



10 PLACES YOU MUST PHOTOGRAPH WHEN VISITING NEW ZEALAND

Quick Guide
Written by Ľudmila Borošová



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Special Note:

This guide features White Island as a photography destination. One month after the production of this eBook, there was a volcanic eruption on White Island in December 2019. Tragically, a number of people lost their lives and were also severely injured.

We have left the eBook as is, with White Island still included, as we also do not want to further impact any local businesses that are built around this tourist destination. However, we have included this special note so that those who have been affected by this tragedy are able to have a stated warning in case this content is triggering.

Have you ever dreamed about your perfect photography destination? Do you often find yourself planning vacations based on other photographers' work and wishing you could be the one there to capture that moment?

New Zealand is a photographer's paradise. I'm here to guide you through so you can get the best results once you visit. Planning a road trip on the other side of the world may be overwhelming, but don't worry, it's worth it. Once you get to experience the night sky full of stars, untouched nature, and the endless roads of New Zealand, you won't mind the hassle of setting up a tripod with your hands frozen.

This country has it all: high peaks with cracking snow, stunning seaside, rich wildlife, fjords, glaciers, volcanoes, geothermal pools, the adventure capital of the world. In fact, it's hard to choose from all the options. Let's go a bit off the beaten path, shall we?

Today, we'll cover the following:

- Ten places you need to photograph in New Zealand

- Sceneries absolutely worth waiting for
- Tips and tricks for achieving the best results

When traveling abroad, we are flooded with information on what to visit or where to go. It covers all touristy "must see" places, which often isn't a true reflection of the country, just the tip of the iceberg. When spending your savings to travel to your dream destination, I'm sure you want to see those places as well. Therefore, I want to guide you through a healthy mix of well-known and lesser-known spots, to get the most out of your stay.

Remember, as photographers, we have a gift of seeing something in the moment – what others might not. Think about how many people visit this country every day and just push the shutter button without giving it much thought. This is your chance to embrace your inner photographer and turn highly photographed spots into your own art.





Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Milford Sound

MILFORD SOUND

Yes, it's probably the most famous spot in the country, but the changing weather and never-ending fjords is what makes it so special. It rains 182 days a year in Milford Sound, but don't let that discourage you – each weather has its own perks. And if I were you, I would be hoping for a rainy day! Why? It makes all the waterfalls come alive, and clouds are perfect for moody shots from the ship.

 **Tip:** Don't limit yourself only to the boat ride! One of the most magnificent roads you can explore in New Zealand is the one from Te Anau to Milford Sound. As you get closer, mountains become bigger and bigger, roads more crooked, and the only thing you want to do is to stop at all the viewpoints. This road rewards you with great views and the best opportunities to see rare Kea birds, but be careful while planning! It's often closed due to avalanche hazards, so leave a bit more time for yourself to be flexible.

 **Recommended Reading:** If you'd like to improve your photography skills and create compelling images, grab a copy of our [Powerful Imagery](#) premium guide by award-winning travel photographer Michell Kanashkevich.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

On the road



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Mount Cook

MOUNT COOK

Imagine falling asleep to the brightest skies in New Zealand and waking up to avalanche cracking sounds and fresh mountain air. This national park is one place not to miss if you enjoy hiking and photography! With a variety of tracks and different difficulties, everyone can find something to suit them – surrounded by the highest mountain, the 3,724 meter beauty of Mount Cook.

💡 **Tip:** Don't miss the unique chance to photograph icebergs! You can find them in the Hooker Lake (with Mount Cook in the background) or Tasman Lake.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Clay Cliffs

CLAY CLIFFS

This is a place that is not very well known, but it's a hidden gem for photographers. For just a small fee, you can be one of the few visitors on the spot and enjoy various sculptures created by nature. It can serve as a great background for portraiture or artistic photography playing with different shapes, or just as your minimalist shot of nature.

💡 **Tip:** Use light in your favor and try to plan ahead. Trust me, the golden hour in this spot is the perfect timing.




Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Benmore Peninsula

BENMORE PENINSULA

If you are seeking something off the beaten track, a place that not many people have explored before, yet not so difficult to find and climb, I might have the perfect spot for you: Benmore Peninsula. It's an escape from reality and a spot where you probably won't meet another soul. Don't worry, it doesn't take more than two hours to return down to the parking lot, and I promise, you are going to want to stay there until the sun goes down.

 **Tip:** If you're into a mix of nature and industrial photography, don't miss the Benmore Hydro Power Station on the way!




Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Waipohatu Waterfalls

THE CATLINS

Make your way through the real muddy jungle exploring native flora and fauna on a search for waterfalls. That's how I would describe this natural park! If you like lots of greens in your pictures, definitely stop by The Catlins. There are many walks ranging from ten minutes to a few hours, so there is no excuse not to pass by!

 **Tip:** The most famous and accessible places are Purakaunui Falls, Matai Falls, or Koropuku Falls. But if you want your mind to be blown away, Waipohatu Waterfalls is a way to go. Be careful, though! It's not a popular track, so you might be alone.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová
Kohaihai Beach on Heaphy Track

WEST COAST

Some roads are more interesting than others, and that is the case with West Coast! This wild part of the South Island will keep your inner adventurer alive. It doesn't matter where you stop by, you will always be surrounded by untamed beaches.

💡 **Tip:** If you have time, find yourself a one-day or multiple-day walk! The scenery on the West Coast changes every few kilometers.

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Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Nugget Point Lighthouse

NUGGET POINT LIGHTHOUSE

One of the cliché spots, but if you want to combine architecture with an ocean and exotic vibes, it should be on your photography to-do list.

💡 **Tip:** It's a popular tourist spot, so if you want to avoid crowds, try coming early in the morning and soak in the vibes.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová
Champagne Pool in Wai-O-Tapu

ROTORUA

A city famous for its distinctive smell of rotten eggs, Rotorua, the paradise of the North Island, is the heart of Maori culture, great cuisine, mud pools, and geothermal activity. With all these attractions so close to each other, it is truly every photographer's paradise.

💡 **Tip:** Start your unique photography experience with a day full of geothermal wonders and finish it off in one of the many Maori villages with the one-of-a-kind experience to photograph traditional dances, food preparation, and other traditions.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Maori performing in Te Puia Village




Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Helicopter flying to the crater of White Island

WHITE ISLAND

Have you ever stood on an active volcano situated in the middle of the ocean? I doubt it. Imagine a cone volcano emerging from the ocean as your ship gets closer, soon finding yourself on a smaller boat to the shore, while the powerful steam is rising from the crater. Some of the hills are covered in green Sulphur, and you can't help but wonder – what did it feel like, being the first one discovering such a place?

 **Tip:** White Island is a private territory, so the only way to get there is by a tour boat. Don't let that discourage you, though. When is the next time you can photograph such a thing?




Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Tongariro Alpine Crossing in Winter

TONGARIRO

Tongariro National Park should be on your list, and it's up to you whether you choose a Tongariro Alpine Crossing day track, multiple-day great walk of Tongariro Alpine Circuit, or something completely different. During summer months, it's a volcanic valley colored in black and red ashes, creating a beautiful contrast with its famous turquoise lakes. In winter, the majority of the track is covered in snow, making it a perfect place for minimalistic landscape photography.

 **Tip:** It's lauded as one of the most beautiful day walks on the earth, but it's also the one with the most search rescues. Always put safety ahead of photography. Check the current weather forecast and tell someone your plans. In winter, it's often accessible only with a guide, since alpine experience is needed.

Remember, to get your perfect photograph, you don't need to be tied to a certain place.

The best place where you can be, is the one you are in right now – because you may not come back there ever again. There are some things you can photograph in New Zealand from almost anywhere, and the only thing you need is luck for perfect conditions. So, what are the shots you shouldn't miss?





Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Seals in Katiki

AMAZING WILDLIFE

New Zealand has no native mammals, but due to its isolation it was home to many different bird species – and many of them are still alive. There are still places where it is possible to spot a Kiwi, Takahe, Kea, and many more unique birds. If you're not into photographing flying creatures, there is a high chance of spotting a seal or sea lion on many beaches around the country. Sometimes, you can even encounter penguin colonies. All of this is for free. All you need to do is a little bit of research. If you don't mind paying for a tour, there are plenty of places for whale and dolphin watching as well.

 **Tip:** Penguins usually go out of the ocean an hour before the sunset. If you want to spot them, be prepared to be quiet and keep your distance.

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Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Beams of Aurora Australis

RICH NIGHT SKY

New Zealand is also an escape from reality for its incredible darkness at night, due to almost non-existent light pollution. All you need is a clear sky and a tripod and you're ready to take stunning pictures of the Milky Way. Are you planning your journey in the winter? There is a small possibility you can see Aurora Australis, the southern lights.

 **Tip:** While the Milky Way can be spotted anywhere, southern lights are best seen around the Dunedin area. Look out for geomagnetic storm alerts and keep your camera charged. This natural phenomenon is very unpredictable, and sometimes you can only be alerted 30 minutes before it happens!



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Lindis Pass Road

ROAD VIEWS

Let someone else drive for a while and keep your camera ready in your hands. You weren't in New Zealand if you leave without a perfect road trip picture taken from your car window. The landscape changes so often, and it would be a pity to miss out.

💡 **Tip:** Road trip pictures are great for helping you tell the story, especially if you're preparing a blog post or just want to show your pictures to the family. They are relatable and make one feel like they were on the journey with you.

And finally, here are some tips to make your photography journey a bit easier:

- **Always carry a small tripod –** GorillaPod worked the best for me. Since you often need to hike to your desired spot, I wouldn't recommend something too heavy. It isn't only handy for long exposure photography, but it makes it a lot easier to take pictures of yourself.

- **Be prepared** – Check out the weather conditions, hiking track details, road restrictions, durations, and places with no signal (network access is mostly available only in settlements). The more information you research, the less likely you'll end up being surprised. Going for a remote hike? Tell someone your plans and hire a personal locator beacon and learn how to use it – it might save your life.
- **Check photography conditions** – Some tourist places are not as photography friendly as you might think. To avoid disappointment, find out whether the place you want to book lets you photograph inside.
- **Join informative groups** – There are many groups on social media helping local and foreign photographers all around the country. There aren't only specific groups for backpackers, photographers, models, or nature; you can also find groups with detailed Aurora Australis forecasts.

- **Interact with locals** – Kiwis are very friendly people, and they are ready to recommend their favorite spots to visit. Don't be afraid to ask them – maybe that's how you will find your next photography jewel.

So, is it worth going on a photography road trip in New Zealand?

YES! As you can now imagine, New Zealand is a unique life experience and every photographer's heaven. But the truth is, it doesn't matter whether it's the Pacific, Europe, America, or Asia. What matters is that you have a will to explore. Don't let the imagination of being somewhere else – somewhere "more exotic" – discourage you from being creative where you are right now. There are millions of people who haven't seen the place where you spend your whole time living. We often try searching for something special, an idea of paradise, while we don't even know what's hiding next to us. I couldn't help but think, "I wish I knew all these amazing spots in my own country."

Self-Check Quiz:

- 1) What is the most famous spot in New Zealand?
- 2) What is the highest mountain peak in New Zealand?
- 3) Where can you find icebergs in New Zealand?
- 4) What peninsula is off the beaten track, yet easy to get to?
- 5) Where can you find some amazing waterfalls to photograph in New Zealand?
- 6) What area of New Zealand is the wildest and most desolate?
- 7) What lighthouse do you definitely want to photograph?
- 8) What area is known for its geothermal pools?
- 9) What island can you only get to by tour?
- 10) What location is a perfect destination for minimalist landscape photography?
- 11) True or False: You cannot find Kiwi birds in New Zealand. You must go to Australia.



Hey there!

Let's get real for a minute... Learning photography can be super challenging! But we're here to help you every step of the way! Here are 3 of our most useful (*and FREE!*) photography resources:



3 Free Photography Cheat Sheets

Grab 3 free photography cheat sheets that will help you understand the basics.

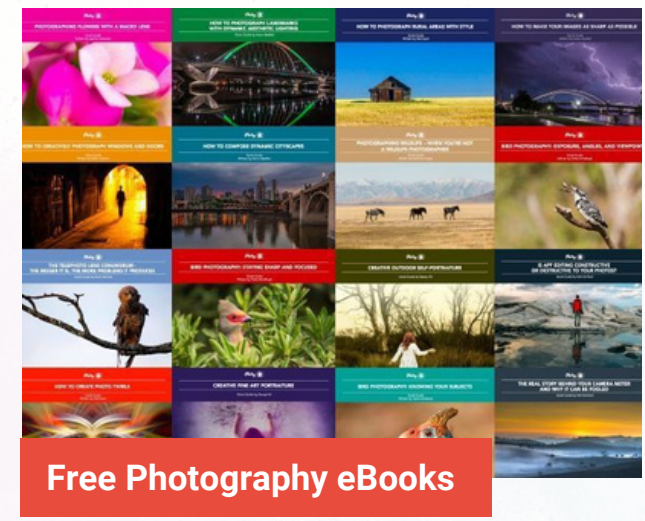
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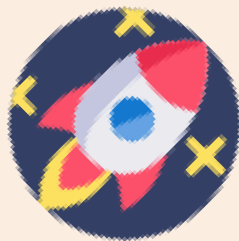
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ludmila is a Slovak photographer focusing on portraiture. She does photography while finishing her Master's degree in Business Administration, specializing in Entrepreneurship. She is based in Prague, Czech Republic but loves to travel around the world and share her stories, as well as her photoshoots with the world on her blog.

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