



Queen Charlotte & Marlborough

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Best Swimming

- Ship Cove (p149)
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Best Views

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Why Go?

For many travellers, Marlborough is their introduction to the 'Mainland', with the interisland ferry to Picton offering a tantalising glimpse of the region's beauty.

The Marlborough Sounds are a popular playground for lovers of the great outdoors. A convoluted maze of waterways, its reaches are lined with trails from beach to peak, crossing and following ridges with wondrous views. The Queen Charlotte and Nydia Tracks are classic examples of such tramps.

The Kaikoura Coast Track is another seaside spectacular, with extensive ocean and mountain views from a trio of neighbouring coastal farms.

Inland, the lesser-known and lightly trodden Mt Richmond Forest Park offers plenty of solitude. The park's signature track, the Pelorus, features deep green river pools and rare lowland forest.

As well as sunshine and warm temperatures, this region is well known for world-class wine and whale-watching tours. These attractions work in very well with the rewarding tramps on offer.

When to Go

The forecast is good: the Marlborough region soaks up some of New Zealand's sunniest weather. January and February are the warmest months, with daytime temperatures averaging 22°C, but even in the middle of winter the daily average is a relatively balmy 12°C.

The Marlborough Sounds' tracks and Kaikoura Coast Track are year-round tramping options. From Christmas to mid-February, however, be prepared to jostle with flocks of Kiwi holidaymakers on their summer holidays.

As the Mt Richmond Forest Park sees plenty of rain, the Pelorus Track is best tramped from October to April.

Background Reading

Come high summer you might think the Marlborough Sounds are very well populated, but for the most part these waterways are incredibly sleepy. And so it has always been. Such isolation – particularly in the outer reaches – breeds singular folk with strange stories to tell, such as those collected in books by Don Grady. Another local yarn-spinner is Heather Heberley, storyteller and biographer, and kin to a prominent whaling family. Notable books in the same genre include *Tales of Kenepuru* (Helen Godsiff), *The Lighthouse Keeper's Wife* (Jeanette Aplin) and *Angela* (Gerald Hindmarsh), the remarkable tale of a young Italian immigrant who finds herself living on remote D'Urville Island in the early part of the 20th century.

DON'T MISS

The Pacific coast town of Kaikoura is terrific for wildlife-spotting. Whales, dolphins, NZ fur seals, penguins, shearwaters, petrels and wandering albatross are just some of the interesting creatures that stop in or call this place home. The area is most famous for marine animals, present in abundance due to ocean-current and continental-shelf conditions.

A good place to get to grips with this lively, salty town is at Point Kean, where seals laze around on a craggy reef – and sometimes in the car park. From there you can pick up the **Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway**, along which you might see various soaring seabirds.

For a fully immersive experience consider a swim with seals or dolphins on regular tours that get rave reviews. The ultimate Kaikoura experience, however, is to go on a whale-watching boat trip with **Whale Watch Kaikoura** (☎ 0800 655 121, 03-319 6767; www.whalewatch.co.nz; Railway Station; 3hr tour adult/child \$145/60), on which you can get up close to the incredible creatures.

DOC Offices

- ➔ **Picton i-SITE** (☎ 03-520 3113; www.lovemarlborough.co.nz; Foreshore; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun)
- ➔ **Sounds Area Office** (☎ 03-520 3002; www.doc.govt.nz; 14 Auckland St, Picton; ☀ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)
- ➔ **Havelock Information Centre** (☎ 03-574 2114; www.havelockinfocentre.co.nz; 256 Main Rd; ☀ 9am-4pm)
- ➔ **DOC Nelson Regional Visitor Centre** (p198)
- ➔ **Kaikoura i-SITE** (☎ 03-319 5641; www.kaikoura.co.nz; West End; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun)

GATEWAY TOWNS

- ➔ Picton (p162)
- ➔ Havelock (p163)
- ➔ Nelson (p197)
- ➔ Kaikoura (p164)

Fast Facts

- ➔ Queen Charlotte Sound is a classic example of a drowned valley, caused by tilting of the land 15 to 20 million years ago.
- ➔ Marlborough is NZ's vinous colossus, producing around three-quarters of the country's wine.
- ➔ The best thing to eat alongside that glass of world-famous sauvignon blanc is a freshly cooked crayfish, a delicacy readily available at roadside stalls around Kaikoura.

Top Tip

The Queen Charlotte Track offers a great opportunity to undertake a multiday walk without the burden of a heavy pack. Take advantage of water taxis that will ferry your bags while you walk from lodge to lodge, or camp to camp.

Resources

- ➔ www.destinationmarlborough.com
- ➔ www.qctrack.co.nz
- ➔ www.havelockinfocentre.co.nz
- ➔ www.nelsonnz.com
- ➔ www.kaikoura.co.nz