

STEERING COLUMN

LEASEPLAN MAGAZINE / WINTER 2015

LeasePlan

It's easier to leaseplan

**NO BUSINESS LIKE
SNOW BUSINESS**

**WINTER ESCAPE
INSPIRATION**

LEIGHS CONSTRUCTION
builds its business



What's On

WINTER/SPRING 2015

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
01-09 Reflect on the sacrifices of Gallipoli at a special season of Maurice Shadbolt's play <i>Once on Chunuk Bair</i> at the Air Force Museum at Wigram. imaginetheatre.co.nz	11-20 Mr Mistoffelees, Rum Tum Tugger, Macavity, Jennyanydots and the rest of the cast of <i>CATS: The Musical</i> return to Auckland's Civic Theatre for a limited season catsthemusical.com/nz	02-11 Celebrate the arrival of spring, with more than 40,000 TULIPS IN BLOOM throughout central Rotorua tulipfestrotorua.co.nz	01-07 Get on your bike or go to watch the SBS Tour of Southland. It's worth it for THE SCENERY , if not the LYCRA . tourofouthland.com
08-09 Whether dogs, cats, fish, budgies or llamas are your thing, it's all at New Zealand's largest PET EXPO at Claudelands Arena, Hamilton. petexpos.co.nz	SEASON EXTENDED TO 4TH OCTOBER  20 Invite some mates over for breakfast for the ALL BLACKS' first game of the 2015 Rugby World Cup, versus Argentina. Kick-off is at 4.45am New Zealand time. allblacks.com	 24 The stars are out in Dunedin tonight as NEIL DIAMOND takes to the stage at Forsyth Barr Stadium. ticketdirect.co.nz	21 Go for a run with the most beautiful backdrop in the world at the QUEENSTOWN INTERNATIONAL MARATHON . As well as the full marathon from Arrowtown to Queenstown there are 21 km and 10 km distances. queenstown-marathon.co.nz
21-23 SPEND A WEEKEND TO REMEMBER WITH BRITISH CELEBRITY CHEF RICK STEIN AT THE FARM AT CAPE KIDNAPPERS, INCLUDING WINES FROM ESK VALLEY. capekidnappers.com	 26-27 Brush up your culinary skills with a two-day advanced and modern cuisine techniques 'foodcamp' at Wellington's LE CORDON BLEU . lecordonbleu.co.nz	 Indulge your green fingers at the NELMAC GARDEN MARLBOROUGH FESTIVAL , including garden tours, workshops and a garden fête in Blenheim's Seymour Square gardenmarlborough.co.nz	 05-08



This time of year sees an increase in the number of accidents LeasePlan deals with on behalf of its customers. Whether the cause is snow and ice, rain or sun-strike, the numbers go up.

Fortunately, our Accident Management service supports drivers on the side of the road and then picks up on managing quotes, insurance claims and the repair job as well — all wrapped up into our on-line Fleet Reporting tool. Call us to see if we can add it into your fleet management and finance solution.

Snow and ice on the road reminds me of my early driving experiences in England. I remember how freshly compacted snow on the road made for a very interesting, sometimes enjoyable, but often frightening experience. This was especially true of my first car: a 50-quid Mini. Driving it in snow was almost ethereal, with the low noise coming from the engine accentuating the squeaking of the tyres on the snow. And did I mention the cold? The heater never worked! As you will see on page 4, there are far more civilised ways of enjoying the winter snow in a car. Keep safe on the road this winter.

Charles Willmer
Managing Director,
LeasePlan New Zealand

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news



FROZEN — LEASEPLAN STYLE

Twelve female staff from LeasePlan UK had the adventure of a lifetime in April, undertaking a 100 km ski-trek of Baffin Island in the Arctic Circle. The women, who trained intensively for 20 weeks leading up to the challenge, made the 10-day expedition in temperatures averaging -15 degrees Celsius, led by professional adventurer Debra Searle.

The team set off from Qikiqtarjuaq in the east of Baffin Island, in north Canada, crossing to Pangnirtung in the west. The adventure was part of LeasePlan's diversity and inclusion initiative, which aims to challenge unconscious bias, put the spotlight on the issue of gender diversity and strip away stereotypical views about gender roles. LeasePlan says this challenge was about overcoming adversity, challenging stereotypes, and achieving your true potential.

Along the trek, the team had to erect and pack down their own tents and melt snow for hydration and cooking. Team members were equipped with 'bear bangers' and bear spray to ward off polar bears. Searle said, 'I am so proud of the team having pulled through such extreme weather conditions and made it successfully to the end.'

FUEL CARDS DIRECT TO YOU

LeasePlan New Zealand has changed the way it sends out fuel cards, RUC and registration labels for your fleet. These items were previously sent by regular post, but will now be sent by courier — which can also deliver to PO Box addresses, the choice is yours. This means labels will get to you more quickly and reliably — just keep an eye out for the orange courier bags — so your drivers can stay on the road without unnecessary hold-ups. The packages can also be tracked.

SUSTAINABILITY KEY PART OF LEASEPLAN VISION

Sustainability is a key part of LeasePlan New Zealand's vision for the future, according to Managing Director Charles Willmer — and it's something it wants to help its clients with too.

'While we do things that any responsible employer would do — such as recycling, switching off the lights and minimising our fuel consumption — the key thing for us that extends well beyond the reach of the eighty people in our office is the influence we have through our customers,' says Willmer. 'We are their fleet manager and thus they come to us for advice. We're in the position where we can influence them on a range of different things regarding their fleet.'

One of the major ways LeasePlan can help its clients run a more sustainable business is by working with them on car policy.

'We consult with our customers every one to two years about what vehicles they're running. We assess the types of people they've got working for them and the jobs they do and then start to identify vehicles that will do the job. We then use our expertise and database to look at options,' Willmer says.

LeasePlan New Zealand has worked closely with the Sustainable Business Network, utilising its Carbon4Good programme to coordinate the planting of trees on behalf of its clients. Now they are working together on a new scheme, Million Metres Streams (see page 19), to enable its clients to support the revegetation and regeneration of waterways around the country.

Willmer says LeasePlan's commitment to sustainability is helping the company to broaden its offering. 'It's helped us to better support our customers to achieve their sustainability goals. Sustainability isn't necessarily going to be a lead strategy, but it adds the next layer of relationship that we build up with our customers.'

RUCS GO UP, REGOS DROP

The government has announced another round of RUC (road-user charges) increases, which came into effect as of July 1, 2015. This is the third of three scheduled annual increases, instigated to help fund the Roads of National Significance (RoNS) programme and other upper North Island transport projects, including the Waterview Connection on Auckland's Western Ring Route and the Mackays to Peka Peka section of the Wellington Northern Corridor.

The increases amount to \$4 per 1000 km for a diesel car, which works out at around 0.4c per km.

However, on the plus side, as of July 1, 2015, the cost of annual licensing (or a car's 'rego') was reduced for commercial and private light passenger vehicles, cars, utes and vans less than 40 years old and weighing less than 3500 kg, as the ACC levy portion of the fee has been reduced by an average of 41 per cent.



AID FOR QUAKE-STRUCK NEPALESE CHILDREN

LeasePlan Corporation has joined the international relief effort following the Nepal earthquakes in April and May, donating €100,000 (around NZ\$165,000) towards relief and rebuilding efforts. The official death toll has risen to more than 8600 and thousands of people remain homeless as the Nepalese government and international aid agencies try to grapple with the enormity of the disaster.

LeasePlan has been involved with humanitarian work in Nepal since 2006, through its ChildPlan programme, which works to provide education and welfare to disadvantaged children and youth around the world. Through its partner Net4Kids, LeasePlan supports the building and running of the Child Watabaran Center

Nepal (CWCN) in Kathmandu, which has provided medical care and life-skills training to more than 3000 children living without shelter, food or accommodation in the Nepalese capital.

Earlier this year, LeasePlan also donated €50,000 for continued work at the CWCN girls' home, and for a mobile health service and transit clinic.

LeasePlan New Zealand Managing Director Charles Willmer says New Zealanders know only too well the devastating and long-lasting effects of a major seismic event. 'We know how much support these people will need. Rebuilding and recovery will be a long process and LeasePlan has a long-term commitment to the people of Nepal.'

SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED

James Bond would totally approve: British car manufacturer Aston Martin has announced plans to produce a limited edition of branded powerboats to complement its line of super-luxury cars.

The AM37 motor yacht, which will enter production later this year, will be built in England by a Dutch manufacturer, to a design by Dutch naval architects Mulder Design. It has vehicle-like features including a stern which resembles the rear of an Aston Martin car and controls which resemble a car dashboard, and a deck which slides back to reveal the entire luxurious interior.

The 'standard' AM37 will have a top speed of 50 knots, and the 'sporty' version can do 60. Both have a timber and stitched leather interior and touch-screen controls that can also be operated by remote control or voice commands.

And no word on the price — if you have to ask, you probably can't afford one.



FLEET FORUM TAKES A BREAK

Fleet Forum is a real highlight of the year for LeasePlan New Zealand's clients and suppliers, but unfortunately the popular events will not be held this October. With a number of new and exciting developments currently underway, something had to give, but watch this space for some exciting customer service innovations, and stand by for a better-than-ever Fleet Forum next year.

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The onset of winter, with its snowy and icy conditions, fills many drivers' hearts with trepidation. But not those at the Southern Hemisphere Proving Ground (SHPG) in Central Otago. There they like nothing more than a good dumping of snow...then going for a low-traction, high-adrenaline drive in it.

SNOW BUSINESS

WORDS BY SARAH ELL AND RICHARD BOSSELMAN

The winter driving facility lies on the western side of the Pisa Range, between Queenstown and Wanaka, looking across the valley to the Cardrona skifield. It was set up in the mid-1990s as an automotive proving ground for vehicle manufacturers, component makers and tyre manufacturers and is the only facility of its kind in the southern hemisphere, offering manufacturers the valuable opportunity to test their products in winter conditions during the northern hemisphere summer.

From June to August each year, major car companies bring their latest models and their test drivers to New Zealand to run highly confidential testing on the 400 ha of private land. Each manufacturer gets their own private testing track and workshops, plus the chance to use snow and ice flats and split-friction and gradient ramps. Security is high: the whole site is fenced, ID is compulsory and photography is forbidden.

‘It is the only facility of its kind in New Zealand, but there are many of these facilities in the northern hemisphere,’ says Steve Gould of SHPG. ‘Traditionally a car company such as Audi would have their own [testing] area, with hospitality and accommodation facilities.’

But now the general public also has the chance to experience the thrills and spills of ice driving for themselves. With the acquisition of the former Snow Park snowboarding terrain park, SHPG has been able to expand its operations to include ice-driving events for corporate and private customers. Facilities now include a restaurant and apartment-style accommodation, so keen drivers can stay and play on the snow.

Gould, who manages the Ice Drive experience at Snow Park, says the event centre’s close proximity to the driving facilities means it provides a great venue for not only ice driving but for customer education, driver training and product launches and demonstrations. He says a wide range of vehicle and component manufacturers are utilising the SHPG for both testing and marketing.

‘In terms of the Ice Driving we have customers like Audi, BMW, Mercedes AMG, Lamborghini, Holden HSV, VW and Pirelli. However, as the product grows there are new enquiries each year — for example, this year we are working also with Continental and Aston Martin.

‘Companies also use the site for launching new models, and customer or dealer demonstrations, where a manufacturer can illustrate the benefits and technologies of a new component, car or tyre under winter conditions.’

Although the park is at a lower altitude to the skifield across the valley, there is frequently enough natural snow to clothe the park. When Mother Nature is not forthcoming, the park has extensive snow-making facilities.

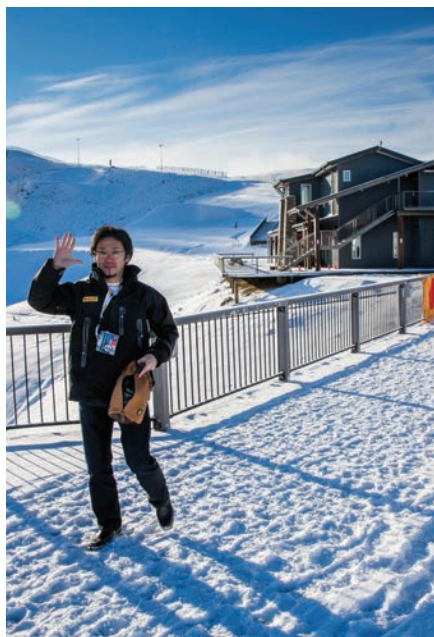
For those lucky enough to take part in a manufacturer’s or corporate day, it’s all on in the ice and snow.

‘Ice Driving customers have a huge range of driving activities when on an event at SHPG, from snow circles to slalom courses to auto-cross courses and everything in between — it’s a huge amount of fun, and also gives people an insight into some of the fundamental driving skills that can be applied across all driving surfaces.’

SHPG also offers conference packages and day-only experiences where customers helicopter up for the day then head back to Queenstown or Wanaka for the night.

‘We can even do partner programmes based out of the event centre where, while half of the group is out driving, the other half can experience other on-snow activities like snow-shoeing, husky dog-sled rides or cross-country skiing, or inside activities such as wine and food tasting or yoga,’ Gould says.

But you’ve got to get in quick: the park is open only from the last week in June until the first week in September, and bookings fill up fast. ■



TOP Multiple testing tracks offer manufacturers privacy to prove their products. LEFT and RIGHT The former Snow Park base building is now a hospitality centre for visitors having an ice-driving experience. BELOW Driving in winter conditions in a controlled environment is a rare opportunity.



For more information, see www.shpg.co.nz or www.icedriving.co.nz. Packages start from \$2249 including accommodation, meals and a day’s instruction and driving on the snow. Manufacturers such as Audi also offer clients and prospects an ice driving experience at SHPG (see sidebar).



ICE ICE BABY

Steering Column motoring writer Richard Bosselman got his day on the ice at an Audi Ice Experience Day at the Southern Hemisphere Proving Ground — where he discovered that ice driving is a lot harder than it looks...

The report card at the end of my day on the ice reckoned my problem had been ‘too much throttle, not enough brake’ but I know the real reason was ‘too much research’.

All those hours spent watching videos of my rally heroes — Walter Rohrl, Max Vatanen, Colin McRae, Tommi Mäkinen — at maximum attack on Nordic snow and ice. They’d made it look so easy.

A day at the Southern Hemisphere Proving Ground utterly undid that preconception. But, heck, I still felt like a WRC hero.

The Audi Ice Experience is ostensibly an education event providing general winter-condition driving tips. Few of us might have to cope with a big freeze but we’ve all been caught out by unexpectedly skiddy conditions when we least expect (like rain after a prolonged dry spell).

The obvious advantage for Audi is to demonstrate its Quattro ace card in a full-slip environment on a course that for us progressed from sharpening the fundamentals — lessons one and two addressed understeer and oversteer — to more advanced, and fun, stuff. Power slides, continual hard-throttle 360s, J-turns...stuff that would have made Dad quiver when you were on L-plates.

What encourages bravery is that it’s hardly ever about speed. We hardly broke 80km/h on the snow with winter compound tyres and were slower still on pure ice areas, on the same rubber fitted with cone-shaped metal studs — teensy things that made quite a difference.

It’s all about finessing: ease on the brakes, drive like there’s an egg under the accelerator, and if you start to skid, steer in the direction you want to go and keep steady, light pressure on the gas. It sounds easy, but really does require practice. And patience. Which is what I tended to lack. Fortunately, the inevitable snow bank smooch was into fresh powder, so no harm done.

This experience doesn’t come cheap, but what it gives in return is priceless and something you can’t do anywhere else at this end of the world. It was one of the best driving experiences I’ve had.

See www.audi.co.nz for more on the Audi Ice Experience.

SLOPESTYLE

EVEN IF YOU DON'T PLAN ON TAKING TO THE SLOPES, YOU CAN STILL LOOK THE PART WITH THESE ESSENTIAL WINTER ACCESSORIES.

COMPILED BY AMY PRICE



- ❶ Weighing just 300 grams, the Beats Pill for Apple portable speaker lets you take your music anywhere. \$339.95, store.apple.com/nz ❷ On the snow or just waiting for the bus, keep cosy with the Icebreaker merino Flexi Chute. \$44.95, nz.icebreaker.com ❸ Record your adventures with the 21st century Polaroid: the Fuji Instax Mini 90. \$249.99, www.instaxshop.co.nz ❹ Stand out and keep warm on the slopes with this North Face Sickline jacket. \$500, www.thenorthface.com.au, or Queen Street store, Auckland ❺ Keep your gear handy and your hands free with the lightweight, comfortable Slackpack 16 by North Face. \$160, www.thenorthface.com.au or Queen street store, Auckland ❻ Find out the coolest places to go with Wallpaper's City Guides. From \$14.99, available from good bookstores nationwide ❼ Get some raw energy with Little Bird Grawnola and 'unbaked' macaroons. Grawnola \$16.90, macaroons \$9.90, littlebirdorganics.co.nz ❽ Keep your iPad safe and scratch-free with the Just Mobile Encore Gold stand. \$129, theobjectroom.co.nz ■

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We (re)built THIS CITY

LeasePlan is helping to keep Leighs Construction on the road as it helps Christchurch get back on its feet.

WORDS BY SARAH ELL PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIEDERIK VAN HEYNINGEN

Wherever there is crisis, there is opportunity. The earthquakes and their aftermath may have brought a lot of Christchurch's CBD down, but locally based Leighs Construction is playing a significant part in building it back up again.

The company, established in 1995, was behind the construction of the Re:START City Mall, converting 23 shipping containers into a retail development in only two months, and a number of other inner-city reconstruction projects. It is currently working on some of the city's keystone projects, such as the new ANZ and BNZ centres, the Burwood Health Campus and The Piano, the new centre for music and the arts at the heart of the city's new Performing Arts precinct.

Yet while the company has plenty on its plate with the Christchurch rebuild, it is also in an expansion phase, having opened a new office in Auckland to pursue business further afield.

Managing Director Anthony Leighs says that even before the Canterbury

earthquakes, the company was going through a growth period.

'This has certainly continued in Canterbury as a result of the rebuild, but we are also now expanding into the Auckland market and Christchurch has become our South Island head office, as there is also commercial construction growth occurring in other centres in the South Island, particularly in Southland and Otago.'

Following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, Leighs Construction was heavily involved in the deconstruction of quake-hit multi-storey buildings, in partnership with the Grant Mackay Demolition Company of the United States. 'However, we have now very much returned to a construction period,' Leighs says.

With all this growth and expansion going on, the company's fleet needs are also changing, and Leighs Construction came on board with LeasePlan in March 2013, not long after LeasePlan opened its South Island office.

Sue Henkel, Leighs Construction's Financial Controller, says having LeasePlan take over management of its fleet — which included some owned vehicles and others leased from other suppliers — has simplified this side of the business.

CLIENT FEATURE :
LEIGHS CONSTRUCTION

Leighs Construction is among the companies helping Christchurch rebuild and recover from the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. One of its current projects is the two-stage BNZ Centre in the Christchurch CBD.





LEFT One of Leighs Construction's flagship projects was the Stranges Building which houses its head office. The triangular building, on the corner of High and Lichfield streets, is built to L4 standard — the same standard as emergency facilities — and was the first new commercial building opened in the CBD following the quakes. BELOW Toyota is the marque of choice for Leighs Construction, with lease vehicles including Hilux utes for site supervisors (facing page) and Highlanders for management (left).

‘Through past experience working with LeasePlan, Graeme Earl, our South Island Operations Manager, said it was a fantastic system — the amount of time a financial team can spend on the administration of vehicles can be a huge distraction.

‘LeasePlan really frees up our financial team to concentrate on our core business. We have seventy vehicles with LeasePlan, and they look after all the insurance, registration, road-user charges etc. They send reminders on service and proactively manage road-user charges, which is fantastic and provides real peace of mind.’

LeasePlan Client Development Manager — Corporate David Yardley says taking on Leighs Construction's fleet meant bringing existing leases, owned cars and new lease vehicles into one system. ‘We basically set up a third-party payment for their existing legacy leases with other leasing companies, so we could provide them with one consolidated invoice. Now all the costs for their leased vehicles come onto one invoice, making it much easier and more transparent to manage.’

Sourcing the new vehicles needed to satisfy the company's growth was also a

ENSURING LEIGHS CONSTRUCTION'S SUCCESS ARE ITS CORE VALUES OF PRIDE, PASSION AND EXCELLENCE. THESE VALUES UNDERPIN EVERYTHING IT DOES AND WERE DEVELOPED BY ITS WHOLE TEAM.

challenge. ‘Within the construction industry, when they have new project managers or quantity surveyors start there tends to be not much notice, but with Toyota New Zealand's assistance we have been able to get them into vehicles more quickly.’

Forward planning for when new vehicles are likely to be needed is also alleviating the problem, Yardley says.

Toyota is the marque of choice for Leighs Construction's fleet, with senior management and project managers driving Highlander SUVs, site managers in Hilux utes and quantity surveyors in Highlanders, Rav4s and Corollas. ‘As a company we have always had Toyotas, and we like them for their



reliability, professionalism and resale value,’ says Henkel. ‘Also, the Hilux ute range is perfectly suited to our business and the demands of our project staff.’

LeasePlan also introduced formal reporting for Leighs Construction's three separate business divisions, formal collision reporting, including trend and cause analysis; and has run an analysis of the company's fuel purchasing. This has resulted in significant fuel-cost savings through changing provider, without inconveniencing fleet drivers, says Yardley.

Ensuring Leighs Construction's success are its core values of pride, passion and excellence, summed up in the acronym PPE — a play on the industry abbreviation for personal protective equipment.

‘They underpin everything we do and were developed in conjunction with our whole team,’ says Leighs.

These values will stand the company in good stead as it tackles the Christchurch rebuild and tenders for work in the active Auckland market.

‘Even before the earthquakes, we had an excellent reputation with subcontractors and suppliers. This loyalty has set us up



well during more challenging times in Christchurch,’ Leighs says.

‘The biggest hurdles in the rebuild tend to be around availability and continuity of resource, but the advantage we have is that we have a direct workforce of highly qualified tradesmen, with extensive construction experience within a number of critical trades.

‘We have built the Christchurch business to a size we are comfortable with and want to maintain for the long term. The next stage in our growth is getting back to a wider geographic region.’ And with LeasePlan looking after the company's fleet requirements, it looks like a smooth road ahead. ■

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

THE IMMIGRATION OF FILIPINO WORKERS TO HELP WITH THE CHRISTCHURCH REBUILD AND THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS HAS BEEN A HOT TOPIC IN THE MEDIA IN RECENT TIMES, BUT LEIGHS CONSTRUCTION HAS SET THE STANDARD IN ACCOMMODATING AND PROVIDING FOR THEM.

Managing Director Anthony Leighs says it was the first major construction company in Christchurch to engage qualified Filipino carpenters. ‘The first group of twenty-five arrived in September 2012 and we now have seventy Filipino carpenters integrated into our project teams and living at Eyre Lodge at West Eyreton, between Christchurch and Oxford.

‘The lodge has a manager, Ray Dyer, who along with his wife Marie and a part-time caretaker manages an amazing home-away-from-home for our Filipino carpenters. The lodge has gym equipment, Filipino satellite television, a computer room — which is extremely popular with the guys Skyping home to their families in the evenings and at weekends — a basketball court, mountain bikes and more.

‘It really is an amazing set-up and one that has worked extremely well for our Filipino team. Ray will frequently plan weekend trips away, and often there are members of the wider team making visits to the lodge for dinner — the chefs put on a great spread — or to watch the guys play a basketball tournament or for other social activities.’



NZ

Waihi

There's still gold in these hills, and a great big hole in the ground to show for it. Explore the town's golden heritage at the Waihi Gold Discovery Centre, take a tour of the Martha Mine, then have a soak at the Athenree Hot Springs, or blow out the cobwebs with a winter walk on Waihi Beach.

Waipara

Just 40 minutes north of Christchurch, this valley's microclimate makes it perfect for growing grapes and making delicious pinot noir and riesling. Dine at one of the superb vineyard restaurants like Pegasus Bay or Black Estate, stay the night in a converted railway carriage at Waipara Sleepers and explore the Iron Ridge Quarry sculpture park.



NEARBY

Phuket

Cheap, tasty food, cold beer, elephants walking down the street...what's not to like about Phuket in wintertime? Take a dive trip out to the Similan Islands, explore historic Phuket Town, or simply lie on the beach and expose your winter-white body to some much-needed vitamin D.



HOLIDAY SEASON

Don't let the winter get you down. Embrace it — or escape it entirely — at these getaway destinations, close to home or further afield.

WORDS BY SARAH ELL ILLUSTRATION BY BECK WHEELER

Las Vegas

Las Vegas is everything you would expect, and more. At night The Strip comes alive with neon, music, fountains, crowds, limos and general all-round craziness. Even if you don't want to gamble, it's worth visiting just for the spectacle of capitalism gone crazy. See it while you can — before the water that creates this desert oasis runs out!



FURTHER AFIELD

Oslo

The capital of Norway is experiencing 18 hours of daylight right about now. During the summer the city's sun-starved residents come out to play in trendy Grünerløkka or down on the waterfront at the redeveloped Aker Brygge. This civilised city boasts parks, art galleries and the vertigo-inducing giant Holmenkollen ski jump.



THE WHITE STUFF

WORDS BY RICHARD BOSSELMAN

WINTER
EDITION
SPECIAL



▼ SUBARU OUTBACK

There's a good reason why Queenstown and the Lakes District maintains the world's highest concentration of Subarus, Outbacks in particular. The trend seems set to continue with the 2015 edition.

A five-seater station wagon still seems a good alternative in a sea of larger-looking SUVs. The Lineartronic constantly variable transmission — already established as the best around — has been sharpened, to effect more of a feel of an orthodox 'geared' automatic, and the car's famously relaxed gait has been improved again. Bump impacts are still minimised yet it has less body roll; some feat given that it's more substantial.

The EyeSight accident-prevention system has been updated, and a reversing camera is easily viewed through the new 6.2 inch touchscreen on the centre console.

Keeping it sweet with the faithful are ongoing toughness, durability and all-round competence. Subaru's brilliant permanent all-wheel-drive is now backed by active torque vectoring for better power distribution through the front axle, plus it has X-mode — an electronic controlled driving control system that modifies throttle, transmission, AWD, brakes and other functions on hill descent control, to make for easier driving on slippery surfaces.

PRICE: \$44,990–59,990

PROS: Spacious, feature-packed, excellent dynamics, great drivetrain.

CONS: Touchscreen difficult to decipher when wearing polarised glasses.



> NISSAN X-TRAIL

The sports/compact utility sector is the place where currently one in three Kiwi new-car buyers wants to be and there's good reason to suggest this model marks its spot. Bold styling, the option of a seven-seater as well as a five-pew format, smart technology and a fresh platform co-formatted with Renault — Nissan has delivered a strong hand.

The fuel of choice for the three grades of all-wheel-drive is petrol, feeding a 125 kW/226 Nm 2.5 litre, four-cylinder engine married to a seven-step constantly variable transmission.

The look seems pretty right, with a sharply raked windscreen, a roof that tapers off gently and high wheel arches bulging from the flanks. There's also interior flair and a multi-level compartmentalised cargo area. The top-of-the-range Ti also has an electrically remote-operated tailgate with 'garage' mode for

adjustable height control in confined spaces. Clever? Yes. Slow? Well, that too.

With the CVT there's no low-ratio gearing. A less generous ground clearance than the previous model, plus the less bluff body, creates shallower departure and approach angles.

The 2.5 litre is a solid engine, but starting to falter on refinement, being a bit noisy at high revs, and perhaps not the briskest. Nissan is one of the few makes that still tunes for 91 octane petrol, which is a handy consideration for cost-saving, so maybe that's part of it.

PRICE: \$39,990–53,290

PROS: Plenty of car for a reasonable price, runs on 91 octane.

CONS: Not all models seat seven.

Snowchains, filling the windshield-washer tank with anti-freeze solution and taking along a snow shovel or at least an ice scraper...all these things make life easier when heading into the white stuff. But any trip to the skifield becomes more satisfying with a car that's up to snuff. Here are four five-seater medium-size wagons with all-wheel-drive for superior traction and a higher-than-average ground clearance, destined for the top carparks at Whakapapa, The Remarkables and Mount Hutt.

> MAZDA CX-3

Mazda's smallest-ever sports utility has the look of a winner and is well equipped. It's also here full force, in five editions, either powered by a 109 kW/192 Nm, 2.0 litre petrol or a 77 kW/270 Nm 1.5 litre turbodiesel, either way driving through a six-speed automatic. Petrol economy is as low as 6.1 litres per 100 km while the diesel optimally ekes 5.1.

My experience so far has been restricted to the all-paw diesel, the priciest variant and possibly the most pleasing to engage with.

This is the smallest of the featured cars and though its packaging is as brilliant as its roadside presence, by its very size, nature and development background (think of it as a high-stepping Mazda2), it cannot be expected to perform utter miracles.

For a weekend away, you'd keep the invite list to just four and, because the rear seat isn't the most commodious on offer, reserve that space for the smallest. Mates might consider packing light, too; a boot officially rated at 264 litres is one of the smallest in this category.

Where the CX-3 punches above its size, and weight, is in its on-road behaviour. Road mannerisms are superb; it relishes spirited driving, responding sharply to driver inputs and offering excellent body control and mid-corner poise, yet the ride has enough compliance to it that bump and rut impacts are not often jarring. The steering is light at low speed and on initial turn-in then weighing up nicely through corners.

All in all, it's a little battler set to head straight to the top of the small SUV sector.

PRICE: \$31,195–42,595

PROS: Stunning looks, strong equipment.

CONS: Rear access limited for tall passengers.



▼ SKODA OCTAVIA SCOUT

The Scout is Skoda's Outback: a rugged, off-road edition out to provide SUV capabilities but without such a bulky look or the premium price tag. It's still a wagon, and proudly so. However, even with just an additional 33 mm ground clearance and some scratch-resistant body cladding around the front and along the sides, it does look tougher than the regular Octavia (from which it derives).

Build quality is very good and the functionality, though perhaps a little stark in places, is also solid. While the leather and Alcantara suede seats seem a bit too fancy for true outdoors use, there's no argument that

Skoda provides a load of kit for the money, including xenon lights that turn into corners, a power tailgate and a cooled glovebox.

A Scout isn't for thrusting into totally untamed territory yet it seemed to be fine on gravel and the decent ride height and approach and departure angles saw it clamber through the boulder field alongside our local river.

There is a marginally less expensive 132 kW/280 Nm 1.8 litre petrol model but the 135 kW/380 Nm diesel is a lovely thing to sit behind — not only fairly alert at kick-off, with 0–100km/h claimed in 7.6 seconds, but also good for a meaty wave of mid-range torque.

PRICE: \$48,200–49,990

PROS: Not overly flashy but impressively functional; great choice for the SUV-shy.

CONS: Lacks reversing camera.



Driving CHANGE

Fleet managers and other interested businesspeople had the chance to check out what's new in electric vehicles (EVs) and how they could be incorporated into their fleets, at a recent Plug-In Fleet Day in Auckland. The day of seminars and demonstrations was organised by the Drive Electric consortium, which aims to promote the use of electric vehicles in business fleets.

'We want to promote the role EVs can play in business, and want people to include EVs in their fleet assessments, using a total-cost-of-ownership model rather than a best-transaction price,' Drive Electric chair Mark Gilbert told the audience of more than 100 fleet managers, financial controllers and business owners. 'New Zealand has the power to charge your fleet — you have the power to change your fleet.'

As well as testing the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority's (EECA) new online cost-of-ownership tool, attendees had the chance to drive some of the latest-model EVs on the market, including the sexy-looking BMW i3 and Audi e-tron.

At the event Gilbert said all the major car manufacturers are indicating that they plan to release electric or plug-in hybrid models of all their biggest lines in the coming years, making for a much wider choice of vehicles becoming available and removing one of the barriers to uptake. Drive Electric is also working with the New Zealand Electricity Networks Association, Mighty River Power and Contact Energy to investigate the establishment of a 'renewables highway', providing charging infrastructure throughout the country.

'In terms of the traditional petrol car market, disruption is not on the horizon: it's here,' said Gilbert.

New Zealand is considered well set-up for EV uptake due to around 80 per cent of its electricity supply coming from renewable sources. This is in contrast to Australia, where just 10 per cent of electricity is renewable.

However, Chris Binns, Manager Strategy and Assets for the City of Sydney, spoke of his experience of the EVs the council added to its fleet in 2009 as part of its Sustainable Sydney 2030 programme.

'Drivers initially had to be encouraged to use the EVs, and the first week was quite difficult as some people had change anxiety. We also had a couple of climate-change deniers, who needed to be force-fed some information! But now the EVs are the most-utilised vehicles in the fleet.' ■



BMW i3.



Audi e-tron.



LEASEPLAN NEW ZEALAND IS A PARTNER IN THE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK'S PROJECT ON ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN NEW ZEALAND. HERE ARE MANAGING DIRECTOR CHARLES WILLMER'S THOUGHTS ON EVs:

'We've been involved with a number of our customers with hybrid vehicles and have existing customers looking seriously at an element of EVs within their fleet. We have some expertise in managing EVs through our history, local and overseas, so we are pleased to be involved in supporting and providing information to the project.'

'Some overseas markets are well ahead of New Zealand and if I look at that experience, EVs are going to be a hard road. Where EVs have been successful overseas, the cost of the vehicle has been, in most cases, subsidised quite heavily, mostly by government via tax breaks.'

'From a leasing point of view, if you compare an EV against a similar petrol vehicle of the same size, the cost is much higher. The second-hand car market doesn't pay a premium for these vehicles, and while there's a fuel saving if you run the vehicle correctly, when you do the total-cost-of-ownership exercise, you have to add in FBT, and in a lot of cases there's a premium to pay.'

'Cost-wise, the high upfront price is a consideration. Government may need to play its part, and volumes will also have an impact over time.'

'New Zealand has a very free market. What the market demands, the market will pay for. A lot of influences need to come to bear.'



Live STREAMING

Million Metres
STREAMS PROJECT

New Zealand may like to trade on its international reputation as '100% pure', but in fact many of its waterways are far from that. LeasePlan and its clients have become involved in a new Sustainable Business Network (SBN) initiative to clean up streams throughout the country, by sponsoring riparian planting.

The Million Metres Streams project aims to restore 1,000,000 linear metres (1000 km) of stream-side planting throughout the country, to improve water quality and enhance freshwater biodiversity. While riparian planting is not a 'magic bullet' that will automatically improve water quality, it contributes significantly by reducing erosion and sedimentation, filters contaminants before they enter the water mitigates the effects of flooding, provides habitat for native species and sequesters carbon. Each metre of streambank in projects around the country will be planted with flaxes, sedges and small trees such as Coprosma species and ti kouka (cabbage trees).

LeasePlan has become involved in the project through its GreenPlan programme, a system of reporting on an annual basis that takes account of the social and environmental impacts of a fleet. Social indicators include safety of the driver, ANCAP safety rating, accident rates and speed camera infringements, while environmental factors include the number of vehicles, the type and quantity of fuel consumed, distance travelled, and the number of tyres fitted.

'From that we can work out the carbon output of the vehicles, using published CO₂ rates, and also the conversion rates into the number of trees that need to be planted to offset that carbon,' says LeasePlan

New Zealand Managing Director Charles Willmer.

Up until 2015 LeasePlan New Zealand worked with the SBN's Carbon4Good programme to plant trees to offset carbon, but has now switched to support the Million Metres Streams initiative. Willmer says while the project doesn't involve accredited carbon offsets, it is making a contribution to the local environment in multiple ways.

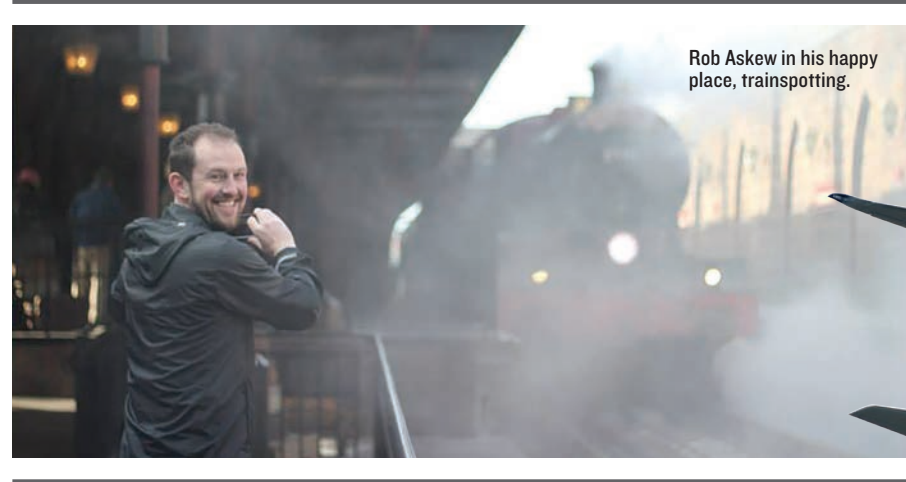
'In addition to the actual planting offsetting carbon, it has the added bonus of focusing on something that's important for New Zealand: the health of our waterways. It's an all-round focus that covers all three pillars of sustainability: environmental — the cleanliness of waterways; social — the play areas for Kiwis as a nation of water-lovers; and economic — if our waterways are no good then potentially our fisheries and agriculture industries will be less efficient.'

'We don't see switching from planting trees in carbon-offset forests to planting metres of streams as an issue, and we're happy to support it.'

Among the LeasePlan clients supporting the new scheme is battery supplier Century Yuasa, which has taken part in GreenPlan since 2007. Century Yuasa will contribute to the Taharoa Trust's planting of the Whangawehi Stream on the Mahia Peninsula, south of Gisborne.

General Manager Stu Stanners says his company is pleased to be involved in the new scheme, as it allows them to take ownership of a particular regeneration project. 'Previously we were offsetting carbon by trees being planted, but it was non-specific,' Stanners says. 'Now we are part of a project that is tangible. We can take ownership and say, "We have actually done this and done that".' ■

For more on the Million Metres Streams project, visit millionmetres.org.nz



Rob Askew in his happy place, trainspotting.

LeasePlan New Zealand Client Manager Rob Askew, who has been with the company since 2008 in a variety of roles, caught the Honda bug as a teenager, when he bought his first car.

‘As an eighteen-year-old boy looking for a reasonably priced but nice car, a lot of car dealerships and salespeople weren’t too keen on letting me take vehicles for test drives,’ Askew says. ‘However, one Honda dealer did — and I liked what I drove.’

So much so that he got a job as a car groomer at that dealership, and has remained involved with cars — and Hondas — throughout his career, including a stint coordinating logistics for new vehicle imports from Honda Japan.

He has now owned a total of 16 Hondas — seven of them new — and has had more than 15 as company cars.

‘I like the performance heritage — F1, Indy cars and so on — as well as the fuel economy, technology and styling, and the driver ergonomics that make driving fun. Plus they aren’t cars that everyone has.’

Askew’s current favourite car is a manual-transmission Honda Accord Euro, and he also has a mint-condition 1997 Honda Prelude VTI-R coupe with only 59,000 km on the clock. However, his company vehicle is his first non-Honda ever: a Subaru Legacy, ‘although I do have a Honda tag on the keys,’ he adds.

Fuel economy is an important aspect for Askew. As an entrant in three Energywise Fuel Economy Rally events in the 2000s, he says it’s an important part of client discussions on vehicle-fleet purchasing policies.

‘I also recognise that it’s not always what you drive, it’s how it’s driven and other factors that have the greatest effect on fuel economy.’

CIVIC Duty

If you love cars, you’ve probably got a favourite marque or manufacturer. BMW? Porsche?...Honda?

Cars are not Askew’s only passion, however: model railroading is also a lifelong and all-consuming hobby.

‘When I was four my dad brought home a model train and set up a layout in the garage. It was probably an attempt to keep me out of trouble and out of the pantry after school — it worked!’ he says.


‘My interests are now very specific — late 1970s American railroading in the state of Oklahoma for the Rock Island Railroad — sorry, I cannot make that sound any more interesting than that!’ he laughs.

Askew finds LeasePlan’s corporate philosophy of openness and transparency sits well with his personal beliefs.

‘What I enjoy the most about my current role is the ability to build genuine relationships with clients,’ he says. ‘LeasePlan’s client focus aligns very well with my own principles, which makes my job a natural, easy fit.’ ■

MY DREAM GARAGE:

IT'S HONDA ALL THE WAY IN ROB ASKEW'S DREAM GARAGE...EXCEPT FOR A FEW FANTASIES...




3

1 2015 HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R
Producing 224 kW of power (or 306 hp, if you prefer) from a 2.0 litre turbo-charged four-cylinder engine, it is officially the fastest front-wheel-drive production vehicle around the famous Nürburgring track in Germany (7 minutes, 50.63 seconds). I'll take a red one please.

2 2014 HONDA ACCORD EURO-L TOURER
A great-looking wagon for when I'm not out cruising in the Type-R. Discreet enough to not attract the attention of would-be thieves or the law.

3 AIRBUS A350XWB
What better way to take your friends and family away for an extra long weekend in the United States than your own private air transport? Just imagine the fitout you could put in the fuselage of this...

4 GENERAL ELECTRIC ES44AC
This 4400 hp locomotive is the way to travel the railroad while you are in the US. You'd also need your own fleet of luxury passenger cars to be hauled by this beast. Now that's the proper way to see the sights!



1

WHAT'S UNDER YOUR WHEELS

How much thought do we give to the roads we drive on? LeasePlan’s Technical Asset Management team gives you the low-down on what’s really under your wheels, and how the black stuff is maintained to keep you — mostly — on the move.

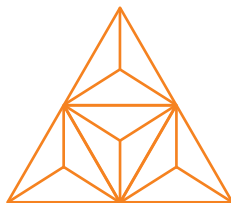




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