

# SURF HIGHWAY 45

TOURING ROUTE AROUND THE TARANAKI COAST FROM NEW PLYMOUTH TO HAWERA



## SURF HIGHWAY 45

Taranaki is the home of Kiwi surf. Almost every road that heads towards the coastline leads to a pristine uncrowded wave. A drive around the iconic Surf Highway 45 – the coast road from New Plymouth to Hawera – will lead you to dozens of world-class surf breaks. But Surf Highway 45 offers much more than epic surf and empty beaches, with a wide variety of artist studios, historical sites, spectacular scenery and cozy cafés making this a great adventure for anybody seeking to explore the best of Taranaki.



6

ROB TUCKER

### Surf Highway 45 Tells Three Stories

The first, and most obvious, is a story of wave-fuelled adventure by generations of surfers searching for the perfect wave. From Mokau in the north to Waitotara in the south, the Taranaki coastline is home to countless classic surf breaks.

Breaks like Stent Road, the Kumara Patch, Fitzroy Beach and Arawhata Road have become legendary in New Zealand surfing over the decades and continue to attract surfers from around the globe. No matter what the swell or wind direction, it's almost always offshore somewhere along the Surf Highway.

The second story of Surf Highway 45 is one of a unique natural environment, perched precariously between a spectacular brooding mountain and the dynamic forces of the spirited Taranaki coastline. This is a story of geography and industry, and is unavoidable as you pass through this coastal landscape. While surfing is a big part of Surf Highway 45, the spectacular natural environment also makes it a journey to remember.

Surf Highway 45 also tells a graphic story of Kiwi culture, both through the rich history that has shaped the region's identity, and the many creative people that call this unique patch of paradise home.

These stories intertwine to provide a touring route that will appeal to the hardcore surfer, travelling explorer, and cultural adventurer alike, leaving all who travel the 105km touring route with an adventure 'like no other.'



5

ROB TUCKER

### A Rich History

From the mythical time when Mount Taranaki made his way to the West Coast from the Central Plateau, brokenhearted after losing a battle for Mount Pihanga, the Taranaki region has created a rich history for itself. Historic land battles, the birth of the passive resistance movement, pioneering industrial growth, and a picture-perfect mountain have all contributed to modern-day Taranaki having many vivid stories to tell. These stories are best experienced by exploring the region's countryside and visiting one of the many museums on offer.

Taranaki is home to many well-preserved historic pa sites. The immense Koru Pa and the pivotal Te Ngutu o te Manu are both easily accessed from the Surf Highway and along with countless sculpted hilltops around the province provide an unbeatable insight into the region's vivid history. The scale of these fortresses, carved into hilltops by hand, is mind-boggling, as are the histories they have created.

### The Journey Begins in New Plymouth

If golf is your thing, then a round at **Ngamotu Links (1)** shouldn't be missed. This world-class course offers both the chance to check the surf and a stunning introduction to the Taranaki landscape – views from the course take in the peak of Mt Taranaki, the green volcanic plains and the sparkling Tasman Sea.

**Lake Rotomanu (2)** is home to North Taranaki's premiere waterskiing and wakeboarding venue, and gets a lot of use on the rare occasions when the surf

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



is flat. Beyond the lake is the **Waiwhakaiho river mouth (3)**, which offers good fishing and surf spots on either side of the river.

The river mouth offers a good access point to the **New Plymouth Coastal Walkway (4)**, a walking and cycling route along the city's foreshore between Bell Block and Port Taranaki. The walkway offers spectacular views and was named the world's best environmental project at the 2008 Liveable Communities international award.



The next stop is the first of the Highway's surf beaches, the legendary **Fitzroy Beach (5)**. One of the best mid-city surf spots in the world, Fitzroy is renowned for hollow waves, and is patrolled in summer, offering excellent swimming. The Fitzroy Camping Ground offers million dollar views for a fraction of the cost. Neighbouring **East End Beach (6)** also offers a good wave on mid to high tide, though is generally a foot smaller than Fitzroy. Also patrolled, it offers good swimming and a launchpad for kite surfing.

In the centre of New Plymouth stands the 45m kinetic artwork the **Wind Wand (7)**, by pioneering New Zealand artist Len Lye (1901-1980). A landmark to arts enthusiasts who visit Lye's collection and archive at the nearby **Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (8)**, the Wind Wand contains 1,296 lights in its glowing red ball, and has become a local icon, as has the gallery, widely regarded as New Zealand's leading contemporary art museum.

Across the road from the Wind Wand is **Puke Ariki (9)**. Maori for Hill of Chiefs, Puke Ariki has transformed an ancient site of knowledge into a fascinating museum and library complex with a dynamic array of exhibitions and events. Puke Ariki is the best place to get an overview of the history and landscape of Surf Highway 45.

If at this point of your Surf Highway 45 adventure you are feeling weary, then a visit to the **Taranaki Thermal Spa (10)** will rejuvenate you for the road ahead. Drawing heated mineral water from deep underground, the spa offers a relaxing range of thermal pool, massage and beauty treatments.

At the western end of the Coastal Walkway is **Ngamotu Beach (11)**, a sheltered swimming and boating beach within Port Taranaki, home to the New Plymouth Yacht Club and several waterfront cafés and restaurants. Ngamotu is also the base of Chaddy's Charters, providing unique tours of the Sugarloaf Marine Park in a restored English lifeboat.

The looming form of **Paritutu Rock (12)** stands sentinel above Ngamotu and Back Beaches. A remnant of the region's volcanic past, Paritutu can be climbed to access unobstructed views of the Taranaki coastline, New Plymouth, and the distant Mt Taranaki.

The black-sand **Back Beach (13)** is another favourite for experienced Taranaki surfers. Overlooking Sugar Loaf Marine Park swells frequent the shifting sand banks.



**Oakura Beach (14)** is one of Taranaki's most popular beaches. Offering good patrolled swimming and a range of beach breaks, Oakura is a favourite with families young and old. The community of Oakura has grown to boast a lively events and arts scene, good restaurants, and the world's biggest surfboard.

While in Oakura, check out the **Oakura Arts Trail (15)**, encompassing artist studios, jewelers, and gifted craftspeople in and around Oakura village.

The first of the significant historic sites around the Surf Highway is the strategic **Koru Pa (16)**, inland from Oakura at the end of Surrey Hill Road. Carved by hand this impressive Maori fortress was a stronghold for centuries in pre-European times.

### A Change of Pace

Beyond Oakura the pace slips back a gear, and the atmosphere changes for the more relaxed. Here nature dominates with brooding Mt Taranaki on one side, and the spirited Tasman Sea bordering the other. The landscape in between is sculpted by volcanic activity, with only cosmetic intervention by man.

The next stop is the lush bush of **Lucy's Gully (17)**, nestled in the Pouakai ranges in Egmont National Park and offering both short walks in pristine native bush and a gateway to the myriad trails that navigate the Park and further peak of Mt Taranaki.

A drive down Timaru Road leads to the **Wreck of the SS Gairloch (18)** which has been a local landmark for the last century. The ship ran aground on Timaru Reef on 5 January 1903, and has been slowly rusting into the Tasman Sea since.



The small community of **Okato (19)** is home to cafés and stores that allow you to refuel for the road ahead. You'll be reminded that Surf Highway

45 is just far enough away from everyday life by the relaxed coastal pace. It's no wonder that more and more people are choosing to call this part of Taranaki home.

Along this part of the Surf Highway almost every road that heads towards the sea will lead to a surf break of some description. Two of the region's best breaks are the legendary **Kumara Patch (20)**, a fast-breaking left hander that peels for 150m along a boulder bank, and the equally iconic **Stent Road (21)**, offering a right-hand reef break into a rocky bay. The signpost marking Stent Road has long been a target for souvenir hunters, which is why the road is now marked with a large rock instead of a more conventional signpost.

The **Cape Egmont Lighthouse (22)** is located at the end of Cape Road, and marks the western-most point of the Taranaki coastline. Built in London in the mid 1800's the segments were shipped to New Zealand in 1865 and originally installed on Mana Island near Wellington. The lighthouse was manually operated until 1986, when it was automated.

Cape Road is also home to the best examples of a geographic feature unique to Surf Highway 45 – the small hills created by ancient lahars, flowing from Mt Taranaki to create distinctive rounded hills over boulders. These hills are also visible from the Highway, and several still display the earthworks of ancient Maori fortifications, recounting this region's past.



Taranaki's history was also indelibly shaped by the actions at nearby **Parihaka Pa (23)**, where passive resistance was first used to great effect under the leadership of Te Whiti O Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi. The people of Parihaka, in protest to the confiscation of their lands, used non-violent protest to delay the construction of the Cape Egmont Lighthouse, until 40 members of the Armed Constabulary were stationed there to ensure its completion. The lighthouse first beamed out from Taranaki in 1881. Appointment required to visit.

Parihaka has since become synonymous with peace - in January each year it hosts a multi-day Peace Festival featuring many of New Zealand's top musicians – and remains a spiritual base for Maori people.

**The Coast**

Back on the Surf Highway, the beach at the end of **Kina Road (24)** is home to the region's best wave-sailing and draws wind and kite surfers from around the world. Mast-high waves are relatively frequent on this part of the coast, and the left-hander into the bay can provide a wild 400m ride.

Shortly after passing the **Maui Production Station (25)**, which has a display centre offering an insight into the largest gas processing complex in New Zealand, the Surf Highway reaches the coastal town of Opunake.



**Opunake (26)** is home to distinctive colourful murals, cozy cafés, eclectic shopping and a laid-back surf culture - a haven for travelling surfers and Surf Highway explorers alike. A bronze sculpture in the centre of town honours legendary New Zealand 1500m runner Peter Snell, and the quaint Everybody's Theatre shows movies twice a week. The Egmont Soap Factory, also on the Highway offers tours through the environmentally friendly soap production workshop.

**Opunake Beach (27)** offers safe swimming, sheltered camping and clean surf, only a short walk from the centre of town.



A short drive further round Surf Highway 45 leads to one of the best breaks south of Opunake – **Mangahume (28)**. This picture-perfect peak works in most winds and on most tides, and can handle the larger swells. Access is just beyond the brightly painted farm shed.

**South Taranaki**

Shortly before the town of Manaia sits **Kaupokonui Beach (29)** which offers surfing, camping and swimming in both the sheltered river and the sea. The land across the river from the carpark was an important early Maori village, and has been the site of many significant archeological finds.

Manaia, once positioned as the major township of South Taranaki, also boasts the **Taranaki Country Music Hall of Fame (30)**, showcasing New Zealand's greatest country and western musicians.

Another pivotal Maori historical site is located inland from the Surf Highway on Ahipaipa Road, just south of Manaia. **Te Ngutu O Te Manu (31)**, which

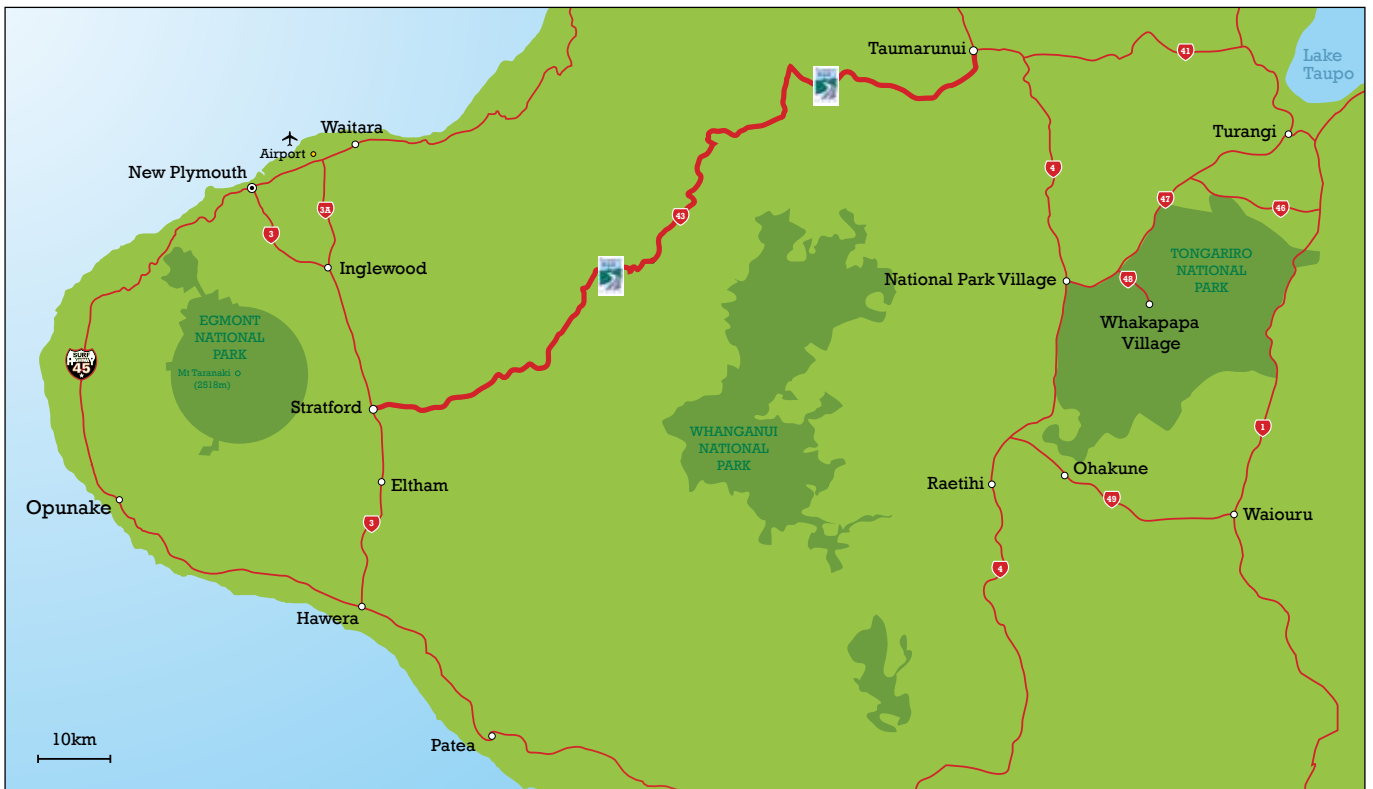
translates as the Beak of the Bird, was the base of revered Maori warrior Titokowaru. From here he led a significant campaign against the Crown confiscation of Maori land in South Taranaki. A memorial stands to Major Gustavus Von Tempsky, leader of the colonial forces, who was killed in an attack on the Pa.

Another detour off the Surf Highway leads to the 10m high **Normanby Dam (32)** on the Waingongoro River, and the unique local extreme attraction of dam dropping – launching down the dam on a white water sledge. Contact Taranaki Outdoor Adventures for a guided tour of the area and dam dropping, tel. 0800 200 625.

South Taranaki's popular main beach, **Ohawe Beach (33)**, offers a range of swimming, surfing and fishing spots, along with a powered camp site and toilet facilities.

Hawera is the major town of South Taranaki, and is a busy and friendly community, with a wide range of accommodation, dining and shopping options. The town is looked over by the iconic **Hawera Water Tower (34)**, completed in 1914 to aid the town's fire fighters following several major fires. The Tower can be climbed for spectacular panoramic views of the surrounding region – call into the South Taranaki i-SITE Visitor Centre at the foot of the Tower for more information.

A fitting end to a Surf Highway 45 adventure is a visit to the unique **Tawhiti Museum (35)**, widely regarded as the best private museum in New Zealand. A labour of love by local man Nigel Ogle, this museum is housed in a former dairy factory, and features thousands of hand made scale and life-sized models, along with a working railway, café, and countless artefacts telling the story of South Taranaki. Not to be missed is the spectacular Whalers and Traders display.



**NEW PLYMOUTH i-SITE VISITOR CENTRE**

Puke Ariki, 1 Ariki Street, New Plymouth Email: info@npdc.govt.nz  
Phone: 06 759 6060 Freephone: 0800 639 759  
Visitor information, maps, souvenirs, internet facilities, accommodation, activity and transport bookings for New Plymouth, Taranaki and all of New Zealand.  
Hours: Monday-Friday from 9am-6pm; Wednesday from 9am-9pm.  
Weekends and Public Holidays from 9am-5pm.

**SOUTH TARANAKI i-SITE VISITOR CENTRE**

55 High Street, Hawera  
Email: visitorinfo@stdc.govt.nz Phone: 06 278 8599  
Visitor information, maps, souvenirs, internet facilities, accommodation, activity and transport bookings for Hawera, Taranaki and all of New Zealand.  
Hours: Monday-Friday, 8.30am-5.15pm; Weekends and Public Holidays: December-April from 9.30am-4pm; May-November from 10am-3pm.

Drive Times	Time	Distance	
New Plymouth to:	Okara	15 mins	14 km
	Okato	30 mins	27 km
	Pungarehu	40 mins	41 km
	Rahotu	45 mins	46 km
	Opunake	55 mins	62 km
	Manaia	1 hr 15 mins	91 km
	Hawera	1 hr 30 mins	105 km
	Hamilton	3 hr 20 mins	241 km
	Manaia	15 mins	14 km
	Opunake	35 mins	43 km
Hawera to:	Opunake	45 mins	59 km
	Rahotu	50 mins	64 km
	Okara	1 hr	78 km
	Okara	1 hr 15 mins	91 km
	New Plymouth	1 hr 30 mins	105 km
Wanganui	1 hr	89 km	

## Key

- 1 State Highway
- State Highway Sealed
- Sealed Secondary Road
- Sealed Local Road
- Unsealed Road
- Walking Trail
- Towns
- Smaller Towns
- 1 Places of Interest
- 2 **SITE** i-SITE Visitor Centre
- A Accommodation
- P Petrol
- A Activity
- R Refreshments
- A Arts Attraction
- R Rest Area
- G Gardens/Parks
- S Surf Area
- G Golf Course
- T Toilets
- C Cultural Attraction
- W Walking Trail
- N Natural Attraction

\*Map is not to scale and not all roads are shown



## Points of Interest

- 1 Ngamotu Links Golf Course
- 2 Lake Rotomanu
- 3 Waikakaho River mouth
- 4 New Plymouth Coastal Walkway
- 5 Fitzroy Beach
- 6 East End Beach
- 7 Wind Wand
- 8 Govett-Brewster Art Gallery
- 9 Puke Aitiki
- 10 Taranaki Thermal Spa
- 11 Ngamotu Beach
- 12 Partitu Rock
- 13 Back Beach
- 14 Okara Beach
- 15 Okara Arts Trail
- 16 Koru Pa
- 17 Lucy's Gully
- 18 Wreck of SS Gairloch
- 19 Okato
- 20 Kumara Patch Surf Break
- 21 Stent Road Surf Break
- 22 Cape Egmont Lighthouse
- 23 Paritaka Pa
- 24 Kina Road Surf Break
- 25 Maui Production Station
- 26 Opunake
- 27 Opunake Beach
- 28 Mangatune Surf Break
- 29 Kaupokonui Beach
- 30 Taranaki Country Music Hall of Fame
- 31 Te Ngutu O Te Manu
- 32 Normanby Dam
- 33 Ohawe Beach
- 34 Hawera Water Tower
- 35 Tawhiti Museum

**PLEASE NOTE WHEN IN NEW ZEALAND, PLEASE DRIVE ON THE LEFT!**

**SOME COAST ACCESS REQUIRES CROSSING PRIVATE LAND. PLEASE ASK THE FARMER FOR PERMISSION AND LEAVE ALL GATES AS YOU FIND THEM.**