

# A healthy look at heritage

by Heather Campbell Hapeta

Herbal medicines and family history combine to provide one of the newest tourist ventures in Kaikoura.

Maori Tours, which began in January 2002, takes guests on a tour that traces Kaikoura's history then on for a bush walk to explore the medicinal properties of our native trees and bush.

"There is no doubt that many, or most of, the remedies possessed validity," says Dr Raymond Stark in his book *Maori Herbal Remedies* (1979). Over the years, trial and error honed the skills to treat various illnesses along with appropriate karakia (prayers).

In pre-European days the Tohunga held the knowledge of the remedies, today others are more familiar with them and early settlers found many worthwhile uses for Maori herbal medicines for aching joints, headaches, constipation and dysentery to name just a few.

The boutique tour is small, intimate and interactive. The first part takes in the ancient pa sites, introduces guests to the protocol of going on to a marae and then we are introduced to family ancestors (through stories) by Maurice Manawatu.

He is a direct descendant of Maru Kaitatea – the common ancestor of all Ngati Kuri (the local Kaikoura tribe) and it was he and his family who took us on the tour.

We started at the old pa site of Nga Niho which was built in the 1700s and were called on to the land by one of Manawatu's sisters. The purpose of the karanga was explained and the importance of the three welcomes, body, mind and spirit.

While there we were also shown the flax plants and the value they had to Maori. These plants were top value and were used for baskets, mats, sandals, rope, twine and the inside of the valued korowai cloaks which were then covered with feathers.

The day I was on the tour the rest of the people were from the UK and they were really impressed with it – in fact they rated it as one of the highlights of their travels. After taking in the views from the top and hearing more legends we went, via the current marae, to the site of an even older marae just south of Kaikoura at Peketa.

Apart from legends passed down orally, Manawatu also has a wonderful resource about the local and family history in a manuscript written by one of his ancestors in 1900. This is a real treasure to the family and her writings ensure his tours are authentic.

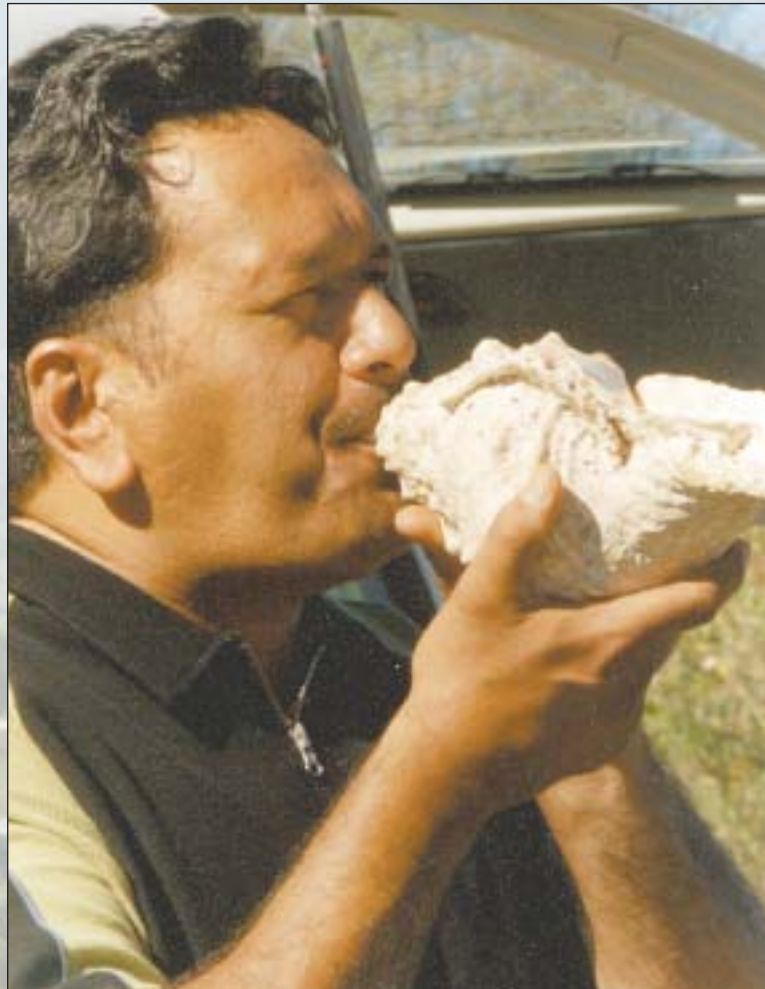
The reason Manawatu, and his wife Heather started the tours was to create a future for their children and a lifestyle change for themselves.

"We are people people," Heather told me. This was certainly in evidence when we stopped at their home for coffee and pikelets and the chance to meet the rest of the whanau – nieces, nephews, sister, brothers-in-law and children. Comments in the visitors' book showed people certainly appreciated the opportunity to see New Zealanders in a different way from other tours. New Zealanders who have taken the tour also reported having especially enjoyed the time with the family.

From there we moved onto the Puhī Puhī Valley where we walked in the bush, learning how to identify various trees and shrubs as well as their many uses. I was pleased to learn how to differentiate between the manuka and the kanuka – until that day I had to wait until the kanuka was really tall and then I knew what it was. Not any longer!

Manuka, miro, totara, rimu, supplejack and kotukutuku – to name a few – were shown to us, as well as their medicinal and cultural uses. A wonderful trip by people proud of their family history and a tour both local and tourists value.

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SEA SOUND: Music can be made from many natural elements.



DEMONSTRATION: A beautifully carved instrument being played.



ANCIENT ART: Traditional flax weaving to make gifts for their guests.

## Words of wisdom

ON a seat overlooking the bay – helped to be built by Ben Solomon and on land gifted by the wider family to Kaikoura – are the following words by Cora Wilding.

**Ho Hou Te Rongo** – (unite in peace)

"Oh Maori and Pakeha, mediate on here on human goodwill justice racial understanding and the striving for friendly co-operation. If attained these could bring peace to the world family"

# Getting fit for travel

Enrolling in the gym is an ego-deflating exercise and I have just humiliated myself.



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Now there is a man, whom I had never met before, who knows more than he should about my body mass, flexibility and fitness. It was a reality check I've been trying to deny, but with only 72 sleeps until I travel, it's time to review the necessities on my pre-trip list. Once money and tickets have been arranged, fitness is the No. 1 issue. I failed.

Why do I want to be fit to travel? Well I believe that I am better off and less likely to get any bugs if I am fitter, flatter and flexible. By now people who know me will be choking over their morning coffee as they read this: laughing hysterically. Bah humbug I say to them, just watch this space!

I need to put in a disclaimer – this entire column is purely my opinion and backed up by no known medical evidence. I have gleaned screeds of useful and useless information over the years and stored it away like a packrat for when I need it. Now I give it to you: take what you like, leave the rest, and, like going to the gym, consult your doctor about health issues.

Back to the gym, the first line of fitness defence. "Pull your tummy button to backbone,"... "Doesn't take much to get your heart rate up" ... "how does that feel?" Red-faced, hot, sweaty and embarrassed at my deep breathing, I ask myself, – what has this got to do with travel; what has riding a bike that goes nowhere or rowing a boat that never sees the water, have to do with tourist activities?

All I know is that past experiences have taught me that I feel better and am able to do more when I feel healthier. I asked other travellers what they do for pre-departure health – all said walking. So reassured, and with my own knowledge to back it up, I'll continue to work on improving my fitness level. I visualise myself jumping nimbly from boat to wharf, climbing hills to see views and monuments with nary a deep gasping breath to be heard and throwing my backpack onto my back as if it weighed nothing. Remember I said visualise, this is not reality – yet.

What other pre-travel checks are needed? Unless you are going to a place absolutely guaranteed not to have any dreaded diseases or bugs it pays to talk to your doctor or vaccination clinic to see what shots are needed. Tetanus, typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis are some of the traveller's common protection needs. Accurate up-to-date information about vaccinations is vital.

A couple of years ago I was off to Zimbabwe and it had been recommended that I have a hepatitis A vaccine. As it lasted only six weeks I waited until the very last minute to give myself the injection: I hadn't really intended to wait until just prior to boarding the plane in The Netherlands.

Picture if you will: me inside the toilets – in a city well-known for its drug use – hunting through my pack for the syringe and contents required to jab myself in my thigh. I am sure my innocence would not have been believed had I been caught on the security cameras.

Apart from indulging in addict-like activities, what else can I do to ensure I'm a healthy traveller? I could take multivitamins or drink only bottled water with no ice, become vegetarian while on the road, but a hepatitis carrier, often unknown to them, is of greater concern than bad food. So vaccinations and common sense around hand-washing is really important.

Despite my constant state of good health when I travel I'm not a good role model as I break so many rules. I drink local water, eat from street stalls and remain healthy. Good luck? I guess so. In the meantime I'll keep going to the gym.

John, next time, I'll remove the heart-rate strap and watch from my body before I go home. Promise.