

Trampers Directory

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PRACTICALITIES

- *Wilderness* (www.wildernessmag.com) is an excellent magazine for trampers, with articles on long treks and day walks in every issue.
- Electricity is 230V AC, 50Hz – as in Europe and Australia – and Australian-style three-prong plugs are used.
- New Zealand uses the metric system for all weights, measures and distances.
- Public laundries are rare in New Zealand, but virtually every accommodation place provides a coin-operated washing machine and dryer.
- The legal drinking age in New Zealand is 18.
- *Going Bush* by the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council is a great brochure covering the basics of tramping. It's available free at most DOC offices or visitor information centres.

ACCOMMODATION

To find your way around New Zealand's caravan parks, hotels, motels and so on, pick up a copy of the *New Zealand Accommodation Guide* published by the **Automobile Association** (AA; ☎ 09-966 8720; www.aatravel.co.nz) – it has more than 3000 listings and can be accessed online. **Jasons Travel Media** (☎ 09-912 8400; www.jasons.com) also produces a variety of free travel directories, including *New Zealand Holiday Parks & Campgrounds* and *New Zealand Motels & Motor Lodges*.

Camping & Caravan Parks

Camping grounds, also referred to as caravan parks and holiday parks, are found just about everywhere, including in conveniently located spots near the centre of many towns. Camping fees are either for unpowered sites, or powered sites with electrical outlets for caravans and campervans. They are also set as a fixed rate for two people, or as a per-person rate.

Large commercial camping grounds usually have well-equipped communal kitchens and dining areas, showers, a laundry and even TV lounges. They also offer bunkrooms, a range of cabins and self-contained units known as tourist flats.

BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

You can camp in the backcountry on all tracks except the Milford. On most other Great Walks (Routeburn, Kepler, Abel Tasman Coast Track, Heaphy and Lake Waikaremoana) you have to book a camp site as you would a bunk in a hut, and there will be times when all the sites are booked. On other Great Walks you must stay at designated sites or in overflow areas near the huts.

On all other tracks you can camp anywhere, as long as you are at least 500m from the trail. You can also camp near huts, and use their water and cooking facilities. A **backcountry hut ticket** (\$5) is required to set up camp outside Serviced huts (see p334). Except on the popular Great Walks, the overwhelming majority of trampers in New Zealand, be they Kiwis or overseas visitors, do not camp along the tracks. The

hut system is so extensive and affordable, and the sandflies so bad at times, that it's hard to justify hauling a tent and sleeping mat into the mountains.

DOC CAMPING GROUNDS

The Department of Conservation (DOC) operates more than 230 camping grounds (conservation camping areas) throughout New Zealand. There are DOC camp sites in reserves and in national, maritime, forest and farm parks.

There are three types of DOC camping grounds. **Serviced grounds** (per adult \$8-14) have flush toilets, hot showers, tap water, kitchen and laundry areas, outdoor lights, picnic tables and rubbish collection, and usually have powered as well as unpowered sites. They may also have barbecues or fireplaces, a shop and a campervan waste-disposal point.

Standard camping areas (per adult \$3-10) are more basic, with minimal facilities, including cold running water, vault (long-drop) toilets, fireplaces and not much else.

Basic camping areas (free) usually have just a cold-water tap and places to pitch tents. Sometimes access to these sites is difficult – you may have to walk rather than drive – but they are worth it if you're geared for camping.

You can check with local DOC visitor information centres for details on facilities, such as what you need to take and whether you should book. Reservations can be made for all serviced camping grounds; contact the DOC office nearest the camping ground.

Guesthouses & B&Bs

B&B (bed and breakfast) accommodation in private homes is a growth industry in New Zealand. You'll find such accommodation in everything from suburban bungalows and farm cottages to stately manors in the most impressive sections of the cities. Guesthouses are usually Spartan, inexpensive, 'private' (unlicensed) hotels – mostly low-key places patronised by people who eschew the impersonal atmosphere of many motels.

Breakfast is part of the stay at genuine B&Bs and may be 'Continental' (cereal, toast, fruit, yogurt, tea and coffee) or 'full' (eggs, bacon, pancakes and other cooked

goodies). Many B&B owners will also pick you up from the airport or bus station, run you out to the track for a small additional fee, store your excess luggage while you are tramping and let you clean your clothes when you get back. Tariffs are typically around \$80 to \$150 (per double), though there are a growing number of upscale B&Bs with rates that start at \$200 and climb from there.

Hostels

New Zealand practically overflows with hostels – or backpacker lodges as they are also known. These range from small home-stay-style affairs with a handful of beds, to huge complexes in the centre of cities such as Auckland and Christchurch that have hundreds of beds, plus Internet cafés, booking desks and even rooftop bars and hot tubs. Virtually all of them have fully-equipped communal kitchens, common areas, laundry facilities and a way to check your email. Most backpacker lodges charge extra if you need to hire bedding, so it's best to travel with your own sleeping bag. A bed in a dorm ranges from \$22 to \$29 per night, and many hostels also offer double and twin rooms.

Most hostels belong to one of three national organisations: **YHA New Zealand** (☎ 0800-278 299, 03-353 9192; www.yha.co.nz) has more than 60 hostels, and **VIP Backpacker Resorts** (☎ 09-816 8903; www.vip.co.nz) has 70 member hostels. **Budget Backpacker Hostels** (BBH; ☎ 03-379 3014; www.bbh.co.nz) is the largest, with around 325 hostels, home-stays and farm-stays. Its *BBH Backpacker Accommodation* booklet, commonly known as the 'Blue Brochure', is a handy publication to travel with. Membership of one of these organisations costs around \$40 per year, but it will save you from \$1 to \$3 a night with their member hostels. The prices in this guidebook are nonmembership rates.

Hotels & Motels

The least expensive form of hotel accommodation is the humble pub. The main business of these hotels is serving beer, but they often do a sideline in relatively cheap upstairs beds with shared bathrooms. Some even offer 'dorm rooms'. In the cheapest pubs, singles/doubles might cost as little as \$30/40, though \$40/60 is more common. Just keep in mind