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Island Hopping

By Jeannette Vermeulen

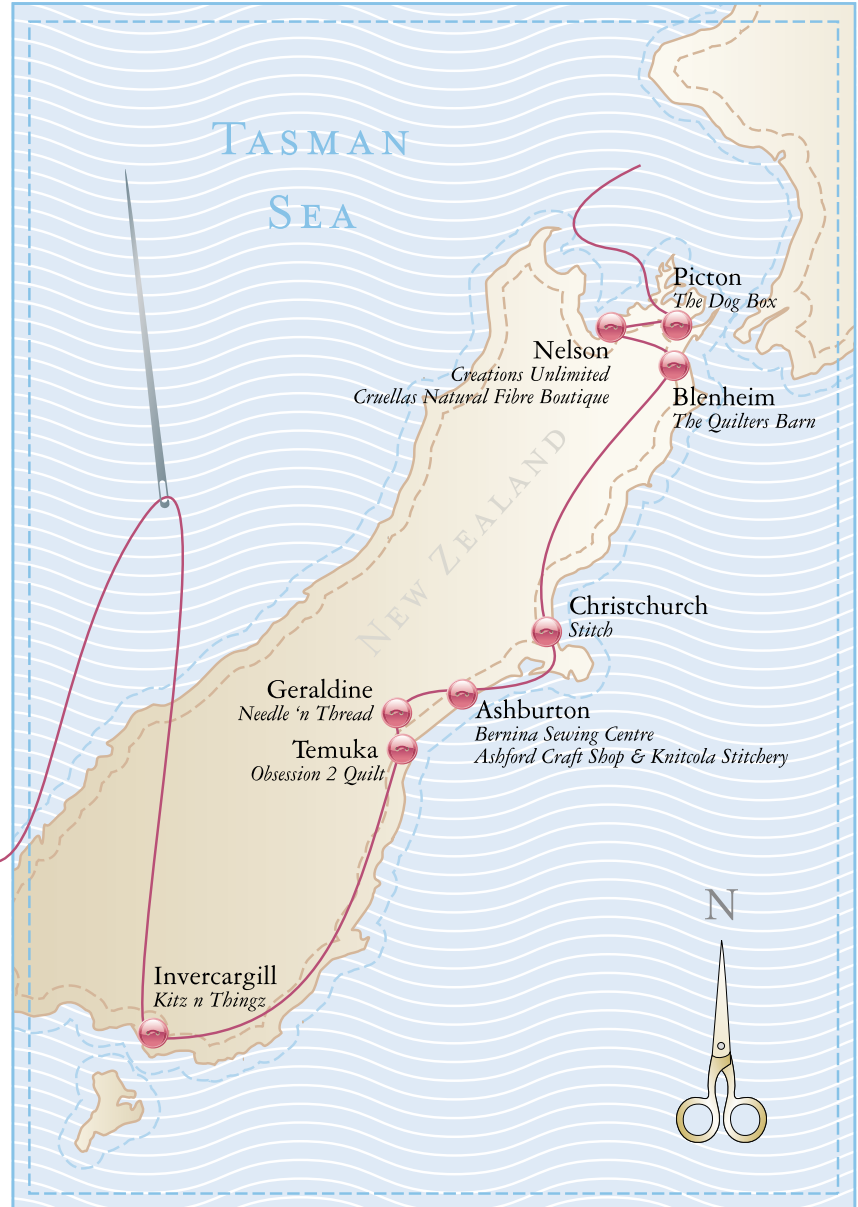
When it comes to dramatic scenery, you'll be hard pressed to find a country that does it quite as well as New Zealand. And one look at the South Island's towering mountains, craggy shorelines and ancient forests will be enough to convince you. Known as Te Wai Pounamu in the native Maori language, the South Island is the larger of the two major islands, if more scarcely populated. All the natural wonders provide an epic backdrop that is matched by its reputation as a thrill-seekers' haven, a hotspot for adventure and cultural experiences. We find middle ground between the two as we set off to explore the vibrant southern craft scene.

Like many other journeys, ours begins in Picton. This is the main traveller port for the South Island, with ferries to and from Wellington arriving and departing by way of the Marlborough Sounds. It is also home to Suellen's charming shop, The Dog Box. A pleasant, scenic drive away is the town of Nelson, a creative haven of popular art events, beautiful surroundings and great weather. Here we visit Creations Unlimited and Cruellas Natural Fibre Boutique.

From here, it's a hop-skip to Blenheim, home to The Quilters Barn. Nestled between the Wither Hills and the Richmond Ranges, Blenheim is located in wine country and a number of world-famous wineries are just over its back fence.

We travel along the picturesque east coast, past the whale-watching hub of Kaikoura, as we make our way to Christchurch. This sophisticated city is still recovering after the devastating earthquake and aftershocks that ravaged its beautiful tranquillity, but there's plenty on offer for the discerning crafter. Here we visit the charming Stitch to stock up on some fabulous fabrics. While some of the city's patchwork shops remain closed due to structural damage, many are trading from their homes and have tons of gorgeous stitching treasures just waiting to be uncovered. Give them a call to find out — the extra effort will certainly pay off in delicious patchwork goodies.

Our journey takes us to Ashburton next, where the Ashford Craft Village, with its antique spinning wheel at its entrance, is hard to miss. We call in at the Bernina Sewing Centre and the Ashford Craft Shop & Knitcola Stitchery. The next stop is Geraldine, a small town with an evolving art scene, where we visit Betty at Needle 'n Thread.



Follow the needle and thread, button by button, as we make our way around New Zealand's stunning South Island

Travelling along the breathtaking expanse of the Canterbury Plains we reach Temuka, where dynamic duo Sue and Toni welcome us to their shop, Obsession 2 Quilt. Still heading along the coast, our tour finally winds down in Invercargill, where we spend some time exploring Kitz n Thingz. The most southern and western city in New Zealand, Invercargill is an ideal place to take a well-deserved rest.

Map by Susan Cadzow

The Dog Box *Picton*



Suellen may have opened the doors to The Dog Box in April 2008, but the story starts long before that. Originally, Suellen ran a small shop at the rear of her café, The Dog and Frog, and was always to be found “in the dog box”, so to speak. When the café was sold, it made perfect sense to move into craft full-time.

The Dog Box is located in Picton’s main shopping area and is open seven days a week, with the exception of some public holidays. It’s a wonderland of craft supplies, with luscious fabrics, patterns,

haberdashery, threads and sewing accessories available, as well as ribbons, buttons, books, beads and scrapbooking requirements such as papers, albums and embellishments. A selection of New Zealand merino and possum knitting yarns and patterns is also available.

Suellen is joined in-store by two talented part-time staff, M’liss and Nicola. You’ll always be greeted with a friendly smile and helpful assistance. You could happily while away an afternoon exploring all the fantastic goodies available and chatting to the

staff. In Picton, at least, The Dog Box is definitely a place you want to be.

Local knowledge:

Picton is close to the head of Queen Charlotte Sound, one of four sounds forming the Marlborough Sounds. The area is a hotspot for outdoor activities including walking, fishing, kayaking and cycling.

Address: 40 High Street, Picton 7220

Phone: +64 3 573 5412

Email: thedogboxpicton@extra.co.nz

Website: <http://thedogboxpicton.co.nz>

Creations Unlimited *Nelson*

A feast of colours, Creations Unlimited is one of the brightest spots on the South Island craft tour. Carl and Sue Jorgensen’s store specialises in bright fabrics, an apt prelude to the sunny disposition of the staff and cheerful atmosphere that’ll keep you coming back. As well as many wools and threads, the shop has a great selection of inspiring books and kits available.

The Jorgensens bought the store 18 years ago, replacing a furnishing division with patchwork and sewing machines. Sue is the demonstrator for a range of Pfaff, Husqvarna Viking, Singer, Janome and Babylock machines. She also makes most of the sample quilts and designs the New Zealand table runners and wallhangings. Carl is the brawn of the operation, spending his spare time

fixing and servicing sewing machines. Other staff members include Rosanne, a wiz at colour selection; the resident joker Lesley, who helps with classes and assembling kits; alterations specialist Adrienne; and talented machinist Roselle.

Creations Unlimited offers classes on Monday evenings, Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons. Whatever is sold in store is taught as well. “If you need help, we help,” Sue says. Better yet, no booking required!

Local knowledge:

Nelson is home to the World of Wearable Art & Classic Cars Museum, featuring both a magical wearable-art gallery and more than 50 cars and motorbikes.

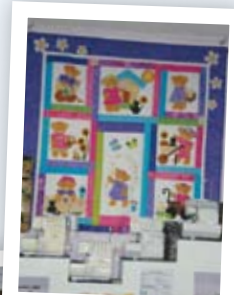
Address: 118 Hardy Street, Nelson 7010

Phone: +64 3 548 4297

Fax: +64 3 546 9049

Email: shop@creationsunlimited.co.nz

Website: www.creationsunlimited.co.nz



Cruellas Natural Fibre Boutique

Nelson

Cousins Ruth Benge and Vicki McGhee opened the enchanting Cruellas Natural Fibre Boutique in 2005, having been in the yarn production business since 1989. Along with Ruth's husband Matthew, the pair were involved in bringing the first shipload of alpacas and llamas to New Zealand on the Kerry Express and have been developing their own yarns since.

The shop is best known as the signature store for Rare Yarns, which works with naturally coloured fibres in a variety of bases to treat knitters and wearers of hand-knitted items to something unique and special. It's a delight to visit the store and see the gorgeous Rare Yarns displayed along the walls by colour, along with balls of wool and beautiful hand-knitted garments.

If a garment is not available in your size and colour, it can be specially knitted for you within two to three weeks. If you're busy knitting your own



items, the staff will be happy to hold extra skeins of your wool and, of course, help you along with the pattern. For a wonderfully helpful and supportive shopping experience, you couldn't ask for better and Cruellas was deservedly awarded the 2011 Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce Top Shop Award.

Local knowledge:

"Nelson is a vibrant artistic area and we are located in the heart of the city, with easy parking, loads of tasty lunch locations and plenty of sunshine year-round," Ruth says.



The stylish Victoria Vest is available in small-medium for NZ\$180, or knit it yourself for NZ\$69.70. Medium-large and large-extra large sizes are also available, each taking another ball of wool.

Address: 155 Hardy Street, Nelson 7010

Phone: +64 3 548 4016

Email: shop@cruellas.co.nz

Website: www.cruellas.co.nz

The Quilters Barn

Blenheim

Anne Murchison's shop in the stunning Marlborough region is developing quite a reputation for its varied collection of patchwork fabrics, including a large range of New Zealand fabrics, patterns, kits and giftware.



More than 3000 bolts of fabric line the walls and immediately capture your attention. The Quilters Barn stocks a selection of country designs, Kaffe Fassett, Moda, Michael Miller and many more. The shop has a great diversity of customers and Anne likes to make sure that everyone's tastes are catered for.

"We have recently exchanged premises within the Vines Village and now have a larger, lighter shop, with a wonderful classroom and display room," Anne says. There are also quilt kits, BOMs and patterns available. If you forget



Left: Arts and Craft Sampler Quilt designed by Michele Hill using Morris Meadows fabric from *In the Beginning*. This is a new block of the month program due to start in February, 2012. Above: The Wool Baa

to grab something on your visit, don't fret. The Quilters Barn has an excellent website and offers overseas postage.

Anne has recently opened the Wool Baa in The Vines Village, a knitter's haven that stocks a large selection of New Zealand yarns, including merino, mohair, possum and alpaca, as well as patterns, needles and other accessories. Be sure to call in for all your knitting needs.

Local knowledge:

Leave yourself at least an hour to explore the rest of The Vines Village, which features a collection of boutique food, wine, clothing and gift shops, and a lovely café by the pond.

Address: The Vines Village, 193

Rapaura Road, RD 3 Blenheim 7273

Phone: +64 3 572 7240

Fax: +64 3 572 7245

Email: info@thequiltersbarn.co.nz

Website: www.thequiltersbarn.co.nz

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Stitch *Christchurch*

Stitch is a creative haven for anyone interested in sewing, knitting and handcrafts. Owned and operated by mother-daughter duo, Penny and Fenella Jameson, this bright and captivating shop is family-friendly and customer-focused.

The pair first decided to open their shop 15 months ago thanks to their shared obsession with all things fabric. Penny was a fashion designer with a love of fibre arts that she passed on to Fenella, who decided to put her business education and experience to good use by opening a shop.

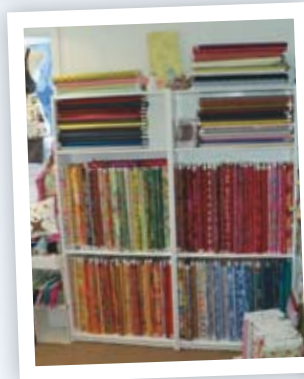
Known as “The Playroom for Knitters and Stitchers”, Stitch features everything from fresh, modern fabrics, including Kaffe Fassett, Kikka, Joel Dewberry, Saffron Craig and many more, to boutique yarns such as brightly coloured Debbie Bliss yarn, haberdashery, patterns and kits. The shop also stocks and sells Husqvarna sewing and quilting machines.

Inspiring class samples deck the walls and the conversational buzz of happy customers and the scent of vanilla and real plunger coffee provides a relaxing shopping atmosphere. Bring the kids along — they’re bound to have as much fun in the purpose-built kids’ playroom as you will stocking up on modern fabrics and beautiful yarns.

A wide variety of classes is on offer, including free patchwork lessons, which run mostly during the day on weekends or evenings during the week. Class and coffee-group timetables are available on the website or in-store.

Local knowledge:

Stitch is truly a one-stop shop, even running a drycleaning agency through



Stitch has the biggest range of Kaffe Fassett fabrics in Canterbury, with more than 130 bolts available.

the store. A fantastic mechanic is also on hand to service machines.

Address: 27a Colombo Street, Cashmere Christchurch 8022

Phone: +64 3 332 1820

Email: fenella@stitchplayroom.com

Website: www.stitchplayroom.com

Bernina Sewing Centre *Ashburton*

Just like the enchanting region in which it is situated, this shop is sure to capture your imagination. Cindy Leonard and her husband took over the business three years ago, shortly after selling their farm. She had been attending classes in the store and found herself entirely taken by the culture of the craft community. Cindy fosters this spirit by encouraging customers to bring in their work and share their creations.

Quilts and displays inspire you from the minute you step through the door and the genial smiles of the staff immediately put you at ease. The choice of product is almost overwhelming and shelves are lined with patchwork and fashion fabrics, including an awesome Kiwiana range, patchwork kits, DMC threads, haberdashery, motifs,



laces, ribbons and buttons, to mention just a few.

The shop is the best place to go for Bernina sewing and embroidery machines in the area, and a very experienced technician is on site to answer any questions. Classes are offered regularly and customers are always welcome to drop by and see what’s happening. “We love to talk to people on their travels,” Cindy says. “There are always new and exciting fabric patterns coming in so it’s always worth a visit.”

Local knowledge:

A rich agricultural region, Ashburton offers many heritage trails, craft markets, art galleries, country festivals and farm tours to explore at any one time.

Address: 435 West Street, Ashburton 7700

Phone: +64 3 308 6570

Email: berninasewingctr@xtra.co.nz

Website: www.bernina-ashburton.co.nz

Ashford Craft Shop & Knitcola Stitchery

Ashburton

Nicola and Miklos Bota took over this charming shop in Ashburton 15 months ago. Nicola was employed with the shop's original owners for 17 years, making her way up from sales assistant to Australasian sales manager. She's a very experienced and passionate crafter and always shares her knowledge with others.

The shop is best known as the home of the world-famous Ashford spinning wheels and weaving looms. It's the ultimate destination for all knitting, textile and fibre crafts. Visiting the shop is quite an experience — it's located in the historic Mill House built in 1914 and has an old-worldly ambience that's simply delightful.

Colourful textiles wait to inspire you as you enter. Along with the Ashford range of spinning wheels and looms, the shop specialises in carding, dyeing and felting, and carries an extensive range of New Zealand and imported knitting



yarns. "Our staff are specialised in the knowledge of all the stock we carry in-store," Nicola says. "As my skills are in teaching, I have very extensive knowledge of these textile crafts."

One-on-one lessons are offered, which are either booked or demonstrated daily. A knitting group is held Thursdays 10am–12pm and newcomers or visitors in the district are always welcome to join in.

Local knowledge:

For international customers, the shop offers a "Fibre Indulgence Retreat" — five days of complete

learning, inspiration and knowledge on fibre crafts. The next retreat will be held in November 2012, with the price including everything from accommodation to transport. Contact the shop for more details.

Address: Ashford Craft Village, 427 West Street, Ashburton 7700

Phone: +64 3 308 9085, freephone (NZ only) 0800 274 3673

Fax: +64 3 308 3159

Email: sales@ashfordcraftshop.co.nz

Website: www.ashfordcraftshop.co.nz

Needle 'n Thread

Geraldine

At the foot of rolling downlands and divided by the Waihi River, Geraldine is the ideal setting for Betty Twaddle's wonderful craft shop. Needle 'n Thread has been under Betty's care for the past six years in this idyllic small town with a growing reputation for its gifted artists and artisans.

At Needle 'n Thread you can expect to find a wide range of fabulous fabrics, including Kiwiana fabrics and dressmaking fabrics. There's a good selection of knitting wool and

haberdashery as well, and the shop sells Pfaff sewing machines and overlockers. Betty is also a certified dealer of QBot, the automated quilter.

A variety of classes is held at various times throughout the year, and Betty will happily welcome anyone to a class that's happening while they're in town. Needle 'n Thread also organises the New Zealand Hoffman Quilt Challenge. In this national quilt competition, customers purchase a metre of the chosen challenge fabric, available exclusively from the shop, and make a quilt that fits within a metre square but which isn't a square or rectangle. After the quilts are judged, approximately 20 are showcased around the country for the next year.

Local knowledge:

Visit the Geraldine Vintage Car and Machinery Museum to see the only surviving 1929 Spartan Biplane in the world.



The delightful Through My Window quilt is available as a pattern or a kit in Kiwiana fabrics.

Address: 9 Talbot Street, Geraldine 7930

Phone: +64 3 693 1122

Email: betty.needlenthread@gmail.com



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Obsession 2 Quilt *Temuka*

Maintaining a love of craft in the family, mother-and-daughter team Sue Dwyer and Toni Brazendale started this lovely shop in February, 2008.

The business is now largely web-based, with a comprehensive website showcasing all the gorgeous products on offer, including a range of unique patterns and BOMs that can't be found anywhere else. There are vibrant funky fabrics and kits available, and a reliable quilting service is offered. The shop is open by appointment and with its homely, welcoming atmosphere and gorgeous displays, it's well worth a visit. Be sure to let Sue and Toni know about your



The new Lovebirds BOM is available in black and cream and runs for six months at NZ\$50 per month, including pattern and fabric, or as a kit for NZ\$250. Fabric, pattern and Parlan is available for NZ\$60 per month, or NZ\$300 for the kit. Scallop ruler for border and quilting templates can be supplied at an extra cost upon request. Prices exclude p&h.

bookings in advance and they'll prepare delicious home-baked treats.

Classes are held most Saturdays, with a free class held once a month. The shop has sewing machines for hire so if you're travelling through, stop by for a fabulous time. Check the website for the latest class listing. Obsession 2 Quilt also launched free trial online classes recently, with more to come in the new year. Subscribe online to the newsletter for all the latest news and you'll also receive a free pattern every month.

Local knowledge:

For the month of November, Obsession 2 Quilt is offering Australian readers free postage when they spend over NZ\$150.

Address: 239 King Street, Temuka, South Canterbury 7920

Phone: +64 3 615 6232

Email: toni@obsession2quilt.co.nz, sue@obsession2quilt.co.nz

Website: www.obsession2quilt.co.nz

Kitz n Thingz *Invercargill*

Angela, the owner of Kitz n Thingz, started out with just 1100 bolts of fabric working from a spare house on her family's dairy farm. Business quickly blossomed and in May, 2009, Angela relocated to a shop in town where she now stocks around 8000 different fabrics and is assisted by four staff members. The shop has room to run classes and the extra space has allowed Angela to expand her product ranges into embroidery threads, Thangles, buttons and haberdashery.

On top of an incredible range of fabrics and the selection of scrapbooking products, Kitz n Thingz is the local dealer for Pfaff and Singer sewing



Thangles take all the guesswork out of creating half-square triangles. Contact Kitz n Thingz to try this fabulous introductory pack for NZ\$23.

machines and runs an interesting collection of BOM programs. Kitz n

Thingz has also begun to get young people involved in sewing by running after-school classes. There is a variety of classes for all skill levels held throughout the year and you can be sure there's always something going on.

Local knowledge:

Invercargill is one of the southernmost cities in the world. It sits in rich farmland that is bordered by conservation land and marine reserves, including Fiordland National Park.

Address: 152 Spey Street, Invercargill 9810

Phone: +64 3 214 9111

Email: kitznthingz@xtra.co.nz

Website: www.kitznthingz.co.nz