

Wanganui & Palmerston North



The Wanganui and Manawatu districts comprise a sizable chunk of the North Island's south, running from Tongariro National Park in the north down towards Wellington. This is mellow, pastoral country, draped with rounded green hills, gently bent roads, socially significant cities and magical national parks, rivers and gorges.

The history-rich Whanganui River curls through Whanganui National Park down to Wanganui city. Ripe with outdoor opportunities, the splendid Whanganui River Rd mimics the river's bows, while Wanganui itself, a 19th-century river port, has aged gracefully, recently reinventing itself as a centre for New Zealand glass art. Like any port there's an edgy transience to the town, as if it's not sure what might come up or down the river next. Settle into Victoria Ave's top-notch restaurants and hip bars while you wait to find out.

Palmerston North, the Manawatu's main city, is a town of two peoples: tough-talkin' country fast-foodies in hotted-up cars and caffeinated Massey University literati, coexisting with none of Cambridge's 'Town vs Gown' sabre-rattling. During the semester the cafés jump and pubs overflow with students.

Beyond the city the Manawatu blends rural grace with yesterday's pace, cut by the dramatic slice of Manawatu Gorge. A meandering Manawatu drive is the perfect antidote to NZ's tourism juggernaut – you might even squeeze in a little laziness!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watching a glass-blowing demonstration at one of **Wanganui's glass studios** (p274)
- Blowing out the cobwebs with a jetboat ride on the **Whanganui River** (p279)
- Traversing the rainy **Whanganui River Road** (p278) – it's all about the journey, not how fast you get there
- Tramping the Matemateaonga and Mangapurua Tracks in the **Whanganui National Park** (p280)
- Flexing your All Blacks spirit at Palmerston North's **New Zealand Rugby Museum** (p282)
- Recaffeinating on the hip George St café strip in **Palmerston North** (p285)
- Connecting life, art and mind at **Te Manawa** (p282) museum in Palmerston North
- Jetboating through the awesome **Manawatu Gorge** (p282)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 06

■ www.wanganui.com

■ www.manawatunz.co.nz

MAORI NZ: WANGANUI & PALMERSTON NORTH REGION

A drive up the Whanganui River Road (p278) takes you deep into traditional Maori territory, passing the Maori villages of Atene, Koriniti, Ranana and Hiruharama along the way. Read up on the area's Maori heritage in the History section following (below), and run your eyes over the amazing indigenous exhibits at the Wanganui Regional Museum (p274) in Wanganui itself. Also in Wanganui, Putiki Church (p274) is emblazoned with superb Maori carvings – drag yourself along to church on Sunday morning!

Over in Palmerston North, Te Manawa (p282) museum has a strong Maori focus, while the New Zealand Rugby Museum (p282) pays homage to Maori All Blacks, without whom the team would never have become a world force. Northeast of Palmerston North, Manawatu Gorge (p282) is steeped in Maori lore – well worth the detour.

Climate

Regional summer maximums range from 19°C to 24°C; 10°C to 14°C during winter. Wanganui winters are mild, but they're chillier on the Palmerston North plains. Sunshine is abundant hereabouts – 2000 hours per year!

The region receives around 60mm of rain through summer and 95mm in winter.

Getting There & Around

Palmerston North's airport (p286) is serviced internationally and domestically by **Air New Zealand** (www.airnewzealand.com).

InterCity, Newmans and White Star City to City buses service both Wanganui and Palmerston North. Transit Coachlines and Tranz Scenic trains service Palmerston North.

WANGANUI & PALMERSTON NORTH FACTS

Eat Anything from Wanganui's hip main street eateries (p276)

Drink A cold handle or six at a Palmerston North student bar (p285)

Read *The Wanganui Chronicle*, NZ's oldest newspaper

Listen to The rockin' album *Back to the Burning Wreck* (2007) by Wanganui riff-monsters The Have Watch The colonial epic *River Queen* (2006), filmed on the Whanganui River

Swim at Palmerston North's Lido Aquatic Centre (p282), whistling Boz Scaggs' *Lido* all the while
Festival Tinted, warped and wonderful glass at the Wanganui Festival of Glass (p275)

Tackiest tourist attraction Owlcatraz (p287) in Shannon (it's not the owls' fault)

Go Green Paddle a stretch of the Whanganui River (p279) – an awe-inspiring slice of NZ wilderness

For more details, see the Getting There & Away sections for Wanganui (p277) and Palmerston North (p286).

To access the north from Wanganui, take the scenic State Highway 4 (SH4) to the centre of the North Island via Raukawa Falls, the Mangawhero River Gorge and the Paraparas, an area of *papa* (large blue-grey mudstone) hills, or the winding Whanganui River Rd (p278). From the north, the Whanganui River is road-accessible at Taumarunui, Ohinepene and Whakahoro.

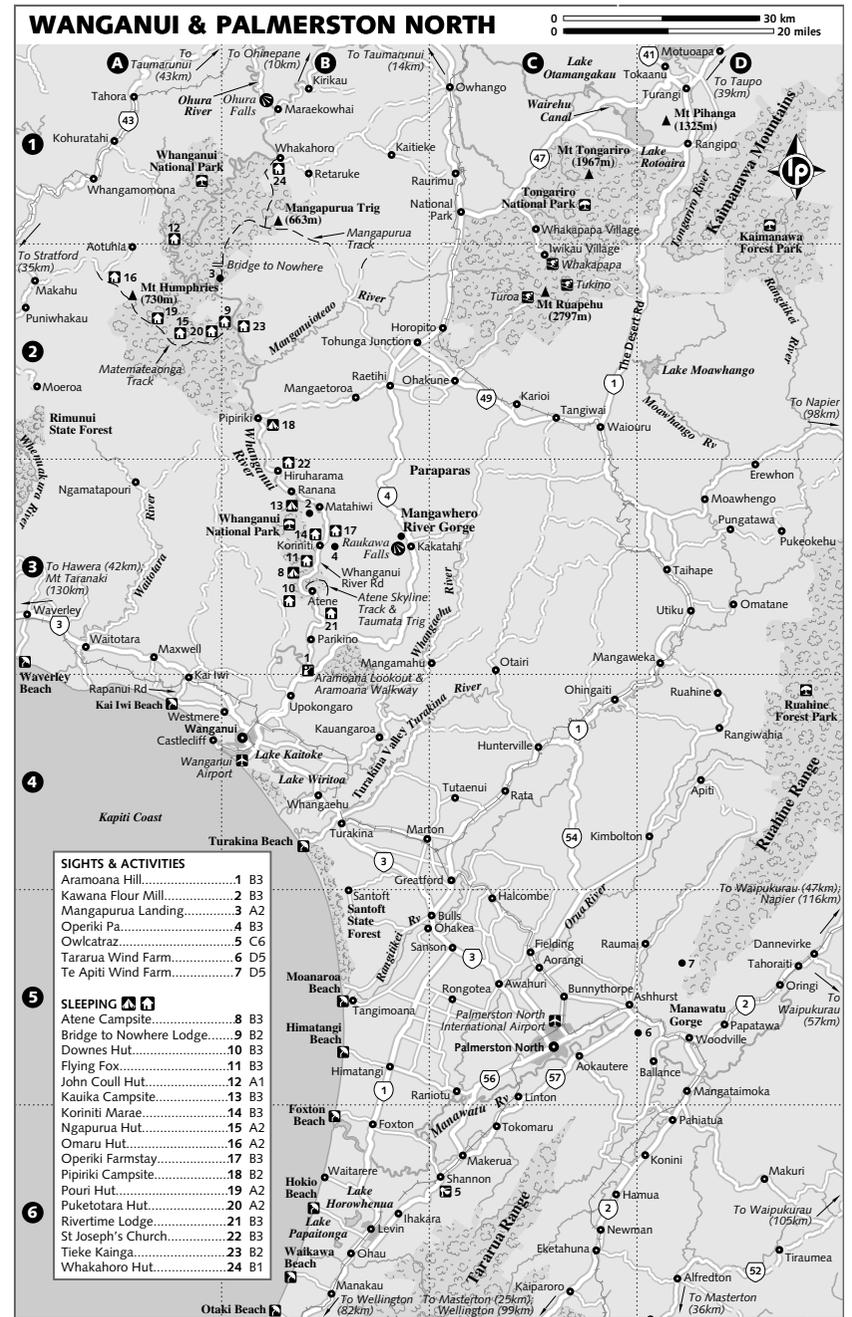
WANGANUI REGION

The Wanganui region's lifeblood is the Whanganui River running through the Whanganui National Park. Despite the fact that there's more sitting down than walking involved, canoeing or kayaking the 'Whanganui Journey' is classed as one of NZ's Great Walks. Early Maoris named the river's estuary (over 30km long) Whanganui, meaning 'Great Harbour' or 'Great Wait'. The spelling difference between Whanganui and Wanganui causes endless confusion – see the boxed text on p272.

History

In Maori legend the Whanganui River was formed when Mt Taranaki, after brawling with Mt Tongariro over the lovely Mt Pihanga, fled the central North Island for the sea, leaving a long gouge behind him. He turned west at the coast, finally stopping at his current address. Mt Tongariro sent cool water to heal the gouge – thus the Whanganui River was born.

Kupe, the great Polynesian explorer, is believed to have travelled 20km up the Whanganui around AD 800; Maoris lived



WHANGANUI OR WANGANUI?

Yeah, we know, it's confusing. The river and national park have an 'h', but the city and region don't – the pronunciation is identical. Everything was originally spelled Wanganui, because in the local dialect *whanga* (harbour) is pronounced 'wan-ga' not (as in the rest of the country) 'fan-ga'. However, to indicate that the 'wan' sound is breathy and aspirated, the 'h' was officially inserted into the river and national park, but not the city or region. This was a culturally deferential decision – the Pakeha-dominated town and region retained the old spelling, while the river area – Maori territory – adopted the new. To allay mass bewilderment, moves are afoot for everything to adopt the querulous 'h'. Whanderful...

here by 1100. By the time Europeans put down roots in the late 1830s, Maori settlements lined the river valley. Missionaries sailed upstream and their settlements – at Hiruharama, Ranana, Koriniti and Atene – have survived to this day despite a dwindling river population.

Steamers first tackled the river in the mid-1860s, a dangerous time for Pakeha. Aligned with Taranaki Maoris, some river tribes joined the Hauhau Rebellion – a Maori movement seeking to expel settlers.

In 1886 a Wanganui company established the first commercial steamer transport service. Others soon followed, utilising the river between Wanganui and Taumarunui. Supplying river communities and linking the sea with the interior, the steamers' importance grew, particularly after 1903 when the Auckland railway reached Taumarunui from the north.

New Zealand's contemporary tourism leviathan was seeded here. Internationally advertised trips on the 'Rhine of Maoriland' became so popular that by 1905 12,000 tourists a year were making the trip upriver from Wanganui to Pipiriki or downriver from Taumarunui. The engineering feats and skipping ability required on the river became legendary.

From 1918 land upstream of Pipiriki was granted to returning WWI soldiers. Farming here was a major challenge, with many families struggling for years to make the rugged land productive. Only a few endured into the early 1940s.

Standing in mute testimony to the optimism of the early settlers is the Bridge to Nowhere, built in 1936. The walking track from the Mangapurua Landing to the lonesome bridge was once part of a long-lost 4.5m-wide roadway from Raetihi to the river.

The completion of the railway from Auckland to Wellington and the improving roads ultimately signed river transport's death

warrant; 1959 saw the last commercial riverboat voyage. Today, just one old-fleet vessel cruises the river – the *Waimarie* (p274).

WANGANUI

pop 40,700

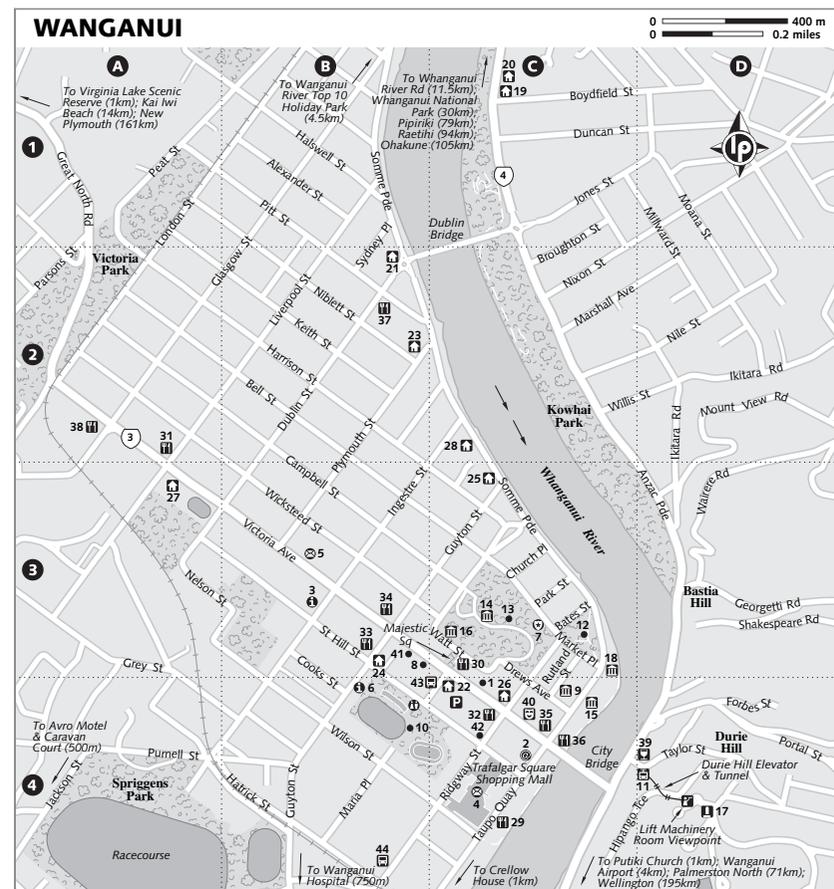
With rafts of casual Huck Finn sensibility, Wanganui is a raggedy historic town on the banks of the wide Whanganui River. Despite the recent NZ housing boom, local real estate remains relatively cheap, much to the satisfaction of the thriving arts community. Old port buildings are being turned into glass-art studios and the town centre has been rejuvenated – there are few more appealing places to while away a sunny afternoon than beneath Victoria Ave's leafy canopy.

But Wanganui isn't all peaches-and-cream – gang violence makes occasional headlines and you might notice the odd deal going down through a car window – but visitors needn't lose any sleep.

History

Maori settlement here dates from around 1100. The first European on the river was Andrew Powers, in 1831, but Wanganui's European settlement didn't take off until 1840 when the New Zealand Co could no longer satisfy Wellington's land demands – settlers moved here instead. Initially called Petre, after a director of the New Zealand Co, the town's name was changed to Wanganui in 1844.

When the Maori understood that the gifts the Pakeha had given them were in permanent exchange for their land, they were understandably irate, and seven years of conflict ensued. Thousands of government troops occupied the Rutland Stockade in Queens Park, which dominates the hill. Ultimately, the struggle was settled by arbitration; during the Taranaki Land Wars the Wanganui Maoris assisted the Pakeha.



INFORMATION

Automobile Association (AA).....	1 C4
Catch 22.....	2 C4
DOC Office.....	3 B3
Paper Plus.....	4 C4
Post Office.....	5 B3
Wanganui i-SITE.....	6 B4
Wanganui Police Station.....	7 C3
Whitcoulls.....	8 B3

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Chronicle Glass Studio.....	9 C4
Cooks Gardens.....	10 B4
Durie Hill Elevator.....	11 D4
Moutoa Gardens.....	12 C3
Queens Park.....	13 C3
Sarjant Gallery.....	14 C3
Waimarie Paddle-Steamer Tours.....	(see 18)
Wanganui Community Arts Centre.....	15 C4

Wanganui Regional Museum.....	16 C3
War Memorial Tower.....	17 D4
Whanganui Riverboat Centre... ..	18 C3

SLEEPING

Acacia Park Motel.....	19 C1
Anndion Lodge.....	20 C1
Astral Motel.....	21 B2
Bard & Breakfast.....	22 C4
Braemar House YHA.....	23 B2
Grand Hotel.....	24 B3
Riverview Motel.....	25 C3
Rutland Arms Inn.....	26 C4
Siena Motor Lodge.....	27 A3
Tamara Lodge.....	28 C2

EATING

Amadeus Riverbank Café.....	29 C4
Ceramic Lounge.....	(see 32)
Indigo.....	30 C3
New World.....	31 A2

Orange.....	32 C4
Red Eye Café.....	33 B3
Red Flame.....	34 B3
Stellar.....	35 C4
Vega.....	36 C4
Vincent's Yellow House.....	37 B2
Woolworths.....	38 A2

DRINKING

Red.....	39 D4
Rosie O'Grady's.....	(see 24)

ENTERTAINMENT

Embassy 3 Cinemas.....	40 C4
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TRANSPORT

Air New Zealand.....	41 B3
Bike Shed.....	42 C4
Tranzit City Link Bus Stop.....	43 C4
Wanganui Travel Centre.....	44 B4

Orientation

Wanganui is midway between Wellington and New Plymouth. The river slides lugubriously north-south past the city, the centre of which is on the west bank. Somme Pde and Taupo Quay trace the western shoreline; Anzac Pde parallels the east bank and leads to Whanganui National Park in the north. Hanging baskets and deep verandas line Victoria Ave, Wanganui's main street.

Free town maps are available at the i-SITE visitor information centre. You can also pick up maps at the **Automobile Association** (AA; ☎ 06-348 9160; www.aatravel.co.nz; 78 Victoria Ave; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri).

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Whitcoulls (☎ 06-345 8747; www.whitcoulls.co.nz; 115 Victoria Ave; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon, 8.30am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

EMERGENCY

Ambulance, Fire & Police (☎ 111)

Wanganui Police Station (☎ 06-349 0600; www.police.govt.nz; 10 Bell St; ☎ 24hr)

INTERNET ACCESS

Catch 22 (☎ 06-348 7610; 62 Taupo Quay; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) Glowing screens and uncouth high-school gamers.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Wanganui Hospital (☎ 06-348 1234; 100 Heads Rd; ☎ 24hr)

MONEY

Major banks and ATMs line Victoria Ave.

POST

Paper Plus (☎ 06-348-0351; www.nzpost.co.nz; Trafalgar Square Shopping Mall, Taupo Quay; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

Post Office (☎ 0800 501 501; www.nzpost.co.nz; 226 Victoria Ave; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

DOC Office (☎ 06-349 2100; www.doc.govt.nz; 74 Ingestre St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Pronounced 'Injester St.'

Wanganui i-SITE (☎ 06-349 0508; www.wanganui.com; 101 Guyton St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun) Rumoured to be relocating – call them if they're not where they're supposed to be!

Sights & Activities

WHANGANUI RIVERBOAT CENTRE

Down by the river the **Whanganui Riverboat Centre** (☎ 0800 783 2637, 06-347 1863; www.riverboats.co.nz; 1a Taupo Quay; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun, Sep-Jul) has historical displays, but the crowds come for the *Waimarie*, the last of the Whanganui River's paddle steamers. In 1900 the *Waimarie* was shipped in a box from England then reassembled in Wanganui. After paddling the Whanganui for 50 years, she sank ingloriously at her mooring in 1952. Submerged for 41 years, she was finally raised, restored, then relaunched on the first day of the 21st century. See opposite for details of tours on the coal-fired dreamboat.

MUSEUMS, GALLERIES & CHURCHES

The **Wanganui Regional Museum** (☎ 06-349 1110; www.wanganui-museum.org.nz; Watt St, Queens Park; adult/child \$5/free; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) is one of NZ's better natural history museums. Maori exhibits include the carved *Tē Mata o Houroa* war canoe and some vicious-looking mere (greenstone clubs). The colonial and wildlife installations are first rate, and there's plenty of button-pushing and drawer-opening to keep the kids engaged.

'Historical, Contemporary, Unique' – the elegantly neoclassical **Sarjeant Gallery** (☎ 06-349 0506; www.sarjeant.org.nz; Queens Park; admission free; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm) covers all the bases with its extensive permanent art exhibition and frequent special exhibits.

The pick of Wanganui's many glass studios (the *Wanganui Glass* brochure from the i-SITE has listings) is the **Chronicle Glass Studio** (☎ 06-347 1921; www.chronicleglass.co.nz; 2 Rutland St; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) where you can watch glass-blowers working, check out the gallery or take a one-hour glass-blowing class (from \$100).

By the river's edge is the **Wanganui Community Arts Centre** (☎ 06-345 1551; 19 Taupo Quay; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 1-4pm Sun), which exhibits mostly local artists (everyone's an artist in Wanganui...), and musters up a decidedly South Pacific vibe with glass, ceramics, jewelry, photography and painting.

Across the Wanganui City Bridge from town and 1km towards the sea is the **Putiki Church**, aka St Paul's Memorial Church. It's nothing out of the ordinary externally but, just like the faithful pew-fillers, it's what's inside that counts. The interior is magnificent, completely covered in Maori carvings and

tukutuku (wall panels). Unless it's a Sunday (service at 9am) the church will probably be closed, but the caretaker (☎ 06-345 4283) may lend you the key.

PARKS, LOOKOUTS & BEACHES

Wanganui has a few grassy, stroll-worthy parks, including **Queens Park** (where the museum and gallery are) and **Cooks Gardens**. The i-SITE stocks a couple of *Wanganui Heritage Walk* brochures which directs amblers through the city.

The **Moutoa Gardens** are considered sacred Maori land and were occupied by Maoris for four months in 1995, in an acrimonious land claim that strained local Maori-Pakeha relations. The city council, abandoned by Wellington, fought the claim in the High Court while angry Pakeha counter-demonstrated under the banner of 'One New Zealand'. Police raids exacerbated the situation. When the claim was dismissed by the courts the country expected violence, but the gardens were peacefully relinquished after a moving night-long meeting addressed by Maori leaders.

The **Virginia Lake Scenic Reserve** (Great North Rd; admission free; ☎ winter gardens 9am-5pm, aviary 8.30am-5pm), about 1km north from the top end of Victoria Ave, is a rambling reserve with a lake, colourful winter garden, walk-through aviary and the Higginbottom Fountain – possibly the world's only pay-per-view geyser (\$1 per 10-minute eruption).

Across the Whanganui City Bridge from the town centre is the **Durie Hill Elevator** (☎ /fax 06-345 8525; Anzac Pde; adult/child \$4/1.50; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun), built with grand visions for Durie Hill's residential future. A tunnel burrows 200m into the hillside, from where the elevator rattles 65m to the top. There are two viewpoints at the summit: one on top of the lift machinery room, the other up the 176 steps of the **War Memorial Tower**. Assess the condition of Wanganui's roof-tiles, or scan the horizon for Mt Taranaki, Mt Ruapehu and even the South Island on a clear day.

Kai Iwi Beach is a wild ocean frontier, strewn with black sand and masses of broken driftwood. To get here follow Great North Rd 4km north of town, then turn left onto Rapanui Rd and head seawards for 10km.

Tours

See p279 for Whanganui River canoe, kayak and jetboat tours.

Ka Pai Tours (☎ 06-343 8444; www.kapaitours.co.nz; full-day tour \$145) Maori-run cultural tours of the river valley, including instruction on *marae* (meeting house) protocol, songs, stories and meals. \$50 deposit required.

Scenic Flights (☎ 06-345 0914; wanganui.aero.club@xtra.co.nz; Wanganui Airport, Airport Rd; 15min-2hr flights from \$45) Mile-high panoramas above Wanganui, Moutoua Island, Mt Ruapehu and Whanganui National Park.

Waimarie Paddle-Steamer Tours (☎ 0800 783 2637, 06-347 1863; www.riverboats.co.nz; 1a Taupo Quay; adult/child/family \$33/14/94; ☎ 2pm daily Nov-May, 1pm Sat & Sun Jun-Oct, closed Aug) Two-hour tour weekdays; three hours with a one-hour stopover at weekends. Also six-hour trips further upriver on the motorized 1904 *Wairua* (adult/child \$50/20).

Whanganui River Road Mail Tour (☎ 06-347 7534; www.whanganuitours.co.nz; tours weekday/weekend \$40/50; ☎ departs 7.30am, returns 3-4pm) Join the mailman on his run to Pipiriki, with lots of social and historical commentary. BYO lunch. Optional extra jetboat trips from Pipiriki to the Bridge to Nowhere.

Whanganui River Road Tours (☎ 06-345 8488; 6hr tours \$60) Small-group minibus tours up the river to Pipiriki, visiting Korinita *marae* and Hiruharama (Jerusalem). BYO lunch.

Festivals & Events

NZ Masters Games (☎ 06-349 1815; www.nzmg.com)

The country's biggest multi-sport event, held in early February every odd-numbered year.

Heritage Weekend (☎ 06-349 0508) Riverboats, architectural adoration and markets in mid-April.

Wanganui Festival of Glass (☎ 06-349 0508) Classy glass fest in September.

Cans Film Festival (☎ 06-347 6774; www.embassy3.co.nz) Swap a can of baked beans for a ticket at the Embassy 3 Cinema in November.

Boxing Day Motorbike Race (☎ 07-828 7852; www.cemeterycircuit.co.nz) Pandemonic 'Cemetery Circuit' bike race and concert.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Braemar House YHA (☎ 06-348 2301; www.braemarhouse.co.nz; 2 Plymouth St; dm \$22, cabin s/d \$45/56, guesthouse \$75/95; ☎) There's a line drawn in the river mud here, segregating the Victorian guesthouse from the rambunctious backpackers. Centrally heated guesthouse rooms fill the main building; out the back airy dorms and no-frills cabins about limited tent space.

Tamara Lodge (☎ 06-347 6300; www.tamaralodge.com; 24 Somme Pde; dm/s/tw 24/43/56, d \$56-66; ☎) Tamara is a mazelike two-storey house with a wide balcony, kitchen, TV lounge, free bikes

and a leafy, hammock-hung back garden. Ask for one of the beaut doubles overlooking the river.

our pick Anndion Lodge (☎ 0800 343 056, 06-343 3593; www.anndionlodge.co.nz; 143 Anzac Pde; dm/s \$30/65, d \$80-120, ste \$140; P) Readers continue to effervesce about this place. Hosts Ann and Dion (Anndion, get it?) have gone to enormous lengths to make things homey: stereo systems, big TVs, Playstation (!), spa, swimming pool, barbecue area, courtesy van etc. It's pricier than your average hostel, but everything's new, clean and thoroughly worth it.

Avro Motel & Caravan Court (☎ 06-345 5279; www.wanganuiaccommodation.co.nz; 36 Alma Rd; unpowered & powered sites \$30, units \$75-100; P) Avro's yellow biplane heralds the closest camping to the city centre, 1.5km west. The motel units are OK but camping facilities are a little weary. Both powered and unpowered sites have their own freestanding bathrooms.

Wanganui River Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 272 664, 06-343 8402; www.wrivertop10.co.nz; 460 Somme Pde; unpowered/power sites \$34/38, cabins \$53-68, units \$105-135; P) Pious and restrained, this top-notch Top 10 park sits on the Whanganui's west bank 6km north of Dublin Bridge. Facilities (including a pool and jumping pillow to exhaust the kids) are immaculate and prodigious. Good off-season rates; kayak and mountain-bike hire available.

Crellow House (☎ 06-345 0740; 274 Taupo Quay; s/d incl breakfast \$55/80; P) Staying at Crellow House is like staying with your grandma. Pam, the spritely owner, cooks a mean breakfast and claims that 'Nobody leaves my house hungry'. Her cheese-dish collection (206 at last count) is a lifelong dedication. Rooms are cosy; the frieze in the queen-size room is another of Pam's efforts. Get in before she retires!

MIDRANGE

Astral Motel (☎ 0800 509 063, 06-347 9063; astralmotel@clear.net.nz; 45 Somme Pde; s \$75-80, d \$80-100; P) Astrally aligned with the terrestrial Dublin Bridge nearby, rooms here are a bit dated but have Sky TV and are well serviced. Good bang for your buck.

Grand Hotel (☎ 0800 843 472, 06-345 0955; www.thegrandhotel.co.nz; cnr St Hill & Guyton Sts; s/d \$75/95, ste \$120-150; P) If you can't face another soulless motel room, rooms at this stately old-school Wanganui survivor have a bit more personality. Singles and doubles are basic but good value; suites are spacious. Rosie

O'Grady's Irish pub (opposite) and a restaurant are downstairs.

Riverview Motel (☎ 0800 102 001; 06-345 2888; www.wanganuimotels.co.nz; 14 Somme Pde; d from \$90; P) Take your pick from one of 15 '80s-style kitchenette units in the main block or the five spiffy spa suites out the back. Management may seem a tad underwhelmed but it's a decent central option.

Acacia Park Motel (☎ 0800 800 225, 06-343 9093; www.acacia-park-motel.co.nz; 140 Anzac Pde; r \$90-110; P) The undisputed highlights of this riverside place are the roosting doves and the round cat, who apparently 'lives to eat' (doves?). The rooms have seen better days (and it's hard to say if those days were all that great) but you get what you pay for.

Siena Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 888 802, 06-345 9009; www.siena.co.nz; 335 Victoria Ave; ste \$125-145; P) Aiming for Tuscany but hitting Taranaki, the compact rooms here are five star and spotless. Business travellers enjoy Sky TV, a DVD library, heated towel rails, coffee plungers and real coffee.

Rutland Arms Inn (☎ 0800 788 5263, 06-347 7677; www.rutland-arms.co.nz; 48 Ridgway St; ste \$130-180; P) Billed as a 'luxury heritage experience', this restored 1849 building has an old-fashioned pub downstairs with colonial-style accommodation above. Rooms have TV, phone, fax, plump pillows and spine-straightening beds. English hunting scenes adorn the bar's beer taps.

TOP END

Bard & Breakfast (☎ 06-343 2050; www.bardandbreakfast.com; 3rd fl, 17 Maria Pl; r \$140-180) Our favourite Wanganui B&B is on the move: by the time you read this the Bard should be a downtown contender, occupying the top floor of the 1919 Perrett's Building. Albert, your host, will whisk you up an Omelette Albért for breakfast as your eyes roam from the Cooks Gardens to the Sarjeant Gallery.

Eating & Drinking

Red Eye Café (☎ 06-345 5646; 96 Guyton St; meals \$9-18; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Thu, 7.30am-late Fri, 8.30am-3pm Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) With inexplicable familiarity (maybe it's the friendly staff), this bohemian urban café has colourful local art, tasty light snacks as well as more substantial meals drifting from curries to organic chicken burgers and gluten-free sausages. Good coffee too.

The Orange (☎ 06-348 4449; 51 Victoria Ave; meals \$10-16; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun; ☎) The Orange is a babbling espresso bar serving gourmet burgers, big breakfasts, muffins, cakes and sandwiches. The outdoor tables reportedly 'go off' in summer.

Ceramic Lounge (☎ 06-348 4449; 51 Victoria Ave; mains \$10-25; ☎) In a split-business arrangement with The Orange, Ceramic takes over for the dinner shift, serving upmarket café food and tapas in a low-lit, rust-coloured interior. Occasional DJs croon tunes across the tables to cocktail-sipping seducers.

Stellar (☎ 06-345 2728; 2 Victoria Ave; lunch \$10-21, dinner \$20-29; ☎ 3pm-late Mon, 9am-late Tue-Sun) Stellar lives up to its name - a cavernous bar-cum-restaurant with a convivial family atmosphere, it's the town's pride and joy. Reclining contentedly on leather couches, locals and tourists alike sip premium lagers and feast on bar morsels, gourmet pizzas and surf 'n' turf fare.

Red Flame (☎ 06-345 2005; 156 Victoria Ave; mains \$16-26; ☎ 10.30am-3pm & 5.30pm-late; V) There are a few Thai joints along Victoria Ave, but Red Flame is the only one that's consistently busy. Try the Red Flame Special: lamb, beef or chicken sautéed with cashew nuts, chilli, onion, capsicum and mushrooms, washed down with a Singha beer.

Indigo (☎ 06-348 7459; cnr Majestic Sq & Watt St; lunch \$12-18, dinner \$26-31; ☎ 8am-late) Along with Vega, Indigo dragged Wanganui dining into the new millennium. The vibe is still up-to-the-minute snazzy; the lofty interior and outdoor terrace swim with NZ wines and contemporary meat, pasta and fish dishes are assembled with progressive flair.

Vega (☎ 06-349 0078; 49 Taupo Quay; lunch \$14-20, dinner \$22-33; ☎ 10am-9pm) Vega's riverside building has been a merchant store and a brothel, but today it's 100% class. A packed house testifies to the virtuoso menu, professional service and meticulously constructed wine list. There's plenty of seafood for the *poisson*-impassioned, and vegetarian and children's options too. Open 'til the wee smalls, the back bar broods at the river through picture windows.

Rosie O'Grady's (☎ 06-345 0955; cnr St Hill & Guyton Sts; ☎ 11am-late) Siphoning into NZ's insatiable (and, it has to be said, annoying) passion for Irish pubs, Rosie's, in the Grand Hotel, is as good a spot as any to elbow down a few pints of Guinness on a misty river afternoon. Good pub meals too.

The Red (☎ 06-347 1157; 45 Anzac Pde; ☎ 11am-late) Across Whanganui City Bridge, the early-evening sun pours into the Red's noisy front bar, illuminating locals watching the races. The owners have tried to up the sophistication stakes, but nobody's seemed to notice.

The Rutland Arms Inn (opposite) is a dependable place for a handle, and serves thumping meals (\$15-28).

Other worthy cafés:

Amadeus Riverbank Café (☎ 06-345 1538; 69 Taupo Quay; meals \$9-19; ☎ 8.30am-4pm; V) Grilled chicken sandwiches are the house special; outdoor riverside tables catch the morning rays.

Vincent's Yellow House (☎ 06-345 4223; 17 Pitt St; lunch \$11-14, dinner \$24-28; ☎ 7am-6pm Sun-Thu, 6am-9pm Fri & Sat; V) Local art, funky tunes, outdoor tables and great omelettes. Actually, it's more of a taupe colour...

Self-caterers can hit the supermarkets:

New World (☎ 06-349 0990; 374 Victoria Ave; ☎ 7am-9pm)

Woolworths (☎ 06-348 9470; cnr Victoria Ave & Glasgow St; ☎ 6am-midnight)

Entertainment

Embassy 3 Cinemas (☎ 06-345 7958; www.embassy3.co.nz; 34 Victoria Ave; tickets adult/concession/child \$10/7.50/7; ☎ 1pm-midnight) Nightly new-release blockbusters selling out faster than you can say 'bored Wanganui teenagers'. November's Cans Film Festival puts further bums on seats.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Wanganui Airport (WAG; ☎ 06-345 5593; www.airport.u.nu/WAG) is 4km south of town, across the river towards the sea. **Air New Zealand** (☎ 06-348 3500; www.airnz.co.nz; 133 Victoria Ave; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) has direct flights from Wanganui to Auckland (from \$99, one to three daily).

BUS

InterCity (www.intercitycoach.co.nz) and **Newmans** (www.newmanscoach.co.nz) buses operate from the **Wanganui Travel Centre** (☎ 06-345 4433; www.tranzit.co.nz; 156 Ridgway St; ☎ 8.15am-5.15pm Mon-Fri). Destinations include:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency
Auckland	\$77	8hr	2-4 daily
New Plymouth	\$35	2½hr	1-2 daily
Palmerston North	\$20	1¼hr	1-4 daily
Taumarunui	\$44	2¼hr	2-4 daily
Wellington	\$40	4hr	1-4 daily

White Star City to City (☎ 06-758 3338; www.whitestarbus.co.nz) has buses to Wellington (\$29, 3½ hours, one to two daily) via Palmerston North (\$16, one hour), and New Plymouth (\$24, 2½ hours, one to two daily). Book at the i-SITE.

Getting Around

BICYCLE

Bike Shed (☎ 06-345 5500; www.bikeshed.co.nz; cnr Ridgway & St Hill Sts; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) hires out mountain bikes from \$35 per day, including helmet and lock.

BUS

Tranzit City Link (☎ 0508 800 800, 06-952 2800; www.horizons.govt.nz; single trip/day pass \$2/6) operates four looped local bus routes departing from the Maria Pl bus stop, including routes 5 and 6 past the Wanganui River Top 10 Holiday Park in Aramoho. Buses run from 7am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday.

CAR

The following car-rental companies have pick-up/drop off at Wanganui Airport:

Avis (☎ 06-358 7528; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 06-345 5122; www.budget.co.nz)

Hertz (☎ 06-348 7624; www.hertz.co.nz)

TAXI

Rivercity Cabs (☎ 0800 345 3333, 06-345 3333)

Wanganui Taxis (☎ 06-343 5555)

WHANGANUI NATIONAL PARK & RIVER ROAD

The Whanganui River in the Whanganui National Park curls 329km from its source on Mt Tongariro (p307) to the Tasman Sea. It's the longest navigable river in NZ, a fact that's been shaping its destiny for centuries. Historically functioning as a transport link between sea and interior, first for the Maori then the Pakeha, the route was eventually superseded by rail and road. Riverboats have given way to canoes, kayaks and jetboats, floating up and down the river's reaches, its waters shifting from deep mirror greens in summer to turbulent winter browns.

The native bush here is thick podocarp broad-leaved forest interspersed with ferns. Occasionally you'll see poplar and other introduced trees along the river, remnants of long-vanished settlements. Traces of Maori settlements also crop up here, with old *pa* (fortified village) and *kainga* (village) sites,

and Hauhau *niu* (war and peace) poles at the convergence of the Whanganui and Ohura Rivers at Maraekowhai. The Ratakura, Reinga Kokiri and Te Rerehapa Falls, all near Maraekowhai on the Ohura, are where Maori caught small *tuna riki* (freshwater eels).

The impossibly scenic Whanganui River Road, a mostly unsealed river-hugging road from Wanganui to Pipiriki, makes a fabulous alternative to the faster but less magical SH4.

Orientation & Information

Pipiriki and Taumarunui are the main entry and exit points to the river with the most facilities, though you are also able to access the river from Ohinepane and Whakahoro.

For national park information, try the affable Wanganui i-SITE or DOC Office (p274). There's also **Pipiriki DOC** (☎ 06-385 5022; Owairua Rd; www.doc.govt.co.nz; ☞ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) and **Taumarunui DOC** (☎ 07-895 8201; Cherry Grove Domain; ☞ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri), though they're both field centres rather than tourist offices and aren't always staffed. Taumarunui's i-SITE is a safer bet.

Check out www.whanganuiriver.co.nz online; otherwise, a more tangible resource is the NZ Canoeing Association's *Guide to the Whanganui River* (\$9). DOC's *In and Around Whanganui National Park* (\$3) covers tramping territory or collect a copy of the Wanganui Tramping Club's *Walking Opportunities in the Wanganui Area* (\$5) from the Wanganui i-SITE.

Sights

The scenery along the Whanganui River Rd en route to Pipiriki is camera-conducive – stark, wet mountain slopes plunge into lazy jade stretches of the Whanganui River. A French Catholic mission led by Suzanne Aubert established the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion in Jerusalem in 1892. Around a corner in the road, the picture-perfect St Joseph's Church (see p281) stands tall on a spur of land above a deep river bend.

Other sights include the restored 1854 **Kawana Flour Mill** (Map p271) near Matahiwi, **Operiki Pa** (Map p271) and other *pa* sites, and **Aramoana Hill**, from where there's a panoramic view. Visitors need to be invited to explore the Maori villages of **Atene**, **Korinita**, **Ranana** and **Hiruharama** along the road.

Pipiriki is beside the river at the north end of Whanganui River Rd. It's a rainy river town

without much going on (no shops or petrol), but was once a humming holiday hot spot serviced by river steamers and paddleboats. Seemingly cursed, the old Pipiriki Hotel, formerly a glamorous resort full of international tourists, burned to the ground twice. Recent attempts to rebuild it have stalled due to funding issues; it's been vandalised and stripped of anything of value, leaving a hollow brick husk riddled with potential. Pipiriki is the end point for canoe trips coming down the river and the launching pad for jetboat rides.

Activities

CANOEING & KAYAKING

The most popular stretch of river for canoeing and kayaking is downstream from Taumarunui to Pipiriki. This has been added to the NZ Great Walks system (p82) and is called the 'Whanganui Journey'. It's a Grade II river – easy enough for the inexperienced, with enough moiling rapids to keep things interesting. See the free DOC leaflet *Whanganui Journey* for canoeing information.

Between 1 October and 30 April you'll need a **Great Walks Hut & Campsite Pass** (adult/child \$60/free) for boat trips involving overnight stays between Taumarunui and Pipiriki. The rule applies only to this stretch of the river. The pass is valid for four nights and five days; you can stay overnight in the huts, the camps beside the huts or in other campsites along the river. If you're only doing an overnighter from Taumarunui to Whakahoro, the pass costs \$10; if you exclude Tieke Kainga *marae* it's \$50. If you're just paddling and not sleeping anywhere, there's no charge.

Outside the main season you'll only need a **Backcountry Hut Pass** (adult/child \$90/45) valid for one year, or you can pay on a hut-by-hut basis (from \$20 to \$45 per night). All passes and tickets are available at the Wanganui i-SITE and regional DOC offices; some canoe operators also sell them. During summer, hut wardens and conservation officers patrol the river.

Taumarunui to Pipiriki is a five-day/four-night trip, Ohinepane to Pipiriki is a four-day/three-night trip, and Whakahoro to Pipiriki is a three-day/two-night trip. Taumarunui to Whakahoro is a popular overnight trip, especially for weekenders, or you can do a one-day trip from Taumarunui to Ohinepane or Ohinepane to Whakahoro. From Whakahoro to Pipiriki, 88km downstream, there's no road

access so you're wed to the river for a few days; this is the trip everyone clamours to do. Most canoeists stop at Pipiriki.

The season for canoe trips is usually from September to Easter. Up to 5000 people make the river trip each year, mostly between Christmas and the end of January. During winter the river is almost deserted – the winter currents run swift and deep, as cold weather and short days deter potential paddlers.

To hire a two-person Canadian canoe for one/three/five days costs around \$80/220/300 including transport. A single-person kayak costs about \$50 per day not including transport (around \$50 per person). Operators provide you with everything you need, including life jackets and waterproof drums (essential if you go bottom-up).

You can also take guided canoe or kayak trips – prices start at \$250/780 per person for a two-/five-day guided trip.

Operators include:

Blazing Paddles (☎ 0800 252 946, 07-895 5261; www.blazingpaddles.co.nz; Taumarunui)

Bridge to Nowhere Tours (☎ 0800 480 308; www.bridgetonowheretours.co.nz; Pipiriki)

Canoe Safaris (☎ 0800 272 335; www.canoesafaris.co.nz; Ohakune)

Taumarunui Canoe Hire (☎ 0800 226 6348, 07-896 6507; www.taumarunui canoehire.co.nz; Taumarunui)

Wades Landing Outdoors (☎ 0800 226 631, 07-895 5995; www.whanganui.co.nz; Whakahoro & Owango)

Waka Tours (☎ 06-385 4811; www.wakatours.com; Taumarunui)

Whanganui River Guides (☎ 07-896 6727; www.whanganuiriverguides.co.nz; Taumarunui)

Whanganui Tours (☎ 06-347 7534; www.whanganui tours.co.nz; Wanganui)

Yeti Tours (☎ 0800 322 388, 06-385 8197; www.canoe.co.nz; Ohakune)

Whanganui River canoe companies also operate from National Park (p313) and Ohakune (p318).

JETBOATING

Hold onto your hats – jetboat trips give you the chance to see parts of the river that would otherwise take you days to paddle through. Jetboats depart from Pipiriki and Wanganui; four-hour tours cost around \$105 per person. The following operators can also provide transport to the river ends of the Matemateaonga and Mangapurua Tracks (see Walking p280):

Bridge to Nowhere Tours (☎ 0800 480 308; www.bridgetonowheretours.co.nz; Pipiriki)

Whanganui Jet (☎ 0800 538 8687, 06-342 5572; www.whanganuijet.co.nz; Wanganui)

Whanganui River Adventures (☎ 0800 862 743, 06-385 3246; www.whanganuiriveradventures.co.nz; Pipiriki)

Whanganui Scenic Experience Jet (☎ 0800 945 335, 06-342 5599; www.whanganuiscenicjet.com; Wanganui)

WALKING

The most popular track in Whanganui National Park is the 40-minute walk from **Mangapurua Landing** (Map p271) to the Bridge to Nowhere, 30km upstream from Pipiriki by jetboat.

The Matemateaonga and Mangapurua Tracks are brilliant longer tramps (DOC booklets \$1). Both are one-way tracks beginning (or ending) at remote spots on the river, so you have to organise jetboat transport to or from the trailheads – ask any jetboat operator. To Pipiriki from the Matemateaonga Track is around \$50 per person; from the Mangapurua Track it's around \$90.

Three to four days from end-to-end, the 42km **Matemateaonga Track** gets kudos as one of NZ's best walks. Probably due to its remoteness, it doesn't attract the hordes of trappers that amass on NZ's more famous tracks. Penetrating deep into wild bush and hill country, it traces an old Maori track and a disused settlers' dray road between the Wanganui and Taranaki regions. It follows the crest of the Matemateaonga Range along the route of the Whakaihūwaka Rd, started in 1911 to create a more direct link from Stratford to the railway at Raetihi. WWI interrupted planning and the road was never finished.

On a clear day, a 1½-hour side-trip to the top of Mt Humphries (730m) rewards you with sigh-inducing views all the way to Mt Taranaki and the volcanoes of Tongariro. There's a steep section between the Whanganui River (75m above sea level) and the Puketotara Hut (Map p271; 427m above sea level) but mostly it's easy walking. There are four huts along the way: Omaru, Pouri, Ngapurua and Puketotara (see Map p271).

The **Mangapurua Track** is a 40km trail between Whakahoro and the Mangapurua Landing, both on the Whanganui River. The track runs along the Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka Streams (both Whanganui River tributaries). Between these valleys a side track leads to the 663m Mangapurua Trig, the area's highest

point, from which cloudless views extend to the Tongariro and Egmont National Park volcanoes. The route passes the Bridge to Nowhere and abandoned farming land cleared by settlers in the 20th century. Unless you're an insane tramping dynamo, walking the track takes 20 hours (three to four days). The Whakahoro Hut (Map p271) at the Whakahoro end of the track is the only hut, but there's plenty of good camping. There's road access to the track both at the Whakahoro end and from a side track from the end of the Ruatiti Valley-Ohura Rd (from Raetihi).

The DOC booklet *In and Around Whanganui National Park* (\$2.50) details a couple of shorter walks branching off the Whanganui River Rd that offers glimpses of wilderness.

The 18km **Atene Skyline Track** begins at Atene on the Whanganui River Rd, 22km north of the SH4 junction. The track takes six to eight hours, showcasing native forest, sandstone bluffs and the **Taumata Trig** (523m), with its broad views as far as Mt Ruapehu, Mt Taranaki and the Tasman Sea. The track ends back on the Whanganui River Rd, 2km downstream from the starting point.

A 1km track cuts through native bush from the Pipiriki DOC field centre to the top of Pukehināu, a hill with great valley vistas.

Sleeping

WHANGANUI NATIONAL PARK

The park has a sprinkling of huts, a lodge and numerous camping grounds. Along the Taumarunui-Pipiriki section are three Category II huts classified as Great Walks Huts during summer and Serviced Huts in the off-season: the Whakahoro Hut (Map p271) at Whakahoro, and the John Coull Hut (Map p271) and Tieke Kainga (Map p271), which has been revived as a *marae*. You can stay at Tieke Kainga, but full *marae* protocol must be observed (see p59). On the lower part of the river, Downes Hut (Map p271) is on the west bank, opposite Atene.

Bridge to Nowhere Lodge (Map p271; ☎ 0800 480 308, 06-348 7122; www.bridgetonowheretours.co.nz; unpowered sites \$20, self-catering/incl breakfast & dinner per person \$45/125) Across the river from the Tieke Kainga *marae*, this remote lodge lies deep in the national park, 21km upriver from Pipiriki near the Matemateaonga Track. The only way to get here is by jetboat from Pipiriki or on foot. It has a licensed bar, and meals are quality

home-cooked affairs. The lodge also runs jetboat tours (p279) and canoe trips (p279).

WHANGANUI RIVER ROAD

Book the following places in advance – none's going to turn you away, but they appreciate a bit of warning! There's no mobile-phone coverage along the road, and no petrol or shops. There are a couple of takeaway food vans in Pipiriki open during summer. From south to north, accommodation includes:

Rivertime Lodge (Map p271; ☎ 06-342 5595; www.rivertimelodge.co.nz; Whanganui River Rd; d self-catering/incl breakfast \$110/130; (P)) A rural idyll: hills folding down towards the river and the intermittent bleating of sheep. Friendly and farmy, Rivertime is a moss-green farmhouse with three bedrooms, a barbecue and no TV!

Flying Fox (Map p271; ☎ 06-342 8160; www.theflyingfox.co.nz; Whanganui River Rd; unpowered sites \$30, tw & d \$80-130) This place is a superb, eco-attuned getaway on the riverbank across from Koriniti. You can self-cater in the Brewhouse, James K or Glory Cart (self-contained cottages), opt for DB&B, or pitch a tent in a secluded bush clearing. Access is by jetboat; otherwise you can park across the river from the accommodation then soar over the river on the flying fox.

Koriniti Marae (Map p271; ☎ 06-348 0303, 021 365 176; www.koriniti.com; Koriniti; dm \$25; (P)) This *marae* on the east bank offers dorm-style beds for prebooked visitors; offer *koha* (a donation) plus the fee. It also runs a 24-hour 'cultural experience' for groups, including a *haka* (war dance), weaving, storytelling and three meals (\$190 per person).

Operiki Farmstay (Map p271; ☎ 06-342 8159; www.whanganuiriver.co.nz; Whanganui River Rd; d & tw incl dinner & brunch \$110; (P)) On a steep hillside 1.5km north of Koriniti, this is a cheery in-with-the-family farmhouse. The host loves a chat and loves to cook almost as much.

Kauika Campsite (Map p271; ☎/fax 06-342 8762; Morikau Rd, Ranana; sites \$20; (P)) In a tranquil spot beside the river, this privately owned site has hot showers, a kitchen and a laundry. Call ahead to check that it's open when you want it to be.

St Joseph's Church (Map p271; ☎ 06-342 8190; www.compassion.org.nz; Whanganui River Rd, Hiruharama; dm \$20; (P)) Taking in bedraggled travellers and offering 20 dorm-style beds, the sisters at St Joe's await to issue your deliverance – book ahead for the privilege. Moutoa Island, site of an historic 1864 battle, is just downriver.

There's an informal campsite with toilets and cold water at Pipiriki and another one (even less formal) just north of Atene (see Map p271).

Getting There & Away

From the north, there's road access to the Whanganui River at Taumarunui, Ohinepene and Whakahoro, though the latter is a long, remote drive on mostly unsealed roads. Roads to Whakahoro lead off from Owhango and Raurimu, both on SH4. There isn't any further road access to the river until Pipiriki.

From the south, the Whanganui River Rd veers off SH4 14km north of Wanganui, rejoining it at Raetihi, 91km north of Wanganui. It takes about two hours to drive the 79km between Wanganui and Pipiriki. The full circle from Wanganui through Pipiriki and Raetihi and back along SH4 through the Paraparas and Mangawhero River Gorge takes about four hours. The Whanganui River Rd is unsealed between Matahiwi and Manganoroa; petrol is available at Raetihi and Upokongaro but nowhere in between.

Alternatively, take a River Rd tour from Wanganui (p275)

PALMERSTON NORTH

pop 67,400

The rich sheep- and dairy-farming Manawatu region embraces the districts of Rangitikei to the north and Horowhenua to the south. The hub of it all, on the banks of the Manawatu River, is Palmerston North, with its moderate high-rise attempts reaching up from the plains. Massey University, NZ's largest, informs the town's cultural and social structures. As a result 'Palmy' has an open-minded, rurally bookish vibe.

None of this impressed a visiting John Cleese who scoffed, 'If you ever do want to kill yourself, but lack the courage, I think a visit to Palmerston North will do the trick.' The city exacted revenge by naming a rubbish dump after him.

Orientation

The grassy expanse of the Square is the centre of city life. One block to the west, George St is the main café and restaurant strip. Massey University is 3km south of town.

the centre of the gorge was its guardian spirit. The rock's colour is said to change intensity when a prominent Rangitane tribe member dies or sheds blood. It takes around four hours to walk through the gorge from either end, or you can see it via jetboat (see below).

On the southwestern edge of the gorge, about 40 minutes drive from Palmerston North, is the **Tararua Wind Farm** (Map p271; ☎ 06-574 4800; www.trustpower.co.nz; Hall Block Rd), allegedly the largest wind farm in the southern hemisphere. From Hall Block Rd there are awesome views of the turbines. Spinning similarly, north of the gorge is **Te Apiti Wind Farm** (Map p271; ☎ 0800 946 463; www.meridianenergy.co.nz; Saddle Rd, Ashhurst). Ask at the i-SITE for directions.

Alternatively, flee the city with a visit to **Timeless Horse Treks** (☎ 06-376 6157; www.timelesshorsetreks.co.nz; Gorge Rd, Ballance; 1-2-hr rides \$30/45). Gentle trail rides take in the Manawatu River and surrounding hills, or saddle up for a half-day trek to the Tararua Wind Farm (\$60). Palmerston North pick/drop-off available.

Tours

Feilding Saleyards (☎ 06-323 3318; www.feilding.co.nz; 10 Manchester Sq, Feilding; tours \$5; ☎ 11am Fri) Local farmers instruct you in the gentle art of selling livestock at this small town north of the city centre. Farmers market from 9am to 2pm.

Hiwinui Jet (☎ 06-329 2838, 0274 349 090; www.hiwinui.co.nz; adult/child \$55/35) Manawatu Gorge jetboat tours, departing from Balance Bridge, Ferry Reserve (or pick-up from Palmerston North i-SITE \$20 extra).

Festivals & Events

Summer in the Park (☎ 06-356 8199) Series of week-end concerts in Victoria Esplanade held throughout summer.

Buskers Festival (☎ 06-350 1922) Late-February ruckus in the Square.

Te Matatini National Kapa Haka Festival (☎ 04-499 6158; www.tematatini.org.nz) Maori *haka* competition in February; much gesticulation, eye-bulging and tongue extension.

Elements Carnival (☎ 04-384 6417) 'Earth, wind, water and fire' – multimedia, music and dance on an October Sunday.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Peppertree Backpackers (☎ 06-355 4054; peppertreehostel@clear.net.nz; 121 Grey St; dm/s/d \$25/48/58; ☎) Inexplicably strewn with green-painted boots, this enduring and endearing YHA is the best budget option in town. Mattresses are thick,

the kitchen will never run out of spatulas, and the friendly cat make things feel downright homey. Doubles off the kitchen are a bit small – angle for one at the back.

Grandma's Place (☎ 06-358 6928; www.grandmas-place.com; 146 Grey St; dm/s/d \$25/45/60; ☎) Ignore the terrifying spectre of Grandma on the sign out the front – inside are tidy, old-fashioned rooms awash with floral wallpaper and macramé rugs. Functional kitchen; plenty of beds; decent value.

Palmerston North Holiday Park (☎ /fax 06-358 0349; 133 Dittmer Dr; unpowered & powered sites \$28, cabins & units \$35-70; ☎) About 2km from the Square, off Ruha St, this shady park has a wheezy boot-camp feel to it (and the cleaners could use a bit of a boot), but it's quiet and right beside Victoria Esplanade.

Shamrock Inn (☎ 06-355 2130; www.shamrock.co.nz; 267 Main St; s/d \$55/70; ☎) Three minutes' walk from the Square, the 'Shammy' is a friendly, old-fashioned boozier with surprisingly decent pub accommodation upstairs. Rooms have TVs and facilities are shared. Limited parking.

Empire Hotel (☎ 06-357 8002; cnr Princess & Main Sts; s/d/f \$70/80/135; ☎) With slicker-than-average pub rooms upstairs, the Empire is a solid central option. Rooms have private bathrooms, TVs and fridges; some open onto a wide veranda above the street. The pub downstairs gets raucous – steer for a room far from the beer cheer.

Ann Keith's B&B (☎ 06-358 6928; www.grandmas-place.com; 123 Grey St; r \$75-105; ☎) This B&B has five en suite rooms in an old-fangled house, with TV, tea- and coffee-making facilities and electric blankets for cold Palmy nights. Run by the same folks as Grandma's Place.

MIDRANGE

Fitzherbert Castle Motel (☎ 06-358 3888; www.fitzcastlemotel.co.nz; 124 Fitzherbert Ave; d \$110-125; ☎) It looks unapologetically like a Tudor castle from outside, but inside it's more like an intimate hotel. Fourteen immaculate rooms with cork-tiled bathroom floors and quality carpets, plenty of trees, friendly staff and small kitchens in some units.

Braemar Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 355 805, 06-355 8053; www.braemarmotorlodge.co.nz; 177 Ruahine St; ste \$120-195; ☎) Braemar's studio units have king-size beds, TVs, spas, kitchenettes, DVD players and stereos, and with 50-plus titles in the DVD library, there should be some-

thing up your alley. Units on the street are double-glazed – you'll sleep tight despite the plastic roses.

Rose City Motel (☎ 0508 356 538, 06-356 5388; www.rosecitymotel.co.nz; 120 Fitzherbert Ave; units \$120-220; ☎) One for the postmodern aesthetes, Rose City's townhouse-style units are spacey (especially the split-level ones) and shipshape but stylistically rather '80s. Free DVDs, a squash court and a kids' play room are bonuses.

Our pick! Plum Trees Lodge (☎ 06-358 7813; www.plumtreeslodge.co.nz; 97 Russell St; d \$135-180; ☎) In a flat-grid town with more motels than seems plausible, this place comes as sweet relief. Down a leafy driveway on a quiet street, ascend past lead-lighting to a secluded lodge. Brilliantly designed using recycled native timbers from demolition sites around Palmerston North, the raked timber ceiling is punctuated with skylights, with the balcony set among swaying boughs. Romantic nights beneath a mosquito net slide lazily into breakfast – a sumptuous hamper of fresh fruit, croissants, jams, eggs, cheese, coffee and juice.

Cornwall Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 170 000, 06-354 9010; www.cornwallmotorlodge.co.nz; 101 Fitzherbert Ave; ste \$140-190; ☎) Cornwall has 27 enormous self-contained apartments on a bleak corner block. But don't let that bother you – rooms have spas, Sky TV, super king-size beds and balconies. Double-glazing culls the Fitzherbert Ave fracas.

TOP END

Bentleys Motor Inn (☎ 0800 2368 5397; www.bentleysmotorinn.co.nz; cnr Linton & Chaytor Sts; ste \$135-280; ☎) The highest branch on Palmerston North's motel tree, Bentleys' five-star apartments are worth the investment. Inside are new appliances, DVD players, spas, stereos, contemporary furnishings and Sky TV; outside are a gym, a squash court and a sauna.

Eating

Moxies (☎ 06-355 4238; cnr George & Main Sts; all-day menu \$5-20, dinner \$15-30; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Wed, 7am-late Thu-Sat, 7.30am-5pm Sun; ☎) This chipper corner café is decked out in primary colours with big windows. Staff members are equally upbeat, the all-day menu is top value (stellar omelettes) and if you've got gluten issues, this is the place for you.

Barista (☎ 06-357 2614; 59 George St; brunch \$5-20, dinner \$20-30; ☎ 6.30am-midnight) No matter what time you wander past, Barista seems to always

be open. It's a big, bustling café-restaurant with professional staff shuffling out plates of pasta, meat, seafood and salad (try the Cajun chicken salad). The coffee will knock your socks off.

Café Cuba (☎ 06-356 5750; cnr George & Cuba Sts; all-day menu \$8-24, dinner \$17-26; ☎ 7am-midnight) Need a sugar shot? Proceed to Café Cuba – the cakes here are for professional chocoholics only. Supreme coffees and traditional café fare (risottos, salads, steak sandwiches) also draw the crowds.

Stage Door Café (☎ 06-359 2233; 96 King St; meals \$10-14; ☎ 9am-5pm) A low-key affair with mellow tunes, spiky green plants, orange plastic chairs and students on the run from the books. Big on coffee, salads, wraps, muffins and cakes.

IndiaToday (☎ 06-353 7400; 30 George St; mains \$10-20; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm Wed-Fri, 5.30pm-late daily; ☎) A million miles from Bollywood schmaltz, this upmarket place won't break the bank. Behind George St picture windows, northern Indian curries are served by super-polite black-clad waiting staff.

Bella's Café (☎ 06-357 8616; 2 The Square; lunch \$12-18, dinner \$17-31; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 6pm-late Tue-Sat) Romantically candlelit, Bella's warm red walls create an inviting atmosphere for a mature crowd. Windows fold open in summer revealing an Italian-Pacific menu – pasta rules at lunchtime, dinners are more agricultural (beef, lamb, chicken and salmon).

Aquaba (☎ 06-357 8922; 186 Broadway Ave; meals \$15-28; ☎ 7.30am-late Mon-Fri, 9am-late Sat & Sun) Family-friendly café classics (pasta, fish and chips, soups, nachos, steaks and pies) served inside a cavernous former Masonic Hall (no secret handshake required). Jamaican beats; Egyptian interiors.

Aberdeen Steakhouse & Bar (☎ 06-952 5570; 161 Broadway Ave; mains \$24-34; ☎ 11am-3pm Wed-Sun, 5pm-late Tue-Sat) A plush, cow-coloured space studded with photos of prize bulls. Chew into 'The Buster' prime rib, or 'The Contender' Wagyu – the 'granddaddy of marbled steaks.'

For self-caterers:

Countdown Supermarket (☎ 06-356 6066; cnr Ferguson & Ashley Sts; ☎ 7am-midnight)

Pak N Save (☎ 06-356 4043; 335 Ferguson St; ☎ 8am-midnight)

Drinking

The Fish (☎ 06-359 3474; Regent Arcade; admission free; ☎ 4-11pm Wed, 4pm-2am Thu, 4pm-3am Fri & Sat) A progressive, stylish, Pacifically-hewn cocktail bar,

the Fish has got its finger firmly on the Palmy pulse. DJs smooth over the week's problems on Friday and Saturday nights as a sexy, urbane crew sips Manhattans and Tamarillo Mules (yes, they kick).

The Brewer's Apprentice (☎ 06-358 8888; 334-6 Church St; admission free; ☎ 11am-late Mon-Fri, 10am-late Sat & Sun) What was once a grungy student pub is now a slick Monteiths-sponsored bar. Business crowds flock for lunch (meals \$9-28); 20-somethings heave and sway after dark. Live music Thursday and Friday nights.

Mao Bar (☎ 06-354 8410; 64 George St; admission free; ☎ 7am-late) Cool café by day, full-scale cocktail bar by night, serving East-meets-West fusion food (mains \$18-32). The interior is aptly bamboo-strewn, with tall screens, red lanterns and dark timbers. Tasty cocktails will lure any reds out from under the bed.

Celtic Inn (☎ 06-357 5571; Regent Arcade; admission free; ☎ 11am-3am Mon-Sat, 4pm-3am Sun) The Celtic expertly offsets the Fish nearby with good old-fashioned pub stuff, labourers, travellers and students bending elbows with a few tasty pints of the black stuff. Friendly staff, live music, red velvet chairs, kids darting around parents' legs – it's all here.

Bar Mode (☎ 06-357 4898; 1 Coleman Pl; admission free-\$20; ☎ 4pm-late) Ground zero for live bands in Palmerston North, Bar Mode is a big beery room with a big stage and a big sound system. Rock, punk, indie, metal and ska – big. Usually full of pool-playing, jukeboxing students, unwinding after a hard day spent aspiring to adulthood.

Entertainment

Downtown Cinemas (☎ 06-355 5655; www.dtcinemas.co.nz, Downtown Shopping Arcade, Broadway Ave; tickets adult/child \$8/7, Tue all tickets \$6.50; ☎ 10am-midnight) The capacious Downtown Cinemas shows mainstream new-release flicks. Also here is **Cinema Gold Downtown** (☎ 06-353 1902; www.cinema.gold.co.nz; tickets \$15) with plush seats and a booze licence to enhance art house classics and limited-release screenings.

There's a simmering theatre scene in Palmy. Check out what's playing at the following:

Abbey Theatre (☎ 06-355 4165; www.abbey.musicaltheatre.co.nz; 369-73 Church St) Quality amateur productions, with a penchant for cheesy musicals.

Centrepoint Theatre (☎ 06-354 5740; www.centrepoint.co.nz; 280 Church St) Bigger-name professional shows, theatre sports and seasonal plays.

Globe Theatre (☎ 06-358 8699; cnr Pitt & Main Sts) Large community theatre; home to the Manawatu Theatre Society.

Regent Theatre (☎ 0800 484 2538, 06-357 9740; www.regent.co.nz; 53 Broadway Ave) Divinely detailed theatre hosting big-ticket international acts like the Russian Ballet and Björn Again.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Palmerston North International Airport (PMR; ☎ 06-351 4415; www.pnairport.co.nz; Airport Dr), 4km north of the town centre, is proud of its international status. International passengers pay a \$25 departure tax; domestically there's a \$5 development levy. **Air New Zealand** (☎ 06-351 8800; www.airnz.co.nz; 366 Church St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) runs daily direct flights to Auckland (from \$89), Christchurch (from \$109), Wellington (from \$69) and Hamilton (from \$89).

Ozjet (☎ 06-351 4415; www.ozjet.com.au) has plans to be winging between Palmy and the Gold Coast, Sydney and Melbourne in Australia, but at the time of writing, the details were still being resolved. Check the website for prices and schedules.

BUS

InterCity (www.intercitycoach.co.nz), **Newmans** (www.newmanscoach.co.nz) and **Tranzit Coachlines** (☎ 06-355-4955; www.tranzit.co.nz) operate from the **Palmerston North Travel Centre** (☎ 06-355 4955; cnr Main & Pitt Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-7.15pm Fri, 9.30am-3.30pm Sat, 9.30am-3pm & 4-7.15pm Sun). InterCity and Newmans run services from Palmerston North to most North Island destinations including:

Destination	Price	Duration	Frequency
Auckland	\$79	9hr	2 daily
Napier	\$40	2½hr	2-3 daily
New Plymouth	\$45	4hr	3 daily
Wanganui	\$22	1¾hr	3 daily
Wellington	\$35	2¼hr	6 daily
Wellington Airport	\$35	2¼hr	2 daily

White Star City to City (☎ 06-758 3338; www.whitestarbus.co.nz) operates from the Tranzit City Link bus stop on Main St near the Square, with services to Wellington (\$24, 2¼ hour, one to two daily) and New Plymouth (\$33, four hours, one to two daily) via Wanganui (\$16, one hour). Book at the i-SITE.

Naked Bus (☎ 0900 625 333; www.nakedbus.com) runs from Palmerston North to many North Island destinations, including Wellington (from \$16,

2½ hours, three daily), Napier (from \$16, 2½ hours, three daily), Taupo (\$24, 3½ hours, one daily) and Auckland (\$39, nine hours, one daily). Departs the Main St Tranzit City Link bus stop. Book online or at the Palmy i-SITE; cheaper fares for advance bookings.

TRAIN

Tranz Scenic (☎ 0800 872 467; www.tranzscenic.co.nz) runs long-distance trains between Wellington and Auckland, stopping at the retro-derelict **Palmerston North Train Station** (Mathews Ave), off Tremaine Ave about 2.5km north of the Square. From Palmy to Wellington, take the *Overlander* (\$49, 2¼ hours, one daily) departing at 5pm (Friday, Saturday and Sunday May to November), or the *Capital Connection* (\$22, 2¼ hours, one daily Monday to Friday) departing Palmy at 6.20am. Buy tickets from Tranz Scenic directly (no ticket sales at the station).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

There's no public transport between the city and airport, but taxis abound or **Super Shuttle** (☎ 0800 748 885; www.supershuttle.co.nz) can whiz you into town in a minivan (\$12; bookings advised)

If you're driving into the CBD from the airport, take Ruahine St then turn right onto Main St. If you're heading through to Wellington, Main St becomes SH56 and continues to Wellington via Foxton, or turn left at the Square into Fitzherbert Ave, which leads to SH57 for Wellington via Shannon. It's a two- to three-hour drive either way.

BICYCLE

Crank It Cycles (☎ 06-358 9810; www.crankitcycles.co.nz; 203 Cuba St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun, closed Sun Jun-Aug) hires out mountain bikes from \$40 per day, including helmet and lock.

BUS

Tranzit City Link (☎ 0508 800 800, 06-952 2800; www.horizons.govt.nz; ticket \$2) runs daytime buses departing from the Main St bus stop on the east side of The Square. Bus 12 goes to Massey University; none go to the airport.

CAR

The following companies have airport offices:

Avis (☎ 06-357 0168; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 06-356 8565; www.budget.co.nz)

Europcar (☎ 06-353 0001; www.europcar.co.nz)

Hertz (☎ 06-357 0921; www.hertz.co.nz)

Thrifty (☎ 06-355 4365; www.thrifty.co.nz)

TAXI

A city-to-airport taxi costs about \$15.

Gold & Black Taxis (☎ 06-351 2345)

Manawatu Taxis (☎ 06-355 5111)

Taxis Palmerston North (☎ 06-355 5333)

SOUTH OF PALMERSTON NORTH

Just south of 'Student City' in the under-rated Horowhenua district, **Shannon** and **Foxton** are sedentary country towns en route to Wellington.

Our fine feathered friends at **Owlcatraz** (Map p271; ☎ 06-362 7872; www.owlcatraz.co.nz; Main Rd South, Shannon; adult/child incl tour \$20/7; ☎ 9am-5pm) have obligingly adopted oh-so-droll names like Owlvis Presley and Owl Capone. It's a 30-minute drive south from Palmerston North.

Foxton Beach is one of a string of broad, shallow Tasman Sea beaches along this stretch of coast – brown sand, driftwood and holiday houses proliferate. Other worthy beaches include Himatangi, Hokio and Waikawa.

The town of **Levin** is more sizable, but suffers from being too close to both Wellington and Palmerston North to warrant the through-traffic making a stop.

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