

On second thoughts . . .



Kate Mead finds there is much to love on a return visit to Kerikeri.

Friday, 3.30pm: It's been 14 years since I was last in Kerikeri for a disastrous family holiday involving non-stop rain and cockroaches. Today I'm back with mum for the weekend, and as we pull into our accommodation at Wharepuke, things are looking considerably better.

4pm: Wharepuke's eco-cottages are set among 2ha of subtropical garden, listed by the NZ Gardens Trust as a Garden of Significance. Tania Booth takes us on a tour of the property's lush foliage. Her grandparents bought the land in 1938 and grew citrus fruit before Tania's father began planting more elaborate gardens 18 years ago. Many of the plants are from overseas – a strawberry fig tree from New Guinea stands before us with big, bulbous figs dangling like swollen strawberries. They look amazing but are inedible as New Zealand doesn't have the right kind of wasp needed to pollinate the plant. Further down the track we come across the non-toxic print-making workshop of Tania's partner, Mark Graver. He also teaches this technique which, curiously, involves soy sauce. He shows us the gallery next door, which is currently showing his work.

6.30pm: Dinner is onsite at Food at Wharepuke and Friday's menu is a Thai banquet. My mother, who avoids spice like the plague, is worried how her sensitive palate will cope but we are very pleased with the chicken pad Thai, beef panang and crispy pork belly salad. Our own bellies are pretty full but we have to try dessert – kaffir lime and lemongrass pannacotta complete with fresh mangosteen, pistachio praline and lemon myrtle ice cream, the perfect end.

Saturday, 10.30am: It's a short drive to the Kerikeri Basin where we are spending the morning. This area is home to New Zealand's oldest stone building, the Stone Store, built in 1832, and the oldest wooden dwelling in Australasia, the Mission House. Our guide, Millie, explains the history of the area before taking us on a tour of the Mission House, which was built by the Church Missionary Society. Missionary and blacksmith James Kemp became resident in 1832, and members of the Kemp family continued to live there until 1974. Original furnishings have been retained, and one of the most interesting knick-knacks we encounter is a china cup with a moustache guard across the brim. After noseying around the house, we peruse the Stone Store and pick up some fig and ginger jam. **12.30pm:** The Marsden Estate Winery is named after the Rev Samuel Marsden, who planted the first grapevines in Kerikeri in 1819. Restaurant manager Terry leads us in sampling some award-



winning wine, before a meal of caramelised onion tart with halloumi, beetroot and lemon salad, and a chicken and mushroom pie with beans and potatoes au gratin. The chocolate torte taunts me for dessert but all I can manage is a coffee with biscotti.

2pm: Get Fudged is on the main street back into town, and we're not going to pass by a shop with a great name like that. I pick up some fudge slabs to take home, including an intriguing watermelon piece, lemon meringue pie and the classic chocolate mud cake flavour.

2.15pm: Barely a few doors down, and also worthy of a detour, is Makana Confections. Stepping inside we are greeted by a sumptuous chocolate aroma and an offer of samples. We taste the macadamia butter toffee crunch – quite possibly one of the best chocolates I've ever had. We stretch out the taste until it melts away in our mouths and watch the chocolatiers working away in the next room, separated from our sweet teeth by a big window.

3pm: We check in to Kerikeri Homestead Motel. It's right in the middle of town, a couple of minutes' walk to cafes and shops. Our cosy room has a view of the pool but I make do with a soak in the huge bath.

7pm: The Pear Tree restaurant is opposite the Stone Store and also an historic site. This is the location of James Kemp's original blacksmith, and it's also where the first pear tree was planted in New

Zealand. The menu is impressive but it's an easy decision for us: sirloin steak with mashed potato, seasonal vegetables and red wine sauce for me, and braised lamb shanks with the same extras for Mum. She can't force me to eat my greens any more, so I leave the Brussels sprouts.

Sunday, 10am: Mum and I agree that Pete's Pioneer and Transport Museum is a highlight. Run by a charitable trust, this venue has a classic car museum holding treasures including a 1918 Model T, a 1929 Austin 7 and a 1930 Essex Super Six Sedan – one of only five in the world. Pete has also installed replicas of retail stores (complete with vintage products inside) and a schoolhouse from yesteryear. He says the museum is ideal for children and the elderly, but really we think anyone would enjoy it. Especially when you see the 1936 Studebaker that Pete and his team are restoring and will eventually use for tours.

Noon: On the way home we visit Ake Ake Vineyard and Restaurant for a final feast. Ake Ake is set among the vines so we have a fitting view during our meal. I choose the vineyard platter which comes with chorizo, salmon, bread, cheese and other goodies. It's a showcase of local produce – the restaurant uses its own garden and local suppliers where possible. The family-run vineyard is elegant and winemaker John takes me through a wine tasting.

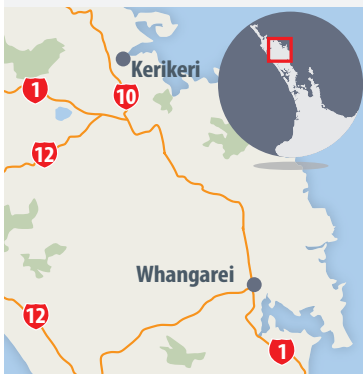
2pm: Relaxed and filled to the

Historic landmarks: The Stone Store and Mission House, Kerikeri.
Left: Wharepuke eco-cottage.

Fact file

Where to stay:
Wharepuke Eco-Cottages, 190 Kerikeri Rd, ph (09) 407-8933, www.wharepuke.co.nz
Kerikeri Homestead Motel, 17 Homestead Rd, ph 0800 222-407, www.kerikerihomesteadmotel.co.nz
What to do:
Stone Store and Mission House, 246 Kerikeri Rd, ph (09) 407-9236.
Keriblu Ceramics and Get Fudged, 560 Kerikeri Rd, www.keriblu.co.nz, www.getfudged.co.nz
Makana Confections, 504 Kerikeri Rd, www.makana.co.nz
Pete's Pioneer and Transport Museum, 460 Kerikeri Rd, www.petesmuseum.co.nz
Where to eat:
Food at Wharepuke, ph (09) 407-8936, www.foodatwharepuke.co.nz
Marsden Estate Winery, Wairoa Rd, ph (09) 407-9398, www.marsdenestate.co.nz
The Pear Tree, 215 Kerikeri Rd, ph (09) 407-8479, www.thepeartree.co.nz
Ake Ake Vineyard and Restaurant, 165 Waimate North Rd, ph (09) 407-8230, www.akeakevineyard.co.nz

For more information visit
www.northlandnz.com



brim, we start the four-hour drive back to Auckland. We both agree this Kerikeri holiday beats the last one hands down.

Kate Mead visited Northland with assistance from Destination Northland

On the ball – Ian Jones' Northland picks

Dive the **Poor Knights** marine reserve. It's a magical experience, even for the novice diver.
Visit the lord of the forest and our own Northland symbol, **Tane Mahuta**, New Zealand's largest known living kauri.

Play a round of golf at **Kauri Cliffs** for first-class service, a first-class course and first-class views. Take plenty of balls.

Go on a fishing charter in the beautiful **Bay of Islands** – you'll catch



Former All Black Ian Jones hosts RugbyCentre with Melodie Robinson on The Rugby Channel and will appear on every build-up show on Sky Sport 1 until the RWC final.

snapper aplenty. And please let me know when you find a good spot.

The Caledonian Games are held on New Year's Day at **Waipu** – it's an event not to be missed, with fun for the entire family and anyone with a touch of Scottish blood.