

VFR New Zealand – Evening Standard – 21st October 2001

Bikers' paradise

Adventure holidays combining exhilarating motorcycling, dramatic sightseeing and other adrenalin-inducing activities in New Zealand are being marketed by a newly-launched London firm, *write David Williams.*

Aimed at motorcyclists in their late twenties through to their sixties, the venture is the brainchild of investment manager Robin Hughes.

A keen biker himself, Robin aims to attract riders desperate to escape the long, wet UK winters and hone their riding skills on some of the most renowned touring roads in the world.

His firm, VFR-NZ, is providing a bespoke service for enthusiasts, supplying bikes, itineraries, advice and insurance.

As the name suggests, the firm offers only Honda VFR800s – claimed by many aficionados to be the best all-round sports tourer available, with surefooted handling, high top speeds and quick acceleration.

The firm even provides tailor-made luggage; riders can pick up panniers in the UK before leaving or pack them when they arrive in NZ.

“Like most riders, I love pure, clean open roads to get the most out of the bike but I rarely have the time to do so,” says Hughes, 34, who lives in Wimbledon.

“Until VFR-NZ was set up it simply was not possible to get on a plane in London, touch down in New Zealand, pick up the perfect sports tourer and just ride.”

Aware of the strict limitations that congestion and weather impose on motorcycling in the UK, and the attractions and beauty of NZ, Hughes says he wanted to create a package that would offer the perfect motorcycling break, good weather included.

As well as being famous for its open sweeping roads, New Zealand offers breathtaking scenery. Riders addicted to adrenalin activities can ride in a twin-seat Vampire jet, float or stunt plane, bungee-jump from a helicopter or go sky-diving and white-water rafting. For the less adventurous, there are bush or glacier walks, whale-watching or lobster fishing.

“The main attraction however is fantastic roads for sports touring,” says Hughes, who has ridden extensively throughout the UK, southern Europe, Norway and New Zealand.

“Beaches, fjords, lakes and glaciers are all accessible – linked by a road system so good it provides a ‘virtual reality’ sensation,” he says.

Those used to more plodding bikes need not worry. All travellers are met in Christchurch where they are introduced to the VFR before embarking on their tour which can be as short as a week or – budget permitting – for months.

All tours are tailored to individual riders and the packages cost from £700. Most riders are expected to average 2,000 miles. VFR-NZ's business partner, Singapore Airlines, flies bikers out and gives extra luggage allowances for helmets and leathers.

Website: www.vfrnewzealand.com