

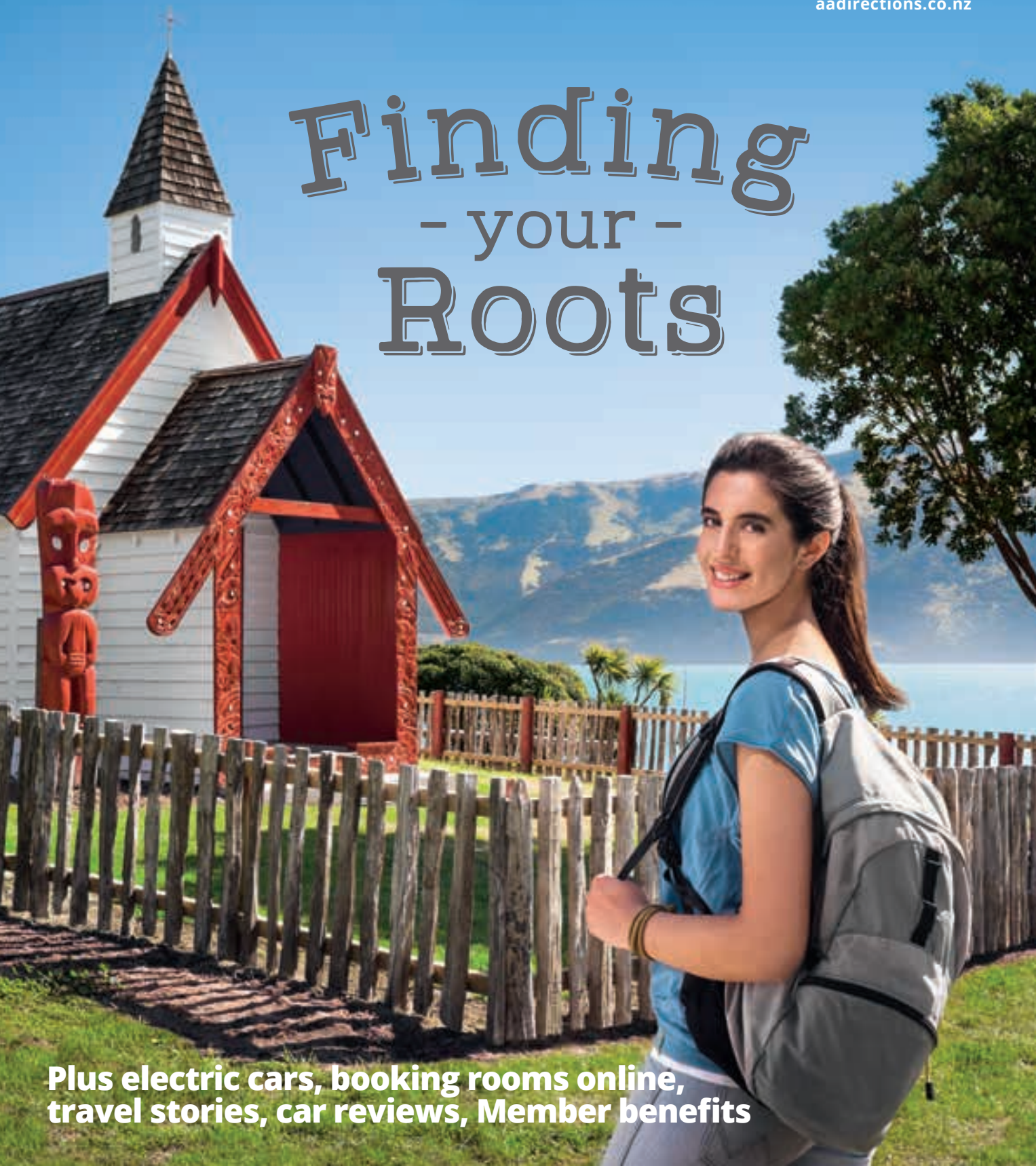


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Dipping into savings, or 'capital investment' as it's commonly referred to, is known as *decumulation*. And unbeknown to some, a home equity loan is much the same concept except instead of dipping into savings, it allows retirees to extract money from their biggest non-income generating investment – their home. Heartland Seniors Finance's Lisa Hatfield regularly talks to seniors about this additional financial choice many never knew they had.

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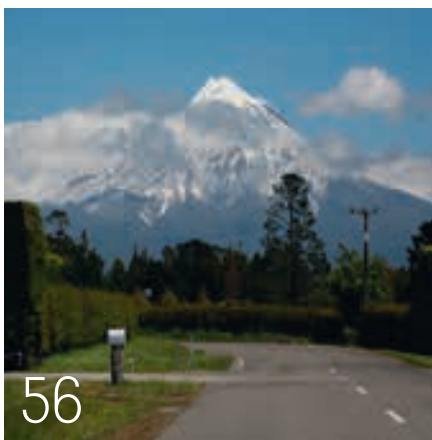
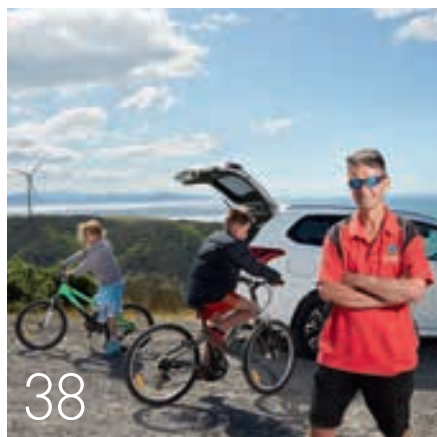
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Accepting the challenge

FOUR YEARS AGO in this column I noted that it seemed we had entered a new era in road safety. This was prompted by the 2011 road toll dropping suddenly from 375 the previous year to 284 – numbers we had not seen since the 1950s. These reductions were sustained for four years reaching a record low of 253 in 2013.

Something was clearly working, but despite the best efforts of the Ministry of Transport and international experts, nobody was able to pinpoint the exact cause of that reduction.

So it was a shock when the 2015 road toll reverted to the sort of levels we had not seen for five years, reaching 320, again seemingly for no reason.

One factor may have been increased traffic.

Low fuel prices, more economic activity and a record three million overseas visitors mean more traffic and where there is more traffic the chance of a mistake becoming a tragedy inevitably increases.

But what is important now, reflecting on the last year, is that we don't get drawn into accepting an increased road toll as a consequence of increased traffic volume. Instead, what we must do is look at last year as a salutary reminder that to keep the road toll reducing more must be done. We must not accept the 2015 toll as the new normal.

What we need is a greater commitment to reducing the road toll every year – even taking factors like increased traffic into account – so that we don't get another 2015. This means making firm commitments to actions

which will deliver year-on-year reductions in the numbers killed and injured on our roads.

If our Association was asked today to recommend four such actions, it would not be too hard to provide them.

For a start, and by far the most significant, would be to install more median barriers on our riskiest and busiest highways to prevent deadly head-on collisions before they happen. Let's get the drunk drivers off our roads by making serious progress with alcohol interlocks. Then, let's make sure that New Zealand drivers are acutely aware of the safety of the vehicles they buy by displaying safety ratings wherever vehicles are sold. And last, but not least, let's take steps to ensure our visiting drivers are kept safe by extending the visiting driver programme from a few tourist routes in the South Island to the whole country.

In citing these four examples we need to acknowledge they will involve some cost. If the objective is to reduce death and serious injury on our roads each year, every year regardless of traffic growth, we cannot expect it to get easier. New initiatives will be needed and there will be a cost. But I suspect it is a cost most people would readily meet.

My hope for the year is that we all buy into this challenge. No one organisation or agency has a monopoly on solutions, but together, with the right commitment and motivations, I believe it is possible to reinvigorate road safety with the sense of urgency that the 2015 toll shows we so clearly need. ■

Brian Gibbons
Chief Executive

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ON THE COVER

Photographer: Dennis Radermacher, Art director: Andre Kini. Model: Nina from NZ Models, Christchurch, who wears Kathmandu and Filigree Fine Jewels. Stylist: Brae Toia. Thank you to Onuku Marae on Banks Peninsula for the location.
See onuku.iwi.nz for marae details and bookings.

hello



Family and history blend in this issue's cover feature, which looks into researching ancestry. It's a fascinating area of interest and, with access to a world of archives online these days, easy to get into. There's nothing like going to a place of personal connection though. Standing in a spot you know your early forebears once stood is poignant and powerful. I recommend it. Other stories in this issue take you travelling, get you thinking, hopefully entertain you, give you insight and remind you that you belong to the best club in the best country.

Kathryn

KATHRYN WEBSTER
EDITOR

CONTRIBUTORS



PETER JAMES QUINN

Photographer and writer Peter is descended from Irish Catholic gold miners who arrived on the West Coast in the 1860s. His grandfather joined the merchant navy in Greymouth, sailing the world aboard the WW1 hospital ship *Maheno* before resettling in the North Island, where Peter was born and raised. The lure of gold runs through Peter's veins; he lives in the former gold-field town of Thames on the Coromandel Peninsula. Peter contributed to our feature on family connections from p.27.



TRACIE HEASMAN

Tracie is a mother of two with a passion for photography. She started her career in wedding photography but has since realised her love of meeting and photographing interesting people and the art they create, whatever medium that may be. Tracie lives in the beautiful, rustic west coast town of Raglan with her family, where the eclectic feel of the beach town fuels her creative juices. She photographed food blogger Emma Galloway on p.10.



JOHN MCCRYSTAL

John, a Wellington-based freelance writer, is an enthusiast for the classic era of motoring – he drives a 1957 Mk II Zephyr – but has also embraced modern motoring. Last year he bought a second-hand electric scooter and proceeded to upgrade the motor, batteries and controller to better cope with the rigours of Wellington's landscape. The scooter, which costs roughly 20c/100 km to run, now climbs Wellington's hills with ease. John and his family put an electric car to the test on p.38.

OPINION POLL

In the summer 2015 issue of *AA Directions* we asked Members:

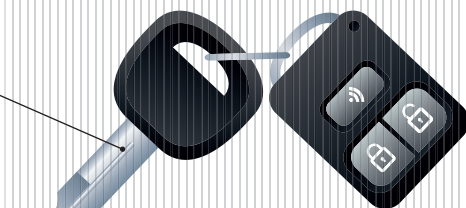
Have you ever driven overseas?

82%

YES

18%

NO



This issue's poll question is:
Would you buy an electric car?
Go to aadirections.co.nz to have your say.

TRICKY TERRITORY

A feature of New Zealand roads that can be a challenge to international drivers is the variety of bends and curves in them. It was something I'd never thought of until I was driving with a Kiwi relative soon after he had returned from living in Canada for 20 years. After driving on streets set out in a grid pattern in a flat city, he had lost the knack of gauging anything that wasn't a straight-forward 90 degree turn.

It really opened my eyes as to how careful and skilled a driver you actually have to be on New Zealand roads. The ability to regularly judge and negotiate curves on roads that are sometimes unpredictable and often, at the same time, going up or down a slope, is something that only comes with experience. It's also a feature of our roads about which international drivers should be strongly reminded.

DELLA KIDD - AUCKLAND

CAR PRICES

You are to be congratulated on a fine and readable magazine. However, one thing I could always rely on was the regular list of cars available in New Zealand and their prices and I could not find them in the last issue. What's going on?

HAMISH CAMERON - TEMUKA

You're right; New Car Price listings are no longer published in AA Directions. The list was getting too long and complex and the prices changed too often for a printed version to be of genuine value. Up-to-date prices are available online; see aa.co.nz/cars

KEEP OFF

While it is terrific that most beaches in this country are in the public domain and not privately owned, why, oh why, are they legal roads?

I can understand in early times the only way to get to some places was along the beach but, in my view, vehicles of any kind and beaches as 'habitats' simply do not mix. If you want to drive a vehicle recreationally, there are better and safer places to so do.

HELEN CAMPBELL - NELSON

NOT IMPRESSED

Driving in Australia recently I was much more impressed with many of their road signs and safety measures than I am at home.

New Zealand prides itself on being a modern nation and yet I am constantly reading of countries, such as the UK and Australia, which are so far ahead of us in taking urgent and stricter measures to implement so many safety issues lacking in our legislation.

BARRY THOMPSON - AUCKLAND

THIS WAY

The painting of arrows on roads to remind visiting drivers to keep left is a great idea, especially when they are coming off one-way bridges. A continuous reminder could be easily achieved by incorporating arrow shapes into the white line along the edge of the road.

MARY JOHNSON - HARURU

SOUTHERN WOES

Interesting to read the Tauranga Eastern link is a world class road (*AA Directions* Summer 2015). It's a shame we can't say the same for any road south of Christchurch! Some roads down here are like driving on corrugated iron; it's a wonder our linkages don't shake loose.

The quality and standard of our road makers are not the same as for the North Island. Why should we in the South Island have to suffer poor quality workmanship?

DAVID SCHOFIELD - WAIMATE

SCENIC STRETCH

My wife and I have lived in Nelson, Invercargill, Bluff, Hastings, Christchurch, Wainuiomata and now Hamilton and we have always enjoyed exploring the surrounding countryside.

All things considered, we reckon the scenic ridgeline along SH3 between Hamilton and Te Awamutu is the best we've driven along. This even beats the Kaikoura Coast drive. The views on either side of the highway are wonderful, stretching to mountains on either side.

There needs to be a rest area and lookout established and the drive needs to be highlighted in tourist information.

MARTIN TOOP - HAMILTON

What do other AA Members reckon are the best short scenic drives in New Zealand?

Join the conversation online. Follow AA New Zealand on Facebook or Twitter @NZAA  

We welcome feedback and views on articles in *AA Directions*, and on any issues affecting motorists. Because of the volume of mail we receive, letters cannot be personally acknowledged. Only a selection can be published and they may be edited or abbreviated for print.

WRITE TO: The Editor, *AA Directions*, PO Box 5, Auckland, 1140 or email editor@aa.co.nz.

Q&A

Internationally-renowned chef and blogger **Emma Galloway** shares the inspirations behind her wholesome masterpieces

What can we expect from your new cookbook, *A Year in my Real Food Kitchen*?

It showcases how I cook and highlights beautiful produce available in different seasons. In a time of all-year-round growing with hydroponics and glasshouses, it's easy to forget that each fruit and vegetable has its own time when it's at its prime, as nature intended. Yes, you can buy a peach in the middle of winter, (a far cry from my childhood memories of peaches eaten in the summer sun with juice dripping down my face...) but if you knew how far that peach had travelled, how much pesticide residue sat on its skin and the amount of radiation it's had, you'd probably step away from it rather quickly!

Who inspires you the most with your cooking?

First and foremost, my parents. When I was growing up, they had a big fruit and vegetable garden in Raglan. They are from the era of

living off the land; that was their main motivation. I call them total hippies. In Raglan there have always been alternative families but we were definitely a minority. My parents grew pretty much all of what we ate and sold any excess produce to the Raglan fruit and veggie store. They would also make veggie boxes for locals who needed food. We had sweet corn, potatoes, strawberries... My siblings and I would sit with Mum and Dad in the garden and feast on raw corn off the cob.

You worked as a chef for eight years before having children. What drove you to create your food blog, *My Darling Lemon Thyme* in 2010?

I borrowed American chef Heidi Swanson's cookbook, *Super Natural Cooking* from the Raglan Public Library and discovered her website, *101 Cookbooks*, which inspired me to start my blog. I didn't know of any other New Zealand food bloggers then. My blog is a place to share gluten-free, vegetarian and real

food recipes, as well as stories and tips on organic gardening. In April 2014, my first cookbook, *My Darling Lemon Thyme: recipes from my real food kitchen* was published with HarperCollins. I wanted my first book to be set out in seasons but didn't want the simple little things, like drinks and breakfasts to get lost, so instead I chose to arrange the recipes by meal times. In it I shared why I eat like this and provided an in-depth look at all the different ingredients that grace my pantry shelves.

What prompted you to lead a gluten- and dairy-free lifestyle?

When my children came along, allergy tests revealed gluten and dairy to be a problem for not only them, but for me as well. My daughter Ada, now 9, wasn't sleeping and would cry in pain. It took us years to pinpoint the problem and we didn't find the culprit until my son Kye was born two years later. When I first changed our diets, it was hard but I wouldn't go back now. »



» Your blog and cookbooks have received international success and you've even had a recipe feature on Oprah's website. What are some of your biggest 'pinch me' moments?

Heidi Swanson, who inspired me to start my blog, listed it as one of her favourites. I ran around the house screaming; I was so excited. Another was winning the Best Original Recipes Category in the 2014 *Saveur Magazine* Best Food Blog Awards.

What's the process of creating a cookbook?

I worked on my new cookbook over six months and love that HarperCollins gave me free range. I take all my own photos and style everything myself. I chug away at home making recipes during the day and edit at night.

In this edition of *AA Directions* we focus on the importance of family ties. You've just moved back to Raglan after five years living in Perth, why did you come home?

You just can't beat the lifestyle here. I'm not a city person. I love how the beach is on our doorstep; we don't have to drive half an hour on a motorway. And I love how the kids can go barefoot. It's home here.

» Emma's cookbook, *A Year in my Real Food Kitchen* is published by HarperCollins and hits bookstores April 1.



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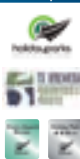
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FOCUS ON HISTORY

A new museum has been built to shed light on a significant moment in New Zealand history.

The Museum of Waitangi is part of a \$14 million redevelopment programme at Waitangi Treaty Grounds and houses permanent and temporary exhibitions telling the stories of Waitangi, from the personal to the political.

Ko Waitangi Tenei: This is Waitangi, is a permanent exhibition that covers important moments from before the signing of the Treaty in 1840 up until today.

Stories will come to life through a collection of taonga, precious artefacts from New Zealand and around the world, and a display of more than 500 images shared by Te Papa, Auckland War Museum, Whanganui Museum and private lenders.

The museum opened in February.

How did they cope?

Being on the frontline was challenging and frightening for soldiers and it was also difficult for loved ones waiting for their return.

Home Front – Experiences of the First World War in New Zealand, an exhibition at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, brings to light the stories of courage, conflict and resilience of Kiwis left behind during that time.

It explores how the experience of loss was felt by those at home in New Zealand.

Friends and families faced uncertainty; would sons, husbands, fathers and brothers survive? When would the war end? Could families make ends meet until the breadwinner returned?

The exhibition is the third in a series of WWI Centenary commemorative exhibitions developed under the theme *He toa taumata rau: Courage has many resting places*. It is on until November 13, 2016 and is free with museum entry.



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NEW ZEALAND



- SMALL TOWN TREASURES - Morrinsville

The construction of major highways means shorter journeys for motorists, but it comes at a cost to settlements now being bypassed. Our new series *Small Town Treasures* puts the spotlight on gems now sitting off the beaten track and highlights why you should stop to stretch your legs...

Moo-ve over sheep: colourful cows are the latest craze in Morrinsville.

The town, nestled between the Kaimai Ranges and the Waikato River, is surrounded by some of the best farmland in New Zealand and has a surprisingly vibrant art scene. Combine the two and you have *Herd of Cows*, a collection of 42 life-size painted sculptures jotted throughout the town that showcase the history and heritage of Morrinsville.

Grab a coffee from one of the township's many cafés, pick up a map from the i-SITE centre and see if you can find them all.

If you're in the mood to enjoy more art, The Wallace Gallery has three large rooms brimming with inspiring and ever-changing New Zealand talent.

You could also stop to smell the roses in the gardens on Moorhouse Street or enjoy a walk along tree-

lined pathways next to the Piako River at the southern edge.

If you're stopping by on a weekend, the Morrinsville Country Market is held on the first Saturday of the month and with fresh produce and creative crafts on offer, it's known by locals as Waikato's best kept secret.

Whatever you get up to, taking a break here will leave you revitalised.

➡ See aa.co.nz/travel for more travel ideas.

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Unrelenting in its ferocity, the Battle of Chunuk Bair brought international respect to the New Zealand contingents which fought there during the Gallipoli Campaign. Battalions from Auckland, Wellington and Otago stemmed the Turkish onslaught with a selfless courage that has come to define our nation. In the Centenary of the Battle of Chunuk Bair, a crown coin has been released to commemorate the New Zealanders who fought during this pivotal battle of the Gallipoli Campaign.

Applications are now open for the crown fully layered with pure 24K gold. It may be yours for just two instalments of \$49.99 or \$99.98 (plus \$9.99 P&H). Only early applicants will have the opportunity to acquire one of the 200 coins minted on the actual Centenary. This offer is likely to attract considerable interest, so please respond now.

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Wherefore art thou?

Aucklanders and visitors are taking a step back in time to experience plays like audiences did in Shakespearean times.

Pop-up Globe, a round, three-storey auditorium, is a replica of Shakespeare's second Globe Theatre in London and is proving a very popular temporary feature in the city.

This year marks the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, creating the perfect excuse for the Pop-up Globe Theatre Company to set up. They have created a special space, with seating for a 900-strong audience completely surrounding the stage. As in the original performances, crowds are encouraged to become fully immersed and responsive: booing, cheering, laughing and being generally rowdy are part of the authentic experience.

Plays including *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet* run throughout March and April.

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Hearing Experts



Mention *Country Calendar* to most people and the TV programme's theme music will pop into their heads. It's familiar because the series has been beaming into Kiwi lounges for 50 years – the longest-running series in the country. To celebrate, Hamilton's Waikato Museum will host an exhibition, opening during NZ National Agricultural Fieldays in June.

In what is described as an 'off-air experience', *Country*

Calendar: 50 Golden Years will reveal life on the farm in a mix of artefacts, video and audio. Central to the show will be stories of genuine land-based people, as they have been for the TV show, and while the emphasis will be on Waikato stories, the exhibition will give an overview of the programme's nation-wide lens.

Country Calendar: 50 Golden Years is at Waikato Museum from 11 June – 28 September, 2016.

An evolving art

As explored in this issue of *AA Directions*, family ties and knowing where you come from are important. Maori carving is a strong element in storytelling and tracing New Zealand history.

A Whakapapa of Tradition: 100 years of Ngati Porou Carving, 1830-1930 sheds light on the evolution of Maori art and explores how traditions begin and why they cease.



Win!

AA Directions has five copies of *A Whakapapa of Tradition* (Auckland University Press, RRP \$69.99) to give away. To enter, send your name and address to: *A Whakapapa of Tradition*, *AA Directions*, PO Box 5, Auckland 1140 or enter online at aadirections.co.nz by May 31, 2016.

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Nana's turn. Triple word score.

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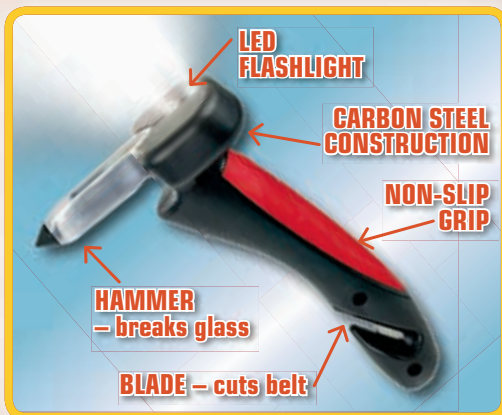
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Safer Cycling

New initiatives are making cycling safer. What do the new markings mean to road users?

Motorists and cyclists are regularly portrayed as being at war on the country's roads. However, in our regular surveys of AA Members, over 17% identify themselves as cyclists; the majority tell us they would like cycling to be encouraged and want more safe cycling facilities to be provided.

The Government is investing in developing safer cycling infrastructure and road users will increasingly see more cycle lanes and specific cycle markings on urban streets.

Cycle lanes and hook turns

Cycle-only road lanes are marked by a cycle symbol. Motorists can't stop or park in a cycle lane, nor drive in or cross a cycle lane except for a maximum of 50m when entering or leaving side roads, driveways or parking spaces. When crossing a cycle lane, motorists must give way to cyclists.

At busy intersections cyclists may turn right using a 'hook turn'. They will go straight ahead in the left lane before stopping on the left side of the road to wait for a gap in the traffic or for the traffic signals to change.

Sharrow markings

Some roads are marked with 'sharrows', a combination of 'shared' lane and 'arrow'. The markings combine chevrons with a cycle symbol and alert drivers to the presence of cyclists where lane sharing is likely.

Advance stop boxes

An advance stop box is a green square with a white cycle symbol at the head of a controlled intersection. These give cyclists a head start when the lights turn green.

Some traffic lights have sensors in the road that trigger the lights. Cyclists can activate these by stopping on diamond-shaped symbols in the stop box.

Motorists should not stop on the green cycle box and should expect cyclists to come through to the front of the queue.

Avoiding 'dooring'

Being 'doored' is a common fear for cyclists. When a car door swings open unexpectedly, a cyclist has two choices: crash or swerve into the lane. Both can have disastrous consequences.

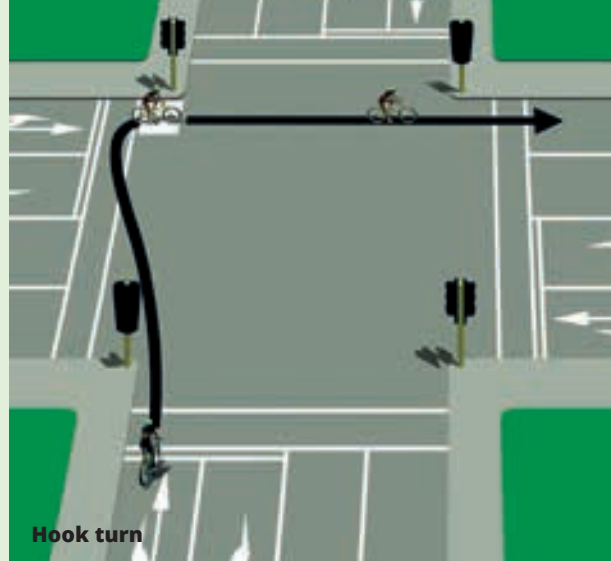
Drivers, when getting out of a parked car, should reach for the door latch with their left hand, forcing them to pivot and widen their peripheral vision.

They should open the door a crack, stop and look behind them (not relying on mirrors) and open fully only when the way is clear.

Cyclists should ride about a metre into the lane, outside the range of an opening door. By 'taking the lane' they are also more visible to other vehicles. Also, they should scan the queue ahead, looking for drivers who have just parked and who are likely to be opening doors.

They should ride predictably, signal clearly, listen for traffic (which they can't do if using headphones) and should move to the left when it is safe to do so.

Drivers, when passing cyclists, need to give them at least one metre clearance.



Hook turn



Sharrow markings



Advance stop boxes



Avoiding 'dooring'



ESCAPE TO



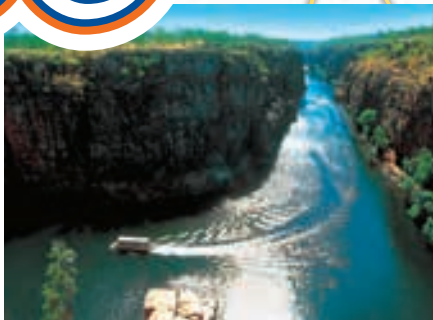
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- Iconic Tilt Train Rail Journey
- 22 meals

Departs 3rd August, 17th August 2016

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- Explore the Blackall Woolscour
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- Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame
- Outback Stockman's Show
- Drover's Sunset Dinner Cruise, Thomson River
- Winton's Age of Dinosaurs Exhibit & Waltzing Matilda Centre
- Qantas Founders Museum & Jet Tour
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- 24 meals



Three Grand Ladies

The Ghan, PS Murray Princess & Indian Pacific

15 Days from \$8290pp AUD twin share

Departs 13th June 2016

- Economy class flights to Darwin and from Perth ex Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide
- 2 nights Darwin, Darwin city sights tour
- Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
- Jumping Crocodile Cruise on the Adelaide River
- 2 nights on the Ghan from Darwin to Adelaide
- Katherine, Nitmiluk Gorge Cruise, Alice Springs
- 3 night cruise aboard the PS Murray Princess
- 3 nights Adelaide, Granite Island Horse Drawn Tram
- Barossa Chateau Art & Antique Gallery
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AUSTRALIA'S WINTER SUN



Lake Eyre Floods

With Coober Pedy, Wilpena Pound and Fleurieu Peninsula. Recent rainfall in South Australia's far north has started to fill Kati-Thanda Lake Eyre, turning dry and dusty plains green with vegetation.

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- Umoona Opal Mine & Museum
- The Breakaways at sunset
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- 1 night William Creek, 1 night Parachilna
- 2 nights Wilpena Pound Resort
- 30 minute scenic flight over The Pound
- Clare Valley
- 3 nights Glenelg
- Barossa Valley
- Jacobs Creek Winery Food & Wine Master Class
- Hahndorf, Mt Lofty Ranges
- Victor Harbor heritage horse-drawn tram journey to Granite Island
- Penguin, Marine and Environmental Centre tour & penguin feeding
- 32 Meals

Departs 6th May, 5th June 2016



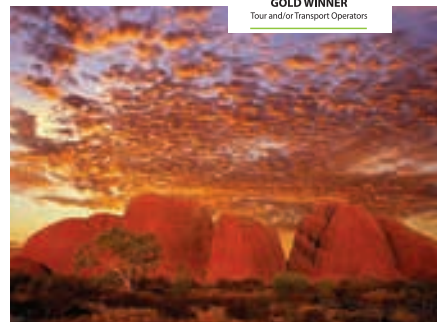
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- Whaling Station Tour
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- 4WD Northern Safari Tour to the Western Beaches, North Point and Cape Moreton
- Sensational Seafood Buffet finale dinner
- 21 Meals

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- 3 nights Alice Springs
- West MacDonnell Ranges
- Standley Chasm, Ormiston Gorge
- Simpsons Gap, School of the Air
- Outback Bush BBQ Dinner
- Outback Telegraph Station
- 1 night Adelaide (Glenelg)
- 33 meals

Departs 18th July 2016

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- 2 nights Karri Valley Resort
- Eagles Heritage Wildlife Centre
- 1 night Margaret River
- Sensational Finale Dinner
- 38 meals



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- Sundowner Drinks at Jetty Hut
- Themed Hawaiian Night
- Humpback Whale Watching Adventure Cruise
- Finale night with dinner and show in the Private Ballroom
- One way Tilt Train Rail Journey to Brisbane
- 14 meals



Finding - your - Roots

WHERE ARE WE FROM? There's a resurgence of interest in genealogy; it inspires study, new connections and travel. Here, we look into how history is kept safe and explore modern ways to trace your ancestry. We search for clues to our own family stories, meet people who found long-forgotten forebears and talk to families who have come home.

Who am I?

THREE OF US, my sisters and I, looked up at an English Oak planted in Christchurch's Riccarton Bush in 1867 by our great-great-grandfather. James Webster worked here, as a forester, having arrived in Lyttelton on the *Cameo* in 1859. He and his wife Catherine spent a few years on the Dean's property, living in the worker's cottage, which is where my great-grandfather was born.

It's still there. We stepped into the cottage, looking for clues, marvelling. This is where one strand of the family tie leads – back to this small house.

Later in the day we drove out to Cust and spent time in the local museum with the extremely helpful local archivist whose family has been in the area for four generations. He lives on the original farm.

Having shown us photos, remnants and records – including my great-great-aunts Bessie's and Kate's signatures on the Women's Suffrage petition for franchise in 1893 – we drove out to where the Webster family had established a farm.

I'd taken a road trip in search of my roots, something that many people do. They take the clues delivered in their family tree search as impetus to go home. For some, that means journeying to England, Ireland, South Africa, Samoa. For others it is enough to take a drive, which is what I chose.

First to Dunedin, where I knew I had family ties as my maternal grandfather was born there. The family has a ceremonial trowel that my great-grandfather was given when he lay the foundation stone of a church. That was about all I knew.

Toitu Otago Settlers Museum was an obvious first stop for me to make. While all museums preserve history, this one keeps the stories of the first ships from Europe, specifically arrivals between 1860 and 1864. Portraits of wealthy settlers line a large gallery; visitors can identify their ancestors and refer to ships' passenger lists at an interactive station. The 1860s was a big decade for Otago with the discovery of gold there in 1861; migrants from the UK and gold-seekers from Australia

poured in.

As well as the records, there are treasures and objects and remnants of early times that bring the history to life. Things from 'home' survived the sea journey, were used in huts, then in basic homes, then more solid homes, passing from hand to hand through generations.

There's also an exhibit replicating the cramped and difficult life on board for steerage passengers, which my ancestors would certainly have been.

It's a trove of photos, maps, diaries, lists, letters, newspapers, directories and online databases that visitors can access for free. Spending time in the archive area costs though, and as I was struggling to know where to start with all this, I elected to drive out to Port Chalmers instead.

At the fascinating, maritime-themed Port Chalmers Museum it was confirmed that forebears on my mother's side came on the *Hindustan* in 1874. Reuben senior, Louisa and two children feature on the passenger list. I stand on the waterfront and imagine their reaction to landing here, from London, after almost four months at sea.

I spared a thought for those early travellers when I drove to Christchurch the next day; six or so hours in a super comfortable Ford Everest. How long would that journey have taken Reuben and Louisa?

In Christchurch, connected with my immediate family, the search switched to the paternal branches of the tree: to Cust, to the house where Dad's father's father was born, and to Lyttelton, where the *Cameo* dropped anchor all that time ago.

In honour of those folk who took such risks, set out for New Zealand to make a new start for their descendants, we walked the Bridle Path over the Port Hill. It's steep and would have been tougher then, in slippery shoes, clambering over from the harbour to the new township, carrying what they could, children in tow. I imagine them marvelling, in broad Scottish accents, how different life would now be for themselves and for those to come.

KATHRYN WEBSTER

Thanks to Dunedin City Ford for use of the Ford Everest

AT 25 YEARS OLD, I know there's a lot of learning ahead of me, but I have a pretty fair idea of my strengths and what I stand for.

Yet I want to take it further, to understand my genetic makeup and to know where I came from. So I spit into a test tube and send it to ancestry.com to decode the DNA in my saliva. I also provide the names of as many family members as I can so the US-based genealogy company can build the basis of my family tree.

Waiting eagerly for my results, I reflect on parts of my background that I do know.

My mum was born and raised in Ngaruawahia, a small town in the Waikato, so I've always assumed I have at least some Maori blood in my veins, especially as she greets everyone with a welcoming "kia ora" followed by a kiss on the cheek.

My father's parents immigrated to Dunedin from Austria in the 1950s before having their two children, so I've known half of me was from that side of the globe.

But I'm astonished at what my results show.

Signing into the ancestry website I click the 'DNA' tab and my heart skips a beat: 51% Scandinavian, 25% Irish, 7% Italian/Greek, 3% Jewish and 3% Iberian Peninsula form the basis of me. Who knew a girl from Hamilton could be so diverse?

Clicking on each country brings up a raft of information about its history and genetic diversity. My imagination runs wild as I picture my ancestors and what life was like for them

Who am I? Continued...

hundreds of years ago.

I click on 'Tischler DNA' under the 'trees' tab. Ancestry.com has put together a list of family members and clicking on each name brings up a timeline of that person's life.

Where they were born, when they married, their children, where they worked and when they died are all listed. It makes for incredible reading. I discover my great-great-grandfather on my mother's side, Alfred Avery, was born in New Zealand in 1870. Despite my strong Scandinavian heritage from my father's side, I feel proud to also come from a family with very strong New Zealand ties.

Now I can begin to find possible living relatives based on my DNA and family tree. My cursor hovers over the 'DNA matches' button... It's surreal knowing there are people out there in far-flung corners of the world who share my bloodline.

There are 19 matches of possible fourth cousins or closer. Clicking on each profile tells me more about their family history and also gives me a confidence rating of very high, high or moderate as to the strength of connection. New matches are indicated so I can keep up to date with possible relations; as more people register, more connections are possible.

To reach out, I can click the green 'send message' button on each profile. It's a fascinating tool to start the journey of understanding who I really am and where I came from. I can't wait to dig deeper.

MONICA TISCHLER

The Tree of Life

"PEOPLE ARE LOOKING for identity," says Ben Mercer, content manager for the world's biggest genealogist company, ancestry.com. "One way to get identity is to look back at your family history. It anchors you."

When New Zealand first went online in the late 90s, genealogy enjoyed a serious resurgence. Rather than having to search through dusty paper archives, the world was at our fingertips – with more and more records digitised and made available via the world-wide web. But it was slow and difficult, and interest declined until recently. Now, fast internet, improved search tools, simpler user interfaces and the power of science is proving an irresistible combo. And it's not only the method of searching that has moved on, the trend mirrors our more connected lifestyles, as Ben explains.

"More and more ancestry is about social context," Ben says. "For a long time it was about people or person or place and time. Now it's much more about social history."

This means that as you discover long-lost aunts, fourth cousins and great-great-grandfathers, you can also quite easily find details about their lives and learn about the era, society and culture in which they lived. Ben says, because of the added layers of information, the process becomes addictive.

"It becomes an obsession, it really does. People start looking for stuff about themselves and end up as social historians. Very often it ends up they'll travel back to where their ancestors came from. That's a very common phenomenon."

He also says, a little surprisingly, the fact that this country is socially young is an advantage for New Zealanders searching for ancestors who immigrated here.

"Young countries like New Zealand really benefit from the record keeping that developed over the last couple of hundred years. As people went from one country to another the record keeping was very good. This allows you to track where people came from, how they travelled, where they travelled, and why they travelled, a whole lot easier."

Alongside the ability to search birth, death, military, education and travel records is technology to identify your DNA.

"The combination of the science of the DNA with archival records is really powerful," Ben says. "You're able to trace back at a molecular level where you come from. With those results, the family trees and the archival records allow you to get a really accurate picture of where you've come from and who you are connected to."

And it's these connections, fascinating and sometimes unexpected, that lie at the heart of people's journeys. You may have no idea who you will uncover as you go deeper into your roots, but whoever pops up, royalty or rogue, you wouldn't be here without them.

KARL PUSCHMANN



ABOVE: Visiting the West Coast cemetery where his great-great-grandfather lies are the writer's daughters and grandson.

ON A GRASSY KNOLL on the flanks of Scandinavian Hill, about a half an hour's drive from Hokitika, sits one of the most tranquil cemeteries I've ever set foot in. Wild flowers swim amongst untended, knee-high grass, birds chirp from surrounding regenerated bush. Crumbling, sombre-grey headstones and rusting wrought iron fences denote the neglected burial plots of the cemetery's residents, lying at rest here untroubled for more than a century.

The twin towns of Stafford and Goldsborough were the scene of a population explosion when gold was first discovered in the Waimea Creek in 1865. Some 5,000 diggers moved into the district, set up camp

in the primeval beech forest and fashioned the two shanty towns in a matter of days. One of those diggers was my great-great-grandfather, John Quinn. He had followed in the footsteps of a brother, who had earlier staked a claim near Piper's Flat and over several months won a fortune on the gold field.

John wasn't so lucky, succumbing to a common miner's ailment, the lung disease known as 'miner's phthisis' or silicosis, after years of inhaling abrasive dust. He was dead by the age of 43, leaving behind a wife, Margaret, and seven children. They buried him in the Catholic section of the Stafford cemetery, amongst the Kellys and Fitzgeralds, in the spring of 1877.

His brother, Patrick Quinn of Arahura, is recorded as the informant on his death certificate.

Soon after, residents of both gold towns upped sticks and moved on, leaving their dead behind and this cemetery, the oldest on the West Coast, is one of the few vestiges from that period. Now it sits overlooking bucolic pastoral land, showing little evidence this valley once boasted 17 stores, 37 hotels, a school, a court house, a police station and four churches. All of that is long gone.

So, too, was the memory of my ancestor, entombed in an unmarked grave in long forgotten surroundings. Then, a few years ago, I made a random search of the Quinn family name on the National Library's

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website, *Papers Past*. The site has a keyword-searchable digitised version of more than four million pages of New Zealand newspapers and periodicals dating back to 1839. The resulting discovery threw up a not uncommon listing on the pages of the *West Coast Times* in 1896 for the renewal of a hotel liquor licence, by the widow of Patrick Quinn. That led me to inquire, with the Hokitika Museum, after the pub and its owners.

The museum offers a research service for historians and genealogists and one of the archivists instantly recalled seeing a booklet in their reference library on the history of a Quinn family, written by a descendant of Patrick and his

wife Annie. They even supplied a contact for the author, living in Wellington.

Through him, I was able to discover that Patrick had an older brother, John, and was also provided contact for another relative who had been tracing the family line on the *Family Search* website, run by The Church of Latter Day Saints. That's when the benefit of a community of genealogy sleuths became apparent, and a treasure chest of otherwise obfuscated historical records and facts about the Quinns was made known to me, including a family tree dating back to the patriarchal ancestors in Tipperary, Ireland.

This summer, I returned to that

peaceful west coast setting with my own children and grandson and pointed out for them the spot denoted on the Stafford cemetery records, held by the museum, where John Quinn was interred. For some, it may seem a frivolous exercise, searching, often fruitlessly, for traces of a distant lineage. But I can attest that knowing something of one's family story can also provide a valuable context for your own life journey. I'd also like to think that long after I'm gone, other descendants might trouble themselves to inquire a little about where I, their ancestor, may have fitted in their own past.

PETER JAMES QUINN

Treasure —TROVE—



THAMES LOCAL, Nicole Thorburn is the current intern at The Treasury, overseeing projects that include cataloguing the collection records for an online database.

She's joined at the old Carnegie Library Building by around 40 volunteers, who spend their days indexing, cataloguing and preparing records for the collection, which includes fumigating and meticulously cleaning boxes of dusty books and more than five tons of newspapers, as well as helping visitors locate material in the archives.

The Coromandel Heritage Trust took over the lease on the 100-year-old building in 2007, as a home was needed for the growing collection of records offered by families and organisations from around the district. Once the collection was safely settled into the upgraded building, fundraising began to construct a \$1.1 million modern, climate-controlled facility next door to house the most fragile material.

"The great thing about The Treasury," Nicole says, "is that it was started by the local community and it's still run by the local community, telling the community's own stories."

PETER JAMES QUINN

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— coming home —

IN A SHELTERED BAY on the south-eastern corner of Lake Taupo is the settlement of Hapete. Here is where Ariki Hamilton and his partner Meriana Morehu have returned to raise their children: five-year-old Ngaio, one-year-old Bella and another baby on the way.

Until recently the couple lived in Australia, where Ariki gained experience cooking in restaurant kitchens.

Then, after five years of city hustle, they decided to return and settle on Meriana's ancestral land at Hapete,

surrounded by her extended family in the papa kainga, the Maori term for village, which literally means 'a nurturing place to return to'.

As both Ariki and Meriana are the offspring of teacher parents, they were educated in Kohanga and Kura Kaupapa schools and are fluent in Te Reo, something they hold dear for their own children.

"We always planned to come back when Ngaio turned five so he could attend the school Meriana's mum, Colleen, started many years ago," Ariki says.

With his new position as head chef at Taupo hotel Roses on Robert, he has introduced native flavours, such as pork and puha, to complement the restaurant's traditional cuisine, which is proving popular. The move home seems to have been the right one for everyone.

"It's a dream to have our kids grow up like this, amongst their cousins, out in the country like we did."

PETER JAMES QUINN

BELOW: At home on the shore of Lake Taupo are Ariki Hamilton, Meriana Morehu and their children Ngaio and Bella.





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My grandma kept her home spotless, her cooking couldn't be beaten and even in her 80s her complexion was that of someone 30 years younger. Grandad had the best garden for miles around, he was able to fix just about anything with bits and bobs from the garage and they both lived well into their 90s with hardly an illness to their name. They used traditional simple tips and tricks that had been passed down the generations. Many of these tips and tricks have been lost, so that's why I've compiled all my grandparents tips plus more in *The Traditional Household Handbook*. Here are a few tips from the book:

- Make your toilet bowl sparkle with coke!
- See how your milkman can help protect your leather furniture
- Check out this great method for getting rid of shirt collar grime
- Draw on the power of this everyday object for smooth running zips
- Bring your china up like new with something that you use every day and watch as stains disappear
- Restore that 'brand new' shine to pots and pans, they will be as good as new
- Clean grime and grease from your oven – without the elbow grease
- Banish smells from shoes with baking soda, it's true!
- Colours running in the wash? Turn to chapter 2 for top washday wonders



- Restore the gleam to your bath with old net curtains
- No more stubborn stains and odours in your microwave – here's how to get rid of them easily
- Banish the headache of dull whites with an aspirin
- Unclog the toughest drains in a jiffy
- Discover how to remove stubborn stains from clothing, carpets and upholstery
- Find out how hairspray can make your lino look like new
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- Use this everyday vegetable to soothe sunburn
- A golden secret that will help you keep the urge for a tippie at bay
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- Soothe arthritic pain with this ingredient added to your bath
- Kill nicotine cravings with this creamy concoction
- This yellow fruit is great for anyone with a nervous disposition

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- Soothe tired, sore feet with this pepper in your socks
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- Sharpen blunt scissors with this quick, kitchen-shelf solution
- Increase energy efficiency in your home with these amazing tips
- Here's a tip for the silkiest and sweetest of complexions
- Banish puffy ankles with this kitchen cupboard ingredient
- Take a leaf from this book to improve the flavour of fish
- Add this to a turkey dish for a guaranteed taste sensation
- Keep wasps at bay with this excellent gardener's trick
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Ancestral —CONNECTIONS—



THE MEETING HOUSE Nga Tau e Waru at Te Ore Ore Marae just east of Masterton celebrated its centenary in 1980. When Goldie and Mary Potangaroa shared the significance of that anniversary with their grandson Robin they planted a seed that would change his life.

"When I went home for school holidays my grandparents often spoke of a family ancestor, Poara Potangaroa, who had gathered his people together to build the original meeting house in the mid-1870s and who also made a number of prophecies," Robin says.

When Goldie passed away in 1989 Robin realised that the opportunity to learn more about ancestors like Poara was diminishing.

"I saw that in terms of knowing about our family history and whakapapa we were pretty

desolate. So I returned to spend time with my grandmother Mary as often as I could to listen to and record our family, marae, hapu and tribal history."

Mary shared with her grandson the importance of whakapapa and how that created connections to other families.

Little did Robin realise at the time that these conversations would lead him to take on a role as a treaty negotiator and trustee for Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa ki Tamaki nui a Rua which encompasses the Wairarapa and Tararua districts.

Learning of the importance of his ancestor's contribution to tribal history has been not only enlightening, but rewarding as he explains.

"Poara Potangaroa had chiefly connections to both Ngāti

Kahungunu and Rangitane iwi within the Wairarapa district and was recognised from the early 1860s as a prophet and leader. As we learn more about his prophecies we get a better sense of what he was attempting to encourage in relation to our rights as a people.

"I think learning about someone like our ancestor Poara means we have to re-engage with our whanau marae and the ability to do that has become more important as we emerge from a treaty settlement environment. For myself I see that outcome as a fulfilment of his prophecy."

AMOKURA PANAHO

ABOVE: Robin Potangaroa learned his family's history by spending time at his marae near Masterton.

-Rich-connections

IN THE GORGE of the Arrow River, under the tunnel of willow trees and only minutes from Arrowtown, a gold dredge floats tethered in the swift current, a cross between a boat and a giant vacuum cleaner. Its twin motors are purring steadily, and two men in wetsuits are working the nozzle, moving the rocks, vacuuming the crevasses in the river bottom.

The Arrow, together with the nearby Shotover, once had the reputation of being among the richest gold-bearing rivers in the world. There is still plenty of gold to be found here, and so the two men work at a brisk pace and with palpable excitement. From the riverbank Tony Sew Hoy watches his friends with a bemused smile. It is his gold claim, but a busy medical practice has long since relegated his lifelong fascination with gold to a weekend hobby.

"Gold fever is a powerful force," he says. "You want to be careful with what it does to you. It can bring out the greed and secrecy, corrupt your ethics and morals. Or you can use it as a force for good and share the excitement, the adventure and the findings with your friends."



PHOTOGRAPHY: DEREK GRZELEWSKI

It's a healthy attitude, considering Tony's almost genetic predisposition to the allure of gold. His great-grandfather, Choie (Charles) Sew Hoy, was one of the early Chinese gold-mining merchants in Otago and a successful pioneer of gold dredging. Unlike the majority of his countrymen, he did not return home with his fortune but naturalised into the New Zealand society.

Tony's father, too, was a passionate gold prospector. "When I was a child, all our holidays were spent fossicking for gold," Tony says. "We never went anywhere without a gold-panning dish, a pick and a shovel."

Naturally, entering the workforce, he was attracted to small-scale gold dredging and later to prospecting with a metal detector, as they offered

reasonable returns, an element of travel and adventure, as well as the freedom of self-employment.

"For a while it was good going and a lot of fun but the truth is gold dredging is brutally demanding work," he says. "You're in cold water all day, diving, moving big rocks and heavy gear. And at some point my body just started to give up."

A search for treatment to his ailments led him to osteopathy, which resulted in him becoming a health practitioner in Arrowtown.

After demanding days at the clinic, he still picks up his high-tech metal detector and heads for the hills and rivers to refresh and rejuvenate and have an adventure hunting for the elusive nuggets.

"I've detected a lot in the Australian

outback and loved the place, but every time I come back to the Southern Alps, see the skylines, walk the rivers, smell the wet tussock after a rain, I know I'm home," he says.

"If gold is the perfect superconductor then through it my connection with this place is especially strong."

DEREK GRZELEWSKI

HOMEWORK: If you're inspired to delve into your own family history, talk to elderly relatives, visit local museums and archive centres and consider signing up to ancestry.com. Once you have some clues, travel to where it all began for you.

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Travel costs

How we book accommodation is changing; **Monica Tischler** reveals the issues behind it



IN A WORLD where almost anything can be purchased online, it makes sense to seek help from Google to book a place to stay while on holiday.

Typing your destination into the search engine will bring up a raft of accommodation options; many boasting the best rates available. It's likely the sites offering attractive details and popping up first on the search engine are for online travel agents (OTAs) based overseas.

It's a modern and convenient approach for the consumer, but the AA estimates close to \$140 million a year is being sent offshore to OTAs by New Zealanders booking accommodation online.

Motel and hotel owners also have issues with advertising through an international medium due to increased commission rates and money being fed into buying advertising priority on Google.

A Whitianga motel owner, who

wishes to be anonymous, has experienced the issues first-hand.

He jumped on board with an OTA two years ago and says the rate parity clause in the booking contract is unfair.

The clause means accommodation owners must advertise rooms on their own website at the same price listed by the OTA, which is bumped up because of added commissions.

"For example, a studio unit at my motel was initially listed on my website for \$115 a night," he explains.

"On the OTA site, it's listed as \$129, which includes the 15% commission placed on it."

This motel owner chose to increase room rates in order to maintain the same profit, while other businesses may opt to keep room prices the same and absorb the commission rates themselves.

But because he's being forced by the rate parity clause to advertise that rate too, it becomes inflated.

"I'm being murdered by lifting the rates. Suddenly people are thinking 'that's too expensive for a room' and they're right, it is. My 1970s motel is good, clean and tidy. But with increased rates, people look at it and think it's very expensive for what it is.

It's put into another league and people aren't happy. I wouldn't be either."

The OTA model began in the 1990s when it took a commission of no more than 10% from hotels and motels. It was worthwhile selling rooms through this medium and a good relationship was formed between the accommodation provider, the OTA and guests. But over the years commission rates have crept higher.

It's money that could be fed into other business areas, like staff wages, the motel owner says.

"My cleaners come in and do a wonderful job for \$16 an hour. I'd love to pay them more but can't because so much of my money is going into the extra commission."

One of the biggest OTAs is Amsterdam-based Booking.com with more than 3,000 New Zealand properties and more than 850,000 world-wide accommodation providers listed on its site.

Area manager of Booking.com New Zealand Tracey Foxall says the rate parity clause benefits all parties involved and is fair to hotels as "they don't need to worry about us competing for better prices directly with customers.

"Most importantly we believe rate

parity is fair to the consumer who does not have to worry about missing out on a better deal on another site," she says. "Parity ensures that we can continue to give our customers the best possible prices through a service they love, as well as continue to help our hotel partners fill their rooms and grow their businesses."

Ms Foxall says Booking.com takes a commission of between 12 and 15% and receives the money once a room has been stayed in and paid for.

"The commission is what supports our business model and allows us to continue to keep the content on our sites fresh and globally relevant.

"We invest heavily in optimising our website and mobile apps to meet customers' ever-changing needs, so properties can rely on our expertise

"Why should someone overseas be clipping the ticket?"

as a highly efficient digital marketing channel. We give small, local accommodation providers such as a bed and breakfast in Russell access to the world, a global reach otherwise impossible for many properties that may not have large advertising budgets, through the most innovative digital distribution channels," Ms Foxall says.

Heritage Hotels General Manager of Sales and Marketing Tony Howlett says although OTAs offer international exposure, it puts the money from commissions into improving its own position on Google search.

"We're bidding on our own name (in online searches) and it costs us more to advertise because OTAs are directly competing with us."

Mr Howlett says Heritage Hotels is focused on driving direct reservations on its website. It also advertises rooms on radio and the AA Traveller website. He says hotels and motels need to come together and look into ways to restrict the control OTAs have on local business.

"We're not an international brand, the exposure is important to us.

"We have to work with OTAs as they play an important part in our business, but it's about regaining control. Where does it stop? What's there to regulate how much an OTA can charge?"

Director of New Zealand Chambers of Commerce Michael Barnett agrees that motels and hotels need to regain control of their "own destinies" before businesses in the tourism sector become "unsustainable."

Mr Barnett is also a member of the Grow Rotorua Board and says although online booking technology has helped boost local tourism, it's also having detrimental effects.

"The leakage overseas of an excessive amount of commission means local businesses, especially painters, plumbers, electricians and furniture shop owners miss out on work to improve properties. The opportunity to invest in employment areas like staff training and better pay is also being held back," he says.

He'd like to see a system of more direct bookings via the motel or hotel and OTAs charging fairer fees as well as signing up to the New Zealand tax system. "Otherwise this problem will continue to plague the industry, not just in Rotorua but nationally and with significant flow-on impact to our tax system," he says.

AA Travel and Tourism General Manager Grant Lilly says each year close to \$140 million is being sent offshore to OTAs.

"Why should someone overseas be clipping the ticket and taking money out of the country?"

Mr Lilly says the AA Traveller website aims to represent a loyal, reliable channel for customers to book accommodation.

"We have a commission rate of 10% or nothing if businesses advertise with us enough, and everything we are paid stays in the country. We hope people will consider booking local and think twice before feeding a global enterprise." ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

See aa.co.nz/travel to book online accommodation.

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New Zealand Government



Motoring



Wheel love

Fashion designer **Annah Stretton** and her Mercedes ML350

I've had this Mercedes for two years. I love driving it. It's a really nice fit and does everything I need. I can use it as a shopping basket around town and also for big trips, which I do a lot of for work. I enjoy the trip over to the Coromandel from Morrisonville where our head office is. There's a lot of easy driving and then you get into the hills as you climb over into Tairua and up into Hahei, and I love that variety. Because my one has the AMG running gear, it's visually attractive too, and that is important given that I'm in the fashion industry. I've always been a fan of Mercedes and four-wheel drives. I can't imagine myself in a car at all. 🚗

PRESS THE 'POWER' BUTTON and you don't hear a thing. The dash lights up with all kinds of messages, but there's no whirring starter motor, and no engine noise at all. And when you put it in gear and push the accelerator, all you hear is a loud, rising whine. That's the kids in the back. The noise of the car's electric motor is all but inaudible.

I've borrowed a Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV, one of four Plug-in

Hybrid Electric Vehicles currently on the New Zealand market. We're only a few kilometres into our trip, and I already like it. A lot.

We hit the motorway at Johnsonville and accelerate to open road speed, and still the only noise from under the bonnet is a subdued hum. Apart from the wind passing over the sleek bodywork and the distant, muffled rumble and thud of the rubber on the road, the car itself is utterly silent. And now that we've finally got the

app that allows the iPad to talk to the on-board entertainment system up and running and the talking book is reading Harry Potter for us, the kids are silent, too. Suddenly Taupo doesn't look so far away.

Kiwis are relatively accustomed to hybrid vehicles such as Toyota's Prius and Camry Hybrid, and the hybrid version of the Honda Civic. Hybrids have an electric motor and a petrol-fuelled internal combustion engine (they're a cross between, or



hybrid of, two engine technologies). At low speeds, the electric motor does the honours. At higher speeds, or when more power is required, the petrol motor kicks in. The electric motor is there to make the operation of the car more efficient: the petrol motor isn't required for much of what you do with a car in urban traffic – idling at the lights, stop-start, low-speed movement in heavy traffic. A lot of what the petrol motor does in the urban context is charge

the battery. And when you're going down a hill or coasting to a stop, the electric motor changes mode and acts as a generator, slowing the car down and recharging the battery in a process known as 'regenerative braking', thus capturing the energy that would otherwise have been dispersed from conventional brakes as heat.

Plug-in hybrids like the Outlander take the hybrid concept a step further. The electric motor – there are

actually two – is capable of driving the car at higher speeds with no help from the petrol motor. And instead of charging exclusively from the petrol engine, the batteries can be charged from an external source – in the Outlander's case, a charging unit that plugs straight into the standard power point in my garage.

The instrument panel as we reach Plimmerton tells me we have only five kilometres of electric range left. If I were driving the other »

Plugged in

John McCrystal and family trial an electric car



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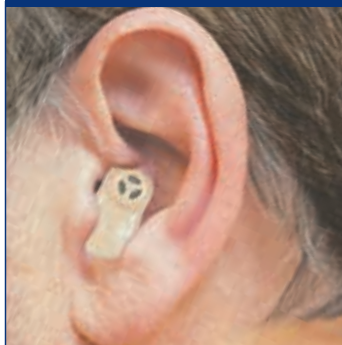
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kind of electric car on the market, a BEV (a Battery Electric Vehicle, like the Nissan Leaf), my palms would be sweaty by now, because the limitation of a battery electric vehicle is that once its batteries are depleted, it won't go again until it's been recharged. The Plug-in Hybrid is designed to soothe what the industry calls 'range anxiety'.

Once the critical moment comes just north of Plimmerton, there is an all-but-imperceptible shudder and suddenly we're not much cleaner or greener than any other late model car on the road. We're running on petrol, but at least we're going to make it to Taupo.

"The technology exists to fully charge a car like the Outlander in just 20 minutes..."

The next day though, I get a first-hand experience of range anxiety. After recharging overnight, the car is boldly telling me we're good to go a couple of hundred kilometres on a combination of electricity and petrol. So I snub the petrol stations we pass on the way to Whakapapa. It's only as I start the car in the ski field carpark (mmm, heated seating!) for the return journey that I begin to wonder if this was wise. And here I am on the wrong side of the Pihanga Saddle, ten kilometres from Turangi, with the car suddenly not so sanguine about going six. You see, it busily does on-the-fly calculations of the range that its remaining energy resources can yield based on the way you're driving. What's good for a couple of hundred kilometres as you're cruising along on the flat is suddenly only 75kms as you labour up a hill. Luckily, with a bit of regeneration downhill, we've got some electricity back in the bank and it looks like we'll make it. Still,

as the display shows not only the image of an electric plug, but also that of a petrol bowser and the stark imperative 'refuel', I'm very nervous.

We make it, and it only costs \$60 to fill; 450km is a lot of motoring on 30 litres of petrol. But I resolve not to cut it so fine in future.

Speaking of the future, it's expected that in a few years' time, you'll be able to plug your car in at a service station as well as (even instead of) putting petrol into it. The technology exists to fully charge a car like the Outlander in just 20 minutes – a cup of coffee, a chance for the kids to stretch their legs. Long-range, purely electric motoring promises to be stop-start, but also leisurely. It's quite an appealing prospect.

It's when we get home and back into our daily round that the PHEV concept really proves itself to me: Monday, drop kids to school because it's raining (1.5km), collect them, drive to gym, do shopping (41km); Tuesday, deliver Hugh to playdate and collect (3km); Wednesday, deliver Nell to playdate and collect (5km); Thursday, kids' tennis, cricket, then my own night class over in Petone (38km); Saturday, cricket for Hugh, playdate for Nell (26km); Sunday, hockey for me (17km). That's 131.5km for the week, an average of 19km per day – a little less than the daily average of 28km for the average urban Kiwi driver. In all that time, because I was able to charge the car between trips, I didn't use a drop of petrol. And since the car uses only around 10 kW/h to recharge from zero, it only cost about \$3.00 for the whole week's running around.

As I start my own car after regretfully handing the Outlander back, I wince at the crude whirr of the starter motor and the flutter of that dirty old internal combustion engine. And as I draw away from the kerb, there's a loud, rising whine from the back.

"Daa-aad. We want the white car back." 🚗



Green and clean

It was commuting daily from his Lower Hutt home to work in Wellington's CBD by bicycle that first got Sigurd Magnusson thinking about cleaner vehicle technologies. His route ran alongside the congested Hutt motorway and the air quality, he reckons, was 'pretty gross'. Then he discovered it was possible to import a used, first generation Nissan Leaf from Japan for under \$25,000.

A couple of months later, he owned a 2011 model in metallic red with 9,000km on the clock.

The most impressive quality of the Leaf, he says, is the smooth, quiet drive. Under 15km/h, there is a sort of a whirring — an artificial noise designed to warn pedestrians and cyclists of the approach of the car. You can flick a switch and turn this off, and at higher speeds it drops out anyway, and apart from road noise, the Leaf is silent.

Sigurd has three small children, and the Leaf will accommodate all five Magnussons around town. The family uses their other vehicle to go further afield, although Sigurd recently took the Leaf over the Rimutaka hill from Wellington. While it performed brilliantly — all that torque makes it an excellent hill climber — he paid \$2.00 to the owners of a campground in Featherston to top up the battery to be sure the return trip was free of anxiety.

At home, the Leaf plugs into an extension cord and costs around 95 cents to recharge overnight.

Sigurd has become something of an evangelist for the Leaf and for EV technology generally. He has made three videos on electric vehicles which can be seen at electricheaven.nz.

He's also involved in a rally from Cape Reinga to Bluff, in April, promoting the use of EVs. See facebook.com/LeadingTheChange for details.



Seeing stars? ... How many?



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The EV road map

Mark Stockdale looks into how electric vehicles are suited to our roads

MANY CAR MANUFACTURERS ARE NOW adding 'plug-in' models to their product range. New Zealand has a high level of renewable electricity which makes it an ideal candidate for the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs). That is certainly the view of proponents, including the Minister of Transport, Hon. Simon Bridges.

"These vehicles are ideally suited for New Zealand because we have relatively low average commute distances and plentiful renewable electricity sources. In addition, our 240 volt electricity network and high levels of off-street parking help make it easy for people to charge vehicles at home," Mr Bridges says.

The Ministry for the Environment estimates that approximately 12% of New Zealand's total annual greenhouse gas emissions come from light vehicles, with another eight per cent from trucks, buses and trains. So, if it were possible to envisage the majority of cars on our roads being electric, New Zealand might be able to cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 12%, while reductions in heavy vehicle emissions could come from greater use of biodiesel, or hydrogen.

But that's a big ask, with just over 1,000 electric vehicles currently on our roads, out of a total light vehicle fleet of some 3.5 million (including motorcycles) and climbing. With an average age of 14.6 years and a turnover of just six per cent, it's going to be a long time before electric vehicles become commonplace.

Even if 20% of all new cars sold annually were electric, they might only comprise a third of the total fleet by 2040. That's why Drive Electric, a lobby group established to accelerate the uptake of EVs, promotes buying cheaper, used-import electric cars. Like the Minister, Drive Electric's chair, Mark Gilbert, believes New Zealand is ideally suited for transforming our fleet to electric.

"Why do we keep importing up to \$8 billion of crude oil every year to manufacture fuel when we've got lakes full of fuel that we don't use? We can use our own home-made fuel, delivered to the door; you go to bed and wake up in the morning and your car's full."

Norway is often held up as an example for New Zealand to emulate. Its population and fleet size is similar to ours, yet there are 75,000 EVs in Norway, which comprise 20% of new car sales. While this is partly due to government subsidies, nearby Denmark, with a similar population, has a fleet of only 5,000 electric vehicles, even though its subsidies are even more generous.

It's surmised that Norway's uptake is not solely due to subsidies, but rather a co-ordinated approach. "They've got an aligned programme, from government down through

business down to community level, where they've driven the desire to own electric vehicles," Mr Gilbert says.

Currently, the only incentive in New Zealand is an exemption from Road User Charges until 2020, which saves about \$744 a year for an EV travelling 12,000km. While Drive Electric doesn't expect the government to offer subsidies like other countries, Mr Gilbert suggests incentives could include permitting EVs to use bus lanes and T2 or T3 lanes, preferential parking, and possibly 'feebates' which are a type of subsidy funded from taxes on 'gas guzzlers'. The Green Party has also proposed to exempt EVs from Fringe Benefit Tax.

Minister Bridges has asked officials to investigate what can be done to increase the uptake of EVs. Factors that stand in the way include ownership costs, 'range anxiety', access to servicing, concerns about battery life, replacement cost and disposal, and the compatibility of charging systems.

Working with industry, including electricity suppliers and vehicle importers, and local government, the goal is to develop an EV 'road map' which could include co-ordinating the development of charging infrastructure, and a publicity campaign to increase awareness and address misconceptions about EVs.

Already, a number of industry-led initiatives are under way. The Electricity Networks Association is planning a national charging network, including fast chargers that can almost fully recharge in 20 minutes, while other organisations like Charge.Net.NZ are building their own network of charging stations across the country. They're necessary to enable non-hybrid (or 'pure') electric cars to travel longer distances. While some models have a maximum range on a full charge of just over 100km (although the Tesla can travel over 400km), the average daily commute in New Zealand is just 28km.

To help address concerns about the initial purchase cost – the cheapest electric car, a Nissan Leaf, retails for \$40,000 new – the Energy Efficiency & Conservation Authority (EECA) has developed an online cost of ownership tool comparing the overall cost of electric cars with conventional vehicles. It shows that in the first three years, the same Nissan Leaf costs less to own than a comparable Toyota Corolla GX which retails for \$5000 less, thanks to electricity costs equivalent to 30c a litre.

So, already new – and used – electric cars are becoming price competitive with conventional cars. While some will make the choice to buy one on hard economics, for others it will be on environmental grounds. Either way, the stars are aligned for EVs to prosper in New Zealand, and with growing political and industry will, the time of the electric car may be sooner than we think.

driveelectric.org.nz

MORE INFORMATION

Call the AA for pre-purchase inspections, servicing and roadside assistance. See aa.co.nz for more.

AA

CAR OF THE YEAR

Stella Stocks, AA Motoring Services General Manager, talks us through the winners of the 2015 COTY awards

CAR OF THE YEAR OVERALL WINNER 2015

BMW i3

For starters, the BMW i3 electric vehicle (EV) is a funky little car. It performs very well and is a good all-rounder. BMW designed it completely from scratch, instead of adapting it from a previous vehicle, and it shows. The i3 does a lot of things well.

With a range of 150kms, which is reasonable for an EV, it's a great little car for everyday use. It combines good range with the luxury BMW is known for.

It will be interesting to see how the market adapts to the new wave of EVs. Their profile has raised considerably, especially with this win, and the infrastructure for them is starting to grow, which is a key factor for their success. I've seen it myself with charging stations beginning to pop up at Auckland's shopping centres. You can park and charge your car while you do your shopping.

But the biggest consideration for me is where the i3 sat in the safety ratings. In a small car versus big car situation physics take over, so safety is absolutely critical with smaller cars. The i3 has a 5 Star ANCAP safety rating, which was very important to us.

The BMW i3 ticks a lot of boxes and is a worthy winner of Car of the Year.

CAR OF THE YEAR SAFEST CAR 2015

Hyundai Genesis and Volvo XC90

For the first time ever we gave two awards for Safest Car. And that's because these two cars really were inseparable, both earning 5 star safety ratings.

However, with this award it's not so much about those 5 stars, it is more about the detailing around the 5 stars. We really examined their scoring sheets to determine how close to the 5 stars they got during their safety assessments.

This year we began transitioning to a new rating system which integrates the ANCAP rating system with the Euro NCAP protocols. This made judging this category challenging, as we were looking at the ratings from both systems. We expect to finish the transition in 2018.

Under the new regime, the safety ratings will step up and be harder to achieve. It is feasible that a 5 star rating in 2014 will now be a 4 star rating under the new regime. You could say it's the goalposts moving, but they're moving to make cars safer.

Previously the emphasis was on how safe you'd be in a crash. Moving forward, the focus will be on preventing the crash from happening in the first place.

In the eyes of the AA, the Car of the Year Safety Award sits right up there beside the overall winner. We consider it to be equally as important.



LEFT: The unique styling of the BMW i3;
ABOVE: Joint Safest Car Award winners the Hyundai Genesis and the Volvo XC90.

BEST IN CLASS WINNERS

Judges Notes

COMPACT CAR: "A unique approach to new technology. Not only a great ride but also one of the most head-turning cars ever."

BMW i3

SMALL CAR: "Has safety features often found in premium brands but also cutting edge design."

Mazda 2

MEDIUM/LARGE CAR: "Exemplifies how style and performance can combine."

Mercedes-Benz C-Class

LUXURY CAR: "A standout in the ANCAP safety ratings and full of luxury features."

Hyundai Genesis

**SMALL SUV/
CROSSOVER:** "Standout styling; modern efficiency and safety technologies and notable interior finish quality."

Mazda CX-3

MEDIUM SUV: "Combines a sturdy off-roader with a city slicker."

Hyundai Tucson

LARGE SUV: "Superior refinement and ride comfort."

Hyundai Santa Fe

LUXURY SUV: "An incredible amount of high technology, with superb safety and class-leading design."

Volvo XC90

**SPORTS
PERFORMANCE:** "Combines a track-ready performance vehicle with luxury and comfort."

Mercedes AMG C 63

UTILITY: "Combines work horse ability with the comforts of a passenger car and ease of use."

Ford Ranger

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE: Over a month, the public had a chance to select their favourite out of the Top 10 Car of the Year finalists. Almost 35,000 people cast a vote, with the most going to Hyundai Tucson.

Hyundai Tucson

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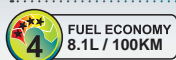
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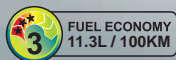
Hyundai Tucson



Jaguar XE



Holden VXR



HOLDEN INSIGNIA VXR

The VXR is Holden's first Turbocharged European AWD performance sedan. Boasting three Holden firsts, the VXR has Adaptive Cruise Control, Lane Change Alert, and Auto Emergency Braking. It's powered by a 2.8 litre turbocharged V6 engine coupled with a six-speed automatic transmission. The nifty VXR mode allows the driver to customise performance features such as accelerator and gear change response, sport steering, suspension and a greater rear bias AWD setting. The German engineered VXR is great if you like European style but want the Holden badge. Priced at \$69,990 for the 239kW, 2.8Ltr V6 Turbo.

Good: Stunning, sporty look.

Bad: Gear changes can be harsh.

HYUNDAI TUCSON

Hyundai's sleek, sporty Tucson features a bold new design backed up with a range of engines, class-leading driving dynamics and high levels of overall refinement. The Tucson boasts a comprehensive safety technology package, including Vehicle Stability Management, Advanced Traction Control and autonomous braking. It was the first vehicle on the New Zealand market to offer Apple's advanced CarPlay connectivity technology.

The entry level 2.0Ltr GDI petrol 2wd 6-speed auto is \$42,990; prices go up to \$63,990 for the 2.0R CRDI Elite Ltd 6-speed auto.

Good: Outstanding integration with your smartphone.

Bad: Rear visibility not great.

JAGUAR XE

Jaguar's new XE delivers something for every motorist. It has lightweight construction, streamlined styling, and outstanding handling. The luxurious, stylish and comfortable interior resembles a cockpit, thanks largely to the deep centre console and spacious cabin. Powering this new feline is a choice of 2.0ltr petrol or diesel engines, or a supercharged V6. All are equipped with an eight-speed automatic transmission, and steering wheel mounted paddle shift.

The range starts with the XE 20t Pure from \$74,900 to the range-topping 3.0L V6 SC S at \$106,000.

Good: Lowest entry cost into Jaguar ownership.

Bad: Boot space marginal.

NEW MAZDA MX-5

Mazda's new MX-5 is the kind of car you want to just run and jump in, without even opening the doors! The convertible blends comfort and play, it's clean and stylish and it's fitted with the latest technology. Seated lower and more centrally than previous models makes it a fun-to-drive car, just like earlier models – but this one is a whole lot better. Handling and balance are impeccable thanks to the 50/50 split-weight distribution. Priced from \$40,990 for the 1.5 GSX, the 2Ltr Ltd (available soon) manual for \$46,995 and AT from \$48,495.

Good: Well-balanced handling.

Bad: Road noise.

SUZUKI VITARA

The rebirth of an icon! The Vitara has a new body, embraces technology and comes with an impressive array of equipment. Besides the front drive option, an ALLGRIP drive system is offered that incorporates four user-selectable modes, providing safety and versatility on all types of road conditions. The interior is simple but comfortable and stylish. It also has high level safety systems, including ABS, EBD, ESP and seven airbags. Price ranges from \$27,990 for entry level JLX 2wd manual to \$36,790 for AWD Ltd Auto optioned with the contrasting roof colour.

Good: Attainable price point.

Bad: Plastic interior is bland.

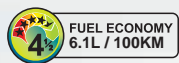
HONDA HR-V

Nine years in the making, Honda has launched its second generation HR-V. The concept was to combine the elegance of a coupe with the utility and strength of an SUV. It's fitted with a 105kW 1.8L i-VTEC engine, bigger than the previous 1.6L, and is coupled with Honda's newly developed Earth Dreams Technology CVT, which increases fuel economy and improves driveability. It looks great and drives with ease, but be wary if you go off the beaten track; no AWD version is offered. No built-in Satnav is offered, either – that's only available via smartphone app.

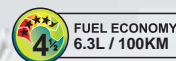
Good: A real looker.

Bad: Minimal in-built safety systems.

Mazda MX-5



Suzuki Vitara



Honda HR-V



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Ride safe

Mark Stockdale reports on efforts to improve roads for motorbikes



IN THE EVENT of a crash, a motorcyclist is 21 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured than if they were in a car, over the same distance travelled. Whilst the trend for serious crashes and fatalities for all other transport modes has been falling, despite increased activity, since the early 2000s motorcycle crash rates have risen.

According to the Ministry of Transport, in the ten years to the end of 2014 motor vehicle occupant deaths fell 39% while the number of cars, utes and vans rose by 12%. Over the same period, motorcycle rider and pillion deaths rose 19% while the number of two-wheelers grew by 52%.

That's the bad news. The good

news is it doesn't have to be that way. Other countries have made inroads into motorcycle safety. It was the experience in Victoria, Australia – along with protests here against rising ACC motorcycle levies – that led to the establishment of the Motorcycle Safety Advisory Council (MSAC) in 2011.

MSAC is an independent panel of motorcycle experts who oversee the \$30 annual Motorcycle Safety Levy introduced at the same time, collected from motorcycle licence fees (but due to fall to \$25 from July). The special levy is ring-fenced to improve motorcycle safety; MSAC's job is to advocate on behalf of motorcyclists, investigate initiatives that make

riding safer and recommend to ACC where to invest the funds.

Projects MSAC has undertaken include research into making motorcycles more conspicuous on the road, assessing popular motorcycle routes from a 'bike's eye view' to identify motorcycle-specific hazards, and developing a guide for roading authorities to make roads more motorcycle-friendly.

MSAC chairman, Mark Gilbert, says the group's goal is to consider what needs to change to reduce the number of serious injuries and fatalities from motorcycle incidents.

"At the end of the day, we want all

ABOVE: Scenic roads popular with motorcyclists will be given safety makeovers.

MOTORING

motorcyclists coming home."

Mr Gilbert is interested in the KiwiRAP programme, which has mapped the safety rating of the entire State Highway network, but MSAC wants to assess local roads popular with riders, which entails equipping motorcycles with cameras that specifically identify hazards from a rider's perspective.

The popular Southern Coromandel Loop was one of their first projects to be assessed this way. As a result, a number of improvements have been made to the route, including sealing property entrances along it to reduce the amount of loose gravel spilling onto the road, a major hazard for riders. Other improvements included widening the edge line marking to provide better visual clues, better road markings on deceptive corners, and improving visibility by cutting back banks.

Via the Motorcycle Safety Levy, MSAC hopes to extend this type of assessment and treatment to other popular motorcycle routes, including the Northern Coromandel Loop, Pokeno (south of Auckland) to Raglan, the Rimutaka Hill Road between Wellington and Wairarapa, and the Christchurch to Akaroa route.

In late 2014, MSAC produced a guide targeted at roading authorities and contractors to help them design roads and infrastructure that are safer for riders. Mr Gilbert says the document aims to "change the DNA around the way we do our road renewal work", and help roading engineers consider issues which pose particular problems for riders, such as the location of roadside infrastructure, design of kerbs and roundabouts, road markings, and drainage.

RIGHT: A tourist rides a motorbike along Milford Road near Milford Sounds.



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"No one sees what they don't see. You can be a good rider or a bad rider, but if the road gets you, it really doesn't matter. We must try to eliminate surprises."

MSAC has also researched improving motorcycle visibility, including whether innovative front lighting configurations make motorcycles more conspicuous, with the results of trials submitted to the Ministry of Transport for consideration. Mr Gilbert's view is the current lighting regulations may not be flexible enough. "If you're doing something to really make yourself stand out when you're a high-risk road user, we'd hate to see penalties being applied," he says.

Vehicle and rider safety equipment are also a focus for the organisation. While motorcycle safety equipment lags the vast improvement in cars, technology along with more rider

training will play a key role in reducing motorcycle crashes and injuries. Research by the Monash University Accident Research Centre shows that anti-lock braking systems (ABS) on motorcycles over 125cc can significantly reduce the number of bike accidents.

Mr Gilbert also wants to explore the idea of rewarding those riders who have safer motorcycles and advanced training. "The more the rider does to upskill themselves, check their equipment and wear the right gear, the better. That might equal a lower ACC levy in future, so that we reward good behaviour."

See msac.org.nz for more. 

MORE INFORMATION

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Hey good looking

Jacqui Madelin takes the new Mustang for a spin

FORD'S MUSTANG ELICITS mental images of drawling accents, drag strips and cars tyre-smoking over prairies into the sunset. What you probably won't think of is right-hand drive cars suited to New Zealand's bendy roads.

Until now, Ford has launched a new generation of Mustang, with all the brash good looks you expect, but with a whole new set of talents under the bonnet – and with the steering wheel where it should be.

This sixth-generation Mustang looks every bit the muscular Yank, our bright orange example turning every head as it cruised Auckland's pricier suburbs and causing whiplash out West. And that's before we started playing the throttle to unleash the V8 growl.

Previous Mustangs were aimed at American buyers, with looks and performance akin to a prize-winning bodybuilder: impressive on paper,

but not so good in a fight. Here in New Zealand we expect our cars to handle rough roads and corners, never a traditional Yank Tank's forte. But Ford's latest philosophy is to build vehicles which will appeal anywhere and so, although this Mustang carries clear visual references to the car that made its debut in 1964, it is actually a very different beast.

It's still a big car, long and low. This GT has its front-mounted 5.0-litre V8 weighing in at 1709kg, and delivering 306kW at 5600rpm and 530Nm at 3000rpm to the rear wheels via a six-speed auto transmission with paddle shift. There's a 2.3-litre twin-scroll-turbo EcoBoost four-cylinder available too, if you want a sensible car that doesn't look like one.

Snuggled into the wrap-around sports seat, surrounded by gleaming chrome accents against a dark finish, my vision was directed ahead by its sharply incised sculpting. I didn't need to hear the engine to feel I was at the controls of something special.

Ordinary cars all but scattered before us like frightened sheep,

pulling over almost the moment they spotted our bonnet in the rear-view mirror as we attacked the spine of Auckland's West Coast hills; that was just in 'normal' mode. Ignoring the 'race' option (switching the stability control off on a public road is never a good idea) and 'snow/wet', we turned to 'sport', holding the revs, upping the aural aggression and all but feeling those rear haunches scrabble for grip as we launched forward.

Initial disappointment that the engine note wasn't more aurally assertive from inside the cabin was soon replaced by pleasure; it certainly tickled the eardrums of everyone we passed. I loved the way this car has replaced outright low-revs brutality with a broader spread of urge that's well matched to the gearbox and to real-world roads.

It's also more nimble than expected, especially in the quicker-steering, lower-gear sport mode, though you'll never beat a truly agile car through typical Kiwi backroads. After all, dancing around bends isn't what a Mustang is about: it's about tarmac

BELOW: This new Mustang GT is a 5.0 litre V8 with six-speed auto transmission. A 2.3 litre, four-cylinder option is also available.





ABOVE: Yes, the steering wheel is on the right side of the car for New Zealand motoring.


domination, which this car does very well. Especially on more open curves, with plentiful grunt to power out of bends, it has swags of grip, a beautifully balanced body with just that hint of rear-steer joie-de-vivre to encourage you to steer on the throttle, and a predictability that lets you make the most of the available power.

There's much to like on top of the performance, too. Ford knows most folk spend more time commuting than taking road trips and there's plenty of everyday pleasure to be had: voice control of the satnav, music and hands-free phone; a rear-view camera; the ability to adjust the steering feel, with 'sport' notably firmer and 'comfort' imparting a light touch that you'll appreciate any time you enter a compact carpark building.

You can even programme a restricted driving mode if your teenager wants a go. Maybe ensure

they don't choose the 'track' mode though, or discover they can view g-force, braking and acceleration with the inbuilt 'track app'.

As for the frivolous icing on the cake? At night, those puddle lamps project Mustang's famous horse logo on to the ground, illuminating darkened driveways as you step out of the car.

More than 550 New Zealand buyers put money down even before they'd seen the new Mustang, most of them opting for graphite grey. If you're thinking of buying one, you'll need to be patient; Ford has taken so many orders your car won't be delivered until next summer. 

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Traveller

Michele A'Court

Author, comedian,
journalist and mum

MANY GOOD MEMORIES are associated with Napier. It's a place where I had a happy and safe childhood. My parents would put my brother Stephen and me on the train from Levin and we'd spend our school holidays there with my great-aunt and uncle, Ruth and Frank.

We went to the Olympic Baths and Stephen and I built slot cars and raced each other. It was about enjoying the sunshine and making fresh orange juice from the fruit trees in the back garden. When it rained, I went through the bookshelf and discovered my love of Katherine Mansfield. It was then I realised you can be a New Zealander and write books.

Nowadays, I go to Napier to enjoy the wineries. It's a glorious and peaceful place.

📺 Michele tours her show *Stuff I Forgot To Tell My Daughter* with the Arts on Tour New Zealand Trust throughout April. See aotnz.co.nz or micheleacourt.com for details.





A weekend away

The drive from Auckland to Taranaki proves inspiring for Kathryn Webster

THE CITY BEHIND us, a weekend ahead – there is nothing quite like that feeling. By the time we're done with Auckland's southern motorway, we're used to the car we've been loaned for this trip. It's a Lexus RC350 Ltd – a sexy, sporty number that's perfect for the drive through Waikato countryside, over hilly and winding King Country roads, to Taranaki.

The only problem with the Lexus is that it's so much fun to drive, we're reluctant to stop. But we do. We swerve off route slightly to Hamilton Gardens because it's a favourite. We take a fast, restorative walk along the river and through the flower gardens then visit Molly Macalister's *Little Bull* sculpture.

Back on track, we pass watchful Pirongia, zip through classic farming territory, bypass Te Kuiti. At Piopio we stop for a stretch and score some vintage ceramics at a craft shop in the old Post Office.

We get to New Plymouth on dark, but the Devon Hotel is easy to find and we're soon settled in and walking up to the centre of town on the hunt for dinner. It's a vibrant town and there's no shortage of options; we eat Japanese then shoot along the road to where local musicians take turns on stage for an open mic night.

On Saturday morning, we walk around a city corner and yell, both of us: "wow!" Because, like most people coming to New Plymouth these days, we're visiting the new Len Lye

Centre. The wavy stainless steel exterior shimmers and plays; people walk close and back off and look up and laugh at their mangled reflections. It is instantly fun.

Inside, the new museum keeps up the playfulness.

Light dances through tall hidden windows along a sloping ramp. Once in the space where the legendary Len Lye works spring into view, it's all about

“
The Lexus is
so much fun
to drive, we're
reluctant to
stop.
”

that. The focus shifts to fountains of coloured light, waltzing steel, rolling plains of shimmering, haunting shapes. There are masterpieces here – *Flip and Two Twisters*, *Universe* – noisy and boisterous; there are quieter works that hypnotise and intrigue. Short films, a genre of art that, along with his kinetic sculpture, Len Lye was internationally famous for, loop in dizzy repeats. It's an astonishing world and everyone visiting on the day we're there seems as energised by the experience as we are.

I'm pleased to learn that the exhibitions will change three times each year, to encourage repeat visits. There will also be collaborations with other artists and with musicians, to keep up the energy level of this infectious happy art.

Next door, the Govett-Brewster Gallery has had a makeover and shines with renewed life.

We step out, back onto the street,



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Iconic Mt Taranaki looms large over the landscape; the new Len Lye Centre in New Plymouth is an architectural delight with its playful mirror-like stainless steel exterior; the picturesque river mouth of Mokau is a sheltered sun trap and a good place to stop for a break.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JASMIN SHEIKH – FREESTYLE; K WEBSTER; PHOTONZ



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ROAD TRIP

and watch the stream of people interacting with the mirrored exterior. It's a winner, this building. It will attract visitors from far and wide. It's ironic that its stainless steel evokes thoughts of milk tankers, as tourism is taking over from dairy farming as the main economic driver of regions like Taranaki. We walk over the road for an excellent coffee at Icon café, feeling a bit jealous of this cool community's genuine respect for culture and creativity.

Holding this mood, we drive south to Oakura Beach and build flimsy sculptures with driftwood, dried seaweed and carefully balanced stones. Then, feeling the need to get close to Mt Taranaki, we drive inland to Stratford, grab some sandwiches and drive uphill to park with a view for an in-car picnic.

It's very cold out. We walk a little, in the snowline, but we're not equipped,

so we keep it short.

On the way back to New Plymouth we stop to photograph the mountain, which is glowing clear and clean against the pink of the evening sky. Initially stark, like a simple silk screen print, the cone becomes more three-dimensional as the light fades.

Leaving New Plymouth early in the day for the drive home gives us time for some breaks in the journey. Not far in, we opt for the first one at Mokau and call into the community museum which is packed with household and farming things: electronic dog collars, photographs, china, toys, tools, everything donated from the 100 kilometres between the tunnels – Mt Messenger to the south and the Awakino Gorge tunnel to the north.

At Awakino we stop to walk the little stretch of baches by the wide river mouth and contemplate taking the track to the coast, but we have to



Pouakai Crossing, Mount Taranaki



Stratford's Glockenspiel Clock Tower



Oakura Beach, Surf Highway 45



Govett-Brewster Art Gallery/Len Lye Centre



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TARANAKI
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Photos: Patrick Reynolds, Jeremy Beckers & Rob Tucker



ABOVE: Waitomo Glowworm Caves have to be seen to be believed. **BELOW:** The entrance area to the caves is an impressive sight; our ride for weekend: the Lexus R350 Ltd.



keep moving. We have to get to our final treat of the trip, before it closes.

The rain doesn't matter a jot. We're going underground. We're going into the famously sparkly underworld of Waitomo Caves.

Our tour guide gathers the group together, briefs us and leads us down – talking all the way about the caves' history and geology. Their magical qualities need no explanation. We stand still in the cathedral in the midst of echoing song. Then we walk on and climb into a boat and float about, silent, on the darkest water imaginable, under the stunning diamond-studded roof and it is like being in a dream.

Do we really have to go back to the big city, with overcrowded rowdiness and lack of open spaces? It was a good thing we had such a nice car to drive the last bit, on the new road that skips Ngaruawahia now, and which carries us over the Bombay Hills toward the orange glow in the northern night sky. It was a good thing that Auckland's lights sparkled in welcome. 📸



3

ON THE WAY

Hamilton's café scene is reason enough to not take the bypass. Head to Victoria Street for a tasty break. See hamiltonwaikato.com

For those following an art theme, visit the Waikato Museum of Art and History and, next door, Artspost.

Waitomo Glowworm Caves can be experienced within around 45 minutes. For those with more time, consider exploring Ruakuri or Aranui caves. There are various packages available. See waitomo.com

📷

KIDS IN THE CAR



Swerve into Dinsdale in Hamilton to the Classic Car Museum.



Visit Otorohanga's Kiwi House for a native wildlife experience.



Photograph the family with Te Kuiti's giant shearer sculpture.

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STAY

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Hanging out

Fiona Terry and her daughter hang out in the big smoke

I'D GOT IT ALL planned...a whistle-stop adventure involving day-return flights, a tour of The Beehive, a few hours in Te Papa, a stroll along the waterfront and a little shopping.

That was until 11-year-old Jasmine got whiff of an attraction around half an hour from the centre that would

involve hanging out in trees.

Porirua's Adrenalin Forest was going to be an absolute must for our perfect day, or so she said. I re-jigged our itinerary, reluctantly crossing off 'shopping'.

We made our way straight from our 'red-eye' flight to explore The Beehive and parliamentary complex before

the city had properly woken. It was also before the official tours of the buildings would begin, though it was still impressive to view from outside. We took photos before heading for the train station, where we discovered

TOP: Seasoned tree climber Jasmine put her mother to shame at Adrenalin Forest.

that works on the line meant the route was being serviced by buses.

I wondered whether our detour from the city could be justified, but the look of delight on Jasmine's face on first sighting Adrenalin Forest made it worthwhile.

Ropes were suspended, some with barrels through which to climb, others with hanging hoops to negotiate. A number had rope-slung horizontal wooden crosses, and another featured what looked suspiciously like a skateboard.

We were fitted with harnesses and given a safety briefing. I was relieved to be told the magnetic carabiner system was specially designed so that of the two clips attached to our harnesses, only one at a time could be removed from the metal safety wires.

"We enjoyed ourselves so much we beamed the whole journey back to the city."

Having been given the all-clear to set off independently we embarked on the first challenge, which at this early stage promised to be no more than three metres high. Jasmine stormed ahead but slowed when she realised some daughterly advice from a well-practised tree climber would be helpful for her less experienced mother.

The city seemed a world away as the sound of birdsong accompanied us on our high-wire adventures.

"Charlie and Dad would love this," enthused Jasmine after swinging on a rope Tarzan-style into a giant cargo net.

The well-marked courses of different challenges zigzagged through the forest. Occasionally our achievements were rewarded with an opportunity to speed down a portion flying-fox style using a device attached to our harnesses with a built-in wheel system.

As our challenges led us higher, my adrenalin levels rose. The place

got busier – beneath us, also working their way up through the levels, were other families, couples on dates, and a group of young women on a hens' do.

After a couple of hours, and having completed the first three levels, my arms were signalling they'd had enough. Jasmine however, was keen to tackle level four, suspended fifteen metres high off the ground.

It's been known that even adults have had to be rescued by the skilled crew from this challenge but not our Jasmine. She completed the section quickly, including negotiating her way between treetops using what was indeed a skateboard contraption.

We'd enjoyed ourselves so much we beamed the whole journey back to the city. Rain greeted us as we made our way from the central railway station to Te Papa.

In less than three hours at this inspiring museum we'd managed to go on a captivating journey through time encompassing millions of years. We explored tectonic plate movements, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, changing commerce, the environment, and encountered fierce and strange-looking creatures.

By the time we emerged there was brilliant sunshine. The lack of overnight luggage helped speed our dash to the bus stop for our return trip to the airport, but the magic didn't end there.

Lying in wait for us back at the airport terminal was something else to make our girls' trip even more memorable for Hobbit fan Jasmine. We could easily have missed our plane, so keenly was she taking pictures and videos of the unnervingly life-like giant sculpture of Smaug, developed in conjunction with Weta Workshop.

His mechanical eye eerily opened as if to survey her movements. In the café, a giant Gollum hovered overhead and nearby Gandalf was swooping through on a giant eagle.

This entertaining city had so much to offer – we'll be back, but maybe next time with our boys. 📌



3

MORE ENERGY BURNERS

- 1 Wellington has its own mountain bike park, up Makara Peak above Karori.
- 2 Cycling in the city is an option for visitors too, on hired bikes.
- 3 Kayaks can also be hired from Wellington waterfront.

i

WITH THE KIDS



Go to the zoo.



Take the cable car up to the Carter Observatory.



Visit Zealandia Sanctuary.



See the New Zealand Cricket Museum in the Basin Reserve.

bicycle icon

WHERE TO STAY

Holiday parks are a good option for families. They're child-friendly, offer various styles of accommodation and are affordable. There are several in the Wellington area.

For families wanting to stay in the centre of town, consider a multi-room motel or book an apartment.

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John Parker tackles the ups and downs of a cycling trail

MOUNTAIN TO SEA

IF YOU'RE GOING to do it, then do it properly. That's the basic motto of our geriatric ten-strong biking group – average age almost 70 – when we've tackled our NZ Cycle Trail rides round New Zealand.

So we started day one of our 230-km Mountains to Sea two-wheel and jetboat adventure in the central North Island from the top of the Turoa Ski Road, 1700m above sea level. A snow-capped Ruapehu soared above a coronet of cloud and there were views all the way to Mt Taranaki.

We arranged a ride up with Jayne from Ohakune's Mountain Bike Station, rather than inviting a heart attack by doing it ourselves. Jayne and husband Darren, himself a keen mountain biker, run a thriving and caring business looking after biking groups in the area and making sure everything goes smoothly.

But we still had to do the riding. Our mountain road descent was an exhilarating 17km swoop of a ride,

but we respected at more sedate speeds the winding and undulating narrow pathways in the next section of the trail: the popular Old Coach Road. The section is around 15kms and three to four hours of cycling from Horopito to Ohakune that winds through forest with dramatic viaducts and railheads recalling the days when the steam engine was king.

Day two was some 50kms and four hours of mixed riding from Horopito to the remote Ruatiti Backpackers Lodge, on quiet shingle or tarmac roads. There were long descents – and equally long ascents. It's biking truth number one: those who go down will sooner or later have to go up. But the remoteness and scenery made it all worthwhile. And the lodge is an authentic, unadorned country experience. Dining is in a corrugated iron shed, working dogs are barking on nearby farms, and roosters crow at four in the morning. We slept well in the narrow bunkrooms – and if some elderly bladders necessitated a night

stroll, a star-studded sky undimmed by city lights was ample compensation.

Day three was the big one: some 40km along the Mangapurua Track to the Bridge to Nowhere, starting with a 60-minute, four-kilometre grind uphill on a sandy surface to the trig point. One thought of England, one stuck the bike in the lowest cog, one kept the legs turning and one knocked the bastard off.

From the top it was mostly downhill, riding along stimulating and varied terrain: pasture curving through abandoned farmland, rutted and bouncy paths, small fords, and single-file tracks bisecting some vertiginous bluffs where walking the bike across was the only safe option. And 33 swing bridges.

It proved a wise investment to hire Darren as guide and mother hen for the day. He pointed out all the best spots for views, including one vista of Ngauruhoe and Tongariro in one direction and Mt Taranaki in the other, and showed us many a poignant



3 MORE THINGS TO DO IN RUAPEHU

- 1** Visit the National War Museum in Waiouru.
- 2** Take a ride along the Forgotten Highway Railway on a railcart.
- 3** Walk the Tongariro Alpine Crossing.

WHANGANUI FAMILY FUN

-  Jump on board a restored river boat: the PS Waimarie, the Wairua or Adventure 11.
-  Spend time playing at one of Whanganui's beautiful parks.
-  Watch glass art being blown at Chronicle Glass Studio.
-  Whanganui Regional Museum is free to visit and has interactive, family-friendly exhibits on show.

MORE CYCLING

New Zealand's Cycle Trail network, Nga Haerenga, is made up of 19 trails. The Ruapehu region has two of the great rides: the Timber Trail and the Mountains to Sea – Nga Ara Tuhono.

AA Traveller

Book accommodation and find out more about other cycle trails at aa.co.nz/travel or pick up a cycle guide from an AA Centre.

remnant of settlements where farmers had tried, but failed, to wrest a living from this remote and tough country. And he was the man for emergency. One of us dislocated a finger when his bike scraped a wall on the side of a narrow track. Darren and one of the three nurses in the party set it right and taped it up ready for more riding. And Darren leapt off his bike to rescue another who'd misjudged a path and catapulted onto a few branches fortuitously draped over a nasty precipice. It could have been much worse than a few scratches.


But we all got through, to take the previously booked jetboat to the comfortable Bridge to Nowhere Lodge. Thanks to a mix of relief and a sense of achievement the food and wine tasted delicious that night.

Another jetboat ride with our bikes and it was on the saddle again for some 90kms to Whanganui and the sea. En route we spent time wandering round the historic nunnery and church at Jerusalem,

where iconic poet James K Baxter is buried. And we observed the sign for tired legs: "Why not rest and pray awhile?"

About halfway we greatly enjoyed a two-night stopover at must-experience accommodation, The Flying Fox. Access is by a cute two-person cable car winching us across the Whanganui River to an extraordinary complex, a beguiling mix of inventiveness, quirky architecture and Hundertwasser-like decoration set in spacious and restful grounds. And we were wine and dined to bursting point with wonderful meals.

The road from there to Whanganui needs care and vigilance for traffic where it narrows – and there's the thigh-burner Gentle Annie hill to grind up. But from there on it's easy, especially if you include a celebratory coffee and muffin break at the charming settlement of Upokongaro.

It's a ride that keeps on giving: months later I'm still warmed by a sense of accomplishment. 



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A jetboat delivered us to a night of luxury on Whanganui River; a tunnel on the Old Coach Road section of the Mountains to Sea cycle trail; one of the team poses with a pou on Mangapurua track.

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A HELL OF A TIME

Karl Puschmann has a nosy around Russell, the reformed town of ill repute

IT'S A NERVE-wracking race against the clock. The best way to get to Russell is via the Opuā car ferry, so we've driven onboard and are waiting for the attendant to get to our car so I can pay our fare. As the crew makes the final preparations she reaches us. I wind the window down, say hi and then... disaster.

"Sorry, we don't have EFTPOS," she says.

"Er..."

"You got cash?"

"Um... no"

"The dairy has EFTPOS. You had better run."

My partner Hayley hears this and is gone on a mad dash to the dairy. The attendant moves on to the car in front of us, taps on their window and exchanges a bright yellow ticket for a handful of coins. How did everyone

know to have cash?

It's a close call, but Hayley makes it back just in time. The ferry toots twice and we're off, heading out across the sea. Ten minutes later we dock at Russell.

We're staying in a little complex consisting entirely of charming little cottages and situated only a couple of minutes' walk from Russell's township. We drop the bags and the car off and go have a nosy.

It doesn't take long. Russell is quaint, rustic, sleepy and small. We walk around the town so quickly we go round again. Despite its stature, we learn that gastronomically speaking we're going to be spoilt for choice. Cafés and funky looking eateries line the

streets and we make a mental note to visit Hone's Garden for delicious looking woodfire pizza.

I also notice a high proportion of beards, plaid and tattoos and realise that this small town can also boast a high percentage of hipster residents.

Well, why not? The appeal is obvious. The vibe's chilled and relaxed.

Today's gorgeous. The sky brilliantly blue and not at all troubled by smudgy white clouds. The heat stays on the right side

of bearable thanks to the cool breeze blowing in across the waters of Kororareka Bay.

It wasn't always this way. Russell is where European settlers first made themselves at home in New Zealand. They set up shop and the place soon

“
The entire
sleepy town has
woken and is
lining up for
fish n' chips.
”

ABOVE: Skipping stones as the sun sets at Russell's Kororareka Bay.

degraded into a debauched sea port. We're told it was labelled 'the hell hole of the Pacific' due to the rowdy sailors coming into town on shore leave. How times change. Today, in the heat of the sun, it's heavenly.

Walking along the beachfront promenade is a real trip back in time. The pastel yellow, corrugated iron Four Square convenience store stands out amongst all the historic, wooden villa-style shops that line the street. We stop for coffee and nab a prime waterfront table. We watch fisherman muck about with their boat while a bunch of kids cool off doing bombs off the dock.

That afternoon we head to the golden sands and inviting ocean blue at nearby Tapeka Point Beach. It's a hidden treasure for sure, surrounded by bright green hills that rise up and enclose the bay and simultaneously act as a terrific natural wind buffer. There



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JOURNEYS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A long view from a short pier; fine dining at Russell's Gables restaurant; a couple admire the view of the bay; Russell's heavy defences should prove a deterrent to potential invaders.

are walking tracks that promise sensational views of Russell, but it's hot and I'm lazy and content to just lie on my beach towel and explore the pages of the new *Mojo* magazine.

Later, it seems everybody has the same idea. With the sun falling on a pearler of a day, the entire sleepy seaside town of Russell has woken up and is lined up outside the Crusty Crab Fish n' Chips shop.

Who can blame them? Fish n' chips on the beach is one of the great Kiwi institutions and the beachfront that stretches alongside Russell's promenade feels like it was designed solely for stuffing your gob with battered, deep fried goodness. Its gentle incline and grassy bank encourage you to laze back and enjoy the pretty views that shepherd your gaze out of the bay, past the bobbing berthed boats and across the harbour to Waitangi.

We get ticket 64 (two pieces of fish, one scoop of chips and a hot dog thanks) and get busy waiting.

Eventually our number's called. We take our little newspaper-wrapped dinner and head back to The Strand to eke out a dining spot near the sand. We snatch a patch of grass and tuck in. Groups of families, friends and couples do likewise. We sit munching our dinner as people's chatter, laughter and joy fill the bay, and the sun sets on the really quite lovely hell hole of the Pacific. 🍷



4

HISTORIC SPOTS



CHRIST CHURCH

Built in 1836, this is the oldest surviving church in the country.



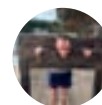
POMPAILLIER HOUSE

Award-winning tours go through the printing press where French missionaries translated the good book into Te Reo Maori.



RUSSELL MUSEUM

This well-curated museum is home to a fully rigged replica of Captain James Cook's vessel, the Endeavour.



THE STOCKS

For a more unusual holiday photo, stop by the wharf and snap a selfie in Russell's stocks.



GETTING THERE

The Opua car ferry is cheap and quick, just make sure to have cash on you. An alternative option is to drive the Old Russell Rd. This is a scenic drive along the coast with plenty of beaches and places to stop along the way. Turn right off SH1 at Whakapara, 20 minutes north of Whangarei and follow the signs to Oakura then Russell.



For accommodation options in Russell see aa.co.nz/travel



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WAY OUT BACK

Kathryn Webster is inspired
by big, open Australia

WAS DANCING by the river and lost an earring but didn't realise until I was back at my slab hut. I mentioned it to Smithy and he said he'd keep an eye out for it. Well, he arranged a metal detector, found the earring, put it on a bus to the town I'd moved on to, and had the

driver find me to hand it over. That sums up the hospitality in these parts.

'These parts' is Outback Queensland. Way out back: two and a half hours' flight or two days' drive from Brisbane. Lots of people drive motorhomes to Longreach but we flew, and stayed in beautiful

little slab huts made in the spirit of shearing quarters, with corrugated iron on their roofs and gaps in their planks to let starlight shine through.

'These parts' are good at stars. The night of the dancing and the lost jewellery, Smithy gave us a ride back to the huts. He swerved out into

TRAVELLER

the empty edges of town,
had us stand out in the night and
look up and out at a zillion stars
shining more clearly, surely, than
anywhere else on the planet.

Longreach is good at drought,
too. When we visit, there's been no
rain to speak of for several years.
Struggling farmers have become
tourism entrepreneurs. Among them,
the Kinnon family, who built the slab
huts, hosted us on the river banks for
a meal and a show one night, and
also run the Cobb & Co experience
in town. That involves exhilarating
horse-drawn carriage rides, a 'tent
show' and tea served with scones by
folk dressed in old time finery.

Dusty horses and a little blue
heeler watch us eat.

Even in the shade it is mighty hot.
The show only runs between April
and October – after that, it gets too hot.

Two evenings, looking for a breeze,

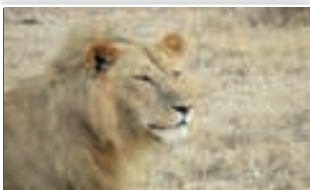


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we spend on the river, although it's not really a river. It's a water hole. Along its banks are eucalyptus, river tea trees, knot weed. High up, whistling kite nests perch in chaotic messiness. Wildlife watchers love this part of the country with its kangaroos, turtles and many various birds.

One day we go to a reserve near town with bush walks loaded with pioneer and indigenous history, geology and stories. We drive across the flood plain where dried-up streambeds wait for rain.

Farmers have stopped waiting. We drive along a skinny road; whenever someone bigger than us comes toward us, we pull right off the road to avoid getting a stone through the windscreen.

PREVIOUS PAGE AND LEFT: The view and sunset from a hill above Winton, photographed during an evening tour that included wine and nibbles.

We pass tough, cloudy gidgee trees. We cross a cattle stop and without any change in the landscape we're, apparently, on Strathmore Station, home of the Pierce family. To supplement the business of keeping the farm going, Maree and Bevin let nosy tourists like us take a look around, have a chat with them and share a cuppa in their homestead. We drive around the property, marvel at its flatness and sameness. It is alarmingly dry. There is beauty though, in the muted colours. The station has around 70,000 acres all up and used to run 12,000 sheep and 2000 cattle, but today there are 60 sheep and four horses. Maree's thinking of moving the horses off.

We drive out to a dam, otherwise known as a turkey nest, look out at the wide, cracked expanse. A small gang of emu stop to watch; we poke



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around bleached bones, check out the windmills. One of our party lies on his back and kicks his legs in the air like a very, very bad break-dancer. He hopes the emus will be intrigued by his odd behaviour and come closer. They don't. It's pretty funny, though – he gets a laugh.

Maree talks factly of the hard times. You can't take on this sort of land without an above-average quota of stoicism.

In honour of this truth, we visit the Stockman's Hall of Fame. Busy with old tools and saddles, Flying Doctor displays, stories of heroes and settlers, wagons and huts, buggies and wool presses, images and stories of Australian bush stations. There is also a relatively new archive of interviews with indigenous stockmen and women; one of them talks poignantly about the Akubra hat being worn like a crown.

We travel to Winton in time for an evening tour to the 'jump up' to toast the sunset. It is reminiscent of Picnic at Hanging Rock. The red sky streaks across the wide horizon, unhindered; the messa is bone pale, stark and mildly spooky.

From Winton we join a tour to Lark

Quarry for the day, to see dinosaur footprints. Yes, dinosaur footprints. The theory is that there was a stampede by four or five species of dinosaur on this spot and, soon after, a geological event which captured the prints in mud, preserving them. Today, 95 million years later, we get to peer over the handrail of a walkway built around a covered area the size of a netball court; it's incredible.

The landscape is surprising, too. I relax in the tour bus and watch it change from being flat and bare, to undulating and covered in grey-blue foliage. Sometimes there is dusty orange dotted with tall, tortured trees, sometimes the view is filled with low, brushy bushes. Pale yellow swirls of mud are edged with red. Between spinifex and ghost gums, shadowy tracks cross the dirt. The spinifex looks so sweet – round and soft and cushion-y but it is spiny and sharp, providing protection for small creatures.

As far as the eye can stretch it's a crusty pan with a silvery skin, baked tight. But it's not dead land, not at all. It's dry and drained and hard, but under the surface is seed and up the



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A break on the tour of Strathmore Station; slab hut accommodation in Longreach; cruising on Longreach's water hole.



sucked-in trees is a clever preservation system at work. Once it rains, it will spring back; it is energetic land, merely hibernating.

We finally get to the Australian Age of Dinosaurs, where dug-up dinosaur bones are exhibited and analysed. They've been finding bones here since the 1930s. In the lab, photos show the enthusiasts at work, their wiry bodies shaded by hats, bent over unbelievable bones, including some so big they took three years to dig up.

Every year the team here undertakes a three-week dig which amateur palaeontologists can join in on, paying to learn preservation techniques and then helping with the careful business of retrieving bones. Yes, there have been Kiwis join the scheme. This world of real science is irresistible to certain types of people.

As we drive to Mt Isa the next day, I consider the various experiences had and realise there is a lot here for a certain type of traveller.

Those who like to shop, indulge in wine tasting or lounge about by pools might not warm to this place. But for those who like to learn as they go – exploring the bush and outback farms, visiting Longreach's Qantas Founders' Museum, seeing dinosaur bones up close and, in Mt Isa, going underground for a taste of being in a mine – this territory offers a lot. Plus, they'll have the company of welcoming, loquacious, generous locals. Speaking of which, if you bump into Smithy, say g'day from me. 🇳🇿

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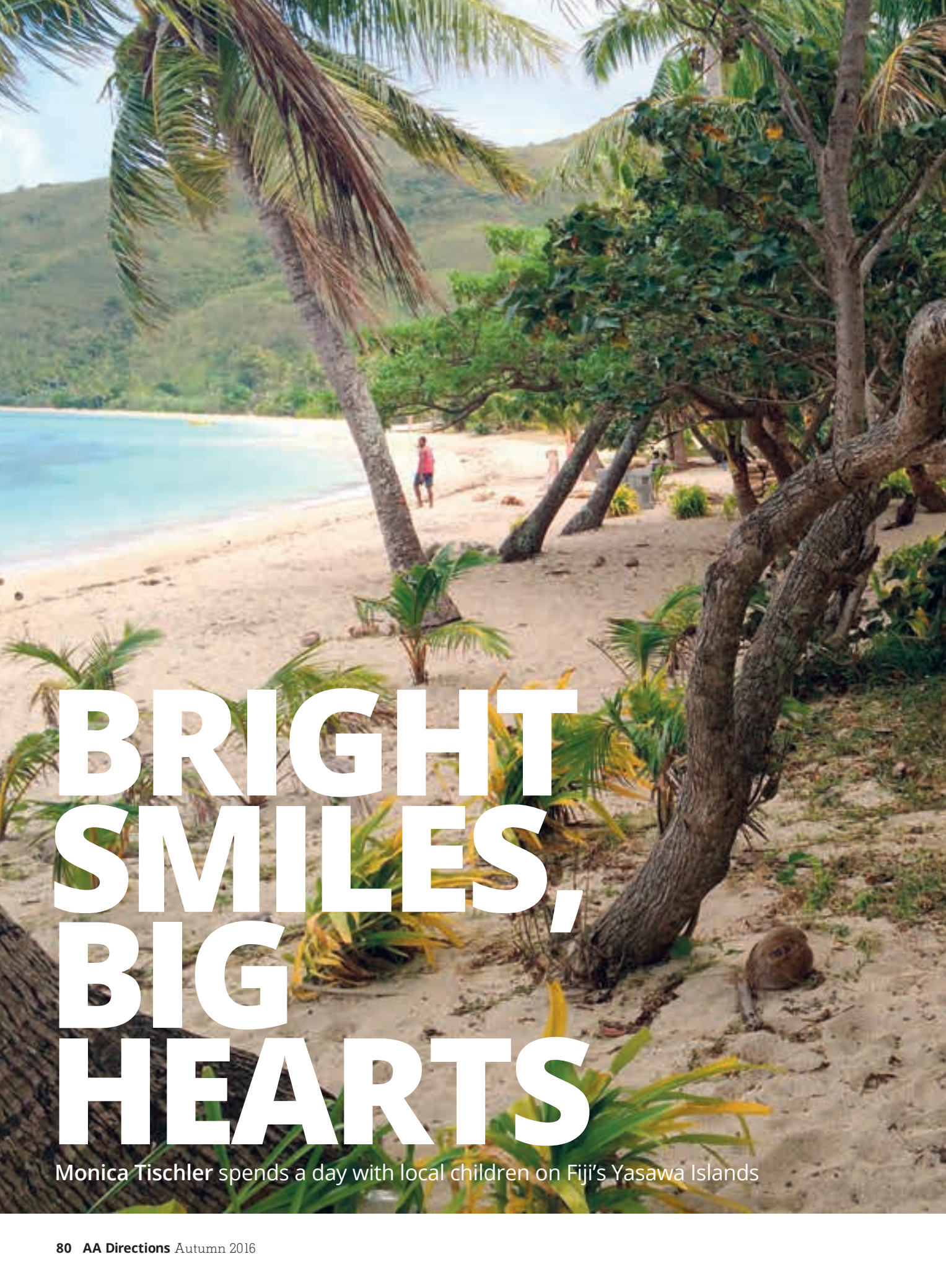
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BRIGHT SMILES, BIG HEARTS

Monica Tischler spends a day with local children on Fiji's Yasawa Islands

THERE'S A LIST of virtues written on a chalkboard at a humble Fijian school nestled among spindly coconut palms.

Neat writing reads that children must show respect at all times, be polite, punctual to class, study for exams, put rubbish in the bin and keep noise levels down.

Spending a day in Soso Village on Fiji's remote Yasawa Islands, it's clear they've perfected most responsibilities. I'm not sure they manage the last task, though.

Walking into the village, the shrill of squealing youngsters echoes through the silky air. A group of friends is playing a game on the school field. Others are singing. Mothers and children laugh together. Young and old chat while unloading a canoe on the water's edge.

I've travelled to the Yasawa Islands, a scattering of 20 smaller islands north-west of Port Denarau on Fiji's mainland. I'm here to spend time with village children through the Vinaka Fiji volunteer programme. The initiative was established in 2010 for volunteers to help maintain and restore remote villages by looking after children, planting crops, installing water tanks and working in clam nurseries.

A local woman and retired school teacher, Tema, hears I'm en route to the village and offers to make the hour-long walk with me from Botaira Beach Resort where I'm staying, over a hill and along the coast. I welcome her company.

A thin dirt track weaving through long grass is guarded by a canopy of trees – the perfect shelter from the potent sun.

Tema is dressed in a long sarong and sandals. I'm wearing a singlet and sneakers, yet I struggle to keep up with her in the heat. Reaching the top of the hill provides a much-needed break to catch my breath, swig on some water and take

LEFT: There's always fun to be had in Soso Village.





in panoramic views of the ocean framed by soothing green bush.

Trekking down the other side leads us to a clearing opening onto a beach. Tema's and my footprints, side by side, are the only marks rippling through smooth, yellow sand. I spot some movement among foliage on the edge of the beach. Flimsy wire netting twisted around four iron stakes makes up the foundations of a pen, home to several plump piglets.

Approaching the village, it's clear just how self-sufficient these locals are. Canoes filled with hand-woven nets line the shore and open fires expel smoky, mouth-watering scents.

Principal of the village school, Don, greets us. He says there are 300 residents living here and more than 60 children from ages six to 14 attend his school.

He gathers the youngsters and leads us into a classroom where we introduce ourselves. I'm taken aback by the goals of the children. One by one, they stand up and share their dreams. I'm in a room of future policemen, teachers, nurses, builders and flight attendants.

The children treat me to a special vocal performance. The small classroom with thin walls and wooden floors creates the perfect acoustics, cocooning their voices and echoing sweet melodies through the village.

The day is spent reading stories, completing puzzles, more singing, dancing and burning energy out on the school field. I join in a game of duck-duck-goose. When a small boy lightly taps the back of my head,

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: It's clear the children in Soso Village are great friends; playing games together on the school field; the writer shares a group hug.



I leap up in an attempt to catch him. He's too fast for me. I don't recall anyone saying they wanted to be an Olympic runner earlier, but perhaps we have one in our midst?

The villagers seem to really enjoy sharing their world with others. I chat to the young girl who wants to be a flight attendant and tell her that my sister is in the profession. Her eyes light up as she tells me she wants to wear a uniform and is excited about the places she'll get to experience. It's special to see how the Vinaka Fiji programme broadens their minds, just as much as ours, as volunteers.

When it's time to leave, I walk back along the beach, tracing my earlier footprints. I feel enriched and enlightened.

The setting sun catches the ripples of an incoming tide and I

reflect on how life here is modest yet full. People aren't distracted by technology or pressures of the outside world but are focused on what's important; caring for one another, learning, gathering and preparing food.

It proves effective as everyone in Fiji seems to adorn a contagious grin. You can't help but approach everything with a smile yourself and wear the brightest, most genuine one you have to offer. 📷

AA Traveller

The writer travelled to the Yasawa Islands with Awesome Adventures Fiji and Vinaka Fiji Volunteering. See awesomefiji.com or vinakafiji.com.fj for more on the volunteering programme. See aa.co.nz/travelinsurance to make sure you're covered before setting off.



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Free AA Safety Check: WoFs are now required annually for cars first registered from 2001. Between WoFs, AA Members can have 16-point AA Safety Checks done for free, twice every year (valued at \$19 per check). Available at 45 AA Motoring sites. See aa.co.nz/safetycheck

AA Vehicle Inspections: AA Members save \$20 on AA Pre-Purchase Vehicle Inspections. The 100-plus point check provides peace of mind to help inform this important decision. See aa.co.nz/vi

AA Vehicle History Report: Before buying a car, get an AA Vehicle History Report to find out if finance is owing, if the vehicle has been re-registered, recorded as stolen or has a wound-back or clocked odometer. AA Members receive a \$5 discount. See aa.co.nz/vh

Vehicle servicing: Regular servicing maximises a vehicle's lifespan. AA Members can save up to \$30 at AA Auto Centres nationwide. See aa.co.nz/autocentre

Car Loans: When you've found the perfect car but don't have all the funds, AA Finance can help.

AA Members receive \$50 off the loan establishment fee when you draw down. See aa.co.nz/carloans

Motoring advice: Got a question about a car? The AA Motoring Advice team will help AA Members for free. Visit aa.co.nz/advice or call **0800 500 333**.

AA Battery Service: AA Battery Service removes the hassle of tracking down and installing the correct battery for your vehicle. A technician will come to your home, the roadside or your work place*; all our batteries come with a minimum two-year warranty. AA Members receive a discounted price and recycle rebate along with an AA Smartfuel discount.

AA Auto Glass: AA Auto Glass will come to you, assess windscreen damage and, if a replacement is necessary, organise a time and place convenient to you.* As an AA Member you will also get an AA Smartfuel discount.

*Service available in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and most provincial areas. Availability of the mobile windscreen and auto glass service may be weather dependent.



TRAVEL

Accommodation: AA Members save 5% and earn a 10c per litre AA Smartfuel discount when booking one of more than 800 properties. Visit aa traveller.co.nz or one of our AA Centres.

Interislander: The best way to travel between the North and South Islands is on the Interislander ferries. AA Members can save up to 20% on bookings. See aa.co.nz/Interislander

Car rental: AA Members save up to 40% and earn a 5c per litre AA Smartfuel discount when booking car rentals with AA Thrifty. See aa.co.nz/carrental

Maps: Pick up city and touring maps at any AA Centre, where AA Members and AA Smartfuel cardholders can also get free regional, and North and South Island maps.

INSURANCE

AA Insurance: Our customers are most satisfied and we're the most trusted brand for general insurance.* AA Insurance offers AA Members up to \$50 off the total cost of car, home and contents policies depending on the length of your Membership. See aa insurance.co.nz

AA Life: Make the hardest time a little easier for your family. AA Members receive 5% off AA Life premiums. See aa life.co.nz

Travel: Going overseas? AA Members save 10% on AA Travel Insurance policies. See aa.co.nz/travelinsurance

* Winner of Canstar Blue Most Satisfied Customers for Home and Contents Insurance 2013-2015 and Most Satisfied Customers for Car Insurance 2011-2016. Voted 2011-2015 Most Trusted General Insurer in the Reader's Digest Trusted Brands Survey.



>> FROM P.83

What does the GM of Membership and Brand do with his day?

Every day starts with a report of how many Members joined the day before and how our AA Roadservice patrols performed against our service targets. After that, it's a mixed bag of meeting with partners to see how we can deliver more value to Members, reviewing any poor service incidents to see how we can enhance the service we provide, developing new products and marketing activities, etc. I'm fortunate to have a very skilled team to make it all happen.

How long have you been in this role/worked for the AA?

Twelve years. The AA's a wonderful place to work and a hard place to leave!

What do you like about working for the AA?

The best thing about working for the AA is that we're a mutual organisation, New Zealand's largest club. Our focus is to deliver value to our Members, unlike corporates who exist primarily to maximise profit for shareholders. It's very satisfying to see how the value AA Members have received from their Membership has grown so significantly over recent years. Last year, AA Members received well over \$50 million in value from Membership benefits other than Roadservice. The other great thing about the AA is our people, and the pride they take in helping our Members.

Are there projects you are particularly proud of?

Two things stand out. When I first joined the AA in 2004 we introduced what we call our 'MyAA' Membership pricing model which gives Members increasingly large discounts off their Membership renewal based on their length of Membership. Despite the increasing cost of providing services such as AA Roadservice, we haven't increased our Membership pricing since then but have added many new Membership benefits. A majority of Members now receive value far in excess of the cost of belonging to the club.

The second is our Membership growth. When I joined in 2004 we'd just passed the one million Member mark. The AA was formed in 1903 and it took 100 years to reach one million Members. We've added another half a million Members in only 12 years since then, so it's a decent run rate!

Anything on the horizon you're ready to share with Members?

Watch this space. We are developing some exciting new products which we will be ready to announce later this year.



There for every stage of life

Did you know the AA is owned by our Members?

We're a club, so everyone who joins the AA is actually an owner. Our job is to give Members as much value as we can.

The AA part-owns AA Insurance and AA Life. Aside from bringing Members discounted insurance, our share of any profit is used to help cover the cost of providing Membership services.

This has also enabled us to hold our subscription costs for Membership for many years.



AA Insurance

Consistently recognised by Reader's Digest Most Trusted Brands (since 2011) and Canstar Blue Most Satisfied Customers (since 2011), AA Insurance offers cover for vehicles, homes and home contents.

AA Members are rewarded with big discounts when multiple new policies are taken out, and discounts increase the longer you've been a Member.

You can find out how much cover you need for your home and assess the value of your contents with an online calculator. For a quote, visit aainsurance.co.nz or call 0800 500 231.

AA Life

AA Life provides reassurance your loved ones are taken care of should the unexpected happen.

AA Life offers a Life Cover policy which covers death, but can also pay out early for some terminal illnesses and funeral costs, up to \$10,000. There are also policies to cover accidental death, living expenses in case of sickness or injury, cancer, accident recovery and funerals.

AA Members receive a 5% discount on new policies and may qualify for a further 10% health and lifestyle discount.

To find out how much cover you need and what it will cost, visit aalife.co.nz or call 0800 808 191.

AA Traveller

Travel Insurance

AA Travel Insurance gives Members a 10% discount, and offers different cover levels to meet your needs: Comprehensive (with a no excess option), an Essentials package to cover the main risks, and Frequent Traveller cover for all trips within a 12-month period.

For a quote, have your AA Membership card ready and go to aatravelinsurance.co.nz or call 0800 500 444.

YOUR CENTRE NETWORK

The AA is a club, and a club needs a base for its Members.



Palmerston North
AA Centre Manager,
Nadine Nicolls and
AA Manawatu
District Chairman,
Garry Goodman at
the new AA Centre.

AA Members have 37 sites to choose from in the form of AA Centres. While a large range of products and services is handled by the team at AA Centres for everybody, AA Members get a number of special benefits not available to others.

MEMBER BENEFITS:

Free maps and guides
• Free accommodation guides
• Discounted travel accessories and publications
• Discounts on learning to drive products
• Discounts on emergency products
• Discounts on umbrellas and sunshades.

SERVICES: Join the AA and renew AA Membership • Vehicle and driver licensing
• Theory tests for new drivers
• Travel bookings
• Road user charges
• IRD number applications
• Photos for SuperGold Cards and passports.

PRODUCTS: New Zealand travel publications, maps and street directories • New Zealand Road Code, L plates and driver training products • International Driving Permits • ID photos • Overseas maps
• AA vehicle first aid kits
• GPS devices • Travel products • TravelSim cards • YHA membership
• Emergency products.

Supporting our AA Centre locations we have a network of 34 agents providing some of the functions of the AA, including driver licensing.

Convenience is coming to you.

We come to you and replace your battery on the spot, any day, in most areas.

AA Members get more:

- \$25 discount*
- New Zealand-wide warranty of up to 3 years
- Assurance our experts will fit the right battery



Call **0800 500 222** or visit **aa.co.nz/batteries**

*Only applicable when a battery is purchased via AA Mobile Battery Service.

AA Motoring

Battery Service

Your AA fleet

We provide services to more than 1.5 million Members. To do that we need to be pretty mobile. Assisting our team of nearly 1,000 people deliver those services is an equally important fleet of vehicles.



AA Roadservice

We attend nearly half a million callouts every year, and mobilise 92% of breakdowns at the roadside. From flat batteries to changing a flat tyre, we're here to help.

Call ***222** free from your mobile phone, **0800 500 222** or download our mobile app for Apple and Android devices (aa.co.nz/mobile-app), which also helps us to locate you.

AA Battery Service

Nearly half of all AA Roadservice callouts are battery-related. In Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch, we have dedicated battery vans who'll come to you, assess your battery and recommend the next step. If a replacement is required, it can usually be done on the spot; just contact AA Roadservice.



AA Auto Glass

AA Members receive a 10% discount on mobile windscreen replacements. The mobile service is also available to repair chips before they turn into major cracks.

Call AA Auto Glass on **0800 300 120** or go to aa.co.nz/autoglass

AA Members can also get free emergency, temporary side glass replacement to ensure your car remains dry and clean. Contact AA Roadservice.

AA Vehicle Recovery

When your vehicle can't be fixed on the roadside, we'll transport it to the nearest place of safety or repair. If you're an AA Plus Member, we'll transport it to your home (or preferred repairer if that's closer than home) – the full length of the country if required. See aa.co.nz/aaplus



AA Driving School

With nearly 125 driving instructors, the AA Driving School is serious about creating safe, confident drivers. AA Members, or their children, who are new learner drivers can get three free driving lessons. There are a few terms and conditions, see aa.co.nz/drivers

AA Vehicle Inspections

We inspect over 2,000 vehicles every year to help make good purchase decisions. We're mobile in major centres, otherwise the vehicle can be checked at one of 21 outlets. Book an inspection at aa.co.nz/vi or call **0800 500 333**.



AA Traveller

AA Traveller distributes more than 3 million maps and guides throughout New Zealand each year. During the busiest tourist season, up to 10,000 copies of our maps and guides are picked up by travellers every day.

THE YEAR in review

NZAA ANNUAL REPORT 2014 – 2015



FROM LEFT: AA Chief Executive Brian Gibbons and AA President Trevor Follows

THE AA HAS had a particularly successful year with achievements on multiple fronts, including unprecedented Membership growth. In fact, it would be fair to describe 2014/15 as a standout year.

The many successes we highlight in this report demonstrate that the Association has a real relevance when it comes to assisting and servicing the motoring needs of New Zealanders. The numbers also show that the support we provide continues to be genuinely valued.

Central to our positive results is

significantly increased Membership numbers. The last financial year saw a record 121,000 joins, with Membership totalling 1.48 million at the end of June, and that growth continues, evidenced by Membership now surpassing 1.5 million.

While that growth has been across all age groups, what is particularly pleasing is the expanding base of young, first-time drivers. The launch of AA Ignition, which provides three free, professional driving lessons to Members and the children of Members, was clearly a factor driving the growth of that younger demographic.

While AA Ignition's popularity surpassed expectations, it also demonstrated that the Association can still find new ways of broadening the range of services and benefits available to Members, in this case with an emphasis on younger drivers. Our aim is to ensure that, collectively, those services and benefits present a compelling reason for every motorist to belong.

Expanding services has been a hallmark of the Association in recent years, with the launch of AA Ignition last year, the introduction of free eye examinations with Specsavers the year before and, prior to that, the launch of AA Smartfuel as examples. Each of those initiatives found favour with Members, as the numbers highlight:

- AA Ignition provided nearly 20,000 free lessons this year alone.
- More than 350,000 free eye exams were taken at Specsavers, equating to \$21 million in savings over the two years since launch.
- \$242 million in fuel savings have been availed through AA Smartfuel since launch.

What is also worth noting is that these services were provided without the need to increase Membership subscriptions. Being able to maintain Membership fees, which we have been able to do for a number of years now, is something we are particularly proud of; that will continue to be our objective.

Pleasingly, our ability to hold Membership fees and at the same time increase the number of benefits available takes nothing away from the traditional services provided by

the Association, such as roadside assistance and free maps and guides. AA Roadservice continues to provide assistance to around 500,000 Members every year and we continue to seek new ways to make that service even more valuable, relevant and easy to access. Our motivation is driven by the desire to enhance Members' experience and satisfaction wherever we can, and is enabled by the financial contribution of our commercial activities.

Strong financial returns from those commercial activities enable the expansion and improvement of all services and also allow us to develop greater depth and diversity within the Association in terms of what new assistance areas the AA can help its Members with.

MEMBERSHIP

AA Membership enjoyed unprecedented growth over the 2014/15 year with total Membership increasing by a net 54,025 to 1,480,920.

- **A record 121,007 new personal Members joined the Association, taking the total personal Membership roll to 952,959.**
- **Vehicle-based Membership enjoyed record growth of 5.1%, increasing to 527,961.**

There is no doubt the Association's strategy to add new Member benefits beyond the traditional services such as AA Roadservice is driving that growth year-on-year. In addition to the new benefits already reported, these include free vehicle safety checks, discounted movie tickets at EVENT cinemas, special rates on Thrifty Car Rentals, discounted accommodation, and savings with AA Insurance and AA Life. In effect, each is contributing value, however, collectively they provide savings that today far outweigh the cost of belonging.

The importance of that value equation is such that we highlight those savings on Members' individual subscription renewal

notices. When combined with the Association's 'My AA' Membership pricing model, which rewards the loyalty of Members with increasing tenure discounts, it has resulted in a Membership retention rate of over 90%.

Maintaining that philosophy of expanding benefits, the next 12 months will see further initiatives launched, each of which will enhance further the value of Membership and build on our aspiration of truly making AA Membership indispensable for New Zealand motorists.

ADVOCACY

Another significant benefit of the Association is its continuing role advocating for road safety and motoring improvements on behalf of Members and the motoring public. The AA has been focussed on five areas in its advocacy work over the last 12 months and these will continue to be priorities. These are speed, drunk and drugged driving, visiting drivers, the One Network Road Classification system, and regional transport funding and Auckland infrastructure.

Each of these is a significant, long-term opportunity to make our roads safer and better, and to make motoring more pleasurable.

Mindful that speed is a factor in the road safety equation, your Association has been involved in a government-led Safer Speed Programme. The Programme is trying to change the way the public perceives speed, encouraging better conversations and risk appreciation. It is also investing in new, more sophisticated methodologies to set safe and appropriate speeds more consistently across the country.

Pushing for alcohol interlocks to become mandatory for repeat or high-level drink drivers has been another major focus this year. The AA Research Foundation commissioned a study of the interlock programme to help guide future advocacy around this key road

"A record 121,007 new personal Members joined the Association, taking the total personal Membership roll to 952,959."

safety initiative.

The AA Research Foundation also commissioned other work tied to improving road safety and our transport system. One study investigated how drivers perceive risks on the road while another examined the levels and types of traffic offending by young drivers and the pathway for youth through the justice system. This research will help guide the Association's policy and advocacy focus.

As crashes involving tourist drivers became a huge focus during the last year, the Association was motivated to become part of the Government's Visiting Drivers project which sought measures to address the issues. Numerous initiatives were proposed, including engineering improvements to some roads, better practices from rental firms and more information for visitors on our road rules and driving safely while here.

With increasing demand for road infrastructure in the Auckland region, it was imperative that Members' views be understood and represented. We conducted several surveys on the subject and also created a regular *Auckland Matters* publication to share Member views and stimulate discussion with transport authorities.

ROADSERVICE

The AA is the premier provider of roadside assistance for New Zealand motorists and is the number one drawcard for Membership. It is our

objective to constantly look at ways of enhancing the service, and this year was no exception.

Key service enhancements this year have centred around optimising the delivery mix of contracted roadside assistance providers, the AA's own Service Officers and operators of the AA Battery vans. The positive outcome of that approach has seen the AA response times enhanced in terms of meeting peak demand, and the success of that initiative has received positive Member feedback.

The other initiative this year has been driving innovation and efficiencies into roadservice through the use of new technologies, the use of web services to automate job dispatch to contractors, the replacement of ageing in-vehicle equipment and moving the technical information and support online.

This year the Association attended 472,000 roadservice jobs of which:

- 40% were for flat batteries.
- 14% were for mechanical and electrical faults.
- 16% were for towing services.
- 10% were for lockouts.
- 8% were for tyre changes.
- 5% were for fuel.

Critical to customer service satisfaction, AA Roadservice attended 88% of those calls within 60 minutes, and was able to mobilise 92% of breakdowns on the spot.

AA INSURANCE

This year, a key development within AA Insurance has been the adoption of new claims and services systems in partnership with joint venture shareholder, Suncorp. This enabled AA Insurance to refine existing products, facilitate added benefits and launch new Classic Vehicle and Landlord policies, both of which are proving popular.

The company enjoyed consistent customer policy growth during the year. That strong growth is attributable to AA Insurance's increasing reputation for providing

value-for-money car, home, and contents insurance, backed by award-winning service, and increasing online capability.

There has also been significant progress in settling Canterbury earthquake claims; 97% of customer claims have now been resolved.

As part of its customer-focused approach, AA Insurance initiated 'Live Chat' which allows customers to interact online in real-time. In the last year more than 15,000 customers used the service.

Another cornerstone of AA Insurance's success story is its reputation. The company has won the Direct Insurer of the Year Award for three years running and was recognised in the inaugural Corporate Reputation Survey, rating fifth out of 50 companies.

For the past four years, AA Insurance has won Canstar Blue's Most Satisfied Customer Awards for Car Insurance, while winning the Home and Contents section for the past three years – achieving 5 out of 5 stars in every category for home and contents.

AA Insurance also won the inaugural Reader's Digest most trusted General Insurer for the past four years, as well as the inaugural Reader's Digest Quality Service Awards for Home and Contents and Car Insurance.

AA LIFE

AA Life has had a particularly successful year. It achieved strong growth in policy sales and customer numbers and was named New Zealand's Most Trusted Life Insurance Brand at the Reader's Digest Most Trusted Brands Awards for the third consecutive year.

Consumer awareness was enhanced during the year by an innovative marketing campaign featuring distinctive yellow sheep characters named Ramsey and Lambert. That campaign stimulated interest in AA Life, attracting enquiries through all sales channels: AA Centres, over the phone, and online.

DRIVER EDUCATION

Following its launch in October 2014, the full AA Ignition programme offering three free driving lessons to new learner drivers finished the financial year with 12,000 sign-ups.

The AA Driving School extended the availability of the programme throughout New Zealand and has assisted thousands of new drivers to have professional driver training for the first time. The restricted test pass rate for students who have participated in AA Ignition is higher than the national average by about 10%.

Another focus for the year for AA Driver Education was the development of new products, including one to help pre-learners prepare for the theory test for the learner licence and for students to prepare for their restricted and full practical driving tests.

AA Driver Training for Fleets and Businesses has also increased its reach and relevance, with many companies enrolling their staff for AA driving assessments and courses.

DRIVER LICENSING

Driver licence transactions increased by 7% over the previous year, with the AA Centres processing just under 1.2 million transactions.

In particular, learner licence transactions grew by 8%, with 133,000 first time drivers obtaining their licenses. However, by far the largest growth in transaction numbers was in respect of overseas driver licence conversions, which was up 20% on the previous year.

The growth in transaction numbers through the AA Centre Network is especially pleasing given the AA's desire to interact with as many motorists as possible when it comes to their driver licensing needs.

MOTORING SERVICES

A key development during the year was the change in Warrant of Fitness (WoF) inspection intervals and the Association responding to those fewer

WoF numbers. With an expected decline in WoF volumes, some of the AA's Motoring Service sites were converted to full AA Auto Centres where Members can get the full suite of vehicle servicing needs, including vehicle inspections, WoFs and minor repair work.

High volumes of used-car arrivals into New Zealand during the year continued to drive strong demand for the Association's compliance activity, necessitating the Association adding new delivery sites.

All in all, it was a busy year across motoring services, not forgetting the popularity of the AA's free consumer vehicle information service.

AA SMARTFUEL

AA Smartfuel celebrated another successful year of growth and further engagement of AA Members.

The focus for the year was on educating Members on the benefits of the programme and how accumulating fuel discounts results in higher savings.

A major marketing campaign around the character Edward was highly successful. Key highlights included growing the number of accumulators by 20,000, launching and promoting a mobile phone app with more than 50,000 downloads and increasing new cardholder growth to more than 17,000 per month.

In addition, AA Smartfuel developed and launched a new website designed to simplify the accumulation message. As a result of this, the number of visitors to the site doubled and the time spent browsing increased.

During the financial year, AA Smartfuel provided \$71 million in fuel discounts to 1.2 million cardholders who swiped at more than 1900 participating outlets.

AA TRAVELLER

Efforts to further diversify and strengthen our role in travel and tourism made good progress. Our core tourism publishing business, which publishes more than

three million maps, travel guides and related tourism publications each year, continues to be transformed to recognise changes in Member and customer practices, and the economics of print businesses.

A range of very successful new publications (*the New Zealand Cycle Trail Guide*, a Chinese language NZ visitor guide and the *What's On* series of visitor booklets which were acquired during the year), have diversified the core stable of maps and visitor guides which are so well known to AA Members.

The AA Traveller website, which handles tens of thousands of accommodation bookings each year, and also provides a wide range of other information to assist New Zealand travel planning and arrangements, is being further enhanced to make it a more valuable reference source in today's mobile-enabled world.

The AA has also become a more active participant in wider tourism industry affairs, with a focus on providing tourism businesses with cost-effective and locally-owned promotion and distribution channels for their products and services.

The year ahead will see us continue to expand our profile, presence and commercial involvement in the travel and tourism industry.

AA FINANCE

AA car loans had a remarkable year, noting that car loans were up by 52% on the previous 12 months. Most of those loans originated from applications via the AA's website.

A new Christchurch-based Car Loan Call Centre was opened this year. That operation, extended to a seven-day-a-week service facility, added to the growth in both applications and draw-downs. The AA has committed to make contact with every borrower within 10 minutes of the finance application being received during the business day.

This enhanced service is expected to contribute to even higher finance lending levels in the year ahead.

"AA Roadservice attended 88% of those calls within 60 minutes and was able to mobilise 92% of breakdowns on the spot."

Specifically, the objective is for a further 48% growth during the current financial year.

The average AA Car Loan is \$14,000, with a term of 39 months.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

The continued expansion of Member benefits and services was possible because of a very strong financial result of the Association's commercial activities and Joint Venture enterprises.

The consolidated result of \$20.8 million for the 2014/15 year is attributed to no single activity but rather to a combination of successful trading of all divisions, the joint ventures, and prudent investment of the Association's surplus funds.

It is also worth noting that this result has been achieved after spending \$2.7 million on the AA Ignition programme, making the combined result even more impressive.

Also of note is the fact that these results were achieved without increasing club subscription fees.

The consolidated result for the year further strengthened the Association's overall financial position, giving it the ability to confidently plan for and invest in the future while continuing to expand benefits, either directly to Members or by providing the necessary resources to the motoring policy and advocacy work that the AA is associated with.

MORE INFORMATION

For a more detailed annual report, go to aa.co.nz/publications

Summarised Financial Statements

THE NEW ZEALAND AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

	2015 \$000	2014 \$000
Revenue	120,483	110,287
Share of profit or loss in joint ventures	13,152	9,122
Other gains/(losses)	6,543	8,618
TOTAL REVENUE	140,178	128,027
Employee entitlements	63,754	59,838
Delivery and distribution	27,995	23,463
Plant, office and property overheads	8,348	8,384
Advertising and promotion	3,721	3,266
IT and telecommunications	6,108	6,193
Motor vehicle expenses	3,174	3,215
Goodwill impairment expense	293	365
Other expenses	5,742	5,496
TOTAL EXPENSES	119,135	110,220
Operating surplus before tax and grants	21,043	17,807
Grant to NZAA Research Foundation	(303)	(305)
Grant to SADD Aotearoa	(100)	–
Taxation benefit/(expense)	–	–
NET PROFIT FOR THE YEAR ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION ACTING IN THE INTERESTS OF MEMBERS	20,640	17,502
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME NET OF TAX:		
Revaluation of properties	621	545
Gain/(loss) arising on translation of foreign joint venture	(382)	298
Share of other comprehensive income/(loss) of joint ventures	(73)	(21)
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR, NET OF TAX	166	822
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION ACTING IN THE INTERESTS OF MEMBERS, NET OF TAX	20,806	18,324

THE NEW ZEALAND AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

	2015 \$000	2014 \$000
ASSOCIATION FUNDS AT BEGINNING OF PERIOD	135,818	117,494
Net profit for the year attributable to the Association acting in the interests of Members	20,640	17,502
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME:		
Gain/(loss) on revaluation of properties	621	545
Gain/(loss) arising on translation of foreign joint venture	(17)	259
Transfer to profit and loss on disposal of foreign operation	(365)	39
Share of other comprehensive income/(loss) of joint ventures	(73)	(21)
TOTAL OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	166	822
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME, NET OF TAX	20,806	18,324
ASSOCIATION FUNDS AT END OF PERIOD	156,624	135,818

THE NEW ZEALAND AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

	2015 \$000	2014 \$000
Net cash from operating activities	17,036	15,580
Net cash used in investing activities	(1,558)	(10,310)
Net cash used in financing activities	–	–
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	15,478	5,270
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of period	30,899	25,629
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF PERIOD REPRESENTED BY CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	46,377	30,899

NEW ZEALAND AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED NOTES TO THE SUMMARISED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

MEASUREMENT BASE

The financial statements are presented in New Zealand Dollars (NZD).
The functional currency is New Zealand Dollars (NZD).

ACCOUNTING POLICIES

There have been no material changes in accounting policies covered by these financial statements.

EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO BALANCE DATE

The Group received the following dividends post balance date from joint ventures; \$11.2 million on 27 August 2015 being their share of a dividend declared on 23 July 2015.

RECONCILIATION OF OPERATING SURPLUS TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2015 \$000	2014 \$000
Net profit for the year attributable to the association acting in the interest of members	20,640	17,502
Movement in non cash items	(15,895)	(8,331)
Movement in assets and liabilities	3,283	3,936
Movement in financing/investing activities	9,008	2,473
NET CASH INFLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	17,036	15,580

FULL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AVAILABLE

These summarised financial statements are unaudited and have been extracted from the full financial statements for the Association for the year ended 30 June 2015. The full financial statements have been prepared in accordance with New Zealand Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (NZ GAAP). They comply with New Zealand equivalents to International Financial Reporting Standards ("NZ IFRS"), International Financial Reporting Standards ("IFRS"), and other applicable financial reporting standards, as appropriate for public benefit entities, except for NZ IAS 16 whereby the Association has accounted for revaluations on an asset by asset basis rather than by class of asset. NZ IFRS requires all entities to determine whether they are a public benefit entity or a profit oriented entity for reporting purposes. The Board considers that the Association is more closely aligned with the characteristics of a public benefit entity than a profit oriented entity. The full financial statements were issued by the Board, and approved for distribution by the National Council on the 25th of September 2015.

The summarised financial report may not contain sufficient information for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Group but copies of the full financial statements and the unqualified auditors' opinion, dated 25 September 2015, can be obtained by members from:

The Secretary, The New Zealand Automobile Association Incorporated, P.O. Box 5, Auckland 1140.

THE NEW ZEALAND AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2015

	2015 \$000	2014 \$000
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	46,377	30,899
Other financial assets	57,445	50,244
Sundry receivables and prepaid expenses	10,474	10,416
Dividend receivable	42	–
Related party receivable	610	60
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	114,948	91,619
Property, plant and equipment	31,161	29,563
Investments	48,782	46,316
Related party receivable	–	3,304
Capitalised lease	31	50
Goodwill	7,939	8,232
Other intangible assets	2,036	2,369
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	89,949	89,834
TOTAL ASSETS	204,897	181,453
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES	24,027	22,687
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES	2,372	2,248
TOTAL LIABILITIES	26,399	24,935
NET ASSETS	178,498	156,518
ASSOCIATION FUNDS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS IN ADVANCE		
Accumulated funds	147,475	126,908
Asset revaluation reserve	9,149	8,528
Foreign currency translation reserve	–	382
TOTAL ASSOCIATION FUNDS	156,624	135,818
Subscriptions in advance	21,874	20,700
TOTAL ASSOCIATION FUNDS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS IN ADVANCE	178,498	156,518

For and on behalf of the Board, T G Follows, President,
M R Winger, Board Member
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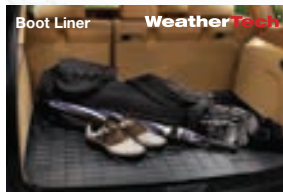
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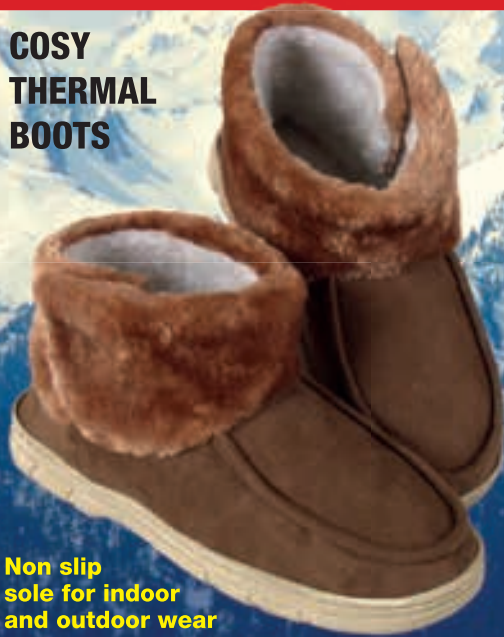
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	LADIES	MENS
SML	5-6	n/a
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LGE	9-10	7 ^{1/2} -8 ^{1/2}
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