

Travel

POINT BREAK

Richard Moore finds the perfect getaway spot for just about any time of the year

Surfers delight: Big waves are a great attraction at the mouth of the tidal lagoon.



As New Zealanders turn their eyes to exploring their own land, those of us who have travelled the length and breadth of the country should put forward our preferred destinations.

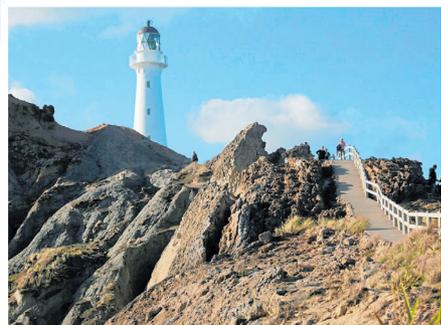
A recent weekend away gave me the chance to visit a much-lauded place I had never been to before and left me pleased to have taken the opportunity.

The getaway spot was Castlepoint on the Wairarapa coast, about an hour away from Masterton, and it has just about everything you could ask for in any season.

Luckily the weather gods turned on a sensational winter weekend with warm sun and little wind allowing cameras, tripod et al to really explore the vicinity.

Castlepoint is famed for its lighthouse, which stands on a small island just off the southern end of the main beach. Next to it is a tidal lagoon protected by a ridge of rocks that is perfect for fisherfolk and overlooking the lot is the towering height of Castle Rock.

The walk to the lighthouse is easy and, unusually, you can climb further up the stairway so you can look down at the structure and beyond to the lagoon and



From left, The single pathway from the beach rises to a hilltop above the lighthouse; a fisherman hauls in a big one to the delight of one of his mates; the rising sun catches the drama of the landscape.



Castle Rock in the distance.

The hike to the summit of that hill takes you along a vertigo-inducing track that skirts a sheer cliff face that is not for the faint-hearted on the frequently windy days that hit Castlepoint. Considering its dominance of the surrounding area it is hard to reconcile the fact that Castle Rock is only 162 metres high.

You can get to it via the beach or a bush track that makes the climb easier by delivering you two-thirds of the way up to the summit via a pleasant track that offers some pretty special vistas.

During whale migration season you can spot the big beasts out to sea and in March there is the famed horse race along the beach.

Once you have done your exploring it is time to consider where to eat. The local cafe/takeaway place offers good breakfasts and later on you can enjoy fish and chips, burgers and other fare.

But, for lunch and dinner I would suggest hopping in the car and driving five minutes up the road to the Whakataki Hotel. It has a very welcoming atmosphere and a bowl of the seafood chowder can be heartily recommended. Its taste and richness made it among the best this fellow has had the pleasure to indulge in. There is accommodation available at the hotel.

For my couple of nights in the area I stayed in a cabin at the Castlepoint Holiday Park, which is on the road into

the village.

It has plenty of different styles of accommodation and there will be something to suit various depths of pocket. The self-contained cabins offer remarkable ocean and lighthouse views and can accommodate up to four people. They are warm and very comfy, particularly as the wind started to build up on my last night there.

Having finally got to experience why people talk excitedly of Castlepoint it is fair to say the delightful spot is right up there with terrific places to getaway to for a weekend.

 www.castlepoint.co.nz
www.castlepointhotel.co.nz/