

**R**ecently, the Web site *The Daily Beast* calculated which countries ranked as the world's laziest, based on daily consumption of calories, amount of time spent watching television, and aversion to physical activity. Out of 24 countries, the United States was rated the most slothful. New Zealand, at number 22, barely made the list.

That it ranked among the laziest at all is a bit of a shocker. After all, New Zealand is the birthplace of black-water rafting (whooshing through underground caves), jet boats (designed to speed over the country's fast-moving, shallow rivers), and commercial bungee jumping.

And then there's sport: rugby, mountain biking, surfing, hang gliding, heli-skiing, free-fall photography, and tandem parapenting (don't ask).

Lazy they're not.

But I am. So on a recent visit to New Zealand, I was determined to experience it on my terms. There would be no hiking, biking, leaping, spelunking, sheep shearing, or scrimmaging. Instead, I planned a leisurely round of dining, drinking, napping, and a little bit of gentle strolling. I would visit farmers' markets, wineries, spas, and restaurants, and cap it all off each night with at least nine hours in a very comfortable bed. How did I achieve all this in a country that is hell-bent on courting death on a daily basis? Actually, it was remarkably easy.

1/ pour a glass of wine and watch the sun set

#### THE BAY OF ISLANDS

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For the lazy person, there is probably no better place to begin a trip to New Zealand than in the Bay of Islands, 150 miles or so north of Auckland. Because of its subtropical climate, it is warm, brilliantly green, and peaceful, with gentle hills that roll down to the sea. Plus, it is steeped in history—this is where the English and native Maori signed a land rights treaty in 1840 that is still being debated, somewhat testily, to this day. So if you feel you really should sightsee, there are plenty of worthy places to visit.

On the way up from Auckland, I stopped at the Matakana Village Farmers' Market and picked up some salad greens, berries, prosciutto, wine, and cheese, just enough to last for a few days. Friends had booked me into the Avalon Resort in the town of Kerikeri, an idyllic complex of four cottages (complete with kitchens) owned by Willem de Jong and Betty Ras, who moved to New Zealand from Holland in 2003. They've created a magical place that looks like something out of Middle Earth, and they share it with a

menagerie of friendly creatures—two hairy little pigs (one with a ring in its nose), a few rusty red hens, some goats, and a dog or two. I can't imagine a more perfect moment than my first evening, sitting on the deck of my cottage, watching my daughter play with the pigs, and sipping a glass of Riverstone Pinot Gris. The ducks swam placidly in the pond while the sun set, all pink and apricot and violet.

My next day was a little more rigorous. I had scheduled a massage and facial at the ultra-luxe Lodge at Kauri Cliffs in nearby Matakauri Bay while friends played 18 holes on the lodge's championship course. We dined together, a very civilized affair of locally sourced foods: cauliflower truffle soup, grilled gurnard with a basil and tomato dressing, rack of lamb with cumin polenta and red onion jam, and an oozy and delicious chocolate fondant cake with *crème anglaise*.

2/ have a three-hour lunch

#### HAWKE'S BAY WINE COUNTRY

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I had broken my no-hiking rule at Kauri Cliffs and ambled down to the resort's pink sand beach, just out of curiosity. Astonishingly beautiful, it was worth the 40-minute vertical climb back to the car. But it meant that when I got to my next destination, I was in serious need of a drink.

Thankfully, I was in the right place. Hawke's Bay is probably New Zealand's most famous wine region, specializing in elegant Chardonnays and Claret-style reds, although you'll find some good Sauvignon Blancs and Syrahs, too. I was staying in one of the ridiculously cushy rooms at The Farm at Cape Kidnappers (a sister property to Kauri Cliffs), which is located near several of the best vineyards. I started by checking in with the sommelier, who not only gave me his list of favorite wineries, but also threw in a few cheese shops and olive oil tasting rooms for good measure. Top of the list was Craggy Range Winery, which produces superlative wines and offers charming vineyard cottages for rent—and it's home to Terrôir, one of the best restaurants in the country.

Terrôir is an interesting place to find in the middle of a vineyard thousands of miles away from London or San Francisco, two cities where it could easily be located. My lunch was ambitious, up-to-the-moment, and extremely well executed. I started with house-cured hot-smoked salmon with pickled cauliflower, arugula, and curry mayonnaise, followed by

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A vanilla bean cheesecake tartlet with roasted rhubarb at Otahuna Lodge (see recipe on page 111); ducks are part of the menagerie at the Avalon Resort in Kerikeri on the

North Island; this seafood barbecue stand in the town of Kaikoura on the South Island sells superlative seafood fritters; executive chef Jimmy McIntyre examines the corn crop in Otahuna's walled kitchen garden;

Otahuna Lodge is a Christchurch landmark built from a restored 19th-century estate house.



FROM LEFT Near the uppermost tip of the North Island, undeveloped land rolls down to secluded beaches like this one near The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs; olive oil from

The Village Press in Hawke's Bay is labeled with its varietal olives, which include smooth Manzanillo, peppery Barnea, and more.

a confit of stuffed rabbit leg with pancetta and pearl barley risotto. The breads were homemade, the olive oil made from the vineyard's own crop, the organic vegetables harvested from the restaurant's garden.

Thanks to its temperate climate, Hawke's Bay has long been known as the fruit bowl of New Zealand, and a visit to the Hawke's Bay Farmers' Market was the perfect way to end a few days of wine tasting. Packed full of every imaginable fresh fruit, vegetable, and herb, as well as local honeys, olive and avocado oils, pickles, preserves, and jams, it's also a great insight into the high art of Kiwi baking, both sweet and savory. I left with a large Wagyu beef pie (frozen for easy transportation) to take to friends in the South Island, the next stop on my slacker's trail.

### 3/ sit by the beach and listen to the waves KAIKOURA, NORTH CANTERBURY

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New Zealand possesses almost 10,000 miles of coastline, which has resulted in a couple of things: There are lots of good beaches and the seafood is incredible. One of the best places to experience both is Kaikoura, a small town on the east coast of the South Island.

*Kaikoura* is a Maori word that means "to eat crayfish," the big spiny lobsters that are plentiful in the area. And while there are many places to eat crayfish in Kaikoura, my favorite by far is The Original Kaikoura Seafood BBQ, which consists of a table, a sign, a grill, and a cooler filled with soft drinks.

The location is perfect: just outside town on a quiet

road right by the beach. The waves crash on the shore, and the sea and sky are a deep, intense blue. If you're lucky, a big fat New Zealand fur seal might be lolling on the beach. Sheep occasionally wander by. You can get grilled scallops, mussels, and fish here, as well as seafood chowder, but the real draw is the fritters, made of whitebait, *paua* (abalone), or crayfish. They are served fresh off the grill on a melamine plate with a side salad and choice of rice or buttered bread. There are tables and plastic chairs set up nearby, so you can sit and eat and contemplate the ocean for as long as you like. You can contemplate many other beautiful things at Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses, eight miles north of Kaikoura. Located on a deer farm and overlooking an olive orchard, the lodge has five whimsical and luxurious "tree houses" built 30 feet high in a native manuka grove. The structures have nearly 360-degree views of the surrounding mountains and coastline and some of the most comfortable beds you will ever sleep in, designed by the architect owners.

Those comfortable beds prepare you well for what may be your most strenuous activity at Hapuku: conquering the breakfast buffet.

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## kiwi's big adventure

7 things to do with zeal in New Zealand



### SAVOR EXOTIC FRUIT

Feijoa is the sourest fruit you'll ever love, and it's used to make jam, ice cream, and even vodka here. And feast on the makeover hit of the produce world, the Chinese gooseberry, which in 1959 was renamed in honor of the flightless bird that is the national symbol of New Zealand—the kiwi.



### SCREW IT

Believed to produce the best Sauvignon Blancs in the world, New Zealand vintners were early adopters of screw-top bottling. Toast this innovation with one of the vibrant whites from Cloudy Bay, a member of a Kiwi consortium who proudly crow, "We've screwed 'em!" [cloudybay.co.nz](http://cloudybay.co.nz)



### PULL THE WOOL

Icebreaker-brand performance clothing often is made from 100 percent wool, from curly-horned Merino sheep. It's lighter than traditional wool, as soft as cotton, and (since no petroleum is used in its production) the green choice for sporty clothing. [icebreaker.com](http://icebreaker.com)



### FORAGE FOR MAORI HERBS

Former Auckland chef Charles Royal leads foraging tours in which guests harvest edible weeds, then prepare a picnic. Green fern fronds (*pikopiko*), the Maori bush pepper, and the healing spice *kawakawa* are just some of the ingredients. [maorifood.com](http://maorifood.com)



### CHOKER DOWN SOME GRUBS

In March, the West Coast of the South Island is home to the Wild Food Festival—think South Beach Wine & Food Festival on acid. Local and wild delicacies particular to the region range from the tasty (Pukeko bird, described as tasting like a cross between wild pork and venison) to the bizarre (roasted huhu beetle grubs that—wait for it—taste like chicken). [wildfoods.co.nz](http://wildfoods.co.nz)



### BATHE IN MUD

In the North Island town of Rotorua, geothermal activity has been drawing sybarites to natural thermal pools and mud baths for more than 100 years. [hellsgate.co.nz](http://hellsgate.co.nz)



### CRUISE FOR MUSSELS

Unique to New Zealand, green-lipped mussels are known for their plumpness and purportedly arthritis-lessening fatty acid. See their long-line aquaculture (cribbed from the Japanese) on an afternoon Greenshell Mussel Cruise. [marlboroughtravel.co.nz](http://marlboroughtravel.co.nz)

But first things first. Coffee culture has hit New Zealand hard, so a "flat white" (a shot of espresso with just the right amount of foamy steamed milk) is the perfect eye-opener—creamy and strong, light years ahead of the average latte. As for breakfast, I used a two-pronged approach, starting with homemade muesli, fresh fruit, and a smoked salmon scone from the buffet, and then finishing up with the Lodge Country Breakfast: eggs and toast with herb-roasted potatoes, slow-roasted tomatoes, and house-made *merguez* sausage. It was enough fuel to get me on my way south to my final stop, Christchurch.

#### 4/ stroll through a kitchen garden OTAHUNA LODGE, CHRISTCHURCH

The largest city on the South Island, Christchurch has long had a reputation for being more English than the English. But those days might be over: Now, for example, the city's most popular restaurant serves Burmese food. Even so, I craved a little colonial coddling, so I drove to Otahuna Lodge, a 19th-century estate that has been transformed into the quintessential country-house hotel. Hall Cannon and Miles Refo, who moved to New Zealand from New York in 2006, renovated the lodge to a state of historical perfection—and then had to do it all over again late last year after serious damage from a major earthquake. The pair even created a Victorian walled kitchen garden, where you almost expect Peter Rabbit to come scampering through the neat rows of veggies. Astonishingly prolific, the half-acre tract yields dozens of heirloom fruit and vegetable

varieties (including about ten kinds of tomatoes), some original to the 1895 property, along with porcini, shiitake, and oyster mushrooms. Pigs are kept here, too, so that executive chef Jimmy McIntyre can make his own *lardo*, *coppa*, prosciutto, and pancetta. And he doesn't keep his expertise to himself—for guests, he runs cooking classes that pull their inspiration from the garden and McIntyre's own culinary philosophy: fresh, simple, and comforting.

On the other hand, if you're feeling less ambitious, you can skip the cooking and just admire the garden. In fact, after a stroll through the grounds and past the massive oak trees that surround the house, it's delightful to collapse into one of the pillow couches in front of the fire in the sitting room, admire the collection of New Zealand art, sip a nice glass of wine, and wait, very happily, for dinner. Whatever you do, just don't break a sweat.

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[Otahuna Lodge chef Jimmy McIntyre doesn't keep his expertise to himself—for guests, he runs cooking classes that pull their inspiration from the garden and his culinary philosophy: fresh, simple, and comforting.](#)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP  
Lamb with tapenade  
jus and onion jam  
from The Lodge  
at Kauri Cliffs (see  
recipe on opposite  
page); a picnic  
of fresh crayfish

from The Original  
Kaikoura Seafood  
BBQ; Beth Moon  
and Matthew Lee,  
guests of the Craggy  
Range Winery, enjoy  
an alfresco lunch on  
the lakefront.

## RACK OF LAMB WITH TAPENADE JUS AND ONION JAM

PREP 2 hours TOTAL 4 hours 15 minutes  
(includes cooling and chilling time)

8 SERVINGS This dish from The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs proves that New Zealanders know their lamb. Serve with polenta.

### tapenade

- 3 tablespoons finely chopped pitted Kalamata olives
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh Italian parsley
- 1 anchovy fillet, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil

### lamb

- 2 1½-pound racks of lamb, excess fat and sinew trimmed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup dry red wine
- ¼ cup low-salt chicken broth
- ¼ cup beef broth
- 1 large fresh thyme sprig
- Onion Jam (see recipe)

**TAPENADE** Mix all ingredients in small bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill.

**LAMB** Preheat oven to 450°F. Rub each rack of lamb all over with 1 tablespoon olive oil; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Heat heavy large skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 lamb rack at a time to skillet and cook until browned, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer lamb to rimmed baking sheet; reserve skillet.

Place lamb in oven and roast until instant-read thermometer inserted into center registers 125°F, about 15 minutes. Remove from oven; tent with foil and let rest 10 to 15 minutes. Add wine, then both broths and thyme sprig to reserved skillet; boil until reduced to generous 1 cup, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in tapenade. Season jus to taste with salt and pepper.

Cut lamb between bones into individual chops; divide among 8 plates. Spoon onion jam alongside. Drizzle tapenade jus over and serve.

## Onion Jam

PREP 1 hour TOTAL 1 hour 30 minutes  
(includes cooling time)

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 pounds red onions, halved, thinly sliced
- 8 fresh thyme sprigs
- 4 garlic cloves, pressed
- 1 cup ruby Port
- ½ cup dry red wine
- ½ cup grenadine
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup sugar

Heat oil in heavy medium pot over medium-high heat. Add onions, thyme, and garlic; sauté until onions are slightly softened, about 10 minutes. Add 1¼ cups water and all remaining ingredients and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium and continue to boil gently until onions are soft, liquid is reduced, and mixture thickens to jam consistency, stirring often and adding more water by ¼ cupfuls to prevent sticking, 30 to 40 minutes. Remove from heat. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Cool slightly. Cover and refrigerate. Before serving, rewarm onion jam just until heated through, stirring frequently.

## VANILLA BEAN CHEESECAKE TARTLETS WITH ROASTED RHUBARB

PREP 1 hour TOTAL 7 hours 30 minutes  
(includes chilling time)

MAKES 8 Serve these tartlets from Otahuna Lodge with the sorbet of your choice—raspberry, strawberry, orange, or lemon would work well. For the best results, choose rhubarb stalks that are deep red in color.

### crust

- 8 ounces imported sweet tea biscuit cookies (such as Lu; from two 7.06-ounce packages), finely ground in processor (about 2½ cups)
- 1 cup natural unsalted pistachios, lightly toasted, cooled
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, melted

### filling

- 1 8-ounce package Philadelphia-brand cream cheese (do not use reduced-fat or fat-free), room temperature, or 8 ounces soft fresh goat cheese
- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise
- 1 cup chilled heavy whipping cream
- ½ cup chilled crème fraîche or sour cream

### roasted rhubarb

- 1½ pounds fresh rhubarb, trimmed, cut crosswise into 2-inch-long pieces
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup fresh orange juice
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange peel
- 1½ tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ¼-inch cubes

### special equipment

- 8 4½-inch tartlet pans with ¾-inch-high sides and removable bottoms

**CRUST** Preheat oven to 400°F. Combine ground cookies, pistachios, and sugar in processor and process until finely ground. Add melted butter and large pinch of salt and process until crumbs are evenly moistened. Divide mixture among eight 4½-inch tartlet pans with removable bottoms (generous ½ cup for each) and press firmly and evenly onto bottom and up sides of pans. Bake until crust is golden, about 10 minutes. Cool completely on rack.

**FILLING** Combine cream cheese and sugar in medium bowl; scrape in seeds from vanilla bean. Using electric mixer, beat mixture until well blended. Beat cream and crème fraîche in another medium bowl until firm peaks form. Fold cream mixture into cream cheese mixture until smooth. Divide filling among baked crusts (scant ½ cup for each). Chill until filling firms up slightly, at least 6 hours. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and keep chilled.

**ROASTED RHUBARB** Preheat oven to 350°F. Combine rhubarb, sugar, orange juice, and orange peel in 11x7x2-inch glass baking dish; toss gently to coat. Dot with butter. Roast until rhubarb is tender but still retains its shape, about 35 minutes. Cool slightly. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 4 hours ahead. Let stand at room temperature.

Place 1 tartlet on each of 8 plates. Top with roasted rhubarb and serve.

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TO [bonappetit.com/recipes](http://bonappetit.com/recipes)