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Places to Go - Tauranga

WHEN I think of Tauranga I always feel great joy from my memories of visiting Mt Maunganui as a child. You probably have your own memories too, but if you haven't been to Tauranga for a while then do plan a trip to fly in and stay for a long weekend. Any flyer's dream is alive and well at the airport where you can live in your hangar and have your planes there with you. Being able to tuck the aircraft into bed at night after flying and then retiring upstairs to the balcony for enjoy a cool drink while watching over the airfield makes for any pilot's dream home.

Flying into NZTG is straight forward. The Tauranga Tower people are professional and even though it can be very busy, arrivals and departures are not stressful. From the north, you'll likely track through Waihi gap then towards Matakana Island and when approaching listen to ATIS on 126.60 and switch to Tower 118.30. From the South do the same approaching Maketu for a Papamoa arrival.

Once you arrive, parking is ample and you will receive the landing fee through the post. You may like to visit the terminal for a cuppa or lunch as it has a friendly cafe or perhaps save that thought for the Classic Flyers café (more on that later). Colin Alexander at Solo Wings is the NZ Rotax agent and also is a very experienced LAME. He has a large facility on the eastern end of the field and can look after your maintenance if you have pre-booked, as well as providing a car if you need one. While he works on your aircraft, you can go and enjoy what the Mt Maunganui and Tauranga region has to offer. Solo Wings phone number is 07 574 7973.

Tauranga airport is home to a very diverse mix of aircraft types and also a diverse range of business interests. A good deal of flight training takes place there, the largest operation being that of Bay Flight which has been in operation since 1996. A great place to visit is a hangar beside the Classic Flyers Cafe that you can visit by going into the cafe. This contains a truly fascinating collection of cars as well as planes. The cafe is a great hang out for residents of the airport and if you are staying over, make an evening visit to meet lots of like-minded individuals and perhaps the odd pilot or two! Great food, coffee and wine can be found there. For a preview check out www.classicflyersnz.com.

If you like shopping then both Tauranga and Mount Maunganui offer great town



Tauranga Airport is a busy and diverse place. Excellent and friendly Controllers make arrivals easy.



Mount Maunganui. Don't miss climbing to the top to check out the view.



Mount Tarawera is nearby and well worth flying around for a closer look.



A flight around White Island is also well worthwhile, or take a helicopter trip to land there and experience an active volcano first hand.

Contributed by Ruth Presland

centres. However if, like me you are on a timeframe then nearby BayFair also offers a great shopping mall just five minutes down the road towards Papamoa. Tauranga's main street and water front is easy to get around on foot and with ample parking and wide streets it is one of my all time favourite shopping centres. There are a great range of clothing shops and cafes in the malls as well as on the water front.

Beyond shopping, one of my picks is the Quarry Park (see www.quarrypark.org.nz). This has an excellent walk around an old quarry that has been converted to an entertaining garden park that suits all ages including your dog. They have a huge array of different flora and fauna, and sculptures by local artists feature throughout the park. The walking tracks are easy for the moderately fit. This is a place to enjoy, a place of nature and tranquillity, of stunning views and great art.

If the beach is more your thing then Mount Maunganui is the place to visit. It is a great walk up to the top and the view is spectacular. This is for the moderately fit but if you have been sitting around too much flying all over the place, then I would recommend at least going up half way! There are interesting pools at the base as well as a colourful range of shops.

The Mount also has timeshares so if you need to use up a week then go exploring further afield. Tauranga is not only a great place to fly to, but also to fly around. Take a trip to nearby White Island or Mount Tarawera, both exciting from the air and well under an hours flight.

If a combination of great weather, people, cafes, shopping, beaches and scenery appeals to you, plan a trip to Tauranga. Enjoyment is a certainty.

(Thanks to Cliff McChesney for the pictures)

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