

# Southern North Island

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Contemplate the paragon of aesthetic volcanoes at **Mt Taranaki** (p114)
- Discover the cultural hub of New Zealand, **Wellington** (p126)
- Revel in thunderous surf and quiet back roads on the west coast near **New Plymouth** (p132)

## TERRAIN

Lots of rolling hills and countryside.

Telephone Code – 04 Wellington

[www.wellingtonnz.com](http://www.wellingtonnz.com)

The southern North Island is dominated by some big features. Big things like the very Mt Fuji-like Mt Taranaki and the very Mt Doom-like Mt Ruapehu. It also has big surf along the west coast, which is a big deal if you're a surfer. Then there's the big little city of Wellington – a cosmopolitan mix of art, culture, music and politicians. There are big hills, some big headwinds to encounter, big wide open spaces and some big distances too. 'Big deal' you say? Too right – this end of the island is a big deal.

There are a good mix of rides in this region with some challenging longer tours like the Stratford Circuit and some of the shortest rides in the book, like the Wellington Scenic Circuit. You'll find rides that suit families, like the Rimutake Incline and pure off-road bliss in the Wellington Hills.



## CLIMATE

The weather in the Taranaki region is heavily influenced by the presence of Mt Taranaki. The region experiences warm, humid summers and mild, wet winters. The area around the mountain is one of the wettest in New Zealand, with about 7000mm of rain recorded annually at north Egmont (compared with 1584mm in New Plymouth). Moisture-laden winds from the Tasman Sea are trapped by the peak and swept up to freezing heights. New Plymouth has an average maximum temperature of 20.5°C in January and 11.3°C in July. The wind, which can be strong at times, blows predominantly from the west.

'Windy Wellington' has a deserved reputation as it is buffeted by strong westerly winds funnelled through Cook Strait much of the time, particularly over winter. It is one of the cooler parts of the North Island, mild in summer (average of 21.8°C in January), mild in summer (average of 21.8°C in January) and fairly cold in winter (13.3°C in July), especially with the added effects of the wind chill.

## PLANNING

If you're looking to plan some of your own rides, the AA *North Island Touring Map* 1:550,000 is a useful companion. It shows the whole of the southern North Island in good detail and includes street maps of the larger towns.

