

It's all work in Waihi Beach

By [Bronwyn Sell](#)

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Bronwyn Sell has the arduous task of eating her way around the hotspots of a wintry beachside town, with interludes of hot pooling and a ride on a Harley.



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Overlooking Anzac Bay near Waihi Beach on a Bularangi Motorbikes Harley driven by the owner of the business, Baz Howie. Photo / Supplied

I had three objectives for my wintry weekend at Waihi Beach: escape the kids, enjoy the leisurely meals and uninterrupted conversations you don't get when they're around, and walk the food off afterwards.

The first goal was achieved remarkably easily. Because I was researching this story the trip technically passed as "work". The pitch to the husband went something like this: "I have to go away this weekend for work. Don't worry, I won't drag you and the kids with me."

It was the loosest possible definition of work: two days sampling the best of the local eateries with an old friend and staying in the peaceful Waihi Beach Lodge, within earshot of the waves and with hours of uninterrupted gossiping, reading and sleeping-in.

There was also a dash of adrenalin. Within minutes of arriving at the beach I was on the back of a Harley Davidson. My leather-clad and bearded chaffeur, Baz Howie, runs his nationwide Bularangi Motorbikes Harley rental and tour business from the beach. We chugged up to a terraced pa site at the southern end of Waihi Beach, with crow's nest views of the churning tides of Tauranga Harbour and the turquoise crescent of Anzac Bay. To the north, Waihi Beach stretched out into a haze of sunshine.

Waihi Beach is, of course, a classic summer destination. But it's also gorgeous in winter, when you have most of the beach and the cafes to yourself.

Rachel and I had no trouble meeting our second objective: leisurely dining. Lunch was spent at the beachside Flatwhite Cafe. I had been here over summer, when my husband declared his burger the best he'd eaten and my friends went giddy over the brownie. It didn't disappoint on my second visit.

With Objective Two underway we got to work on the third, a walk along the beach.

Unfortunately for our thighs, it was curtailed when we realised we were shortly expected at Athenree Homestead - for afternoon tea. No problem, there was always our coastal walk to Orokawa Bay the next day. We believed ourselves too full to eat - until we saw the cake stand in the historic house.

After tea we pondered whether a soak in a hot pool would aid digestion. Deciding it was worth a shot, we motored down to the Athenree Hot Springs and Holiday Park and lazed awhile in its silky spring-fed mineral pool.

The next stage in Objective Two involved trying out the Monteith's Beer & Wild Food Challenge entry at The Porch, a village restaurant that won the nationwide challenge last year.

This year's entry was called Wild Peter Rabbit (so it's just as well the kids weren't there). We book-ended it with scallops and two stupendous desserts and rolled back to our B&B very happy.

I pretended to be disappointed in the morning when I woke (late) to the sound of drizzle. No walk then. I found consolation in food - a hearty breakfast at the B&B, followed by a chocolate and walnut slice at The Deli on the way home. (Just to make quadruply sure that second objective was met.)

Traveller's tips

Where to stay: Waihi Beach Lodge, 170 Seaforth Rd, Waihi Beach (07) 863 5818

Where to eat: The Porch Kitchen & Bar, 23 Wilson Rd, Waihi Beach (07) 863 1330; Flatwhite Cafe, 21 Shaw Rd, Waihi Beach (07) 863 1346; The Deli, 28 Wilson Rd, Waihi Beach (07) 863 5995

Where to soak: Athenree Hot Springs & Holiday Park, 1 Athenree Rd, Athenree, (07) 863 5600

Where to step back in time: Athenree Homestead, 360 Athenree Rd, Athenree, ph Anne (07) 863 6448 or Edith (07) 549 1118. Open first Sunday of the month 10am to 4pm, or for Devonshire teas and tours by appointment

More info: Visit waihibeachinfo.co.nz