



The Bluff Maritime Museum chronicles the town's history as the third-oldest European colony in New Zealand

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Bluff, Southland, New Zealand

WHY GO NOW?

The quirky town of Bluff celebrates not seasons, but the peak of oyster harvest in Southland. May's Bluff Oyster and Food Festival heralds the freshest, most bountiful harvest of the year with copious indulgence of molluscs served in a fanciful number of ways. From the cold, briny flavour of raw Bluff oysters, to the tastefully grilled Kilpatrick oyster topped with bacon with a liberal drizzle of Worcestershire sauce, it's no wonder thousands would flock to the small, bucolic town for a share of the annual yield. Aside from the stars of the show, the seaside community dish up the best seafood in the region; highly coveted muttonbirds, whitebait patties, Bluff chowder, and more.

Participate in oyster opening, eating and blindfolded oyster-eating contests on the day of the festival, and while you gorge on juicy oysters, feast your eyes on the winning creations of Kaye's Bakery's Creativity Awards in a fashion show. While you're in Bluff, have a look around the roadside stores set up near the festival for local keepsakes, or visit Bluff Maritime Museum to discover the port's rich maritime history as one of the oldest European settlements in New Zealand.

Singapore's Agri-food and Veterinary Authority permits tourists to bring small quantities of seafood into the country for personal consumption without permit; 5kg per person (ava.gov.sg). Do check if your airline has restrictions on packaging and storage of seafood in dry ice ahead of your flight.

HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

✈ The festival takes place on May 23 this year. Tickets to the festival are available on bluffoysterfest.co.nz at US\$19.30.

✈ Fly to Invercargill with Air New Zealand or Singapore Airlines from Singapore (1 to 2 layovers), and with Malaysia Airlines, Qantas or Air New Zealand (2 layovers) from Kuala Lumpur.

🏨 Stay in Invercargill at the 116-room Ascot Park Hotel offering high speed Wi-fi, spa facilities, a swimming pool, bar and lounge access, and a restaurant on their ground-floor complex (from US\$89; ascotparkhotel.co.nz). McDermotts Coachlines buses stop by the hotel's bus stop on festival day to ferry tourists to the festival gate; schedule is available on the festival website bluffoysterfest.co.nz.

Bali, Indonesia

WHY GO NOW?

While most nations struggle with their hold on national identity and old cultural traditions, the Balinese proudly colour their streets with fanfare, celebrating the cultural treasure of their art. The 37th Bali Arts Festival is themed "Strengthening the Welfare of Society" and takes place in Denpasar, a city set alight with sights and sounds of joyous locals in embellished costumes.

Pastoral villagers from the sleepy mountain slopes of Indonesia arrive in the cultural capital of Bali, bringing with them a vibrant spirit of Indonesia's oldest customs. Experience first-hand the vigour of Balinese arts through the showcase of the best of their artistic expressions in the month of festivities, plays, dances and music staged and performed along the streets and on stages and amphitheatres. Fierce competition is to be expected among the representatives of different villages and provinces, where winning performances would bring esteem to their hometown.

While you're there, be sure to savour the scrumptious Balinese food at roadside stalls or in restaurants; try the succulent stuffed flatbread *martabak*, or the flavoursome spiced stir-fried rice *nasi goreng*, and top it off with the sticky sweet *burbur sumsum* rice pudding for desert.

HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

✈ The Bali Arts Festival runs from 13th June to 11th July this year.

✈ Fly directly to Bali International Airport from Singapore with Jetstar, AirAsia or Garuda Indonesia. Travel from Kuala Lumpur with Malaysia Airlines or Garuda Indonesia.

🏨 Rejuvenate and explore your inner artist with Sakaalya Travel's weekend escape package (from US\$1966.90 for two; travel. saakalya.com) at private villas in a world-class eco-resort on the outskirts of Ubud. Further details are to be announced by Sakaalya nearing the date of the festival. With relaxation and well-being in mind, Sakaalya offers yoga, cooking and arts classes for the soulful.



A dancer performs the Baris Tunggal, a traditional war dance

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