

Hot Spots for Summer in New Zealand

Bay of Islands (Paihia) - pop. 1,850

Paihia makes an excellent base for exploring the Bay of Islands. It has an extensive choice of accommodation and a good-sized town centre. From the wharf you can arrange a trip to the outer islands, hook into a fishing expedition or catch ferry to Russell. Top local adventures include cruising to the 'hole in the rock' at the tip of Cape Brett, finding dolphins (and maybe swimming with them) and sea kayak tours. Paihia is also just down the road from the historic Treaty House at Waitangi, which marks the beginning of New Zealand as a nation. Just west of Paihia is Haruru, where you'll find an impressive waterfall and a boardwalk.

Great Barrier Island - pop. 1,000

Great Barrier is a 2.5 hour ferry ride from downtown Auckland or a 45 minute flight. Great Barrier provides a range of activities and natural attractions. There is a variety of walking tracks to discover the stunning terrain, fishing, kayaking, boating, horse riding, golf and bird watching. It is very isolated and you will feel world's away from the business of Auckland.

Piha, Karekare and Muriwai - pop. 1,000

Piha is New Zealand's most famous surf beach. Located on the West Coast of the North Island, 40 kilometers from the city of Auckland, this black iron-sand beach has a reputation for awesome surf. A short drive from Piha is Karekare, a small surfing community. Karekare beach is less popular than Piha but just as beautiful. A little further north is Muriwai, another great surf beach. The tide can come right to the base of the sand dunes at Muriwai so check the tides! There is a camp site in Piha which would be a great way to spend a weekend over summer.

Raglan - pop. 2,700

The surf town of Raglan is relaxed and arty. Watched over by Mount Karioi, the colourful community goes about the business of surfing, creating artworks and enjoying the fantastic coastal environment. Manu Bay to the west is world famous for its perfect left-hand break; two kilometres further on is Whale Bay, known for its terrific tubes. For those who don't surf (or don't want to take surfing lessons) there are safe swimming beaches, hiking tracks and kayaks for hire. Or follow the arts and crafts trail to meet some of the local creatives. Expect great cafés and all kinds of accommodation - from upmarket lodges to basic backpackers.

Kawhia - pop. 650

Kawhia, with its small population of approx. 650 residents, charming 1960's appeal and unspoilt harbour, is one of the most beautiful regions in New Zealand. It is south of Raglan on the West Coast of the North Island.

Steeped in ancient history, this historic eco-wonderland is the spiritual and ancestral home of the Maori tribe, Tainui. Cultural heritage seekers world wide are slowly discovering this rare eco-gem where you can still walk for miles on an isolated ocean beach without seeing another footprint in the sand. This coastal paradise is true country living, down-to-earth, practical and laid-back. You know you're in heartland rural New

Zealand when youngsters saunter through the streets riding bareback on a horse, or diving and leaping off the wharf into the inviting waters below. Kawhia has regular festivals for things like fishing, sheep shearing and of course food.

Whitianga (Coromandel) - pop. 4,000

If you're exploring the Coromandel Peninsula, you'll soon come to Whitianga - the main town in Mercury Bay. When native forests were being harvested on the peninsula in the 1800s and early 1900s, Whitianga was a timber port. Ships from Europe came to load up with kauri. Today, Whitianga depends on fishing, farming and tourism for its prosperity. Accommodation is plentiful for much of the year, but the town gets busy over the summer holiday period. You'll find a great choice of places to eat and drink. Dolphins often frolic in the bay and sometimes orca, seals and even whales pay a visit. A passenger ferry provides a link with the Cooks Beach side of the harbour.

Whangamata (Coromandel) - pop. 3,880

The attractive combination of sand, surf and native forest makes Whangamata a popular destination for summer holidays. Find a spot on the four kilometre ocean beach or swim in the safe waters of the harbour. There are two golf courses in the area and plenty of charter boats waiting to take you diving or game fishing. Just behind the town, the Coromandel Forest Park is a place for hiking, mountain biking and hunting. The Wentworth Falls walk is particularly lovely. Whangamata has numerous cafés, restaurants, motels and beach cottages. Arts and crafts shops provide interesting shopping opportunities.

New Plymouth - pop. 49,000

The city of New Plymouth is known for its sunny climate, art galleries and beautiful parks. Surrounding New Plymouth is some of the country's best surf. It is also New Zealand's 'oil town', with offshore rigs extracting natural gas and oil. Mount Taranaki provides a dramatic backdrop to the city, while reminding you that the hiking trails of the Egmont National Park are just a short drive away. Down at the New Plymouth waterfront you'll find Puke Ariki, a wonderful museum and heritage centre that overlooks a six kilometre coastal walkway. At any time of the year, Pukekura Park is a place to relax and enjoy nature. Expect good shopping and an appetising selection of restaurants.

The mountain and the Tasman Sea, provide a natural playground for travellers who enjoy outdoor adventures. The region is also known for its creativity and ingenuity - characteristics that materialise as beautiful gardens, fascinating museums and highly acclaimed art collections.

Mount Maunganui - pop. 16,800

The surf town of Mount Maunganui takes its name from the large dormant volcano that dominates the local landscape. From the base of the mountain, a white sand surf beach stretches as far as the eye can see. It's a spectacular place, which explains the wall-to-wall apartments and holiday homes that flow along Marine Parade. On the harbour side of the town there is a sheltered bay, port and marina. There's plenty to keep you occupied here - surfing, beach walks, big game fishing, dolphin watching, hikes up and

around the mountain and swimming in the hot pools. Accommodation is sophisticated and there's a wide range of restaurants.

Napier - pop. 55,000

Napier's misfortune in 1931, when it was almost levelled by an earthquake, has led to the city's world famous point of difference. Today Napier has one of the most outstanding collections of 1930s architecture in the world. Walking around the city, you'll see wonderful examples of Art Deco, Spanish Mission and Stripped Classical design. Napier's other special attractions include the gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers and the many vineyards that make good use of the region's alluvial soils. On Saturday morning, the Napier farmers' market is a chance to shop for artisan foods and fresh produce. Located on the coast - there are ample beaches for you to swim and surf on.

Kapiti Coast - pop. 46,000

The Kapiti Coast is just a step way from Wellington. This area is full of spectacular sea vistas, glorious sunsets, untouched native forest and dramatic hillsides. As you enter the coast, just 40 minutes drive from central Wellington, and see the magnificent Kapiti Island and the beaches stretching along the coast any thoughts of the city are left behind as the more relaxed, refreshing atmosphere of our coastal region takes over. This is the Kapiti Coast, home to the Kapiti Island nature and marine reserves and a host of activities ranging from exhilarating outdoor adventures to a superb variety of shopping.

Add in New Zealand's top golf course, a world class car museum, magnificently restored trams, easily accessible nature reserves and arts and crafts that match the best in the country, the Kapiti Coast has something for everyone. A day trip, a weekend away, or a stopover en route further north or south are all very viable options for visitors to Kapiti region - just a step away from Wellington.

Nelson - pop. 52,000

Nelson is an entertaining city in many ways. From a cultural point of view, it provides the chance to appreciate New Zealand art, both in galleries and in artists' studios. The district has attracted creative people who work with glass, metal, stone, wood, clay, sand, paper, ink, paint and fabric. Nelson is also appealing from a lifestyle point of view. There are wineries scattered around the Moutere Hills and the Waimea Plains. In the city, you'll find a good selection of restaurants - some with huge views of Tasman Bay. Activities include skydiving, rock climbing, 4WD biking, horse treks, sailing charters and water fun at the excellent beaches. There are a few of the NZ's best tramps in the vicinity. This is one chilled out, laid back summer town.

Picton - pop. 4,000

The Port of Picton is situated at the head of Queen Charlotte Sound, one of three sounds which make up the Marlborough Sounds. Queen Charlotte Sound is by far the busiest of the three sounds as it is the main thoroughfare for the Interisland ferries which provide passenger, car and rail transport to Wellington twenty fours a day. Picton offers a myriad of activities to the traveller: cruise on the waters of the Marlborough Sounds soaking up Maori legends and see a huge array of birdlife with Myths and Legends Ecotours; swim with dolphins or dive the Mikhail Lermontov. Whether on the

water or walking the Queen Charlotte Track or mooching on the foreshore, the scenery will leave you breathless. Smell the manuka, hear the bellbirds. Slow down, take in the beauty around you. Picton and the Marlborough Sounds are special places, to which you will want to return again and again.

Takaka - pop. 1,100

Over the Takaka hill discover a region rich in wildlife, forests, art and attitude. The main township of Takaka is a bohemian retreat, with some of the finest organic, vegetarian and vegan cafes in New Zealand. Close to the gorgeous Abel Tasman National Park, Takaka is a popular resting place for tourists, with numerous accommodation options - from boutique to backpacker.

Kaiteriteri - pop. 870

Kaiteriteri, one of the best beaches in the South Island, is a beautiful seaside resort town in the Nelson Region. It is also set close to the Abel Tasman National Park. Kaiteriteri, New Zealand, offers a selection of accommodation options. Kaiteriteri accommodation may include luxury accommodation, family parks, backpackers, hotels and more. Sea kayaking is very popular in Kaiteriteri and is an activity not to miss in New Zealand.

Kaikoura - pop. 3,800

Kaikoura is a base for wildlife experiences of all kinds - it's also a great place to eat crayfish (in the Maori language kai means food, koura means crayfish). The environment is truly spectacular - the village is caught between the rugged Seaward Kaikoura Range and the Pacific Ocean. In winter the mountains are covered with snow, adding to the drama of the landscape. Kaikoura's special talent is marine mammal encounters - whales, fur seals and dolphins live permanently in the coastal waters. Whale watching trips leave the town several times a day and the local seal colony is always entertaining. There are plenty of cafés, restaurants and shops.

Christchurch - pop. 348,000

Located on the east coast of the South Island, Christchurch - just like the rest of New Zealand - is a city of contrasts. Christchurch is known as the Garden City due to the abundance of trees and gardens in the city. Christchurch has some great beach areas including Sumner and Taylors Mistake. These areas are pumping over the summer with surfers and kite surfing.

Akaroa - pop. 600

Just 75 kilometres from the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, Akaroa is an historic French and British settlement nestled in the heart of an ancient volcano. Explore the village with its colonial architecture, craft stores, and cafés. Relax in the sun at French Bay, or find a secluded beach of your own in one of the neighbouring bays. Go cruising on the beautiful Akaroa harbour, you can choose from a variety of cruises including sailing around the harbour. View the stunning wildlife including the Hector's dolphins. Enjoy Akaroa and the harbour for the week, your weekend, or just one day there's an Akaroa Escape to suit your mood.

Queenstown - pop. 10,000

Queenstown is known as the adventure capital of the world. It is just as much fun watching one of the many breath-taking activities as it is actually doing them. Visitors can watch people bungy jumping from the world's first commercial bungy site. Queenstown is very accessible (coach ride) to the stunning Fiordland region, a World Heritage Area and New Zealand's largest National Park. If you want to spend summer in the outdoors this is a place to be.

Wanaka - pop. 3,500

The lakeside town of Wanaka can provide you with an appealing mix of fine living, family fun and adventure. It has a high concentration of cafes, restaurants and interesting shops. It's obvious that the Wanaka district is nicely obsessed with aviation. At the airport you can arrange to go flightseeing or sky diving, and every two years the town hosts a spectacular airshow revolving around classic military aircraft. Wanaka is also a handy base if you want to hike or climb in Mount Aspiring National Park.

Ringed by pebbly beaches and with magnificent views to the surrounding peaks, the lakes are popular with locals and travellers, especially during the long, hot months of summer.

Walking tracks skirt the southern edge of Lake Wanaka. A number of more rugged tracks depart from points around nearby Lake Hawea. Camping grounds on the shores of both lakes offer idyllic locations for an outdoorsy holiday. Sailing, swimming, windsurfing and fishing are popular at both lakes during summer.

Te Anau - pop. 1,785

Perched on the edge of New Zealand's second largest lake, the township of Te Anau is the main visitor base for Fiordland National Park. At the Department of Conservation Visitor Centre you can make plans to walk the Milford, Routeburn or Kepler Tracks. There are many places to stay, but you'd be wise to book ahead in the busy season. Restaurants are plentiful as are cafes, hotels and backpackers. Apart from hiking, popular local activities include lake cruising, kayaking and exploring the Te Ana-au glow worm caves. The museum has a collection relevant to both the Maori and European history of the area. There's also a wildlife park specialising in native birds.

Stewart Island - pop. 340

Stewart Island/Rakiura is a 20 minute flight from Invercargill or an hour by ferry from Bluff. It is an isolated island famous for its fantastic hiking and abundance of native New Zealand birds. The ferry arrives into Half Moon Bay where there is a corner store, a pub, a hotel and a hostel. There is only 25km of road on the island and there are buses that can take you around. It is worth taking a trip to Ulva Island (within Stewart Island) which is a bird sanctuary and is stunningly beautiful. Try and spend at least one night on Stewart Island to experience the serenity.