

# HEAVEN IS ONLY 24 HOURS AWAY

Flying half way round the world to ride a motorcycle seems extreme. But then you see what New Zealand has to offer

**E**MPTY RIBBONS OF road skirting pristine lakes and vanishing into snow-topped mountains are good enough. But then you've got the azure skies, untouched beaches, rolling green countryside, superb wines, incredibly fresh seafood and the best lamb and beef on the planet. No wonder New Zealand is widely considered as the world's official motorcycle paradise.

Plus there's the soul stirring images of the All Blacks' Haka, geothermal wonderlands and the stunning scenes from movies such as *Lord of the Rings*, *Narnia*, *The Last Samurai*, *Avatar*, and *King Kong*.

You'll also be pleasantly surprised by New Zealanders' friendliness and laid back attitude – get used to being invited to a 'Kiwi Barby' by a new friend. Lodgings are way above most people's expectations – the







Most hobbits ride smokey two-strokes (they don't like changing the rings)

B&Bs used by Paradise Tours are top quality, in stunning locations and with wonderful hosts. The hotels are four-five star and you always get a room with a view.

It's partly thanks to this attention to detail that Paradise Motorcycle Tours NZ have become so successful – they are the only New Zealand-based certified BMW Motorrad Travel Partner and their guides have travelled to Germany to do the BMW Motorrad Tour Guide training. Here are Paradise's top tips for having a true holiday of lifetime.

» **Should I book the flights or bike first?**

Booking a tour or renting a bike in New Zealand should be a simple process, and it usually is, but there are some things to watch for to ensure you get the experience you want. Book the bike before the flight. There are hundreds of flights into New Zealand but there are not hundreds of good quality well maintained motorcycles under two or three years old available. If your flights are slightly different to the dates you booked the bike for you can always ask the rental company to amend the booking.

» **Which flight to go for?**

So much choice, so many routes, and should you stopover or not? It's best to look at the 24 hour flight as a great chance to relax, eat, drink sleep, watch films, not

reply to emails or answer a constantly ringing phone.

Shortest routes are through Los Angeles and San Francisco, though Singapore, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur are also good and all great places for a stop-over. Routing through China is an experience, as is flying with a Chinese airline.

There are no charter flights and you're travelling on national carriers, so booking with your credit card online is OK – you don't need a travel agent – but if there's one you have a relationship with, then use them. Be aware, it takes two days to get here (if you leave UK on Monday, you'll arrive NZ on Wednesday), but only one day to return. There are more flights into Auckland than anywhere else, and the City of Sails is a great place to relax before you start your tour. If you're starting in Christchurch, then a 1 hour 20 minute flight from Auckland costs around £60.

» **How do I choose my tour company?**

Look for companies that are based in New Zealand. Sounds obvious but there are many marketing companies and a few specialist travel agencies that are based off-shore, and don't own any motorcycles in NZ. You are paying a middle man, and there is no need for that. Better to deal directly with the people that own the bikes. They can give you instant

availability, and discuss your options with you using local knowledge. Look for companies that have some form of accreditation. Qualmark is the official quality standard for all things tourism in NZ and there are a few Qualmark licenced motorcycle tourism companies that have all been audited and have jumped through all the hoops. You're all but guaranteed a good experience booking with them.

Look for companies that have been going for a few years – there have been several companies recently that have started and disappeared within one or two seasons, so five years is a minimum.

Look at websites – have they been updated recently, or is it all old content? If so, steer clear. Finally, reviews. Are they independent – for example Trip Advisor – or have they been put on the website by the company? It doesn't mean they're not genuine, but you only get one side of the story. Do your research, ask lots of questions, and get the New Zealand motorcycle touring experience that you want and deserve.

» **What bike should I go for?**

NZ has some of the most amazing motorcycle roads in the world, so why wouldn't you want to ride them on a modern motorcycle with great handling, performance and brakes. We recommend hiring a nearly new bike.

**TOUR DETAILS**

Paradise Motorcycle Tours offers latest model rentals, self-guided GPS tours and fully-guided tours of New Zealand with bases in Auckland in the North Island and Christchurch in the South. Tours range from £1080 (NZ \$2128) for one person travelling as a couple on a seven day non-guided tour of North Island to £7025 (NZ \$13,815) for one of a couple doing a 21 day luxury guided tour. Prices include bike hire, bike insurance, B&B in four star hotels and a guide where applicable. All dinners are included in the luxury tour. » **More details: [www.paradisemotorcycletours.co.nz](http://www.paradisemotorcycletours.co.nz)**



'It's more than just incredible roads. The beaches, countryside, food and wine are sublime'



Paradise Tours is New Zealand's only certified BMW travel partner

