

easy rider

There's nothing like the view from a Harley-Davidson. Baz and Ali Howie let you get out on the highway. BY EMMA RAWSON

THERE'S SOMETHING VERY cool about being on the back of a big motorbike. At the traffic lights, pedestrians give me and Baz Howie, my Harley-Davidson tour guide, nods of approval as they admire the hulk of machinery in all its engine-roaring glory.

Not only does riding a Harley feel rebellious, it's also a great way to explore New Zealand. Baz and his wife Ali operate Harley Tours New Zealand, a company that gives tourists a different view of the country. "There's such an absolute feeling of freedom on a motorbike," says Ali. "You're outside all day so you're breathing in fresh air the whole time. You can smell the forest, taste the sea air and the crispness of the mountains," she says.

The Howies run a wide range of Harley tours to suit all levels of experience – everything from pillion-passenger tours for inexperienced riders to guided tours for licensed motorbike riders, or independent tours. They pride themselves on flexibility, so tours can be as short as a two-hour trip around Auckland or as long as 19 days around the North and South Islands.

On the guided tours, Baz and a team of experienced Harley riders escort people around the country with one guide for every five people in a group. On the independent tours, riders hire bikes and hit the road solo, armed with a tour map and a GPS.

Baz has been a Harley fanatic since way back and says the bikes, with their commanding presence and comfortable seating, are ideal for touring. He takes most of the larger groups himself and when he hires extra guides, he's careful to choose experienced riders to shepherd tourists who might be unfamiliar with tricky New Zealand roads. "Some of our guides look pretty rough in their leathers. But you couldn't find more experienced riders or friendlier blokes," he says.

For British-born Ali, New Zealand is the ultimate location for motorbike riding. "New Zealand roads with their twists and turns are just made for motorcycles – riding them is such a pleasure. It's all about the journey and not just the destination."

Harley Tours New Zealand
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