

# SACRED BEAUTY

New Zealand's Bay of Islands has been fought over by Maoris, missionaries and British colonialists. Today it's a haven of calm and beauty, says **Teresa Levonian Cole**

The first thing that strikes me about New Zealand is the sky. Not its brilliant blue, but, rather, the clouds: white and morphologically inventive – fluffy, wispy, herringbone or translucent as angel wings. And in the Bay of Islands, they are doubly impressive, reflected in glassy waters protected by islands and promontories cloaked in native totara, rimu and manuka trees.

The Bay of Islands, so named by Captain Cook in 1769, is the most historic place in New Zealand. Home of early Maori settlers who paddled here from Polynesia some 1,000 years ago, of whalers and sealers, and of missionaries, who followed in their wake, this is where the famous Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840, whereby New Zealand became a British colony, its terms a cause of Maori resentment to this day.

At Opua, I board the Ipipiri to explore some of the 144 islands that dot the bay, with flowering pohutukawa trees erupting on the cliffs in ruby-red

clusters. Like Cook's Endeavour, the Ipipiri moored off an idyllic sandy cove on Motuarohia, also known as Robertson Island, after its one-time owners.

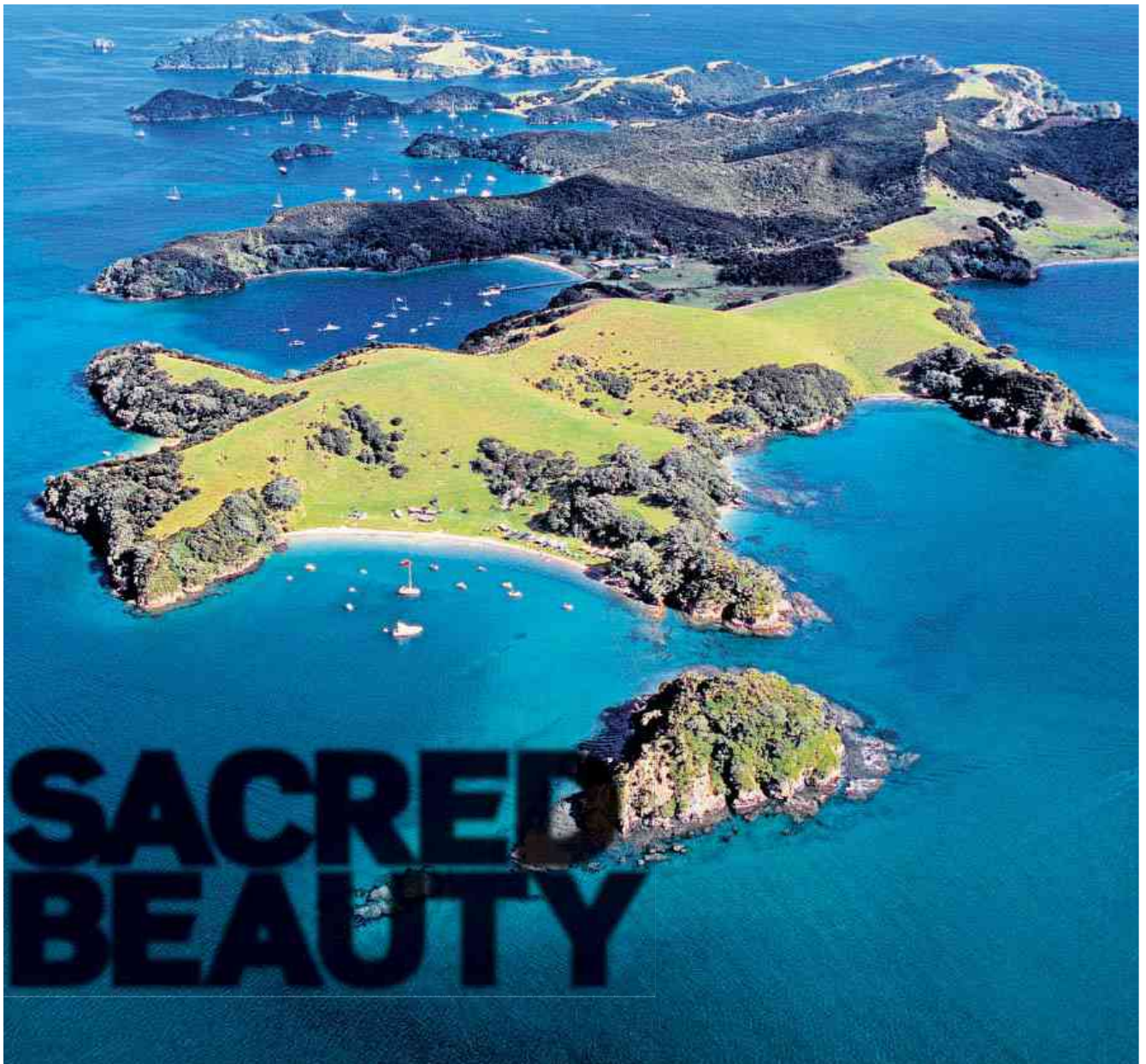
At nearby Moturua, we anchor for kayaking and snorkelling in the still-icy waters, the island a sanctuary for wildlife, including the endangered spotted kiwi. The remains of a *pa* – a Maori fortified village – sits atop the island. It was destroyed by the French in 1772, after the

CONTINUED OVERLEAF



Source: Sunday Telegraph {Discover}  
Edition:  
Country: UK  
Date: Sunday 16, January 2011  
Page: 1,2,3  
Area: 3337 sq. cm  
Circulation: ABC 501430 Weekly  
BRAD info: page rate £34,000.00, scc rate £80.00  
Phone: 020 7538 5000  
Keyword: New Zealand

> durrants



# 'The east coast is notched with deep inlets and sandy beaches'

## FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Maori roasted and ate the explorer Marion du Fresne, this being the ultimate sanction for his transgression against a sacred *tapu*.

Today, however, the Bay of Islands Maritime Park is a haven of calm and beauty, where dolphins leap and spin to the delight of seafarers, and red-back spiders pose the only menace to unwary explorers on the beach.

We dart around the frilly coastline, past Urupukapuka – the largest island and a fisherman's paradise. Yesterday, we're told, a pod of orcas convened in one of its bays; the marlin, their prey, have yet to arrive. We pass extraordinary basalt rocks rising sheer from the seabed, whose like are found only in two other places in the world.

With so many islands, peninsulas, promontories, bays and coves, I am by now thoroughly confused as to which way is up. But a scenic flight, next on the agenda, clarifies this peculiar topography. From 1,500ft above forested interior and emerald pastureland, down to 500ft above the sea at 90 Mile Beach to watch diving whales, we fly from coast to coast: the west, bordering the rough waters of the Tasman Sea, straight and featureless; the east, notched with deep inlets and sandy bays as though

edged with lace, the turquoise Pacific living up to its name.

We land on a small strip in a middle-of-nowhere called Waikiki, where 7,000 cows and 5,000 sheep are tended by just three farmhands. With the nearest supermarket an hour away, locals hunt and fish for sustenance. "On a good day," says our guide Stuart, who lives in an isolated cottage here, "you can catch seven large fish in 40 minutes."

We drive through native bush, Stuart explaining the medicinal properties of plants, to the northernmost tip of New Zealand, where the oceans meet in dramatic confrontation at the windswept tip of Cape Reinga. A lighthouse marks the craggy spot. It is a numinous place whence, according to Maori legend, the spirits of the dead depart for their homeland, Hawaiki.

Among the dark red rocks below, you can glimpse the cave where spirits spend three days before descending, via the roots of a pohutukawa tree, into the waters for their final journey. That tree, bizarrely, never flowers. No one would even think of approaching this most sacred of Maori sites.

Back on terra firma, it is time to explore the little towns around the Bay of Islands. Giving short shrift to the commercial centre, Paihia, I head for Kerikeri,

surrounded by citrus and kiwi orchards, on the mouth

of the pretty Kerikeri inlet. It was chosen, in 1819, as the site of the second Mission by the Reverend Samuel Marsden, who bought land from the local chief, Hongi Hika, in exchange for 48 axes. The axes no doubt came in handy at nearby Kororipo *pa* during the intertribal wars, while Marsden busied himself setting up the Mission House – the country's oldest standing building, completed in 1821.

But my prize for most charming town goes to Russell, the short-lived first capital of New Zealand, a 10-minute ferry ride across

the Bay. By the 1820s this town of ill-repute – Kororareka of old – was known as "the hellhole of the Pacific" and later branded by Darwin as "a stronghold of vice". It's still a little town of wooden houses along the waterfront – but the 17 "grogshops and brothels" that catered for the resident Nantucket whalers and convict escapees from Australia are now smart b&bs that swell with visitors during summer.

The pretty Anglican Christ Church of 1836, its hassocks embroidered with boats and seashells, stands as the oldest church in New Zealand. Three

years later, the Catholic Bishop Pompallier arrived to instil Christian values, setting up a printing house for

Source: Sunday Telegraph {Discover}  
Edition:  
Country: UK  
Date: Sunday 16, January 2011  
Page: 1,2,3  
Area: 3337 sq. cm  
Circulation: ABC 501430 Weekly  
BRAD info: page rate £34,000.00, scc rate £80.00  
Phone: 020 7538 5000  
Keyword: New Zealand

> durrants

religious texts and tannery for their bindings, today a fascinating museum. These two buildings, complete with bullet holes, are the only ones to survive the settler era after the destruction of the town in the 1845 Flagstaff War between the British and Chief Hone Heke, whose repeated chopping down of the pole bearing the Union flag did not please the authorities.

I sit at a waterside café, watching the boats and the

antics of a tui – the parson bird, whose unorthodox sermon of trills, whistles and cackles is the most entertaining I have heard. Across the water, I can glimpse the latter-day “Heaven” of pious Paihia.

If Russell was “Hell”, I have no doubt where I would rather be.

Have you been to the Bay of Islands? **YOUR SAY**  
Send any comments to [yoursay@telegraph.co.uk](mailto:yoursay@telegraph.co.uk) or post them on our website at [telegraph.co.uk/travel](http://telegraph.co.uk/travel)

## ESSENTIALS

### GETTING THERE

Qantas (020 8600 4300; [www.qantas.com.au/uk](http://www.qantas.com.au/uk)) flies to Auckland from Heathrow via Singapore/Bangkok and Sydney from £875 return. British Airways (0844 493 0787; [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)) offers various routes, the cheapest being via Los Angeles, and connecting with Qantas, from £1,014.

Air New Zealand (0800 028 4149; [www.airnewzealand.co.uk](http://www.airnewzealand.co.uk)) currently has a flight sale (book before the end of January) from £779 return, via Hong Kong.

Singapore Airlines ([www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com)) also flies to New Zealand, from £935. From Auckland, either take a 40-minute flight to Kerikeri on Air New Zealand, on the Bay of Islands, or drive (see “Getting Around” below).

### PACKAGES

Journeys to New Zealand can be tailor-made by many operators, including Qantas Holidays (020 8222 9124; [www.qantas.holidays.co.uk](http://www.qantas.holidays.co.uk)), which offers a “Standard Kiwi” 15-night self-drive itinerary of

highlights of both the North and South Islands, including the Bay of Islands, from £3,750 per person, including international flights, mid-range accommodation, sightseeing tours, 16 days’ car hire, and the ferry crossing between the North and South Islands.

Bridge & Wickers (020 07483 6555; [www.bridgeandwickers.co.uk](http://www.bridgeandwickers.co.uk)) offers a 14-night self-drive grand tour of New Zealand from £2,995 per person, including international flights, boutique or luxury accommodation, 12 days’ car hire and ferry crossing.

Discover the World (01737 218800; [www.discover-the-world.co.uk](http://www.discover-the-world.co.uk)) offers a 14-night scenic and cultural highlights tour, including international flights, budget accommodation, 14 nights’ car rental, ferry crossing, and TranzAlpine & TranzCoastal train journeys, from £2,498 per person.

### GETTING AROUND

European flights arrive in Auckland (if necessary, overnight at the De Brett Hotel; 0064 9 925 9000; [www.hoteldebrett.com](http://www.hoteldebrett.com)), whereupon most visitors self-drive around New Zealand.

Few roads means navigation is simple, and cars are right-hand drive. Most tour packages include car hire, but if you choose to go it alone, even small local airports have car-hire facilities, including the major companies (Hertz, Avis and Budget) together with the local Jucy (0800 559 3292; [www.jucy.co.nz](http://www.jucy.co.nz)). Car hire costs around £25 per day.

From Auckland International Airport, the 150-mile (240km) drive to Kerikeri takes about three and a half hours. Alternatively, take an internal flight to Kerikeri and travel in style with the Northland Limousine Service (9407 4239; [www.limo4me.co.nz](http://www.limo4me.co.nz)).

### THE INSIDE TRACK

☛ Take an overnight cruise round the Bay on the new Ipihiri, a comfortable 150ft catamaran with 30 cabins, and a friendly, knowledgeable crew whose captain brings the region’s history to life.

From £150 per person inclusive, except drinks. Further details: 9402 7421; [www.ipihiri.co.nz](http://www.ipihiri.co.nz).

☛ Take a guided scenic flight/drive from Kerikeri to legendary Cape Reinga, with Salt Air (9402 8338; [www.saltair.co.nz](http://www.saltair.co.nz)); £215 per person.

☛ Visit the historic Waitangi Treaty Grounds (9402 7437; [www.waitangi.net.nz](http://www.waitangi.net.nz)) with a Maori descendant of the original signatories as your guide, and see the Treaty House and museum, a 115ft Maori war canoe

Source: Sunday Telegraph {Discover}  
Edition:  
Country: UK  
Date: Sunday 16, January 2011  
Page: 1,2,3  
Area: 3337 sq. cm  
Circulation: ABC 501430 Weekly  
BRAD info: page rate £34,000.00, scc rate £80.00  
Phone: 020 7538 5000  
Keyword: New Zealand

and traditional Marae (meeting house).  
☉ Drive to Hokianga on the west coast (around one and a half hours). The place where Puke, the first Maori, landed, Waipoua Forest is home to Tane Mahuta ("Lord of the Forest") – a 2,100-year-old kauri tree, 167ft high, with a girth of 55ft. Information on guided walks at [www.footprintswaipoua.com](http://www.footprintswaipoua.com).

### WHAT TO BRING HOME

Kerikeri has a great range of craft shops.

Visit Angela Peacock's Possum Trendz ([www.possumtrendz.co.nz](http://www.possumtrendz.co.nz)) in Kerikeri for a great range of snug and unusual knitwear made from a blend of possum fur (considered a pest in New Zealand) and merino wool.

The wood of NZ's famous and protected kauri trees is crafted into exquisite objects and furniture by Tony Mudford at the Kauri Workshop (9407 9196; [www.kerikeri.co.nz](http://www.kerikeri.co.nz)).

With so many health-giving plants on its doorstep, Living Nature ([www.livingnature.com](http://www.livingnature.com)) has a fabulous range of natural body products and cosmetics.

Chocoholics cannot miss Makana ([www.makana.co.nz](http://www.makana.co.nz)), where you can watch chocolate being moulded into mouthwatering confections. Manuka honey, in different strengths of active ingredient, is widely available.

### THE BEST HOTELS

#### The Duke of Marlborough, Russell, Bay of Islands ££

On the waterfront, John Johnson's grogshop and brothel 187 years ago, and holds the oldest liquor licence in New Zealand. History

aside, this charming white weatherboard hotel has recently come under new young ownership, and is enjoying a total revamp (9403 7829; [www.theduke.co.nz](http://www.theduke.co.nz); doubles from £100).

#### Bay of Islands Lodge, Port Opuā, Bay of Islands £££

Delightful four-bedroom (plus one two-floor apartment) lodge hidden among manuka trees in the hills overlooking the Bay near

Opuā; host Peter is an excellent chef (dinners are included); (9402 6076; [www.bayofislands.lodge.co.nz](http://www.bayofislands.lodge.co.nz); doubles from £225 per night).

#### Kauri Cliffs, Matauri Bay ££££

A super-lodge, with three beaches, farmland, forest and magnificent cliff-edge golf course, 6,500 acres in all. The 22 suites, with ocean views, balconies and fireplaces, are set among luxuriant native bush. Semi-formal dinners (included) are inventive and served in the beautiful, colonial-style main lodge (9407 0010; [www.kauricliffs.com](http://www.kauricliffs.com); from £310 per person per night).

#### Eagle's Nest, Russell, Bay of Islands

£££££

Wonderful, though not a hotel or a lodge; the creation of Sandra and Daniel Biskind perches atop a promontory in 75 acres above Russell, with five self-contained, fully-equipped villas, from the one-bedroom First Light to the four-bedroom Rahimoana (which includes a Porsche Cayenne for guest use in the local area).

Immaculate service is a phone-call away; ideal retreat for romantic couples and families who value privacy and security – but at a considerable price (9403 8333; [www.eaglesnest.co.nz](http://www.eaglesnest.co.nz); from £660 per night for First Light, low season).

### THE BEST RESTAURANTS

#### Pure Tastes, Paihia ££

Don't be put off by this being part of the Paihia Beach Resort – the ocean-front, contemporary fine dining restaurant was voted NZ Restaurant of the Year last year; it uses 22 local suppliers; inventive dishes, but the seven-course tasting menu takes the pain out of decision-making (9402 0003; [www.puretastes.co.nz](http://www.puretastes.co.nz)).

#### The Pear Tree, Kerikeri ££

The lovely views of the Kerikeri River make for an atmospheric setting. The menu is simple but delicious – even the burgers are made from Wagyu beef (8 7327 8733; [www.thepeartree.co.nz](http://www.thepeartree.co.nz)).

#### Kamakura, Russell ££

Contemporary and minimalist; on the waterfront, in the historic heart of Russell; inventive fusion menu (9403 7771; [www.kamakura.co.nz](http://www.kamakura.co.nz)).

#### Ake Ake Vineyard & Restaurant, Northlands ££

Although Northlands is not known for its vineyards, there are a few, and family-owned Ake Ake is one of the most delightful. Friday nights are popular Tapas Nights (9401 7137; [www.akeakevineyard.co.nz](http://www.akeakevineyard.co.nz)).

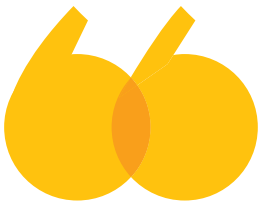
## WHAT TO AVOID

- ➡ Many roads to remote beauty spots are not paved and standard car-hire insurance does not cover driving on these roads. Check your cover carefully.
- ➡ Sunburn. Lack of pollution and gaps in the ozone layer mean that UV rays are particularly strong in summer – take adequate protection.
- ➡ Try to avoid visiting Russell when cruise ships are docked – the little town gets swamped. For a schedule, visit [www.tapeka.com/cruiseships.htm](http://www.tapeka.com/cruiseships.htm).
- ➡ Unlike Australia, there is no seriously nasty fauna lurking in the bushes. But watch out for a type of red-back spider.

## DID YOU KNOW?

New Zealand is one of just three countries in the world to have two national anthems

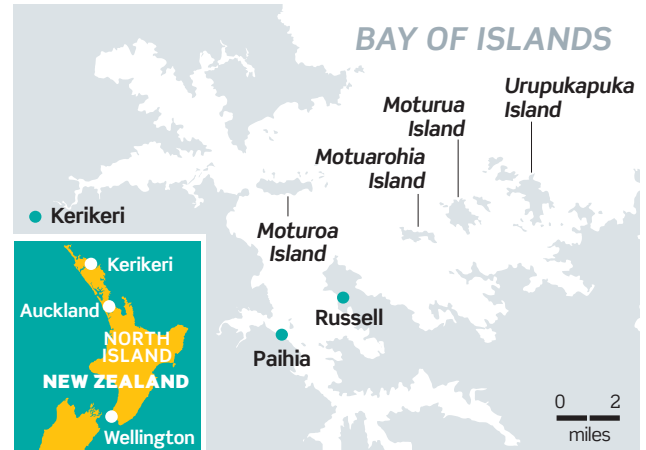
## WELCOME TO DISCOVER



For many, a remote, little-visited island with stunning scenery is the perfect holiday destination. This week we feature several such islands: not just New Zealand's 'haven of calm and beauty'

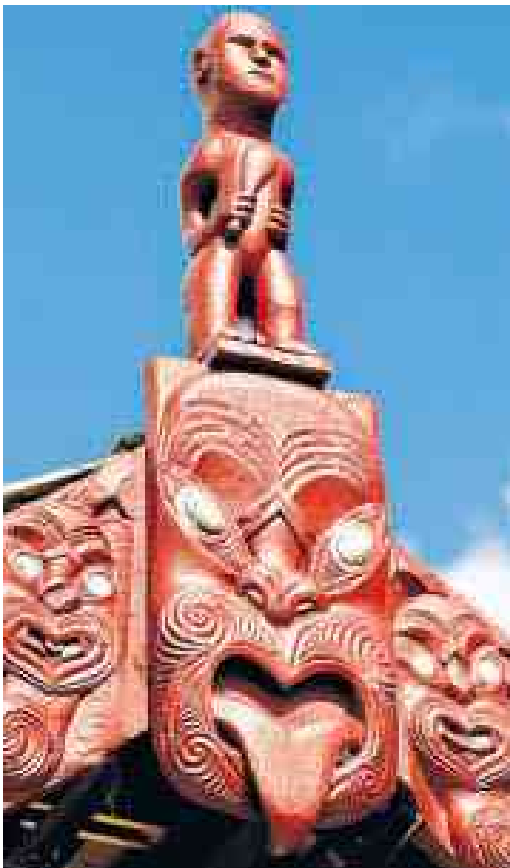
described by Teresa Levonian Cole in our cover story (p1-3), but the similarly favoured Barra and South Uist in the Outer Hebrides (p8-9). The Canary Islands, meanwhile, are the subject of our readers' guide. Neither remote nor little-visited, of course, but still a firm favourite. Read the great tips and comments on p6-7.

**Maggie O'Sullivan**  
Discover editor



Source: Sunday Telegraph (Discover)  
Edition:  
Country: UK  
Date: Sunday 16, January 2011  
Page: 1,2,3  
Area: 3337 sq. cm  
Circulation: ABC 501430 Weekly  
BRAD info: page rate £34,000.00, scc rate £80.00  
Phone: 020 7538 5000  
Keyword: New Zealand

> durrants

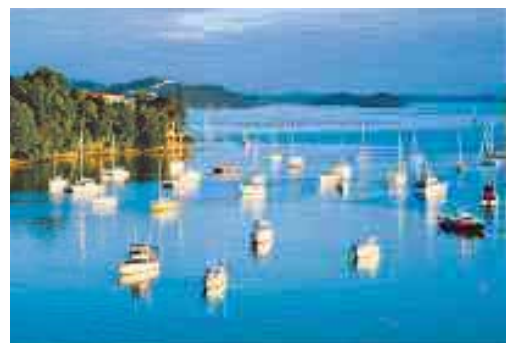


Prime position: a Maori carving, left, the Duke of Marlborough Hotel and, inset, one of its rooms



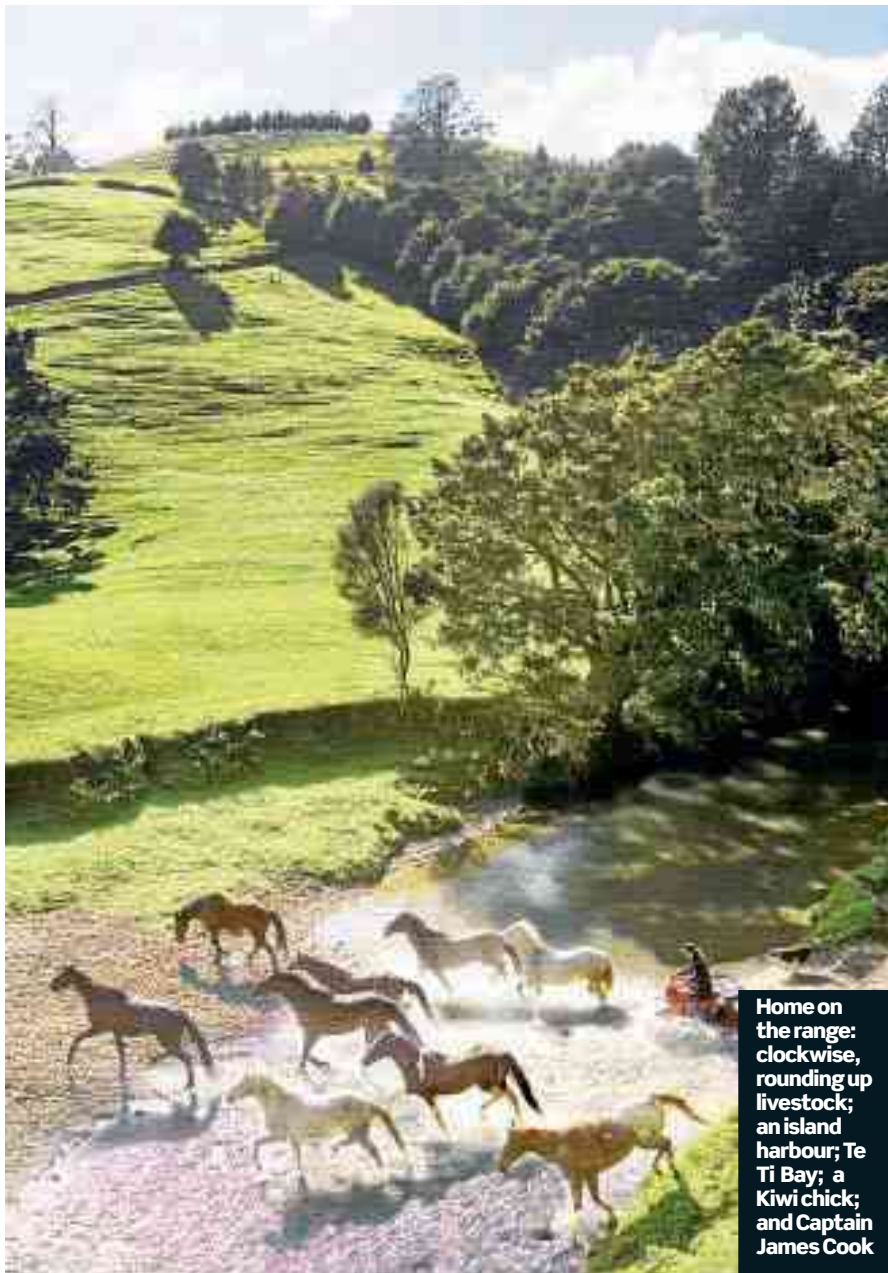
Source: Sunday Telegraph {Discover}  
Edition:  
Country: UK  
Date: Sunday 16, January 2011  
Page: 1,2,3  
Area: 3337 sq. cm  
Circulation: ABC 501430 Weekly  
BRAD info: page rate £34,000.00, scc rate £80.00  
Phone: 020 7538 5000  
Keyword: New Zealand

> durrants



Source: Sunday Telegraph {Discover}  
Edition:  
Country: UK  
Date: Sunday 16, January 2011  
Page: 1,2,3  
Area: 3337 sq. cm  
Circulation: ABC 501430 Weekly  
BRAD info: page rate £34,000.00, scc rate £80.00  
Phone: 020 7538 5000  
Keyword: New Zealand

> durrants



GETTY IMAGES/MINDEN PICTURES/RM/LONELY PLANET IMAGE/GALLO IMAGES/ALAMY

**Home on the range: clockwise, rounding up livestock; an island harbour; Te Ti Bay; a Kiwi chick; and Captain James Cook**