



Marlborough & Nelson

HIGHLIGHTS

- The golden sands of **Abel Tasman National Park** (p149)
- Hippies, art, music and food – all to be found in **Nelson** (p155)
- **Vineyards** (p143) all growing and serving delectable vintages

TERRAIN

Low lying plains in the east around Blenheim interspersed with ranges and valleys fanning from the interior towards the sea becoming increasingly rugged in the west. Rolling hills and plains in coastal areas surrounding Tasman and Golden Bays.

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The mountains, glaciers, fiords and bungy-based circuses get much of the attention in the South Island – most tourists are in a mad dash to head south and tend to miss out on one of the best regions in the country. Marlborough and Nelson are packed with friendly locals, golden-sand beaches, wineries, quasi-hippy towns and some of the best weather in the country.

This is one of those regions that gets under your skin – the longer you stay here, the harder it is to leave. The friendly local atmosphere and ideal cycling locations are definitely a big part of that equation. The city of Nelson is a charming place with a thriving artistic scene and a cycle-centric sub-culture that is a pleasure to dip into.

Abel Tasman National Park with its blonde beaches, azure water and limitless adventure opportunities is a must-see location. If the bike needs a break, the sea kayaking and tramping opportunities abound.



HISTORY

The Maori began to migrate to the South Island during the 16th century, and among the first to arrive in Nelson were the Tumatakokiri. By 1550 this tribe occupied most of the province, as Abel Tasman found out to his cost when he turned up in 1642 at what he later named Murderers' Bay. Other tribes followed the Tumatakokiri, settling at the mouth of the Waimea River. The Tumatakokiri reigned supreme in Tasman Bay until the 18th century, when the Ngati-apa from Whanganui and the Ngai Tahu – the largest tribe in the South Island – got together in a devastating attack on the Tumatakokiri, who virtually ceased to exist as an independent tribe after 1800.

The Ngati-apa's victory was short-lived because between 1828 and 1830 they were practically annihilated by armed tribes from Taranaki and Wellington, who sailed into the bay in the largest fleet of canoes ever assembled in New Zealand.

By the time European settlers arrived, no Maori lived at Te Wakatu – the nearest *pa* (fortified Maori village) being at Motueka – and the decimated population that remained in the area put up no resistance. The first *Pakeha* (the name given to whites or Europeans by the Maori) settlers sailed in response to advertisements by the New Zealand Company, set up by Edward Gibbon Wakefield. His grand scheme was to transplant a complete slice of English life

