

# 2020/21 visitor insights report

Department of Conservation | Te Papa Atawhai  
September 2021



New Zealand Government



# Annual 2020/21 visitor insights report

This report looks at where people went and what impacts were observed over 2020/21.

This report is compiled to inform DOC staff how things are tracking around the country and where best to focus DOC's heritage and visitor work.

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- ▶ [Overview of visitor activity over 2020/21 nationally.](#)
- ▶ [Overview of visitor experiences over 2020/21 nationally.](#)
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- ▶ [Data and information sources](#) - multiple data sources are used to produce this report. The sources vary in data quality.

# Overview of visitor activity over 2020/21 nationally



# 2020/21 visitor activity – important takeaways

## Overall decline in visitor activity

International border restrictions caused significant changes in visitor patterns – several regions had a large decline in activity.

Visitor numbers have fallen in many places when compared with previous years – noticeable in Fiordland, South Westland, Otago, Whakapapa/Tongariro and Aoraki/Mt Cook.

While iconic destinations including Piopiotahi/Milford Sound and Cathedral Cove welcomed many New Zealanders, the overall number of visitors to our iconic places was much lower.

There were hotspots of increased activity including places in Northland and Auckland regions. Island destinations were popular – they may be a short-term substitute for offshore destinations.

## Many New Zealanders out in nature

New Zealanders explored places in their own backyard, especially coastal and easily accessible experiences.

Between Nov 2020 to May 2021, more than three-quarters of New Zealanders (78%) reported they had visited the outdoors in the last four weeks. Water-based areas were most commonly visited.

An estimated 171,000 people camped at bookable campsites, 91,800 people experienced a Great Walk and 80,600 people stayed at other bookable huts across New Zealand over 2020/21.

Visitors had different experiences in the outdoors. Of the six options, most commonly visitors agreed that their most recent experiences were authentic, memorable and personally meaningful.

## Opportunity to educate

Now more than ever, we have an opportunity to influence the behaviour of New Zealanders to respect the outdoors and look after Papatūānuku.

The visitor impacts most commonly observed by New Zealanders include litter, trampling of vegetation and damaged facilities in the outdoors.

Local rangers identified litter, visitors taking dogs where they are not allowed and damaged facilities as negative visitor impacts within their districts.

Looking forward, 2021/22 will be busy, with Great Walks in high demand. It's important people know to leave pets at home and demonstrate responsible use of 4WDs and jetski/boats.

# Given the COVID-19 context, how comfortable were New Zealanders visiting the outdoors?

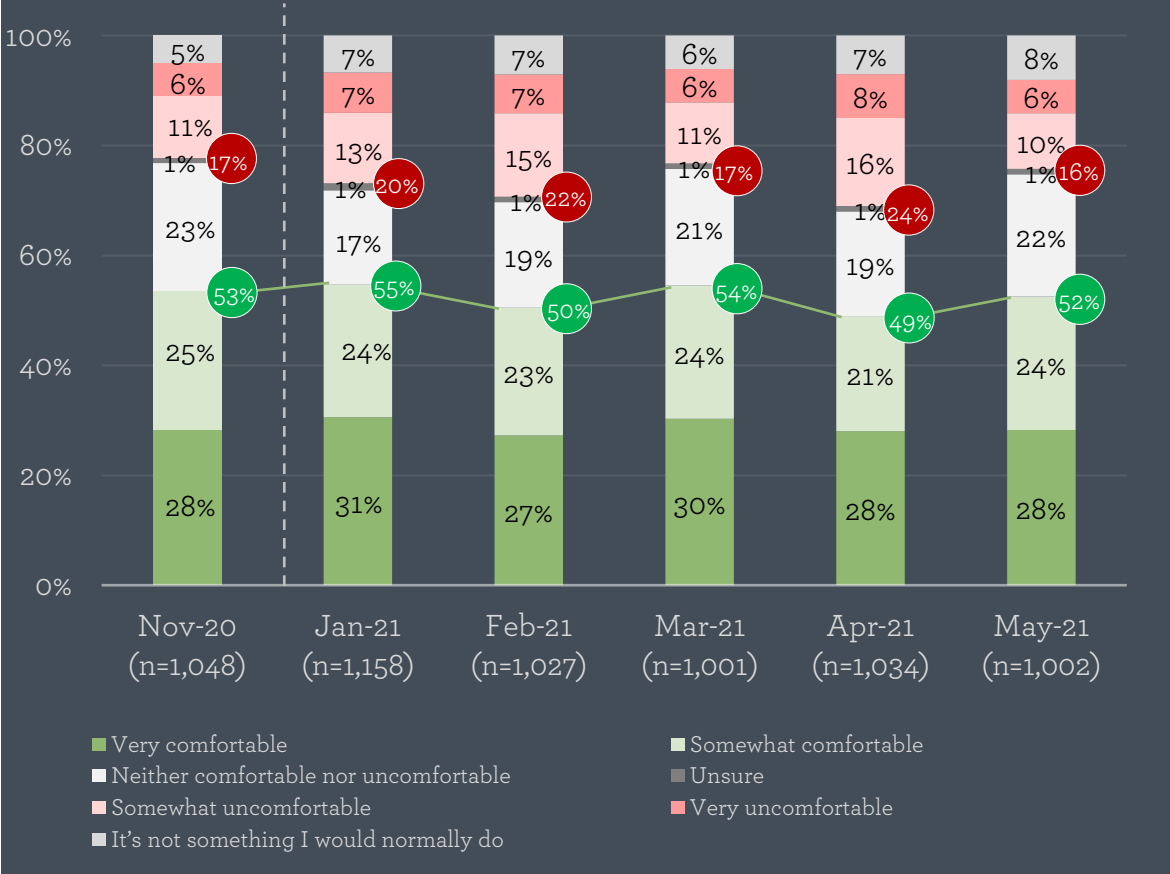
Each month, from November to May around half of New Zealanders reported feeling somewhat or very comfortable visiting outdoor environments given the current COVID setting at the time.

Over the seven months, one-fifth of New Zealanders reported feeling somewhat or very uncomfortable. The highest level of discomfort (24%) coincided with the commencement of quarantine-free travel with Australia. Prior to this, changes in New Zealand COVID-19 Alert Levels<sup>1</sup> over summer had led to negligible changes in New Zealanders' levels of comfort.

Those most likely to be uncomfortable were of Pasifika, Asian and/or Māori ethnicity. Other groups less comfortable included visitors aged 18-24 years, those with dependent children, those living rurally and Aucklanders.

UMR Omnibus Survey – Given the current COVID-19 settings (e.g., risk levels, border restrictions) which of the following best describes how you feel about visiting outdoor environments including cultural and heritage sites?

NB: Data was not collected in December.



<sup>1</sup> Changes to [Alert Levels](#) (particularly in Auckland).

# Where in the outdoors did New Zealanders visit?

Over the seven months (November to May), more than three-quarters of New Zealanders (78%) reported they had visited one or more outdoor environments.<sup>1</sup> Overall reported visitor activity peaked in February (84%); while outdoors participation in the shoulder seasons (November (74%) and May (73%)) was relatively high.

Those aged 45 plus or currently not working were least likely to have visited any of the listed environments.

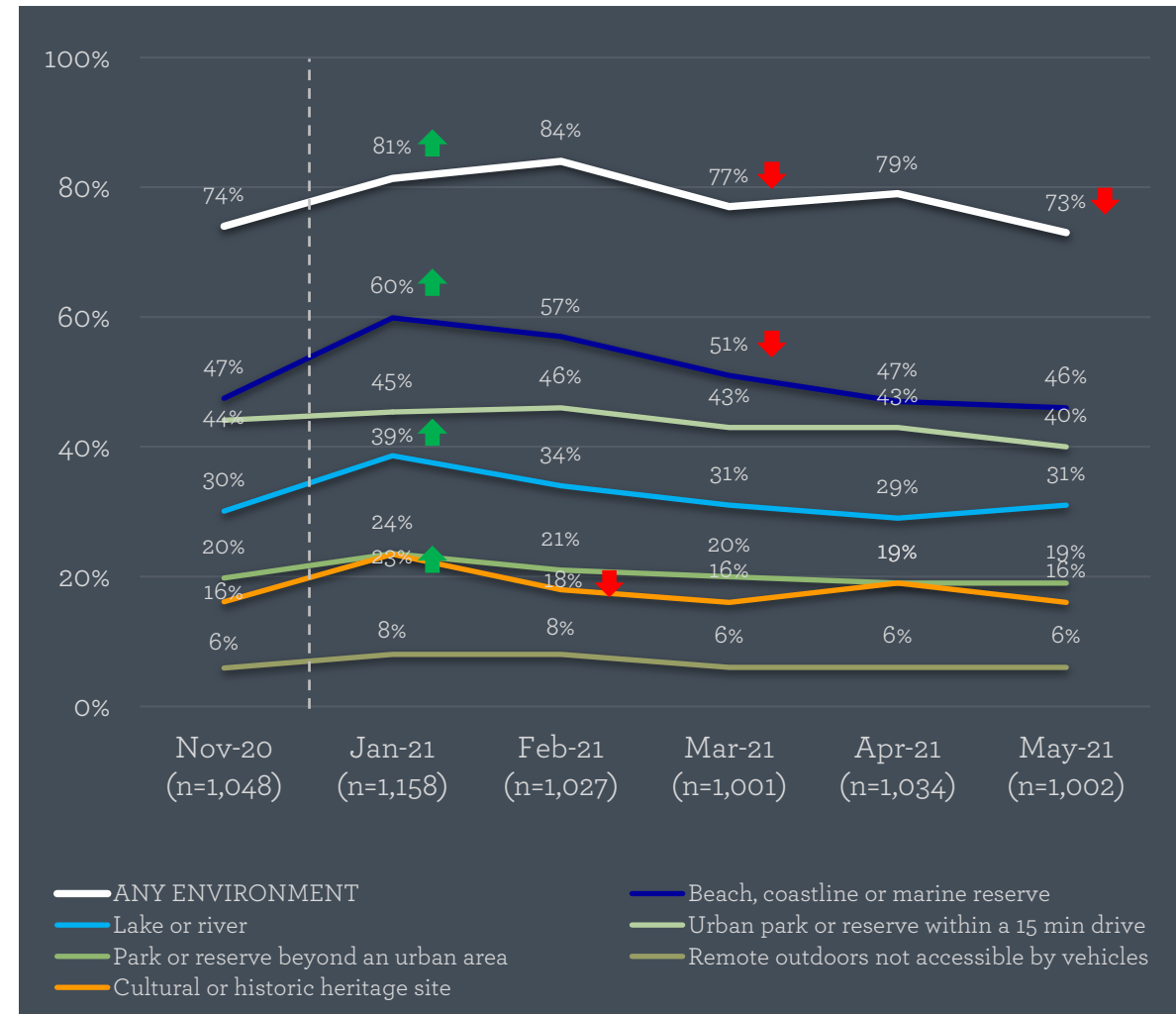
Beaches, coastlines or marine reserves were the most commonly visited environment, followed by parks or reserves in urban areas<sup>2</sup> and lakes or rivers. While visitation to land-based nature environments has been relatively consistent from November to May; a peak in visitation to water-based and heritage environments is observable in January.

<sup>1</sup> These environments were not limited to public conservation land and waters.

<sup>2</sup> Within a 15-minute drive of a population of 30,000 or more.

UMR Omnibus Survey – Which of the following outdoor environments have you visited in the last four weeks?

NB: Data was not collected in December.



# What did New Zealanders experience in the outdoors?

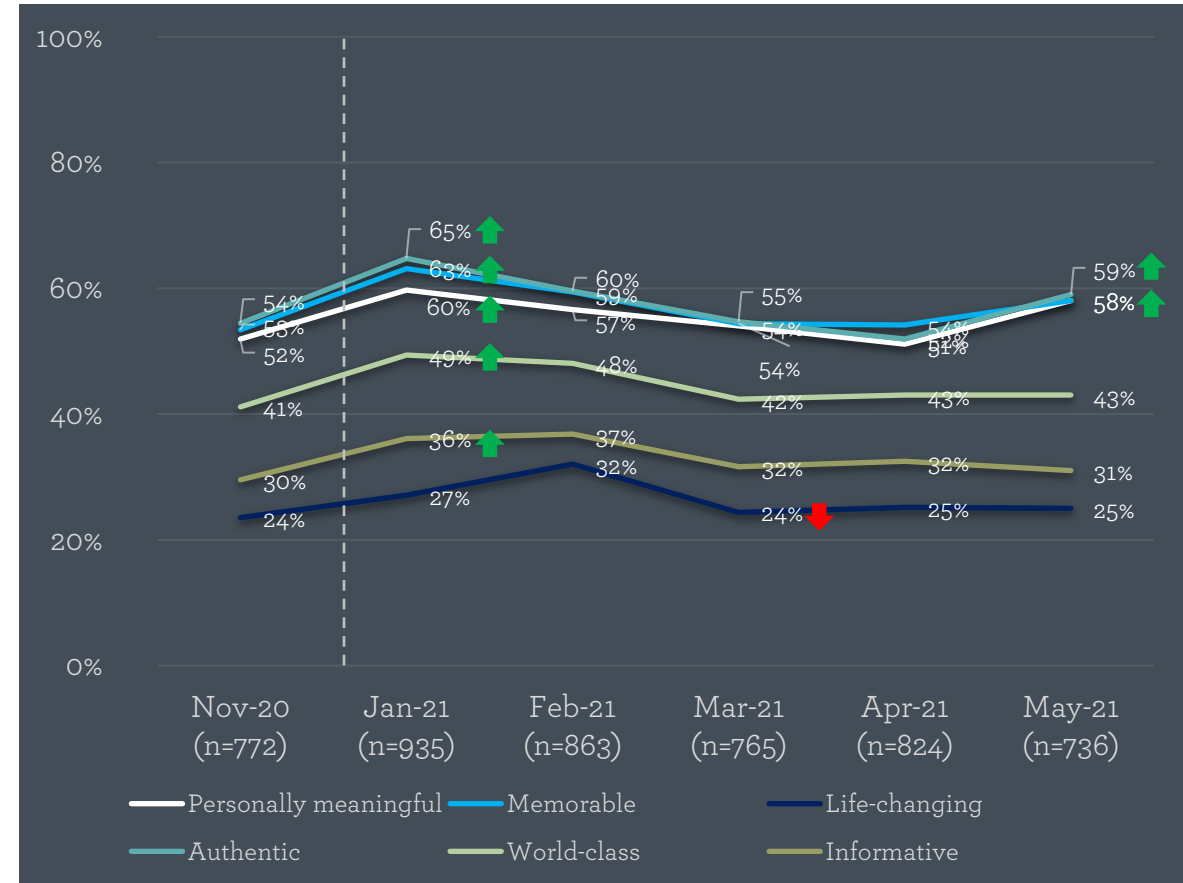
Visitors indicated that they had different experiences across all types of outdoor environments. Most commonly visitors agreed to some degree that their most recent experiences were authentic, memorable and personally meaningful.

Experiences reported in late January<sup>1</sup> were more likely to be considered authentic, memorable, personally meaningful, world-class and informative compared with other months.<sup>2</sup> This may be due to people visiting special places, being with family and friends, and increased duration in the outdoors resulting in greater appreciation and wellbeing benefits.

Visitors to remote places agreed the most that their experiences were memorable and personally meaningful; while visitors to cultural and historic heritage sites agreed the most their experiences were authentic, informative, world-class and life-changing.

UMR Omnibus Survey – Thinking about your most recent experience, how strongly do you agree your experience was

NB: Data was not collected in December.



<sup>1</sup> Covering the Christmas and New Year timeframe.

<sup>2</sup> Given little opportunity for intervention, seasonal elements appear to come into play.

# What visitor impacts did New Zealanders observe?

Except for April<sup>1</sup>, New Zealanders consistently observed visitor impacts over the summer and autumn months.

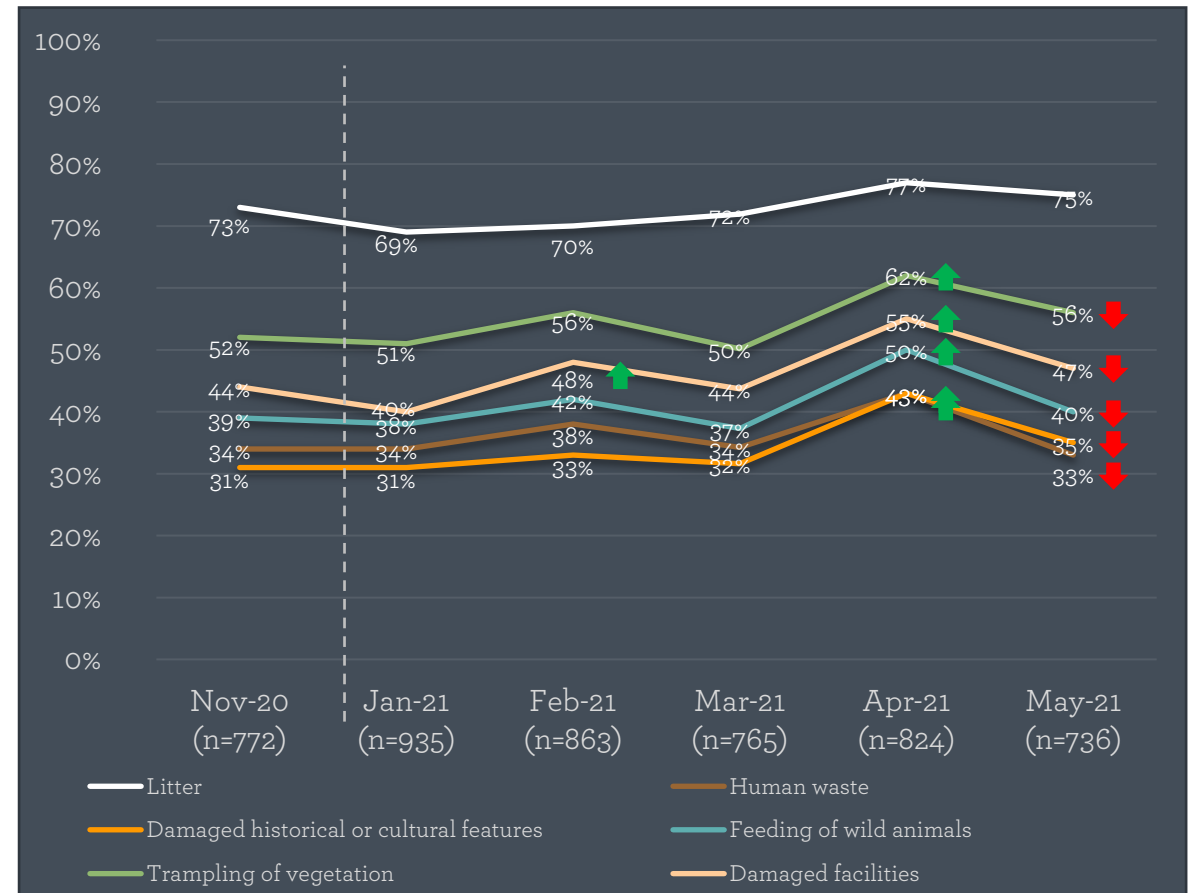
Littering was the impact most commonly noticed either 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' (14%). Other types of damage asked about were similarly prominent (between 9-11%).

Compared with other outdoor environments, visitors to cultural and historic heritage sites were more likely to report 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' of all types of visitor impacts.

Visitors who reported any of the six types of damage were less likely to report personally meaningful, memorable, authentic and life-changing experiences.

UMR Omnibus Survey – Again, thinking about your most recent experience, how much of the following did you notice?

NB: Data was not collected in December.



<sup>1</sup> In April, visitors were significantly more likely than in preceding months to report five of the six negative visitor impacts. The reporting of impacts fell again in May. It is unclear why April reporting is so high. There is potential with the commencement of quarantine-free travel with Australia that unconscious bias came into play – that is the perception that international visitors cause damage.

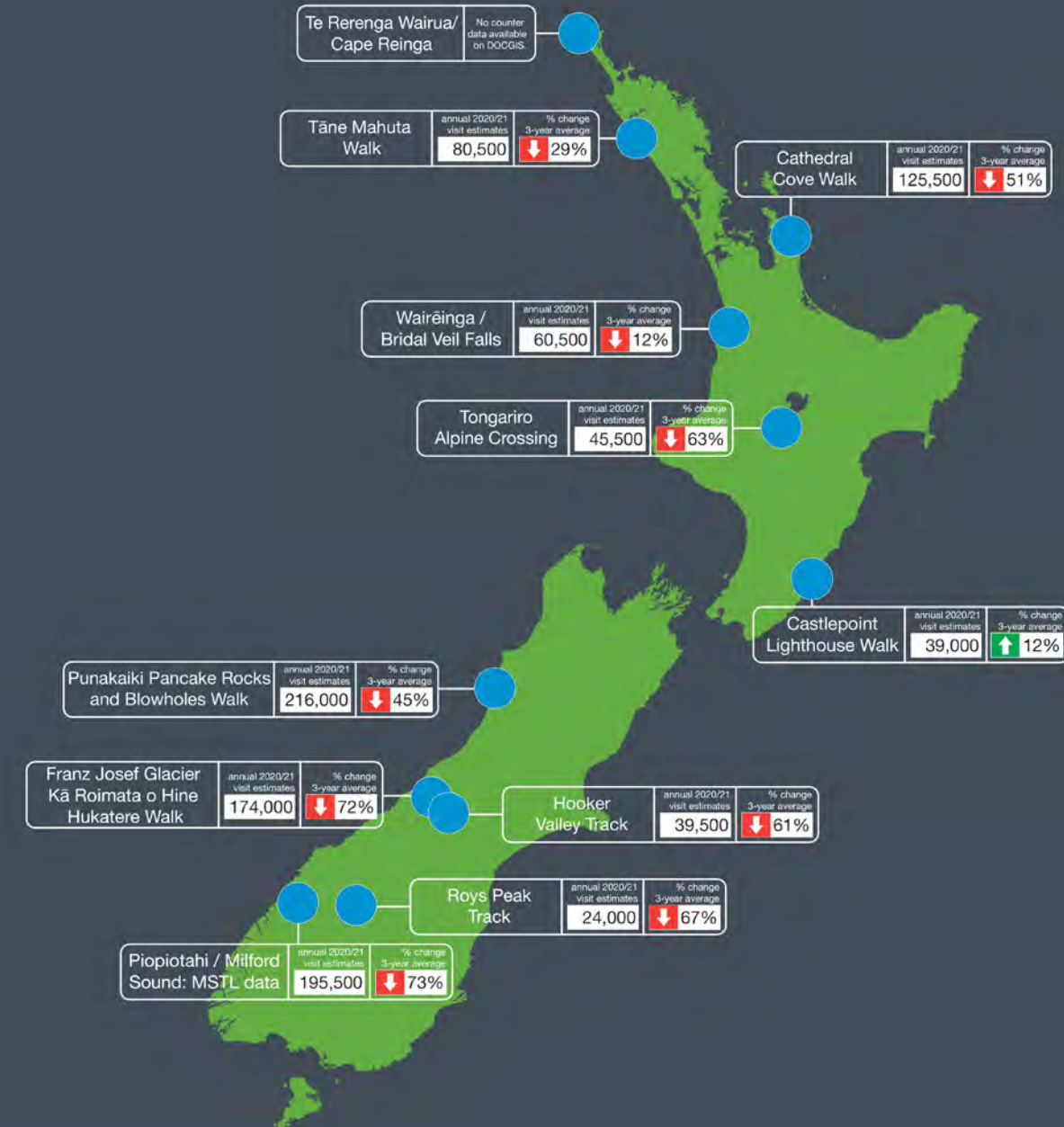


Overview of visitor experiences  
over 2020/21 nationally



# Visitor activity was completely different to previous years.

- High-volume iconic destinations saw a huge decline in visitor activity over 2020/21 compared with the average of the last three years.
- This significant decline is expected given the closure of international borders. Places that have been most impacted include:
  - Milford Sound/Piopiotahi<sup>1</sup> – down 73%
  - Franz Josef Glacier – down 72%
  - Roys Peak Track – down 67%
  - Tongariro Alpine Crossing – down 63%.
- Visitor activity over 2020/21 dropped at all the selected high-volume places DOC manages, except for Castlepoint in Wairarapa.

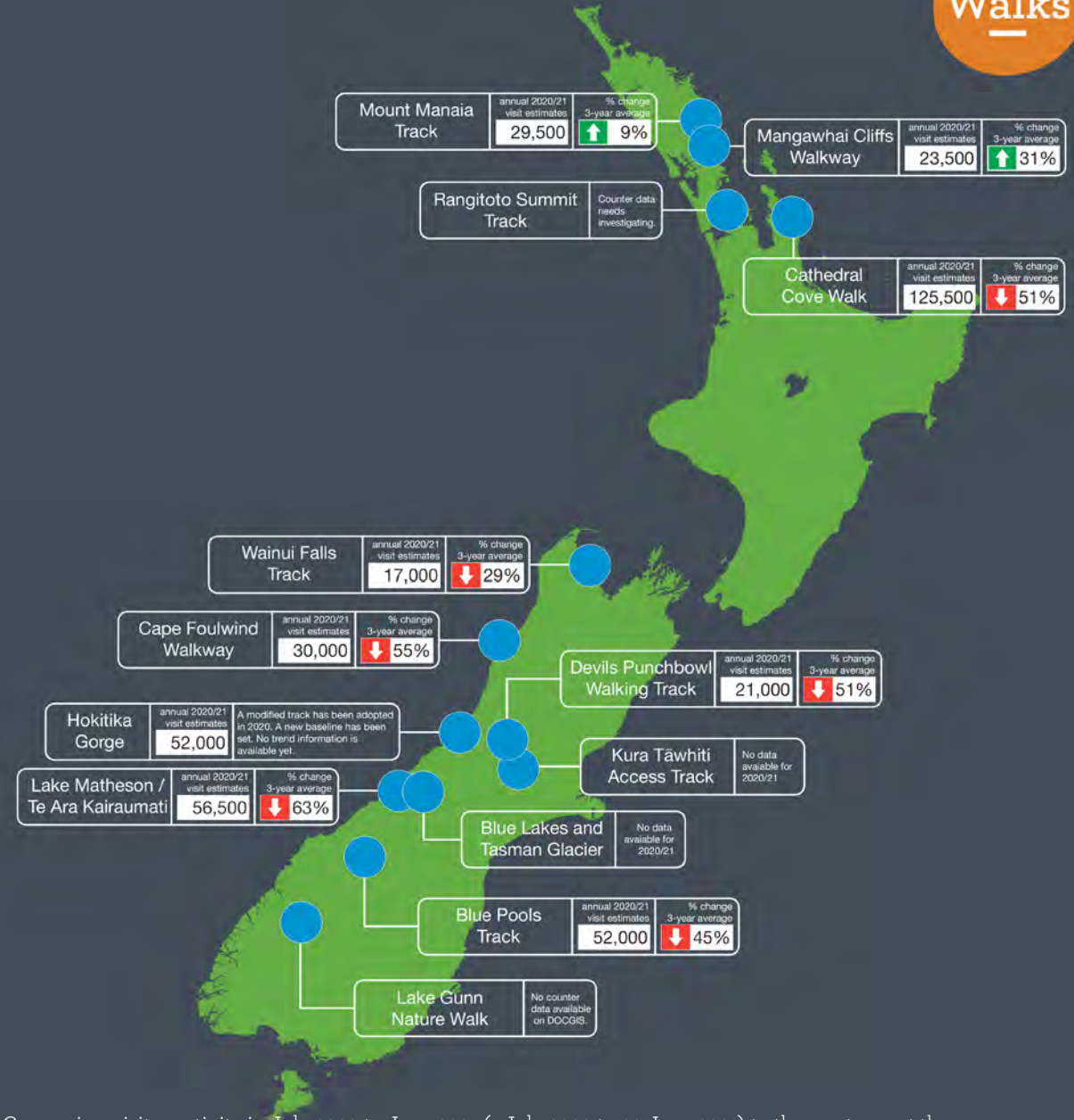


Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land. Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to each site.

<sup>1</sup>Data is from MSTL (Milford Sound Tourism Ltd) passenger figures.

# Short Walks over 2020/21

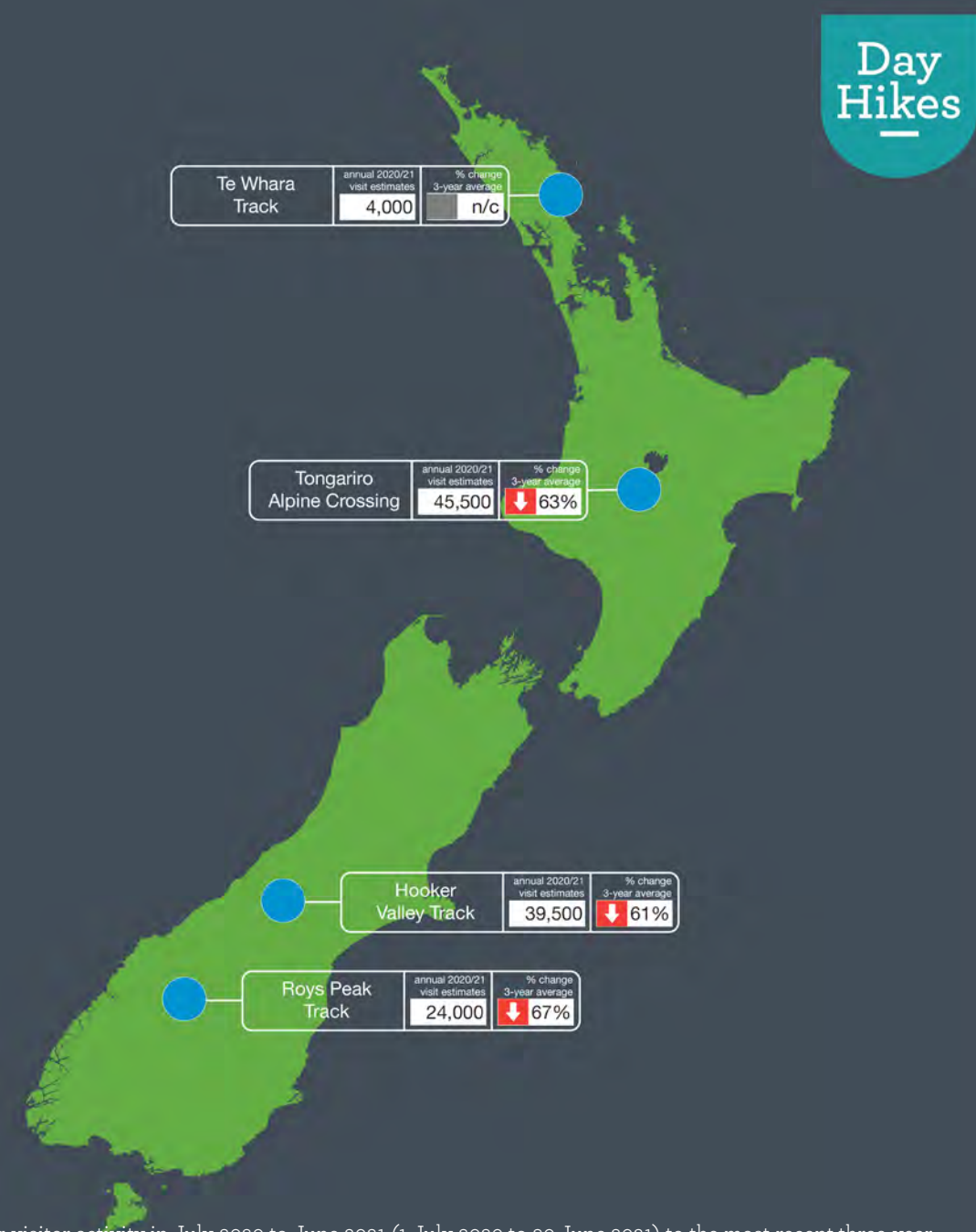
- Visitor activity to DOC's Short Walks decreased over 2020/21 compared with the average of the previous three years. Short Walks located in the South Island were hit hard including:
  - Lake Matheson Walk, West Coast – down 63%
  - Cape Foulwind Walkway, West Coast – down 55%
  - Devils Punchbowl, Arthur's Pass – down 51%.
- Over 2020/21, it is estimated that the Cathedral Cove Walk (Coromandel) was one of New Zealand's most popular walks, with around 125,500 people who walked the track, down 51% when compared with previous years.
- Short Walks in Northland have become increasingly popular. Mangawhai Cliffs and Mount Manaia Track increased in visitor activity over 2020/21, up 31% and 9%, respectively.



Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at Short Walks. Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to that track.

# Day Hikes over 2020/21

- The amount of people who undertook a 'Day Hike' remain high, however, majority of the tracks decreased in visitor activity over 2020/21 when compared with previous years.
- This significant decline is expected given the closure of international borders. Places that have seen the biggest drop include:
  - Roys Peak Track - down 67%
  - Tongariro Alpine Crossing - down 63%
  - Hooker Valley Track - down 61%.
- Over 2020/21, it is estimated the Tongariro Alpine Crossing was still one of New Zealand's most popular day walks, with around 45,500 people walking the track.
- Visitor activity at Te Whara Track (Northland) remained the same as previous years.
- Day Hikes remain integral recreation opportunities for New Zealanders and are a great way for people to engage with the outdoors.



Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at Day Hikes. Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to that track.

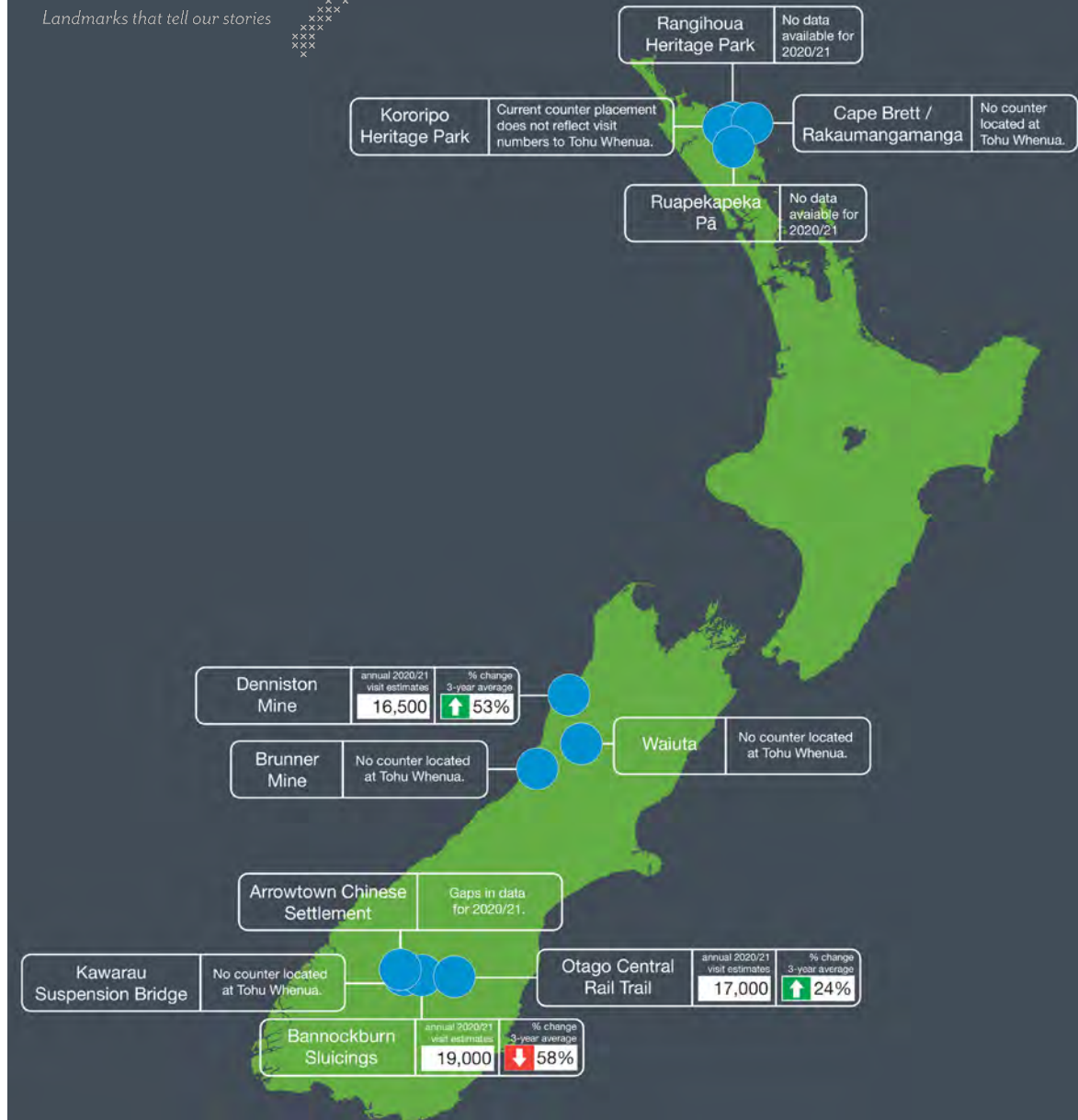
# Tohu Whenua sites on Public Conservation Land over 2020/21

- Tohu Whenua heritage sites are operating in three regions – Te Tai Tokerau Northland, Otago and Te Tai Poutini West Coast. The goal is to roll out Tohu Whenua in all regions of New Zealand.
- Based on limited up-to-date counter data available, Bannockburn Sluicings (Otago) was the most popular DOC-managed Tohu Whenua site with an estimated 19,000 visitors over 2020/21, down 58%.
- Denniston Mine (West Coast) experienced an increase, up 53%, when compared with previous years. The Otago Central Rail Trail increased by 24% compared with previous years.<sup>1</sup>
- The new histories curriculum is a significant opportunity for Tohu Whenua to link the education of our heritage to New Zealand’s past.

<sup>1</sup> Like other biking trails, the Otago Central Rail Trail showed an increase in activity.

TOHU WHENUA

Landmarks that tell our stories



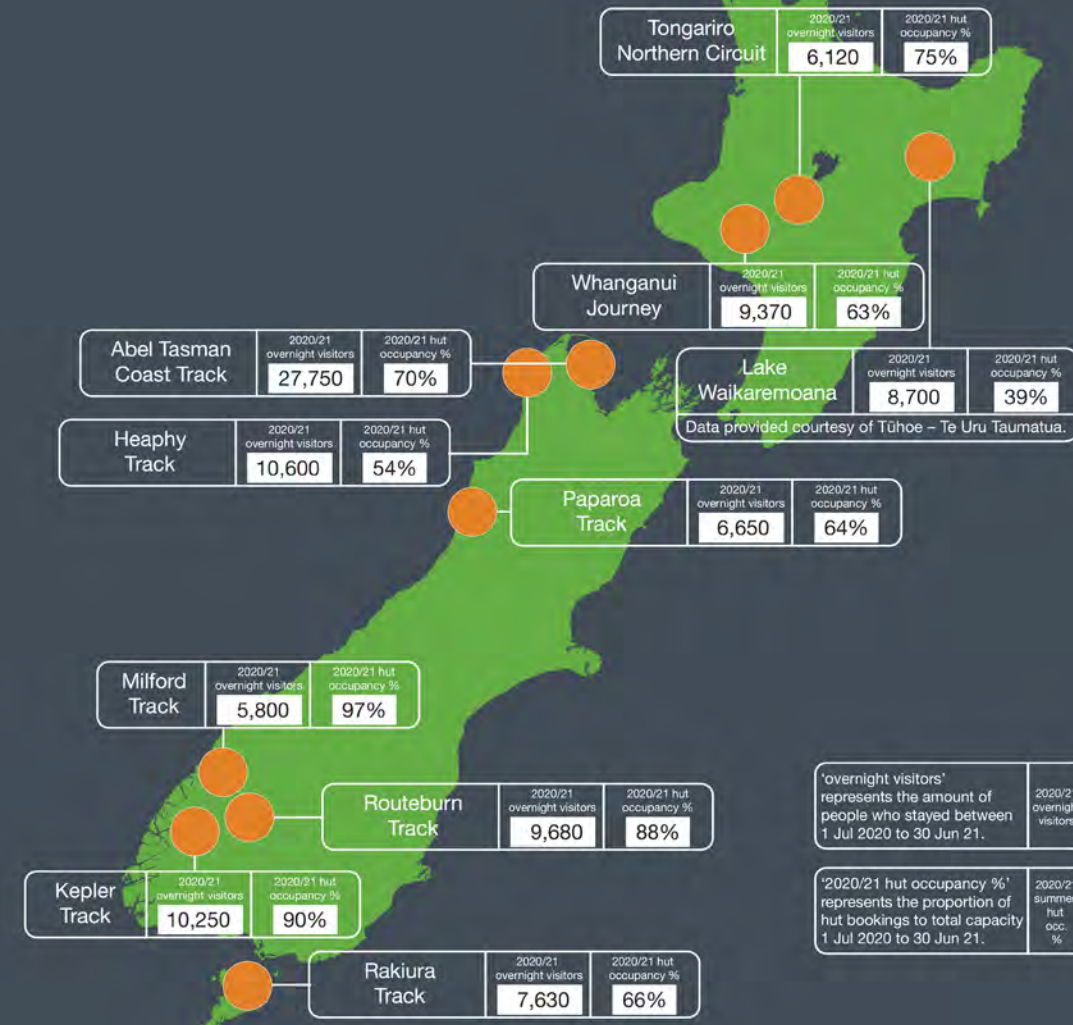
Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at Tohu Whenua. Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to that track.

# Great Walks over 2020/21

- There was strong demand for Great Walks with around 91,800 people who stayed overnight at Great Walk huts and campsites across the year (booking period starts 1 July 2020 and ends 30 June 2021).
- Many New Zealanders took the opportunity to experience the Great Walks. Domestic visitor numbers were the highest they have ever been across the network.
- Great Walk hut occupancy rates were an average of 65%. The Milford Track was at full capacity over this period. Routeburn, Kepler and Tongariro Northern Circuit huts were also popular.
- With by far the most accommodation spaces available, the Abel Tasman Coastal Track remains the busiest Great Walk over 2020/21 – nearly triple the amount of people who stayed at other Great Walks.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Abel Tasman, Paparoa, Heaphy and Rakiura tracks are bookable all year round. The Whanganui River Journey and alpine Great Walks (Milford, Routeburn, Kepler and Tongariro Northern Circuit) require bookings during the Great Walks season (October to April).

The amount of people who stayed at Great Walk accommodation from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. The occupancy rate is the amount of people who stayed at huts divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.



# Looking ahead, demand is high for Great Walks over 2021/22

- Overall bednights<sup>1</sup> have increased, with more bednights booked on the Great Walks over 2021/22 than the same time last year – up from 132,000 to 167,800 bednights booked.
- New Zealand Great Walk bednight bookings are significantly higher at this time of the year than previous years – up from 53,300 in 2019/20 and 122,200 in 2020/21 to 150,900 in 2021/22.
- The Abel Tasman Coast Track is shaping up to be the busiest Great Walk this season, with 32,700 bednights booked – up 11%.
- The Whanganui Journey bednights booked, with more than double the amount of bednights over 2021/22 than 2020/21 – up from 4,300 to 8,700 bednights.
- While the Routeburn and Milford tracks show increases in bednights when compared to the same time last year, the higher amount of bednights is due to the shortened 2020/21 season, as a result of storm damage.

<sup>1</sup> A bednight is one person (assigned to one bed) for one night. This differs from other Great Walk measures within this report that measure estimated visit numbers – the amount of people who stayed overnight at accommodation.

## 2021/22 Great Walk bednights as of 1 August 2021

Comparing the amount of bednights booked between July 2021 to June 2022 as of 1 August 2021 to the previous year between July 2020 to June 2021 as of 1 August 2020.

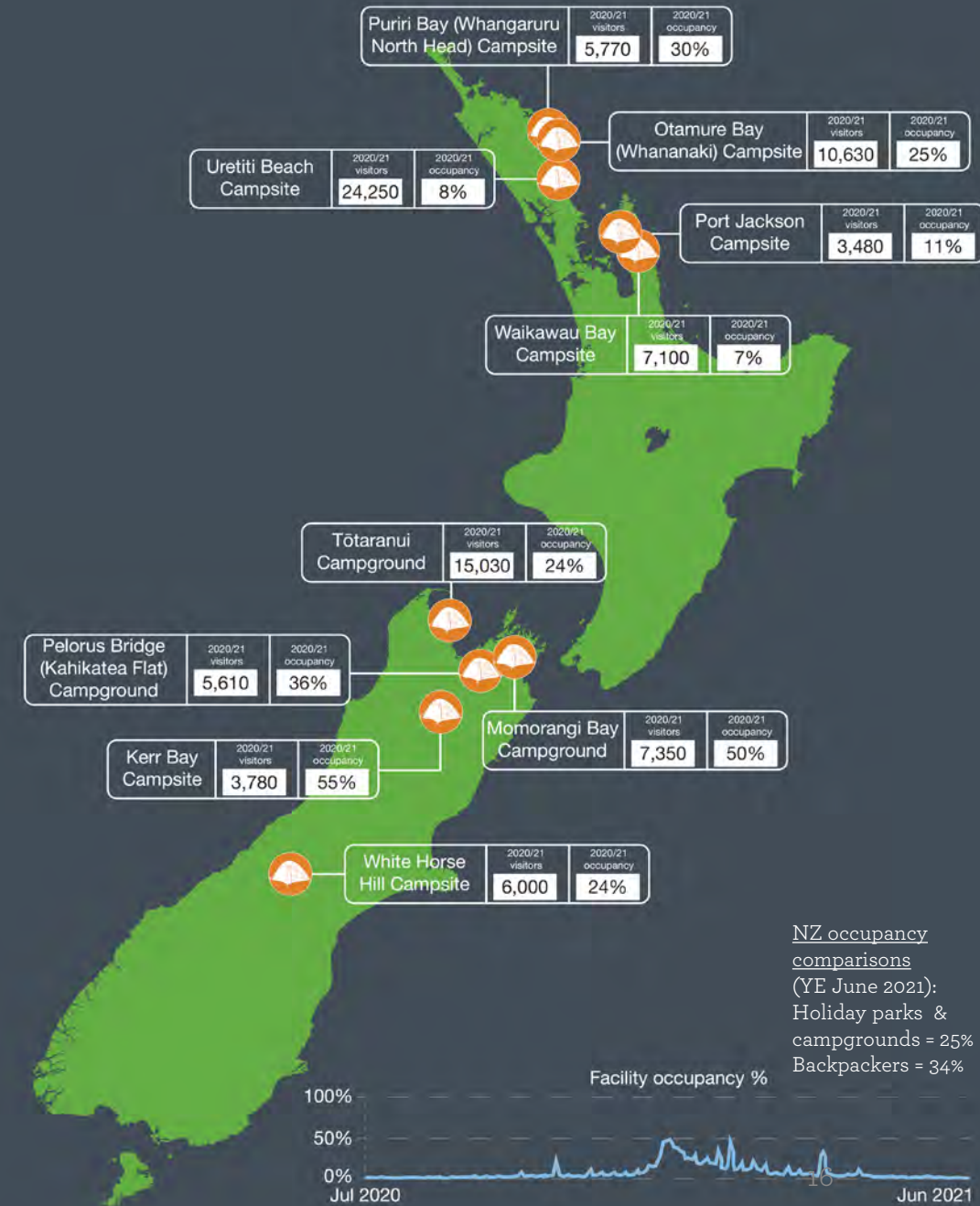
Great Walk	Bednights	% change
Abel Tasman Coast Track	32,700	11%
Heaphy Track	20,800	12%
Kepler Track	21,900	20%
Lake Waikaremoana <small>(Data provided courtesy of Tūhoe – Te Uru Taumatua)</small>	11,200	33%
Milford Track	22,200	24%
Paparoa Track	13,000	25%
Rakiura Track	8,800	16%
Routeburn Track	21,100	89%
Tongariro Northern Circuit	7,300	24%
Whanganui Journey	8,700	103%
Great Walks – overall	167,800	27%

# Popular campgrounds over 2020/21

- Around 171,000 people camped at DOC-managed bookable campgrounds over 2020/21 (Jul to Jun), with 63% of campers staying over the summer period (Dec to Feb).
- Uretiti Beach Campsite (Northland) was the most visited DOC campground in New Zealand over 2020/21. Tōtaranui (Tasman) and Otamure Bay (Northland) were popular too.
- Looking at occupancy rates,<sup>1</sup> Kerr Bay (Tasman) and Momorangi Bay (Marlborough) had the highest occupancy rates for 2020/21.
- During the peak summer period, many campgrounds in Northland and the upper South Island were at or near full capacity including Waikahoa, Kerr Bay, French Pass, Puriri Bay and Urupukapuka Bay campsites - occupancy rates ranged between 88% to 100% from late December to early January.

<sup>1</sup> The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at the most popular campsites on public conservation land across New Zealand.



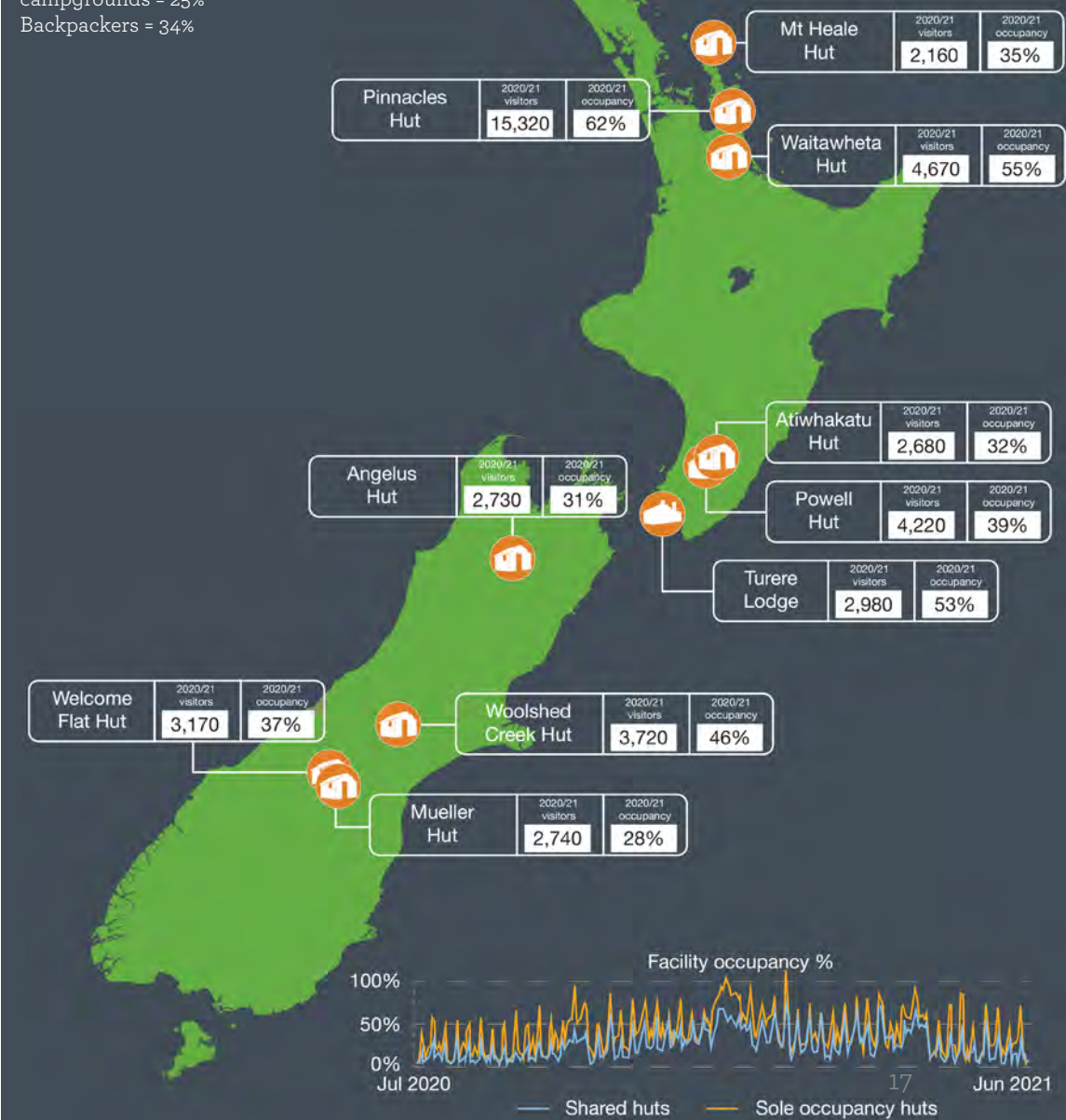


# Popular bookable huts over 2020/21

- While the Great Walks network is popular, many other bookable huts experienced high visitor demand. Around 80,600 people stayed overnight at bookable huts (outside the Great Walk huts) over 2020/21.
- Hut occupancy rates averaged at 26% occupancy over 2020/21. Saturday night occupancy were higher at 45%, with many huts at or near full capacity over summer. Weekend demand is shown in the line graph below.
- The Pinnacles Hut (Coromandel) was the most visited hut in New Zealand over 2020/21, with over 15,000 people who stayed there and an occupancy rate of 62%.
- Huts close to population centres and an easy walk from road end were popular including Waitawheta Hut (Bay of Plenty), Powell Hut (Wairarapa) and Woolshed Creek Hut (Canterbury).

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at the most popular huts on public conservation land across New Zealand (exc. Great Walk huts).

NZ occupancy comparisons (YE June 2021):  
 Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
 Backpackers = 34%

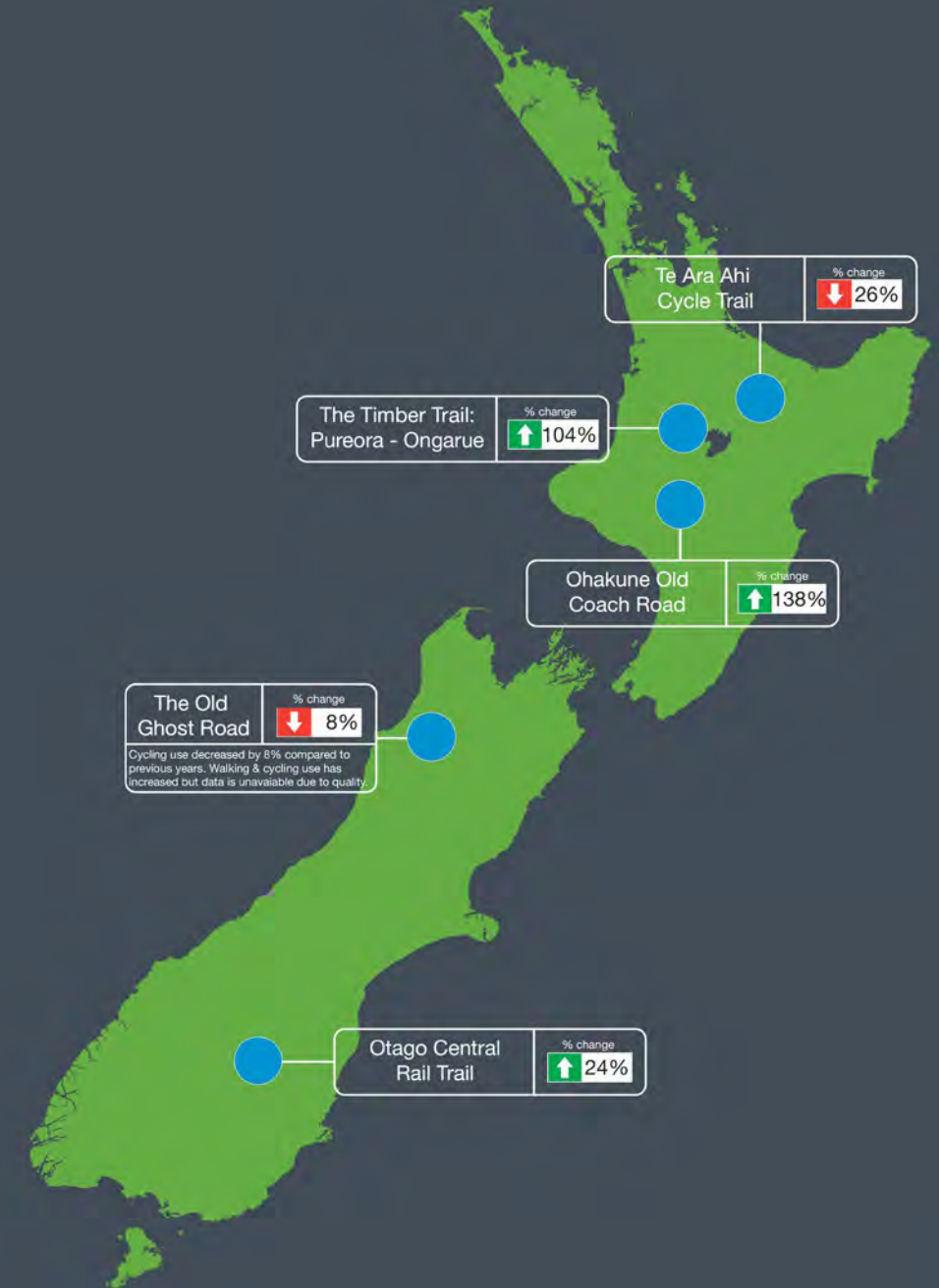


<sup>1</sup> The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, including weekends or summer periods, occupancy rates were higher.

# Iconic biking trails were popular over 2020/21

- While biking activity is generally much lower in visitor volume compared to walking experiences, there were some trails that grew significantly in visitor activity compared with previous years.
- Biking trails that experienced visitor growth compared with previous years include:
  - Ohakune Old Coach Road – up 138%
  - The Timber Trail – up 104%
  - Otago Central Rail Trail – up 24%.
- Other selected biking trails near international hotspots including Rotorua and the West Coast dropped in biking activity:
  - Te Ara Ahi (Rotorua) – down 26%
  - The Old Ghost Road (West Coast) – down 8%.

Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected biking trails.



# Visitor activity across DOC's nine regions



# 2020/21 – a regional overview of the year that was

## Northern North Island

- Bookable accommodation was busy around the Bay of Islands. Especially over summer.
- An increase in visitor activity around Whangārei, including Mangawhai Cliffs and Mt Manaia. Expect high activity this summer.
- A decrease in activity at iconic destinations such as Tāne Mahuta.

## Central North Island

- Like other national parks, Tongariro National Park showed significant decreases in activity.
- The Kaimai Ranges were popular – with many locals staying at popular huts.
- Ohakune Old Coach Road activity went up significantly – reflecting more New Zealanders who biked over 2020/21.

## Western South Island

- South Westland significantly down and one of the hardest hit regions when compared with previous years.
- Franz Josef and Lake Matheson showed significant decreases.
- Expect this trend to continue while border restrictions are in place.

## Auckland

- Some tracks were busier than ever, with a huge increase in activity at Te Henga Walkway – reflecting the large population nearby.
- Notable increase on Aotea/Great Barrier Island at the Kaitoke Hot Springs Track.

## Lower North Island

- Visitor activity at Castlepoint in Wairarapa was the busiest it has ever been.
- Weekend demand for overnight huts near Wellington was strong, especially huts that are easily accessible and a short walk from the road ends.

## Eastern South Island

- Huge decrease in activity at Aoraki/Mt Cook and Arthur's Pass national parks.
- Overnight tramps and family-friendly experiences (easy walks from road ends) were popular in Canterbury.
- Cantabrians visited places that were close to home – including Awaroa/Godley Head.

## Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki

- Another busy year across the Coromandel especially at Pinnacles Hut (all-year round) and campgrounds over summer.
- Places around Waikato such as the Timber Trail and Kakepuku Track were busy.
- Pouakai and Pahautea huts were busy on weekends.

## Northern South Island

- A decrease in visitor activity but less pronounced compared with other regions.
- Traditional domestic hotspots including Abel Tasman, Nelson Lakes and Marlborough Sounds remain drawcards for the region.

## Southern South Island

- Aside from the southern Great Walks, many places had significantly less visitors including Piopiotahi/Milford Sound, Queenstown and Wānaka.
- Otago Central Rail Trail activity is up.
- New Zealanders visited Rakiura/Stewart Island with visitor numbers to Ulva Island higher than ever.

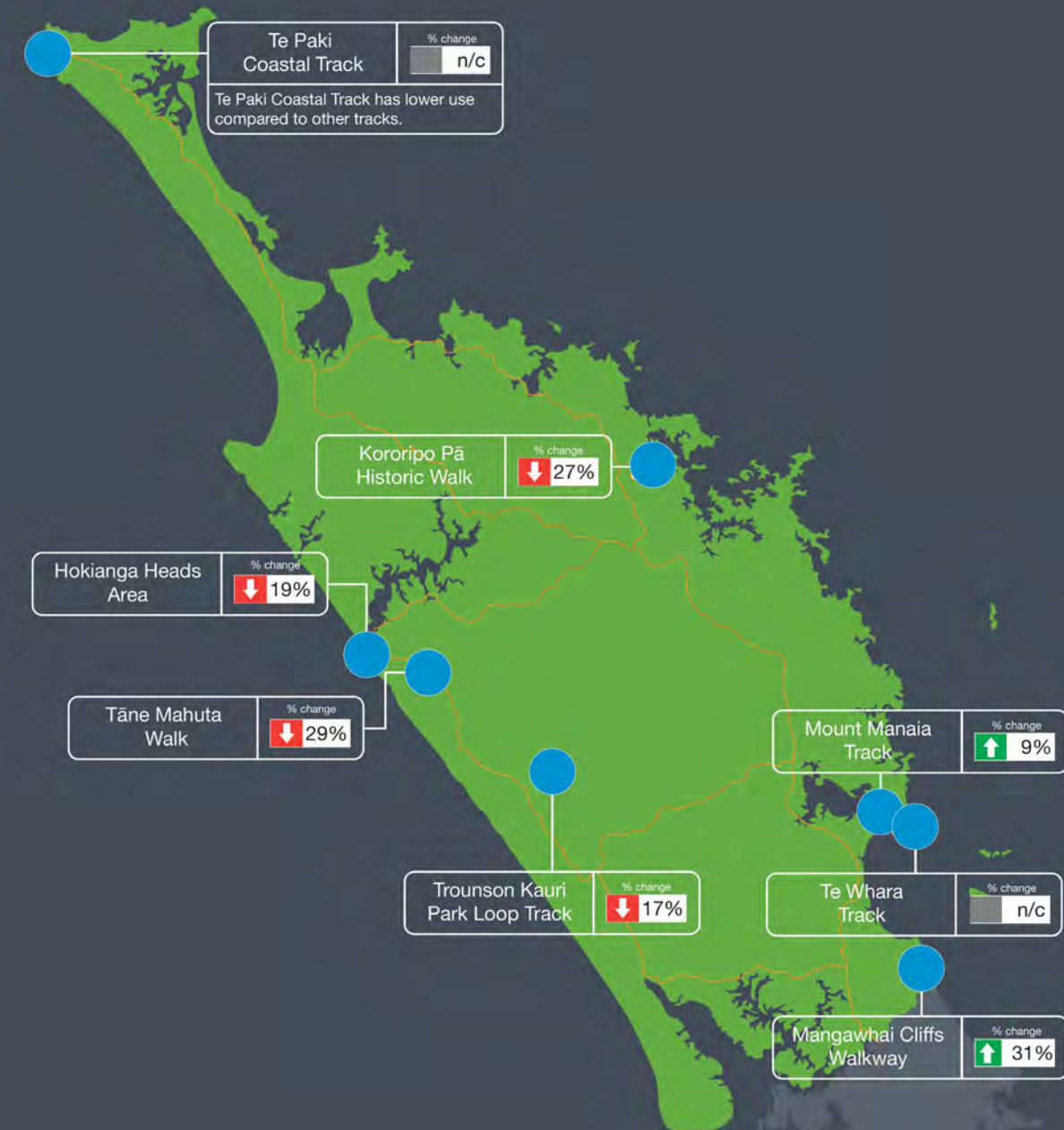
# Northern North Island (NNI)



# Where did people go in NNI over 2020/21?

- Some destinations in Northland saw an increase in visitor activity when compared with previous years.
- Mangawhai Cliffs Walkway - less than two hours from Auckland - increased in visitor activity (up 31%), despite having no international visitors. This was due to an extremely strong shoulder season between August and October.
- Western areas of Northland, including at Tāne Māhuta Walk, Hokianga Heads and Trounson Kauri Park Loop Track decreased in visitor activity (down 29%, 19% and 17% respectively).

Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Northern North Island.



# Where did people stay in NNI over 2020/21?

- NNI campgrounds have had a high level of demand, with some of the highest amount of overnight visitor numbers compared with other areas of New Zealand. Northland campsites were busy over Christmas/New Year and long weekends.
- Uretiti Beach and Otamure Bay (Whananaki) campsites were popular over 2020/21, with Uretiti Beach welcoming over 24,000 visitors – more visitors than any other campground on public conservation land in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>
- While Lane Cove, Peach Cove and Motukawanui Huts annual occupancy rates ranged between 33% and 57%, weekend demand for huts was high, with Peach Cove Hut near capacity on Saturdays.

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Northern North Island. Urupukapuka Island campsites includes Cable Bay and Sunset Bay campsites. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.



NZ occupancy comparisons (YE June 2021):  
 Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
 Backpackers = 34%

<sup>1</sup> Uretiti Beach has high visitor demand yet low occupancy rates, the large campsite has 300 non-powered/tent sites.

Auckland (AKL)





# Where did people go in AKL over 2020/21?

- Based on limited up-to-date counter data available, all destinations in Auckland saw an increase in visitor activity compared with previous years, even with border and regional restrictions<sup>1</sup> for part of 2020/21.
- Te Henga Walkway (near Muriwai Beach) saw an increase in visitor activity – up 64% – doubling in visitor activity over the last four years.
- Another hot spot in Auckland was Aotea/Great Barrier Island. Visits to Kaitoke Hot Springs, a popular attraction on the island, went up 48% compared with previous years.

<sup>1</sup> After a nationwide lockdown from March to May 2020, regionalised alert level changes have been used. Auckland has entered lockdown twice, in August–September 2020 and February–March 2021.

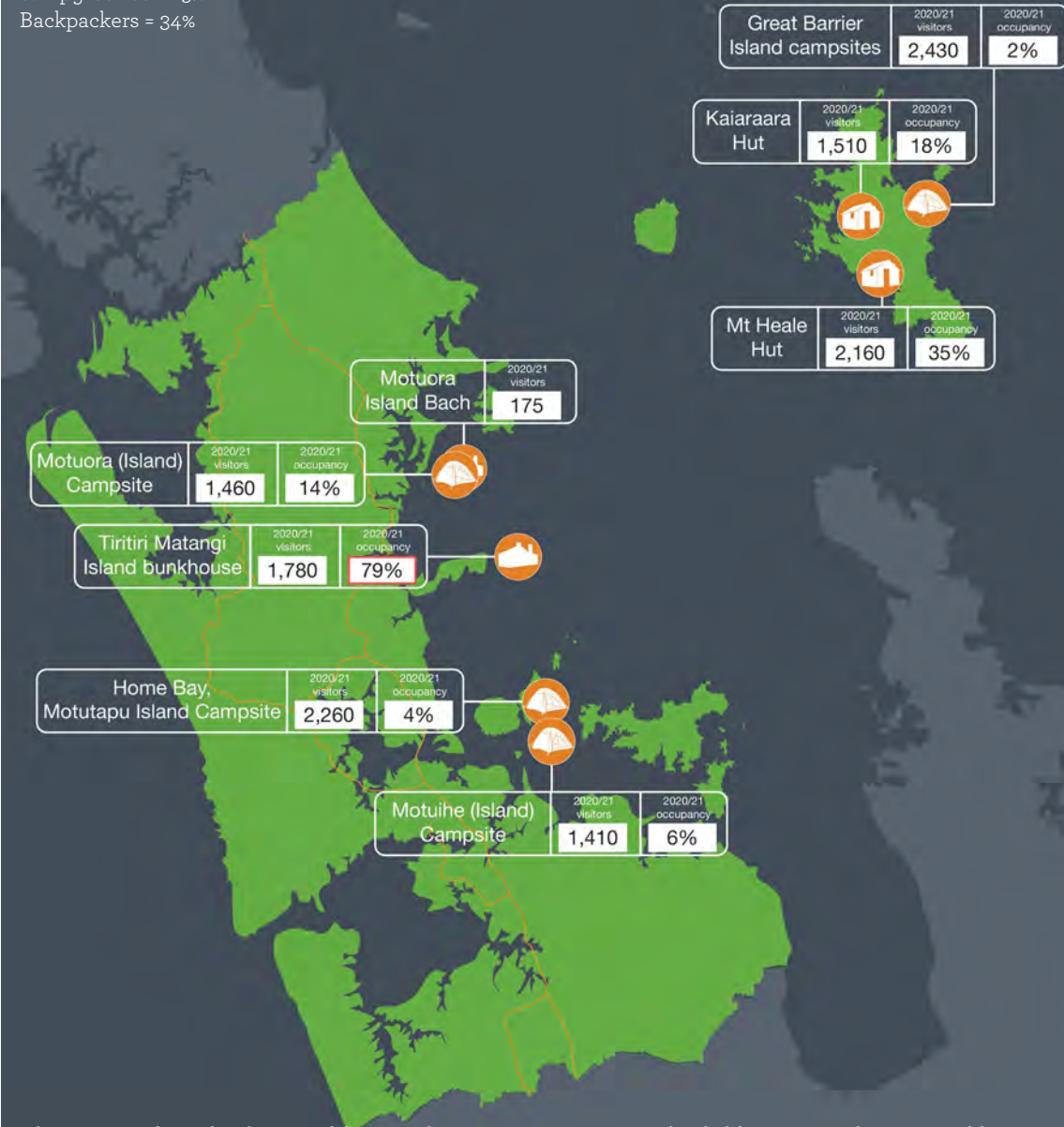
Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Auckland.



# Where did people stay in AKL over 2020/21?

- While Aucklanders were in Alert Level 1 for the majority of 2020/21,<sup>1</sup> overnight visitor demand was low but remained high during holiday periods, such as Christmas/New Year, Waitangi weekend and Easter.
- Aotea/Great Barrier Island accommodation captured a high proportion of Auckland regional bookings, with Mt Heale Hut popular on weekends.
- New Zealanders stayed at other islands in the Hauraki Gulf, including Motutapu Island (campsite) and Tiritiri Matangi Island (bunkhouse) and Motuora Island (campsite).

NZ occupancy comparisons (YE June 2021):  
 Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
 Backpackers = 34%



The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Auckland. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.

<sup>1</sup> Auckland moved between Alert Levels 1-3 on 12 August to 7 October and also on 14 February to 12 March.

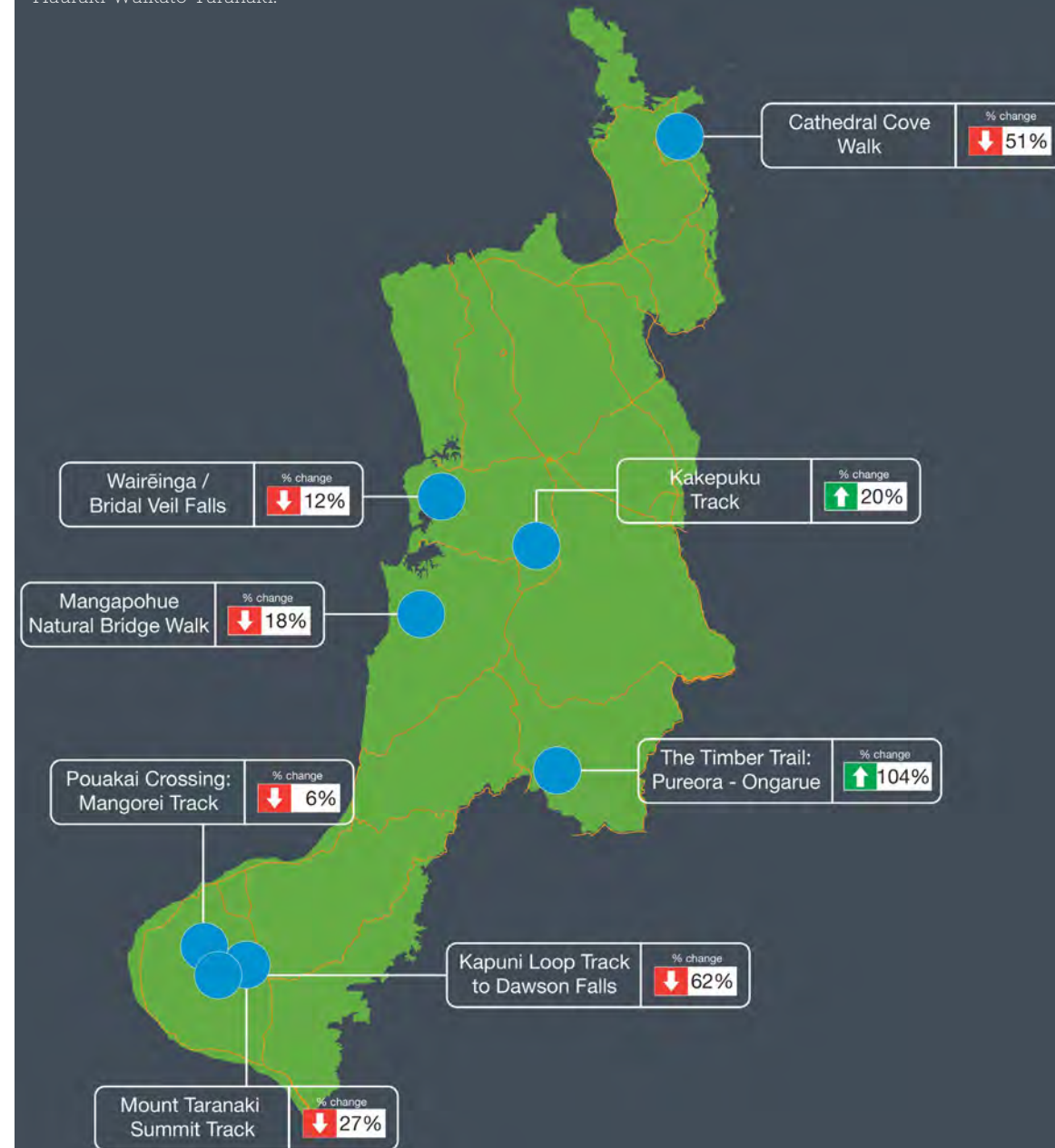
# Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki (HWT)



# Where did people go in HWT over 2020/21?

- Although many New Zealanders visited Cathedral Cove, overall level of activity decreased, by 51%, compared with previous years.
- Visitor activity at Kakepuku Track (near Hamilton) increased, up 20%,<sup>1</sup> while activity at Wairēinga/Bridal Veil Falls (near Raglan) decreased by 12%.
- Places in Taranaki saw large decreases – the Dawson Falls (down 62%) and Mount Taranaki Summit Track (down 27%) had lower levels of activity compared with previous years.
- Activity in the King Country was mixed with the Timber Trail showed huge growth (up 104%);<sup>2</sup> whereas decreased activity Mangapohue Track (Waitomo area).

Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki.



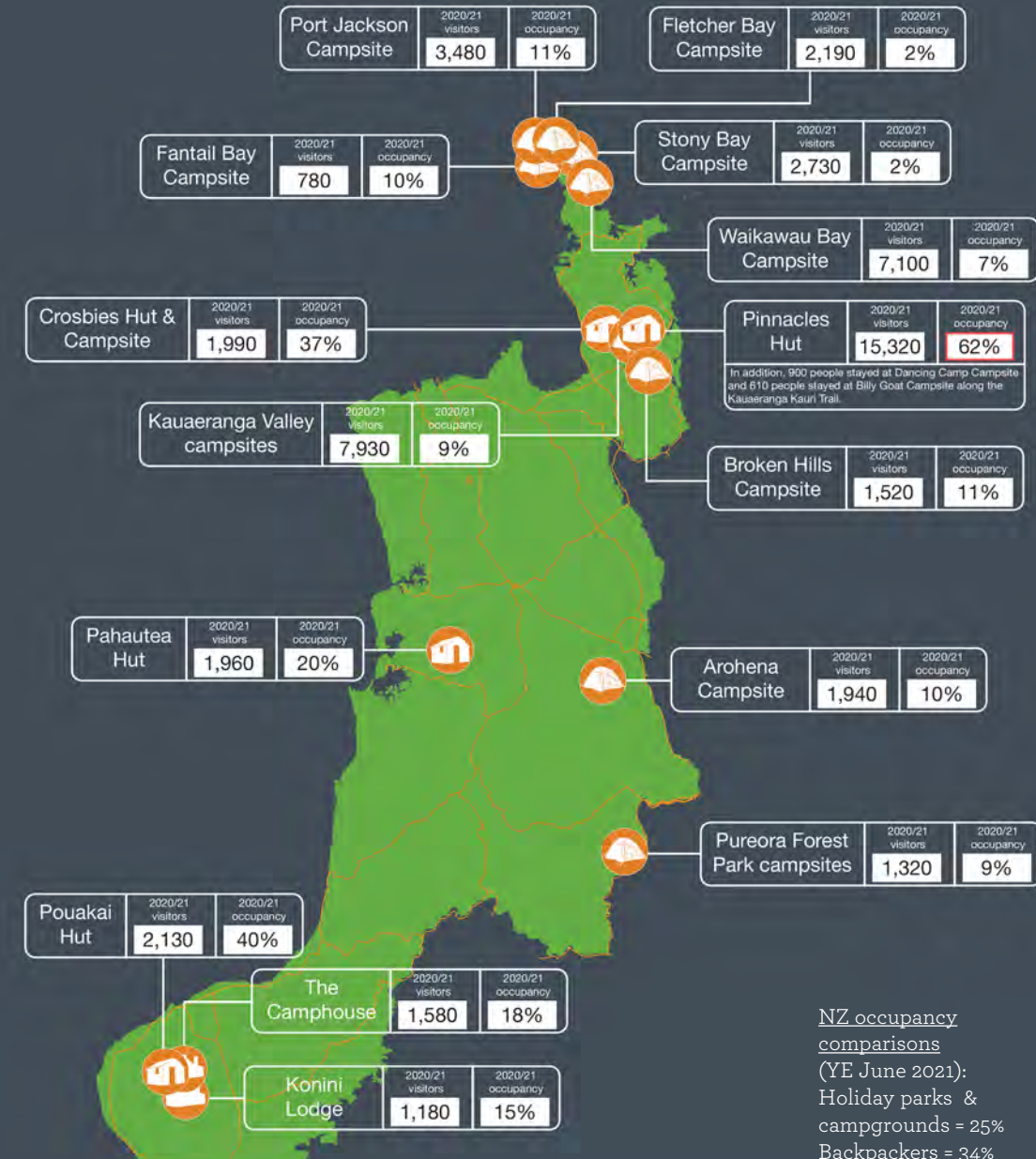
<sup>1</sup> During 2020/21, the Kakepuku Track was added to [Te Ara Wai Journeys](#), a free digital storytelling guide, which may have contributed to more people climbing the maunga.

<sup>2</sup> Like other biking trails such as the Ohakune Old Coach Road, the Timber Trail showed a significant increase in activity.

# Where did people stay in HWT over 2020/21?

- New Zealanders stayed at campsites in Northern Coromandel (Waikawau Bay, Port Jackson and Stony Bay), with high peaks during the Christmas/New Year, Waitangi, Auckland Anniversary and Easter periods.
- The Pinnacles Hut (Coromandel) was the most visited hut in New Zealand over 2020/21, with over 15,000 people who stayed there. The 80-bunk hut had an occupancy rate of 62% across 2020/21 and a rate of 96% over summer weekends.
- Pouakai Hut (Taranaki) and Pahautea Hut (Waikato) were busy on weekends with Saturday occupancy rates, 59% and 58%, respectively.

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki.



Note: Kauaeranga Valley cottages, Kahikatea Campsite and Stony Bay Bach are not included on map as they have low (less than 250) visitor numbers over 2020/21. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.

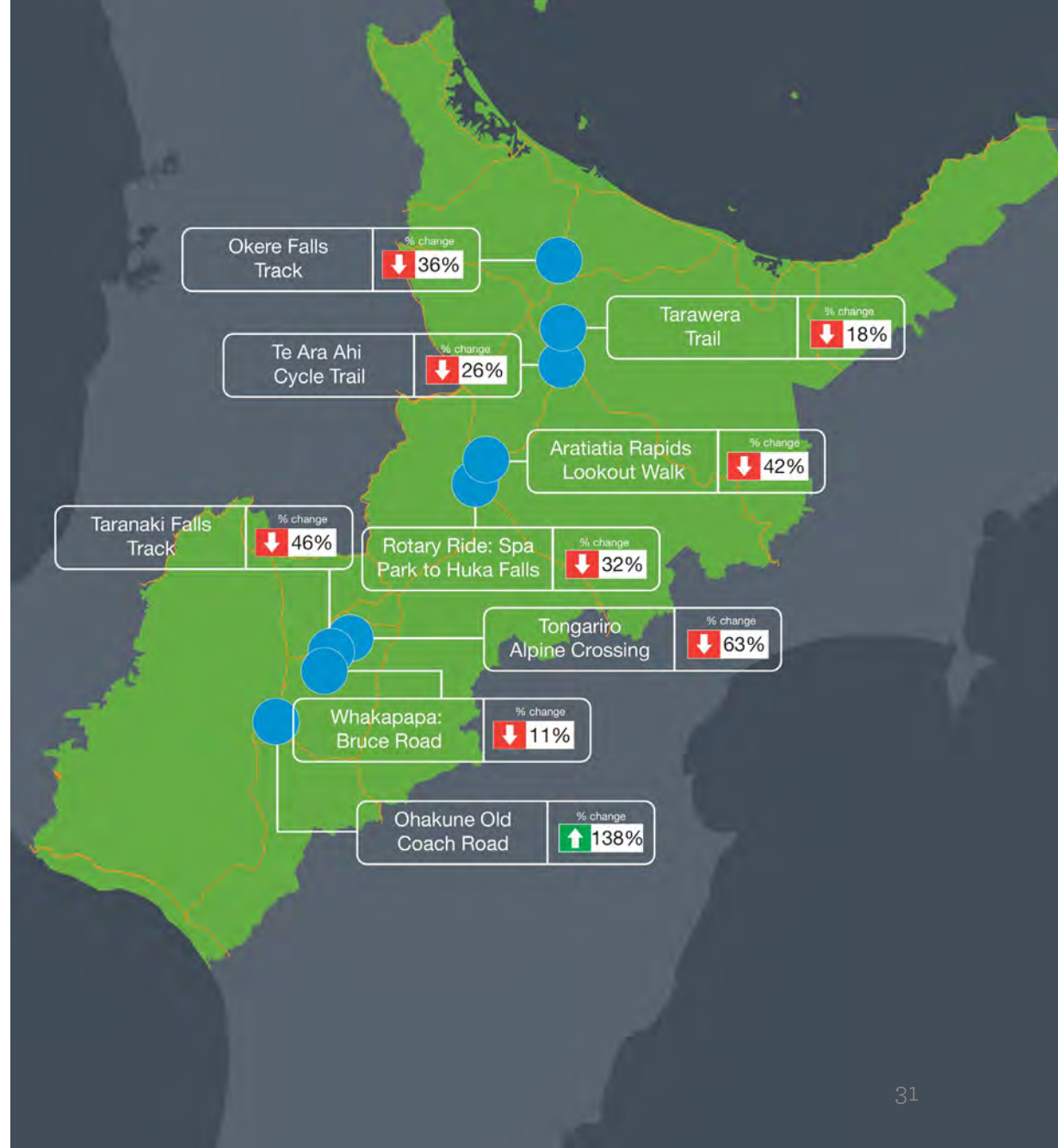
# Central North Island (CNI)



# Where did people go in CNI over 2020/21?

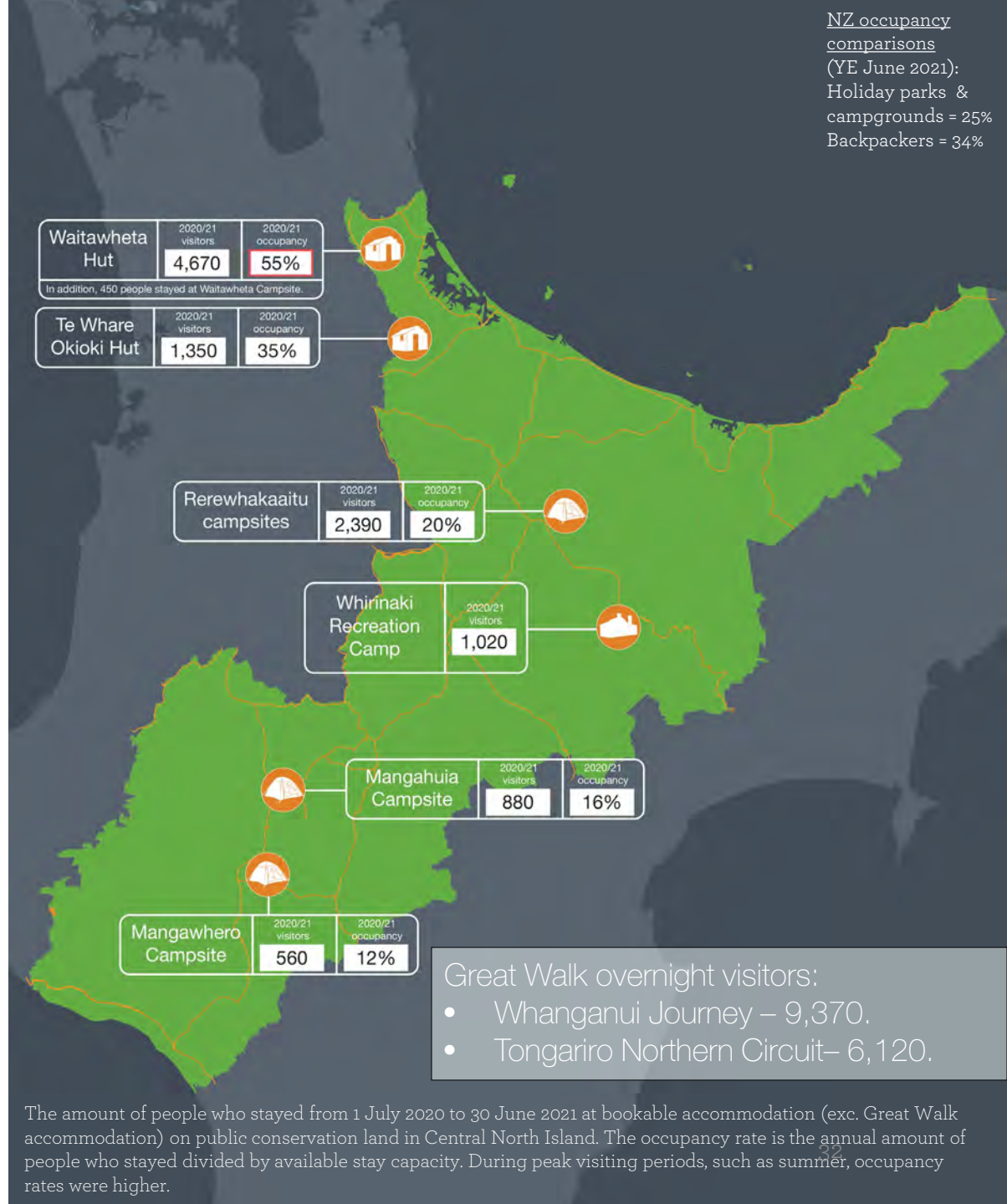
- Visitor activity in CNI decreased – some places saw more of a decline when compared with previous years.
- Like other regions of New Zealand, places that were visited by international visitors went down in activity compared with previous years. Tongariro Alpine Crossing visitor activity dropped 63% – reflecting the lack of international tourists. Taranaki Falls had a similar decrease, down 46% in visitor activity.
- Places near Rotorua/Taupō saw decreases – Okere Falls Track (down 36%), Rotary Ride near Huka Falls (down 32%) and Tarawera Trail (down 18%) had lower levels of activity compared with previous years.

Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Central North Island.



# Where did people stay in CNI over 2020/21?

- More New Zealanders than ever canoed the Whanganui Journey and walked Tongariro Northern Circuit. Hut occupancy rates for these two Great Walks range between 59% to 80%.
- Both Waitawheta Hut and Te Whare Okioki, located in the Kaimai ranges, were near capacity every weekend in 2020/21 – averaging 88% capacity on Saturdays.
- Other places that experienced high demand in the region include the Rerewhakaaitu, Ash Pit Road campsite, especially over summer and Easter weekend.



NZ occupancy comparisons  
(YE June 2021):  
Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
Backpackers = 34%

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on public conservation land in Central North Island. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.



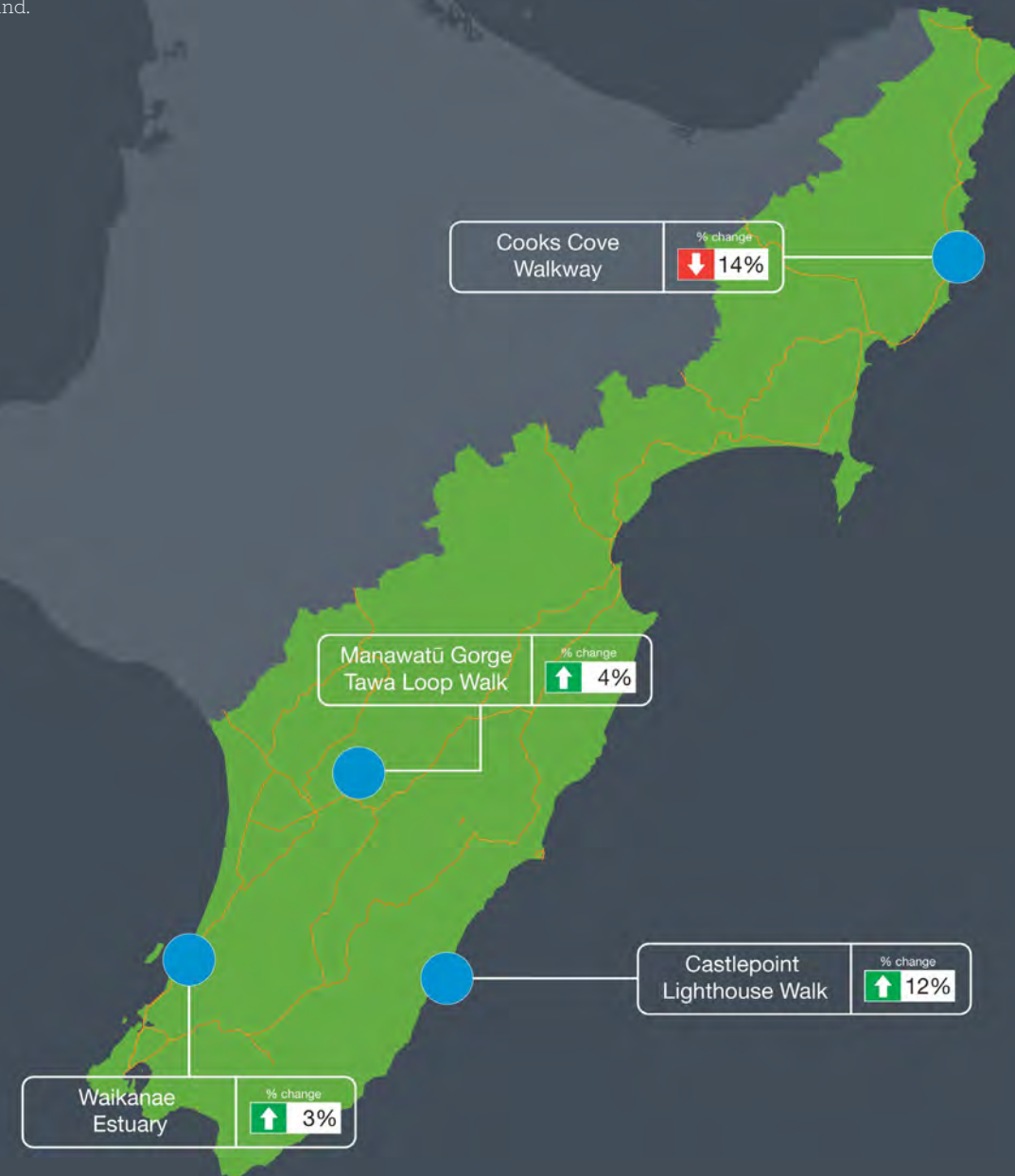
# Lower North Island (LNI)



# Where did people go in LNI over 2020/21?

- Based on limited up-to-date counter data available, the figures related to the four destinations on the map do not reflect visitor activity for the entire region.
- The Castlepoint Lighthouse Walk saw an increase in visitor activity - up 12% - despite no international visitors.
- Other places with slight fluctuations include - Waikanae Estuary (up 3%), Manawatū Gorge Tawa Loop (up 4%) and Cooks Cove Walkway (down 14%).
- Kāpiti Island: Trig Track activity (not shown on map) increased during the peak season when compared with last year.

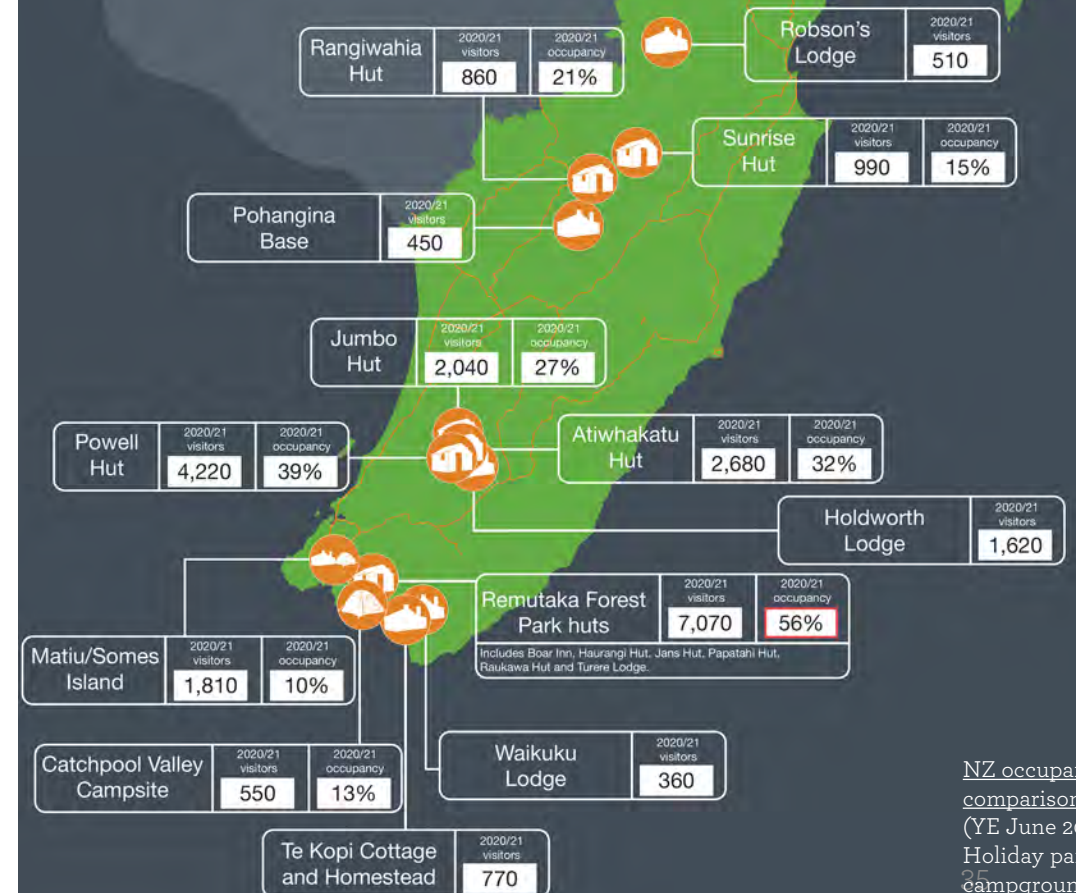
Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Lower North Island.



# Where did people stay in LNI over 2020/21?

- Another year of strong local demand for bookable Remutaka and Tararua forest park huts. Turere Lodge (1hr from Wellington) and Powell Hut (1hr 30m from Wellington) welcomed many visitors – 4,310 people stayed overnight at Powell Hut.
- Weekend hut demand was strong in LNI with many bookable huts and lodges operating at or near full capacity. Remutaka Forest Park and Mt Holdsworth-Jumbo Circuit huts operated at or near full capacity. Rangiwahia Hut (Manawatū) was full over summer.
- Matiu/Somes Island campsite had strong weekend demand over the warmer months of 2020/21.

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on public conservation land in Lower North Island. Note: Coast Road Cabin and Kawhatau Base are not included on map as it has low visitors (less than 250) over 2020/21. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.



NZ occupancy comparisons (YE June 2021):  
 Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
 Backpackers = 34%

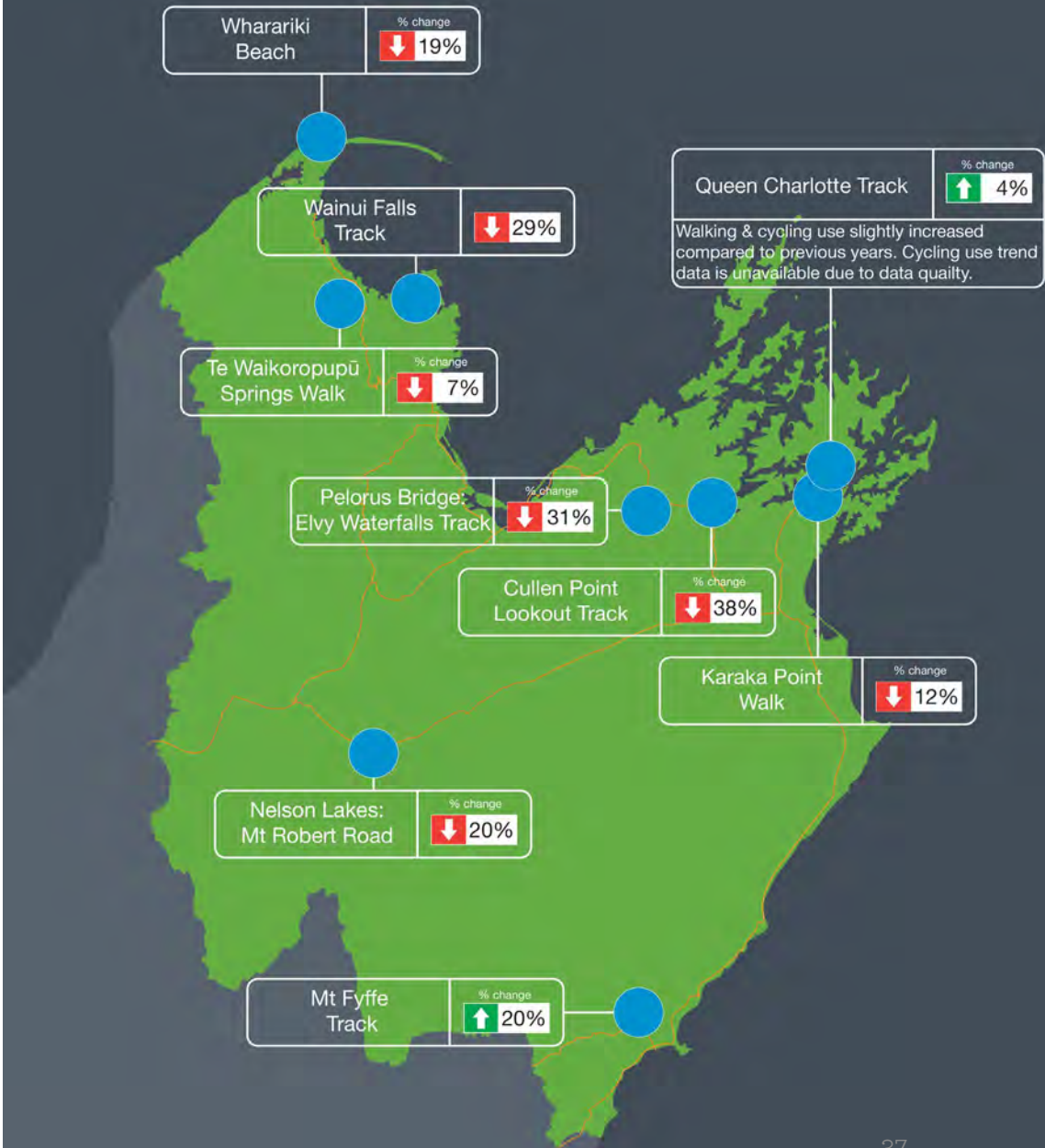
# Northern South Island (NSI)



# Where did people go in NSI over 2020/21?

- Generally, New Zealanders visited NSI over 2020/21, yet they did not substitute international visitors as decreases in activity were observed across the region.
- While visitor activity at Wharariki Beach and Te Waikoropupū Springs was high over winter, the popular walks saw a decrease in visitor activity over summer which was reflected in the annual visitor activity – down 17% and 5% respectively.
- Scenic destinations including Nelson Lakes National Park and Mt Fyffe Track near Kaikōura saw changes in visitor activity (down 20% and up 20% respectively).

Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Northern South Island.

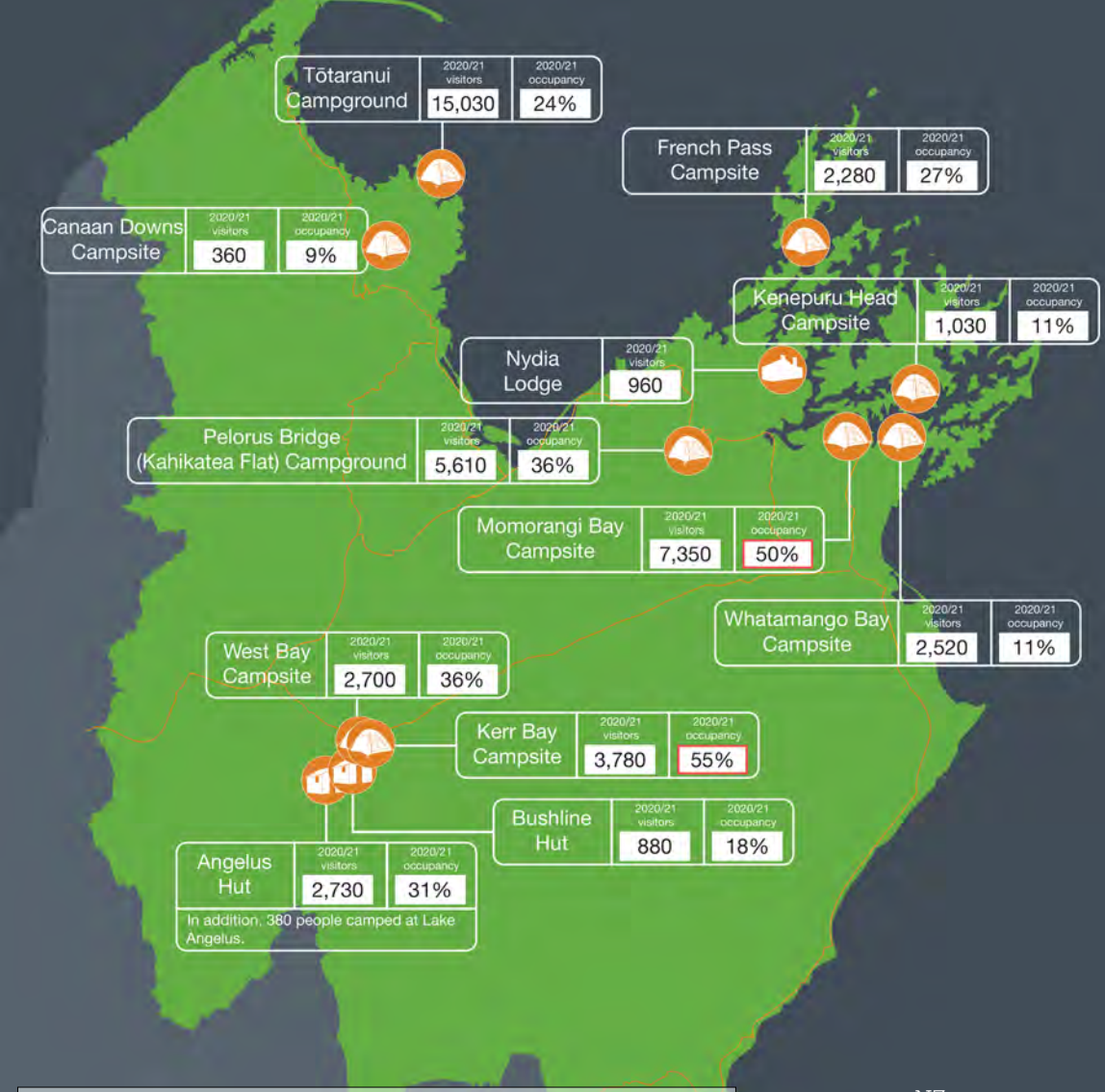


<sup>1</sup> There are many counters on the Queen Charlotte Track. The Torea counters were used for this document.

# Where did people stay in NSI over 2020/21?

- The Abel Tasman Coast Track and Heaphy Track remain popular, with most huts along these Great Walks ranging from 65% to 74% capacity for 2020/21.
- Tōtaranui Campground welcomed over 15,000 people – more visitors than any other campground in NSI over 2020/21. It was extremely busy over the summer season.
- Camping opportunities in Marlborough were popular, especially at Momorangi Bay, Pelorus Bridge, with over 5,000 visitors to each campsite.
- There was strong demand for accommodation at Nelson Lakes National Park. Kerr Bay had the highest occupancy rate in NSI. Angelus Hut was also popular, with consistent demand and around 2,730 people who stayed at the hut.

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on public conservation land in Northern South Island. Note: Cobb Hostel is not included on map as it had low (less than 250) visitor numbers. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.



Great Walk overnight visitors:

- Abel Tasman Coast Track – 27,750
- Heaphy Track – 10,600.

[NZ occupancy comparisons](#)  
 (YE June 2021):  
 Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
 Backpackers = 34%

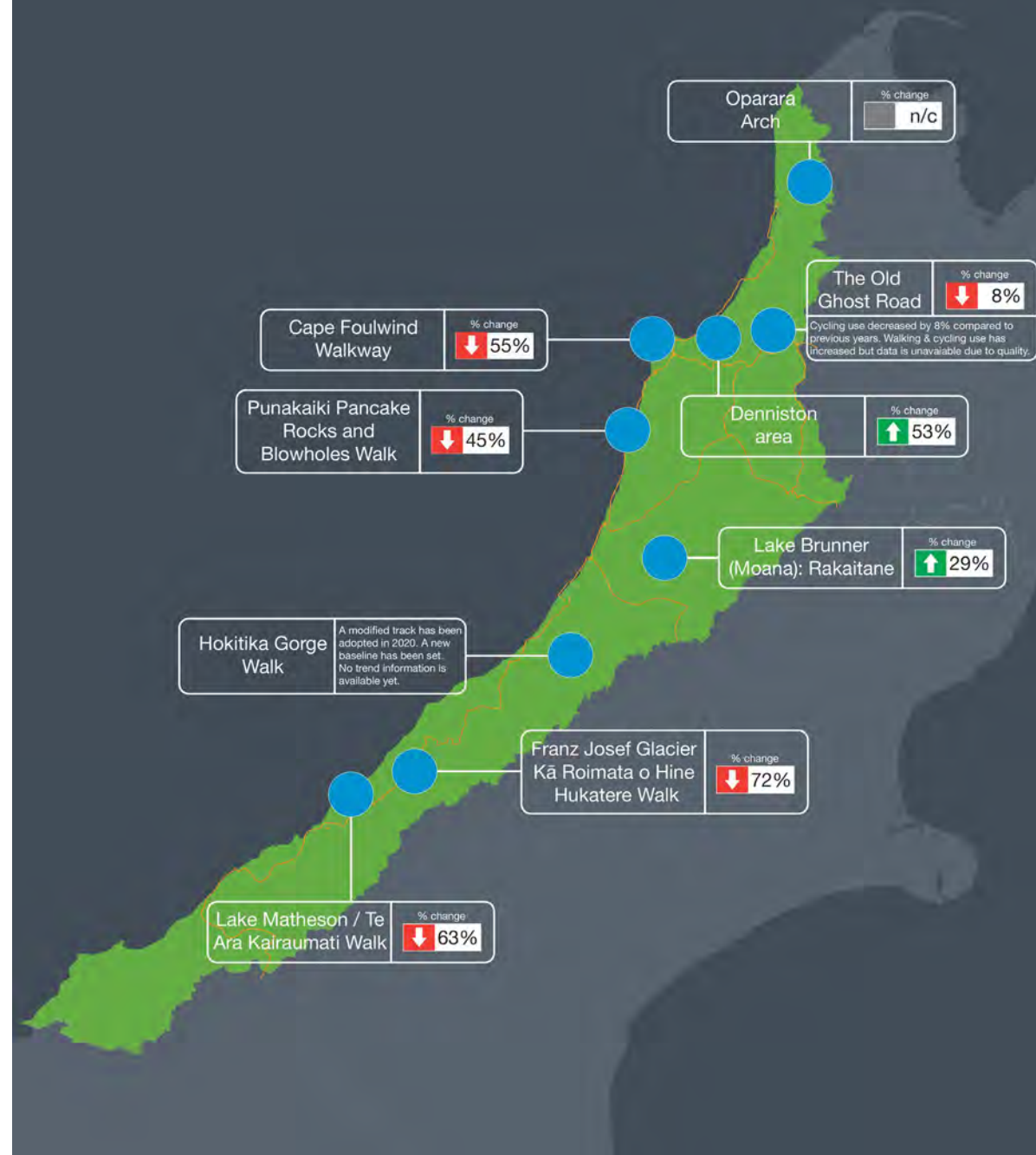
# Western South Island (WSI)



# Where did people go in WSI over 2020/21?

- Over 2020/21 there was a significant decrease in visitors in WSI – reflecting the high proportion of international visitors that used to visit the region.
- The drop in visitor numbers is most evident in South Westland:
  - Franz Josef Glacier/Kā Roimata o Hine Hukaterere – down 72% compared with previous years.
  - Lake Matheson/ Te Ara Kairaumati Walk – down 63%.
- Places around the Greymouth/Buller area including Cape Foulwind and Punakaiki Pancake Rocks decreased in visitor activity (down 55% and 45% respectively).
- Denniston and Lake Brunner areas were busiest over 2020/21 – up 53% and 29% in visitor activity.

Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Western South Island.





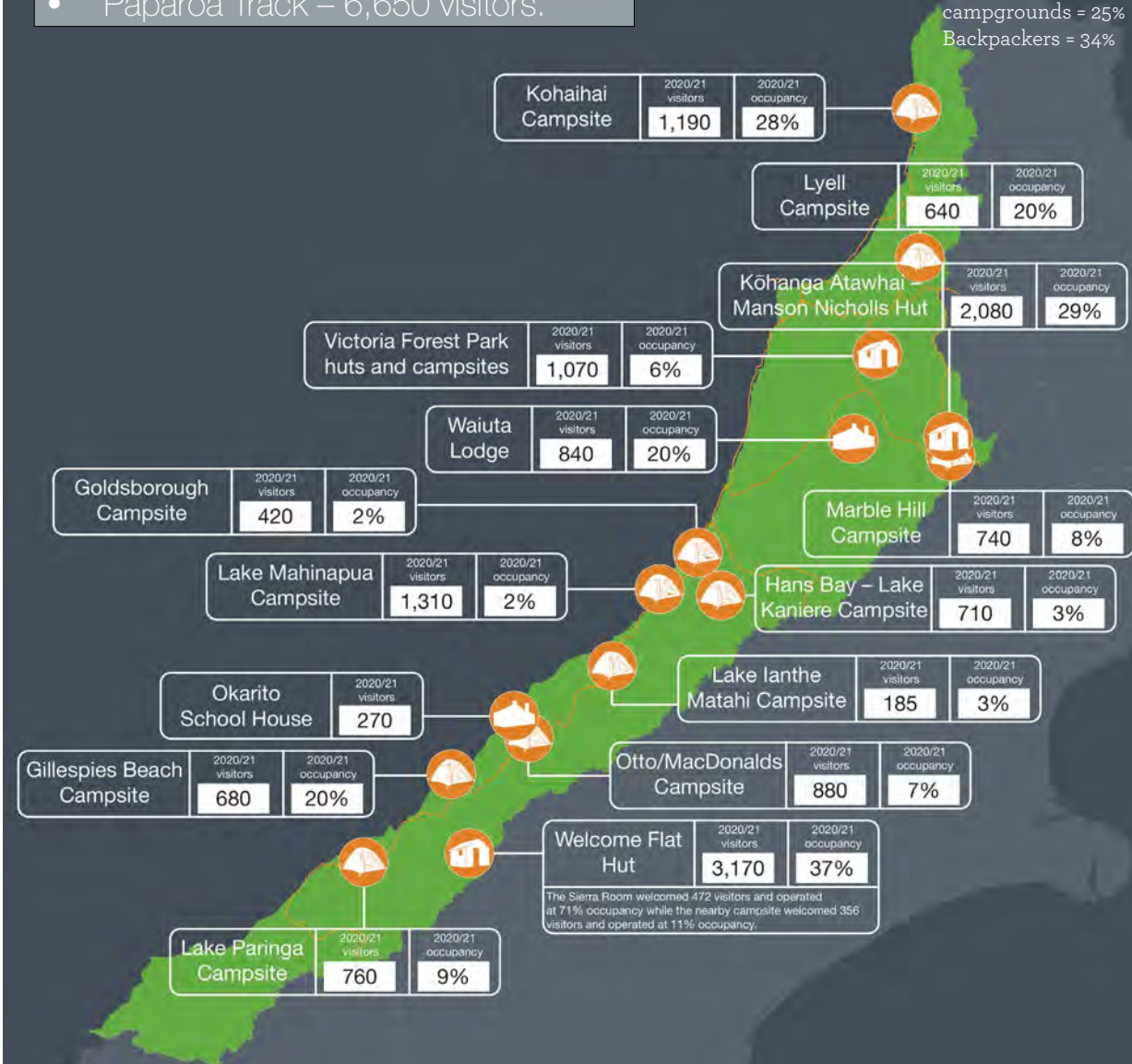
# Where did people stay in WSI over 2020/21?

- WSI bookings were much lower than previous years – reflecting the drop in international visitors.
- Camping activity in WSI was high over Christmas/New Year period while hut accommodation occupancy rates were high on weekends – with many Cantabrians staying at WSI accommodation.
- The Paparoa Track as a network welcomed around 6,650 visitors over 2020/21. Pororari and Moonlight Tops huts were at full capacity from October to May.
- Aside from Great Walk huts, Welcome Flat Hut and Kōhanga Atawhai – Manson Nicholls Hut attracted many people – averaging 55% capacity on Saturdays.

Great Walk overnight visitors:

- Heaphy Track – 10,600 visitors.
- Paparoa Track – 6,650 visitors.

NZ occupancy comparisons (YE June 2021):  
 Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
 Backpackers = 34%



The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on public conservation land in Western South Island. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.

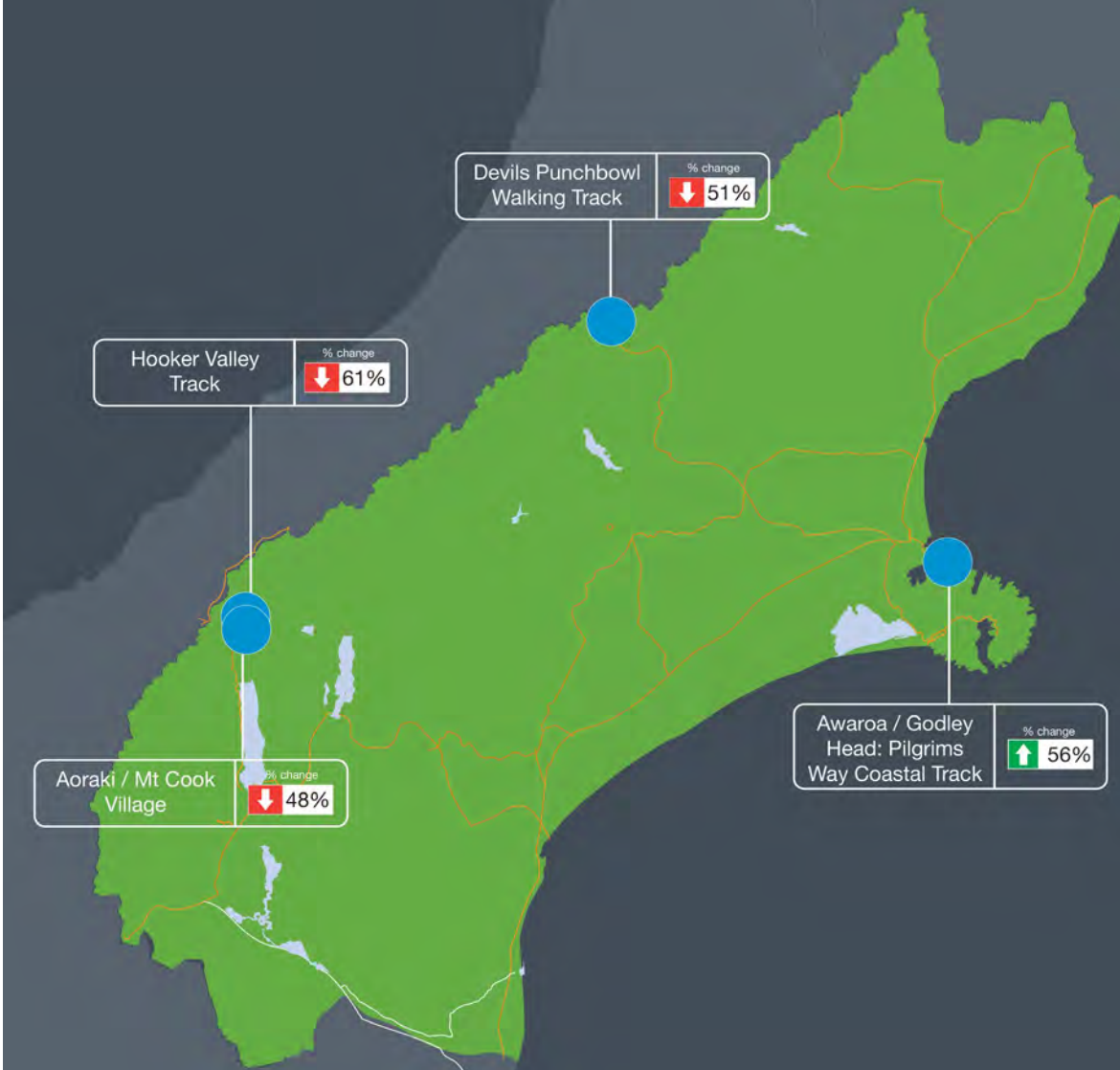
# Eastern South Island (ESI)



# Where did people go in ESI over 2020/21?

- Visitor activity at Aoraki Mt Cook National Park dropped (vehicles into the village decreased by 48%) – reflecting the lack of international tourists. The Hooker Valley Track was down 61% compared with previous years.
- Devils Punchbowl, located in Arthur's Pass National Park, saw a noticeable decrease in visitor activity, down 51%.
- Awaroa/Godley Head: Pilgrims Way Coastal Track increased by 56% compared with previous years – most likely due to the destination reopening after seismic strengthening following earthquake closures and being near Christchurch CBD.

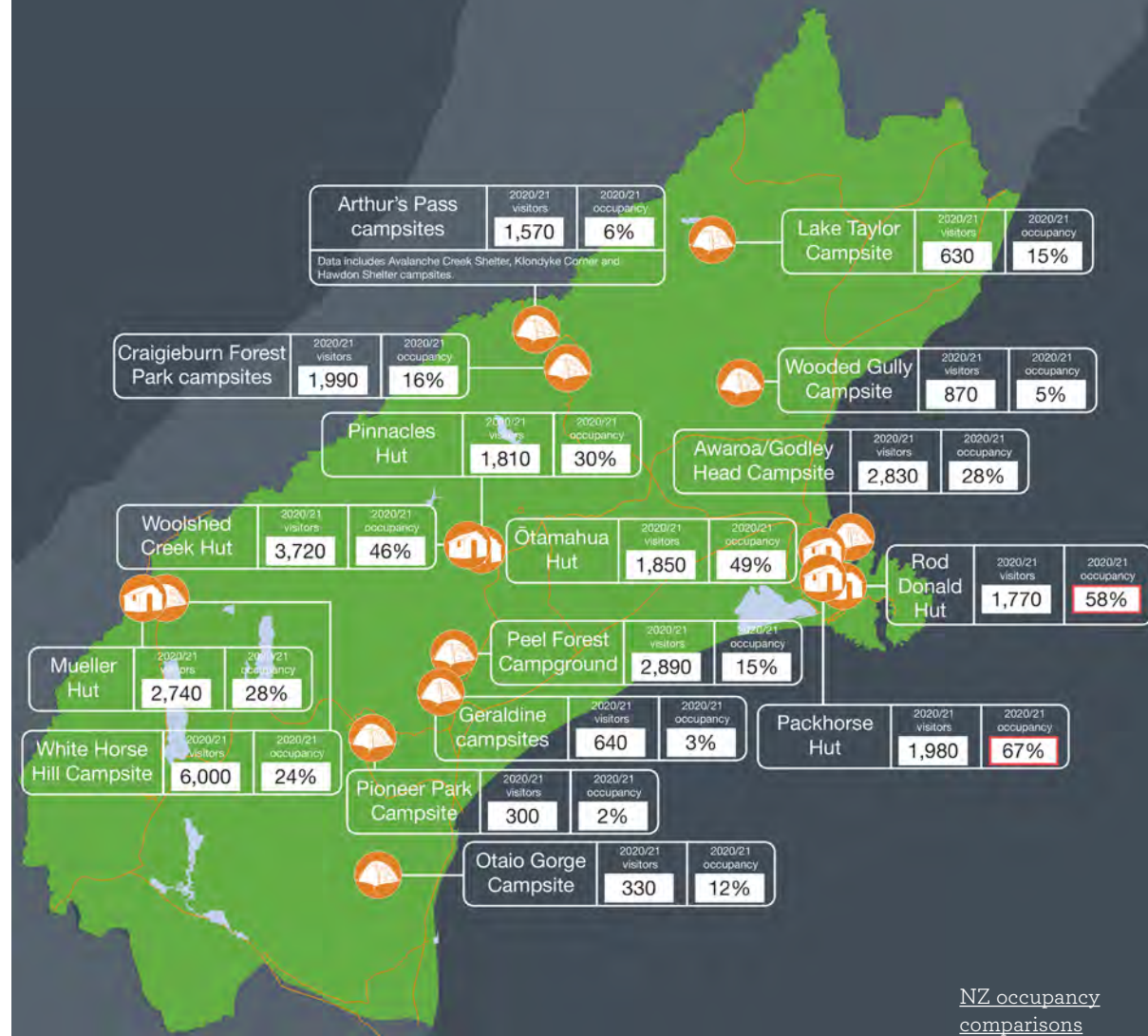
Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Eastern South Island.



# Where did people stay in ESI over 2020/21?

- Overnight tramps and family-friendly experiences were in high demand in ESI, especially on weekends and near Christchurch. Te Ara Pātaka huts were at full capacity most weekends of 2020/21.
- Similarly, Ōtamahua Hut (on Quail Island) and Woolshed Creek Hut (located on the Mount Somers track) were near full capacity on Saturdays. Awaroa/Godley Head Campsite was busy between January to March 2021.
- Other bookable accommodation had high demand from New Zealanders, including families, over public holidays:
  - White Horse Hill Campsite (Aoraki)
  - Peel Forest Campground (less than 2hr from Christchurch).

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Eastern South Island. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.



NZ occupancy comparisons (YE June 2021):  
 Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
 Backpackers = 34%

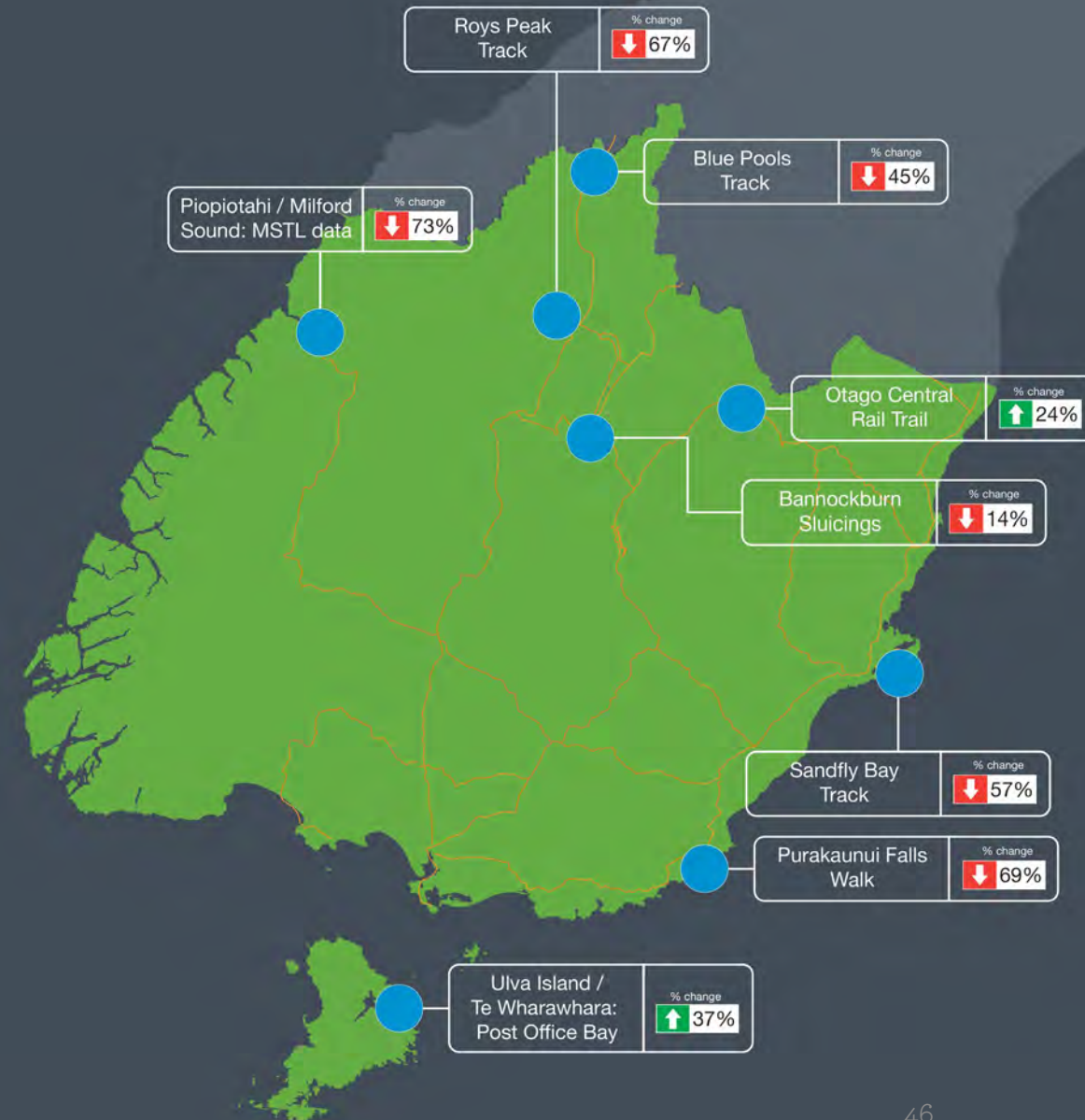
# Southern South Island (SSI)



# Where did people go in SSI over 2020/21?

- Over 2020/21 there was a significant decrease in visitors in SSI – reflecting the lack of international visitors.
- Milford Sound/Piopiotaahi had a significant decrease in visitor activity, with boat passengers down 73% compared with previous years.
- Places in the Queenstown/Wānaka area, including the Roys Peak Track and Bannockburn Sluicings decreased in visitor activity (down 67% and 14% respectively).
- Although decreases were evident in SSI, there was a noticeable increase in people undertaking the Otago Central Rail Trail, up 24% when compared with previous years.
- Similarly, like other island destinations across New Zealand, Ulva Island/Te Wharawhara (Post Office Bay) saw an increase in visitors, up 37%.

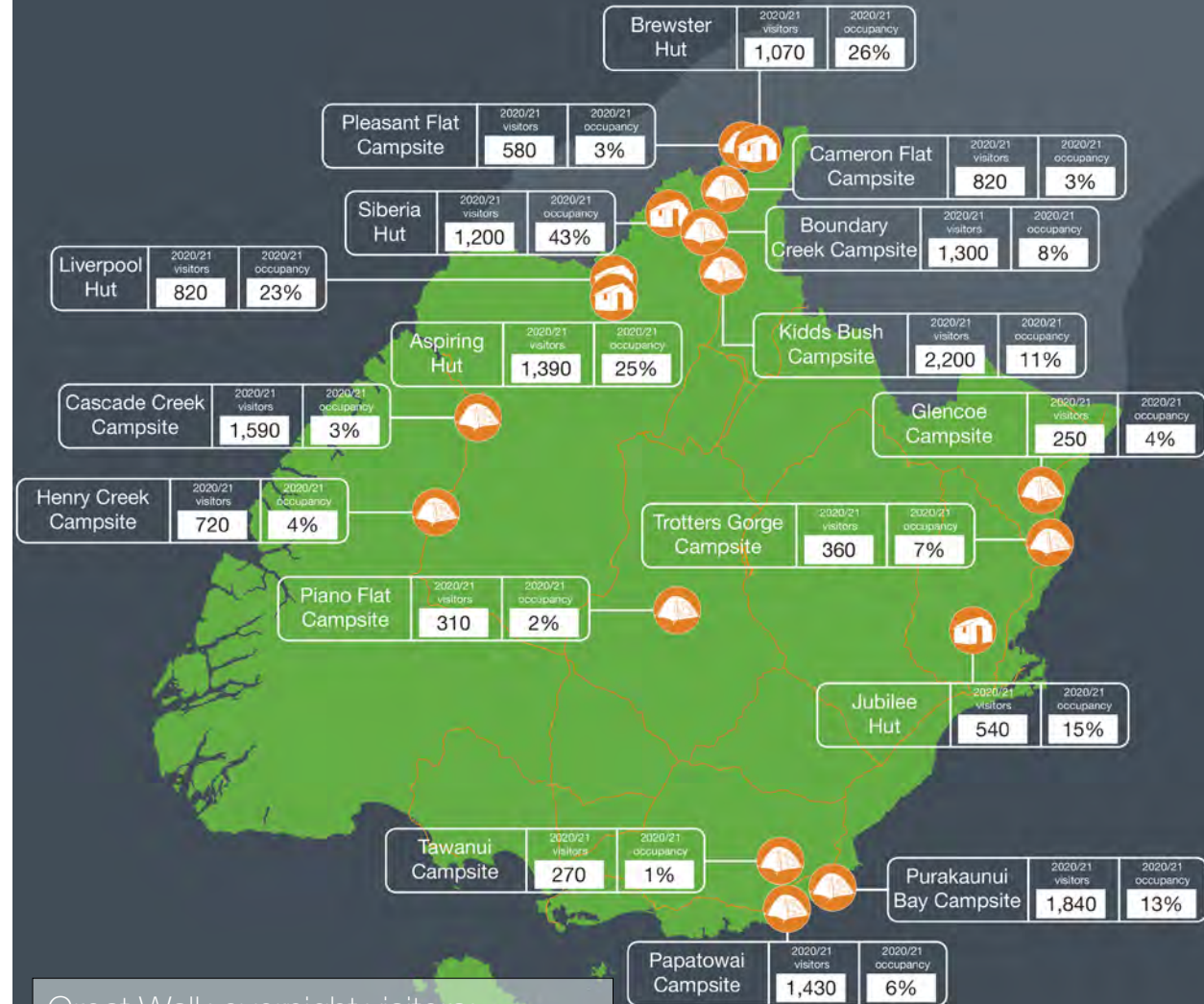
Comparing visitor activity in July 2020 to June 2021 (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) to the most recent three-year average July 2017 to June 2020 (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Southern South Island.



# Where did people stay in SSI over 2020/21?

- SSI Great Walks remain popular, despite the lack of international visitors. The Milford Track was at full capacity for the season. Routeburn and Kepler huts were at or near full capacity.
- Aside from Great Walk huts, Aspiring and Siberia huts, located in Mount Aspiring National Park, were popular. Jubilee Hut, near Dunedin, had a lot more visitors during weekends.
- Most campsite accommodation had low demand over 2020/21, with peaks during the Christmas/New Year period. Kidds Bush (located alongside Lake Hāwea), Purakaunui Bay (the Catlins) and Cascade Creek Campsite (along Milford Road) were the popular campsites in SSI over 2020/21.
- Milford Road campsites felt the lack of international tourists most, with annual 2020/21 camping occupancy rates of 3%.

The amount of people who stayed from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on public conservation land in Southern South Island. Note: Deer Walk, Upper Eglington, Kiosk Creek, Totara, Walker Creek campsites are not included on the map below as they had less than 250 overnight visitors over 2020/21. The occupancy rate is the annual amount of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.



- Great Walk overnight visitors:
- Kepler Track – 10,250 visitors
  - Routeburn Track – 9,680
  - Rakiura Track – 7,630
  - Milford Track – 5,800.

NZ occupancy comparisons (YE June 2021):  
 Holiday parks & campgrounds = 25%  
 Backpackers = 34%

Ngā mihi





## Data and information sources

### UMR omnibus survey (n=6,270)

- Over the summer and autumn of 20/21 DOC commissioned UMR to include a small module of questions in their monthly omnibus survey.
- From late Nov 2020 to late May 2021 n=6,270 adults (18+) participated in an online panel survey, around 1,000 adults each month (except December). The results are nationally representative of the New Zealand adult (18+) population.

### DOC activity counter system

- DOC identified 98 activity counters (from over 700 nationwide) as being of priority for data to be downloaded over 2020/21. 48 of these were downloaded by Operations between 1 July 2021 and 14 July 2021. 14 counters had over 90% days of 2020/21 downloaded.
- Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to that track.

### DOC bookable accommodation data

- The DOC booking system currently collects accommodation data for huts, campsites and lodges across New Zealand.
- Visitor numbers and occupancy rates are from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.