



# A FAMILY AFFAIR

It's known for its sunshine and wine, but Hawke's Bay is also an ideal destination for a fun family getaway. Water slides, animal encounters, child-friendly fine dining... there are plenty of reasons to catch the next flight there.

STORY FIONA FRASER



Napier's Marine Parade links a number of key attractions, while leading you along a spectacular 3km stretch of seashore.

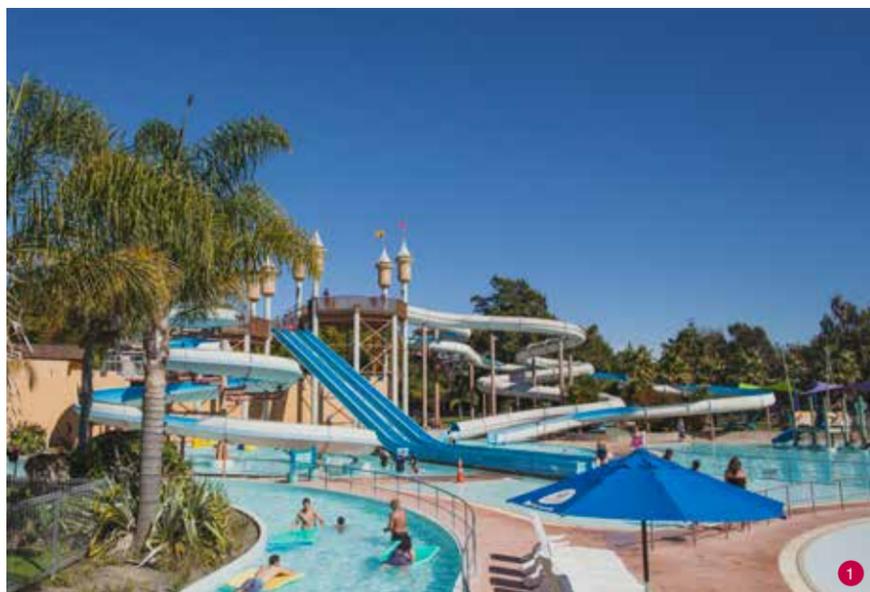
HAWKE'S BAY IS paradise for wildlings, and with a thriving wine and food scene for the adults, it's a terrific family holiday destination. Kids will love the National Aquarium of New Zealand, where they can get up close and personal with sharks, stingrays and fish via a 1.5-million-litre oceanarium tunnel. The aquarium recently won international attention for its innovative "virtual encounters" – essentially Zoom calls with penguins – and its Good and Naughty Penguins of the Month board is bound to elicit a giggle.

You can take a backstage tour with the Little Penguin Close Encounter package to learn about the on-site penguin rehabilitation programme and have a go at hand-feeding them. Watch out for Timmy and Mo, who are famous for their bad behaviour during feeding time.

Just along from the aquarium, you'll find Bay Skate, a world-class waterfront skating arena where scooters, rollerblades, skateboards and pretty much anything else with two wheels are welcome. If you haven't brought your own gear, the team can kit you out, and if those energy levels begin to flag, the Lick This! ice-cream parlour next door has booths where you can relax and enjoy any of the 43 flavours on offer.

### WATER WORLDS

If you're visiting in the warmer months, Splash Planet in Parkvale is a must. Set aside at least half a day to explore this popular outdoor complex, which opens to the public each November. Watch your children cruise down Lazy River, smash merrily into each other on the bumper boats, emerge blinking from the dark of the Sky Tunnel or simply soak in the indoor heated pool. There are "dry" attractions too – go-karts, a pirate-themed obstacle course, a flying fox and a real throwback to the origins of the site, a miniature train ride, the Fantasyland Express.



### Watch the kids cruise down Lazy River, smash into each other on the bumper boats and emerge blinking from the dark Sky Tunnel.

In Hawke's Bay, locals love to start the day with a walk on one of the region's many beaches. Safe for water babies, Mahia Beach in the north is a sheltered curve of white sand hugging the glorious blue sea. Marine Parade in Napier isn't recommended for swimming due to an undertow, but you can walk, jog or cycle along its pathways and take in the sights from the viewing platform. If your family includes a dog, Ocean Beach's designated off-lead area is ideal, providing a couple of kilometres of coast on which to stretch two legs or four.

At Waimarama Beach, you can stroll,

swim or surf. Hawkes Bay Surf School runs lessons here, beginning at \$40 per person. The tutors are all local surfers with a lifetime of experience in and on these waves, and have a wonderful way of encouraging others to find their feet on a board.

If it's too cold to dip your toe in the sea, head to Morere Hot Springs just off State Highway 2. The eight pools set within lush bush can get busy, so try your luck when you turn up or make a private booking – they're available in half-hour slots.

### GO, GO, GO!

Outfoxed is a must for older kids and larger groups, family reunions or functions. Here on rolling farmland bordering the vast Cape Kidnappers luxury resort and golf course are several modified and beautifully styled shipping containers that provide refuge from the elements. There's also a raft of adventure activities: clay target shooting, archery, knife-throwing, and you can even bash a golf ball from the top of a hill overlooking the Te Awanga coast, all with expert tuition and lots of laughs. Bookings are essential.

### TOAST TO THAT

While you're in the vicinity, stop off for a glass of something chilled and fruity at Te Awanga Estate, probably the most relaxed cellar door in the Bay. The wines span the very best of the region, from buttery chardonnay to delicious syrah. In the warmer months, locals flock to Te Awanga's Sunday Sessions, at which local musos playing sweet tunes on the expansive lawn overlooking the vines. And there's easy



1. Wrinkled fingers are a side effect of the full-on fun to be had at Splash Planet.

2. There's much to discover at the National Aquarium of New Zealand. 3. Birdwoods delivers a sweet sugar rush. 4. Splash Planet.

5. Mahia Beach. 6. Pekapeka wetlands. 7. Wheels on the waterfront at Bay Skate. 8. ToiToi Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre opera house.



food on offer year-round – platters, pizzas and pasta. Kids are always welcome.

If wine is your thing, there are myriad ways to enjoy it in Hawke's Bay – but to make it fun for the kids, saddle up and cycle through the vines. Several local companies offer bike rental and route information. Coastal Wine Cycles have California beach cruisers and a “no wedge” guarantee, while On Yer Bike does a great line in e-bikes and tandem cycles. Hawke's Bay's network of flat, wide, well-maintained cycling tracks, called the iWay, makes it easy for even the smallest members of the family to enjoy a ride.

### FEET FIRST

Or, take a walk. The Pekapeka wetland is one of only a few remaining in the area, and is suitable for all ages and abilities due to the well-maintained boardwalks and information panels. Gorgeous Te Mata Peak can be climbed in about an hour, or there are shorter walks in and around the beautiful environs of Te Mata Park for those with less gas in the tank. Make sure you stop off at Peak House for refreshments. On the last Sunday of each month, this hilltop venue also runs family-friendly event The High Rotation Record Club, where personalities play a favourite record on vinyl, with chat and guidance from local muso Scott Towers of Fat Freddy's Drop.

### BETTER IN THAN OUT

Hawke's Bay's climate is known for being warm, dry and generally delightful. But if the weather's not playing ball, there are plenty of indoor activities to enjoy. Kids who love to touch and tinker should check out The Faraday Centre in Napier, an interactive museum staffed by volunteers who love to help families discover how things worked way back when. Old arcade games, telephone booths with phones that



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ring, home appliances and a mock-up of a vintage store all feature. There's a biplane hanging from the ceiling, an antique dentist's chair to sit in, a vintage car and a steam engine, and visitors are encouraged to interact and play with everything on display.

In Hastings, the old opera house has undergone a renovation to become a symphony of red and gold in the art nouveau style of the period. Sitting within the ToiToi



Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre, this October it and other venues in the region will host the Harcourts Hawke's Bay Arts Festival – 10 days of live performance, music and culture. The line-up includes several theatre performances for kids: *The Perfect Gift*, a Kiwi romp with lots of laughs; *The Boy with Wings*, which uses puppetry to tell the tale of the kuaka's annual migration to Hawke's Bay; and *Captain Festus McBoyle's Travellin' Variety Show*, on at Havelock North's Keirunga Gardens.

### TWEET AS

No child's visit to Havelock North is complete without a trip to Birdwoods – a sweet shop, cafe, gallery and sculpture garden a few minutes' drive out of town. Owners Louise and Bruce Stobart have built a thriving attraction out of a remodelled wooden church, adding a teensy cottage knocked together from salvaged materials to house the most gorgeous sweet shop. Their extensive range of confectionery is stored in large glass jars, and children can choose their favourites to be weighed, measured, wrapped in cellophane and tied with a ribbon at the counter by one of Birdwoods' friendly “grandmothers”.

Or head to the cafe and gardens for a tempting array of soups and salads, and a slice of the rhubarb and caramel cake. There's a swing, stilts, stone sculptures to explore (look for the hippo) and even a carnival cut-out frame for photos. Warning: you'll have to drag your family away. [hawkesbaynz.com](http://hawkesbaynz.com)



9. Have it your way on the iWay, suitable for bikies big and small. 10. Parents and grandparents will recognise relics from their own childhood at The Faraday Centre. 11. One of the upscale tents in the garden of Meadowood House. 12. Fine food as art at St Georges. 13. Wallingford Homestead.

### Eat

#### CARR'S KITCHEN

Juicy burgers, huge sandwiches served on fresh rye, an array of waffles and a counter full of mouth-watering baking – what's not to love about this popular Hastings diner? Run by brother-and-sister duo Dan Hopkins and Nicole McDonald, and named for their beloved grandmother Joyce Carr, they've used family recipes alongside modern adaptations of traditional fare to create a menu everyone will enjoy. [carrskitchen.co.nz](http://carrskitchen.co.nz)

#### CHAN'S CHOP HOUSE

A new arrival in Havelock North, Chan's serves pan-Asian faves – dumplings, bao buns, fried rice and banh mi – in a bright space with pumping tunes on the sound system. A fantastic option for a quick meal on the run. [chanschophouse.co.nz](http://chanschophouse.co.nz)

#### ST GEORGES RESTAURANT

While grown-ups enjoy chef/owner Francky Godinho's artful plates of



local produce (90 percent of the fresh ingredients come from his huge kitchen garden next door), kids can request a fine-dining plate of their own. Although there isn't a children's menu, dad-of-three Francky will whip up gourmet fish and chips, local Bostock chicken fettuccine or a mini steak and garden salad for the little ones. [stgeorgesrestaurant.co.nz](http://stgeorgesrestaurant.co.nz)

#### COLLAB BY THE DOSA PROJECT

Great news for fans of the delicious dosas at the Hawke's Bay Farmers' Market, on each Sunday at the A&P Showgrounds – Cliff Fernandes of The Dosa Project now has permanent premises. His plant-based Indian street food, curries, nut milks, tonics and juices are available weekdays at 211 Market Street, Hastings.

### Sleep

#### WALLINGFORD HOMESTEAD

For a getaway in peaceful surrounds, make the journey to Wallingford Homestead near Waipukurau. There are 11 large bedrooms (book one or reserve the whole place if you're

a large group), a pretty pool and pool house, and a thriving trufflerie. The food is sublime, too; chef Chris Stockdale uses quality local produce to create spectacular plates you'll savour. [wallingford.co.nz](http://wallingford.co.nz)

#### COTTAGES ON ST ANDREWS

Comfy, cosy self-catering cottages situated between Hastings and Havelock North, plus an enormous lodge that sleeps 18. There are farm animals here – and you can bring your dog. [cottagesonstandrews.nz](http://cottagesonstandrews.nz)

#### MEADOWOOD HOUSE

For a touch of art deco glamour in Fernhill, Meadowood House is a sweet spot with lovely gardens, lawn games and the option to “glamp” in their Lotus Belle Tents. Put the teens out there and take the house for yourself. [meadowoodhouse.co.nz](http://meadowoodhouse.co.nz)

#### MORE FOODIE MORSELS

You'll see the bright red and yellow signage sprinkled throughout Hawke's Bay – Kool's Chicken 'n' Fries is a local institution serving piping hot chicken and – you guessed it – chips, from dairy counters in the region. A \$6 box of chips is a must on a dreary afternoon. Doused in lightly spiced chicken salt, they have a cult following and are simply delicious. Some of the best coffee in the Bay can be found at any of Firsthand Coffee's four outlets: Crazy Good in Ahuriri, Box Espresso in Clive, Cupple in Hastings and Workroom in Havelock North. Scrumptious sandwiches and bombaloni from Ya Bon French Baker are on site too. If you're self-catering, stock up at Vetro in Napier and Bellatino's Food Lovers' Market in Havelock North. Both are brilliant specialist grocery stores, each offering a good range of gorgeous meats and cured goods, wines, cheeses, condiments, oils, baked items and chocolate. ☺

PHOTOGRAPHY NATIONAL AQUARIUM, KIRSTEN SIMCOX, CHARLOTTE ANDERSON



### Getting there

HAWKE'S BAY +

Air New Zealand operates daily non-stop flights to Napier from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, with connections across the domestic network.

[airnewzealand.co.nz](http://airnewzealand.co.nz)

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