

## ▶ Visiting Down Under — New Zealand By Gerry Aspinall

For any travelers wishing to visit Down Under, especially New Zealand, the time could never be better. The rate of exchange has dropped to unbelievable lows — N.Z. 40¢ to the U.S. \$1.00. This is an authentic value since most Kiwi food and lodging prices are in the moderate range anyway.

Fishing, golfing, biking, backpacking and general sightseeing have always been great things to experience in New Zealand. If you can get around all right in Oregon and Washington, you'll have no trouble over there. The thing that worries some in advance is driving on the "wrong" or left side of the road. One can prepare for this by visualizing the change while fooling around your hometown. Also, if you go out on some quiet country road and make left hand and right hand turns from the opposite side, you'll catch on fast. The most important thing is to always look right, not left, as you cross an intersection or street. By the way, it is illegal to make any corner turns against a red light over there, and they do ticket you with radar cameras. I found out when a citation came home by airmail—so always take an added insurance policy when renting a vehicle.

Keeping in mind the seasons are exactly opposite, the best time for us to visit is January on through March, omitting December because that's when all the Kiwis are on their Summer vacation and things can get a bit crowded. You're never more than 35 miles from a seashore there.

Winging it without reservations has always been our favorite way to travel there—staying in hostels, bed and breakfasts, pub hotels and rented motor homes at campgrounds. Licensed hotels have pubs and the public bars are usually fun places to be. The evening roasts in a friendly noisy bar can provide wondrously cheap, flavorful meals including tomatoes, chips, eggs and steak all on one platter. Bankcards are accepted generally throughout the country.

The easiest places to fly fish I've found include the following locations: The Brown Trout Waitake River country near Kurow and the must-see Milford Sound Fjordland area in the South Island. If you're taking a look see as well as a fishing trip, you have to visit famous Milford Sound and Mitre Peak, but bear in mind, it rains over 200 inches a year there. While laying in at the big Hostel at the Sound, you can fish for ocean-run Speckled Trout on the Cleddau River emptying into the Tasman Sea directly behind the facility. Twenty years ago these trout readily took deep running Burlap Nymphs while we were escorting two other non-angling couples about. The folks enjoyed their breakfast of fresh grilled trout in the big commune kitchen. A paved road into that fjord runs 100 miles along the lovely fly-fishing-only/easy-to-wade Eglinton River whose big Rainbows will hit our Royal Coachman dry or wet flies with relish. No need to buy Kiwi flies like the Mrs. Simpsons or Parson's Glory.

On the North Island, the best places to head for are the Taupo and Rotorua Lake regions where you'll have no problem finding fly fishing in the world famous Tongariro River or the lakes themselves. Night fishing, when there's no wind, is a real experience in both these lakes, as the big fish move up to the cold stream mouths from deep water. You'll have plenty of company as the Kiwis gravitate to this nocturnal sport.

Getting help or hiring guides is really a no-brainer. Check in with the local sport shops or visit the Tourist Bureau in Rotorua. You can get one fishing license to cover all the localities throughout the country in Auckland at the main Tourist Bureau on Queen St. as well as booking buses and trains and so on. New Zealanders still don't tip in country places and really don't like foreigners "spoiling us simple folks" so keep that in mind as a savings, too.

Anyway, the folks over there always like Yanks so there's no problem asking permission to fish the farmer's meadow or sheep paddock. I don't think that will change as long as one sticks to good manners and shows the proper respect. The benefits are really worth some polite inquiries.

"Good on ya, Mate" — You'll still hear this famous saying Down Under, but not too often any more. I'll be seein' you there if the last Kiwi doesn't turn out the light.

Gerry Aspinall has been a member of CFFU since 1964 and is certainly one of the club's more prolific writers.