

**Right** A collection of tourism posters and other publicity that marketed New Zealand in the days before colour photography and television. *Selling the Dream* celebrates the works of graphic art that aimed to entice travellers down under and also served to define our national identity. Natural wonders and Maori culture were high on the agenda in the creation of these pre-1960s advertisements, as well as the concept of Kiwi ingenuity. Two images provided by the Hocken Library.



## NEW DREAMLAND

A new book celebrates a glorious era of posters touting New Zealand's virtues.

INTERVIEW / *Jeremy Hansen*

***Selling the Dream: The Art of Early New Zealand Tourism* is in bookstores now.**

📞 [sellingthedream.co.nz](http://sellingthedream.co.nz)

**HOME What got you started on this project?** PETER ALSOP I wanted to see this imagery better celebrated as a missing chapter in our art and design history, and as an important body of work in developing our tourism industry and national identity. I worked on the book with Gary Stewart and Dave Bamford. At its most fundamental level, the impetus for the book reflects a deep love of New Zealand and its scenic splendour.

**What sort of a dream were early New Zealand tourism posters selling?** First of all, we had to develop a dream to sell! In the early 1900s, there was no 'New Zealand' brand and no clear national identity. As a no-name tourism new entrant offering a risky proposition (a six-week trip into the unknown by boat), we needed to find a way to compete with the world's top tried-and-true attractions. So this is also a story of how we first took on the world, including trying to foot it with the world's best poster designers to attract the interest of potential travellers. While

other countries touted resorts, hotels and sophistication, artists here celebrated the 'splendid naturalism' of what New Zealand had to offer.

**What characteristics do the promotional posters from this period share?** Some key things do stand out. At their best, these artworks were a refined integrative package of art, typography and composition. Having looked at the images time and time again, I still marvel at how warm, impactful feelings can emerge from such simplicity. Let's also remember that these artworks, with lasting historical significance, were designed only for momentary appreciation. The imagery never possessed high art's aspiration to outlive its own time, yet it does, often with wider public appeal than high art itself. There's also good evidence that developments in commercial art lead the fine arts in New Zealand, in addition to considerable crossover by artists – an aspect of New Zealand's history that deserves greater recognition and attention. 📖

