



Dig it Treetops Lodge, left, and its manager Heiko Kaiser oversees David Bellamy planting a tree in the grounds.

DAVID BELLAMY NEW ZEALAND

The British botanist fell in love with this far isle via a postage stamp when he was a young boy and has since visited numerous times to help conserve the wilderness. BY PAUL CHAI

As a very small kid, I was given a postage stamp by my uncle with a tree on it, the tane mahuta, which is the biggest tree in New Zealand, and he told me about this wonderful country.

It was the most unique place in the world because it didn't have any big mammals, so all the plants had never been trodden on by hooves or chewed by big beasts. But over the years many feral animals were brought in, like possums and deer, and now New Zealand is the world leader in getting rid of these pests. I am president of the Galapagos Foundation and one of the big islands there had more than 4.2 million goats. When we needed experts to clear them out, they came from New Zealand.

I have worked with local scientists and with the Department of Conservation and with wonderful people who are stitching the country back into working order. The department now lists 4500 local groups who are looking after their patch and making sure their children and grandchildren will be able to see the wonderful creatures that inhabit them.

When I first came to New Zealand the great thing to eat was mutton pie. As a kid in war-torn London I was brought up on mutton, some of which came from New Zealand. I once used one of these mutton pies for a TV show I was doing. I stuck my knife into the pie and poured tomato ketchup on and said, "These are the tectonic plates sliding around and the magma coming up."

If you have seen this wonderful bite-sized country, you will know it is full of surprises – wonderful seascapes, wonderful landscapes, volcanoes, ice caps – and you just have to come back. +

BELLAMY'S NEW ZEALAND

STAY

Treetops Lodge

(351 Kearoa Road, Horohoro, Rotorua; +64 7 333 2066; treetops.co.nz) has become a role model in the very top end of eco-tourism. You come into the valley and you could be in Scotland. Once you get there you are taken up into this wonderful lodge with a natural stream flowing down through the middle.

EAT

Mangonui Fish Shop

(Beach Road, Mangonui; +64 9 406 0478) is renowned around the world. They have their own special organic

potatoes and you get the fish of the day.

Auckland

In Auckland, around every corner, is every sort of food you could want. You can duck into a restaurant to dine or just stand outside and smell all the aromas.

SEE

The South-West

My favourite landscapes in the world are in Antarctica: if you get down to Fiordland National Park (doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/national-parks) and the snow is still there you have got rivers of ice that are very beautiful.