



Places to Go: Taupo

A RECENT trip to Taupo for a holiday really opened my eyes to the hospitality of the North Island. We planned to take a vehicle plus a plane, to make sure we would have ample opportunity to sight-see while we were there. Flying in was straight forward, and after lunch at Raglan, the boys arrived. Local frequency is unattended 118.40 with AWIB on 125.20. Do not join overhead as there is a fairly busy drop zone adjacent to the airport. Air Zealand has daily flights into Taupo as well, so there is a small terminal with a little café there for hungry pilots.

We drove into town and I was reminded of my home area and also the Bay of Islands. The town centre is geared for shoppers and the whole area is really a big tourist playground. Once settled into our accommodation, for which there is ample (mostly right by the lake), it was time to browse the brochures. With so much to do in only a few days we worked out our itinerary for the week as each person in our team had specific sights they wished to visit. One day was allocated for the boys to do a fly around of the region while the girls did the shops. Both activities took up almost the whole day. The fly around included overhead the Huka Falls, a landing for lunch at Opotoki and of course the famous flight over Mount Tarawera. Although I have flown over it before it really is the most spectacular sight. Note to pilots, keep a look out for the now closed airstrip on the top, near the eastern end. I bet those pilots who landed there could tell some stories!

On the shopping side there are great boutique shops such as the Kitchen Shop which is just down the road from Hunting and Fishing. We spent a lot of time in both these shops, partly because we were going fishing on the lake but mostly because there was so much to see inside them. Another shop I liked was called The Merchant (www.themerchant.co.nz). If you like the unusual such as black pudding, kumara crisps or boutique beer then this is for you.

Attractions are many and a great wet weather one is the glass blowing studio (www.lavaglass.co.nz). For a tiny fee you can watch the glass blowing in action. Our group sat fascinated as they formed a bowl out of a blob of white hot glass that used to be sand. The Huka Falls are a must and do take the short walk down



Float Planes ready for scenic flights on the lake edge.



Huka Falls from the air.



Lake Taupo looking towards Mt. Ruapehu.



Mt. Ngauruhoe on a superb Spring flying day.

to see the mighty Waikato river tumble down the falls themselves. We would have liked to try the Huka Falls River cruise which is a purpose built boat that takes a leisurely and informative tour right up to

the base of the falls. Good idea for a rainy day as well, because you are inside with hot drinks and biscuits while watching the scenery and learning all about the extensive wild life of the area (www.hukafallscruise.co.nz). It starts from the Aratiatia Rapids area, which is where a dam opens up to let the water cascade down the river. A few times each day, spill gates from the dam are opened at the top of the Aratiatia rapids and the narrow gorge fills with turbulent water surging past at up to 90,000 litres per second. Then, as the gates are closed about thirty minutes later, the turbulence recedes to a placid stream. There is a good walking track in the area as well. On the way back you can visit the mud pools and steam, go for a helicopter ride and many other activities. We dropped into the Huka Honey Hive which sold delicious honey mead which is worth a taste.

Then it was out onto the lake with fishing licenses in hand. Lake Taupo is full of fish, thanks to the hatchery just past Turangi. This is another fantastic rainy day visit with the highlight being feeding the fish in the Tongariro River. If down that way, another must do is a visit the Grand Chateau Hotel. It is really stunning, just down from the Whakapapa Ski field.

Whenever we heard the float plane start up, it was all people to the balcony to watch it take off. Our group of 6 had 5 pilots, so we soon ended up down at the jetty, enthusiastically talking flying with the float plane pilot (www.tauposfloatplane.co.nz). They also offer float plane ratings so add that to your bucket list for your Taupo holiday.

Lastly if you have had enough of flying for the day, then a visit to Scenic Cellars is another must (www.sceniccellars.co.nz). I remember going 20 years ago and purchasing the first bottle for my wine cellar. A trip down memory lane revealed they still have an amazing cellar themselves and also reasonably priced unique bottles to purchase to start your own. We sat down to a wine tasting of reds from all over the world and some delightful nibbles. The business is family run and being served by the owners makes this experience well worthwhile.

Our trip ended all too soon, so planning is in place for the next one. What we all took from our stay was the friendliness of the locals and the wonderful array of things to do for all ages and interests, whether aviation minded or not. Add Taupo to your places to visit today.

country-wide aviation support

- Helicopter sales
 - P145 maintenance and avionics
 - Blade repair facility
 - Turbine engines
 - Piston engines
 - Component overhaul
 - Extensive parts stock
 - Agents for
- A full listing on our website
 - Auckland and Queenstown MD and Schweizer Service Centres
 - Open now
 - Rolls Royce 250 and Honeywell
 - Lycoming and Continental range
 - Schweizer, Bell and MD Helicopters AS350 servos and masts
 - Schweizer, Bell, Eurocopter and MD Helicopters
 - Schweizer aircraft and Heli Lynx FX conversions



HELICOPTER SPECIALISTS

Ardmore

Auckland, New Zealand
Phone (+64 9) 296 2644
Facsimile (+64 9) 296 2645
Email oceania@ohl.co.nz

Queenstown

Queenstown, New Zealand
Phone (+64 3) 442 2045
Fax (+64 3) 442 2047
Email queenstown@ohl.co.nz



You'll find more detailed information, parts search and helicopters sales at www.oceania-aviation.com