

The Senior traveller

AUGUST 2014

Taste for travel...

Hike, bike or kayak your way to New Zealand sights – PAGES 4-5

Photo: Fiona Harper



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■ NEW ZEALAND

Relax – hiking, biking or kayaking... it's all fun

Ride the Great Taste Trail in combination with walking the Abel Tasman National Park for a civilised easy outdoor adventure.
Story and photos: FIONA HARPER



ADELE Hadfield, shot dead by her feisty second husband William Knowles, was a headstrong independent woman. Of fine breeding, landed gentry of Nelson you might say, the story of her death (preceded by falling pregnant to her lover William whom she later married) has long been a skeleton in the closet of the Wilson family.

Adele raised nine children at Awaroa settlement with her first husband William Hadfield, and today her descendants operate guided walks on the land now known as Abel Tasman National Park on New Zealand's South Island.

After a morning's hiking with senior guide Lucy Hodgson, who also happens to be the partner of Adele's great great grandson Darryl Wilson, the story of Adele's tragic death unfolds over lunch at Meadowbank Homestead.

With her portrait hanging on the living room wall, it's easy to appreciate her loneliness, having arrived at this remote outpost as an 18-year-old newlywed in the 1870s.

Protected with national park status since 1942, Abel Tasman National Park has golden beaches bookended by towering clusters of granite boulders which intersect forest-clad hills tumbling into the Tasman Sea. Dolphins and penguins inhabit the calm sea, and fur seals bask on rocks.

In a wind shadow and graced with a mild Mediterranean climate, the Nelson Tasman region claims the prize for the highest sunshine hours (subsequently with the fewest rainy days) in New Zealand.

The park is criss-crossed with 54km of walking trails. Day walks are available, but by far the best option is to join a three-day or five-day walk, overnighting at either of two beachside lodges. Fully guided and all inclusive, also with luggage portage, all double rooms have en-suites. Walks are graded easy, covering between seven and 17km each day.

The trails are spectacular. Tracks run alongside boulder-strewn streams, across the odd swing or fixed bridge, atop ridges affording expansive sea views, or across

golden beaches kissed by gin-clear sea.

All the while walkers are accompanied by bellbirds or curious tail-wiggling fantails pouncing on the insects walkers have disturbed.

Along the trails, the Department of Conservation provides facilities such as overnight huts, flushing or compost toilets and filtered drinking water taps.

Guided sea kayak paddles offer another perspective. They're great for poking around reserves like Adele Island where the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust works with the department to remove all predators.

The pretty coastal village of Kaiteriteri is the natural starting point for walkers and the finish point for cyclists on the Great Taste Trail.

Formerly known as the Tasman Loop Trail, most of the work expanding this splendid new trail is now complete. An easy sort of pleasure-seekers' triathlon could be created by combining cycling and hiking, with kayaking or eating as the third activity.

Covering about 66km, the Great Taste Trail Coastal Route is a relaxed self-guided ride across mostly flat and rolling terrain between Nelson and Kaiteriteri.

Cyclists bed down at gorgeous Pine Hill Lodge Mapua, with views across the vines, followed by Nautilus Lodge Motel Motueka the next night where rooms come with double spa baths. At Kaiteriteri check into Kimora Eco Retreat which takes full advantage of the sun with a vast bank of solar panels high on the hill overlooking the beach.

The Great Taste Trail passes through vineyards, apple orchards, alongside grazing paddocks or beaches, past galleries, cafes and at least 20 boutique breweries or distilleries. Interestingly, not that I'm condoning such behaviour; a cyclist cannot be charged with drink driving as NZ Driving

under the Influence laws apply only to motor vehicles.

There are plenty of leisurely diversions for sampling produce or chatting with the locals.

Try Jellyfish Cafe in a converted apple shed at Mapua for devilish slow-cooked lamb shanks, or rambling Jester House Cafe, poking fun at nursery rhymes including quaint accommodation in a boat at the bottom of the garden (There was an old woman who lived in a shoe?).

Riverside Cafe is run by the residents of the Riverside Community, established by conscientious objectors to World War II.

Lovers of fresh raw milk will enjoy buying a litre of raw milk (from a type of vending machine no less) for the bargain price of \$NZ2.

Vineyards worth calling into for cellar door tastings and lunch include Neudorf Vineyards and Waimea Estate.

With most of the route on designated cycle paths, the Gentle Cycling Company takes care of all pesky logistics like transporting luggage.

The only decisions you'll need to make are where to stop for lunch, beer or wine tastings, along with how to carry the artworks you're likely to pick up along the way. Large waterproof panniers help.

The Gentle Cycling Company has support vehicles on hand to address any maintenance issues, plus they'll pick you and your bike up and take you back to Nelson at the end of your ride.

Adele Hadfield would likely be delighted had her own life been as easy.

* Fiona Harper is a freelance travel writer specialising in active and soft adventure. Read more at www.travelboatinglifestyle.com

She was a guest of Tourism New Zealand.

■ More on New Zealand – Page 18.

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ABOVE – Strolling through the vines in Nelson. Photo courtesy Ian Trafford/Tourism New Zealand.
 RIGHT – Quirky artworks can be enjoyed enroute.
 OPPOSITE PAGE – The Abel Tasman National Park boasts beautiful beaches.

IF YOU GO...

TASMAN'S Great Taste Trail will eventually incorporate a 175km loop from Nelson. The Gentle Cycling Company has been instrumental in developing an easy network of trails, some through private property, and is the only company offering fully supported cycling. All gear is provided – www.gentlecycling.co.nz

THE Wilson family has been welcoming visitors to the area since 1841, going back eight generations. Wilsons Abel Tasman guide multi or single-day walks through Abel Tasman National Park utilising their own boats to transport guests. Their two lodges, Torrent Bay Lodge and Meadowbank Homestead, are located within the park – www.abeltasman.co.nz

FOR more information on what to see and do in the Nelson Tasman region – www.nelsonnz.com

THE 20th Nelson Arts Festival will run from October 16-27 providing 12 days of fabulous, theatre, dance, music and other events including a masked parade on October 17 – www.nelsonartsfestival.co.nz

MORE walks: With nine iconic walks throughout the country, New Zealand has thousands of kilometres of walks covering all kinds of terrain. Walk for

half an hour, a day, a week or a month and choose the track that suits your ability and schedule.

New Zealand's 9 Great Walks showcase some of the most well-known locations and diverse landscapes. The volcanic 41km Tongariro Northern Circuit hike incorporates the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, while the Lake Waikaremoana Walk winds through 46km of lush Te Urewera National Park rainforest and wetlands.

Fiordland's Milford Track attracts hikers from all over the globe wanting to experience the dramatic vistas of mountain lakes, waterfalls and towering alpine peaks.

Short hikes or day walks are everywhere and easily fit into travel itineraries. The most renowned day walk, the 19.4km Tongariro Alpine Crossing, traverses dramatic volcanic plateau landscapes of crater lakes, alpine meadows and peaks. Auckland visitors can enjoy panoramic harbour and city views while walking the dormant volcano Rangitoto Summit Track. The Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway visits cliffside seal and bird colonies, while West Coast walkers can explore the fascinating icy environment of the Franz Josef Walk – www.newzealand.com



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