



((DISPATCHES))

In New Zealand, Follow in the Footsteps of Disney's Pete's Dragon

March 15, 2016 by Christina Valhoulis

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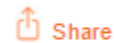
Redwoods in Rotorua/Tourism New Zealand

Forget about The Shire for a second and think dragons instead. New Zealand is gearing up to be back in the tourism spotlight thanks to the upcoming Disney movie *Pete's Dragon*, which was filmed there. Slated for an August 12 release, the film — which is a redo of the 1977 version — chronicles the adventures of the orphaned Pete and his best friend Elliott the dragon. Here's a closer look at the three towns where filming took place, and what each one offers for families — and the dragon-obsessed.

Wellington, Lower North Island: Wellington is often described as one of the coolest little cities in the world, and with good reason. It's New Zealand's top destination for the arts as well as coffee and craft beer. Visitors can tour [Stone Street Studios](#) and Weta Digital, the visual effects company that worked on Elliott. Pop into Te Papa Tongarewa to learn about the native Maori culture or [Enjoy Public Art Gallery](#), an artist-run collaborative. You can also explore the city's coastline by foot and head out to the [Red Rocks Seal Colony](#). Kids will love sitting at the counter of the [Six Barrel Soda Company](#) — order a specialty jerk soda or milkshake.

Rotorua, Central North Island: Rotorua, which is packed with giant redwoods, was the backdrop for the forest scenes in *Pete's Dragon*. Kids can unleash their energy at [The Redwoods Treewalk](#), a ropes course spanning 22 ancient trees, or hurl themselves down a luge course at [Skyline](#). No visit to Rotorua is complete without a visit to [Hells Gate](#), a geothermal park that offers endless Instagram-worthy landscapes. Visitors can see a mud volcano and soak in thermal mud baths. Indulge in an authentic steamed Maori lunch at the [Te Puia Steambox](#) while Tolkien fans can do a [Hobbiton](#) movie set tour.

Tapanui, Lower South Island: Tapanui stood in for main street in the movie's fictional town of Millhaven. Rent bikes to explore the Clutha Gold Trail that is part of [New Zealand Cycle Trail](#). Animal lovers, take note: yellow eyed penguins and fur seals can be spotted near the Otago coastline. Or go for an epic hike at Black Gully – during the holiday season mistletoe is in bloom.



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