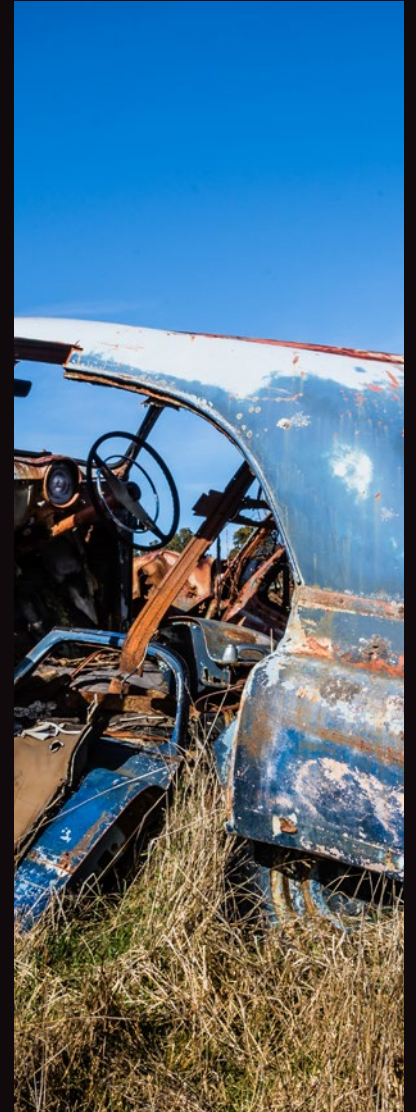


AOTEAROA

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S JOURNEY AROUND NEW ZEALAND

SECOND EDITION



Stuart Macdonald

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Previous Publications

Aotearoa - A Photographer's Journey Around New Zealand
New Holland (2019)

Wellington Places - A Photographic Journey
smphotoart books (2023)

Previously Self Published

nzphotoart - landscape and fine art images from New Zealand (2014)

The Obsessional Photographer (2015)

The Eclectic Photographer (2016)

The Wandering Photographer (2018)

Information about these books can be found at: www.smphotoart.co.nz

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Old Pines in the Mist

A misty day on Mt Victoria, Wellington. It was near here that a number of Lord of the Rings scenes were shot. The mist swirls around the gnarly old pines and makes the place seem a bit eerie and other worldly.

Foreword to Second Edition

A Photographer's Journey

It has been five years since the first edition of Aotearoa - A Photographer's Journey Around New Zealand was published. In that time we have experienced Covid, major disasters including cyclones, and a cost of living crisis for many New Zealanders. The world and Aotearoa is going through testing times. However it is my philosophy that it always helps to look at the positives one has in one's daily life, and to value and appreciate these. This is where this book comes in - we often tend to take the beauty of what is around us for granted, in both the good and the bad times. But there is much joy and solace to be had in connecting with what is there in plain sight.

In this Second Edition the same mixture of the beautiful and the iconic or unique are included. The 'journey' includes not just our beautiful landscapes, of which there are plenty, but also those typically 'kiwi' aspects the cities, towns and small localities that make up our country. Even though we are a relatively young nation there is a rich and friendly culture to be seen in the less usual places as you travel about.

There are over 100 new images and places included in the book. And in this sense Aotearoa - A Photographer's Journey can also be used as a photographic guide to New Zealand's interesting and beautiful places.

We are blessed within such a small country in having a wide range of landscapes and places all within an easy drive of each other. For instance one can enjoy the swamp forests of South Westland and then drive through the Haast Pass to the open semi-desert of Central Otago and the Mackenzie Country. In the North Island one can explore the volcanic plateau and within a couple of hours be canoeing down the beautiful bush gorges of the Whanganui River.

We also have our own New Zealand lifestyle (Kiwiana as they say), often easiest to see when driving through a small town. There may be a dairy open all hours, or the local pub, a community hall (or marae) or some old building converted to community use. In the countryside you may come across a 'weird' art piece at the farm gate or, in summer, a child's fruit stall.

As a 'young' country we do not have many truly old buildings – Aotearoa New Zealand was, after all, settled by Europeans only around 150 years ago, and by Maori some 700 years before that. There are a few old Government buildings to be seen as one travels around, but it is in the churches and original commercial buildings of both cities and towns that one can often see the old and the beautiful, or just how life was. Some of these old, unique buildings are included here - to illustrate a New Zealand we often overlook.

New Zealanders love the open spaces, and have a strong history of exploring and enjoying our remote places. There are tramping tracks (although I am reluctant to call some of these proper tracks) and huts scattered all over our back country and national parks. New Zealanders also value their individuality, and you will see signs of this when you visit where they live – especially in small towns and localities off the main road. They will have put their stamp on their piece of New Zealand.

The journey reflected in this book has taken place over several years, and although there are shots of our traditionally beautiful landscapes I have also wanted to show those less visited places - whether they be a beach on a stormy day, a remote place in the bush or high country, or an interesting old building somewhere – the ordinary beauty of New Zealand.

Every image has a short 'story' telling the reader a little bit about the place (or how to find it) and maybe my reactions as a photographer being there - to help you also enjoy seeing what I and the camera saw.

About My Photography

Photography is a creative art that enables me to stop time - that is, to capture a moment or a place and preserve that for others to also experience. It is also about observation – about being connected and ‘in the moment’ of what you are doing, so that you ‘see’ at another level. For me ‘observation’ goes through several phases when I am taking a photograph – Phase 1 is just finding the place or object and realising the possibilities; Phase 2 is looking around to size up the best angle or the light and Phase 3 is ‘composition’ when I am refining how the image looks through the viewfinder.

At the start of each photograph (especially so with landscapes, or inside churches) I take the time to just absorb the place and the beauty that emerges. Often quite ordinary places can hide a unique beauty or image – such as the image of a local dairy or convenience store, or an old farm house.

Photography, particularly landscape photography, also involves patience - whether it is waiting for the light or coming back another time to get the right weather or sky. In this sense it is not unlike fishing, where a certain amount of luck helps and there might be days when you do not catch a fish at all.

For me the equipment (the camera) is only half of the photographic process. The other half is the person behind it. This means one has to be very familiar with the camera – to get the best out of it, especially in tricky lighting or weather – but equally one must practice ‘seeing’. By this I mean stopping and being still. In a sense just ‘being there’ and not thinking about anything else – looking and imagining what images might be in front of you. So ‘wandering around’ whether in a town or in the countryside can open up possibilities, just like driving up a road to see what is at the end.

About the Future

It is part of our Kiwi nature to accept things at face value, to be reasonably direct, and to be open and friendly. For an overseas visitor it is often this friendliness, this simplicity, this slightly understated culture that makes their visit so rewarding. It is also part of our nature to respect the values and individuality of others, so long as they don’t impact adversely on anyone else. However it is important to protect what we as a people value – to recognise what we have. There can be little doubt that some of our special places, and the localities close by, are under pressure. We need to do something about that.

I hope the collection of images in this book will help us to appreciate the beauty around us, and to value what we have. And I hope you find some special places to visit by looking through the images herein.

Stuart Macdonald

12 September 2024

Images and Places

Northland – including the Far North

OPPOSITE PAGE

Cape Reinga Lighthouse

Not quite the most northern part of New Zealand but close enough for photographic purposes! They say the confluence of ocean currents and winds around this northern tip of the country produces an interesting feeling to the place – and I think that is so. The wind rushes in, the sun shines fleetingly and the seas seem turbulent... It does feel different.

Author's Note - Viewing Images:

Remember – the amount of light falling on a printed photograph determines how bright it will appear. So to fully appreciate an image you like, view it in a good light.

I hope you enjoy your travels through these pages.

SM





OPPOSITE PAGE

Te Pahi Sand Dunes

The huge sand dunes at Te Pahi just south of Cape Reinga are really something quite different in terms of New Zealand landscapes. They are popular with people sand boarding, but there are whole parts of the dunes where few people go, and where you can experience the somewhat surreal exhilaration of walking these dunes... It is a fairly tough slog going up but once amongst the dunes you won't regret it.

I wanted to capture the desolate immensity of the dunes, and I do think you get that feeling in this image. From the car park by the Te Pahi stream just walk straight up and go from there!

LEFT

Te Pahi Sand Dunes 2

Once you are in the sand dunes you will appreciate their immensity, but also the variety of sculpted shapes. Here is a close up image where the wind has been blowing sand through a gap in the dunes...



OPPOSITE PAGE

Ratana Church at Te Kao

Te Kao is in the 'far north' about 40 kms south of Cape Reinga. The church can be seen as you drive past on SH1. In this image you can just see the five point stars and crescent moons atop each corner bell tower – Ratana symbols of light/enlightenment, and make out the words 'Arepa' and 'Omeka' which are Maori transliterations of the Greek words Alpha and Omega. The coloured star on the gate represents, among other things, the 'holy trinity' in Christian terms – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



LEFT

St Andrews at Te Kao

Just south of the Ratana Church lies St Andrews with its beautiful and lovingly tended cemetery, containing loved ones from the area. Art as well as memory!

Heading south turn right into Te Ahu Road. The church and graveyard are about 200m along the road on the right.





OPPOSITE PAGE

Vote

This house is on one of the main streets as you enter Kaitaia. In a way it reflects the history of Maori grievance and activism that is part of New Zealand, and part of being in a functioning democracy where people can fight for justice and what they believe is right.

LEFT

Entrance to Hokianga

The Hokianga harbour reaches some 20 kilometres inland from the entrance, and was once a major commerce route for Maori and early settlers. The bar at the entrance is dangerous, and many ships were lost as they tried to exit the harbour whilst laden. On the right of the image are the large sand dunes of Rangi Point.



OPPOSITE PAGE

In Waipoua Forest

The Waipoua Forest lies some 20 kms south of Hokianga Harbour and is home to some of the largest Kauri trees in New Zealand. But there are many beautiful parts to the forest and this image captures the luxuriant dense growth near one of its many streams. It has been raining and everything is wet – there is a slight ‘shimmering’ on all the leaves. In a place like this one has to be very watchful as there are steep drops into streams and gullies.



LEFT

Mangroves Near Opu

There are many mangroves around the harbours and inlets of Northland. This image is an attempt to capture the ‘mood’ of the convoluted shapes as the mangroves stretch up out of the tidal waters.



OPPOSITE PAGE

Kawakawa Toilets

The Kawakawa Hundertwasser toilets are famous, and very popular! In fact I had to wait patiently even though not a busy time of the day, in order to get this photograph. The idiosyncratic and colourful Hundertwasser style is really quite unique and Kawakawa has made a theme of this throughout the town.



LEFT

On Kawakawa Main Street

Opposite the Kawakawa toilets is the Grass Hut shop, also in the Hundertwasser style, and beautifully done. In particular the mural on the side of the building is something to behold – above the first ‘face’ on the left end are the words ‘Conservation is a State of Harmony between Men and Land’. Just to stand there and let your eyes wonder over the whole thing is a joy!



OPPOSITE PAGE

Ocean Beach

Whangarei is blessed with waterfalls, beautiful bush walks, a warm climate and so on. Also close by are bays and beaches that are typical of Northland – Ocean Beach is an example. Located down toward Bream Head and popular with surfers it does though feel isolated and remote (in fact it is a 5 minute walk from the small car park). This is the view if you climb up to the ridge at the south end of the beach. There is a smaller and even more private beach on the other side of the ridge.



LEFT

Home Away from Home – Whangarei

When New Zealanders go on their summer holidays they often make their campsite quite unique – it is a time to relax and be yourself! Here is an example, admittedly at the more extreme end, but lovely just the same... One can enjoy, along with these caravan campers, some of their passion.

