



Taupo & the Central Plateau

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Best Places to Eat

- » Bistro Lago (p254)
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Best Places to Stay

- » Riverstone Backpackers (p258)
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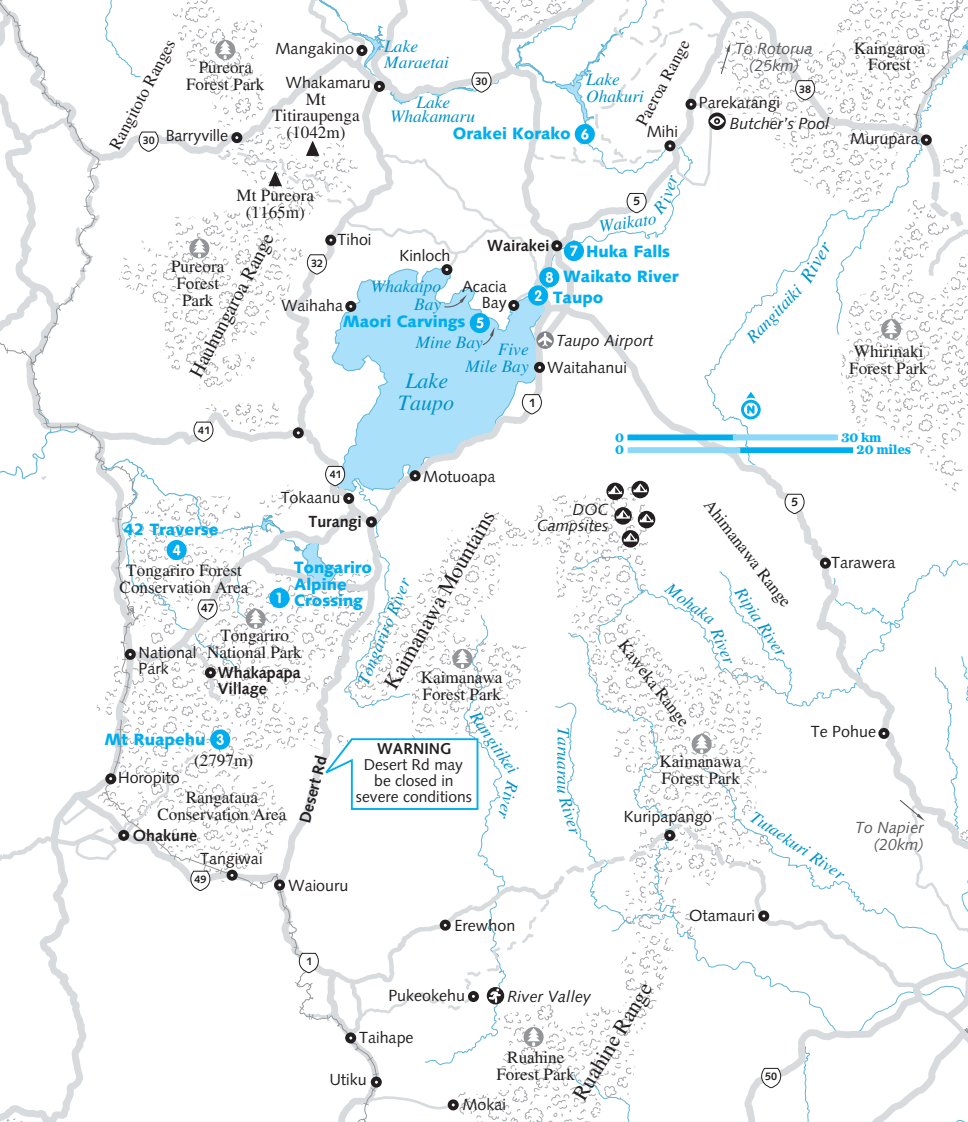
Why Go?

From river deep to mountain high, New Zealand's geology takes centre stage in this diverse region – and my-oh-my does it get its shimmy on. Much of the pizzazz comes from 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, for this area now rivals Rotorua for daredevil escapades. Perhaps you fancy fly-fishing in the trout-filled Tongariro River, hooning up to Huka Falls in a jetboat, or bouncing on a bungy over the Waikato River? Or skydiving, skiing or just soaking in a thermal pool? If so, mark Taupo as a must-do on your North Island itinerary.

When to Go

Equally popular in winter as in summer, there's not really a bad time to visit. 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 up to around 24°C in summer. In summer, the lake becomes the epicentre of a whirl of outdoor activity.



Taupo & Central Plateau Highlights

- 1** Exploring fascinating volcanic terrain while tramping the **Tongariro Alpine Crossing** (p262)
- 2** Hurtling to earth strapped to a complete stranger in the world's skydiving capital, **Taupo** (p250)
- 3** Carving fresh powder on **Mt Ruapehu** (p260)
- 4** Biking till your bum burns on the **42 Traverse** (p262)
- 5** Paddling Lake Taupo to check out the modern **Maori carvings** (p245)
- 6** Rediscovering the 'lost valley' of **Orakei Korako** (p256)
- 7** Rocketing up the Waikato River to the base of **Huka Falls** (p245) in a jetboat
- 8** Plunging 47m over the **Waikato River** (p251) on the end of a rubber band