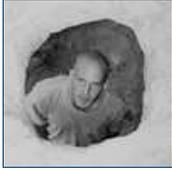


The Fiendish New Zealand Climbing guide: Introduction by **Fiend.**



Fiend thinking a bit....Think Tank 6a (V4), Castle Hill, NZ
© Fiend

General: New Zealand climbing? Pretty damn good if you ask me. The crags are well spread out, but varied, accessible, with lots of fun sport and trad climbing. Plus the country is civilised but sparsely populated, the weather's okay, and they do steak and cheese pies. What more do you want?? As you'd expect, though, with a less developed climbing scene, there's a good blend of information, mis-information and occasionally dis-information in the local guides. Thus this guide should give you a bit of perspective whilst avoiding the over-intimacy of the locals and the fuckwittedness of some other views we've seen. Although it's unashamedly biased towards stuff we actually did, it's supposed to supplement the information available in the published guides so read those carefully. Enjoy. Any comments or queries please email Fiend.

Important notes

1. This article was written during 05/03 - the information was correct at time of writing but may change over time. It is based on a 6 month trip from 10/02 to 04/03, during which my partner Ef and I climbed at least 400 mid-grade routes between us.
2. This article supplements the information available in the published guides (see below for a list of guides) so read those carefully.
3. It's worth noting that NZ has some highly rated mountain cragging at Twin Streams, The Darrans, Milford Tunnel area etc etc. Due to the complexity and relative inaccessibility of this type of climbing, we didn't explore those areas.

Getting around: Combine the traffic of Scotland in the early hours, a Japanese-orientated car market so cheap they almost pay you to have cars, and petrol at "proper" prices, and it's clear what's the best way to get around. Pity the speed limit's only 62mph tho. Go cheap or save up a bank-breaking 3 grand, treat yourself to a rudified

Toyota Celica or Subaru Impreza and join the other hooners.

Eating: Food is cheap and plentiful, although if you're unfortunate enough to have chosen vegetarianism as your calling, you might struggle. Supermarkets, take-aways, cafes, and good fish and chip shops abound. Recommended highlights include: The plethora of cheap Asian eateries in all cities, the ubiquitous steak and cheese pies, Paddle Pops ice creams and Hubbards cereals. If you liked the cafe scene - funky places, great savoury muffins, good coffee.

Sleeping: Accommodation is also plentiful. Be warned that it gets cool at night even in summer. The usual options include car+tent, camper van, or perhaps most sensible, car+campsite cabins or hostels. Likewise it's fairly cheap, though it pays to look around for the best places.

Weather: Hot sun, cool breeze, fresh showers sums up NZ. The weather changes very quickly so don't be put off by rain as it often blows over, and take forecasts with a handful of salt. Remember this is upside-down land so the seasons and sun direction are opposite - and although the air is often cool, the sun is bloody fierce indeed. Beware of North facing crags and dying of sunstroke. The warmer North Island has a climate that spreads sunshine and showers across the whole country, while in the cooler South Island the Southern Alps keep the West rainy and the East dry. Most guidebooks have good information about how well the crags are suited to various weather conditions.

Gear: Three things to remember here.

1. Do not even think of buying any climbing gear other than chalk here. You'd pay 25-50% more than the UK, and aside from Bryce's, the selection is arse too.
2. You can get by with just quickdraws, as there's plenty of good sportclimbing around. But a set or two of wires and half a dozen small-medium cams would let you do some great trad routes too. If you can squeeze in a full rack, it might be good.
3. Whichever way, you will need something for the hangerless bolts that are sometimes found on ignimbrite and Southern limestone. These are either small hexagonal bolts which take RP hanger plates (should be fairly cheap) or wires, or large coach bolts that require hooking with wires (or as a last resort, home-made accessory cord nooses - these have been tested!). 6 wires/plates should be plenty.

Grades and stars: Once you've got used to a crude numerical system that tells you neither the state of protection nor the hardest moves, the grades are fairly servicable. See the [UKC](#) and [Rockfax](#) grade tables to begin your confusion.

There is a definite variation from area to area, this is mentioned in each area's section. Be aware that there are few good genuinely easy routes (10-14), and they can be underused as the wall-bred apes jump straight to 16+ where a better choice of climbing begins. To add further demoralisation, "moderate climbs" don't mean that at all, they mean "mid-grade climbs", usually around 18-20.

Stars are pretty reliable although there's a quite a few excellent understarred routes. A couple of guides use a sparse single star system which is not particularly informative - thus spying out good unstarred routes is more relevant.

Guidebooks: I think one should be wary of Climbing New Zealand by Posing Productions. Although it gives an overview of most of NZ, and along with South Island rock it is available in the UK, we thought it an amateur effort and found the information patchy and sometimes unreliable. Instead....

North Island:

Northern Rock - Ngahere, Ti Point, Mt Eden and a few other Northland crags. Single stars only.

Central North Island Rock - Good for Froggatt, Wharepapa South, the adventurous Mangatepopo valley, and some minor Taupo crags (note that the excellent Motuoapa is now banned).

Or alternatively both the Froggatt and Wharepapa guides - all the climbs but no star system.

New Ignimbrite Climbs - all the other ignimbrite crags, but check the update sheet too.

Waipapa - available from Bryce's

Whanganui Rock - Single stars only.

South Island:

South Island Rock - just about everything except Wanaka. Comprehensive if slightly variable in accuracy.

Paynes and Beyond - available from Hangdog and conveniently in easy (up to 23) and hard (23+) versions. Includes the seacliffs and lots more routes.

Queenstown Climbing - should be back in print sometime soon, various other crags as well as Wye Creek.

Wanaka Rock - the guide.

There are also guides available to the **Port Hills** and **Dunedin Rock** but these don't have much useful extra information.

Websites:

Don't expect an NZClimbing.com. Their climbing websites are few and far between. The only regularly updated one is <http://www.mojozone.co.nz/>, and there is also an older general site at <http://www.climb.co.nz/>.

OK! On to the crags themselves: read it all at

[North Island](#) (onscreen) or just download the [PDF version](#)  (408kb)

[South Island](#) (onscreen) or just download the [PDF version](#)  (324kb)

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