



# Marlborough & Nelson

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## Best Places to Eat

- ◆ Rock Ferry (p392)
- ◆ Hopgood's (p405)
- ◆ Green Dolphin (p400)
- ◆ Sans Souci Inn (p418)

## Best Places to Stay

- ◆ Te Mahia Bay Resort (p388)
- ◆ Watson's Way (p391)
- ◆ South Street Cottages (p405)
- ◆ Kerr Bay Campsite (p422)

## 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.

These top-of-the-south neighbours have much in common beyond an amenable climate: both boast renowned coastal holiday spots, particularly the Marlborough Sounds, Abel Tasman National Park and Kaikoura. There are two other national parks (Kahurangi and Nelson Lakes) amid more mountain ranges than you can poke a walking pole at.

And so it follows that these two regions have an abundance of produce, from game and seafood to summer fruits, 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, with January and February the warmest months when daytime temperatures average 22°C.
- ◆ July is the coldest, averaging 12°C. However, the top of the South sees some wonderful winter weather, with frosty mornings often giving way to sparkingly clear skies and T-shirt temperatures.
- ◆ The rumours are true: it *is* wetter and more windswept the closer you get to 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.



## Marlborough & Nelson Highlights

- 1 Getting up close to wildlife, including whales, seals, dolphins and albatross, in **Kaikoura** (p412)
- 2 Nosing your way through the **Marlborough Wine Region** (p392)
- 3 Tramping or biking the **Queen Charlotte Track** (p386) in the Marlborough Sounds
- 4 Eating and drinking your way along Nelson's **Great Taste Trail** (p407)
- 5 Sea kayaking in postcard-perfect **Abel Tasman National Park** (p414)
- 6 Getting blown away at Blenheim's **Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre** (p390), one of New Zealand's best museums
- 7 Driving through a dunescape to **Farewell Spit** (p419), where there'll be gannets and godwits for company
- 8 Reaching the wild West Coast on foot, across Kahurangi National Park on the **Heaphy Track** (p420)