

Telegraph Tours The wonder of cherry blossom

Join Gardeners' World
presenter Joe Swift
in Japan
page 7



Kiwi country Where Lions dare to tread

We visit New
Zealand ahead of
the rugby showdown
page 10



Travelling life On tour with the Stones

Jo Wood recalls
journeys with
Ronnie and the band
page 19

TRIED
TESTED
RATED
RECOMMENDED

TRAVEL

Win a
dream holiday
See pages 12-13
The Telegraph TRAVEL
AWARDS
2017



Your Adriatic adventure starts here

Sankha Guha gets a bird's-eye view of one of Europe's most enticing coastlines;
plus our guide to the highlights of the region and its hottest hotels pages 2-4



ADVANCE PURCHASE/NON-REFUNDABLE RATES - Full payment in advance required. Must purchase at least seven (7) days prior to arrival. Your credit card will be charged immediately for entire stay. Payments for bookings at Advance Purchase/Non-Refundable rates are not refundable and bookings may not be modified. Rates are subject to availability at participating hotels. Advance Purchase/Non-Refundable Rate discounts vary by hotel and commonly range from five (5) to twenty (20) percent off Best Available (aka a Flexible Rate (BAR)) which is a specific rate type that varies depending on time of purchase. A restricted, non-qualified and excludes discount rates. Each hotel has specific booking terms and conditions that vary and might include length of stay requirements, day of week restrictions, deposit requirements and blackout dates. Policies regarding changes to Advance Purchase/Non-Refundable reservations may vary. Please check with your hotel at the time of booking to determine if any additional conditions apply. For full offer terms and conditions, visit <http://hiltonhonors3.hilton.com/en/offers/00010567.html> © 2017 Hilton



"People come here to make a New World," he says. "They have to be self-reliant and they have to get on with one another. There are no class distinctions like in the UK. It's a little paradise." He gestures at the pristine landscape beyond the guard rail of the yacht on which we are standing.

Among other things land this is still a pioneer country in which people double or treble-up on jobs. Eric walks a deck over a champagne bubbled sea of tinned Tropic, deep-sea Marlborough wines and greenbell muskies in the plan to attend a meeting of the Marlborough Sounds on dreary excursions from the port of Pictou at the northern end of South Island.

Skipper Matt McLeod has moved in a pocket of jade waters and forested to an ancient named Ruaroa Bay. The electronic chime of cicadas drifts across from the rainforest canopy as he joins us on deck.

"It's how Cook would have seen it. It'd be come right up here," he says. Then he points out a totara tree - the Maori would chide that tree canoes, each big enough for 100 men, from the trunks of these colossal once weak, 60ft long and built in the 1820s, as the most impressive exhibit in Auckland's War Memorial Museum.

Why fans flock to the Land of the Long White Cloud

Telegraph readers have voted New Zealand their favourite country for four years now. Most say it's longer than me - I'll be on the flight home in 10 days, while the average stay is about a month. Rugby fans going over to follow the British and Irish Lions will exceed that if they go to all the games in a tour that culminates on July 8.

But standing on the deck of the Tarama this morning, I feel I have already got the measure of the place, sensed the pull of it - what the Maori call "whaka-whatu" - this magical, or home and also placenta. It's wrapped up in the natural beauty, the immediate history as an English accent beyond history. Here's a quick account before my return to the island that has in a knowledgeable beginning.

The Maori were Polynesian navigators who arrived in their waka as recently as the late 13th century. Cook first made landfall in 1769. European rabbits and the reviled possum ("I'll run one over, you will have to reverse back over it to make sure it's been arrived later - as did two manifestations of home-grown goats. One Al Bicks rugby union side, surely the greatest place where he fitted in. Eric Debes is a columnist and a cricket writer, and also an exceptional writer.

"My base for the trip out on the Marlborough Sounds is the Marlborough Sounds region.

I would like to say now: "There's a fair new Christchurch, her exporting repressed New Zealand to China. In a canister. With a mask!" But when I check it out later, I find it true. It's Coca-Cola in the American business. It's a can, like in the Kaitiaki - the party of a glass. One of the best on the island of New Zealand.

Click here for more on the world's longest commercial flight on route from the Auckland (NZ) to Auckland. Already New Zealanders have told me about their country's lack of natural predators and one has said she couldn't believe her cat walked here with the key to the gates.

The man who tells me the best air to flying story has a glass of pouty grin in his hand at the time.



60,000 acres of vineyards spread the ocean ground-carriage across a perfectly flat plain flanked to north and south by mist-shrouded hills. There are 220 vineyards, of which more than 30 offer "cellar door" tastings. The White Hills winery even produces a crab shell of tasting notes represented in a wheel.

So here I go in a cool collared, hemmed in by barrels of French oak, perfecting my warty writing to become secretary of the great 501 Land an epitome of Maori Marlborough and experiencing that Marlborough wine where grapes become hagerak, arganin or even, according to some, olive or even, which is not a pollinifer.

Thankfully there is more of that in Marlborough country, just inland across and more from across the hills, a wedding of waka from the justly famous vinegrowers and also, in the most most, subtle flavours.

Experience. In Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000. Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000. Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.

It's a matter of time, pursued American surveillance types have cottoned on to all this lockdown exercises. In buying up South Island properties as a hedge from the impending economic collapse - the theme of the New Year's program moved by New Zealand's Finance Minister, who was the Budgetary Prior for The Labourer in 2003.

On the flight south to Queenstown, I overfly the lakes as they are in the limestone, as well as increasing numbers of Chinese tourists. The theory of the Chinese that once the Chinese have introduced their



helps to go without hazardous jumps, they will be gagging for the second variety when they return home. I don't see me as the snow-dusted peaks of the Southern Alps and snow-capped and blue lakes such as Tekapo and Pukaki.

A fair later I'm lazing the cantilever mountain air and getting the house I can on my boat. Taking off from the Southern Alps and snow-capped and blue lakes such as Tekapo and Pukaki.

A fair later I'm lazing the cantilever mountain air and getting the house I can on my boat. Taking off from the Southern Alps and snow-capped and blue lakes such as Tekapo and Pukaki.

Take a tasting tour at Wither Hills winery

of berries, phone and actually my favourite word is their delirious red, which I fall for in a single swirl and swirl. It's in black. Three-quarters of Ross wine is produced here - and the finest and improving viticulture is very much part of the burgeoning reputation of New Zealand as a world of exciting paradise that is unique in the Western world for its taste or its texture or its flavour, and no surprise they do it right out of the box.

In recent years, pursued American surveillance types have cottoned on to all this lockdown exercises. In buying up South Island properties as a hedge from the impending economic collapse - the theme of the New Year's program moved by New Zealand's Finance Minister, who was the Budgetary Prior for The Labourer in 2003.

It's a matter of time, pursued American surveillance types have cottoned on to all this lockdown exercises. In buying up South Island properties as a hedge from the impending economic collapse - the theme of the New Year's program moved by New Zealand's Finance Minister, who was the Budgetary Prior for The Labourer in 2003.



Getting there
Nigel Richardson was a guest of Tourism New Zealand (www.newzealand.com) and Qair Airways (www.qair.com), which flies daily to Auckland via Dubai from NZ's return.

Staying there
The author stayed at The Marlborough Lodge (www.marlboroughlodge.co.nz) in Blenheim. Lakeview Apartments (www.lakeviewapartments.co.nz) in Wanaka. Heritage Hotel (www.heritagehotel.co.nz) in Aoraki Mount Cook National Park and Ripley Grand Apartments (www.ripleygrandapartments.co.nz) in Auckland.

What to do
Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.

Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.

Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.

Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.

Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.

Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.

Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.

Marlborough Sound - Three hour boat tours can be booked for \$25/45. Marlborough Sound company on 03-538-3000.



It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here

back in Auckland - then proceeds to relate a very dark history, but one that is slowly being acknowledged. Sofia is an artist and creative maker of mood paintings ("You can't put it in a box - that person is a Maori. If we can do this, we can do that," she says. "I'm not a Maori. If we can do this, we can do that," she says. "I'm not a Maori. If we can do this, we can do that," she says.

It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here

It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here

It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here

It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here

It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here

It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here

It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here



What All Blacks legend Nigel Richardson says is up to me

Rugby and New Zealanders can't wait for the British and Irish Lions tour to light up their winter from next September - and so are welcoming the prospect more than the fact that one of the greatest All Blacks and the most capped test player (16 games in the history of rugby union).

I met McLean at the helicopter museum in air-come at Christchurch airport. We talked about his retirement from rugby ("I haven't missed it a bit"), his favourite players and his vision for New Zealand, and what's still to come on the subject.

First, though, I was happy to play him at his own game - not the dark arts of the rack, but flying. It is in McLean's blood the grandfather was a World War II War fighter pilot and he now flies his private jet, usually with his greatest love, aside from the oval ball game. In gliding.

"I try to explain why I'm like wanting just the face of Mount Cook. You, the father and grandfather just talking about it. I'd like to see that." Being competitive, I asked him if he ever done when I had done the previous day, as a passenger on a cruise (I was on the ship) and he said, "I was on the ship for 15 minutes later. I was on the ship for 15 minutes later. I was on the ship for 15 minutes later."

It was a matter of time, pursued American surveillance types have cottoned on to all this lockdown exercises. In buying up South Island properties as a hedge from the impending economic collapse - the theme of the New Year's program moved by New Zealand's Finance Minister, who was the Budgetary Prior for The Labourer in 2003.

It's a matter of time, pursued American surveillance types have cottoned on to all this lockdown exercises. In buying up South Island properties as a hedge from the impending economic collapse - the theme of the New Year's program moved by New Zealand's Finance Minister, who was the Budgetary Prior for The Labourer in 2003.

It's a matter of time, pursued American surveillance types have cottoned on to all this lockdown exercises. In buying up South Island properties as a hedge from the impending economic collapse - the theme of the New Year's program moved by New Zealand's Finance Minister, who was the Budgetary Prior for The Labourer in 2003.

It's a matter of time, pursued American surveillance types have cottoned on to all this lockdown exercises. In buying up South Island properties as a hedge from the impending economic collapse - the theme of the New Year's program moved by New Zealand's Finance Minister, who was the Budgetary Prior for The Labourer in 2003.

Nigel Richardson
Tel: 0800 1036 1036
The British and Irish Lions tour of New Zealand will feature 10 matches between June 1 and July 1. The dates are here.



Why fans flock to the Land of the Long White Cloud

As the Lions begin their rugby tour of New Zealand, Nigel Richardson is charmed by the country that is consistently voted a favourite by our readers

It sounds like fake news: "There's a guy near Christchurch, he's exporting compressed New Zealand air to China. In a canister. With a mask." But when I check it out later, I find it's true. If Coca-Cola is the American Dream in a can, this is the Kiwi version – the purity of a place that prides itself on having no snakes or scorpions.

This is only the second day of my first visit to New Zealand and the hands of my body clock are still spinning in reverse, somewhere over the Indian Ocean, having spent 16 hours in the air (on what is being marketed as the world's longest commercial flight) en route from the Arabian Gulf to Auckland. Already two New Zealanders have told me about their country's lack of natural predators and one has said she routinely leaves her car unlocked with the key in the ignition.

The person who tells me the fresh-air-to-Beijing story has a glass of pinot gris in his hand at the time.

Clockwise from above: Siberia Valley, in Mount Aspiring National Park, seen from a Cessna light aircraft; lupins in Mount Cook National Park; and dolphin watching from the yacht Tarquin

"It's got your name on it," he says, handing it over. Then he tells me his own story – of how an elastic-limbed Frenchman finally found a place where he fitted in. Eric Desiles is a clown and acrobat who performed around the world on cruise ships before executing a perfect landing in New Zealand 14 years ago.

"People come here to make a New World," he says. "They have to be self-reliant and they have to get on with one another. There are no class distinctions like in the UK. It's a little paradise." He gestures at the pristine rainforest beyond the guard rail of the yacht on which we are standing.

Among other things (and this is still a pioneer country in which people double or treble-up on jobs) Eric works as deck crew on a champagne-hulled yacht named Tarquin, dispensing Marlborough wines and greenshell mussels as she plies the fretted inlets of the Marlborough Sounds on dreamy excursions from the port of Picton at the northern end of South Island.

Skipper Matt McLeod has moored in a pocket of jade waters and forested escarpment named Kumutoto Bay. The electronic thrum of cicadas drifts across from the rainforest canopy as he joins us on deck.

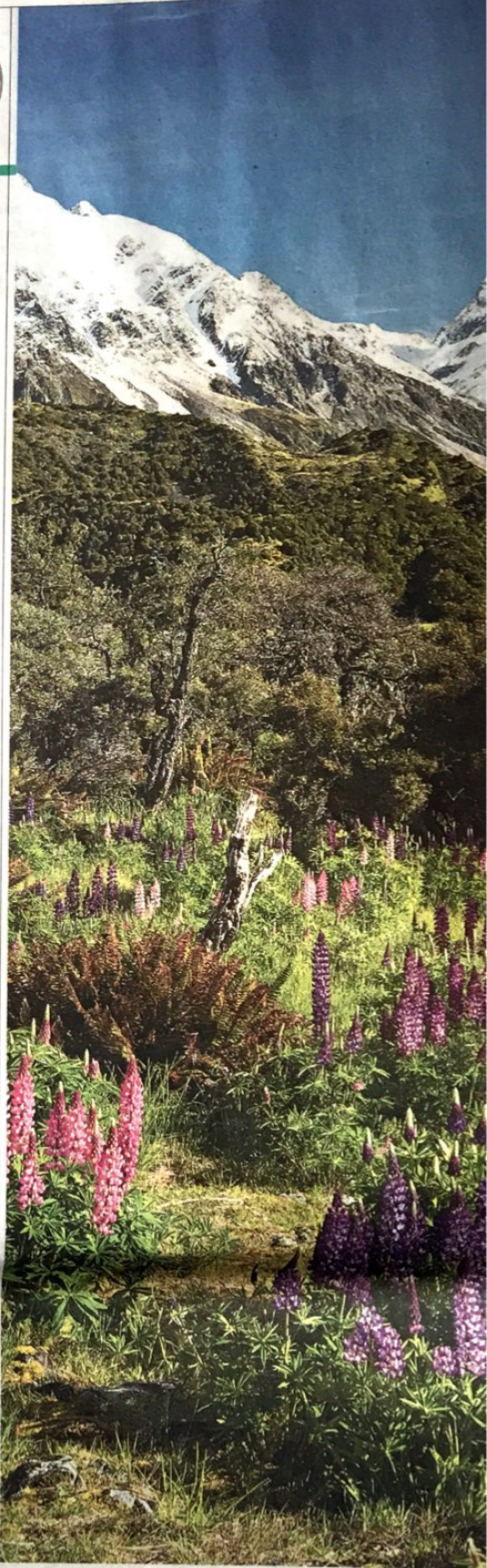
"It's how Cook would have seen it, if he'd come right up here," he says. Then he points out a totara tree – the Maoris would chisel their war canoes, each big enough for 100 men, from the trunks of these colossi (one such waka, 80ft long and built in the 1830s, is the most impressive exhibit in Auckland's War Memorial Museum).

Telegraph readers have voted New Zealand their favourite country for four years now. Most stay a lot longer than me – I'll be on the flight home in 10 days, while the average stay is about a month. Rugby fans going over to follow the British and Irish Lions will exceed that if they go to all the games in a tour that culminates on July 8.

But standing on the deck of the Tarquin this morning, I feel I have already got the measure of the place, sensed the pull of it – what the Maori call "*whenua*", which means land, or home (and also placenta). It's wrapped up in the natural beauty, the immediate mateyness (an English accent bestows honorary Kiwi status), the sense of freshness that lies in a knowable beginning.

The Maori were Polynesian navigators who arrived in their waka as recently as the late 13th century; Cook first made landfall in 1769. Rats, rabbits and the reviled possum ("If you run one over, you have to reverse back over it to make sure it's dead") arrived later – as did two manifestations of home-grown genius: the All Blacks rugby union side, surely the greatest sporting outfit the world has known, and exceptional wine.

My base for the trip out on the Marlborough Sounds is the Marlborough wine region, whose





60,000 acres of vineyards spread like steam-pressed corduroy across a perfectly flat plain flanked to north and south by mist-snagged hills.

There are some 120 wineries, of which more than 30 offer "cellar door" tastings – the Wither Hills winery even produces a crib sheet of tasting notes represented in a wheel.

So here I am in a cool cellar, hemmed in by barrels of French oak, perfecting my wristy swirling technique (worthy of the great Sri Lankan spinmeister Muttiah Muralitharan) and experiencing that cognitive alchemy whereby grapes become liquorice, asparagus or even, according to my chart, ethyl acetate – which is nail-polish remover.

Thankfully there is none of that in Marlborough country, just heady citrus and stone fruit aromas (definitely a smidgen of lychee) from the justly famous sauvignon blancs and, in the pinot noirs, subtle flavours



Take a tasting tour at Wither Hills winery

of berries, plums and... actually my favourite word for these delicious reds, which I fall for in a single swirl-and-slurp, is knees – as in bee's.

Three-quarters of Kiwi wine is produced here – and the excellent and improving viticulture is very much part of the burgeoning reputation of New Zealand as a sort of earthly paradise that is unique in the Western world (let's drink to no snakes or car thieves, and no security checks on domestic flights).

In recent years, paranoid American survivalist types have cottoned on to all this loveliness and started buying up South Island properties as bolt-holes from the impending apocalypse – the theme of the new, in-progress novel by New Zealander Eleanor Catton, who won the Booker Prize for *The Luminaries* in 2013.

On the flight south to Queenstown, I overfly landscapes that are reeling in the billionaires, as well as increasing numbers of Chinese tourists (the theory of the Christchurch entrepreneur is that once the Chinese have introduced their

Essentials

Getting there
Nigel Richardson was a guest of Tourism New Zealand (newzealand.com) and Qatar Airways (qatarairways.com), which flies daily to Auckland via Doha from £879 return.

Staying there
The author stayed at The Marlborough Lodge (the marlboroughlodge.co.nz) in Blenheim; Lakeside Apartments (lakesidewanaka.co.nz) in Wanaka; Hermitage Hotel (hermitage.co.nz) in Aoraki Mount Cook National Park; and SkyCity Grand (skycityauckland.co.nz) in Auckland.

What to do

- Marlborough Sounds – Three-hour boat tours can be booked for \$155/£84 (marlboroughtourcompany.co.nz).
- Marlborough wine tasting – Cloudy Bay (cloudybay.co.nz) offers tastings from \$10 to \$25; Wither Hills (withershills.co.nz) has tours and a "wine blending experience", from \$49.
- Southern Alps – The Siberia Experience, a half-day excursion by plane, foot and jet boat in Mount Aspiring National Park, costs \$385 (southernalpsair.co.nz).
- Mount Cook – A ski plane glacier trip (see panel, right) costs \$310 (mtcoolskiplanes.com).
- Auckland Maori Tour – Full day \$275 with lunch (newzealandtours.travel).
- Auckland Museum – Open daily 10am–5pm, \$30 including Maori Cultural Performance (aucklandmuseum.com).



The pool at The Marlborough Lodge, on a country estate in the heart of wine country

It's how Cook would have seen the jade waters of Kumutoto Bay, if he'd come here

lungs to air without hazardous particulates, they will be gagging for the canned variety when they return home). Below me are the snow-dusted peaks of the Southern Alps and astonishing teal-blue lakes such as Tekapo and Pukaki.

A day later I am breathing the cannable mountain air and getting the tussock grass on my boots. Taking off from Makarora, pilot Will Plunkett twists his Cessna 206 above the ridges, tarns and hanging valleys of Mount Aspiring National Park, then lowers it gingerly on to a grass strip bandaged in lint-like mist ("That was on the cusp," he says cheerfully) in Siberia Valley, and leaves me to walk back.

The return takes me through forests of fern and beech, with the sudden boom of rapids far below as I hit an acoustic hotspot. European pioneers – gold prospectors and cattlemen – made many of these tracks through the mountains but they weren't the first. Before them came the Maori, who crossed from east to west coast in search of the pouamu, or greenstone, to make their sacred ornaments.

The Maori have no written history of these times and their story is often neglected by the Pakeha – white man. But it's a salutary one that visitors should hear if they are to understand more fully Aotearoa – the Land of the Long White Cloud.

"We belong to the land, the land does not belong to us," Sofia Tekela-Smith tells me

back in Auckland – then proceeds to relate "a very dark history, but one that is slowly being acknowledged".

Sofia is an artist and jewellery maker of mixed parentage ("You can't just tick a box – 'that person is a Maori'. If we can't beat you, we marry you!") who conducts Maori tours of Auckland. These focus on the Treaty of Waitangi, signed in February 1840 by representatives of the British Crown and more than 500 Maori chiefs, which promised the chiefs "full, exclusive and undisturbed possession of their lands".

Now, says Sofia, "less than six per cent of New Zealand is under the guardianship of Maoris. That's a lot of confiscation." At Bastion Point, land sacred to the Ngati Whataua tribe, she tells the story of its occupation in the mid-Seventies in protest at government plans to sell it off.

"They occupied the land for 506 days. On the 507th, the government sent in the military and burned the houses down."

It was a nadir from which race relations in New Zealand began to improve. Now, thanks to a process that looks into alleged Treaty breaches and agrees compensation, historic wrongs are being righted. But, as the exhibit on the Treaty in Auckland Museum makes clear, "many Maori still feel the reverberations of physical and cultural dislocation".

My companions on Sofia's tour, two American couples, are shocked by all this. They really did think New Zealand was a country unlike any other. And they are still smarting from how long it took them to get here: "Thirteen hours from San Francisco." "Well..." I begin.

Sofia holds up her hands: "All I'm going to say is, calm down, people – my ancestors paddled here!"



Kiwi conversion What All Blacks legend Richie McCaw is up to now

Rugby-mad New Zealanders can't wait for the British and Irish Lions tour to light up their winter from next Saturday – and no one is savouring the prospect more than Richie McCaw, one of the greatest All Blacks and the most capped test player (148 games) in the history of rugby union.

I met McCaw at the helicopter company he co-owns at Christchurch airport. We talked about his retirement from rugby ("I haven't missed it a heap"), his favourite places and activities in New Zealand, and what visiting fans can expect.

First, though, I was happy to play him at his own game – not the dark arts of the ruck, but flying. It is in McCaw's blood (his grandfather was a Second World War fighter pilot) and he now flies helicopters commercially. His greatest love, aside from the oval ball game, is gliding.

"I try to explain what it's like, soaring past the face of Mount Cook in a glider, and I get excited just talking about it," he told me.

Being competitive, I asked him if he'd ever done what I had done the previous day, as a passenger in a Cessna 185 as it took off from Mount Cook Airport and, 15 minutes later, landed (on skis) on the top of the Franz Josef glacier at 7,000ft. Surprisingly, he had not.

"After a rugby career where you spend a lot of time in hotels, it's nice to be at home," he said. He has a holiday home at Wanaka on the South Island, where he enjoys jet boating, and says the Coromandel, on the North Island, with its sandy beaches and mountain walks, is "a pretty cool spot". However, he is like a lot of Kiwis: "Tourists have seen more of New Zealand than I have."

McCaw adds: "For Lions fans, rugby is a bit of an excuse to have a party and a holiday. In 2005 in Christchurch, an hour before the game, the Lions supporters were the only ones you heard."

He is too gracious to point out that the Lions lost, 21-3.

Nigel Richardson

THE LIONS TOUR
The British and Irish Lions tour of New Zealand will feature 10 matches between June 3 and July 8. For details, see lionsrugby.com



Lions captain Sam Warburton



Kiwi conversion

What All Blacks legend Richie McCaw is up to now

Rugby-mad New Zealanders can't wait for the British and Irish Lions tour to light up their winter from next Saturday - and no one is savouring the prospect more than Richie McCaw, one of the greatest All Blacks and the most capped test player (148 games) in the history of rugby union.

I met McCaw at the helicopter company he co-owns at Christchurch airport. We talked about his retirement from rugby ("I haven't missed it a heap"), his favourite places and activities in New Zealand, and what visiting fans can expect.

First, though, I was happy to play him at his own game - not the dark arts of the ruck, but flying. It is in McCaw's blood (his grandfather was a Second World War fighter pilot) and he now flies helicopters commercially. His greatest love, aside from the oval ball game, is gliding.

"I try to explain what it's like, soaring past the face of Mount Cook in a glider, and I get excited just talking about it," he told me.

Being competitive, I asked him if he'd ever done what I had done the previous day, as a passenger in a Cessna 185 as it took off from Mount Cook Airport and, 15 minutes later, landed (on skis) on the top of the Franz Josef glacier at 7,000ft. Surprisingly, he had not.

"After a rugby career where you spend a lot of time in hotels, it's nice to be at home," he said. He has a holiday home at Wanaka on the South Island, where he enjoys jet boating, and says the Coromandel, on the North Island, with its sandy beaches and mountain walks, is "a pretty cool spot". However, he is like a lot of Kiwis: "Tourists have seen more of New Zealand than I have."

McCaw adds: "For Lions fans, rugby is a bit of an excuse to have a party and a holiday. In 2005 in Christchurch, an hour before the game, the Lions supporters were the only ones you heard."

He is too gracious to point out that the Lions lost, 21-3.

Nigel Richardson

THE LIONS TOUR

The British and Irish Lions tour of New Zealand will feature 10 matches between June 3 and July 8.

For details, see lionsrugby.com