

UNDERSTANDING ANNUAL VISITOR ACTIVITY



Giants Gate, Milford Track. Image: Graham Dainty

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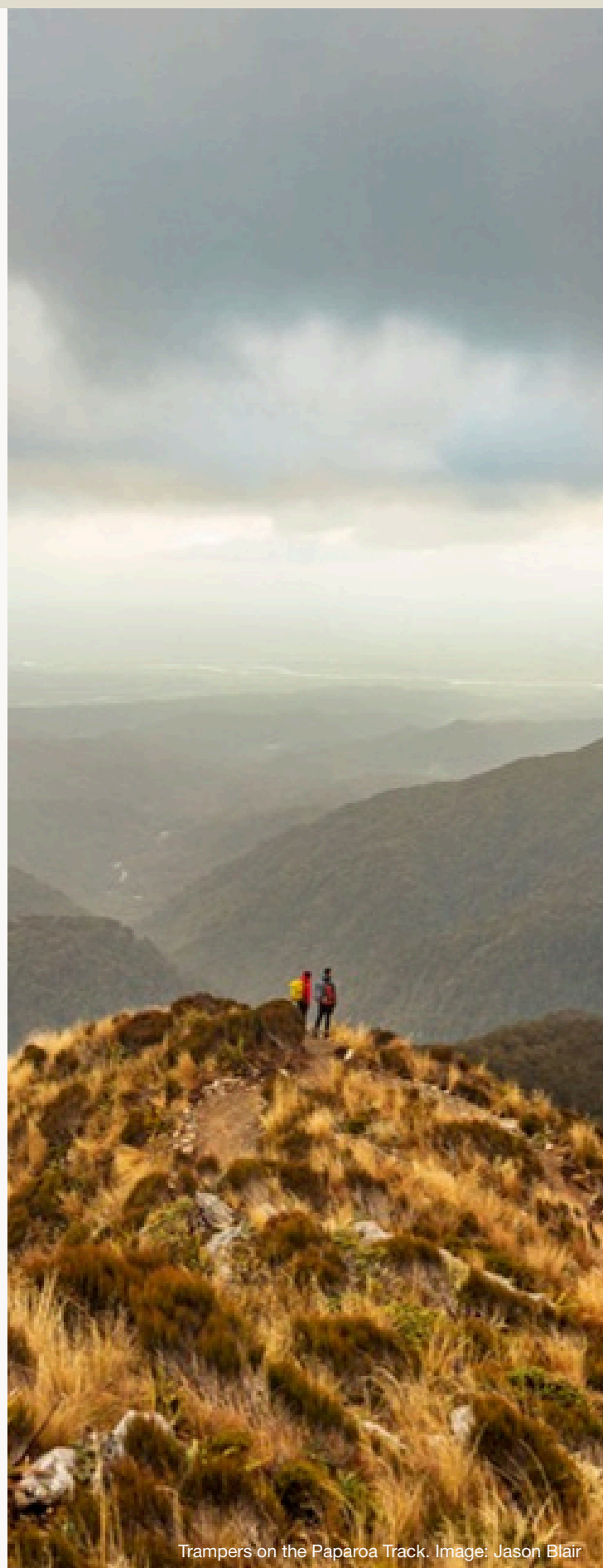
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Trampers on the Paparoa Track. Image: Jason Blair



Executive Summary

The Department of Conservation (DOC) protects and cares for Aotearoa New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage. DOC manages one third of the country's land area, including over 21,800 visitor assets and 15,000km of tracks. DOC manages the largest heritage portfolio in the country as well as hundreds of huts and campsites across public conservation land and waters (PCLW). These places form the backbone of tourism and recreation in Aotearoa New Zealand, connecting millions of people to nature and heritage each year.

Tourism and recreation deliver significant benefits, supporting wellbeing, regional economies, and cultural exchange. But they also create pressures on infrastructure and the environment. Understanding how people engage with PCLW is essential to balancing these benefits with long-term protection.

This report provides an annual snapshot of visitor activity for year-end June 2025. It draws on multiple data sources to highlight trends in international and domestic visitation, activity patterns, and satisfaction. These insights can inform DOC's management priorities and investment decisions, ensuring that visitor experiences remain safe, enjoyable, and sustainable. Included in this document are case studies of work DOC is undertaking at popular places to sustainably manage tourism, e.g. Tongariro Alpine Crossing and Mautohe Cathedral Cove. DOC is actively working with mana whenua to reshape the visitor experience at these iconic places to support protection and conservation.

Diamond Lake, Wanaka. Image Shellie Evans

Key Findings

Cyclists on the Paparoa Track. Image: Jason Blair

Visitor activity across Aotearoa New Zealand PCLW reflects defined patterns of participation but evolving pressures.



International visitation rebounded: 3.38 million arrivals based on year-end June 2025 data and now exceeding 90% of pre-COVID levels. Australia and the UK markets showed stronger growth compared to last year than other markets. Visitors from these two countries are more likely to come to Aotearoa New Zealand to visit friends and relatives than other markets.¹



Domestic visitation declined: Monthly visits to Protected Natural Areas dropped from 43% to 39%, likely influenced by multiple factors such as cost-of-living pressures, weather-related closures, and New Zealanders travelling overseas.²



Nature dominates itineraries: For internationals, natural attractions, especially beaches and national parks, remain the key places to visit. Fiordland, Aoraki/Mt Cook, Tongariro and Westland Tai Poutini National Parks are consistently popular, signalling ongoing pressure on these sites.³



Short walks lead activity choices: Over 70% of international visitors and 41% of domestic visitors chose walks under three hours.^{2,3} These walks can offer easy access and low-barrier entry points into nature.



Cultural engagement matters: 92% of international visitors who experienced Māori culture reported enjoyment, with many seeking deeper connection.³ Heritage sites near urban centres are frequently visited by domestic visitors.² Such visits can help foster domestic cultural connection.



Satisfaction remains high: 83% of domestic visitors to Protected Natural Areas and 78% to Protected Heritage Places were very or totally satisfied, creating a strong foundation for stewardship.² International studies indicate satisfied visitors are more likely to value, respect and care for places.

Strategic Implications

To sustain tourism and conservation outcomes, DOC can maintain focus on five priority areas:



Strengthen protection and build resilience to manage visitor pressure: Continue investment in infrastructure, booking systems, transport solutions at iconic destinations such as Aoraki/Mt Cook, Tongariro, and Fiordland National Parks. Strengthen monitoring to manage international visitor pressure. Opportunities include:

- Developing scalable visitor management systems (e.g. booking platforms, congestion alerts) for popular destinations.
- Continuing to invest in infrastructure upgrades, sustainable transport solutions to reduce environmental strain, and monitoring to measure progress.
- Embedding cultural and environmental values into site planning to ensure protection and restoration alongside access.



Diversify visitor demand and timing: Continue efforts to promote lesser-known places, incentivise off-peak travel, and use marketing to balance domestic proximity patterns with international demand. Ideas include:

- Exploring opportunities to collaborate with iwi and hapū and stakeholders to adjust destination plans to spread visitor demand and support regional economies.
- Considering incentives for visitors to choose alternative experiences near popular hubs.



Deepen cultural partnerships and storytelling: Continue to expand co-design models with mana whenua (already underway at Tongariro and Mautohe Cathedral Cove) to weave cultural storytelling into walks, heritage sites and visitor hubs. DOC is working in partnership with mana whenua to ensure cultural interpretation is a core part of the visitor experience. Continue to invest in interpretation and infrastructure at heritage sites close to urban centres to strengthen and deepen cultural connection.



Leverage opportunities for behaviour change and connection: Continue to maintain and enhance short walk infrastructure as entry-points to nature and heritage. Consider opportunities to pair these experiences with interpretation and campaigns like Tiaki Promise and Always Be Naturing to foster responsible behaviour and conservation awareness. Consider opportunities to develop pathways to encourage visitors to venture beyond short walks to deeper experiences (e.g. overnight walks and volunteering) to build long-term conservation engagement.



Embed sustainability into visitor management: Continue efforts to align visitor management with climate resilience and biodiversity goals. Reinforce behaviour change campaigns and community-led environmental projects. Explore technology for monitoring environmental impacts and look for opportunities to reinvest tourism revenue into conservation outcomes.

Visitor Activity Patterns

Visitor Trends

A total of 3.38 million international visitors arrived in year-end June 2025, marking a 162,000 increase from the previous year. These numbers have now reached over 90% of pre-COVID levels. Australia and the UK showed the biggest increases compared to last year, with Australia up 141,000 and the UK up 19,000 visitors compared to last year. In contrast, China, USA and Japan showed smaller gains compared to the last year, highlighting uneven recovery.¹ This near-complete rebound in numbers signals that DOC can shift from a recovery mindset to managing renewed visitor pressures, particularly at high-use sites.

Domestic visitation numbers tell a different story. The proportion of New Zealanders visiting a Protected Natural Area (PNA) at least once in a month, fell from 43% to 39%, a significant decline compared to last year.² Cost-of-living pressures, weather-related closures, and increased overseas travel may all be contributing factors. Understanding these patterns is important; not just to track participation, but to ensure DOC's management approaches remain responsive to evolving public use and expectations.



International visitors — key points:

- International visitor numbers increased in the year-end June 2025, although growth was slower than in the previous year.
- Visitors from the UK and Australia showed the strongest growth, with many travelling to visit friends and relatives.¹
- Smaller increases were observed from China, USA and Japan where holiday travel remains the primary purpose.¹
- Natural places particularly beaches and national parks such as Fiordland and Aoraki/Mt Cook continue to be popular.³
- Walking is central to Aotearoa New Zealand's tourism offering and is popular with international visitors with over 70% taking part. Walks between 30 minutes and 3 hours are the most popular.³
- Over 90% of international visitors who experienced Māori culture enjoyed their experience.³



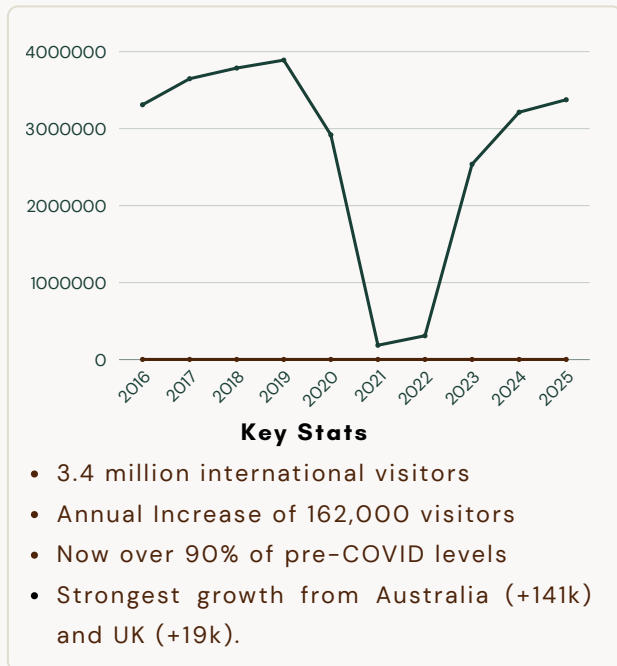
Domestic visitors — key points:

- Fewer New Zealanders reported visiting a PNA or Protected Heritage Place (PHP) compared to last year.²
- In the past year, 44% of New Zealanders visited a national park with Tongariro National Park being the most visited followed by Abel Tasman and Aoraki/Mt Cook National Parks.²
- Locations near major population centres and short walks (less than 3 hours) remain popular among domestic visitors.²
- Heritage sites close to urban centres are access-points to cultural connection. Their easy access makes them places of regular connection and part of everyday life for many New Zealanders.
- Around 80% of New Zealanders who visited a PNA or PHP location were very or totally satisfied with their experience.²

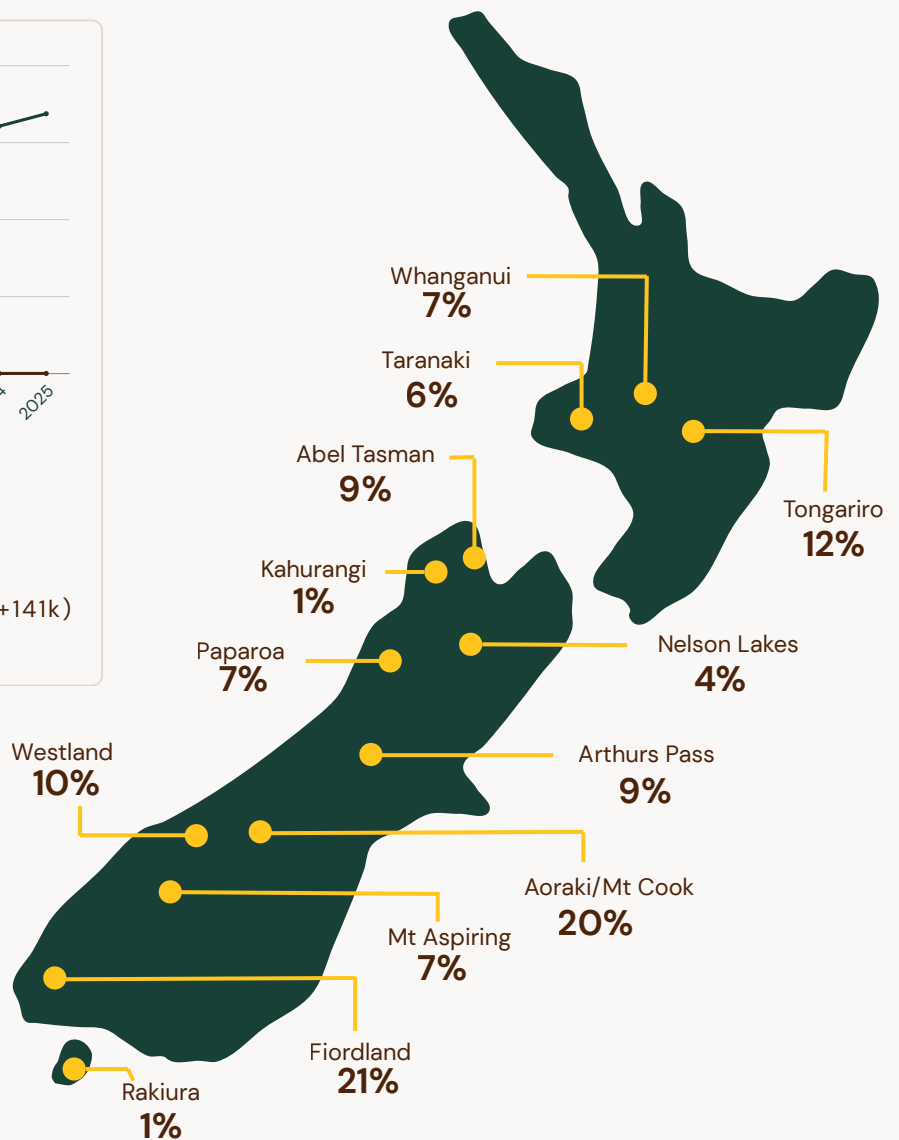
INTERNATIONAL VISITORS SNAPSHOT

July 2024 – June 2025

International Arrivals¹



National Parks Visited⁵

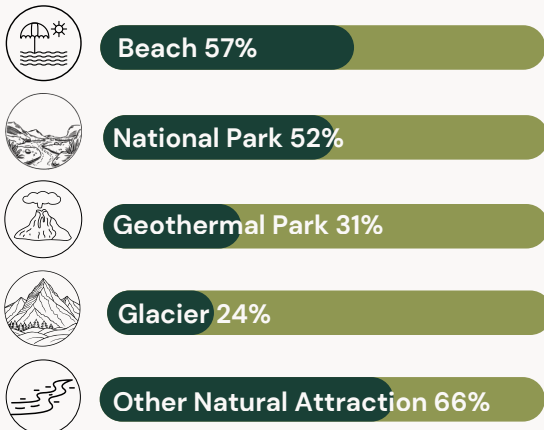


91%

OF VISITORS SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED WITH THEIR VISIT TO NEW ZEALAND³

Types of Places Visited³

Nature-based activities remain the most popular, ahead of urban attractions.



72%

OF VISITORS WENT FOR A WALK, HIKE, TREK OR TRAMP³



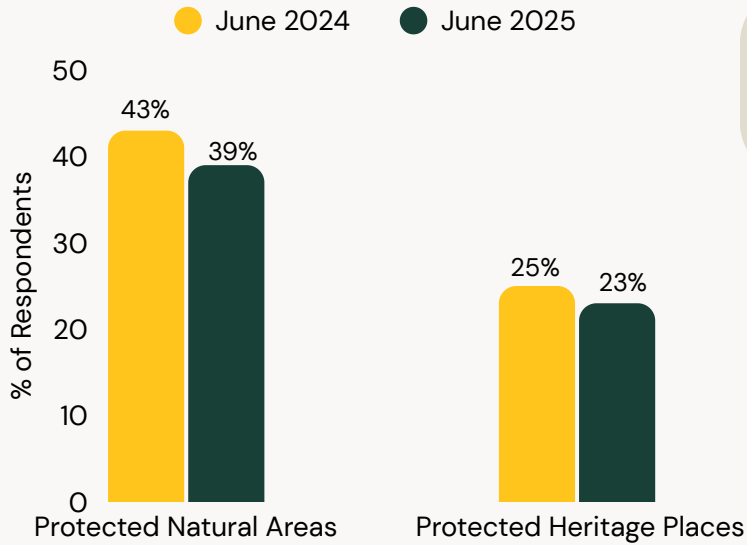
Walk under ½ hour	8%
Walk between ½ hour and 3 hours	41%
Day Walk over 3 hours	15%
Overnight or Multiday Walk	6%
Did not do a walk	28%

Source: Statistics NZ data, year-end June 2016 to June 2025¹. International Visitor Survey, year-end June 2025⁵

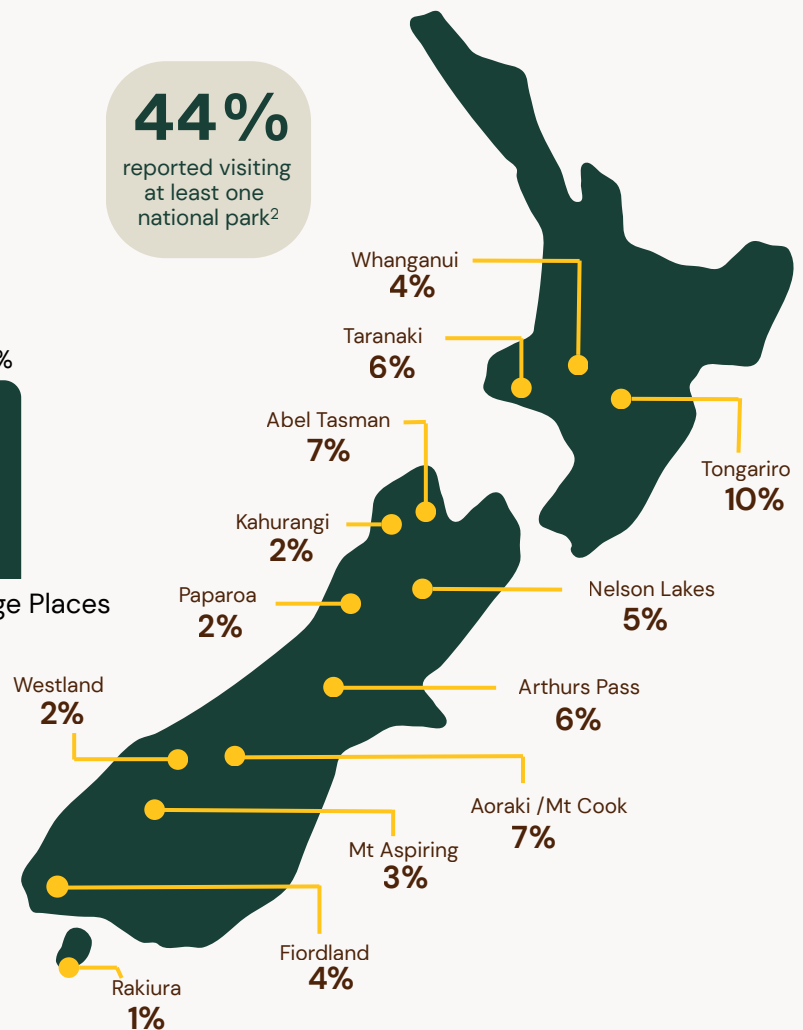
DOMESTIC VISITORS SNAPSHOT

July 2024 – June 2025

Natural Areas and Heritage Places Recently Visited²



National Parks Visited²



Visitor Satisfaction²

78% of visitors satisfied or very satisfied with their visit to a Protected Heritage Place

83% of visitors satisfied or very satisfied with their visit to a Protected Natural Area

DOC-Supported Experiences²

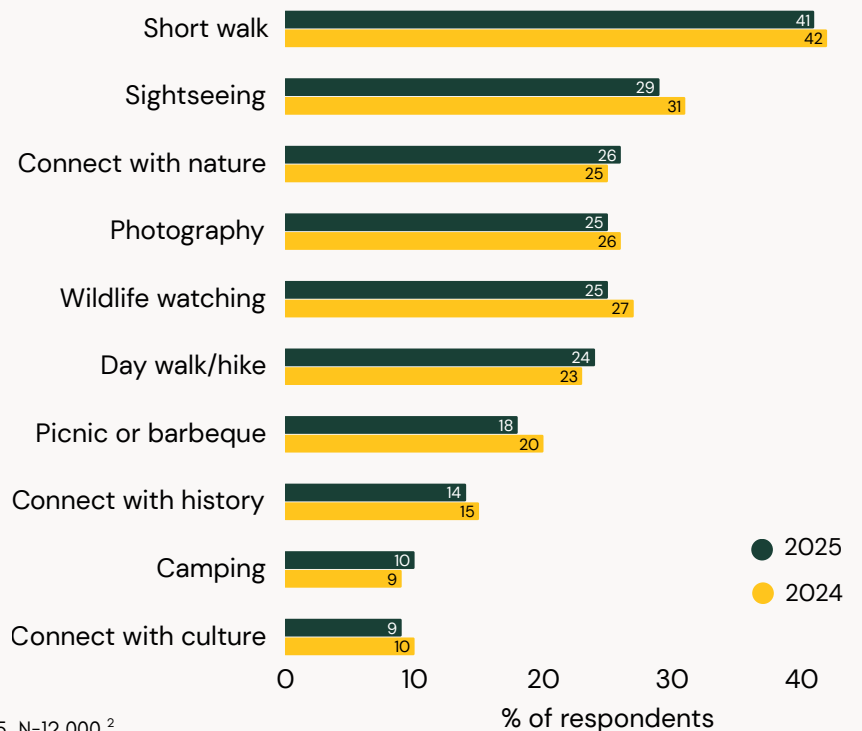


18%
Did a Great Walk



11%
Did a Great Ride

Most Popular Activities²



Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025. N=12,000²



Beaches, national parks and walking are popular

Paparoa Track - Nikau. Image: Neil Silverwood

Nature-based activities dominate international visitor preferences. Over half of international visitors went to a beach (57%) or a national park (52%) in year-end June 2025, consistent with last year. Landscapes and scenery in Aotearoa New Zealand remain the primary reason internationals choose to visit, far outweighing interest in non-nature activities like fine dining or wine trails.³ For further detail, see Figure 19 in Appendix B. International visitors on holiday (who tend to spend more) visit national parks much more than beaches. The reverse is true for those visiting friends and relatives.³ Overall, the continued popularity of beaches and national parks means DOC must plan for social and environmental impacts at these high-use destinations. Since nature dominates itineraries, there is an opportunity for DOC to encourage visits to lesser-known national parks. There is also the opportunity to encourage visitation at off-peak times to spread international visitor demand and protect fragile ecosystems.

Short walks are an easy way to connect

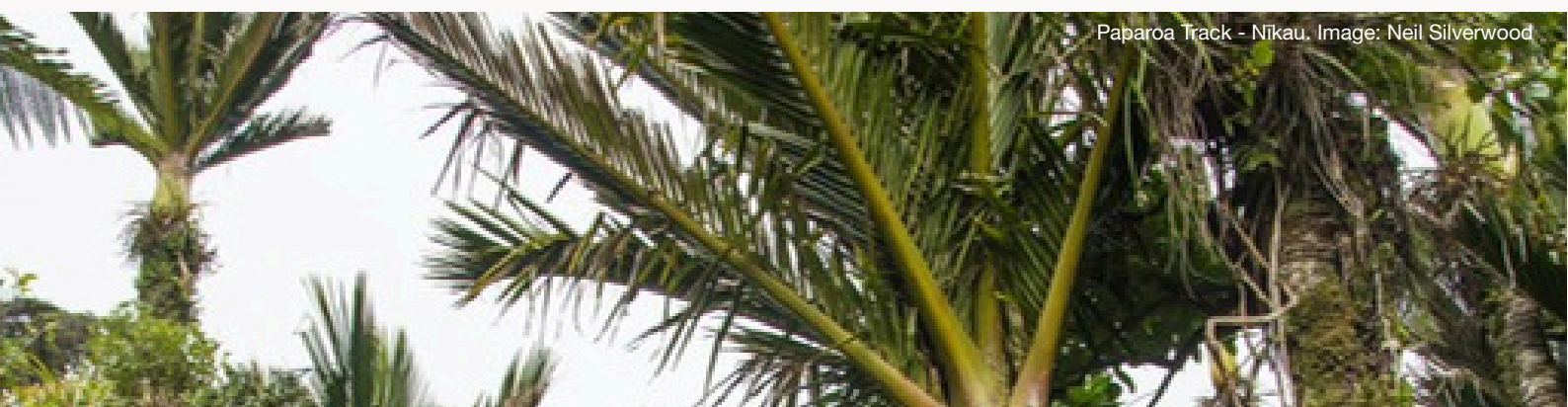
Walking remains a particularly popular activity for both international and domestic visitors:

- **International visitors:** Over 70% engaged in walks, hikes, or tramps; especially short walks lasting between 30 minutes and three hours, whereas only 6% undertook multi-day walks, revealing mixed patterns of participation within the outdoors.³ See Figure 20 in Appendix B.
- **Domestic visitors:** Short walks (less than 3 hours) dominate, with 41% reporting this activity on their most recent visit.² These experiences are easy access, low-barrier entry points into nature and heritage, often close to home or holiday destinations. See Figure 23 in Appendix B.

Short walks are a popular way to gain wellbeing benefits. Their popularity highlights their role as an attractive and easily accessible way to connect with nature. These experiences are often close to home, require minimal planning, and are suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities. For both domestic and international audiences, short walks offer a way to connect with nature and heritage without committing to longer or more remote experiences.

For DOC, this reinforces the strategic importance of maintaining short walk infrastructure, particularly near visitor hotspots, urban centres and transport hubs, and promoting discoverability of short walks overall. These sites serve as key touchpoints for public engagement with conservation and could be leveraged to foster deeper connections with nature and heritage over time. DOC's Customer Segmentation Research shows that equity of access can be an issue with the cost of getting to places and staying overnight as a barrier for many.⁵

These trends also raise questions about how DOC can support progression from short walks to longer walks and broader participation with PCLW. Could short walks be a stepping-stone to deeper visitor experiences and conservation activities, or are they the primary mode of interaction for many? Is there opportunity to encourage visitors to take longer walks and consider overnight experiences? Understanding how equity of access and cost barriers limit participation on PCLW could help shape future investment and planning.



Proximity shapes domestic visitation

Domestic visitation is not evenly distributed across Aotearoa New Zealand; it is clustered around regions with large population centres and easy access to coastal or iconic landscapes.² Seven of the top ten places reported as the most recently visited PNAs are located in the North Island.² Locations near Auckland, such as Long Bay–Okura Marine Reserve and Rangitoto Island, were popular.

Analysis of recent patterns shows that visitation is concentrated around regions with large population centres and iconic landscapes, see Figure 1 below. Further detail on regional patterns of domestic visitation is provided in Appendix A.

- **Northern North Island:** Whangārei and the Bay of Islands dominate recent visits, alongside Tāne Mahuta in Waipoua Forest and Te Rerenga Wairua in the Far North. These destinations combine cultural significance with easy-to-access recreation opportunities, reinforcing the role of Northland as a domestic tourism hub.²
- **Auckland Region:** The Hauraki Gulf islands and coastal reserves—such as Long Bay–Okura Marine Reserve, Rangitoto Island, and Fort Takapuna Historic Reserve—are among the most visited. Their proximity to New Zealand’s largest urban centre makes them part of everyday leisure patterns, not just holiday itineraries.²
- **Central North Island:** Tongariro National Park remains a standout destination, alongside Huka Falls and Whanganui National Park’s Bridge to Nowhere. These sites attract visitors seeking iconic landscapes and adventure experiences within a manageable travel radius.²
- **South Island Hotspots:** Abel Tasman and Nelson Lakes National Parks lead visitation towards the north, while Fiordland and Mount Aspiring National Parks dominate the south. Closer to Christchurch, Awaroa/Godley Head and Hanmer Forest Park illustrate the importance of easy access nature experiences near urban centres.²

These patterns reflect where people live and travel. DOC’s Customer Segmentation Research has shown proximity and ease-of-access are key drivers of visitation and engagement.⁵ While these regional concentrations are expected, there are implications for DOC’s investment priorities. High-traffic sites require more frequent maintenance and infrastructure upgrades. They benefit from visitor experience enhancements and monitoring to ensure they remain safe, enjoyable, and environmentally resilient. These trends also highlight opportunities for DOC to work with other stakeholders such as local and regional councils as well as recreation and community groups, to better meet the needs of all New Zealanders.

The patterns articulated in this report reiterate questions regarding equity of access and regional visitation. Understanding where people go—as well as where they don’t—can help DOC identify opportunities to support broader connection to nature and heritage, reduce pressure on popular sites, and ensure conservation outcomes are balanced with public use.

Popular Protected Natural Areas

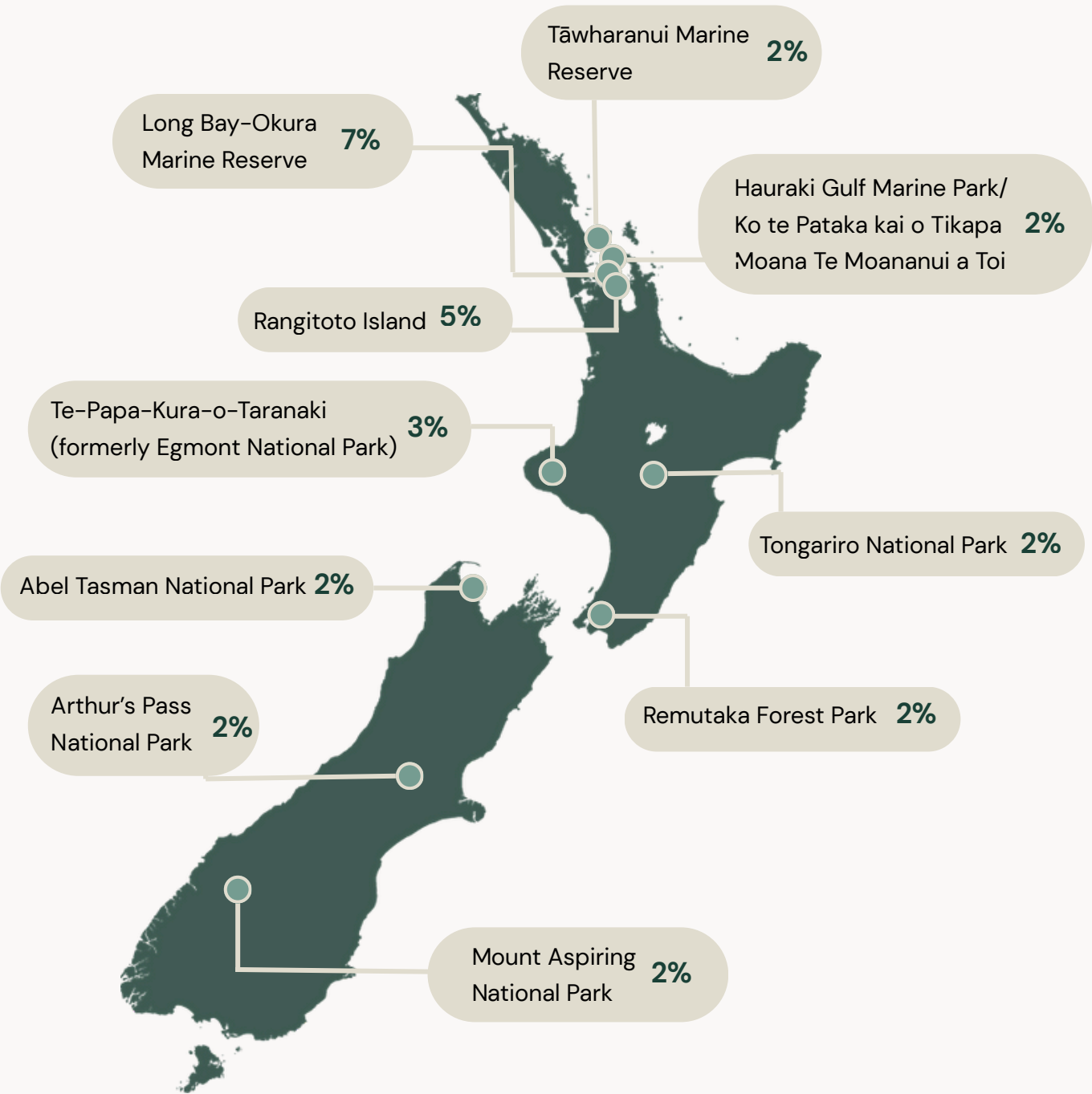


Figure 1: Percentage of respondents who reported visiting one of the Top 10 Protected Natural Areas (PNA'S) in response to question 8: 'which of these PNA's did you visit most recently, select the location that is strongest in your memory' 12 Month Average July 2024 – June 2025 N visited PNA = 4406.
Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025

Fiordland and Aoraki/Mt Cook National Parks remain popular

More than half of international visitors to Aotearoa New Zealand visited a national park. This proportion was almost the same as last year, (51% year-end June 2024 and 52% year-end June 2025), confirming the enduring appeal of these renowned destinations.³

Fiordland and Aoraki/Mt Cook National Parks continue to be consistently popular. Tongariro National Park has emerged as one of the top three most visited parks—nudging past Westland Tai Poutini National Park, which held a higher share of visitors last year.³ See Figure 17 in Appendix B. These patterns show that iconic national parks dominate international visitor itineraries, and Tongariro's rise may signal growing interest in North Island experiences. While the recent wildfire in Tongariro National Park has been a setback and impacted the visitor experience, the Tongariro Alpine Crossing has now re-opened. Visitors are encouraged to walk the track to support the local community. Recently, DOC in partnership with mana whenua, has undertaken significant work to improve the visitor experience, cultural interpretation and safety messaging on Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Monitoring has begun to assess the impact of these changes.

Around 44% of New Zealanders reported visiting at least one national park between July 2024 and June 2025.² Tongariro, Abel Tasman, and Aoraki/Mt Cook National Parks were the most likely to be visited in the last year by domestic visitors. See Figure 21 in Appendix B. These parks are well-known destinations—their popularity likely reflects their visibility and established reputation. Tongariro Alpine Crossing is a Day Hike, the Abel Tasman Coast Track is a Great Walk with multiple water-based activities, and Aoraki/Mt Cook has World Heritage Status – they are iconic landscapes and destinations.

Connecting with places

Participation in DOC-supported experiences

Cyclists on Paparoa Track. Image: Jason Blair

Overall levels of domestic participation in DOC-supported experiences such as Great Walks and Great Rides (15 out of 23 Great Rides are on part or all PCL) were lower compared to levels of national park visitation:²

- 18% of New Zealanders reported doing a Great Walk (Abel Tasman Coast Track and Tongariro Northern Circuit were most popular at 5%).²
- 11% did a Great Ride.²

These patterns of lower participation in Great Walks and Great Rides experiences are not unexpected; such activities require additional gear, planning, and logistical effort. Factors such as cost, available time, and physical access are known to strongly influence participation, and can represent barriers for many potential users. Evidence suggests that these constraints are not evenly distributed, again highlighting potential concerns with equity of access.⁵

While these experiences attract fewer participants overall, they continue to play an important role in DOC's visitor offering. They are a revenue source with the potential to contribute to conservation work. Their immersive nature provides opportunities for deeper engagement with conservation values and the natural environment.

Understanding visitation patterns helps DOC consider how to support a range of visitor experiences from short, effortless outings to multi-day journeys. It further enables DOC to ensure that visitor infrastructure, messaging, and planning reflect the diverse ways people connect with nature and heritage.



International visitors enjoy Māori cultural experiences

Māori cultural experiences were highly valued by international visitors; 92% of international visitors who attended Māori cultural experiences reported enjoyment. In addition, not only were these cultural experiences highly rated, 90% reported the experience improved their understanding of Māori culture, and over half expressed interest in deeper connection.³ This suggests cultural interpretation is a strong differentiator for visitor experience in Aotearoa New Zealand. DOC is strengthening cultural storytelling at popular destinations in partnership with mana whenua, e.g. Tongariro Alpine Crossing. There appears opportunity to further expand authentic cultural experiences into walks, heritage sites, and visitor hubs to create richer experiences and enhance visitor enjoyment.

Local heritage places as stepping-stones

Protected Heritage Places are historically significant living landscapes where heritage and nature are deeply interconnected. Of the PHPs surveyed, the top 10 most recently visited by New Zealanders are largely located near major urban centres, with Fort Takapuna topping the list.²

This pattern reinforces the role of heritage sites close to urban centres as entry-points to cultural connection. DOC's Heritage Experiences Research has shown their easy access makes them part of everyday life for many New Zealanders—not just destinations, but places of regular connection.⁶ For DOC, this presents an opportunity to strengthen heritage participation where it's already happening. Investing in interpretation, infrastructure, and conservation at these sites can help deepen public understanding of cultural heritage while ensuring these places remain protected and valued. Research shows heritage is not static; it connects people, nature, and story, shaping identity and wellbeing.⁶



Satisfaction and Engagement

Hiker on Tongariro Northern Circuit. Image: Visit Ruapehu Visual Library

Understanding visitor satisfaction provides a measure of how successfully DOC is balancing ecological protection with recreational use. Visitor satisfaction is measured on the basis that visitors who are highly satisfied with their experience are more likely to become repeat visitors, recommend the destination to others and support or be an advocate for protected areas. High satisfaction may suggest stronger engagement although engagement is not measured. On PCLW, visitor satisfaction remains high, creating a strong foundation for stewardship.

- **Domestic visitors:** Visitor satisfaction with their most recent visit to a PNA or PHP remains high. Visitor satisfaction levels are strong across both PNAs and PHPs. Around 80% of domestic visitors reported being either “very” or “totally” satisfied with their experience². See Figure 22 in Appendix B.
- **International visitors:** Over 90% of international visitors expressed satisfaction with their overall visit to Aotearoa New Zealand.³ See Figure 18 in Appendix B.

High satisfaction signals trust and relevance, but it also raises strategic questions: how can DOC turn satisfaction into advocacy, repeat visitation, or deeper involvement in conservation? And how can this be sustained as pressures on infrastructure and natural values increase?



Popular Heritage Places

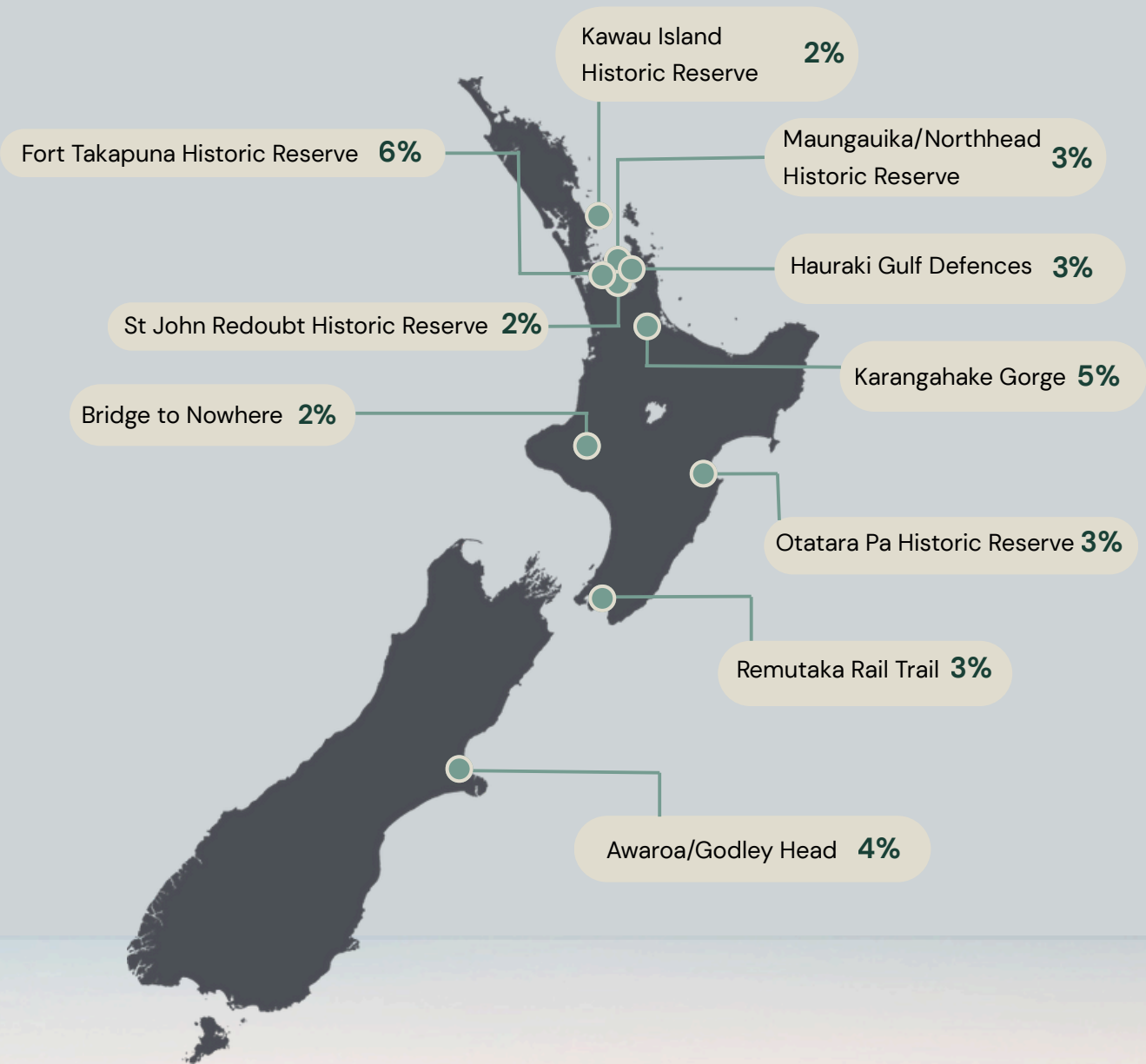


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who reported visiting one of the Top 10 most often selected places in response to Q20: 'Which of these Heritage places did you visit most recently?, select the location that is strongest in your memory'. Note: only respondents who indicated that they had visited a PHP in last month answered Q20 (n = 2608). Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025.



Aoraki/Mt Cook congestion. Image: DOC

Visitor Management

Managing tourism at popular places

Tourism continues to play a vital role in New Zealand's economy. Increasing visitor pressures such as overcrowding and congestion present challenges that require careful management. DOC is actively responding to these pressures, particularly at popular high-traffic locations on PCLW, where the impacts are most visible—places like Aoraki/Mt Cook, Franz Josef Glacier, and Punakaiki Pancake Rocks.

These pressures are not unique to Aotearoa New Zealand. Globally, destinations are grappling with similar challenges, and international guidance—such as that from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)—emphasises the importance of spreading visitor demand, engaging communities, and investing in infrastructure. DOC's current work reflects many of these priorities, tailored to the unique cultural and environmental context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

There has been significant investment by Regional Tourism New Zealand in developing destination management plans that preserve the unique character of places—DOC has contributed to these. As the WTTC points out tourism can be "...a force for good, for residents, for visitors, and for future generations."⁷



Sustainable visitor management

Strategic guidelines (WTTC)

Ensuring tourism supports host communities is key to sustainable visitor management and protection of our nature and cultural heritage. The WTTC provides the following guidelines to manage tourism:

- Spread tourism – market lesser-known places, incentivise places on the outskirts of popular places and provide off-peak options. DOC could spread the visitor demand at popular places by promoting less-visited places on PCLW.
- Encourage responsible visitor behaviour—emphasise respect and values at place, a code of conduct to guide visitors and staggered schedules. Tiaki Promise (commitment to care for New Zealand) could be leveraged to remind visitors to tread lightly to protect our nature and cultural heritage.
- Engage residents in tourism – empower residents and communities to shape tourism at their place. DOC has developed principles to anchor tourism so it ‘gives back more than it takes’. These principles could be implemented at place to support nature, cultural heritage and host communities.
- Invest in infrastructure – reinvest tourism dollars into critical community infrastructure. DOC is at work with upgrading visitor facilities at popular places, introducing more sustainable transport solutions, and partnering with mana whenua and host communities to restore nature and cultural heritage.

The visitor experience at popular places such as Tongariro Alpine Crossing and Mautohe Cathedral Cove is being reshaped in partnership with mana whenua to protect and care for them for the long-term. The following section highlights these two case studies.



Case study – collaborative tourism management Tongariro Alpine Crossing (TAC)

The TAC Sustainable Management Project aims to create a new model of collaborative tourism management, grounded in partnership with mana whenua, Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro. The project recognises the maunga's cultural significance, enhances visitor safety, and ensures long-term environmental sustainability. Benefits are:

- Increased visibility of and opportunities for mana whenua.
- Created business certainty and increased cultural capability of concessionaires.
- Visitors gain a deep connection to and appreciation of this special place.

Innovative solutions were developed and co-led by DOC and Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro with support by broader stakeholders. These solutions are:

- Employing Manaaki Rangers (mana whenua-based) at key access points.
- Hosting annual wānanga to strengthen concessionaire understanding.
- Launching a Community Contribution Fee for financial sustainability.
- Rolling out visitor behaviour campaigns.
- Introducing the first Day Walk booking system.

The project won the 2025 New Zealand Public Service Award. The award recognises the project's contribution to embedding cultural values into visitor management.



Pou whenua Te Ririo at Mangatepopo.
Image: Kelly Ryan



Case study – reset of visitor experience

Next steps for Mautohe Cathedral Cove

DOC is actively investing in and reshaping the visitor experience at Mautohe Cathedral Cove to support its long-term protection and management. This is guided by a deep respect for the local history and the natural and cultural values of Ngāti Hei.

DOC's aim is to:

- Improve awareness and protection of the marine reserve.
- Restore the mauri (life force) of the marine reserve.
- Encourage meaningful connections between visitors and the marine reserve and support local guardianship.
- Ensure impacts from visitor pressures are managed well.
- Effective management of visitor safety to minimise risks.
- Develop sustainable management of the visitor experience.



Te wero | Our challenge

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we welcome manuhiri (guests) in the spirit of manaaki (respect, kindness and hospitality).

We also present our visitors with a wero (challenge) to follow the Tiaki promise.

When you visit Mautohe Cathedral Cove, we ask you to pick up this wero and act as a guardian, protecting and preserving our home.

Care for Mautohe Cathedral Cove

**Show respect**

Mautohe Cathedral Cove is culturally significant to Ngāti Hei. Respect this place so it can be enjoyed for future generations.

**Protect nature**

Protect our native plant and animal species by keeping your distance and leaving them undisturbed. Be aware that Te Whanganui-o-Hei / Cathedral Cove Marine Reserve is a protected no-take area.

**Keep Aotearoa New Zealand clean**

Take all rubbish with you and use the toilets provided.

**Be prepared**

Stay safe by preparing for your trip. Wear appropriate footwear and bring a hat, sunscreen and a drink bottle.

Behaviour change signage for track reopening. Image: DOC



Mautohe Cathedral Cove crowds. Image: DOC

Case study – reset of visitor experience

Mautohe Cathedral Cove

Walking access to Mautohe Cathedral Cove reopened in December 2024 after nearly two years of closure due to severe weather damage. DOC focused on restoring access and developed a visitor management plan to improve site resilience and support responsible visitation through:

- DOC's partnership with Ngāti Hei centred on restoring mauri (giving back more than is taken) and prioritising protecting the environment.
- Values-based signage to encourage responsible visitor behaviour.
- A park and ride service from Hahei eased traffic congestion at peak times.
- A digital campaign to promote visitor preparedness. Reached over 350,000 people with 53,500 click-throughs to DOC's website for safety and trip planning information.
- Summer Rangers guided visitor behaviour on the ground.

“Together these efforts are helping to shape a more respectful and informed visitor experience, while reducing pressure on the reserve.” Nick Kelly — Whitianga Operations Manager

These two case studies: Tongariro Alpine Crossing and Mautohe Cathedral Cove, show how the WTTC strategic guidelines are aligned with DOC's visitor management. Both case studies take a strategic approach and weave together cultural partnership and environmental protection to ensure infrastructure investment is sustainable for people and place for the long-term. This approach nudges tourism from focusing on volume to focusing on values to ensure tourism gives back more to host communities.

Visits to DOC Managed Places



DOC manages a range of facilities that support outdoor recreation, including Great Walks, bookable huts and campsites. These places are maintained to provide safe access and protect natural areas, offering options for walking, overnight stays, and camping across Aotearoa New Zealand.



Ghost Lake Hut. Image: Ray Salisbury

Great Walks — recovery and resilience

Great Walks remain one of DOC's popular visitor offerings, with many tracks operating at or near capacity during the summer season (November to April). Milford Track and Abel Tasman Coast Track both reached 95% occupancy, while the Kepler Track followed closely at 91%. Five of the eleven Great Walks saw increased bookings compared to the previous year, with Lake Waikaremoana Track (up 143%) and the Heaphy Track showing the largest gains.⁴ These increases are likely due to the reopening of tracks previously closed because of storm damage in 2023.

This rebound highlights the importance of resilient infrastructure and adaptive management. It also underscores the importance of communication and planning around closures and reopenings, as these directly influence visitor behaviour and regional tourism.

While Great Walks represent a smaller proportion of overall visitation compared to short walks or national park visits, they have the potential to play a significant role in deeper engagement with PCLW. These experiences offer immersive, multi-day journeys that foster strong connections to nature and heritage. Most people undertaking Great Walks were New Zealanders, with only the Milford and Kepler Tracks showing a higher proportion of international visitors. This pattern reinforces their relevance as a key touchpoint for domestic visitors. Knowing which Great Walks are popular with international visitors helps pinpoint where commercial ventures and other services aimed at this market are most likely to succeed.



Summer 2024/2025 Great Walks Hut Bookings

Great Walks Hut Booking Totals

Bednights	Occupancy & YOY Change	
154,215	78%	↑ 10%
Domestic	59%	International 41%



YOY = Year on year

Figure 3: DOC Booking Data 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 seasons. Great Walks Post Visit Survey 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 season. Note: bednights, occupancy and YOY change may have been impacted (in some cases to a large extent) by weather impacts and track/hut work. N/A is reported for Hump Ridge Track due to unavailable data. Source for proportion of domestic and international visitors: Great Walks Post Visit Survey (2024/25 season), Q 7: What is your nationality (% New Zealander provided, % International determined by taking % New Zealander from 100), N = 5193, sample size for individual Great Walks ranges from n = 210 – n = 897.

High-Use Bookable Huts – emerging pressures

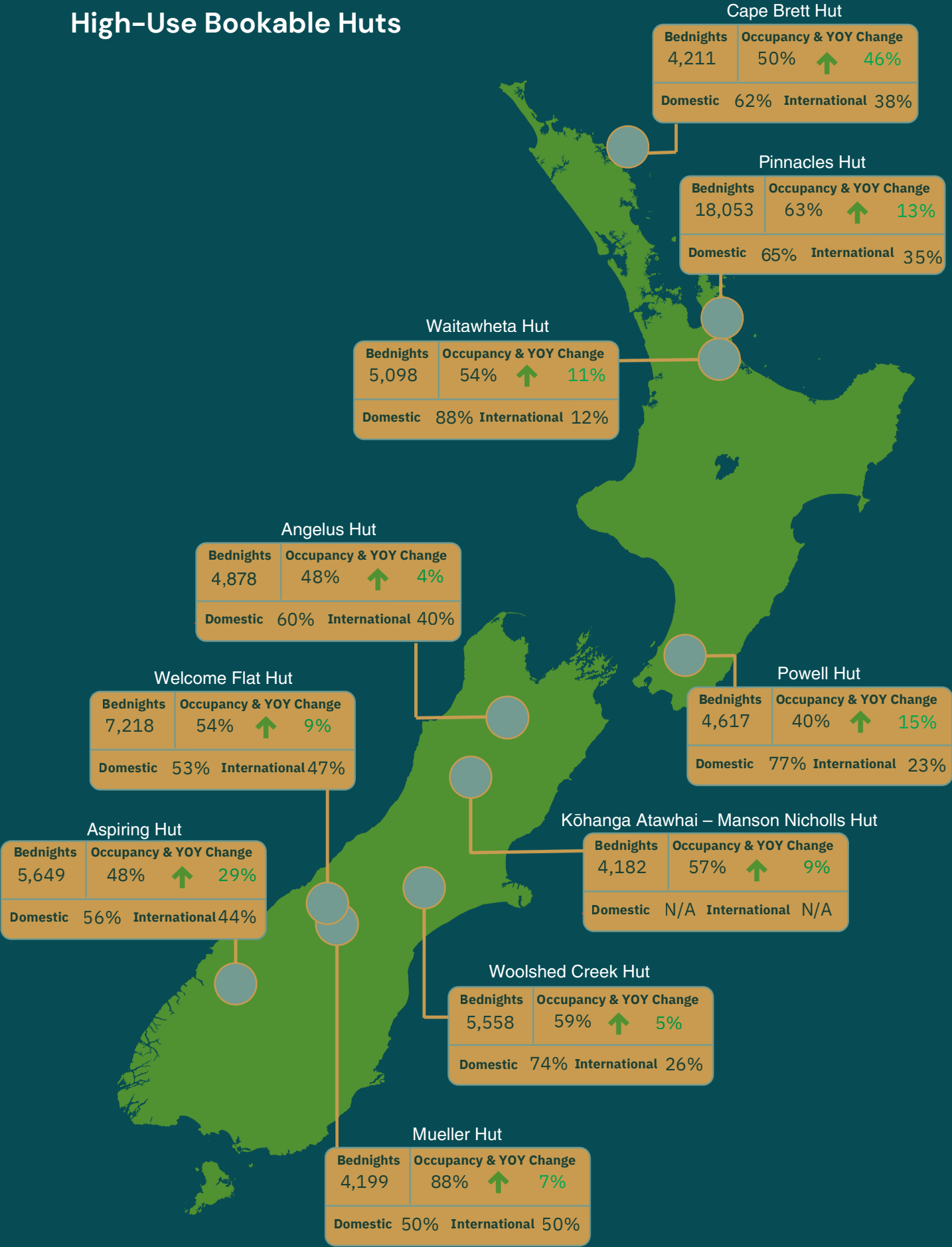
DOC Booking Data for the 10 most booked huts shows strong and sustained use.⁴ The recorded occupancy rates appear low with many below 50%. It is important to note, however, that these rates cover the entire bookable period; it is likely that during peak times such as weekends occupancy rates are much higher. All huts showed an increase in bookings compared to last year which highlights their increasing importance within DOC's visitor infrastructure.

The international/domestic visitor split in booking rates reinforces earlier findings: New Zealanders continue to make up most users across most bookable huts.⁴ This strong domestic participation emphasises the importance of DOC's overnight experiences. These huts offer accessible immersive nature experiences as well as opportunities for people to connect with important heritage sites. They provide this without the time or cost commitment of multi-day Great Walks.

As with Great Walks, increasing use and consistent occupancy rates point to the need for ongoing investment in hut infrastructure, maintenance, and visitor experience enhancements. These trends reiterate the strategic importance of how best to manage capacity, support equitable access, and ensure that high-use sites remain safe, welcoming, and environmentally resilient.



High-Use Bookable Huts



YOY = Year on year

Figure 4: DOC Booking Data 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 seasons. Bookable Huts Post Visit Survey – Q7: What is your nationality (% New Zealander provided, % International determined by taking % New Zealander from 100) 2024/2025 season, N = 4,734, sample size for individual huts ranges from n = 146 to n = 693

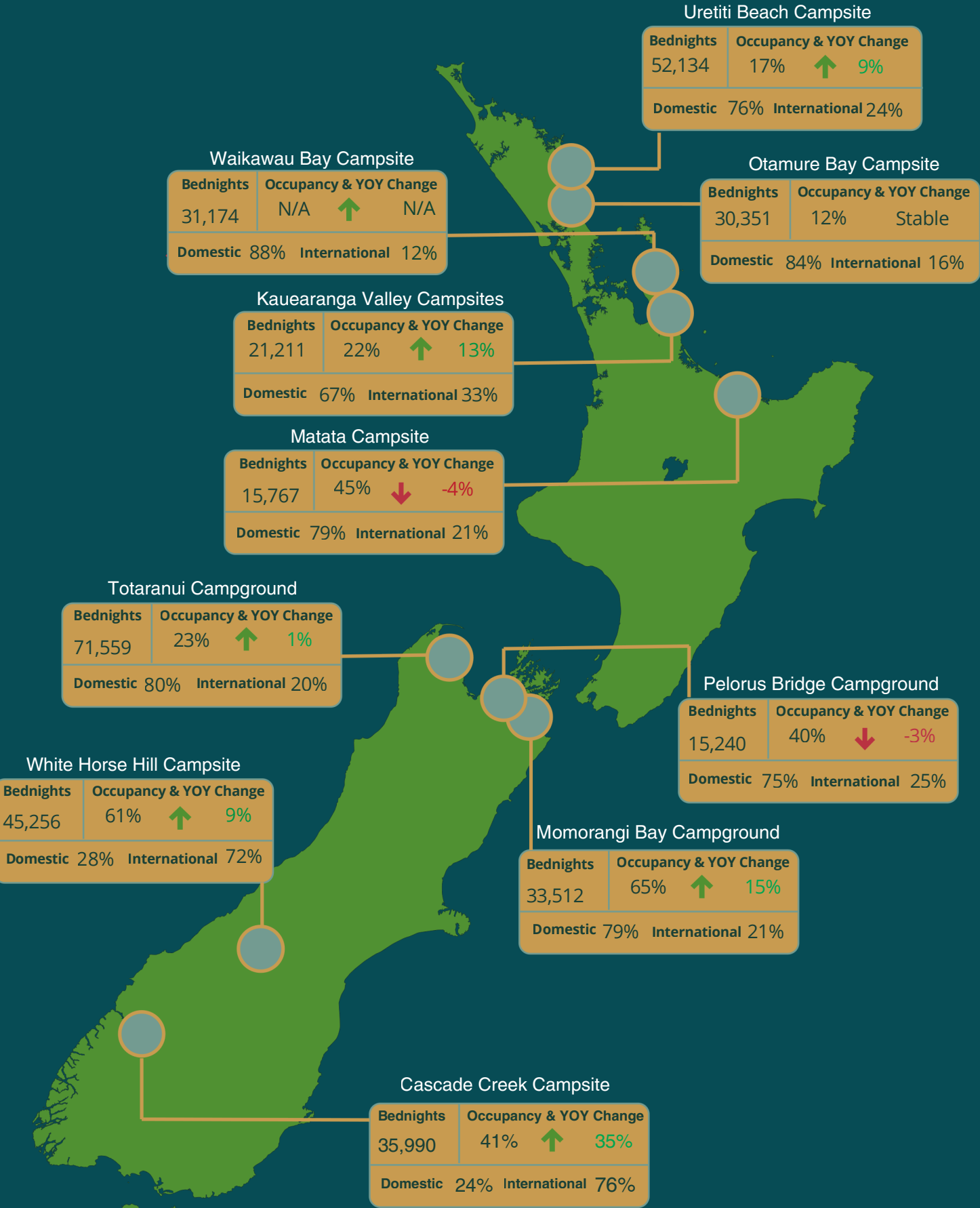
High-Use Bookable Campsites — investing long-term

DOC manages close to 300 campsites—around 137 of these are bookable. Over 400,000 bednights were booked between July 2024 and June 2025, up more than 10% compared to last year.⁴ Tōtaranui Campground in the Northern South Island had the most bednights booked for all non-Great Walks DOC campsites over the last year.⁴

High campsite occupancy rates point to the need for ongoing investment in maintenance and visitor experience. DOC's Customer Segmentation Research shows camping is a popular choice for young families, extended families, and younger adults.⁵ For these groups, camping offers an affordable and enjoyable way to spend time together. DOC campsites often offer a more immersive and deeper way to connect with nature and heritage with many campsites near scenic and/or heritage locations. The research reinforces that camping is an important and valued activity that New Zealanders want to see protected for future generations.



High-Use Bookable Camps



YOY = Year on year

Figure 5: DOC Booking Data 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 seasons. Bookable Campsites Post Visit Survey – Q7: What is your nationality (% New Zealander provided, % International determined by taking % New Zealander from 100) 2024/2025 season, N = 10,790, sample size for individual huts ranges from n = 86 to n = 1024)

Stewarding sustainable tourism

Tourism can connect people and nature

The patterns of visitation to DOC-managed places—whether Great Walks, huts or campsites—highlight the growing demand for quality experiences on PCLW. However, it also underscores the pressures on infrastructure and ecosystems, particularly at iconic destinations operating near capacity. This is where sustainable tourism becomes critical: DOC’s challenge is not only to maintain visitor satisfaction but to ensure that tourism actively supports conservation outcomes. Linking insights regarding where and how people visit, with strategies that manage pressure, spread demand, and embed cultural and environmental values, will help DOC turn strong visitor participation into shared responsibility to protect and restore nature and heritage.

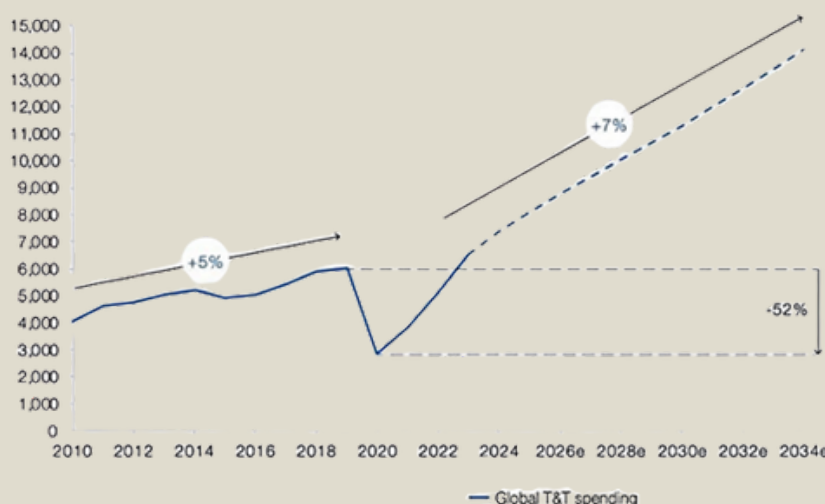
Tourism is a powerful connector between people and nature, but it also generates emissions, waste and pressures on the environment. As global travel spend is projected to grow by an average of 7% over the next decade, the challenge and opportunity is clear; tourism must contribute to conservation rather than work against it.

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) environmental impact is a crucial consideration for three out of every four travellers).⁸ Tourism revenue can be a force for good by:

- Protecting biodiversity and regenerating natural habitats.
- Leveraging technology to monitor environmental impacts.
- Funding community-based environmental projects.

DOC’s own approach reflects these principles through initiatives that encourage responsible behaviour and active stewardship. Further detail is provided below on DOC’s current “Always Be Naturing” campaign.

Global tourism and travel spend is expected to grow an average of 7% over the next decade.



Note: Includes domestic + inbound spending, in nominal prices; estimated
Source: Tourism Economics; Global Travel Service, published by WEF⁸

Championing Tiaki Promise

Tiaki Promise invites all visitors (international and domestic) to respect and care for Aotearoa New Zealand by protecting nature, keeping the country clean, being prepared, driving carefully, and showing respect.⁹ More than half of New Zealanders report no disturbance from poor behaviour in Protected Natural Areas, however there may be a lack of awareness of Tiaki Promise and the importance of behaving respectfully in these places. This suggests an opportunity to amplify the Tiaki Promise message for domestic visitors through storytelling, signage, and community engagement so it becomes a visible and lived commitment across PCLW.

Level of reported disturbance for behaviours covered by the Tiaki Promise

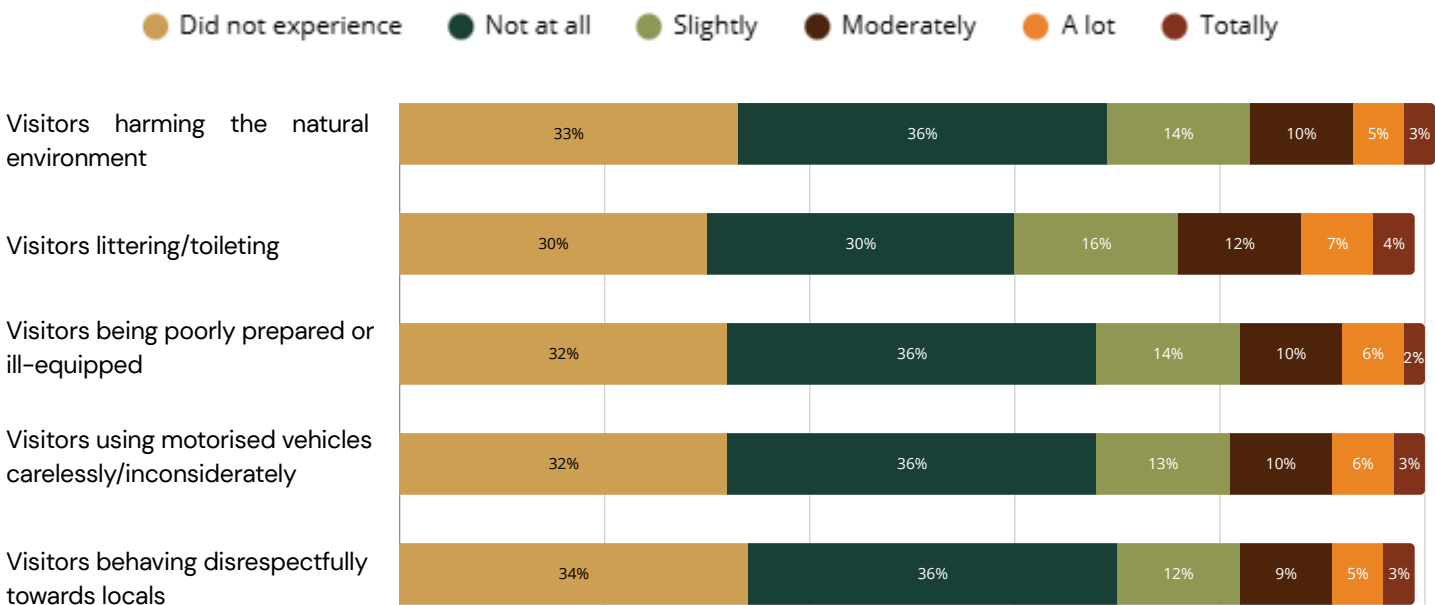


Figure 6: Proportion of responses to Q13b in DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025. Q13b asks respondents how disturbed they were by behaviours related to Tiaki Promise during their most recent visit to a Protected Natural Area (PNA). Answers are on a 5-point scale from 0 = 'Not at all disturbed' to 4 = 'Disturbed me totally'. Respondents can also answer 'Did not experience this'. The PPoC began asking this question in July 2024.

Championing Tiaki Promise is about all visitors taking responsibility for how they travel and interact with places. This helps ensure tourism protects our natural environment, respects host communities, and supports long-term sustainability. “Always Be Naturing” is about turning that responsibility into action. It is a DOC campaign aiming to get more New Zealanders to take action for nature – to actively care for our natural environment so it sustains for future generations.

Always Be Naturing

Nature is in trouble: more than 4,000 native species are threatened with extinction, or at risk of becoming threatened, and 63% of ecosystems are on the brink of collapse. DOC's Always Be Naturing campaign responds by making it simple for everyone to take small, regular actions that add up to big results.¹⁰

As Sia Aston, Deputy Director General of Public Affairs, notes “every day at DOC we see evidence that when we take action for nature, nature bounces back.” This campaign builds on New Zealanders’ love for nature and turns it into practical steps that support biodiversity and ecosystem health.

LOVE OUR WILD PLACES

Protect nature wherever your path takes you.

Half of all Kiwis visit a national park or protected area every summer.



Image: Daniel Deans | [DOC](#)



DO YOUR BIT →FOR NATURE

We've made it easy for you to find small ways to make a big difference.

Weekend conservationist, one-off helper or first-timer. Nature needs all kinds of help. Get naturing the way you want to.

[FIND YOUR ACTION](#)

What this means for future action

The themes explored in this report: visitor trends, pressures at high-use sites, cultural engagement, and sustainability are interconnected. Managing tourism pressures is not just about infrastructure; it is about shaping behaviour, spreading visitor demand, and embedding cultural and environmental values into every experience.

These key insights converge on a common challenge: how to balance access with protection and restoration. High satisfaction and strong participation provide a foundation for stewardship, however pressures on iconic destinations, uneven regional visitation, and climate-related disruptions demand adaptive strategies. Initiatives like Tiaki Promise and Always Be Naturing show how DOC can turn values into action, reinforcing responsible behaviour while connecting visitors to conservation outcomes. These initiatives highlight an opportunity for DOC to proactively influence visitor mindsets and behaviour and actively steward tourism. This will ensure tourism gives back more to our natural environment and cultural heritage than it takes. This active stewardship bridges the gap between enjoying nature and protecting it by ensuring tourism is sustainable and contributes to conservation.

Conclusions

Protecting what we value

Public conservation land and waters remain central to visitor experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand—drawing millions to beaches, national parks, short walks, and heritage sites. These places deliver immense value, connecting people with nature and heritage, but rising visitor numbers, infrastructure pressures, and environmental challenges demand active visitor management.

The insights in this report show strong participation and high satisfaction, yet also highlight evolving pressures:

- International arrivals have rebounded, concentrating demand on iconic destinations such as Aoraki/Mt Cook, Tongariro and Fiordland National Parks.
- Short walks dominate activity choices for both domestic and international visitors, reflecting the importance of easy access experiences near urban centres.
- Great Walks, huts, and campsites operate at or near capacity, while cultural experiences and heritage sites continue to resonate deeply with visitors.
- Participation and satisfaction are strong—83% of domestic visitors to Protected Natural Areas and 78% to Protected Heritage Places report positive experiences, and international visitors show similar trends.

Conclusions - opportunity and responsibility

These patterns create both opportunity and responsibility. In summary and as highlighted throughout this report, DOC has the opportunity to:



Continue to manage pressure on high-use sites: Fiordland, Aoraki/Mt Cook, Tongariro and Westland Tai Poutini National Parks continue to dominate itineraries for international visitors. These sites face congestion, environmental impacts, and infrastructure strain. DOC must prioritise investment in visitor management strategies—such as booking systems, transport solutions, and behaviour campaigns—to protect and restore natural values and maintain quality experiences.



Diversify destinations and timing: Uneven recovery across international markets and concentrated domestic use near major population centres, highlight opportunities to spread visitor demand. Marketing lesser-known destinations, promoting off-peak travel, and incentivising visits to areas on the outskirts of popular sites can reduce pressure and support regional economies.



Strengthen cultural partnerships: High satisfaction with Māori cultural experiences and strong domestic participation with heritage sites reinforce the need for authentic interpretation. DOC's commitment to working with mana whenua to integrate cultural storytelling into nature-based experiences and ensuring conservation outcomes are aligned with cultural values is likely to pay dividends in strengthening both visitor experience and conservation awareness.



Leverage short walks for engagement: Short walks dominate activity choices for both domestic and international visitors, offering easy access, convenient entry into nature. DOC has work underway to leverage these experiences as stepping-stones to deeper conservation engagement through interpretation, storytelling, and education—without requiring major infrastructure expansion.

These priorities are operational but also have a broader role in shaping the future of conservation and tourism in Aotearoa New Zealand. Every decision DOC makes now determines whether these places remain resilient, easy-to-access, and valued for generations to come. The challenge and opportunity is to turn high satisfaction and strong participation into community-led stewardship, ensuring nature and heritage thrive.

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Appendix A - places New Zealanders visit

Identifying where New Zealanders undertake recreation and travel helps DOC understand the value these important places contribute to the wellbeing of New Zealanders. The following pages look at popular places across DOC’s 10 regions. Note: this Appendix A does not include places most visited by international visitors; in maps blue dots = PNAs and orange dots = PHPs.

Whangārei and Bay of Islands in Northland popular with New Zealanders

Te Tai Tokerau Northland is a place steeped in rich cultural history and holds spiritual significance, offering many popular campgrounds and marine recreation opportunities. The map below shows places most frequently reported as recently visited in Northern North Island.

Recent visits reported in this region are concentrated around Whangārei and the Bay of Islands. Other places visited by New Zealanders include: Tāne Mahuta in Waipoua Forest and Te Rerenga Wairua / Cape Reinga in the Far North.

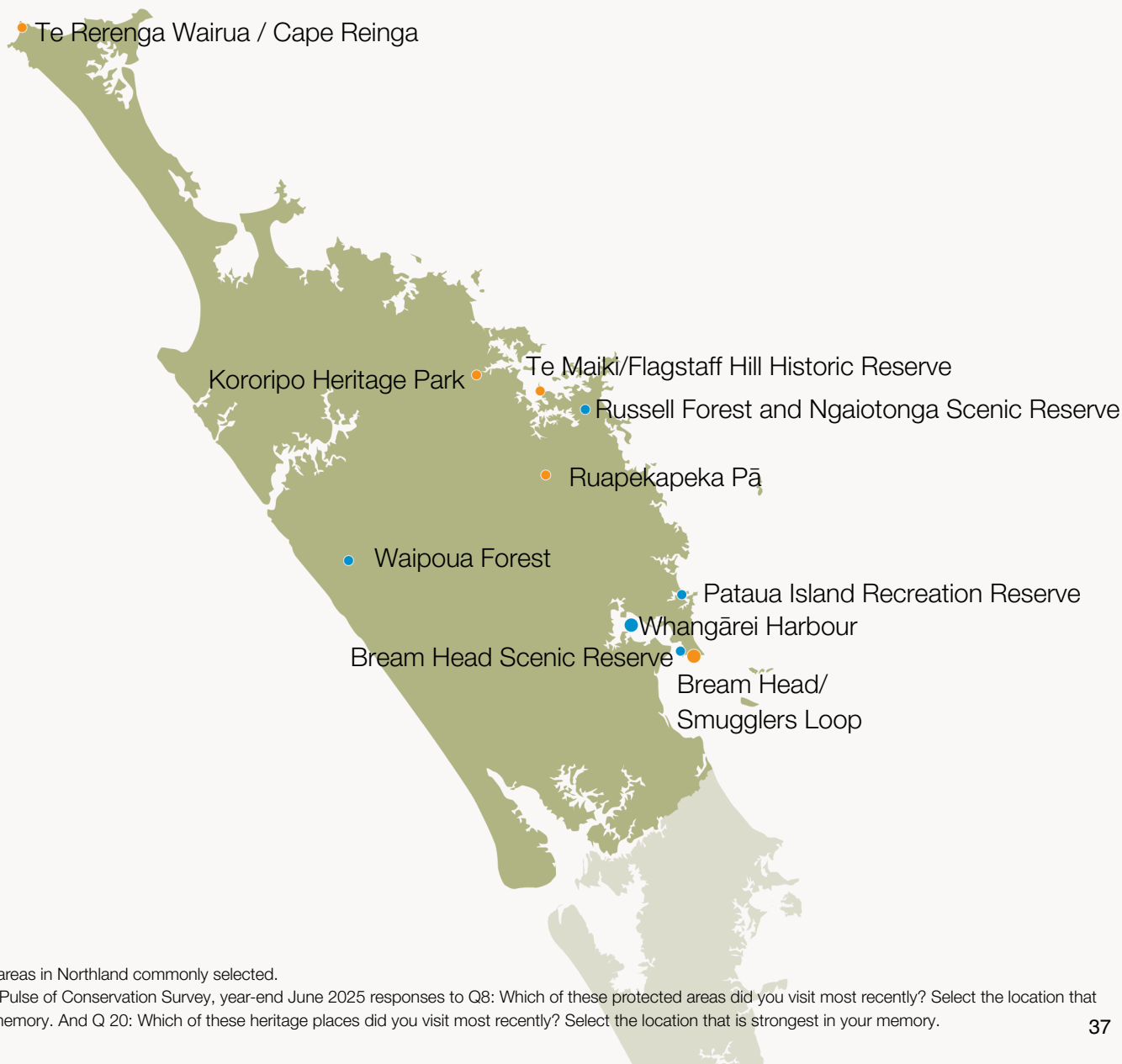


Figure 7: Protected areas in Northland commonly selected.
Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Hauraki Gulf in Auckland is popular with New Zealanders

Auckland is Aotearoa New Zealand’s largest region, home to more than one-third of the population and offering many popular island experiences. The map below shows places most frequently reported as recently visited in the Auckland region.

Destinations located in the Hauraki Gulf were among those most often reported as recently visited by New Zealanders, particularly destinations closer to Auckland such as Long Bay-Okura Marine Reserve, Rangitoto Island and Fort Takapuna Historic Reserve.



Figure 8: Protected areas in Auckland commonly selected.
Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Taranaki Maunga, Hakarimata and Coromandel busiest in HWT

DOC's Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki (HWT) region includes the Waikato awa, the longest river in New Zealand; Te Papakura o Taranaki and the Coromandel Peninsula. The map below shows places most frequently reported as recently visited in HWT.

Taranaki Maunga was the most often reported as recently visited, followed by Hakarimata Forest Park in Waikato. Other frequently reported places include:

- Waikato – Pirongia Forest Park and Kakepuku Historic Reserve
- Coromandel – Coromandel Forest Park, Whitianga Rock



Figure 9: Protected areas Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki commonly selected.

Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Taupō, Tongariro and Whanganui are busy in CNI

DOC's Central North Island (CNI) region is renowned for its outstanding natural environment, including Tongariro and Whanganui National Parks. The map below shows places most often reported as recently visited in CNI.

Locations often reported as visited recently include:

- Tongariro National Park
- Huka Falls
- The Bridge to Nowhere (located in the Whanganui National Park)

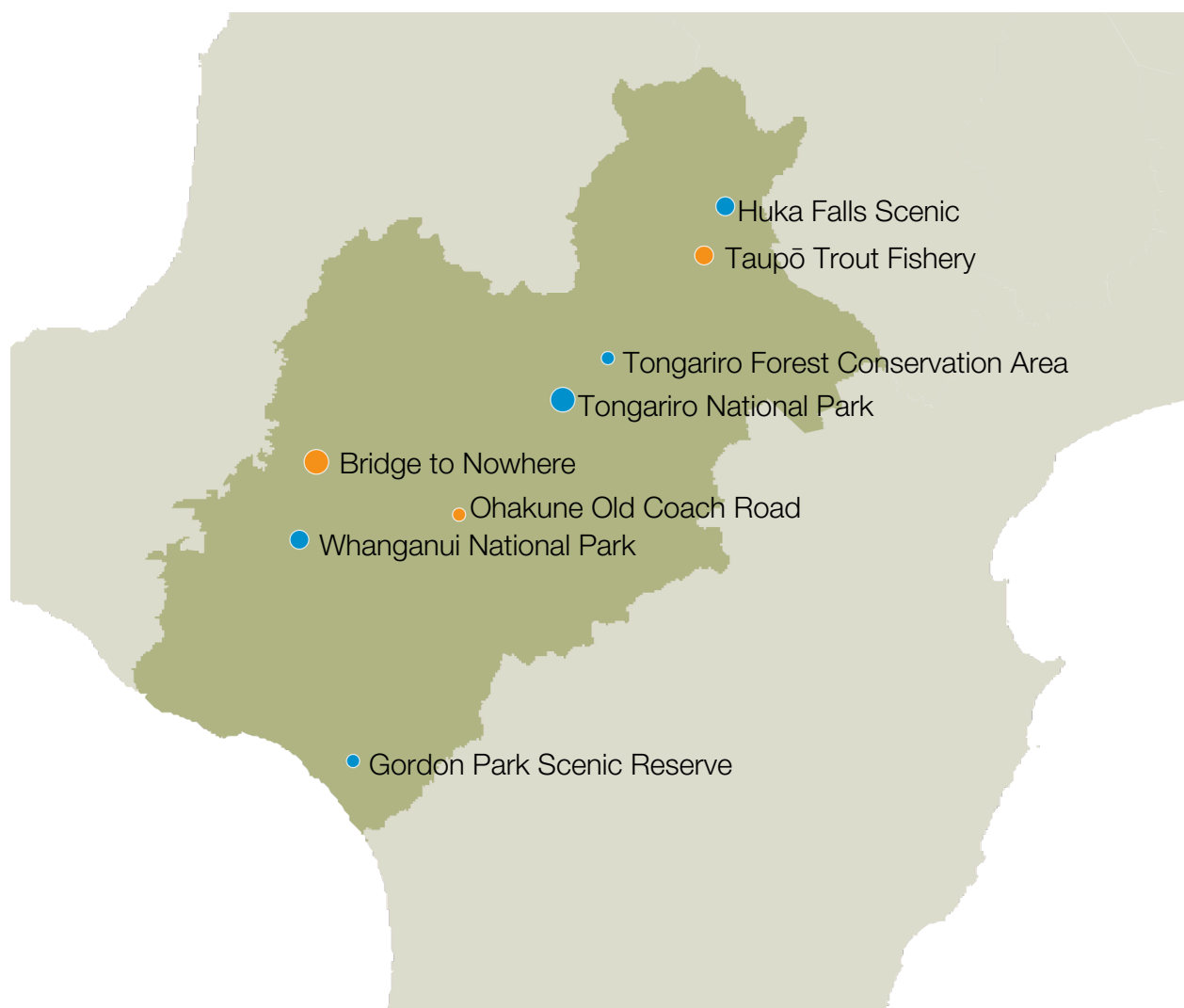


Figure 10: Protected areas in Central North Island commonly selected.

Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Visitor hubs are near the Kaimai ranges and Rotorua areas in ENI

DOC's Eastern North Island (ENI) region is rich in history and features a range of unique and scenic landscapes, including coastal areas, forests, lakes and renowned geothermal sites. The map below shows places most often reported as recently visited in ENI.

The region has two clusters of frequently reported recent domestic visits:

- Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park – Karangahake Gorge and Waitawheta Tramway
- Rotorua area – Okere Falls, Lake Rotoiti and Lake Rotoma scenic reserves



Figure 11: Protected areas in Eastern North Island commonly selected.

Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Experiences close to Wellington are popular in LNI

DOC's Lower North Island (LNI) region includes the North Island's backbone – the Remutaka, Tararua, Ruahine, and Kaweka ranges. The map below shows places most often reported as visited recently in LNI.

Locations most often reported as recently visited are near Wellington where most people in the region live:

- Remutaka Forest Park (the closest forest park to Wellington)
- Remutaka Rail Trail

Other frequently reported recent visits are in:

- Manawatu (Te Āpiti – Manawatū Gorge)
- Hawkes Bay (Ōtātara Pā, Cape Kidnappers)
- Kapiti Coast (Kapiti Marine Reserve)



Figure 12: Protected areas in Lower North Island commonly selected.

Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Abel Tasman and Nelson Lakes popular in NSI

The Northern South Island (NSI) is known for its stunning Abel Tasman and Nelson Lakes National Parks, as well as the Marlborough Sounds. The map below shows places most often reported as visited recently in this region.

Abel Tasman and Nelson Lakes National Parks were frequently reported as recently visited places in the region.

Other frequently reported locations include Glenhope Scenic Reserve, Kawatiri Historic Railway and Meretoto/Ship Cove in the Marlborough Sounds



Figure 13: Protected areas in Northern South Island commonly selected.

Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

West Coast - fewer residents and fewer recent visits

The West Coast, Te Tai Poutini, is renowned as one of Aotearoa New Zealand’s most beautiful and natural regions. It is also the least populated region of Aotearoa New Zealand. The map below shows places most often reported as recently visited in the Western South Island.

Places most often reported as recently visited on the West Coast were: Brunner Mine Historic Area, Denniston area, Hokitika Gorge, Franz Josef Glacier/Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere, Punakaiki Marine Reserve, Paparoa National Park, Charming Creek area and Waiuta area.



Figure 14: Protected areas in West Coast commonly selected.
Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Experiences close to Christchurch are popular in ESI

The Eastern South Island (ESI) is a popular gateway to the South Island and home to spectacular natural experiences. These include Aoraki/Mt Cook and Arthur's Pass National Parks. The map below shows places most often reported as visited recently in ESI.

Places most often reported as recently visited in ESI are within two hours of Christchurch, including:

- 30 minutes from Christchurch: Awaroa/Godley Head
- 2 hours from Christchurch: Hanmer Forest Park; Arthur's Pass National Park; Akaroa Marine Reserve



Figure 15: Protected areas in Eastern South Island commonly selected.

Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Southern South Island is popular with New Zealanders

The Southern South Island (SSI) is among the most iconic natural areas of the world and includes Mount Aspiring and Fiordland National Parks. The map to the right shows places most often reported as visited recently in SSI.

Mount Aspiring National Park was most likely to be reported as recently visited, followed by: Silver Peaks Scenic Reserve, Bluff Hill/Motupohue, Arrowtown Chinese Settlement, and Milford Road/Milford Sound area.

Other places often reported include:

- Queenstown area – Arrowtown
- Dunedin area – Tunnel Beach
- Fiordland – Fiordland National Park and Lake Te Anau



Figure 16: Protected areas in Southern South Island commonly selected.

Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 responses to Q8: Which of these protected areas did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory. And Q 20: Which of these heritage places did you visit most recently? Select the location that is strongest in your memory.

Appendix B

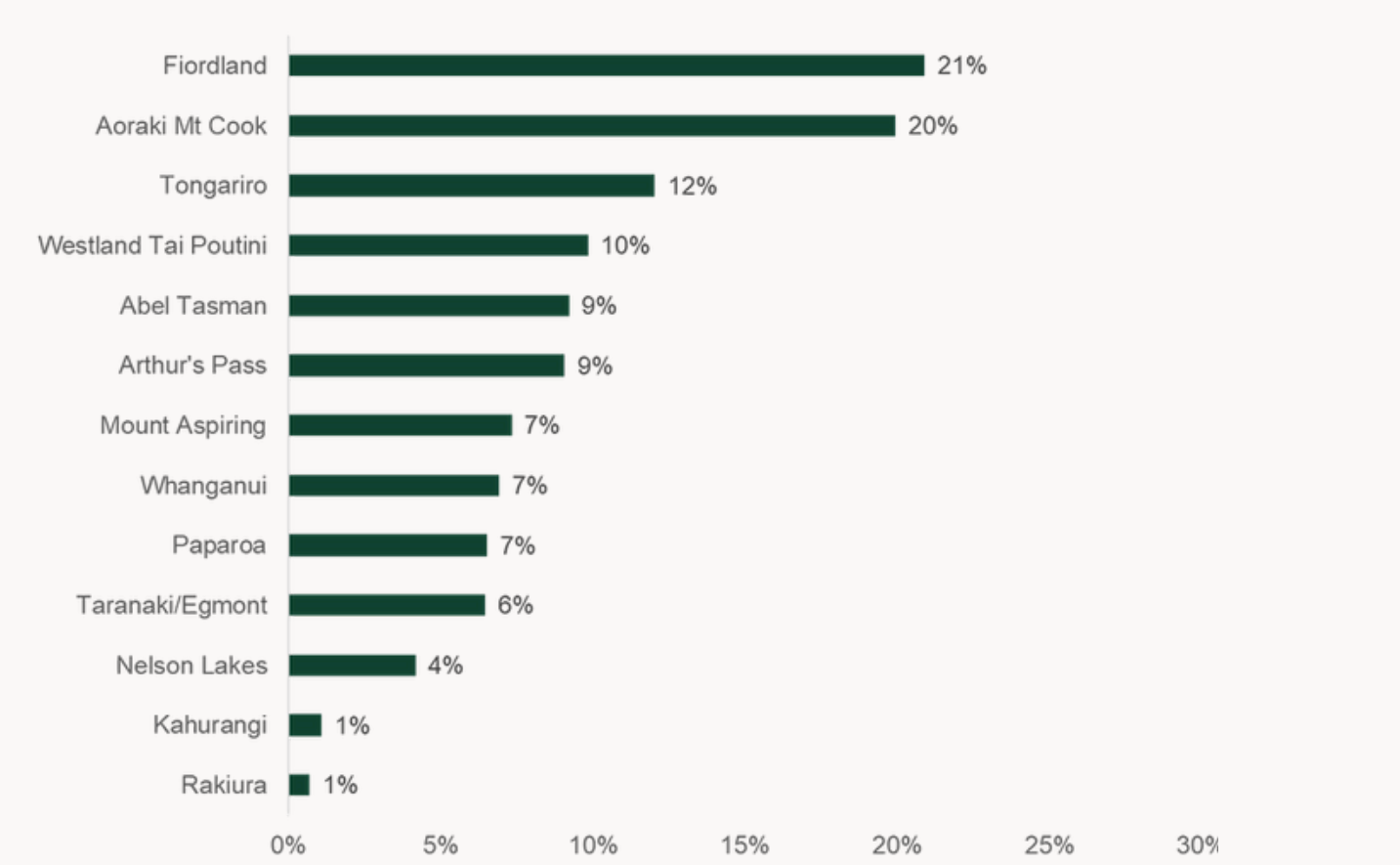
International Visitors Key Stats

1. Proportion of International tourists that visited different national parks

The proportion of international visitors who visited various national parks during their trip to Aotearoa New Zealand was similar to last year.

This year, Tongariro National Park in the North Island emerged as one of the top three most visited parks by international visitors. Westland Tai Poutini National Park held a slightly higher share last year - the difference was minimal, highlighting the appeal of iconic destinations.³

Figure 17: IVS activities data. Source: International Visitor Survey, year-end June 2025



Sources: IVS activities data, N = 7,451. International Visitor Survey, year-end June 2025

Note: 13% indicated that they had visited another national park or were unsure of the name of the national park in the North Island. For the South Island this proportion was 5%.

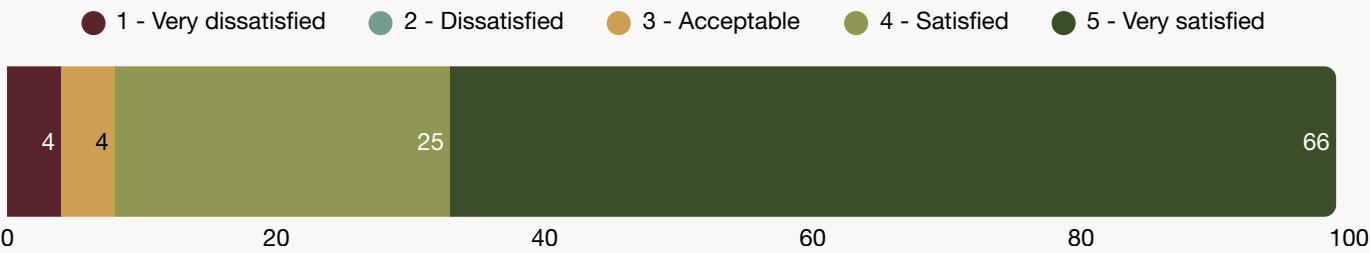
International Visitors Key Stats

2. International visitors' satisfaction with their visit to Aotearoa New Zealand

Nine out of ten (over 90%) international visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit to Aotearoa New Zealand. The Net Promoter Score (NPS) for all international visitors was 70. 55% felt their expectations were met and 41% felt their expectations were exceeded.³

Over nine out of ten (92%) international visitors who attended Māori cultural experiences said they enjoyed them. Ninety percent said the experience improved their understanding of Māori culture, and 58% said they would have liked to experience more Māori culture.³

Figure 18: And thinking about all the aspects of your trip, how satisfied were you with your New Zealand visit overall?



Note: No international visitors reported being dissatisfied

Source: International Visitor Survey, year-end June 2025

1. Net Promoter Score questions ask about likelihood to recommend using a standard zero to ten point-scale Respondents are classified as Detractors (0-6), Passives (7-8), or Promoters (9-10). The NPS is the difference between promoters and detractors. Detractors are scored -100, Passives 0, and Promoters 100. Experiences were not limited to PCLW.

2 Data from International Visitor survey, year-end June 2025

International Visitors Key Stats

3. Places Visited by International Visitors

Nature-based activities continue to be popular with international visitors. These experiences are more popular than other activities, such as fine dining or visiting breweries and wine trails.³

Aotearoa New Zealand’s landscapes and scenery continue to be the top reason international visitors choose to travel here.

Figure 19: Places visited by International visitors



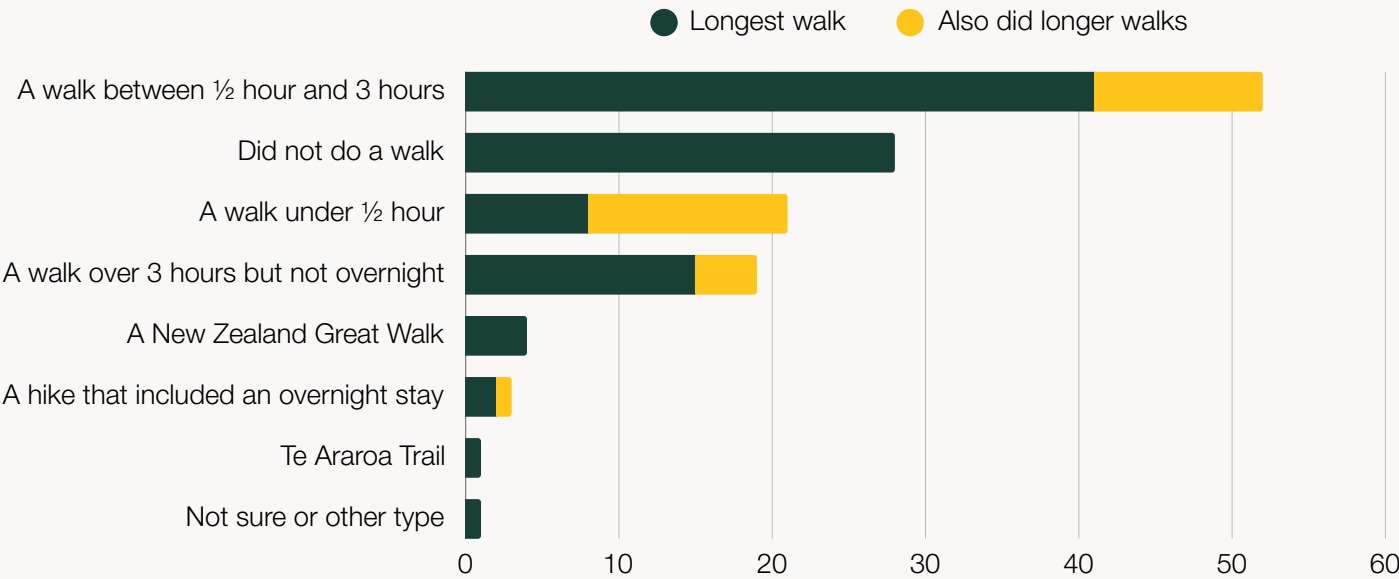
Sources: IVS activities data, N = 7,451. International Visitor Survey, year-end June 2025

International Visitors Key Stats

4. Percent of International visitors that did a walk, hike, trek or tramp, grouped by their longest walk.

The green and yellow bars in Figure 20 below show the proportion of international visitors that did that type of walk. The green section of each bar shows the proportion of international visitors that did that type of walk as their longest walk. The green sections add up to 100% of visitors. The yellow section shows the proportion of international visitors that also did a longer walk. Six percent of international visitors reported doing walks like Te Araroa Trail and Great Walks that involve overnight stays, an additional 64% did day walks.³

Figure 20: Categories of walks taken by International visitors



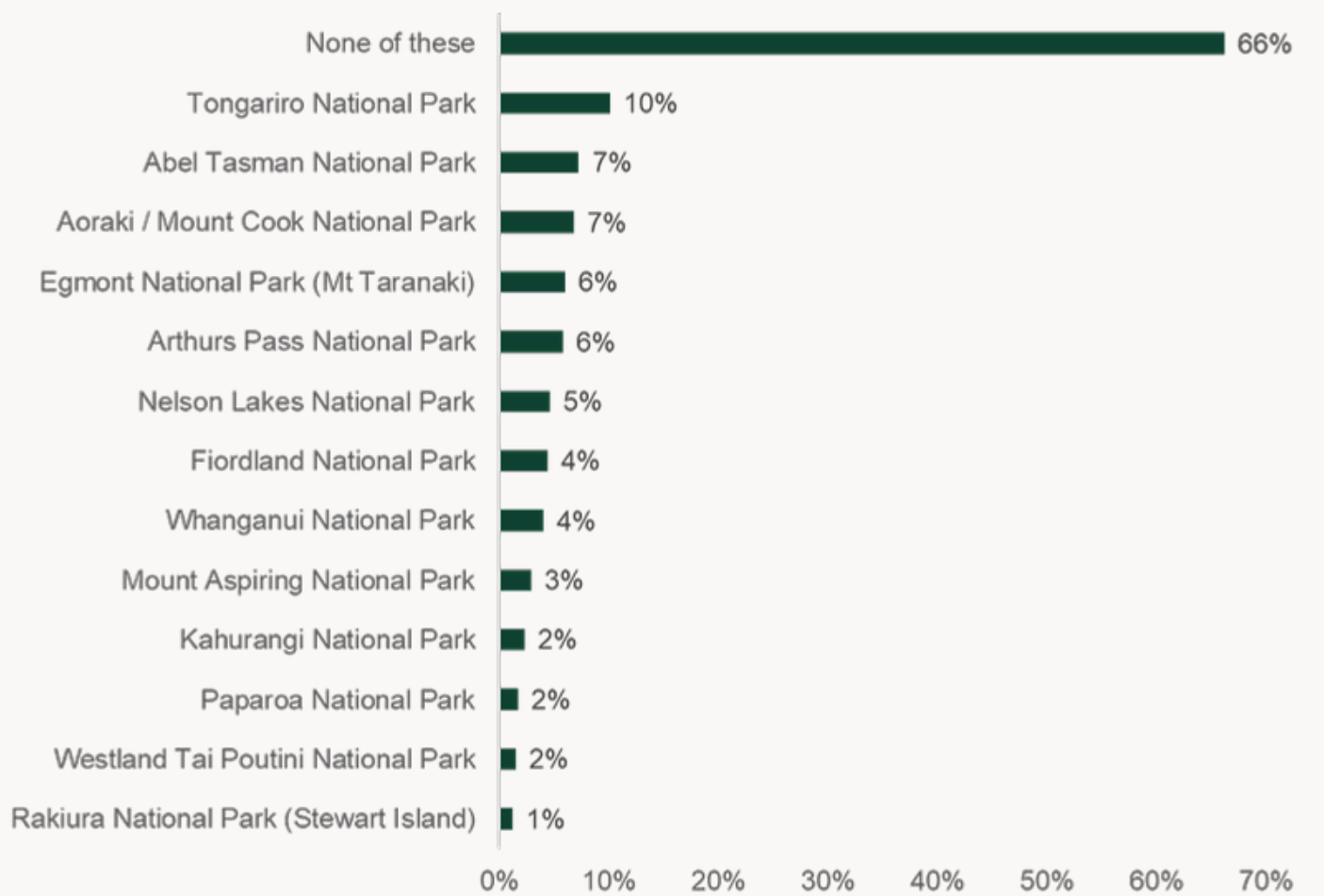
Source: IVS activities data, N = 7,451. International Visitor Survey, year-end June 2025

Domestic visitors Key Stats

Around 44% of New Zealanders visited at least one national park in the last year (July 2024 – June 2025). Tongariro National Park had the most reported visits followed by Abel Tasman and Aoraki/Mt Cook National Parks.²

A smaller proportion of New Zealanders reported doing a Great Walk (18%, Abel Tasman and Tongariro Circuit were the most popular at 5%), a Great Ride (11%) or walking all/part, of Te Araroa Trail (10%).²

Figure 21: Percent of New Zealanders visited each National Park or none



Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2025 Q40a: 'Which, if any of New Zealand's National Parks have you visited in the last 12 months?' Data July 2024 – June 2025, N=12000

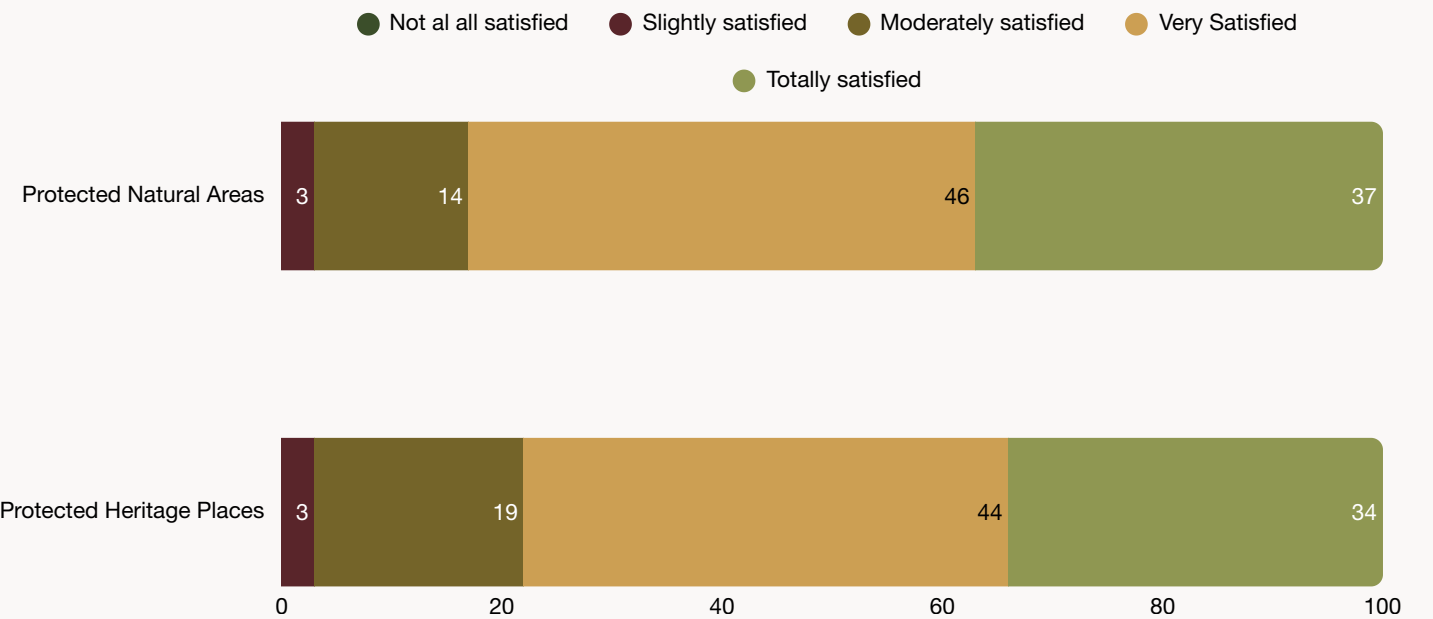
Domestic visitors Key Stats

6. Reported Domestic Visitor satisfaction

Similar to previous years, most visitors were very or totally satisfied with their most recent visit to a PNA or PHP. 83% of visitors to Protected Natural Areas (PNAs) and 78% to Protected Heritage Places (PHPs) were very or totally satisfied. Net Promoter Scores (NPS)¹ [on a scale from -100 to 100] reached 43 for PNAs and 33 for PHPs – considered favourable scores and an increase from last year.²

Note, the overall satisfaction rating for year-end June 2025 is 3.2 for PNA and 3.1 for PHP, measured on a 5-point scale where 0 = ‘Not at all satisfied’ and 4 = ‘Totally satisfied’.

Figure 22: Visitor satisfaction with their most recent visit to a PNA or PHP remains high



Source: The proportion of visitors who rated their most recent visit to Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places from ‘Not at all satisfied’ to ‘Totally satisfied’. DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey (n=4406 for PNA and n = 2698 for PHP), year-end June 2025

Net Promoter Score (NPS) in the Public Pulse of Conservation: Q16 and Q28 ask about likelihood to recommend using a standard zero to ten point-scale. Respondents are classified as Detractors (0-6), Passives (7-8), or Promoters (9-10). The NPS is the difference between promoters and detractors. Detractors are scored -100, Passives 0, and Promoters 100.

2. Satisfaction was measured on a five point scale from ‘Not at all satisfied’ to ‘Totally satisfied’

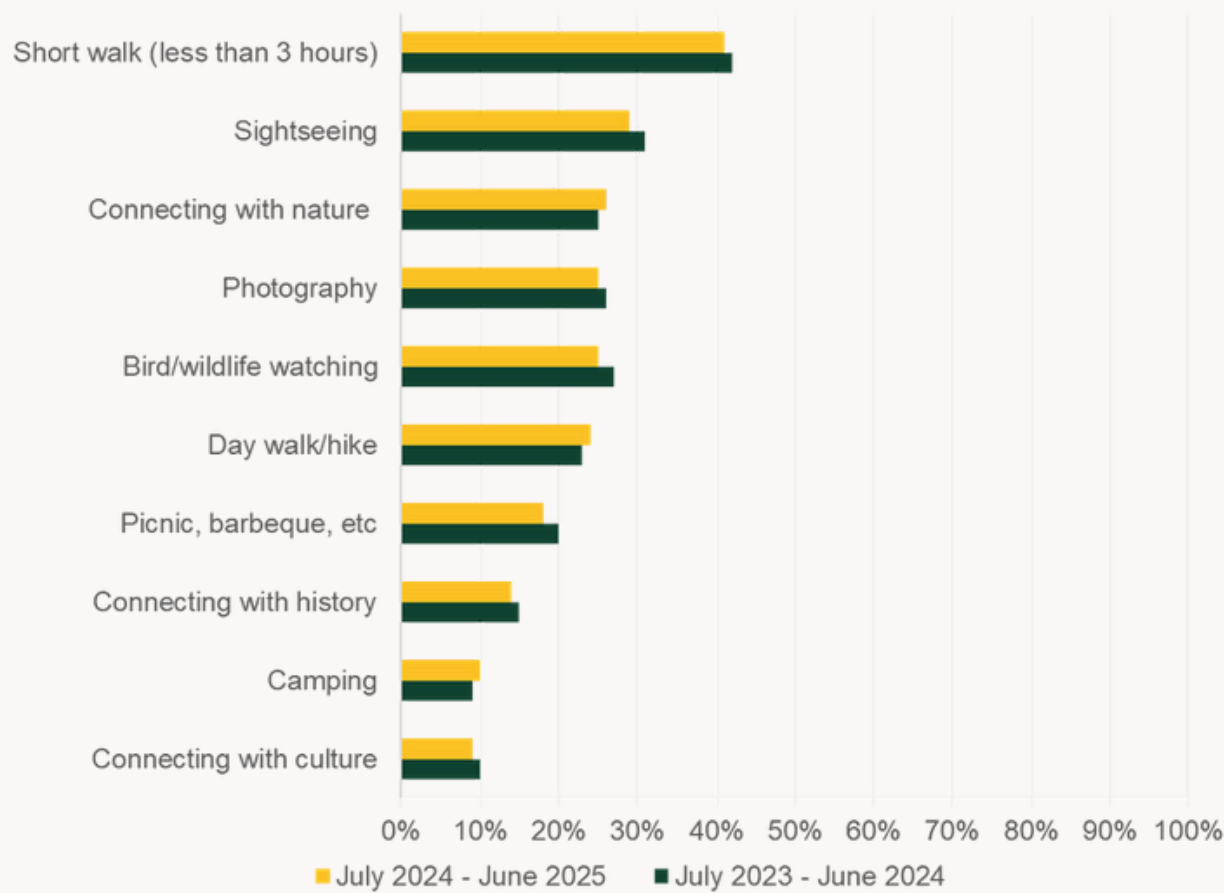
Domestic visitors Key Stats

7. Short walks remain the most popular activity for New Zealanders

42% of New Zealanders did a short walk on their most recent visit to a Protected Natural Area, roughly the same as last year.²

Compared to last year there was little to no difference (differences ranging from 0.6% to 2.7%). The sustained popularity of short walks reflects their role as easy and convenient access into nature. It also reinforces the value of maintaining and promoting short walk infrastructure, especially near urban areas.

Figure 23: Proportion of respondents who engaged in the top 10 most reported activities during their most recent visit



Source: Top 10 activities selected as responses to Q12: Thinking about your most recent visit to “location selected in q8” which of the following activities did you engage in? 2023/24 N visited a PNA = 5530, for 2024/25 N visited a PNA = 4406. Source: DOC Public Pulse of Conservation Survey, year-end June 2024 and 2025