



Fabulous: The Marlborough Sounds in New Zealand are renowned for their spectacular scenery – a true adventure for those who love sea kayaking.

PHOTO: JOHAN AUGUSTIN

Kayak in the fairy world

New Zealand's Marlborough region offers a wonderful landscape.

Come along to the riverbed where The Lord of the Rings was filmed.

stands closely along
the winding road. A sign says
Canvastown is right nearby.

The trees The village got its name from
the gold rush in the mid-19th century when
thousands of visitors settled in tents here.
Town and river have the same name and both
are located in the Wakamarina Valley. It is quiet.
The last census here, carried out ten years
ago, was able to state that there are 130
inhabitants living in the district.

The river full of gold

However, gold can still be found in the valley
and river.

- My aunt finds whole nuggets of gold
the time, says Jade Brown and presses the
gas pedal. The van with the kayaks on the trailer
flies forward through the woods.

Only now and then does the landscape open up and
we see meadows and grazing cows.

Jade is a kayak guide in the area and
quickly drives past the next village of Havelock.
During the gold rush days, the place had its glory
days and could offer 17 different pubs. Now
there is only one left.

- Most visitors who come here
not sitting in a pub drinking. They like outdoor
activities, explains Jade.

Nature attracts

New Zealand's tough covid rules during
the pandemic, when the country largely
closed its borders for over two years, spelled
disaster for many in the tourism sector.
Finally, new visitors are beginning to find
their way back to the country's spectacular scenery.
One such place is the Wakamarina River. This is
an important tributary of the Pelorus River.
Unlike many of the mountain sides that have
been cleared for new pine plantations, this lot
consists of natural, rich forest.
There are believed to be large amounts of gold
left in the area, but a strong environmental
movement has protested against new mining. Instead



by **The Lord of the Rings:** The river Pelorus offers rapids, waterfalls and beautiful natural forest. This district was used in the filming of the Hobbit films.

PHOTO: JOHAN AUGUSTIN

Guide and joy:

There is only one kayak operator on the Pelorus River. They are called Pelorus Eco Adventures.

The organizer offers a number of excursions. The tour named "The Hobbit Kayak Tour" provides a four-hour paddling experience. For those who want to end the whole ode with a swim, followed by a delicious lunch. Kayak and other equipment are included in the package. The guide also takes pictures of the visitors.

These will be sent by e-mail afterwards. The excursion costs the equivalent of 1450 Norwegian kroner.

<https://www.kayak-newzealand.with/>

Lunch is included from the catering the company Karaka Kitchen, and consists of carefully selected gourmet dishes. It is not possible to organize your own kayaking on Peloruselva. This is because the river

meanders through private land.

The organizer Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company is investing in sea kayaking in the Marlborough Sounds. From them it is possible to get tailor-made excursions for a few days or even rent a kayak on your own. www.marlboroughsounds.co.nz.

The business is open all year round and is based in Picton.

is it from forestry and milk production that the local people collect money from. - And on tourism, adds Jade. He brakes, drives the van into a meadow and parks.

Expertly, she throws the one inflatable rubber kayak on her back and jumps onto a path through the forest. - Hang on, and don't forget your kayak!

Troll forest with fabulous animals

With the good help of Jason Poon, I lift the other kayak down from the trailer.

Janson is originally from Sydney and is visiting Marlborough and New Zealand for the first time. We make our way through the greenery that hangs over the path, and where ferns compete for the few strips of light that reach down to the ground covered in moss and reeds. More enchanted forest than this is hard to come by! New Zealand director Peter Jackson researched the area before choosing the Pelorus River



by **Miss never tired:** Kayak guide Jade Brown never gets tired of her job. The river Pelorus constantly offers something new. PHOTO: JOHAN AUGUSTIN

as a location for one of the Hobbit films, The Hobbit: "The Desolation of Smaug". The film was released in 2013 and was a follow-up to the Lord of the Rings trilogy.

Bird life and sparkling water

Jade pulls our kayaks out into the knee-deep water, which is fresh and cold. It is the end of March and summer is turning to autumn. Only now and then do the sun's rays peek through

forward and portion out some heat. But if the sun stays back, the birdlife is more generous. A large white cormorant peeks out from behind a branch, completely fearless even though we are up close. The cormorant is protected in New Zealand - and the country has a third of the world's cormorant species. In addition to living along the coast, they also live by the country's many waters and rivers. The cormorant follows us with curious eyes as we paddle



🌿 **Quiet:** The quiet is part of the overall experience in the Marlborough region.

downstream in the Pelorus River. Since it hasn't rained for a long time, the river is shallow and we can see through the clear water all the way to the sandy bottom. We paddled at a leisurely pace. It's like Jade has read my mind.

- If you get thirsty, just drink directly from the river. That's what I usually do.

Undesirable plants

The "Trollskogen" extends beyond the river, and it looks as a real natural forest should.

Here and there dead pines stick out of the vegetation, which is because since we are now on private land, the landowners sometimes kill invading species with poison, as in the case of the pines. New Zealand, just like its neighbor Australia, has a big problem with invasive animal and plant species. These multiply uncontrollably and displace the local flora and fauna in many places. Not only are there plants that do not belong in New Zealand. We slip past some dead animals. It turns out to be goats - these too belong to a species that the landowner has shot and abandoned. Jade is clearly annoyed. On a few occasions she has had to pull dead goats into the water and let the river take care of the bodies. At the same time, she is well aware that the decay process can affect the otherwise strong water quality.

Shallow rapids and swarms mosquito

We paddle further downstream and can more or less let the river do the work. It's quiet, so quiet. Birds chirping is the only thing that can be heard. A couple of paradise ducks accompany them, giving out loud calls. It is as if they are shouting; - Don't come here, leave our children alone! The only thing that really disturbs the peace is a swarm of sandflies, intent on sucking blood from my bare legs.

Good rapids We

quickly approach the first rapid, but since the water flow is so low, it is easy to spot the dangerous moments and maneuver away from the large rocks.

- Lean back so you get more speed through the rapids, Jade calls out.

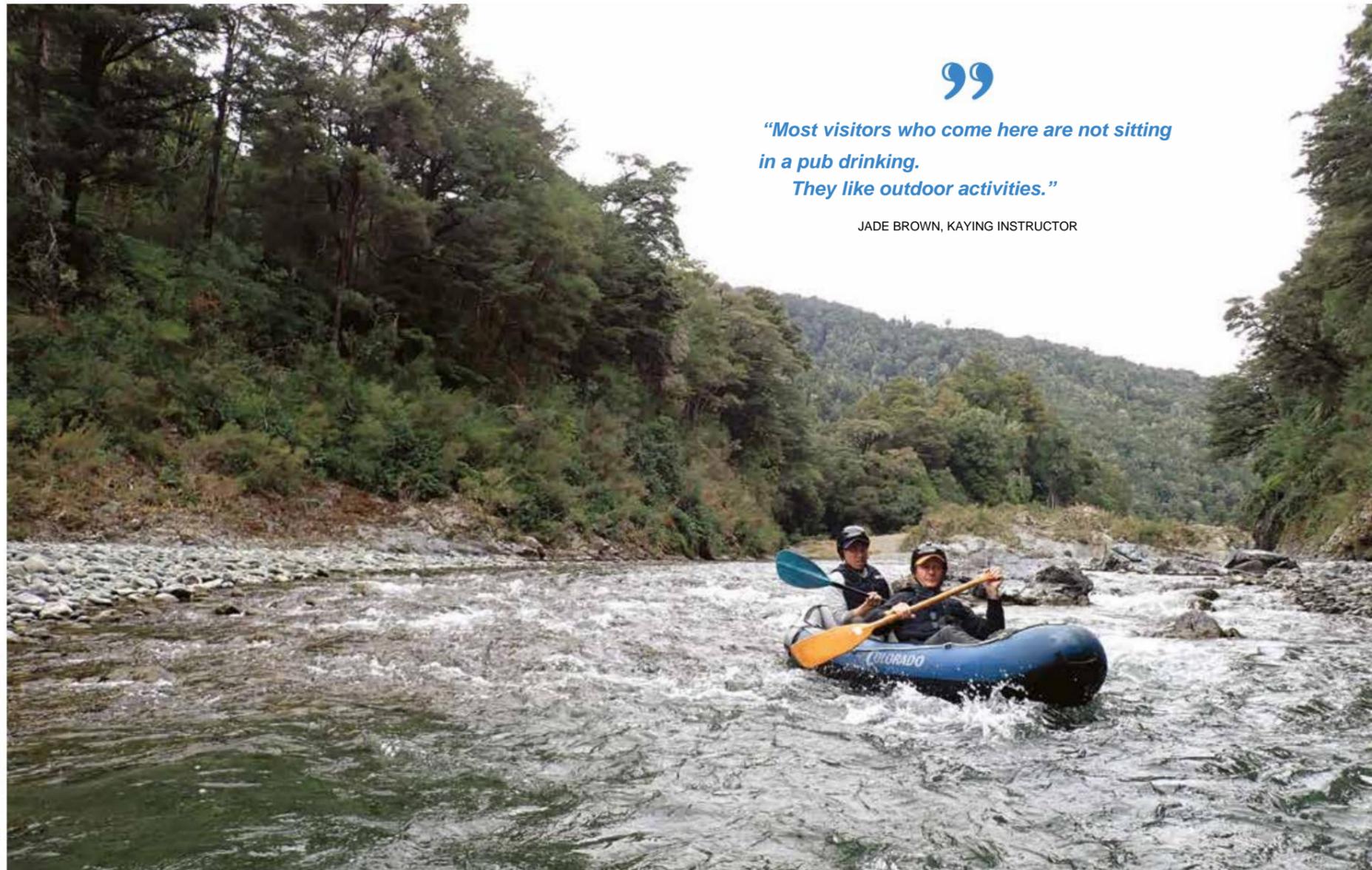
We parry the first big rocks, but at the same time know others who tickle the keel.

Note! Now there is a great chance that we can settle down! With Jade's advice in mind, we sit back and take in new chances to pass. On the other side of the rapids, the water quickly gets deeper again.

Phew! The journey can continue.

The river relieves stress

A calm paddling pace in combination with trickling water makes for a relaxing experience



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“Most visitors who come here are not sitting in a pub drinking. They like outdoor activities.”

JADE BROWN, KAYING INSTRUCTOR

experiences and lowers the stress level considerably.

After a while, Jade stops at a large rock. This is the place where Bilbo and his friends sailed down the river in wooden barrels.

The scene is taken from the world-famous Hollywood film "The Desolation of Smaug".

A little further up the valley, Peter Jackson is said to have rented a wooden cabin. This was to act as a shelter in case it started to rain while they were on set. The cabin should have cost NOK 700,000. Jade chimes in the eyes:

- They never used that cabin.

Frisk finish

Further down, the river widens and large pools of deep turquoise water form.

Up on a high cliff someone is standing

🌿 **Slalom:** Article author Johan

Augustin and his paddling partner from Australia, Jason Poon, desperately try to steer clear of the rocks.

local boys. Jump! There they take a chance and jump in. Judging by their screams, the temperature is somewhere between cold and chilly.

Can it really be that uncomfortable? This must be tested. We pull up the kayaks, take off our clothes and follow the boys' example. Oh! So refreshing! I take the opportunity, dive to the bottom, but at the same time keep my eyes open. The hope is to find a gold ring from the world of fairy tales. ||

TIPS

Rice hit:

Traveling to Marlborough is done either by flying to Christchurch which is on the South Island and then renting a car and driving north. The trip takes about four hours. It takes about the same time to get from Wellington International Airport, in the southern part of the North Island, by taking a ferry across to Picton, located in Marlborough, in the northern part of the South Island.

The Interislander ferry operates many daily routes between Wellington and Picton. www.interislander.co.nz

For comfortable accommodation close to vineyards and paddling in Marlborough: Chateau Marlborough, www.marlboroughnz.co.nz

More information about Marlborough: www.marlboroughnz.com

When is the best time to travel?

It is possible to paddle all year round in New Zealand, but in winter (when it is summer in Scandinavia) colder temperatures apply, and thus more clothing, such as a wetsuit. Spring (October-November) and autumn (March-April) are the best, because there are fewer visitors than in summer, still good weather and often high water levels in the river.