



# Abel Tasman, Kahurangi & Nelson Lakes

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## Best Huts

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- ➔ Salisbury Lodge (p186)
- ➔ Angelus Hut (p192)

## Best Views

- ➔ Separation Point (p173)
- ➔ James Mackay Hut (p178)
- ➔ Little Wanganui Saddle (p183)
- ➔ Mt Arthur (p185)
- ➔ St Arnaud Range (p196)

## Why Go?

The Nelson region is a trampers' paradise, boasting three national parks – Abel Tasman, Kahurangi and Nelson Lakes. Between them they offer a mind-blowing diversity of landscapes and experiences, from swimming in golden coves or quick plunges in frigid mountain streams, to traversing a plateau strewn with ancient rock formations, tramping across the sands of a wild West Coast beach, or exploring alpine peaks and passes with views as far as the eye can see.

This region has two Great Walks, including New Zealand's most popular, the Abel Tasman Coast Track. The other, the Heaphy Track, is famed for its ecological and geological wonders. There are many other well-established tracks and myriad more-remote and less-frequented options such as the Mt Arthur Tableland Circuit, included in this book for the first time.

## When to Go

Sheltered by mountain ranges, Abel Tasman National Park basks in some of NZ's best weather. Particularly pleasant spells occur reliably through summer and autumn, but the park can happily be tramped all year round.

Kahurangi cops the westerly winds that blow off the Tasman Sea, bringing substantial rainfall to mountain areas that in turn lead to river flooding. Snow is also possible at higher altitudes, but Kahurangi can be tramped all year round in favourable conditions.

Nelson Lakes possesses a surprisingly moderate climate for an alpine region. Things can turn pear-shaped very quickly, though, with the arrival of heavy rain or even a blizzard. The odds of good weather are considerably higher from November to April.

## GATEWAY TOWNS

- ➔ Nelson (p197)
- ➔ Motueka (p198)
- ➔ Marahau (p199)
- ➔ Takaka (p199)
- ➔ Karamea (p200)
- ➔ St Arnaud (p201)

## Fast Facts

- ➔ Abel Tasman National Park is NZ's smallest, covering 227 sq km. But small doesn't mean unpopular...around 30,000 people walk the Abel Tasman Coast Track every year, making it NZ's most popular Great Walk.
- ➔ At the other end of the scale, Kahurangi is NZ's second-largest national park, at 4520 sq km, but only 6500 people a year complete its Great Walk, the Heaphy Track.

## Top Tip

Between rivers, lakes and ocean, you can count on getting out on or in the water at some stage during your tramping adventures. Pack a hat, sunscreen and swimsuit (although you'll probably get away with a skinny dip).

## Resources

- ➔ [www.nelsonnz.com](http://www.nelsonnz.com)
- ➔ [www.motuekaisite.co.nz](http://www.motuekaisite.co.nz)
- ➔ [www.goldenbaynz.co.nz](http://www.goldenbaynz.co.nz)
- ➔ [www.heaphytrack.com](http://www.heaphytrack.com)
- ➔ [www.karameainfo.co.nz](http://www.karameainfo.co.nz)
- ➔ [www.starnaud.co.nz](http://www.starnaud.co.nz)

## Background Reading

Golden Bay writer Gerald Hindmarsh has produced several highly readable social-history books in recent years. In *Kahurangi Calling: Stories from the Backcountry of Northwest Nelson*, he describes many of the natural wonders found in Kahurangi and tells the stories of the fascinating characters who have lived there or travelled through, including explorers, miners, graziers, eelers, hermits and trampers. His 2013 book, *Outsiders: Stories from the Fringe of New Zealand Society*, continues in the same vein. Hindmarsh believes that a society is lucky to have people such as those he mentions in his book, that these 'outsiders' offer 'an important counterbalance to the high-pressured, commercialised and urban world that most of us inhabit'.

## DON'T MISS

The Abel Tasman Coast Track has long been trampers' territory, but its coastal beauty makes it an equally seductive spot for sea kayaking, which can be combined with walking and camping. The possibilities and permutations for guided or freedom rental trips are vast. You can kayak from half a day up to three days, camping or staying in DOC huts, baches, even a floating backpackers, either fully catered or self-catering. You can kayak one day, camp overnight then walk back, or walk further into the park and catch a water taxi back.

A popular choice if time is tight is to spend a few hours kayaking, followed by a walk on the coastal track, stopping off for a dip or two in the azure waters.

Marahau is the main base for departure, but trips also depart from Kaiteiteri. There are plenty of professional operators ready to float you out on the water, most offering similar trips at similar prices. The Nelson region i-SITEs are well versed in kayak trip planning, recommendations and bookings.

## DOC Offices

- ➔ **DOC Nelson Regional Visitor Centre** (☎ 03-548 2304; [www.nelsonnz.com](http://www.nelsonnz.com); cnr Trafalgar & Halifax Sts; ☀ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun)
- ➔ **DOC Motueka Area Office** (☎ 03-528 1810; [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz); cnr King Edward & High Sts; ☀ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri)
- ➔ **DOC Golden Bay Area Office** (☎ 03-525 8026; [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz); 62 Commercial St; ☀ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri)
- ➔ **Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre** (☎ 03-521 1806; [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz); View Rd; ☀ 8am-4.30pm, to 5pm in summer)