

Title:

Backpacking in New Zealand - How to Get Amongst the Locals & Experience Things Off The Tourist Trail

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499

Summary:

A great way for backpackers to get a taste of the real New Zealand is to seek out local events and festivals. One festival not to be missed is the legendary Wild Foods festival held annually in a small town on the West Coast of the South Island called Hokitika.

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Article Body:

A great way for backpackers to get a taste of the real New Zealand is to seek out local events and festivals in smaller towns and communities. Take your time to chill out in one place for a while and you will be surprised how much more you can deepen your experience by getting amongst the local scene.

One festival not to be missed is the legendary Wild Foods festival held annually in a small town on the West Coast of the South Island called Hokitika.

Due to the isolated location of the West Coast the 'Coasters' have always done things their own way, paying little attention to how the rest of the world lives. The festival is a prime example of this, as it show cases the rather random delicacies of the coast and the local characters that live there. You name it, it's on offer and both locals and tourists come from afar to challenge themselves to eat the huge selection of wild foods.

Some of the more memorable dishes at this years festival included Mountain Oysters (goat testicles); huhu grubs that were very much alive; eel spine, marinated duck tongue; semen sauce; cow tit; seagull turd; rotten fish eyes and possum pie. MMMMMM Yuk! Funnily enough there was such a high demand for the live huhu grubs that they sold out. The atmosphere is awesome as everywhere you look people are egging their friends on encouraging them to try the most vulgar of the vulgar wild foods on offer.

A few of the more tame - or should we say edible foods - included "Bambi"

burgers, white bait fritters, homemade fudge, pickled punga (native fern), mussels and wild pork.

Let's not forget that there is also plenty of booze and live music (hillbilly style) at the festival for those who like a drink or three and a bit of a boogie. The locally brewed Monteiths Ale was flowing from mid day along with a selection of New Zealand wines.

Hokitika has a population of about 6,000 and with more than 10,000 people attending the Wild Foods Festival accommodation options get rather interesting. So where does everyone sleep? The local fire brigade set up a couple of large camp sites right by the beach which over flows with tents and campervans. The setting is to die for... right at your doorstep is a rugged west coast beach dotted with bonfires as far as one can see which makes for the perfect place to chill out on return from the Hillbilly dance.

On waking early to enjoy watching the sun rise take a stroll and you will discover that the less organised have set up home on the railway track, footpath, under the town clock or in some less fortunate cases in amongst the abundance of porta-loos..

There are many fantastic festivals in New Zealand, so be sure to enquire about what is on and where during your backpacking through our beautiful country, Aotearoa - the Land of the Long White Cloud.