



Taupo & the Central Plateau

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Best Places to Eat

- Lakeland House (p261)
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- Piccolo (p257)
- Bearing Point (p271)

Best Places to Stay

- Station Lodge (p271)
- Powderhorn Chateau (p271)
- Creel Lodge (p261)
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- Lake Taupo Top 10 Holiday Resort (p256)

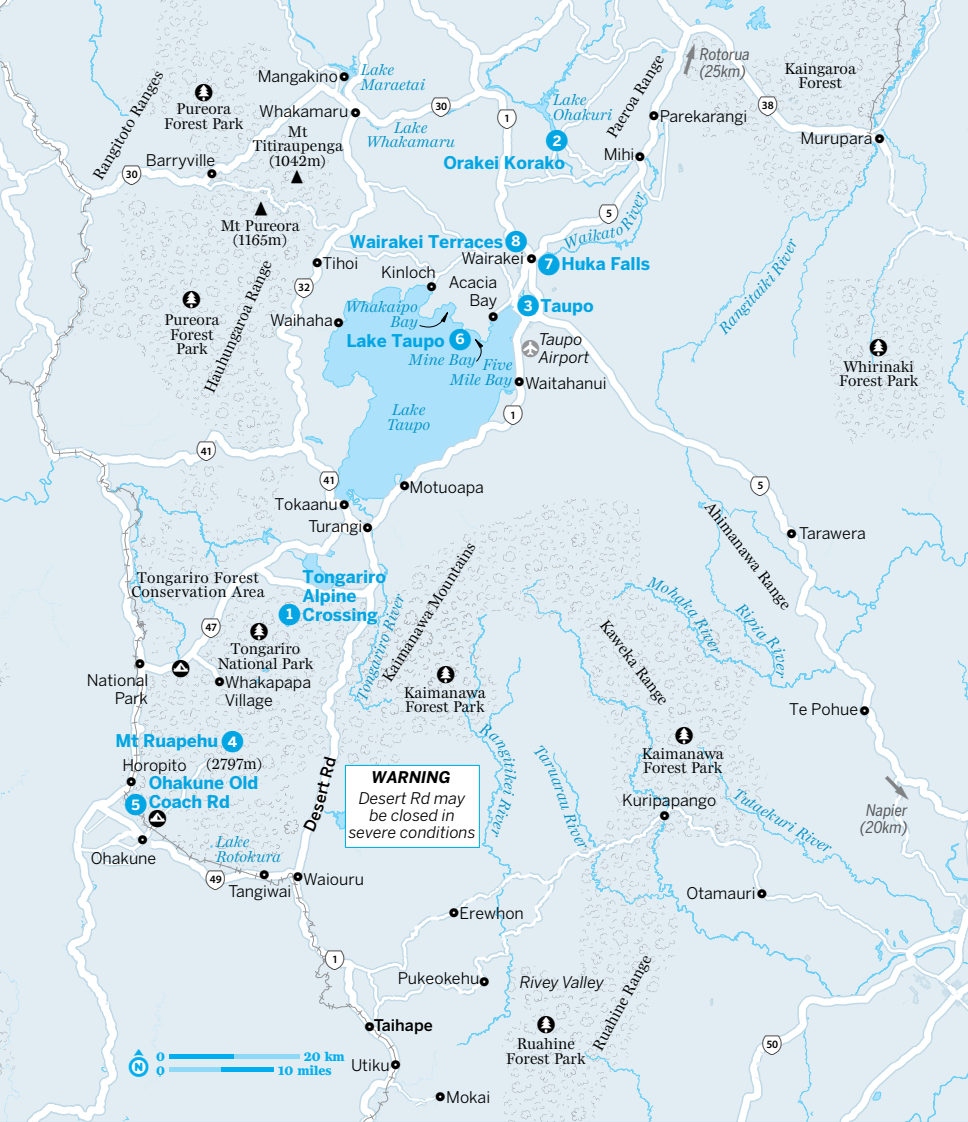
Why Go?

From river deep to mountain high, New Zealand's geology takes centre stage in this diverse region – and boy, does it shoot for the moon. Much of the drama happens along the Taupo Volcanic Zone – a line of geothermal activity that stretches via Rotorua to Whakaari (White Island) in the Bay of Plenty. It's the commotion below the surface that has gifted the region with some of the North Island's star attractions, including the country's largest lake and the three hot-headed peaks of Tongariro National Park.

And the thrills don't stop there: this area rivals Queensland for outdoor escapades. How about hooning on a jet-boat up to a waterfall, bouncing on a bungy over a river, skydiving or skiing fresh powder? Or maybe you'd rather take it easy, soaking in thermal baths or frittering away a day or two with some fly-fishing. If so, mark Taupo and the Central Plateau as a must-do on your North Island itinerary.

When to Go

- Equally popular in winter and summer; there's not really a bad time to visit the centre of NZ.
- The ski season runs roughly from July to October, but storms and freezing temperatures can occur at any time on the mountains, and above 2500m there is a small permanent cap of snow.
- Due to its altitude, the Central Plateau has a generally cool climate, with average high temperatures ranging from around 3°C in winter to around 24°C in summer.
- Lake Taupo is swamped with Kiwi holidaymakers from Christmas to late January, so it pays to book ahead for accommodation during this time.



Taupo & the Central Plateau Highlights

- 1 Exploring fascinating volcanic terrain while tramping the **Tongariro Alpine Crossing** (p264)
- 2 Rediscovering the 'lost valley' of **Orakei Korako** (p253)
- 3 Hurtling to earth strapped to a complete stranger above the world's skydiving capital, **Taupo** (p248)
- 4 Carving fresh powder on **Mt Ruapehu** (p262)
- 5 Mountain biking over the 284m Hapuawhenua Viaduct on the **Ohakune Old Coach Road** (p270)
- 6 Paddling Lake Taupo to check out the modern **Maori carvings** (p249)
- 7 Rocketing up the Waikato River to the base of **Huka Falls** (p249) in a jetboat
- 8 Soaking in the healing geothermal waters of the **Wairakei Terraces** (p251) hot pools