

Famed for its distinctive mountain and black sand beaches, the Taranaki region lies on the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand. Predominantly an agricultural region, Taranaki is also a leader in New Zealand's hydrocarbon industry.

Taranaki's rich landscapes, abundant natural resources and moderate climate all contribute to a flourishing economy and a range of lifestyle opportunities that mean a growing number of people choose to call Taranaki home.

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The Taranaki region

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Regional economy

- Agriculture and forestry
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Tangata whenua

Our vision for the future

Where we live



'Taranaki ... an attractive place to live, work and play.'

The Taranaki region

Taranaki's distinctive landforms, rivers and streams, and temperate climate are all part of what makes the Taranaki region an attractive place to live, work and play.

Regional boundaries

The Taranaki region extends across 723,610 hectares. It stretches from the Mōhakatino catchment in the north to the Waitōtara catchment in the south. Inland, its boundary is the Whanganui catchment. The region reaches 12 nautical miles (approximately 22 kilometres) into the territorial sea. There are three district councils within the region: New Plymouth, Stratford, and South Taranaki district councils.



The Taranaki region comprises several units of local government (left) and a variety of landforms (right).

Landforms

Taranaki has four distinctive landforms, each requiring a different type of environmental management.

Ring plain

Centred on Mount Taranaki, the Taranaki ring plain has fertile and free-draining soils that are well suited to pastoral farming. Dairying is the most common land use here and it is more intensive on the flatter lands of South Taranaki.

Frontal and eastern hill country

The hill country to the east of the ring plain is made up of older rock including siltstone, mudstone and sandstone—known locally as papa. This country is steep, and prone to soil erosion and slipping. Managed properly, the hill country can support both pastoral farming and commercial forestry.

Marine terraces

The marine terraces that run along the Taranaki coastline in the north and south contain some of the most versatile and productive soils in the region. However, the combination of light, sandy soils and strong winds in some areas make the terraces susceptible to wind erosion if vegetation cover is lost.

Coastal sand country

The coastal and marine environment is exposed to the west. The land here is subject to erosion from waves and wind. There are few areas of sheltered water beyond the major estuaries and the confines of Port Taranaki. In both the north and south, erosion has resulted in a coastline of almost continuous papa cliffs; to the west, volcanic activity has produced boulder reefs and the region's famous black sand beaches.

Rivers

Many rivers and streams flow across the Taranaki region. Over 300 radiate in a distinctive pattern from the flanks of Mount Taranaki and across the ring plain. Ringplain rivers are usually short, small and fast-moving, supplying a steady flow of water, even during long, dry periods. In the hill country, the drainage pattern is different. Hillcountry rivers have short tributaries contained by narrow valleys and generally carry high-sediment loads.

Taranaki's rivers and streams are used extensively throughout the region for agriculture, for industry, for community water supplies and for a wide range of recreational activities. 'Taranaki's rivers and streams are used extensively throughout the region ...'

Find out more

- Sharing the Waiwhakaiho website tinyurl.com/TRC3a
- Sharing the Waiwhakaiho tinyurl.com/TRC3b



The Stony (Hangatahua) River is one of hundreds of rivers stemming from the flanks of Mount Taranaki.



Many rivers flow across the Taranaki landscape. Of these, around 530 are named.

Climate

Taranaki's temperate climate, with abundant rainfall and high sunshine hours, makes the region lush, green and fertile.

Rainfall

Annual rainfall varies throughout the region. Some coastal areas receive less than 1,400 mm annually, while the summit of Mount Taranaki receives around 7,500 mm.

Heavy rainfall events do occur and there can be extremes. In 2012 heavy rain caused a number of slips on the coastal road around Mount Taranaki, including a large slip at Oākura that covered the road, burying a block of public toilets.

Typically though, flooding is not a major problem on the ring plain because ringplain rivers are normally short and narrow with steep gradients—well incised into the volcanic ash and debris material of the surrounding land. However, in the hill country, where the drainage pattern is different, intense rainfall can lead to rapid rises in river levels and flooding on river flats.

Temperature

Taranaki's generally moderate summer and winter temperatures, combined with average to high sunshine hours, create a pleasant environment for both indoor and outdoor lifestyles.

Average winter temperatures range between 6°C and 14°C, with summer temperatures between 13°C and 22°C. The highest temperature on record to date is 30°C.

Temperature variation is greater in sheltered inland locations than in coastal areas and elevated inland areas are generally cooler.

Most areas of New Zealand receive 2,000 sunshine hours annually; the average number of annual sunshine hours at New Plymouth Airport is 2,182.



Average annual rainfall in the Taranaki region.

Wind

Taranaki is windy, but wind strength varies depending on how exposed an area is. In coastal and exposed areas the wind often comes from the southeast, bringing generally fine weather—largely because of the shelter provided by the ranges to the east. In the spring and summer, the wind generally comes from the west, bringing more unsettled and showery weather.

Sometimes, the region experiences more extreme winds, including gale force winds and, occasionally, tornadoes.



Taranaki lies in the path of weather systems moving west over the Tasman Sea.



South Taranaki can get very dry in the summer months.

Climate of varying extremes

Taranaki may enjoy a temperate climate but extremes are not unknown. In the past five years these have included extraordinary snowfalls blanketing the region to very low altitudes, and a devastating windstorm that caused severe damage in the Pātea area.

After near-record high temperatures early in 2011, July brought a polar blast and two snow dumps that turned Taranaki into a giant Christmas-card scene. Even coastal areas were affected, prompting the *Taranaki Daily News* to declare it a once in a generation event. With pastures covered and power out in many areas, it was a challenging time for farmers and some were forced to move stock indoors. Even moving along roads became difficult, with police temporarily closing SH3 between Stratford and New Plymouth.

In early March 2012, severe winds caused widespread damage in South Taranaki. Houses and commercial buildings in

Hāwera and Pātea and other small towns were damaged, and a welfare centre was opened in Pātea for residents who could not stay in their homes. The winds damaged about 600 overhead lines or poles, cutting off power to many in South Taranaki, some for several days. Later the same month it was the north's turn to be buffeted.

Other weather fluctuations over the past five years have included:

- Wildly see-sawing temperatures in 2009 and a hot dry summer in 2009–2010 with drought in South Taranaki in April 2010.
- A swarm of tornadoes in north Taranaki in June 2011, which caused power outage and damage to property (but not to the same extent as the Oākura storm in 2007).
- Gale force winds in January 2012, causing New Plymouth Airport to cancel eight flights and the Todd Energy Aquatic Centre to close its doors.

Ex-tropical cyclone Evan dragged warm and humid air over the country in December 2012, delivering stifling heat and humidity on Christmas and Boxing Day and through the rest of summer. New Plymouth experienced the sunniest year since records began, but very low rainfall caused region-wide drought by March 2013. Useful rain fell in April but the official drought status lingered until September.

2014 was the warmest winter since records began. However, heavy spring hailstorms cost many retailers in the New Plymouth CBD thousand of dollars when spouting was blocked and the heavy rain that followed flooded many buildings.

