

Touring New Zealand's North Island - Tour of Taranaki (224 miles/358 km)

The Tour

This self-supporting tour will take you on 5 days of riding and sightseeing through the Taranaki region of the southwestern coast of New Zealand's North Island. Mt Taranaki (formerly known as Mt Egmont) is the dominating natural feature of the region. This huge cone-like shaped mountain that rises straight from sea level to 8,261 ft/2,518m is one of the most symmetrical volcanic cones in the world; and due to its resemblance to Mount Fuji, Mt Taranaki provided the backdrop for the film, The Last Samurai. It is rare to see the snow-covered top of Mt Taranaki, because most of the year it is shrouded in cloud cover; but when the weather allows, the view is simply magnificent. The volcano of Mt Taranaki is surrounded by lush green landscape, most of it forming the Egmont National Park.

The route will take you north from Wanganui, a region of numerous rivers and valleys, through undulating terrain to Hawera, which is the entry point to the Mt Taranaki region. From Hawera you will continue north to circumnavigate the magnificent Mt Taranaki. Riding along scenic farmlands, you will pass through the tourist town of Strathmore, before arriving on the west coast in New Plymouth. From New Plymouth the route will turn south and snake its way along the western coastline back to Hawera before finally retracing the route.

Duration: 7 Days

Riding: 5 Days

Difficulty:  Moderate

Depart: Wanganui

Arrive: Wanganui

Total Distance: 224 miles/358 km

Total Ascent: 11,555 ft/3,522 m



When to Ride It

The best time to ride this tour is before or after the high summer (southern hemisphere) season (December – January) when there is much less traffic and crowds. Because the climate is reasonably mild, cycling in the Taranaki region can be quite enjoyable any time between October and April and often well into May and June.

If you are planning to visit during December and January, or on any major holiday such as Easter, it is advisable that you make lodging reservations ahead of time.

How to Get There

If you have planned your travel to Auckland or Wellington, New Zealand, you should check Air New Zealand and other major airlines for schedules. For North American cyclists, Air New Zealand has direct/non-stop flights operating several times a week from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Auckland with easy connection to Wellington. From either Auckland or Wellington, Air New Zealand Link has daily flights to Wanganui.

Wanganui is well served by buses. The InnerCity and Newmans both operate services from Auckland and Wellington to Wanganui. It is best to check their web sites for latest schedule, prices, and policy for carrying bicycles.

If you are traveling by car, Wanganui is accessed by SH1 and SH3 from the south and by SH3 from the north.

The starting and ending point of this tour is the town of Wanganui. The tour begins from the center of town on Victoria Street.

Accommodations

Most of New Zealand's accommodations are clean and well serviced, and relatively affordable. You can simply camp (if you prefer to carry your own tent), or stay in a basic hostel, or you can select a more comfortable option such as motel, hotel, private flat, or B&B (Bed and Breakfast).

You will find that many private and B&B accommodations in New Zealand offer shared bathroom (generally for lesser rate), which may have a shower but not bath, or vice versa. If you prefer a room with private bath or shower (or both), look for accommodations advertising "ensuite" and always ask if the bathroom has a bathtub (There is nothing more soothing than a good bath after a hard day's ride).

If you are traveling during high summer season (unless you are camping), it is recommended you arrange for reservations ahead of time. Check the web for B&Bs in the Thames and Coromandel region. Alternatively, pick up one of the many free accommodation guide books available from any tourist information center in New Zealand (mind you they can add some weight to your bicycle load). These guides offer an extensive list of accommodations from campgrounds to hotels.

The Roads

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Recommended Gear

Besides the [standard touring gear & spare parts](#), it is recommended that you bring at least two extra foldable tires with strong Kevlar casing. Clothing layers and cycling rain gear is absolutely essential for this tour. Additionally, if you like to use rearview mirrors, whether they are helmet mounted or bicycle mounted, make sure you bring one that can be switched for riding on the left hand side of the road. As previously mentioned, a cycling helmet is required by law in New Zealand and if you ride after sunset, your bicycle must be equipped with rear reflective lights and front headlight.

List of Daily Rides

The Daily Rides

Day 1 of 5: Ride from Wanganui to Hawera (57.2 miles/91.5 km)



Day 2 of 5: Ride from Hawera to New Plymouth (44.5 miles/71.2 km)



Rest days (2) in New Plymouth



Day 3 of 5: Ride from New Plymouth to Opunake (38.2 miles/61.1 km)



Day 4 of 5: Ride from Opunake to Hawera (27.3 miles/43.7 km)



Day 5 of 5: Ride from Hawera to Wanganui (57.2 miles/91.5 km)

