

FIVE SENSES TRAVEL

Marlborough, New Zealand

Michael Franco takes you on a sensory journey through one of the most beautiful and vine-rich areas of New Zealand.

What it FEELS like. Travelling down rural roads where vines stretch away from you in all directions, then ascending mountain slopes and diving down again into a lush valley full of fresh discoveries. Situated in one of the most notable wine regions in country, the portion of the Classic New Zealand Wine Trail that passes through Marlborough is rich with scenery, wildlife and, of course, dozens of stunning wineries to visit. You can choose to self-drive (not advised if you're going to do a lot of sampling!), or you can join a motor or cycling tour through the landscape. Thanks to Marlborough's compact size, you can cover up to ten wineries in one day. See <http://www.classicwinetrail.co.nz> for more information.

What it LOOKS like. Bald brown hills guarding verdant valleys of vineyards and forest-clad

slopes dropping to sapphire waters. Marlborough has an array of natural delights to match its culinary and wine offerings. One of the most visually striking features of this varied corner of New Zealand's south island is the Lake Grassmere Saltworks situated just down the coast from Blenheim. Here, in the summer months, the water in the large but shallow lake turns a deep shade of pinkish purple while mini-mountains of white begin piling up on the shoreline. The cause of this colourful phenomenon is the high salt content of the water, which becomes even more concentrated as hot winds blow across the surface of the lake. The unique hues are created by a type of algae that is normally green, but turns pink or purple in a high-salt environment.



Photography by: Ian Trafford

What it SMELLS like. Tropical fruit, cut grass, and smoky, nutty oak. You'll pick up these notes as you sample the wine that made the Marlborough region famous: sauvignon blanc. The relatively small town of Renwick is big on sav blanc and is, in fact, responsible for 85% of New Zealand's production of the lovely liquid. Here you'll find a slower pace of life where you can stay in one of the cozy bed and breakfasts and then bike or horseback through the countryside, stopping at one of the multitude of wineries for a scenic lunch.

What it TASTES like. The sea itself. That's what you'll enjoy as you savour a plate of green-lipped mussels. You can get these large, juicy delights in many places around Marlborough, but why not enjoy them in the green-lipped capital of the region - the former gold mining town of Havelock. To work up an appetite, first stroll the town's main street, home to diverse art galleries housed in lovely colonial buildings. Then, patronize any of the myriad of cafes and fine dining restaurants to start your feast. To impress your dining companion while eating, here's a bit of interesting trivia: you'll know if you're eating a male mussel because the flesh will be white. Female mussels are orange. Another good tip? The region's famous sauvignon blanc goes great with the shellfish dish!

What it SOUNDS like. Water gently clunking at sides of your kayak and seabirds calling out from above as you glide through the Marlborough Sounds. At the northern end of New Zealand's southern island, the land reaches into the sea like a claw. Within the curves and crags of this formation are four bays that collectively make up the Marlborough Sounds. This watery wonderland offers you the chance to kayak in calm waters while keeping your eyes open to spot the rich marine life that abounds here - including dolphins and seals. You can begin your seafaring adventure from either the towns of Havelock or Picotin. If water doesn't, erm, float your boat, you can also explore the Sounds by trekking along the Queen Charlotte Track which offers spectacular views of the sea.

For more information about this dynamic destination, see <http://www.destinationmarlborough.com>.

A NEW WORLD OF WINE

Marlborough's marvellous wines are the result of alluvial soil, sunny days, cool nights and low rainfall.



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To win one of five trips to Marlborough, visit www.asiawinesociety.com