

# New Zealand: the bicyclers' nirvana

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Bill Martin is an educational project aid with the Outdoor Program and spent three months cycling in New Zealand from October 1977 to January 1978.

By **BILL MARTIN**  
For the Emerald

Is this you?

You like riding bicycles.

You enjoy touring in the United States but get tired of pick-up trucks cutting you off.

You've thought of touring the British Isles or Europe, but you're afraid Pan Am might abandon you at the London airport when the summer rush starts.

You could put up with the crowds, but the dollar just fell through the floor again, and you may have to resort to filling your pannier with gold coins.

You like cycling in the States during the summer, but wish there was a place where you and your bike could escape from the ravages of winter storms.

Now, when the leaves start dropping and the nights turn cold, and the rain starts, don't despair because there is a place in the world where trees are budding, snow is melting and the days are getting longer. Just follow the sun south and you may just run into one of the finest bike touring areas in the world.

New Zealand has long been a country unsurpassed in scenery and hospitality. And with the new air fares and world dollar situation, it will soon become noted for inexpensive travel. Until recently, the cheapest round-trip non-excursion, non-limiting fare was around \$1,800. But now Pan Am and Air New Zealand have one-way excursions for \$349. West Coast to Auckland. This drastic fare reduction coupled with a favorable exchange rate (approximately \$1 U.S. to 1 N.Z. dollar) makes New Zealand an overseas bargain.

Bicycle touring is a relative newcomer to this island nation, and after a short time there, you begin to wonder why it wasn't discovered before now. As with the British Isles, bicycling in New Zealand is one of the best ways to meet people and experience a diversity of scenery found nowhere else.

In an area the size of Colorado there are three million people,



Photo by Bill Martin

Bicycling in New Zealand provides numerous attractions, including the opportunity to stand halfway between the equator and the South Pole.

sixty million sheep and scenery varying from tropical jungles to fiords, volcanoes, rolling pastures and 12,000 foot mountain ranges. All these things are in a country where you're never more than 60 miles from the ocean.

The scenery is only surpassed by the people (called Kiwis). The Polynesian and English cultures intermix to create friendly, helpful people. Much could be written on the merits of New Zealand. Suffice to say that New Zealand deserves its popularity among travelers.

Being an agricultural exporting country, dairy products and meat are extremely inexpensive. If camping and cooking your own meals, figure on \$5 per day to be your average cost. You'll get by even cheaper if you like milk

(9¢/liter), cheese (70¢/pound), ice cream (30¢/liter) or hamburger (65¢/pound).

You won't starve, but how's the riding? Once adjusted to New Zealand roads, it can be very enjoyable. Like all British Commonwealth countries, traffic keeps to the left. That's easy enough, but everyone has a few exciting times adjusting. The paved roads tend to be a bit rougher than in the States, so be prepared for vibration. Don't expect many shoulders to ride on either; although it's not as bad as British Isles roads, New Zealand roads are narrow. With the close proximity to the ocean and the vast pastures, always figure on wind, which, depending on your luck, will be for or against

you. The day I rode into Wellington, the winds were reaching 50 miles per hour, luckily a tail wind.

Discouraged? Don't be. New Zealand makes up for all these minor difficulties by offering light traffic outside the four main cities, spectacular scenery that changes drastically daily, and people who seem to always come through when you need them most. After riding 1200 miles on both islands, I'm convinced I personally waved to half the population. I spent one day waving to the New Zealand Army as they were on maneuvers heading opposite to my riding. It quickly grew tiresome waving at tanks, personnel carriers and trucks full of troops, but public relations for bicycle riders and a good feeling toward Kiwis made the task quite enjoyable.

Now's the time to start saving and planning for next year. Perhaps a few tips may help:

Take your bike and all your gear with you. New Zealand has a tax that doubles the price on all imported goods, so all quality bikes and gear are double what they are in the United States. Pan Am will accept a boxed bike as one piece of baggage, and there's no weight limit into or out of the States anymore.

Be self sufficient, for tools and parts are hard to come by except in the large cities. Carry extra spokes and a spare tire.

Plan on doing at least one hike. New Zealand mountains are too beautiful to just ride by. Plan on going up into them. All the trails offer huts with foam bunks, gas stoves and heaters. All you need to carry is good rain gear, some wool clothes, sleeping bag and food. If you can't afford the weight, it's easy to box it up, ship it ahead by bus to the nearest town and pick it up when you get there.

Hostels are \$2 per night and plentiful. Motor camps average \$1.50 per night and usually have showers, central kitchen and TV room. Rest areas are everywhere, free and no hassle. Just plan ahead for water. All towns have public domains (parks) which sometimes allow camping.

Think about carrying a small transistor radio. It helps pass the time climbing hills and it lets you learn about New Zealand life and the things that are happening.

Have a great time. Leave people with a nice feeling about bike tourists. Remember that others will be bicycling behind you. You are their ambassador.

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## Win ends Steeler 'slump'

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Pittsburgh quarterback Terry Bradshaw returned to early season form with three touch-down passes Monday night, two to Lynn Swann in a second-quarter hot streak, leading Steelers to a 24-7 victory over the San Francisco 49ers.

The Steelers improved their record to 11-2, best in the National Football League, while snapping out of a two-week offensive slump and sending the 49ers, 1-12, to an eighth consecutive defeat.

Bradshaw took the NFL lead in

touchdown passes this year with 22 when he hit John Stallworth with an 11-yarder in the fourth quarter. Swann leads NFL receivers with 11 scoring receptions.

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