

# Taranaki



Halfway between Auckland and Wellington, Taranaki sits out on a limb in more ways than one. Somewhat off the main drag, the region relies upon the fat of the land and the natural riches offshore. Indeed, Taranaki is the Texas of New Zealand, with oil and gas streaming in from the rigs, plumping the region with an affluence and stability that's the envy of many – if only they knew. It's not only overseas visitors who miss the turn-off to Taranaki; lots of Kiwi travellers do, too.

This is remarkable when you consider what it is that puts the region on the map: the moody and magnetic volcanic cone of Mt Taranaki, standing smack-bang in the middle of Egmont National Park. It demands to be visited.

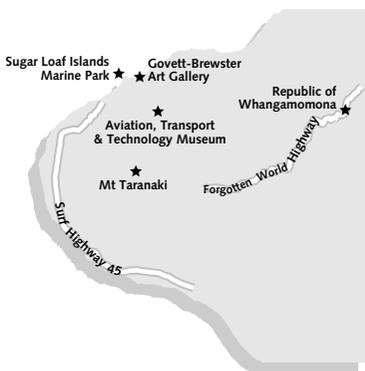
In the shadow of the mountain are many small towns, mostly sleepy and rural, but friendly to boot. On the eastern boundary of the province you'll find NZ's only republic – Whangamomona – a bushy little settlement, stranded in paradise.

New Plymouth is the bustling hub of the 'naki (as they call it), home to the fabulous Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and an excellent provincial museum. It also has enough decent espresso to keep you wide awake: you may or may not need it, depending on how long you're staying and how resourceful you are.

Taranaki has a glut of black-sand beaches, and the summer months see the region swell as a wave of surfers and holidaymakers hit the coast. As for the rest of the year, there's plenty to see and places to visit – as long as you're as laid back as the locals.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Walking up or around the massive cone of **Mt Taranaki** (p254)
- Taking a trip on Chaddy's lifeboat for some seal-spotting in the **Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Park** (p248)
- Tripping down memory lane at the **Aviation, Transport & Technology Museum** (p253)
- Riding the big breaks along **Surf Highway 45** (p257)
- Finding the **Forgotten World Highway** (p257) and crossing the border into the **Republic of Whangamomona** (p257)
- Getting experimental at New Plymouth's **Govett-Brewster Art Gallery** (p247)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 06

■ [www.windwand.co.nz](http://www.windwand.co.nz)

■ [www.newplymouthnz.com](http://www.newplymouthnz.com)

## Climate

Mt Taranaki is one of NZ's wettest spots, and frequently cops snowfalls. The moisture-laden winds coming in from the Tasman Sea are the climatic culprits as they are swept up to freezing heights by the mountain. Weather on the mountain can be extremely changeable (see the boxed text, p255) and snow is common even in summer. Ironically, New Plymouth frequently tops the list of most sunshine hours in the North Island, emphasising the changeability of weather in the region.

November to April are the region's warmer months when temperatures hover around 20°C. From May to August, the temperatures drop to around 5°C to 14°C.

## Getting There & Around

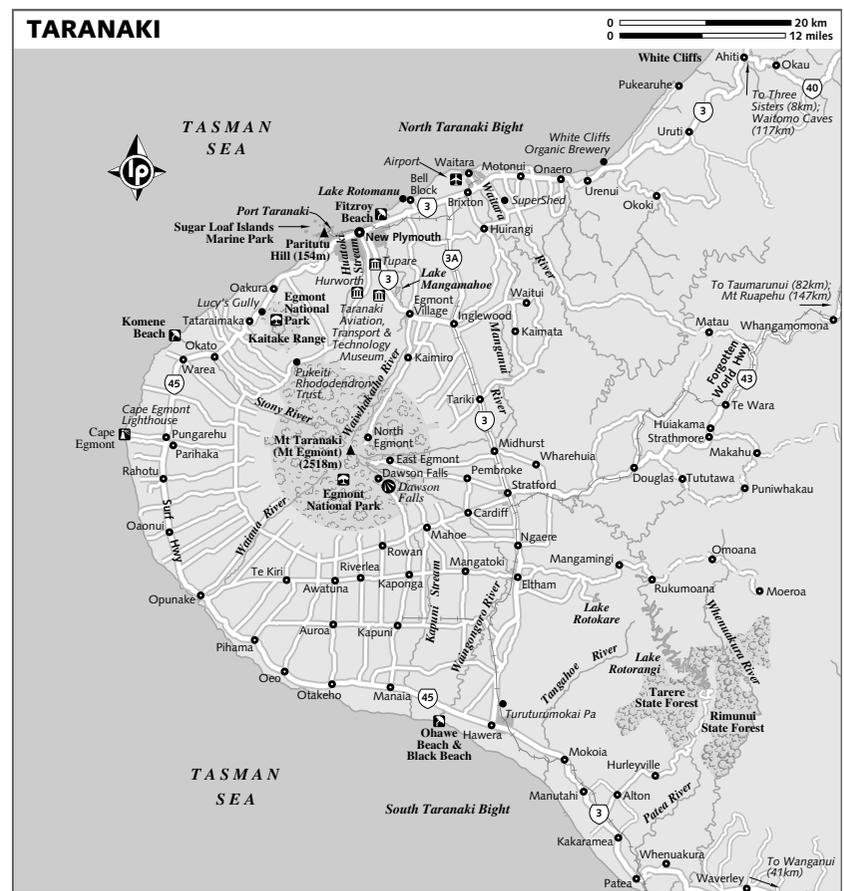
Air New Zealand has domestic flights and onward connections to/from New Plymouth. InterCity runs several bus services connecting to New Plymouth; Dalroy Express and White Star are smaller companies on local routes.

Getting to Mt Taranaki is easy, as many shuttle services (p256) run between the mountain, New Plymouth and other surrounding towns.

## NEW PLYMOUTH

pop 49,100

Dominated by Mt Taranaki and surrounded by lush farmland, New Plymouth acts as the west coast's only international deep-water port, handling cargo for much of this part



of the North Island. The city has a thriving arts scene and an outdoorsy focus, with good beaches both in and around it and Egmont National Park just a short drive away. The town centre supports a heartening number of locally owned businesses, and the obligatory

small-town convoy of boy-racers – who get to cruise the longest main street in the country.

**History**

Local Maori *iwi* (tribes) have long contested Taranaki lands. In the 1820s they fled to the

Cook Strait region to escape Waikato tribes, who eventually took hold of the area in 1832. Only a small group remained, at Okoki Pa (New Plymouth), where whalers soon joined the fray. When European settlers arrived in 1841 the coast of Taranaki seemed deserted and there was little opposition to land claims. The New Zealand Company bought extensive tracts from the remaining Maori.

When other members of local tribes returned after years of exile, they fiercely objected to the land sale. Their claims were upheld when Governor Fitzroy ruled that the New Zealand Company was only allowed just over 10 sq km of the 250 sq km it had claimed around New Plymouth. The Crown gradually acquired more land from Maori, and European settlers became increasingly greedy for the fertile land around Waitara.

The settlers forced the government to abandon negotiations with Maori, and war erupted in 1860. While Maori engaged in guerrilla warfare and held the rest of the province, the settlers seized Waitara. Taranaki chiefs had refused to sign the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 and were brutally treated as rebels. By 1870 over 500 hectares of their land had been confiscated with the remainder acquired through dubious transactions.

In a time of relative peace, economic stability was largely founded on dairy farming. The discovery of natural gas and oil in 1959 and the creation of a natural gas field off the South Taranaki Bight have kept the province economically healthy in recent times.

**TARANAKI FACTS**

- Eat** Anything at Sugar Juice Café (see p258)
- Drink** A bottle of Mike's Mild Ale from White Cliffs Organic Brewery (p254)
- Read** *The Captive Wife* by Fiona Kidman, the fictionalised account of Betty Guard's largely satisfactory captivity amongst Taranaki Maori in the whaling days of the 1830s
- Listen to** Way, way too much Bryan Adams, Shania Twain and Fleetwood Mac on the local radio station
- Watch** *The Last Samurai*, starring Tom Cruise (although Mt Taranaki was the real star)
- Swim** at Oakura Beach (p257) – fantastic if you don't mind fine black sand in your crannies and third degree burns on your feet
- Festival** WOMAD (World of Music Arts and Dance) every March at Brooklands Bowl (p249)
- Tackiest tourist attraction** The 'Welcome to the Bread Capital of New Zealand' sign outside of Manaia on Surf Highway 45
- Go green** Environmental Products (p256) – every possum product purchased equals one less varmint chomping beautiful native bush

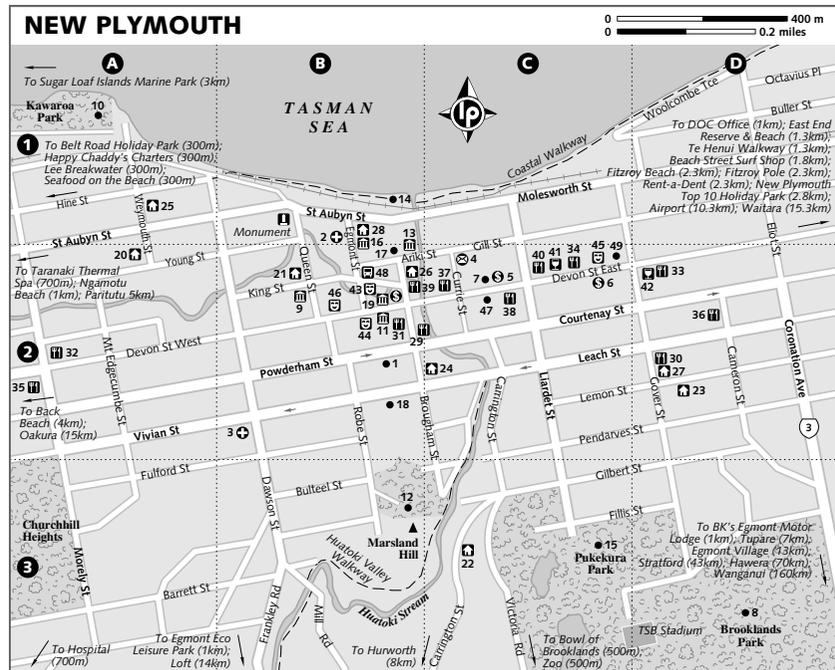
**Phoenix Urgent Doctors** (☎ 06-759 4295; 95 Vivian St; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm)

**MONEY**  
All major banks are represented in the town, plus there are two foreign-exchange specialists.  
**Travel Connexions** (☎ 06-769 9440; 31 Devon St East)  
**TSB Foreign Exchange** (☎ 06-968 3713; 87 Devon St East)

**POST**  
**Post Office** (www.nzpost.co.nz; Currie St)

**TOURIST INFORMATION**  
**Automobile Association** (AA; ☎ 06-759 4010; www.aa.co.nz; 49-55 Powderham St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 9am-5pm Tue)  
**Department of Conservation** (DOC; ☎ 06-759 0350; www.doc.govt.nz; 52 Rimu St; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)  
**New Plymouth i-SITE** (☎ 0800 763 759; www.newplymouthnz.com; 1 Arikī St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 9am-9pm Wed, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) In the Puke Arikī building.

**Sights GALLERIES**  
The **Govett-Brewster Art Gallery** (☎ 06-759 6060; www.govettbrewster.com; cnr Queen & King Sts; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm) is arguably the country's best



<b>INFORMATION</b>		Verge.....	19 B2	Elixir.....	34 C2
Automobile Association.....	1 B2	Wind Wand.....	(see 14)	Empire.....	(see 46)
Medicross.....	2 B1	<b>SLEEPING</b> ☎		Fresha.....	35 A2
New Plymouth i-SITE.....	(see 13)	Arcadia Lodge.....	20 A2	Pak N Save.....	36 D2
Phoenix Urgent Doctors.....	3 B2	Bella Vista.....	21 B2	Petit Paris.....	37 C2
Post Office.....	4 C2	Carrington Motel.....	22 C3	Sandwich Extreme.....	38 C2
Travel Connexions.....	5 C2	Cottage Mews.....	23 D2	Snax in the City.....	39 B2
TSB Foreign Exchange.....	6 C2	Nice Hotel.....	24 C2	Ultra Lounge.....	40 C2
Wadsworths.....	7 C2	Seaspray House.....	25 A1	<b>DRINKING</b> ☎	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		Shoestring Backpackers.....	(see 23)	Crowded House.....	41 C2
Brooklands Park.....	8 D3	Sunflower Lodge.....	26 B2	PowderRoom.....	(see 46)
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.....	9 B2	Timata Ora.....	27 D2	Rosie O'Grady's.....	42 D2
Kawaroa Park.....	10 A1	Waterfront.....	28 B1	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> ☎	
Kina.....	11 B2	<b>EATING</b> ☎		55.....	43 B2
New Plymouth Observatory.....	12 B3	Andre's L'Escargot.....	29 B2	Matinée.....	44 B2
Puke Arikī.....	13 B2	Andre's Pies.....		Top Town Cinema 5.....	45 C2
Puke Arikī Landing.....	14 B1	Arborio.....	(see 13)	TSB Showplace.....	46 B2
Pukekura Park.....	15 C3	Chaos.....	31 B2	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
Real Tart Gallery.....	16 B1	Daily News.....	(see 13)	Air New Zealand.....	47 C2
Richmond Cottage.....	17 B2	Down to Earth.....	32 A2	Bus Centre.....	48 B2
St Mary's Church.....	18 B2	El Condor.....	33 D2	Cycle Inn Bike Hire.....	49 C2
Todd Energy.....					
Aquatic Centre.....	(see 10)				

**MAORI NZ: TARANAKI**

Ever since Mt Taranaki fled here to escape romantic difficulties (p254), the region has had a turbulent history. The region has seen conflicts between local *iwi* (tribes) and invaders from the Waikato, followed by two wars with the government (see boxed text on p36) – first in 1860–61, when Waikato *iwi*, traditionally an enemy (p218), came to Taranaki's aid; and then again in 1865–69, when local forces were surprisingly successful under the remarkable general, Titikowaru. Following the wars there were massive land confiscations and an extraordinary passive-resistance campaign at Parihaka (see the boxed text, p259).

To further explore the history of local Maori, visit Puke Ariki (below) in New Plymouth, and Parihaka if you can. Readers should look out for Dick Scott's *Ask That Mountain* or Maurice Shadbolt's very funny *Monday's Warriors*. More information on local *iwi* can be found at Maori Tourism Taranaki ([www.mtt.org.nz](http://www.mtt.org.nz)).

regional art gallery and the crowd-pulling jewel in the town's crown. Presenting contemporary – often experimental – local and international shows, it's most famous for its connection with NZ sculptor, filmmaker and artist Len Lye. His work is well represented here, with showings of his 1930s animation as well as sculpture and super-clever kinetic works. Moves are afoot to add a special wing to the gallery to showcase more of his work.

To see what local artists have to offer, visit **Real Tart Gallery** (☎ 06-769 5717; [www.tact.org.nz](http://www.tact.org.nz); 19 Egmont St; admission free; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–4pm Sat & Sun). Exhibitions change regularly and some works are for sale.

Just around the corner is **Verge** (☎ 06-769 6450; 62 Devon St West; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9.30am–4pm Sat, 11am–3pm Sun), a gallery selling lots of NZ-made portable and affordable souvenirs. **Kina**, almost opposite, offers similar.

**PUKE ARIKI**

Translating as 'Hill of Chiefs', **Puke Ariki** (☎ 06-759 6060; [www.pukeariki.com](http://www.pukeariki.com); 1 Ariki St; admission free; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon & Tue, Thu & Fri, 9am–9pm Wed, 9am–5pm Sat & Sun) is home to the i-SITE, museum, library, Daily News Café and Arborio restaurant. The **museum** (admission free) has an extensive collection of Maori artefacts, wildlife and colonial exhibits. The half-hourly Taranaki Experience show tells the history of the province while the audience sits in podlike seats that rumble and glow.

**HISTORIC PLACES**

The *Heritage Walkway* booklet (\$5), available from the i-SITE, outlines an interesting self-guided tour of around 30 historic sites.

**Richmond Cottage** (☎ 06-759 6060; cnr Ariki & Brougham Sts; admission free; ☎ 11am–3.30pm Sat & Sun) was built in 1853. Unlike most early cottages, which were made of timber, Richmond Cottage was sturdily built of stone.

**St Mary's Church** (Vivian St), built in 1846, is the oldest stone church in NZ. Its graveyard has the headstones of early settlers and soldiers who died during the Taranaki Land Wars (1860–61 and 1865–69). Impressed by their bravery, the British also buried several Maori chiefs here.

About 2.5km from the centre of town on the eastern extreme of Devon St, the **Fitzroy Pole** was erected by Maori in 1844 to limit settlers' land acquisition. At the base of the pole, a carving shows a sulking Pakeha (white person) topped by a triumphant Maori.

**SUGAR LOAF ISLANDS MARINE PARK**

The rugged islets, Back Beach on the west side of Paritutu, and the waters 1km offshore were made into the Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Park in 1991. The islands, which are eroded volcanic remnants, are a refuge for sea birds and over 400 NZ fur seals. Most seals come here from June to October but some stay all year round. You can learn more about the marine park at the tiny **Interpretation Centre** (☎ 9am–5pm daily) on the Lee Breakwater promenade.

You can visit the islands with **Happy Chaddy's Charters** (☎ 06-758 9133; [www.windwand.co.nz/chaddiescharters](http://www.windwand.co.nz/chaddiescharters); adult/child \$30/10). Chaddy's quote the character and offers great value for money: expect at least four laughs a minute on this one-hour bob around on the chop. Departs daily from Lee Breakwater, tide and weather permitting. Paddleboats, kayaks and bikes are available for hire too.

**MARSLAND HILL & OBSERVATORY**

The **New Plymouth Observatory** (☎ 06-753 2358; Marsland Hill; suggested donation adult/child \$3/2; ☎ 7.30–9.30pm Tue Mar–Oct, 8.30–10pm Tue Nov–Feb) is off Robe St. Public nights include a planetarium programme and, if the weather is clear, viewing through a 15cm refractor telescope.

**PARITUTU**

Above the power station west of town is Paritutu, a steep-sided and craggy hillock whose name translates appropriately as 'Rising Precipice'. From the summit you can see for miles around: out to the Sugar Loaves, down to the town and back to the mountain beyond. These views can be earned by a 20-minute scramble to the top. Well worth it.

**PARKS**

New Plymouth has several picturesque parks but none so delightful as **Pukekura Park**, which in 2007 was voted in as the Mayfair of NZ Monopoly – no other landmark polled higher nationwide. A 10-minute stroll from the city centre, the park has 49 hectares of gardens, bush walks, streams, waterfalls, ponds and display houses open between 8.30am and 4pm. Next to the lake, the **Tea House** (☎ 10am–5pm) serves up light meals and cream teas. Row boats, costing \$5 for 30 minutes, make for easy exploration of the lake on weekends and summer evenings. The **Festival of Lights** (early December to early February) is now so legendary that many New Zealanders make a pilgrimage of it. The park also has a delightful cricket oval in the English tradition, with terrace seating cut into the surrounding hills.

Adjoining Pukekura is **Brooklands Park** and, close by, the **Bowl of Brooklands** ([www.bowl.co.nz](http://www.bowl.co.nz)), a world-class outdoor sound-shell, home to WOMAD (right) and performed in by the likes of Elton John and Cliff Richard. The park was once the grounds of a settler's home, destroyed by Maori, though the fireplace and chimney survive today. Spectacles include a 2000-year-old puriri tree, a rhododendron dell with over 300 varieties, a **zoo** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am–5pm) and the **Gables** (admission free; ☎ 1–4pm Sat & Sun), a former hospital, now an art gallery and medical museum.

Along the city waterfront is **Puke Ariki Landing**, a historic area with sculptures, including the Wind Wand. Designed by Len Lye – the man who has put this town on the map in modern times – this 45m-high kooky ki-

netic sculpture is a truly beloved icon of bendy poleness. Further west along the water's edge is grassy **Kawaroa Park**, the site of squash courts and the **Todd Energy Aquatic Centre** (☎ 06-759 6060; adult/child \$4/3), which has a waterslide, outdoor pool and indoor pool.

**Activities****SURFING & WINDSURFING**

The black, volcanic-sand beaches of Taranaki are world renowned for surfing and windsurfing. Close to the eastern edge of town are Fitzroy and East End Beaches, and there's decent surf at Back Beach, near Paritutu, at the western end of the city. Oakura is also popular (and reachable by Okato Bus Lines). In fact there are so many surf beaches along the coast that the road south is now known as Surf Highway 45 (p257).

**Beach Street Surf Shop** (☎ 06-758 0400; 39 Beach St, Fitzroy; lesson & hire \$75) offers lessons, gear hire and tours. The inexperienced can try **Tandem Surf Taranaki** (☎ 027 489 9232; lesson & hire \$80), who guarantee you'll stand up. **Taranaki Coastal Surf Charters** (☎ 06-751 2483) provides customised guided surf tours. For windsurfing, try **Windsurf Taranaki** (☎ 06-769 9291; lesson & hire \$45).

**WALKING**

The i-SITE has leaflets on walks around New Plymouth, including coastal, local reserve and park walks. The 7km **Coastal Walkway**, from Lake Rotomanu to Port Taranaki, makes for a scenic orientation of the town. **Te Henui Walkway**, extending from the coast at East End Reserve to the city's southern boundary, is a pleasant and interesting streamside amble. **Huatoki Valley Walkway**, following Huatoki Stream, makes an attractive walk to the city centre.

**HOT POOLS**

The warm mineral water that fills the **Taranaki Thermal Spa** (☎ 06-759 1666; 8 Bonithon Ave; 30min \$15) was discovered during the search for oil around 1910. The private baths are filled on arrival: soak alone or with friends. An absolute tonic.

**Festivals & Events**

**Rhododendron & Garden Festival** (☎ 06-759 8412; [www.rhodo.co.nz](http://www.rhodo.co.nz)) NZ's oldest and most famous garden festival, held late October/early November each year. **WOMAD** (World of Music Arts & Dance; ☎ 06-759 8412; [www.womad.co.nz](http://www.womad.co.nz)) A diverse array of local and international artists perform at the Brooklands Bowl each March.

## Tours

**Cruise NZ Tours** (☎ 06-758 3222; kirstall@extra.co.nz; full day \$95) Runs tours of the city and surrounding highlights.

**Cydetours Taranaki** (☎ 06-756 7727; 1-7 day tours incl bike hire & back-up service \$99-650) Offers self-guided tours around the area.

**Heliview** (☎ 0508 435 484; www.heliview.co.nz) A range of sightseeing tours starting from \$75.

**Kayak Discovery** (☎ 06-769 5506; half-day trips incl hire \$50) Paddle out to the Sugar Loaf Islands or over the gentle Waitara River rapids.

**New Plymouth Aero Club** (☎ 06-755 0500; www.airnewplymouth.co.nz) Standard and customised scenic flights starting from \$44.

**Taranaki Tours** (☎ 0800 886 877; www.taranakitours.com; half-/full-day \$80/150) Offers several themed tours, strong on Maori culture and natural history.

## Sleeping

Sea views will edge up the price but there are well-priced options close to the city.

## BUDGET

**Sunflower Lodge** (☎ 06-759 0050; www.sunflowerlodge.co.nz; 25 Ariki St; dm \$20-25, r&tw \$59; ☑) Across the road from Puke Ariki and a stone's throw from the beach, this backpackers has sea views from a sun-drenched balcony and good rooms with TVs.

**Shoestring Backpackers** (☎ 06-758 0404; www.shoestring.co.nz; 48 Lemon St; dm/s \$25/43, d&tw \$62; ☑) Set in a labyrinthine heritage building, this isn't the fanciest option but it's well maintained and brimming with character. Upstairs rooms are secluded and quiet, while the downstairs dorms are handy to the dining area and chilled-out sunroom. Out the back is a suntrap: deck and handkerchief lawn, plus barbecue for guests' use.

**our pick Seaspray House** (☎ 06-759 8934; www.seasprayhouse.co.nz; 13 Weymouth St; dm/s/d \$27/43/66; ☑) A real home away from home, just a few minutes walk to town. A big old house with glorious high ceilings, it has recently been renovated but remains relaxed and affordable with well-chosen retro and antique furniture. A rare, bunk-free backpackers that feels fresh, arty and attractive.

**Egmont Eco Leisure Park** (☎ 06-753 5720; www.egmont.co.nz; 12 Clawton St; sites \$32, dm/d/f \$28/65/125; ☑) An immaculate facility set in a glade with chirping birds and a babbling creek. Has mixed dorms in the main lodge, and smaller pinewood cabins down below which sleep a

maximum of four. The kitchen and dining areas are well set up and comfortable. Be there in the early evening to share in the nightly Egmont cake, home-made by lodge mother.

**Belt Road Holiday Park** (☎ 0800 804 204, 06-758 0228; www.beltroad.co.nz; 2 Belt Rd; sites \$30, cabins \$45-95; ☑) This pohutukawa-covered holiday park sits atop a bluff overlooking the increasingly interesting Lee Breakwater area, about a 10-minute walk to the town centre.

**Arcadia Lodge** (☎ 06-769 9100; www.arcadialodge.net; cnr Young & Weymouth Sts; dm/d/f \$35/85/120; ☑) Formerly a rest home, this big old lemon villa was originally built for the local newspaper editor. Now a bed and breakfast (continental included in price), it offers warmth, easy access and plenty of peace and quiet. The breakfast room is a delight, as is the genteel lounge. There's a spa and barbecue too.

**New Plymouth Top 10 Holiday Park** (☎ 06-758 2566; www.nptop10.co.nz; 29 Princes St; sites/cabins \$38/55, tourist flats \$70-110, units \$80-200; ☑) This park is in Fitzroy, 3.5km east of the town centre, with pleasant cottages and family fittings such as a life-sized chess set, trampoline, laundry and spacious kitchen.

## MIDANGE

**Carrington Motel** (☎ 06-757 9431; www.newplymouthmotel.co.nz; 61 Carrington St; s/d/f \$75/85/125; ☑) Sixteen tidy, roomy units close to Pukekura Park and 10 minutes walk to town. Good kitchen facilities, large grassy areas and barbecue. Very family friendly and great value.

**Cottage Mews** (☎ 06-758 0403; www.shoestring.co.nz; 48 Lemon St; s/d \$90/100; ☑) A small and modest motel where you'll feel like family, rather than a guest. Well-kept rooms have smallish bathrooms and some nice antique furnishings. There is a lawn out front, plus you can pop next door to the co-owned Shoestring backpackers and tie up some friendly socialising.

**BK's Egmont Motor Lodge** (☎ 06-758 5216; www.egmontmotorlodge.co.nz; 115 Coronation Ave; s&d \$110, f \$165; ☑) Opposite the racecourse on the main south road, this lodge sports ground-floor units and lots of parking, so is good for those who need room to move. Units are plain but comfortable and clean.

**Bella Vista** (☎ 06-769 5932; www.bellavistamotels.co.nz; cnr King & Queen Sts; d \$115-150; ☑) A dependable option for those who want to be right in town. Basic rooms have toast-making facilities only; fancier rooms have full kitchens. Bonuses, such as fair trade coffee to

plunge, free bicycle hire and internet in all rooms, abound.

**Timata Ora** (☎ 06-757 9917; www.timataora.co.nz; 55 Gover St; s&d \$120-130) A homely bed and breakfast with several spacious suites. Comfortable rooms with a decor of florals, giant teddy bears and even a four-poster bed. Quality furnishings and all necessary amenities.

## TOP END

**Waterfront** (☎ 06-769 5301; www.waterfront.co.nz; 1 Egmont St; r \$190-550; ☑) Sleek and snazzy, the Waterfront is the place to stay, particularly if the boss is paying. The minimalist studios are pretty flash, while the penthouses steal the show with all mod-cons and balconies. It's got terrific views from some – but not all – rooms, but certainly from the bar and restaurant, Salt.

**Nice Hotel** (☎ 06-758 6423; www.nicehotel.co.nz; 71 Brougham St; d/ste \$225/300) This place is high class from top to bottom, exuding attention to detail with luxury furnishings and *objets d'art*. There are seven rooms with large bathrooms, while the ground floor suite has several rooms and a grand piano. The in-house restaurant, Table at Nice, has an elegant deck and garden, and specialises in events and dinner parties.

## Eating

While there's not *too* much to quibble about in the way of choice and value, be prepared for some zestlessness and a lot of the same thing done several ways (with parsley; without).

## RESTAURANTS

**Ultra Lounge** (☎ 06-758 8444; 75 Devon St East; lunch \$5-14, dinner \$25-30; ☑) (lunch & dinner) A fashionable bar and restaurant serving upmarket café fare during the day and upping the ante in the evenings. Plenty of top quality NZ produce served intelligently, fresh Med flavours and delicately-done Asian. Boasts a stylish interior and pleasant rooftop balcony.

**our pick Arborio** (☎ 06-759 6060; inside Puke Ariki; breakfast/lunch \$10-17, dinner \$20-30; ☑) (breakfast, lunch & dinner) Despite looking like a cheese grater, this is arguably the star of the local food show. It's airy, arty and modern, with sea views, and is handily located inside Puke Ariki. The Med-influenced café-style fare is generous and flavoursome and clearly prepared with pride. Terrific brunch. You can see the kitchen too, which is always reassuring in a strange town. Cocktails and NZ wines are also on offer.

**El Condor** (☎ 06-757 5436; 170 Devon St East; mains \$20-36; ☑) (dinner Tue-Sat) A cosy and popular joint offering fresh and tasty pizza, calzone, and pasta plus very pleasing desserts. Hearty portions go some way to make up for the bizarre minimum order policy.

**Andre's L'Escargot** (☎ 06-758 4812; 37 Brougham St; mains \$36-40; ☑) (dinner Mon-Sat) If you're looking for the best in town, this is as good as it gets. Audaciously serving up snails in the 'naki since 1977, we doff our beret to the man who has no doubt raised the bar and kept it there. All classic French fare, indulgent and largely gout-inducing, plus killer cocktails.

## CAFES

**Empire** (☎ 06-758 1148; 112 Devon St West; lunches \$4-10; ☑) (9am-4pm Mon-Fri) A perfectly evolved Kiwi tearoom with pretty china plates nailed to the wall and a sunny courtyard out back. Nice sandwiches, salads, lasagne and fillos, plus great cakes and biscuits for afters.

**Daily News** (☎ 06-769 5386; 1 Ariki St; meals \$4-7; ☑) (lunch) Situated in a pleasant corner of the library, this place is perfect for those who like to eat in peace. Inexpensive, filling counter food such as sandwiches and muffins that you can enjoy while plugging into CNN or BBC sites or browsing mags and newspapers.

**Chaos** (☎ 06-759 8080; 36 Brougham St; snacks \$4-6, meals \$6-16; ☑) (breakfast & lunch) Not so much chaotic as a little bit scruffy and grimy, Chaos is generally dependable and, with its boho stylings, pretty high on the groove-ometer. The food's a happy mix of wholesome/interesting and lardy/sugary options, and their coffee reigns supreme.

**Petit Paris** (☎ 06-759 0398; 34 Currie St; lunches \$5-12; ☑) (7am-5pm) Ooh la la: it's lashings of buttery treats. A popular boulangerie and patisserie turning out proper cruchy baguettes and tart au citron plus the likes of omelette and croque monsieur for lunch.

**Elixir** (☎ 06-769 9020; 117 Devon St East; snacks/lunch \$5-15, dinner \$15-26; ☑) (breakfast, lunch & dinner) A welcoming drop-in at any time of day, this café has an American-diner feel about it, albeit with a distinct NZ twist. Offers everything from coffee, cake, bagels beer and eggs on toast, through to some innovative (if silly-sounding) evening fare. Organic, free range and fair trade are a priority.

## QUICK EATS

**Sandwich Extreme** (☎ 06-759 6999; 52 Devon St East; meals \$7-9; ☑) (lunch) Toasties, baked spuds and

other refreshingly simple fare served fresh and fast.

**ourpick** **Seafood on the Beach** (☎ 06-769 9906; 43 Ocean View Pde, Lee Breakwater; meals \$8-18; ☎ 11am-8.30pm) Gourmet fish and chips. How gourmet, you say? Fish fresh off the boat, kumara chips, garlic aioli and burgers on ciabatta. Finger lickin' good.

#### SELF-CATERING

**Andre's Pies & Patisserie** (☎ 06-758 3062; 44 Leach St; snacks \$2-6; ☎ 6am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) Expanding waistlines since 1972, this is an easy pull-over off the main road through town. Dive on in for good pies and slabs of cake.

**Fresha** (☎ 06-758 8284; cnr Devon & Morley Sts; snacks \$2-6; ☎ 9am-6pm) A drool-worthy emporium of everything you need for your picnic basket, much of it representing the best NZ has to offer. There is a café on the spot, while diagonally opposite is Down to Earth, which sells organic wholefoods.

**Snax in the City** (15 Brougham St) The only downtown dairy, this place stocks a small but smart grocery range, as well as making cheap, fresh sandwiches, milkshakes and ice cream, while the local **Pak N Save** (53 Leach St; ☎ 8am-midnight) supermarket is just west of the town centre.

#### Drinking

**Rosie O'Grady's** (☎ 06-758 5373; cnr Gover & Devon St East; mains \$10-23; ☎ 10am-late) Located behind Breakers, Rosie's offers the best pint of Guinness in town and a raft of other good beers to boot. Cosy and convivial atmosphere inside; outsider seating is provided in a sheltered lane.

**Crowded House** (☎ 06-759 4921; 93 Devon St East; mains \$15-26; ☎ 10am-late) A throbbing hive of all-ages activity with pool tables (in good nick), restaurant (fries with everything) and big screen TV.

**Powder Room** (☎ 06-759 2089; 108 Devon St West; ☎ 4pm-late Tue-Sat) Get all made up for this slinky bar serving super-smooth cocktails and mouth-watering wines. Then slide onto the dance floor (which features frequent DJs) to throw a few decorous shapes – if you still can.

#### Entertainment

**Matinée** (☎ 06-759 2088; 69 Devon St West; ☎ 4.30pm-late Sun-Thu, noon-late Fri & Sat) A good option (one of the only ones, actually) for those who prefer top shelf to Tui, and electronica to '80s rock. Housed in a former theatre, the interior

is pleasant enough while the tables outside afford puffing and people-watching.

**55** (☎ 06-759 0997; 55 Egmont St; admission \$9; ☎ Thu-Sun late) If you've still got energy to burn at midnight, this is for you. Balcony a highlight, albeit reminiscent of a tin of sardines.

**TSB Showplace** (☎ 06-759 0021; 92 Devon St West) Housed in the old opera house, the Showplace stages a variety of big performances, as does the Bowl of Brooklands (p249), administered by the same people. For bookings go to Ticketek ([www.ticketek.co.nz](http://www.ticketek.co.nz)) or Ticket Direct ([www.ticketdirect.co.nz](http://www.ticketdirect.co.nz)).

**Top Town Cinema 5** (☎ 06-759 9077; [www.nzcinema.co.nz](http://www.nzcinema.co.nz); 119 Devon St East; adult/child \$12.50/7) A worn cinema complex, the floor a sea of popcorn.

#### Getting There & Away

You can book tickets for InterCity, Tranz Scenic, Interislander and Bluebridge ferries at the i-SITE inside Puke Ariki.

#### AIR

**Air New Zealand** (☎ 06-757 3300; [www.airnz.co.nz](http://www.airnz.co.nz); 12 Devon St East) has daily direct flights to/from Auckland (45 minutes, eight daily), Wellington (55 minutes, five daily) and Christchurch (85 minutes, one daily), with onward connections to other NZ destinations.

#### BUS

The bus centre is located at the corner of Egmont and Ariki Streets.

**InterCity** (☎ 06-759 9039; [www.intercitycoach.co.nz](http://www.intercitycoach.co.nz)) runs daily buses to/from Hamilton (\$44, four hours), Auckland (\$68, six hours), Wanganui (\$35, three hours), Palmerston North (\$45, four hours) and on to Wellington (\$61, four hours).

**Dalroy Express** (☎ 06-759 0197; [www.dalroytours.co.nz](http://www.dalroytours.co.nz)) operates a daily service between Auckland (\$54, five hours) and Hamilton (\$36, three hours) with pick-ups available from Hawera.

**White Star** (☎ 06-758 3338) has two buses each weekday and one at weekends to/from Wanganui (\$24, 2½ hours), Palmerston North (\$33, 3¾ hours), Wellington (\$47, 6¼ hours) and many small towns in between.

#### Getting Around

**New Plymouth Airport** (☎ 06-755 2250) is 11km east of the centre. **Airport Shuttle** (☎ 06-769 5974; [www.npairportshuttle.co.nz](http://www.npairportshuttle.co.nz); adult \$22) operates a door-to-door shuttle to/from the airport – book online.

**Citybus** (☎ 06-758 2799; [www.okatobus.co.nz](http://www.okatobus.co.nz); adult \$3-5) services run on weekdays around town, as well as north to Waitara and south to Oakura. The main stop is at the bus centre on the corner of Egmont and Ariki Sts.

**Cycle Inn Bike Hire** (☎ 06-758 7418; 133 Devon St; per day \$15) rents out bicycles. For cheap car hire, head to **Rent-a-Dent** (☎ 06-757 5362; [www.rentadent.co.nz](http://www.rentadent.co.nz); 592 Devon St East) or to catch a taxi call **Energy City Cabs** (☎ 06-757 5580).

For shuttle services to Mt Taranaki, see p256.

#### AROUND NEW PLYMOUTH

Although Egmont National Park is the pinnacle of the region's attractions, there are plenty of other pleasant things to do.

#### Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust

This four sq-km **garden** (☎ 06-752 4141; [www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz); 2290 Carrington Rd; adult/child \$12/free; ☎ 9am-5pm Oct-Mar, 10am-3pm Apr-Sep), located 20km south of New Plymouth, is home to a remarkable collection of rhododendrons and azaleas, which generally flower from September to November. This beautiful, bush-bordered garden is worth visiting any time of year. The scenic journey there passes between the Pouakai and Kaitake Ranges, both part of Egmont National Park.

#### Tupare

**Tupare** (☎ 06-765 7127; 487 Mangorei Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a Tudor-style house designed by the renowned architect, James Chapman-Taylor. It is a picture, but the highlight of this 7km trip south of town will likely be the stunning 3.6 hectare garden surrounding it. Bluebells, birdsong – a picnicker's dream.

#### Hurworth

This 1856 **cottage** (☎ 06-756 8606; 906 Carrington Rd; adult/child \$3.50/1; ☎ 11am-3pm Sat & Sun), about 8km south of New Plymouth, was built by four-time NZ prime minister Harry Atkinson. The cottage is the sole survivor of a settlement abandoned at the start of the Taranaki Land Wars, and as such affords interesting insights into the lives of early settlers.

#### Lake Mangamahoe & Taranaki Aviation, Transport & Technology Museum

If you're heading towards Stratford or North Egmont on SH3, stop at Lake Mangamahoe, 9.5km south of New Plymouth, for walking

tracks and the possibility of a photograph of Mt Taranaki reflected in the lake.

Opposite the lake is the **Taranaki Aviation, Transport & Technology Museum** (Tatatm; ☎ 06-752 2845; [www.nz museums.co.nz](http://www.nz museums.co.nz); cnr SH3 & Kent Rd; adult/child \$7/2; ☎ 10.30am-4pm Sat & Sun), which takes you on a fascinating and nostalgic trip down memory lane with its ramshackle displays of old planes, trains, automobiles and general household miscellany. Ask to see the stuff made by the amazing bee guy.

#### Inglewood

Handy to the mountain, the little town of Inglewood is an adequate stop for supermarket supplies and a noteworthy stop for a pie at **Nelsons Bakery** (45 Rata St), or a pint of beer. Its foremost feature is the cute **Fun Ho! Toy Museum** (☎ 06-756 7030; [www.funho.com](http://www.funho.com); adult/child \$6/free), which shows and sells charming sand-cast toys of Kiwi yesteryear. The visitor information centre is located inside.

**White Eagle** (☎ 06-756 8252; [www.whiteeaglehotel.co.nz](http://www.whiteeaglehotel.co.nz); 87b Rata St; s/d \$75/90; ☎) is pretty much your only accommodation option in the town. It's quiet and clean.

**Macfarlane's Caffe** (☎ 06-756 6665; 1 Kelly St; snacks \$4-8, mains \$18-25; ☎ 9am-5pm Sun-Wed, 9am-late Thu-Sat), housed in a heritage building, offers super-sized custard squares and coffee during the day and wild boar sausages at night.

**Funkfish Grill** (☎ 06-756 7287; 32 Matai St; mains \$25-28; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) is a hip pizzeria and fish and chipper doing eat-in and takeaway, and doubles as a bar at night.

#### North via SH3

Heading north towards Waikato from New Plymouth is the scenic route of SH3. This is the way to Waitomo, and one of the roads to Hamilton. Get the free *Northern Taranaki* brochure from the i-SITES in Otorohanga (p235) or New Plymouth (p247).

The first major town north of New Plymouth is Waitara, 14km along SH3. Not far past is a right-hand turn-off down Ngatimaru Rd, which, after five minutes' drive will see you at the weird but kinda wonderful **SuperShed** (☎ 06-759 9917; 325 Ngatimaru Rd, Tikorangi; adult incl afternoon tea \$50; ☎ by appointment). Watch hundreds of cows rotating while they lactate in this state-of-the-art milking shed. Strangely mesmerising and well-worth a look if you're remotely interested in cows, dairy products or mega-machines that go whoosh 'n' click.

Continuing north on SH3 are various seaward turn-offs to high sand dunes and surf beaches. **Urenui**, 16km past Waitara, is popular in summer.

About 5km past Urenui you'll find arguably the highlight of North Taranaki – **White Cliffs Organic Brewery** (☎ 06-752 3676; www.organicbeer.co.nz; Main Rd Nth; ☎ 10am-6pm) – home of award-winning beers. The brewery provides tours, tastings and takeaways (for the driver to drink off-duty). A little further on is the turn-off to Pukearuhe and **Whitediffs**, huge drops which resemble their Dover namesake. From here the **Whitediffs Walkway** leads to the Tongaporutu River via a tunnel from the beach (check the tides – go when it's low). On clear days the five- to seven-hour walk affords superb views of the coastline and the mountains (Taranaki and Ruapehu).

If you're continuing up to Mokau, it's worth stopping at the **Three Sisters**, signposted just south of the Tongaporutu Bridge. The beach is quietly dramatic, with the two sisters standing somewhat forlornly off the coast (their other sister sadly collapsed in a heap).

## MT TARANAKI (EGMONT NATIONAL PARK)

A classic 2518m volcanic cone dominating the landscape, Mt Taranaki is a magnet to all who catch his eye. Geologically, Taranaki is the youngest of three large volcanoes – Kaitake and Pouakai are the others – which stand along the same fault line. With the last eruption over 350 years ago (you can see lava flows covering the top 1400m), experts say that the mountain is overdue for another go. But don't let that put you off – this mountain is an absolute beauty and the highlight of any visit to the region.

## History

According to Maori legend, Taranaki belonged to a tribe of volcanoes in the middle of the North Island. However, he was forced to depart rather hurriedly when he was caught with Pihanga, the beautiful volcano near Lake Taupo and the lover of Mt Tongariro. As he fled south (some say in disgrace; others say to keep the peace), Taranaki gouged out a wide scar in the earth (now the Whanganui River) and finally settled in the west in his current position. He remains here in majestic isolation, hiding his face behind a cloud of tears.

It is said that Maori did not heavily settle the area between Taranaki and Pihanga be-

cause they feared the reunification of the lovers in a spectacular eruption. Instead, Maori settlements in this district lined the coast between Mokau and Patea, concentrated around Urenui and Waitara. The mountain itself was supremely sacred, both as a burial site for chiefs and as a hide-out in times of danger.

It was Captain Cook who named the mountain Egmont, after the Earl he sought to flatter at that particular moment. Egmont National Park was created in 1900, making it NZ's second-oldest. Mt Taranaki eventually reclaimed its name, although the name Egmont has stuck like, well, egg. The mountain starred as Mt Fuji in *The Last Samurai* (2003), the production of which caused near-hysteria in the locals, especially when Tom Cruise came to town.

## Information

The most current and comprehensive information about the national park is available from the **North Egmont visitor centre** (☎ 06-756 0990; www.doc.govt.nz; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Oct-Apr, 8.30am-4pm May-Sep) where you also find interactive displays, a video presentation and a small café. **Dawson Falls visitor centre** (☎ 027 443 0248; www.doc.govt.nz; Rd 29; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Thu-Sun) is the southeastern side of the mountain. **Metphone** (☎ 0900 999 06) can also give weather updates.

## Activities WALKING

Due to its accessibility, Mt Taranaki ranks as the 'most climbed' mountain in NZ. Nevertheless, tramping on this mountain is dangerous and should not be undertaken lightly (see the boxed text, opposite). It's *crucial* to get advice before departing and leave your intentions with the DOC visitor centre or i-SITE.

Most walks are accessible from North Egmont, Dawson Falls or East Egmont, and all the walks mentioned here can be found in DOC pamphlets – a good one to start with is *Short Walks in Egmont National Park* (\$2.50).

From North Egmont, the **Ngatoro Loop Track** (one hour), **Veronica Loop** (two hours) and **Connett Loop** (40 minutes return) are all recommended basic walks. The **Summit Track** also starts from North Egmont. It's a poled route taking six to eight hours return, and should not be attempted by inexperienced

## DECEPTIVE MOUNTAIN

Mt Taranaki may look like an easy climb, but this scenic mountain has claimed more than 60 lives. The principal hazard is the weather, which can change from summery to white-out conditions unexpectedly and almost in an instant. You may leave New Plymouth in sunshine and find yourself in snowfall up at altitude. There are also precipitous bluffs and steep icy slopes.

There are plenty of short walks, safe for much of the year, but for adventurous trampers January to March is the best time to go. You must take an appropriate map and consult a DOC officer for current conditions. You *must* also register your tramping intentions with the DOC visitor centre or i-SITE. Pick up the brochure *Taranaki: The Mountain* from DOC offices or visitor information centres for more safety tips.

people, especially in icy conditions and snow. The **Pouakai Circuit** (12 hours return), a two-day loop around the mountain, also starts from here.

East Egmont has disabled access on **Potaema Track** (30 minutes return) and **East Egmont Lookout** (30 minutes return); a longer walk is the steep **Enchanted Track** (two to three hours return).

At Dawson Falls you can do several short walks including **Wilkie's Pools Loop** (one hour return) or the excellent but challenging **Fanthams Peak Return** (five hours return), which is snowed-in during winter.

The 55km **Around-the-Mountain Circuit** takes three to five days and can be picked up at any of the three park entrances. There are a number of huts en route, tickets for which should be purchased in advance (see Sleeping, right).

The **York Loop Track**, accessible from York Road, north of Stratford, is a fascinating walk following part of a disused railway line (interpretive leaflet available).

## Guides

You can tramp without a guide from February to March when snowfalls are low, but inexperienced climbers (or those looking for tramping companions) can check with DOC for contacts with local clubs and guides. It costs around \$300 per day to hire a guide. Reliable operators include:

**Adventure Dynamics** (☎ 027 248 7858, 06-751 3589; www.adventuredynamics.co.nz)

**MacAlpine Guides** (☎ 027 441 7042; www.macalpineguides.com)

**Top Guides** (☎ 021 838 513; www.topguides.co.nz)

## SKIING

From Stratford you can take Pembroke Rd all the way up to Stratford Plateau. From here

it's a mere 1.5km walk to the small Manganui club ski field. Buy a daily ski pass and hire gear from **Mountain House Motor Lodge** (☎ 0800 668 682, 06-765 6100; www.mountainhouse.co.nz; Pembroke Rd; daily ski pass adult/child \$35/20) just down the road. The Stratford i-SITE has daily weather and snow reports; otherwise you can ring the **snow phone service** (☎ 06-759 1119) or check the webcam at www.skitaranaki.co.nz.

For more on skiing in this area, see p89.

## Sleeping BUDGET

There are many DOC huts scattered about the mountain which are accessible by tramping tracks. Most cost \$10 per night (although Syme and Kahui cost \$5); purchase hut tickets in advance from DOC. You need to bring your own cooking, eating and sleeping gear, and bookings are not accepted – it's first-come, first-served. Although DOC would much prefer you to use the huts, camping is permitted in the national park. Limited pitches are available near the huts (per person \$5). Remember: you must carry out *all* your rubbish.

**Missing Leg** (☎ 06-752 2570; missingleg@xtra.co.nz; 1082 Junction Rd, Egmont Village; unpowered/powerd sites \$10/12, dm/d \$20/25; ☎) This excellently eccentric backpackers is easily spotted by its bicycle fence. Dorm accommodation up in the loft, and a handful of comfy little baches out the back.

**Camphouse** (☎ 06-756 9093; dm/d \$28/65; ☎) Bunkhouse-style accommodation behind the North Egmont visitor centre in a historic 1850 corrugated iron building, complete with bullet holes in the walls, from shots fired at settlers by local Maori during the Taranaki Land Wars. Endless horizon views from the porch.

**Eco Inn** (☎ 06-752 2765; www.ecoinn.co.nz; 671 Kent Rd; st/tw/d \$30/52/60; ☎) About 6.5km up the road

from the turn-off at the Aviation, Transport & Technology Museum (p253), this super eco-friendly place is made from recycled timber and runs on solar, wind and hydropower. Has a spa and pool table and transport to and from the mountain is available.

Bunkhouse accommodation is offered at **Konini Lodge** (☎ 027 443 0248; adult/child \$20/10; 📍) right next to Dawson Falls visitor centre.

#### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Mountain House** (☎ 0800 668 682, 06-765 6100; www.mountainhouse.co.nz; Pembroke Rd; r from \$130; 📍) This lodge, on the Stratford side of the mountain (15km from the SH3 turn-off) and the closest to the Manganui ski area, has rooms and chalets with kitchens. On-site restaurant; ski hire available.

**Dawson Falls Mountain Lodge** (☎ 0800 695 6343, 06-765 5457; www.dawson-falls.co.nz; Upper Manaia Rd; s/d \$140/200; 📍) Right beside the DOC visitor centre is this peculiar yet inviting lodge with en suite rooms plus shared sitting and dining areas. Meals are available in the tea room.

**Anderson's Alpine Lodge** (☎ 06-765 6620; www.andersonsalpinelodge.co.nz; 922 Pembroke Rd; r \$165-215; 📍) Anderson's Swiss-chalet style lodge is further down the mountain, not far from the DOC office. It's quite quirky inside but pleasant and comfortable, with a postcard mountain view from the upstairs sitting room.

**Rahiri Cottage** (☎ 06-756-9093; www.mttaranaki.co.nz; Egmont Rd, RD6; d \$245; 📍) This enchanting clinker-brick cottage was once the tollgate into Egmont National Park and today it offers luxury B&B rooms in a bush setting.

#### Getting There & Away

There are three main entrance roads to Egmont National Park, all of which are well signposted and either pass by or end at a DOC visitor centre. Closest to New Plymouth is North Egmont: turn off SH3 at Egmont Village, 12km south of New Plymouth, and follow the road for 14km. From Stratford, turn off at Pembroke Rd and continue for 15km to East Egmont (plus Mountain House, p255; Manganui ski area, p89; and the Plateau car park). From the southeast, Upper Manaia Rd leads up to Dawson Falls, 23km from Stratford.

There are no public buses to the national park but numerous shuttle bus operators will gladly take you there (one way \$30 to \$40, return \$45 to \$50):

**Cruise NZ Tours** (☎ 06-758 3222) Departs New Plymouth at scheduled times; other pick-up points and times by arrangement.

**Eastern Taranaki Experience** (☎ 06-765 7482; www.eastern-taranaki.co.nz) Departs from Stratford.

**Kiwi Outdoors Centre** (☎ 06-758 4152; 18 Arikiri St, New Plymouth) Pick-up points and times to suit; gear hire available.

**Taranaki Tours** (☎ 0800 886 877; www.taranakitours.com) Pick-up points and times by arrangement.

#### AROUND MT TARANAKI

There are two principal highways around the mountain. SH3, on the inland side of the mountain, is the most travelled route, heading south from New Plymouth for 70km until it meets the coast at Hawera. The other route is the SH45 – also known as the Surf Highway (opposite).

#### Stratford pop 9730

Forty kilometres southeast of New Plymouth on SH3, Stratford plays up its namesake of Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace, by naming its streets after the bard's characters. It also claims NZ's first **glockenspiel** (🕒 10am, 1pm, 3pm & 7pm). Four times daily this clock doth chime out Shakespeare's greatest hits with some fairly wooden performances.

The town has an **i-SITE** (☎ 0800 765 6708; www.stratfordnz.co.nz; Prospero Pl; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) that also serves as the **Automobile Association** and houses the **Percy Thomson Gallery** (☎ 06-765 0917; www.percythomsongallery.org.nz; 🕒 10.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-3pm Sat & Sun), a community gallery that shows eclectic local art. The main street is unremarkable except for the trapped-in-a-time-warp tearoom, **Casa Pequena** (☎ 06-765 6680; 280 Broadway; snacks \$3-5, meals \$12-28; 🕒 9am-late Tue-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun & Mon). Fresh, filling food, cheap as chips, served in a disarmingly retro coffee lounge.

One kilometre south of Stratford town centre on SH3, the **Taranaki Pioneer Village** (☎ 06-765 5399; adult/child/family \$10/5/20; 🕒 10am-4pm) is a four-hectare outdoor museum housing 40 historic buildings. Very bygone era and more than a little spooky, this ought to stop you complaining about how hard life is nowadays.

Not far from the Dawson Falls turn-off, 11km from Stratford, is **Environmental Products** (☎ 06-764 6133; www.envirofur.co.nz; 1013 Opunake Rd; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) a tannery and manufacturer of bags, boots, slippers, hats, rugs and accessories. Tours by arrangement.

**Stratford Holiday Park** (☎ 06-765 6440; 10 Page St; dm/sites/cabins/d \$18/28/35/95; 📍) is a trim caravan park offering one-room cabins, motel-style units and backpackers' bunks, plus spa, bar-becue and bike hire.

For more accommodation around Stratford, see p255.

#### The Forgotten World Highway

The road between Stratford and Taumarunui (SH43) has become known as the Forgotten World Highway. The drive winds through hilly bush country with 12km of unsealed road, and along the way passes many historic and heritage sites such as Maori *pa* (fortified villages), abandoned coal mines and memorials to those long gone. Allow four hours and plenty of stops, and fill up with petrol at either end as there are no petrol stations along the route itself. A pamphlet is available from i-SITES or DOC visitor centres in the area.

The town of **Whangamomona** is a highlight. This quirky village became an independent republic after disagreements with local councils (see the boxed text, below). In the middle of town is the unmissable grand old **Whangamomona Hotel** (☎ 06-762 5823; www.whangamomonahotel.co.nz; meals \$12-18; 🕒 11am-late; 📍), a pub with accommodation (\$95 including dinner and breakfast), offering 'real country hospitality'.

In the Tahora Saddle, **Kaieto Café** (☎ 06-762 5858; www.kaietocafe.co.nz; meals \$5-20) has panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. It also has cabins and a campsite (unpowered/power/cabin \$10/20/35).

**Eastern Taranaki Experience** (☎ 06-765 7482; www.eastern-taranaki.co.nz) runs tours of the highway (minimum four people).

#### SURF HIGHWAY 45

Sweeping south from New Plymouth to Hawera, the 105km-long SH45 is known as the Surf Hwy and although it does indeed have many good beaches dotted along it, don't expect to see waves crashing ashore the whole way. The drive generally just undulates through farmland so be ready to swerve for random tractors and Holden drivers.

#### Oakura pop 1218

The first stop from New Plymouth, 15km southwest on SH45, is laid-back Oakura. Its beautiful beach is renowned to waxheads for its right-hander breaks, but is also great for family fun (take sandals – that black sand scorches feet). For seashore and surf gear, go to **Vertigo** (☎ 06-752 7363; vertigosurf@xtra.co.nz; board & suit per day \$45) on the main road. Ask about lessons.

There are a couple of good craft shops on the main road. **Crafty Fox** (☎ 06-752 7291; 🕒 9am-5pm) sells loads of Kiwi-made loveliness in an early 20th-century church, and **AlleyCat** (☎ 06-752 1001; 🕒 10am-4pm) is a pottery studio and gallery.

#### SLEEPING & EATING

**Oakura Beach Holiday Park** (☎ 06-752 7861; www.oakurabeach.com; 2 Jans Tce; unpowered/power sites \$14/28, cabins \$60; 📍) A classic beachside park catering best to caravans but with basic cabins and well-placed spots to pitch a tent.

**Wave Haven** (☎ 06-752 7800; www.thewavehaven.co.nz; cnr Ahu Ahu & Main South Rds; dm/s/d \$20/30/50; 📍) A surfy backpackers close to the big breaks, this colonial charmer has a coffee machine and a large deck to chill out on.

#### POODLE FOR PRESIDENT!

Whangamomona is New Zealand's only republic, declared so after a disagreement with government authorities. The story goes that, in 1989, the local council sought to adjust the town's boundaries, shifting its jurisdiction from Taranaki council to that of Manawatu-Wanganui. The citizens – independent, flinty folk – were not prepared to take this lying down. For a starter it meant they'd have to play for a rival rugby team. And so it was that they dumped both councils and became a republic, complete with democratically elected presidents who have included Billy the Goat (elected after eating all the opposition's votes) and Tai the poodle (who stepped down after an assassination attempt).

The town celebrates Republic Day in January every two years, with a military themed extravaganza. Visitors (many railed in from Auckland – passports required) can throw a gumboot, crack a whip, bet on the sheep races, skin a possum and engage in all manner of other forgotten world activities.

**Oakura Beach Motel** (☎ 06-752 7680; oakurabeach.motel@paradise.net.nz; 53 Wairau Rd; s/d/f \$85/105/145; (P)) A very pleasant and quiet seven-unit motel set back from the main road, just three minutes walk to the beach – a top-notch example of its kind.

**Ahu Ahu Beach Villas** (☎ 06-752 7370; www.ahu.co.nz; 321 Ahu Ahu Rd; s/d/f \$210/230/320; (P) (Q)) Pricely, but pretty amazing. Set on a knoll overlooking the big wide ocean, these luxury, architecturally designed villas are stunning. Even rock stars stay here.

**Malaysian Carriage** (☎ 06-752 1007; Main South Rd; lunch \$7-10, dinner \$15-22; (M) lunch & dinner) Housed in a very slow moving railway carriage behind the Crafty Fox, this is a great stop for good value traditional Malay dinners and hybrid lunches.

Below the Oakura Beach Holiday Park office is the **Terrace Takeaway** (☎ 06-752 1190; (M) 9am-8pm) famous well-beyond the beach for its home-made pies.

On the main road is **Snickerdoodles** (☎ 06-752 7227; snacks \$3-10; (M) breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat), a tiny bakery baking daily. Lots of healthy options, as well as pastry, with yummy pumpkin bread a speciality.

## Oakura to Opunake

From Oakura, Surf Hwy 45 veers inland, with detours to pleasant beaches along the way. As you pass Tataraimaka, consider pulling over for **Okato Cheeses** ((M) 9am-5pm) to stock up on cheddar and other specialities. Just after Warea is **Stent Road**, a legendary shallow reef break, suitable for experienced surfers. Newbies will prefer the gentler waves of **Komene Beach**, which at the mouth of Stony River attracts its fair share of interesting bird life, including black swans. On the highway the 130-year-old **Stony River Hotel** (☎ 06-752 4253; \$580; (P)) has pleasant rooms and a straight-up public bar.

Another coastward turn-off at **Pungarehu** leads 20km to **Cape Egmont Lighthouse**, a picturesque cast-iron lighthouse that was shifted here in 1881. The road to **Parihaka** (see the boxed text, opposite) leads inland from this stretch of highway.

## Opunake pop 1500

A summer town and the surfie epicentre of the 'naki, Opunake has a sheltered family beach and plenty of challenging waves further out.

The **Opunake i-SITE** (☎ 06-761 8663; opunake@stcd.govt.nz; Main Rd; (M) 9am-4pm) is in the Egmont Public Library & Cultural Centre.

**Opunake Motel & Backpackers** (☎ 06-761 8330; opunakemotel@xtra.co.nz; 36 Heaphy Rd; lodge/s/d \$20/50, cottages/units d \$85-\$100; (P)) offers a range of options – the lodge on the edge of the sleepy fields is comfy and a triumph in genuine retro.

**Surf Lodge 45** (☎ 06-761 8345; cnr Tasman & Napier Sts; s/d/f \$25/50/75) is the mural-covered former bank building in the middle of town. John and Viola's laid-back pad will suit surfers and sociable types.

**Opunake Beach Holiday Park** (☎ 0800 758 009, 06-761 7525; www.holidayparks.co.nz/opunake; Beach Rd; sites/cabins/cottages \$27/40/65; (P)) is a mellow spot right on the beachfront.

The best food along the whole Surf Hwy is at **Sugar Juice Café** (☎ 06-761 7062; 42 Tasman St; snacks \$4-10, meals \$12-28; (M) lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Wed-Sat) which is buzzy and brimming with delicious, filling things and terrific coffee. Don't pass it by.

## Hawera pop 8740

Hawera is the largest town in South Taranaki. Not quite on the coast, it lies 70km south of New Plymouth and 90km from Wanganui.

### INFORMATION

**Automobile Association** (☎ 06-278 5095; www.aa.co.nz; 121 Princes St)

**Hawera i-SITE** (☎ 06-278 8599; visitorinfo@stcd.govt.nz; 55 High St; (M) 8.30am-5.15pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun)

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

You may be surprised to hear that the rather austere **water tower** beside the i-SITE is actually one of Hawera's highlights. Not only is it an invigorating climb (get the key from the i-SITE during opening hours), but with South Taranaki being rather flat, this affords a rare bird's-eye view of the area – around the town, along the coast and, on a good day, up to the mountain.

Elvis lives. At least he does at the **Elvis Presley Memorial Record Room** (☎ 0274 982 942; www.digitalus.co.nz/elvis; 51 Argyle St; admission by donation; (M) by appointment only), which houses a collection of the King's records (over 5000), souvenirs and the man's Cadillac. Maybe.

The excellent **Tawhiti Museum** (☎ 06-278 6837; www.tawhitimuseum.co.nz; 401 Ohangai Rd; adult/child \$10/2;

## PARIHAKA

From the mid-1860s Parihaka, a small Maori settlement east off Hwy 45 near Pungarehu, became the centre of a peaceful resistance movement, one which involved not only other Taranaki tribes, but Maori from around the country. Its leaders, Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi, were of both Taranaki and Te Ati Awa descent.

After the Land Wars (see p36), confiscation of tribal lands was the central problem faced by Taranaki Maori, and under Te Whiti's leadership a new approach to this issue was developed: resisting European settlement through non-violent methods.

When the government started surveying confiscated land on the Waimate plain in 1879, unarmed followers of Te Whiti, wearing the movement's iconic white feather in their hair and in good humour, obstructed development by ploughing troughs across roads, erecting random fences and pulling survey pegs. Many were arrested and held without trial on the South Island, but the protests continued and intensified. Finally, in November 1881 the government sent a force of over 1500 troops to Parihaka. Its inhabitants were arrested or driven away, and the village was later demolished. Te Whiti and Tohu were arrested and imprisoned until 1883. In their absence Parihaka was rebuilt and the ploughing campaigns continued into the 1890s. The imprisonment of Parihaka protesters without trial also continued until the late 1890s.

In 2006 the NZ government issued a formal apology and financial compensation to the tribes affected by the invasion and confiscation of Parihaka lands.

Te Whiti's spirit lives on at Parihaka, with annual meetings of his descendants and a public music-and-arts festival held early each year. Parihaka is open to the public on the 18th and 19th of each month. For more information, read Dick Scott's *Ask That Mountain*, Gregory O'Brien and Te Miringa Hohaia's beautiful *Parihaka – The Art of Passive Resistance*, or see www.parihaka.com.

(M) 10am-4pm late Dec-Jan, 10am-4pm Fri-Mon Feb-May & Sep-Dec, 10am-4pm Jun-Aug) houses a private collection of remarkable exhibits, models and dioramas. The creepily lifelike human figures were modelled on people around the region, while a large collection of tractors pays homage to the province's rural heritage. It's near the corner of Tawhiti Rd, 4km from town.

**Ohawe Beach** makes for excellent swimming and nearby **Black Beach** is known for its black sand, curiously enough.

The most exciting adventure around Hawera is white-water sledding with **Kaitiaki Adventures** (☎ 06-752 8242; www.damdrop.com; 3-hr trip \$100). Trips on the Waingongoro River involve sliding down a 7m dam on a sledge (more than once if you're keen), then sledding a further 5km on the river (Grade II to III). Also included is a journey past an historic *pa* site, birthplace of the Maori prophet Tohu Kakahi. All gear is provided and tours run rain or shine. Kaitiaki also run trips in Rotorua (see p329 for details).

Two kilometres north of Hawera, on Turuturu Rd, are the remains of the pre-European **Turururumokai Pa**. The name translates to 'stakes for dried heads', which were used to ward off potential attackers. Today, all that's left are a few remains of ramparts and storage pits. The reserve is open to the public daily.

Northeast of Hawera is **Lake Rotorangi**, the longest artificial lake in NZ (46km). There are three access roads in: Ball Road, north of Patea – from which you can visit the dam and camp; Tangahoe (a largely unsealed road), lovely for picnicking; and Mangamingi, where there's a public domain. This road passes **Rukumoana Reserve**, which has freedom camping alongside the Patea River.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Avon Motel** (☎ 06-278 7144; www.avonmotel.co.nz; 215 South Rd; s/d \$85/95) A spick 'n' span 13-unit motel, centrally located with plenty of parking and lots of nice freebies such as the use of the laundry, daily newspaper, gym passes and a round of golf at the local club.

**our pick** **Wheatly Downs Farmstay** (☎ 06-278 6523; www.mttaranaki.co.nz; 46 Ararata Rd; sites/dm \$16/28, d & tw \$65; (P)) Set in a rural idyll, this heritage building is a classic, with its smooth wooden floors and no-nonsense fittings. Host Gary is kind and affable, showing you his special pigs and letting you milk his cows. To get there head past Tawhiti Museum and keep going on the Ararata Rd for 5.5km. Pick-ups by arrangement.

**Canivi Lodge** (☎ 06-764 7577; www.canivilodge.co.nz; 505a Aorere Rd, Lake Rotorangi; d cabins/chalets \$75/160; (P)) On the shores of Lake Rotorangi, this lodge

caters for all with its basic cabins and luxury chalets. Back-to-nature activities to enjoy include kayaking, bird-watching or hanging out with the farm animals. From Eltham follow King Edward St (soon Rawhitiroa Rd) for 15km, turning right into Aorere Rd. It's 5km from there.

For a light bite and good coffee go to **Arabica** (☎ 06-278 9134; 227 High St; lunches \$4-10; ☺ lunch).

For hearty meals, try **Rough Habits** (☎ 06-278 7333; 79 Regent St; meals \$16-30; ☺ 11am-late), a sports bar and restaurant popular with regulars and not remotely rough. The massive menu will suit all, especially meat-eaters. For a bit of finesse, try **Indian Zaika** (☎ 06-278 3198; meals \$16-19; 91 Princess St; ☺ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sun) for perfectly acceptable Indian fare in relaxing surroundings. Takeaways available.