

2026

THE Ultimate Guide



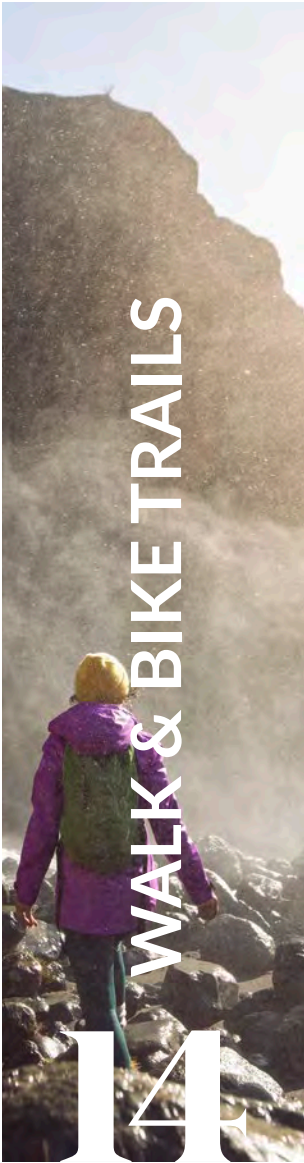
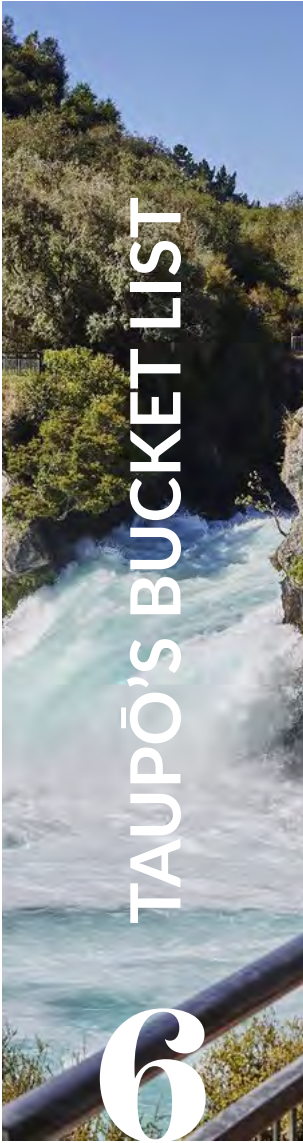
TAUPŌ & VOLCANIC
LOOP HIGHWAY

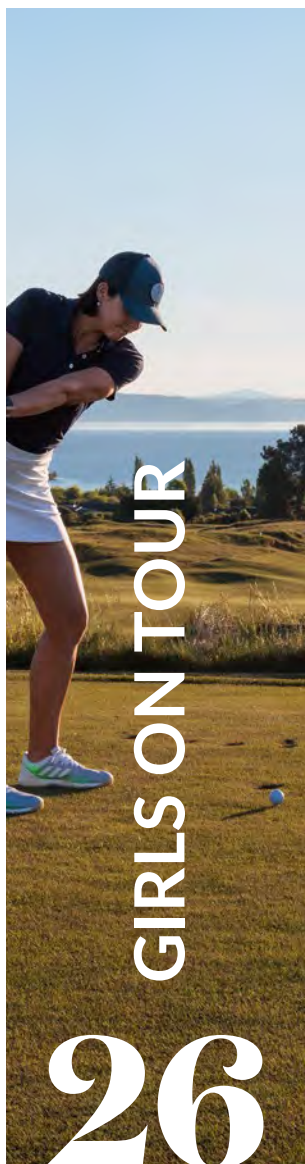
**PLEASE
LEAVE**

the Ultimate Guide
here for others
to enjoy



WHAT'S INSIDE?





Proudly published by **NinetyBlack** since 1997

Tēnā koutou to our contributors! A huge shout out to LoveTaupō.com, Tourism New Zealand and our local operators who supplied us with imagery to share with our readers.



Lake Taupō is the size
of Singapore



220,000 litres of freshwater
thunder down Huka Falls
every second



Lake Taupō is actually a caldera,
and has erupted around 28 times
since it formed



THE HEART OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

DISCOVER TAUPŌ

Adventure and tranquillity live side by side here...

Whether you're cruising at sunset, casting a line for trout, exploring trails on foot or bike or chasing thrills on the water, Taupō is a region that embraces every kind of traveller. Whichever path you choose, you'll leave with memories carved as deeply as the land itself.



© Rangatira Point flat rocks, Todd Eyre

At the heart of Aotearoa New Zealand sits Taupō – a region where vast skies meet the country's largest freshwater lake and where nature's power is never far from view. From the crystal-blue roar of *Huka Falls* to the quiet hush of native bush and towering mountain ranges, this is a place that invites you to slow down, breathe deep and reconnect.

The town centre hums with energy. Wander from lakeside trails to boutique shops, cosy cafés and award-winning restaurants – all within steps of the water. Art galleries and artisan stores add a creative flair, while accommodation ranges from luxury stays to family-friendly motels. Known as New Zealand's events capital, Taupō's calendar is packed with festivals, sporting challenges and cultural celebrations throughout the year.

Beyond the town, hidden treasures await. *Acacia Bay* and *Kinloch* are beloved for their relaxed beauty, while the *Western Bays* unfold with dramatic cliffs and sparkling waters.

Head south to *Tūrangi* – gateway to *Tongariro National Park* – and you'll discover some of the most awe-inspiring volcanic landscapes in the world.

Beneath Taupō's beauty lies an extraordinary geothermal story. The lake itself rests in the vast caldera of a volcano, shaped by eruptions that shook the earth and coloured skies as far away as Rome and China. Today, that fiery past is alive in steaming valleys, bubbling hot springs and warm lake shallows where you can soak your toes.

Beyond the lake, forests and ranges open up a different side of Taupō. The *Kaimanawa* and *Pureora Ranges* are renowned for tramping, mountain biking, and hunting – with wild deer and pigs roaming free in these vast landscapes. Guided hunting trips offer a safe and responsible way to explore the backcountry, while well-marked tracks and trails make it easy for walkers and riders to experience the same wilderness at their own pace.



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📞 TOP 10 THINGS TO DO IN TAUPŌ

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TAUPŌ'S BUCKET LIST ADVENTURES

THE MOMENTS YOU CAME FOR

Water thunders, earth breathes and the sky opens wide. From lake to mountain, forest to fire, Taupō's stories are written in every ripple, every rise of steam, every gust of alpine wind.

Taupō hums with energy – water thunders, steam curls and mountains rise against endless sky. Every moment here feels alive, shaped by fire and water. Dive in. Slow down. Look closer. Adventure lives in every ripple.

WAIKATO RIVER FLOAT

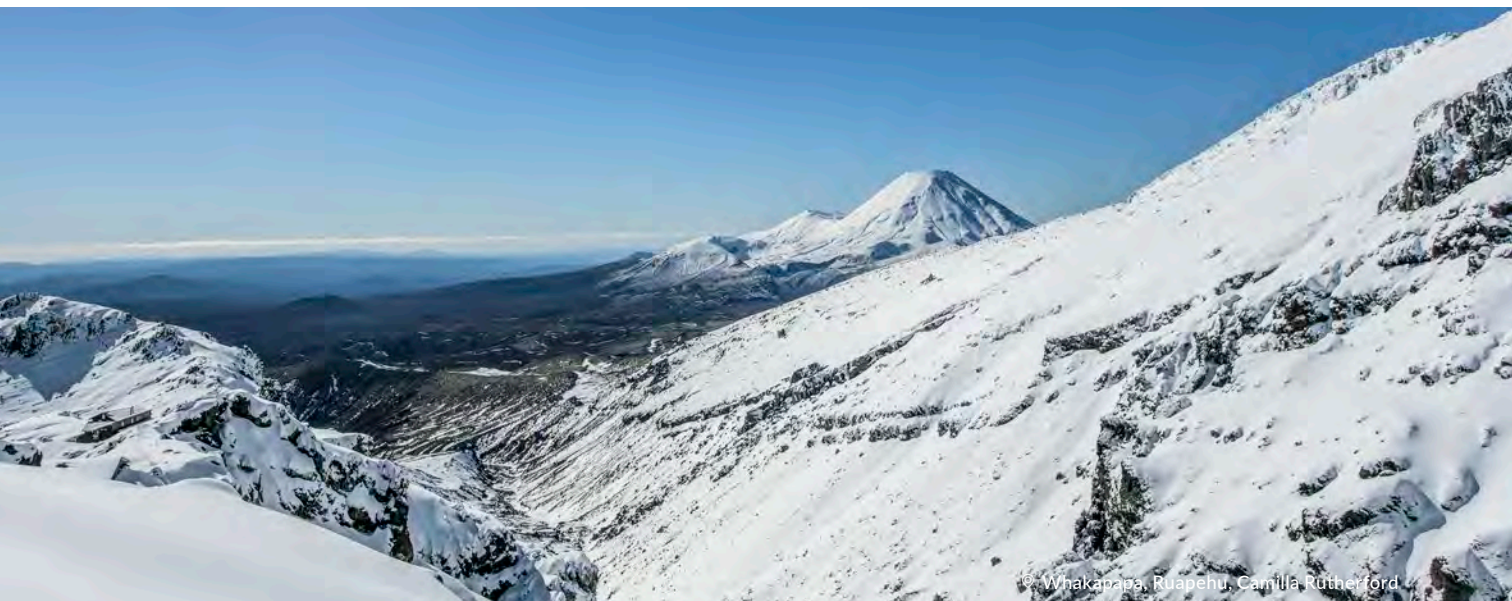
On a summer's day, the river turns lazy – and so do you. Locals drift the current from *Gates Park* to *Hipapatua Reserve*, half-sunk in rafts, rings and kayaks. Slip in, float slow, feel the sun on your face and the pull of the current underfoot. It's peace, Taupō-style – just don't miss your exit!

MĀORI ROCK CARVINGS

One of New Zealand's most extraordinary cultural artworks, the *Mine Bay Māori Rock Carvings* are a sight to see, whether by boat or by kayak. Towering 14 metres above *Lake Taupō's* deep waters, these contemporary carvings by artist *Matahi Brightwell* have become one of the *North Island's* biggest tourist attractions.

It's also a favoured spot among locals for parking up to enjoy some fishing or water sports.





© Whakapapa, Ruapehu, Camilla Rutherford



© Huka Falls, Todd Eyre, Love Taupō



© Tongariro River, Jason Bethune, Love Taupō

HUKA FALLS

It's not just a waterfall – it's power, pure and raw. A surge of electric-blue water squeezes through the gorge, roaring into the *Waikato River* below. You'll feel it in your chest before you see it. Nearly a quarter of a million litres every second – unstoppable, unforgettable. Take your time, grab an ice cream from the carpark and watch nature do its thing.

MOUNT RUAPEHU

North Island's giant. Still breathing. In winter, carve through snow on *Whakapapa* or *Tūroa* – the *North Islands* biggest ski fields. In summer, ride the *Sky Waka Gondola* to the top of the world. The views stretch forever and *Knoll Ridge Café* waits with hot coffee and cold air. Standing here, you feel small but alive.

TROUT FISHING

This lake made Taupō famous – and its trout are legendary. You can't buy them; you have to earn them. Cast a line at dawn as mist lifts off the water or fly-fish a river so clear it feels like glass. Remember, a license is required before you cast your line. When luck strikes, a few local restaurants may even cook your catch for you. It's fishing the way it's meant to be; calm, patient and deeply satisfying.

PUREORA FOREST PARK

Where silence is broken only by birdsong. Ancient *Rimu* and *Kahikatea* stand tall over trails that wind through moss and light. Short walks lead to mirror lagoons; longer rides and hikes take you deep into the wild heart of the forest. *Pureora* is the kind of place that stays with you – quiet, steady, timeless.

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MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY FORECAST

RAIN WON'T STOP THE FUN

Worried about wet weather impacting your stay in Taupō? No fear, there's exciting activities here for all ages and tastes. With our pick of great rainy-day activities, we're sure you'll find plenty of things to do, rain or shine!

Rainy days are perfect for a challenge! Step into **CONFINEMENT ESCAPE ROOMS** in the heart of Taupō and put your problem-solving skills to the test. Work together with friends, family or colleagues to crack clues and escape one of their uniquely themed rooms before time runs out. Want to keep the fun going? Try a town scavenger hunt or grab a take-home escape game and turn your own living room into an adventure zone.

If it's too wet to explore the *Tongariro National Park*, why not spend a couple of hours discovering New Zealand's military history at the **NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM**? Make family memories and learn how conflict has shaped our nation. Bring history to life with a guided tour through the galleries and then relax with a coffee in *The Mess Tent café* as you look out at the majestic views of *Mount Ruapehu*. There's plenty to keep the whole family entertained including hands-on fun in the Kids HQ, or browsing the gift ideas in the gift shop. Only 45mins south of Tūrangi.

For a little cultural enrichment, take a stroll through *Taupō Museum and Art Gallery*. Entry is free for locals and only a small fee for visitors, making it a great budget-friendly option. Explore captivating exhibits on local history, Māori culture, and contemporary art for all ages.

Or admire Taupō's vibrant street art scene by following the self-guided *Graffiti Street Art Trail*.

Maps are available at the i-SITE, making it an easy and free way to explore the town's artistic flair, even in light rain.

Finally, make the most of the cooler weather by soaking in the natural hot springs around the area. For a free dip in thermal mineral waters, head to *Otumuheke Stream at Spa Thermal Park*. It's a special experience, even as the rain falls all around you.



© National Army Museum

CHAOS RESUMES

THE BOYS ARE BACK

Planning a big weekend with the guys? Boy, have we got the weekend trip for you.

WEEKEND MOOD: GAME ON

Taupō's the kind of place that ticks all the boxes for the boys' trip – epic landscapes, a lake that's basically an adventure playground and plenty of ways to turn downtime into good times. Whether you're here for golf, fishing, adrenaline or just a bit of banter, this is where memories get made.

THRILLS & SPILLS

Kick things off with a rush of adrenaline – Taupō's playground of water, sky and open air delivers it all. Power through whitewater on a jet boat, freefall from the clouds on a skydive or lift off by helicopter or floatplane for views that stop you mid-breath.

TIGHT LINES & BIG SWINGS

This is trout country and the lake's calling. Charter a boat, cast off at sunrise and see who reels in the day's ultimate catch. When the rods are packed, swap to golf clubs – Taupō's courses deliver fairways with views that almost steal the focus from your swing.

EAT, DRINK & REPEAT

After a day on the water or the fairways, Taupō knows how to refuel the crew. Think hearty pub meals by the lake, wood-fired pizza and craft beer under the sun. Head to the waterfront for burgers and brews or pull up somewhere with a decent steak and a view worth raising a glass to.

STAY & PLAY

Lock in a spot that keeps the weekend rolling. Lakeside lodges, roomy holiday homes, classic Kiwi motels and modern hotels give you space to spread out, fire up the barbecue and settle in after a full day on the lake. Choose somewhere close to the action so you can park up, recharge and get ready to do it all again tomorrow.

MAKE IT LEGENDARY

A boys' trip to Taupō is equal parts adventure and camaraderie. It's the laughs, the competition and those "remember when" stories. Big skies, bigger views and a lake that keeps the good times rolling – that's Taupō legend material.







TRAILS CARVED BY WATER, FRAMED BY FIRE

TAUPŌ'S BEAUTY IS BEST EXPLORED ON FOOT OR BY BIKE

Taupō moves to the rhythm of its landscape – shimmering water, rolling forest, volcanic ridges, and rivers that run forever. Whether you're chasing the rush of a downhill ride or the calm of a lakeside stroll, every track here leads somewhere unforgettable.



GREAT LAKE WALKWAY (LION'S WALK)

A local classic that never loses its charm. Starting at the *Taupō Marina*, this wide, smooth trail hugs the lake's edge all the way to *Wharewaka Point*. Wheelchair, pushchair and dog-friendly, it's perfect for an easy walk or ride with panoramic views across the water to the mountains beyond.

Stop for a swim, a picnic or the classic "fush 'n' chips" by the lake as the sun sinks behind the peaks.

FAMILY FRIENDLY: Flat, accessible and full of places to stop for ice cream or a dip.

FOR ADVENTURERS: Link it with the *Rotary Ride* for a longer, scenic day out.

WAIKATO RIVER TRAILS

Follow the country's longest river as it winds through native forest, farmland, and hydro lakes between *Karāpiro* and *Ātiamuri*. Taupō's section offers gentle stretches with flowing singletracks for confident riders. Bridges and lookouts deliver views you'll never forget.

FAMILY FRIENDLY: Ride short sections near *Ātiamuri Dam* or *Pokaiwhenua Bridge*.

FOR ADVENTURERS: Take on the full journey – 100 km of riding across five lakes and ever-changing landscapes.

MOUNT TAUHARA

A climb with a view that makes every step worthwhile. This dormant volcano rises 1,088 metres above Taupō, offering 360-degree panoramas from summit to skyline. The 2.8 km track is steep in parts, weaving through native bush alive with birdsong before breaking into open tussock.

AT THE TOP: Pure silence, endless views and a sense of achievement that sticks.

FAMILY FRIENDLY: Best for older kids used to steeper tracks.

FOR ADVENTURERS: Sunrise hikes deliver unreal light and lake reflections.

OPEPE SCENIC & HISTORIC RESERVE

Where history meets forest. Just off SH5, *Opepe* offers two short trails – the northern loop winds through towering podocarps, while the southern side passes relics of the old *Opepe* settlement.

FAMILY FRIENDLY: A perfect rest-stop walk - shady, safe, and full of history.

FOR ADVENTURERS: Link it with nearby *Kaimanawa Forest* tracks for a longer wander.

TIMBER TRAIL – PUREORA FOREST PARK

An 84 km back-country icon, part of *New Zealand's Great Rides*. Ride through ancient forest, across massive suspension bridges and along historic tramlines once used for logging. The trail blends nature and history, with overnight lodges and DOC (*Department of Conservation*) huts for two-day journeys.

FAMILY FRIENDLY: Ride the first section from *Pureora Village* to *Bog Inn Creek* for a manageable taste.

FOR ADVENTURERS: Go the distance – two days, countless memories.

SPA THERMAL PARK & HUKA TRAILS

A hub for walkers, riders and those who just want to soak it all in. Trails radiate from *Spa Thermal Park* toward *Huka Falls* and *Aratiatia Dam*, weaving beside the *Waikato River's* turquoise flow.

Rest the feet in the free hot pools at *Otumuheke Stream*, play a round of frisbee golf or simply wander through the trees.

FAMILY FRIENDLY: Easy lakeside and river paths, playground and picnic areas.

FOR ADVENTURERS: Bike the full *Huka Trails loop* or push on to *Craters Mountain Bike Park*.

GREAT LAKE TRAILS

70 km of singletrack purpose-built for adventure. Ride from *Whakaipo Bay* through native forest and cliffs to *Kinloch*, *Kawakawa Bay* and *Waihaha Bridge*. Expect fast descents, waterfalls, hidden beaches and lookout points that stop you in your tracks.

FAMILY FRIENDLY: Short, smooth rides around *Kinloch* or *Kawakawa Bay*.

FOR ADVENTURERS: Complete the full 71 km loop – three days of world-class riding with lake swims between stages.

CRATERS MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

Taupō's gravity playground – 50 km of forest tracks weaving through pines and eucalyptus. From flowing beginner lines to advanced downhill runs, Craters has something for every rider.

It's a community-built gem, constantly refreshed and maintained by *Bike Taupō*. Grab a coffee at **THE HUB** before you ride and finish with a soak at *Spa Thermal Park*.

FAMILY FRIENDLY: Smooth green trails and a pump track for kids.

FOR ADVENTURERS: Hit the black runs or join a shuttle for back-to-back descents.

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Taupō is where adventure meets serenity.

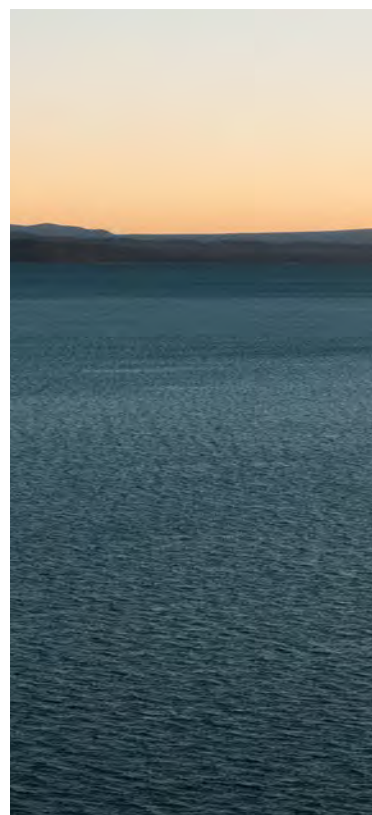
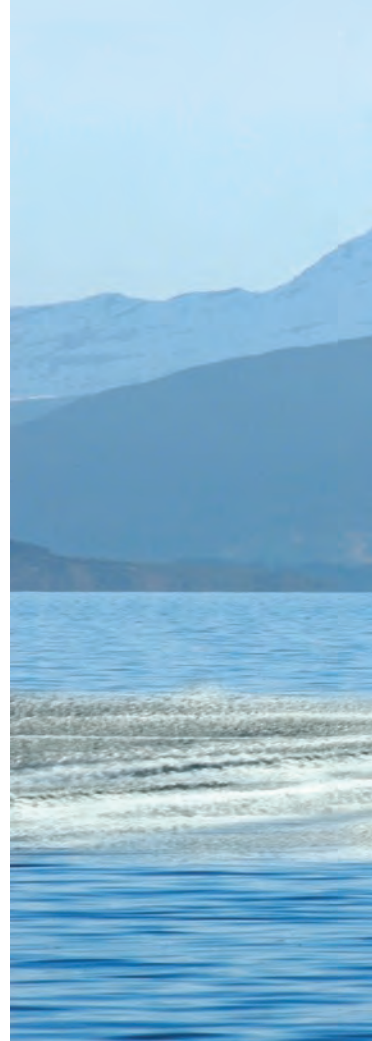
Taupō is where adventure meets serenity. Feel the rush as you skim across the lake by floatplane, ride the whitewater rapids or sail beneath wide, golden skies. Between the highs, slow things down – soak in the scenery, share a laugh and breathe in the calm that follows the thrill. However you find your balance, Taupō is the perfect place to experience both excitement and ease in equal measure.

Set sail with **SAIL BARBARY** and soak up the beauty of *Lake Taupō* in comfort. Cruise across crystal-clear waters, take in the stunning mountain views and get up close to the famous *Māori Rock Carvings*. Sit back, relax and enjoy this peaceful adventure aboard an eco-friendly electric yacht.

Set against stunning Lake Taupō and mountain views, **TAUPŌ GOLF CLUB** offers 18 holes of golf for all skill levels.

Enjoy well-kept fairways, a welcoming clubhouse with café and bar and the 12th Tee – a premier golf entertainment hub with state-of-the-art simulators that let you play world-renowned courses. Perfect for a relaxing round, a fun day out with friends or combining sport with social connection.

For an exhilarating ride closer to the ground, nothing beats a jet boat ride up the *Waikato River*. The iconic **RAPIDS JET** will see you zooming up the crystal-clear river on their super-fast jet boats – a 500-horsepower, 496 Chevy V8 engine connected to a Hamilton 212 jet unit – hitting maximum speeds of 90km/h. Speed past impressive rock faces in a thrilling, adrenaline-fueled ride of spins, cheers and peals of laughter as you power through the white water of the *Waikato River*.





© Taupō Floatplane



© Taupō Sailing Adventures

Take to the skies with **TAUPŌ'S FLOATPLANE** for an unforgettable adventure over some of New Zealand's most spectacular scenery. From the moment you lift off the crystal-clear waters of *Lake Taupō*, you'll be treated to breathtaking views of the mighty *Huka Falls*, the snow-capped volcanoes of *Tongariro National Park*, and the stunning geothermal landscapes that make this region so unique.

Perfect for families, couples and adventure seekers alike, our scenic flights offer the ultimate combination of excitement and serenity. Capture incredible photos, enjoy fascinating commentary from your experienced pilot and experience the thrill of a smooth water take-off and landing. A must-do Taupō experience – breathtaking, effortless and truly unforgettable!

TIME TO EMBARK

For an environmentally friendly sailing experience on *Lake Taupō*, book a scenic sailing tour courtesy of **TAUPŌ SAILING ADVENTURES**. Their beautiful yachts offer sustainable sailing options to the *Māori Rock Carvings* or you can charter your own adventure. Cruise in luxury aboard the catamaran *Tiua* or enjoy timeless charm on the classical yacht *Fearless*. Sit back with a drink on the deck or get involved in hoisting the sails. For a truly spectacular experience, opt for a sunset sail to escape the hustle and bustle.

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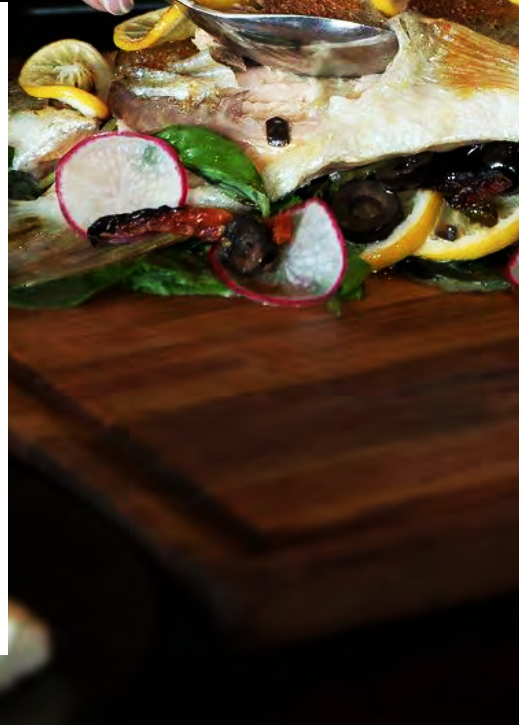
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SAMPLE LOCAL FLAVOURS

TAUPŌ'S GOT TASTE

From flavours to finds, Taupō tempts every sense – where great taste meets good style.

Taupō knows how to serve up more than just good food – it serves up moments. From long lunches to bustling cafés and twilight cocktails with a view, this is a town that eats well, drinks well and lives well. Every bite and every sip carry the flavour of the land and the easy charm of the people who call it home.



© The Cozy Corner Café, Make-Collective, Love Taupō



© Vine Eatery, Abby Dance, Love Taupō

Start by the water's edge, where Taupō's easy rhythm sets the mood. Lakeside decks fill with laughter and the soft clatter of cutlery, while the air carries hints of smoke and something delicious on the grill. Chefs here let the land do the talking – showcasing local produce, beef, venison, mānuka honey and greens grown under big open skies. Whether you're wrapped in a blanket by the fire or dining al fresco as the sun melts into the lake, Taupō makes every meal feel effortless and unforgettable.

And then there's the café culture – unhurried, welcoming and always full of locals. Start your morning with rich, locally roasted coffee and a cabinet packed with tempting treats, from classic scones to loaded brunch plates. Explore the new café cluster in the *Kokomea subdivision*. Wander the *Wharewaka Precinct* for wood-fired pizzas, gastro-pub fare and family-friendly lakeside eats with sweeping views. It's the perfect spot to relax, refuel and soak in the beauty of Taupō.

If you're lucky, you might even catch your own dinner. Taupō's wild trout are world-famous – and since they can't be bought or sold, the only way to enjoy them is to catch one yourself. Charter a boat or try your hand at fly-fishing, freshly caught trout is the purest taste of Taupō there is.

Because the good stuff doesn't stop at the plate, Taupō's shopping scene offers its own kind of indulgence. Stroll the boutique-lined streets of Taupō Central, where designer labels meet artisan finds, outdoor gear and galleries packed with pieces perfect for home.

On Sundays, browse *Market Central Taupō* at *Northcroft Reserve* – live music, more than 70 stalls, local food and games to keep the kids happy. Then wander through town to discover boutiques and gift stores filled with one-of-a-kind treasures – browsing here feels like a relaxed treasure hunt. In summer, the markets come alive after dark – make a night of it at *Dinner at the Lake* on Thursdays. Enjoy delicious street food, live music, local beer and wine and sunsets that turn the water to gold.

Every meal, every market, every smile here comes with a sense of place. You don't just visit Taupō – you feel it. In its food, its people, and the way every day ends beside the lake.

Whatever you're looking for – a special keepsake, a new outfit, or just a relaxing shopping day, Taupō's local retailers are here to welcome you with a smile and make your visit unforgettable.

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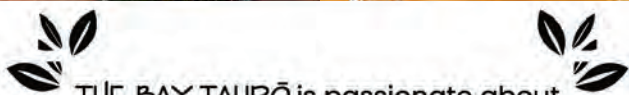
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OUT OF OFFICE. INTO TAUPŌ

GIRLS ON TOUR

Spa, sun, adventure, laughter. Taupō is made for girls' getaways.

WEEKEND MOOD: LAKE LIFE ON

Taupō's the kind of place that fits every type of girls' weekend – from the ones who pack heels and lipstick to those who bring hiking boots and sunnies. Whether you're chasing adventure, a little indulgence or a whole lot of laughter, Taupō serves up the perfect escape.

SOAK & SPA

Nothing says "girls' weekend" like a good soak. Taupō's geothermal hot pools and luxury spas are made for unwinding – soak beneath the pines, sip bubbles in a private tub, or bring the spa to you with in house massages – perfect for those who prefer to relax without leaving their robes. You'll leave feeling lighter, brighter and ready for the next round of fun.

TASTE & TOAST

Taupō knows how to feed a crowd. Lakeside brunches or long lunches with lake views and menus that make sharing easy – from fresh local trout to grazing platters and cocktails that sparkle in the sun.

As night falls, move from dinner to drinks and let the conversation stretch as long as the evening sky.

ADVENTURE TOGETHER

Adventure is part of the Taupō story. Test your courage with a jet boat blast or skydive, cruise across the lake to see the *Ngātoroirangi Mine Bay Māori Rock Carvings* or take it down a notch with an e-bike ride or lakeside walk. You could even start the day with a Pilates session – book out a studio for you and the girls and get those bodies moving before the adventures begin.

STYLE & SHOPPING

Boutique time? Absolutely. Taupō's town centre is full of local fashion, homewares, art and jewellery. Pop into artisan markets, explore design stores and treat yourselves to something beautiful – just because.

EVENINGS BY THE LAKE

As daylight fades, Taupō comes alive. The lake glows gold, decks fill with chatter and guitars start up somewhere down the road.

Sip something cold as the sky turns pink, drift toward live music, or tuck into a wine bar where the conversation runs long. Whether you're out dancing or just stargazing by the shore, Taupō nights always find their rhythm.

STAY YOUR WAY

Stay close to the lake, in the heart of town or tucked into the hills – Taupō's stays suit every style. Think boutique lodges with steaming spa pools, modern villas built for groups, or hideaways with fireplaces and mountain views. Wherever you land, it's the kind of place you'll want to linger – and maybe never leave.

ESCAPE, INDULGE, RECONNECT

Taupō gives you balance – rush and rest, laughter and stillness. Days brim with adventure; nights slow to the lake's quiet rhythm. It's the kind of place that fills you up and draws you back – not just for what you do here, but for how it makes you feel, you'll already be planning your next trip before this one's even over!



Martin Grafetsberger, Love Taupō



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THE BEST KIND OF TIME IS TIME TOGETHER

SMALL ADVENTURES BIG MEMORIES

Packed with loads of family-friendly activities to suit all ages, Taupō will forever be a firm family favourite.

Whether you're looking for action, to enjoy the sights, or simply relax over delicious food and drink, there's something for adventurers of every age. Here's just a taste of how to spend some quality family time while you're here.

If you've got little ones with you, check out some of Taupō's best family-friendly attractions. Situated in *Wairakei Tourist Park*, you can easily complete the circuit and experience *Huka Honey Hive*, *Craters of the Moon*, *Huka Falls River Cruise* & for the more adrenaline seeking – *Huka Falls Jet* all in one day or spread them out over a couple of days if time is on your side.

HUKA HONEY HIVE of artisan honey, meads and honey-related products. There's something for all the family – from sampling raw honey and natural beauty products to learning all about the bees themselves! You'll leave with a new appreciation for these incredible creatures and plenty of delicious treats, including honey ice cream and refreshing honey drinks.

Plus, the kids will love the interactive displays and watching the bees at work in the live beehives. *Huka Honey Hive* is so much more than just honey!

With its picturesque lakeside location and a whopping 18 holes, **TAUPŌ MINI GOLF** is a great place to spend some quality time with the kids or get competitive as a family. This spot has been entertaining locals and visitors since 1992 and the scenic views of *Lake Taupō* and *Mount Tongariro* are a bonus.

Nature and history, science and myth – the **CRATERS OF THE MOON** geothermal walk has something for everyone. An easy 45-minute track, winds around colourful craters and roaring steam events and an optional steeper track rewards you with stunning panoramic views across *Lake Taupō*. Part of the largest geothermal region in New Zealand and perfect for all ages. *Craters of the Moon* mist-veiled landscape is truly an otherworldly experience.





© Taupō Mini Golf

Get up close and feel the power of nature on the **HUKA FALLS RIVER CRUISE** – the only way to stand on the white water directly below the famous *Huka Falls*! This affordable, family-friendly adventure is perfect for all ages. Sit back, relax and enjoy a scenic cruise through crystal-clear waters surrounded by lush native bush, vibrant birdlife and the occasional trout gliding beneath you.

Capture breathtaking photos and videos of the majestic falls and complete your experience by watching the nearby *Aratiatia Dam* gates open before or after your cruise.

A must-do Taupō experience – calm, relaxing and absolutely unforgettable! If you're in the mood to pick up the pace, nothing will get you closer to the falls than **HUKAFALLS JET**. Since 1990, this 30-minute jet boat ride has been thrilling visitors with its exhilarating *Waikato River* trip. 360° spins and jaw-dropping speed combine with awe-inspiring views of the famous *Huka Falls* and native bush – a Taupō must-do. This is a great family fun way to see New Zealand's most visited natural attraction!

Adventurers need fuel and **COBB & CO. TAUPŌ** is the perfect place to relax and refuel after exploring the region. Enjoy a meal in comfort – indoors or out on the dog-friendly balcony – while soaking in views of the snow-capped mountains & *Lake Taupō*. A true family favourite, *Cobb & Co.* delights with its special menu and cosy fireplace for wintery days. And a standout attraction: their cheerful robot waiter, who might even sing “*Happy Birthday*” for a memorable dining experience. With thoughtful catering for all ages and dietary needs, it's a must-visit spot to recharge and enjoy some local charm.



© Huka Falls River Cruise



© Hukafalls Jet



© Cobb & Co.

WHERE HOT SPRINGS FLOW AND COOL LAKES GLOW

TAUPŌ'S WARM WELCOME

Known for its stunningly clear waters, this picturesque destination is perfect for a refreshing dip. In summer, join the locals as they cool off in one of the lake's many scenic bays, each with its own unique charm.

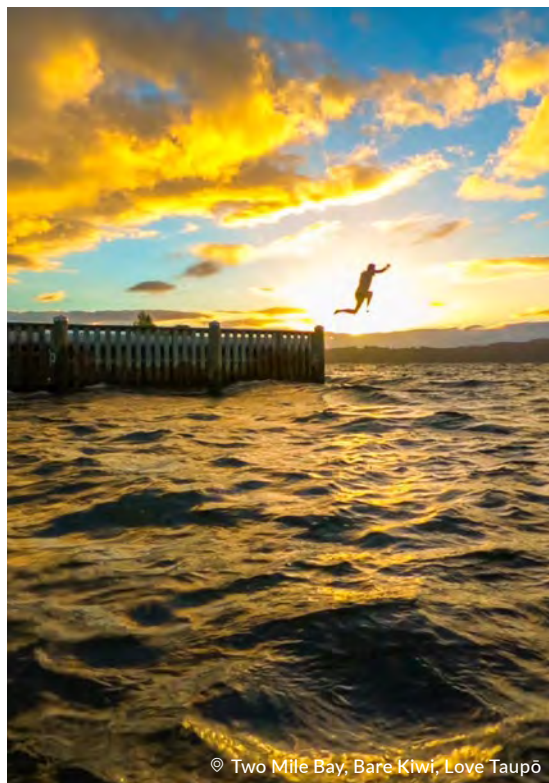
Taupō is built for long summer days spent by the water. The lake is the star with its clear fresh depths, sheltered bays and warm shallows that make it one of the best freshwater playgrounds in Aotearoa. You can dip in almost anywhere but there are a few spots that locals and visitors keep returning to. Places where the water's calm, the views stretch wide and time seems to slow down.

Start close to town. The main lakefront is perfect for easy swims with grassy banks, picnic tables and plenty of room to spread out. Families love the shallows along the *Two Mile Bay* and *Three Mile Bay* stretch. Paddleboards drift past, boats idle offshore and the volcanic hills sit quietly on the horizon. It feels relaxed even on a busy day.

Take a moment to dig your toes into the sand and discover geothermal hot spots scattered around the lake's edge, including the well-known *Hot Water Beach*. With a carpark and public toilets located just below *Taharepa Reserve*, everything you need for a relaxed lakeside experience is close at hand.

If you want something a bit more tucked away head to *Acacia Bay*. The water here is crystal clear with a stoney bottom that warms up fast in summer. It's a favourite spot for a quick dip between walks or for a slow afternoon swim with the sun dropping behind the western hills. Pack snacks and make a day of it.

Or discover *Rangatira Point*, where a scenic trail winds through native bush to reveal flat rocks perfect for swimming and relaxing by the lake. The water here is deep, so it's important to keep an eye on little ones, but for confident swimmers, it's a great spot to dive in or explore. If you're feeling adventurous, it's even close enough to *Mine Bay* to swim to the iconic *Māori Rock Carvings*. *Rangatira Point* is a serene and adventurous retreat for those seeking a unique lakeside experience.



© Two Mile Bay, Bare Kiwi, Love Taupō



© Otumuheke Spa Park, Natural Hot Pools, Miles Holden

Further around the lake *Kinloch* offers a peaceful beach with a gentle curve that's great for kids and confident swimmers alike. The bay is sheltered so the water stays calm even when the wind picks up. There's a village feel here with a marina and café close by. It's an easy place to settle in and watch the boats slide in and out.

For something a little different brave a swim at *Wharewaka Deep*. Just beyond the shallows, the lakebed dramatically drops into a deep, dark abyss, adding a sense of mystery to your swim. The large reserves here make it an ideal location for family barbecues, with a playground close by.

If rivers are more your style the *Waikato River* offers some incredible swimming too. The stretch at *Reid's Farm* is popular with backpackers and summer travellers.

Spa Thermal Park and *Otumuheke Stream* give you a mix of cold river and natural hot stream. You can drift soak or plunge depending on the mood. Just keep an eye on signage and flows because river conditions change quickly. Facilities include changing rooms, lockers and toilets, ensuring a comfortable visit. Afterward, treat yourself to a coffee or ice cream from the charming kiosk nearby.

Wherever you end up you'll find that Taupō does swimming well. Clear water. Big skies. Space to breathe. Whether you're after a quick morning dip or a whole day by the lake there's always a spot waiting. Perfect for cooling off between adventures or settling in for a classic Kiwi summer.

SOUTHERN LAKE & VOLCANIC LOOP

Welcome to the Southern Lake and Volcanic Loop, a region where ancient energy hums beneath your feet and every horizon tells a story. Here, pristine lakes mirror the sky, volcanoes carve the skyline and forests whisper tales of time. It's a place that feels powerful and peaceful all at once – raw, alive, unforgettable.



Mt Ngāuruhoe

TŪRANGI – RIVER HEART OF THE SOUTH

At Lake Taupō's southern edge, Tūrangi moves with the flow of the *Tongariro River*. It's a small town with big energy – part anglers' haven, part adventure base. Fish world-class trout waters, wander the 15km *Tongariro River Trail* or raft the lively rapids with local guides. Nearby, *Kaimanawa Forest Park* offers tramping tracks, wide high-country views and the chance to spot wild *Kaimanawa horses*. In town, life stays easy with good coffee, local tackle shops, and dinners built around the day's catch.

TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK – LAND OF LEGENDS

A dual UNESCO World Heritage Site, this is the volcanic heart of the region. The *Tongariro Alpine Crossing* remains the star attraction, leading past lava fields and emerald lakes beneath *Mt Tongariro* and *Mt Ngāuruhoe*. Easier walks like *Taranaki Falls* or *Tama Lakes* reveal alpine landscapes without the crowds. *Whakapapa Village* hums year-round with cafés and chalets. In winter, *Whakapapa* and *Tūroa* transform into snow-filled playgrounds for skiing, boarding, and guided alpine adventures.

ŌHAKUNE – THE MOUNTAIN TOWN WITH HEART

Ōhakune blends ski village charm with creative spirit. *Clyde Street* is lined with cafés, gear shops, and colourful murals. Winter brings skiers to *Tūroa*; summer sees cyclists on the *Ohakune Old Coach Road*, weaving through viaducts and forest tunnels. The town's creativity shows in breweries, bakeries, markets, and its famous *Carrot Carnival* each October.

STAY, SAVOUR, AND SOAK IT IN

Across the region, cosy lodges and chalets offer mountain views, warm fireplaces, and meals showcasing local produce – venison, greens, trout and craft beer. After dark, clear skies reveal a sweep of stars in true Dark Sky country.

THE LOOP THAT LINGERS

Here, you don't just see landscapes – you live them. Walk volcanic ridgelines, paddle quiet lakes, breathe alpine air and discover the stories held within these mountains, rivers and trails. It's a journey that stays with you long after you leave.



© Tama Lakes Track, Tongariro National Park

TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK

Tongariro National Park is a place where volcanic peaks, sweeping valleys, and alpine plateaus create an environment like nowhere else in Aotearoa. It's a playground for hikers, bikers, sightseers and anyone who loves being out in the elements..

THE HEART OF THE PARK

At the centre of it all stand the three iconic mountains – Ruapehu, *Tongariro*, and *Ngāuruhoe*. Their presence defines the region, offering dramatic horizons and unforgettable adventures. The most celebrated of these is the *Tongariro Alpine Crossing*, often hailed as one of New Zealand's finest day hikes.

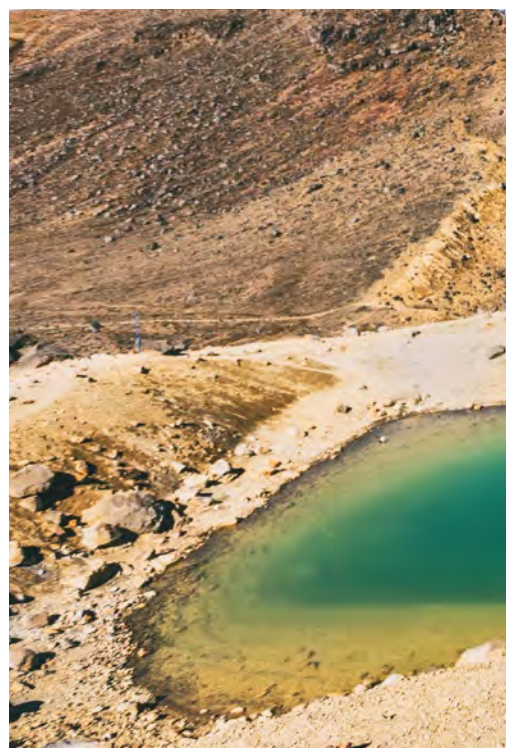
TONGARIRO ALPINE CROSSING

A journey across an active volcanic landscape, *the Crossing* reveals emerald lakes, steaming vents, rugged craters and sweeping views that seem to go on forever. Summer brings clear skies and warm, dry tracks, while winter transforms the route into a challenging alpine experience for those with the right gear and guidance.

It's a must-do for experienced walkers and preparation is key – from weather checks to water, layers and sturdy footwear.

Embarking on the *Tongariro Alpine Crossing* is not just a trek; it's an odyssey through an ever-changing volcanic terrain. The trek can be steep and unpredictable, so be sure to wear proper clothing, suitable footwear, and bring plenty of food and water. *The Crossing* is possible year-round but take care during winter months as snow adds to the complexity of the challenge – crampons are essential. The famous hike is one-way, starting and ending in different locations. **TONGARIRO CROSSING SHUTTLES** based in *National Park Village* now called *Waimarino* – facilitates seamless transportation for trekkers, offering pick-up and drop-off services and ensuring flexibility for a personalised experience.

Covering 20.2 kilometres over six to eight hours, *the Crossing* takes explorers on a journey past breathtaking vistas and tackles challenging climbs. The volcanic alpine landscape is dominated by *Mt Ruapehu*, *Ngāuruhoe* and *Tongariro*, taking you past spectacular emerald-green alpine lakes, active craters, steaming vents, alpine vegetation and old lava flows. *Tongariro Crossing Shuttles* offers a return service from *Waimarino* (*National Park Village*) timed to give customers the flexibility to do the full day long trek at their own pace. The company also caters for visitors wanting to do the *Tongariro Northern Circuit*, one of New Zealand's *Great Walks* or shorter walks in and around *Whakapapa Village*.



While *the Crossing* often steals the spotlight, the wider area offers plenty of ways to make a trip here a full adventure.

SHORT WALKS & SCENIC HIGHLIGHTS

TARANAKI FALLS TRACK: A classic 2-hour loop through forest and open tussock, finishing at a 20-metre waterfall plunging over an ancient lava flow.

SILICA RAPIDS: Creamy, mineral-rich terraces on an easy 1.5–2 hour walk from *Whakapapa*.

TAWHAI FALLS: A short 20-minute return walk to a picturesque waterfall – a favourite with families.

MEADS WALL: Lava-rock formations with dramatic views towards *Ngāuruhoe*.

BIKING ADVENTURES

OLD COACH ROAD (OHAKUNE): Family-friendly terrain crossing historic viaducts and forest.

FISHERS TRACK: A gentle gradient with rewarding views across the central plateau.





© Tongariro Alpine Crossing

 A photograph of four hikers (three women and one man) walking along a red dirt trail. They are wearing various hiking gear like jackets, backpacks, and trekking poles. In the background, a large, dark, conical volcano dominates the landscape under a clear sky.

COME & embrace THE MIGHTY maunga'a

Whakapapa is set for anyone keen to explore the Tongariro National Park's volcanic landscape, NZ's only UNESCO Dual World Heritage site. Walk one of the marked trails or soak in the views by riding the Sky Waka gondola to 2,020m and settling in at Knoll Ridge chalet, New Zealand's highest café.

WHAKAPAPA
MT RUAPEHU