



Marlborough & Nelson

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Why Go?

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 pen-knife and picnic set at the ready.

When to Go?

The forecast is good: Marlborough and Nelson soak up some of New Zealand's sunniest weather. January and February are the warmest months, with daytime 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.

From around Christmas to mid February, the top of the South teems with Kiwi holidaymakers, so plan ahead during this time and be prepared to jostle for position with a load of jandal-wearing families.

Best Places to Eat

- » Green Dolphin (p422)
- » Wither Hills (p414)
- » Hopgood's (p428)
- » Sans Souci Inn (p442)
- » Wakamarinian Cafe (p411)

Best Places to Stay

- » Hopewell (p410)
- » Ratanui (p442)
- » Kerr Bay (p430)
- » Dylan's Country Cottages (p422)



Marlborough & Nelson Highlights

1 Getting up close to wildlife, including whales, seals, dolphins and albatross, in **Kaikoura** (p416)

2 Nosing your way through the **Marlborough Wine Region** (p414)

3 Tramping or biking the **Queen Charlotte Track** (p407) in the Marlborough Sounds

4 Embracing the craft-beer scene around **Nelson** (p429)

5 Sea kayaking in postcard-perfect **Abel Tasman National Park** (p437)

6 Getting blown away at Blenheim's **Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre** (p411), one of New Zealand's best museums

7 Reaching the end of the road around **Farewell Spit** (p444), where there'll be gannets and godwits for company