

# FORGOTTEN WORLD HIGHWAY

NEW ZEALAND'S OLDEST TOURING ROUTE BETWEEN STRATFORD AND TAUMARUNUI

## Welcome to the Forgotten World

Seeing the perfect volcanic cone of Mount Taranaki and the surrounding Egmont National Park in the rear view mirror means one of two things – you're heading down one of Taranaki's famous coastal roads in search of a great wave or a secluded beach, or you're leaving the province. If you're leaving, then New Zealand's oldest Heritage Trail, the Forgotten World Highway, offers an unparalleled journey through our pioneering past and richest landscape.

The 155km adventure begins in Stratford and ends in Taumarunui on the Central Plateau, with Mount Ruapehu looming in front of you. It follows ancient Maori trade routes and pioneering farm tracks, through ambitious historic settlements, untamed native bush and stunning natural scenery.



Along the Forgotten World Highway, you'll encounter a landscape where man and nature have fought each other for centuries resulting in more than 30 historic or natural points of interest. Whether you approach the Forgotten World Highway as a three-hour scenic link between the West Coast and the Central Plateau, or explore its many stories over several days, you'll be treated to an adventure 'like no other'.

## The Journey Begins at Stratford

Named after Shakespeare's birthplace, the streets of **Stratford (1)** reflect the Great Bard's characters. The town is home to New Zealand's only glockenspiel clock tower which performs scenes from Romeo and Juliet at 10am, 1pm, 3pm and 7pm daily. Renowned as the gateway to Egmont National Park, Stratford is

the last petrol station and major town before Taumarunui. **Taranaki Pioneer Village (2)**, on the outskirts of Stratford, is worth a visit and sets the scene for the journey through the Forgotten World Highway.

The Highway leaves Stratford via Regan Street, from the northern of the town's two roundabouts. The first stop is the **Whakaahurangi Maori Trail (3)**, a significant ancient route between North and South Taranaki. Further down the road you will find road condition information.



After passing through vivid green dairy country, the Highway reaches the village of Douglas. A quintessential Taranaki rural village, its fortunes have flourished and waned since its heyday in the 1920s - its prosperity dictated by that of its dairy factory. **The Douglas Brick Kiln (4)** is classified with the Historic Places Trust and closed in 1981 after turning local clay into bricks and tiles for over 60 years. The Kiln's landmark 33m high chimney was demolished in 1985 in an attempt to salvage the bricks for sale.

The **Strathmore Saddle (5)** is the first of four natural saddles along the Highway and offers spectacular views of Mt Taranaki to the west, and Tongariro, Ruapehu and Ngaurahoe to the east. The saddle lies close to the fault line and surrounding hills display fossilized shell outcrops dating back to when this land lay at the ocean floor.

The village of Strathmore, just off the Forgotten World Highway along Brewer Road, is another once vibrant frontier town that fed the pioneering expansion along this route. A surviving example of that growth is the **Makahu Tunnel (6)**, which opened in 1907, giving access to the Makahu and Puniwhakau Valleys.

For more information visit: [www.taranaki.info/visit](http://www.taranaki.info/visit) or [www.visitruapehu.com](http://www.visitruapehu.com)

The Tunnel leads to the start point of the **Matemateaonga Walkway (7)**, a multi-day tramp through to the Whanganui River that can be experienced either as a return trip or connect to Wanganui by jetboat. When these isolated valleys were first accessed in the early 1900s, scores of settlers flocked to make their living off the land, though most walked away heartbroken years later, beaten by the isolation and constantly encroaching bush.



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MIKE CURRY

The road leads on to the **'Bridge to Somewhere' (8)**, a substantial concrete bridge built in 1937 in an unlikely location, recalling the ambitions of these hardy pioneers. Allow 90 minutes return from Strathmore to reach the bridge, a sister to the even more isolated 'Bridge to Nowhere' on the northern banks of the Whanganui River.

Beyond that the old Whangamomona Road takes a turn for the rugged, and becomes strictly for the dedicated four wheel drive, motor bike, mountain bike or tramper from here through to Whangamomona.

Back on the Forgotten World Highway, the next stop is **Te Wera (9)**, an early settlement and more recently the base for the 6500ha Te Wera Forest. The former New Zealand Forest Service campsite is still well used, and a number of walks lead from here through an arboretum and forest.

The second of the Highway's saddles, the **Pohokura Saddle (10)**, provides a view into the valley used as a large railway construction campsite in the early 20th Century, and is named after a prominent Maori Chief. The pass is near the hilltop Taumata-Mahoe Maori track and close to three major Taranaki watersheds – that of the Waitara, Patea and Whanganui Rivers.

The **Whangamomona Saddle (11)** also offers spectacular views of the surrounding landscape with a backdrop of beech and Podocarp forest. The Awahou three-hour loop track starts at the saddle crest and provides an insight into the terrain that confronted the early surveyors and settlers.

### Whangamomona: Valley of Plenty

First settled in 1895, the village of **Whangamomona (12)** was once a bustling frontier town, with up to 300 residents providing strong service links to the hardy farmers trying to wrestle a living from the nearby bush. The town experienced a great flood in 1924, but farm mergers and rationalisation of the 1960s put paid to the township's expansion, and its population has since declined to around 30 residents. The village has a Historic Places Trust precinct rating, and is centred on the iconic Whangamomona Hotel, which provides hearty meals and accommodation for locals and travellers alike.

Whangamomona declared itself a republic in 1989, complete with its own presidential election. The famous Republic Day is held biennially in January and is enjoyed by thousands of visitors. Passports to the Republic of Whangamomona are available from the Hotel.



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The memorial to **Alice King (13)**, just north of Whangamomona, recognises this intrepid farmer and mother, who raised one of the first seven families to settle the area in the 1890s. Alice's grave site is marked over the river by a stainless steel cross.

### A Forgotten World

The final saddle of the journey at **Tahora (14)** offers another great vantage point and views of three prominent Maori Pa sites, railway tunnels and the central North Island mountains. A 6km detour from Tahora along Raekohua Road leads to the former **Tangarakau Village (15)**, once home to a substantial community with 1200 residents, fuelled by construction of the nearby railway.

The single-lane 180m long **Moki Tunnel (16)** was built in 1936 and is known locally as the Hobbit's Hole. Home to fossilized giant crabs, the tunnel's floor was lowered in 1989 to allow access for triple-decked stock trucks.

### Natural Delights

Shortly after the tunnel, a detour along Moki Road leads to a 20 minute walk to **Mt Damper Falls (17)**. At 85m this is the North Island's second highest waterfall, and is a spectacular sight, particularly after heavy rain. Surrounded by native bush, the falls spill over a papa bluff and eventually find their way via the Tongaporutu River to the Tasman Sea in North Taranaki. The Moki Road runs through the **Moki Forest (18)**, which features some of New Zealand's fastest regenerating native bush, traversed by walking tracks, old milling roads, and picnic spots.

Back on the Forgotten World Highway there is 12 km of unsealed surface shortly after the Moki Road turnoff while driving through the breathtaking **Tangarakau Gorge (19)**, which marks the boundary between the Stratford and Ruapehu Districts. The Gorge offers an incredibly scenic passage through the magnificent Podocarp forest that still characterises the region.



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**Pioneering Ambitions**

The final resting place of respected early surveyor **Joshua Morgan (20)**, who died in 1893 at the age of 35, is marked by a memorial and a short walkway through native bush to his grave site. This memorial also remembers the many other pioneers who sought their fortunes in this remote area.

One of the Forgotten World Highway's historic settlements, **Tatu (21)** once featured four houses, a school and hall, though was overshadowed by the nearby town of Puketihi further up the valley which boasted 30 homes, a post office, two-teacher school and even a reticulated water supply. A remnant of the once prosperous coal mining industry in this area, the **Tatu Mine entrance (22)** is located 6.5km along Waro Road, and can be accessed by foot in a two hour round trip. A greater insight into this area's bustling past can be found in the **Ohura Museum (23)**, a 10km diversion off the Forgotten World Highway.

**Nevin's Lookout (24)** offers panoramic views of the Central North Island from a vantage point a short walk from the road. Please ensure the gate is shut behind you. Though the original **Aorangi Flour Mill (25)** no longer survives, the trenches used to carry water from the Opetea Stream to the mill wheel are still visible. An information sign is located on River Road opposite the Koiro Road junction.



The settlement of Aukopae was once home to an **impressive tunnel (28)** hewn from the papa landscape over a decade and completed in 1923. Made redundant by the road cutting in 1968, the tunnel can be seen on a 45 minute walk following the old road. Aukopae was also the site of a once bustling **river-boat landing (29)**, where regular paddleboats navigated the Whanganui River with a cargo of settlers, supplies, and livestock. The landing is located 200m down Saddler Road. **The Nukunuku Museum (30)** is signposted from the river landing, and features displays of memorabilia from the area and river boats.

A distinctive bridge leads to **Te Maire Reserve (31)** in the upper reaches of the Whanganui National Park. This towering forest features a number of spectacular walks and can be a great way to spend a few hours.

The significant geological site of **Herlihy's Bluffs (32)** showcases the area's ancient history through 1300m thick layers of sand and mud stone. Causing a headache for roading construction over the last century, these bluffs date back 15-25 million years.



The historically significant **Maraekowhai Reserve (26)**, in the Whanganui National Park can be accessed along Tokirima Road. Please note that this road can be rough in places. The reserve was a stronghold for Hauhau warriors, and the site of Rongo Nui – a war pole calling warriors to arms – in 1864, and Rere Kore – a peace pole to announce the end of hostilities – both of which are preserved on the site. They are accessible via the river, a linking swing bridge has been taken down. A 20-minute walk leads to a viewing platform overlooking Ohura falls.

Through necessity the early settlers made the most of the materials to hand. An example of this is one of the few remaining **Papa Drives (27)** that were used extensively as roading culverts in the 1900s.

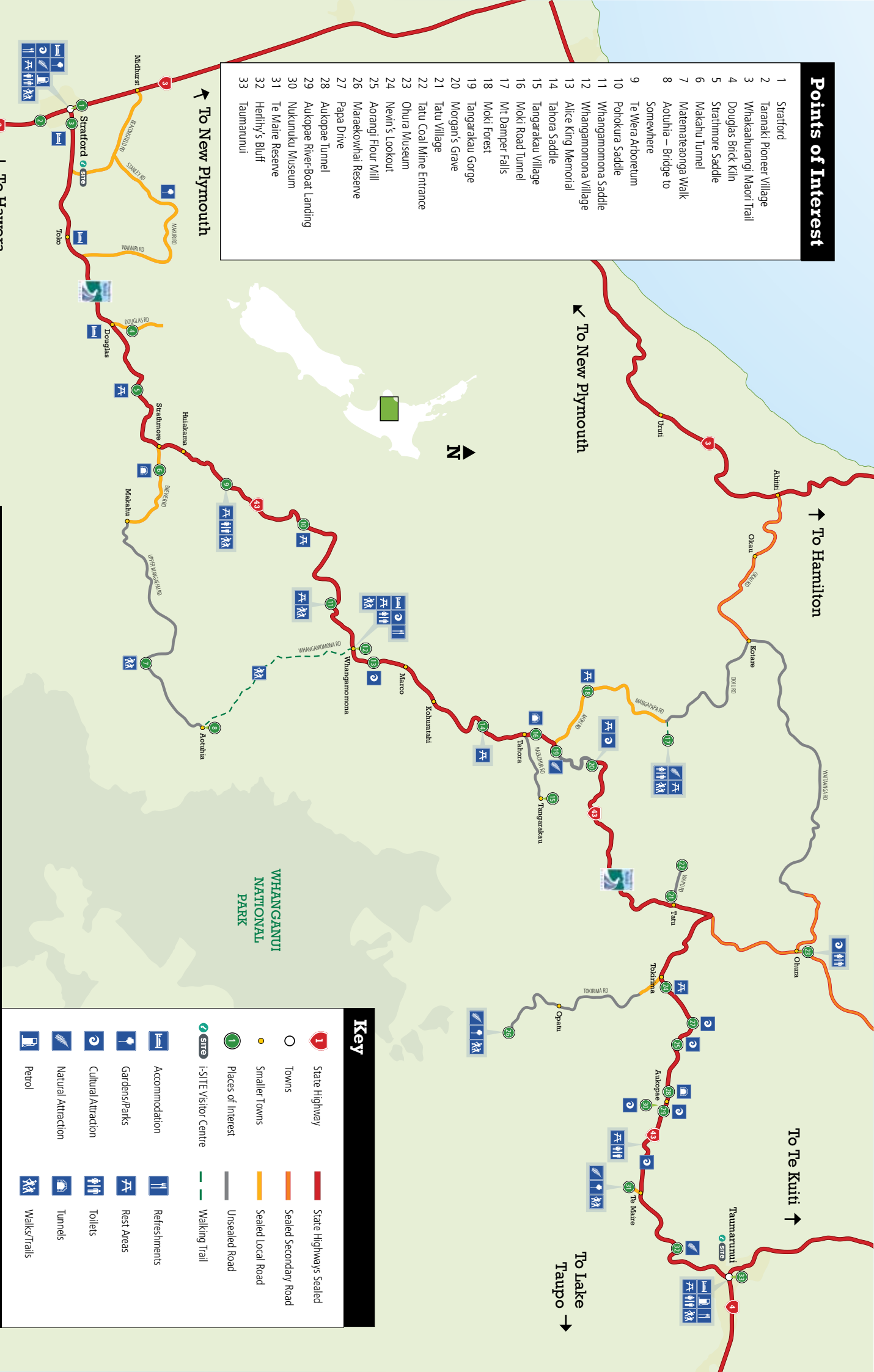


**Found Again**

The journey through the Forgotten World Highway concludes in **Taumarunui (33)**, at the junction of the Whanganui and Ongarue Rivers. Taumarunui holds great significance in both Maori and New Zealand history – it is the point of convergence for the Whanganui, Maniapoto and Tuwharetoa tribes, and has been an important location for New Zealand's rail network since the pioneering era. From Taumarunui the Central North Island can be easily accessed.

## Points of Interest

- 1 Stratford
- 2 Taranaki Pioneer Village
- 3 Whakaahuurangi Maori Trail
- 4 Douglas Brick Kin
- 5 Strathmore Saddle
- 6 Makahu Tunnel
- 7 Matemateanga Walk
- 8 Aotuhia – Bridge to Somewhere
- 9 Te Wera Arboretum
- 10 Pohokura Saddle
- 11 Whangamomona Saddle
- 12 Whangamomona Village
- 13 Alice King Memorial
- 14 Tahora Saddle
- 15 Tangaraku Village
- 16 Moki Road Tunnel
- 17 Mt Dampier Falls
- 18 Moki forest
- 19 Tangaraku Gorge
- 20 Morgan's Grave
- 21 Tatu Village
- 22 Tatu Coal Mine Entrance
- 23 Ohura Museum
- 24 Newin's Lookout
- 25 Aorangi Flour Mill
- 26 Marekowhai Reserve
- 27 Papa Drive
- 28 Aukopae Tunnel
- 29 Aukopae River-Boat Landing
- 30 Nukunuku Museum
- 31 Te Maire Reserve
- 32 Herihy's Bluff
- 33 Taumarunui



To Hamilton

To Te Kuiti

To New Plymouth

To Lake Taupo

To Hawera

To New Plymouth

## Key

- |  |                       |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
|  | State Highway         |  | State Highways Sealed |
|  | Towns                 |  | Sealed Secondary Road |
|  | Smaller Towns         |  | Sealed Local Road     |
|  | Places of Interest    |  | Unsealed Road         |
|  | i-SITE Visitor Centre |  | Walking Trail         |
|  | Accommodation         |  | Refreshments          |
|  | Gardens/Parks         |  | Rest Areas            |
|  | Cultural Attraction   |  | Toilets               |
|  | Natural Attraction    |  | Tunnels               |
|  | Petrol                |  | Walks/Trails          |

**PLEASE NOTE 12KM OF THE FORGOTTEN WORLD HIGHWAY IS UNSEALED ROAD, THERE ARE NO PETROL STATIONS ALONG THE HIGHWAY. WHEN IN NEW ZEALAND, PLEASE DRIVE ON THE LEFT! \* Map is not to scale and not all roads are shown**

Drive Times		Time	Distance
Stratford to:	Douglas	18 mins	18 km
	Strathmore Saddle	23 mins	23 km
	Pohokura Saddle	45 mins	45 km
	Whangamomona Saddle	56 mins	56 km
	Alice King Memorial	1 hr 3 mins	65 km
	Tahora Saddle	1 hr 15 mins	75 km
	Moki Rd Tunnel	1 hr 21 mins	81 km
	Nevin's Lookout	1 hr 50 mins	110 km
	Taumarunui	2 hr 30 mins	150 km

Drive Times		Time	Distance
Tahora/SH43 to:	Tangarakau	6 mins, one way	6 km
Moki Rd/SH43 to:	Mt Damper Falls	15 mins, one way	15.1 km
	Moki Forest	8 mins, one way	7.9 km
Tatu to:	Tatu Coal Mine	3 mins, one way	2.6 km
Ahititi to:	New Plymouth	1 hr	61 kms
	Hamilton	2 hr 30 mins	180 kms
Taumarunui to:	Te Kuiti	1 hr	83 km
	Taupo	1 hr 30 mins	131 km
Stratford to:	New Plymouth	30 mins	40 km
	Hawera	20 mins	31 km

\* Approximate distance and drive times



**STRATFORD i-SITE VISITOR CENTRE**

Prospero Place and Miranda Street, Stratford  
 Email: [info@stratford.govt.nz](mailto:info@stratford.govt.nz) Phone: 06 765 6708 Freephone: 0800 765 6708  
 Visitor information, maps, souvenirs, internet facilities, accommodation, activity and transport bookings for Stratford, Taranaki and all of New Zealand.  
 Hours: Monday-Friday from 8.30am-5pm.  
 Weekends and Public Holidays from 10am-3pm.

**TAUMARUNUI i-SITE VISITOR CENTRE**

Railway Station, Hakiaha Street, Taumarunui  
 Email: [taumarunui.vic@xtra.co.nz](mailto:taumarunui.vic@xtra.co.nz) Phone: 07 895 7494  
 Visitor information, maps, souvenirs, internet facilities, accommodation, activity and transport bookings for Taumarunui, Ruapehu and all of New Zealand.  
 Hours: Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm.  
 Weekends and Public Holidays from 10am-4pm. Closed Christmas day.