

*"ITARAKI'S SLOGAN IS 'TARANAKI WAS CREATED
TO GIVE hardcore PEOPLE A PLACE TO LIVE' AND
THAT'S PERFECTLY TRUE"*

Telly Tubby Land.



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PART 2

NEW ZEALAND STORY:

A LOVE TRIBUTE

I have been privileged to get to know so many places and cultures all across our lovely Mother Earth, however, nothing can live up to New Zealand and the experiences I've had here! This country simply combines the best things of so many other places: wild, lush green jungle like Brazil, white sandy beaches as seen on TV in the Indian Ocean, more beautiful mountains than in Austria (and I've always thought, Austria had THE most beautiful mountains !?), world-class waves...Yes, the beauty of nature overwhelmed me completely and I remember so many times when I was gawping open mouthed at the sites in this true last paradise! And as a kiteboarder, just remember that there is 6000km of coast for only 4 million inhabitants... so a huge number of beaches and spots!



Just cracking the top off one

After my adventures on the South Island (as seen in the last KS Mag), I jumped onto the ferry to cross the Cook Strait from Picton to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand on the south-western tip of the North Island. The ferry crossing is an impressive passage along the spectacular coasts and takes approximately 3 hours. It's easy to take your camper onto the ferry, just ensure that you confirmed with your rental company before that you are actually allowed to take your car from one island to another.

Because of its location in the Roaring Forties latitudes and its exposure to omnipresent winds coming through Cook Strait, the city is known to Kiwis as "Windy Wellington". Obviously there are several good kite-spots in the area, but naturally a common problem around here is too much wind for kiting. Go to the Kapiti Coast to find the best conditions, though the fact that the wind is usually preceded by, accompanied by and followed by rain might not thrill you much...

So I hit the road up North from Wellington, which eventually turned into the 'Surf Highway

No.45'. My anticipation for some sick wave-riding was building as the KM's clicked by on my tachometer till I finally hit Taranaki, as famous for its waves as its stunning active but quiescent 2518metre-high volcano. I still remember like yesterday, driving along the Surf Highway, singing to the radio, checking out some of the breaks that I have heard so much about (Stent Road and so on) and suddenly noticing that the clouds had burned through and Mount Taranaki stood proud in its full grace, the very top covered in fresh snow... Taranaki's slogan is "Taranaki was created to give hardcore people a place to live" and that's perfectly true, it's a kind-a-'Kiwi Hookipa': the Tasman sea here is heaving with energy. Heavy waves break far out in the open sea, most beaches are impossible to launch from due to gnarly rocks and therefore more suited to pole dancers than us lot.

Another highlight and a classic experience for the traveller to NZ was hanging out at the Mount Maunganui area, in the Bay of Plenty region and meeting the local crew here, amongst them my

team mates, NZ national champ Marc Jacobs and Vice NZ champion Kelby Bright. Marc and Kelby took me to several spots in the vicinity and we shared some unforgettable wave sessions, sweet! There's nothing better than being shown around a new place by the locals, right ;)! Thanks to the bay, it's possible to ride here in the area in any wind direction. When the winds are from NW/E/SE, you go to ride the coast, and the wind is usually steady. Tay Street, Papamoa domain, Taylors reserve, Maketu are different spots located on a long white sandy beach, often with waves. The harbour is a protected bay where the wind is usually gusty but allows you to ride on NW/W/SW days. Fergusson Park, Pilot Bay and Maketu are the most popular with flat water, no rocks, no oysters; the rest of the Bay of Plenty is full of less well known spots but one is as nice as the next!

Next stop: The Coromandel Peninsula. That's also where I hooked up with Ian Trafford again, top-photographer from the South Island of New Zealand.



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Along the way, we stopped at 'Hot Water Beach', a popular surf spot and natural attraction, 'cause thanks to the geothermic action here, you can dig out your very personal Jacuzzi in the sand. If you forgot to pack your spade, grab one from the Beach Cafe. Although the days we spent on the Coromandel were a bit 'grey', we did manage to get a photo-session in at Opito Bay, a beautiful, secluded endless beach with sweet waves.

Passing through Auckland on our way up North, I checked out the most famous surf spots and had a kick ass session at Piha, an infamous beach with extremely unforgiving rips that tragically claim lives each year. Yeah, that was quite a day and apparently not many, if any kites have gone out there before me... That day I wound down with a sunset-kite at Muriwai Beach, up the road from Piha. It's a much safer place and the local 'go-to' spot. The atmosphere when the sun set was incredible and I will never forget the light that came shining through the holes that God had poked in the sky. Muriwai is about 40km from Auckland and boasts a black sand beach that's several kilometres long. You kite here in westerly winds (NW/W/SW) and usually there's the typical windswell action - pretty big, not very clean and with a strong current.

Next highlight: Northland and the Far North. When I arrived at Mangahawai Heads (it was a bright blue, sunny, though windless day) around an hour and a half north of Auckland on the East coast, I could scarcely trust what my eyes were telling me. The white beach, the crystal clear turquoise water, perfect glassy waves, OMFG, yet again NZ surprises me with a new face! In fact, the scenery brought to mind Western Australia, just better vibes in and around the water. On my way up I had the pleasure of meeting Dave and Sue Kay, a super lovely couple, stoked to the hilt on kitesurfing as well as their boardshaping business. If you pass through here, make sure you say 'Hi' to Dave and Sue.

She's an Independent woman

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Marc Jacobs

They're always happy to help folk around Mangawhai which has options for pretty much every wind direction apart from the northwest.

Kerikeri Peninsula, 90 Mile Beach, Cape Reinga, Ahipara, well, what can I say, other than those places totally blew my mind. I kited at 'The Bluff' and had THE most joyous surf at 'Shippies' (Shipwrecks Bay). I so much wanted to stay longer but had to continue my trip. Back down South, I was due to give my campervan back at the depot in Auckland, but my dream trip was on such a roll that I extended the rental for another week.

I still had to check out Raglan, a groovy harbour town with its classic endless left-hand pointbreak. Further away from the main surfspots, which are not kiteable due to their geographic location (lack of launch.) There's a big river mouth which you can kite though and here you will experience the formidable Raglan Express: the current from the ebbing tide. It can add another 3-4knots to the windspeed! All westerly wind is good for this versatile spot – you've got waves, freestyle action, so much joy! There was no wind forecast, though some solid swell hit and as the perfect end to the perfect dream, I had THE best surfing session of my life until a longboarder (they love it here) ran me over and sliced my board. All good though, this little incident just confirmed to me that it was time to leave anyway.

Unknown local. Gizzy area.



Bay of plenty area

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Tasmanian Sea power

Every dream also has an end, when you wake up and realize that you gotta go back to reality, right? I tried to keep hitting snooze for as long as I could but had to hit the road for Auckland to at last return the camper.

I felt heartbroken and still do, to tell you the honest truth. It feels like being love-sick, something's missing, obviously I'm not only talking about my van, not directly anyway, I'm talking about the crazy adventure, my dream-joyride through Kiwi land. Every mile and moment of it filled with pure joy. Each morning I woke up with the eyes of a small girl, full with excitement what the day would bring and NZ did not let me down once. So many evenings, I went to bed so overwhelmed with impressions that I found it hard to fall asleep. I would like to take this opportunity to 'THANK' all my Kiwi-mates for the once-in-a-lifetime trip that will stay with me forever and especially Ian Trafford for capturing it all with his camera!



Handy Hints

Facts for the NZ Traveller (separate text box)
Weather and winds: New Zealand is in the Southern Hemisphere, thus summer is between December and February. Waves are best in autumn and spring, though, during these periods you are also more likely to encounter rain, which is extremely common in New Zealand, that's why the country is so incredibly green! The North Island is usually not very windy during the summer months because of the high pressure systems that get stacked above the country. You've got to go to the East Coast to get some decent thermal winds. The rest of the year is normally very windy due to numerous depressions that cross the country. North Island is sub-tropical with quite a lot of rain, temps between 20 and 30 degrees in the summer with rather mild winters where the temperature usually doesn't drop below 10 degrees. No glacier system but some snow on the high volcanoes at the centre of the island. The South Island's best season is in the summer thanks to thermal winds. The eastern and northern coast are the best for kiting but are windless in winter. Spring and autumn brings some winds with the big depressions. Winters are usually cool (8-12 degrees) and summers hot.

Getting there: Not much choice, you've got to fly and it's a long way from Europe (approx. 24 hours +).

Where to stay: Buying or renting a van is definitely the way to go, check the paper and backpackers car market for used vehicles for sale or www.paradise.co.nz for rental with a wide range of companies.

Visa: Usually you can enter the country without a visa. You can stay up to 3 months.

With any further questions, feel free to email me anytime via www.kitegabi.com!

