



PONANT and Relais & Châteaux renew partnership for two exclusive gastronomic voyages in 2023



Two leaders in hospitality and gastronomy excellence, PONANT and Relais & Châteaux, have renewed their collaboration for 2023. Central to this unique partnership are two voyages to New Zealand, one with Norka Mella Munoz and the other with Jimmy McIntyre, both renowned Relais & Châteaux chefs.

Highlighting the inimitable French lifestyle and excellence, PONANT and Relais & Châteaux have devised two outstanding itineraries for these expeditions where emotion, eco-responsible commitment and sharing take centre stage. *"I am delighted we have renewed this partnership with PONANT, which this year will highlight two exceptional Relais & Châteaux chefs on the occasion of these newly tailored voyages,"* enthuses Laurent Gardinier, President of Relais & Châteaux. Indeed, both these New Zealand expeditions will offer exclusive gastronomic experiences.

It is a passion shared by Hervé Gastinel, CEO of PONANT: *"Through these two out of the ordinary voyages to the heart of New Zealand's hidden treasures, our companies were keen to share their expertise and passion by combining forces to bring guests authentic and meaningful experiences."*

Chefs Norka Mella Munoz from Relais & Châteaux Wharekauhau Country Estate and Jimmy McIntyre from Relais & Châteaux Otahuna Lodge in New Zealand will share their passion, expertise and time in the galleys on *Le Lapérouse*, to propose two gala dinners on each voyage. Both will create their signature dishes that give pride of place to New Zealand cuisine. The culinary spectacle will not just be what is on the plate as the chefs will come out from behind the scenes to demonstrate a dish for guests.



Executive Chef at the Wharekauhau Country Estate, Norka Mella Munoz has won several culinary gold awards working for hotels such as the Intercontinental, Las Torres del Paine, Explora Patagonia and San Pedro de Atacama. Head chef at this Relais & Châteaux since December 2022, her cuisine is a fusion of her Chilean roots with that of her adopted country, New Zealand.



Jimmy McIntyre has been the Executive Chef at Otahuna Lodge since 2004. He is one of New Zealand's longest serving lodge chefs and is credited with developing one of the country's most exceptional food and wine programmes. Having already featured in *Bon Appetit*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, the *Financial Times* and *Time* magazine, Jimmy is behind the famous "garden to plate" philosophy of this Relais & Châteaux member property.

Focus on the itineraries

New Zealand's South Island and Chatham Islands

With Chef [Norka Mella Munoz from Relais & Châteaux Wharekauhau Country Estate](#) on board, this tropical expedition unveils all the magic and beauty of Aotearoa's landscapes, the 'Land of the Long White Cloud'. Departing from New Zealand's capital, Wellington, *Le Lapérouse* will set sail to explore the South Island's east coast one of the most unspoiled environments on the planet. First port of call is the Marlborough Sounds, a vast network of submerged valleys forming a maze of peninsulas and hilly islands. Next is the rocky Kaikoura peninsula, renowned for its wealth of biodiversity, then out to the Chatham Islands for more breathtaking scenery and intriguing insights into Māori heritage, before Akaroa and finally Dunedin. Between stunning panoramas and the wildlife, this voyage is also a rare opportunity for guests to immerse themselves in Māori history and culture.

Wellington-Dunedin, on Le Lapérouse. 25 November to 3 December 2023, 9 days – 8 nights.

From €5,550 – [Find more about this voyage](#)

Before the cruise - exclusive stay at the Wharekauhau Country Estate

As an option, guests can book prior to the cruise a four-day, three-night program at the Wharekauhau Country Estate. Between visits of the Marlborough vineyards and the discovery of the region's traditions, this option offers a complete immersion in the Kiwi culture and gastronomy, with all meals included at this Relais & Châteaux estate.

€4,750 – [Discover this exclusive stay at the Relais & Châteaux Wharekauhau Country Estate](#)

Ancient fjords and unspoiled islands of southern New Zealand

Along the shores of New Zealand's South Island, *Le Lapérouse* will be sailing amidst spectacular scenery in the presence of Chef [Jimmy McIntyre from Relais & Châteaux Otahuna Lodge](#). From Dunedin, this polar expedition reveals all the wonders of the magnificent Fjordland National Park, an integral part of Te Wahipounamu, a UNESCO World Heritage site of fjords shaped by over 100,000 years of glaciations. The ship then heads for the Snares Islands, one of New Zealand's subantarctic archipelagos, before reaching Ulva Island, a predator-free sanctuary that provides a refuge for numerous species of birds and rare plants.

Dunedin-Dunedin, on Le Lapérouse. 3 to 10 December 2023, 8 days – 7 nights.

From €5,150 – [Find more about this voyage](#)

ABOUT RELAIS & CHÂTEAUX

Founded in 1954, Relais & Châteaux is an association of 580 landmark hotels and restaurants run by independent innkeepers, chefs and owners, often families, who share a passion for their businesses and desire for authenticity in their relationships with customers. Relais & Châteaux members are motivated by the desire to protect and promote the richness and diversity of the world's cuisine and local traditions of hospitality. More than a quality label, Relais & Châteaux is also a movement embodying a distinctive vision for the profession and for hospitality rooted in emotions, to discover the world in the best way possible.

ABOUT PONANT

Explore to Inspire: explore to better understand, learn, share and protect. For 35 years, PONANT has been committed to more responsible tourism and voyages of exploration which have meaning. The French-flagged fleet comprises 13 small ships equipped with state of the art environmentally friendly equipment. With PONANT, exploration is refined, authentic and a source of inspiration. For more information www.ponant.com

Press contacts | Laure Foulatier +33(0)4 88 66 64 38 | Justine Fraticelli +33(0)4 88 91 35 56 | presse@ponant.com

P O N A N T

Photo credits PONANT: ©Studio PONANT - Nathalie MICHEL

Photo credits Norka Mella Munoz: @Wharekauhau Country Estate – Relais & Châteaux

Photo credits Jimmy McIntyre: @Stephen Goodenough – Otahuna – Relais & Châteaux

