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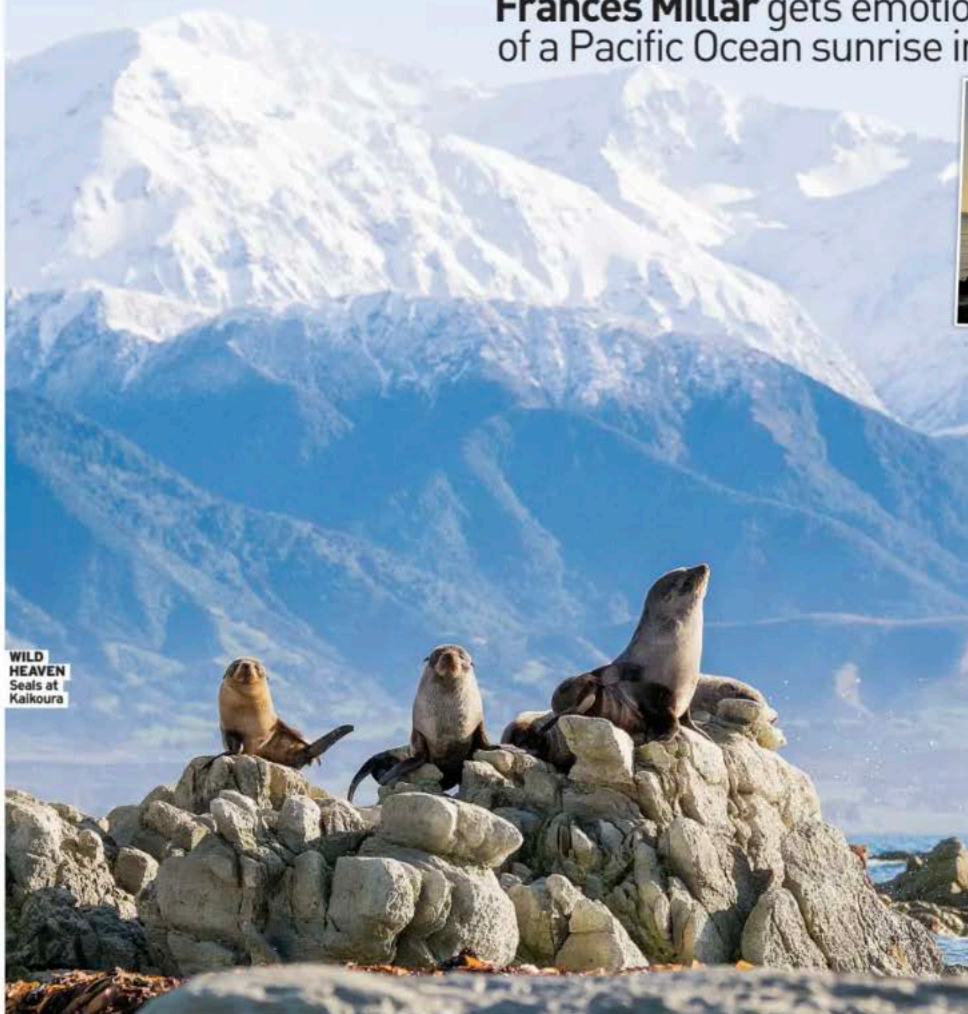
Travel



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Natural wonder

Frances Millar gets emotional at the sight of a Pacific Ocean sunrise in New Zealand



WILD HEAVEN
Seals at Kaikoura



GOOD AS GOLD
Sunrise over the Pacific

IT'S not often I'm spontaneously moved to tears, but sitting on my hotel balcony in a tiny northeastern coastal town on New Zealand's South Island, my eyes are welling up as I watch the sun rising over the Pacific for the first time.

The panorama before me is transcendent. Towering pine trees lining Kaikoura's promenade stand as stark silhouettes against the band of gold stretching across the horizon.

A dawn chorus sounds over the rushing waves, and with the slightest tilt of my head, the snow-capped Seaward mountain range looms into view. The vast sky is cloudless and quickly turning a piercing blue.

It's my second morning here and jet lag has upended my circadian rhythm.

Maybe I'm just very tired, but seeing this new day unfurling before me in a strange place on the other side of the world feels like a baptism by nature itself. So far I've only scratched the surface of what New Zealand has to offer, but I have already wilted.

Kaikoura is as good a place as any to kick off this far-flung adventure offering a bounty of Attenborough-worthy wildlife excursions. Its Maori name translates as 'eat crayfish' - an order with which I gladly comply twice in my three-day stint.

A two and a half hour drive from Christchurch, the largest city in the South Island, this former whaling

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BIG DEAL

Kenya safari/stay from £2,742pp; depart Heathrow on October 3 for a nine night package, with a full-board five night safari then Southern Palms resort, Mombasa coast, on half-board. Includes 23kg baggage and transfers. Use KENYA150 for £150 off, book by April 8. tj.co.uk

CRUISE NEWS

BY VICKY LISSAMAN

Direct from its West End triumph, winning the Olivier Award for best comedy, *Pride and Prejudice** ("sort of") will premier at sea aboard Queen Anne's British Isles Festival Voyage.

The unique and audacious retelling of Jane Austen's story by acclaimed theatre producer David Pugh will debut on May 24 for the new Cunard

ship's two-week celebratory circumnavigation of the British Isles that will also feature the official naming ceremony. Featuring pop classics and karaoke, the laugh-out-loud show will be a mainstay of Queen Anne's maiden season - headlining a diverse mix of live performances at sea. Cunard president Katie McAlister said: "We are excited to be teaming up with David Pugh for this at-sea premiere of one of the most acclaimed West End productions of

recent times. I truly believe we are redefining luxury entertainment at sea with Queen Anne."

Show creator Isobel McArthur said it would be "deeply affectionate towards the Jane Austen original, with a few new elements thrown in. Our version is *Pride & Prejudice* told by the servants - with karaoke.

"It is a big-hearted, dynamic piece where those who normally just serve the tea are playing every part."

cunard.com

BIG DEAL

Greek Islands from £299pp; enjoy a spring sunshine Aegean getaway at the four-star Evita Resort in Faliraki, Rhodes. Comes with all-inclusive accommodation and flights from East Midlands on selected dates in May. juniobolidays.com

GOING GREEN

PLANET FRIENDLY TRAVEL NEWS
BY NIGEL THOMPSON

British Airways is hitting the ground running with a boost for zero emissions equipment at Heathrow.

The flag carrier now has more than 750 items of airport equipment - from aircraft de-icing vehicles to baggage loaders - that are now either zero emissions electrical or operating on hydrotreated vegetable oil fuel.

Also, diesel passenger aircraft steps are being switched for electric versions, hybrid electric vehicles will move cargo and



electric baggage vehicles will be rolled out throughout 2024-25.

Collectively, the changes will save 7,170 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year. The updates are part of a £7 billion investment plan over the next three years and a spokesman said: "We are committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner, reducing emissions in the air and on the ground too." ba.com

Amazing Train Journeys, £22.99, lonelyplanet.com

BUY OF THE WEEK

BY NIGEL THOMPSON

Soak up some slow travel and scenic inspiration with this second edition of the coffee table guide.

It showcases 60 of the world's most memorable railway experiences, from Canada's Rocky Mountaineer and Australia's Ghan to the Glacier Express in Switzerland and Vietnam's Reunification Express, with maps, fascinating facts, gorgeous photos and expert's description of the trip.

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HOP ON
Travel by
tram in
Christchurch



COMFORT
Bedroom at
Sudima Hotel

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

station has transitioned into a haven for marine life.

The last whale was harpooned in 1964, and since then the town's thriving wildlife-focused tourist trade has become a key industry.

Boat trips promise encounters with dolphins and albatrosses. Although just strolling along the rugged coastline you can see colonies of fur seals, and even penguins pop up during certain seasons. Sperm whales - permanent residents owing to an oceanic canyon plunging to depths of 2,000ft just half a mile offshore - attract thousands of visitors each year. A lucky few might even spot migrating blue whales, humpbacks and orca.

Alas, on our tour with South Pacific Helicopters, they evaded us. We did, however, pass a huge pod of dolphins, swoop through forests lining the epic mountain range and stop off for a very memorable lunch.

Arriving by helicopter at a small seaside crayfish shack was like a scene from *Succession*. It was my first and likely only taste of a billionaire lifestyle, so I made the most of it. When cars tooted their horns, I nonchalantly waved back as if I was just out for a spin in my chopper.

From the air, our guide Lisa Bond, from Destination Kaikoura, enlightened us on the endangered Hutton's Shearwater, exclusive to these shores.

During breeding season, the penguin-like seabirds become so disorientated by the town's street lights when making the short flight from their alpine homes to the ocean, that they crash-land and can't take off again. So a community effort was launched to protect grounded shearwaters from oncoming traffic or, worse, prowling cats, and a calamity-proof artificial colony was created metres from the coast.

Admittedly, at the time I thought it a heartwarming local tale to gladden the ears of Chris Packham-types. But during my stay it became apparent that a deep respect for nature, specifically New Zealand's native flora and fauna, is taken very seriously indeed. 'Kaitiakitanga' as the Maori term it, not only epitomises Kiwi culture but is woven into governmental policy.

The designation of legal personhood to the Whanganui River in 2017 stands as testament. And a word of caution to travellers - strict biohazard checks upon arrival at Auckland Airport caused us to miss our connecting domestic flight, all due to a pair of suspicious hiking boots.

In another nature-inspired initiative,

Kaikoura aspires to earn international acclaim as a dark sky sanctuary. On a chilly spring evening we met two local astronomers who had stationed telescopes aiming toward the darkening heavens.

After the tearful spectacle of dawn, the dusk unveiled a whoop-inducing, giddy celestial vista. Thousands of stars began littering the sky creating yet another stupefying sight for this city dweller. Like a pack of geeky schoolkids, we jostled for a peek through the eyepiece, shrieking as Saturn revealed itself.

Despite the unfathomable distance of 793 million miles, it appeared like a comic book illustration, its rings absurdly clear to see.

Aside from the natural wonders, Kaikoura extends its offerings to culture hounds too. Fyfie House, a salmon-pink Victorian-era whaler's villa, provides a glimpse into the challenging lives of early European settlers.

Literally built on foundations of whalebone, the pioneering 'can do' spirit of its original occupants is evident in its ill-measured but sturdy-enough joinery.



SHELL'S
KITCHEN
Frances
prepares
crayfish at
Hapuku



Travel



KOUR
BLIMEY!
Nature at
its finest in
Kaikoura



Tippie tips for New Zealand

BY VICKY LISSAMAN

New Zealand is offering tourists a sipping good time as it unveils the ultimate go-to guide for wine lovers. As the country's celebrated harvest wine season gets underway, its new 'wine-inary' showcases the breadth of its wine offerings and where to experience them at source.

Comprising 10 destinations across eight wine regions, the guide is packed with the best vineyards. Complete with a hero wine to try at each stop, restaurants, cultural Maori activities and thrilling adventures, the wine-inary has something to suit all travellers.

New Zealand sommelier Cameron Douglas said: "The destinations are plotted out to help travellers maximise their time in New Zealand, from coastlines and mountains. It's an easy-to-follow guide for the ultimate holiday."

The wine-inary takes in Auckland, where vino fans can enjoy a glass at Brick Bay Wines and single vineyard Thomas Wines for the Legacy Chardonnay and Syrah.

A short ferry away is Waiheke Island, home to Batch Winery, the highest vineyard on the island with sweeping views from the Coromandel to Auckland.

An essential on any wine-focused trip to New Zealand is Hawke's Bay. The region has the country's oldest vineyard, Mission Estate Winery.

The final stop on the North Island route is at Ata Ranō, a family owned winery in Wairarapa and respected Pinot Noir producer.

On the South Island travellers can enjoy a drink at Neudorf Vineyards in Nelson Tasman before heading to New Zealand's oldest pub, the Moutere Inn.

In Marlborough, wine lovers can experience world-renowned Sauvignon Blancs at a choice of wineries, from Cloudy Bay with private tastings on a yacht, to Clos Henri, which is dedicated to organic and low intervention winemaking.

The guide also comes with transport and accommodation suggestions as well as guided options.

A link to the New Zealand wine-inary will go live shortly on newzealand.com/cameron-douglas-wine-inary

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Wild new yonder

And in poignant contrast to the 21st century passion for conservation, display cases exhibit brutal tools of the town's former trade, alongside redundant whale oil products and intricate scrimshaw.

For avid foodies and gardeners like me, a visit to Hapuku Kitchen is essential. The highly-Instagrammable home of former MasterChef NZ contestant Fiona Read provides envy-inducing interior design inspo, as well as serving as a private dining restaurant and a culinary school.

Nestled among flower gardens, a veg patch, clucking hens, a citrus and fruit orchard, even a nuttery for heaven's sake, with walnut, pecan, and hazelnut trees, it's a greedy person's fantasy reminiscent of that early scene from *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* where the doomed competition winners explore a sweetie-land Eden.

After plucking almost all our ingredient list from the garden, Fiona led a relaxed cooking class followed by an incredible meal. Chargrilled crayfish with coriander and chilli butter, asparagus with hand-bashed pesto, lightly smoked white fish and freshly-baked sourdough, followed by orange-zest-spiked stewed rhubarb with lemon thyme ice cream and walnut meringue.

For a small town heavily reliant on

unwind and take in the ocean and mountain views, while the Hiku restaurant offers modern European-inspired dishes with a Kiwi twist - perfect when you're awed-out after a day of wildlife rubbernecking.

Just three days in this rocky outcrop evoked a childlike giddiness I thought long gone. Beforehand we took a whistle-stop tour of Christchurch which, in

hindsight, provided hints this would be a holiday unlike your usual Euro-zone jaunt in the sun.

Once dubbed the most English city outside England, it's still rebuilding after the devastating earthquake that occurred in 2011.

However, the disaster presented an opportunity for the city to transform into a contemporary Kiwi hub, embracing both European and Maori heritage.

Beside the damaged Anglican Cathedral, still undergoing restoration, stands Turanga, the new central library. Its bold architecture is influenced by the South Island's Ngai Tahu tribe, from the Maori tattoo-inspired facade right down to the structure.

Even our guide, Riwan Grace, greeted us with a traditional 'hongi'. Roughly



WILDEST
DREAMS!
Dolphins and
an albatross



tourism, Kaikoura took a big hit during the pandemic due to New Zealand's strict lockdown policies. Borders were closed to foreign visitors for two and half years, and the last of the Covid restrictions were only lifted in August 2023.

But the newly opened Sudima Hotel is proof that tourism is booming again. Located on the shoreline, its generously-sized rooms are decorated in calming tones, inviting guests to

“A deep respect for native flora and fauna is taken very seriously”