

Stuart Macdonald

Aotearoa

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S
JOURNEY AROUND
NEW ZEALAND

Aotearoa

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S JOURNEY
AROUND NEW ZEALAND

Stuart Macdonald



CONTENTS

Foreword	7	Whanganui	86
		Rangitikei/Manawatu/Horowhenua	96
North Island		Wairarapa	103
Far North	9	Wellington	115
Northland	18		
Auckland	24	South Island	
Coromandel	34	Nelson/Marlborough	131
Waikato/Waitomo	36	West Coast	136
Bay of Plenty	45	Canterbury	152
East Cape/Ureweras	49	McKenzie Country/Southern Alps	157
King Country	57	North Otago/Dunedin	172
Volcanic Plateau	61	Central Otago	177
Hawkes Bay	69	South Otago/Southland	199
Taranaki	77	Fiordland/Lakes District	205



Old Pines in the Mist

A misty day on Mt Victoria, Wellington. It was near here that a number of *Lord of the Rings* scenes were shot. The mist swirls around the gnarly old pines and makes the place seem a bit eerie and other-worldly.

Nikon D800, 24–120mm at f11 and 1/30sec. ISO 400.

FOREWORD

A Photographic Journey

New Zealand is not just about beautiful landscapes, although there are plenty of those – it is also about the cities and towns and small localities that make up the country. Even though we are a relatively young nation there is a rich and friendly culture to be seen in the less usual places as you travel about. This book not only includes some of the traditional beauty of New Zealand but also attempts to convey to you, the reader, a wider range of images than you would usually see – images which draw out some of what is unique about New Zealand.

We are blessed within such a small country in having a wide range of landscapes and places all within an easy drive of each other. For instance one can enjoy the swamp forests of South Westland and then drive through the Haast Pass to the open semi-desert of Central Otago and the McKenzie Country. In the North Island one can explore the volcanic plateau and within a couple of hours be canoeing down the beautiful bush gorges of the Whanganui River.

We also have our ‘quirky’ New Zealand lifestyle, often easiest to see when driving through a small town. There may be a dairy open all hours, or the local pub, a community hall (or marae) or some old building converted to community use. Nowadays there will often also be a cafe for visitors – catching the tourist traffic that goes by. In the country side you may come across a ‘weird’ art piece at the farm gate or, in summer, a children’s fruit stall. In a way these sorts of things are our true ‘Kiwiana’.

As a ‘young’ country we do not have many truly old buildings – New Zealand was, after all, settled by Europeans only around 150 years ago, and by Maori some 700 years before that. There are a few old Government buildings to be seen as one travels around, but it is in the churches and original commercial buildings of both cities and towns that one can often see the old and the beautiful, or just how life was. Some of these old, unique or ‘quirky’ buildings are included here – to illustrate a New Zealand we often overlook.

New Zealanders love the open spaces, and have a strong history of exploring and enjoying our remote places. There are tramping tracks (although I am reluctant to call some of these proper tracks) and huts scattered all over our back country and national parks. New Zealanders also value their individuality, and you will see signs of this when you visit where they live – especially in small towns and localities slightly off the main road. They will have put their stamp on their piece of New Zealand.

The journey reflected in this book has taken place over several years. As I have travelled around New Zealand with my camera I have tried to capture these different elements of the country – from remote mountains and bush, to the beaches and lakes, to the places where people live. Although there are some shots of our traditionally beautiful landscape I have also wanted to show those less visited places – whether they be a beach on a stormy day, a remote place in the bush or high country, or an interesting old building somewhere – the ‘ordinary’ beauty of New Zealand. So in this book you will find a mixture of:

- beautiful traditional landscapes
- ‘moody’ or alternative landscapes
- ‘quirky’ small town New Zealand
- old or unusual buildings, or cityscapes.

Each of these images has a short ‘story’ telling the reader a little bit about the place (or how to find it) and maybe my reactions as a photographer being there – to help you also enjoy seeing what I and the camera saw.

About My Photography

Photography is a creative art that enables me to stop time – that is, to capture a moment or a place and preserve that for others to also experience. It is also about observation – about being connected and ‘in the moment’ of what you are doing, so

that you ‘see’ at another level. For me ‘observation’ goes through several phases when I am taking a photograph – phase 1 is just finding the place or object and realising the possibilities; phase 2 is looking around to ‘size up’ the best angle or the light and phase 3 is ‘composition’ when I am refining how the image looks through the viewfinder.

At the start of each photograph (especially so with landscapes, or inside churches) I take the time to just absorb the place and the beauty that emerges. Often quite ordinary places can hide a unique beauty or image – such as the image of a local dairy or convenience store, or an old farm house. But one has to take the time to ‘absorb’ the place to see it.

Photography, particularly landscape photography, also involves patience – whether it is waiting for the light or coming back another time to get the right weather or sky. In this sense it is not unlike fishing, where a certain amount of luck helps and there might be days when you do not catch a fish at all.

The camera is an extension of my eye and my creative side. It not only captures the image but it also captures the essence of my thoughts and feelings as I took the shot. So for instance I would like to think the colours and shapes in a particular image convey for the person viewing it an emotional reaction to that place or object – just as when I was there taking the photograph.

For me the equipment (the camera) is only half of the photographic process. The

other half is the person behind it. This means one has to be very familiar with the camera – to get the best out of it, especially in tricky lighting or weather – but equally one must practice ‘seeing’. By this I mean stopping and being still. And just looking and imagining what images might be in front of you – observing and creating. So ‘wandering around’ whether in a town or in the countryside can open up possibilities. just like driving up a road to see what is at the end.

About the Future

It is part of our Kiwi nature to accept things at face value, to be reasonably direct, and to be open and friendly. For an overseas visitor it is often this friendliness, this simplicity, this slightly understated culture that makes their visit so rewarding. It is also part of our nature to respect the values and individuality of others, as long as they don’t impact adversely on anyone else. However it is important to protect what we as a people value – to recognise what we have. There can be little doubt that some of our special places, and the localities close by, are under pressure. We need to do something about that.

I hope the collection of images in this book will help us to appreciate the beauty around us, and to value what we have.

Stuart Macdonald. 12 September 2019



Cape Reinga Lighthouse

FAR NORTH

Not quite the most northern part of New Zealand but close enough for photographic purposes. They say the confluence of ocean currents and winds around this northern tip of the country produces an interesting feeling to the place – and I think that is so. The wind rushes in, the sun shines fleetingly and the seas seem turbulent. It does feel different.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f16 and 1/45 sec. ISO 100.



Te Pahi Sand Dunes

The huge sand dunes at Te Pahi just south of Cape Reinga are really something quite different in terms of New Zealand landscapes. They are popular with people sand boarding, but there are whole parts of the dunes where few people go, and where you can experience the somewhat surreal exhilaration of walking these dunes. It is a fairly tough slog going up but once amongst the dunes you won't regret it. I wanted to capture the desolate immensity of the dunes, and I do think you get that feeling in this image.

From the car park by the Te Pahi stream just walk straight up and go from there.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f16 and 1/60 sec. ISO 100.



Ratana Church at Te Kao

Te Kao is in the 'far north' about 40 kms south of Cape Reinga. The church can be seen as you drive north on SH 1. In this image you can just see the five point stars and crescent moons atop each corner bell tower – Ratana symbols of light/enlightenment, and make out the words 'Arepa' and 'Omega' which are Maori transliterations of the Greek words Alpha and Omega. The coloured star on the gate represents, among other things, the 'holy trinity' in Christian terms – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f16 and 1/90 sec. ISO 100.



Vote

This house is on one of the main streets as you enter Kaitiāia. In a way it reflects the history of Maori grievance and activism that is part of New Zealand, and part of being in a functioning democracy where people can fight for justice and what they believe is right.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f11 and 1/250 sec. ISO 100.



Kaeo Cafe and Accommodation

Kaeo is a small rural town on the main road between Kerikeri and Kaitiāia. This place has a 'quirky' style to it, and if you look closely you will see, amongst other things, the wooden eagle and rooster on the first floor balustrade. A good place to stop if you are travelling through.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f9.5 and 1/30 sec. ISO 100.



Mangroves Near Opua

There are many mangroves around the harbours and inlets of Northland. This image is an attempt to capture the 'mood' of the convoluted shapes as the mangroves stretch up out of the tidal waters.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f16 and 1/6 sec. ISO 800. Handheld. Shot taken at dusk to avoid harsh light and shadows.



In Waipoua Forest

The Waipoua Forest lies some 20 kms south of Hokianga Harbour and is home to some of the largest Kauri trees in New Zealand. But there are many beautiful parts to the forest and this image captures the luxuriant dense growth near one of its many streams. It has been raining and everything is wet – there is a slight ‘shimmering’ on all the leaves. In a place like this one has to be very watchful as there are steep drops into streams and gullies.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f13 and 1/8 sec. ISO 400. (Handheld – there is no easy placement of a tripod here.)



Kawakawa Toilets

The Kawakawa Hundertwasser toilets are famous, and very popular. In fact I had to wait patiently even though not a busy time of the day, in order to get this photograph. The idiosyncratic and colourful Hundertwasser style is really quite unique and Kawakawa has made a theme of this throughout the town.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f16 and 1/8 sec. ISO 400. Handheld.



On Kawakawa Main Street

Opposite the Kawakawa toilets is the Grass Hut shop, also in the Hundertwasser style, and beautifully done. In particular the mural on the side of the building is something to behold – above the first ‘face’ on the left end are the words ‘Conservation is a State of Harmony between Men and Land’. Just to stand there and let your eyes wonder over the whole thing is a joy.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f11 and 1/180 sec. ISO 400.



NORTHLAND

Ocean Beach Near Whangarei

Whangarei is blessed with waterfalls, beautiful bush walks, a warm climate and so on. Also close by are bays and beaches that are typical of Northland – Ocean Beach is an example. Located down toward Bream Head and popular with surfers it does though feel isolated and remote (in fact it is a 5 minute walk from the small car park).

This is the view if you climb up to the ridge at the south end of the beach. There is a smaller and even more private beach on the other side of the ridge.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f13 and 1/125 sec. ISO 100.



Smugglers Bay

Smugglers Bay is part of the Bream Head Scenic Reserve at the entrance to Whangarei Harbour. A short walk across local farmland takes you to the beach and, depending when you go, there may well be no-one else around. The much longer Ocean Beach is on the other side of the heads, and is not as sheltered and peaceful as here.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f16 and 1/125 sec. ISO 100.



Railway Bridge 178 Birds

Both side buttresses of the railway bridge have these lovely Kiwiana paintings on them – one of New Zealand’s birds (this image) and one of New Zealand’s flowers. Bridge 178 is just on the edge of the Whangarei CBD, and is easy to find. Each bird has a character as reflected in the Maori and English words you can see. For example the Kaha/Strength of the eagle.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f9.5 and 1/125 sec. ISO 100.



Pukenui Falls Whangarei

The A H Reed Memorial Park in Whangarei contains mature Kauri trees, including an elevated canopy type walk, but also the beautiful Pukenui falls (also known as the Paranui Falls). Getting to the base of the falls involves a bit of scrambling through the bush as the walking track takes you to the top of the falls and to the stream below only. But as you can see it is worth the struggle – the falls drop into a small secluded clearing surrounded by moss covered rocks. Even though only 15 minutes from the city CBD it feels like you are in the remote bush somewhere.

Nikon D750, 24–120mm at f11 and 1/8 sec. ISO 100. Handheld in order to get this angle.