

Waikato & the King Country

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Why Go?

If the colour green had a homeland, this would be it. Here, verdant fields and rolling hills line New Zealand's mightiest river, the Waikato. Visitors from England might wonder why they bothered leaving home, especially in quaint towns like Cambridge where every effort has been made to replicate the 'mother country'.

But this veneer disguises another reality: this is Tainui country. In the 1850s this powerful tribal coalition elected a king to resist the loss of land and sovereignty. The fertile Waikato was forcibly taken from them, but they retained control of the limestone crags and forests of the King Country to within a whisper of the 20th century.

These days visitors can experience first-hand the region's genteel/wild dichotomy. Adrenaline junkies can hurl themsleves into Raglan's legendary surf, or into extreme underground pursuits in the extraordinary Waitomo Caves. Others will warm to the more sedate delights of Te Aroha's Edwardian thermal complex or Hamilton's gardens.

When to Go

The southern area around Taumarunui is wetter and colder than the rest of this region, which can suffer summer droughts. But either way, you're guaranteed to see a lot of green, green grass. Crowd-wise, if you avoid summer you'll avoid any accommodation shortfalls, but without the extra people around this region can seem a just a bit *too* agricultural. Raglan's surf breaks are always busy, regardless of the season (they didn't call the surf movie *The Endless Summer* for nothing).



n unhurried Raglan 3 Discovering you

(p201)

and then the pub)

chance to try black-2 Hitting the surf

water rafting)

(p214) (this is your

stimulation in the

subterranean

1) Seeking

Naitomo Caves

Highlights

Country

& the King

Waikato

seductive little town

(p210), an utterly

crawl around Hood

through an inland

6 Tramping

Hamilton (p195)

5 Plotting a pub and Victoria Sts in surprisingly buzzy

4 Soaking up 'the

ove' in the thermal

waters of Te Aroha

on the rugged west

coast (p218)

own bush-framed black-sand beach