

Marlborough & Nelson



Splashed across the northern end of the South Island, the Marlborough and Nelson regions are many travellers' first southern contacts after crossing Cook Strait from Wellington. The South Island's population only recently topped one million, but less people doesn't mean less action: there's just as much to do here, and more room to do it!

The name of the genius who discovered that Marlborough's cool, sunny climate is perfect for growing grapes has been lost to history, but the wine world is now toasting his (or her) legacy: Sauvignon Blanc from the Marlborough Wine Region is a world-class winner. Also here is pretty Picton, and the sunken valleys of the Marlborough Sounds: the Queen Charlotte Track is a tramping and mountain-biking haven.

The coast road southeast from Blenheim to Christchurch tracks through stunning (and we mean it!) Kaikoura. Here, snowcapped summits erupt from the coastline, while not far offshore, a continental crag offers up a smorgasbord for the whales, dolphins, seals and seabirds.

West of Marlborough is Nelson, an artsy, midsize city dotted with photogenic Victorian houses. Pubs, galleries and hip cafés set the scene for creative discourse; a vigorous coffee culture keeps the locals humming. The Nelson region is also the access point for tramping and kayaking in New Zealand's most-visited national park, Abel Tasman. Not far away is Kaiteriteri, with one of NZ's most alluring beaches, while further west Golden Bay mellows-out in hippiedom near the abandoned, end-of-the-world beauty of Farewell Spit.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Eyeballing your first **whale** (p455) off Kaikoura
- Nosing and noshing your way through the **Marlborough Wine Region** (p448): Sauvignon Blanc and gourmet feasts aplenty
- Waking up in a boutique hideaway, or tramping the Queen Charlotte Track in the **Marlborough Sounds** (p439)
- Sea kayaking through postcard-perfect **Abel Tasman National Park** (p478)
- Getting airborne in the Nelson region: **paragliding** (p461), **skydiving** (p472) or **hang gliding** (p461)
- Planning a creative outburst in Nelson's cool **cafés** (p466)
- Reaching the end of the road in chilled-out, artsy **Golden Bay** (p479)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.destinationmarlborough.com

■ www.nelsonnz.com

Climate

The forecast is good: Marlborough and Nelson soak up some of NZ's sunniest weather. January and February are the warmest months, with temperatures averaging 22°C; July is the coldest month, averaging 12°C. It's wetter and more windswept the closer you get to Farewell Spit and the West Coast.

Getting There & Around

Soundsair (www.soundsair.com) is a local airline connecting Wellington with Picton, Blenheim, Nelson and Kaikoura. **Air New Zealand** (www.airnewzealand.com) offers domestic flights.

Interisland Cook Strait ferries pull into Picton, often the starting point for South Island explorations. From here you can connect to almost anywhere in the South Island by bus; InterCity is the major operator, but there are also local shuttle buses. **Tranz Scenic's TranzCoastal** train takes the scenic route from Picton to Christchurch, via Blenheim and Kaikoura.

Renting a car is easy – there's a slew of car-hire offices at Picton ferry terminal.

Water transport, sea kayaking or walking are the best ways to navigate large tracts of this region, including the Marlborough Sounds and Abel Tasman National Park.

MARLBOROUGH REGION

The convoluted maze of Marlborough Sounds waterways are a South Island spectacle. Picton is the gateway to the island and a prime spot for walking, sailing, kayaking and exploring Sounds' hideaways. A cork's pop south of Picton is agrarian Blenheim, and the world-famous Marlborough Wine Region.

History

Long before Abel Tasman sheltered on the east coast of D'Urville Island in 1642 (more than 100 years before James Cook blew through in 1770), Maori traders and war parties knew the Marlborough area as Te Tau Ihu o Te Waka a Maui. Cook named Queen Charlotte Sound; his detailed reports made the area the best-known sheltered anchorage in the southern hemisphere. In 1827 French navigator Jules Dumont d'Urville discovered the narrow strait now known as French Pass. His officers named the island just to the north in his honour. In the same year a whaling station was established at Te Awaiti in Tory Channel, which

MARLBOROUGH & NELSON FACTS

Eat Seafood, seafood and more seafood (especially local green-shell mussels and crayfish)

Drink Sauvignon blanc in the Marlborough wineries (p448); microbrewed beer in Nelson (p461)

Read *The Wine Atlas of New Zealand* by Michael Cooper and John McDermott

Listen to Rootsy reggae from Kaikoura band Salmonella Dub

Watch Whales, seals, dolphins and seabirds in Kaikoura (p455)

Swim at The heaven-sent beaches in Abel Tasman National Park (p478)

Festival Nelson Arts Festival (p463); Kaikoura Seafest (p455)

Tackiest tourist attraction Dazzling dresses at Nelson's World of WearableArt & Classic Cars Museum (p464)

Go green Golden Bay (p479) – more sustainable living, untrammelled wilderness and organic food than you can lob a lentil at.

brought about the first permanent European settlement in the district.

PICTON

pop 4000

Half-asleep in winter, but hyperactive (with 2000 ferry arrivals per day) in summer, Picton clusters around a deep gulch at the head of Queen Charlotte Sound. It's the main marine access point to the South Island, and the best place from which to explore the Marlborough Sounds and tackle the Queen Charlotte Track. The vibe here is touristy and transient, but there are some great hostels, decent watering holes and plenty of good eateries.

Information

Picton i-SITE visitor information centre (☎ 03-520 3113; www.destinationmarlborough.com; Foreshore;

☎ 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat & Sun) Picton pamphlets, plus Sounds maps and walking information. DOC counter staffed during summer.

Picton Police Station (☎ 03-520 3120; 36 Broadway; ☎ 24hr)

Post office (☎ 03-573 6900; Mariners Mall, 72 High St; ☎ 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri)

Take Note (☎ 03-573 6107; 28 High St; ☎ 9am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, to 4.30pm Sat, 10am–2pm Sun) Books and magazines.

United Video (☎ 03-573 7466; 63 High St; ☎ 9am–9pm) Internet access.



Sights & Activities

The *Edwin Fox* is purportedly the world's ninth-oldest wooden ship (who counts these things?). Built of teak in Bengal, the 48m, 760-ton vessel was launched in 1853. During its chequered career it carried troops to the Crimean War, convicts to Australia and immigrants to NZ. The **Edwin Fox Maritime Centre** (☎ 03-573 6868; www.nzmaritime.co.nz/edwinfox.htm; Dunbar Wharf; adult/child \$8/2.50; ☎ 9am-5pm) has maritime exhibits including the decrepit ship, which is being chemically restored.

Next door is the **Seahorse World Aquarium** (☎ 03-573 6030; www.seahorseworld.co.nz; Dunbar Wharf; adult/child/family \$16/9/40; ☎ 9am-8pm Dec-Feb, 10am-5.30pm Mar-Nov). Inside the salty smelling shed, touch-pools and feeding sessions

are a hit with kids. There's also a cinema here (p438).

Above the foreshore, the **Picton Museum** (☎ 03-573 8283; pictonmuseum@slingshot.co.nz; London Quay; adult/concession/child \$4/2/1; ☎ 9am-4pm Mar-Nov, to 5pm Dec-Feb) has a collection of whale bones, shells and model ships, and displays on Marlborough Sounds history and Maori lore.

A free i-SITE map details several walks around town, including an easy 1km track along Picton Harbour's eastern side to Bob's Bay. The **Snout Walkway** (three hours return) continues along the ridge from Bob's Bay offering ace Queen Charlotte Sound views.

Diving opportunities around the Sounds include the wreck of the *Mikhail Lermontov*,

a Russian cruise ship that sank in Port Gore in 1986 – allegedly the world's biggest diveable cruise-ship wreck. **Dive Picton** (☎ 03-573 7323; www.pictondiversworld.co.nz; cnr Auckland St & London Quay; dive trips from \$165; ☎ 8am-6pm) runs dives to the *Mikhail Lermontov* and other Sounds wrecks. It also offers equipment hire and 'Discover Scuba Diving' courses (\$145).

Picton Water Taxis (☎ 03-573 7853; www.pictonwatertaxis.co.nz; London Quay; ☎ 7am-6pm) hires out mountain bikes (half-/full day \$35/50), kayaks (half-/full day \$45/75) and power boats (from \$290 full day plus fuel), and runs a water-taxi service. Other companies, including Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company and Endeavour Express, offer mountain-bike rental for the Queen Charlotte Track from \$50 per day; see below.

Too terrestrial? **Skydive the Sounds** (☎ 0800 373 2648, 03-573 9101; www.skydivethesounds.com; Picton Airport; 9000/12,000ft jump \$245/295; ☎ 9am-5pm) offers tandem skydives with sensational views (if you remember to open your eyes). You could also try the North Island–South Island 'X Flight' for \$620: fly out of Wellington and skydive into Picton. Better than the ferry! See also the boxed text, p420.

Tours

There are loads of local tours to choose from, most including a cruise-and-walk combination around Queen Charlotte Sound. There's also kayaking, wildlife-spotting, mountain biking and winery touring in the region.

Active Eco Tour (☎ 03-573 7199; www.sealswimming.com; Waikawa Marina; 3hr seal swim tour incl equipment/adult/child \$95/85; ☎ 9am-5pm) Get underwater with speedy Sounds seals. Wetsuits, snorkels, masks and Picton-to-Waikawa transport provided. The marina is northeast of town.

Beachcomber Fun Cruises (☎ 0800 624 526, 03-573 6175; www.beachcombercruises.co.nz; Town Wharf; mail run \$80, cruises \$53-80) Two- to four-hour cruises, some with resort lunches. Cruise/walk, cruise/bike, full-day kayaking and Queen Charlotte Track options also available. Also operates the Queen Charlotte Sound mail run, a genuine NZ Post delivery service.

Cougar Line (☎ 0800 504 090, 03-573 7925; www.cougarlinecruises.co.nz; Town Wharf; cruises adult/child from \$63/25) Full-day cruise/walk deals, three-hour cruises, resort lunches, track transport and summer twilight cruises.

Dolphin Watch Ecotours (☎ 0800 9453 5433, 03-573 8040; www.dolphinswimming.co.nz; Picton Foreshore; half-day viewing/swimming tours \$80/130) Ecotours around Queen Charlotte Sound and Motuara Island bird

MAORI NZ: MARLBOROUGH & NELSON

Maori culture on the South Island is often less obvious than in the north, but that doesn't mean it's any less potent! In the Marlborough and Nelson regions, the following operators are keyed into *Maoritanga* (Maori culture):

- **Harakeke Basket Weaving** (p472) One-day flax-weaving workshops south of Motueka.
- **Maori Tours** (p455) Small-group history and cultural tours around Kaikoura.
- **Maori Uncut** (p477) Maori cultural tours in Abel Tasman National Park.
- **Myths & Legends Eco-tours** (below) Eco-oriented cultural and wildlife cruises on the Marlborough Sounds.
- **Te Hikoi Maori** (p463) Learn the *haka* (war dance) or take a bush-medicine walk at Nelson's Whakatu Marae.

sanctuary. Also cruise/walk options, plus swim-with-dusky-dolphins trips.

Endeavour Express (☎ 03-573 5456; www.boatrideresources.co.nz; Town Wharf; full-day cruise/walk options \$45-55) Backpacker-friendly company offering cruise/walk options and Queen Charlotte Track transfers. Mountain bikes and camping gear for hire.

Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company (☎ 0800 283 283, 03-573 6078; www.marlboroughsounds.co.nz; Town Wharf; 1-/2-/3-/4-day tours from \$95/140/395/1270, twilight paddle \$60, full-day kayak hire \$50) Professional sea-kayak and tramping trips. Kayaking ranges from three-hour twilight paddles to four-day guided tours. Also multiday guided walk/bike adventures on the track. Rentals (bikes, kayaks, camping gear) also available. **Myths & Legends Eco-tours** (☎ 03-573 6901; www.eco-tours.co.nz; half-/full-day cruises \$150/200) A Sounds day with a local Maori family – longtime locals, storytellers and environmentalists. There are different day trips to choose from (bird-watching, visiting Ship Cove) or evening barbecue cruises (\$150).

Sounds Connection (p448) Full-day gourmet wine tours. **Wilderness Guides** (☎ 0800 266 266, 03-520 3095; www.wildernessguidesnz.com; Picton Railway Station, 3 Auckland St; full-day kayak/walk/bike incl lunch from \$90/115/130) Marlborough and Nelson regional tours, with all-inclusive guided Queen Charlotte Track (one/four days \$175/1250) and Nydia Track (two days \$300) walks. Kayaking and full-day combo options (kayaking/walking/biking and a cruise back to Picton) from \$115. Bike hire \$45 per day.

Run by a couple of chirpy Scots, it has two detached, self-contained units with king-sized beds and balconies with magic views. There are two other rooms under the main house (also with views), sharing a bathroom. Free kayaks; two night minimum.

Jasmine Court (☎ 0800 421 999, 03-573 7110; www.jasminecourt.co.nz; 78 Wellington St; d \$130-165, f \$195-250; (P) (Q)) Top-notch, spacious motel with bonuses like wireless internet access, plush couches, kitchenettes, free DVDs and plunger coffee. Some rooms have a spa; upstairs balconies have harbour views. No sign of any jasmine.

TOP END

Sennen House (☎ 03-573 5216; www.sennenhouse.co.nz; 9 Oxford St; d incl breakfast \$345-475; (P) (Q)) Tucked against a steep hillside, Sennen House is an exquisitely restored, 1886 weatherboard homestead. Inside are five plush apartments and suites, each with its own entrance, kitchen facilities, sunny veranda and private lounge/dining area. Eyeball the black sheep on the surrounding slopes while you tuck into your gourmet breakfast hamper.

Eating & Drinking

Picton Village Bakkerij (☎ 03-573 7082; 46 Auckland St; items \$2-7; (M) 6am-3.30pm; (V)) Dutch owners bake trays of European treats here, including lead-weight rye bread, scrumptious gourmet pies, sandwiches, cakes and brownies. Look for the cut-out Amsterdam roofline stapled to the eaves.

Fresca (☎ 03-573 6075; 3a High St; items \$3-5; (M) 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun; (V)) A hole-in-the-wall juice and organic-coffee bar on the main drag, also serving freshly cut sandwiches, sushi, cakes, made-to-order salads and smoothies (the manuka honey and red apple version is a knock-out).

Flying Haggis (☎ 03-573 6969; 27 High St; meals \$6-12; (M) 11am-late) The original Picton is in Scotland, something this pub celebrates without reservation. Muster up your thickest brogue and order haggis sausages and baked potatoes, washed down with imported Scottish ales. Musos drift in from the hills occasionally and twang their guitars.

Seamus's (☎ 03-573 8994; 25 Wellington St; meals \$6-17; (M) noon-1am) An authentically snug drinking den, pouring a reliable Guinness and plating up hearty bar food (fried breakfasts, Guinness hotpot, steak and chips). Monday night jam sessions are a hoot!

AS Echo Café & Bar (☎ 03-573 7498; Shelley Beach; meals \$6-20; (M) 10am-8.30pm Wed-Sun) The deck of this old trading scow, built 1905 but now high 'n' dry on concrete stumps, is a quirky place for a drink, watching the comings and goings in the marina. Unpretentious home cooking at decent prices.

Le Café (☎ 03-573 5588; London Quay; lunch \$10-20, dinner \$19-28; (M) 8am-10.30pm; (V)) All big windows and warm timbers, Le Café is great for a lingering lunch or delicious dinner from the oft-changing blackboard menu, laced with seafood and organic herbs and veggies. Also good for a drink (muchos Marlborough wine) and occasional live gigs.

our pick! Gusto (☎ 03-573 7171; 33 High St; mains \$11-20; (M) 7.30am-9pm; (V)) Hip Gusto injects some café class into Picton's dining scene. It's a discreet, charcoal-coloured nook on the main street, serving up beaut breakfasts (French toast with bacon, maple syrup and berry coulis), fantastic coffee, and locally sourced mains (Marlborough mussels steamed in garlic and tomato broth). Friendly staff; outdoor tables; Marlborough beer and wines. Perfect!

Self-caterers can head to **Supervalue Supermarket** (☎ 03-573 6463; Mariners Mall, 72 High St; (M) 7.30am-7.30pm).

Entertainment

Picton Cinema (☎ 03-573 6030; www.pictoncinema.co.nz; Dunbar Wharf; adult/child/concession \$13/9/10; (M) 10am-9pm) Wander through the Seahorse World Aquarium to the art-house cinemas out the back. All tickets are \$9 on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Getting There & Away

Make bookings for trains, ferries and buses at Picton i-SITE and Picton Train Station.

AIR

Soundsair (☎ 0800 505 005, 03-520 3080; www.soundsair.com) flies between Picton and Wellington (\$79, six to eight daily). There are discounts for online bookings, and for backpacker- and student-card holders. A courtesy shuttle bus to/from the airstrip at Koromiko, 8km south, costs \$3.

See boxed text, p420 for info on a novel way of travelling between Wellington and Picton, via tandem skydive.

BOAT

Ferries depart and arrive at **Picton Ferry Terminal** (Auckland St), where both ferry com-

panies have booking desks. The terminal houses a café, public showers, phones and internet facilities.

There are two options for crossing Cook Strait between Picton and Wellington (timetables subject to change):

Bluebridge Ferries (☎ 0800 844 844, in Wellington 04-471 6188; www.bluebridge.co.nz; adult/child \$55/25) Crossing takes three hours, 20 minutes. Departs Wellington at 3am, 8am, 1pm and 9pm daily (no 3am service Saturday; no 8am service Sunday). Departs Picton at 2am, 8am, 2pm and 7pm daily (no 8am service Saturday; no 2pm service Sunday). Additional sailings December to January. Cars and campervans under 4m long \$130; campervans under 5.5m \$165; motorbikes \$60; bicycles \$15.

Interislander (☎ 0800 802 802, in Wellington 04-498 3302; www.interislander.co.nz; adult/child \$72/37) Crossing takes three hours, departing Wellington at 1.55am, 8.25am, 2pm and 6.15pm; departing Picton at 5.45am, 10am, 1.15pm, 6pm and 10.05pm. From mid-November to April there's an extra 10.35am sailing from Wellington, and an extra 2.25pm sailing from Picton. The most flexible (and expensive) fare for a car is \$163; for a 5.5m campervan it's \$208; a motorbike \$78. Sizable discounts apply for advance, nonchangeable and internet bookings. Bicycles \$15.

BUS

Buses serving Picton depart the ferry terminal or nearby i-SITE.

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz; Picton Ferry Terminal) runs services south to Christchurch (\$51, 5½ hours, two daily), via Kaikoura (\$32, 2½ hours, one or two daily) with connections to Dunedin, Queenstown and Invercargill. Services also run to/from Nelson (\$32, 2¼ hours, three to four daily), with connections to Motueka and the West Coast; and to/from Blenheim (\$13, 30 minutes, up to five daily). At least one bus daily on each of these routes connects with a Wellington ferry service. Keep an eye on discounted internet fares – at the time of research, Picton-Christchurch was a supercheap \$23.

Smaller shuttle buses running from Picton to Christchurch (around \$40, door to door) include:

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz)

Naked Bus (☎ 0900 625 33; www.nakedbus.com)

Southern Link KBus (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkkbus.co.nz)

TRAIN

Tranz Scenic (☎ 0800 872 467, 04-495 0775; www.tranzscenic.co.nz) runs the *TranzCoastal* service daily

each way between Picton and Christchurch via Blenheim and Kaikoura (and 22 tunnels and 175 bridges!), departing Christchurch at 7am, Picton at 1pm. The standard adult one-way Picton-Christchurch fare is \$104, but discounted fares can be as low as \$52. The service connects with the *Interislander* ferry (included in Wellington-Christchurch fares)

Getting Around

Renting a car in Picton is easy-peasy – as low as \$19 per day if you shop around. Most agencies allow drop offs in Christchurch; if you're planning to drive to the North Island, most companies suggest you leave your car at Picton and pick up another one in Wellington after crossing Cook Strait. Take a punt on a cheaper local operator, or the big-namers at Picton Ferry Terminal:

Ace (☎ 03-573 8939; www.acerentalcars.co.nz)

Apex (☎ 03-573 7009; www.apexrentals.co.nz)

Avis (☎ 03-520 3156; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 03-573 6081; www.budget.co.nz)

Hertz (☎ 03-520 3044; www.hertz.co.nz)

Thrifty (☎ 03-573 7387; www.thrifty.co.nz)

See p443 for details on water taxis from Picton servicing the Sounds.

MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS

The Marlborough Sounds are a crazed geographic omelette of inlets, headlands, peaks, beaches and watery reaches, formed when the sea flooded into deep valleys after the last ice age. Parts of the Sounds are included in the Marlborough Sounds Maritime Park – a series of small reserves punctuated by private land. To get an idea of how convoluted the sounds are, Pelorus Sound is 42km long but has 379km of shoreline! With your own wheels, the wiggly, atmospheric 36km drive along Queen Charlotte Dr from Picton to Havelock is a great Sounds snapshot (even on a rainy day).

The Queen Charlotte Track is the main lure for trampers, but the two-day Nydia Track (p444) is also worthwhile. Secluded accommodation (boutique and rudimentary) is scattered throughout the Sounds.

Tours

Picton (see p435) and Havelock (see p444) are the main bases for Sounds tours.

Sea Kayaking Adventure Tours (☎ 0800 262 5492, 03-574 2765; www.nzseakayaking.com; Anakiwa Rd, Anakiwa; 1-/2-/3-/4-day guided tours from \$85/200/300/400)

Guided kayaking adventures around Queen Charlotte Sound with overnight camping (accommodation upgrades available). BYO food. Kayak and mountain-bike hire from \$50 per day.

Sleeping & Eating

Some Sounds sleeping options are accessible only by boat and are deliciously isolated, but the most popular are those on (or just off) the Queen Charlotte Track (p442). There are also places to stay along Queen Charlotte Dr between Picton and Havelock. Some places close over winter; call ahead to check.

There are almost 30 DOC camping grounds throughout the Sounds, providing water and toilet facilities but not much else; cooking facilities are nonexistent.

If you're looking for your very own secluded retreat, **Sounds Great Holiday Homes** (☎ 03-574 1221; www.soundsgreat.co.nz) can book you a house in the Sounds, from humble bach to luxurious house.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE DRIVE

Smiths Farm Holiday Park (☎ 03-574 2806; www.smithsfarm.co.nz; 1419 Queen Charlotte Dr, Linkwater; unpowered/power sites \$26/30, cabins \$50-90, motel units \$110; (P) (A)) Just east of the turn-off to Portage, Smiths is a cut above your average caravan park, with lush camping lawns and comfy, well-looked-after cabins and units. Goats and lambs nibble around the fences; walks extend to a nearby waterfall and glowworm dell.

Sunflower Units (☎ 03-574 1074; www.sunflowerunits.co.nz; 1533 Queen Charlotte Dr, d \$90; (P)) Just east of the turn-off to Anakiwa (about 20km from Picton) are these two cosy, affordable, self-contained units resting in bucolic splendour. Free transport to/from Anakiwa.

Accommodation at Anakiwa (p443) is accessed by the road off Queen Charlotte Dr.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE TRACK

See p442 for options along the track.

OUTER SOUNDS

Hopewell (☎ 03-573 4341; www.hopewell.co.nz; Kenepuru Sound; dm \$30, tw & d with/without bathroom from \$92/62, 4-person cottage \$140; (X) closed Jun-Aug; (A)) One of NZ's best-loved backpackers, and it's not hard to understand the appeal. Hopewell occupies a remote corner of Kenepuru Sound, surrounded by native bush opening onto the sea. Road access is possible, but the long, bumpy drive makes a water taxi from Te Mahia far

preferable. Once here, chill out with the roll-call of facilities: books, games, outdoor spa, mountain bikes, kayaks, fishing equipment, gourmet pizzas and more.

Queen Charlotte Wilderness Park (☎ 03-579 9025; www.truenz.co.nz/wilderness; Cape Jackson; 2 nights & 3 days per person \$300) North of Ship Cove extending right up to Cape Jackson, this private nature reserve allows you to venture north of the Queen Charlotte Track. The package includes accommodation in en suite twins or doubles, meals and Picton transfers. Wildlife-spotting, fishing and kayaking are on offer, plus the chance to tramp on virtually deserted tracks.

Getting There & Around

The best way to get around the Sounds is by boat. Scheduled and on-demand water taxis (see p443) service most points along the Queen Charlotte Track. Buses don't service the Sounds, but much of the area is car-accessible. The road is sealed to the head of Kenepuru Sound, but beyond that it's nothing but narrow gravel roads with more twists than a hurricane. To drive to Punga Cove from Picton takes two to three hours (45 minutes by boat).

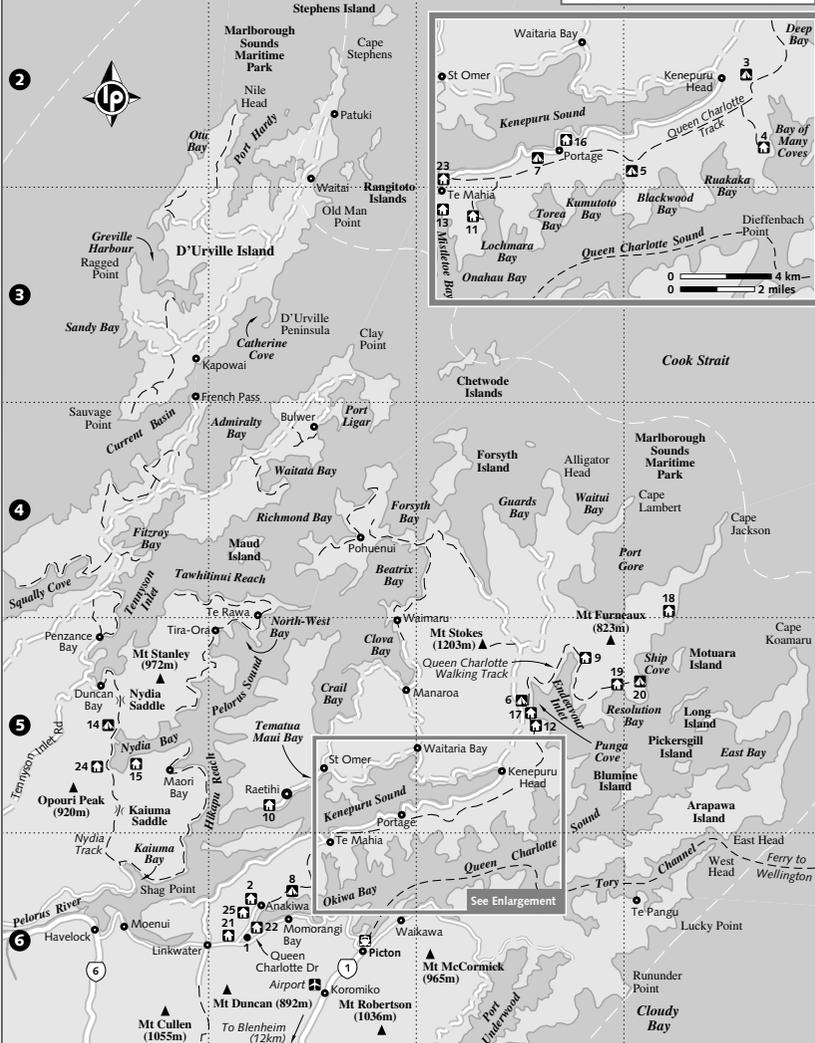
QUEEN CHARLOTTE TRACK

The hugely popular, meandering Queen Charlotte Track offers gorgeous coastal scenery, isolated coves, luxury accommodation and pristine campsites. The coastal forest is lush, and from the ridges you can look down on either side to Queen Charlotte and Kenepuru Sounds. The 71km track connects historic Ship Cove with Anakiwa, passing through privately owned land (40% of the track) and DOC reserves (not national park). Access depends on the cooperation of local landowners; respect their property by utilising designated campsites and toilets, and carrying out your rubbish. DOC charges a \$5 'Track Tribute' fee through the summer season, payable at Picton i-SITE. See Sleeping & Eating (p442) below for accommodation and camping charges.

Queen Charlotte is a well-defined track, suitable for people of average fitness. You can do the walk in sections using local water-taxi transport, or walk the whole three- to five-day journey. Sleeping options are only half a day's walk apart; boat operators will transport your pack along the track for you. Though there aren't the hordes that tramp the Abel Tasman

MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS

| SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES | | SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES | | SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES | |
|--|--|---------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Sea Kayaking Adventure Tours.....1 | | Furneau Lodge.....9 | | Queen Charlotte Wilderness Park....18 | |
| Hopewell.....10 | | B5 | | Resolution Bay Cabins.....19 | |
| Lochmara Lodge.....11 | | C3 | | Schoolhouse Bay Campsite.....20 | |
| Mahana Homestead Lodge.....12 | | C5 | | Smiths Farm Holiday Park.....21 | |
| Mistletoe Bay Accommodation & Camping.....13 | | C3 | | Sunflower Units.....22 | |
| Noeline's Homestay.....(see 12) | | C3 | | Te Mahia Bay Resort.....23 | |
| Nydia Bay Campsite.....14 | | A5 | | Te Mahoerangi.....24 | |
| Nydia Lodge.....15 | | A5 | | Tirimoana House.....25 | |
| Portage Resort Hotel.....16 | | C2 | | B6 | |
| Punga Cove Resort.....17 | | C5 | | EATING | |
| Davies Bay Campsite.....8 | | B6 | | Blis'd Foot Cafe.....(see 25) | |
| | | | | Kenepuru Store.....(see 16) | |



Track, there's some solid summer traffic. As with Abel Tasman, you can do part of the trip by sea kayak (see p435).

Mountain biking is a brilliant alternative: it's possible to ride the track in two or three days, guided or self-guided. Note that the section between Ship Cove and Kenepuru Saddle is off limits to cyclists from December to February. During these months you can still be dropped by boat at the Saddle and ride to Anakiwa.

Ship Cove is the usual (and strongly recommended) starting point – mainly because it's easier to arrange a boat from Picton to Ship Cove than vice versa – but the track can be started from Anakiwa. There's a public phone at Anakiwa but not at Ship Cove. Between Camp Bay and Torea Saddle you'll find the going toughest. About halfway along there's an excellent viewpoint, Eatwell's Lookout, about 20 minutes off the main track (45 minutes return).

Estimated walk times:

| Track section | Distance | Duration |
|---|----------|----------|
| Ship Cove to Resolution Bay | 4.5km | 1½-2hr |
| Resolution Bay to head of Endeavour Inlet | 10.5km | 2-2½hr |
| Endeavour Inlet to Camp Bay/Punga Cove | 12km | 3-4hr |
| Camp Bay/Punga Cove to Torea Saddle/Portage | 24km | 5½-7½hr |
| Torea Saddle/Portage to Mistletoe Bay | 8km | 2½-3hr |
| Mistletoe Bay to Anakiwa | 13km | 2½-3½hr |

Information

The Picton i-SITE (p433) stocks the *Queen Charlotte Track Visitor Guide* pamphlet and DOC's *Queen Charlotte Track* brochure, and is the best spot for information. The Villa (p437) backpackers in Picton is also a hotbed of info, and handles bookings. Online details: www.qctra.ck.co.nz.

Tours

Most of the tour companies based in Picton (see p435) offer guided Sounds cruises and short walks on Queen Charlotte Track, plus mountain-biking and kayaking opportunities.

Sleeping & Eating

Unless you're camping, it pays to book your Queen Charlotte Track accommodation *waay* in advance, especially in summer. There are six **DOC campsites** (adult/child \$6/1.50) along the

track, each with toilets and a water supply but sans cooking facilities. There's also a variety of resorts, lodges and guesthouses; backpacker establishments usually charge \$5 for linen.

The following listings are arranged in order heading south from Ship Cove (where camping is not permitted). Where you stop for the night will depend on how far you can/want to walk on any given day – do your research and (as everybody keeps telling us) book ahead. Not every option along the track is covered here.

Schoolhouse Bay Campsite (Resolution Bay) Beautifully situated, this is the first DOC campsite off the rank.

Resolution Bay Cabins (☎ 03-579 9411; reso@extra.co.nz; Resolution Bay; dm \$35, cabins/self-contained cottages d \$80/160) Choose from rustic backpacker dorms, old-fashioned candlelit cabins and modern family cottages with kitchen and bathroom. Complimentary kayaks and good swimming opportunities.

Furneaux Lodge (☎ 03-579 8259; www.furneaux.co.nz; Endeavour Inlet; dm \$30-40, chalets/studios d \$195/275; ☎) This century-old place amid lovely gardens is a godsend for thirsty trampers. The basic backpacker section is located in an old stone cottage, plus there are self-contained two-bedroom chalets (sleeping up to seven) and swish waterfront studios. Meals are available in the bar (Monteiths beers ahoy!) and restaurant.

Camp Bay Campsite (Punga Cove) On the western side of Endeavour Inlet.

Punga Cove Resort (☎ 03-579 8561; www.pungacove.co.nz; Endeavour Inlet; dm \$35, lodge d \$110-155, chalets \$175-375; ☎) An impressive range of self-contained studio, family and luxury A-frame chalets, some with sweeping sea views. There's a separate area of budget backpacker cabins, plus a pool, spa, shop, bar, café and an excellent restaurant. Hire a mountain bike or kayak for \$50 per day. We hope the disinterested receptionist when we visited was just having a bad day.

Mahana Homestead Lodge (☎ 03-579 8373; www.mahanahomestead.com; Endeavour Inlet; dm \$33, d with/without bathroom \$95/75; ☎) Every room in this purpose-built lodge has sea views, and it gets a huge rap from guests. It's an intimate affair, with only 14 beds, and is attempting to be as ecofriendly as possible, with home-grown veggies, free-range eggs, predator-free acreage, native tree planting, and by pumping all waste back up the hill instead of into Queen Charlotte Sound. Home-cooked meals available; free fishing gear and kayaks.

Noeline's Homestay (☎ 03-579 8375; Endeavour Inlet; s/tw \$25/50) Follow the pink arrows from Camp Bay to this relaxed homestay and be greeted by 70-something Noeline, 'The Universal Grandma', and her home-baked treats. It's a friendly arrangement with beds for five people, cooking facilities and great views.

Bay of Many Coves Campsite (Bay of Many Coves) On a saddle above the track.

Bay of Many Coves Resort (☎ 0800 5799 771; 03-579 9771; www.bayofmanycovesresort.co.nz; 1-2-/3-bedroom apt \$400/610/880; ☎) Honeymooning? These plush, secluded, boutique apartments are appropriately sexy. Each one has a private balcony shunting you out towards the water, designer bathrooms and all the mod cons you could concoct. The upmarket café and restaurant are staffed by a crew of iron chefs. A steep path leads down to the resort from the main track.

Black Rock Campsite (Kumutoto Bay) Further along past Bay of Many Coves, above Kumutoto Bay.

Portage Resort Hotel (☎ 03-573 4309; www.portage.co.nz; Kenepuru Sound; dm \$40-50, d \$185-335; ☎) This flash Kenepuru Sound stalwart has a classy restaurant, seasonal Snapper Café and funky bar. The 22-bed backpacker wing is pretty good, with small lounge and cooking facilities; the more upmarket resort accommodation climbs the price ladder from there. Even if you're not staying, drop in for a beer and a bite to eat. Sailboats, fishing, spa and pool also available.

Kenepuru Store (☎ 03-573 4445; Kenepuru Sound; meals \$5-10; ☎) 8am-8pm Oct-Apr, 9am-5pm May-Sep) By the time you read this, the old Portage Bay Shop will have been revamped into the Kenepuru Store, an improved but still unpretentious takeaway specialising in fish and chips, pies and toasted sandwiches – perfect track fodder. Also planned is an Adventure Centre downstairs, hiring out bikes, kayaks, dinghies and charter boats.

Cowshed Bay Campsite (Cowshed Bay) Not far from the Portage Resort Hotel.

Lochmara Lodge (☎ 03-573 4554; www.lochmaralodge.co.nz; Lochmara Bay; d \$85-110, self-contained units & chalets \$150-180; ☎) A superb retreat on Lochmara Bay, reached by a side track south of the Queen Charlotte Track, or by boat from Picton. Relaxation-inducing facilities include an outdoor spa, hammocks and barbecues. There are en suite doubles, units and chalets, all set in lush surroundings, and a fully licensed

café and restaurant serving local, wild and organic produce.

Mistletoe Bay Accommodation & Camping (☎ 03-573 4048; www.mistletoebay.co.nz; Mistletoe Bay; unpowered sites & dm \$20, cottage \$80-120; ☎) A former DOC campground (still with limited facilities: toilets and cold water), but also home to a bargain-priced self-contained cottage sleeping six. Sustainability is the theme: solar power, water conservation, recycling and wastewater treatment are all in place. At the time of research, some stylish new cabins were almost finished.

Te Mahia Bay Resort (☎ 03-573 4089; www.temahia.co.nz; Kenepuru Sound; d \$135-240; ☎) This sweetly low-key resort is north of the track, just off the main road, in a picturesque bay facing Kenepuru Sound. It has roomy, affordable self-contained units in a late-1800s house, plus new luxury self-contained apartments. There's also a store, selling precooked meals, coffee and camping supplies (wine!), plus dinghies and kayaks for hire.

Davies Bay Campsite (Umungata) Also a popular picnic spot, with barbecue facilities nearby.

Anakiwa Backpackers (☎ 03-574 1338; www.ana.kiwabackpackers.co.nz; 401 Anakiwa Rd; tw & d \$66, unit d \$90; ☎) A small, beachy old house squatting at the southern end of the trail – a great place to recuperate from your walk. No dorms, just room for six in three twins/doubles, plus a self-contained unit sleeping up to four. The caravan at the bottom of the garden does out ice creams and drinks to trampers as they stumble off the track.

Tirimoana House (☎ 03-574 2627; www.tirimoana.house.com; 257 Anakiwa Rd; d incl breakfast \$160-260) About 1.5km down the road from the end of the track (near the pick-up point for water taxis to/from Picton) is this art-filled B&B owned by a couple of prolific painters. Sleep in a French four-poster bed, then graze over the gourmet breakfast buffet. Dinner available. The Blist'd Foot Café is also here – coffee, toasted sandwiches and home-baked lunches for weary trampers.

Getting Around

Several boat operators service the track, allowing you to start and finish where you like. Prices usually include pack transfers, so your gear can wait for you at your chosen accommodation. Transport costs around \$75 return, \$50 for a one-way drop off. Bikes and kayaks can also be transported.

Except for Pelorus Sound Water Taxi, the following operators are in Picton. Most offer on-demand taxi services, scenic cruises and cruise-and-walk options (see p435).

Arrow Water Taxis (☎ 03-573 8229; www.arrowwatertaxis.co.nz; Town Wharf)

Beachcomber Fun Cruises (☎ 0800 624 526, 03-573 6175; www.beachcombercruises.co.nz; Town Wharf)

Cougar Line (☎ 0800 504 090, 03-573 7925; www.cougarlinecruises.co.nz; Town Wharf)

Endeavour Express (☎ 03-573 5456; www.boatriides.co.nz; Town Wharf)

Pelorus Sound Water Taxi (☎ 03-574 2151; www.pelorusbelle.com; Jetty 1a, Havelock Marina)

Picton Water Taxis (☎ 03-573 7853; www.pictonwatertaxis.co.nz; London Quay)

West Bay Water Transport (☎ 03-573 5597; www.westbay.co.nz; Picton Ferry Terminal)

HAVELOCK

pop 470

The highlight of tiny Havelock is its industrious harbour, which helps the town maintain the title of 'Greenshell Mussel Capital of the World'. Havelock sits at the confluence of the Pelorus and Kaiuma Rivers, 36km west of Picton, and makes a practical base from which to explore the more remote parts of Pelorus and Kenepuru Sounds. Online resources include www.havelocknz.com and www.pelorus.co.nz.

The helpful staff at **Havelock Infocentre** (☎ 03-574 2114; www.havelocknz.com; 70 Main Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) book tours, transport and offer regional advice. The centre doubles as an agent for DOC.

Activities

The **Nydia Track** (27km, 10 hours) starts at Kaiuma Bay and ends at Duncan Bay (or vice versa). Nydia Bay was originally the site of a Maori *pa* (fortified village) called Opouri, which means 'Place of Sadness', so named after a bloody battle between members of the same tribe. The walk passes through different bird habitats; it's also open to mountain bikers craving a challenge. Book water taxis to/from the track through Havelock Infocentre.

There's a **DOC campsite** (adult/child \$6/1.50) at Nydia Bay, and DOC's unhosted backpackers **Nydia Lodge** (Map p441; ☎ 03-520 3002; www.doc.govt.nz; Nydia Bay; dm \$15), a 50-bed hut about halfway along the track. Four person minimum; bookings through Havelock Infocentre.

Te Mahoerangi (Map p441; ☎ 03-579 8411; www.nydiatrack.org.nz; dm/d \$25/60) is a tranquil, ecofocused

backpackers right on Nydia Bay. Profits are poured back into local environmental protection efforts; ask about volunteering/woofing opportunities.

Tours

Boutique Cruises (☎ 03-574 2988; Havelock Marina; 3hr mussel cruise adult/child \$90/45) For an insight into the greenshell mussel industry, with a complimentary glass of Sauvignon Blanc. Cream Run Cruises (adult/child \$105/50) trace an old Sounds milk-delivery route.

Pelorus Mail Boat (☎ 03-574 1088; www.mail-boat.co.nz; Jetty 1, Havelock Marina; adult/child \$110/free; ☎ departs 9.30am Tue, Thu & Fri) Popular full-day boat cruise through the far reaches of Pelorus Sound on a genuine NZ Post delivery run. Bookings essential; BYO lunch. Picton pick-up/drop off available.

Pelorus Water Transport (☎ 027 239 0000, 03-577 6103; www.peloruswt.co.nz; Havelock Marina) Transport to points far and wide in Pelorus and Kenepuru Sounds, plus tailored scenic tours and fishing charters.

Sleeping & Eating

Havelock Motor Camp (☎ 03-574 2339; havelock.mc@extra.co.nz; 24 Inglis St; unpowered/power sites \$20/24, cabins/on-site vans \$36/50; ☎ ☎) Near the marina, this park offers shady sites, basic cabins and spick-and-span facilities, and it's one of the few caravan parks around that still has caravans!

Rutherford YHA (☎ 03-574 2104; www.yha.co.nz; 46 Main Rd; unpowered sites \$24, dm/d \$22/54; ☎ ☎) A well-equipped YHA filling an 1881 schoolhouse once attended by Lord Ernest Rutherford, discoverer of the atomic nucleus. Management was in a state of flux when we visited (focused mainly, it seems, on repairing two boats in the back yard), but the rooms remain simple and comfy (doubles are nicer than dorms).

Blue Moon (☎ 03-574 2212; www.bluemoonhavelock.co.nz; 48 Main Rd; dm \$23, tw & d \$52; ☎ ☎) Managing to be both homely and unremarkable, Blue Moon occupies a Victorian cottage at the top of the main street. Spend leisurely afternoons chewing the fat by the barbecue, or pumping your pecs on the back deck.

Havelock Garden Motel (☎ 03-574 2387; www.gardenmotels.com; 71 Main Rd; d \$95-140; ☎) A small (12-unit) family-run motel set against a misty mountain backdrop, with a fast-flowing, duck-filled creek along one side of the property. The low and long '60s units have been tastefully revamped, with gas cookers and muted colour schemes.

Mussel Pot (☎ 03-574 2824; 73 Main Rd; mains \$10-24; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Thu, to 8pm Fri-Sun) Bright, cheery

place specialising in local greenshell mussels (steamed whole-shell or grilled half-shell), fresh fish and hearty chowders. Look for the mussel rugby team scrumming on the roof.

Slip Inn (☎ 03-574 2345; Havelock Marina; lunch \$14-24, dinner \$15-27; ☎ 8am-late) Breakfast is a mussel-free zone at this brilliant, fully licensed indoor-outdoor space down by the water, but at lunch or dinner you can't escape the bivalves – on pizzas, in chowders, and in various other incarnations. There are plenty of nonmussel options too, like beer-battered blue cod and pan-fried venison in chocolate and red-wine sauce.

Clansman (☎ 03-574 1170; 72 Main Rd; lunch \$14-24, dinner \$18-29; ☎ 10.30am-1am) A top spot for a beer by the open fire, or to sink your choppers into gamey pub meals like the 'Wild Feast': an artery-clogging concoction of steamed mussels with wild pork salami in a creamy sauce. Kid-friendly; occasional live music.

Getting There & Away

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) runs daily from Picton to Havelock via Blenheim (\$20, one hour, once daily), and from Havelock to Nelson (\$21, 1¼ hours, once daily). Shuttle buses also ply this route for around \$4 less, including **Southern Link KBUS** (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkkbus.co.nz) and **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz). Buses avoid the convoluted 36km back road to Picton (Queen Charlotte Dr), but this is highly recommended if you're driving or cycling.

BLENHIM

pop 26,500

Blenheim (pronounced 'Blenum') is a dead-flat, agricultural town 29km south of Picton on the Wairau Plain, between the Wither Hills and the Richmond Ranges. Aside from banks, supermarkets and couple of good eateries, Blenheim doesn't offer much to enthrall or distract, but you *must* come here to check out the sensational Marlborough Wine Region just over Blenheim's main fence.

Information

Automobile Association (AA; ☎ 03-578 3399; www.aa.co.nz; 23 Maxwell Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Tue)

Blenheim i-SITE (☎ 03-577 8080; www.destinationmarlborough.com; Railway Station, Sinclair St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun) Information on the

whole Marlborough area, including Blenheim town and Wine Region maps.

Blenheim Police Station (☎ 03-578 5279; 8 Main St; ☎ 24hr)

Paper Plus (☎ 03-578 3904; The Forum, Market Pl; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat) Books and magazines.

Post office (☎ 03-578 3904; www.nzpost.co.nz; cnr Scott & Main Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5.15pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat)

Travel Stop Cyber Centre (☎ 03-579 1902; Shop 17, 1 Market St; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat) Internet access.

Wairau Hospital (☎ 03-520 9901; www.nmdhb.govt.nz; Hospital Rd; ☎ 24hr)

Sights & Activities

Conspicuously blue opposite Seymour Sq, the **Millennium Art Gallery** (☎ 03-579 2001; marpublicart@xtra.co.nz; 13 Seymour Sq; admission by donation; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 1-4pm Sat & Sun) is a contemporary gallery presenting changing exhibitions by local and national artists.

Around 2km southwest of town off New Renwick Rd is the **Marlborough Provincial Museum** (☎ 03-578 1712; www.marlboroughmuseum.org.nz; 26 Arthur Baker Pl; admission adult/child/family \$5/1/10; ☎ 10am-4pm), passionately celebrating the region's history. The much anticipated 'Uncorked' permanent wine exhibition is slated to open in 2009.

High Country Horse Treks (☎ 03-577 9424; www.high-horse.co.nz; Taylor Pass Rd; 1hr/4hr rides \$50/130) runs equine exploration from its base 11km southwest of town (call for directions).

Tours

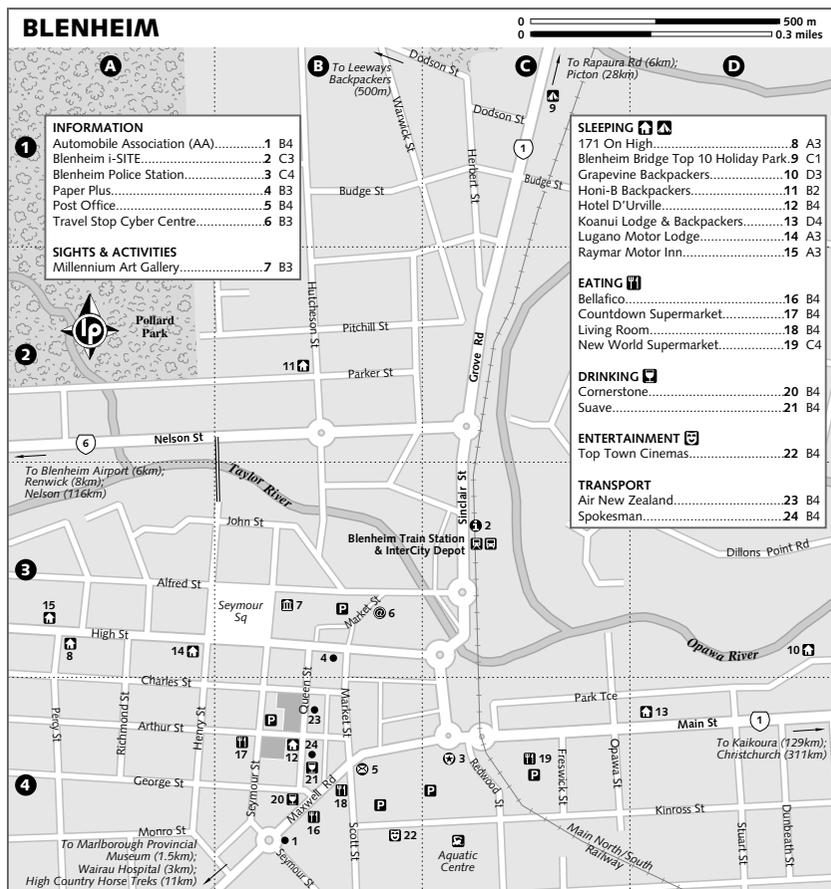
See p450 for wine tour operators.

Molesworth Tour Company (☎ 03-575 7525; www.molesworthtours.co.nz) has pricey, one- to four-day high-country farm trips to Molesworth cattle station via the Awatere valley (from \$235), two-day whale-watch trips to Kaikoura (\$730), and more reasonable Marlborough wine tours (half-/full day \$60/100).

Festivals & Events

Marlborough Wine Festival (☎ 03-577 9299; www.wine-marlborough-festival.co.nz; tickets \$40) During the second weekend of February at Montana's Brancott Estate. Features wine from over 50 wineries, fine food and entertainment. Book accommodation well in advance if you're participating in the overindulgence.

Blues, Brews & BBQs (☎ 0800 224 224; www.bluesbrews.co.nz; tickets \$25) Counteracting any potential wine-wankery, the weekend preceding the Wine Festival hosts this beer fest at Blenheim's A&P showgrounds, featuring live blues, food, and ales from around 20 NZ breweries.



Sleeping BUDGET

Blenheim's budget beds fill with long-stay guests, working in the area's vineyards and orchards; hostel owners help find seasonal work and offer reasonable weekly rates.

Grapevine Backpackers (☎ 03-578 6062; www.the-grapevine.co.nz; 29 Park Tce; unpowered sites \$17, dm \$22, tw & d \$48, tr \$72; P) Inside an old maternity home just out of the centre, Grapevine is another worker-focussed hostel, with a brilliant sunset deck by Opawa Stream. Free canoes; bikes \$15 per day. Avoid the three-tier bunks if vertigo is an issue.

Honi-B Backpackers (☎ 03-577 8441; honi-b-backpackers@xtra.co.nz; 18 Parker St; dm \$21, tw & d \$50; P) A shipshape collection of four suburban

houses clustered around the corner of Parker and Hutcheson Sts, Honi-B offers simple, clean, affordable accommodation: no frills, no expectations.

Leeways Backpackers (☎ 03-579 2213; leeway1@xtra.co.nz; 33 Landsdowne St; dm/d \$21/50; P) Leeways feels like a huge, messy share-house. It's very much a workers' hostel, and an utterly social one at that (there's sometimes more than one body per bunk...). Facilities for long-stayers are good, and the shed is perfect for parties. It's a couple of kilometres north of town.

Koanui Lodge & Backpackers (☎ 03-578 7487; www.koanui.co.nz; 33 Main St; dm \$23-26, d with/without bathroom \$70/54; P) A big pink palace on the main street, catering to both pink workers and

casual visitors. The busy backpackers section (for workers) is an old villa with weary facilities and mildly dank rooms, while the newer lodge (for casual visitors) features shiny amenities and en suite rooms.

Blenheim Bridge Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 268 666, 03-578 3667; www.blenheimtop10.co.nz; 78 Grove Rd; unpowered & powered sites \$30, cabins \$55-70, units & motels \$90-110; P) About five minutes north of town, this spread-out, well-equipped holiday park has campsites by Opawa Stream, a spa, playground and the usual cabin/unit suspects. The communal kitchens are winners!

MIDRANGE

Blenheim has oodles of midrange motels, with rich pickings on Middle Renwick Rd west of the town centre, and a handful on SH1 towards Christchurch.

Raymar Motor Inn (☎ 03-578 5104; www.raymar.co.nz; 164 High St; d \$90, extra person \$20; P) A recent spruce-up hasn't completely redeemed this old-timer: tacky laminex and patterned glass remain. Still, it's clean enough, central, and the cheapest motel in town.

Lugano Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 584 266, 03-577 8808; www.lugano.co.nz; cnr High & Henry Sts; d \$115-140; P) Handy to central Blenheim, opposite manicured Seymour Sq, these roomy, immaculate rooms range from studios to one- and two-bedroom units (which are more like apartments). Spa baths, cooking facilities and Sky TV add to the mix, and guests can use the neighbour's pool!

171 On High (☎ 0800 587 856, 03-579 5098; www.171onhighmotel.co.nz; cnr High & Percy Sts; d \$115-165; P) An excellent, L-shaped midrange option, painted SoCal colours with olive trees in the car park (Motel California?). Studios and apartments offer slick furnishings, full kitchens and Sky TV, and some have spas.

TOP END

Hotel D'Urville (☎ 03-577 9945; www.durville.com; 52 Queen St; d \$165-285; P) Injecting some chutzpah into Blenheim's old Public Trust buildings, the 10 dazzling rooms in this boutique hotel are lavishly decorated and individually themed. Downstairs is a classy lounge bar and restaurant (mains \$18 to \$30, open for breakfast, lunch and dinner daily). Food here is highly rated, with a sweeping selection of local wines and brilliant desserts. Impressive.

WINE REGION ACCOMMODATION

The following accommodation options are beyond Blenheim, in the Wine Region proper.

Swampys Backpackers (Map p449; ☎ 03-570 2180; www.swampys.co.nz; 2 Ferry Rd, Spring Creek; dm/d \$22/52; P) An effervescent hub for travellers and long-termers alike. There's a pub and supermarket nearby, plus funky lounges, two kitchens, tidy bathrooms and a chilled-out courtyard. Free bikes and kayaks.

Stonehaven (Map p449; ☎ 03-572 9730; www.stonehavenhomestay.co.nz; 414 Rapaura Rd; d incl breakfast \$145-250; P) A fastidiously built (and rebuilt after a fire) stone-and-cedar B&B among the vines, with three commodious guest rooms. Beds piled high with pillows; dinner by request; funky Scandinavian-style breakfast pavilion.

Antares Homestay (Map p449; ☎ 03-572 9951; www.antareshomestay.co.nz; 106 Jeffries Rd; s/d incl breakfast \$150/190, d unit \$200, extra person \$35; P) A four-acre property with two en suite rooms in a funky wing off the main house, plus a self-contained unit (sleeping up to four) above the garage. Benny the dreadlocked goat watches from behind a fence. Bikes with nifty bottle-holders available.

Vintners Retreat (Map p449; ☎ 03-572 7420; www.thevintnersretreat.co.nz; 55 & 199 Rapaura Rd; d \$180-560; P) Roomy, luxurious self-contained villas (sleeping up to six) and smaller suites at two locations along the Rapaura Rd 'Golden Mile'. Prices vary with size, season, guest numbers and length of stay.

Old St Marys Convent Retreat (Map p449; ☎ 03-570 5700; www.convent.co.nz; 776 Rapaura Rd; d incl breakfast \$550-750; closed Jun-Aug; P) In no way is this place remotely affordable, but wow, what a place! A gorgeous 1901 convent, cut into five chunks, moved here from its original Blenheim location and reassembled. Renovated in sumptuous style with no expense spared.

Eating & Drinking

Living Room (☎ 03-579 4777; cnr Scott St & Maxwell Rd; meals \$8-16; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat; V) Prominent corner café and deli, decorated in warm tones with artistic, Franco style. It's great for a peppy coffee, quality breakfast or quiche on the run.

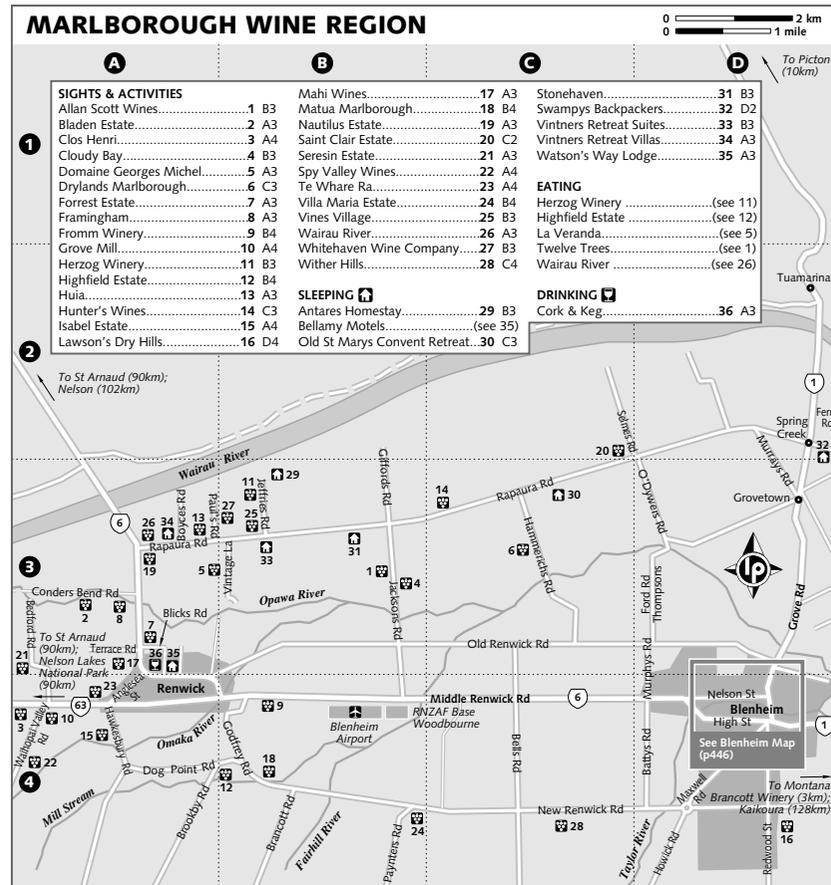
Bellafico (☎ 03-577 6072; 17 Maxwell Rd; lunch \$12-22, dinner \$24-30; ☎ 3-10pm Mon-Sat) A mainstream, main-street eatery with a huge wine and beer list that makes great reading. The menu differs

MARBOROUGH WINERY DIRECTORY

Marlborough is NZ's biggest, and one of the New World's leading, wine-producing areas. Around 60 wineries blanket in from Cloudy Bay create the perfect microclimate for cool-climate grapes: famous Sauvignon Blanc, plus gewürztraminer, riesling, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir. Spending a day or two drifting between tasting rooms and savouring local gourmet fare is a quintessential South Island experience. See p447 for sleeping options among the vines.

Not every Marlborough winery is open to the public, or is worth visiting – some are production-only acreages, some have limited opening hours, some are too small – but the following outfits are well worth a look. Listed hours are summertime hours; many wineries scale back operations in winter. See also www.winemarlborough.net.nz, and the Marlborough Wine Region map from Blenheim i-SITE. The following appear on Map p449:

- **Allan Scott Wines** (☎ 03-572 9054; www.allanscott.com; Jacksons Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm)
- **Bladen Estate** (☎ 03-572 9417; www.bladen.co.nz; Conders Bend Rd; ☎ 11am-5pm)
- **Clos Henri** (☎ 03-572 7923; www.closhenri.com; 639 SH63; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri)
- **Cloudy Bay** (☎ 03-520 9140; www.cloudybay.co.nz; Jacksons Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm)
- **Domaine Georges Michel** (☎ 03-572 7230; www.georgesmichel.co.nz; 56 Vintage La; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm)
- **Drylands Marlborough** (☎ 03-570 5252; www.drylands.co.nz; Hammerichs Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm)
- **Forrest Estate** (☎ 03-572 9084; www.forrest.co.nz; 19 Blicks Rd; ☎ 10am-4.30pm)
- **Framingham** (☎ 03-572 8884; www.framingham.co.nz; Conders Bend Rd; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm)
- **Fromm Winery** (☎ 03-572 9355; www.frommwineries.com; Godfrey Rd; ☎ 11am-5pm)
- **Grove Mill** (☎ 03-572 8200; www.groovemill.co.nz; Waihopai Valley Rd; ☎ 11am-5pm)
- **Herzog Winery** (☎ 03-572 8770; www.herzog.co.nz; 81 Jeffries Rd; ☎ 9am-4pm)
- **Highfield Estate** (☎ 03-572 9244; www.highfield.co.nz; Brookby Rd; ☎ 10.30am-5pm)
- **Huia** (☎ 03-572 8326; www.huia.net.nz; Boyces Rd; ☎ 10.30am-5pm)
- **Hunter's Wines** (☎ 03-572 8489; www.hunters.co.nz; Rapaura Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm)
- **Isabel Estate** (☎ 03-572 8300; www.isabelestate.com; Hawkesbury Rd; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri)
- **Lawson's Dry Hills** (☎ 03-578 7603; www.lawsondryhills.co.nz; Alabama Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm)
- **Mahi Wines** (☎ 03-572 8859; www.mahiwine.co.nz; 9 Terrace Rd; ☎ 10am-4.30pm)
- **Matua Marlborough** (☎ 03-572 8642; www.matua.co.nz; 776 New Renwick Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm)
- **Montana Brancott Winery** (☎ 03-577 5775; www.montanawines.co.nz; SH1; ☎ 9am-5pm) East of Blenheim.
- **Nautilus Estate** (☎ 03-572 9364; www.nautilusestate.com; 12 Rapaura Rd; ☎ 10am-4.30pm)
- **Saint Clair Estate** (☎ 03-570 5280; www.saintclair.co.nz; cnr Rapaura & Selmes Rds; ☎ 9am-5pm)
- **Seresin Estate** (☎ 03-572 9408; www.seresin.co.nz; Bedford Rd; ☎ 10am-4.30pm)
- **Spy Valley Wines** (☎ 03-572 9830; www.spvalleywine.co.nz; Waihopai Valley Rd; ☎ 10am-4pm)
- **Te Whare Ra** (☎ 03-572 8581; www.te-whare-ra.co.nz; 56 Anglesea St; ☎ 10am-5pm Thu-Sun)
- **Villa Maria Estate** (☎ 03-570 8470; www.villamaria.co.nz; cnr New Renwick & Paynters Rds; ☎ 10am-5pm)
- **Vines Village** (☎ 03-579 3520; www.thevillage.co.nz; 193 Rapaura Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm)
- **Wairau River** (☎ 03-572 9800; www.wairauriverwines.co.nz; 11 Rapaura Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm)
- **Whitehaven Wine Company** (☎ 03-572 7589; www.whitehaven.co.nz; 39 Pauls Rd; ☎ 10am-4pm)
- **Wither Hills** (☎ 03-578 4037; www.witherhills.co.nz; 211 New Renwick Rd; ☎ 10am-4.30pm)



from light afternoon fare into evening mains with an emphasis on local produce (shellfish, venison, rabbit, field-mushroom pâté) cooked with Italian zest. Beware the easy-listening soundtrack, sometimes emanating from a human.

Suave (☎ 03-577 8238; 67 Queen St; ☎ 9am-late Thu-Mon, to 6pm Tue & Wed) A cool, split-level blues and jazz bar serving up a neat selection of tasty dishes (salads, burgers, lamb shanks) and good coffee. Open mic night Thursday; live music Friday and Saturday.

Cornerstone (☎ 03-577 7555; 70 Queen St; ☎ 9am-late) Morphing seamlessly from daytime café into evening pub into nocturnal cocktail lounge, Cornerstone is the cornerstone of Blenheim's nightlife. The brood-

ing, wood-lined room serves upmarket pub grub, with plenty of Mac's on tap (Nelson's favourite beer).

See also Hotel D'Urville (p447). For self-catering, hit the supermarkets:

Countdown Supermarket (☎ 03-579 2946; 51 Arthur St; ☎ 8am-7pm)

New World Supermarket (☎ 03-520 9030; 1 Freswick St; ☎ 8am-9pm)

Entertainment

Top Town Cinemas (☎ 03-577 5559; www.toptowncinemas.co.nz; 4 Kinross St; adult/child/concession \$13/8/11; ☎ 10am-midnight) Major Hollywood releases in the main cinemas, with more off-the-wall stuff screening in 'The Lounge'. All tickets \$7 on Tuesdays.

MARLBOROUGH WINE REGION HIGHLIGHTS

Best Tastings

Whether it be for quality, quantity, friendliness or wine-wisdom, these wineries get our vote as Marlborough's top tastings:

- **Grove Mill** (tasting free) The most educational of tastings (good for inexperienced palates), with the emphasis on their status as the world's first carbon-neutral winery! Aroma demonstrations, audiovisual displays and local contemporary art complete the experience.
- **Lawson's Dry Hills** (tasting free) A relaxed, unpretentious family affair, with Tomi the lazy wine dog sniffing around your ankles. Not a sniff of snobbery though, just quality Sauvignon Blanc and gewürztraminer made and bottled on site.
- **Mahi Wines** (tasting free) Give the knowledgeable staff here a minute of your time and they'll take 10, launching into a passionate dissertation on production processes, blends, single vineyard crops, vertical tastings, and the differences between coastal and inland Marlborough wines.
- **Seresin Estate** (tasting \$5) Owned by cinematographer Michael Seresin (*Midnight Express*, *Paris Je T'aime*), Seresin offers a quality 45-minute tasting program, with in-depth discussion of organic processes and terroir (the qualities of the local land). One for the serious wine buffs.
- **Vines Village** (tasting free) Friendly tastings and cellar door for five (count 'em) boutique wineries under one roof: Bouldevines, Clay Ridge, Koru, No.1 Family Estate and Terravin. Also here is an olive-oil shop and a brilliant café serving homemade fare.

Top Tours

Jump on a bicycle or pile into a minibus for the best wine tours Marlborough can muster:

- **Bubbly Grape Wine Tours** (☎ 0800 228 2253; www.bubblygrape.co.nz; half-/full-day tours \$55/80) Happy-go-lucky minivan tours departing Blenheim, with hosts as effervescent as champagne. Four tour options with a wine/art/food focus.
- **Marlborough Wine Tours** (☎ 03-578 9515; www.marlboroughwintours.co.nz; 3/5/7hr tours \$43/54/75) Morning, afternoon or full-day minibus tours departing Blenheim and Picton. Winery lunch extra; wine shipping available.
- **Sounds Connection** (☎ 0800 742 866, 03-573 8843; www.soundsconnection.co.nz; half-/full-day tours \$59/79, full-day gourmet tour \$179) Professional winery tours from Picton with Blenheim pick-ups. The gourmet tour includes a wine-matched four-course lunch at Twelve Trees.
- **Waka Whenua Tours** (☎ 03-573 7877; www.picton.co.nz/for/wakawhenuatours; half-day tours \$40-55) Flexible, small-group minivan tours of the wine zone with an indigenous perspective. Picton or Blenheim pick-up/drop off.
- **Wine Tours by Bike** (☎ 03-577 6954; www.winetoursbybike.co.nz; half-/full-day bike hire \$40/55) Reader-recommended self-guided bicycle tours. Includes pick-up/drop off, winery map, bottled water, panniers and support vehicle (if you buy too many bottles!) Accommodation available.

Getting There & Around

AIR

Blenheim Airport is 6km west of town on Middle Renwick Rd. **Air New Zealand** (☎ 0800 747 000, 03-577 2200; www.airnz.co.nz; 29 Queen St; ✈ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) has direct flights to/from Wellington (from \$64, 12 daily), with onward connections.

BICYCLE

Spokesman (☎ 0800 422 453; fax 03-578 2238; 61 Queen St; hire per half-/full day incl helmet \$25/40; ✈ 9am-5pm

Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) rents bikes; longer hire and delivery by arrangement.

BUS

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) buses run daily from the Blenheim i-SITE to Picton (\$13, 30 minutes, up to five daily) continuing through to Nelson (\$20, 1¾ hours). Buses also head down south to Christchurch (\$50, five hours, two daily) via Kaikoura (\$30, 1¾ hours). A couple of shuttle buses also make the stop at Blenheim

Best Wining & Dining

With wine there must be food: grazing over local produce at one of the vineyards is all part of the Marlborough experience!

- **Wairau River** (mains \$14-20; ☎ noon-3pm) Casual mudbrick bistro with an ever-changing menu of quality, affordable meals. Order a double-baked blue-cheese soufflé, or some mussel chowder (with a glass of Sauvignon Blanc, of course).
- **Twelve Trees** (mains \$15-22; ☎ 9am-3.30pm) At Allan Scott Wines you'll find this superb courtyard eatery with an innovative menu. Try the oyster pie, smoked mussel and chilli paté, or Sounds salmon with fresh herbs from the garden. Breakfast and good coffee too.
- **La Veranda** (mains \$16-18; ☎ 10am-5pm) Next to the Domaine Georges Michel tasting room is this amicable, sunny eatery, serving pastas risotto and steak lunches. After 3pm its tasting menu steps up, with platters of dips, olives, paté and cheese. We suspect George Michael has never eaten here...
- **Highfield Estate** (mains \$25-26; ☎ 10am-5pm) A simple menu of fish, beef and lamb prepared with élan. Sit outside with a view, or in the slate-floored restaurant as happy young staff pour you a glass of Elstree Cuvée Brut (NZ sparkling white).
- **Herzog Winery** (mains \$26-98, 5-course degustation menu with/without wine \$185/119; ☎ 6.30-9.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Oct-mid-May) Acclaimed fine-dining experience from Michelin-starred European chefs. Also offers casual bistro lunches and cooking classes.

Best Wine Design

Slick contemporary or traditional Euro architecture and Marlborough wines go hand-in-hand (or rather, glass-in-hand). Our five favourite winery designs:

- **Cloudy Bay** Nothing special from the outside (it looks like a high school), but what a cool tasting room! Polished concrete and blonde-wood panelling, with an open fire and huge window wall behind the counter allowing you to peer into the Chardonnay barrel room.
- **Highfield Estate** Try to suspend disbelief when you first see Highfield Estate – a pink castle on a hill, faithfully mimicking the turrets and arches of Cafaggiolo Castle in Italy. Climb to the top of the tower and survey the serfs among the vines.
- **Montana Brancott Winery** Marlborough's biggest and best: a massive complex in traditional chateau style that could have been airlifted from the Rhône. Steeply pitched roofs, stone walls and monastic colonnades.
- **Spy Valley** In a style best described as 'Agricultural-Sexy', Spy Valley's out-of-the-way pavilion is clad in horizontal timber slats and corrugated iron. Impressive arched roof structures are oddly reminiscent of the Sydney Opera House.
- **Wither Hills** A showpiece design by Auckland architect Chris Jack, Wither Hills erupts from an earthen mound by the roadside. The clean lines of concrete wall panels and timber pagodas are offset by softer river-stone surfaces and native grass planter beds.

on the Nelson–Picton–Christchurch run (see p439).

Ritchies Transport (☎ 03-578 5467; www.ritchies.co.nz) buses traverse the Blenheim–Picton line (\$10, 30 minutes, two to four daily Monday to Friday), departing Blenheim i-SITE.

Naked Bus (☎ 0900 625 33; www.nakedbus.com) runs from Blenheim to many South Island destinations, including Greymouth (\$59, 7½ hours, one daily), Kaikoura (from \$14, two hours, three daily), Nelson (from \$11, 1¾ hours, four daily) and Motueka (\$22, 2¼

hours, two daily). Buses depart the i-SITE. Book online or at the i-SITE; cheaper fares for advance bookings.

TAXI

Call for bookings or for a ride back to your hotel post-wine-touring with **Marlborough Taxi** (☎ 03-577 5511).

TRAIN

Tranz Scenic (☎ 0800 872 467, 04-495 0775; www.tranzscenic.co.nz) runs the *TranzCoastal* service, stopping

Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug) Helpful staff make tour, accommodation and transport bookings.

Post office (☎ 03-319 6808, 41 West End; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat, to 4pm Sun)

Sights

George Fyffe, cousin of Kaikoura's first European settler, Robert Fyffe, came to Kaikoura from Scotland in 1854 and built **Fyffe House** (☎ 03-319 5835; www.fyffehouse.co.nz; 62 Avoca St; adult/child/concession/family \$7/2/5/15; ☎ 10am-6pm daily Nov-Apr, to 4pm Thu-Mon-May-Oct) around 1860. The house is the only survivor from the whaling days (it's got whale vertebrae for foundations!). If you want it, admission includes a 30-minute guided tour.

Kaikoura District Museum (☎ 03-319 7440; kk.museum@xtra.co.nz; 14 Ludstone Rd; adult/child \$3/50; ☎ 12.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 2-4pm Sat & Sun, extended summer hr) includes the old town jail (1910), historical photos, Maori and colonial artefacts, and an exhibit on the region's whaling era (check out the sperm whale jaw).

The 30-minute **Point Sheep Shearing Show** (☎ 03-319 5422; www.pointsheepshearing.co.nz; Fyffe Quay; adult/child \$10/5; ☎ shows 1.30pm & 4pm) at the Point B&B is a barrel of laughs. You can also feed a ram, and lambs between September and February. Classic NZ!

Similarly farmy is **Fyffe View Horse Treks** (☎ 03-319 5069; www.kaikourahorsetrekking.co.nz; Chapmans Rd off Postmans Rd; 1/2hr treks \$45/70; ☎ 10.30am-2pm) with guided treks trotting through farmland, native bush and riverbeds; experience not required. Pick-up/drop off available.

Near the Point Kean car park is a rather smelly **seal colony**. The seals laze around in the grass and on the rocks, wondering why everyone is looking at them. Give the seals a wide berth (10m), and never get between them and the sea – they will attack if they feel cornered.

If you haven't exceeded your annual wine intake in the Marlborough Wine Region yet, sip some local Pinot, Chardonnay and gewürztraminer at **Kaikoura Wine Company** (☎ 03-319 7966; www.kaikourawinery.co.nz; tasting \$4, tour & tasting \$9.50; ☎ 10am-5.30pm), 2km south of town off SH1. Tours leave on the hour, taking in the winery plus the amazing cellar.

Not far from the winery is **Maori Leap Cave** (☎ 03-319 5023; mary.and.scott@xtra.co.nz; SH1; 40min tours adult/child \$12/5; ☎ tours 10.30am, 12.30pm & 2.30pm), a sea-formed limestone cave discovered in 1958. Tours depart the Caves Restaurant,

3km south of town. Book at the restaurant or the i-SITE.

On the hill at the eastern end of town is a water tank, on top of which is a panoramic **lookout**; scan both sides of the peninsula, the mountains and along the coast. Dempsey's Track leads up to the tower from Torquay St, or drive up Scarborough Tce.

Activities

WALKING

The highly recommended **Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway** is a two-hour loop, starting in the town, heading out to Point Kean, along the cliffs to South Bay, then back to town over the isthmus. En route you'll see fur seals, and red-billed seagull and shearwater (aka mutton bird) colonies. There are interpretive panels at South Bay. Collect a map at the i-SITE.

Kaikoura Coast Track (☎ 03-319 2715; www.kaikouratrack.co.nz; package \$160) is a three-day, 40km, self-guided walk through private farmland and along the photogenic Amuri Coast, 50km south of Kaikoura. The price includes three nights' farm-cottage accommodation and pack transport; BYO sleeping bag and food (some supplies and meals available). A two-day mountain-bike option costs \$80.

Kaikoura Wilderness Walks (☎ 0800 945 337, 03-319 6966; www.kaikourawilderness.co.nz; 1-/2-night package \$695/995) offers more creature comforts than the Coast Track walk. Choose from a two-day/one-night, or three-day/two-night guided walk (graded easy to moderate) through forests and alpine landscapes, with accommodation in a secluded lodge. Prices include Kaikoura pick-up/drop off, meals and pack transport.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There's a safe swimming **beach** in front of The Esplanade, and a **pool** (adult/child \$3/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) if you have a salt aversion. The whole coastline, with its rocky formations and abundant marine life, offers fabulous snorkelling and diving. Have a chat with **Dive Kaikoura** (☎ 0800 728 223, 03-319 6622; www.divekaikoura.co.nz; 94 West End) about scuba-diving opportunities. If you'd rather stay high and dry, dropping a line off the town wharf makes for a lazy afternoon. See opposite for organised **fishing tours**.

Mangamaunu Beach, 15km north of Kaikoura, has wicked surf (a 500m point break when it's working). **Board Silly Surf Adventures**

(☎ 0800 787 352, 03-319 6464; boardsilly@clear.net.nz; 3hr lesson adult/child \$75/65) can teach you to surf, or if you already can, it'll hire you a wetsuit and board (\$50). R&R Sport (p458) also hires out boards and wetties.

If you're here in winter, you can **ski** yourself silly at nearby Mt Lyford (p91). When there's snow on the slopes, shuttle buses run from Kaikoura to the mountain; enquire at the i-SITE.

Tours

Tours are big business in Kaikoura. It's all about marine mammals: don't miss the chance to see whales (sperm, minke, killer, humpback and southern right), dolphins (Hector's, bottlenose and dusky) and NZ fur seals up close. During summer, book whale-and-dolphin-watching tours a few days ahead, and give yourself some leeway to allow for lousy weather.

WHALE-WATCHING

A whale-watch tour is an unforgettable experience, either by boat, plane or helicopter. Aerial options are shorter and pricier, but allow you to see the whole whale, as opposed to just a tail, flipper or spout from a boat.

Kaikoura Helicopters (☎ 03-319 6609; www.worldofwhales.co.nz; Railway Station; 30/40/50min flight from \$195/225/235) Reliable whale-spotting, plus snow landings in winter.

Whale Watch Kaikoura (☎ 0800 655 121, 03-319 6767; www.whalewatch.co.nz; Whaleyway Station (ha-ha); 3hr tour adult/child \$130/60) Tours head out to sea in search of whales in boats equipped with hydrophones (underwater microphones) to pick up whale gurgles. Refund of 80% if no whales are sighted (they are 98% of the time). The only hitch is the weather: the company relies on planes to spot whales from the air before sending out the boats, which can be difficult in foggy or wet conditions. If they can't find any whales, your sailing may be cancelled. If this trip is a *must* for you, allow a few days. Three to 16 tours daily.

Wings Over Whales (☎ 0800 226 629, 03-319 6580; www.whales.co.nz; Kaikoura Airport; 30min flight adult/child \$145/75) Light-plane flights departing from Kaikoura Airport 7km south of town. Spotting success rate 95%!

DOLPHIN & SEAL SWIMMING

Dive Kaikoura (☎ 0800 728 223, 03-319 6622; www.divekaikoura.co.nz; 94 West End; guided dives/lessons from \$120/150) Boat-based seal-spotting, wreck and nocturnal dives, plus diving lessons and tours.

Dolphin Encounter (☎ 0800 733 365, 03-319 6777; www.dolphin.co.nz; 96 The Esplanade; swim adult/child

\$150/140, observation \$80/40; ☎ 8.30am & 12.30pm year-round, plus 5.30am summer) The chance to rub shoulders with pods of dusky dolphins on three-hour tours; wet suits, masks and snorkels provided. Limited numbers so book in advance.

Seal Swim Kaikoura (☎ 0800 732 579, 03-319 6182; www.sealswimkaikoura.co.nz; shore-based tour adult/child \$70/50, boat-based tour \$80/70; ☎ Oct-May) Two-hour guided snorkelling tours among NZ fur seals – they zip through the water and don't seem to mind your presence in the slightest.

BIRD-WATCHING

Bird-nerds fly at the opportunity for a close encounter with pelagic species: albatross, shearwaters, shags, mollymawks and petrels. **Albatross Encounter** (☎ 0800 733 365, 03-319 6777; www.oceanwings.co.nz; 96 The Esplanade; adult/child \$80/40; ☎ 9am & 1pm year-round, plus 6am summer) is run by the same folks as Dolphin Encounter.

FISHING TRIPS

Fish Kaikoura (☎ 0800 768 020, 03-319 7012; www.fishkaikoura.co.nz; 1/2hr trip \$45/65) Short-and-sweet fishing (sea perch and blue cod) and crayfishing trips, launching from Kaikoura Beach. Ask about longer trips with a BBQ fishing lunch.

Kaikoura Fishing Charters (☎ 03-319 6888; www.kaikourafishing.co.nz; 3/4hr trip \$90/100) Dangle a line from the good ship *Takapu*, then take your filleted, bagged catch home to eat. Trips depart South Bay Wharf.

OTHER TOURS

Kaikoura Kayaks (☎ 0800 452 456, 03-319 5028; www.kaikourakayaks.co.nz; seal tours adult/child \$75/60; ☎ 8.30am, 12.30pm & 4.30pm Dec-Mar, 9am & 1pm Apr-Nov) Guided sea-kayak tours to view fur seals and explore the peninsula's coastline. Kayaking lessons and freedom hire also available.

Maori Tours (☎ 0800 866 267, 03-319 5567; www.maoritours.co.nz; 3½hr tour adult/child \$99/55; ☎ 9am & 1.30pm) Unique and fascinating half-day, small-group tours laced with Maori hospitality and local lore. Visit ancient sites, hear legends and understand indigenous use of trees and plants. Advance bookings required.

Festivals & Events

Seafest (☎ 0800 4732 337, 03 319 5641; www.seafest.co.nz; tickets \$25; ☎ early Oct) If you take your seafood seriously, time your visit with Kaikoura's annual fish fiesta on the first Saturday in October (and book your ticket and bed well in advance). Seafest showcases the region's piscatorial prowess: stallholders sell seafood and wine, and there are live bands, family entertainment, and a big Friday night bash to kick things off.

Sleeping

Book ahead in summer, and during Seafest.

BUDGET

Lazy Shag (☎ 03-319 6662; lazy-shag@extra.co.nz; 37 Beach Rd; dm/s \$23/48, tw & d \$60; (P) (Q)) The name refers to a local bird species, not the behaviour of guests (but don't rule it out...). It's in a prime spot, cafés on both sides and a party-prone deck taking in gob-smacking mountain views. All rooms have bathrooms; the living area has a wood heater and free internet.

Dusky Lodge (☎ 03-319 5959; www.duskylodge.com; 67 Beach Rd; dm \$23, d & tw \$53-75; (P) (Q) (V)) What a whopper! Easily Kaikoura's biggest hostel, it's an industrious, social place with facilities to cope (including three lounge areas and three kitchens). The crowning glory is the brilliant outdoor deck with heated pool, spa and mountain views. Live it up in 'luxury doubles' with en suite and flat-screen TV. Thai restaurant onsite.

Cray Cottage (☎ 03-319 5152; www.craycottage.co.nz; 190 The Esplanade; dm/tw \$23/56; (P)) Like your hostels small and cheery with a whiff of beach? Look no further than this self-contained 12-bed bunkhouse behind the owners' seaside cottage. It's 1km east of the town centre; pick-up/drop off available.

Maui YHA (☎ 0800 278 299, 03-319 5931; www.yha.co.nz; 270 The Esplanade; dm \$23-25, d & tw \$52-54; (P) (Q)) After Maui heaved the North Island out of the sea, he probably sat here and checked out the beach and mountains while he caught his breath. Superclean hostel, with amazing views from the better rooms and lilting jazz piped through the corridors. Half-/full-day bike hire \$20/30.

Sunrise Lodge (☎ 03-319 7444; sunrisehostel@extra.co.nz; 74 Beach Rd; dm/tw/tr \$25/54/75; (P) (Q)) Run by a super-enthusiastic couple of corporate escapees, this comfortable, sociable lodge continues to garner great feedback from travellers. Bunk-free rooms are bright and comfortable, there are free bikes and helmets, Friday pub nights, and free nightly sunset tours in a minivan – the perfect introduction to Kaikoura.

Alpine Pacific Holiday Park (☎ 0800 692 322, 03-319 6275; www.alpine-pacific.co.nz; 69 Beach Rd; unpowered/powered sites \$28/32, cabins \$50-60, units & motels \$85-140; (P)) Excellent creekside park with chatty owners and quality facilities, including communal kitchen (BYO utensils), proudly trimmed

lawns and BBQ pavilion. Cabins and units are unremarkable but perfectly decent.

Albatross Backpacker Inn (☎ 03-319 6090; www.albatross-kaikoura.co.nz; 1 Torquay St; dm/s/tw/d \$28/48/60/65, 6-bed unit \$150; (P) (Q)) Homely and colourful, this high-quality backpackers in an 1800s post office has a hefty TV/living area, plus outdoor decks and verandas to chill out on. Some of the dorms have 'Turkish-theme' bunks – semi-enclosed beds with Ottoman overtones.

Kaikoura Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0900 363 638, 03-319 5362; www.kaikouratop10.co.nz; 34 Beach Rd; unpowered/powered sites \$35/38, cabins \$60-80, units & motels \$120-160; (P) (Q) (V)) Invisible behind a massive hedge, this busy, well-maintained campground offers family-friendly facilities (heated pool, spa, trampoline) and cabins and units of the usual Top 10 standard.

Lyell Creek Lodge (☎ 03-319 6277; www.lyellcreeklodge.co.nz; 193 Beach Rd; s \$40, d & tw \$54-60; (P) (Q)) There'll be no squabbling for kitchen space at this cosy creekside lodge: guests spread out over two kitchens and two lounges. And there'll be no fighting over the remote control either – all rooms have TV, and some have private bathrooms. Free pick-up/drop off (it's just north of town), hot-water bottles and mints on pillows.

MIDRANGE

Bay Cottages (☎ 03-319 5506; www.baycottages.co.nz; 29 South Bay Pde; cottages/motels \$90/120; (P)) Five tourist cottages with kitchenette and bathroom sleeping up to four, and two slick motel rooms with stainless-steel benches, low-voltage lighting and flat-screen TVs. They're on South Bay, a few kilometres south of town, close to swimming beaches. The friendly owner may take you crayfishing if the weather is looking good.

Sails Motel (☎ 03-319 6145; www.sails motel.co.nz; 134 The Esplanade; d \$85-110, apt \$120; (P)) There are no sea (or sails) views at this motel, so the cherubic owners have to impress with quality. Their four secluded, tastefully appointed units are down a driveway in a garden setting (private outdoor areas abound). The apartment sleeps four.

Old Convent (☎ 0800 365 603, 03-319 6603; www.theoldconvent.co.nz; cnr Mill & Mt Fyffe Rds; s incl breakfast \$100, d \$120-195; (P) (Q) (V)) Once a rambling nunnery built in 1910, this memorable B&B retains many original features. The chapel is now a guest lounge full of magazines, books and games, and the roomy rooms are

decked out with old-fashioned furniture. There's also a café and chocolate shop in the flower-filled grounds.

Dylans Country Cottages (☎ 03-319 5473; www.dylanscottages.co.nz; 268 Postmans Rd; cottages incl breakfast \$150; (P)) On the grounds of the happily whiffy 'Lavendyl' lavender farm, northwest of the town centre, these two self-contained timber cottages make a romantic, mildly eccentric escape. One cottage has a private outdoor bath; the other an indoor spa. Extraneous loos relocated to the garden now sprout flowers; a shower emerges from a tree.

Also recommended is **Donegal House** (p458), as well as the following options:

Kaikoura Cottage Motels (☎ 0800 526 882, 03-319 5599; www.kaikouracottagemotels.co.nz; cnr Old Beach & Mill Rds; d \$120; (P)) Enclave of eight immaculate, blue-and-cream tourist flats just north of town.

Admiral Court Motel (☎ 0800 555 525, 03-319 5525; www.kaikouramotel.co.nz; 16 Avoca St; d/q \$125/180; (P)) Clean, self-contained units (studios and two-bedrooms) with Sky TV and off-the-beaten-beach aspect.

TOP END

Waves on the Esplanade (☎ 03-319 5890; www.kaikouraapartments.co.nz; 78 The Esplanade; apt \$190-250; (P)) Can't do without the comforts of home? If your home is like one of these luxury two-bedroom apartments, we're surprised you would ever leave! Each apartment boasts a balcony overlooking the ocean, Sky TV and DVD player, plus two bathrooms, laundry facilities and full kitchen. Rates are for up to four people.

Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses (☎ 03-319 6559; SH1 at Hapuku Rd; www.hapukulodge.com; d \$390-850; (P) (Q)) Twelve kilometres north of Kaikoura is this

fabulously indulgent place, perfect for a lavish escape. Warm contemporary décor and hand-crafted furniture anoint the well-appointed guest rooms, self-contained apartments and gorgeous 'tree houses' (built in a manuka grove at tree-top level to snare sea views over the dunes). One native tree is planted for every guest! Super-doooper!

Eating

Beach House Café & Bar (☎ 03-319 6030; 39 Beach Rd; mains \$8-12; ☎ 9am-4pm) The best brunch and coffee in town is at this chipper roadside café, garnering more than its fair share of the passing trade. Sit on the front terrace or back deck and reconstitute with green eggs and ham, fish and chips or seafood chowder.

our pick Store at Kekerengu (☎ 03-575 8600; SH1, Kekerengu; mains \$12-33; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm) Don't be fooled by the name – this 'store' is an upmarket café dotted with wine barrels and baskets of pumpkins, where you can enjoy cake and coffee, or chowder or half a cray from a seafood-loving menu. Dine by the fire in the shabby-Spanish interior, or out on the wide sun decks, with magical sea views. The Store is halfway between Blenheim and Kaikoura – stop even if you're not hungry.

Black Rabbit Pizza Co (☎ 03-319 6360; 17 Beach Rd; mains \$16-25; ☎ noon-late) Making a real splash on the local foody scene, Black Rabbit's pizzas are like gourmet dinners served on pizza bases instead of plates. Try the 'Crabs on Dough': crayfish, braised fennel bulb, pancetta, capsicum and anchovies in a horseradish and lime sauce. Good pasta too; limited seating.

Hislops Cafe (☎ 03-319 6971; 33 Beach Rd; lunch \$7-17, dinner \$17-30; ☎ 9.30am-9pm; (V)) This sunny,

CRAY CRAZY

Among all of Kaikoura's munificent marine life, the one species you just can't avoid is the crayfish. In season, cray dominates restaurant menus and takeaway blackboards. Unfortunately (some say unnecessarily), it's pricey – you'll pay export price, around \$80 per kg. If you can't stomach the idea of shelling out (pardon the pun) \$45 for half a cray at a restaurant (or \$90 for the whole beast), you can buy fresh, cooked or uncooked crays from \$35 at **Cods & Crayfish** (☎ 03-319 7889; 81 Beach Rd; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, from 10am Sun) and iconic **Nins Bin** (☎ 03-319 6454; SH1; ☎ noon-5pm), a surf-side caravan 23km north of town.

Fish-and-chip takeaways usually offer a half-cray with salad and chips for around \$30. Try **Continental Seafoods** (☎ 03-319 5509; 47 Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-9pm), or the sensational **Kaikoura Seafood BBQ** (☎ 027 330 0511; Fyffe Quay; ☎ 10.30am-dark Sun-Fri), a roadside stall near the seal colony where a chef barbecues seafood morsels to order: scallops, mussels, whitebait, fish and crays, plus seafood chowder. Alternatively, take a fishing tour (p455) and crack into some cray that way, or buddy-up with a local who'll take you crayfishing and share the spoils.

offer a plethora of activities, both relaxed and adrenalin-charged.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Litter Arty (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 8009; litterarty@xtra.co.nz; 91 Hardy St; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Quirky secondhand book exchange.

Page & Blackmore Booksellers (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 9992; www.pageandblackmore.co.nz; 254 Trafalgar St; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Quality bookseller.

EMERGENCY

Ambulance, fire service & police (☎ 111)

Nelson Police Station (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 3840; cnr St John & Harley Sts; ☎ 24hr)

INTERNET ACCESS

Aurora (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 6867; 161 Trafalgar St; ☎ 9am-late)

Internet Outpost (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 8789; 53 Bridge St; ☎ 9.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-8.30pm Sun)

KiwiNet Café (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 8095; 93 Hardy St; ☎ 10am-6pm)

INTERNET RESOURCES

Backpack Nelson (www.backpacknelson.com) Information for the budget-bound.

Creative Tourism (www.creativetourism.co.nz) Nelson-based organisation listing artistic, indigenous, culinary and wilderness tours and workshops.

Eat Drink Nelson (www.thetaste.co.nz) Culinary guide to restaurants, cafés, wines and boutique consumables.

Nelson Arts (www.nelsonarts.org.nz) Regional arts and crafts.

Nelson NZ (www.nelsonnz.com) Official Nelson tourism website.

Nelson Wines (www.nelsonwines.co.nz) Local wineries and galleries.

MEDICAL SERVICES

After Hours & Duty Doctors (Map p459; ☎ 03-546 8881; fax 03-545 7059; 96 Waimea Rd; ☎ 8am-10pm) After-hours attention and general practitioners.

Nelson Hospital (Map p459; ☎ 03-546 1800; www.nmdhb.govt.nz; Waimea Rd; ☎ 24hr) Emergency doctor and dentist; entry off Tipahi St.

MONEY

Banks and ATMs pepper Trafalgar St.

POST

Post office (Map p462; ☎ 0800 501 501; www.nzpost.co.nz; cnr Trafalgar & Halifax Sts; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Automobile Association (AA; Map p462; ☎ 03-548 8339; www.aa.co.nz; 45 Halifax St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Tue)

Nelson i-SITE (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 2304; www.nelsonnz.com; cnr Trafalgar & Halifax Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) Pick up a copy of the *Nelson/Tasman Region Visitor Guide*. The DOC information desk has the lowdown on national parks and walks (Abel Tasman Coast Track and Heaphy Track).

Sights

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The enduring symbol of Nelson is the Art Deco **Christ Church Cathedral** (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 1008; www.nelsoncathedral.org; Trafalgar Sq; admission free; ☎ 8am-7pm), lordling over the city from the top of Trafalgar St. Work began in 1925 but was delayed, and arguments raged in the 1950s over whether the design should adhere to original plans or embrace modern trends. The architectural hybrid was finally completed in 1965 and consecrated in 1972, 47 years after the foundation stone hit the dirt.

Just west of the cathedral, **South St** (Map p462) contains a row of improbably quaint workers' cottages, built between 1863 and 1867: those in the know say it's the oldest fully intact street in NZ. Some cottages are available as accommodation (see p465).

South of town in suburban Stoke (once a separate village), the lush gardens of Isel Park are worth a wander. In the grounds you'll find the stately 1880s **Isel House** (Map p459; ☎ 03-547 1347; isel@ihug.co.nz; 16 Hilliard St, off Marsden Rd; admission by donation; ☎ 11am-4pm), former home of the upwardly mobile Marsden family.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

The shiny **Nelson Provincial Museum** (Map p462; ☎ 03-547 9740; www.nelsonmuseum.co.nz; cnr Hardy & Trafalgar Sts; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) is the showpiece of central Nelson. The modern space is filled with cultural heritage and natural history exhibits with a regional bias, and there's a great rooftop garden. Charges may apply for major exhibits.

Adjacent to Queen's Gardens, the **Suter** (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 4699; www.thesuter.org.nz; 208 Bridge St; adult/child/concession/\$3/50c/1; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm) is Nelson's bastion of high art, with changing exhibitions, musical and theatrical performances, films, a craft shop and café.

The i-SITE stocks the *Art & Crafts Nelson City* brochure, listing commercial galleries

around town (of which there are many). Our favourites:

Flamedaisy Glass Design (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 4475; www.flamedaisy.com; 324 Trafalgar Sq; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun) Boutique glass-blowing studio.

Höglund Art Glass Gallery (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 9850; www.nelson.hoglund.co.nz; Trafalgar Sq; ☎ 9am-5pm) Original, hand-blown glass, inside the Rutherford Hotel.

Jens Hansen (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 0640; www.jenshansen.com; 320 Trafalgar Sq; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Gold and silversmith workshop producing contemporary jewellery (including the accursed ring for the *Lord of the Rings* movies).

Rutherford Gallery (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 1878; www.rutherfordgallery.co.nz; 42 Halifax St; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat) Contemporary paintings by local and national brush-strokers.

South St Gallery (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 8117; www.nelsonpottery.co.nz; 10 Nile St W; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) An extensive collection of kooky, classy and colourful pottery.

PARKS & MARKETS

Founders Heritage Park (Map p459; ☎ 03-548 2649; www.founderspark.co.nz; 87 Atawhai Dr; adult/child/family \$5/2/13; ☎ 10am-4.30pm), near the waterfront 1km from the city centre, houses a replica historic village clustered around a huge windmill. Sure, the olde-worlde buildings are cute-as-can-be, but the best thing here is **Founders Brewery & Café** (Map p459; ☎ 03-548 4638; www.biobrew.co.nz; meals \$9-15; tastings \$3, tours & tastings \$5; ☎ 10am-4.30pm), NZ's first certified organic brewery. Take a behind-the-scenes tour of the bubbling vats, or sip the finished product over a café lunch: Tall Blonde, Red Head, Long Black, Generation Ale and Fair Maiden brews. If you're only visiting the brewery there's no admission charge to the park. Also on site is **Farmers @ Founders** (admission free; ☎ 6pm Fri), a weekly farmers market.

Walking tracks in Nelson's **Botanical Reserve** (Map p459; Milton St; admission free; ☎ 24hr) ascend Botanical Hill, where a spire proclaims it NZ's geographical centre. NZ's first-ever rugby match was played at the foot of the hill on 14 May 1870: Nelson Rugby Club trounced the lily-livered pansies from Nelson College 2-0.

Just down the road from Founders Park is serene **Miyazu Japanese Garden** (Map p459; Atawhai Dr; admission free; ☎ 24hr), full of sculptures, lanterns and ducks on placid ponds. Sit for a while and ponder something big-picture.

Don't miss **Nelson Market** (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 6454; Montgomery Sq; ☎ 8am-1pm Sat), a bubbly melt-

ing pot of fresh produce, food stalls, fashion, local arts, crafts and buskers. **Monty's Sunday Market** (☎ 9am-1pm Sun) is a flea market on the same site.

Activities

Nelson offers boundless opportunities to embrace the great outdoors (something to do with the sunshine?). The clear blue skies are particularly welcome: this is a real NZ hotspot for paragliding, kiteboarding and hang gliding. Most operators are some way out of town, but will pick-up/drop off in Nelson.

Go paragliding with **Nelson Paragliding** (☎ 0508 359 669, 03-544 1182; www.nelsonparagliding.co.nz) or **Adventure Paragliding & Kiteboarding** (☎ 0800 212 359, 03-540 2183; www.skyout.co.nz). Both charge around \$150 for a tandem flight and \$180 for a full-day introductory course. The latter company can also get you airborne teaching you kiteboarding (aka kitesurfing); a full-day introduction costs \$190. **Kitescool** (☎ 021 354 837; www.kitescool.co.nz) also runs half-day kiteboarding lessons from \$170.

Hang gliding is another daredevilish possibility, arranged through one of two operators: **Nelson Hang Gliding Adventures** (☎ 03-548 9151; www.flynelson.co.nz; flight \$150) and **Hang Gliding New Zealand** (☎ 0800 212 359, 03-540 2183; www.hanggliding.co.nz; flight \$150).

Rock climbing on the limestone cliffs around Golden Bay and Takaka is popular with local death-defiers. **Vertical Limits** (Map p462; ☎ 03-545 7511; www.verticallimits.co.nz; 34 Vanguard St; ☎ noon-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) runs half-/full-day rock-climbing trips (\$65/90), plus an indoor climbing wall in Nelson (\$16 per day including equipment).

Strap yourself onto a 'skywire' and soar through the forest at **Happy Valley Adventures** (off Map p459; ☎ 03-545 0304; www.happyvalleyadventures.co.nz; 194 Cable Bay Rd), a 20-minute drive northeast along SH6. The 3km-long Skywire (a chairlift/flying-fox hybrid) dangles you 150m above the native forest; rides cost \$85/55 per adult/child. Quad-bike tours start at \$70/20 per driver/passenger for one-hour forest rides.

Further down the road from Happy Valley Adventures is **Cable Bay Kayaks** (off Map p459; ☎ 0508 222 532, 03-545 0332; www.cablebaykayaks.co.nz; Cable Bay Rd), offering half-/full-day guided sea-kayaking trips exploring the local coastline and marine life from \$70/105.

To get out onto Tasman Bay, a great option is the Wednesday night races run by **Cat Sailing**

THE WHACKY WORLD OF WEARABLEART

Nelson exudes creativity: it's hardly surprising that NZ's most inspiring fashion show was born here. It began humbly in 1987 when creator Suzie Moncrieff held an off-beat fashion show in Wakefield, southwest of Nelson. The concept was to create a piece of art that could be worn and modelled. The idea caught on, and the World of WearableArt Awards Show became an annual event. Wood, papier-mâché, paua shell, copper wire, soft-drink cans, wine bladders and foodstuffs have been used to create garments; 'Bizarre Bra' entries are showstoppers.

The awards show has been transplanted to Wellington (p411), but you can ogle entries at Nelson's **World of WearableArt & Classic Cars Museum** (WOW; Map p459; ☎ 03-547 4573; www.wowcars.co.nz; 95 Quarantine Rd; adult/child \$18/7; ☎ 10am-5pm). High-tech galleries include a carousel mimicking catwalk models, and a glow-in-the-dark illumination room.

More car than bra? Under the same roof are 50 mint-condition classic cars and motorbikes. Exhibits change, but may include a 1959 pink Cadillac, a 2001 Plymouth Prowler and a convertible Eldorado Cadillac used by Eisenhower in the 1953 US presidential parade.

There's a fabulous glassed-in kitchen, a high-rotation hammock, volleyball court and sauna. Book in advance to cut yourself a slice of the action.

Bug Backpackers (Map p459; ☎ 03-539 4227; www.thebug.co.nz; 226 Vanguard St; dm \$23-25, d \$58; (P) (Q)) The newest hostel on the Nelson block occupies a converted suburban villa strewn with VW Beetle paraphernalia. The painter graduated from the 'How can we get rid of this rude orange/lime/blue paint?' school of interior design. Quality beds, great kitchen, under-the-radar vibe.

Green Monkey (Map p462; ☎ 03-545 7421; www.thegreemonkey.co.nz; 129 Milton St; dm/d \$24/58; (P) (Q)) Small, homely and exceedingly comfortable option (carpeted; good linen), run by a friendly English couple. There are just two dorms and two double rooms (doubles with TV). Sit and chat among the fruit trees or toast yourself by the log fire.

Tasman Bay Backpackers (Map p462; ☎ 1800 222 572, 03-548 7950; www.tasmanbaybackpackers.co.nz; 10 Weka St; unpowered sites \$30, dm/d \$24/60; (P) (Q)) Typical of Nelson's breed of quality backpackers, this well-designed hostel has airy communal spaces, hyper-coloured rooms, a sunny outdoor deck and a well-used hammock. Free breakfast during winter; free evening soup and chocolate pudding year-round.

Trampers Rest (Map p462; ☎ /fax 03-545 7477; 31 Alton St; dm/s/d \$25/41/60; (P) (Q)) With just a few beds (no bunks), much-loved Trampers is hard to beat for a homely environment. The enthusiastic/eccentric owner is a keen tramp and cyclist, and provides comprehensive local information and free bikes. There's a

small kitchen, book exchange, piano, and Bruce Springsteen on the stereo.

Nelson YHA (Map p462; ☎ 03-545 9988; www.yha.co.nz; 59 Rutherford St; dm/s \$26/41, tw & d from \$64, d with bathroom \$80; (Q)) A spotless, central hostel, purpose-built not so long ago, and with high-quality facilities like a soundproof TV room (free vids and DVDs) and a well-organised kitchen opening onto an outdoor terrace. Tour and activity bookings too.

Tahuna Beach Accommodation Park (Map p459; ☎ 0800 500 501, 03-548 5159; www.tahunabeach.co.nz; 70 Beach Rd; powered & unpowered sites \$30, cabins & units \$60-105; (P) (Q)) A few minutes' walk from the beach, 5km from the city, Tahuna is a huge park accommodating thousands. It's more like a housing estate than a campsite, with a supermarket, minigolf and playgrounds.

Nelson City Holiday Park (Map p459; ☎ 0800 778 898, 03-548 1445; www.nelsonholidaypark.co.nz; 230 Vanguard St; powered & unpowered sites \$32, cabins & units \$45-99; (P) (Q)) Nelson's most central camping option has been spruced up to almost boutique levels, with hotel-like amenities blocks, motel-like kitchen units and powered sites divided by hedges. Limited tent sites by the creek out the back.

Also recommended:

Palace Backpackers (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 4691; www.thepalace.co.nz; 114 Rutherford St; dm/d incl breakfast \$22/55; (P) (Q)) Characterful old place high above the street, with free spa, and Hundertwasser-inspired bathroom mosaics. Entrance via the driveway behind the Shell service station.

Nelson Beach Hostel (Map p459; ☎ 03-548 6817; www.nelsonbeachhostel.co.nz; 25 Muritai St; dm/d \$25/55; (P) (Q)) Chilled-out, carefree place close to Tahunanui Beach, 4km from town. Free bikes; pub across the road.

MIDRANGE

Lynton Lodge (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 7112; www.holidayguide.co.nz/Nelson/LyntonLodge.aspx; 25 Examiner St; apt \$95-110) High on the hill with wonderful Nelson views, Lynton Lodge has older-style self-contained apartments and a guesthouse vibe – try for one of the balcony units. The host's wit is as sharp as (and more intentional than) the retro décor.

Apartments Paradiso (Map p462; ☎ 0800 269 667, 03-546 6703; www.paradisopartments.co.nz; 5 Tasman St; d \$99-140; (P) (Q) (R)) Sink into huge king-size beds in these appealing motel-style units, each with well-equipped kitchenette, spa, Sky TV and CD player. It's managed (enthusiastically) by Paradiso Backpackers (p463) next door: guests can use the swimming pool and hostel facilities.

Sussex House (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 9972; www.sussex.co.nz; 238 Bridge St; s \$110-140, d \$140-170; (P) (Q)) In a historic riverside home, the Sussex has five appealing B&B rooms, all named after famous composers (Strauss, Beethoven, Mozart et al), most with balcony access and/or views. Lush gardens; French-speaking hosts.

Cedar Grove (Map p462; ☎ 0800 233 274, 03-545 1133; www.cedargrove.co.nz; cnr Trafalgar & Grove Sts; studio \$120-140, apt \$140-170; (P)) Does one cedar constitute a grove? Debate it with your roommate as you check-in to these warm, spacious apartments with elegant décor, cooking facilities and all the business trimmings (phone, fax, internet jack). A short walk to downtown Nelson.

Beaches Motor Inn (Map p459; ☎ 0800 332 232, 03-548 6008; www.beachmotorinn.co.nz; 69 Tahunanui Dr; d \$140-175; (P)) This slick, clean-cut out-of-towner is the best of the half-dozen motels at Tahunanui Beach. Extras include full kitchens, spas and Sky TV. Try for a ground-floor unit with courtyard.

TOP END

South Street Cottages (Map p462; ☎ 03-540 2769; www.cottageaccommodation.co.nz; 1, 3 & 12 South St; d \$180-220, villa \$220) Stay on NZ's oldest preserved street in one of three endearing, two-bedroom self-contained cottages built in the 1860s. Each has all the comforts of home, including kitchen, laundry, log fire and courtyard garden; breakfast provisions supplied. Two-night minimum. The owners also have a modern two-bedroom villa on the waterfront.

California House Inn (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 4173; www.californiahouse.co.nz; 29 Collingwood St; r incl breakfast \$250-325; (P) (Q)) An original manor home

with six graciously proportioned rooms, all immaculately arranged with Victorian-era furniture. Service is personalised, and food is a big thing with an elaborate breakfast each morning. Lunch and dinner by request.

Eating RESTAURANTS

Dellah (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 1154; 282 Hardy St; mains \$9-25; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 6.30-10pm Tue-Sat; (V)) Revolving around an adobe oven is this ebullient Arabian eatery, draped with tentlike fabrics. Call before 2pm to order your fabulously spicy meat *tajine* (Moroccan casserole) for dinner. Equally spicy bellydancing displays may or may not help you digest.

Indian Café (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 4089; 94 Collingwood St; mains \$11-23; ☎ 5pm-late Mon-Sat) This open-plan, saffron-coloured Edwardian villa away from the main eat streets houses a surprisingly up-market Indian restaurant. Impressive interpretations of standards (chicken vindaloo, rogan josh, beef korma), tandoori dishes, good-value banquets and 10 different types of naan!

Hopgoods (Map p462; ☎ 03-545 7191; 284 Trafalgar St; lunch \$11-24, dinner \$25-34; ☎ 11am-2.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-2.30pm Sat, 5-10pm Mon-Sat) Sophisticated Hopgoods is perfect for a romantic dinner, or as a treat when your budget traveller's diet of rice and muesli bars starts to wear thin. It's a narrow, timber-lined room with crisp white linen and crisp attentive service. Start with the caramelised onion and blue-cheese tart, then move on to the 12-hour confit of Tasman Bay lamb with organic carrots and capers. The wine list has 100% NZ wines too.

Hot Rock (Map p459; ☎ 03-546 4421; 8-10 Tahunanui Dr; mains \$16-25; ☎ 4.30pm-11pm Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, to 10pm Sun) A gourmet pizza and pasta bar leading the charge of emerging Tahunanui Beach eateries. Breeze in for a quick salad, pasta or 'Nelson Bays' pizza: green-lipped mussels, fresh fish, shrimp and calamari marinated in mango, chilli and coriander salsa.

Lambretta's (Map p462; ☎ 03-545 8555; 204 Hardy St; mains \$16-30; ☎ 8am-late Mon-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun) Named after the Italian scooter (there's one on the footpath), this cavernous pizza/pasta restaurant fosters a casual, keep-it-in-the-family vibe. No ordinary, processed pizza toppings here – it's all interesting gourmet stuff. Good coffee too.

Boat Shed (Map p459; ☎ 03-546 9783; 350 Wakefield Quay; lunch \$20-25, dinner \$31-36; ☎ 9am-9pm) A Nelson institution, standing on oyster-encrusted stilts

over the bay. As befits the setting, everything here is very fishy – from the chairs to the water bottles, and especially the menu (but not exclusively so). Breakfast or lunch is easier on the wallet, but still rich in experience. Sexy staff and lilting world music.

Other waterfront seafood options:

Waterfront Café & Bar (Map p459; ☎ 03-546 6685; 341 Wakefield Quay; lunch \$12-20, dinner \$24-30; ☎ 11am-9.30pm) Eternally popular eatery with a much sought-after window seat overhanging the footpath. Casual café lunches, more formal dinners.

Saltwater Café & Bar (Map p459; ☎ 03-548 3361; 272 Wakefield Quay; mains \$15-30; ☎ 9am-late) Breezy upstairs-downstairs café serving à la carte scallops, fish and chowder.

Venice Cove Osteria (Map p459; ☎ 03-539 1307; 322 Wakefield Quay; mains \$27-31; ☎ 5pm-late Wed-Sun) Sassy Italian with a seafood propensity (cognac-sautéed tiger prawns, calamari alla Veneziana). Venice-worthy views.

CAFÉS

Nelson has embraced café culture with fully-caffeinated enthusiasm. If you need a strong morning coffee-shot before you can even think about the rest of the day, you've come to the right town.

Zippy's (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 6348; 276 Hardy St; meals \$6-8; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat; ☎) Zippy's décor is a confronting combo of purple, teal and red, and service is zippy indeed. Strictly vegetarian food includes burritos, salads and the 'locally famous' chocolate afghans. Drinks include ice-cream shakes, *chai* and heart-startlingly rich, full-flavoured coffee.

Yaza Cafe (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 2849; Montgomery Sq; meals \$6-15; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat, 8am-3pm Sun; ☎) Adjacent to the weekend markets, Yaza is a colourful, kid-friendly café with all-day breakfasts and live music most summer weekends (folk, blues, punk, pop and reggae). Food is free-range and organic (quiches pizzas, frittatas, wraps, soup); patchouli lingers in the air.

Morrison St Café (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 8110; 244 Hardy St; meals \$8-16; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-3pm Sat, 9am-3pm Sun) Part café, part gallery, Morrison St Café is a polished operator. Down a hearty brekkie (bubble and squeak with chorizo), or swing by for an afternoon pick-me-up of coffee and cake.

DeVille (Map p462; ☎ 03-545 6911; 22 New St; meals \$12-16; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat) Indoor/outdoor DeVille is a cool place, with a pebble-

covered courtyard dotted with couches, mirror mosaics and established greenery. Feast on bagels, veggie burgers, nachos and thumpin' breakfasts. Sixties flower-power bands own the stereo.

Stingray Café (Map p462; ☎ 03-545 8957; 8 Church St; mains \$14-21; ☎ 10am-1am Sun-Tue, to 3am Wed-Sat) From its ecofriendly ethos to sunny courtyard, well-priced meals and smooth tunes, Stingray embodies Nelson's upbeat mood. Drop by any time for relaxed vibes and to snaffle a pizza or salad. Later on, settle in with a cocktail and some live acoustic twanging or DJ.

QUICK EATS

Pinguino Ice Cream Café (Map p462; ☎ 03-545 6450; Montgomery Sq; items \$2-5; ☎ 11am-5pm) Queuing for Pinguino's superb gelato and sorbet, made daily on the premises, is a Nelson ritual. The boysenberry sorbet is a medal winner.

Tozzetti Panetteria (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 8484; 41 Halifax St; items \$3-6; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat; ☎) You'll smell fresh bread baking before you see Tozzetti, a pocket-sized bakery serving beautiful breads, sandwiches and sweet treats. The Jack Daniels and pecan tarts are awesome.

A couple of Bridge St options to calm a beery belly:

Sticky Fingers (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 8822; 135 Bridge St; items \$4-9; ☎ 5pm-late) Hole in the wall pumping out burgers, toasted sandwiches, and chicken and chips.

Akbabas (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 8825; 130 Bridge St; kebabs \$8-10; ☎ 11am-late) Tiny Turkish kebab house where hyperactive staff in natty head scarves build a better tomorrow for late-night drinkers.

SELF-CATERING

Organic Greengrocer (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 3650; cnr Tasman & Grove Sts; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat; ☎) This large organic food store stocks all things sans wheat/meat/dairy/gluten, plus organic wines and beers and herbal cosmetics.

For self-caterers:

New World Supermarket (Map p459; ☎ 03-548 9111; cnr Vanguard & Gloucester Sts; ☎ 9am-9pm)

Woolworths Supermarket (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 6466; cnr Paruparu Rd & Halifax St; ☎ 7am-10pm)

Drinking

Maen Fiddler (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 8516; 145 Bridge St; ☎ 4pm-late Tue-Sat) A traditionally Irish bar, but not nauseatingly so with leprechauns and shamrocks everywhere (retro record sleeves and an antique motorbike instead). Live music

nightly, plus an amazing range of whiskies, local and imported beers. Maen hangovers...

House of Ales (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 4220; 296 Trafalgar St; ☎ 10am-late) 'Purveyors of fine ale and good times' – readers recommend this boozy bar, serving quality beers and pub meals with a meaty bent. Tuesday night trivia, summer jazz, and window seats perfect for people watching.

Victorian Rose (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 7631; 281 Trafalgar St; ☎ 11am-late) Backpackers (and locals) often launch the night with a meal (mains \$12 to \$27) and a few handles at this stylish pub inside an old downtown council building. Enjoy live jazz-groove tunes Tuesday to Saturday.

Shark Club (Map p462; ☎ 03-546 6630; 132-136 Bridge St; ☎ noon-late) Hankering to shoot some stick with the fiercest white pointers around? Head to this pubby pool hall with free pool from 5pm to 7pm, drinks deals for backpackers, pool comps, jukebox and bar snacks (nachos, wedges etc).

Entertainment

Phat Club (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 3311; www.phatclub.co.nz; 137 Bridge St; admission from \$10; ☎ 10pm-late Wed-Sat) DJs at this righteous club spin techno, dub, drum 'n' bass, breaks and hip-hop, and big-name international and national bands (Katchafire, Fur Patrol) frequently grace the stage.

State Cinema 6 (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 8123; www.statecinema6.co.nz; 91 Trafalgar St; adult/child/concession \$13/7.50/9.50; ☎ 10am-midnight) is the place to see mainstream, new-release flicks.

The theatre at The Suter (p460) often hosts drama, music and dance.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air New Zealand (Map p462; ☎ 0800 737 000, 03-546 3100; www.airnz.co.nz; cnr Trafalgar & Bridge Sts; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) has direct flights to/from Wellington (from \$69, 11 daily), Auckland (from \$99, 10 daily), Christchurch (from \$79, eight daily), and New Plymouth (from \$122, three weekly).

Soundsair (☎ 0800 505 005, 03-520 3080; www.soundsair.com) flies daily between Nelson and Wellington (\$75 to \$95).

BUS

See p479 for services to/from Abel Tasman National Park. Note that many operators run reduced timetables from May to September.

Abel Tasman Coachlines (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 0285; www.abeltasmantour.co.nz; 27 Bridge St) operates services to Motueka (\$12, one hour, four daily), Takaka (\$30, two hours, two daily), Kaiteriteri (\$18, two hours, one daily) and Marahau (\$18, 1½ hours, two daily). In summer buses also run to Tōtaranui and the Heaphy Track (\$50).

InterCity (Map p462; ☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.coach.co.nz; 27 Bridge St) runs daily to Picton (\$32, 2½ hours, one or two daily), Christchurch (\$69, seven hours, one daily) and Greymouth (\$75, six hours, one daily) via Murchison and Westport, with onward connections to Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers.

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) runs from Picton to Nelson (\$22, 2¼ hours, one daily) continuing from Nelson to West Coast centres like Greymouth (\$50, seven hours, one daily) and Fox Glacier (\$75, 10¼ hours, one daily). Services depart Nelson i-SITE.

Naked Bus (☎ 0900 625 33; www.nakedbus.com) South Island destinations ex-Nelson include Blenheim (from \$11, 1¼ hours, four daily), Motueka (\$11, one hour, two daily) and Westport (\$29, four hours, one daily). Buses depart the i-SITE. Book online or at the i-SITE; cheaper fares for advance bookings.

Southern Link KBUS (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkkbus.co.nz) runs from Nelson i-SITE to:

| Destination | Price | Duration | Frequency |
|--------------|-------|----------|-----------|
| Christchurch | \$52 | 7hr | 2 daily |
| Greymouth | \$51 | 5hr | 1 daily |
| Kaikoura | \$38 | 5hr | 2 daily |
| Motueka | \$12 | 1hr | 2 daily |
| Picton | \$24 | 2hr | 2 daily |
| St Arnaud | \$26 | 1hr | 1 daily |
| Takaka | \$28 | 2½hr | 1 daily |
| Westport | \$41 | 4hr | 1 daily |

Call to arrange connections to the Heaphy Track, Collingwood, Tōtaranui and Marahau.

Getting Around TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

A taxi to the airport costs about \$17, or **Super Shuttle** (☎ 0800 748 885, 03-522 5100; www.supershuttle.co.nz; 1/2 passengers \$15/18; ☎ 24hr) offers door-to-door service to/from Nelson Airport, 6km southwest of town. It's cheaper if two or more passengers are travelling to the same destination.

BICYCLE

Hire a bike from **Stewarts Avanti Plus Nelson** (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 1666; www.stewartscyclecity.com; 114 Hardy St; hire per day \$35-95, per week from \$140; 🕒 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). City and mountain bikes, plus touring bikes, repairs and equipment.

BUS

The **Double Decker Experience** (Map p462; ☎ 03-548 3290; 27 Bridge St; circuit adult/child/family \$7.50/5/20; 🕒 11am & 1pm Sun-Thu) is a handy way to get around and see the sights too. The bus departs the Suburban Bus Lines/InterCity depot twice daily and loops in and around Nelson, passing (among other sights) Founders Park, Isel Park, the World of WearableArt Museum, Tahunanui Beach and Nelson's waterfront. Stay onboard for an entire circuit, or get off at an attraction on the morning loop, then jump back on the afternoon service.

Nelson Suburban Bus Lines (SBL; Map p462; ☎ 03-548 3290; www.nelsoncoaches.co.nz; 27 Bridge St; adult \$3.20) operates local services from Nelson to Richmond via Tahunanui and Stoke until about 6pm weekdays, 4.30pm on weekends. It also runs the **Late Late Bus** (tickets \$3; 🕒 hourly 10pm-3am Fri & Sat) from Nelson to Richmond via Tahunanui, departing the Westpac Bank on Trafalgar St.

Departing Wakatu Sq, the **Bus** (Map p462; ☎ 03-539 4107; www.leisuretravelnz.com; tickets adult \$2) runs roughly hourly from 7am to 5pm on four routes to outlying areas (including Tahunanui).

TAXI

Nelson City Taxis (☎ 0800 108 855, 03-548 8225)
Sun City Taxis (☎ 0800 422 666, 03-548 2666)

NELSON LAKES NATIONAL PARK

Pristine Nelson Lakes National Park surrounds two mirrorlike glacial lakes – Rotoiti and Rotoroa – fringed by beech forest and flax with a backdrop of forested mountains. There's an unexpected hint of Fiordland about the place, minus the crowds – an unusual sense that you're well off the tourist trail!

Part of the park, east of Lake Rotoiti, is classed as a 'mainland island', and is part of an aggressive conservation scheme to eradicate introduced pests (possums, stoats), and regenerate native flora and fauna. There's excellent tramping, including short walks, lake scenery and also winter skiing at Rainbow ski field (p91). The park is flush with bird life, and is famous for brown-trout fishing.

Orientation & Information

To get here take SH6 south from Nelson towards Murchison, or SH65 southwest from Blenheim; it's about a 1¼-hour drive either way. The park itself is accessible from both Lake Rotoiti and Lake Rotoroa. The main town is diminutive St Arnaud near Lake Rotoiti. Lake Rotoroa, 11km off the highway, sees far fewer visitors (mainly trampers and fisherfolk), although there is some accommodation down this way.

The **DOC visitors centre** (☎ 03-521 1806; www.doc.govt.nz; View Rd, St Arnaud; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm) provides park information (weather, activities, hut tickets) plus displays on park ecology and Maori history. See also www.nelsonlakesnationalpark.co.nz.

Activities

Part of the 80km **Travers-Sabine Circuit**, a wild three-day tramp from St Arnaud takes you south along the eastern shore of Lake Rotoiti to Lake Head Hut, across the Travers River and up the Cascade Track to Angelus Hut on beautiful alpine Lake Angelus. The trip back to St Arnaud traverses Robert Ridge. The track descends steeply to the Mt Robert car park, from where it's a 7km road walk back to St Arnaud.

Other walks at Rotoiti, most starting from the car park and camping area at Kerr Bay, include the **Bellbird Walk** (15 minutes), **Honeydew Walk** (45 minutes), **Peninsula Nature Walk** (1½ hours), **Black Hill Walk** (1½ hours), **Loop Track** (1½ hours), **St Arnaud Range Track** (five hours) and **Lake Circuit** (seven hours).

Short walks around Lake Rotoroa include the botanists' delight **Short Loop Track** (25 minutes); medium-length walks include the **Porika Lookout Track** (one to three hours return) at the northern end of the lake, and **Braeburn Walk** (two hours return) on the western side. The arduous track along the eastern shore of the lake connects with the Travers-Sabine and Speargrass Tracks to Lake Rotoiti.

Before tackling any walks, stop by the DOC visitors centre for brochures, maps, and track and weather updates.

Sleeping

Yellow House (☎ 03-521 1887; www.nelsonlakes.co.nz; Main Rd, St Arnaud; unpowered sites \$26, dm/d \$26/59; 📍) Yep, it's yellow, the theory being that yellow stimulates ideas, promotes clear thinking and gives energy. We can neither

confirm nor deny any of these outcomes, but it sure is an upbeat place to stay. You can hire tramping equipment and snowshoes from the helpful owners, who have extensive, all-season tramping experience.

Nelson Lakes Motels (☎ 03-521 1887; www.nelsonlakes.co.nz; Main Rd, St Arnaud; d \$99-129; 📍) Next door to the Yellow House (and run by the same people) are these log-cabin motel rooms, oozing rustic charm. But you won't be roughing it here – the cabins have all the creature comforts, including kitchenettes, Sky TV and wood heaters. Bigger units sleep four.

Tophouse (☎ 0800 967 468, 03-521 1848; www.tophouse.co.nz; 38 Tophouse Rd; d with shared bathroom incl breakfast \$120, cottage d \$110; 📍) Perched on a 700m-high hill, 9km from St Arnaud off the Blenheim road, the Tophouse dates from 1887 when it was built as a highway inn. Now it's a quaint B&B with open fireplaces, colourful (murderous!) history and a superb St Arnaud Range outlook. As well as rooms in the historic house, there are a handful of self-contained two-bedroom units in the adjacent paddock. The owners also serve delicious all-day Devonshire teas (\$6) to anyone who happens by; dinner for guests is \$35.

Alpine Lodge (☎ 03-521 1869; www.alpinelodge.co.nz; Main Rd, St Arnaud; d \$135-160; 📍) Generously sized rooms and apartments in a lodge that tries its darnedest to create an alpine mood. There's a range of accommodation, the pick of which are the split-level doubles with mezzanine bedroom, spa and pine panelling aplenty. There's a budget chalet (dorm/double \$23/61) here too; it's a fairly spartan affair and linen costs an extra \$5, but it's clean and warm when the rain is on the roof.

There are decent **DOC campsites** (☎ 03-521 1806; unpowered/power sites Oct-May \$20/24, Jun-Sep \$14/16) on the shores of Lake Rotoiti at West Bay and Kerr Bay (the former is open in summer only). Sites have toilets, hot showers (summer only) and a kitchen. Bookings essential for the peak season (December to February).

Eating

St Arnaud Alpine Village Store (☎ 03-521 1854; Main Rd, St Arnaud; meals \$5-12; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun) A general store selling fish and chips, pies and the like, plus groceries, petrol and local beer and wine. Mountain bike hire per half-/full day is \$30/50.

Elaine's Alpine Cafe (☎ 03-521 1979; Main Rd, St Arnaud; mains \$9-14; 🕒 10am-8pm) Below the Alpine Lodge's budget chalet, this is a toasty spot to

warm up over soup, sandwiches, an all-day bacon fry-up or maybe a burger and Nelson-brewed Lighthouse Lager.

Alpine Lodge (☎ 03-521 1869; Main St, St Arnaud; mains \$20-26; 🕒 8-10am, noon-2pm & 5-9pm) This place gets the lion's share of St Arnaud's dinner trade, with a snug bar serving casual, meaty meals to a jukebox and clattering pool-ball soundtrack. There's a separate breakfast room too.

Getting There & Around

Southern Link KBus (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkkbus.co.nz) passes through St Arnaud on its Greymouth to Nelson to Picton run, which operates four times a week in winter, daily from November to April; reservations essential. Fares to/from St Arnaud include Greymouth (\$31, 4¼ hours), Nelson (\$26, 1¼ hours) and Picton (\$41, three hours).

Nelson Lakes Shuttles (☎ 03-521 1900; www.nelsonlakeshuttles.co.nz) provides on-demand transport from St Arnaud to Mt Robert car park (per person \$10), Lake Rotoroa (per person \$25), Murchison (per person \$30) and further afield, including services to Nelson (\$15), Picton (\$20) and the Heaphy Track (\$30). There's a minimum charge for longer trips, but the website lists 'budget fares' on prebooked shuttles.

Rotoroa Water Taxi (☎ 03-523 9199; simpson.rotoroa@xtra.co.nz) runs from Lake Rotoroa Jetty to/from Sabine Jetty and D'Urville Jetty (\$120, up to three people). **Rotoiti Water Taxis** (☎ 03-521 1894, 021 702 278; watertaxi@clear.net.nz) runs to/from Kerr Bay and West Bay to Lakehead Jetty (\$60, up to four people) and Coldwater Jetty (\$80, up to four people). Management also offers kayak, canoe and row-boat hire from \$60 per half-day, and can arrange fishing trips and scenic lake cruises.

NELSON TO MOTUEKA

From Richmond, south of Nelson, SH60 heads northwest to Motueka. This stretch of Tasman Bay teems with local holidaymakers: there's plenty of accommodation, art-and-craft activity, vineyards, fishing and swimming to keep you off the streets. The area is also flap-happy with bird life, particularly Arctic migrant waders.

**Sights & Activities
WINERIES & CRAFTS**

The Nelson region has a burgeoning wine-making industry, and although it can't challenge Marlborough's marketing juggernaut,

there are enough quality wineries here to keep you busy (20-plus at last count). **Nelson Wineart** (www.wineart.co.nz) lists wineries; Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are the grapes of choice/wrath. See p463 for wine tours departing Nelson, or tackle the vineyards via a loop from Nelson through Richmond to Motueka, following the SH60 coast road in one direction and the inland Moutere Hwy in the other. Wineries are open for tastings and sales; several have cafés and restaurants. There are loads of craft outlets along these routes too; for details pick up the *Nelson's Creative Pathways* brochure from the Nelson i-SITE, local galleries and wineries.

A worthy stop on the wine route is the **Grape Escape** (☎ 03-544 4341; www.grapeescape.co.nz; cnr SH60 & McShane Rd, Richmond; ☎ 10am-4.30pm), a complex housing two wineries – Richmond Plains (organic wine) and Te Mānia – plus a café-bar, liqueur distillery, kids' playground, craft shops and a paddock of curious alpacas.

A few of our fave local wineries: **Neudorf Vineyards** (☎ 03-543 2643; www.neudorf.co.nz; Neudorf Rd, Upper Moutere; tastings free for purchasers; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Sep-May) Moss-covered barnlike complex; good Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. **Seiffred Estate** (☎ 03-544 1555; www.seiffred.co.nz; cnr SH60 & Redwood Rd; tastings free for purchasers; ☎ 10am-5pm) One of the region's biggest wineries, at the turn-off to Rabbit Island, and home to an excellent restaurant. **Waimea Estates Winery** (☎ 03-544 4963; www.waimeaestates.co.nz; SH60, Richmond; tastings free for purchasers; ☎ 11am-5pm) Jazzy café and tables by the vines.

OTHER SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

About 10km west of Richmond is the turn-off to **Rabbit Island**, a recreation reserve boasting unspoilt swimming beaches and pine forests. We didn't see any rabbits when we visited, but plenty of boaters, whitebaiters, walkers, horse-riders and sunbathers. The bridge to the island closes at sunset; overnight stays are not allowed.

Further along, the picturesque Waimea Inlet and the twin villages of **Mapua** and **Ruby Bay** sit at the mouth of the Waimea River, one of NZ's biggest estuaries and a haven for bird life. Clustered around Mapua's town wharf are art-and-craft outlets, top-notch cafés, restaurants and a small aquarium, **Touch the Sea** (☎ 03-540 3557; www.seatouchaquarium.co.nz; Mapua Wharf; adult/child/family \$7.50/4.50/16; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm). Anything you can reach in the tanks you can touch!

Mapua Adventures (☎ 03-540 3833; www.mapuaadventures.co.nz; Mapua Wharf; tours from \$59; ☎ Oct-Apr) offers affordable boat-based bird-watching tours around the Waimea estuary and Rabbit Island. Keep an eye out for the Royal Spoonbill and the much-migrating Eastern bar-tailed godwit.

Sleeping & Eating

Consult staff at Nelson or Motueka i-SITES for a host of out-of-the-way homestays, cottages and B&Bs in the area.

Mapua Leisure Park (☎ 03-540 2666; www.mapualeisurepark.co.nz; 33 Toru St, Mapua; unpowered/powerd sites \$30/32, cabins \$70-85, motels \$115-135; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is 'NZ's only clothes-optional leisure park'. But don't let that put you off – you don't have to nude-up, and the nekkid option is only available from February to March. Location and facilities are superb: tennis and volleyball courts, kayak hire, pool, sauna, spa and a waterfront café.

Clayridge House (☎ 03-540 2548; www.clayridge.co.nz; 77 Pinehill Rd, Ruby Bay; B&B s/d \$180/250, cottage d \$180, extra person \$25; ☎ ☎) On a property high above Ruby Bay with sea views across Tasman Bay to Nelson, surrounded by orchards and vineyards, this is the perfect place to unwind. There's a choice of B&B guest rooms or modern two-bedroom, self-contained cottages (two-night minimum stay for the cottages).

Shed One (☎ 03-540 2028; Mapua Wharf; mains \$12-25; ☎ 10.30am-late Tue-Sun) Casual dining in a big orange shed, just along from the Smokehouse (following). Expect steaks, salads, pastas and seafood (scallops and West Coast whitebait patties a speciality). Retro-mod interior with polished plywood floors.

Smokehouse (☎ 03-540 2280; www.smokehouse.co.nz; Mapua Wharf; mains \$15-29; ☎ 8.30am-8pm) Hamish the white heron surveys proceedings at this water's-edge eatery, which serves delicious wood-smoked fish and a bevy of super seafood dishes (and nonfishy food too, including smoked veggies). Pull up a pew outside and feast on fish and chips – yes, you're on holiday!

MOTUEKA

pop 6900

The *loong*, gun-barrel-straight main street of Motueka (pronounced Mott-oo-ecka, meaning 'Island of Wekas') is itself unremarkable, but the town makes a handy pit stop en route to Golden Bay and the Abel

Tasman and Kahurangi National Parks – in summer it's a busy place. There's a free-wheeling community of craftspeople in the hills around here, and the town has pubs, banks, supermarkets and some excellent cafés. Motueka is also the heart of a green-tea, hops and fruit-growing area; apples, grapes and kiwifruit are harvested from March to June. Pick up a bag of a dozen kiwifruit by the roadside for \$1!

Information

Cyberworld (☎ 03-528 8090; 178 High St; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9.45am-9pm Sat & Sun) Internet access.

Motueka i-SITE (☎ 03-528 6543; www.motuekaisite.co.nz; 20 Wallace St; ☎ 8.30m-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) Excellent resource, with extremely helpful

staff able to book Abel Tasman hut passes, tours and kayaks. Open later in summer.

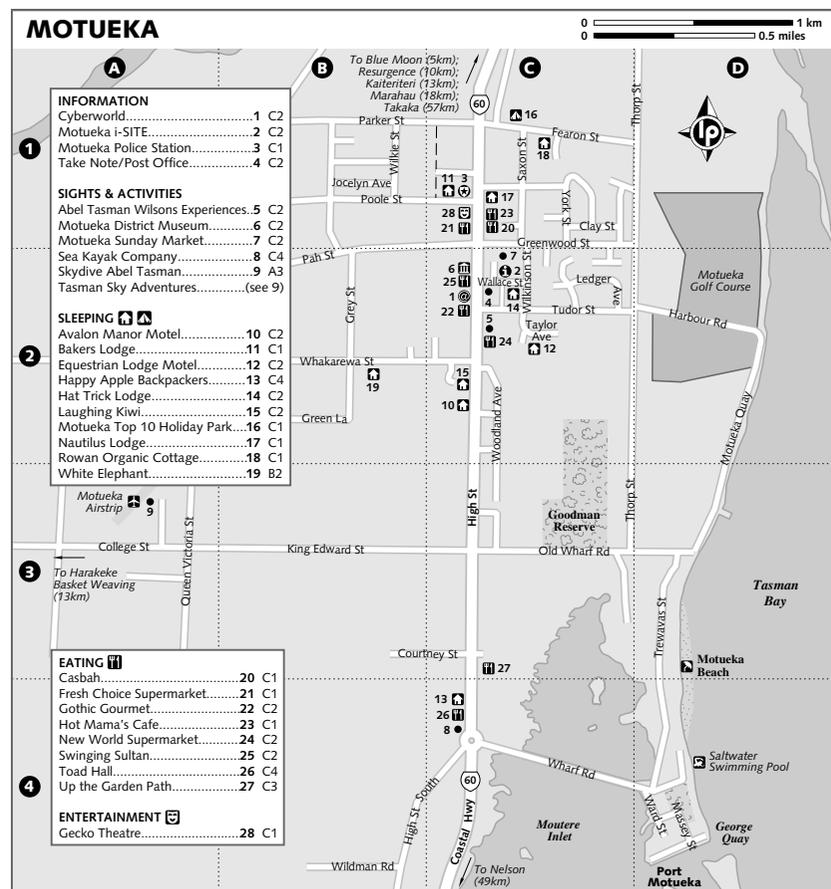
Motueka Police Station (☎ 03-528 1220; 68 High St; ☎ 24hr)

Take Note/post office (☎ 03-528 6600; 207 High St; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Bookshop moonlighting as a post office.

Sights & Activities

Inside the 1913 Motueka District High School building is the **Motueka District Museum** (☎ 03-528 7660; savepast@ihug.co.nz; 140 High St; adult/child \$2/50; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat, closed Mon in winter), with displays re-creating the region's colonial past. There's a cool café on site too.

Take in eye-popping views on the way up (and pant-wetting views on the way down)



on a tandem skydive with **Skydive Abel Tasman** (☎ 0800 422 899, 03-528 4091; www.skydive.co.nz; Motueka Airstrip, 16 College St; jumps 12,000ft/13,000ft \$269/289). Prices include instruction and a certificate (DVDs and photos to show your mum cost extra); free pick-up/drop off from Motueka and Nelson.

Rather soar than plummet? **Tasman Sky Adventures** (☎ 0800 114 386; www.skyadventures.co.nz; Motueka Airstrip, 16 College St; flights 2500ft/5280ft \$185/275) will take you on a 15 to 30 minute tandem hang-glide, or a 35-minute scenic microlight flight above Abel Tasman National Park (\$155).

Motueka River Kayaks (☎ 03-528 6222; www.riverkayak.co.nz; kayaking adult/child \$95/50) runs journeys in inflatable kayaks on the Motueka River. Four-hour trips involve 2½ hours on the river, sightseeing, swimming and navigating rapids, and can be geared for families. Free Motueka pick-up/drop off.

Or you could do a full-day **Harakeke Basket Weaving** (☎ 03-526 8784; www.creativetourism.co.nz/workshops_maori_flax.html; Greenhill Rd, Ngatimoti; workshop \$90; ☎ 10am-4pm Wed & Thu) workshop with a Maori expert at Ngatimoti, 15km southwest of Motueka. Learn about *tikanga* (native customs) and *kaitiakitanga* (protection and guardianship). Book in advance; pick-up/drop off available.

On Sunday the car park behind the i-SITE fills up with trestle tables for the **Motueka Sunday Market** (☎ 03-540 2709; Wallace St; ☎ 8am-1pm Sun): food, produce, jewellery, buskers, arts and crafts.

Sleeping BUDGET

Laughing Kiwi (☎ 03-528 9229; www.laughingkiwi.co.nz; 310 High St; dm \$22-24, d with/without bathroom \$62/54; ☎ ☎) Laugh yourself silly at this hostel, which is split into two buildings: a rambling old house and a mod, purpose-built bunkhouse. The new section is probably a better bet, with huge lounge, island kitchen bench and spotless bathrooms, plus walls covered with photos of the owners' travels. Abel Tasman track bookings; free spa.

Bakers Lodge (☎ 03-528 0102; www.bakerslodge.co.nz; 4 Poole St; dm \$23-28, d with/without bathroom \$66/56, f with/without bathroom \$110/100; ☎ ☎) A roomy YHA in a remodelled bakery. Ceilings are tall, facilities are immaculate, and there are plenty of common areas, including a massive kitchen and barbecue terrace. A couple

of cats roam the halls, and the manager (a personal trainer) will whip you into shape in the gym.

Motueka Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 668 835, 03-528 7189; www.motuekatop10.co.nz; 10 Fearon St; unpowered & powered sites \$34, cabins \$45-103, units & motels \$99-145; ☎ ☎ ☎) Busy, amenity-packed park at the northern end of town. Grassy campsites are peppered with native trees, or there are plenty of options if you'd rather a roof over your head. Prices take a tumble either side of December and January.

More quality hostels:

White Elephant (☎ 03-528 6208; www.whiteelephant.co.nz; 55 Whakarewa St; dm \$22-24, d with/without bathroom \$70/50; ☎ ☎) Dorms in a gorgeous, high-ceilinged colonial villa (it's white, but hardly a white elephant), plus newer en suite cabins out the back if you're feeling a bit 'trailer-trash.'

Happy Apple Backpackers (☎ 03-528 8652; www.happyapplebackpackers.co.nz; 500 High St; dm/s/tw/d \$23/35/52/56; ☎ ☎) Big blue bungalow with a cavernous lounge and 42 beds, often full of slumbering apple-pickers. Closed June to September.

MIDRANGE

Numerous midrange B&Bs, retreats and cottages are salted through the surrounding hills – ask the i-SITE for suggestions.

Avalon Manor Motel (☎ 0800 282 566, 03-528 8320; www.avalonmotels.co.nz; 314 High St; d \$125-225; ☎) Prominent L-shaped motel on the highway heading into town from Nelson. Massive four-star rooms have a contemporary vibe, with cooking facilities, Sky TV, free videos and DVDs. Sumptuous studios have king-size beds and huge flat-screen TVs. There's also a garden and guest barbecue.

Equestrian Lodge Motel (☎ 0800 668 782, 03-528 9369; www.equestrianlodge.co.nz; Taylor Ave, off Tudor St; d/q \$130/180; ☎ ☎) Quit horsing around and check into this peaceful family-friendly option off the main drag. Clean, well-appointed rooms face onto manicured gardens, complete with heated pool, spa and children's play area.

Nautilus Lodge (☎ 0800 628 845, 03-528 4658; www.nautiluslodge.co.nz; 67 High St; d \$135-195; ☎ ☎) Probably the best motel north of Christchurch, with 12 high-class units behind rippling adobe walls. Rooms feature subtle wall colours, European slatted beds, beautiful bathrooms, wireless internet access, flat-screen TVs and plush linen. Good off-season rates; spas and kitchenettes in bigger units.

Also recommended:

Rowan Organic Cottage (☎ 03-528 6492; www.rowancottage.net; 27 Fearon St; d incl breakfast \$110-150; ☎) Chomp into an organic breakfast in one of two private rooms – choose the studio with outdoor deck and spa. Cheaper sans breakfast.

Blue Moon (☎ 03-528 6996; www.thebluemoon.co.nz; 57 School Rd, Riwaka; s/d incl continental breakfast from \$90/140; ☎) Private, self-contained unit behind a ramshackle cottage, encircled by berry fields. Sunken bath in the garden. It's 5km north of the centre.

TOP END

Resurgence (☎ 03-528 4664; www.resurgence.co.nz; Riwaka Valley Rd, Riwaka; d incl breakfast \$325-445; ☎ ☎) Choose a luxurious en suite lodge room or self-contained chalet at this magical 50-acre bushland retreat 15 minutes' drive north of Motueka. Lodge rates include cocktails and a four-course dinner as well as breakfast, or you can fire up the BBQ if you're staying in one of the chalets. The owners lay awake at night thinking up ways to make the place even more sustainable.

Eating & Drinking

Swinging Sultan (☎ 03-528 8909; 172 High St; kebabs under \$10; ☎ 8am-1am Dec-Feb, to 9pm Mar-Nov; ☎) Chunky chicken, falafel and beef kebabs from early until late at this hard-working nook. Coffees to go, blaring techno and a bit of banter with the boss.

ourpick! Hot Mama's Cafe (☎ 03-528 7039; 105 High St; lunch \$10-15, dinner \$12-22; ☎ 9am-10pm Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat) This breezy, open-fronted food room is the funkiest café in town, and the best spot to down a few local lagers to boot. Repair last night's damage with a Hangover Brekkie (eggs, bacon, spicy sausage etc), or close out the day with a Hardcore Prawn or Bombay Chicken pizza before adjourning to the bar, hip lounge area or balmy courtyard. Plenty of laughter; excellent wine list; live bands, jam nights and DJs on summer weekends.

Up the Garden Path (☎ 03-528 9588; 473 High St; meals \$13-30; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sun; ☎) Perfect for lunch or a peppy coffee, this licensed café-gallery kicks back in an 1890s house amid idyllic gardens. Unleash the kids in the playroom and linger over your warm Moroccan chicken salad, Tasman Bay scallops, whitebait patties and glass of wine. Vegetarian, gluten- and dairy-free options too.

Gothic Gourmet (☎ 03-528 6699; 208 High St; lunch \$13-20, dinner \$20-32; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5.30-9pm Tue-Sun) Stone-grilled meats (with your sauce of choice)

are the speciality at this once-was-church, now a moody, elegant restaurant. The eye fillet stuffed with scallops would get a choir singing; the fish and chips and jumbo burgers are worship-worthy. Outdoor tables off the apse.

Casbah (☎ 03-528 6971; 103 High St; mains \$14-23; ☎ 8am-late; ☎) A relative newcomer making culinary inroads on Motueka's menu map, serving trad Algerian and Moroccan fare. Couscous, *tajines* and *brochettes* (Algerian shish kebabs) are the main options, plus salad, soup and fresh seafood entrees. Complimentary bread, olives and hummus.

For self-caterers:

Fresh Choice Supermarket (☎ 03-528 0500; 108 High St; ☎ 7am-9pm)

New World Supermarket (☎ 03-528 6245; 271 High St; ☎ 8am-8.30pm)

Toad Hall (☎ 03-528 6456; 502 High St; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) Locally grown fruit, organic veggies, frozen yoghurt and ice cream.

Entertainment

Gecko Theatre (☎ 03-528 4272; www.geckotheatre.co.nz; 78 High St; adult/child \$12/7; ☎ 5pm-midnight) When the weather closes in, check out this wee, no-frills theatre for interesting art-house flicks. Cheap Monday tickets \$8.

Getting There & Away

All services depart Motueka i-SITE. See p479 for transport to/from the Abel Tasman Coast Track.

Abel Tasman Coachlines (☎ 03-528 8850; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) runs between Motueka and Nelson (\$12, one hour, up to five daily), Marahau (\$9, 30 minutes, three or four daily), Kaiteriteri (\$9, 25 minutes, three or four daily) and Takaka (\$21, one hour, two daily). Services run less frequently from May to September. From October to April there are daily services from Motueka to Totaranui and the Heaphy Track.

Golden Bay Coachlines (☎ 03-525 8352; www.goldenbaycoachlines.co.nz) buses depart Motueka for Takaka (\$19, one hour, two daily) and Collingwood (\$34, 1½ hours, one daily). Heaphy Track and Totaranui connections on request.

Southern Link KBUS (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkbus.co.nz) has buses to Takaka (\$19, one hour, two daily) and Nelson (\$12, one hour, two daily). Call to book buses to Kaiteriteri, Marahau, the Heaphy Track and Collingwood.

Naked Bus (☎ 0900 625 33; www.nakedbus.com) runs from Motueka to Nelson (from \$8, one hour, one daily). Book online or at the i-SITE; cheaper fares for advance bookings.

MOTUEKA TO ABEL TASMAN KAITERITERI

Known simply as 'Kaiteri' to locals, this tiny hamlet 13km from Motueka on a sealed road (continuing to Marahau), is the most popular resort town in the area. On a sunny summer's day, Kaiteri's gorgeous, golden, safe-swimming beach feels more like Noumea than NZ, with more towels than sand. The tourist-driven economy has boomed over the last decade. Kaiteri, it seems, was *the* place to invest in real estate, which these days will set you back millions.

Several Abel Tasman National Park kayak trips and cruises depart Kaiteriteri beach, though Marahau is the main base.

SLEEPING & EATING

Kaiteriteri Beach Motor Camp (☎ 03-527 8010; www.kaiteriteribeach.co.nz; Sandy Bay Rd; unpowered & powered sites \$24, cabins \$33-60; (P) (Q)) Gargantuan 430-site park in pole position across from the beach. It's hugely popular (make your summer bookings in winter), but it's large enough to cope, and there's an onsite general store. Showers cost a miserly 50c.

Torlesse Coastal Motels (☎ 03-527 8063; www.torlessemotels.co.nz; Kotare Pl, Little Kaiteriteri Beach; d \$130-180, q & f \$195-300; (P)) Just 200m from Little Kaiteriteri Beach (around the corner from the main beach) is this congregation of roomy hillside units with kitchens and laundries. The two-bedroom units have lofty ceilings; most have water views.

Kaiteri Lodge (☎ 03-527 8281; www.kaiterilodge.co.nz; Inlet Rd; dm \$35-40, d \$140, f \$260; (P) (Q)) Modern, purpose-built lodge with small, simple rooms – mainly en suite doubles. A nautical navy-and-white colour scheme has been splashed throughout; communal facilities (kitchen, laundry, barbecue, bike hire) are excellent. Cheaper winter rates.

Bellbird Lodge (☎ 03-527 8555; www.bellbirdlodge.com; Sandy Bay Rd; d incl breakfast \$180-275; (P) (Q)) An upmarket B&B 1.5km up the hill from Kaiteri Beach, offering bush and sea views, extensive gardens, fluffy towels, spectacular breakfasts (croissants, French toast, poached pears etc) and gracious hosts. Dinner by arrangement in winter, when local restaurant hours are erratic.

Shoreline (☎ 03-527 8507; cnr Inlet & Sandy Bay Rds; lunch \$8-19, dinner \$17-30; (M) 8am-10.30pm) A spiffy, modern café-bar-restaurant right on the beach. Punters chill on the sunny deck, lingering over pizzas and local seafood and forgetting what they have to do at the office next week. Erratic winter hours; takeaway booth out the back.

Beached Whale (☎ 03-527 8114; Inlet Rd; dinner \$18-33; (M) 6-10pm) Adjacent to Kaiteri Lodge, Beached Whale is a casual, family-friendly affair serving palatable mains (wood-fired pizzas, steaks, fish and chips), with the lodge owner strumming a guitar most evenings. Closed May to September.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are regular bus connections to/from Kaiteriteri (see p473).

Marahau

Further along the coast from Kaiteriteri and 18km north of Motueka, Marahau is the main gateway to the Abel Tasman National Park. From here you can book water taxis, hire kayaks, swim with seals or wander off on foot into the park. Marahau itself doesn't really feel like a town – more like a loose affiliation of houses and businesses.

If you're in a nonnautical, equine state of mind, **Pegasus Park** (☎ 0800 200 888; www.pegasuspark.co.nz; Sandy Bay Rd; 2hr/kids' rides \$85/35) offers the chance to belt along the beach on a horse, your hair streaming out behind you.

SLEEPING & EATING

Barn (☎ 03-527 8043; Harvey Rd; unpowered sites \$13, dm \$25-26, tw & d \$62; (P) (Q)) Architecturally chaotic, this rustic, tranquil place surrounded by eucalypts offers tramping-style platform bunks, a bright home-spun kitchen and a friendly cat always looking for a lap. There's an all-girls dorm and a couple of attic doubles too.

Marahau Beach Camp (☎ 0800 808 018, 03-527 8176; www.abeltasmanmarahaucamp.co.nz; Franklin St; unpowered & powered sites \$25, dm/d/cabins \$20/45/60; (P) (Q)) An established camping ground on Marahau Beach with beds from backpacker dorms to serviceable cabins. Marahau Sea Kayaks (p478), Marahau Water Taxis (p479) and Abel Tasman Mountain Biking (p477) operate from the Abel Tasman Centre out the front; Hooked on Marahau (opposite) and the camp shop (groceries, beer and wine) are also here.

Old MacDonald's Farm (☎ 03-527 8288; www.oldmacs.co.nz; Harvey Rd; unpowered/power sites \$24/30, dm \$22-26, cabins & units \$80-140; (P) (Q)) Llamas, alpacas, deer, pigs and cows make themselves at home on this rambling 100-acre property, and don't seem bothered by visitors snoring in backpacker huts, cabins, campsites and self-contained units. There are swimming holes in the river, and bushwalks nearby. Ee-aye-ee-aye-oh.

Ocean View Chalets (☎ 03-527 8232; www.accommodationabeltasman.co.nz; Marahau Beach Rd; d/q from \$108/235; (P)) Well-priced cypress-lined chalets, 300m from the Abel Tasman Track with views across Tasman Bay to Fisherman Island. Positioned on a leafy hillside for maximum privacy, the chalets are self-contained, some with wheelchair access. Bike hire \$20 per day.

Abel Tasman Marahau Lodge (☎ 03-527 8250; www.abeltasmanmarahaulodge.co.nz; Marahau Beach Rd; d \$130-230; (P)) On the main waterfront road, Marahau Lodge maintains an arc of 12 immaculate studios and self-contained units. They're lovely rooms with pitched ceilings, fan, TV, phone and microwave; there's also a large communal kitchen for self-caterers, plus spa and sauna. Quails, tui and bellbirds warble in the bushes.

Park Café (☎ 03-527 8270; Harvey Rd; items \$9-14; (M) 8am-10pm mid-Sep-May; (V)) Near the start of the Abel Tasman Coast Track (pretty much right on it) and the park information kiosk, this breezy, licensed café is the ideal place to rest (or prime) your feet. Selections include seafood chowder, vegetarian lasagne, fish burgers, muffins, cakes and toasted veggie quesadillas. Wines by the glass or bottle; occasional live tunes.

Hooked on Marahau (☎ 03-527 8576; Franklin St; mains \$23-30; (M) 6pm-late Oct-May, from 8am Dec-Apr) This place has the locals hooked – dinner reservations are prudent. The art-bedecked interior (local stuff) opens onto an outdoor terrace with meal-distracting views. Dinner mains include fresh fish of the day, green-lipped mussels and NZ lamb, washed down with local wine or Mac's beer.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are regular bus connections to/from Marahau (see p479).

ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK

The accessible, coastal Abel Tasman National Park is NZ's most visited national park. The park blankets the northern end of a range of

marble and limestone hills extending from Kahurangi National Park; its interior is honeycombed with caves and potholes. There are various tracks in the park, including an inland route, although the Coast Track is what everyone is here for.

Abel Tasman Coast Track

This 51km, three- to five-day track is one of the most scenic in the country, passing through native bush overlooking golden beaches lapped by gleaming azure water. Numerous bays, small and large, are like a travel brochure come to life. Visitors can walk into the park, catch water taxis to beaches and resorts along the track, or kayak along the coast.

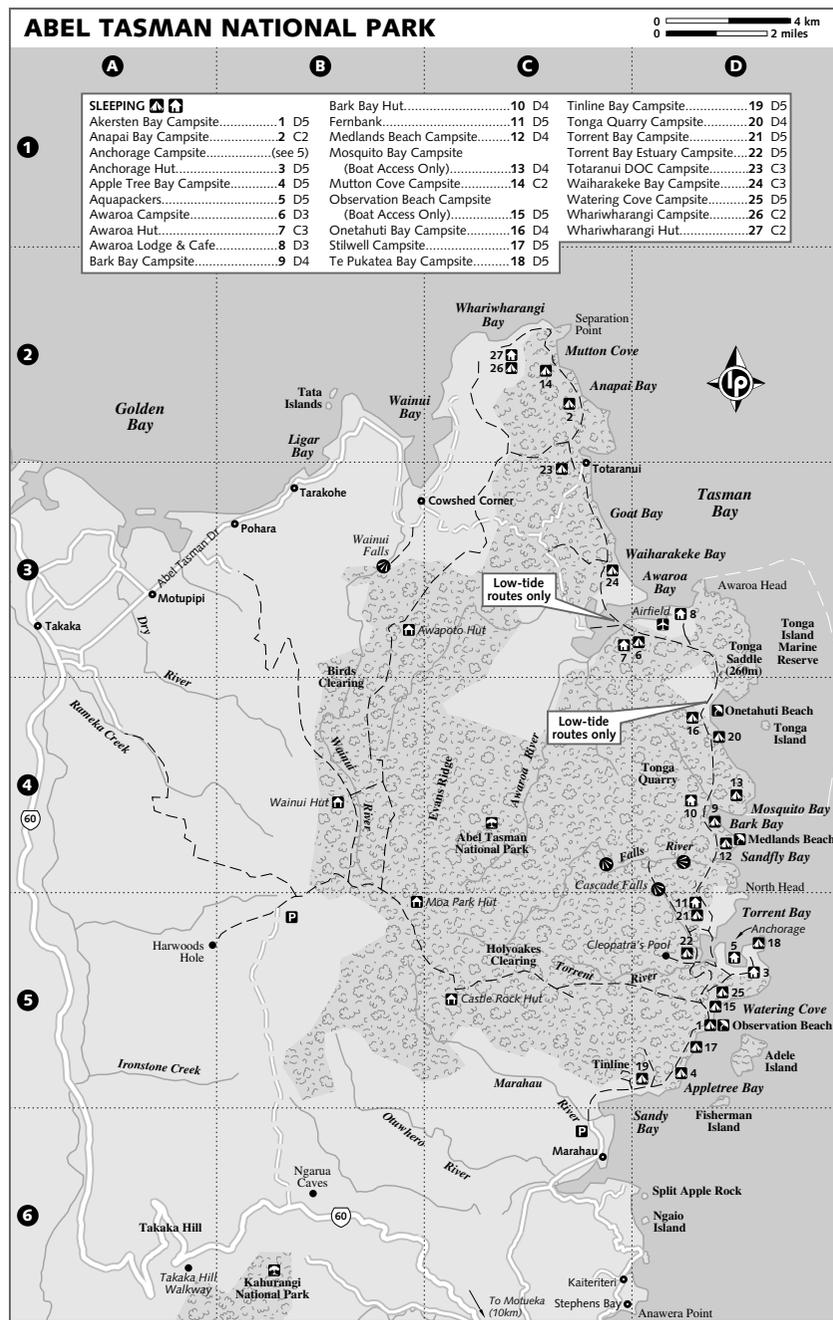
It's hard to believe, but the Coast Track was once little-known beyond the Nelson/Tasman region, but the trail has now been well and truly 'discovered'. In summer hundreds of trampers tackle the track at the same time (far more than can be accommodated in the huts – bring your tent). Track accommodation works on a booking system, similar to the Routeburn and Milford Tracks: huts and campsites must be prebooked year-round. There's no charge for day walks – if you're after a taster, the 2½ hour stretch from Torrent Bay to Bark Bay is as photogenic a stretch as any.

Between Bark Bay and Awaroa Head is an area classified as the **Tonga Island Marine Reserve** – home to a seal colony and visiting dolphins. Tonga Island itself is a small island offshore from Onetahuti Beach.

For a full description of the route, see Lonely Planet's *Tramping in New Zealand*.

INFORMATION

The track operates on a **Great Walks Pass** (per person sites/huts \$12/30 Oct-Apr, \$10/7 May-Sep) system. Children can now walk for free. The **Abel Tasman Coast Track Helpdesk** (☎ 03-546 8210; greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz) offers information and can make bookings. You can also book online (www.doc.govt.nz) or in person at the Nelson, Motueka and Takaka i-SITES, where staff can offer suggestions to tailor the track to your needs and organise transport at each end. Booking fees apply to all bookings other than those made online. Try to book your trip well ahead of time, especially if you're planning on staying in huts between December and March.



WALKING THE TRACK

The Abel Tasman area has crazy tides (up to 6m difference between low and high tide), which has an impact on walking. Two sections of the main track are tidal, with no high-tide track around them: Awaroa Estuary can only be crossed 1½ hours before and two hours after low tide, and the narrow channel at Onetahuti Beach must be crossed within three hours either side of low tide. The estuaries at Torrent and Bark Bay have tracks around them for use during high tide. Tide tables are posted along the track; advice can be obtained from regional i-SITES. Immune from the tides, many visitors kayak the track; see p478. Note that you can't pick up kayaks within the park, only at either end (Kaiteiteri and Marahau in the south; Pohara in the north).

Take additional food so you can stay longer should you have the inclination. Bays around all the huts are beautiful, but definitely bring lavish amounts of sandfly repellent and sunscreen.

Estimated walking times from south to north:

| Route | Time |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Marahau to Anchorage Hut | 4hr |
| Anchorage Hut to Bark Bay Hut | 3hr |
| Bark Bay Hut to Awaroa Hut | 4hr |
| Awaroa Hut to Totaranui | 1½hr |

Many walkers finish at Totaranui, the final stop for the boat services and bus pick-up point, but it is possible to keep walking around the headland to Whariwharangi Hut (three hours) and then on to Wainui (1½ hours), where buses service the car park.

TOURS

See p479 for information about water taxis to the park and p479 for info on flights into the park. Tour companies usually offer free Motueka pick-up/drop off, with Nelson pick-up available at extra cost:

Abel Tasman Mountain Biking (☎ 0800 808 018, 03-527 8176; www.abeltasmanmountainbiking.co.nz; Abel Tasman Centre, Franklin St, Marahau; half-/1-/2-day tours from \$145/110/200) A two-wheeled option for experiencing the area. Guided and unguided adventures can include kayaking and hiking.

Abel Tasman Sailing Adventures (☎ 0800 467 245, 03-527 8375; www.sailingadventures.co.nz; full day \$75-190, overnight from \$270) A range of well-priced sailing trips, plus yacht rentals and private skippered charters.

Two-and-a-half hours sailing plus a four-hour walk costs \$75; an overnight tour (land and sea) costs \$270.

Abel Tasman Seal Swim (☎ 0800 252 925, 03-527 8383; www.sealswim.com; Kaiteiteri Beach; 5hr seal swim adult/child \$149/110, seal walk \$70/50) Trips to the seal colony, departing Kaiteiteri. You can be dropped in the park and walk or kayak back post-seals, or take combined trip with Maori Uncut (below; \$259).

Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences (Map p471; ☎ 0800 221 888, 03-528 2027; www.abeltasmanz.com; 265 High St, Motueka; half-day cruise \$60, cruise & walk \$53-60, kayak & walk \$79-179) Impressive array of cruises, walks, kayak and combo tours. Luxurious beachfront lodges at Awaroa and Torrent Bay for guided-tour guests.

Maori Uncut (☎ 0800 252 925; www.maoriuncut.co.nz; Kaiteiteri Beach; half-/full-day tour \$110/185) One of South Island's best Maori cultural activities, under the watch of Tangaroa (God of the Sea) and Tane Mahuta (Lord of the Forest). Full-day tours involve hiking and kayaking; the half-day version visits a seal colony. You can also combine your trip with Abel Tasman Seal Swim (\$259).

Sleeping & Eating

At the southern edge of the park, Marahau is the main jumping-off point for the Abel Tasman National Park. From the northern end of the park, the nearest towns with accommodation are Pohara and Takaka. The whopping **Totaranui DOC Campsite** (☎ 03-528 8083; www.doc.govt.nz; unpowered sites adult/child \$12/6; P) is also in the north, 32km from Takaka on a narrow, winding road (12km of it unsealed). It's serviced by buses from October to April. Sites at Totaranui from December to mid-February are now allocated via ballot. Download a booking form from the DOC website, submit it to Takaka DOC (p480) between specified dates (usually the first week in July) and cross your fingers! No powered sites.

Along the Coast Track there are four huts: Anchorage (24 bunks), Bark Bay (34 bunks), Awaroa (22 bunks) and Whariwharangi (20 bunks), plus 21 designated campsites. None of these have cooking facilities – BYO stove. Some of the campsites have fireplaces but, again, you should carry cooking equipment. Hut and camp passes should be purchased before you enter the park (see p475). From Christmas Day to February, huts and campsites fill to the rafters (book with DOC).

Other sleeping options in the park, accessible on foot, by kayak or water taxi, but not by road, include:

Aquapackers (☎ 0800 430 744, 025 510 882; www.aquapackers.co.nz; dm/d \$60/175) The *MV Parore* (a former

PADDLING THE ABEL TASMAN

The Abel Tasman Coast Track has long been trampers' territory, but its main attractions – scenic beaches, isolated coves and rock formations – make it an equally seductive spot for sea kayaking.

Many travellers choose to kayak around at least part of the national park, cruising the safe, sheltered waters and calling in at those impossibly pretty beaches. You can easily combine kayaking, walking and camping. It needn't necessarily be a matter of hiring a kayak then looking after yourself from that point (although it is possible to do that) – a variety of professional outfits are able to float you out on the water, and the possibilities and permutations for guided or freedom trips are vast. You can kayak from half a day up to three days, camping or staying in DOC huts, upmarket lodges, even floating backpackers, either fully catered for or self-catering. You can kayak one day, camp overnight then walk back, or walk further into the park and catch a water taxi back.

Most sea-kayaking operators have plenty of experience, offering similar trips at similar prices. Marahau is the main base, but trips also depart Kaiteriteri. Some operators have their office in Motueka. Transport to the park from Motueka is usually free; some operators pick-up/drop off in Nelson (free, or around \$5). A popular choice if time is tight is a guided kayak trip to Anchorage, where you stay overnight, walk unguided to Onetahuti Beach and catch a water taxi back; it costs around \$165 plus camping/hut fees (\$12/30) or a night at Aquapackers (p477). Three-day trips usually drop you at the northern end of the park, then you paddle back (or vice versa) and cost around \$500 to \$550 including food. One-day guided trips are around \$90 to \$180; two-day \$190 to \$330. Freedom rentals (kayak and equipment hire) are around \$100 per person for two days; most companies require a minimum of two days' hire and do not allow solo hires. Shop around!

Peak season runs from November to Easter, but you can paddle year-round. December to February is the busiest time – it's worth timing your visit earlier or later. In winter you'll see more bird life, and the weather is surprisingly amenable.

Instruction is given to first-timers; double kayaks are used by all outfits unless you can demonstrate competence in a single kayak. If you're on your own you'll be matched with someone else in the group. Most tour companies have a minimum age of 14. Camping gear is usually provided on overnight trips; if you're disappearing into the park for a few days, most operators provide free car parking.

At the time of writing, a mass rationalisation of kayak companies was underway. By the time you read this, Abel Tasman Kayaks, Kaiteriteri Kayaks, Kiwi Kayaks, Ocean River and Southern Exposure Sea Kayaking will (probably) all come under the umbrella of 'Kayaking Abel Tasman' based in Marahau, though they may still be independently advertised.

- **Abel Tasman Kayaks** (☎ 0800 732 529, 03-527 8022; www.abeltasmankayaks.co.nz; Main Rd, Marahau)
- **Golden Bay Kayaks** (p482) Self-guided tours from the park's northern end.
- **Kahu Kayaks** (☎ 0800 300 101, 03-527 8300; www.kahukayaks.co.nz; Sandy Bay Rd, Marahau)
- **Kaiteriteri Kayaks** (☎ 0800 252 925, 03-527 8383; www.seakayak.co.nz; Kaiteriteri Beach & Marahau Beach Rd, Marahau)
- **Kiwi Kayaks** (☎ 0800 695 494, 03-528 7705; www.kiwikayaks.co.nz; Main Rd, Marahau)
- **Marahau Sea Kayaks** (☎ 0800 529 257, 03-527 8176; www.msk.net.nz; Abel Tasman Centre, Franklin St, Marahau)
- **Ocean River** (☎ 0800 732 529, 03-527 8022; www.seakayaking.co.nz; RD2, Abel Tasman National Park) Freedom rental specialists.
- **Sea Kayak Company** (Map p471; ☎ 0508 252 925, 03-528 7251; www.seakayaknz.co.nz; 506 High St, Motueka)
- **Southern Exposure Sea Kayaking** (☎ 0800 695 292, 03-527 8424; www.southern-exposure.co.nz; Moss Rd, Marahau)

Navy patrol boat) and *Catarac* (a 13m catamaran), moored permanently in Anchorage Bay, are unusual backpacker options, especially if you don't mind the boozy, shanty-singing sessions that tend to eventuate on deck. Facilities are basic but decent; prices include dinner, breakfast and a packed lunch for the trail.

Fernbank (☎ 027 369 9555; www.abeltasmanaccommodation.co.nz; Torrent Bay; d \$90-130, extra adult/child \$10/5) Fernbank comprises two classic holiday homes at Torrent Bay; each self-contained house can sleep up to seven and the houses are a surprising bargain (seven adults staying one night between May and October would pay a grand total of \$140). BYO linen (or pay an extra charge) and food.

Awaroa Lodge & Café (☎ 03-528 8758; www.awaroalodge.co.nz; Awaroa Bay; d ste \$235-400, f \$245-305) There's lots to love about this plush ecolodge at the northern end of the track. Opulent rooms are furnished with artistic, contemporary touches, and the innovative restaurant (open to all-comers) plates up delicious meals (lunch \$13 to \$26, dinner \$30 to \$36). Family units sleep eight, but there are no cooking facilities. Guided kayaking and other activities by arrangement; private bushwalks in the grounds. Awaroa is also accessible by air.

Getting There & Away

AIR

If you're time-poor but funds-rich, consider a fly-in option; the following companies fly to/from Awaroa, and offer scenic flights:

Abel Tasman Air (☎ 0800 304 560, 03-528 8290; www.abeltasmanair.co.nz) Flies between Awaroa and Motueka or Nelson; Motueka–Awaroa one way is \$125. Also offers a one-day cruise/dine/fly option: take a coach to Marahau, a water taxi to Awaroa, have lunch at Awaroa Lodge, then fly back to Motueka (\$195 not including lunch).

Tasman Helicopters (p463) Motueka–Awaroa by helicopter is around \$150 one way, or there's a good deal including return flights and lunch at Awaroa Lodge for \$180 (minimum numbers apply).

BUS

Abel Tasman Coachlines (☎ 03-528 8850; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) runs from Nelson to Motueka, then on to:

| Destination | Price | Duration | Frequency |
|-----------------|-------|----------|-----------------|
| Kaiteriteri | \$9 | 25min | 3-4 daily |
| Marahau | \$9 | 30min | 3-4 daily |
| Takaka | \$21 | 1hr | 2 daily |
| Totaranui | \$30 | 2¼hr | 1 daily Dec-Feb |
| Wainui car park | \$25 | 1¾hr | 1 daily Dec-Feb |

Golden Bay Coachlines (☎ 03-525 8352; www.goldenbaycoachlines.co.nz) buses depart Motueka for Takaka (\$19, one hour, two daily), continuing to Totaranui (\$18, one hour, one daily).

Southern Link KBus (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-528 8355; www.southernlinkbus.co.nz) runs between Motueka and Takaka (\$19, one hour, two daily). Call for info/bookings for Kaiteriteri and Marahau buses.

Nelson Bays Shuttles (☎ 03-540 3852; www.nnbays.co.nz) runs minivan shuttles on demand from Nelson to Marahau and Kaiteriteri (\$120 one way for up to eight people).

Getting Around

The beauty of Abel Tasman is that it's easy to get to/from any point on the track by water taxi, either from Kaiteriteri or Marahau Beach. Typical one-way prices from either Marahau or Kaiteriteri: Anchorage and Torrent Bay (\$24), Bark Bay (\$27), Tonga (\$29), Awaroa (\$34), Totaranui (\$35). Operators include:

Abel Tasman Aqua Taxi (☎ 0800 278 282, 03-527 8083; www.aquataxis.co.nz; Kaiteriteri & Marahau)

Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle (☎ 0800 732 748, 03-528 9759; www.abeltasmanseashuttles.co.nz; Kaiteriteri)

Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences (Map p471;

☎ 0800 221 888, 03-528 2027; www.abeltasmannz.com; 265 High St, Motueka) Offers a three-day explorer pass (adult/child \$99/48) for unlimited taxi travel.

Kiwi Water Taxis (☎ 0800 695 494, 03-528 7705;

www.adventureabeltasman.com; Marahau)

Marahau Water Taxis (☎ 0800 808 018, 03-527 8176; www.abeltasmanmarahaucamp.co.nz; Abel Tasman Centre, Franklin St, Marahau)

GOLDEN BAY

MOTUEKA TO TAKAKA

From Motueka, SH60 meanders absent-mindedly up Takaka Hill, past dramatic lookouts over Tasman Bay and Abel Tasman National Park, and onwards to Takaka and Collingwood. The best way to tackle this region is with your own wheels.

Takaka Hill (791m) butts-in between Tasman Bay and Golden Bay. Just below the summit (literally) are the **Ngarua Caves** (☎ 03-528 8093; mte@xtra.co.nz; SH60; adult/child \$14/5; ☎ 45min tours hourly 10am-4pm Sep-May, closed Jun-Aug), where you can see moa bones. Access is restricted to tours – you can't go solo spelunking.

Also in the area is the biggest *tomo* (cave) in the southern hemisphere, **Harwood's Hole**.

It's 400m deep and 70m wide, with a 183m vertical drop. The cave is a 30-minute walk from the car park at the end of the 11km gravel Canaan Rd, off SH60. Be careful as you approach the precipice – accidents have occurred. Only *very* experienced cavers should attempt to explore the cave itself. The Canaan area was used as the location for Chetwood Forest in the *Lord of the Rings* movies.

Just over the summit is the **Takaka Hill Walkway**, a three-hour loop through marble karst rock formations, native forest and private farmland (owned by the Harwoods, of Hole fame). Also here is **Harwood Lookout**, affording fine views down the Takaka River Valley to Takaka and Golden Bay.

From the summit you wind down through Takaka Hill Scenic Reserve to the river valley.

TAKAKA

pop 1230

Laid-back to near-horizontal, Takaka is the business centre for the Golden Bay area, and the last town of much import as you head towards the South Island's northwest corner. The local community of rootsy artists and bearded, dreadlocked types rubs shoulders with hardened farmers and crusty fisherman in harmonious equilibrium: the bike shop sells guitar strings; the pub serves chai.

Information

DOC office (☎ 03-525 8026; www.doc.govt.co.nz; 62 Commercial St; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) Information on Abel Tasman and Kahurangi National Parks, the Heaphy Track, Farewell Spit and Cobb Valley. Sells hut passes.
Golden Bay Internet Café (☎ 03-525 8355; 4 Commercial St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)
Golden Bay i-SITE (☎ 03-525 9136; www.goldenbay.net.nz; Willow St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun) Stocked with information, maps and brochures.

Sights & Activities

Simply called 'Pupu', **Te Waikoropupu Springs** are the largest freshwater springs in NZ and reputedly the clearest in the world. About 14,000L of water per second surges from underground vents dotted around the Pupu Springs Scenic Reserve, including one with 'dancing sands' propelled upwards by water gushing from the ground. The water looks enticing, but swimming is a no-no. From Takaka, head 4km northwest on SH60, turn inland at Waitapu Bridge and follow Pupu

Spring Rd for 3km. From the car park, a walkway (30 minutes return) leads to a glassed viewing area.

Not far from the springs is the **Pupu Hydro Walkway**, a two-hour circuit through beech forest, past engineering and gold-mining relics to the restored (and operational) Pupu Hydro Powerhouse, built in 1929. To get here, take the 4km gravel road (signed 'Pupu Walkway') off Pupu Springs Rd.

The **Golden Bay Museum** (☎ 03-525 6268; www.virtualbay.co.nz/gbmuseum; Commercial St; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm, closed Sun winter) is a jumble of historical memorabilia. Stand-out exhibits include a diorama depicting Abel Tasman's 1642 Golden Bay landing, and a stuffed (but still noble) albatross. Entry is through the adjacent **Golden Bay Gallery** (☎ /fax 03-525 9990; Commercial St; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm, closed Sun winter), with three rooms full of local creations. Collect a copy of the *Guide to Artists in Golden Bay* leaflet for details on other galleries in the area.

On the Anatoki River 6km south of town, **Bencarri Nature Park & Café** (☎ 03-525 8261; www.bencarri.co.nz; McCallum Rd; adult/child/family \$12/6/35, meals \$8-16; ☎ 10am-5pm, closed May-mid-Sep) has a cornucopia of farm animals including llamas and yaks (!), family activities and a cool café. But the prime attraction is feeding the fat, tame river eels, which can live to be 100, and have apparently been here since 1914.

Fish for salmon next door at the **Anatoki Salmon Farm** (☎ 03-525 7251; www.anatokisalmon.co.nz; McCallum Rd; admission & fishing gear free, salmon price per kg; ☎ 9am-5pm). The owners will clean and smoke your catch, so you can eat it on the spot. If you're not up for DIY, you can also buy fresh or smoked fish.

Tours

Kahurangi Guided Walks (☎ 03-525 7177; www.kahurangiwalks.co.nz) specialises in small-group tours through the area's national parks, covering nearly every track option, including a five-day walk along the Heaphy Track or Abel Tasman Coast Track for \$1000. A day walk around Golden Bay costs around \$120.

See p484 for Farewell Spit tours.

Sleeping

Barefoot Backpackers (☎ 0508 525 700, 03-525 7005; www.bare-foot.co.nz; 114 Commercial St; dm/s/d from \$23/37/42; P) A small, shoe-free house with open lounge and kitchen areas, and a

barbecue-friendly garden out the back. Other plusses: homemade bread, and a spa to sauté yourself in.

Kiwiana (☎ 0800 805 494, 03-525 7676; kiwianabackpackers@hotmail.com; 73 Motupipi St; dm/s/d \$24/37/54; P) Check into this cute cottage dedicated to Kiwiana – rooms are named after the jandal, gumboot, Buzzy Bee and *tiki*. There's a free outdoor spa and a converted garage full of treasures: wood-fired stove, pool table, CD player, books, games and bikes for guest use.

Annie's Nirvana Lodge (☎ 03-525 8766; www.nirvanalodge.co.nz; 25 Motupipi St; dm/d \$25/53; P) Annie herself is long gone, but the YHA has maintained her name and her lodge's mildly grungy atmosphere. It's a small, chilled-out hostel with dorms in the main house, and four doubles at the bottom of the garden. Bike hire \$5 per day. And we've never seen a cat quite like Fluffy...

Golden Bay Motel (☎ 0800 401 212, 03-525 9428; www.goldenbaymotel.co.nz; 132 Commercial St; d \$95-115, extra person \$20; P) Clean, spacious, self-contained units with decent older-style fixtures and decent older-style hosts. The rear decks overlook a lush green lawn. Two-bedroom units have full kitchens.

Anatoki Lodge Motel (☎ 0800 262 333, 03-525 8047; anatoki@xtra.co.nz; 87 Commercial St; d \$105-130; P) Rhododendrons ahoj at this modernish motel, with studios and one- and two-bedroom units, all with kitchenette, lounge/dining area, and private patio. Solar-heated pool.

See also Eatery on the Rock (right). The nearest official campsite is in nearby Pohara.

Eating & Drinking

Golden Fries (☎ 03-525 9699; 7 Commercial St; meals \$4-7; ☎ 4.30pm-late Tue & Wed, 11.30am-late Thu-Sat) Join salivating locals at this ship-shaped takeaway for gourmet burgers, pan-fried scallops, fresh fish and whitebait fritters. Kids' meals too.

Wholemeal Café (☎ 03-525 9426; 60 Commercial St; meals \$6-23; ☎ 7.30am-8pm; V) A local institution and Takaka's stand-out eatery: a cruise café/restaurant/art gallery with occasional live music and internet access. There's a dedicated curry menu, free-range eggs for breakfast, lots of vegetarian options and smooth coffee. The foyer noticeboard is a fascinating snapshot of the region.

Dangerous Kitchen (☎ 03-525 8686; 48 Commercial St; mains \$14-28; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat) Dedicated to Frank Zappa (*'In the kitchen of danger,*

you can feel like a stranger'), the Dangerous Kitchen specialises in whacky gourmet pizzas and serves strong coffee, hefty slabs of cake and bumper burritos. Mellow and laid-back; local beer and Italian wine.

Brigand Café Bar (☎ 03-525 9636; 90 Commercial St; lunch \$15-27, dinner \$20-30; ☎ 11am-late Mon-Sat) Behind steel gates and a lush garden, Brigand serves fresh Golden Bay produce in a relaxed, pubby atmosphere. Try some tapas, a burger or some local mussels, or swing by for a beer or an organic coffee. It's also the hub of the Takaka music scene: Tuesday night jam, Thursday open mic, Saturday DJ.

Eatery on the Rock (☎ 03-525 8096; 29 Main Rd; mains \$21-36; ☎ 5.30pm-late Tue-Sun) Squatting atop a karst outcrop on the right as you head into town, this restaurant-bar comes highly recommended by readers. The menu features local crab and meat-and-seafood creations, plus local wines by the glass. It also has five snazzy en suite cabins out the back (double \$150).

The **Telegraph Hotel** (☎ 03-525 9445; cnr Commercial & Motupipi Sts; mains \$10-24; ☎ 11am-10pm) and the **Junction Hotel** (☎ 03-525 9207; 15 Commercial St; mains \$10-20; ☎ 11am-10pm) are old-fashioned pubs if you fancy a quiet lager or pub meal, but most people relax with a drink outside Wholemeal Café and Dangerous Kitchen.

Fresh Choice (☎ 03-525 9383; 13 Willow St; ☎ 8am-8pm) is the main supermarket in town.

Entertainment

Village Theatre (☎ 03-525 8453; 34 Commercial St; adult/child/concession \$11/6/9; ☎ 6pm-10pm) Catch a flick at Takaka's cinema, screening newish releases.

Getting There & Around

Capital Air (☎ 0800 588 885, 03-525 8725; www.capitalair.co.nz) flies regularly between Wellington and Takaka (\$129, one hour, daily Wednesday to Monday during summer).

Abel Tasman Coachlines (☎ 03-528 8850; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) runs between Takaka and Nelson (\$30, 2½ hours, two daily) and Collingwood (\$17, 25 minutes, one daily). In summer buses run from Takaka to Totaranui (\$18, one hour, one daily) and the Heaphy Track (\$26, one hour, one daily).

Golden Bay Coachlines (☎ 03-525 8352; www.goldenbaycoachlines.co.nz) runs from Takaka to Nelson (\$30, 2¼ hours, two daily), and has services to Collingwood (\$17, 25 minutes, two daily), the Heaphy Track (\$26, one hour, two daily) and Totaranui (\$18, one hour, one daily).

Southern Link KBus (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkkbus.co.nz) runs between Takaka and Nelson (\$28, 2½ hours, one daily). Phone for info/bookings for Collingwood, Totaranui and Heaphy Track connections.

Quiet Revolution Cycle Shop (☎ 03-525 9555; quietrev@hotmail.com; 11 Commercial St; per day \$15-40; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) hires town and mountain bikes, has local track information and will straighten your wonky spokes.

If you need a cab, call **Takaka Taxi Service** (☎ 0800 825 252).

POHARA

pop 350

About 10km northeast of Takaka is pint-sized Pohara, a beachside resort with a population that quadruples over summer. It's more 'yup-pified' than other parts of Golden Bay, with large modern houses cashing in on sea views, but an agreeable air persists and there's some great accommodation here.

The beach is on the way to the northern end of the Abel Tasman Coastal Track; the largely unsealed road into the park passes **Tarakohe Harbour** (Pohara's working port), and **Ligar Bay** which has a lookout and a memorial to Abel Tasman, who anchored here in December 1642.

Rawhiti Cave, between Takaka and Pohara, has the largest entrance of any cave in NZ. It's an awesome sight, but the steep, 45-minute approach walk is poorly signposted. Take Packard Rd 2.5km from Motupipi, or contact Kahurangi Guided Walks **Kahurangi Guided Walks** (☎ 03-525 7177; www.kahurangiwalks.co.nz), which runs three-hour tours (\$25).

Golden Bay Kayaks (☎ 03-525 9095; www.goldenbaykayaks.co.nz; Pohara beachfront; half-day guided tours adult/child \$60/30, 3-day freedom hire \$130) rents out kayaks for hour-long paddles, or can launch you on a three-day exploration of Abel Tasman National Park from Tarakohe Harbour south to Marahau or Kaiteriteri.

Tours

Golden Bay Connections (☎ 0800 752 232, 03-525 7672; www.goldenbayconnections.co.nz; 800 Abel Tasman Dr; half-/full-day tours from \$70/110) runs a plethora of short-and-sweet water-taxi tours around Golden Bay and Abel Tasman National Park, departing Tarakohe Harbour in Pohara.

Sleeping & Eating

Pohara Beach Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 764 272, 03-525 9500; www.poharabeach.com; Abel Tasman Dr;

unpowered & powered sites \$32-38, cabins \$50-85, motels & units \$80-150; (P) ☎) Woah, what a big 'un! On a long grassy strip 'tween the dunes and the main road, the location is primo, but in summer it can feel more like a suburb than the seaside. There's a general store out the front.

Nook (☎ 0800 806 665, 03-525 8501; www.the nookguesthouse.co.nz; Abel Tasman Dr; unpowered sites \$32, dm/tw/d \$25/50/60, cottage \$140-160; (P)) Low-key, nook-sized backpackers with fabulous garden, beautiful timber floors and subtle artistic touches. Behind the hostel is a self-contained straw-bale cottage sleeping six, and space for two tents. Bikes available; TV banned.

our pick Sans Souci Inn (☎ 03-525 8663; www.sans souciinn.co.nz; 11 Richmond Rd; s/d/f \$75/95/140; ☞ closed Jul-mid-Sep; (P)) 'Sans Souci' means 'no worries' in French. That'll be your mantra after staying here – creatively designed, affordable accommodation with flair. Ecofriendly down to its composting toilets, seven mudbrick rooms, simply furnished in bright, Mediterranean style, arc around a semitropical courtyard. Guests share the loveliest communal bathroom we've ever seen, with mosaics and protruding plant life, plus a brilliant lounge, kitchen and laundry. Food at the on-site restaurant (dinner mains \$27 to \$29; bookings essential) is nothing short of superb. Breakfast by request.

Sandcastle (☎ 0800 433 909, 03-525 9087; www.goldenbayaccommodation.co.nz; Haile Lane; d \$80-95; (P)) It sounds like a regal beach fantasy, but it's actually a cluster of bird-bombarded, ecofriendly chalets with a wood-fired sauna, outdoor spa pool, and an emphasis on family frivolities. Look for the sign 600m past the Penguin Café. Great value.

Penguin Café & Bar (☎ 03-525 6126; Abel Tasman Dr; lunch \$12-19, dinner \$18-29; ☞ 4-10pm Mon & Tue, 11am-10pm Wed-Sun) A classy, free-forming eating (and drinking) spot with open fire and pool table, and big outdoor area for sunny days. Day-time brunch treats include gourmet pizzas, burgers and easy-drinking bar snacks; dinner mains are meatier.

Totally Roasted Café (☎ 03-525 9396; Abel Tasman Dr; meals \$10-17; ☞ 8.30am-5pm) Totally Roasted is soooo Golden Bay, with its walled sculpture garden, organic coffee, art-covered walls, strewn magazines and funky tunes. The owners roast their own beans and serve café fare with flair: sweet-corn fritters, muffins, BLTs and awesome caramel-meringue cake.

Getting There & Away

Several bus companies run to nearby Takaka (p481); you'll have to make your own way from there.

COLLINGWOOD

pop 250

Far-flung Collingwood is the last town in this part of the country, and has a real end-of-the-line, frontier vibe. It's busy in summer, though for most people it's simply a launch pad for the Heaphy Track or trips to Farewell Spit.

The **Collingwood Museum** (☎ 03-524 8131; Tasman St; admission by donation; ☞ 10am-4pm) fills a tiny, unstaffed corridor with a quirky collection of saddlery, Maori artefacts, moa bones, shells and old cameras, typewriters and telephony.

No Collingwood visit would be complete without dipping into **Rosy Glow Chocolate House** (☎ 03-524 8348; 54 Beach Rd; chocolates \$3-5; ☞ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu). Chocoholics will go nuts for handmade chocolates produced with loving attention.

Sleeping

Innlet Backpackers & Cottages (☎ 03-524 8040; www.goldenbayindex.co.nz/theinnlet.html; Main Rd; unpowered sites \$32, dm/d \$23/56, cottages & units \$70-150; (P)) The Innlet (yes, with two 'n's), 10km from Collingwood on the way to Pakawau, is a great option. The main house sustains backpacker rooms, and there are various campsites, huts and motel-style units around the property, from basic to self-contained. Environmentally conscious owners offer kayak and bike hire, plus guided fishing and kayaking trips.

Somerset House (☎ 03-524 8624; www.backpackerscollingwood.co.nz; 10 Gibbs Rd; dm/s/d incl breakfast \$25/38/56; (P)) Let it all unravel at this small, low-key hostel: graft tramping advice from the knowledgeable owners, admire the views, and pick through the veggie garden. Free bikes and tramper transport available.

Beachcomber Motel (☎ 0800 270 520, 03-524 8499; goldenbaybeds@extra.co.nz; Tasman St; d \$85-150; (P)) Clean, spacious self-contained units in excellent nick, wedged between the road and the estuary. Good-value family-sized units have nifty mezzanine floors.

Eating & Drinking

our pick Mussel Inn (☎ 03-525 9241; SH60, Onekaka; all-day menu \$3-14, dinner \$21-25; ☞ 11am-late, closed Aug) Muscle in to Mussel Inn, an earthy, rustic tavern-café-brewery halfway between Takaka and Collingwood. A totem pole staped with

redundant mobile phones heralds the mood: this is no place for urban trappings, just great food (mussels steamed in white wine or basil and tomato broth, seasonal scallops, fresh fish), organic coffee, open fires, live music (classical quartets to acoustic rock) and a handle or two of 'Captain Cooker', a brown beer brewed naturally with manuka. Don't miss the composting toilets!

Old School Café (☎ 03-524 8457; SH60, Pakawau; meals \$6-20; ☞ 10am-4pm & 6pm-late) Carving out a niche in the market between Collingwood and Puponga, these guys serve all-day breakfasts, salads, pastas and wraps in sizable portions (the local fisherfolk are a hungry mob).

Courthouse Café (☎ 03-525 8472; cnr Gibbs & Tasman Sts; meals \$8-28; ☞ 9am-5pm Thu-Mon, plus 6-9pm Fri & Sat) A cool café in the 1901 Collingwood courthouse preparing delicious à la carte meals from locally grown organic produce and fresh seafood. Local art; good coffee; beautiful wine list.

Getting There & Away

Abel Tasman Coachlines (☎ 03-528 8850; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) runs between Collingwood and Nelson (\$47, 2½ hours, one daily) via Takaka (\$17, 30 minutes, one daily).

Golden Bay Coachlines (☎ 03-525 8352; www.goldenbaycoachlines.co.nz) also runs from Takaka to Collingwood (\$17, 25 minutes, two daily); contact **Southern Link KBus** (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkkbus.co.nz) for its Takaka-Collingwood details.

FAREWELL SPIT & AROUND

Farewell Spit Visitor Information Centre (☎ 0800 250 500, 03-524 8454; Farewell Spit; ☞ 9am-5pm Nov-Apr, 10am-4pm May-Oct), 24km north of Collingwood, provides regional information and handles Spit tour bookings. The licensed **Paddlecrab Café** (☎ 03-524 8708; meals \$8-26; ☞ 9.30am-4pm year-round, plus 5.30-10pm Nov-Apr) is also here, with superb Farewell Spit views and paddlecrab platters (a local crustacean). On the track below the centre is a pilot whale skeleton, a species that sometimes beaches here.

Sights & Activities

Bleak, exposed and unusual, **Farewell Spit** is a wetland of international importance, and a renowned bird sanctuary – the summer home of thousands of migratory waders from the Arctic tundra. The 26km beach features colossal, crescent-shaped dunes, from where

panoramic views extend across Golden Bay and a vast low-tide salt marsh. Access is via tour only (see below); customised vehicles grind over the beach to within 1km of Cape Farewell. Close to the base of the spit are fossilized shellfish; further east are colonies of Caspian terns and Australasian gannets. The normal trip ends at an old lighthouse compound.

Remote, desolate **Wharariki Beach** is 6km from the turn-off to the visitors centre along an unsealed road, then a 20-minute walk from the car park over farmland (part of the DOC-administered Puponga Farm Park). It's a wild introduction to the West Coast, with mighty dune formations, looming rock islets just offshore and a seal colony at its eastern end (keep an eye out for seals in the stream on the walk here). As inviting as a swim here may seem, there are strong undertows – what the sea wants, the sea shall have...

Befitting a frontier, this is the place to saddle up a hoss: **Cape Farewell Horse Treks** (☎ 03-524 8031; www.horsetreksnz.com; 23 McGowan St, Puponga) is en route to Wharariki Beach. Treks in this wind-blown country range from 1½ hours (\$45, to Pillar Point) to three hours (\$95, to Wharariki Beach), or try the Overnight Coastal Experience (\$300) or 4½-day all-inclusive West Coast exploration (\$1100).

Tours

Tours depart daily at low tide; see websites for schedules.

Farewell Spit Eco Tours (☎ 0800 808 257, 03-524 8257; www.farewellspit.com; Tasman St, Collingwood; tours \$90-115) An experienced operator running a range of tours from three to 6½ hours, taking in the Spit, lighthouse and gannet colony. Tours depart Collingwood.

Farewell Spit Nature Experience (☎ 0800 250 500, 03-524 8992; www.farewell-spit.co.nz; tours \$75-95) Four-hour Spit tours depart Farewell Spit Visitor Information Centre; six-hour tours depart the Old School Café in Pakawau.

KAHURANGI NATIONAL PARK

Kahurangi, meaning 'Treasured Possession', is the second largest of NZ's national parks and undoubtedly one of the greatest. Its 450,000 hectares are a hotbed of ecological wonderment: more than 1000 bird species, 50% of all NZ's plant species, 80% of its alpine plant species, a karst landscape and the largest known cave system in the southern hemisphere (explored by local caving groups, but only for the experienced).

Heaphy Track

One of the best-known tracks in NZ, the four-to six-day, 82km Heaphy Track doesn't have the spectacular scenery of the Routeburn or Milford Tracks, but revels in its distinct brand of beauty. Almost entirely within Kahurangi National Park, track highlights include the Mt Perry summit (two hours return from Perry Saddle Hut), and the coast, especially around Heaphy Hut (spend a day or two here at least). At low tide you can cross the Heaphy River mouth; the Crayfish Point section should only be tackled within one hour either side of low tide.

There are seven huts en route, each accommodating around 20 people; all have gas stoves, except Brown and Goulard Downs, which need wood. There are nine campsites along the route, with limited capacity (eight campers maximum at Saxon Hut, as many as 40 at Heaphy Hut). Huts/campsites cost \$10/7 per adult per night from May to September, \$20/10 from October to April; all must be prebooked through DOC.

INFORMATION

The best spot for detailed Heaphy Track information and bookings is the DOC counter at the Nelson i-SITE (p460). You can also book at the Golden Bay i-SITE in Takaka (p480), online at www.doc.govt.nz, or by post, email (greatwalksbookings@doc.govt.nz) or phone (☎ 03-546 8210). See also www.heaphytrack.com.

For track descriptions, see Lonely Planet's *Tramping in New Zealand*.

WALKING THE TRACK

Most people tramp southwest from the Collingwood end to Karamea. From Brown Hut the track passes through beech forest to Perry Saddle. The country opens up to the swampy Goulard Downs, then closes in with sparse bush all the way to MacKay Hut. The bush becomes more dense towards Heaphy Hut, with beautiful nikau palms growing at lower levels.

The final section is along the coast through heavy bush, and partly along the beach. Unfortunately, sandflies are a real problem along this beautiful stretch. The climate here is surprisingly mild, but don't swim in the sea as the undertows and currents are vicious. The lagoon at Heaphy Hut is good for swimming, and the Heaphy River is full of fish.

Kilometre markers crop up along the track – the zero marker is at the track's southern end at Kohaihai River near Karamea. Estimated walking times:

| Route | Time |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| Brown Hut to Perry Saddle Hut | 5hr |
| Perry Saddle Hut to Goulard Downs Hut | 2hr |
| Goulard Downs Hut to Saxon Hut | 1½hr |
| Saxon Hut to MacKay Hut | 3hr |
| MacKay Hut to Lewis Hut | 3½hr |
| Lewis Hut to Heaphy Hut | 2½hr |
| Heaphy Hut to Kohaihai River | 5hr |

Wangapeka & Leslie-Karamea Tracks

After tackling the Heaphy north to south, you can return to Golden Bay via the more scenic (though harder) **Wangapeka Track**. It's not as well known as the Heaphy, but many consider the Wangapeka a more enjoyable walk. Taking about five days, the track starts 25km south of Karamea at Little Wanganui, running 52km east to Rolling River near Tapawera. There's a chain of huts along the track.

The 91km **Leslie-Karamea Track** is a medium-to-hard tramp of five to seven days, connecting the Cobb Valley near Takaka with Little Wanganui, finishing on part of the Wangapeka Track.

See www.doc.govt.nz for detailed info on both tracks.

Tours

Bush & Beyond (☎ 03-528 9054; www.bushandbeyond.co.nz; day/multiday walks from \$150/1150) Guided treks in Kahurangi National Park, catering to your abilities and interests (eg flora, fauna, photography). Mt Arthur or Cobb Valley day walks include lunch and Motueka pick-up/drop off. Multiday treks (backpacking or luxury) include five days on the Heaphy Track.

Kahurangi Guided Walks (p480) The name says it all. **Southern Wilderness** (☎ 0800 666 044, 03-545 1308; www.heaphytracknz.com; day/multiday walks from \$170/1195) Guided tramping on the Heaphy Track and day walks in Nelson Lakes National Parks.

Getting There & Away

Abel Tasman Coachlines (☎ 03-528 8850; www.abeltasmantravel.co.nz) runs from Nelson to the Heaphy Track, via Motueka, Takaka and Collingwood (\$50, 3½ hours, one daily). **Golden Bay Coachlines** (☎ 03-525 8352; www.goldenbaycoachlines.co.nz) also plies this route (\$50, 3½ hours, two daily). Contact **Southern Link KBus** (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkkbus.co.nz) for its Takaka–Heaphy Track details. There's a phone at the trailhead to call buses, but it's best to book your pick-up/drop off in advance.

Wadsworths Motors (☎ 03-522 4248; Main Rd, Tapawera) services the eastern ends of the Wangapeka Track, on demand. Price on application.

For transport details at the Karamea end of proceedings see p495.

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