

Pictures:

Left: Hawkes Bay

Below: Gannets at
Cape Kidnappers

Small inset right:
Old Portland
Lighthouse Wairoa



Mt Hikurangi is the first part of New Zealand, and reputedly the world, to see the sun rise. It is also the highest non volcanic peak in the North Island. Prior permission is required to climb the mountain.

The city of Gisborne has several beaches to visit and is home to New Zealand's shortest river Turanganui, just 1200m in length. An interesting place to visit is Gray's bush, a 12ha pre-European native bush reserve thought to be the only remaining forest ecosystem of its type. For lovers of non-native tree species, Hackfalls Arboretum has one of the country's largest private collections of maples, oaks and poplars.

35 km inland from Gisborne is Eastwoodhill Arboretum, a 65ha mature Arboretum of Northern Hemisphere temperate zone trees. This impressive planting was the labour of love for William Douglas Cook who planted 8,000 trees in two years when he returned from the first world war.

41 km from Wairoa is the Morere Scenic reserve which has a number of well signposted bush walks. A popular feature of the reserve are its thermal pools of varying temperatures, set within lush native bush. Further inland from Wairoa is the Te Urewera Forest Park, the largest untouched native forest in New Zealand, and Lake Waikaremoana. Here visitors can enjoy boating, fishing and canoeing on the lake, as

well as bushwalks, hikes and cave visits within the park. Call at the Aniwanui visitor centre for further information.

Heading south to Hawke's Bay, the 'fruitbowl' of New Zealand, the region is typified by the many vineyards and orchards which give it a distinctive charm and character.

Perhaps the best known icon of the region is the colony of Gannets at Cape Kidnappers, a short drive south of Napier. This colony is unique as it is the largest and most accessible mainland gannet colony in the world providing visitors with an intimate encounter to view nesting gannets. Either walking unguided, or as part of an eco-friendly guided tour, you can only get to the colony at low-tide so be careful to check the times before you leave, or you might end up spending the night with the birds! As well as the gannets there are spectacular views of the entire Hawkes Bay and the opportunity to view 5 million year old sedimentary rock containing fossils in the cliffs along the beach.

From Te Mata Peak, a 330 metre (1000ft) hill to the south of Hastings, you are able to take in panoramic vistas of the entire Hawkes Bay from Mahia Peninsula in the north to Cape Kidnappers and the gannet colony in the south and even further south down the eastern coast of the southern North Island. The majestic view also takes in the twin cities of Napier and Hastings, Havelock North and the Tukituki river valley. It is also a popular take off point for paragliders and hanggliders. You can either walk to the top of the peak or there is a good, if slightly narrow, sealed road.



This article offers just a small taste of the multitude of natural attractions that abound along the entire length of the Pacific Coast Highway. For more information call at any of the visitor information centres on route, the Department of Conservation office in the ferry buildings at the bottom of Queen Street in Auckland, or at one of the Auckland Visitor Information Centres.