

# Marlborough & Nelson



For many travellers, Marlborough and Nelson will be their introduction to what South Islanders refer to as the 'Mainland'. Having left windy Wellington, and made a white-knuckled crossing of Cook Strait, folk are often surprised to find the sun shining and the temperature up to 10 degrees warmer.

Good pals, these two neighbouring regions have much in common beyond an amenable climate: both boast renowned coastal holiday spots, particularly the Marlborough Sounds and Abel Tasman National Park. There are two other national parks (Kahurangi and Nelson Lakes) and more mountain ranges than you can poke a stick at.

And so it follows that these two regions have an abundance of luscious produce: summer cherries for a starter, but most famously the grapes that work their way into the wineglasses of the world's finest restaurants. Keep your penknife and picnic set at the ready.

In high season, these regions are popular and deservedly so. Plan ahead and be prepared to jostle for your gelato with Kiwi holidaymakers.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Getting up close to **Kaikoura's wildlife** (p452), including whales, seals, dolphins and albatross
- Nosing your way through the **Marlborough Wine Region** (p446)
- Tramping the **Queen Charlotte Track** (p438) in the Marlborough Sounds
- Getting airborne above **Nelson** (p459) and **Motueka** (p467) for a spot of paragliding or skydiving
- Sea kayaking in postcard-perfect **Abel Tasman National Park** (p474)
- Getting blown away at Blenheim's **Omaka Aviation Heritage Museum** (p442), one of New Zealand's best provincial museums
- Reaching the end of the road around **Farewell Spit** (p479) where there'll be gannets and godwits for company



■ Telephone code: 03

■ [www.destinationmarlborough.com](http://www.destinationmarlborough.com)

■ [www.nelsonnz.com](http://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, 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](http://www.soundsair.com)) is a local airline connecting Wellington with Blenheim, Nelson and Picton. **Air New Zealand** ([www.airnewzealand.com](http://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 shuttles. 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 in Picton.

Water transport, sea kayaking or walking are the best ways to navigate popular coastal areas, including the Marlborough Sounds and Abel Tasman National Park.

## MARLBOROUGH REGION

Picton is the gateway to the South Island and the launching point for Marlborough Sounds' exploration. A cork's pop south of Picton is