

WANDERLUST

inspiration for adventurers

Plan, commit, go!

Get inspired and start making memories of your own.

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KIA ORA

This 'guide to' has been created for The Backpacker Group members by me, Michel Holleman. All adventures were my own and told from my personal experiences travelling through New Zealand. The information is in no way compensated and I didn't receive any payment, sponsorship or the like.

As a keen traveller I love reading about the destinations I am about to venture too but I don't like reading novels or surf the internet and waist lots of time scrolling through unusable websites.

With this in mind I have created this booklet to give you some short information about the journey ahead. I have chosen to keep the writing to a minimum and chose to add images instead.

My idea with this 'guide to' is to inspire, inform and to get your travel juices flowing so you can make your own memories.

Enjoy your adventure.

Cheers,
Michel Holleman

Give me a follow and say hi!  [@michelholleman](https://www.instagram.com/michelholleman)



INTRO

History

Yawn, history?! Only a little bit I promise and New Zealand history isn't very long anyway.

The first settlers of New Zealand were the Polynesian which are the forebears of today's Maori and arrived around AD1000-2000.

In 1642 the first European Dutchman Abel Tasman arrived (not going on land) while on expedition from the Dutch East Indies to find the 'Great South Land'.

In 1769 Englishman James Cook arrived and managed to communicate with Maori and this time NZ was linked with the outside world permanently.

NZ became an official British colony in 1840.

New Zealand is a young country, its present shape is less than 10.000 years old. It has one of the most varied and spectacular series of landscape in the world, ranging from snow-dusted mountains and glacial valleys to rainforests, dune lands and an otherworldly volcanic plateau.

The South Island's mountainous spine - the 650km-long ranges of the Southern Alps - is a product of the clash of two continental plates.

On the North Island, the volcanic heartland runs through the centre of the Island, from Mt Ruapehu in Tongariro National Park through Rotorua lake district out to NZ's most active volcano, White Island, in the Bay of Plenty.

Wildlife

NZ may be relatively young, geologically speaking, but the plants and animals go back a long way. The Tuatara is an ancient reptile unique to New Zealand and is closely related to the Dinosaurs. Due to its long isolation, the country is a veritable warehouse of unique and varied plants, most of which are found nowhere else.

The first Polynesian settlers found little in the way of land mammals - just two species of bat - but forests, plains and coast are alive with birds.

The flightless kiwi is the species most sought after and sighting on Stewart Island are common at all times of the year.

If you spend some time in the South Island high country you are likely to come up against the fearless and inquisitive Kea. A green mountain parrot with bright red underwings.

Besides land animals New Zealand is a great place to spot marine mammal such as dolphins, whales, fur seals and sea lions.

Tramping

Tramping (hiking) is a great way to explore NZ's natural beauty and I would highly recommend to bring some good hiking/running shoes. There are thousands of kilometres of tracks, some well marked plus an excellent network of huts. The well know Great Walks draw the most visitors and need to be booked well in advance. The Routeburn, Milford Sound, Kepler, Lake Waikaremoana, Abel Tasman, Rakiura, Tongariro Northern Circuit, Heaphy, Paparoas and the Whanganui River Journey which is a canoe/kayak adventure are New Zealand's Great Walks. Check www.doc.govt.nz for bookings.

DOC (Department of Conservation) maintains the huge network (more than 950) of backcountry huts and have different categories.

- Great Walk huts: mattress-equipped bunks or sleeping platforms, water supply, toilets, heating and often solar lighting, cooking facilities and a warden).

- Serviced Huts: mattress-equipped bunks or sleeping platforms, water supply, heating, toilets and sometimes cooking facilities.

- Standard Huts: mattress-equipped bunks or sleeping platforms, sometimes water supply, heating, toilets and no cooking facilities.

- Basic hut: Just a shed with bunks and if lucky only have some mattresses.

Compare to European mountain huts/lodges/refugees the NZ huts are still very basic.



ITINERARY

This itinerary brings you along some amazing spots and you can pick and choose the locations you would like to go and how long you would spend at each destination. The locations in this document are based on The Backpacker Group affiliated accommodation and activity locations.

If you are looking for some information on itineraries or hikes head over to www.michelholleman.com/blog where I post new blogs on a regular bases including topics about photography, gear and various other adventures. Download this pdf on your device so you can check it out when you are offline.



The
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Auckland

Paris may be the city of love, but Auckland is the city of many lovers, according to its Māori name, Tāmaki Makaurau. Those lovers so desired this place that they fought over it for centuries.

Its two harbours frame a narrow isthmus punctuated by volcanic cones and surrounded by fertile farmland. From any of its numerous vantage points you'll be surprised how close the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean come to kissing and forming a new island.

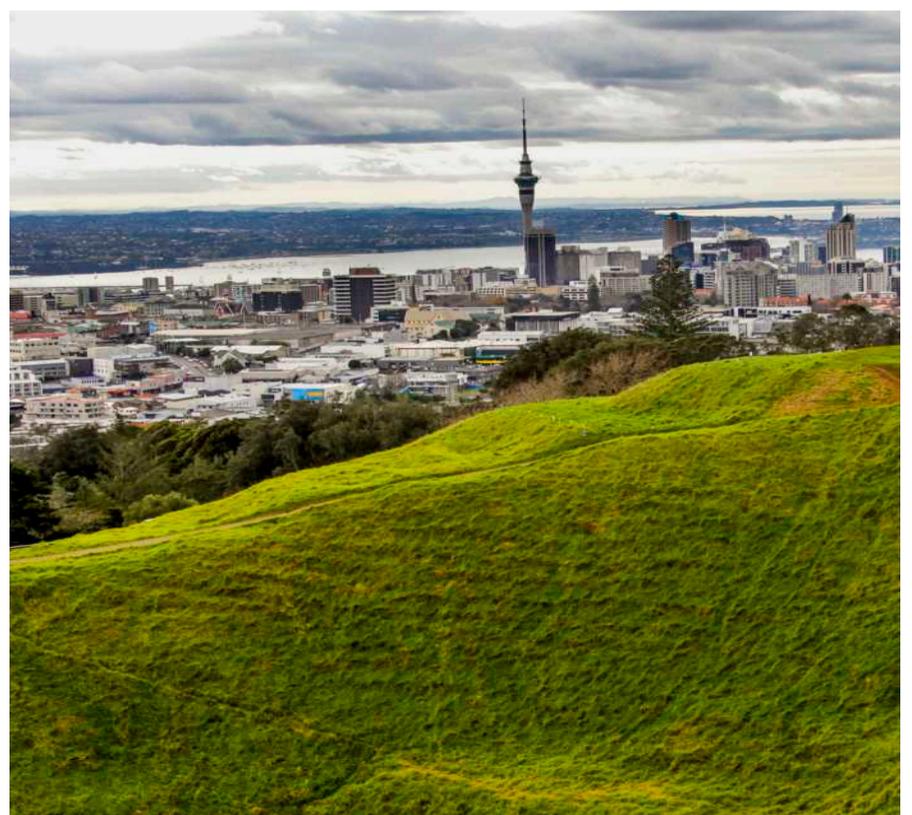


Suggestions

- Walk to the top of Mt Eden volcano
- Bungy jump from the Skytower
- Shop in downtown Auckland
- Explore Waiheke island
- Hike Ragitoto Summit track, 2 hr return

Places to stay

- [The Attic Backpackers](#)



Northland & Bay of Islands

For many New Zealanders, the phrase 'up north' conjures up sepia-toned images of family fun in the sun, pohutukawa in bloom and dolphins frolicking in pretty bays. From school playgrounds to work cafeterias, owning a bach (holiday house) here is a passport to popularity.



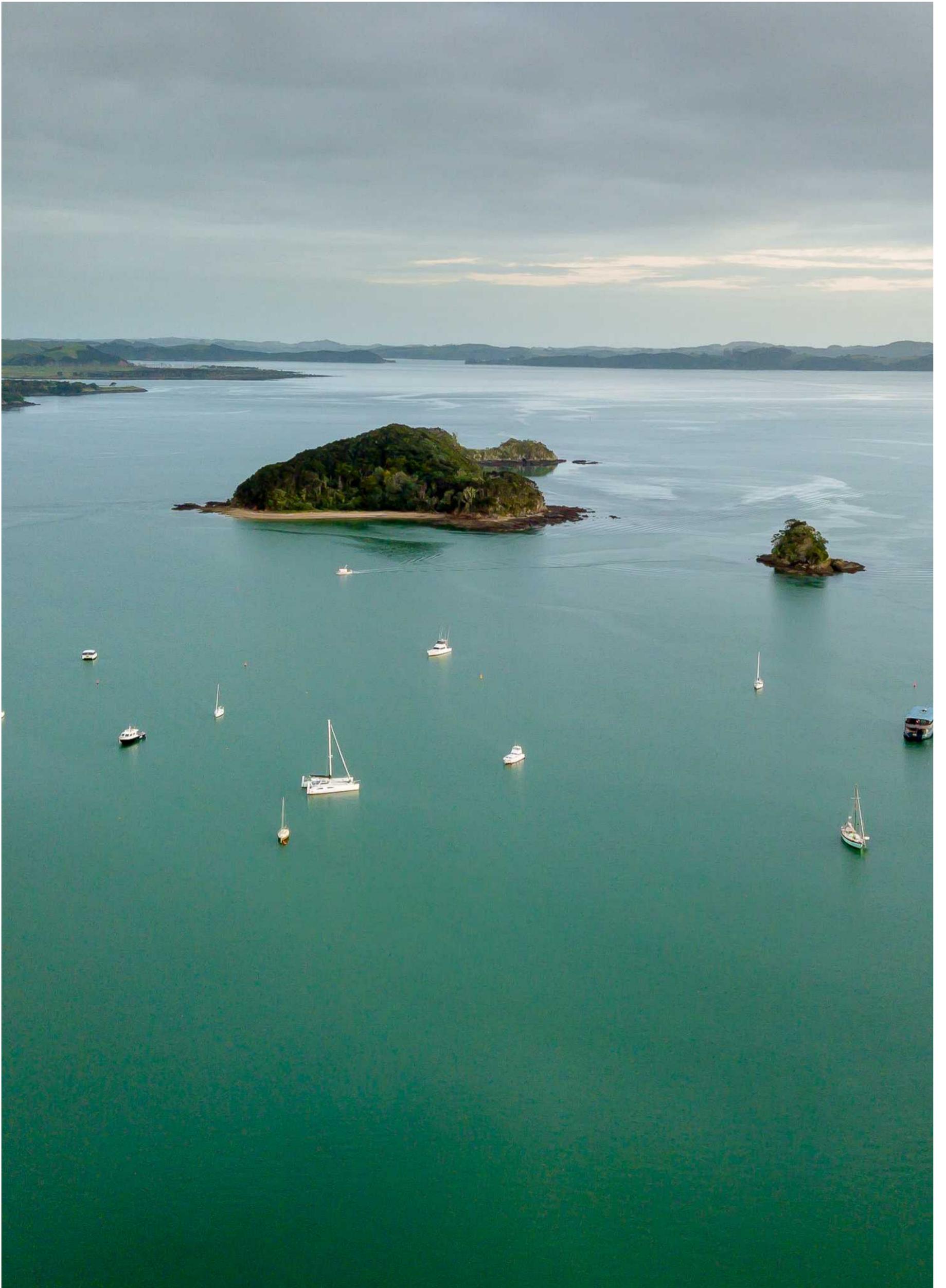
Suggestions

- Drive to Cape Reinga
- Walk through Waipoua Forest
- Visit the Poor knight islands
- Cruise to the hole in the rock
- Visit the Waitangi treaty grounds

Places to stay

- Moustrap (Paihia)
- Saltwater Lodge (Paihia)







Coromandel

The Coromandel Peninsula juts into the Pacific east of Auckland, forming the eastern boundary of the Hauraki Gulf. Although relatively close to the metropolis, the Coromandel offers easy access to splendid isolation. Its dramatic, mountainous spine separates it into two very distinct parts.



Things to do

- Walk or kayak to Cathedral Cove
- Dig your own bath at Hot Water Beach
- Hike the Pinnacles track
- Drive along the windy west coast
- Sup or kayak to Donut Island

Places to stay

- Turtle Cove accomm. (Whitianga)
- Tatahi Lodge (Hahei)





Rotorua

Catch a whiff of Rotorua's sulphur-rich air and you've already had an introduction to NZ's most dynamic geothermal area.

The Māori revered this place, naming one of the most spectacular springs Wai-O-Tapu (Sacred Waters).

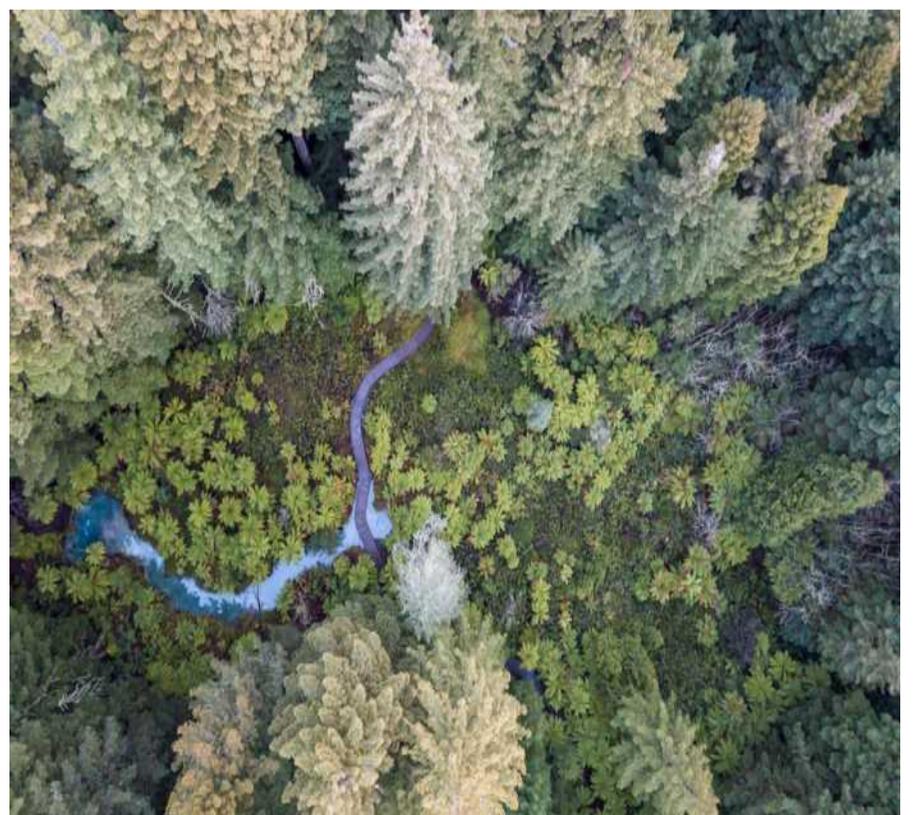
Today 34% of the population is Māori, with cultural performances and traditional hāngi (steam-cooked banquets) as big an attraction as the landscape itself.

Things to do

- Attend a cultural experience
- Stroll through Kuirau Park
- Walk around in the Redwoods
- Experience Wai-O-Tapu
- Relax in the Polynesian Spa

Places to stay

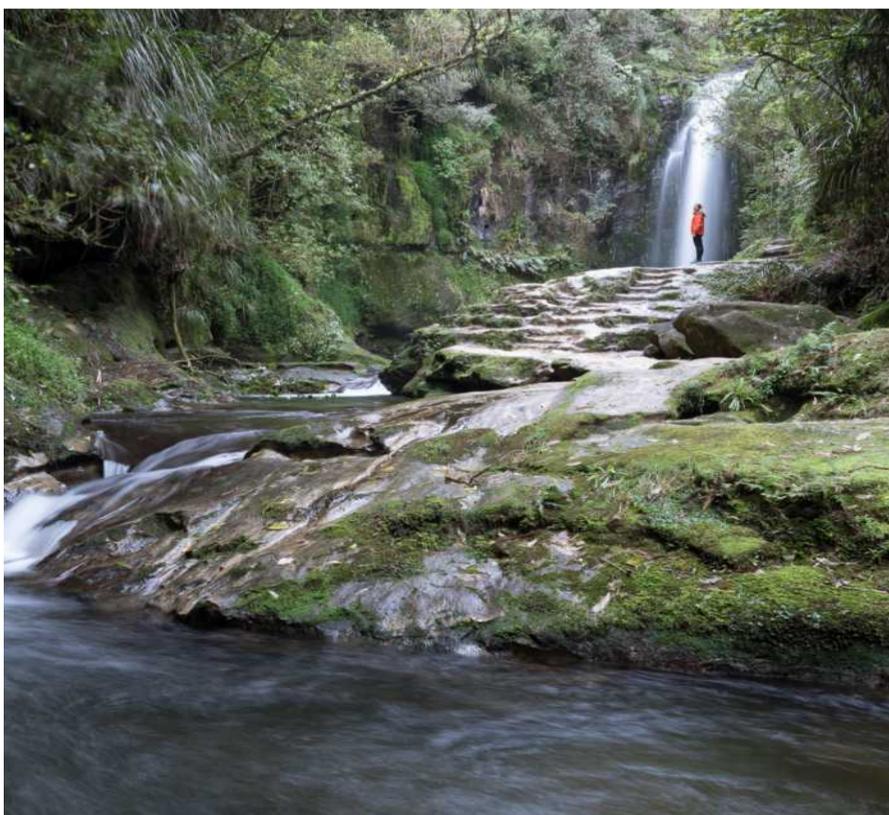
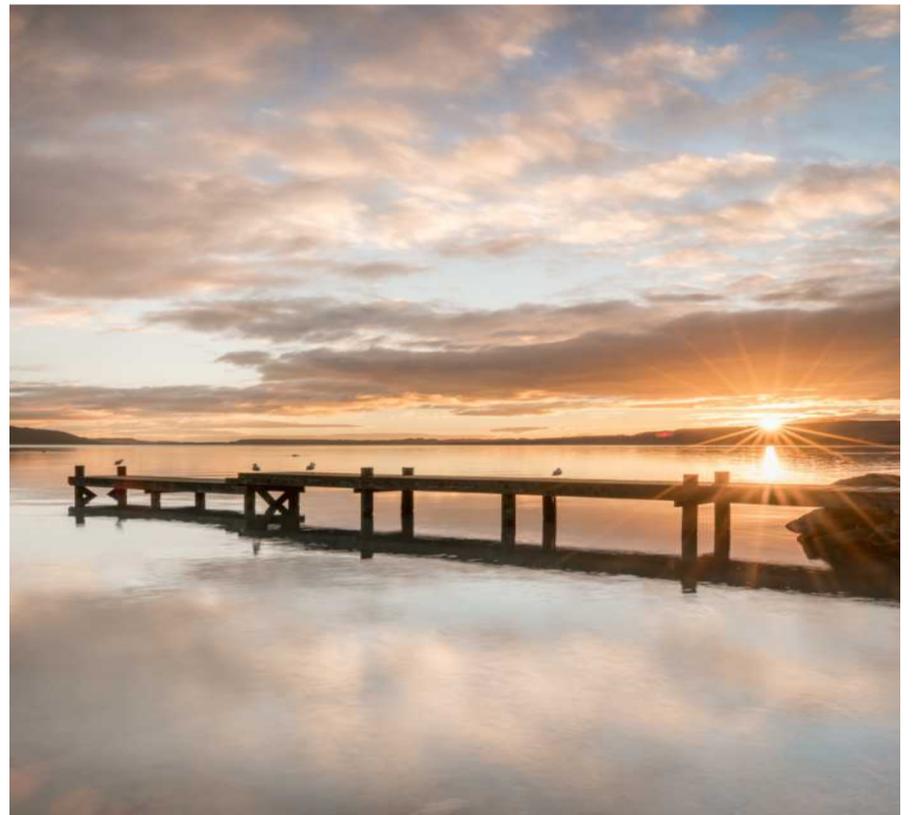
- [Rock Solid Backpackers \(Rotorua\)](#)





The Bay of Plenty

The Bay of Plenty stretches along the pohutukawa tree-studded coast from Waihi Beach to Opotiki and inland as far as the Kaimai Range. This is where New Zealanders have come on holiday for generations, lapping up salt-tinged activities and lashings of sunshine

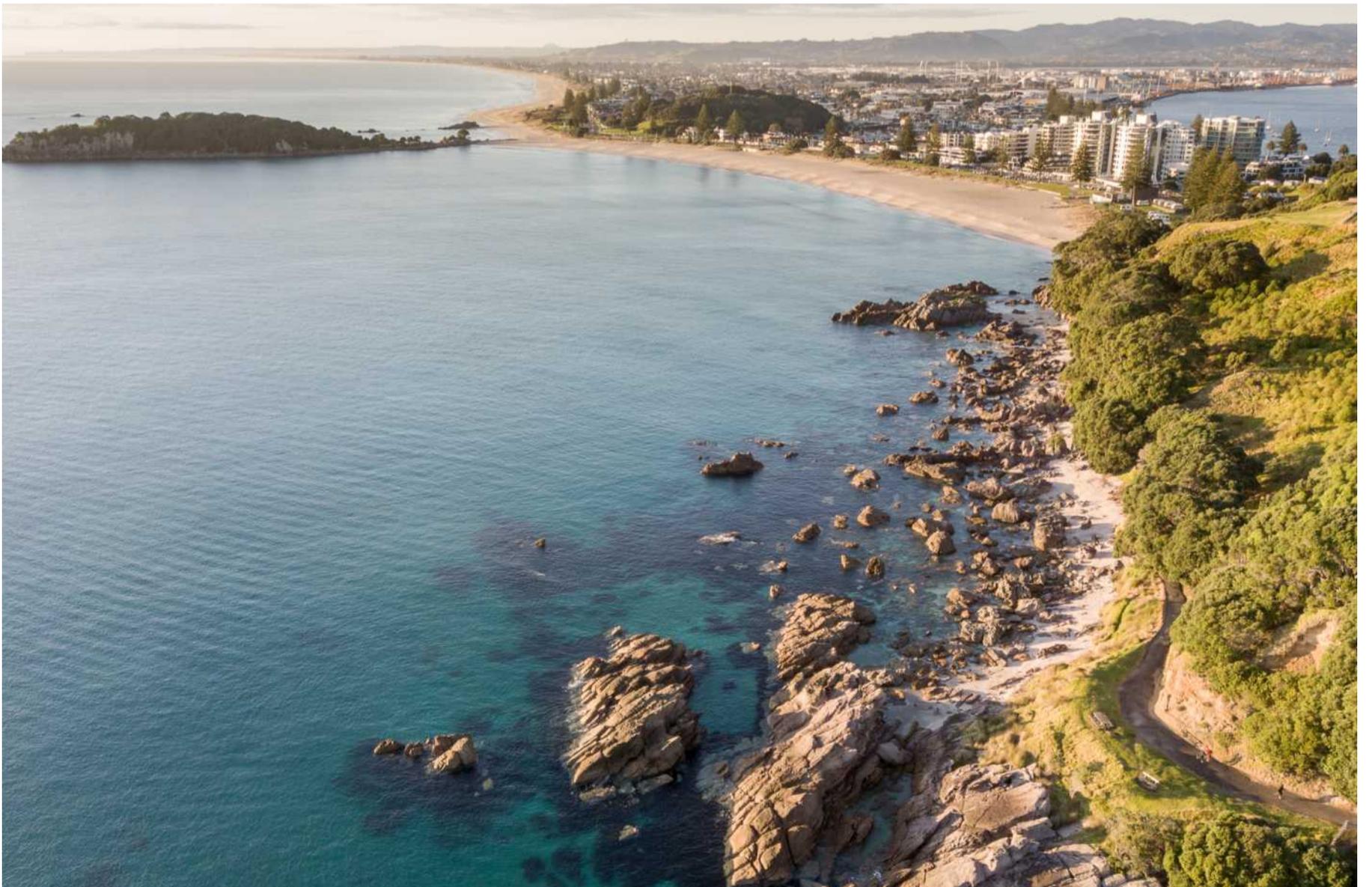


Things to do

- Hike or run up Mt Maunganui
- Skydive above Tauranga
- Visit the Kaiate falls
- Walk along pristine beaches
- Relax in the hot pools

Places to stay

- [Arthouse Accommodation \(Tauranga\)](#)
- [Mount backpackers \(Mt Maunganui\)](#)





Tongariro National Park

Even before you arrive in Tongariro National Park its three mighty volcanoes - Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro - steal your breath from the horizon. It would be a wasted opportunity not to get closer, which is possible on the ski fields and during the other-worldly, day-long Tongariro Alpine Crossing, as well as other walks to natural features.



Suggestions

- Walk the Tongariro Crossing in summer
- Walk the Tongariro Crossing guided in winter
- Explore various other hiking trails
- Admire Taranaki falls
- Get wet while white water rafting
- Go skiing on Mt Ruapehu

Places to stay

- Plateau Lodge (National Park)





Taranaki

Halfway between Auckland and Wellington on New Zealand's under appreciated west coast, Taranaki (aka 'the 'Naki') is the country's Texas, with oil and gas streaming in from offshore rigs.

But in New Plymouth free galleries, a provincial museum and dining hot spots attract young families and retirees from Auckland craving a slower pace without compromising lifestyle.

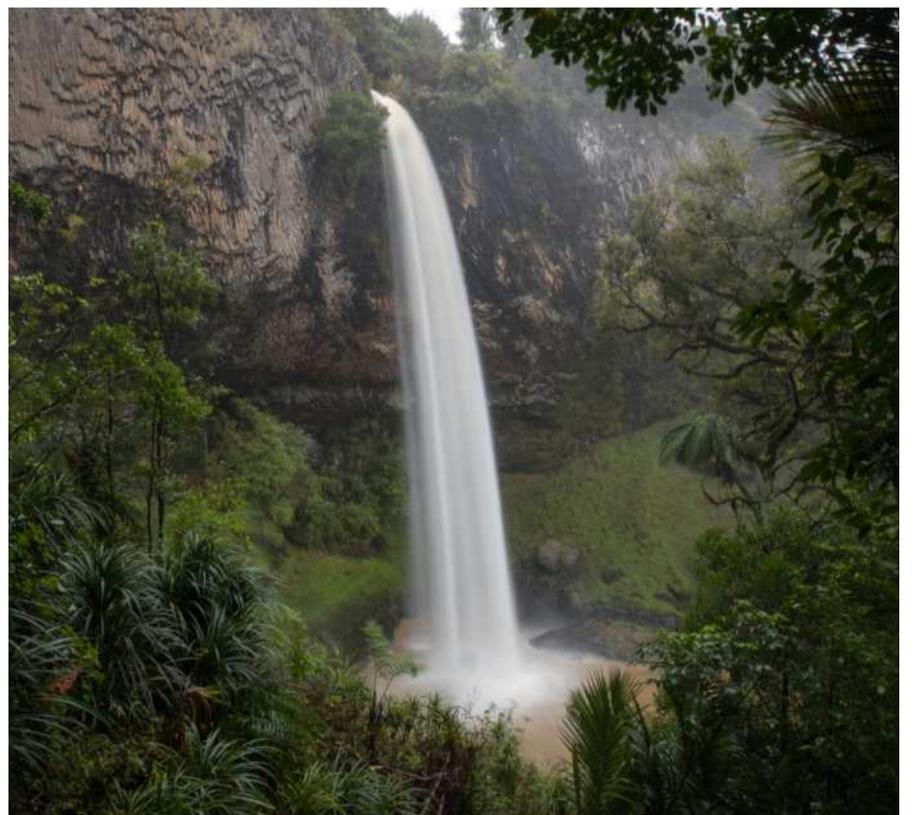
Travellers are following suit.

Places to stay

- [Ducks N Drakes \(New Plymouth\)](#)

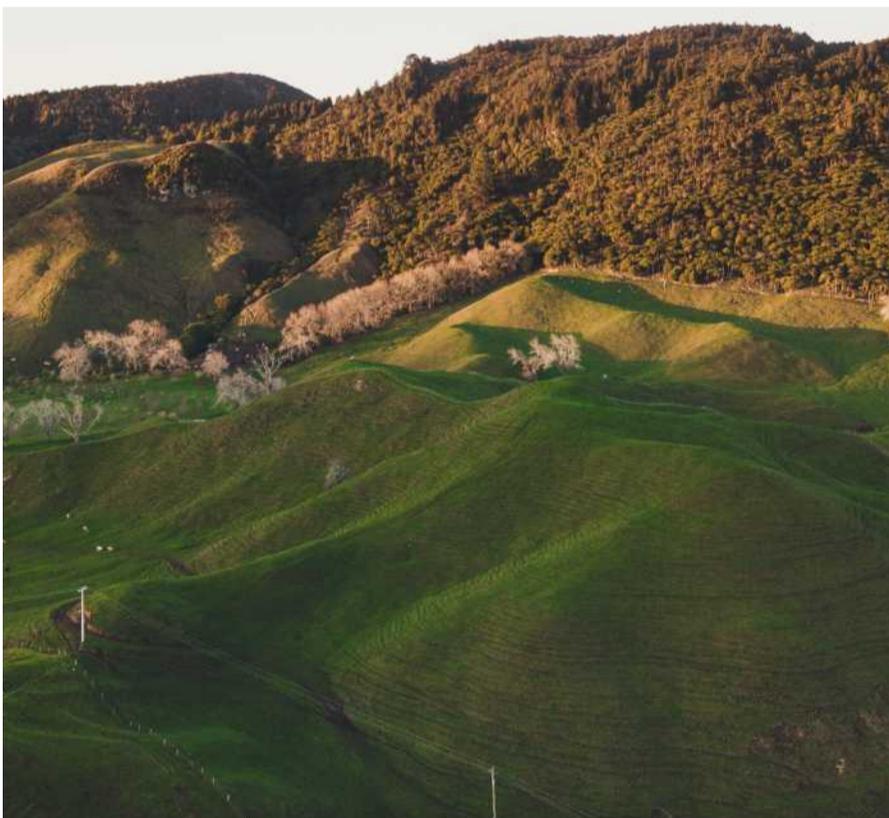
Things to do

- Walk to the 55m Bridal Veil waterfall
- Visit New Zealand's rugby museum
- Surf highway 45
- Explore downtown New Plymouth
- Go hiking in Mt Egmont National Park



Waikato & the King Country

Holding good claim to the title of New Zealand's rural heartland, this is the kind of no-nonsense place that raises cattle and All Blacks. A bastion of independent Māoridom, it was never conquered in the war against the King Movement. The story goes that King Tawhiao placed his hat on a large map of NZ and declared that all the land it covered would remain under his mana (authority), and the region was effectively off-limits to Europeans until 1883.



Places to stay

- [Rock Solid Backpackers \(Rotorua\)](#)
- [Matamata backpackers \(Matamata\)](#)

Things to do

- Experience Glowworms
- Go black water rafting
- Visit Hamilton & Raglan
- Admire the lush green hills

Wellington region

If your New Zealand travels have been all about the great outdoors and sleepy rural towns, Wellington will make for a lively change of pace. Art-house cinemas, hip bars, live bands and endless cafes all await you in NZ's cultural capital.

With long, driftwood- and pumice-strewn, crowd-free beaches, the Kapiti Coast acts as a summer playground and suburban extension for Wellingtonians. The region takes its name from Kapiti Island, a wildlife sanctuary 5km offshore from Paraparaumu.



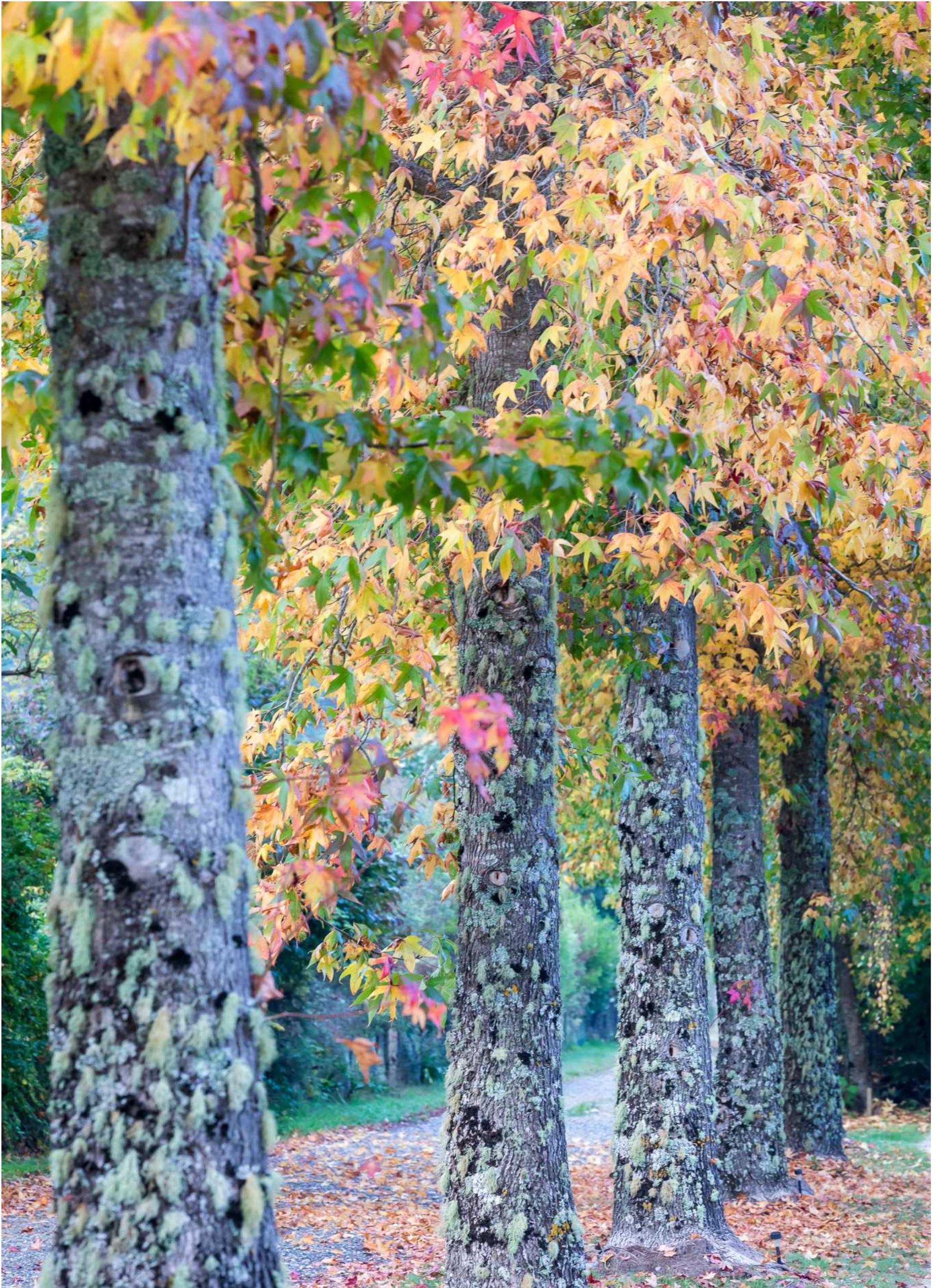
Places to stay

- [The Dwellington \(Wellington\)](#)
- [The Marion \(Wellington\)](#)

Things to do

- Walk up to Mt Victoria lookout
- Explore the beautiful Botanic Gardens
- Visit Kapiti Island
- Drive along the Kapiti Coast
- Meet locals at the Sunday farmers market in Wellington
- Drive to Cape Pellisar







Marlborough & Nelson

For many travellers, Marlborough and Nelson will be their introduction to what South Islanders refer to as the 'Mainland'. Having left windy Wellington, and made a white-knuckled crossing of Cook Strait, people are often surprised to find the sun shining and the temperature 10°C warmer.

Things to do

- Hike or bike the Queen Charlotte Track
- Admire Kaikoura's wildlife
- Cycle the Great taste trail
- Explore Golden bay and meet the locals
- Visit Abel Tasman National Park

Places to stay

- Dusky Lodge (Kaikoura)
- Adventure Inn (Marahau)
- Almond House (Nelson)
- INNBetween Lodge & Backpackers





The West Coast

Nowhere is solitude sweeter than on the West Coast. A few marvels pull big crowds - like Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, and the magnificent Pancake Rocks - but you'll need jet boats, helicopter rides and tramping trails to explore its inner realms. Hemmed in by the Southern Alps and the savage Tasman Sea, the West Coast forms almost 9% of the land area of New Zealand (NZ) but contains less than 1% of its population.

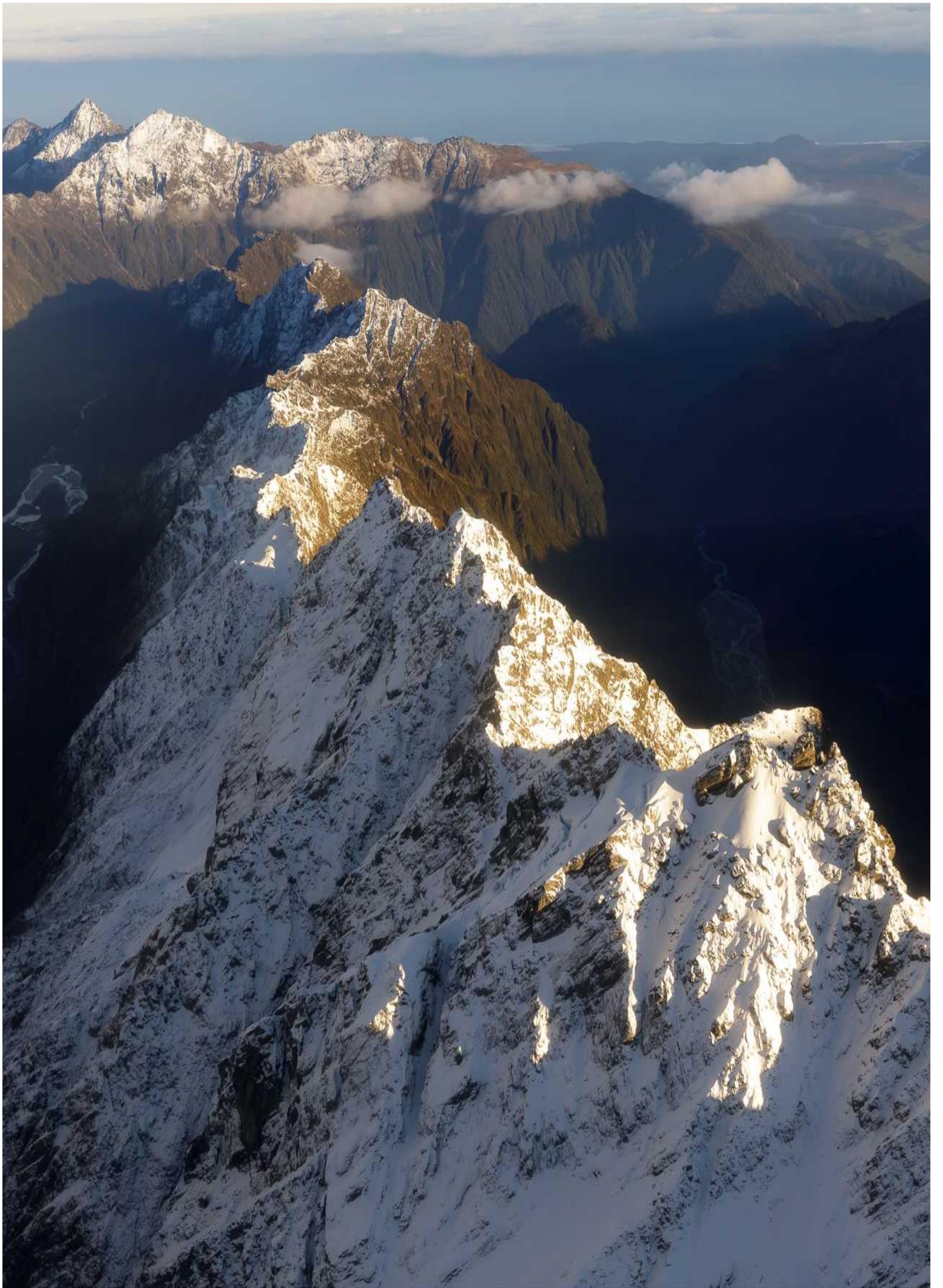


Things to do

- Helicopter above Glacier Country
- Drive the great coast road
- Visit Hokitika Gorge
- Learn about the Gold-rush history
- Experience sunset at the Pancake Rocks
- Kayak on Lake Mapourika

Where to stay

- Rainforest Retreat (Franz Josef)
- Glow Worm Accomm. (Franz Josef)
- Ivory Towers (Fox Glacier)





Dunedin & Otago

Otago has attractions both urban and rural, from quirky towns to world-class wineries and some of the country's most accessible wildlife. Its historic heart is Dunedin, home to a vibrant student culture and arts scene. From the town's stately Edwardian train station it's possible to catch the famous Taieri Gorge Railway inland, and continue on two wheels along the craggily scenic Otago Central Rail Trail.

Things to do

- Visit Oamaru
- Check out the Moeraki boulders
- Drive around the Otago Peninsula
- Visit the Catlins incl. many waterfalls
- Cycle the Otago Rail trail

Places to stay

- Manor house (Dunedin)
- On Top Backpackers (Dunedin)



Fiordland & Southland

Brace yourself for sublime scenery on a breathtaking scale.

The pot of gold at the end of Milford Hwy (SH94) is sublime Milford Sound (Piopiotahi). Rising above the fiord's indigo water is Mitre Peak (Rahotu).

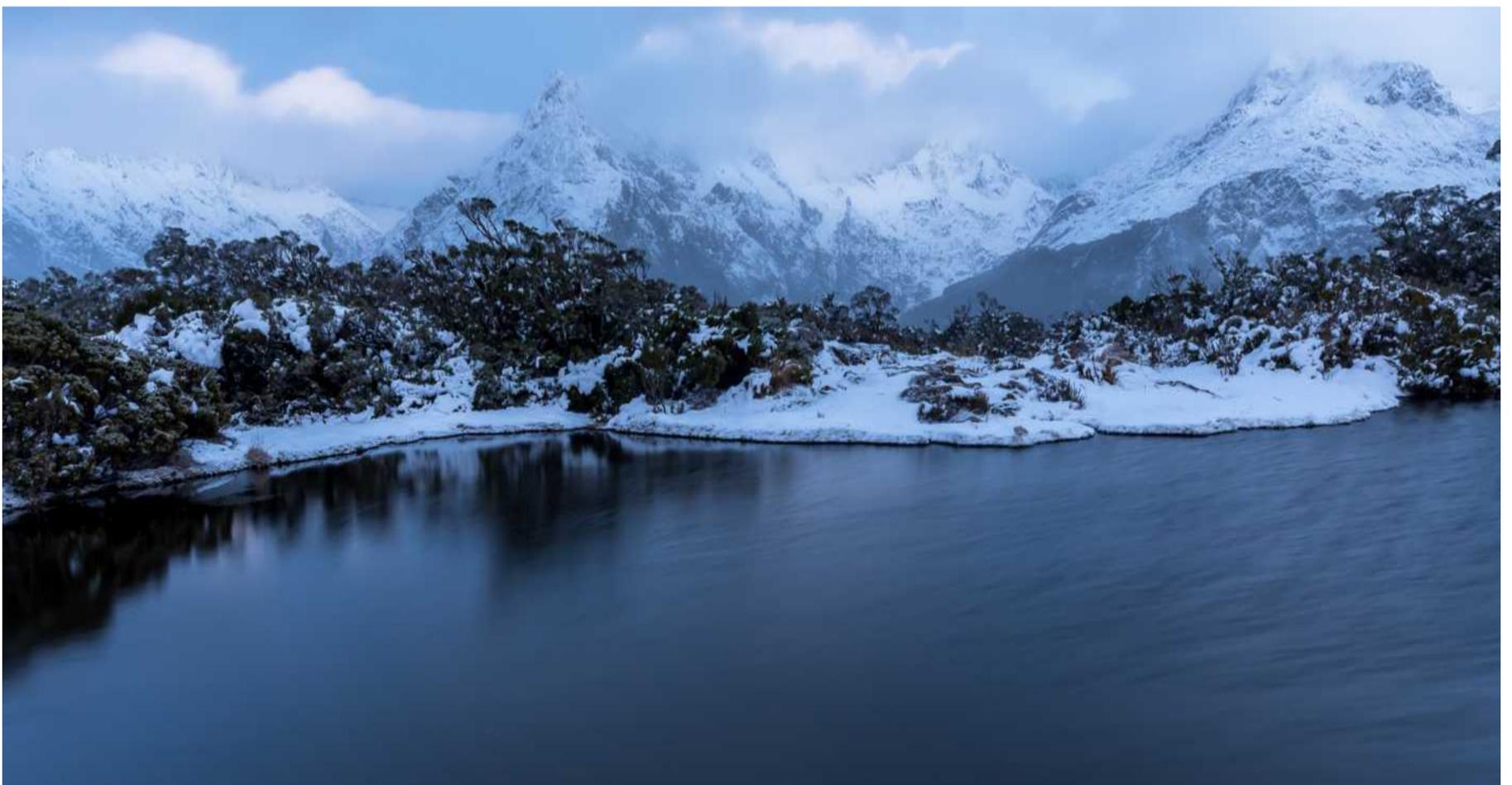
Remote Doubtful Sound is humbling in size and beauty. Carved by glaciers, it's one of New Zealand's largest fiords - almost three times the length of more popular Milford.

Things to do

- Drive the Milford Road
- Cruise in Doubtful Sounds
- Hike the Milford Track
- Hike the Kepler Track
- Enjoy Lake Te Anau

Places to stay

- [Te Anau Lakefront Backpackers](#)



Queenstown & Wanaka

The region has a cinematic backdrop of mountains and lakes and a smattering of valley towns just as enticing as Queenstown itself. Wanaka may resemble Queenstown - lakeside setting, a fringe of mountains, a lengthy menu of adventures - but it runs at a less frenetic pace. Glenorchy is even more sedate, and yet it's the final stop for many on their way into arguably the finest alpine tramping terrain in NZ.

Things to do

- Walk the Routeburn track
- Undergo adrenaline activities
- Visit gold rush Arrowtown
- Drive to Glenorchy & Kinloch
- Go hiking anywhere in this area

Places to stay

- [Wanaka Backpackers \(Wanaka\)](#)
- [Absoloot backpackers \(Queenstown\)](#)
- [The Flaming Kiwi \(Queenstown\)](#)





Stewart Island (Rakiura)

If you make the short but extremely rewarding trip to Stewart Island/Rakiura you'll have one up on most New Zealanders, many of whom maintain an active curiosity about the country's 'third island' without ever going there.

Things to do

- Bird spotting on Ulva Island
- Hike the Rakiura track
- Fly, walk and boat coast to coast

Places to stay

- [Stewart Island Backpackers](#)



Christchurch & Canterbury

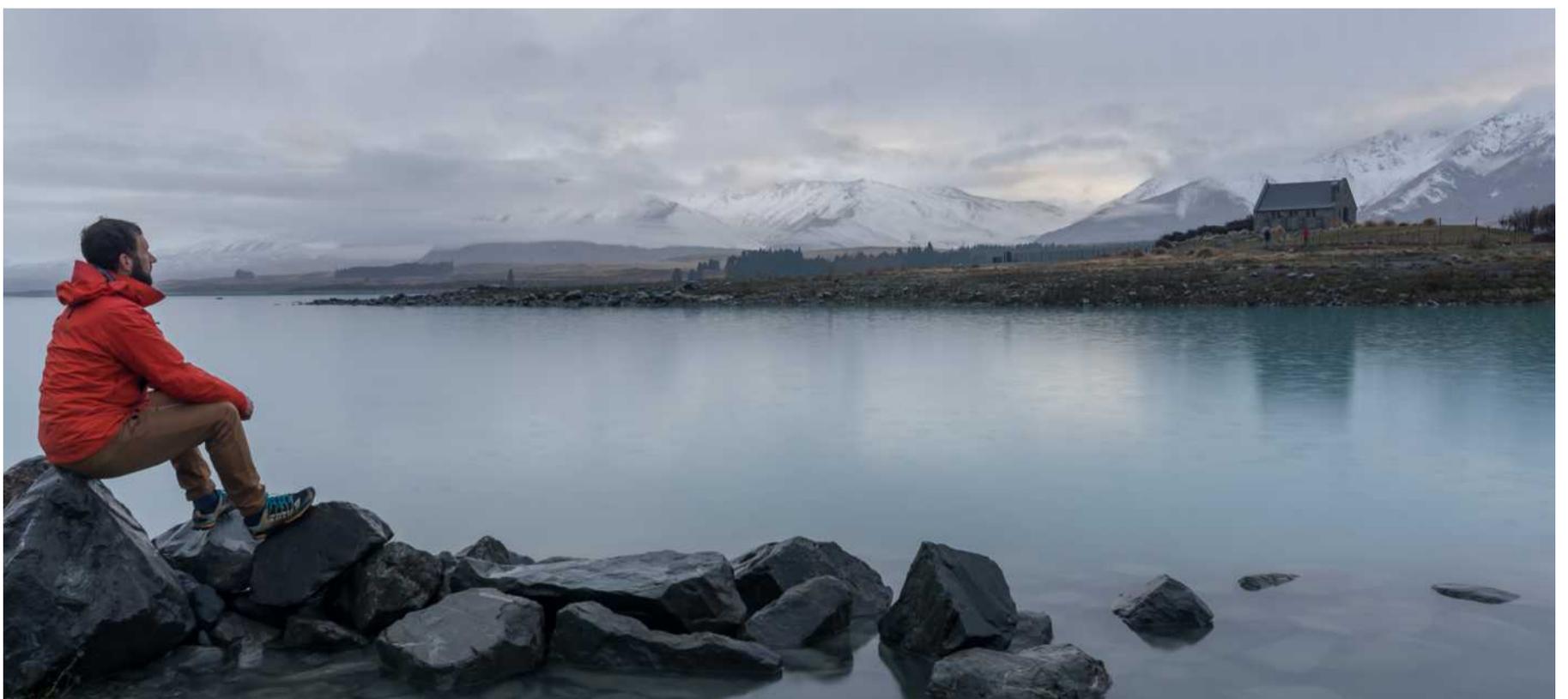
Nowhere in New Zealand is changing and developing as fast as post-quake Christchurch. The scaffolding is coming down, the hospitality scene is flourishing and the central city is once again drawing visitors to its pedestrian-friendly streets.

Things to do

- Walk around vibrant Christchurch
- Visit Lake Tekapo
- Explore Mt Cook National Park
- Chill out in Hamner Springs
- Drive to Banks Peninsula

Places to stay

- [All Stars Inn \(Christchurch\)](#)
- [Lakefront backpackers \(Lake Tekapo\)](#)



Thanks for reading, I hope this guide has inspired you to make your own memories. If you have any questions or just want to say 'hi' contact me on Instagram.

Support me by following me on  [@michelholleman](https://www.instagram.com/michelholleman)



Disclaimer: This post was in no way compensated. All adventures were my own and told from my personal experiences. There aren't any affiliate links listed on this post.

Please keep in mind that while in nature to always be cautious and help preserve it. Don't litter and always clean up after yourself and others. All together we can make a difference in the world to help maintain its beauty.

Be awesome and leave no Trace!

Tiaki is a powerful and diverse word in te reo Māori, meaning to care and protect, and to look after people, animals and place.

Although I have taken all reasonable care in preparing this guide, I take no warranty about the accuracy of completeness of its content, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from it use.

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