

Welcome to New Zealand

With spectacular scenery, amazing trails, a unique hut network and a rich tramping culture, New Zealand is the ultimate destination for immersing yourself in the great outdoors.

A Freaky Field Trip

Cast adrift from Gondwanaland and dragged to the edge of civilisation by powerful geological forces, NZ boasts a staggering array of landforms – from uplifted mountains and glaciated valleys to rain-forests, dunelands and an otherworldly volcanic plateau. Unusual plant life abounds, from mighty 2000-year-old kauri trees to delicate alpine herb fields. In their midst is a veritable menagerie of strange creatures, such as the kiwi, large carnivorous snails, and the tuatara – the ‘living fossil’ as old as the dinosaurs. There’s never a dull moment on a tramp through the NZ wilderness.

Trampers’ Territory

Whether Maori on hunting forays or gathering greenstone, or colonial explorers surveying for settlements, early New Zealanders showed an aptitude for journeying through this wild new land. To follow in their footsteps today is to encounter a network of tracks and huts that is the envy of the world. In the wild – where wrong turns can be fatal, ferocious storms are common, and rivers can turn torrential within an hour – such prior knowledge is king. How welcome it is, then, to encounter an emphatic signpost, a splendid suspension

bridge, or a Department of Conservation ranger. You’re in good company.

Easy Going

It may be one of the world’s most popular tramping destinations, but outside of major tracks in peak season there is plenty of room in lodges, huts and campsites, and mile upon mile of empty track. Yet despite this, the shuttle bus driver will still pick you up in the middle of nowhere, probably just 10 minutes late. The logistics of NZ tramping are pretty easy, with plenty of well-oiled operators ready to get you where you need to go – even if it means they have to go out of their way.

Sheer Beauty

You’ve seen the photographs: soaring peaks, turquoise lakes, golden sands and majestic forest. It’s even more amazing in real life, at close range. Strange moss hangs off branches, jewel-like river stones glow in a shaft of sunlight, a raft of age-old forest logs lies piled up on a wild, windswept beach... There *will* be climbing, for this is the land of the lookout. Whether a very low saddle from one beach to the next, or a 1000m grind to an alpine pass, scenic surprises lie around every corner, over every hill. These are the *wow!* moments, and there are many of them.



Why We Love Hiking & Tramping in NZ

By Sarah Bennett & Lee Slater, Authors

Welcome to our 'happy place' – a place where our everyday cares disappear, replaced by the need to reach the hut before nightfall, and dry our socks before dawn. Slumbering senses awaken: eyes fix on faraway peaks, ears tune in to songbirds, noses twitch at the scent of honeydew. We relax, open up, see things in a different light. But this could happen anywhere, right? Maybe. But maybe there's magic in the wilderness here – something in the air, in the mountains, in the rivers and beaches. Something in the sparkling night skies. Something that says *it's good to be alive*.

For more about our authors, see page 376.