

# TRAVELER

IDEAS, TIPS AND

ADVENTURES FROM AAA

FALL 2014



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## HOLIDAYS IN PARIS





SET TO A  
**MAGICAL**  
BACKDROP,  
THE HOBBIT INSPIRES YOUNG AND OLD TO  
SET FORTH ON A REAL-LIFE FANTASY  
THROUGH MAJESTIC MIDDLE-EARTH.

# new Zealand: HOBBIT STYLE

BY LESLEY TRACZYK

The power of movies to ignite our imaginations is absolutely incredible. A great movie can take you on an adventure without you ever leaving home. What's even better than watching a great film, though, is actually living it, and nowhere brings fantasy to life quite as spectacularly as the stunning landscapes of New Zealand.

*The Lord of the Rings* movies may have put New Zealand on the world's radar as a top travel destination, but *The Hobbit* series has brought new levels of fun to the real-life middle-earth. Follow in the hairy footsteps of these adventurers on a visit to New Zealand and you're sure to have a tale or two to tell when you come back.

## Welcome to The Shire

Begin your journey on New Zealand's North Island in Hobbiton™, just as Bilbo Baggins did. Two hours from Auckland, near Matamata, Hobbiton village is

nestled into a steep, verdant hillside with blooming trees, meandering paths, idyllic wooden fences and grass so lush it begs to be explored barefoot. The series was filmed at these unique Hobbit-hole homes that define the look of the enchanting set. Be sure to enjoy a traditional ale at The Green Dragon Inn to get into the festive Hobbit spirit.

## Let the Fun Begin

Stay in a merry mood as you continue your trek to Tauranga. Here, the Jazz Village is located in the Historic Village on 17th Avenue, which is reminiscent of New Orleans' French Quarter. The village is a departure from the sprawling countryside, but is magical in its own ways. Cobblestone streets and wide-open two-story porches invite visitors to relax and enjoy the sounds of jazz music. Dixie music in the Village Hall will make you want to celebrate

IMAGE: NEW ZEALAND TOURISM, IAN BRODIE





Discover the real middle-earth at Hobbiton



great music and good times with as much fervor as the Hobbits celebrated Bilbo's birthday in *The Lord of the Rings*.

### Journey Inland

Venture from civilization into the vast landscapes where filming of *The Lord of the Rings* first began. Outside Wellington, explore the forests of the Outer Shire and further south along the breathtakingly blue coastline lies an entrance to another world. Owhiro Bay's high-rising mountains are the Gates of Mordor in *The Lord of the Rings* and you, too, will feel as small as Frodo and Sam amid the peaks seen from this stunning bay.



### From Peaks to Valleys

The unbelievable scenery of middle-earth is at its best on New Zealand's South Island. Akaroa, near Christchurch, is a scenic gateway to journey up to Rakaia Gorge. The twisting Rakaia River's teal blue waters carve through steep, straight cliffs of rock. The brightness of the water and its pebble-stone shores are accentuated by towering pines and a backdrop of majestic snow-covered peaks. The Canterbury Plains pose an even greater contrast to the surrounding mountains. This patchwork of farmlands across a wide open valley reaches to the edge of the

Southern Alps that then explode up into the sky. It's a beautiful vista that lends itself perfectly to Tolkien's fantasy world.

### Ancient Landscapes

To the northwest of coastal Dunedin sits the small town of Middelmarth in Central Otago. This area was the craggy terrain where The Company was hunted by Orcs in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, which is only fitting given the area's epic landscape. Make your journey inland more enjoyable than the harried experience of the Hobbits by riding a vintage railcar through the winding mountains and along the Taieri River Gorge. Fiction comes oddly close to reality here, as the phrase middle-earth rather aptly describes this wild landscape, which includes volcanic outcrops and a crater lake that formed 20 million years ago.

### On the Backs of Eagles

Milford Sound is arguably one of the most picturesque places in the world. The sound's incredible mountains rise up sharply out of serene waters and can at times be seen covered in greenery but also capped with snow. It's a magnificent contrast amid the varied landscape of the South Island.

The sound is part of Fiordland National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, which made its appearance (one of many) in *The Hobbit* as the backdrop for the scene when The Company flees the mountain on the backs of eagles. Get a bird's-eye view of the dramatic fiords for yourself aboard a helicopter flight that

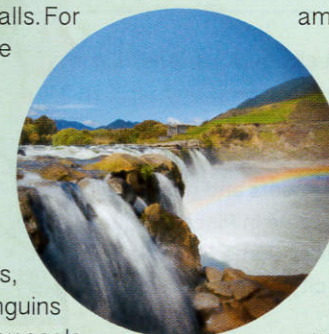


also provides spectacular views of the park's cascading waterfalls. For an even more

grand exploration, kayak or cruise along the water to get up-close with the local wildlife—including three species of dolphins, two species of penguins and New Zealand fur seals.

### Fancy-Free Explorations

Hobbits are rather uncomplicated people, and your vacation through their world should be, too. A cruise around New Zealand is a care-free way to explore middle-earth without



having to worry about carrying your bag(gins) everywhere you go. When you take a AAA Vacations cruise, extra amenities and benefits are included.

AAA Vacations cruises include 24/7 Member Care, Best Price Guarantee and many exclusive amenities.

These amenities, which vary from cruise line to cruise line, could include priority check-in, a complimentary dinner for two and cabin upgrades. With great add-ons like these, cruising with AAA Vacations may be as enchanting as that infamous, precious ring. **T**

IMAGES: ISTOCK



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