

Foreword

Peter Hillary



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There is something extraordinary about New Zealand's primeval landscape. The place is a South Pacific remnant of Gondwanaland, and the best way to see its brooding forests and cloud fringed peaks is to walk it. Whether it is bush bashing in the Waitakeres, strolling Abel Tasman's gorgeous coastline or hunkering down from the weather on the Milford Track – spectacular is the word that defines this country.

You know, I am able to think better when I walk...and I love to walk and talk with a friend. New Zealand is filled with wonderful places to walk, talk and think. (By the way, this is 'antipodean multitasking.' We can move our lips and limbs at the same time.)

I learned 'antipodean multitasking' at an early age from my father, Sir Edmund Hillary. When I was 10 years old he took me to climb Mt Fog in the incredible wilderness of the Matuki Valley, deep in the Southern Alps. We slept outside in the golden tussock grass and headed for the summit in the early morning light. I followed Dad's bucket-sized footprints up a snow slope, feeling the sublime confidence of a young boy's faith in his father. Such experiences led to a lifetime of forays into the New Zealand mountains to climb and explore. Both the Mt Cook and Mt Aspiring areas became the perfect training ground for expeditions to the ends of the earth. I have been to the North and South Poles, and to the summit of Mt Everest twice, and yet I crave returning to the great walks and landscapes of New Zealand.

It's simple really. New Zealand is one of the world's most beautiful countries, with superb coastlines and beaches, mountains, rivers and forests. When it comes to outdoor recreation this country is the best. Go on, get out there. Go tramping!

Peter Hillary has climbed Everest, skied to the South Pole, and funds schools and hospitals in Nepal. He is the father of four energetic children and he loves tramping in New Zealand

The tramps	Duration	Difficulty	Best time	Transport	Summary	Page
Far North						
Rangitoto Island Loop	4-5 hours	easy	year-round	boat	Climb a volcano and tramp through lava fields, enjoying one of the best views of central Auckland	41
Waitakere Ranges Loop	4 hours	moderate-demanding	year-round	private	Explore a wilderness-like setting only one hour's drive from Auckland	44
Cape Reinga Walkway	3 days	easy	year-round	bus	Tramp spectacular beaches and the rugged coast around New Zealand's northern tip	47
Great Barrier Forest	3 days	moderate	Oct-May	bus	Wander a rugged island with historic kauri dams and hot springs	53
Kauaeranga Kauri Trail	2 days	easy-moderate	Oct-May	shuttle service	Step back in time with logging and gold-mining relics on the forested hills of the Coromandel Peninsula	59
Central North Island						
Lake Waikaremoana Great Walk	4 days	easy-moderate	Oct-May	shuttle service, boat	Enjoy beaches, swimming and fishing on this Great Walk	70
Whakatane-Waikare River Loop	5 days	moderate-demanding	Nov-Mar	private	Follow a remote river route with plenty of fords and fishing opportunities	73
Whirinaki Track	2 days	easy	Oct-May	shuttle service	Explore a lush forest with caves and an impressive gorge	79
Tongariro Northern Circuit	4 days	moderate	Dec-Mar	bus	Tramp past volcanoes and through a spectacular thermal area on this Great Walk	85
Urchin-Umukarikari Circuit	2 days	moderate	Nov-Apr	bus	View the Tongariro volcanoes from a neighbouring forest park	92
Southern North Island						
Mt Taranaki High-Level Circuit	4 days	moderate	Dec-Mar	shuttle service	Tramp around a landmark volcano for spectacular views	102
Mt Taranaki Low-Level Circuit	5 days	moderate	Dec-Mar	shuttle service	Beat the elements and explore the bush while circuiting a stunning volcano	106
Pouakai Track	2 days	moderate	Oct-May	shuttle service	Enjoy Egmont National Park and Mt Taranaki in two days	108
Matamateonga Track	4 days	easy-moderate	Oct-May	bus, boat	Wander along an isolated wilderness track, ending with a thrilling jetboat ride on the Whanganui River	111
Rangiwahia & Deadmans Loop	3 days	moderate-demanding	Jan & Feb	private	Explore lightly used ridges and valleys in Ruahine Forest Park	117
Mt Holdsworth Circuit	3 days	moderate-demanding	Dec-Mar	private	Stay in scenic huts and admire views from an alpine ridge in Tararua Forest Park	121
Totara Flats Track	3 days	moderate	Oct-Apr	private	Follow pleasant river valleys through the Tararua Range	125
Marlborough Region						
Queen Charlotte Track	4 days	moderate	Oct-May	boat, bus	Treat yourself to beautiful coastal scenery and interesting accommodation options	132
Nydia Track	2 days	easy	Oct-May	boat, shuttle service	Cross two saddles and explore a sheltered shoreline	138
Pelorus Track	3 days	moderate	Oct-Apr	shuttle service	Tussle with trout or take a dip in the deep green pools of the Pelorus River	140
Nelson Region						
Abel Tasman Coast Track	5 days	easy	year-round	boat, bus	Explore a series of beautiful beaches and bays on this Great Walk	148
Heaphy Track	5 days	easy	Oct-May	bus	Follow in historic footsteps and enjoy a stunning variety of scenery on this Great Walk	166
Wangapeka Track	5 days	moderate	Nov-Apr	bus	Climb two 1000m saddles and wander beech-forested valleys	172
Leslie-Karamea Track	7 days	moderate-demanding	Nov-Apr	bus	Combine great trout fishing with the dramatic scenery of an earthquake-torn valley	177
Travers-Sabine Circuit	6 days	moderate-demanding	Feb & Mar	bus, boat	Explore grassy river flats, beech forests and two alpine saddles	186
D'Urville Valley Track	6 days	demanding	Feb-Mar	shuttle service, boat	Climb a challenging alpine pass, tempered by the beauty of Blue Lake	190

The tramps	Duration	Difficulty	Best time	Transport	Summary	Page
Canterbury						
Banks Peninsula Track	4 days	easy-moderate	Oct-Apr	bus	Take in wonderful seascapes and wildlife on this private track	196
Mt Somers Track	2 days	moderate	Nov-Mar	shuttle service	Tramp the subalpine areas around Mt Somers, soaking in refreshing pools at night	200
St James Walkway	5 days	easy-moderate	Nov-Apr	bus	Cross two low passes while enjoying fine mountain scenery	205
Kaikoura Coast Track	3 days	easy-moderate	Oct-Apr	bus	Enjoy following the Pacific coast by day and staying at farms by night	211
Arthur's Pass National Park						
Avalanche Peak	6-8 hours	moderate	Nov-Mar	bus, train	Climb high above Arthur's Pass on the South Island's most scenic day tramp	220
Goat Pass Track	2 days	moderate	Nov-Mar	bus	Spend a night high above the bush-line in Goat Pass Hut	224
Waimakariri-Harman Pass Route	4 days	demanding	Nov-Mar	bus	Soak in a hot spring as reward for a tough crossing of two alpine passes	226
Harper Pass	5 days	moderate	Nov-Mar	bus, train	Follow a historic gold-mining route over a low pass	230
Cass-Lagoon Saddles Track	2 days	moderate	Nov-Feb	bus, train	Admire spectacular views from two alpine saddles	234
West Coast						
Inland Pack Track	2 days	moderate	Dec-Mar	bus	Admire an unusual karst landscape and stay in one of NZ's largest rock bivvies	241
Croesus Track	2 days	moderate	Nov-Mar	bus, helicopter	Retrace history on a subalpine track loaded with mining relics	245
Welcome Flat	3 days	easy-moderate	Oct-Apr	bus	Follow the Karangarua River to NZ's most spectacular hot springs	251
Mueller Hut	2 days	demanding	Dec-Mar	bus	Climb steeply to spend a night among the spectacular peaks of Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park	254
Mt Aspiring National Park						
Routeburn Track	3 days	moderate	Nov-Apr	bus	Enjoy one of NZ's best alpine crossings on this Great Walk	261
Greenstone Track	3 days	easy	Oct-May	bus, boat	Discover the easy tramping and legendary fishing of the Greenstone valley	265
Caples Track	2 days	moderate-demanding	Nov-Apr	boat	Ascend to a high pass on a lightly used track	269
Mavora Walkway	3 days	easy	Oct-May	bus, boat, plane	Savour the solitude, impressive alpine scenery and trout fishing of the Mavora valley	271
Rees-Dart Track	4 days	moderate	Nov-Apr	bus, jetboat	Cross an alpine pass dividing two splendid valleys	274
Cascade Saddle Route	4 days	very demanding	Dec-Mar	bus	Admire the fine views after a difficult climb to one of NZ's most scenic saddles	278
Wilkin-Young Valleys Circuit	3 days	moderate-demanding	Dec-Mar	bus, boat, plane	Savour superb views and scenic beech-forested valleys	281
Fiordland National Park						
Milford Track	4 days	easy	Oct-Apr	bus, boat, plane	Experience lush rainforests, an alpine pass and waterfalls along the 'finest walk in the world'	292
Hollyford Track	5 days	easy-moderate	Oct-May	bus, jetboat, plane	Tramp to the rugged coast and wildlife of Martins Bay	298
Kepler Track	4 days	moderate	Oct-Apr	bus, boat	Spend a full day surrounded by alpine beauty on this Great Walk	302
Dusky Track	4 days	very demanding	Nov-Apr	boat, plane, helicopter	Tramp into the wilderness and isolation of remote Dusky Sound	306
Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track	3 days	moderate	Oct-Apr	bus	Explore a spectacular coast and intriguing logging relics	311
Stewart Island (Rakiura)						
Rakiura Track	3 days	moderate	Nov-Apr	boat, plane	Follow sheltered shores and beautiful beaches on this Great Walk	322
Northwest Circuit	10 days	demanding	Nov-Apr	boat, plane	Slog through mud to wild Mason Bay, admiring beaches and birdlife as you go	326

The Authors



JIM DUFRESNE

Jim first came to New Zealand 20 years ago in search of high peaks and wild places. He found both, along with some fine trout fishing, and has been returning ever since with his backpack and fly rod in hand. Jim began his writing career as the sports and outdoors editor of the *Juneau Empire*, and was the first Alaskan sportswriter to win a national award from Associated Press. Today he lives in Michigan and feeds his appetite for the alpine world with frequent trips to Alaska and New Zealand, as the author of Lonely Planet's *Alaska*, *Hiking in Alaska* and *Tramping in New Zealand*.

My Favourite Tramp...

The trout never had a chance. I love the Greenstone Track because of the easy tramping, the roomy huts, the way mountains enclose the valley, and the clarity of the Greenstone River. But most of all I love the fishing. When I landed a 2kg brown trout after seven days of pasta, rice and instant porridge, I didn't release it...not this time. Instead I carried it back to McKellar Hut, borrowed a frying pan from the hut warden, and – with 20 sets of hungry eyes closely watching me – cooked the two large fillets. I put one on my plate, the other I divided up into 20 nuggets and said: 'Anybody want to try some trout? Freshest fish you'll ever eat.' It was gone in minutes.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

Peter Hillary wrote the foreword (p9). Peter has climbed Everest, skied to the South Pole, and funds schools and hospitals in Nepal. He is the father of four energetic children and he loves tramping in New Zealand.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the Internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on www.lonelyplanet.com.

Tramp Descriptions

This book contains 53 tramp descriptions, ranging from day trips through to multiday megawalks, as well as suggestions for other walks, side trips and alternative routes. Each walk description has a brief introduction outlining the natural and cultural features you may encounter, plus information to help you plan your walk, such as transport options, the level of difficulty and time-frame involved, and any permits that are required.

Day walks are often circular and are located in areas of uncommon beauty. Multiday walk descriptions include information on camp sites, mountain huts, hostels and other accommodation, and point out places where you can obtain water and supplies.

TIMES & DISTANCES

These are provided only as a guide. Times are based on actual walking time and do not include stops for snacks, taking photographs, rests or side trips. Be sure to factor these in when planning your walk. Distances are provided but should be read in conjunction with altitudes. Significant elevation changes can make a greater difference to your walking time than lateral distance.

In most cases, the daily stages are flexible and can be varied. It is important to recognise that short stages are sometimes recommended in order to acclimatise in mountain areas or because there are interesting features to explore en route.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Grading systems are always arbitrary. However, having an indication of the grade may help you choose between walks. Our authors use the following grading guidelines:

Easy A walk on flat terrain or with minor elevation changes, usually over short distances on well-travelled routes with no navigational difficulties.

Moderate A walk with challenging terrain, often involving longer distances and steep climbs.

Demanding A walk with long daily distances and difficult terrain with significant elevation changes; may involve challenging route-finding and high-altitude or glacier travel.

TRAMP STANDARDS

New Zealand's tramping tracks have been graded by the DOC into six categories, which reflect how well they are developed and maintained, and how easy they are to follow. In order, from the easiest to the most difficult, the categories are easy access tracks, short walks, walking tracks, Great Walks & easy tramping tracks, tramping tracks, and routes. For more details on what these standards involve, please see p340.

TRUE LEFT & TRUE RIGHT

The terms 'true left' and 'true right', used to describe the bank of a stream or river, sometimes throw readers. The 'true left bank' simply means the left bank as you look downstream.

Planning

Tramping is the best way to enjoy New Zealand's natural beauty. Climbing a mountain gives you the satisfaction of being a participant in the country's remarkable wilderness rather than just a spectator in a crowded bus on the side of the road.

And this country has no shortage of mountains to climb; it's hilly from one end to the other. There is also no shortage of tracks. New Zealand has thousands of kilometres of tracks, some well marked, others only a line on the map. Many tracks are graded, bridged and easily covered by those with only moderate fitness and little or no tramping experience. Others, such as poled routes through wilderness alpine areas, are better suited to experienced, fit trampers, skilled in map, compass or GPS use and capable of climbing a 1700m pass with 15kg to 20kg strapped to their back.

There are also day hikes and nature walks all across the country. But in New Zealand, overnight and multiday tramping is especially popular because of the hundreds of huts along the tracks. These enable trampers to carry lighter packs, as tents and sleeping mats are often not needed, and to socialize with other trampers at night. Many overseas visitors, after experiencing New Zealand-style tramping for the first time, then plan the rest of their trip travelling from one track to another.

The most important part of planning a tramp is picking the right track, the one that is best suited to your level of fitness and experience. If it's your first tramp, or you have just arrived in the country, an ideal introduction to tramping in New Zealand are the Great Walks (p155). These eight walks are incredibly scenic, thus their special status, but also well signposted and maintained with large huts. Most need to be booked in advance, but that will ensure you have a bunk every night, while each morning hut wardens will pass on weather reports and tips for enjoying the track that day.

After the first tramp, you'll know the type of tracks that are best suited to your level of experience, equipment and interests. If you seek a challenging alpine crossing, jump on a bus for Wanaka to climb Cascade Saddle (p278); if a leisurely stroll through an ancient forest of towering trees appeals, head to the Whirinaki Track (p79); and for an epic 10-day wilderness journey, where you'll see more wildlife than people, find your way to Stewart Island and walk its Northwest Circuit (p326). None of these tramps require advance bookings or reservations – nor do most tracks in New Zealand – just a spirit of adventure and a desire to leave the cities and roads far behind.

WHEN TO TRAMP

National parks and state forests see their largest influx of trampers during the Christmas school holidays (roughly from the third week of December to the end of January). Most tracks, including those in this book, can be undertaken any time from mid-November to mid-April, although snow may be encountered in alpine areas in November or March. The booking season for the Milford Track, the country's best-known tramp, is from the end of October to mid-April.

Low-elevation tracks – the Cape Reinga Walkway and the Hollyford, Greenstone and Abel Tasman Coast Tracks, for example – are walked year-round by trampers, but the vast majority of tracks in New Zealand

TRAMPS FOR EVERY OCCASION

From Cape Reinga at the tip of the North Island to Mason Bay on the backside of Stewart Island, New Zealand is laced with tracks as diverse and different as the trampers who arrive to walk them. Whatever your interests, there's something here to suit you.

Wildlife Watching

New Zealand isn't known for its wildlife; there just isn't a lot of it around. The best track for seeing a wide range of native fauna is the Hollyford Track (p298), where you'll encounter good bird life in the bush, trout in the rivers and penguins and a seal colony at Martins Bay. If you have the time and the legs, the 10-day Northwest Circuit (p326) on Stewart Island will provide opportunities to spot Fiordland crested and yellow-eyed penguins, fur seals and kiwis.

Alpine Crossings

New Zealand is a mountain paradise, and its most famous tracks are alpine crossings where you get a great view and an incredible sense of accomplishment. The Cascade Saddle Route (p278) is a challenging but dramatic crossing, featuring panoramic views of Mt Aspiring and the Dart Glacier. If this crossing is too much for you, try the Routeburn (p261) or Kepler (p302) Tracks. On both tramps you spend almost an entire day above the tree line.

Those seeking a high alpine experience should head to Mt Cook National Park and join a guided trip across either Ball Pass or the famed Copland Pass (see p250).

Bubbling Thermal Areas

Trek around volcanoes, through craters or end your day soaking away sore muscles in steaming hot springs. The Tongariro Northern Circuit (p85) is a truly stunning tramp featuring volcanoes, brightly coloured craters and steep lava ridges. Near Auckland you can hike up to the summit and peer into Rangitoto (p41), the largest volcanic cone in the region.

Remote hot springs are one of New Zealand's best tramping attractions. The most scenic springs for that end-of-the-day soak are at Welcome Flat Hut (p251). For more suggestions see p207.

Beach Rambles

There's a reason the Abel Tasman Coast Track (p148) is New Zealand's most popular track: the weather is sunny and beaches are plentiful. That's a nice combination if you're a trumper. Forgot to book a spot on this Great Walk? Then head north to the uncrowded beaches and tropic-like weather on the Cape Reinga Walkway (p47).

At the End of the World

Load up your backpack and use your feet to escape the crowds and lose yourself (figuratively) in the middle of nowhere. For that edge-of-the-world feeling that only a long wilderness tramp can give you, hike into Supper Cove (p310) at the end of the Dusky Track, or watch the surf pound isolated Big Bay (p316).

All in a Day

No time? No problem. It's amazing what you can see and experience on some of New Zealand's best day tramps. In the North Island they like to say the thermal attractions of the Tongariro Crossing (p85) make it the country's best day tramp. In the South Island they say it's the alpine world experienced by tramping to Avalanche Peak (p220). Take your pick.

In the Lap of Luxury

Sure, you're tramping, but that doesn't mean you have to rough it by hauling a heavy backpack every day and eating two-minute noodles every night. Along the Queen Charlotte Track (p132) you can choose from a variety of plush resorts with fine restaurants and fun pubs to end each day. The next morning a water taxi will ship your pack to the next resort.

There are also a wide range of guided walks that have their own private huts with hot showers, cold beer and fresh food. The Milford Guided Walk (p292) is expensive...but you're worth it.

Lighthouses

Some people are intrigued by lighthouses, and New Zealand has no shortage of them. The high point along both the Cape Brett Track (p64) and Cape Campbell Walkway (p145) is hiking out to a remote lighthouse and spending the night there.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is invaluable when planning any tramp in New Zealand. Check up-to-date track information and sign up for the news email *What's Up DOC?* at www.doc.govt.nz.

should be avoided in June, July and August. These are New Zealand's winter months and tramping at this time requires special skills and equipment to combat the low temperatures, snow and strong winds.

For overseas travellers, the best time to explore the country's wilderness may be February and March. This is the driest time of the year, the kids are in school, mums and dads are back at work and, on most tracks, you can usually count on getting a bunk in the next hut. If you do plan on tramping around Christmas, choose a track that lies off the beaten path.

COSTS & MONEY

Compared to travelling around the country, tramping in New Zealand is extremely affordable. Only Great Walks and private tracks have permit fees for tramping. It's inexpensive to arrange a tramp and once you're on the tracks there's rarely any place to spend your money, as there's no friendly pubs near the huts. Figure on a daily cost of \$15 to \$20 while tramping to cover DOC hut fees (\$5 to \$10 per night) and the food you're carrying. Add transport fares from the nearest town to the trailhead – \$30 to \$100 for most bus and water-taxi drop-offs – and the price of the necessary map (\$14 to \$16) and you have the cost of your tramp.

In between walks is when most trampers empty their money pouch, replenishing themselves with the things they were deprived of – basically a bed, beer and a box of fish and chips. Budget travellers who sleep in

See Climate (p336) for more information on New Zealand's weather.

GUIDED & GROUP TRAMPS

On many of New Zealand's best-known tracks you can join guided tramps, often featuring large, comfortable lodges, excellent food and other amenities not available when you tramp on your own and stay at DOC huts. Some people join organised tramps because they like the security of a guide who has been there before, but most people join such a tramp because they like the luxury it offers. Following are some tramping organisations:

- **Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences** (☎ 03-528 2027; www.abeltasman.co.nz) Three-day guided tramps on the Abel Tasman Coast Track with accommodation in beach lodges.
- **Hiking New Zealand** (☎ 274-360 268; www.nzhike.com) Complete itineraries that include guided tramps along with transport, sightseeing and accommodation between tracks.
- **Hollyford Track** (☎ 03-442 7789; www.hollyfordtrack.co.nz) Several trips in the Hollyford valley that all end with a scenic flight to Milford Sound.
- **Kahurangi Guided Walks** (☎ 03-525 7177; www.kahurangiwalks.co.nz) Guides you along the Heaphy Track with accommodation in DOC huts.
- **Kiwi Wilderness Walks** (☎ 021-359 592; www.nzwalk.com) Its Stewart Island trip begins with a flight to New Zealand's wildest beach at Masons Bay, and on the Hump Ridge Track it uses helicopters to transport your pack.
- **Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company** (☎ 03-573 6078; www.marlboroughsounds.com) Offers a range of guided walks along the Queen Charlotte Track, with accommodation at a different resort each night.
- **Milford Track Guided Walk** (☎ 03-441 1138; www.milfordtrack.co.nz) A five-day tramp along the 'finest walk in the world', with accommodation in private lodges.
- **Routeburn Track Guided Walk** (☎ 03-442 8200; www.routeburn.co.nz) Tramps along the Routeburn Track, or a combination of the Routeburn and Greenstone Tracks, with its own comfortable huts.
- **Wild Walks** (☎ 03-443 4476; www.wildwalks.co.nz) Claims its four-day Rabbit Pass Trek is the wildest guided tramp in the country.

backpacker lodges or caravan parks, and prepare two meals a day themselves, can expect daily expenses of \$40 to \$50. This does not include transport between towns, your bar tab at night or that spur-of-the-moment bungee jump. Take it up a notch, with accommodation at B&Bs or motels and two meals a day at mid-range restaurants, and the expenses for two people jump to \$130 to \$150 a day.

BACKGROUND READING

Sir Edmund Hillary: An Extraordinary Life, by Alexa Johnston, is the story about the Auckland beekeeper who became the first man to climb Mt Everest – part of the reason why tramping and climbing are such passionate pursuits in New Zealand.

A Trampler's Journey by Mark Pickering is the story of a self-described 'hill junkie', blending personal anecdotes, stories and lively logbook entries from 30 years of tramping experience in New Zealand.

The book *True South*, by Pat Barrett, tells of the author's love for tramping all over the South Island. It features 22 stories, taking you from well-known and popular walks like the Kepler Track right out to rugged and remote adventure treks, such as a glacial traverse of Westland's Garden of Eden.

The Four Corners of New Zealand by AH Reed is a classic autobiographical account of this legendary Kiwi publisher who, in 1954, at the age of 85, walked from the North Cape to Bluff and then walked home to write about it.

The New Zealand Outdoor Cookbook, by Marcelle Pilinton, is an informative and interesting guide on appetising, lightweight food, and one Kiwi's answer to why nobody should go hungry while tramping. Pass the mint sauce please.

Tramping Smarter by Hans Willem covers the basics in detail (navigation, weather, clothing and how to eat well on the track) but also provides a brief overview of New Zealand's national parks and popular tracks.

The Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook by Ian Bodie is for trampers who are also fans of the trilogy. You're in for a treat as many scenes were shot in backcountry locations, from the Routeburn Track Road to Mavora Lakes.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Before you hit the track, hit the Internet for thousands of useful sites. Here are just a few of interest to trampers.

Department of Conservation (www.doc.govt.nz) Information on national parks, huts, Great Walks, tracks and endangered species. The most useful site for trampers.

Fish and Game New Zealand (www.fishandgame.org.nz) Tips and information on fishing in NZ, plus *Reel Life*, its online angling magazine with regional fishing reports.

HOW MUCH?

Stove fuel canisters \$7

Great Walk huts \$10-40

Freeze-dried dinner \$8-11

Night at backpacker lodge \$22-29

Scroggin (trail mix) \$1.20 per 100g

DON'T HIT THE TRACK WITHOUT...

- A lightweight stove (p365)
- A spinning or fly rod if you dream of trophy trout (p34)
- Insect repellent that melts watchbands (p362)
- Gaiters; the best way to handle the mud (p365)
- Moleskin or bandages for unexpected blisters (p360)
- Hut tickets or an annual backcountry hut pass (p335)

Hike South (www.hikesouth.com) Dedicated to the major tracks on the southern tip of the South Island, from the Milford to the Dusky Track and Stewart Island. Useful if you're a freedom walker or looking for a guided trip.

New Zealand Alpine Club (www.alpineclub.org.nz) Information on mountaineering, rock climbing and tramping, as well as club huts, classes and courses.

New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association (www.rivers.org.nz/nzrca) Information on paddling and white-water rafting in NZ.

Tourism New Zealand (www.newzealand.com) Highlights, itineraries and transport options.

Ultralight Tramping (www.tramplight.co.nz) Devoted to enjoying the New Zealand wilderness without having to carry heavy loads: tramping with 4.5kg or less strapped to your back.

LonelyPlanet.com (www.lonelyplanet.com) Post tramping questions on the Thorn Tree before you go, and then dispense advice when you get back.

MetService (www.metservice.co.nz) Current and five-day weather forecasts throughout New Zealand.

Environment

New Zealand is a country of towering peaks, clear mountain streams, impressive glaciers, soothing hot springs and bush so thick and lush that it keeps the rain off you. What it doesn't have is a whole lot of wildlife, at least not that is visible to trampers.

For many this is good. They don't have to worry about venomous snakes or a 300kg grizzly bear charging down the track at them. For others it's the only thing missing in what is otherwise a walkers' paradise. The fluttering of birds seen along the tracks pales to the wildlife encounters possible in places such as Alaska and Australia.

THE LAND

New Zealand stretches 1600km from north to south. It consists of two large islands, a number of smaller islands scattered nearby, plus a few islands hundreds of kilometres away.

NEW ZEALAND ENVIRONMENTAL CARE CODE

Toitu te whenua (leave the land undisturbed). To support this approach, the Department of Conservation (DOC) has developed an Environmental Care Code that includes the following directives:

Protect Plants & Animals

Treat forests and birds with care and respect; they are unique and often rare.

Remove Rubbish

Litter is unattractive, harmful to wildlife and can increase vermin and disease.

Bury Toilet Waste

In areas without toilet facilities, bury your toilet waste in a shallow hole well away from waterways, tracks, camp sites and huts.

Keep Streams & Lakes Clean

When cleaning and washing, take the water and wash well away from the water source. Because soaps and detergents are harmful to water life, drain used water into the soil so it can be filtered. If you suspect the water may be contaminated, boil for at least three minutes, or filter or chemically treat it.

Take Care with Fires

Portable fuel stoves are less harmful to the environment and are more efficient than campfires. If you use a fire, keep it small, use only dead wood, put it out by dousing it with water and check the ashes.

Camp Carefully

When camping, leave no trace of your visit.

Keep to the Track

By keeping to the track (where one exists) you lessen the chance of damaging fragile plants.

Consider Others

People visit the backcountry and rural areas for many reasons. Be considerate of others who also want to enjoy the environment.

Respect Our Cultural Heritage

Many places in New Zealand have a spiritual and historical significance.

Enjoy Your Visit

Take a last look before leaving an area; will the next visitor know you have been there?

Protect the Environment

This is important, for your own sake, for the sake of those who come after you and for the environment itself.

The North Island (115,000 sq km) – in Maori called Te Ika a Maui (the Fish Of Maui) – and the South Island (151,000 sq km) are the two major land masses. Stewart Island (1700 sq km) lies directly south of the South Island. With a land mass of 270,534 sq km, New Zealand's total area is greater than the UK (244,800 sq km), smaller than Japan (377,800 sq km) and just a little bigger than Colorado in the USA (270,000 sq km). New Zealand's coastline – with its many bays, harbours and fiords – is very long relative to the land mass of the country.

Another notable geographic feature is the country's great number of rivers. There's a lot of rainfall in New Zealand, and all that water has to go somewhere. The 425km-long Waikato River, in the North Island, is the country's longest river. The Whanganui River, also in the North Island, is its longest navigable river. There are also several spectacular lakes: Waikaremoana and Wanaka, in the North and South Islands respectively, are two of the most beautiful, while Lake Taupo in the North Island is New Zealand's largest lake.

GEOLOGY

Both the North and South Islands have high mountains, which were formed by distinct geological processes related to the westward movement of the Pacific tectonic plate.

North Island

When one tectonic plate slides underneath another it forms a subduction zone. Geologists say the North Island is on the southern reaches of the subduction zone, where the oceanic Pacific plate is sliding underneath the continental plate. This movement results in volcanic activity and has created a number of large volcanoes and thermal areas, and some equally impressive volcanic depressions.

A rough 'line' of volcanoes, some of which are still active, extends south from the steaming Whakaari (White) Island in the Bay of Plenty, past Putauaki/Mt Edgecumbe and the highly active thermal areas around Rotorua and Lake Taupo, to the North Island's spectacular volcanoes of Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu. Continuing west, there's the lone volcanic cone of Mt Taranaki. It is said that Port Nicholson – the bay on which New Zealand's capital, Wellington, is located – is a flooded volcanic crater. Other parts of the North Island also show evidence of volcanic activity. Auckland, for example, has more than 50 volcanic cones, including most of the famous 'hills' (One Tree Hill, Mt Eden) that rise from the flat lands.

The North Island also has ranges of hills and mountains produced by folding and uplift, notably the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges in the south. In general, though, most of the high places of the North Island were formed by volcanic activity.

South Island

The geological process is different in the South Island. Here the two tectonic plates are smashing into each other, resulting in a process called crustal shortening. This has caused the Southern Alps, which include New Zealand's highest peak, Aoraki/Mt Cook (3754m), to rise as a spine, extending virtually the entire length of the South Island. Thrust faulting, folding and vertical slips have all combined to create a rapid uplifting of the Alps – as much as 10mm per year. Although the Southern Alps receive a lot of rainfall, and hence a lot of erosion, they are continuing to rise.

With 17,000 earthquakes a year, plus smoking volcanoes, New Zealand is a beautiful but unstable land. Read *Awesome Forces* by Geoff Hicks and Hamish Campbell, and see if you still want to go tramping.

Most of the eastern side of the South Island is a large plain, known as the Canterbury Plains. Banks Peninsula, southeast of Christchurch, was formed by volcanic activity, and was joined to the mainland by alluvial deposits washed down from the Southern Alps.

WILDLIFE

New Zealand is believed to be a fragment of the ancient southern continent of Gondwanaland that detached more than 80 million years ago, allowing many ancient plants and animals to survive and evolve in isolation. As a result, most of the indigenous flora and fauna is endemic. New Zealand has the world's largest and only flightless parrot (kakapo), the only truly alpine parrot (kea), a reptile that dates back to the age of the dinosaurs (tuatara), some of the biggest earthworms, the smallest bats, some of the oldest trees and many of the rarest birds, insects and plants. The first Maori brought rats and the now-extinct Maori dog (*kuri*) with them but the only indigenous land mammals are bats.

Animals

BIRDS

The diversity of endemic birds in New Zealand is not immense, but they initially evolved in relative peace, with very little threat and no large competitors. For a time at least, ground-dwelling parrots, kiwis and moas not only survived but thrived.

The balance was altered by the arrival of humans – first the Maori then the Pakeha (Europeans) – as well as the predatory species they introduced. Many species quickly vanished, including the famous moa, a sort of oversized ostrich that stood up to 4m tall.

New Zealand's symbol, and its best-known bird, is the kiwi – a small, tubby, flightless bird. Because it's nocturnal, and sleeps for up to 20 hours a day, it's not easy to observe. Kiwis have defunct vestigial wings, feathers that are more like hair and eyes that are short sighted, but they do have strong legs. They spend their waking hours poking around for worms, which they sniff out with the nostrils on the end of their bill.

The female kiwi is larger than the male and much more fierce. She lays an egg weighing up to 500g, about 20% of her body weight, and huge in relation to her size. After performing that mighty feat, she leaves the male to hatch it while she guards the burrow.

There are three species of kiwi: the brown kiwi, of which there are several subspecies; the little spotted kiwi; and the great spotted kiwi. Brown kiwis can be seen on Stewart Island (see p329) but also live in Waitangi State Forest, Little Barrier Island, Fiordland National Park, Paparoa National Park and Mt Otanewainuku, near Tauranga. Little spotted kiwis live on Kapiti Island, and great spotted kiwis are found in Paparoa National Park (see p247).

One of the more interesting and visible ground birds in New Zealand is the weka. Its four subspecies are found in a wide range of habitats, but usually in scrub and on forest margins. The flightless weka is most active at dusk, but can be seen hanging around camp sites during the day and will pilfer anything it can carry in its bill. It is particularly fond of shiny objects. The North Island weka is found on Kapiti Island, in Northland and Poverty Bay. The western South Island weka is found in the northern and western regions of the South Island, while the eastern South Island weka is found in the drier east. The Stewart Island weka has been introduced to Kapiti Island.

Kiwis are monogamous – pairing for up to 30 years – with traditional gender roles reversed; the female is bigger and dominates the male. This combination of monogamy and role reversal is extremely rare among birds.

If birds are your passion, and you need full-colour photos of every species in the country, *The Field Guide To The Birds of New Zealand* by Barrie Heather is the ultimate guide.

New Zealand Penguins (www.penguin.net.nz) is a great website on the flightless birds, with species information, games, downloads and even a webcam focused on a penguin colony.

The Fiordland crested penguin (*tawaki*) lives around the South Island's southwest coast and on Stewart Island. Believed to be the world's rarest species of penguin, it is timid and identifiable by its broad yellow crest. Although seen as far north as Cook Strait, you're most likely to see these birds in the Te Wahipounamu-South West New Zealand World Heritage Area, especially near the beach by Lake Moeraki and in Milford Sound.

Another rare species seen in New Zealand is the yellow-eye penguin (*hoiho*), which has a pale, golden head and a clearly defined yellow band from one eye to the other. Stewart Island is an excellent place to see the yellow-eye, as they are often encountered at Long Harry Bay (p319). Trampers also spot them along the Banks Peninsula Track (p196).

New Zealand's smallest species of penguin, the diminutive little blue penguin (*korora*), is the most common penguin, often encountered in coastal waters throughout the country. The bird can be seen coming ashore at night, most notably at Oamaru in Otago. Its upper parts are blue, underparts white and its bill is black.

The kaka is a forest-dwelling parrot, of which there are two distinct subspecies. The North Island kaka inhabits lowland forests in the North Island and forested offshore islands. The South Island kaka inhabits forests in Nelson, the west coast, Fiordland and Stewart Island. Both birds are generally bronze in colour with crimson tones on their underparts, but the South Island kaka is slightly larger and has a whitish (sometimes grey) crown.

New Zealand's best-known parrot is the kea, a large parrot decked out in drab, unparrot-like green, except for bright-red underwings. The kea inhabits South Island high-country forests and mountains, and is an amusing, fearless, cheeky and inquisitive bird. It creates a nuisance for many trampers, but the mountains would be the poorer if the kea was not there to greet you with its strident 'kee-aa' call when you enter its territory. Keep a close eye on your gear when keas are around; their strong beaks can rip tents, sleeping bags and clothing, and destroy plastic containers. The best places to spot a kea are the Routeburn Track (p261) and Arthur's Pass National Park.

There are three species of indigenous parakeet – the yellow-crowned parakeet, red-crowned parakeet and the orange-fronted parakeet. The yellow-crowned is seen high in the canopy of forests throughout the country. The red-crowned is not likely to be seen on the mainland, but rather in lowland forests on many offshore islands. The orange-fronted is found in the Hawdon Valley near Arthur's Pass and the Hurunui Valley in northern Canterbury. All three parakeets are basically green with distinctive colour patches.

The rifleman (*titipounamu*) is New Zealand's smallest bird and a member of the New Zealand wren family. It is found throughout the South Island, especially in mountainous beech forests, the Barrier Islands, and in forests south of Te Aroha on the North Island. The rifleman has a short tail and a short spiralling flight pattern, flitting from tree to tree when feeding.

The tui is found in New Zealand's forests. Conspicuous by its white throat feathers (hence its common name, parson bird), it has an extremely large repertoire of sounds and can mimic many other birds. You can see it around much of the country: Pelorus Sound, Ulva Island (p319) and Halfmoon Bay on Stewart Island are particularly good spotting grounds.

The bellbird (*korimako*) is common in both native and exotic forests, and is easily identified by its beautiful bell-like call. It is found all over

New Zealand, except Northland. Both sexes have curved honeyeater bills and short tail feathers.

There are two subspecies of fantail, the North Island fantail (*piwakawaka*) and South Island fantail. Both are common in forests, scrubland and suburban gardens. The South Island fantail has more white on its outer tail feathers. You might notice this showy bird following you through the bush. It is attracted to the insects you disturb as you brush through the undergrowth.

The mohua, or yellowhead, is about the size of a house sparrow and difficult to find. It is unmistakable in a forest because of its bright yellow head and breast. You may find it in the ancient forests of Arthur's Pass National Park, Fiordland National Park or the Catlins State Forest Park (all in the South Island). If you see a similar bird in open grassland, it is more likely to be the introduced yellowhammer.

The whitehead (*popokatea*) inhabits forest and scrubland in the North Island. Like the mohua, its most conspicuous feature is the single colour – white – of the head. It doesn't occur north of Te Aroha, except on Tiritiri and Little Barrier Islands.

The Australasian gannet (*takapu*) is becoming increasingly common around New Zealand waters, and there are three mainland breeding colonies (Farewell Spit on the South Island, and Muriwai and Cape Kidnappers on the North Island). Juveniles migrate to Australia and return four years later to breed. These birds dive from great heights, with wings folded back, to catch fish. Their yellow head against a white body is their most obvious feature. On land they are ungainly but in the air they're poetry in motion.

Cormorants are generally referred to as 'shags' in New Zealand and seldom is distinction made between the seven species. The black shag (*kawau*), New Zealand's largest shag, is common on inland lakes and along sheltered parts of the coast. It is seen in flocks near shell banks and sand spits, or perched on rocks.

Other species of cormorant in New Zealand include the pied shag (*karuhiruhi*), the little black shag and the little shag (*kawaupaka*). The little black shag is distinguished from the immature little shag by its long narrow bill. The Stewart Island shag is found in coastal waters from the Otago Peninsula to Stewart Island. The spotted shag (*parekareka*), recognisable by the black spots on its back, is found around the Auckland coast, Marlborough Sounds and on the Otago and Banks Peninsulas.

When you first encounter the New Zealand pigeon (*kereru*) it is likely that you will be startled by its thumping, whistling wing beat as it flies from tree to tree. The bird is widespread in New Zealand forests and is occasionally seen eating in open fields. A large bird, it is the only endemic species of pigeon. The west coast, Fiordland and Stewart Island are good places to see it.

The New Zealand falcon (*karearea*) is distinguished from the larger Australasian harrier by its rapid flight, longer tail and pointed wing tips. It inhabits high country in the Southern Alps and Fiordland, and the forests of Westland and the North Island, although it is rarely seen in the far north. It has a rapid 'kek-kek-kek' call and feeds on smaller passerine birds. Blue-black in colour, it has brown-and-white underwings.

The rock wren also inhabits subalpine and alpine fields in the South Island. Not much larger than the rifleman, it is recognised by its long legs and curious habit of bobbing up and down. This olive-coloured bird with yellow flanks jumps from rock to rock, looking for insects and spiders. During winter it lives in rock crevices under the snow.

Birds of New Zealand Locality Guide, by Stuart Chambers, not only tells you which species live in NZ, but also the best places and parks to spot them in.

On the Banks Peninsula, little blue penguins occasionally nest under seaside cottages, where they often raise a noisy racket at night.

The pukeko is common throughout wet areas of New Zealand, especially near swamps and lake edges where there are clumps of rushes. A good swimmer, the pukeko is unmistakable with its purple breast and head, white undertail and bright red bill. It has very large feet and emits a high-pitched screech when disturbed.

Wrybills (*ngutuparore*) migrate within New Zealand, nesting in the shingly river beds of Canterbury and Otago, and moving north to spend autumn and winter in the warmer estuaries and mud flats of the North Island. The wrybill is a plover and swings its bill sideways through mud to trap marine organisms from the sludge. This grey-and-white bird can be distinguished by its bill, which curves to the right.

MARINE MAMMALS

The only marine mammal trampers will usually encounter is the fur seal. Mature males (bulls) are about 2m in length, and females (cows) are about 1.6m; their average weight is about 140kg. You may see them basking on rocks or sleeping on the sand, but they will probably enter the safety of the water if you get too close. They are occasionally seen by trampers on the Abel Tasman Coast Track (p148), while the colony of seals in Martins Bay (p302) is the highlight for most people tramping the Hollyford Track.

If you're lucky you may also see Hector's dolphins (the world's smallest and rarest dolphins) off the Banks Peninsula Track (p196), the Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track (p311) or the Kaikoura Coast Track (p211). These small (they grow to only 1.4m) and very social creatures have distinctive black markings, white bellies and grey sides, round dorsal fins and gently sloping snouts. Found only in New Zealand, and with an estimated population of only 3000 to 4000, Hector's dolphins were put on the endangered list in 2000.

OTHER NATIVE ANIMALS

There are a number of species of weta, a large invertebrate with a frightening appearance. The cave weta has long legs and a small body, adapted for movement on cave walls. In contrast the bush weta has a large body. Males of both species look fearsome, with large heads and snapping mandibles. The wingless alpine weta, also known as the Mt Cook flea, lives in rock crevices above the snow line.

There are two species of native bat – New Zealand's only indigenous land mammals – the long-tailed bat and the short-tailed bat. You may see some bats flitting around forest margins at sunset, seeking insects.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Changes to New Zealand's landscape since human colonisation have resulted in the extinction of more than 50 animal species. Clearing of land and introduced predators such as stoats and rats have had a devastating effect on native species, particularly birds. Today, New Zealand's threatened or endangered species range from native frogs to the Hooker's sea lion, and include the chevron skink (New Zealand's largest lizard) and flightless birds such as the takahe, kakapo and even the country's national icon, the kiwi.

INTRODUCED SPECIES

Introduced mammal species have done their share of damage. Probably the most infamous is the brushtail possum, which devastates native trees and shrubs, kills kiwi chicks and eats the eggs. Also prevalent are the

rabbit, goat, chamois, tahr, stoat, red deer and wild pig. With the exception of rabbits, and an occasional glimpse of a red deer, trampers rarely see any of the imported species.

Plants

The variety of vegetation in New Zealand is enormous. Heading south from the giant kauri forests of Northland, there are the luxuriant lowland kohekohe forests of the Bay of Plenty; the rainforests dominated by rimu, beech, tawa, matai, rata and a great range of ferns; the podocarp and hardwood forests of the lower North Island, with their kahikatea, tawa, rimu, rata and kohekohe; the summer-flowering alpine and subalpine herb fields; and the windswept scrub of the smaller islands.

In the South Island the vegetation changes dramatically as you climb into the mountains. The lowland supplejacks give way to rimu, miro and then ferns at about 800m. Above 1000m the totara, wineberry, fuchsias, rata and kaikomako are gradually left behind, to be replaced by subalpine scrub. At about 1200m the scrub gives way to tussock grasses and alpine herb fields, and at extreme heights only hardy lichens hang on to the exposed rock.

TREES

New Zealand has several species of beech. The silver beech (*tawhai*) is found in stands in mixed forest on both islands, and occurs in subalpine regions. It grows to 30m and has a silver-grey trunk up to 2m in diameter. The small, rounded leaves have serrated edges, the green-and-brown flowers are little, and the fruit is small and woody. The beautiful mountain beech (*tawhairauriki*) occurs in mountain and subalpine areas from the central North Island plateau to the far south of the South Island. It grows to 22m in favoured sites (but usually to about 15m) and its trunk is about 1m in diameter. It has small red flowers and woody fruit. It is seen in splendour in Arthur's Pass National Park and near Lewis Pass.

The beautiful, broad-leaved mountain cabbage tree (*toii*) is found in moist mountain areas with plenty of light. It grows to 20m and, when mature, its stems hang downwards. The kahikatea, or white pine, is New Zealand's tallest tree, reaching 60m and maturing over hundreds of years. It is found throughout the country in lowland forests or in dense stands in swampy land. An adult tree has green, scaly leaves. The immature fruit is yellow, ripening into an orange-red berry that bears a seed at its tip – favoured by the New Zealand pigeon and, in the past, the Maori. Kamahi (pronounced 'car-my') is a hardy black birch seen from Auckland down to Stewart Island. It grows to a height of 25m and its trunk attains a diameter of more than 1m. It has grey bark with white blotches, glossy dark-green leaves, small lilac-coloured flowers and rust-red seeds.

Kauri grows only in Northland and on the Coromandel Peninsula and Great Barrier Island. These large native trees were once ruthlessly cut down for their excellent timber, and Northland is covered with evidence of the kauri days. Kauris grow to 30m and are believed to attain an age of about 2000 years. They have a distinctive blotchy mosaic on their bark that feels as good as it looks.

The kowhai, which produces New Zealand's national flower, grows to about 11m and has small green leaves and groups of bright-yellow flowers. There are three species of kowhai, all similar in appearance. The tree is found in open areas, near rivers and on the edge of forests.

Matai is a black pine found throughout the North and South Islands. One of the most majestic of New Zealand's trees, it grows to 30m, often

There are 76 species of whales and dolphins on earth, and New Zealand's waters are blessed with 35 of these.

Introducing New Zealand Trees, by Alina Arkins, is a slim guide that will easily fit in your pack but has more than enough photos and details to identify trees along the tracks.

with a very wide girth (Lake Ianthe in Westland has some very good examples). Its thick, grey bark falls off to reveal blotchy red patches underneath. It has small flat leaves, and male and female flowers on the same long yellow spikes. Another member of the pine family is miro, which grows to 25m and is found in lowland forests. It has pointed leaves, which could be mistaken for matai.

New Zealand's only native palm, nikau, is found throughout lowland areas of the North Island and portions of the South Island. The best place to see a nikau is on the South Island's west coast, from Punakaiki to Karamea. It can grow to 10m.

Pohutukawa is a beautiful tree predominantly found in the north of the North Island, though it has been successfully planted throughout the South Island. Its magnificent crimson flowers appear in December, making it popularly known as the 'Christmas tree'. It grows to 20m, and reaches 2m across at its base. A good place to see pohutukawa is on the Coromandel Peninsula.

Another tree with beautiful crimson flowers is the rata. The northern rata, reaching a height of 25m, grows in the North Island and around Nelson. Southern rata grows predominantly in the South Island but is also found in Northland.

Rimu, or red pine, is the most easily recognised podocarp. It is found throughout NZ and grows to a height of more than 50m, with a girth of about 1.5m. The narrow prickly leaves drape, and there are often little red cones at the tips of the leafy clusters. The fruit appears as a black nut at the seed's tip.

The totara was favoured for Maori war canoes because of its soft wood. It has long pointy leaves, and the male and female cones grow on separate trees. Its red-and-pink stalks attract birds.

FERNS

One of the prominent features of the New Zealand bush is the proliferation of ferns mixed with the undergrowth. There are more than 80 species of fern and five species of soft fern. Perhaps the most interesting are the hen and chickens fern (*mauku*) and the kidney fern (*raurenga*), and the rarest would be the horseshoe or king fern (*para*). A common sight on New Zealand hillsides is bracken fern, which grows to 3m or more.

The black tree fern (*mamaku*) is the largest of New Zealand's ferns, growing to 20m, with its fronds extending to 7m. It grows throughout the country and is common in damp forest gullies.

The silver tree fern (*ponga*) is the national symbol that adorns the kit of many of New Zealand's sports representatives. It grows to 10m, and the fronds, which extend up to 4m, are white on the underside and dull green on the upper side. The crown fern (*piupiu*) is found throughout the country and is noticeable because its bright green fronds, up to 1.5m in length, often form a significant part of the ground cover. When the frond is turned over it reveals a silver-grey undersurface.

SHRUBS & FLOWERS

New Zealand's alpine zones support a wide range of plant species, of which a high proportion is endemic. The bush-line, usually marked by the upper limit of beech trees, varies from 1500m on Mt Ruapehu down to about 900m in Fiordland. Above the bush, alpine scrub merges into snow tussock, which in turn merges, in wetter areas, into alpine herb field. In drier regions, tussock grassland is often found almost unmixed with other plant types. Higher still, plant cover becomes sparse

and a number of specialised communities are found, including fellfield, scree, cushion vegetation and, near high ridges and summits, snow-bank vegetation.

The Spaniard, or speargrass, is a familiar sight to trampers, growing in a wide range of habitats up to the low alpine zone (about 1700m), and occasionally higher. Many species form large, intimidating clumps of long, stiff, sharply pointed leaves; others are smaller, with leaves that are divided but still spiny. Flower stems are typically tall and spectacular, projecting well above the foliage and protected by sharp spines.

Pineapple scrub grows to less than 1m and bears clusters of stiff, tapering leaves at the ends of its branches. It is found in a variety of plant communities in the subalpine and low alpine zones of southwestern South Island and Stewart Island. White flowers, sometimes tipped with red, are often partly hidden by the leaves. A more widespread member of the genus, the grass tree (*inanga* or *inaka*), occasionally reaches 12m in height, although in the alpine zone it is usually a shrub of no more than 1.5m. It grows between sea level and about 1200m on the North and South Islands, as well as on Stewart Island.

The Mt Cook lily, more properly known as the mountain buttercup, is found between 700m and 1500m on the South Island, as well as on Stewart Island. It grows to about 75cm and sends up its white flowers, about 5cm to 8cm across, on tall, branched stems between November and mid-January. The korikori is another buttercup, smaller than the Mt Cook lily and found over a wider range of altitudes, from close to sea level up to about 1800m. Its flowers are bright yellow and appear between October and December.

The ubiquitous gentians are well represented in New Zealand. They flower later than many alpine species, in late summer and into autumn. One of the most widespread, and most attractive, species is *bellidifolia*, which grows as a perennial, 10cm to 15cm tall, among herb-field and tussock communities in both the North and South Islands. Its white or cream flowers, sometimes veined with purple, appear between January and March.

The genus *Celmisia* has 60 species in New Zealand, and more than 50 are found in alpine zones. The form of the leaves varies widely from species to species, but their white daisy flowers with yellow centres are one of the most common sights in mountain regions. The mountain daisy is the largest species. It grows in clumps and has leathery leaves, 20cm to 60cm long, with a silvery top and white underneath. Its tall flower stems (up to 50cm) appear in January and February, and it is common above the bush-line in the South Island.

NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES

National Parks

In 1887, Te Heuheu Tukino IV, the paramount chief of the Tuwharetoa Maori tribe, was worried about the future of his people's sacred ancestral mountains on the North Island's Central Plateau. Rival Maori tribes were eyeing the peaks, and so too were European settlers, who saw the tussock lands around the volcanoes as potential grazing country. With remarkable foresight, the chief offered the land to the New Zealand government as a gift to all the people – but he had one stipulation: it had to be kept *tapu* (sacred) and protected. The area became Tongariro National Park, New Zealand's first national park and the start of the world's fourth national-park system, following in the footsteps of the USA, Australia and Canada.

Reed Handbook of New Zealand Ferns and Fern Allies by RJ Chinnock is devoted to the fern species – NZ's trademark plant in the bush – seen while tramping.

Project Crimson (www.projectcrimson.org.nz) is dedicated to the rata and the pohutukawa, New Zealand's so-called Christmas trees, and includes fact sheets, merchandise, even trail maps.

With the official opening in March 2002 of Rakiura National Park on Stewart Island, there are now 14 national parks in New Zealand (four in the North Island and 10 in the South Island) collectively covering more than 50,000 sq km. Each preserves a distinct area of the country, ranging from volcanoes, glaciers and the Southern Alps, to coastal beaches, native forests and New Zealand's longest navigable river, the Whanganui. As listed below, they come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Conservation (DOC), and their visitor information centres are excellent places to obtain information about tramping tracks and other activities in the parks.

NORTH ISLAND NATIONAL PARKS

Egmont (☎ 06-756 0990; ntheegmontvc@doc.govt.nz; North Egmont Visitor Centre, Egmont Rd, Inglewood)

Te Urewera (☎ 06-837 3803; urewerainfo@doc.govt.nz; Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre, State Hwy 38, Wairoa)

Tongariro (☎ 07-892 3729; whakapapvc@doc.govt.nz; Whakapapa Visitor Centre, Whakapapa Village)

Whanganui (☎ 06-348 8475; Wanganui Area Office, Ingestre Chambers, 74 Ingestre St, Wanganui)

SOUTH ISLAND NATIONAL PARKS

Abel Tasman (☎ 03-546 9339; nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz; Nelson Regional Visitor Centre, 79 Trafalgar St, Nelson)

Aoraki/Mt Cook (☎ 03-435 1186; mtcookvc@doc.govt.nz; Aoraki/Mt Cook Visitor Centre, Aoraki/Mt Cook Village)

Arthur's Pass (☎ 03-318 9211; arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz; Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre, Arthur's Pass)

Fiordland (☎ 03-249 7924; fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz; Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre, Lakefront Dr, Te Anau)

Kahurangi (☎ 03-546 9339; nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz; Nelson Regional Visitor Centre, 79 Trafalgar St, Nelson)

Mt Aspiring (☎ 03-443 7660; wanakvc@doc.govt.nz; Mt Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre, Ardmore St, Wanaka)

Nelson Lakes (☎ 03-521 1806; stamaudao@doc.govt.nz; Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre, View Rd, St Arnaud)

Paparoa (☎ 03-731 1895; punakaikvc@doc.govt.nz; Paparoa National Park Visitor Centre, Main Rd, Punakaiki)

Rakiura (☎ 03-219 0002; stewartislandfc@doc.govt.nz; Stewart Island Visitor Centre, Main Rd, Halfmoon Bay)

Westland/Tai Poutini (☎ 03-752 0796; westlandnpvc@doc.govt.nz; Westland/Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre, Franz Josef)

Forest Parks

Additional bush and wilderness areas are preserved in New Zealand's forest park system, with 14 parks in the North Island and six in the South Island. Forest parks also fall under the jurisdiction of DOC.

While the charter of national parks is to preserve 'an area in its natural state', forest parks are managed to sustain a balance of land uses, which might include timber production, deer harvesting to provide stock for farms and, of course, recreational activities, particularly tramping, with all forest parks having huts and a variety of tracks.

North Island's forest parks are Northland, Coromandel (Kauaeranga Kauri Trail, p59), Kaimai-Mamaku, Pirongia (p94), Raukumara, Pureora, Whirinaki (Whirinaki Track, p79), Kaweka, Kaimanawa (Urchin-Umukarikari Circuit, p92), Ruahine (Rangiwhahia and Deadmans Loop,

p117), Rimutaka, Haurangi and Tararua (Mt Holdsworth Circuit, p121; Totara Flats Track, p125).

In the South Island, the forest parks are Mt Richmond (Pelorus Track, p140), Victoria, Hanmer, Lake Sumner (Harper Pass, p230), Craigieburn (Cass-Lagoon Saddles Track, p234) and Catlins.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

New Zealand may be small, but it has a high awareness for protecting its natural environment. One of the leading issues among residents is a return to their native flora and fauna, a huge problem considering how many plants and animals have been introduced into what was a predator-free land.

It is estimated that 150 native plants – 10% of the total number of native species in New Zealand – are threatened. The culprits in many cases are environmental weeds, exotic species that often escape the confines of gardens to invade forests, wetlands, dunes and waterways, where they smother native plants. The problem is so serious, and Kiwis are so concerned about their native bush, that an inter-agency program called **Weedbusters** (www.weedbusters.org.nz) has been created to equip locals with the information and skills they need to recognise environmental weeds and remove them.

Of even more concern to the country is the struggle to save its national icon, the kiwi. Before the Maori arrived, the kiwi population was estimated to have been in the millions. Today there are less than 50,000, with almost half living on Stewart Island, and the kiwi is listed as threatened. North Island brown kiwis are now effectively extinct south of Hawkes Bay. The main cause of the bird's decline is predation by dogs, stoats, ferrets and cats, as only half of all kiwi eggs hatch, and then only 10% of the chicks survive to six months.

Leading the effort to save the bird is **Bank of New Zealand Kiwi Recovery** (www.kiwirecovery.org.nz), which sponsors Operation Nest Egg. The program involves removing kiwi eggs and chicks from the bush to save them from stoats, rats and cats. The young kiwis are then returned to the wild when they are 1kg or large enough to fight off most predators.

Other environmental efforts include the **Living Rivers Coalition** (www.livingrivers.org.nz), fighting the spread of hydroelectric sites and siphoning of water for irrigation, and 'Six Pack, Six-Pack', a campaign to convert portions of leased pastoral land in the South Island into six new high-country parks.

Want to help keep New Zealand green? Contact the **Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand** (www.forestandbird.org.nz), or 'Forest and Bird' as it is commonly known, the country's largest conservation organisation.

Tongariro National Park, New Zealand's first, was created from land donated to the people by Maori chief Te Heuheu Tukino IV (also known as Horonuku or Pataatai) in 1887.

The Kiwi Conservation Club (www.kcc.org.nz) is a site devoted to children (and their interested parents), providing fact sheets about NZ wildlife, colouring pictures and ways kids can help the environment.

Fishing in New Zealand

One introduced creature to have made a hit in New Zealand is the trout. Before Europeans arrived there were only a few species of freshwater fish and eel in the country. In 1867 the English, being English, imported the brown trout – via Tasmania – and then in 1883 imported the California rainbow trout, stocking the country's rivers. The superb water of the lakes and rivers soon led to thriving populations that easily exceeded their ancestors in size. Today, New Zealand is renowned for its fishing, especially fly fishing.

Tramping and fishing complement each other extremely well. With the exception of high alpine areas, huts are more often than not located along pristine stretches of river that receive little fishing pressure. Many tracks skirt rivers, and during the day trampers will be able to study the pools and spot trout. Once you sight a trout it's hard not to drop the backpack and break out the rod and reel.

Those interested in combining fishing with tramping should plan to bring either a lightweight spinning outfit, or some fly-fishing gear. You'll also need to look into seasons and limits, and purchase a fishing licence.

FISHING LICENCES

Fish and Game New Zealand (www.fishandgame.org.nz) is responsible for sport fishing in NZ, and is composed of 12 regional councils that manage, stock and regulate the lakes and rivers in their areas. A New Zealand fishing licence (day licence adult/youth \$18/3.50, per season adult/youth \$90/18) allows you to fish in any of the council areas, with the exception of the Taupo Fishing District, which requires a special permit. Children under the age of 12 can fish for free. Licences are available at outdoor and fishing shops, or at post offices. You can also buy a licence in advance through the Fish and Game New Zealand website.

EQUIPMENT

Anglers from overseas find it best to bring a selection of their favourite tackle or flies, and then to purchase a few local varieties once they arrive. Any additional equipment (rods, reels, line) can also be bought in outdoor and fishing shops.

Spin Fishing

Backpacking rods have improved tremendously in recent years, and now it is possible to purchase a quality graphite spinning rod that dismantles into four pieces and fits into a tube case less than 70cm long. Such a rod is easy to lash to a backpack and carry from hut to hut.

A 2m, medium-action rod with an open-face spinning reel is best for fishing most rivers and streams. Fill the reel with 8lb test monofilament line, and the spare spools with 6lb, as New Zealand trout are wary and line sensitive. Some anglers will even fish with 4lb test. Choice of tackle changes from one angler to the next, and from one region of the country to another, but spinners – such as 4 and 3 Mepps – and small spoons should work in most places.

If you are serious about catching a trout, always stop in at a fishing shop in the last town you pass through. Kiwi anglers are extremely friendly and helpful, and purchasing just a couple of the recommended

BATTLING THE SPREAD OF DIDYMO

Often referred to as 'rock snot,' didymo has invaded some of New Zealand's finest trout rivers and now has Biosecurity New Zealand, fish biologists and anglers concerned. Didymo is a type of freshwater algae that naturally occurs in the northern parts of the northern hemisphere, but was not present anywhere in the southern hemisphere until it first appeared as a foreign invader in New Zealand's Southland District in 2004. Since then it has spread to almost a dozen South Island rivers.

Didymo can form massive blooms on the bottoms of streams, rivers and, occasionally, lake edges with sufficient wave action. It forms thick, brown mats that smother rocks, submerge plants and exclude other forms of algae that invertebrates feed on, which in turn are food for trout. To combat didymo, anglers are urged to do the following:

- Remove all obvious clumps of algae before departing a river, and leave them at the affected site.
- Soak and scrub all fishing gear for one minute in hot water with a 2% solution of bleach or dishwashing detergent.
- If cleaning is not practical, then wait 48 hours (from when your equipment is completely dry) before using it in another waterway.

For more information on didymo see www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo.

lures will often be the difference between eating macaroni and cheese every night, or enjoying an occasional dinner of fresh trout.

Fly Fishing

With its English heritage, you'd expect fly fishing to be a passion in New Zealand, and it is. There are opportunities to combine tramping during the day and enticing trout with dry flies in the evening. The ideal rod for tramping is a four-piece, six-weight that can be easily dismantled and carried on the tracks. You can get away with a five-weight, but a six-weight is better because of the windy conditions often found in valleys and the fact that you will undoubtedly have shots at fish weighing more than 2kg.

Fly selection is not nearly as important as in Britain or many parts of the USA. Flies in New Zealand are very affordable (around \$2 each) so you can leave the vice and hackle at home and just purchase a handful once you arrive. Pack such dry-fly standards as Adams, Humpys, Royal Wulffs and Elk Hair Caddis, sizes 10 to 14. All should work well as even big fish in flat water will rise to them. For nymphs bring bead-head versions of Hare's Ears and Pheasant Tails, sizes 12 to 16.

Some Kiwi anglers are pretty adamant that the fly line colour should be dark, and the leader and tippet (4X and 5X) long (3.5m to 4m). More important, however, is your presentation. New Zealand trout are known for being vigilant, and anglers who cast right in front of the fish, or don't mend their lines, are going to see lots of trophy fish but catch few, if any, of them.

WHERE TO FISH

Trampers will have a number of opportunities for lakeshore fishing – on Lake Waikaremoana Great Walk (p70 for example – and also to get a taste for such delights as blue cod whilst saltwater fishing on the coast – on the Hollyford Track p298) and Northwest Circuit (p326) for instance. For the most part, however, backcountry fishing is all about trying to entice elusive brown and rainbow trout from rivers and streams.

New Zealand is famous for freshwater fish, but you can also cast a line into the sea on many tramps, and hook anything from snapper to sharks. See www.fishing.net.nz for more.

Eastern North Island

Te Urewera National Park provides wilderness fishing in both lakes and rivers. Lake Waikaremoana (p70) has exceptional lakeshore summer fishing for brown trout. The Whakatane River (p73) flows northward at Ruatahuna, and holds good populations of middle-sized brown and rainbow trout. The Whirinaki River (p81) also contains high densities of both brown and rainbow trout in a scenic bush setting.

Hawkes Bay

The headwaters of the Ngaruroro and Mohaka Rivers in Kaimanawa Forest Park are wilderness fisheries that are nationally recognised for offering anglers a chance to catch trophy-sized fish. Helicopter fishing is popular in this area. Trampers, however, can easily reach the rainbow-rich fishery of the Waipakihī River (p81) along the Urchin-Umukarikari Circuit.

Nelson/Marlborough Region

This region is blessed with a variety of rivers where trampers can toss a fly or a spinner. The most attractive are the upper reaches of the Karamea and Leslie Rivers along the Leslie-Karamea Track (p177), the D'Urville River (p192), and the Sabine and Travers Rivers along the Travers-Sabine Circuit (p186). The Little Wanganui River (p176) offers good fishing, and its upper catchments are on a wild and scenic stretch, accessible only to trampers and anglers who helicopter in. Large holes and runs in mid-sections of the river are more suited to spin fishing, although during normal flows you will be able to spot feeding fish and entice them with

A POOL FULL OF STUBBORN TROUT *Jim DuFresne*

I was standing near a large pool in the Taipo River, debating whether to keep fishing or return to the hut, when, seemingly out of nowhere, a large trout rose to the surface. The fish slurped in an insect, left that distinct ring on the smooth surface of the pool and returned to its lie, not more than a few metres from the tip of my rod. I was mesmerised, and for 10 minutes simply stood and watched the fish rise over and over like clockwork. Finally I selected a dry fly and tied it on.

I floated the first fly, a No 10 Adams, over the trout several times, but the fish just wasn't interested. I peered at the river to see what it could possibly be feeding on, changed the fly and tried again. And again and again and again. Some 40 minutes later I was running out of flies to tie on and that trout was still feeding in front of me. Damn you! What do you want?

I'm not the only trumper ever to curse a stubborn Kiwi trout. New Zealand is famous for big, hard-to-catch rainbow and brown trout. In this country I never pull out the rod until I see the fish. The water is so clear that you can spot a trout in a run or in a deep pool from the track 30m above the river, but seeing the fish is one thing and catching it is something else entirely. You have to quietly sneak down the bank, position yourself so your shadow doesn't spook it, and then make a perfect first cast. There's rarely a second chance with big trout in New Zealand. Any drag of your line or tippet and you might as well pack up and move on.

Trout lying in pools will rise to a dry fly, but you need to use a long leader, a fine tippet and flawless delivery. Combine all three and you might be rewarded with the catch of a lifetime. More times than not, however, fishing for trout in New Zealand is a humbling experience for me. It's frustrating to go fishing and not catch a fish, but to go fishing, see big fish, and then not catch them...that's Dante's version of hell for an angler.

After an hour of watching this trout I opened up my fly box, selected the biggest beaded nymph I had and aimed right for the spot where the trout was rising. I didn't bonk the fish on the head with the weighted hook, but I came close. The trout decided to go somewhere else to finish dinner. Left with a deep, clear pool to myself, I did what any frustrated angler in the middle of nowhere would have done. I stripped off my shirt and shorts and went for a swim.

dry flies. In the Marlborough Sounds the upper reaches of the Pelorus River (p143), where it carves through the rugged heart of Mt Richmond Forest Park, is another productive trout fishery, which can be reached only on foot.

North Canterbury

This region is known for its sea-run salmon fishing, but the upper reaches of the Waimakariri and Taipo Rivers along the Waimakariri-Harman Pass Route (p226) offer quality brown and rainbow trout. Likewise, the Hurunui River (p232), just to the east, often attracts the attention of tramping anglers.

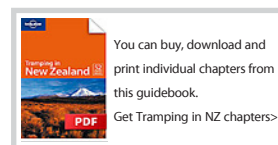
Otago & Southland

Flowing into the Southern Lakes are pristine high-country rivers with some of the clearest water in the world. Rainbow and brown trout are large and easy to spot, but are also wary, making them a challenge to catch at times. Rivers that attract the most attention from tramping anglers include the Caples (p269), Dart (p277) and Mararoa (p273), and the Wilkin and Young tributaries of the Makarora River along the Wilkin-Young Valleys Circuit (p281). The best-known river is the Greenstone, which in 2004 became New Zealand's first controlled fishery, strictly limiting the number of anglers who can fish it at any one time (see the boxed text on p266).

BOOKS

Two of the best fishing guides come with your licence: the *North Island* and *South Island Sport Fishing Regulations* booklets. Each booklet has information on productive lakes and rivers, points of access and lists of pamphlets and contact numbers for more information, as well as the fishing regulations. There are a number of trout guides available at bookshops. One of the best is *New Zealand's Top Trout Fishing Waters* by John Kent and Patti Magnano Madsen. The book begins with solid introduction chapters to fishing New Zealand-style, followed by reviews of all the best-known rivers, district by district.

Fishing in New Zealand's unique conditions is an art unto itself. If you want some help from local experts you can contact them through the New Zealand Professional Fishing Guides Association (www.nzpfga.com).



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