



Photo: KiwiRail Limited

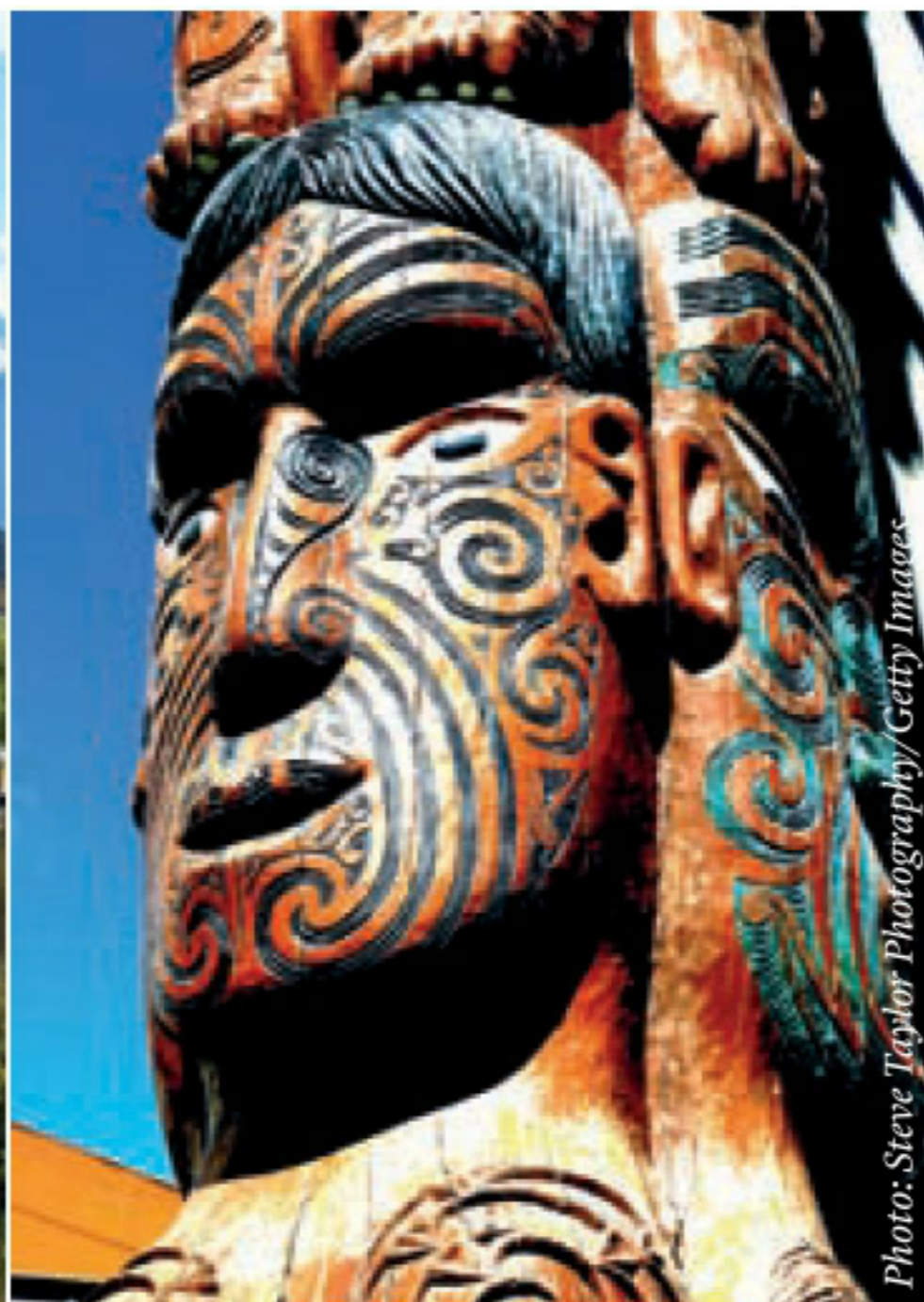


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*This spread, clockwise from far left In a country known to have more sheep than people, this will certainly be a common view on any train excursion*

*KiwiRail's Coastal Pacific journey runs between Christchurch and Picton*

*A Maori carving of the indigenous people of New Zealand*

*While in New Zealand, try the local Bluff oysters*

*Depart from Auckland's Britomart Station for the Northern Explorer journey to Wellington*

*Railway scenery from Christchurch to Greymouth*



Photo: Sandra Mu/Getty Images

towering ferns and low clouds. This is coal country, and the TranzAlpine pauses to let lumbering coal trains cross the peaks bound for the port at Christchurch. Our journey continues as the train curls its way around Lake Brunner on the approach to Greymouth. Here, many passengers leave the train to head for the glaciers, national parks and coastal communities of the west. In March, the TranzAlpine is a popular way to reach the annual wild food festival at Hokitika. Others, on day trips, lunch on whitebait fritters and Bluff oysters at the local pub before making their way back to the station, where the eastbound train stands ready to start the long, steady climb back into the alpine valleys and ancient peaks of the real Middle Earth.

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