

SCENE

The Movie Magazine

A photograph of actor Orlando Bloom with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing a black t-shirt and a long necklace with several pendants. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred crowd of people, suggesting a red carpet event.

ORLANDO BLOOM:
HOLDING THE KEYS TO THE "KINGDOM"
LINDSAY LOHAN RACES TO STARDOM
TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS
THE COMPLETE SUMMER MOVIE GUIDE



New Zealand Dream Getaways

If the words "New Zealand" start you daydreaming about gorgeous vistas, steaming volcanoes, fine wines, and even a Hobbit or two, then it is time to stop imagining what it would be like to visit the land of "The Lord of the Rings," and just do it. Catch an Air New Zealand overnight flight out of Los Angeles or San Francisco, drift off and sleep for most of the thirteen-hour flight to Auckland or Christchurch, and you'll wake up ready to live your dreams. Visit the North Island or the South, or, to see everything that this astonishing country has to offer, do both. For an amazing experience on each island, consider these two very special, yet completely different lodges as jumping off spots for each island experience.

TREETOPS LODGE ON THE NORTH ISLAND

Nestled in the lush hills outside of the famous bubbling city of Rotorua, the hydrothermal hotbed that sits near the middle of the North Island (a quick Air New Zealand flight from Auckland or a two-hour-plus drive), is the Treetops Lodge & Estate, the ten-year labor of love of real-estate developer John Sax. Sax had the idea to make a place where people could come to experience the adventure of New Zealand, but do it all in the lap of luxury, and he has succeeded admirably.

From the moment you step across the landscaped creek and enter the massive carved wooden front doors, it is clear that this is a special place. The huge Great Room sports giant fireplaces, comfortable couches, and tables and beams hewn out of tremendous pieces of burnished wood. The open kitchen is large and welcoming to guests, as is the chef and incredibly friendly staff. Four beautifully appointed suites are available in the Lodge, or for more privacy, there are four villas, each with two separate suites, nestled in the lush, rain-forested hills above and below the main house.

It would be easy to just lounge around the lodge all day, sipping their collection of fine New Zealand wines and perusing the extensive library of books on the history, flora, and fauna of this magical land, but you just can't do that, not when there is so much to experience. Hike through the rain forest up to Bridal Veil Falls, ride a horse across the vast 2500-acre property, hunt for big game and birds, or go fly fishing for trout in one of the pristine lakes on the property.

If more adventure is needed, hop onto a helicopter (HelPro Helicopter Adventures will land on the front lawn and pick you up) and zoom to the summit of Mt. Tarawera, the huge volcano in a long chain of volcanoes that string across the middle section of the island. The view is amazing, a landscape of craggy mountains and stunning lakes that literally stretches for miles and miles. And don't miss going to the Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland to see the Champagne Pool, where poisonous elements in the water create an ever-changing gorgeous pattern of colors and textures, or the Waitomo Glowworm Caves, where thousands of tiny worms light up the underground caverns like stars in the sky.

Returning to Treetops Lodge go to www.treetops.co.nz for rates and more information; after those adventures, you can have a massage in your room, or just kick back, sit on the lawn, and have a cocktail or two before the gourmet dinner is served. All in all, this is a place that you'll never want to leave, until the wonders of the South Island pull you away.

GRASMERE LODGE ON THE SOUTH ISLAND

The Southern part of New Zealand is a marked contrast from the North, with amazing mountains (the Southern Alps), huge glaciers, vast farmlands, and stunning fjords. Sitting high in the Southern Alps west of Christchurch, Grasmere Lodge is a remote luxury resort nestled in the shadow of those craggy mountains. Sporting beautiful suites and individual cottages with amazing panoramic vistas, fantastic food, fine New Zealand wines, and even a well-appointed spa with a complete list of treatments, this working sheep, cattle, and deer "station" (Americans would call it a ranch) is a singularly special place to make your jumping-off point for the rest of the South Island.

All the amenities of home await there, with soft linens, large fireplaces, tennis courts, and a swimming pool, but the real lure of Grasmere are the things you don't get at home, unless you live in Montana. The vast landscapes of flatland colliding with huge, glacier-created mountains are breathtaking; you can experience them from horseback, 4-wheel-drive vehicle, mountain bike, or hiking on foot. Secluded lakes on the property are perfect for trout fishing, canoeing, or kayaking; there is spectacular hiking in the Arthur's Pass National Park close by, and even nearby ski resorts if you visit in winter.

The Lodge is a great place to just decompress and enjoy, but if seeing the rest of this Kiwi paradise is on your agenda (and it should be, of course), then getting around is simple, if you have the cash. Grasmere has its own landing strip, so helicopters and light planes are at your service, to whisk you north to the Marlborough and Bierheim wine districts or farther up to Abel Tasman National Park for some ocean kayaking. Next fly to the southwest to visit Mt. Cook and climb on her fascinating glaciers, or head further south to Queenstown for some high-end shopping—or to go bungee jumping, for the bridge where that craze began is just outside of that bustling lakefront city—and don't forget a visit to Milford Sound, the country's most famous fjord.

Whatever strikes your fancy is easy to experience at Grasmere Lodge, for owners Oliver and Vicki Newbegin have made sure that guests at this "high country retreat" are so relaxed and content that they feel like the unforgettable South Island of New Zealand really is a place to call home.

For rates and more information, go to www.grasmere.co.nz.