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New Zealand

Bette Flagler

Adventure Guide

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HUNTER

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Cover photo: Kauricoa, Northland
Back cover photo: Punga Cove, Destination Marlborough

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Tourism New Zealand is the marketing machine for our little country and is blessed with many talented folks spread around the islands. Some who really stand out are Kristine Larner in the Hawke's Bay, Selena Hurndell in Wellington, the entire staff at the Reefton Visitor Centre, Margaret Mabey at Tourism Coromandel, Esther Gamble in the Bay of Plenty and Shevaun Taberner and Lisa Sadler in Fiordlands. Gaynor Dyet and the whole team at Canterbury & Christchurch are amazing and Julia Sanson in the Manawatu is the cream that rises to the top.

I was lucky to meet new friends with every part of this adventure and that is the true wealth of the project – not just did I get to visit the sparkling nooks and crannies of my adopted country, but I got to snoop around its cobwebs and warts, too, uncovering as I went more and more of the characters who weave together to form a colorful and interesting life. Thanks to all of you.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all the restless spirits and wandering souls who know there's a whole world out there waiting to be explored and who aren't content to sit in one place for their entire life.

Preface

From the sandy beaches of Northland to the snowy Southern Alps, New Zealand is a country of Eye Candy. When New Zealand was designed, it's as if all the greatest places on Earth were put together in one compact little land mass and most of the people were removed. Lucky for travelers, New Zealand is also a user-friendly kind of place, combining the laid-back attitudes of an island with conveniences and lifestyle of the first world. New Zealanders, or Kiwis, are honest-to-goodness nice folks. It's like living in a country full of Labrador retrievers.

When I first arrived in New Zealand it was on a friend's sailboat at the end of two years traveling. As the sun began to brighten the morning sky, what was to become my adopted home literally presented itself as Aotearoa, the Maori word for New Zealand meaning "Land of the Long White Cloud." We sailed closer to Opua, our landfall in the Bay of Islands, and the cloud cover burnt off to reveal a green land underneath a startling blue sky. Sailors who had arrived before us said, "the people just keep getting friendlier the farther south you travel." We couldn't imagine how this would be possible, but it proved true. As the landscape gets more dramatic, the people are nicer, more welcoming, have more time to share. Interested not only in who you are, Kiwis look to visitors for approval and love to ask "so, how do you like New Zealand?" When I'm asked why I chose to move here, "just look around," is what I answer.

New Zealanders are great walkers and the country is bursting with tracks, from local strolls in the park, to full-on mountaineering. The woods are called the bush and hiking is called tramping. Funny turns of phrase, but you'll get used to the idea of tramping in the bush. You can't go far without seeing water and many activities are sea, river or lake based. One of the most amazing things about New Zealand is the proximity of places — you can be climbing on a glacier in the morning and hanging out at the beach in the afternoon.

As if the natural grandeur of the place isn't enough to inspire a visit, consider this: New Zealand has no snakes, no rabies, only one poisonous spider that's so reclusive virtually no one ever sees it, and there is very little violent crime. Robust with bird and marine life, its only native mammal is a small bat. For me, it all adds up to a paradise where I can hike, bike or sail without much to worry about. Plus, there is great fresh produce, piles of fish, and wine just about everywhere you look – what could be better? If I had to fault New Zealand, it would be twofold: the total lack of understanding what makes a proper chocolate chip cookie and the belief that instant coffee is an acceptable drink. The coffee issue is changing, but I've yet to find a Toll House morsel.

New Zealanders are nuts for sport, but there is art and culture, as well. Never have I seen so many avid gardeners and the creativity of the artisans is astounding. While listening to the radio, you may get a chuckle hearing a song that you thought (and maybe even hoped) to never hear again, but live music is alive and well in the city centers and the opera, ballet and orchestras are well-respected. New Zealand is the birth place of many world famous performers, filmmakers, directors, singers, authors, photographers, painters... you get the picture.

I wrote this book with my friends in mind – for people who travel like Peggy and Jeff, Mark and Amy; people who appreciate fine wine and goose down duvets, but who are just as happy and comfortable when barreling down a muddy mountain on their bike or strapping a pack of camping gear to their backs. The America's Cup, *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *Whale Rider* have, in a few short years, taken New Zealand from the bottom of the world to the front of the minds of people all over the planet. And fair enough, too. It's a great place and, while there is no paradise, if you're a traveler in search of a destination where exploration is part of the adventure, then New Zealand is pretty darned close. I hope you enjoy your trip and that this book helps in your travels. Feel free to drop me a line and let me know what you did and didn't like (both about the book and New Zealand!): bette_flagler@xtra.co.nz.

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From the sandy beaches of Northland to the snowy Southern Alps, New Zealand is a country of eye candy. When New Zealand was designed, it's as if all the greatest places on earth were put together in one compact little land mass and most of the people were removed. Luckily for travelers, New Zealand is also a user-friendly kind of place, combining the laid-back attitudes of an island with the conveniences and lifestyle of the first world. New Zealanders, or Kiwis, are honest-to-goodness nice folks. It's like living in a country full of labrador retrievers.

When I first arrived in New Zealand it was on a friend's sailboat at the end of two years traveling. As the sun began to brighten the morning sky, what was to become my adopted home literally presented itself as Aotearoa, the Maori word for New Zealand meaning "land of the long white cloud." We sailed closer to Opua, our landfall in the Bay of Islands, and the cloud cover burned off to reveal a green land underneath a startling blue sky. Sailors who had arrived before us said, "the people just keep getting friendlier the farther south you travel." We couldn't imagine how this would be possible, but it proved true. As the landscape gets more dramatic, the people are nicer, more welcoming, have more time to share. Interested not only in who you are, Kiwis look to visitors for approval and love to ask "So, how do you like New Zealand?" When I'm asked why I chose to move here, "just look around" is my answer.

New Zealanders are great walkers and the country is bursting with tracks, from local strolls in the park, to full-on mountaineering. The woods are called "the bush" and hiking is called "tramping." Funny turns of phrase, but you'll get used to the idea of tramping in the bush. You can't go far without seeing water and many activities are sea- , river- or lake-based. One of the most amazing things about New Zealand is the proximity of places – you can be climbing on a glacier in the morning and hanging out at the beach in the afternoon.

As if the natural grandeur of the place isn't enough to inspire a visit, consider this: New Zealand has no snakes, no rabies, only one poisonous spider that's so reclusive virtually no one ever sees it, and there is very little violent crime. Robust with bird and marine life, its only native mammal is a small bat. For me, it all adds up to a paradise where I can hike, bike or sail without much to worry about. Plus, there is great fresh produce, piles of fish, and wine just about everywhere you look – what could be better? If I had to fault New Zealand, it would be twofold: the total lack of understanding what makes a proper chocolate chip cookie and the belief that instant coffee is an acceptable drink. The coffee issue is changing, but I've yet to find a Toll House morsel.

New Zealanders are nuts for sport, but there is art and culture, as well. Never have I seen so many avid gardeners and the creativity of the artisans is astounding. While listening to the radio, you may get a chuckle hearing a

song that you thought (and maybe even hoped) never to hear again, but music is alive and well in the city centers and the opera, ballet and orchestras are well-respected. New Zealand is the birthplace of many world famous performers, filmmakers, directors, singers, authors, photographers, painters... you get the picture.

I wrote this book with my friends in mind – for people who travel like Peggy and Jeff, Mark and Amy; people who appreciate fine wine and goose-down duvets, but who are just as happy and comfortable when barreling down a muddy mountain on their bike or strapping a pack of camping gear to their backs. The America's Cup, and the movies *Lord of the Rings* and *Whale Rider* have, in a few short years, taken New Zealand from the bottom of the world to the front of the minds of people all over the planet. And fair enough, too. It's a great place and, while there is no paradise, if you're a traveler in search of a destination where exploration is part of the adventure, then New Zealand is pretty darned close. I hope you enjoy your trip and that this book helps in your travels. Feel free to drop me a line at bettewrites@xtra.co.nz and let me know what you did and didn't like (both about the book and New Zealand!).

History

Apart from Antarctica, New Zealand was the last major land mass to be settled by man and the land that we call New Zealand evolved following the separation of the Rangitata Land Mass from the ancient super continent Gondwanaland – some 80 million years ago. Separation forces continued for 20 million years until the Tasman Sea reached its current width and the land mass continued to experience changes until as little as five million years ago, when the current shape of the two islands began to take form. During this time of development, New Zealand lived in isolation and, as recently as 7,000 years ago, most of New Zealand was covered in rainforest. Protected by the sea, New Zealand developed unique flora and fauna and, within the perfectly safe forest, birds even lost their ability to fly. Sadly, the discovery of New Zealand by man – first the Maori and the Moriori, and then the Europeans – changed everything. The Maori were skilled hunters and fishermen and brought rats, dogs, fire and stone age weapons. The Europeans brought disease, agriculture, more weapons, intrusive flora and more fauna. The New Zealand we know today, while beautiful, is a shadow of what it must have been only 1,000 years ago.

■ Pre-European History

The Maori

While the exact date of Maori settlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand is unknown, current belief points to the arrival of the Maori people sometime around 1000 AD on double-hulled *waka hourua* (voyaging canoes) from their homeland in Hawaiki. It is believed that migrations took place over several generations, with some to-ing and fro-ing to Hawaiki.

While similar in sound and spelling to Hawaii, Hawaiki is not the same island nor in the same island chain. Hawaiki is probably in the Society Islands, perhaps the island of Rangitea.

Evidence shows that long before Maori landed in Aotearoa/New Zealand, their forebears lived in what is now China. From there, about 15,000 years ago, they migrated through Taiwan and the Philippines to Indonesia, where they stayed until about 6,000 to 9,000 years ago, when another migration took them through Melanesia. Eastward migration about 3,500 years ago brought them to Fiji; the migration pattern continued through to Samoa and the Marquesas, from where, it is believed, they sailed south to Tahiti (and the rest of the Society Islands) to the Cook Islands, and to Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Maori

Maori history begins with the arrival of the great explorer Kupe sometime around 900 AD, but it is his wife, Hine-te-aparangi, who is credited for the name *Aotearoa* – Land of the Long White Cloud. After visiting both the North and South Islands, Kupe, his wife, and crew left Hokianga Harbour and returned to Hawaiki.

Ancient Maori history is unwritten, but many legends and stories explain the journeys to Aotearoa. Each *waka* (voyaging canoe) and each tribe has its own story and, to make the history easier to understand, non-Maori historians of the past melded some stories together. For instance, it was taught that a Great Fleet arrived in New Zealand around 1350 – but this massive Polynesian migration theory is currently being disputed. The boats included in the migration include the *Aotea, Arawa, Tainui, Kurahaupo, Takitimu, Horouata, Tokomaru* and *Mataatua* and, while it is not doubted that the boats existed, it is questioned whether they came in a fleet.

Regardless of whether a fleet arrived on one particular day or not, the first Maori settled on the North Island and, in particular, around its eastern coast – where the temperate climate was more hospitable than farther south. (Imagine, though, coming from a tropical Pacific island where you rarely wore clothes to New Zealand!) The Maori set up a thriving society based on the *iwi* (tribe). Today, most Maori can trace their origins from their *whanau* (extended family) to their *iwi* (tribe); and their *whakapapa* (geneology) to a particular *waka hourua* (ocean-going canoe).

The Maori brought dogs and rats – the first four-legged animals to set foot on the land – and fire. And so began the devastation of previously untouched flora and fauna. The Maori settlers were great hunters and fishermen and lived a stone age existence until the arrival of the Europeans; they used bird, whale, dog and human bones, ivory teeth, and stone for tool making. *Pounamu* or greenstone, was an especially prized possession and was used for weapons, tools and adornments. Maori traveled long distances in search of *pounamu* and many of the settlements of the South Island (many of the walking tracks, too) owe their existence to the search for this stone.

The Maori hunted the native birds, many of which were flightless, including on the South Island, the spectacular moa, the world's largest bird. There were over 20 species, ranging from the size of a turkey to the giant, which

stood 3.7 meters (12 feet) high and weighed up to 200 kg (440 pounds). So heavily hunted was the moa (and the moa eggs) that it became extinct approximately 400 years ago (you can see a fabulous display of Moa bones in the Southern Lands, Southern People exhibit at the Otago Museum). Along with the flightless moa, Maori hunted and ate *kereru* (wood pigeon) and *tui,* or parsons bird. In addition to hunting, Maori were keen fishermen and tribes on the South Island hunted penguins, seals and muttonbirds. The lifestyle of the early Maori during this "Archaic" period was a transient one – campsites were used short-term while they hunted and fished in a particular area.

Widespread agriculture wasn't prevalent during the Archaic period of Maori settlement – possibly because the crops that had been grown in Hawaiki couldn't survive the colder conditions of the new land, or, equally likely, the crops arrived not on the first landings, but with successive migrations. When crops did arrive they were primarily root crops; the *kumara* (sweet potato) was the most heavily cultivated, growing successfully on north-facing gardens of the milder North Island. As gardens became established, Maori history moved into what is referred to as the "Classic Period" – punctuated by widespread agricultural systems that protected crops from frost, the formation of *kainga* (villages) near the gardens, and the specialization of tasks. It was during this era of increased leisure time that carving, weaving and, unfortunately, inter-tribal warfare began to flourish.

Many tribes were annihilated through conquest and enslavement and cannibalism became prevalent. *Pa* (fortified villages) containing a series of stockades and trenches, were established at strategic locations to protect villages from invasion. Only men fought and Maori men were proven to be fierce warriors. Intricately carved weapons such as the spear-like *taiaha* and the *mere* (club) were prized possessions and warriors often had a full-face *ta moko* (tattoo). Ta Moko (facial tatoo) is considered a *taonga* (treasure) and every tatoo tells the story of the wearer's family and tribal affiliations.

■ European Arrival

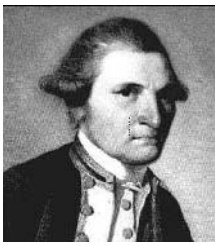
On December 13, 1642, Dutchman Abel Tasman became the first European to visit New Zealand. Hired by the Dutch East India Company, Tasman was sent off to find the mysterious and rich Southern Continent, known as *Terra australis incognita*, believed to stretch across most of the Pacific and balance the huge continents of the Northern Hemisphere. The land Tasman first spotted was on the West Coast of the South Island – somewhere between Hokitika and Okarito. He named the land "Staten Landt" referring to the "Land of the Dutch States-General," and, while he wasn't sure, he believed that he had found the southern continent. Five days later, in need of fresh water and in hopes of exploring the land, Tasman and his crews anchored off the coast of Taitapu Bay (now Golden Bay).

Abel Tasman

Tasman and his two boats were spotted and met by two canoes of Maori who attempted communication. Neither group could understand the other, but Tasman recorded that the Maori seemed friendly. They paddled away and the following morning another canoe approached. Communication was still impossible and seven more canoes came to the anchored ships. One of the Maori

canoes paddled toward a small Dutch boat that was being rowed between the two Dutch ships, ramming into it and killing four of the Dutch sailors. Three other sailors swam to the ship and they were plucked from the sea. Anchors were weighed and by the time the Dutch had set sail, 22 canoes were on shore and 11 more were paddling toward the ships. When the canoes were at close range, Tasman fired and hit one Maori; the canoes retreated to shore.

Tasman named the area "Murderer's Bay" and never set foot on land. Before leaving the New Zealand coast, he passed and named Three Kings Islands at the northern tip of the North Island, and Cape Marie van Diemen, the northwest tip of the North Island after the wife of the Dutch Governor General to Batavia.



Captain Cook

Following Tasman's first sightings, no Europeans explored New Zealand until Captain James Cook arrived on the *Endeavour* in 1769. His first assignment had been to study the passage of the planet Venus across the disc of the sun; his second task was to find the elusive southern continent. Joining Cook were Joseph Banks (a botanist), Daniel Solander (a naturalist) and Charles Green (from the Greenwich Observatory). Cook fulfilled his first assignment in Tahiti on April 13, 1769, and, having made friends with the Tahitians, left accompanied by a Tahitian chief named Tupaia (who spoke some English and had a yearning to travel) and his boy servant. Here is the big advantage that Cook had over Tasman – he had a Polynesian chief on board who could advise Cook and Banks on the appropriate behavior and customs of island tribes.

Even though Cook is a hero and countless place names refer in one way or another to his explorations, it wasn't always smooth sailing. On October 6, 1769, Nicholas Young, the surgeon's boy, spotted a peninsula of land on the east side of the North Island. Cook named the peninsula "Young Nick's Head" and, two days later, Cook sailed into what he would name Poverty Bay, near what we know as Gisborne. There was an unfortunate altercation in Poverty Bay, where Maori were killed. Luckily, Tupaia was able to provide insight and interpretation and as Cook sailed farther on, circumnavigating both the North and South Islands, relations between the British and the Maori became more friendly and successful. It was in Cannibal Cove at the top of the Marlborough Sounds that Cook realized the Maori were, in fact, cannibals. The bones in the soup gave it all away. Cook knew the land was not the great southern continent, but claimed it for Great Britain, nonetheless. Cook returned to New Zealand on two more journeys – in 1773 and 1777, both times on board the *Resolution*. During his travels, particularly the first one on the *Endeavour*, many flora and fauna samples were collected. Cook was killed in 1779 on a beach in Hawaii.

At the same time as Cook's first exploration of New Zealand, the French ship *St. Jean Baptiste* was sailing around the same seas under Jean-François-Marie de Surville. The *Endeavour* and the *Baptiste* passed by each other off the northern coast of the North Island, but neither explorer was aware of the other's presence. The French ship was on a trading mission and anchored in what Cook had named Doubtless Bay. In 1772, Marion du Fresne sailed into the Bay of Islands and spent five weeks before most of his crew was killed, having likely done something to violate a *tapu* (taboo).

The Moriori

Moriori

The Moriori arrived on the Chatham Islands (800 km/500 miles east of Christchurch), which they named Rekohu, around (or just before) the time the Maori were settling the mainland. For some time, the history books claimed that the Moriori were actually the first settlers of the South Island and were either driven away by the Maori or had left on their own to explore the Chathams. There is little evidence, however, to support this theory.

Like many of the Pacific tribes of the time (including the Maori), warring between tribes was bringing the downfall of the Moriori and leading to a decline in population. Chief Nunuku Whenua ordered an end to war and, following his decree, it was instituted that if disagreements occurred, fighting was stopped at the first drop of blood. In this way, the Moriori developed into a peaceful nation.

Moriori child

The population rose to 2,000 and the Moriori lived in isolation with their main activities being the hunting of birds, shellfish and seals. Europeans arrived at Rekohu on the *Chatham* in 1791. British Lieutenant Broughton claimed the islands in the name of King George III and named them after his boat. Broughton and crew encountered confusion not unlike what happened to Abel Tasman. Skirmishes broke out, and a number of Moriori were left dead.

Two years later, the Chathams became the center of the whaling and sealing industries from Europe and North America. The Moriori had *tapus* (taboos) against killing on the animal's breeding grounds, but these *tapus* were ignored and the slaughter of breeding animals led to a decline in not only the wildlife, but whales and seals, mainstays of the Moriori diet.

The Europeans weren't the only ones to invade the Chathams. In search of more land, Maori, mainly from Wellington, arrived in 1835 and claimed the Chathams as their own. The peaceful Moriori were killed and captured, their numbers dropping to 101. By the 1870s most Moriori had left the Chathams and the last full-blooded Moriori, Tame Horoman Rehe Solomon (Tommy Solomon) died in 1933.

Beginning in the late 1790s, more European settlers arrived in New Zealand. This time they were whalers, sealers and missionaries. They established settlements on the coasts and brought disease, prostitution, alcohol and Christianity. The sealers all but decimated the seal population, and the whalers did the same to the whales. The strong, straight, giant kauri trees didn't go unnoticed, and the British navy began felling the mighty trees to provide

masts and spars for their ships; others did the same, filling orders from Sydney shipbuilders.

It was a wild time in the frontier, especially so because the Europeans brought firearms. The meaning of that wasn't lost on the Maori – who could now fight their enemy with a previously unknown vengeance. Maori began to trade their valuables – food, *pounamu* (greenstone), and the preserved heads of fallen chiefs – for firearms, and inter-tribal warfare took on a new significance. As agriculture became more efficient, tribes had more time for war and, with the introduction of European disease, mass slaughter at the hands of musket-toting warriors, the trading of food for weapons, and the introduction of prostitution, the Maori lifestyle changed completely and the population began to shrink. By 1800, the Maori population is believed to have reached a peak of 100,000 but, by the 1830s, the Maori population was dropping dramatically.

Samuel Marsden

Enter the missionaries. In 1814, Samuel Marsden was the first to bring Christianity to New Zealand and other missionaries followed. During the following 20 years, intertribal warfare slowed dramatically and cannibalism was basically a thing of the past. European cures for the imported diseases arrived and things were starting to look up. But at the same time, Maori lost a lot of their land, and also a big part of their lifestyle and culture.

The British government was dealing with the ramifications of its global presence and tendency to invade anything anywhere and was not too keen to shower on the new little country much attention and support. In the early 1830s, leaders from some of the Northern Maori tribes approached the British for friendship and support. In answer, the Crown sent one James Busby. Poor Busby, who had been living in Australia, growing grapes and making wine, really wasn't cut out for the job as Lieutenant Governor and had little in the way of support from home – he wasn't even given firearms to enforce the will of the Crown.

In 1839, there were about 2,000 pakeha (Europeans) living in New Zealand, mainly in the Bay of Islands and things were really getting out of control on the land issues. The French had arrived and were establishing themselves around Akaroa on the South Island, land speculators from Australia were coming across the Tasman and even an American consul was set up. Busby, no doubt at his wits end, pushed the British government into action. The Crown sent Captain William Hobson as Lieutenant Governor. His task was, by way of treaty, to gain British rule of New Zealand. (Busby, sadly, returned to England because of failing health and died shortly thereafter.)

In 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, making New Zealand a British colony. The treaty, an agreement between the British Crown and the Maori chiefs, guaranteed that the Maori would remain in control of their land, fisheries and culture, but, in exchange, they would lose sovereignty. It established British law, but the concepts were not clearly understood by the Maori. There are two versions of The Treaty, one in English and one in Maori, and they are not exactlythe same.

One of the stipulations in at least the English version of the treaty was that land would be sold by Maori to only the British Crown, who could then sell

the land to other buyers – in effect, policing the buying and selling of land that had begun to swirl out of control.

Colonization continued and, after the signing of The Treaty, there was a huge increase in British migrants, many sent by The New Zealand Company. The New Zealand Company was fashioned after the ideas of Edward Gibbon Wakefield who wanted to settle New Zealand in a more systematic and scientific fashion than, say, America had been settled. The plan was to buy up tracts of land from the Crown and sell it to investors in planned communities. The settlements were intended to be self-sufficient, living harmoniously with neighboring Maori. Between 1840 and 1860, 40,000 pakeha arrived, making the Maori and pakeha populations nearly equal.

The first few years after the treaty were a mess, as disputes arose when waves of settlers arrived and more land was desired than was available. The capital was moved from Russell to Auckland and in Russell the Northland war broke out following the repeated felling of the British flagpole by Northland chief Hone Heke. Things were, once again, out of control. Sir George Grey was named governor (New Zealand's third) and by the mid-1840s, he had quieted most of the disputes; but when he was sent to Cape Town in the 1850s, the New Zealand wars began to gain steam. Wars were fought in Northland (mid-1840s), Taranaki (intermittently through the 1860s), King Country and Waikato (mid-1860s) and on the east coast (late 1860s).

In the late 1800s, a labor shortage brought more migration from Britain and Europe. By the turn of the century, there were over half a million *pakeha* and the numbers of Maori had diminished to about 40,000. The kauri gum trade (see section on Northland, page 81) in the late 1800s brought nearly 5,000 Dalmatians (from present day Croatia); and during the mid- to late 1800s, a flood of Scots arrived and settled mostly in Otago and Southland. Immigration by Europeans, Americans, Australians and the Chinese continued with the discovery of gold in Otago in the 1860s. By the 1880s the population was around half a million. Railways and roads were being built and farming was becoming an economic mainstay. During WWI, many New Zealanders returned to Great Britain to fight on her behalf. In 1935, a Labour government was elected that brought changes like a 40-hour work week and state-funded health and welfare systems. By the 1950s, New Zealand enjoyed full employment and export demand for its agricultural products fueled a boom.

Following an agreement between the New Zealand and Dutch governments in the mid-20th century, a large population of Dutch immigrants settled around the country.

> **Did you know?** New Zealand exports tulip bulbs to Holland.

With a severe labor shortage, New Zealand turned to the Pacific Islands, and during the 1960s and 1970s a large number of Pacific Islanders settled around Auckland, making Auckland the largest Polynesian city in the world. During the 1970s and 1980s, New Zealand's economy deteriorated in response to losing ground in export markets (the UK joined the EC). Unemployment, previously unheard of, was on the rise. In the late 1980s, Labour was elected and again brought sweeping reform – industry deregulation, the removal of government subsidies and the privatization of some government departments. Unemployment has dropped and currently rests around 4.5%.

New Zealand has remained tied to Britain, with the Crown's influence on government, education and culture quite obvious through the last 200 years. However, as New Zealand has become more comfortable in its own skin and developed a stronger sense of self, today there is increasing talk of becoming a republic.

Dates in history: New Zealand gained Dominion status within the British Empire in 1907; was granted autonomy in 1931; and the Statute of Westminster was formally accepted in 1947.

The Treaty of Waitangi

Waitangi Treaty House, where the treaty was signed

The Treaty of Waitangi is called New Zealand's founding document. Hobson drew up the treaty, had it translated, and, after debate, The Treaty was signed on February 6, 1840 at Waitangi in the Bay of Islands. Today, the grounds and building where The Treaty was signed are preserved and open to the public.

The Treaty was written and entered into with, no doubt, honorable intentions on all sides. But it is today, as it was in 1840, a source of constant debate and misunderstanding; it has continued to present problems in interpretation from both sides. Written in English and translated to Maori, the two versions each contain three articles, but vary widely in their interpretation.

In 1975, following a decade of activism, the New Zealand government established the Waitangi Tribunal to investigate Maori land claims. Many settlements have been made, some in the form of financial compensation (some particularly large claims have been paid to major *iwi* (tribes) and some in the form of health care, and educational services.

The Treaty of Waitangi is not history – it is a living document that is central to the law and culture of New Zealand. In 2004, a heated debate is ongoing – certain *iwi* have filed claims to regain control of the foreshore and seabed, and, as I write, this is one of the hottest topics in the news. The results of the foreshore debate will no doubt mold the future of New Zealand. Prime Minister Helen Clark recently suggested an inquiry into the Treaty – to once and for all clear up misinterpretation from both sides.

Geography & Land

One of the most striking aspects of New Zealand is that virtually in the middle of nowhere is an incredibly immense range of scenery all tucked into a very small space. New Zealand sits in the South Pacific Ocean, 1,900 km (1,200 miles) east of Australia and 10,000 km (6,210 miles) west of San Francisco. It lies between 34°S and 47°S and stretches for some

1,770 km (1,097 miles) in length from top to bottom (California is 770 miles long). The North and South islands are the two major landmasses, the North being 114,500 square km (44,655 square miles) in area, the South being 150,700 square km (58,773 square miles). Stewart Island, directly south of the South Island is the third largest, with a land mass of 1,750 square km (6,825 square miles).

> **Did you know?** In addition to the main islands, New Zealand is also made up of many outer islands, including the Chathams, Kermadecs, Tokelau, Campbell, Auckland, Antipodes, Snares, and the Ross Dependency.

New Zealand has long been celebrated for its clean, green image and, while a small island nation, it is rich in natural resources. It is a mountainous land – about 20% of the North Island and 65% of the South Island are mountains. The North Island, home to most of the population, has beaches, kauri forests, lakes, volcanoes and thermal areas. The South Island is punctuated by a more dramatic landscape including the mountains and glaciers of the Southern Alps, dense, lush bush and deep fjords. Approximately 50% of land is in meadows and pastures; 30% is forested and 15% is under permanent cultivation. Sheep and cattle grazing is virtually everywhere, but is most predominant around Hamilton and New Plymouth on the North Island and around Dunedin and Invercargill on the South Island. One of the unfortunate realities is that nearly all of New Zealand land has, at one time or another, been farmed. There is quite an effort to regenerate bush, but many stands of old-growth native trees have been lost.

Underneath New Zealand, are two tectonic plates – the Pacific and the Indo-Australian – that are constantly shifting, grinding and sliding. The geography of the North Island is the result of both tectonic and volcanic forces. The island sits at the southern end of a subduction zone created from the sliding of the Pacific Plate under the Indo-Australian Plate and, while the hills of the Tararuas and Ruahines are a result of tectonic uplifts, the highest places on the island were produced by volcanic action. The Taupo Volcanic Zone stretches from White Island to Mt. Ruapahu, includes both dormant and active volcanoes, and dominates the Central Plateau.

The South Island is dominated by the 500-km (300-mile) spine of the Southern Alps. With the majority of our weather patterns coming from across the Tasman, the western side of the Alps is punctuated with rainforest, glaciers and fast-flowing rivers; the eastern side of the Alps is home to the vast, flat Canterbury Plains and the rolling Otago farmland.

We get a lot of rain in New Zealand (see climate section, page 11) and, consequently, a lot of moving water – there are rivers and waterfalls everywhere! Our longest river is the Waikato (425 km/260 miles) and the longest navigable one is the Whanganui. Both are in the North Island.

Overhead, the night sky shows stars out of view in the Northern Hemisphere. The most notable difference is the presence of the Southern Cross, which is represented on our national flag. Its long axis points to the South Pole. You might also notice Orion – not only is the guy standing on his head, but his belt is just about in the water.

■ National Parks

Tongariro was the first national park to be established in New Zealand and only the second in the world (Yellowstone in the United States was the first). Today, our 13 national parks cover over five million acres of land – one-third of the country. In addition, we have three maritime parks – the Bay of Islands, the Hauraki Gulf and the Marlborough Sounds. The Department of Conservation (DoC) was established in 1987 with the responsibility of conserving New Zealand's natural and historic heritage. Prior to the formation of DoC, responsibilities were spread among several government agencies. DoC maintains a fabulous network of walking and tramping tracks, huts, and campsites, as well as parks, reserves and sanctuaries. Theirs is an amazing responsibility! Information about DoC, its projects and the park system can be found by visiting www.doc.govt.nz.

NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL PARKS	
Te Urewera	**Arthurs Pass**
Tongariro	**Paparoa**
Egmont	**Westland**
Whanganui	**Aorkaki/Mt. Cook**
Abel Tasman	**Mount Aspiring**
Kahurangi	**Fiordlands**
Nelson Lakes	**Rakiura**

■ Climate

New Zealand lies in an area called the "Roaring Forties," or "mid-latitudes" – meaning that we are midway between the tropics and the poles. Our weather occurs because two sources of air – warm and moist from the tropics, and cold and dry from the poles – do not mix well. When they meet, the air from one swirls around the air from the other and causes low-pressure areas called depressions. Fronts are formed when the two conflicting air systems bang into each other.

Our weather typically comes from west to east (the predominant wind is westerly) and arrives on land after traveling over large areas of water. The predominant weather pattern comes in the form of "anticyclones." Anticyclones generally move eastward every six to seven days and are characterized by descending air, settled weather patterns, little or no rain and clear skies – they are "highs." Between these highs or anticyclones, are troughs of low pressure. These troughs are often cold, oriented from the northwest to the southeast, and bring northwesterly winds. The wind typically becomes stronger, the clouds increase and rain develops. After the rain passes, there is often a system change to cold, wet southwesterly winds.

When the systems hit the land, the mountain chains, particularly the Southern Alps, disrupt the flow of air and catch a lot of the rain. On the South Island, the western slopes are the wettest area of the country, while the eastern side is the driest. On the North Island, the mountain ranges don't extend the

length of the island and the weather patterns from one side to the other are not so dramatically different.

On the coasts, summer sea breezes predominate – one day may be highlighted with northeasterlies, the next southwesterlies.

> **Keep in mind:** New Zealand is in the Southern Hemisphere and it's the southerlies that are cold – there's nothing between us and Antarctica!

While westerly is generally the predominant wind pattern, some months and some regions see a different trend. For instance, southerlies are common in northern Taranaki. Over the year, wind patterns change – on the North Island, summer and autumn have lighter winds, while on the South Island, winter is generally a more settled time. Wind strength is buffeted by the mountain ranges, but whereever there is a break in the land masses – for instance the Foveaux Strait between the South Island and Stewart Island, the Cook Strait between the North and South Islands, and the Manawatu Gorge, where the break occurs between the Tararuas and the Ruahines – wind increases and can become dramatic. Windy Wellington didn't get its name for nothing – it averages 173 days a year with gusts over 60 km/hour (36 miles/hour).

In general, rainfall is spread throughout the year, but on the North Island, winter can be twice as wet as summer. The average rainfall across the country varies from 300 mm (11 inches) in one Central Otago location to over 8,000 mm (312 inches) in the Southern Alps. Most of New Zealand sees between 600 and 1,500 mm (23 to 59 inches) per year.

> **Did you know?** Stewart Island and Fiordland experience more than 200 rain days per year.

While the South Island is generally a few degrees cooler than the North, temperatures remain mild throughout most of the year. Winter is from June to August, and during that time snow is expected at the higher altitudes and, occasionally, on the lower hills. Even at sea level on the South Island, a light dusting can occur. Fruit-killing hard frosts can occur as late as November.

> **Tip:** When planning a trip to New Zealand, keep in mind that it is a maritime climate prone to sudden changes in weather. Always take warm clothing and be prepared for rain.

■ Flora

New Zealand evolved in relative isolation and 80% of its land mass was covered in forest; today, about 23% of that remains and much of that is in national parks, forests and reserves. Much of the native plant life is unique to New Zealand and 10% of our native plant species are considered endangered. So, too, are many of our native birds.

Great book: I love *Which Native Tree* by Andrew Crowe. If you don't want to carry a whole book, pick up a copy of the laminated, fold-up poster that lists the most common trees. Crowe also wrote, *Which Native Fern* and *Which Native Forest Plant.* All are worthwhile and go into much more depth than I possibly have room for here.

Beech forest is the predominant forest type in New Zealand, followed by podocarp. The beech comes in several species, including the silver, red, black, and mountain. As you get higher in the mountains, the leaf size and height of the trees gets smaller – the silver beech for example, is found at lower elevations, reaches heights up to 30 meters (98 feet) and diameter up to three meters (10 feet); the mountain beech grows to 22 meters (71 feet) and diameter of one meter (just over three feet).

The **podocarp** is ancient forest type of conifer and refers to evergreen trees that reproduce with a single pod-like seed (similar to cone-bearing pines) and pulpy fruit. The podocarps are mighty trees and include: rimu, totara, matai, miro, and kahikatea, the white pine, which is New Zealand's tallest tree. The matai, totara and miro all have short spiky leaves (like a pine); the rimu and kahikatea have hanging, lacy leaves.

Other trees that are common in the forest include the **giant kauri**, perhaps our most famous trees, growing only in Northland and on the Coromandel Peninsula (see Northland chapter, page 81, for information on kauri), and the yellow-flowered **kowhai**.

There is both a Northern and a Southern **rata**, and both have bright crimson-red flowers (rata is Maori for red). Ratas are found in the forest and, as a young tree, use a host tree for support. The northern rata strangles its host; the southern rata does not.

The **pohutukawa** also has bright red flowers, but they have more of a bottle-brush appearance and are only found naturally in the North Island. Pohutukawa are called the New Zealand Christmas Tree, due to their flowering at the end of December. (Rata flower later in the spring/summer and continue flowering longer.)

The **nikau** palm is found throughout the North Island and as far south as the Heaphy Track on the South Island. It is the world's southernmost palm and is fabulously beautiful, especially when seen en masse.

Tree ferns are abundant throughout the undergrowth of New Zealand forest. They say there are nearly 90 species of ferns, but I think it's more like 900. Ferns like to grow in damp and dark forest.

The most common ferns you will see are the **black tree fern** or mamaku, which can grow to 20 meters (65 feet).

Black tree fern

Silver fern

The most famous tree fern is the **ponga** or **silver fern**. The silver fern is New Zealand's national symbol and the one you'll see being worn by the All Blacks (the national rugby team) and on the tail of Air New Zealand. Ponga grow to 10 meters (32 feet) high. To tell a silver fern from a black fern, look at the underside of the leaves – the silver fern is silver; the black fern is green! You can also look at the trunk where the fronds come out – on the black fern this is much darker and fuzzier.

Did you know? The **koru** symbol that is commonly used in Maori art (and on the tail of Air New Zealand planes) means "New life" or "new beginning." It comes from the ferns – when a fern frond begins its growth, it comes out of the trunk as a koru – and as it unfolds, the side fronds and leaves unfold from within. Koru is a big word – with a very important and spiritual meaning. All that the new life will ever be is wrapped up inside of the koru, just waiting to grow.

■ Fauna

New Zealand has no native mammals, save two species of bats, and no snakes. Our fauna consist of a diverse bird population and marine mammals. New Zealand developed in isolation; many of its birds evolved during a threatless era and lost their ability for flight. For some this led to extinction at the hands of humans, first the Maori, then the pakeha.

The **tuatara** is a reptile that comes from the days of the dinosaur and is only found on a handful of protected offshore islands. This old guy (dating back some 200 million years) has changed little, while the rest of the world was busy evolving. You can see tuatara in captivity, most notably at the Southland Museum in Invercargill where they have been successfully bred.

If you followed the *Lord of the Rings* hype, you'll know that a lot of the special effects were made by a company called Weta Workshop. The name might have seemed odd to the rest of the world, but not to those of us in New Zealand. There are four species of the **weta**, a wingless cricket, that lives in caves, bush and cracks in rocks. They are fairly hideous and scary looking – especially surprising when you find one in your letter box as I have – but relatively harmless.

Great book: Pick up a copy of ***The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*** by Heather & Robertson.

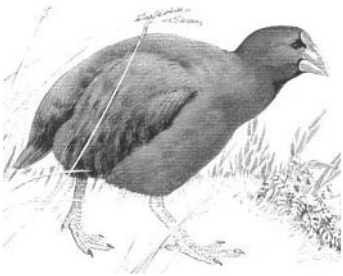
Flightless Birds

The **moa** is one flightless species that didn't survive the immigration of man. You can read more about this giant of the bird world in the chapter on Otago, page 510.

The **kiwi** is the most famous of all New Zealand birds. It's a bit of an icon and is the nickname used for the people of New Zealand. There are six species of

kiwi and within those six, several subspecies; all but the ones on Stewart Island are completely nocturnal. While varying in size, they all have in common a very long pointy nose, used for poking around the ground in search of grubs and worms. They are brown in color and have short, stocky, strong legs. The call of the kiwi, heard at night, sounds much like a screeching baby – it can wake you up with a start from a sound sleep. Rather defenceless, these birds are threatened and most often seen in a kiwi nocturnal house, designed to be dark during daylight hours.

Many visitors spot a **weka** and mistakenly believe they've seen a kiwi. It's an easy mistake, as weka are about the same size as a large kiwi and similar in color. Kiwi tend to be more on the brown side, though, whereas weka are a reddish-brown. Their legs are strong, but a bit longer than the kiwi; their beaks are much shorter and not nearly as pointed. Weka are not particularly timid – especially in areas frequented by tourists, they can become a terrible pest, coming out of the bush when trampers arrive at a well-used lunch or break spot. And beware! They will steal your lunch right out of your backpack. These cheeky birds have no manners whatsoever.



The cartoonish **takahe** was believed to be extinct, but was re-discovered in the Murchison Mountains in 1948. Takahe exist today in Fiordlands and on some predator-free offshore islands, as well as in captivity. If you are lucky enough to see one, these birds are great fun to watch – their chest is a bright blue, their back is green and their short, sharp beak is orange. They have short, stocky legs and move around in a rather clucky manner.

The **kakapo** is the largest parrot in the world and is near extinction. Only about 60 remain and are managed by DoC on predator-free islands. It is also the only flightless parrot in the world.

Flighted Birds

The **pukeko** has got to be one of the most beautifully colored of all New Zealand birds. They are deep blue, with a red beak and white under-tail feathers. You will no doubt see a pukeko or two during your travels – they are most common near swamps and lakes and seem unaware of passing vehicles. They swim, run and fly (a multi-sport bird) and have long legs with large feet.

You can read more about **Australasian gannets** in the Hawke's Bay chapter, page 294. Briefly, there are three mainland breeding colonies of gannets – Murawai (Auckland), Farewell Spit (Nelson) and Cape Kidnappers (Hawke's Bay). Gannets are remarkably beautiful, especially around their heads – they look like the work of a very talented makeup artist. Gannets dive from great heights to catch fish, a sight that you won't soon forget. One of the best places for watching gannets fish is in the Queen Charlotte Sound.

In New Zealand, cormorants are generically referred to as **shags**. There are a few species of shag, including the king shag (only found in the Marlborough Sounds), the black shag (the largest, found on inland lakes), the spotted shag (has spots on its back and is found in the Marlborough Sounds, on the Otago

and Banks peninsulas, and around Auckland), the pied shag (black and white in color, same locations as the spotted shag), and the Stewart Island shag (found between Otago and Stewart Island). Shags nest in coastal areas and, depending on type, either on overhanging rocks or in trees.

New Zealand is the first place many people see **penguins**. There are three species, the most common being the little blue penguin, found in coastal waters around most of New Zealand. The yellow-eyed penguin is the second-rarest penguin in the world and is sometimes seen along the coast from around Otago south. For more information about the yellow-eyed penguins, refer to the Otago chapter, page 517. You are least likely to see the Fiordland crested penguin – it is believed to be the rarest penguin in the world and lives in very limited places (the West Coast and Fiordlands).

Fourteen species of **albatross** (there are 24 world-wide) live in New Zealand waters. The only mainland breeding colony for the **royal albatross** is on the Otago Peninsula (see that chapter, page 516, for details). These are incredible birds to watch fly, take off and land – their wing span can reach three meters (nearly 10 feet).

The West Coast is home to the world's only breeding ground of the **Westland black petrel** which come to land near Punakaiki only during breeding season.

Some of the big birds of the forest that you may see include the **kaka** (two species, one on the North Island and one on the South), a sturdy, hooked-beak fellow that is bronze and red.

The **kea**, left, a greenish-brown parrot, is a character. You'll likely see kea at high-country huts or on tramps – they are very inquisitive and are prone to ripping things apart with their sturdy beaks. They are commonly blamed for torn-up rubber weather-stripping around car windows and have been known to beg for food.

You are much more likely to see **yellow crown** than **red crown parakeets**. The yellow-crowned birds are common in the forests of the North, South and Stewart Islands. They have a somewhat serious look to their face, and a chubby, solid-looking head, neck and chest.

The **morepork** is more likely to be heard than seen. This is the native owl of New Zealand and is named for the sound of its call (similar to "mo-poke").

Another bird you'll hear first is the **New Zealand pigeon**, but it's not the call that you'll hear. When these birds are flying, their wings make a loud, "*whooomp*, *whooomp*, *whoomp*" sound – you can't miss it. These birds are large and brightly colored – green on their backs and heads, white on their underside.

One of the smaller forest birds that you'll likely see is the **fantail**. These birds seem friendly and flirty, as they follow trampers and walkers through the bush. But what they're really after is the bugs you stir up by walking through the forest. Fantails eat on the wing and are dark brown and white (though some appear black).

Another small bird is the brownish-green **rifleman**. They are most common in mountain beech forests, but can be seen in lowland shrub as well.

The North Island and South Island **bush robins** are friendly, chubby little guys who in certain areas seem completely unfussed by the presence of humans. Much smaller than robins in North America, the bush robin may even walk across your shoes if you stand perfectly still. The Chatham Island robin was on the brink of extinction, but following an heroic DoC effort (using other birds such as tomtits as foster parents) they are enjoying a resurgence.

Tomtits are one of my favorite forest birds, partly because of their role in the recovery of the Chatham Island robin, and partly because I think it's fun to say the name.

The green **bellbird** is a common resident of most of New Zealand's forest (they are found virtually everywhere but the far north). Bellbirds have a beautiful, clear song and birds from different areas have different dialects.

When heard, the **tui**, or parsons bird, is often confused with the bellbird, and with good reason. The tui, which has white throat feathers, mimics the calls of other birds, especially its neighbor the bellbird. But the tui often blows its cover when it adds a series of clucks at the end of a song – a bellbird wouldn't be caught dead doing that!

One of the most beautiful birds in the New Zealand forest is the rare **saddleback**, left. There are two species, a North and South Island. The North Island bird can be seen in some preserves and on offshore islands like Kapiti; the South Island can be seen on Ulva and Motuara Islands (as well as a few other offshore islands). The bright red band around their backs is distinctive, as is their chattery call.

You are much more likely to hear than see the gray **warbler** – its call is distinctive and, once heard, you will understand their name.

Marine Mammals

New Zealand is a hotspot for marine mammals. Of the 77 species of dolphins and whales worldwide, 35 have been recorded in New Zealand waters, including the world's largest, the sperm whale, and the smallest, the Hectors dolphin. Sealing was New Zealand's first industry and almost brought an end to these animals; the same is true of the early whaling industry. But now all are protected and add to the tourist draw of New Zealand. Areas where marine mammal watching is a popular activity include: the Bay of Islands, Bay of Plenty, Kaikoura, Banks Peninsula and the Otago Peninsula. Descriptions of animals and activities are included in those chapters.

Whales

The largest whale in the world is the **sperm** whale; the male can reach 20 meters (65 feet) and the female up to 12 meters (39 feet). These whales are most likely seen in Kaikoura.

Long-finned **pilot** whales are common around New Zealand and have, unfortunately, been the subject of large-scale strandings – one notable stranding was just north of Gisborne, the other near Farewell Spit.

The **humpback** whale is slightly smaller than sperm whale and not nearly as common in our waters, but there are occasional sightings in the Tasman Sea, offshore of Fiordlands.

Dolphins

The **orca** or killer whale is actually the largest dolphin on earth. These fellows are pretty amazing to see, with a tall, straight dorsal fin. While a predator of other dolphins, rays, seals, birds and penguins, orca are not predatory towards humans (unless provoked). At different times of the year, orca can be seen in different spots around New Zealand.

Flipper, the dolphin we all watched on television, was a **bottlenose** dolphin. Bottlenose are common around both main islands of New Zealand. They grow to about three or four meters (nine to 13 feet) and are usually found in groups.

Common dolphins get their name honestly – they are the most common dolphins in the world and are slightly smaller than the bottlenose. They are most often found offshore, but, like many other marine mammals, come to Kaikoura to feed. They usually swim in pods and, like the bottlenose, often swim on the bow-wake of boats

Most recognizable by their antics are the **dusky** dolphins. While all dolphins are natural gymnasts, the dusky dolphins take it to a new level. Smaller than the common and bottlenose, they top out at about two meters (6½ feet) and are the ones that people most often swim with in Kaikoura.

Hector's dolphins are the smallest in the world and also the rarest. They are only found in New Zealand and are most common in the South Island. Unlike the pointier dorsal fin of most dolphins, the Hectors have a rounded, short dorsal fin. They tend to swim either alone or in very small groups.

Other Marine Mammals

New Zealand sea lions are only found on the South Island. They are a protected species and can be seen in Otago and the Catlins.

The **New Zealand fur seal**, left, is common and protected throughout the country. While their numbers are nowhere near what they were before the sealers arrived in the 1800s, there are colonies of them on both islands and it's easy to find a spot to see them sunbathing on a rock. Fur seals have more prominent ears and bigger front flippers than sea lions, though sea lions have much bigger bodies.

> **Warning:** Do not get between a sea lion or seal and the water! They may look fat and slow, but they can yell very loudly and move a lot faster than you'd expect!

Government

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy and the Head of State is Her Majesty, Elizabeth II, Queen of England. Our government is a representative democracy, modeled after the British parliamentary system. We have a Prime Minister (currently Helen Clark), a leader of the opposition (currently Doctor Don Brash), and a resident Governor-General (currently Dame Silvia Cartwright) who is the representative of the British monarch.

The Prime Minister and the Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected by general election (voting age is 18) every three years. Parliament is New Zealand's House of Representatives. The Prime Minister and Ministers of the Crown make up the Cabinet – Cabinet members are MPs.

Since a 1993 election reform, New Zealand has followed a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system. The country is divided into electorates, and under the MMP, voters have two votes: one is for *individuals* to represent their electorate as an MP, the other is for political *parties*. There are 120 seats in Parliament – 61 are general electorates, six are Maori electorates, and 53 are "list MPs" – seated to parties based on the percentage of votes the party received. Following an election, if one political party gains more than half of the seats in Parliament, it can form a majority government. If no party has more than half the seats, two or more parties (with a combined majority) can form a majority coalition government. For a party to win seats in Parliament, it needs to have won at least 5% of the party votes. How many seats it gets depends on the percentage of votes received – for example, if the National Party won 30% of the vote, they would get 36 seats.

Clark is a member of the Labour Party (established in 1916, it is New Zealand's oldest) and Brash is a member of the National Party (established in the 1930s).

> **Did you know?** New Zealand was the first country to give women the right to vote. That was in 1893. But it wasn't until 1919 that women were allowed to be candidates!

New Zealand follows the Westminster model and has three branches of government:

- **The legislature**: A single House of Representatives, through drafting, examining and debating bills, has the power to make laws. New Zealand only has a lower house – unlike Australia and England, which have a lower and an upper house.
- **The executive**: Made up of the Governor-General, the Cabinet Ministers and the public service. The executive branch is involved with policy – developing, initiating and implementing.
- **The judiciary**: Includes the judges and courts. Their role is to interpret and apply the laws. We have a Chief Justice who is appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister. Judges are appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Attorney-General. Only the Queen or the Governor-General (acting on the advice of Parliament) can remove a Court of Appeal or High Court judge from office. We have Specialist and District Courts, The High Court and the Court of Appeal. The highest court is The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (The Privy Council) which is in London and is made up mainly of British judges. This is in some ways similar to the Supreme Court – civil cases may (upon appeal) be heard by the Privy Council. The Queen has the final word, but usually acts on Privy Council Advice.

Economy

Traditionally, New Zealand's primary economy has been agricultural – and farming has centered around sheep and cattle. The meat industry is a big earner (80% of all meat produced is exported) and New Zealand is the world's largest producer of crossbred wool. Dairy is the largest single industry (over 30% of agricultural production) and dairy giant Fonterra is the largest exporting company. While famous globally for sheep, numbers have dropped significantly over the last 20 years – from around 70 million in 1982 to 40 million now (though we still have 10 times as many sheep as people). The whole of agriculture (including fisheries) contributes 60% of New Zealand's total export earnings and over half of all land is used for farming.

New Zealand is set for a shift in its economy, though, as it moves from the primary sector of agriculture to an economy based on talent and ideas. The Government's Growth for Innovation Framework (GIF) was released in 2003 and targeted three industries – biotechnology, ICT (information and communication technology), and the creative sector (including the arts of fashion, design, screen production and music) – as key potential contributors to the future economic growth and international competitiveness of the country. For me, it's really exciting – both as a writer and a former scientist. The estimate is that biotechnology export earnings currently are around $250 million – but half of our companies are less than five years old. This industry has nowhere to go but up.

> **Cool magazine:** If you are interested in the business of New Zealand, pick up a copy of ***Unlimited*** magazine. It also has a fascinating quarterly science supplement (of which I'm the editor!).

People & Culture

Population Breakdown by Origin

- 75.8% European descent
- 13.8% Maori
- 5.3% Pacific Island
- 4.5% Asian

The day-to-day culture of New Zealand is not so different from that of other primarily English-speaking countries. When my sister came to visit, she was surprised at how strong the British influence is, and I suppose she's got a valid point; I'm just used to it. The basics of developed culture and society are familiar – don't burp in public or spit on the streets; treat people with respect and be polite. Older New Zealanders prefer to be addressed as "Mrs" this and "Mr" that, but the younger generations are quite relaxed and easy-going.

During your travels in New Zealand, I would be willing to bet that you'll be impressed by the kindness and spirit of New Zealanders. The beauty of the place is astounding and, on the surface, it seems as if this is one country that's got it all figured out. But there is no paradise; New Zealand struggles

with the same social ills as any country: we have teenage pregnancy and suicide, we have drug abuse and we have gangs; we have a small percentage of the population who seem to make a career out of staying on a government benefit, and some of our cities have London levels of air pollution. We use less public transport than Los Angeles and we are among the worst recyclers and re-users. Our health care is supported by the government, but our waiting lists are unacceptable. I tell you these things not to discourage you from traveling here, but to encourage you to travel with open eyes and to look at the whole of our culture.

Modern New Zealand is attempting to create a healthy environment where people of many cultures can live and thrive and it's not an easy feat. Currently, there is "discussion" over Maori/pakeha relationships and the idea of bi-culturalism. A timely slogan in some camps is "One Country, One People," but others reject this concept. As a recent pakeha immigrant, I struggle to understand the political and emotional issues and so I turn to a letter published in *Unlimited* magazine, May 2004, written by Tahu Potiki, the CEO of Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, who sits on the board of the Ngai Tahu Development Corporation:

As a visitor, I encourage you to interact with a wide variety of our population – not just those who are involved in tourism. By all means, if you are invited to someone's home or to a marae, accept the invitation. The marae is a meeting place, and people visit a marae to celebrate – for family reunions and weddings; to mourn; for meetings; and to share knowledge or experiences. Each marae is owned by the local Maori people and represents their ancestors and their stories. It is a very significant place and you would be honored to visit. If you have not been invited to a marae and would like to visit one, it is very important that you ask permission of the elders or caretaker.

Visiting a Marae

There are rules for visiting a marae, and depending on the nature of your visit, you may or may not partake in a full traditional welcome. Most often, a member of the local iwi or tribe will help guide you through the welcome and farewell. Do not be embarrassed to ask questions or look to your guide for assistance. Protocol varies from iwi to iwi, but always includes a **powhiri** or welcome, an **inoi** or prayer, a **wero** or challenge, a **karanga** or calling, the **haka powhiri** or welcome dance, the **mihi** or speeches, the **waiata** or song, the **koha**, or gift, the **hongi**, traditional form of greeting (the gentle pressing of nose and forehead) and the **hakari** or feast.

**Metric table

Travel Information

At a Glance

- For emergency assistance dial 111
- Telephone country code: 64
- Capital: Wellington
- Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II of England
- Governor General: Dame Silvia Cartwright
- Prime Minister: The Right Honourable Helen Clark, elected in 1999, re-elected in 2002, up for re-election in 2005
- Leader of the Opposition: Dr. Don Brash
- Area: 268,000 square kilometers (103,000 square miles), 1,770 km (1,097 miles) in length from top to bottom (as a comparison, California is 770 miles long). It is roughly the same size as Colorado, Japan or Britain and made up of two major islands, the North and South, and a number of small outlying islands. The North and South Islands are separated by the 20-km-wide (12-mile) Cook Strait.
- Location: In the South Pacific Ocean, approximately 1,900 km (1,200 miles) east of Australia and 10,000 km (6,210 miles) west of San Francisco. It lies between 34°S and 47°S.
- Time zone: 12 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. New Zealand is the first country to see the sun each day.
- Population: The population reached 4,000,000 on April 24, 2003. (A peak population of 4,800,000 is expected in 2046.) Interestingly, Colorado's population is 4.3 million.
- Coastline: 15,811 km (9,824 miles)
- Highest point: Mt. Cook, 3,754 meters (12,313 feet)
- Deepest lake: Lake Hauroko, 462 meters (1,515 feet)
- Largest lake: Lake Taupo, 606 km (234 miles)
- Largest glacier: Tasman Glacier, 29 km (18 miles) long
- Deepest cave: Nettlebed, Mount Arthur, 889 meters (2,916 feet)
- Currency: New Zealand Dollar. Depending on the economy, $1NZ hovers around the $0.50 US and $0.70 Australia.
- Education: Compulsory until the age of 15

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- Unemployment: 4.6%
- Electricity: 230 volts, 50 hertz. Many hotels and motels provide 110 volt, 20 watt and AC sockets for electric razors, but bring a voltage transformer if you plan to use a hairdryer or the like.
- Flight time from Los Angeles: about 11 hours
- Language: English and Te Reo Maori are the official languages. About one quarter of the Maori population living in New Zealand speak Te Reo Maori (around half of those under the age of 25) but virtually all speak English as well.
- Population origin: 75.8% European; 13.8% Maori; 5.3% Pacific Island; 4.5% Asian.
- Measurements: New Zealand is officially on the Metric System, although most people refer to their height in feet and inches, and will use expressions like "it's miles away."

The official Tourism New Zealand website is ***www.purenz.com****.*

The Basics

■ When to Go

When you visit depends very much on what you want to do once you're here. New Zealand enjoys four seasons, but only in the mountains will you find much snow or fierce winter conditions. Otherwise, winter is a rather mild affair, though accented by wind and rain – and, in some areas, it can be the bone-chilling wet stuff. If you want to ski, obviously, come in the winter; but if you are coming to enjoy the tramps, lakes and other outdoor activities, you may find some of the tour operators closed over the winter months.

> **Remember:** New Zealand is an island nation – our weather changes quickly and dramatically as compared to continental weather patterns.

Let's go back to the basics… New Zealand is in the Southern Hemisphere, so the seasons are reversed. I just add six months on to whatever month I'm thinking about and consider what the weather in Northern California/Oregon is like at that time. For example, April in New Zealand is very much like October in Northern California – typically settled weather with crisp mornings and nights and shortening days, and a real chance of a warm, Indian summer. My favorite months for traveling in New Zealand are February, March and April; February because it's usually the hottest and most likely to be the driest (although in 2004, February was the wettest in history and floods devastated much of the lower North Island); March and April because the weather is still settled, it's not particularly windy, most of the tourists are gone, and tour operators are still up and running. The busiest time for tourism is from Christmas to the end of February – January is prime time for kiwi families to travel and international tourists make up the bulk in Febru-

ary. But keep in mind, we are talking New Zealand busy, not Disney World, Paris or New York busy. Total international tourists visiting New Zealand number around two million annually.

■ Health Concerns

New Zealand is a relatively healthy country, with no bizarre diseases that your family doctor won't have heard of. I recommend that you carry travel insurance that covers general health care and emergency treatment in addition to ticket and luggage coverage. New Zealand has an Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) that provides personal injury coverage for New Zealand citizens, residents and temporary visitors. In return for this coverage, people do not have the right to sue for injuries. That's why we don't have accident lawyers and lawsuits and none of those annoying late-night lawyers' television commercials. As a visitor, though, it is still recommended that you have your own health and accident coverage.

> **Giardia**, an intestinal parasite, is present in some areas of New Zealand. Many of the rivers and streams are clear of giardia, but, to be safe, when you are tramping, camping or otherwise exploring the wilderness, get local knowledge or treat your water by boiling, filtering or using chemical treatments like iodine. All tap and drinking water in cities and towns is safe to drink.

■ Dangers & Annoyances

New Zealand is a very safe destination, but it's important to use common sense. Petty theft (and worse) does occur and cars parked with valuables visible are prime targets. Watch your things and don't carry a lot of cash.

The telephone number for emergency assistance is 111.

■ How Long Should I Stay?

When you're traveling to a long-haul destination, you want it to be worth your while. But it's often impractical to wait until you can take a month or more, which is ideal. So my advice is this. Come for as long as you can and don't try to split your holiday between New Zealand and Australia, unless you have months to spend. Pick a few areas to visit and get to know them well – the biggest mistake most people make is trying to fit too many places and things into a short time. Find some activities you want to do, or sights you want to see, and then design your trip around them. Give yourself some days off and don't be set on a strict schedule, because something will come up that you hadn't heard about before! Still, the temptation to fit as much in as possible is strong and many people stay for two or three weeks on their first trip to get an overview, and then plan a return trip to see the places they missed or to better experience the ones they loved.

> **Tip:** New Zealand is small. But driving is not like getting on the Autobahn or Interstate 80. Most of the roads, except for a few around major cities, are two lanes, often curvy and hilly and, especially on the South Island, linked by one-lane bridges. You won't get in the car and drive 70 miles an hour for days on end!

■ How Much Should I Pack?

As little as possible. New Zealanders have a very laid-back, casual lifestyle and as far as dress goes, basically anything is fine. You'll want to pack appropriately for activities (i.e., warm clothes for tramping) and be sure to bring a waterproof jacket or raincoat. I usually use a three-season sleeping bag, because even in the summer, it can be chilly in the mountains. And I always take plenty of polypropylene to keep me warm, regardless of season. In the cities, you may feel compelled to dress up a bit, but it's not imperative and Kiwis are very forgiving of anyone who might be underdressed. Let's face it, most of us own a pair of gumboots and you'll see plenty of locals walking around barefoot – it's still a Pacific island and that's often the attitude.

We have some wonderful outdoor stores, so if you're in the market for new gear, you could plan a little extra in the budget and shop while you're here.

> **Tip:** If you'll be camping or tramping and staying in huts, make sure your gear is clean when you arrive at the airport. When you claim it, MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries) will inspect your things, and may even disinfect them.

As far as personal stuff goes, you can buy things like shampoo and all manner of personal hygiene products if you run out, so no need to panic. And there's really no reason to bring your own coffee or teabags or the like – we really do eat here and have a fairly reasonable selection of foods.

> **Tip:** If you're coming from North America and using a traditional camera, bring film. Buying at the large warehouse-type stores in the US is much cheaper than in New Zealand. The same goes for contact lens solution.

■ The Details

Visitors to New Zealand need to have a current passport that will be valid for at least three months beyond the time you intend to stay. You also need an onward or return ticket to a country that you have permission to enter and sufficient money to support yourself during your stay (approximately $1,000 per month per person).

Do I Need a Visa?

You do not need a visa to visit New Zealand if you are a New Zealand citizen or resident permit holder, an Australian resident with a current Australian resident return visa, or a citizen of a country that has a visa waiver agreement with New Zealand. These countries include most European, North American and South East Asian countries and Japan. Australian passport holders and permanent residents can stay in New Zealand indefinitely.

If you have questions about visas and regulations, the New Zealand Immigration Service has a very informative website, **www.immigration.govt.nz**, and has an embassy and consulate in many countries.

Foreign Consulates in New Zealand

(all in Wellington except as noted)

- Australia, 72 Hobson Street, ☎ 04-473-6411
- Canada, 61 Molesworth Street, ☎ 04-473-9577
- France, 34 Manners Street, ☎ 04-384-2555
- Germany, 90 Hobson Street, ☎ 04-473-6063
- Japan, Level 12, ASB Bank Centre, 135 Albert Street, Auckland, ☎ 09-303-4106
- Netherlands, corner Featherston and Balance Streets, ☎ 04-473-8652
- UK, 44 Hill Street, Thorndon, ☎ 04-472-6049
- USA, 29 Fitzherbert Terrace, Thorndon, ☎ 04-472-2068

Customs

In addition to personal effects, visitors to New Zealand are allowed the following duty-free allowances:

- 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco
- 4.5 liters of wine or beer and one 1,125 ml bottle of spirits or liqueur
- Excess quantities are liable for customs charges
- In addition, each traveler may import (duty free) other accompanied goods that have a total combined value of $700.

New Zealand's isolated location has resulted in a unique environment that is relatively pest- and disease-free. Consequently, arriving passengers and their baggage are scrutinized rather closely. MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries) will inquire as to your belongings and may inspect them. Most items are not disallowed, but must be claimed – if you are carrying any food, plant or animal products be sure to list these on your arrival card. Certain foodstuffs are not allowed, for instance, honey and other bee products. There are other prohibited items, such as products made from endangered animals. Certain animals are not allowed and others must go through a quarantine procedure; if you are considering bringing a living animal in to the country,be sure to contact MAF before your trip. If you have an item that you are not sure of, contact the New Zealand embassy in your home country, customs or MAF before beginning your journey, www.customs.govt.nz, www.maf.govt.nz.

Getting Here

■ By Sea

If you arrive on a yacht, first, congratulations to you and welcome! My life changed because of sailing across the ocean to New Zealand, and I'm sure yours has, too. As far as customs and immigration, I think contacting other current yachties and getting the local knowledge from them, and from Russell Radio (on marine single sideband at 130 UTC, 12.359

MhZ), would best serve you. We made landfall in Opua, and it was a great harbor to come into. We arrived from Tonga just before midnight on a Friday night with a busted starter motor. We ghosted most of the way through the channel before a charming couple came out and towed us the last few hundred meters to the anchorage. Immigration came out to our boat and did their thing at about 12:30 am.

■ By Air

Obviously, most people arrive in New Zealand by air. International airports are in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch, Queenstown and Dunedin, but most of those are serviced only by flights to and from Australia. If you want to fly direct from North America, you pretty much have to fly into Auckland.

From the United States, there are direct flights to Auckland from Los Angeles (Air New Zealand, Qantas, United) and San Francisco (Air New Zealand).

From Canada, Air Canada code-shares with United on flights from Vancouver to Auckland. Connections around Canada are available on Air Canada.

Freedom Air, Air New Zealand, United, Qantas and Virgin Blue all fly to and from Australia.

Airline Contacts

- www.united.com, ☎ 09-367-2324 or 0800-508-648
- www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000
- www.qantas.co.nz, ☎ 0800-808-767
- www.freedomair.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302
- www.aircanada.ca, in the US, ☎ 1-888-247-2262
- www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302

Most airports have shuttle services that meet arriving flights and take you into town. **Super Shuttle** is a nationwide service with independent operators in most locations. You can contact them by calling ☎ 0800-748-885. Taxis are also available at most airports and meet incoming flights.

> **Tip:** When you leave New Zealand, you will need to pay a $25 departure tax. Check in with your carrier and they will tell you where to pay your tax – a stamp will be applied to your boarding pass.

Getting Around

The first thing that I would buy is a decent map of New Zealand. There are lots of free ones that you can pick up, but they typically only have the major routes – and you'll be wanting to explore some of the more minor roads. My favorite maps are **Kiwi Pathfinders**.

■ By Air

Air New Zealand has the lion's share of domestic travel and has services throughout both islands. **Origin Pacific** is quickly catching up, but has more limited service. **Qantas** flies to and from Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, Nelson, Palmerston North, Queenstown, Rotorua and Wellington. They are a good option to consider and often have cheaper fares. There are other small airlines that service specific locations; I have tried to include those in the text of the book where appropriate.

> **Tip:** It's no more expensive to book two one-way flights within New Zealand than it is to book a round-trip or return flight – this makes for much more flexible travel arrangements.

■ By Train

Train service is limited in New Zealand, but the trains we do have cover incredibly beautiful country and pass through some wonders of engineering in the form of magnificent tunnels and bridges. There are two daily trains (with return service) between Auckland and Wellington, and one train daily (return service) between Picton and Christchurch. Train bookings can be made at any information center or directly through **TranzScenic**, www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 04-498-3302 or 0800-802-802. There are other scenic train trips (the TranzAlpine and the Taieri Gorge) and details for those are listed in the appropriate chapters. See pp. 483 and 510 .

■ By Bus

By far the largest bus service is **InterCity Coachlines**, which merged with Newman's Coach in 2002. They can be contacted at www.intercitycoach.co.nz ☎ 09-913-6100 and www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6200. All information centers (see *Information Sources* in each chapter) can make bookings for bus service.

There are also other regional shuttle and bus companies – particularly on the South Island. Contact details have been included in appropriate chapters.

■ By Car

Rental

If you can afford to rent (hire) a car, I strongly suggest it. Seeing New Zealand involves getting off the beaten path and exploring small towns, beaches and settlements. I would also strongly suggest renting a car that is allowed on unsealed (unpaved) or "metal" (gravel) roads. If you are an off-the-beaten-path kind of traveler, it's too limiting if you can't go onto a dirt road. They are everywhere! If you have limited time and a few extra dollars you can fly from one destination to another and rent a car at each place. You can pick up a copy of *Guide to NZ Roads* from any Automobile Association office. The AA website, www.aahost.co.nz, has a good, brief discussion of some of the traffic rules.

To rent a car in New Zealand, you must have a current, valid driver's license and typically you must be 25 years old, but some agencies will rent to drivers

between 21 and 25 at a slightly higher rate. Some of the smaller agencies may be more flexible in their policies about renting to drivers under 25. Some may rent to 18-year-olds. It pays to shop around.

Car Rental Companies

- Avis, www.avis.com, ☎ 09-526-2847.
- Budget, www.budget.com, ☎ 09-375-2230.
- Hertz, www.hertz.com, ☎ 09-367-6350.
- Thrifty, www.thrifty.com, ☎ 09-309-0111.
- National, www.nationalcar.com, ☎ 09-275-0666.

Local Agencies

- Scotties, www.scotties.co.nz, ☎ 0800-736-825.
- A1, www.a1rentacar.co.nz, ☎ 03-349-8022.
- About New Zealand Rental Cars, www.rentalcar.co.nz, ☎ 09-256-9016 or 0800-455-565.
- Ideal, www.ideal-cars.co.nz, ☎ 09-262-0464 or 0800-736-225.

Recreational Vehicles

- Maui, www.maui-rentals.com, ☎ 09-275-3013 or 0800-651-080.
- Britz, www.britz.com, ☎ 09-275-9090 or 0800-831-900.
- KEA Campers, www.keacampers.com, ☎ 09-441-7833.

Buying a Car

Renting a car for a long trip can be pricey, and many travelers who are planning on staying for a couple of months or more find it more economical to buy a used car. The bulletin boards at backpacker accommodations in the main centers (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch) are often filled with advertisements for used cars. There are also a large number of car auctions in the major centers, and quite a few used-car yards. Additionally, there are a few car dealers in Auckland and Christchurch that offer a vehicle buy-back agreement. My first car here was a 1982 Honda Accord that I bought in Auckland for about $2,000. I named her Lucy and drove her for two years, then traded her in – you don't have to spend a fortune to get around for a few months. Registration and insurance are much more reasonable in New Zealand than in most parts of North America.

WOF

Warrant of Fitness. Older cars must pass a WOF inspection every six months (new cars must pass annually). These inspections include such things as brakes, tire-tread depth, lights, body rust, seatbelts and so on.

Registration

Vehicle registration can be paid for on a six-monthly or annual basis. You can pay your registration fees at an AA office or at any New Zealand post office. When you buy or sell a car, you can complete the transfer of ownership paperwork at these locations, as well.

Insurance

There are a number of competing insurance companies and it pays to shop around. Just as in any country, there are different types of policies to suit different drivers. A standard policy is the most comprehensive and covers your car, damage you do to another car, and so on; Third Party Only insurance only covers damage that your car causes to someone else or their property. There are other options, as well, that may cover fire, theft, and so forth. Best to inquire with an agent. There are many, and the yellow pages is a good place to start, but some of the big insurers are:

- New Zealand Automobile Association, www.nzaa.co.nz, ☎ 0800-500-444
- State Insurance, www.state.co.nz, ☎ 0800-802-424
- AMP, www.amp.co.nz, ☎ 0800-808-267
- The New Zealand Automobile Association (AA) offers reciprocal services to members of some other motoring associations. Contact your association or NZAA for specifics. www.nzaa.co.nz.

Funny word: Unpaved roads are called "metal," although there is no metal involved; they are made of small split pebbles.

Driving Tips

OK. The first thing is the most obvious. If you are from North America, we drive on the *other* side of the road. It's not so bad once you get used to it, and the worst part is backing out of a driveway. But you'll be fine. The funniest parts are using the windshield wipers in place of the turn signals and letting your left hand work the gearshift. Thankfully, the feet stay the same. If you have a valid driver's license from your home country or an International Driving Permit, you can legally drive in New Zealand for up to one year.

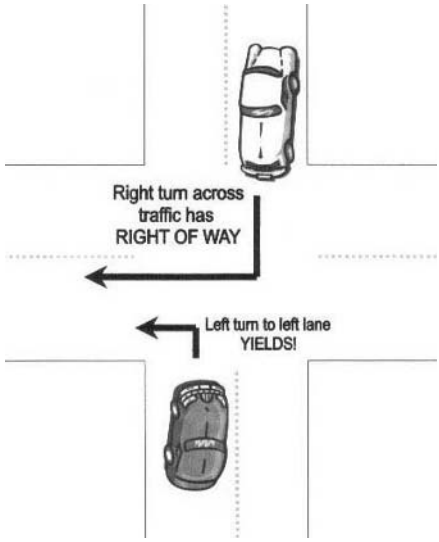
Some of our roads, particularly in more rural areas and around the South Island, have one-lane bridges. When you approach a one-lane bridge, if there is a sign with a red arrow pointing in your direction of travel, and a larger black arrow in the direction of approaching traffic, you must give way.

Roundabouts are great and all countries should have them. They move traffic along quite efficiently but keep this in mind – it's ALWAYS give way to the traffic on your right! ALWAYS! ALWAYS! ALWAYS! Remember that and you'll be fine.

New Zealanders are the nicest, most easy-going people in the world, but get them behind the wheel of a car and they are morphed into raging speed demons, who will overtake you on curves and on hills, on curves going up hills, on curves going down hills. Some also have that bizarre habit of signaling not only their own intentions, but using signals to suggest intentions for you. If you find yourself behind a big truck, for instance, and you're going up a hill and it's clear the truck is having a hard time getting up the hill, you may notice the driver putting on his/her right turn indicator. That's a sign for you that the road is clear and you can pass. This is all well and good until they signal that they are actually going to turn to the right, but you can usually figure out what is going on.

Another odd driving habit stems back from before there were turn lanes. When a driver in front of you is wanting to turn right onto a side road or into a driveway and there is oncoming traffic and no pull around section for you, the driver may, at the last moment, flick on his/her left signal and pull off the road onto the shoulder to allow you to pass while he/she waits for the oncoming traffic to clear.

The Stupidest Rule of All



We all agree this is a dumb rule and it's on the agenda to consider changing it, but in the meantime, we are stuck with it. It relates to the "give way right" rule.

If you are at an intersection and want to turn left (the easy turn, not crossing any lanes of traffic), and along comes an on-coming vehicle wanting to turn right (the hard turn, across the lanes of traffic), the other guy, the one turning right, has the right of way!

In every other country this is not the case, the easy turn has the right of way. But in New Zealand, the hard turn has the right of way. Yield to the car on your right!

Typically, speed limits are 100km (62 miles) per hour on main roads out of city or town centers, and 50 kph (30 mph) in urban areas. Speeding tickets are happily given out and there are extremely gruesome billboards to remind you that speeding, drunk driving and tired drivers end up dead.

You MUST wear a seat belt while driving or as a passenger. You, as the driver, are responsible for children wearing their seat belts; adults are responsible for themselves. You can be pulled over and ticketed (as a driver or passenger) for not wearing one. It is also the law to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.

A word about drunk driving: New Zealand has really cracked down on driving under the influence of alcohol and there is zero tolerance. Just don't do it.

Petrol (gas) is available seven days a week and you won't save much money by shopping around, although on occasion one or another petrol company will have a price drop and then others will follow suit. Shell, CalTex and BP are the most common stations. Petrol is sold by the liter and at the time of this writing was going for about $1.13 NZ per liter, which is about $4.35 per US gallon/$5.14 per Imperial gallon. One liter is equivalent to just over a quart.

■ Hitchhiking

Hitchhiking in New Zealand is probably easier and perhaps a bit safer than in many countries, but I don't think it's quite as common as it was even five years ago. You'll have more luck getting a ride with locals than with other travelers who are in rented cars. Perhaps the easiest way is to befriend other travelers met at your accommodations or on activities and share their vehicle cost. Obviously, use your common sense and, if in doubt, don't do it.

Communications

■ Telephone

Most **public telephones** are of the phone-card type, and you will find very few coin-operated telephones in New Zealand. There are a number of cards available, including Telecom, KiaOra and Easycall. I have found that KiaOra and Easycall have the cheapest rates overseas, but within New Zealand, they are all about the same. Telecom uses cards that slide into the telephone; with the others, you dial a toll-free number and enter a PIN number before dialing your destination.

A/H shown before or after a telephone number means "after hours." Typically, this is the home telephone number of the business owner or manager.

Mobile phones are big in New Zealand, just as they are everywhere else. You can either set up your international phone to work in New Zealand or you can rent a pre-pay phone from **Vodafone** at the major airports. Alternatively, for about $35, you can get a Vodafone SIM card to put in your own phone and use that during your stay. Mobile phone numbers begin with 021, 025, 027 and 029. They are more expensive to dial than landlines, but the person receiving the call does not get charged.

Using the Telephone System

- Toll-free numbers begin with 0800 and 0508 and are followed by six or seven digits; 0900 are toll numbers.
- Directory assistance: 018
- Emergency: 111
- International direct-dial access code: 00
- International directory assistance: 0170

New Zealand Area Codes

- New Zealand country code: 64
- Auckland and Northland: 09
- Coromandel Peninsula, Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Central Plateau: 07
- East Coast, Hawke's Bay, Wanganui, Manawatu and Taranaki: 06
- Wellington: 04
- South Island: 03

Most accommodations and tourism operators have fax machines, although as e-mail has become more popular, less and less business is done by fax. If you need to send a fax overseas, prices vary, but hover around $5; to receive, it's around $1.

Internet access is available just about everywhere. When I first started to put this guide together, I thought it would be a good idea to include specific places to access the Internet and get your e-mail. But then I took a look around and found that there are countless spots, from bars and pubs to libraries to Internet cafés. If you're having trouble finding one, the visitor information centers usually have a list of local Internet cafés.

Opening Hours

New Zealand is still small-town when it comes to business hours. Things are changing and there is a trend toward shops being open on Sundays in the major cities, but out in the sticks, shop hours are very conservative and everything tends to close mid-day on Saturday and remain so until Monday. (Supermarkets, dairies and petrol stations are the exception.) Generally, most shops open from 9 am to 5:30 pm, Monday to Friday, with either Thursday or Friday being late-night shopping – usually until 9 pm. In tourist areas, shops tend to stay open later every night. Businesses are typically open weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm, and government offices from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

Tip: Convenience stores are called "dairies" in New Zealand.

New Zealand Post

Most New Zealand Post shops are open Monday to Friday only, but it all depends on the post shop. In some towns where there is no separate post shop the post is handled by a stationery/book store, like New Zealand Post-owned **Books 'n More**. The cost to send a postcard internationally is $1.50.

Postal services in New Zealand were deregulated in 1998, but NZ Post still has 97% of the domestic market share.

Food

What was once the land of lamb and potatoes has developed into a culture of fresh, Pacific Rim-inspired fare. Similar in many ways to California cuisine, the modern Kiwi menu includes flavors of the Mediterranean and Asia. Even since I arrived in New Zealand in 1999 I've noticed a change in the cuisine.

In addition to lamb, we have high quality, grass-fed beef, wild and farmed pork, and venison. Poultry is also popular, as is seafood. Fish varieties on many menus and in shops include terakihi, blue cod, snapper tuna, John Dory, grouper and orange roughy. Special stars-from-the-sea are whitebait

and shellfish, including green-lipped mussels, Bluff oysters, paua (abalone) and crayfish (rock lobster). A huge range of fresh produce, including kiwifruit, many varieties of apples (my favorite is Braeburn), stone and berry fruit, kumara (sweet potato), capsicum (bell peppers) and asparagus, are grown and served. Dairy products reign supreme in New Zealand, with fabulous cheeses and a plenitude of ice cream.

You'll still find plenty of options for fish and chips, and meat pies are a popular fast-food item. The Sunday-evening roast is not a thing of the past and while larger towns and cities have fast-food chains, independent takeout places are very popular. You will see marmite and vegemite – brown spreads high in Vitamin B that are made out of brewer's yeast. It's definitely an acquired taste and Kiwi kids (like their Australian counterparts) grow up with the stuff.

> **Did you know?** *Starters* and *entrées* are what North Americans would call appetizers. *Mains* are what North Americans would call entrées or the main courses. *Pudding* is any type of sweet dessert. *Jelly* is what North Americans would call Jell-O or gelatin (making it easy to imagine why most New Zealanders think a peanut butter and jelly sandwich is disgusting).

Pavlova is the national dessert. A meringue cake, it is usually topped with fruit – kiwi fruit or strawberries – chocolate, or nuts. Just about everyone has a favorite recipe or style – some like it crunchy and short, some like it really tall; you name it, the variation is there. And so is the Trans-Tasman controversy about who invented it – but one thing that is agreed on is that it was named after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova.

■ Drinks

New Zealand has embraced the café culture and in all but the smallest of towns you'll find at least one café with an espresso machine (though some are driven better than others). We have the full menu of espresso drinks – latte, cappuccino, mocha – and also some different ones. A short black is espresso; a long black is a short black but weaker and larger; and a flat white is a long black with milk (and sometimes a bit of froth). An Americano is a long black served with a pot of hot water or diluted.

> **Tip:** BYO means "bring your own" and usually refers to wine only at a restaurant.

There is plenty of **beer** to be drunk around the place and much of it produced by New Zealand Breweries and DB. Beer has as much of a local backing as sports teams – Speights is Pride of the South, for example. Microbreweries exist in pockets – like Nelson and the West Coast of the South Island.

New Zealand is in the New World as far as **wine** is concerned. There are wine-producing regions from the top of the North Island to the bottom of the South, including Auckland, Waiheke Island, Northland, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Martinborough, Marlborough, Nelson, Canterbury, Waipara and Central Otago.

Did you know? Central Otago, famous for Pinot Noir, is the southernmost wine-growing region in the world.

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc put New Zealand on the wine map and, while the whites have garnered the most attention, Pinot Noir is the red (especially from Central Otago and Wairarapa) that may end up meaning more to New Zealand than Sauvignon Blanc. Other varieties grown include: Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, as well as many other varieties in smaller quantities. Given all the Chardonnay and Pinot Gris (and Pinot Meunier) it should not be a surprise that New Zealand also makes a lot of sparkling wine.

If you are at all interested in wine touring, I suggest you pick up a copy of ***Cuisine Wine Country***. It's an annual put out by *Cuisine* magazine and lists all the wine-growing regions, the wineries in each and what they offer. It is available at most magazine and bookshops.

Traveling With Kids

Being one of the safest destinations in the world and a country that celebrates its own children and family, New Zealand is a good destination for kids, but many of the activities here are designed for people who are "big." Sea kayaking, quad-bike riding, and rafting, for instance, often have a minimum age of 16 and many of the tramps would be very strenuous for young legs.

However, when I was guiding on the Queen Charlotte Track, some of my favorite trips were with families. The youngest chap I led (who walked the whole 71 km/43 miles) had just turned 12. He had to work hard and there were a few tears along the way, but he proudly made it from one end to the other. If you are traveling with kids, I would consider their age and abilities and design a trip that suits. Introduce them to the outdoors in a pleasant, comfortable way and you'll win them over for life! There are quite a few interactive museums (**Te Papa** in Wellington and **Te Manawa** in Palmerston North stand out), many farm stays (**Landsdown Farm Park** in Marlborough and **Wheatly Downs** in Hawera are particularly fun), more than a couple of places to get close to animals (**Nga Manu Reserve** on the Kapiti Coast, **Mt. Bruce** and **Riverleigh Lodge**, **Wetlands** and **Animal Park** both in the Wairarapa, and **Walter Peak High Country Farm** in Queenstown are all good choices), and a few multi-day walks that are perfect for shorter legs (**Queen Charlotte**, **Abel Tasman**, **Kaikoura Coast Track**).

I think the ultimate for kids is either a canoe trip down the Whanganui River or a raft trip down the Clarence. There are more trips that are appropriate for kids, maybe not toddlers, but kids big enough to carry a small daypack and get into the swing of it.

Of course, most of the sightseeing and watchable wildlife is appropriate for kids, and what youngster wouldn't need to stifle a giggle watching the penguins come in for the night? As long as your children are well-behaved, can be

quiet when it's important (i.e., around wildlife) and have a sense of adventure, bring 'em along!

Holidays

- January 1 – New Year's Day
- January 2 – New Year's Holiday
- February 6 – Waitangi Day
- March/April – Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday

> **Easter:** For a country that isn't particularly driven by the church, it's surprising how supremely the Easter holidays reign. Every year it seems, we go through a heated debate about opening hours on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The most hotly contested arguments have to do with the garden centers and the wineries being closed. I suspect the general population thinks the closing laws are archaic, but changing them seems to be a hurdle we can't clear.

- April 25 – ANZAC Day (honoring Australia New Zealand Army corps soldiers)
- 1st Monday June – Queen's Birthday observed
- 4th Monday October – Labour Day
- November 5 – Guy Fawkes' Night (not a public holiday, but a national celebration with lots of fireworks)
- December 25 – Christmas Day
- December 26 – Boxing Day

In addition to the national holidays, each province has its own anniversary day holiday. The actual date observed may vary from year to year.

- Southland – January 17
- Wellington – January 22
- Auckland and Northland – January 29
- Nelson and Buller – February 1
- Otago – March 23
- Taranaki – March 31
- South Canterbury – September 25
- Hawke's Bay – November 1
- Marlborough – November 1
- Chatham Islands – November 30
- Westland – December 1
- Canterbury – December 16

> **Tip:** Daylight savings begins on the 1st Sunday in October and finishes on the 3rd Sunday in March.

■ School Holidays

These vary from year to year, but this general guideline for the school year 2004 may help you in planning your trip. Consider that Kiwis are big holiday makers when the kids are out!

- 15th December-26th January (secondary school 4th December-26th January)
- 9th April-25th April
- 3rd July-18th July
- 18th September-3rd October

■ Local Festivals & Celebrations

This list is not exhaustive, but includes the major festivals:

January

Auckland Anniversary Day Regatta – Auckland's biggest sailboat race. Held either on the fifth Monday in January or the first Monday in February.

The Gathering rave – Alcohol-free dance and music festival, Golden Bay. Over three days, ending January 1.

February

Marlborough Wine and Food Festival – second weekend.

Napier Art Deco Festival – third weekend.

International Festival of the Arts – Wellington; in even-numbered years only. Runs from the end of February to mid-March. In 2006, the dates are February 24-March 19.

Aotearoa Maori Performing Arts Festival – Wellington; in odd-numbered years only. Dates vary.

Taste Nelson Wind and Food Festival – first Saturday.

Garden City Festival – Christchurch; February 3-14.

Hawke's Bay Harvest food festival – Waitangi weekend.

March

Golden Shears competition – Masterton, usually the first week of March, but dates vary.

Wild Foods Festival – Hokitika, second Saturday.

Taranaki Festival of the Arts, New Plymouth, February-March, odd-numbered years only.

Warbirds over Wanaka International Air Show – Easter weekend even-numbered years.

Classic Fighters Marlborough – Easter weekend odd-numbered years.

April

Highland Games, Hastings. Date varies, often held at Easter.

Waiheke Jazz Festival – Waiheke Island, Easter week.

June

NZ Agricultural Field Days – Hamilton, third week of June.

July

Auckland International Film Festival. Runs for just over two weeks in mid-month.

October

Gumboot Festival – Taihape. Dates vary. The festival lasts for three days, at the end of October or beginning of November.

November

Guy Fawkes' Night fireworks – November 5.

Toast Martinborough food and wine festival – third Sunday.

December

Festival of Lights – New Plymouth. Mid-December to early February.

Money Matters

I am often asked if New Zealand is an expensive place to visit and, in all truth, it can be as expensive as you want it to be. Clearly, there are luxury resorts, pricey wine and fancy adventure trips around each corner, but you can also get away with not spending much at all.

Depending on where you want to stay, an average motel will run about $80 a night for two people. A café-type dinner will be about $20 and a glass of wine about $7. Depending on your appetite, breakfast and lunch can run about $10 a day and car rentals vary, but you can typically get a small car for less than $50 a day (sometimes, quite a bit less), and long-term rentals are cheaper. So, with those very general guidelines, two people traveling together can get by on about $125 per person per day – much less if they cook for themselves at a backpackers (a Kiwi hostel); much more if they stay at a luxury lodge and eat out every day.

Activities vary in cost and certainly there are plenty of tour operators ready to charge you money in exchange for enjoyment. But travel, to me at least, isn't always about spending $200 to have a good time; I'm just as happy to throw my backpack on and head to the hills or the beach.

■ About Money

New Zealand currency is based on the New Zealand dollar. There are $5, $10, $20, $50 and $100 notes (all different colors, and size increases with value), $0.05, $0.10, $0.20, and $0.50 silver coins, and $1 and $2 gold coins (coins also get larger with more value).

Banks are usually open from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday (some in the larger centers are open on Saturday mornings). All banks except the Kiwi Bank (owned by *New Zealand Post*) are foreign-owned.

You will need to use New Zealand money for transactions, and most businesses will not take foreign currency of any kind. Traveler's checks can be exchanged for cash at most banks and any *bureaux de change* (typically found in tourist areas and major airports), which tend to stay open later than banks, usually until 9 pm. **Automated Teller Machines (ATMs)** are generically referred to as Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale (EFTPOS).

Most retailers (except very small ones) accept EFTPOS for purchase. However, I have found it difficult to use my US-based ATM cards at shops – though I have no problem getting cash from them at the bank ATM. **MasterCard** and **VISA** are widely accepted and there are increasing numbers of businesses that accept **American Express** and **Diners Club**. I would not, however, have American Express or Diners Club as my sole credit cards.

Exchange rates: NZ$1 = US$0.69; US$1 = NZ$1.46.

■ Tipping

Tipping is not expected or customary in New Zealand – Kiwis never tip each other – but you won't insult anyone if you choose to do it. Don't feel obligated to tip big, but 5-10% is a nice reward for someone who has gone out of his way. Guides do not expect to be tipped but, as a former guide, it's always a nice surprise at the end of a trip.

■ Taxes

Goods and Services Tax (GST) adds 12½% to the price of most things in New Zealand. Most prices are quoted with GST included, but beware of the odd quote that doesn't.

■ Accommodation & Meal Costs

Accommodation prices throughout this book reflect the price of an average room for two people, in New Zealand dollars. Where a range is given, the property has more than one type of room available.

For restaurants, the code reflects the price of an average dinner in New Zealand dollars. Where a range is given, the restaurant has either more than one menu, or a broad range of choices.

Accommodation

There is a huge range of accommodation available in New Zealand. You can stay at top of the heap luxury lodges or in small town historic pubs and everything in between. While there is no way that I can list all the accommodations in each town or region, I hope I've provided a good cross-section.

TOILETS

First, we call a spade a spade and a toilet a toilet. There is no "powder room" or "rest room." It is the toilet or the loo.

When flushing a New Zealand toilet, you usually have two options: the "full" flush and the "half" flush. Using the half-flush saves water and is intended to be used when you don't need a full flush – I'm sure you can figure out what time of the day you need which.

En-suite refers to a room that has an attached private toilet (and usually shower or bath).

Private refers to a room (usually in a B&B) that has its own toilet (and shower or bath) but that is down the hall, not connected to the room.

Shared refers to a room that shares the toilet with other guests (and sometimes the host).

Hotels come in all shapes and sizes but have in common one thing – a liquor license. There are some totally funky old pubs with great hotel rooms that have shared facilities and are as cheap as any backpacker room, and there are the multi-national luxury hotels like Hyatt and Hilton. Plus you'll find everything in between.

Motels have self-contained units with cooking facilities – some have full kitchens with ovens and some just have a jug for boiling water, a microwave and a toaster.

THE DUTY MOTEL

Motels in most towns take turns being the "Duty Motel." The duty motel is responsible for keeping a log of what motels have vacancies – if you find yourself in a town and the information center is closed and you stop at a couple of motels and can't find a vacancy, ask what motel is the duty motel and then call them. They should be able to help find you a room. Most towns also have a "Duty Bed and Breakfast."

Bed-and-Breakfast accommodations run the gamut. I have visited and stayed in everything from a spare bedroom in a house to a specially built, top-end facility. One word I get tired of, though, is "luxury" when it comes to B&Bs. There are some B&Bs that are truly luxurious; most of them, though, are very comfortable and pleasant. B&Bs may have en-suite bathrooms, shared or private facilities. Breakfast ranges from a continental spread of toast, cereals and fruit, to a full cooked farm-style meal. Don't be surprised when a host or hostess proudly presents peanut butter – they know not everyone likes marmite and vegemite and are trying to make you feel at home.

Homestay is often used interchangeably with bed and breakfast. At a homestay, though, expect to interact more with the family.

Lodges can be top-end or moderate. They almost always include breakfast and often include dinner. In a lodge, you would not expect to share facilities or living space with the family, owner or manager.

Farmstays are just that – accommodation at a farm. The farm can be any size and of any type. You will usually be invited to partake in farming activities, but don't feel pressured to do more than you want. This is a great way to get to know some local folks and guests are usually treated like family. All sorts of accommodations are available.

"**Backpackers"** are typically independently owned and operated hostels. Wipe all thoughts of youth hostels from yesteryear out of your mind – backpackers are fabulous places to stay and some are quite posh. Accommodation

ranges from dorm rooms (sleeping more than four and sometimes up to over a dozen) to single, twin and double rooms. Some rooms have en-suite bathrooms and all backpacker accommodations have fully equipped communal kitchens and lounge areas. These are great places to meet other travelers, and you don't have to be 18 years old or younger to enjoy them. I often book a single, a double or a twin room at a backpackers so that I can interact with other traveling people – it's much more interesting than sitting by myself in a motel room. Most of the time, you need to provide your own bedding (sleeping bag) and towels, but sometimes linen is available at a nominal or no cost and more backpackers are moving towards supplying bedding.

Hostels associated with the **New Zealand YHA** (Youth Hostel Association) are dotted around the country and you can pick up a YHA guidebook at most of the information centers. YHA hostels typically offer the same range of accommodation options as other backpacker hostels.

Pick up a copy of the blue ***BBH guide,*** published by Budget Backpacker Hostels. It lists most of the backpacker accommodations around New Zealand and rates them with a BPP – Backpacker Perception Percentage. The BPP is determined by guests staying at each BBH on a particular day (or days). Guests are asked to fill out a survey about the accommodation and a score is given. I have found this to be the most dependable method of picking a backpacker. See www.bbh.co.nz.

Tip: When traveling with another person, it is usually just as cheap to book a twin or double room as it is to get two bunks in a dorm room.

Holiday Parks are scattered around New Zealand and come under a few banners, including "motor camps" and "holiday parks." In addition to tent and (usually) power sites, they have a variety of accommodation including: on-site motor homes or campers (on a power site often with cooking facilities; sleep two to four); standard cabins (basic sleeping accommodation for two to six, shared facilities and shared kitchen – with or without cooking utensils and supplies and usually not including bedding); kitchen cabins (sleeping facilities and equipped kitchen); en-suite unit (a standard cabin but with its own toilet and shower); and self-contained unit (with TV, equipped kitchen, en-suite bathroom). Some holiday parks or motor camps also have motel units and backpackers lodges.

Tip: If you book into a holiday park and intend to self-cater (cook) in the communal kitchen, be sure to ask if the kitchen is equipped with dishes, cutlery and cooking utensils.

Camping is basically allowed anywhere that it's not prohibited. That may sound like a weak description, but as long as you don't put your tent in an area that's marked "No Camping," you'll probably be OK. Avoid reserves and don't camp close to walking tracks. Additionally, on some tracks (such as the Milford Track) camping is strictly prohibited. Ask DoC or the local information center if you are unsure.

What's a bach? Pronounced "batch," it's short for bachelor accommodation and is a Kiwi holiday cottage, often at the beach. Think about renting a bach for part of your stay… www.ki-wi.co.nz lists quite a few. Most information centers in 'beachy' areas have a listing of what's locally available, as well.

■ Accommodation Ratings

Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Automobile Association partnered together to create **Qualmark New Zealand** – the official quality agency for New Zealand tourism. Qualmark-rated operators typically display their rating at the entrance to their business. Its goal is to provide a way of knowing (with confidence) what you're getting. But don't think that if an accommodation isn't Qualmark rated, it's necessarily a bad place to stay. Qualmark isn't mandatory and, for the smaller providers, the cost of joining and being accredited is expensive, so if a small B&B doesn't have a Qualmark sign, they may just have chosen not to join – and that's no reflection on their quality. Check with www.qualmark.co.nz if you want to find out more.

Qualmark Ratings

☆ **Acceptable** – Meets customers' minimum requirements. Basic, clean and comfortable accommodation.

☆☆ **Good** – Exceeds customers' minimum requirements with some additional facilities and services.

☆☆☆ **Very Good** – provides a range of facilities and services and achieves good to very good quality standards.

☆☆☆☆ **Excellent** – Consistently achieves high quality levels with a wide range of facilities and services.

☆☆☆☆☆ **Exceptional** – Among the best available in New Zealand.

Adventures

Just about anything you can imagine doing in the outdoors is within easy reach in New Zealand. The mountains, lakes, rivers, sea, beaches, caves and sky are all accessible and open for exploration. This action-packed environment makes New Zealand a perfect adventure destination, but keep in mind, adventure activities – adrenaline sports, if you will – do carry a certain level of danger and risk. There aren't any red velvet ropes along the tracks and rivers. Chances are you won't get hurt, but the possibility is out there. As I write this, I am recovering from a rafting accident on Perth River and am wearing a brace on my right leg. I tore the medial cruciate ligament in both knees (the right one much worse) and the jury is still out on whether I have cartilage damage and whether I'll need surgery. The trip was great – it was in high water with big flows, and we knew we were pushing the limits of safely being able to raft this continuous Grade V river (see page 47 for river grade definitions). I tell this story not to discourage you from doing the same or an-

other trip (on the contrary!), but to emphasize that accidents do happen and the more time you spend doing adventure activities, the more likely you are to experience one. I also suggest that you check your insurance coverage before signing up for an action trip.

A WORD ABOUT THE RIVERS

Rivers are one of the leading killers in New Zealand – their levels rise quickly and unexpectedly and more than a few lives have been lost, either by being swept away or being wrapped around a tree, or by some other gruesome accident. Be careful and don't try to cross a swollen river if you have any doubt about your ability.

Did you know? "True right" refers to the right-hand side of a river when you are looking downstream.

Specifics on activities are given later on a region-by-region basis. But here is an overview of some of the more popular activities.

■ Tramping

It's what you might also call backpacking, hiking, or bush walking. Fill your pack, strap it to your back and head into the bush or forest. Tramping is a hugely popular activity in New Zealand – and the best way to discover the country. I don't think a visit to New Zealand is complete unless you spend at least one (preferably three or more) days walking. There are thousands of kilometers of tracks around the country, most of them managed by the Department of Conservation (DoC), and many of them serviced by a system of backcountry huts. Huts range from the most simple (four walls, a ceiling and a couple of bunks) to very fancy (gas cookers, heaters, flush toilets). Prices for staying in the huts vary depending on level of accommodation and services offered. In addition to the public tracks managed by DoC, there are a few very nice private tramping tracks managed by landowners. I have included some of the more popular tracks below, as well as some of those less publicized. I honestly can't pick a favorite tramp – there are too many that I love. The trip to Brewster Hut is incredibly special, the Queen Charlotte holds a big piece of my heart, I found one of my best friends at the Nelson Lakes, I love the Routeburn, and Stewart Island is beyond compare. But the rest are just as wonderful and there are some I'm not even going to tell you about!

Trail Classification

Path – A well-formed track that is suitable for a family and may be wheelchair accessible. Paths are always benched and waterways are bridged.

Walking track –Well-defined and suitable for individuals of average fitness levels. Some walking tracks are benched and you'll be more comfortable in shoes that offer support, but you probably won't require full-on hiking boots. Waterways are usually bridged.

Tramping track – Less well-defined and often with steep gradients or climbs; the footing may be uneven and you should have appropriate tramping gear, including hiking boots. Tramping tracks are not benched and some waterways are unbridged.

Route – A lightly marked trail but with little or no formed track. Routes require skill, experience and proper equipment and many waterways are unbridged.

DoC has designated eight of its walks and one of its river trips as **Great Walks**; these are described in the appropriate area section of this book. The Great Walks require a Great Walks Pass; some of them (for example, the Milford and the Routeburn) have limited passes available and fill up months in advance. There are other walks around New Zealand that are, in my opinion, just as "great," so don't feel that if you miss out on these, you won't experience the best the country has to offer. For booking information, contact greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-8514, fax 03-249-8515.

NEW ZEALAND'S GREAT WALKS

On the North Island

- Lake Waikaremoana, three to four days, Te Urewera National Park.
- Tongariro Northern Circuit, three to four days, Tongariro National Park.
- Whanganui River Journey, three- to five-day canoe trip, Whanganui National Park.

On the South Island

- Heaphy Track, four to five days, Kahurangi National Park.
- Abel Tasman Coastal Track, two to three days, Abel Tasman National Park.
- Kepler Track, four to five days, Fiordland National Park.
- Milford Track, four days, Fiordland National Park.
- Routeburn Track, three days, Mt. Aspiring and Fiordland National Parks.

On Stewart Island

- Rakiura Track, three days, Rakiura National Park.

There are nearly 1,000 backcountry huts scattered around New Zealand, making a trip to the backcountry a relatively civilized affair. Most huts that have bunks or platforms also have sleeping mattresses. There is certainly no rule that says you can't carry a tent (and I often do), but for many of the tramps there's little or no need to add that extra weight to your pack.

Tip: Bunks are on a first-come, first-served basis and, unless you are booked into a hut that has a reservation system through DoC, there is no guarantee a bunk will be available. Consequently, many trampers carry tents as a back-up.

Backcountry Hut Categories

Category 4 – Simple, basic shelter. Free of charge.

Category 3 – Simple, weatherproof huts with bunks or platforms, long-drop toilets, water supply. May or may not have mattresses; often a wood-burning stove or gas fire for heat. $5 per person per night.

Category 2 – Bunks with mattresses, water indoors at a sink, usually a wood burning stove or gas fire for heat and occasionally flush toilets. Sometimes have gas-fire cooking rings, but that is rare. $10 per person per night.

Category 1 – Top of the line. Most have separate bunkrooms, gas rings for cooking and gas fires for heat. Some have solar power for lighting and hot water, and some have flush toilets. $14 per person per night.

Huts on Great Walks may be more expensive (Milford and Routeburn $35 per person per night; Kepler $20 per person per night). During the winter, these huts are often stripped and revert to Class 2 or 3 status.

Many huts on the more heavily traveled tracks have "hut wardens" in residence. Wardens are volunteers for DoC and are gold mines of information. They are responsible for ensuring trampers pay their fees and often perform routine chores around the huts.

Did you know? A "long drop" is an outhouse or latrine.

All around New Zealand there are companies that lead **guided walks**. If you have a hankering to get out in the bush but aren't so keen to do it on your own, sign up for a guided walk. Not only do the guides know the ins and outs of the route, but they usually have a wealth of knowledge about New Zealand. I think it's a good idea when visiting a foreign country to take at least one guided trip – it gives you some insight and can serve as a great base for the rest of your travels.

My top choice for tramping guides is **Adventure Guides and Southern Wilderness NZ**, www.southernwilderness.com, in Picton.

■ Rafting

With so many rivers around the country, it's no wonder New Zealand is a rafter's paradise. While the thrill for some is the rapids, for others, it's being treated to a day on the river in the middle of pristine, sky-scraping gorges. You can find a rafting trip in just about any corner of the country, but the most popular tourist destinations are **Rotorua** on the North Island and **Queenstown** on the South. If you're look-

ing for a rafting experience that removes you from the main tourist centers, consider heli-rafting on the West Coast of the South Island or a multi-day rafting trip. Typically, you'll be outfitted in a wetsuit, helmet and personal flotation device and then you'll be instructed in paddling and safety techniques. A group of about six will be in each raft (along with a guide) and by the end of the trip, you will have formed into one cohesive team. It's a blast and a thrill and even if you end up on crutches, you won't regret it. But don't think you have to be a thrill-seeker to enjoy it – consider, for instance a family raft trip down the Clarence.

My choice for guided rafting trips with a difference is **Hidden Valleys**, www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz, Peel Forest.

Rivers and rapids are graded on a six-level system – the highest grade being assigned to the most demanding rapid. When you're booking a trip, consider if the river is a "continuous grade IV" or just has one grade IV rapid; perhaps the best runs have a few grade II and III for a warm up, a long string of grade IV and one or two grade V thrown in for thrills. Ask the operator, if you are unsure, and be forewarned, it all changes with river flow and rain.

River Grades

Grade I – Flat, moving water. A few small bumps of waves, no obstructions. Grins and some giggles.

Grade II – Some choppy waves, with few or no obstructions. Lots of giggles.

Grade III – Bigger waves, up to one meter or four feet, and some obstacles to maneuver around. Giggles and some big laughs.

Grade IV – Difficult, bigger waves with rocks midstream. This is a more challenging run and there's a good chance that you'll go for a swim. Scouting necessary. Much laughing, a few gasps, and a few whispered expletives.

Grade V – Large, unavoidable waves with long and violent rapids; holes are present, as are multiple obstacles. Some standing waves and narrow channels, increased risk of injury. Scouting is imperative. Many gasps, some loud expletives.

Grade VI – Commercially un-raftable, involves serious risk of life. No laughing matter.

■ Kayaking & Canoeing

New Zealand is the best place I've found to kayak. I'm a sea kayaker (longing to be a whitewater kayaker) and have never run out of places to paddle. If you are not experienced, go on a guided trip; if you are experienced, my advice is to hire a kayak and gear and head out for a few days. The **Marlborough Sounds** are my top choice for kayaking – the **Queen Charlotte** for diversity and wildlife, the **outer Pelorus** for a chance to be remote. Tourists flock to the **Abel Tasman**, and I've had some awfully nice days paddling there, too, but you can't beat the sounds. My second favorite choice for sea kayaking is **Fiordlands** – the Milford and Doubtful are relatively easily accessible.

■ Jet-Boating

It was a Canterbury farmer, William Hamilton, who developed the jet-boat. Based on water-jet propulsion, Hamilton figured out a way to get low draft boats up the very shallow braided rivers of the South Island. Now, just about every river in New Zealand has a jet-boat running on it. Rides are thrilling, there's no doubt about it, and most involve at least one 360° spin. You'll have to hold on and there's little doubt that you'll get wet – most operators supply you with a raincoat.

My choice for jet-boat is the tried and true Shotover Jet through the **Shotover Canyon** in Queenstown. I think this is the most fun ride, by far. Www.shotoverjet.co.nz.

■ Sailing

Having sailed to New Zealand from North America, I'm embarrassed to admit that I haven't done a heck of a lot of sailing since I've been here. There are boats for charter all around and I think the one place that I would be inclined to sail is the Bay of Islands. If you happen to be in Wellington on a race day, pop into one of the yacht clubs and see if you can crew. Likewise in Picton – sailors are always happy to have along a keen and interested newcomer. You can go on scenic sails in the **Abel Tasman**, the **Bay of Islands** and around **Auckland**. There is also a great trip between Auckland and the Coromandel – if you're without transport and want to see both places, consider this a prime option, **Ocean Safaris**, www.oceansafaris.com.

■ Skydiving

Skydiving is absolutely the scariest thing I have ever done, but others seem to love it and do it more than once. Top choices in New Zealand are **Taupo**, **Nelson** and **Queenstown**. I suppose my top choice here is **Taupo Tandem Skydiving**, but it's the only jump I've ever done (or will ever do) so I'm not able to make a fair comparison (www.skydive.net.nz).

■ Scenic Flights

High on the must-do list of any visitor to New Zealand really should be a scenic flight. Save your money, eat nothing but three-minute noodles, whatever it takes, but go on a scenic flight. There is no better way to appreciate this country than to see it from above. I have three choices here – a Tiger Moth ride with the **Central Hawke's Bay Aero Club** (it's not really a commercial venture, but if you're nice, they may take you), a floatplane ride from Te Anau (see page 581), and my top choice of all airborne activities is **Wanaka Helicopters**. Absolutely the best scenic flight of my life (www.heliflights.co.nz).

■ Horse Trekking

There are some fabulous horse treks around New Zealand. Some are just an hour's ride on the beach, but to get into the heartland you need to go for a couple of days. There are outfitters on both islands, and I've tried to include as many as possible. On the North Island, my choice is **Makoura Lodge** in the Manawatu, www.makouralodge.co.nz, and on the

South Island there is none better than **Western Ranges Horse Treks**, www.thehorsetrek.co.nz.

■ Mountain Biking

Well. There are some fabulous places to ride a bike and if you want to explore this little country by bike, then "good on ya!" Countless times I have sped past a biker or two with my own bike ("Pearl") hanging on the rack of my car. I'm always a little embarrassed, but I think the best way for me to explore NZ has been by driving to locations where I ride. Bikes can be rented in just about every tourist location and some even have (call me a snob) proper mountain bikes. There are many plantation forests that have biking tracks – the **Bottle Lake Forest** in Christchurch and the **Naseby Forest** in Central Otago stand out as don't-miss spots. In addition to the forest tracks, there are plenty of miles of riding to be done – Skippers Canyon ranks up there with fun rides where I ended up injured. The **Queen Charlotte** is 71 km (44 miles) of single track, and the section from Mistletoe Bay to Anakiwa is mountain biking at its best. But there are hundreds of other rides and if you're a biker, pick up a copy of the Kennett Brothers ***Classic New Zealand Mountain Bike Rides***. It's the bible.

■ Quad Bikes

It seems as if every farmer and his dog are offering quad-bike trips. On most of them you'll have a good experience and travel through varying terrain. I certainly haven't ridden them all but, having ridden more quad bikes over the last year than I ever would have imagined riding in my entire life, I pick **Kapiti 4x4** in the Maungatukutuku Valley for the best ride, terrain, professional operation and safety briefing. www.kapitifourx4.co.nz.

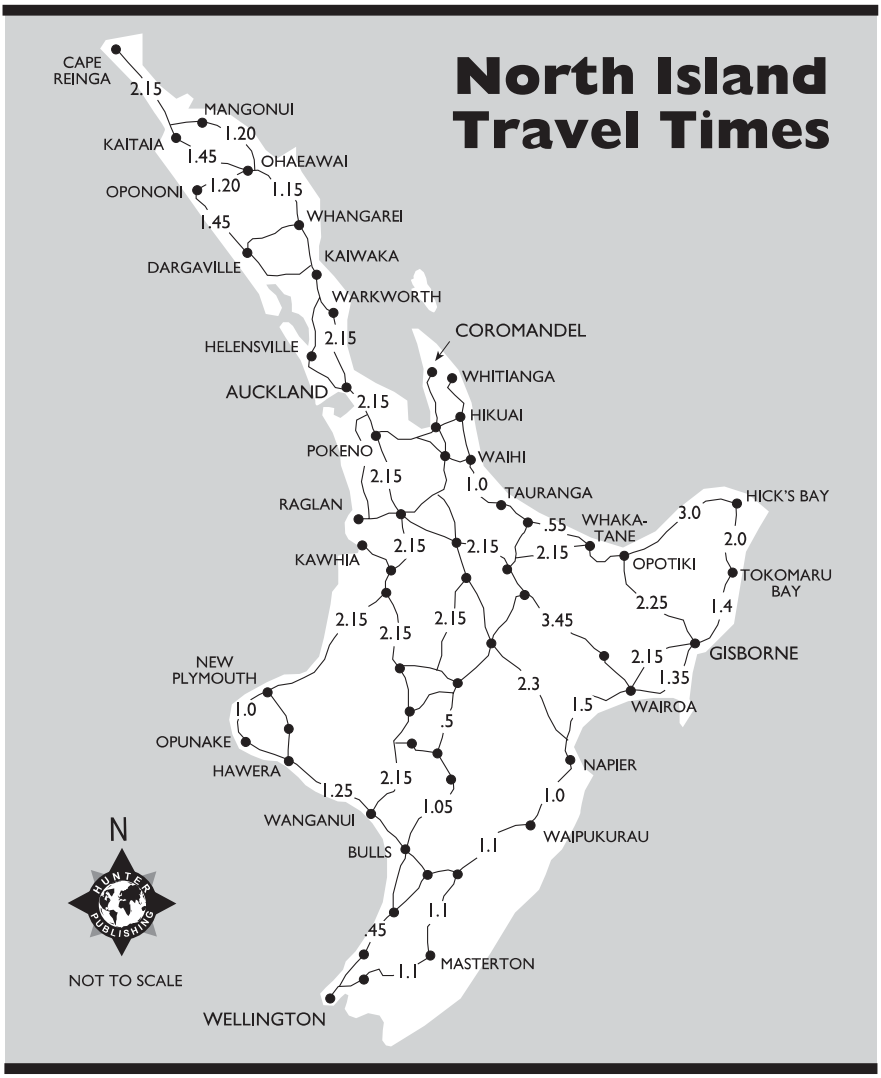
■ Bungy Jumping

You will not catch me on a bungy jump, but if you are so inclined, then certainly the most scenic option is the original AJ Hackett jump at the **Kawarau Bridge** outside of Queenstown. There are lots of competitors around NZ, but this really is the most amazing setting (**Taupo Bung**y isn't far behind).

■ Skiing & Snowboarding

Winter comes alive with ski season! New Zealand has 12 public ski areas and another dozen or so club areas. Running from June to October (or sometimes November), the New Zealand ski season sees an influx of Northern Hemisphere skiers every year. On the North Island, the main ski areas – **Turoa** and **Whakapapa** – are on Mt. Ruapehu. On the South Island, commercial ski areas start with **Mt. Lyford** (on the inland Kaikoura Road) and continue to the growing-in-popularity **Mt. Hutt**. Queenstown and Wanaka have the lion's share, with **Coronet Peak** and the **Remarkables** near the former and **Treble Cone**, **Cardrona** and **Waiorau Nordic Ski Area** near the latter. Club fields were a new concept to me – they really are ski areas that are owned and maintained by ski clubs. Most of the club fields have only surface lifts, but very low lift prices and no lift lines at all to speak of.

Much of NZ skiing is above the tree line and only the largest areas have snowmaking equipment. But the skiing is good and fun and – bonus – it's in the Northern Hemisphere summer, so it's perfect for anyone who can't get enough. A very popular option is **heli-skiing**. The prices in New Zealand, while steep in comparison to the lift prices, are affordable compared to heli-skiing in Europe or North America. Queenstown holds an annual winter festival, which is good fun; but for serious skiing, I'd opt for either Treble Cone, or heli-skiiing in Wanaka or around Mt. Hutt.



North Island

Auckland

Introduction

Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand and the main port of entry for international visitors. It is a sprawling, modern, busy city but not nearly so densely populated as other global cities of its same geographic size. The 60 square kilometers (23 square miles) that make up the region are home to 1¼ million people – one-third of New Zealand's population.

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Known as **The City of Sails**, it is built on a narrow isthmus that separates two harbors – the **Manukau** and **Waitemata** – and claims to have more boats per capita than any other city in the world. That's a fact that would be hard to dispute on a summer afternoon when the sky above the harbor is full of sails. Home of the America's Cup defense in 2000 and defeat in 2003, it is very much a sailor's city. The **Kaipara Harbour**, farther to the north, is Auckland's third harbor and the largest in New Zealand.

Auckland has the largest Polynesian population of any city in the world. In addition to nearly 20% of the population being of Maori descent, many islanders from the Cooks, Tonga, Niue, and Samoa immigrated here during the 1960s and 1970s, and there is a very strong Asian community. Unlike the rest of New Zealand, walking around Auckland you are sure to hear more than one accent and language; the diversity of the population gives a much more global feel to the city than is present in the more white-bread cities of the rest of the country.

Tamaki, the Maori name for the area, means battle and is probably a good description of what happened around the place. The fertile, low-slung land was no doubt a draw for early settlers, who fiercely battled from their *pas* (fortified villages). Forty-eight extinct volcanoes – like Mount Eden and One Tree Hill – ring Auckland, and these were natural settlements for the Maori. A walk or cycle up either is a good way to get your bearings and see the pa. They are probably two of the most accessible and easy-to-understand pa sites, or Maori fortified villages, in New Zealand.

When the Europeans arrived, the Maori were still engaged in inter-tribal warfare and presented no organized resistance to the intruders. By the 1840s, the British had acquired most of the land of the Ngati Whatua tribe and settlement began in earnest. Captain William Hobson was New Zea-

land's first governor and chose Auckland to be the capital, a title it lost to Wellington in 1865. While Wellington is the political heart, Auckland is the center of commerce and business and is (whether the rest of the country wants to admit it or not) the most powerful city.

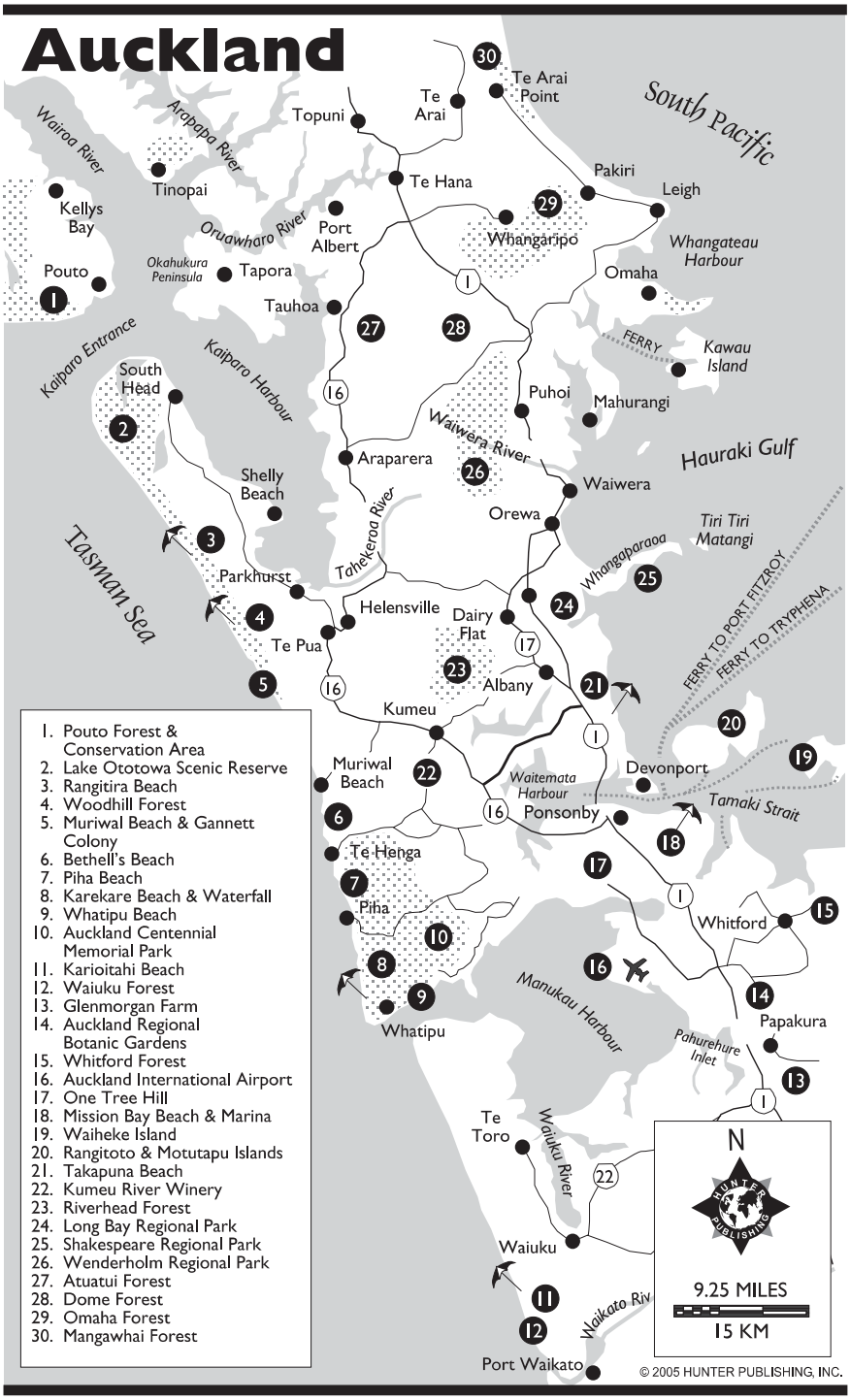
The attitude of the rest of the country towards Auckland is a bizarre one. You don't have to strike up too many conversations about Auckland in the hinterlands before you'll hear "Jafa," an expression that might at first seem endearing but in fact means "Just Another F—ing Aucklander." Coming from the outside, and not wanting to upset my Kiwi friends, I hesitate to say it, but it seems that the rest of the country is a bit threatened by Auckland. When I first traveled around New Zealand in 1999, I began to think that the rest of New Zealand feels about Auckland the way the world feels about the United States. Auckland has the people, the money, the business and the power to influence the lives of the rest of the country, and no one likes a big brother telling them what to do. And Auckland is not without its faults – it's crowded, traffic is a nightmare, housing is expensive and (as in any populated area) there is more crime than in the small rural towns where everyone knows each other. It's an easy target for criticism and derision.

Most international visitors to New Zealand don't stay too long in Auckland – frankly, a forgivable decision, with so much to see and do in the rest of the country. I've lived in Auckland and very much enjoy going up for work and to see friends, but I would have a hard time encouraging you to stay long if you're on a tight travel schedule. If you do have a day or more, there are plenty of sites to see, tracks to walk or cycle, boats to sail and much more. After all, the population that lives here keeps itself entertained.

In spite of its lack of a strong heart (certainly as compared to Wellington), I like Auckland – I like wandering down Queen Street and around the Viaduct Basin. I think the Auckland museum is tops and there are some really good biking and hiking trails not far from town. The gulf is great for sailing, there are fabulous beaches, and neighborhoods have personalities. The city has wonderful food and I can't think of another place in New Zealand where I can go to a drag show every week.

Neighborhoods to wander around include historic **Devonport** on the North Shore, **Parnell** for shopping, eating and charm, and **Ponsonby Road** for shopping, eating and entertainment. **Karanagahape Road** (K Road) is the funky part of town with international food stores, little dives for eating and drinking, music shops, massage parlors and all the rest of the color that a city needs.

Some of the popular tourist attractions in the city include the **Auckland Museum**, the **Maritime Museum**, **Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World Aquarium**, the **Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki**, the **Museum of Transport and Technology**, and the **Sky Tower**. The islands of the Hauraki Gulf would be the perfect place to spend some time at the beginning or end of your travels.



1. Pouto Forest & Conservation Area
2. Lake Ototowa Scenic Reserve
3. Rangitira Beach
4. Woodhill Forest
5. Muriwal Beach & Gannett Colony
6. Bethell's Beach
7. Piha Beach
8. Karekare Beach & Waterfall
9. Whatipu Beach
10. Auckland Centennial Memorial Park
11. Karioitahi Beach
12. Waiuku Forest
13. Glenmorgan Farm
14. Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens
15. Whitford Forest
16. Auckland International Airport
17. One Tree Hill
18. Mission Bay Beach & Marina
19. Waiheke Island
20. Rangitoto & Motutapu Islands
21. Takapuna Beach
22. Kumeu River Winery
23. Riverhead Forest
24. Long Bay Regional Park
25. Shakespeare Regional Park
26. Wenderholm Regional Park
27. Atuatui Forest
28. Dome Forest
29. Omaha Forest
30. Mangawhai Forest

Getting Here

■ By Air

The **Auckland International Airport** (about 20 km/12 miles south of the city) serves 45 airlines and is the main entry point for most visitors. You can get a shuttle ride from both the international and domestic terminals, and a ride to the city center (on a shuttle) will be about $20. Taxis are also available. In the international terminal, there are showers – downstairs by the McDonald's and upstairs in the toilets by the departure gates. After a long-haul flight, nothing feels better (you can rent a towel from the Airways Florist on the ground floor). In addition to the usual duty-free shops that are open for inbound flights, there is a baggage storage service and a bicycle dismantling and assembly area. In both the domestic and international terminals, there is a very helpful **Visitor Information Centre**, ☎ 09-275-6467.

> **Hint:** When you are departing Auckland on an international flight, there are more shops and restaurants once you pass through immigration and head to the boarding gates.

■ By Car

SH1 slices right through the city. Heading to the north, SH16 shoots off to the west coast. Average driving times to Auckland include: just under two hours from Hamilton, 6½ from Napier, 3½ from Rotorua, four from both Mt. Ruapehu and Taupo, just over three from Tauranga and Waitomo and five from Whakatane. From farther afield, about 12 from Wellington.

> **Hint: Rideline** provides a booking service for bus, train and ferry services around Auckland. www.rideline.co.nz, ☎ 09-366-6400 or 0800-103-080.

■ By Bus

Bookings can be made at the information centers or by contacting bus companies directly. As usual, I would recommend using the information center – they can explain all your options and explain the rules and regulations. **InterCity**, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100, and **Newman's**, www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6200, both depart from Sky City (see page 59) and provide bus transport all around the North Island. **Guthreys Express** transports passengers from Auckland to Rotorua, Taupo, Waitomo, Hamilton, and the Bay of Plenty, www.guthreys.nzhere.com, ☎ 09-309-0905. If you're heading to Northland, you'll want the **Northliner Express**, www.northliner.co.nz, ☎ 09-307-5873.

■ By Water

Cruise ships call in to Auckland every summer. You'll see the massive floating cities tied up by the Viaduct.

Ferry service connecting Auckland to Devonport on the North Shore and islands of the Hauraki Gulf is provided by ferry giant **Fullers**, www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111.

For both vehicle and passenger service to Waiheke and Great Barrier Islands, contact **Subritzky**, www.subritzky.co.nz, ☎ 09-373-4036.

Reubens Water Taxi Ltd. provides customized service around the gulf, reubens_taxi@hotmail.com, ☎ 09-422-8881.

■ By Train

The **Britomart Transport Centre** opened in 2003 and provides a modern hub for buses, trains and ferries. The station is at the bottom of Queen Street. Both the day- and night-trains bound for Wellington leave from Britomart. www.tranzscenic.co.nz.

Information Sources

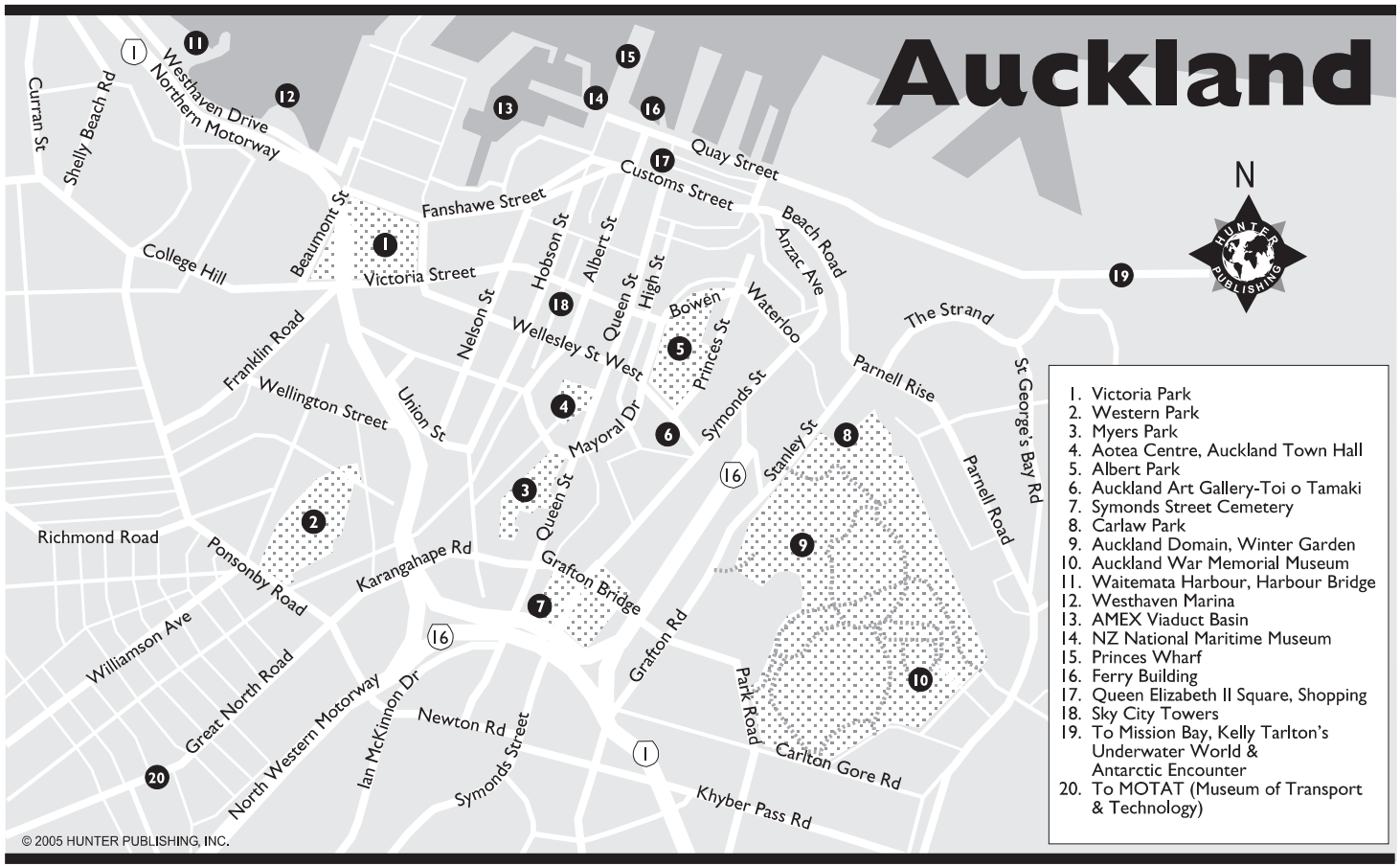
Tourism Auckland maintains **www.aucklandnz.com**. For central reservations and bookings, reservations@aucklandnz.com or call ☎ 09-979-2333

To get an idea of what's happening during your stay, take a look at **www.eventsauckland.com**.

The **Visitor Information Centre** is located at the corner of Quay and Hobson Streets, at the Amex Viaduct Harbour and at 287 Queen Street.

Auckland Central City

Queen Street is the commercial center of Auckland and runs from near the waterfront at Queen Elizabeth II Square (QEII Square) uphill to Karangahape Road (K Road). One block east of Queen Street is **High Street**, where you can shop in designer stores and grab a few good cups of coffee. There are restaurants worth a look and more than one place to sip a nice glass of wine. **Vulcan Lane**, a cut-through between the two main streets, is lined with bars and cafés, and on a nice day you're sure to see all the suits out having an after-work drink. Wandering around Auckland, you'll notice the **Sky Tower**, as it pierces any clouds that might be hanging around (see *Sightseeing*, page 59, for details). The **American Express Viaduct Basin** was the hub of activity for the America's Cup and is full of cafés, bars and clubs, as well as the **New Zealand National Maritime Museum**. East of the central city is **Parnell**, once a run-down suburb, now one of the trendiest neighborhoods. There are quite a few boutique shops and cafés, and the churches and restored villas built with kauri wood make for sightseeing. A bit farther is **Newmarket**, where clothing designers have their shops and where you won't go hungry or thirsty. West of the city center is **Ponsonby**, and on the way, **Victoria Market**, a place for those who like to shop at stalls and wander around looking at clothes and crafts. If you're walking from the city center to Ponsonby, it makes a nice diversion to duck in for a browse. Ponsonby started life as a low-rent area and, as it often happens, the up-and-comers moved in, renovated the houses and drove the prices high. It's a happening spot and probably my favorite for going out to eat (and drink) or for looking at decorating and clothing shops.



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■ Getting Around

Auckland is a bit spread out, though the central city attractions are mostly within walking distance. I don't enjoy driving in the central business district at all, whether in Auckland or another city, so if you're going to center yourself there, perhaps take a taxi or shuttle from the airport. If you're staying in the outer reaches or planning to explore some of the regional parks, your best bet is to rent a car.

> **Embarrassing but true:** Auckland uses less public transport than Los Angeles.

Local buses are operated by **Stagecoach Auckland** and information can be gathered through **Rideline**, www.rideline.co.nz, ☎ 0800-103-080, at the information center or from your accommodation. There are bus stops scattered around the city. Buses marked **Downtown** end up on lower Queen Street, while those marked **Midtown** go to Victoria Park.

The **Link** loops around the city, taking in Parnell, Newmarket, K Road and Ponsonby. Link buses are white. They run from 6 am to 10 pm Monday to Thursday, 6 am to 11:30 pm on Friday, and 7 am to 11 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

For visitors, the **Explorer Bus** is a good option to access the popular spots. It's a hop-on/hop-off bus going to "Auckland's big 14 attractions." Buses leave every 30 minutes from 9 am to 4 pm. For a $30 day pass, you can ride as much as you like. It all begins at the Ferry Building at the end of Queen Street, heads out to Mission Bay, Kelly Tarlton's, the Domain, Parnell, Sky Tower and Victoria Market. There is a satellite run that leaves the Museum and goes out to Lionzone, Mt. Eden, St. Lukes (shopping center), MOTAT. www.explorerbus.co.nz, ☎ 0800-439-756.

■ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World and Antarctic Encounter is just outside of the city center and is housed in the old stormwater holding tanks. Kelly Tarlton was a New Zealand diver who wanted to share the underwater world with those who don't dive. Opened in 1985, the walk-through acrylic tunnels were the first of their kind – you stand on a moving sidewalk and move through the tunnels as the fish swim around you. The design is meant to recreate a diver's experience around New Zealand. The Antarctic Encounter includes a replica of Scott Base, a penguin colony and a below-the-ice aquarium. The penguins are housed in a -7°C/19°F colony – like a giant freezer – and you get to visit it riding a heated snow-cat. The king penguins come from a breeding colony that was raised at Sea World in San Antonio Texas and now they breed in captivity at Kelly Tarlton's. Their environment closely resembles their natural habitat. It is the first environment of its type to be built anywhere in the world, though it is a bit of a cross between an amusement park ride and a zoo. But let's face it, how many of us are going to Antarctica anytime soon? Open 9 am daily. www.kellytarltons.co.nz, Tamaki Drive, ☎ 0800-805-050.

On Water

Beaches

Closest to town is **Mission Bay**, which has a long golden sand beach, a running/roller blading pathway and lots of cafés – quite the trendy and attractive place to hang out. It's only 10 minutes from downtown and a good afternoon out (not a bad spot for a romantic envening, either).

The beach in **Takapuna**, on the North Shore, is a popular one and is also just 10 minutes from the city center.

You can learn to surf while you're in town with **Aloha Surf School**. There are lessons and training for all levels at different beaches around the area. Surf tours also available. www.alohasurfschool.com, ☎ 09-489-2846 or 021-655-405.

New Zealand Surf Tours runs single and multi-day surf trips and lessons. www.newzealandsurftours.com, ☎ 09-832-9622.

On Boats

In addition to ferry service around the gulf, Fuller's has a two-hour **scenic cruise**, which is a great way to take in the sights, learn about the place and get out on the water for not much money. Departs daily at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm. $30.40 adults, $15.40 children. www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111.

A lot changed for Auckland, The City of Sails, when New Zealand won the America's Cup and the whole world arrived for the Louis Vuitton and America's Cup Challenge in 1999/2000. The **American Express Viaduct Basin** had been a bit of an eyesore of derelict buildings. When it became obvious that Auckland would be on display, a major refit of the area was undertaken. Today, it is one of the trendiest spots in the city and high on the list of most tourists for wandering around. You can take a peek at mega-yachts, sit outside sipping latte, have a bottle of wine and visit the **New Zealand National Maritime Museum**. The museum is a youngster – just opened in 1993 – and is filled with all things water-related. Start your visit with the 10-minute film *Te Waka: Our Great Journey,* a story of Pacific migration told in an entertaining and visually striking way. Then continue through the museum's exhibits, wander around the boats and take a ride out to the harbor.

The Pride of Auckland, based at the NZ National Maritime Museum, operates a fleet of sailboats and offers a huge range of sailing options. You can go for breakfast, for coffee, for lunch, for the whole day, for dinner, you name it, there's a trip to suit. Prices begin with the 45- to 50-minute Sailing Experience: $45 adults, $25 children. www.prideofauckland.com, ☎ 09-373-4557, fax 09-377-0459.

> **Tip:** There are countless sailing options; I suggest you call the information center at the Viaduct Basin and inquire about what's going on.

Here's your chance to crew on an America's Cup boat. With **SailNZ**, you can opt for either a day-sail on a catamaran or a match race on former America's Cup boats *NZL 40* or *NZL 41*. Better still, choose the **Whitbread** boat option (the boat was previously raced in the Whitbread around-the-world sailing

race) and go 120 nautical miles offshore to the Bay of Islands and spend two nights out. www.sailnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-359-5987 or 0800-724-569.

If you'd prefer a more traditional sailing experience, go with **Tallship *Soren Larsen***, a square-rigger. www.sorenlarsen.co.nz, ☎ 09-411-8755 or 0800-767-365.

On Foot

One of the best things about Auckland is its series of **Regional Parks**. Pick up a copy of the regional parks brochure, and head out. There are over 20 parks scattered around, many of them are farm parks, many are coastal and many offer fabulous views of the harbors. Walks vary in length from a few minutes to a couple of hours.

In the Air

At **Mission Bay**, you can go tandem hang-gliding up to 2,000 feet. www.gethigh.co.nz, ☎ 0508-438-4444.

Scenic helicopter flights around the area are available from **Helilink**. Prices begin at $95. www.helilink.co.nz, ☎ 09-377-4406.

■ Sightseeing

The **Auckland Domain** is a don't-miss spot. It is the oldest park in the city, and is wonderfully diverse – it is built around the cone of an extinct volcano and the land contours form a natural amphitheater. In addition to the **Auckland Museum**, it is home to the **Winter Garden**, with a fabulous collection of temperate-zone and tropical plants. The museum is set on three floors: the ground level is devoted to the people of New Zealand and contains one of the best Maori and Pacific collections in the world; the first level explains the place – how New Zealand came to be and its natural history; and the second level concerns New Zealand at War. The Auckland Museum was established in 1852, and the museum building (opened in 1929) was established as a memorial to New Zealand war dead. The original museum contents were moved to this complex, and during the 1990s a major renovation and renewal was undertaken. There is a Maori Cultural Performance three times daily; $15 adults, $7.50 children. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. Entry by donation, $5 suggested for adults, children free. www.akmuseum.org.nz.

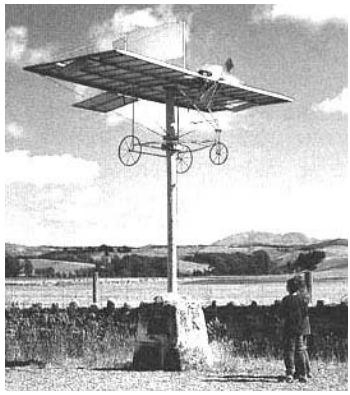
The **Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki** has a great collection of contemporary and traditional New Zealand as well as international art. You can view works by both Gottfried Lindauer and Charles F. Goldie, two of New Zealand's favorite artists of Maori subjects. It's conveniently located near downtown (just a block off Queen Street) and has free tours daily at 2 pm. It's a great spot, it's free and it's open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. Corner of Wellesley and Kichener Streets, ☎ 09-379-1349.

> **People-watching:** The **Aotea Square Markets** take place every Friday and Saturday. You can buy gifts, food, clothing, listen to music or just wander around and watch.

Sky City features a 328-meter (1,066-foot) needle that sticks up into the Auckland sky. If you are in the city on a clear day, go up to the top for a look around – it's spectacular. If you're so inclined, you can pop into the Casino and lose all your travel funds (or double them, depending). Or, if you're look-

ing for something a bit more adrenaline-pumping, you can do the **Sky Jump**, New Zealand's highest bungy. Or climb to the top of the tower with **Vertigo Climb**. A ride to the Sky Tower is $15 adults, $10 for YHA members and $7.50 children. At the corner of Federal and Victoria Streets, ☎ 09-363-6000.

So the Sky Tower wasn't enough high stuff for you? Consider the **Auckland Bridge Climb**. It's a 2½-hour trip, through, up and over the Auckland harbor bridge. Open daily for anyone seven years and older. www.aucklandbridgeclimb.co.nz, ☎ 09-979-2333 or 0800-000-808.



Monument to Richard Pearce at the site of his flights, Waitohi, near Timaru

My dad will be most embarrassed that I listed this, but from the ceiling at Sir Keith Park Memorial Site, a part of MOTAT, the **Museum of Transport and Technology**, there hangs an airplane that he designed. The Flaglor Scooter (yes, we spell our surnames differently; it's a long story) is a before-its-time ultralight. In addition, there are much more historically significant airplanes, like the Solent Mark IV Flying Boat that is outfitted for the period. If you like airplanes, you'll like this place – the volunteers are quite keen to chat. You can also view trains, vehicles and military transport displays and a Victorian Village. Open daily from 10 am to 5 pm. www.motat.org.nz, 805 Great North Road, Western Springs, ☎ 09-846-0199.

> **Did you know?** New Zealander Richard Pearce actually took the world's first flight, two years before the Wright Brothers. On March 31, 1902, Pearce flew his aircraft a distance of 91 meters (296 feet) in a field in Timaru. You can view a replica at MOTAT and at the site of his flights.

Mt. Eden, **Maungawhau**, is another dormant volcano; from the top you can get great views of the city and harbor. There are some nice walking tracks, it's a pleasant spot for a picnic and not far from downtown.

One Tree Hill, Maungakiekie, is a bit farther out from the city center, but has some really good walking and biking tracks. Right in the business district of Auckland, there are sheep and cattle in the lower paddocks. There are also olive groves, kauri trees and massive oaks. On a clear day, the views from the top are great. One Tree Hill Park and **Cornwall Park** come together to form the largest park in Auckland.

■ Where to Stay

Books have been written on where to stay in Auckland. There is no way I can include an exhaustive list, but here's a start. Keep in mind that the closer to the city center, the higher the price, and if you're not fussed about being in the center, stay out a ways or try to swing a deal through an agent.

In the City

The **Airedale Hotel** is right downtown and within walking distance to most attractions. Unusual for a city hotel, all the rooms have kitchen facilities. www.scenic-circle.co.nz, 380 Queen Street, ☎ 09-374-1741 or 0800-696-963, fax 09-374-1740 ($$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART

Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.

$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Rydges is also in the city center and close to most of the downtown action. www.rydges.com, corner of Federal and Kingston Streets, ☎ 09-375-5900, fax 09-375-5901 ($$$$).

Another good big hotel is the **Hilton Auckland**, located right on Princes Wharf. All the rooms have balconies over the harbor. info_Auckland@hilton.com, 147 Quay Street, ☎ 09-978-2000, fax 09-978-2001 ($$$$).

The only B&B right in the city center is **Aspen House**. They call it a boutique budget hotel and that's an apt description – it offers basic, contemporary accommodation and is a good value. There are twin, double and triple rooms with en-suite bathrooms, as well as single, double and triple rooms with shared facilities. Definitely a few steps up from backpacker's hostel but nowhere near as dear as the snazzy five-star hotels. www.aspenhouse.co.nz, 62 Emily Place, ☎ 09-379-6633 ($$-$$$).

The **Albion Hotel** is an older-style hotel a couple of blocks off Queen. It has 20 rooms in a renovated building, as well as a bar and restaurant. Convenient and not so pricey. albionhotel@xtra.co.nz, 119 Hobson Street, ☎ 09-379-4000, fax 09-379-4901 ($$).

The largest backpacker's hostel in the city is **Auckland Central Backpackers**, and they have made every effort to fill travelers needs – there's an Internet café, a travel center, currency exchange, and huge notice boards for buying and selling cars or tagging along on rides. There is the usual assortment of rooms, including some with en-suite bathrooms. www.acb.co.nz, 229 Queen Street (at Darby), ☎ 09-358-4877, fax 09-358-4872 ($).

Not nearly as huge is **Albert Park Backpackers**. Still in the city center, there are both small and large dorms, and doubles and twins that are made up with sheets and duvets. bakpak@albertpark.co.nz, 27 Victoria Street East, ☎ 09-309-0336 ($).

The **Auckland City YHA** is another big one. In addition to same-sex dorms, there are mostly twins and doubles. **Tommy's**, the in-house bistro, makes breakfast and dinner. www.yha.org.nz, corner of City Road and Liverpool Street, ☎ 09-309-2802 ($).

The new **Auckland International YHA** is just down the street, with modern facilities. There are small and large dorm rooms, twins and doubles (some with en-suite bathrooms), and a large, modern kitchen. www.yha.org.nz, 5 Turner Street, ☎ 09-302-8200 ($).

Parnell

The **Ascot Parnell** is a lovely facility and a good choice for rooms with private bath in a B&B. It's an historic home, and the large lounge has a sunny balcony. www.ascotparnell.com, 36 St. Stephens Ave., ☎ 09-309-9012, fax 09-309-3729 ($$$$).

Parnell's Village Motor Lodge is a large, rambling lodge with studios, and one- and two-bedroom self-contained units. This is a good option for staying in a trendy area without spending huge amounts. www.parnellmotorlodge.co.nz, 2 St. Stephens Ave., ☎ 09-377-1463, fax 09-373-4192 ($$).

Under new ownership, the clean, friendly and well-run **Lantana Lodge** has dorms, doubles, twins and triples. lantana@xtra.co.nz, 60 St. Georges Bay Road, ☎ 09-373-4546 ($).

International Backpackers has been recently refurbished and is under new ownership. It's on a quiet residential street, towels are provided and there is a large, comfortable garden. Twins, doubles and same-sex dorms. international.bp@xtra.co.nz, 2 Churton Street, ☎ 09-358-4584 ($).

Ponsonby

Amitees on Ponsonby B&B is an urban-style boutique hotel that is small, friendly and family-owned. There are eight bedrooms (ask for one with the awesome city views) and all have en-suite bathrooms with modern décor. www.amiteesonponsonby.co.nz, 237 Ponsonby Road, ☎/fax 09-378-6325 ($$$).

One of my favorite backpacker hostels is the **Brown Kiwi**, an old villa, just a short walk to the cafés and bars on Ponsonby Road. It's small and friendly and there is a garden to relax in. The owners are very helpful and accommodating. www.brownkiwi.co.nz, 7 Prosford Street, ☎ 09-378-0191 ($).

Ponsonby Backpackers has recently undergone refurbishment. It's in a big old villa and, sleeping just 30, is one of the smaller hostels around. It's a block off Ponsonby Road. www.ponsonby-backpackers.co.nz, 2 Franklin Road, ☎ 09-360-1311 or 0800-476-676 ($).

The **Herne Bay B&B** is a bit older, laid-back and not at all pretentious. It's in an old mansion home that overlooks the harbor. The B&B has recently undergone a change in ownership, and the manager is wonderful. There are apartments with bath and kitchen, rooms with private bath, and rooms with shared facilities. www.herne-bay.co.nz, 4 Shelly Beach Road, Herne Bay, ☎ 09-360-0309 ($$-$$$).

At the Airport

The **Jet Inn** is very convenient and modern, with a large swimming pool and a 24-hour courtesy shuttle. www.jetinn.co.nz, 63 Westney Road, ☎ 09-275-4100 or 0800-538-466 ($$$).

Silverpoint Motor Inn is a basic airport motel, but is clean, well-kept and serves a good hot breakfast to order. www.silveroaks.co.nz, silverpoint@silveroaks.co.nz, 138 McKenzie Road, Mangere, ☎ 09-275-3499 ($$-$$$).

For good value and a clean and comfortable place to stay, go to the **Skyway Lodge**. They have motel units, and dorm, twin and double rooms (some with

en-suite bathrooms). There's a pool, large kitchen and a courtesy bus. www.skywaylodge.co.nz, 30 Kirkbride Road, ☎ 09-275-4443 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

Well, you won't go hungry. Auckland has piles of restaurants to choose from and some are decidedly pricier than others. You can find just about everything.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

In the City

There are a few spots along Queen Street, but when I'm working in town I usually duck up to High (which turns into Lorne) or O'Connell Street. On High Street, there is a long block of cafés and bagel shops. **Sierra** has good coffee, fresh food and nice baked things. It's at the corner of Lorne and Victoria. During the day, to see and be seen, go to Chancery Arcade, just off Courthouse Lane. There is great outdoor café seating and some good designer shops where you can drop your extra money.

The best lunch deal, though, is stopping at one of the **sushi carts** – I like the one that's between Wellesley and Victoria. And it might sound cheesy, but I really like the **Food Alley** on Albert Street for all kinds of Asian fare. You can get a huge plate of noodles (or whatever) for $10 or less and it's open until 10 pm.

As far as evening meals go, **Merlot Wine Café** is my favorite for wine lists. They have good food, too, and, while it's a bit pricey, it's worth it. 23 O'Connell Street, ☎ 09-309-5456 ($$$).

The **Belgian Beer Café** has good beer and a full menu to go with it. Pleasant outside seating, too. Vulcan Lane ($$-$$$).

A little farther up the street is **Melba**, a café with tasty all-day breakfast and good coffee. Vulcan Lane.

If all the café food is getting too much and you want to sink your teeth into a steak, you really can't beat **Tony's Steak & Seafood**. 27 Wellesley Street ($$-$$$).

At the Viaduct

Loaded Hog is the spot for pub food and there's usually a band on the weekends. Viaduct Basin, 204 Quay Street ($$-$$$).

For great seafood, go to **Kermadec**. Choose from either the brasserie or the fine dining section. 1st Floor, Viaduct Harbour, ☎ 09-309-0412 ($$$).

Soul Bar and Bistro is trendy and expensive, but a good place to look around. Viaduct Harbour ($$-$$$).

Whangthai Restaurant has great Thai food and very attentive service. Viaduct House, Customs Street West ($$-$$$).

On Princes Wharf

Euro Bar Ltd. is trendy and expensive. Good leather couches, nice fire, great chef. Shed 22, Princes Wharf, ☎ 09-309-9866 ($$$-$$$$).

Wildfire Churrasaria is about meat – they bring around skewers of meat until you can't eat anymore. The name might give away the Latin influence... and there's Latin music on the weekends. ☎ 09-353-7595 ($$$).

Parnell

If you couldn't find a café to suit downtown, you're sure to find one in Parnell. Just wander the sidewalks until one of them strikes your fancy. But, for Italian, go to **Non Solo Pizza**. Authentic Italian in a contemporary setting. 259 Parnell Road, ☎ 09-379-5358 ($$-$$$).

For the upmarket, linen table-clothed dinner, go to **Antoine's Restaurant**. All the traditional foods, including sweetbreads and gizzards. 333 Parnell Road, ☎ 09-307-8756 ($$$$).

In Newmarket, go to **Mecca** for great breakfast and lunch at affordable prices. 61 Davis Crescent ($-$$).

Zarbo Delicatessen Café is a fabulous food shop as well as place to eat breakfast and lunch. Food is only served until 3 pm, so make sure you plan your day wisely. The shop has a huge range of choices from all over the world and, if you'll be self-catering at all, this would be a good spot to stock up before heading down the road. 24 Morrow Street ($-$$).

In Mission Bay, try **Jacques**. It's right on the water by the boats – great for a relaxed place to eat and the food is exceptionally good. 18 Tamaki Drive, Orakei, ☎ 09-521-3930 ($$$).

The **Fish Pot Café** is the pick for fish and chips. You can eat in or take out, so grab some food, sit on a bench and make a pig of your self. Right on the water, 99 B Tamaki Drive ($).

Ponsonby

Whoa. Ponsonby Road is one café and restaurant after another. Again, it's not a bad place to just wander until something strikes your fancy, but for a bit of direction, try one of the following.

My favorite coffee in New Zealand is Atomic and *the* **Atomic Café** is not only a fabulous place for a cuppa, but also home to some very tasty muffins and a long blackboard menu of mostly organic foods. 121 Ponsonby Road.

GPK (Gourmet Pizza Kitchen) has really good and innovative pizza (as well as other food). 234 Dominion Road, ☎ 09-623-1300 and 262 Ponsonby Road, ☎ 09-360-1113 ($$-$$$).

Sawadee Thai Restaurant is a good choice and always busy. 42 A Ponsonby Road, ☎ 09-376-0320 ($$-$$$).

Box House Café has excellent contemporary New Zealand cuisine. 286 Ponsonby Road, ☎ 09-376-6538 ($$$).

SPQR is a trendy spot for lunch and dinner and has a good wine list. It's very dependable, the staff is great and it was one of the original cafés on the street. 150 Ponsonby Road, ☎ 09-360-1710 ($$-$$$).

Go to **Anglesea Grill** for the seafood. Great food at good prices in a small space. 147 Ponsonby Road, ☎ 09-360-4551.

One Red Dog is a dependable, fun place with pizza, salads, interesting mains and lots of drinks. Loud enough that your kids will fit in. 151 Ponsonby, ☎ 09-360-1068 ($-$$$).

Andiamo Restaurant and Bar is a good choice, especially for brunch. 194 Jervois Road, Herne Bay, ☎ 09-378-7811 ($$-$$$).

One of my all time favorite Thai restaurants is **Tusk** in the neighborhood of Balmoral. Fabulous food and great ambience. 590 Dominion Road, ☎ 09-638-9516 ($$-$$$).

North of Auckland

Just over the Auckland Harbour Bridge is the North Shore, a bit of a bedroom area for the city, hard to dispute if you're trying to get over the bridge at rush hour. While Takapuna has a very pleasant beach and a smattering of good cafés and bars, it is Devonport that is of most interest to the visitor.

Easily accessed by a 15-minute ferry ride, **Devonport** is a ritzy little town, one of Auckland's oldest suburbs and full of Victorian architecture. There are plenty of shops (including some good used-book stores), cafés and restaurants. The beach is very pretty and on a fine day nothing beats walking up to **North Head** for the views out to Rangitoto. There are plenty of gun emplacements and tunnels for exploring. The walk up to **Mount Victoria** also provides stunning views of the city and harbor. In February of each year the Devonport Wine and Food Festival really brings to life this little town. It runs for a weekend, and wine tasting, music and food are what's hot. There are two museums in Devonport, the **Navy Museum** and **Jackson's Muzeum**. Neither are on the top of my list of things to do, but at Jackson's you'll see lots of artifacts of local interest, including plenty of old phone booths and other incidentals. It's in the old post office. Open daily, 10 am to 9 pm, $8 adults.

Getting to Devonport is easy on the ferry, www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111. It's only 15 minutes across and runs every 30 minutes from 6 am to 11 pm daily. Bikes are free so, if you have one, take it! Once you arrive in Devonport, pop into the information center and get a map to explore the place, 3 Victoria Road, ☎ 09-446-0677.

Farther North & West

While there are definite draws in the city center, I think the best part of Auckland is to the west – specifically in the **Waitakere Park Ranges** – a magical spot only 40 minutes away and Auckland's largest regional park. Covering over 21,000 acres, the Waitakeres are popular for walking, biking and surfing. Heading out of Auckland, aim for the **Arataki Visitor Centre**. You'll be outfitted with maps (*Waitakere Ranges Track Map* $8) and brochures and there is also a well-stocked gift shop. At the entrance to the center is a *Pou*, a guardian post, carved by local iwi (tribes). At 11 meters (35 feet), it is one of the largest in New Zealand. You can get permits and information about camping in the ranges at the visitor center. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm during the summer; 9 am to 5 pm weekends and 10 am to 4 pm weekdays during the winter. On Scenic Drive in Titirangi. ☎ 09-366-2000 or 0800-806-040.

■ Adventures

On Water

Warning: The beaches on the West Coast have strong rip currents and heavy surf! Be careful, and always swim between the flags

West Coast Beaches

Whatipu Beach is an excellent surf beach and the farthest south, at the entrance to Manukau Harbour – an area known for many shipwrecks. The area is good for exploring around the cliffs.

Karekare Beach has a patrolled swimming area on the weekends and a walk that leads to Karekare Waterfall.

Did you know? Karekare Beach was the site for the filming of *The Piano*.

Piha, rugged and windswept, is the most popular surf beach on the west coast. The black iron-sand beach is great for walking (both on the beach and in the bush).

For a more extreme beach, try **Bethells** – exposed and rocky; if the sea is rough, you'll see its power here.

Muriwai Beach, a bit farther north, is a very popular spot for walking, running and swimming. It's black sand and long – you can walk for 48 km (30 miles)! The north end is popular with people who like to drive their cars and trucks on the beach so, for solitude, stay farther south.

Watchable wildlife: Check out the gannet colony at Muriwai Beach. Australasian gannets breed here beginning in September. After the chicks are born, they stay at Muriwai until February or March and then head off to Australia for two to six years. There are short walking tracks to view the colony. To learn more about gannets, see the section on Cape Kidnappers, page 294.

On Bikes

There is some great mountain biking to be done at the **Woodhill Forest**. There are tracks for all levels and you can ride for at least half a day without crossing the same track twice. It's a very popular spot on the weekends with Auckland riders, so if you're wishing to meet some biking buddies, here's your chance. There are bikes available for hire at the forest, and it's advisable to pick up a forest map. Turn off SH16 at Woodhill and follow the signs.

On Horses

Horse treks are available on the beach at Muriwai with the **Muriwai Riding Centre**. Depart at 10 am and 1:30 pm, $70 per person, bookings are essential. ☎ 09-411-8480.

Canyoning

AWOL Canyoning Adventures leads trips into the Piha canyon. You'll abseil under waterfalls, do some jumps, explore caves, take a rockslide on your bum – what else? None of it is obligatory; if you're afraid, you can use optional routes. No previous experience is required and, even if you chicken out of of it all, you'll be in a fabulously beautiful place, and you'll look cool in your wetsuit, helmet and harness. From $125. www.awoladventures.co.nz, ☎ 09-834-0501 or 0800-462-965.

Another option for canyoning is with **Canyonz**. They run trips both in the Waitakeres and on the Coromandel Peninsula. In the Waitakere Range's Blue Canyon, there are 18 waterfalls! It starts with a bush walk and then you hit the water with rock slides, rope swings and abseil. After lunch, it's more of the same, but bigger. From $125. www.canyonz.co.nz, ☎ 09-630-2776 or 0800-422-696.

With Wine

The Henderson Valley and Kumeu are home to some fabulous wineries that not only make a good drop or two, but are worth a visit while you're in the area.

My Favorite Wineries

Don't miss **Kumeu River**. The Brajkovich family has been making wine here since 1944 and is one of the most respected families of wine in New Zealand. Definitely try the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. And don't pass up the Merlot. 550 SH16, Kumeu, ☎ 09-412-8415.

I was once in a documentary for a Korean television show filmed at **Matua Valley** and it was one of the most hilarious experiences of my life. While that is not reason enough for you to visit, the fact that Matua regularly makes very lovely wine at affordable prices and that the cellar door (Kiwi lingo for tasting room) is a friendly and inviting place to spend time, is a reason. Waikoukou Valley Road, ☎ 09-411-8301. Next door is the **Hunting Lodge** restaurant, which has very good food, but I've found it important not to be in a hurry when dining there. ☎ 09-411-8259 ($$$).

Belonging to the second-largest wine company in New Zealand, the **Nobilo** tasting room usually has a broad range of wines for tasting. Definitely worth a stop. 45 Station Road, Huapai, ☎ 09-412-6662.

For another winery with a restaurant, try **Slojans Estate Winery**, with lovely outdoor seating and delicious food for a leisurely lunch. 366 SH16, ☎ 09-412-5858.

Local products: BeesOnline Honey Centre & Café is a celebration of all things bee-related. Traveling around New Zealand, you may see many bee and honey stores and shops, but this one is new and classy and not only full of bees and bee products, but has a fabulous café and educational area. Definitely worth a stop; open daily, 9 am to 5 pm. SH16, Waimauku, ☎ 09-411-7953.

Farther North & East

Heading out of Auckland towards Northland, SH1 will lead you out of the North Shore suburbs and into the more laid-back Rodney district. I'm sometimes in such a rush to get farther north that I blast through here, but there are definitely places to stop and enjoy. Just past Albany (you're still really urbanized here) is **Long Bay Regional Park**, with a popular sandy beach. It gets crowded, but not a bad place to stop and let the kids run around. Continuing north, you'll get to the turnoff for **Whangparaoa Peninsula** and the Shakespeare Regional Park. There are beaches and bays, cliffs, lookouts and walks, as well as a narrow-gauge railway. Just four km (two miles) out to sea, is **Tiritiri Matangi Island**. You can catch a ferry from Gulf Harbour out to the island.

Orewa, the first town you'll arrive in once you leave the grips of the Auckland suburbs, is a pleasant town with a long sandy beach and a few beach-front motels. Just a few clicks north is Waiwera, most known for the **Waiwera Thermal Resort**; open daily from 9 am to 10 pm, it's a good place to stop off for a soak. There are 26 (!) naturally heated mineral pools as well as a spa-therapy center and water slides – clearly, something for everyone in your car. www.waiwera.co.nz, 21 Main Road, SH1, ☎ 09-427-8800, fax 09-427-8816.

Just north of Waiwera is the **Wenderholm Regional Park** – the first of Auckland's regional parks and one of the most beautiful. Great beaches, magnificent pohutukawa trees, walking tracks that vary from 20 minutes to a couple of hours and mangrove swamps all tie together to make this a fine place for a few hours exploration or a picnic.

Puhoi was settled by pioneers from Bohemia in 1863. It is now home to a small population of their descendants, the very popular **Puhoi Tavern**, and also **Puhoi Cheese** and its **Art of Cheese Café**. You can rent a canoe or kayak from **Puhoi River Canoe Hire** and paddle the Puhoi River to Wenderholm Regional Park, eight km (five miles). Guided trips are available or you can go out on your own, ☎ 09-422-0891 or 025-284-1672.

■ Where to Stay

Why not stay at the Waiwera Thermal Resort? A resort hotel is going to be built, but in the meantime, check out the **Waiwera Holiday Park**, right next door, which has chalets and campsites. camp@waiwera.co.nz, ☎ 09-426-5270, fax 09-426-5250 ($$).

South of Auckland

Leaving Auckland and heading south, most tourists are so excited to be in the car and traveling that they forget to stop along the way. There are a couple of things that I would definitely recommend doing and if you're grabbing a rental car after a long-haul flight, it'll be good for you to stretch your legs with a bit of a walk. The **Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens** are on SH1 just south of the city proper. This is a fantastic park with over 8,000 plant varieties, including a good stand of threatened native flora. This is the site of the annual **Ellerslie Flower Show** in November. There is also a café onsite.

Heading out to the Whitford Forest will take you around the Whakakaiwhara Peninsula and to the **Duder Regional Park**, yet another great spot to take a walk, a picnic or a mountain bike ride.

One of my favorite places to ride a bike when I was living in Auckland was at the **Hunua Ranges Regional Park**. There are streams, waterfalls, fabulous views and the largest native forest in the area. You can walk here, too! There are plenty of trails, some wheelchair-friendly, some leading into the rugged inner core.

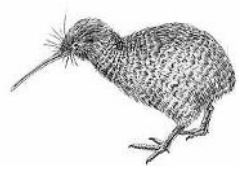
Glenmorgan Farm, one of New Zealand's premier Thoroughbred breeding farms is open to visitors. You can choose a one-hour stable and parade tour and/or a 30-minute farm tour. It's a working stud farm, so depending on season, you'll see whatever is happening on the farm – foals being born, yearlings being trained, and so on. The tour starts with a video explaining the racing and breeding industries and then you'll be guided through the barns and farm. During the parade of horses, your guide will comment on who the horse is, what it's being trained for, its history, and so on. www.glenmorgan.co.nz, ☎ 09-291-9355.

Hauraki Gulf Islands

If you fly into Auckland during daylight hours, you can't help but notice all the islands dotting the sea – there are more than 50. Most of them are easily accessible from Auckland (see *Getting Here By Water* section above, page 54).

Cone-shaped **Rangitoto** is only 600 years old, formed by volcanic activity, and is just 10 km (six miles) northeast of the city. It has the world's largest pohutukawa forest, interesting lava caves, and, because of the terrain, very few plants or birds. The walk to the top (about an hour) offers fabulous views of the area and there's a plaque at the summit that describes the role of the island in defense during WWII. Next to Rangitoto, connected by a causeway, is **Motutapu**, which, in contrast to the rocky, porous ground of Rangitoto, is green and lush. You can camp at the basic DoC camping area on Motutapu.

Watchable Wildlife



Tiritiri Matangi, just four km (less than three miles) off the Whangaparaoa Peninsula, is a predator-free conservation area that is planted with native trees and home to many endangered birds, including the little spotted kiwi (left), takahe, saddleback, kokako, North Island robin, brown teal and stitchbird. It's a magical place, and one of the most successful examples of conservation projects anywhere. Like much of New Zealand, it was cleared and used for farming, but between 1984 and 1994 the farm animals were removed and intense restoration efforts began, followed by reintroduction of birds. It's definitely a place worth visiting. Ferry service is by Fuller's from either Gulf Harbour or Auckland.

One of the larger Hauraki Gulf islands, **Kawau Island** is home to Mansion House, the home of the first Governor General of New Zealand, Sir George Grey. Around 1870, Grey imported more than a few exotic plants and, of all things, **wallabies**. An interesting addition to the landscape, the wallabies are destructive of the forest and seedlings, along with worms and insects – the diet of weka and kiwi. Two of the species of wallaby are threatened in their homeland, Australia. Efforts are being made to repatriate the animals – pests here, but protected there. The island has had a history of copper mining and farming. Now, about 10% is DoC managed, with the rest of the island privately owned by a small population of about 100. It's a very popular yachting destination – the sheltered bays are often dotted with anchored sailboats.

■ Waiheke Island

This has become quite the place. Similar in size to Hong Kong, Waiheke was home to some of Auckland's fringe – the artists and alternative-lifestylers – during the 1960s and 1970s. Then it became popular with the well-heeled business types and wine and olive growers and now, while still an easy-going place to hang out, is one of the trendier "suburbs" of Auckland.

Getting Here

Fullers runs regular ferry service from downtown Auckland and Half Moon Bay to Matiatia Bay, the "gateway" to Waiheke, www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111.

Subritzkyline operates passenger and vehicle service from Half Moon Bay to Kennedy Point, www.subritzky.co.nz, ☎ 09-534-5663.

Information Sources

The **Waiheke Island Information Centre** is in Oneroa, 2 Korora Road, ☎ 09-372-1234, fax 09-372-9919.

You can rent scooters or bikes to ride around (cycling around Waiheke is good exercise as it's a bit hilly), visiting beaches and art galleries as you soak up the sun and views. The walk at Stony Batter will take you through old gun emplacements and tunnels. Waiheke is a good destination close to the city (with fast and efficient ferry service). If you can't spend a few nights out here, then at least head over for a day trip. A range of island tour companies that offer sightseeing trips around the island meet the passenger ferries. It's a good idea to book in advance, particularly if you want to do a wine tour. Contact **Ananda Tours** for art, wine, or general tours, ☎ 09-372-7530. **Fullers** also runs tours in conjunction with ferry service (see contact details above). You can ride in the open-sided **Tuk Tuk Taxi** around the island – they'll do wine tours and scenic rides. ☎/fax 09-372-6127.

There is also a bus service on the island that can take you to most of the attractions.

Adventures

On Water

You can take a half- or full-day guided kayak trip with **The Kayak Company**. It's a great way to poke in and out of the bays and enjoy Waiheke island from the water side. Prices begin at $60 per person. www.thekayakcompany.co.nz, ☎ 09-372-2112.

On Horses

One- and two-hour horseback rides are available through **Sunset Corral**. Prices begin at $55 adults, $45 children. If you book a day-trip with Club Waiheke-Sunset Corral, your $69 fare includes ferry transport, time to explore the shops and cafés and a one-hour horseback ride. www.gotowaiheke.co.nz/clubwaiheke.htm, office right near the ferry terminal, ☎ 09-372-6565.

In the Air

Scenic flights from as little as $25 will give you a good view of the island, its coves and vineyards. **Waiheke Airservices** also runs charter flights between Auckland, the Coromandel Peninsula and Great Barrier Island. reservations@waihekeairservices.co.nz, ☎ 09-372-5000 or 0800-372-5000.

With Wine

In addition to walks, beaches, and art galleries, some of New Zealand's best red wine – Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec and Cabenet Franc – comes from Waiheke. The vineyards are small, so the wine production is limited and prices are higher than much of the rest of the country. But it's worth it. Don't take my word for it, get out there.

My Favorite Wineries

Peninsula Estate not only makes wonderful wine (which they age for five years before release), but has spectacular views overlooking Oneroa Bay. The tastings are in the barrel hall or on the lookout and are by arrangement. But don't be shy; ring to say you're coming. ☎ 09-372-7866.

Growing 14 varieties of olives as well wine, **Kennedy Point Vineyard** provides one of the friendliest cellar door (tasting room) facilities on the island. They make lunch platters and you can choose between sitting on the deck or in the vineyard and olive grove. ☎ 09-372-5600.

Mudbrick Vineyard makes 14,000 bottles of wine a year. Enough, they say, to supply their customers, their restaurant and their staff. "A lot of wine drinking goes on over here." You've got to love that philosophy. The restaurant is a perfect spot for lunch and dinner. ☎ 09-372-9050.

You can't come to Waiheke to taste wine and not go to **Te Whau**. The wine, the place, the surroundings are all exquisite. Enough said, just go. ☎ 09-372-7191.

Where to Stay

There are many B&Bs on the island and a few large accommodations like motels. I'll include some choices here, but the information center has a wall full of brochures. You might also want to check out www.waihekeunlimited.co.nz for upper-end accommodation options.

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Waimarama Cottage is a beautiful self-contained cottage next to Peninsula Estate Vineyard. It has its own private garden and striking sea views. korora@ihug.co.nz, 52 Korora Road, ☎ 09-372-6282 ($$$$).

You can stay at the lovely **Te Whau Lodge** while you enjoy the best wine and food (breakfast and dinner are included in the price). There is an outdoor spa and four guest rooms, each with its own balcony. www.tewhaulodge.co.nz, 36 Vintage Lane, ☎ 09-372-2288 ($$$$).

There are studios, condominiums, villas and chalets at **Waiheke Island Resort**, as well as a tennis court and heated swimming pool. It's one of the larger facilities on the island. www.waihekeresort.co.nz, 4 Bay Road, ☎ 09-372-0011 or 0800-924-4353 ($$$$).

For more affordable options, consider **Beachside Lodge**, with apartments that sleep up to five. www.ki-wi.co.nz/beachside.htm, 48 Kiwi Street, ☎ 09-372-9884 ($$$).

Midway Motel has studios and one-bedroom units, as well as holiday homes. There is also a pool and a spa. www.waihekemidway.net, 1 Whakarite Road, ☎ 09-372-8023 or 0800-372-8023, fax 09-372-9669 ($$-$$$).

Punga Lodge has affordable self-contained units in native bush. They also offer a homestay option, where you stay with a family. www.ki-wi.co.nz/punga.htm. 223 Oceanview Road, ☎ 09-372-6675 ($$-$$$).

Where to Camp

Camping is available at the basic **Whakanewha Campsite** by Rocky Bay. There are cold showers and composting toilets, and a safe swimming beach along with walking tracks. Contact Parksline for booking at ☎ 09-303-1530.

Where to Eat

The restaurant at **Mudbrick Vineyard** has a great vineyard menu that will have you salivating. Many of the fresh ingredients come right from the garden; there is indoor and outdoor seating and the view is great. Open for lunch and dinner, Church Bay Road, ☎ 09-372-9050.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Te Whau Vineyard Restaurant is top of the heap, for sure. Not only is the food to

die for, but the wine list will have you drooling. It's a special occasion to go there and one not to miss. 218 Te Whau Drive, ☎ 09-372-7191 ($$$-$$$$).

There are quite a few cafés in the little village of Oneroa, but the **Lazy Lounge** is my choice, with its totally eclectic clientele and menu. This is where the local poets spin yarns on Sunday night and where the sports teams celebrate victory. It's a good spot for lunch or a beer in the garden. 139 Oceanview Road, ☎ 09-372-5132 ($-$$).

Open for lunch, the **Veranda Café** at Stonyridge Vineyard is yet another wonderful place to eat and enjoy the sunshine and views. 80 Onetangi Road, ☎ 09-372-8822 ($$).

■ Great Barrier Island

Go from upmarket winery tourism with little shops to the rugged lifestyle farther out to sea on Great Barrier Island. If you have time, this is a fantastic destination for a few days worth of exploration. It's rugged and filled with walking tracks, birds and lizards. Larger than most of the islands, it sits nearly 90 km (56 miles) offshore and does, as its name suggests, protect the inner islands from weather. The eastern side catches the weather and wind and is pounded by the ocean; the western coast is more pleasant and tranquil and it's there you'll find yachts anchored and beaches to play on. The island was named by Captain James Cook, but prior to his arrival it was inhabited by Maori of the Ngatiwai and Ngatimaru tribes. It was later used as a whaling center and became, like Waiheke, a haven for those seeking an out-of-the-ordinary lifestyle in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, about 1,200 people live on the island. There is no electricity, other than private generators, and no bank. There is, however, accommodation at all levels.

> **Did you know?** Great Barrier is the fourth-largest New Zealand Island.

Most visitors to the island spend their time kayaking, walking, cycling, surfing, scuba diving or just lazing on the beach – not a bad option in the bunch. The main settlement (a few houses, a cardphone, the school and accommodation) is in **Tryphena**, where the ferries arrive.

Getting Here

Keep in mind that Great Barrier Island is remote and getting here is at the whim of the weather. Trips can be cancelled or delayed because of bad conditions.

By Air

Daily flights operate from Auckland International Airport and from North Shore Airfield. Flights from either take about 30 minutes. You can also fly to Great Barrier from the Coromandel Peninsula and Whangerei. Contact **Great Barrier Airlines**, www.greatbarrier.co.nz, ☎ 09-275-9120 or 0800-900-600.

By Water

Subritzky has a passenger and vehicle ferry from Auckland, which is about a two-hour journey. www.subritzky.co.nz, ☎ 09-373-4036.

Fullers operates seasonal passenger service from Auckland. www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111.

Getting Around

There is limited public transport on the island, but shuttle buses operate from the ferry terminal and airfield to accommodations. Daily service around the island is available on **Great Barrier Buses** between Stray Possum Lodge and the Claris Airport, the hot pools, Medlands Beach and a few other destinations. You can buy a five-day pass and transfer to and from the wharf, plus get unlimited travel around for five days. You can also opt for a one-day pass. Book with the information center (see below).

There are two companies that do island-wide tours. **Bob's Island Tour & Car Rentals** does full-day tours to the more remote spots on the island and includes a detailed commentary along the way. Bob also provides transport to tramping and walking tracks. You can rent cars and campervans from him as well. ☎ 09-420-0988

You can also rent a car from **Aotea Rentals**, ☎ 09-429-0055.

Information Sources

Check out **www.greatbarrier.co.nz**.

The **Visitor Information Centre** is in Claris, opposite the airfield and can be reached at ☎ 09-429-0033, fax 09-429-0660.

The **Department of Conservation** has an office at Port Fitzroy Field Base, which is open weekdays. ☎ 09-429-0044, fax 09-429-0071.

Did you know? You can send a letter by pigeon post from Great Barrier Island. Said to be the first pigeon post run in the world, pigeons really were used from 1898 to 1908. It'll set you back $20 and your letter will be flown to Auckland where it gets forwarded to any destination.

Adventures

On Water

It's an adventure just going to the beach at **Medlands**! This is a sweeping crescent of white sand, popular for swimming and surfing. Note, however, that it is not patrolled.

The **Kaitoke Hot Springs** is a series of bathing pools. It's just an easy one-hour walk from the Whangaparapara Road.

Paradise Cycles in Claris rents surfboards, ☎ 09-429-0303.

If you want to go kayaking or snorkeling, contact **Aotea Kayaks**. They do guided trips during the day for as short as two hours up to a full day. For something really special, go on a night trip. Sunset paddles are also offered. Prices begin at $30 per person. ☎ 09-429-0664.

Kayaks are available for rent from **Great Barrier Kayak Hire**, ☎ 09-429-0520 or 0800-101-840; **FitzRoy House**, ☎ 09-429-0091; and **Great Barrier Lodge**, ☎ 09-429-0488.

On Foot

This is definitely the place to bring your tramping boots. The walks through the bush will take you past rimu, kauri, rata and kowhai, in addition to other native trees. Be sure to stop in the very helpful DoC office and pick up a copy of the *Track Information* brochure.

One of the popular walks is to the **Kauri Dams** – built by kauri loggers to drive large quantities of logs downstream from remote areas. Trees would be felled and rolled into reservoirs, then water was allowed to build up behind the dams. The floodgates would open, and the logs would be transported to the harbor. Remains of the dams can be seen in the Kaiarara Stream. Access is from the track to Mt. Hobson.

The **SS *Wairarapa* Walkway** is 30 minutes along Whangapoua Beach and leads to the site commemorating where the steamship struck the cliffs near Miners Head in 1894. There were 130 lives lost and it remains one of New Zealand's worst shipping disasters.

At 621 meters (2,018 feet), the highest point on the island is **Mount Hobson** (*Hirakimata*). The track is boardwalked to protect the nesting sites of the black petrel – the summit is a principle nesting site. There are a number of tramping routes to Mount Hobson, the most popular being from Windy Canyon, which takes all day.

> **Did you know?** The Whangaparapara forest is the largest possum-free forest in New Zealand. Thanks to there being no possums, you'll see fabulous stands of nikau palms. Many of the tracks follow the old mining routes.

On Bikes

Great Barrier is going to become a very popular mountain bike destination, mark my words. It's already popular with those in the know. There are some hills, but you'll ride mainly on gravel roads. But the remoteness, scenery and access to the beaches is the real draw for me. Bring your own or hire a bike in Claris from **Great Barrier Hire**, ☎ 09-429-0417, or **Paradise Cycles**, ☎ 09-429-0303; in Whangaparapara from **Great Barrier Lodge**, ☎ 09-429-0488.

The **Glenfern Sanctuary** is in the valley behind FitzRoy House and is an intensely managed reforestation and predator-control area. There is a track around the property and you'll see plenty of great trees, including a 600-year-old kauri. You will also see nesting sites of petrels here (shown at right). Other birds on the track are tui, kakas, wood pigeons, and fantails. Keep your ears open for the grey warbler and shining cuckoo.

Where to Stay

There are many small B&Bs, guest cottages and homestays. Contact the information center at ☎ 09-429-0033, fax 09-429-0660 to book accommodation before coming to Great Barrier.

The loveliest spot in so many ways is **Earthsong Lodge**. It's one of the luxury accommodations (it only has room for six guests at a time) on the island and lives up to its reputation. There are great views of the bush and sea and

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

it really is a retreat. In addition to the accommodation and fabulous restaurant, therapeutic and aromatherapy treatments in the suites can be arranged. The building is of straw-bale construction – very friendly to the environment and the insulating qualities of the straw make it friendly to the guests. The floors are of renewable timber and much of the other wood used in construction was recycled. Solar energy is used for heating, and the lodge has a modern, eco-friendly waste treatment system. The owners make a huge effort to care for their guests, as well as the environment, planting native trees and eradicating predators to create a haven for wildlife. Tariff includes dinner, bed and breakfast. www.earthsonglodge.co.nz, ☎ 09-429-0030, fax 09-429-0351 ($$$$).

FitzRoy House, with a cottage that sleeps six in three bedrooms, is a part of the **Glenfern Sanctuary** – your stay here is about nature tourism. Enjoy the walkways, the birds and the outdoors. You can use the canoes and dinghy for free, and Tony has a sailboat that he might take you out on. www.fitzroyhouse.co.nz, Port FitzRoy, ☎ 09-429-0091, fax 09-429-0492 ($$$).

Great Barrier Lodge is right on the water in Whangaparapara Harbour. It's a large facility with cottages and studio units, a general store and a restaurant. ☎ 09-429-0488 ($$$-$$$$).

In the bush is the Tudor-style **Pigeon's Lodge**. There is a restaurant and four roomswith private bath and two self-contained units. In Tryphena. ☎ 09-429-0437 ($$).

Also in Tryphena is **Pohutukawa Lodge**, with three rooms with private bath and one family suite with bath. It has a big garden and children are welcome. It's associated with the Currach Irish pub (see below), which has a separate entrance. ☎ 09-429-0211 ($$).

The **Shearers Quarters** in Whangapoua Bay is a self-contained cottage that sleeps up to six. Set among trees, but on a two-mile beach, this is on a farm that you're invited to walk around and explore. ☎ 09-429-0133 ($$).

Also in Tryphena is **Stray Possum**, a lovely backpackers' hostel with a licensed restaurant. There are two chalets, as well as a backpacker's hostel with double and share rooms. It's set in the bush and has large gardens and plenty of outdoor space. Some room for tents, too. These folks operate the bus service around the island and also have gear for rent for snorkeling, biking and kayaking. www.straypossum.co.nz, ☎ 09-429-0109 or 09-429-0401 ($-$$$).

Check out **Medlands Beach Backpackers and Villas**. There are family rooms and a double bunk room as well as a chalet and villa. Bikes, boogie boards, snorkels, fishing gear all available free of charge. www.medlandsbeach.com, ☎ 09-429-0340 ($-$$$).

Where to Camp

DoC maintains six campsites around the island at the following locations: Akapoua Bay, Whangapoua, Medlands, Awana, Harataonga, and The Green. All campsites have toilets and a water

supply and all but The Green have cold showers. Bookings are essential during the busy holiday season. ☎ 09-429-0044.

There is also a backcountry 24-bunk hut at Kaiarara. It has a wood stove, BBQ area, water and toilets.

DoC also has a guest cottage adjacent to the DoC office (☎ 09-429-0044, fax 09-429-0071) at Port FitzRoy Field Base.

Where to Eat

There aren't too many choices, but a few good ones and many accommodations provide food. If you are cooking for yourself, you had better bring all the food you'll want for your stay (particularly vegetables). There is a grocery store at the Claris Centre near the airport, the Stonewall Store in Tryphena, and general stores in Port Fitzroy, Great Barrier Lodge and Orama.

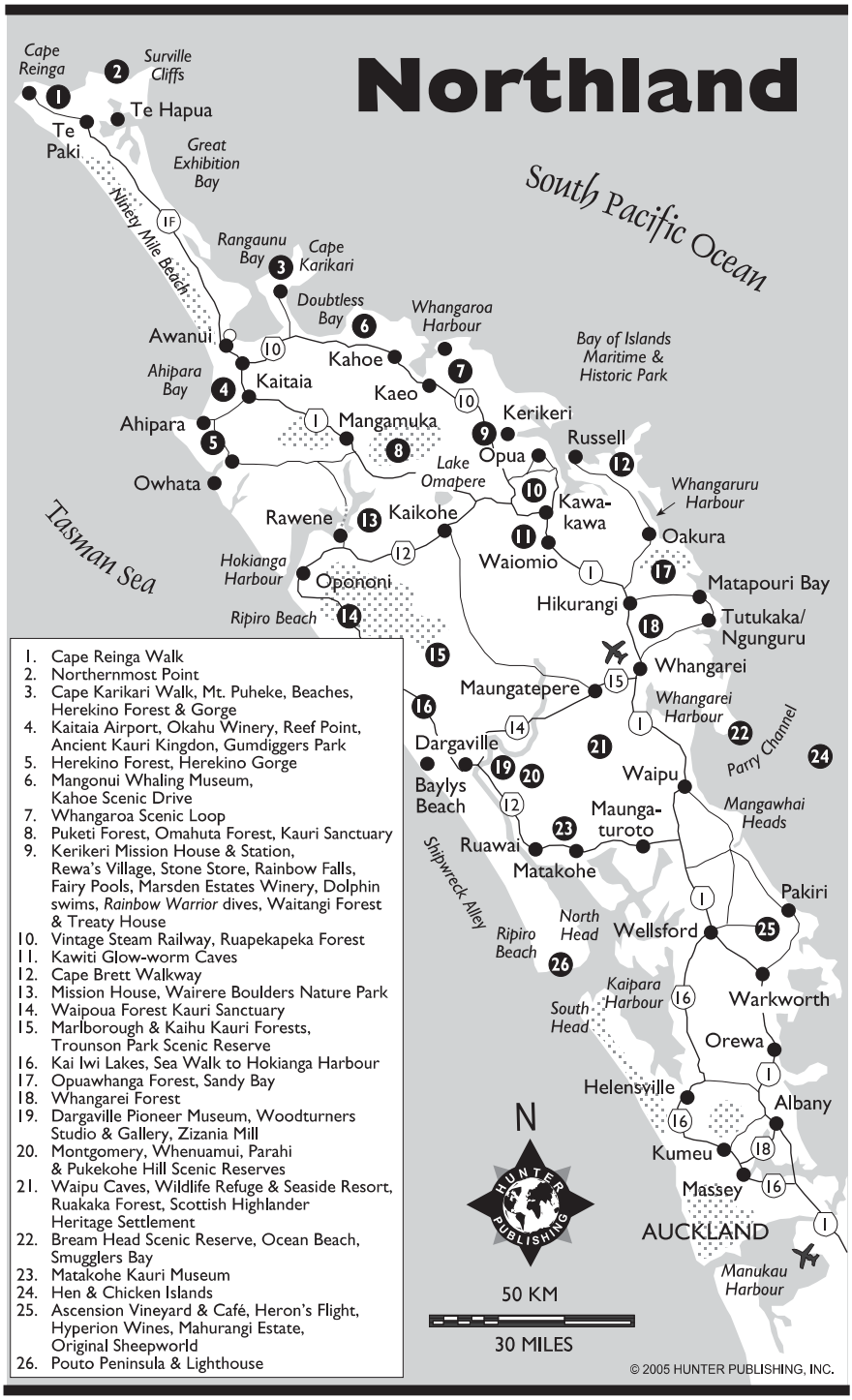
DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

At the Claris center near the airport is the **Claris Texas Café**. Surprising though the name may be, it is the best café on the island, has good sandwiches, coffee, panini, and baked things. ☎ 09-429-0811 ($-$$).

The **Currach Irish Pub** has a big menu and lots of choices, from seafood to steaks, and they're also open for breakfast. There's music on Thursdays and Irish beer on tap. There is outdoor dining in the summer and a big fire in the winter – perfect Irish pub stuff. Tryphena, ☎ ($$-$$$)

The **Barrier Oasis Lodge** is a good choice for fine dining and drinking local wine from the on-site vineyard. Open for lunch and dinner (bookings essential for dinner). Stonewall, Tryphena, ☎ 09-429-0021.

There are a few other places to grab a bite, some with restricted hours outside of the summer season. Try the **Barrier Social Club** for pub meals, in Tryphena and the **Great Barrier Island Sports and Social Club** on Whangaparapara Road in Claris for pub food.



1. Cape Reinga Walk
2. Northernmost Point
3. Cape Karikari Walk, Mt. Puheke, Beaches, Herekino Forest & Gorge
4. Kaitaia Airport, Okahu Winery, Reef Point, Ancient Kauri Kingdon, Gumdiggers Park
5. Herekino Forest, Herekino Gorge
6. Mangonui Whaling Museum, Kahoe Scenic Drive
7. Whangaroa Scenic Loop
8. Puketi Forest, Omahuta Forest, Kauri Sanctuary
9. Kerikeri Mission House & Station, Rewa's Village, Stone Store, Rainbow Falls, Fairy Pools, Marsden Estates Winery, Dolphin swims, *Rainbow Warrior* dives, Waitangi Forest & Treaty House
10. Vintage Steam Railway, Ruapekapeka Forest
11. Kawiti Glow-worm Caves
12. Cape Brett Walkway
13. Mission House, Wairere Boulders Nature Park
14. Waipoua Forest Kauri Sanctuary
15. Marlborough & Kaihu Kauri Forests, Trounson Park Scenic Reserve
16. Kai Iwi Lakes, Sea Walk to Hokianga Harbour
17. Opuawhanga Forest, Sandy Bay
18. Whangarei Forest
19. Dargaville Pioneer Museum, Woodturners Studio & Gallery, Zizania Mill
20. Montgomery, Whenuamui, Parahi & Pukekohe Hill Scenic Reserves
21. Waipu Caves, Wildlife Refuge & Seaside Resort, Ruakaka Forest, Scottish Highlander Heritage Settlement
22. Bream Head Scenic Reserve, Ocean Beach, Smugglers Bay
23. Matakohe Kauri Museum
24. Hen & Chicken Islands
25. Ascension Vineyard & Café, Heron's Flight, Hyperion Wines, Mahurangi Estate, Original Sheepworld
26. Pouto Peninsula & Lighthouse

Northland

Introduction

Known as The Birthplace of a Nation, Northland's natural beauty is equaled by its fascinating history and culture. Northland is home to Hokianga Harbour, where Kupe, the legendary Maori explorer first arrived in his *waka* or war canoe. In 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi, an historic agreement between Maori and the British Crown, was drafted and signed at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds. Inland, Tane Mahuta (the largest living kauri tree in New Zealand) and other towering kauri trees grow tall and proud and the waterways, seashores and islands of Northland all demand attention. A subtropical region, Northland is often referred to as the "Winterless North" and regularly enjoys the warmest temperatures in the country. A long, narrow peninsula, Northland is a big region with over 1,700 km (1,054 miles) of coastline. Exploring Northland can take days, weeks or months – give it as much time as you have.

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- **The Kauri Coast** 81
- **The Far North** 91
- **The Bay of Islands** 102

Legend says that Kupe, an ancient Maori hero, went on an expedition to prove his fishing prowess. He pulled up the world's largest fish – the North Island of New Zealand. If you turn a map of New Zealand upside down, you can envision Wellington as the fish's head, Taranaki and East Cape as its fins and Northland, its tail or Te Hiku o Te Ika. In his waka (canoe), Kupe and his crew made landfall on the shores of Hokianga Harbour. Kupe's wife, Kuramarotini, described the land as "Aotearoa," Land of the Long White Cloud.

Northland has a population of 139,143 and its economy is based on agriculture – over half the region's three million acres of land is devoted to dairy, beef and sheep farming; forestry and wood operations are also beginning to gather steam. The fertile soil and the climate provide ideal growing conditions for radiata pine, which mature in 25 years or less – faster than anywhere else in the world. The forestry industry (already generating $500 million a year) is expected to increase by a factor of six in the next 10 years. Marine farming and aquaculture is also a developing sector. Research has been conducted to determine the most suitable marine species to be grown commercially along the coastline and within the harbors and waterways. The environmental sustainability of aquaculture is a major consideration and it is estimated that the marine industry could contribute $100 million annually to the economy in the next 10 years.

Many Maori of Northland trace their ancestry back to Kupe, and all Maori trace their ancestry to one of seven *waka* or war canoes that landed on Cape

Brett. The tale says that the first Maori arrived from Hawaiki at Rakaumangamanga in seven waka. As it happens, there are seven peaks on the Brett peninsula, and all seven tribes headed south. But one, Nga Puhi, came back and all Maori in Northland are members of the Nga Puhi tribe.

> **Did you know?** When Maori introduce themselves, they give not only their name, but what mountain, river and waka (tribe) they belong to.

Getting Here

■ By Air

There are three airports in Northland: **Whangarei**, **Kerikeri** (Bay of Islands) and **Kaitaia**. All have regular scheduled service from Auckland. Service is provided by **Air New Zealand**, ☎ 0800-737-000, www.airnewzealand.co.nz, **Mountain Air & Air Kaitaia**, ☎ 09-256-7025, and **Salt Air-Bay of Islands**, ☎ 09-402-8338.

■ By Car

Two main roads servicing Northland make up the **Twin Coast Discovery Highway** – SH12 on the west coast and SH1 on the east. Coming from Auckland, I suggest you drive up the west coast and down the east. This way, you will explore the less populated, more rugged coast first, and, on your return, be deposited more gently back into the urban sprawl of Auckland.

■ By Bus

Regular bus service to and from Northland is provided by **Northliner Express**, www.northliner.co.nz, ☎ 09-438-4833 (Whangarei), 09-402-7857 (Bay of Islands) and 09-307-5873 (Auckland), and **Intercity Coachlines**, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100. Northland is included in tours offered by both **Kiwi Experience Services**, www.kiwiexperience.com, ☎ 09-366-9830, and **Magic Bus Services**, www.magicbus.co.nz, ☎ 09-358-5600. Once in Northland, a variety of operators provide transport to popular destinations like Ninety Mile Beach. See specific areas for information.

■ By Water

Arriving in Northland by water most likely means that you either came on a *waka* (canoe) or you sailed from Tonga or Fiji. If so, well done! Due to weather patterns, the trip between the islands and New Zealand can be dangerous, and arriving in New Zealand is an accomplishment for any blue-water sailor. That's how I first arrived and, consequently, Opua has a special place in my heart. Most yachts make their landfall in either Opua or Whangarei, and from October to May there are plenty of boats in the anchorages and marinas around Northland.

Tourist Information

Destination Northland is the regional tourism organization and can be visited at www.northland.org.nz. Information centers abound and are listed for each area.

The Kauri Coast

The Kauri Coast isn't about big money, fancy lodges and snobby wine bars. This coast is about having an unspoiled, un-commercialized experience in the midst of some real Kiwi characters while surrounded by history and magical bush. Spend some time poking around and chatting to the folks and you'll understand that, for most of them, life is more about lifestyle than money.

But money was once quite a draw – during the late 1800s 75% of New Zealand's gross domestic product came from the area now referred to as the Kauri Coast. It was the massive kauri trees that were exploited and brought riches, first from wood – popular for shipbuilding and as sawn timber – and, as the timber industry died out, from kauri gum.

Kauri gum is the amber resin from the kauri tree. Once the Europeans came and felled the mighty trees for their timber, they then began to collect the gum – first from the forest floor and then by digging up the ground wherever kauri trees had grown and/or fallen. Kauri gum looks like cut and polished crystallized honey. Fabulous collections can be seen at the **Kauri Museum** and the **Dargaville Museum** (see pages 82, 84). While kauri wood is spectacular (both for its patterns and straightness of growth), its gum is equally breathtaking.

> **Did you know?** Gumboots, that great Kiwi icon, got their name from the leather boots that the kauri gum diggers wore.

Tall ships that came from Europe to the Dargaville coast brought passengers and supplies and left filled with kauri wood and kauri gum. When traveling along the kauri coast, you can get a real feel for the cycle of growth and the passage of time – visit the museums in Matakohe and Dargaville for an understanding of the past; see remaining kauri giants growing in the forest and stop at the woodturner's studio to see how swamp kauri is being used now.

Swamp Kauri

Swamp kauri is timber from ancient trees that has been recovered from underground.

While the Europeans can be blamed for harvesting plenty of old-growth trees, before any man set foot on New Zealand cataclysmic events felled many, many trees (more than were left standing). Over the eons, those trees became buried in the swamps. Carbon dating of swamp kauri from the Dargaville area has shown them to be over 50,000 years old. The wood of the swamp kauri is a deeper, richer brown than new wood.

■ Matakohe

With good reason, Matakohe's claim to fame is **The Kauri Museum**. In addition to the world's largest kauri gum collection, there is a massive slab of a tree called **Balderston kauri** that was killed by lightning; interpretive displays of kauri history; a huge collection of kauri furniture; displays on life of the kauri bush people; and samples of wood from other podocarp trees. There is also a sawmill and operational machinery exhibit. It's an interesting place. One of the volunteers said to me, "here we are, this little town in the sticks and we have 16 paid staff, 75 volunteers and over 500 friends of the museum who volunteer as needed." There is also a turn-of-the-century schoolhouse on the grounds, a very extensive gift shop, and a church across the road. Nearly 100,000 people come each year to visit the museum. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm (longer hours in summer). $12 adult, $3 child. www.kauri-museum.com, Church Road, ☎ 09-431-7417, fax 09-431-6969.

> **Did you know?** Kauri gum was used to make varnish, dentures, linoleum floor coverings and glue, among other things.

Where to Stay

Just a few minutes' walk from the museum, **Matakohe Top 10 Holiday Park** has the usual range of holiday-park accommodations. MatakoheHolidayPark@xtra.co.nz, Church Road, ☎/fax 09-431-6431 or 0800-431-6431 ($-$$).

Petite Provence is very new and very French. It is set in farmland beside native bush and has harbor views. Dinner (Mediterranean/vegetarian) is available and there are queen rooms with en-suite bathroom. Tinopai Road, ☎/fax 09-431-7552 ($$$).

June and Edsel at **Weber's Matakohe Homestay** are a Kiwi couple who volunteer at the Kauri Museum. You will no doubt enjoy your stay here. Breakfast and dinner are included. Barlow Lane, ☎ 09-431-7288 ($$$).

Matakohe House is a new structure made to look old and filled with turn-of-the-century furnishings. There is a licensed café serving home-grown foods and good coffee. Breakfast is included, and dinner is available in the café. mathouse@xtra.co.nz, Church Road, ☎ 09-431-7091, fax 09-431-6002 ($$$).

> **Did you know?** Ruawai, on the Wairoa River between Matakohe and Dargaville, is the Kumara Capital of New Zealand (kumara is a sweet potato).

■ Dargaville

Dargaville is the service center for this part of Northland and is located just west of the junction of SH14 (from Whangarei) and and SH12. Just a few miles north on SH12 is Scottys Camp Road, which leads out to Baylys Beach; south from town, Pouto Road heads down the peninsula to Pouto. (It's paved for about half the way.)

> **Rice grass** growing on the banks of the river comes from the tall sailing ships. For the trip to New Zealand, ships needed ballast, so they were loaded with bricks. The bricks came from Asia and contained rice seeds. When the ships arrived in Dargaville, the ballast was tossed overboard and kauri logs were loaded – the rice seeds took hold and – voila – rice grass.

Information Sources

The **Kauri Coast Information Centre** is located on Normanby Street in Dargaville. ☎ 09-439-8360.

Adventures

At 107 km (66 miles), Ripiro is New Zealand's longest driveable beach. It stretches from Maunganui Bluff to Kaipara Harbour and is edged with colorful sandstone cliffs. Go on a trip with someone who knows the tides and where the quicksand is – having a guide is also a good way to learn about the more than 150 shipwrecks in the area.

On Water

Kaipara Action Experience is a new tourism operator that offers boat trips down the Northern Wairoa River. They have a range of packages, both water- and beach-based. One option is to board the *Kaipara Kat* (a 30-passenger catamaran), in Dargaville, travel down the river to Pouto, board a 6WD bus and drive on the beach back to Dargaville, visiting the lighthouse on the way. Other options include quad-bike rides; transport to Pouto for dinner; or transport to or from Shelly Beach and Port Albert. Inquire at the information center (above) or contact them for details of what's on. Prices begin at $60. www.kaiparaction.co.nz, ☎ 09-439-1400.

When I was talking to Nelsa at **Baylys Beach Holiday Park**, she said, "One thing that makes this region different is if you go fishing, you'll catch a fish." Common fish are: snapper, travali, kowhai, kingfish, gunnard, octopus, shark, "whatever takes the bait, really." If you don't have equipment, or don't know what you're doing, talk to Nelsa and Maurice. They'll arrange a "surfcasting safari" and supply your gear, teach you how to use it and provide lunch. Plus, you can bring your fish back and they'll smoke it for you.

On 4X4

Nelsa and Maurice are your contacts for this as well, so if you need to blow the cobwebs out of your head, hire a quad bike and cruise along Ripiro beach for as long as you like. This is one of only two places in New Zealand where you can rent quad bikes without a guide. Freedom is probably as good a description as any – there are sand dunes to play on or just blast along the surf line. I've ridden at a few places, but on the beach, watching the surf, not worrying about tipping over on some hairpin turn, is a really fun way to spend some time. Ask at the holiday park about going to explore some of the shipwrecks. $60 per hour. www.baylysbeach@xtra.co.nz, 24 Seaview Road, ☎/fax 09-439-6349.

Sightseeing & Shopping

For a change of pace, try your hand at wood turning in **The Woodturners Studio and Gallery**. Rick Taylor has been working as a woodturner for nearly 30 years and offers one-on-one instruction for all levels of experience. Beginners will learn to shape, sand and polish; more advanced turners can learn the intricacies of the craft. The gallery features Rick's work and also sells paper that is handmade from wood shavings (where else can you buy paper that is made from the wood of a

3,800-year-old swamp kauri tree?). www.thewoodtunersstudio.co.nz, 4 Murdoch Street, ☎ 09-439-4975.

Taylor Made Tours offers customized tours, including a visit to a local dairy, a trip to the lighthouse and shipwrecks, sand tobogganing – all sorts of options. Anthony Taylor is knowledgeable about the whole area and makes for an entertaining (not boring) day. Book at the Information Centre on Normanby Street in Dargaville, ☎ 09-439-8360, or The Woodturners Studio.

The **Dargaville Museum** is a fine local museum with the usual collection of furniture, doctors' instruments (featuring an unusually large collection of speculums and dilators) and old tools. But they do have a few points of difference – outside the museum are the masts of Greenpeace *Rainbow Warrior* and within the museum are other relics of the boat. In 1985, when the *Rainbow Warrior* was getting ready to set sail for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia to protest French nuclear testing, it was blown up in Auckland Harbour. When I was sailing to New Zealand, we called in at some of the Tuamotu atolls. One of the fellows we met was infamous for having been in the French Foreign Legion – and for being the guy who put the explosives together that were used to destroy the *Rainbow Warrior*. While he wasn't one of the two who were caught actually "bombing" the boat, he was, apparently, responsible for the explosives.

The Dargaville Museum also houses relics of the French warship *L'Alcmene* that wrecked off the Dargaville coast in 1851. The museum has a huge kauri gum display – one massive room is filled with gum washing and processing equipment, as well as many pieces of kauri gum. Also on display is one of the oldest Maori carvings in New Zealand. The carving is from the Waitaha people, who are believed to have arrived in New Zealand prior to the modern Maori. The Waitaha were peaceful and were driven out by the more aggressive northern tribes. Go to the museum and get one of the volunteers talking – you'll learn plenty. (If Ron's there, he's your man.) Adults $5, children $1. Open 9 am to 4 pm daily, extended hours in summer. Harding Park ☎ 09-439-7555.

There have been up to 156 shipwrecks along the Dargaville Coast, nicknamed "Shipwreck Alley." There is apparently evidence that a Portuguese caravel wreck is embedded in the coast. If that's true, it means that the Portuguese arrived in New Zealand perhaps more than 100 years before Abel Tasman in 1642.

Where to Stay

Anson Clapcott ("Clappie") is a Kiwi who left home in 1969 and was itching to come back; Pat is his Savannah, Georgia wife. They returned to NZ in 2002 and took over ownership of **Birch's Bed and Breakfast**. It's a simple, welcoming kind of place with two queens, two twins and shared-bath rooms. New in 2003 is the adjacent cottage that sleeps four. birch@kauricoast.co.nz, 18 Kauri Street, ☎ 09-439-7520 ($$).

McLeans Bed and Breakfast is in the former mayor's residence and is an original 1930s-style house. A large lounge, three guest rooms and shared facilities. 136 Hokianga Road, ☎ 09-439-5915 ($$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

The **Dargaville Motel** is one of those dependable, nothing-fancy kind of motels with studio units and fully equipped kitchens. All the other stuff is available (laundry, cable TV), as is breakfast. 217 Victoria Street, ☎/fax 09-439-7734 ($$).

For the most modern motel in town, pick **Motel Hobson's Choice**. There's a swimming pool, spa baths, mini bar – all the extras. www.motelhobsonschoice.co.nz, 212 Victoria Street, ☎ 09-439-8551, fax 09-439-8553 ($$$).

Complimentary breakfast is the point of difference for **Awakino Point Boutique Motel**. It's a small facility with three units on a "farmlet," just outside of town. Another plus is the gas BBQ. awakinopoint@xtra.co.nz, SH12. ☎/fax 09-439-7870 ($$).

The **Northern Wairoa Hotel** is one of those old-style hotels with the original atmosphere. There is a casino and 29 rooms – many with en-suite bathroom. A good affordable option. northernwairoahotel@win.co.nz, Victoria Street, ☎ 09-439-8923, fax 09-439-8925 ($).

The **Aratapu Tavern** has just been renovated. It's still a bit on the basic side, but it's a fine, interesting place to stay and breakfast is included. Port Road, ☎ 09-439-5923 ($).

With a rather unfortunate name, but a good choice for a small group or large family is the **Hog Snort Oasis**. Right in town (behind the information center), it's a modern house that sleeps nine (price is for the whole place) and it even has a spa pool. 503 Pouto Road, ☎ 09-439-7018 or 021-109-1813 ($$$)..

Where to Eat

OK, Dargaville has a little way to go before it's on the culinary map of New Zealand. Like every other town, there is the obligatory Chinese takeout and steak house. My choice, though is the **Blah Blah Blah Café and Bar** which wins for name and menu. It's eclectic, with gourmet pizzas thrown in and great coffee. Not a bad bar, either. Normandy Street, ☎ 09-439-6300 ($-$$).

■ Baylys Beach

Where to Stay

Denim Digs is a cheesy name, but it's a modern "beach pad" with wonderful views and fully equipped kitchen. lorraine@impaktmarketing.co.nz, Coates Avenue, ☎ 09-439-1400 ($$$).

For another option with bath and kitchen, try the cottage at **Ocean Terrace B&B**. Sea views, plenty of privacy and continental breakfast. www.bnb.co.nz/oceanview.html, 7 Oceanview Terrace, ☎ 09-439-6256 or 021-040-051 ($$).

Seaview Bed and Breakfast is run by a gracious gentleman host, and it's perfect for friends or couples, but he does not take single woman travelers. Sea views and private facilities. Seaview Road, ☎ 09-439-6054 ($$).

For a real Kiwi beach experience 1970s-style, go to **76 Seaview Road Beach**. It's 80 years old, it's right near the beach and it's a real bargain. www.holidayhouses.co.nz, 76 Seaview Road, ☎ 09-439-7022 ($$).

The Hunky Dory has accommodation with shared facilities and a "Map Lounge," where you can pore over maps of New Zealand and beyond. Close to the Baylys Bay shop and food. aymditch@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 09-439-0922 ($).

Baylys Beach Holiday Park has the full range of accommodation options, from two-bed backpacker-type units to motels with bath and kitchen. There's space for your campervan or tent, too. Gotta love it; there's no pompous attitude and you get four-star service for three-star prices. These folks will happily arrange for fishing trips, horseback riding, tours around the area and there are always the quad bikes for rent. www.baylysbeach@xtra.co.nz, 24 Seaview Road, ☎/fax 09-439-6349 ($-$$)..

The **Lighthouse Lodge** is about an hour south of Dargaville on the edge of Kaipara Harbour. It's a fabulous place to stay, with good food, a good bar and it's at the very end of a long sandy beach that stretches for miles. You can either drive from Dargaville, or arrange for boat transport from Dargaville or Shelly Beach (just 35 minutes from Auckland). Contact the lodge for details. From here you can explore the Ripiro Beach and shipwreck sites, try claybird shooting, or go fishing. A great getaway spot. www.lighthouse-lodge.co.nz, Te Kopuru Road, ☎ 09-439-4150 ($$$).

Where to Eat

The Funky Fish Café and Bar has a fun menu featuring burgers, panini, pasta, ice cream. Seaview Road, ☎ 09-439-8883 ($-$$).

The owners of the Funky Fish opened another restaurant in 2003, called **Sharky's Bites and Bits**. It's on Seaview Road coming into the beach. ☎ 09-439-4549 ($-$$).

■ Kai Iwi Lakes

There are three fresh water "dune" lakes within the Toharoa Domain, which encompasses over 1,300 acres about 40 minutes north of Dargaville. The beaches are white silicone sand and are not only safe for swimming, but are popular for other water sports too: the local waterski club is based here; quite a lot of dinghy sailing goes on; and, in the summer, you can rent canoes at the (very small) store at Lake Taharoa. The lakes are also good for trout fishing, and there is a nice walking track (about three hours) from Lake Taharoa, although a relatively strong sense of direction is required as the track is not particularly well-marked. The Tasman Sea Walkway (it goes to Hokianga Harbour) is accessible through a neighboring farm – get information at the Kai Iwi Lakes camp office. A lovely spot for camping and camp spaces are limited, so even in the busiest days of summer, it is somewhat controlled and pays to book ahead at the information center in Dargaville (on Normanby Street, ☎ 09-439-8360).

In addition to camping, you can stay at a one- or two-bedroom house with kitchen and bath at Willowdale. It's a great place to enjoy walks on the beach or around the lake, or just laze about. Breakfast is available. Willowdale@xtra.co.nz, Kai Iwi Lakes Road, ☎ 09-439-4645 or 021-273-174 ($$-$$$).

■ Kauri Forests

Continuing north, you soon enter the kauri forests. It might sound sappy, but when walking through the kauri forest, among the ferns and mosses and palms, I feel surrounded by strength, power, and spirit. I think the enormity of the trees and their quiet elegance, with the realization that they've been standing in this exact spot since Christ's time, can be a magical experience. I've been lucky to visit quite a few stands of native bush and its importance isn't lost on me. I hope that you, too, will appreciate the history that old-growth trees have seen.

Information Sources

A visit to the **Department of Conservation Kauri Coast Visitor Centre** is a must! As in all DoC centers, the staff knows their stuff and will patiently direct you to where you want to go and what you want to see. There is a small shop with nature-related gifts and an interesting interpretive display area. At the Waipoua Forest Headquarters, SH12, ☎ 09-439-3011, fax 09-439-3016.

Trounson Kauri Park is one of six mainland "islands." A mainland island is a section of land, in this case bordered on one side by the Waima River, that is managed by DoC for predator control and eradication, bringing the forest back to its natural state. Trounson has over 1,100 acres of mixed kauri/podocarp forest and is less crowded than the Waipoua Forest. To really appreciate the bush, I think you need to have as little distraction as possible. The interpretive panels at Trounson are poetic, not preachy, and the photography is beautiful. It's just a 40-minute wander through the bush and I think it's a must-do walk. There are tent-camping sites at Trounson Park. The Trounson Kauri Park is on Trounson Park Road, off SH12.

> **Did you know?** "Rickers" is the term given to young kauri trees. They are called rickers until they leave their teenage years and begin to shed their lower branches.

The **Waipoua Forest** is home to some of the largest and oldest kauri trees, as well as the largest population of brown kiwi in Northland. When I've stayed at the cabins, I've been woken by the shrill screams of kiwis – you'd swear someone was killing a baby! Among the trees of the Waipoua, the most famous is **Tane Mahuta**, "Lord of the Forest." It is the tallest surviving kauri tree (17.7 meters/57 feet at the first branch) in New Zealand and is just five minutes off the road, about 10 km (six miles) from the DoC Visitor Centre on SH12. Closer to the DoC visitor center is **Te Matua Ngahere**, "Father of the Forest." This is the second-largest living kauri tree, but has a bigger girth (five meters/16 feet compared to 4.4 meters/14 feet) than Tane Mahuta. It's about a 20-minute walk from the security-guarded car park to Te Matua Ngahere. There is also a 10-minute walk from the same car park to the formation called the **Four Sisters**. However you look at it, there are some mighty big trees all around, and just because they don't all get individual names doesn't mean they're not worth looking a**t.**

Continuing on from the Four Sisters, you can walk to the Yakas formation, named for a pioneering bushman in the area. If the track is open, you can walk the three hours back to the visitor center, or, alternatively, begin at the

visitor center and head up. This track is very dependent on weather, so check in the office as to its condition.

Where to Stay

Waipoua Lodge is on SH12 about 16 km (10 miles) from Tane Mahuta. Travelers have come to the lodge since 1890 and, in 2003, the whole complex underwent a major restoration. In addition to the common rooms in the lodge, four apartments with kitchen and bath are in the original farm buildings, scattered around the site. www.waipoualodge.co.nz, SH12, ☎ 09-439-0422 ($$$$).

The **Kauri Coast Holiday Park** has accommodation ranging from tent sites to standard cabins and cottages with kitchen and bath. It's a wonderfully clean, tidy, pleasant place set beside the river in the forest. Tubes are available for river play! Just five km (three miles) from Trounson Park, this makes a very nice option as a place to stay with stuff to do. Guided night walks are available ($15 adults; $9 children). The first time I came to the area, I was staying at the DoC cabins at Waipoua and came down for the walk. It was a great experience and, while we didn't spot any kiwis, we heard quite a few and I learned a lot about the local forest. Kauricoast.top10@xtra.co.nz, Trounson Park Road, ☎/fax 09-439-0621 or 0800-807-200 ($-$$).

About two km (1½ miles) north of Trounson Park Road is the **Kaihu Farm Hostel**. There's a great deck with views of the countryside, glow worms, double and twin rooms, a blackboard menu (with yummy things like curry and masala), farm fresh eggs and plenty of walks. From here, you can do four-hour loop walks to Trounson Park, Kai Iwi Lakes and the Kaihu River – this is a perfect base for reasonable day walks. Kaihufarm@clear.net.nz, SH12, ☎ 09-439-4004 ($).

The cabins at the **Waipoua Kauri Forest Campground** make a perfect base to explore the kauri forest. These DoC cabins are simple and newly renovated and come with basic cooking equipment. There are also tent sites and a few campervan/caravan sites. Best to book in advance during the busy season. ☎ 09-439-3011, fax 09-439-3016 ($).

■ Hokianga Harbour

Just 25 minutes from Tane Mahuta is the Omapere Hill – coming over it on a clear day, you will be assaulted with tremendous views of the Hokianga Harbour and sand hills. The tourism in this region is in its infancy, and thank goodness for that. It's a fabulous place to visit – the local people are friendly, it's steeped in Maori history and there's enough fun stuff to keep you busy. Plans include a new museum of the area's Maori history told in a modern style and a marae, or Maori meeting place, opened to tourists who want to experience marae life.

A straight drive from Auckland to Hokianga on SH12 will take about three hours.

Information Sources

In addition to getting advice and making reservations, you can watch a short film about Opo, a bottlenose dolphin who, in 1955-56, came into the harbor and played with the kids, at the very helpful

Hokianga Information Centre, **hokiangainfo@xtra.co.nz**, SH12 in Omapere, ☎ 09-405-8869.

Adventures

On Water

As Pete Clarke, the driver of **Hokianga Express**, handed me the boogie board I would use for sand tobogganing, he told me that I could get up to 50-60 km (30-36 miles) per hour on the hills. Plus, because it was high tide, if I was interested in getting wet, now would be the time. I said I'd rather not, so he told me to dig my toes in the sand to slow myself down. "You'll figure it out," he said as he dropped me and my board on the far side of Hokianga Harbour. The sand dunes stretch forever and all you do is climb the hill, lie down on the board, keep your head up and mouth closed and go. You can stay for as long as you like and Pete will return to pick you up at a designated time. There is plenty of beach and dune walking to do, so pack a picnic (and sun block) and go for the day – this is one of the most cost-effective activities around. $20 adults, $10 children. Pete also offers fishing trips, both inside the harbor and outside the bar, and scenic trips around the harbor. His father was a lighthouse keeper at six of the lights around New Zealand and Pete has plenty of stories to tell, including some from living at Cape Reinga. Fishing is $100 per hour to charter the boat. Contact Pete directly or call the Hokianga Information Centre. Hkexpress@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 09-405-8872.

Hokianga Blue is a kayak company based in Rawene, but they will come to Omapere or Opononi – depending on what you want to do and where you're staying. They offer short (two- or three-hour) discovery trips, half-day explorers, and full-day adventures. You can also rent the boats without a guide for half a day or multiple days. In addition to the harbor, there are a number of rivers to explore. Give them a ring to see what's up, if the weather's decent. I think this is one of the best ways to explore the area. Prices for guided options start at $35 per person. www.hokiangablue.co.nz, 49 Parnell Street (next to the Fire Station), Rawene, ☎ 09-405-7675 or 021-263-1171.

On Horses

Okopako The Wilderness Farm gets the local seal of approval for horse trekking and farm activities. Rides are one to six hours ($20 per hour) and travel through bush but also offer sea views. There is organic produce to enjoy and accommodation is available. North of Opononi, turn right on Mountain Road. 1.5 km off SH12. ☎ 09-405-8815.

Guided Tours

Wild Action Tours NZ will put together just about anything you want for exploring the area. They're a good option if you don't have transport, but also if you want to do a little fishing, kayaking, tramping, learn to surf, and so on. Phil and Israel are really enthusiastic and will pick you up in Auckland if you need, do a day-tour around Hokianga, visit the trees, whatever you wish. Day-trips begin at $70. www.wildactiontoursnz.co.nz, ☎ 021-358-626.

Where to Stay

Just a few kilometers north of Omapere is Opononi and the **Opononi Resort Hotel**. It's right on the side of the road, and, while it doesn't look like much when you drive up, the motel units (with

private decks) are tucked away in the mature garden out back. You'd never guess you were in the same place. Backpacker's hostel and budget accommodation is also available and there is a full-service, licensed restaurant. Opononi-hotel@xtra.co.nz, 19 SH12 (beside the Four Square market), ☎ 09-405-8858 or 0800-116-565 ($-$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Hokianga Haven is a spectacular home right on the beach. It's got that old weathered-wood look, spacious rooms with sweeping views, and a hot tub. Owner Heather is a poetic, gentle sort. www.hokiangahaven.co.nz, 226 SH12, ☎ 09-405-8285, fax 09-405-8215 ($$$).

In addition to a B&B room, there's a fully equipped two-bedroom cottage with kitchen and bath at **McKenzie's**, which is right by the beach. It's a fabulous place, especially at the price. dlmk@xtra.co.nz, 4 Pioneers Walk, ☎ 09-405-8068 ($$).

Another option is a two-story beachfront house with kitchen and bath, with very pretty gardens and gorgeous views, owned by the **Macphersons**. dimal@xtra.co.nz, 35 Akiha Street (SH12), ☎ 09-405-8286, fax 09-405-8287 ($$$).

Jutting out into the harbor is the Kouto Loop Road, just a few minutes along SH12 from Opononi. About two km (a bit over a mile) down the road, Marian and Michael Lough have a place with kitchen and bath at **Waione B&B**, a great, off-the-track option. m.lough@xtra.co.nz, 71 Waione Road, ☎/fax 09-405-8343 ($$).

Also on the Kouto Loop Road is **Koutu Lodge B&B**. It has three bedrooms, two with en-suite bathrooms. Tony and Sylvia are lovely hosts and dinner is available by arrangement. www.wairereboulders.co.nz/koutulodge, Koutu Loop Road, ☎ 09-405-8882, fax 09-405-8893 ($$).

Where to Eat

There are à la carte and bar meals available at the **Omapere Tourist Hotel**. Main dishes include Hokianga crayfish and other local seafood, as well as the usual beef, lamb, pork and chicken ($$-$$$).

A similar menu and prices are available at the **Opononi Resort Hotel**, SH12, ☎ 09-405-8858.

■ Rawene

Leaving Opononi and heading north, you have two options: taking SH12 to Kaikohe and joining SH1 just south of Lake Omapere, or taking the ferry across from Rawene and continuing north on the coastal road, which joins SH1 in Kaitaia. Both are pleasant drives, through lush forest and farmland, but I lean toward taking the ferry and continuing to explore on the secondary route. Either way, it's worth a detour to visit **Wairere Boulders Nature Park**, a new attraction that has received nothing but good comments. It's a bit of a basalt boulder wonderland stretching for 1½ km (nearly a mile) – huge boulders thrown here and there in all sorts of formations with all sorts of markings. The tracks are unguided and there are two loops – one hour or

three. $10 adults, $5 children. www.wairereboulders.co.nz, 14 km (nine miles) off SH1 near Horeke on McDonnell Road, ☎/fax 09-401-9935.

If you choose the Rawene route, you'll appreciate that one of the challenges in writing about New Zealand is coming up with innovative ways to say "rolling green farmland." The drive north from Omapere to Rawene, and beyond, for that matter, is a lovely one through sweeping hills. And what a great little town, Rawene. It's the third-oldest town in New Zealand and a picture-perfect end-of-the-road kind of place. This is the spot to get on the car-ferry to Kohukohu. There are a couple of antique shops, and the **Boat Shed Café**, which has a very full blackboard menu and sells locally made, high-quality art and crafts. Walk in, and the yummy smells will have you ordering in no time flat. 8 Clendon Esplanade. ☎ 09-405-7728.

The ferry ride to Kohukohu is $2 for foot passengers and $14 per car. It leaves Rawene on the half-hour and is a 15-minute passage. Kohukohu is a small town, with a few artists' studios and a couple of places to eat. **The Palace Flophouse and Grill** has the best hamburgers around. On Kohukohu Road, ☎ 09-405-5858.

Where to Stay

The **Rawene Motor Camp** has tourist cabins, tent and power sites and a small shop. rawenemotorcamp@hotmail.com, 1 Marmon Street West, ☎/fax 09-405-7720 ($).

There are single and double hotel rooms at the **Masonic Hotel**, just a quick walk from the ferry terminal. ☎ 09-405-7822 ($-$$).

Across the harbor, **The Tree House Backpackers Lodge** is a delightful, tucked-away little spot with cabins, tent sites and a lodge. It's in the forest, has pleasant accommodation and welcoming hosts. Definitely off the beaten track. Turn left after getting off the ferry in Kohukohu Rawene, then follow the sign marked for Mitimiti. www.treehouse.co.nz, 168 West Coast Road, ☎ 09-405-5855 ($).

The Far North

■ Ahipara

Following the coastal route as it meanders from Kohukohu north, you will skirt the **Herekino Forest** and pass through the **Herekino Gorge**. Just after that, you reach Ahipara, a fabulous beach community and the "high growth" location for the far north. It's at the very bottom of Ninety Mile Beach and many of the accommodations have superb sea and sunset views. In addition to fishing and swimming, it's a popular surf location and I think it's the perfect place to spend a few days. It's about 14 km (nine miles) from Kaitaia and a much more attractive place to stay if you are going to explore Ninety Mile Beach and/or Cape Reinga.

Ahipara is the tribal land for the Te Rarawa and its name means "Sacred Fire." The story goes that an ancient fire was kept burning for the village on the site where the present-day school is. The first Maori arrived on the *waka* (war canoe) *Tinana*, which landed at Tauroa on the south end of the reef past Shipwreck Bay.

Information Sources

There is no official information center, but the **Ahipara Adventure Centre** serves as one. ☎ 09-409-2055.

Adventures

On Water

You shouldn't need a guidebook to tell you what seems painfully obvious. Ahipara is at the base of Ninety Mile Beach – you might want to just put on your suit and go to the beach. It's safe for swimming and there are rock pools for kids.

■ Fishing

For those serious about fishing, charter ***Wildcat 1*** for the day. It takes up to five passengers, so with a group to split the $800 price tag is reasonable for a professional fishing excursion. It's deep-sea game fishing, and you'll be going for marlin, kingfish, grouper, and hapuka, to name a few. The guides have been at it for years, so you'll be in good hands. You can book through the Adventure Centre (see above) or contact them directly. www.ahipara.co.nz/wildcat, ☎ 09-409-4729 or 025-471-138.

On Foot

There's a good five-hour walk around **Reef Point** that takes you past a big sand dune and to some good places to dig for kauri gum. Access is towards the sand dune from Shipwreck Bay, I got my map from Kerry at Mainstreet Lodge YHA in Kaitaia, but no doubt you can ask around and find directions in Ahipara.

On Horses

When you drive into Ahipara, if you follow Foreshore Road, you'll probably see **Jayar Horse Treks**. You can opt for a one- or two-hour ride on Ninety Mile Beach and across farmland. All levels of experience are catered to. Prices begin at $25 per hour. Book through the Ahipara Adventure Centre, ☎ 09-409-2055.

By 4x4

As far as quad bikes go, you've got two options here. **Tua Tua Tours** offers guided trips ranging from 1½ to three hours and has bikes that can take doubles. You can ride on the beach or opt for a "Gumfields Safari." Prices begin at $80, for a single rider on the short trip. www.ahipara.co.nz/tuatuatours, Ahipara Road, ☎/fax 09-409-4875.

Your other option is to rent on your own through the **Ahipara Adventure Centre**. Other than Baylys Beach, this is the only place in NZ where you can rent quad bikes without a guide and, if you've ridden before and have some confidence, then I say, "why not?" Guided tours are available if you're not up to going it alone. Prices begin at $60 per hour and the rates go down with additional time. These folks also offer 4x4 Unimog (like a quad bike but carries passengers) trips over the Ahipara gumfields. www.ahipara.co.nz/adventurecentre, Takahe Street, ☎ 09-409-2055.

The Adventure Centre also rents **Blo Karts**, which are land yachts. Just remember, you gotta get back! So, while they will give you instruction on sailing the things, it's probably not a bad idea to tack a few times and get a feel for going in different directions (just a sailing word to the wise!).

Where to Stay

There are quite a few beachy kinds of places in Ahipara.

The **Ahipara Bay Motel** has a mixture of new (spectacular) and old (serviceable) units. The new units have spa pools, and there is a restaurant and bar on site. www.ahipara.co.nz/adrian, 22 Reef View Road, ☎/fax 09-409-4888 or 0800-906-453 ($$$-$$$$)..

Beachfront has an apartment with kitchen and bath that sleeps up to four, but it's one of those places where you'd go if you were a couple looking for a special spot. Another room (adjoining) is available, if needed. The views are great. Breakfast and dinner are available by arrangement. www.beachfront.net.nz, 14 Kotare Street, ☎/fax 09-409-4007 ($$$).

There are two units with kitchen and bath (sleeping up to eight) on the beach at **Foreshore Lodge**. These folks have the reputation of not only being good hosts, but of enjoying a lot of return business, which is always a good sign. In addition to full kitchen, BBQ facilities are available. www.ahipara.co.nz/foreshore, Foreshore Road, ☎ 09-409-4860 ($$-$$$).

Baylinks Lodge Motel is a small, clean, well cared for place right on the 8th hole of the golf course. All units have kitchen and bath and there is a lovely garden and BBQ area. Just a few steps to the beach. www.ahipara.co.nz/baylinks, 115 Takahe Street, ☎/fax 09-409-4694 or 0508-265-100 ($$).

The **Ahipara Motorcamp and Backpackers** has a range of accommodation, from tent sites to small tourist units and on-site campers. www.ahipara.co.nz/pinetree, Takahe Road, ☎ 09-409-4864, fax 09-409-2118 ($-$$).

AUTHOR'S PICK

My newest favorite backpacker's hostel in New Zealand is **Endless Summer**. It's in an 1880s kauri lodge and just became a backpackers in December 2002. There are twins, doubles, and shares and, if you are smart, you'll book ahead and ask for the double with the phenomenal sea view. The kitchen is big and friendly, there's a massive kauri table on the patio and the lounge is comfortable. owners Anna and Blaine also have surfboards and wet suits for rent, and free-to-use boogie boards. It's just across the street from the beach and a great place to stay that doesn't feel like a backpackers at all. www.endlesssummer.co.nz, 245 Foreshore Road, ☎ 09-409-4181 ($).

For another budget option, try the two **Coastal Cabins**, just two doors down from Endless Summer. knitta1@xtra.co.nz, 267 Foreshore Road, ☎/fax 09-409-4839 ($).

■ Kaitaia

Information

The well-stocked (and very opinionated) **Information Far North** can be reached at visitorinfo@fndc.govt.nz, and is located at Jaycee Park, South Road, ☎ 09-408-0879.

The **Department of Conservation** has an office on SH1 right near McKenzie Welding. They are open weekdays, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. ☎ 09-408-6014.

Kaitaia is the service center for the Far North and usually registers the warmest winter temperatures in the country. Many nights, I'll watch the weather, freezing in my South Island home, and listen with envy to the highs in Kaitaia. Unfortunately, other than temperatures and being the gateway to Ninety Mile Beach and Cape Reigna, Kaitaia doesn't really have much of a draw. I have to say, if you're visiting the beach and cape, I would recommend you stay in Ahipara. However, there are a lot of accommodation options in Kaitaia, a few worth noting, and a few other sites to take in. The population is about 7,000 and the major industries are dairy, farming, timber milling, forestry, fishing and tourism.

Adventures

On Water

Pack or Paddle offers fishing, kayaking, and 4x4 trips with Marty Benson, who has been described as the New Zealand version of Crocodile Dundee. ☎ 09-409-8445.

■ Fishing

Deep-sea fishing in the Kaitaia area is for game fish like king fish, hapuka and marlin. Most of the boats are chartered at $800 per day and take five to six people. The information center (above) can tell you what's available.

> **Did you know?** Each year, during the last week of February, the "biggest fishing contest in the world" is held here. The goal is to catch the heaviest snapper, and the contest is open to the first 1,000 entries.

With Wine

New Zealand's northernmost vineyard is **Okahu Estate**, just four km (two miles) south of Kaiaia. They've only got 15 acres in grapes and source most of their fruit from Hawke's Bay and Gisborne, but they've made some very rewarding wines. They grow unusual varieties for NZ, including Chambourcin, Pinotage, Cabernet Franc and Shiraz. While growing some Chardonnay, they source a lot of the whites and make three levels of wines, for a total of around 5,000-7,500 cases per year. They also make port. Stop in for a tasting at this very casual, friendly winery. Open daily, 10 am to 6 pm during the summer, Monday to Friday during the winter. www.okahuestate.co.nz, Okahu Road, ☎ 09-408-0888.

Sightseeing

The **Ancient Kauri Kingdom** is seven km (four miles) north of Kaitaia in Awanui. All the buses stop here – it's where they rinse the sand off their buses after driving on the beach. There are plenty of things made of kauri for sale and there is a café. It's the last stop for postcards, stamps, etc., before getting to Cape Reigna where, if you are so inclined, you can mail a letter or card and it will be postmarked from the Kauri Kingdom. One of the kitschy things in the "kingdom" is a massive tree that's been turned into a staircase. It's kind of cool, because you can see the inside of

the tree, but it seems somewhat insulting to the tree itself. www.ancientkauri.co.nz, SH1, ☎/fax 09-406-7172.

Gumdiggers Park is just a few minutes off the road (north of Awanui) on your way to Cape Reigna and has displays explaining the kauri gum industry. There is also a collection of items made from kauri gum. 9 am to 5:30 pm daily. $7. www.gumdiggerspark.co.nz, ☎ 09-406-7166.

Ninety Mile Beach

Depending on whom you talk to, you will be told either horror stories of driving on Ninety Mile Beach, or be met with a "she'll be right" (Kiwi for "don't worry about it") attitude. It all depends on your ability to listen to directions and gather local knowledge. First, you do not need a 4x4 to drive on the beach, regardless of what the more conservative types would like you to believe. However, 4x4 or not, vehicles have been stuck and lost in the sand. The road to the Cape is also not quite as scary as some would like you to believe. It is paved to Waitiki Landing, and the last 20 km (12 miles) are gravel – most rental cars aren't allowed to drive on gravel, so check into that restriction before you head out. Also keep in mind that there aren't many petrol stops. Still, it's not like you're crossing the great Australian outback, either. For local knowledge, I'd ask first at your accommodation and then at the information center (though they tended to be extremely cautious and are motivated to sell bus tours). Then, I'd stop at Mainstreet Lodge (see page 97) and talk to Kerry. She's a wealth of knowledge and welcomes inquiries, whether or not you're staying there. You can also talk to the bus drivers and ask their advice – they ought to know!

> **Warning:** Only drive on Ninety Mile Beach at low tide! Check with the locals or bus drivers before leaving! Don't drive in the water or in soft sand.
>
> **Did you know?** Ninety Mile Beach is really just 64 miles (but 90 km) long.

The second week of March is the time for the annual 60-km (36-mile) foot race on the beach from Mongonui Bluffs to Ahipara.

Cape Reinga – Te Rerenga Wairua

Contrary to popular belief, Cape Reinga is not the northernmost point of New Zealand – that honor goes to Surville Cliffs, farther to the east. But that is not to say that Cape Reinga is any less important. On the contrary. Spiritually, and geographically, it is an incredibly important spot.

Geographically, it is where the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean meet, with currents coming from two conflicting directions. When I was there it was a fabulously calm day; standing at the lighthouse, I could clearly see the confused seas come together.

Spiritually, Cape Reinga is where the Maori believe their spirits go after death. Their spirits travel to the pohutukawa tree that is on the headland of Cape Reinga and slide down a root into the sea below. At Ohaua, the highest point on Three Kings Islands, the spirits climb back out of the sea, bid a final farewell to Aotearoa and return to Hawaiiki-A-Nui, the land of their ancestors. As I write this, months after last visiting the Cape, I feel tenderness towards the place. Perhaps it comes from spending time at sea – when I was at the Cape, looking out to the ocean towards where I had sailed, it hit me how far we travel in our lives. And looking across the Tasman, to a place I had yet to visit, I also realized how far we all have to go. I don't know if other people feel such a strong pull when they visit Cape Reinga, but for me it is one of the most significant places I have been.

Guided Tours

There are several bus tours to choose from. All of them drive on the beach, go to the lighthouse, give you a white silica-sand experience, and let you go either sand tobogganing or sledding on the dunes. The differences are in pick-up points and where some of these activities occur. A light lunch is provided on all the trips.

Wildcat Bus Tours leave from Ahipara. Trips begin with a barge trip across Pawarengarenga Harbour to explore the white silica-sand beach. They also stop at Gumdiggers Park. $55 adults. www.ahipara.co.nz/adventurecentre, ☎ 09-409-2055.

Paradise Connexion operates out of Mangonui and, in addition to the other stops, calls in at the Wagener Museum. $55 adults. Paradiseconnexion@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 09-406-0460.

Harrisons Cape Runner is based in Kaitaia, which makes the trip a little shorter, but it still includes all the important features. $40 adults. www.ahipara.co.nz/caperunner, ☎ 09-408-1033, fax 09-408-3003.

Sand Safaris is also based in Kaitaia, and stops at Gumdiggers Park, which lengthens the trip a bit. $48 adults. www.sandsafaris.co.nz, ☎ 09-408-1778, fax 09-408-3339.

If the idea of a bus tour repulses you, but you don't want to self-drive, consider **Far North Outback Adventures**. They'll arrange a personalized, informative and fun tour including anything that you want to do. $125 adults. www.farnorthtours.co.nz, ☎/fax 09-408-0927.

Adventures

On Foot

Most of the popular walks here are based around **Cape Reinga** and **Ninety Mile Beach**. They vary in length from three hours to three days; DoC has maps and current information on trail conditions. If you want to do the three-day walk, Harrisons (see above) will drop you off at the starting point and arrange to pick you up three days later. It's a good option and saves worry about your vehicle or transport and, if you get tired or rained out, they can pick you up along the road at a half-way point. The

three-day trip takes you along the beach and offers a couple of different forest loops. The **Cape Reinga Walkway** edges three sides of the cape as well as some forest sections. This area gets very little in the way of foot traffic compared to some regions, and it makes a fabulous place to walk. If DoC is closed when you're in Kaitaia, call Kerry at Mainstreet Lodge (see page 97) who will also store your luggage while you tramp. Pick up a copy of *Cape Reinga and Te Paki Walks*. Shuttle service and vehicle storage are also available at Waitiki Landing, ☎ 09-409-7508.

If I were going to visit Cape Reinga on a holiday, and only had one day, I think I would drive to the Cape in my own car, forego the driving on the beach, and instead use the time to do **Te Werahi loop walk** and out to **Cape Maria van Dieman**. There are so many fantastic walks out on the peninsula and, if you enjoy walking, your feet will be itching. If you can stay longer, take a tent and do the **Cape Reinga Coast Walk**.

In the Air

Scenic flights leave from the Kaitaia airport; contact **Turf to Surf**, ☎ 09-409-7911. You can also arrange scenic flights from Paihia. If money is not a problem, a scenic flight to Cape Reinga is a good option – you get there before the buses arrive and the place is yours to enjoy more privately.

Where to Stay

A three-bedroom cottage with kitchen and bath is available at **Okahu Estate** winery. It is very comfortably decorated and a real bargain. There are laundry facilities, a big kitchen, and an outdoor BBQ area. www.okahuestate.co.nz, Okahu Road, Kaitaia. ☎ 09-408-0888 ($$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

The **Mainstreet Lodge** is the YHA and owners Kerry and Peter refer to it as a Quality Maori Backpacker Lodge. It is the site of a **Maori Cultural Centre** and instruction is offered in different facets of Maori life and art. They are building a meeting house using traditional tools and building techniques. These folks are really friendly and helpful; Kerry is happy to share local knowledge even if you aren't staying. Peter leads **Cape Reinga Experience (Te Ara Wairau)** offering a Maori perspective on the usual cape tours. Accommodation in dorms, twins, doubles and family rooms. www.tall-tale.co.nz, 237A Commerce Street, ☎ 09-408-1275, fax 09-408-1100.

The **Kaitaia Motor Camp** has tent and power sites, 69 South Road, ☎ 09-408-1212 ($).

If you have your own transport (or you can arrange to be dropped off on a tour and picked up the next day), check into either the Pukenui Holiday Park or the Wagener Holiday Park.

The **Wagener Holiday Park** is 40 km (24 miles) north of Kaitaia on SH1F – on the way to the Cape – and is the site of the Wagener family homestead and museum. The accommodation is in on-site campers and backpacker hostel

rooms. It's a friendly place, with a small shop and café. It's right on the beach and these folks are happy to help you organize some activities. The museum is a wacky place with treasures from a lifetime or two. www.northlandholiday.co.nz, Houhora Heads Road, ☎ 09-409-8880 ($).

The **Pukenui Holiday Park** is five km (three miles) farther north and has on-site campers, cabins and tourist flats. It's a short walk to the beach; there are cabins in the trees, and plenty of spots for camping. Lamb Road, Pukenui, ☎ 09-409-8803, fax 09-409-8802 ($).

Where to Eat

They say that Kaitaia is learning to make good coffee. Which is, I suppose, better than saying that Kaitaia isn't learning to make good coffee, but you're not going to have a lot of gastronomic thrills around here.

If the locals go out to eat, it's likely they'd go to **Beachcomber Restaurant** for seafood. 222 Commerce Street, ☎ 09-408-2010 ($$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Their second choice would probably be **Bushman's Hut Steakhouse** at the corner of Puckey Ave and Bank Street, ☎ 09-408-4320 ($$).

The best chef is said to be at **Orana Restaurant**, 238 Commerce Street, ☎ 09-408-1510 ($$).

> **Tip:** If you're driving up to the cape and need to do those "most northern" kinds of things, stop in the tavern at Houhora, the northernmost tavern in New Zealand.

■ Karikari Peninsula

Heading east at Awanui, you rejoin the coast at Doubtless Bay and in 40 km (24 miles) reach Mangonui. But half-way there, Inland Road leads out to the Karikari Peninsula, on the western side of Doubtless Bay. Most tourists don't get up here, but if you take the time you will be rewarded. There are lots of holiday homes dotted around Cape Karikari and Doubtless Bay and the golden sand beaches wrap around the bays, giving it a definite laid-back holiday feel. More than a few Aucklanders use Karikari as their escape from city life. It's a bit farther than the Bay of Islands, to be sure (it's about four hours from Auckland), but that remoteness is welcome. And as I keep saying, go to the spots where the locals go for their holidays.

The most popular spot for visitors is **Whatuwhiwhi** where there is a shop, a service station, a liquor store and a takeout restaurant.

A to Z Diving guides trips and provides instruction from their base in Whatuwhiwhi. They offer trips around the cape and out to the Rainbow Warrior, at the Cavalli Islands. www.atozdiving.co.nz, ☎/fax 09-408-7077.

Just outside of Whatuwhiwhi is the **Carrington Club**, a well-respected golf course with superb food, views and facilities. They grow their own grapes and make their own wine. www.carringtonclub.com, ☎ 09-408-7222.

The Bays & Beaches

Tokerau Beach (18km/11 miles) is the longest beach on the Peninsula. There is a small settlement in Tokerau and a camping area.

Matai Bay has two sheltered bays and a DoC camp. It's at the end of the road.

Karikari Bay, on the eastern side of the peninsula, has a long sweeping beach and a camping ground.

Puheke Beach has a walking track up to Mt. Puheke that provides fabulous views.

Rangiputa is on the craggy western edge and has white sand and good fishing access.

Where to Stay

There are quite a few holiday homes available during the season. I would contact **Acadia Property Management** to get a listing. arcadia@whatuwhihi.com, ☎ 09-408-7374.

The **Carrington Club** is the top place to stay. There is a luxurious lodge with 10 sleeping rooms (all with bath) and also a selection of villas. Everything you could want is available here. www.carringtonclub.com, ☎ 09-408-7222 ($$$$).

The **Reef Lodge Motel** is on the beachfront with good swimming access and a spa pool. 44 Gillies Road, Rangiputa, ☎ 09-408-7100 ($$).

The **White Sands Motel** has fine units, including one- and two-bedrooms. It makes for a good base (and there's a BBQ). Rangiputa Beach, ☎ 09-406-7080, fax 09-408-7580 ($$-$$$).

The **Whatuwhiwhi Holiday Park** is the best place to stay in the area for those on a budget. It's a very pleasant holiday park, right across the road from the water, and has not only great views but cabins, tourist flats, motel units and tent and powered sites. www.holidayparks.co.nz/whatuwhiwhi, Whatuwhiwhi Road, ☎ 09-408-7202 or 0800-142-444 ($-$$$).

■ Doubtless Bay

Heading back down around SH10 and the bottom of Doubtless Bay, you will reach Mangonui, left,a picturesque seaside fishing town that could just as easily be in Nova Scotia or Maine. Doubtless Bay reputedly gets its name from Captain Cook, who said that it was "doubtless a bay." There are plenty of beaches and fishing spots and, if you like to wander around fishing villages, you'll love it here. You can use Mangonui as a base for exploring Cape Reinga and Ninety Mile Beach. It's certainly a more attractive town than Kaitaia, though the trip to the Cape is longer from here. On the way to Mangonui, you will pass through Cable Bay (once the terminus of a cable stretching from

Queensland in Australia) and Coopers Beach (a popular holiday destination with shops).

> **Did you know?** Mangonui was the first whaling town in New Zealand.

Information Sources

Check out **www.doubtlessbay.co.nz**.

The **Visitor Information Centre** is open daily, 9 am to 4 pm and is on the (only) main road, ☎/fax 09-406-2046.

Adventures

On Water

Tucked away in Whangaroa Harbour is **Northland Sea Kayaking**, where guided day-trips will take in sea caves, islands and, often, marine life. It's a bit out of the way, and that makes for a pretty special trip. $70 for a full day, lunch not included, and accommodation is available. northlandseakayaking@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 09-405-0381.

Hihi Charters operates fishing trips in Doubtless Bay for six passengers or fewer and doesn't mix groups. The set rate is $60 per person and all equipment is supplied. Mill Bay, Mangonui, ☎ 09-406-1041 or 021-854-163.

Also operating out of Mill Bay is **Pisces Charters**. Go for a half-day ($60) or a full-day ($80). piscescharters@igrin.co.nz, ☎ 09-406-1234 or 021-180-8751.

Watchable wildlife: Doubtless Bay Dolphin Rendezvous cruises Doubtful Bay out to the Karikari Islands looking for and swimming with the dolphins. clypsofishing@actrix.co.nz, ☎ 09-406-0538.

Sightseeing & Shopping

The **Paradise Connexion** offers trips from Mangonui/Doubtless Bay to Cape Reinga. paradiseconnexion@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 09-406-0460.

If you're interested in the whaling history of the area, make an appointment to view the **Whaling Museum**, an 1840s Victorian house and gardens. There is a collection of whaling paintings, plus harpoons and other equipment, including a whaling ship. $10 adults, $2 children. www.butlerpoint.co.nz, Butler Point, ☎/fax 09-406-0006.

There are quite a few art and craft outlets around. One that is worth poking into is **Flax Bush**, on the waterfront. You can find lovely woven items there, including *kete* (handbags).

Inland at Oruru is the **Swamp Palace Cinema**, a community cinema. It's in an old hall, in the middle of the bush, and going is an adventure. ☎ 09-408-7040.

Where to Eat

The **Mangonui Fish Shop** is on stilts over the water and has a fabulous outdoor seating area. They call it "world famous," the "best in New Zealand" and, frankly, it is much better than average. Hopefully, you'll time your arrival to be ahead of the busloads. On the Waterfront ($).

Just down the road is **Fresh and Tasty**, the other take-away fish shop that gets the overflow crowd from their rivals. Just as good if you're going to take your fish away and go for a stroll to the water. On the Waterfront ($).

The **Waterfront Café** is across the street from the water. It's a comfortable modern café with a generous menu and good coffee. ☎ 09-406-0850 ($$-$$$).

The **Mangonui Hotel** has pub and better food, often with live music on the weekend. On the Waterfront ($-$$).

Where to Stay

There aren't dozens of choices, but a few good ones.

Acacia Lodge is right on the water and has studio to family units. It's really a beach-resort lodge, with big porches and gabled windows. Mill Bay Road, ☎ 09-406-0417, fax 09-406-1276 ($$-$$$).

The **Mangonui Hotel** has the usual hotel rooms; the ones on the waterfront side have great harbor views. Waterfront Road, ☎ 09-406-0003, fax 09-406-0015 ($$).

The **Mangonui Motel** is on a hill, so you get great views of the harbor from your tidy, simple apartment with kitchen and bath. Colonel Mould Drive, ☎ 09-406-0346 or 0800-462-646 ($$$).

■ Kaeo Loop

Continuing south on SH10, just before Kaeo, you can opt for the beautiful **Kaeo Loop Road**. It takes about 45 minutes and wanders along the coast with spectacular views of offshore islands, notably the Cavalli Islands, where the wreck of the *Rainbow Warrior* lies (see page 84). Along the way, you will pass through Whangaroa and along Whangaroa Harbour, a lovely sheltered bay with some beautiful scenery and rich history. Like Wangonui, it was a whaling town, but then, when kauri logs were being harvested for shipbuilding, it became a hotbed of boat-building. There were shipyards around the harbor and, between 1850 and 1909, over 100 ships were built here.

> **Did you know?** Matauri Bay is the spot where missionary Samuel Marsden first set foot on New Zealand.

For a little loop, there are quite a few notable things to do, including kayaking with **Northland Sea Kayaking**, ☎ 09-405-0381; viewing the impressive **Taraire Water Gardens**, ☎ 09-405-0466; and golfing at **Kauri Cliffs**, an absolutely amazing golf course and retreat. I can't even describe how beautiful the views are from the greens – the islands, the sea, it's incredible. If you golf, and have a few extra dollars to spend, this is the place to do it. It's currently ranked 49th in the world. The accommodation is, as we say in New Zealand, a bit over the top. It's fabulous and I would like to move in. There is a pink shell beach that requires a bit of a hike down from the golf course, but you just can't find a more beautiful place. www.kauricliffs.com, ☎ 09-407-0010, fax 09-407-0061.

Where to Stay

Kahoe Farms Hostel is a family farm and small hostel about 12 km (seven miles) north of Kahoe on SH10. The hosts are avid walkers and can point you in the right direction for any number of walks.

You can also join in the fun of farm life or kayak on the river through the mangrove forest. ☎ 09-405-1804 ($).

Oceans Holiday Village overlooks the water and has seven units of varying sizes. Matauri Bay, Kaeo, ☎ 09-405-0417 ($$-$$$).

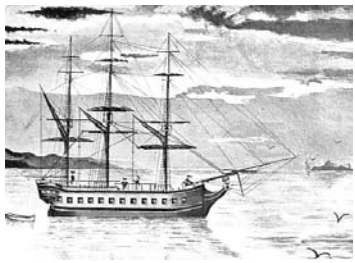
The Bay of Islands

Including Kerikeri, Russell, Paihia, Opua, and 50 Islands, the Bay of Islands is a bit of a playground and gets the lion's share of Northland attention. I'm not sure if this is because of its incredible natural beauty and historical significance, or because of good marketing and promotion but, either way, it is a popular holiday spot for both domestic and international tourists. It's a fairly busy destination, reminiscent of a (much smaller) Queenstown.

Kerikeri is a bit removed from it all, and filled with history and places to poke around. **Russell** is a delightful, romantic little town with a magnetic draw that served as the first capital of New Zealand. Partly, perhaps, because most people arrive by ferry, Russell has a true holiday feel and getting there is an excursion. It's the kind of town that you just wander around in, have a coffee or a wine, and then wander around some more. You can also access the sea, though, and go sailing, kayaking and fishing. **Paihia** is the busier sister, where most of the accommodation, bigger shops and a greater variety of activities are found. When I first sailed into New Zealand, we made landfall in Opua, and so this region has always had a place in my heart.

> **Local produce:** The Bay of Islands, and particularly Kerikeri, is replete with farm stands. You can fill your entire car with fresh fruit and vegetables! Be sure to buy plenty of Kerikeri oranges.

The region was the site of the first permanent European settlements and where the Treaty of Waitangi – New Zealand's founding document – was drawn up and signed by Maori chiefs on February 6, 1840. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the area was settled and fought over by Maori tribes – the weather, the seafood and the safe harbors were all quite attractive then as they are now.



Cook's ship

When Captain Cook made the rounds in 1769, he visited, anchored, and named the area. His experiences in the Bay of Islands were relatively good and without major incident. That was not the case for French explorer Marion du Fresne, who arrived in 1772 and, while originally getting on well with the locals, had a miscommunication that led to his own death and that of 26 crew members. The French retaliated, killing hundreds of Maori.

Once European settlement began in earnest, relations between Maori and pakeha fared well for a time and then began to break down, no doubt spurred on in part by the arrival of missionaries and European ways, including firearms. Not to say that the ways of the Maori warrior (including, let's face it, cannibalism) were ideal either.

Traditional Maori fighting was carried out during a "fighting season" – the time between hunting and growing crops; with the new fighting tools, the Maori took to warring on a more regular and much more destructive basis. In order to gain more firearms, Maori traded all that was valuable – food, greenstone and heads of chiefs taken in battle. It really is a gruesome story. European disease became prevalent, alcohol and tobacco were introduced and Maori women were prostituted to pakeha sailors. No surprise, the Maori lifestyle and culture began to fall apart.

When missionary Samuel Marsden showed up in 1814, he was intent on civilizing the Maori and saving the fallen pakeha. Following Marsden, Anglican, Catholic and Wesleyan missionaries all arrived and set up missions around the North Island.

■ Kerikeri

Information Sources

The **Department of Conservation** office at the Kerikeri Basin Reserve can help you out with planning both short and long walks in the area, 34 Landing Road, ☎ 09-407-8474.

Sightseeing

Some 25 km (15 miles) northwest of Paihia, this is home to New Zealand's oldest building, the **Kerikeri Mission House**, known as the Kemp House (1822). Located in the **Kerikeri Scenic Recreation Basin Reserve**, the **Mission Station** (in which sits the house) was founded in 1819 by the Church Missionary Society; the Kororipo pa, which was the fort of the Ngai Tawake war chief Hongi Hika, overlooks the station – Hongi Hika was the first Maori chief to acquire firearms and stockpiled quite a collection.

The **Stone Store**, built in 1832-1836, is beside the Kemp House, and is the oldest European stone building in New Zealand. It was meant to hold crops from the mission farm. Because of crop failure, that never happened; instead, it was used as a kauri gum trading store and then a general store.

While in the Kerikeri Basin area, you can visit the **Kororipo pa**, or stronghold, and **Rewa's Village** – a replica of a pre-European Maori fishing village. At the Kerikeri Basin Reserve, there is a walkway along the Kerikeri River that in 15 minutes takes you to the site of Kerikeri's first hydroelectric plant, in 35 minutes to the **Fairy Pools** and in an hour to the **Rainbow Falls**.

Shopping

In addition to the history stops, make sure you take the time to go to **Living Nature** – a Kiwi success story. They make fabulous skin- and body-care products using all-natural ingredients. Also stop in at **Makana Confections** for hand-make chocolates. And if you like interesting clothes and decorations, go to **Enz of the Earth**. I seem to leave a pile of money there every time I visit.

Wineries

There are a handful of wineries around Kerikeri and with good reason – grapes were originally planted here in 1819 by Samuel Marsden, a mission-

ary. Those were the first grapes planted in New Zealand, although not much happened on the winemaking scene until the 1960s.

Marsden Estate, named for Samuel, is just outside of Kerikeri and is open for tastings Tuesday-Sunday. It's the brunch choice of my friends who live in Kerikeri. www.marsdenestate.co.nz, Wiroa Road, ☎/fax 09-407-9398.

On SH10 is **Cottle Hill Winery** and it's owned by former sailors who came here and just didn't want to leave. They have a restaurant in addition to the tasting room and are open seven days a week. 10 am-6 pm summer, 10 am-5 pm winter. cottle-hill@xtra.co.nz, Cottle Hill Road, ☎ 09-407-5203 or fax 09-407-6808.

Where to Stay

The **Summer House** is an exquisite B&B with fabulous gardens and grounds. As one of my friends said, the house is like something out of an architectural magazine. It's pretty fancy and the breakfasts are works of art. www.thesummerhouse.co.nz, 424 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-4294, fax 09-407-4297 ($$$$).

The **Abilene Motel** is a centrally located, dependable motel with standard units. abilene@kerikeri-nz.co.nz, 136 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-9203 ($$-$$$).

Colonial House Motel has studios and one- and two-bedroom units. Set in a large garden. 178 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-9106 or 0800-242-555 ($$-$$$).

For a cottage with kitchen and bath, try the **Kemp Lodge Motel**. There are nice gardens, a spa and a swimming pool. 134 Kerikeri Road, ☎/fax 09-407-8295 ($$).

The **Hone Heke Lodge** is in a residential neighborhood and has dorms, twins and doubles (some with bathroom). Each of the dorms has its own cooking gear. Recently under new ownership. honeheke@xtra.co.nz, 65 Hone Heke Road, ☎ 09-407-8170 ($).

Set on a 16-acre citrus orchard, the **Kerikeri Farm Hostel** is a bit out of town and a teeny bit pricier, but you get what you pay for and this is worth it. It's in a wooden house and the rooms are comfortable. Breakfast and dinner are available and there's one unit with kitchen and bath. kkfarmhostel@xtra.co.nz, SH10, ☎ 09-407-6989 ($).

The **Kerikeri YHA** is close to town and set in a wooded area. There are dorms and doubles. 114 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-9391 ($).

Where to Eat

My favorite place to eat is the **Café Cinema**. Located, you guessed it, at the cinema. They have fresh and innovative food, a good wine list and yummy desserts. You can get a movie and meal deal. Hobson Ave, ☎ 09-407-9121 ($$).

My other favorite option is the **Rocket Café**. Three km (two miles) out of Kerikeri, it's set in a fruit orchard; it's small, the food is tasty and they make a mean cup of coffee. Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-3100 ($$).

For baked goodies, go to **Kerikeri Bakehouse** on Fairway Drive.

I've managed to have quite a few good breakfasts and lunches at the **Fishbone Café**. I've never been for dinner, but plan to. Good fresh food and pleasant staff (and good desserts). You can sit outside on a nice day. 88 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-6065 ($$).

MARX Garden Restaurant is set in beautiful grounds with lovely indoor and outdoor seating. I ate brunch here one New Year's Day and the memories are great. Good food, good service, it's perfect. Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-6606 ($$$).

■ Paihia & Russell

Give yourself a half-hour to get from Kerikeri to Paihia, the center of all tourism for the Bay of Islands. Two km (less than a mile) across the river is Waitangi and the Treaty Grounds and, by ferry, Russell is just a few minutes away. I'll treat them together as far as activities go and list where to stay and eat at the end.

Information Sources

In Paihia, there is a very busy and informative **Visitor Information Centre** beside the Maritime Building. **visitorinfo@fndc.govt.nz**, ☎ 09-402-7345.

The Department of Conservation has an office in Russell, the **Bay of Islands Maritime & Historic Park Visitor Centre**, ☎ 09-403-9003, fax 09-403-9009. They have some great natural-history displays and a very nice gift shop.

> **Historic interest:** **Christ Church** in Russell is the oldest church in New Zealand and still has bullet-hole scars from a rougher era. **Pompallier** is the oldest industrial building in New Zealand and was built as a print shop for the Roman Catholic mission. It has been restored, and staff (and visitors) can take part in the activities of the missionary days, including book-binding and working in the tannery. Open daily, at the end of The Strand.

Adventures

On Water

To miss getting on the water around here is to miss the soul of the place. Whether you take a scenic ride to the popular Hole in the Rock, or jump into the sea with the dolphins, make sure you get out there!

Watchable Wildlife

Some of the most wonderful moments of my life have been swimming with marine mammals, and in the Bay of Islands you can swim with dolphins. The day I went out from Paihia, we had three fabulous drops with bottlenose dolphins and then went on to view common dolphins. You never know what or how many you'll find, but honestly, being invited into their world is a breathtaking, not-soon-forgotten experience. In addition to the dolphin swim, you'll be on the lookout for whales, sunfish, and whatever else is out there.

Dolphin Discoveries runs two trips a day, with pick-up points in Paihia and Russell. $95. dolphin@igrin.co.nz, corner Marsden & Williams roads, ☎ 09-402-8234, fax 09-402-6058.

Fullers also has dolphin swims as well as a whole menu of scenic boat trips. $95 adults, $48 children. www.fullers-bay-of-islands.co.nz, ☎ 09-402-7421 (Paihia), or 09-403-7866 (Russell).

Kings Dolphin Cruises & Tours offers a day-trip that includes a scenic ride to the Hole in the Rock, as well as a dolphin swim. They have outfitted their boat with a "boom net" allowing less confident swimmers to safely get in the water. $85 adults $50 children. Departs at 10 am, lunch not included, but can be arranged. www.kings-tours.co.nz, ☎ 09-402-8288, fax 09-402-7915.

■ Diving

Dive North operates daily dive trips to the *Rainbow Warrior* site from their base in Paihia. They also offer dive courses from beginner to divemaster level, as well as specialty courses like search-and-rescue and photography. www.bay-of-islands.co.nz/diving/divenorth.html, ☎ 09-402-7079.

■ Boating

There are a couple of different sailing options, depending on your interest. The ***R Tucker Thompson*** is a traditional-design gaff-rigged schooner, built in the 1970s and 1980s. If you've never sailed on a traditional ship, this would be a great opportunity. A great lunch is included and there's plenty of space to spread out and enjoy the sun and sea. Daily, mid-October to end of April, from Paihia and Russell. $95 adults, $48 childrenren. www.tucker.co.nz, ☎ 0800-882-537.

For the opposite end of the sailing spectrum, consider ***Carino New Zealand***, a quick-moving, modern catamaran. Vanessa McKay is the skipper and has been sailing around the world nearly all her life. She supplies fishing and snorkeling gear, and the *Carino* has a DoC concession for dolphin swimming. A part of your daily fee goes toward dolphin research. $69 adults, $35 children. carinonz@voyager.co.nz, ☎ 09-402-8040 or 025-933-872, fax 09-402-8661.

If you keep thinking how much fun it would be to go out on one of those sailboats you see anchored in a tucked-away little bay, here's your chance. Take a sail on *Manawanui,* a 72-foot yacht. **Ecocruz** trips leave Paihia on Tuesday and Friday and return on Thursday and Sunday. There's kayaking, snorkeling, fishing, sailing, good food, all the things you do on a boat. Plus, it's a bargain. $450 per person (dorm accommodation), $525 per person (double) includes your activities, lodging and food – where else in the Bay of Islands is that going to happen? www.ecocruz.co.nz, ☎ 0800-432-6278 or 025-592 153.

One of the odder ways to travel is on the ***Paihia Duck***. Cruises offer amphibious land and sea tours, looping between Paihia, Waitangi, Russell, Okiato and Opua. www.paihiaduck.co.nz, ☎/fax 09-402-8681 or 0800-494-868.

■ Kayaking

I find sea kayaking a wonderful way to spend a day. There are a couple of different operators on the beach in Paihia that do trips around the bay and that hire out kayaks for you to enjoy on your own. My pick is **Coastal Kayakers** at the Waitangi end of the beach. They offer guided trips as well as rentals up the Waitangi River. The river is bordered by mangrove forest which, tide-dependent, you can paddle through. There are usually some great shore birds to check out. The trips also include a chance to play at Haruru Falls, a welcome cooling-off spot. Half-day, full-day and multi-day trips are available. Guided trips begin at $50 adults. www.coastalkayakers.co.nz, ☎ 09-402-8105 or 09-403-7951, fax 09-403-8550.

■ Fishing

Fishing around the Bay of Islands is for yellowtail, kingfish, kahawai, snapper, john dory, grouper, trevally and shark. There are more than a few different charters and guides available.

The word among locals is that you can't do better than Steve Butler on ***Earl Grey*** for a day's fishing. www.earlgreyfishing.co.nz, ☎ 09-407-7165, fax 09-407-5465.

Another option for the serious fisherman is ***Major Tom II***. ☎ 025-377-844 or 0800-625-678.

Blue Sea Charters makes three trips a day. ☎ 09-402-7071, fax 09-402-8133.

Children are welcome on ***Snappa***. Day-trips leave at 9 am and dusk trips leave at 4 pm. Adults $50, children $30. ☎ 09-402-7123.

The **MV *Arline*** is another $50 option for a day-long trip. ☎ 09-402-7345 or 027-286-6995.

On Foot

In Russell, pick up a copy of the *Heritage Trail* and take a self-guided tour focusing on Maori history, whaling or colonization. The three trails outlined take you all over the peninsula and vary in length from one to three hours.

The **Cape Brett Walkway** is the one "big" walk in this area. Cape Brett, or Rakaumangamanga, is the site where the first Maori landed in New Zealand in their seven *waka* (canoes). As it would happen, the peninsula also has seven peaks. At 16 km long (10 miles) it takes about eight hours, and takes in some fabulous scenery and terrain, ending (or beginning, depending on your point of view) at the DoC Cape Brett lighthouse hut. The hut was originally used for the lighthouse keepers and their families; it now sleeps 22.

Previously, the track was rather overgrown and rough. Transport options were limited; now it seems to be working pretty well. There are a couple of options. You can self-drive and leave your car at the campgrounds in Rawhiti and do an "out and back" walk. Or you can get water transport to the hut at the top of the cape, stay the night or not, and walk back. Or, my pick, get transport to Rawhiti, walk out to the lighthouse hut and then get picked up by boat the next morning. Whichever way you do it, you'll get fantastic views of the islands.

There is one good climb up to the ridge and then the rest of the track undulates along. Contact Cape Brett Walkways for options and ideas – they offer a

guided option, and one guide can trace his Maori ancestry back to the original seven canoes that arrived from Hawaiki. Eco-tours on water and land are also available.

There are two other shorter loop walks on the peninsula, both listed in the Cape Brett brochure, available from DoC. The track is privately maintained, and there is a $30 per adult ($15 children) fee for track maintenance and a $12 per night hut fee. Guided walks are $125 and independent walks with transport are $60. Contact the Russell DoC office or Cape Brett Walkways. www.capebrettwalks.co.nz, ☎ 09-403-8823, fax 09-403-8827.

You can also camp at the **Rawhiti Marae** camping ground and leave from there. Tent sites are $8 per adult, power sites are $10 per adult, and in the two houses the tariff is $12 per adult. There are showers, kitchen and laundry and it's right across the street from the beach. ☎ 09-403-7044.

On Horses & Quad Bikes

There are few options for horseback riding. **Skyline Adventures** offers different tours for novice or experienced riders; rides take you into the Waitangi Forest. From $40. skyline-adventures@xtra.co.nz. On Baylys Drive, Waitangi. ☎ 027-233-3490. From their base across from the airport, Skyline runs quad-bike rides. Prices begin at $60. 445 Puketona Road, ☎ 021-487-357.

More serious horseback riders should contact **Big Rock Springs Trail Rides**, which is about 45 minutes north of Paihia. They take full-day trips out. You can bring your own lunch or arrange for one; fun options include exploring glow-worm caves and swimming with your horse. Full-day $80, half-day (by arrangement) $55. ☎ 09-405-9999 or 09-401-9303.

Bush 'n' Bike Adventures has riverbank and valley quad-bike rides, beginning at $65; which you go on depends on experience. Prices start at $45 and bookings are essential. Outside of Kawakawa, about 20 minutes from Paihia. ☎ 09-404-1142 or 025-650-9444.

In the Air

For a fabulous, albeit pricey, option, book with **Salt Air** for a scenic tour around the Bay of Islands. There are some islands where you can land, and trips can be individualized for your needs and interests. These folks have both fixed-wing planes and helicopters available; for the ultimate in Northland adventure, take the flight out to Cape Reinga, get picked up in a 4x4 for lighthouse and dune exploration, and then be whisked back to Paihia. Bonus – you'll get to these places when the buses full of tourists aren't there. Prices begin at $95. www.saltairco.nz, ☎ 09-402-8338 or 0800-472-5824, fax 09-402-8302.

In Culture

The **Waitangi Treaty Grounds** is incredibly important to all New Zealanders. It's on the site of the Waitangi National Reserve and is the place where the Treaty of Waitangi was drawn up and signed. You enter the grounds through a visitor center where there are Treaty displays, an audio-visual gallery and a gift shop. The Grounds include the **Treaty House**, which originaly served as home to James Busby, Official British Resident, and his family. Now it is restored and houses national

heritage displays. There is also the **Whare Runanga**, or Maori meeting house, and the Maori *waka*, or war canoe, *Ngatoki Matawhaorua*. (There are also walkways, a golf course and sports area.)

The Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, gave sovereignty of Aotearoa to Britain, while protecting Maori and guaranteeing their right over land and resources. I can't pretend to understand the Treaty and its implications – no one understands it fully. In fact, in 2004, it is still being disputed and interpreted and Helen Clark, the current Prime Minister, is considering an inquiry into the treaty.

Historically, on February 6, 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed by Captain William Hobson, acting for the British Crown, several British residents and approximately 45 Maori rangatira or chiefs – Hone Heke was the first. The Maori text was taken around Northland for more Maori signatures and copies of it were sent around the rest of the country.

You can do a self-tour of the Waitangi National Trust, or join a tour and have the intricacies of Waitangi explained to you. It's a good opportunity to learn not only about Waitangi and the treaty grounds, but to gain some understanding of both the culture and history of New Zealand. Tours are very informal and guides are entertaining – open to answering whatever questions you may have. The treaty house and the traditional war canoe are two don't-miss sites on the grounds.

In addition to guided tours, there are two cultural presentations. The daytime show is a more relaxed, casual affair with lots of singing and acting-out of stories. The performers are cheeky and silly. The evening show was specifically written for the Treaty Grounds and is a light, sound, and visual experience. On fine evenings, this performance is held outdoors on the lawn in front of the treaty house – a spectacular setting!

The Waitangi National Trust is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm in the winter, to 6 pm in the summer. Prices begin at $10 adult. Shows and tours are additional. www.waitangi.net.nz, ☎ 09-402-7437.

Spas

The spa scene is getting to be quite popular around the Bay of Islands, and no doubt more day-spas will be opening. As of now, the most extensive menu is offered at **La Spa Naturale Day Spa**. www.paihiabeach.co.nz, Paihia Beach Resort & Spa, 116 Marsden Road, ☎ 09-402-6140 or 0800-870-111, fax 09-402-6026.

Where to Stay

As in any true tourist area, there is a plethora of choices for lodging. Depending on season, it's best to book ahead.

Paihia

There is a studio and cottage with kitchen and bath at **Benwin**. The studio includes breakfast on the first morning (two night minimum stay). Located in a residential neighborhood, this is a different option to the hype in town. benwin@xtra.co.nz, 38 Kings Road, ☎ 09-402-8216 or 09-402-8652, fax 09-402-8220 ($$$-$$$$).

Allegra House offers an option of apartment or bed-and-breakfast room. It's a large, modern house up on the hill, with great views of the bay. www.allegra.co.nz, 39 Bayview Road, ☎ 09-402-7932 ($$$-$$$$).

Waiora wins in the value-for-money category. They have four chalets and the key here is simple elegance. On-site aromatherapy and massage make me want to stay. www.waiora-valley.co.nz, 52 Puketona Road, ☎ 09-402-6601, fax 09-402-6038 ($$$-$$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

La Veduta is a good choice for homestay. The owners are French and Italian who make food and guests a part of their life. Dinner available by prior arrangement. www.laveduta.co.nz, corner of Gould and Hazard streets, ☎/fax 09-403-8299 ($$$).

The **Edelweiss Motel** is a good, dependable motel with reasonable rates. There are different size units depending on need (all with full kitchen) and a heated saltwater swimming pool. www.edelweissmotel.co.nz, 70 Seaview Road, ☎ 09-402-7982, fax 09-402-6023 ($$-$$$).

Pioneer on the Waterfront has serviced two-bedroom apartments that sleep up to six. www.pioneerapartments.co.nz, Marsden Road, ☎ 09-402-7924 or 0800-272-786, fax 09-402-7656 ($$$).

For the swanky, choose **Paihia Beach Resort & Spa**. It's the only real "resort" kind of place – big, heated salt-water swimming pool, day-spa, poolside restaurant, but, with only 21 suites, it's not overpowering. www.paihiabeach.co.nz, 116 Marsden Road, ☎ 09-402-6140 or 0800-870-111 (in the US/CAN 1-888-226-7448), fax 09-402-6026 ($$$$).

You can choose from studios with kitchen and bath, one- and two-bedroom suites, or B&B at **Admirals View Lodge**. It's a block off the beach and was just opened in late 2002, so things are new and modern. Free bikes. www.admiralsviewlodge.co.nz. 2 Murray Road, ☎ 09-402-6236 or 0800-247-234, fax 09-402-6237 ($$-$$$).

The **Pickled Parrot Backpackers** is a good choice for budget accommodation in Paihia. There's a nice courtyard, free breakfast, barbecue area and the rooms range from single to dorm or tent sites. theparrot@paradise.net.nz, Greys Lane, off MacMurray Road, ☎ 09-402-6222 or 0508-727-768 ($).

Built as a backpacker hostel is **Peppertree Lodge**. They have a big kitchen and a large lounge, as well as big courtyard. Bikes and kayaks are available for guest use free. www.peppertree.co.nz, 15 Kings Road, ☎/fax 09-402-6122 ($).

More and more backpackers are being built with en-suite bathrooms, which makes sense to me. Such is the case at **Saltwater Lodge**. New in 2001, they seem to have bothered to take the time to figure out what's important to budget travelers. Twin, king and dorm rooms are available. Free bikes and kayaks. www.saltwaterlodge.co.nz, 14 Kings Road, ☎ 09-402-7075 or 0800-002-266, fax 09-402-7240 ($).

For a real point of difference, check out the swimming pool at **Bay Adventurer**. They have doubles, dorms and family rooms, a BBQ, large outdoor area and a spa. www.bayadventurer.co.nz ($)

Centabay Lodge has a range of budget and backpacker hostel rooms, from studios to dorms. Some of the doubles and twins have en-suite bathrooms. They also have free kayaks and a spa pool. www.centabay.co.nz, 27 Selwyn Road, ☎ 09-402-7466, fax 09-402-8145 ($-$$).

Russell

The **Duke of Marlborough Hotel** is home to the oldest pub in New Zealand and in 2003 all of the guest rooms were renovated. On the Waterfront, www.theduke.co.nz, ☎ 09-403-7829, fax 09-403-7828 ($$$).

For the historic B&B option, consider **Ounuwhao Harding House**, a restored 1894 kauri villa with a fabulous wrap-around porch. They also have a cottage with kitchen and bath. Hope Avenue. www.bay-of-islands.co.nz/ounuwhao. ☎ 09-403-7310 fax 09-403-8310 ($$$-$$$$).

Kimberly Lodge is on the hill above the DoC office. The hosts are lovely and offer extras like cooking classes – go out, help catch fresh seafood and then bring it home to prepare the evening's meal. Pitt Street, ☎ 09-403-7090 ($$$$).

For those who want to tie a little fishing into their stay, **Te Manaaki** is the choice. Dudley has a charter boat and is a keen fisherman. Robertson Street, ☎ 09-403-7200 ($$$).

Triton Suites is a totally revamped 70s-style place. It's a motel, but the suites have nice furnishings that set it apart. www.tritonsuites.co.nz, 7 Wellington Street, ☎/fax 09-403-8067 ($$$).

The units at **Te Maiki Villas** might be getting a bit tired, but it's still a good place to use as a base and is a reasonably-priced option with kitchen and bath. www.temaikivillas.co.nz, Flagstaff Road, ☎ 09-403-7046 or 0800-156-777, fax 09-403-7106 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Pukematu Lodge** has a most imposing entrance and is set up on a hill with commanding views of the town and bay. It's not quite as pricey as some of the other options, but is equally pleasant. The owner is the local policeman, so you'll want to behave! www.pukematulodge.co.nz, Top of Flagstaff Hill, ☎ 09-403-8500 or 025-245-7640, fax 09-403-8501 ($$$$).

For the reasonably priced option, pick **Kororareka Backpackers**. It's a big house on the hill, with fabulous views and very social hosts. Oneroa Road, ☎ 09-403-8494 ($).

It's funny the things you remember about a place. When we first arrived in New Zealand on the boat and were anchored in Opua, we ended up doing our laundry at the **Russell Top 10 Holiday Park**. It's got a bit of everything, from tent sites to cabins and everything is clean, friendly and modern. www.russelltop10.co.nz, Long Beach Road, ☎ 09-403-7826 or 0800-503-889, fax 09-403-7221 ($-$$)

Where to Eat

Paihia

There are so many places to eat to suit all budgets. **Tides** is my favorite, I've been for breakfast and lunch and it's always good. Williams Street, ☎ 09-402-7557 ($$-$$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Pizzeria La Scaletta is dependable for gourmet pizza and other Italian options. Selwyn Road, ☎ 09-402-7039 ($$-$$$).

Only Seafood is the place to go if everyone wants, you guessed it, seafood. It's one of the nicest restaurants in town. Upstairs at 40 Marsden Road, ☎ 09-402-6666. Downstairs at the same address is **Bistro 40**, with a broader menu, but just as good food (and they make tiramisu). ☎ 09-402-7444 ($$$).

At the Treaty Grounds is **Waikokopu Café**, which has the best café food in town. They make all sorts of dishes, all with great flavor and are happy to suit your tastes. There are salads and wraps prepared in advance, or they make more substantial foods to order. It's all yummy and the surroundings are lovely. ☎ 09-402-6275.

Russell

The Gables is in an historic (c. 1847) building on the waterfront. Features all the food you'd expect in such elegant surroundings, served on white linen. The Strand, ☎ 09-403-7618 ($$$$).

The **Duke of Marlborough Tavern** is the place for pub food. ☎ 09-403-7829 ($-$$).

The **Bordello Garden Bistro** has breakfast, snacks and light meals all day. The Strand, ☎ 09-403-7618 ($$).

Sally's Restaurant has outdoor seating which is good because inside it's a bit dark. But they have well-prepared fish and reasonable prices; and they make very good chocolate brownies. The Strand, ☎ 09-403-7652 ($$-$$$).

■ On the Road to Tutukaka

Leaving Paihia, you don't have to travel far to Opua, where the vehicle ferry leaves for Russell. Opua is a deep-water port and popular with the yachties. At times, you can get a ride on the train to Kawakawa (the tracks used to continue on to Whangarei for freight). A non-profit group, the **Bay of Islands Vintage Railway**, is the contact ☎ 09-404-0684. If you end up driving, a visit to the **Hundertwasser toilets** in Kawakawa has become a bit of a pilgrimage for travelers, especially those hailing from Austria, like the artist Frederick Hundertwasser. I've been in a lot of toilets – the artwork in these is rather spectacular.

There are two main reasons to stop or make a side-trip to the little town of Moerewa – **The Tuna Café** and, next to it on SH1, **Te Puna Keteriki**. The café is run by a couple of local girls and has some of the best New Zealand food around. They put on a Maori spread, but also have good coffees and sweets, couches for lazing in and a friendly, warm welcome. Te Puna Keteriki is an art gallery displaying local art and craft. They have lovely, individual

pieces in here and, if you're looking for something a bit different, I suggest you stop in.

Continuing south from Paihia on SH1, you'll reach Waiomio and the **Kawiti Glow-worm Caves**. These are definitely worth a stop. No big lines here to get in, it's a simple exploration of the caves on private land. Driving in, I was surprised by how the rocks and caves just jutted unexpectedly straight out of the ground. Guided tours only (30 to 40 minutes). $10 adults, $5 children. 5 km south of Kawakawa, 1 km from SH1 at Waiomio. Probably best to phone first, or if you stop by unannounced, you may need to hang out for a few minutes until a guide returns. ☎ 09-404-0583 or 09-404-1256.

Taking the coastal loop from Paihia, you will reach **Oakura** on Whangaruru Harbour. It's a great little place to take a swim or a beach walk. You can snorkel here or climb around on the rocks, and you won't be overrun by other tourists.

■ Tutukaka

Continue south on SH1 from Waiomio; I suggest that when you reach Hikurangi you head toward the coast and follow the road to Matapouri and then Tutukaka. This is an interesting little piece of the coast, but most international travelers don't venture this far – unless they're keen divers or fishermen. The area has historically been a strong charter-fishing base, but in recent years it's turned into more of an eco-tour area. **Ngunguru** is a few kilometers south of Tutukaka. When the Europeans first arrived in Ngunguru, the local Maori welcomed them and gave them land on which to build a school. Today, it is a popular swimming and waterskiing area, and kayaks are available to paddle around the estuary.

Dive! Tutukaka is based at the edge of the Tutukaka Harbour and, with Poor Knights Islands (a marine reserve 28 km/23 miles offshore that has been called the world's best subtropical dive site) and two specially sunk ships, it makes a great base for exploring the area underwater. In addition to dive trips, these folks are happy to take snorkelers and kayakers along, and can supply all the gear you need. The wrecks were both navy vessels and were prepared for sinking (access and exit holes were cut, for example). Sunk in 1999 and 2000, one lies in 28 meters (91 feet) one in 32 meters (104 feet). I think this is a great option to get on the water, even if you're not a diver. New in 2003 is a half-day sightseeing trip out to the Poor Knights on a high-speed jet-boat. All the scenic trips include glimpses into caves, looks at sea birds, a chance to kayak, etc. Prices begin at $65 for snorkelers, $185 for diving. www.diving.co.nz, ☎ 09-434-3867 or 0800-288-882, fax 09-434-3884.

> **Did you know?** In 2003, it was determined that Rikoriko Cave on Aorangi Island (one of the islands making up the Poor Knights) is the largest sea cave in the world.

The **Poor Knights Express** runs diving trips and sightseeing cruises. Poor Knights, www.divenz.co.nz, Tutkaka Marina, Berth J1, ☎ 09-437-3632 or 0800-693-483.

Greensea Ecocharters is operated by a marine biologist who conducts tours of Poor Knights Islands. Day-trips and overnight voyages. www.greensea.co.nz, ☎ 09-434-3350 or 025-934-140.

There are quite a few fishing charters in Tutukaka, including **Delray Charters**, which offers fishing and cruising trips for one day or several. Contact John, delray@igrin.co.nz, ☎/fax 09-434-3028 or 025-755-985.

Where to Stay

There are a few accommodations along the Tutukaka coast, and no doubt more will be springing up.

The **Poor Knights Lodge** in Ngunguru has two rooms, each with en-suite bathroom, and is a relaxing place to stay while enjoying the area. www.poorknightslodge.co.nz, Tutukaka Block Road, ☎ 09-434-4405, fax 09-434-4401 ($$$$).

Pacific Rendezvous has the luxury of sitting atop the southern peninsula of Tutukaka. They have 30 apartments with kitchen and bath, ranging from studios to three-bedrooms. There is also a swimming pool and a spa, not to forget the fish-cleaning area and helicopter pad. www.oceanrest.co.nz, Motel Road, ☎ 09-434-3847, fax 09-434-4919 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Braeburn Resort** has three two-bedroom motel units. In Whangamau Bay, they are very spacious and convenient to the beach. www.braeburnresort.com, Tutukaka Block Road, ☎ 09-434-4009 ($$$).

For a reasonably priced option, pick one of the two apartments at **Malibu Mal's**. Right by the beach, it's a good spot for a dive or relaxing holiday. www.malibumals.co.nz, Tutukaka Beach Road, ☎ 09-434-3450 or 025-471-621 ($$).

Ngunguru Holiday Park and Backpackers is right on the water and has cabins, on-site campers and a backpackers chalet in addition to power and tent sites. water.edge@xtra.co.nz, Papaka Road, Ngunguru, ☎/fax 09-434-3851 ($-$$).

■ Whangarei

Northland's major city, Whangarei is popular among the yachting community and the next major town you'll come to on your way to Auckland. Many offshore sailors leave their boats here during cyclone season while they travel around the rest of New Zealand. Consequently, a walk through the Quayside Town Basin will give you plenty of sailboats to look at – some you'll envy and some will make you wonder how on earth they ever made it here. As a destination, Whangarei is a pleasant, small city, but doesn't really justify a long stay. Most of the activities and attractions are away from the city center, but there are a few things worth a stop and a day or two should suit you just fine.

Information Sources

Tip: For more information on Whangarei and the surrounding area, check **www.whangareinz.org.nz**.

The **Whangarei Information & Travel Centre** is very helpful and well-equipped. They even have a café. 92 Otaika Road, ☎ 09-438-1079. The

Department of Conservation is in the same building and can be contacted at ☎ 09-430-2007.

Adventures

On Water

Whangarei Falls drop 25 meters (81 feet) into a beautiful pool and are considered among New Zealand's most photogenic waterfalls. They are also easily accessible in Tikipunga, five km (three miles) northeast of the city center.

For beaches, the **Whangarai Heads**, 35 km (22 miles) from the city, are a favorite spot for swimming, surfing and all other water activities, as well as walking. The closest good swimming beach to town is at McLeod Bay, but the best beaches are farther along and include Urquharts/Woolshed Bay, Smugglers Bay (only accessible by foot) and the favorite, Ocean Beach, which is at the very end of the road. It has white sand, clear water and rocky outcrops from which to fish and explore. For a good walk, stop at **Bream Head Scenic Reserve** where there are a number of walking tracks that range up to six hours one way. Another good walk is the one-hour climb to the top of Mount Mania. At 460 meters (1,495 feet), the summit offers great 360°views.

On Foot

In addition to the walks at **Bream Head Scenic Reserve**, there are a scenic walks right in the town of Whangarei. The **Parahaki Scenic Reserve** has a good selection of walks along the river and in the bush. One of the walks leads to a pa or fortified village site; two in the **Coronation Scenic Reserve** lead to pa sites.

On Horses

One- to two-hour horse treks through kauri forest, on the beach or on the farm are available through **Whananaki Trail Rides**. ☎ 09-433-8299 or 025-949-437.

On Quad Bikes

Inland from Whangarei about 20 km (12 miles), **Maungakaramea Farm Safaris** has quad-bike rides through farm and bush. If you're lucky, you may get to muster some sheep or cattle. fmsafari@ihug.co.nz, ☎ 09-432-3794 or 025-778-218.

Sightseeing

The **Town Basin** is a very pleasant waterfront area to wander around, eat (consider the Fudge Farm Café), drink and look at the boats. There are quite a few galleries and shops as well as **Claphams Clocks**, boasting the largest collection of clocks in the Southern Hemisphere. It is also home to a music box collection. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm. $8 adults, $4 children. ☎ 09-438-3993.

The **Paper Mill** began as a work project for the intellectually disabled and has evolved into a tourist stop. You can join a tour and watch the paper being hand-made. Weekend workshops and tutorials by arrangement. Monday-Friday, 9:30 am to 4 pm, tours until 2:30 pm. $5 per person. 300 Otaika Road, ☎ 09-438-2652.

Where to Stay

There is a huge range of affordable accommodation around Whangarei, and, if none of these suit, the information center has rack upon rack of others to choose from.

For a double room with an en-suite bathroom right on the waterfront, pick **Quay B&B**. quaybandb@xtra.co.nz, 6 Dundas Road, ☎/fax 09-430-8882 or 027-451-5712 ($$$).

Graelyn Villa is in a century-old home amid mature gardens. Rooms are simple and tasteful, with breakfast often served outdoors. 166 Kiripaka Road, ☎ 09-437-7532 fax 09-437-7533 ($$).

Centrally located opposite the town basin is **Kingsgate Hotel**, part of the Millenium Hotel and Resort Chain. There are lots of rooms, a heated indoor pool, gym, 24-hour room service, and all the usual large hotel accoutrements. www.kingsgatehotels.co.nz, 9 Riverside Drive, ☎ 09-438-0284 or 0800-782-548, fax 09-438-4320 ($$$).

The **Flames International Hotel and Conference Centre** recently underwent a renovation. It's near the airport and all rooms overlook the harbor. www.flameshotel.co.nz, Waverly Street, ☎ 09-436-2107 or 0800-424-000, fax 09-436-0980 ($$$-$$$$).

BK's Pohutukawa Lodge is a member of the Best Western chain. It's a new facility and the rooms and grounds are spotless. www.pohutukawalodge.co.nz, 362 Western Hills Drive, ☎ 09-430-8634 or 0800-200-355, fax 09-430-8635 ($$-$$$)..

A clean, dependable and modern motel is **Cheviot Park Motor Lodge**. All units are with bath, there is a swimming pool and breakfast and dinner are available. www.cheviot-park.co.nz, corner Cheviot Street and Western Hills Drive, ☎ 09-438-2341 or 0508-243-846, fax 09-438-0442 ($$-$$$).

A good mid-range option, **Cypress Court** recently underwent renovations and has a range of suites with kitchen and bath in addition to basic rooms. www.cypresscourt.co.nz, 29 Kamo Road, ☎ 09-437-6193 or 0800-429-773, fax 09-437-6306 ($$).

Central Court Motel gets a gold star for being an excellent budget motel. They have good facilities, perhaps a bit of an older style, but great value for money. www.centralcourtmotel.co.nz, 54 Otaika Road, ☎/fax 09-438-4574 or 0800-990-000 ($$).

Bunkdown Lodge is a small backpacker hostel in an old kauri villa and has a really homey feel to it. It even has a bath. There is a telescope for viewing the night sky, and free tours to see the glow worms. Free tea and coffee. www.bunkdownlodge.co.nz, 23 Otaika Road, ☎ 09-438-8886 ($).

The **YHA Whangarei** is another small option and looks out over the Whangarei Harbour and town basin. It has twin, double and dorm rooms. www.stayyha.com, 52 Punga Grove, ☎ 09-438-8954, fax 09-438-9525 ($).

Whangarei Holiday Park and Cabins is centrally located and backs up to native bush. There are cabins, cabins with bath, or with kitchen and bath, and backpacker accommodation in addition to tent and power sites. www.whangareiholiday.co.nz, 24 Mair Street, ☎ 09-437-6856 or 0800-455-488, fax 09-437-5897 ($-$$).

Another holiday park option, just 200 yards from the falls, is the **Whangarei Falls Holiday Park** with cabins, bunk-rooms, camper and tent sites. www.whangareifalls.co.nz, Ngunguru Road, ☎/fax 09-437-0609 or 0800-227-222 ($$).

■ Whangarei to Warkworth

Leaving Whangarei, I suggest you take the scenic coastal route, which follows SH1 to Waipu. In 30 minutes, you'll be at Bream Bay and the small settlement of Ruakaka, with a long, sandy beach perfect for sunbathing and swimming. It's a very popular surf spot, too, and there are more than a couple of shellfish living in the water. Right along the water is the Ruakaka Racecourse.

Waipu is a proudly Scottish settlement with the usual restaurants and fast food shops, continuing south you'll go through Langs Beach and the Mangawhai Heads, Pakiri, and Matakana to Warkworth. I much prefer the coast drive, although the inland route (staying on SH1) does wind through some beautiful bush.

Information Sources

Check out the **Information Center** in Warkworth, service@warkworth.co.nz, 1 Baxter Street, ☎ 09-425-9081.

Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

The Waipu Rivermouth and Estuary is an important nesting area for the New Zealand dotterel, the variable oyster catcher, the New Zealand ferry tern and others. It's at the end of Johnson Road, three km (under two miles) southeast of Waipu.

On Water

Just north of Leigh is **Goat Island Marine Reserve**, where a snorkel and mask or dive gear are the appropriate wardrobe accessories. Opened in 1977, this was New Zealand's first marine reserve. You can access the water directly from the mainland beach – swim out toward the island to get the best visibility (up to 15 meters/49 feet); it's best from January to June. There are also **Glass Bottom Boat** tours available, www.glassbottomboat.co.nz, ☎ 09-422-6334. For diving, contact **Goat Island Dive**, www.goatislanddive.co.nz, 142 Pakiri Road, Leigh, ☎ 09-422-6925.

Beaches along this stretch of coast that are good for swimming include **Uretiti** (five km/three miles north of Waipu), **Waipu Cove** and **Langs**. The surf club at **Mangawhai Heads** is (obviously) a good spot for surfing and there is also beach access at **Eyres Point** and **Te Arai Point**. **Pakiri Beach** stretches forever and is as good a beach as any for walking and splashing about.

■ Fishing

For fishing and cruising, contact **Bream Bay Charters**. They run dive trips, dolphin- and whale-watch tours and overnight and big game fishing trips. ☎/fax 09-432-7484 or 025-749-751.

On Horses

North River Treks runs one- to three-hour trips, as well as overnight treks. Ride along the river, to the Waipu Caves, or just enjoy views of Bream Bay. www.northriver.co.nz, Helmsdale Road, ☎ 09-432-0565 or 0800-743-344.

Pakiri Beach is a long, sandy, safe beach that's rarely frequented by more than a handful of people at any one time. A real draw is the **Pakiri Beach Horse Rides**, where you can ride for basically any length of time, from an hour ($35) to seven days ($2,695). The seven-day ride is a coast-to-coast trip, from the Tasman to the Pacific. Simple accommodation is available in cabins and, for something bigger and more plush, there is a beach house. A small café rounds out the offerings. www.horseride-nz.co.nz, ☎ 09-422-6275.

Horse Riding Warkworth runs one- to two-hour rides for all levels of ability and ages. Shiloh Farm, 42 Kaipara Flats Road, ☎ 09-425-8517.

In Caves

The **Waipu Caves** are about 16 km (10 miles) north west of Waipu and have free, unrestricted access. They contain one of the longest stalagmites in New Zealand – eight feet high and six feet in diameter. The caves are home to more than a few glow worms, so turn off your lights and enjoy. Be sure to wear sturdy footwear – it can get muddy – and note that the caves are impassable during wet weather.

With Wine & Food

From Matakana to Warkworth, there are a handful of very good and well-respected wineries to visit. Traditionally, the mostly hillside vineyards were planted in reds – Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinotage, Pinot Noir and Sangiovese; now, however, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris are making a stand. These wineries typically produce small quantities and tastings are a casual affair.

My Favorite Wineries

The buildings at **Ascension Vineyard & Café** were inspired by the Spanish Mission at San Luis Obispo, California. It's a small producing winery and the wines aren't widely available, so a trip to the cellar door (tasting room) and café is an opportunity to try something new. The café is Mediterranean in flavor and open daily for lunch, dinner on Thursday to Saturday. The cellar door tasting room is open daily. 480 Matakana Road, ☎ 09-422-9601.

I've always liked **Heron's Flight**, not only because of the wine, but just because of their attitude. The café uses fresh ingredients for simple platters and salads and provides a relaxing sunny spot to try wine and food. They make olive oil and preserves, and also conduct garden tours. 49 Sharps Road, ☎ 09-422-7915.

Housed in an old cowshed, **Hyperion Wines** makes a range of fabulous reds as well as Pinot Gris and Chardonnay. Great views from the site, too. 188 Tongue Farm Road, ☎ 09-422-9375.

Another terrific spot is **Mahurangi Estate**. They grow some of their grapes here, but they bring in Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough and much of their Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay from the Gimblett Gravels area of Hawke's Bay. The winery was opened in 2002 and not only can you taste wine and have lunch, but you can view their current art exhibition. 162 Hamilton Road, ☎ 09-425-0306.

Sightseeing & Shopping

At Marsden Point, visit the **New Zealand Refining Company**, the only oil refinery in New Zealand. There is a visitor center with audiovisual displays. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. Free admission, corporate@nzrc.co.nz, ☎ 09-432-8194,

Waipu Heritage Centre commemorates the immigration from Scotland to Nova Scotia to New Zealand. Open daily, 9:30 am-4:30 pm, $5 adults, $2 children. 36 The Centre, ☎ 09-432-0746.

There are quite a few galleries and trendy shops in Matakana and Warkworth, making it a favorite weekend drive from Auckland.

The **Original Sheep World** is in Warkworth and is a big woolly attraction – see sheep dogs work, take some time in the animal farmyard, go to the sheepskin and sweater shop. You can try sheep shearing, wool spinning and carding. There's also a playground. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm. $10 adults, $5 children. Main Highway, 4 km north of Warkworth, ☎ 09-425-7444.

Where to Stay

Mangawhai

Milestone Cottages by the Sea is definitely the place to be. The darling cottages with kitchen and bath are sprinkled around five acres of bush and provide easy access to beaches and a wildlife sanctuary. There is a swimming pool and kayaks. milestone.cottages@clear.net.nz, 27 Moir Point Road, Mangawhai Heads, ☎/fax 09-431-4018 ($$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Another great option is **Mangawhai Lodge**, a boutique B&B with fantastic sea views and a great wrap-around porch. The five rooms all have bathrooms. www.seaviewlodge.co.nz, 41 Heather Street, Mangawhai, ☎ 09-431-5311 ($$$).

The two **Mill Creek Cottages** have kitchen and bath and are beautifully decorated. They are on 10 acres and are a very relaxing, peaceful place to stay. www.millridge.co.nz, Cove Road, ☎/fax 09-431-5654 ($$$).

The **Mangawhai Heads Camping Ground** has tent and powered sites, on-site campers, cabins and units with kitchen and bath. Book in advance in the summer. campnewing@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 09-431-4675 ($-$$).

Goat Island Camping and Backpackers is just five minutes from the beach and has cabins as well as a backpackers lodge and tent sites. goatiscamp@xtra.co.nz, Goat Island Road, ☎/fax 09-422-6185 ($).

Matakana

There are heaps of B&Bs and luxury lodges around, with more coming on the scene all the time. I suggest contacting the information center (1 Baxter Street, ☎ 09-425-9081) for details.

Matakana House Tavern & Motel has 11 motel units on the same grounds as the tavern (they are not in the same building). The tavern was an old boarding house and has been renovated into a tavern and restaurant. It has lovely gardens with picnic tables. www.matakanahouse.co.nz, 11 Matakana Valley Road, ☎ 09-422-7497 ($$-$$$).

The **Walton Park Motor Lodge** has clean and comfortable rooms on a nice site. They also have a swimming pool and can arrange for wine tours. www.waltonpark.co.nz, 2 Walton Ave., ☎ 09-425-8149, fax 09-425-8564 ($$-$$$).

Where to Eat

You can tell Mangawhai is a popular summer beach town, because there are more than a couple of good cafés to choose from, including **Smashed Pipi**, **Barracuda Café**, **Sail Rock Café** and **Naja Garden Café**. All of them are good, although I prefer Barracuda for coffee ($-$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

The **Leigh Sawmill Café and Accommodation** is one of those funky places to grab a bite to eat or hang out at night for the live music. This is definitely a relaxed place and it's easy enough to spend a few hours drinking local wine and eating fresh seafood. www.sawmillcafe.co.nz, 142 Pakiri Road. Leigh. ☎ 09-422-6019 ($$).

In Matakana, make an effort to eat at one of the winery restaurants. Try **Ascension**, **Mahurangi**, or **Heron's Flight**. If you can't get to a winery, then stop for a meal at **Morris & James Café - Bar**. On the same site as a pottery and tile workshop and store, the café specializes in lunches, baked goods and wines from the region. 48 Tongue Farm Road, ☎ 09-422-7484.

Central West

Introduction

The Waikato and King Country, with the exception of Waitomo, are often not included in the plans of visitors – most people blast through the area on their way farther south or bypass it all together and head directly to Rotorua, Taupo, the Bay of Plenty or points farther afield. While there are few major tourist draws in the area, you will find many points of interest and certainly some lovely places to explore – the area is as rich in natural resources as it is in history. **Hamilton**, the center of the region, is the largest inland city in New Zealand and is the fifth-largest city overall. An area rich in agriculture, it is seeing a shift away from primary production – as more and more people and businesses escape the "bigness" of Auckland and find their way to the Waikato, many of the Waikato farmers have packed up their dairy cows and moved to the bottom of the South Island. There is quite a lot of business, as well as animal and agricultural research conducted in the area around Hamilton.

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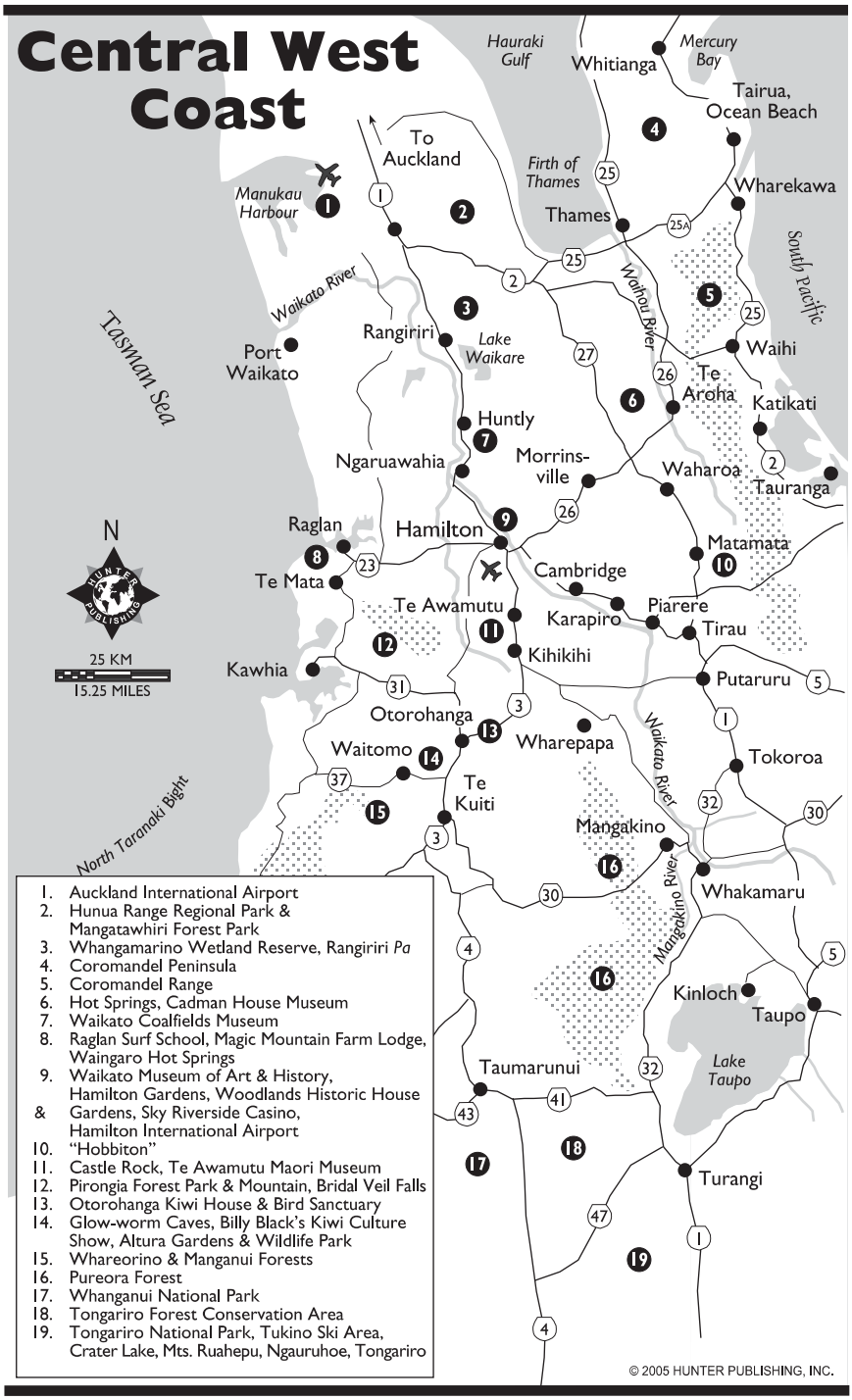
- Waitomo 132
- King Country 136

Did you know? The area around Wharepapa South is one of the premier rock-climbing destinations in the world.

South of the Waikato is King Country, so named because of the Maori King Movement in the late 1850s against encroaching Europeans, who were determined to buy up ancestral land. The King Movement was a turning point for New Zealand Maori – it was the first time members of more than one family and tribe united for a common goal. Members of the Tainui tribal confederation, as it is known today, came from the Waikato, Maniapoto, Hauraki and Raukawa tribes and in 1859, elected Te Wherowhero, left, as their king. He assumed the name Potatu I and his lineage continues today with Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu as their Queen.

In 1863 the better-armed Europeans invaded, and the Waikato Land War ensued, lasting nearly a year. The Maori were pushed to the south, to the land generally referred to as King Country. In 1994, the New Zealand government signed an agreement that contained a public apology for confiscating land of the Waikato-Tainui people. Today, the marae, or meeting place, for the region's Maori Queen is at Turangawaewae Marae in Ngaruawahia alongside the Waikato River. On the southern slopes of Taupiri Mountain is the sacred burial ground for the Tainui Maori.


Central West Coast
Hauraki Gulf
Whitianga
Mercury Bay
Tairua, Ocean Beach
To Auckland
Firth of Thames
Thames
Whareka wa
Manukau Harbour
Waikato River
Waihou River
South Pacific
Tasman Sea
Rangiriri
Lake Waikare
Port Waikato
Waihi
Te Aroha
Katikati
Huntly
Ngaruawahia
Morrinsville
Waharoa
Tauranga
Raglan
Hamilton
Matamata
Te Mata
Cambridge
Te Awamutu
Karapiro
Piarere
Tirau
Kihikihi
Kawhia
Putaruru
Otorohanga
Wharepapa
Waitomo
Te Kuiti
Tokoroa
Mangakino
Whakamaru
Mangakino River
Kinloch
Taupo
Lake Taupo
Taumarunui
Turangi
North Taranaki Bight
N
25 KM
15.25 MILES
HUNTER PUBLISHING
1. Auckland International Airport
2. Hunua Range Regional Park & Mangatawhiri Forest Park
3. Whangamarino Wetland Reserve, Rangiriri Pa
4. Coromandel Peninsula
5. Coromandel Range
6. Hot Springs, Cadman House Museum
7. Waikato Coalfields Museum
8. Raglan Surf School, Magic Mountain Farm Lodge, Waingaro Hot Springs
9. Waikato Museum of Art & History, Hamilton Gardens, Woodlands Historic House & Gardens, Sky Riverside Casino, Hamilton International Airport
10. "Hobbiton"
11. Castle Rock, Te Awamutu Maori Museum
12. Pirongia Forest Park & Mountain, Bridal Veil Falls
13. Otorohanga Kiwi House & Bird Sanctuary
14. Glow-worm Caves, Billy Black's Kiwi Culture Show, Altura Gardens & Wildlife Park
15. Whareorino & Manganui Forests
16. Pureora Forest
17. Whanganui National Park
18. Tongariro Forest Conservation Area
19. Tongariro National Park, Tukino Ski Area, Crater Lake, Mts. Ruahepu, Ngauruhoe, Tongariro
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Getting Here

■ By Air

The **Hamilton International Airport** is about 15 km (nine miles) south of Hamilton and flying in and out is a breeze – no long lines and no manic parking lots. **Air New Zealand**, www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 07-857-1027, **Origin Pacific**, www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302, and **Sun Air**, www.sunair.co.nz, ☎ 07-575-7799, operate domestically and **Freedom Air**, www.freedomair.com, ☎ 0800-600-500, based in Hamilton, has direct flights to destinations around Australia.

■ By Car

Hamilton lies at the intersection of SH1 and SH3. From Auckland (SH1) to Hamilton, the drive takes about 1½ hours; it's an hour from Rotorua (SH5 and SH1) or from Waitomo (SH3), and nearly two hours from Taupo (SH1).

Auckland to Hamilton

The drive along SH1 takes just 1½ hours, but there are a couple of interesting stops along the way. In Huntly, about 95 km (59 miles) south of Auckland, you can't help but notice New Zealand's largest power station. You can pay a visit to the **Waikato Coalfield's Museum** and learn how the coal turns into power, 26 Harlock Place, ☎ 07-828-8128. Continuing south, you will reach Ngaruawahia, an historically important place to the local Maori and the home of the region's Maori Queen.

■ By Bus

Hamilton is well served by **InterCity Coachlines**; they come and go from the Travel Centre at the corner of Bryce and Anglesea Streets. InterCity has routes around the region. Bookings can be made at the information center or through InterCity directly. www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100.

Busit is the regional transport system; buses operate during the week and with limited weekend schedules. There are city buses and lines that connect to the Coromandel, Huntly, Cambridge, Paeroa, Raglan and Te Awamutu. Contact the information center or the **Hamilton Transport Centre** on Bryce Street, ☎ 0800-428-75463.

■ By Train

Hamilton is on the main line for train service between Auckland and Wellington. Both the day train and night train call in to Hamilton.

Information Sources

Tourism Waikato maintains **www.waikatonz.com**, the official website of the region.

There are many information centers around the area, each is listed in the appropriate section of this guide.

The **Department of Conservation** is located at 18 London Street, Hamilton, ☎ 07-839-1393.

Hamilton

The commercial center for the region, Hamilton is a fine spot to replenish supplies, grab a coffee and make plans for touring around. There are a few points of interest here as well and, if you stay the night, you'll be sure to find ways to fill in your time. **Waikato University** is in Hamilton, bringing a young and energetic component to the city. A block off the Waikato River is **Victoria Street**, where most of the dining and shopping action is to be found.

■ Tourist Information

The **Visitor Information Centre** is in the Transport Centre Building at the corner of Anglesea and Bryce Streets, open daily, hamiltoninfo@wave.co.nz, ☎ 07-839-3580, fax 07-839-3127.

■ Adventures

On Water

You can cruise down the river on the **MV *Waipa Delta***. Lunchtime, afternoon tea and dinner cruises leave from the Memorial Park Jetty. Bookings are essential and prices begin at $20 adult. The dinner cruise lasts three hours and includes a buffet dinner and live entertainment. www.waipadelta.co.nz. ☎ 07-854-7813 or 0800-472-3353.

On Foot

Extreme Edge Indoor Climbing has climbing for all levels from $40 per person, gear available. Open daily, 12 noon-8:30 pm, 10:30 am-8:30 pm. 90 Greenwood Street, Frankton, Hamilton, ☎ 07-847-5858

■ Sightseeing

The **Waikato Museum of Art and History** has both long-term and changing exhibitions in a large space at the edge of the river. Given the background and lifeblood of the region, it should be no big surprise that significant space is allocated to Ngaa Purapura o Tainui – The Seeds of Tainui – and to Innovations in Agriculture. Within the facility is **Exscite**, an interactive science museum aimed at the kids. Museum entry by donation, Excite $5. www.waikatomuseum.org.nz, 1 Grantham Street.

The **Hamilton Gardens** are a popular spot. There are all manner of gardens, including herb, Renaissance, Japanese, and more. Open daily, 10 am to 4 pm. www.hamiltongardens.co.nz, bordering the river and alongside Cobham Drive SH1, ☎ 07-856-3200 or 838-6897.

The **Sky Riverside** casino can keep you entertained by taking your money at roulette, baccarat, poker and the money wheel. 346 Victoria Street.

■ Where to Stay

The biggest and the newest place to stay is **Novotel Tainui Hamilton**, complete with a gym, spa, sauna and restaurant. www.novotel.co.nz, Alma Street, ☎ 07-838-1366 or 0800-450-050, fax 07-838-1367 ($$$).

Kingsgate Hotel has a tidal flow pool, three spa pools, sauna, two steam rooms and a gym, as well as accommodation. www.kingsgatehamilton.co.nz, 100 Garnett Avenue, ☎ 07-849-0860, fax 07-849-0660 ($$$).

For a pleasant, clean room, suitable facilities and reasonable cost, go to **Ventura Inn & Suites**, www.venturainns.co.nz, 23 Clarence Street, ☎ 07-838-0110 or 0800-283-688, fax 07-838-0120 ($$-$$$).

There are more than a few motels on Ulster Street. Dependable ones to try include: **Barclay Motel**, www.barclay.co.nz, 280 Ulster, ☎ 07-838-2475 ($$$); **Ambassador Motor Inn**, ambassador@silveroaks.co.nz, 86 Ulster Street, ☎ 07-839-5111 or 0800-800-533 ($$-$$$); and **Fountain City Motor Inn**, www.fountaincity.co.nz, 305 Ulster Street, 07-839-3107, fax 07-839-3108 ($$-$$$).

I stayed at the original **Flying Hedgehog** on my first trip through Hamilton years ago and lost my sleeping bag somewhere between my room and the car park; I have no idea what happened to it! But, other than that, my stay was very pleasant and the hosts helpful (even in searching for the elusive bag). The facility has since moved to an old motel site and offers motel accommodation (kitchens in each room, sky TV, en-suite bathroom) at backpacker prices. flyinghedgehog@xtra.co.nz, 1157 Victoria Street, ☎ 07-839-2800 or 0274-920-931 ($).

J's Backpackers is in a small converted home in a residential neighborhood. It has twins, dorms and a family room. www.jsbackpackers.co.nz, 8 Grey Street, ☎ 07-856-8934 ($).

■ Where to Eat

Along Victoria Avenue, you can find cafés, restaurants, take aways, gourmet burgers, Indian, kebabs, you name it. A couple worth mentioning are as follows.

Metropolis would be top of the heap for veggie and other options, including coffee. 211 Victoria Street ($$).

The Bank Bar and Brasserie is in (what else) an old bank and has reasonably priced meals and snacks. Corner Hood and Victoria ($-$$).

All Around Hamilton

Just a few minutes east of Hamilton on SH1 is Cambridge, the bluegrass area of New Zealand. This is where the horses come from and it's a lovely, quaint little village to stay in. Continuing east on SH1 is Karapiro and its lake, popular for kayaking and waterskiing. And a short distance farther along, you'll get to the intersection of SH27 and Tirau. Head up SH27 and you'll find yourself in Matamata. From there, SH27 curves around to the west and joins SH26, which heads north to Te Aroha and the Coromandel Peninsula. Tokoroa is midway between Tirau and Taupo on SH1. Heading

south from Hamilton on SH3, you will reach Te Awamutu, Kihikihi, Wharepapa and Mangakino.

Traveling around this area, you may see brochures titled *Protecting the Mana of the Mountain*. The Maungatautari volcano is the mountain that rises in the Waikato just south of Lake Karapiro. The Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust was formed to return the mountain to predator-free status. It is a cooperative venture with Animal Health Board, Forest & Bird, Environment Waikato and DoC. For more information, visit www.maungatrust.org.

■ Information Sources

The **Cambridge Visitor Information Centre** is on Queen Street, ☎ 07-823-3456, fax 07-823-3457.

It's hard to miss the **Tirau Visitor Information Centre** in "The Big Dog" right on Main Street. The dog is made of corrugated metal, and it's right between the Church of the Good Shepherd, also corrugated, and the Big Sheep. thedogtirau@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-883-1202.

Information Matamata is at 45 Broadway, ☎ 07-888-7260, fax 07-888-5653.

Te Aroha Information Centre is at 102 Whitaker Street, ☎ 07-884-8052, fax 07-884-8259.

The **Tokoroa Visitor Information Centre** is on SH1, ☎ 07-886-8872, fax 07-886-6501.

In **Te Awamutu**, the visitor center is at the corner of Gorst Avenue and Arawata Street. www.teawamutu.co.nz, ☎ 07-871-3259.

■ Adventures

On Water

For a really relaxing and enjoyable trip, rent a kayak from **The Boatshed Café & Kayaks** and go for a paddle around on Waikato River. In just a few minutes, you'll be paddling in a tucked-away little cove amid old-growth trees, on your way to a waterfall. This is laid-back Kiwi kayaking. If you want a guide, they can arrange one. Alternatively, this is a great spot to take some courses that will improve your skills – Richard offers introductory courses up to advanced-skill clinics (such as rolling a kayak upside down in the water). Rentals start at $15 for three hours. www.theboatshed.net.nz, Amber Lane, ☎ 07-827-8286 or 027-275-8724, fax 07-827-8266.

At **Lake Karapiro**, check out where the rowers, kayakers, sailors and water-skiers hang out. There is always some kind of event going on.

Visit the **Te Aroha Hot Springs** for a soak in the mineral soda springs. These pools are the only naturally flowing hot soda spa pools in the world, and the site is also home to the only hot soda water geyser in the world. Private spas and bath-houses as well as public pools are available. www.tearohapools.co.nz, ☎ 07-884-8717.

> **Did you know?** The **Cadman House Museum** at The Domain in Te Aroha was New Zealand's original sanatorium. Also at The Domain is the **Queen Anne Pipe Organ** – the oldest pipe organ in the Southern Hemisphere.

On Foot

The **Jim Barnett Scenic Reserve** has short walking tracks and camping areas, just south of Waotu (west of Tokoroa) on Waotu Road. It's an island of native trees in the midst of Waotu Bush. By the 1920s, 90% of the bush had been logged, but today much of the area has been replanted and the bush is regenerating.

Pirongia Forest Park (accessed easily from Te Awamutu) is riddled with walking tracks, including five tramping tracks to the summit of Mount Pirongia (959 meters/3,100 feet). Routes to the top vary in intensity and are described in the DoC brochure, *Pirongia Forest Park*. There is an eight-bed hut at the top. These less-publicized walks are often the best!

On Wheels

In Te Awamutu, **Castle Rock** has created a fabulous place to cycle. On a working cattle farm that was keen to diversify, they've created a very tough, technical trail, and a relatively simple scenic trail. You can combine bits and pieces of them and there are plans to create an intermediate ride, as well. Bikes are available to rent. There is also a competition-level BSX track. It's a great place to ride and hang out. www.castlerockadventure.co.nz, 1250 Owairaka Valley Road, ☎ 07-872-2509.

On the Rocks

In addition to mountain biking, Castle Rock is also home to world-class rock climbing. Famous for its ignimbrite rock formations, it is close to six crags, with difficulties to suit all levels. Daily guided climbing and abseil tips are available and all equipment included. www.castlerockadventure.co.nz, 1250 Owairaka Valley Road, ☎ 07-872-2509.

Check out **Bryce's Rockclimbing** in Wharepapa South. This is one of the most popular climbing destinations on the North Island and you can rent gear, arrange for instruction or just listen to yarns about the climbs at Bryce's. You're not a climber? That's OK, this is also the only café around and has tasty paninis and good coffee. Wharepapa Outdoor Centre, 1426 Owairaka Valley Road, ☎ 07-872-2533.

A different kind of rock: New Zealand music icons Tim and Neil Finn from Split Enz, and later Crowded House, hail from Te Awamutu. You can grab a copy of a self-guided tour brochure (from the Te Awamutu information center) to learn as much as you like about these musicians and how they grew up.

On the Farm

It's not easy to get a tour of the stud farms so, if you're interested, I'd recommend contacting **Barry Lee**. He's a bloodstock consultant and knows everyone. Tours can be arranged to suit your needs, but it's imperative to book in advance. From one hour to 2½ hours, from $60 per person. www.cambridge.net.nz/barrylee/tour.html, ☎ 07-827-5910 or 027-497-5346 or through the Cambridge Information Centre.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

Tirau is a bit of a shopper's heaven, with Main Street lined by antique and gift shops. There are a couple of nice cafés to round out your time.

Can you only imagine the neighbors' horror when **Castle Pamela** was built? The story goes that Pamela and Kelvin had way too many toys and dolls and needed a place to put them, so they built a castle. The neighbors did fight – for years – but the project eventually went through. You'll no doubt find some childhood memories when you walk around the place and look at the displays, part of a $500,000 toy, doll and train collection – New Zealand's largest. Open daily and there is a tearoom. www.thecastle.co.nz, 10 Bridge Street, ☎ 07-883-1112.

Hobbiton, left, the Hobbit village from *The Lord of the Rings*, is near the town of Matamata. You can tour the rolling green farm movie set with **Rings Scenic Tours**, 45 Broadway, Matamata, ☎ 07-888-6838, fax 07-888-5653. Find out more at www.hobbitontours.com.

Visit **Te Awamutu Museum** for good displays of Maori taonga (treasures) from the region. Free admission. Open daily, 10 am to 4 pm; 1 pm on weekends. At the Civic Centre.

■ Where to Stay

If you want to stay on a working thoroughbred stud farm, go to **Fayette Park**, where there is a beautiful B&B, heated pool, tennis court and lots of animals to visit. No doubt, Masey will give you a farm tour, if you ask. www.fayettepark.co.nz, Wells Road, Tirau. ☎ 07-883-1892, fax 07-883-1357 ($$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Huntington Stables has beautiful accommodation in rural Cambridge. All the extras are here in the private former stables. www.huntington.co.nz, 106 Maungakawa Road, ☎ 07-823-4120 or 027-441-1425, fax 07-823-4126 ($$$$)

The Hedges B&B is in an old kauri villa and just off the Cambridge town square. 30 Alpha Street, ☎ 07-823-4072 ($$)

Captains Quarters Motor Inn is a small, dependable motel. It's just off SH1, but in a quiet spot. 57A Hamilton Road, Cambridge, ☎ 07-827-8989 fax 07-827-8985 ($$).

Cambridge Motor Park has all the usual facilities and range of accommodation and is in a park-like area. 32 Scott Street, Cambridge, ☎/fax 07-827-5649 ($-$$).

All units are on the ground floor at **Cambrian Lodge Motel**. In addition to studio and kitchen units, there are three large family units, a spa and swimming pool. www.cambrianlodge.co.nz, 63 Hamilton Road, Cambridge, ☎ 07-827-7766 or 0800-886-886, fax 07-827-6019 ($$).

In Te Awamutu, treat yourself to **Out in the Styx Café and Guest House**. Gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous. With fabulous green hills as the view, good food to eat and accommodation in bunkrooms or rooms with bath, this is a real find. It offers dinner, bed and breakfast and you can even take cooking lessons here. www.styx.co.nz, 2117 Arapuni Road, ☎ 07-872-4505 or 0800-461-559, fax 07-872-4505 ($$-$$$).

Also in Te Awamutu is **Rosetown Motel**, a clean, quiet and basic small town motel. 844 Kihikihi Road, ☎ 07-871-5779 ($$).

A fantastic place to stay is at **Castle Rock Adventures**. There are options to suit all budgets, from the simple shearer's quarters to the lodge to a four-bedroom house. The lodge is my choice, what with the tennis court, swimming pool and spa (not to mention a huge lounge and wraparound porch with BBQ). www.castlerockadventure.co.nz, 1250 Owairaka Valley Road, Wharepapa South, ☎ 07-872-2509 or 0800-225-462 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

The Boatshed Café and Kayaks is the choice for a chill-out spot with great food and even better views. This is the kind of place where you grab a book or magazine, sit in the sun, eat and read. Or doze. The food is all fresh (try the asparagus and rocket salad) and the baked goods homemade. www.theboatshed.net.nz, Amber Lane, ☎ 07-827-8286 or 027-275-8724, fax 07-827-8266 ($-$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Raglan

Just 48 km (29 miles) from Hamilton, on the west coast of the Waikato region, is Raglan, "Rag Town," a totally great, cool, surf town. This is a wonderful place to hang out and, even if you don't surf when you arrive, you may by the time you leave.

> **Tip:** Pick up a copy of *Raglan Gardens Brochure*, which includes not only gardens, but other points of interest around the town.

Raglan has embraced recycling in a big way. **Xtreme Recycling** is a non-profit community group determined to help Raglan achieve zero waste. In the first two years since Xtreme's existence, Raglan has reduced the amount of waste going to the landfill by 70%. There is a recycling center one km past the golf course where you'll find The Kaahu's Nest, a shop selling recycled goods.

■ Information Sources

The **Raglan Information Centre** is currently located at 4 Wallis Street, but there is talk about moving it. Open 9 am-3 pm Monday to Friday, 10 am to 4 pm, Saturday and Sunday. ☎ 07-825-0556, fax 07-825-0557.

Check **www.raglan.net.nz** and **www.raglan.org.nz**.

■ Adventures

On Water

Think about it – this is a major international surf destination and that means beaches. The best of the bunch are to the south of town. Pick up a *Welcome to Raglan* brochure and head out to **Te Kopua** for safe swimming; it's right by the camping ground. Continuing around the coast, **Ocean Beach** is lifeguard-patrolled and there are flags to mark the safe swimming zone. **Manu Bay** is a favorite of the surfers because of its left-hand break. If you're not out there doing it, at least hang out here and watch. The last time I was in Raglan, the world long-board championships were going on – quite a sight to see.

AUTHOR'S PICK

Learn to surf at the **Raglan Surf School**, where the use of imported soft boards just about guarantees that you'll be standing during your first time out. Good instruction with lots of laughs. You can opt for just one introductory lesson or a surf package. www.raglansurfingschool.co.nz, ☎ 07-825-7873, fax 07-825-7573.

You can learn to kitesurf with **Sky Rider**. Learn the basics on the ground and then get on the water. Instruction at $100 per hour. Call Sean Oliver. ☎ 07-825-7453 or 025-670-8301.

Raglan backpacker's hostel has **kayaks** available to rent, and you can paddle around the estuary. ☎ 07-825-0515.

On Horseback

Check out **Magic Mountain Farm Lodge and Horse Treks** for rides through stunning countryside. Trips range from half-hour pony rides to two hour horse treks. The lodge sleeps up to eight, but only one group at a time and the tariff includes breakfast. www.magicmountain.co.nz, about 20 minutes from Raglan, 334 Houchen Road, ☎ 07-825-6896 or 025-756-276.

■ Sightseeing

Waingaro Hot Springs are about 40 minutes north of Raglan. There are natural hotsprings, bumper boats, and private spa pools. Waingaro Road, ☎ 07-825-4761.

Bridal Veil Falls are in the midst of a large stand of native bush near Te Mata, about 20 km (12 miles) south of Raglan. There is a 10-minute walk to

the top of the 55-meter (150-foot) falls and you can swim at the bottom of them. Take SH23 to Te Mata/Kawhia turnoff, follow the signs.

■ Where to Stay

There are so many options in Raglan, such as holiday homes and cottages. Check in with the information center to see what's available.

The modern **Raglan Sunset Motel** has studio units, some with spa baths. There is a large outdoor area, the grounds are tidy and pleasant, and all rooms have Internet connections and SKY TV. www.raglansunsetmotel.co.nz, 7 Bankart Street, ☎ 07-825-0050, fax 07-825-0061.

Sleeping Lady Lodgings encompasses a variety of houses, cottages and lodges. Operated by the same folks who run the surf school. www.sleepinglady.co.nz, ☎ 07-825-7873 ($$-$$$).

The Raglan Surf School is based at **Karioi Lodge**, the site of a former camp and now home to backpacker-type accommodation. It's a cool place to stay, there's a big lounge/common room, a BBQ area, and bush walks. Also a flying fox! You can cook for yourself or try their reasonably-priced evening meals. www.raglanadventure.co.nz, 5 Whaanga Road, Whale Bay, ☎ 07-825-7873 ($).

Raglan Backpackers is located on the water and has a garden, free kayaks, large lounges, all the good things. Linen available in twins and doubles. 6 Nero Street, ☎ 07-825-0515 ($).

Raglan Kopua Holiday Park is a member of the Kiwi Holiday Park chain and has plenty of space for campers and tents; there are also units with kitchen and bath and cabins. raglanholidaypark@xtra.co.nz, Marine Parade, ☎ 07-825-8283, fax 07-825-8284 ($-$$)

On the harbor, **Waters Edge B&B** has a beachfront apartment, a cottage, and a chalet that sleeps six. www.watersedge.co.nz, 100E Greenslade Road, Moonlight Bay, ☎ 07-825-0567, fax 07-825-0562 ($$$).

Whale Bay Villas is contemporary accommodation on the waterfront. It's a private home and only one party is booked in at a time. The whole place is just gorgeous! www.whalebayvillas.co.nz, 26 Calverts Road, Whale Bay, ☎ 07-825-6831, fax 07-825-6851 ($$$$).

■ Where to Eat

Like most funky beach towns, Raglan has an assortment of cafés, takeaways and better.

The Department of Food wins for best deli case, yummy breads and salads and good coffee. They're only open during the day, though, and closing hours vary depending on traffic. Worth a stop for breakfast or lunch. 35 Bow Street, ☎ 07-825-7017 ($-$$).

My choice for a reasonably priced, tasty and filling meal is **Vinnie's World of Eats**. Kind of a crazy name, sure, but they've got pizza, wraps, steak, venison, fish – all sorts of choices. Plus, they make great fruit smoothies. 7 Wainui Road, ☎ 07-825-7273 ($-$$).

The **Tongue and Groove Café** is a trendy spot with good coffee and fresh food. 19 Bow Street, ☎ 07-825-0027.

Waitomo

The underground world of Waitomo is the most famous area of the Waikato. It's all about glow-worms and blackwater rafting!

About Those Glow Worms

Found all over New Zealand, they're not worms at all! They are the larval stage of the fungus gnat, which is a relative of the mosquito. They attach themselves to cave roofs (or overhangs) and produce a 20 to 30 long mucus-and-silk threads that resemble fishing line in look and function. They hang down a few centimeters or inches and these larvae have luminescent organs that emit a greenish-yellow light. Flying insects and midges are attracted to the light, get caught in the threads, and the gnat eats them. This is the only time in the life of the gnat when it eats. As an adult, it has no mouth parts and only lives for a couple of days, frantically trying to find a mate.

The larval stage of the gnat lasts six to nine months and then it becomes a pupa (similar to a cocoon), remaining in that stage for two or three weeks. Once it hatches, it has its short adult life, the female lays eggs, and it all starts again.

Glow worms need an overhang, darkness and moisture. If you shine your torch on them, they will stop glowing and stop attracting food. The brighter the glow, the hungrier the gnat!

When you enter a glow worm cave, it seems pretty much like any other cave. But once you get away from the light of the entrance, and your eyes adjust to the darkness, you will be astounded by the starry clusters of lights all over the walls and ceiling. It's a must-see in New Zealand.

■ Getting Here

Waitomo is toward the coast on SH37, just about five minutes from the SH3 intersection. From Rotorua, it's two hours; from Auckland, 2½ hours; and from Hamilton, one hour.

Waitomo Wanderer runs daily round-trip shuttles from Rotorua. They leave Rotorua at 7:30 am, arriving at Waitomo at 9:30 am. Depart Waitomo at 4 pm, arriving at Rotorua at 6 pm. ☎ 07-349-2509.

■ Information

? The friendly and helpful **Information Center** is located right in the middle of Waitomo township. ☎ 07-878-7640, fax 07-878-6184.

■ Adventures

In Caves

Blackwater rafting is not like whitewater rafting in a cave. There are no big rapids; in fact, the water is usually pretty gentle and tame. Chances are you'll be paddling part of the way. You will see at least some glow worms on all the trips and floating along the river inside the cave is good fun. You're decked out in a wetsuit, helmet and boots, given an inner tube that fits over your bum, and then coached in the art of jumping backwards into the water, landing seated on your tube. There are moments of thrill, but it's not terrifying by any means, and a good belly laugh is almost a guarantee. Minimum age is 12 for the tubing trips, and booking is essential during summer months. All of the companies provide water gear (but bring a swimsuit and towel) and hot showers at the end of the trip. Most provide a light meal or snack, too.

Blackwater Raft Trips

The term "blackwater rafting" is a generic one that had its inception at **The Legendary Black Water Rafting Co**. Depending on your pocket book, time constraints and thrill level, choose from three trips – two are in inner tubes, one in a raft. The Black Abyss takes five hours and includes abseiling, walking and tubing; the Black Labyrinth is three hours of tubing and walking; and the Spellbound is three hours in a raft. I'd definitely recommend at least trying the Labyrinth. Prices range from $37 to $145. www.blackwaterrafting.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-6219 or 0800-228-464, fax 07-878-5190.

Not to be outdone, **Waitomo Adventures Ltd**. offers five trips through their rivers and caves, with names like Tumu Tumu Toobing, Lost World Tandem Abseil, Haggas Honking Holes and Lost World Epic. Prices range from $85 to $355. www.waitomo.co.nz. ☎ 07-878-7788 or 0800-924-866.

Next to the Museum of Caves is **Waitomo Down Under**. They offer a three-hour tubing trip ($85) or abseiling, during the day or at night ($75-$85). www.waitomocavesfloatthrough.co.nz, ☎ 07-878-6577 or 0800-456-9676, fax 07-878-6565.

Waitomo Wilderness Tours calls it Rap, Raft 'n' Rock – a four- to five-hour abseil/tubing/climbing trip. They also offer cave canoeing. Prices start at $85 per person. www.caveraft.com, ☎ 0800-228-372.

With Glow Worms

The **Waitomo Glow Worm Caves** have guided tours of the limestone caves by boat. This is the least adventurous way to see the glow worms, but you probably see more – the caves are enormous and the ceiling is covered with the things. Huge tour buses and lots of independents siphon through here, but things click along pretty smoothly and you'll only be with one boatload of

people. Tours depart every half-hour from 9 am to 5 pm. You can also visit the **Aranui Cave** (no glow worms, but great cave structures) for a guided walking tour. Combination tickets are available. For one admission: $25 adults, $12 children. Under five free. For both cave and boat trip: $45 adults, $22.50 children. www.waitomocaves.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-8227 or 0800-456-922, fax 07-878-8858.

On the Farm

Billy Black's Kiwi Culture Show is an audience participation event that traces the history of New Zealand in a goofy and entertaining way. Plenty of animals file in and out of the monstrous barn and there's lots of memorabilia to keep you occupied before and after the show. The daily show is full of enthusiasm and laughs. You'll even see a wild pig dancing. Or try the Drive Yourself Jet-Boats – it's the only place in NZ where you can! Following a brief introduction on jet engines, strap yourself in and have a go around the double figure-eight lake. The last two laps are timed and I thought that I was quite the speed demon – imagine my disappointment to find out that I was only average. If you need a place to stay, consider the 1950s Rail Car or "one of the last allied planes to fly out of Viet Nam." Both have been converted to motel rooms. www.woodlynpark.co.nz, 1177 Waitomo Valley Road, ☎ 07-878-6666, fax 07-878-8866.

If you've had enough of water- and cave-based activities, book with **Waitomo Big Red** for a farm-based quad-bike tour. Book at the information center or call ☎ 07-878-8393.

You can have a pony ride and see lots of birds and animals at **Altura Gardens and Wildlife Park**. It's just four km (2½ miles) from the caves and a change of pace. Open September 21-May 31. www.alturapark.com, Fullerton Road (just off Waitomo Caves Road, look for the signs), ☎ 07-878-5278.

The Shearing Shed is home to over 300 angora rabbits, and there are daily shearing shows. Admission is free and the folks here are keen to tell you everything about angora rabbits and their fiber. They sell products made from the fiber, ranging from baby clothes to duvets. shearingshed@xtra.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎/fax 07-878-8371.

For those who want to read about and understand why the caves are here, go to the **Waitomo Museum of Caves**, located at the information center. Kids will enjoy crawling through the place and there are interactive displays and audio-visual programs. www.waitomo-museum.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-7640, fax 07-878-6184.

■ Where to Stay

An unusual option is **Waitomo Big Bird B&B**. It's set on an ostrich farm and can handle large groups as well as individuals. Rooms with kitchen and bath as well as bed and breakfast accommodation in the house are available. www.waitomobigbird.co.nz, right near the junction of SH3 and SH37, 17 Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-873-7459 or 0800-733-244 ($$).

Right in the village and a stone's throw from the information center and museum is **Waitomo Guest Lodge**. The five rooms are separate from the house, all very clean and tidy. The new owners (2003) are very enthusiastic

and cook up a full breakfast. Waitomo Caves Road, beside the tavern/shop. ☎ 07-878-7641 ($$).

For that special place, go up the steep drive to the **Abseil Breakfast Inn**. This place is gorgeous, with four huge rooms, modern décor and fabulous views of the area. You get a big cooked breakfast, too. abseilinn@xtra.co.nz, 709 Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-7815 ($$$).

The **YHA** in Waitomo is new (open in 2002, but construction still underway in 2003), modern, clean and has a ski-resort feel. While housing countless beds, it feels more like a neighborhood than a massive hostel. The "dorms" are in four-bed chalets, each with en-suite bathrooms, and there are also singles and doubles available. www.kiwipaka-yha.co.nz, School Road, ☎ 07-878-3395 fax 07-878-3396 ($).

Juno Hall Backpackers is right across from the Legendary Black Water Rafting Co. and has a real ski lodge feel to it. There's a big outdoor swimming pool (yeah!) and lots of extras like Internet, laundry, food. They are also the home of the local horse-trekking operation. It's much smaller than the YHA, so a bit more cozy. www.junowaitomo.co.nz, 600 Waitomo Caves Road, ☎/fax 07-878-7649 ($).

A few minutes outside of Waitomo is **Te Tiro Accommodation**. There are two cottages set on a cattle and sheep farm and the views are fabulous! Cottages hold up to five, there is a BBQ facility and breakfast is included. In addition to the activities in town, on the farm, you can go bush walking, abseiling, rock climbing and caving. Of course, there are the obligatory glow worms. www.waitomocavesnz.com, 970 Caves-Te Anga Road, ☎ 07-878-6328 or 027-226-7681 ($$).

The **Waitomo Top 10 Holiday Park** is new, tidy and right in the village. Accommodation options include motels, rooms with kitchen and bath, backpacker hostel and standard cabins. There's nothing particularly fancy about the location, but everything you need is there. www.waitomopark.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎/fax 07-878-7639 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

Waitomo hasn't really caught up with the cuisine standards of most of the country, but you're not going to starve.

Morepork Pizzeria and Café is located at the YHA and has tasty café food with plenty of vegetarian options, as well as pastas and pizza. Good coffee and baked things; they're open in the evenings for dinner. School Road, ☎ 07-878-3395 ($-$$).

The Long Black Café at the Legendary Black Water Rafting Co. base, has fabulous salads, wraps and breakfast options, not to mention good coffee. Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-7361 ($).

You owe it to yourself to stop at **The BIG Apple Café**, **Restaurant and Orchards**. The giant red apple outside has become a New Zealand icon and it's a good spot for a snack or coffee. SH3, 9 km from Waitomo Caves, ☎ 07-873-8753.

King Country

North of Waitomo on SH3 is Otorohanga, home to all things Kiwiana – Busy Bee for toys, pavlova (the national dessert), jandals (flip-flops). A bit of kitsch never hurt anyone. Heading to the coast from just north of Otorohanga, you will reach Kawhia, a bit of a seaside retreat. Historically, this is an important spot – it's the spiritual home of the Tainui people and where they landed in their canoe from Hawaiki. It's a sleepy place, but does have a surge over the summer holidays. You can dig yourself a hot-water beach hole at Te Puia Springs, much like Hot Water Beach on the Coromandel, but less crowded.

The **Otorohanga Kiwi House & Bird Sanctuary** has a nocturnal house and New Zealand's largest aviary. It is where the first kiwi bird was bred in captivity. Alex Telfer Drive, ☎ 07-873-7391.

Traveling back to SH3 and heading south, you'll be in a less-populated area of the North Island and stumble quickly upon **Te Kuiti**, the shearing capital of New Zealand. You might guess this, given the gigantic statue of the shearer in the middle of town. It's about sheep and forestry around here. West of Te Kuiti is the **Tawarau** and **Whareorino Forests** – both have tramping tracks; the Tawarau has a few good waterfalls, as well. Continuing south on SH3, you will hit the coast at Awakino and enter the region of **Taranaki**; if you choose SH4 and stay inland, you will travel between the **Waitotara Forest** and **Pureora Forest Park**. About 60 km (36 miles) from Te Kuiti, you will come upon **Taumaruni**, which is pretty much at the beginning of the **Whanganui National Park**, the **Tongariro National Park** and SH43, the Lost World Highway.

I'd keep my eyes on this area. Though it doesn't seem as if much in the way of tourism is going on now, in the Pureora Forest Park, for example, there is a strong movement to use the old logging roads and pathways for a long-distance mountain-bike track. It's already a popular destination for biking, but to tie together multiple days of riding with huts would be great.

■ Where to Eat

These little towns have their share of takeaways, and the rest, but in Te Kuiti, there is one place to eat that's really worthwhile and that's **Bosco Café**. Great salads, wraps and fantastic baked goods. 8:30 am-4 pm Monday-Saturday. www.greenplan.co.nz, 57 Te Kumi Road, ☎ 07-878-3633.

Taranaki

Introduction

The province of Taranaki is the bulb of land that projects into the Tasman Sea on the West Coast of the North Island. Remember the Maori legend about Maui pulling up the big fish that is the North Island? Hold a map of the North Island upside down and it does look like some kind of creature, perhaps a ray – the tail is Northland, the head is Wellington, and the East Cape and Taranaki are its wings or fins.

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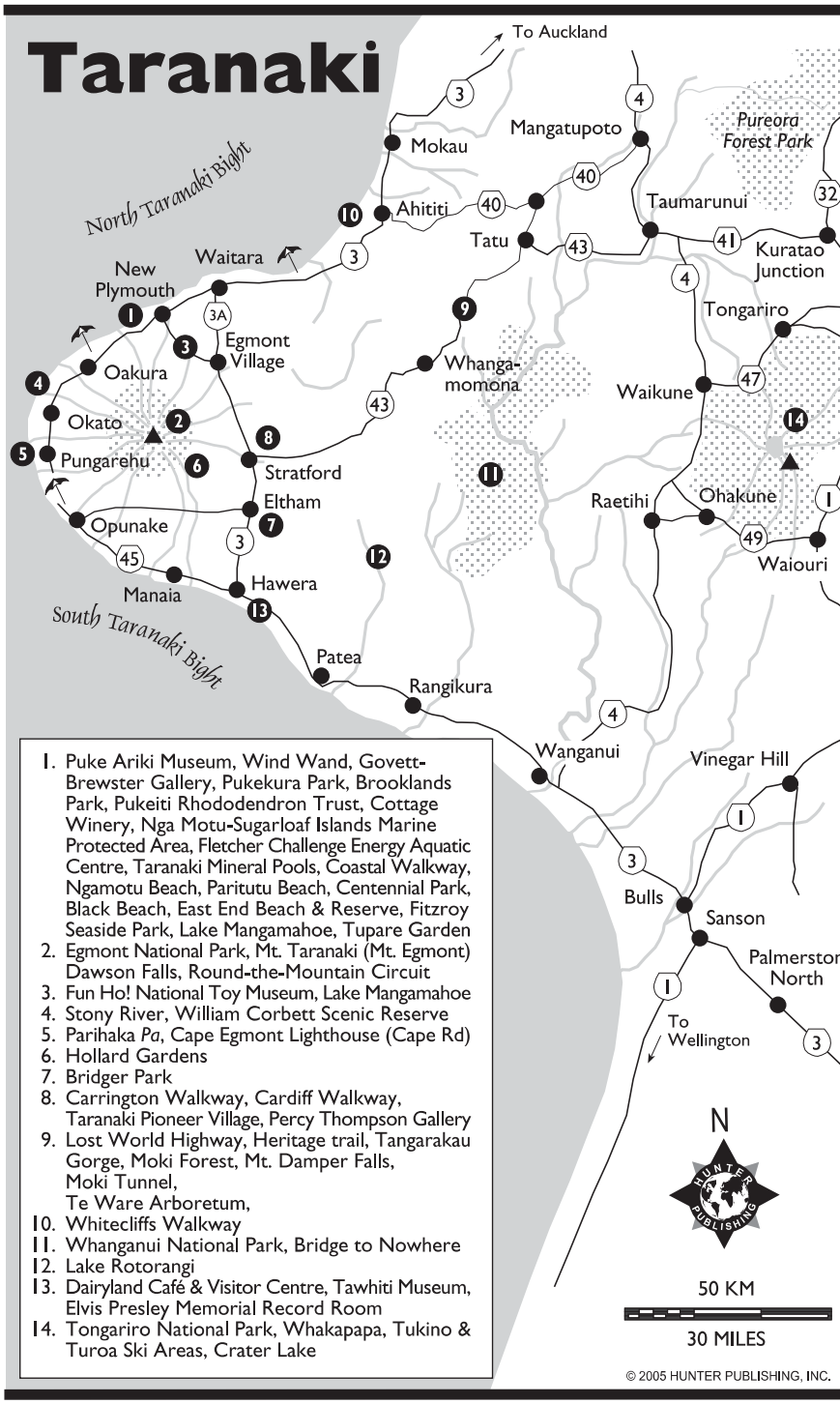
At the center of Taranaki is the mountain – **Mount Taranaki** (the Maori name) – or **Mount Egmont**, as it was tagged by Captain Cook in 1770. Depending on the weather, you may not believe the mountain exists; you may suspect that all the photos have been digitally enhanced. There's an old saying that, if you can see the mountain, it's about to rain; if you can't see the mountain, it's raining already. But this is rather unfair – the sunshine hours in New Plymouth, for instance, were the highest of all in the North Island in 2001 and were just behind Tauranga, Napier and Gisborne in 2002.

Trust me, there is a mountain and its summit is 2,518 meters (8,180 feet). Mount Taranaki is not an extinct volcano, but a dormant one, meaning that it will be active again one day. It has been compared to Mt. Fuji in Japan – a real draw for Tom Cruise and the filming of *The Last Samurai* (the story goes that the sun came out the day before the film crew arrived and it began to rain the day after they left). Taranaki is one of New Zealand's richest areas in terms of agriculture – the fertile land around the mountain (thanks to prior eruptions) is a haven for the dairy industry and Hawera is home to the largest dairy factory in the world.

Taranaki is also energy-rich. The Moturoa oilfields at Ngamotu Beach were first drilled in 1865 and the much larger Kapuni field was drilled in 1959. But the offshore giant Maui gas fields, discovered in 1969 and on-line in 1979, have supplied New Zealand with 80% of its gas, and at a price one-quarter the going international rate. While the Maui gas fields are forecast to be spent by 2007, there is some political controversy about whether or not more gas fields of the same size or bigger are in the area.



1. Puke Ariki Museum, Wind Wand, Govett-Brewster Gallery, Pukekura Park, Brooklands Park, Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, Cottage Winery, Nga Motu-Sugarloaf Islands Marine Protected Area, Fletcher Challenge Energy Aquatic Centre, Taranaki Mineral Pools, Coastal Walkway, Ngamotu Beach, Paritutu Beach, Centennial Park, Black Beach, East End Beach & Reserve, Fitzroy Seaside Park, Lake Mangamahoe, Tupare Garden
2. Egmont National Park, Mt. Taranaki (Mt. Egmont) Dawson Falls, Round-the-Mountain Circuit
3. Fun Ho! National Toy Museum, Lake Mangamahoe
4. Stony River, William Corbett Scenic Reserve
5. Parihaka *Pa*, Cape Egmont Lighthouse (Cape Rd)
6. Hollard Gardens
7. Bridger Park
8. Carrington Walkway, Cardiff Walkway, Taranaki Pioneer Village, Percy Thompson Gallery
9. Lost World Highway, Heritage trail, Tangarakau Gorge, Moki Forest, Mt. Damper Falls, Moki Tunnel, Te Ware Arboretum,
10. Whitecliffs Walkway
11. Whanganui National Park, Bridge to Nowhere
12. Lake Rotorangi
13. Dairyland Café & Visitor Centre, Tawhiti Museum, Elvis Presley Memorial Record Room
14. Tongariro National Park, Whakapapa, Tukino & Turoa Ski Areas, Crater Lake

It's a destination off the beaten path, and many first-time visitors to New Zealand (and many Kiwis, for that matter) don't include Taranaki in their travel plans. Those who bypass it are missing out on a lovely, friendly area that is replete with outdoor activities (including gardens, tramping, world-class surfing, swimming and great mountain biking, especially off The Lost World Highway), culture, art and generous spirit. Taranaki is the kind of place where you can visit, spend days or weeks and not spend piles of money to be entertained – the fun is for the taking in the outdoors. New Plymouth, the provincial capital, is awash with cafés and trendy hangouts, and is home to the Puke Ariki, a fabulous museum and library complex that opened in June 2003 and rivals all others in New Zealand. Built on the site of an ancient Maori pa or fortified village, Puke Ariki means "Hill of Chiefs."

Things haven't always been so pleasant in Taranaki. In 1828, a whaling station was set up in Ngamotu by John Love and Richard Barrett. Threats of invasion by fierce (musket-carrying) tribes from the Waikato in the 1820s drove many of the original Taranaki people, the Te Ati-awa, to the South Island. The first ship from the Plymouth Company of Britain arrived in 1841, finding the place rather uninhabited. More Plymouth Company ships came over the next five years and the pakeha population, who liked the fertile volcanic soil and bought up land without much resistance from the remaining Te Ati-awa, numbered over 4,000 by 1852. During this time, the exiled Te Ati-awa began to return, objecting to the sale of their tribal and family lands. No Taranaki tribe signed the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi and grievances from Maori and greed from pakeha fueled the fire. In 1860, the principal chief of the Northern Taranaki tribes objected to a lesser chief's land sale, martial law was proclaimed by Governor Browne and Maori were forced off their land, resulting in the Taranaki Land Wars (1860-1872).

TE WHITI.

After the wars, however, the story gets really interesting. The British continued to confiscate land (1.3 million acres) and, in 1881, with a population of 1,300, Parihaka was the largest Maori settlement in the region. Here, prophets Te Whiti O Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi led a campaign of passive resistance and encouraged civil disobedience. Te Whiti heard about an imminent invasion and, when troops arrived on November 5, 1881, they were met by a group of singing children and sitting villagers. Unbeknownst to the invaders, Te Whiti had invited New Plymouth photographers and reporters to the event and the story their words and pictures told was more than a teensy bit different than that told by the atrociously behaving invaders. Te Whiti and Tohu Kakahi were exiled and Maori from outside Parihaka were sent back to their original homes. Land claims around Parihaka have never been completely settled and the incident remains one of the most embarrassing in New Zealand's history. A fabulous display at Puke Ariki tells the story that has been swept under more than one carpet.

Getting Here & Getting Around

■ By Air

Direct flights from Auckland, Wellington and Nelson take about 50 minutes. The airport is 12 km (seven miles) northeast of New Plymouth.

■ By Car

From the north, State Highway 3 is the direct route from Auckland to New Plymouth and it's about a four-hour drive. From the south, it's about an hour on SH3 from Wanganui to Hawera; if you're coming all the way from Wellington, plan for 3½ hours; from Hawera, add another hour to New Plymouth on SH3. Traveling the Surf Highway, SH45, from Hawera to New Plymouth takes about 15 minutes longer and is far more interesting. Of course, if your destination is the east side of Mount Taranaki or Egmont National Park, then you'll want to stay on SH3. From the east, take SH43, the Lost World Highway, for a cultural, scenic and interesting trip. This drive takes three hours without stops, but most folks figure about five hours to enjoy it (see section on the Lost World Highway, page 157).

■ By Bus

InterCity, ☎ 06-759-9038, arrives and departs from the seaside of Centre City shopping center on Molesworth Street. Buses run between Wanganui, Auckland, Hamilton and Palmerston North, where connections to Napier, Gisborne and Wellington can be made.

White Star, ☎ 06-758-3338, arrives and departs from Budget Rent-A-Car on Liardet Street, by the State Insurance Building. They provide service to Wanganui, Palmerston North and Wellington.

Information Sources

The regional tourism group is called **Destination Taranaki** and their website is **www.taranakinz.org**.

The **Department of Conservation** office is located at 220 Devon Street, New Plymouth and also on Egmont Road at North Egmont and Manaia Road at Dawson Falls.

New Plymouth

The biggest town in the province, New Plymouth is a thriving, fabulous small city with art galleries and cafés that are a fine complement to the mountain and outdoor activities. If you're wanting to do day-trips to the mountain, New Plymouth is a handy place to base yourself; if you're planning on multi-day trips, then add a day or two at either end and enjoy the urban aspects. At Christmas, the city really comes to life with the Festival of Lights. The **Wind Wand**, opposite Puke Ariki, shown at left, is an iconic landmark within New Plymouth. Designed by

artist, filmmaker and sculptor, Lyn Lye (1901-1980) in 1962, it is 45 meters (146 feet) high made of red carbon fiber and it sways with the wind. Erected in 2000, it is a focal point for the city. Lye, who had built wind wands around the world, dreamed of this tall one and, after his death, the people of New Plymouth brought to life his dream.

■ Information Sources

Tip: Molesworth Street becomes St. Aubyns Street at just about the point of the Puke Ariki. As per normal in New Zealand, roads change name without much warning.

The **Visitor Information Center**, is located at the Puke Ariki complex on Molesworth/St. Aubyn Street and is open daily. info@newplymouth.govt.nz, ☎ 06-759-6060, fax 06-759-6073.

■ Adventures

On Water

Swimming & Surfing

Well, a region doesn't get known as an international surf destination for nothing. While many of the popular surf spots are along (where else) Surf Highway, there are a few closer to town that are good for surfing, swimming and sunning.

Closest to town is **Ngamotu Beach** on Ocean View Parade. There is swimming, kayaking and fishing off the Lee Breakwater. You'll also find a café, barbecues and an original beam pump from the site of an 1866 oil well.

On Centennial Drive, at the western end of the city, **Paritutu Beach and Centennial Park** offers swimming, picnicking, and hang-gliding. You can climb Paritutu Rock (15 to 20 minutes) for 360° views, but there aren't any facilities here (all other beaches listed have toilets). Just beyond on Centennial Drive is **Back Beach**, from which (at low tide) you can walk to Oakura Beach.

On the East End of town, at Nobs Line and Buller Street, is the **East End Beach** and **East End Reserve**. Here you'll find a patrolled beach (in the summer) with swimming, surfing, body-boarding and windsurfing. There's also fishing, seasonal whitebait fishing in the river, mini-golf, a skate park, mini-cars and ducks to feed. The reserve is where the Te Henui Walkway meets the coast.

A wee bit farther east is **Fitzroy Seaside Park** on Beach Street. Patrolled beach swimming in the summer, surfing, body-boarding and windsurfing are popular for the bigs, and there is a summer pool for preschoolers. This area is being redeveloped and completion is expected in the middle of 2004.

The **Fletcher Challenge Energy Aquatic Centre** not only has a water slide, but a lap pool, sauna and steam rooms, a toddler pool, a learner pool, and a diving pool. There are plenty of places to get wet (and there is also child minding available). $3 adults, $2 children. Kawaroa Park, ☎ 06-758-6496.

Have a massage or a soak at **Taranaki Mineral Pools**. The mineral well was originally drilled in 1906; the bath house was built in the early 1930s

and operated until the early1960s. After renovation, the pools were reopened in 2000 and there are private pools, group spas and a therapy pool. Prices begin at $8 per person. 8 Bonithon Ave, ☎ 06-759-1666, fax 06-759-1696.

Kayaking

You can rent a kayak for a trip to the Sugar Loaf Islands or go on an organized trip up either the Waitara or Mokau River with **Canoe & Kayak**. Mokau River trips can be one or two days. Prices start at $45. canoekayak@maxnet.co.nz, 6/631 Devon Road (just after the Waiwakaiho Bridge), ☎ 06-759-5506 or 025-608-3844.

Nga Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Protected Area (SLIMPA) is located just offshore from the Port Taranaki breakwater and Paritutu. The area is the breeding colony for New Zealand fur seals – breeding occurs during November and December. Common dolphins, orca, and pilot whales also frequent the area and during August and September, humpback whales migrate past. Bird life around and on the islands includes fleshfooted, sooty and fluttering shearwaters; diving, grey-faced and white-faced petrels; and white-footed terns. Diving is popular around the islands during the summer and autumn; visibility can reach 20 meters (65 feet). Access to the islands of the reserve is by permit only. There is an informative display at the port. For information, contact DoC, ☎ 06-759-0350, or Ministry of Fisheries, ☎ 06-758-0433.

KID FRIENDLY

A trip on **Happy Chaddy's Charters** is bound to bring a smile to any face. For just $25 per adult, $10 per child, you get an hour on an old lifesaving boat – complete with lifeboat speed launch out of the shed – and a tour around the Sugar Loaf Islands, where 400+ fur seals make their home. You may spot a whale along the way and, with the fishing lines out, you may even catch dinner (for no additional charge). The dog, T'pence, loves to fish and holds her own line. Another bonus: coming back into port provides a fabulous opportunity to photograph the city sitting at the base of the mountain. Chaddy's also rents kayaks if you want to have a paddle out to the islands. At the port, ☎ 06-758-9133.

On Foot

A must-do, keen walker or not, is the six-kilometer (roughly four-mile) **Coastal Walkway** that has been created along the coastline of New Plymouth, with the Wind Wand at its center, the walkway takes in some of the popular beaches of New Plymouth and is a great place for an evening stroll (to watch the sun set) or a morning jog. Right near the Wind Wand is a coffee kiosk, and dotted along the way are places to sit and rest.

If you can't get enough tramping and walking on Mt. Taranaki, that's okay – there are lots of local tracks around New Plymouth, including two good walks at Lake Mangamahoe. One takes about 90 minutes, the other about two hours. Both have a couple of climbs, so you can get a bit of exercise. Enter off SH3 on Lake Road… there's a big sign.

On Wheels

Just outside of New Plymouth on SH3, is **Lake Mangamahoe** and a huge mountain-bike park, with trails through plantation forest. There are downhill and cross-country tracks with road access at various points in case you get tired of the tracks. Pick up a guide to walkways (oddly enough), rent a bike and head out SH3. But don't take the main entrance for the walks! The mountain-bike entrance is on Plantation Road, a few km toward Inglewood and not particularly well-marked.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

AUTHOR'S PICK

Puke Ariki opened in 2003 and is a combination library, museum and visitor information center that takes center stage on the foreshore. It stands on the site of a former pa, or fortified village, and has interactive exhibits telling the natural and social history of the region. Even if you don't plan to look at everything, make sure you view the 12-minute film about Taranaki and see Parihaka, the exhibition that explains the land wars and Maori passive resistance. Open 9 am to 6 pm weekdays (until 9 pm on Wednesday), 9 am to 5 pm weekends. Free admission. 1 Ariki Street, right in front of the Wind Wand, ☎ 06-759-6060.

There are plenty of art dealers and galleries along Devon Street, as well as a fantastic public gallery – the **Govett-Brewster Art Gallery**. It's a contemporary art museum that enjoys an international reputation for vision and commitment to the Pacific Rim. The gallery is also home to the collection and archive of Len Lye, one of New Zealand's modernist filmmakers and a kinetic sculptor. Free admission. Open 10:30 am to 5 pm daily. www.govettbrewster.com, Queen Street, ☎ 06-759-6072.

Pukekura Park (120 acres) was opened in 1876 and connects to **Brooklands Park**. Both have an extensive network of walking trails, and beautiful gardens, including a fernery, rhododendron dell, and NZ natives. There is a boating lake in Pukekura (you can rent rowboats), and in Brooklands there is a zoo and a natural amphitheater that seats up to 15,000. This is a popular summer concert venue. Over the Christmas holidays, the place is beautifully lit up. There are several entrances to the park. It's probably best to pick up a guide at the information center and figure out which will put you where you want to be. The fernery is open 8 am-4 pm daily, the zoo 8:30 am-5 pm daily, and the gates close at 6 pm in winter, 8 pm during daylight savings.

If you're a lover of rhododendrons, visit the **Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust**, 790 acres of rain forest adjacent to Egmont National Park. The majority of flowers bloom October through to January, and the gardens are set on the lower slopes of Mt. Taranaki. www.pukeiti.org.nz, pukeiti@pukeiti.org, 2290 Carrington Road, ☎ 06-752-4141.

Local product: For fruit-wine enthusiasts, go to **Cottage Wines**, where just about everything is fermented. Open daily, 9 am to 6:30 pm. 81 Branch Road, Highlands Park, ☎ 06-758-6910.

■ Where to Stay

Timandra Lodge B&B is ensconced in an historic home (circa 1886). It's close to Pukekura Park, has lawn tennis, mature landscaping and native bush. Dinner is available, there is a BBQ area and a children's play area. timandra@xtra.co.nz, 31B Timandra Street, ☎ 06-758-6006, fax 06-758-6010 ($$).

For an option with kitchen and bath, try **Janz B&B**. There are three bedrooms and you can rent the whole unit or individual rooms. 60A Fulford Street, ☎ 06-757-5490 or 025-748-747 ($$).

Right near Fitzroy Beach is **New Plymouth B&B**, with four bedrooms, one with en-suite bathroom, the others with shared bathrooms. Ginadave@paradise.net.nz, 604 Devon Street East, ☎ 06-758-0687 or 021-412-174 ($$).

Airlie House B&B is set in an historic house and has two guestrooms and one studio flat (with kitchen). Probably one of the classier B&Bs in town. www.airliehouse.co.nz, 161 Powderham Street, ☎ 06-757-8866 ($$$).

Nice Hotel & Bistro is the fashionable place to stay. It's in one of the city's oldest buildings, which has served as a hotel, a doctor's surgery, an office building and who knows what else. Now a boutique hotel, there are six individually decorated rooms and a lovely restaurant. This is where many of the cast and crew from *The Last Samurai* stayed. B&B, www.nicehotel.co.nz, 71 Brougham Street, ☎ 06-758-6423, fax 06-758-6433 ($$$$).

The **Devon Hotel** is one of the larger accommodations and has a variety of room types. It's very pleasant, has a pool and spa, a buffet restaurant and all the extras you'd expect to pay a lot more for. www.devonhotel.co.nz, 390 Devon Street, ☎ 06-759-9099, 0800-800-930 ($$-$$$).

The **Plymouth International Hotel** was undergoing renovations in 2003. The rooms are spacious and comfortable and have gigantic television sets. There is a pleasant bar and a restaurant, a pool, spa and gym. www.plymouth.co.nz, corner Courtenay & Leach Streets, ☎ 06-758-0589 or 0800-800-597, fax 06-758-9949 ($$-$$$).

For beachfront trendy, choose **the Waterfront** – beautifully decorated and designed. www.waterfront.co.nz, 1 Egmont Street, ☎ 06-769-5301 or 0508-843-928 ($$$-$$$$)..

299 on Devon West is newly remodeled and has mountain bikes to borrow, a BBQ area and an indoor/outdoor pool area with slide. Welcomes children. www.the299motel.co.nz, 299 Devon Street West, ☎ 06-757-9151 or 0800-843-299 ($$-$$$).

AUTHOR'S PICK

Directly across from Puke Ariki and steps away from the bus terminal is **Sunflower Lodge**, the best pick for a backpacker hostel in town. Formerly a hotel, five rooms have been maintained in a spacious 1950s hotel style and other rooms have en-suite bathroom, TV, free coffee and tea. There's a rooftop BBQ deck, large kitchen, comfortable lounge and the new owners have lots of surf, tramping and travel knowledge. www.sunflowerlodge.co.nz, 25 Ariki Street, ☎ 06-759-0050 fax 06-759-0051 ($).

The YHA in town is called **Egmont Lodge**; it's in a residential area near the reserves and walking paths. Doubles, twins and shared rooms, with free cake

in the evening. www.taranaki-bakpak.co.nz, 12 Clawton Street, ☎ 06-278-6523 or 025-538-975, fax 06-278-6541 ($).

Near the Fitzroy surf beach is the **New Plymouth Top 10 Holiday Park**. Rooms with kitchen and bath, motel, kitchen and units with bath are available in addition to campervan, camping and tent sites. Heated pool, BBQ area, large kitchen. www.nptop10.co.nz, 29 Princes Street, ☎/fax 06-758-2566 ($-$$).

Also near Fitzroy beach is the **Fitzroy Beach Holiday Park**, with lots of space for campers and tents, as well as a few cabins and apartments. fitzroybeach@clear.net.nz Beach Street, ☎/fax 06-758-2870 ($).

Belt Road Seaside Holiday Park is at the other end of town, nearer to the port. There are tent and camper sites, cabin options and backpacker accommodation. www.beltroad.co.nz, 2 Belt Road, ☎/fax 06-758-0228 ($).

■ Where to Eat

The **Bistro** at the Nice Hotel is one of the best dining options in town. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, but be sure to book in advance. Interesting desserts in addition to great mains and an extensive wine list ($$$).

Arborio is located at the Puke Ariki and is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. This makes a wonderful place to eat before, during or after your visit. The menu is well-rounded (and the pizza is excellent). ☎ 06-759-1241 ($$-$$$).

For interesting fusion food in a funky setting with outdoor seating, go to **Ultra Lounge**. I recommend the Asian stir-fry and the Middle Eastern platter. 75 Devon Street, ☎ 06-758-8444 ($$-$$$).

ESPresso Café and Wine Bar at the Govett-Brewster Gallery has great coffee, light meals and baked treats and outdoor seating. Queen Street, ☎ 06-759-9399 ($).

Proper deli sandwiches, coffee and the best muesli bars around can be found at **Sandwich Extreme**, 52 Devon Street, ☎ 06-759-6999 ($).

Try **Baja Mexican Bar & Restaurant** for a reasonably priced meal. It's uncommon to find fish burritos in New Zealand and, while not quite like fish tacos from a street cart in La Paz, these are pretty good. 17 Devon Street, ☎ 06-757-8217 ($-$$).

Anyone who likes to read and drink coffee as much as I do must stop in at **Simply Read Café and Bookshop**. Right off the sea, it's also got good views. Corner of Dawson and Hine Streets ($).

The **Waterfront Café & Bar** could have been plucked from any remote island. It's a great little place, right on the water and really makes you feel you're somewhere special. Go for a meal before or after a trip with Chaddy – they're right next door – or just head on down for a relaxing visit. Ocean View Parade, ☎ 06-757-4322 ($-$$).

Egmont National Park

Egmont National Park was formally protected as a forest reserve in 1881 and declared a national park in 1900, making it the second oldest national park

in New Zealand. It consists of 33,760 hectares (83,387 acres) and includes the Pouakai and Kaitake Ranges, as well as Mt. Taranaki.

Did you know? It was all because of a girl (Pihanga). The Maori story goes something like this: The mountain called Te Maunga o Taranaki originally sat beside the mountains of Tongariro, Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe. He fell in love with Mount Pihanga, as did Mount Tongariro. They battled, and Pihanga took sides with Tongariro. Hurt, bruised and angry, Taranaki left town to lick his wounds, carving out the Wanganui River on his way to the coast, where he turned north. While he slept, the Pouakai ranges trapped him in the spot where he remains today, but some say he is just being silent and will return inland to fight Tongariro again.

The region is great for tramping – there are over 140 km (87 miles) of walking tracks, including multi-day walks and many, many day walks. Climbing to the summit takes between six and 10 hours, depending which route you choose. While some of the mountain clubs lead open climbs to the summit, most folks go on their own. The best times to summit are from January to March, and my local friends say the very best time is during February's full moon. The mountain records some of the highest rainfall in New Zealand – over 7,000 mm (270 inches) – all necessary for its incredible rain forest.

Warning: Mt. Taranaki has the highest mortality rate of any mountain in New Zealand. Two reasons: it's easily accessible and, when you fall, you fall a long way. Also, keep in mind that Mt. Taranaki is known for its changeable weather. Take plenty of food, gear and emergency clothing.

■ Getting Here

For transport from New Plymouth to the National Park, check with **Mountain Shuttle**, ☎ 06-758-3222, or **Withers Coachlines**, ☎ 06-751-1777.

■ Information Sources

Dawson Falls Visitor Centre, dawsonfallsvc@doc.govt.nz, at the end of Manaia Road, ☎ 027-443-0248.

North Egmont Visitor Centre, Egmont Road, Inglewood, ☎ 06-756-0990, fax 06-756-0991.

Stratford Area Office, Pembroke Road, ☎ 06-765-5144.

■ Adventures

On Foot

Pick up a copy of the local walking guide describing local tramps (30 minutes to five hours) from the North Egmont Visitor Centre. A good quick option is the **Ngatoro Loop Track** that wanders for about 45 minutes and takes you through a mossy valley and the so-called "goblin forest." Be careful, though. The Ngatoro Loop Track and the Ngatoro Track are two very different animals – the Ngatoro Track is two to 2½ hours one-way. Another good option is two-hour **Veronica Loop Track**.

At North Egmont, check in and inquire about weather conditions and snow on the summit track.

Dawson Falls, right, are 16.5 meters (54 feet) high and only take about 20 minutes to reach, so this makes a good warm-up for other walks. The path goes through some good examples of native bush. Leave from the Dawson Falls visitor center, where you can check out several other walk options.

The **Round the Mountain Circuit** takes from three to five days, depending on your fitness level. There is a choice of a high track (for views) or low track (for bush). The track can be accessed from numerous points around the mountain and can be walked clockwise or counter-clockwise. On the section between Lake Dive and the Waiaua Gorge Hut, there is a horrendous ladder to climb to the top of the gorge, but the reward is a very impressive view down the valley. Alternatively, the lower track goes through very wet, pretty podocarp forest. On the next section, from Waiaua Gorge Hut to Holly Hut, just before the hut there is a track to the Bells Falls Track. The falls are spectacular, with a 31-meter (101-foot) drop. The final leg (clockwise) of the lower track, from Holly Hut to North Egmont, goes on the Kokowai Track and passes an amazing twisted tree.

The two- to three-day **Pouakai Circuit** is a tramping track that requires a moderate to high level of fitness and experience. It goes through rain forest, sub-alpine and alpine zones and crosses the Ahukawakwa wetlands, as well as the headwaters of the Hangatahua, or Stony, River. Check into one of the DoC offices for information, track conditions and hut passes.

Guided Walk Options

As mentioned above, many of the local tramping clubs lead climbs and summit trips. Check in with the information center or any of the DoC offices for information.

Ian MacAlpine runs **MacAlpine Guides** and has a variety of mountaineering and tramping options. www.macalpineguides.com, ☎ 06-765-6234 or 025-417-042, fax 06-765-6234.

Likewise, **Top Guides** run mountaineering, climbing and outdoor trips. www.topguides.co.nz, ☎ 021-838-513 or 0800-448-433, fax 06-753-7937.

On Snow

The **Stratford Mountain Club** operates Manganui Skifield, open from June to October, weather-dependent – there is no snow making equipment. The snowfalls are unpredictable, making skiing here undependable. There are three rope-tows and a T-bar. 65% of the field is rated advanced. Ski rental is available from the Mountain House Motor Lodge. ☎ 06-765-7669 or 027-280-0860.

■ Where to Stay

Konini Lodge is a DoC hut that sleeps up to 38. It's a good base for trips around the Dawson's Falls end of the park. Book through DoC, ☎ 027-443-0348 ($).

Dawsons Lodge Mountain Lodge has 12 rooms, all different, and all very Swiss. The lodge was originally built in 1896 as a tramping club. Flip through the album in the large lounge to read all the news about the mountain. It's run as a dinner, bed and breakfast at $250 per person. Casual dinners ($36.50) are also available, but book in advance. Saturday night is always roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. www.dawson-falls.co.nz, Upper Manaia Road, ☎/fax 06-765-5457 or 0800-695-6343.

For another Swiss-style option, but on the Stratford side, go to **Mountain House Motor Lodge**. There are in-house hotel rooms as well as chalets with kitchen and bath. Also on-site is the **Egmont Room** restaurant, and right across the road is **Anderson's Alpine Lodge**, a B&B with the same owner. www.mountainhouse.co.nz, Pembroke Road, ☎ 06-765-6200 (Mountain House), 06-765-6620 (B&B) or 0800-668-682 for either ($$$).

There is a darling little cottage called **Araheke** on the road to the North Egmont Visitors Centre. It's right on a stream out in the bush and has kitchen and bath. There is a queen bed and a pull-out sofa. Breakfast is available. arahekecottage@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-752-2722 or 025-609-1173 ($$$).

North Taranaki

When traveling from the north on SH3, the town of Mokau marks the beginning of the region of Taranaki. The Mokau River has an annual take of two tons of whitebait, down significantly from its former high of 100 tons, but a lot nonetheless. Whitebait season runs from mid-August to the end of November. The one-hour drive between New Plymouth and Mokau is one of contrasts: it winds its way partly along the coast, partly inland, partly on the flats and partly along high-sided canyons. There are fabulous sea views, fishing hamlets and holiday homes along with fantastic erosive sea structures, particularly in the Tongaporutu area, home to the Three Sisters and Elephant Rock formations, as well as nearby rock carvings.

The rarest dolphins in the world, Maui dolphins, only live in the Mokau and Kaipara (in Northland) Harbours. A North Island subspecies of Hector's, they are believed to number around 100. They live up to 20 years, keep

Maui dolphin

within 30 km (19 miles) of home and venture no more than 10 km (six miles) from the coast.

The area between Taumaranui (inland at the eastern end of SH43) and Mokau lies over a huge coal field. During the 1880s there were several mines along the Mokau River (well over 65 at one point). Though the larger mines closed following a flood that blocked the river in 1915 (the river served as the main transport for the coal), one mine continued to operate until 1934. The 1980s brought exploration and talk of re-opening the mines in the area, but between bureaucracy and logistics, not much more happened. However, now that the Maui gas fields are running dry, attention is being given once again to mining coal along the Mokau River. From studies done in the early 1980s, it is estimated that the Mokau field could fuel a 1,000-megawatt thermal power station for at least 35 years.

■ Adventures

On Water

You can take a ride up the river with **Mokau River Cruises** on *Cygnet,* an old cream boat that used to deliver mail and pick up cream from dairies on the river's banks. It's a three-hour cruise, with a lunch stop at Lewes Reserve, where there is a lovely stand of native bush. During whitebait season (August 15-November 30), the banks are lined with fishermen; year round, you'll see stands of Nikau Palms, ferns and lots of flax, in addition to other native bush. It's an enjoyable, leisurely ride. Mokau.river.cruises@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 06-752-9775.

On Foot

Between Tongaporutu and Pukearuhe is the **Whitecliffs Walkway** – a cliff-top, 9.6-km (six-mile) walk that has fabulous views and takes five to seven hours one way. The walk is closed for lambing season, July through September. Best done at low-ish tide, as the cliffs can be pounded by the surf.

On Horses

Horseback riding is popular along this short stretch of coast. **Gumboot Gully Horse Treks** offers a range of trips from two hours to five days into surrounding hill-country stations. Piko Road, Urenui, ☎ 06-752-3467.

■ Where to Stay

For dinner, bed and breakfast, along with never-ending views in an architecturally delightful home, go to **Mataro Lodge**. www.mataro.co.nz, Mataro Road, Urenui, ☎ 06-752-3926 ($$$$).

AUTHOR'S PICK

For a farmstay, pick **Tongaporutu Whitecliffs Station** which has a bit of everything. It's right by the beach, so there's good swimming, sea kayaking and exploring of the rock formations. It's also a good base for the Whitecliffs Walkway and, if you don't feel like doing anything that physical, you can learn harakeke – flax weaving. There is a homestead that sleeps up to 12, a studio, and camper and tent sites. www.windwand.co.nz/threesisters, 169 Clifton Road, Tongaporutu, ☎/fax 06-752-5868 ($$-$$$).

Palmhouse Backpackers is just off SH3 and a minute to the beach in Mokau ☎ 06-752-9081 ($).

■ Where to Eat

Choices are limited, but for whitebait, go to the **Roadhouse Café** on the main road in Mokau.

There is a brewery, **Mike's Mild Ale**, that's open for tastings. It's 4½ km (three miles) north of Urenui, ☎ 06-752-3676.

Surf Highway

SH45 links New Plymouth to Hawera, following the coast about three km inland. District roads spoke off of it out to the sea, and there is a beach at the end of most of them – some are sandy and some rocky. Swells form on reefs and sandbars, creating dependable surf breaks. Leaving from New Plymouth and heading toward Hawera, the first town of any size you get to is **Oakura**, a beach and surf town with a few notable accommodations, a couple of good cafés, some fine artists' studios and a surf shop. The beach is great and the minute you get out of your car, you'll feel relaxed. Pick up a copy of ***Art & Craft Oakura*** at the information center in New Plymouth before you head out and then grab a map from any of the shops in Oakura. **Opunake** has a great crescent-shaped sandy beach that is perfect for goofing off, having a picnic or taking a swim. Keep this in mind – the weather here is often fine when it's raining in New Plymouth. Just before reaching Hawera, you'll come across **Manaia**, the self-proclaimed Bread Capital, and there is a giant loaf to prove it as you drive into town. In case that wasn't reason enough to stop, every other Friday there are crayfish races.

■ Adventures

On Water

Surfing

Taranaki is home to some of the most popular and dependable surf in New Zealand. If you've ever considered giving it a go at least once in your life, you gotta do it; and if you don't do it in Raglan or here, you're missing a great opportunity. Some accommodations have boards you can use, but why not take a lesson to get started?

If you're six years old or older, you can choose either private ($60) or a group lesson ($40 per person) at **Surf School Taranaki**. Surf@blackdiamondsafaris.co.nz, ☎ 06-752-8283 or 027-450-8283, surf shop 06-752-7363.

Tangaroa Adventures offers surf tours along SH45 and they supply the equipment, guide, transport and refreshments. Prices begin at $95 per person. Tangaroa.adventures@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 021-701-904.

You're sure to stand up while you surf when you go with another person at **Tandem Surf Taranaki**. Specially designed boards give you the feeling of getting up and on a wave without all the frustration. Prices begin at $80 per session, and a session can last the better part of a day. Location depends on surf conditions, but this is a great way to get started. www.hang20.com, ☎ 06-752-7734 or 027-489-9232.

On Foot

The southern side of Mount Taranaki is riddled with walking and tramping paths and the **Stony River Walkway** is a popular walk with excellent views of the mountain, the mountain range and Stony River. Of the over 50 rivers flowing off the mountain, Stony (or Hangatahua) is the largest. Access is from Saunders Road at the back of Okato and begins with a swingbridge. It then follows the Kaihihi Stream and through the **William Corbett Scenic Reserve**. The track then goes across farmland and along the river to the Okato Domain.

■ Sightseeing

Just what are those blobs of rock, anyway? When Mt. Taranaki erupted, those bits of mountain got blown off and traveled to the sea.

Take a side-trip down Cape Road outside of Pungarehu to the picturesque **Cape Egmont Lighthouse**.

Just across the street is Parihaka Road and **Parihaka Pa**, scene of the passive-resistance movement described earlier in this chapter. The site is not open to the public, but visits can sometimes be arranged through the information center in Hawera (see contact details on following, page).

■ Where to Stay

In addition to those listed below, there are quite a few cottages and surf flats along SH45. I'd visit one of the visitor centers and ask to see their listings.

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

The gorgeous **Ahu Ahu Beach Villas** are set on an enviable piece of land, right above the beach. There are four lovely units in two villas. www.ahu.co.nz, 321 Ahu Ahu Road, eight km from Oakura, ☎ 06-752-7370 or 025-781-206 ($$$).

Oakura Beach Bed & Breakfast is in a 110-year-old restored villa made of rimu and kauri wood. Beautifully decorated, and there are surfboards, bikes and kayaks available to use. www.oakura.com, 1160 Surf Highway, ☎ 06-752-7320, fax 06-752-7310 ($$-$$$).

The **Oakura Beach Camp** has simpler accommodation in cabins on the beach. oakurabeachcamp@internet.co.nz, 2 Jans Terrace, ☎ 06-752-7861, fax 06-752-7286 ($).

Backpackers accommodation is available at **Wavehaven Backpackers**, where you can also get surfing and windsurfing lessons and rent bikes and kayaks. wave.haven@clear.net.nz, 1518 South Road, SH45, Oakura, ☎ 06-752-7800, fax 06-752-7363 ($).

The **Opunake Motel** has a dozen rooms, some bunk, some double, cottages and motels. 36 Heaphy Road, ☎ 06-761-8330, fax 06-761-7022 ($-$$).

Opunake Beach Camp Holiday Park has rental campers and cabins with kitchen and bath and is right on the bay. Beach Road, ☎/fax 06-761-7525 or 0800-758-009 ($).

■ Where to Eat

Café Wunderbar has good food, good prices and good coffee. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. SH45, Oakura, ☎ 06-752-7303 ($-$$).

Green Ginger Café offers fresh café foods and drinks. SH45, Oakura, ☎ 06-752-1399 ($-$$).

You should stop in the **Volcanic Café and Surfshop**, if for no other reason than it's a great name, and by the time you get to Opunake you might be hungry. It's your best option by far, with interesting food and cool surroundings. SH45, ☎ 06-761-8848.

There are a few other options along the way, including the obligatory fish and chips and Chinese takeout. Opt for a picnic at the beach.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Around the Mountain

Driving non-stop on SH3 between Hawera and New Plymouth takes about a half-hour. The route is dotted with small towns and there are a few interesting reasons to take a break, some of which are at the base of the mountain. Likewise, the Dawson Falls, East Egmont and North Egmont entrances to Egmont National Park are easily accessed from many points off SH3. While the Surf Highway is about the sea and beaches, this section is an agricultural heartland for the region.

Hawera

Hawera is the largest town in Taranaki, other than New Plymouth. Located at the eastern end of the Surf Highway, Hawera is a gateway to the rest of the region. A fertile farming area, Hawera is home to Fonterra, New Zealand's largest dairy factory.

■ Information Sources

The very helpful and pleasant **Information South Taranaki** is open daily, with shortened weekend and holiday hours. visitorinfo@stdc.govt.nz, 55 High Street, ☎ 06-278-8599, fax 06-278-6599.

■ Adventures

On Water

If you want serenity, go to **Lake Rotorangi** – the longest man-made lake in New Zealand, at 46 km (29 miles). Even getting there is an adventure; as one writer perfectly described it, "the twisting, turning, climbing, plunging, narrow road" takes you through a long tunnel.

Kaitiaki Adventures invites you to get horizontal on a plastic board when you sign up for their Dam Droppings trips, which leave from Hawera and travel to the Waingongoro River. You'll go over the edge – but wearing a helmet, life vest and wetsuit. On the way to the river, you'll learn the history of the area. There are two three-hour trips daily in winter, 9 am and 12 noon; three trips in summer, 9 am, 12 noon, and 3 pm. $50 for one dam drop, $80 for full river trip. www.damdrop.com trips leave from the Aquatic Centre in Hawera, ☎ 021-461-110.

■ Sightseeing

If you want to increase your knowledge of the New Zealand dairy industry, take a visit to **Dairyland Café and Visitors Centre**. This is the public end of the Whareroa dairy factory – the largest dairy factory in the world, and a producer of many of the 600 products made by the dairy cooperative, Fonterra. $3 adults, $2 children. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm; Saturday and Sunday the café is open for a smorgasbord, 6 pm to late. www.fonterra.com, Traveling on SH3, look for the giant cow at Whareroa Road, just outside of Hawera, ☎ 06-278-4537.

> **Did you know?** Dairy farming is New Zealand's largest industry and Fonterra is the largest dairy cooperative. It is responsible for 20% of New Zealand's overseas earnings, and is New Zealand's largest company. Fonterra (and all its holdings) was worth $11 billion in 2003.

The **Tawhiti Museum** began as a hobby and now has the reputation of being the best private museum in New Zealand. There are impressive displays about the Land Wars and life-size figures of locals made by Nigel Ogle, the museum owner. This is one of the must-see things in Taranaki, especially if you have any interest in the history of the place or the passive-resistance movement. The museum is housed in the old Tawhiti cheese factory and, to add even more interest, there is a weaving studio, a stained glass shop and a railroad that takes passengers on Sunday trips (first Sunday of the month plus holiday Sundays). The museum is open 10 am to 4 pm, Sundays only during June, July and August, Friday through Monday the rest of the year; and seven days a week during the period between Boxing Day and the end of January. www.tawhitimuseum.co.nz, 401 Ohangai Road, ☎/fax 06-278-6837.

If you are at all into gardening or plants, **Hollard Gardens** is a must. It has over nine acres of trees, shrubs, and flowers with walking paths throughout. It's a hobby gotten out of hand – Bernie Hollard was a dairy farmer who liked horticulture and started to develop his garden in 1927. In 2002, ownership was transferred to the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust and the Taranaki Regional Council. It's open 9 am to 5 pm daily, and is a beautiful place to visit. Free admission. ☎ 06-764-6544.

For a dose of the quirky, go to the **Elvis Presley Memorial Record Room**, a private collection of all things related to the King. It's one of those wacky places that's kind of fun to visit and, who knows, you may even see Elvis driving his Cadillac. Book in advance. Argyle Street, ☎ 06-278-7624 or 025-982-942.

■ Where to Stay

Tairoa Lodge Bed & Breakfast is in a redecorated 1875 kauri timber home.The gardens are just beautiful and there is a very inviting swimming pool. Two rooms inside the house and a separate cottage with kitchen and bath. www.tairoa-lodge.co.nz, 3 Puawai Street, ☎ 06-278-8603 ($$$-$$$$).

Tudor Lodge Motel is convenient, clean and spacious and there is a heated indoor pool. 158 Waihi Road, ☎ 06-278-6800, fax 06-278-1188 ($$).

Kerry Lane Villas has motel accommodation on a small farm across from the racecourse. It's a charming little place with horses and other livestock, a play area and great views. www.kerrylanemotel.co.nz, 2 Kerry Lane, ☎/fax 06-278-1918 or 0800-537-795 ($$-$$$).

South of Hawera near Te Roti is **Kingfisher Cottage**, with kitchen and bath. Renovated after being moved from its prior location in Matapu, it has a great blend of contemporary and classic. In a rural setting with beautiful views and a nearby stream, there is an outdoor barbeque area and the tariff includes a breakfast hamper. Very good value. www.kingfishercottage.co.nz, 135 Ahipaipa Road, ☎ 06-272-6630 ($$$).

For a fun farm stay and backpackers hostel, try **Wheatly Downs**. Set on a 342-acre working farm, there is an array of walks, hidden lakes, and a wide spectrum of farm animals, including; horses, sheep, cows, chickens, and pigs (some will sit for a treat and others will play dead). You can go horse trekking, follow the owner, Gary, around while he does farm chores, or just laze about. A very comfortable farm stay. www.taranaki-bakpak.co.nz, Aratara Road, ☎ 06-278-6523 ($).

■ Where to Eat

The choice is **Morrieson's Café and Bar** for casual, friendly and good portions of tasty food. 60 Victoria Street, ☎ 06-278-5647 ($).

Eltham

Heading to New Plymouth from Hawera, Eltham is the next town of any size that you will reach. For a bit of kitsch, stroll or drive past the Eltham Toy Wall on the edge of Bridger Park. Seems kids playing at the park left behind a toy or two and homeowner Faye Young set them on the wall to wait for the kids to reclaim them. Never happened, but others started arriving and then the idea of cementing them into the wall, and voila, thousands of little toys. It's not quite the Leaning Tower, but an icon, nonetheless.

Historic interest: Bridge Street was the first road in New Zealand to be tar-paved and Eltham is also the site of the first dairy factory in New Zealand.

Local products: While there are no factory visits because of strict hygiene regulations, there is a great Cheese Bar where you can sample a few products and buy a wide range of Ferndale Cheeses at very reduced prices. Stock up! Open 8 am to 4 pm on Monday, 8 am to 4:30 pm Tuesday to Friday. Most definitely closed every day from noon to 12:30 pm for lunch break.

Stratford

Stratford is the closest town of any size to the mountain, so many people stay here overnight and then begin multi-day mountain activities the following day, or use it as a base to explore the day-walks and attractions.

■ Information Sources

The **iSITE**, info@stratford.govt.nz, Miranda Street, ☎ 0800-765-6708, fax 06-765-6709.

■ Adventures

On Foot

In addition to the walks and tramps on the mountain, Stratford has quite a few short local walks, including the **Carrington Walkway** that winds along the river. Pick up a brochure at the information center.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

Home to New Zealand's only **glockenspiel**. Completed in 1999, it plays Romeo and Juliet three times a day – at 10 am, 1 pm and 3 pm.

The **Percy Thompson Gallery** is a beautiful place at the same location as the information center. Well worth ducking in to see what's on display. Open weekdays, 10:30 am to 4 pm, weekends, 10:30 am to 3 pm. Admission by donation. Prospero Place, Miranda Street, ☎ 06-765-0917.

Animal & Farm Products

It seems that Stratford has more than its share of animal and farm product factories.

Egmont Tanneries sells sheepskin products from their shop just outside town. Mountain Road, ☎ 06-765-7065.

You can buy smoked eel products direct from the producer at **Vanderdrift**, www.vandedrift.co.nz, 121 Cordelia Street, ☎ 06-765-7822 or 0800-367-335.

If you've ever wondered what you could do with all the possum you see on the side of the road, consider a visit to **Environmental Products Ltd**. They don't pick up road-kill, but they do rent hunters to go out and harvest the furry critters. Then they take the

skins and tan them in a "natural" patented way – no chemicals are used in the process. The skins (and fur) are turned into hats, ugboots, and other waterproof products that you can buy at the factory. www.environmentalproducts.co.nz, 1103 Opunake Road, Mahoe. ☎/fax 06-764-6133.

Lavender Lane sells – what else – lavender products from oil grown and distilled on the farm. There is also a woodturner's shop. Open daily, 10 am to 3 pm, October through March; Thursday and Sunday only, April through September. www.lavenderlane.co.nz, 100 East Road, ☎ 06-765-5133.

Just outside Stratford is **Taranaki Pioneer Village** where a pioneer town has been recreated – all buildings were moved here from sites around the district. The village (15 acres) opened in 2001 and serves as the region's history museum. $7 adults, $3 children, $2 for a ride on the train that circles the village. Open 10 am to 4 pm daily. One kilometer south of Stratford on SH3, www.pioneer.village@infogen.net.nz, ☎/fax 06-765-5399.

■ Where to Stay

Antonia Mews Motel opened in 2003 and has modern units very close to the center of town. antonio.mews@xtra.co.nz, 424 Broadway South, ☎ 06-765-8313 fax 06-765-8317 ($$).

Good value and dependable accommodation is to be had at **Regan Lodge Motel**. Set off the main drag, it's a quiet spot and has a variety of room types and sizes. 16 Regan Street, ☎/fax 06-765-7379 ($$).

The **Broadway Motel** is a bit older but has studio, one- and two-bedroom units. 65 Broadway, ☎/fax 06-765-7308 or 0800-665-000 ($$).

The **Amble Inn Motel** is five km (three miles) south of Stratford in Ngaere and is acquiring new owners in January 2004. SH3, ☎/fax 06-765-6991 ($$).

Edna and David Pretty are the very nice hosts at **The Pretty Croft**, a century-old renovated villa with just two guestrooms for bed and breakfast. davidandedna@xtra.co.nz, 93 Regan Street, ☎ 06-765-6820, fax 06-765-8092 ($$).

For a country B&B, try **Ridlands Farm Homestay** in Ngaere. Dinner is available by arrangement and there is room for campervan parking. www.ridlands.co.nz, Skinner Road, three km (less than two miles) off Cheal Road, ☎ 06-764-7147 ($$).

Just outside of Stratford is **Te Popo Gardens Bed & Breakfast**, set on a large woodland garden. In addition to en-suite bathrooms, each of the three rooms has a wood-burning fireplace and private views. www.tepopo.co.nz, 636 Stanley Road (take Beaconsfield Road out of Midhurst then turn onto Stanley Road), ☎/fax 06-762-8775 ($$-$$$).

Taranaki Accommodation Lodge is in an old nurse's home and has single and double rooms in four separate wings. www.mttaranakilodge.co.nz, 7 Romeo Street, ☎/fax 06-765-5444 ($).

Stratford Top 10 Holiday Park is beside King Edward Park and set in native bush. There is a backpacker lodge, motel units, tourist flats and standard cabins, as well as spots for campers and tents.

Stratfordholpark@hotmail.com, Page Street, ☎/fax 06-765-6440 or 0508-478-728 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

Along with the usual small-town eateries, Stratford has a few standouts.

Collage on Prospero Place is the one choice that's open late daily and is, consequently, quite popular. ☎ 06-765-7003 ($-$$).

Casa Pequena open weekdays 8 am to 4 pm, dinner on Friday; Saturday 10 am to 1 pm. Closed on Sunday. Broadway Street, ☎ 06-765-6680 ($-$$).

Urban Attitude is open 7:30 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm on Saturday. Central Broadway ($).

Inglewood

This is a darling little town, with freshly painted buildings and well-maintained public areas. Its **Fun Ho! National Toy Museum** has collections of lead and aluminum toys and molds for making them. The company was started in 1930 in Wellington and then moved to Inglewood. In 1987 the factory shut down, but toys are still made and assembled here at the museum. You can also buy a wide range of spare parts, as well as complete copies of toys. $5 adults, $2 children. www.funho.com, corner of Rata and Matai Streets, ☎ 06-756-7030.

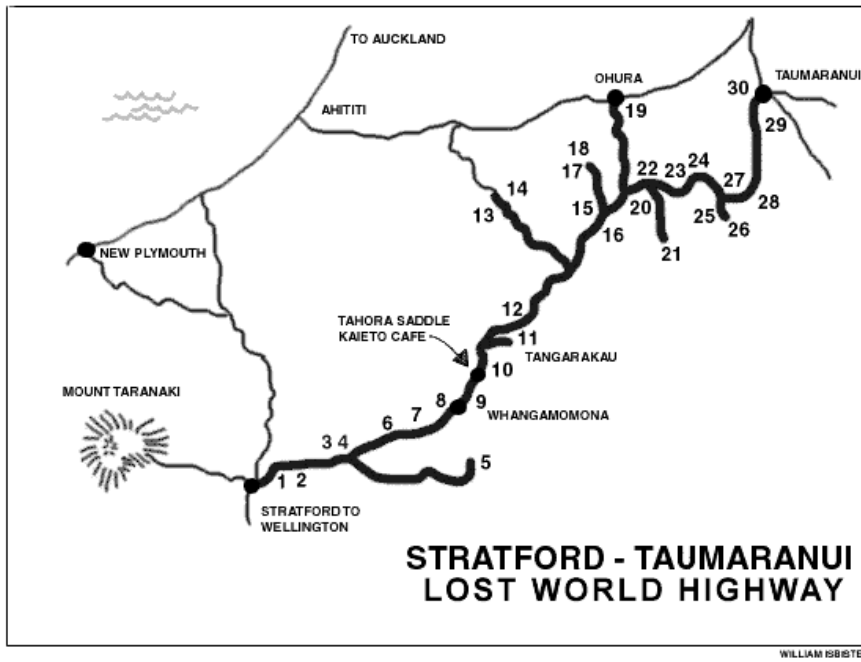
The Lost World Highway

State Highway 43 was dubbed The Lost World Highway – perhaps because it takes travelers through a lost age, a lost lifestyle, a lost time. At 150 km (93 miles), with 25 km (15 miles) of unpaved road from the foot of Tahora Saddle to Tatu, a straight drive takes about 2½ hours. But plan at least twice that for quick stops along the way; two days is even better. For a more rewarding option, drive or ride your bike on the 53-km (33-mile) Bridge to Somewhere loop. It begins and ends in Whangamomona and can be shortened to an out-and-back ride of four to six hours. There is a hotel (see below) in Whangamomona and plenty of spots for camping, too.

Tip: Fill your gas tank in either Taumarunui or Stratford before embarking on your journey!

The Lost World Highway was established in 1990 and is marked with teal and yellow signs. There are a number of historic sites along the bush-clad, hilly drive as you travel through its ghost and near-ghost towns. Many of the settlements along this rugged route are nothing more than boarded-up shops and empty buildings – testaments to more prosperous days of freezing works, dairy plants, and a working railway. The ferns and hills are green enough to hurt your eyes along this road, and there are side-trips to places like the Tanagarkau Gorge, the Moki Forest (home of the endangered kokako bird) and Mt. Damper Falls (one of the highest falls in the North Island). Quirky history exists, like that of the Moki Tunnel, which was built in 1936, but had its floor lowered in 1985 so triple-decked stock trailers could fit. At the Whangamomona Saddle, you can peer at the boundary between the Patea

and Wanganui River watersheds and take a three-hour circular walk through the beech and podocarp forest. The village, which had a bit of a heyday during the early 1900s, is nearly empty now, but its buildings wear commemorative signs telling their history. There is a local campground here, and a pub. If you are looking for off-the-beaten track locations, The Lost World Highway definitely fits the bill.



■ Where to Stay

Rimu Farmstays & Backpackers is on a sheep and beef farm and near quite a few good walking tracks. Options include either a backpacker's hostel or dinner, bed and breakfast. Murcott@xtra.co.nz, Murcott Road, Makahu, ☎ 06-762-3805, fax 06-762-3888 ($-$$).

Whangamomona Hotel is about an hour from Stratford and has just undergone major renovations. For $50 a night, you get dinner, bed and breakfast. breakfast.whangamomonahotel@clear.net.nz ☎ 06-762-5823.

■ Where to Eat

You'd best put a few snacks in the car, but food can be had at the **Ohura Tearooms** (in Ohura), **Whangamomona Hotel** (in Whangamomona), **Kaieto Café** (at the Tahora Saddle) and the **Toko Garage** (in Toko). All of these places are right on the Lost World Highway (SH43).

Wanganui

Introduction

What's in a name? It's confusing, all this "w" and "wh." Without getting into a huge political discussion, the whole of the city and river were originally spelled with the "wh." The "h" was dropped and the city became known as Wanganui. The river and national park had a bit of a name identity issue, but are now called Whanganui. There is ongoing debate and uncertainty about changing the city's spelling.

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Tip: Just because it's called the Whanganui River, doesn't mean you access trips from Whanganui. Most adventures begin farther up in Ohakune or along the river road.

Telephone numbers in this region may have either 06 or 07 as an area code!

Getting Here

By Air

Air New Zealand Link provides service daily between Auckland and Wanganui and weekly service to and from Wellington. **Palmerston North** is the nearest international airport and has regular flights within New Zealand.

By Car

From the east and west, SH3 services Wanganui – about three hours from Wellington, one hour from Palmerston North and just over two hours from New Plymouth. The drive from Auckland, via SH4, takes about six hours.

By Bus

Connections around the North Island can be booked on **Intercity Coachlines**, which leaves from the Travel Centre, 156 Ridgway Street, Wellington, ☎ 04-472-5111. You can also book through the information center (see below).

White Star provides service to Wellington and New Plymouth. Coaches arrive and depart from the Budget Rent-A-Car office at 161 Ingestre Street, ☎ 06-347-6677, fax 06-758-8878.

Information Sources

The **Wanganui Information Centre** is at 101 Guyton Street, ☎ 06-349-0508, fax 06-349-0509.

DoC has an information office that can provide river and tramping information. At the corner of Ingestre and St. Hill Streets, ☎ 06-345-2402.

Destination Wanganui is the tourism group for the area and their website is **www.destinationwanganui.com**.

Wanganui City

Wanganui is the service center for this area and is a pleasant enough place to top up on the groceries, get a good night's sleep and plan your adventure in the national park or on the river. I've never had a bad time in Wanganui, and have friends in art school who love it. But as a tourist, unfortunately, I think you'd be hard-pressed to find a reason to stay for very long. It is a handy destination to consider before or after a ferry trip to or from the South Island. It is not a major tourist destination, but historically it's an important place, since the river served as a major trade route for the Maori and later for the Europeans. The river and the national park are definitely the draws, but while you're in the area you may as well check out some of the sights.

■ Adventures

On Water

Castlecliff Beach is a popular black iron sand swimming beach and is lifeguard-patrolled during the summer. The adjacent children's park was recently revamped. Just out of town. Castlecliff Holiday Park, ☎ 06-344-2227 or 0800-254-947, is just across from Castlecliff Beach.

Kai Iwi Beach is a popular swimming beach 14 km (8.6 miles) from Wanganui along Rapanui Rd. There are wood-burning barbecues and it's perfect for a summer picnic.

South Beach stretches from the river mouth and is a good place for surfcasting, taking a run or surfing. Drive past the airport.

The circa 1900 paddle steamer ***Waimarie*** sank on her moorings in 1952, was salvaged in 1993 and completely restored. It's the only fully operational steam paddler in New Zealand; a cruise will introduce you to local sites and information. $25 adults, $10 children. www.wanganui.org.nz/riverboats, ☎ 06-347-1863 or 0800-783-2637.

■ Sightseeing

It's interesting to me that **Moutoa Gardens**, the site of a nearly 80-day Maori occupation beginning on Waitangi Day 1995, can be described on the regional website only for its history as a Maori pa, or fortified village, and pakeha (trading market). How modern history is omitted from the heritage baffles me, but perhaps that is why there is still division within the community. I'll get off my soapbox. The local iwi (tribe) signed off the sale of Wanganui on these grounds and, in 1995, voiced their desire to

have this bit of land returned to them. It was a non-violent occupation and the High Court eventually stepped in. Things have settled down, but it's a good reminder that all is not well in Maori/pakeha relations. Moutoa Gardens are at the curve where Somme Parade and Taupo Quay come together.

Free: The **Sarjeant Gallery/Te Whare O Rehua** is a wonderful art gallery housed in one of Wanganui's loveliest buildings. Open Monday-Saturday, 10:30 am-4:30 pm, Sunday and public holidays, 1 pm-4:30 pm. Queens Park, ☎ 06-349-0506.

Take a visit to the **Quay School for the Arts**, where all sorts of media are transformed into amazing art. The buildings are old warehouses and the place is magic. ☎ 06-345-0997.

For a better understanding of the history of the area, visit the **Whanganui Regional Museum**, where displays explain its importance as a busy port, the boom days and the river. Open Monday-Saturday, 10 am-4 pm; Sunday and holidays, 1-4 pm; closed Christmas and Good Friday. $2 adults, 60¢ per child. www.wanganui-museum.org.nz, Watt Street, ☎ 06-345-7443.

Bushy Park Homestead and Forest is a lowland rain forest just 24 km (15 miles) from Wanganui. There is plenty of bird life and many tracks for walking. www.bushypark-homestead.co.nz, SH3, turn inland at Kai Iwi. ☎/fax 06-342-9879. Homestead and bunkhouse accommodation is also available.

Bason Botanic Gardens resulted when a farm was gifted to the city council in 1966 in order to create a botanical reserve. Plantings include natives, camelias, orchids, begonias and iris. There are also bush walks and an observatory complex. Open daily, 8 am to dusk; conservatories open 9 am to dusk. 11 km (seven miles) from Wanganui, 552 Rapanui Road, ☎ 06-342-9742.

■ Where to Stay

The top B&B, **Arlesford House**, is a country homestay with swimming pool and tennis court, four km (2½ miles) from town. Four units with baths are housed in a circa 1934 country home. www.arlesfordhouse.co.nz, SH3 2½ miles toward New Plymouth, ☎ 06-347-7751 or 025-852-922, fax 06-347-7561 ($$$-$$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Arles B&B is in an 1880s house and has four guest rooms, two with en-suite bathroom, two shared-bath and a two-bedroom lodge with kitchen and bath. Plus, there is a full guest kitchen, a laundry and a swimming pool. www.babs.co.nz/arles, 50 Riverbank Road (about four km/two miles) out on SH4, ☎ 06-343-6557 ($$$).

A bit less expensive is **The Pepper Tree B&B**, situated in a bungalow with double and twin rooms and a private guest bathroom. pittman@xtra.co.nz, 19 Young Street, ☎ 06-343-9933 or 025-264-7603 ($$).

My choice is **Kings Court Motel** for friendly hosts and clean, pleasant rooms. www.kingscourtmotel.co.nz, 60 Plymouth Street, ☎ 06-345-8586 or 0800-221-222, fax 03-345-0222 ($$).

Fiesta Court Motel is a cheap and cheerful option. Accommodations include apartments with kitchen and bath, and studio units. fiestacourtmotel@xtra.co.nz, 56 Heads Road, at the corner of SH3, ☎ 06-345-8209 or 0800-222-525, fax 06-345-6479 ($$).

The best value is **Wanganui Riverview Motel**, right across from the river. The rooms are clean and the hosts pleasant. 14 Somme Parade, ☎ 06-345-2888 or 0800-102-001, fax 06-345-2843 ($$).

Astral Motel is an older-style spot, nothing fancy, right across from the river. astralmotel@clear.net.nz, corner Dublin Street and Somme Parade, ☎ 06-347-9063 or 0800-509-063, fax 06-347-8653 ($$).

Burwood Motel has new owners in 2003. It's centrally located, has a large swimming pool, sauna and spa and some rooms have private spas. www.burwoodmotel.co.nz, 63 Dublin Street, ☎ 06-345-2180 or 0800-202-063, fax 06-345-8711 ($$-$$$).

If you don't need to be within walking distance of town, and want some peace, pick **Acacia Park Motel**. Set in a big garden with lots of birds, it's very relaxing, quite close to the river. www.acacia-park-motel.co.nz, 140 Anzac Parade, ☎ 06-343-9093 or 0800-800-225 ($$).

Braemar House has doubles, twin, family and shared-bath rooms. There is lots of kitchen space, and plenty of room to pitch a tent. This big old house was built in 1895 and sits across from the river. www.braemarhouse.co.nz, 2 Plymouth Street, ☎ 06-347-2529 or 021-159-7690 ($).

Another good hostel, also in an old house and also on the river is **Tamara Backpackers**. There are singles, twins, doubles and dorms and the common areas are pleasant and spacious. 24 Somme Parade, ☎ 06-347-6300, fax 06-345-8488.

Aramoho Top 10 Holiday Park is right on the river and has all the usual accommodation options for a holiday park. aramoho.holidaypark@xtra.co.nz, 460 Somme Parade, ☎/fax 06-343-8402 or 0800-272-664 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

There is the typical combination of take-out places, fast food and diners in Wanganui. A few other spots are worth a mention.

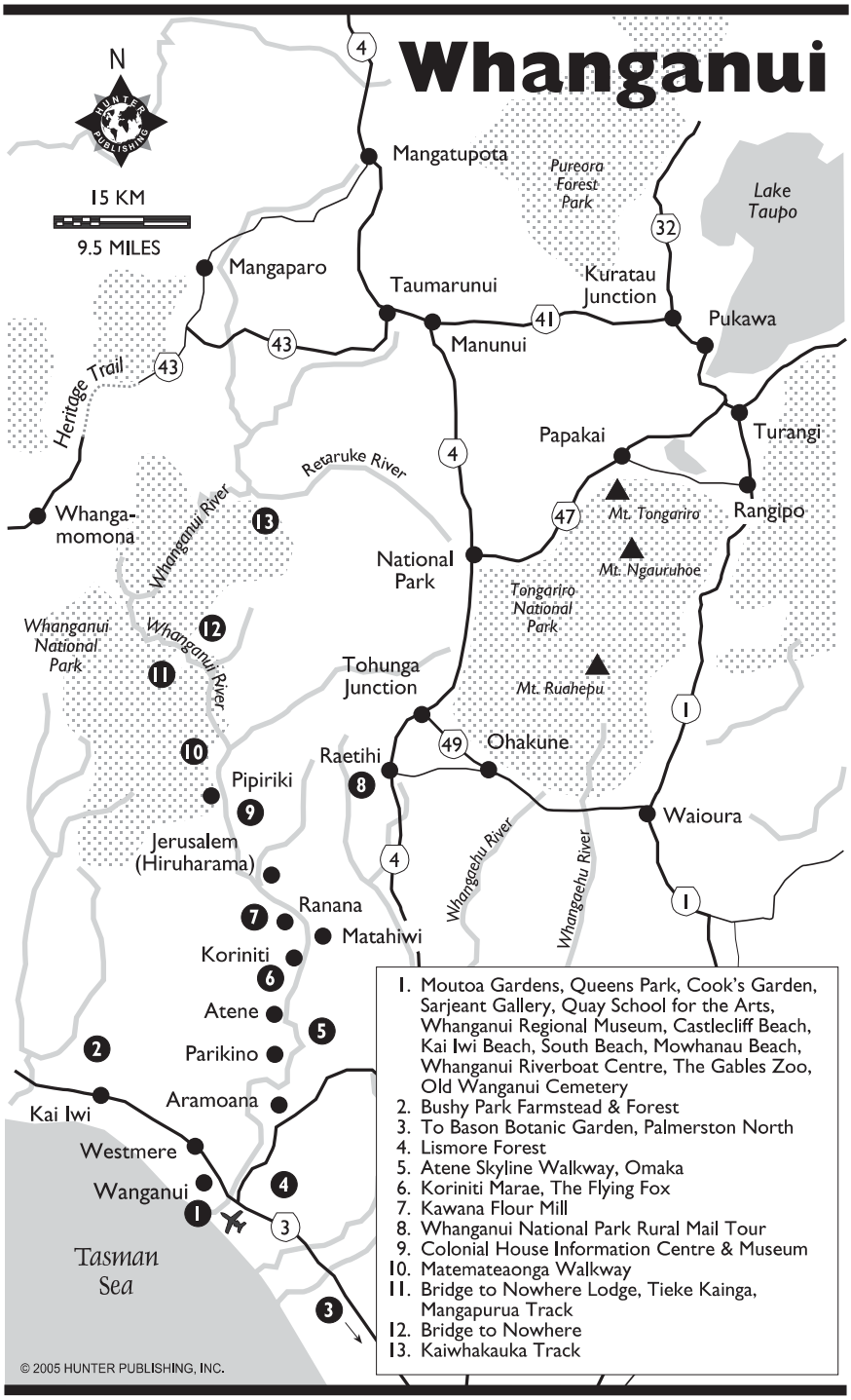
Red Eye Café gets my vote for friendly service and good food. An interesting place. 96 Guyton Street, ☎ 06-345-5646 ($).

The other café of choice is **Caffeine Fixx**, 71 Liverpool St, ☎ 06-345-7557 ($).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

For big food at family prices, go into **Clareburts Restaurant** at the Grand Hotel. Corner Guyton and St. Hill St., ☎ 06-345-0955 ($$).

Just a few minutes up SH4 is Upokongaro and **Riviera**. It's authentic and reasonably priced Italian, and it pays to book on the weekends for dinner. ☎ 06-345-6459 ($$)



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Whanganui River, National Park & Whanganui River Road

Pick up a copy of ***In and Around Whanganui National Park***. It includes information and maps on the river, tramps and the river road! A bargain at $2.50.

The Whanganui Valley was settled by the Te Atihau Nui a Papa Rangi peoples who used the river for access to the inner part of the North Island. The Maori built *pa,* or strongholds, on the high spots, and cultivated food on the terraces. As you paddle down the river today, you can see holes in the rock walls where earlier travelers would wedge poles in as levers for pushing the boats upstream. You can also see remnants of eel weirs or nets on the sides of the river.

Missionaries were the first Europeans in the area, arriving in the 1840s. By the mid-1860s, the first riverboat reached Pipiriki from Wanganui; by 1891 a regular riverboat service was established that carried passengers, freight and mail to settlers from Wanganui to Tuamarunui. The riverboats were still operating in the late 1950s, but use had declined after the 1920s, when roads and the railway came through. There have been quite a few books written about the Whanganui River, and many of them have great old photographs of these steam boats, with passengers dressed in their finest.

The Whanganui River is the longest *navigable* river in New Zealand. It is canoeable for over 200 kilometers (124 miles) and, while there are 239 rapids between Taumaranui and the Tasman Sea, it is classified as a Grade II river, a beginner's river manageable by most people, including families with children. The river has long been known for its eel, freshwater crayfish (*koura*) and freshwater flounder. It is also home to several species of the New Zealand native trout, the young of which are referred to as whitebait.

The National Park forest is a mixture of broadleaf and podocarp, home to stands of native trees, such as rimu, tawa, kamahi, kowhai, northern rata and rewarewa. You will also notice some stands of black beech and many tree ferns along the high-sided gorges. Common bird-life in the park consists of native wood pigeons, fantails, tui, North Island robins, grey warblers, rifleman, and tomtits. You may be lucky enough to see the less common whitehead, kaka, falcon and yellow-crowned parakeet (*kakariki*). Brown kiwi can be heard at night.

■ Information Sources

Contact the DoC at:

Wanganui, Ingstre Chambers, 74 Ingestre Street, ☎ 06-345-2402, fax 06-345-8712.

Taumarunui, Cherry Grove, ☎ 07-895-8201, fax 07-895-9036.

Pipiriki, Owairua Road, Whanganui National Park, ☎ 06-385-5022, fax 06-385-5023.

■ Adventures

Caution: During heavy rain, water levels can rise quickly and the river can become dangerous and impassable. Likewise, after rain, the levels can drop very quickly. If the river is high, wait until the level drops before attempting to cross or canoe it.

On Water

Canoe & Kayak Trips

Traveling around New Zealand with small children can be a challenge – a lot of the activities require people to be "big." Canoeing down the Whanganui River doesn't – and what a fabulous way to spend a holiday, big or small! While most of the river is navigable, the section from Taumarunui to Pipiriki is the most popular for canoeing. Within that area, the most popular option is from Ohipnae or Whakahoro to Pipiriki. I did a four-day trip through the middle reaches (90 km/56 miles from Whakahoro to Pipiriki), and it was a perfect length of time – long enough to "get away from it all" but not long enough to make you tired of it. There are some great swimming holes along the way, waterfalls to investigate, campsites with water and long drops, everything you need to be comfortable and remote. Mobile phones don't work, there are no roads, and in four days (maybe three) you can get into a rhythm of being on the river. While many of the outfitters rent canoes and gear, going with a guided group alleviates the hassle of transport, permits, provisioning and cooking (plus the guides know where all the good camping spots are). In addition to camping areas, there are three Great Walk/serviced DoC huts on the river – the Whakahoro, John Coull and Tieke Kainga. River passes must be purchased from the DoC before beginning your journey!

Guided Options

AUTHOR'S PICK

Canoe Safaris runs first-rate two- to five-day fully catered canoe trips. These cover up to 50 km/30 miles for the two-day trip and 125 km/578 miles for the longest one. You can opt for a kayak if you prefer, but I think a river like this deserves a canoe. Rafting and canoeing trips on the Mohaka, Rangitikei and Clarence rivers are also available. For adults, prices range from $300-$785 for two-five day trips; for children, $200-$485 for two-five days. www.canoesafaris.co.nz, Ohakune, ☎ 06-385-9237 or 0800-2723-353, fax 06-385-8758.

Also based in Ohakune, is **Yeti Tours**, which offers two-day (36.5 km, 23 miles), four-day (87.5 km, 55 miles,) and six-day (125 km, 78 miles) guided canoe and kayak trips. You'll camp along the way, and you can opt for the "luxury tour" with portable showers, extra guides to carry your gear, set up tents and make your food. (Or why not just rough it like the rest of us?) For adults, prices range from $325 to $895 for two- to six-day classic trips; for children,

$215-$595. Kayak, canoe and gear rental is available. www.canoe.co.nz, ☎ 06-385-8197 or 0800-322-388, fax 06-385-8492.

Stewart Barclay at **Adrift Guided Outdoor Adventures** offers one-day and multi-day canoe adventures, as well as Tongariro treks, cycle tours, mountain-bike tours and ski weekends. www.kiwiadv.com/Volcanic/AdriftNZ.htm, ☎ 07-892-2751 or 021-164-6044.

Canoe rental is the specialty, but guided one- to five-day trips can be arranged through **Blazing Paddles**. From $50 pp to $140 pp for rental. www.blazingpaddles.co.nz, ☎ 07-895-5261 or 0800-252-946.

If you would like to be fully immersed in Maori culture and include *kainga* (cultural village or ancestral homes) and a marae or Maori meeting-place stay on your trip, contact **Waka Tours Ltd**. Formed in 1992, these folks have six-seater canoes (two-seaters are also available) and run three-day, 85 km trips, with guides who are are descendents of settlers of the area. $480 adults, $380 children. www.whanganuiriver.co.nz/operators/01-wakatours.html,.

If you don't have a few days to spare, but still want to get on the river, go to **Omaka Farm**, just 30 minutes from Wanganui. They will transport you, a canoe (or kayak) and gear 16 km up the river and then you have a leisurely three-hour float/paddle back to the farm. Daily departures at 10 am. Call ahead to confirm time and availability. $40 per person, guides also available at $50 per trip. www.whanganuiriver.co.nz, ☎ 06-342-5595.

While the historic riverboat cruises are no more, you can climb aboard the modern **MV *Wakapai*** for a one-day or overnight cruise between Pipiriki and Wanganui. Each trip includes commentary, time for stops, lunch, etc. The overnight cruise offers a range of accommodation options. $135-$285. www.wakapai.co.nz, 1 A Taupo Quay, Wanganui, ☎/fax 06-385-4128 or 0800-783-2637.

> **Historic interest:** The **Bridge to Nowhere** is a large concrete bridge built in 1936 when the fantasy of this area being developed was still alive. The bridge makes for a popular photo stop, and there is a lookout above it for that perfect shot. Most of the jet-boats and canoe trips stop here and you will also access it from the Mangapurua walk.

Jet-Boat Tours

Half-day scenic tours to Bridge to Nowhere and afternoon trips to Tieke Marae for a traditional Maori welcome or *powhiri* are available through **Bridge to Nowhere Jetboat Tours**. $75-$85 per person. www.bridgetonowhere.co.nz, ☎/fax 06-385-4128.

Whanganui Scenic Jet has a range of trips from 1½-7½ hours. Prices begin at $50. www.whanganuiriver.co.nz, ☎/fax 06-342-5869 or 06-342-5599.

Starting at Whaakahoro, **Whanganui River Jet** offers a range of trips on different sections of the river. From $50 per person. Wades Landing Outdoors, Owhango, ☎ 07-895-5995.

On Foot

Tip: Although not on the water, the Wanganui Journey is one of New Zealand's Great Walks; from October to April a River Journey Pass is required to use the facilities on the river. Purchase one from DoC before beginning your journey!

There are quite a few short walks in the Whanganui National Park as well as the two popular multi-day tramping tracks, the **Matemateaonga** and the **Mangapurua**. Huts on the river and the Matemateaonga are serviced and require two tickets per person per night.

The **Matemateaonga track**, three to four days one-way, follows an old Maori trail and settlers' dray road. The 42-km (25-mile) track traverses the bush-clad hills between the Kohi Saddle on the Upper Mangaehu Road (near Stratford) and the Whanganui River right near Tieke Marae. The track goes through thick bush and on the ridgeline provides views of the volcanoes on the Central Plateau. There is a sidetrack to Mt. Humphries that offers even more spectacular views of the area – it's about a 1½-hour round-trip. The Matemateaonga (and the Mangapurua, for that matter) are wonderful walking options and don't get the crowds of other more popular tramps. There are three huts along the way. Jet-boat transport is necessary to or from the Whanganui River end of the track; the Information Center in Wanganui (see page 160) can arrange road transport to or from the other end.

The **Mangapurua/Kaiwhakauka** track is 40 km (24 miles) and can typically be walked in three to four days. There are no huts on this track, so trampers need to carry a tent. This track runs along the Kaiwhakauka and Mangapurua streams (both tributaries of the river) between Whakakahoro and the Mangapurua landing. It follows former roadlines and through former farming areas. (Some current farmland, as well.) At the lower end of the track, it crosses the famous Bridge to Nowhere to the Mangapurua landing. Transport to and from the track can be arranged through the Information Center in Wanganui.

The **Atene Skyline Track** is only six to eight hours and begins about 30 minutes from the Wanganui township. It's nearly circular, and the two entrances are less than two km apart, so transport is not a major issue. The track goes through lowland bush and up to the Taumata Trig, all the while encircling the hill, Puketapu, around which the river once flowed. There is a camping site with water and long-drops (toilets) about half-way around the track.

■ Sightseeing

The River Road winds 79 km (about 49 miles) from Wanganui to Pipiriki along the Wanganui River, through bush, national park and farmland. Construction took 30 years to complete; the road was opened to cars in 1934 and is paved for about half the way. It takes about 1½ hours to Pipiriki without stops, so it's obviously a more time-consuming route to Raetihi than SH4. But it's filled with fantastic views and plenty of interesting places to stop along the way. The more leisurely traveler will opt to spend a day or two. The turnoff is 14 km (nine miles) from the City Bridge on SH4. Pick up a copy of ***The Wanganui River Road*** brochure from the information center in Wanganui for a description of sites along the trip, including

Aramoana (great views of the river valley), **Atene** (see description of walk, above), **Koriniti Marae** (in Corinth), the **Kawana Flour Mill**, **Ranana** (one of the larger settlements and home to a Roman Catholic mission in the early 1900s), and **Moutoa Island** (scene of a major battle in 1864). **Hiruharama** or **Jerusalem** was a large Maori village, which in the late 1800s, became the site of a Catholic mission, school, orphanage and farm; mission work continues today. Jerusalem was where a 200-strong commune was established by the late poet James K. Baxter, though that no longer exists. Along the road, there are veiwpoints, look-outs, and short walks. The road ends in Pipiriki, where there is a field center office, picnic and camping areas and the **Colonial House Information Centre and Museum** (open from noon to 4 pm daily). From Pipiriki, turn east to Raetihi where you will meet SH4.

Whanganui National Park Rural Mail Tour delivers the mail to rural stations and farms, schools and marae, or Maori meeting places. Weekday departures with stops at the Jerusalem Church, Kawana Flour Mill and the Koriniti Marae. $30 per person. www.rivercitytours.co.nz, ☎ 06-344-2554 or 025-443-421 or 0800-377-311.

■ Where to Stay

Just 30 minutes from Wanganui is **Omaka**, where you can stay on a hill country farm – a backpacker's hostel at the homestead in a what was once a woolshed – camp by the river, or at Rivertime Lodge, set above the river in a beautiful garden surrounded by bush. www.whanganuiriver.co.nz, 1569 Whanganui River Road, ☎ 06-342-5595 ($-$$)

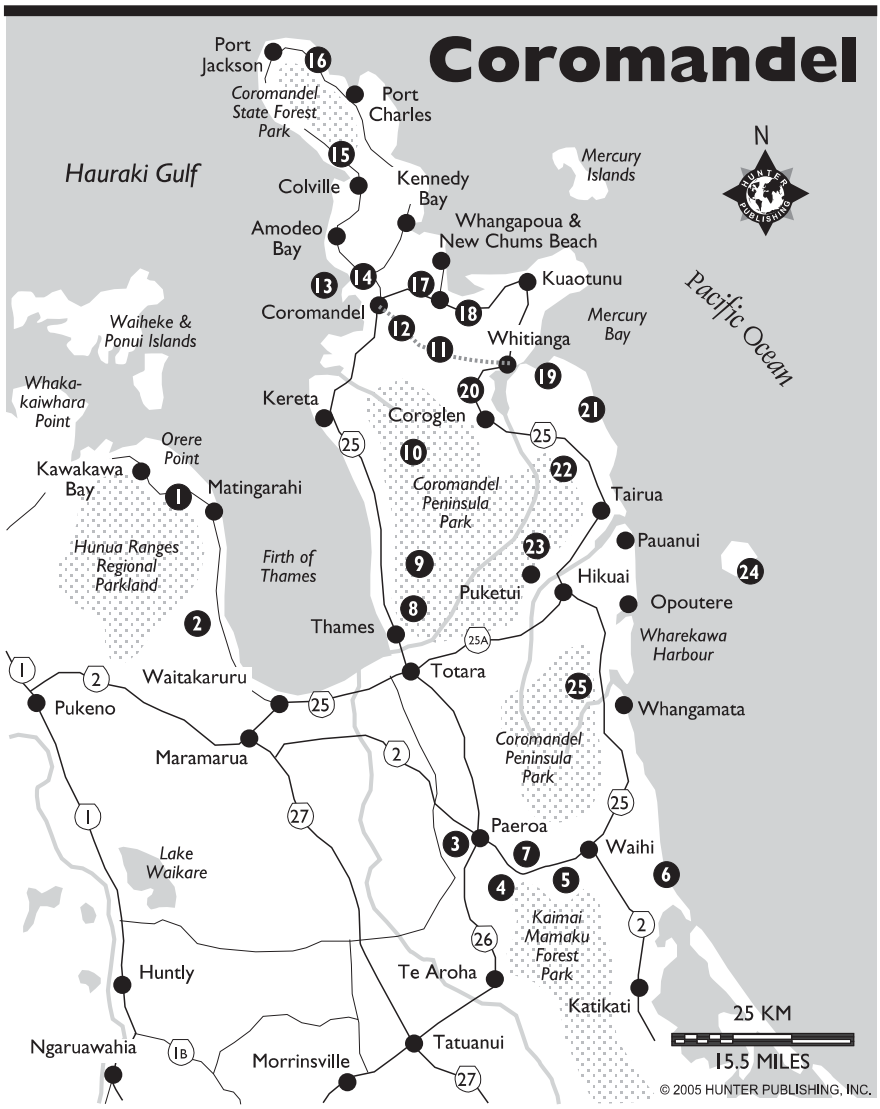
The Flying Fox is 45 minutes from Wanganui and access is by an aerial cable car ("flying fox") or by boat. Cottages with kitchen and bath, an organic orchard and gardens, minimal impact on the environment (including composting toilets) and meals are available by prior arrangement. You can cook for yourself, but I'd be sure to bring a few bottles of wine, because this is the place to hang out and just plain relax. Camping is available and there's an outdoor bush bath. A perfect retreat! www.theflyingfox.co.nz, ☎ 06-342-8160 ($$).

> **Good value:** Completely different, but equally fabulous is **Oeriki Farmstay**. It's like going to mom's – great gardens, a working farm, massive country kitchen. Trissa grows macadamia nuts and makes gorgeous pottery; Peter farms and is always on the go. Here is a place to become one of the family in a very comfortable way. Tourism@wanganui.govt.nz, ☎ 06-342-8159. Dinner, bed and breakfast, $55 per adult.

In addition to the huts and camping, there are a couple of accommodation options right on the river, including the **Bridge to Nowhere Lodge**, www.bridgetonowhere.co.nz. Dinner, bed and breakfast runs $85 per person.

Tieke Kainga is a marae or meeting place on the site of an old pa (fortified village), across the river from the Bridge to Nowhere Lodge. Everyone is welcome on the marae, but please respect proper marae protocol. Visitors will be met on the riverbank and participation in the powhiri, or welcome, will be explained. It's nothing to be afraid of, just a ceremony that involves some song, some speeches, gift giving and a hongi, the Maori greeting where the noses

touch. If no one is in attendance when you arrive at the Tieke Kainga marae, you are still welcome to use the dining room, bunk rooms and camping area. Accommodation is on a first-come, first-served basis and if you are not interested in participating in the marae experience, you may proceed directly to the camping area.



1. Seabird Coast Route from Auckland
2. Miranda Shorebird Centre
3. Paeroa "Big Bottle"
4. Karangahake Gorge Historic Walkway, Ohinemuri River, Owharo Falls
5. Goldfields Railway, Martha Mine (Waihi)
6. Waihi Beach
7. Ohinemuri Estate Winery
8. Thames School of Mines & Museum
9. Kauaeranga Valley, Pinnacles Hut Walk
10. Square Kauri Tree
11. 309 Road, 309 Kauri Walk
12. Waiau Waterworks
13. McGregor Bay Beach
14. Driving Creek Pottery & Railway, Coromandel School of Mines Museum
15. Pohutukawa Coast
16. Coromandel Walkway, Coromandel Farm Park, Fantail Bay, Fletcher Bay, Stony Bay
17. Opera Point Historic Reserve
18. Castle Rock Winery (Te Rerenga)
19. Ferry to Cooks Bay & Beach, Hahei, Whanganui-a-Hei Marine Reserve, Cathedral Cove, Shakespeare's Cliff Scenic Reserve, Mills Reef Winery
20. Rangihau Ranch
21. Hot Water Beach
22. Whenuakite Kauri Groves, Twin Kauri Scenic Reserve
23. Broken Hills
24. Slipper Island (Whakahau)
25. Wentworth Valley Road, Wentworth Falls

The Coromandel Peninsula

Introduction

Like a long craggy finger on granny's hand, the Coromandel Peninsula sticks out to separate the Firth of Thames and Hauraki Gulf from the Pacific Ocean. The rugged peninsula is a bit of a "second-time destination" for most international travelers – it doesn't have the infrastructure to support huge busloads of tourists or a constant flood of visitors, but makes a welcome retreat for those desiring a remote bush walk or a golden sand beach. The name comes from the HMS *Coromandel* that called in to the region in 1820 to gather kauri wood for ship spars.

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The peninsula was formed volcanically about nine million years ago. Agriculture, including forestry, has been the mainstay of the region for years, but tourism (both domestic and, increasingly, international) is increasing as more visitors take advantage of the close proximity to Auckland and the relaxed lifestyle. The peninsula is dotted with holiday homes, and the permanent population of 45,000 burgeons to 250,000 over the Christmas holidays. Estimates are that at least 200,000 of those are Kiwis – and don't you think a good way to pick a holiday destination is to go where the locals go?

The Coromandel gold fields yielded 1,290 tons of gold – more during the same time period than the Klondike and California gold rushes combined. Still regarded as one of the richest fields in the world, the gold is not alluvial but trapped inside quartz, making mining more difficult. Consequently, there was never a major "Coromandel Gold Rush." Miners needed more than a gold pan; mining companies with sophisticated equipment were required.

You cannot come to this narrow peninsula and not spend some time either on the water or just beside it! The Coromandel has some of the longest, most golden beaches in New Zealand and each one deserves a walk, a swim, a snorkel or a picnic. As you drive around the peninsula, you'll see countless signs for walks; I recommend getting out of the car and doing at least a few. The Coromandel Peninsula Park and the Coromandel State Forest Park cover the backbone of most of the peninsula, and there are quite a few stands of kauri trees – some of the biggest and most impressive are just a few steps off the road.

The Coromandel Peninsula is absolutely riddled with walking tracks and if you are a keen walker, I suggest you pick up a copy of the ***Holidaymaker InfoMap*** ($14.95, available at the information centers).

Getting Here

■ By Air

Air service is provided to and from Whitianga on **Great Barrier Airlines**. Service routes include Great Barrier Island and Auckland. www.greatbarrierairlines.co.nz, ☎ 09-275-9120 or 0800-900-6612.

■ By Car

From Auckland going south on SH2, it takes about 1½ hours to Thames and two hours to Waihi. From Rotorua, it's about 2½ hours north to Waihi and nearly three to Thames. It's just an hour along the coast from Tauranga to Waihi and two hours to Thames. On the peninsula, it's about an hour from Thames to Coromandel, Waihi and Pauanui; from either Pauanui or Coromandel to Whitianga it's about an hour.

■ By Bus

InterCity Coachlines provides regular bus service to Thames (outside the information center) from Auckland and Tauranga. InterCity also has limited trips around the peninsula. www.intercitycoachlines.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100, 07-868-7251.

Go Kiwi Shuttles offers door-to-door service between the Coromandel Peninsula, Auckland, Rotorua, Hamilton and Tauranga. Links to Paihia and Taupo are also available. Bookings for all services are essential. www.go-kiwi.co.nz, ☎ 07-866-0336 or 0800-446-549.

Information Sources

Tourism Coromandel is the marketing organization and can be reached at info@thecoromandel.com. Websites to look at include www.thecoromandel.com and www.thepacificcoast.co.nz.

The regional DoC office is located at the **Kauaerenga Visitor Centre**, Kauaerenga Valley, ☎ 07-867-9080, fax 07-867-9095.

If you're interested in camping, be sure to stop in the DoC office and get a map and a list of camping areas. There are dozens of places to pitch a tent, but during the summer holidays, they can fill up. Book in advance!

Tip: Prices at accommodations on the Coromandel tend to go up around the Christmas holidays and things get tight – book in advance!

The Seabird Coast

From Auckland, the most scenic route to the Coromandel Peninsula is by way of the "Seabird Coast" route. It follows the shoreline from South Auckland, dipping and diving into coastal settlements, through regional

parks and along the coast that is edged by the Hunua Ranges. This is an important migratory area – the inter-tidal flats are visited annually by tens of thousands of birds. While there are not an overwhelming number of places to stay or eat on this drive, Kaiau Fisheries does offer takeout.

The area adjacent to the **Miranda Shorebird Centre** is the destination of over 100 species of birds, including many from the Arctic (no complaining about how long your flight was to Auckland – these birds flap their wings for over 15,000 km, or 9,300 miles, every year). There is a very well-informed information center with good interpretive displays. They also have simple accommodation (with kitchen and bath or bunk rooms) available. www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz, ☎/fax 09-232-2781.

The very lovely Miranda Holiday Park has cabins, motel units, power and tent sites. In addition to being right beside the Miranda Hot Springs, it has its own swimming pool, tennis court and clean kitchens. 595 Front Miranda Road, Waitakaruru, ☎ 07-867-3205 or 0800-833-144 ($-$$$).

Driving on SH25 along the bottom of the Firth of Thames, or along SH2 or SH27, you will travel through the Hauraki Plains, the area of flattish land that borders the Firth of Thames and stretches south into the Waikato. Many rivers flow through the Plains, land that was once swamp. After massive drainage efforts, it is now very productive dairy land.

Paeroa is probably the best-known town in the area, thanks to the iconic Kiwi drink L&P – Lemon and Paeroa, "World Famous in New Zealand." The water that was originally used for the drink came from here and, in fact, the drink was made in the town of Paeroa, but now all that is left is the "big bottle" (manufacturing and bottling are now in Auckland). The big bottle is such a popular photo opportunity that the bottle was moved in 2001 – in order to get a good shot of the bottle in the old location, you had to stand in the middle of the road!

There is an information center in Paeora right on SH2 (this stretch is called Belmont Street) that is open daily, ☎ 07-862-8636.

Continuing on SH2 about 10 km (six miles) from Paeroa (midway to Waihi), you will reach the beginning of the Karangahake Gorge, a small but stunning area that runs alongside the meandering Ohinemuri River. The river was an important trade route for the Maori and later the European settlers. The whole area is steeped in gold-mining history. Mining was active from the mid-1870s through to the 1950s and there are remains of four major gold-mining sites in the gorge. The original Martha Mine was worked from 1878 to 1952; a new mine was opened in 1988. Expectations are to keep it going until 2008.

Many people fly past here on their way through, but it is definitely worth a stop for a couple of hours to stretch your legs, go for a short walk, grab a cuppa and even take in a wine tasting. Just a half-hour wander along the river takes you far, far away from the highway and into a steep-walled, beautifully bush-clad area. From the gorge, continue on to Waihi and then either north to the peninsula or east to Waihi Beach.

> **Historic interest:** The Karangahake was the first place in the world to use the cynanide process to extract gold from ore. Unfortunately, when the area was being mined full-tilt, the river became polluted. (It's cleaned up now.)

■ Information Sources

Waikino Station Café serves as the local information center and display center for DoC, SH2, ☎/fax 07-863-8640.

In **Waihi**, the information center is at info@waihi.org.nz, Seddon Street, ☎ 07-863-6715.

■ Adventures

On Water

Waihi Beach is long and sandy, and the town is like the old beach towns in your mind. It's a good place to grab an ice cream, walk in the sand and go for a swim or a surf.

On Foot

There are a variety of walks through the gorge, including the **Karangahake Gorge Historic Walkway** that follows along the railway line from the site of the Crown Battery. The walkway goes between the Karangahake visitor center and the Waikino Railway Station, crossing three bridges, and going through an 1,100-meter (3,600-foot) tunnel. Along the way, there are large pools in the Ohinemuri River that are not only suitable for swimming, but very inviting! The walk is easy, with no major hills and suitable for all fitness levels. From the Waikino car park to Owharo Falls takes about 30 minutes, from Karangahake to the falls, about 90 minutes.

There are shorter walks, including a loop-track from Karangahake that goes through the tunnel and across two swingbridges.

Take a ride on Goldfields Railway connecting Waihi and Waikino, a nostalgic trip on an old-fashioned steam train through the historic gold-mining district. It's 30 minutes each way and the train lays over for 15 minutes… or take the early train and spend the day in Waihi, returning to Waikino on the late run. Trains depart Waihi at 11 am, 12:30 pm, and 2 pm; Waikino at 11:45 am, 1:15 pm and 2:45 pm. Tickets available at the Station Café; adults $6, children $3. ☎ 07-863-8251 (station) or 07-863-8640 (café).

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

Many of the shops in Waikino closed when the mines did in the 1950s, and most of them simply floated away when, in 1981, it rained over 23 inches in 24 hours! Many residents left Waikino after the mines closed, but it is now populated by a large number of artists. Take a wander around the galleries.

> **Historic interest:** Make a stop at the **Martha Mine** in Waihi to check out modern gold-mining. There are some good interpretive signs and an educational center. In 2003, the Martha Mine produced 110,000 ounces of gold and 954,000 ounces of silver. The economic impact of the mine on the district (direct and indirect) was estimated at nearly $200 million dollars in 2002. The viewing platform is on Moreseby Avenue. At the first roundabout, turn left; about 400 meters (1,300 feet) on your right there is a car park and short trail up to the viewing platform.

Wine

The Coromandel is never going to be one of the big grape-growing regions in New Zealand and, with its damp, cool weather, the Karangahake won't be either. But at the **Ohinemuri Estate Winery** they are pretty serious about wine making. Grapes are sourced from Gisborne, and the 1,000 cases of wine that are made and bottled on-site are mostly sold on-site. Owner and winemaker Horst Hillerich worked in Germany, France and Switzerland before coming to New Zealand; he makes Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, Riesling and Merlot. It's a small, friendly affair – tastings are casual. The café is located in what used to be the stables. Food choices include Mediterranean with a New Zealand twist, curry, and schnitzel. There is also accommodation available (see *Where To Stay,* below). Open 10 am-5 pm daily during summer, Friday-Sunday during the winter. Moresby Street, Karangahake, ☎ 07-862-8874.

■ Where to Stay

Accommodation with kitchen and bath is available in what once served as the hayloft at the **Ohinemuri Estate Winery**. Comfortably sleeping four, it can fit six. This would be a great base for doing some of the walks around the gorge. Moresby Street, Karangahake, www.ohinemuri.co.nz, ☎ 07-862-8874, fax 07-862-8847 ($$).

The Drift House Trout and Chicken B&B might have an odd name, but it's a good choice for accommodation. Two rooms (with en-suite bathroom) in the house and a newly built barn with space for four are available in the organic blueberry orchard of Adrienne and Michael Muir (harvest is late January to the end of March). Dinner is available by arrangement. www.troutandchicken.co.nz, 9137 SH2, Waihi, ☎ 07-863-6964, fax 07-863-6966.

■ Where to Eat

In addition to the restaurant at the Ohinemuri Winery, the **Waikino Station Café** is an excellent stopping point for a tasty meal, perfect coffee and information about the Karangahake Gorge. Vegetarian pizza, chicken sandwiches, meat pies, burgers – the choice is varied and everything is good. You get your tickets for the train ride here. Owners Eddie and Karen are passionate about the area and their enthusiasm shows up in their product. SH2, ☎/fax 07-863-8640 ($-$$).

Thames to Coromandel

Thames is the western gateway to the Coromandel Peninsula. It is the major service community for the peninsula, offering a good place to stock up on groceries and gather information for the rest of your trip. The western coast of the peninsula is more rugged than the eastern – the rocks are spectacular and the windswept shore picturesque. Rock fishing is a popular activity all around the peninsula and along this drive you'll likely see fishermen pulling in a catch of the day, perhaps snapper, kingfish, or kowhai. While most visitors head to the golden beaches of the east coast, the western side is a bit more remote and uncluttered.

■ Information Sources

The **Thames Information Centre** can be reached at thames@ihug.co.nz and is located at 206 Pollen Street, ☎ 07-868-7284, fax 07-868-7584.

If you want to learn more about rocks and mining, go into the **Thames School of Mines & Museum**. Open daily. Cochrane Street.

■ Adventures

On Foot

Just out of Thames is the **Kauaeranga Valley**, the most popular walking area in the Coromandel Forest Park. Tracks range from less than an hour to three or four; some go through regenerating bush, some through native old-growth. The DoC visitor center has an extensive listing of the options.

Probably the best and most easily accessible longer walk on the peninsula is to the **Pinnacles Hut**. Often called "the best hut in New Zealand," it's big (sleeps 80 in two bunk rooms) and plush – hot water, washing and cooking supplies, fireplace. From the end of Kauaeranga Valley Road, it's about three hours to the hut and, from the hut, it's about another 30 minutes to the marker at the top of the track; on a clear day, the views are spectacular. You can carry on to Rangihau Road (total about nine hours) but you'll have to arrange for transport. There is a plan to make a three-day, two-night tramp in these hills – hopefully that'll be reality in the next few years.

■ Sightseeing

Along SH25, there are a few places to stop and see the view or take a swim. At the settlement of Tapu, turn inland on the road toward Coroglen. There is a 20-minute loop track to the **Square Kauri Tree**, estimated to be 1,200 years old.

Continuing north, be sure to stop at Kirita Hill for a view across the gulf.

Don't miss: Just a few kilometers south of Coromandel is the 309 Road, a cut-across to Whitianga. Eleven km (seven miles) down the 309 Road you can take a five-minute walk to the foot of the Waiau Falls; another km farther on the 309 is the **309 Kauri Walk**. A small car park is on your right; the walking track is on the left and only about 10 minutes long, but it ends at the most amazing stand of kauri trees. Their roots are protected by boardwalk, but their massive trunks are right there, inviting you to touch them and feel the texture and strength of these mighty trees. Only about 600 years old, they are not the oldest kauri in New Zealand, but they are some of the most impressive. The track wanders through old-growth forest, dense with nikau palms and tree ferns. I really love this little bit of forest – it's small, close to the road, easily accessed, and magic.

The Waiau Waterworks is one of those slightly goofy places that you gotta love. Things like pedaling a bike to make water squirt will keep you entertained. You can also have a picnic, go for a swim or buy an ice cream. It's 10 minutes down the 309 Road from the Coromandel Town end. www.waiauwaterworks.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-866-7191.

Coromandel Town

Heading north along the west coast is one of the most rugged and spectacular drives you'll come across. There are a few spots to stop and explore along the way and the town of Coromandel has some good coffee shops, an organic food store, a few art galleries and a range of accommodation. It's a laid-back place that's fun to browse around or stay a night.

■ Information Sources

The **Coromandel Information Centre** is on Kapanga Road in the District Council offices, coroinfo@ihug.co.nz, ☎ 07-866-8598.

■ Adventures

On Water

Swimming

McGregor Bay just out the peninsula from Coromandel has picnic areas and is popular for swimming, waterskiing and boating.

Sailing

You can go for a day-sail around the islands with **Ocean Safaris** on *Resolute,* a 75-foot yacht moored at Hanafords Wharf, just south of Coromandel. The crew is experienced and passionate and guests are invited to do as little or as much as they like. Cruises include refreshments and lunch; there are toilets, bunks, and plenty of space to wander around and relax. Which islands you visit will depend on conditions, but any day on the water is a great experience and it's always enlightening to see the coastline from offshore. Depending on where the boat is, you can even sail between Auckland and Coromandel, making for an unusual opportunity. Might be a nice idea to sail one way and take the bus back. Your options are just about endless. Contact Stephen at Ocean Safaris to see what he's got going. Day-trips begin at $90 per person. www.oceansafaris.com, ☎ 021-923-423.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

The Driving Creek Pottery and Railway is a labor of love. Just north of Coromandel, owner-sculptor Barry Brickell spent 25 years building a narrow-gauge railway (including a double-decker viaduct) that winds through the mountains up to its terminal building, the "Eyefull Tower." At the craft shop, you can purchase pottery and books, or learn about the area's ecology and history. The forest is being replanted with native trees and a wildlife sanctuary is being established. $15 adults, $7 children. Trains run at 10:15 am and 2 pm daily all year; 9 am, 12:45, 3:15 and

4:30 pm during holiday periods (best to inquire about times). www.drivingcreekrailway.co.nz, Driving Creek Road, ☎/fax 07-866-8703.

Gold was discovered at Driving Creek in 1852.

A must-stop for New Zealand jewelry, pottery and art is **Weta Design Ltd**. The gallery is filled with a huge variety of interesting bits and pieces, all NZ made. 46 Kapanga Road, Coromandel, ☎ 07-866-8060.

The **Coromandel School of Mines Museum** is open daily in the summer from 10 am to 4 pm, with displays covering the history of gold mining in the area. Kapanga Road.

■ Where to Stay

Mangrove Manor is a specially built B&B about two km (1½ miles) south of Coromandel. There are three guest rooms with en-suite bathroom and a large, private guest lounge. It's a very modern home with all the amenities and makes for a most comfortable place to stay. Pchaffey@xtra.co.nz, 2710 Tiki Road, ☎ 07-866-7633, fax 07-866-7639 ($$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART

Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.

$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

The newest motel in town is the **Anchor Lodge**, which is set in native bush, and has a heated swimming pool and a spa. They also have backpacker accommodation in a new lodge, with doubles, twins and dorms. www.anchorlodgecoromandel.co.nz, 448 Wharf Road, ☎ 07-866-7992, fax 07-866-7991 ($-$$).

The **Coromandel Court Motel** is a very clean and pleasant place to stay right near the shops and restaurants. There is a spa pool and BBQ. www.coromandelcourtmotel.co.nz, 365 Kapanga Road, ☎ 07-866-8402 or 0800-267-6236, fax 07-866-8403 ($$-$$$).

For a simple, convenient and dependable place to stay, try **Central Motel**. It's been recently renovated and has studio with kitchen and bath and family units. 50 Wharf Road, ☎ 07-866-8709, fax 07-866-8750 ($$).

The Lions Den is a good backpacker hostel in Coromandel. It's small and friendly; they offer seafood cooking lessons and budget meals. 26 Te Tiki Street, ☎ 07-866-8996 ($).

The Tui Lodge offers free use of bikes, a washing machine and free fruit in season. Dorms, twins and doubles. tuilodge@paradise.net.nz, 60 Whangapoua Road, ☎ 07-866-8237 ($).

■ Where to Eat

Success Café is open from breakfast through to late night and has supreme seafood chowder, lamb salad and great baked items, good coffee, not a bad wine list, either. On the main drag, Coromandel, ☎ 07-866-7100 ($-$$$).

The other best choice in town is **Umu**, which has good vegetarian as well as meat options and makes a mean cup of coffee. Open for lunch and dinner. 22 Wharf Road, ☎ 07-866-8618 ($-$$$).

For crayfish and other seafood, give **Peppertree Restaurant & Bar** a try. They are recently under new ownership and open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. 31 Kapanga Road, ☎ 07-866-8211, fax 07-866-7391 ($$-$$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Pick up some smoked fish at the **Coromandel Smoking Company** – they'll even smoke your catch. Also try the **Mussel Shop**, just south of Coromandel Town for (what else) mussels. If you like oysters, stop in at the **Coromandel Oyster Company**.

North to the Top

Gannet

The farther north you travel, the more extreme the landscape and the more dramatic the cliffs and views. On a clear day, you can see across the water to Auckland and the Sky Tower, the Whangarei heads and the Hen and Chicken Islands. The scenery is stunning, with rocky cliffs, cabbage trees jutting up, green pastures dotted with cattle, and pohutukawa groves – this stretch is even referred to as the Pohutukawa Coast. And the birds are something to watch; the only time I've ever seen gannets from above occurred while driving along this road. Four gannets flew in formation; the sight of their startling white bodies against the sea was spectacular. Coromandel is the last major stop, but Colville has a general store that sells just about everything – including gasoline at lower prices than in Coromandel. The store is run as a cooperative and isn't about being a big money-making venture. The road is paved to Colville.

■ Adventures

On Water

There are popular swimming beaches at both **Oamaru Bay** and **Amodeo Bay**, which are just north of Coromandel. At the top of the peninsula, there is good swimming at **Port Jackson**.

Along the coast, there are also plenty of dive sites, but you'd best check in with one of the dive shops on the peninsula for information.

On Foot or on a Bike

When you can drive no farther you are at Fletcher Bay, where the **Coromandel Walkway** begins. It links to Stony Bay, where the road begins again. It takes about three hours in each direction to walk, part of it wandering through the **Coromandel Farm Park**. There are alternative routes for mountain bikes and trampers, but you can link them

together to make a bit of a loop. I've never done the entire walk, but I have ridden my bike from Fletcher Bay to Poley Bay and spent about an hour asleep on a flat, hot rock, the surf pounding around me. Who needs to ride the whole thing when that's an option? Part of the walk is through farmland, part is fantastic single-track through the bush – pretty steep, but not technical, so good, fast fun. The views along the farm-park track are phenomenal eye candy.

■ Where to Stay

There aren't masses of options for accommodation once you leave Coromandel, but there are a few. When I first sailed to New Zealand and moved off the boat, I headed straight for the Coromandel Peninsula, feeling a need for earthiness, to replace all that water. I stayed a few days at **Colville Farm Holidays**. It's set on a working farm with accommodation options ranging from motel-like rooms, cottages and backpacker dorms. The accommodations are spread around the farm and there are some good bush walks. You can also go horseback riding or get involved with farm work. 2140 Colville Road, ☎/fax 07-866-6820 ($-$$).

Colville Bay Lodge & Motor Camp has just five apartments with kitchen and bath, an on-site camper and sites for camping (some with power). Wharf Road, ☎ 07-866-6814 ($-$$).

■ Where to Camp

There are countless places to camp around the peninsula. The ones north of Colville are my top picks. It may take some effort to get there, but it's worth it. Consider **Fantail Bay** (which is in a pohutukawa grove), **Port Jackson** (set on a huge, long beach) or **Fletcher Bay** (beach in pastoral surroundings) as top options.

SH25 to Whitianga

Leaving Coromandel on SH25, you will find yourself almost immediately immersed in bush. The road travels generally alongside the Whitkuri River and, at Te Rerenga, branches off with a side road that leads to Whangapoua, one of the more isolated spots on the peninsula. SH25 continues from Te Rerenga around the bottom of the Whangapoua Harbour, and leads to Matarangi and Kuaotunu before turning south and crossing through the forest park and into Mercury Bay. Driving non-stop, it'll only take you about an hour from Coromandel to Whitianga, but what's the hurry?

> **Tip:** At **Opera Point Historic Reserve** (adjacent to Whangapoua), there is an old pa site, or fortified village, called Raukawa, where you can get fabulous views of the coastline.

■ Adventures

On Water

Whangapoua is a good surf beach and the harbor is popular for windsurfing and sailing.

For one of the most stunning beaches on the Coromandel Peninsula, drive to the end of Whangapoua Road and take the four-km (2½-mile) walk to picture-perfect **New Chums Beach** – accessible only at low tide. Stop into the shop in Whangapoua and get local information for tides!

You will also find safe swimming beaches if you take the side road from Kuaotunu out to Opito Bay.

Local products: "If it doesn't have legs, ferment it," could be the motto at **Castle Rock Winery** in Te Rerenga, where they make small batches of wine from locally grown fruits and vegetables. Go in for a taste or two; they are very friendly here. SH25, ☎ 07-866-4542.

■ Where to Stay

There is a lovely two-bedroom cottage with kitchen and bath at **Castle Rock Winery**. It's a very comfortable, reasonably priced place to stay that makes a good base for wanderings around the area. www.castlerockwinery.co.nz, SH25, Te Rerenga, ☎ 07-866-4542 ($$).

Black Jack Lodge, **Chalet & Backpacker** opens right up to views of the beach, and the new lodge has a veranda that just invites falling asleep in the sun. There are doubles with bath and twins, as well as bunkrooms. Mountain bikes are available for rent and kayaks are free to use. www.black-jack.co.nz, 201 SH25, ☎ 07-866-2988, fax 07-866-2987 ($).

Whitianga, Cooks Beach & Hahei

Whitianga and Mercury Bay are very popular holiday destinations, and no wonder! Within a short space, you can find beaches, marine reserves, kayak trips, ferry rides, bush walks, horseback riding, fishing charters, you name it. Top it all off with a range of accommodation and food and why wouldn't tourists flock here? Whitianga is just a short ferry ride away from Cook's Bay and many people combine staying at Whitianga with activities at Cook's.

> **Did you know?** Mercury Bay was named by Captain Cook when he and his crew witnessed the passage of the planet Mercury across the sun.

■ Getting Around

The Whitianga foot ferry connects Whitianga with Cooks Bay. It takes less than five minutes to get across, and then it's a 15-minute walk to Hahei. The ferry runs continuously between 7:30 am and 6:30 pm; and again between 7:30 pm and 8:30 pm; and from 9:30 pm to 10:30 pm. Fares each way are $1 adults, 50¢ children, 50¢ per bike.

■ Information Sources

The very helpful **Whitianga Visitor Information Centre** does everything, including renting bikes. Contact them for accommodation ideas, especially if you're coming over the Christmas holidays. Open daily. enquiry@whitianga.co.nz, Albert Street, ☎ 07-866-5555, fax 07-866-2205.

■ Adventures

On Water

The first beach south of the Whitianga ferry is **Cooks Beach**, a three-km (two-mile) golden sand, crescent-shaped beach.

It's only outdone by the beach at **Cathedral Cove**, which is magic! See the description below for the walk, but I think this is a perfect place. It's only accessible by foot or boat and that makes it even more special.

The beach in **Hahei** is a great place to splash around, drop a towel and fall asleep listening to the water. It's also not a bad idea to grab an ice cream before you head down.

Probably one of the most famous beaches on the Coromandel is **Hot Water Beach**. Because of the volcanic Ring of Fire that New Zealand is part of, there is a lot of thermal activity – obvious in places like Rotorua. But it's also obvious in places like Hot Water Beach, where, at low tide, you can dig yourself a hole, lower yourself in and be warmed through the sand. A definite must-do for a visitor to the peninsula.

Diving & Snorkeling

Probably the best diving and snorkeling on the peninsula is out of **Hahei**. During the summer, DoC sets up a snorkeling trail at **Stingray Bay**, which is accessed by trail from the Cathedral Cove car park. If you don't have your own equipment, rent it in Hahei. There are plenty of options – one is the **Hahei Explorer**. You'll notice their sign on the left as you arrive in town. www.hahaiexplorer.co.nz, 2 Emma Street, ☎ 07-866-3910.

The **Whanganui-a-Hei Marine Reserve** (Cathedral Cove) was New Zealand's sixth marine reserve. It covers nine km (five miles) and includes some of the offshore islands. There is a snorkel trail in **Stingray Bay**.

For another option, you can rent snorkeling gear from **Cathedral Cove Dive**, also in Hahei. Join them for a one-tank dive or go along on the boat and snorkel different parts of the area. Many of their trips are within the Whanganui-a-Hei Marine Reserve but, dependent on weather and water conditions, they may go to other locations. Russ and Wendy are very approachable, run a professional business and offer all levels of dive instruction. Their Discover Scuba Diving course is a fantastic introduction to the sport. Prices for snorkel trips are $30 ($50 including gear rental); dive trips begin at $40 ($80 including gear rental). The Discover Scuba course is $120; inquire for prices on more advanced courses. www.hahei.co.nz, Shop 2, Grange Court, ☎ 07-866-3955, fax 07-866-3053.

In Kayaks

AUTHOR'S PICK

For an absolutely fabulous kayak experience, take a trip with **Cathedral Cove Sea Kayaking** from Hahai Beach. Half-day trips are focused on the Whanganui-a-Hei Marine Reserve; you will paddle along the stunning volcanic coast, get a chance to see the most amazing honeycombed rock patterns, take a break at Cathedral Cove (for cookies and cappuccino made on the beach), continue out to Motueka Island for a circumnavigation and poke your way through caves. When I went, we saw shags

(cormorants), gannets, stingrays and little blue penguins. I've kayaked in a lot of places around New Zealand and, especially for a half-day trip, I think this is your best bet for a memorable experience on the water. The guides are very knowledgeable about the area and its Maori and European history. They provide lots of information without making the trip a history lesson. No experience necessary. This company has the only access rights for the reserve, so it is not overrun by kayaks. Pick-up and drop-off at the Whitianga ferry are available. www.seakayaktours.co.nz, ☎ 07-866-3877.

Fishing

Boats can get out of Whitianga in just about any weather conditions, making it one of the most popular spots for joining a fishing charter. This is big-time fishing for marlin, tuna and kingfish, among others. There are many different charter companies and it would be a good idea to call the information center (see page 181) for current listings and availability.

Fishing Charters

Catch Charters offers diving, fishing and sightseeing trips from Whitianga aboard a 28-foot boat. You can rent the boat for a half-day or longer, or opt for a scenic cruise by the hour. All bait and fishing gear is supplied. ☎ 07-866-5102.

Landfall Charters also has fishing, diving and cruise options and is available for overnight trips. ☎ 07-866-4664.

For a serious game-fishing adventure, go out on ***Mamma Mia!*** These folks are serious – contact through Villa Toscana, ☎ 07-866-2293.

Mercury Bay Charters does two five-hour trips a day during the summer and is suitable for taking the kids. You can also charter the whole boat for a half- or full-day. ☎ 07-866-0091 or 021-350-112.

On Foot

Just off the ferry, or at the end of Purangi Road if you're driving, is **Shakespeare's Cliff Scenic Reserve**, where there are walking tracks and great views. I love sitting on the hillsides here and just staring out to sea.

Cathedral Cove is accessed by a 30- to 40-minute walk from the car park and is well worth the effort – you can also walk from Hahei beach, which takes about 1½ hours. The trail ends at Mare's Leg Beach, but walk through the cave and you'll be at Cathedral Cove. In the summer when the pohutukawa trees are in flower, the hills that wrap around the beaches are covered in crimson red flowers. The rock formations are phenomenal and the water is brilliant. Bring a suit, a snorkel, some snacks and make a day of it. When you get into Hahei, turn left at the Hahei Shop and follow the signs to the Cathedral Cove car park. I recommend walking through the puripuri grove at least one direction – you'll pass some gorgeous moss-covered rocks.

On Horses

If you're interested in doing a bit of riding, **Rangihau Ranch**, based outside of Coroglen, is your best bet for a quality experience. Rides begin from the farm property and explore the hills and valleys of the area. Rides range from one to three hours and horses for all abilities are available. Rangihau Road, Coroglen. ☎ 07-866-3875.

Mills Reef Winery

Just outside of Cooks Beach you'll see grapes growing on the hillside. Those belong to the Tauranga-based **Mills Reef Winery**. The grapes are transported back to the Tauranga winery. Mills Reef was criticized for planting on the Coromandel ("you can't grow grapes there"), but the vineyard has produced awfully good wine where they said it couldn't be done!

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

There are a number of gardens and studios to visit in the Whitianga area – call the information center for a map (see page 181). At Hot Water Beach, give **Moko** a try for reasonably-priced, high-quality gifts and art.

Make some of your own jewelry by taking a course at **The Bone Studio & Gallery**, $80 per day/carving, 6B Bryce Street, Whitianga, ☎ 07-866-2158; or at **Bay Carving**, on The Esplanade, opposite Whitianga Wharf, ☎ 07-866-4021.

■ Where to Stay

Warning: There are lots of places to stay in Whitianga, but fewer in Cooks Beach and Hahei. I can't emphasize it enough: if you are planning on coming over Christmas, contact the information center and book in advance!

The most posh is **Villa Toscana**, a luxurious Italian-style accommodation on a hill looking out on Mercury Bay. Most of the building materials were imported from Italy. There is just one guest unit with kitchen and bath that sleeps four. www.villatoscana.co.nz, Ohuka Park, Whitianga, ☎ 07-866-2293, fax 07-866-2269 ($$$$).

For apartment-style motel units, give **Admiralty Lodge Motel** a try. It's new, modern, clean and has a heated swimming pool. Mountain bikes are available for use. www.admiraltylodge.co.nz, Buffalo Beach Road, ☎ 07-866-0181, fax 07-866-0182 ($$$-$$$$).

Mercury Bay Beachfront Resort is in a perfect spot right on the beach. Units are fully equipped and the facility has a BBQ, large garden area, kayaks, dinghy, body boards and more. www.beachfrontresort.co.nz, 111 Buffalo Beach Road, Whitianga, ☎ 07-866-5637, fax 07-866-4524 ($$$-$$$$).

Baileys Beachfront Motel is a small, simple beachy kind of place. www.baileysmotel.co.nz, 66 Buffalo Beach Road, ☎/fax 07-866-5500 or 027-492-7182 ($$-$$$).

You can rent a bed and take a ride in an airplane at **The Cat's Pyjamas Backpackers**. A centrally located (though not on the main drag), small, friendly backpacker hostel with free herbs and spices. www.cats-pyjamas.co.nz, 4 Monk Street, ☎/fax 07-866-4663 ($).

On The Beach Backpackers has free kayaks and boogie boards and mountain bikes for rent. Best of all, it's located right on Buffalo Beach. www.coromandelbackpackers.com, 46 Buffalo Beach Road, ☎ 07-866-5380, fax 07-866-5320 ($).

Tucked away in the bush on the 309 Road is **Bushcreek Cottage**, where you will find family and backpacker accommodation in a kauri cottage on an organic farm. www.bushcreek.co.nz, 1694 the 309 Road, ☎ 07-866-5151, fax 07-866-5137 ($).

There are luxury chalets, motel units, cabins and a backpackers lodge at **Hahei Holiday Resort**. It's right on the beach and close to Cathedral Cove. www.haheiholidays.co.nz, Harsant Avenue, ☎ 07-866-3889, fax 07-866-3098 ($-$$$).

Tatahi Lodge is in Hahei and has motel units, a cottage, an on-site camper and a backpackers lodge. It's just a short walk to the beach and just behind the shop. All units are spacious, well kept and inviting. www.dreamland.co.nz/tatahilodge, Grange Road, ☎/fax 07-866-3993 ($-$$$).

Also in Hahei, **Fernbird Backpackers** is a small accommodation that provides linen and duvets, and is just across the road from the beach and the Cathedral Cove walkway. 24 Harsant Eve, ☎ 07-866-3080, fax 07-866-3097 ($).

For a retreat unlike any other, try **Vida**. The owners call it an eco-retreat and offer holistic therapies, including massage, aromatherapy, hypnotherapy and more; they grow organic vegetables, have a spa, sauna and three gorgeous suites. All this and it's set in an exquisite bush location. Price includes all facilities (treatments extra) and full breakfast. www.vido.co.nz, 444 Rangihau Road, ☎/fax 07-866-3286 ($$$$).

■ Where to Eat

Whitianga

The best café option is **Eggsentric Café** and it's also great in the evenings for dinner, music, art, films, and even "design your own ceramics." Don't let the extras take away from the food, though; it's fabulous morning, noon and night. 1047 Purangi Road, ☎ 07-866-0307 ($-$$).

There are more than a couple of options along The Esplanade. Most popular is probably **On the Rocks**, which specializes in seafood, beef and venison. The Esplanade, ☎ 07-866-4833 ($$$).

The Fire Place has a menu that ranges from wood-fired pizza to fine seafood, beef and lamb. The Esplanade, ☎ 07-866-4828 ($$-$$$).

Hahei

Try **Luna Café** for good coffee and café-style meals and a great breakfast. Open till late; book for dinner. 1 Grange Road, ☎ 07-866-3016 ($-$$).

Along the same strip is **Grange Road Café** where you can get good baked treats, nice paninis and other treats. 7 Grange Road, ☎ 07-866-3502 ($-$$).

Colenso Country Shop & Café is much more than a place to eat. Located just 10 minutes north of Tairua, Colenso not only has mouth-watering café meals and sweets, but also fabulous gardens. There is a great shop filled with a huge selection of tasteful gifts and a massive choice of skincare lotions – the kind you just want to slather on every inch of your skin. It's hard to pick just one. Whenuakite, ☎ 07-866-3725 ($-$$).

As you're driving around the peninsula, you may see fields full of small tents with white nets on top. Those are baby olive trees. After the trees are a few years old, they can handle more extreme weather, but as youngsters they are easily damaged by frost, and the tents protect them.

Tairua, Pauanui & South to Whangamata

Big tree alert: About a half-hour south of Coroglen, there are two good spots to view kauri trees – the **Whenuakite Kauri Groves** and, a bit farther south, the **Twin Kauri Scenic Reserve**. Both have short loop tracks to substantial trees.

Tairua, connected by ferry to Pauanui, is a good base for exploration, has a few nice shops to poke around in and a mellow harbor, but it doesn't have one of the best swimming beaches – it's steep, with a terrific undertow and potentially dangerous rips; it's popular with surfers, though. **Pauanui** has a good beach for swimming and on those long weekends and holidays you'll be seeing plenty of water toys out there. It's a very popular retirement and holiday area.

Leaving Tairua, continue south on SH25 and you'll soon reach Puketui Road, which goes to Broken Hills. At Puketui, the road connects to SH25A. You can follow it back across to the west side of the peninsula or, better yet, you can take SH25A east to rejoin SH25 to the south, and then take the side road to **Opoutere** for an out-of-the-way treat. Opoutere is a really special place – hardly anyone lives here, there are no shops or restaurants, and the beach is gorgeous and unspoiled. It's only four km (2½ miles) off the road – remote, yet only 20 minutes away from Tairua.

■ Information Sources

The **Tairua Information Centre** is on Main Road, ☎ 07-864-7575. The **Pauanui Information Centre** is in the Shopping Centre on Jubilee Drive, ☎ 07-864-7101.

Historic interest: Offshore from Pauanui and Tairua is Slipper Island, or Whakahau – a pretty enough place, but one that comes with an ugly past. The story goes that the Nga Puhi tribe, from around the Russell area, came down to

the Coromandel in the 1820s and killed a lot of the local Maori using muskets that they had obtained from the British. They transported the locals whom they didn't kill out to Slipper Island and broke their legs so they couldn't escape! The Nga Puhi then continued south battling along the way with other tribes. When they returned to Whakahau, they killed their prisoners and ate them.

■ Adventures

On Water

Opoutere has a five-km (three-mile) white sand beach that is protected from being developed by the fact that it is bordered by a reserve. It's safe for swimming (safest at low tide) and is a popular surfing spot.

The sandspit at Wharekawa Harbour & Wildlife Refuge at Opoutere is the breeding ground for several species of sea birds, notably the New Zealand dotterel and variable oystercatcher. There are some great walks around the refuge, the mudflats and the beach. This is a really pleasant place to spend a few moments or a couple of hours.

On Foot

At **Broken Hills**, a former gold mining area, there are walking tracks, swimming holes and camping sites.

In Art

Try **Manaia Gallery** for a wide selection of art and gifts from many different artisans. Corner of Main and Manaia Roads in Tairua.

Guity Evelyn quickly became one of my favorite people and artists – visiting her **Topadahil Studio** in Opoutere is at once a magic and an inspiring experience. Guity was raised in Provence, France, and returns there annually to paint. She uses contemporary techniques to create thoughtful, gentle works that carry strong messages. I am lucky enough to own one of her paintings, *A New Day and A New Beginning*, and I feel blessed to have a part of her spirit in my home. In addition to original paintings, Guity creates limited-edition prints. She shares the studio with her husband David, who uses local products in his jewelry and sculpture. Their home is (obviously) at the top of the hill with spectacular views of the ocean and wetlands. If you're a serious collector, phone first for a visit; if you just want to stop in on a whim, that's OK, too. Opoutere Road, Opoutere. ☎ 07-865-7266.

■ Where to Stay

Harbour View Lodge is a very comfortable, modern B&B on the main drag in Tairua. Sheryl and John are friendly, enthusiastic and welcoming. They have three guest rooms – king, queen and twin –

and a separate guest lounge and patio (not to mention a very inviting swimming pool). The design of the house offers plenty of privacy for guests and the views of the harbor from the breakfast table are stunning. www.harbourviewlodge.co.nz, 179 Main Road, Tairua, ☎ 07-864-7040, fax 07-864-7042 ($$$).

For a modern yet rustic feel, try **Dell Cote**, a B&B made out of earth brick. There are three guestrooms (two en-suite bathrooms, one with private bath down the hall), and a separate guest lounge, all set in an organic orchard. www.dellcote.com, Rewarewa Valley Road, Tairua, ☎ 07-864-8142 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Pinnacles Backpackers** recently underwent major renovations and upgrading. Right on the main drag, it's a popular place with all the usual amenities, plus free use of bikes, canoes and kayaks. Dorms, doubles and twins. www.pinnaclesbakpak.co.nz, 305 Main Road, Tairua, ☎ 07-864-8448 ($).

In Opoutere, the **YHA** is a classic country kind of place, with good views of the estuary and free use of canoes. There are family cabins as well as the main house and you're welcome to make use of the BBQ. 389 Opoutere Road, ☎ 07-865-9072, fax 07-865-6172 ($).

There are campsites and cabins at the **Opoutere Park Beach Resort**, which is just down the road from the YHA. ☎ 07-865-9152 ($).

■ Where to Eat

I absolutely stuffed myself silly at **ikamata** on The Esplanande in Tairua. I figured that a selection of the tapas would be a light meal, but apparently I ordered a few too many. The selections include plenty of fish choices, some meat and lots of fresh vegetables. And the dessert – well, sticky date pudding shouldn't taste this good. ☎ 07-864-7171 ($$-$$$)

For exquisite pizza, try **Johnty's Fish and Chips** on Main Street, Tairua, right beside the BP gas station ($).

Whangamata

Whangamata has a bit of everything – rainforest, beach, estuary, surfing, swimming – all combining to make a popular holiday destination. The sleepy town swells during the Christmas holidays and there are quite a few art and craft galleries, along with a few shops.

■ Information Sources

Whangamata Information Centre, info-whangamata@co.nz, is on Port Road, ☎ 07-865-8340, fax 07-865-8341.

■ Adventures

On Water

The bar at **Ocean Beach** is left-hand breaking and is popular with the surfers – it's also one of the safest swimming beaches around. The golden sand beach is four km (1½ miles) long and curves around from the harbor entrance to the river – it's a great blobbing-on-the-beach

kind of spot. The **Whangamata Surf Shop** rents surf and boogie boards. It was for sale in 2004; no doubt the new owners will be as helpful as the old ones were. ☎ 07-865-8252.

On Foot

The Wentworth Valley Road juts out of town and into the Coromandel Forest Park for easy access to picnic spots and walking tracks. The most popular, to **Wentworth Falls**, takes about a half-hour. There is safe swimming along the way in the Wentworth River!

Guided Options

Johansen Guiding Adventures tailor-makes trips around the Coromandel for any interest – bush walking, mountain biking and surfing for the more active; glow worm walks, scenic drives, interpretive strolls for the less energetic. All of the trips come with lots of local information and knowledge, including an insight into Maori legends. I usually drive myself places, but I went mountain biking with Damian Johansen one day. We drove up to the top of the peninsula (his vehicle) and it was great to have this friendly and interesting young man fill my head with so many stories. He grew up here and has combed just about every inch of the place, which makes for a really special trip. www.coromandel.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-864-8731.

Damian's father is known as **Kiwi Dundee** in these parts and also leads eco-tours around the Coromandel. I ran into him at Wharekawa Wildlife Refuge one day and he, too, is an interesting, entertaining guy with a strong bond to the land. He offers one-day walks as well as multi-day trips. www.kiwidundee.co.nz, ☎ 07-865-8809.

For insight into the gold mining around here (particularly in the Karangahake Gorge), contact Phil and Bev Mulhern at **Beach, Bush & Heritage Walks**, based in Waihi. Phil was a schoolteacher (Bev still is one) and has a great way of sharing his love and knowledge of the history of the area without getting heavy or boring. He'll structure trips to your demands and interests and is just as happy to spend the day hiking in the bush as he is doing a scenic drive. www.beach-bush-heritage.co.nz, ☎ 07-863-4938 or 0508-924-448.

■ Where to Stay

Woodland Park Lodge is an impressive retreat on 200 acres of park-like grounds and 80 acres of native bush. There are two lovely rooms in the main house and a separate two-bedroom private house available on the property. Spa therapies are provided by prior arrangement, as are tours around the area (the owners are classic-car enthusiasts and very well may take you for a spin). Options include bed and breakfast, dinner with bed and breakfast, or house only. www.woodlandpark.co.nz, 10 km (six miles) from Waihi; get directions when you book, ☎ 07-863-8168, fax 07-863-8596 ($$$$).

For a special treat, go to **Bushland Park Lodge**, up the Wentworth Valley. Not only will you find four delightful suites all set on five acres of bush park, but you will be able to enjoy some of the best food on the peninsula at the Nickel Strausse restaurant. While you're there, take advantage of the wellness center – spa, sauna, massage and yoga. They offer B&B. www.bushlandparklodge.co.nz, 444 Wentworth Valley Road, ☎ 07-865-7468, fax 07-865-7486 ($$$$).

Try the **Breakers Motel** for good-quality, modern accommodation at reasonable prices. Sunny decks, a nice pool, well-equipped kitchens and convenient location to the beach and town make it a good choice, and that's not to mention the private spa pools on the decks. www.breakersmotel.co.nz, 324 Hetherington Road, ☎ 07-865-8464, or 0800-865-8464, fax 07-865-8991.

There is a wide range of accommodation options at the **Garden Motor Lodge & Tourist Lodge**. There are tourist flats, motel rooms, bunk rooms, you name it, and they're all clean and nicely outfitted. Free surfboards! www.gardenlodge.whangamata.co.nz, corner Port Road and Mayfair Avenue, ☎ 07-865-9580 ($-$$$).

Blake Court Motel is very new, comfortable, quiet and spotlessly clean. You can order a hot cooked breakfast if you like. www.blakecourt.co.nz, 308 Port Road, ☎ 07-865-7958, fax 07-865-7598 ($$-$$$).

Pipinui Motel is a small new facility (only four units) just a short walk from the beach. www.pipinuimotel.co.nz, 805 Martyn Road, ☎/fax 07-865-6796 ($$-$$$).

Pinefield Holiday Park has just about every accommodation option. It's a bit crowded on two acres, and you probably won't feel like you're the only one around, but it makes for a reasonably priced, dependable place to stay. www.pinefield.co.nz, 207 Port Road, ☎/fax 07-865-8791 ($-$$$).

■ Where to Camp

There is a lovely DoC campsite at the beginning of the track to Wentworth Falls. Cold showers, gas BBQ and beautiful location.

■ Where to Eat

The best of the bunch is no doubt **Nickel Strauss**, styled like a Black Forest winery and serving European cuisine, using local fresh ingredients. Open for gourmet lunch and dinner, bookings essential. 444 Wentworth Valley Road, ☎ 07-865-7468 ($$$).

There are a few good cafés in Whangamata; one to try is **Café Rossini**, 646 Port Road, ☎ 07-865-6117 ($).

Another café option is **Vibes**, 638 Port Road, ☎ 07-865-7121 ($).

Neros is a good choice for wood-fired pizza, 711 Port Road, ☎ 07-865-6300 ($-$$).

Bay of Plenty

Introduction

The Bay of Plenty (BOP) stretches along the Pacific Ocean from Katikati to Whakatane. It is one of the most popular holiday destinations for New Zealanders and the place gets quite filled up around the Christmas holidays. BOP is about white sand, warm(ish) water and fun. It's one of the sunniest and warmest places in New Zealand and is attracting more and more permanent residents. Mount Maunganui can get a crowded, beach-town feel to it during the busy holiday times, but remember, we are talking New Zealand crowds, not Los Angeles, Paris or London. The beaches are great, there are offshore islands to explore, and plenty of boat-related activities.

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The Maori first arrived in the area from Hawaiki around 1350. Tauranga, meaning "sheltered anchorage," was named by the Maori and the bay was named by Captain Cook when he sailed in here in 1769 on the *Endeavour*. The local Maori were welcoming and prosperous and offered him provisions – much friendlier than their reception in Poverty Bay.

Getting Here

By Air

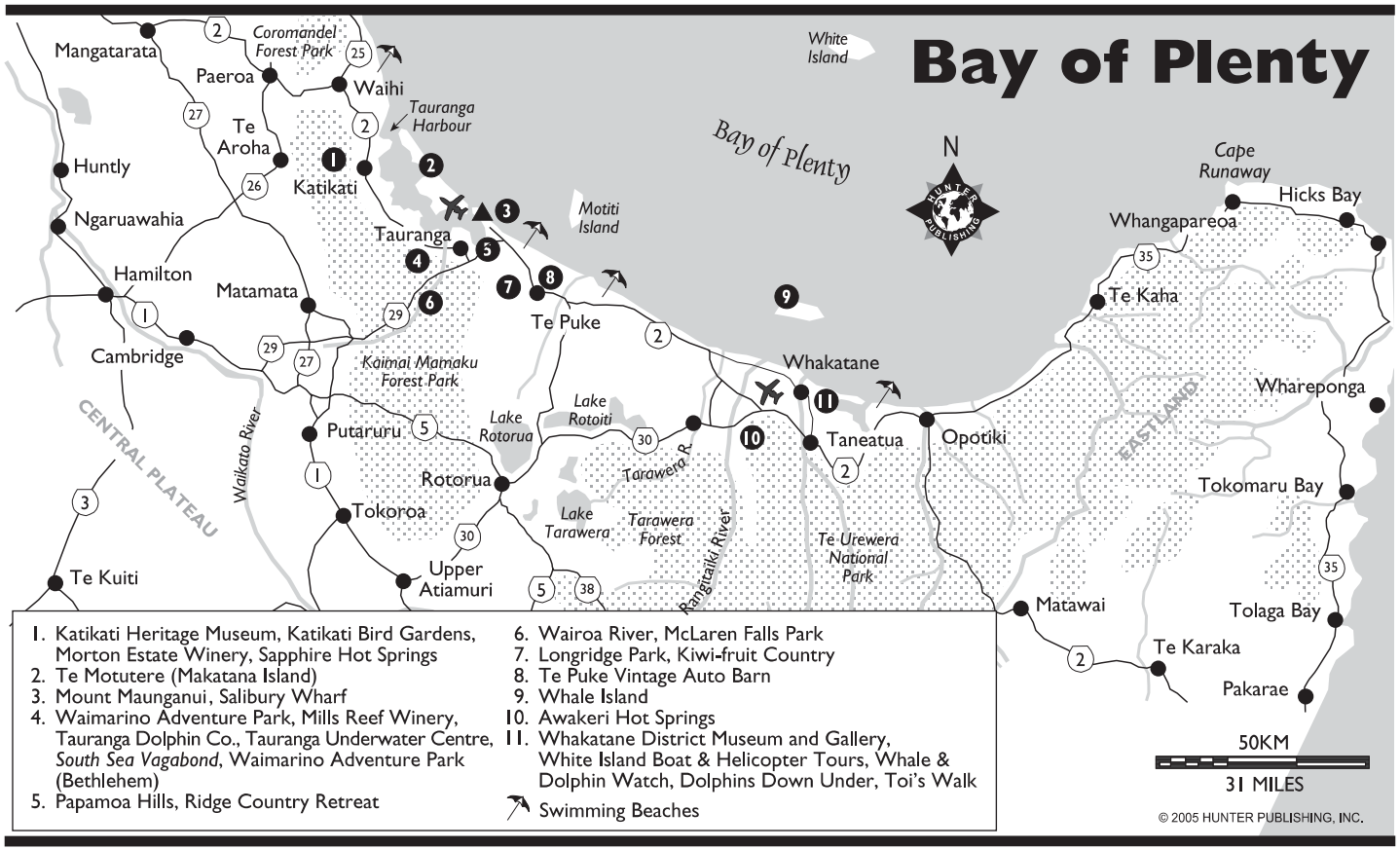
Tauranga and Whakatane both have airports, and Air New Zealand operates from both.

By Car

Tauranga is 2½ hours away from Auckland, less than two hours from Hamilton, just over one hour from Whakatane, about 1½ hours from Rotorua and five hours from Napier. SH2 runs east and west through the region and SH29 and Pyes Pa Road spoke out to the south from Tauranga. Whakatane is served by SH2 and SH30.

By Bus

Buses come and go from the Tauranga Visitor Center. **InterCity Coachlines** connects BOP with the rest of New Zealand, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100. **Coastline Shuttles** provides transport between Auckland, Hamiltons and Rotorua, www.coastlineshuttles.co.nz, ☎ 07-541-0888. **Bayline Coaches** operates between Tauranga, Whakatane, Roturua and Hamilton, www.baylinebus.co.nz, ☎ 07-578-3113.


Bay of Plenty
Mangatarata
Coromandel Forest Park
Paeroa
Waihi
Tauranga Harbour
Te Aroha
Huntly
Katikati
Ngaruawahia
Tauranga
Motiti Island
White Island
Bay of plenty
N
Cape Runaway
Hicks Bay
Whangapareoa
Te Kaha
Hamilton
Matamata
Te Puke
Whakatane
Cambridge
Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park
Lake Rotoiti
Lake Rotorua
Putaruru
Taneatua
Opotiki
Whareponga
EASTLAND
CENTRAL PLATEAU
Waikato River
Tarawera R.
Rotorua
Tokoroa
Lake Tarawera
Tarawera Forest
Rangitaiki River
Te Urewera National Park
Tokomaru Bay
Upper Atiamuri
Te Kuiti
Matawai
Tolaga Bay
Te Karaka
Pakarae
1. Katikati Heritage Museum, Katikati Bird Gardens, Morton Estate Winery, Sapphire Hot Springs
2. Te Motutere (Makatana Island)
3. Mount Maunganui, Salibury Wharf
4. Waimarino Adventure Park, Mills Reef Winery, Tauranga Dolphin Co., Tauranga Underwater Centre, South Sea Vagabond, Waimarino Adventure Park (Bethlehem)
5. Papamoa Hills, Ridge Country Retreat
6. Wairoa River, McLaren Falls Park
7. Longridge Park, Kiwi-fruit Country
8. Te Puke Vintage Auto Barn
9. Whale Island
10. Awakeri Hot Springs
11. Whakatane District Museum and Gallery, White Island Boat & Helicopter Tours, Whale & Dolphin Watch, Dolphins Down Under, Toi's Walk
Swimming Beaches
50KM
31 MILES
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Information Sources

Tourism Bay of Plenty maintains **www.bayofplentynz.com** as the official website for the region.

The **Department of Conservation** has a regional office about six km (four miles) south of Tauranga at 253 Chadwick Road in Greerton, ☎ 07-578-7677.

Katikati

Katikati marks the upper end of the Bay of Plenty region. Bound on the inland side by the **Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park** and on the ocean side by Tauranga Harbour, Katikati is best known for the murals that decorate its main-street buildings. It's a laid-back town, with a few galleries and the **Katikati Heritage Museum**.

■ Information Sources

The **Katikati Visitor Information Centre** can be e-mailed at katikatinfo@wbopdc.govt.nz. They are located at 36 Main Road, Katikati, ☎ 07-549-1658, fax 07-549-1798.

■ Adventures

Katikati Bird Gardens is on 10 acres and is home to over 50 varieties of birds, both natives and exotics. You are welcome to bring a picnic and enjoy the gardens. Open daily, 10 am-4:30 pm, September to April. $8.50 adults, $3.50 children. 263 Walker Road East, just off SH2, south of Katikati, ☎ 07-549-0912.

Tui

In the Air

For a peaceful ride above it all, contact **Max's Balloon Adventure** based in Katikati. ☎ 07-549-1614.

With Wine

Morton Estate has their cellar door (tasting room) in Katikati. Grapes are grown in Hawke's Bay and Marlborough, the head office is in Auckland, but wines are made and tasted here on the winery's original site. They make quite a nice Sauvignon Blanc as well as Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Noir and Syrah. SH2, ☎ 07-552-0795.

■ Where to Stay

In addition to hot springs, **Sapphire Springs Holiday Park** has everything from camper sites to units with kitchen and bath. Not to mention the hot springs. sapphire.springs@xtra.co.nz, Hot Springs Road, ☎ 07-549-0768 ($-$$).

Tauranga

Tauranga is the "big city" in the Bay of Plenty, and one of New Zealand's most important shipping ports. There are plenty of accommodation and eating op-

tions in Tauranga. Also, being on the Tauranga side of the Mt. Maunganui Bridge is a bit more convenient for the activities farther afield (not to mention cheaper).

■ Information Sources

The **Tauranga iSITE** is open daily can be contacted at trgvin@tauranga.govt.nz, 95 Willow Street, ☎ 07-578-8103.

■ Adventures

On Water

Being a port town blessed with long stretches of beach, Tauranga has plenty of water-based activities.

The **Wairoa River**, along SH29 between Matamata and Tauranga, is one of the most popular whitewater rafting destinations in New Zealand. It's a controlled-release grade 5. Trips from Tauranga are operated by the rafting companies based in Rotorura: **Wet & Wild**, **Adventure Kayaking**, **Kaitaki Adventures**, **Raftabout**, and **River Rats**. See pages 212-13 in the Rotorua chapter for contact details.

More than 60,000 dolphins live in the Bay of Plenty, and you can check them out on a trip with **Tauranga Dolphin Company**. Based at the Tauranga Marina (Sulphur Point) and Salisbury Wharf, they make just one trip each day and stay out as long as it takes. Trips are on a sailboat, which is unusual – most dolphin-watching trips around New Zealand are on big launches or catamarans. www.swimwithdolphins.co.nz, ☎ 07-578-3197.

Snorkeling, diving, discover SCUBA and all levels of instruction are available at the **Tauranga Underwater Centre**. www.diveunderwater.com, Unit 1/50 Cross Road, Sulphur Point, ☎ 07-571-5286.

For another dive option, contact giant **Dive HQ** for the full range of instruction and trips, both local and distant. www.divehq.co.nz, 213 Cameron Road, ☎ 07-578-4050, fax 07-928-9703.

You can go for a sail to the offshore islands on ***South Sea Vagabond***, an 18-meter catamaran. ☎ 07-576-1841 or 027-224-226.

Tauranga Sailing School & Yacht Charters offers basic sailing classes and instruction. sail@bopis.co.nz, ☎ 07-548-0689.

KID FRIENDLY

Waimarino Adventure Park is a blast of a place and Tauranga's only aquatic theme park. There are day-passes available for kids and family to just play! Rent a kayak for an easy paddle down the river, take a turn on the Tarzan swing, zoom down the kayak slide, toodle around in a pedal cat, ride the flying fox and try your hand and foot at the climbing wall. For the more serious, kayak courses range from an easy paddle down the Wairoa River to the challenge of a whitewater course. There is also a great kayak shop on-site. www.kayaks.co.nz, 60 Taniwha Place, Bethlehem, ☎ 07-576-4233

Fishing Charters

As usual, where there are fish, there are fishing charters. Among those enjoying a good reputation is **Fat Boy Charters**, for fishing, diving or sightseeing, ☎ 07-575-5986 or 025-286-3638. **Scott Hollis-Johns** offers fly fishing, novice to expert, anywhere you want to go, streams, rivers, lakes, harbor or offshore, fishart@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-543-0555 or 025-656-4757. **MV *Deepstar*** has fishing and dive charters, one-day or multi-day trips, and live-aboard groups of up to 10 passengers. ☎ 07-577-9100 or 0274-731-523. **Blue Ocean Charters Ltd**. offers fishing trips all over the area, www.blueoceancharters.co.nz, ☎ 07-578-9685.

On Islands

Te Motutere (Matakana Island) is just across Tauranga Harbour and is accessible by ferry. Rent a bike and ride around, then hang out on the 24-km (14-mile) white sand beach! The island is mostly pine forest and farmland, much of it Maori-owned and not open to visitors. But the beach is the real reason to be here, anyway. Good surfing and swimming. Ferries depart from Omokoroa, 22 km (13 miles) west of Tauranga. *Matakana Ferry 2000* leaves from The Esplanade, ☎ 07-492-7251.

Tuhua (Mayor Island) is 40 km (24 miles) north of Tauranga and is a dormant volcano. In 1993, it was designated a marine reserve and has a number of walking tracks. There are good sites for snorkeling or diving and there are cabins and camping at Opo Bay, ☎ 07-577-0531.

Blue Ocean Charters Ltd. provides transport to both Tuhua and Te Motutere. www.blueoceancharters.co.nz, ☎ 07-578-9685.

On Foot

Pick up a copy of ***Walkways of Tauranga***. It includes walks in Mt. Maunganui, Welcome Bay, Greerton and McLaren Falls Park.Walks range from 10 minutes to two hours.

McLaren Falls Park is a fabulous place to spend some time for free. There are wonderful walking tracks through native bush to glow worm grottoes and waterfalls, then up to the ridge for great views. Nothing is too strenuous, and it's all very enjoyable. The park has one of the best collections of trees on the North Island and is home to 42 different species of birds. There is plenty of open space, and McLaren Falls are a fun place to watch the extreme kayakers. Lake McLaren has a large population of waterfowl, and you can kayak, canoe or fish for trout. From Tauranga, take SH29, then turn left on McLaren Falls Road. Open 8 am daily to 5:30 pm in winter, 7:30 in summer. Coin-operated BBQ sites. Camping $4 adults, free for children under 16. Hostels $15 adults, $10 children. www.tauranga.govt.nz.

In the Air

Tauranga Tandem Skydive is based at the Tauranga Airport and jumps from 8,000-12,000 feet are available. Way up there, you'll have views stretching from Mount Ruapehu to White Island. Prices begin at $190. Freefall@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-576-7990 or 025-968-408.

Island Air Charters operates scenic flights and also offers transport to the offshore islands Motoiti and Skipper. www.islandair.co.nz, ☎ 07-575-5795.

With Wine

Mills Reef Winery has a fabulous tasting room with floor-to-ceiling windows into the winery. Going to Mills Reef is an outing; it's in a fabulous location with lovely facilities. They are not pretentious, but they make some of the best wine around. The juice comes mostly from grapes grown in the Hawke's Bay region (and a bit from the Coromandel Peninsula – see page ### in *Coromandel* chapter). On summer weekends, you're likely to find music playing outside, kids running around and a relaxed picnic feel to the place. There is also a wonderful restaurant, with the whole range – from exquisite and fancy dishes to pizza. www.millsreef.co.nz, 143 Moffat Road, Bethlehem, ☎ 07-576-8800.

■ Where to Stay

There are lots of accommodation options. Consider contacting the information center for assistance prior to arriving in town (that's imperative over the Christmas holidays).

AUTHOR'S PICK

Just outside of Tauranga are the Papamoa Hills and nestled in them is one of the most wonderful accommodations around. Penny and Joanne designed **Ridge Country Retreat** as a place to be pampered. It's on 35 acres of native bush and they forgot no details – there's a heated lap pool and spa, walking tracks, a health spa, fabulous food, massive wrap-around porch, views that go on forever, fantastic bathrooms and suites. I could go on and on. But the best thing about RCR is Penny and Joanne and how at-home they make you feel. This is not a snobby, pretentious luxury resort – just a beautiful home that you are welcomed into warmly. www.rcr.co.nz, 300 Rocky Cutting Road, Welcome Bay, ☎ 07-542-1301, fax 07-542-2116 ($$$$).

The Hotel on Devonport is a brand new, gorgeous boutique hotel right in the center of Tauranga. www.hotelondevonport.net.nz, 72 Devonport Road, ☎ 07-578-2669 or 0800-322-8568 fax 07-578-2669.

For a clean, dependable and pleasant place to stay that won't empty your savings account, consider one of these: **Summit Motor Lodge**, www.summitmotorlodge.com, 213 Waihi Road, ☎ 07-578-1181 or 0800-186-007, fax 07-578-1354; **Roselands Motel**, www.roselands.co.nz, 21 Brown Street, ☎ 07-578-2294, fax 07-578-2390; **Cobblestone Court Motel**, www.nzmotels.co.nz/cobblestone, 86 Chapel Street, Otumoetai, ☎ 07-576-9028 or 0800-506-306, fax 07-576-1397 ($$-$$$).

Bell Lodge has motel rooms with kitchen and bath and twin, double, and dorm backpackers rooms. They offer a daily bus to Mount Maunganui and into town. www.bell-lodge.co.nz, 39 Bell Street, ☎ 07-578-6344, fax 07-578-3939 ($-$$).

The **Tauranga YHA** is next to the Waikareao Estuary and has bikes and boards for rent, a BBQ, herb garden and good outdoor space. yha.tauranga@yha.org.nz, 171 Elizabeth Street, ☎ 07-578-5064 ($).

Just the Ducks Nuts is a small, relaxed hostel with two kitchens, four- and six-bed dorms, and free bikes. info@justtheducksnuts.co.nz, 6 Vale Street, Tauranga, ☎ 07-576-1366 ($).

Tourist Parks

Omokoroa Tourist Park & Thermal Hot Pools has cabins, tourist flats and backpacker lodges, as well as tent and power sites. www.omokoroatouristpark.co.nz, 165 Omokoroa Road, ☎ 07-548-0857 ($-$$).

Silver Beach Thermal Holiday Park has motel rooms with kitchen and bath, cabins, tourist flats and tent and power sites. www.holidayparks.co.nz/silverbirch, 101 Turret Road, SH2, ☎ 07-552-5621 or 0800-837-862, fax 07-552-5745 ($-$$).

Te Puna Lodge Motel & Holiday Park is new in 2000 and has chalets, backpackers hostel, and motel units. www.tepunalodge.co.nz, corner Minden & Auckland Waihi roads (SH2), ☎ 07-552-5621 or 0800-837-862, fax 07-552-5745 ($-$$).

Te Motutere is a Maori homestay on Matakana Island, sleeping up to six, marae-style, on mattresses in the main lodge room. You can visit the local marae, or Maori meeting place, learn about the island and go fishing. Book through nzhomestay@hotmail.com, ☎ 06-835-9933 ($).

■ Where to Eat

You won't be at a loss for choices between Tauranga and Mount Maunganui. Pick up a copy of *Dine Out Restaurant Guide* to help you make a selection. Or just wander the streets.

Somerset Cottage is the top restaurant for food and wine. 30 Bethlehem Road, Bethlehem, ☎ 07-576-6889 ($$$).

Mills Reef Winery & Restaurant has contemporary food in a great setting. www.millsreef.co.nz, 143 Moffat Road, Bethlehem, ☎ 07-576-8800 ($$-$$$)

One of my favorite restaurants is **Harbourside Brasserie and Bar**. It's right on the water, has good food with fresh ingredients and a nice, comfortable bar. I've come here just for coffee and dessert, too; it's always been a pleasant experience. Open at 10:30 am. Beneath the railway bridge. ☎ 07-571-0520 or 0800-721-714 ($$-$$$).

Treat yourself at **Piccola Italia** for genuine Italian food in pleasant surroundings. 107 Grey Street, ☎ 07-578-8363 ($$$).

Pick **Soho-French Bistro** if you want more than a café but not a white tablecloth evening. 59 The Strand, ☎ 07-577-0577 ($$).

For gourmet bagels, pizza and sandwiches, try **Bravo** on Red Square. At night the menu kicks up a few notches. Red Square, ☎ 07-578-4700 ($-$$$).

Café Hasan Baba is open for lunch and dinner and has very good Middle Eastern and vegetarian meals. 107 Grey Street, ☎ 07-571-1480 ($-$$).

Mount Maunganui

Just across the Harbour Bridge from Tauranga is Mount Maunganui and the "The Mount." The Mount is the extinct volcano that is the center of attention wherever you are in the Bay of Plenty. Ocean Beach, the long strip of golden sand beach, stretches 21 km (13 miles) to Papamoa Beach, and makes for a wonderful place to spend some time. There are great rocks to climb around, you're never far from a café and the water is clean. What more can you want? Oh, shopping you say. Well, you're in luck, because there are countless shops along the main street, many selling surf- and beachwear. There is also a modern movie theater and plenty of bars and restaurants.

■ Information Sources

The **Mount Maunganui Visitor Information Centre** can be reached at trqvin@tauranga.govt.nz and is on Salisbury Avenue, ☎ 07-575-5099, fax 07-578-7020.

■ Adventures

On Water

Take a half-day trip to swim with the dolphins at **Dolphin Seafaris**. They carry an underwater camera and there are screens on board to watch what's going on. They have a 95% success rate for locating dolphins. $100 adults, $85 children. www.nzdolphin.com, Mt Dolphin Shop, 90 Maunganui Road. The boat is at the Harbour Marina, Dock D5, ☎ 07-575-4620 or 0800-326-8747.

Oceanix The Expeditionz Company leads kayaking trips all around the area. Included in their offerings are tours around local islands and the marine reserve, a sunset paddle exploring the inner harbor, and lake paddling during the day or night at McLaren Falls Park, where you can explore glowworm caves by kayak. Prices start at $75. www.oceanix.co.nz, ☎ 07-572-2226 or 027-494-2677.

Kayaking on the harbor, waterskiing, wakeboarding, tube rides and parasailing are available through **Water Rox**, which also has a water park with an aqua tramp, aqua launch, aqua slide and aqua log. www.waterrox.co.nz. Pilot Bay side of Mt. Maunganui, ☎ 07-574-7333.

Learn to surf at **Lovely Planet Surf School**. Individual or group lessons; prices start at $45 per person. They operate at Mount Maunganui and Ohope Beach (just east of Whakatane). www.lovelyplanet.co.nz, Marine Parade, ☎ 07-572-3399.

New Zealand Surfing School also operates out of Mount Maunganui and offers instruction for all levels. Marine Parade, ☎ 07-574-1666.

Mount Maunganui Hot Salt-Water Pools are a fabulous place to take a relaxing soak. There is one large hot pool as well as cooler pools, a fountain, a slide and two private pools. Open until 10 pm. h2omanagement@xtra.co.nz, Adams Ave., ☎ 07-578-0868.

On Foot

A very enjoyable walk is around the base of **Mount Maunganui**. An even better walk is to the volcano cone summit, elevation 230 meters (874 feet). Figure 35 to 40 minutes to walk around the base, and one

hour for the summit. Take a picnic or a bottle of wine, sit up high and watch the ships come into the harbor.

■ Where to Stay

Oceanside Motor Lodge and Twin Towers has very comfortable, spacious units with full kitchens and baths, a hot mineral pool and swimming pools. www.oceanside.co.nz, www.twintowers.co.nz, 1 Maunganui Road, ☎ 07-575-5371 or 0800-866-868 ($$$-$$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Belle Mer Apartments are gorgeous and just across the road from the beach, with big windows and private balconies. www.bellemer.co.nz 53 Marine Parade, ☎ 07-575-0011 or 0800-100-235, fax 07-575-0211 ($$$-$$$$).

For a luxury apartment, try **Thornton Lodge**. It's on the beachfront and the penthouse has a private spa pool. www.thorntonlodge.co.nz, 171 Oceanbeach Road, ☎ 07-575-5555 or 0508-846-763 ($$$$).

Cosy Corner Motor Camp has kitchen cabins, units with kitchen and bath, tent and power sites. It has a swimming pool and is just steps away from the beach. www.cosycorner.co.nz, 40 Oceanbeach Road, ☎ 07-575-5899, fax 07-575-5670 ($-$$).

Right in the thick of it is **Mount Backpackers**. Lots of activity going on here and there are bikes and boards to rent. www.mountbackpacker.co.nz, 87 Maunganui Road, ☎/fax 07-575-0860 ($).

Pacific Coast Lodge and Backpackers is a large place that is a little way away from the restaurant scene, across from a park and just a few blocks to the beach. www.pacificcoastlodge.co.nz, 432 Maunganui Road, ☎/fax 07-574-9601 or 0800-666-622 ($).

Papamoa Beach is pretty much the end of the beach that begins at Mount Maunganui, and **Papamoa Beach Top 10 Holiday Resort** has beach-front cabins, apartments with kitchen and bath, motels, power and tent sites. In addition, they have luxury beachfront villas. www.papamoabeach.co.nz, 535 Papamoa Beach Road ☎/fax 07-572-0816 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

Astrolabe is the best choice for cuisine and ambience. 82 Maunganui Road, ☎ 07-574-8155 ($$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

The **Sand Rock Café and Bar** is right on Marine Parade, a hop over to the beach, the pools or the walking track. It's a perfect place to sit outside, catch some sun and watch everyone. 4 Marine Parade, ☎ 07-574-7554 ($-$$).

Zeytin Café and Eatiri is the choice café and has the best (and cheapest) Turkish food. 118 Maunganui Road, ☎ 07-574-3040 ($).

Eastern Bay of Plenty

It's 97 km (60 miles) from Tauranga to Whakatane, and along the way you'll reach **Te Puke**, the heart of kiwi-fruit country, a fact you can't really miss as you drive through. It's called the "Kiwi-Fruit Capital of the World," and you'd be hard-pressed to argue.

Tip: It's not pronounced "tea puke," but "t'pookie."

■ Information Sources

Visit the **Te Puke Information Centre** at 130 Jellicoe Street, ☎ 07-573-9172.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

Leave your pride in the car and climb aboard a giant kiwi fruit for a ride through **Kiwi-fruit Country**. For all things kiwi, this is the place. It's actually a very informative and interesting trip – learn about Zespri. That's all I'm going to say so that you go and find out. There's a café and giant gift shop, not to mention the gi-normous kiwi fruit outside. 25 minutes from Tauranga, 35 from Rotorua. $11 adults, $5.50 children. www.kiwifruitcountry.co.nz,.

Just down the road is **Te Puke Vintage Auto Barn**, where you can view over 90 vintage and classic vehicles (you can even buy one). Open daily, 9 am-5 pm. $7 adults. www.vintagecars.nzhere.com, ☎ 07-573-6547.

> **Local product: Comvita** is one of the major business success stories of New Zealand. Begun in 1970, they use honey and other bee products (propolis, pollen, royal jelly) to make natural health products that are sold in New Zealand and around the world. In the **Comvita Visitor Centre** you can learn about honey, bee-keeping, and the therapeutic benefits of the products, as well as sample different products (including honey ice cream). There are very interesting and attractive displays tracing the industry and the company in the educational gallery. Open daily. www.comvita.com, nine km (5½ miles) from Te Puke at The Junction at Paengaroa, ☎ 07-533-1987.

Longridge Park, set on a kiwi-fruit orchard, is a laid-back, fun place to spend some time. You can take a farm tour, feed the animals or self-drive on a 4x4 course, rambling over three km of hairy tracks, down steep drop-offs, through mud pools, on two wheels – it's an adventure, that's for sure. From $59 adults, $25 children. For something completely different, try axe- and knife-throwing or be a little tame with clay-bird shooting. At the same location you can take a 25-km (15-mile) jet-boat trip on the Kaituna River. Hold on tight! I landed on the floor. $65 adults, $35 children. www.funpark.co.nz,

www.adventure4wd.co.nz, 316 SH33. Just south of Te Puke, at the Junction, ☎ 07-533-1818 or 0800-244-554.

■ Whakatane

Marking the eastern end of the Bay of Plenty, Whakatane (pronounced fa-ka-ta-knee) is the gateway to White Island and the East Coast. It's a delightful town, with nice shops and cafés, plenty of accommodation and many water-based activities. The first person to live in Whakatane was Tiwakawaka, grandson of Maui, the ancient voyager who is credited with discovering Aotearoa New Zealand. In the center of town is Pohaturoa, a rock outcrop that is a Maori sacred site, and it was here that local leaders signed the Treaty of Waitangi.

While White Island (see below) is a major drawing card for Whakatane, **Whale Island**, just nine km (5½ miles) offshore, is also an important place. A remnant volcano cone, it too is still active volcanically and has hot springs. Whale Island is controlled by DoC, which has put a great deal of effort into making it predator-free; as a result the island is enjoying a resurgence of native bush, birds and lizards. Public access is restricted to permit holders and approved tour groups. Permits must be obtained from DoC in Whakatane (see below), which does conduct some guided tours to the island each year.

Information Sources

Check out **www.whakatane.com**.

The **Whakatane iSITE** is at whakataneinfo@xtra.co.nz and can be found at the corner of Quay and Kakahoroa Drive, ☎ 07-308-6058, fax 07-308-6020.

DoC maintains an office at 236 The Strand, ☎ 07-308-7095, fax 07-308-8798.

Pick up a *What to do on a Rainy Day* brochure for listings of collections, art, day-trips, sightseeing. One example is the **Awakeri Hot Springs** on SH30, the Rotorua Highway, 16 km (10 miles) from Whakatane. ☎ 07-304-9117, fax 07-304-9290.

Adventures

On Volcanoes

People come from all over the world to visit **White Island**, New Zealand's most active volcano and it would be a real shame not go out there while you're so close. Located 50 km (30 miles) offshore, it is one of the most accessible marine volcanoes in the world. The whole of White Island, or Whaakari, is estimated to be 100,000 to 200,000 years old, but the bit that sticks above the water is just 16,000 years old. White Island is on an alert rating of 1, meaning that it's always active – something you're aware of when you visit. Walking around White Island is what I imagine it to be like walking on the moon – desolate, weird, rocky, steamy – otherworldly. There are bubbling pots, steaming vents, big lakes – all the things you would expect on a volcano. It's kind of eerie, really, but a definite must. There is a large Australasian gannet colony on the island as well as a colony of grey-faced petrels. Sulfur was mined on White Island on and off during the late 1800s and tourism began in the late 1860s when steamships that called into the Bay of Plenty provided transport to the island.

Did you know? White Island is the only privately-owned active volcano in the world.

White Island Tours provides fabulous trips to the island by boat. I really can't say enough about how good their trips are – the staff are all friendly, interested and appear to love what they do. The walk around the island is unforgettable and the interpretation given by the guides interesting and entertaining. You are outfitted with a gas mask and helmet and cautioned to not wear new or particularly good clothes – the sulfur can cause damage. The boat trip out can be thrilling too. On the day I went, we saw whales, dolphins and sunfish. There is no jetty on the island, so passengers transfer to an inflatable boat and take a short ride to the island. If the water's rough, you might get wet, but that's all part of the fun. In addition to touring the volcano and the active sites, pools, and fumeroles, you will learn about the sulfur mining and view the derelict equipment. Tours are weather-dependent and it would behoove you to schedule a free day after your scheduled tour in case you can't go out on the first day. There is one trip scheduled daily year-round (at 8:15 am), and two in the summer (the second at 10:15 am). Trips last five to six hours and include transport, safety gear, guide and lunch. Bookings are essential. $130 adults, $100 children (13 and under). www.whiteisland.co.nz, 15 The Strand, ☎ 07-308-9588, fax 07-308-0303.

White Island Adventures takes smaller groups out for the day and includes a snorkeling option (perhaps with dolphins) if conditions are right. www.whiteislandadventures.co.nz, Green Wharf, ☎ 0800-377-878, fax 07-312-4014.

Vulcan Helicopters White Island Volcano Adventure provides air service to the island. After reaching the island (having experienced phenomenal aerial views), you land and have a one-hour guided walk. $375 per person. www.vulcanheli.co.nz, ☎ 07-308-4188 or 0800-804-354.

On Water

Whale and Dolphin Watch offers three- to four-hour daily trips to swim with dolphins. If you're not a swimmer, you can watch. To swim, $100 adults, $80 children; to watch, $80 adults, $60 children. www.whalesanddolphinwatch.co.nz, ☎ 07-308-2001 or 027-255-2130.

Dolphins Down Under runs two-hour snorkel trips to Whale Island (the nearest offshore island to Whakatane), plus two swim-with-the-dolphins options: three to four hours, or five to six hours, the longer trip including snorkeling in one of the bays at White Island. www.dolphinswim.co.nz, ☎ 07-308-4636 or 0800-354-7737.

With all the heat that a volcano puts off, it should be no big surprise that the water around it is warm, and that makes for some interesting dive sites. **Dive White Island** is a PADI 5 Star Dive Centre and runs trips to this top dive site. You can also go along as a sightseer or snorkeler. Prices begin at $120 for snorkeling, $155 for diving. www.divewhite.co.nz, 186 The Strand, ☎ 0800-348-394 or 025-401-126, fax 07-307-0765.

Another dive option is to charter a boat with **Baker Marine Charters**. John's been diving around here for more than 30 years and knows the place well. Stay on board the night before and spend a whole day out. www.divenfish.co.nz, ☎ 07-307-0015 or 025-940-324, fax 07-307-1364.

On Foot

There are quite a few walks around Whakatane; pick up a map from the iSITE. A particularly gentle and pleasant walk goes along the river, or you can choose a longer walk, **Toi'sWalk**, "Nga Tapuwae o Toi" or the "Footprints of Toi." On it, you will visit pa village sites, travel through native bush and plantation forest and enjoy some superb views.

In the Air

East Bay Flight Centre runs scenic flights over White Island and other sites in the region, from $45 per person. www.whiteislandair.com, Whakatane Airport, ☎ 07-312-6204 or 0800-550-880, fax 07-312-6205.

Scott Air also offers scenic flights to White Island and other locations. www.scottair.co.nz, Whakatane Airport, ☎ 07-308-9558 or 0800-535-363.

Sightseeing

The **Whakatane District Museum and Gallery** is a good place to learn about the area and its history, both Maori and European. Definitely worth a stop. www.whakatanemuseum.org.nz, Boon Street, ☎ 07-306-0505.

Where to Stay

White Island Rendezvous has very clean, pleasant and modern studio, spa, family and apartment units; it is associated with White Island Tours. PeeJay's Coffee House is on-site. www.whiteisland.co.nz, 15 The Strand, ☎ 07-308-9588 or 0800-242-299, fax 07-308-0303 ($$-$$$).

Clifton Manor has both motel and B&B rooms. It's modern, clean and right near the town center. cliftonmanorwhakatane.co.nz, 5 Clifton Road, ☎/fax 07-307-2145 or 0800-307-214 ($$-$$$).

Just 10 minutes out of town, you'll find **Baker's Homestay**, where there are both B&B and cottage with kitchen and bath options. Nice gardens with plenty of birdlife. There is a spa, croquet and meals are available by arrangement. www.bakershomestay.co.nz, 40 Butler Road, ☎/fax 07-307-0368 or 025-284-6996 ($$-$$$).

Modern, reasonably priced units are available at **Barringtons Motor Lodge**. www.barringtonsmotorlodge.co.nz, 34 Landing Road, ☎ 07-308-4273 or 0800-830-130, fax 07-308-5132 ($$).

Pacific Coast Motor Lodge is a new option that's right near town. One-bedroom or studio units with breakfast available. 41 Landing Road, ☎ 07-308-0100 or 0800-224-430, fax 07-308-4100 ($$-$$$).

Lloyds Lodge Backpackers is in a residential neighborhood and you'll be invited to listen to Maori stories told by elders. Coaching in hangi (traditional Maori) food preparation is available, as is an herb garden. Transport available; this is a backpackers hostel with a bit of a difference. lloyds.lodge@xtra.co.nz, 10 Domain Road, ☎/fax 07-307-8005 or 025-288-7176 ($).

Karibu Backpackers has a wide range of rooms available and a large outdoor space for relaxing. Big kitchen and lots of places to sit around. 13 Landing Road, ☎/fax 07-307-8276 ($).

Where to Eat

My favorite spot for a quick meal in Whakatane is **PPK – Pizza, Pasta and Kebab**. Dine-in or take-away, and they're open for lunch and dinner. 60 Strand East, ☎ 07-308-5000 ($).

The best place for coffee and baked treats is **PeeJay's**, 15 The Strand, ☎ 07-308-9588 ($).

The Wharf Shed Restaurant wins for best location, seafood and brunch. Open for lunch and dinner. On the wharf, The Strand East, ☎ 07-308-5698 ($$-$$$).

Give **Global Bar and Restaurant** a try if you want something more than a café that has interesting food. Corner of Commerce Street & The Strand, ☎ 07-308-9000 ($$-$$$).

In Awakeri, you will find surprisingly good food at the **Avangada Restaurant and Café**, located at the White Goose Winery (makers of fruit wines). Open for coffee and lunch Tuesday to Sunday, dinner Tuesday to Saturday. SH30 & Luxton Road, ☎ 07-308-7879 ($$-$$$).

Rotorua

Introduction

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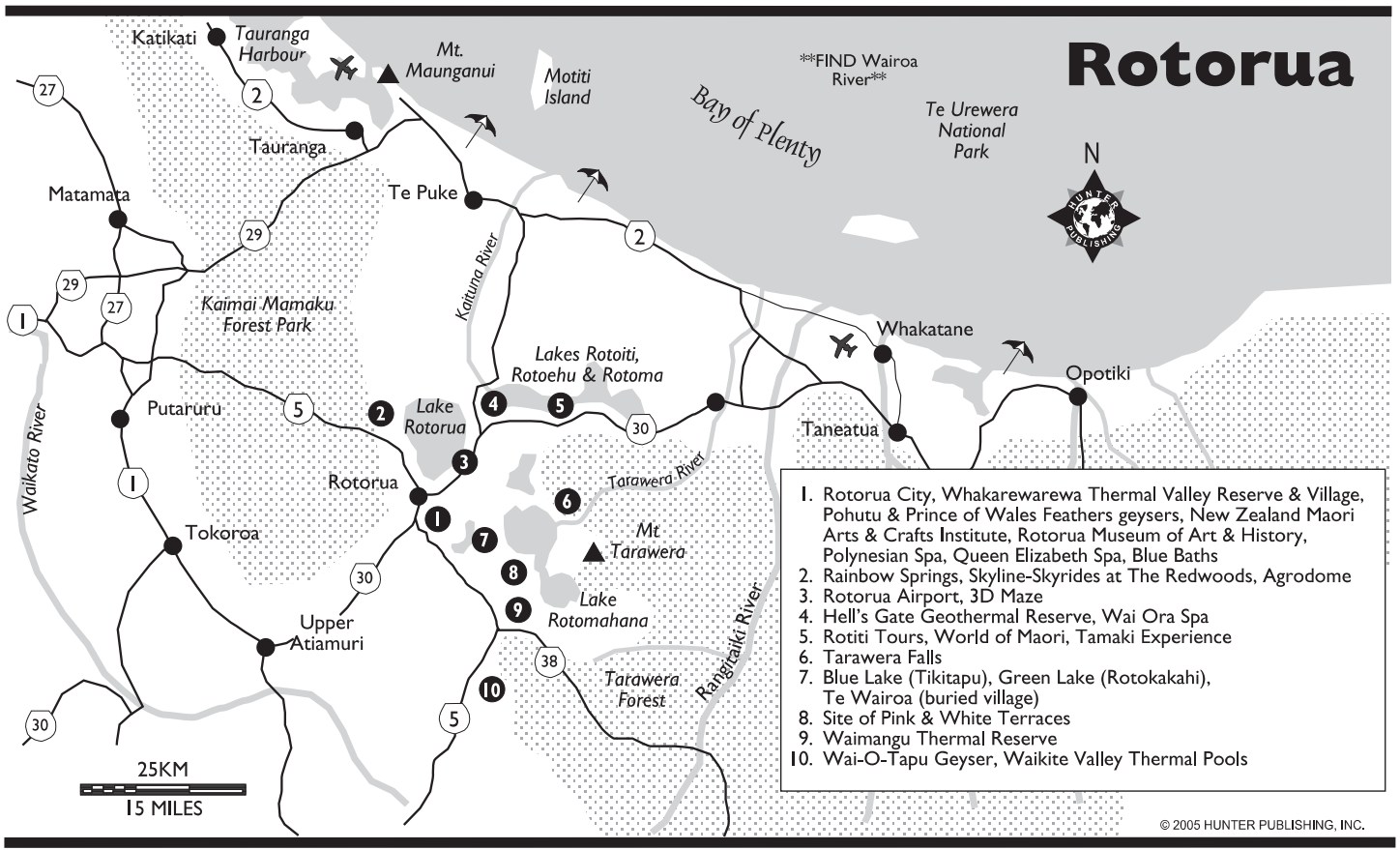
The Rotorua area has the most geothermal activity in New Zealand. Reminders that you are in a volcanic zone are everywhere – from bubbling mud pots and exploding geysers to mineral baths and active volcanoes. It has been a natural spa destination for years and the allure of its health benefits just keeps getting stronger. Rotorua has a year-round population of 76,000 and is the most popular vacation destination on the North Island. Arriving here can be an overwhelming experience. It is fondly referred to as both **Sulphur City** (it does have a bit of a smell to it) and **Rotovegas** (it reminds me more of Reno). The first time I came I was impressed, but for all the wrong reasons. The place was busy, there were piles of tour buses, lots of spots to spend your money and just way, way too much activity for me. But, upon returning and getting off the main drag, I have come to really like the area and appreciate it for what it is.

Rotorua is the heartland of Maori culture. It was the Te Arawa Maori, arriving in New Zealand from Hawaiki on the Arawa canoe in the mid-14th century, who first settled Rotorua. They began receiving visitors as early as the 19th century, when people came to see the pink and white terraces – the "eighth wonder of the world"– making them New Zealand's first tourist destination.

In June 1886, Mt. Tarawera erupted with such force that the local village of Te Wairoa was destroyed under hot ash. Along with destroying the village, the eruption killed more than 150 people and destroyed the famous pink and white terraces. This was the most recent of numerous major volcanic events in the Rotorua area. Scientists say that the next significant volcanic activity in the area will come from Makatiti Dome and it will be 30-40 times greater than Mt. Tarawera.

If the bustle of Rotorua is too much for you, venture out to Blue Lake, Green Lake or Lake Tarawera. It's not so smelly out here and there are far fewer people (and rarely a tour bus in site). While you could bleed money in a tourist-destination town, there are some reasonably priced and even free options here. I recommend that you take some time and understand the history of the place and what makes it special.

Warning: Beware of amoebic meningitis! When you bathe or soak in thermal springs, pools or rivers, do not put your head under the water!



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Getting Here

■ By Air

Rotorua has daily air service between Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The airport is a 15-minute drive from the city.

■ By Car

It seems that all roads lead to Rotorua, which is one-hour from Tauranga via SH2, from Hamilton via SH1 and SH5, and from Taupo via SH5 or SH1 and SH30. It takes about three hours from Auckland via SH1 and Hamilton, and five hours from Wellington, via SH1 through Taupo.

■ By Bus

All major bus lines and tour buses service Rotorua with connections throughout the North Island. Buses arrive and depart from **Tourism Rotorua**, 1167 Fenton Street. **InterCity** buses can be booked through the information center, on-line or directly in Wellington at ☎ 04-472-5111 or in Auckland at ☎ 09-913-6100. **Guthreys** bus service can be contacted at ☎ 09-302-2645.

Information Sources

The official Rotorua website is **www.rotoruanz.com**.

The very helpful, spacious and well-stocked **Visitor Information Centre** is open daily from 8 am to 5:30 pm in the winter, 8 am to 6 pm in the summer. Contact them at info@tourism.rdc.govt.nz. The office is located at 1167 Fenton Street, ☎ 07-348-5179 or 0800-768-678, fax 07-348-6044.Hours are 8 am-5:30 pm.

Adventures

■ In Maori Culture

Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley and Reserve is a natural geothermal field with bubbling mud pools, steaming mineral springs and erupting geysers, two of which are among New Zealand's most famous – **Pohutu** (can go as high as 30 meters/98 feet) and **Prince of Wales Feathers**. It is right at the edge of town, making it a convenient stop.

Whakarewarewa Thermal Village is located in the Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley and Reserve and has been home to the people of the Tuhourangi/Ngati Wahiao since 1710. This is the village where survivors from Te Wairoa village were invited to live after the June 1886 volcanic eruption. It is a living Maori village; all the guides are descendants of the survivors of the Tarawera eruption and share their history and lifestyle, including explaining their cooking and bathing areas. I wondered how many of the residents actually bathed outside in the communal baths. Sometime later, I was back in the States talking to a friend who had visited Rotorua and she said they stayed in a hotel that looks over the village. "There were all these young

naked Maori guys down there swimming and waving at us." So much for my cynicism.

The 25 homes belonging to the 75 residents are built around the thermal valley, and admission to the village includes a guided walk (lasts about an hour) and twice-daily concerts. Lunch is also available for an additional price, or you can just have a piece of sweet corn steamed in the ground, or buy something more substantial at the café. There is a gift shop, but some of the locals have begun to operate craft stalls from their homes. After the guided tour and concert, you can take to the paths and wander around the property (trails up the hill give good views of the area). There are some great vantage points for watching the geysers. Admission $18 adults, $9 children; hangi buffet combo, $35 adults, $30 children. www.whakarewarewa.com, entrance at the end of Tryon Street. ☎/fax 07-349-3463 or 0800-924-426.

Also in the Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley and Reserve is **The New Zealand Maori Arts & Crafts Institute**. It was created in 1963 by an act of Parliament as a way to keep the art of Maori carving alive. Each year, three students are chosen to attend the school for three years, and visitors are invited to watch them working. It's interesting to see and there are interpretive displays. In addition, there is a weaving school, where you can not only watch experts weave flax, but can try your hand at it yourself. Also on the property is a pa, or fortified village, a meeting house, a nocturnal house (where you can view kiwi birds) and bush walks to vantage points for viewing the geysers and mud pools. You can take a guided walk or go on your own.

Included in your admission price is a midday Maori concert. *Mia Ora* is the evening show here and audience size is limited to just over 100 people, making it one of the smaller, more intimate evening shows. In addition to traditional hangi, or Maori buffet, food, there is a large selection of seafood and other non-smoked dishes. $19.95 adults, $9.95 children (ages five-15) $3.50 (ages four-five); evening show and meal $70 adults, $40 children (ages five-15). Open 8 am to 6 pm (5 pm in winter). Evening shows begin at 6:15 pm in the summer, 5:15 in winter. Make sure you book in advance! www.nzmaori.co.nz, Hemo Road, ☎ 07-348-9047.

On the banks of Lake Rotoiti, is the marae, or meeting place, of Ngati Rongomai, where **Rotoiti Tours**, **World of Maori** welcomes you for a cultural performance and hangi buffet. Total group size is limited to just over 100, so this too is a smaller, more intimate experience in an authentic and beautiful location. The night I went there were only 15 guests, and it was fun, casual and easy going – the performers had a giggle or two and didn't seem bored or over-rehearsed. We elected a chief, sang songs and had a good time. The food is prepared hangi or Maori buffet style, with cold salads to round things out. rotoiti.tours@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-348-8969.

> **Did you know?** *Hangi* refers to the traditional Maori meal preparation and feast. Food is slow-cooked in the ground and served buffet-style.

The famous **Tamaki Experience** is the most glitzy of the shows, but it's still is fun. As with the other shows, you'll be picked up at your accommodation in a bus, or waka, and transported as if you were part of a tribe to the site. Along the way, you'll practice a song and elect a chief. It's all good fun, and very en-

tertaining. At the show grounds there is a tribal market that is open daily from 9 am to 4:30 pm, where craftspeople work and sell their art. SH5, 15 minutes out of Rotorua. The booking office for the Tamaki Experience is in central Rotorua and you can buy souvenirs and gifts here, as well as visit an orchid garden.

The Tamaki Experience is a local success story – Mike Tamaki wanted to create a center where visitors could have an in-depth Maori experience. He convinced his brother to sell his Harley Davidson to help finance it. Now, they are two of the richest men in New Zealand, and the Harleys have become a Tamaki icon. There are usually two shows nightly, but check the schedule in advance. $75 adults, $35 children. www.maoriculture.co.nz, ☎ 07-346-2823.

■ Thermal Reserves

> **Inside advice:** As with the cultural nights, each thermal reserve has its special character. Your choice will depend on what you want to experience or see.

For a **free** experience, head to **Kuirau Park**, right in town. There are walking paths and bubbling mud pools. You can wander around as long as you like. Access on Kuirau Street.

> **Helpful hint:** The steam from the reserves turned my silver rings black. They cleaned up fine, but you might want to leave your jewelry somewhere else.

A "fumerole" is an opening in the ground from which steam and volcanic gasses escape. The hissing and roaring sound that you hear is from the pressurized steam escaping through cracks.

If you've never seen a geyser, then **Wai-O-Tapu** is a good bet, as the Lady Knox geyser erupts at 10:15 am every day. How do they know that? They prompt her by adding detergent. Wai-O-Tapu has the most colorful pools and has the most extensive walking tracks – the longest loop is about 75 minutes, the shortest 30. The pools are beautiful, the colors quite spectacular. The Champagne Pool is the largest in the area (65 meters/213 feet in diameter) and especially colorful. One thing to keep in mind when visiting Wai-O-Tapu is that most of those who gather to see the eruption of Lady Knox will then go on a loop walk. So, if you don't want to be in a crowd, bug out after you snap your photo and start the walk ahead of the huge throng. Or, do the walk first. Open daily from 8:30 am to 5 pm (last admission is at 3:45). $18.50 adults, $6 children. Take SH5 toward Taupo for 27 km (17 miles). Turn left at the Waiotapu Tavern. ☎ 07-366-6333, fax 07-366-6010, www.geyserland.co.nz.

> **Tip:** You don't have to stand still with your camera poised at 10:10 am waiting for the eruption. For one thing, a guide will come out and explain what's going to happen and then add the detergent. For another thing, once it starts erupting, it lasts for about 30 minutes, so you'll have plenty of time to take all your photos.

Of all the thermal reserves in the region, **Waimangu** is my choice for a more peaceful, natural experience. The property is owned by the DoC and man-

aged by a concessionaire, which is, I think, what makes it feel a bit more natural, less commercialized, and more of an eco-tourism experience. From the visitor center, the walking path leads downhill to the valley and you have a choice of three places to catch a shuttle bus back to the top. Even the shortest walk offers a lot to see; the bush is lovely and a very detailed guide is provided. Refer to *Adventures on Water*, page 213, for their boat-trip options. Open daily from 8:30 am, last admission at 3:45 pm (4:45 in January). Take SH5 toward Taupo for 14 km (nine miles), turn left on Waimangu Road and drive six km (3¾ miles). ☎ 07-366-6137, fax 07-366-6607, www.waimangu.com.

Instead of colorful pools, **Hell's Gate Geothermal Reserve** has mud. And lots of it. It's the most active thermal park, meaning that things are brewing pretty rapidly and the water doesn't have time to sit in pools and absorb the colors of the minerals. There are a lot of bubbling cauldrons of mud and it's eerily pretty. There are sign-posted trails and a self-guide map. This is the only thermal park that is Maori-owned and -operated; it's only been operating since 2001. Associated with the reserve is **Wai Ora Spa**, which makes good use of all the mud (refer to spa listings below for details). 9 am to 8:30 pm daily. $16 adults, $8 children. SH30, about 20 minutes from the city center. ☎ 07-345-3151, fax 07-345-6481, www.hellsgate.co.nz.

■ Spas

Did you know? Spa therapies have been going on in Rotorua since 1910.

If you like soaking in thermal water or having a spa treatment, then **Polynesian Spa Pools** is a must. Pool temperatures range from 91°F to 109°F and there are adult, family and private pools. They are all fed by Rachel Spring, which is right outside the complex. Polynesian Spa Pools' **Lake Spa Retreat** offers more privacy and pampering, and you can select one of a package of spa treatments. The focus here is on unique treatments using New Zealand-made products developed on-site. Treatments include AIX hydrotherapies as well as retreat therapies like body wraps, massage, skin exfoliation, and so on. This is a great place to relax after tiring travel! As a little extra interest, the spa pools at the retreat overlook Sulphur Bay on Lake Rotorua – a bird and marine reserve. Advance bookings for treatments are essential and are based on a rate of $65 per half-hour, although packages are also available. Polynesian Spa also has a large gift area that sells many New Zealand-made skin and health-care products. The café has a wide selection of food choices, including dairy- and gluten-free. 6:30 am to 11 pm, Lake Spa, 9 am to 9 pm; $12 for pools, $30 for lakeside pools. Hinemoa Street, ☎ 07-348-1328 or 0508-765-977, fax 07-348-9486, www.polynesianspa.co.nz.

You can get therapeutic spa treatments at the **Queen Elizabeth Spa**, the more clinical, less touristy option. It is located at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, right on the lakefront. Open Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 6:30 pm; inquire for weekend hours. www.qehospital.co.nz, Whakaue Street, ☎ 07-348-0189, fax 07-348-4266.

Historically, The Bath House was for the very rich to have therapeutic treatments, but the **Blue Baths** were built in the Government Gardens in the 1930s with fun in mind. Closed in 1982 when the city built a modern Olympic swimming pool, they were renovated, restored and reopened on December 31, 1999 – 66 years to the day after the initial grand opening. A 1930s-style afternoon tea is served (although the tea room is often booked for private functions) and there is a large outdoor swimming pool as well as spa pools. Definitely worth a stop, this is a quiet place to have a soak. There is a fun museum set up in the former changing rooms, open 10 am to 6 pm (5 pm in winter); pools open 10 am to 7 pm, Monday to Friday and 10 am to 8 pm Saturday and Sunday. $18 adults. www.bluebaths.co.nz, Government Gardens, ☎ 07-350-2119, fax 07-350-2118.

> **Did you know?** The Blue Baths were the first place in New Zealand that offered mixed-sex bathing.

Wai Ora Spa & Wellness Centre will leave your skin feeling soft and smooth, albeit looking a little gray! It's the only spa on a thermal reserve and all the products used are created using the mud from the reserve. There are two options for mud baths – the public and the private. The public side has the benefit of nicer views and a more social experience. The private is, well, private. On the private side is where massages and facials are done and there is a guest lounge. The massage is traditional Maori, based on Miri Miri techniques – meaning that it incorporates spiritual as well as physical aspects. The spa complex is a part of Hell's Gate geothermal area (see above). Five minutes past the airport, toward Whakatane, ☎ 07-345-3151, fax 07-345-6481, www.hellsgaterotorua.co.nz.

For thermal pools that are more casual and laid-back, go to **Waikite Valley**. This facility was built by the community using volunteer labor and fund-raising activities. There are thermal pools, spas, camping, BBQ and picnic areas. It's in a rural community, nothing fancy, but very pleasant and clean. Open from 10 am daily. Look for signs on SH5, at the Waiotapu Tavern, about 27 km (17 miles) from town (toward Taupo), ☎ 07-333-1861, fax 07-333-1505, thermalpools@xtra.co.nz.

■ On Water

Lake Rotorua is the largest of the 11 major lakes in the area and on its shore is the city of Rotorua. The lakes are filled craters from extinct volcanoes. Many contain fish that attract anglers from around the world; others are popular with kayakers and sailors. The rivers vary from the soft and gentle to aggressive whitewater.

Rafting & Kayaking

With so many lakes and rivers around, it's no wonder that Rotorua is a kayaking- and rafting-mad area. For rafting, the **Rangitaiki** is grade IV; the **Wairoa**, only open 26 days a year, is grade V, as is the **Kaituna**, famous for its seven-meter (23-foot) waterfall – the highest com-

mercially rafted waterfall in the world. Most rafting companies will pick you up at your accommodation.

Grading the Rapids

Rivers and rapids are graded on a six-level system. Grade I is very easy, with a few small ripples and waves; Grade VI, on the other hand, is commercially unraftable and even the pros will think twice. The grade assigned is based on the biggest/baddest rapids on the river, so a Grade V river might be relatively easy, but with one or two big mamas thrown in. When you're considering what river to raft, ask the operator if it's continuous Grade V or continuous Grade IV – which is probably more fun than a slow ride with a couple of thrills. Many rivers around New Zealand are graded V, but are rafted daily and safely; while thrilling, they aren't life-threatening. Some other rivers, though, particularly in the more remote areas, are truly Grade V, with big water, and they can be dicey. I don't recommend you go on a big Grade V adventure as your first rafting trip. River conditions, obviously, change when there is more or less water (i.e., after a big rain or during a drought).

Adventure Kayaking has a menu of kayak trips that span Lakes Rotorua, Rotoiti and Tarawera and last anywhere from two hours to several days. Most of the longer trips involve a soak in a thermal pool, which is a definite draw. Guided-trip prices begin at $55. You can also rent kayaks and equipment and go out on your own for $40 per day. kayak@clear.net.nz, ☎ 07-348-9451 or 025-997-402.

Kaitiaki Adventures has rafting trips on the Kaituna and Wairoa, as well as sledging… you put on a helmet, wet suit and fins, lie down on a sled and hit the whitewater. The choice of river depends on the conditions, but this is your only option for a Grade V sledge! Rafting trips begin at $120, sledging at $115. www.raft-it.com, ☎ 0800-338-736.

Add a bit of white-water to the kayak experience with **Kaituna Cascades**. The trips are run in double kayaks, with you in the front and a superb kayaker in the back. Paddle through a narrow canyon with all its stomach-lurching drops, including the seven-meter (23-foot) falls. Quite a thrill, this, and don't worry, they'll tell you what to do if (when) you go upside down. Rafting trips on all three rivers are also available. From $65 per person. www.kaitunacascades.co.nz, ☎ 07-357-5032, fax 07-357-4370.

Kaituna Kayaks also runs tandem trips on the Kaituna River with a guide sitting in the back. Kayak lessons are available, from beginner level to rolling and freestyle. A private lesson costs $120 for three hours, but get a friend to go along and it'll be just $70 each. Longer lessons and multi-day courses are available. This is a fabulous way to have some fun and improve your skills. www.kaitunakayaks.com, ☎ 021-465-292 or 0800-465-292.

Sunsports Kayak Shop has kayak rentals as well as instruction for all levels. If you just want to paddle around and have a relaxing time, they'll set you up and give you some ideas of where to go, but if you're really keen to learn rolls and other advanced river skills, they'll do that, too.

www.gokayaking.co.nz, 391 SSH33, Okawa Bay, ☎ 07-362-4222, fax 07-362-4324.

If whitewater is your thing, but you prefer it in a raft, **Raftabout** has six-hour trips on the Wairoa and Rangitaiki and three-hour trips on the Kaituna. From $79 per person. www.raftabout.co.nz, ☎ 07-345-4652 fax 07-345-4654.

River Rats does the big three and adds the Tongariro to its menu. The Tongariro is a Grade III, suitable to the more meek of heart among the rafting crowd, but it is farther away (south of Taupo). From $69. www.riverrats.co.nz, ☎ 07-345-6543 or 0800-333-900, fax 07-345-6321.

In addition to the three rivers around Rotorua, **Wet 'n' Wild** also runs multi-day trips on the Motu and the Upper and Lower Mohaka – some of which are accessed by helicopter. From $70. www.wetnwildrafting.co.nz, 2 White Street, ☎ 07-348-3191 or 0800-462-7238, fax 07-349-6567.

Boating

Just 15 minutes from the busy-ness of Rotorua is **Lake Tarawera** – a peaceful retreat with plenty of fish, a few beaches and plenty of watersports options. The 41-square-kilometer (16-square-mile) lake provides access to short bush walks, **Lake Tarawera Falls**, **Hot Water Beach** and a few remote camping spots. Summer finds the lake alive with water skiers, canoeists and kayakers, but there's always a spot for fishing. Consider packing up the camping gear and either renting a kayak or getting boat transport to Hot Water Beach for a few days of retreat. Pick up a copy of *Lake Tarawera, A Very Special Place* from the information center. Along the way, stop at **Lake Tikitapu** (Blue Lake) and/or **Lake Rotokakahi** (Green Lake).

Clearwater Charters has three boats on Lake Tarawera, including a self-drive "Aqua Patio." There are plenty of fishing spots on the lake (equipment supplied), but another option is to just cruise around or get transport to Hot Water Beach or to one of the scenic walks off the lake. www.clearwater.co.nz, 537 Spencer Road, ☎ 07-362-8590 fax 07-362-8591.

Leaving from the jetty at the Tarawera Landing, **MV *Reremoana*** takes visitors on scenic and trail cruises around Lake Tarawera. The skipper gives a good spiel about the lake, Mt Tarawera and other local trivia. The scenic cruise is 45 minutes and a good intro to the area; the trail cruise is just over two hours and drops you off at the head of Te Ariki. From here, you walk for about 20 minutes to Lake Rotomahana – the former site of the white and pink terraces that were destroyed in the 1886 eruption of Mt Tarawera. Trail cruise is $28 adults, $13.50 children; scenic $17.50 adults, $9 children. www.purerotorua.com, ☎ 07-362-8595 fax 07-362-8883.

Another option is to take the round-trip from **Waimangu Volcanic Valley**. Get picked up from your accommodation and transported by bus to Waimangu Valley for a walk (see *Thermal Activities*, page 233). From there, take a boat coming across Lake Rotomahana, walk the Te Ariki Bush Walk, and join the MV *Reremoana* across Lake Tarawera. There your bus waits to transport you to the Buried Village and back to Rotorua, with stops at the museum and Polynesian Spa. This trip is a good option especially if you don't have your own transport. Lunch is included. $180 adults ($190 including Polynesian Spa), $65 children ($80 including Polynesian Spa). There is also

an option of a Lake Rotomahana cruise. www.waimangu.com, ☎ 07-366-6137, fax 07-366-6607.

Did you know? The eels in Lake Tarawera can reach weights up to 25 kg (56 pounds).

Fishing Charters

There are plenty of fishing guides and charters, but **Ernie Skudder** is considered the best. He takes a maximum of six people and isn't bothered if you're not experienced. He'll take you out on any of the lakes or, if you prefer, the streams and rivers. www.troutflyco.nz, ☎/fax 07-332-3488 or 025-262-4226.

Shamrock Trout Charters goes out on a small (six-meter/20-foot) fishing dory and only takes up to four passengers. Half- and full-day options available. shamrockcharters@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-345-3089 or 025-202-6905.

You can also try **Gordon Randle** to either share a boat with others for a couple of hours or charter the boat for a few hours or the whole day. From $45 per hour. troutfishing@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-349-2555 or 025-938-733.

Greg Tuuta will take you to the lakes, rivers, streams or backcountry in a helicopter. He also arranges hunting trips. www.ikanuicharters.com, ☎ 07-362-7794 fax 07-362-7792.

Jeff Oakes from Lake Tarawera Lodge guides fishing trips on lakes and rivers or out in the sea. He'll take you in a 4x4, a helicopter or a boat. fish@laketarawera.co.nz, Te Mu Road, ☎ 07-277-2676, fax 07-362-8704.

■ On Foot

There are plenty of places to walk around the region. The closest tracks to town – ranging from 30 minutes to eight hours – are at **The Redwoods**. Walking tracks are accessed from Tarawera Road, off SH30. There is a visitor center with a shop that has gifts, maps and information. October to March, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 6 pm; April to September, 8:30 am to 5 pm, weekends 10 am to 4 pm. www.redwoods.co.nz, ☎ 07-346-2082.

By the jetty near the Tarawera Landing Café, there are two walks – one goes up to where the trout spawn, the other to Maori rock paintings. Around Lake Tarawera are other walking options, ranging from 40 minutes to 2½ hours. You'll need boat access, so check with the Landing Café or Clearwater Charters (see page 213).

For a great bush walk near town, drive to the north end of the lake to a sign for Hamurana, where there's a good half-hour loop.

Rainy day option: The Wall is an indoor climbing center that's fun for all ages. $14 adults, $10 children (includes harness rental). 1140 Hinemoa Street, ☎ 07-350-1400, fax 07-350-1441.

■ On Bikes

On the North Island, Rotorua is "the" place to ride. If you're not traveling with your bike, you can rent one, either in town or at Whakarewarewa forest, in an area referred to as **The Redwoods**, where most of the great rides are located (although there are a lot of rides farther afield – drop in at one of the bike shops for more information). The forest is managed by Fletcher Challenge Forests, has 40 km (25 miles) of single track and is just five minutes from Rotorua. It's a really fun place to ride – you can just wander from one track to another, they're all well-marked and maps are available. Contact the visitor center for more information at ☎ 07-346-2082.

Planet Bike has a shop at The Redwoods (from November to April, seven days a week, May to October, weekends and holidays) for bike rental. They also offer tours and workshops and a shuttle service from town or bike delivery to your accommodation (no excuses!). Prices begin at $30 for two hours and it pays to book in advance, especially during busy times. ☎ 07-348-9971.

■ On Horses & the Farm

For an indoor sheep show (which seems odd on a nice day, but certainly makes an attractive bad-weather option), go to **Agrodome**, where the different breeds are introduced and stand on stage. You can see cows being milking and a re-enacted sheep auction, as well as sheepdog trials and a wool-carding demonstration. There are paua shell (New Zealand abalone), ice cream, and chocolate shops, in addition to a café. Open 8:30 am to 5 pm, farm shows at 9:30 am, 11 am and 2:30 pm. Adults $18 for farm show and chocolate factory tour, $35 including farm tour, $9 for children. www.agrodome.co.nz, Western Road, Ngongotaha, ☎ 07-357-1050, fax 07-357-5307.

Rainbow Springs has a native bush area, trout streams, an endangered species program and a kiwi recovery program. Rainbow Springs is a member of Green Globe 21 and runs an animal park and farm show. There is a good representation of native birds, trees and ferns. This is a lovely place to spend an afternoon and definitely a favorite with the kids (big and small). www.rainbownz.co.nz, Fairy Springs Road, ☎ 07-350-0440 or 0800-724-626.

Peka Horse Treks at the Redwoods has one- to three-hour rides and specially tailored rides for experienced riders. Booking essential. peka.info@xtra.co.nz, 117 SH30, ☎ 07-346-1755, fax 07-349-6319.

■ With Adrenaline

Skyline Skyrides gondola gives great panoramic views of the area and shouldn't cause a panic reaction; once you get to the top, you can opt for a few wilder rides. The **Skyswing** is a horrific option that will hurl you to 150 m (163 yards) in two seconds and the **Rotorua Simulator** has 25 different rides to choose from. The **Luge** (the first in the world) is the really big draw,

though. Put on a helmet, sit on a hard molded little three-wheeled cart, and head down any one of three tracks. Return from the bottom on a chairlift and try it again. There are two eating options, a buffet and a café. The food seems rather uninspired, though. Bus after bus arrive in the car park and it's all a bit much, but if you want to give the luge a go, here's your chance. Gondola, adults $17, children $7. Family rates available and you can splurge on a photo pack for $30. Luge, $6 per ride; multi-ride deals and combos with other rides are available. Skyswing, $30. Rotorua simulator, $7. Gondola opens 9 am, while the luge and café open at 9:30 am. www.skylinesskirides.co.nz, Fairy Springs Road, ☎ 07-347-0027, fax 07-348-2163.

If you've ever wondered what it feels like to be a hamster, try **Zorb**. Begun right here in New Zealand, there are now 19 franchises around the world, which is somehow unbelievable, but true. You have the option of either a dry ride – where you are harnessed inside a giant PVC ball and pushed down a 200-meter (656-foot) hill, or a wet ride, where you (and your friends) go un-harnessed into the ball – along with a bucket of water – and are pushed down a hill. Kind of crazy! They say no one gets sick riding it, but they also give you clothes to wear so your own don't get wet or soiled. From $25. www.zorb.com, located by the Agrodome, ☎ 07-357-5100 or 0800-227-474, fax 07-357-5102.

Also at the Agrodome is a **Bungy Jump** and **Agrojet** (jet-boat). I'm not big on the bungy at the best of times, but at least pick one that goes over a river in some indescribably beautiful place. $80 per jump, $35 for the jet-boat.

If you've got the urge to shoot something, head out to **Combat Action Pulse Ranger**, where you can try your hand at pulse-ranger archery (like paint ball, but not so messy), axe- and knife-throwing, clay-target shooting and regular target shooting. Believe it or not, you can also try a high impact grenade launcher… perhaps hone some skills that may come in handy when you least expect it. www.action-nz.co.nz, at the corner of Te Ngae Road and Sala Street, ☎ 07-348-3531.

■ In the Air

> **Tip:** If you're not going to make it to Whakatane, consider a trip by air to White Island from Rotorua.

Volcanic Wunderflites is run by the Rotorua Aero Club and has a range of options, from 15 minutes (around Lake Rotorua), to 2½ hours (around Lake Rotorua and down to Mt Ruapehu). Other trips in a small fixed-wing plane include trips around the Volcanic Lakes District and to White Island. Prices start at $70 per person or, for something a little different, the Aero Club also offers bi-plane scenic trips – "fly low and slow." Prices for these begin at $95 per person. www.webwings.co.nz/volcanic, www.redcat.co.nz, ☎ 07-345-6077, 0800-777-359 or 0800-733-228.

Volcanic Air Safaris operates floatplanes and helicopters from the lakefront. They specialize in trips to Mt Terawera and White Island. www.volcanicair.co.nz, ☎ 07-348-9984 or 0800-800-848, fax 07-348-4069.

In addition to scenic flights around Rotorua, **HELiPRO** also goes out to White Island. www.helipro.co.nz, ☎ 07-357-2512.

Tandem skydive trips are available through **NZONE**, the same company that operates in Queenstown, and is the longest operating tandem skydive company in New Zealand. This is a very professional company and they've been awarded a NZ tourism award. Prices start at $245 and cost depend on altitude, from 9,000-15,000 feet. www.nzone.biz, ☎ 07-345-7520.

Sightseeing

I'm not, by nature, terribly excited about being inside a history museum on a warm, sunny day, but, regardless of the weather, I recommend a visit to the **Rotorua Museum of Art & History**. It is housed in The Bath House, once a spa where therapeutic treatments were offered to the very wealthy. The building graces the government gardens. Pop in here and take a look around the changing exhibits. When I was there, I visited "Big Red," a tribute to the beautiful pohutukawa tree. The mixed-media display was amazing. But be sure you watch the two films – one on the history of Rotorua – includes a simulated earthquake – and one paying tribute to the Maori Battalion that fought in WWII. You can also tour the basement of the building, where the old pipes and treatment rooms are still in their 1900-1960 style. $10 adults, $4 children. Summer hours 9 am to 6 pm, winter 9 am to 5 pm. www.rotoruamuseum.co.nz, at the head of the government gardens, ☎ 07-349-4350, fax 07-349-2819.

Buried Village is just that. This is the site of Te Wairoa Village, which was destroyed in the June, 1886 eruption of Mt. Tarawera. Many buildings have been partially or fully excavated and more are set to be unearthed. One thing to remember when you're walking around is that this is not a recreation – go inside the buildings and you'll see how "buried" they really were. To access the buildings, you first walk through an interesting, appealing museum. There is also a bush walk to Te Wairoa Falls, which weaves past the trout stream. A café is also on-site. $18 adults, $6 children. www.buriedvillage.co.nz, Tarawera Road, ☎/fax 07-362-8287.

New Zealand black robin

Take a trip to Mokoia Island, plopped right in the middle of Lake Rotorua. The island is predator-free and filled with birds, including North Island saddlebacks and robins. It is also the site of the romance of Hinemoa and Tutanekai, performed at most of the cultural events. There are walking tracks and you can soak in Hinemoa's hot water pool. Ride out on the morning boat, be dropped off and then picked up in the afternoon. Alternatively, you can just do a circumnavigation and not get off the boat. **Mokoia Island Cruises**. Scenic cruise $25 adults, children under 15 are free;

landing on the island $30 adults, $15 children. Rotorualakescruises@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-347-9852.

You can get to the top of Mt Tarawera and the edge of its crater either by 4x4 or helicopter with **Mt. Tarawera Volcano NZ Ltd**. Being on top of a volcano is a fabulous experience and, if you can afford it, go for the helicopter option. $110 adults $65 children for 4x4; $390 per person for helicopter. www.mt-tarawera.co.nz, ☎ 07-349-3714, fax 07-349-3704.

Here's a way to get some much-needed alone time. Take the kids to **3D Maze** and try to lose them in the giant labyrinth. $6 per person. On Te Ngae Road, about three km (two miles) past the airport. ☎ 07-345-5275, fax 07-345-9936.

Where to Stay

There are so many options, you would be best served by contacting the information center – in advance – and asking for a hand. I'm listing a few places in different price brackets, but in no way is this exhaustive. Many of the motels have in-room spas; if that is important to you, be sure you inquire. Most of the accommodation is on Fenton Street, but there are a few others scattered around, including the bigger complexes. Most accommodations have off-season rates so, if you're not traveling in the middle of the summer holidays, ask. To get out of the hustle and bustle of the city, head out to Lake Tarawera.

The cottages at **Lake Tarawera Lodge** are just 15 minutes from Rotorua, but they feel a world away. The cottages are recently renovated, with kitchen and bath, and provisions can be supplied. There are plenty of birds to listen to, a tennis court, and fabulous views. Good hiking and mountain biking are nearby – Lake Tarawere Lodge is just 10 minutes from the trails in the Redwoods area at Whakarewarewa Forest. Jeff Oakes is a fishing guide, but only about half the guests are there for fishing, so don't think of it as a fishing lodge. www.laketarawera.co.nz. Te Mu Road, ☎ 07-362-8754, fax 07-362-8704 ($$$-$$$$).

The luxury lodge around the area is **Solitaire Lodge**, on the banks of Lake Tarawera. Solitaire is beautiful, perfect, comfortable and graced with wonderful art. There are three different styles of suites, and a separate villa suitable for families or two couples. Heli-pad, fishing/boating charters (through Clearwater Charters), beach walking, kayaks, lovely lounge – it's all here, plus you have fabulous views of Mt. Tarawera and other surrounding mountains. www.solitairelodge.com, ☎ 07-362-8208 or 0800-765-482, fax 07-362-8445 ($$$$$).

In 2004, vouchers for the **Treetops Lodge and Estate** were given as gifts to presenters and other stars involved in the Academy Awards. It's the first time a New Zealand accommodation was chosen as a gift. And the place is exquisite. Set on 1,000 hectares (2,470 acres) of native forest and wilderness parklands, it's less than 15 minutes from Rotorua. Obviously, it's private, intimate

and exclusive. You can fish in the streams, eat fabulous food, marvel at the bush, or opt for more active adventures. www.treetops.co.nz, 351 Kearoa Road, Horohoho, ☎ 07-333-2066, fax 07-333-2065 ($$$$$).

For an upmarket B&B, your best option is **The Springs**. There are only four rooms; each is decorated differently and each opens onto a garden area. The guest lounge is large and comfortable (with port and sherry waiting for you), and breakfast is delicious. www.thesprings.co.nz, 16 Devon Street, ☎ 07-348-9922, fax 07-348-9964 ($$$$).

There are quite a few big chain hotels, making it hard to choose. Most of them have an influx of tour bus groups daily. I find the **Royal Lakeside Novotel** pleasant and up to scratch and I didn't feel like a number. Plus, it's near the lake and restaurants. www.novotel.co.nz, Lake End, Tutanekai Street, ☎ 07-346-3888, fax 07-346-1888 ($$$-$$$$).

Ace Motor Lodge has simple, small rooms with in-room spas. Nothing fancy, but reasonably priced and friendly. 319 Fenton Street, ☎/fax 07-347-0452 ($$)..

One of my friends recently traveled around New Zealand and, at the end of her trip, she said that **Ascot Motel** was her favorite place to stay. It's extremely clean and comfortable with knowledgeable and friendly hosts. And it's a good value, within walking distance of downtown. www.ascotmotel.com, 247 Fenton Street, ☎ 07-348-7712, fax 07-348-7819 ($$-$$$).

Malones Motel has in-room spas, friendly management and clean, newly appointed full kitchens in three different sizes of suites. www.malones.co.nz, 321 Fenton Street, ☎ 07-346-0333 or 0800-625-663, fax 07-346-1806 ($$).

New Castle Motor Lodge is new, off the main traffic road and has studios, suites and family units. I think this is one of the best values in town. www.newcastle.co.nz, 18 Ward Avenue, ☎ 07-346-3001 or 0508-227-853, fax 07-346-3007 ($$-$$$).

Regal Palms Motor Lodge is off the main drag and has executive studios and luxury suites at reasonable prices. www.regalpalsml.co.nz, 350 Fenton Street, ☎ 07-350-3232 or 0800-743-000, fax 07-350-3233 ($$$).

Collingwood Gables has outdoor spas in little private garden areas. Very clean and tidy. 325 Fenton Street, ☎ 07-347-7795 or 0800-921-292, fax 07-346-3625 ($$).

Eaton Hall Bed & Breakfast Hotel is undergoing some massive renovations in early 2004, so there will be more rooms with bathrooms. It's a big old home right in town and has single, double, twin and triple rooms. They have a huge breakfast area and rates include a full cooked breakfast. www.eatonhallbnb.cjb.net, 1255 Hinemaru Street, ☎/fax 07-347-0366 ($$).

Off the main drag is the large **Accolade Lodge B&B**. It's bed and breakfast, but more like a motel, with individual units and very reasonably priced. It's also very clean. www.accoladerotorua.co.nz, 30 Victoria Street, ☎ 07-348-2223 or 0800-279-000, fax 07-348-2238 ($$).

Swiss Lodge Rotorua is right on the lake and has bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, penthouse apartments and chalets. It's a lovely location with equally nice facilities. www.swisslodge.co.nz, 207 Kawaha Point Road, ☎ 07-348-5868, fax 07-348-5869 ($$$-$$$$).

For backpackers, go to **Kiwi Paka YHA**. There are lodge rooms, chalets, tent and campervan sites. There is a café and a swimming pool and, like the sister lodge in Waitomo, it's all new, clean and comfortable. Able to handle large numbers, it doesn't feel like one of those massive backpackers hostels with bed upon bed. www.kiwipaka-yha.co.nz, 60 Tarewa Road, ☎ 07-347-0931, fax 07-346-3167 ($).

Rotorua Central Backpackers, in a big old house, is crisply kept and has a friendly feel. 1076 Pukuatua Street, ☎ 07-349-3285 ($).

There are doubles, twins and dorms at **Crash Palace**. It's central, has two kitchens and space to spread out. www.crashpalace.co.nz, corner of Hinemaru and Eruera Streets, ☎ 07-348-8842, fax 07-348-8862 ($).

Hot Rock is a good option for backpacker and motel-style rooms. There's also a bar, three pools, sundecks, all the extras. It's right by Kauirau Park, so that makes for nice strolling and it's not so manic as right smack in the center of town. www.acb.co.nz/hot-rock, 1286 Arawa Street, ☎ 07-348-8636, fax 07-348-8616 ($).

Rotorua Planet Nomad Backpackers is right on Fenton Street, above the shops – how's that for a central location? They've done a bit of a renovation recently, with a new kitchen and other facilities. Bikes are available for rent. www.planetnomad.co.nz, 1193 Fenton Street, ☎/fax 07-346-2831 ($).

Rotorua Top 10 Holiday Park is right near town and has the usual combination of cabins, tourist flats, campsites, and so forth. www.rotoruatop10.co.nz, ☎ 07-348-1886 or 0800-223-267, fax 07-348-1867 ($-$$).

All Seasons Holiday Park is out in Hannahs Bay and away from the hubbub of town. There are tourist flats, cabins, tent sites, a backpackers hostel and a large lodge. Swimming pool, BBQ, tennis, kayaks. www.allseasonsrotorua.co.nz, 50 Lee Road, ☎/fax 07-345-6240 or 0800-422-674 ($-$$).

Of all the holiday parks in the area, my top choice is **Blue Lake Top 10 Holiday Park**. The name gives it away. It's on the shores of Blue Lake, just 10 minutes from the city center, but a world away. All the usual accommodation choices are available, plus a heated spa pool, game room, playground, etc. The thing that's really nice, though, is the location – you can enjoy all the activities of Rotorua without having to stay right in town. www.bluelaketop10.co.nz, 723 Tarawera Road, ☎ 07-362-8120, fax 07-362-8600 ($-$$).

Waiteti Trout Stream Holiday Park & Backpackers is, in fact, set on the trout stream, amidst a mature landscape. There are tourist flats, cabins, motel units and camping sites. A little way out of town, it's a bit more peaceful, but you will be driving to get anywhere. www.waiteti.com, 14 Okono Crescent, Ngongotaha, ☎ 07-357-5255 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

There are more places than you will be able to sample, but a few to check out are on "The Streat" – Tutanekai Street.

One of the best is **You and Me**. Great menu of lovely fresh innovative food and a good wine list, too. 1119 Pukuatua Street, ☎ 07-347-0368 ($$-$$$).

Zambique uses exotic foods and flavors, as well as local foods. 1111 Tutanekai Street, ☎ 07-349-2140 ($$-$$$).

Zippy Central Bar & Café is a trendy café with a wide range of great food and good coffee. 1153 Pukuatua Street, ☎ 07-348-8288 ($-$$).

Fat Dog Café & Bar serves up huge, fabulous meals – great choice of salads and veggie options as well as meat. Good baked treats, too. 1161 Arawa Street, ☎ 07-347-7586 ($-$$).

The **Pig and Whistle** has micro-brewed beer and better-than-bar-food at reasonable prices. Try a prawn burger or mushroom cannelloni. Live music on the weekends. Corner of Tutanekai and Haupapa Streets, ☎ 07-347-3025 ($$).

Triple 1 Five Café is called a café, but seems a bit more. Yummy options including salads, pastas, and some more substantial choices. Live music sometimes in the evenings. 1115 Tutanekai Street, ☎ 07-347-1115.

Capers Epicurean is the spot for foodies to go and buy those treats to take out. In addition to a great gourmet food shop, the food served is fabulous, too. They have a good deli-type counter, but also sit-down meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner (dinner Tuesday to Saturday). An interesting blend of choices on the menu, from beef to tofu. 1181 Eruera Street, ☎ 07-348-8818 ($$-$$$).

A must for those who love breads and pastry (they also have great sorbet and ice cream) is **Patrick's Patisserie**, 1300 Tutanekai Street, ☎ 07-346-0375 ($).

On Lake Tarawera, try the **Landings Café Bar and Restaurant**. It's in a rebuild of the old boat shed and has good, fresh food, great atmosphere and a wine list that includes many of the smaller wineries around New Zealand. It's small and intimate and it's best to phone and book for dinner. Open 9 am to 5 pm every day; dinner seven days in the summer, shortened hours in winter. ☎ 07-362-8502 ($-$$$).

The Central Plateau

Introduction

The Central Plateau describes the area of land that encompasses Taupo, Tongariro and the forest parks that border those areas. It is a land-locked region that has four-season attractions. Taupo is the premier tourism destination in the area and makes for a great base to explore farther afield; its focus is mostly water-based, including lake activities, river trips and fishing; in the southern reaches, around Tongariro National Park, the focus is more on land-based activities like tramping and skiing.

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Lake Taupo is about the same size as Singapore.

While the area enjoys a laid-back holiday resort atmosphere, geologically at least, it's quite a happening place. The **Taupo Volcanic Zone** extends from White Island in the north through Rotorua, Taupo, Tongariro and Ruapehu. The Taupo area is one of the most active volcano sites anywhere in the world.

Lake Taupo has experienced 28 volcanic eruptions in the last 27,000 years. Contrary to some publications, the truth is that one single eruption was not responsible for the creation of the lake. The largest eruption – the Taupo – occurred in 181 AD and was the biggest eruption anywhere in the world for the last 5,000 years. It blew 50 km (30 miles) into the sky, and the volume of tephra (anything that comes out of a volcano) was the same volume as the water in Lake Taupo. The Taupo eruption blew 10 to 30 cm (four to 12 inches) of ash as far away as Gisborne, and, at the White Cliffs of Lake Taupo, the ash is 200 meters (650 feet) thick. The tephra that came out of Mt. St. Helens, by comparison, was only one cubic kilometer.

The Volcano

Lake Taupo is a *caldera*, or large collapsed-crater type, volcano. The Oruanui eruption, which occurred 26,500 years ago, was responsible for the caldera shape of Lake Taupo. In Lake Taupo's case, the caldera is 500 meters (1,640 feet) deep and the Taupo eruption that occurred in 181 AD enlarged the caldera.

By contras, Ruapehu, at the tail-end of the zone, is a *cone* volcano. Cone volcanoes have more frequent but smaller eruptions than caldera volcanoes. Ruapehu, for example, has been erupting almost continuously for about 260,000 years!

The name of Taupo comes from Maori history. Tia, a chief, and the great priest Ngatoroitangi arrived with their iwi, or tribe, at Cape Runaway aboard the canoe *Arawa*. They settled in the Bay of Plenty. Tia was the first to explore inland. He arrived at the eastern side of Lake Taupo, saw rock formations that resembled a cloak and called the place *Taupo nui a Tia,* which means the Great Cloak of Tia.

The Maori explanation for the Taupo Volcanic Zone is, of course, more romantic than anything the volcanologists might come up with. After Tia began his explorations, Ngatoroitangi wasn't far behind. He headed farther south and became extremely cold on top of one of the mountains. He prayed to the sisters in his home land of Hawaiki to send warmth. The fire gods were listening when his sisters prayed and sent heat under the sea and land, arriving in New Zealand at White Island and extending south to Ruapehu. (The volcanologists, though, attribute the volcanic activity to the sliding and gnashing of the Pacific and Indo-Australian Plates.)

European history begins in the area when Andrew Powers, a British trader, was captured by the Maori and brought to Taupo. During the East Coast Land Wars, Taupo was used as a military outpost. Tourism began with the construction of the Taupo Hotel in 1872.

Beware of amoebic meningitis! When you are bathing or playing in any hot water springs or pools, do not put your head under the water.

Getting Here

■ By Air

Both **Origin Pacific** and **Air New Zealand** fly in and out of the Taupo Airport. Air New Zealand connects daily with Auckland and Wellington and Origin Pacific flies four times a week to and from Wellington. The airport is about 10 km (six miles) south of town, on the eastern side of the lake.

■ By Car

Conveniently located in the center of the North Island, Lake Taupo and the rest of the Central Plateau are easy to reach. SH1 comes down from Auckland and continues on to Wellington, Taupo making a logical halfway stop between the two. SH5, dubbed the Thermal Explorer Highway, connects Taupo with Hawke's Bay and Rotorua. To Lake Taupo, it is approximately one hour from Rotorua, 3½ hours from Auckland, 4½ hours from Wellignton, and 1½ hours from Hawke's Bay.

■ By Bus

All buses lead to Taupo, or so it seems. Services all around the North Island are available on **InterCity**, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100, and **Newmans Coachlines**, www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6200. They arrive and depart from the Travel Centre on Gascoigne Street in Taupo, ☎ 07-378-9032, and in Turangi from Ohuanga Road, ☎ 07-386-8918. You can book seats at the information centers or directly with the bus services.

■ By Train

National Park and Ohakune are serviced by both the day and night trains that travel between Auckland and Wellington. www.tranzscenic.co.nz,

Getting Around

There are quite a few shuttle companies that offer transport to the different activities – particularly to the ski areas in the winter and Tongariro National Park in the summer. See the section on Tongariro, page 238, for details.

Information Sources

Destination Lake Taupo's website is **www.laketauponz.com**. These folks have wisely realized that some things in life can be free (or at least not cost a fortune) and have put together *Free Things To Do*, *Family Things To Do Under $60*, and *Rainy Day Activities*. Pick them up at the information center.

You might also want to check out www.backpacklaketaupo.com for general information.

Information centers are listed with each area below.

Lake Taupo & Around

As close as it is geographically to Rotorua, Taupo has a more boutique feel to it. In fact, the consensus is that Taupo needs Rotorua to absorb all the buses so that Taupo can stay small. Taupo, the town, is at the northeastern side of Lake Taupo. North of town, along the Waikato River, are many of the tourist sights and activities, including Huka Falls, Wairakei Terraces and Thermal Valley, and the jet-boat operators. There are quite a few lake-based attractions and the airport is along the eastern edge of the lake.

■ Information Sources

The **Taupo Information Centre** is open daily and has DoC maps. (The DoC office is in the National Park.) Tongariro Street, ☎ 07-376-0027.

■ Adventures

*If you're interested in an adrenaline rush, consider **4PLAY** – Huka Jet, Helistar, Taupo Bungy and Taupo Tandem Skydive have come together to make a package. Bookings available through any of the operators or at the information center. It'll save you some cash and give you all the thrills.* ☎ *0800-368-775.*

On Water

Lake Taupo is New Zealand's largest lake, and it's also quite deep – the deepest part of the lake is over 600 feet, the average is around 350. With all the coastline of New Zealand, you may become accustomed to swimming and kayaking in the sea, but here's a pleasant chance to play in fresh water.

Swimming

AC Baths Complex has recently undergone a major redevelopment and now boasts new indoor and outdoor leisure pools, a competition pool, two hydro-slides and a learn-to-swim pool – a pool for everyone. $6.50 adults, $2.50 children. AC Baths Avenue, off Centennial Drive. ☎ 07-376-0359. The "AC" in AC Baths is for "Armed Constabulary" which was formed in 1867 as the first law-enforcement service in the area. It operated until 1886. The baths first opened in 1883.

Where to Swim

The sandiest beaches are the ones on the main waterfront – they trucked in the sand in the 1970s. At the eastern end, hot water seeps out through the sand.

Kinloch and Whakaipo Bays have good, safe swimming, as does Five Mile. These three have gradual drop-offs, but get crowded in the summer. Acacia Bay also has reasonably good swimming, but it, too, can get crowded.

The best, sandiest and most secluded beaches are in the Western Bay – but you need a boat or floatplane to get you there (you can get a lift out there and get picked up).

Kayaks & Other Boats

There are more than a couple of ways to get out on Lake Taupo but my favorite is by kayak. **Kayaking Kiwi** runs half-day trips that include a swimming break at a beach (with delicious food) and a stop for a visit at the celebrated Maori rock carvings. The guides share local knowledge of the lake and area. Trips run every morning and afternoon and are a perfect introduction to the sport, as well as a quick outing for experienced paddlers who don't have piles of time. You can also arrange longer trips, including full- and multi-day trips and kayak/walk combinations. Another bonus, Kayaking Kiwi also has a launch on which they can transport the kayaks to more remote areas of the lake. www.kayakingkiwi.com, ☎ 07-378-0909 or 027-288-1137, fax 07-378-0929.

About Those Rock Carvings

The Maori Rock carvings at Kaiapo Point, over 10 meters (32 feet) high (reputedly the highest carvings of their kind), can only be accessed by boat, and tell the stories of the area. It's pretty amazing to be sitting in a kayak looking up at the serpents, birds and other forms, realizing how difficult it would be to carve them from the water (or hanging over it). They are not ancient carvings – far from it. Of the two artists who created the work, one still lives in Taupo, the other not far away.

Two Mile Bay Sailing Centre and Water Sports has rowboats, sailboats, kayaks and windsurfers. They can also take you water skiing or fishing. www.sailingcentre.co.nz, ☎ 07-378-3299 or 025-967-350.

For a steamboat experience, take a cruise on ***Ernest Kemp***. Two-hour trips head over to the Maori rock carvings and hot-water beach. $28 adults, $10 children. ☎ 07-378-3444

If you want to sail but don't want to do the work, go on ***Barbary***. Its claim to fame is having been owned by Errol Flynn at one time. It was also a part of the Greenpeace anti-nuclear protest in the Tuamotus. Daily cruises to the carvings ($30 adults, $25 children) and evening cruise ($25 adults) in the summer. ☎ 07-378-3444.

You don't have to be around Lake Taupo for long before you see the name **Chris Jolly**. Just about anything you want to do on the water and off can be arranged, including water skiing, hiring boats, scenic cruises, helicopter flights, fly fishing, hunting, you name it. These folks have been around forever, and know what's up. www.chrisjolly.co.nz, Taupo Harbour Office. ☎ 07-378-5596 or 07-378-0623.

Rivers

Kiwi River Safaris is based in Taupo and runs kayak trips on the Waikato River. The four-hour trip lets you see the Taupo Bungy from underneath and includes a stop for a soak at a natural hot pool. $40 adults, $25 children. The also run raft trips on the Rangitaiki, Wairoa, Tongariro and Mohaka (two-day trip). The Rangitaiki is their most popular and is two hours of rafting through grade III and IV rapids for just $90. Lunch is included, as is transport from town to the river. www.krs.co.nz, ☎ 07-377-6597 or 0800-723-8577.

Waikato River Discovery also runs guided trips on the Waikato River at $40 adults, $25 children and offers kayaking instruction. Based at the Canoe & Kayak Shop, they also rent out kayaks and equipment, and can be found on the lakeshore during the summer. 38 Nukuhau Street, ☎ 0800-529-256.

Jet-Boats

Three jet-boat companies operate around Taupo, each in a different area of the Waikato River. Depending on the length of the trip, prices start around $69 for an adult.

Nearest to town is **Huka Jet**. These folks do more than a couple of 360-degree turns as you blast to the top of Aratiatia Dam and then back down to Huka Falls, for some sloshing around in the foam. www.hukajet.com, Wairakei Tourist Park (Huka Falls Road), ☎ 07-374-8572 or 0800-485-2538.

NZ River Jet is about halfway (30 minutes to either) between Taupo and Rotorua on SH5, just north of Tutukau Road. They have three trip options, ranging from 30 minutes to two hours, the longest going to the Aratiatia rapids. You can also arrange to access the Hidden Valley of Orakei Korako. www.riverjet.co.nz, ☎ 07-333-7111.

Rapids Jet leaves from Rapids Road off Aratiatia Road and shoots the Fuljames Rapids, then plays at the base of the Aratiatia rapids. It's a wet ride and a teeny bit scary to boot. www.rapidsjet.com, ☎ 07-378-5828 or 0800-727-437.

Fishing

Lake Taupo and neighboring rivers claim to be the trout capital of the world and there aren't enough pages to list all the fishing guides and spots! For fly-fishing on the rivers, try **Will Kemp**, a young guy who grew up fishing around here and is great for serious, experienced anglers and is also patient enough for those wanting to give it a try (he put up with me, after all). www.tongariroflyfishing.co.nz, ☎ 07-386-6545 or 021-633-685.

Another one to try is **White Striker**, which has two boats and caters to serious fishermen and tourists who want to catch a fish on the lake. www.troutcatching.com, ☎ 07-378-2736.

Other river guides with good reputations include **Greg Catley**, www.nzflyfish.co.nz, ☎ 07-377-0035 or 021-638-242; **Mark Aspinall**, www.markaspinall.com, ☎ 07-378-4453 or 021-500-384; and **Grant Bayley**, www.fishhunttaupo.com, ☎ 07-377-6105 or 025-222-9539.

> **Brown trout** were first released in the area in 1885; rainbows came in 1898.

On Foot

In the midst of tourist activities that can cost an arm and a leg, Taupo has managed to maintain some good old free stuff to do and that include quite a few good, easily accessed walking tracks. There is a lot of green space and plenty of space for wandering, both along the river and up into the forest. DoC has produced a brochure, *Taupo Walks*, describing nearly 20 local walks, that range from 30 minutes to a couple of hours, and a brochure about the walks in the Kaimanawa Forest Park (at the southeastern edge of the Lake).

One walk not to miss is a four-hour round-trip walk from **Huka Falls to the Aratiatia Rapids**. It starts with great river views of the falls and then climbs onto the cliff tops for fabulous views before descending and following the river to the Aratiatia Rapids. Schedule your walk to coincide with the opening of the control gates (10 am, noon, 2 pm and 4 pm). Watch the flood spill, have a picnic and then walk back.

The **Spa Thermal Park** has thermal river walks, a recreation reserve, a fun and fitness trail, and a flying fox (see page 417). It's a great spot to pull over, get out of the car and get some exercise just wandering around. Managed by

the Taupo District Council, there is a path that goes down to the river. Along it are naturally occurring hot pools that have unrestricted (read: free) access. The walking tracks lead all the way to Huka Falls, where you can join the walk described above. At the end of County Avenue.

At **Cherry Island**, you can stroll through native bush, feed the trout, visit the animal park or just sit by the river. A very peaceful, pleasant place to spend some time. Waikato Street, ☎ 07-378-9427.

On Bikes

Like neighboring Rotorua, Taupo is full of great places to ride. Each year, in November, there is a ride around the lake that brings hundreds of cyclists from all over New Zealand. The opportunities for all levels of mountain biking are plenty and many are easy to reach – I suggest going into one of the bike shops and getting some local knowledge for what's hot. Some of my picks include **Craters of the Moon**, where there are a variety of tracks through the forest to suit all levels of experience. You could spend hours riding in here and it's really pretty and not a huge climb. The ride from **Huka Falls** to **Aratiatia Dam** takes a couple of hours and, if you start in town, is a respectable 26 km (16 miles).

Guided Options Include

Freeride Guide Ltd., www.freerideguide.co.nz, ☎ 07-376-8696 or 0800-2174-3363.

Rapid Sensations Adventures has guided rides all over the area and offers combination trips – biking with kayaking or rafting. Also bike rental on your own is available. www.rapids.co.nz, ☎ 0800-353-435.

On Horses

While there are no native mammals in New Zealand, we do have wild horses in the Kaimanawa ranges around the Waiouru Army base. There are several hundred horses, the first being reported in the area in 1876, their presence here is the result of escapes and releases of animals in the area. The Kaimanawa wild horses are listed by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations as a herd with special genetic value – due to their long-time isolation. DoC is responsible for managing the land on which they roam and when their numbers get too high, they can cause ecological damage. To put it lightly, the management of the horses does become rather controversial.

For a farm and horse experience with well-trained horses, contact **Harakeke**. This is a professional operation that's located on a working dairy, sheep and horse farm and run by life-long professional equestrians. Lessons are also available by prior arrangement. www.taupoequestrian.co.nz, SH1, ☎ 07-377-3545.

Taupo Horse Treks has one- to two-hour rides through pine forest and to lookouts over Craters of the Moon thermal reserve. Karapiti Road, ☎ 07-378-0356.

The **National Equestrian Centre** is in Taupo and plenty of shows and events happen throughout the year. If you're traveling with a horse-mad companion, see if anything's going on. It's located on Rapids Road, off Aratiatia Road.

With Adrenaline

Poised above the Waikato River is **Taupo Bungy**. Choose between either a wet or dry option and then jump from 47 meters (153 feet). I have to admit, I am not at all interested in bungy jumping, but managed to convince an Australia guy I met to give it a go. He did the jump screaming my name the whole way down. It was crazy, but I think he liked it. If you're so inclined, it is a lovely spot for a jump. The bridge is spectacularly set right over the Waikato River. www.taupobungy.com, Spa Road, ☎ 0800-888-408.

Rock 'n Ropes is a high ropes course with trapeze and giant swing options. Instruction and safety equipment is provided (thank goodness). www.rocknropes.co.nz, SH5, 10 minutes north of Taupo at the Crazy Catz Adventure Park. ☎ 07-374-8111.

In the Air

Taupo has become a real destination for skydiving and, if you ever thought about doing it, here's a good place to give it a go. The views are spectacular and, with three companies doing "drops," it's unlikely that you'll have to wait around very long (which is both good and bad). All the companies offer upgrades that include video and/or still photos.

Think about this. The higher you exit the plane, the longer you free fall – they say that if you jump from a lower altitude, you don't have time to really comprehend what's happening, so the better experience is from a higher altitude. Which all sounds dandy, until they decide that you, too, should experience the highest jump allowed. Now, that Australian guy who did the bungy jump for me paid me back by convincing me that I should jump from 15,000 feet instead of just 12,000 feet. Jumping (read: being pushed) from a perfectly good airplane 15,000 feet above Lake Taupo was, by far, the scariest moment of my life. I had been advised to be totally "present" the whole time – to remember what it's like on the edge of the plane, during the jump, during the one-minute five-seconds of free fall. And boy, was I present. I'm not saying that I wouldn't do it again or that I wouldn't recommend anyone else do it – the flight up was great, the views coming down were fabulous – but for me, it was scary. I had a great tandem master, and he was very calming. Unfortunately, on the flight up his hands were sweatier than mine, which was a bit of a worry, but by the time he pried mine off the railings at the airplane door, I think I may have caught up.

On the day that I jumped, the sky was absolutely clear and we could see all around Taupo, National Park and even Mt. Taranaki perfectly. The views were amazing for miles in every direction and the details of fresh water reefs in the lake were incredible.

AUTHOR'S PICK

Taupo Tandem Skydiving was the first to offer tandem in New Zealand and is not only the biggest in Taupo, but in the world – 12,000 tandem students in 2002! Drops are from 6,000 feet to 15,000 feet and they can handle up to 220 people per day. But you don't feel like a number. They've kept the prices reasonable – beginning at $185 – and are completely professional. www.tts.net.nz ☎ 07-377-0428 fax 07-378-0468.

Skydive Taupo has jumps from 12,000 and 15,000 feet, with prices beginning at $200. www.skydivetaupo.co.nz, ☎ 0800-586-766.

Freefly jumps from 9,000, 12,000 and 15,000 feet and prices start at $195. www.freefly.co.nz, ☎ 07-378-4662 or 0800-373-335.

For those who would prefer to stay in the airplane, there are a number of scenic flights available. My favorite way to tour in the air is by helicopter, and **Helistar** offers a wide range of scenic flights around the area. Even if you take a short one, it's a good way to see the place and put it all into perspective. www.helistar.co.nz, 415 Huka Falls Road, ☎ 07-374-8405 or 0800-435-478, fax 07-374-8406.

Trips with **Air Charter Taupo** range from 15 minutes to an hour (longer and different trips by arrangement) and take in the volcanoes, the mountains, lakes and even the wild horses of the Kaimanawa. Prices begin at $50 per person. www.airchartertaupo.co.nz, Taupo Airport, ☎ 07-378-5467.

Taupo Air Services has scenic trips around the Volcanic Plateau, out to White Island and around the mountains. A quick trip around Taupo starts at $65 and prices go up from there. taupo.air@xtra.co.nz, Taupo Airport, ☎ 07-378-5325.

For a flight with a difference, consider **Floatplane**. Take off from the boat harbor and tour around the Volcanic Plateau, Lake Taupo and as far as White Island. Trips begin at $60. nkemp@xtra.co.nz, Ferry Road, ☎ 07-378-7500.

Taupo Gliding Club offers three levels of scenic flights ranging from $80-$120 and go out Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays. Other days are available by arrangement. ☎ 07-378-5506 or 07-378-5340 or 07-378-3305.

On Wheels

Kiwi Dirtbike Adventures leads both on- and off-road motorcycle trips in the Taupo area and around New Zealand. The off-road trips don't require a license, but you do need riding experience. One of the popular rides is the 42 Traverse (see section on Ruapehu, page 242). www.kiwiadventures.co.nz, ☎ 07-377-8055, fax 07-377-8056.

You can go quad biking with **Taupo Quads**, who are about 24 km (15 miles) north of Taupo on SH1 by Tutukau Road. Prices start at $60 for an hour's bash around the farm and bush. You can splurge on a full-day wilderness tour. Call for details. Bookings are essential. www.4x4quads.com, ☎ 07-377-6404.

Transport to a quad adventure is available through **The Great Lake 4WBike Adventures**, where there are one- to three-hour rides during the day and a two-hour glow-worm ride at dusk. Backpacker accommodation is also available. ☎ 07-376-8386.

Gravity Hill is the only mountain-board park in Australasia and has boards and runs to suit all levels of riders and all ages. These contraptions are like snowboards with wheels, and you can carve your way down a grassy hill or blast your way doing jumps down the more competitive dirt hill. Pick-up service available around Taupo. Prices start at $29 for an introductory hour that includes safety gear, instruction and board use. www.mountainboard.co.nz, Rakaunui Road, ☎ 07-377-4299 or 0800-472-848.

■ Cultural Activities

Now that all your adrenaline has leaked out of your body, how about time for some culture? Try **Wairakei Terraces** for an introduction to Maori culture. It's only been open since 2002 and offers a more intimate experience than some of the higher-profile shows in Rotorua. The geothermal area has geysers, mud, and hot water pools. The whole place was built next to the geothermal power plant to complement the plant and to recover what was lost when the plant was built in the 1950s, like the silica terraces – man-made terraces were built to replace those that were destroyed. The evening begins with a *powhiri* (traditional welcome) and *wero* (challenge). This is followed by a guided tour of the village where traditional crafts are demonstrated (this part seemed a bit over-acted to me) and hangi or traditional Maori meal. The Maori concert is performed during the hangi and the hangi meal was probably the best I've had – not over-smoked or dried out at all! The very friendly hosts are deservedly proud of what they've created. Guided tours of the power plant and steam field are also available during the day. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm for tours of the village (independent or guided), animal park and carving workshop. The visitor center has audio-visual displays about power generation. Contact the visitor center to inquire about evening performances – days may vary. Day admission $18 adults, $9 children; evening $75 adults, $37.50 children. www.wairakeiterraces.co.nz, SH5, ☎/fax 07-378-0913.

> **Did you know?** Large caldera volcanoes like Taupo are associated with geothermal systems where underground water is heated by the volcano. The Wairakei geothermal area produces about 8% of New Zealand's electricity.

■ Thermal Activities

The **Volcanic Activity Centre** in the Wairakei Tourist Park has interactive displays explaining all the activity that's going on underground while we merrily make our way through life. There is also an extensive volcano-inspired gift shop. $5 adults, $2.50 children. www.volcanoes.co.nz, ☎ 07-374-8375.

Clearly, Rotorua has the lion's share of thermal tourism, but don't count out Taupo. **Craters of the Moon** is an area of thermal activity that is operated by DoC. It's very natural, doesn't have the hype or commercial feel of most of the other thermal areas, and is free. There are boardwalk paths and interpretive signs. Volunteers who look after cars in the car park also run a small shop at the entrance and sell postcards, snacks, etc. Donations are appreciated. Open daily until dusk. Karapiti Road, off SH1.

If you're interested in learning more about volcanic and other thermal events, consider a Volcanic Explorer trip, through **Eco Explorer**. These are the only really in-depth tours that can explain the science and history of the area; they can be on the lake by launch, on land, or by air. Tie it in with a fishing or helicopter trip – custom tours available. Owners David and Liz Otway also operate Kayaking Kiwi (see page 226). They will combine eco-tours with kayak trips. They also lead forest walks around the area – into the Opepe Forest, Pureora Forest, up Mount Pureora and at Lake Rotopounamu. David comes by his interest in the area and its geology honestly – his father is a volcanologist. These are the folks to call if you want a custom tour.

www.ecoexplorer.co.nz or www.kayakingkiwi.com, ☎ 07-378-0909, fax 07-378-0929.

Tucked into the bush 25 minutes north of Tahoe is the **Hidden Valley of Orakei Korako**, on the shores of Lake Ohakuri. It can only be accessed by boat, so it is more natural than many areas and receives fewer visitors, making your time here a bit more special. Another point of difference is the Ruatapu Cave, which is 40 meters (130 feet) deep, and the large, brightly colored silica terraces. The self-guided walk around colorful pools, active geysers and bubbling mud holes takes about an hour. Café, kayaks and rowboats. Backpacker accommodation is also available. Opens at 8 am daily. www.orakeikorako.co.nz, Orakei Korako Road. It's accessed from Tutukau Road, which runs between SH1 and SH5, then you by boat launch, ☎ 07-378-3131.

Just outside of town is **Taupo Hot Springs & Health Spa**. Mineral pools (private pools available) of varying temperatures, waterslides and spa treatments are nestled beside the river and gorge walls. It's a low-fuss kind of place, no snazzy café – you get your chips out of a vending machine – and very comfortable. The spa has a full menu of services and I can't think of a better way to spend the day. Open daily, 7:30 am to 9:30 pm, $8 adults, $3 children. www.taupohotsprings.com, SH5 (Napier-Taupo Road), ☎ 07-377-6502, fax 07-377-6501.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

Must do: See the **Aratiatia Falls**. The Aratiatia rapids are part of a huge hydroelectric power station. Water is released during the winter at 10 am, 12 noon and 2 pm; during the summer at those times and at 4 pm. The release lasts for 30 minutes. It's especially cool before the water is released when you can see the boulders dry. About 10 km (six miles) north of Taupo; follow the signs on SH5.

A little closer to Taupo on SH1, is **Huka Falls**, the major waterfall on the Waikato River. The force of the water is amazing – 220,000 liters (62,000 gallons) per second blast through the narrows – enough to fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools every second. The locals say that Huka Falls are New Zealand's most visited natural attraction.

Local products: If you like prawns, don't miss the **Prawn Farm**. It's the only geothermal prawn farm in the world and you can take a guided tour, then head into the restaurant and enjoy prawn and non-prawn dishes. www.prawnpark.com, right by Huka Jet on Huka Falls Road, ☎ 07-374-8474.

The Honey Hive has live bees on display and educational information about bees and honey production. Plus you'll find just about every honey product you can imagine. This is also the place for fruit-wine tasting. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm. www.honey.co.nz, Huka Falls Loop Road, ☎ 07-374-8553.

■ Where to Stay

The top of the stack is definitely **Huka Lodge**. Set on the banks of the Waikato River, it is considered one of the top retreats in the world, and who are we to argue with that? This is where the Queen

stays when she visits; it has probably received more international awards and attention than any other. www.hukalodge.com, ☎ 07-378-5791, fax 07-378-0427 ($$$$$).

The sprawling **Lake Taupo Lodge** on Acacia Bay is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Beautiful grounds, lovely accommodation and great food. www.laketaupolodge.co.nz, 41 Mapara Road, ☎ 07-378-7386, fax 07-377-3226 ($$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

West Wellow is in stylish Acacia Bay, with fantastic views of the lake. There are four guest rooms, three with en-suite bathroom, and one with a private bath down the hall. It's comfortable yet elegant and guests are free to enjoy the entire home. Many weddings are performed on the beautiful grounds. www.westwello.co.nz, 39 Mapara Road, ☎ 07-378-0435, fax 07-378-0635 ($$$$).

For a stunning hillside location with fantastic views of the lake and a hostess who's a massage therapist, go **to Tauhara Sunrise**. www.tauharasunrise.com, 38 Mapara Road, Acacia Bay, ☎ 07-376-8555 ($$$$).

Paeroa Homestay is right on the water… follow the garden path and end up on one of two small private beaches. There is a dinghy to use and John has a charter boat for fishing. There are three guest rooms, a large guest lounge, a deck and lots of nooks and crannies for catching the sun or sitting in the shade. John and Barbara were farmers in Hawke's Bay and they hosted farmstays – they know all about Lake Taupo and the rest of New Zealand. www.taupohomestay.com, 21 Te Kopua Street, ☎ 07-378-8449, fax 07-378-8446 ($$$$).

The largest complex in Taupo is **Wairakei Resort**, slightly out of town and directly across from a golf course. There are executive suites, studios, newly remodeled villas… something for everyone, including families. Two restaurants, swimming pools, tennis courts, a full gym (with squash court) and lovely gardens make the list complete. Near the river, and you can walk to Huka Falls if you like. www.wairakeiresort.co.nz, SH5, ☎ 07-374-8021 or 0800-737-687 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Terraces Hotel** was undergoing a major renovation and rebuild when I was last in Taupo. It was built originally in 1889 and is a stately, grand resort adjacent to the Taupo Hot Springs. From the looks of the construction and plans, I expect the rooms and facilities will be phenomenal. www.terraceshotel.co.nz, SH5, ☎ 07-378-7080, fax 07-378-4174 ($$$$).

The **Copthorne Hotel and Resort Manuels Terrace** has a big name and a huge range of accommodation options to suit just about any needs. Located on the lake, there are also two popular restaurants and a heated swimming pool. www.copthornemanuelstaupo.co.nz, 243 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-378-5110 or 0800-555-511, fax 07-378-5341 ($$$$).

The **Caboose African Express** is themed around a rail trip in Africa. All the decorations and furniture are African and the restaurant serves wonderful meals (with a lot of game on the menu) overlooking the lake. Great bar, too. www.taupo.caboose.co.nz, 100 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-376-0116 ($$-$$$).

The Cove is a great choice for lakefront accommodation. Studios and suites (rumor is that one has a vibrating bed) with wonderful views and modern, stylish decorations. www.thecove.co.nz, 213 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-378-7599, fax 07-378-7393 ($$$-$$$$).

For an upmarket motel, to go **Baycrest Lodge**. Spacious rooms, heated pool, guest bar, golf driving net. www.baycrest.co.nz, 79 Mere Road, ☎ 07-378-3838, fax 07-378-4007 ($$$-$$$$).

Another choice motel is **The Cottage Mews**, with two-level lake-view units, family units and studios. www.cottagemews.co.nz, 311 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-378-3004, fax 07-378-3005 ($$-$$$).

The **Baywater Motor Inn** has 12 units, each with its own balcony, and is right across from the beach. baywater.motorinn@xtra.co.nz, 126 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-378-9933 or 0800-926-822, fax 07-378-9940 ($$-$$$).

Clearwater Motor Lodge is right on the lake with its very own hot-water stream running alongside. Very comfortable units with full kitchen and spa baths in all. Just down the beach from Hot Water Beach. www.clearwatermotorlodge.co.nz, 229 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-377-2071, fax 07-377-0020 ($$$).

For a good value motel, try **Lakeland of Taupo**. Nice grounds, simple place, nothing too fancy, but there is a tennis court and two pools. www.lakeland.co.nz, 282 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-378-3893, fax 07-378-3891 ($$).

Great views and good prices come together at **Suncourt Motorhotel and Conference Centre**. www.suncourt.co.nz, Northcroft Street, ☎ 07-378-8265, fax 07-378-0809 ($$-$$$).

The backpackers lodge of choice is **Tiki Lodge**. Brand new in 2003, this is a luxury backpackers hostel with dorms and doubles. The large, modern kitchen opens to a deck that is a magnificent spot for sitting outside looking at the lake. Maori art adorns the place and is focused mainly on (you guessed it) the Tiki. Undercover parking. The prices are a tad more than some backpackers, but definitely worth it. www.tikilodge.co.nz, 104 Tuwharetoa Street, ☎ 07-377-4545, fax 07-377-4585 ($).

Another good choice for backpackers is **Rainbow Lodge**. Handy, yet not on the main drag, clean, funky, and friendly. There are singles, twins, doubles and dorms. rainbowlodge@clear.net.nz, 99 Titiraupenga Street, ☎ 07-378-5754, fax 07-377-1548 ($).

A little farther afield is **Berkenhoff Lodge**. It's a former motel and many of the rooms have en-suite bathroom. Pool and spa, near the bungy jump. bhoff@reap.org.nz, corner of Duncan and Scannell Streets, ☎ 07-378-4909, fax 07-378-0242 ($).

Sunset Lodge is a small facility in a residential neighborhood, near 2 Mile Bay. Not a bad walk into town, and handy to beaches and the beach walkway. sunset@reap.org.nz, 5 Tremaine Avenue, ☎ 07-378-5962 ($).

The **Lake Taupo Top 10 Holiday Park** is a real winner. It's big and well-planned and there is plenty of space for all the guests. There is a huge range of accommodation from tent spaces and simple cabins to motel units. Very clean and the units are updated regularly. Tennis courts, swimming pool, gigantic games room. www.taupotop10.co.nz, 28 Centennial Drive, ☎/fax 07-378-6860 ($-$$).

Out trendy Acacia Bay Road is **Great Lake Holiday Park** with tourist flats, cabins, tent and power sites. www.greatlake.co.nz, ☎ 07-378-5159, fax 07-377-2541 ($-$$).

DeBretts Thermal Resort is set in a mature landscape at the same location as Taupo Hot Springs Spa. Standard cabins, lodges and studios, as well as powered and non-powered camping sites; there is also a licensed restaurant/café. www.debrettresort.co.nz, SH5, ☎ 07-378-8559, fax 07-377-2181 ($-$$).

■ Where to Camp

You can camp for free at **Reids Farm** for up to 28 days. It's on Huka Falls Road, right beside the river.

■ Where to Eat

Wishart Huka Winery has free wine tasting and vineyard tours and they are developing a wine educational area and library. Many of the grapes are sourced from Hawke's Bay, but some are grown on-site. **Huka Vineyard Restaurant** has a fabulous deck that could make summer lunch a day-long affair. Open seven days for lunch; dinner on the weekends in summer. The food is contemporary New Zealand. 56 Huka Falls Road. ☎ 07-378-5426 ($$-$$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Max Licensed Café is open 24 hours a day (rather unusual in New Zealand) and has "great food fast." Nice full meals of fish, lamb and beef as well as a huge burger menu and baked things. Good coffee too. 38 Roberts Street, ☎ 07-378-8444 ($).

My choice for the best fudge brownies in town goes to **Replete Café**, who also happen to make wonderful sandwiches. 45 Heu Heu Street ($-$$).

The Bantry Restaurant has contemporary New Zealand cuisine served in a cozy atmosphere. Tasty mains include fish of the day, lamb, beef and chicken, but not much in the way of vegetarian options. Very nice wine list. ☎/fax 07-378-0484, 45 Rifle Range Road ($$$).

The finest food and service is at **The Bach**. World-class chefs, great food, perfect atmosphere. And they also make pizza. 2 Pataka Road, ☎ 07-378-7856 ($$-$$$).

Jolly Good Fellows has authentic English-style food, such as mushy peas. It's comfortable for single travelers who want to people-watch, as well as for groups. 76 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-378-0457 ($-$$).

Lotus Thai Restaurant is the choice for Thai. Open for lunch Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and dinner every day but Tuesday. 137 Tongariro Street, ☎ 07-376-9497 ($$).

Taupo Hell is a chain around New Zealand and has hellishly good pizza. My favorite is in Wellington at 30 Tuwharetoa Street, ☎ 07-377-8181 or 0800-864-355 ($$).

Fine Fettle Café boasts natural whole foods. It's off the main drag, so not quite so touristy, but a favorite among the locals. Good breakfast, lunch and snack menu. Open every day from 9 am. Paora Hape Street, ☎ 07-378-7674 ($).

Turangi & Tokaanu

At the southern end of Lake Taupo, 40 minutes from the town of Taupo, is Turangi, "The Trout Fishing Capital of the World." Around the lake a bit farther is Tokaanu. In addition to great fishing, there are some good walks based here. The town came into being because of the construction of a major hydroelectric plant in the early 1960s.

■ Information Sources

The **Turangi Visitor Centre** is on Ngawaka Place, ☎ 07-386-8999.

DoC is on Turanga Plance (just off the intersection of SH1 and SH41), ☎ 07-386-8607, fax 07-386-7086.

■ Adventures

On Water

The **Tongariro National Trout Centre** is run by DoC and has a trout-spawning stream, underwater viewing chamber and interpretive displays. Definitely worth a stop, and it's free! Three km (less than two miles) south of Turangi. ☎ 07-386-9243.

Turangi is a popular fishing destination (see *Taupo* section, page 226, for guide options) and is also the base for whitewater in the region. For either whitewater thrills or gentle floats with the kids, contact **Tongariro River Rafting**. You can even rent a four-person raft and pilot it yourself under the supervision of a guide. You can also opt for raft fishing, overnight excursions, rescue courses or kayak trips. www.tongariro-riverrafting.com, The Rafting Centre, Atirau Road, Turangi, ☎ 07-386-6409 or 0800-101-024.

Kayaks and rafts are the two ways to go with **Rock 'n' River**. Choose from a half-day self-guided trip in the lake or streams, or hit the whitewater of the Tongariro, Mohaka, Rangitaiki, Rangitikei or Wairoa. Prices begin at $40 per person for the half-day, self-guided. www.raftingnewzealand.com, SH41, Tokaanu, ☎ 07-386-0352 or 0800-865-226.

If you'd rather not exert much effort, you can soak in hot water springs at **Tokaanu Thermal Pools**. There is a children's pool, a large public pool and family-sized private pools. A short walk wanders through native bush and a trout stream edges the property. Open daily, 10 am to 9 pm. $4 adults, $2 children. Mangaroa Street, ☎ 07-386-8575.

On Foot & by Bike

There are some great short loops and one-way tracks around Turangi. Pick up a copy of the DoC brochure ***Turangi Walks*** at the information center. Walks vary in length from five minutes to 2½ hours.

A popular option in the Kaimanawa is the **Pillars of Hercules** walk – it starts with a steep set of steps and offers views of the gorge where the river

has eroded a path through lava flows. It's only about 10 minutes, and begins about two km (just over a mile) on Kaimanawa Road.

Two of the most popular walks, also open to mountain bikes, are in the **Kaimanawa Forest Park** and accessed by Kaimanawa Road. You need a permit for this road, available at the Turangi Information Centre or the Rotoaira Forest Trust office, also in Turangi. **Tree Trunk Gorge** walk takes about 2½ hours on foot (in and out on the same track) and goes through native bush along the old power access road. It offers great views on a clear day. **Tongariro River Trail** is just south of Turangi and is popular for both walkers and bikers.

Vertical Assault is the new climbing-wall center at Extreme Backpackers (see below). www.extremebackpackers.co.nz, 26 Ngawaka Place, ☎ 07-386-8949, fax 07-286-8946.

■ Where to Stay

Tongariro Lodge is where you go if you like Huka Lodge but want to wear your jeans and not spend $1,000 a night. Accommodation is in chalets set amidst the 22 acres of wooded, riverfront grounds. A very popular fishing lodge, but close to other activities, too. www.tongarirolodge.co.nz, Turangi, ☎ 07-386-7946, fax 07-386-8860 ($$$$).

Tongariro River Motel offers simple, dependable motel units near to the Tongariro River. Corner SH1 and Link Road, ☎ 07-386-8555 or 0800-187-688 ($$).

Tucked away in the trees, right on the river, and affordable, is **The Creel Lodge**. Taupahi Road, ☎/fax 07-386-8081 ($$).

The **Anglers Paradise Resort** has a heated pool, a spa and a restaurant. All suites have private patios. anglers@reap.org.nz, corner SH41 and Ohuanga Road, ☎ 07-386-8980, fax 07-386-7408 ($$-$$$).

New on the backpacker scene, is **Extreme Backpackers**, where there is a large lounge, Internet access, big kitchen, a nice outdoor area and free coffee and tea. Site of the Vertical Assault climbing wall. www.extremebackpackers.co.nz, 26 Ngawaka Place, ☎ 07-386-8949, fax 07-286-8946 ($).

The other backpacker choice is **Bellbird Lodge**, which just sold to new owners in 2004. There are twins, doubles and dorms. www.bellbird.co.nz, at the corner of Tautahanga Road and Rangipoia Place, ☎ 07-386-8281 ($).

■ Where to Eat

In addition to some takeout options, **Red Crater Café** has gourmet burgers and pizza, coffee and smoothies. At the Vertical Assault climbing wall (above). 26 Ngawaka Place, ☎ 07-386-8949, fax 07-286-8946 ($).

Tongariro National Park

Established in 1887, Tongariro National Park, a World Heritage area, is the oldest National Park in New Zealand and the fourth-oldest in the world. It became a national park when Te Heuheu Tunkin IV, the then-paramount chief of the Ngati Tuwharetoa, gifted the three sacred peaks – Ruapehu, Ngaruahoe and Tongariro – to the government. It's 49 km (30 miles) from

Turangi to the National Park on SH32. Driving to the area, as you climb onto the plateau that has a desert, Mars-like feel, the terrain changes, the flora changes, and the weather changes. Mt. Ruapehu is New Zealand's largest active volcano – it last erupted in 1996 and before that in 1995. Ruapehu is also home to the largest single ski field in New Zealand and, is, consequently, a popular winter and summer destination.

> **Tip:** Whakapapa Village is in Tongariro National Park. The town of National Park is about 15 km (nine miles) from Whakapapa Village.

This area was the location for a quite a lot of the *Lord of the Rings* filming. Standing beside Mt. Ruapehu is Mt. Ngauruhoe, or "Mt. Doom."

■ Getting Around

Tongariro Track Transport runs from National Park and Whakapapa. ☎ 07-892-3716 or 021-563-109.

Howard's Lodge provides shuttle transport for the Tongariro Crossing and for the 42nd Traverse (see *On Foot,* below). They also have equipment and clothes for rent. ☎ 07-892-2827.

Tongariro Expeditions services Taupo and Turangi and also provides transport for the Waihohonu Traverse, in addition to the Tongariro Crossing. ☎ 07-377-0435.

Alpine Scenic Tours provides service for the Tongariro Crossing and The Northern Circuit (see *On Foot* below), from Taupo, Turangi, National Park and National Park Whakapapa. www.alpinescenictours.co.nz, ☎ 07-378-7412 or 025-937-281.

■ Information Sources

The **Whakapapa Visitor Centre** is in Whakapapa Village and also has a DoC office. There is great information and interpretive displays about the area, its formation and history. Be sure to watch the two movies – one on the creation of the area and one on the National Park. Check in here for an up-to-date weather forecast. 8 am-6 pm in summer, to 5 pm in winter. ☎ 07-892-3729, fax 07-892-3814.

> **Did you know?** The DoC runs a summer program from the end of December to the beginning of February, with guided day-trips, evening talks and lots of walks and interactive programs. There are bike trips, guided night walks, all sorts of options. Contact DoC at Whakapapa for information.

For weather information in the area, phone Met Service, ☎ 0900 999 15.

■ Adventures

On Foot

There are many walks around the area, and DoC has produced a good series of brochures on them. Stop in the DoC office and pick up the appropriate ones – Whakapapa Walks, Round the Mountain,

Tongaririo Crossing, etc. While the longer walks take a lot of the attention, there are about two dozen shorter walks in the area and they are well sign-posted

By far the most popular is the **Tongariro Crossing**, one of New Zealand's Great Walks. It's 17 km (10½ miles) long and takes between six and eight hours, passing steam vents, brightly colored lakes – filled explosion craters – and lava flows along the way. The views from the track (at the highest it's 1,900 meters/6,175 feet) are fabulous. Or so I'm told. I would love to be able to give you first hand knowledge of this track – but all three times I've tried to do it, the weather has been shockingly bad and my tramp has been canceled. Honestly, the Tongariro Crossing is one of my New Zealand goals and it seems to be unattainable. Everyone – everyone – I have ever talked to about it says it's brilliant and I won't be able to believe how pretty it is or how spectacular the views. I was talking after my last canceled attempt to a local who said that February has the most settled weather (also the hottest and busiest), so give it a go and let me know how you do. Track transport (from National Park and Whakapapa Village) is available through a number of operators and guiding services are also available. See *Getting Around*, page 239, for transport operators.

Obviously, if I've never had decent weather for the one-day Tongariro Crossing, I've been completely out of luck for the **Northern Traverse**, 50-km (31-mile) circuit, a three- to four-day trip, or the **Round the Mountain** track, which is four to six days around Mt. Ruapehu. The Northern Traverse takes in most of the Tongariro Crossing and passes Mounts Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro. It also goes past lava flows, the Tama Lakes, Taranaki Falls and glacial valleys. Again, let me know. These are on my "must do" list of walks in New Zealand.

One of the best short walks in New Zealand is around **Lake Rotopounamu** ("greenstone lake") and I have managed to do this one. It only takes an hour or two and it's under the canopy, so you can do it in the rain. There are fabulous specimens of old-growth trees in here, a lot of rimu, matai and miro. On a clear day, plan to have a picnic on one of the beaches; the water is clear and the lake is only about 12 feet deep, so it warms up nicely in the summer. On SH47.

Rainy day option: There's an **Indoor Climbing Wall** at National Park Backpackers. The last time I tried to do the crossing, I ended up here and it's a popular, fun spot to spend some time, rainy or not. $12 adults, $9 children, including equipment (discount if you have your own gear). www.npbp.co.nz, Finlay Street, ☎/fax 07-892-2870.

Guided Options

Guided walks on the Tongariro Crossing, Northern Circuit and other local walks are available through **Outdoor Experiences**. But only **Outdoor Experiences** is licensed by DoC to lead walks on the Tongariro Crossing. That's not to say that others don't but, legally, these are the only folks allowed to. In addition to the one-day crossing, they offer guided three-day trips on the Northern Circuit, walks to the summit of Mt. Ruapehu and Mt. Ngauruhoe,

as well as other options to suit your needs. www.tongarironz.com, across from the Grand Chateau, ☎ 0800-806-369.

David Otway from **Kayaking Kiwi** (see page 226) leads guided walks around the region, including Opepe Forest, Pureora Forest, and Lake Rotopounamu. David's father is a volcanologist who has passed on plenty of information about the area to David – he has a very informative, but laid-back approach. www.ecoexplorer.co.nz, ☎ 07-378-0909 or 0800-529-255, fax 07-378-0929.

On Bikes

Tongariro Forest 42nd Traverse is probably the most famous ride around here and riding full out takes about three hours, though more like five hours to enjoy. Be careful, as the track is shared with quad bikes, horses and walkers. It's 46 km (nearly 29 miles) through the Tongariro Forest and provides some up, some down and some stream crossings. Transport and bike rental is available through Howard's Lodge (see *Where to Stay*, page 243, for details).

Fishers Track is only 21 km (13 miles), with the majority of it downhill. Get transport from Howard's Lodge.

On Horses & Quad Bikes

AUTHOR'S PICK

John Smythe operates **Horse Trax to the Max** and leads rides into the mountains from a base outside of Owhango. John is a very cool guy, half-Maori, half-pakeha and shares his beliefs and traditions while riding some of the most beautiful land around. He has a string of horses that all have their own personalities and are well-looked after. John is gentle and kind, but will challenge your riding ability through a variety of terrain. He offers rides from two hours to multiple days, staying at shearer's quarters along the way. You'll go deep into the mountains and, from their tops, have views you won't believe. Bookings essential. Oio Road ☎ 07-895-6161.

Kiwi Outback Tours Limited run horse treks and quad-bike rides into the bush from their base between Turangi and National Park. www.kiwioutback.com, SH46, Tongariro, ☎/fax 07-386-6607.

For a laid-back Kiwi kind of quad-bike ride, talk to **Shayne**, a Kiwi bloke who leads rides into Tongariro Forest Park from the Bushline Lodge in Owhango. Owhango Road, about 30 minutes from National Park off SH4, ☎ 07-895-7557 or 07-896-7936.

The Raurimu Spiral

In 1908, the Raurimu Spiral was completed, bringing plaudits to New Zealand for this railroad engineering feat. Using three horseshoe curves, two short tunnels and one complete circle, the main trunk rail line connecting Auckland to Wellington rises over 700 feet in seven miles, instead of the three miles of actual distance covered.

You can see the spiral from a lookout at Raurimu; you can also do a round-trip day excursion between Taumaranui and National Park.

In the Air

Based near Whakapapa, **Mountain Air** runs scenic volcanic flights around Tongariro from 15 to 35 minutes. Prices begin at $70 per person. www.mountainair.co.nz, ☎ 07-892-2812 or 0800-922-812.

On Snow

Mt. Ruapehu boasts the largest snow area in NZ, the highest lift access in New Zealand, and the longest vertical drop in Australasia. It's also the largest individual ski resort in New Zealand and on a live volcano. It's definitely the place on the North Island, and a lot of ski clubs have lodges here. www.mtruapehu.com, ☎ 07-892-3738, fax 07-892-3732.

Tukino ski field is on the eastern slope of the mountain and requires 4WD to access. It's the smaller option, to be sure, but lift passes are only $30 for adults, $20 for children. With 65% beginner runs, this is a good place to introduce the kids to the sport (except that it's all tow-ropes, which can make even big people cry). www.tukino.co.nz, 22 km (14 miles) north of Waiouru or 46 km (29 miles) south of Turangi on SH1 (the Desert Road), the seven-km (four-mile) turnoff road is sign-posted, ☎ 0800-885-466.

■ Sightseeing

From mid-December to April, scenic chairlifts operate on **Mt. Ruapehu**, from Top O' the Bruce at the base of Whakapapa Ski Area (a shuttle bus is available from Whakapapa Village). The lift goes to 2,020 meters (6,565 feet), and then you can walk to the Dome Shelter at 2,670 meters (8,677 feet). There are two cafés at the top, as well as guided walks from the top of the chair to the summit of Mt. Ruapehu. Chairlifts operate from 9 am to 4 pm. Round-trip fare: $17 adults, $9 children. www.mtruapehu.com, ☎ 07-892-3738.

■ Where to Stay

Whakapapa Village

You would have to be blind to miss the **Grand Chateau**, a Kiwi icon. Built in 1929, it is a grand old lady sitting in front of the majestic mountains. There is a big, old-fashioned stately lounge, filled with chairs where you can curl up and read, stare out the window at the mountains, or listen to the piano player. Two restaurants are available, a formal à la carte off the main lounge and a more relaxed bar/restaurant on the ground floor. It's a lovely old place, but feels a bit tired and in need of some TLC. In 2003, an addition was being built, with a more modern interior. A variety of room choices are available and the prices are quite reasonable, considering the location and style. www.chateau.co.nz, ☎ 07-892-3809 or 0800-242-832, fax 07-892-3704 ($$-$$$$).

The **Skotel** is behind the Chateau on Ngauruhoe Place and has hotel units in addition to chalets with kitchen and bath and backpackers accommodation. A friendly, low-key place to stay. www.skotel.co.nz ☎ 07-892-3777 or 0800-756-835 ($-$$$).

Whakapapa Holiday Park has tent sites, power sites, cabins and a lodge. There is also a small camp store. whakapapaholpark@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-892-3897 or 0800-756-835, fax 07-892-3026 ($).

On SH47, between Turangi and the Whakapapa Village turnoff, is **Eivins Lodge** with accommodation in twin rooms. Most people opt for the dinner, bed and breakfast option, but you can get just a bed as well. www.nationalpark.co.nz/eivins, ☎ 07-386-8062, fax 07-386-7659 ($-$$).

National Park

A terrific new boutique hotel **Tongariro Crossing Lodge** opened in 2003. There are six spacious suites, all stylishly decorated and all with private lounges. The common breakfast room is very comfortable and, with a chef on-site, lunch and dinner are available by arrangement. It's a historic location – reputedly it was a Cobb & Co. stagecoach inn. This lodge really fills a hole in the available accommodation for the area and offers personal service at a reasonable price. www.tongarirocrossinglodge.com, 37 Carroll Street, ☎ 07-892-2688 ($$$).

Adventure Lodge & Motel has bunks and doubles with shared-bath facilities, as well as studio units with kitchenettes. There's a nice big lounge, a separate TV room, and two spas. Meals are available as well. www.adventurenationalpark.co.nz, Carroll Street, ☎ 07-892-2991 or 0800-321-061, fax 07-892-2799 ($-$$).

Howard's Lodge has budget, standard and deluxe accommodation. It's under new ownership in 2003, but has always enjoyed a good reputation and the new owners are both friendly and enthusiastic. Very accommodating, they'll make bookings for you, rent equipment (including tramping, biking and skiing gear) and provide transport (for biking and tramping). www.howardslodge.co.nz, 11 Carroll Street, ☎/fax 07-892-2827 ($-$$).

National Park Backpackers has dorms with shared-bath, quads, doubles and twins with en-suite bathrooms. The doubles are huge! There are two kitchens, a shop, BBQ area and a wood-fired spa. This is also the site of the indoor climbing wall (see page 240), and track transport is available. www.npbp.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-892-2870, Finlay Street ($).

Pukenui Lodge has shared-bath and private-bath accommodation, a huge dining room and lounge and free e-mail. There's also a spa and a drying room and very friendly host. In the winter, breakfast is included. Millar Street, ☎ 07-892-2882 or 0800-785-368 ($).

Mountain Heights Lodge and Motel is just outside of the town of National Park and has bed and breakfast as well as units with kitchen and bath (breakfast can be ordered). Dinner by arrangement and mountain bikes are available. www.mountainheights.co.nz, SH4, ☎ 07-892-2833, fax 07-892-2850.

■ Where to Eat

Whakapapa Village

There are two restaurants at the Chateau and also a pub that serves food. The **Ruapehu Restaurant** is the "white linen" option, serving breakfast (buffet and à la carte), lunch and dinner. The dinner menu is the most extravagant in the area and bookings are essential. ☎ 07-892-3809 ($$$). Downstairs, the **Pihanga Café** ($$) is more casual and serves a wide range of pasta, meats and (surprisingly) burritos. It's my favorite at the Chateau for dinner – midway between the pretentiousness of the

Ruapehu and the bar meals at the **Whakapapa Tavern** ($-$$), which is just across the hall.

There is one restaurant at the **Skotel**, which is open for breakfast (7-9 am) and dinner (6-9 pm). Packed lunches are available if ordered the night before. Dinner has an à la carte menu (including casual meals such as pizza) and daily specials. Reservations are necessary for dinner. ☎ 07-892-3719 ($$-$$$).

National Park

Pub food and full meals are available at **Schnapps Bar** on Findlay Street. ☎ 07-892-2788 ($-$$).

Café-style food is at **Eivins Café**, recently rebuilt after a fire. Corner of SH4 and Carroll Street, ☎ 07-892-2844 ($-$$).

At the railroad station is **The Station** café, which opens every day at 11 am and stays open through dinner every day but Tuesday. Fresh modern food in a modern, trendy place. Sit here, read the paper and watch the trains go by. Findlay Street, ☎ 07-892-2854 ($$)

The **National Park Hotel** offers takeout and pub food. Corner Carroll & Ward Streets, ☎ 07-892-2805 ($$).

Ohakune

In Ohakune, on SH49, there is a sign – "Ohakune, Where Adventures Begin." Right next to it is a gigantic carrot, which seems a somewhat bizarre combination. Another huge sign nearby says, "Reject Carrots For Sale." (What does that mean?) You might guess, and you'd be right, that carrots are big business around here. The first market gardens were planted in 1925 by Chinese families who settled here.

Ohakune, in addition to being a big carrot-growing area, is also the gateway to two national parks – the Whanganui and the Tongariro. It's the happening spot during ski season, but it is also a great base for trips on the Whanganui River and walks in the Tongariro National Park. Tongariro National Park is easily accessed by the Ohakune Mountain Road, an incredibly picturesque 17-km (10½-mile) drive through lowland and beech forest and subalpine shrub. There are fabulous views and impressive stands of rimu and matai, as well as many, many cabbage trees.

■ Information Sources

The **Ruapehu Visitor Centre** is at 54 Clyde Street, ☎ 06-385-8427 or 0800-782-734.

The **DoC office** is on Ohakune Mountain Road, just over the railroad tracks.

■ Adventures

On Water

Ohakune is the base for many of the canoe companies that run trips on the Whanganui River – see the Wanganui chapter, page 164 ff., for details.

On Foot

Off the Ohakune Mountain Road are a number of walking tracks, including the **Mangawhero Forest Walk**. A new walking track, developed in 2000, this easy three-km (not even two miles) walk takes just an hour and follows the Mangawhero River.

The track to Waitonga Falls is a little longer, at four km (2½ miles) and just over an hour, but the reward is a beautiful waterfall.

On Bikes

Scenic Cycle Rides offers the Ohakune Mountain Road Ride, 17 km (10½ miles) downhill, on a paved road. It takes two hours, including the drive up. Ruatihi Downhill, 21 km (13 miles) downhill, paved, three hours, including the drive back. They transport you up; you end back at Ruatihi Domain for a picnic. sceniccycle@xtra.co.nz, 16 Miro Street, ☎ 06-385-8257 or 021-607-294.

In the Air

Ohakune Scenic Flights around Mounts Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu from 15 to 35 minutes. Cost begins at $55 per person. Ohakune Airfield, ☎ 06-385-9173

■ Where to Stay

Be aware: *Rates go up in the winter!*

Tussock Grove Boutique Hotel has just eight rooms, recently refurbished. The place is lovely and picture-perfect. www.tussockgrove.co.nz, 3 Karo Street, ☎ 06-385-8771, fax 06-385-8171 ($$$-$$$$).

Hobbit Motor Lodge and Restaurant has that alpine ski-area feel to it. Very lovely setting and modern facilities with studio, en-suite bathroom, two-bedroom and lodge rooms. There is a restaurant on-site. www.the-hobbit.co.nz, corner Goldfinch and Wye Streets, ☎ 06-385-8248, fax 06-385-8515 ($-$$).

Powderhorn Chateau is the ski resort of choice. Go there and you'll know you're in an alpine village. The definite draws include nice rooms, good restaurants, a sun bed and an indoor heated pool. www.powderhorn.co.nz, bottom of Mountain Road, ☎ 06-385-8888, fax 06-385-8925 ($$$).

Comfortable, clean and dependable is **Acacia Lodge**. www.acacialodgemotel.co.nz, 4 Moore Street, ☎ 06-385-8729 ($$).

There are motel units, chalets with kitchen and bath and backpacker facilities at the **Alpine Motel**. It's a well-kept place and there's a hot spa! www.alpinemotel.co.nz, 7 Miro Street, ☎ 06-385-8758 ($-$$).

For backpackers, try **Matai Lodge** where there are doubles, twins and dorms. www.matailodge.co.nz, at the corner of Clyde and Rata, ☎ 06-385-9169 ($).

Ohakune Top 10 Holiday Park is in a pleasant tree-lined area, just a short walk to shops and town. Cabins, units with kitchen and bath, and motel units. www.ohakune.net.nz, 5 Moore Street, ☎/fax 06-385-8561 or 0800-825-825 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

There are takeout places, kebabs, all the usual food in Ohakune and also a few spots that stand out.

Utopia Café & Wine Bar has good food for breakfast and lunch as well as dependable, tasty coffee. Clyde Street ($).

The **Fat Pigeon Garden Café and Bar** is at the bottom of Mountain Road and offers garden seating. Good coffee and food. The only bad thing is that it's only open on the weekends and holidays in the summer, but it is open daily in the winter. Mountain Road, ☎ 06-385-9423 ($$).

Matterhorn Restaurant and **The Powderkeg (**or "the Keg") are both at the Powderhorn Chateau and are the place to be for après ski and good food. The Matterhorn is the fine dining option, and the Powderkeg is more relaxed. At the corner of Mangawhero and Thames Street, ☎ 06-385-8888.

Mountain Rocks Café & Bar is a good choice for breakfast, lunch and dinner. A new restaurant with a happy attitude. Corner Clyde & Goldfinch, ☎ 06-385-8295 ($$).

Manawatu

Introduction

When traveling between Auckland and Wellington, many tourists (and locals alike) blast through the center of the North Island, taking SH1 from top to bottom. There's plenty of reason not to, though, and part of it is that you'll miss the region called Manawatu. When you're in France and want to know how the everyday folks live, you don't go to Paris. Likewise, when you're in New Zealand and want to know about real Kiwi life, get out of the main centers.

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Bordered by the Rangiteki and Manawatu Rivers, the Ruahine Ranges and the Tasman Sea, the Manawatu is a fertile agricultural area and deservedly proud of its rural heritage. And, while not home to any of New Zealand's Great Walks, the Manawatu should not be overlooked as a wonderful place to get out and explore the bush. Pick up a copy of ***Walks in the Manawatu*** from the information center. This handy little book describes dozens of local walks. When visiting the Manawatu, one of the most pleasant surprises for me was traveling through the **Pohangina Valley** – on the eastern edge of the region, this area hugs the Ruahine Forest Park and is one of those places that you will think you discovered first.

The narrow **Manawatu Gorge** stretches for 10 km (six miles) between Woodville on the east to Ashhurst on the west. The Maori named the Manawatu Gorge *Te Apiti* (the narrow passage), and the river *Te Au-Rere-a-Te-Tonga* (the rushing current of the south). It was an important river to the Maori, as it afforded a low-level route to cross from one side of the ranges to the other. Today, the river and gorge provide recreation and sightseeing.

> **Historic interest:** Railways in New Zealand are built on the southern faces of gorges because that side is less likely to slip!

Getting Here

By Air

Palmerston North International Airport is five km (three miles) northeast of the central business district and boasts of being the airport within New Zealand that is open the most – 99.5% of the time. Taxi fares to the airport from the central business district should run about $10-$15. www.pnairport.co.nz, ☎ 06-351-4415.

Air New Zealand and **Origin Pacific** connect Palmerston North with the rest of New Zealand and **Freedom Air** has low-cost direct flights to the Aus-

tralian cities of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney – making this a good base if you're going to hop across the Tasman Sea.

■ By Train

The **Overlander** (day train) and the **Northerner** (night train) pass through Palmerston North on their journeys between Auckland and Wellington. Bookings can be made at information centers or directly through **TranzScenic**. www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 0800 872 467.

The Capital Connection, a commuter service, links Palmerston North with Wellington, leaving at 8:20 in the morning and returning in the afternoon. You can reach them at ☎ 04-498-3000, extension 44324.

The train station is on Matthews Ave.

■ By Car

Half-way between Taupo and Wellington, Manawatu is easily reached by car and all state highways in the region lead directly to Palmerston North. It's two hours to Wellington (take SH1 to 57), two hours to Hawkes Bay (SH3 and SH2), two hours to Wairarapa (SH2) and just over an hour to Wanganui (SH3).

■ By Bus

Palmerston North is a bit of a hub for **InterCity Coachlines** and **Newmans**, with connections in all directions, and **White Star** stops at Palmerston North on its runs between Wellington and New Plymouth. The **City Bus Terminal** is at the corner of Main and Pitt Streets and buses can be booked through the information center. Buses also have arrivals and departures at Bulls and Sanson; **InterCity** and **Newman's** service Feilding.

Information Sources

Visit **Destination Manawatu** at **www.manawatunz.co.nz**. Information centers are scattered around the region and are listed throughout this chapter.

Palmerston North

Palmerston North ("Palmy" to those in the know) is the business center for the Manawatu. Farming in the area spurred the development of the town, which began subdivision in 1866. The current population is roughly 75,000 and a third is aged between the ages of 15 and 30. Probably the biggest claim to fame for Palmerton North is as the home of Massey University, which began as an agricultural college in 1927 and expanded to a full university in 1963. State-funded, Massey is one of New Zealand's leading research institutions. Palmerston North is also home to Te Wananga O Aotearoa (offering university education within a Maori-based environment) and International Pacific College.

■ Information Sources

A new (2003) **Manawatu Visitor Information Center** is at the northeastern quadrant of The Square in Palmerston North, manawatu-info@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-354-6593, fax 06-356-9841.

The **Department of Conservation** is at 717 Tremaine Ave., ☎ 06-358-9004.

■ Adventures

On Water

The **Lido Aquatic Center** has a "zoom tube" (waterslide to me and you), indoor/outdoor and toddler pools, spa, sauna, and so on. Located beside the Palmerston North Holiday Park on Park Road. ☎ 06-357-2684.

Manawatu Gorge Adventures offers half-day guided kayak trips through the Manawatu Gorge for paddlers of every skill level. With a one-to-four guide-to-client ratio, you're sure to be looked after as you find your way through the mostly Grade II rapids on a nine-km (almost six-mile) trip. The summer water temperatures of 18-22°C (65-70°F), make falling out not such a bad thing and the trips are fully narrated by guides who are knowledgeable about the gorge and its history. They'll even point out where the steam train fell off its rails and landed in the river. $65 per person. Full-day and overnight paddles on the Rangitikei River are also available. www.teamtactix.co.nz, ☎ 027-447-4025 or 0800-746-025.

Adventure Jet blasts its jet-boats through the high-sided canyon of the Manawatu Gorge. Adults $55, children $35 (under 12 years). Trips must be booked in advanced and can be arranged by contacting www.adventurejet.co.nz, ☎/fax 06-377-2114 or 025-464-664.

> **Did you know?** The Manawatu is one of only two rivers in the world that starts on one side of a mountain range and enters the sea on the other? And it's the only one that does it east-to-west.

On Foot

Maps for the following walks are available at the information centers.

In Palmerston North, there is the very pleasant **Easy Heritage Walk**, a one-hour, three-km (nearly two-mile) stroll around town, past many interesting historic sites, including the first public ladies' toilet, built in 1918 on the NE corner of the square. The Palmerston North City Council has also developed a series of "**KiwiWalks**," each of which takes 60 minutes or less and wanders around different parts of the city.

The **Manawatu Gorge Walk** is along the side of the river and takes about four hours one-way; you can walk it from either the Ashurst or the Woodville end. It's a good idea to arrange transport back to your car if you're not keen on retracing your steps. There is a half-hour loop option, as well.

City Rock has an indoor climbing wall and offers instruction for everyone from the total beginner to the most advanced. Once you've mastered the indoor wall, these guys will take you to the outdoor climbing spots, or you can arrange abseiling, canyoning or caving. If you're looking for something a lit-

tle different, give bridge swinging a go over the Manawatu Gorge. $35 buys you two hours of endless jumping. www.cityrock.co.nz, 217 Featherston Street, Palmerston North, ☎/fax 06-357-4552.

On Wheels

There are a few good mountain-bike rides to be had just minutes from Palmerston North. The **Kahuterawa Loop** is a one-hour ride mostly through pine forest. Get a map from Pedal Pushers before heading out of town. The **North Range Road** is an out-and-back 4WD ride on gravel roads. **Pedal Pushers** has a map for that as well and they are at 303 Church Street, ☎ 06-356-7987.

Bike rental is available at **Pack 'n Pedal** for about $45 per day. They also rent bike racks for your car and were putting together a bike map when I last visited. 469 Main Street, ☎ 06-355-3338 or 0508-722-567.

Another ride is along the **Bridle Track** that follows the Manawatu River for just under 10 km (six miles), beginning at Riverside Drive and ending at Paneiri Park (or the reverse). This is one of the KiwiWalks, so take a look at the walk brochure and watch out for those not on wheels!

For further mountain-bike information, contact the **Manawatu Mountain Bike Club**, www.mountainbike.co.nz/clubs/manawatu.

For adventures on four wheels, give **Go4Wheels** a call. Located just east of the Manawatu Gorge, these trips travel across farm tracks to the top of the Tararuas and up to the Tararua Wind Farm. Prices range from $55 for a one-hour river or farm ride to $65 for a wind farm trip. Bookings essential. go4wheels@amcom.co.nz, Gorge Road, ☎ 06-376-7136 or 027-278-7362.

Another option is **Tararua 4x4's Offroad Adventures**. Prices for trips around high-country working farms and the Tararua Ranges begin at $50 per person and there is a minimum of two people. Pick up point is at Beyond the Bridge Café. Contact the Corlett's at tararua4x4@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-357-1713, 021-630-487 or 025-601-5571.

Rainy day suggestion: Daytona Indoor Motorsport Centre is an indoor go-kart track at 23C Bennett Street. Drivers must be age 15 or older. ☎ 06-353-5082.

On Horses

Timeless Horse Treks has trail rides and Clydesdale-drawn wagon trips around the Manawatu River and into the hill country. They also offer overnight and six-day options. Prices begin at $25 per person and leave from the Beyond the Bridge Café. Contact Cameron Horne, ☎ 06-376-6157 or 025-468-536.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

The **Tararua Wind Farm** is already the largest wind farm in the Southern Hemisphere, and will at least double by 2004, when it will be capable of providing power to 32,000 homes. Getting to it can be a bit daunting, but the views are rewarding. Drive through the Manawatu Gorge, across the Ballance Bridge and turn right on Hall Block Road. It's about a six-km (four-mile) climb through private property, so be mindful of

signs and closed gates. This is a very narrow, steep and windy gravel road and you'll need to watch out for other cars, quad bikes, livestock and walkers. There are few passing areas, so you may need to reverse.

Did you know? New Zealand produces 29% of its electricity through renewable resources – more than any developed other country. Most comes from hydroelectricity, but wind farms are starting to become more common.

Victoria Esplanade is home to aviaries, rose gardens, nature trails, a conservatory and sports fields. Wandering through the bush to the Manawatu River is a marked and measured walk, which then joins the **Manawatu Riverside Walkway & Bridle Track**, another favorite that wanders along the river. At the Esplanade, there is a 'big adventure' play area for kids and a **Promo King Fun Park** with go-karts, bumper boats and mini-golf. At the **Esplanade Station**, ¼-scale trains leave for a 1.3-km (just under a mile) round-trip around the park. $1.50, 1 pm-4 pm on weekends; extended hours during school and public holidays. The Esplanade is free, and open from dawn to dusk.

Palmerston North was once called "The Rose City."

The **Palmerston North City Library** calls itself "The Living Room of the City," and is a great place to hang out. Short tours of its architecture and art collection are available, there's an inviting café, and public showers can be found on the mezzanine level. Open 10 am to 6 pm Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; 10 am-8 pm Wednesday and Friday; 10 am-4 pm Saturday; 1-4 pm Sunday. 4 The Square, % 06-351-4100, fax 06-351-4102.

Just outside the library is **Bruce McKenzie Booksellers**. I can get lost in independent bookstores like this. They have a wonderful selection of books, including a great travel section, are open late Wednesday and Friday nights and everything is there. Definitely worth a stop. 51 George Street, ☎ 06-356-9922.

Good value: Taylor Jensen Fine Arts has a wonderful collection of local art, from paintings to sculpture, to traditional carvings and weavings. With "provincial" pricing, the gallery, which is beside the city library, represents both contemporary and traditional artists and has an on-line catalogue. Affordable, irresistible souvenirs to take home. www.finearts.co.nz, 39 George Street, ☎/fax 06-355-4278.

The **Regent Theatre** is one of the nicest provincial theaters in New Zealand. After 60 years of film and live performance, the theater went through a decline in use and was threatened with demolition. Following a massive fundraising effort, the 1930-era building underwent a major remodeling and re-opened in 1998, it's barrel-vaulted foyer ceilings, marble staircase and elaborate friezes restored to their original glory. Worth peeking in, even if you're not seeing a show. On Broadway Street.

Te Manawa is the only regional museum in New Zealand to weave together three disciplines – museum, art gallery and science center. Te Manawa aims to teach children that museums aren't stuffy places and science centers are not just for people with superior intellect. The science center is the only one of the three with an admission charge ($6 adults, $4 children) and is designed with the philosophy that "things only work here if you touch them." The museum, specializing in the history, art and culture of the region, has a permanent Maori display and a changing collection of artifacts from "other peoples." The collection in the art gallery is mostly works of New Zealand artists and of an exceptionally high standard. Open 10 am-5 pm, every day but Christmas. www.temanawa.co.nz, 396 Main Street, ☎ 06-355-5000, fax 06-358-3552.

If you have at least a passing interest in rugby (and frankly, how can you not?), stop in the **New Zealand Rugby Museum**. It's home to the most extensive collection of rugby mementos, its collection spanning from the early days of the game in 1870 to the present. If for no other reason than to see the goofy caps these guys used to wear and to be surrounded by the passion of New Zealand's national sport, pay your $4 ($1 for children) and enjoy. Bob Luxford is the curator (he answered an ad for a volunteer job in 1987 and hasn't left). He's a fount of rugby knowledge. Open Monday to Saturday, 10 am to noon, 1:30 to 4 pm; Sunday, 1:30-4 pm. www.rugbymuseum.co.nz, 87 Cuba Street, ☎/fax 06-358-6947.

In addition to the stores found in every New Zealand center, there are quite a few boutiques and specialty shops in Palmerston North. My favorite for clothes is **Trumps**; they always seem to have a good selection of all type of clothes, from work to play to party. On Coleman Mall, ☎ 06-358-9912.

Ezi-buy is Australasia's largest catalog marketing company, selling clothing and housewares. Their home is Palmerston North and there is a retail store at 170 John F. Kennedy Drive, ☎ 06-952-2112 or 0508 500 500.

Massey University

It's always nice to drive or walk around a university campus and Massey is no different. When you're there, stop in at **Whareratа (**an activity center that at one time was the faculty club) for a cuppa and a muffin, or for lunch. It began as a homestead for a wealthy Hawke's Bay farmer and it's a good place to grab a snack or light meal and sit outside on the veranda – or take a walk around the sunken gardens that were planted in 1924. ☎ 06-350-5864.

■ Where to Stay

As Dave Stewart led me down the basement stairs at **Hiwinui Country Estate**, he said over his shoulder, "I have a model train set up down here," "Oh, terrific," I thought. But, when he flipped the switch to illuminate a glorious wine cellar, the thought changed to, "this guy, I like." As I browsed the mostly New Zealand wine collection, he suggested I not stay too long or I'd miss my massage appointment in the day spa. Does it get any better? The warm, welcoming and entertaining Stewarts have custom-built the accommodation to diversify their farming interests. One of New Zealand's most prominent sheep breeders, the Stewart family has owned the land since 1886; they also run a dairy farm, and Dave is happy to show guests around the properties. I also spotted a jet-boat in the garage, and I don't think too much arm-twisting would be needed to get it in the river.

Only 15 minutes from the center of Palmerston North. www.hiwinui.co.nz, 465 Ashhurst Bunnythorpe Road, ☎ 06-329-2838 or 025-268-0173, fax 06-329-2828 ($$$$).

A B&B with kitchen and bath, **Udys on Anders** is just six minutes from the CBD. Tim and Glenda Udy farmed dairy, beef and sheep before moving here, closer to town. They are a wealth of local knowledge and very easy to talk to. The kitchen in the unit is complete, or you can arrange meals with the family. There is also a tennis court with lights and outdoor dining area. kiwitim@clear.net.nz, 52 Anders Road, ☎ 06-354-1722 or 027-409-299, fax 06-354-1711 ($$$).

The **Country Pioneer Cabin** is a charming little B&B eight minutes from Palmerston North. It's a cozy private cabin, sleeping just two, and there is an outdoor heated bath in the garden. Continental breakfast is delivered to the front veranda. pat.collins@clear.net.nz, 15 Moonshine Valley Road, ☎ 06-357-1431 ($$).

Only 50 meters (160 feet) to the Regent Theatre, **Consolidated Mid-City Motel** is the closest to town and has very affordable rooms, as well as a spa pool and gym. www.midcity-motel.com, 129 Broadway, ☎ 06-357-2184 or 0800-666-400, fax 06-359-0777 ($$).

The **Empire Hotel** has recently undergone major renovations. It is in an attractive old building with three bars, food and accommodation at the corner of Princess and Main streets, ☎ 06-357-8002 ($$).

Consider Fitzherbert Avenue "motel row," with lots of options. As you travel farther from the the middle of town, the prices tend to drop. Dependable options include:

Brand new in 2002, the **Cornwall Motor Lodge has** 27 units, all with spa baths and kitchen. www.cornwallmotorlodge.co.nz, 101 Fitzherbert Avenue, ☎ 06-354-9010 or 0800-170-000, fax 06-356-8119 ($$-$$$).

The **Rose City Motel** has studios, one- to two-bedrooms and suites. Breakfast is available, not to mention a spa pool and squash courts. www.rosecitymotel.co.nz, 120 Fitzherbert Avenue, ☎ 06-356-5388, fax 06-356-5085 ($$$).

Another clean, quality place is the **Coachman Motel and Suites**. They have everything from studios to family units, full-kitchen options, and some with spa baths. Two spa pools and a gym. www.coachman.co.nz, 134 Fitzherbert Avenue, ☎ 06-357-3059 or 0800-262-246, fax 06-357-1603 ($$$).

Rydges caters to the corporate market but is a good option for tourists as well, particularly on weekends. Good restaurant and bar, large pool, gym, all the extras. www.rydges.com, 140 Fitzherbert Avenue, ☎ 06-356-5065, fax 06-356-6692 ($$$).

Adventure Backpackers has a decidedly warehouse feel but a massive kitchen and lounge. They cater to lots of large teams and groups, but individual travelers are welcome. It might help if you're on the younger side of life here. Mountain bikes are available to rent. www.adventure-backpackers.com, 95 King Street, ☎ 06-358-9595 ($).

The **Peppertree YHA** is a smaller, cozier option with a nice lounge and piles of videotapes to watch. Clean and friendly, they have dorms, doubles and family rooms. peppertreehostel@clear.net.nz, 121 Grey Street, ☎ 06-355-4054, fax 06-355-4063 ($).

The **Palmerston North Holiday Park** is in a park-like setting at the edge of Victoria Esplanade, with tourist flats, cabins and tent sites. www.holidayparks.co.nz/palmerstonnorth, 133 Dittmer Drive, ☎/fax 06-358-0349 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

You're not going to go hungry in Palmerston North unless you can't decide where to eat because of all the choices. With the large student population, there are the requisite noodle houses, Asian food centers and other affordable alternatives. But there's also fine dining around the town.

The café strip on George Street is the place to be on Saturday night and a good spot for "Sunday Morning Strolling." Among others, check out **George Street Delicatessen**, and **Moxis** (great smoothies and breakfast) ($-$$$).

Don't miss **The Gourmet's Pantry** for a light snack or to pick up food for cooking later. A great place to get unusual ingredients from around New Zealand and the world. 366 Church Street, ☎ 06-355-1199 ($).

Beside the Regent Theatre, between Broadway Ave and King Street, is the Regent Arcade. At the King Street end is **Stage Door**, where they make great coffee ($).

At the corner of Broadway and Princess is **The Bath House**, one of the city's nicest restaurants. A sliding roof over the courtyard allows for year-round al fresco dining. Lovely menu and professional service. Music on Thursday and Friday. 161 Broadway, ☎ 06-355-0051 ($$$).

Along the Square, check out **Roma** for (obviously) Italian lunch and dinner. Its basement bar is called **Uno**. 51 The Square, ☎ 06-356-1853 ($$-$$$).

For gourmet pizza, try **Pompeii**, open seven nights a week, 198 The Square, ☎ 06-359-0059 ($$).

Cobb & Co, a New Zealand family restaurant chain, is located in the Empire Hotel, at the corner of Princess and Main streets, ☎ 06-357-8002 ($$).

Diablos Restaurant on Fitzherberts Street makes good fusion food and is a popular, not-too-pricey kind of a place with nice atmosphere ($$).

Feilding

With a population of 14,000, Feilding (and it really is spelled "e" before "i") is a quintessential provincial farming town. It's home to Manfeild Park, named from the combination of Manawatu and Feilding, and is where they race just about everything – cars, trucks, bikes, jet-boats. Four to five international races are held every year, the rest of the races are local. Manfeild Park is also home to the Central Districts Field Days, garden shows, you name it – there is usually something going on every weekend.

> **Mix with the locals:** On Mondays and Fridays, go to the stock sales. If not the largest in New Zealand, they're close. The locals are happy to explain what's going on and it has become a bit of a tourist draw.

■ Information Sources

The **Feilding & District Information Center** is open Monday to Saturday. They can give you current information regarding what's going on at Manfeild Park and other local activities. feilding-info@clear.net.nz, 10 Manchester Square, ☎ 06-323-3318, fax 06-323-6549.

Feilding is a 12-time winner of "New Zealand's Most Beautiful Town" award.

■ Adventures

In the Air

I became a member of the Mile High Club at **Gliding Manawatu** – and have a somewhat goofy certificate to prove that I have gone above 5,280 feet in a glider. Up here you can get a bearing on the bottom of the North Island and enjoy fantastic views of the Tasman Sea, Mt. Ruapehu, Mt. Taranaki and local sites, including the wind farm. On a clear day, you can see past Kapiti Island and to the Marlborough Sounds. Based at the Feilding Airfield, flights are available on weekends and holidays but give them a ring to see about arranging other times. ☎ 06-323-8389.

A number of native birds make their home at **Kowhai Park**. There are some very friendly tui, kea (right) and kaka and also a pleasant stroll through a stand of podocarps. This walk is short and easy and wheelchair-accessible. On South Street.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

If you're a history buff, then Feilding is for you. There's **Mount Biggs Vintage Machinery** at 31 James Road, ☎ 06-328-8605; **The Steam Traction Society** opposite the Feilding Cemetery, ☎ 06-355-9176; **Maewa Austin Mews** on Maewa Road, ☎ 06-323-4436; the **Manawatu Horse Drawn Era Museum** at 40 Bowen Street, ☎ 06-323-3318; and the **Antique Dolls and Teddybears Museum** at Cabelina Lodge, Halcombe Road, ☎ 06-323-0968.

Local products: The **Little Wool Company** at the corner of Dunolly and Williamson Road West is definitely worth a visit. This is a totally vertical company – the wool is grown on the family's sheep, sheared, carded, spun and dyed on-site. It's all to the designs of Anna Gratton, the owner, who produces a lot of small-run and niche-market products. I went nuts in this shop, but, because there is no retailer markup it was a great bargain. The US is one of Anna's key export markets. Call them to arrange for a visit. www.annagratton.co.nz, filaro@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 06-328-6868.

If you've ever had a desire to make your own paper, bind a book, print a postcard or a bookmark, or carve and print with wood or lino, stop by **Homeprint** in Feilding. What began as a teaching tool for John and Allison Brebner's pri-

mary-school classes has burgeoned into one of the biggest collections of printing supplies and presses in NZ. Definitely a cool place to go if you love art and paper and anything that goes along with them. Individual instruction or group classes can last an hour or days. www.ur.co.nz/homeprint, 11 Sandilands Street, ☎ 06-323-8046, fax 06-323-8062.

■ Where to Stay

The **Manfeild Park Motel** is close to town, the sale yards and Manfeild. All units have cooking facilities, some with full kitchen and there is a BBQ. A simple, dependable place to stay. manfeildparkmotel@hotmail.com, 1 Fergusson Street, ☎ 06-323-8761, fax 06-323-3821 ($$).

With a licensed bar and restaurant and near to Manfeild is **Raceway Court Motel**. Spa baths in some, with the usual modern amenities. Awahuri Road, ☎/fax 06-323-7891 ($$).

The Pohangina Valley Touring Route

The northeastern section of Manawatu is a great area for exploration and getting off the beaten track. When traveling SH1 from the North, turn left at Ruahine Road, about 20 km (12 miles) south of Taihape and just before Mangaweka. Mangaweka has long been known because of the café in the DC3 that's painted like a cookie wrapper, but if you follow this route you'll miss it. That's okay, skip the cookie-airplane and head into the valley. The final few kilometers of the Ruahine Road were paved in 2003 and, prior to that, not many people bothered to turn off SH1 and come this way. What a shame. I definitely recommend this trip.

Ruahine Road follows the Mangawhereriki River and, when the road heads south, it becomes Rangiwahia Road and then Kimbolton Road. The drive between Mangaweka and Feilding on the Kimbolton Road (one of the richest farming roads in the country) is over rolling landscape dotted with old shearing sheds and settlers' homes.

If you're in Palmerston North and want a day or so to explore, head up Pohangina Valley Road East (which is paved, compared to Pohangina Valley Road West, which is not), turn on Makora Road to Apiti, and return to Palmerston North on Kimbolton Road. The following adventures and sights are either on that loop or on Ruahine and Kimbolton Roads.

■ Adventures

On Water

Swimming

With all the rivers around, there are plenty of places to get wet, but among the best are a couple of good old swimming holes at **Almadale Reserve**, where the Manawatu and Pohangina Rivers come together. There are also short bush tracks beside the river. If you drive from Ashurst to Palmerston North on SH3, the entrance is near the bridge

Menzies Ford is another good river-swimming option. Driving on the Kimbolton Road, between Feilding and Kimbolton, turn toward Ashurst at "The Historic Water Trough." It's just down the road a few minutes.

Kayaking & Rafting

In order to visit **Rangitikei River Adventures** (rrA), you get to drive to the cookie café in Mangaweka; just beside it is the rrA base where you can book one- to multi-day river kayak and rafting trips. This is wilderness kayaking and rafting – the Rangitikei is a remote river that has very little access, so you can really get away from it all and into some spectacular scenery. There are four gorges on the river and the multi-day trips take you through a gorge a day! www.rra.co.nz, ☎/fax 06-382-5747 or 0800-655-747.

Fishing

With 15 streams and rivers listed in the Manawatu/Rangitikei sports fishing information guide, there are plenty of places to choose from. Some of the rivers are not well known, and many are not heavily fished. Pick up an information guide at the information center or give David Webb at **Fly Fishing Manawatu** a call; he has a good reputation among the locals for knowing where to find fish, and is happy to guide all skill levels. He'll also guide on Lake Taupo. Davidweb@man.quik.co.nz, ☎ 06-326-8423.

On Foot

The **Ruahine Forest Park** is riddled with walking tracks. One very popular day walk is the one to the Rangawahea Hut. Where the Rangawahea Ski Field once was is now more of a fine weather walking destination. About 40 minutes from the hut is an awesome lookout where you can see both sides of the North Island.

The **Branch Road Walkway**, which connects Pohangina to Ridge Road, is a six-km (almost four-mile) walk (one way) through regenerating and native forest and farmland. Many trees and shrubs are labeled.

The **Sledge Track** was opened in 2003 and is located at the end of Kahuterawa Road. At three km (less than two miles), it sports two waterfalls, old-growth rimu trees and plenty of birdlife.

One fantastic series of walks is collectively called the **Weka Walks** and is accessed through Mt. Huia station. The **Tui Walk**, which begins on Glen Tui farm, is six to seven hours through untouched Titirangi Reserve. This land was deemed too difficult to clear when the original settlers arrived and, unlike more developed tracks, puts you "in" the bush, as compared to "beside" the bush. The Titirangi Reserve is regarded as one of the best examples of lowland forest vegetation on the North Island with fantastic specimens of kahikatea, rimu, matai and rewa-rewa. There are some short, steep sections and proper walking boots are essential. The access to the Tui Walk is across the Mangawharariki River. I recommend leaving a bottle of wine and a few beers in the river at the beginning of the day (you'll come back through here after your walk and there is a picnic table just beside a secluded swimming hole). The **Huia Walk** is a four-hour pastoral walk on Mt. Huia farm with gentler climbs but still fantastic views. Contact Neil and Virginia Travers (below) for information and access.

The Travers' call **Hodd Cottage** a "country experience," and that's a pretty good description. A cottage with kitchen and bath on an 11,000-acre working farm, Hodd Cottage sleeps up to eight and is the only accommodation option

for walking in the Titirangi Reserve. Just 10 minutes off State Highway 1 on the recently paved Kimbolton Road, it is a gem of a place. I would recommend booking in for a few days, doing the walks, following Neil around with the farming, swimming (or fishing) in the river or blobbing in the spa pool. It's only an hour to Palmerston North, so you could use it as a base to explore the northern end of Manawatu. Virginia, who is a dietician, is available to cater meals, or you can cook your own. There is a deck behind the cottage that faces an incredible limestone gorge, over which the sun rises. There is also a B&B accommodation in the homestead. Neil.virginia@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 0800-737-848 ($$).

On Horses & the Farm

One of the greatest joys in my life was sitting on the porch outside my room at **Makoura Lodge**, watching a just-past full moon rise over the Ruahine Ranges, pulling itself through a single layer of clouds. This 350-acre working farm has been in Hugh McIntyre's family since 1896 and the lodge was opened in 1998, a response to undependable sheep and beef prices. All timber in the lodge was milled from trees on the site and the fireplace mantel has burn marks that give away a family story. It's often used for conferences, weddings and other functions, and travelers are also encouraged to come and stay. Bordered by Coal Creek, there are horse treks (from an hour to two days), quad-bike rides, mountain-bike tracks, fishing, clay-bird shooting, swimming holes, and lawn sports. Helicopter rides can be arranged. Makoura Lodge is a wonderful place to rub elbows with a real Kiwi farming family and do as much or as little as you want. If you like to ride horses, this is a fabulous place to explore the backcountry on a working horse that knows the ropes. The lodge sits on a bit of a cliff with a fantastic gorge just out the window and meals are casual, or you can cook for yourself. Definitely worth a stay, accommodation is either in four lodge units (sleeping up to six) or in the original homestead (sleeping up to 15). www.makouralodge.co.nz, ☎ 06-328-4746, fax 06-328-4745 ($$).

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

The fertile land of Manawatu needn't be used only for livestock. And nowhere is there a better example of this than at **Cross Hills Gardens**. Family-owned and -operated, the 18-acre garden includes over 2,000 varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas – one of the world's finest collections. But there are plenty of other rare and exotic trees and plants around the gardens, too. Cross Hills Gardens, which began as a private homestead garden on the family farm, took on a life of its own and opened to the public in 1970 – the first private garden in New Zealand to do so. One of the most amazing features is that owners Rodney and Faith Wilson, along with their son and one other gardener, do all the work (and continue to raise sheep on the rest of the farm). During the peak flowering season, October and November, there is a café open daily. Cross Hills is a fantastic place to spend a couple of hours – bring a picnic, a book and enjoy. Open every day from September to May, 10:30 am to 5 pm. $7 for adults, $1 for children over 12. There is also the option of Magic Mini Tours for individuals unable to walk the garden paths

($4 extra, by appointment only). www.crosshills.co.nz, Rangawahia Road, five km (three miles) north of Kimbolton, ☎ 06-328-5797, fax 06-328-5773.

The Herb Farm & Café is a must for anyone who likes gardens, herbal and aromatherapy products, is hungry for lunch, or enjoys discovering the work of local artisans. The gardens are open for strolling or guided tours (inquire for details) and there is a quiz designed to keep small folks busy while the bigger ones enjoy the plantings. All the herbal products in the shop are made on the premises (using mostly local materials) and courses and functions are available for groups. Open Wednesday to Sunday, 10 am to 4:30 pm. www.herbfarm.co.nz, North Grove Road, Ashhurst, ☎ 06-326-8633, fax 06-326-9650.

■ Where to Stay

Set in four acres of gardens that for over 30 years were the site of a plant nursery is the **Woodland Grange**, with kitchen and bath. A charming cottage, it sleeps up to four and has an outdoor bath and shower (as well as indoor!). There is also a small chapel on the grounds that works well for weddings or other functions. Hotcurry@xtra.co.nz, 13 Grammer Street, ☎ 06-328-9667 or 021-142-9570, fax 06-328-9614 ($$$).

The Kimbolton Lodge is housed in the town's first church, which was built in 1891, and now tastefully redecorated as a comfortable B&B. Owned by Paul and Vicki, who also run the General Store Café & Bar, referred to as the Kimbolton Café. There are three guest rooms (one with en-suite bathroom). Paul is a keen tramper and full of local knowledge about the tracks in the Ruahine Ranges. Simpler backpacker accommodation is available at the café. kim.lodge@inspire.net.nz, 6 Edwards Street, ☎ 06-328-5707 ($-$$$).

Just outside of Cheltenham on Vinegar Hill Road is **Drovers Retreat Homestay**. Perched on top of a hill, the views are spectacular. There is accommodation in the house and in a unit with kitchen and bath. Motorhomes are also welcome. droversretreat@xtra.co.nz, 2697 Cheltenham-Hunterville Road, SH54 ☎ 06-328-9068, fax 06-328-9065 ($$).

The **Cheltenham Hotel** is an old pub with bar meals and simple accommodation. Sometimes, these are the best places to stay and do a little mixing with the locals. On Kimbolton Road, ☎ 06-328-9888.

Places to Camp

There are lots of choices, but for camping with all the modern conveniences, give **Totara Reserve** a try. There are bush walks and camper power points as well as tent sites. At the top end of Pohangina Valley East Road and Churchill Road; caretaker, ☎ 06-329-4708.

■ Where to Eat

The General Store Café and Bar on Kimbolton Road in Kimbolton has a blackboard menu of simple café meals and basic general-store supplies. There is a sweet shop in front of the bar. Open from 4 pm on Tuesday and 10 am Wednesday-Sunday. Closed Mondays. ☎ 06-328-5005, fax 06-328-5001 ($-$$).

Apiti Tavern has good pub food and a large lounge. They serve morning and afternoon tea, luncheons and dinners. Oroua Valley Road, Apiti. ☎ 06-328-4802 ($$).

In Raumai (just north of Ashhurst), **The Waterford Café & Bar** has Kilkenny and Guiness on tap and Celtic music on long weekends. With pub meals and gardens to eat them in, this is a great stop on the Pohangina Valley West Road. ☎ 06-326-8832 ($$).

Pilgrims Rest Tearoom is on Pohingina Valley Road East and makes delicious Devonshire teas, served in the garden. Follow the signs.

State Highway 1

If you don't take my advice and bypass the Ruahine turnoff, you will come to the town of Bulls where SH1 and SH3 intersect, which is about 20 km (12 miles) north of Horowhenua. Bulls is an Air Force town and beside it is Ohakea – New Zealand's major Air Force base. At Ohakea is the **Air Force Museum**, a truly hands-on affair. There are lots of buttons to push, ejector seats to sit in, and flight simulators to try. The theater is set up in, what else, an airplane. It's unusual to have a museum so close to a working Air Force base; you can sit in the **Crew Room Café** and watch the airplanes come and go. There's also an Air Force and aviation gift shop. Open seven days a week, 9:30 am to 4 pm. $8 adults, $3 children, under five free. www.airforcemuseum.co.nz, ☎ 06-351-5020.

Horowhenua

Continuing south on SH1, you will reach Horowhenua – loosely defined as the region extending from Himatangi to Waikawa Beach on the coast and inland to include Tokomaru through Levin. Along this strip you'll find some nice beaches and a few touristy places to poke around in. It's a bit of a breadbasket around here, and there are plenty of farmstands where you can pick up some freshly picked produce.

The visitor information center in Foxton is at The Tram Station (☎ 06-363-8940) and beside it is **Café Espresso** – great coffee and you can catch up on your e-mail.

In Levin, visit the **Horowhenua Visitor Information Centre**, visitorinfor@horowhenua.govt.nz, 93 Oxford Street, ☎ 06-367-8440.

■ Adventures

On Water

There's nothing fancy about **Himatangi Beach**, but in fact the sand dunes here make up New Zealand's largest dune field. The town is a simple summer beach community, and it's a great idea to pick up takeaways, wrap yourself in a warm blanket and take a walk on a cold day – in fact, you can walk all the way to Foxton. You can even drive on the beach if you want. The **Himatangi Beach Motor Camp** is near the end of Koputara Road.

There's **fishing** at the river mouth in Foxton and there are also **beaches** to visit at Waitarere and Hokio.

Driving from Shannon to the Mangaore Dam, you'll reach the hydroelectric station and the **Environmental White Water Park**. There's a community nature reserve and a rather impressive whitewater slalom course for kayaks.

Give them a call in advance to see if anything's going on but, even if there isn't, just imagining someone paddling through the course is pretty cool. www.slalomnz.org.nz, ☎ 06-358-4279.

Lakes Horowhenua and **Papaitonga** are both outside of Levin. Horowhenua is an important stop for migrating birds. There's a play and picnic area and, while not a lake for swimming, it is good for small yachts and canoes.

> **Historic interest:** On Buller Road, four km (2½ miles) south of Levin is **Lake Papaitonga**. This sacred Maori site can be reached by a boardwalk track.

On Horses

Between Levin and Foxton, turn toward the sea for Waitarere Beach and **Black Forest Horse Treks**, where you can take a one- to two-hour ride through the forest, farmland, sand dunes and onto the beach. ☎ 06-368-7878 021-128-2134

Eco-Tours

The **Manawatu Estuary** is also in Foxton and well worth a stop. It's an important migratory destination for many Arctic birds – godwit (right), red knot and Pacific golden plover. Annually, 38 species and 3,000 birds visit the estuary. Follow the signs for the Manawatu Estuary.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

> **Local products:** A few kilometres before **Himatangi**, you'll come across **Waireka Honey Centre**. If it's got anything to do with honey, and it's made in New Zealand, you'll find it here – sweets, skin care, honey mead, fruit honeys, plus a wide range of New Zealand-made natural and health products. Specific floral sources of honey are available for tasting and there is a beehive to view. They also sell fruit wine and home-made honey ice cream. SH1 and Rangtoea Road, open seven days a week, 9 am to 6 pm. ☎ 06-324-8224.

The Tokomaru Steam Engine Museum, on Highway 57, is open seven days a week with displays, but Colin and Esma Stevenson schedule "steam ups" throughout the year. Give them a ring to see if there's one coming up or to schedule one by request. Monday to Saturday, 9 am to 3 pm, Sunday, 10:30 am to 3 pm. ☎ 06-329-8867, fax 06-329-8840.

They built a working windmill in **Foxton**, "New Zealand's Fox Town," and say that the windmill will be as important to Horowhenua as the Eiffel Tower is to Paris. That might be a bit courageous, but it's good to see local enthusiasm. You can take a tour to the top and even buy some wooden shoes. Other things to check out in Foxton are the **Flax Stripper Museum** and the **Trolley Bus Museum**.

Taking KereKere road from Foxton leads you to the small town of **Shannon**, and streets full of antique shops and espresso cafés.

Shannon is home to **Flaxville**, a 20th-century model town. It's all built to a 1:24 scale and is open daily, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, ☎ 06-362-7060. It's also home to **Owlcatraz**, an educational and farmpark that has a range of animals. It's very friendly and, although perhaps a bit commercial, it's a hit with kids. www.owlcatraz.co.nz, just off SH57, ☎ 06-362-7872.

Levin was once a center of textile manufacturing, but that tide has changed; you'll find less industry and more retirees here now, although there are still quite a few factory shops.

The **Levin Adventure Park** is on the site of an old school. Two private citizens funded the renovation of the property to serve as the community park with flying fox, play area, sand volleyball court, climbing wall, fitness trail and skate and inline skating areas.

Eastland

Introduction

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Traveling SH35 from Whakatane to Gisborne will take you through one of the least visited, most isolated and most scenic areas of New Zealand. This is an area of huge importance to the Ngati Porou – the second-largest tribe of Maori. Driving full-tilt, you can make the trip in about six hours, but I honestly can't imagine why you'd want to. This is a stunning part of New Zealand, an area that is largely untouched by tourists, and most New Zealanders will never make their way here. From Whakatane, I recommend taking the coastal route through Ohope, which meets up with SH35 in Kererutahi. Then head east on SH35 and you might just feel as if you're traveling through a national park. The winding road is lined with masses of trees, and the off-shore islands jut out of the sea. On clear, calm days the turquoise water will beckon you in and, with so many safe swimming beaches, it's not a bad idea. The beaches along the way are strewn with driftwood… piles and piles of the stuff. From Whakatane, the approach to Opotiki is through seemingly endless stands of pohutukawa trees. Summertime here means the hills are on fire with the red flowers.

> **Inside advice:** The East Coast has yet to get on the café-culture or fine-dining bandwagon. You are probably better off taking some food along and cooking for yourself, or else you'll be eating a lot of takeout and fried food.

Eastland has a decidedly Pacific Island feel – it's laid-back and relaxed and people have more than the time of day for you. I am a firm believer that travel isn't worthwhile unless you get out and talk to the folks who live in the place and nowhere is that more important than around Eastland. Take your time and spend an hour or two shooting the breeze with people. Go into some of the shops and request your groceries from the shelves behind the counter, where handwoven kete (bags) hang from walls; chemists and doctors are few and far between in these parts, and medicines are delivered to the local shop or tavern to be picked up. Horses are still used for transport, and a day doesn't go by when you won't see someone riding down the road with little more than a rope around their horse's neck. Traveling around Eastland isn't about high-action adventure or big-budget tourism – it's about finding your own way, hanging out at the beach, eating some crayfish and enjoying the sunshine. This is definitely a place to relax and take your time. Eastland was the location of the 2002 movie *Whale Rider*, and many locals were used in small roles and as extras. The movie was based on a novel by Maori writer Witi Ihimaera, who used Maori legend and culture as inspiration. Eastland is the kind of place that feeds my soul – and it will yours, too, if you are open enough to receive it.

1. Ohope Beach
2. Hukutaia Domain, Ancient Burial Tree
3. Anglican Church (Ruakokore); Old Post Office (Waihau Bay)
4. First Landing place of Tainu & Arawa Canoes from Hawaiiki
5. Te Waha O Rerekohu, the largest pohutukawa tree in the world
6. East Cape Lighthouse
7. St. Mary's Church
8. Anaura Scenic Reserve & Anaura Bay Walk
9. Cooks Cove Walkway, Historic Wharf, Tolaga Bay Cashmere Co., Te Pou O Te Kari gallery
10. Whangara Marine Reserve & marae
11. Motu Falls
12. Rere Falls Rockslide
13. Te Reinga Falls
14. Eastwoodhills Arboretum
15. Gisborne Wineries; East Coast Museum of Technology; Yesteryear Motoring; *Whale Rider* Tours to Whangara

Beaches

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Tip: Consider spending at least three nights as you wander around Eastland. The drive isn't that long, but a multi-day stay will offer you time to enjoy the place once you get here.

Most of the region's attention is on the coast. Inland is the Raukumara Range, managed by the Raukumara Conservation Area. The area is all but impenetrable. While many keen hunters fly in, DoC recommends that, unless you are very experienced compass-carrying, bush-walking folks, you don't venture in. Stop in the DoC office in Opotiki for current local information.

If you're interested in learning more about this region, get a copy of *Highway 35*, a fabulous book about the people and the place, illustrated with lovely photography.

Getting Here

■ By Air

Gisborne and **Whakatane** are the only towns along this route that have scheduled air service. Neither are international airports.

■ By Car

SH35 and SH2 are your options for travel within the Eastland region. Both are described in this chapter.

Inside Advice: Gas stations are few and far between; fill up when you can.

■ By Bus

InterCity Coachlines serves Opotiki to Gisborn via SH2. In Opotiki, buses come and go from The Diner on Bridge Street. Bookings can be made at the information centers or by contacting InterCity directly, in Auckland, ☎ 09-913-6100, or Wellington, ☎ 04-472-5111.

If you don't have your own car, and want to travel SH35, transport can be a bit of a challenge, but it is not impossible. **Polly's Passenger Courier Service Ltd**. provides transport between Opotiki and Gisborne, with options of getting off at any of the backpackers or holiday parks. Best to inquire about schedules, but, as of this writing, departures from Gisborne were at 1 pm and from Whakatane at 12:30 pm daily. You can book at the Whakatane, Opotiki or Gisborne information centers. Or call Polly's, ☎ 06-864-4728.

Cooks Passenger Service runs Monday to Saturday from Te Araroa to Gisborne and back. It leaves Te Araroa at 8 am and Gisborne at 2 pm. Inquire at the Gisborne information center or book direct. ☎ 06-864-4711 or 027-437-1364.

Information Sources

Two websites are worth checking: **www.eastlandnz.com** and **www.gisbornenz.com**.

The **Information Center** and **DoC** office in Opotiki are incredibly helpful and friendly. Be sure to stop in before heading around the coast to get

up-to-date information. Many of the tourism operations on the coast are quite small, and it's best to make sure they are open and operating instead of being disappointed when you get there. Both are at the corner of St. John and Elliott Streets. ☎/fax 07-315-8484.

Pick up a copy of ***Opotiki & East Cape*** from the information center in Opotiki. It's a detailed guide to SH35, but beware – distances are not always accurate! Also, Tourism Eastland has produced a one-page tear-out map with highlights of the area. It's probably a bit easier to use than the book, but nowhere near as detailed.

Whakatane to Te Araroa

This section, along the northern and western coast, is my favorite part of SH35. The twisting road keeps presenting better and better views – from gorgeous swimming beaches to remote bays and harbors.

■ Ohope

Leaving Whakatane, the first town you will come to is **Ohope** with its long (11-km/seven-mile), safe, sandy beach. It is backed by a fabulously huge hillside of pohutukawa trees. The beach is great for walking, picnics or just hanging out, making Ohope Beach a popular holiday spot. There is a service station with gas, a small shopping area and a golf course.

Where to Stay

Across from the beach is **Aquarius Motor Lodge**, with 10 units and all the extras like hairdriers. www.aquariusmotorlodge.co.nz, 103 Harbour Road, ☎/fax 07-312-4550 ($$-$$$).

Modern, individual single-story cottage-like units with a beach feel can be found at **Surfs Reach Motel**, www.surfsreachmotels.co.nz, 52 West End, ☎ 07-3125-4159, fax 07-312-4995 ($$-$$$).

Ocean View Motel Ohope Beach has free bikes, kayaks, boogie boards and surf boards. Units are apartment-style and have beach views. It's a very appealing place to stay. www.oceanviewmotel.co.nz, 18 West End, ☎/fax 07-312-5665 ($$-$$$).

For an apartment with kitchen and bath, try **Henton's Apartment**, which sleeps two to four. hentons@xtra.co.nz, 295 Pohutukawa Avenue, ☎ 07-312-5095 ($$).

The **Ohope Beach Top 10 Holiday Park** is right by the harbor and has all the usual accommodation options. There's also a swimming pool, waterslide and miniature golf. www.ohopebeach.co.nz, 367 Harbour Road, ☎/fax 07-312-4460 ($-$$).

■ Ohiwa

Continuing along the coast, **Ohiwa** is next. It's a popular spot for fishing and gathering shellfish (cockles, mussels and oysters), as well as having a safe swimming beach with gorgeous pohutukawa trees.

Get a copy of ***Arts, Crafts and Garden Trail*** and poke around the small shops and studios here.

Adventures

On Water

Bill Plunket offers harbor cruises around Ohiwa, pointing out shorebirds and sites of historic and ecological interest. ☎ 07-308-7837 or 025-206-6689.

You can rent a kayak or take a guided trip with **KG Kayaks**. Trips begin at two hours and include the options of an ocean explorer, harbor crossing or sunset tour. www.kgkayaks.co.nz, at the Ohiwa Fisherman's Wharf, ☎ 07-315-4005 or 025-272-4073.

Where to Stay

Ohiwa Family Holiday Park is a good option here for tourist flats, cabins and tent sites. www.ohiwaholidays.co.nz; turn off on Ruatuna Road and follow until it becomes Harbour Road, then follow to the end. ☎/fax 07-315-4741 ($-$$).

■ Opotiki

About 15 km (nine miles) from Ohiwa is **Opotiki**, a small town at the junction of SH2 and SH35. There isn't a lot of reason to stick around, but it makes a good stop for groceries and, most importantly, information.

Information Sources

The **Information Center** and **DoC** share an office at the corner of Elliot and St. John Street. These folks are incredibly knowledgeable and will not steer you wrong! If you are traveling around the East Cape, or if you are planning to venture into Te Urewera, make sure you stop in. Information Center, ☎/fax 07-315-8484; DoC, ☎ 07-315-6103, fax 07-315-6102.

Adventures

On Foot

Consider going for a stroll through the **Hukutaia Domain**, just under 10 km (six miles) from town, where there are bush walks through native plants and rock gardens. It's on Domain Road; best to stop in the Information Center for a brochure that has detailed directions.

A number of walks in the **Te Urewera National Park** can be accessed from the Opotiki side – they range from two hours to multi-day and are very weather-dependent. Pick up a copy of ***Waimana Valley Tracks*** at the DoC office in Opotiki and get local information.

Where to Stay

Eastland Pacific Motor Lodge is a clean and modern facility. www.eastlandpacific.co.nz, 44 St. John Street, ☎ 07-315-5524, fax 07-315-5504 ($$-$$$).

Opotiki Backpackers Beach House is at Waiotahi Beach, five km (three miles) before Opotiki. They have surf kayaks and bodyboards available to use

for free and it's right on the beach. hangout@paradise.net.nz, 7 Appleton Road, Waiotahi Beach, ☎ 07-315-5117 ($).

In Opotiki, with easy access for bus transport, is **Central Oasis Backpackers**. It's in an old villa with a garden and they've got free bicycles. centraloasis@hotmail.com, 30 King St, Opotiki. ☎ 07-315-5165 ($).

Opotiki Holiday Park is on the river about three km (two miles) from the beach. There's a swimming pool, you can rent kayaks and bikes and fishing trips are available. Units with kitchen and bath, cabins, on-site campers. www.holidayparks.co.nz/opotiki, Potts Avenue, ☎/fax 07-315-6050 ($-$$).

A little farther along on SH35 is **Tirohanga Beach Motor Camp**. Backpacker bunks, tourist flats, cabins. Small shop and takeaways. www.holidayparks.co.nz/tirohanga. ☎/fax 07-315-7942 ($-$$).

Chris Stone has just completed remodeling **Oariki Farmhouse** in Maraenui. There is both a cottage with kitchen and bath and B&B. Organically grown food is available, as are all meals, if desired. It's very private and right on the coast near the mouth of the Motu River. The driving directions are a bit intimidating, but it's worth the effort. Drop in at the Opotiki information center for printed directions. oariki@clear.net.nz, ☎/fax 07-325-2678 ($$$).

■ Te Kaha & Whanarua Bay

Te Kaha (70 km/43 miles from Opotiki) is about halfway between Opotiki and Hicks Bay. It's one of the bigger villages around, with a gas station and shops, as well as good bays and beaches for swimming and popular fishing spots. If you haven't stopped for a night so far, this is a great place to break up the trip.

Adventures

On Water

Motu River Jet-Boat Tours operate on demand from Te Kaha and travel into a remote river valley. The emphasis is on fun, but with an ecological perspective. $85 adults, $50 children. ☎/fax 07-315-8107.

On Horses

Drop into **Maraehako Retreat** and inquire about horse treks. Pihi's brother runs them and will take you on the farm horses into the 2,000-acre family farm. ☎ 07-325-2648.

Sightseeing & Shopping

Not far past the turnoff to Te Kaha is the Maungaroa Marae. It's not marked, but behind it is a shed that holds a whaleboat. While politically incorrect now, this region was a very important whaling area.

Local products: A must stop is **Pacific Coast Macadamias** in Whanarua Bay. All the nuts are grown locally and processed on-site – in fact, the honey-roasted variety are roasted with honey from bees on the orchard. In addition to fresh, natural macadamias, delicacies like white chocolate macadamia cookies, fudge, macadamia pesto and dukkah (ground nuts mixed with spices for dipping) are made on-site as well. When I visited, the ice cream was being made

off-site, but they were looking at making that here, too. There is a café open seven days a week from Labour weekend (the fourth Monday in October) to Easter. www.macanuts.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-325-2960.

Where to Stay

Tui Lodge is one of the few B&B options on the coast; it has queen, double and twin rooms. It's set on three acres surrounded by native bush, with views of the sea. Dinner is available by arrangement. Copenhagen Road, a loop road just past Te Kaha Service Centre. ☎/fax 07-325-2922 ($$-$$$).

Waikawa B&B has three units with kitchen and bath, one with a full kitchen. There are lots of extras here, including kayaks and a spa. Meals are available and there is lots of space outside to enjoy the sea views. www.waikawa.net, #7541 SH35, ☎/fax 07-325-207 ($$-$$$).

The **Te Kaha Holiday Park and Motel** is graced with plenty of trees and large gardens. You can rent a bike or kayak and choose accommodations ranging from a backpacker bed up to a motel unit. tekahahp@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-325-2894 ($-$$).

Rendezvous Holiday Park has camping, cabins and tourist apartments, a small shop and Internet connection, as well as kayaks and snorkel gear. rotchp@clear.net.nz, SH35, ☎/fax 07-325-2899 ($-$$).

AUTHOR'S PICK

Pihi and Lisa Hei operate **Maraehako Retreat** right on the water's edge. They call it a "backpackers paradise," and they're not wrong. It's a casual, laid-back kind of place, no TV (but you can access the Internet after 6 pm), plenty of rocks for sitting, hammocks for sleeping and water for swimming. Show a little interest, and they'll take you out to check the crayfish pots or arrange a horse trek. Kayaks are available for rent and Pihi runs diving, fishing and scenic trips to White Island. Look for the driveway on the left side of the road, to the right of the standing kayak. ☎ 07-325-2648 ($).

Just beside the Maraehako Retreat is the **Maraehako Camping Ground**. It's on the beach, a very pleasant place to stay. ☎ 07-325-2942.

Off Copenhagen Road is Maungaroa Access Road; this eventually leads to **Maungaroa Station**, where there is accommodation with kitchen and bath and space for camping. You can go horse trekking, tramping, swimming, you name it. It's a get-away-from-it-all place. www.opotiki.com/outback ☎ 07-325-2727 ($$).

Where to Eat

Not too many options, but there is a small shop at the **Te Kaha Holiday Park** that offers takeout. The **Te Te Kaha Hotel** has a licensed restaurant.

■ Ruakokore

You'd be hard pressed to miss the stunning Anglican Church on the side of the road in Ruakokore. It's incredibly picturesque and still very much an active center for much of the community. It is open to visitors daily.

■ Waihau Bay

There are a few accommodations here and a general store. If you're interested in the area and its history, give June McDonald a call; she is available for guided Maori history and scenic walks. ☎ 07-325-3697.

Where to Stay

Waihau Bay Holiday Park is a tidy and friendly holiday park with all levels of accommodation, including backpacker hostels, tourist cabins, campers and motel units. There are also power and tent sites, a cottage with kitchen and bath and a small shop/café that sells liquor off-license. The park is graced by massive pohutukawa trees as well as other native bush. They also have a BBQ and a smokehouse, if you're lucky enough to catch some fish. SH35, opposite Oruaiti Beach, ☎ 07-325-3844 fax 07-325-3980 ($-$$).

Waihau Bay Lodge is a simple affair down the wharf road from SH35 with a backpacker hostel, chalets and in-house rooms. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are available in the restaurant. This is big fishing country and the lodge can help you arrange for a local fishing charter. wb.lodge@xtra.co.nz, SH35, ☎ 07-325-3804, fax 07-325-3875 ($-$$).

For a spacious and private kind of place with kitchen and bath, choose **Oceanside Apartments** at Oruaiti Beach. Meals are available by arrangement and Barry and Jan have a licensed fishing boat that can be chartered. www.waihaubay.co.nz, ☎ 07-325-3699, 025-811-898, fax 07-325-3689 ($$).

> **Historic interest:** Continuing up the coast, you'll reach Whangaparaoa, the spot where the Tainui and Arawa Canoes first landed from Hawaiiki in 1350 AD.

■ Lottin Point

About four km (two miles) off SH35, between Whangaparaoa and Hicks Bay, is Lottin Point. It's popular for fishing and home to the **Lottin Point Motel**, a new place with fabulous ocean views and a licensed restaurant. They also have fishing gear available. ☎/fax 07-864-4455 ($$).

■ Hicks Bay

It's easy to miss the turnoff for Hicks Bay. Before heading up the long hill, there is a Hicks Bay sign. But you should turn on Wharf Road, which is sign-posted "no exit." Despite that, this is the main drag into town. There is a general store where you can get gas.

Adventures

Fishing

Joe McClutchie operates both offshore and inshore fishing charters from his Hicks Bay location. Offshore, Joe fishes at Ranfurly, his traditional fishing grounds. Accommodation is also available in houses with kitchen and bath (see *Where to Stay*). Joe and Marilyn also run five- and eight-day tours around East Cape in a bit of a loop from Auckland. www.eastcapefishing.co.nz, ☎ 06-864-4694.

On Horses

In Hicks Bay, the choice for horse trekking is the **Bennetts**. You can ride in the bush or on the beach. They also have a small backpackers hostel (double, twin or single room) in a country home. Located about four km (2.4 miles) north from Hicks Bay (just past the holiday park); look for the Horse Trekking sign and gate #5837, ☎ 06-864-4634.

Shopping

Local products: Stop in at **Natural Solutions East Cape Manuka Oil** for manuka honey, oil and manuka-based health care products. The manuka, or tea trees, grown around the East Cape is reported to have higher levels of active ingredients than those grown in other places. Oil is processed on-site by steam distillation. A new café is set to open in 2004. www.manuka-products.com, just a few km past Hicks Bay, ☎ 06-864-4826 or 0508-626-852.

Manuka and kanuka together make up what are commonly referred to as "Tea Trees."

Where to Stay

Tahuroa Cottages was undergoing a change in management when I last passed through, but they're worth a look. There are two cottages with kitchen and bath, a large picnic/BBQ area and a gigantic vegetable garden. At that time, they were being run as a dinner, bed and breakfast. About eight km before Hicks Bay; look for the brightly colored sign. redtui@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-864-4596 ($$).

At **Mels Place**, Marilyn and Joe McClutchie aim to share Maori history, beliefs and lifestyle with visitors. Their home is on a peninsula, the site of former pa, or fortified village, which provides spiritual significance. Dorm accommodation is available for a few guests at a time, and visitors are encouraged to take part in family activities, meals, and daily life. www.eastcapefishing.co.nz, Onepoto Beach Road; coming from SH35, turn right on the road across from the Hicks Bay Store and follow it around. ☎ 06-864-4694 ($).

At the top of the hill, heading from Hicks Bay toward Te Araroa, tucked off SH35 and backed by dense bush, is the **Hicks Bay Motel Lodge**. It's probably one of the more modern motels around the coast. It has one- and two-bedroom options as well as units with kitchen and bath. They have a restaurant, small shop and swimming pool, and can arrange for other activities in the area. SH35, ☎ 06-864-4880, fax 06-864-4708 ($$).

■ Te Araroa

I think this might be one of my favorite towns on the East Coast. It has a real "Northern Exposure" kind of feel to it. For a beautiful vantage point, go down to the beach and look back at the hills under which the town is nestled. There are two gas stations here: Mobil, which you pay for at the Four Square; and Shell, which you pay for at the Te Araroa Farmers (not to be confused with the Farmers department stores in more populated areas). I love the sign on the playground fence in Te Araroa – "Children's Playground. No Horses."

You can get takeout here or full meals at the tavern and you couldn't ask for a better beach to eat them on. The largest pohutukawa tree in the world, "Te Waha o Rerekohu," is on the school grounds.

It is from Te Araroa that you access **East Cape** – the easternmost point of New Zealand. It's about 20 km (12 miles) out a partly-paved, partly-gravel road, and then you'll climb 700 steps up to the lighthouse…but it's well worth it. Trust me. The steps aren't particularly steep and the views are magnificent. For a long time the lighthouse was on the island just offshore – along with three lighthouse keepers, their families and houses. The farmland on the way out is worth the drive – the day I drove it, I saw a newborn calf just landing as I drove by. The peace of the place is worth the effort.

Where to Stay

Te Araroa Holiday Park is about six km (four miles) west of the settlement of Te Araroa (midway between it and Hicks Bay) and, as of 2003, was under new management. There are plenty of campsites, cabins, bunkrooms and on-site campers to choose from. It's a pleasant place with lots of trees, and kayaks and boogie boards to rent. ☎/fax 06-864-4873 ($-$$).

The Cinema at Te Araroa Holiday Park is the easternmost movie theater in New Zealand. Newly released movies play here over the holiday season.

Te Araroa to Gisborne

The terrain and views change once you leave Te Araroa and begin heading down the eastern side of the east coast. For starters, the road cuts inland, far from the sweeping views of the sea. Not that the farmland isn't beautiful – it's just a different experience than hugging the side of a hill and gazing across the water.

■ Tikitiki

The first township you come to after Te Araroa is Tikitiki, the home of St. Mary's Church – regarded as one of the most ornate of all Maori churches and worth a quick stop.

Where to Stay

Eastenders Farmstay has backpacker accommodation in the old sheep-shearing quarters. You're more than welcome to join in the farm fun; but you also can take advantage of horse treks, quad bikes, bush walks and other outdoor activities, as well as bone-carving lessons. eastenderfarmstay@xtra.co.nz, 836 Rangitukia Road, ☎ 06-863-8320 fax 06-863-8042 ($).

■ Ruatoria

Ruatoria is the center of the Ngati Porou tribe, and the tribal offices are here. There is a bank, shop and gas station, but if you arrive late there won't be much to eat in town, save whatever is available from a roadside takeaway cart.

Adventures

On Foot

Mt. Hikurangi is the highest non-volcanic mountain on the North Island and has spiritual significance for the Ngati Porou. There are nine carved sculptures on the mountain that signify Maui-Tikitiki-a-Taranga and his whanau, or extended family. A walking track (approximate walking time six to eight hours) begins at the Pakihiroa Station and goes to the top. It crosses private land, and permission to pass must be granted. There is a hut 10 km (six miles) up the mountain. The Ngati Porou (the local Maori tribe) run 4-wheel-drive trips up Mt. Hikurangi, prices based on number of passengers, but for two it's about $70 per person. History tours around the area are also available. For access to the private areas and information about the hut, 4-wheel-drive trips, etc., contact www.ngatiporou.iwi.nz, Kerry Johnson, Tourism Coordinator, Te Runanga o Ngati Porou. PO Box 394, Gisborne. ☎ 06-867-9960 or 021-676-910, fax 06-867-5335.

Where to Eat

The **Blue Boar Bar** and the **Mountain View Café** stand beside each other just two kms (1½ miles) from Ruatoria. The bar has typical fare, but also more creative meals like a scrumptious chicken curry. It's your best bet later in the day… nothing much stays open in Ruatoria. The café offers Devonshire teas, meals and takeaways but closes early. ☎ 06-864-8619 ($-$$).

> **For fun:** Count the number of boar heads mounted on the walls in the Blue Boar Bar!

■ Te Puia

The hot-springs at Te Puia are a bit of a disappointment. Due to land use conflicts, things just aren't what they might be (or might have been). But, you can still have a soak and it's only $2 per adult.

Information Sources

There is a general store and information center in the Te Puia District Council building. ☎ 06-864-6853.

■ Tokomaru Bay

A popular surf spot, Tokomaru Bay also has a few accommodation options, a tavern, horse trekking and the beginnings of a fishing-guide business. Gas is available at the Four Square Shop. It's a relaxed little town where no one is in a hurry. There was at one time a huge slaughterhouse and meat-processing plant here, but now, very little industry. The plant closed in 1956, but a lot of the brick buildings and foundations are still standing.

Where to Stay

The **Blue Marlin Motel** is an older, simple kind of place right on the beach. It's next to the supermarket, shops and takeout places. ☎ 06-864-5842 ($$).

The Ruins Accommodation is one of the tidiest, most interesting places to stay that I've come across. It's on the site of the former meat-processing plant

(those are the ruins). Marlene offers casual and simple accommodation in campers that have permanent extensions built on. There are just two, one that sleeps two and one that sleeps up to seven. Both have kitchen and bath, but showers and toilets are shared. Follow the road along the beach, past the Te Puka tavern. The Ruins is on your left. ☎ 025-267-6561 ($$).

Brian's Place is the backpacker hostel of choice in Tokomaru Bay. It's up the hill and provides fantastic views of the sea. There are plenty of places to sit on the veranda and watch the surfers. Brian is the quintessential laid-back Kiwi guy – he's not in a hurry, has plenty of time to talk and makes a mean latte. He's just expanded and done a bit of a remodel, but the place sleeps just 10, so it's never going to be overcrowded or manic. Toilets are the composting type and I think that's great. A good place to hang out and relax. Potae Street, ☎ 06-864-5870 ($).

The other backpacker hostel option is the **House of the Rising Sun** and is in need of some TLC. Potae Street, ☎ 06-864-5858 ($).

Where to Eat

The **Te Puka Tavern** in Tokomaru Bay has bar meals and, if location means anything, this place has it made. Right across from the beach ($).

The **Surf Café** makes good coffee and has a decent blackboard menu. A plus is the fast Internet connection; a negative is the hours – they're only open from 8 am until 2 pm, so go in early. Locally made handicrafts are also sold here. Potae Street ($).

■ Anaura Bay

Anaura Bay is about six km (four miles) off the main road and is a popular surfing, swimming and fishing spot. There is a small campground and store and DoC maintains a short – 3½-km (two-mile) – walking track through coastal forest, grassy hillside and pine plantation. The walk takes about two hours and goes through the **Anaura Scenic Reserve**. DoC also allows camping at the Recreation Reserve, but there are no facilities. It makes for a nice side-trip.

■ Tolaga Bay

The next town of any size on your way to Gisborne is Tolaga Bay – and it's one of the larger ones on the coast. When I called in during November 2003, they were having the grand opening of the local radio station… 88.5 FM. Free sausage sizzle, lots of giveaways, people milling about the sidewalks. Clearly, this was a very big community event. European history runs deep here – Captain Cook anchored offshore in 1769.

> **Did you know?** The longest wharf in the Southern Hemisphere is in Tolaga Bay. Leaving the township, turn left at the sign for the historic wharf.

Adventures

On Foot

Heading toward Gisborne from Tolaga Bay, turn left onto the road for the historic wharf. At the bend is a car park for **Cook's Cove Walk-**

way, which is six km (four miles) roundtrip and takes two or three hours. It offers good views of the sea and a chance to poke around in the rock formation called the "Hole in the Wall."

Shopping

Drop into **Te Pou o Te Kari** and see if there is an art exhibit going on. In the same building is **The Vault**, for new and recycled clothing.

> **Local products:** If you are at all interested in fiber or clothing, the **Tolaga Bay Cashmere Company** is definitely worth a stop. Most of the cashmere comes from goats raised just outside of Tolaga Bay. It is sorted and spun in New Zealand, sent to Scotland for processing, and then returned to Tolaga Bay for manufacturing. The knitting staff is very welcoming and will explain all the processes to you. Fabulous garments are available for purchase, as well. tbc@xtra.co.nz, 31 Solander Street, ☎ 06-862-6746, fax 06-862-6736.

Where to Stay

The **Tolaga Bay Inn** is a picturesque old-style hotel right in town, with shared-bath. There is a bar, restaurant and café. anne.prabah@xtra.co.nz, Cook Street. ☎ 06-862-6856, fax 06-862-6337 ($$).

Papatahi Homestay is on a farm just off the main road. ☎ 06-862-6623 ($).

Right by the beach are the cabins and camping sites of the **Tolaga Bay Holiday Park**, and what a fabulous location it is, especially if you want to fish or go for a walk on the Cook's Cove Walkway. 167 Wharf Road, ☎ 06-862-6716 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

In addition to the restaurant at the Tolaga Bay Inn, there are plenty of takeout options here, including **Amigos** for Mexican. There are also two supermarkets and a gas station.

■ Whangara

Whangara is where *Whale Rider* was filmed. However, public access to the beach and marae, or Maori meeting place, is not allowed without an escort. See Gisborne section, page 279, for information.

■ Tatapouri

Tatapouri is one of the last places to stop before heading into Gisborne. The fishing club at **Tatapouri by the Sea** has power and non-power sites, cabins and a furnished cottage. There's a big communal kitchen and a brand new shower/toilet block. www.tatapouri.co.nz, ☎ 06-868-3269 or 0800-828-276, fax 06-868-3270 ($-$$).

■ Wainui Beach

As SH35 drops out of the hills and into Wainui Beach, you may feel somewhat assaulted by the modern beach houses and traffic on the road after your remote trip around Eastland. It's just eight km (five miles) from Gisborne, but still a world away.

Sad sight: In March 1970, 59 sperm whales were stranded on the beach and buried here.

Adventures

On Water

Wainui Beach is a great place to surf – or to learn how. Drop in at **Chalet Surf Lodge** to rent a board or sign up for lessons – they cater to all abilities. The beach is three km (two miles) long, golden sand and stunning.

On Horses

Waimoana Horse Trekking offers one- and two-hour trips into the bush and along the beach. They also have twilight treks available by arrangement, and enjoy a good reputation around the area. $40 per hour. waimoana@ihug.co.nz, at the end of Lysnar Street, Wainui Beach. ☎ 06-868-8218 or 025-958-420.

Where to Stay

Mokorori Heights B&B is a reasonably priced pleasant option in Wainui. Dinner is available by arrangement. At the end of Sirrah Street, ☎ 06-867-0806 or 021-250-4918, fax 06-868-7706 ($$).

Wainui Beach Motel is just a few minutes walk from the beach and is new and clean. They also have a beach house with kitchen and bath available right on the beach. www.wainuibeach.co.nz, corner of SH35 and Wairere Road, ☎ 06-868-5882 or 0800-250-800, fax 06-868-8482 ($$$).

Ocean Beach Motor Lodge expanded in 2003 and has a total of 15 units – from studio to one- and two-bedroom. It's clean and tidy and only 100 meters (328 feet) to the beach. motorlodge@oceanbeach.co.nz, corner of SH35 & Oneroa Road, ☎ 06-868-6186 0800-250-800, fax 06-868-3653 ($$$)

Chalet Surf Lodge by the Sea has inexpensive accommodation, ranging from backpacker hostel (beds are in lofts) to a lodge to apartments with kitchen and bath. The units are all big, bright and cheerful. As for value, I'd opt for the lodge. You get a double room for $50-$60, there's a great porch with BBQ that overlooks the ocean and a spacious kitchen and lounge. They do daily runs into Gisborne and can provide transport. www.chaletsurf.co.nz, 62 Moana Road, ☎ 06-868-9612, fax 06-868-7344 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

There are the usual takeout places, but if you want something better without driving into Gisborne, give **Sandbar Beach Café** a call. They have a nice blackboard menu, plentiful breakfasts, light and tasty lunches and a substantial dinner menu. Alongside the Wainui Beach Motel, off SH35. ☎ 06-868-6828 ($$).

Opotiki to Gisborne

Traveling SH35 from Opotiki to Gisborne can take as little as six hours or as much as several days. As a contrast, taking the direct route on SH2 through the Waioeka Gorge can be as short as two hours. Obviously, if you're in a hurry, this is the better option, but there are a number of things to do along the way. In fact, there are a lot of places to get out of the car take a walk or try

some water activities. The first half of the drive is quite spectacular as you wind through the gorge and the Urutawa Conservation Area.

Adventures

On Water

Waioeka River Kayaks runs three-hour river trips down the Waioeka River. The minimum age is just 12, which is unusual, so if you've got kids, this may be the place to do some paddling.

www.newzealandbestspot.co.nz, 3666 Waioeka Gorge Road (about 10 minutes from Opotiki). ☎ 07-315-5553.

Rafting trips in this area are offered by Rotorua-based **Wet'n'Wild Rafting**. They have a wide range of trips, and the one on the Motu is billed as an eco-experience, through a remote area of the river. www.wetnwildrafting.co.nz, ☎ 07-348-3191 or 0800-462-723 fax 07-349-6567.

On Foot

Pick up a copy of ***Walks in Waioeka and Urutawa*** at the DoC office for descriptions of the 10 DoC walks through the gorge, which vary from 15 minutes to 10 hours. There are a couple of walks that include the option of staying overnight in a hut. One walk that I've really enjoyed was the Tauranga Track – it's just two hours, so it makes a good break in the drive. The trail goes up one side of Tauranga Stream and back down the other. You can use the suspension bridge, or ford the river if it's not in flood and you don't mind getting wet.

On Mountain Bikes

Mountain bikes are allowed on the Tauranga Track; when I've done it, it was quite overgrown but still manageable.

Another good option for biking is from Motu on the Toa Toa track. I've never done it, but hear it's a good ride. I'd get some local knowledge in either Whakatane or Gisborne before heading out.

In Matawai is **Kotare Station**, a working sheep- , beef- and deer-farm. They run it as a day retreat where you can bring your bike (or hiking boots, if you'd rather) and follow the marked tracks to a day hut, from which a number of other marked tracks lead off. Bookings are essential. B.gaddum@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-862-4817, fax 06-862-4819.

Where to Stay

Simple accommodation is available at **The Quarters** at the **Wairata Forest Farm**, about 40 minutes from Opotiki. You're housed in the shearer's quarters, with kitchen and bath. It sleeps up to eight. wairata.forest.farm@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-315-7763 ($).

For a remote, in-the-bush experience, consider **Takaputahi Ventures**. It's just a simple cabin adjacent to the Takaputahi River and sleeps six in two bunkrooms. There are plenty of options for bush and river walks, as well as kayak trips down the river. It's off SH35 up the Motu Road, but call for directions. Bookings essential; tariffs include lodging and all meals. www.takaputahi.co.nz, ☎ 07-863-7331 or 025-276-6394 ($$$).

Gisborne & Poverty Bay

The business and commercial center of Eastland, Gisborne's big claim to fame is being the easternmost city – therefore, the first city in the world to see the sun. There was quite a lot of hullabaloo about this in December 1999, as you can imagine. Unfortunately, like most of the rest of New Zealand, Gisborne welcomed 2000 under rainy and overcast skies. It was all kind of disappointing, to say the least.

Nevertheless, most people come to Gisborne for the sunshine and beaches. It's a popular summer-holiday spot and very popular with surfers. It's also quite well known for its grape-growing and wine production. Gisborne is on the coast and at the confluence of two rivers – the Waimata and Taruheru. It's a water-based city, a working harbor and industrial port, with seafood, timber and whatever else going in and out. There are also no fewer than 12 golf courses in the region; pick up a *Gisborne & Eastland Region Golf Guide* from the information center if you're so inclined.

Gisborne is at the top of Poverty Bay, so called by Captain James Cook when he landed here in October 1769. This was the first place Cook landed in New Zealand, and it was not a pleasant experience – conflict ensued with the local Maori, several of whom were killed, and Cook and his men sailed away without replenishing their ship. He named it Poverty Bay because it provided him with nothing but grief. To the immediate south of the city of Gisborne is a point of land called Te Kuri A Paoa, or Young Nick's Head. The Maori name was given by Paoa, the captain of the waka (tribe) Horouta in honor of his dog. The English name was given by Cook in honor of Nicholas Young – surgeon's boy on the ship – who first spotted New Zealand. Gisborne (and Poverty Bay) has had its share of conflict since 1769, including quite a few bloody battles in the 1860s.

Young Nick's Head

This point of land became part of a large farm called Young Nick's Head Station. No one is sure why a historically significant piece of land went into private ownership but, in 2002, the family that had owned the land for nearly a century agreed to sell the station to a New Yorker named John Griffin for nearly $4 million.

In a word, all hell broke lose. Many New Zealanders, pakeha and Maori alike, resented foreign ownership of a historical landmark; others said, hey, the land is going to stay here, it's been privately owned for nearly 100 years and no one goes out there anyway, so what difference does it make? The local Maori, the Ngai Tamanuhiri, who see the headland as spiritually and historically significant, and believe it should be theirs, occupied the land and went to Parliament. Eventually, the sale of the station (which remains a sheep and beef station) was completed, with some qualifications. Historic-reserve status and public ownership was assigned to the cliffs, the Rangihoua Pa site, and a hill known as Te Kuri. Griffin plans to continue farming the land and make improvements to it; but a covenant was established under the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust deeming that the land will only be used for farming and not for other developments.

Gisborne hosts a **film festival** every year in November. Contact ☎ 06-867-3339 for details.

■ Information Sources

The very helpful and honest **Information Center** in Gisborne is located at info@gisbornenz.com, 209 Grey Street, ☎ 06-868-6139, fax 06-868-6138; visit here first.

The **Department of Conservation** office is at 63 Carnavon Street, ☎ 06-867-8531.

■ Adventures

On Water

The popular beach in town is **Waikanae**, where the swimming is safe. It's at the end of Customhouse, quite central to town, and has plenty of picnic spots as well as sand. **Kaiti Beach** is popular for sailing and windsurfing.

To get out on the water and try your hand at what it's like to be an East Coast fisherman, give **Shoreline Adventures** a call. You can check crayfish pots, learn to saltwater fly-fish, take your kids for an intro to fishing, or go waterskiing, wakeboarding or biscuit-riding. Basically, anything you can do on the water is an option, including transport to surfing spots. ☎ 0800-102-298.

Less placid is **Surfit** a "shark cage experience." I have, in the tropics, inadvertently found myself snorkeling with rather large sharks and I'm not sure what the draw is to do it from the safety of a cage, but others seem to enjoy it. www.sharks.co.nz, 48 Awapuni Road, ☎ 06-867-2970 or 025-307-216, fax 06-867-2703.

On Foot

There are quite a few walks within a short distance of Gisborne. The information center has DoC brochures for sale.

With Wine

Gisborne is probably best known for its Chardonnay. In October of each year the region hosts a Chardonnay Challenge. There are a few wineries with cellar doors (tasting rooms) that are open to the public, but many are only open Monday to Friday; the region hasn't really gotten the hang of wine tourism yet, but it may happen. Go into the information center, get a map and ask what's open. Most of the grapes are grown in a triangle bordered by SH2 and SH36, which is a very pretty area with nice country roads and farm stands where you can buy fresh produce.

Wineries

Longbush Wines can be tasted at **The Works**, which is a café and restaurant on the wharf, ☎ 06-863-1285.

Matawero Wines are available at the **Colosseum Café and Wine Bar**, which is open from September until Queen's Birthday. Riverpoint Road, ☎ 06-867-4733.

Lindauer Cellars has tastings at different times of day, depending on the calendar; six days a week in winter, seven in summer. They are close to town and not far from the beach, so if you get a bit too much sun, duck in for a taste. Solander Street, ☎ 06-868-2757.

Millton is open during the summer, Monday through Saturday. Papatu Road, ☎ 06-862-8680.

Pouparae Park is open seven days a week in the summer, but inquire first in the winter as hours are limited. Bushmere Road, ☎ 06-867-7931.

TW Wines is the place to go if you're serious about wine; they welcome appointments and will arrange for tastings and tours. Back Ormond Road, ☎ 021-864-818.

Waiohika Estate does tastings on most days and you can also visit the gardens and enjoy a vineyard walk. Waimata Valley, ☎ 06-867-4670.

■ Sightseeing

If you want a look around the place, including some of the wineries, perhaps the best option is to book with **Trev's Tours**. A highly respected guide, Trev offers wine-themed and other guided tours around the region. ☎ 06-863-9815 fax 06-863-9515.

***Whale Rider* Tours** to Whangara are available through Te Reiputa Ltd. Tours take approximately three hours, and include a lot of information about Maori culture. Unfortunately, not everyone is culturally sensitive; in the past there were some incidents involving picnics and other activities on the cemetery grounds at Whangara. Therefore, a guide is needed to explore this lovely little settlement. info@gisbornenz.com ☎ 06-868-6139, fax 06-868-6138.

Eastwoodhill Arboretum is a real draw for the area. It's about 30 minutes away from the city, and has nice open spaces, great examples of woodlands and flower gardens. Good for a wander – and keep in mind, there are over 3,000 exotic trees and shrubs here, making it one of New Zealand's largest plant collections. It's especially beautiful in the autumn, when the fall colors of the exotic species are showing their stuff. Bunkroom accommodation is available… not a bad choice, really. www.eastwoodhill.org.nz, 2392 Wharekopae Road (off SH36), Ngatapa, ☎ 06-863-9003, fax 06-863-9093.

The East Coast Museum of Technology is just off the Main Road in Makaraka. Open daily from 9:30 am to 4 pm. Adults $2, children 50¢.

For a bit of a treat, go for a ride with **Yesteryear Motoring**. Do a wine tour or scenic drive in a vintage Model A Ford. old_car_tours@hotmail.com, ☎ 06-868-4817 or 025-617-0756.

■ Where to Stay

For a B&B right on the beach road, try **Sea View**, 68 Salisbury Road, ☎ 06-867-3879, fax 06-867-5879 ($$$).

The **Beachcomber Motel** is the newest beach motel and probably one of your best bets. Direct access to the beach and close to town. 73 Salisbury Road, ☎ 06-868-9349, fax 06-868-6974 ($$-$$$).

An older-style beach option is the **Blue Pacific Motel**. Good location, serviceable and clean. www.seafront.co.nz, 90 Salisbury Road, ☎ 06-868-6099, fax 06-867-0481 ($$-$$$).

For something a bit more upmarket, try the **Senator Motor Inn**. It's new, on the harbor and close to restaurants. www.senatormotorinn.co.nz, 2 Childers Road, ☎ 06-868-8877, fax 06-868-8879 ($$$).

Another harborside option is **Pacific Harbor Motor Inn**. Modern, nicely appointed and spacious. Corner of Reads Quay and Pearce Streets. www.pacific-harbour.co.nz, ☎ 06-867-8847, fax 06-867-4586 ($$$).

Te Hau Station Farmstay gets the prize for pretty, comfortable and fun. You can play tennis, go for a mountain-bike ride, golf, or try your hand at claybird shooting. Meals are available. It's about 50 km (30 miles) from Gisborne on a working farm. tehaustn@xtra.co.nz, 332 Hau Road, Whatatutu, ☎ 06-862-1822, fax 06-862-1997 ($$).

Highgate is a reception and retreat center, but also has accommodation in a two-bedroom cottage with kitchen and bath. It's part of a large country homestead and farm, with expansive gardens, a private beach and river. www.highgate.co.nz, 2115 Wharerata Road, ☎ 06-862-8435, fax 06-862-8835 ($$$).

Sycamore Lodge and Backpackers is a bit out of town, but it's the most pleasant of the three local backpacker hostel options. The grounds have a bit of a group-home feel, and with good reason. Before becoming a backer hostel, the place was an orphanage, then a retirement home. Yvonne, the owner, is helpful and calm, and offers long-term accommodation in addition to the backpackers wing. Large kitchen, huge garden, plenty of space for tents. gisbornebp@xtra.co.nz, 690 Gladstone Road, ☎ 06-868-1000, fax 06-868-4000 ($).

I stayed at the **Flying Nun** when I first visited Gisborne in 1999. I think it was in a bit better shape then, but it's a serviceable, bizarre kind of place. It was once a convent and the rooms are tucked here and there. Big kitchen and lounge, lots of period woodwork. yager@xtra.co.nz, 147 Roebuck Road, ☎ 06-868-0461 ($).

The local **YHA** was up for sale at my last visit. Let's hope it sells and someone gives it a little attention; it seemed a bit tired. yha.gis@clear.net.nz, corner Wainui Road and Harris Street, ☎ 06-867-3269, fax 06-867-3296 ($).

The **Waikanae Beach Holiday Park** is right on the beach and a short walk into town. There are cabins and tourist apartments, as well as tent and power sites. It's so convenient to the beach, you can forgive its crowded feel. motorcamp@gdc.govt.nz, Grey Street, ☎ 06-867-5634, fax 06-867-9765 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

There are a few good choices for meals in Gisborne and a few cafés that have come onto the scene in recent years. There are plenty of takeout options and a few interesting ethnic choices, plus the usual KFC, McDonalds, and the like.

> **Local products:** Opening in early 2004 is **The Wharf Market**, which promises to have local foods, wines and other goodies. It was under construction when I was last in Gisborne, but it's in a great location, so let's hope the food and drinks match!

The Wharf is a good choice for any meal. Good location on the waterfront, good food, good coffee. They also have a selection of magazines to read while you sip a cuppa. ☎ 06-868-4876 ($$-$$$).

Housed in the old freezing plant is the aptly named **The Works Café and Cellar**. They have a nice wine list, innovative food (but also simple, dependable fare) and they serve as what the Kiwis call the cellar door, or tasting room, for Longbush wines. On the Esplanade, ☎ 06-863-1285 ($$-$$$).

Verve Café is one of the few cafés that stays open in the afternoons, so it gets my vote. Plus, they have good food and baked treats, as well as Internet access. 121 Gladstone Road, right in the central business district. ☎ 06-868-9095 ($$).

I like **Ruba** because they're tucked away and make a statement by not being on the main drag. Open for breakfast and lunch (until 5 pm) and dinner on the weekends. River end of Childers Road, ☎ 06-868-6516 ($$-$$$).

Hawke's Bay

Introduction

Unfortunately, many tourists miss the diverse region that is known as Hawke's Bay. It is slightly out of the way, but you could come to New Zealand and only go to Hawke's Bay, and still keep yourself entertained for a couple of weeks. First, there is the Mediterranean climate, the stunning scenery, the sunshine and the coast. And then there's the wine and food; you'd better leave your diet at home. Add wilderness, in the form of hot springs, rivers and one of New Zealand's Great Walks. Home to the world's most accessible mainland gannet colony, the National Aquarium, the Art-Deco city of Napier, and the agriculturally wealthy central portion of the region, Hawke's Bay really does have all bases covered. The biggest problem with tourism in Hawke's Bay is that people don't stay long enough.

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- Mahia Peninsula 286
- Te Urewera National Park & Wairoa 287
- Napier, Hastings & Havelock North 290
- Central Hawke's Bay 302

Keep in mind: The body of water is called "Hawke Bay." The region is called "Hawke's Bay."

Getting Here

By Air

The Hawke's Bay airport is just north of Napier and is serviced domestically. The Airport Shuttle meets most flights and can be booked in advance through ☎ 06-870-9050.

By Car

Running north and south, SH2 links Gisborne to the Mahia Peninsula, Wairoa and Napier, before continuing to Wellington. From the northwest, SH5 leads to Taupo. From Auckland to Napier, it is a five-hour drive; from Rotorua, three to four hours; from Gisborne, three hours; and from Wellington, four hours.

By Bus

InterCity Coachlines, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100, and **Newman's**, www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-613-6200, provide service from most areas of the North Island to Hawke's Bay. Buses arrive at the **Napier Travel Centre** at the train station on Munro Street.

Hawke's Bay
To Taupo
Te Urewera National Park
Lake Waikare-moana
Aniwaniwa
Tuai
To Gisborne
Muriwai
Bartletts
Te Reinga
Wairoa River
Mangaaruhe R
Waikaretaheke R
Esk Forest
Mohaka River
Waihua River
Frasertown
Morere
Nuhaka
Wairoa
Waihua
Mahia Beach
Mohaka
Tutira
Hawke Bay Coastal Walk
Esk River
Tawapata
Mahia Peninsula
Hawke Bay
Eskdale
Bay View
Dartmoor
Napier
Taradale
Hastings
Ruahine Forest Park
Havelock North
Pukehou
Ocean Beach
Tukituki River
Otane
Waimarama
Pacific Ocean
Takapau
Waipukurau
To 18
Wanstead
Mangamaire River
Weber
Wimbledon
Cape Turnagain
Herbertville
25 KM
15.5 MILES
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
1. Mahia Beach & Scenic Reserve
2. Morere Hot Springs
3. Te Reinga Falls
4. Lake Waikareiti & Maungapohatu Tracks
5. Lake Waikaremoana Track
6. Esk River Area Wineries
7. Napier Attractions: Art Deco District, Marine Parade (Marineland, Opossum World), Centennial & Sunken Gardens, Ocean Spa, National Aquarium of NZ, Seahorse Farm, Silky Oak Chocolate Co., Hawke's Bay Museum, Te Puna Farm (Puketapu)
8. Napier Area Wineries
9. Hastings Attractions: Sunday Farmers Market, Splash Planet, Rush Monro Ice Cream Garden, Hawke's Bay Exhibition Centre, British Car Museum
10. Cape Kidnappers Gannet Colony
11. Te Mata Peak & Trust Park
12. Hastings Area Wineries
13. Winery Tours, Bike Tours, Dartmoor Area Wineries
14. Prinsy's Rural Experience, Sheepshearing
15. Te Angiangi Marine Reserve
16. Historic Farm Walks, "Tamatea's Hill"
17. Historic Farmstead
18. Dannevirke & Norsewood Attractions: Norsewood Pioneer Cottage Museum, Norsewear NZ Natural Clothing, Dannevirke Holiday Park, Dannevirke Aerodrome-GoJump
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Information Sources

Hawke's Bay Tourism maintains **www.hawkesbaynz.com** as the official website. Information centers are located around the region and they are listed at appropriate spots in this chapter.

DoC has offices at Aniwaniwa at Lake Waikaremoana, in Wairoa, in Napier.

> **Did you know?** More acres of apples are grown in Hawke's Bay than anywhere else in New Zealand. Hastings is the base for New Zealand food-processing giant, Heinz-Watties.

Gisborne to Wairoa

Heading south from Gisborne toward Hawke's Bay, you have two options: the inland SH36 or coastal SH2. They join up at Wairoa. SH36, Tiniroto Road, doesn't see much traffic; it's a peaceful drive through bush and farmland and offers the occasional view, especially from Gentle Annie Summit, about 24 km (14 miles) from Gisborne. There are a few good fishing spots along the route, including Hangaroa, Doneraille Park, Tiniroto, and Te Reinga. From Te Reinga, you can also access the road to Lake Waikaremoana. The Wairoa River and Te Reinga Falls are accessed from an unpaved side-road at Te Reinga.

SH2 runs closer to the coast until reaching the Wharerata Forest and Morere. You can then head east to the Mahia Peninsula, or continue directly on to Wairoa.

■ Adventures

In Water

Morere Hot Springs is one of my favorite thermal spas… it's not just a big cement swimming pool filled with hot water that could be anywhere in the world. The eight pools are set in the bush, tastefully designed and really relaxing and special. It's in a reserve of nearly 900 acres of bush, which is managed by DoC, and there are walking tracks ranging from 20 minutes to three hours. Just off SH2, 58 km (34 miles) south of Gisborne, 40 km (24 miles) north of Wairoa. $5 adults, private spas $7. Open daily, 10 am to 9 pm in summer, 10 am to 5 pm in winter. morere.hot.springs@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 06-837-8856.

■ Where to Stay

Moonlight Lodge is just across the street and has backpacker accommodation in an old farmhouse, as well as a cottage with kitchen and bath. It's charming, friendly and a nice place to relax. There are also walking tracks on the property. moonlightlodge@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-837-8824 ($).

Cabins and campsites are available at **Morere Tearooms and Camping Ground**, also directly across from the reserve. They offer takeout, as well as meals, and they have a limited grocery supply. morere@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-837-8792 ($).

Mahia Peninsula

From Morere, it's about nine kilometers (five miles) to Nuhaka, where you can grab a few supplies, and then drive about 20 kilometers (12 miles) to the peninsula, where there are a few shops, so you won't starve. I am a real fan of the Mahia Peninsula and Mahia Beach. I get to Mahia and, immediately, I relax. It's a lovely drive in, through farms and hills with one rewarding view after another. It just feels miles away from anything and I especially like the fact that the accommodations are simple. The beach is long and sandy, someone is always out walking their dog or running, and it's a good place to swim. If you continue on around from the main beach you'll find some reefs for snorkeling – stop in the dive shop, ask advice and rent gear.

■ Adventures

On Water

Mahia Dive and Fish offers dive trips for shellfish and recreational diving on nearby wrecks. Equipment rental is available, or bring your own. ☎/fax 06-837-5808 or 025-523-305.

On Foot

In addition to being a great place for beachcombing, the **Mahia Scenic Reserve**, a lowland coastal forest, has a 3½-km (two-mile) loop walk.

■ Where to Stay

Mahia Beach

Mahia Beach Motel and Holiday Park overlooks the sea and has tourist cabins, on-site campers and motel units. They also have a store and a café. The property is under new ownership as of late 2003 with a lot of upgrading going on. mahia.beach.motels@xtra.co.nz, 43 Moana Drive, ☎ 06-837-5830 ($-$$)

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Blue Bay Holiday Resort is tucked in a pine forest right on the water. There are backpacker hostels, tourist apartments, cabins and motel rooms with kitchen and bath, plus lots of space for tents and campers. There is also a shop and a café. www.bluebay.co.nz, ☎ 06-837-5867 or 0800-262-442, fax 06-837-5516 ($-$$).

Cappamore Lodge is a beautiful Scandinavian-style log-cabin home that has two bedrooms with kitchen for travelers who want to cook for themselves. www.cottagestays.co.nz/cappamore/cottage.htm, 435 Mahia East Coast Road, ☎ 06-837-5523, fax 06-837-5583 ($$).

Mahia

Mahia, as compared to Mahia Beach, is on the other side of the peninsula and is a gem of a place. **The Quarters** has a cottage with kitchen and bath that

overlooks the sea, set on a beef and sheep farm. A bonus here (in addition to outstanding views) is the complimentary crayfish and corn bread! www.quarters.co.nz, ☎ 06-837-5751, fax 06-837-5721 ($$$).

■ Where to Eat

Sunset Point Sports Bar & Bistro is the place to go. They have takeout as well as restaurant meals and they serve lots of local seafood and wine. You can also access the Internet. Corner Newcastle & Ratau streets, Mahia Beach. ☎ 06-837-5071 ($-$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

On the second Saturday of each month, the **Kaiuku Marae** has a traditional New Zealand dinner buffet that includes Maori food. It's a laid-back, casual affair that costs $15. Bring your own drinks; call first to confirm. ☎ 06-837-5777. East C Road, Mahia ($).

Te Urewera National Park & Wairoa

Back on SH2 coming off the Mahia Peninsula at Nuhaka, it's about 10 km (six miles) to the **Wairoa Region**, where the slogan is "New Zealand the way it used to be." One of my friends said that the marketing group must have been sitting around and said, "Well, we haven't got much going for us and we're a little backwards, so let's go with that." Perhaps a little harsh, but there aren't too many places or reasons to stop here except for the fact that Wairoa is the jumping-off town for East Coast and the fantastic Lake Waikaremoana, nestled in Te Urewera National Park. From Wairoa, SH38 follows along the Waikaretheke River for most of the 70 km (42 miles) to Aniwaniwa, where the state highway ends. I would allow more than an hour to do the drive from Wairoa, and you would be wise to buy your groceries in Napier, Gisborne or Wairoa. There is a small camp store at the Lake Waikaremoana Motor Camp where you can get necessities that you may have forgotten or run out of. You can also leave your car there while you do the walk (check with the shop for advice on parking spots).

> **Did you know?** Hawke's Bay is the only place in New Zealand where land-dinosaur remains have been found. In 1997, a self-taught paleontologist found them in the Te Ureweras.

Lake Waikaremoana also connects to Rotorua by way of SH38. Most of the road is unpaved and it takes about two hours to drive the nearly 100 km (60 miles) between Lake Waikaremoana and Murupara, which is just over 60 km from Rotorua. SH38 is a fascinating look into the backcountry of the North Island, and makes for an interesting, albeit twisting and turning, drive. The road cuts through Te Urewera National Park and offers some fantastic views of waterfalls and forest. It also leads through the heartland of the Tuhoe people, who live a more traditional lifestyle than most New Zealanders – horses are used as transport, homes are simple, and most everyone will wave as you wander past. The only town is Ruatahuna, which is about 27 km (16 miles) from Aniwaniwa. It has a small shop, takeout food, and gas, but you'd be wise

to fill up your gas tank before beginning your drive, as there are no guarantees as to when the gas station will be open. There are a few homestays in Ruatahuna, and a handful of short walks lead into the national park from here. This is the kind of town where you stop and inquire about accommodation. You might get lucky and be invited to stay on the marae or at a homestay.

> **Tip:** I enjoy approaching Lake Waikaremoana from the Wairoa side, doing the walk and then driving to Rotorua via SH38.

■ Information Sources

The **Wairoa Information Centre** is on the corner of SH2 & Queen Street, weavic@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 06-838-7440.

The **Aniwaniwa Visitor Centre** is a great source of information on Lake Waikaremoana and other regional lakes. SH38, Aniwaniwa, urewerainfo@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 06-837-3900, fax 06-837-3722.

In Wairoa, **DoC** has an office at 272 Marine Parade, ☎ 06-838-8252; it also has a field office in Murupara (on the Rotorua side of the Lake), ☎ 07-366-5641.

■ Adventures

On Water

There are six lakes in the area, Lake Waikaremoana being the largest. All are popular for fishing.

In **Tuai**, 10 km (six miles) east of Lake Waikaremoana, you can rent kayaks, canoes and go trout fishing on the river.

On Foot

> **Tip:** If you plan to do the Lake Waikaremoana walk over the Christmas/New Year period, it is essential to book in advance. Contact DoC, greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz.

The people of Lake Waikaremoana are called "The Children of the Mist," and if you happen to be walking the track during a rainstorm, you may think the title is a gross understatement. The mountains become shrouded in mist and walking the track is not unlike living in a cotton ball. The forest takes on a quiet, almost Gothic feel in the rain and fog; your reward comes when the clouds lift and the views are exposed.

The **Lake Waikaremoana Track**, in Te Urewera National Park, is one of New Zealand's Great Walks; it is 46 kilometers (27 miles) long and takes between three and four days to walk. While not alpine, the weather is extremely changeable and can be dangerous – when I walked this track, two hypothermic trampers were rescued by helicopter. It is not terrain to be taken lightly. The track can be walked from either direction; your choice depends on whether you want your one long day of climbing to be the first day or the last. I chose to do it first and was glad for it, but because of weather, I missed the views from the Panekiri bluffs. Had I traveled in the opposite direction the clear days would have been from the high spots; but no worries, it was a fabulous walk nonetheless. The bird life is great, lots of tui and bell-

birds, fantail, kaka, North Island robin and morepork. There are five DoC huts around the lake, and five campsites, making the track somewhat flexible as to which days you want to walk the longest. Although this was a "Great Walk," the huts are a bit simpler than other Great-Walk accommodations, but they are in the process of being upgraded. I think this is probably my favorite walk on the North Island – great views, remote, fabulous bush and good bird life. It's not the most strenuous hike in the country, but it is challenging.

Water Transport

Water-taxi service is about $25 per adult for drop-off and pick-up and, depending on where you are staying prior to walking, contact one of the following:

Waikaremoana Guided Tours rents kayaks and canoes, as well as providing water-taxi service for the walk. ☎ 06-837-3729.

Big Bush Water Taxi provides water transport to the beginning of the walk. www.lakewaikaremoana.co.nz, ☎ 06-837-3777 or 0800-525-392.

There are other walks around the area, including one to Lake Waikareiti and around its western shores. Inquire at DoC for information.

■ Where to Stay

At the Lake

A very convenient way to do the walk is to stay the night before at the **Waikaremoana Motor Camp**, which offers fisherman's cabins, tourist flats and chalets. www.lake.co.nz, Lake Waikaremoana, ☎ 06-837-3826, fax 06-837-3825 ($-$$).

Big Bush Holiday Park is in Aniwaniwa, just four km (2½ miles) from the Onepoto (southeastern) end of the track. There are units with kitchen and bath, backpacker dorms and tent sites. Transport to the track is available. www.lakewaikaremoana.co.nz, ☎ 06-837-3777 or 0800-525-392 ($).

In Wairoa

Bush Dale Farm Backpackers is a cute cottage in the hills and there are walking tracks in the bush. Cricklewood Road, Wairoa, ☎/fax 06-838-6453 ($).

Wairoa Riverside Motor Camp offers simple accommodation in tourist cabins or camping sites. Marine Parade, Wairoa, ☎ 06-838-6301, fax 06-838-6341 ($).

Three Oaks Motel has rooms with kitchen and bath, swimming pool, evening meals by arrangement. Corner Campbell & Clyde, Wairoa, ☎/fax 06-838-8204.($$)

Napier, Hastings & Havelock North

The Maori were living a rich agricultural and fishing lifestyle in the Napier area along the coast, south of Wairoa, when Cook arrived on the *Endeavour*. They hadn't always lived peaceably, though, as the Battle of Te Pakake testifies. The local tribes in the area, Ngati Parau, Ngati Hinepare and Ngati Mahu, used Te Pakake Island – a low, sandy island just offshore where the present port is – as a pa (a fighting place or stronghold) and as a burial ground. What happened at the battle is unclear, but it appears that several warrior tribes from the Waikato attacked those who were taking refuge on the island and defeated them, capturing some of the chiefs.

I think **Napier** is one of the nicest small cities in New Zealand. It's clean, friendly and has lots of sunshine hours. It also has art galleries, beaches and wineries. Take a stroll along Marine Parade and enjoy the sea, the sand and the sun.

Hastings, about 20 km (12 miles) south, is the commercial and agricultural center for the area, but also has some worthwhile attractions. Havelock North, three km (three miles) from Hastings, is a trendier place to hang out and is near quite a few of the wineries. **Ahuriri** is a Napier suburb – it's where the marinas are, and is experiencing a bit of resurgence in activity. It's a great spot to hang out, grab a coffee or a beer and watch the boats come and go. I'm going to attack all the towns together, as the activities and adventures tend to know no boundaries.

It would be nearly impossible to visit Napier and not be aware of the Art Deco influence. On February 3, 1931 at 10:46 an earthquake registering 7.9 on the Richter scale shook Napier and the surrounding area for 2½ minutes. It was followed by over 500 aftershocks! Nearly all the buildings in Napier were destroyed and 258 people were killed – 162 in Napier, 93 in Hastings and three in Wairoa. Soon after the earthquake, a fire swept through Napier, destroying some of what the earthquake didn't and creating more havoc. During the shaking and twisting, the land changed form. Parts of the coastline fell to the sea, and the whole area tilted upwards, rising two meters (over six feet) from its previous level. The Ahuriri lagoon drained, creating 9,000 acres of new land.

Architects from Napier and around New Zealand were enlisted to redesign the city and, while Art Deco seems to garner the most attention, the other styles of the 1930s – Stripped Classical and Spanish Mission – are also evident. Napier is the one place in the world where you can see so many examples of these styles all in one area.

But Napier would be just a bunch of 1930s-style buildings if it weren't for **Marine Parade**, a seaside gem. When the rebuilding of Napier was going on, there were more than a few wheelbarrows full of rubble to dispose of. Thinking like enterprising New Zealanders, they transported the fallen-down building bits to the sea front, creating what we now call Marine Parade. It's two km long (about a mile and a quarter) and is a lovely place to stroll – either on the sand, or the walkway. Or you can roller blade along the pavement. There's a skateboard park for the kids and more than a couple of inviting benches at the Centennial and Sunken Gardens. All along, it's lined by stately Norfolk Island pines. At the northern end, the bronze statue, Pania of the Reef, sits quietly and forever. She is a character from a Maori

legend – Pania was one of the sea people, but came to live on land with her lover/husband. The sea kept calling her, though, and one night she swam back to her sea people, who took her back (against her will) to the watery realm and away from her lover.

■ Information Sources

Napier Information Centre, info@napiervic.co.nz, 100 Marine Parade, ☎ 06-834-1911, fax 06-835-7219.

Tip: You can make on-line reservations at www.napiervic.co.nz.

Hastings Visitor Information Center, info@hastingsvic.co.nz, Russell Street, ☎ 06-873-5526, fax 06-873-5529.

■ Adventures

In Art

Sign up for an **Art-Deco walk**. It's an absolutely fascinating walk around town. Choose between the one-hour morning walk or two-hour afternoon walk. You can self-guide with a brochure from the trust, but on the guided walk you will learn more than you can imagine in a short time and for only $8-$10. www.artdeconapier.com, Deco Centre, Tennyson Street, Napier, ☎ 06-835-0022, fax 06-835-1912.

Deco Affair is a "why not, you only live once," kind of activity. Dress up in period clothes, have tea or cocktails, be driven around in a vintage car – the perfect way to experience the place. Bertie is a total showman and character, while Penelope has all the clothes. Tours from $40 per person. www.decoaffair.com, ☎ 06-835-4491 or 025-241-5279.

On Water

The beach along Marine Parade is not safe for swimming but, if you go out past the port, there is good swimming there. Also, swimming and surfing are popular at **Ocean Beach** and **Waimarama**, southeast of Hastings. The drive to these spots takes you past Te Mata Peak and winds around hillsides, past wineries and farms. The views are great and the beaches popular.

Ocean Spa, new in 2003, is a heated pool complex right on the ocean with private spa pools and massage available. It's a great place whether or not you've got kids, but particularly so if you do. Open Monday-Saturday 6 am-10 pm, Sunday 8 am-10 pm. $6 adults, $4 children. napier@h2omanagement.co.nz, 42 Marine Parade, Napier, ☎ 06-835-8553.

If your kids find out **Splash Planet** exists and you don't take them, you will have hell to pay. It's a water park with rides like Never Ending River and Sky Castle Screamer. There are also bumper boats, go-karts, beach volleyball, indoor heated pools and – the Master Blaster, a giant slide. Open daily in the summer, 10 am to 6 pm; $25 adults, $19.50 children (15 and under). www.splashplanet.co.nz, Grove Road, Hastings, ☎ 06-876-9856 or 0508-775-274.

To try something totally different, go on a gorging adventure with **Kiwi-Adventure Company**. No kayaks or rafts, just you and your safety

gear as you go down rock-slides in a limestone chasm. There are waterfalls, plunge pools, slides… a real change of pace. Kiwi-Adventures also runs four-hour canoe trips down the Tukituki River. Transport is provided, as is all equipment. The Tukituki is a grade 1 (very gentle ripples) river, right outside of Havelock North. For the more adventurous, sign up for the Mohaka River Trip. You can choose either a Canadian canoe or a sit-on-top kayak. The Mohaka, midway between Taupo and Napier, is grade 2 or 3 (depending on flow). The trip is five hours including travel time. Prices begin at $140 per person. www.kiwi-adventure.co.nz, 58 West Quay, Ahuriri, Napier, ☎ 06-834-3500, fax 06-834-3502.

Dive HQ has two locations from which they lead trips. Nelson Quay, Ahuriri, Napier, ☎ 06-834-2009, and 709 Karamu Road, Hastings, ☎ 06-878-8831, www.divehq.co.nz.

Fishing and dive charters are available through **Adrenaline Charters and Adventure Dive**, ☎ 06-843-5148 or 025-794-998.

On Foot

Te Mata Trust Park walking tracks through native and exotic bush range from five minutes to two hours, some with great views of the area. At Te Mata Peak, 399 meters (about 1,300 feet), there's a lookout, and on clear days you can't quite see forever, but close to it. Pick up a map at the information center in Havelock North or Napier.

Rainy day option: The **Kiwi Adventure Company** has an indoor climbing wall at their base in Ahuriri. This is a young company, started by some energetic guys and it's a fun place to hang out. All levels are catered to and equipment is available to rent. www.kiwi-adventure.co.nz, 58 West Quay, Ahuriri, Napier, ☎ 06-834-3500.

In Caves

It's back to the **Kiwi Adventure Company** again. They run three caving options: a two-hour family trip to see glow worms and cave formations; a four-hour hard-core caving trip with abseiling and underground stream passages; and a full-day (12 hours!) caving trip with either easy caving or the kind that has you squeezing through tight spaces. All sorts of options are available, so give them a call to find out what's on. Prices begin at $25 per adult for the family trip, $75 per person for the four-hour trip, and $600 for four people for the full-day expedition. www.kiwi-adventure.co.nz, 58 West Quay, Ahuriri, Napier, ☎ 06-834-3500, fax 06-834-3502.

On Bikes

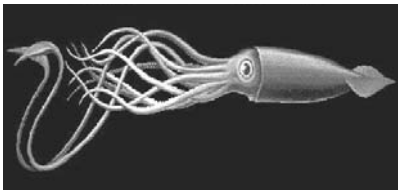
While the mountain biking around Napier isn't the best, there are some good country roads for touring. I like the area out by Taradale and Dartmoor. Don't be afraid of the hills, they don't last forever. And the wineries are a great place to pedal around. If you don't have your own bike, there are a couple of bike-touring companies, each offering a slightly different bend on the idea of wine-touring by bike.

Bike D'Vine has a number of winery and sightseeing options – including an Art Deco trip – for touring around. Their trips concentrate on the Esk Valley and Napier. They provide you with the bike, helmet, lunch-pack and map,

and will pick you up from your accommodation if you want. Single and tandems available and they also have scooters for rent. $30-$40 per day depending on the trip. www.bikedevine.com, 8 Brewster Street, Bluff Hill, ☎ 06-833-6697, fax 06-833-6687.

On Yer Bike, seven km south of Hastings, focuses on the wineries around the Ngatarawa Triangle – including Selini Estate, Ngatarawa and Trinity Hill. They have tandems and mountain bikes and provide maps, lunch-pack, and mobile phone. www.onyerbike.co.nz, 129 Rosser Road, Hastings, ☎ 06-879-8735.

> **Tip:** There's a good map-brochure called ***The Coastal Trail to the Cape***, which highlights the wineries, art, craft and accommodation in the coastal area between Napier and Cape Kidnappers.



The **National Aquarium of New Zealand** is on the shore in Napier and is a great rainy or sunny day place to go. For a more detailed account of this fascinating place, I definitely recommend taking a guided behind-the-scenes tour – it gives you an up-close and personal experience, allowing touching, feeling and smelling. If you're a diver, you can dive in the main tank during feeding times. Set up like the seven continents, the aquarium displays lead you around the world, starting in Africa. The aquarium provides an educational experience without being stuffy or in-your-face. Open 9 am-5 pm from Easter to December 26; longer hours over Christmas holidays from February 1 through Easter. Behind-the-scene tours at 9 am and 1 pm; feeding in reef tank, 10 am; feeding in ocean tank, 2 pm. Dive in the main tank by appointment only. General admission $12 adults, $6 children; behind-the-scene adults, $20, $10 children. Diving, $40 plus $5 per tank. www.nationalaquarium.co.nz, Marine Parade, ☎ 06-834-1404, fax 06-833-7631.

> **Did you know?** The giant squid, above, at the National Aquarium is the only one on permanent display in the Southern Hemisphere.

Between the Information Centre and the National Aquarium on Marine Parade is **Marineland**. It's a marine zoo with performing seals and dolphins and other marine animals, many of which are recovering from injuries suffered in the wild.

> **Did you know?** Seahorses are fish. They belong to the same phylum as goldfish and herring. **The Seahorse Farm** in Clive breeds seahorses for the aquarium and medical trade, and conducts tours. $9 adults, $5 children. Open daily for tours 10 am, 1, and 3 pm. www.theseahorsefarm.co.nz, SH2, ☎ 06-834-0998, fax 06-834-0992.

Don't Miss This

Cape Kidnappers is home to over 20,000 Australasian gannets, making it the world's largest mainland nesting spot for this type of booby. Gannets are incredible. Not only are they breathtakingly beautiful, with their blue eyes and yellow heads (more vibrant during breeding season), but they are amazing from a biological standpoint as well. When gannets feed, they soar 10 to 30 meters (32-100 feet) above the water looking for fish, then fold their wings and dive in with incredible speed. Inflatable air sacs on their neck and breast cushions the impact when diving. Another interesting feature of gannets is that they leave their colony on their maiden flight at just 15 weeks old and fly all the way to Australia, where they stay for a few years before returning to their home breeding-grounds to find a mate. A trip to Cape Kidnappers is one you won't soon forget. There are three colonies, the earliest first noted in the 1850s. One colony, The Saddle, is reserved for scientific study; the other two, the Plateau and Black Reef, are open for viewing. The cape is closed to the public during breeding season (June to October).

Annually, the birds arrive for nesting in June. Eggs are layed from early July through October and chicks hatch about six weeks later. The best time to view the gannets is between early November and late February. The oldest gannet recorded was over 30 years old!

You can be amazingly close to the majestic birds, see the furry, goofy youngsters, the flirting teens and the hard-at-work parents. And getting there is half the adventure, regardless of the route you pick. You can walk the 11 km/seven miles (no permits are required), but the route is tide-dependent. Be sure to check in with DoC before heading out and give yourself plenty of time – at least five hours so you have time with the birds. The views from the lookouts are fabulous, so you may want to stay as long as possible.

Historic interest: Cape Kidnappers gets its name from Captain Cook. Local Maori tried to kidnap a young Tahitian boy who was on Cook's ship, the *Endeavour*. The Maori feared the boy was being held beyond his will; the lad managed to escape from them and swim back to the boat. In Maori mythology the cape is known as the hook with which Maui fished the North Island from the sea.

Guided Options

Gannet Beach Adventures provides tractor-drawn trailer transport to the reserve. Trips go along the coastline and departure times vary depending on tides. You have about 90 minutes at the Cape to walk to the plateau, have a picnic or a swim. Along the way, you'll travel at the base of (somewhat unstable) cliffs, see earthquake faults, and have a laugh or two before getting to the

DoC shelter, from which you walk (about 20 minutes) to the colony. $28, adults, $19 children. www.gannets.com, ☎ 06-875-0898 or 0800-426-638.

Gannet Safaris is into 4WD comfort trips that travel over Summerlee station, a large working beef and cattle station, and through the new sleek golf course on the way to the gannets. This is a good option for those who don't want to do the walk to the colony. They offer two trips per day, at 9:30 am and 1:30 pm. If you have some extra cash, pick the helicopter option (on demand), where you have a scenic trip out above the headlands, meet with the 4WD vehicle and proceed to the gannets. These folks also offer half-day and full-day guided walks and horse treks. www.gannetsafaris.com, Summerlee Station, ☎ 06-875-0888 or 0800-427-232, fax 06-875-0893.

Opossum World is one of my favorite tourist destinations, because of it's high level of "bizarre." You can see live possums, learn about their history, control, and how they got to be an ecological nightmare in New Zealand. You can even try your hand at possum shooting! Plus, buy all manner of possum products from the boutique tannery. $3 adults, open 9 am-5 pm daily. www.opossumworld.co.nz, 157 Marine Parade, ☎ 06-835-7697.

Did you know? The 70 million possums in New Zealand eat 21,000 **tons** of foliage each night?

In the Air

An iconic activity of Hawke's Bay is touring by balloon with **Early Morning Balloons Ltd**. Flights are one hour, the trip is four hours total. $250 adults, $160 children. www.early-am-balloons.co.nz, ☎ 06-879-4229 or 025-445-645.

In Golf

There are quite a few golf courses around the region, but the one that stands out and that's in the news is **Cape Kidnappers Golf Course**. Opened in early 2004, designed by Tom Doak and owned by Julian and Josephine Robertson (who also own Kauri Cliffs), this place is, frankly, spectacular, sitting on the peninsula that is home to the Cape Kidnappers gannet colony. You can't get a more gorgeous location to swing a club. At 480 meters elevation (about 1,560 feet), when you play toward the sea it looks as if you're playing into the sea; when you turn, you are playing into sheep and a cattle station.

When Robertson, an American, was developing the course, there was the usual grumbling about foreigners owning New Zealand real estate and turning a sheep and beef station into a golf course, for goodness sake! I was talking with Michael Neilson at Gannet Safaris, whose family owned the property that the golf course is on. I asked how they felt about the development and he told me they were really happy about it – his father was a keen

golfer and wished he had the resources to develop the station into a golf course. In fact, years ago Michael's father designed a golf course for the very site that Julian developed. www.capekidnappers.com, ☎ 06-875-1900.

With Wine

There is no denying it – Hawke's Bay is a food and wine lover's paradise and the region has embraced food and wine tourism with open arms. Hawke's Bay is the third-largest wine-producing region in New Zealand, and varieties range from Chardonnay, Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Gris to Syrah, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Other varieties are also planted in small quantities and wineries often produce dessert wines as well. About the food, well, just about every kind of fruit and vegetable you can imagine is grown here.

Pick up copies of the ***Wine Country Food Trail*** and ***Guide to the Wineries***.

Festival: Harvest Hawke's Bay is the annual food and wine celebration and is held in late January or early February each year. There is wine, food, entertainment, and bus transport between the participating wineries. www.harvesthawkesbay.co.nz, ☎ 0800-442-946.

My Favorite Wineries

Drop into **Mission Estate**, near Napier. It's a must, if not for the great wine, then for the extraordinary setting, building and history. It's been going since 1851; in 1910, the building was moved to its present site, something you can't really appreciate until you see the place. There is a museum, cellar tours are available and there is a wonderful New Zealand art and gift shop. Every February, the Mission Estate Concert hauls in a big international star. And you're not going to taste a bad drop, either. Open 8:30 am to 5:30 pm Monday to Saturday; 11 am to 4 pm on Sunday. Corner of Avenue and Church roads, Taradale, ☎ 06-845-9350.

Out on Puketapu Road is **Moana Park**, a relaxed, friendly, young and hip place. This is the kind of winery where you want to hang out and have a yarn with the owner who's pouring your wine. It's very informal, and visitors are encouraged to bring a picnic. They also serve light platters if you don't have your own food! I really like their Chardonnay – it's crisp, yet butterscotchy. Open Labour Weekend to Easter, 11 am-5 pm daily, Easter to Labour Weekend, by appt. 530 Puketapu Road, Taradale, ☎ 06-844-8269, http://moanapark.tiz.co.nz.

Brookfields has tutoring hints for all levels of tasters. They sponsor an Art-Deco weekend and have really wonderful art in their barrel hall. I think their Riesling is great and it's certainly a good value. They are a small winery, making only 10,000 cases per year, but each one is good. Open daily, 11 am to 4:30 pm. Brookfields Road, Meeanee, ☎ 06-834-4615.

Kim Crawford Wines makes some of my favorite wines and is one of my favorite wine companies. They were the first to make a high-quality un-oaked Chardonnay, and consistently turn out great wine at affordable prices. I also like their Pinot Gris. Open 11 am to 6 pm daily in the summer, 11 am to 5 pm Saturday, Sunday and Monday in the winter. Clifton Road, Te Awanga, ☎ 06-875-0553.

Just about next door in Te Awanga is **Clearview Estate**. In addition to very drinkable wines, they have a lovely indoor/outdoor restaurant, and when I was staying at the Kim Crawford apartment, I did manage to drag myself over here to enjoy a drop or two in the sunshine. 194 Clifton Road, ☎ 06-875-0150.

Outside of Havelock North is **Te Mata Estate**, one of the oldest and most respected wineries in New Zealand. They make some outstanding serious wines, like their Coleraine Cab Merlot; some unusual ones, like Viognier; and also fun stuff like rosé. Need another reason to like the place? They established the New Zealand Poet Laureate award to recognize outstanding contributions to New Zealand poetry. Each winning poet is appointed for a two-year tenure and receives a grant of both money and wine, together with an individual tokotoko (a ceremonial carved walking stick) symbolizing their achievement. Te Mata Road, ☎ 06-877-4399.

Craggy Range Winery grows grapes in Marlborough, Martinborough, and Hawkes Bay. Their spectacular "cellar door" tasting facility is not too far from Te Mata Estate; you can taste a wide range of their fine wines and have a tour – by appointment. Open daily, 10 am to 6 pm. 253 Waimarama Road, ☎ 06-873-0141.

In the Esk Valley, stop in at **Crab Farm**. First, because it's a cool name, and second because they make very drinkable wine and have a great patio on which to drink it. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 4:30 pm in the winter, 10 am to 5 pm in the summer. 511 Main Road, Bay View, Hawke's Bay, ☎ 06-836-6678.

Farther along the road (going away from Napier) is **Esk Valley Estate**. Wine has been made here (albeit under different owners) since 1933, and many of the grapes are grown on picturesque terraces. They make a broad selection of wines, including some less-common varieties like Verdelho. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. Main Road, SH2, Hawke's Bay, ☎ 06-836-6411.

Selini Estate is a "don't miss" winery. Great wine, wine education, culinary school and a fabulous gourmet-food store. 2016 Maraekakaho Road, ☎ 06-879-8768.

Guided Options

Bay Tours and Charters operate daily wine tours around the region. www.baytours.co.nz, ☎ 06-843-6953.

Vicky's Wine Tours has full- and half-day tours, and a VIP trip with all the extras. They also have an option with lunch supplied. www.vickyswinetours.co.nz, ☎ 06-843-9991.

In Food

Don't miss the **Sunday Farmers Market**. What you will find depends on the season. This is the first farmers market in New Zealand and is going strong. There are meats, preserves, pretzels, cheeses, fruits, coffees, vegetables. A great way to spend the morning rubbing elbows with the locals, filling up your cooler and grazing. Hawke's Bay Showgrounds, Kenilworth Road, Hastings.

> **Local product:** Make a stop at the **Silky Oak Chocolate Company** for Kramer's hand-made chocolates. Started in 1959, this company has changed owners and names, but is still producing hand-made chocolates. New in 2004 is a museum on chocolate through the ages, from the Aztecs to now, as well as a café. They make a chocolate chilly drink called "Hot Chocolate Extreme" that is out of this world! Watch chocolates being made and then enjoy! Monday-Thursday, 9 am-5 pm; Friday, 9 am-3:30 pm; weekends and holidays, 10:30 am-3:30 pm. www.silkyoakchocs.co.nz, 1131 Link Road, Napier, ☎ 06-845-0908. A visit to the **Rush Monro Ice Cream Garden**, where they manufacture and sell premium ice cream, is a summer-holiday must. 704 Heretaunga Street, West. Hastings, ☎ 06-878-9634.

■ Sightseeing

I really enjoy the **Hawke's Bay Museum** in Napier – they have great art and a fabulous Maori taonga collection (taonga = treasures) as well as lovely textiles. There are special stories about the region and survivor stories from the earthquake – four people describe their experiences in a 35-minute film. Definitely a worthwhile stop. Open daily, 9 am-5 pm in the winter, 9 am-6 pm in summer. $7.50 adults, children free. 65 Marine Parade, Napier, ☎ 06-835-7781.

In Hastings, visit the **Hawke's Bay Exhibition Centre**, the venue for short-term national and international exhibitions. Open weekdays, 10 am-4:30 pm, weekends and holidays, 11 am-4 pm. Free admission. 201 Eastbourne Street, Hastings, ☎ 06-876-2077.

There are countless artists and artisans in the region. Pick up a copy of the ***Hawke's Bay Art Trail*** – and then follow the numbers, visiting potters, jewelers, painters and more. Really, truly, there are too many to list. It's a good idea to grab one of these maps for when you're doing the wine and food touring, too.

Guided Options

Scheduled trips with **Long Island Tours** depart Napier daily at 9 am and return at 1:15 pm, having completed a sightseeing tour and visits to wineries and art studios. They include local history in their trips and can customize options from a few hours to multiple days. If you want to tour by horseback, they can arrange it. Want to learn more about the local Maori? They're the ones to call. Say you like to fish or you want to travel for a day to Te Urewera? No problem. Prices begin at $120 per person. www.longislandtours.com, ☎ 025-241-7574 or 0800-877-097.

■ Where to Stay

Napier

Cobden Villa Art Deco B&B is furnished and decorated in Art Deco style, sits on a hill and has a lovely garden. There are four rooms, including a honeymoon suite, two queens, and a twin. Drinks and a welcome platter plus baked treats and a full breakfast. www.cobdenvilla.com, 11 Cobden Road, Napier, ☎ 06-835-9065, fax 06-833-6979 ($$$$)..

The County Hotel is in a restored Edwardian building and is the nicest hotel in town. It was built in 1909 for the county council and survived the 1931 earthquake. Each room is themed with a different native bird. www.countyhotel.co.nz, 12 Browning Street, Napier, ☎ 06-835-7800 or 0800-843-468 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Masonic Hotel** is Napier's "original" Art Deco Hotel and encompasses the Backpackers at Rosies as well as The Governors Inn. www.masonic.co.nz, 47 Tennyson Street, ☎ 06-835-8689, fax 06-835-2297 ($-$$$)

Te Pania Hotel Scenic Circle is right across from Ocean Spa and was new in 2002. There are all sorts of room options and those on the ocean side have great views. The restaurant has huge windows and doors opening to patio dining. www.scenic-circle.co.nz, Marine Parade, Napier, ☎ 06-833-7730, fax 06-833-7732 ($$$$)

Archie's Bunker Backpackers is a big, sprawling place that sleeps 50, but there is plenty of room to spread out. It's been recently refurbished, has two lounges and is well-kept. Right across from the museum. www.archiesbunker.co.nz, 14 Herschell Street, ☎ 06-833-7990 or 0800-272-4437, fax 06-833-7665 ($).

Napier Stables Lodge Backpackers is a small and cozy custom-built backpacker hostel across from Marineland. It's clean, modern, has free Internet, and horse rides (for experienced riders only). There are hammocks, a book exchange, free use of bikes and free tea, coffee, fruit and herbs. A really special place and they even have a dog. info@stableslodge.co.nz, 370 Hastings Street, Napier, ☎ 06-835-6242, fax 06-835-5557 ($).

The biggest backpacker hostel in town is in an Art Deco-style former hotel that's right in the center of town. It's big and roomy and there are plenty of common areas to spread out. New owners took over since I last stayed there, but they are just as nice and friendly. cribac@yahoo.com, 48 Emerson Street, ☎ 06-835-2059 ($).

Napier Prison Backpackers in the oldest prison in New Zealand. It opened in 1862 and closed in 1993. Now you can sleep there in dorms, singles, doubles and twins. Free Internet, laundry, tea and coffee. www.napierprison.com, 55 Coote Road, Napier, ☎ 06-835-9933 or 021-114-4991. ($)

Outside of Napier

AUTHOR'S PICK

For a farm stay, go to **Te Puna Farm**. I'm probably prejudiced, because Sarah and Tony are tramping buddies of mine, but their place is great. It's very relaxing and comfortable; you can do as much on the farm as you like or as little (or sequester yourself in your room working, as I always seem to do). They have a few hills

to climb on the property, there are sheep and cattle and a cow to be milked. Sarah's a wonderful cook who loves vegetables as much as I do and they've walked just about everywhere in New Zealand, so if you're a tramper, they'll have some good advice. It's also not a bad location if you want to do some bike touring. www.farmstaynapier.co.nz, 301 Appley Road, Puketapu, ☎ 06-844-8753 ($$)

For a wonderful apartment with kitchen and bath, contact **Kim Crawford Wines**. The apartment is upstairs from the winery, has views of grapes, farmland and the sea. Wake up and take your morning run along the beach. There is a two-night minimum, but you'll want to stay longer. www.kimcrawfordwines.co.nz, ☎ 06-875-0553 ($$$$).

The Cellar Master's Cottage at Craggy Range Winery has a bath and kitchen with two bedrooms. Great views and convenient location in the vineyard. www.craggyrange.com, ☎ 06-873-0141 ($$$$).

Tuki Tuki Valley Cottages are three separate country cottages with bath and kitchen in rural Hawke's Bay. Tom's Cottage, ☎ 06-874-7900, The Shearers Quarters, ☎ 06-874-7858, and Matangi Farm Cottage, ☎ 06-874-7831, are all on Matangi Road. Breakfast provisions are included. www.hawkesbaynz.com ($$$$).

Cape Accommodation has a listing of private beach options – studios, houses and lifestyle properties, all with bath and kitchen. capeaccommodation@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-875-0377 or 025-672-4858.

Te Awanga Holiday Park is right on the beach. There are sites for tents and campers and a few cabins and serviced units. 52 Kuku Street, Te Awanga, ☎ 06-875-0334 ($-$$).

Ahuriri

I really like Ahuriri as a base for exploring the region. It's away from the traffic of town and has quite a few restaurants, bars and cafés within very easy walking distance. Maybe it's my sailing lifestyle, but I like being near the marina and walking by the boats in the evening.

The **Anchorage Motor Lodge** is new and overlooks the marina. The rooms have bath and kitchen, balconies and most have spa baths. Very good value. www.anchorage.net.nz, 26 West Quay, ☎ 06-834-4318 or 0800-422-266, fax 06-834-3010 ($$-$$$).

Another fine option is **Harbour View Motor Lodge**, set right on the sea. Rooms have balconies and there's only grass between the building and the water. 60 Nelson Quay, ☎ 06-834-8077 or 0800-668-432, fax 06-835-8077 ($$$).

Portside Inn Backpackers is simple budget accommodation in Ahuriri. It's new and is just a couple of minutes walk from the beach and cafés. www.portsideinn.co.nz, 52 Bridge Street, ☎ 06-833-7292, fax 06-833-7291 ($).

Havelock North

Mangapapa Lodge is blessed with a wonderful location on gorgeous grounds. The suites are spacious and nicely decorated, the common rooms warm and inviting. This lodge is the old family home of the Wattie's family and is decorated with memorabilia of the family and their horse racing enthusiasm. There are rooms in the main lodge as well as my favorites in the annex; there is also a separate house. Swimming pool, exquisite meals, all the bells and whistles. www.mangapapa.co.nz, 466 Napier Road, Havelock North, ☎ 06-878-3234, fax 06-878-1214 ($$$$).

For a relaxed option, try **Peak Backpackers** is a small hostel in the village. 33 Havelock Road, Havelock North, ☎ 06-877-1170 fax, 06-877-1175 ($).

Hastings

Siesta Backpackers is the newest in Hastings and each room has an en-suite bathroom. There is a large yard and clean kitchen. www.siestabackpackers.com, Heretaunga Street East, ☎ 06-870-8112 or 0800-177-117 911 ($).

Adjacent to Splash Planet is the **Hastings Top Ten Holiday Park**. Motel and units with bath and kitchen, cabins, tent and power sites. www.hastingsholidaypark.co.nz, 610 Windsor Avenue, ☎ 06-878-6692 or 0508-4278-4647

■ Where to Eat

You are not going to go hungry and it is impossible to list even a small fraction of the restaurants. Many of the wineries have restaurants and all that I have been to have been great.

Napier

Chambers Restaurant at the County Hotel has great food and is probably the choice formal restaurant in town. 12 Browning Street, Napier, ☎ 06-835-7800.

If you want to impress someone, you go to **Mission Restaurant**, although the food is so beautiful, you just may want to look at it, though, and not eat it. 198 Church Road, ☎ 06-844-6048 ($$$).

Brookfields Restaurant, at the winery, serves lamb, salmon, venison, sirloin and chicken in an outdoor café. There is also seating in the barrel hall, decorated with paintings of wine labels. 376 Brookfields Road, ☎ 06-834-4389 ($$$).

You'll know **Caffe Arroma**, because of the Vespa bikes sitting outside. Good coffee and light meals. 20 Dalton Street, ☎ 06-835-3922 ($-$$).

Raffles Café is my favorite choice for lunch. Fantastic salads and innovative food. The only problem is deciding which one you want. Also, important to me, they have a good pile of magazine. Fine wine list, too. On Raffles Street ($-$$).

After Raffles, **Sappho & Heath** is my choice for a café. 222 Emerson Street, ☎ 06-834-3933 ($-$$).

Soak, the café at the Napier Ocean Spa, isn't too bad either, come to think of it. And they have innovative vegetable dishes on the menu ($-$$).

Breakers Café & Bar has good sea food options, kebabs, burgers and is the pick for roast dinners. It's easy, quick and the food is good. Also at the corner, Marine Parade & Tennyson Street is **Acqua Seafood Restaurant** and **Rosie O'Grady's Irish Bar**. ☎ 06-835-8689 ($-$$$).

Ahuriri

There's wood-fired pizza and good lunches at **Shed 2**, which becomes a night club after hours. West Quay, ☎ 06-835-2202 ($$-$$$).

Hep Set Mooch is very retro, very 1960s. No cell phones are allowed at the counter and you have to like them for that. Great coffee, lunch and breakfast. Open 9 am-3 pm. In the Kiwi Adventures building. ☎ 06-833-6332 ($).

Provedore is a bit more posh with good food and sleek surroundings. 60 west Quay, Ahuriri, ☎ 06-834-0189 ($$-$$$).

Out a Bit

Scholars Training Restaurant, at Eastern Institute of Technology is the learning facility for the hospitality school. You will have a fabulous meal for a very good price. And they are dying to please. Gloucester Street, Taradale, ☎ 06-974-8000 ext 6923 ($$).

Havelock North has really gotten into the swing of the café scene. My favorite is **Olive Tree Café**, 17 Joll Road, ☎ 06-877-0222.

Central Hawke's Bay

The agriculturally rich Central Hawke's Bay stretches from Hastings in the north to Woodville in the south, encompassing the breadth of land between the Ruahine Ranges and the Pacific Ocean. SH2 is the major route; SH50 is a longer trip through small town New Zealand. Driving SH2, it takes less than four hours to get to Wellington. There aren't countless reasons to stop along the way, but there are a few and they are pleasant diversions to the drive.

■ Adventures

On Foot

There are a few **Historic Farm Walks**, ranging from two to four hours, including the Taumata Walk to the hilltop with the world's longest place name (say this twice, really fast) – **Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateaturipukakapikimaungahoronukupokaiwhenuakitanatahu**. Which means "The hill where Tamatea, with big knees, conqueror of mountains, eater of land, traveler over land and sea, played his kaouau (flute) to his beloved." The walk takes about three hours (nearly long enough to learn to say it) and is closed during lambing season. www.airliemount.co.nz, Waipukurau, ☎ 06-858-7601.

On Bikes

Pick up a copy of ***Central Hawkes Bay Cycling Routes*** for road trips on the flat land and hills that range from 21 to 40 km (13 to 25 miles).

In Air

Some of the fellows at the **Central Hawke's Bay Aero Club** will take you for an airplane ride. The club has a Tiger Moth and, if you're lucky, you may be able to score a ride. I love flying in Tiger Moths and, if you go, get them to fly you out over the ocean and then back across the paddocks of cattle and sheep! You can see the reefs at the edge of the beaches. It's just lovely. They don't advertise, but if you're really nice you may get to go. ☎ 06-858-8226.

On the Farm

Try your hand at shearing, or just about anything else. **Prinsy's Rural Experience** offers very enjoyable and interesting rural tours, wine tours, sightseeing, and farm visits. They can be personalized to

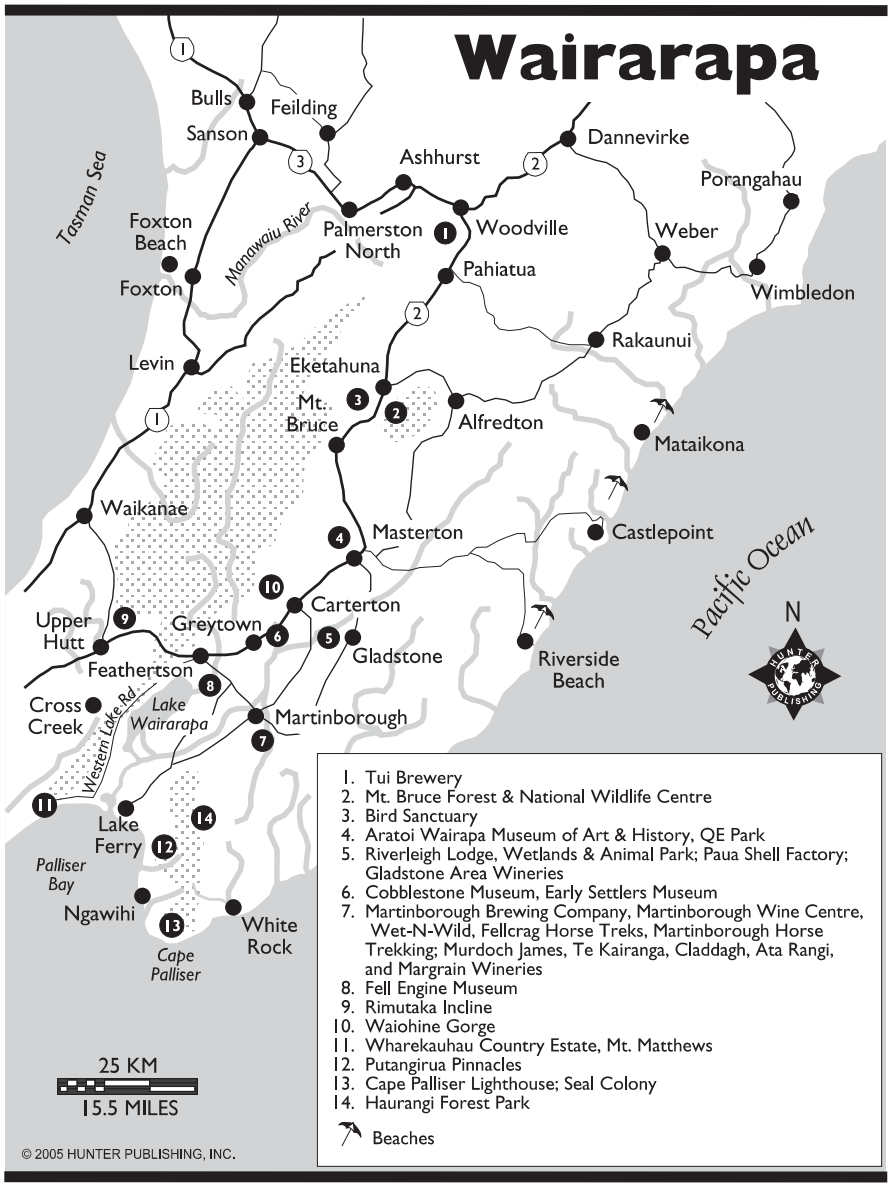
suit your interests and they are very flexible and accommodating – I was working on a story about nutraceuticals when I met these folks and they took me to a deer farm where velvet is harvested and processed for medical use in both the domestic and overseas markets. It's really interesting and a place you wouldn't go on your own. $40-$135 per person. www.hawkesbay.co.nz, Boundary Road, Pukehou, Otane, ☎ 025-224-0696 or 0800-004-237

■ Shopping

Norsewood and Dannevirk were settled in 1872 when the New Zealand government made a movement to encourage immigration from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Special land was set apart for the settlers and the *Hovding* and *Ballarat* ships arrived with Scandinavians, who trekked across from the port in Napier. The pride of heritage is obvious in these towns. It's worth stopping at **Norsewear New Zealand Natural Clothing** – there's a factory shop and, if you've run out socks or need a sweater or vest, here's a good place to pick some up. The **Norsewood Pioneer Cottage Museum** has displays on the settlement of the areas.

> **Tip:** If you're traveling through at lunchtime, stop at the domain for a picnic with the ducks. Follow signs for Dannevirke Holiday Park on Christian Street.

If socks aren't exciting enough for you, then call **Go Jump** and skydive from 10,000 feet. www.0800gojump.co.nz. They're based at the Dannevirke Aerodrome. ☎ 06-374-9992 or 0800-465-867.



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Wairarapa

Introduction

Wairarapa bills itself as a rural retreat and that's as good a description as any. As a region, it is home to just under 40,000 people and includes the expansive area bordered on the west by the Rimutaka and Tararua mountains and on the east by the ocean. While a popular weekend getaway for those living in Wellington, it's a bit off the beaten path for most international tourists. But it's wonderfully accessible, making it all the more worthwhile to visit and explore. The coastline is rugged, exposed and isolated – great for fishing, taking time out and, for the experienced, surfing. Townships are scattered along SH2 and range from wine-focused Martinborough to rural Pahiatua. The settlements that dot the coast are centered on fishing. Driving between the small towns of the Wairarapa, you'll be in a long valley – flat, gorgeous and green. Springtime is definitely a great time to be here, when pure white lambs dot the pastures and their antics are free for the watching.

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Pick up a copy of ***Wairarapa Walks*** ($9.95), a guide to 60 walks around the region. It also lists mountain-bike access and camping spots, and gives references to topo maps.

Getting Here

By Air

There are no scheduled flights in or out of Wairarapa, but the area is served through **Palmerston North** and **Wellington international airports**. Charter flights (both fixed-wing and helicopter) can be arranged and **Air Wairarapa** has regular, chartered flights to and from Auckland and Masterton. Best to contact them directly at ☎ 06-370-3747.

By Car

SH2 stretches between Wellington and Hawke's Bay, offering a less-congested route in and out of the capital than SH1. To Masterton, it takes about three hours to drive from Napier, about an hour and a half from Wellington, and an hour from Palmerston North.

■ By Bus

Getting in and out of Wairarapa on **InterCity Coachlines** is a bit cumbersome because the route goes by way of Palmerston North, but buses arrive and depart from the **Tranzit Coach Depot** on Queen Street, ☎ 04-472-5111 (Wellington).

Tranzit Coachlines operate within the region and to Palmerston North (via Eketahuna, Pahiatua, Woodville and Ashurst). They also run wine tours around Martinborough. www.tranzit.co.nz. Tranzit Coach Depot is on Queen Street, Masterton. ☎ 06-377-1227 or 0800-471-227, fax 06-377-3254.

Wairarapa Coachlines have buses for tours and charter, and also have scheduled service between Masterton, Martinborough and Featherston. www.waicoach.co.nz, ☎ 06-308-9352 or 0800-666-355, fax 06-308-9358.

■ By Train

The train journey between Wellington and Wairarapa is all a part of the adventure, as it rolls through the Rimutaka Tunnel out to views of Lake Wairarapa and the coast and ranges. Contact **TranzScenic**, **Ride Well** or the information center for details. www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 04-801-7000.

Information Sources

Check out Go Wairarapa's website, **www.wairarapanz.com**.

Northern Wairarapa

Driving from Hawke's Bay to the Wairarapa, you will come to Woodville, at the junction of SH2 and SH3, half-way between Wellington and Napier. It's the logical place to start exploring the region. Nestled between the Tararua Ranges and the Ruahine Forest Park, it is the eastern edge of the Manawatu Gorge. There are the usual takeout places and grocery stores, plus a few antique shops.

Continuing south on SH2, you will come upon a seven-story Art Deco building in the middle of farmland. Built in 1931, it houses **Tui Brewery**, established in this little settlement of Mangatainoka in 1889. Half-hour tours leave from the visitor center between 10 am and 3 pm, Monday through Friday; and 12 pm and 3 pm, the first and third Saturday of each month. It's best if you make an appointment so that you're not disappointed but, if you stop by, they'll try to fit you in. Tours end with a half-hour tasting in the bar and cost $5. SH2, Mangatainoka, ☎ 06-376-9745, fax 06-376-9799.

Continuing south on SH2 for a few minutes you reach **Pahiatua**. While there isn't a huge laundry list of reasons to stop, there is Graeme and Alison's Franklin **The Black Stump Café and Bar** (which gets my vote for most relaxing place to have a cuppa), and, in the same building, **Harrows Restaurant** (a great choice for dinner – try the fabulous lamb shanks). Both are great examples of little establishments that are tucked in small towns and worth the discovery. 173 Main Street, ☎ 06-376-7123 ($-$$$).

Did you know? Kallista Field, the first New Zealand equestrian to ride in the specialist dressage event in the Olympics (Sydney, 2000), hails from Pahiatua.

Warning: If you are driving SH2 between the Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay and you hear that there are wind warnings on the road, take heed! I was driving through here one windy day and no fewer than six semi-trailer rigs were strewn about the road on their sides. The wind just howls through and, especially if you're pulling a camper or driving a high profile vehicle, beware!

The **Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre** is 30 km (19 miles) north of Masterton and is an absolute must. The center has been open for 30 years and is set in the largest remaining stand of Forty Mile Bush – the lowland primeval forest that once covered much of the Wairarapa. The center focuses on recovering endangered species, reintroducing them to the bush, and developing captive-breeding programs for endangered species. As an example of their work, they have successfully increased the numbers of Campbell Island teal from fewer than 20 to over 90.

Living in the center are kiwi, tuatara (right), kokako, stitchbird and kakariki. Restoration projects are ongoing and community-supported. For $25 annually, you can sponsor a hectare (2.47 acres) of bush and keep it predator-free. Try to time your visit to see the kaka feed at 3 pm and the eel feed at 1:30 pm. There is a café on site. Allow an hour or two for your visit.

Did you know? The average lifespan of a kiwi chick is less than 100 days. Fewer than 5% of the chicks reach adulthood.

Masterton

Masterton is the service center for the area and just about anything you need is here. Although there's probably not as much reason to stay in Masterton as some of the farther-flung towns, it's still an easy, central location that serves as a good base. Queen Street, which is the main street of Masterton, seemingly stretches forever. Entering Masterton from the south, you'll be welcomed by tractor shops; from the north, by a monstrous sign reminding one and all that Masterton is home to the annual Golden Shears competition, when top sheep shearers from around the country gather to compete on style and speed. The annual competition has been going on for over 40 years and it is a woolly extravaganza. Lasting for four days in March, there are junior, senior and open events as well as pairs and singles wool pressing competitions.

■ Information Sources

The **Wairarapa Visitor Centre** is located at 316 Queen Street (alongside the park), ☎ 06-370-0909, fax 06-378-8451.

Things to Do Here

The public swimming pools were undergoing major renovations in 2003. A large outdoor complex was in the plans and, at a cost of $7 million, the new facilities will, no doubt, be quite a great place to hang out. One of the other big draws in town is Queen Elizabeth Park. Originally planted in 1877, it is a huge expanse of gardens, walking paths, running trails, an aviary, and a lake that has paddleboats in the summer. There is a skatepark and a restaurant to round out the offerings.

Across the street from the park entrance and information center is **Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of Art & History**. Opened in February 2002, it celebrates New Zealand and international art as well as the Wairarapa region. Entry is by gold coin donation – i.e., NZ$1-2. Open daily, 10 am-4:30 pm, except Christmas and Good Friday. **Café Char Char** makes for a great lunch stop on the premises, . At the corner of Bruce and Dixon Streets, ☎ 06-370-0001.

Tip: If you are cooking for yourself, go to **Moore Wilsons** – a fantastic grocery store with really good fresh produce, specialty meats and cheeses, a huge wine shop and a large selection of breads from local bakers. Also plan to visit the one in Wellington.

■ Where to Stay

Inside advice: For reasonably-priced, friendly B&Bs, visit the information center. They have an extensive listing of options, and prices in Masterton are much more reasonable than in Martinborough.

For a breath of fresh air, go to the **Cornwall Park Motel**. Run by husband and wife David and Vanessa, it's about quiet, simple accommodation and a great value – their goal is to provide 3½-star quality, but charge only two-star prices. They moved to New Zealand from the UK to get away from the busy-ness of London and have really made this simple motel into a very comfortable place to stay. They provide extras like SKY television, plunger coffee and CD players; there's a swimming pool, spa, playground, mature landscaping and guest laundry. The property backs onto a sheep paddock, so you really feel you're in the country. www.nzmotels.co.nz/cornwall, 119 Cornwall Street, ☎ 06-378-2939, fax 06-378-2938 ($$).

The **Copthorne Resort Solway Park** is massive! There are indoor and outdoor pools, a driving range, a ropes course, tennis, you name it. Rooms range from studios to suites, motel units to apartments. There's almost too much choice. www.solway.co.nz, High Street South, ☎ 06-377-5129 or 0800-267-846, fax 06-378-2913 ($$$)..

■ Where to Eat

There are plenty of fast-food and takeout options and, while I'm not sure Masterton will ever be the culinary center of New Zealand, you can find everything from pub meals to fine dining.

No 8 Café is open for breakfast and lunch and reopens for dinner Tuesday through Saturday. They have café-style food with a big range of seafood options. Also on the menu are more interesting choices like ostrich and kidneys with bacon, and a few nice vegetarian dishes. 8 Bannister Street, ☎ 06-378-2641 ($-$$$).

For gourmet pizza or a full-on meal of steak, chicken, fish, vegetarian, or a giant salad, pick **Stellar Bar & Restaurant**. The menu is huge. 109 Chapel Street, ☎ 06-370-1312 ($$).

In Queen Elizabeth Park is **Café Cecille** – open for café dining during the day and white table-cloth dining at night. This restaurant, popular with tourists and locals, is set in beautiful grounds. Entrances off Memorial Drive and Park Avenue. ☎ 06-370-1166 ($$-$$$).

Plaza India Bistor and Tandoor has a presence in Masterton and is a dependable spot for reasonably-priced Indian food. Good curries, available for takeout and deliveries. 3 Perry Street, ☎ 06-370-5177 ($-$$).

Food for Thought is my choice for a café in Masterton. There's plenty of space to stretch out and have a good coffee, and they serve interesting wraps and sandwiches for lunch. 131 Queen Street, ☎ 06-377-5195 ($).

Solstone Estate Winery is the cool place to eat in town. I quite enjoy my wine, and Solstone's central location, with a gift shop and a restaurant, make it a must. Stop in for wine tasting and lunch. www.solstone.co.nz, 119 Solway Crescent, ☎ 06-377-5522 ($$).

> **Tip:** If you want to impress your friends, have Solstone customize a label for you and ship home some wine as a souvenir.

Carterton

Carterton is sometimes referred to as the "garden village." There is an annual spring festival when daffodils bloom and are ready for picking. A laid-back town, it also makes a good base for exploring the Wairarapa.

■ Adventures

On the Farm

OK, I have to 'fess up. I thought that **Riverleigh Lodge**, **Wetlands and Animal Park** was going to be a hokey farm park with a petting zoo. But I had so much fun here – I definitely recommend this to anyone – with kids or not. (But it's a MUST if you have kids.) Dave and Dianne Matthews bought this place as their get away and never intended to have a wildlife park. But Dave likes wetlands and animals, and it just kind of happened. Every species of bird and farm animal is here, and Dave is hilarious. There is a café on-site, and there's lodging with bath and kitchen that is appropriate for large groups or families. Located at the base of the Tararuas, it's a fabulous stop prior to a tramp; Dianne is a mine of information on the tracks, so drop in, get the inside scoop, and have a good time. Picnics are encouraged and there are some very inviting swimming holes in the river. Open 10 am to 5 pm, Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and public holidays from September to May; Tuesday to Sunday, December 26-January 31; week-

ends and school holidays June to August. Other times by appointment. d&dmatthews@xtra.
co.nz, Mt. Holdsworth Road, ☎/fax 06-378-8054.

In the Air

Ballooning New Zealand Ltd. offers one-hour hot-air-balloon flights above the Wairarapa; the whole adventure takes two to three hours and includes a champagne breakfast. Departs from the Paua factory at 7 am in winter and 6 am in summer. Bookings are essential! Prices begin at $260; under 13, $160. ☎/fax 06-379-8223 or 025-224-8696.

With Wine

Although the wineries around Martinborough are great, I also enjoyed touring the Gladstone area of Carterton. It's a little slower-paced and less touristy.

At **Fairmont Estate** all the wine is estate-grown on the family's 25-acre vineyard, and they don't export. The majority is Pinot Noir, with a bit of Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, and they've just remodeled a cottage with bath and kitchen, which sleeps up to five. See *Where to Stay*, below. Gladstone Road, ☎ 06-379-8498.

Directly next door to Fairmont is **Gladstone Vineyard**, which is home to Victoria University's summer Shakespeare season, usually held the last week of February. Gladstone has a very comfortable feel… geese stroll along, a creek wanders through the property, there's an outdoor lunch café. I can easily spend hours in a place like this, and I encourage you to do so as well. Gladstone Road, ☎ 06-379-8563.

Local products: Stop at the **Paua Shell Factory and Shop** for a good insight into the very colorful paua shells – New Zealand's unique version of abalone. The factory in Carterton is the oldest, and the biggest one that offers tours. It's quite interesting to go into the back, watch the folks work and view a video. You'll see jewelry and gifts made out of these shells for sale all over both islands – they supply to 500 shops around the country – and you'll save money on all your souvenirs (from $2-$1,200), because they sell at factory prices and don't charge GST! Open weekdays, 8 am to 5 pm, weekends and holidays, 9 am to 5 pm. www.pauashell.co.nz, 54 Kent Street, Carterton, ☎ 06-379-6777.

■ Where to Eat

I usually steer clear of restaurants that advertise with billboards and paint their buildings with obnoxious farm scenes, but trust me, go into **Wild Oats Bakery**, **Deli & Café**. I had the best blueberry muffin of my life there, and then bought a too-big-for-one bag of ANZAC biscuits. I could have filled the car with cakes and breads, and fresh sandwiches too, but I used some restraint. 127 High Street, ☎ 06-379-5580 ($).

Did you know? ANZAC stands for Australia New Zealand Army Corps. An ANZAC biscuit is like an oatmeal cookie – and they come in all different levels of crisp versus chewy.

■ Where to Stay

Country Cottage at Fairmont Estate is my pick. It sleeps up to five, with a bath and kitchen. I am used to life on the road, but sometimes I just want to unpack and feel at home. It's possible at Fairmont. The price (in 2003) was $130 for the first two people, $20 per person after that. Here's my suggestion: stay here, get a couple of bikes and just take a few days off. They also offer homestay accommodation. Gladstone Road, ☎ 06-379-8498 or 06-379-7688 ($$-$$$).

There is also an apartment for two at **Gladstone Vineyard** that is charming. It's above the winery and would be an equally nice place to unwind. A plus here, Carters Reserve is next door and there are half-hour bush walks. Includes breakfast, wine and a winery tour. Gladstone Road, www.gladstone.co.nz, ☎ 06-379-8563, fax 06-379-8564 ($$$$).

Greytown

Happy birthday: Greytown is the oldest planned inland town in New Zealand. It celebrated its 150th birthday in 2004!

Greytown has the most complete "main street" in the country. Many of the old buildings have been restored and now house shops, artist studios and cafés. As Martinborough is the spot for wine, Greytown is the spot for shopping and eating. As with many towns in New Zealand, its plans were drawn in London; the town planner never set foot in New Zealand. Pick up a copy of *Historic Greytown* and take a stroll. Greytown makes another good, relaxing place to use as a base. There is a funky spot called the **Cobblestones Museum** that is home to relocated buildings of yesteryear; it's a pleasant spot for a stroll right on Main Street.

■ Where to Stay

Relocated in 2003, **The White Swan** fits so well on Main Street that it's hard to believe this historic hotel building hasn't been there forever. It wasn't finished when I was last there, but there were to be studios and suites, each individually designed and decorated. From the looks of it while under renovation, I'm quite confident that it won't disappoint. www.thewhiteswan.co.nz, 109 Main Street, ☎ 06-304-8894 ($$$-$$$$).

You'll find **Briarwood Boutique B&B** down a very pleasant residential street. The house is from the turn of the century; it was moved from rural Carterton to its present location and underwent major renovation before opening as a B&B in 2002. There are only two rooms, so you won't be tripping over hordes of other guests. The wrap-around porch offers fantastic afternoon sun – I'd get out there early and claim the hammock as my own – while lots of birds fly around and sing in the garden. Liz makes a very special breakfast, including creative items like fish cakes. www.briarwood.biz, Udy Street. ☎ 06-304-8336 ($$$$).

Oak Estate Motor Lodge is on the edge of town, easily accessible, very clean and modern. Most of the accommodation in Wairarapa is B&Bs or cottages, and Oak Estate is a good motel option. Units range from studio to spa suite to family. There is a BBQ area on-site and cooked or continental breakfasts are available. www.oakestate.co.nz, corner Hospital Road and Main Street. ☎ 06-304-8188 or 0800 843-625 fax 06-304-8187 ($$-$$$).

■ Where to Eat

Main Street seems to be blanketed with places to eat, so park the car and munch your way up and down.

A good choice for café and light meals is the **Tastes Delicious Café**. 97 Main, ☎ 06-304-8480 ($).

The **Main Street Deli** has great food and reasonable prices. 88 Main Street, ☎ 06-304-9022 ($).

Le Pommier French Bakery is a real French bakery, run by a real Frenchman who makes absolutely fabulous breads and other treats. A must! 104 Main, ☎ 06-304-8873 ($).

Pipi Café has great handmade pizzas and incredible sweet-baked things. 128 Main, ☎, 06-304-8992 ($).

The Wakelin House has modern gourmet meals and includes things like wild boar on the menu. 123 Main, ☎ 06-304-8869 ($$-$$$).

Featherston

At the junction of SH2 and SH53, is Featherston, the southernmost town in Wairarapa. There are a couple of cafés and take-out shops, a gas station, and the Fell Engine Museum. From Featherston, it's about a 40-km drive through pastoral scenery and rolling hills on Western Lake Road to Wharekauhau and Ocean Beach. There are a few good picnic spots along the shores of Lake Wairarapa, which is the largest wetland area in the lower North Island and an important place for migratory birds. Pick up a copy of the self-drive tour brochure at the information center. It's too dangerous to swim at Ocean Beach, but you can walk along the rugged coastline.

■ Information Sources

The visitor center is open 10 am to 3 pm daily and is in The Old Courthouse, Fitzherbert Street, ☎ 06-308-8051.

■ Adventures

On Foot & Bikes

The **Rimutaka Incline**, which starts (or ends, depending on your point of view) in Kaitoke (just north of Upper Hutt), comes out at Cross Creek Road, 10 km (six miles) from Featherston. The entire trail is 17 km (10 miles) and takes about four or five hours to walk one-way. Unfortunately, there is no public transport from either end, so it's a bit of a mission to do the whole thing, unless you can arrange for a car shuttle. Walking to the summit (five km/three miles) from Cross Creek takes about an hour – making for a pleasant half-day wander through the woods on your

way to doing some wine tasting. In addition to the main trail, there are a smattering of mountain-bike trails off the incline. The information center has free brochures with maps of both the incline and mountain-bike tracks.

Caution: It gets very windy on this route – in the 1890s, a locomotive was blown off the tracks at Siberia Gully!

Waiohine Gorge is at the end of Dalefield Road, with about a 10-minute drive on gravel. There is camping and three walking tracks (two to four hours) to huts. It's set in really pretty native and regenerating bush and gives good river views. Pick up a brochure at the information center.

Martinborough

Martinborough is a charming village that, having gained international attention for its Pinot Noir, has become a wine tourism center over the last couple of decades. It's a popular weekend getaway for Wellingtonians (think Napa and San Francisco) and, in addition to wine and food, offers some great diversions.

■ Tourist Information

The information center is at martinborough@wairarapanz.com, 18 Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9043, fax 06-306-8033.

■ Adventures

On Water

When I last traveled through Martinborough, **Wet-N-Wild** was undergoing a change in ownership, and I'm not 100% sure what will be offered. But they have historically had jet-boat tours and kayak trips on the Ruamahanga River in addition to vineyard and scenic tours. The booking office is right off The Square, so drop in and see what kind of trips are going on. www.wetnwild.co.nz, 3 Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-8252, fax 06-306-8254.

On Horses

As always, seeing the country from the back of a horse gives a different perspective. There are two horse-trekking operators; both are out on Ruakokopatuna Road, and both offer one- and two-hour treks with longer rides available upon request. Prices start at $30 per person. **Fellcrag Horse Treks** is smaller, probably the more laid-back, "nothing is a bother, mate," kind of place. fellcrag@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 06306-9284.

In addition to horses, the larger, more established **Martinborough Horse Trekking** on Patuna Farm has a "Pole to Pole Adventure Ropes Course" and the Patuna Chasm Walkway. The ropes course has swings, beams and trapeze. www.patunafarm.co.nz, ☎ 06-306-9966 fax 06-306-9506.

On Quad Bikes

Just 10 minutes from the town square is **McLeods Martinborough Quad Adventures**, where you can cruise around a 1,400-acre working farm on a quad bike. The view from the ridges is spectacular and, depending on the level of the water, the river riding can be really exciting as you bounce over river rocks, water rushing around your feet (and higher). They offer 1½-hour, 2½-hour (the most popular option with the best views) and 3½-hour rides (for the more experienced). Prices begin at $90, the minimum age is 16, and a snack break is included in all trips. A great contrast to the more civilized wine touring! McLeods also has clay-bird shooting. Bookings are essential and accommodation is available (see bottom of page 316). www.mcleodsadventures.co.nz, White Rock Road, ☎ 06-306-9032 or 0800-494-335.

With Wine

Traveling from Greytown to Martinborough, it's a gentle entry into this wine growing area – the grapes don't seem to attack you from every angle. As with other regions of New Zealand, wine growing here has taken off over the last two decades; Pinot Noir leads the parade, and Martinborough is respected as making New Zealand's best. It is followed by other varietals, including Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and a smattering of others. There are about three dozen wineries – but all together produce less than 3% of New Zealand's wine. Many tasting rooms (cellar doors in Kiwi) are forced to close when they run out of stock, such is the demand for wine from these boutique growers. But what is lacking in quantity is made up for in quality, and wine tourism is a young, but very vibrant, industry. Martinborough is definitely a great place to stop for a day or two. Quite a lot of Martinborough wine is finding its way overseas, and most of the wineries are exporting to the US and Canada.

Wine Tours are available through a number of operators. Ask at the information center or at your accommodation for a current listing. Or contact **Wairarapa Coachlines**, ☎ 06-308-9352 or 0800-666-355, fax 06-308-9358. There is an operator who offers horse-and-carriage wine tours; inquire at the information center for details.

> **Festival: Toast Martinborough** is the major wine festival here and is held the third Sunday in November. Tickets MUST be purchased in advance. www.ticketek.co.nz.

My Favorite Wineries

If you want to learn about wine and feel you're starting at the ground floor, give **Murdoch James** a ring and book a "How to Taste Wine and Wine Tasting Tricks" class. For $20, you'll get tutored for an hour in flavors, aromas, wine characteristics and so on. This would be a good place to go first, and then use your knowledge as you tour around. In addition to the special class, you can opt for tastings, or (for $12) have a comprehensive vineyard and tasting tour. About six kilometers (three miles) out of town, it's definitely worth the drive for the wine, the restaurant and the educational

aspects. They also have cooking classes, and can arrange activities on-site like clay bird shooting, laser tag and quad-bike riding. Not your typical winery. www.murdochjames.co.nz, Dry River Road, ☎ 06-306-9165.

One of the oldest wineries in Martinborough, **Te Kairanga** had its first vintage in 1986 and continually makes one of my favorite Pinot Noirs. At 2 pm on weekends you can tour the vineyard and winery and follow up with a tasting. The cellar door tasting facility is thoughtfully built with a very comfortable veranda overlooking a lawn that invites a picnic. Te Kairanga recently purchased additional vineyard sites, with the potential to double its production. www.tkwine.co.nz, Martins Road, ☎ 06-306-9122.

I always like wineries that say "Children Welcome" and **Claddagh** is one of those. It's a comfortable place to enjoy both the wine and the sunshine. www.claddagh.co.nz, Puruatanga Road, ☎ 06-306-9264.

Ata Rangi is another of those on the must-visit list. I really like their Pinot Noir and their Craighall Chardonnay – it's a lot lighter and not so big as a lot of Chardonnays. They make a very tasty dessert Riesling and a relatively sweet Pinot Gris. This is another winery that welcomes kids and there is a very inviting picnic area. www.atarangi.co.nz, Puruatanga Road, ☎ 06-306-9570.

It sounds trite, but it's fun to go to **Margrain Vineyard** where, on the weekends, you'll often find Graham Margrain leading the tastings. They have a gigantic spitting barrel where you'll look like a professional and not a punter with wine dribbling down your front. Their Pinot Gris and Riesling are both on the drier side, which I really like, and they have a funky "Mad Red," which is a blend of Cab Sav and some unknown red variety that looks and smells a lot like Zinfandel. Don't stop before you try the sticky Chenin Blanc. There's a café on-site and accommodation across the way (see *Where To Stay*, page 316). www.margrainvineyard.co.nz, corner Ponatahi & Huangaura Roads, ☎ 06-306-9292.

New to Martinborough in 2003 is the **Martinborough Brewing Company**, which makes four different beers – wheat, dark, ale and lager – on-site, and also serves simple pub food. Beer is always a good change during a day of wine tasting and the brewery is conveniently located just beside Martinborough Vineyards on New York Street, ☎ 06-306-8310.

The **Martinborough Wine Centre** really made a splash when it opened in the center of Martinborough. It reminds me of the cheese shop in the square in Sonoma, California. You can taste wines from many of the local wineries, buy gourmet foods and other local products, and eat in the café. A great little spot. 6 Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9040 fax 06-306-9070.

■ Where to Stay

Martinborough has a plethora of homestays (where you stay with a family), B&Bs and cottages with bath and kitchen. During the summer months, they do book up (especially on the weekends when a lot

of Wellingtonians venture over the hill), so best to inquire in advance and engage the services of the information center.

Set on a 5,000-acre working sheep station is the exclusive **Wharekauhau Country Estate**. Its location is secluded and accommodation superb. One of the luxury inns of New Zealand, Wharekauhau has a fabulous (and well-deserved) international reputation. Only about 40 km (24 miles) from Featherston, the lodge sits on the site of the original homestead with commanding views of the sea; the 12 cottages dot the landscape, with views of the farm and Palliser Bay. The main lodge is spacious, beautifully decorated and riddled with cozy spots to enjoy. The recreation center has a gym, spa, treatment room and a 20-meter (65-foot) heated lap pool. In addition to relaxation, activities include horse trekking, mountain biking, hiking and beach walking. Western Lake Road, Featherston. www.wharekauhau.co.nz, ☎ 06-307-7581, fax 06-307-7799 ($$$$).

Right smack-dab in the middle of The Square is **The Martinborough Hotel**. Built in 1882, it underwent a major renovation in 1996 and just keeps improving. New in 2003 is an expanded guest lounge, billiards room and conservatory. You can choose either an upstairs room that opens onto the wrap-around veranda in the main hotel building, or a more modern garden courtyard room. www.martinboroughhotel.co.nz, ☎ 06-306-9350, fax 06-306-9345 ($$$-$$$$).

Just four rooms make up the **Petit Hotel**, but they are all perfect. It's in a renovated old Victorian, right in the middle of town. The price includes a breakfast voucher for a local café or a continental breakfast delivered to your room. www.petithotel.co.nz, 3 Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-8086, fax 06-306-8087 ($$$).

My rural choice for affordable accommodation is the **Margrain Vineyard Villas**. These units with bath and kitchen are in the midst of the vineyards and are simple and perfect. They all open onto a veranda that overlooks a creek and the neighbor's paddocks… perfect for eating the supplied continental breakfast or, on a warm summer day, what better place to sit back and relax before heading off to dinner. There is one big suite with a very spacious lounge; the others are studio units. www.margrainvineyard.co.nz, corner Ponatahi & Huangaura Roads, ☎ 06-306-9292 ($$$).

Just at the edge of town is **The Old Manse**. Built in 1876, it was the Presbyterian manse for 70 years, fell into disrepair, and was lovingly restored to a very comfortable B&B 2000. There are a total of six rooms, including one twin, all with en-suite bathroom. Guests enjoy a pre-dinner drink and nibbles in the spacious lounge and dining area or, in warm weather, on the patio. The gardens are lovely – no wonder so many weddings are booked here! www.oldmanse.co.nz, 19 Grey Street, ☎ 06-306-8599 or 0800-399-299 ($$$-$$$$).

You would never expect to find the **Claremont Motel** tucked at the end of a quiet residential street. It's a small motel, but the eight apartment units are spacious and open onto beautiful gardens. www.claremont-motels.co.nz, 38 Regent Street, ☎/fax 06-306-9162, 0800-809-162 ($$$).

For a rural option with bath and kitchen, try **The Shearers Quarters**, at McLeods (the quad-bike place). This charming four-bedroom house was built in the late 1890s, but is completely modern and fully equipped. Right on the farm, it's great for a family, group of friends or just two.

www.mcleods-martinborough.co.nz, just over the Hautotara Bridge, nine km down White Rock Road, ☎ 06-306-9032 or 0800-494-335 ($$$).

■ Where to Eat

You won't be at a loss for nice places to eat. Try **Est Wine Bar**, for daytime platters and light meals, as well as evening dining featuring local fresh produce. The open fireplace makes it comfortable year-round. Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9665 ($$-$$$).

True to its name is **The French Bistro**. Lovely food, with seating for only 40. Classic. Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-8863 ($$-$$$).

The Martinborough Hotel Bistro is in the hotel and is a very popular, tasty place to eat. Fabulous wine list in addition to a fine menu; open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9350 ($$-$$$).

For a steak and salad bar and a more relaxed feel, go to **Pukemanu Tavern**. The Square, ☎ 06-306-9606 ($$).

A good café choice is **Café Medici**. Food with an Italian flare, including pizza and calzone. 9 Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9965 ($).

The **Flying Fish Takeaways & Café** should meet the need for burgers and takeout. A blackboard menu; courtyard dining is also available. The Square, ☎ 06-306-9270 ($-$$).

Coastal Wairarapa

While Wairarapa is a popular surf destination like Raglan, there isn't a town here with a surfer feel to it. The southern coast is about fishing, marine life, remote beaches and the erosive forces of nature.

■ Lake Ferry

Heading south from Martinborough, **Lake Ferry** is a postcard-perfect fishing village just 30 minutes out of town. It's rugged and can be nasty on a bad windy day but, when conditions are right, there will be countless trucks parked on the beach and old ladies and men will be out in force, their whitebait nets set. Lake Ferry is home to surfcasting competitions, and the Lake Ferry Hotel is synonymous with great fish and chips! Retracing your steps for a few minutes, a secondary road juts off just south of Pirinoa and wanders along the coast to the **Putangirua Pinnacles**. Formed by erosion and wind, the organ pipe-like spires are within the Haurangi Forest Park and can be accessed by either a short one-hour round-trip walk or a longer three- to four-hour loop that takes you deeper into the park. There is camping available, and chances are you won't see too many others around the place.

Driving on, you'll reach **Te Kopi**, where the force of erosion is again obvious, but this time because the road and beach homes are dropping into the sea! It's eery to see where the white line on the road used to be. There are wild goats on the side of road and sheep grazing on the local nine-hole golf course (the greens are protected by electric wire). **Ngawi**, a village that is the fishing hub of the Wairarapa, comes next. Most residents have crayfish quotas and they are probably not doing as badly as their remote and isolated location would lead one to believe. The beach is lined with tractors in all states of

repair and decoration. Get out your camera – this is definitely a photo opportunity, especially if you arrive when the boats are going out or coming in.

Farther up the coast is **Cape Palliser**, the southernmost point of North Island, and home to the largest breeding colony of fur seals on the North Island. The seals are everywhere – on the grass, on the rocks, in the sea. Beware of getting too close to pups or between pups and their parents; also do not get between animals and the sea. They may look slow, but they can move in a hurry if they feel threatened.

> **Tip:** The **Cape Palliser Lighthouse** is definitely worth the climb of 250 steps – you will be rewarded with fabulous views.

Where to Stay

The **Lake Ferry Hotel** has simple accommodation right at the beach and has a restaurant with a full menu, including great fish and chips. ☎ 06-307-7831 ($-$$).

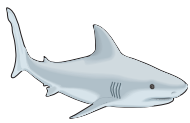
The **Gateway Motor Camp**, three km from Lake Ferry, is also a simple affair, with a limited number of cabins and motel rooms. There is also space for tents and campers, plus a craft shop. ☎ 06-307-7780 ($-$$).

■ Castlepoint

The beaches to the south might be rugged, but those at the north end of the region – particularly Castlepoint – are more suitable for swimming and family holidays. From Masterton, it's about 65 km (40 miles) through rolling farmland, and the winding road takes you over creeks, alongside paddocks, through a saddle and into pine-tree plantations. This is a pleasant, easy side-excursion on a fine day. There are a couple of good walks at Castlepoint and you'd be hard-pressed to keep most kids and adults alike from wandering up the cliffs and looking at fossils. Heading north just a few minutes is **Mataikona** with a more rugged coast, holiday beaches, and a long line of surf. If you're at Castlepoint, it's definitely worth a pop up to this beautiful spot.

In addition to beachcombing and eating ice cream, fishing is the thing in Castlepoint. There's bottom sea-fishing and trolling for sharks, tuna and albacore. Marlin have been caught here as well, but they're rare.

FISHING CHARTERS



Castlepoint Fishing Charters, Rob and Carol Reriti, ☎ 06-372-6613.

Rehu-Tai Fishing Charters, who also have accommodation available, are a wealth of local knowledge. The family has been here for generations. $100 pp/day from summer to mid-October. www.rehu-tai-fishing-charters-castlepoint-nz.com, Tom and Kay Wilton, ☎ 06-377-2042 or 025-793-575.

Where to Stay

You may want to visit the information center in Masterton and inquire about holiday homes at Castlepoint.

Just inland from Castlepoint in the small village of Tinui and **Tinui Homestay B&B**. They raise miniature horses and have one double and one twin room. 2 Charles Street, Tinui, ☎ 06-372-6856 or 06-372-6883.

Castlepoint Holiday Park has all sorts of options – cabins, houses, flats, lodges – all within a short walk of the beach. www.castlepoint.co.nz, ☎ 06-372-6705, fax 06-372-6717 ($-$$).

Castlepoint Motel is on the sea and has individual rooms, a bunkroom and a cottage. ☎ 06-372-6637 ($-$$).

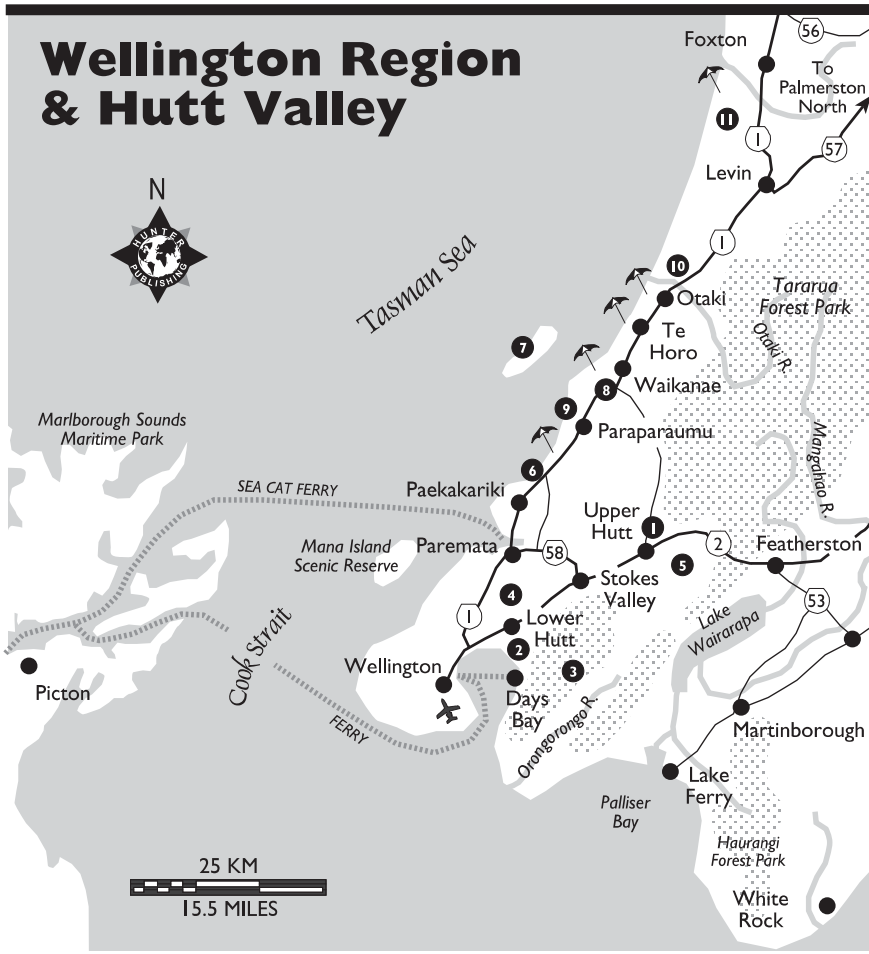
The **Whakataki Hotel** has hotel rooms and cabins and was undergoing a change in ownership when I was last there. Set a little away from the beach. ☎ 06-372-6852, fax 06-372-6842.

Where to Eat

The **Whakataki Hotel** has meals from Wednesday through Sunday, ☎ 06-372-6852 ($-$$).

The Castlepoint Store has takeout in addition to fuel, alcohol and groceries ($-$$).

The Tinui General Store has Paninis, burgers and fisherman's platters ($).



1. Staglands Wildlife Reserve, H2O Xtream, Hutt River Trail, Lighthouse Cinema & Café
2. Maori Treasure, Dowse Art Museum
3. Rimutaki Forest Park
4. Belmont Regional Park
5. Rimutaki Incline, Mt. Climbie, Pakuratahi Forest, Tunnel Gully
6. Fly By Wire, Queen Elizabeth Park, Wellington Tramway Museum
7. Southward Car Museum, Coastlands Shopping Cente, Kapiti 4X4, Emudale, Kapiti Aero Club, Lindale Centre
8. Kapiti Island Nature Reserve
9. Waikane River Walkway, Ferndale Equestrian Centre, Nga Manu Nature Reserve, Tararua OutdoorRecreation Centre, Aotaki Homestead
10. Te Wananga O Raukawa (the Maori University), Otaki Gorge, Otaki Forks, Tararua Range
11. Plantation Forest & Bird Sanctuary

Beaches

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Wellington

Introduction

Wellington isn't just the national capital. It's a hilly harbor town with great food, lots of museums and galleries, fantastic outdoor adventures and, at least in my opinion, more heart and soul than the other major cities. The San Francisco of New Zealand, Wellington sits on an earthquake fault, has some impossibly windy days and is vibrantly diverse. It is home to **Te Papa (the Museum of New Zealand)**, **The Royal New Zealand Ballet** and the **New Zealand Symphony Orchestra**, and Wellington is probably the best city in New Zealand for theater. Check out what's happening at the **Westpac St. James Theatre** and **The Opera House**. Tickets can be purchased through **Ticketek**, ☎ 04-384-3840

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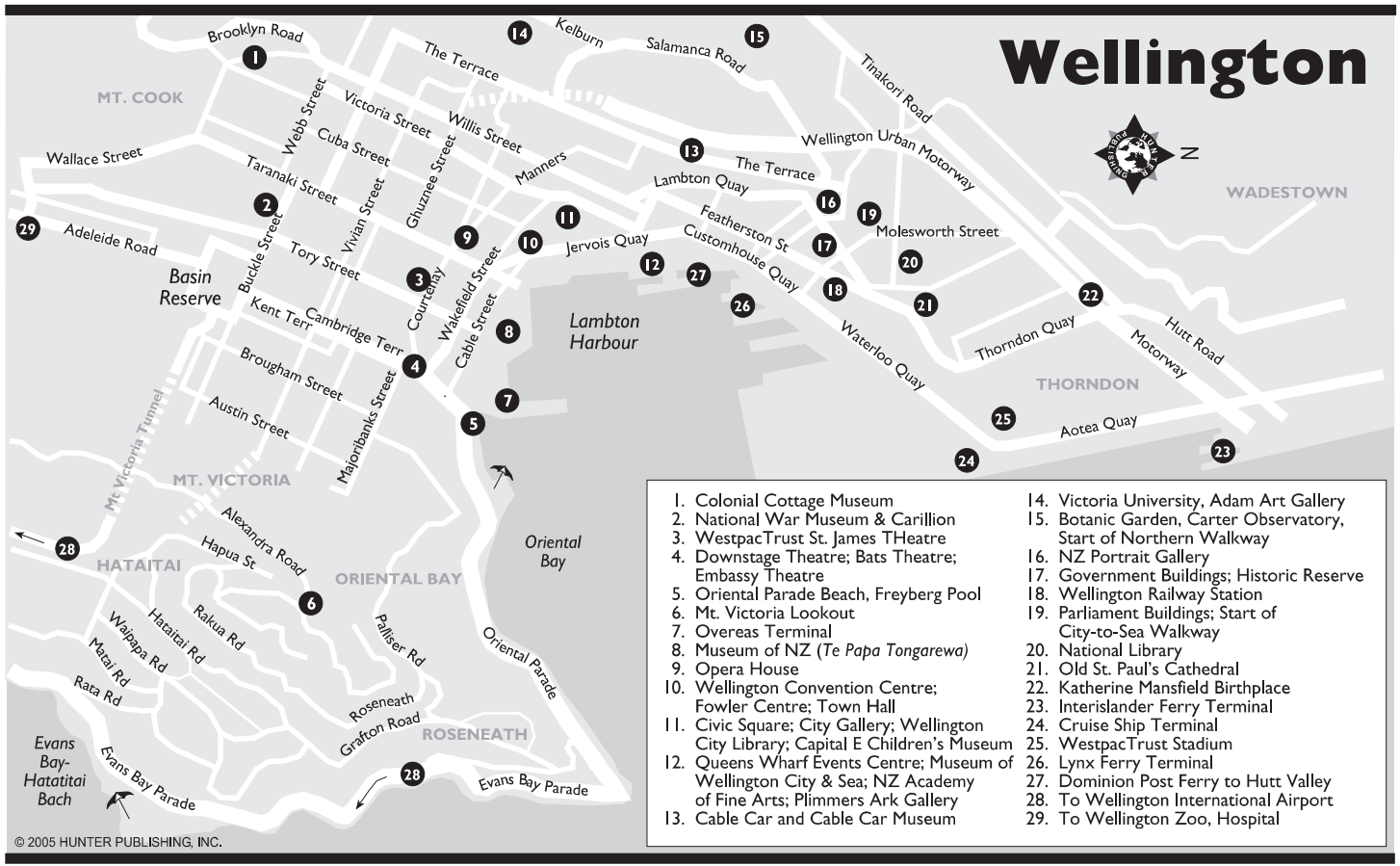
> **Historic interest:** One of the worst disasters in New Zealand maritime history occurred during a ferocious storm just out of Wellington Harbour in 1968, when the passenger ferry *Wahine* struck Barretts Reef and sank. Over 730 people were on the ship and 51 died. There is a fabulous movie at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea about the event.

The discovery of Wellington Harbour is attributed to the Polynesian explorer Kupe, who is believed to have arrived around the 10th century. Its first name was Te Upoko o te Ika a Maui, which means "The head of Maui's Fish," and refers to the Maori legend saying that Maui caught and pulled a fish to the surface, and that fish became the North Island.

> **Did you know?** The original waterfront was along what is now Lambton Quay. As you walk, look for plaques on the sidewalks marking the original shoreline. Reclamation of land began in 1852.

The population of Wellington proper is less than 200,000 but, if you include the Hutt Valley and up the eastern coast, the regional population is closer to 400,000. The city is compact – you can walk across Wellington in 20 minutes, but there are plenty of reasons to take your time and meander around its four quarters – Lambton, Willis, Cuba and Courtenay.

> **Inside advice:** Try to arrange your stay in Wellington over a weekend, when many of the accommodations offer better rates. And, if you have a car, a bike or a pair of feet, go to the lookout at the top of Mt. Victoria to get your bearings. It's a great view from up there!



1. Colonial Cottage Museum
2. National War Museum & Carillion
3. WestpacTrust St. James THeatre
4. Downstage Theatre; Bats Theatre; Embassy Theatre
5. Oriental Parade Beach, Freyberg Pool
6. Mt. Victoria Lookout
7. Overeas Terminal
8. Museum of NZ (*Te Papa Tongarewa*)
9. Opera House
10. Wellington Convention Centre; Fowler Centre; Town Hall
11. Civic Square; City Gallery; Wellington City Library; Capital E Children's Museum
12. Queens Wharf Events Centre; Museum of Wellington City & Sea; NZ Academy of Fine Arts; Plimmers Ark Gallery
13. Cable Car and Cable Car Museum
14. Victoria University, Adam Art Gallery
15. Botanic Garden, Carter Observatory, Start of Northern Walkway
16. NZ Portrait Gallery
17. Government Buildings; Historic Reserve
18. Wellington Railway Station
19. Parliament Buildings; Start of City-to-Sea Walkway
20. National Library
21. Old St. Paul's Cathedral
22. Katherine Mansfield Birthplace
23. Interislander Ferry Terminal
24. Cruise Ship Terminal
25. WestpacTrust Stadium
26. Lynx Ferry Terminal
27. Dominion Post Ferry to Hutt Valley
28. To Wellington International Airport
29. To Wellington Zoo, Hospital

Getting Here

■ By Water

Coming from the South Island, the **Interisland Line** operates a frequent ferry service for foot and vehicle passengers and has a fleet of three ships offering a variety of facilities, including bars, cafés, a children's play area and a movie theater. Interisland Line ferry prices are tiered, just like airlines, so it pays to book ahead. Fares for foot passengers begin at $25 one-way, vehicles at $105. Traveling from one island to the other takes about three hours on the *Arahura* and *Aratere* (which arrive at the Interisland terminal about two km (just over a mile) north of the rail station) and slightly less for the *Lynx* (arriving at Waterloo Quay, just across from the rail station). Bookings can be made through information centers, www.interislandline.co.nz, or by calling ☎ 0800-802-802

The **Blue Bridge Ferry** sails between the North and South Islands twice daily, offers foot and vehicle passage and arrives on Waterloo Quay, just north of the Lynx Terminal. It also has restaurants, bars and an entertainment center – plus long couches to stretch out on if you're traveling at night. Fares are set ($40 per adult, $110 per car) and bookings are made directly with Blue Bridge at www.straightshipping.co.nz, or by calling ☎ 0800-844-844.

■ By Air

Wellington International Airport is about eight km (five miles) southeast of the city. The airport is built on reclaimed land and is in a bit of a wind tunnel – landing here can be an adventure, and the airport does sometimes close in rough weather. The **Stagecoach Flyer** services the airport through Upper Hutt. Contact the information center or Ridewell for schedules and routes, www.wrc.govt.nz, ☎ 04-801-7000. There are shuttle services that run between the airport and Wellington city center, plus plenty of taxis (although pricier than the shuttles). Try **Metro Shuttle Service**, ☎ 04-389-3669, or **Super Shuttle**, ☎ 0800-748-885.

> **Helpful hint:** **Ridewell** is the public transport information service for the region. They have information, timetables and fares for all sorts of transport around the region. ☎ 04-801-7000.

■ By Car

SH1, from the coast, and SH2, from Wairarapa, come together just north of the city. It's about five hours from Napier, five or six from Taupo, and nearly 12 from Auckland.

■ By Bus

InterCity Coachlines and **Newmans** go to all North Island destinations and leave from platform nine at the rail station. Bookings can be made at the information center or through InterCity, www.intercity.co.nz, ☎ 04-472-5111, or Newmans, www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 04-499-3261.

White Star provides service to Wanganui, Palmerston North and New Plymouth. Contact them directly, ☎ 06-758-3338.

■ By Train

The **Wellington Rail Station** is on Bunny Street, at the corner of Waterloo Quay. The Overlander (day train) and the Northerner (night train) travel between Auckland and Wellington. Bookings can be made at information centers or directly through **TranzScenic**. www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 0800 872 467.

The Capital Connection, a commuter service, links Palmerston North with Wellington. You can reach them at ☎ 04-498-3000, ext 44324.

Tranz Metro operates train services between Wellington and Wairarapa, stopping in Lower Hutt (about 25 minutes from Wellington) and Upper Hutt (about 50 minutes) along the way. They also have lines that go to Paraparaumu and Johnsonville. For information, contact Tranz Metro, ☎ 04-498-3000, ext 44993, or **Ridewell**, ☎ 04-801-7000.

Information Sources

Positively Wellington is the tourism organization and their website is **www.wellingtonnz.com**.

The **Wellington Visitor Information Centre** is on Wakefield Street, in a huge complex surrounding Civic Square. The main library is right beside it and there is a café and extensive gift shop within. Open seven days a week, shorter hours on weekends and holidays. ☎ 04-802-4860, fax 04-802-4863

Department of Conservation has a wonderful office in the Old Government Building, at the corner of Lambton Quay and Whitmore Street. If you are interested in visiting Kapiti Island (see page 337 below), you need to get your permits through this office. Open 9 am-4:30 pm, Monday to Friday, 10 am-3 pm Saturday. ☎ 04-472-7356.

Adventures

■ On Water

> **Did you know?** The beach on **Oriental Parade** is man-made? But it's definitely worth a dip in the water when the weather's warm.

For good pool swimming, go to **Freyberg Pool**, also on Oriental Parade, just next to the beach

To get on the water and not in it, rent a kayak from **Ferg's Rock 'n Kayak** and go for a paddle around the harbor. It's a great way to cool off and get some exercise after too much eating and drinking. Ferg's also rents inline skates and has a climbing wall. www.fergskayaks.co.nz, Shed 6 Queens Wharf, ☎ 04-499-8898, fax 04-499-8896.

Give windsurfing a go with **h2osports**. Lessons and gear are available for all levels. Open from 9 am until dark; prices begin at $35. www.h2osports.co.nz, Worser Bay, Seatoun, ☎ 04 388 6164 or 027-224-2223.

The Dominion Post Ferry crosses the harbor to **Day's Bay** eight times on week days and five on weekends. Three trips each day stop at **Matiu/Somes Island**, a reserve administered by DoC. There are walking paths around the island and it's a great little city escape. Day's Bay has Cobar, a trendy café, the Blue Penguin ice cream shop, and one of the best beaches around. $7.50 adults, $4 children. www.eastbywest.co.nz, ☎ 04-499-1282, for timetable ☎ 04-494-3339

> **Historic interest:** Matiu/Somes Island was New Zealand's main internment camp for enemy aliens during both WWI and WWII and has also been used as an animal quarantine station.

■ On Foot

Wellington is a walker's city and there are countless places to stroll around. Go to the information center and pick up brochures for the walks below.

My favorite walking spot is in **Mt. Victoria**. I used to live on Palliser Road and the trails around "Mt. Vic" were where I ran and rode my bike after work. There's a great collection of trails, including the northern end of the **Southern Walkway**.

The **Northern Walkway** starts at the Botanic Gardens and goes all the way to Johnsonville. It's about 14 km (nine miles) through regenerating forest and has a couple of good climbs.

The Wellington Writers Walk is a very cool thing; begun in 2002 by the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand Society of Authors, it's due for expansion in 2004. Pick up a guide at the information center or a museum and follow the route around the waterfront, reading quotes by some fine writers with Wellington connections.

Another favorite walk is all or part of the **City to Sea Walkway**. It begins on Bolton Street near Parliament and ends 12 km (seven miles) later in Island Bay. There is a very informative brochure available.

> **Guided option:** For a great introduction to the city, sign up with **Walk Wellington**. After this guided 90- to 120-minute experience, you will know more about the place than most residents (I took along my friend Jill, who has lived in Wellington for nearly 15 years, and she was constantly surprised at the things she didn't know about her city). Specialty walks focus on a particular aspect of Wellington, such as art, heritage, nature or shopping. Prices range from $20 to $80. Contact Walk Wellington for details. Another option is **Essential Wellington Walks** from November to March. These leave from the visitor information center at 10 am, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday; 5:30 pm, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. From April to October, walks are at 10 am on Saturday and Sunday only. $20 adults, $10 children. Book at the visitor information center. www.wellingtonnz.com/walkwellington, ☎ 04-384-9590

■ On Bikes

There are piles of places to ride around the Wellington area and, if you're serious about it, I'd pick up a Kennett brothers guide (*Classic New Zealand Bike Rides*) or go into one of the bike shops on Courtenay Place.

Mt. Vic is a great place to just pound out some single track without leaving the city. You can ride up to the lookout and choose your trails.

Makara Mountain Bike Park has a spider's web of tracks, anywhere from a couple of kilometers to 20 (two to 12 miles). There are some mighty steep technical rides as well as some easy-peasy ones. This is the place to go if not everyone wants to ride – tell the others to put on some good walking shoes and meet you at the top, where there are fabulous views of the South Island on a clear day. Stop in one of the bike shops and pick up a map, but basically, head south through the town of Karori on Karori Road and watch for the car-park sign.

*Say you left your bike at home? No worries. Rent one at **Mud Cycles** right in Karori, 1 Allington Road, www.mudcycles.co.nz, ☎ 04-476-4961, fax 04-476-4962.*

■ Watchable Wildlife

Great shearwater

The **Karori Wildlife Sanctuary** is an incredible place with an incredible story. It's run as a charitable community trust and is the world's first inner-city predator-free habitat. The Sanctuary began as a vision in 1992, and was fenced in 1999. In place is a 500-year plan to restore the 622-acre valley, which is now home to many endangered species of birds, including the North Island saddleback. The Sanctuary is the first place where a little spotted kiwi hatched in the wild on mainland New Zealand in over 100 years. There are wheelchair-accessible paths, as well as over 35 km (21 miles) of walking and tramping tracks (up to eight hours), and you can either self-guide or book a tour. This is a lovely place to explore for as little as an hour or you all day. Plans include the building of a new visitor center and expanding educational and eco-tourism activities. Nocturnal tours are also available by arrangement. There is a shop with nature gifts and books and also hot drinks and ice cream. Visitors are welcome to bring a picnic. Open every day except Christmas. Winter hours are 10 am-4 pm, Monday to Friday; 10 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday and public holidays. Summer hours, 10 am-5 pm daily. $6 adults, $3 children, $15 family. Waiapu Road, www.sanctuary.org.nz, ☎ 04-920-9200, fax 04-920-9000

Sightseeing

Stop in at the **Embassy Theatre** to see where the world premier of the third film in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy – *Return of the King* – was shown. It's a beautiful theater (with very posh seats) that was refitted for the premier. I was lucky enough to be in town a few weeks after the premier and had friends with a spare ticket – so I got to see the movie in

the Embassy; tickets sold out weeks in advance. At the corner of Majoribanks and Kent Terrace.

Seal Coast Safari will get you out of the city and into the wilds in no time flat. Transportation is by 4x4; your first stop will be at the wind turbine for amazing views of the city and then it's along the fence-line of Karori Wildlife Park and onto the private property of Long Gully Station. You'll drop down and follow the coast out to the Red Rocks and the seal colony at Sinclair Head, where a group of up to 500 fur seals hang out and do their thing. This company has the only DoC concession to the colony and offers a great commentary. It's a lot of fun bouncing over the rocks and down the sides of the hills. $59 per adult, $10 per child. www.sealcoast.com, ☎ 04-802-4860, 0800-732-527. Bookings essential. Pick-up is at the Visitor Information Centre on Wakefield Street.

Tip: Nothing, but nothing, beats taking the **Cable Car** on a clear night. It's been running since 1902, connecting Lambton Quay with the Botanic Garden and the village of Kelburn. At the top of the run, you'll find Skyline Café, the gardens and the Planetarium. $3 round-trip, leaves every 10 minutes from 7 am to 10 pm, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am-10 pm, Saturday, and 9 am-10 pm, Sunday & public holidays. Cable Car Lane (next to McDonald's on Lambton Quay) or Upland Road, Kelburn. www.wellingtonnz.com/cablecar, ☎ 04-472-2199.

The Cable Car stops at the entrance to the **Wellington Botanic Garden**. Set on over 60 acres, its plantings include roses, succulents, rhododendrons, you name it. There's also a begonia house. It's a wonderful place to wander around and spend a day. Main entrance on Glenmore Street.

Within the garden is the **Carter Observatory** and a trip there will change any preconceptions you may have about astronomers hanging out in dull, lifeless places. With a new CEO and a new vision, the programs here are interactive, and many are run by and for the young. Each presenter introduces a different side of astronomy and manages to reach visitors at an everyday level, often using stories to teach. The planetarium show is a great introduction to the stars and constellations of the Southern Hemisphere. On clear nights, take in a telescope viewing. Prices begin at $5, with an additional fee for added shows; $20 for telescope viewing. For a cheap treat, go to backpackers evenings the last Sunday of the month, when entry is by gold coin donation ($1-2). 10 am-5 pm, Monday to Friday; 12 pm-5 pm, Saturday to Sunday and public holidays. Also open evenings on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, from 6:30 pm to late. In the Botanic Gardens, www.carterobs.ac.nz, ☎ 04-472-8167.

Katherine Mansfield Birthplace is the childhood home of New Zealand's most famous author. In addition to the house and garden there is a gift shop. Guided tours are available by arrangement. 25 Tinakori Road, Thorndon, just a 10-minute walk from Parliament. kmbirthplace@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 04-473-7268.

I have to admit, when I was living in Wellington, I used to walk right past the **Museum of Wellington City & Sea**. And what a mistake that was. Built in

1892, the building is classified as a Category One ("special or outstanding historical or cultural heritage") by the Historic Places Trust. It originally housed the Queen's Bond, which means it served as a warehouse where all goods received from overseas were stored until duty was paid to the Queen. This museum is a complement to Te Papa. Walking into the ground-floor gallery, you will be dwarfed by the Tall Screen, where feature films commissioned by the museum are shown every 40 minutes. Make sure you see *Tall Ships* and *Mountains to the Sea.* You don't have to stand in front of the screen all day; it's visible from the other gallery floors. There are great displays on social history – Maori and European – as well as "Living Treasures," which tell the stories of six contemporary Wellington residents. The Wahine disaster film is shown on level one. This is a lovely, modern museum and now one of my favorites in New Zealand. Free admission. Queens Wharf. www.museumofwellington.co.nz, ☎ 04-472-8904, fax 04-496-1949.

Plimmers Ark Gallery is just beside the Museum of Wellington City & Sea and has a walk-through display of the bilges of *Inconstant,* an 1848 wooden sailing ship that came to grief during Wellington's early development. There is also a display about the 1855 earthquake and how it changed the land around Wellington; a 3-D map of the city; and information about the restoration of the ship. Free admission.

> **Don't miss this:** No visit to Wellington is complete without a tour of **Parliament**. The guides are well informed and the tour takes you through the real working areas of Parliament. If the debating chambers are in session, do not miss the opportunity to watch our politicians behaving like children. You don't have to know anything about New Zealand politics to be entertained by the heckling and yelling. Tours are free and begin hourly, from 10 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday; 10 am-3 pm, Saturdays and public holidays. On Sundays, tours leave at 12, 1, 2 and 3 pm. Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and Waitangi Day. Corner Lambton Quay and Molesworth Streets. ☎ 04-471-9503.

> **Did you know?** New Zealand was the first country to give women the vote. Kate Shepard petitioned the house five times and finally, in 1892, had the necessary 30,000 signatures.

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa is the national museum of New Zealand and has interactive and static displays telling the history and stories of New Zealand, as well as a virtual bungy jump. It's hard to describe all that's in Te Papa, and I wouldn't try to see everything in one day – stop in for a couple of hours each day that you're in the city or you might be overwhelmed. I used to duck in for a few minutes here and there whenever I was nearby. There's a lot of history, including good displays on the Treaty of Waitangi. There is also quite a good Maori section and well-presented art displays. The kids' section changes periodically and there are often fantastic visiting exhibitions (which sometimes have free entry). You can pick up a monthly guide to what's going on and plan your visit accordingly. As with most good museums, the shop has a wonderful selection of gifts and art. Free admission. Cable Street. 10 am-6 pm every day, open until 9 pm on Thursday. www.tepapa.govt.nz, ☎ 04-381-7000.

> **Tip:** While you're at the information center, pick up a copy of ***The Arts Map***, which lists not only art galleries but the museums as well.

Other museums and galleries worth visiting include the **National Library of New Zealand**, which often has changing exhibits. Free admission. www.natlib.govt.nz, 9 am-5 pm, Monday to Friday; 9 am-4:30 pm, Saturday; 1 pm-4:30 pm, Sunday. Corner of Molesworth and Aitken Street, ☎ 04-474-3000. Another point of interest, **Old St. Paul's** cathedral was built in 1866 and is a lovely building with a good display of Wellington history. Free admission, open daily, 10 am-5 pm, 34 Mulgrave Street, Thorndon. ☎ 04-473-6722. For fine arts there are two other options in town. **City Gallery Wellington** is in Civic Square and is a fabulous place to poke around. Displays are constantly changing, often featuring NZ as well as international artists. Admission for special displays; otherwise free. www.city-gallery.org.nz, ☎ 04-801-3021. The **New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts** is across Queen's Wharf from the Museum of Wellington City & Sea and has wonderful art and high-quality craft exhibits from around New Zealand. Free admission. ☎ 04-499-8807.

Capital E is Wellington's children's museum. Lots of interactive stuff, including a TV studio. Just under the City to Sea Bridge. www.capitale.org.nz, ☎ 04-384-8502.

Wellington proudly boasts many of the country's fashion designers and has great, easily accessed shopping. Pick up a copy of ***The Fashion Map*** and show yourself around. My favorites are Karen Walker and Starfish. Once in a while, you just gotta splurge.

Guided Options

Hammond's Wellington Scenic Tours offers just that. Choose between 2½ hours around the city (departs at 10 am and 2 pm), four hours for the Kapiti Coast (departs at 9 am and 1:30 pm) or all day in the Wairarapa (departs at 9 am). A good choice if you don't have a vehicle and want to get to some farther-out attractions. The city tour gives a good overview of the place, its history and interesting facts. Prices begin at $40 adults, $20 children. Pick up at your accommodation is available, or meet them at the information center on Wakefield Street or at the railroad station. www.wellingtonsightseeingtours.com, ☎ 04-472-0869, 04-528-2248, fax 04-471-1730.

Frodo

The Lord of the Rings has certainly made its mark on Wellington. For a tour of locations used in the film, call **Wellington Rover**. Comfortable transportation, good lunch, and interesting commentary fill out the full-day tour ($150). Wellington Rover also has a great loop trip around the bays, getting travelers out to some of the less accessible – but well worth a visit – spots. Leaving from the information center on Wakefield Street four times a day, you can get on and off wherever you want, and be picked up on the next loop. Among other stops is the Wellington Zoo, h2o sports (www.h2osports.co.nz, for windsurfing), the Chocolate Fish (one of the best cafés around!), the Miramar Links, Lyall Bay (rent a surfboard) and Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. You can also get off at Owhiro Bay and walk out to Red Rocks and the seal colony at Sinclair Head. Day passes are $35. Call Jason for other trip options. Book at the information center. www.wellingtonrover.co.nz, ☎ 021-426-211.

Wellington's City Circular Bus Service meanders around every 10 minutes, with pick-ups and drop-offs at the most popular inner-city attractions. A single ride is only $2 for adults, 50¢ for kids, or an all-day pass is $8. Look for the yellow bus. www.stagecoach.co.nz, ☎ 04-801-7000.

Where to Stay

The Wellesley Boutique Hotel, built in 1927, is tucked down a side street and is a delightful choice. With just 13 rooms, a fabulous multimillion-dollar art collection, and two well-respected restaurants (the Wellesley Restaurant and the Winebar), The Wellesley does everything well. There is a proper gym, sauna and a full-time massage therapist. Book early – they fill-up fast. www.thewellesley.co.nz, 2 Maginnity Street, ☎ 04-474-1308, fax 01-473-1913 ($$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Ruby House is my new favorite place to stay in Wellington. It's a B&B designed like a NZ farmhouse. Elizabeth is a perfect hostess and lives in a separate home on the property with her husband and children (for whom the rooms are named). Tucked beside Victoria University, it's just a two-minute walk to the Cable Car. Elizabeth serves afternoon tea and makes a very nice continental breakfast. (Try to get the room upstairs with the outside deck!) www.rubyhouse.co.nz, 14b Kelburn Parade, ☎ 04-934-7930 or 021-483-980, fax 04-934-7935 ($$$$).

Nestled beside Mt. Victoria is **Booklovers B&B**, where author/owner Jane Tolerton happily answers questions about Wellington and the rest of New Zealand. Single, twin and queen rooms are available, some with shared facilities. www.booklovers.co.nz, 123 Pirie Street, ☎ 04-384-2714 ($$$).

New in 2003 is **Aitken on Mulgrave**, where they've converted apartments into very comfortable, fully equipped twins and queens. In addition to a full kitchen, each unit has a washer and drier – an unusual commodity in New Zealand. Located very close to Parliament and Westpac Stadium. You're likely to get a better price on the weekends when the business travelers have all gone home. www.wellingtoncityhotel.co.nz, 7 Aitken Street, ☎ 04-473-1873 or 0800-552-233, fax 04-473-4014 ($$$).

All the rooms at the **Duxton Hotel** are gorgeous and front-facing, offering harbor and city views. The clubrooms and suites are particularly luxurious and include complimentary breakfast and entry into the Club Lounge – a very comfortable spot to unwind and relax.. It is in a perfect spot for evening activities, very close to a wide variety of restaurants. www.duxton.com, across the street from the Michael Fowler Centre and Town Hall, 170 Wakefield Street, ☎ 04-473-3900 or 0800-655-555, fax 04-382-0750 ($$$$).

The **Hotel Ibis** is a reasonably priced, pleasant place to stay right in the heart of Wellington. Rooms are spacious and clean, the staff is friendly, and it's probably the best value in town. www.ibishotels.co.nz, 153 Featherston Street, ☎ 04-496-1880 ($$-$$$).

Handy to Te Papa, Oriental Parade and Courtenay Place is **Museum Hotel – Hotel de Wheels**. The building was originally across the street, but to make way for Te Papa, it was put on rails and wheeled across the street, hence the name. Pleasant, quiet rooms, interesting art in the lobby and beautiful patios that overlook the harbor. www.museumhotel.co.nz, 90 Cable Street, ☎ 04-802-2809 or 0800-994-335, fax 04-802-8909 ($$$$).

Novotel Capital has standard rooms and suites, a small conference room and a gym. It's very close to the buzz of The Terrace and offers easy access to Lambton Quay via elevator. Good weekend rates. www.novotel.co.nz, 133 The Terrace, ☎ 04-918-1900, fax 04-918-1901 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Cambridge Hotel** was originally built in 1930; it now has both hotel and backpacker accommodation in a newly renovated area. On Cambridge Terrace, it's in a great location for just about everything. The management, by providing duvets and offering BBQ specials, is really trying to make backpacking a pleasant experience. The hotel section is also nicely remodeled, with a variety of room options, and proves you don't have to spend a fortune when you stay in the city. www.cambridgehotel.co.nz, 28 Cambridge Terrace, ☎ 04-385-8829 or fax 04-385-2503 ($-$$).

The **Wellington City YHA** is in such a great location, and offers such a huge variety of accommodation, that you don't need to claim you're a tried and true backpacker to stay here. It has an enthusiastic and mature staff who all seem to enjoy what they're doing. There are twins, doubles and quad shares with en-suite bathroom, and rooms with shared facilities; two gigantic kitchens and dining rooms, an interactive, high-energy games room and a quiet lounge round out the place. Linen is provided free of charge; the laundry facilities have Internet, TV and stereo. www.stayyha.com, 292 Wakefield Street, ☎ 04-801-7280, fax 04-801-7278 ($-$$).

Across from the railstation is **Downtown Backpackers**. It's a big one – but most of the rooms have en-suite bathroom or shared baths and the majority of dorms are just four beds (there are also singles, doubles and a few six-bed dorms). It may be big, but it is convenient and the facilities can handle the numbers. Located in an art deco building that in earlier days was the Waterloo Hotel. www.downtownbackpackers.co.nz, 1 Bunny Street, ☎ 04-473-8482, fax 04-471-1073 ($).

If you're not concerned about being right in town, then definitely go out to Plimmerton and stay at **Moana Lodge**. It's right on the beachfront and is set in a renovated 1929 seaside guest house. All the beds have sheets and feather duvets; the bathrooms are not en-suite but are private and come supplied with towels; and there is a large country kitchen. It's about 20 minutes from Wellington on SH1; this is a perfect option for the night before (or after) a ferry passage to the South Island. www.moanalodge.co.nz, 49 Moana Road, ☎ 04-233-2010, fax 04-233-9465 ($).

Where to Eat

So many choices! It's really hard to pin down places to eat in a city that seems to have countless cafés and restaurants, not to mention bars. I'll give it a go, but don't think this list is conclusive. There are plenty of noodle houses and kebab shops, too.

■ Café Scene

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

First-time visitors to **Caffé L'Affare** might be confused, but don't worry, the incredible waitstaff knows exactly where everyone is sitting and what they're eating. This is one of *the* places for breakfast, especially on the weekends. They roast their own coffee and everyone seems to be a bit buzzed. 27 College Street, ☎ 04-385-9748 ($-$$).

The **Nikau Gallery and Café** is in Civic Square and has breakfast, brunch and lunch options. It's a rather classy place with protected outdoor seating. City Gallery Building, Civic Square, ☎ 04-801-4168 ($$-$$).

Felix is a bit of an icon, a smart, hip diner with casual service that offers a major breakfast platter all day. 128 Wakefield Street, corner of Cuba Street, ☎ 04-499-5523 ($-$$).

Across from the Civic Centre is **Lido**, where they blend up a mean fruit smoothie. 81 Victoria Street, ☎ 04-499-6666 ($-$$).

Cuba Street is home to a lot of great food… **Purple Onion**, **Krazy Lounge**, and **Olive Café** all come to mind as dependable café stops. On Ghuznee Street, there are a couple of really good noodle houses ($-$$).

Café Zing is at the end of Blair Street, right across from the New World and one of the few places where they have cellared wine on the blackboard menu. Good, good atmosphere. 1 Blair Street, ☎ 04-385-0111 ($$-$$$).

At the other end of Blair Street is **Hummingbird**, where tapas are the name of the game. The incredibly friendly waitstaff gives this a corner-pub feel, but it's much classier than that. Jazz playing on most weekends. 22 Courtenay Place, ☎ 04-801-6336 ($$-$$$).

Along Oriental Parade, there are two choices for brunch: **Vista** (for street-side watch-the-crowds dining), 106 Oriental Parade, ☎ 04-385-7724; and **Parade Café** (for a chill-out in the back patio), 148 Oriental Parade, ☎ 04-939-3935. Either way, you win with great food ($$).

When you're near Parliament, go into **The Backbencher Pub & Café**. Lots of the big-shots pop in here and there's good fun with the caricature decorations. The food is traditional New Zealand, all named after one MP or another. There's a good wine list, with most offerings available by the glass. Lunch or dinner. 34 Molesworth Street, Thorndon, ☎ 04-472-3065 ($$-$$$).

■ For Something More Formal

There is only one choice for Northern Italian and it's **Il Casino**, a Wellington institution. Book ahead and bring your appetite. 108 Tory Street, corner of College, ☎ 04-385-7496 ($$$).

Imbibe Antipasto is the only strictly-antipasto restaurant in Wellington and has some innovative combinations. I really like this place; it's very comfortable and a welcome change of pace. 3 Swan Lane, ☎ 04-385-7060 ($$-$$$).

For an award-winning dinner, try **Roxburgh Bistro** at 18 Majoribanks Street, ☎ 04-385-7577, or its sister, the kid-friendly **Café Bastille** at 16 Majoribanks Street, ☎ 04-382-9559 ($$-$$$).

Bouquet Garni is another "get in your good clothes" kind of place and is in a fabulous old building that used to house a bordello. Downstairs is a wine bar. 100 Willis Street, ☎ 04-499-1095 ($$$).

Recently having undergone renovations, **Matterhorn** went from a mainly Swiss style to a more global menu. Really tasty food; be sure to try some of the starters. 106 Cuba Street, ☎ 04-384-3359 ($$-$$$).

Get out of the central city and head over to **Tinakori Bistro**. There are three dining rooms in this old house and the food is as great as the setting. This is one of my favorite restaurants. 328 Tinakori Road, Thorndon, ☎ 04-499-0567 ($$$).

Hutt Valley

Looking across Wellington Harbour, the land you see on the other side is the beginning of the Hutt Valley. A bit of a bedroom community for the capital city, this is an option for spending a couple of days away from the usual tourist routes.

■ Getting Here

By Boat

While often thought of as a Wellington tour, **The Dominion Post Ferry** is a good way to reach Day's Bay and the Hutt Valley. After arriving at Day's Bay, you can take a taxi to some of the other attractions in the area, then return to Wellington by train. $7.50 adults, $4 children. www.eastbywest.co.nz, ☎ 04-499-1282, for timetable call 04-494-3339.

By Train

Tranz Metro operates services between Wellington and Wairarapa, stopping in Lower Hutt (about 25 minutes from Wellington) and Upper Hutt (about 50 minutes) along the way. For information, contact Tranz Metro, ☎ 04-498-3000, ext 44993, or **Ridewell**, ☎ 04-801-7000.

By Car

The Hutt Valley is located on SH2, which is the main link between Wellington and Wairarapa. From Wellington, it's just about 20 minutes to Lower Hutt, 45 to Upper Hutt.

Between the Kapiti Coast and "the Hutt" take the Mana turnoff on **Paremata-Haywards Road**, or choose the **Akatarawa Valley Road**. It's a great option to spend the day traveling through the valley, visiting gardens, blueberry farms and enjoying some walks along the way. The section from Staglands to Waikanae is narrow and windy, but it's all paved. You might not want to opt for it if you're a nervous driver or pulling a camper, but otherwise, why not? The Upper Hutt Information Centre (see below) has a good brochure and map of the area.

By Bus

Probably the best bus service from the Hutt Valley to Wellington is on the **Stagecoach Flyer**, which connects to the Wellington airport, making stops in the central city along the way. Contact the information centers or **Ridewell** for schedules and routes. www.wrc.govt.nz, ☎ 04-801-7000.

■ Information

In Lower Hutt, visit **Hutt City Information and Visitors Centre** at www.huttcity.info, 10 Andrews Avenue, ☎ 04-560-4715, fax 04-939-4716.

The **Upper Hutt Visitor Information Centre**, www.upperhuttcity.com, is located at 6 Main Street, ☎ 04-527-2141, fax 04-527-9818.

■ Adventures

On Water

H2O Xtream has a great combination of facilities – lap swimming, spa, steam room, sauna, wave pool and slides. Open 6 am-9 pm, Monday to Thursday; 8 am-9 pm on weekends and public holidays. Open until 10 pm on Friday and Saturday and in the summer. $3.75 adults; $2.50 under age five; $2.90 ages five-14; $11 family pass. www.h2oxtream.com, corner Brown and Blenheim, Upper Hutt. ☎ 04-527-2113, 0800-243-8938.

On Foot

If you're driving along SH2, you can't help but notice the **Hutt River Trail**. It stretches 24 km (15 miles), all the way from Petone to beyond Upper Hutt. Easy access, easy terrain, well-marked and with toilet stops!

The main entrance to **Rimutaka Forest Park** is just south of Lower Hutt, outside of Wainuiomata, along the Coast Road. There are great walking options here, and trampers can go to the Orongorongo River and camp. A small DoC information site is at the car park but, if you're coming from Wellington, I'd pop into the DoC office there and pick up a map and brochure – opening hours are limited at the Rimutaka DoC.

Belmont Regional Park is another good option for a couple of hours of exercise. I like the trail up to Korokoro Valley, the dam and Belmont Trig. This regional park has a few entrances, some easily serviced by public transport – contact Ridewell for information, ☎ 504-801-7000 or ask at the information center.

The Upper Hutt Information Centre has a fantastic publication, ***Walkways in Upper Hutt***, that lists tracks from short walks to full-day tramps. One of the most popular in the area is the 17-km (10-mile) **Rimutaka Incline** that follows the old railway line from Cross Creek to Kaitoke. You'll go through four tunnels, so take a flashlight. It's about 4½ hours one-way or 2½ hours to the summit. Access is off SH2 at the signs; look for the glider club and GoKart raceway.

Another good option is the tramping track at **Mt. Climbie**. With an 860-meter (2,795-foot) summit, on a clear day it offers good views of the Hutt Valley and Wairarapa.

Kaitoke Regional Park is not only a popular spot for tent camping, but also has plenty of walking tracks (some wheelchair-accessible) and great swimming holes for relief on a hot day. There are a number of old-growth trees and plenty of places to have a picnic. Main entrance is on SH2, 12 km (seven miles) north of Upper Hutt.

On Bikes

Tunnel Gully Recreation Area in the Pakuratahi Forest has a number of mountain bike rides, including the **Rimutaka Incline** and **Mt. Climbie**. My vote is the Rimutaka Incline for a comfortable, easy ride; sometimes it's just nice to take the bike out – no need to prove how steep a mountain you can ride. The information center has a guide to the tracks.

On Horses

Well, maybe not *on* horses, but *with* horses. Spend a day at **Trentham Racecourse**. It's where the Wellington Cup is run, as well as plenty of other races. Racecourse Road, Trentham, ☎ 04-528-9611, fax 04-528-9611.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

I often shy away from privately-run nature reserves, but **Staglands Wildlife Reserve** is different. It's beautifully laid out, with creeks and little waterfalls, gorgeous trees and plants. The animals are in the most natural habitats possible, the birds are in a big enclosure where they can fly around and the place is clean, fresh and very comfortable. Kids will really enjoy interacting with the animals as they wander around the 25-acre property. The café is an added bonus. Open every day except Christmas. $10 adults, $5 children. www.staglands.co.nz, Akatarawa Valley, Upper Hutt, ☎ 04-526-7529.

Local produce: Bluebank Blueberry and Emu Farm has pick-your-own organic blueberries and homemade blueberry fudge. They also have emus, emu skin-care products and a beautiful wildflower meadow. www.bluebank.co.nz, 1301 Akatarawa Valley Road, ☎/fax 04-526-9540.

AUTHOR'S PICK

A trip to **Maori Treasures** is an experience you won't soon forget. Erenora Hetet is a traditional weaver of cloaks who embraces new techniques and materials; her husband Rangi is one of the country's most respected carvers. Together with the rest of their family and students, they create art within a Maori tribal settlement in Lower Hutt. You can just pop into the gallery, gift shop and café, or book (at least a day in advance) for a "Journey with our Ancestors" tour. This tour ($85) is a brilliant way to spend three hours learning about Maori culture and art. In order to provide a personal experience, the group size is limited. At the end of the three hours, you will have created something to take home, perhaps a flute or small woven basket. There is also a full-day option ($210) that includes transport to and from your accommodation and a

special tour of Te Papa, the national museum of New Zealand. Check the website or inquire about other tours and educational options – you can try your hand at different art techniques. Open daily, 9 am-4 pm. www.maoritreasures.com, 58 Guthrie Street, Lower Hutt, ☎ 04-939-9630, fax 04-393-9631.

Exhibits of international as well as New Zealand art change regularly at the **Dowse Art Museum**. Definitely worth a stop, the Dowse is more like a big city museum than the average art museum in the suburbs. Free admission, except for major exhibits. The Dowse is also the home to a good café. www.dowse.huttcity.govt.nz, 35 Laings Road, Lower Hutt, ☎ 04-570-6500.

The **Lighthouse Cinema & Café** has two locations, one in Upper Hutt and one in Petone. Both show current movies as well as art films and are fully licensed with cafés and comfortable seating on couches. Limited seating, so book ahead. 8 Miro Street, Upper Hutt, ☎ 04-939-1060, fax 04-939-1062. 52 Beach Street, Petone, ☎ 04-939-2061, fax 04-939-2063.

■ Where to Stay

Bell House Fine Food and Lodging is just across the street from the racecourse and offers B&B singles, twins and doubles with shared bath in a renovated old home. Just two minutes from the rail station, it's very convenient for those who don't have a vehicle but who want to get out of the city. 40 Camp Street, Trentham, ☎ 04-527-8835 or 025-995-983 ($$).

At **Crazy Kiwi Adventure**, you'll be bedding down in a traditional, though rustic, cottage and be eating good old traditional Kiwi food (vegetarian options are available). It's on the grounds of an organic farm (and also happens to be home of Alchemy Rural Day Spa) where there are horses, cows and a bush spa. Included in the price is either a horse trek or a mountain-bike tour, lunch, dinner and breakfast. www.crazykiwiadventures.co.nz, 971 Whitemans Valley Road, Whitemans Valley, ☎ 04-528-0103 or 021-534-842 ($$$).

Harcourt Holiday Park is about the closest place to Wellington that you can take your camper or tent. In addition to camping sites, there are cabins, tourist apartments, on-site campers and motel units. It's very clean and spacious and set among native bush. Playground and pool right next door in the park. www.harcourtholidaypark.co.nz, 45 Akatarawa Road, Upper Hutt, ☎ 04-526-7400 or fax 04-526-7401 ($-$$).

The **Antler Lodge** is like a luxurious tramping hut and commands the highest point in Upper Hutt. 4WD access to this private retreat where you can go on forest walks or have a guided tour of a deer farm. 2092B Akatarawa Road, Upper Hutt, ☎ 04-526-8322 ($-$$).

The chalets at **Kaitoke Country Gardens** are a good choice for accommodation just outside of Upper Hutt, and an even better choice if you're walking or biking the Rimutaka Incline. You'll feel you're a million miles away from Wellington. While you're here, take advantage of clay-bird shooting, archery or quad-bike riding. www.kaitokecountrygardens.co.nz, 1747 Main Road North, Kaitoke, ☎/fax 04-526-6639 ($$$).

■ Where to Eat

Head to the **Bell House** even if you're not staying there. The dining room is small and cozy, the dishes include steak, chicken and fish; there might even be a chocolate brulée for dessert. Again, it's only two minutes from the train station and just across from the racetrack. Give it a try, but book ahead. 40 Camp Street, Trentham. ☎ 04-527-8835, 025-995-983 ($$$).

Even if you don't have much time to spend viewing the exhibits, stop in for a meal at the **Dowse Café**, located at the art museum. Laings Road, Lower Hutt, ☎ 04-570-6500 ($$).

Another art-related café that has marvelous food and great coffee is **The Galleria** at Maori Treasures, with very nice outdoor seating in a lovely atmosphere. 56 Guthrie Street, Lower Hutt, ☎ 04-939-9630 ($$)

For a great meal in a wonderful location, try **Cobar** in Day's Bay, where there's an extensive wine list and good food. Iit's right on the water, 12 Main Road, ☎ 04-562-8882 ($$).

Kapiti Coast

The Kapiti Coast stretches for 40 km (25 miles) from Otaki in the north to Paekakariki in the south. It is only a 50-minute drive to Wellington and is easily accessible by car, train or bus. Many travelers choose to stay on the coast the night before their ferry to the South Island; likewise, many crossing from the South Island find Kapiti a perfect destination for their arrival day. But the Kapiti Coast is far more than a stopover on the way to or from Wellington – with its pleasant climate and relaxed lifestyle, more and more people are becoming "Kapiti Coasters."

Bordered on the west by the Tasman Sea, the Kapiti Coast boasts beaches that are safe for swimming, sailing, fishing and diving, and there is plenty of white sand for spreading blankets and dozing in the sun. On the eastern edge of the region, the Tararua Ranges offer both short day-hikes and multi-day tramps into beautiful native bush. It's an agriculturally fertile area, where you will find plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

> **Did you know?** The name comes from Kapiti Island, home to a very important bird and marine reserve, five km (30 miles) offshore. Many endemic and indigenous rare and endangered birds live on the predator-free island.

■ Getting Here

By Car

Getting to the Kapiti Coast is easy; just take State Highway 1. Otaki is 30 km (18 miles) south of Levin, and Paekakariki is 50 km (30 miles) north of Wellington.

By Bus

InterCity Coachlines and **Newmans** travel along the Kapiti Coast, as does **White Star** on its runs between Wellington and New Plymouth.

By Train

Tranz Metro operates train services between Wellington and Paraparaumu. For information, contact Tranz Metro, ☎ 04-498-3000, ext 44993, or **Ridewell**, ☎ 04-801-7000.

■ Information Sources

The regional tourism website is www.kapititourist.co.nz.

Visitor information centers can be found in **Otaki**, at Centennial Park on SH1, ☎ 06-364-7620, fax 06-364-7630, and in **Paraparaumu**, in Coastlands Shopping Centre, also on SH1, ☎ /fax 04-298-8195. Both can be e-mailed at kapiti.info@clear.net

The **Department of Conservation** office for the region is in Waikanae, at 10 Parata Place.

■ Otaki

Twenty km (12 miles) south of Levin, Otaki serves as the northern gateway for the Kapiti coast and the western entrance to the Tararua Ranges. Otaki is rich in Maori history, the home of several marae, or Maori meeting places, and a Maori university, Te Wananga O Raukawa (TWOR). TWOR was established in 1981 by an association of the three local tribes (Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Toa, and Te Ati Awa) and in 1999 became the first educational institution in NZ to supply a personal computer to every student.

Adventures

On Foot

Two km (about a mile) south of town, Otaki Gorge Road runs 19 km (12 miles) inland through the Otaki Gorge to Otaki Forks and the Tararua Ranges. There are many short walks, from 20 minutes to six hours round-trip, some of which must be avoided when the rivers are high or the weather is bad. Otaki Forks is also an access point for longer multi-day tramps but it's best to visit with the DoC or the resident ranger at the site. The Tararuas are noted for changeable weather and every year, ill-prepared trampers and day-hikers require assistance.

On Water

Like most of the beaches on this coast, the Otaki Beach is a long, sandy affair, popular with locals and city-slickers alike when the weather is good.

Kayaking and rafting are popular on the Otaki River, which is a grade II river. The **Tararua Outdoor Recreation Centre** operates daily rafting trips (October to April) of about three hours ($45 per adult) and kayaking on Sundays. torc@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-364-3110, fax 06-364-2210.

Where to Stay

A good, centrally located B&B, **Aotaki Homestead** has a bedroom in the house, a studio unit with kitchenette and a cottage with bath and kitchen. The hosts, Judy and Paul, are keen gardeners and growers, and the birdlife in their garden is astounding. The cottage is particularly good for long stays. aotaki.homestead@paradise.net.nz, 11 Dunstan Street, ☎ 06-364-6438, fax 06-364-6461 ($$).

Another good B&B is **Naumai**, a 1911 villa in a large garden with plenty of fruit trees. It's unusual in that they welcome travelers with pets – that always makes me like someone immediately. naumai_kapiti@xtra.co.nz, 112 Waerenga Road, ☎ 06-364-8440 ($$).

Right on SH1, but tucked away in a quiet garden is **Waitohu Lodge**, a comfortable and clean B&B. www.waitohulodge.homestead.com, 294 State Highway 1, ☎ 06-364-5389 or 0800-364-239, fax 06-364-5350 ($$).

Just a short walk to the beach is **Byron's Resort** with motel units, tourist apartments, tent and camper sites, and a beachside cottage. It's got all those holiday park features: quite a few permanent campers, swimming pool, spa, playground, tennis courts, and so on. It also has a well-respected local restaurant that serves nicely prepared beef and lamb. www.byronsresort.co.nz, 20 Tasman Road, ☎ 06-364-8121, fax 06-364-8123 ($$-$$$).

Cottage Park Motel & Conference Centre has clean and spacious cottages with bath and kitchen, plus studio units. They say North Americans like it because of the log-cabin design, a comment that might normally make me steer clear, but this place is really inviting. They have spaces for motor homes and a large indoor swimming pool. cottagepark@kapiti.co.nz, 272 State Highway 1, ☎ 06-364-6228, fax 06-364-7228 ($$-$$$).

Nirvana Backpackers is a small (only five beds) and cozy house-turned-hostel just a short walk to the beach. There is a garden, meditation room, spa pool, kayak and bikes to use. Transport to and from Otaki is available. nirvana@paradise.net.nz, 41 Rangiuru Road, ☎ 06-364-0115 ($).

For something completely different, try **Otaki Oasis Backpackers**, located at a riding school and horse farm. Just a short walk from town, the simple rooms are clean, families are welcome, and there is plenty of organic produce for you to enjoy. 33 Rahui Road, ☎ 06-364-6860 or 021-129-2478 ($).

Where to Eat

As in most small towns, there is a pretty good selection of takeout places and "good old Kiwi tucker" (that's food), but nothing much that stands out. You probably won't write home about many of the places, but you won't go hungry either.

■ Te Horo

Five km (three miles) south of Otaki you reach tiny Te Horo. There are plenty of places here to pick your own fruit and vegetables, or buy some that's been freshly harvested for you. Te Horo Beach Road heads out to, where else, Te Horo Beach, another safe and sandy swimming beach.

> **Learn to cook:** Te Horo is home to **Ruth Pretty Catering**. Ruth is one of the most popular and successful food personalities in New Zealand. On most weekends from March to November, Ruth Pretty Cooking School is alive with classes taught either by Ruth or guest presenters from New Zealand and abroad. Most classes cost $155, an absolute bargain for the education, entertainment and eating that is packed into the classes. These fill quickly, so if you're planning a trip check out the website and book on-line. The **Ruth Pretty Kitchen Shop** is open Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm; and weekends by appointment. www.ruthpretty.co.nz, 41 School Road, ☎ 06-364-3161, fax 06-364-3262.

Where to Stay

Te Horo Lodge is on 10 acres of native bush. All four bedrooms have private en-suite bathroom and there is a small conference center and a wonderfully secluded outdoor pool and spa. The lounge is anchored by a gigantic rock fireplace and Craig Garner is a fantastic cook and host who will cheerfully arrange activities for you. Full cooked breakfast is included and dinner is available by arrangement. Just down the road from Ruth Pretty, it's a great place to stay for a weekend cooking class. www.tehorolodge.co.nz, 109 Arcus Road, ☎ 06-364-3393 or 0800-483-467 ($$$$).

Lavender Creek Farm is a B&B on a working lavender farm that looks out toward the sea. There is a saltwater swimming pool, private bathroom, continental breakfast and fields of lavender. lavender_creek@clear.net.nz, ☎/fax 06-364-3682 ($$$).

■ Waikanae

Often, when I am driving through a new town, I notice a clean, comfortable neighborhood and I think "I could live there." More often then not, it turns out to be a retirement center. This happened in Waikanae, but that shouldn't have been too big a surprise as this beach town is a popular retirement destination. Having said that, Waikanae, 10 km (six miles) south of Otaki, is a lovely place to spend some time even if you're still in the workforce.

Like the other towns on the Kapiti Coast, it is split between the busy commercial center on SH1 and the beach town, located four km (two miles) down Te Moana Road.

Adventures

On Foot

Check out the **Waikanae River Walkway**. Extending from SH1 to the sea on both sides of the river, the north- and south-bank tracks join at Otaihanga Bridge; from there it's just over one km (a half-mile) to the beach. On either side, expect about a 2½-hour round-trip walk through river reserves and restoration plantings. Pick up a brochure at the information center, or just follow the signs to access points along Te Moana Road.

On Horses

In addition to farm, park and beach rides, **Ferndale Equestrian Center** offers some innovative programs, including combined educational packages with Nga Manu Nature Reserve (and, for those who have English as a second language, the Three E's – Equestrian, English language and Environment). Spend a week at a local homestay, take riding lessons in the morning (dressage or jumping) and then spend the afternoon at the nature reserve. Run by two veterinarians, this is not a livery-stable kind of place. Horses are well-trained and, while beginning riders will enjoy a ride around the farm, those who are experienced will thrill at cantering along the beach for miles. Programs can be tailored to meet the desires of the clients; prices (extremely reasonable) are available upon request. www.ferndalehorses.com, 148 Ngarara Road, Waikanae, ☎ 04-293-6209.

Watchable Wildlife

Nga Manu Nature Reserve, operated by Nga Manu Trust, is a 40-acre bird and wildlife sanctuary set in native and virgin bush just west of Waikanae. Up to 300 birds are rehabilitated annually and those healthy enough are reintroduced to the wild; those unable to survive in the wild are given lifetime accommodation at the reserve. The bird enclosures are open-plan, allowing visitors an unobstructed view of the birds, but are made for the animals, not humans – the enclosures are built so birds can get away from visitors if they want to. Bush walks are wheelchair-accessible, eels are fed daily at 2 pm, and the nocturnal house has kiwi and tuatara. An area called Preservation Island provides plant insurance – growing and propagating endangered and native flora. The Trust cooperates in research projects around New Zealand, assists students in research, and is committed to outdoor and conservation education. A one- to two-hour visit to Nga Manu is well worth the trip. Open from 10 am to 8 pm from Boxing Day to Wellington Anniversary Day; 10 am to 5 pm the rest of the year. $7.50 for adults, $3.50 for under age 15. www.ngamanu.co.nz, off Ngarara Road, ☎/fax 04-293-4131.

Kapiti Bird Tours to the Waikanae Estuary are the passionate effort of Mik and Moira Peryer. Tours (often in Mik's 1934 Citroen) take about two hours. Birds that frequent the estuary include Caspian terns (above), royal spoonbills, shags, dabchicks, scaup, herons, shovelers and pukeko. Wheelchair-accessible. www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz, ☎ 04-925-1001 or 021-750-603.

Where to Stay

For a superb location right on the beach, try **Sand Castle**, four km (two miles) north of Waikanae. All units have fully equipped kitchens and there is an outdoor spa. sandmote@kapiti.co.nz, Paetawa Road, off Peka Road, ☎ 04-293-6072, fax 04-293-3926 ($$$).

The **Toledo Park Motel** offers clean and convenient accommodation just one km (half a mile) from the beach. They have a heated outdoor swimming pool and both one- and two-bedroom units, all with fully equipped kitchens. park@paradise.net.nz, 95 Te Moana Road, ☎ 04-293-6199, fax 04-293-8604 ($$).

Heperi Beach House is a charming beach house on elevated ground in a garden, just a block from the surf. Comfortable, modern furnishings and fully equipped (BYO linen), the house sleeps up to six and there is a minimum two-night stay. But there is no reason you'd want to stay a shorter time and this must be one of the most cost-effective accommodations on the coast. 14 Heperi Road. The owners live at **Peka Peka**, five minutes north of Waikanae, and have a studio there with bath and kitchen for two, available for short-term stays, right on the beach. schiff@paradise.net, ☎ 04-293-8689 ($$).

Where to Eat

At Waikanae Beach there is a great little café, **The Front Room**. There's a fantastic blackboard menu, current magazines and couches on which to read them, sidewalk tables, good coffee and wine. Brunch is served from 10 am to 3 pm and dinner from 6 pm; closed Tuesday night and all day Wednesday. It's the kind of place that would be your local café if you lived here. 1/42 Tutere Street, ☎ 04-905-4142 ($$).

On SH1, in the midst of Waikanae, is **Rumours**, where you won't be disappointed in the food or service. 40 Main Road, ☎ 04-293-4564 ($$$).

Life has seen its name-appropriate series of changes, but has excellent "European-inspired" modern cuisine and good service. Book in advance. 8 Main Road (just south outside of Waikanae on SH1), ☎ 04-902-6200 ($$$).

The **Reikorangi Pottery, Park and Café** is a pleasant 4½-km (three-mile) drive west of Waikanae. Pottery by owners Jan and Wilf Wright, as well as jewelry and other art, is on display and for sale in the gallery and café (light meals and snacks). Wander around the farm park, pet and feed the animals and take a picnic to the river. Open from 9:30 am to 5 pm, Tuesday to Sunday and public holidays during summer (daily in January), and Wednesday to Sunday in winter. Reopens at 6:30 pm for dinner on Friday and Saturday. 27 Ngatiawa Road, ☎ 04-293-5146 ($$).

■ Paraparaumu

Paraparaumu is the biggest town on the Kapiti Coast and the commercial center for the region, but don't think when you're driving down the highway and come to the fast-food strip malls that you're in Paraparaumu. While the necessities of life (including the visitor information centre) can be found at and around the **Coastlands Shopping Center**, the beach town is three km (two miles) west on Kapiti Road.

As you drive toward the coast, you'll pass the **Paraparaumu Airport** on your left and, a little later, the **Paraparaumu Golf Course** on your right. This is the course where Tiger Woods played in the NZ open, which the locals are very proud to tell you about. It's ranked number 79 in the world's top 100 courses, and they say it's a rare example of a classic links-style course, with influences of the windy coast, fast greens and rolling fairways. www.paraparaumubeachgolfclub.co.nz, 371 Kapiti Road, ☎ 04-902-8200, fax 04-902-8201.

> **Tip:** Buy some fish and chips, sit on the beach and watch the sun go down. It's a fine walking beach with hard sand, and offers great views of the South Island. There are some good shops to poke into and plenty of options for food. In mid-2003 when I was last there, construction was just beginning on a major upgrade to the shops on Maclean Street. I imagine that will be the first of many refits and, before long, Paraparaumu will be "the place to be."

Adventures

On Water

In addition to putting on your togs and going for a swim, there are some good places to dive and snorkel. The **Kapiti Dive Centre** rents equipment and offers SSI certification. Charter boats for dive trips are available at $550 per day, and dive trips along Kapiti Island and the coast ($75 per person per day) can be arranged. southernocean@xtra.co.nz, 27 Milne Drive, ☎ 04-298-9511, fax 04-298-7546.

On Wheels

The first time I rode a quad bike was at **Kapiti Four X 4** and, having since ridden with nearly a dozen quad-bike operators around New Zealand, I think this is the best – in both terrain to ride on and operations. I was a little nervous when first going down some of the steep bits and along the "skidder tracks," but it was really, really fun and I would encourage anyone to give it a go. There are muddy sections and tree roots, plus lots of natural hazards to test your skill, but the guides are patient and their instructions are very clear. The operation is completely professional and it's obvious that safety is the primary motivation. Based in the Maungakotukutuku Valley, trips range from one hour to two days of exploration in the adjacent 44,000 acres. They offer transport to and from the site and provide all safety equipment and outerwear. Prices begin at $70 per person. Minimum age 16. Other activities (clay-bird shooting, archery, air pistol shooting, golf chipping) are also available. www.kapitifourx4.co.nz, Maungatukutuku Road, ☎ 04-299-0020, fax 04-297-9222.

On the Farm

Just across from Kapiti Four X 4 is **Emudale**, a working emu farm, where you can feed and visit farm animals and see emus of all ages, including gigantic eggs in the incubator. There is also a shop selling emu oil and other products, including meat. Open Wednesday to Sunday; $5 adults, $2 children. www.emudale.co.nz, 331 Maungatukutuku Road, ☎ 04-299-1351, fax 04-299-1350.

In the Air

Scenic flights in fixed-wing airplanes and helicopters are available through the **Kapiti Districts Aero Club**. You can opt for just 15 minutes around Kapiti and spend only $99 or go for a longer ride, with rates based on $230 per hour for fixed wing, $495 for the helicopter. In just over an hour you can get a good look around by flying over Kapiti Island, Cook Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound. Tiger Moth rides from 15 to 20 minutes go for $125-$165 – and why not opt for the aerobatic flight to 3,500 feet with loops, barrel rolls and stall turns? www.kapitiaeroclub.co.nz, Paraparaumu Airport, ☎ 04-902-6536.

Sightseeing & Shopping

A bit touristy, but worth a stop, is **The Lindale Centre**, one km north of Paraparaumu. Kapiti Cheese and Ice Cream (both some of the best in New Zealand) have shops there, in addition to Kapiti Olives, Kapiti Candies and The Honey Hive. There's also a wine bar and a restaurant. Farm walks and a weekend farm show at 2 pm (daily during school holidays) give the kids something to do. ☎ 04-297-0916. Other tasty stops include **Nyco Chocolate Factory Shop**, ☎ 04-299-8098, and **Prenzel Distillery**, ☎ 04-902-9559, both located at the corner of SH1 and Raumati Road and open seven days a week for tastings and sales.

> **Tip:** Stop at **Out 'n About** and **On Your Bike**. Sister companies that specialize in outdoor and bike equipment, respectively, they are great sources of local information and activity suggestions. 128 Rimu Road, ☎/fax 04-298-7267.

The Southward Car Museum

This is what happens when a collector has the means to collect and the generosity to share his passion with the public. Housing not only the largest collection of vintage cars in the Southern Hemisphere (over 250), the museum also has too many engines to count, bicycles, motorcycles, typewriters, suits of armor and airplanes hanging from the ceiling (including a 1941 Tiger Moth and one of the planes used in the 1965 movie *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*). When benefactor Sir Len Southward purchased a Wurlitzer organ, it was time to build a theater with sloping seating and a hydraulic floor. The fully equipped restoration workshop employs five, and tours are available for enthusiasts by appointment. Museum hours are 9 am to 4:30 pm daily, except Christmas, Good Friday and ANZAC morning (April 25, honoring Australia New Zealand Army corps soldiers). $5 per adult; $2 per child. southward@kapiti.co.nz, Otaihanga Road, ☎ 04-297-1221, fax 04-297-0503.

Kapiti Island Nature Reserve

Five km (three miles) offshore from Paraparaumu, this is an absolute treasure and the most popular destination in the area. Ten km (six miles) long and two km (a mile) wide, Kapiti is home to some of New Zealand's rarest and most endangered birds and is easily accessible to the public. Fifty visitors per day are granted permits from DoC and are likely to be rewarded with sightings of kaka, kakariki, robins, saddleback, stitchbird, weka, kereru, bellbirds, tui and takahe. Two types of brown kiwi and little spotted kiwi also make their home on the island. Day visitors arrive at Rangitira Point and have the option of three walking tracks, the **Trig** (steepest) and the **Wilkinson** (gentler) joining and leading to the 521-meter (1,700-foot) summit of Tuteremoana and the **North Track**. A round-trip to the top takes about three hours, but take your time, walk slowly and stop often to see and listen to the birds. Keep in mind that the best bird-viewing spots are at the lower segments of the tracks. The North Track is a two- to three-hour trip, following a coastal route with some hills, to Waiorua Bay and Okupe Lagoon.

Kapiti hasn't always been a quiet, idyllic spot for a hike, though. Originally settled by the Rangitane, Muaupoko and the Ngati Kahungunu, Kapiti was invaded and overtaken in 1822 by Te Rauparaha and the Ngati Toa. Revenge attacks followed, with bloody battles on grounds that, in 1897, were established as a preserve.

Permits to visit the island must be obtained from DoC Visitor Information Centre, Government Buildings Historic Reserve, Lambton Quay, Wellington, ☎ 04-472-7356. Permits are non-refundable but, in the event of weather prohibiting boat access, are transferable to another day. The cost of $9 per adult and $4.50 per child covers DoC permits and mandatory introduction talks. One-hour guided walks are available for an additional $10. With only 50 permits granted a day, the summer fills up quickly, often up to three months in advance, so book as soon as you know your intentions. DoC will provide you with options for boat transport; round-trip fare per person is usually $30.

AUTHOR'S PICK

Overnight stays on the island are available at **Kapiti Nature Lodge**, a homestay accommodation, where you stay with a family on private Maori land at the north end of the island. In addition to after-dark guided kiwi-spotting trips, a resident family of takahe birds, trees laden with kaka (brown or bush par-

rots), and wekas (like large kiwis) ready to make friends with your lunch, there is a marked walking track through regenerating lowland bush and another offering spectacular views from the ridge top. This is the first place I ever saw a kiwi in the wild and it really is an incredible experience. And it's not often you wake up to see a takahe bird walking past your door. Beds are in four bunkrooms and all meals are provided. In keeping with the environmental consciousness of the island, visitors are restricted from using any type of flame devices, cooking, or transporting food onto Kapiti and must undergo inspection prior to traveling. Just as at the reserve end, everyone must arrive via an approved water transport operator and be in possession of a DoC permit. A total of 50 visitors per day (including those staying over) are allowed on the north end of the island. Bookings are absolutely mandatory. www.kapitiislandalive.co.nz, ☎ 06-364-8818 or 027-288-3771 ($$$).

Where to Stay

As with most beach communities, there is a wide range of accommodation options and something to suit nearly every budget. The visitor centers have complete lists of motels, B&Bs and so on.

Greenmantle is take-your-breath-away spectacular. Bev is completely down-to-earth and, though I've never met Snow, I understand that he is, too. Their lovely home is nearly 9,000 square feet and can accommodate up to 14 guests. The gardens are beautiful and open for wandering; there are resident doves, and birds visit from Kapiti Island. While the home is magnificent, perhaps the most stunning feature is the stand of Nikau palms in the back of the property and the spa tucked underneath them. Well worth a couple of days on your journey and a fantastic base for golf and trips to Kapiti. www.greenmantle.co.nz, 214 Main Road North, ☎ 04-298-5555, fax 04-298-5552 ($$$$).

Wrights by the Sea, is a new, modern motel with big rooms, a heated spa pool, conference center, SKY TV, and very friendly, helpful hosts. wrights@paradise.net.nz, 387 Kapiti Road, ☎ 04-902-7600 or 0508-902-760, fax 04-902-7601 ($$-$$$).

Where to Eat

Let's just say you're not going to go hungry here, so here are a few options.

The **Brier Patch** is unusual for New Zealand, specializing in Creole cooking. It's good to get some food with spice once in a while (and they have pecan pie and mud cake). 9 Maclean Street, ☎ 04-902-5586 ($$).

Cookies has the deserved reputation of great food, lots of it, and very reasonably priced. Tuesday and Thursday are roast-dinner nights and Wednesday, Friday and Saturday are smorgasboard. Open for lunch and dinner. Located at the Copperfield shopping center on Seaview Road, ☎ 04-902-9111 ($).

Dhaba, also at the Copperfield shopping center on Seaview, serves authentic Indian food; open for lunch and dinner. ☎ 04-298-8892.($)

For very reasonably priced takeout Thai food, go to **The Oriental Thai** (another good option for a beach picnic). 1 Te Roto Drive, ☎ 04-298-2207 ($).

For the best fish and chips in town, go to **Fed Up Fast Foods** on Marine Parade. There's always a line of locals in there. ☎ 04-297-3399 ($).

■ Paekakariki

The feel of Kapiti Coast becomes decidedly more Bohemian as you travel 10 km (six miles) south and reach Paekakariki. This little village calls itself "The Jewel of the Kapiti Coast," and I can't disagree. There isn't a paved boat ramp, so you'll find none of the commercial action of Paraparaumu and, even in the height of summer, the beaches here – which are patrolled for safe swimming – remain uncrowded. Trains to Wellington leave every half-hour, making Paekakariki a great base to explore the capital city (or, alternatively, a fine beach destination from the city).

Adventures

On Water

Just go to the beach! That's the biggest reason to be here.

With Adrenaline

What began as an idea to make a swing that the rider could steer grew into **Fly By Wire**, an insane contraption that attracts the bungy crowd and, they say, "those who are interested in the engineering." It's about a 10-minute walk up the hill behind the BP gas station in Paekakariki, through regenerating forest and along a gurgling stream. In the center of a grassy valley hangs the part-plane/part-rocket, suspended from high wires reaching across the canyon. Lie down on your stomach, get strapped in and then hoisted 55 meters (179 feet) into the air, nearly vertical. You release the tow and the two-stroke, 25 hp engine gets you flying. Control the throttle and steering, swooping and diving at will. The ride ($99) lasts six minutes, but then, depending on where you are when the engine stops, it could take up to 10 minutes to bring you back down to the ground. The company operates another such ride in Queenstown, in case you can't get enough. www.flybywire.co.nz. Park at the BP station, go in and watch the video, then climb the hill. ☎ 025-300-366 or 0800-359-299, fax 03-442-2116.

Sightseeing & Shopping

The **Queen Elizabeth Park** is 1,600 acres of coastal land filled with sand dunes, picnic areas, walkways, cycling tracks, and swimming beaches. Stretching from Paekakariki and Raumati South, the Wainui and Whareroa Beaches offer good swimming, boating, windsurfing and fishing. The **Wellington Tramway Museum** is located at MacKays Crossing, ☎ 04-292-8361, and horseback riding can be arranged through **Stables in the Park**, ☎ 04-486-764.

Local products: On Beach Road, there is a mixture of shops that are good for beach-day browsing. **The One Eye Gallery** is an artist-run dealer gallery having solo and group exhibitions; across the street, **Coast Craftworks** has locally designed and produced crafts and is attached to an artists' studio. Right next door, **Decorative Arts** specializes in applied arts from 1880 onward. For one-of-a-kind and antique books visit **Pukapuka Bookshop**, beside Decorative Arts.

Where to Stay

There aren't too many choices in Paekakariki, but perhaps that's part of it's charm.

Paekakariki Backpackers is just up the hill beside Il Gambero (see *Where to Eat*). Accommodation is spread among three buildings and includes four- and five-bed dorms, doubles with en-suite bathroom, and a cottage with its own solar shower. The big kitchen, lots of books in the lounge, great sea views and bush bath in the garden make this a wonderful place to chill out. Peter, the host, is a seasoned traveler and says many people book for one night but, within a couple minutes of unpacking, ask if they can stay longer. It's just a five-minute walk to the train station and, with half-hourly trains to Wellington, it makes a great base for capital-city travel. paekakbp@voyager.co.nz, 11 Wellington Road, ☎ 04-292-8749.

Paekakariki Holiday Park is fortunate to be adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth Park, which offers many walking paths; it's also just a short walk to the beach. In addition to tent and camper sites there are tourist apartments, standard cabins and a lodge. www.holidayparks.co.nz/paekakariki, 180 Wellington Road, ☎/fax 04-292-8292 or 0800 656-699.

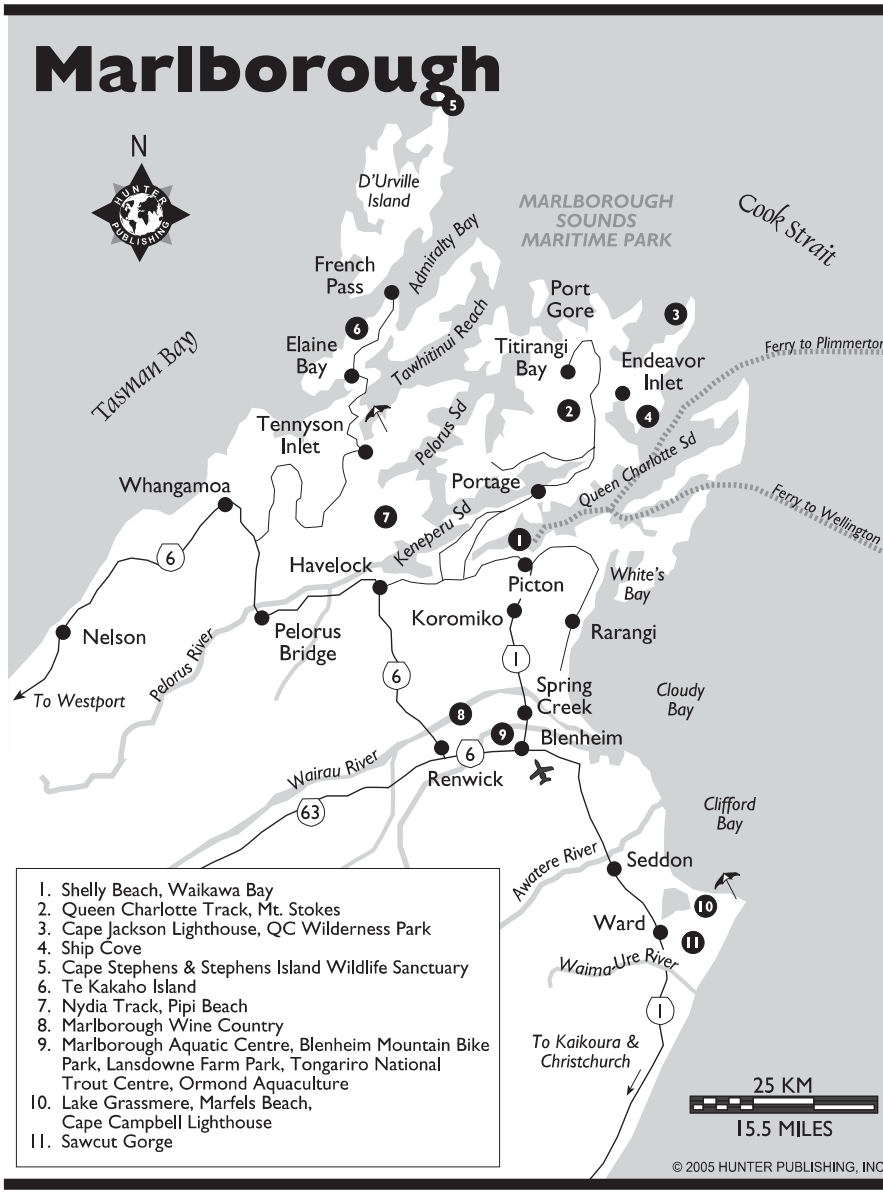
Where to Eat

The Paekakariki Café is open for brunch, lunch and dinner. There's indoor and outdoor dining and a blackboard menu. BYO. 7 Beach Road, ☎ 04-292-8860 ($).

Located in the Paekakariki Pub, **Next Door Restaurant & Bar** is a relative newcomer to the dining scene. It is open for brunch and dinner and has a broad menu ranging from pasta to lamb chops, and roast dinners on Sundays. 2 Beach Road, ☎ 04-292-8123 ($$).

Around the corner is **Il Gambero**, a cozy, welcoming spot with a wonderful Italian menu and matching wine list. Open for dinner from 5:30 pm and for late supper after 10 pm. 9a Wellington Road, ☎ 04-292-7040 ($$-$$$).

If you want to stuff yourself as full as possible and have great views while you're doing it, go to **Fisherman's Table**, on Main Road South, just past the turnoff for Paekakariki. There's another one in Wellington and one in Palmerston North ($$).


Marlborough
N
D'Urville Island
MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS MARITIME PARK
Cook Strait
Admiralty Bay
French Pass
Port Gore
Tasman Bay
Elaine Bay
Tawhitinui Reach
Titirangi Bay
Endeavor Inlet
Ferry to Plimmerton
Tennyson Inlet
Pelorus Sd
Whangamoa
Portage
Queen Charlotte Sd
Ferry to Wellington
Keneperu Sd
Havelock
Picton
White's Bay
Koromiko
Rarangi
Nelson
Pelorus River
Pelorus Bridge
To Westport
Spring Creek
Cloudy Bay
Blenheim
Wairau River
Renwick
Clifford Bay
Awatere River
Seddon
Ward
Waima-Ure River
To Kaikoura & Christchurch
1. Shelly Beach, Waikawa Bay
2. Queen Charlotte Track, Mt. Stokes
3. Cape Jackson Lighthouse, QC Wilderness Park
4. Ship Cove
5. Cape Stephens & Stephens Island Wildlife Sanctuary
6. Te Kakaho Island
7. Nydia Track, Pipi Beach
8. Marlborough Wine Country
9. Marlborough Aquatic Centre, Blenheim Mountain Bike Park, Lansdowne Farm Park, Tongariro National Trout Centre, Ormond Aquaculture
10. Lake Grassmere, Marfels Beach, Cape Campbell Lighthouse
11. Sawcut Gorge
25 KM
15.5 MILES
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South Island

Marlborough

Introduction

Wine, water and wilderness. Those are the buzzwords in Marlborough, one of the sunniest regions in New Zealand. Straddling the top of the South Island, Marlborough is the place where most tourists are introduced to the less-populated, slower-going "mainland" as they cross the Cook Strait from Wellington to Picton.

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Captain James Cook first arrived in 1769 and, on his three journeys around the world, chose the Queen Charlotte Sound (which he named after the wife of King George III) to visit five times – coming here more than any other place on the planet. Often, tourists arrive and feel that same draw to return. I know that I did. During my first four years in New Zealand, I spent over half of my time here. Until I began traveling for this book, Marlborough was my home.

1827 watercolor of Maori by Augustus Earle

Geographically, Marlborough encompasses the intricate Marlborough Sounds, the long flat Wairau plains and the hilly high country valleys of Awatere and Waihope. Three major rivers carve the bottomland of Marlborough: the Taylor, Opawa, and Wairau, all beginning in the mountains and terminating in the Pacific Ocean.

Did you know? As the Earth moves on the Alpine and Pacific faults, the rest of New Zealand rises slowly out of the water, the land masses of the Marlborough Sounds sink gently back into the sea.

Like most of the South Island, Marlborough doesn't have as strong a Maori influence as the North Island, but the Maori are believed to have inhabited the region for nearly 1,000 years. The biggest skirmish between Europeans and Maori has been named the Wairau Incident. There is a monument to it on SH1 near Koromiko/Spring Creek. (See the *Nelson* chapter, page 385, for details.) European settlement brought farming and whaling and, in the

1830s, the whaling station at Port Underwood was one of the largest in the world. Gold and antimony were mined sporadically and many of the walking tracks are leftovers from the mining era.

Tourism and agriculture (including wine) are the main activities and sources of revenue. It's nearly impossible to say Marlborough without saying Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, so popular is the wine here. As more and more grapes are planted to meet a global demand, it seems that the entire province is carpeted in vineyards. But that's not so, as you will see if you venture off the main routes, past the wineries, and explore what this province has tucked away in its hills, forests and rivers. The overseas popularity of New Zealand Greenshell mussels has given rise to a burgeoning aquaculture and processing industry, a wealthy addition to commercial fishing and salmon farming.

Getting Here

■ By Water

The **Interisland Line** operates a frequent ferry service for foot and vehicle passengers and has a fleet of three ships. Each offers a variety of facilities, including bars, cafés, children's play area and movie theater. Interisland line ferry prices are tiered, just like airlines, so it pays to book ahead. Fares for foot passengers begin at $25 one-way, vehicles at $105. The crossing takes about three hours. Bookings can be made through information centers, www.interislandline.co.nz or by calling ☎ 0800-802-802.

The **Bluebridge ferry**, the *Santa Regina*, sails between the North and South Islands twice daily and offers foot and vehicle passage. The *Santa Regina* also has restaurants, bars and entertainment areas, with the added bonus of long couches to stretch out on during night sailing. Fares are set ($40 per adult, $110 per car) and bookings are made directly with Bluebridge at www.bluebridge.co.nz, or by calling ☎ 0800-844-844.

■ By Air

Marlborough is served by three airlines – **Air New Zealand** (www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000) and **Origin Pacific** (www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302). They fly between Blenheim and the rest of the country, while **SoundsAir** offers flights between Picton and Wellington. Contact Sounds Air, www.soundsair.com, at the rail station in Picton or at ☎ 0800-505-505.

> **Tip:** If you are planning to travel in both directions across Cook Strait, do yourself a favor – fly SoundsAir one way and take the ferry the other, getting to see the Sounds from two different vantages.

■ By Train

The **TranzCoastal** originates in Christchurch at 7:30 each morning, arriving in Blenheim at 12:20 and Picton at 12:50 pm. The return service departs Picton at 1:40 pm and Blenheim at 2:10, arriving in Christchurch at 7 pm. Fares from Christchurch to Picton (or Picton to Christchurch) begin at $35. In Blenheim, the rail station is on

Grove Road and is the site of the information center; in Picton, the rail station is on Auckland Street, immediately across the street from the information center. Book through the information centers, www.tranzscenic.co.nz or by calling ☎ 0800-872-467.

■ By Car

The main highways entering Marlborough are SH63 from the West Coast, SH6 from Nelson, and SH1 from Christchurch. Blenheim is approximately 1½ hours from either Kaikoura or Nelson and four hours from Christchurch. Picton and Blenheim are about 25 minutes apart.

■ By Bus

The South Island in general, and Marlborough in particular, is serviced by **InterCity Coachlines** and a variety of smaller shuttle buses, including **Atomic Shuttles**, **East Coast Express**, **South Island Connections** and **Kahurangi Bus Lines**. There are also smaller companies that service specific areas, like **Abel Tasman Coaches** and **Hanmer Connection**. I think the best way to arrange for transport on any of them is to visit one of the information centers, as schedules and companies change frequently. As I was finishing up this chapter, two shuttle companies were merging into one and another had stopped service.

If you are traveling around the South Island with a bicycle and want to take it on a bus, book with one of the smaller shuttle companies… they'll guarantee a space for your bike. InterCity takes bikes on a space-available basis and it's at the discretion of the driver.

Information Sources

Destination Marlborough is the tourism board for this region and can be visited at www.destinationmarlborough.com.

Picton

More than just a port town, Picton is the jumping-off point for exploration of the Queen Charlotte Sound and Queen Charlotte Track, and a destination in its own right.

■ Information Sources

The **Visitor Information Centre** and **Department of Conservation** office are located in the same facility on Auckland Street, directly across from the train station and at the end of the car park for the ferry terminal. pvic@destinationmarlborough.com, ☎ 03 520-3113, fax 03-573-5021. For DoC information, ☎ 03-520-3002.

■ Adventures

On Water

Swimming

The public can use the outdoor pool at Queen Charlotte College when school is not in session – the Picton information center has a schedule of opening hours. Popular swimming beaches include **Shelly Beach** (at the foreshore) and **Waikawa Bay**.

> **Did you know?** The Marlborough Sounds, including the Queen Charlotte, Kenepuru and Pelorus, make up one-quarter of New Zealand's total coastline and are true "sounds" or flooded river beds.

By Kayak

The Marlborough Sounds are one of the nicest places in New Zealand to sea-kayak and they're not over crowded like the Abel Tasman. Marine life is abundant in the Sounds and, depending on season, you'll see little blue penguins, fur seals, dolphins, orca and rays as you paddle through the water. The bird life is extraordinary, including pied

and spotted shags, Australasian gannets and fluttering sheerwaters. While appearing calm, sea conditions in the Sounds can change quickly and be quite challenging. Guides are trained to read the weather and take you to appropriate places, so if you're not an experienced paddler, take a guided trip. Most day-trips are in the Grove Arm of the Queen Charlotte, a nicely protected, wildlife-rich area. Expect to paddle about 15 km (nine miles) on a day-trip.

Kayak Outfitters

The **Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company** is based on the foreshore in Picton and offers guided trips, as well as having kayaks and camping equipment for rent. They have one-day guided trips in both the Queen Charlotte (leaving from Picton) and Kenepuru Sounds (leaving from Portage, transport available). The Kenepuru trip includes a "mussel experience." Harvest some mussels and your guide cooks them up for lunch. Prices for day-trips, including a catered lunch, are $90 per person. For a quick introduction to kayaking or if you've got a few hours before the ferry, take a twilight paddle, three hours for only $50. They also offer three-day trips to the Outer Sounds ($445), where camping on remote beaches and eating gourmet meals cooked by the guide makes a paddling trip even more tempting. It's a great way to get away from just about everyone and to see the many moods of the Sounds. www.marlboroughsounds.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-6078, fax 03-573-8827.

Roger Reardon operates **Sea Kayak Adventure Tours** in Anakiwa, at the southernmost end of the Queen Charlotte Track. He provides transport for paddlers staying in Picton. Roger also offers multi-day trips and kayak/walk or kayak/mountain-bike options – paddle to Mistletoe Bay, have lunch and then walk or bike back to the base (or do the reverse, but if you're biking, the bit from Mistletoe Bay to Anakiwa is single-track at its best). Prices range from $75 (does not include lunch) for one day to $480 for multi-day trips. www.nzseakayaking.com, ☎/fax 03-574-2765.

Sounds Wild has guided single- to multi-day kayak trips in the Queen Charlotte, the Kenepuru and the Pelorus Sounds and also has kayaks for rent. This company is smaller than the others, but that's definitely a plus, as they personalize tours depending on the needs and experience of the group. Because they paddle all three Sounds, their flexibility is even greater. Prices range from $75 for a day-trip with catered lunch to $560 for a four-day trip. www.soundswild.com, ☎/fax 03-573-5577.

Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides leads one-day trips from Picton or Waikawa for $80 per person, including lunch and transport. In addition, they have two other interesting options. For $110 begin the day kayaking to Mistletoe Bay, then walk four hours on the Queen Charlotte track and finish up with a road bike ride back to Picton – a perfect way to fit three activities into one day. Or for $135, take a water taxi from Picton to a paddling destination higher in the Queen Charlotte Sound, paddle for the afternoon and then transfer back to Picton at the end of the day – a nice

option to see more of the area in a short amount of time. Multi-day trips in all three sounds are available upon request, and accommodation can be in either luxury lodges or camping. Contact them for details. www.marlboroughsoundsnz.com, Located at Picton Railway Station, Auckland Street. ☎ 03-520-3095, fax 03-520-3096.

By Boat

If you're aged 16 or over and want a quick buzz around the Queen Charlotte, consider a JetSki tour with **Steady's Adventures**. Nigel will take you on as short or long a trip as you want, but recommends a trip up to Endeavour Inlet for lunch. Tour prices begin at $100 for the first hour. www.travelmarlborough.com, 42 High Street, ☎ 573-8565.

Coming into the Marlborough Sounds, any boatie will be itching to drop anchor and stay for a few days and **Compass Charters** at the Waikawa Marina lets you do just that with a fleet of power- and sailboats for charter – bareboat or skippered. Their sailing fleet ranges from 26- to 45-foot boats and they sleep from four to eight. They also have two sailing catamarans that sleep up to eight and a power launch fleet that ranges from 30 to 45 feet, sleeping four to six. Looking at the convoluted landmasses and intricate weather patterns, I often think that I'd rather use a power boat to explore this region – an incredible thing for a sailor to say, but watch the yachts for any length of time and you'll see two boats headed the same direction on different tacks. www.compass-charters.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-8332 or 0800-101-332, fax 03-573-8587.

■ Boat Tours

You don't have to be a history buff to be fascinated by the lore of this region. Take a **Myths & Legends Eco Tour** with Pete Beech, a sixth-generation Marlburian. Pete can tell you all the stories and history of this one-time whaling and sealing region. He and his wife Takutai are well-versed in both European history and Maori legends. They offer a wide variety of tours around the Queen Charlotte, some including fishing. When I was finishing this chapter, they had just been awarded permits for dolphin watching and seal swimming. Give them a ring to see what tours are going on. ☎ 03-573-6891, beechpete@hotmail.com.

A great way to spend the day on the water is taking a **Mail Boat Trip**. While the Marlborough Sounds don't feel particularly remote when you're sitting in Picton, most of the people who live in the Sounds can only access their home by water… and only get mail and supplies delivered by boat. **Beachcomber Cruises** is contracted with New Zealand Post to deliver the mail, and invites passengers to join in the fun. Queen Charlotte Sound trips leave from Picton at 1:30 pm every day except Sunday; the Pelorus Sound mail run leaves from Havelock at 9:30 am on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. I think the best trip is on Fridays, touring the far reaches of the Pelorus Sound. Prices begin at $90 per person from Havelock, $62 from Picton. Children ride free. beachcomber@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-6175, fax 03-573-6176.

In addition to the mail boat, Beachcomber offers scenic cruises and water taxi services around the Queen Charlotte Sound (prices start at $38) as do

Cougar Line (from $48), www.queencharlottetrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-7925; and **Endeavour Express** (from $40), www.boatrides.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-5456.

Nellie the Scow is a great way to be introduced to Picton and the Sounds. This low-key trip around the harbor lasts an hour, is informative, fun and doesn't require booking ahead. Just get on board and go. Great for those times just before or after the ferry. Departs from the Picton Town Wharf at 9:30, 11:30, 1:30, 3:30 and 5:30. $20 for adults; $10 for under-16s. nelliescow@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 021-333-661.

Nellie Pedal Boats are on the foreshore in Picton and cost only $10 for a half-hour, $15 per hour. A nice way to spend a sunny afternoon and there's no need to book in advance. Contact through Nellie the Scow, nelliescow@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 021-333-661.

Diving

Divers World is located at Atlantis Backpackers in Picton and is a full-service PADI-accredited diving facility, offering daily trips into the Sounds (including shipwreck sites) and diving instruction. ☎ 03-573-7323.

Blenheim Dive Centre on Scott Street is also a PADI facility; they offer instruction, rental equipment and have a retail shop. They operate dive charters around the area. bdc@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-578-0331, fax 03-577-6066.

Fishing

There are plenty of fish swimming around in all that water and plenty of charters to help you find them. Dip your line in and pull up snapper, blue cod and terakihi; the Sounds are also home to paua, crayfish (rock lobster) and, of course, mussels. And keep in mind, you'll be fishing in sheltered waterways, so there's no open sea travel. Perfect if you have a tendency to be seasick on the ocean!

Ian Love owns and operates **Picton Launch Charters**; $50 gives you half a day of fishing with rods and bait supplied. He's been fishing in the Queen Charlotte for long enough to know where to find the fish and will even filet the ones you catch. ☎ 03-573-8558 or 025-358-364.

Sounds Connection has a brand new boat and goes out every afternoon. They can handle charter groups, but mostly cater to independent travelers. All gear is provided and prices start at $69 for a half-day. Full-day and charter trips are available by arrangement. www.soundsconnection.co.nz, 10 London Quay, ☎ 03-573-8843 or 0800-742-866, fax 03-573-7726.

On Foot

Captain Cook stayed in Ship Cove five times on his three voyages around the world; he planted gardens, tended to sick sailors and made friends with the local Maori. He also discovered scurvy grass there – if the sailors ate it, they didn't suffer from scurvy!

Queen Charlotte Track (QCT)

At 71 km (44 miles), this is the is the longest walking track in Marlborough and is one of the few in New Zealand where you can stay at lodges along the way. The track distance was 67 km (41

miles) before realignment, hence the confusion in some publications. The track stretches, meanders, climbs and descends almost the entire length of the Queen Charlotte Sound. There are magnificent examples of rata, kahikatea, rimu, matai and miro, as well as nikau, the southernmost growing palm and large stands of tree ferns. As with most NZ bush walks, if you keep your eyes and ears open, you'll see and hear tui, bellbirds, warblers, fantails and wood pigeons. While not an alpine track, the QCT does traverse varying terrain. Some of the most fantastic views can be had from the ridgeline between the Kenepuru and Torea Saddles, where you'll be rewarded with one after another. Most trampers travel from north to south and take four days to do the entire walk, carrying just a day pack, letting the water taxi deliver their large packs to accommodations along the way. Keen trampers may choose to combine the first two days and spend just three days on the track – certainly do-able, but keep in mind that you'll have three eight-hour days of walking. Because of the pack-transfer service and the comfortable accommodation along the way, the QCT has an unfair reputation of being an easy stroll. Keep in mind that it is longer than, and has more vertical climbing than, most of the Great Walks. The information center has a *Queen Charlotte Track Brochure* and there is a good website, www.qctrack.co.nz, that includes contact information for most of the operators on the track.

> **Did You Know?** The Queen Charlotte Track is based on a series of old bridle paths. The region was once heavily populated and farmed.

■ Logistics

From Picton, take a water taxi to Ship Cove. The three major companies, **Beachcomber, Cougar Line**, and **Endeavour Express** (for contact details, please see boat tour section, page 354, above) all offer basically the same services, but departure times and prices vary somewhat. Regardless of which company you choose, opt for the pack-transfer service – the boat moves your luggage from one lodge to the next, you carry just a day pack. Following an hour ride from Picton (during which you're likely to see dolphins, penguins, seals and numerous sea birds), you'll be dropped off at Ship Cove where your walk begins.

If you have a rented car, you'll need to store it while on the track. If you're staying in Picton the night before you leave and again the night of your return, ask at your accommodation. Otherwise, **Gateway Garage** (the BP Service Station) offers secure parking for a few dollars a day; 17 Auckland Street. ☎ 03-573-6105. Alternatively, **Sounds Storage Ltd**. offers covered vehicle storage. You can arrange directly with them, or leave your keys at the information center. Sounds Storage will transport your car for you and have it waiting when you finish your walk. ☎/fax 03-573-5136, 021-335-136.

> **Time Savers:** If sorting accommodation and water taxis seems a bit of a pain, contact either the Picton information center, Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company, or Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides. They can all put together packages for you. The two guiding companies even provide lunch the first day and arrange for a packed lunch on the others.

The Department of Conservation has placed kilometer markers every five km, beginning with 71 at the start. Take a photo of yourself at 71 and again at 1!

■ Where to Stay Along the QCT

All accommodations are accessible by water taxi and some, as noted, by road. While walking it is a popular activity, those not interested in the track can still enjoy staying in the Queen Charlotte area.

~ Cape Jackson ~

Queen Charlotte Wilderness Park is not on the Queen Charlotte Track, but is accessed from Ship Cove along the Captain Cook Trail. It's a six- to eight-hour walk through native and regenerating forest, taking in some huge stands of rimu and nikau palms. You can be dropped off by water taxi, but the walk is very enjoyable and beautiful. There are walking tracks on the property (one goes out to Cape Jackson Lighthouse, at the very tip of the Queen Charlotte Sound), diving and snorkeling in kelp forests, and horse trekking. Lodging is in the original homestead and a home-cooked, three-course dinner is included in the tariff (breakfast and lunch are available by arrangement or you can cook for yourself). Bookings are mandatory at this wonderful retreat. www.truenz.co.nz/wilderness, ☎ 03-579-9025.

The Wilderness Park is an interesting place. It had been intensively farmed since the 1860s. In 2002, land owner Ron Marriott donated 600 acres (93% of his property) to EBEX21, an Emissions/Biodiversity project, operated by Landcare Research (a Crown Research Institute). The land is the first commercial carbon sink in New Zealand and is being allowed to regenerate to natural forest. Travelers can visit the EBEX21 website, determine how much CO^2 they emit through their visit to and within New Zealand, and offset it by investing in the regenerating forest. www.ebex21.co.nz.

~ Endeavour Inlet ~

Rumor has it that **Resolution Bay Cabins** was once part of a commune. Now, these rustic cabins with bath and kitchen, snuggled under giant trees and edged by a beach, are available for short- or long-term stays. There is a café that bakes muffins every morning. Just under two hours from Ship Cove. ☎ 03-579-9411 ($-$$).

> **Inside advice:** If you take one of the morning water taxis, plan to stop at Resolution Bay for a muffin break.

At **Tawa Cove Lodge**, host Nigel Armstrong offers secluded, private accommodation with all meals included. There are three guest rooms, a large lounge and huge views of the cove. He's cut some nice walking tracks around his property and has logistically set benches and bush baths (outdoor bathtubs, heated by an open fire underneath) around the place. About four hours from Ship Cove. www.tawacove.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-8363 or 027-485-5424 ($$$$).

Furneaux Lodge is an icon in the Queen Charlotte Sound and the first-night destination of many walkers on the Queen Charlotte Track. The main lodge building, which was originally built as a holiday home, has an à la carte restaurant and full-service bar – a popular spot for Sounds locals. Accommodation ranges from private chalets (some newly constructed in 2003) to backpacker dorms. Deep in Endeavour Inlet, the property is set amid virgin forest, with its very own waterfall, just a half-hour into the bush. The

only espresso machine in the inlet, Internet access, kayaks, fishing gear, etc. are available. From Ship Cove, allow about five hours, including a lunch break. www.furneaux.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-8259 ($-$$$).

Ten minutes walk past Furneaux Lodge is **Endeavour Resort**, where simple accommodation ranges from backpacker hostels to motel units. They have a well-stocked shop and the relaxed atmosphere offers a great rest after tramping or fishing. endeavouresort@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-8381 ($-$$).

> **Historic interest:** Antimony, a mineral used in alloys and in medicines, was once mined in the hills behind Endeavor Inlet. At one time, over 400 miners and families lived here.

~ Punga Cove ~

The tar-paved twisting road from Linkwater goes as far as the Kenepuru Saddle, where it then heads around the Kenepuru Sound. You can drive to the accommodations in Punga Cove; from Picton, it's a bit over two hours.

Punga Cove Resort has all levels of accommodation, from backpacker hostels and a group lodge to private, secluded chalets. They also have a bar that serves simple meals and a full-scale à la carte restaurant that has the most spectacular views imaginable. Swimming pool, spa, Internet, BBQ, kayaks, the works. A new conference center and additional chalets were being built in 2003. www.pungacove.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-8561, fax 03-579-8080 ($-$$$$).

Mahana Homestead Lodge is just a bit farther along the inlet and offers bunk, twin and double rooms in the new lodge (2002) that sleeps a total of 12. You have the choice of cooking yourself or home-cooked meals (meat or vegetarian). It's a simple, friendly place to stay, with a fabulous deck and lounge that has great windows for gazing. There is also a big beach, kayaks and fishing gear. www.mahanahomestead.com, ☎ 03-579-8373 ($-$$).

For a night at grandma's, go another few steps to **Noeline's Homestay**. You'll have full use of the lounge and kitchen and with a maximum of only five people in twin rooms, you won't trip over very many others. Noeline has a maximum stay of two nights and offers a drink and cookies on arrival. Come on, how can you not want to go? Great views from (where else) the kitchen table. ☎ 03-579-8375 ($).

The **Bay of Many Coves Resort** was refurbished in 2003 from a simple fishing lodge to the most magnificent accommodation along the track. It's a tough little walk down from the QCT, but there are plans to tidy that up. Most people come by water taxi, which makes more sense, frankly. Once you get there, you'll want to stay and wear your dress-up clothes, not tramping gear. There is a shop, swimming pool, spa and brilliant restaurants. It's a nice option, and, if you don't want to walk the entire track, you could do a long first day to Punga, then come here the second day, spend a few nights, and take the water taxi out. www.bayofmanycovesresort.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-9771 or 0800-579-9771, fax 03-579-9777 ($$$-$$$$).

~ Torea Saddle ~

Walking seven to eight hours from the Kenepuru Saddle, the track comes out at Torea Saddle. For accommodation, turn to the right – these accommodations are in the Kenepuru Sound, a 1½-hour drive from Picton.

Inside advice: The walk from Kenepuru to Torea is absolutely my favorite day on the track. When I guided here, I couldn't believe how many people were afraid of this day. Yes, it's long, but you get into a good rhythm, and it offers the most spectacular views and glorious forest.

Portage Resort Hotel underwent a major facelift in 2001 and transformed itself from a tired bar and motel to an upmarket resort and conference center. There is accommodation for nearly every budget, starting with backpackers and working up to luxury suites. The only thing I don't like about Portage is its unfortunate location right on Kenepuru Road; I like to feel a little more remote when I'm in the Sounds. However, you're guaranteed to be treated well, your room will be clean, comfortable and modern, the food is great, and there is a nice wine list. www.portage.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-4309. ($-$$$$)

The **Portage Bay Shop** has backpacker accommodation in bunk and double rooms. They have a well-stocked shop and rent kayaks, sailboats, launches, JetSkis and mountain bikes. Located just beside the resort. www.portagecharters.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-4445, fax 03-573-4442 ($-$$).

A new hostel in 2003 is **De Bretts**, up the hill from Portage. Follow the yellow signs. With a maximum of only five guests, this is a nice, friendly option and you can still walk down the hill to have dinner at the resort. ☎ 03-573-4522 ($).

~ Lochmara Bay ~

I can honestly say that **Lochmara Lodge** is one of my favorite places in New Zealand. Shayne and Louise are the most welcoming hosts I've ever met and they have built backpacker accommodation at the homestead, four double rooms with bath and seven units with bath and kitchen – all with views of the bay. You must cook your own food (there is no restaurant or bar), but there are gas BBQs as well as kitchens. There is an enclosed spa that opens to the bush, countless hammocks, a volleyball court, and walks around the property. The access road to the track has made the approach friendly to mountain-bikers as well as trampers. www.lochmaralodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-4554 ($-$$$).

~ Other Options Along the QCT ~

Derrik and Jenny Foss offer a wonderful option for exploring the Queen Charlotte Track and Sound on ***Christopher Grey***, their "Tramp the Track" boat. $160 per person buys you three days voyaging, two nights accommodation on board, and continental breakfast. Get on board with all your gear (including mountain bikes) at the Picton Ferry Terminal, be transported to Ship Cove and begin walking. Each afternoon, Derrik picks you up at a designated spot and you spend the night anchored or moored in one of the bays of the Queen Charlotte Sound. You can choose to have your meals catered on the boat, at the lodges or cook yourself. Resume walking (or biking) the next morning. It's a great option for anyone, but especially for groups where one or more person may not want to walk the entire track, but still wants to be out there. *Christopher Grey*, a 52-foot motor sailer, was originally built as a fishing trawler and is equipped for 10 stay-aboard guests. Hot shower, full galley, the works. fosshome@ihug.co.nz, ☎ 027-444-6308 or 0800-287-267. Jenny and Derick also operate Milton Cottage, an accommodation with bath and kitchen in Picton.

~ Camping Along the Track ~

Camping at all DoC campsites along the QCT is currently $5 pp per night. There are honesty boxes at the sites, but this may change and campers will be required to purchase camp passes prior to walking the track. Please contact DoC in Picton for current status. ☎ 03-520-3002.

There's a DoC campsite at **Camp Bay**, about four hours from Endeavour Inlet, with fresh water and flush toilets, just five minutes from the shop at Punga Cove. This is a good tent-camping site and the water taxis will deliver your bag to the jetty.

Along the ridgeline between the Kenepuru and Torea Saddles are two DoC campsites, the **Bay of Many Coves** and **Black Rock**. They both have day-shelters, tent sites and long-drop toilets. From the Kenpuru Saddle, the Bay of Many Coves is about 2½ hours; from there, it's approximately another 2½ hours to Black Rock.

Cowshed Bay is the DoC site on the Kenepuru side at Torea Saddle. There are tent sites, toilets and water, and it's just a few minutes walk to the Portage Bay Shop and Portage Resort.

DoC manages camping and a simple cabin, with full kitchen facilities and indoor plumbing, at **Mistletoe Bay**. Drop in at the DoC information desk in Picton for booking Mistletoe Bay or ring DoC at ☎ 03-520-3002.

From Mistletoe Bay, it's about three hours to **Davies Bay**, where there is another DoC campsite, with fresh water and long-drop toilets.

> **Did you know?** The black on the beech trees is not from fire. It's a sooty mould. And the pinhead-sized golden droplets hanging from threads through the bark? That's honeydew – produced as a by-product from a scale insect that lives just beneath the bark. Gently touch your finger to a droplet and then place it on your tongue. You'll see why it's a favorite food for the bellbirds, tui and (unfortunately) German wasps.

Local Hikes

Pick up a copy of ***Picton By Foot***, a walking tour map, from the information center. Depending on how much time you have, take a walk from the Picton marina out to The Snout, a round-trip of about four hours that passes through dense bush and along the ridgeline, offering views of the harbor and Queen Charlotte Sound. If you happen to be visiting on a Tuesday or Sunday, take a picnic and watch the local yacht races from the end of the point. The map also outlines some shorter options, great for filling in a little time and getting some exercise before or after a ferry trip across Cook Strait.

The Tirohanga Track begins with a 45-minute climb from Newgate Street to the Hilltop View. This is a great spot to photograph Picton and its harbor. Continue on for another 45 minutes and come out in Essons Valley, with the option of either walking out to Garden Terrace or up to either Humphries or Barnes Dam. Both of the dam walks can be accessed from Garden Terrace and are gently graded, well-maintained paths.

Guided Walk Options

Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company focuses on the Queen Charlotte Track and offers four- and five-day guided walk options ($1,150-$1,400), as well as a paddle-and-walk (two days of each for $1,150), or the Ultimate Sounds Adventure – one day walking, one day kayaking and one day mountain biking ($430 with backpacker accommodation, but can be upgraded). The five-day guided walk is my favorite – spend two nights at Portage and, on the fourth day, kayak around the Kenepuru Sound. You don't miss any of the track and you get time on the water. They also offer a Freedom Walk, making all of your accommodation and transport arrangements for you ($460-$550). www.marlboroughsounds.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-6078.

Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides has the broadest range of walk options in the Marlborough Region. Juliet Jordan and Steve Gibbons own the company and are often the guides on trips to the Queen Charlotte, Nydia, Nelson Lakes, Sawcut Gorge, the Heaphy, and beyond. On the Queen Charlotte, they offer one- , four- and five-day options ($130-$1,245) with a range of accommodation levels and upgrades available. You can do all three sports (paddle, walk and cycle, $110) in one day, or choose a four-day kayak-and-walk (two days of each for $960). They're the one to call if you want something out of the ordinary or want to get into the backcountry. They also offer walking tours of the wine country. ☎ 03-520-3095, fax 03-520-3096, www.marlboroughsoundsnz.com.

On Bikes

The **Queen Charlotte Track** is New Zealand's longest single track and is open for bikes along its entire length from March 1 through November 30. But during the busy summer season (December 1-February 28) bikes are not allowed on the section between Ship Cove and Kenepuru Saddle. See preceding pages for a description of the track and transport options.

Mountain-bike rental is available through **Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company** and **Steady's Adventures** (see *Adventures on Water*, page 352-55, for contact details).

If you only have one day and want to do some mountain biking, take your bike by water taxi to Waterfall Bay. Ride the track to Anakiwa – single track at its finest – and then the road back to Picton.

In the Air

In addition to commuter fights between Koromiko (just outside Picton) and Wellington, **SoundsAir** offers three different scenic flights around Marlborough. Fares per person range from $100 to $220 and all flights have a minimum of two passengers. www.soundsair.co.nz, in the Picton train station on Auckland Street, ☎ 03-520-3080.

Watchable Wildlife

Dan and Amy Engelhaupt, the owners of **Dolphin Watch Marlborough**, are both marine biologists and, from their base in Picton, explore the Queen

Charlotte Sound, happily sharing their abundant knowledge of marine and bird life. All trips include a guided walk on Motuara Island, a predator-free bird sanctuary and home to the rare South Island saddleback, South Island bush robin, and Maud Island frog. Little blue penguins (left) also make their home on the island, as do tui, wood pigeons, bellbirds and pied and spotted shags. On the way to Motuara, you will likely see shags, penguins, fluttering sheerwaters, Australasian gannets, New Zealand fur seals and, depending on the season, dusky, hector and/or bottlenose dolphins. If the weather cooperates, Dan and Amy lead a bird-watchers' trip, including a visit to White Rocks, one of two places in the world (the other is also in the Marlborough Sounds) to find king shag – among the largest cormorants known. Prices begin at $70. www.dolphinwatchmarlborough.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-8040.

■ Where to Stay

> **Warning:** There are dozens of accommodation options in Picton, but be forewarned, the town can be booked solid in the summer. Call the information center for available accommodation *at least* a day or two before arriving.

Not quite in Picton, but just a quick boat ride away is **The Lazy Fish**. This fabulous place began life as a backpackers hostel, but has grown into an upscale, magnificent place to chill out. Accommodation for a maximum of eight is in four cabins, each with its own terrace, outdoor bath, hammock and candles. The cabins are just lovely, as is the central lounge and courtyard. Photos from owner Chris' global travels adorn the walls. There is a resident chef and all meals are provided. Minimum two nights stay. www.lazyfish.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-5291 ($$$$).

Picton

The wrap-around decks at **Karaka Point Lodge** offer magnificent views of the Sounds. There are two king rooms with en-suite bathroom and plans to expand and build a third as well as a private guest lounge. Dinner, made with simply prepared fresh Marlborough produce, is available by request, but a good option is to bring back some fresh food, plus a bottle of wine, then just sit outside and relax. www.karakapointlodge.co.nz, 312 Port Underwood Road, ☎ 03-573-7700, fax 03-573-5444 ($$$$).

Laurel makes **Lincoln Cottage** a wonderful place to stay. She seems to know just how much interaction guests want, and is authentically happy to see each person arrive. The cottage is a bed-and-breakfast with bath and kitchen. Laurel can offer lots of advice on how to spend time while in Picton and Marlborough. www.pictonstay.com, 19 Lincoln Street, ☎ 03-573-5285 ($$-$$$).

Milton Cottage has a bath and kitchen in a quiet residential neighborhood. There are two bedrooms but they only accept single-party bookings, so you won't have to share this little paradise with anyone but your traveling companions. There is a sun-drenched deck, a BBQ, TV, music, everything to make it a perfect base for exploring the area. I'd plan to stay more than one day, unpack and unwind. (Jenny and Derick also operate *Christopher Grey*, the "Tramp the Track" boat. See page 359 for details.) fosshome@ihug.co.nz, 27B Milton Terrace, ☎ 03-573-5466, fax 03-573-5188 ($$$).

Palm Haven has got to be one of the best values around. It's a B&B with three guest rooms downstairs and one up. Choose from a single, double, or triple, two with en-suite bathroom. Peter and Dae are delightful, easy to talk to, and Dae claims she can teach anyone to understand cricket in five minutes, so that's reason enough to stay. It's a top accommodation but they've kept their rates reasonable so you don't need deep pockets to enjoy their great deck! palmhaven@xtra.co.nz, 15A Otago Street, ☎ 03-573-5644, fax 03-573-5645 ($$).

The **Sennen House** has four bed-and-breakfast apartments and is listed under the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. All units in this circa-1886 Colonial villa have private entrances and verandas. In place of a formal breakfast, guests are provided with a breakfast hamper. Imogen and Richard were formerly landscape architects, so the grounds are lovely and there is a plan for walking tracks through the adjacent bush. You can't find many better places from which to explore the Sounds. www.sennenhouse.co.nz, 9 Oxford Street, ☎ 03-573-5216 ($$$$).

For simple, clean and friendly accommodation, try **Aldan Lodge Motel**. It's a basic motel offering studio and family units. There is a heated indoor swimming pool and breakfast is available. 86 Wellington Street, ☎ 03-573-6833, fax 03-573-6091($$)

The **Ancient Mariner** is Picton's only "hotel." The rooms have balconies offering superb views of the harbor, a good restaurant on the top floor, and a beautiful outdoor swimming pool. As the closest accommodation to the departure point for the water taxis, this is a fine place to stay before or after your walk on the Queen Charlotte. The Ancient Mariner has new owners as of 2003 with plans for remodeling. www.ancientmariner.co.nz, corner of Waikawa Road and Wellington Street, ☎ 03-573-7002 or 0800-991-188, fax 03-573-7727 ($$$).

The **Broadway Motel** has recently undergone a major renovation and must be one of the best values for lodging around – 18 units with bath and kitchen, all having private balconies or courtyards. www.broadwaymotel.co.nz, 113 High Street, ☎ 03-573-6563 ($$).

Jasmine Court has studio and one- and two-bedroom suites with bath and kitchen. All are non-smoking, modern, clean and very spacious, with all the extras. All in all, it's probably the nicest of the motels in town. www.jasminecourt.co.nz, 78 Wellington Street, ☎ 03-573-7110 or 0800-421-999, fax 03-573-7211 ($$$).

Offering both motel and guesthouse accommodation is **Marineland**. They have a wide range of room options, a swimming pool, car storage and dinner by arrangement. marineland@xtra.co.nz, 26 Waikawa Road, ☎ 03-573 6429 or 0508 742 866, fax 03-573 7634 ($$).

For a change of pace, look into **Waikawa Bay Seafront Apartments**. Located at the Waikawa Marina, these units with bath and kitchen sleep up to six and make an ideal accommodation for a family or group of friends. Each one has private laundry facilities, an open-plan living area and two terraces. There is also a spa and salt-water pool, plus conference facilities available. www.visitpicton.com, at the Waikawa Marina, ☎ 03-573-5220 ($$$).

Atlantis Backpackers has a heated indoor swimming pool. They are also home of the local dive shop. It's a rather large accommodation, with some gigantic dorm rooms, but the full range is there, including twins, doubles and

small dorms. Free breakfast. www.atlantishostel.co.nz, corner Auckland Street and London Quay, ☎ 03-573-7390, fax 03-573-8876 ($).

Just before you get to Waikawa Bay is **Bayview Backpackers**. This is a good option, just a bit out of town and strolling distance to the beach at Waikawa (where there is a little shop and café). In 2000, they expanded to a second facility and offer free kayak and bicycle use. bayview.backpackers@xtra.co.nz, 318 Waikawa Road, ☎ 03-573-7668 ($).

If you're traveling on a budget, but still want privacy, stay at **Sequoia Lodge**. Danny and Katsuko used a lot of thought when designing this backpacker's hostel – there is a separate TV lounge, a large kitchen (they bake fresh bread daily and make soup in the winter), and twin and double rooms with en-suite bathroom, in addition to mixed and female-only dorms. www.sequoialodge.co.nz, 3a Nelson Square, ☎ 03-573-8399 ($).

If you'd rather have vegetable soup and apple crumble than fresh bread, and if you like hanging out in a hammock under a big tree, then pick **The Villa**, just a few steps away from the ferry terminal. This old villa has been designed as a retreat for the traveler, offering doubles with en-suite bathrooms, twins and dorms. They have a wonderful garden, and have recently expanded to include the house next door. www.thevilla.co.nz, 34 Auckland Street, ☎ 03-573-6598 ($-$$).

Alexander's Holiday Park has the full range of options, from tent sites to cabins with baths. There are some pleasant sites among the trees and the kitchen/laundry/shower facilities are all clean. A very friendly place. alexanders.picton@xtra.co.nz, Canterbury Street, ☎ 03-573-6378 or 0800-474-2866 ($).

Right in town across from the Picton marina is **Blue Anchor Holiday Park**. Well-appointed tourist apartments and cabins; tent and powered campervan sites. www.blueanchor.co.nz, 78 Waikawa Road, ☎ 03-573-7212 ($-$$).

Farther down Waikawa Road at the turnoff for the Waikawa Marina is **Parklands Marina Holiday Park**. Another clean, well-maintained facility with tourist apartments, cabins, tent and camper sites. Good playground and swimming pool. 10 Beach Road, Waikawa, ☎ 03-573-6343 or 0800-111-104 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

Like most small towns in New Zealand, Picton has its share of takeout and pub food. But don't let that fool you… Picton also has very good eating. I vacillate between Le Café and Espresso House as my favorites.

Cibo has café food; their dinners are very tasty and often innovative. I really like their fish. They also have good breakfasts, make great coffee and offer sidewalk service. Perfect place to people-watch. 33 High Street, ☎ 03-573-7171 ($$-$$$).

Le Café is on the waterfront and there can't be many better ways to spend a morning than sitting at one of the patio tables, drinking a latte and watching the ferries come in and the kayaks go out. Breakfast is a proper affair here, and the foccacia sandwiches are one of the best lunch values around. Peter, the Swiss owner and chef, disproves the assumption that no one in New Zealand knows

how to bake proper sweets, nor does he let you down at dinner. There is always fresh fish on the menu and often a wonderful venison dish. London Quay, ☎ 03-573-5588 ($$-$$$).

Espresso House doesn't have a harbor view, but it's got a garden out back instead. When you order your meal at the counter you can watch what's going on in the big kitchen. The menu here changes often, but is usually inspired by Asia and the Pacific Rim, often with hints of Thai. This is the most likely place to find some innovative vegetarian food. 58 Auckland Street, ☎ 03-573-7112 ($$-$$$).

The **Jolly Roger** can't compete with the others for food, but the location at Waikawa Marina is worth the sacrifice. This is a great spot to have some pub food, drink a couple of beers and watch the yachts. ☎ 03-573-6585 ($$).

Blenheim, Renwick & the Wine Country

Blenheim is definitely the commercial center for the region and has the requisite shops and service providers. It's about 20 to 25 minutes south of Picton on SH1, which takes you through Koromiko, Tua Marina (stop at the cheese factory) and Spring Creek. For an alternative scenic trip, you can drive out Waikawa Road, which becomes Port Underwood Road. The road is paved until just past Whatamango Bay (where there is a good spot to stop for a picnic and some bird-watching) and then becomes gravel until you reach White's Bay. It's then paved again and climbs a hill (great photo stop) and drops into Rarangi Beach. The drive on Port Underwood Road from Picton to Blenheim takes a good two hours. Stop at the information center and ask how the road is… sometimes it gets very rough and corrugated.

■ Information Sources

A good local map is available for free at the information center, located in the historic railway station on State Highway 1. mvic@destinationmarlborough.com, ☎ 03-577-8080, fax 03 577-8079.

There is a **DoC** office on Gee Street in Renwick, ☎ 03-572-9100.

Perry's Book & Map Shop has a great selection of street, tramping, and topographical maps of the area. 4 Arthur Street, Blenheim, ☎ 03-578-3195.

■ Adventures

On Water

For swimming, go to the **Marlborough Aquatic Center** on Kinross Street at Stadium 2002, where there is both an indoor and outdoor pool. ☎ 03-577-8300.

White's Bay, just North of Rarangi on Port Underwood Road, is a popular surf and swimming beach and has a surf club complete with showers. It's also a great place to camp and hike.

AUTHOR'S PICK

The **Wairau River**, behind Renwick, is a classic South Island braided river and is the region's best choice for splashing around.

Access from Highway 6 or at the end of Giffords, Jeffries, Pauls or Boyces Roads.

One of the loveliest ways to spend a few hours is aboard **Marlborough's *River Queen***, wining, dining and cruising on the Opawa River. New to Blenheim in 2002, this replica paddleboat has daily lunch, afternoon tea and dinner cruises along the historic shipping routes. The food is cooked on a stone grill and there is a full-service bar. Cruises cost $19 per adult for lunch or dinner (plus food) and the afternoon tea cruise is $22, including food. www.riverqueencruise.com, ☎ 03-577-5510.

No one swims in the Taylor River as it weaves through Blenheim, but there is a walking path alongside it and it's a pleasant place to wander and have a picnic.

Fishing

If fly fishing is your thing, then give Tony and Bridget Orman a call. Their home, **Rivers Edge**, is near the bank of the Wairau River, just outside of Blenheim near Rarangi. With only two guest rooms, it's a small, personalized fishing lodge and, with a plethora of rivers in easy driving distance, this is a perfect place to spend some time. Tony's been fishing the rivers of New Zealand for four decades and seems to know every rock where the fish might be hiding; he's happy to take you to the salt water, too. www.riversedge.co.nz, ☎ 03-570-5666 ($$$-$$$$).

On Foot

The **Waikakaho/Cullen Creek Walkway** is an old goldminers trail and connects Tuamarina to Linkwater. There are groves of pines growing in plantations, but also regenerating forest. This full-day walk is best done with transport at each end, or as an in-and-out from either side. If I'm going in and out the same way, I go from Tuamarina, because the forest on that side is more interesting.

The beach at Rarangi is a great walking beach, with lots of driftwood.

Walking tracks lace the golden hills of the **Wither Hills Farm Park**, on the southern side of Blenheim. This is a favorite spot for locals to grab a bit of exercise before or after work. Walk options are outlined in the Marlborough District Council map, *Walk the Withers*. They range from 30 minutes to three hours. Maps are available at the Blenheim information center.

The **Richmond Ranges** are full of walking tracks and no one seems to know about them. But they're there, and DoC in Renwick and Picton have maps. Pick up a *North Bank Road* brochure, which outlines walks as short as 30 minutes around the Onamalutu Reserve. Get yourself a *ParkMap* from DoC, take advantage of the huts in the area and spend a few days – one of the most popular options is to the summit of Mt. Richmond, Lake Chalice and across the Wakamarina to Butchers Flat.

> **Did you know?** The rangiora plant is also called bushman's toilet paper. The white underside of its leaves is very soft and absorbent!

Guided Walks

Nettie Barrow and Jane Craighead from **Trails of Marlborough** are keen trampers and will happily guide you on just about any track in the region. From Nettie's home at the Straw Lodge you can see Mt. Fishtail and Mt. Riley in the Richmond Ranges – inspiration out the back door! www.trailsofmarlborough.co.nz, ☎ 03-572-9769.

On Bikes

For biking in the wine region, refer to *Adventures in Wine*, pages 368 ff.

Head up Taylor Pass Road and do a few spins around the **Blenheim Mountain Bike Park**, a custom-built route that weaves around the Wither Hills. It's open during daylight hours and has tracks for all levels and abilities.

Walking options that are also challenging fun on bikes include the **Wakamarina** and the **Waikakaho**. Get a map from DoC.

You can rent bikes at **Spokesman Cyclery**, www.themegastore.co.nz, ☎ 03-578-0433, and at the information center, ☎ 03-577-8080.

On Horses

For a one- to four-hour ride around a high country farm, with fabulous views of the area, contact the Westenras at **High Country Horse Treks**. They offer rides for all skill levels, with prices ranging from $30 to $100. Located up Taylor Pass Road. Phone first for directions. ☎ 03-577-9424.

On the Farm

You need to turn your watch back 40 years when you drive into **Lansdowne Farm Park**. David and Margaret Dillon live on a classic 1960s Kiwi family farm in the Wairau Valley. There are cows to be milked, pigs to be fed, eggs to be gathered and sheep to be sheared – it's a nostalgia trip for adults and a new experiences for kids. David will tour you around the 170 acres in a 1955 Series 1 Land Rover, while Margaret cooks up great farm food using fresh produce from the garden. Farm tours range cost $5-$45 per person and accommodation is available with B&B in the house and the two cottages. Backpackers are invited to partake in a "work to stay" program. www.lansdowne.co.nz, ☎ 03-572-2838, fax 03-572-2828 ($-$$$).

Just across the street from the entrance to Lansdowne is **Leighvander Cottage**, a working lavender farm. Elsie and Brian Hall grow 160 varieties of the herb and have a replica 14th-century-style still for extracting essential oils. They breed their own plants and welcome visitors to stroll around the gardens and visit their shop.Open 10 am to 4 pm, November through April. Book ahead for tours and demonstrations. ☎ 03-572-2851, fax 03-572-2841.

The **Tongariro National Trout Centre** is run by DoC and has a trout-spawning stream, underwater viewing chamber and interpretive displays. Definitely worth a stop, and it's free! Three km (less than two miles) south of Turangi. ☎ 07-386-9243.

Ormond Aquaculture Ltd. is just two streets and a few gates down from Leighvander Cottage. Here Peter and Coreen Whilheimus operate the only certified organic-salmon farm in New Zealand. They raise quinnat and

sockeye in fresh-water ponds and do all their own processing and smoking. They also raise freshwater crayfish. This is a really interesting alternative to the salt-water salmon farming in the Marlborough Sounds. salmon@clearwatercrayfish.co.nz. Call ahead for a tour, ☎ 03-572-2770, fax 03-572-2768.

> **Local products:** The **Marlborough Farmers' Market** was the first farmers' market on the South Island and is held on Sunday mornings in the spring and summer months at the corner of Alabama and Maxwell Roads. Definitely worth a stop, with lots of great food and drinks and hot, cooked breakfast.

For Kids

Paintball Adventure Challenge is just outside of Blenheim, near the Omaka Aerodrome. While there is no age limit, smaller children need adult supervision. Omaka Aerodrome Road. ☎ 03-579-4080.

In the Air

The **Marlborough Aero Club** lets you choose for how long and far away from the base at the Omaka Aerodrome you want to fly, based on an hourly rate of about $200 (you can go for as little as a few minutes). The club also offers charter flights to any licensed aerodrome in New Zealand. ☎ 03-578-5073.

Every two years (2003 was the last one) over Easter Weekend, the sky above Marlborough comes alive with **Classic Fighters**. It's an air show and more – recreating battle scenes from WWI and WWII. On the ground, displays and performances round out the experience. www.classicfighters.co.nz.

With Wine

> **Tip:** The second Saturday in February is the **BMW Wine, Food and Jazz Festival**, the largest and longest-running wine festival in New Zealand. You can try over 150 wines from more than 40 wineries, eat local foods and listen to great music. It all starts on Friday night with a gourmet dinner and lasts through Sunday when many of the wineries open their doors to day-long parties of music and food. www.winemarlborough.net.nz

I could write an entire book on adventures in wine in Marlborough, but I'd have to change some names and then leave the country. Marlborough didn't get its reputation as "The Gourmet Province" for nothing. Herbaceous Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc is what put New Zealand on the wine-making map. Marlborough is the largest wine-producing area in New Zealand, but quantities are still small compared with the giant growers of other countries – most of the wineries here are still considered "boutique." More than 60 wineries have planted in the rocky soil that comes from this river-rich area.

Sauvignon Blanc was just the beginning. The wineries here make other whites (including Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, and aromatics like Riesling and Gewurztraminer), as well as reds (Pinot Noir, Cabernet, Merlot and Malbec). Marlborough is also the bubbles capital of New Zealand. Most of the wineries are located around the small village of Renwick, but there is a lot of expan-

sion to the east (the Awatere Valley) and west (the Waihope and Wairau valleys). Maps of the wineries are available at the information center and at most accommodations. While very few wineries charge for tastings, if they do, the fee is usually credited toward anything you might buy.

When you visit a "cellar door" or tasting room, ask questions. No one is going to think you're stupid and the more interest you show, the more interesting experience you'll have.

Unlike wine regions in other countries, going to a winery often means spending a few hours or the day – doing a little tasting, buying a bottle and sitting outside to enjoy it. Eating your way around the wineries seems to have become a bit of a sport in Marlborough and a number of the wineries have restaurants well worth a visit. Spitting is always acceptable and encouraged for proper tasting, but if you prefer to swallow it's best to have a driver, and there are plenty of options in that regard.

Wine Tour Options

Barry's Wine Tours is the way to go if you want a personalized tour. He's more liable to take you to the smaller, off-the-beaten-path wineries and introduce you to the owners and winemakers than the other guided trips. Barry also offers farm tours and general sightseeing in the area. Prices begin at $50. www.yp.co.nz/for/marlboroughwinetrails, ☎ 03-578-1494 or 025-264-4704.

DeLuxe Tours travel a set route each day, which probably suits the average tourist quite well. The groups can be large, though, which is a turnoff to me. The tour is $45 per person and can be booked through www.deluxetravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-578-5467.

Good value: Marlborough Travel has guided tours as well as the **Wine Line** – buses begin at the Blenheim rail station and follow a circuit route around 20-some wineries, allowing you to get off and on wherever you wish. The bus returns an hour later to pick you up and drop you off at the next stop. $45 per person. www.marlboroughtravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-577-9997 or 0800-990-800.

Half- and full-day tours with **The Sounds Connection** seem to have a more lively, party atmosphere than the other companies. Individuals can join a tour, and larger groups can be accommodated. Depending on interests, stops at different wineries are arranged to suit. Prices range from $45 for a half-day to $55 for a full-day (lunch is extra). www.soundsconnection.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-7726.

Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides offers walking and cycling wine tours. www.marlboroughsoundsnz.com, ☎ 03-520-3095 fax 03-520-3096

Another great option for touring the wine region is by bike. Because many of the wineries are located within a 20-km (12-mile) circuit on flat ground, cycling is an exceptional way to get around. There's a new bike route established in 2003; you can pick up a map or just follow the signs.

Supported bike rentals and tours are offered by **Wine Tours By Bike**, operated from Antares Homestay. Half-day and full-day rentals are available, and they'll pick you up at your accommodation, transport you to the bikes and then deposit you back home at the end of the day. www.marlborough.co.nz/antares, Jeffries Road, ☎ 03-572-9951, fax 03-572-9940.

Regardless of whether you join a tour or ride a bike, there are, in my mind, some not-to-miss wineries. However, because many winery restaurants are open for evening dining only on the weekends and change their hours depending on the season, if you want an evening meal, it pays to book ahead.

Get your feet wet at **Montana Brancott Winery**. Tours are run every half-hour from 10 am until 3 pm and cost $7 per adult. There is also a large retail shop, cellar door tasting area with hard-to-find wines, and a wine education center. The restaurant is open seven days a week from 10 am to 5 pm. State Highway 1, Riverlands, ☎ 03-578-2099, Restaurant ☎ 03-577-5775.

> **Did you know?** Montana is New Zealand's largest-producing winery. They were the first to plant grapes in Marlborough, back in 1973. The locals scoffed.

My Favorite Wineries

Allan Scott Wines & Estate is a family-owned and -operated top-of-the-line kind of place. The Scotts are genuine folks and make wonderful wines. **Twelve Trees Restaurant at Allan Scott** offers indoor and outdoor dining on the patio. Lunch is served every day and dinner on the weekends. Jacksons Road. Winery, ☎ 03-572-9054; restaurant, ☎ 03-572-7123.

Bladen must be one of the most laid-back and friendly wineries I've ever visited. The cellar door is outside and the resident dogs and cats all have grape-inspired names. They make a range of wines, but focus on aromatic whites. Conders Bend Road, ☎ 03-572-9417.

Cellier LeBrun made its name with Méthode Traditionnelle sparkling wines. Go for a winery tour, get to know how they make it and see the underground cellar. Terrace Café is the restaurant here and a great place for breakfast, lunch or dinner on the weekend. Terrace Road, ☎ 03-572-8859.

Clifford Bay Estate has brunch, lunch, wine, and the best chocolate desserts that I've had at a winery. Sitting outside in the walled courtyard drinking coffee and eating chocolate after an afternoon tasting wine… how much better can it get? 26 Rapaura Road, ☎ 03 572 7132.

Forrest Estate is one of the few wineries that realize some wine tourists travel with children. John and Brigid Forrest invite you to bring a picnic and eat by the lake, play volleyball, enjoy some outdoor activities with your kids. John has been named winemaker of the year more than once, so you'll be drinking some of the best, while you relax in their gardens. Try the dessert wine, as well as everything else. 19 Blicks Road, ☎ 03-572-9084.

Fromm is one of the most respected wineries in Marlborough, with some of the nicest reds in New Zealand. A great place, great wine and a commitment to quality. Godfrey Road, ☎ 03-572-9355.

Grove Mill is a must visit for the wine tastings, the art gallery and the vine library – grapes of different varieties growing side-by-side, allowing you to compare what you're drinking before you drink it. They also have a sensory evaluation where you can take a whiff of the different aromas that make up Sauvignon Blanc and train your nose to find them in the wine. Grove Mill makes an environmental statement by regenerating a native wetland and re-utilizing all their winery waste water. Waihopai Valley Road, ☎ 03-572-8200.

Herzog Winery has been called New Zealand's only European dining experience. Therese and Hans Herzog had a winery and Michelin star-rated restaurant in Switzerland before immigrating. They brought traditional European winemaking – big, heavy reds – with them. The restaurant has impeccable service, superior food, a gigantic wine cellar, a cigar room and fantastic views of the Richmond Ranges. Herzog's is not for the budget traveler, but well worth breaking the piggy bank. Wine quantities are too small for a cellar-door tasting facility, but come for dinner and be rewarded. 81 Jeffries Road, ☎ 03 572 8770.

Highfield Estate is perched on a hill and is a great spot to drink in the views with a bottle of wine while enjoying lunch or an afternoon platter. While the food is just as good if you eat it inside, there's nothing better than al fresco and they offer a huge range of wine for tasting. Brookby Road, ☎ 03-572-9244.

Hunter's is a landmark winery and restaurant in Marlborough. There is often an artist in residence, and gardeners will really enjoy the native plantings around the place. Open every day for lunch, weekends for dinner. Hunter's sponsors the annual Hunter's Garden Marlborough – a Spring weekend devoted to the garden. ☎ 03 572 8489.

Lawson's Dry Hills is a small family winery, close to town and has an incredibly friendly staff and dependable, excellent wines. 238 Alabama Road, ☎ 03-578-7674.

Spy Valley calls itself a New Millineum Company… young and energetic, they want to be different. A monstrous new winery built in 2003 and a name taken from the local satellite communication monitoring station just up the valley promises an interesting future. In addition to very nice wines, Spy Valley also makes olive oil. Waihopai Valley Road, ☎ 03-572-9840.

Wairau River Wines is my favorite place to go for lunch in the winter. It's in a mud brick building and has a roaring fire and a blackboard menu. The outdoor seating makes it a summer favorite, too. Rapaura Road, ☎ 03-572-9800.

Whitehaven gets the award for being the winery closest to town. It shares a building with **Dodson's**, a brewery located in an historic brewery building. Both offer seven-day-a-week service and indoor and outdoor dining. 1 Dodson Street. Whitehaven, ☎ 03-572-7588; Dodsons. ☎ 03-577-8348.

Cork & Keg. It's not a winery or a restaurant, but it has served as my neighborhood pub for quite awhile now. It's a "Cheers" sort of a place, where locals and tourists mingle in an old English Pub and drink the micro-brewed beer and cider. Meals are available, and it's hard to beat a platter of nachos on Friday night after work. A good change of pace from wine, too, and you'll likely be having a beer with someone who made the wine you tasted earlier in the day. A must stop; tell 'em I sent you. Inkerman Street, ☎ 03-572-9328.

In Food

If you're not happy just sitting back and letting someone else do all the cooking, Marlborough is still the right place. Try one of the cooking schools:

Hotel d'Urville has a demonstration kitchen and organizes cooking courses, including "Cook's Discovery," where your group ventures into the province, gathers food from the producers and brings it back to the kitchen for preparation. They also have a cooking school for kids aged 8-14 over school holidays. A great activity! www.durville.co.nz, ☎ 03-577-9945.

Depending on the time of year, **Herzog Winery** offers a range of cooking courses, including their popular "Cooking for Guests." You can also join in on a "Kitchen Confidential" and work with the chefs to prepare the food for the restaurant. Check the website for current offerings. www.herzog.co.nz, ☎ 03-572-8770

■ Where to Stay

In Blenheim

Copper Beech House is an informal B&B housed in what was The Old Mercy convent. Singles, twins and doubles, some with en-suite bathroom. moian@xtra.co.nz, 73 Maxwell Road, ☎ 03-579-3399, fax 03-579-3398 ($$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART

Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.

$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Henry Maxwell's Central B&B is just that – central to town. It's in a big, old house with mature landscaping. Breakfast is big and homemade. www.henrymaxwells.co.nz, 28 Henry Street, ☎ 03-578-8086 ($$-$$$).

For a more luxurious B&B, try **The Peppertree**, five minutes south of town on SH1 toward Riverlands. Set adjacent to the Cob Cottage, all five suites are lovingly decorated and have en-suite bathrooms. Breakfast is cooked, there is a swimming pool and beautiful gardens. One of the few places that puts on a formal Christmas dinner. www.thepeppertree.co.nz, SH1, ☎ 03-520-9200, fax 03-520-9222 ($$$$).

A little farther along SH1, turn left at Hardings Road for **Swansdown Cottage**, a circa-1920 cottage with bath and kitchen that has been redecorated by David and Pat Western for B&B use. Adjacent to the Opawa River, Swansdown sits on the farm that David was born and raised on, and he's happy to

do farm tours. The Westerns also offer farm stay accommodation. www.swansdown.co.nz, 39 Hardings Road. ☎ 03-578-9824 ($$-$$$).

For years, Gino Rocco owned and cooked at Rocco's, Blenheim's best Italian restaurant. When he retired, he and wife Heather opened their home **Uno Piu** as a B&B and built a mud-block cottage with bath and kitchen. The cottage is a great little spot – book in advance, it fills up fast. There is a very pleasant swimming pool with lovely gardens, and the property is very close to town. By arrangement, Gino will cook dinner, which is an opportunity you should embrace. www.geocities.com/unopiu, 75 Murphys Road, ☎ 03-578-2235 ($$-$$$).

Admirals Motor Lodge is an expansive, clean and welcoming motel. There is a fabulous swimming pool and spa; rooms in the back of the complex offer plenty of privacy. They have studios, one- , two- and three-bedroom units, and Ann is a very friendly hostess. Unlike most of the motels around, Admirals has a licensed bar. www.admirals.co.nz, 161 Middle Renwick Road, ☎ 03-577-7711, fax 03-577-7712 ($$-$$$).

At **Alpine Motel** they advertise that you'll "spend a night, not a fortune," and it's true. New owners in 2002 remodeled this older motel into a clean, functional facility. Nothing fancy, but the studios, units with bath and kitchen and family suites are all definitely good value. 148 Middle Renwick Road. ☎ 03-578-1604 or 0800-101-931, fax 03-578-577-6367 ($$).

Also new in 2002 was the **Blenheim Palms Motel**. Very clean studio, one- and two-bedroom units, some with spas. Cooked and continental breakfast is available. www.blenheimpalmsmotel.co.nz, corner of Henry and Charles Streets ($$-$$$).

Very nice accommodation at a fair price can be found at **Chateau Marlborough**. Choose from studio, one-bedroom and executive suites. All suites have kitchen facilities. Continental and cooked breakfast is available, there is a poolside bar and the location is close to the town center. www.marlboroughnz.co.nz, corner High and Henry Streets, ☎ 03-578-0064 or 0800-752-275, fax 03-578-2661 ($$-$$$)

For an upmarket experience, try the **Hotel d'Urville**, a small luxury hotel right in the middle of town. It's in the old bank building and each room is decorated in a different theme (including one in the old vault). The bar is a fine place to enjoy a few drinks and the restaurant is a must. www.durville.com, 52 Queen Street, ☎ 03-577-9945, fax 03-577-9946 ($$$$).

The Marlborough is a lovely hotel about a five-minute walk along the river from the town center. There is a good art collection, a comfortable bar and a pleasant restaurant; there is also a swimming pool. The rooms are suites, spas and deluxe. 20 Nelson Street, ☎ 03-577-7333 or 0800-115-533, fax 03-577-7337 ($$$).

A very good budget accommodation is **The Grapevine Backpackers** on the banks of the Opawa River. They've got a BBQ, pool table, canoes and bicycles (including a tandem) for your use. Dorm, twins and doubles. rob.diana@xtra.co.nz, 29 Park Terrace, ☎ 03-578-6062 ($).

Honi-B Backpackers was new in 2003 and is in a former "Rural Woman's Home." Short-term accommodation is in very clean dorm and double rooms. The kitchen is big, clean and efficient. honi-b-backpackers@xtra.co.nz, corner of Hutcheson and Parker Streets, ☎ 03-577-8441 ($).

Koanui is a Maori word that means "large and happy place to meet and stay." It's a very fitting name for this backpackers hostel just outside the center of town in a circa-1900 guest house. There are spacious double, twin and dorm rooms. www.koanui.co.nz, 33 Main Street, ☎/fax 03-578-7487 ($).

There aren't too many camping options right in Blenheim, but the **Blenheim Bridge Top 10 Holiday Park** is a nice enough place to pitch a tent along the river or rent a tourist apartment, cabin, or room in the lodge. They also have backpacker accommodation available. www.topparks.co.nz, just over the bridge on SH1, 78 Grove Road, ☎/fax 03-578-3667 or 0800-268-666 ($).

On SH1 at the other side of town is **Duncannon Holiday Park**, also along the Opawa River. It's a very pretty location, with a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. You can camp or rent a cabin or on-site camper. SH1, ☎/fax 03-578-8193 or 0800-697-895 ($).

Around the Wineries

The **Airport Motel** in Renwick is a simple kind of place with all you need for a night's rest. It's within easy stumbling distance of the tavern, pub and wineries and I suppose it is the closest motel to the airport, but it's a good eight km (five miles) away. Family and studio units available. www.renwick.co.nz, 46 High Street, Renwick, ☎ 03-572-8767 or 0800-767-797 ($$).

Antares Homestay is at the end of Jeffries Road, right near the Wairau River. The guest rooms are separate from the main house and there is a private guest lounge. With underfloor heating, four acres of gardens and mountain bikes free for use, how can you lose? Jane and Ray Adams are delightful hosts and offer use of the BBQ, laundry and Internet. Just down the road from Herzog's winery and restaurant – a great combination of places to stay and eat. www.marlborough.co.nz/antares, Jeffries Road, Blenheim, ☎ 03-572-9951, fax 03-572-9940 ($$$).

The Bell Tower aims to provide a comfortably luxurious and serene place as a base for Marlborough exploration. The complex consists of two buildings: a main lodge with two suites (each with a private courtyard) and The French Barn, a spacious building with two bedrooms plus living and dining rooms that is perfect for families. Perched on a hill with views that last forever, The Bell Tower is within easy cycling distance of many wineries. Breakfast, brunch or lunch is included and dinner is by arrangement. Maria focuses on French, Italian and Asian cuisine and is quite comfortable with guests watching her kitchen wizardry. www.belltower.co.nz, Brookby Road, Blenheim, ☎ 03-572-8831 ($$$$).

Old Saint Mary's Convent was designed and built in 1901 as the home of the Sisters of Mercy and was located next to the church in town. In 1994, the Convent was moved to its present 20-acre location on Rapaura Road. The owners call it a sanctuary and who am I to disagree? The immaculate grounds and pleasant furnishings are just the beginning – from the upstairs veranda, the views of the Richmond Ranges are superb. There are four guest rooms and an indescribably lovely honeymoon suite. Breakfast is included and there is a small chapel on the grounds that is available for weddings. This is a place to splurge and treat yourself. www.convent.co.nz, Rapaura Road, Blenheim, ☎/fax 03-570-5700 ($$$$).

Timara Lodge is one of the loveliest places to stay in Marlborough. Adjacent to Spy Valley Wines, Timara is tucked into 25 acres of gardens among a total of 600 acres. It's an idyllic retreat set in the vineyards, complete with a swim-

ming pool and lake with a rowboat. A maximum of eight guests (it's not suitable for children) ensures personal service by Jeremy Jones and Sue Goulter, the hosts. And you'll be eating no ordinary food, either. Jeremy is an accomplished chef, has owned two fine restaurants and is a frequent guest on a National Radio cooking show. www.timara.co.nz, Dog Point Road, Blenheim, ☎ 03-572-8276 ($$$$).

St. Leonards is a circa-1884 homestead, and the four accommodation buildings with baths and kitchens are spread around five acres. There is a lemon grove, gigantic vegetable garden, swimming pool and grass tennis court, all bordered by vineyards. This is a lovely base for visiting the area, and children are most welcome. Choose the converted century-old stables or woolshed, the recently built cottage, or the annexe, just off the main house. Includes continental breakfast. www.stleonards.co.nz, 18 St. Leonards Road, Blenheim, ☎ 03-577 8328, fax 03-577-8329 ($$-$$$).

Nettie Barrow and Jane Craighead operate Trails of Marlborough from Nettie's home at **Straw Lodge**. In the Wairau Valley, this vineyard accommodation is set in a Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc vineyard, and made of, not surprisingly, straw. The two private vineyard suites have a cheaters window – a glassed-over hole in the wall to prove to the cynical that the building really is straw. Each also has its own courtyard, plus living and dining space. Another, smaller room is in a separate wing. It's a very private B&B and you have the choice of cooking for yourself or having your meals prepared for you. www.trailsofmarlborough.co.nz, 17 Fareham Lane, ☎ 03-572-9767, fax 03-572-9769 ($$$).

The Vintners Retreat opened in 2000 and was something new to Marlborough… 14 two- and three-bedroom villas, with a tennis court and a swimming pool. Each villa is completely furnished, has its own laundry facilities, BBQ, electric garage door, you name it. I stayed here once for a week while working on a project and wanted to move in permanently. Which is an option, because the villas are available for purchase or short-term stay. www.thevintnersretreat.co.nz, 55 Rapaura Road, Renwick, ☎ 03-572-7421 or 0800-484-686, in NZ fax 03-572-7421 ($$$$).

Once in awhile, you drive into a place and know that you're in for something special. So with **Terrace Brook Cottage** in the Onamalutu Valley. Elaine and Colin Peterken built the free-standing addition for visiting family and friends, but use it as a B&B. Their property has expansive views of the Richmond Ranges, is edged by dense forest and is within minutes of walking tracks, fishing rivers and the Onamalutu Domain. The cottage has a wrap-around porch, the trees are laden with singing birds and the night sky just glistens with stars. There's a badminton court and gorgeous gardens. If you ask really nicely, Colin may take you on a winery tour in his 1927 Buick or 1929 Chrysler. terracebrookcottage@xtra.co.nz, Peakes Road, ☎ 03-572-9623 ($$-$$$).

Just when you thought you'd never be able to afford to stay amid the grapes, you stumble across a place called **The Moose Lodge**. On the property of Isabel Estate, this Kiwi lodge with bath and kitchen is relaxed, casual and comfortably sleeps groups of up to 12. Isabel Estate exports most of its wine, so it doesn't maintain regular tasting-room hours, but they offer tastings by appointment (try the Pinot Noir). If you stay at the lodge, you'll happily find the wine rack filled. A big rock fireplace keeps the place cozy in the winter and prices per person depend on the size of your group, from two to 12. A

great base for exploring the area by bike, foot or car. www.isabelestate.com, 72 Hawkesbury Road, Renwick, ☎ 03-572-8300 ($-$$).

Don't fret if the Moose Lodge is taken. **Watson's Way Backpackers** is a specially built facility with doubles, shares and tent sites. Located on Highway 6 in Renwick, it's easy to access for bus travelers between Blenheim and Nelson. They usually have bicycles for use and are eager to help you plan your adventures in Marlborough. www.watsonswaybackpackers.co.nz, 56 High Street, Renwick, ☎ 03-572-8228 ($).

■ Where to Eat

Springlands Garden Centre Café gets my vote for best café in town. It's in the garden center at Springlands and is only open for breakfast and lunch, but most definitely is worth a stop. They have great sandwiches to take on a picnic or to eat in, and fabulous salads and lasagna. Also, very good fudge brownies (as well as other baked goods). 131 Middle Renwick Road, ☎ 03-578-4353 ($).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

For an excellent, rather filling evening meal go to **Bacchus**. They have a menu of fish, meat and vegetarian options and a good wine list. 3 Main Street, ☎ 03-578-8099 ($$$).

Bellafico Restaurant and Wine Bar is another dependable, gracious place to eat and there is usually a fish option, as well as the requisite meats. Very good breads and starters. 17 Maxwell Road, ☎ 03-577-6072 ($$$).

Chequer's is one of the first restaurant/bars around that was non-smoking. Great café food for breakfast and lunch as well as very good dinners. One of my favorites on their menu is seafood chowder. They also make a mean fudge brownie and offer a variety of smoothies. Internet is available. 24-28 Scott Street, ☎ 03-579-3242 ($$).

I am not a big meat eater, but they know how to do it right at the **D'Urville Wine Bar and Brasserie**. The other options on the menu are just as good and diners are rewarded with a little chocolate truffle at the end of their meal. Lovely wine list. Located in the Hotel D'Urville, ☎ 03-577-9945 ($$$).

Figaros was new in 2003 and is owned by a great Swiss fellow called Alain. He used to be a partner with Peter at Le Café in Picton, and the food is just as good here as it is there. Very fresh and simple, and the flavors are not overpowered by too many ingredients. This is my new favorite Blenheim restaurant. Scott Street, ☎ 03-577-7277 ($$-$$$).

The Living Room is a great little café, with good food all day long and a bar in the attached room. Corner of Scott St. and Maxwell Road, ☎ 03-579-4777 ($-$$).

Paysanne Café is upstairs in the Forum Building and has a wood-fired pizza oven as well as a complete menu of fresh and local foods. Very dependable. Market Place, ☎ 03-577-6278 ($$-$$$).

Havelock & West

SH6 leads to Havelock – the access point for activities in the Kenepuru and Pelorus Sounds – and farther on to Nelson. When traveling from Picton, you have the option of the scenic Queen Charlotte Drive or heading toward Blenheim and taking Rapaura Road through the wine region. Rapaura Road and Queen Charlotte Drive take the same amount of time (about 45 minutes) – the latter being twisty and hilly along the edge of the Grove Arm of the Queen Charlotte; the former flat and straight, but past plenty of tasting rooms. The choice depends on your interests. If you opt for the scenic, ask for a map at the Picton information center – it points out picnic spots, galleries and shops along the way.

> **Local produce:** Havelock is the "Greenshell Mussel Capital of the World." You can find them on most menus, but here's my favorite way to cook them. Buy a pile at the supermarket (they are cheap). To clean them, just pull off the little "beards" that sometimes hang where the shell closes. Put them in a big pot with a very small bit of water, lemon and a bit of cayenne pepper (or maybe some Sauvignon Blanc or tomatoes and sautéed garlic and onion). Steam them JUST UNTIL they open, drain and eat. Don't overcook them or they get rubbery. You don't need a lot of sauce or extras, just eat them plain or with lemon.

■ Adventures

AUTHOR'S PICK

Pelorus Bridge is a must on a hot day! There are great swimming holes and gigantic rocks to sun on – treat yourself and act like a seal for the day, sleeping on a rock and rolling into the water to cool off. Pelorus Bridge is about midway between Blenheim and Nelson, just 15 minutes from Havelock on Highway 6.

There is also a choice of interpretive walks at **Pelorus Bridge** through the forest and along the river. The **Tawa Path** wanders through some gigantic rimu and tawa trees and only takes about 30 minutes. Another 30-minute option is the **Circle Walk** along the Rai River… it'll take you through ferns, rimu and beech. If you have more time, try the **Trig K Loop**. It takes two to three hours to complete the circuit that begins with a leisurely stroll to Elvy Falls. Then it's a bit of a grunt to the top, but worth it for the views of the Rai Valley and the Richmond Ranges. Good examples of old-growth and southern rata trees – look for the bright red flowers if you're visiting in summer.

On Water

Kayaking out of Havelock was rather up in the air when I was finishing up this chapter. It's a shame, because the Pelorus and Kenepuru Sounds are much less traveled then the Queen Charlotte, and a trip out of Tennyson Inlet is superb. For information and trips, contact **Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides** (www.marlboroughsoundsnz.com, ☎ 03-520-3095, fax 03-520-3096) or **Sounds Wild** (www.soundswild.com, ☎/fax 03-573-5577). Both are based in Picton.

Marlborough Travel has two scenic-cruise departures daily from the Havelock Marina, at 9:30 am and 2 pm (one cruise daily in winter). While

traveling through the inner Pelorus and Kenepuru Sounds, you'll not only learn about the region and the farming of greenshell mussels, but will have the chance to try some – freshly harvested and cooked for you while you sip a glass of Sauvignon Blanc. For a full-day adventure, take the morning run, get dropped off at St. Omer, Raetihi or Portage Resort for lunch, plus a bit of a walk, a kayak trip, or beach lounging, and get picked up on the return. $69 per adult, with special family rates. They also run half- and full-day sport-fishing snapper trips with skipper and guide Aussie Vale. Aussie, as his name would suggest, comes from across the Tasman, but has been in Marlborough for over 15 years and has spent most of that time either on or in the water. Prices start at $550 to charter. If you don't have a group, don't be scared off; give them a call and see if you can join up with others. www.marlboroughtravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-577-9997.

Also operating out of Havelock is **Chris Hobbs**. Chris limits his trips to five anglers and goes in search of snapper, kahawai and yellowtail kingfish. A very personalized service; you can choose between a half- and full-day, but he might just extend the day if everyone's having a good time. hobzee@ihug.co.nz, ☎ 03-574-2911 or fax 03-574-2914.

On Foot

There are some fantastic walking tracks in the **Wakamarina**, which is accessed from the Canvastown side.

The Nydia Track

I'm all for making things easy and, with one telephone call to **Rutherford Travel**, you can arrange water taxi, shuttle pick up and accommodation for the two-day walk on the Nydia Track. The water taxi will take you from Havelock to Shag Point, where day one – four to five hours of walking – begins. This day winds through some pastureland, has a bit of a climb and a few good views of the sounds. It ends in Nydia Bay. Day two is shorter, mostly through native bush with great examples of rimu, nikau palm, beech and kamahi. A real bonus on the Nydia – you may not see another tramper. (Pipi Beach is about 20 minutes before the end of the track and makes for a great swimming beach). At the end of the track, a van will be waiting to transport you back to Havelock. www.marlboroughadventures.co.nz, ☎ 03-574-2114 0800-742-897 fax 03-574-2109

> **Tip:** Take sand fly repellent, especially if you're considering time at Pipi Beach.

The Nydia is open to mountain bikes, and it is technical single-track. This one is best ridden from north to south, so you may need to organize your own transport. Well worth the effort, though.

■ Where to Stay

In Havelock

The **Havelock Garden Motel** is a small, simple affair with rooms that have bath and kitchen. 71 Main Road, ☎ 03-574-2387, fax 03-743-2376 ($$).

Rutherford Lodge YHA has twins, doubles and small dorms. Right in town, and they will happily book travel activities for you. www.marlboroughadventures.co.nz, 46 Main Road, ☎ 03-574-2114 or 0800-742-897, fax 03-574-2109 ($).

For power sites, tent sites and cabins, go to **Havelock Motor Camp**, a handy, simple base for the area. 24 Inglis Street, ☎ 03-574-2339, fax 03-574-2335 ($-$$).

Just a few minutes along SH6 toward Nelson is Canvastown and **The Trout Hotel**. This area was profitable for gold mining and you can try your hand at gold panning. A good stopping-off point for tramping in the Wakamarina. Simple hotel units and really friendly owners. ☎ 03-574-2888 ($$).

In the Pelorus Sound

Jane Churchwell and Micheal Ewan have created **Driftwood Lodge** in Nydia Bay. For hostel prices, you'll be treated to real coffee, crisp white cotton sheets, free-range eggs and, by prior arrangement (and for additional cost), home-cooked, spectacular meals. There are a few different accommodation options and, if you can stay a couple of days, Jane and Michael will suggest some great day-walks from the lodge. driftwood@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-579 8454 ($-$$).

Nydia Lodge is a DoC lodge in Nydia Bay that sleeps up to 40. Book through Rutherford Travel in Havelock or DoC in Renwick ($).

In the Kenepuru Sound

Also see listings under the Queen Charlotte Track, Torea Saddle, page 358.

Gigantic home-cooked meals, profuse flower gardens and comfortable rooms all combine to make a stay at **St. Omer** like a trip to granny's. It's right next to the Nopera Golf Course, with kayaks to rent and a beach to collapse on; plan to stay for a few days. Accessible by car, but it's a long drive… easier to get a water taxi from either Havelock, Te Mahia or Portage. Inquire for current water-taxi operators. Tariffs include all meals. ☎ 03-573-4086 ($$).

Raetihi Lodge is a bit farther along the road from St. Omer (also accessible by water taxi and air – contact Raetihi for transport details) and is the upmarket accommodation choice on this side of the Kenepuru. It's in a gorgeous location and is a real "retreat." Lunch is served in the bar, dinner in the formal dining room. There is a massage therapist on premises and you can opt for more action in kayaks or on walking tracks. www.raetihi.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-4300 or fax 03-573-4323 ($$$$).

Every year, Budget Backpacker Hostels of New Zealand asks those staying in the lodges to rate them. In 2002, **Hopewell Backpackers** in Double Bay, scored 98%, the highest ranking ever! Its sunny, secluded location, great service, outdoor spa, bush walks, kayaks and mountain bikes make for a great experience. Mike and Lynley are fabulous hosts and see to it that everyone is comfortable. There are twins, doubles (some with en-suite bathrooms), small

dorms, a brand-new common facility and kitchen. It's not just for backpackers, but also for families. Accessible by road, but Mike and Lynley offer water transport for their guests – inquire to arrange (or, better yet, rent kayaks from Portage Bay Shop and paddle across). www.hopewell.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-573-4341 ($-$$).

Outer Sounds

French Pass is home to Danny Boulton, one of the most passionate and knowledgeable guides in the Marlborough Sounds. Danny and his wife Lyn operate **French Pass Sea Safaris**, touring some of the most remote and fascinating sites in the Sounds. They are DoC concessionaires for Te Kakaho Island, home of yellow-crowned parakeets, and include a tour there on a Chetwood & Outer Island Bird Tour. You can also take a Discovery Tour and experience the incredible tidal surge in French Pass, or go swimming with dolphins and seals. They also operate **Beachfront Villas**, with baths and kitchens, at what feels like the edge of the world – the end of Croiselles-French Pass Road, a beautiful drive with sweeping views that last forever. www.seasafaris.co.nz, ☎ 03-576-5204 ($$-$$$).

For a remote and memorable getaway, go across French Pass to **D'Urville Wilderness Resort**. Rooms with bath and kitchen sleep two to 20 and there is also a full-service restaurant. Access by boat only, this is a great base for fishing, hiking and challenging mountain-biking. www.durvilleisland.co.nz, ☎ 03-576-5268 ($$).

■ Camping

Too numerous to list! If you want to camp, go to the DoC office in Picton or Renwick and get a Park Map. There are some nice spots all along the tracks off North Bank Road, particularly at the Onamalutu Domain – a big grassy area that's easy to get to. Check in at the Canvastown Hotel – there are some really good spots at the end of the road that goes alongside the river, though sometimes the road gets a bit flooded.

Camping and cabins (bunks in huts) are also available at **Pelorus Bridge**. Be sure to book ahead, ☎ 03-571-6019

■ Where to Eat

There are **Tea Rooms** at Pelorus Bridge for simple food ($).

A must spot to visit is **Mussel Boys** in Havelock. It's become a bit of an icon with the rugby-playing mussels on the roof. Try mussels prepared in any number of ways. 73 Main Road, ☎ 03-574-2878, fax 03-574-2824 ($$).

Awatere & East

Driving from Blenheim south on SH1 toward Kaikoura, you cross a historic railway bridge at Seddon – the trains take the top level, the cars the bottom. The drive to the Kaikoura coast is usually rushed by most travelers, and fair enough, there isn't a huge laundry list of reasons to stop as you wind through the sandhills. But if you have the time the Awatere valley offers a rural, slow-paced travel option.

Historic interest: Sheep first arrived on the South Island at Flaxbourne Station, Lake Grassmere.

Inside scoop: A heated political debate is underway on the issue of building a new bridge. If you want to get someone in Seddon excited, ask about funding for the bridge!

■ Adventures

On Water

Marfel's Beach, east of Lake Grassmere, draws families with tents and campers. When the tide is out you can walk to Cape Campbell lighthouse.

Ward Beach is popular for surfing and swimming; road access is well-marked on SH1.

On Foot

One of my favorite hot-day walks is in the **Sawcut Gorge**. About 10 km (six miles) south of Ward, turn inland on Ure River Road just before the Waima River. Continue on the gravel road, leaving gates as you find them, until the road ends. The walk crosses private property and you must either ask for permission at the homestead where you leave your car, or sign the intent book that's on the front porch. Take the access track down to the river (okay for 4X4) and start walking upstream. There is no reason to try and keep your feet dry; on the way to the gorge, you'll be crossing the river at least a million times. You can either come out the way you came in, or continue on to the hut and out in Clarence. Contact Steve at **Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides** for guided trips (contact details in Picton section, page 353).

■ Sightseeing

Don't be fooled by **Lake Grassmere's** name. It's not a swimming lake, it's where salt is harvested. Dominion Salt offers guided tours on Tuesday and Friday at 1:30 pm. ☎ 03-575-7021.

Did you know? The tallest mountain (2,885 m/9,463 feet) in Marlborough is Tapuea-o-Uenuki, fondly referred to as Mt. Tapi. It's name means "Stairway to the Stars."

The **Molesworth Station** is New Zealand's largest high-country cattle station (768,000 acres) and is open to private vehicles and bicycles for six weeks a year, usually from the very end of December to mid-February. Absolutely inquire at a DoC or information center when planning your trip, as opening dates change every year and the road will close for fire danger. It's a long gravel road through a remote area, and Lake Tennyson is a good place to stop for a quick – and very cold – swim. You can opt to travel through the Molesworth and Rainbow Stations, or to Hanmer Springs.

Guided trips are offered by **Back Country Safaris**. They do fully supported one- and two-day trips (with an overnight in Hanmer Springs) and have the DoC concession, so they can operate from October through May each year. There's catered food and commentary, plus you don't have to wash the car afterwards (from $210 per person). gwift@powerlink.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-575-7525.

■ Where to Stay

Ugbrooke Country House is the largest privately owned single-level residence in New Zealand and a lovely bed and breakfast. The renovated historic house sits on 70 acres, complete with camellia and rhododendron gardens, vineyard and ocean views, a sunroom looking over the swimming pool, and walking paths. www.ugbrooke.co.nz, in the Awatere Valley, ☎ 03-575-7988 or 025-601-1991 ($$$$).

Ellerton Homestay is a little farther along SH1, just past Kekerengu. It's also an historic house – and overlooks the Pacific Ocean. It was once the homestead of a large cattle farm and gives you the feeling of being a land baron. It would be a fantastic place to stay with two or three couples or a family. You can rent the whole house, a portion of it, or rooms in the simpler "annexe." www.ellerton.co.nz, ☎ 03-575-8673 ($$-$$$$).

The **A1 Ward Motel** has simple accommodation on SH1 in Ward. ☎/fax 03-575-6891 ($$).

At Ure River Road (turnoff for Sawcut Gorge), you'll find a water tank with a bicycle on top. That's where to find **Cycle Packers Hostel**. There are two small bunkrooms and campsites on this lovely property. peddlers@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-575-6708, fax 03-575-6703 ($).

■ Where to Eat

In Seddon, try **The Station Wine Bar/Café**, housed in the old rail station. They often have art on display and do tastings for the local wineries. SH1, ☎ 03-575-7902 ($$).

The Store at Kekerengu is a must, if for nothing else than the amazing views of the ocean. It's a perfect mid-way coffee break from Blenheim to Kaikoura and has very good food to boot. Sit outside, play petanque, eat. the_store@xtra.co.nz, SH1, ☎ 03-575-8600, fax 03-575-8620 ($$-$$$).

Nelson

Introduction

Occupying the western half of the top of the South Island is Nelson, a sunny, warm region filled with activities both on land and water. With 2,500 hours of sunshine a year, Nelson claims to be the sunniest region in New Zealand – but those of us living in Marlborough fuel a friendly rivalry on that front. Home to three National Parks, Nelson is a thriving area that is one of the most popular tourist destinations for both domestic and international travelers. For generations, many New Zealand families have spent their summer holidays in and around Nelson and this region can suit almost any holiday desire – you can just as easily find a remote piece of wilderness as you can an adrenaline ride or a trendy café.

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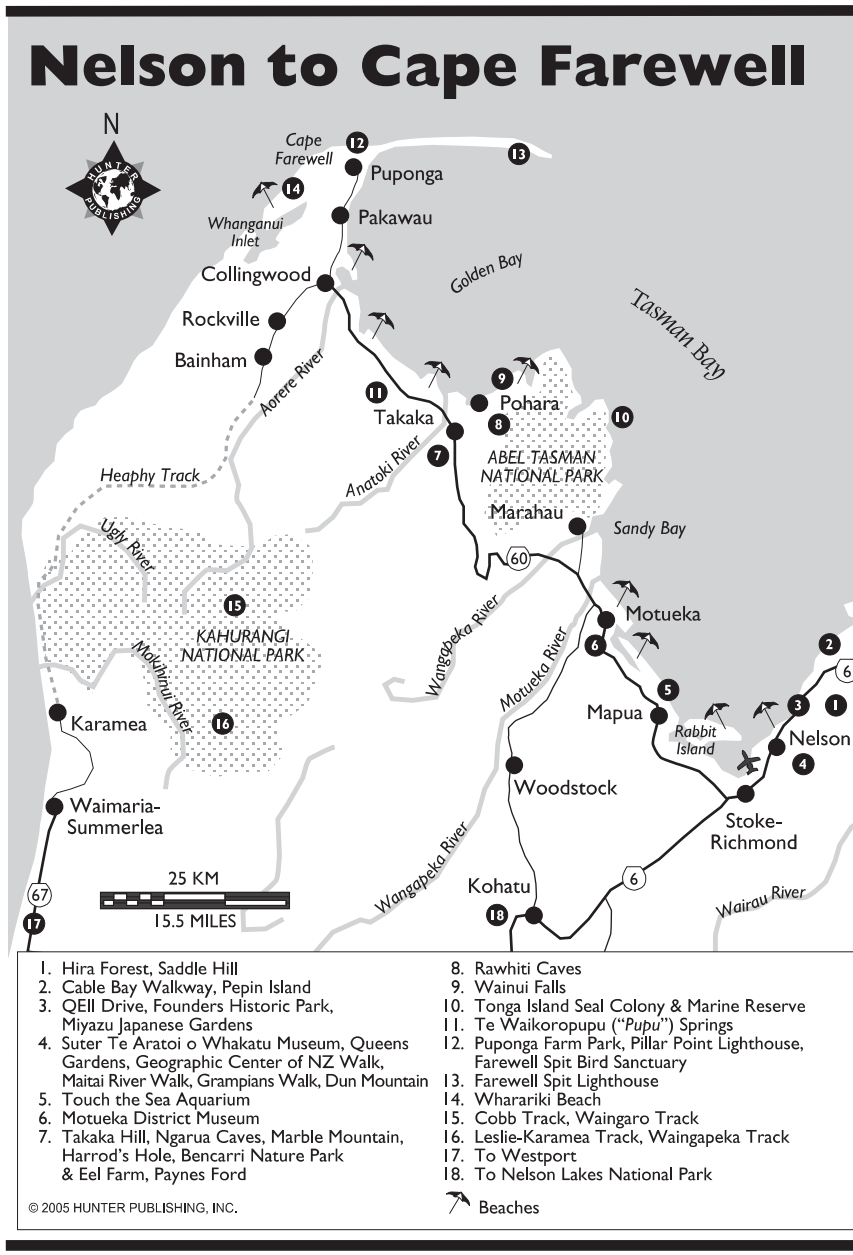
In addition to spectacular walking tracks, golden sand beaches and glorious inland lakes, Nelson is a haven for artists and craftspeople and has an annual calendar punctuated with festivals; two of the most renowned are the **Montana World of Wearable Arts** show (held every year in September) and the **Taste Nelson Festival** (held in February). New Zealand's largest dance festival, **The Gathering**, is a three-day rave that takes place at the end of January in Golden Bay.

Contrary to the meaning of Nelson's Maori name – *Whakatu*, "peaceful haven" – life hasn't always been so pleasant in this little section of the world. When the Maori began to move from the North Island to the South, the Ngati Tumatakokiri, who hailed from Taupo, settled in the area from Wakapuaka (east of Nelson) to Karamea (at the end of the Heaphy Track on the West Coast). When Dutch explorer Abel Tasman showed up in Golden Bay in 1642, he thought he had landed on the great southern continent that he had been sent out to find. Instead of celebrating his glory, he cut his stay short when the Ngati Tumatakokiri attacked, killing four of his sailors. Tasman and the surviving crew turned tail and left New Zealand, having never set foot on land. Captain James Cook arrived in what is now Tasman Bay in 1770 and named it Blind Bay, but didn't stick around and explore. The next European, French Captain Dumont D'Urville, left, arrived in 1827 aboard *Astrolabe*.

In the 1800s, the Ngai Tahu from Kaiapoi (near Christchurch) and Karamea (on the West Coast) and the Ngati Apa (from Rangitikei) attacked the Ngati Tumatakokiri, nearly decimating the tribe. The Ngati Tumatakokiri managed to hold on to some of their land, only to be attacked by an alliance of three North Island tribes, the Ngati Toa, Ngati Rarua and Ngati Tama, in 1828. Te Rauparaha, the chief of the Ngati Toa, wanted to claim more land for his tribe than the others, which resulted prolonged fighting and land-claim changes.



European presence began in 1841 when ships from the New Zealand Company arrived and picked Nelson as a settlement site. It quickly became clear that there wasn't enough land (as more than 2,000 people had arrived en masse) to grow food and fulfill contracts, so surveyors were sent to Wairau, which is now Marlborough. Disagreements between the Europeans and the Maori and among the Maori chiefs developed, as did confusion, misunderstandings and violence – those killed included not only the wife of Maori chief

Te Rangihaeata, but 20 settlers and Captain Wakefield of the New Zealand Company. You can see the historical site of the Wairau Incident on SH1 in Spring Creek, between Picton and Blenheim. Nelson was settled eventually and a government was established in 1853.

Getting Here

■ By Air

The Nelson airport is serviced with frequent flights from both **Air New Zealand** (www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000) and **Origin Pacific** (www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302). The airport is just 15 minutes out of the city center. Flying time from Auckland is about one hour, 20 minutes.

■ By Car

Nelson is about an hour and a half on SH6 from Blenheim and two hours from Picton. From Nelson to Motueka is about an hour and it's another hour from there to Takaka. Heading inland from Nelson on SH6, it takes an hour and a half to reach St. Arnaud and two hours to reach Murchison. From farther afield, it's about six hours from Christchurch to Nelson.

■ By Bus

Both small shuttle companies and large buses provide service to and around Nelson. **InterCity Coachlines** provides transport by way of Blenheim and the West Coast. However, the timing of some of the West Coast connections is inconvenient and your better bet is often one of the shuttles – **Atomic**, **Kahurangi**, and **Kiwilink** – but check with the information center for current information.

Within the region, **Abel Tasman Coachlines**, info@nelsoncoaches.co.nz, ☎ 03-548-3290, transports passengers to Motueka, Kaiteriteri, Marahau, Takaka, Totaranui, the Heaphy Track, Kahurangi National Park and Abel Tasman National Park. **Kahurangi**, www.kahurangi.co.nz, ☎ 03-525-9434, fax 03-525-9430, also provides scheduled service within the region, as well as between Picton and Blenheim. **Kiwilink**, www.kiwilinks.co.nz, ☎ 03-525-9434, fax 03-525-9430, merged with Kahurangi in 2002.

Shuttle buses come and go from the Visitor Information Centre; **InterCity** is based at the Travel Centre, at 27 Bridge Street.

Information Sources

The very proactive **Latitude Nelson** produces a heap of maps and guides, as well as maintains **www.nelsonnz.com**. Visitor information centers are scattered around the region and listed in appropriate sections.

The always-busy, well-stocked **Visitor Information Centre** is located at the corner of Halifax and Trafalgar streets. DoC information and hut passes are also available. You can contact them at vin@nelsonnz.com, ☎ 03-548-2304, fax 03-546-7393.

In **Richmond**, the information center is on Gladstone Road, ☎ 03-544-4793.

Pick up copies of the ***Regional Visitor Guide***, ***Tourist Guide to Potters***, ***Eat Drink Nelson*** and ***Wine Art***.

Nelson & Around

Nelson is the South Island representative of my favorite 'N' towns, joining Napier and New Plymouth as friendly seaside locations that are fun places to visit and where I can easily imagine living. There are plenty of activities to keep me busy – both of the action-packed variety and the latte-sipping kind; it's my kind of place. It's relatively easy to find your way around Nelson; the main streets are on a grid and Christ Cathedral on the Square makes a good anchor. The Cathedral grounds are lovely to walk around, as is Queens Gardens. There's reason enough to spend some time in Nelson and, because of the proximity of so many other great activities, it becomes a busy and happening place in the summer.

> **Did you know?** The first game of rugby played in New Zealand was in Nelson on May 14, 1870. New Zealand has never been the same.

Most of the outdoor-gear stores in New Zealand are represented in Nelson and there are quite a few good clothing and gift shops, too. Not to mention books. It's easy to spend a day wandering around the town center. Richmond is just 14 km (eight miles) to the west and is a bedroom community for Nelson, but also has accommodation, restaurants and access to mountain-biking and walking tracks.

■ Adventures

On Water

Close to town with great water and sand, the beach at **Tahunanui** is a must! It's a popular family destination.

My favorite beaches, though, are at **Rabbit Island** – a bit farther out (18 km/11 miles) but definitely worth the effort. The 13-km (eight-mile) beach is backed by plantation forest and the shallow water is perfect to splash around in. Except at the busiest of holiday times, not many people are around; it's much less developed and that's a big part of the draw. Grab a picnic and a magazine and head out. Gates close at 9 pm and camping is not allowed.

For a sunset cruise or multi-day sail around the local islands (and even into the Marlborough Sounds), consider going for a trip on ***Penelope***. Depending on time and interests, trips can be arranged to suit. www.new-zealand-sailing.com, ☎ 025-651-2877.

Cable Bay Kayaks leads half- and full-day tours out to **Pepin Island**, where there are caves, blowholes, coves and waterfalls. It's just 20 minutes from Nelson, and not crowded like some of the kayak destinations in the Abel

Tasman National Park. This is a really good option for getting on the water when you're staying in town. $60 half-day, $95 full-day. www.greenstone.co.nz, Cable Bay Road, ☎ 03-545-0332.

On Foot

There are a few good walks close to town, including a one-hour round-trip to the geographic **Centre of New Zealand**, accessed from the Botanical Reserve. Centre of New Zealand is situated at the summit of Botanical Hill and is an easy walk or bike ride offering some spectacular views over Nelson and Tasman Bay. There are two access tracks to the Botanical Gardens, either via Milton Street (yellow) or Branford Park (blue).

There's a three-hour round-trip walking track up **Dun Mountain**, through native and pine forest.

Perhaps it doesn't quite fit the "on foot" category, but **Vertical Limits** is the local indoor-climbing center, and these folks guide outdoor trips, as well as offer instruction. There are some very popular and famous climbing areas outside of Nelson, such as at **Paynes Ford**, an area known for its limestone climbing. If you've ever wanted to try, here's your chance – with no previous climbing experience, you can spend the day learning in a small group. www.verticallimits.co.nz, 34 Vanguard Street, ☎ 03-545-7511 or 0508-837-842.

In the Air

Scenic flights around the area can be arranged through **Flight Corporation**. Flight options include Farewell Spit, the Nelson Lakes, Kahurangi, and Abel Tasman National Parks and the Marlborough Sounds. You can also arrange for transport to and or from the Heaphy Track. ☎ 0800-359-464.

For hang gliding, call **Nelson Hang Gliding Adventures**, ☎ 03-548-9151 or 025-751-436, or **Hang Gliding New Zealand**, www.hanggliding.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-540-2183 or 0800-212-359.

Tasman Tandems has a variety of paragliding trips and uses different sites depending on the weather. tasmantandems@e3.net.nz, ☎ 03-528-9283 or 021-544-800. Likewise, **Nelson Paragliding** uses different flying sites dependent on weather for tandem flying as well as multi-day instruction. www.paragliding.co.nz, ☎ 03-544-1182 or 021-544-800.

Skyout has tandem rides, learn-to-paraglide courses, and kite boarding (kite surfing). www.skyout.co.nz, 6 Bridge Street, ☎ 03-546-6863 or 021-400-295.

On Bikes

There are plenty of places to mountain-bike around Nelson. One of the best rides I've done is **Dun Mountain**. I had a friend in Nelson and one of the guys she rode with was fabulous technically, and took us out there for a day of coaching. It was great. As usual, I suggest you stop in one of the bike shops and find out what's hot. They always know the best rides. **Hira Forest**, coming into Nelson from the Blenheim side, has quite a few trails – some of them the kind you walk more than ride, unless you're a star. If you have plenty of time, the ride from Pelorus Bridge across the

Maungatapu Saddle makes a good day out, with good climbing. Arrange for transport at one end or the other, though.

Eazibike offers guided rides around the city and off-road, including heli-biking on local hills (guided rides from $25). They also have bike rental available (from $25 for half-day city bike). www.eazibike.co.nz, ☎ 0800-200-282.

Natural High also leads guided rides as well as renting mountain and city bikes. www.cylcenewzealand.com, 52 Rutherford Street, ☎ 03-546-6936.

By 4x4 & With Adrenaline

Just east of Nelson is **Happy Valley Adventures –** the place for quad bikes and the **Sky Wire**, all-new in 2003. Yet another way to be propelled through the air at breakneck speed, the Sky Wire straps four people into a gondola chair that free-falls forwards on a (let's hope) mighty strong cable, attaining speeds up to 100 kph (60 mph). Lucky for me, there was an eight-year-old beside me who held my hand until I stopped being scared. After the fall, the forward ride continues for a total of 1.6 km (one mile) over the bush and then – you got it – you free-fall backwards and retrace that 1.6 km to where you started. It's fun, not nearly as scary as skydiving and it really is a smooth ride, but that first fall was a bit of a shock. It's the only one in the world and the inspiration came from watching logs shoot down the sides of mountains. The quad-bike riding is quite good here, too, through native and regenerating forest and with views of the Sounds and sea to die for. There are two cafés – one at the base and one at the Sky Wire. Quad rides start at $60 per rider, $25 per passenger, and Sky Wire is $85 adults, $55 children. www.happyvalleyadventures.co.nz, 194 Cable Bay Road, about 10 minutes north of Nelson. ☎ 03-545-0304 or 0800-157-300.

On Horses

AUTHOR'S PICK

Without a doubt, my favorite horse trek in New Zealand is **Western Ranges Horse Treks**. Located up the Baton Valley, and bordering the Kahurangi National Park, this is a really special place with very special horses (Ata, a big white gelding comes home with me in the winters). Cheryl Dean has been running horse treks for years and these horses are no livery-stable plugs – they each have their own personality and riders of all levels will be suited to appropriate horses. The rides go through Cheryl's and neighboring farms and most include river crossings (and, weather dependent, swimming with the horses). All the food is homemade and there is a cabin on the farm where you stay for two-day trips. Behind the cabin in earshot of the creek is a bush bath (where water is heated by a fire underneath the tub) – my favorite for relaxation. The grand majority of Cheryl's clients are experienced riders and the two-day treks are very popular. I heartily recommend staying for two or more days. There is one 10-day trek a year from Tophouse, through the Rainbow Station farm and into the Molesworth – the largest farm in New Zealand. If you really like to ride, Western Ranges is a don't miss place; if you're a beginner, you'll love it, too. www.thehorsetrek.co.nz, ☎ 03-522-4178.

For short rides suitable for riders of all levels, try **Stonehurst**, where you can choose between scenic farm trails, river rides and sunset rides. Rides range from one hour to half-day but there are also short (20-minute) pony

rides. www.stonehurstfarm.co.nz. Located off Clover Road East, eight kilometers (five miles) from Richmond on SH6. ☎ 03-542-4121 or 0800-487-357.

In Beer & Wine

> **Did you know?** The Nelson area has more breweries than any other area of New Zealand.

Mac's Brewery offers one-hour tours that end with a full tasting. If you go during the work-week, you'll see the brewery in action. There is also a huge store (and you can fill your own flagons for a cheap price!). Open from 10 am-5:30 pm daily, until 6 pm during the summer. Tours are 11 am and 2 pm, $8 per person, under 15 must be accompanied by an adult (bookings advised during busy holiday periods). www.macsbeer.co.nz, 660 Main Road, Stoke, ☎ 03-547-0526, fax 03-547-7352.

Right in the middle of Founders Park is **Founders Brewery and Café**, which makes organic beer. Open daily from 10 am to 4:30 pm, you can have a beer and lunch and spy on the beer-making through the windows. The brewmeister will be happy to chat with you about the products, too. Much of the food is organically grown. www.biobrew.co.nz, Founders Park, ☎ 03-548-4638.

Even though Nelson is a small player on the New Zealand wine stage, there are plenty of wineries to visit and most have embraced wine tourism. Nelson wineries make varieties similar to those from Marlborough, but different growing conditions here result in slightly different flavors. Wine tasting is a casual event, and it's easy to make a day of it with just one or two stops.

The Upper Moutere is a great area to drive or, better yet, bike around and visit wineries. There is far less traffic than on the Appleby Highway and, while there are a few hills, it's all very scenic and the hills aren't that high. And you need to burn off some of those holiday calories anyway.

> **Tip:** Pick up ***Wineart***, a map of the area produced by the local wineries, and hit the road. One option is to rent bikes and do a loop around the Upper Moutere.

My Favorite Wineries

Grape Escape is a good stop with something for everyone… you can taste wine from **Te Mania Estate** and **Richmond Plains**, ☎ 03-544-4054, eat chocolates at **Kerstien's**, have a sample of Schnapps at **Prenzel**, buy some beautiful candles at **Living Light** (NZ's largest hand-crafted candle company), pick up NZ-made gifts at **Escape**. Then top it off with lunch at **Grape Escape**, ☎ 03-544-4341. Open seven days a week, at the corner of McShane Road and Coastal Highway 60.

Easy to find, **Waimea Estate** is right around the corner of Appleby Highway and SH6, Main Road, Stoke. They have a good range of wines to taste and the café has an extensive vineyard menu and regularly receives rave reviews. www.waimeaestate.co.nz, ☎ 03-544-4963.

Not too much farther down the Appleby Highway is **Seifried Estate**, one of Nelson's biggest wineries. They have very tasty food, a good outdoor area and a playground for the kids. Not a bad stop to

pick up some wine for your trip to Rabbit Island. www.seifried.co.nz, Rabbit Island turnoff, ☎ 03-544-1555.

Ruby Bay Wines is a few minutes after the turnoff to Mapua. You'll often find live music here and, in addition to tasting the wines, you can have lunch. Korepo Road, ☎ 03-540-2825.

Moutere Hills Vineyard has vineyard lunches, platters and focaccia, in addition to a full range of tastings and a great picnic site. www.mouterehills.co.nz, Eggers Road, ☎ 03-543-2288.

Sunset Valley is a small, very friendly, BioGro-certified winery set on top of a hill, at the end of a dirt road. I love this place. www.sunsetvalleyvineyard.co.nz, Eggers Road, ☎ 03-543-2161.

One of Nelson's finest is **Kahurangi Estate**. All of New Zealand winemaking is young, but Kahurangi has some of the oldest vines in Nelson. In addition to Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, they make Pinot Noir, Gewurtztraminer and Riesling. The café and wine bar is open daily from September to May. Lunch here is very large, with very good platters. www.kahurangiwine.com, Sunrise Road, Upper Moutere, ☎ 03-543-2980.

In Art

If you appreciate art, no visit to Nelson is complete without stopping at **Hoglund Art Glass Galleries**. Wandering through the shop is great, but in order to really appreciate hand-blown art glass, you must take a tour. Once you do, you'll never again think a piece of art glass is overpriced. The guided tour includes entry into the glass museum; after an introduction and video, sit outside the studio and just watch the process. It's incredible! There is also a café on site, but feel free to bring a picnic. Hoglund also has a gift shop at the Rutherford Hotel in Nelson. Open daily, 9 am-5 pm, tours at 10 am, 11 am and 2 pm. Additional tours during the summer. www.nelson.hoglund.co.nz, Landsdowne Road, Richmond, ☎ 03-544-6500.

> **Did you know?** You can take glass-blowing classes at Hoglund. Classes are for one or two days and, at the end, you'll have a couple of things to take home and great memories. Contact Hoglund to book a space.

The Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu is the Nelson region's public art museum. Set in the beautiful Queens Gardens, it has a wonderful range of exhibits of national significance. It is destined in 2004 to undergo a somewhat controversial expansion. The building is in lovely gardens on which the new expansion will impede. Open daily, 10:30 am to 4:30 pm. $3 adults, $1 students. www.thesuter.org.nz, 208 Bridge Street, ☎ 03-548-4699.

Get a copy of ***Art in Its Own Place, a Nelson Regional Guide Book***. It's a fantastic overview of the whole art scene around Nelson and gives bios on the artists, describes their art and includes wine, food, jewelry, fine art and pottery. Following are just a few of my choices.

I like **Royce McGlashen Pottery** because it's innovative and always changing. 128 Ellis Street, Brightwater, ☎ 03-542-3585.

If you like fibers, go into **Silkwood Fibre Arts, Crafts Centre and Café**. I can't keep my hands off the stuff, it all feels so good. Hand-knits, silks and woven pieces. Westdale Road, Richmond, ☎ 03-540-2985.

> **Rainy day option:** Head into the **Bead Gallery** and make some jewelry. They have a huge collection of beads from the cheapest to the finest. 18 Parere Street, ☎ 03-546-7807.

At **MacMillan's Hand Thrown Ceramics**, you can stand back and buy contemporary tableware or get your hands dirty and throw some of your own. 92 Bateup Road, Richmond, ☎ 03-544-5853.

The **New Zealand Nature Company** has a shop in town, as well as Internet-based mail order for outdoor, educational and eco gifts from New Zealand and around the world. www.nznature.co.nz, 49 Collingwood Street, ☎ 0800-028-0664.

> **Local produce:** **Rosy Glow Chocolates** are to die for. They are all hand-made and the quantities are small – you're not going to find them all over the supermarket shelves. They are old-fashioned chocolates. On Beach Road in Collingwood and 20 Harley Street in Nelson, ☎ 03-548-3383.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

> **Local produce:** **The Nelson Market** in the Montgomery Square Carpark is a must! You can buy food, crafts or just about anything, but it's the atmosphere and music that makes it special. 9 am to 1 pm.

Founders Historic Park is set up like an old town and all the buildings are open for walking around. The railway runs on weekends (and holidays) and there is a café at the rail station. The park is home to Founders Brewery and Café and is set right beside **Whakatu Marae** and **Miyazu Japanese Gardens**, which is a great place to wander around and relax. 87 Atawhai Drive.

Page Blackmore is one of my favorite bookstores in New Zealand. It's wonderful. 254 Trafalgar Street, ☎ 03-548-9992.

A Nelson Icon

The **World of Wearable Arts and Collectable Cars** has become a Nelson (and New Zealand) institution. Beginning as a small fashion show held in a tent during a rainstorm in 1987, it has grown into an international event. The annual **Montana WOW Awards Show** is held in September and entries come from around the globe – the costumes can be made of anything, but must be able to be worn. It's all about taking art off the wall, they say, and the show and gallery are fabulous. Many of the costumes from prior years are housed in the complex (displays change every four months), as is a huge collection of restored and original automobiles (those displays change every four months, too).

There are two short movies that I recommend you watch – one about the history of the show and complex, and one with clips of

prior shows. If you happen to be in New Zealand in September, make an effort to attend the show – it's a parade of fashion, lights, music and dance. It sells out well in advance and in 2003 was extended to two weekends instead of the prior one. In the complex there is also a café and a gift shop where you can buy interesting wardrobe accessories. Open daily, 10 am to 6:30 pm in summer, 10 am to 5 pm in winter, $15 adults, $7 children. www.worldofwearableart.com, 95 Quarantine Road, ☎ 03-548-9299.

Guided Options Around the Area

Organized tours with **JJ's Quality Tours** might include wine, beer, sailing, art, just about any kind of tour you want. www.jjs.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-545-1855 or 0800-568-568.

Nelson Day Tours offers various tours around the area to all the local tourist spots – crafts, wine, sites. from three hours to a full day. nelson.day.tours@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-548-4224, fax 03-548-9824.

Wine tours half- or full-day and other tour options of the region. **Bay Tours**, ☎ 03-545-7119 0800-229-868, http://webnz.co.nz/baytours.

With guided day-trips for the more active traveler, try **Adventure Ltd**. One climbing, caving and walking trip per week. $120 per person www.whenua-iti.org.nz, ☎ 03-526-7842, 0800-379-842.

■ Where to Stay

The **Lodge at Paratiho Farms** is the premier luxury accommodation in the region. This magnificent place is set on a working farm and offers the best in accommodation and extras – swimming pools, spa treatments, activities. http://paratiho.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-2100, fax 03-528-2101 ($$$$).

A Little Manor is a darling cottage with bath and kitchen in the delightful historic area of Nelson. a.little.manor@xtra.co.nz, 12 Nile Street West, ☎ 03-545-1411 or 025-247-1891 ($).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

The Last Straw Cottage is a charming B&B with bath and kitchen constructed from straw bales and located on a small farm in Brightwater. It's in a lovely location, there are mountain bikes available, a BBQ, a bathtub, a kennel for your dog and a paddock for your horse! www.laststraw.co.nz. Phone for directions, ☎ 03-542-3575 ($$$).

Sunnybank Homestead goes back to 1856 and is a Heritage Home with lovely rooms and grounds. The owner is an artist and everything is thoughtfully decorated. www.sunnybank.co.nz, 156 Nile Street, ☎ 03-548-1971 or 03-548-1973 ($$$$).

Cathedral Inn is a gorgeous big house, right near town. It's beautiful but comfortable and the owners are aware of what travelers want and need. www.cathedralinn.co.nz, 369 Trafalgar Street, ☎ 03-548-7369 ($$$-$$$$).

Out of the center of town, but near the center of New Zealand, is **Prince Albert Hotel**. Established in 1888, it has a full restaurant and bar. 113 Nile Street, ☎ 03-548-8477 ($$).

The **Honest Lawyer Pub** has much better than your average pub accommodation. It's a fun, special place to stay. www.honestlawyer.co.nz, 1 Point Road, ☎ 03-547-8850 ($$$-$$$$).

For a quiet affordable homestay, opt for **Arapiki**. www.nelsonparadise.co.nz, 21 Arapiki Road, Stoke, ☎ 03-547-3741 ($$-$$$).

Te Puna Wai Lodge is fabulously located on a hill overlooking the water. There is both apartment and B&B accommodation. It's gorgeous. www.tepunawai.co.nz, ☎ 03-548-7621 ($$$-$$$$).

Manuka Island Eco-Cottage is an environmentally friendly cottage with bath and kitchen built in 2002. Manuka Island is a private four-acre island on the Waimea estuary. www.manukaisland.co.nz, Redwood Road, ☎/fax 03-544-2762 or 025-242-1400 ($$$).

Location, location, location. **Istana Coastal Cottage** is a cottage with bath and kitchen of rammed earth and timber, right near the water and Rabbit Island. There is a swimming pool, tennis court, kayak, canoe, sailing dinghy…. www.istana.co.nz, Coastal Highway, ☎/fax 03-544-1979 or 021-136-8797 ($$$).

The **Harbourside Motor Lodge** is a new complex of studio units near the marina. www.the-harbourside.co.nz, 62 Vickerman Street, Port Nelson, ☎ 0800-426-606. ☎ 03-539-0555, fax 03-539-0222 ($$$).

Palms Nelson has studio and family units in a central location. There is a very inviting swimming pool and right next door is the Trafalgar Center with tennis, squash, a skate ramp, etc. www.palmsnelson.co.nz, 5 Paru Paru Road, corner of Halifax and Rutherford Streets, ☎ 03-546-7770 or 0800-725-676 ($$$).

Apartments Paradiso is a new complex with a lap swimming pool, a spa and sauna. It's by the same owners as **Paradiso Backpackers**. They're in a great neighborhood location and the backpacker hostel has singles, dorms, twins and doubles, some with en-suite bathroom and some with gardens. The address for the apartments is paradisonelson@hotmail.com, 5 Tasman Street (on the corner of Weka), ☎ 03-545-7128 or 0800-269-667, fax 03-546-7533 ($$-$$$). The hostel is at www.backpackernelson.co.nz, 42 Weka, ☎ 03-546-6703 ($).

Mid City Motor Lodge lives up to its name. It's right in town and while a bit longer in the tooth, the rates reflect it. 218 Trafalgar Street, ☎ 03-548-3595 or 0800-264-321 ($$-$$$).

DeLorenzo's Motel is very convenient, tidy, and contemporary. The units are spacious (with washing machines and dryers) and the pool is inviting. It's a good choice. www.delorenzos.co.nz, 51 Trafalgar Street, ☎ 03-548-9774 or 0508-335-673 ($$$).

Riverlodge Motel Apartments is a bit older and simpler, but dependable, clean and comfortable. www.nzmotels.co.nz/riverlodge, 31 Collingwood Street, ☎ 03-548-3094, fax 03-548-3093 ($$-$$$).

Shortbread Cottage is a small, friendly backpacker hostel with a pleasant garden and comfortable furnishings. 33 Trafalgar Street, ☎ 03-546-6681 ($).

Trampers Rest is also small and in a residential neighborhood. It pays to book in advance. It's a very friendly, homey place and you can get information on walks and bike rides. 31 Alton Street, ☎ 03-545-7477 ($).

The Green Monkey is also small and in a good residential neighborhood. It's in a converted villa and very tidy. A relaxing place to stay. www.thegreenmonkey.co.nz, 129 Milton Street, ☎ 03-545-7421 ($).

The Palace Backpackers is in a big old historic house in the middle of town and there's a big garden, lots of space, free spa pool and the dorms only have five people max. Free breakfast. 114 Rutherford Street, ☎ 03-548-4691, fax 03-548-4658 ($).

Central Backpackers is just that. Right smack in the middle of town. Doubles, twins and dorms. 163 Trafalgar Street, ☎/fax 03-548-9001 ($).

Footprints Lodge has apartments with bath and kitchen as well as with shared facilities in the lodge. www.footprints.co.nz, 31 Beach Road, Tahunanui, ☎ 03-546-5441 or 021-548-398 ($-$$).

Nelson Beach Hostel is just a couple of blocks from the beach. They have camping gear for rent and free bikes! nelsonbeachhostel@xtra.co.nz, 25 Muritai Street, Tahunanui, ☎ 03-548-6817 ($).

■ Where to Eat

For good value, just a little out of town is **The Honest Lawyer**, serving breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner. It's on the water and you can eat in the garden. 1 Point Road, Monaco, ☎ 03-547-8850 or 0800-921-192 ($$-$$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Along the waterfront are The Boat Shed Café, Passion, The Restaurant, and Fish Bizzare Brasserie and Bar. All of them are good. At **The Boat Shed**, you can sit outside on high stools and watch the boats while you eat fresh seafood. This is my choice for Sunday brunch. 350 Wakefield Quay, ☎ 03-546-9783 ($$-$$$).

Passion has fabulous food, but is more expensive and the food is in smaller portions (how does that work?). It's wonderful, but more of a fancy event. 322 Wakefield Quay, ☎ 03-539-1307 ($$$).

At **Fish Bizzare**, you order your food and grab a beer, sit outside and people-watch. The food is fresh and tasty and reasonably priced. It's a summer place, for sure, and it's not just fish – there are also burgers, pizza, pasta and steak! 272 Wakefield Quay, ☎ 03-548-3361 ($-$$).

You'll get consistently good food at the **Morrison Street Café**. Breakfast is great and so is the rest of the menu. They also make Atomic coffee, my favorite brand. 244 Hardy Street, ☎ 03-548-8110 ($-$$).

An old icon is **Chez Eelco**, near the cathedral. It's a cool hangout. I've done breakfast and lunch and snacks here and never been disappointed. There are couches to relax on and, if the weather keeps you from eating outside, there are windows to stare out of. Another plus, they have a good magazine collection. 296 Trafalgar Square ($-$$).

Broccoli Row is the stand-by for fish, big salads and vegetarian. Good outside seating. 5 Buxton Square ($-$$).

For the white-tablecloth option, go to **Chambers Restaurant**, where there is very good food and you can't fault the service. This is the best in town. 306 Hardy Street, ☎ 03-539-0905 ($$$-$$$$).

For fabulous pizza, go to **Lambrettas Café Bar**. They also have really good salads and innovative vegetarian options. 204 Hardy Street, ☎ 03-545-8555 ($$-$$$).

The Suter Park Café at the Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu art gallery is fantastic! Not only is it set in the picturesque Queens Gardens, but there is great coffee, cakes, food, everything is good. 208 Bridge Street ($-$$).

Nelson to Farewell Spit

■ Mapua

Heading south from Nelson on SH6, you'll soon reach SH60, the coastal route leading north to Motueka, the Abel Tasman, Takaka and Collingwood. It's a rich agricultural area, where much of the region's fruit (pears, apples, kiwi, stonefruit, grapes and berries) are grown. The first town you'll arrive in is Mapua (about 30 minutes from Nelson), a lazy little estuary town with more than its share of trendy and fun stops. At 8,500 acres, the Waimea Estuary, home to many plants, birds, insects and fish, is the largest in the South Island. It is an especially important habitat for wading shore-birds.

The inland route from Richmond to Motueka goes along the Moutere Highway and through the wine-growing region. It's an area strong in German history, with crafts and art and photogenic buildings. If you're staying in Nelson, a nice touring option is to take the inland route to Motueka and then come back via the coast – or the reverse.

Adventures

Estuary Jet Mapua Adventures has guided kayak trips around the estuary and jet-boat tours that range from a discovery tour to a specialized bird-watching trip. Bikes are also available for rent and come with maps and suggested itineraries (consider renting one and doing a wine tour from here). Jet-boat rides begin at $40 adults, $30 children; kayak trips are $55 adults, $40 children; bikes run from $10 per person. The adventure company shares its space with Pacific Rim Jewelry. www.mapuaadventures.co.nz, 8 Aranui Road, ☎ 03-540-3833, fax 03-540-3873.

EcoSail organizes sailing trips of varying lengths leaving from Mapua. www.ecosail.com, 13 Tahi Street, ☎/fax 03-540-2850.

You can poke around the estuary on ***The Flat Bottom Floozie***. Sailing times change, so call in advance or check the board at the wharf. One-hour cruise, $15 adults; two-hour, $25 adults. Children $5. ☎ 03-544-2752 or 0508-356-694.

Kid Friendly

Rent some fishing gear from Mapua Adventures and let your kids fish off the wharf.

There is an easy one-hour coastal walk along the waterfront. Leave from the wharf; at low tide the route goes around the Leisure Park.

Touch the Sea is an aquarium with a difference. This one is really geared to the kids and it's not so "glassy" looking. Visitors can touch eels and rays, peer into rock pools, and watch octopus do their thing. Fish and other marine creatures are re-introduced to the sea after spending short times at the aquarium. A marine-education specialist is on staff conducting classes and seminars. Good for all ages, and there is a gift shop as well. $5.50 adults, $3.50 children. 8 Aranui Road, ☎/fax 03-540-3557.

Where to Stay

Just outside Mapua is Mahana and **Mahana Escape B&B**. Set on a ridge-top, the views are great and the facility is comfortable, casual and classy. Lunch and dinner are by arrangement. www.mahanaescape.co.nz, 750 Old Coach Road, Mahana, ☎ 03-540-3090 ($$$-$$$$).

For a very creative option in B&Bs, try **Artizanne**, where there is also an art gallery. artizanne@xtra.co.nz, 16 Higgs Road, ☎ 03-540-3720 ($$$).

Flaxhouse Retreat offers a peaceful place to stay in an old (1860) home full of character. There is a meditation room, the food is vegetarian, spiritual healing and counseling are available. It also functions as a healing and retreat center. Relax and enjoy. www.flaxhouse-retreat.co.nz, 225 Seaton Valley Road, ☎ 03-540-3970 ($$$).

Mapua Leisure Park was New Zealand's first "clothing optional" park. It's popular with all ages of folks, and lots of families come here year after year for their summer holidays. All ranges of accommodation are available and there is a private beach. www.mapualeisurepark.co.nz, Toru Street, ☎ 03-540-2666, fax 03-540-3888 ($-$$$).

Moana Cottage, with bath and kitchen, is on the estuary, has a BBQ area, grassy lawn, a tandem bike, sailing dinghy, and other fun toys. www.moanacottage.co.nz, 32 Tahi Street, ☎ 03-540-2969 ($$$).

If you've ever wanted to sleep in a tipi, here's your chance at **Tipistay**, where you can also opt for a yurt. Central kitchen, outdoor fire area, and there are tipis with doubles, as well as dorms. www.tipistay.com, Upper Moutere Road, ☎ 03-543-2119 ($).

Where to Eat

The Smokehouse regularly receives acclaim for its food and setting and if you stop in you'll understand why. The food is fabulous (including great desserts and manuka-smoked fished) and you can't beat the location. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. www.smokehouse.co.nz, Mapua Wharf. ☎ 03-540-2280 ($-$$$).

It is impossible to choose between all the great food at **The Naked Bun Patisserie**. This must be one of the best bakeries in New Zealand. It definitely has a European flair and absolutely everything is gorgeous. Save up some calories and go for breakfast or lunch. 66 Aranui Road, ☎ 03-540-3656 ($).

Mapua is home to the **Regional Wine Centre**, where you can do comparative tastings of local beer, wine and olive oil. They are happy to ship cases nationally and internationally and also have a full restaurant and café. 67 Aranui Road, ☎ 03-540-2526 ($$).

■ Motueka

From Mapua, continuing on SH60 toward Motueka, you will skirt around Ruby Bay, where there are lots of footpaths to the beach, and (in season) lots of places to buy fresh berries! Motueka, about 30 minutes from Mapua, was one of the main Maori settlements when the Europeans arrived, and has some of the best weather in New Zealand. Most of the things to do are actually outside of Motueka, including the Abel Tasman National Park (only 35 to 40 minutes away) but this is a popular spot to use as a base. There are a few good galleries and shops, the information center is amazingly efficient and you can pick up any last-minute provisions or camping gear you may need before heading farther down the road. The **Motueka District Museum** is open weekdays and has both regular displays and changing exhibits, all with a local-history focus. Like everything else (except the information center) it's on the long main street (SH60) through town. Riwaka is just out of Motueka and has a few accommodations that make a good base for the Abel Tasman.

> **Tip:** Make sure you book accommodation in advance if you're traveling during the summer.

Information Sources

The **Visitor Information Center** is well-stocked, extremely helpful and can provide DoC information and hut passes for the Abel Tasman, Heaphy Track and Kahurangi National Park. They have their own website, www.abeltasmangreenrush.co.nz, and can be contacted at bookings@abeltasmangreenrush.co.nz or mzpvin@xtra.co.nz, Wallace Street, ☎ 03-528-6543, fax 03-528-6563.

The **Department of Conservation** has an office at the corner of High Street and King Edward Street. Open weekdays. ☎ 03-528-9117.

Adventures

On Water

Motueka River Kayaks runs two trips each day and a twilight paddle on request. $78 adults, $45 children. www.riverkayak.net, ☎ 03-528-6222.

In the Air

For that little something extra that you'll never forget, go on an aerobatic flight in an open cockpit with **Pitts-Special Biplane**. You can opt for just a scenic flights or for a charter. www.abeltasmanair.co.nz, Motueka Airfield, ☎ 0800-360-180.

To zip around in style, call **Tasman Helicopters**. They do scenic trips, lunch destinations, accommodation drop-offs, you name it. Taking a helicopter trip over the Tasman and Golden Bays or the National Parks would be a very special treat for your holiday. www.tasmanhelicopters.co.nz, Motueka, ☎ 03-528-8075, fax 03-528-8078.

Motueka is a popular destination for skydiving, and trips with **Skydive Nelson** leave from the Motueka Airport. Here's a chance to see the Abel Tasman from above and thrill yourself at the same time. www.skydive.co.nz, ☎ 0800-422-899, fax 03-528-4092.

Where to Stay

The **Avalon Manor Motel** is right on the main drag, and has mature gardens and pleasant, modern rooms. http://webnz.co.nz/avalonmotel, 314 High Street, ☎ 03-528-8320, or 0800-282-566, fax 03-528-7107 ($$-$$$).

It's a funny name, but the **Equestrian Lodge Motel** is a very pleasant motel that has park-like grounds and spacious lawns. There is also a heated swimming pool and an extensive rose garden. www.equestrianlodge.co.nz, Tudor Street, ☎ 03-528-9369 or 0800-668-782, fax 03-528-6369 ($$-$$$).

Motueka Garden Motel has studios, one- and two-bedroom units and apartments. It's located away from the main drag in a quiet area. romelaine@hotmail.com, 71 King Edward Street, ☎ 03-528-9299 ($$-$$$).

Abel Tasman Motel is a simple, older-style place, but perfectly fine and comfortable. There are rooms with bath and kitchen and rooms with bath in the lodge. www.motuekamotel.co.nz, High Street, ☎ 03-528-6688 or 0800-845-678 ($-$$).

Nautilus Lodge is new and has spa rooms, private courtyards and balconies, one-bedroom and studio units. www.nautiluslodge.co.nz, 67 High Street, ☎ 03-528-4658 or 0800-628-845, fax 03-528-4659 ($$-$$$).

For an organic B&B option, try **Rowan Cottage**. There's even a private outdoor tub. www.rowancottage.net, 27 Fearon Street, ☎ 03-528-6492 ($$$).

There are lots of backpacker hostels to choose from. The **Laughing Kiwi Backpackers** is a smallish hostel with free fruit, coffee, and storage. marknwendy@xtra.co.nz, 310 High Street, ☎/fax 03-528-9229 ($).

Set in an old Victorian, the **White Elephant Backpackers** has free bag storage while you walk the track, as well as gear rental. www.whiteelephant.co.nz, 55 Whakawera Street, ☎ 03-528-6208 ($).

Baker's Lodge is a specially built backpacker hostel and the hosts are very helpful and attentive. www.bakerslodge.co.nz, 4 Poole Street, ☎ 03-528-0102 ($).

On the main drag coming into town is **Happy Apple Backpackers**. They've just done a remodel and there's space to unwind inside and outside in the sun. www.happyapplebackpackers.co.nz, 500 High Street, ☎ 03-528-8652 ($).

The **Motueka Top 10 Holiday Park** has motel rooms and units with bath and kitchen, cabins, and backpackers accommodations. Also room for campers and tents. www.motuekatop10.co.nz, 10 Fearon Street, ☎ 03-528-7189 or 0800-668-835 ($-$$).

Riwaka Resurgence Lodge has four bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms that overlook the Kahurangi National Park. There is a pool and spa, a large lounge, 50 acres of grounds and jogging tracks! www.resurgence.co.nz, Riwaka Valley Road, ☎ 03-528-4664, fax 03-528-4605 ($$$).

You can learn Italian and stay on the Moutere River Estuary at **Grey Heron B&B and Homestay**. Host Sandro is a mountaineering instructor and Italian tutor. www.greyheron.co.nz, 110 Trewavas Street, ☎ 03-528-0472 or 021-266-0345 ($$-$$$).

Consider a stay at the **Buddha House Sanctuary** if you're looking for meditation, philosophy or Chi Kung. There is a studio with bath and kitchen, as

well as bedrooms in the house. www.buddhahouse.co.nz, 127 Umukuri Road, ☎ 03-528-4951 ($$-$$$).

Where to Eat

Hot Mama's Café is my favorite and all-time stand-by in Motueka. They have fabulous breakfast, lunch and dinner menus and make some delicious options for takeout. They also have good indoor and outdoor seating. 105 High Street ($-$$).

Thirst Café is next to the museum has L'Affare coffee, good café food and is my second choice after Hot Mama's. High Street.

As you drive into Motueka look for **TOAD Hall**. They sell great veggies, fruit, ice cream, energy bars, and baked things. 502 High.

■ Takaka & Golden Bay

Fill up your tank and drive over the Takaka Hill. At the top, there is a viewpoint where you must stop. Look back toward Nelson at all the hops and fruit trees, the coastline, the mountains – it's fabulous. To the east is the Abel Tasman National Park, to the west, the Kahurangi.

Just at the top of the Takaka Hill, 20 km (12 miles) from Motueka, is **Ngarua Caves**. The marble caves, discovered in 1870 and opened to the public in 1970, are the only known horizontal caves, so there isn't a lot of climbing to do, which makes them accessible to just about everyone. Guided tours last about 45 minutes and, in addition to an interpretive tour of the caves, include the amazing opportunity to actually hold a moa leg bone. Moa, wandering around the property, would fall into the caves through a "tomo" or hole, and many of their skeletons have been excavated from the caves. At the exit point from the cave, you can take a look at the signatures on the walls left from early visitors – the oldest dating to 1876. The caves are open daily from September to May and tours leave hourly from 10 am to 4 pm (and half-hourly during the busy holiday period). $11 adults. mte@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-8093.

> **Did you know?** Marble Mountain extends 140 km (87 miles) from north to south and is estimated to be 6,000 feet thick. It is home to the most extensive caving system in New Zealand.

Continuing on SH60, you'll quickly reach a turnoff to **Harrod's Hole**. The access road – 12 km (seven miles) – is unpaved and bumpy. The hole is 183 meters deep (nearly 600 feet) and is unforgiving – they say that you can't see down it unless you're falling into it. Access to the area is unrestricted and, a week after I was last there, a group of New Zealanders got lost and had to be lifted out by an experienced cave-rescue team. Wandering around the area gives you a good appreciation for the geology. Don't be like a moa, though, and fall down a tomo. The walk from the end of the access road takes about 45 minutes.

Once you drop off the Takaka Hill, you are in the area lovingly referred to as Golden Bay, the "Heart of the Parks." Say Golden Bay to most people who have been there and you will get a wistful look. I think just about everyone loves it; SH60 is the only access to Golden Bay and its remoteness and isolation have allowed a casual, free spirit to survive. It's a crescent-shaped bay,

hemmed by the Abel Tasman National Park on the south, Farewell Spit on the North, and Kahurangi National Park on the west. There are marvelous beaches, unique landforms, great walking tracks, good food and funky places to stay. What more can you want?

Driving directly, it's about two hours from Nelson to Takaka. With a population of 1,200, it's the biggest town on Golden Bay and has a couple of worthwhile art cooperatives, some good cafés and a big organic food store.

Information Sources

The staff at the **Golden Bay Visitor Information Centre** is very knowledgeable about Kahurangi National Park and the activities around Collingwood and Farewell Spit. They also sell DoC hut and camp passes. gb.vin@nelsonnz.com, Willow Street, ☎ 03-525-9136, fax 03-525-9288.

The extremely helpful **Department of Conservation** office in Takaka can provide you with all the information you need for this section of the South Island. They are well-stocked and well-versed in all the walking tracks and seem almost clairvoyant as to what track suits what walker. Pick up a copy of the DoC brochure, *Golden Bay, A Guide to Conservation Areas.* Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-8026. For bookings at Totaranui campground, call ☎ 03-528-8083.

Adventures

On Water

You want to touch an eel? Go to **Bencarri Nature Park**, but don't think it's just the home of the Anatoki eels – there's also an interactive nature park with plenty of animals (including yaks and llamas) and a very good café. The velvet-like eels, though, make the place pretty special. Take a few minutes in the museum and watch the eight-minute video presentation on the history of the eels and Maggi McCallum, who began feeding them kitchen scraps in 1914. Feeding times vary, but you will never wait more than an hour. $12 adults, $6 children, 10 am to 5 pm daily, longer hours over Christmas holidays. eels@bencarri.co.nz, McCallums Road, ☎ 03-525-8261.

Local produce: Just beside Bencarri, is **Anatoki Salmon**, where fish are farmed from the Anatoki River. You can fish for your own, or just pick up some already caught and/or smoked. www.anatokisalmon.co.nz, McCallums Road, ☎ 03-525-7251.

Pick a beach! All along Golden Bay is – you got it – golden sand. From Pohara to Pakawau, there are places to swim and play. I like **Pohara** a lot – it's long and sandy and good place to base yourself. **Ligar Bay** is good for swimming as well and at **Tata Beach** there's often an espresso kiosk set up at beachfront. I always want a kayak when I get here.

Te Waikoropupu Springs, "Pupu" to those in the know, is the largest freshwater springs in New Zealand. Just north of Takaka (nine km/five miles), turn off on Pupu Valley Road; there is a short walking track tracing an old gold-mining water race to the springs and an underwater observatory window.

At Pohara, you can go kayaking with **Golden Bay Kayaks** and paddle the less crowded northern end of Abel Tasman. Rentals and guided trips available. www.goldenbaykayaks.co.nz, ☎ 03-525-9095.

On Foot

For serious rock climbers, **Paynes Ford** is the place to go. It's three km (two miles) south of Takaka and, if you don't climb, it's a great place to watch those who do. In addition to the sheer faces for climbing, there are picnic areas and a 30-minute walking track that provides access not only to climbing sites, but swimming holes.

In Milnthorpe, there is a scenic reserve and the **Milnthorpe Revegetation Project**. There is a 30-minute walking track and the estuary is good for swimming.

At the **Aorere Goldfields** is the Goldfields Track, a three-hour circuit that leads to the Aorere Caves, past remnants of gold-mining days. Mind the warnings about not entering tunnels!

The easily accessible **Rawhiti Caves** are just outside of Pohara and boast the largest entrance of any cave in New Zealand. You can go on your own for free (check with DoC for restrictions) or opt for a guided walk with Kahurangi Guided Walks ($25, see *Guided Options*, page 403-404). The walk-in is through a mature podocarp forest and dry gorge and takes about two to three hours round-trip. DoC has restricted which parts of the cave are open, but you can venture pretty far in and see many cave structures.

Another walk option is to the **Wainui Falls** where you can go for a swim. From Pohara, head toward Wainui Bay and watch for the sign on your right. It's just a short drive down the access road and then a 40-minute round-trip walk through attractive bush and lovely examples of Nikau palm.

> **Did you know?** The Nikau palm is the only native palm in New Zealand and is southernmost-growing palm in the world. The trees can reach 45 feet (15 m).

On Bikes

In Takaka, be sure to call into **The Quiet Revolution Cycle Shop**. They know everything about biking in the area and have a map that describes 14 rides, including an overnight ride along the beach at Anatori and rides in the Wakatu Forest at Parapara. They rent bikes, too. ☎ 3-525 9555.

Where to Stay

It's a quick walk to good food, coffee and the shops from **Anatoki Lodge Motel**. In addition to studio, one- and two-bedroom units, there is a heated swimming pool. anatoki@xtra.co.nz, 87 Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-8047 or 0800-262-333, fax 03-525-8433 ($$-$$$).

There is both guesthouse (double, twin and share rooms) and a strawbale cottage with bath and kitchen at **The Nook**, between Takaka and Pohara. Just a short walk to the beach and off the road, you can also rent a bike here. nook@clear.net.nz, ☎ 03-525-8501 ($-$$).

The **Sunflower Motel** is nothing fancy, but the cabin-style units are serviceable and clean, the owners are friendly, the use of the laundry is free and it's

just a short walk down the path to the beach. Selwyn Street, Pohara Beach, ☎/fax 03-525-9075 ($$).

Pohara Beach Top 10 Holiday Park has just about every kind of accommodation and can get quite crowded over the holiday season. But it's handy to the beach. www.pohara.com/paradise, Abel Tasman Drive, ☎ 03-525-9500 ($-$$).

San Souci Inn is made of mud brick with a sod roof. It's Mediterranean in style and the feel is relaxed, casual and friendly to the environment. The toilets are in a separate block and are the composting type. There are doubles, family rooms and a fixed-menu restaurant. reto@sanssouciinn.co.nz, Richmond Road, ☎ 03-525-8663 ($$).

Windsong Retreat has the option of B&B or holiday home rental. It's in the bush at Wainui Bay and has great views. www.goldenbayindex.co.nz/windsong/, ☎ 03-525-8567 or 027-221-0466 ($$$$).

Totaranui Campground is managed by DoC and sites can be booked through ☎ 03-528-8083 ($).

Where to Eat

Being a funky little town, Takaka has funky little places to eat.

Dangerous Kitchen has good pizza, burritos (unusual around these parts, though they could learn about black beans), coffee and dessert. Eat-in or takeout. Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-8686 ($-$$).

The **Wholemeal Café** has good bread, pizza, yummy baked treats and healthy salads to counteract them. They've just undergone a huge expansion and I liked it more when it was small and cramped, but there's often music and it's where the locals hang out. Commercial Street ($-$$).

For that outdoor island feel, go to **Golden Fries**, where reggae on the stereo will entertain you while you sit outside and eat fish and chips and other deadly things. There is also an extensive gourmet burger menu and full meals of seafood. Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-9699 ($-$$).

Mussel Inn is north of Takaka about 16 km (10 miles), but definitely worth the drive. They have homemade beer and cider, music many nights, and great indoor and outdoor seating. Open from 11 am, food served until 9 pm, music after 9 ($-$$).

San Souci Inn has a set menu (vegetarian option available) and you can dine here whether or not you're staying, but make reservations for dinner. ☎ 03-525-8663 ($$).

■ Collingwood & Farewell Spit

Collingwood is pretty much the end of the road. SH60 finishes up here and it's a secondary road out to Farewell Spit or inland to the start of the Heaphy Track. It's a quiet little town with a couple of places to stay, one store, and a few cafés. It's a jumping-off point to tour Farewell Spit and the windswept beaches on the west coast. The primary industry for the whole of Golden Bay is dairy; next comes fish. As you travel out to Farewell Spit, you'll see the sites of cockle processing; Puponga and Pakawa are used commercially for growing and harvesting cockles – 600 tons per year are shipped overseas. This is also an important place for scallop harvesting. Puponga was also once big into coal mining, and you can see the remains of the coalmining jetty that

went 800 m (2,600 feet) into the bay. The bay is tidal-dependent and the coal mines were three km (two miles) inland.

Watchable Wildlife

Farewell Spit is the long narrow tip at the north end of the South Island. A nature reserve since the 1930s, it is a flyway for migratory birds – and a wetland of international significance. At 25 km (15 miles), it is the longest sandbar in the world and actually lies 80 km (50 miles) north of Wellington. Some of the 90 species of birds that frequent the area are bar tailed godwits, knots, curlews, pied oyster catchers, pied stilts, black swan, dotterels and Australasian gannets. This is the only place in the world where gannets nest on shell banks, instead of rocky outcrops as at Cape Kidnappers or Murawai. The Farewell Spit lighthouse was originally built in 1870 and is now automated (like all the lighthouses in NZ); the lighthouse buildings are preserved with interpretive displays. The guided tours of the area typically have a lunch break at the lighthouse grounds. You can climb the steps to the top and get great views all around. Access to the spit is through the Puponga Farm Park, but without joining one of the two guiding companies (see below), you can only walk 3½ km out. However, you can then head over the sand hill and then back along the Tasman Sea – a beautiful section of beach with a lot of fossils in the rocks and many seals.

If you are self-guiding, park at the Puponga car park, and visit the **Puponga Visitor Centre**. There are interpretive displays about the area, including an incredibly sad photo-documentary about the mass whale-stranding in 1991 (335 whales were stranded). At the visitor center, you can use powerful binoculars to view wading and shore birds.

Within the Puponga Farm Park, there are some very good walks. Follow Whararíki Road until it ends, and climb the hill over to the beach. Along Whararíki Beach, there are tremendous dunes, caves, overhanging cliffs and great views of the Archway Islands. It's a fantastic place to spend a day.

Warning: Don't even consider going to Whararíki Beach if a westerly is blowing – you will be sand-blasted.

Guided Options

The **Original Farewell Spit Safari** takes tours out to the lighthouse and/or gannet colony, leaving daily at times determined by tide. It's a fun, entertaining trip, filled with bird spotting, story telling and stopping to play on the beach. There's a chance along the way to run (or fall) down a massively steep sand hill, and lunch is at the lighthouse. It's possible that you'll stop at the beach to look for fossils in rocks, do some beachcombing and all around enjoy the Tasman Sea. You'll call into one of the great lookouts along the coast to watch for seals swimming in the water far below. All is weather- and tide-dependent, of course. In addition to the tours that go to the lighthouse or gannet colony, there's one for the serious birder in all of us – the Wader Watch, three to four hours of bird watching. From $60 adults. www.farewellspit.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-524-8257.

Farewell Spit Nature Tours go to the lighthouse but not the gannet colony and make similar stops along the way. $75 adults, $45 children. www.farewell-spit.co.nz, ☎ 03-524-8188 or 0800-250-500, fax 03-524-8091, www.farewell-spit.co.nz.

Barefoot Guided Tours don't go out to Farewell Spit, but are a good option if you don't have a vehicle or don't want to drive your own car to spots around Golden Bay. They head out to Whahariki Beach, the Quartz Range Swing Bridge and more. Operated in conjunction with the folks at Somerset Backpackers. www.bare-foot.co.nz, ☎ 0508-525-700.

Adventures

On Horses

Cape Farewell Horse Treks leads fabulous rides of any length from a couple hours to multi-day. Depending on the ride, you can go up onto the ridges for incredibly long views of Farewell Spit and beyond, or along the beaches for a sandy gallop and cave exploration on Whahariki Beach. Multi-day rides can go along the beach or into the bush. www.horsetreksnz.com, ☎ 03-524-8031.

Where to Stay

Somerset Backpackers is a comfortable and friendly place to stay, with staff knowledgeable about local activities, and happy to arrange adventures. It's on the hill and the wrap-around porch is a great place to sit and read or drink a glass of wine. www.backpackerscollingwood.co.nz, ☎ 03-524-8327 ($).

A small accommodation, the **Old Post Office** is in an old house and caters to small numbers of guests. Right in town. jacklee@xtra.co.nz, Tasman Street, ☎ 03-524-8963 ($).

Skara Brae is a small motel and B&B set in a lovely garden. www.accommodationcollingwood.co.nz, Elizabeth Street, ☎ 03-524-8464, fax 03-524-8474 ($$$).

Pakawau Beach Park is right on the beach, and has a small shop, gas station, tourist cabins and motel units. ☎ 03-524-8327 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

There aren't too many choices, but the **Courthouse Café** is fully licensed and has the best food and coffee. On the corner of Tasman Street and Haven Road ($$).

The **Collingwood Tavern** has bar and bistro meals. Tasman Street ($).

Rosy Glow Chocolates is a must-stop. All chocolates are handmade and they're not trying to be a big business – they just make chocolates that owner Mary Taylor remembers from childhood. Beach Road, Collingwood, ☎ 03-524-8348.

Abel Tasman National Park

The **Abel Tasman National Park**, named for Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, who in 1642 became the first European to discover New Zealand, is the

smallest national park in New Zealand, but has one of the biggest reputations, not to mention big visitor numbers. It's about golden sand and fairly easy-going walking and kayaking; for those who don't want to exert themselves, there are scenic boat trips, and you can arrange to helicopter in to the more posh accommodations. Sometimes I think that Abel Tasman's success has been its downfall – in the busy summer months, there are zillions of kayaks. Don't get me wrong – it's a fabulous place for a walk, the kayaking is superb and the beaches and water are stunning, but it does get crowded. I like to visit either in the spring, autumn, or winter, trying to avoid the peak season. Abel Tasman is a real gem, definitely a treasure. But when you're planning your visit, keep in mind the time of year and consider some of the options.

■ Getting Here

Marahau, 90 minutes from Nelson, is the gateway to the Abel Tasman Track. Here, you'll find a parking lot, an information kiosk, a number of accommodations, all sorts of kayak companies, and a few places to eat. Kaiteriteri is on the coast a few km before Marahau and, while not in the park, is home to many kayak companies, water taxi services and tour companies. In Totaranui, at the Golden Bay end of the park, there is also a car park, an information center and camping areas.

■ Adventures

On Water

There are scenic boat trips and water-taxi providers and, depending on where you are and where you want to go, these operators can get you (and your gear) to your destination.

If you just want a scenic boat ride, most of them offer that, but I'd probably opt for the **Abel Tasman Wilson's Experience**… they're set up for it and have large vessels with food and drink available on board. www.abeltasmannz.com, based at Kaiteriteri, ☎ 0800-223-582.

Captain Haddy's Abel Tasman Water Taxis, www.abeltasman4u.co.nz, Kaiteriteri, ☎ 03-528-7497 or 0800-423-397.

Marahau Water Taxis, www.abeltasmanmarahaucamp.co.nz, Marahau Beach Camp, ☎ 03-527-8176 or 0800-808-018.

Aqua Taxi www.aquataxis.co.nz, Marahau, ☎ 03-527-8083 or 0800-278-282.

Abel Tasman Seal Swim & Water Taxi, www.nelson.nz/web/sealswim, Marahua, ☎ 0800-527-813.

> **Watchable wildlife:** For an unforgettable experience, go with **Abel Tasman Seal Swim**. Leaving from Kaiteriteri, the trip takes you on a 45-minute boat ride out to Tonga Island seal colony followed by a one-hour swim with the seals. It seems as if dolphin swims get all the attention, but seals are often much more interactive and playful. You can add a walk or kayak option to your trip. Prices begin at $100 to swim, $60 to watch. www.sealswim.com, ☎ 03-527-8383 or 0800-252-925.

Kayaking

Most of the outfitters listed rent kayaks and equipment for one or multiple days, assuming you have a bit of experience and are not kayaking solo. If you have some money and time, I think a good option is to rent kayaks and get the water taxi to take you up to Totaranui, paddle around the top end (be mindful of weather – it gets exposed up there) and then over the next couple of days, paddle back down the coast. Kayaks are a fabulous way to travel and camp – you can stuff a truckload of gear into them and you don't have to carry anything on your back.

Guided kayak trips leave from either Kaiteriteri or Marahau. Most companies offer similars options – day-trips out to Split Apple Rock and some of the islands, with lunch on a beach; to Tonga Island Marine Reserve; or to and from different spots along the coast. Most of them are catered (lunch is usually very good and vegetarian is always an option). Most of the companies also offer multi-day trips, with camping out for one or two nights and most of them combine a kayak/walk option. I've never heard anything bad about any of the companies and, with so much competition, they really do have to stay on top of their game. They include all the necessary equipment and are suitable for everyone, even those who have no experience. Trips cancel because of wind long before they'll cancel for rain. Trips do fill up, so it pays to book a day or two in advance, or to be flexible with your schedule. If you happen into Marahau when the morning kayak trips are leaving, you may well think you're witnessing warring tribes heading out to sea. And you wouldn't be far from wrong.

Don't expect to find peace and solitude here in the midst of summer – if that's what you're after, better paddle in the winter or shoulder season. But, regardless of season and crowd, it's a gorgeous stretch of coast to explore and the golden sand beaches and clear water are hard to beat. On all the trips, you need to bring a hat, sunscreen, warm clothes to change into, and shoes that can get wet. Trips start about $65 for a half-day, $95 for a full day.

Guided Options

From Kaiteriteri: **Kaiteriteri Kayak**, www.seakayak.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8383 or 0800-252-925; **Kayak Tasman**, ☎ 0800-527-8225; and **Kiwi Kayaks**, www.kiwikayaks.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-7705 or 0800-695-494. **Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences** has a day-trip that starts with a scenic water taxi ride from Kaiteriteri to Torrent Bay and avoids the mad dash of other kayakers. www.abeltasmannz.com, ☎ 03-528-7801 or 0800-223-582.

From Marahau: **Southern Exposure**, www.southern-exposure.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8424 or 0800-695-292. **Ocean River** www.seakayaking.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8266 or 0800-732-529. **Marahau Sea Kayaks**, www.msk.net.nz, ☎ 03-527-8176 or 0800-808-018. **The Sea Kayak Company**, www.seakayaknz.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-7251 or 0508-252-925. **Abel Tasman Kayaks**, www.abeltasmankayaks.co.nz, ☎ 03-537-8022 or 0800-732-529.

For something more traditional, try a canoeing or sea kayaking trip with **Waka Tours**, daily from 9 am to 1 pm; they also run twilight tours on de-

mand. It's pretty cool and you won't do it anywhere else. $135 adults, $115 children. www.wakatours.co.nz, Kaiteriteri Beach, ☎ 03-527-8160.

Another great option is to go sailing with **Abel Tasman Sailing Adventures**. They have relaxing day-trips and learn-to-sail courses, as well as pick-ups along the track and one-way fares – a fabulous option to begin or end your walk. They are lovely people and the day-trip is just a relaxing and fun way to see the coast. Prices begin at $45. www.sailingadventures.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8375 or 0800-467-245.

On Foot

The **Abel Tasman Track** has both an inland and a coastal option, with the grand majority of trampers opting for the coastal route. It is one of the loveliest walks around, and wanders not only through long stands of undulating bush, but along the water on golden-sand beaches. Due to popularity, there are often more walkers on the track than bunks in the huts – so take a tent along. I think this is a superior option, anyway, as there are about 20 designated camping areas. The track operates on a booking system; check with DoC before setting out.

> **Tip:** Many stretches of the coastal track are tidal – make sure you check with DoC or an information center to find out tide times and plan your trip accordingly. This is especially important around Awaroa. If low tide is in the morning, it is best to walk the track from south to north; if low tide is in the afternoon, plan your trip from north to south. Subtract 20 minutes from Nelson tides, but you may as well confirm the times when you book your walk.

Excess luggage can be transported by bus between Marahau, Nelson and Takaka. Check with the information center for details. A water taxi service is available for transporting packs on the track, but I don't really recommend it as the packs are dropped off at your desired location, where there may or may not be any type of security. I think it's best to carry your pack and to ship onward or store anything not needed.

The coastal track is 51 km (32 miles) long and from Marahau to Wainui takes a total of about 16 hours. You can break up the walk in countless ways, especially if you are carrying a tent. Water-taxi services operate from Marahau to Totaranui, but my favorite section of the track is from Totaranui north. I like exploring the part of the track that isn't accessible by water taxi, because they aren't so busy and I think the rocks at Separation Point are perfect for sunbathing. There are also some remote sandy beaches at the top that are just perfect! That's not to say the lower section isn't stunning – because it is; the beach at Awaroa is gorgeous, as are many of those farther south.

One option is to walk a loop from Totaranui around the top, stay a night at Whariwharangi Homestead Hut and then come back to Totaranui by way of the inland track. From your return at Totaranui, you can then head south all the way to Marahua or be picked up at a point along the way. Or do it the other direction, beginning in Marahua and being picked up by water taxi at Totaranui.

Guided Options

Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences offers fully supported, all-inclusive walks. Accommodation is in private lodges, and group size is limited to 22. The lodge at Awaroa is the Wilson family homestead, a lovely old home filled with the history of a large and interesting family. The second lodge, at Torrent Bay, is spacious and warm, with lovely decks and gardens. Guests can do a side-track to Cleopatra's Pool. All rooms in both lodges have en-suite bathrooms and the meals are fabulous. Luggage is transported, so you only need to carry a day-pack. The Abel Tasman is not the kind of track that requires a guide, but if you want to join a group, meet some people, not worry about food, and have a more upmarket experience, Wilson's does a fantastic job. www.abeltasmannz.com, ☎ 03-528-7801 or 0800-223-582.

■ Where to Stay

In the Park

There are huts at Anchorage, Bark Bay, Awaroa and Whariwharangi Homestead. They all sleep at least 20 and have stoves for heat. There are camping areas all along the track, with the majority on the southern end.

Anchorage Bay's only safe anchorage is along the track and there are two backpacker options on board boats. The **MV *Etosha*** is a large catamaran with private and single share cabins. Meals and kayak rentals are available on the boat. catinthepark@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 0800-386-742 ($). **Aquapackers** is an ex-Navy patrol boat with 14 dorm beds, hot showers and full kitchen. Dinner, bed, lunch and breakfast. www.aquapackers.co.nz, ☎ 027-230-7446 or 025-510-882 or 0800-430-744 ($-$$).

Kanuka Hill Lodge is a small, private accommodation also at Anchorage. www.kanukalodge.co.nz,☎ 03-548-2863 or 025-242-4052 ($$$$).

Awaroa Lodge in Awaroa Bay is a fabulous accommodation that recently (2003) underwent a massive renovation. Options range from studio units to incredible suites – all scattered around the beautiful grounds. The restaurant is definitely worth a stop for a snack or a meal even if you're not staying. Make lunch or dinner here a reward for walking the track. www.awaroalodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-8758 ($$$-$$$$).

Marahau

There are three separate cabins with bath and a limited kitchen at **Abel Tasman Tourist Units**. They are nothing fancy, but very pleasant and in a pastoral setting. www.abel-tasman-marahau.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8269, fax 03-527-8275 ($$).

Abel Tasman Marahau Lodge has rooms with bath and kitchen plus studio apartments and a communal kitchen. There is also a spa and sauna. www.abeltasmanmarahaulodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8250, fax 03-527-8258 ($$$).

You can find homestay bed and breakfast, motel, and cottage options at **Abel Tasman Stables**. www.abeltasmanstables.co.nz, Marahau Valley Road, ☎/fax 03-527-8181 ($$-$$$).

For an upmarket spot, pick **Ocean View Chalets**. Located in the bush and removed from the road, there is the option of a studio or a chalet with living room and kitchen. Breakfast is available. www.accommodationabeltasman.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8232, fax 03-527-8211 ($$-$$$$).

The Barn has a few funky choices – backpacker hostel (dorm, twin or double), housetruck, tipi, or hammock in the trees. It's good, close to the track and has a small camp store. Harvey Road, ☎ 03-527-8043 ($).

The name describes it at **Old Macdonalds Farm**, where there are animals as well as studio units, cabins, camper and tent sites, and backpackers cabins. It's also home to the Gumdrop café and swimming holes. www.oldmacs.co.nz, Harveys Road, ☎ 03-527-8288, fax 03-527-8289 ($-$$).

Southern Exposure Sea Kayaking also has backpacker accommodation and a campground. www.southern-exposure.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8424 ($).

You can pitch a tent, park your van, book into a cabin or hang in the backpackers at **Marahau Beach Camp**. They also have a small camp shop, water-taxi service, restaurant and kayaks. www.abeltasmanmarahaucamp.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-527-8176 ($-$$).

Kaiteriteri

Kimi Ora Spa Resort is high on my list of great places to stay. The accommodation (bed & breakfast) is in cabins that are sprinkled around the grounds, most with fabulous decks, and there is a great swimming pool. Part of the pool is indoors (which is heated and has a counter-stream swim unit) and part is outdoors, so it can be enjoyed in all weather. There are walking tracks through the bush, tennis courts, a vegetarian restaurant and an extensive sharing library. But the real draw is the health spa, where there are plenty of options on the menu, from body massage and exfoliating wraps to mud treatments and oxygen therapy. This is a really good stop in the middle of your travels to recharge and pamper or to reward yourself after walking the track and sleeping in your tent for a few nights! www.kimiora.com, ☎ 03-527-8027 or 0508-546-4672 ($$$).

Kaiteriteri Beach Motor Camp is right across from the beach, has a general store, campsites and cabins, some with en-suite bathroom. kaiteritericamp@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8010 ($-$$).

Kaiteri Flashpackers is a motel-like backpacker hostel right across from the beach; it's a brand new place, many rooms have en-suite bathrooms, and there is a bar and restaurant that has wood-fired pizza. www.kaiteriflashpackers.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8281 or 0508-352-747 ($).

Torlesse Coastal Motel has studio, one- and two-bedrooms, or units with bath and kitchen. www.torlessemotels.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8063 ($$).

■ Where to Eat

Hooked on Marahau is open from breakfast through to dinner (fabulous dinner menu with lots of seafood, but book in advance). There is a good café menu for the whole day, plus good coffee and pleasant outdoor seating. Packed lunches also available. ☎ 03-527-8576 ($-$$).

The Park Café at the park entrance. It has good café food and packed lunches available. Marahau, ☎ 03-527-8270 ($-$$).

Kahurangi National Park

At over one million acres, Kahurangi is one of the largest of New Zealand's national parks and was only designated in 1996. Its features include an incredible limestone-and-marble cave system, glacial lakes and alpine mountains. Maori are believed to have inhabited parts of the area from the 14th century and they are believed to have traveled its coast in search of greenstone (pounamu). Because of its vastness, there are vegetation changes from one side to the other. The east is punctuated by beech forest, the west by podocarp with vines, ferns and shrubs, and on the coast there are large stands of Nikau palm. A park of superlatives, it is home to the largest cave spider and the great spotted kiwi, as well as the smallest weta and the tiny rock wren. There are more than 570 km (350 miles) of walking and tramping tracks in the park, including the Heaphy Track, one of New Zealand's Great Walks, and the very popular Wangapeka Track.

> **Did you know?** New Zealand's oldest fossil – 540 million years old – was found in Kahurangi National Park.

■ Getting Here

Depending on where in the park you want to explore, access is from Collingwood (to the beginning of the Heaphy Track), from the Cobb Valley, South of Takaka (to the alpine regions), and from Tapawera (to the Wangapeka).

■ Information Sources

Contact DoC in either Motueka (motuekaAO@doc.govt.nz, corner of King Edward and High Streets, ☎ 03-528-1810) or Takaka (goldenbayAO@doc.govt.nz, 62 Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-8026).

■ Great Walks

The **Heaphy Track** is one of New Zealand's official Great Walks. It is 82 km (51 miles), takes four to five days and is a mountain-to-sea walk. It begins at the junction of the Brown and Aorere rivers and travels over tussock, through the forest and to the Tasman Sea. It is named for Charles Heaphy, a draftsman for the New Zealand Company. Heaphy and Thomas Brunner, who was a surveyor for the company, were exploring the area with a Maori guide and were the first Europeans to travel the coastal section of what is now the Heaphy Track. Flora that you'll see along the way include red tussock, beech, flax, rimu, miro, kahikatea, matai, rata, mahoe, kamahi and pukatea. On the coast, there are fabulous stands of Nikau palms and great examples of vines. Bird life on the track is tui, weka, bellbird, wood pigeon and robin. The highest point on the track is Flanagan's Corner at 915 meters (2,970 feet).

There are seven huts on the track, making planning an individual decision – many of them are only one to two hours apart and all have bunks, heating, water and toilets. There are gas cookers in all but the Brown and Gouland Downs huts, but it is best to carry your own cooker. There are six designated

campsites and passes need to be purchased for either the huts or the campsites before entering the track. Keep your pass visible at all times.

Because the beginning and end of the track are so far away from each other, transport has been a bit of a nightmare, but more options are available now. While more costly, transport by air can be arranged through **Flight Corporation**, allowing you to return to your starting point – an important consideration if you left a car at the other end. From Karamea to Nelson, $165; from Karamea to Takaka, $150. www.flightcorp.co.nz, ☎ 03-547-8175, 0800-359-464.

Drive Me Wild Expectations provides scheduled transport to both ends of the track, as well as gear rental, hut passes and luggage storage. www.drivemewild.co.nz, ☎ 03-546-8876 0800-945-369, rates from $115 per person.

Trek Express provides transport for the various walks in the National Park, including the Heaphy. rorymoore@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 0800-128-735, fax 03-540-2042.

Other walks in Kahurangi National Park include the Leslie/Karamea, Wangapeka and a series of walks in the Cobb Valley, Mount Arthurs and Tablelands.

The **Wangapeka** is mostly forested and traverses the park from Waimea to near Karamea. It can be walked in conjunction with the **Leslie/Karamea** or with the Heaphy to make a round-trip between Nelson and the West Coast. On its own, it is 52 km (32 miles) and takes three to five days. It's a tramping track, with three-wire bridges (you can ford many of the crossings if not in flood) and some steep climbs; the highest point on the track is Little Wanganui Saddle at 1,087 meters (3,532 feet). There is snow on the passes and saddles in winter and the track has five huts. Most are category-two huts, which have bunks with mattresses, water indoors at a sink and a wood-burning stove or gas fire for heat ($10 perperson per night). They also have good camping areas.

There is a two-day **Tablelands Circuit** that is a good beginner's tramp. It's 28 km (17 miles) with a 24-bunk hut, accessed from the Flora car park. If you don't have a lot of time and still want to get into the bush, this is a good option. The Cobb Valley is filled with walking tracks, including some short walks (two to four hours). Access them from the Flora Car Park (from Motueka, turn at Pokororo), or the longer tramps from the Cobb Reservoir car park (from Upper Takaka). The Leslie/Karamea begins at the Flora carpark and is 90 km (56 miles) and takes five to seven days.

Guided Options in the Kahurangi

The following operators provide catered guide services on the Heaphy Track and other tracks within the National Park. Keep in mind that guided operators can not operate on the Heaphy from December 20 through January, or at Easter.

Adventure Guides and Southern Wilderness NZ, www.adventureguidesnz.com, ☎ 03-520-3095 or 0800-266-266.

Bush & Beyond Guided Treks, www.naturetreks.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-9054.

Kahurangi Guided Walks, www.kahurangiwalks.co.nz, ☎ 0800-264-156.

Nelson Lakes National Park

Of all the places I've been tramping in New Zealand, the Nelson Lakes National Park rates as my favorite. It's easy to get to, you can choose an easy or challenging track, a short or long trip, stay in huts or camp and pass through all kinds of scenery and vegetation. The two beautiful lakes – Rotoiti and Rotoroa – are glacial in origin and edged by beech forest. It's at the northernmost end of the Southern Alps and some of the tracks include alpine passes. The only bad thing about Nelson Lakes is the sand flies, but actually they serve a purpose. If they weren't there in such screaming hoards, the place would be overrun with walkers and trampers! With them, you have to pay a price to enjoy the fabulous scenery. The Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project is attempting to make Lake Rotoiti's beech forest predator-free.

■ Getting Here

Easy. Walks and lakes are accessed from St. Arnaud on the north shore of Lake Rotoiti. From Blenheim, take SH63 to St. Arnaud, it's about an hour and a half, as it is from Nelson. From Nelson (118 km/73 miles), head up SH6 to Belgrove and then take the Golden Downs road to Tophouse, and head west on SH63 to St. Arnaud. From Motueka, travel SH61 along the Motueka River, through the lovely Tapawera Valley to Korere, then take the turnoff to Tophouse. From Murchison, it's straight down SH63. Shuttle buses call in on their way from Blenheim to the West Coast and back.

■ Information Sources

The **St. Arnaud Area Department of Conservation** is a fabulous field center with conservation displays on Nelson Lakes National Park (including audio-visual), and last-minute tramping supplies (like pack liners). Call in here regardless of the length of walk you're doing, but be sure to file your intentions for the longer walks. www.doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-521-1806, 03-521-1896.

■ Walks

There are a variety of short and long walks that leave from St. Arnaud. The **Peninsula Nature Walk** takes 1½ hours and it's a very popular way to stretch the legs.

One favorite walk edges **Lake Rotoiti** – you can go to the Lakehead or Coldwater huts and spend the night, or just walk as far in as you like and then back. If you choose to spend the night, the walk loops around the lake, making a nice two-day trip.

My favorite tramp in Nelson Lakes is the **Travers-Sabine Circuit**, 80 km (50 miles), taking four to six days. Five days, with one day on a side-trip to Blue Lake, is a perfect trip. The tramp goes through beech forest, scrub, river flats, and steep climbs. The Travers Saddle is an alpine pass, so be prepared. Huts have water, toilets, and wood fire places.

Lake Rotoroa has some walking tracks, but is the quieter of the two and popular mostly for fishing.

Water taxis can be booked at ☎ 03-521-1894 for Lake Rotoiti, and ☎ 03-523-9199 for Lake Rotoroa.

While bikes are not allowed in the national park, there are some good **mountain biking** rides around and from the village. Ask at the DoC office for information.

■ Where to Stay in St. Arnaud

Alpine Chalet and Lodge has dorms, motel rooms with bath and kitchen, and family-style apartments, as well as a full-service restaurant and bar. www.alpinelodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-521-1869 or 0800-367-777, fax 03-521-1868 ($-$$$).

The **Yellow House** is the YHA option in St. Arnaud and has doubles, twins, and family-style rooms. The folks are very friendly, there's a big kitchen and they have tramping equipment for rent. www.yha.org.nz, ☎ 03-521-1887, fax 03-521-1882 ($).

St. Arnaud Log Chalets are cheerful accommodations with bath and kitchen, operated by the same people as the Yellow House. info@nelsonlakes.co.nz, ☎ 03-521-1887, fax 03-521-1882 ($$).

Murchison

Heading to the west on SH6, the next town of any size is Murchison (60 km/36 miles), on the banks of the Buller River. About 20 km (12 miles) before Murchison is Owen River, at the south end of the Kahurangi National Park. The Owen and Buller are popular rivers for whitewater rafting and kayaking. Gold was discovered in Murchison in 1862, but now the riches are in outdoor adventures. It's a pleasant stopping-off point when heading from one coast to the other, but try to stay long enough to enjoy some of the action.

■ Information Sources

The **Murchison Information Centre** provides local and DoC information and makes bookings for DoC huts. 47 Waller Street, ☎/fax 03-523-9350.

■ Adventures

On Water

With all the rivers nearby, whitewater rafting and kayaking are two of the biggest activities around. **Ultimate Descents** run full- and half-day raft trips on the Buller – the put-in is just five minutes from the base and, depending on flow, the river is grade III-IV, going through granite canyons and deep gorges. They can also arrange raft trips to the Maruia (two days) and the Clarence (five days); or heli-rafting to the more remote Karamea and Mokihinui. Closer to home and bit easier are the inflatable, sit-on-top kayak trips – with different kayaks to suit your ability. www.rivers.co.nz, ☎ 03-523-9899.

The other rafting company in town is the smaller **White Water Action**. They also have full- and half-day trips in rafts and on inflatable kayaks and lead multi-day and remote trips to other rivers. adventure.tours@xtra.co.nz, Main Road, behind the information center, ☎ 03-523-9581 or 0800-100-582.

Those more serious about the river, and I mean serious, should contact the **New Zealand Kayak School**. This is where you go if you want to learn (or

improve) your whitewater kayaking skills. You sleep, eat and breathe it for a week. I tried to enroll in a course once, and they talked me out of it, but I still want to do it! I'm just a little scared. www.nzkayakschool.com, ☎ 03-352-5786.

On Foot

There are some "extreme" tramping tracks around here and you really should inquire about them with DoC. The information center has details on many of them. A short, not-so-extreme option is the two-hour **Skyline Walk** that crosses the Matakitaki River and climbs up to a ridge where you can have great views of where the Buller, Matakitaki, Matiri and Marui rivers all come together.

On Bikes

There is some good riding to be done around Murchison. Ask at the information center about bike rental.

■ Where to Stay

The Commercial Hotel has pub rooms away from the pub noise. ☎ 03-523-9490 ($-$$).

The **Murchison Motel** is a small (six-unit) place, but the same owners also have two-bedroom apartments with bath and kitchen and a three-bedroom riverside house available. All at very reasonable prices. www.murchisonmotels.co.nz, 53 Fairfax Street, ☎ 03-523-9026 or 0800-166-500, fax 03-523-9298 ($$).

The **Mataki Motel** is an older place, but suits the need. Some kitchens are complete, some just have a jug and toaster. 34 Hotham Street, ☎ 03-523-9088 ($$).

Kiwi-Park Motel and Holiday Park has tent and power sites as well as cabins, tourist apartments and very good motel units. Everything is clean and the folks are friendly. 170 Fairfax Street, ☎ 03-523-9248 ($-$$$).

On the Nelson side of town is the **Riverview Holiday Park**, with lots of trees, cabins, tourist apartments and tent and power sites. riverview.hp@xtra.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-523-9591 ($-$$).

The **Lazy Cow** is a new backpacker hostel in a home. There are doubles, singles and dorms (five rooms in all). lazycow@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 0800-529-9269 ($).

■ Where to Eat

In addition to a couple of takeout shops, your choices are really limited to the following.

Rivers Café is a cool, funky place to get a meal. It's at the base for Ultimate Descents (see page 413). 51 Fairfax Street, ☎ 03-523-9009 ($-$$).

The Commercial Hotel has bistro meals and is the best place in town for a good dinner. SH6, ☎ 03-523-9696 ($$-$$$).

Beechwoods Wayside Rest is a café that caters to tourists and is always busy and loud. SH6 ($-$$).

West Coast

Introduction

Long before the Europeans came to the West Coast in search of gold, the Maori came over to find *pounamu* or greenstone. This was used for cutting tools, weapons and adornment. It's still a valuable possession and you'll find evidence of it all along your travels on the West Coast. The longest region in New Zealand, the West Coast stretches for 550 km (341 miles), nearly as far as from Auckland to Wellington, but it's only about 30 km (19 miles) wide. It is a coast of amazing scenery, with the Southern Alps extending nearly its whole length.

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Those who live on the West Coast are referred to as "Coasters" by the rest of the country and enjoy a more relaxed lifestyle than you'll find in many other parts. It's a region marked by rainforests, glaciers, gold and coal mines. The gold was found first (and in large quantities), while the coal, which is still being mined, came later. Dairying is a big industry on the coast. Recently, so is growing and exportation of sphagnum moss.

The Tasman Sea whips into a fury but can be calm and gentle – so too, can the weather be a bit of a challenge. It rains over here. But much of the scenery on the West Coast is due to rain – you can't have all this green and all of these rivers and waterfalls without a lot of the wet stuff! And it doesn't mean that you'll be soaked the whole time you're here, though it might pay to carry an umbrella or waterproof jacket. Don't let the rain stand in the way of getting out and enjoying the place – many of the bush walks are under canopy and there is no more spectacular time to visit the rain forest than when it's a bit misty or rainy.

And how about those sand flies? They're miserable and we all know it, but, if you apply sand fly repellent and keep your skin covered, you'll be less bothered. If you do get bitten (and chances are you will), pick up some antihistamine or anti-itch cream at the drugstore.

Take care: The West Coast is noted for its unsafe swimming beaches. Before you go into the surf, get some local knowledge.

There's plenty of adventure to be had on the Wild West Coast – from glacier walks to whitewater rafting to cave exploration – and there are countless walking tracks. You can see dolphins, seals, penguins, rare and endangered

birds and a carnivorous snail. The bird life in the rain forest is remarkable and the trees. The trees. Reaching sky-high and packed densely on the mountains are rata, rimu, kahikatea, nikau palm, tree ferns, and the list goes on. There are lots of caves and rocks to explore and not very many people around.

Whitebait is a New Zealand delicacy but becomes a new religion on the West Coast. Make sure you have at least one whitebait fritter, preferably on white bread with ketchup and matched with some good, fattening, salty chips. What is it? Well, whitebait are tiny, nearly transparent fish that are the young of three species: the inanga, the koaro and the banded kokopu. The inanga (galaxies maculatus) is the most commonly caught. White bait are usually caught in nets and friendships have ended over fishing rights. The season is short, running from August or September to November, but regional dates may differ. The best way to cook them is to beat a few eggs, add some breadcrumbs or a little flour, salt and pepper and a few ounces of whitebait. Fry them up! Delicious.

Getting Here

■ By Air

Air New Zealand serves Westport and Hokitika by way of Christchurch.

■ By Car

SH6 runs almost the entire length of the West Coast. You can reach SH6 either at Westport via SH6 from Nelson; via SH7 from Reefton; via SH73 and Arthurs Pass; or via the Haast Pass. In each section, I've described travel times.

■ By Bus

The major routes of the West Coast are served by **InterCity** (Nelson to Haast, including most of the West Coast from Westport south) and **Atomic Shuttles** (as far north as Greymouth). Other regional operators are listed in the appropriate sections. As with the rest of the country, you can book transport at any information center and most booking agents.

InterCity Coachlines, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 03-379-9020.

Atomic Shuttles, www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-768-5101 (Greymouth), ☎ 03-789-6658 (Westport).

Information Sources

Local information centers are listed in each section, but for more information about the whole region, take a look at **www.west-coast.nz**.

The Buller Gorge to Westport

SH6 continues west from Murchison, following the Buller River eventually to its mouth at the Tasman Sea. A quick 11 km (seven miles) from Murchison, you will reach the junction of SH65 – which leads through the lush Maruia

Forest to Maruia Junction. Continuing on SH6, though, in another few minutes you'll reach Ariki Falls and then the dense and green Buller Gorge. Farther on, it's into the Inangahua Junction, a region deep with mountains on all sides and one scenic spot after another.

This area has certainly had its share of mining, but the most interesting land activities happened with no prompting from man – the earthquakes in 1929 and 1968 reshaped the land; you can see the evidence at the view of the **Inangahua earthquake slip**. There's a good car park and walk down to the river – it only takes a few minutes and is a must side-trip. The **Lyell Walks** explore the ghost town area of Lyell, 17 km (10½ miles) from the Inangahua Junction (35 km/22 miles from Murchison). Pick up a copy of the *Lyell Walks* DoC leaflet that describes the 10- to 45-minute walks.

The Lower Buller Gorge, farther on from Inangahua, gets really narrow and twisty, the rock at **Hawk's Crag** hanging over the road very close to the height of passing buses and trucks. You'd hate to lose your steering along here.

■ Adventures

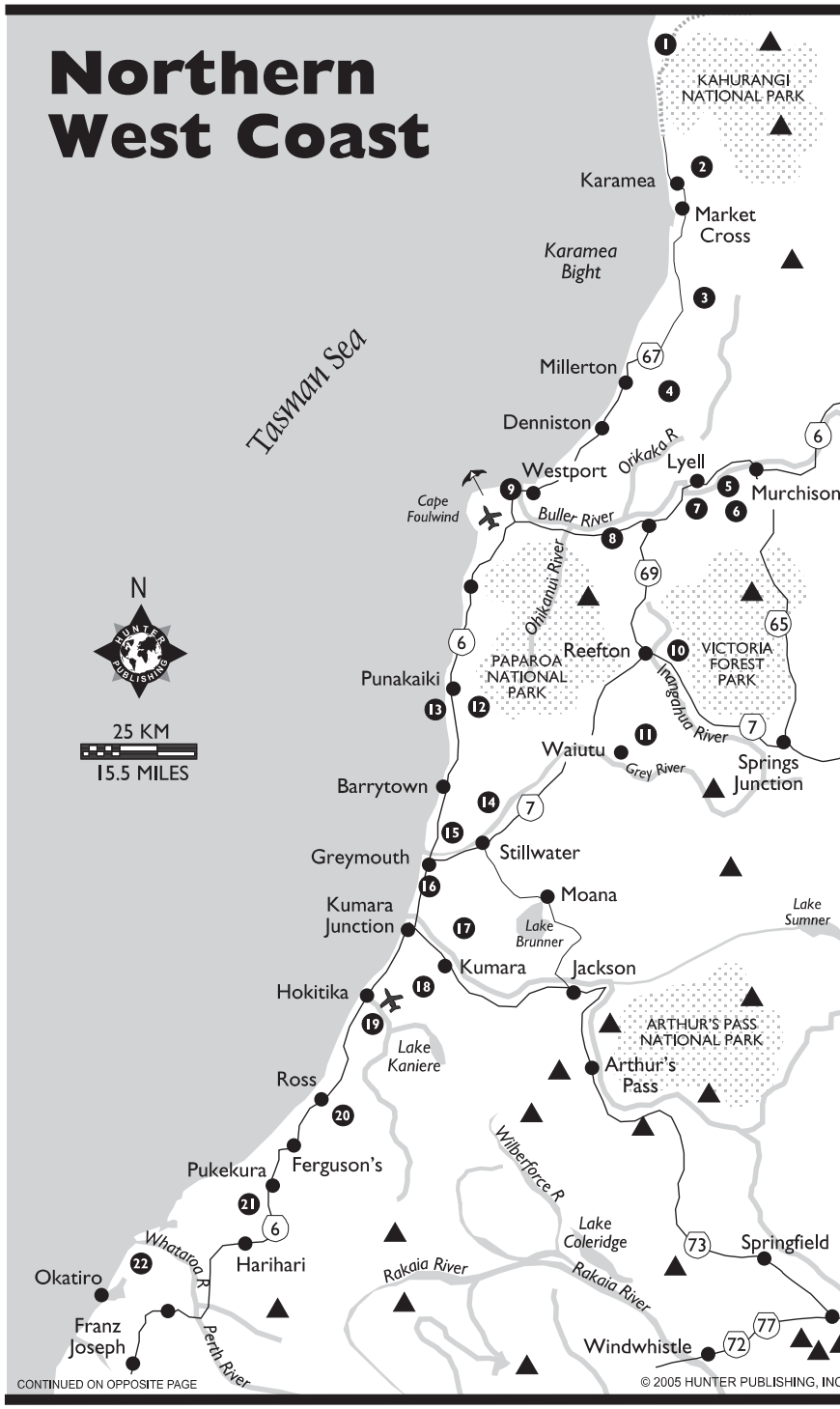
For those of you who aren't trampers and have only heard about swing bridges from your friends, you can walk across New Zealand's longest swing bridge (110 meters/357 feet) and then zip back across on the flying fox (160 meters/520 feet). It's all at **Buller Gorge Swing Bridge**. Say you don't know what a flying fox is? Well then you haven't seen enough of New Zealand. In this case, it's a chair-like contraption that you're harnessed into and flung across the gorge by wire. For something more sedate, you can go on a nature tour or a gold-panning trip. They can also arrange jet-boating and rafting trips. www.bullergorge.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-523-9809.

Buller Adventure Tours have just about all the other action activities in the gorge sewn up. See them for rafting (whitewater and family floats), horse-trekking, jet-boating, and eight-wheel, all-wheel-drive, amphibious Argo safaris. www.adventuretours.co.nz, on the Buller Gorge Road, ☎ 03-789-7286 or 0800-697-286.

You can JetSki the Buller River with **Xtreme Adventures**, which is a pretty cool way to see the river and gorge. They also offer an option to ride down the river and out into the Tasman Sea. Trips range from one to three hours and prices start at $110. www.xtremeadventures.co.nz, ☎ 025-526-405 or 0800-526-405.

Inland to Greymouth

From Inangahua at the junction of SH6 and SH69 a trip to Greymouth takes you through the beautiful **Inangahua Valley** over the mountains and into the Grey Valley. At Ikamatua, you can choose to stay on SH69 or skip across the Grey River and pass through Blackball. Either way, your trip will be cloaked in green. **Reefton** is pretty much in the center of the **Victoria Forest Park**, the largest forest park in New Zealand. It came to life during gold mining and now the town and surrounding area is a gem for biking, walking and fishing. Continuing south from Reefton, one of the beauties of the region is that there is no compelling reason to do anything – just drive and enjoy the scenery.


Northern West Coast
KAHURANGI NATIONAL PARK
Karamea
Market Cross
Karamea Bight
Tasman Sea
Millerton
Denniston
Westport
Orikaka R
Lyell
Murchison
Cape Foulwind
Buller River
Ohikanui River
PAPAROA NATIONAL PARK
Reefton
VICTORIA FOREST PARK
Inangahua River
Punakaiki
Waiutu
Grey River
Springs Junction
Barrytown
Greymouth
Stillwater
Moana
Kumara Junction
Lake Brunner
Lake Sumner
Kumara
Jackson
Hokitika
ARTHUR'S PASS NATIONAL PARK
Lake Kaniere
Arthur's Pass
Ross
Wilberforce R
Pukekura
Ferguson's
Lake Coleridge
Springfield
Whataroa R
Harihari
Rakaia River
Okatiro
Franz Joseph
Perth River
Windwhistle
N
25 KM
15.5 MILES
CONTINUED ON OPPOSITE PAGE
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Southern West Coast

NORTHERN WEST COAST (OPPOSITE PAGE)

1. Heaphy Track, Heaphy Bluff
2. Karamea Gorge
3. Charming Creek Walk
4. Denniston Walkway
5. Ariki Falls
6. Upper Buller Gorge
7. Maruia Falls
8. Hawk's Crag
9. Tauranga Bay Seal Colony, Cape Foulwind Walk, Lighthouse, Carters & Nine Mile Beaches
10. Murray's Creek Goldfield Walk
11. Big River Track
12. Inland Pack Track
13. Dolomite Point, Blowholes, Pancake Rocks
14. Croesus Track
15. Point Elizabeth Walkway
16. Jungle Boat Cruises, Wild West Adventure Co., Jade Boulder Gallery, Left Bank Art Gallery, Monteith Brewing Co.
17. Shantytown
18. Waimea Goldfields, Goldsborough Walks
19. Paddleboat Cruise, Canoe & Kayak Trips, Lake Kaniere Walk & Water Race Track, Mahinapua Walk, Carnegie Centre & Art Gallery, West Coast History Museum, Hokitika Craft Gallery
20. Panning at Ross Goldfields
21. Lake Ianthe
22. Okatiro Forest

SOUTHERN WEST COAST (THIS PAGE)

23. Alps Panorama, Three Mile Lagoon Walk
24. Lake Mapourika Walk
25. Franz Josef Glacier, Douglas Track
26. Fox Glacier, Glow Worm Dell, Chalet Lookout Walk
27. Lake Matheson Walk, Alps Panorama
28. Gillespies Beach, Seal Colony
29. Copland Track
30. Lakes Paringa & Moeraki
31. Ships Creek
32. Thunder Creek Falls
33. The Gates of Haast
34. Haast Pass, Fantail Falls
35. Mt. Cook, Hooker Glacier Lake & Walk, Blue Lakes Walk
36. Tasman Glacier, Murchison Glacier
37. Godley Glacier
38. Lyell Glacier, Ramsay Glacier

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Did you know? Reefton was the first town in New Zealand to have an electric power supply. Electricity was switched on in August 1888.

■ Getting Here

It's about 35 km (22 miles) from Springs Junction to Reefton and takes 30 minutes to drive. To Greymouth, it's 80 km (50 miles) and takes one hour.

■ Information Sources

The incredibly helpful and friendly **Reefton Information Centre**, reeftoninfo@paradise.net.nz, is at 67 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8391, fax 03-732-8616.

The **DoC** office is in the same location and there is a good display on mining.

■ Adventures

On Foot

If you like to walk, come to Reefton and stop in the information center where they will load you down with brochures and maps. There is an historic walk around town that takes as little or as much time as you want and there are multi-day tramps.

Outside of town, north on SH69, there's a short and sweet walk called **Larrys Creek Track**. It takes two to three hours and goes by mining remnants from one of the region's earliest claims.

Off SH7 toward Springs Junction, you can access the **Murray Creek Goldfield Tracks**. These range from 10 minutes to two hours and go through an area that once had over 200 claims. Farther down SH7, there is a series of tracks, collectively known as the **Rahu Saddle Tracks** that lead into little-visited bush and take between one and four hours.

*The **Victoria Conservation Park and Environs** brochure outlines seven walks including the 90-minute trip to **Alborns Coal Mine**, off Soldiers Road and the two- to three-day **Kirwans Reward Track**.*

On Bikes

One of my favorite mountain-bike rides was done with my friend Amy on the **Big River** track. It was a great ride through the bush and along an old pack track, then up to a clearing where we slept in the sun and life was good.

Ghost Town

If you ride or walk the whole Big River Track you will either begin or end in Waiutu. It's a ghost town now, but was the South Island's richest gold mine. It's the kind of ghost town that you want to poke around for a couple of hours, have a picnic, pitch a tent. Remnants of most buildings remain, though in some cases only the chimneys. There are new in-

terpretive signs. The town was a perfect model of a gold-mining town – about 600 people lived here, there was a hospital, a bowling green, a working-man's club and all the rest. The mine closed in 1951 when the Blackwater shaft collapsed. It would cost too much to open it back up, but the mine had produced 730,000 ounces of gold during its workings. Pick up a copy of the **Waiutu Victoria Forest Park** brochure and map from the information center. To get here by car, from SH7, travel 21 km (13 miles) south and follow the road sign. The first nine km (five miles) are paved, the second half is a bit steeper and is unpaved.

■ Where to Stay

Tip: You simply must stay at **Formerly the Blackball Hilton**, a traditional old pub in Blackball that makes good pub food, serves a lot of beer and has simple hotel accommodation. The funny name comes from "the" Hilton hotel chain not liking this little pub calling itself The Blackball Hilton. Lawyers convinced the small-town establishment to change its name and so it did – adding "Formerly." www.blackballhilton.co.nz, 26 Hart Street, ☎ 03-732-4705 ($-$$).

Accommodation in Reefton is not on the fancy side, but you can find comfortable digs at the **Reef Cottage Bed & Breakfast and Café** where there are nicely decorated suites. www.reefcottage.co.nz, 51 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8440 or 0800-770-440 ($$$).

Reefton Auto Lodge has studio units with bath and kitchen and offers fly-fishing packages. www.flyfishingparadise.co.nz, 74 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8406, fax 03-732-8955 ($$-$$$).

The **Bellbird Motel** has simple motel units. bellbird@minidata.co.nz, 93 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8444 or 0800-235-524 ($$).

Reefton Backpackers is nothing fancy but has big rooms with not very many beds in them. It's an old house; the kitchen is fine, the garden is simple. 64 Shiel Street, ☎ 03-732-8383 ($).

The **Old Bread Shop Backpackers** is another small place and is vibrantly colored and friendly. 157 Buller Road, ☎ 03-732-8420 ($).

The **Old Nurses Home Accommodation and Backpackers** has single and double rooms, as well as apartments with bath and kitchen. Boy, it's big. 104 Shiel Street, ☎ 03-732-8881 ($).

The **Hotel Reefton** has simple hotel rooms with shared baths. 75 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8447 ($).

■ Where to Eat

No trip to the West Coast is complete without a meal of **Blackball Salami**. It's good stuff and a great shop. Open Monday to Saturday. 11 Hilton Street, Blackball, ☎ 03-732-4111.

Reefton hasn't really gotten on the culinary bandwagon, and you'll be able to choose what takeout sounds best. But there are a couple of spots that a road-weary traveler will enjoy.

The **Reef Café** is your best bet for something tasty to go with a decent cup of coffee or for a light meal. 55 Broadway ($).

Café Alfresco would be the next choice and the first choice for pizza. They have (not surprisingly) outdoor seating. 16 Upper Broadway ($).

If you've been searching for a home-cooked roast, go to the **Reefton Hotel**. They'll fill you up and the food is something like grandma's. 75 Broadway ($).

Westport North to Karamea

As you head north on SH67, you will be returning the way you came, unless you fly out from Karamea or walk the Heaphy Track to Nelson. Karamea is isolated. Bound on three sides by the Kahurangi National Park and on one side by the Tasman Sea, it is a special place to visit. There are caves to explore, walks and bike rides to enjoy, beaches to blob out on – it's a great section of land up here. And one that you shouldn't rush through. The first time I came north of Westport, I figured a day, two days tops. But I stayed more than a week and wished for more time.

■ Getting Here

By Car

From Westport, it's an 88-km (55-mile) drive to Karamea that'll take you about 1½ hours. About 50 minutes into the drive, you'll reach Hector.

By Bus

The **Karamea Express** has weekday service between Westport and Karamea. ☎ 03-782-6916.

■ Information Sources

The **Karamea Information and Resource Centre** is home to the Karamea Centennial Museum, info@karameainfo.co.nz, at Market Cross, ☎ 03-782-6652, fax 03-782-6654.

■ Walks

This section of the West Coast is filled with coal mines – the town of Denniston (historically the biggest producing area) is but a ghost town now, and can be reached by the **Denniston Walkway**, which takes two or three hours and has a bit of a climb to it. There are countless little walking tracks on the old mining roads. The best advice that I can give you is to ask at the DoC office in Westport, the information center in Karamea or to inquire at your hotel – they'll know the best ones and what the conditions of the tracks are, but one you don't need to ask about is the **Millerton Incline Railway Walk** which is just 10 minutes and not as steep as the Denniston. The **Charming Creek Walk** is one of my favorites; it is about two hours one-way and follows the old coal rail lines.

For information on the Heaphy Track, see the Nelson chapter, pages 410 ff.

Some 45 minutes north of Karamea is the **Oparara Valley**, home to amazing limestone cave and arch formations, sink holes, bridges, underground

streams and carnivorous snails. You can visit some of the arches and sites on your own (and take a look at the tannin-stained river). Head north from Karamea and follow the signs. This area is slated to be more promoted to tourists – it's been a bit ignored. Former logging roads are being developed and the the **K-Road Mountain Bike and Walking Track** – officially opened by the Prime Minister on a drippy wet day – is the first stage. K-Road is 27 km (17 miles) long and a relatively easy ride or tramp that goes through regenerating forest and has some great views.

The two-tiered 200-meter (650-foot) **Oparara Arch** is a popular 40-minute walk. Another draw is **Mirror Tarn**, a reflective lake reached by a 10-minute walk. You can explore **Crazy Paving** and **Box Canyon Caves** on your own, but the **Honeycomb Cave**, which has 70 entrances and over 13 km (eight miles) of passages, can only be visited on a guided trip. It was just discovered in the 1970s and holds skeletons of many bird varieties, including the extinct moa and the Haast eagle You can arrange tours with the **Last Resort** in Karamea or explore the area on a guided walk or by kayak with **Advenures Unlimited**, ☎ 03-782-6111.

■ Where to Stay

AUTHOR'S PICK

Just north of Granity is Hector and **The Old Slaughterhouse**. This is one of my all-time favorite places to stay in New Zealand. It's on a hill (park at road level and walk up the path, your bags will go up on a quad bike) with fantastic views of the sea. Accommodation is doubles and dorms in buildings set behind the main house, which is open for you to enjoy. There is a fabulous deck and I could sit for days watching the sea. David, the owner, and I share the same birthday and he is a great host and wonderful guy. He even came to my birthday party in Renwick one year. If you go, be sure to say "Hi" for me. SH67, Hector, ☎ 03-782-8333 ($).

The **Last Resort** has a broad range of accommodation options in a comfortable, clean and pleasant complex. The roofs are of sod, so that's kind of fun, but you won't find any dirt inside. The buildings are constructed (mainly by hand) of local building materials. Everything from budget rooms to cottages with bath and kitchen. www.lastresort.co.nz, ☎ 03-782-6617 or 0800-505-042, fax 03-782-6820 ($-$$$).

Bridge Farm Motel has modern one- and two-bedroom units that have bath and kitchen, and look out on to fabulous views of the national park. Breakfast is included. www.karameamotels.co.nz, Bridge Street, ☎ 03-782-6955 or 0800-527-263, fax 03-782-6748 ($$).

The **Karamea Village Hotel** has lodge rooms as well as separate motel units. karameahotel@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-782-6800 or 0800-826-800 ($-$$).

The **Karamea Holiday Park** has cabins and motel rooms. Maori Point, ☎ 03-782-6758 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

Remember it's a small town, but you can get coffee, pies and sandwiches while looking at crafts at **Saracens** ($).

The **Karamea Bight Restaurant** at the hotel has above-average pub food ($).

And the **Last Resort** has both a restaurant and bar options ($).

Westport

While gold might have settled some towns around the South Island, it has been coal that brought Westport, near the mouth of the Buller River, to life. Julius Haast and James Burnett first discovered coal at the in the Papahaua Ranges in 1860; two years later, a detailed survey showed the region to be holding millions of tons of extractable coal. Robert Denniston, for whom one of the biggest mining sites is named, sparked the interest in mining coal and the construction of the Denniston Incline was begun in 1878. It operated for nearly 90 years, bringing coal from many of the sites up in the hills. A visit to the **Coaltown Museum** will give you a better appreciation of coal mining in the area and of minerals in general. There's a simulated coal mine and the sound effects and musty smell is there, too! Open daily, 9 am to 4:30 pm. Queen Street, ☎ 03-789-8204.

> **Tip:** Pick up a copy of the *Buller Coalfields Heritage Trail* before you head north – it points out 10 spots that were instrumental in the coal mining industry of this area.

Coal mining is still a big industry on this section of the West Coast and, as New Zealand struggles to meet its growing energy demands, eyes are shifted to coal. It's a can of worms, though, as New Zealand also aims to meet the Kyoto Protocol greenhouse gas reduction goals. In total, New Zealand has an estimated 10 billion tons of coal – surely enough to power us for quite a long time. Tourism is becoming a healthy second industry to the Westport area – increasing numbers of domestic and international visitors are finding their way to this comfortable town.

■ Getting Here

By Air

Air New Zealand serves Westport by way of Christchurch.

By Car

Westport's the end of the road for SH67 that leads from Karamea and it's at the junction of SH6 – from here, head back inland to the Buller Gorge or south to the rest of the coast. From Nelson, the 230-km (143-mile) drive will take you just under four hours; from Greymouth, it's about 105 km (65 miles) and a drive of an hour and 45 minutes. A straight shot from Christchurch is 335 km (208 miles), a bit over five hours.

By Bus

InterCity Coachlines connects Westport with Nelson and points south on the West Coast. **East West Shuttles**, ☎ 03-789-6251, runs between Westport and Christchurch and the **Karamea Express**, ☎ 03-782-6916, has weekday service between Westport and Karamea.

■ Information Sources

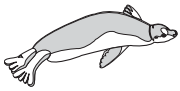
Check out www.westport.org.nz for more information on this area.

The extremely helpful **Visitor Information Centre** is open daily with later hours in the summer. Contact them for Heaphy Track information. westport.info@xtra.co.nz, 1 Brougham Street, ☎ 03-789-6658.

The **DoC** office is at 72 Russell Street and is open weekdays daily from 9 am to 5 pm (closed for lunch), ☎ 03-788-8008.

■ Adventures

On Foot



The **Tauranga Bay Seal Colony** is home to up to 300 fur seals. Pups are born during November and December, and they stay on the rocks with their mothers for a good month. It's just a couple of minutes' walk from the car park to the seal colony. The **Cape Foulwind Walkway** is 90 minutes one-way; it passes past the seal colony along the cliffs and has an optional trip to the lighthouse. The name comes from Captain Cook, who arrived here in bad weather, but the walkway is not foul at all – in fact, it's quite pleasant, gently rolling and gives good coastal views.

On Water

See page 427 details on Charleston-based Underworld Rafting and page 417 for Buller Gorge activities.

On 4x4

Outwest Tours runs all sorts of trips around the region, getting out to the back of beyond in a variety of vehicles. www.outwest.co.nz, ☎ 0800-688-937.

Guided Options

Burning Mine Adventures can set up mountain biking, kayaking, mine tours or connections to walking tracks. ☎ 0800-343-337.

> **Cool shop:** One of my favorites is **Hector Pottery** at 116 Palmerston Street; call ☎ 03-782-8107 to visit the studio.

■ Where to Stay

The **Ascot Motor Lodge** has rooms with bath and kitchen and is close to the town center. ascotmotorlodge@xtra.co.nz, 74 Romilly Street, ☎ 03-789-7832 or 0800-657-007, fax 03-789-6311 ($$).

The **Bella Vista Motel** is new and tidy and has very modern rooms with bath and kitchen. www.bellavistamotels.co.nz, 314 Palmerston Street, ☎ 03-789-7800 or 0800-493-787, fax 03-789-8110 ($$-$$$).

Westport Motor Hotel has doubles, twins and triple rooms with a restaurant on site. wptmh@xtra.co.nz, 207 Palmerston Street, ☎ 0800-500-989, fax 03-789-7885 ($$$).

At Cape Foulwind, you can stay in a studio at the **Omau Settlers Lodge Motel**. Breakfast is included and everything is new and clean.

thecape@xtra.co.nz, Cape Foulwind, ☎ 03-789-5200 or 0800-466-287, fax 03-789-5600 ($$-$$$).

TripInn Hostel and Tours is in an old house with twin, double and dorm rooms. It's homey and comfortable. There's a free gas BBQ and videos as well as space for tents. These folks also run 4x4 tours around the West Coast. 72 Queen Street, ☎ 03-789-7367 or 0800-874-746, fax 03-789-5401 ($).

Another old house converted into a backpacker hostel is **Robyn's Nest Hostel**. There's a big porch and kitchen, a dog and a cat and interesting old woodwork. There are twins, double, shared-bath units and dorms. www.robynsnest.co.nz, corner of Pakington and Romilly Streets, ☎ 03-789-6565 or 0800-550-109 ($).

Last but not least, the **Happy Wanderer** has doubles, twins and dorms. They are spread among three buildings and each has its own shared facilities. 56 Russell Street, ☎ 03-789-8627 ($).

There are units with bath and kitchen, deluxe and family suites at the **Seal Colony Top 10 Holiday Park**. www.sealcolonytouristpark.co.nz, Marine Parade, Carters Beach, ☎ 03-789-8002 or 0508-937-876, fax 03-789-6732 ($-$$).

The **Westport Holiday Park** has rooms with en-suite bathroom and standard chalets, cabins and motel units, plus tent and power sites. www.westportholidaypark.co.nz, 31 Dormett Street, ☎ 03-789-7043, fax 03-789-7199 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

There is no shortage of quick food and takeout options, but the choice for a good meal that might be a bit more special is **The Bay House**. They specialize in great food with a contemporary twist and the setting is equally special. Open daily, 9 am until late. Tauranga Bay, Cape Foulwind, ☎ 03-789-7133 ($-$$).

In town, **Percy's** is probably your best choice for coffee and a light meal, including vegetarian options. 198 Palmerston Street ($).

The **Dennison Dog Saloon** is a good spot for wine and beer and fresh New Zealand food. Your in-town dinner choice. 18 Wakefield Street, ☎ 03-789-5030 ($$).

Punakaiki & Paparoa National Park

The drive from Westport to Punakaiki is one spectacular view after another. Pounding surf, limestone cliffs, curving roads, small towns that have secret stories of mining days to tell and the inland Paparoa National Park. It's not a drive to be rushed and there are some caves and an old gold center in Charleston.

The **Blowholes** and **Pancake Rocks** at Dolomite Point are the most famous features of Paparoa National Park but they are my no means the only features. The blowholes, most fabulous when the tide is high and the swell is coming from the south or southwest, put on an explosive show when water rushes into the caverns below and surges out through small openings, geyser-style. The Pancake Rocks, layer upon layer of limestone, have made it onto just about every New Zealand calendar and postcard collection. And no

wonder, they are a fabulous example of how the earth moves and shifts and lifts, creating art that we can't. If you happen by on a day of pounding surf, you may understand how the water could carve the holes in the first place. There is a short walk (10 minutes) to view the structures and you'd be wise to heed the warnings on the track.

Paparoa National Park became New Zealand's 12th National Park in 1987 and encompasses the area between SH6, SH7, and SH5. It's a grand little triangle that is covered in lowland rainforest – trees like gaint rata, rimu and miro reach for the sun, while nikau palms, tree and ground ferns, supplejack and other vines hug the ground.

> **Did you know?** Under the right conditions, supplejack (the Tarzan-looking vine) can grow up to half a meter a day? That's 20 inches!

■ Information Sources

The **Paparoa National Park DoC Visitor Centre** is a helpful and interesting stop; it's hard to miss it. punakaikivc@doc.govt.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-731-1895, fax 03-731-1896.

■ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

Birds here are abundant, including the lyrical tui and bellbirds and the whoosh-whoosh of the kereru. Notably, though, this is the world's only breeding site of the **Westland black petrel**. The largest of the burrowing petrels, it spends most of its life at sea and comes home to breed. Contact the DoC office for information on the birds and the possibility of tours.

On Water

Norwest Adventures leads a fantastic **Underworld Rafting** trip in the Paparoa National Park from their base in Charleston. The trip includes a ride on a train (how often does that happen on a tubing trip?) and takes you underground for a float down the Nile River – see stalactites, stalagmites and glow worms. They can also take you on a tame cave tour or on a more ambitious adventure caving trip. The more sedate can just ride the Charleston Nile River Rainforest Train, which takes 1½ hours and provides access to the caves. Trains depart at 9 am, 11 am, 2:30 pm and 5:30 pm. Bookings for all trips essential. www.caverafting.com, ☎ 03-789-6686 or 0800-116-686.

There are some safe swimming beaches along here and the rivers are good for hopping in, too. The one at the end of the Pororari River is a good bet. Do yourself a favor though and, before you hit the surf, check into DoC and ask for specifics.

Kiwi Sea Adventures runs trips in search of dolphins and other marine life, with the chance of swimming with Hector's, dusky and common dolphins. $100. ☎ 03-768-7765.

Punakaiki Canoes has rentals and guided trips to explore the Pororari River – a fantastic way to get into the forest amid the tree ferns and palms. I'd opt for this on a drizzly day or a sunny day – a good way to experience the moods of the place and you don't have to go for days on end. Just a couple of

hours will do you a favor. Guided trips start at $60, rentals at $30. www.riverkayaking.co.nz, by the river, just north of the visitor center, ☎ 03-731-1870.

On Foot

Within the Paparoa National Park are a few good walking tracks, including the Croesus and the Inland Pack Track. All tracks in the national park are subject to closings due to bad weather – check with DoC before heading out and inquire about any difficult stream or river crossings.

The **Croesus** crosses the Paparoa Range from Blackball to Barrytown, is 18 km (11 miles) and takes seven to eight hours. There is a hut on the Blackball side and accommodation on the Paparoa side. The recommended route is from Blackball to Paparoa – the western side is steeper and rougher. If you want to take your time or had a late start, the Ces Clark Hut is about halfway.

The **Inland Pack Track** is a one- to three-day 30-km (19-mile) track that has no huts (take a tent) and no bridges over river crossings – stop at DoC and ask about river levels. The track can be walked in either direction, beginning at Tiromoana or Pancake Rocks. If you don't want to do the whole thing, start at either end and explore for a few hours. then come back. From the Tiramoana end you can access the caves and, with an additional effort, the Ballroom overhang.

On Horses

A must is **Punakaiki Horse Treks**, where you ride through the valley and along the beach. There is nothing that beats riding a horse on the beach and this is one incredible spot to do it. From $95. www.pancake-rocks.co.nz, ☎ 03-731-1839, fax 03-731-1838.

> **Cool shop: Punakaiki Crafts** is filled to the brim with gorgeous jewelry, ceramics, textiles and more. The displays are always changing and most of the artists are from the local area. SH6, by the information center, ☎ 03-731-1813.

Guided Options

Green Kiwi Tours has a long menu of options, including caving, walks, eco-tours and bouldering. www.greenkiwitours.co.nz, ☎ 03-731-1142 or 0800-474-733.

■ Where to Stay

Hydrangea Cottages have bath and kitchen and are secluded in the bush. Lots of rock structures to ooh and ahh over. And, of course, there are the wild hydrangeas. Studio, one- and two-bedroom units. The owners also run the horse treks. www.pancake-rocks.co.nz, SH6, just south of Pancake Rocks. ☎ 03-731-1839 ($$$-$$$$).

Paparoa Park Motel has studio units set amid the bush, with great views of the sea. www.paparoa.co.nz, SH6 one km (less than a mile) south of Pancake Rocks, ☎ 03-731-1883 or 0800-727-276 ($$).

Punakaiki Cottage Motel is on the beach and have studio and family units. ☎ 03-731-1008, fax 03-731-1118 ($$-$$$).

Punakaiki Rocks Hotel is a new rather large accommodation right near the Blowholes. They've tried to design and build the space to blend into and respect the environment. A part of the Scenic-Circle chain. www.scenic-circle.co.nz, ☎ 03-731-1844 ($$$$).

Another new, rather large and colorful accommodation near the Blowholes is **Punakaiki Rocks Villas** with bath and kitchen that have sea views. www.punakaiki-resort.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-731-1168 or 0800-786-2524 ($$$-$$$$).

Te Nikau Retreat is a special place and a great accommodation option. Fresh bread and muffins and the surrounding forest is to die for. It's gorgeous, but be sure to book in advance – it's small and fills up quickly. Three km (two miles) north of Pancake Rocks, turn down Hartmount Place, ☎ 03-731-1111, fax 03-731-1102 ($).

The **Punakaiki Beach Hostel** is a comfortable and pleasant place to stay right by the beach. Great spa and views. www.punakaikibeachhostel.co.nz, Webb Street, ☎ 03-731-1852 ($).

Punakaiki Beach Camp has standard and kitchen cabins, tent and power sites. It's right by the beach. beachcamp@xtra.co.nz, Owen Street (off SH6), ☎ 03-731-1894 ($).

■ Where to Eat

You can grab a coffee and a light snack to eat outside at **Punakaiki Crafts**, SH6 ($).

The **Wild West Café** has indoor and outdoor seating and a café menu. Next to Punakaiki Crafts ($).

The **Punakaiki Tavern** has the broadest range of food and the best value for money. By the campground, two minutes north of Pancake Rocks ($).

Punakaiki to Greymouth

This is a drive that you'll remember – with the wild coast on one side and the massive Paparoa Ranges on the other, you won't know what to take in first. The Tasman Sea can really put on a show. Midway between Punakaiki and Greymouth is **Barrytown**, a small former gold mining town that now boasts a pub, the **Barrytown Tavern**, where you can get a meal and a bed ($). This is where the Croesus Track comes out (see Punakaiki and Paparoa National Park section, page 426 ff. for details). You can also have a meal at the **Rata Café** ($).

Continuing farther south, you'll reach **Rapahoe** and **Runanga** (about seven km/four miles) north of Greymouth. The **Point Elizabeth Walkway** is a popular four-hour round-trip through the Rapahoe Scenic Range. It begins at Rapahoe (near Seven Mile Creek) and follows the coast south to Cobden Beach. If low tide is at the right time, you can return on the beach. Ask at the information center for tide times. The beach at Rapahoe is usually safe for swimming, but inquire at the hotel or motor camp to be sure of conditions.

You can find accommodation at the **Rapahoe Hotel**, which is right at the north end of the walkway, ☎ 03-762-7701 ($).

Or try the **Rapahoe Beach Motor Camp**, which has cabins and sites, a safe swimming beach and swimming pool and walking tracks. rapahoebeach@actrix.co.nz, ☎ 03-762-7025 or 0508-465-432 ($).

Greymouth

At the mouth of the Grey River, Greymouth was once known as Mawhera and was the site of a Maori pa. When gold was discovered in the 1860s, so, too, was Greytown. The largest town on the West Coast, it is the service center for the area. The Grey River plays a mighty role in daily life – especially so after times of heavy rain when it is prone to overflow its banks and flood the town. Most tourists don't spend much time here, but there are more than a couple of good activities nearby and plenty of places to stay; it's certainly not a bad base for exploring. (And the staff is very nice at the Grey Hospital.)

■ Getting Here

By Air

Greymouth is served by the airports in **Hokitika** and **Westport**.

By Car

Greymouth is about 335 km (208 miles) and nearly six hours from Haast and 554 km (344 miles) and 11 hours from Queenstown. It's 255 km (158 miles) from Christchurch, a drive that will take you four hours. From Blenheim, it's 331 km (205 miles) and takes five hours. SH6 runs north and south through Greymouth; SH7 comes through from the Ikamatua Valley; and SH73 joins SH1 from Arthur's Pass midway to Hokitika.

By Bus

InterCity Coachlines and **Atomic Shuttles** service the north- and south-bound routes.

Additionally, **Alpine Coaches** run between Hokitika and Christchurch with stops along the way. www.alpinecoaches.co.nz, ☎ 0800-274-888, and **Coast to Coast** connects the two sides, as well. ☎ 0800-800-847.

By Train

The **TranzAlpine** arrives from Christchurch about 12:45 pm each day and departs on its return trip at 1:45 pm. See the Canterbury chapter (Selwyn section, page 483) for details.

■ Information Sources

Take a look at www.westcoastbookings.co.nz.

The **Greymouth Visitor Centre**, vingm@minidata.co.nz, is located at the corner of Herbert and Mackay streets, ☎ 03-768-5101 or 0800-473-966, fax 03-768-0317.

■ Adventures

On Water

You can pick either an easy float or a more extreme white-water trip with **Eco-Rafting**. They offer half-day trips on the Arnold River (raft or sit-on-top kayaks), full-day trips on the Grey or Buller, heli-rafting on the Hokitika, Whitcombe, Whataroa, Perth and Wanganui and multi-day trips on the Grey and Buller. Prices begin at $80, $230 for heli-rafting and $400 for multi-day. www.ecorafting.co.nz, or go see them at 108 Mawhera Quay, ☎ 03-768-4005.

Jungle Boat Cruising is one of the wackiest trips if you choose the outrigger or you can be conservative and opt for a raft. Either way, it's a scenic float down the river in the rain forest and there's time for a bit of flax weaving, too. Three-hour trips depart Greymouth at 9 am, 11:45 am and 2:30 pm. www.nzholidayheaven.co.nz, ☎ 03-768-6649 or 0508-474-837.

Really fun black water rafting (tubing) can be had with Wild West Adventures on their **Dragons Blackwater Cave Tubing**. You get outfitted in a wetsuit, boots and a helmet and then it's into the cave, where you float, jump, squeeze and laugh your way through the cave system. $125, $195 if you add the abseiling option. 8 Whall Street, ☎ 03-768-6649 or 0508-372-466.

Wild West Adventure Company offers a series of 83 (!) guided walks along the Maori Greenstone Trails in Te Ara Pounamu, the Greenstone Pathway which is a 720-km (446-mile) route that was used by the Maori pounamu traders. 8 Whall Street, ☎ 03-768-6649.

On Bikes

There are quite a few really good bike rides inland from Greymouth, particularly around **Marsden**. Stop by **Coll Sportsworld**, 53 Mackay Street, ☎ 03-768-4060, for advice on trails and rentals.

On 4x4

On Yer Bike! runs quad-bike adventures in the mud and wet, which is a much more appropriate use of a quad bike than a dry and dusty ride! Rides from one hour to 90 minutes, prices begin at $70 adults, $60 children. Eight-wheel, all-wheel-drive, amphibious Argo rides also available for 30 and 60 minutes. $30/$55 adults, $10/$20 children. They have pint-sized bikes for six to12 year olds at $5 per five minutes. www.onyerbike.co.nz, 511 SH6, 5 km north of Greymouth. ☎ 03-762-7438 or 0800-669-372.

In the Air

Air West Coast Ltd. runs scenic flights around the West Coast, Mt. Cook and Fiordlands. They also offer passenger services to and from Wellington. www.airwestcoast.co.nz, Aerodrome Road, ☎ 03-738-0524.

Coastwide Helicopters Ltd. provides scenic service around the West Coast, including trips to Punakaiki. ☎ 03-768-6117.

■ Sightseeing

There are quite a few craft shops in Greymouth, especially those selling pounamu (greenstone) carvings. The **Jade Boulder Gallery** has turned into a tourist draw, where you can watch very talented carvers work. 1 Guinness Street.

The **Left Bank Art Gallery** has a good display of pounamu as well as other art. Open 10 am to 5 pm daily, 7 pm in summer. 1 Tainui Street.

Monteith's Brewing Company conducts tours of their historic brewery, where they make a wide variety of craft beers, including special seasonal releases. Three tours a day, Monday to Friday (10 am, 11:30 am and 2 pm) and two a day (11:30 am and 2 pm) on Saturday, are priced at $10 and include tastings at the end. Bookings essential. 60 Herbert Street, ☎ 03-768-4149.

■ Where to Stay

Gables Motor Lodge is the snazziest, with studios and one- and two-bedroom units. www.nzmotels.co.nz/gables, 84 High Street, ☎ 03-768-9991 or 0800-809-991, fax 03-768-9992 ($$-$$$).

Plenty of motel options exist, including **Charles Court**, which has recently undergone a remodeling. www.charlescourtmotel.co.nz, 350 Main Street, ☎ 03-762-6619 or 0800-800-619 ($$-$$$)..

The **Paroa Motel** has studio and family units. www.paroa.co.nz, 508 Main Street, ☎ 03-762-6860 or 0800-762-6860 ($$).

The **High Park Motor Inn** has studios and apartments. www.highpark.co.nz, 90 High Street, ☎ 03-768-4846 or 0800-844-846, fax 03-768-9746 ($$-$$$).

Global Village Travellers Lodge offers free kayaks and bicycles; there's a spa pool and sports equipment like tennis rackets and golf clubs. Rooms have linen and duvets. Twins, doubles, shares and dorms. 42 Cowper Street, ☎ 0508-542-636 ($).

Neptunes International Backpackers has beds, not bunks, in bright and spacious rooms, with a lounge and outdoor area. nepts.backpacker@actrix.co.nz, 43 Gresson Street, ☎ 03-768-4425 ($).

The **Kainga-Ra YHA** is in a former Catholic priest's house and has dorm beds. Easygoing and funky. 15 Alexander Street, ☎ 03-768-4951 ($).

■ Where to Eat

There are a few places to grab a meal around town and **The Smelting House Café** has good, healthy café food, including paninis, salads and bagels. They also make fresh smoothies. 102 Makay Street ($).

Dp:One Café has a funky name and atmosphere – books, videos, live music, as well as good food and coffee. 108 Mawhera Quay ($).

You won't leave th **Hogs Head Bar & Grill** hungry, that's for sure. Big food including meat, lasagna, and a mean seafood chowder. 9 Tainui Street ($-$$).

From Greymouth to Hokitika

Some of the most amazing sea views in New Zealand are along SH6 between Greymouth and Hokitika. There isn't a lot of reason to stop on this stretch of road, other than to enjoy the scenery and take in the power of the Tasman Sea. Depending on the weather, you can really see some wild stuff along these beaches. Just 11 km (seven miles) south of Greymouth is **Shantytown**, a recreation of a gold mining town. There are plenty of restored buildings to poke around in and kids will probably enjoy the theatrics of it all. Your paid entry to Shantytown includes a ride on one of the three steam trains. It's not all make believe – Shantytown had a population of 5,000 in its heyday. $15 adults, $7.50 children, including gold panning; $12 adults, $3 children, without the gold panning. Open 8:30 am to 5 pm daily. Follow the signs; it's about four km (two miles off SH6), ☎ 03-762-6634.

Continuing south on SH6 in another 10 km (six miles) you'll reach the Kumara Junction at SH73, which comes from over Arthurs Pass. Between here and the pass, as the highway snakes along the Taramakau River, are a few notable gold rush sites from the 1840s and 1870s, particularly around the town of **Kumara**. Kumara is the site of annual horse races in January (quite a draw around the area), the Waimea Goldfields and the Goldsborough walking tracks. This is a quaint mountain settlement where you'll find a couple of country hotels as well as tearooms and a small store.

In about 25 minutes, you'll reach a side road to Inchbonnie and **Lake Brunner**. This road loops around the lake to join SH7 at Stillwater, 25 km 15 miles) farther on, and the small settlement of **Moana** is a stop on the TranzAlpine train. Lake Brunner is a beautiful, slow paced holiday destination known for its fishing – "Where the Trout Die of Old Age." There are a few notable artisans around here, including Carey Dillon, who carves beautiful bowls from native wood.

■ Adventures

On Water

You can get a boat (and no doubt plenty of fishing advice) at **Lake Brunner Boat Hire**, sth@ihug.co.nz, 66 Koe Street, ☎ 03-738-0291.

On Foot

The boundaries of the **Moana Reserve** run around Lake Brunner. There is a wildlife park with a number of marked walking paths. On a walk around the area, you may see kereru, tui, bellbirds, fantails and the occasional white heron. There are also four varieties of orchids. Parking is at the boat ramp.

In the Air

Floatplane Lake Brunner takes "alpine scenic flights" around Mt. Cook, the glaciers and Pancake Rocks. You can also get fishing access to remote spots. With a minimum of three passengers, you can opt for just a take-off and landing. From $49 per person. floatplane@xtra.co.nz, Westland Air Charters, ☎ 03-738-0088.

■ Where to Stay

Clearly the high-class place to stay is at the **Lake Brunner Lodge**, a secluded spot for fishing and relaxing. www.lakebrunner.com, 8175 Westland, ☎/fax 03-738-0163 ($$$$).

The **Lake Brunner Motor Camp** has tent sites, cabins and a small shop. gott@minidata.co.nz, Moana, ☎/fax 03-738-0600 ($).

You can also get a room at the **Moana Motel and Hotel**, 34 Ahau Street, ☎ 03-738-0083, fax 03-738-0086 ($-$$).

Or stay at the forested **Lake Brunner Country Motel**, Arnold Valley Road, ☎ 03-738-0144, fax 03-738-0143 ($$).

Perhaps the best way to go is to pick up a list of "bach's" (bachelor cottages) and holiday homes from **Lake Brunner Boat Hire**, sth@ihug.co.nz, 66 Koe Street, ☎ 03-738-0291.

Hokitika

Like many of the towns on the South Island, Hokitika was settled after the discovery of gold in the 1860s. It became a busy port and the population swelled to 6,000 (currently, it's about 4,000). But before gold, the Arahura and Taramakau rivers were important sources of pounamu (greenstone) for the Maori – and they continue to be.

■ Getting Here

By Air

Air New Zealand provides domestic service to and from Hokitika by way of Christchurch. www.airnz.co.nz, ☎ 0800-737-000.

By Car

From Greymouth to Hokitika, it's just a 40-minute drive; from Westport, it's about two hours. From Nelson, figure about five hours. From Franz Josef, it'll take you almost two hours, and from Haast, nearly four.

By Bus

The bus lines that serve Greymouth also stop in Hokitika. See page 430.

■ Information Sources

The **Westland Visitor Information Centre**, hkkvin@xtra.co.nz, is in the Carnegie Complex, at the corner of Hamilton and Tancred Streets, ☎ 03-755-6166, fax 03-755-5011.

Tip: The annual **Wildfoods Festival** is not to be missed. Held on the second Saturday in March, it's a celebration of the diversity of food on the West Coast – and a bit of a party! You'll be able to try all sorts of yucky things – but there's also plenty of good stuff. The festival is held on a Saturday, but the party on Saturday night is a happening. Be warned,

though, the town gets book solid so, if you want to attend, arrange for your accommodation in advance. Check www.westlanddc.govt.nz for the current calendar.

■ Adventures

On the Water

River Play is a fun company with both rafting and inflatable-kayak trips. Adventure kayak trips include 4x4 ride and bush walk to the river and then inflatable kayaks on grade II to III rapids – these kayaks allow first-timers to go down the rapids safely and easily. They also offer heli-rafting to the Arahura and Karamea Rivers and half-day to three-day Buller River trips. www.riverplay.co.nz, ☎ 03-755-5339 or 0800-116-348.

You can take a **Paddle Boat Cruise** through the rainforest of the Mahinapua Creek into the Mahinapua Lake. ☎ 03-755-7239.

Due West Canoe Safaris leads one-day and multi-day trips around the West Coast, including trips out to the gorge and moonlight paddles. Prices begin at $80 and they're happy to customize a trip for you. www.duewest.co.nz, 209 Revell Street, ☎ 03-755-6717 or 0800-383-9378.

Lake Kaniere is popular for boating, water skiing, fishing and picnicking. Dorothy Falls are just off the road on the northern side of the lake.

On Foot

There are quite a few good walks around Hokitika and a few that you have to ferret out of the locals (stay at Blue Spur Lodge; Keith knows them all – see below). There are a couple of particularly good ones around Lake Kaniere. The **Kaniere Water Race Track** takes about three hours one-way and goes along through the bush and regenerating forest. It leaves from the lake and has a bit of a climb; the flat **Lake Kaniere Walkway** takes about four hours along the western shores of the lake. It's all in the forest but the start and finish are 10 km (six miles) apart – contact DoC for details.

A shorter option, the **Mahinapua Walkway** only takes two hours and is just south of town.

In the Air

Scenic flights around the West Coast can be arranged through **Wilderness Wings Ltd**, ☎ 03-755-8118.

■ Sightseeing

Take a minute to stop by the **Carnegie Centre** and visit not only the information center, but **The Carnegie Art Gallery** and **The West Coast Historical Museum**. Both are open daily.

A drive or bike ride out to the Hokitika Gorge can be looped with a trip to Lake Kaniere to make an 80-km (50-mile) day.

There are more artisans and craftspeople in Hokitika than you might suspect – from bone and greenstone carvers to glass blowers to goldsmiths. If you're in search of something special, you may find it here. I'd take a quick browse at the big spots and then head for the cooperatives like the **Hokitika Craft**

Gallery, 25 Tancred Street. I also recommend a stop at **Westland Pottery and Silk** for gorgeous hand-dyed silks, six km (four miles) north of Hokitika on SH6.

■ Where to Stay

Two of the nicest places you could hope to find are outside of Hokitika – Kapitea Ridge to the north and Villa Polenza to the east. **Kapitea Ridge** has seven gorgeous rooms, great sea views, a coastal walk and all the little extras that make staying at a lodge such a special treat. It's just beautiful and the grounds are exquisite. www.kapitea.co.nz, Chesterfield Road, ☎ 03-755-6805, fax 03-755-6895 ($$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Villa Polenza is equally stunning and the two side-by-side outdoor baths sold me. It's above Hokitika with marvelous views; the rooms are beautifully decorated and comfortable. www.villapolenza.co.nz, 143 Brickfield Road, ☎ 03-755-7801, fax 03-755-7901 ($$$$).

The **Southland Hotel** has been run by the same family for nearly 120 years. It's kept up with the times, but still has West Coast hotel hospitality. There are superior and standard rooms and some have fabulous Tasman Sea views. www.southlandhotel.com, Revell Street, ☎ 03-755-8344 or 0800-400-344, fax 03-755-8258 ($$-$$$).

You'll find comfortable and affordable accommodation right on the beach at **Shining Star Beachfront Chalets**. There are cabins with bath and kitchen, motel units, and tent and power sites. Very nice, very new and good value. www.accommodationwestcoast.co.nz, 11 Richards Drive, ☎ 03-755-8921 or 0800-744-646, fax 03-755-8653 ($$-$$$).

A dependable motel option iss **Black Sands Motor Lodge & Motor Home Park**, with cabins, cottages, studio and family units; www.blacksands.co.nz, 252 Revell Street, ☎ 03-755-8773 or 0800-755-222, fax 03-577-8772 ($$-$$$). Another good option is **Jade Court Motor Lodge**, a new facility; choose from rooms having bath and kitchen, studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments. Nice grounds and pleasant, clean rooms. www.jadecourt.co.nz, 85 Fitzherbert Street, ☎ 03-755-8855 or 0800-755-885, fax 03-755-8133 ($$$).

Blue Spur Lodge is a small, specially built backpackers lodge; there's also a cottage with bath and kitchen and two rooms with en-suite bath, one twin, one double, and an upstairs lounge. A very laid-back place. There are mountain bikes and kayaks for rent and plenty of places to explore. Keith has a wealth of local knowledge about what to do while you're there. Kick your shoes off and stay a while. 5 km up Hampden Street, on Cement Lead Road, bluespur@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-755-8445 ($).

Waters Edge really is. It's a small hostel and has made-up beds. It's a lovely setting right on the beach. ☎ 03-755-6349 ($).

The **Hokitika Holiday Park** has units with bath and kitchen, cottages and tourist apartments. 242 Stafford Street, ☎ 755-8172 or 0800-465-436, fax 03-755-8127 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

Café Flix is a good spot for a coffee and muffin and other baked goodies. They stay open late on movie night. 15 Weld Street ($).

For a casual dinner or daytime meal, go to the **Filling Station**. Good pizza, salads, meats and coffee. 111 Revell Street ($).

PR's Café is another popular spot and makes good burgers and sandwiches. 39 Tancred Street ($).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Café de Paris has innovative dinners using local produce as well as tasty breakfasts and lunches. 19 Tancred Street ($-$$).

Trappers is the place to go if you want to try something new – they make lots of dishes with wild game. 79 Revell Street ($$).

Hokitika to the Glaciers

Heading south from Hokitika, it's about 155 km (96 miles) to Franz Josef, a drive that will take you just under two hours. Along the way, there aren't scads of reasons to stop but, depending on your interests, you're in for some real treats.

■ Information Sources

Watch the AV display on mining history at **Ross Goldfields Visitor Information & Heritage Centre**, 4 Aylmer Street, ☎ 03-755-4077, fax 03-755-4078.

■ Sightseeing

Try to ignore the sandflies and instead focus on the gorgeous rainforest and scenery of the remote coast as you travel south. The first town you'll reach (30 km/18 miles) south is **Ross**, which gained its fame in the days of gold mining – New Zealand's biggest nugget, a 99 oz piece called **Honourable Roddy**, was found in 1907 very near to where the information center is today. Miners had just about given up hope on the claims around Ross when the nugget was found. The Honourable Roddy was bought by the New Zealand government and given to George V as a coronation gift (it was later melted down to make tableware for Buckingham Palace). Today, the visitor center is in a remodeled miner's cottage and holds mining memorabilia; outside is mining equipment. There are a couple of one-hour bush walks around Ross – stop in the visitor center to get a map.

You can rent a pan and try your luck at gold panning in the area behind the information center – maybe you'll find another Honourable Roddy. Panning $6, pan and shovel rental $5.

Traveling south from Ross, you'll come across a few options for bush walks and other light points of interest, including **Fergusons Bush**. For the bizarre, stop in **Pukekura**, deep in the rimu trees, population: two. The town's sole industry was based on clear-cutting of rimu trees; when the sawmill closed in the mid-1980s, tourism became the main industry. The **Bushman's Centre** opened in 1993. You can inquire here about horse treks and canoe trips. The current owners of the center also own the pub, the heli-pad, accommodation and houses, so they effectively own the town. And they have a sense of humor about it.

Lake Ianthe comes next and it's a fine place for a picnic or you can hop aboard the ***Tamati*** for a scenic 40-minute boat ride around the lake. Departing hourly from the Lake Ianthe jetty. You might see Southern crested grebe chicks from December to February. $15 adults, either payable on board or at the information center in Hokitika. ☎ 0800-119-494. There is an unepaved road through Ianthe State Forest that leads to a 1½-hour bush walk to a seal colony (take your sand-fly repellent).

Next stop is **Hari Hari** which is just a small dairy town with green fields aplenty. The little area was the focus of world attention when, in 1931, Guy Lambton Menzies completed the first solo flight across the Tasman. All went well until he landed his Southern Cross aircraft in the swamp – upside down! He released the straps that were holding him in and landed head first in the mud. You don't need to follow in Menzies footsteps to explore the area – you can enjoy the two- to three-hour **HariHari Coastal Walk**, which includes the Doughboy lookout, kahikatea forest and a bit of coastal track.

Whataroa is the next settlement of any size and it is here that we must all stop and thank our lucky stars that I am able to finish writing this book. Just north of Whataroa, you will cross the Perth River – and it is on the Perth that I came to a little grief and ended up at the Grey Hospital in Greymouth with a torn ligament in each knee (but it could have been worse, right?). And so I find it oddly appropriate to talk about West Coast rafting here.

West Coast Rafting

West Coast rivers are wild and there's something for everyone. Most of the rivers require helicopter access – which only adds to the thrill of the trip. You'll be in canyons and gorges that you had previously only imagined existed. Sure, if you're rafting on high flows on big rivers, there's a chance you'll come out of your boat and there's a very remote chance that you'll be injured. But the risk is worth the trip and if you want something a bit more tame, then pick a two-day trip on the Wanganui or a one day on the Whataroa. I've listed a few operators here who I think do a good job.

River classes vary depending on flow – talk to your guide and ask what's going on, and how the river's behaving. The Whitcombe is for experienced paddlers only, and I wouldn't pick the Perth as a first-time run (unless the water level is down).

Multi-day: Wanganui class III-IV; Landsborough class IV; Waiatoto class IV.

One day: Whataroa class III-IV; Hokitika, class IV; Perth class V; Whitcombe class V.

Hidden Valleys, is based in Peel Forest, but run trips all over; www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz, ☎ 03-696-3560.

Rivers Wild is based in Franz Josef, but runs trips on seven rivers on the West Coast. www.riverswild.co.nz, ☎ 0800-469-453 or 021-748-371.

Queenstown Rafting runs a multi-day Landsborough trip. www.rafting.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9792 or 0800-723-8464.

The only nesting place in New Zealand of the **kotuku** or **white heron** is at the Waitangiroto colony outside of Whataroa. These rare and beautiful birds can only be seen from late October to March. Tours last 2½ to three hours and include transport from the base in Whataroa to the river and then a 20-minute jet-boat ride to the colony. There is a boardwalk through the bush and you can stay to view the birds for 30 to 40 minutes. **White Heron Sanctuary Tours** are the only operators allowed in the area and there is no access from the Okarito side. $95 adults, $45 children. www.whiteherontours.co.nz, SH6, Whataroa, ☎ 03-753-4120 or 0800-523-456.

Just 15 km (nine miles) south of Whataroa, you'll come to Okarito – the spot where Abel Tasman first spotted New Zealand. It's now a small laid-back settlement where there are a few walks. The best way to see what Okarito has to offer is from the water, and **Okarito Nature Tours** leads kayak trips and rents kayaks to explore the wetlands. Surrounded by rimu and kahikatea rainforest, this area is home to over 70 species of birds. You don't have to be a mad bird-watcher to enjoy a paddle around the area, though, and if you've got the time, I'd inquire about camping out on one of the beaches. www.okarito.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-753-4014.

■ Where to Stay

In Ross, there are a couple of accommodation options, including the **Historic Empire Hotel**, 19 Aylmer Street, ☎ 03-755-4005 ($-$$); and the **Ross Motel** on Gibson Street, ☎ 03-755-4153 ($$).

The **Pukekura Lodge** has cabins, backpacker hostel, luxury tents (permanent with beds) tent and camper sites. All fun and in good condition. SH6, ☎ 03-755-4144 ($).

The **Whataroa Hotel** has simple, clean and friendly accommodation. whataroahotel@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-753-4076, fax 03-753-4078 ($$).

There are motel units and cabins at the **White Heron Sanctuary Tour** office. SH6, Whataroa, ☎ 03-753-4120 or 0800-523-456 ($$).

In Okarito, you can get a bunk at the **Okarito YHA** in the old school house. It's not fancy, but it'll do and it has a certain charm. The Strand, ☎ 03-753-4210 ($).

The **Royal Motel & Hostel**, also in Okarito, has backpacker and other simple units and fishing gear is available. The Strand, ☎ 03-753-4080 ($).

■ Where to Eat

In Ross, your choices are pub meals (very tasty) at the **Historic Empire Hotel** or light meals at the **Roddy Nugget Café** ($).

In Pukekura there is no choice but the **Puke Pub and Wildfood Restaurant**. They take life less seriously here with menu items like "roadkill of the day," "guess this mess," and "billy goat's legs." You gotta stop in. SH6 ($-$$).

Stone grill, pub food and West Coast specialties are on the menu at the **Whataroa Hotel** ($-$$).

The Glaciers

High on the "must do" list of any visitor to New Zealand should be a visit to the glaciers of the West Coast. **The Fox** and the **Franz Josef** are special, not only because they are the most easily accessible in the world, but because nowhere else in the world do glaciers exist so close to the sea. For example, the Franz Josef is 19 km (12 miles) from the sea and five km (three miles) from the township. Additionally, due to their location on the West Coast these glaciers advance at a rate much faster than most. As weather comes across the Tasman Sea, it carries a lot of moisture. In its passage across the Southern Alps, it cools and most of that moisture is dropped as rain at sea level and snow higher up. The catchment area of a glacier is called its "neve" and the neve of the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers receive approximately 30 m (nearly 100 feet) of snow each year. The neve on both glaciers is quite large, and the accumulated snow and ice carry a lot of weight, pushing the glaciers forward. The glaciers are both quite long – the Franz (fed by three feeder glaciers) is 12 km (seven miles) long and the Fox (fed by four feeder glaciers) is 13 km (eight miles) and quite steep, so the ice has a long way to travel before it melts at the terminus.

A Word About Glaciers

Valley glaciers form when snow accumulates and turns to ice, which then begins to flow downward under the pressure of its own weight and the forces of gravity. As the pressure from overlying snow increases, it compacts the lower layers. Ice crystals grow and air spaces decrease until they are very small or nonexistent – this is why dense glacial ice looks blue. When glaciers move quickly, the stress within the ice builds up and results in cracks, or crevasses.

Glaciers are often referred to as "retreating." This doesn't mean that the glacier is high-tailing it back up the hill. It means that the terminus of the glacier (the front) is higher up than it was – that ice is melting at the terminal end faster than it's advancing at the top.

Glaciers are living, breathing, works in progress. Especially for fast-moving glaciers like the Fox and the Franz, they are different every day. If you go on a guided walk (which I highly recommend) your guide will no doubt cut steps for you and find new places to explore. Caves come and go; no two days on the glacier are the same.

Most glaciers around the world seem to be retreating, but in the last few years it appears the Fox and Franz Josef have been advancing.

The **towns of Franz Josef** and **Fox** are 23 km (14 miles) apart and each has accommodation and activity operators. Bus service goes through both and many of the scenic-flight companies have trips to both. Where you choose to stay and which glacier you choose to visit depends largely on personal preference and timing; if you can fit it in, visit them both. Simply put, the differences have to do with access – on the Franz Josef, you walk up the terminal face; it's long, but not terribly steep. The terminal face on the Fox, however, is steep. Access is by way of a walk through the rain forest; when you get to the ice, you are immediately in the crevasses and ice formations.

Be forewarned: if you are afraid of heights, the bush walk passes some steep drops. It didn't bother me, but a good friend was really frightened and now prefers the Franz. Having said that, on one full-day walk on the Franz there was a girl in my group who was badly claustrophobic and really did not enjoy walking through the narrow caves, so there's always something to consider. But I still highly recommend a full-day guided walk on at least one and, if the weather cooperates and you can afford it, a heli-hike is worth considering.

Both glaciers have public viewpoints that are roped off for safety, but the ropes are quite a way from the glacier so, if you want to really experience the ice, you need to take a guided trip. On my first glacier trip, I was astounded not only at the blue of the ice and the caves, but at the seracs, or blocks of ice. Some of them are massive, and being high on the glaciers really gives you an appreciation for how large they are and how small we are.

With a full-day trip, you will have time to get used to walking on the ice with crampons (supplied by the guiding companies) and also get explore much higher up the glacier. I was really surprised at how exposed and seemingly dangerous the trip was – full-day trips are "free guided," meaning that guides look for appropriate routes to take and cut new steps, take you to see crevasses (from a safe distance), lead you through snow caves, and so on. There aren't any red velvet ropes up there and it says a lot for the guiding company that there are relatively no injuries. If you are really afraid of heights, I would talk to the company when you book your trip and explain your fears.

The half- and full-day trips are designed for all abilities – no previous mountaineering experience is necessary. Guided walks go out in most all weather, but heli-hikes are canceled in bad weather and low visibility. If the weather plays ball, though, this is a great option as you get much higher up the ice and have a far greater chance of exploring ice caves and crevasses. Keep in mind that, whether you go by foot or helicopter, every day is different and you may not always get to experience ice caves.

Getting on the Ice

The two companies listed below lead trips on Franz Josef; both offer half- and full-day trips, as well as ice climbing and heli-hikes. The half-day trips are about four hours, with one or two hours on the ice; on the seven- to eight-hour full-day trips, you spend five or six hours on the ice (and you get to carry and use an ice ax, which is really cool). Half-day prices start at $65, full-day around $135, heli-hikes at $260 and ice climbing at $200.

The **Franz Josef Glacier Guides**, www.franzjosefglacier.com, Main Road, next to the Mobil station. ☎ 03-752-0763 or 0800-484-337.

The Guiding Company, www.nzguides.com, is in the Alpine Adventure Centre, ☎ 03-752-0047 or 0800-800-102.

For trips to the Fox, **Alpine Guides Fox Glacier** offers half- and full-day trips as well as heli-hikes and ice climbing instruction. They also lead trips to Chancellor Dome – day-trips and overnight. www.foxguides.co.nz, ☎ 03-751-0825 or 0800-111-600

You have a range of choices for scenic flights, including **The Helicopter Line**, www.helicopter.co.nz, operating from both Franz Josef, ☎ 03-752-0767, fax 03-752-0769, and Fox, ☎ 03-751-0767, fax 03-751-0722. The toll-free number for either location is ☎ 0800-807-767.

Fox and Franz Josef Heliservices also leaves from both places, www.scenic-flights.co.nz, ☎ 03-752-0793 or 0800-800-793, fax 03-752-0764.

Glacier Southern Lakes Helicopters flies out of Franz only, www.heli-flights.co.nz, ☎ 0800-800-732. Scenic helicopter flights begin about $180 and usually include a landing on the ice.

Air Safaris run fixed-wing scenic flights to and from Lake Tekapo, Mt. Cook, Murchison, Tasman, Franz Josef and Fox glaciers. Prices begin at about $170 and they are a bit longer than the helicopter flights, but they don't include an ice landing; www.airsafaris.co.nz, ☎ 0800-723-274. **Mt. Cook Airline** also does scenic flights and on some of their trips, a ski landing on the ice is included. Prices begin at $190. www.mtcookskiplanes.com, ☎ 0800-702-190.

The village of Franz Josef is a bit bigger and has more services than Fox. There are no banks in either Fox of Franz Josef, but most places accept credit cards and there are a few spots that have ATMs. If you need to change money, though, do it in Hokitika or Wanaka

> **Did you know?** During the last Ice Age, glaciers covered 32% of the earth's total land area; today, they cover 10% of the land mass and store 75% of the world's fresh water.

■ Getting Here

By Car

From Greymouth, Franz Josef is about 179 km (73 miles) and the drive takes 2½ hours; from Hokitika, it's 139 km (86 miles) and takes just under two hours. From Haast, it's also just under two hours and 143 km (89 miles). From Wanaka, figure four hours (294 km/182 miles).

By Bus

Franz Josef is serviced by InterCity and Atomic Shuttles. **InterCity** buses from the north and south arrive between 4 and 5 pm; departures in both directions are about 8 am. **Atomic Shuttles** arrives at

2 pm from the south and at 5 pm from the north. Buses headed north depart at 7:30 am and buses headed south depart at 10:30 am. When traveling by bus, if you want to do any trips on the ice, you will need to stay for two nights in either Fox or Franz.

■ Information Sources

Take a look at www.glaciercountry.co.nz.

■ Franz Josef

Information Sources

The **DoC Franz Josef Visitor Centre** is a good place to get your bearings and fill in any missing glacial information you're craving – the displays are great and the staff helpful. The center is open from 8:30 am to 6 pm in the summer (9 am to 5 pm in winter) so, even if you arrive by bus, you can quickly make it in. There is a good movie about the glaciers shown every half-hour and you can also get weather reports here. vctemp@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-752-0796, fax 03-752-0797.

> **Did you know?** The Franz Josef glacier was named in 1863 by Julius von Haast after the Emporer of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Von Haast, a Canterbury geologist, named the Haast pass after himself).

Adventures

On Water

Lake Mapourika is just 10 minutes north of Franz and is a good fishing lake.

Fergs Kayaks leads half-day guided tours on Lake Mapourika. It's a good wet-weather option – especially if you're waiting for fog and mist to clear for a helicopter trip or heli-hike. These guys also have a "Sniff Nipple Triple" (SNT) that includes a heli-flight, a guided walk and a paddle. Prices begin at $45. www.glacierkayaks.com; meet your guide at 20 Cron Street, their base, ☎ 0800-423-262.

On Foot

There are quite a few walks based from Franz, the most popular being the flat **Glacier Valley Walk**. It takes about 1½ hours and follows the Waiho River bed to the terminal end of the glacier. The short (20 minute) **Sentinal Rock Walk** has an easy climb and good views of the glacier. At one hour, the **Douglas Walk** goes past Peters Pool, a kettle lake (left behind by the glacier) and then continues through the bush. For a bit more exercise, take the **Roberts Point Track**. It's five hours, a bit rocky and goes through gorgeous rain forest (and over some creeks and swing bridges) but is a manageable and fun walk for most people with rewarding views at the end. Finally, in eight hours you can walk the **Alex Knob Track**, which offers good views of the glacier, the mountains and the coast, taking you through a variety of terrain.

On Horses

South Westland Horse Treks has one- to three-hour trips, including evening and beach options. They use western saddles. From $40, horsetreknz.com, on Waiho Flat Road, about five km south of the village, ☎ 03-752-0223 or 0800-187-357.

Guided Options

Glacier Valley Eco Tours (formerly Kamahi Tours) runs three-hour small-group tours of Fox or Franz Josef Glacier. Also shuttle service to the start of glacier walks, Lake Matheson or a combination. www.glaciervalley.co.nz, ☎ 03-752-0699.

Rainy day option: Be sure to see ***Flowing West***, "the film of glacier country." It plays in The Alpine Adventure Centre in Franz Josef. Great photography and storytelling about the glaciers and why they're so special. ☎ 03-752-0793.

Cool shop: Flights of Fancy The Gallery Shop has a great collection of New Zealand art, jewelry and gifts, SH6, ☎ 03-752-0242.

Where to Stay

For a small village, Franz has quite a bit of accommodation, but beware, they book up quickly in the summer.

A dependable and charming place to stay in the rainforest is **Punga Grove Motor Lodge**, with studios, suites and luxury suites. www.pungagrove.co.nz. Cron Street, ☎ 03-752-0001 or 0800-437-269, fax 03-752-0002 ($$$-$$$$).

Rain Forest Retreat has cool units in the, what else, rain forest. Units are either on the forest floor or raised into the canopy. There are also log cottages with bath and kitchen and campervan spaces at the associated **Forest Park**. www.rainforestretreat.co.nz, ☎ 03-752-0220 or 0800-873-346, fax 03-752-0003 ($-$$$).

Dependable motel options include **Glacier Gateway Motor Lodge**, glacier.gateway@xtra.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-752-0776, fax 03-752-0732 ($$-$$$); **Glow Worm Cottage/Motel**, www.budgetaccommodation.co.nz, 27 Cron Street, ☎ 03-752-0172 or 0800-151-027, fax 03-752-0173 ($-$$); and **Glacier View Motel**, www.keywest.co.nz/glacierview, SH6, ☎ 03-752-0705 or 0800-484-397, fax 03-752-0761 ($$-$$$).

The **Waiho Motel** is associated with the **Franz Josef Holiday Park** and the **Black Sheep Backpackers**. They've got all the bases covered. www.fjhp.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-752-0766, fax 03-752-0066 ($-$$$).

Other backpacker hostels to check out include the new **Montrose Backpackers**, with made-up beds and a spa. montrosebackpackers@xtra.co.nz, 9 Cron Street, ☎ 03-752-0188 or 0800-666-876 ($).

The **Franz Josef YHA** has been recently remodeled and it shows. Large kitchen, comfortable rooms (dorms, twins and doubles), a shop and some other extras. A very good choice. yha.franzjosef@yha.org.nz, 2 Cron Street, ☎ 03-752-0754, fax 03-752-0080 ($).

Chateau Franz is next door and has a large selection of rooms, including quite a few with en-suite bathroom. www.chateaufranz.co.nz, 8 Cron Street, ☎ 03-752-0738 ($-$$).

The **Mountain View Holiday Park** has tent and power sites, park motels, standard cabins and tourist apartments. www.mountainview.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-752-0735 or 0800-467-897, fax 03-752-0035 ($-$$$).

Where to Eat

My choice for coffee and/or a meal is the **Blue Ice Café**. They definitely have the best coffee in town (not bad on the baked things, either) and their dinner menu (with whitebait and pizzas) is tasty. It can get hopping in the evenings upstairs. SH6 ($-$$).

The Landing Café probably has the best wine list and makes very tempting and tasty vegetarian dinners, as well as fish, venison and other meats. SH6 ($$).

Beeches Café is a good choice for a light meal of a sandwich or salad during the day and, in the evening, there is a full à la carte menu. SH6 ($-$$).

The **Cheeky Kea Café** is good for takeaways and simpler foods. SH6 ($).

■ Fox

> **Did you know?** The Fox Glacier was named after former New Zealand Prime Minister William Fox

Information Sources

The **Fox Glacier DoC Visitor Centre** is open from 8:30 to 6 pm in the summer, 9 am to 5 pm in the winter, on SH6, ☎ 03-751-0807.

Adventures

On Foot

It takes about half an hour on the **Fox Glacier Valley Walk** to reach the terminal face of the Fox Glacier. The walk leaves from the car park on Glacier Road.

The **Chalet Lookout Walk** will take you across streams and up to a lookout where you'll have great views of the glacier. Figure 1½ hours round-trip for this one.

There is a short **Glow Worm Forest Walk**, which is a good evening adventure. Leave from the Glow Worm Forest Building, opposite the BP station. Ask for more information at the visitor center or call ☎ 03-751-0711.

Slightly out of town (six km/four miles) on Cook Flat Road is the magnificent **Lake Matheson**. There is an hour walk here and the reward for early risers is a fabulous reflective image of Mt. Cook and Mt. Tasman – this is the image you see on postcards and in photo albums. The lake is calmest early in the morning, so set your alarm and get here as the mist rises from the water and the lake is dead still. Perfect, and you can stop in the Lake Matheson Café for a cuppa and a pie to reward yourself for your early morning.

There is a seal colony north of **Gillespies Beach** (21 km/13 miles from Fox), accessible on a three-hour round-trip walk. Stop at DoC and ask when low

tide is. You can also see the remnants of an old gold dredge at Gillespies Beach.

Where to Stay

Te Weheka Inn is a lovely large B&B/small lodge (20 rooms) and has a comfortable lounge, good breakfast and welcoming hosts. www.weheka.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-751-0730 or 0800-313-414, fax 03-751-0731 ($$$$).

The Westhaven is a new, contemporary motel. It's the kind of place where you want to stay for awhile. www.thewesthaven.co.nz, ☎ 03-751-0084 or 0800-369-452, fax 03-751-0094 ($$$-$$$$).

Everything seems new and clean at the **Rainforest Motel**. The rooms are very spacious, the bathrooms are huge and the grounds are very pretty. Studios and suites, all with full kitchen. www.rainforestmotel.co.nz, Cook Flat Road, ☎ 03-751-0140 or 0800-724-636 ($$-$$$).

The **Glacier Country Hotel** is one of the Scenic-Circle chain and has recently refurbished rooms, a restaurant and a bar. www.scenic-circle.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-751-0847 or 0800-730-847, fax 03-751-0822 ($$$$).

The **Fox Glacier Resort Hotel** was originally built in 1928 and has had renovations since, but it's not nearly as grand as the façade suggests. There are a variety of rooms, from the more modern motel units to shared bath hotel rooms in the main building. www.resorts.co.nz, ☎ 03-751-0839 or 0800-273-767, fax 03-751-0868 ($-$$).

Fox Glacier Lodge has budget rooms with shared bath as well as pricier rooms with en-suite bathroom or private bathrooms in the hotel. foxglacierlodge@hotmail.com, Sullivan Road, ☎ 03-751-0888 0800-369-800 ($-$$$).

My choice for hostels is the **Fox Glacier Inn and Backpackers**, with a wide variety of room types, a comfortable lounge, and spacious kitchen. foxinn@xtra.co.nz, 39 Sullivan Road, ☎ 03-751-0022, fax 03-751-0024 ($).

The other backpacker hostel of choice is **Ivory Towers**, a smaller, friendly hostel with gorgeous garden and bikes for rent. www.ivorytowerslodge.co.nz, Sullivan Road, ☎ 03-751-0838 ($).

Mount Cook View Motel is on the way to Lake Matheson. It has eight spacious rooms, and is in a rural setting with fantastic views. 203 Cook Flat Road, ☎ 03-751-0814 or 0800-828-814 ($$$-$$$$).

Where to Eat

The Plateau Café and Bar has the best coffee in town, light meals during the day and a fine dinner menu. Good desserts, as well. Sullivan Road ($-$$).

Another excellent choice is **Café Neve**. They have good coffee, salads and sandwiches during the day and a full menu at night. SH6 ($-$$).

For your pub meal fix, pick **Cook Saddle**. SH6 ($).

The **Hobnail Café** is a good quick lunch stop and serves breakfast as well. In the building with Alpine Guides ($).

The Glaciers to Haast

Heading south from the glaciers, you will be in rainforest that's so dense it drips in green. The narrow road is lined with, among others, incredibly tall, straight rimu trees. The road takes a bit of a curve and then you're along the massive beach of **Bruce Bay**. Halfway between those two points (about 25 km/16 miles south of Fox Glacier) is the **Copland Valley** and the terminus of the Copland Track, which comes over from Mt. Cook. It takes so many hours to drive to the West Coast from Mt. Cook that it's hard to believe it's just over the hills. South of Bruce Bay, you head inland again and come to lakes **Paringa** and **Moeraki**. Along the way, there are a few good spots to pull off the road, look at the sea and, if you can stand the sand flies, have a picnic.

> **Get out your camera:** Between lakes Paringa and Moeraki is "Windbag Creek." Surely there's someone in your car who should be photographed with that sign.

Knight's Point is on the coast just a few minutes south of Lake Moeraki. It was here that the north and south segments of SH6 were finally linked together in 1965; the historic spot is named for the surveyor's dog. This viewpoint is a good spot to spy on seals on the rocks below. The road pretty much follows the coast for the next 30 km (19 miles) until you reach the Haast.

The Haast region is as diverse and interesting an area as they come. Here you'll find ancient stands of rainforest, sweeping tidal flats, rocky cliffs, swamp forests; you may see (or hear) kaka, kiwi, morepork, tui, bellbirds, keruru, parakeets and warblers; you may come upon fur seals and, during certain times of the year, you may spot Fiordland crested and blue penguins and Hector's dolphins. A part of Te Wahipounamu – Southwest New Zealand World Heritage Park – the Haast is a remote wilderness – so much so that the road connecting it to the rest of the West Coast wasn't finished until 1965.

The Haast is made up of three distinct places. There is **Haast Junction**, home to the Haast Visitor Centre, where SH6 meets Jackson Bay Road and turns north up the coast; **Haast Beach**, a small fishing community slightly south of the junction on Jackson Bay Road; and **Haast Township**, where you can find accommodation, food and activities.

■ Getting Here

You don't have a lot of choices, really. SH6 is the one and only road. From Wanaka to Haast, figure 145 km (90 miles) and 3½ hours; from Franz Josef, it's also 145 km (90 miles), but just about 2½ hours driving time. To Greymouth, it's 335 km (208 miles) and will take you nearly six hours to drive.

■ Information Sources

This area is served by the **South Westland Weheka Area DoC Visitor Centre** in Haast Junction. Not only is the staff helpful and knowledgeable, but the displays are interesting and the building and grounds are modern and pleasant. Be sure to watch the 30-minute film, *Edge of Wilderness*. ☎ 03-750-0809, fax 03-750-0832.

■ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

During the summer you may very well spot **Hector's dolphins**, right, offshore between Jackson Bay and Neils Beach. They also frequent Ship Creek and Knight's Point.

Fiordland crested penguins nest at Wharekai Te Kau. The best time to see the penguins is from July to November – during breeding season. They also nest around Monro Beach, a 40-minute walk from Lake Moeraki. Please remember that the adults are extremely stressed during molt (in February after the young leave home). It's best if you consult the DoC office for information on these rare animals before heading out there.

On Water

At Lake Paringa, you can rent a kayak (two hours, $30) and paddle around the shores of the lake, which is edged with tree ferns and rimu. I can't think of a much better way to spend a couple of hours to break up a drive, can you?

With **Waiatoto River Safaris**, you can jet-boat from the sea to the mountains. Trips leave from the Waiatoto Lagoon and travel up the Waiatoto River, snaking through canyons along the way. You turn around in the mountains at The Shark's Tooth. 9 am, noon, 3:15 pm, $110 per person. www.riversafaris.co.nz, ☎ 03-750-0780, 0800-538-723.

Haast River Safaris offers a more leisurely river trip in a closed-in boat that can go out in any weather. Travel to the Haast Bridge and return, along the way learning about rainforest flora and fauna and the area's history. Trips depart at 8:45 am, 10:45, and 2:45 pm. $110 per person. www.jetboat.com. Leave from The Red Barn, off Jackson Bay Road (you can see it from SH6). ☎ 03-750-0101 or 0800-865-382.

On Foot

The first part of the **Copland Track** is a great two-day tramp. It's 17 km (10½ miles) to Welcome Flat Hut at the Copland Flats and takes about six hours. The hut is modern and the best part is that it's right near some natural hot springs and pools – a perfect place for a soak! Look for the sign on SH6 marking the track, but pay for your hut use at the DoC office in Fox or Haast.

Heading south on Jackson Bay Road, there is a good half-hour boardwalked trail at **Hapuku Estuary** that has interpretive panels on the local fauna and flora, including the bright yellow kowhai, kahikatea, cabbage trees and wetland habitat.

You'll also find a couple of walks at the very end of Jackson Bay Road – the shorter one leads out to **Wharekai Te Kau** (40 minutes) and the longer one to **Smoothwater Bay** (three hours).

At **Ship Creek**, north on SH6, there are two walks – one through a swamp forest and one in the sand dunes.

In the Air

Heliventures offers scenic flights, including trips to the glaciers. They also offer kayak, raft, hunting and fishing trips. Prices begin at $245 for a trip to Hidden Valley. www.heliventures.co.nz, SH6 and Marks Road, ☎ 03-750-0866 or 0800-750-0866, fax 03-750-0712.

■ Sightseeing

The grand majority of travelers never head down **Jackson Bay Road** – it's just enough out of the way. But if you've got a tank of gas and a little time, it's a good diversion, with a few spots to encourage you getting out of the car. There's not a metropolis in sight – just a few small fishing villages and beaches for picnics, walks and listening to the surf. Along the road, the trees are attention-grabbers, as they evolve from tree ferns and massive flax plants to regenerating wind-swept forests of kanuka and manuka and finally beech, rimu, lance wood and cabbage trees.

■ Where to Stay

Paringa

The **Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki** is set right in the rain forest. Two short guided trips (kayak, canoe, night sky, glow worms) per day are included in the tariff. You can also grab a kayak or canoe or go for a walk. It's a getaway place, with no TVs or radios, no cell phone coverage. Dinner, bed and breakfast. www.wildernesslodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-750-0881 ($$$-$$$$).

Heritage Lodge has rooms with bath and kitchen and studio units, as well as campervan sites. They have kayaks and other sporting equipment and are right on the lake, where you'll find beautiful rainforest bush. It's nothing fancy but fairly priced and there's a café on-site. www.lakeparinga.co.nz ($-$$)

Haast Junction

The biggest place around is the **Haast World Heritage Hotel** where you can find backpacker and simple motel accommodation. There's a bar and restaurant on-site. www.world-heritage-hotel.com, SH6 at the junction, ☎ 03-750-0828 or 0800-502-444 ($-$$$).

McGuires Lodge was new in December 2000. It is a large, modern accommodation, with a bar and restaurant on the grounds of a red-deer farm. The menu in the restaurant is heavy on West Coast foods. There are family, studio and standard units. www.mcguireslodge.co.nz, SH6, just east of the Haast Bridge, ☎ 03-750-0020, fax 03-750-0040 ($$).

Acacia & Erehwon Motel has units with bath and kitchen on the beach. Jackson Bay Road, ☎ 03-750-0803 ($$).

The **Haast Beach Holiday Park** is across from the Hapuka Estuary and has motels, cabins, tent and power sites. pgglubb@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-750-0860 or 0800-843-226 ($-$$).

Haast Village

The pleasant and well-kept **Heritage Park Lodge** has studio and family units and some with kitchens. www.heritageparklodge.co.nz, Marks Road, ☎ 03-750-0868 or 0800-526-252 ($$-$$$).

The **Wilderness Backpackers** has twins, doubles and dorms and some rooms with en-suite bathrooms. Marks Road, ☎ 03-750-0029 ($).

The **Aspiring Court Motel** and associated **Haast Highway Accommodation YHA** isn't the most inviting of the lot, but has studio and family units, cottages and dorm rooms. haastway@xtra.co.nz, Marks Road, ☎ 03-750-0703 or 0800-500-703, fax 03-750-0718 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

South Westland Salmon Café & Shop just past the Paringa River is a good place to get smoked or fresh salmon. You can feed the salmon, buy the salmon, eat the salmon. ☎ 03-751-0837.

At the junction, the restaurant at **McGuires Lodge** would be a good choice for a full meal ($-$$), as is the restaurant at the **Haast World Heritage Hotel** ($$).

In the village, try **Smithy's Tavern** for fish or steak ($-$$).

Also in the village, to get your pie fix go to the **Fantail Café**, where they also have good vegetarian options and make a decent muffin ($).

The Craypot at Jacksons Bay is a mobile restaurant that makes great fish (including whitebait), chips, venison and other hardy fare. It's a favorite of everyone nearby and a unique experience. Open until 6 pm daily ($).

The Haast Pass

SH6, the Haast Pass/Tioripatea Highway heads inland at Haast Village and winds its way along the Haast River and over the Haast Pass. At a mere 565 meters (1,830 feet), it is the lowest of the three Southern Alps passes and is an all-weather road through dense rain forest. Initial construction of the road began during the Depression but work was halted during WWII. The road was completed in 1960 and the section linking Haast to the rest of the West Coast was completed in 1965.

Beware: There is no gas station between Makarora and Haast; or between Haast and Fox Glacier.

While the road was not completely paved until 1995, the route has been an important one since the days of the first Maori settlement. Maori of Central Otago and the West Coast crossed the pass to trade pounamu (greenstone) and food. In 1863 Charles Cameron, a gold explorer, was the first pakeha to travel across the pass – it is named, however, for Julius von Haast, who came along several weeks later. Perhaps his position as Canterbury Provincial Geologist carried enough clout to get his name ascribed to such a beautiful natural place.

Between the Haast Visitor Center and Haast Pass, there are three waterfalls within easy reach of the road. **Roaring Billy Waterfall** is reached by a 25-minute (round-trip) bush walk through tree ferns. **Thunder Creek Wa-**

terfall is 28 meters (90 feet) high and just five minutes off the road. And another five-minute walk takes you to **Fantail Falls**, shaped, not surprisingly, like a fan.

> **Tip:** Be sure to stop and get out of your car at The Gates of Haast – the combination of big boulders and whitewater is something you must see!

SH6 breaks out of the rain forest and into scrub and continues on to Wanaka (145 km/90 miles; 3½ hours from Haast Village). Along the way there are quite a few good walks. Pick up a copy of the Haast Pass brochures at DoC. These walks, as well as accommodation and activities in Makarora are described in the Wanaka section of the Otago chapter (see pages 534 ff.).

Canterbury
Acheron River
Clarence River
Kaikoura
Kahutara
Charwell
Mt. St. Bernard
70
1
Conway River
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
25 KM
15.5 MILES
Clarence River
Hanmer River
Hanmer Springs
Waiau
Waiau River
Cheviot
7A
Waiau River
Waiau River
70
7
Pahau River
Hurunui River
Glencoe River
Hurunui
Hurunui River
Waitohi River
Waikari River
7
Waipara
Pegasus Bay
Waipara River
Amberley
1
Okuku River
Rangiora
Ashley River
71
Kaiapoi
Ashley River
Belfast
Christchurch
1
1
Eyre River
Lyttleton
Akaroa
72
73
75
Waimakariri River
Akaroa Harbour
Akaroa Head
1
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Canterbury Map Key

1. Cathedral Square, Christ Church Cathedral, Arts Centre, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu, Bone Dude's Bone Carving Studio, Tram Tours, Summit Road Walks, Canterbury Museum, Nga Hau E Wha National Marae, Christchurch Gondola, Riccarton House, QEII Park, Botanic Gardens, Science Alive, Air Force World, Christchurch Casino, Canterbury Brewery
2. Christchurch International Airport, Antarctic Centre
3. Bottle Lake Forest, New Brighton Beach & Pier
4. Pegasus Bay & Walkway, The Pines Beach, Woodend Beach
5. Eyrewell Forest
6. Banks Peninsula: Lyttleton Harbour, Diamond Harbour, Summit Walk, Le Bons Basin, Botanic Gardens
7. Lyttleton Museum, Timeball Museum
8. Langlois-Eteveneaux Cottage & Akaroa Museum, Customs House, Stanley Park, Garden of Tane
9. To Selwyn District: Arthur's Pass National Park, TranzAlpine Train, Korowai-Tussocklands Park, Craigieburn Forest Park, Waimakariri & Rakaia Rivers, Skiing in Craigieburn & Arthur's Pass
10. Whale Watch Kaikoura, Seal Colony, Clarence Reserve Conservation Area, Fyffe House, Kaikoura Museum, Gold Art & Design, Night Sky, Maori Trips Kaikoura, Maori Leap Cave, Kaikoura Wine Co.
11. Kaikoura Coast Track
12. Hanmer Springs Thermal Reserve, Hanmer Forest Park, Adventure Centre
13. Molesworth Station Road to Blenheim
14. Rainbow Station & Lake Tennyson
15. Loch Katrine & Lake Sumner Conservation Park
16. Clarence River Raft Trip & Hidden Valleys
17. Balmoral Forest, Hawarden
18. Weka Pass Railway Trip
19. Mt. Lyford Alpine Resort
20. To Lewis Pass, St. James Walkway, Maruia Springs Thermal Park
21. Lake Coleridge Area, Methven, Erewhon Station & Mt. Sunday, Mt. Hutt Forest, Rakaia Gorge Walkway, Ryton Station, Castle Hill Alpine Village, Ashburton Gorge, Alford Forest, Awa Awa Rata Rreserve, Pudding Hill Scenic Reserve, Mt. Somers Walk

Canterbury

Introduction

Canterbury is one of the most diverse regions in New Zealand and it hardly seems fair to lump it all together. Stretching from Kaikoura in the north to Aoraki/Mt. Cook in the south, Canterbury includes oceans, mountains, hot springs, rivers, glaciers and flat, dry plains. Its wildlife ranges from bush birds to the high country kea to three varieties of penguins, dolphins, seals, sea lions and whales. Townships run the gamut as well – from the tiniest set-

tlements of rural New Zealand to Christchurch, a bustling Anglican city with a major University. It's a vast area of land and culture; there is certainly no reason to zip through it unaware.

Bounded on the west by the Southern Alps and on the east by the Pacific Ocean, Canterbury is home to the flat, dry plains where intensive grain and livestock farming rule. The plains sit atop a vast system of aquifers – Christchurch is the only city in the world of its size that doesn't have to treat its drinking water.

Two of the main east-west mountain passes are in Canterbury – the Lewis Pass and Arthur's Pass (the Haast Pass is in the West Coast region); and the highest mountain in Australasia – Aoraki/Mt. Cook – is also here. The TranzAlpine train trip is celebrated as one of the most scenic rides in the world.

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Christchurch

The third-largest city in New Zealand, Christchurch is often referred to as our most English city. Perhaps it's the Anglican Cathedral that stands guard on the square; it was built following the model of Christ Church in Oxford. Or perhaps it's the river, the rose gardens, the manicured lawns and old buildings on the original university site. Christchurch was indeed designed to suit the needs of the Anglican immigrants, who began to arrive in 1850 – they were determined to settle New Zealand in an orderly and logical way.

Christchurch seems at first to be flat and uneventful; but look a bit farther to the Port Hills and the Banks Peninsula if you want relief from the flat. Or head out to the coast at New Brighton, Redcliffs, Clifton and Sumner if you want to smell and taste the sea. There are lots of walks to stretch your legs and plenty of cafés, restaurants and bars to fill your belly.

Cathedral Square, anchored by **Christ Church Cathedral**, is the center and heart of the city. The construction of the Gothic cathedral began in 1864; it was opened in 1881 and finally completed in 1904. It is open for tours and services and, for a nominal fee, you can climb the 63-meter (204-foot) spire – pick a clear day to do this for the best views of the city. There is also a gift shop and a café on-site.

The rest of the square is a concentration of tourist shops and cafés, Internet outposts and a sprinkling of historic sites. It's a happening spot, most days, as office workers rush around and tourists wander, map in hand, eyes pointing skyward. If you've been putting off buying Kiwi souvenirs, here's a good spot to pick up all kinds. All in all, the square is a pleasant place; there are often market stalls with artists and craftpeople selling their goods. There also seems to be an unusually high number of baked-potato kiosks around the sidewalks of Christchurch.

The streets of the city are laid out in a grid – but, outside of the main downtown, I always manage to get lost and find myself on the wrong side of a river or park. The four avenues – Moorhouse, Fitzgerald, Bealey and Deans – hem in the city, and are referred to simply as "the Avenues." Delivery and/or transport prices are often based on whether or not your location is within "the avenues." Within their boundaries is the large Hagley Park – reputedly the largest city park in New Zealand, and home to masses of walking and running tracks and playing fields. Off Cathedral Square, two blocks to the south, is the City Mall, where you'll find department stores, clothing shops, booksellers – the mainstream kind of shopping is done here. Christchurch also has a fair number of malls in the outlying areas, including Riccarton and Merrivale. On both the City Mall and up Colombo Street you'll find retailers of outdoor sporting gear.

While the Cathedral dominates the city center, the Avon River dominates the outskirts, as it winds its way through the city. It's a lovely river with nicely landscaped banks and, as it curves around the Botanic Gardens on the west side of town, is really a special addition to the "Garden City." Try, if you can, to reserve some time on your visit to Christchurch to wander along the river, through the Arts Centre and the Botanic Gardens. And let's not forget that Christchurch is also a coastal city, with beaches and sand dunes minutes from the city center. Banks Peninsula and Akaroa are a bit of a drive, but it takes virtually no effort to get to the charming beach communities of New and South Brighton and Sumner, where you'll often find surfers, swimmers and kayakers. The beach by Brighton is perfect for long walks.

> **Did you know?** Christchurch is the last port of call before the world's cold-loving people head to Antarctica. Teams from New Zealand and abroad fly from Christchurch – it's about five hours to the ice.

■ Getting Here

By Air

The **Christchurch International Airport** is 10 km (six miles) northwest of the city center and services both domestic and international travelers (primarily from Australia). Air New Zealand added direct flights from Los Angeles to Christchurch in late 2004. This is a very convenient option if you plan to spend most of your time on the South Island. Many hotels and motels provide complimentary shuttle service, and other shuttles also meet most flights. The airport is relatively large and has an information center in both the international and domestic terminals. Travel to the airport on the public bus is $3 per person and takes 30 to 40 minutes with half-hourly departures from Cathedral Square; by shuttle, it's $10 per person and takes 20 to 30 minutes; and by taxi, $25 to $30 and 15 to 20 minutes.

> **Tip:** If you have a layover at the Christchurch airport, don't despair. Use it to visit the International Antarctic Centre, only an eight-minute walk from the airport. See Sightseeing section, page 459.

By Car

SH1 links Christchurch with points farther north and south. From Blenheim, it's about 320 km (198 miles) and takes roughly 4½ hours to drive; from Dunedin, it's 360 km (223 miles) and takes five hours. Coming from the West Coast, figure 190 km (118 miles) and just over three hours from Greymouth on SH73.

By Bus

Christchurch is serviced by all the main shuttle and bus lines. Most of them pick up and drop off from Cathedral Square.

InterCity, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 03-379-9020.

Atomic Shuttles, www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-322-8883.

Hanmer Connection, hanmerconnection@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 0800-377-378.

South Island Connection, ☎ 03-366-6633.

By Train

Christchurch is the beginning point of the daily round-trip train service to Picton on the **TranzCoastal** and to Greymouth on the **TranzAlpine**. The train station is in the suburb of Addington, not at all convenient to downtown. There are shuttle buses and taxis that service the station and some accommodations also offer transport. Train reservations can be made at the information center or through TranzScenic directly. www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 0800-872-467.

■ Getting Around

The Shuttle provides free central-city transport from 8 am to 10:30 pm weekdays, to midnight on weekends. Look for the yellow signs. It goes out by Hoyts 8 movie complex and Science Alive museum in the south end of town all the way to the Convention Centre in the north end.

■ Information Sources

The very capable and efficient Christchurch & Canterbury Marketing organization supports **www.christchurchnz.net**. Another site to check out for events is **www.bethere.org.nz**.

The always busy and amazingly organized **visitor information center** is open daily from 8:30 am, and is located on Cathedral Square, ☎ 03-379-9629.

The DoC **North Canterbury Area Office** is open Monday to Friday (8:30 am to 5 pm) and is located at 133 Victoria Street, ☎ 03 371 3706.

> **Did you know?** The World Buskers Festival is held annually in January. www.worldbuskersfestival.co.nz.

> **Tip:** Pick up copies of *Christchurch City Art Trail*; *Best Shopping*; *Christchurch Central City Walks*; and *The Blue Edge* (a guide to the shoreline).

■ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

The **Travis Nature Heritage Park** is a lowland freshwater wetland and home to 55 different species of birds. There is a walking track that goes around most of the reserve, an educational center and a viewing platform. Off Beach and Frosts Road.

Orana Park Wildlife Trust has a population of both native birds and imported animals, with quite a few representatives of Africa. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. www.oranawildlifepark.co.nz, McLeans Island Road, ☎ 03-359-7109.

Willowbank Wildlife Reserve has farm animals, native birds and fish, as well as exotic animals like wallabies, otters, llamas and emus. www.willowbank.co.nz, 60 Hussey Road, ☎ 03-359-6226.

On Water

These safe swimming beaches run along **Pegasus Bay**, to the north of the city.

- Spencer Park
- Broad Park
- New Brighton Pier
- Sumner & Scarborough Beach
- Taylors Mistake

If you've never done it, here's your chance. With **Punting on the Avon**, you can opt to just punt or punt 'n indulge – go punting down the river and then have a gourmet platter or Devonshire tea, either on the banks of the river or in the CLUB restaurant (see page 464). Daily from 9 am in summer, 10 am in winter, from $12 per person. www.christchurchnz.net/punting, ☎ 03-379-9629.

Punting in the Park has 30-minute trips leaving from 9:30 am to dusk. Your punter will be in traditional dress. $15 adults. punting@xtra.co.nz, tours depart from Antigua Boat Shed, ☎ 03-366-0337.

If you're in search of a faster way to get down a river, try jet-boating on the Waimakariri River with **Waimak Alpine Jet**. Trips vary in length and transfers from Christchurch are available. Prices start at $60. www.waimakalpinejet.co.nz, Springfield, ☎ 03-318-4883 or 0800-263-626.

Learn to surf at the **South Island Surfing Company**. Weekend sessions are available and lesson packages are by arrangement. If you already know how to surf, you can rent gear here, too. Prices start at $35 for 90 minutes. www.surfsouth.co.nz, on the mall in New Brighton, ☎ 03-382-6969.

AUTHOR'S PICK

Rangitata Rafts runs fabulous one-day rafting adventures on Grade I-V rapids through the Rangitata Gorge. These guys (and gals) are really fun, but run a totally professional trip. They operate in the Peel Forest, but transport is available from Christchurch. This is probably the best easily-accessible one-day rafting trip in New Zealand.

Lunch before and BBQ after the trip are included, as is all gear. Great fun, lots of laughs. $145. www.rafts.co.nz, ☎ 0800-251 251.

In the Air

Hot air ballooning is a Canterbury icon and **Up Up and Away** balloons fly from the center of the city in view of the ocean toward the mountains – it's the only place in the world where you can do that! Call them for start times (it'll be rather early in the summer!). www.ballooning.co.nz, ☎ 03-381-4600, fax 03-381-4611.

Christchurch Helicopters offers scenic flights, heli-skiing and charter. You can also do a trial flight to see if you would like to learn how to fly. www.christchurchhelicopters.co.nz, Christchurch airport, ☎ 03-359-0470.

Christchurch Parachute School has tandem and static-line options as well as accelerated freefall, where you jump on your own but with two instructors beside you. www.skydiving.co.nz, ☎ 03-343-5542 or 027-432-1135.

Paragliding lessons and trips can be had in either Christchurch or Akaroa with **Paragliding New Zealand**. From $120. www.paragliding.co.nz, ☎ 0508-727-245.

Nimbus Paragliding School does tandem flights and solo courses from Christchurch. Prices begin at $100. www.nimbusparagliding.cjb.net, ☎ 025-324-874 or 0800-111-611.

On Horses

Parkgrove Riding Stables takes riders on farm and beach treks for an hour or longer. Prices start at $35. Rides can be combined with a jet-boat ride. www.adventurecanterbury.com, 78 Lower Styx Road, Marshlands, ☎ 03-385-2508.

You can try harness racing at Addington Park… see the entry for *Horsepower* under the *Ashburton District* section, page 488.

On Bikes

Bottle Lake Forest has mountain bike tracks in addition to bridle paths and walking paths. The mountain-bike tracks range from simple beginner romps suitable for kids to much more technical and wild rides for those with experience. Tracks are through the plantation forest and along the beach.

The Mountain Bike Adventure Company has a "gondola-up, mountain-bike-down" package. Minimum age 15, or with adult, 12. Allow two hours, includes safety gear, bike, and gondola ride. $45 for gondola/mountain bike package. www.cyclehire-tours.co.nz, ☎ 0800-424-534.

Rainy day option: Action Dirt Karts is an indoor dirt track and could bring out parts of your personality that you didn't know existed. Prices begin at $10 per person for five minutes. www.dirtkarts.co.nz, 23 Leeds Street, ☎ 03-377-3730.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

The Arts Centre is on the site of the old university campus and is a fabulous place to poke around in over 40 galleries, studios, shops and cafés. If you're in town on the weekend, don't miss the market – filled with arts, crafts, music and food. www.artscentre.org.nz, between Hereford and Worcester, Rolleston and Montreal. ☎ 03-366-0989, fax 03-379-7576.

The **Christchurch Art Gallery-Te Puna O Waiwhetu** was new in 2003 and is the largest art institution on the South Island. It houses changing exhibits of local, national and international art. It's a wonderful site and deserving of a visit. There is also a great gift shop. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm, 10 am to 9 pm on Wednesday. www.christchurchartgallery.org.nz, corner of Worcestor Boulevard and Montreal Street.

For a fun day, go to **The Bone Dude's Bone Carving Studio** and take a lesson in carving while listening to stories and Maori myths. This is a good source of local knowledge. Available 9 am to noon and 1 to 4 pm, Monday to Friday, 10 am to 1 pm on Saturday. Prices begin at $35. 229 B Fitzgerald Ave, ☎ 03-379-7530.

Tram tours circle around the inner city, pointing out interesting things along the way. Summer, 9 am to 9 pm, winter, 9 am to 6pm. $10 adults, buy your tickets on board. Cathedral Square, along Worcestor Boulevard, to Rolleston, up Armagh, to New Regent and back.

Sign of the Takahe is one of four plaques depicting native birds that were installed around the late 1920s/early 1930s as rest spots for walking tracks. The Sign of the Takahe provides fabulous views of the city and is also the site of a café and restaurant. The Sign of the Kiwi and the Sign of the Bellbird are also good vantage points. You can get a copy of the map for the Summit Road, on which these lookouts are shown, at the information center, or just take your own map in and ask for directions.

The **International Antarctic Centre** tours take you through the four seasons on Antarctica. There is also a Scott Base display and The Snow and Ice Experience – my favorite! It's cold in there (-5°C/23°F and -18°C/0°F wind chill) and you can slide down a real ice slide! There's an interactive gallery with lots of stuff for kids and adults and plenty of "Please Touch" signs. There is a snowphone, audio guides and, my second-favorite part of the center, *The Great White South* audio-visual movie. For an additional price you can take a Hagglund ride, to experience the kind of vehicles used on the ice. Open daily from 9 am to 8 pm summer, 5:30 pm winter; open on Christmas! Allow two or three hours for your visit. $20 adult, $10 child; $10 more for the Hagglund ride. www.iceberg.co.nz; it's an eight-minute walk from the airport, 38 Orchard Road, ☎ 03-353-7798 or 0508-736-4846.

A visit to the **Canterbury Museum** will help you understand the history of the region and the current issues it faces, with traditional and contemporary displays. You can take a walk down a re-creation of Victoria Street. Open 9 am to 5:30 pm in the summer, 9 am to 5 pm in the winter, Free admission and there is a museum store and café. Rolleston Avenue, in the Botanic Gardens, ☎ 03-366-6000 fax 03-366-5622.

The very best library in New Zealand is at **New Brighton Beach Pier**. It is the most fabulous place to read a book or stare at the ocean. Right on the beach.

Daily tours are available at **Nga Hau E Wha National Marae**, where you can learn about Maori culture, customs and history. There are also night-time hangi (traditional Maori feasts), guided tours and concerts. You can visit the marae, or Maori meeting place, free of charge between 9 am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday; show prices are $25 adults ($15 children) for the concert only, $30 adults ($19 children) for tour and concert, and $65 adults ($36 children) for tour, concert and hangi. www.nationalmarae.co.nz, 250 Pages Road, ☎ 03-388-7692.

You can ride the **Christchurch Gondola** to almost 1,500 feet above sea level at the top of the Port Hills. Great views of Christchurch, the Canterbury plains and Lyttelton Harbour to the south. $15 adults, $7 children, Based in the Heathcote Valley, 15 minutes from downtown; access by Best Attractions express shuttle. www.gondola.co.nz or www.tram.co.nz.

Heritage tours of the oldest pioneer cottage in Christchurch and a visit to the last remaining native bush in Christhchurch are available at the **Riccarton House & Bush**. www.riccartonhouse.co.nz, Kahu Road, ☎ 03-341-1018.

Queen Elizabeth II Park is a sports and leisure facility with a variety of pools and activities, including a Lazy River, dive pool, lap pool, squash courts, spas, saunas, steam room, restaurant. Pools $4.50 adults, $2 children; gyms $7 adults. Open weekdays, 6 am to 9 pm; weekends, 7 am to 9 pm. www.qeiipark.org.nz, Travis Road, ☎ 03-383-4313.

Science Alive! Is an interactive science center and a great place to figure out how things work. Open 10 am to 5 pm, www.sciencealive.co.nz, in the old train station, 392 Moorhouse Ave, ☎ 03-365-5199.

Air Force World is the museum located at the former Air Force base at Wigram. There are plenty of airplanes and other memorabilia on display, including some relating to the exploration of Antarctica. $15 adults, $5 children. www.airforcemuseum.co.nz, 45 Harvard Avenue, Sockburn, just south of Sockburn Overbridge.

Christchurch Casino has blackjack, poker, roulette, and all the gaming machines, plus The Grand Café buffet, with enough food to make you burst. $18 breakfast, $20 lunch, $34 dinner.

Canterbury Brewery does tours and tops them off with a tasting of Canterbury Draft. Tours go through the history and process of how beer is made. There is also a museum of beer. Tours are 1½ hours and begin at 10 am and 12:30 pm, Monday to Thursday; 1 pm on Saturday. Bookings are essential. 36 St. Asaph Street, ☎ 03-379-4940.

■ Where to Stay

Christchurch

There are scads of places to stay in Christchurch. The town does fill up in the summer (especially in the more affordable accommodations) so it pays to book ahead.

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

The George is the swankiest hotel in town. It's a small luxury hotel with all the lovely accents and extras. It's a top choice. www.thegeorge.com, 50 Park Terrace, ☎ 03-379-4560 or 0800-100-220 ($$$$).

The Manor, **Christchurch**, could either be called a small hotel or a huge bed and breakfast. Whatever description you choose, it's a grand old place in an historic building with old-world gardens and fabulous furnishings. It was built in 1860 as a private home and remodeled into guest accommodation in 1981. www.themanor.co.nz, 82 Bealey Avenue, ☎ 03-366-8584, fax 03-366-4946 ($$$$).

There are two Copthorne hotels, the **Copthorne Central** and the **Copthorne Durham**. The Central overlooks Victoria Park and reopened in 2002 after a massive upgrade. It has twins, queens, suites and family rooms. www.copthornecentral.co.nz, 776 Colombo Street, ☎ 03-379-5880. The Durham is across the street from the Casino and has the full range of rooms as well. www.copthornedurham.co.nz, corner of Durham and Kilmore streets, ☎ 03-366-4699 or 0800-267-846 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Crowne Plaza** is a massive hotel with stylish, modern rooms and facilities. It's in one center of the city and has great views of Victoria Square. www.crowneplaza.co.nz, corner of Kilmore and Durham Streets. ☎ 03-365-7799 or 0800-110-888 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Chateau on the Park** is a large complex with 183 rooms (some suites have spas, others have baths), native garden views, rose gardens, heated pool, outdoor dining in rose garden, two restaurants. Free shuttle to the airport and train, but check times because it may not get you there early enough for your train! www.chateau-park.co.nz, ☎ 03-348-8999 or 0800-808-999, fax 03-348-8990 ($$-$$$$).

Right near the center of town is the very pleasant and well-run **Hotel Grand Chancellor**, with all the extras you'd expect in a big-city hotel. www.grandc.co.nz, 161 Cashel Street, ☎ 03-379-2999 or 0800-275-337 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Charlotte Jane** is the romantic top-of-the-heap. Built in 1891, this lovely old home has it all. The prices aren't out of line, either, but it is a bit out from the center of town. www.charlotte-jane.co.nz, 110 Papanui Road, ☎ 03-355-1028, fax 03-355-8882 ($$$$).

The **Elm Tree House** is also slightly removed from the city center, but has six very pleasant rooms in an historic 1920s house. Cooked or continental breakfast, large grounds, lovely furnishings, evening sherry or port. www.elmtreehouse.co.nz, 236 Papanui Road, ☎ 03-355-9731 ($$$$).

If you want to stay close to the square but don't want to spend a fortune, consider one of the following:

The **Croydon House Bed and Breakfast** is a very pleasant spot with twins and doubles (all with en-suite bathrooms) and is in an old house. Full breakfast is included, there is a guest lounge, off-street parking and complimentary sherry. Singles, twins and doubles in the house and apartments with

bath and kitchen adjacent. www.croydon.co.nz, 63 Armagh Street, ☎ 0800-276-936 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Grange Guesthouse** is another older home with B&B twins and doubles, all with en-suite bathrooms. Another good, friendly choice. www.thegrange.co.nz, 56 Armagh Street, ☎ 03-366-2850 ($$$).

The **Windsor Hotel** is a comfortable old hotel with shared baths. It's very clean, friendly and budget-minded and has a few extras like bathrobes, hotwater bottles, laundry facilities and off-street parking. A full breakfast is included and it's just a few blocks from the city center. www.windsorhotel.co.nz, 52 Armagh Street, ☎ 03-366-1503 or 0800-366-1503, fax 03-366-9796 ($$-$$$).

Bealey Ave and Papanui Road are the motel strips. A few dependable ones to try include **Bella Vista Motel**, www.bellavistamotel.co.nz, 193 Bealey Ave, ☎ 03-377-3363 or 0800-235-528, fax 03-377-3445 ($$-$$$); **Tuscana Motor Lodge**, www.tuscana.co.nz, 74 Bealey Ave, ☎/fax 03-377-4485 or 0508-887-226 ($$-$$$$); and **Akron Motel**, www.nzmotels.co.nz/akron.motel, 87 Bealey Ave., ☎ 03-366-1633 or 0800-778-787, fax 03-379-1332 ($$-$$$).

On Papanui Road, try **Strathern Motor Lodge**, www.sml.net.nz, 54 Papanui Road, ☎ 03-355-4411/fax or 0800-766-624 ($$$); **Colonial Motel**, www.nzmotels.co.nz/colonial.inn, 43 Papanui Road, ☎ 03-355-9139 or 0800-111-232, fax 03-355-5457 ($$); or **Camelot Court**, a Best Western affiliate, camelot.chch@clear.net.nz, 28 Papanui Road, ☎ 03-355-9124, fax 03-355-8698 ($$$).

Thomas's Hotel is convenient to downtown, opposite the Art Centre. There's a big kitchen, lots of room options, bike rental and storage of gear, skis, bikes. Some rooms with en-suite bathrooms, some with shared bath; single, twin and double as well as multi-share. Very tidy and fine for what it is. www.thomashotel.co.nz, 36 Hereford Street, ☎ 03-379-9536, fax 03-379-9556 ($-$$).

New Excelsior Backpackers has a cool rooftop sundeck with BBQ and tables, chairs, perfect for drinking beer and soaking up sun. All the doubles have sinks, and there are many twin rooms. This is an old hotel that's been a backpacker hostel for six years and still has old-hotel charm. www.newexcelsior.co.nz, corner, Manchester and High Streets, ☎ 03-366-7570, fax 03-366-7629 ($).

Women only at the **Frauenreisehaus Womens Hostel**, a comfortable and relaxed place that has spring water, a garden, fresh herbs and a great kitchen. Free linen, duvets, washing machines and bikes. Twin, single, shared bath and dorm rooms. 272 Barbadoes Street, ☎ 03-366-2585, fax 03-366-2589 ($).

The **Old Countryhouse** is just that and it's a bit of a walk from town, but is a comfortable and high-quality backpacker hostel. Big kitchen and new beds make it even better, and there is a nice garden for chilling out. 437 Gloucestor Street, ☎ 03-381-5504 ($).

At **Christchurch City Central YHA**, you'll be just a couple of minute's walk from the cathedral and all the goings on. There are two kitchens, lots of space to spread out and an on-site booking service. yha.christchurchcity@yha.org.nz, 273 Manchester Street, ☎ 03-379-9535, fax 03-379-9537 ($).

The other YHA in town is **Rolleston House**, opposite the Arts Centre – an incredibly handy location. Only 54 beds and no doubles, but there are twins. Book early. yha.rollestonhouse@yha.org.nz, 5 Worcestor Blvd at the corner of Rolleston Avenue, ☎ 03-366-6564, fax 03-365-5589 ($).

The **X base Backpackers** is a new site, taking over the former Star Times Backpackers. It's right on Cathedral Square and the newest backpacker hostel in town. There is a bar on-site and also an outdoor BBQ area. The rooms are made-up and clean; emphasis is on young, modern and hip. This company plans to open accommodations in all the major spots (there's another one in Auckland and Wellington). www.basebackpackers.com, 55 Cathedral Square, ☎ 03-982-2225 or 0800-942-225, fax 03-982-2226 ($).

Meadow Park is a massive Top 10 Holiday Park and can sleep up to 1,000 – they serve about 30,000 people per year in all manner of accommodations: cabins, tourist apartments, motel units, tent and power sites. www.meadowpark.co.nz, 39 Meadow Street, Papanui, ☎ 03-352-9176 or 0800-396-323 ($-$$).

Sumner Beach

There are a couple of great places to stay at the beach and if you've got transport and are looking for a more relaxing place to rest, I'd head out here.

The **Sumner Beach Guest House** is a cool little cottage in a beautiful garden. The owner has a furniture store in the village and her sense of style is evident. It has bath and kitchen and is gorgeous. shirleyann@paradise.net.nz, 4 Stoke Street, ☎ 03-326-6820, fax 03-384-3266 ($$$).

If you're on a budget, pick **The Marine Bar & Backpackers** – don't get the wrong impression from "bar" in the name, it's not a manic, out-of-control place by any means. Recently renovated and offering dorms and doubles with bath. There's plenty of sunshine and it's near the beach. www.themarine.co.nz, 26 Nayland Street, ☎ 03-326-6609, fax 03-326-5843 ($).

■ Where to Eat

You are not going to go hungry while you're here. There are the requisite kebab and noodle shops and all sorts of trendier options.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

To see and be seen, head on down to Oxford Terrace, where your choices include (but are not limited to) the Tex-Mex of **Coyote Street** (126 Oxford Terr.); the Meditteranean of **Azure** (128 Oxford Terr.); the trendy and modern at Sticky Fingers (corner of Hereford); and Japanese at **Sala Sala** (184 Oxford Terr.). For a great brunch (or dinner) go to **Boulevard** at the corner of Hereford and Oxford Terrace ($$-$$$).

Even if you're not staying here, you can still enjoy the brilliant cuisine at **Pescatore**, the restaurant at The George, 50 Park Terrace ($$$).

My current favorite restaurant in Christchurch is **Alchemy** at the Christchurch Art Gallery. Good, healthy portions of very tasty food. Some menu items are innovative, some are more traditional, but all are nicely pre-

sented. Every time I've been here, I've had very good service and the surroundings are lovely. There's a comfortable bar as well ($$).

I also like to go down Victoria Street for ethnic restaurants – it seems to have more of a neighborhood feel than Oxford Terrace. For Thai, head to **Kanniga** at 173 Victoria – they are always busy, though, so plan on having a drink first or else book in advance ($$). For pizza or pasta, try **Spagalimis**, 155 Victoria ($$).

Also on Victoria, but opposite the Casino (which has a massive, reasonably-priced buffet) is **Hay's** – the place to go for home-grown lamb. 63 Victoria Street ($$$).

The **CLUB** is popular with the quiet, middle-aged crowd, but they also do great picnic baskets. 88 Armagh Street ($$-$$$).

Dux De Lux Restaurant and Bar serves vegetarian, seafood and all sorts of blackboard menu items, and they're not too bad on the desserts, either. This is also home to Dux's in-house brewery. It's a popular place to sit outside and drink a pitcher while you listen to music ($$-$$$).

For something different, the **Christchurch Tramway Restaurant** lets you experience fine dining while you roll along. It leaves from Cathedral Square; call ahead for times. ☎ 03-366-7511 ($$$).

As far as cafés go, there are more than a few, but the **Backstage Bakery** at the Arts Centre, Collins Building, has great food and coffee ($). So does the **Boulevard Bakehouse Café**, which is also at the Arts Centre, Boulevard Shops & Galleries (open until midnight) ($).

Six Chairs Missing has good coffee, lunch and home-made ice cream! Dinner from 6 pm. Corner of New Regent Street and Armagh, on the Tram route. Closed Sunday and Monday ($).

For an injection of baked greatness, try **Copenhagen Bakery**. Yummy breads and cakes. Armagh Street.

Banks Peninsula

The rugged, hilly volcanic knob called the Banks Peninsula is a great getaway destination. **Lyttelton Harbour**, 12 km (seven miles) south of Christchurch and at the base of Banks Peninsula, is the major South Island port and yet has interesting activities for the visitor, including dolphin swimming, kayaking and harbor cruises. Farther out on the peninsula is the very French town of **Akaroa**. There are both short and long walks to explore, a couple of scenic drives and a lot of marine life to enjoy. When you look at a map, the area's volcanic history is evident. Less obvious, though, is violent human activities that occurred, including a particularly bloody skirmish between the Ngai Tahu and the Ngati Toa.

When the British and Maori were busy writing and signing the Treaty of Waitangi, the captain of a French whaling ship negotiated with local Maori and bought the peninsula. By the time the settlers had returned from France to begin life in their new land, the treaty had been signed and the land was subsequently sold to the New Zealand Company. The French remained and settled the area, nonetheless.

■ Getting Here

SH75 comes out of Christchurch and follows along Lake Ellesmere before jutting inland and weaving its way around small villages to Akaroa. It's about 85 km (53 miles) and takes 1½ hours to drive. A longer, and much more scenic drive is the **Summit Road**. Pick up a copy of the Summit Road Map from the information center and take your time enjoying the hills, bays and sites along the way.

> **Tip:** A stop in Diamond Harbour for an ice cream or a picnic is a great diversion on any day. You can grab a ferry from Lyttelton if you don't have a car. $4 adults, $2 children. Multiple trips every day. Contact the Black Cat Group for water transport, ☎ 03-328-9078.

Akaroa Shuttle offers shuttle service and scenic tours from $20 round-trip for direct shuttle service; $35 for bus day-trips. info@akaroashuttle.co.nz, ☎ 0800-500-929.

The **Akaroa French Connection** leaves Christchurch daily at 9:30 am for a scenic trip; 8:45 for direct service. ☎ 03-366-4556 or 0800-800-575.

■ Information Sources

In **Lyttelton**, the information center is on Oxford Street.

The **Akaroa Information Center** is at the corner of Rue Lavaud and Rue Balguerie, ☎/fax 03-304-8600.

■ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

From Lyttelton, take a scenic half-day tour by **Sea Cruises Ltd**. to see marine life, including Hector's dolphins and blue penguins, as well as natural features and landmarks. You'll also learn about the history of the area. If you're staying in Christchurch you can be picked up at your accommodation and have a good tour on the way out to Lyttelton. Along the way, see the Botanic Gardens, Hagley Park, Redcliffs, estuary wetlands and Sumner. $50 adults, $17.50 children. www.sea-cruises.co.nz, ☎ 03-328-7720 or 0800-314-314.

Akaroa Harbour Cruises (two-hour cruises daily at 11 am and 1:30 pm) and **Dolphin Watching and Swimming** (three-hour trips at 6 am, 9 am, noon and 2 pm) leave from the Akaroa Main Wharf. Things to see include Hector's dolphins, little blue penguins, Cathedral Cave, volcanic cliffs, the Akaroa Salmon Farm and more. This is also the same operator that provides ferry service to Diamond Harbour. Wildlife cruises $45 adults, $15 children; dolphin swim $95 adults ($55 to watch), $75 children ($30 to watch). Black Cat Group, www.blackcat.co.nz, ☎ 03-304-7641 or 0800-436-574.

Dolphin Experience Akaroa runs four trips daily in the summer (6 am, 9 am, noon and 3 pm) and two in the winter (9 am and noon). Hector's dolphins are the type you're most likely to see. To swim, $80 adults, $55 children; to watch, $38. dolphins.akaroa@xtra.co.nz, 61 Beach Road, ☎/fax 03-304-7726 or 0508-365-744.

Pohatu Penguins leads penguin tours that include trips to the marine reserve at Pohatu-Flea Bay. Transport is provided (and recommended – the road is a rough one) and penguin tours go out each evening. Best viewing is from September to January. This is the largest mainland colony of white-flippered penguins. Accommodation (in a small bach or holiday cottage) and kayak/snorkel rental is also available. $45 for transport and penguin tour. www.pohatu.co.nz, ☎ 03-304-8552.

The **Akaroa Seal Colony Safari** leads trips out to the seal colony at Goat Point, stopping at other points of interest along the way. Access to the colony is on private property, so this is your only option to get out there. It's on a rugged and spectacular site. Minimum group of two; maximum of six. $50 adults, $30 children. Trips leave from Akaroa. www.sealsafari.com, ☎/fax 03-304-7255 or 025-942-070.

On Water

Le Bons Bay is a safe and sheltered swimming beach.

Experience Canterbury offers sea kayaking trips. Fully catered day-trips include transport to and from Akaroa. $120. www.experiencecanterbury.
co.nz, ☎ 0800-896-989.

On Foot

The **Banks Peninsula Track** is a private two- or four-day 35-km (22-mile) tramp. Accommodation is in either new cabin/huts or historic cottages, with hot water, gas stoves and so on. The third night (second night if you're doing the two-day) has an outdoor bush bath – one of my favorite things! The walk is limited to 12 people for the four-day, four for the two-day (the same distance is covered in half the time). They call it "Four Nights, Four Days, Four Beaches" and that should give you an idea of what to expect. $180 per person. www.bankstrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-304-7612.

There are quite a few other good walks, for a few hours or multi-day. I would recommend visiting the information center and getting a map for the area. Most of the walks are DoC conservation walks and you can stop in DoC in Christchurch for more information, too.

By 4x4

Kowhai Tours runs 4WD day-tours of Akaroa and Banks Peninsula. $135 per person. kowhaitours@slingshot.co.nz, ☎ 03-388-7899 or 021-128-9090.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

I think the best part about sightseeing in Lyttelton is just walking along the quay and looking at the big ships. If you need something more structured, stop into the **Lyttelton Museum** on Gladstone Quay for its Antarctic and historical (including maritime) displays; and at the **Timeball Station** on Reserve Terrace, where you, like sailors before the days of radio, can set your watch to precisely 1 pm every day.

Be sure to stop at **Barry's Bay Cheese** to taste and view traditional cheese making. Main Road, Barry's Bay.

The best way to get to know Akaroa is to wander around the small shops and gardens, the **Langlois-Eteveneaux Cottage & Akaroa Museum** and the old **Customs House**. There are also short walking tracks in **Stanley Park** and in the **Garden of Tane**. Most enjoyable, though, is to grab some fish and chips and sit on the Main Wharf and watch the world go by.

■ Where to Stay

In Lyttelton

You'll find a few hotels and B&Bs but the best place to stay in town is **Tunnel Vision Backpackers**. It's a good reprieve from the city, and a good destination of its own. Housed in a remodeled (and now very modern) hotel, circa 1881, and has a big kitchen, lounge, outdoor patio, and twins, doubles and dorms. It's a very comfortable place to stay. www.tunnelvision.co.nz, 44 London Street, ☎ 03-328-7576.

In Akaroa

There are so many B&Bs, it's best to inquire at the information center about them. One that stands out is the **Oinako Lodge** with a variety of stately rooms in an historic building set among gorgeous grounds. www.oinako.co.nz, 99 Beach Road, ☎ 03-8787 ($$$-$$$$). Another good choice is **Blythcliffe**, in an 1858 historic house with a fabulous garden and pavilion. There are rooms in the house (en-suite bathroom and private bath) and a cottage with bath and kitchen. www.blythcliffe.co.nz, 37 Rue Balguerie, ☎/fax 03-304-7003 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Akaroa Village Inn** has plenty of choices, ranging from simple to luxurious, studios to apartments, and on a variety of sites. www.akaroavillageinn.co.nz, 81 Beach Road, ☎ 03-304-7421 or 0800-695-2000, fax 03-304-7423 ($$-$$$$).

The **Driftwood** & **Wai-Iti Motels** are run by the same people and provide comfortable and affordable options. The Wai-Iti is the better option if you're traveling with the family. www.driftwood.co.nz, 56 Rue Jolie, ☎ 03-304-7484 or 0508-928-373, fax 03-304-5858 ($$-$$$).

Chez la Mer Backpackers is in an historic building in Akaroa, with shared-bath, double, twin and single rooms. chez_la_mer@clear.net.nz, 50 Rue Lavaud, ☎/fax 03-304-7024 ($).

Bon Accord Backpackers is a small, cozy, friendly and charming place to stay. www.bon-accord.co.nz, 57 rue Lauvaud, ☎ 03-304-7782 ($).

The **Akaroa Top 10 Holiday Park** makes for a good option with just a few cabins and units with bath and kitchen as well as tent and power sites. Good views of the harbor. 96 Morgan Road, ☎/fax 03-304-7471 ($-$$).

On the Peninsula

On a sheep farm and beside the bay is **Onuku Farm Hostel**. There are some nice walks to take from here and you can also go on a kayak trip to see the dolphins. www.onukufarm.co.nz, ☎ 03-304-7612 ($).

Le Bons Bay Backpackers is family-run, with accommodations in a farmhouse with big gardens, walks, swimming and lots of marine life right outside the door. Le Bons Bay, ☎ 03-304-8582 ($).

The **Duvauchelle Reserve Board Motor Camp** has plenty of spots for tents and campers, but only three cabins, so book early in this pleasant, remote spot. Seafield Road, ☎ 03-304-5777.

In Diamond Harbour, the **Purau Bay Holiday Park** has kitchen cabins and a backpacker lodge. They also have kayaks to rent, a swimming pool and boat trips. 191 Purau Avenure, Purau Bay, ☎ 03-329-4702 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

I don't usually list bars, but there's one that is so odd, you gotta go. It's the **Wunderbar** in Lyttelton and has the most bizarre collection of decorations, plus there's often live music.

Akaroa, being a French settlement, is bound to have a good bakery and that is the **Akaroa Bakery**, with breads, cakes, sandwiches, coffee. 51 Beach Road ($).

Café Eiffel has breakfast that will fill you up, light snacks for takeout and an all-day menu. 37 Rue Lavaud ($-$$).

Grab those fish and chips for sitting on the wharf at, where else, **Akaroa Fish and Chip Shop**, Beach Road ($).

You can also be sure there will be wonderful formal food and you can find that at **C'est la Vie**. Great fresh ingredients and seafood and good vegetarian options. Book ahead. 33 Rue Lavaud, ☎ 03-304-7314 ($$$).

The **French Farm Winery** is open for tastings and café-style lunches. Great food and wine. Let's hope they decide to open for dinner. Valley Road, French Farm ($$).

The **C'est Si Bon Restaurant and Café** is open for lunch and dinner and has French-German-Austrian food. In the old post office in Duvauchelle.

North & West of Christchurch

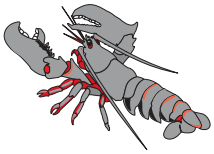
The **Inland Scenic Route 72** leaves SH1 at Woodend and takes you west to Oxford before heading south into the Selwyn District. This is by far the most scenic drive and if you're not in a hurry to get south (or return north), I suggest you travel this route and enjoy small-town New Zealand along the way. There are plenty of adventures to be had on SH72, as you travel through Selwyn, Ashburton and Central South Island, which are described later in this chapter. You can pick up a map of the Inland Scenic Route at any of the information centers.

Kowhai Equestrian Farm Stay has private cabins, breakfast, lunch and dinner with the family, horses for all levels, including dressage, show jumping and cross-country. Accommodation, all meals and riding for $146 single, $240 double or twin. You can do just horse trekking for two hours and up from $50. www.kowhai.co.nz, Island Road, View Hill, Oxford, ☎ 03-312-4309.

Millcreek Clydesdales Wagon Adventures runs two-hour trips. The day-tour includes lunch, and there's a supper adventure in the summer. www.millcreekclydesdales.co.nz, Catherwoods Road, Cust, ☎ 03-312-5239 or 027-491-4251.

Kaikoura

From humble beginnings as a fishing village, **Kaikoura** has grown into an international travel destination for those who want to interact with wildlife. Kaikoura translates into "meal of crayfish" and comes from the combination of the Maori word for food, "*kai,*" and crayfish, "*koura.*"



Did you know? Crayfish is rock lobster. You can find it on many menus, but it's rather expensive. If you drive up the coast about 15 minutes, you'll find campers selling it on the roadside at a much more reasonable price.

There is evidence that moa hunters lived around Kaikoura 900 years ago. When Cook spotted the peninsula in 1770, he thought it was an island. It should be no surprise that this little town was once the home of some very large whaling stations. Just offshore is what you might call the Grand Canyon of the sea world; several different species of whales live in the Kaikoura area, including that incredible giant, the sperm whale. It is the whales that have built this town and, thankfully, that is now in the form of tourism instead of whaling.

Try to imagine the ocean floor. Just off the coast of Kaikoura, an unusual phenomenon occurs – instead of the sea floor gradually sloping from the beach to the dark depths of the ocean, it drops off precipitously, forming a continental shelf at the edge of a very deep underwater canyon. This provides a rich and diverse feeding ground for – that's right – whales, dolphins, and seals. Because of the flow of water from Antarctica, the feeding grounds are constantly being replenished and marine mammals can live here year-round and never go hungry. In addition to sperm whales, pilot whales and orca are occasionally seen; dusky dolphins are almost always around; and Hector's dolphins are seen often. There are a few colonies of fur seals here as well, and these are rather dependably found.

Kaikoura is a success story. When the whaling industry came to an end, fishing was all that was left. Kaikoura was not only a sleepy little village, but a poor one. The locals looked around and asked themselves, right, what have we got here? We've got those whales. Wonder if anyone would want to go out and see them? And a couple of brave and trusting families mortgaged their homes, bought a boat, and in 1987 created **Whale Watch Kaikoura Ltd**. Whale-watching tours began in 1989 when 3,000 people went out to see the whales. In 2003, over 70,000 did the same.

It didn't take long before the locals realized people might also like to see dolphins and seals, and that maybe someone who doesn't want to go in a boat might just want to go in an airplane or a helicopter. Of course, there were still the fish. Bet some of those tourists might like to go fishing. And where are all those people who want to see the whales going to sleep and eat? So Kaikoura really is the town the whales built; and let's all be grateful it wasn't just by being slaughtered.

But even if the waters weren't rich with marine mammals, Kaikoura would be a great destination – it's stunningly beautiful, with the coast on the east side and the seaward Kaikouras on the west. Often capped with snow, the Kaikouras make for a picture-perfect backdrop.

> **Tip:** All trips on the water are weather-dependent and Kaikoura is an exposed coast. You must book in advance for wildlife trips and if your trip gets cancelled due to weather, you will be offered another date. Try to be in Kaikoura for two to three nights – there are plenty of activities to keep you busy and you'll have a better chance at getting out to see the wildlife.

■ Getting Here

By Air

The nearest commercial airports are in Blenheim and Christchurch. Scenic flights come and go from the Kaikoura airport, just south of town.

By Car

Kaikoura is located on SH1, about 130 km (80 miles) south of Blenheim. Without stopping, you can make it in an hour and a half, but it always takes me two hours – I just have to stop. The coast is incredible and there are often seals at play or at rest at Ohau Point Seal Colony. Christchurch is about 180 km (110 miles) south of Kaikoura and takes a little more than two hours.

By Train

The **TranzCoastal** train operates daily between Christchurch and Kaikoura, calling in on both northbound and southbound service. The train station is aptly named the **Whaleway Station**. www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 0800-872-467.

By Bus

While I hesitate to say "all" the South Island buses call into Kaikoura, certainly most of them do. They stop in the town car park on West End, very near to the information center.

Most things in Kaikoura are within walking distance and there is taxi service. You can get shuttle service to the Kaikoura Peninsula walkways, the seal colony, Mount Fyffe, Fyffe Palmer Track or sign up for a one-hour sightseeing tour with **Snowman Shuttles**, snowmanshuttles@hotmail.com, ☎ 0800-766-962.

■ Information Sources

Check out www.kaikoura.co.nz for information about the area.

The very helpful and up-to-date **Kaikoura Visitor Information and Tourism Inc**, info@kaikoura.co.nz, is located on West End, ☎ 03-319-5641, fax 03-319-6819.

The **DoC** office is on Ludstone Road, ☎ 03-319-5714.

Interesting fact: In August 2002, Kaikoura became the first New Zealand community (and only the second in the world) to become **Green Globe 21** benchmarked. Green Globe 21 is a tourism certification program that encourages and certifies organizations, operators – and in this case, a whole town – to take better care of the environment. It has to do with waste, energy, water, all the things that go into a sustainable world. Kaikoura also has a **Trees for Travellers** program, where you can purchase a tree or shrub to be planted in the Kaikoura region. Benefits of the program are generating income to help Kaikoura attain its Zero Waste goal; reforesting an area with native trees; providing jobs to youth; preventing land erosion; and helping offset the carbon dioxide you emit through your travels. www.treesfortravellers.co.nz.

■ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

The **Seal Colony** is just a short drive, about six km (nearly four miles), from the center of town; in fact, it's within walking or biking distance. You'll often find seals lounging around, resting or swimming and rolling around in the sea. These guys are fairly accustomed to people, but still, it's wise not to be between the seal and the sea and always be especially aware of youngsters (the seals, as well as your children). Never get between a baby and its mother and stay a respectful distance away from all of them.

Whale Watch Kaikoura Ltd. takes 70,000 people a year to see the whales and learn more about the environment. This is a very progressive company that is always looking for new ways to deliver content in an interesting manner. In 2003, they began showing a computer-animated movie of the ocean emptying to reveal the deep canyon, then filling back up and showing what creatures and fish are at the different levels. The animations are shown on board while you are under way and they are tailored to what's going on at the time – when you see a whale dive, for instance, the crew will show the movies about how whales dive. You must book in advance (especially during the busy summer months). Cost is $110 adult, $60 child (ages three to 15). www.whalewatch.co.nz, The Whaleway Station, ☎ 03-319-6767 or 0800-655-121, fax 03-319-6545.

> **Watch this space:** Whale Watch Kaikoura is trying to bring a little Hollywood to Kaikoura. Within the next two or three years (2006 or so), they are looking to develop the peninsula with indoor and virtual marine activities and life-size marine mammal models. This will not only fill in those rainy days, but give visitors a taste of what's out there.

You'll probably swim with dusky dolphins if you go out with **Dolphin Encounter**. These are the playful acrobats of the dolphin world and it's a take-your-breath-away kind of experience. You must absolutely book in ad-

vance – swim trips are often booked weeks ahead! $115 for adults to swim, $55 to watch; $105 for children under 15 to swim, $45 to watch. www.dolphin.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-6777 or 0800-733-365, fax 03-319-6534.

Equally fun to swim with are seals and **Dive Kaikoura** is a boat-based seal swim that takes three tours a day in summer, one to two per day at other times of year. $65 for adults to swim, $40 for children. Spectators $40. 58 West End, timdivekaikoura@xtra.co.nz es, ☎ 03-319-6622 or 0800-728-223 fax 03-319-6868

Seal Swim Kaikoura takes land-based seal swimming trips. $50 adults, $40 children. sealswim@clear.net.nz, 190 Beach Road, ☎ 03-319-6182 or 027-488-6235, fax 03-319-6186. You can also book with **Topspot Seal Swim**, $50 adults, under 12 $30, ☎ 03-319-5540, fax 03-319-6587.

For seal diving, snorkeling, dive training and other dive trips, contact **New Zealand Sea Adventures**, www.godive.co.nz, 114 Beach Road, ☎ 03-319-7560 or 0800-463-483.

Sea Kayak Kaikoura leads half-day guided tours taking in the coastline and seal colony. Departs from info center, 8:30 am, 12:30, 4:30 pm (summer) $70 adults, $50 children, seakayakkaikoura@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-5641 or 0800-728-223 or 027-201-3298.

If you're not interested in getting in or on the water, you can get above it.

Wings over Whales has fixed-wing 30-minute flights that leave at 9 am, 11 am, 1 and 3 pm. Other times are available by arrangement. These are often the spotter planes for the whale-watch trips and, from above, you'll see the whole whale, not just the bits that are coming out of the water. From $135 for adults. ☎ 03-319-6580 or 0800-226-629.

Kaikoura Aero Club offers scenic flights that can include whales, dolphins and seals. (In addition, they have "Pilot-A-Plane" trips where you take the controls.) www.virtual-kaikoura.com/aeroclub, Kaikoura Airfield, ☎ 03-319-6579.

Flights on **Kaikoura Helicopters** last 30 to 40 minutes and start at $165 for adults. While the sea is the biggest draw around here, mountain-top landings are also available. At the railway station, right next to Kaikoura Whale Watch Ltd, ☎ 03-319-6609 or 027-437-2300, fax 03-319-6814.

Blue's Cruise Nature Watch goes out in a glass-bottom boat for one hour and the kids love it. $50 adults, $25 children. Karen.gilroy@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-7570

Fishing Options

For a fishing trip with a difference, contact **Kaikoura Executive Sea Tours**. Passengers catch fish and pick up lobster from pots, then have them prepared on the boat. There is tons of food to eat and it's a good scenic sunset trip. Brunch trips are also available. Contact them for trip time options. $95 adults, $55 children. www.kaikouraexecseatours.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-319-7424 or 0800-732-868.

Reel "Obsession" Charters takes two-hour trips for two to eight passengers, or longer by arrangement. $60 adults, $30 children.

www.kiwitravelchannel.co.nz, reelobsessioncharters@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 03-319-5350 or 025-284-5941.

Kaikoura Fishing Adventures takes two-hour and full-day trips. Prices begin at $60. seatours03@yahoo.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-6981 or 025-470-007.

Top Catch Charters has three-hour trips fishing trips, longer by arrangement. They also offer scuba trips. $70 adults, $35 children. ☎ 03-319-6306 or 025-987-613.

Molly-D Ocean Charters has fishing, waterskiing, wakeboarding and sightseeing trips. From $25 per person. mollydcharters@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-7012 or 027-252-0002.

Kaikoura is a favorite surf spot and you can learn to surf with **Board Silly Adventures**. $65 adults, under 13 $55; includes transport to beach, coaching, equipment and wetsuit. ☎ 03-319-6464 or 025-645-8211.

On Foot

There is a good walk on the Kaikoura Peninsula that leaves from the seal colony, and takes about five hours if done as a loop (11km/seven miles). The Promenade Shoreline walk goes along the peninsula, past a couple of other seal colonies, a gull colony and sea caves; the Promenade Clifftop walk goes, obviously, along the top. The shoreline walk is tide-dependent – call the information center before heading out.

There are quite a few walks in the **Clarence Reserve Conservation Area**. It's a rugged area on the Seaward Kaikouras and you would be wise to go to the DoC office in Kaikoura to get information. Ludstone Road, ☎ 03-319-5714, or the Kaikoura Visitor Centre, ☎ 03-319-5641.

The **Kaikoura Coast Track** is a three-day, three-night walk across private land. The name is a bit of a misnomer because the walk begins about 45 minutes south of Kaikoura. I intended to tell you first-hand about this walk, but I had a rafting accident while researching the book. My sister was visiting, however, and I set up the walk for her and eight of my friends – I met them each night at their accommodation, being transported either by one of the hosts or the rural mail delivery. This was a fabulous option. The walk travels through bush, along coastal ridges, on the beach, back into the bush and across more hills. Set on three private farms, the accommodation varies, but all have hot showers, full kitchens, BBQ and a mixture of bunk, double and twin rooms. Packs are transported from one hut to the next, so all you need to carry is a day pack. In the evenings, you can relax on your own (or with your group) or socialize with the host and family. Meals can be provided and the walk, while taking an average of four or five hours each day, is not a terribly strenuous or technical one. The views are fabulous (they took a digital camera so each night I could relive their experiences) and the price is just $130 per person for accommodation and pack transfer. The first night you stay at the Staging Post (also available as accommodation if you're not planning to walk), the second at the Ngaroma homestead, and the third at Medina. In addition to the walk and the views, this trip gives you a little insight into life on a remote sheep station. www.kaikouratrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-2715, fax 03-319-2724.

On Horses

Fyffe View Horse Treks offer two-hour treks through farmland, the mountains, and across riverbeds. No riders under 12. Prices begin at $45, with transport extra. Mt. Fyffe Road, ☎ 03-319-5069, fax 03-319-7202.

Lake View Horse Treks does one- and two-hour rides through the farm or on the beach. Prices begin at $35. ☎ 03-319-5997 or 025-377-705.

Ludley Horse Treks also has one- and two-hour rides on the farm or beach, as well as multi-day rides in the high country. Prices begin at $35. ☎ 03-319-5925 or 025-227-8221.

On Quad Bikes

Glenstrae Farm offers quad-bike rides around their high-country farmland, through native bush, on ridgelines for views and through rivers. 9 am and 1:30 pm daily, bookings advised; allow three hours. $80 adults. SH1, between Oaro and Conway Flat. ☎ 03-319-7021.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

The historic **Fyffe House** is the oldest surviving building in Kaikoura. Robert Fyffe founded Waiopuka whaling station in 1842 and this house was part of the station. It's a good historical look at Kaikoura. 62 Avoca Street, ☎ 03-319-5835.

The **Kaikoura Museum** is worth a poke around. You can find out more about the early history of Kaikoura, including some really nasty Maori skirmishes, and the whaling era. Open 12:30 to 4 pm weekdays, 2 to 4 pm weekends. $3. 14 Ludstone Road.

Check out **Gold Art & Design** for a look into fantastic art, sculpture and contemporary Kaikoura mirrors. 129 Scarborough Street, ☎/fax 03-319-6640.

For something different, go with **Night Sky** for a great trip up on a private hilltop where you'll learn about the sky and get to look at the stars through a powerful telescope. Trips are one hour and cost $35 adults, $25 children. starskaikoura@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-6635 or 027-291-2120.

Maori Tours Kaikoura is one of the few interactive Maori tours around. Learn a song, learn about the bush and the uses of plants, do a little flax weaving. It's a great trip and limited to nine people, insuring a personalized experience. Trips last a half-day, and leave at 10:30 am and 3 pm in summer. maoritoursk@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-5567 or 0800-866-267.

Rainy day option: Maori Leap Cave is about two km (one mile) south of town and contains stalagmites and stalactites, straws, cave coral and algae. It's a sea cave and was only discovered in the late 1950s. Six 40-minute tours a day. $8.50 adults. SH1, look for the Caves Restaurant sign.

The **Kaikoura Wine Company** is just a few minutes farther south on SH1 from the caves and has a cave of its own, but they call it a cellar. Tours are $7.50 (which includes tastings) and tastings alone are $3, refundable with purchase. In addition to the wine, there are great views from up here and you can buy a little snack to enjoy. Open daily, 10 am to 5:30 pm. SH1.

■ Where to Stay

During the busy summer season, Kaikoura fills up fast! Be sure to reserve in advance.

AUTHOR'S PICK

Kaikoura Lodge opened late 2003 and is gorgeous, modern and sophisticated yet relaxed. There's a fabulous dining room for breakfast and a very comfortable lounge. It's set on a deer farm and there are six rooms in the lodge and an apartment that sleeps four. Plans are in the works for eight units in the manuka woods that grows between the lodge and the sea. On the grounds is Hapuku Café (see below for details). www.kaikouralodge.com, 12 km (seven miles) north of Kaikoura, ☎ 03-319-6559, fax 03-319-6557 ($$$$).

Lemon Tree Lodge is another good option. There are four units (each has an oustide deck); two have a spectacular ocean view and two are set in the garden. There's a great outdoor hot tub that's under the trees and even on a rainy night it's a terrific place to watch the ocean. Opened in 2001; both owners worked in hospitality. www.lemontree.co.nz, 31 Adelphi Terrace, ☎ 03-319-7464 or 0800-108-951, fax 03-319-7467 ($$$).

Endeavour Heights B&B has panoramic views and two queen rooms with private bathrooms. www.endeavourheights.co.nz,1 Endeavour Place, off Scarborough Street, ☎ 03-319-5333 or 025-224-0549 ($$$-$$$$).

Dylan's Country Cottages are log-style chalets in a rural area, but not far from town; there are big gardens, lots of native and natural woods and a spa. Tariff includes breakfast. dylans.cs@clear.net.nz, Postman's Road, ☎ 03-319-5473, fax 03-319-5425 ($$-$$$).

Miharotia Boutique B&B is in a contemporary house with great views and four guest rooms. www.miharotia.co.nz, 274 Scarborough Street, ☎ 03-319-7497, fax 03-319-7498 ($$$-$$$$).

The Old Convent has a new owner who is putting great energy into an already fun and interesting place. There's a new café and wine bar set to open. Mt. Fyffe Road, ☎ 03-319-6603, fax 03-319-6690 ($$-$$$$)

Kaikoura has a full menu of motels. A dependable one is **Blue Seas Motel**, right on the seafront, with studios and one- and two-bedroom units. www.virtual-kaikoura.com/blueseas, 222 The Esplanade, ☎ 03-319-5441 fax 03-319-6707 ($$-$$$). Another is **Admiral Court**, with studio and family units in a fairly simple motel. www.kaikouramotel.co.nz, 16 Avoca Street, ☎ 03-319-5525 or 0800-555-525 ($$-$$$).

The **White Morph Motor Inn** has everything from studios to family apartments and rooms have extras such as hairdryers. www.whitemorph.co.nz, 92 Esplanade, ☎ 03-319-5014 or 0800-803-666, fax 03-319-5015 ($$$).

The **Anchor Inn Motel** is probably the best motel in town. It's on the water, clean, new and breakfast is available. www.anchor-inn.co.nz, 208 The Esplanade, ☎ 03-319-5426 or 0800-720-033, fax 03-319-5427 ($$$-$$$$).

Waves on the Esplanade has lovely beachfront two-bedroom apartments. www.kaikoura-apartments.co.nz, 78 The Esplanade, ☎ 03-319-5890, fax 03-319-5895 ($$$$).

Newer, with Turkish-themed rooms, is the **Albatross Backpacker Inn**. It's very homey with a large kitchen and semi-enclosed bunks with individual

reading lights. www.albatross-kaikoura.co.nz, 1 Torquay Street, ☎/fax 03-319-6090 or 0800-222-247 ($).

Bad Jelly Backpackers has no dorms, just twins and doubles. badjelly53@hotmail.com, 11 Churchill Street, ☎ 03-319-5538, fax 03-319-5539 ($).

Lyall Creek Lodge is a more upmarket backpacker lodge. Many rooms have en-suite baths and linen is provided. lyallcreeklodge@yahoo.co.uk, 193 Beach Road, ☎ 03-319-6277 or 021-293-2503 ($-$$).

The **Lazy Shag** is a new and modern hostel with free Internet. 37 Beach Road, ☎ 03-319-6662 ($).

Seaward Pottery and Accommodation is set in an organic garden, a short walk to the beach. On the same grounds is the artist's studio and shop. Accommodation ranges from the basic barn to new units that sleep two and an apartment that sleeps four. There is also a basic treehouse option! seawardnz@xtra.co.nz, 12 km (seven miles) north on SH1 (just past the Hapuku Café), ☎ 03-319-5795, fax 03-319-5711 ($$-$$$).

The **A1 Kaikoura Motel and Holiday Park** has tourist apartments, cabins with en-suite bathrooms, tent and power sites, 11 Beach Road, ☎/fax 03-319-5999 or 0800-605-999 ($-$$).

Kaikoura Top 10 Holiday Park is very popular and always full – book in advance! Everything from tent sites right up to motel rooms with bath and kitchen. www.kaikouratop10.co.nz, 34 Beach Road, ☎/fax 03-319-5362 or 0800-363-638 ($-$$).

Peketa Beach Holiday Park has tent and power sites and cabins. Across from the beach. peketabeach@xtra.co.nz, 10 minutes south of Kaikoura, ☎ 03-319-6299, fax 03-319-7296 ($).

Kaikoura Coastal Campgrounds are right on the water with cabins, tent and power sites. goosebay@ihug.co.nz, Goose Bay SH1, 15 minutes south of Kaikoura, ☎ 03-319-5348, fax 03-319-5355 ($).

Inland about 20 minutes on a farm station is **Waikene Motor Camp**. There are tent and power sites, a new lodge in 2003 and, soon to be opening, a café. waikene.station@xtra.co.nz, RD 4. Take SH70 (toward Hanmer Springs, Mt. Lyford) 20 km (12 miles), then two km (one mile) on Scotts Road, ☎ 03-319-7957, fax 03-319-7951 ($).

■ Where to Eat

The **Hapuku Café** at Kaikoura Lodge serves vegetarian, seafood and venison main dishes. The very health-conscious menu was inspired by the owner's interest in health and educating the Kiwi public about good eating. Imported olive oils are being used, but they will soon have their own line (note all the olive trees out back). They make their own pickles! Meals are very reasonably priced for the quality and quantity. There is also a good selection of South Island beer and wine. Corner of Hapuku Road and SH1, 20 km (12 miles) north of Kaikoura. ☎ 03-319-6558 ($$-$$$).

The **Green Dolphin Restaurant and Bar** is a lovely restaurant with great views of the mountains and sea. There's a big, ever-changing menu and a fine wine list. 12 Avoca Street, ☎ 03-319-6666 ($$-$$$).

The **Craypot Café and Bar** is right smack in the middle of town, with good food, friendly service and good coffee. 70 West End Road ($$-$$$).

The **Donegal House** is an Irish restaurant and bar and serves lunch and dinner. Mt. Fyffe Road, ☎ 03-319-5083 ($$-$$$).

Flukes Café is at the Whaleway Station and has indoor and great outdoor seating. Sit here, drink a cuppa and watch the helicopters take off ($).

Aromas has great coffee and very tasty seafood chowder. Also good salads, a stone grill and desserts. West End ($-$$).

Hislops Wholefoods Café is one of the originals. Great salads and vegetarian options and delicious baked things! 33 Beach Road ($).

The Mussel Boys is the sister restaurant to the one in Havelock. All things mussel. 80 Beach Road, ☎ 03-319-7160 ($).

Hurunui

Heading south from Kaikoura, travelers have two options – to continue on SH1 through agricultural towns, including Cheviot and Waipara, or to head inland on SH70 through Mt. Lyford to SH7, where a short side track takes you to **Hanmer Springs**. This is New Zealand's premier alpine spa town that also provides the area with adrenaline action. SH7 continues on to the **Lewis Pass**, **Maruia Springs** and **Springs Junction**. For travelers heading to Christchurch, SH1 is the quickest and most direct, but the inland road, which has only been completely paved for the last few years, is a pleasant and easy alternative. SH7 rejoins SH1 at **Waipara** – one of the newer wine growing regions in New Zealand.

Tip: As you travel south from Kaikoura, keep an eye on the sea (and at least one on the curving road) for dolphins. Sometimes, pods of frisky dusky dolphins will put on a show just off the coast.

The **Alpine Pacific Triangle** is a name given to a touring route that links Kaikoura, Hanmer Springs and Waipara. The entire circuit route is 370 km (229 miles) and, while drivable in one day, is better enjoyed over two or three.

■ Getting Here

By Car

From Christchurch, allow 90 minutes to Hanmer Springs; from Kaikoura, about 15 minutes more. It's four hours to either Nelson or Picton and three hours to Greymouth.

By Bus

The **Hanmer Connection** has scheduled round-trip service between Kaikoura and Hanmer Springs, Christchurch and Hanmer Springs, and Greymouth and Hanmer Springs. ☎ 0800-377-378.

■ Information Sources

The **Hurunui Visitor Information Centre** is in Hanmer Springs. Not only does the office provide good information, but there is a fabulous map room upstairs and an extensive gift shop. www.hurunui.com, 42 Amuri Street, ☎ 03-315-7128 or 0800-442-663.

■ Adventures

In Thermal Water

Hanmer Springs wouldn't be what it is without **Hanmer Springs Thermal Reserve**, a complex of swimming and soaking pools of varying temperatures filled with the hot mineral water that has been a draw to the area since the 1870s. In addition to the therapeutic pools, there is also a lap pool, a toddler pool and a health spa that has the whole menu of massages and facials. Open daily, 10 am to 9 pm. $8 adults, $15 for a private pool, $5 extra for waterslide. www.hotfun.co.nz, ☎ 0800-873-529.

On Water

The **Alpine Pacific Adventure Company** leads kayak trips on some of the most peaceful mountain lakes you're likely to find. Lake Tennyson, New Zealand's largest, is at the edge of the Molesworth Station and is in a spectacular alpine setting – kayak trips explore the shoreline and take a full day. For something even more remote, opt for the two-day, one-night Loch Katrine trip, in the Lake Sumner Conservation Park. You'll paddle through the channel that connects the loch to the lake, where you'll paddle around and camp on the shore. Prices begin at $165 per person. Transport is provided from Hamner Springs. www.advenuresnz.com, ☎ 03-315-7387 or 025-228-43338, fax 03-315-7397.

For a fabulous multi-day raft trip down the Clarence River that's suitable for families, contact **Hidden Valleys**. They offer a 240-km (150-mile) gentle trip through river gorges and high country that takes five days. Paddle from the Spencer Mountains and past the Inland and Seaward Kaikoura ranges. How cool would this be for your kids? www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz, ☎ 03-696-3560.

For the other end of the river spectrum, consider jet-boating or whitewater rafting (grades II-III) with **Thrillseekers Canyon**. Choices include two options through the Waiau Gorge. They also have a jet-boat/raft combo – raft down the river and jet-boat back up. These folks are also the operators of the local bungy jump, off the 135-year-old, 35-meter (113-foot) Waiau Ferry Bridge. www.thrillseekers.co.nz, at the ferry bridge, Hanmer Springs, ☎ 03-315-7046.

On Foot

There are quite a few local walks that go through the **Hanmer Forest Park** and range from one to several hours. On a hot day, a particularly refreshing walk is the three-hour Waterfall Track – the waterfall comes just at the right time for a picnic. Pick up a copy of *Hanmer Forest Recreation* at the information center.

On Bikes

There are mountain-bike tracks at Mt. Lyford as well as within the Hanmer Forest Park – check in with the information center to get local updates. Contact **Hanmer Springs Adventure Centre** for mountain-bike, motor scooter and ski gear rental. They also offer guided mountain-bike rides. 20 Conical Hill Road, ☎ 03-315-7233.

On Horses

Hanmer Horses caters to all ages and abilities and leads horse treks from one hour to 2½ hours. They're right in town and very friendly. Prices begin at $40 adults, $35 children. They also have 20-minute pony rides. www.hanmerhorses.co.nz, ☎ 03-315-7444.

Mt. Lyford Horse Treks leads varying length trips for all ages and abilities that range from one hour to a full week. Prices begin at $50. www.lyfordtreks.co.nz, ☎ 03-366-8155.

Two-hour, half-day and multi-day rides are available with **Alpine Horse Safaris**, based in Hawarden, about 15 km (nine miles) north of Waipara. The multi-day rides are from two to 11 days – covering some incredible high country. Prices begin at $45; multi-day trips begin at $385. www.alpinehorse.co.nz, ☎ 03-314-4293.

Hurunui Horse Treks also leads quality half- , full- and multi-day rides from two to eight days through the high country, including a popular Mountains-to-Sea option. Prices begin at $95 for half-day, $415 for overnight. www.hurunui.co.nz, ☎ 03-314-4204.

On the Farm

You can bike or drive through the **Molesworth Station** from late December until mid-February – if conditions allow. The road remains closed if fire danger is high and the dates the road is open vary from year to year, so check with DoC or an information center. The ride through the station is on a gravel road (56 km/35 miles) that connects Hanmer Springs to Blenheim. You can also opt to ride through the **Rainbow Station** to St. Arnaud. The Molesworth is Crown Land and is a remote, high-country station; it supports the largest herd of cattle in the country. In December 2003, it became permanently protected as a high country park. Camping is permitted in two areas – the Molesworth and Archeron homestays. Fee for cycling is $5, for cars $15. Buses, campers and campervans are not allowed.

On 4x4

The **Alpine Pacific Adventure Company** has four-wheel-drive and eight-wheel, all-wheel-drive, amphibious Argo trips around the area. Trips range from two hours to two days. See contact details under *Adventures On Water*, page 478.

In the Air

Fixed-wing scenic flights can be booked through **Hanmer Air**, ☎ 0800-235-942; helicopter flights can be booked through **Hanmer Helicopters**, ☎ 03-315-7758.

On Rails

The **Weka Pass Railway** ran from Glenmark to Waikiri from the 1880s to 1978; now, you can take the two-hour trip in 1930s carriages (including open-air observation cars) through the limestone formations of the Weka Pass. First, third and fifth Sundays at 11 am and 2 pm. www.wekapassrailway.co.nz; follow the signs in Waipara.

On Snow

A winter playground, **Mt. Lyford Alpine Resort** has skiing and snowboarding in the winter. There are six surface lifts that provide access to two mountains, Mt. Lyford and Mt. Terako. There are no snow-making facilities, so skiing here is definitely weather-dependent. ☎ 03-315-6178.

With Wine

The Waipara Valley is one of the up-and-coming wine regions in New Zealand. There are quite a few vineyards in the ground, but only a few wineries are open during regular hours for tastings and tours. The ones that are open, though, are definitely worth a stop and make delicious Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, some Gewurztraminer and Pinot Noir.

You can't miss the gigantic **Canterbury House**. The restaurant and cellar door (tasting room) are open daily (until 11 pm on Friday and Saturday). It might pay to book for the restaurant. 780 Glasevin Road, SH1, ☎ 03-314-6900, Amberley ($$-$$$).

The very low-key and friendly **Pegasus Bay** has a restaurant (open noon to 4 pm daily) and cellar door (open 10:30 am to 5 pm daily), Stockgrove Road. ☎ 03-314-6869.

Waipara Springs was one of the first wineries here and is open daily from 11 am to 5 pm during spring, summer and autumn. 409 Omihi Road, SH1, Waipara.

Fiddler's Green is open on the weekends only, Georges Road, Amberly ☎ 03-314-6979.

Torlesse Wines is open Friday to Sunday, 11 am to 5 pm or by appointment. Loffhagen Drive, Waipara, ☎ 03-314-6929.

Also visit **Athena Olive Groves** at The Millhouse for tours, tastings and sale of olives and oils. Open the first and third Sunday or by arrangement. 164b Mackenzies Road, Waipara, ☎ 03-314-8193.

Vin de Pays has wine, food and garden tours from $85. www.vindepays.co.nz, ☎ 03-357-8262.

■ Where to Stay

Every time I go to Hanmer Springs, more and more accommodations have popped up.

The old **Hanmer Lodge Hotel** is now part of the Heritage Hotel chain and has recently undergone a major remodeling and transformation. Room choices include villas and garden suites. 1 Conical Hill Road, ☎ 03-315-7021 or 0800-368-888, fax 03-315-7023 ($$$-$$$$).

The best B&B in town is **Cheltenham House**. There are four suites in the 1930s house and two in the garden. There is a large guest lounge and it's just a short walk to the thermal pools. www.cheltenham.com, 13 Cheltenham Street, ☎ 03-315-7545, fax 03-315-7645 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Glenalvon Lodge** has B&B rooms in the house and motel rooms in the back. All nicely kept and comfortable. www.glenalvon.com, 29 Amuri, ☎ 03-315-7475, fax 03-315-7361 ($$-$$$).

The **Settlers Inn Motel** is a new complex with rooms and suites. It's more upmarket than the rest. www.settlersinnmotel.co.nz, 6 Leamington Street, ☎ 03-315-7343, fax 03-315-7071 ($$$-$$$$).

There are a slew of motels. I've been comfortable at the **Drifters Inn**, which includes continental breakfast in the room rate. www.driftersinn.co.nz, 2 Harrogate Street, ☎ 03-315-7554, fax 03-315-7235 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Alpine Lodge Motel** is right across the street from the thermal pools and has a range of room types. www.alpinelodgemotel.co.nz, 1 Harrogate Street, ☎ 03-315-7311, fax 03-315-7312 ($$-$$$$).

The **Alpine Garden Motel** has clean and comfortable apartments with bath and kitchen. The hosts are friendly, too. alpinegardens@xtra.co.nz, 3 Leamington Street, ☎ 03-315-7332, fax 03-315-7334 ($$-$$$).

Other dependable motels include **Forest Peak Motel** with motel rooms and chalets with bath and kitchen. www.forestpeak.co.nz, 4 Torquay Terrace, ☎/fax 03-315-7132 ($$-$$$); and the **Hanmer Inn Motel** has studios and one-bedroom units. www.hanmer.com, 16 Jacks Pass Road, ☎ 03-315-7516, fax 03-315-7471 ($$-$$$); **Le Gite Backpackers** is a short walk from the town center and is set up quite well. All beds are made up, the kitchen is spacious and there is a sunny garden and courtyard. Doubles, three- and four-bed rooms. www.legite.co.nz, 3 Devon Street, ☎/fax 03-315-5111 ($).

The **Kakapo Hostel** is the YHA affiliate and is a new modern two-story facility with twins, doubles and shared-bath rooms set amongst the trees. There are no bunks, all the beds are made up and the courtyard and decks are sunny. There's also a BBQ and large lounge (and underfloor heating). stay-kakapo@xtra.co.nz, 14 Amuri Avenue, ☎ 03-315-7472 ($).

There are three holiday parks, the prettiest being the **Hanmer Springs Forest Camp**, with tent sites, a lodge and cabins set in the forest. It's about 2½ km (1½ mile) out of town. hanmer.forest.camp@xtra.co.nz, 243 Jollies Pass Road, ☎/fax 03-315-7202 ($).

The **Mountain View Top 10 Holiday Park** has the full range of options and is close to town. They have a playground area for the kids. mtview.hanmer@clear.net.nz, Hanmer Springs Road, ☎ 03-315-7113 or 0800-904-545, fax 03-315-7118 ($-$$).

Finally, there's the **AA Tourist Park**, with a lodge, cabins, tourist apartments, tent and power sites. About 2½ km (1½ miles) from town. www.aatouristpark.co.nz, 200 Jacks Pass Road, ☎ 03-315-7112, fax 03-315-7017 ($-$$).

Mt. Lyford Lodge was built in 2002 and has both bunk rooms and motel accommodation. There is a big lounge area with a huge fire – perfect for an Alpine ski lodge, a pool table and three outdoor spas. www.mtlyfordlodge.co.nz, 10 Mt. Lyford Forest Drive, Alpine Pacific Triangle, ☎ 03-315-6446, fax 03-315-6116 ($-$$$).

■ Where to Eat

There isn't a heck of a lot of choice in Hanmer Springs, but there are the usual cafés, pizza and sandwich takeaways. The top spots to eat are **The Old Post Office**, with fine food and a wine list to match, Jacks Pass Road ($$$), and **The Laurels Café**, which has equally good main

dishes and desserts. They have a charming outside seating area, as well. 31 Amuri Street ($$-$$$).

> **Tip:** If you're headed to Christchurch, you may want to time your travel to have a meal at one of the wineries.

West to the Lewis Pass

Continuing west on SH7 from Hanmer Springs, in 65 km (40 miles) you will cross the 907-meter (2,947-foot) **Lewis Pass**. Many tourists want to drive across one of the passes – either the Lewis, Arthur's or Haast. Arthur's Pass, being farther south, has the more dramatic forest and peaks, the Haast has the incredible rain forest and the Lewis is a gentler pass with silver and red beech stands. The Lewis shouldn't be underrated, though. The views are equally spectacular and the drive along the river is lovely. The Lewis Pass National Reserve is home to quite a few walks, including the **St. James Walkway**. At 66 km (41 miles), this trip is not particularly difficult, but a pleasant walk through a sub-alpine area. It is serviced by five main huts which each have bunks for 20. The track is not a loop, and it would be wise to check with the information center in Hanmer or Reefton for up-to-date and local advice on car parks and transport. Typically, it is advisable to begin at the Lewis Pass end and take the bus back to your car. There are also about 20 short walks around the Lewis Pass area – pick up a copy of ***Lewis Pass Region*** from DoC. You will be astounded at the number of places you can walk that are easily accessed.

Maruia Springs Thermal Resort is just a blip on the map, but a blip worth a stop. The hot pools are much smaller than at Hanmer and much more naturally set; they are rock-lined, overlook the Maruia River and make for a very comfortable spot. Hope for a misty day; it adds to the mood. In addition to the outdoor pools, there are sex-segregated Japanese baths and private, individual spas. There are just 20 rooms in the lodge and there is a café, bar and Japanese restaurant. You probably wouldn't want to spend your entire holiday here (there's not that much to do once you've had a good soak), but it makes for a good night away from any crowds. Pool rates are $10 adults, $5 children; free for in-house guests. Accommodation is standard and comfortable. www.maruiasprings.co.nz, SH7, ☎ 03-523-8840 ($$$).

From Maruia Springs, it's just 20 km (12 miles) farther to Springs Junction where SH65 takes off for Murchison and SH7 continues to the West Coast.

Selwyn District

The Selwyn District incorporates that area to the west of Christchurch that leads through the Torlesse and Craigieburn ranges, over Arthur's Pass and through Arthur's Pass National Park. A region of contrasts – from the flat plains of the west to the high mountains of the middle and east – it is flanked by the Waimakariri River in the north and the Rakaia River in the south. Many north-south travelers barely touch on this region as they dash through on SH1; the real gems of the area, though, are along and beyond SH72 and SH73. To really get to know this region, plan a day or two for some walks around Arthur's Pass – just two hours from Christchurch. This area is also

popular in the winter – there are six ski fields within a short distance of each other. The drive across the center includes one type of scenery after another – tussock hills, beech forest, alpine landscapes and rain forest.

The road across was improved in 2000 and makes a very rewarding scenic drive, probably one of the most amazing in the country. The road slices between the mountains – with summits calling you from both sides of the car. As you pass out of Arthur's Pass village heading toward Otira and the West Coast, there are four places signed for parking, the final three offering good spots to get a photo of Mt. Rolleston, one of the highest peaks in the park.

One of the most popular ways to see this area is on board the **TranzAlpine**. This 223-km (138-mile) coast-to-coast trip is one of the most wonderful train rides in the world. Traveling between Christchurch and Greymouth each day, the trip begins near the Pacific at 8:15 am (times do change depending on season – be sure to book in advance) and arrives in Greymouth at 12:45 pm; it departs Greymouth one hour later and arrives in Christchurch at 6:05 pm. The trip begins by crossing the broad Canterbury Plains and, about the time you reach Springfield, you can see the mountains in the distance. The train enters the foothills and gorges of the Torlesse and Craigieburn ranges, then climbs into the Southern Alps through a series of five viaducts and 16 tunnels. At 73 meters (239 feet), the Staircase viaduct is the highest. At Arthur's Pass the train stops for a breather (and to get another locomotive) so passengers are able to get off the train for a sniff of high-mountain air before continuing on to the West Coast. Each direction, the trip takes 4½ hours – you can either return on the same day or stay over in Greymouth and visit the nearby attractions before returning to Christchurch the next day. Alternatively, hop on a bus or rent a car and continue your trip from there. Likewise, you can take a one-way trip from Greymouth to Christchurch. The trip is popular in the summer, but in the midst of winter when the mountains are iced in snow it's even more spectacular. Prices depend on availability, but are around $140 round-trip per adult. Contact any information center or TranzScenic direct at www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 0800-872-467.

> **Tip:** Be sure to take warm clothing and waterproof outer wear. Often when the weather is fine on one coast, it's raining on the other. TranzScenic often has package deals going with West Coast accommodation and activity operators – ask your booking agent for details. You might also want to ask about Senior Saver fares, if appropriate.

■ Information Sources

Check out www.selwyndistrict.co.nz.

Arthur's Pass Visitor Information Centre is at Arthur's Pass and open daily, 8 am to 5 pm, ☎ 03-318-9211, fax 03-318-9210.

■ Adventures

On Water

In Springfield, you can go jet-boating with **Waimak Alpine Jet**. See details under *Adventures on Water* in the Christchurch section, above page 457.

On Foot

The **Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park** is in the high-country of the Torlessee and Big Ben mountain ranges. Heading west from Christchurch, it is these mountains that you see first. As you approach Porters Pass, you will have a spectacular view of the park – on both sides of SH73 – and the Torlesse Gap, 20 m (65 feet) wide and 40 m (130 feet) deep. The area is an important site for the conservation of high-country plants and ecosystems. There are no marked paths in the park, but there are a couple of routes, including a climb up Foggy Peak from Porters Pass. The park does have a few backcountry huts – contact DoC for information.

The entrance to **Craigieburn Forest Park** is about 110 km (68 miles) from Christchurch on SH73. The forest park – notable for the dense beech forest at the lower levels and the incredible rocky, jagged and erosive top levels – is home to many walking tracks, from 20 minutes to six hours. Some of them, like the Camp Saddle, go across scree slopes that this region is known for. There is also an Environmental Education Centre with an interpretive walking track (20 minutes). Pick up a copy of *Craigieburn Forest Park: Day Walks* from DoC or the Environmental Education Centre. Follow the signs to the Craigieburn Picnic Area on the Broken River ski area road.

Arthur's Pass National Park has many, many day walks and longer tramping tracks. Many are one-way routes to the scenic tops of mountains – including Mounts Temple, Cassidy, Aicken and Bealey; there is also a nice loop tramp connecting Avalanche Peak and Scotts Track. Only do the loop in good weather, but it's great for views of the surrounding area. There is a quick one- to two-hour historic walk around the settlement of Arthur's Pass (pick up a brochure at the visitor center). In addition to the day-walks, Arthur's Pass National Park has at least a dozen two-day and longer tramps. This national park has some rugged and challenging trips and many are only lightly marked, if at all. Be sure to go to the visitor center before heading out. The area is also very popular for mountaineering, biking and skiing.

On Bikes

You can ride mountain bikes on the ski area roads and some of the bush tracks – these are outlined in the walking brochure.

On Snow

There are five ski slopes in the Craigieburn Range and Temple Basin at Arthur's Pass. All have lodge/bunk accommodation on the field – contact the club for information.

- **Porter Heights Ski Area** is the only commercial field in the area and is the closest skiing to Christchurch. www.porterheights.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-4002.
- **Temple Basin** is just five km (three miles) from Arthur's Pass. www.snow.co.nz/templebasin, ☎ 03-318-9205.
- **Craigieburn Valley**, www.craigieburn.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-8711.
- **Broken River**, www.snow.co.nz/brokenriver, ☎ 03-318-8713.
- **Mt. Cheeseman**, www.mtcheeseman, ☎ 03-379-5315.
- **Mt. Olympus**, www.snow.co.nz/mtolympus, ☎ 03-318-5840.

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

The **kea** is the world's only mountain parrot and is commonly seen in the Craigieburn Forest Park and Arthur's Pass National Park (as well as in other alpine areas around New Zealand). They are very inquisitive and great fun to watch – but don't feed them and watch out for loose rubber bits on your car or gear. They will destroy everything. But remember, they are fully protected!

■ Where to Stay

Things book up fast over the summer, so make your arrangements early.

Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge is the most luxurious you'll find. It has a full offering of activities and is on a nature reserve/merino sheep farm. Food is good, wine is good and there are eco- and environmental activities to keep you busy. www.wildernesslodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9246, fax 03-318-9245 ($$$-$$$$).

The Chalet TranzAlpine Lodge has B&B and lodge rooms just a short walk from the visitor center. www.arthurspass.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9236 ($$-$$$).

The historic **Bealey Hotel** is 12 km (seven miles) toward Christchurch from Arthur's Pass and sits on the banks of the Waimakariri River. They have motel and backpacker rooms and the hotel was used as a Cobb & Co. stagecoach stop. The moa statue here was a business generator for a former owner. bealeyhotel@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9277 ($-$$).

Alpine Motel is just a short walk from the visitor center and has simple and budget rooms. alpine.motels@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9233 ($$).

The **Mountain House Backpackers** has lodge rooms and cottages (rent by the room or the whole thing). www.trampers.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9258 ($-$$).

Arthur's Pass Alpine YHA is set up for trampers and can help you figure out what you want to do when and where. Free gear storage, dorms, twins and doubles. yha.arthurspass@yha.org.nz, ☎ 03-318-9230 ($).

■ Where to Eat

Oscar's Café & Bar is your best bet for eating if you're not cooking for yourself; the **Arthur's Pass Store and Tearoom** has a few things on the menu. There's also a restaurant at The Chalet Lodge. It's a small town – population just 100 – so don't expect miracles.

Lake Coleridge

The **Lake Coleridge** district is a bit out-of-the-way, but it's definitely worth the effort. While there are a few things to do without straying too far from the beaten path, a drive along the gravel road brings rewards as well – salmon and trout fishing, rafting, kayaking, boating, jet-boating, horse trekking, 4-wheel drive tours, skiing and snowboarding, walks and tramps. From

Windwhistle, head up Coleridge Road until it ends. Give yourself an hour from the Rakaia Gorge to the lake. Check out www.lakecoleridgenz.info for more details on this small area.

■ Adventures

On Foot

Washpen Falls is a private walking track. Two hours through native bush and tussock with views across the plains to the falls. Windwhistle, ☎/fax 03-318-6813.

On Horses

High Country Horse Adventures leads one-hour to three-day high country rides leaving from either Ryton Station or Terrace Downs High Country Resort. www.horsetrek.co.nz, ☎ 0800-386-336 or 025-305-601.

On the Farm

Ryton Station is a high-country 37,000-acre merino sheep farm at Lake Coleridge with absolutely spectacular scenery. It's like a postcard come to life. Activities include horse treks, 4x4, jet-boat, fishing, walks and tramps (from one or two hours to all day). You can opt for dinner with bed and breakfast in chalets or cooking for yourself in the lodge (bunks or doubles with en-suite baths). www.ryton.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-5818 or 0800-926-868.

■ Where to Stay

Terrace Downs High Country Resort is the biggest thing that ever hit this area. Set on the edge of the Rakaia Gorge, the golf course is beautiful and the pro shop, restaurant and spa are fabulous. The golf course has been around awhile, but the resort is brand new and it's still being developed. I want to go back when the health spa is up and running. It's not a pompous, pretentious place at all and, if you're traveling with a couple of friends, the chalets are affordable. Coleridge Road, Rakaia Gorge, ☎ 03-318-6943 or 0800-465-373, fax 03-318-6942 ($$$$).

Lake Coleridge Lodge offers dinner, bed and breakfast from their location right at the edge of the lake. www.lakecoleridgelodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-5002 ($$-$$$).

Ashburton

Conveniently defined by the Rakaia and Rangitata Rivers, the Ashburton district reaches from sea to mountains and contains some of the Canterbury plains' most prized agricultural land. It's also home to the **Mt. Hutt Forest** and ski field, the **Alford Forest** and all the action one would expect on two major braided rivers. Ashburton is the service center for the area and is about 86 km (53 miles) south of Christchurch on SH1. There isn't too much of a tourist draw to the town, but you can find the essentials and gear-up for more of your trip or use it as a base for heading to the ski fields at Mt. Hutt or Mt. Somers.

As I described in the Selwyn District section above, SH72 is a much more scenic route through the center of the south than is SH1 and, if you choose not to head inland from Christchurch, at Rakaia, you have the option of bisecting the district on Thompsons Track to Mount Somers or heading to Methven, either along the Rakaia River or on SH77. Driving through this district will show you a side of New Zealand that is more about everyday life than it is about tourism – and sometimes, that's exactly what you're looking for.

You'll know you're in **Rakaia** when you see the giant salmon hanging from a hook on the side of the highway.

Methven, also known as Mt. Hutt village, is a small town (only 1,500 permanent population) one hour from Christchurch. It is the adventure center for the region and is busiest during the winter when the skiers and snowboarders turn out en masse. I think it's a great base for spring, summer and autumn exploration, too.

On SH72, just beside the Rakaia River at the gorge bridge, is a great place to have a picnic or pitch a tent.

■ Information Sources

The **Ashburton Visitors Centre**, infocentre@ashburton.co.nz, is on East Street, ☎ 64 3 308 1064.

In Methven, **Methven Travel Ltd**. is the visitor information center. www.methven.net.nz, 93 Main Street, ☎ 03-302-8106, fax 03-302-9369

■ Adventures

On Water

Did you know? The Rakaia Bridge is the longest bridge in New Zealand.

In addition to jet-boat trips, **Rakaia Gorge Scenicjet Ltd**. will carry fishing rods and will drop you off, then pick you up on a later jet-boat trip. He's got other options, too, like heli-jet and jet-raft combos. Prices begin at $10. ☎ 03-318-6515 or 0800-435-453.

Rakaia Gorge Alpine Jet also jet-boats the river and offers fishing and helicopter options. A former fishing guide, owner Ric Georgeson will jet-boat you to the best fishing spots. www.rivertours.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-6574.

On Foot

With either of the above companies, you can opt to jet-boat up the river and walk back on the **Rakaia Gorge Walkway** – about 1½ hours – or do the three- to four-hour round-trip. The track takes you through the bush to the ruins of the ferryman's cottage and climbs to the rim of the gorge. There are mine shaft entrances along the way,

The Mount Hutt Forest has a number of walking tracks through diverse native bush in the **Awa Awa Rata Reserve** and the **Pudding Hill Scenic Reserve**.

There are a number of short walks in the **Mount Somers Conservation Area** that range from 20 minutes to seven hours. The one I'd keep an eye on to get a lot of attention, though, is the **Mt. Somers Walk**, a subalpine walk that goes through mountain beech forest, snow tussock and subalpine scrub..

In 2003, it became a loop "round the mountain" track that takes about eight or nine hours each day and is for experienced trampers. There is a new hut being built at the site of Mt. Somers hut. The climb to the summit (1,687 meters/5,482 feet) will earn you an extra chocolate bar and the views of the plains are gorgeous. I'd stop in the shop in Mount Somers to get current information before heading out. They'll also know what routes are best (short or long), depending on the weather forecast. Or contact **Tussock and Beech Ecotours**, who will set up a self-guided trip and provide accommodation before and after your walk. Warren is a photographer and environmental educator, with degrees in botany and biogeography, and he leads nature walks around the area, from one day to several. Prices (for guided walks) begin at $120. www.nature.net.nz, Staveley, ☎ 03-303-0880, fax 03-303-0980.

On Bikes

If you want to do some mountain biking around this part of New Zealand, give the guys at **Back of Beyond** a call. They'll organize either a guided trip or a self-guided tour into some of the high country stations and little known areas. Use your own or their gear. www.mountainbiking.net.nz, ☎ 03-303-9806.

On Horses

AUTHOR'S PICK

Horsepower is one of the coolest things you will ever do! Lindsay Kerslake's family has been breeding and training Standardbreds for generations and Lindsay wanted to give others the feel of harness racing – so he designed a twin sulky. The whole experience takes between two and three hours and involves picking your horse, dressing in silks, getting your horse ready to race, warming the horses up and racing around the track. Full throttle! It is so much fun and these horses are no slouches – the one my sister beat me with was Happy Asset, a world record holder who has won nearly a million dollars. Definitely, if you have a horse lover in the family, this is something they will have never done before and they will love it. My sister and I grew up with horses, but I took two friends who appreciate horses but don't have as much experience and they loved it too. You can choose to race either at the farm in Lauriston, or at Addington Raceway in Christchurch. While the thrill of a big raceway is appealing, if you go to the farm you get to see the foals. $175 at the farm, $225 at Addington, www.horsepower.co.nz, ☎ 03-302-4800, fax 03-302-4822.

If you'd rather be on a horse than behind one, call **Staveley Horse Treks**, who lead hourly and longer treks in native bush, up mountains and across the plains. In Staveley. Cross the bridge turn right, and follow the signs. ☎ 03-303-0809.

In the Air

The gorgeous pictures you see of ballooning above the Canterbury Plains are no doubt from **Aoraki Balloon Safaris**. Seems that hot air ballooning is one of those things you can't stop talking about once you've done it and here's a gorgeous place to give it a go. They offer both a Premier Plains Flight or the Exotic Rakaia Gorge Safari – into the gorge! Prices begin at $245. www.nzballooning.com, ☎ 03-302-8172 or 0800-256-837.

On Snow

Mt. Hutt is the major ski area around and is part of the NZSKI group. There are a number of chairs, surface lifts and runs for skiers and snowboarders. The majority of the mountain is intermediate and skiers coming to New Zealand often use Mt. Hutt as a warmup before heading down to Wanaka. There's a restaurant and ski school, but no accommodation – that's why everyone stays in Methven! www.nzski.com.

The more remote snow can be accessed with **Mt. Hutt Heli**, which began for exclusive clients but now does trips for the rest of us too. Half-day to full-day, the North Peak Run is the most popular and a good introduction to heliskiing. They also do scenic flights, heli-jet, heli-golf, heli-picnic. www.mthuttheli.com, on The Square (you can't miss them), ☎ 03-302-8403, fax 03-302-8701.

For something different, head up to **Mt. Potts**, where you arrive by helicopter and then use a snow cat to get around. Only 14 people at a time, and that means fresh snow for everyone. There's a lodge, so you can stay the night before you ski (includes dinner and breakfast). It's not as insanely expensive as you'd think, either. Mt. Potts was used in the *Lord of the Rings* – in the summer, you can do scenic drives and/or flights. www.mtpotts.co.nz, ☎ 03-303-9060 or 0800-766-9228.

■ Sightseeing

For those of you with *Lord of the Rings* fever, there are transport operators in Methven who will take you on day-long tours around the filming sites, perhaps including up to Erehwon station and Mt. Sunday – where Edoras was filmed. Prices start at $125. Contact the information center in Methven or **Hassle Free Holidays**, ☎ 03-302-8595 or 0800-553-554.

■ Where to Stay

Some of the accommodations in Methven close over summer, but that's starting to change as more people discover that it's a fun spot all year. This is one spot where you'll find the rates cheaper in the summer.

The **Beluga** is the best B&B in town. There are six bedrooms in the house and another four in the cottage. www.beluga.co.nz, 40 Allen Street, ☎ 03-302-8290, fax 03-302-9290 ($$$).

Whitestone Cottages are two-bedroom holiday cottages with bath and kitchen convenient to Methven. www.whitestonecottages.co.nz, 3020 Methven Highway, ☎/fax 03-302-9271 ($$$$).

The **Mt. Hutt Motel** has studios with bath and kitchen and apartments. 205 Main Street, ☎ 03-302-8382 ($$).

The **Lodge on Chertsey** is right in town, has a variety of rooms (some with spa bath), an on-site restaurant and bar and some comfortable in-room extras. www.thelodgenz.com, corner of Chertsey and Kilworth, ☎ 03-302-2000 or 0800-127-544 ($$-$$$).

The **Aorangi Lodge** has twins, doubles, triples and shared-bath rooms. Breakfast is included. 38 Spaxton Street, ☎ 03-302-8482 ($).

For a comfortable and friendly place to stay, try the **Snow Denn Lodge**. It's the YHA affiliate – well-run, clean and pleasant. Beds are made up and breakfast is included. www.methvenaccommodation.co.nz, at the corner of McMillan and Bank, ☎ 03-302-8999 ($).

Just out of Mt. Somers is **Stronechrubie Country Restaurant and Chalets**. There are studios, luxury and family chalets, not to mention great food. www.stronechrubie.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-303-9814 ($$$).

Central South Island

Leaving the Ashburton district and heading south on SH72 or SH1, you will cross the Rangitata River and enter what is loosely referred to as the Central South Island. This area includes the inland strip parallel to the coast between the Rangitata and the Waitaki Rivers and the land that edges the Rangitata River to the Southern Alps. The very tidy and charming **Geraldine** is the inland hub and, heading south, you will reach **Temuka** and then **Timaru**, the coastal service center and a pleasant town to poke around. In between, there are lots of little towns strung along the way, and plenty of places to catch your eye. It's an unexplored area for most travelers, but becoming more popular. Traveling south from Timaru, you probably won't feel compelled to stop in many spots until you reach **Waimate** – for walks, great mountain bike rides and wallabies. Waimate is at the base of the Hunter Hills and is a charming, rural, friendly place with huge civic pride. Shortly afterward, you'll cross the Waitaki River and be in Otago. If you're not sure where to stay, Geraldine and Timaru offer quite a few reasonably-priced options and make a welcome break from the more touristy towns.

Throughout the area (and in Central Otago, as well) there are numerous Maori rock art sites. Plenty of them are around Timaru, Cave-Paeroa Road, and between Geraldine and Fairlie. You'd be wise to drop into one of the information centers and ask directions – many of them are highlighted on the Central South Island map.

Did you know? Bennett's or brush wallabies (originally from Australia) were introduced to the Hunter Hills in 1874 – primarily for fur and sport. But, like so many other mammals, the wallaby has thrived in the New Zealand and become a pest. What started with two females and one male has grown into a big nuisance. Along with the wild animals, there are a couple of places where you can visit tame ones. Try Enkledoovery on Bathgates Road or Kelceys Bush Farmyard on Upper Mill Road.

■ Getting Here

SH1 serves the coastal route and towns of the Central South Island. SH72 continues from the north and joins SH1 in Winchester. Just out of Geraldine, SH79 heads toward the Mckenzie Country and Mt. Cook. From Christchurch

to Timaru on SH1, figure two hours; Dunedin is about 2½ hours away, as is Mt. Cook. A straight shot to Queenstown will take you four hours.

From Peel Forest to Geraldine is about 20 minutes, to Timaru 45. From Timaru to Waimate, it's 35 minutes and to Fairlie, 50 minutes.

■ Information Sources

Check out www.southisland.org.nz for more information on this area.

The friendly **Visitor Information Centre** has plenty of local knowledge and is on Talbot Street, Geraldine, ☎ 03-693-1006.

The **Visitor Information Centre in Temuka** is at 72 King Street, ☎ 03-615-9537.

The **Timaru Visitor Information Centre** is well-staffed, knowledgeable and extremely helpful. Stop in here for information about your travels all around the region. info@timar.co.nz, 2 George Street, ☎ 03-688-6163, fax 03-684-0202.

For Waimate, take a look at www.waimate.org.nz or stop in at the **Waimate Information Centre**, 75 Queen Street, ☎ 03-689-7771.

Did you know? Phar Lap, New Zealand's most famous race horse, was born just outside Timaru. He raced during the 1920s and 1930s, winning the Melbourne Cup, many races in the United States and the Agua Caliente Cup in Mexico. He died in the US, apparently poisoned. There is a great movie about him (from the 1970s) that always makes me cry. You can see an Oamaru statue to him at his birthplace at the corner of Phar Lap Road and Seadown Road north of Timaru (follow the signs). His skeleton is at Te Papa in Wellington.

■ Adventures

On Water

Sign up with **Rangitata Rafts** for a trip down the river (see description on page 457), **Peel Forest Outdoor Pursuits Centre** for rafting, river rescue, abseiling, kayaking and group activities www.peelforestopc.org.nz, ☎ 03-696-3833; or **Hidden Valleys** for multi-day rafting and raft/alpine hiking, raft/helicopter, and personalized tours around the area (see the Hurunui section earlier in this chapter page 478 for details).

For a fly-fishing guide, try **Kevin Payne** in Temuka, www.nzflyfishingguide.com, ☎ 025-227-8142 or 0800-266-105.

Timaru Marine Cruises takes scenic trips out to see the wildlife – Hector's dolphins, penguins, seals, shags. ☎ 03-684-0200.

On Foot

If you like the outdoors, one area you won't want to miss is Peel Forest just over the Rangitata. There are tracks within the **Peel Forest** to suit everyone, from one-hour easy walks to a five- or six-hour summit trip up Little Mt. Peel. If you have been spending too much time in the

car, in cities or in busy tourist centers, then take a day or two out, put up your tent, lace up your boots and just chill out. Three of the walks – Acland Falls, Emily Falls and Rata Falls – all end up at waterfalls, and some of the walks can be joined together to make for a full day's walking. There are also tramping routes that are for fit and experienced trampers – the South Ridge Route (within the park) and the summit of Mt. Peel (outside the park). This is a really beautiful area to explore with as little or as much time as you have. I really recommend doing at least a couple of the walks here. Pick up a copy of the *Peel Forest Park Track Information* brochure.

The **Talbot Forest** in Geraldine has five short walking tracks through a native mixed podocarp forest. It makes a pleasant break in the drive, and there is a camping area as well. There is also a 20-minute river walk that follows the **Waihi River** and has four picnic areas along it. Access it from the footbridge at Wilson Street and go either direction. Pick up a brochure at the information center. The **Kakahu Bush** is a 900-acre area of protected bush and provides a few walking tracks, from 10 minutes to two hours. There are interesting geologic formations, including limestone escarpments, mushroom rocks and huge rock pinnacles. There is also quite a variety of bird life and the bush is lowland podocarp. The marble from the quarries in the gorge was used to make burnt lime. You'll have great views from the top of the lookout. A real gem. 15 km (nine miles) from Geraldine on SH79 (toward Fairlie). Turn on Hall Road and go two km. Park at the lime kiln.

On Bikes

Stop in at the Geraldine information center for a list of mountain-bike rides in the area. They can help you arrange to ride on private stations. You can also call Paul at **The South Canterbury Mountainbike Club**, ☎ 03-684-3198.

There are good rides at the **Waimate Forest** and Kakahu Forest (contact the mountain Waimate Information Centre before going to Kakahu, as some of the rides change with logging operations and you need to get permission to ride here). There are a few loop rides from the Waihao Forks that run along the Hunter Hills, the Hakatarmea River and the Campbell Hills – rides range from 40 to 100 km (25 to 62 miles). Pick up a trail map at the Geraldine or Waimate Information Centre

You can also ask **The Cyclery** on Stafford Street in Timaru for information on the area.

4x4

4x4 New Zealand does half- , full- and multi-day tours around the high-country and stations. Rafting, flights and tramping can also be incorporated into the action and, because Les has worked as a station manager, shearer, and all sorts of other high-country jobs, he knows the area well. www.4x4newzealand.co.nz, ☎ 03-693-8847.

On Rails

Pleasant Point Museum and Railway is 15 minutes from Timaru and home to the world's only Model T Ford railcar. The steam train runs on most weekends during the summer (not as often in the winter); contact them for the "steaming schedule." Railway Station, Pleasant Point, ☎ 03-614-8323.

■ Sightseeing & Shopping

Just past the Peel Forest, there's a sign for the **Mt. Peel Anglican Church**. It was built in 1868 by the first European to settle on Mt. Peel Station, Sir John Acland, who emigrated from England in 1855. The station is still farmed by his descendants – members of the fourth, fifth and sixth generations live on the property. For one day in December (ask at the Peel Forest store or information center in Geraldine for the date), the Homestead Garden is opened to the public for a show of the Himilayan lilies that grow in abundance (and to great height!). At other times, the church is open to visitors.

> **Cool shop:** Worth a stop for New Zealand wool products is **The Tin Shed** on SH79, just west of Rangitata.

Geraldine has a large retirement community and, consequently, quite a few shops and places to browse around. Pick up a copy of ***Geraldine Art & Craft Trail***.

There is also a **Vintage Car & Machinery Museum** in Geraldine. Open 10 am to 4 pm daily, October to June. $5 adults, children free. ☎ 03-693-8005 or inquire at the Geraldine Information Centre. 178 Talbot Street.

Don't miss **Temuka Pottery** – one of the larger commercial tableware companies in New Zealand. They have traditional and modern plates, bowls, serving ware. It's definitely worth a quick stop while you're passing through. Temuka Bypass.

The **South Canterbury Museum** is a good place to learn more about this part of the country. It's nothing too taxing, and covers Maori and European history, as well as the marine environment. Perth Street, ☎ 03-684-2212.

A fine spot for a picnic or a short walk is the **Timaru Botanic Gardens**. Open daily, with lots of beautiful flowers and trees. Enter on Queen Street.

The **Aigantighe** (pronounced "egg and tie") **Art Gallery**, the third largest gallery in New Zealand, is in a 1908 historic home. It contains New Zealand, Asian, Pacific and European art from the last four centuries, including some of the big artists. Open Tuesday to Friday, 10 am to 4 pm. www.artists.co.nz/aigant.html, 49 Wai-it Road, Timaru, ☎ 03-688-4424.

For a special outing, go to the **Belanger-Taylor Glass Studio** and watch this talented artist create in hand-blown glass. Stop by or ring first to make sure she's working. 1032 Te Moana Road, Geraldine, ☎ 03-693-9041.

> **Good value:** If you've been wanting any wool outer clothes, stop in the **Swanndri Factory Outlet**. You never know what they might have and the things are usually a really good bargain. Open 10 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday, 10 am to 2 pm Saturday. 24a Church Street.

Pleasant Point, just minutes west on SH8 from Timaru, is home to the **Artisan Gallery** – where a blacksmith forges a lot more amazing things than horseshoes. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. 5 Maitland Street, ☎ 03-614-7272.

If you've been drinking DB beer, you owe it to yourself to see where it's made – at **Mainland Brewery** in Timaru. Tours, 10:30 Monday to Friday. On Sheffield Street; phone first, ☎ 03-688-2059. You can also stop into **Robsons Brewing Company** to pick up some freshly made beer, 4 to 6 pm Monday to

Thursday, 3 to 7 pm Friday, and 11 am to 7 pm Saturday. 21 Butler Street, ☎ 03-688-1060.

Be sure to stop at **Butler's Berry Farm and Café** for fresh and frozen berries, home-made preserves, tasty lunches and good coffee. SH1, just near Waimate.

■ Where to Stay

Geraldine

Stonebridge Homestay B&B has a very comfortable studio cottage with bath and kitchen. The new owners (2003) formerly had a farm, and are really personable and interesting with lots of knowledge about the area. Dinner available by arrangement. www.stonebridgenz.co.nz, 842 SH72, ☎ 03-693-7912 ($$$).

Four Peaks Lodge has four new suites in a beautiful old country home. www.fourpeakslodge.co.nz, 414 Four Peaks Road, ☎ 03-693-8587 ($$$$).

The beautiful **Victoria Villa** is in an historic villa that has been recently refurbished. There are two rooms with en-suite bathroom and a third has a private bath down the hall. Right by the park. jbasinger@xtra.co.nz, 55 Cox Street, ☎/fax 03-693-8605 or 027-482-1842 ($$-$$$).

Sitting on top of a hill is **Deep Meadows B&B**. It's on 33 acres (plenty of outdoor relaxing spots) and has an indoor swimming pool. deep.meadows@xtra.co.nz, 86 Greenvale Road. ☎ 03-693-7655 fax 03-693-7645 ($$-$$$).

Best value for money is **Lilymay B&B**. Very pleasant, large garden, three bedrooms with separate facilities and private entrance. lilymay@bed-and-breakfast.co.nz, 29 Cox Street, ☎ 03-693-8838 ($$).

Geraldine Motel has a spa pool, breakfast available, a range of unit sizes and some rooms are new. www.nzmotels.co.nz/Geraldine, 97 Talbot Street, ☎/fax 03-693-8501 or 0800-400-404 ($$).

Andorra Motel has a swimming pool, BBQ facilities, studio and one- and two-bedroom units. andorra.motel@xtra.co.nz, 16 McKenzie Street, ☎ 03-693-8622 or 0800-263-677, fax 03-693-9731 ($$).

Geraldine Motor Camp has units with bath and kitchen, standard cabins, power and tent sites. There's a heated swimming pool and it's right across from the domain (tennis, bush walks). geraldine.motor.camp@xtra.co.nz, 39 Hislop Street, ☎/fax 03-693-8147 ($-$$).

Winchester

There are some stately and lovely B&Bs in the area, one of which is **Kavanagh House**, located in Winchester. Gorgeous place, beautiful floors and furniture, private verandas – it's just perfect. www.kavanaghhouse.co.nz, SH1, Winchester, ☎ 03-615-6150 ($$$$).

Timaru

If you keep promising yourself that you'll stay in a castle, **Castle Claremont** is your chance. It's an historic home, set in a large garden, and the B&B rooms range from simple to superior, so even a lady- or man-in-waiting can sleep like a queen (or king). Good fun. www.castleclaremont.com, 222 Mt. Horrible Road, ☎ 03-686-2950 ($$-$$$$).

Tayside Manor is another big historic house with just two guest rooms. Right by the botanic gardens. 4 Taylor Street, ☎ 03-688-5182 ($$).

If you don't stay at **Tighnafeile House** (circa 1911), you can still get a guided tour of the impressive house and grounds. If you do stay, there is plenty of space for spreading out and making yourself comfortable. 62 Wai-iti Road, ☎ 03-684-3333, fax 03-684-3328 ($$$$).

The **Blueberry Cottage** is very comfortable with one twin and one double room (guests share facilities) overlooking the ocean. If there's a southerly storm coming in, this is the place to watch it. 72a High Street, ☎ 03-684-3115 ($$-$$$).

The **Homestead Lodge Motel** is a dependable, clean and convenient spot. 28 Evans Street, SH1, ☎ 03-684-5193 or 0800-877-773, fax 03-684-8836 ($$).

Also try the **Baywatch Motor Lodge**. It's a short walk to town, overlooks the ocean and has all the room options. 7 Evans Street, ☎ 03-688-1886, fax 03-688-1171 ($$).

Anchor Motel &Timaru Backpackers is an older facility but well-run and pleasant. Fishing gear is available. Accommodations range from budget to family units. 42 Evans Street, ☎ 03-684-5067 ($-$$).

The **Wanderer Backpackers** is easy to find and has the usual budget accommodation choices. 24 Evans Street, ☎ 03-688-8795 ($).

The **334 on Stafford** is in a state of change. The current owners are moving away from budget accommodation and renovating this old place into more of an upmarket hotel. They seem to have run out of steam, but the property is up for sale, so the new owners might bring in some more positive energy. The idea is great – art galleries, kitchen and lounge on the ground floor, accommodation upstairs. www.334onstafford.co.nz, 334 Stafford Street, ☎ 03-684-4729 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

There are the usual diners and takeout places, and you'll find a bit of an eating festival at the **Berry Barn Complex**, which includes a Barker's Shop (fruit smoothies and dried fruits), Talbot Forest Cheese (watch the cheesemakers), the Berry Barn Bakery, and the Easy Way Café. Talbot Street ($).

Chocolate Fellmann might not be the healthiest spot for a meal, but they make absolutely fantastic chocolates from their shop in Geraldine. Go in and watch them at work. It is a Swiss Chocolatier. 10 Talbot Street, ☎ 03-693-9982. Open Monday-Saturday ($).

Winchester

The **Kavanagh House** serves delicious café food during the day and à la carte in the evenings. If you're traveling through Winchester and want something special to eat, this is it. SH1, Winchester, ☎ 03-615-6150 ($$-$$$).

Timaru

For really truly delicious Italian food, go to **Casa Italia**. 2 Strathallan Street, ☎ 03-684-5528 ($$-$$$).

The **Loaded Hog** shares the historic Landing Service Building with the information center; they offer blackboard and other menu items. Same chain as

in Auckland and Christchurch and a good, friendly place for a meal or beer. George Street ($$).

At the **Hairy Lemon Bar & Grill** you'll find surprisingly good fish and salads. 164 Stafford Street, ☎ 03-688-0086 ($-$$).

Mackenzie Country & Aoraki/Mt. Cook

If you're traveling from Christchurch to Wanaka or Queenstown, you will probably want to head inland on SH79 through Geraldine (see section above) and Fairlie. From Fairlie, you cross into the splendid high country of Mackenzie before dropping onto the incredible turquoise Lake Tekapo and Lake Pukaki.

> **Inside advice:** The speed laws are taken seriously around Mackenzie Country – remember, it's 100 kph (62 mph) on the open road!

The Mackenzie Country is named after **James McKenzie** (that's right, it's spelled differently). McKenzie is a bit of an unexpected hero – he became famous for stealing sheep and then grazing them on the land we now call Mackenzie Country. He was imprisoned and escaped (three times), and was asked to leave the country.

■ Fairlie

Fairlie is a quaint country town and the eastern gateway to the Mackenzie Country and Mt. Cook. A bit understated, it has never been anything but nice to me – one time I stopped in Fairlie with embarrassingly squeaky brakes. Figuring, in the middle of nowhere, I'd be reamed for a few thousand dollars in repair bills, I went to the local garage. After a lengthy inspection and time spent away from other cars, the mechanic sent me on my way, no charge, with the advice that all the dirt roads I drove on had built up some dust. The brakes did calm down after a few rain storms and I have felt fondly about Fairlie ever since! It's also quite beautiful in the autumn when the leaves are changing colors.

Information Sources

For information about the area, stop in at **The Resource Centre**, 64 Main Street, ☎ 03-685-8496

Adventures

Fairlie is near the **Mt. Dobson Ski Area**, 26 km (16 miles) away, and home to chair as well as surface lifts, a natural half-pipe and a range of beginner, intermediate and advanced runs. Ski school and rentals are available at this very sunny ski area. www.dobson.co.nz, ☎ 03-685-8039. You can also ski at the **Foxpeak Skifield**, another few minutes up the mountains from Mt. Dobson. ☎ 03-685-5871. And, for the unique advantage, go to **Alpure**, which is snow-cat access only and, at $175 per person, perhaps a bit steep, but you'll only ski with nine others at the most, so you get what you pay for! ☎ 03-685-4856. All these areas are known for powder and sunshine.

Where to Stay

For reliable motel accommodation, try the **Mt. Dobson Motel**, SH8, just five minutes out of town, ☎ 03-685-8819 or 0800-362-766 ($$), or **Aorangi Motel** right in town, 26 Denmark Street, ☎ 03-685-8340 ($$).

The **Fairlie Gateway Holiday Park** has units with bath and kitchen, apartments, and power and tent sites. 10 Allandale Road, ☎ 03-685-8375 or 0800-324-754 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

In addition to passable pub food at a few outlets, the **Old Library Café** is a good bet for vegetarian and other dishes. Good coffee and a pleasant bar, too. 6 Allandale Road ($-$$).

■ Lake Tekapo

Leaving quiet Fairlie to enter the expanses of the Mackenzie country starts out as a lazy afternoon drive and then, crossing Burkes Pass, you find yourself with stunning, high-country mountains on the sides. There are sheep paddocks that stretch forever and the incredible horizon is filled with lumps and bumps. You will come around a corner at the sign for Lake Tekapo walk and then the amazing blue/green water of Lake Tekapo jumps off the page. This region must be one of the most beautiful places on earth. I love the surprise of it all – even if you've been here before, the scenery is truly eye candy. It reminds me of why I live in New Zealand – one surprising sight after another. The basin where the high-country Lake Tekapo sits is carpeted in gold tussock grass. The mountains make for a spectacular contrast with the rolling gold ground and the night sky is alive with stars.

Lake Tekapo is a stop for most of the buses that tour around the South Island – making timing very important, indeed! If you come into town and there aren't any buses at the **Church of the Good Shepard**, stop and take a look and a photo or two, because in no time flat you'll be joined by dozens of camera-clicking visitors. This must be the most photographed church in New Zealand, and it shouldn't take long to figure out why. Inside, it's simple and beautiful. Looking out the window at the altar end provides a stunning frame for a picture. The church was built in 1935 as a memorial to the settlers of the region. The **Collie Dog Monument** just beside the church was put up in 1968 as a tribute to the importance of the working dogs to the settlement of Mackenzie country. I admit that I'm an old softy, but I'm moved whenever I read the inscription on the dog's plaque.

> **Did you know?** Lake Tekapo is filled with glacial waters and, as the water comes down from the mountains, it carries with it very finely ground rocks – the light that reflects off of them is what makes that beautiful color.

Information Sources

For information take a look at www.laketekapountouched.co.nz.

At Lake Tekapo, **Kiwi Treasures & Gifts & Information** serves as the local information center. SH8, ☎ 03-680-6686

Adventures

On Water & on Foot

Guided options: Tussock and Tarn leads kayaking, mountain biking and tramping trips around the area. Kayaking is available both guided (from $65 half-day) and on your own (from $20). ☎ 03-680-6966 or 027-285-6160. They share space with **Mt. Tekapo Mountain Bike Adventures**, who rent mountain bikes and camping equipment. They also offer guided rides. Located on the strip. ☎ 027-416-9558.

Alpine Recreation is based in Lake Tekapo, but leads climbing and tramping tours around the whole region. They do a three-day guided crossing of Mt. Cook range, and also ski-touring and climbing courses. www.alpinerecreation.co.nz, ☎ 03-680-6736, fax 03-680-6765.

There are quite a few walks based at Lake Tekapo, and on a clear day, nothing beats the **Mt. John Lookout**. It's a three-hour round-trip that takes you to the summit of the mountain – start at the skating rink area and walk around the lakeside of Mt. John; join up with the private road to the summit and the Mt. John walkway, or do the reverse. Ask at the information center for a map of other local walks.

Check this out: Follow the signs to **Mt. Cook Salmon Ltd**. on the way to Lake Pukaki. You can enjoy a self-guided tour, catch your own (rods supplied), or just buy a fish. This alpine salmon farm is the first in the world to operate in a hydro-electric canal system. $5 for two adults, children free. Open daylight hours. www.mtcooksalmon.com, ☎ 021-370-038.

On Horses

Mackenzie Alpine Trekking Company leads horse rides from one-hour to overnight. matc@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-680-6760 or 0800-628-269.

In the Air

I really believe there is no better way to see this country than to get above it – and I strongly encourage you to book at least one scenic flight. Where you do it depends on what you really want to see, and also it depends on the weather. If you are in any of the popular regions for flights – Lake Tekapo, Glentanner, Wanaka, the West Coast – and it's a stunning day, by all means get up there! You won't regret it. Flights from Lake Tekapo do seem to be a bit cheaper than some of the other locations. It pays to shop around if you have the time and a good weather window.

Tekapo Helicopters operates from the salmon farm and all flights are in a four-seater so everyone gets a window. A 10-minute landing on the snow is included on all flights, which range from $180 to $320 (currently the lowest prices in the area). www.tekapohelicopters.co.nz, ☎ 03-680-6229 or 0800-359-835, fax 03-680-6228.

Air Safaris offers a fixed-wing option for touring above the area. They have a full menu of flights, from local ones to trips across to the West Coast. Their special Grand Traverse is a pretty spectacular flight – by Mt. Cook, Tasman and Murchison Glaciers, across the Main Divide, and over the top of both the

Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers. It's a 200-km (120-mile) flight. Prices begin at $170 for short flights; inquire for Grand Traverse prices. www.airsafaris.co.nz, departures from Tekapo, and Glentanner (near Mt. Cook), ☎ 03-680-6880.

On Snow

Roundhill Ski Area is an aptly-named club field just outside of Lake Tekapo. www.roundhill.co.nz, ☎ 03-680-6977.

Where to Stay

Lake Tekapo Scenic Resort was new in 2000. It has six family units and 12 studios. There's a definite lodge-feel to it. www.laketekapo.com, ☎ 03-680-6808, fax 03-680-6806 ($$$).

Lake Tekapo Lodge is a B&B, with four guest rooms, each with an en-suite bathroom. Three are open to a huge deck area, and the views are fabulous. www.laketekapolodge.co.nz, Aorangi Crescent, ☎ 03-680-6566 or 0800-525-383, fax 03-680-6599 ($$$$).

The **Godley Resort Hotel** is on the lakeside, and has a range of rooms from budget to superior. www.tekapo.co.nz, SH8, ☎ 03-680-6848, fax 03-680-6873 ($-$$$).

Where to Eat

There isn't a huge range of choices but, in addition to the takeout places and pie shop, you can go to **Pepe's**, which has pizza and pasta, or **Kohan**, for Japanese. Both are on the main drag.

■ Aoraki/Mt. Cook

At 3,755 meters (12,200 feet), **Aoraki/Mt. Cook** is the highest peak in New Zealand and on a clear day, coming in along Lake Pukaki on SH80, the sight of this mountain can indeed take your breath away. It is one of 22 peaks in Aoraki Mt. Cook National Park that are above 3,050 meters (9,912 feet) and is on the "to see" list of many visitors to New Zealand. The national park encompasses 174,619 acres and was named a national park in 1953. There is no mistaking the importance of rock and ice in this part of the country – virtually no forest exists in the national park; instead there are alpine plants on the mountains and nearly 40% of the park is covered in glacial ice. The five major valley glaciers are the Godley, Murchison, Tasman, Hooker and Mueller. At 27 km (17 miles) long, the Tasman is the longest glacier in the Southern Hemisphere. In places, it is three km (nearly two miles) wide and its ice is up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) deep.

Compared to the gold and brown tussock lower lands, the mountains and glaciers provide a startling contrast. This is a very moody area. If the weather doesn't play ball with you (and it often doesn't) unless you are a die-hard mountaineer, there is virtually no reason to make the trek along Lake Pukaki to Mt. Cook Village. But, if it's a clear day and the sun is shining, the views of the mountains and glaciers are more than rewarding. While an absolutely stunning place, the accommodation and eating limitations of the village encourage most people who are not setting off on a multi-day tramp, to come here on a day-trip. You can also use the town of Twizel (pronounced "TWY-zl," not "twizzle") as a base for exploring the park.

- Mt. Cook, Fiordland, Aspiring and Westland National Parks together make Te Wahipounamu World Heritage Site, designated by UNESCO in 1990.
- The Ngai Tahu Maori hold Aoraki in high esteem – it is a sacred mountain that they believe is inappropriate to climb.
- Mt. Cook was first climbed on Christmas Day, 1884. It was a group of three locals who worked in the Hermitage area, Tom Fyfe, George Graham and Jack Clarke, who won the summit.

Getting Here

By Car

At the base of Lake Pukaki, turn off onto SH80 and follow along the incredible green/blue lake – just aim toward the white, snowy mountains standing like a reward at the end of the road. It's about 55 km (34 miles) to Mt. Cook Village. From Christchurch, it's 330 km (205 miles) and will take you five hours to reach Mt. Cook; from Queenstown, it's 270 km (167 miles) and will take nearly as long.

By Bus

The **Cook Connection** runs between Oamaru and Timaru via Twizel. www.cookconnect.co.nz, ☎ 027-458-3211 or 0800-266-526.

InterCity Coachlines also provides service to Mt. Cook. www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 03-379-9020.

Atomic Shuttles serves Twizel and Lake Tekapo. www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-322-8883.

Information Sources

Check out www.mtcook.org.nz.

The **DoC Visitor Centre** is in the village and is open daily from 8:30 am to 5 pm during the winter, 8:30 am to 6 pm in the summer. Some evenings they are open later and have special events, slide shows and talks. They are very well-staffed and stocked with information, last-minute tramping supplies and gifts. mountcookvc@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-435-1186.

Adventures

On Water

Glacier Sea-kayaking is a one-of-a-kind experience. This three-hour trip takes you on the grayish glacial lake where you'll get up close and personal with ice shelves, icebergs, dripping glacial water and the moans and groans of avalanches. Stop for a break to watch the avalanches and follow your guide carefully around the ice. It is a great trip. www.mtcook.com, book at the Old Mountaineers Café, ☎ 03-435-1890.

Glacier Explorers take an inflatable boat out on the Tasman Glacier lake. While not as close to the water as you'll be in a kayak, you do get close to some pretty incredible stuff – icebergs, waterfalls, melting ice. The guides are knowledgeable and, on either this or the kayak trip, you'll leave knowing more than you thought you could about the area. $105 adults, $50 children. www.glacierexplorers.co.nz, ☎ 03-435-1077.

On Foot

This is a trampers', hikers' and mountaineers' wonderland but beware – the weather around here is seriously changeable and the alpine routes are recommended for experienced trampers. There are alpine guiding companies in the village and, if you are interested in mountaineering, it would be a good idea to contact them.

There are 10 short and/or day-walks around the village that go into the main valleys. Pick up a copy of ***Walks in Mount Cook National Park***. The most popular short walk goes to the **Hooker Valley**. Over the course of nine km (five miles) and taking about three to four hours, you will cross two swing bridges at the bottom of Mueller Lake and then climb to the Alpine Memorial. The track ends at Hooker Lake. The most popular short, but challenging, walk is to the **Ball Shelter**. This will take you about six hours (14 km/nine miles) and includes a good amount of climbing. It's used as a stop for longer trips higher up, but you can just stay the night and then return either by way of the Tasman Valley or the Blue Lakes. The three most popular alpine routes for experienced trampers are over the Mueller, Copeland and Ball Passes.

> **Tip:** Drop into the DoC office in the village – they are extremely helpful and have lists of walks of varying lengths.

Contact **Alpine Guides** for mountaineering or guiding options. www.alpineguides.co.nz, ☎ 03-435-1834.

You can contact Charlie Hobbs at **Southern Alps Guiding**, www.mtcook.com, ☎ 03-435-1890, for mountaineering and ski guiding on the glaciers. They also run the Old Mountaineers' Café (see below under *Where to Eat*) and a sea kayaking company (see above).

In the Air

You're going to get sick of me saying it, but you really can't appreciate the beauty and enormity of the glaciers and the mountains unless you get above them.

The **Helicopter Line** has three set trips from 20 to 45 minutes. All trips have a landing on the snow and they also do charters into huts. I did just a short ride with these guys up to the Ben Ohua Range and saw scenery I didn't know existed. Prices start at $185 per person. www.helicopterline.co.nz. Based at Glentannter, ☎ 0800-650-651.

Here's something unusual – **Mount Cook Ski Planes**. The airplanes are outfitted with skis and you fly up the glacier and land on the snow. There are four set tours, ranging from 25 to 55 minutes with prices beginning at $190. Not all flights have landings, so make sure you check. It's really a fun experience. www.mtcookskiplanes.com. Mt. Cook Airport, ☎ 0800-800-702.

On Bikes

You'd think with all the mountains, there'd be a lot of riding, but there really isn't at Mt. Cook. You can go with **Discovery Tours**, however, who cater to the more upmarket clientele for mountain biking, hiking, fishing, farm tours or anything else you want to do. The heli-bike option ($165) would be my choice; I felt unchallenged on the 4X4 bike option – it was on an easy station trail ($60). They also run shuttles and tours ($15)

for those who want to do day-walks and *Lord of the Rings* tours from Twizel. www.discoverytours.co.nz, ☎ 0800-213-868.

Alan's 4WD Tours runs 2½-hour trips to the Tasman Glacier. alan@mountcooktours.co.nz, ☎ 03-435-0441.

Where to Stay

You don't get much choice, really, as virtually all the accommodation is owned by **The Hermitage**, which is a decidedly large building at the base of the valley. It's very well-run and a modern, clean, lovely place to stay. If you can, get a room that looks out on the mountain. There is no more spectacular way to wake up in the morning and binoculars are in the rooms for your use. The Hermitage also runs the **Glencoe Lodge** and the **Mount Cook Motel and Chalets**. www.mount-cook.com, ☎ 03-435-1809 or 0800-686-800, fax 03-435-1879 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Mt. Cook YHA** is your other option and is a good alternative with lots of rooms, a knowledgeable staff and plenty of facilities. yhamtck@yha.org.nz, corner of Bowen Drive and Kitchener Drive, ☎ 03-435-1820 ($).

The **Glentanner Park Holiday Park**, 15 minutes from Mt. Cook at the site of Glentanner airport, has cabins, tents and campervan sites. It's set on a working sheep station, alongside Lake Pukaki. www.glentanner.co.nz, SH80, ☎ 03-435-1855, fax 03-435-1854 ($-$$).

Pukaki Homestay, between the turnoff on SH80 and Glentanner has a cottage, cabins, swimming pool and lake access. They also run Pukaki Downs Backpackers and have a dinner with bed and breakfast option. www.pukakihomestay.co.nz, ☎ 03-435-3240 or 027-271-5330, fax 03-435-3241 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

The Old Mountaineers' Café is run by Charlie Hobbs, who is not an old mountaineer at all, but who is a well-respected guide and mountain man. He went through hell and back before he finally got approval to open the café (and take the monopoly away from The Hermitage). Well done, Charlie; the place is great. Next to the DoC office. ☎ 03-435-1890 ($$).

The Hermitage has a café, small shop and an à la carte restaurant ($-$$).

■ Twizel

Twizel, pronounced "TWY-zl," 70 km (43 miles) from Mt. Cook, can be used as an affordable option to explore the national park. On its own, Twizel doesn't have a lot of draw, but it's certainly not a bad stopover or rest point.

Information Sources

Check out www.twizel.com.

The **Twizel Information Centre** is on Market Place, ☎ 03-435-3124.

> **Tip:** On your in or out of Aoraki Mt. Cook, be sure to stop at the **Lake Pukaki Visitor Centre**, SH8, ☎ 03-435-3280.

Adventures

On Bikes

Call Al Shearer at **Heli-Bike**. He's got the inside knowledge of where to ride and has bikes for rent. He puts on an annual heli-bike challenge, usually in February. On one trip we couldn't get a helicopter, so he took us up a 4x4 road up by Lake Ohau and we had a blast riding down. He'll arrange just about anything and is also a keen mountaineer and guide. www.helibike.com, ☎ 03-0800-435-424, fax 03-435-0626.

Watchable Wildlife

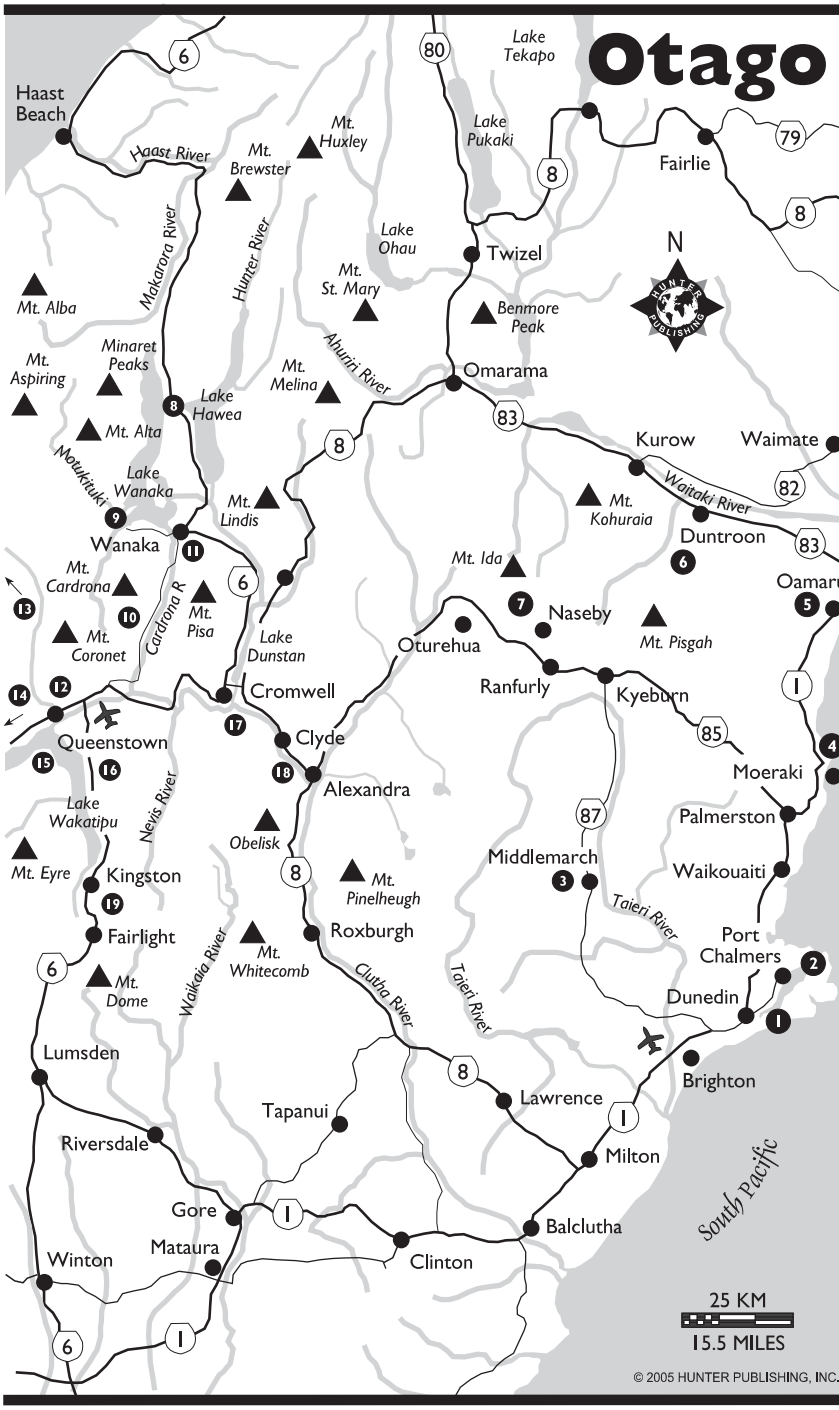
The riverbed of the Waitaki River is home to the kaki, or black stilt, one of New Zealand's rarest birds. The stilts are wading birds with black body and long red legs. Their numbers were down to 23, but the breeding center near Twizel has increased the numbers through captive breeding. You can visit the center and have a tour of the Kaki Visitor Hide. Open in the spring and summer, tours leave from the Twizel Information Centre. Bookings are essential ($12.50 adults, $5 children), ☎ 03-435-3124.

On Snow

Lake Ohau is the ski area around here and is a small (one chair lift), friendly place. www.ohau.co.nz, ☎ 03-438-9885.

Where to Stay

There are a few inexpensive and reliable motels in Twizel, including the **Colonial Motel**, 36 Mackenzie Drive, ☎ 03-435-0499 or 0800-355-722 ($$); the **Mountain Chalets Motel**, Wairepo Road, ☎ 03-435-0785, fax 03-435-0551 ($$); and the **High Country Holiday Lodge and Motel**, 23 Mackenzie Drive, ☎ 03-435-0671 ($-$$).


Otago
Haast Beach
Haast River
Mt. Huxley
Mt. Brewster
Makarora River
Hunter River
Lake Tekapo
Lake Pukaki
Lake Ohau
Twizel
Fairlie
N
Mt. Alba
Mt. St. Mary
Benmore Peak
Mt. Aspiring
Minaret Peaks
Mt. Melina
Ahuriri River
Omarama
Lake Hawea
Mt. Alta
Kurow
Waimate
Waitaki River
Nouktuki
Lake Wanaka
Mt. Lindis
Mt. Kohuraia
Duntroon
Wanaka
Mt. Ida
Oamaru
Mt. Cardrona
Cardrona R
Mt. Pisa
Naseby
Mt. Pisgah
Mt. Coronet
Lake Dunstan
Oturehua
Ranfurly
Kyeburn
Cromwell
Queenstown
Clyde
Moeraki
Nevis River
Alexandra
Lake Wakatipu
Palmerston
Obelisk
Middlemarch
Waikouaiti
Mt. Eyre
Kingston
Mt. Pinelheugh
Taieri River
Fairlight
Roxburgh
Port Chalmers
Waikaia River
Mt. Whitecomb
Clutha River
Taieri River
Mt. Dome
Dunedin
Lumsden
Brighton
Tapanui
Lawrence
Riversdale
Milton
Gore
Balclutha
South Pacific
Mataura
Clinton
Winton
25 KM
15.5 MILES
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Otago Map Key

1. St. Clair & St. Kilda Beaches, St. Clair Saltwater Pool, Tunnel Beach, Mt. Cargill, Organ Pipes, Silver Stream Water Race-Tracks, Cadbury Chocolate World, Speight's Brewery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Olveston House, Otago Museum, Otago Settlers Museum, New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame, Botanic Garden
2. New Zealand Marine Studies Centre, Royal Albatross Centre at Taiaroa Head, Fort Taiaroa, Larnach Castle, Glenfalloch Woodland Gardens, Port Chalmers Museum, Flagstaff Lookout, Wellers Rock, Otakau Marae
3. Taieri Gorge Vintage Steam Train, Otago Rail Trail
4. Moeraki Boulders
5. Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony
6. Elephant Rocks, Vanished World Fossil Trail, Dansey's Pass
7. Naseby Forest, Settlers' Museum, Motoring Museum
8. Lake Hawea Neck, Kidds Bush
9. Glendhu Bay, Mt. Aspiring National Park, Rob Roy Glacier, Treble Cone Ski Area
10. Lakes District Museum & Gallery, Macetown (mining era ghost town)
11. Wanaka Airport, Transport & Toy Museum, Paradiso Cinema, Stuart Landsborough's Puzzling World, NZ Fighter Pilots' Museum, Hero Mountain-Mt. Roy Track
12. Queenstown Gardens, TSS *Earnslaw*, Skycity Queenstown Casino, Ben Lomond & One-Mile Creek Walks, Rippon Vineyard
13. Rees-Dart Track
14. Greenstone & Caples Tracks, Glenorchy, Kinloch
15. Cecil & Walter Peaks
16. The Remarkables
17. Cromwell Information Centre & Museum, Cromwell Top Ten Holiday Park, Bannockburn Wineries, Nevis Valley, Kawarau Gorge
18. Alexander Museum & Art Gallery, Clyde Lookout Point & River Walk
19. Kingston Flyer Railway

Otago

Introduction

Otago commands a large portion of the South Island, in terms of space, variety and activities. **Dunedin**, the provincial capital, is the most Scottish of New Zealand's cities, home to the oldest university and the gateway to the spectacular Otago Peninsula. **Queenstown**, sitting on the shores of the majestic Lake Wakatipu, is the self-professed Adventure Capital of the World and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in New Zealand. Ripe with walking tracks and other natural activities, Queenstown is a destination not just for the adrenaline set. **Wanaka**, less than an hour away, is a fa-

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vorite spot for domestic and international visitors and has a more laid-back manner. The gold country of Central Otago has some of the most incredible scenery around – and makes for some easy-going poking and prodding around small-town New Zealand.

Getting Here

■ By Air

Otago is served by international airports in both **Dunedin** and **Queenstown**. See those sections for details.

■ By Car

I live at the top of the South Island and when I think of heading to any of the towns of Otago, I am immediately in a quandary. Should I blast down along SH1 to Dunedin and then head inland, take my time and tour around SH72 and then SH8 through the middle of the island, or should I drive to the West Coast and enter via SH6? My decision isn't usually made until I back out of the driveway and see which way my car points and, even then, I'm not sure. I suppose it all depends on the time at hand and the focus of your trip.

Information Sources

Each town has its own information center and the whole of the region isn't covered by one body. For regional sites, check out www.dunedinnz.com, www.queenstown-nz.co.nz, www.lakewanaka.co.nz and www.tco.org.nz.

Dunedin

Dunedin, a flourishing, energetic university town, is the main center of Otago and is often referred to as New Zealand's most Scottish city – the "Edinburgh of the South." Its streets are lined with shops, cafés and restaurants and its galleries and museums are just short walks from most accommodation. A compact city, Dunedin is at the base of the Otago Harbour, where the Otago Peninsula – New Zealand's first and perhaps premier eco-tourism area – juts into the sea. The marine life around the peninsula is fabulous and this area is home to many species found nowhere else. Like much of New Zealand, Dunedin's early history is volcanic, with a series of eruptions that formed the hills that ring the city and the harbor. The coast around Dunedin is notable for cliff faces, rock formations and sea caves, as well as having beaches that are popular for (chilly) swimming and surfing.

> **Did you know?** Otago University was the first university in New Zealand.

Local Maori history began with fishing in the coastal bays and inland hunting, evolving into the settlement of both sides of the harbor, which was named Otakau. The area was the site of a long and bloody feud between the three tribes in the area, resulting in many deaths. European settlement be-

gan with the whalers and sealers, who brought more death through disease – by 1848, the population of Otakau Pa had dropped to just over 100. More than 300 permanent settlers arrived in the same year, courtesy of the New Zealand Company, who chose Dunedin as the site for a Scottish community. In 1849, twice as many settlers from England and Ireland arrived, but the Scottish influence was already strong enough to survive. It was a small town and the values of the community were those of the Scottish Free Church until the discovery of gold in Otago. The gold rush that followed influenced Dunedin's development like nothing else – during the gold-mining era, Dunedin was the richest, biggest and most powerful city in New Zealand. It was during the time of gold fever that Otago University was founded and built, as were Otago Boys and Otago Girls High Schools. Businesses flourished and buildings were erected. When you visit Dunedin today, be sure to walk up around the town belt, perhaps to Olveston House, and take in a view of the architecture and physical examples of the city's history.

■ Getting Here

By Air

The Dunedin airport is about 30 km (18 miles) south of town on SH1. It is an international airport with service to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Within New Zealand, flights serve Queenstown, Invercargill, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. Rental cars are available at the airport, as are door-to-door shuttle services (taxi service is pricy).

By Car

The drive south to Dunedin on SH1 from Christchurch takes about 4½ hours. From Queenstown, via SH6, 8 and 1, it's four hours; and from Invercargill, the drive north on SH1 is two hours.

By Bus

Connections around the South Island are available to and from Dunedin. In addition to those listed, there are other door-to-door services available. Contact an information center for details.

In addition to stopping at the Dunedin airport and the Dunedin Botanic Garden, **InterCity Coachlines**, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, arrives at Inter City Travel, 205 St. Andrew Street. ☎ 03-477-8860 or 03 477-9238, fax 03-477-8859.

Atomic Shuttles services most of the South Island, including inland routes to Central Otago. They arrive and depart from the Dunedin Rail station at the corner of Anzac and Stuart Streets, www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-477-4449.

South Island Connection departs from the Information Centre in The Octagon. They leave at the ungodly hour of 1 am to head north, but arrive in Christchurch by 6 am – making connections to other points much easier. They also service the Christchurch airport on this run. www.southislandconnections.co.nz, ☎ 03-366-6633.

Catch-A-Bus provides door-to-door service to and from Dunedin and Central Otago, including Wanaka. ☎ 03-479-9960.

By Train

Train service to Dunedin is currently limited to the scenic Taieri Gorge. See page 510 for details.

■ Tourist Information

Tourism Dunedin does a fabulous job of creating maps and visitor guides for the area. They can be visited at www.dunedinnz.com. Another good site to visit is www.cityofdunedin.com.

The **Visitor Information Centre**, visitor.centre@dcc.govt.co.nz, is conveniently located on The Octagon, ☎ 03-474-3300, fax 03-474-3311.

The **DoC** area conservancy office is open weekdays from 8:30 am to 5 pm and is located at 77 Lower Stuart Street, ☎ 03-477-0677.

> **Tip:** Pick up a free copy of ***f*INK***, Dunedin's weekly entertainment guide, or visit them at www.fink.net.nz.

■ Adventures

On Water

During the late 1800s several saltwater pools were built around Dunedin but today, only the **St. Clair Salt Water Pool** remains. The site underwent a massive renovation that was completed in summer 2002. Hanging at the edge of the sea, the pools are outdoors and filled with a mixture of heated salt and chlorinated water. Open during the summer only. West end of St. Clair Beach.

St. Clair Beach is also popular for swimming and surfing (life guard patrolled in summer), as is **St. Kilda**. These two sandy beaches are tucked between two volcanic headlands.

Brighton Beach, about 15 km (nine miles) south of town, is a very popular swimming and surfing beach.

On Foot

The weather in Dunedin can quickly change – make sure you take plenty of warm clothes! Drop into the visitor center for an up-to-date map of local walking tracks around Dunedin. DoC also has brochures on walks around the area.

Tunnel Beach, at the foot of sandstone cliffs, is accessible by foot only, and is at the end of a 1½-km (about one mile) walk that takes you through a handmade rock tunnel. It's a favorite summer spot and is notable for visual evidence of the area's geology.

There is a series of walking tracks around the city, particularly to the east and west of SH1 as you exit the city going north. The land on the eastern side of SH1 makes the northern boundary of the Otago Harbour and is a good choice for day-walks, especially on fine days. From the end of Norwood Street, follow the track uphill to **Mt. Cargill** for spectacular (and very windy) views and then continue on to **The Organ Pipes** (giant granite rock columns). The same sites are accessible by way of Hall Road to The Organ Pipes and up to Mt. Cargill. Either way, allow three to four hours round-trip and expect a bit of a climb.

On the western side of SH1 are the **Silver Stream Water Race-Tracks** within the Whare Flat Pine Forest and range from under an hour to full-day networks of walks, one going up to Flagstaff Mountain.

The **Botanic Garden** also has a series of short, easy walks that are easily accessible from town. The gardens were established in the early 1860s and include a formal lower garden and a more natural upper garden that consists of natives as well as a Rhododendron Dell. There is also an aviary housing native birds.

On Bikes

There is a good map, ***Fat Tyre Trails***, describing half a dozen good rides in and around Dunedin. Pick it up at the information center or at a bike shop. For rentals, check **Cycle Surgery Ltd.**, where you can rent a bike, helmet and lock for $30 a day. They also have bike racks for rent. www.cyclesurgery.co.nz, 67 Stuart Street, ☎ 03-477-7473, fax 03-477-7455.

In Food & Beer

> **Did you know?** Cadbury makes 85% of the chocolate eaten in New Zealand and has to work for six months to produce all the eggs consumed in New Zealand just during the Easter season.

Cadbury World is a must if you are traveling with kids, enjoyable if you're not. Depending on what's happening, you'll see various stages of chocolate making and be given plenty of samples! If you like chocolate, it definitely seems worthwhile. The factory was closed for a number of years and retrofitted for modern tour safety requirements, but is now a popular attraction. A good history of the company (and chocolate) starts the tour, which takes a little over an hour. The smells are great and at the end of the tour you can purchase even more chocolate at a special shop (accessible only to those who have taken the tour). Book ahead; tours every half-hour seven days a week, but they do fill up. Adult $14, children $8. www.cadburyworld.co.nz, 280 Cumberland Street, ☎ 03-467-7967 or 0800-223-287.

Tours of **Speights Brewery** take about 90 minutes and end in the pub/tasting room, where they tend to carry on for quite a while longer. The tours are definitely a celebration of beer and the "Southern Man," and are entertaining, informative and a fun way to spend some time. I recommend taking the 7 pm tour if you can. Adults $12, children $4. Bookings essential. www.speights.co.nz, 200 Rattray Street, ☎/fax 03-477-7697.

■ Sightseeing

The **Dunedin Public Art Gallery** is filled with fantastic exhibitions of current and early art. When you enter the gallery, its spaciousness is uplifting; every time I have walked in, I immediately felt calm and relaxed. There is a gorgeous spiral stairway that just draws your eyes upwards, pulling you into the exhibits. You'll see work from international as well as New Zealand artists and there is quite an extensive contemporary collection. The gallery often hosts traveling exhibits that don't make it to other New Zealand sites. This is definitely a place to stop in and spend as little or as long as you have. Free admission, charges for special ex-

hibits. Open daily, 10 am-5 pm, www.dunedin.art.museum, 30 The Octagon, ☎ 03-474-3240, fax 03-474-3250.

The **New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame** is in the railway station and a quick browse around will introduce you to some of the great athletes throughout New Zealand's history. New Zealand loves its sport and this stop will get you up to speed on who's who. It is considered the national sports museum. $5 adults, $2 children. www.nzhalloffame.co.nz, Railway Station, Anzac Avenue, ☎ 03-477-7775, fax 03-477-7762.

Olveston House was left to the city in 1967 by the last surviving member of the influential and privileged Dunedin Theoman family. The house was quite modern for its time (built in the early 1900s, it had central heat and an internal telephone system) and is filled with souvenirs of the family's travels around the world. There is an extensive art collection and tour guides are quite knowledgeable about not only the family and the house, but the collections and their histories. The Edwardian house was envisaged by the Theomans after traveling around Europe and North America, then designed by architect Sir Ernest George. $13 adults, $4 children. Tours daily, limited to 15, so bookings are essential. www.olveston.co.nz, 42 Royal Terrace, ☎ 03-477-3320 or 0800-100-880.

One of my favorite museums in New Zealand is the **Otago Museum** which is over 125 years old. I especially enjoy the *Southern Land, Southern People* exhibit, which opened in late 2002. It's a fabulous exhibit on the natural and cultural heritage of the southern part of the South Island. As you may have gathered by now, I do not spend the bulk of my holidays in museums, but this one I really enjoyed and was sad to leave. It's creatively designed, keeps your interest and embraces the character of the region. Don't miss the moa display – I had no idea there had been so many species of moa. The Otago Museum has the most complete collection of moas in the world, with 10 species on display. Globally, there are nine intact moa eggs; four of them are here. In addition to the *Southern Land* exhibit, take some time to see the interactive Discovery World and Pacific Culture Galleries. Open from 10 am to 5 pm, 419 Great King Street, ☎ 03-474-7474, fax 03-477-5993.

> **Things you'll learn:** 57 birds have become extinct in New Zealand; about half of the world's fossilized penguins have been found in Southland (including giant penguins that are twice the size of emperors); and freshwater crocodiles once lived near St. Bathans in Central Otago.

For social history of Dunedin, make a visit to **Otago Settlers Museum**, where displays of people, transport and history fill permanent and temporary exhibits. There are two steam trains and quite an amazing array of historic photographs. The display about Chinese history and immigrants is particularly interesting. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. 31 Queens Gardens, ☎ 03-477-5052.

The **Taieri Gorge Railway** leaves daily from the Dunedin Railway Station. It's pronounced "Tie-ree," by the way, and quickly, without any accent. Don't say Tay-ear-y. This historic train (with a mixture of refurbished old and new carriages) travels to either Pukerangi (58 km/36 miles) or Middlemarch (77 km/48 miles) and the beginning of the Otago Central Rail Trail. The carriages are air-conditioned, snacks are available and the commentary is inter-

esting and educational, but not overwhelming. The tracks, built between 1879 and 1921, were a notable engineering feat of their time. The train served the towns of Central Otago, covering a total distance of 235 km (145 miles) to Cromwell. Leaving Dunedin, you first travel through rich agricultural areas before breaking into the Taieri Gorge, with steep schist walls. During the winter, the snow makes for lovely photographs, as do the remote bridges and homesteads along the way. Most people opt for a round-trip and the homeward leg is a good time to catch a nap. You can arrange for bus transport from Middlemarch to Queenstown, or for those interested in getting some exercise, bring a bike along and ride the Rail Trail from Middlemarch to Alexandra (150 km/93 miles, accommodation available along the way). You might also want to consider riding from Alexandra to Middlemarch and getting the train back to Dunedin. For more information on the Rail Trail, see the Central Otago section (page 549). Round-trips are four hours to Pukerangi and five hours to Middlemarch. Bookings are essential. Train departure times vary depending on season. One-way fares begin at $36.50 adults (one child free per adult, additional children $10); round-trip fares begin at $57 for adults. www.taieri.co.nz, ☎ 03-477-4449.

The **University Book Shop** is a great one! Don't miss it. 378 Great King Street.

Baldwin Street has the reputation of being the steepest street in New Zealand, and reportedly, the world. **Otago University**, the oldest university in New Zealand, was founded in 1869 and makes a good spot for wandering around. The **clock tower** at the administration building on Leith Street is a Dunedin landmark and is frequently visited and photographed.

■ Where to Stay

Built in 1863 as the original home of Sir Thomas Sidey and his family, **Corstorphine House** has gone through quite a few lifetimes, including 100 years as a private home and 40 as an institution. Now the most luxurious accommodation in Dunedin, it has eight guest suites, each decorated in a different theme, a fabulous restaurant in the Conservatory where organic produce grown on-site is served (open to the public), and a beautiful 12-acre garden. They also have a fantastic day spa. www.corstorphine.co.nz, Milburn Street, ☎ 03-487-1000, fax 03-487-6672 ($$$$).

> **Tip:** Produce grown in the Corstorphine gardens is sold in a small shop on-site. Open Monday to Friday, 10 am to 2 pm.

In 2003, **Fletcher Lodge** underwent a major facelift, addition and renovation. There are two standard and two premium rooms to choose from, each with its own water heater, so there's never a shortage of hot showers. The original wood paneling and windows remain in this 1924 building, the hosts are especially friendly and welcoming, and the home is very comfortable. www.fletcherlodge.co.nz, 276 High Street, ☎ 03-477-5552 or 0800-843-563, fax 03-474-5551 ($$$$).

McGavin's brewery used to be on the grounds of the **Skyline Leisure Lodge**, which is conveniently located beside the Botanic Garden. The name

sounds like a retirement home, but it's a pleasant, recently renovated facility with about 75 suites and standard double rooms. All have mini-bars, SKY TV, and the executive suites have video, DVD and kitchens. **McGavin's Restaurant and Bar** is open for breakfast and dinner. www.leisurelodge.net.nz, Duke Street, ☎ 03-477-5360 or 0800-334-123, fax 03-477-5460 ($$$).

Dunedin Scenic Circle Southern Cross Hotel is in a gorgeous old building dating back to 1883; it commands attention and serves as an anchor for the city. The hotel has 178 rooms (suites, superiors and standard rooms) three restaurants, two bars and is home to the Dunedin Casino. southern.cross@scenic-circle.co.nz, at the corner of Princes & High Streets, ☎ 03-477-0752, fax 03-477-5776 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Leviathan Heritage Hotel** was built in 1884 and has been a hotel ever since. It's a bit of a rabbit warren, with hallways going here and there and accommodation options ranging from backpacker hostel to lovely suites. It's a great old hotel and there are photos on the walls of Christmas dinners from the late 1800s. There is a house bar but, as the owner says, alcohol is not their primary focus. It's near enough to all the attractions of the city and, for the money and the atmosphere, I think it's a good pick. leviathan@xtra.co.nz, 27 Queens Gardens, ☎ 03-477-3160 or 0800-773-773, fax 03-477-2385 ($-$$$).

Quality Hotel Dunedin is a perfectly fine, serviceable accommodation not far from the city's activities. All 155 rooms have balconies and are north-facing for all-day sun. The restaurant is open for breakfast and dinner. dunedin@mcqhotels.co.nz, 10 Smith Street, ☎ 03-477-6784 or 0800-782-548, fax 03-474-0115 ($$$).

George Street has a broad range of accommodations. From The Octagon, street numbers go up.

526 George Street is a smoke-free "boutique hotel" housed in a beautiful 1907 building originally constructed as a residence for a surgeon's family. The rooms are spacious, the lounge is comfortable (with a big screen TV, stereo and piano), and a continental breakfast is included. www.hotel526.co.nz, 526 George, ☎ 03-477-1261 or 0800-779-779, fax 03-477-1268 ($$$).

Cargills Hotel has singles, doubles, studios and family units, most of which are around a center courtyard, which is beautiful in the spring when the cherry trees are blossoming. The hotel has just undergone major renovations and the rooms are clean, bright and colorful. A real plus here is the complimentary guest laundry and 24-hour room service. www.cargills.co.nz, 678 George, ☎ 03-477-7983 or 0800-737-378, fax 03-477-8098 ($$$).

The **Albatross Inn** is a charming old home with nine rooms, each decorated differently, but in keeping with the old-world style of the building. Eight rooms have en-suite baths, the ninth has an en-suite toilet and basin and a private bath a few steps away. Continental breakfast (with homemade yogurt and baked muffins) is included, except with the winter super-cheap specials. There is free Internet access and some rooms have a kitchen. www.albatross.inn.co.nz, 770 George, ☎/fax 03-477-2727 ($$-$$$).

Once in a while, you come upon a place you just want to move into. That happened to me at the **858 George Street Motel**. Sally and Michael Young tore down their family home and built in its place 13 units that make up a little community. This section of George Street has an Edwardian feel to it and these new buildings blend right into the neighborhood – you don't feel as if

you're going to a motel. In fact, they were the Regional Winner for Architecture in 2000, the year they opened. Inside, the units are tastefully appointed and two can be combined to make a large two-level family or group apartment. Cooked or continental breakfast is available and units have kitchen facilities. This must be one of the best value accommodations around. www.858georgestreetmotel.co.nz, 858 George, ☎/fax 03-474-0047 or 0800-858-999 ($$$).

I foolishly walked into the broom closet trying to find my way out of **Adventurer Backpackers**, but I'm quite sure most people don't have that same problem. There are a couple of twins and doubles, and dorms sleeping five, six and nine. The big lounge with fireplace, and being very close to The Octagon and city center, make this a popular spot. adventur@es.co.nz, 37 Dowling Street, ☎ 03-477-7367 or 0800-422-257, fax 03-477-7367 ($).

Dunedin Central Backpackers has twin, double, shared-bath and dorm (up to 11 bed) rooms. It is, indeed, central to the city and that's definitely a plus. duncb_nz@yahoo.co.nz, 243 Moray Place, ☎ 03-477-9985 or 0800-432-2322, fax 03-477-9822 ($).

On a residential street, housed in two big old historic homes, is **Manor House Backpackers**. They have twins, doubles and dorms and – get this – three kitchens. Even though it can hold up to 70, it feels more like home than most backpacker hostels. www.manorhousebackpackers.co.nz, 28 Manor Place, ☎/fax 03-477-0484 ($).

Elm Lodge Backpackers is near the center of town, but in a residential neighborhood. It's situated on a hill, in an older house and has a nice garden and a BBQ. They also offer wildlife tours of the peninsula. www.elmwildlifetours.co.nz, 74 Elm Row, ☎ 03-474-1872 or 0800-356-563 ($).

In Dunedin the YHA is called **Stafford Gables** and is an older, not quite up-to-date homestead. There is a large variety of rooms, large and small dorms and family suites. yhadndn@yha.org.nz, www.stayyha.com, 71 Stafford Street, ☎/fax 03-474-1919 ($).

Queens Gardens Backpackers was renovated in 2003. It's in an historic hotel with singles, doubles, twins, dorms and family rooms. Close to downtown, this is a really cool old building. 42 Queens Gardens, ☎ 03-479-2175 or 0800-225-228, fax 03-479-0700 ($).

Chalet Backpackers is located in an old hospital and has lots of little rooms tucked here and there. It's a comfortable spot, near the center of town. Lots of good information available here, too. 296 High Street, ☎ 03-479-2075 or 0800-242-538, fax 03-479-2050 ($).

■ Where to Eat

Like any university town and regional center, there are plenty of choices for good eats. Just take a wander down George Street and you'll find any number of noodle houses, kebab shops, cafés, ethnic restaurants, not to mention all the fine dining options that make choosing difficult.

When I asked my old sailing friend Bruce (who now lives in Dunedin) for his favorite restaurant, the one he picked was **Esplanade** at St. Clair Beach and probably not just because he lives in the neighborhood. They have great

pizza, pasta and seafood, it's right on the beach and off the typical tourist route. All great reasons for a visit and, when he took me there, I easily saw why it's his favorite. The big seaside windows are open when the weather's nice; when it's not so nice, sit by the fire. On the Esplanade at St. Clair Beach. ☎ 03-456-2544 ($$-$$$).

Governors has blackboard menus, full breakfast served all day, build-your-own pizza and sandwiches, and really good smoothies. A student hang-out kind of place and well worth a stop. 438 George Street ($-$$).

2 Chefs has upstairs views of St. Knox Church, fashionable, delicious food and a good wine list. 428 George Street, ☎ 03-477-9117 ($$$).

Capers is a must for breakfast, with lunch a close second. They open at 7 am, earlier than most of the local cafés. 412 George Street ($).

The very tasty and trendy **Nova Café** is in the same building as the Dunedin Public Art Gallery (page 509). Good choice for coffee or a meal. On The Octagon ($$).

The **London Lounge** is a bar and bistro upstairs at the Albert Arms. Nothing fancy about the food, but it's good and the place is friendly. Corner London and George Streets ($$).

At the rail station, not surprisingly, is **The Station Café and Bar**. Just opened in 2003, it's a good place to grab lunch or a coffee before riding the Taieri Gorge Railway. Dinner is equally good. Open evenings Thursday to Saturday. ☎ 03-477-7704 ($-$$).

The **Ra Bar Street Bar and Café** is on the Octagon, open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and one of those lively places day or night. Might be a good idea to book for dinner. 21 The Octagon, ☎ 03-477-6080 ($-$$$).

Cargills Hotel Restaurant and Bar has won the NZ beef and lamb award for three years, including 2003. It's a brasserie and open from 7 am to 10 pm with a tempting à la carte menu. 678 George Street. ☎ 03-477-7983 ($$-$$$).

Vino Vena has a broad range of entrées, including lamb, beef, chicken and pasta. Upstairs at 484 George Street, ☎ 03-479-0110 ($$-$$$).

Two Bears has New York-style pizza, pasta and plenty of beer on tap. There are pool tables to keep you busy and they stay open late. Frederick Street ($).

Grab a coffee and a snack at tucked-away **The Fix**. 15 Frederick Street ($).

For breakfast, lunch or a great ANZAC biscuit, try **Modaks Coffee Shop**. 339 George Street ($).

At the corner of Albion and Great King Street is **Sopranos Café**. A good option for a midday snack and it's right by Kathmandu, if you're in the market for outdoor gear. Albion and Great King Street ($).

Coffee Culture is a good spot for lunch or an afternoon boost. Just up Albion Lane from Great King Street ($).

The vegetarian/vegan option of choice is the **Green Acorn Café** at 741 Cumberland Street ($-$$).

The Curry Box has both eat-in and takeout, and is open for lunch and dinner. 442 George Street ($-$$).

Otago Peninsula

The Otago Peninsula, just a few minutes drive from the city center, is a magical place and should be a mandatory stop on the itinerary of every visitor to New Zealand. Subtropical and subantarctic waters come together off Dunedin's shore – creating an unusual marine environment, feeding place, and home for some of the rarest marine life in the world. The yellow-eyed penguin, one of the most endangered species, makes its home here, as does the little blue penguin, the royal albatross, and the Stewart Island shag. There are also seals and many different seabirds. Driving from the city center to Taiaroa Head, allow an hour, but you'll need at least a day to explore the Peninsula. A round-trip of the peninsula is about 64 km (40 miles). There is a variety of accommodation to choose from to extend your stay. Pick up a free ***Visitors Guide to the Otago Peninsula*** at the information center.

■ Adventures

On Foot

The peninsula is filled with walking tracks, from five minutes to three hours, and the handy little guide, ***Otago Peninsula Tracks***, describes 19 of them. Get a copy at the information center.

Watchable Wildlife

The **New Zealand Marine Studies Centre and Aquarium** at Portobello is a working laboratory for the University of Otago and makes a great first stop on a wildlife tour of the peninsula. There are touch tanks and static displays; you'll see sea-horses, anemones, sharks, and fish indigenous to the area. Celebrating its 100th birthday in 2004, it is the oldest marine research laboratory in Australasia and, because it is a working laboratory, there are always marine-studies students working around the site. Fish feeding is between 2 and 3 pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Guided tours are available at 10:30 daily and are a fantastic way to tour the aquarium, get some behind-the-scenes stories, find out about on-going research projects, and learn about the wildlife on the peninsula. New in 2003 are cooperative trips with Wild Earth Adventures – spend the first part of your day at the aquarium learning about the marine life and then paddle out to experience sea life first-hand. For those wishing to go on their own, the facility is open daily from 12 noon to 4:30 pm. It's not necessary to book ahead for guided tours, but during the busy summer months it's a good idea. $7 adults, $3 children, $14 family ($16 adults/ $8 children for guided tour). www.otago.ac.nz/marinestudies, ☎ 03-479-5836, fax 03-479-5844.

If you don't fancy a combined tour with the aquarium and just want to go sea kayaking, you can do that with **Wild Earth Adventures Ltd**. The best way to explore the coastline is at sea level, and where better then here? Half-day to multi-day tours, from $79 per person. www.wildearth.co.nz, ☎ 03-473-6535, fax 03-473-6539.

> **Did you know?** Dunedin is the shark "hot spot" of New Zealand, with over 13 different types of sharks found along the Otago coastline.

AUTHOR'S PICK

The Royal Albatross Centre at Taiaroa Head is a fantastic experience and should not be missed. The first time I came to the Peninsula, I didn't get to do the guided tour, and I'm happy to say that I now have. Not only is this is the only mainland breeding colony of albatross in the world, it's teeming with other wildlife as well, including the rare Stewart Island shag. The Royal albatross are amazing birds – there are only two colonies in the world, the one at Taiaroa Head and another in the Chatham Islands. The birds have a wingspan of over three meters (nearly 10 feet), are capable of speeds over 100 kilometers (62 miles) per hour, and can swallow a one-meter (39-inch) squid whole. Spending 80% of their life at sea, every two years they come to land – only to find a mate and to breed. Their lifecycle goes something like this: September to October, adults arrive at Taiaroa Head and breed. Eggs are laid in November and incubated until January when the chicks hatch. Until the end of March, one parent is with the chick at all times, while the other goes off to feed; by April, the chicks are left alone, the parents returning only to feed them. By the following September, the new chick takes off for its first flight and doesn't return for four to five years! All that time, it circumnavigates Antarctica and feeds at sea. When it returns (always to the site where it was born), it hasn't seen land since it left on its inaugural flight! It comes home as a teenager to find a mate. These birds mate for life and spend three to four years going to "albatross parties" to find an appropriate partner. Once they've picked a mate, the pair return the following year and have a trial run – they do everything their parents did with the exception of laying an egg. If all goes well, they return the following year to breed. Each time a chick is reared and leaves the nest, the parents take a year off and go their separate ways, returning a year later to reacquaint themselves and breed again. Most albatross live into their forties, and continue to breed throughout their life.

The best time to come is from December to February, when the teenagers are going to their parties and the young birds are being guarded by one or the other parent; during breeding season (September to November) the viewing area is closed. Open daily except Christmas, tours leave every half-hour, beginning at 9 am during summer, 9:30 am hourly in winter. On Tuesdays, tours begin at 11:30. Consider going on the 6 pm tour and staying for dinner at the restaurant. The center has a gift shop with many local products. Tour costs vary depending on time of year. Adults pay $12-30; children $6-15. www.albatross.org.nz, ☎ 03-478-0499, fax 03-478-0575.

Penguin Place is a private conservation reserve and a stop that I think is imperative if you'll be heading farther south along the coast and want to view penguins. When I came here the first time, I had never before seen a penguin, and gained a great appreciation for them by doing the guided tour through the tunnels and viewing them from the hides. I can't stress enough how important it is to treat these lovely creatures with respect. I really believe a guided trip will give you the best understanding of how to view and appreciate the birds. The guides are knowledgeable and passionate; you just can't help but adore the penguins. It's easy to anthropomorphize the penguins. They are just so darned cute, the way they walk and hop and jump. They're also pretty dependable, coming home from a day's fishing at the same time

each evening. The reserve is aiming to restore the penguin habitat, build nesting sites, trap predators and care for injured birds. The way the hides are built, you are very close to the birds, but without their knowledge. The experience made it easier for me to spot penguins as I traveled on – they are difficult to see getting out of the water unless you know what you're looking for. I'd call first to find out what time tours are going, but typically they leave every 30 minutes from 10:15 am until 90 minutes prior to sunset. www.penguin-place.co.nz, ☎ 03-478-0286, fax 03-478-0257.

YEPs

The **Hoiho** ("noise shouter") or **yellow-eyed penguin** (YEP) is one of the rarest of the world's 17 breeds of penguin. Breeding only on outlying islands and on the southern coast of New Zealand, it was originally found as far north as Marlborough. The nesting habitat of the YEP is coastal forest – an environment that has seen a marked decline since the arrival of man to New Zealand's shores. Maori hunted YEPs for food and burned the coastal forest; European arrival brought further destruction of the forest. The arrival of dogs and other mammals with Maori and Europeans brought predators the YEPs could not fight off and, at sea, fishing nets trap YEPs. Youngsters are especially prone to attack and even protective parents can't fight off intruders – they have no means to defend their young against dogs or other mammals. In 1990, it was estimated that only 150 breeding pairs remained on the mainland but, through conservation efforts, that number was estimated to have risen to 450 by 2002. Approximately 1,200 to 1,500 pairs are believed to live on offshore islands.

YEPs weigh about five to eight kg (11 to 18 pounds), are an average of 72 cm (28 inches) long and have a mostly white plumage with a blue back. They have a bright yellow band that circles their head, going through the line of their eyes. They are private and shy –preferring to be concealed – and build their nests away from the sites of their neighbors. They are believed to be direct descendants of the first penguins that inhabited New Zealand waters 27 million years ago. They live for 18 to 20 years; the males begin to breed at three to five years of age, the females at two to three years of age.

In August, mates are selected or partnerships are renewed and nesting sites are chosen. Pairs return to the same nesting territory year after year and, while most pairs choose sites within 500 meters (1,600 feet) of the coast, some choose a nesting site as far as one km inland. They nest on the surface of the ground and need shady areas to stay cool. Mid-September to October, two eggs are normally laid three to five days apart. Both parents share the job of incubation, which lasts about six weeks. During November and December, the eggs hatch (about 80% hatch) and six weeks of chick guarding begins – one of the parents will stay with the chicks at all times while the other parent fishes. When the fishing parent re-

turns to the nest, a noisy, ritual greeting occurs and the fishing parent feeds the youngsters on regurgitated hot fish soup. By the time the chicks are six weeks old, both parents must go fishing in order to provide enough nourishment for the chicks. In February and March, the chicks are fledged and head north, perhaps as far as 500 km (300 miles), to warmer winter feeding grounds. Less than 20% of all chicks survive to breeding age. After the chicks have left, the parents regain weight and condition before their annual three- to four-week moult. They stay ashore until their new feather coat grows in – this is a dangerous time for the parents as they are low on energy and can not escape to the sea in the event of predator attack. By early May, they have a new coat of feathers.

The best time to view penguins is late in the afternoon, when the adults are coming home from fishing. The penguins will not land on the beach if they see people (or other predators). Always view the birds from hides and do not, under any circumstances, approach the birds. I've had some remarkable viewing experiences from public viewing hides and believe this is a fantastic opportunity to appreciate these very special animals. But you must respect them! Do not make loud noises, do not make yourself visible and do not attempt to interact with them. Read and follow all instructions from DoC or other site caretakers.

In addition to Penguin Place on the Otago Peninsula, there are some public viewing sites along the Otago Coast. You can get more information from the visitor centers in Dunedin, Oamaru, the Catlins, and Invercargill. Public viewing hides include: Bushy Beach, Katiki Point, Nugget Point and Sandfly Bay.

■ Sightseeing

If you drive out of the city on Portobello Road, the first tourist stop is **Glenfalloch Woodland Gardens**, about 12 km (seven miles) down the road, where there are garden walks, a café and wine bar, pottery and crafts. Popular with rhododendron and azalea lovers, the gardens are home to many free-flying native birds.

Larnach Castle, the only castle in New Zealand, is on the Otago Peninsula. The road going to the castle is lined with massive trees and the castle grounds are great fun to walk around and explore, but the castle itself seems a bit out of place. On top of a hill, it has great views of the harbor and a self-guided tour will let you see for yourself how filthy rich some of the businessmen of Dunedin were during the 1870s. Hand-built by the best craftsmen around and using many imported materials, it was funded by Australian William Larnach. He may have been better off with more conservative investments – while a commercial banker, he made some not so profitable decisions and his life ended tragically with suicide in 1898. The castle has been undergoing restoration since the 1960s. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm, $15 adults $6 children for entry to castle and entire grounds, $8 adults, $3 per child for just the gardens, stable and ballroom. www.larnarchcastle.co.nz, 16 km (10 miles) from town on Castlewood Road, ☎ 03-476-1616.

Other sites to visit along the peninsula include the **Otakau Marae**, which was built in the 1940s, but was originally established in the early 1830s and is the site of much Ngai Tahu history. At Taiaroa Head is **Fort Taiaroa**, established in 1858 in response to fears of Russian invasion. The fort is made of a series of tunnels and features the world's only fully restored Armstrong Disappearing Gun. There are also many artist galleries and shops along the peninsula. Just stop in – you'll be warmly welcomed.

Port Chalmers

On the other side of Otago Harbour is the small town of Port Chalmers, which was built to service the new Scottish settlement of Dunedin. It makes a good day-trip destination and, in addition to churches and other historic buildings, there are quite a few craft galleries and shops. Explorers headed for Antarctica left from here, including Captain Scott in 1901 and again on his ill-fated voyage in 1910. Today it is an important fishing harbor and serves as a deep-water container port. You'll see brand new ships as well as rotting reminders of ships from the area's history. There is also a small museum and at the Flagstaff Lookout you'll find sweeping views.

Tours

Wellers Rock (named to commemorate the Weller brothers' whaling station) is the departure spot for one-hour trips with **Monarch Wildlife Cruises & Tours**. Half- and full-day trips leave from the city harbor in Dunedin. Wildlife you're likely to see includes penguins, seals, albatross, shags and sheerwaters. There are five daily departures in summer and two in winter – you can book at the information center or directly. Prices begin at $30 for adults, $10 for children on one-hour trips and range up to $185 for a full-day peninsula package. www.wildlife.co.nz, ☎ 03-477-4276, fax 03-477-4275.

Just past The Royal Albatross Centre at Taiaroa Head (see page 516) is **Nature's Wonders Naturally**. Here, you can take a 45- to 60-minute tour around private property, viewing penguins, fur seals, sea lions and birds on an all-terrain eight-wheel, amphibious Argo vehicle. It's a fun way to see the sites and get a taste of living on a remote, windswept farm. Prices begin at $30 adults, $25 children for the Argo option. Bus tour prices begin at $25 adults, $12.50 children. Tours go out every day, but bookings are essential. www.natureswondersnaturally.com, ☎ 03-478-1150, fax 03-478-0714.

Elm Wildlife Tours operates five- to six-hour tours leaving from Dunedin and taking in the sites and the marine life on the peninsula – royal albatross, fur seals, little blue penguins, yellow-eyed penguins, and Hooker's sea lions. They also run a two-day tour to the Catlins. Prices begin at $62. www.elmwildlifetours.co.nz, ☎ 03-474-1872 or 0800-356-563, fax 03-474-8808.

Back to Nature Tours does guided trips around the peninsula. Prices start at $50 ($5 discount for backpackers). www.backtonaturetours.co.nz, ☎ 03-477-0484 or 0800-477-0484.

Nature Guides Otago leads small groups and individual tours of Dunedin, the peninsula and the surrounding area. www.nznatureguides.com, ☎ 03-454-5169.

■ Where to Stay

See the visitor center for an updated listing of B&Bs and homestays on the peninsula.

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

Penguin Place Lodge is on the premises of Penguin Place and includes a bath and kitchen. It's very comfortable and clean. www.penguin-place.co.nz, Pakihau Road, Harington Point. ☎ 03-478-0286 ($).

Another budget accommodation is **McFarmers Backpackers**. They have doubles, dorms and a separate cottage. I was really afraid my little car mightn't do so well on the steep brick drive, but it managed better than I did. This place seems like a leftover from the hippie era. mcfarmersbackackers@hotmail.com, 774 Portobello Road, ☎ 03-478-0389 ($).

The **Portobello Village Tourist Park** has on-site campers and tourist apartments as well as tent and power sites. 27 Hereweka Street, ☎ 03-478-0359 ($).

Larnach Castle has accommodation in the original stables, which is certainly a unique place to stay, but the price seems a bit steep for shared-bath facilities. If you book ahead, ask for room 14 – it's the brightest. A full cooked breakfast is included and there is a small lounge upstairs by the sleeping rooms. On the ground floor, in addition to the breakfast/dining room, there is an old horse stall (still has the door on it) that serves as a small TV room. Tea and coffee facilities are available in the rooms, but meals must be purchased either in the dining room or elsewhere (might be a good idea to take a picnic and go for a stroll). The rooms in the lodge all have en-suite bathrooms, two have spa baths, and those on the ground floor have patios. Each room is decorated differently and the one they call Gold Rush is one of the most bizarre sleeping rooms I've ever seen. Honestly, there is a monstrous wagon (complete with neck-high wheels and the driver's seat) in the room. The mattress is in the bed of the wagon and how you wouldn't break your neck getting in and out of it is beyond me. I'm not sure I'd want to sleep in this, but it's worth a look to see how eccentric decorating can be. www.larnarchcastle.co.nz, 16 km (10 miles) from town on Castlewood Road, ☎ 03-476-1616 ($$-$$$$)

■ Where to Eat

The Royal Albatross Centre restaurant is open from 9 am in the summer and stays open until 10 pm. It's a perfect place to have a meal after a day of eco-tours. Fish and seafood are often on the dinner menu. Lunch is pies, soups, sandwiches ($-$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.	
$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

The ballroom at **Larnach Castle** serves as a cafeteria. Open for lunch and dinner ($-$$).

Stop Into Coffee is a good coffee shop in Portobello and makes for a great spot to grab something to eat and get advice about the Peninsula. 699 Highcliffe Road, ☎ 03-478-0555 ($).

1908 Café and Bar has lunch and dinner from a changing blackboard menu. Very pleasant place, lots of fresh fish and seafood but pricey. 7 Haringtон Road, Portobello ($$$).

Queenstown

With Coronet Peak to the north, the Remarkables to the east, and Cecil and Walter Peaks across Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown is surrounded by eye candy. Looking at a globe, Queenstown is a million miles from anywhere – but that just doesn't matter. It's got lots to go around and it seems as if just about everyone who has a New Zealand stamp in their passport has spent time in Queenstown. This sounds daft, but the first thing I do when I get to Queenstown is shop – there is so much choice, plenty of wool and outdoor gear and things that don't exist in the small town where I live. The cars all have some type of sporting racks on top, so you can't forget that even with bus after bus of tourists blasting around, you are in a place for outdoor adventure.

The first Maori were drawn to the area in search of pounamu (greenstone), which they found around Glenorchy. Otago pounamu was especially valuable to the Maori for its pearly grey-green color. The area was not home to a permanent Maori population and Queenstown, like much of inland New Zealand, had it's European beginning in farming. Things were fairly low-key for the first few years that settlers William Gilbert Rees and Nicholas von Tunzleman farmed on opposite sides of Lake Wakatipu. But once gold was discovered in the Shotover River, their lifestyles, and the complexion of Queenstown, changed markedly. The population swelled to 8,500 virtually overnight and it seems even today there's no stopping things. Since the 1940s, development around Queenstown has been with the tourist in mind – today, over 70% of the town's economy comes from tourism. While a few travelers (and locals) turn their noses up at the touristy economy of the area, I will tell you what a friend of mine (who grew up on a high-country station just outside of Glenorchy) told me: there's a reason all those people want to go to Queenstown. The place is beautiful, there is an abundance of things to do and if solitude is what you're looking for, that's not far away, either.

Be prepared, though, to part with some of your hard-earned cash if you want to do any of the action adventures. It sometimes feels as if everyone wants my money when I'm in a major tourist town (especially having admitted that I just want to shop) and I take solace in a long walk or cup of coffee at the lake. There really are some free activities, but you need to seek them out.

■ Getting Here

By Air

Queenstown International Airport connects the region with Australia and the rest of New Zealand and landing in Queenstown could be considered your first adventure activity – it's hard to believe how close a big airplane can get to a mountain. There are taxis and the airport Super Shuttle to whisk you away to your accommodation. The airport is

served by **Air New Zealand** (www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000), **Origin Pacific** (www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302) and **Qantas** (www.qantas.co.nz, ☎ 0800-808-767).

By Car

Regardless of where you start your day, you will arrive in Queenstown via SH6. It's about an hour from Wanaka, 2½ hours from Invercargill and about four from Dunedin.

By Bus

All buses lead to Queenstown, or so it seems with the tour buses. Scheduled passenger service includes:

InterCity Coachlines between Queenstown, Invercargill, Te Anau, Dunedin and Christchurch. www.intercitycoach.co.nz,

Atomic Shuttles between Queenstown, Dunedin, and Invercargill (via Gore). www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-214-6243 or 03-218-9000.

KnightRider Bus Service links Invercargill with Christchurch on a regularly scheduled overnight run. ☎ 03-342-8055 or 025-800-610.

The **Bottom Bus** offers trips and transport to stops around the south including Queenstown, Dunedin, the Catlins and Invercargill. www.bottombus.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9708, fax 03-442-7038.

By Train

While there is no rail service direct to Queenstown, the **Queenstown-Dunedin Track & Trail** coach-and-train combo link the two cities. It's a six-hour trip, taking the Taieri Gorge train to Middlemarch and then the coach to Queenstown (or reverse). $110 adults, $55 children. In summer, departs Dunedin at 2:30 pm and Queenstown at 12 noon; in winter, at 12:30 pm from Dunedin and 10 am from Queenstown. www.transportplace.co.nz

■ Information

For regional information check out www.queenstown-nz.co.nz.

You very well may feel assaulted by all the booking offices around town. The official iSITE information office is the **Queenstown Visitor Centre**, qvc@xtra.co.nz, Clock Tower Building, corner Shotover and Camp streets, ☎ 03-442-4100 fax 03-442-8907.

The very helpful Department of Conservation (DoC) office will make hut bookings and provide plenty of information. www.doc.govt.nz, 37 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-7933.

■ Adventures

Try a combo. There are just too many combinations to list, but most operators are hooked up with other operators and you can cut and paste any combination of helicopter, raft, bungy jumping and jet-boat activities into a package. Probably the best advice I can give you is to go into one of the booking offices and tell them the kinds of activities you want to do and let them present your options. If, however, you want to get a specific look at things, visit www.combos.co.nz or www.rafting.co.nz.

On the Water

Jet-Boats

I'm not particularly vain but, after my first jet-boat ride, I had to spend a few moments in the bathroom combing my hair and rearranging my face. Between the wind-whipped snarls and the blasts of water, I was a mess. On our first spin, the engine died. I wasn't sure if that was intentional, just to scare us, or not, but scare me it did. The driver tells you to hang on tight when he twirls his hand in the air, and you better listen, or you'll be shot across (or out of) the boat. The smell of jet fuel adds to the experience.

Shotover Jet is the most famous jet-boat company and operates in the narrow canyon of the Shotover River, spinning 360s all the way, or so it seems. Twin-jet-engine boats were introduced in 2003 and you get really wet during the half-hour trip. I've had the chance to enjoy quite a few jet-boat rides and I think the canyons of the Shotover make this the best trip out there. $89 adults. www.shotoverjet.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-8570 or 0800-746-868.

Kawarau Jet or **K Jet**, based right in Queenstown, leaves from the jetty at the end of the mall and goes through Lake Wakatipu to the Kawarau River and then the Shotover. Trips last one hour and cover over 40 km (24 miles); there is also the option of combining a jet-boat ride with wine tasting, a cellar tour and lunch at Gibbston Valley Winery. $75 adults www.kjet.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-6142 or 0800-529-272.

Twin Rivers Jet also leaves from downtown Queenstown and trips are on both the Kawarau and Shotover Rivers. They last for an hour and you'll travel over 40 km (24 miles). $75 adults. www.twinriversjet.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3257 or 0800-107-747.

Dart Wilderness Adventures leave from Glenorchy and travel 70 km (42 miles) up the Dart River. All the river trips are somewhat remote, but going up the Dart will probably give you more of a feel that you're "out there." Transport from Queenstown is available. Prices begin at $159 adults. www.glenorchyinfocentre.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9939.

Dart River Safaris is more than just a thrilling jet-boat ride… trips leave from Glenorchy (transport available) and include a jet-boat ride, a 30- to 40-minute forest walk and a 30- to 40-minute 4X4 tour. Another fun option is to take the jet-boat up the river and **funyak** back down – an on-the-water trip suitable for most ages. There are two trips a day. Prices begin at $159 adults, $79.50 children. www.dartriver.co.nz, www.funyaks.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9992 or 0800-327-853.

Rafting

Depending on the level of adventure you're looking for, rafting trips are available on both the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers. The Shotover is graded higher (Grades III to V) and has more big rapids; the milder Kawarau River trip is good for those with less confidence and for an added thrill, takes you under the AJ Hackett bungy bridge. Most trips take about 4½ hours round-trip, including transport. Operators include: **Queenstown Rafting**, www.rafting.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9792 or 0800-723-8464; **Extreme Green Rafting**, www.nzraft.com, ☎ 03-442-8517; **Challenge Rafting**,

www.raft.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-7318 or 0800-423-836. Prices for all the companies begin about $135 and can be set up in a multitude of combinations, with heli-this and bungy-that. It's best to have a chat at the booking office or with the operator about your options.

If you're looking for something more than just a half-day trip, then sign up for the Landsborough Wilderness Rafting trip, a three-day camping/rafting expedition that takes you from Queenstown to Westland. Access to the start of the trip is by helicopter or fixed-wing plane, following a road journey. Contact **Queenstown Rafting**, www.rafting.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9792 or 0800-723-8464, or **Hidden Valleys**, www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz, ☎ 03-696-3560.

Canyoning & Other River Play

Put your feet into fins, your head into a helmet, your body onto a formed board, jump in the river and go river surfing or sledging; add some abseiling and jumping off waterfalls and you've got canyoning. Prices for most trips begin around $125.

Frogz Have More Fun is sledging, and the boards are more bouyant than the river surfing. Operating out of both Queenstown and Wanaka, there is a choice of rivers, depending on your thrill level, age and interest in bouncing over rocks or whitewater. www.frogz.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-9130 or 0800-338-738.

Serious Fun River Surfing sticks to the Kawarau River, but has more than one section at their disposal. Depending on river flow, the whitewater can be pretty intense. www.riversurfing.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-5262 or 0800-737-468.

Also on the rapids of the Kawarau River is **Mad Dog River Boarding**. They have a rescue JetSki that you can ride and there is a rope swing for playing. www.riverboarding.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-1386 or 027-444-0089.

Canyoning involves rocks, ropes and water and is not for the faint of heart, but is good for confidence-building. Try the waterslides, rock pools, jumping and swimming with **12 Mile Delta**, www.xiimile.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3315 or 021-507-677, or **Routeburn Canyoning Ltd.**, www.gycanyoning.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-4386.

On Foot

So many tramps, so little time. Queenstown and the surrounding area are a haven for trampers. Many of the walks are accessed by either Queenstown/Glenorchy or Te Anau – for information on the Routeburn and Hollyford tracks, see the Fiordland chapter, pages 574 ff.

The **Greenstone and Caples tracks** are linked by a pass over the McKeller saddle – one of the lowest passes of the major walks. The tracks go through valleys that were important access routes from Otago to the West Coast. They were used by Maori in search of pounamu and later by Europeans also on their way to the West Coast. The Greenstone and Caples tracks can be linked to the Routeburn, (the Greenstone is often used on its own as a link between the Routeburn and Glenorchy/Queenstown making up the Grand Travers) but on their own, make a reasonable four- or five-day tramp that's not too difficult and basically follows the paths of the two rivers. This route is especially popular early in the season when the other tracks are still closed due to snow. They aren't as popular as some of the tracks that go higher and have better views, but one strong selling point is the absence of sand flies.

The river flats are characterized by tussock and grass; the forest is predominately beech. There are four huts on the track, which sleep between 12 and 20; the Greenstone hut is the newest. The track can be walked either clockwise or counter-clockwise, but my recommendation is clockwise. Leave your car at the holiday park in Glenorchy and take a boat ride across to the start of the track – the road in is long and unpaved; it can be impassable after a flood.

The **Rees and Dart Tracks** are for more experienced trampers and beware – snow can last here until late in the summer. As with the Greenstone and Caples tracks, you should arrange transport and not leave your vehicle at the trail head – washouts do occur and they make Muddy Creek impassable. These tracks are very busy in the summer and DoC is considering instituting a booking system. I suggest you contact DoC in Queenstown or Glenorchy for information before setting out (or getting your hopes too high). The track is a four- to five-day circuit that goes through farmland and parts of the Mount Aspiring National Park. The area was used by the Maori as a route to and from the West Coast when they traveled in search of pounamu. The mind boggles at the now-peaceful place which was called Kotapahau, or the place of a revenge killing. There are four DoC huts on the track, including the new and very fancy Dart Hut. The section from Shelter Rock Hut to Dart Hut can be challenging – narrow at places with steep dropoffs.

Local Walks

There are quite a few good walks around and at the head of Lake Wakatipu that are accessed from along the Glenorchy-Queenstown Road and from Glenorchy. The **Twelve Mile Loop Track** is a good three-hour loop that makes a good diversion from the action of town. Another good walk that leaves right from town is along the **Frankton Arm Walkway**. It's an easy walk along the lakeshore, but it feels as if you're miles away. The **Ben Lomond Track** is a good all-day walk to the summit of Ben Lomond, but the six- to eight-hour round-trip can be cut by two hours if you take the gondola. The climb is demanding, but on a clear day you'll be rewarded. See DoC for brochures on all the walks around town (there are dozens).

Getting around to the different walks is often a pain. Try one of these operators for transport options.

TrackNet connects you with the different tracks and picks you up again at the end. Contact them if you are interested in doing the Milford, Routeburn, Kepler, Hollyford, Greenstone or Caples. They also rent gear and arrange for hut passes, self-guided walks, one-day trips and combination trips. www.greatwalksnz.com, ☎ 03-249-7777 or 0800-832-628.

Info&Track also provides services for independent walkers, including bookings, transport and gear rental. They service the Great Walks and others. www.infotrack.co.nz, 37 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-9708 fax 03-442-7038.

The **Backpacker Express** has transport options for the Routeburn, Greenstone, Caples, and Rees/Dart tracks. Book through the Glenorchy information center, www.glenorchyinfocentre.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9939.

On Bikes

Pick up a copy of ***Walk & Bike The Wakatipu***, which lists about a dozen mountain bike tracks in the area, as well as additional walks. Also go into DoC and get a copy of ***Mountain Bike Riding -***

Wakatipu, which includes a topo map. My favorite ride in the area is from Arrowtown to Macetown, which goes up an old miners road (see section following on Arrowtown).

Another good option not far from town is out to **Moke Lake**. You can ride out Glenorchy-Queenstown Road then up Moke Lake Road. Ride around the bottom of the lake before heading down alongside Lake Dispute and continuing on to Glenorchy-Queenstown Road. It'll take you a couple of hours and there's no major climbing. It's a good cobweb-blowing ride for the morning or afternoon.

For a really fun time, sign up with **Gravity Action** and ride Skippers Canyon. You can do it on your own, but the van transport is a real plus – no riding back out the canyon after you barrel down the old miner's pack track. I spent a bit of time on my face when I rode here, but it was good fun and, while I opted just to ride, you can combine your trip with bungy, rafting or a helicopter trip. A plus here is that you get the 4x4 ride into and out of Skippers. Trips take about 3½ hours and run two or three times daily. Prices begin at $99. You can also rent full- and front-suspension bikes from these guys. www.gravityaction.com, 37 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-441-1021.

Fat Tyre Adventures leads mountain-bike trips all around the Queenstown area, including some on private land. Prices begin at $75. www.fat-tyre.co.nz, ☎ 0800-328-897.

Vertigo Mountain Biking does guided trips and mountain bike rental. They have a special track coming down from the Skyline Gondola and also offer heli-biking and 4WD trips to the tops of hills. It's also a retail shop, so they can outfit you with gear if needed. Guided trips begin at $99. www.heli-adventures.co.nz, 14 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-8378.

Adventure Biking offers 4WD transport to Moke Lake, where you begin your guided mountain-bike ride. It's not just a downhill ride; there are river crossings and some climbs. Trips take about three hours and depart twice a day. For a longer option, these folks will take you on a two-day trip with a night camping in between. Prices begin at $79. www.houseofsafari.com, ☎ 0800-222-767

On Horses

Shotover Stables runs three short trips a day, longer rides by arrangement, ☎ 03-442-7486.

Moonlight Stables also has three set trips a day, as well as half- and full-day rides, on a large farm. $75 adults, $45 children. ☎ 03-442-1229.

One-hour, two-hour and all-day trips up the Rees Valley leave from **High Country Horses**, five km past Glenorchy. Prices begin at $40. www.high-country-horses.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9915.

Dart Stables, also in Glenorchy, offers two-hour, all-day and overnight rides. Accommodation is in cabins and includes all meals. Prices begin at $85. www.dartstables.com, ☎ 03-442-5688 or 0800-474-3464.

On the Farm

A farm tour can be combined with the **TSS Earnslaw Steamship** trip to Walter Peak Station. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-4846 or 0800-656-503.

Deer Park Heights has tame and wild animals and began as an animal park in 1966. It's not a typical animal farm – the animals are not in small zoo-like enclosures. The property is high up on Peninsula Road, above the Franklin Arm, just 20 minutes away from Queenstown, but it feels like another place altogether. It was used quite a bit in the filming of *Lord of the Rings*. www.thedeerpark.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-7699.

By 4x4

There are a couple of different 4x4 options around and the choice will depend on where you want to explore.

Skippers Canyon Heritage Tours take about four hours and, obviously, go to Skippers Canyon. From $95 adults, $50 children. skippers@queenstown-holiday.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-5949.

Mountainland Rovers runs out of Glenorchy and heads into the Rees Valley, through native bush, along the river and to the Lennox Falls. Round-trips three hours from Glenorchy; pick-up from Queenstown is available. From $129 adults, $86 children. www.mountainlandrovers.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-7146.

New Zealand Nomad Safaris has a variety of trips around the area, including Skippers Canyon, Macetown, Glenorchy and the Wakatipu Basin. They also offer a "learn to drive a 4WD" trip. From $110 adults, $60 children. www.nomadsafaris.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-6699 or 0800-688-222.

With Adrenaline

Monster Mountain Rally is between Queenstown and Wanaka in the Cardrona Valley. Blast around on gravel as the passenger in a rally car. Any weather. There is also a self-drive option. From $85. www.mmrally.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-6878 or 0800-872-559.

Off Road Adventures, has off-road motorcycle (90cc to 400cc) and four-wheeler tours on a 12,000-acre high-country sheep station. From $139. ☎ 03-442-7858.

It seems like you can't mention Queenstown without saying "bungy" in the same breath. AJ Hackett is the grand-daddy of bungy and for those so inclined, if you're going to jump off a bridge with a rubber band tied to your feet, then you really owe it to yourself to do it in the place where it all began. Me, I'll be across the road at Chard Farm having a glass of wine, but you knock yourself out.

The **Kawarau Bridge** is the world's first bungy site (open since 1988) and is 43 meters (142 feet) above the water. It really is picturesque here, so at least stop by and watch (although to get a really good view, you'll have to fork over $5 and go through the bungy center). The **Nevis Highwire** is the highest, at 134 meters (440 feet), and it takes a ride on a 4WD road to reach it. The **Ledge Bungy** is 47 meters (154 feet) and the **Ledge Skyswing** are in town, at the gondola. www.ajhackett.com; the AJ Hackett office is at The Station, ☎ 03-442-7100 or 0800-286-495.

If the standard bungy isn't enough, for an added touch, you can bungy from a chair, hanging under a parachute, while being pulled around Lake Wakatipu by a boat with **Parabungy**, www.parabungy.co.nz. ☎ 03-409-0712. Or you can opt for a **Bungy Rocket** where you are in a cage and shot skyward for 50 meters (160 feet) and then, well, what goes up and all that. ☎ 03-442-9894.

As if the bungy jump wasn't enough, now you can **Canyon Swing**. Be harnessed to a swing, step off a platform and drop like lead before swinging across the Shotover Canyon and being winched back to safety. I asked the owner what inspired such an idea and he said too much beer and hot sun. New in 2003, this is the world's highest rope swing. You just go see for yourself. Prices start at $109. www.canyonswing.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-6990 or 0800-279-464.

On Trains

The vintage steam train **Kingston Flyer** operates three times daily with round-trip service from Kingston to Fairlight, a mere 14 km (nine miles) away. The train came to life in 1878, following the discovery of gold and the need for transport of equipment, supplies, and livestock. At one time, the line ran from Dunedin to Kingston, and even connected with steamer service from Kingston to Queenstown. But, following the building and opening of roads in the area and improved transport, rail service was suspended in the mid-1950s. In action today are two AB Class Pacific locomotives, built between 1925 and 1927. Kingston is about 45 minutes from Queenstown on SH6. Other transport options to Kingston include mini-bus or catamaran. Contact the Flyer for details. Round-trip fare is $30 adults, $10 children. www.kingstonflyer.co.nz, ☎ 03-248-8848 or 0800-435-937.

In the Air

Scenic Flights

A menu of scenic flights is available from **Air Wakatipu**, including options to Milford Sound, Mt. Cook, and local sites. If you prefer, you can opt for an aerobatic flight. Prices begin at $75. www.flying.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3148.

For a performance flight, go in a Pitts Special with **Actionflite Limited**. Roll, climb, dive, it's all there. From $215. www.actionflite.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-4131 or 0800-360-264.

The Helicopter Line has scenic trips to the glaciers. From $180. www.helicopter.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3034.

Over The Top The Helicopter Company offers set and personalized trips around Queenstown and Fiordlands. You can also have a picnic on top of a mountain, or get lifted in for a bit of fishing. From $132. www.flynz.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-2233 or 0800-123-359.

Milford Sound Scenic Flights does fly/cruise/fly packages, as well as other scenic flights, bus and cruise options. From $275. www.milfordflights.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3065.

Air Fiordland flies from both Queenstown and Te Anau and offers scenic flights throughout the area. From $275. www.airfiordland.com, ☎ 03-442-3404 or 0800-103-404.

For something a bit more mellow, try a three-hour trip with **Sunrise Balloons**. Flight time is about an hour and trips include a champagne breakfast. $295 adults, $195 children. www.ballooningnz.com ☎ 03-442-0781 or 025-200-0699.

Skydiving

Although after my experience skydiving in Taupo I promised myself never to do it again, if I did, I might consider going with **NZONE**, if for no other reason than that I really like their marketing style and slogan, "Embrace the Fear." Jumps from 9,000, 12,000 and 15,000 feet. Go on, do it! Do it once. And let me know how it went. From $245. www.nzone.biz, ☎ 03-442-5867.

Vertical Descent has tandem skydive trips leaving from Glenorchy. Trips can be arranged in combo with a canyoning trip. From $245. verticaldescent@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-409-0363 or 03-409-0364.

Queenstown is the second site for **Fly By Wire**; the first one is on the Kapiti Coast. (See the Wellington chapter, page 346, for a full description.) It's part-rocket, part-swing, all terror. From $155. www.flybywire.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-2116 or 027-430-0474.

Para-Stuff

You can go tandem or single parasailing with **Paraflights NZ**, just off the main jetty in town. $65 tandem/$75 single. www.parasail.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-8507 or 025-226-2613.

You've got quite a few choices to go paragliding and hang-gliding. Prices for most trips begin around $165. Tandem paragliding is available at Coronet Peak through **Flight Park Tandems Ltd.**, www.tandemparaliding.com, ☎ 0800-467-325. **Elevation Paragliding School** has tandem rides and solo lessons at Coronet Peak, www.elevation.co.nz, ☎ 0800-359-444. **Tandem Paragliding** also operates from Coronet Peak, www.tandemparagliding.com, ☎ 0800-759-688. **Extreme Air** is also at Coronet Peak and offers tandem hang-gliding and paragliding as well as lessons, ☎ 027-475-0524 or 0800-727-245. **Antigravity** launches tandem hang-gliding trips from Coronet Peak or other sites, depending on conditions, www.antigravity.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-8898. Likewise, **Sky Trek Tandem Hang Gliding** uses Coronet and other spots, ☎ 03-442-6311 or 025-331-741. **Tandem Pargliding Queenstown** lifts off from the Skyline Gondola site, www.paragliding.net.nz, ☎ 03-441-8581 or 0800-759-688.

On Snow & Ice

The **Lindauer Queenstown Winter Festival** goes for 10 days from the end of June to the beginning of July. They call it the Southern Hemisphere's Ultimate Winter Party. The year I went, the snow came just in time. Try to make it to the Dog Derby. Ski action is at Coronet Peak.

Coronet Peak is a big ski area with runs for all abilities. For the 2004 season, they were installing a substantial snow-making system. In addition to the slopes, there are a couple of restaurants and bars and a sunny patio to hang out on when you've had enough.

The Remarkables has a range of runs with most of them suiting intermediates, the remainder equally divided between beginners and advanced. They have a self-service café and child care.

Both ski fields are managed by the same organization. Check out **www.nzski.com** for more information.

■ Sightseeing

Tip: Come on! There are so many sights to see and isn't the action getting you a bit tired and weary? Revive by taking a walk through the Queenstown Gardens.

On a clear day (or night) nothing beats a trip up the **Skyline Gondola** for views of the city, lake and mountains. The top is 790 meters (2,500 feet) above sea level and, honestly, the view is incredible. The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner buffets and you can make a pig of yourself while gazing out the floor-to-ceiling windows. I did. The gondola operates from 9 am daily. There is also a movie theater that shows *Kiwi Magic*, a 30-minute film of New Zealand landscape and sites. There are a few thrills, too, like **The Ledge Bungy**, the **Skyline Luge** and the **Tandem Parapente**. Even if you're not interested in a big dinner or doing the luge or bungy, ride the gondola up and have a drink in the bar. The views are great. www.skyline.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-0101

An icon on the water is the **TSS *Earnslaw Steamship***. The boat leaves three or four times a day, depending on season, and heads to Walter Peak High Country Farm. There you can either disembark for a farm tour, horseback ride, or BBQ, or just return directly to Queenstown. It's an hour and 35 minutes for the round-trip, three hours 35 minutes if you stay on the station for an activity. On the ride back, be prepared to sing along with the piano player. From $36 adults, $15 children. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-4846 or 0800-656-503.

If you still have some money in your pocket after paying for all your activities, then **Skycity Queenstown Casino** is for you. Open noon to 4 am daily, www.skycityqueenstown.co.nz, 16-24 Beach Street, ☎ 03-441-0400.

■ Where to Stay

I hesitate to say "countless" but there are lots of options. The prices are a bit higher than in the rest of New Zealand and during the busy summer months can fill up in advance. If you have a car, Arrowtown is just a short drive away and, in addition to being less frenetic, has more reasonably-priced accommodation. Some of the backpacker hostels in Queenstown are enormous, and the smaller ones tend to fill up quickly. I think the best bets are actually the holiday parks – lots of options and more spread out.

Millbrook Resort is between Queenstown and Arrowtown and, in addition to the sprawling golf course and fitness spa, has a range of accommodation, from cottages with bath and kitchen to rooms in the hotel villas. It's all very beautiful. www.millbrook.co.nz, Malaghans Road, ☎ 03-441-7000, fax 03-441-7007 ($$$$).

The Dairy Guest House was a 1920s general store; now it's a darling small lodge with boutique accommodation. www.thedairy.co.nz, 10 Isle Street, ☎ 03-442-5164 or 0800-333-393, fax 03-442-5166 ($$$$).

The **Novotel Gardens Queenstown** is right in the center of town and has easy access to just about everything. Corner Earl and Marine Parade, ☎ 03-442-7750 ($$$-$$$$).

The **Mercure Resort Queenstown** is up the hill and a bit away from downtown – with nice views. There is a shuttle if you don't have a car, and walking isn't too big of a mission either. reservations@mercuregtn.co.nz, Sainsbury Road, ☎ 03-442-6600, fax 03-442-7354 ($$$-$$$$).

Blue Peaks Lodge and **Blue Peaks Apartments** are close to town and have a range of options to chose from – some motel units have kitchens, some don't. The apartments are upmarket and spacious. www.bluepeaks.co.nz, corner Stanley and Sydney Streets, ☎ 03-442-9224 or 0800-162-222, fax 03-442-6847 ($$-$$$$).

Melbourne Lodge and Guest House is a simple, older facility that's tucked away a bit, but has all the necessities. The lodge has studios and apartments and the B&B is a reasonably priced option. www.mmlodge.co.nz, 35 Melbourne Street, ☎ 03-442-8431 or 0800-741-444, fax 03-442-7466 ($$$-$$$$).

Reserve early if you want to stay at **Butterfli Lodge**. It's a small, popular place that feels homey. No big dorm rooms here. www.butterfli.co.nz, 62 Thompson Street, ☎ 03-442-6367 ($).

Another good backpacker hostel choice is **Bumbles**. It's a medium-sized place with good facilities and right across from Lake Wakatipu. 2 Brunswick Street, ☎ 03-442-6298 ($).

Gotta like the name of **Southern Laughter**. It's not the biggest in town and has singles, twins, doubles and dorms. 4 Isle Street, ☎ 03-441-8828 ($).

The **Queenstown YHA** is massive (sleeps 146), with doubles, twins and dorms as well as an apartment with bath and kitchen. It's a really friendly, happening place and the kitchen facilities are big enough to handle the load. 88 Lake Esplanade, ☎ 03-442-8413, fax 03-442-6561 ($).

The **Queenstown Lakeview Holiday Park** was recently upgraded and refurbished and is a very pleasant, comfortable place to stay within easy walking distance of the manic areas of Queenstown. Motel rooms with bath, tourist apartments, and leisure lodges, plus tent and power sites round out the offerings. Good value. www.holidaypark.net.nz, Brecon Streeet, ☎ 03-442-7252, fax 03-442-7253 ($-$$$).

Queenstown Top 10 Creeksyde Holiday Park has the full range of accommodation options and is in a tree-lined area. It's very comfortable and the hosts are lovely. More notably, though, Creeksyde is the world's first holiday park to be certified Green Globe 21, which is a high standard set by the United Nations for sustainable development. www.camp.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9447 or 0800-786-222, fax 03-442-6621 ($-$$$).

Arthurs Point Top 10 Holiday Park is five km (three miles) outside of Queenstown, just past the Shotover Jet turnoff. Lodge, cabins, units with bath and kitchen, tent and power sites. BBQ area and swimming pool. ☎ 03-442-9311 fax 03-442-9306 ($-$$).

In Glenorchy

If Queenstown seems a bit too much and too busy and you have a vehicle, I suggest you head down to Glenorchy at the head of Lake Wakatipu. It's a beautiful little town and many of the fabulous walks and tramps start here so it's a great base for exploring the mountains. The town is surrounded by fabulous scenery and sits at the base of the Forbes and Humbolt Mountains and

the Rees and Dart Rivers end their flows here. It's just 50 km (30 miles) from Queenstown and yet a world away.

Blanket Bay is not only the premier accommodation in Glenorchy, but it ranks right up there among the most wonderful places in New Zealand. Hard to beat for location or accommodation (or food). There are lodge rooms, suites and chalets and it's all set right on the shore. www.blanketbay.com, ☎ 03-442-9442, fax 03-442-9441 ($$$$).

Top of the heap for cool spot and history would definitely be **Kinlock Lodge**, which was built in 1868. It's around the head of the lake from Glenorchy and only a five-minute boat ride. There are bunk rooms and lodge rooms and a very good restaurant. www.kinlochlodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-4900, fax 03-442-992 ($-$$$$).

Glen Roydon Lodge definitely has that mountain-lodge feel. Facilities include a big lounge, restaurant, bar, shop. www.glenroydon.com, ☎/fax 03-442-9968 ($$-$$$).

Mt. Earnslaw Motel is a small facility (only seven units) set in a lovely location. www.earnslaw.bizland.com, ☎ 03-442-6993 fax 03-442-7776 ($$).

The **Glenorchy Hotel** is just a regular Kiwi hotel. Some rooms share facilities, some have en-suite bathroom and there is a bar and restaurant. www.glenorchynz.com, ☎ 03-442-9902 or 0800-453-667, fax 03-442-9912 ($-$$).

Glenorchy Holiday Park and Backpacker's has all the usual holiday-park options and a small store. www.glenorchyinfocentre.co.nz, Oban Street, ☎ 03-442-9939, fax 03-442-9940 ($).

■ Where to Eat

There are so many places to eat. Some of my favorites are:

Roaring Megs was in an old house that had been moved from Skippers Canyon. Then a new building was erected on the grounds, so now this old-time restaurant is in a brand-new facility, but the food is still fabulous. If you've been waiting to have rack of lamb, do it here. Reserve for dinner. 53 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-9676 ($$$).

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The Cow is a must for fantastic pizza. Cow Lane, ☎ 03-442-8588 ($-$$).

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The **Vudu Café** has fabulous chocolate and berry cake and other yummy baked breakfast goodies. They also have very reasonably priced wraps and veggie and pasta dishes for dinner. 28 Beach Street, ☎ 03-442-5357 ($-$$).

The **Bathhouse** is open for breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea; then it reopens for dinner. I've never had dinner here, but have had lunch and it was very good. It's a bit more formal than some spots. Marine Parade, ☎ 03-442-5625 ($$$).

Choose **Wai Waterfront Restaurant** for a proper dinner of great food and good wine. It's especially good when someone else is paying. It's one of my favorite places for just sitting outside with some wine. Steamer Wharf, ☎ 03-442-5969 ($$$).

I've had good pad thai at **Thai Saim**, 43 Beach Street, ☎ 03-442-4815 ($-$$).

Gourmet Express is a diner and good for that big breakfast (or lunch) after a night out. They've been around forever. 62 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-9619 ($-$$).

Café 111, away from the main drag, is great for breakfast, lunch or coffee. On the way to the gondola ($).

The **Naff Caff** makes a mean cup of coffee to go with your bagel. Shotover Street ($).

Arrowtown

When gold was found in the Arrow River in 1862, the town that would become **Arrowtown** sprang to life. At its peak, Arrowtown was home to 7,000 – today there are only 1,200 permanent residents (but the number swells to about 7,000 in the summer). One of the richest rivers for size, the Arrow was mined by gold seekers from around the world, including quite a strong Chinese contingent. The Chinese miners were subject to prejudice and segregation (presumably, the European miners forgot that they, too, were recent immigrants). At the end of Bush Creek, you can see a re-created example of a typical Chinese mining settlement; for more information on the Chinese gold miners throughout Otago, see the Lakes District Museum in Arrowtown (below), or the Otago Settlers Museum in Dunedin (page 510).

Today, Arrowtown is a lovely, touristy spot that's a quiet base to use while exploring more of the region. The main street is lined with deciduous trees (and there are many on the hillsides behind town). Autumn color here rivals that of anywhere in the world. Miners' cottages have been restored and are the subject of many a photograph. Shops sell higher-end tourist treats, including wool and sheepskin products. It's nicest to wander around town after the tour buses have left – plan to stay a night to enjoy this gold-mining village at its best.

Macetown, 16 km (10 miles) up the Arrow River, is a ghost town from mining days. You'll find a few old buildings (some restored) made of wood and brick, but better still is that you don't find much – it's close to so much activity, but a quiet spot for a day's outing. The road follows the old miners' track and is definitely for 4X4s, or a long walk. My favorite mountain bike ride in this area is on this track from Arrowtown to Macetown. Depending on the river flow, you'll be crossing it at least 30 times each way – don't even think about keeping your feet dry! My toes were little ice cubes after this ride, but it was a great time. And if you're weak on river crossings, this trip will fix the problem.

Visitor information services are handled at the **Lakes District Museum and Gallery**, which also houses some interesting displays on the town's (and region's) history. www.museumqueenstown.com, 49 Buckingham Street, ☎ 03-442-1824.

■ Where to Stay

The units at **Shades of Arrowtown** are extremely clean and tidy, comfortable and spacious, yet very reasonably priced. Various arrangements of beds and cooking facilities, gas BBQ, large lawn/garden area. There is also a house with

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bath and kitchen. www.shadesofarrowtown.co.nz, corner of Buckingham and Merioneth Streets, ☎/fax 03-442-1613 ($$-$$$).

Half of the rooms at the **New Orleans Hotel** have just been remodeled, but even the older ones are in fine enough condition for a simple hotel. All with en-suite bathrooms and right at 27 Buckingham Street, ☎/fax 03-442-1745 ($$).

Settlers Cottage Motel has studio and one- and two-bedroom units, with a certain "old-time charm." www.arrowtown.co.nz/settlers, 22 Hertford Street, ☎ 03-442-1734 or 0800-803-801, fax 03-442-1936 ($$-$$$).

Riverdown Guesthouse is a small house with just four rooms (bunk, double and twin), a regular cottage-house kind of kitchen and lounge, a gorgeous garden and BBQ area – impeccably clean. The family is as nice and friendly as can be and two of the rooms were brand new in 2004 (with en-suite bathrooms), while the others are just a bit older. A perfect place to stay whether you're on a budget or not. Open summer only. 7 Bedford Street, ☎ 03-409-8499 ($).

Poplar Lodge is a backpacker hostel in a sprawling home, located in a residential neighborhood, with plenty of space to spread out. Small dorms, twins, and doubles, washing facilities, lots of garden space. Extremely clean and there's real coffee. www.poplarlodge.co.nz, 41 Merioneth Street, ☎ 03-442-1466 fax 03-442-1459 ($).

Arrowtown Holiday Park is a quick walk from town and has cabins and tourist apartments, tent and power sites. Suffolk Street. ☎ 03-442-1876 ($).

■ Where to Eat

Saffron is the top restaurant, to be sure. The food is scrumptious and the surroundings are lovely. I ate here when they first opened and have never looked back. 18 Buckingham Street ($$-$$$).

The **Stable Café and Restaurant** offers a wide range of superb food, from pizza and light meals to full and hearty giant steaks and fish. It's in a gorgeous building of wood and stone on 28 Buckingham Street ($$-$$$).

Another fine choice is **The Postmasters House**, with lots of flavors and full lunch and dinner menu. Set in a darling spot. 54 Buckingham ($$-$$$).

The **Stone Cottage** is another quaint spot for a cuppa or a delicious meal. Corner of Buckingham and Wiltshire ($-$$).

Café Mondo has good coffee, tasty cakes and yummy wraps. Good outdoor seating, too. Ballarat Arcade ($).

The **Arrowtown Bakery** is famous for its savoury pies, but makes some other tasty treats, too. Ballarat Arcade ($).

Wanaka

Naming Wanaka as one of my favorite vacation destinations makes me like just about everyone else in New Zealand. Definitely the laid-back cousin to big and busy Queenstown, Wanaka is a four-season destination with fabulous walks, great mountain biking, a wide range of water activities and more than one way to take to the air. Wanaka sits at the base of the Crown Range and at the very edge of the Southern Alps. Hills and mountains jut out of the ground and reach to the sky, gently changing from rounded, tame hillsides to

dramatic craggy peaks laden with glacial ice. This is one of the most spectacular places in all of New Zealand to take a scenic flight and definitely one of my favorite spots for getting out and among the scenery. Winter brings lots of snow and the ski areas are among the best. During the summer, the temperature around Wanaka averages 30°C (86°F) and the humidity is low. In the winter, the overnight lows can dip down to -10°C (-15°F), but in town the days are typically above zero and the lake does not freeze.

> **Did you know?** Sitting 277 meters (900 feet) above sea level, Lake Wanaka is the fourth-largest lake in New Zealand and has 175 km (108 miles) of shoreline. At its deepest, the lake is 311 meters (1,010 feet). It is the source of the Clutha River that winds its way to Lake Dunstan. The Clutha River is New Zealand's largest-volume river.

Wanaka (Oanaka) was home to the ancient Maori, attracted to the same things that later brought the Europeans – natural resources and pleasant weather. The lake provided food and fiber, the land was rich in plant and bird life. Flightless moas were hunted, as were pigeons, wekas and kakapos. The trading routes for pounamu (greenstone) converged in Wanaka. Europeans arrived and settled the area in the 1850s, first in Albert Town along the Clutha River and, 20 years later, in Wanaka, which the Europeans named Pembroke, after a British colonial secretary. (The name Wanaka was reinstated in 1940.) Farming was the premier activity until the 1860s, when Pembroke served as the service center for the gold-mining settlements during the Otago gold rush. When the first hotel (on the site of the Wanaka Hotel) was built in 1867, Wanaka's destiny as a tourist destination was set.

Modern Wanaka sprang to life in the late 1960s when the local ski hills were first developed as club fields and later, as the fields became more commercialized in the 1970s, the town really began to grow. The year-round permanent population is only 2,000 – but over the Christmas holiday that number swells to 25,000. Many locals and out-of-towners alike openly dislike the somewhat uncontrolled development of Queenstown and aim to keep Wanaka smaller and less touristy.

Lake Hawea, the most northern of the southern glacial lakes, is just 15 minutes north. It is the quieter sister and, if travel writing were more lucrative and I had money to invest, I would buy property here.

■ Getting Here

By Air

The **Wanaka airport** has domestic service via **Air New Zealand**. The airport is about 10 minutes out of town on SH6. You can also fly to Queenstown and drive 40 miles/67 km to Wanaka.

By Car

From the West Coast, SH6 travels along the Haast River and exits the Southern Alps at Makarora. The terrain changes dramatically as you leave the rain forest and sidle along the northeast shores of Lake Wanaka and the southeastern edge of Lake Hawea. From Makarora, it's only 60 km (36 miles), but allow yourself a good 45 minutes to an hour. One of the most beautiful drives is between Wanaka and Queenstown via the

Crown Range. It's only been a few years that the road was completely paved, making the 67 km (40 miles) a relatively painless and very rewarding drive. Prior to the paving of the road, visitors from Queenstown more often than not came to Wanaka via Cromwell and SH6. From Cromwell to Wanaka, it's about 42 km (26 miles). To Dunedin, figure about four or five hours and from Omarama, it's a bit over an hour.

By Bus

InterCity and **Atomic Shuttles** both provide regular service to Wanaka. InterCity stops at the Paper Place, 84 Ardmore Street, and Atomic goes to United Travel, 99 Ardmore Street.

■ Information Sources

Take a look at www.lakewanaka.co.nz and, for information on Lake Hawea, www.atnow.net.

The very helpful **Wanaka Visitor Centre** can be contacted at holiday@lakewanaka.co.nz, on the Lakefront, ☎ 03-443-1233, fax 03-443-1290.

The well-supplied DoC office is the **Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Center** and is at the corner of Ardmore Street and Ballantyne Road, ☎ 03-443-7760, fax 03-443-8777.

Mt. Aspiring National Park is the third-largest in New Zealand. It has it all – glaciers and snow fields, meadows and gorges. At the end of the Southern Alps, it is part of Te Waipounamu World Heritage Area. Mt. Aspiring (3,027 meters/9,828 feet) is the tallest peak in the park and the tallest peak in New Zealand outside of the Aoraki/Mt. Cook region. The park is home to a number of New Zealand birds.

■ Adventures

On the Water

On a hot summer day after a walk or a bike ride, you're going to want to get in the water. The Wanaka lakefront is a popular spot for picnics and swimming and the coastal walks give plenty of opportunity for beach splashing, but favorite swimming holes include Dublin and Glendhu Bays. Keep in mind, Lake Wanaka is a cold lake – rarely getting above 15°C (60°F) – but in the shallow bays like Dublin and Glendhu the top layer does warm up from the sun. It's a refreshing swim, to be sure, and the Kiwis don't seem to notice the chill (or are too tough to mention it).

Lake Wanaka has four islands (all uninhabited) that are reserves and open to the public. Mou Waho and Mou Tapu are nature conservation reserves and the largest of the islands. **Mou Waho** was once the site of a shipbuilding company and is notable for Arethusa Pool – a small lake high up on the island in which no fish have ever been seen. The island is also home to the weta – a large, nocturnal insect that has disappeared from many mainland areas. For good stands of native vegetation, go to **Mou Tapu**– full of kowhai, cabbage, kanuka, manuka, rata and lancewood. The island is home to quite a large number of wood pigeons, fantails and bellbirds. Weta also make their home here – including a species of cave weta. **Stevensons Island** is special because of its close proximity to the mainland. The possums and rabbits have been eradicated, but mainly because of the translocation program for the buff weka – a subspecies endemic to New Zealand.

Did you know? In the 1920s, the buff weka was extinct on the mainland (due in part because of predation and food shortages, but also because they were a traditional food of the Maori – easy to hunt and relatively abundant) but a colony existed on the Chatham Islands (from a colony introduced in 1905), and now, the buff weka are being reintroduced on Stevensons Island.

Ruby Island has a colorful past – it was home to a cabaret in the 1920s. The dance floor was built on top of car tires to give it spring. The story goes that, during prohibition, the locals would come out here with their bootleg and moonshine to party! Afternoon tea was also served here for passengers on scenic boat trips.

If you want to cruise Lake Wanaka (on your own or skippered) in a pontoon boat, call **Bluewater Cruises**. Take a picnic, a fishing rod and a good book; spend a few hours or the day. Daily cruises are also available, and leave at 10:30 am and 4 pm. $55 adults, $20 children. Self-drive boats start at $90 per hour, skippered ones at $120. bluewatercruises@wave.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-5452 or 021-445-458.

Half- and full-day sailing trips or bareboat charters are available with **Lake Wanaka Yacht Charters**, with prices beginning at $150. www.sail-wanaka.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-1369 or 025-314-032.

Jet-boat around Lake Wanaka and then head up the Clutha River with **Lakeland Adventures** at $70 for adults, $35 children. Other, slower-paced scenic cruises around the lake include trips to Stevensons Island and Mou Waho; prices begin at $50 adults for a scenic trip, $25 children. Island trips begin at $70/$35. Kayaks, dinghy, aqua bike and fishing rods are available for rent. www.lakelandadventures.co.nz, The Log Cabin, ☎ 03-443-7495or 027-437-0271, fax 03-443-1323.

Wilkin River Jets operate on the Makaroa River to the Wilkin River, at the edge of Mt. Aspiring National Park. Drivers give a good commentary about the area, providing some thrills. Two jet-boats may leave at the same time and race up the river. SH6, Makaroa (about 45 minutes from Wanaka), ☎ 03-443-8351.

Abseiling instruction and getting extremely wet is all a part of canyoning with **Deep Canyon**, making it one of the top activities in Wanaka. This is the original canyoning company of New Zealand and trips go into the Matukituki Valley with lots of water chutes, waterfalls and floats. Some trips require prior experience, but there's something for everyone as long as you've got a sense of adventure. Prices begin at $195. www.deepcanyon.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-7922.

If you've wanted to try river kayaking, **Alpine Kayak Guides** is a really good choice. River options depend on flow and experience, but include the Clutha, Hawea, Makarora and Matukituki. Trips range from three to six hours, and instructional courses, from a three-day beginner class to rolling clinics, are also available. Prices begin at $65 per person. www.alpinekayaks.co.nz, located in Luggate, about 12 km (seven miles) from Wanaka, ☎ 03-443-9023 or 025-382-475.

Wakeboard Wanaka has two- and four-hour trips or you can opt for a half- or full day. wakeboardwanaka@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 0800-wakeboard.

Fishing

In addition to lakes Wanaka and Hawea, rivers in the area that are fished include the Clutha, Hawea, Matukituki, Makarora and Hunter. The area is known for rainbow and brown trout and landlocked salmon. Choice fishing sites are Timaru Creek early in the season (November to December) and Deans Bank on the Clutha River in Albert Town.

> **Tip:** Keep in mind that, as with anywhere else in New Zealand, you must have a fishing license.

Fishing Guides

The top three local choices for guides are:

Gerald and Sue Telford Fishing and Hunting Services, www.flyfishhunt.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-9257.

Ian Cole, iancole@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7870 or 025-208-0188, fax 03-443-7853.

Mark Buckingham, www.southernlakesfishing.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-9121 or 025-852-150.

Other guides include:

Southern Lakes Fishing Ltd., specializing in fly fishing and happy to take beginners. www.southernlakesfishing.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-9121 or 025-852-150.

Wanaka Fishing Safaris, offering part-day, full-day and evening trips. www.trout.net.nz, ☎ 03-443-7748.

Dick Marquard's Trout Fishing Services, with fishing trips on Lake Dunstan from two hours to a full day, and prices that begin at $160. Other locations on a daily rate basis. www.troutfishingservices.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-445-1745 or 025-344-258.

For drift fishing from a raft, try **Alpine Fishing Guides**. From $385 per day. www.driftfishingnz.com, ☎ 03-443-1023 or 025-652-5617.

On Foot

Wanaka is a great base for some of the most spectacular day-walks around. Visit the DoC office and pick up copies of ***Wanaka Walks and Trails***, ***Matukituki Valley Tracks*** and ***Haast Pass Highway: Short Walks***.

Wanaka Walks

Mount Roy Track is lovingly called Hero Mountain by the locals, who are constantly trying to beat each other to the top. If you want to be a hero, by all means go for it (the current record is about 50 minutes to the top; the normal person will take a little over three hours). It's a straight-up grind to the top and at the summit you'll be rewarded with fabulous views of the lake, Mt. Aspiring and the surrounding mountains. Respect that this walk is on private land and may be closed during lambing season.

Eely Point Walk is best done in the afternoon and, at 20 minutes of flat, it's at the other end of the exertion spectrum. It's a gentle amble with lovely seating along the way – a favorite of the locals for walking the dog and good for gawking at multi-million dollar homes as well. Keep your ears and eyes open for mountain bikes.

Beacon Point Walk goes out to Beacon Point and, by adding on a bit of road, you can tie it in with Eely Point. It's another easy walk (30 minutes) that's also open to mountain bikes and dogs.

Waterfall Creek Walk is on the west side of the lake and best done in the morning. It's misnamed – there's no waterfall. It's an easy walk with seats for "over 40s" along the way and takes about an hour in each direction.

Lake Outlet Track is another locals' track and, because it's sheltered, is highly recommended in windy conditions. It's also a good choice if the weather's not clear – the river gives you some things to look at when the mountains are obscured.

Mount Iron Track crosses private land (please be respectful) and serves as a training track for the locals – you just may be passed by a grandma toting a backpack full of bricks. From the top, the views of the surrounding area are fabulous. Opt to go clockwise up. For a round-trip, figure about an hour and a half.

For another walk with great views, try the **Diamond Lake Track**. It's also on private land and a gold coin donation ($1-2) is appreciated. It's a terraced walk and good for the fit and agile – a good half-day option.

> **Reminder:** Don't leave your valuables in the car at Raspberry Creek – the access spot for Matukituki Valley walks and tramps – or at any of the car parks!

Matukituki Valley Walks

If you're looking for something farther out, try the walks in the Matukituki Valley. Head out of Wanaka toward Glendhu Bay and then continue on the road up to and past Aspiring Station. Be forewarned – the road is gravel and there are fords to cross – check with your rental car company to make sure you're covered. It's imperative that, after a rain, you check with DoC or your accommodation provider to make sure the road is passable (or advisable). The fords are shallow and firm, but after a good rain, that can change! Even if you're not going to do any long walks, this is a spectacular drive, with waterfalls, mountains and lake views. It's about 50 minutes from Wanaka township to the Raspberry Creek car park. Multi-day walks from the Matukituki Valley are for experienced trampers. Quite a few mountaineering routes leave from here, as well. Mt. Aspiring is quite like the Matterhorn, and is the highest mountain in New Zealand outside of Mt. Cook National Park.

Rob Roy Glacier walk is one of the must-do activities in Wanaka. It's three or four hours round-trip and, while not recommended after heavy rain, is filled with great scenery – trees, bushline, glaciers, rocks, cliffs, you name it! Take a picnic and head up for the day.

The walk to the **Aspiring Hut** is the other popular day-walk from Matukituki Valley – four or five hours round-trip. This is a fine picnic walk and you'll have great views of Mt. Aspiring. If you're fit and have good weather, continue on (follow the signs) to the pylon above the hut – you'll get

the best views that you could hope for. This will add a couple of hours in the valley and then a climb but, if you have time, daylight and energy, go for it.

Along the neck of Lake Hawea, is **Kidds Bush**. There is both a 30-minute nature walk and a two-hour walk to the bushline – that's the one I'd recommend. It's a good choice for a day when the wind is blowing and, if you're fit, you can get up to Centennial Peak and have some mighty good views.

There are also quite a few walks worth doing along SH6 toward the West Coast. These can be walked using Wanaka as a base, when passing through, or by staying at the campground or cottages in Makarora. Don't feel compelled to climb to the sky, but be sure to get above the tree line – you'll be rewarded with great views. Stop at the Makarora Visitor Centre and get instructions to **Mt. Shrimpton** – this one is only worth doing in good weather when you'll see across the Makarora to the Wilkin and Young Rivers (for a good multi-day option, do the Wilkin and Young Circuit).

An unusual spot for a picnic is along the **Blue River** – take a minute to enjoy the Blue Pools (only about 15 minutes from the road) but then continue up the river to Camp Flat. It's not a fantastic track, but well worth the effort.

One of my all-time favorite walks in New Zealand is up to **Brewster Hut**. It's a great one-day up, stay the night and then back down. You get above the tree line and onto a good open ridge – it can get really windy up here, so dress accordingly. You can do this as a day-walk and just have lunch at the top, but I really enjoyed staying in the four-bunk hut (and getting snowed in).

Beware: The Makarora River is a serious one and crossing it should be done with respect. If the river's at all high or you're unsure, rent a jet-boat to get you across. Ask at the DoC office about the river level. And remember, rivers rise very fast around here!

AUTHOR'S PICK

The **Siberia Experience** is a great package. It starts with a 25-minute breathtaking flight from Makarora to the Siberia Valley. Along the way, you'll see incredible glaciers, tarns, hanging valleys and peaks of the Southern Alps. After landing in the valley, follow the river on a three-hour walk through beech forest and finally be picked up by jet-boat for a 30-minute trip back to Makarora. For value, this is one of the best things going – just the scenic flight is worth the money and the rest is free! Also contact Southern Alps for interesting flight/tramping packages into the mountains. There are countless multi-day walks and options. $225 per person. www.siberiaexperience.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8666 or 0800-345-666.

Did you know? Hanging valleys are the product of glaciers and result from different rates of erosion between the main valley and the valleys that enter it along its sides. The floors of the tributary valleys are eroded at a slower rate than the main valley, so the difference between the depths of the two steadily increases over time. The tributaries are left high above the main valley, hanging on the edges, their rivers and streams entering the main valley by either a series of small waterfalls or a single impressive fall.

Guided Options

Another good value is a day spent tramping with **Iris Abaeherli**. You'll drive by 4WD to some of the best walking around – Mt. Aspiring Hut, Rob Roy Glacier, or Glacier Burn, for example – and she'll provide good interpretation of the flora and fauna and local area. For a tougher tramp, she'll take you up Mt. Brewster or to Mt. Cook. Options are just about endless. If you're short on time, ask about a half-day trip. Prices for a full day begin at $185 for one person, $115 per person for two, $90 per person for three and $80 per person for four. Iris' husband, Gary Dickson, is a mountain guide who offers mountaineering on some of the toughest real estate around. He also runs mountaineering instruction for all levels. In the winter, this duo leads ski touring, ski mountaineering and avalanche courses. www.alpinismski.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-6593.

Edgewater Adventures does half-day, full-day and multi-day walks and treks around the area and also offers 4x4 sightseeing tours. Lots of options. www.adventure.net.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-8422.

Wild Walks Ltd. leads two- to eight-day trips into Mt. Aspiring National Park and beyond. Contact them for options you never dreamt of. www.wildwalks.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-4476.

Aspiring Guides leads walking trips to Black Peak. All involve helicopters – either to fly in and out, or just out. Trips of one to three days are based around a private hut and are fully catered. www.aspiringguides.com, Level One, 99 Ardmore Street, ☎ 03-443-9422.

Southern Alps Mountaineering has seven- to 10-day courses and all levels of mountaineering. Also guided ascents and private guiding. www.aspiringguides.com, ☎ 03-443-9422.

For a one-day introduction to rock climbing or multi-day technical courses, contact **Wanaka Rock**. They also offer abseiling for all levels of experience. www.wanakarock.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-6411.

Guided walks to a range of local sites are available through **Good Sports**, who is also a good contact for rental equipment. www.good-sports.co.nz, 17 Dunmore Street, ☎ 03-443-7966 or 0800-754-926.

> **Tip:** If you do any amount of walking, invest in some Trampers Wool. This stuff is great. It's produced by carding and scouring mid-range wool and comes from **Belex Carding** in Wanaka. Stuff a wad of it between your sock and your skin and your feet will thank you. When I was guiding, I always had a pile of it in my pack and it made many clients smile again. Stop by the Belex shop at the Wanaka Airport. It's cheap, too. About $3.50 for a bag.

Transport for Walkers

Mount Aspiring Express runs shuttle service to and from Raspberry Creek – the access spot for Matukituki Valley walks and tramps. Prices begin at $25 one-way. www.adventure.net.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-8422.

Alpine Coachlines operates transport from Wanaka to the more popular hiking areas up the Matukituki Valley, like Mt. Roy, Rob Roy Glacier, Aspiring Hut, and so on. www.good-sports.co.nz, 17 Dunmore Street, ☎ 03-443-7966 or 0800-754-926.

In the Air

AUTHOR'S PICK

High on my list of must-do activities in all of New Zealand is a ride with **Wanaka Helicopters**. Scenic flights range from 20 minutes to four hours and can be combined with jet-boating, biking, skiing or hiking. The mountains around Wanaka are beautiful from the ground, but absolutely incredible from the air – and there is no way a fixed-wing flight can offer you the same wow factor as a helicopter. Take the flight up to the ice and be amazed at Mt. Aspiring. Other trips go to Milford Sound, Mt. Cook or wherever you want. Honestly, of all the scenic flights I've done, the ones that I've done from Wanaka are by far my favorites. A lot of people try a scenic helicopter flight from the glaciers on the West Coast, only to be disappointed when the weather doesn't cooperate. From Wanaka, you've got a much greater chance of good weather and there are actually more glaciers on this side (and, compared to Queenstown, the flight patterns here offer better views). They also offer a "you fly the plane" scenic flight (accompanied by a trained pilot who also has the controls). From $145. www.heliflights.co.nz, Wanaka Airport, ☎ 03-443-1085, fax 03-443-1086.

Aspiring Helicopters has scenic flights from 25 minutes to 2½ hours around Wanaka, Mt. Aspiring, Milford Sound and Mt. Cook. Their helipad is on a working sheep and deer farm south of Lake Wanaka. www.aspiringhelicopters.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-1454 or 027-432-3121.

Nordic Helicopters offers scenic flights and ski transport. ☎ 0800-667-342.

Fixed-wing scenic flights from Wanaka around the area, including Mt. Cook, Mt. Aspiring, the Glaciers, and Milford Sound (which can include a boat cruise on Milford Sound), are available through **Wanaka Flightseeing**. From $175. www.flightseeing.co.nz, Wanaka Airport, ☎ 0800-105-105 or 03-443-8787, fax 03-443-8770.

Aspiring Air Scenic Flights has a similar menu of flights. www.nz-flights.com, Wanaka Airport, ☎ 03-443-7943 or 0800-100-943, fax 03-443-8949.

If the natural beauty of the area isn't enough, you can thrill yourself at **JetFlights Wanaka** on board an L 39 Albatros. www.jetflights.co.nz, ☎ 0800-538-354 or 021-325-318.

Wanaka Paragliding offers three options: **Eco-flying** (walk up and fly down), **Big Mountain** (drive up and fly down), and **Huge Vertical** (drive and chairlift up and fly down). From $90. Transport available from Wanaka. www.wanakaparagliding.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-9193 or 021-292-7036.

Lucky Montana's Flying Circus has both paragliding in the mountains and parasailing at the beachfront. ☎ 0800-247-287.

Tandem Skydive Wanaka Limited lets you choose from 9,000, 12,000 or 15,000 feet. If I were ever again to be convinced that I need to sky dive (which is highly unlikely) I think Wanaka would be the spot. At least the views would be great. Video and still photography of your jump is available. www.skydivenz.com, Wanaka Airport, ☎ 03-443-7207 or 027-479-6877.

Warbirds Over Wanaka

Every second year (the last one was in 2004) over Easter weekend, this international air show, with a wide variety of vintage and unusual planes, is the big event for the area (in 2004, over 60,000 people attended). If you are interested in the show, make sure you reserve accommodation as far in advance as possible. If you are not interested in the show, don't even consider being in Wanaka at that time! www.warbirdsoverwanaka.com.

On Bikes

Wanaka is ripe with mountain bike tracks – pick up a copy of ***Lake Wanaka Cycling Map*** and hit the road! It lists over 45 rides. Many of them are in The Plantation forest park and vary in difficulty from easy to very technical. It's a great place to ride; you can link tracks together and be out there all day. There are also quite a few short, technical rides along the edge of the Clutha River. On the other side of the lake, an easy ride is along the Lakeside and Millennium Tracks – but be careful of walkers.

Rental bikes are available at the following locations:

- **Lakeland Adventures**, in The Log Cabin, on the waterfront, ☎ 03-443-7495.
- **Mountain Bikes Unlimited**, 99 Ardmore Street, ☎ 03-443-7882.
- **Good Sports**, 17 Dunmore Street, ☎ 03-443-7966.

Mountain Bike Wanaka leads three-hour tours for $75, including bike rental. Easy to tough; if you want to do gnarly stuff, let them know. mountainbike_wanaka@hotmail.com, ☎ 03-443-7739 or 025-617-4416.

Alpine & Heli Mountain Biking has some great rides on Treble Cone, Mt. Pisa, and other high tracks accessed by 4WD. Depending on the ride, you can have over 20 km (12 miles) of downhill. www.mountainbiking.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8943 or 025-277-3358.

On Horses

Backcountry Saddle is by the Cardrona Hotel and takes trips into the high country, ranging from two hours to overnight. These are not yee-ha rides – Debs is a serious horsewoman and her horses are treated well. Multi-day horse treks to huts are also available by arrangement. Prices begin at $55 adults, $35 children. backcountry.saddle.expeditions@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8151, fax 03-443-1712.

Lake Hawea Horse Trekking Ltd. has two-hour, half-day and full-day options along the lake and on the family sheep station. All levels of riders are accommodated. Prices begin at $65 adults, $55 children. kiarastables@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8541 or 027-255-0985, fax 03-443-8542.

On the Farm

Glendhu Station, is a working beef and sheep farm and does farm tours for groups. glendhu.station@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7055.

4x4

At **Criffel Peak Safaris** you can ride a quad bike along old pack trails through gold-rush areas, and on high-country farmland. Trips last from two to three hours. www.criffelpeaksafaris.com, Cardrona Road, SH89, a few minutes before Cardrona. ☎ 03-443-1711 or 0800-102-122.

With Testosterone

Ever wish you could ride in a monster truck? Here's your chance, and, so far, the only place in the world where you can. You can also ride in the world's biggest school bus and crush cars as you go – or even opt to drive a monster truck yourself. Open daily, 10 am to 5:30 pm. **Monster Mountain**, www.monstertrucks.co.nz, SH89, over the Cardrona Range (just before the Cardrona Hotel), ☎ 03-443-6363 or 021-528-133.

On Snow & Ice

Treble Cone is a 35-minute drive from Wanaka and access is on a long, unpaved road that requires nerves of steel to drive. It's a less busy mountain than some others and is good for either more advanced skiers, or complete beginners. There's not much in-between for the intermediates. The views over the lake are fabulous (reminiscent of skiing at Lake Tahoe) and you can get a bumper sticker telling the world that you're a Cone Head. There is some fantastic back-country skiing from here, but you must have a guide! It's the locals' mountain. A word of warning – the keas in the car park are feisty – don't leave any rubber bits around. www.new-zealand.com/treblecone, ☎ 03-443-7443.

Cardrona is great for snowboarders, with a half-pipe and terrain park. It's also good for beginners and families. The on-mountain accommodation is a rarity in New Zealand, but there's really nothing else to do up there, so it's probably still best to commute. www.cardrona.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7341.

The **Waiorau Snow Farm** has New Zealand's only Nordic (i.e., cross-country) skiing and also a new Snowpark – custom-built for the snowboarders. Waiorau has a groovy club atmosphere. www.snowfarmnz.com ☎ 03-443-0300, 03-443-9991.

Ohau wins for atmosphere. It'll take you an hour and half to get there (it's in Twizel), but is doable in a day. There is one chairlift and a few surface lifts. On a busy day, there might be 100 people skiing. www.ohau.co.nz, 03-438-9885.

The best and the cheapest heliskiing in New Zealand is on the **Harris Mountains**, right behind Treble Cone. You'll find a low guide-to-skier ratio (and don't be fooled by the booking agents in Queenstown – most of their trips start with a van ride to Wanaka). www.new-zealand.com/hmh

In Beer & Wine

Wanaka Beerworks offers tours at 2 pm daily and tastings of Cardrona Gold, Brewski and Tall Black from 9:30 am to 6 pm. Food is also available. Located at the Wanaka Transport Museum, SH6, ☎ 03-443-1865.

Rippon Vineyard is one of the most photographed vineyards in the world, and with good reason. Sitting on the edge of Lake Wanaka, it is a

beautiful site – and the wines are just as good as the views. Stop in for a tasting and a picnic; enjoy the lakefront location and quiet, laid-back elegance. It's a small winery and owner Lois Mills encourages people to stay and enjoy the place – to have an experience. It's a lovely spot. Rippon is also the founding site of **GolfCross**, where you use oval, not round, balls and aim for goals, not holes. Every second year, Rippon hosts **Rippon Music Festival**, an open-air contemporary music festival. The cellar door (tasting room) is open from 11 am to 5 pm during the summer (December to April), by appointment only during May and June; and from 1:30 to 4:30, July to November. www.rippon.co.nz and www.golfcross.com, five minutes from Wanaka on the Mt. Aspiring Road, ☎ 03-443-8084.

■ Sightseeing

Tip: Do not miss a night at **Paradiso Cinema** café bar. They show two or three different movies each day, which range from first-run to special showings. The food in the café is tasty and fresh (I'd recommend the vegetarian lasagna) and freshly baked cookies come out of the oven in time for intermission. Not to mention the popcorn and homemade ice cream. The seats aren't your usual theater seats – they range from recycled couches and recliners to seats in a VW bug. The old chair I picked was the most comfortable seat I've ever had at a movie and gave me plenty of room to stretch my legs. It's a perfect night out. 1 Ardmore Street, ☎ 03-443-1505.

Wanaka Sightseeing has half- and full-day guided trips around the area including wine touring, art, mountains, and just about everything else, including *Lord of the Rings* tours. www.wanakasightseeing.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-1855.

You can actually go on a nature photo tour with **Gilbert van Reenen**, one of the most highly respected photographers in New Zealand. Trips can range from a few hours to many days and are customized for your interests. You can even rent equipment. If you are interested in photography of New Zealand, you can't go wrong here. www.cleangreen.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7951.

Lose yourself (or any misbehaving traveling companions) at **Stuart Landsborough's Puzzling World**. In addition to the maze, there's an illusion house, lots of holographs, goofy staircases and puzzles to tease your brain. The maze is 1½ km (one mile), but you may walk 10 times that far (or you may choose to duck out an emergency exit). www.puzzlingworld.com, five minutes west of Wanaka on the Main Highway, ☎ 03-443-7489.

Wanaka Transport & Toy Museum has plenty of stuff to ooh and ahh at and overhear others say "my mother had one of those." The museum shop sells models as well as gifts. www.wanakatransportandtoymuseum.com, SH6, just before the airport, ☎ 03-443-8765.

New Zealand Fighter Pilots Museum is dedicated to airplanes, pilots and crews. There are stories, photographs and exhibits as well as flight simulation – fly against the computer or up to six other players. Open daily, 9 am to 4 pm, extended summer hours. www.nzfpm.co.nz, at the Wanaka Airport, ☎ 03-443-7010 or 0800-927-247.

■ Where to Stay

AUTHOR'S PICK

There are lots of nice places to stay in Wanaka, but **Te Wanaka Lodge** is my favorite. Andy and Graeme wanted to create accommodation that was like a ski lodge – cozy and comfortable and run by people who get out and do the stuff you want to try. There are 13 rooms, two guest lounges, a large eat-in kitchen (a full breakfast is provided) and a don't-miss spa in the garden. It's right in town and I can't say enough. www.tewanaka.co.nz, 23 Brownston Street, ☎ 03-443-9224, fax 03-443-9246 ($$$-$$$$).

Parklands Lodge is a custom-built B&B just outside of town on the way to the airport. It's very comfortable, the hosts are delightful and the gardens are beautiful. All the rooms open to the patio and lawn areas and there is a large swimming pool and a spa pool. There is a large TV lounge and, outside, five holes of golf. In addition to the B&B rooms, you can opt for a two-bedroom apartment with bath and kitchen. www.parklandswanaka.co.nz, Ballantyne Road, ☎ 03-443-7305 or 021-955-160, fax 03-443-7345 ($$$-$$$$).

Wanaka Springs is another comfortable B&B with a fabulous garden and spa pool. You might find yourself dozing in the sunny garden while listening to the little creek. The rooms are lovely and the guest lounge is very comfortable. www.wanakasprings.com, 21 Warren Street, ☎ 03-443-8421, fax 03-443-8429 ($$$$).

Wanaka Homestead is a fabulous accommodation that takes their responsibility to the environment seriously – they use solar technology to meet two-thirds of their energy demands and were finalists in the 2004 EnergyWise Awards sponsored by the EECA (Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act). The Homestead is a custom-built B&B with five bedrooms and baths, as well as two cottages with bath and kitchen, which are all beautiful and comfortable. www.wanakahomestead.co.nz, 1 Homestead Close, ☎ 03-443-5022, fax 03-443-5023 ($$$$).

Mount Aspiring Hotel gets the thumbs up for location, facilities and design. There are 32 rooms that are tastefully decorated and have mini-kitchens. Just a short walk to the lake. www.wanakanz.com, Mt. Aspiring Road, ☎ 03-443-8216 or 0800-688-688, fax 03-443-9108 ($$$).

There are cottages with bath and kitchen at **Glendhu Station**, a working beef and sheep farm. Just three minutes from the lake, this is a delightful accommodation with lovely hosts. glendhu.station@xtra.co.nz, Glendhu Bay, ☎ 03-443-7055 ($$-$$$).

There are quite a few motels to chose from and ones to try include:

Manuka Crescent Motel with 10 units and a swimming pool. www.manukacrescentmotel.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7773 or 0800-626-852, fax 03-443-443-9066 ($$-$$$); **Alpine Motel**, cheap and cheerful, next to the cinema and very close to town, www.alpinemotels.co.nz, 7 Ardmore Street ☎ 03-443-7950 or 0800-822-284, fax 03-443-9031 ($$-$$$); **Archway Motel**, with 15 units, a BBQ area and close to town, but not on the main drag. www.archwaymotels.co.nz, 64 Hedditch Street, ☎ 03-443-7698 or 0800-427-249, fax 03-443-8642 ($$-$$$); and **Fairway Motel**, with studios, one- and two-bedroom units and one backpackers room with bunks.

www.fairwaylodgemotel.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7285 or 0800-324-792, fax 03-443-9178 ($$-$$$).

The Purple Cow is a comfortable and large backpacker hostel with twins, doubles and dorms. It's a very pleasant place to stay and a quick walk to the lake. www.purplecow.co.nz, 94 Brownstone Street, ☎ 03-443-1880 or 0800-772-277, fax 03-443-1870 ($).

The **Wanaka YHA** is a small and quiet spot just a short walk from town. Very friendly and relaxed. yha.wanaka@yha.org.nz, 181 Upton Street, ☎/fax 03-443-7405 ($).

Matterhorn South has lodge and backpacker rooms and is conveniently located in the center of town. The lodge rooms sleep up to four and have en-suite bathrooms; the backpackers are shared-bath facilities. www.matterhornsouth.co.nz, 56 Brownstone Street, ☎ 03-443-1119, fax 03-443-8379 ($-$$).

The **Wanaka Bakpaka** can be forgiven its cutesy name because it has great views, great facilities and is a friendly, relaxed place to stay. There are single, twin, double and shared-bath rooms and you can rent bikes, kayaks and canoes. wanaka.bakpaka@xtra.co.nz, 117 Lakeside Road, ☎ 03-443-7837 ($).

The **Lake Wanaka Pleasant Lodge Top 10 Holiday Park** has motel rooms, cabins, units with bath and kitchen, power and tent sites and is just a couple of minutes drive from Wanaka. Swimming pool, great views, clean facilities. www.nzsouth.co.nz/pleasantlodge, on the Mt. Aspiring Road, ☎ 03-443-7360 or 0508-926-252, fax 03-443-7354 ($-$$).

Lake Hawea Motor Inn has motel and lodge units. This is a reasonably priced place to stay; it's also very comfortable and the hosts friendly. www.lakehawea.co.nz, 1 Capell Avenue, ☎ 03-443-1224, fax 03-443-1024 ($-$$).

The **Lake Hawea Holiday Park** is in one of the prettiest locations that I've come across. It's right on the lake with fabulous views and you can rent fishing rods and kayaks. Cabins, tourist apartments, on-site campers, tent and power sites. lake.hawea@xtra.co.nz, SH6, ☎/fax 03-443-1767 ($-$$).

Cardrona Hotel was established in 1863 during the gold rush and recently underwent major renovations. Featured in more than one ad, it's a wonderful historic hotel on one of the classic roads of New Zealand. It's a 20 minute drive from Wanaka (40 from Queenstown) and you'll think you are at some old ghost town building – then step inside! There are 16 rooms with en-suite bath (all with garden views), a restaurant and a bar. www.cardronahotel.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8153, fax 03-443-8163 ($$$-$$$$).

Mt. Pisa Station is a cook-for-yourself farmstay cottage on an historic working high-country station along the Crown Range. You can hike or mountain bike on all of the 20,000 acres. You can even bring your horses, if you've got them. Or bring a 4-wheel drive. www.nzsouth.co.nz/mtpisa ☎ 03-445-1223 fax 03-445-1068 ($).

At **Makaroa Homestead**, there are cooking facilities in the homestead or B&B in cottage rooms. www.makarora.com, Rata Road, ☎ 03-443-1532 ($$-$$$).

There are also A-frame chalets and cabins at Makarora. Contact the Makarora Tourist Centre for details, touristcentre@makarora.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8372, fax 03-443-1082 ($$).

■ Where to Eat

My favorite café is **Kai Whakapai**. They have the best coffee and light meals in town. Plus, their corner location is perfect for people-watching. Corner of Ardmore and Helwick ($-$$).

The second-best café is **Relishes** – it is outstandingly consistent and you can BYO, so take that bottle of wine you bought on your wine-tasting outing. This is probably the most popular restaurant in town. 99 Ardomore, ☎ 03-443-9018 ($$).

Café Gusto is a good choice for wraps and other light foods. They make really tasty vegetable or fruit juices and smoothies. One Lakeside Road, ☎ 03-443-6639 ($-$$).

If you need a big fix of pizza with interesting toppings, go to **Tuatara**. Funky seating and a pool table round out the experience. 72 Ardmore Street, ☎ 03-443-8186 ($-$$).

The romantic restaurant of choice is **Ambrosia**. Great views to go along with the food. 76 Golf Course Road, ☎ 443-1255 ($$-$$$).

For a bustling, modern restaurant, go to **Missy's Kitchen** for lunch or dinner. It's a relaxed spot with great food – just stop in for a snack if you don't want a whole meal. 80 Ardmore Street, ☎ 03-443-5099 ($$-$$$).

Sasanoki has the best views in town and the food isn't strictly Japanese – more of a Western/Japanese fusion. Very interesting menu and combinations. Well worth a stop. Upstairs at 145 Ardmore, ☎ 03-443-1188 ($$-$$$).

The **White House** is the best choice for vegetarians. Menu selection is unique and trendy. All the wines are available by the glass. Corner of Dunmore and Dungarvon Streets, ☎ 03-443-9595 ($$-$$$).

Central Otago

When Hartley and Reilly discovered gold on the banks of the Clutha in 1862, they scooped it out with shovels. A shepherd stumbled on it in the Shotover; his sheep dripped in the stuff. The first gold in Otago was found early in 1861 in the Lindis River, a find that was followed by the more famous discovery in Gabriels Gully, just outside of Lawrence, in May 1861. Within two months, 150 men were working Gabriels Gully; in four months the number soared to 6,000. Gold mining shaped Central Otago, no two ways about it. Small towns sprang up here and there, bringing with them the raucous lifestyle previously known to the rush sites of California and Australia.

Now, gold flows in different colors. You can't go farther inland on New Zealand's South Island and, in a country of maritime influences, Central Otago, or "Central" to those in the know, offers a continental climate – dry, hot summers, long autumns and cold winters create perfect growing conditions for stone fruit and some very persnickity grapes. Central is the world's southernmost grape-growing area and is also home to merinos, hearty sheep that produce the finest and most sought-after wool in challenging conditions. The hills roll and tumble; you'll pass creeks with names like Roaring Meg and Gentle Annie, and you'll see remnants of mining huts and tunnels that burrow into the golden folded mountains, rocky reminders of the last pioneers. Grapes growing alongside mine tailings testify to the new ones.

Tip: Pick up a copy of ***Otago Goldfields Heritage Trail***, outlining the gold sites around the region. It includes a useful map for planning a driving tour to see the sites.

■ Adventures

On Water

Eco Experience conducts a boat tour of the Bendigo wetlands at the edge of Lake Dunstan. There are lots of birds: herons, terns, dotterels, and more. www.nzsouth.co.nz/ecotours, ☎ 03-445-0788 or 025-286-8316.

Kayak and Outdoor leads guided trips through the Roxburgh Gorge, on Lake Dunstan and on the Clutha River. They also have kayaks and Canadian canoes for rent. www.kayakandoutdoor.co.nz, 21 Shannon Street, ☎ 03-448-8149.

On Bikes

Around Alexandra, you'll find some of the best mountain biking in New Zealand. The ride to Clyde is suitable for beginners and families. The Central Otago Rail Trail (described below) is also good for most riders. But if you venture just a little farther out, your skill and daring will be tested – consider exploring the Old Man Range and the Dunstan Mountains, or riding the Manorburn/Poolburn Curcuit, or from Nevis to Carrickton. This is one place where you'll want to get some local knowledge before setting out. See **Kayak and Outdoor**, 21 Shannon Street, ☎ 03-448-8149 or **Henderson Cycle**, 88 Centennial, ☎ 03-448-8917, for information.

The 151-km (94-mile) **Central Otago Rail Trail** runs from Clyde to Middlemarch and takes in some of the most lovely country around. (The trail is also open to walkers, but the most enjoyable way to travel is by mountain bike.) The trail is, as its name suggests, built on the former railway line. The line sat unused for years, until DoC acquired it in 1993. The trail, which opened in February 2000, goes across some 68 bridges and can be ridden in either direction, in full or in part; there is lodging along the way. You can combine a bike ride with the train through the Taieri Gorge – what a way to get from Central to Dunedin! The trail is not technically challenging, but its rewards are great scenery. Beginning in Clyde, it runs through the valley between the Dunstan Mountains and the Raggedy Range; at Oturehua, it turns around the base of the North Rough Ridge and enters into the incredibly photogenic Maniototo Plains. Bikes are available for rent in both Alexandra and Dunedin and transport services are available. If you've been wanting to do a bike holiday but don't want to cycle the whole of New Zealand, consider three or four days on the rail trail. For more information, take a look at www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz. Tours and arrangements can be made through any of the information centers, or **e-tours**, www.inmark.co.nz/e-tours, ☎ 03-476-1960, and **Kayak & Outdoor**, www.kayakandoutdoor.co.nz, ☎ 03-448-8149.

With Wine

It was, what else, a Frenchman. During the gold days, Jean Desire Feraud found gold but turned his efforts toward grapes. Beer-drinking miners

wanted nothing to do with wine. Not much later, Romeo Bragato consulted with the New Zealand government and proclaimed Central a viticultural dream. But it took nearly a century to be heard. Central is the youngest grape-growing region in New Zealand, with the oldest vines just celebrating their 20th birthdays. When the glaciers that carved this part of New Zealand retreated, they left behind rocks and soil high in schist. The land once had nothing more exotic than briar and thyme, but low fertility and quickly draining ground is the kind of stuff grapes love and, combined with the marginal climate, it means lower crop yields, but with more flavor intensity. With two-thirds of the plantings, Pinot Noir is the favored child. It's fruitier, here, the Chardonnay is more delicate and the Riesling is crisper, evoking the region's mineral history. More wineries seem to crop up every time I visit Central and this is one region that embraces wine tourism with open arms – it is my favorite wine region to visit.

The Grape Escape offers tours around wineries from Alexandra through to Cromwell and Banockburn. ☎/fax 03-449-2696 or 021-449-269.

Daily tours from Queenstown are led by **Central Otago Wine Trails**. ☎ 03-442-0246.

An Essential Wine Adventure is a new place; it has an auditorium with a wine film and offers tasting, a restaurant and café, and merchandise from Central Otago wineries and food producers. Open daily, 9 am to 8 pm. www.wineadventure.co.nz, corner of Sandflat Road and SH6, ☎ 03-445-4052.

My Favorite Wineries

Chard Farm is at the end of a long narrow gravel road that clings to the side of a slippery-looking mountain. At the bottom of the slope is the Kawarau River. In the old days, this was the only route between Cromwell and Queenstown, but that was long before 1987 when Rob Hay got his hands on the place and planted grapes. He wisely started with those that have proven best – Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling – to the consternation of the locals, who thought it was all "a waste of bloody good merino country." Chard Road, ☎ 03-442-6110.

Leaving Chard, you'll have a clear view of the AJ Hackett bungy bridge, where some lunatic might just leap as you glance over. Turn right and up the road is **Gibbston Valley Wines**, where it's easy to get distracted. There's a restaurant, a gift shop, a cheesery. The place brims with holidaymakers, guided tours through the caves and winery leave hourly and the car park has bus-sized spaces. But don't be fooled. Wine is definitely the focus and Grant Taylor's wines compete on the world's best stages. While Pinot Noir is the major variety, its cousin Pinot Gris isn't far behind. Chardonnay (both oaked and un-) and Riesling make up the balance. Wine is to be taken in conjunction with the rest of life and at Gibbston, that includes handmade cheese. The cheesery, 10 steps from the winery, concentrates on styles from wine-growing regions and offers free tastings. SH6, ☎ 03-442-6910.

If you hanker to own a vineyard but disdain responsibility, visit Wentworth Estate. The home of **Peregrine Wines**, Wentworth is a lifestyle subdivision where owners build a house, have their vineyard managed, and contract their grapes to Peregrine. Wines had been made off-site but the new ultra-modern winery was brand new in 2003 and is turning out some mighty

fine wines. Get Greg Hay to start talking about kayaks and helicopters and you may never budge from the sunny tables, where you'll sip Pinot Noir and snack on a cheese board. SH6, ☎ 03-442-4000.

To produce hydroelectric power, the Clyde Dam was built and, when Lake Dunstan was filled, a portion of old Cromwell was flooded. Rudi Bauer makes wine in the boiler house and workshop left behind by the Ministry of Works. He calls **Quartz Reef** a "no frills winery." The tasting room is across the hall from glistening tanks and the air is heavy with the smells and sounds of winemaking, here in the middle of an industrial park where there isn't a vine in sight. Regional commitment to Pinot Noir is important to Rudi, whose winemaking partner is Clotilde Chauvet. Not many of us know what our ancestors were doing in 1529. But Clotilde does. Hers were making Champagne. And this 17th-generation winemaker produced the first sparkling wine in Central (*Emma* for Rippon) before joining forces with Rudi. *Chauvet* is the bubbly here and at the risk of sounding daft, I could drink it by the gallon. Someday, Rudi and Clotilde will build a winery and tasting room at Bendigo, where they grow grapes on a north-facing slope. It will be, as Rudi puts it, "spot on." No doubt. McNulty Road, ☎ 03-445-3084.

It takes a visit to **Black Ridge** to appreciate how hard some grapes work to make you a little glass of wine. On the outskirts of Alexandra, Verdun Burgess and Sue Edwards planted vines between shelves of rock. Not little stones, but boulders that were ripped up by bulldozers and blasted by dynamite. They've got four inches of topsoil and seven tons of rock in every acre. "The rocks are why I bought this place," says Verdun. He and Sue were pioneers – their plantings date back to 1981. The first vintages, 1985-87, were made by Verdun himself and he learned that he makes very good vinegar. Since then, he's had a winemaker, now Kevin Clark. Everything is grown on-site and handpicked by a crew consisting largely of retirees who belong to a local walking group. What, you might ask, do you do with seven tons of rock from every acre? You make rock walls, a rock house, a rock winery and a rock tasting room. Conroys Road, ☎ 03-449-2059.

Water races left by gold miners irrigate grapes along Bannockburn's Felton Road, where one vineyard leads to another in one of the region's warmest areas. In 1998, four growers got together, took a look at the hill at the end of the road and called their new enterprise **Mt. Difficulty**. The group is like an extended family and has a state-of-the art facility where gold-medal wines are made from grapes grown in vineyards bearing old-time names like Target Gully, Pipeclay Terrace, Lone Tree and Black Rabbit. You don't want to argue with the vineyards – some plantings are high and cold, while those on the flats have more soil and make quite a different style of wine. Felton Road, ☎ 03-445-3445.

John Olssen and Heather McPherson dreamed of moving to Central. She grew up here; he spent summers picking fruit. But they had serious city-life, grown-up jobs. Wine gave them the means to live a dream. They bought property, started as contract growers, relocated, focused on being a garden vineyard, embraced wine tourism, and worked with a sense of being different. They took a lot of ribbing when they planted 8,500 trees, and probably spent too much money moving the stone cottage that serves as a tasting room. But it's all to provide the visitor with a good experience at **Olssens of Bannockburn**. They host "Music in the Vines," featuring the National Youth Brass,

have a scarecrow festival each November, open the gardens for wandering, serve light platter food in the summer and make relatively small quantities of special things, like Robert the Bruce, a big blend of Cabernet, Pinotage and Shiraz (because they didn't want to spend the rest of their lives drinking only Pinot Noir). Felton Road, ☎ 03-445-1716.

The first time I showed up at **Felton Road Winery**, owner Nigel Greening invited me join in a blind tasting, one of the most stressful activities I can imagine. I was grateful for keeping my thoughts – too big, takes up too much room in my mouth – to myself, when Nigel announced that the North Island drop we had all swirled, sniffed and spat had just scored 97 points and won some fancy prize. Ah well. The three-level gravity-flow winery at Felton Road was custom-built for gentle handling of grapes and juice. Plantings began here in 1992 and there are no posh names on the bottles – the best are simply called Block 3 and Block 5. At an area called Cornish Point, they've planted a veritable Pinot laboratory – 23 combinations of clones and rootstocks. Felton Road, ☎ 03-445-0885.

■ Cromwell

Modern Cromwell was redeveloped after the building of the Clyde Dam and subsequent filling of Lake Dunstan. It's on the main route between Wanaka and Queenstown and between Queenstown, Wanaka and Dunedin. Unless you come from the West Coast or Invercargill, you can't really miss Cromwell and its massive fiberglass tribute to fruit. Use Cromwell to access the wineries of Bannockburn (see *Adventures With Wine*, above), as well as the remote Nevis Valley – and the Nevis Bungy. The Nevis Road is the highest public road in New Zealand. Old Cromwell is good for a nose around some reconstructed buildings from pre-dam days (the original commercial center of Cromwell was flooded) and Bendigo lies between Cromwell and Tarras on SH8. It's a ghost town now, but worthy of a snoop. From Cromwell to Queenstown, it's a spectacular trip through the Kawarau Gorge, where the Kawarau River flows energetically, draining Lake Wakatipu into Lake Dunstan. The Gorge walls, up to 1,200 meters (3,900 feet) high, will be in your rear-view mirror as you enter the Gibbston Valley.

Information Sources

The **Cromwell Information Centre and Museum** is in The Mall and open daily. ☎ 03-445-0212.

Where to Stay

Willowdene is a 140-year-old cottage in Bannockburn, with full kitchen, laundry and can offer dinner, bed and breakfast if you prefer. Near the walkways to the gold sluicings (and not far from the wineries, either). ☎ 03-445-0125, fax 03-445-0130 ($$).

You'd be hard-pressed to miss the **Golden Gate Lodge**, right across from The Mall. There are studio units, a café and bar. www.goldengate.co.nz, Barry Ave, ☎ 03-445-1777 or 0800-104-451, fax 03-445-1776 ($$-$$$).

Not too far on is the **Colonial Manor**, the fanciest of Cromwell's offerings. Units have all the extras and most have full kitchens. www.colonialmanor.co.nz, corner of Barry & Mead Ave, ☎ 03-445-0184 or 0800-428-648, fax 03-445-1017 ($$-$$$).

The **Cromwell Top Ten Holiday Park** is your best bet for pleasant budget accommodation and has cabins, apartments and motel units in addition to tent and power sites. www.cromwellholidaypark.co.nz, 1 Alpha Street, ☎ 03-445-0164 or 0800-107-275, fax 03-445-0431 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

There are the usual outlets offering café fare and takeout, but the new **Fusée Rouge Café** on The Mall is definitely the best place for a cup of coffee and a healthy lunch.

You can fill your cooler before heading down the road at the **Cromwell Bakery**, also on The Mall, and at any number of fruit stands in the area – there's at least one on every major road leading in and out of town.

■ Alexandra

The service center for the region, Alexandra or "Alex" is a good place to pick up needed supplies before heading into the more touristy and expensive areas of Queenstown and Wanaka. Like the rest of Central, Alex had its beginnings in gold – and a stop in the **Alexandra Museum and Art Gallery** at the corner of Thompson and Walton Streets will fill in any gaps in your knowledge of the region's history. You'll notice the big white clock on the hillside and the tree-lined riverbank. Take a time-out and walk along the river (or ride your bike) – it's a quiet, gentle place to spend some time and catch your breath.

> **Cool shop:** **Touch Yarns** is a fabulous yarn shop selling their own merino and mohair yarns and products. The colors are amazing. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm, in the summer, Monday to Saturday in the winter. www.touchyarns.com, Earnscleugh Road, ☎/fax 03-449-2022

Information Sources

The very helpful and extremely well-stocked **Central Otago Visitor Information Centre** can be reached at info@tco.org.nz and is located at 22 Centennial Ave, ☎ 03-448-9515.

Where to Stay

There are a few motels in town to consider, including **Alexandra Garden Court**, Manuherikia Road, ☎ 03-448-8295 or 0800-736-116; **Almond Court**, 53 Killarney Street, ☎ 03-448-7667 or 0800-256-663; and **Alexandra Heights**, 125 Centennial Avenue, ☎ 03-448-6366 or 0800-862-539. All have a range of room options ($$-$$$).

Two Bobs B&B Homestay is run by a couple who used to have a backpacker hostel. There is a single, twin and double room and mountain bikes are available. twobobs@xtra.co.nz, 30 Marshall Road, ☎/fax 64 3 449 3188 ($$).

Where to Eat

Briar and Thyme is the restaurant of choice. Centennial Avenue ($$-$$$).

The brother of a good friend owns **The Avenue Bakery**. Be sure to stop in and grab a pie, roll or biscuit. Centennial Avenue.

■ Clyde

Just 10 km (six miles) west of Alexandra and 24 km (15 miles) east of Cromwell is the delightfully quaint town of Clyde. There is a very enjoyable walk along the river connecting Clyde to Alexandra; it takes about three hours. The path is used by bikes, horses and dogs, so keep your eyes open. The **Clyde Lookout Point** is signposted and worth a stop.

> **Tip:** While I think Alexandra and Cromwell are pleasant towns, and certainly good places to live, if I were looking for a place to spend a night, I'd pick Clyde. Room rates are reasonable and the accommodations all have personality – there's not a cookie-cutter motel in the bunch.

Where to Stay

Top of the heap for interesting accommodation is **Olivers**. The smokehouse room is incredible – a stone room, beautiful furnishings and the tiled bathroom is the size of a small apartment. Other rooms scattered around the property include the stables; lodge rooms are smaller, but equally interesting and inviting. Each room has its own character and you won't be disappointed with whatever room you have. www.olivers.co.nz, 34 Sunderland Street, ☎ 03-449-2860 fax 03-449-2862 ($$$).

Dunstan House was built in 1900 as a hotel and it's been one ever since. Checking out the staircase is worth a stop in. There are just eight rooms, some with en-suite bathroom, some shared-bath, and all are B&B. A very affordable and historic place to stay and there are two lounges in which to relax, not to mention the massive veranda to watch the passers-by. www.dunstanhouse.co.nz, 29 Sunderland Street, ☎ 03-449-2295, fax 03-449-2566 ($$-$$$).

Singles, twins and double rooms with shared facilities are available at the **Dunstan Hotel**, ☎ 03-449-2817, fax 03-449-2869 ($).

Hartley Arms is a small backpacker hostel that is just delightful! It's set off the street in a garden and there are three rooms, a pleasant kitchen and BBQ. Linen is available and the owners are extremely nice and helpful. hartleyarms@xtra.co.nz, 25 Sunderland Street, ☎ 03-449-2700 ($)

Where to Eat

The food at the **Dunstan House** was described to me as "loosely Italian-based, but also New Zealand fare," and that's probably a fair enough comment. Alexander Wine Company is their own label and tastings are conducted at the restaurant. It's a delightful, friendly and warm place to eat very good food ($$-$$$).

Across the street is Olivers, with things like venison and seafood to go along with a good wine list. The restaurant is in the old miners' general store and is open for lunch and dinner ($$-$$$).

Post Office Café and Bar has contemporary New Zealand food and a massive open fire (also outdoor seating for the summetime). At the corner of Blythe and Matau Streets, ☎ 03-449-2488 ($-$$).

The **Dunstan Hotel** has typical Kiwi bar meals ($).

Dunedin to Central Otago & the Roxburgh Valley

SH8 breaks away from SH1 at Clarkesville, about an hour south of Dunedin. It's 33 km (20 miles) to **Lawrence** and, whether it's in the middle of summer or the snowy depths of winter, this is a lovely area to travel. Lawrence is a dandy little town on SH8 on the way from Dunedin to Queenstown and was once quite the hive of gold-mining activity. The information center is incredibly helpful and packed with, among other things, free maps of walks in the area. There are some good local walks, swimming and gold panning in the river, and left-overs from the gold mining days. Details on all the local activities can be found at the very helpful **Lawrence Information Centre & Museum**, lawrence.infocentre@xtra.co.nz, Ross Place, ☎ 03-485-9222.

To ease hunger pains, **The Wild Walnut**, 32 Ross Pl, Lawrence, ☎ 0-3-485 9529, has good chutneys, preserves and muffins to go with your coffee, and **Jazzed on Java** is another good option for a coffee and a snack. ☎ 03-485-9234

Continuing on from Lawrence, you'll soon reach the **Beaumont Hotel** – a simple country hotel and pub. My friend Bruce and I were traveling to Queenstown one winter for Winter Fest and spent the better part of a day snowed in here. The **Rae Junction Hotel**, at the other side of the pass, was the spot where travelers heading toward Dunedin sat for hours drinking coffee, waiting for slipped trucks to be cleared from the road. The next town of any size that you'll come to is **Roxburgh**, which is a fruit-lovers paradise. If you like berries half as much as I do, you'll have found heaven. The Roxburgh Dam and Lake Roxburgh are rather hard to miss and the latter is a popular spot for waterskiing, swimming and jet-boating. You can also kayak here (contact the Lake Roxburgh Lodge, details below). There are walks from 15 minutes to five hours in the Roxburgh area, with views of the area and historic sites. Pick up a copy of ***Teviot Valley Walkways***. Between Roxburgh and Alexandra, **Fruitlands Café and Gallery**, built in 1871, retains historic charm in the café, pub and gallery.

■ Information Sources

The **Roxburgh Information Centre**, roxinfo@codc.govt.nz, 120 Scotland Street, ☎ 03-446-8920.

■ Places to Stay

The Seed Farm is a gorgeous, reasonably priced B&B with accommodation in the old stables. They also have a fully licensed restaurant that uses local produce (vegetarian options, too). SH8, nine km (five miles) south of Roxburgh, ☎ 03-446-6824, fax 03-446-6024 ($$$).

The **Lake Roxburgh Lodge** is a fabulous choice for a night or two – all levels of accommodation and a laundry list of fun things to do make this a really special spot. Tramping, biking, kayaking, and fishing are a few of the choices. www.lakeroxburghlodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-446-8220, fax 03-446-8799 ($-$$$).

The **Roxburgh Family Motor Camp** has dorms and cabins. ☎ 03-446-8093 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

It's a toss up: either at the **Seed Farm** or the **Lake Roxburgh Lodge**.

The Maniototo or "Plain of Blood"

Central Otago is great for fantastic rocks just jutting out of the ground, and scenery so vivid and amazing that your eyes just can't take it in. Nowhere is this more evident than the **Maniototo Plains**. I could spend weeks in this area and never get tired of it – there are so many little towns to visit, so many places to get on my bike and countless photos to be taken. The area was traveled by Maori in search of greenstone, but there is no evidence of permanent Maori occupation. The gold rush certainly made its mark (and many of the gold-rush-era towns remain) and sheep farming was, and continues to be, central to the economy, bringing with it deer, beef and dairy. Accommodation is not plentiful, but delightful; little pubs and lodges and charming B&Bs make the often-dusty drive well worth your while.

■ Getting Here

Turning inland at Palmerston, you'll be on the Pig Route (or Pigroot, depending on who you listen to). In about 10 minutes you'll get to Dunback, which is just a tiny little spot, but the hotel is a pleasant place to stay. Another hour (about 60 km/36 miles) and you'll find yourself in Ranfurly.

■ Information Sources

The **Maniototo Information Centre** in Ranfurly, maniototo@centralotagonz.com, is in a gorgeous stone building on Charleton Street, ☎/fax 03-444-9970.

Grahame Sydney, one of New Zealand's major artists, paints scenes of the everyday landscape of Central Otago. Looking at his work, I can feel the air, smell the earth. He's an incredible talent and his work is easily recognized; you don't have to spend much time in New Zealand without coming across a painting or print.

■ Ranfurly

Ranfurly has been getting more attention over the last few years since the Central Otago Rail Trail opened (it's halfway along). While this is not Napier, there are a few Art Deco-era buildings and shops and the town is embracing it's Art Deco history. The fourth weekend of February is Rural Art Deco Weekend, with vintage music, cars, and dress. It's a pleasant and relaxing place to spend the night.

Where to Stay

Dunback

The **Highwayman Motel**, just 10 minutes off SH1, won the best country hotel award in 2003-2004. There are nine rooms, including one family suite and meals for up to 30 in the restaurant. It's good

old Kiwi tucker, including blue cod, chicken, ham steaks, and so on. There are usually a couple of people staying who are working at the mines, and the kitchen prepares family-style meals for them, with other guests invited to partake. Very much a family hotel and the tariff includes cooked breakfast. ☎ 03-465-0440 fax 03-465-0441 ($$).

Ranfurly

Ranfurly Lion Hotel has singles, doubles, twins and backpacker accommodation. ranfurly.hotel@xtra.co.nz, 10 Charlemont Street, ☎ 03-444-9140 fax 03-444-9142 ($).

Set up for family stays or individuals is the **Annerly House B&B**. Guests have a private kitchen and lounge, but may dine with the family if desired. j.hazlett@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-444-9857 40 Stuart Road ($$).

The most upmarket in Ranfurly is **Moyola Art Deco Guest House**, www.ruralartdeco.co.nz, 38 Charlemont Street, ☎ 03-444-9010 or 444-9196 or 0800-999-979 ($$$).

Ranfurly Motel is a small (only six units) older style, convenient spot. Studios have separate kitchens, and breakfast is available upon request. robbieandjoan@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-444-9383, 1 Davis Street ($$).

Ranfurly Motor Camp has apartments, cabins and backpackers as well as tent and power sites. Reade Street, across from the swimming pool, ☎/fax 03-444-9144 ($-$$).

For a good Central Otago farmstay option, try **Rotherwood Farmstay**. Single, twin and queen rooms, as well as a farm cottage that sleeps up to six. There's also a washing machine and fully-equipped kitchen. www.rotherwood.cjb.net, ☎ 03-444-9281, fax 03-444-9218 ($-$$).

Peter's Farm Hostel is a very friendly simple place on a sheep station. There's a big country kitchen, separate TV lounge and plenty of space for tents. Free bikes, fishing rods and kayaks to use in the river. Ride from here to the rail trail. www.petersfarm.co.nz, phone for directions, ☎ 03-444-9083 ($).

■ Naseby & Dansey's Pass

Naseby was once the largest settlement in the gold-mining region. Gold was discovered in the Hogburn in May, 1863 and within three months, there were 2,000 miners, 18 stores, two butchers, a baker and 14 hotels. There were no large finds, but Naseby frequently topped the fortnightly gold export figures with an average of between 1,000 and 1,500 ounces. Today, it's a charming spot to hang out and there is a settler's museum and a motoring museum. For the more active, you can find fishing, forest walks, mountain biking.

Getting Here

Back on SH85 heading north from Ranfurly, in about five minutes you will spot a small side-road on your right. Take it for 14 km/eight miles and you will be in Naseby.

If you've made it to Naseby, don't miss the chance to travel to **Dansey's Pass**, for a real look into the country. You can continue on to Duntroon on SH83, or just make the 16-km (10-mile) drive from Naseby and return the same way. Much of the Kyeburn Diggings Road from Naseby is gravel, but it is well-maintained.

Adventures

In Water

The local swimming hole, with its partially paved floor, is right at the edge of the forest and deepens gradually, suiting all swimmers.

Curling: Maniototo is the home of curling in New Zealand. This sport originated in Scotland and was first introduced to New Zealand in the McKenzie Country of South Canterbury. It took hold in the Maniototo, though, where in the cold winters, residents searched for entertaining ways to pass the season. There are approximately 17 clubs in the area, and New Zealand is the only country in the world that still plays the traditional game. Most other countries (and the Olympics) play a version of known as Hack Curling .

On Bikes

In the summer, thoughts move from curling to mountain bikes. The **Naseby Forest** is a fabulously fun place to ride! The center of the action is The Royal Hotel (see details below), where you can rent a bike, get yours fixed or just learn about the trails. There's nothing too insane, but it's all good fun. Royal Hotel owner Kila is a passionate mountain biker and will take you on a guided ride or just share ideas and stories.

Sightseeing

You wouldn't really expect a fashion museum in the middle of the Maniototo. But it's there. Stop in at Eden Hore's 1970s **fashion museum**, about halfway between Naseby and the Danseys Pass Inn. The story goes that the uncle of John Steele, who owns the property with his wife Margaret, started to collect "frocks" made of wool, having been a sheep farmer all his life. Back in the 1970s Benson and Hedges sponsored a NZ fashion awards show and, as designers learned of the interest in fashion, started to donate frocks after the award show. When the uncle died, he left the collection to his nephew to look after. It's a case of a hobby spun out of control. Also a big collection of taxidermied wild-life, ansubstantid a rather al collection of Jim Beam vessels. Glenshee Park, ☎ 03-444-9624. Open daily.

Where to Stay

Naseby

The Royal Hotel was built in April 1879, and was the first hotel in Central Otago to have a separate entrance for the ladies. It's one of the original coach inns, and underwent an upgrade in 2004. There are simple rooms, friendly service, and all at a cheap price. It's also the center for mountain bike information and trips. www.naseby.co.nz, Earne Streeet, ☎ 03-444-9990 ($).

The **Ancient Briton Hotel** is a bit of a misnomer, as the accommodation isn't a hotel, but apartments with bath and kitchen and a motel with shared kitchen. Either way, while there's nothing fancy, it's clean and convenient and includes dinner, bed and breakfast. www.nasebytoppub.co.nz, ☎ 03-444-9992, fax 03-444-9390 ($$).

Larchview Holiday Park has houses, cabins, chalets, power and tent sites. It's on 17 acres of trees and next to the swimming dam. This is a quiet, peace-

ful and a very beautiful holiday park. There are new ablution blocks**(?) and some of the cabins are old miner's cabins. johnsjoynaseby@paradise.net.nz, Swimming Dam Road, ☎/fax 03-444-9904 ($-$$).

Turnstone B&B is in an 1870s mud-brick home with a twin and a double room, shared bath. There's a big breakfast area that looks into the garden and an outdoor BBQ area. It's a pleasant, quiet option and they offer free pick-up service from Ranfurly and Wedderburn. grifford@xtra.co.nz,13 Carrowmore Street, ☎ 03-444-9644 ($$).

Dansey's Pass

Driving on the Kyeburn Diggings road, along the landscape of jagged cliffs and rock, you'll go around a corner and out comes a stand of trees. Within those trees is the **Danseys Pass Inn**, built in 1862, with the kitchen, bar and dining room added on in 1990. The inn is on the road… not across from it or beside it, but right there on the road and at the base of Mt. Nobbler. The story goes that the fellow who built the inn was paid in beer – one for every piece of shingle set. There are plans to build cabins and a conference center, swimming pool and native gardens, but in the meantime, enjoy the lodge. Even if you don't stay, drive on in for a cuppa or a glass of wine, a snack or lunch. Dinner is scrumptious country food. (It's about half an hour from Naseby, and 1¾ hours from Queenstown.) www.danseyspass.co.nz, ☎ 03-444-9048 ($$$).

Shortlands Station Lodge is on a giant high-country station (over 14,000 acres) filled with sheep and cattle in the Dansey's Pass. There is a four-bedroom cottage with bath and kitchen and a homestay with tennis court and swimming pool. Walks, stock work, tramping, mountain biking – plenty to keep you entertained. www.shortlandsstn.co.nz, ☎ 03-444-9621 or 0800-375-247 ($$$).

Glenshee Park B&B has queen and twin rooms, one with private bath, others share a guest bath. On the grounds of the Eden Hore fashion museum. mas.glenshee.park@xtra.co.nz, Dansey Pass Road, ☎ 03-444-9624 ($$).

Where to Eat

Naseby

The Royal Hotel is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, has outdoor seating and, in addition to hearty pub food, has some healthy and modern options ($-$$).

Cottage Garden Café offers freshly baked breads, cakes, and cookies. Refreshing lunches and delicious dinner menu. Jan is a world-class cook who built the reputation at the Dansey's Pass Inn. Reserve for dinner and it's a good place to hang out with a coffee, inside or out ($-$$).

Ancient Briton Hotel has a full pub and country menu. www.nasebytoppub.co.nz ($-$$).

■ Ranfurly to Alexandra

The drive from Ranfurly to Alexandra is just beautiful and good for taking your time, with lots of unhurried stops along the way.

Getting Here

From Ranfurly on SH85, it's just 60 km/36 miles to Ophir and another 20 km/12 miles from there to Alexandra. There is a (mostly gravel) side-loop

(about 10 km/six miles) to St Bathans that turns off 25 km (15 miles) from Ranfurly, You can also access the St Bathans loop from Becks (17 km/10 miles), and from this direction, the road is paved all the way.

Sightseeing

Be sure to stop at the picturesque **Wedderburn Tavern**, if not for a drink at least for a look around. Then take a side-trip to **Oturehua** for a pop into the tavern or a nose around the T. Gilchrist & Sons General Merchants historic store – it's been a general store since 1902 and it still looks like the turn of the century. New owners were to take over in early 2004, though, so it'll be interesting to see if it changes.

Just down the road is Hayes Engineering Works, where you can see early 1900s engineering workshops. Open Saturday and Sunday from 11 am-4 pm or by arrangement. ☎ 03-444-5801 or 03-444-5817.

> **Authors Pick:** Put **St. Bathans** on your list of stops in Central Otago. In the hollow between the Dunstan and Hawkdun Ranges, this little town, population 13, is known for Blue Lake, created by the early gold miners. It's a delightful little stop in the gold country.

Where the road to St. Bathans meets SH85 is Becks and continuing along, you'll pass through Lauder, Omakau and, by side-trip, Ophir, before coming to Alexandra. This drive alongside the Raggedy Range is fabulous.

Where to Stay

There are a few hotels and B&Bs sprinkled around the area, including the **White Horse Hotel** (☎ 03-447-3685) in Becks and the **Broadhaven Bed and Breakfast** in Lauder (☎ 03-447-3099). **Ophir Lodge** (☎ 03-447-3339) is a backpacker hostel with rooms in brick cottages and there are single rooms as well as twin and double hotel rooms at the **Blacks Hotel** (☎ 03-447-3826), also in Ophir.

The **Vulcan Hotel** in St. Bathans is a Kiwi icon that has been featured in more than one TV and print ad. Built in 1882, it still serves as a hotel (there were 13 hotels and 2,000 miners in St. Bathans during its heyday) and a fabulous restaurant serving very good, tasty food. There are also three cottages for rent (including one in the old jail cells) that are just down the road from the hotel. They are all very period and very inviting (my choice is Ingrams). Dinner might be venison, blue cod, chicken, lamb or something else fabulous. ☎/fax 03-447-3629. Accommodation ($$-$$$), meals ($$-$$$).

Coastal Otago

Traveling north from Dunedin on SH1, in less than an hour you'll arrive in Palmerston. There isn't a lot of tourist draw here, but you do have the opportunity to grab a latte at the old train station. Palmerston does have one celebrated son, Sir John McKenzie, a Scottish immigrant farmer who was a popular political figure, eventually elected to Parliament in 1881. He was instrumental in the partitioning of large tracts of land, making small allotments available to the everyday man and family. A memorial to him is erected at the site where he worked as a young shepherd. There is a walking track to the site.

Continuing north from Palmerston, you quickly arrive at **Shag Point** and, not too much farther, **Moeraki**, from where it's a straight shot to Oamarau.

■ Watchable Wildlife

Yellow-eyed penguins (YEPs) come ashore at **Shag Point**, as do New Zealand fur seals. When I finally convinced my sister to visit me in New Zealand we were traveling around the South Island, and made it to Shag Point just about sunset. The most amazing thing happened – a YEP came home from fishing and after a wander around the beach made his way up the hill, passed the spot where we were standing (on the DoC-provided trail) and continued to his burrow. It was magic. But then the saddest thing happened – the DoC volunteer who was standing beside us mentioned that there had been three YEPs who made their homes here, but the numbers were dwindling, perhaps due to stress, perhaps due to bad weather or bad fishing. Seeing animals in the wild is one of the most incredible experiences we can have – so please, if you are lucky enough to see penguins (or any other animal in their natural habitat), follow the instructions of DoC, respect that you are their visitor and don't harass the animals.

The small fishing town of Moeraki (about 95 km/59 miles north of Dunedin and 40 km/24 miles south of Oamaru) is a good, quiet stopover, where you can visit penguins to the north and south, see the Moeraki boulders, go fishing, take a walk or just listen to the waves. Fishing charters can be arranged through **Catch-A-Fish Moeraki**, ☎ 03-439-4690 or 027-222-4867, or **Moeraki Fishing Charters**, ☎ 03-439-4868 or 025-238-1468.

Head out to the lighthouse for the yellow-eyed penguin viewing area. It's about five km (three miles) out of town. Park at the lighthouse (where there is a penguin rehabilitation program) and walk down to the viewing hide. The hide is filled with information about the YEPs. Lots of sea lions live around here, too, many are likely to be flopped around on the beach. From town, turn on either David or Tenby Street and follow the sign to Lighthouse Road.

Moeraki Boulders

Sitting at the edge of the sea, these almost perfectly spherical orbs look as if they've been left behind after a gang of giants were playing croquet. In fact, they were not deposited or dropped on the sea at all – they were shaped within the mudstone – the ancient sea floor. Think about how an oyster makes a pearl – a grain of sand is an irritant, and the oyster builds layers of pearl over the sand. These boulders were formed in much the same way. They began as small pieces of bone or shell, and minerals in the sea bed crystallized around them equally in all directions. The mudstone seabed was then uplifted and formed the cliffs along the coast. As the cliffs eroded, the boulders, classified as septarian concretions, were released, appearing to have been dropped from above. Other boulders like these can be seen at Shag Point and Katiki.

■ Where to Stay

The **Moeraki Motel** has simple and friendly accommodation. ☎ 03-439-4862 ($$).

The **Moeraki Motor Camp** has tourist apartments, cabins, motel units, power and tent sites. The owner bakes fresh bread every morning! ☎/fax 03-439-4759 ($-$$).

■ Where to Eat

There is a small café at the **Moeraki Boulder Visitor Centre** ($-$$).

Moeraki Tavern has dependable old pub food, even though it's a new pub. Right on the main drag, across from the harbor ($-$$).

Fleurs Place has a good selection of seafood and other dishes, tastefully prepared and presented. This is the best place to eat by far. Full breakfast menu and good coffee. www.fleursplace.com, at the Old Jetty ☎ 03-439-5980 ($$).

Oamaru

While towns in Central Otago were getting their start in gold, the port town of Oamaru was busy becoming the region's commercial center and reached fame via the limestone and frozen meat industries. First settled in 1853, by the late 1870s it was the ninth-largest town in New Zealand and today is an enjoyable and pretty place to spend time. Wandering around the buildings of the historic sector is a relief from more action-packed activities – this is the one place in the country where you'll truly feel you're in a historic district. Oamaru stone is still popular with sculptors – it's soft to carve and hardens with time. The proximity of little blue and yellow-eyed penguin colonies is an added draw.

> **Did you know?** The first frozen meat (lamb) shipped from New Zealand to the UK was processed at **Totara Estate**, just outside of Oamaru. It's called the birthplace of the New Zealand meat-industry and you can see restored farm buildings and meat processing displays. Open daily in the summer from 10 am to 4 pm, Wednesday to Sunday during the winter. $7 adults, $2 children. ☎ 03-433-1195.

■ Information Sources

Check out www.tourismwaitaki.com.

The staff is very helpful at the **Oamaru Visitor Information Centre**, 1 Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-1656.

■ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

Little blue penguins (called fairy penguins in Australia) are the smallest in the world and are found throughout New Zealand waters. They are fairly numerous and sometimes annoying – especially if they nest under your house. Residents of Oamaru, however, have embraced the little fellows and they've

become sort of an Oamaru icon. One of New Zealand's toilet paper companies produced rolls that were decorated with little blue penguin images and Oamaru shopkeepers couldn't keep enough of the stuff on the shelves! You laugh, but it made national news.

The **Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony** is within walking distance of the town center and housed in an old quarry. You can view the penguins in the evening as they come home from sea. Call the center first to find out the best time for watching. The visitor center is open 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, 10 am to 5 pm weekends. $12.50 adults, $8 children. www.penguins.co.nz, http://www.penguins.co.nz, Breakwater Road, ☎ 03-433-1195.

Yellow-eyed penguins can be seen at Bushy Beach, usually two hours before dark. There is a viewing hide (free of charge).

On Water

Keltra Kayaks has one of the best things going – they run kayak trips all along the coast, from Oamaru to Nugget Point. There is so much wildlife along here that you're not going to be disappointed. Some of the trips are on the sea, some on inland estuaries. Give them a call to see what's up. Trip prices begin at $85. ☎ 03-465-8198.

■ Sightseeing

Famed New Zealand author Janet Frame (who died in 2004) spent quite a bit of time in Oamaru and used many sites in her books. Pick up a copy of the ***Janet Frame Heritage Trail*** brochure. You should also get a copy of ***Historic Oamaru*** from the information center and have a wander around town.

There are over 20 historic buildings in town, including St. Paul's Presbyterian Church and St. Patrick's Basilica. The Forester Gallery and the Criterion Hotel are especially lovely, as is the Courthouse. In the historic district is a wide range of business – from modern cafés to a scrumptious German bakery to a wool-buying and -processing shed to – the first one I've ever seen – as well as an organ factory, where they repair and build pipe organs.

Drop into the **Forrester Art Gallery**. There's always something wonderful to look at. Open daily, 10:30 am to 4 pm, closed Christmas and Good Friday. Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-1653.

Guided Option

Whitestone Walking Tours depart from the information center six times daily. ☎ 03-434-1656.

North Otago Heritage Tours runs day and evening tours around Oamaru and the local area. Evening tours include a visit to the penguins. ☎ 03-434-1656.

To really get into the feel of the historic district, take a ride with **Whitestone Carriage Services**. Garden tours and penguin trips are also available. ☎ 03-349-5155.

■ Where to Stay

If all the history has you wanting to stay in an historical building, try out the **Criterion Hotel**. The rooms are Victorian in theme, and some have en-suite bathrooms. The breakfast part of the deal is sub-

stantial. www.criterion.net.nz, 3 Tyne Street, ☎ 03-434-6247, fax 03-434-6248 ($$$-$$$$).

If that price is a little high, but you still want history, try the **Empire Hotel**. It's in an historic (150-year-old) building, has the modern conveniences, including free Internet, and bikes available for guests. It's right in town, too. empirehotel@hotmail.com, 13 Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-3446, fax 03-439-5215 ($).

Oamaru has quite a few dependable motels with rooms that include bath and kitchen. Budget options include **Alpine Motel**, modern and clean with just 10 units and close to town, 285 Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-5038, fax 03-434-6301. Another is the nearby **Midway Motel** with 11 units with patios. 289 Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-5388 or 0800-447-744. **Colonial Lodge** has all ground-floor units; it's simple but clean and a few minutes away from the town center, 509 Thames Highway, ☎ 03-437-0999 or 0800-102-999, fax 03-437-0992 ($$-$$).

Next up the rung is the slightly more modern **Ambassador Motor Lodge**, 296 Thames Highway, ☎ 03-437-2146 or 0800-437-214, fax 03-437-2143, and the newer and smarter **Heritage Court Motor Lodge**, 346 Thames Highway, ☎ 03-437-2200 or 0800-732-200, fax 03-437-2600 ($$-$$$).

The **Red Kettle YHA** is in an old-fashioned house just off the main drag and has twins, doubles and dorms. www.stayyha.com, corner of Reed and Cross Streets, ☎/fax 03-434-5008 ($).

■ Where to Eat

There are the usual service-center eateries, but also a few in the historic district. These include the **Star & Garter**, one of NZ's oldest restaurants, serving lunch and dinner every day. 9 Itchen Street, ☎ 03-434-5246 ($$).

Also try the **Woolstore Café** for simpler food like glorious sandwiches and all-day breakfast. 1 Tyne Street, ☎ 03-434-8336 ($-$$).

The **Whitestone Cheese Factory & Café** is the choice for a coffee, lunch and, of course, cheese. They sell a huge variety of their organic cheeses here and you can taste many of the products. Fabulous cheeses that you'll see around your travels include Moeraki blue, Whitestone brie, sheeps and cows milk feta and cheddar. Corner of Torridge & Humber Streets ($-$$).

Waitaki

Heading inland from Oamaru, you'll travel along SH83 or the Weston-Tokarahi Road. Both lead through the Waitake Valley and eventually come together near **Duntroon**. Throughout this region are Maori rock paintings; the most accessible are the Tikarora Maori Rock Art, just west of Duntroon. These paintings are believed to date back to the moa hunting days – the visitor center in Oamaru has maps with a few noted and directions to others. Other interesting rock structures around Duntroon include the unusually-formed **Elephant Rocks** on the Weston-Tokarahi Road (take your camera and your sense of humor) and the **Earthquakes Area** just beyond Duntroon. Take a left at the church and follow the road about six or seven km (three to four miles). There are significant drops – be careful with

children and pets. The area is not a collapsed cave, but instead was formed when the land slumped and large blocks of limestone fell into place.

The **Vanished World Fossil Trail & Centre** is new on the map, but covers really old stuff. It focuses on the geology of the Waitaki area, and the fossils from vanished life forms found in the Duntroon area. The region, like most of New Zealand, was once under the sea, and inhabited by lots of creatures that no longer exist. When they died, their skeletons sank to the seabed, eventually being compressed and forming limestone. The center has displays and a map of the area; the staff is keen to share their passion. $8. SH83, Duntroon, ☎ 03-431-2024.

Continuing west from Duntroon, you'll next reach **Kurow**, which is big on the fishing circuits. It's also big on the power circuits, as it's the service center for the **Benmore Power Station**. The Benmore Dam is the largest earth-filled water-retaining structure in New Zealand and the volume is about 1½ times that of Wellington harbor! Tours of the power station (11 am, 1 pm and 3 pm, $5 adults, no children under four and no one with a pacemaker allowed) must be booked through the Benmore Information Centre, open daily during the summer, and weekends from June to mid-October.

Next along SH83 is Otemata and, just after that, a very good fresh fruit and vegetable stand! **Omarama** (*oh-mara-ma* not *oh-ma-rama*) is next. You'll find a couple of quick eats here and a few places to stay, but, unless you're sticking around for a glider meet, you might want to push on to a more happening spot.

■ Information Sources

The **Omarama Information Centre** is on Main Road, ☎ 03-438-9544.

Here's your chance: Omarama is famous for wind – the warm, northwesterly thermal wind that glider pilots love. Pilots come from all over the world and gliding records are met and broken here. If you've wanted to give it a try, this is as good a location as you're going to get. Call **Alpine Soaring**, ☎ 03-438-9600.

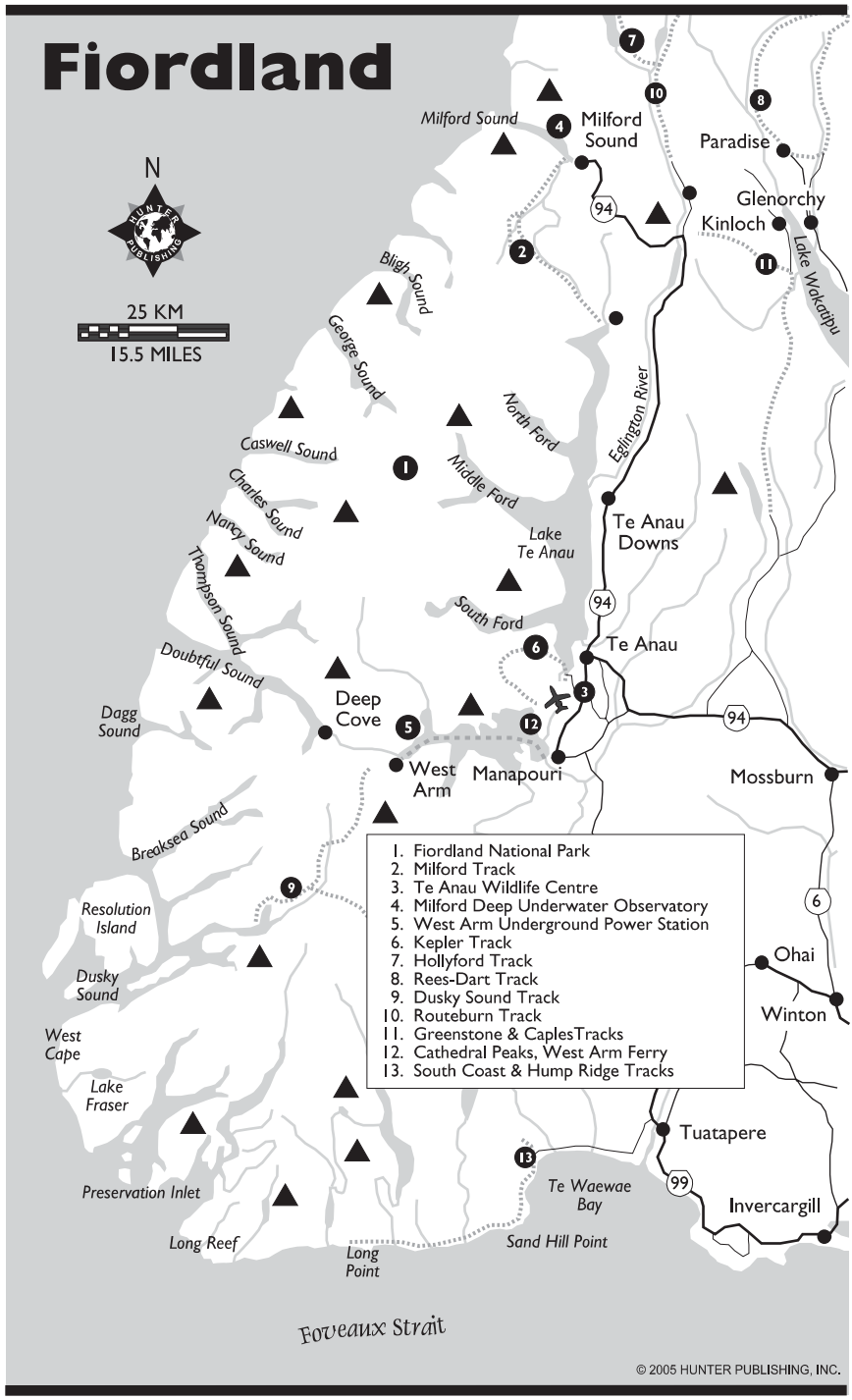
You can put **Clay Cliffs Scenic Reserve** on your list of bizarre landscape structures. The clay cliffs and columns have been formed from the action of the Ostler fault, which runs through the area. The weather does its erosive thing and makes these pipelike structures. It's a $5 entry (and reached by a gravel road, which becomes boggy and impassable after rain). More clay cliffs are about seven km (four miles) along SH8 toward the Lindis Pass – they can be seen from the road. Traveling from Omarama to Tarras, you'll cross the Lindis Pass, not the most spectacular one in New Zealand, but you will see large sheep stations and hills reminiscent of the American desert southwest.

■ Where to Stay

Buscat Station Backpackers is eight km (five miles) north of town and is on a working sheep and cattle station. I've never stayed here, but the place has received nothing but rave reviews from everyone I've talked to who has. SH8, toward Twizel, ☎ 03 438-9646 ($).

The **Omarama Holiday Park** has tourist apartments and cabins, tent and power sites. It's got lots of trees and is by the river. At the junction of SH8 and SH83. ☎ 03-438-9875 ($-$$).

The **Ahuriri Motel** has dependable studio and full-service motel units. There's a BBQ and pleasant outdoor area. SH83, ☎ 03-438-9451 or 0800-438-945 ($$-$$$).



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Fiordland

Introduction

If there is one region that screams out "New Zealand," this is it. The sites around Fiordland are, in Kiwi lingo, gob-smacking. High mountains, deep lakes and thundering waterfalls are only part of the stunning scenery at the lower corner of the South Island. It is a dramatic landscape, created first by the thrusting and folding of the earth's crust, then carved by glaciers and finally filled in by the sea – the deep U-shaped valleys typical of a fiord landscape are evident throughout the area. In Milford Sound, for example, the walls rise steeply about 1,700 meters (5,500 feet) above the water, and extend 300 meters (975 feet) below the water's surface. The plant and animal life within Fiordland is like what Gondwanaland must have had all those hundreds of thousands of years ago. Several threatened native birds make their home in Fiordland, including the takahe, once believed to be extinct, which was rediscovered in 1948.

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Did you know? The flightless **takahe** is the largest living member of the rail family. It is brightly colored green and blue and has very substantial legs, feet and beak. Introduced deer are the biggest threat to the takahe. The Department of Conservation has a takahe recovery plan to help establish populations in Fiordland and a handful of predator-free islands. There are currently about 145 takahe living in the park and a few more pairs scattered around offshore islands.

Other birds seen within the park include yellow-crowned parakeets, robins, kaka, and the more common tomtits, brown creepers, grey warblers, fantails, tui, bellbirds, wood pigeons and keas. The national park is also home to New Zealand's only native mammals, long-tailed and short-tailed bats.

Fiordland landscape is marked by temperate rainforest – you will be astounded by the trees, ferns, mosses and vines. While looking around the hillsides, keep in mind how little soil is there – these plants support themselves on the mold from degenerating plant materials.

FIORDS

The bodies of water referred to here as "sounds" (Milford Sound, Dusky Sound, Doubtful Sound) are not sounds, but fiords. Sounds are, in fact, flooded river beds – such as the Marlborough Sounds. Fiords are glacially carved. There are 14 fiords – Milford Sound is the northernmost and Preservation Inlet the southernmost.

Not only is Fiordland notable for its birdlife, the waterways of the fiords sustain an equally unique marine environment. Because the rainfall is so high, a permanent freshwater lens is created on top of the more dense salt water of the sea. When the rain falls on the land, it filters through the ground to the sea, gathering tannins from the vegetation along the way – making the lens darker and cutting down the amount of light that reaches the salt water. Two things happen – most of the marine life is restricted to the top 40 meters (130 feet) where some light gets through, and the marine life is typical of that seen at much greater depths. Among the marine life in the fiords are brachiopods; clam-like animals that haven't evolved at all in the last 300 million years! The fiords are also home to the world's biggest population of red coral and black coral trees – over seven million colonies exist. Some are over 200 years old, and some are in water as shallow as eight meters (26 feet). Marine life that breaks the surface includes bottlenose dolphins, fur seals, Fiordland crested penguins and little blue penguins. Just offshore of the fiords, there are often whales.

Fiordland National Park, established in 1952 and the largest national park in New Zealand (2.9 million acres), is a walkers' and trampers' paradise. There are over 500 km (300 miles) of tracks within the national park, which is part of Te Wahipounamu World Heritage Area. Some of New Zealand's most famous walks, including the famous Milford Track, have their beginnings and/or endings in the park, but there are also short day-walks begging to be explored. There are hundreds of lakes within the region, including Lake Hauroko (the deepest lake in New Zealand) and Lake Te Anau (the second-largest).

Te Wahipounamu (the place of the greenstone) World Heritage Area includes Fiordland, Aoraki/Mt. Cook, Westland/Tai Poutini and Mount Aspiring National Parks. World Heritage is a global designation of sites that are deemed so special and of such natural and cultural significance that they must be preserved and protected.

Lots of people hope for clear, sunny days in Fiordland – and that's great. But to really know the place, you need to hope for rain. You may think you don't want to be out in a storm, but you do! Or at least hope for mist and clouds hanging on the high peaks. If you're really lucky, it'll spit rain, leaving some peaks dripping with moisture, and the sky will open blue and reveal the tops of the mountains. It can all happen in one day. If it rained the day before your trip, be grateful – the air will clear and the greens will be even brighter. Hope for moodiness. Let Fiordland unpeel its many layers.

Did you know? To get a rainforest, you need rain. Annually, there are over 200 rainy days here and rainfall in the area varies from 48 inches in Te Anau to 318 inches in Milford Sound. In January 1994, a storm raged in Fiordland and dumped 27 inches of rain in 24 hours. Roads and tracks were closed for a month.

While Maori did not have permanent settlements in the area, many of the tracks within Fiordland were used by the ancient Maori for gathering food and pounamu (greenstone), particularly the translucent takiwai stone. In 1773, Captain Cook and his crew became the first Europeans to visit the area, and they stayed for five weeks. They were followed by sealers and whalers and it's hard to imagine how wild this place must have been during the late 1700s when the rough and tumble sealers and whalers were establishing settlements.

> **Tip:** If you have escaped the wrath of the infamous New Zealand sand flies until now, your luck will no doubt run out in Fiordland. Make sure you take plenty of sand fly repellent and either slather it on or cover those parts of your body most attractive to these little biting monsters – ankles are a real favorite. My favorite brand is Tui – it's a bit more natural and not quite as stinky as some of the more chemically charged products. I also always carry a tube of topical antihistamine that takes away the itch. Visit the drugstore before you need it!

Getting Here

■ By Air

In addition to scenic flights (see below), **Air Fiordland Ltd**., www.airfiordland.com, ☎ 03-249-7505 or 0800-103-404, provides air services to Te Anau and Fiordland from Queenstown.

■ By Car

Te Anau, at the junction of SH94 and SH95, is the base for exploration of Fiordland and is a two-hour drive from either Queenstown or Invercargill.

■ By Bus

A number of transport operators offer service to Te Anau. **Catch a Bus** operates between Dunedin and Te Anau by way of Lumsden, Gore, and Balclutha. ☎ 03-471-4141 or 027-433-8612. **Scenic Shuttle** travels between Te Anau and Invercargill via Lake Manapouri and the Southern Scenic Route. Weekdays in winter, daily in summer. ☎ 03-249-7654 or 0800-277-483. **Top Line Tours** runs between Te Anau and Queenstown. Daily service and options to Manapouri if booked in advance. ☎ 03-249-8059. **Atomic Shuttles** runs day-trips between Te Anau and Milford Sound, hooking up with MV *Friendship* for an optional trip on the water. They also operate connections from Queenstown and Wanaka. www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-322-8883.

Tracknet provides transport around Fiordlands and between Fiordlands and Queenstown. They have all sorts of options, especially geared for trampers. www.greatwalks.com, ☎ 03-249-7777. For an off-the-beaten-path trip, you can take the vintage steamship **TSS *Earnslaw*** (www.fiordlandtravel.co.nz/main/earnslw) to Milford Sound's Mitre Peak Station and then go on **Back Track Transport** for a bus ride through the Von Valley, into Mavora Lakes and then Te Anau. This is definitely some-

thing different and you'll see lots of scenery. www.tracknet.net. ☎ 03-249-7457 or 0800-483-2628.

> **Tip:** Many of the scenic bus trips to Milford Sound originate in Queenstown. This makes for an incredibly long day (12 to 14 hours) and I guarantee you will be exhausted. Te Anau is a lovely town – come here, spend a night or two and then venture to Milford (or Doubtful).

Information Sources

Destination Fiordland takes care of this region and can be visited at **www.fiordland.org.nz**. For more information on the Milford road, take a look at **www.milfordroad.co.nz**.

The **Fiordland iSITE Visitor Centre** is open seven days a week, with extended hours in summer. vin@realjourneys.co.nz, located on Lakefront Drive, in the same building as the Real Journeys office, ☎ 03-249-8900, fax 03-249-7022.

Take a look at **www.doc.govt.nz** for information on any of the walks or the national park. Then visit what must be one of the most helpful DoC centers in New Zealand. (They also have a large gift shop.) November to April, open daily 9:30 am to 5; May to October, open Monday-Friday from 9 am to noon and 1 to 4:30 pm. **Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre**, fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-7924 fax 03-249-7613 and the **Great Walks Booking Desk**, greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-8514, fax 03-249-8515, are in the same building on Lake Front Drive.

The DoC office in **Tuatapere** also handles Fiordland information, 31 Orawia Road, ☎ 03-226-6697 fax 03-226-6074.

■ Emergency Services

Locator beacons can be rented at Mobil in Te Anau, ☎ 03-249-7247.

Mountain radios can be rented in Te Anau, ☎ 03-249-8363, and Invercargill, ☎ 03-216-3751.

Adventures

■ Watchable Wildlife

DoC operates **Te Anau Wildlife Centre**. You can see many of the local native birds, including the flightless takahe – a real character and very rare. Other birds include waterfowl, wekas, parakeets, tuis, keas, kakas and wood pigeons. Donations are appreciated and you can pick up a map and description of the birds and enclosures. On the Te Anau-Manapouri Highway, just a 10-minute walk from DoC office. ☎ 03-249-7921 or 03-249-7924.

■ On Water

> **Did you know?** Lake Manapouri, New Zealand's fifth-largest and second-deepest lake, was originally called Roto Ua, "the rainy lake." Lake Te Anau is the largest lake on the South Island and is the second-largest in New Zealand (Lake Taupo is the largest).

There are plenty of boat options around, but one of the most enjoyable boat trips goes from Te Anau Downs to the Milford Track. You can ride along even if you're not doing the walk… it's a great introduction to the area, has fabulous views and the commentary gives you a bit of a history lesson about the place. It's usually a smaller group, too, so, while you don't see one of the fiords, you do get a really good trip. Take a look at the transport operators for the Milford Track.

Across the lake are the **Te Anau Glow Worm Caves**. There are 2½-hour tours conducted by **Real Journeys**, which include a boat ride and cave tour. If you didn't have a chance to see glow worms before, do it here, where you can also see rock formations and get a pretty good boat ride out of the deal. Trips go in the afternoon and evening and cost $46 adults, $15 children. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7416 or 0800-656-501.

Milford Sound

Milford Sound really is a sight to behold. My friend Jane came to New Zealand for a visit and, after she returned home, wrote to say that now when people ask if there's a god, she says yes, and he lives right in Milford Sound. While not the biggest fiord by far, Milford is, to me, the most spectacular. The steep, high-sided mountains and the waterfalls combine to make an incredible spot. I've explored Milford Sound by boat, kayak and helicopter and I'm not sure which one is my favorite – kayaking is great because you're at the water level and can really appreciate the immense size of the mountains and waterfalls; boats are good to get you farther but still at water level. The helicopter is a totally awesome way to see a lot of area in a short time and be able to really get the height into perspective. The options from the water seem just about endless – you can either drive to Milford Sound and then take a scenic cruise or you can opt for a bus-and-cruise package. The choice really depends on what you want to do. The Milford Road is, by no means, the scariest road on the planet, but it is a narrow, twisting mountain road and, if you are a timid driver, you might best be served by a bus ride – plus then everyone in your party can gawk at the scenery. On the other hand, taking a bus tour means that you can't stop and look along the way. See the section below about the Milford Road. Most of the companies offer the option of going to the underwater observatory on some trips.

Great Sights has bus tours from either Te Anau or Queenstown. They connect with Milford Sound Red Boat Cruises. Prices begin at $109 adults and more if lunch is included. www.greatsights.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9445 or 0800-264-536.

For a smaller option (group size is limited to 20), try **Milford Wilderness Explorer**. They also connect with Milford Sound Red Boat Cruises. Prices begin at $115 adults. www.airfiordland.com, ☎ 03-249-7505 or 0800-107-505.

Trips 'n' Tramps is another small group tour (limit of 12 passengers) that includes a nature cruise. They also have a fabulous option that, in addition to the drive in and cruise, includes a three-hour hike on the Routeburn Track to Key Summit on the return trip to Te Anau. It's a full day and you get some exercise and great views. As far as the guided drive options go, I think this one is the best value. Prices begin at $126 adults for the tour and cruise, $142 adults for the trip with the Routeburn walk. www.milfordtourswalks.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7081.

You can't miss the **Real Journeys** buses driving around – there are plenty of them and trip options are vast. They offer scenic and nature cruises as well, as overnight (dinner, bed and breakfast) trips on boats that sleep 60. This is a very popular option and a great way to experience the moods of the fiords in a more relaxed manner. On the overnight trips, the boats have kayaks and tenders, allowing more intricate exploration. Prices for day-trips (bus and boat) begin at $105 adults; overnight trips begin at $275 adults. Boat trips only begin at $45 adults. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7416 or 0800-656-501.

Milford Sound Red Boat Cruises runs boat trips up to seven times daily in the summer (abbreviated schedule in the winter). They can handle up to 400 passengers and there are lots of viewing decks and seats, as well as quite broad food options. Trips range from 1¾ hours to 2¾ hours. Prices begin at $46 adults. www.redboats.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-1137 or 0800-264-536.

Mitre Peak Cruises are on a smaller boat that carries a maximum of 60 passengers. They go out four times a day and other times for groups are available. Trips range from an hour and 40 minutes to two hours 10 minutes and prices begin at $49 adults. www.mitrepeak.com, ☎ 03-249-8110 or 0800-744-633.

Kiwi Discovery has one cruise daily and carries a maximum of 45 passengers. There are also bus options from Queenstown and Te Anau. Prices begin at $60 adults for cruise only, and $120 adults for bus and cruise. www.kiwidiscovery.com, ☎ 03-442-7340, fax 03-442-7341.

Another smaller boat option is offered by **Cruising Milford Sound Ltd**. Four trips are scheduled daily and last from 1½ to 1¾ hours. Prices begin at $40 adults. reservations@cruisingms.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7735 or 0800-500-121.

> **Tip:** When booking a boat trip, you might want to ask the operator if the trip is likely to be filled with tour groups or independent travelers. You also might want to ask if the interpretive information will be given in many languages, or just English. The reason I mention this is that some people find it tiring to listen to four or five translations of information all day.

A side-trip to the **Milford Deep Underwater Observatory** will give you an opportunity to see things that you would otherwise have to get extremely wet to see. Located in Harrison's Cove, the observatory is not an aquarium – it's a floating building, and the windows of the viewing room expose the natural environment of the fiord. What you see depends on what happens to float past. Most of the cruise companies have options to visit the observatory, but you can also just visit Milford Deep by taking their shuttle. Prices begin at $45 (adults). www.milforddeep.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-249-9442 or 0800-326-969.

Doubtful Sound

Doubtful Sound is different from Milford Sound in many ways, including the access to it. All trips on Doubtful start with a boat ride across Lake Manapouri, which is the second-deepest lake in New Zealand. Within the lake are a number of bays and coves. Commentary about the lake makes the trip even more enjoyable than with the scenery alone! Frequented by kayaks, yachts and other boats, Manapouri is a popular recreational lake. Boat trips begin at Pearl Harbour and end at the far end of the lake, at West Arm, site of

the West Arm Underground Power Station. Optional tours of the power station are available and, while I wouldn't say going into it will be the highlight of your trip to New Zealand, it is an interesting and unusual trip; the road takes you two km (just over one mile) underground. In the underground viewing room, there is a model of the power station, the lake and the fiord – helping to make sense of the engineering and construction. From the power station, access to Deep Cove of Doubtful Sound is by bus – the 22-km (13-mile) road offers river, mountain and valley views and frequent stops allow opportunities to see the plant life, particularly ferns and mosses. The road was built during the construction of the power plant.

Doubtful Sound is the deepest fiord, and is much longer than Milford, with three arms and a main body that stretches 40 km (25 miles) to the Tasman Sea. Doubtful Sound doesn't have the narrow gorge feel or spectacular Mitre Peak of Milford, but by contrast is gentler and more peaceful. A one-day trip to Doubtful is a very full day – if you have the means, try to book on an overnight journey, either by kayak or cruise.

Fiordland Explorer Charters has a daily 10 am departure and includes a stop at the power station. Prices begin at $160 adults. explorercharters@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-6616 or 0800-434-673.

Real Journeys offers trips across the lake for a power station tour only, wilderness day cruises that include the lake, power station and fiord, and overnight cruises that offer the option of exploration by tender craft or kayak. The overnight option includes dinner, with bed and breakfast and there is an on-board nature guide. Day-trips begin at $190 for adults and overnight trips at $275. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-6602 or 0800-656-502.

If you're looking for an overnight option but want something smaller and less commercial, consider **Journeys of Discovery**. They offer two- and three-day trips on a houseboat. Backpacker accommodation and food costs are not included. Prices begin at $250 adults. www.teanau.info, ☎ 03-249-7457.

Kayaking

For the most professional operation, contact **Fiordland Wilderness Experience**. These guys are great and run one-day sea kayaking trips in Milford Sound, two-, three- and five-day trips in Doubtful Sound and expedition tours in other sounds. They can also set you up on a kayak/walk option, can combine both the Milford and Doubtful Sound trips, and have guided trips on Lake Te Anau and Lake Manapouri. If you want to get on the water, they are my top choice. The one-day trips in Milford can include the scenic drive in, with stops of interest along the way. Prices begin at $95 adult. www.fiordlandseakayak.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7700 or 0800-200-434, fax 03-249-7768.

Rosco's Milford Sound Sea Kayaks has guided trips in Milford Sound only, but has both a one-day trip from Milford and the option of taking a boat to Stirling Falls and kayaking back to Milford Sound. This trip takes advantage of the afternoon breeze – you may sail the kayaks back instead of paddling them. They also have kayak/walk options. Prices begin at $98 adults. www.kayakmilford.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-8500 or 0800-476-726.

Focusing on Doubtful Sound, **Adventure Kayak and Cruise** begins their trips with a boat ride across Lake Manapouri and then a bus ride to Doubtful

Sound. They have a really good option of doing a one-day guided trip and then rental on your own for the second day (camping out overnight), or a two-day guided trip. One day trips begin at $169 adults, $199 for two days with rental on your own and $295 for two days guided. www.fiordlandadventure.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-6626 or 0800-324-966.

Kiwi Reel & Rifle has guided trips on Milford Sound, Lake Te Anau and Manapouri and also rents kayaks. They have walk/paddle options, overnight paddle trips on the lakes and combo flight/kayak trips. Guided trip prices begin at $85 (for a moonlight paddle). www.kiwireelrifle.com, ☎ 03-249-9071, fax 03-249-9081.

Diving

For a fabulous dive experience, call **Tawaki Dive**. They go out every day (October to April) and can show you some great dive sites. Prices begin at $190, $235 for full equipment rental. www.tawakidive.co.nz, 44 Caswell Road, ☎ 03-249-9006.

Fishing

Fiordland Guides Ltd. are good, friendly, knowledgeable guides. They own Fiordland Lodge (see *Where To Stay*). www.fiordlandguides.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7832.

Mike Molineux is an older fellow who's been fishing here awhile. He's based in Manapouri. www.fishfiordland.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-8070.

Kiwi Reel & Rifle has fishing trips for the beginner up to the professional, including helicopter trips or half-day adventures. Prices begin at $155 per person. www.kiwireelrifle.com ☎ 03-249-9071.

■ On Foot

Beware: The weather on all of the tramps in Fiordland must be respected! Conditions can change dramatically and bad weather can bring cold and flooding. By all means, go tramping, but contact DoC for current information, track conditions and advice.

Tip: The DoC website has track update information available. www.doc.govt.nz

Tramps

Most tracks in Fiordland are still okay to walk through April and May unless there is early snow on the alpine sections. The Dusky, Kepler, Milford and Routeburn are prone to avalanches from July to October, and have remained closed some years into November and even December. Check the DoC website for track conditions.

The 53.5-km (33-mile) iconic **Milford Track** is certainly the best known of New Zealand's Great Walks. It **must** be booked in advance (weeks to months), unguided walkers are limited to 40 each day, and no camping is permitted on the track. While some people find the rigor of the booking system inflexible and annoying, it does ensure that everyone will have a bed and that all trampers are walking in the same direction. Consequently, while 14,000

people complete the track each year, you will see very few of them while you are walking. The huts are among the best in New Zealand – to some, too fancy for the wilderness. All have gas cookers (bring your own pots, though), flush toilets, and cold showers. Hut passes are $35 per night. For booking information, contact greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-8514, fax 03-249-8515.

In early days, the Maori used what we call the Milford Track in search of pounamu (greenstone) from Milford Sound. The first Europeans to travel the area were Donald Sutherland and John Mackay who, in 1880, found Sutherland and Mackay Falls. It is unclear whether these two explorers crossed Mckinnon Pass before surveyor Quinton McKinnon, for whom the pass is named. Mckinnon and Sutherland began guiding travelers on the Milford Track in 1889. Before radio communication between huts was available, a telephone system was – on the first day of the walk, you can still see some of the old insulators. Horses were used to transport supplies to the huts and some of the old timers (and guides alike) have great tales about the horses and ferrying of walkers.

The Milford can best be described as a valley walk through glacially-carved canyons. The third day is the hardest, crossing McKinnon Pass, where you will be rewarded with spectacular views. Otherwise, you'll spend most of your time walking through towering valleys alongside rivers, and the rewards are rainforest and rainfalls. One friend aptly said "it's like walking up a street in Manhattan but all the skyscrapers are natural." Be prepared and enjoy it whether or not you're wet, and remember, the waterfalls are more spectacular after rain!

The Milford Track is walked over four days. The **first day**, a short one (only five km/three miles, one to two hours), is devoted mostly to transport. Following a boat trip from Te Anau Downs to Glade Wharf, you'll walk along the Clinton River. There are a couple of side-tracks that you can take to warm up for the rest of the trip. **Day two** (16.5 km/ 10 miles, six hours) begins with a gradual climb along the Clinton River to Lake Mintaro, the river's source. You will have your first glimpses of McKinnon Pass from Hirere Falls and there is one short, steep section just before reaching the hut. **Day three** (14 km/eight miles, six hours) is the day to go over McKinnon Pass. The track zig-zags to the top and, when clear, the views are spectacular. The tough time comes for many on the descent; watch out and take care of your knees. You can take a side-trip to Sutherland Falls, which is highly recommended, as they are New Zealand's highest falls and the fifth-highest in the world. They are spectacular, especially after a good rain! The **final day** (18 km/11 miles, five to six hours) is mostly along and across the river. Look for eels and fish in the river and take the time to play around Bell Rock, a hollowed-out boulder. Just keep in mind that you have a water taxi to meet!

> **Authors tip:** If you're short of time, or didn't get booked in for the whole trip, then at least book a day-walk. The boat trip to and from the Glade Wharf is wonderful in its own regard, and the walk offers some great views, lovely bush and a taste of the track and area. You can easily do the day-walk on your own, but you should book with **Trips 'n Tramps** (see contact details in section on guided options, page 579); for just a little bit extra, you will have a guide to point out interesting sites in the bush and take you off the beaten track.

Transport: It's probably best if you inquire at the Information Center or DoC office for specific timetables, but basically, as an independent walker you will need transport by boat ($65-70) from Te Anau to Glade House. Contact **Manuska**, sinbad@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7016; or **Tracknet**, res@greatwalksnz.com, ☎ 03-249-7777; or **Waterwings** (to go by floatplane), waterwings@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7405. On the other end of the track, you will need to arrange boat transport ($25.50) from Sandfly Point to Milford. Contact **Red Boats**, rbinfo@redboats.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7926, and then bus transport from Milford to Te Anau, which is provided by. **Tracknet**. Alternatively, you can hook up with **Rosco's Sea Kayaks**, rosco@kayakmilford.co.nz, ☎ 0800-476-726, or **Fiordland Wilderness Experiences**, fiordland.sea.kayak@clear.net.nz, ☎ 03-249-7700 or 0800-200-434, to arrange a kayak trip at Sandfly Point and transport back to Te Anau. These trips range from $60-$65. **Manuska** offers a package deal of sail/kayak/bus for $120 and **Tracknet** has a similar bus, boat, kayak/boat, bus for $130.

Unlike most of the other Great Walks that started out as transport routes, the 60-km (37-mile) **Kepler Track** began as a tramping track, intending to take some of the load off the Milford and Routeburn. It is a bit of an "up and coming" track – not quite getting the attention of the others – but, with a good mix of alpine and low valley, it is a great option. It can be walked in either direction, takes three to four days to complete and is a circular track – and consequently doesn't involve the high transport costs of the other walks. Farther east and higher in elevation, the Kepler is less about rain forest and more about alpine views and beech forest. The second day is a day on top, and in clear weather, offers fabulous views. Beware, though, as the wind does a fair howl up there. Most common of the trees you'll see are beech, with silver and red varieties interspersed with kamahi, miro, rimu, kahikatea and totara. The silver beech will stay with you as you travel along Iris Burn. Listen for bellbirds, tomtits, fantails and grey warblers. Other birds include the yellow-crowned parakeet (found along the river), yellowheads and robins (along Iris Burn).

> **Caution:** Camping is only allowed at Brod Bay and Iris Burn. Otherwise, you must use the huts.

The recommended route is counter-clockwise and the 1½-hour walk along the edge of Lake Te Anau is often traded for a 20-minute boat ride to the starting point at Brod Bay. Because the huts are not booked in advance, you can adjust your walk to your time and schedule. The typical **first day** is eight km (five miles) and takes about four hours, ending at Luxmore Hut, near which there are limestone caves to explore. This walk is above the bushline and has the biggest climb of the trip. The **second day** (14.6 km/nine miles) is five to six hours and takes you over the Luxmore Saddle (past two emergency shelters) to the Iris Burn Hut. Crossing the saddle can be particularly dangerous if the wind is howling or there is heavy rain or winter conditions. **Day three** (16.2 km, 10 miles) is also five to six hours and leads through beech forest, along the river and into podocarp forest to Moturau Hut. The hut is beside a beach with great views of Lake Manapouri. The **final day** (15.5 km, 9.6 miles) is through beech forest and wetlands and winds along the Waiau River. It's a bit shorter (four to five hours) and ends at the Te Anau Control

Gates. There is an option to use bus service from Rainbow Reach, which cuts the last day to one to two hours (six km/three miles).

Did you know? Every year on the first weekend of December, there is a running race on the Kepler Track. The current record is four hours, 41 minutes.

Transport: You can go by boat to Brod Bay with **Sinbad Cruises**, one-way $20, round-trip $35. sinbad@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7106 or 025-408-080; **Lakeland Boat Hire**, one-way $20, round-trip $35. stevesaunders@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-8364. **Southern Lakes Helicopters**, provides service to Luxmore Hut; $125 per person, minimum of two people, info@southernlakeshelicopters.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7167 or 0508-249-7167. Bus service from Te Anau to Control Gates and Te Anau from Rainbow Reach is available through **Tracknet**, $5, res@tracknet.net ☎ 03-249-7777.

The **Hollyford Track** is, like the Milford, mostly a valley walk, but this is the only one that takes you right out to the coast. It's a 56-km (35-mile) low-altitude track that can be walked year-round and in either direction. It ends (or begins) at Martins Bay, home of a New Zealand fur seal colony and a group of crested penguins. In addition to the fur seals, highlights include the Hollyford River and the waterfalls. The track isn't as well-defined as the others and isn't serviced, so trampers need to be more self-sufficient; parts of the track are prone to flooding and trampers can be delayed – so carry extra food. There are jet-boat options for the Lake McKerrow section, a portion fondly referred to as the Demon Trail that can, because of the rockiness and undulations, live up to its name. Don't think just the wimps opt for the jet-boat option; in fact, getting onto the river affords you gob-smacking views of the forest. A good transport option is to walk toward the coast, take the jet-boat along the river to Martins Bay and then walk back to the track's beginning, thereby eliminating the cost of a flight in or out.

Typically, the track is done over four days, and one option is to fly to Martins Bay, and then walk back to the Humbolt Creek Car Park (where prearranged transport can pick you up). Alternatively, you can begin at the car park and arrange for a flight out the other end (or walk back, if you're keen). Camping is allowed on the Hollyford, and huts are not booked in advance. Hut fees are $10 per adult per night.

Transport: If you're not on a tight budget, I suggest you fly to Martins Bay and walk back to the car park at Humbolt Creek. For air transport, contact **Air Fiordland**, $415 for four people, reservations@airfiordland.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7505 or 0800-107-505. **Hollyford Track** also provides air, boat and bus transport; contact them for details, info@hollyfordtrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3760 or 0800-832-226. Bus transport from Te Anau to the Hollyford track can be arranged through **Tracknet**, res@tracknet.net, ☎ 03-249-7777, or **Trips 'n Tramps**, dave@milfordtourswalks.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7081.

Tip: The Hollyford and Dusky have three-wire bridges. The other walks have swing bridges, but these three-wire deals are the real thing. I shuffle along, holding on the whole time, of course!

The **Dusky Track** is for more experienced trampers who are prepared to be self-sufficient and handle circumstances as they arise. It's more remote and incurs relatively high transport costs, and at 84 km (52 miles), it takes at least eight days, involves over a dozen three-wire bridge crossings, crosses two mountain ranges and traverses three valleys. It's not a dawdle. But, if you're prepared and experienced, it is one of the most rewarding tracks in New Zealand. There are a couple of passes, a lot of bush and a lot of swamp. The area around Lake Roe is really beautiful, and, while the track goes to Dusky Sound, you don't see much of the fiord – just across the arm. It's advisable to carry mountain radios; parts of the track are prone to flooding – trampers have been rescued from trees! Huts are not booked in advance, so beds aren't guaranteed, but it's highly unlikely you'll find a crowd. Hut prices are $5 per adult per night.

Transport to the Dusky Track will probably involve an airplane, and **Waterwings Airways** has daily scheduled flights to Supper Cove during the summer (subject to weather and passenger numbers). waterwings@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7405. To get to the track, you need to come across either Lake Hauroko or Lake Manapouri, depending on where you want to start your trip. Contact **Lake Hauroko Tours** ($60) ☎ 03-226-6681.

The **Routeburn Track** (33 km/20 miles) can be accessed either from the Te Anau end or the Glenorchy end, and is the track that many locals choose as the best. It offers a taste of everything – the western rainforest and moss, lots of time just above or just below the bush line. To me, the Routeburn means moss and moss gardens. Those who have seen both say that the views across the Hollyford valley to the Darran mountains rival anything in the Himalayas (I'll have to go to the Himalayas and get back to you on that). The birdlife is great on the Routeburn, with lots of robins, fantails, bell birds, yellowheads and parakeets. While my memories of the Routeburn are of rainy moss, yours may be of crystal-clear views of sheer mountains and peaks. Like the Milford, there are plenty of waterfalls to keep you busy with your camera. This walk goes through both Fiordland and Mt. Aspiring National Parks and has been used as a recreational walk since the 1880s. It takes three days and two nights to complete, but day-walks from either end are reasonable options. Historically, the route was used by Maori in search of pounamu.

Guided Options

Guided walks include full meal service, transport, and much more posh accommodation than DoC huts. Contact **Ultimate Hikes New Zealand**, www.ultimatehikes.co.nz, for information on the **Milford Track Guided Walk**, ☎ 03-441-1138 or 0800-659-255, and the **Routeburn Walk Ltd.**, ☎ 03-442-8200 or 0800-768-832. Prices for guided walks on the Milford range from $1,490 in the low season to $1,750 in the high; on the Routeburn, $950 for low season, $1,090 high. **Hollyford Track Guided Walks** can be reached at www.hollyfordtrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3760 or 0800-832-226. Prices on the Hollyford range from $1,860 to $2,220, depending on length of walk and transport options.

Other Walks

Tip: Don't despair if you can't book a Great Walk or if you don't have time to do four or five days – there are some spectacular day-walk options around Fiordland!

From Te Anau

Along the Milford Road you will find one of the best short walks in New Zealand – the walk to **Key Summit** on the Routeburn Track. It's very easily accessible and one of the most brilliant viewpoints in Fiordlands. The track begins about one hour along on the Milford Road from Te Anau and takes 1½ hours to the top, and an hour to get down. If it's a clear day, take a picnic and plan to sit up there for awhile.

A little farther along the Milford Road is the track to **Lake Marion** – a rocky little hike that is easily followed for about 1½-two hours up. The track crosses the Hollyford River on a swing bridge and travels through a great stand of beech forest to waterfalls before ascending to the lake.

The **Gertrude Saddle**, accessed a little farther along the Milford Road, takes two hours to reach and offers great views along the length of the Milford Sound.

If you have a little extra money to spend, rent a helicopter (see page 577 above) to **Luxmore Hut** on the Kepler Track, walk to the summit and then hike back down to Brod Bay and catch a boat ride back across to Te Anau.

Manapouri Tracks

There are several tracks on the eastern side of Lake Manapouri. These are becoming more popular as people have experienced the other walks and are looking for new walks in the area. They are a bit more remote, but accessed easily from Manapouri. You can tie a couple in together and stay out for two or three days. Each leg of the tracks is at most two or three hours, so this is a perfect area for families and school groups and they can be used as day-walks. The only bugger here is that the Waiau River is not bridged – and the tracks are on the other side of the river! However, you can get across the river by hired dinghy or boat. There are more demanding tramps as well, and you can inquire about them at the DoC office.

Row boat rental for crossing the river is available through **Adventure Kayak & Cruise**, ☎ 03-249-6626. Dinghy rental is available from **Fish Fiordland**, arranged through the Manapouri Store, ☎ 03-249-8070.

Guided Day-Walks

One-day guided walks on the Milford Track can be arranged with **Trips 'n Tramps**, www.milfordtourswalks.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7081, and **Milford Track Encounters**, www.ultimatehikes.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-1138 or 0800-659-255.

For day- and overnight walks around Manapouri, contact **Adventure Manapouri**, www.adventuremanapouri.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7111 or 03-249-8070.

Fiordland Guides Ltd. offers full- and half-day nature walks in the Fiordland National Park, as well as overnight camping trips. www.fiordlandguides.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7832.

Upland Journeys individualizes trips in Fiordland National Park. www.upland.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7492 or 025-606-0424.

Gear Rental

Te Anau Sportsworld, www.sportsworldteanau.co.nz, 38 Town Centre, ☎ 03-249-8195, fax 03-249-8023.

Bev's Tramping Gear Hire, www.ubd.co.nz/bevs.hire, 16 Homer Street, ☎/fax 03-249-7389 or 025-223-4214.

■ On the Road

The favored scenic drive is fondly referred to as the **Milford Road Experience**. The Milford Road is one of the world's most scenic driving trips and stretches for 119 km (74 miles) from Te Anau to Milford. (The return drive is along the same road.) Allow yourself eight hours if you are driving yourself and planning to do a scenic boat trip on Milford Sound. Pick up a copy of *Travel Tips for Drivers* from DoC and heed their advice – to avoid traffic congestion, either depart Te Anau before 8 am or after 11 am. The buses depart between 9 and 10 am and most stop at the same places you'll want to visit! There are no fuel stops along the way, so be sure you have a full tank before you set out.

The Mirror Lakes and Knobs Flat are popular stopping points but there are also many other sites and short walks, and over a dozen camping areas. The Homer Tunnel, New Zealand's longest, is 1.2 km (¾ mile) long and was completed in 1953. It was quite a feat of engineering (and no doubt explosives). On the Milford end of the tunnel, the road makes quite a steep descent.

■ On Bikes

Fiordland Bike 'n Hike uses van support and gives you the opportunity to cycle the downhill bits of the Milford Road. The trip also includes a cruise on Milford Sound. $119. www.bikefiordland.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7098 or 027-417-1174.

■ On Horses

High Ride Horse Treks has three trips per day and takes riders along the Whitestone River, offering views of the surrounding area while exploring the countryside. $70 per person. **High Ride 4-Wheeler Adventures** is another option at the same location, and is a cool way to see the sites. Trips begin on easy farmland and, as your confidence increases, so does the challenge. The best part, though, is the views of the area. www.highride.co.nz, 865 Wilderness Road, ☎ 03-249-8591.

Westray Horse Treks run two-hour rides providing great views. $60 adults, $45 children. agillespie@xtra.co.nz, 55 Ramparts Road, ☎ 03-249-9079 or 027-201-2014.

■ On the Farm

You can have a good old Kiwi farm experience at **Glen Monarch**. There are plenty of animals – deer, sheep and cattle – and you can watch sheep shearing, have a tour or watch sheepdogs work. Tours are a minimum of two hours. $45 per person and include morning or afternoon tea. Kakapo Road, ☎ 03-249-7041 or 025-200-0268.

■ In the Air

I really believe that you can't appreciate this area unless you see it from both water and sky level – I am constantly astounded at the enormity of the place. The views from above are spectacular and it's worth a wait for the weather to clear before you go up. You can combine flights and boat trips; the options are just about endless with all the operators, so pick your weapon and go for it.

In Te Anau, if you want the the trip of a lifetime, contact **Wings & Water** and go for a floatplane trip. Trips from 10 minutes to over an hour can be arranged, and prices begin at $65. If you're lucky, you'll be able to get on a trip to pick up trampers in remote huts and sounds. wingsandwater@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7405.

Southern Lakes Helicopters can get you into places that only exist in your mind. Take as long or as short a trip as you want and remember to breathe. slheli@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7167 or 0508-249-7167.

Fixedwing scenic flights are available through **Air Fiordland** and can range from 10 minutes to an hour, with prices beginning at $150. www.airfiordland.com, ☎ 03-442-3404 or 0800-103-404.

Milford Helicopters Ltd. is based in Milford and offers scenic flights in and around Milford Sound. They also do trips with glacier landings. Inquire for prices. milford.helicopters@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-8384 or 03-249-7845.

South West Helicopters runs charters, customized flights and links to the Hump Ridge Track and Tuatapere. www.southwesthelicopters.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7402 or 027-433-4609.

If you are not staying in Te Anau, take my very favorite trip in New Zealand and fly by helicopter from Wanaka – you will be amazed and delighted. I've said it before, but I'll say it again – flying from Wanaka gives you fantastic scenery that the other routes don't include. Contact **Wanaka Helicopters**, www.heliflights.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-1085.

Where to Stay

■ Te Anau

Top of the heap is **Fiordland Lodge**. Just a few minutes outside of Te Anau, it's perched on a hill with fabulous views of the lake and mountains. The owners are fishing guides and, after receiving plenty of requests for accommodation in the area, they saw the need for an upmarket lodge and built their own. Their cabins with bath and kitchen are also very popular and very affordable. www.fiordlandlodge.co.nz, Te Anau-Milford Highway, ☎ 03-249-7832 ($$$-$$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Rates are per room based on double occupancy. Rates lower if single occupancy or sharing a bed. Higher rates on holidays.	
$	Up to NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$100-$175
$$$$	NZ$175+

The nicest hotel in town is **Te Anau Hotel and Villas**. It's right on the lake and, in addition to great views, has a swimming pool, spa, and more extras.

Big renovations have been ongoing since 1999. www.holiday-inn.com, Lakefront Drive, ☎ 03-249-9700 or 0800-223-687 ($$$-$$$$).

For a jump back to the 1960s, ask for the room with the vibrating bed at **The Village Inn**. The inn is getting older, but it's still a reliable place to stay. www.thevillageinn.co.nz, Mokoroa Street, ☎ 03-249-7911 or 0800-249-791 ($$$).

You'll get good value at **Anchorage Motel**. There are just 14 rooms, some studios, some one- and two-bedroom. www.teanaumotel.co.nz, 47 Quintin Drive, ☎ 03-249-7256 or 0800-180-191 ($$-$$$).

Another dependable, lakefront place to stay is **Garden Park Motel**. Units are cottage-style and all are non-smoking. www.gardenpark.co.nz, 30 Lakefront Drive, ☎ 03-249-7064 or 0800-246-248 ($$-$$$).

Radford's Lakeview Motel was built in 2000 and is on the lake. There are a variety of room types and all are non-smoking. www.radfordslakeviewmotel.co.nz, 56 Lakefront Drive, ☎ 03-249-9186 or 0800-782-972, fax 03-249-9187 ($$$).

Slightly out of town and right above the lake is **The Croft B&B**. There are two cottages on a small farm. www.thecroft.co.nz, Milford Highway, ☎ 03-249-7393 ($$$).

Rob and Nancy's Place has two rooms, one with en-suite bathroom and one with private bath down the hall. www.bnb.nz/hosts/robnancyplace.html, 13 Fergus Square, ☎ 03-249-8241, fax 03-249-7397 ($$$).

Shakespeare House is a bit bigger, with eight rooms, all with en-suite bathroom, ranging from single to quad rooms. They also have a unit with bath and kitchen. www.shakespearehouse.co.nz, 10 Dusky Street, ☎ 03-249-7349 or 0800-249-349, ($-$$).

New owners took over **The Cats Whiskers** in 2003. It's a great location across from DoC and boasts a big breakfast! www.fiordland.org.nz/html/catswhiskers.html, 2 Lakefront Drive, ☎/fax 03-249-8112 ($$$).

A good farmstay option is **Mount Prospect High Country Homestay**. A guided farm tour is included in the dinner, bed and breakfast rate and guests can feel free to jump in on farm activities. www.mtprospectstation.co.nz, Mt. Prospect Road, ☎ 03-249-7082 fax 03-249-7085 ($$$$).

Steamers Beach Backpackers & West Arm Lodge is a bit of a mouthful. It's part of the Te Anau Lake View Kiwi Holiday Park and offers extras like lake-facing rooms with balconies and SKY TV. It's in a great location (across from DoC) and has doubles, twins and shared-bath rooms. Corner Te Anau Terrace & Manapouri Road, ☎ 03-249-7737 or 0800-483-2628 ($).

A big and busy place, but very friendly and having all types of room arrangements (including some with en-suite bathroom), **Te Anau Lakefront Backpackers** is right across from the lake. www.teanaubackpackers.co.nz, 48 Lakefront Drive, ☎ 03-249-7713 or 0800-200-074 ($).

The **YHA** in town is just a block off the lake and is a friendly and comfortable place to stay. Twin, double and family rooms are available and some have en-suite bathrooms. Very well run and a pleasant staff round out the offerings. www.stayyha.com, 29 Mokonui Street, ☎ 03-249-7847 ($).

The primo holiday park in town is **Te Anau Top 10 Mountain View**. It's very well-done and comfortable, with little extras that you don't always find.

All rooms in the new (2003) **Matai Lodge** have bath and there's a common room; there are also cabins, units with bath and kitchen, campervan and tent sites. www.teanautop10.co.nz, 128 Te Anau Terrace, ☎ 03-249-7462 or 0800-249-746, fax 03-249-7262 ($-$$$).

Te Anau Great Lakes Holiday Park is the newest holiday park in town and closest to the town center, which also means farthest from the lake. But it is new, clean and modern and has motels, cabins, units with bath and dorm rooms. www.teanaugreatlakes.co.nz, corner Luxmore Drive & Milford Road, ☎ 03-249-8538 or 0800-249-555 ($-$$$).

Te Anau Lake View Holiday Park has the full range of accommodation, a shop, coin-operated BBQ, TV lounge and Internet facilities. It's right across from the lake on the road to Manapouri, and a pleasant place to stay. www.teanau.info, 1 Te Anau-Manapouri Road, ☎ 03-249-7457, fax 03-249-7536 ($-$$).

■ Te Anau Downs

The location of **Fiordland National Park B&B Hotel** is definitely a plus – right at the edge of Lake Te Anau and departure point for catching the boats to the Milford Track. It's a bit older, but that can be forgiven. www.teanau-milfordsound.co.nz, SH94, ☎ 03-249-7510 or 0800-500-706 ($$).

Owned by the same folks as the B&B is **Grumpy's Backpackers**, which has 11 rooms, all with en-suite bathrooms. It's an older building, but the location makes up for any shortcomings. The story goes that Dave (the owner) gets grumpy if you ask more than a couple of questions. www.teanau-milfordsound.co.nz, SH94, ☎ 03-249-8133 or 0800-478-6797 ($).

■ Milford Sound

The only place to stay in Milford Sound was getting a bit tired, but new owners and a big renovation have meant major improvements in the **Milford Sound Lodge**. There are only 24 backpacker rooms, though, so book early if you want to be in Milford Sound, right on the edge of the river. milford.sound.lodge@xtra.co.nz, SH94, Milford Sound, ☎ 03-249-8071 fax 03-249-8075 ($).

■ Manapouri

For an historic place to stay, try **Murrell's Grand View House**, which has been owned by the same family and run as a guest house since 1889. All the extras – bathrobes, fresh fruit, full breakfast, big gardens – are there. www.murrells.co.nz, 7 Murrell Avenue, ☎ 03-249-6642, fax 03-249-6966 ($$$$).

Manapouri Lakeview Motor Inn may not be anything fancy, but has all levels of accommodation and a great location looking out over the lake. Café and bar on-site and all rooms (including backpackers) have en-suite bathrooms. www.manapouri.com, 68 Cathedral Drive, ☎/fax 03-249-6652 ($-$$).

Chalets at **Manapouri Lakeview Motel and Motor Park** are hand-built and have interesting, quirky features (including one that is in ¾-scale). There is a big Penny Arcade-like game room as well as cabins, motels, tourist apartments and sites for tents. www.ubd-online.co.nz/manapourilakeview, fjordland@xtra.co.nz, 50 Manapouri-Te Anau Road, ☎ 03-249-6642, fax 03-249-6699 ($-$$).

Where to Eat in Te Anau

Redcliff Café has great food, good drinks and a fabulous atmosphere. 12 Mokonui Street, ☎ 03-249-7431 ($$).

AUTHOR'S PICK

La Toscana is a good choice, especially if you're in the mood for pizza or pasta. Takeouts and deliveries are available, too. 108 Town Centre ($-$$).

For good honest pub food, go to **The Ranch Café Bar & Grill**. They even have a $12 Sunday roast. Town Centre ($-$$).

Naturally Fiordland has good juice, smoothies, tea and coffee. 62 Town Centre ($).

The **Olive Tree Café** serves very good, interesting evening and lunch meals (not to mention full breakfast) and great coffee. It pays not to be in a hurry, though. 52 Town Centre ($-$$).

Huge meals, quick service and upmarket pub food is at **Bailez Café and Bar** at the Luxmore Hotel. Town Centre ($-$$).

DINING PRICE CHART

Price per person for an entrée, not including beverage or tip.

$	Under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$20-$30
$$$$	NZ$30+

Southland

Introduction

The Southern Scenic Route was the first touring route to be established in New Zealand and runs through diverse rural countryside, along the windswept southern coast, to the deep-south towns of Invercargill and Bluff, and meanders through the incredible Catlins. There is a pride in southern hospitality here, and the unspoiled scenery very well may entice you to stay longer than you had planned. If you like to fish, this is the place to be – the rivers are filled.

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- **Central Southland** 600

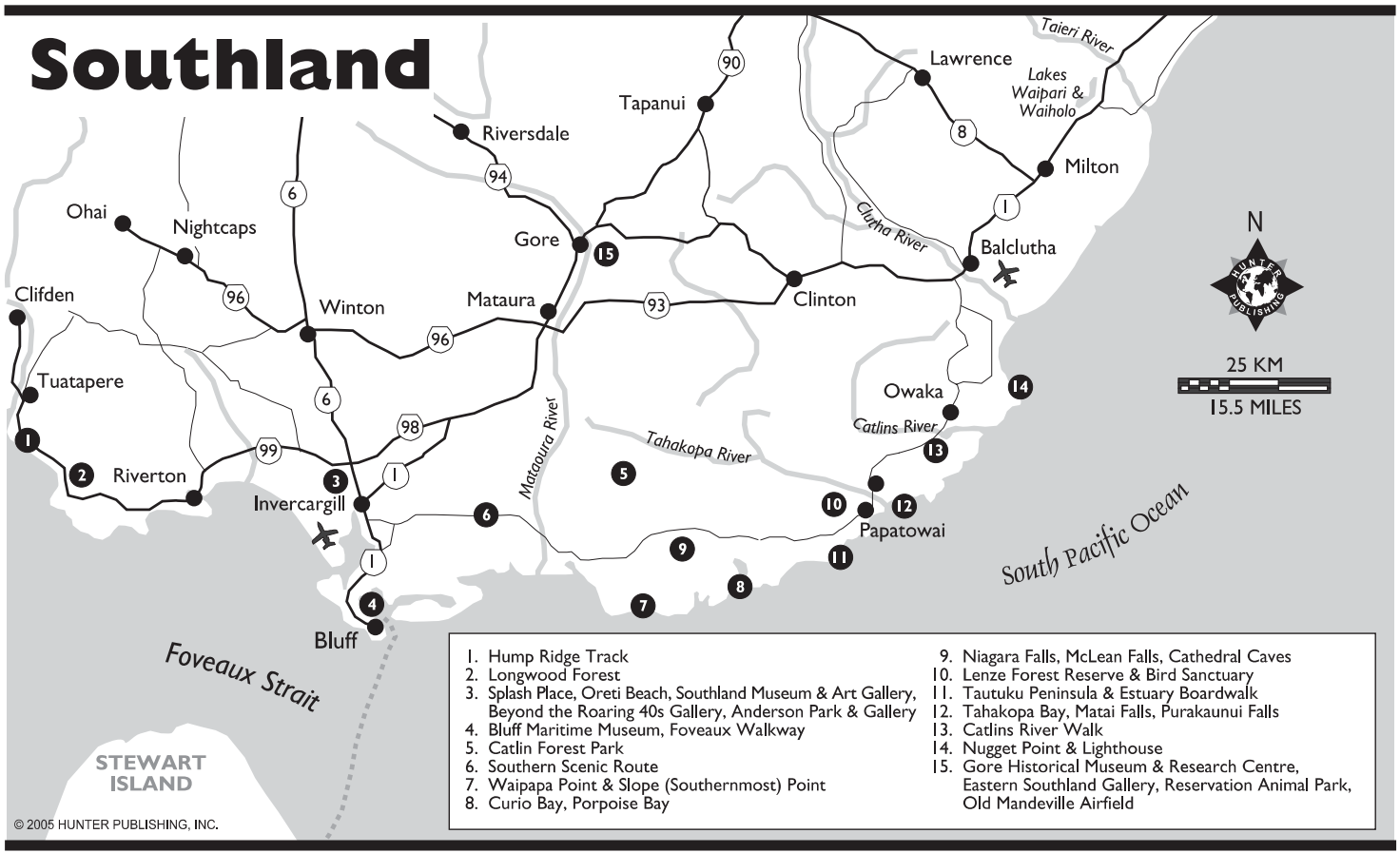
Abundant fish and bird life attracted Maori to Southland in the early 1100s. In the late 1700s the first Europeans arrived and were, as in so many other early settlements, sealers. It didn't take long to see that the rich soil could support sheep and crops, so farmers from Dunedin began to shift south. Bluff became a port in response to farmers' demands for increased livestock numbers and Invercargill was developed as the city to support the port. Sheep continued to be the major livestock commodity, but over the last handful of years sheep numbers have declined, while dairy herds have increased, both in number and in size.

The southern part of New Zealand has taken more than its share of grief from the rest of the country – it seems to be the butt of jokes about rural lifestyle and being at the end of the earth. Perhaps, though, that has made the region and its people more confident and assured. They are certainly more innovative when it comes to education. In 2001, the Southland community established a zero-fees policy, where students enrolled at the Southern Institute of Technology would pay no fees for their education. It was determined that the income from out-of-region students would more than make up for the fees lost and the region, in need of an educated work force, would continue to benefit. This successful scheme has continued and is an example for the rest of the country (where college students regularly rack up rather hefty loan fees).

Getting Here

By Air

Air New Zealand (www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000) and **Origin Pacific** (www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302) both have regular scheduled flights in and out of Invercargill. **Stewart Island Flights** operate services to Stewart Island (www.stewartislandflights.com, ☎ 03-218-9129, fax 03-214-4681). The airport is just three km (two miles) outside of town and scenic flights are available throughout the region.



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■ By Car

There are several different ways to access Southland – the highways leading to the southern coast look like a series of rivers. The Southern Scenic Route includes sections on a few different state highways and secondary roads. It starts in Manapouri and ends in Dunedin.

The direct route between Invercargill and Dunedin passes through Gore on SH1. This is about 217 km (135 miles) and takes three hours. To take the Southern Scenic Route between these two towns adds 60 km (36 miles) and 2½ hours of drive time.

From Queenstown, the direct route to Invercargill is SH6. It is 187 km (116 miles) and takes 2½ hours.

SH94 and SH96 do an east-west jump across the region.

■ By Bus

> **Tip:** If you want to get somewhere specific deep on the South Island, it's sometimes easier to combine the services of more than one transport operator. Consult a visitor center for advice and time schedules.

InterCity Coachlines travel between Invercargill and Te Anau, Dunedin and Christchurch. www.intercitycoach.co.nz, Information Centre, Southland Museum and Art Galleries, Gala Street. ☎ 03-474-9600.

Atomic Shuttles run between Invercargill, Dunedin, and Queenstown (via Gore). They stop at the corner of Tancred and Hamilton Streets in Invercargill. www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-214-6243 or 03-218-9000.

KnightRider Bus Service links Invercargill with Christchurch on an regularly scheduled overnight run. They pick up at Blue Star Taxi. ☎ 03-342-8055 or 025-800-610.

The **Spitfire Shuttle** runs between Te Anau and Invercargill daily. They also provide service to the jet-boat operators on Lake Hauroko and to the Hump Ridge Track. reservations@spitfire.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7654 or 027-228-3834, fax 03-249-7080.

The **Bottom Bus** offers trips and transport to stops around the south, including Queenstown, Dunedin, the Catlins and Invercargill. www.bottombus.
co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9708, fax 03-442-7038.

Information Sources

For more information about the region, check out **www.southlandnz.com**.

Local information centers are listed in appropriate sections.

> **Tip:** If you are interested in gardens, pick up a copy of *Southland Gardens*. It lists over 30 gardens open to the public throughout the region.

The Southern Scenic Route

■ Te Anau to Invercargill

From Te Anau, it's just a short drive on SH95 to Manapouri. For details on this section, see the Fiordlands chapter. Leaving Manapouri and heading south, you quickly leave the rain forest and enter the Redcliff Wetland, where waterfowl can often be seen from the road. The drive continues as a rather straight shot to the coast. Along the way, there are a few sights to see and walks to take.

> **Did you know?** Lake Hauroko is the deepest lake in New Zealand. Boat service from here provides access to the Dusky Track. The bluff over the lake is the site of ancient Maori burial grounds.

Tuatapere

Tuatapere is the "Sausage Capital of New Zealand" and you'll probably want your camera ready to take a photo of the giant smiling sausage that welcomes you to town (I know that I did). The town's other claim to fame is being the access point for the **Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track**. The track is managed by the people of Tuatapere – who have moved away from the harvesting of rain forest to embrace tourists who enjoy a wander through it. The track took a decade to build and is the only Great Walk to be privately managed. It's a bit of a community success story.

Information Sources

The **Tuatapere Information Centre** has lots of Hump Ridge track information and some limited tramping supplies. info@visitorcentre.co.nz, Main Road, ☎ 03-226-6399 fax 03-226-6074.

Adventures

■ On Water

The story goes that the farmers around here realized that the rivers they were using to access their livestock were, in fact, pretty darned special and figured that a few tourists might be interested in jetting along the scenery. I'm not sure how true the story is, and while the jet-boat trips on the Wairaurahiri River may not have the mile-high limestone gorges of Shotover, the 27 km (17 miles) of mostly grade III rapids is reason enough to hold your breath. The Wairaurahiri River drains Lake Hauroko and drops over 500 feet to meet the sea. Most operators provide transport for day-trips and most also provide transport for those trampers walking the Hump Ridge Track.

WJET has offer 74 km (46 miles) of jet-boating – starting in the lake and moving into the river. Some trips include bush walks. Prices begin at $99 adults (for a short twilight ride), $49 children. www.wjet.co.nz, ☎ 03-226-6845 or 0800-376-174.

Hump Ridge Jet also starts on Lake Hauroko and then moves to the Wairaurahiri River, and out to the sea, where you can take a bit of a walk along the track. This trip can be combined with a helicopter trip. Prices begin

at $140 adults. www.wildernessjet.co.nz or www.humpridgejet.com, ☎ 03-225-8174 or 0800-270-556.

Waiau Jet Tours has one- to four-hour trips. The four-hour trip includes a BBQ and the 3½-hour trip goes to the giant totara trees. Prices begin at $40 per person. For information, call the Highway 99 Café/Bar, ☎ 03-226-6996 or 0800-009-993.

■ On Foot

The 53-km (33-mile) **Hump Ridge Track** is the newest major walking track in New Zealand. It typically takes three days to walk and accommodation is in two huts – 40 bunks each with gas cookers, hot water, lights and flush toilets. It is a circuit track and begins and ends at the Bluecliffs Car Park. Transport to the car park must be arranged.

The **first day** begins with a coastal walk, during which you may spot dolphins playing in the bay. After you enter the mixed podocarp/beech forest, be prepared for a bit of a climb (600 meters/1,900 feet), but your effort will be rewarded with great views along the way. The first day takes about eight or nine hours and you'll be a tired little tramper at the end of it. **Day two** isn't so much climbing – at least not all at once – but you'll wander up and down through the Waitutu Forest, traversing the Hump Ridge (you were wondering about that name, weren't you?) and eventually descending to the Edwin Burn and the Percy Burn Viaducts.

> **Did you know?** The Percy Burn Viaduct is the highest remaining wooden viaduct in the world. It's 36 meters (117 feet) high and 125 meters (400 feet) long.

From the Percy Viaduct, it's along the coast to Port Craig Village, which is a good reminder of this region's logging and sawmilling past. The settlement and sawmill began in 1917 and the school was built in 1925. The Depression caused the closure of the sawmill, and most of the buildings in the settlement were destroyed in response to the threat of Japanese invasion during WWII. The second day of the walk takes about seven hours. **Day three** is lots of downhill, meanders through coastal rimu forest, and eventually lands on the beach. The final blast follows the same track that you walked in on the first day. Plan on about six or seven hours on the last day.

The Hump Ridge Track must be booked in advance through the **Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track Office**. In addition to the basic $40 hut fees, extras include transport to and from the beginning/end of the track (about $35 per segment) and optional pack transport (via helicopter at $45 per sector or $120 for the full circuit).

A fully-catered and -supported guided option is also available (with optional upgrade at Okaka Hut to a cottage, the "Hump Suite" and to a twin or super king with en-suite bathroom at Port Craig Village) for $995. Pack transport is included in the guided option.

For all bookings, including the guided option, contact the **Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track Office**, www.humpridgetrack.co.nz, 31 Orawia Road, Tuatapere, ☎ 03-226-6739 or 0800-486-774.

In addition to the Hump Ridge Track, there are other walk options. The **South Coast Track** begins at the same point as the car park for the Hump Ridge Track and follows the same track to the Edwin Burn. It then sticks to

the historic tramline and skirts the coast to the Wairaurahiri Hut at the end of the river. You can continue on from there to the Waitutu Hut and then along a route to Lake Hakapoua. In total, it's about 70 km (42 miles), some of which is not particularly well-marked. Inquire at the information center for details. Another walk option is a tramping route that goes up to Lake Hauroko and on to the Hauroko Car Park. Best to inquire at the information center about this one, it's recommended for experienced trampers only.

■ On Horses

Tara Downs Horse Treks has rides to suit all abilities. You'll ride through changing scenery and landscape and be rewarded with great views – on clear days, you can see Stewart Island (see pages 603 ff.). Riding can be in the bush or on sand dunes (or a combination). 549 Omaui Road, 19 km, south of Invercargill. ☎ 03-214-0011 or 025-683-2466.

Beaumont Station in Otautau is a high-country sheep station and has horseback rides departing at 10:30 am; $140 per person. minty1@xtra.co.nz, ☎03-225-4721 or 027-292-8204.

Where to Stay in Tuatapere

Borland Lodge is a YHA affiliate and is at the edge of Fiordlands. It is owned by the Borland Adventure and Education Trust and, while often used for group educational activities, is open for individual use. There are a variety of walks from the lodge, and manager Gary is very happy to help arrange transport. There are some great mountain-bike trips as well and the lodge has kayaks available for use. In 2004, the chalet accommodations were undergoing a major renovation and refit. borland@ihug.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-225-5464 ($).

The **Waiau Hotel** was opened in 1909 and is a real country hotel with simple accommodation, but it's clean and friendly. En-suites and shared-bath rooms are available and there is a big garden out back. www.waiauhotel.co.nz, 47 Main Street, ☎ 03-226-6409 ($).

Tuatapere Motel has units with bath and kitchen and is new, simple and close to the Hump Ridge Walking Track. 73 Main Street, ☎ 03-226-6250 or 0800-009-993. $$)

Rarakau Lodge is on a 3,000-acre farm at the very beginning of the Hump Ridge Track and has shared-bath and private-bath bunk rooms and a full kitchen. Handy for the track and you can take a farm tour if you desire. www.rarakaulodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-225-8192 ($).

> **Tip:** Check out the windswept trees in Orepuki! And take a picnic out to the long beach at Monkey Island.

Colac Bay

One of my favorite photo spots in the Deep South is at the entrance to Colac Bay – check out the gigantic surfer on the shell, and then stop at Isobel's Weaving Studio just up the road. The beach is a favorite with surfers and swimmers.

Riverton

Riverton has tried to get away with calling itself the "Riviera of the South" and, while I'm not one to squash someone else's dreams, this is a bit of an ex-

aggeration. Riverton is a delightful little town to poke around and stay the night. But Riviera? Not quite. Riverton had its start in the sealing and whaling days and it reminds me very much of coastal Nova Scotia, a fishing village that's busy, yet quiet and there are a couple of shops where you can buy fresh catch. It's a nice bike ride out to The Rocks.

Information Sources

The **Riverton Visitor Information Centre** is based in the Early Settlers Museum, 172 Palmerston Street, ☎ 03-234-9991.

Souvenir Options

If you're tired of buying things someone else has made, learn to weave or carve at the **Maori Craft Studio**. The studio is run by a husband and wife team, and you can stay as long or short as you like, creating your own little gem. Lessons can include accommodation. (Or you can just buy something they've already made.) soloman.whanau@xtra.co.nz, 130 Palmerston Street, ☎ 03-234-8520.

You can buy paua and jade jewelry at **Fiordland Souvenirs Ltd. Factory Shop** (35 Bath Road) and at **Fiordland NZ Gift Studio** (166 Palmerston Street) or settle for photographing yourself in the giant paua shell just at the edge of town (this will make a nice bookend to the one of you with the big surfer in Colac Bay).

Where to Stay in Riverton

The Riverton Rock guesthouse is a beautiful accommodation and as comfortable a place to stay as I've ever experienced. It's a renovated hotel and there's a large lounge, comfortable beds and real coffee in the kitchen. Definitely a top value for money. www.riverton.co.nz, 136 Palmerston Street, ☎ 03-234-8886 fax 03-234-8816 ($).

Just next door is the **Globe Backpackers and Bar** which is also a recently renovated hotel. It's more of a country pub and has twins, doubles and dorms. All the rooms are clean and breakfast is included. The very friendly hosts also have two units with bath and kitchen on Taramea Bay Road at the beach – which fill up very quickly! www.theglobe.co.nz, ☎ 03-234-8527 or 0800-843-456 ($-$$).

Where to Eat in Riverton

You wouldn't be far from wrong if you thought that it's all fish and chips and pub meals in Riverton, but head out the Rocks Highway and stop at the **Beach House Café and Bar** for a delicious lunch or dinner. Or just a cuppa and dessert ($$).

Invercargill

The regional center for Southland, Invercargill doesn't rank too high on most traveler's lists. It is a blustery kind of place and definitely takes a beating from the weather (next stop Antarctica), but it's wind strength is actually lower than in Wellington (which isn't really a very strong bragging point at

all, come to think of it). All-in-all, while not home to many major tourist attractions, it's a handy spot for replenishing supplies, getting a night's rest and, if you are at all interested in gardening, spending quite a few hours ambling around some of the magnificent public gardens here. The art gallery is also worth a visit, particularly if it's raining out.

Information Sources

The **Invercargill Information Centre** is located at the Southland Museum and Art Galleries, ☎ 03-214-6243.

Adventures

Check out **Splash Palace** for waves and waterslides. There's also a lap pool and sauna. 56 Elles Road, Invercargill, ☎ 03-217-3838, www.splashpalace.co.nz.

■ On Water

Oreti Beach is about nine km (five miles) west of the city and has a long, sandy beach that stretches nearly to Riverton. It's a popular summer swim spot and is patrolled, but be careful during a windy day, as the air can sting with sand. Entrance off Dunns Road.

■ In Art

Be sure to stop in the **Southland Museum and Art Gallery** where you'll find regional, national, Maori and international art exhibits as well as galleries on natural and human history. Check out **Beyond the Roaring 40s Gallery** for a look into life on the Subantarctic islands and don't miss the tuatara exhibit. Tuatara are reptiles from the dinosaur era and found only in New Zealand; this is the only site where they are regularly bred. As with most museums and galleries, there is a nice shop and café. Open daily (except Christmas) from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, and 10 am to 5 pm on weekends and holidays. No charge for admission. At Queens Park, ☎ 03-218-9753.

Anderson Park and Art Gallery is also worth a stop. It was built in 1924 and donated to the city in 1951. There are lovely grounds (with walking tracks), a children's play area, a carved Maori meeting house and an art gallery. Open daily, 9:30 am to 5 pm. Seven km (four miles) north of the city on SH6; turn on McIvor Road and drive three km (two miles). It's very well sign-posted.

Watchable wildlife: The Awarua wetlands (on the way to Bluff) are a large area of protected wetland and home to many migratory birds.

Where to Stay in Invercargill

The **Ascot Park Hotel** has an indoor heated swimming pool, saunas and spa pools. There are motel, hotel and studio units. ascot@ilt.co.nz, corner of Tay and Racecourse Road, ☎ 03-217-6195 or 0800-272-687 ($$-$$$).

The **Kelvin Hotel** is right in the center of town. It underwent renovations in 2001 and is clean and bright. Rooms have mini-bars and **Molly O'Grady's Restaurant and Bar** are on-site. ☎ 03-218-2829 or 0800-802-829, fax 03-218-2287 ($$$).

Clean and friendly, the **Colonial Motor Inn** is reasonably priced with full kitchens, under-floor heating and recliner chairs. www.colonialmotorinn.co.nz, 335 Tay Street, ☎ 03-217-6058, fax 03-217-6056 ($$).

Admiral Court Motel has just 10 units. The owners are friendly and helpful and the rooms are clean, modern and supplied with coffee. www.admiralcourt.co.nz, 327 Tay Street, ☎ 03-217-1117 or 0800-111-122, fax 03-217-4447 ($$-$$$).

Balmoral Lodge Motel recently underwent renovations and has some of the best accommodation in town with modern conveniences like data ports. accom@balmoral.ilt.co.nz, 265 Tay Street, ☎ 03-217-6109 or 0800-225-667, fax 03-217-5755 ($$-$$$).

Another motel worth a mention is **Birchwood Manor**. It's new, clean and comfortable and most units have either a balcony or a patio. www.birchwood.co.nz, 189 Tay Street, ☎ 03-218-8881 or 0800-888-234, fax 03-218-8880 ($$-$$$).

Gala Lodge B&B is right by Queens Park. There are three rooms with shared bath in an early-1900s home. 177 Gala Street, ☎ 03-218-8884 ($$-$$$).

One of the more popular backpacker hostels around is **Southern Comfort**. It's in an Art Nouveau villa with lovely gardens and comfortable rooms. They'll store your luggage while you go to Stewart Island and offer free bikes to use. 30 Thompson Street, ☎ 03-218-3838 ($).

Brand new and right in town is the bright and cheerful **Tuatara Lodge**. The local YHA affiliate, they have dorms, twins, doubles and "executive" rooms with en-suite bath. Other pluses are the on-site Internet café and two lounges. tuataralodge@xtra.co.nz, 30 Dee Street, ☎ 03-214-0954 or 0800-882-827 ($).

Lorneville Holiday Park has camping, tourist apartments, cabins and on-site campers. It's on a small farm with lots of mature landscaping. Get in the farming action or just relax. lornepark@xtra.co.nz, 352 Lorneville-Dacre Road, ☎ 03-235-8032, fax 03-235-8035 ($).

Where to Eat

For a good café option, try **Zookeeper's Café**. Big portions and reasonably priced. 50 Tay Street, ($-$$)

Another option is **Rocks Café** where the food is very good but more expensive. Courtville Place, 121 Dee Street ($$).

Tillermans Restaurant is the choice for a wide-ranging menu of international flavors. The food is great and so is the atmosphere. 16 Don Street ($$-$$$).

Louie's Café is another fine place for a meal and a few drinks. They have some innovative menu items and are popular with the locals. Corner of Dee and Spey Streets ($$-$$$).

If you're not into trendy and just want to sink your teeth into some ribs, head over to the old standby **Lone Star Café**. There are plenty of other Tex-Mex options on the menu, but the ribs and nachos are hard to beat. Corner of Dee and Leet Streets ($$-$$$).

Bluff

Bluff, just 27 km (17 miles) south of Invercargill, is the access point to Stewart Island, is famous for the Bluff Oyster, and is home to the Tiwai Aluminium Smelter. It is also the oldest European town in New Zealand. When you drive out to the Stirling Point car park, be sure to have your camera ready for the signpost of distances around the world.

Mark your calendar: The **Bluff Oyster Festival** is held annually in April or May and celebrates the unique Bluff Oyster. There are competitions of every type: cook-offs, fashion, wearable art, oystershell sculpture and more. Contact bluffoyster@venturesouthland.co.nz, ☎ 0800-732-386 for dates and details.

Adventures

■ On Foot

There are a number of walking tracks around town; the ones around Bluff Hill are particularly popular. You can drive to either Bluff Hill or Stirling Point where you can access one- and two-hour walks with fabulous views of the sea and Stewart Island.

Sightseeing

The **Bluff Maritime Museum** has displays about the area and its seafaring history. Open weekdays, 10 am to 5 pm, weekends and holidays, 1 pm to 5 pm. $2 adults, children free. 241 Foreshore Road, ☎ 03-212-7534.

Stop in the **Paua Shell House** and see what happens when you keep collecting shells. 258 Marine Parade, ☎ 03-212-8262.

Where to Stay in Bluff

The 1930s Art Deco **Foveaux Hotel** has en-suite bathroom and shared-bath rooms with breakfast included. 40 Gore Street, ☎ 03-212-7196, fax 03-212-7197 ($$).

Your B&B option of choice is at **Lands End**. It's right on the rocky coast and just looking at it makes me want to drink brandy by a fire. There are studios, doubles and singles. www.landsend.net.nz, 10 Ward Parade, at the end of SH1, ☎/fax 03-212-7575 ($$).

The **Lazy Fish** is an apartment with a private patio. 35 Burrows Street, ☎ 03-212-7245, fax 03-212-8868 ($$).

Where to Eat

The restaurant at **Lands End** serves breakfast, lunch and dinner and is one of the most popular spots around. You might want to try some oysters here. 10 Ward Parade ($$).

Right next door is the **Drunken Sailor Café** that has good views across the strait. They serve lunch daily (heavy on the seafood) and dinner on the weekends. 8 Ward Parade ($$).

■ The Road to Papatowai

Leaving Invercargill on the Southern Scenic Route, the incredible **Catlins** come next.

To me, this is one of the most beautiful areas in all of New Zealand. I am captivated by the wildlife – yellow-eyed penguins, Hector's dolphins, seals and Hookers sea lions and the natural formations are magic. There are waterfalls and blowholes, long beaches, dunes and a petrified forest. Wandering through farmland and hugging the coast from Tokanui to Balclutha, this is a fabulous drive for wildlife viewing and nature walks and it's also a region rich in rural appeal. I really think that to do this area justice you need to take your time – it's a poke-here-and-there kind of place with lots of side-tracks and getting in and out of the car. If you try to jet through it, you'll be exhausted and disappointed.

> **Tip:** Pick up a copy of DoC's *Southern Scenic Route, Catlins Highway Guide*.

This is one of the least-touristed areas of New Zealand, but it is getting more popular. Parts of SH92 are still unepavd, but when I last visited in early 2004, major roadworks seemed to be going on at every bend. Early Maori were attracted to the area because of the abundance of food – both the fish in the rivers and sea and the mighty moa on land. Europeans arrived first as whalers and later as farmers who raised sheep and cattle and timber; the name Catlins comes from an Australian ship's captain named Edward Cattlin, who purchased huge holds of land from resident Maori.

Getting Around

If you don't have your own car, your options are a bit limited, but there are a couple of transport operators. Contact **Catlins Coaster** for day-trips starting in either Dunedin or Invercargill. www.catlinscoaster.co.nz, ☎ 0800-304-333.

The **Bottom Bus** does a good tour of the south from either Dunedin or Invercargill and then continues on to Te Anau, Milford and Queenstown. www.bottombus.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9708.

Daily round-trips from Invercargill are an option on **Blue Star Taxis**. You'll be gone about nine hours and stop at some of the highlights. ☎ 03-218-6079 or 0800-321-860.

Information Sources

The **Waikawa Dolphin Information Centre** can be contacted at dolphinmagic@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-246-8444 or 0800-377-581.

In Balclutha, stop at the **Clutha Visitor Information Centre**, cluthavin@cluthaadc.govt.nz, 4 Clyde Street, ☎ 03-418-0388.

Sightseeing

The sea is a violent creature on this coast and many ships have been lost, including the SS *Tararua*. It wrecked on a reef just offshore at **Waipapa Point** in 1881 and 131 lives were lost (20 managed to survive). This is the worst New Zealand maritime disaster.

Traveling from Fortrose to Balclutha, Waipapa Point is your first scenic stop. **Slope Point** comes next on your list and it's the southernmost point on the South Island of New Zealand. Slope Point is on private land and access is closed during lambing season (September and October). Next along the drive is one of the best stops – **Curio Bay** – home to one of the most impressive fos-

sil forests in the world. The fossils are best viewed at low tide and a wander on the beach will take you around petrified trees that are over 160 million years old. At the shop in Curio Bay, you can rent kayaks, wetsuits and body boards.

Watchable wildlife: Curio Bay and neighboring Porpoise Bay are home to **Hector's dolphins**. These are among the smallest and rarest dolphins in the world and are only found in New Zealand waters. They feed close to shore and are often within swimming distance. Please respect these wonderful and threatened creatures and do not approach them. Let them come to you and follow all written and verbal instructions from DoC. Porpoise Bay is home to a small group – just about 20 – and they use the bay to raise their young. This is the only place in the world where Hector's dolphins live so close to shore without being bribed with food. It's very important not to harass these animals; do not feed them and do not touch them. They have very sensitive skin and it's best not to wear sunblock or lotion if you are going to swim in the same area. Again, don't approach them; if they are interested in you, they will come to you.

Yellow-eyed penguins also make their home around Curio Bay and Waikawa. Again, please respect them and do not approach them. During February to April, adults go through a molt when they are vulnerable and very susceptible to stress. Please keep this in mind when visiting. You can read more about yellow-eyed penguins on page 517.

Continuing on from Porpoise Bay, you'll reach **Waikawa** where there is a small shop and information center (and you can get a cup of tea and a biscuit here) that specializes in information about the Catlins and the dolphins. They book trips on the local **Dolphin Cruise**. Niagara is just a few minutes down the road and you owe it to yourself to see Niagara Falls. You'll know it's not "the" **Niagara Falls** and not just because you won't see anyone going over them in a barrel. The coffee shop in Niagara makes a mean latte and has very tasty cakes (and soup). They also sell local art and gifts.

There are plenty of places to stop between Waikawa and Papatowai, including some very worthwhile walks. The very pretty **McLean Falls** are at the end of a 30-minute bush walk (which is at the end of a five-minute drive up a gravel road). Once you're back on the road, the next turnoff is for the don't-miss **Cathedral Caves**, accessed only at low tide. At the entrance to the car park there is a sign with tide times (times are also posted at the information center at Owaka and the staff at Waikawa have the tidal information, as well); the walk is about 80 minutes round-trip and a real treat. These caves are the best example (and easily accessible) of all the caves along the coast. Well worth timing your visit.

Quickly back on the road and you're at the **Lenze Reserve**, a Forest and Bird Lodge and the site of some private (and worthwhile) walking tracks. See *Where to Stay* for information on lodging; if you just want to access the walks, see the caretaker in Papatowai for permission. Just about across the street is the **Tautuku Peninsula** and the **Tautuku Estuary Boardwalk**. Defi-

nitely worth the 20 minutes it takes to visit the birds. **Lake Wilkie** is another 20-minute walk with interesting forest and shore plants. If you're looking for a beach, consider either Papatowai or the Tautuku Bay. Papatowai is next and there you will find some good bush walks, beaches, a camping ground and a shop. It is also the start of the two-day privately managed Catlins Top Track. Contact **Catlins Wildlife Trackers** for information (see *Guided Options* below).

Where to Stay

There are a few places to stay along the way and more than a couple of B&Bs – best to see the information center at the start of your journey to get an up-to-date listing. You might also consider a holiday home – there are a few of them available, particularly around Curio and Porpoise bays. In addition to the information centers, Marguerite Buckingham runs a booking service for B&Bs and cottages. kj.mf.buckingham@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-246-9876.

Not too far out of Fortrose is **Greenbush B&B**, on a working sheep and cattle farm that has been in the family for generations. www.greenbush.co.nz, ☎ 03-246-9506, fax 03-246-9505 ($$$).

Slope Point Backpackers is a simple affair with accommodation for 12 in dorms and doubles. It's on a farm and pretty low-key. justherb@xtra.co.nz, 164 Slope Point Road, Tokanui, ☎/fax 03-246-8420 ($).

Just a bit farther along Slope Point Road is **Nadir Outpost** where you can choose between backpackers, B&B and tent or campervan sites. They have a very small shop, appropriately named "The Little Shoppe" and also serve as the local information center. nadir.outpost@ihug.co.nz, 174 Slope Point Road, ☎ 03-246-8544 ($-$$).

In addition to the campground at Curio Bay, there are a few other options, including **Curio Bay Accommodation**, right on the beach. You can't beat the views and it's a small, low-key kind of place. stratsnz@yahoo.com, 501 Curio Bay Road, ☎ 03-246-8797 ($).

Curio Cottage is also on the beach; it's a house with three bedrooms that sleeps up to six. $120 is for the whole house (three bedrooms). catlinsfarmstay@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-246-8843, fax 03-246-8844 ($$$).

Catlins Farmstay B&B is on a working sheep, cattle and deer farm. It's a lovely accommodation and only 25 minutes from Cathedral Caves, so easy to time your viewing and transport. Breakfast is included and dinner is available by arrangement. catlinsfarmstay@xtra.co.nz, 174 Progress Valley Road (six km north of Waikawa), ☎ 03-246-8843, fax 03-246-8844 ($$$).

The **Tautuku Lodge** at the Lenz Reserve is a handy place to stay. There is a lodge that sleeps up to 10, a cabin that sleeps four, and an A-frame that sleeps two. It's a very good place to stay while exploring the area. Contact the caretaker, dianan@clear.net.nz, ☎ 03-415-8024, fax 03-415-8244 ($-$$).

Just outside of Papatowai is **Hilltop Backpackers**, an absolutely brilliant backpacker hostels high on a hill. It only sleeps 10 and is like being in a real house – nice kitchen, lounge, fireplace. The decorations are treasures and there are mountain bikes and canoes available to use. Book in advance – I've been disappointed when I've just shown up and they're full. Two doubles and two dorms (three in each). www.catlins-nz.com/hilltop.html, 77 Tahakopa Valley Road, ☎/fax 03-415-8028 ($).

In Papatowai, there are a couple of options, including the **Papatowai Scenic Highway Motel & Store**. Just three units, sleeping five. A cheap and cheery place to stay. b.bevin@paradise.net.nz, Papatowai, ☎/fax 03-415-8147 ($$).

Southern Secrets Motel has four studios with modern furnishings. catlinsbb@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-415-8600 ($$).

You can also get a cabin (there are only two) at the **Papatowai Motor Camp**. pest@es.co.nz, ☎ 03-415-8500, fax 03-415-8503 ($).

■ Papatowai to Balclutha

Leaving Papatowai for Balclutha, stop at **Tahakopa Bay** for a 40-minute walk to an old moa-hunting camp. The walk is through coastal podocarp forest and you can opt for a two- to three-hour round-trip. The next few stops are about moving water and a quick 10-minute walk to the **Matai Falls** is worth your while. For something more spectacular, try **Purakaunui Falls**, also reached by a 10-minute forest walk, but a bit farther along your drive. If you're feeling the need to really stretch your legs, consider the five-hour (one-way) **Catlins River Walk**. It's out and back the same direction and there's camping at the end of the track. Not too much farther along, you can take a look at the rather odd **Jack's Blowhole** – situated in paddocks 200 meters (650 feet) from the sea, it is connected by a series of caverns. Paddock access is closed during lambing season.

Owaka is the big town along the Catlins, but don't let that fool you – it's still small and cozy and there isn't much reason to hang around (but you can access your e-mail and grab some groceries). Head onward to **Surat Bay**, which is long and sandy and often frequented by sea lions. **Cannibal Bay**, next around the coast, but accessed by a totally different side-road, is home to Hooker's sea lions (it was named Cannibal Bay after human bones were found in the sand dunes). Back on the main road and you'll soon be at the sign for **Tunnel Hill**, the most southerly rail tunnel, excavated by hand in the late 1800s. There is short walk to the tunnel, but don't dilly-dally too long, since you'll want to get out to **Nugget Point**, one of the most wonderful spots on the trip. There is a lighthouse at the point (built in 1869), but it is the wildlife that is the most spectacular – fur seals, sea lions, gannets, sheerwaters, shags and yellow-eyed penguins all live here. Elephant seals also stop by on occasion; it is very unusual to find them all of these animals in one place. You'll want to stay here awhile, but please, once again, respect the wildlife and don't impose on them.

Continuing up the coast, **Kaka Point**, where there are tracks through coastal remnant forest, is the last real stop before reaching Balclutha, the northern boundary to the Catlins. **Balclutha**, a regional center, is built on the Clutha River (New Zealand's largest-volume river) and here you'll find information, groceries and some accommodation. From here, it's only about 80 km (50 miles) to Dunedin.

Guided Options in the Catlins

Catlins Wildlife Trackers Ecotours has both self-guided and fully-guided (and catered) trips. Options include the two-day/two-night guided Catlins Traverse, which begins in the beech forest and ends at the beach; and the two-day self-guided Top Track, which begins at the beach and climbs to offer

great views of the area (accommodation is in a converted trolley bus). The guided options are a great way to learn about the area's natural history and wildlife. They also offer two- to four-day eco-tours around the area. Contact them for details and ideas. Prices for the self-guided trip begin at $35 (add $5 for pack transport); guided options begin at $375. www.catlins-ecotrous.co.nz, ☎ 03-415-8613 or 0800-228-5467.

Nugget Point Eco Tours is happy to take you out on a boat to explore the sea life of the area. They'll also do fishing charters and have accommodation available. www.catlins.co.nz, ☎ 03-412-8602 or 0800-525-278.

For a horseback tour of the area, contact **Valley View Horse Treks**, just outside of Owaka. ☎ 03-415-8239.

Where to Stay

The **Catlins Retreat Guesthouse** is housed in a charming villa right in Owaka. There is a separate guest lounge and all rooms have en-suite bathroom. www.catlins-nz.com, 27 Main Road, ☎ 03-415-8830 ($$-$$$).

In Owaka, the **Blowhole Backpackers** is a great choice. It's small, in a remodeled old villa and has a very comfortable lounge and kitchen. 24 Main Road, ☎ 03-415-8998 ($).

At **Surat Bay Lodge**, you'll find doubles, twins and shared-bath rooms as well as an on-site camper. Really handy for walks on the beach and wildlife viewing! They also have canoes and bikes for rent. Surat Bay Road, New Haven, Owaka, www.suratbay.co.nz, ☎ 03-415-8099 ($).

Kepplestone by the Sea Homestay is a B&B just a minute from Surat Bay, where sea lions hang out. Separate guest house and homestay available and meals are with fresh, garden produce. 9 Surat Bay Road, Owaka, www.kepplestone@hostlinknz.com Surat Bay, ☎ 03-415-8134 or 0800-105-134 fax 03-415-8137 ($$).

Just out of Owaka is **Hillview Farmstay**, where you can choose between a cottage and a homestead B&B. It's a great spot for quiet or animal adventures. Hunt Road, Katea, Owaka, ☎ 03-415-8451 ($$).

At Kaka Point, **Fernlea Backpackers** has only six beds in what was once a holiday cottage. Moana Street, ☎ 03-412-8834 ($).

Rosebank Lodge is a modern facility with studio units (no kitchens). There is a restaurant on-site. 265 Clyde Street, ☎ 03-418-1490, fax 03-418-1493 ($$-$$$).

The **Helensborough Motor Inn** is a tidy and friendly motel with Internet access, BBQ and free laundry service. helensborough@xtra.co.nz, 23 Essex Street, ☎/fax 03-418-1948 or 0800-444-778 ($$-$$$).

There are tent sites and a couple of cabins at **Naish Park Motor Camp**, 56 Charlotte Street, ☎ 03-418-0088 ($).

Where to Eat

As in the rest of the Catlins, you won't have too much trouble finding takeaways and fish and chips in Owaka. There is another option, though – the **Lumberjack Café and Bar**, which serves good meals and has a decent wine list.

In Balclutha, your best bet if you are sick of deep-fried food is the restaurant at the **Rosebank Lodge**.

Central Southland

All the arteries of the South Island start to come together in Central Southland. Heading south from Queenstown to Invercargill on SH6, the major ports of call are **Lumsden** and **Winton**. Heading west from Balclutha on SH1, you will soon be traveling between **Clinton** and **Gore** on what is fondly referred to nowadays as the Presidential Highway.

■ Gore

In case you didn't know that Gore is the brown trout capital of the world, the giant fiberglass replica in the town square might give the secret away. (You might note that the center of Clinton features three massive Clydesdales). In 2004, plans were in the works to build a fishing museum. There isn't a huge list of things to do in town, but if you like to fish, here's your chance and, if not, it should be noted that Gore is a nice place to stop off and catch your breath.

Information Sources

The **Gore Visitor Centre** is open daily (shortened hours on the weekend) and can be contacted at goreinfo@goredc.govt.nz. At the corner of Norfolk Street and Hokonui Drive, ☎ 03-203-9288, fax 03-203-9286.

Watchable Wildlife

Among the large gardens at the **Reservation Animal Park** are domestic animals and quite a few different bird species. This is a new facility that opened in 1998 and received zoo status in 2003. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm. During the winter, 1 to 5 pm. $4 adults, $2 children. Top of Coutts Road, ☎ 03-208-1200.

Sightseeing

The **Eastern Southland Gallery** is a real hidden gem. The new John Money Wing is home to his impressive international art collection and the permanent Ralph Hotere Gallery is wonderful. Open Monday to Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm, Sunday 2 to 4:30 pm. Under the Clock Tower, ☎ 03-208-9907.

Hokonui Moonshiners' Festival is held every year in late February. There's entertainment, food and beverages, all in celebration of the days of illicit alcohol production. The **Hokonui Moonshine Museum** is housed at the Information Centre, as is the **Gore Historical Museum and Research Centre**. Entry to the historic museum is by donation; the Moonshine Museum has a $5 charge. Corner of Norfolk and Hokonui Drive.

If you're a fan of country music, plan your stay to coincide with the **New Zealand Gold Guitar Awards**. A celebration of country music, they're held annually at the end of May/beginning of June. www.goldguitars.co.nz, ☎ 03-208-1978.

A trip to Gore is not complete without a stop at the **Old Mandeville Airfield**, where you can watch the restoration of vintage aircraft. Reasonably priced scenic flights are available, including rides in a Tiger Moth. A massive new hangar and display center opened in 2004. In addition to displays, it has an aeronautical-themed shop. Croydon Aircraft Company, ☎ 03-208-9755.

Say you want to fish? There are more than a few streams and rivers around here and the information center can advise you on fishing rules and licenses or where to rent gear. They also have a listing of fishing guides, but do yourself a favor and book in with my friend Daniel Agar. Dedicated fisherman, good sense of humor, he knows where the fish live, and will put up with your antics while showing you the ropes. www.mataura-flyfishing.com, ☎ 03-205-3191.

Where to Stay

For a B&B near Gore, pick **Hawthdornden Inn**. Housed in an 1870s home on a working farm, there is both B&B and a fisherman's apartment with bath and kitchen options. The gardens are lovely. www.hawthornden.co.nz, 141 Waikaka Road, ☎fax 03-207-1869 ($$-$$$).

Kowhai Place is a B&B on a farm outside of Mataura, just 15 minutes from Gore. Set on gorgeous grounds, there are both twin and queen rooms and a private guest lounge. www.southland-homestays.co.nz, 291 Glendhu Road, ☎/fax 03-203-8774 ($$).

The biggest accommodation on offer is the **Scenic Circle Croydon Lodge Hotel** with plenty of clean and comfortable rooms and a restaurant and bar on-site. There is also a golf course. www.scenic-circle.co.nz, On SH94, five minutes from the town center. ☎ 03-208-9029 or 0800-280-280 ($$-$$$).

The excellent **Oakleigh Motel** has clean and comfortable rooms. www.oakleighmotel.co.nz, 70 Hokonui Drive, ☎/fax 03-208-4863 or 0800-625-534 ($$).

The recently refurbished **Charlton Motel** has full kitchens, studio, one- and two-bedroom units and a gorgeous garden. www.nzmotels.co.nz/charlton, 9 Charlton Road, Gore, ☎ 03-208-9733 or 0800-929-733, fax 03-208-9734 ($$).

Rooms at the **Riverlea Motel** are very tidy and pleasant. Breakfast provided on the first day. www.nzmotels.co.nz/riverlea 46 Hokonui Drive, ☎/fax 03-208-3130 or 0508-202-780 ($$).

The **Old Fire-Station Backpackers** has very comfortable, new and clean accommodation in, what else, the old fire station. The owners are pleasant and helpful and there are four-bed shared-bath and double rooms. 19 Hokonui Drive, ☎/fax 03-208-1925 ($).

For the real fishing enthusiast, try **Pinehill**, a cottage with two bedrooms, sleeping up to four. mlcooper@esi.co.nz, River Road, ☎ 03-208-7516 ($).

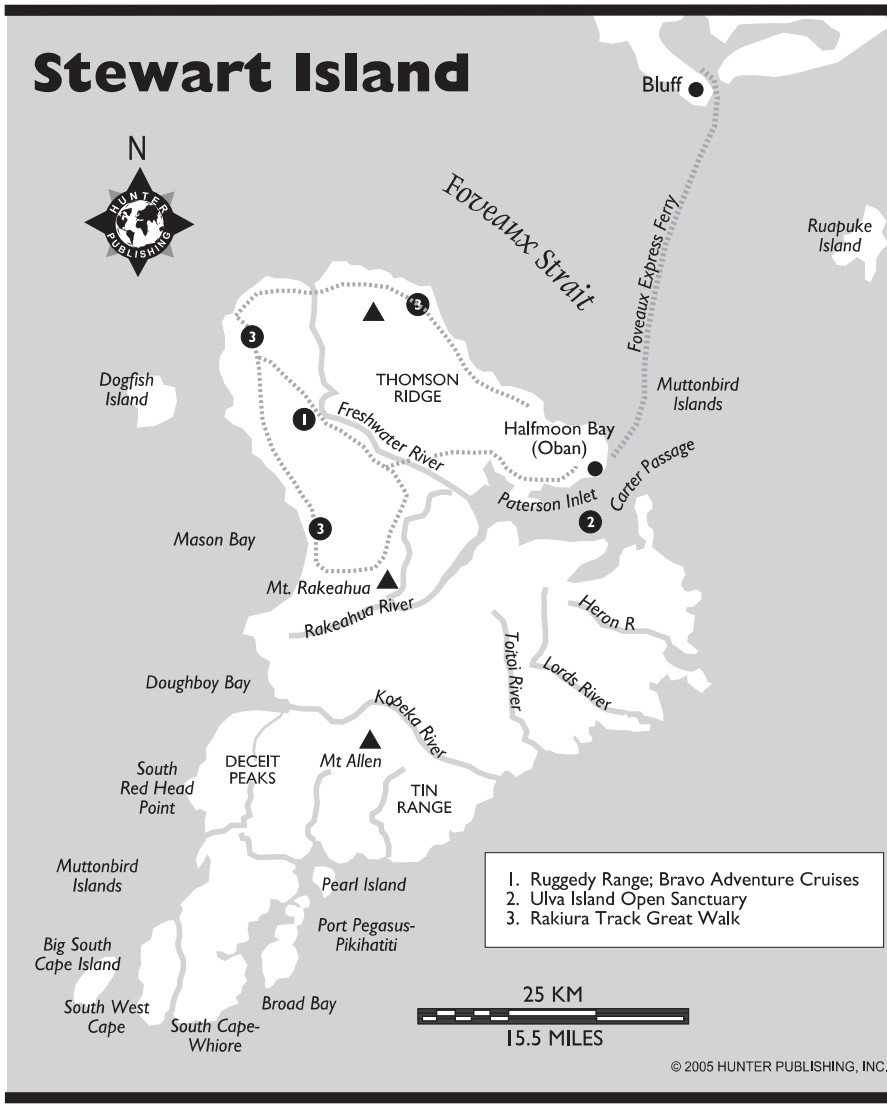
The Falls Motel and Bistro has a few very reasonably priced rooms and can provide breakfast and lunch. Main Street, Mataura, ☎ 03-203-8027 ($$).

Where to Eat

The Green Room Café, has the best food and coffee in town and a nice atmosphere to boot. Have breakfast or lunch here, or just a coffee. 59 Irk Street ($-$$).

New in 2003 is **Café De Paz**, serving health-conscious Mexican food with a New Zealand bent. Great light meals for lunch or dinner. 51 Main Street ($).

The Moth Restaurant at the Mandeville Airfield has very good food and a nice wine list. Open for lunch and dinner, but stop by for coffee at any time. This would be my choice for a full, delicious dinner. SH94, ☎ 03-208-9662 ($$).


Stewart Island
Bluff
N
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Foveaux Strait
Foveaux Express Ferry
Ruapuke Island
Dogfish Island
THOMSON RIDGE
Muttonbird Islands
Freshwater River
Halfmoon Bay (Oban)
Carter Passage
Paterson Inlet
Mason Bay
Mt. Rakeahua
Rakeahua River
Heron R
Toitoi River
Lords River
Doughboy Bay
Kobeka River
South Red Head Point
DECEIT PEAKS
Mt Allen
TIN RANGE
Muttonbird Islands
Pearl Island
Port Pegasus-Pikihatiti
Big South Cape Island
South West Cape
Broad Bay
South Cape-Whiore
1. Ruggedy Range; Bravo Adventure Cruises
2. Ulva Island Open Sanctuary
3. Rakiura Track Great Walk
25 KM
15.5 MILES
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Stewart Island/Rakiura National Park

Introduction

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The third-largest of New Zealand's islands, Stewart Island is only 24 km (15 miles) south of the South Island and, from the shores of Bluff or Riverton, it appears like a mountainous mirage on the horizon. The island's original Maori name was Te Punga o Te Waka, which roughly translates into "The Anchor of Maui's Canoe," referring to the story of Maui fishing up the North Island while using the South Island as his canoe. The more modern Maori name, Rakiura, means "Glowing Skies" and refers either to the incredible sunsets or the aurora australis that can be seen in the Southern Latitudes. The name Stewart comes from First Officer William Stewart on board the *Pegasus* in 1809. While Captain Cook was the first European to see what we call Stewart Island, he believed it to be a peninsula attached to the South Island and it wasn't until the *Pegasus* completed a circumnavigation nearly 40 years later that its island status was recorded. The Maori were attracted to the island by its plentiful food – especially the *titi*, known as the muttonbird (the chick of the sooty shearwater, and a tribal delicacy). The Maori also fished the waters, which were (and are) rich in seafood. The Europeans came as sealers and whalers, followed by missionaries, miners, and sawmillers.

Approximately 85% of Stewart Island was designated a National Park in 2002, making it New Zealand's 14th national park. Constant exposure to the Southern Ocean has resulted in impressive cliffs and beaches on the western shores; the eastern coast has three sheltered inlets, Paterson being the largest and most often visited. The highest peak is Mt. Anglem/Hananui, which is in the far north and reaches 980 meters (3,100 feet).

Small in comparison to the North and South islands, Stewart Island surprises many visitors, who expect it to be a tiny dot of land that they can easily wander around. On the contrary, at its longest, the island is 64 km (39 miles), its widest 40 km (25 miles), and in all has 700 km (434 miles) of coastline. There are only 20 km (12 miles) of roads and even the 10-day tramp will only expose you to about half of the island.

There is coastal low forest as well as grasslands, wetlands and dunes. The rain forest is lush with trees, ferns, mosses, lancewood and supplejack. Rimu was once predominant, and, though many of the trees were felled for timber, some stands still exist; the kamahi is the most common of the hardwood trees, and you'll also see kahikatea and totara, rata and fuschia. The fuschia is a deciduous tree (unusual for New Zealand) and is a favorite of tui, bellbirds (who like its nectar) and wood pigeons (who eat, in abundance, its konini berry).

Oban is the only major settlement on the island and is home to just over 400 people. The terrain is rugged – but much of it is not inhospitable or impenetrable – and the weather can figure into your plans. Stewart Island has its own personality and feel – you have to be a special person to live on a remote, small island, even if it is only 20 minutes by air to the mainland. I really enjoy a visit, but there's no way I'm self-sufficient enough to live here; I am in awe of those who can. If your travel plans allow, try to stay at least a couple of days on either side of doing the three-day walk.

Getting Here

It's either by sea or by air. Don't let horror stories of the Foveaux Strait put you off – yes, it can blow and be a rough crossing, but every time I've done it, the conditions have been perfect. You just never know. Depending on vehicle arrangements on the mainland, you might want to consider flying one way, ferrying the other.

■ By Air

Stewart Island Flights provides regular service between Invercargill and Oban, as well as scenic flights around Stewart Island. The trip is just 20 minutes and there are three scheduled departures daily, from Invercargill (in summer, 8 am, 1 pm, 5 pm, weekends and winter, 9 am, 1 pm, 4 pm); from Stewart Island (in summer, 8:30 am, 1:30 pm, 4:30 pm, weekends and winter, 9:30 am, 1:30 pm, 4:30 pm). One-way and round-trip fares, $80/$145 adults, $45/$75 children. www.stewartislandflights.com, ☎ 03-218-9129, fax 03-214-4681.

Helisouth Ltd. provides helicopter service on demand between Invercargill and Oban. www.helisouth.co.nz, ☎ 03-218-4355, fax 03-218-4356.

■ By Water

Foveaux Express is the ferry service from Bluff to Oban and the crossing time is one hour. From Bluff, in summer, 9:30 am and 5 pm; in winter, 9:30 am and 4:30 pm. From Oban, summer, 8 am and 3:30 pm; winter, 8 am and 3 pm. One-way and round-trip fares $45/$82 adults, $22.50/$42 children. www.foveauxexpress.co.nz, ☎ 03-212-7660, fax 03-212-8377.

Information Sources

Check out **www.stewartisland.co.nz**.

The **Department of Conservation** and the **Visitor Information Centre** share the same office space. The staff is very helpful, replete with ideas for your stay and enthusiastic about sharing their island with visitors. In addition to information on the walks and tramps, there are displays about the area, storage lockers and personal locator beacons for rent. They also put on seasonal educational talks about Stewart Island and beyond. The first time I was here, I went to an evening presentation on the Appalachian Trail by one of the DoC officers who had just completed the walk! stewartislandfc@

doc.govt.nz, Main Road, ☎ 03-219-0002 (DoC), 03-219-0009 (Information Centre), fax 03-219-0003.

The **Adventure Centre** on the main wharf serves as a booking agent for most activities on the island. www.foveauxexpress.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1134, fax 03-219-1322.

> **Did you know?** Stewart Island hosts about 60,000 visitors per year. Compare that to the 500,000 who visit Milford Sound!

Adventures

■ Watchable Wildlife

You don't have to be a junior birdsman to appreciate the bird life on Stewart Island! As you arrive by ferry, you may be able to spot little blue penguins, sooty shearwaters, gulls, Buller's mollymawks, and cape pigeons. Other shorebirds are seen in tidal areas around Paterson Inlet, including dotterels, oystercatchers, herons and godwits. It only takes about five minutes of walking from Oban to be in the forest, but the deeper you go, the more bird life you'll be exposed to. Keep your eyes open for bellbirds, tui, parakeets, fantails, wood pigeons, shining cuckoos, weka, tomtits and grey warblers.

The island forest is also the home of the **Stewart Island kiwi**. This subspecies of the brown kiwi behaves differently than the kiwi in the rest of New Zealand – they maintain family groups and some birds feed during the day. You have a better chance to see kiwi in the wild on Stewart Island than anywhere else and Mason Bay is the popular viewing spot. There are a few operators who lead kiwi-spotting trips and you can also combine a flight and boat taxi ride (stay a night at Mason Bay and then tramp out). Contact the information center for details, or for kiwi spotting combined with a guided walk, **Ruggedy Range**, www.ruggedyrange.com, ☎ 03-219-1066; and for boat trips to Mason Bay, **Bravo Adventure Cruises**, philldismith@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1144. All trips are limited to small numbers, so reserve in advance.

Ulva Island Open Sanctuary is a must! It's a predator-free island in Paterson Inlet, just a quick boat trip from Oban, and is home to the Stewart Island robin, the saddleback and the mohua. If you've never seen a saddleback, don't miss your chance! They are such beautiful birds. In addition, there are kaka, weka, kakariki and wood pigeons. The island was declared a bird sanctuary in 1922, after a stint as the local Post Office. In addition to magnificent bird life, the island has wonderful flora – rata, broadleaf, rimu and kamahia are just a few of the trees you'll see.

■ On Water

Good kayak trips can be arranged (guided or rental) through **Rakiura Kayaks**. Liz can also set you up with private accommodation on Bravo Island in Paterson Inlet. www.rakiura.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1368, fax 03-219-1349.

Quite a few people have boats available for charter – contact the information center for an up-to-date listing.

Bravo Adventure Cruises has day-trips to Ulva island and the salmon farms, including an opportunity for fishing. They have evening guided trips to Mason Bay for kiwi spotting. philldismith@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-219-1144.

Talisker Charters uses a motor-sailer for trips around the island. You can opt for a half- or full-day or live-aboard. They also do sailing trips to Fiordlands. www.taliskercharter.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1151.

Rakiura Adventure has regularly scheduled water taxi service around the island. rakiuraadventure@clear.net.nz, ☎ 03-219-1414, as does **Seaview Water Taxi**, ☎ 03-219-1014, and **S.I. Water Taxi & Eco Guiding**, www.portofcall.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1394. **Seabuzzz** offers water taxi service and scenic rides in their glass-bottom boat. Prices begin at $35 adults. www.seabuzzz.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1282.

■ On Foot

> **Warning:** You will be walking in some muddy, boggy stuff and the rain is likely to fall while you are on Stewart Island. Be sure to dress appropriately and be prepared for changing and often violent weather!

The Rakiura Track is one of New Zealand's Great Walks and is usually tramped in three days. It's 36 km (22 miles) and is mostly through forest and coast. The only climbing is 300 meters (975 feet), and parts of the track are boardwalked. At low tide, you will walk along the beach. The huts are simple (for a Great Walk), with mattresses, wood-burning stoves, running water, and long-drop toilets. I really enjoyed my time on this walk – within minutes of leaving town, you are in the bush and the bird calls are marvelous. The beaches are beautiful and at night, if it's clear, you will see the most incredible display of the southern sky – look to see how Orion is nearly in the water (and on his head). Camping is allowed at three spots along the track – Maori Beach, Port William and Sawdust Bay. You must buy your Great Walk pass before you set out and there is a maximum of two nights in any one hut. For booking information, contact greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-8514, fax 03-249-8515.

The epic 10-day **North-West Circuit Track** should only be undertaken by experienced trampers. There are 10 huts on this 130-km (80-mile) tramp and no campsites. This walk will take you along Mason Bay (the kiwi-spotting bay), in and out of the forest and along the coast. See the DoC office for details and be sure to take plenty of food and warm clothing.

There are plenty of day-walks from Oban – I particularly like the one out along **Ringaringa Beach** (as long or short as you want). The walk out to **Akers Point** (three-hour round-trip) is best done in the late afternoon when you can watch the penguins coming home from a feed. You can also do a good four-hour round-trip walk to **Ryans Creek**. Pick up a copy of the day-walks brochure at DoC.

Guided Options

Ruggedy Range Wilderness Company runs trips to suit most interests – day and overnight guided walks (including kiwi spotting), interpretive trips to Ulva Island, bird watching and kayaking adventures. www.ruggedyrange.com, ☎ 03-219-1066, fax 03-219-1078.

Ulva's Guided Walks specializes in trips to Ulva Island. Ulva (a direct descendent of the original Maori settlers) gives an interesting interpretive commentary about the natural and social history of the island, its flora and fauna. www.ulva.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1216.

For a quick and entertaining tour around the island, contact Sam, a naturalist and historian, on **Billy the Bus**. billybus@ex.co.nz; book at the visitor or adventure center.

Good Shops

Make sure you stop into **Glowing Sky**. This small clothing company began just a few years ago and you may find their very artistic T-shirts in shops around New Zealand. But drop into the studio shop if you're here. The other shop of choice is **The Fernery**, where you can buy local and New Zealand art.

Where to Stay

Accommodation options range from luxury B&Bs to simple backpacker hostels and prices are a bit higher here than on the mainland. In any small town, there are bound to be rumors, but I would take heed of a couple here. One is the strong advice not to stay at the hostel that is run by a single man who also rents kayaks; the other is not to have a massage at another of the backpackers. I don't have personal experience with the massage issue, but have heard plenty of bad reports; I do, however, have experience at the other hostels and it was uncomfortable and somewhat creepy. Enough said.

Stewart Island Lodge is the swankiest place on the island and the most expensive. It's beautiful and perched on a hill with great views. Meals are included and all rooms have en-suite bathrooms. www.stewartislandlodge.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-219-1085 ($$$$).

Port of Call B&B is another attractive option set on a hill amidst acres of native bush – and the site of the historic Stone House. They have both a B&B room and a bach (cottage, with bath and kitchen). www.portofcall.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-219-1394 ($$$$).

Rakiura Lodge has four bedrooms (two per unit) and sleeps up to eight. There is a guest lounge, full kitchen and large deck. www.rakiuralodge.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-219-1003 ($$$).

The new **Bay Motel** has units with bath and kitchen and breakfast is available by arrangement. bay.motel@xtra.co.nz, 9 Dundee Street, ☎/fax 03-219-1119 ($$$).

Rakiura Retreat has one- and two-bedroom motel units with bath and kitchen that are clean and well-kept. Great views from here, too. www.rakiuraretreat.co.nz, 156 Horseshoe Bay Road, ☎ 03-219-1096, fax 03-219-1408 ($$$).

You'll see the **South Sea Hotel** about as soon as you get off the boat. There are shared-bath rooms in the country-style hotel and motel units with bath

and kitchen adjacent. www.stewart-island.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1059, fax 03-219-1120 ($$-$$$).

A charming budget place to stay tucked away in the bush is **Deep Bay Cabin**. It's a little cottage with full kitchen, shower and long-drop toilet. The hosts are very helpful and friendly. ewenjengell@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1219 ($).

Ann's Place has simple backpacker accommodation in an older house. 55 Horseshoe Bay, ☎ 03-219-1065 ($), as does **Joy and Andy's B&B**, corner of Main Road and Morris Street, ☎ 03-219-1230 ($).

Stewart Island Backpackers/Shearwater Inn is the largest backpacker accommodation here (sleeps 66) and is currently undergoing a big renovation. There are simple hotel rooms as well as dorms, twins and doubles. www.stewart-island.co.nz, ☎ 03-219-1114, fax 03-219-1516 ($).

Where to Eat

You won't go hungry, but the choices are limited. If you're cooking for yourself, there is a small island shop, **Ship to Shore**, that stocks the basics. Flying over, you will be restricted by a weight allowance, but if you're arriving by ferry it may pay to bring some food with you.

The **South Sea Hotel** has both a dining room and pub food, and both serve tasty local fish as well as other menu items. Great views, right on the shore; it's kind of a must that you eat here at least once during your stay ($-$$).

Church Hill Café Bar & Restaurant has the best food in town and, even if you don't eat here, go up on a sunny afternoon, order a coffee and sit outside and read. It's fabulous. Treat yourself to dinner and enjoy the fresh seafood. Full bar and good wine list. 36 Kamahi Road, ☎ 03-1323 ($$-$$$).

There are a few other small cafés in town, including the **Boardwalk Café and Bar** upstairs at the ferry wharf ($).

Book List

If you would like more information about New Zealand, consider one or more of the following books. They can all be ordered through www.newzealandbooks.co.nz, a web-based book shop that specializes in New Zealand published books.

The Whale Rider, Ihimaera
Lord of the Rings Location Guide, Brodie
Maori a Photographic and Social History, King
An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Maori Myth and Legend, Orbell
The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand, Sinclair
Myths and Legends of Aotearoa, Te Ake Ake
New Zealand Land & People, Potton
Contemporary New Zealand Art (Vol 1, 2, 3), Caughey & Gow
New Zealand Sculpture: A History, Dunn
100 New Zealand Craft Artists, Schamroth
This Is New Zealand, Wall
The Queenstown Experience, Wall
The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand, Heather & Robertson
Which Native Tree, Crowe
Which Native Fern, Crowe
Kiwi: New Zealand's Remarkable Bird, Peat
The Reed Field Guide to New Zealand Alpine Fauna & Flora, Parkinson
Classic Tramping in New Zealand, Barnett & Brown
Aoraki Mount Cook a Guide for Mountaneers, Palman
New Zealand White Water, Charles
New Zealand Surfing Guide, Bahana
No Mean Feat, Inglis
202 Great Walks, Pickering
New Zealand Pure Adventure, McLennan
Classic New Zealand Mountain Bike Rides, Kennett
Catch That Trout, Giles
4WD South Island: 107 Off Road Adventures, Silby & Wilson
4WD North Island: 102 Off Road Adventures, Cockroft

Maori Language

Some pointers: each syllable in Maori ends in a vowel and they are always pronounced.

The vowels are: a (as in path), e (as in pain or pen), i (as in feet or fit), o (as in foe or forest) and u (as in boot or put). When two vowels are together, they each have a sound, but the sounds are run together.

The consonants are h, k, m, n, p, r, t and w. "ng" is pronounced "ing" and "wh" is usually pronounced as an "f," but in some regions it is pronounced as a "w."

There is no word in Maori for "very" so place names that are repeats of the same word mean very whatever. For instance rata means red, if you found a river called Rata Rata, that would mean the river is very red.

Aotearoa	Land of the long white cloud; the Maori name for New Zealand
Kia Ora	Hello
Haere mai	Welcome
Tena koe	How do you do?
Haere ra	Goodbye
Ara	Path
Awa	River
Haka	Ritual dance and chant as a welcome or as a warning.
Hongi	Maori greeting where the noses touch. You breathe the same air.
Iwi	Tribe
Hapu	A sub-tribe
Kai	Food
Koha	Gift
Mana	Authority, influence, prestige
Marae	A gathering place
Maunga	Mountain
Moana	Sea
Moko	Facial tattoos incorporating Maori designs and motifs. Traditionally worn only by important Maori people.
O	The place of
Pakeha	Non-Maori people
Rangi	Sky
Roto	Lake
Tangata whenua	The people of the land
Tangi	Funeral
Taonga	Values (spiritual, personal and physical), treasures.
Tapu	Sacred
Te	The

Te Reo	The Maori language
Wai	Water
Whakapapa	Geneology
Whare	House or hut
Whare nui	Meeting house
Whanau	Family or extended family group
Whenua	Land

Kiwi English

New Zealand English may very well sound different from what you're accustomed to hearing – it's a tough accent to hear through in the beginning.

Some Tips

There is very little accent in Kiwi English – words are pronounced rather flatly, especially at the end of the word. For instance, Coromandel is pronounced "Coromandl" not "Coroman-dell."

The "i" and the "e" will get to you – the word "sick" might sound like "seek."

The letter "r" is a wacky one – it is pronounced like "ah" in words where it exists and added to the ends of words where it doesn't exist at all. For instance, "hard" is pronounced "hahd," and America is often pronounced, "Americker." Where the "r" is pronounced like "ah," just pretend you're from Boston.

Words like "pasta and Mazda" are pronounced like the "a" in pack, not "pah-sta." But tomato is pronounced "tomahto."

The double letter "tt" is crisp, not dull the way North Americans say it. For instance, my name is Bette, pronounced with crisp "t's" not "d's."

There are a few funny words in Kiwi English and a few funny words in American English that will make a Kiwi blush or laugh. My favorite is what you might call a "fanny pack." Call it a "bum bag" in New Zealand – a fanny refers to a part of a woman's body where she would be very unlikely to carry a pack.

Some Words & Expressions

Back block	A remote piece of land used for farming
Blow that for a joke	"It's not funny"
Box of birds	Feeling fine, fit and healthy. Also "box of fluffy ducks."
Bring a plate	Bring a plate of food to a party
Cheers	It's fine or thank you
Chilly bin	Insulated ice chest
Chocker	Or "chock a block" – full, no room left
Crook	Feeling unwell or sick
Flat tack	To go fast
Four by two	The size of a piece of timber (not two by four)

Gidday	As in "good day"
Grog	Alcohol
Hard case	Eccentric, funny, goofy
Jandals	Flip flop shoes ("Japanese sandals")
Paddock	Field
PYO	Pick your own (tomatoes, berries, etc).
She'll be right, mate	Everything is going to be fine
Shout	Buy your friends a drink or meal
Smoko	Coffee or tea break
Togs	Bathing or swimming suit
Tucker	Food
What a dag	What a character (similar to hard case)
Wop-wops	Out in the country, miles from anywhere

And one of my all-time favorites:

He doesn't know if he's Arthur or Martha.
He's really confused.

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