



34 NORTH OF NELSON

DRIVING TOUR ■ 222 KM ■ 1 DAY ■ EXPLORING GOLDEN BAY

In an unspoiled wilderness outcrops of marble hide a honeycomb of caves and underground rivers, and steep granite country sweeps down to a coastline of pristine golden beaches fringed with lush forest.

In 1642 the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman became the first European to reach New Zealand when he sailed into Golden Bay. The coastline of the National Park that bears his name holds the same enchantment for visitors today as it did for those early explorers. This is paradise. Golden-sand beaches enclosed by rocky granite headlands separate the forest-clad hills from the crystal-clear water.

The forests cover a mountain range formed by a huge granite dome over 100 million years old. The granite runs beneath even older formations of marble which have survived immense changes including submersion beneath the sea, but have been uplifted and are now weathering high in the hills where an intricate system of underground rivers and caves lies beneath the rock. Roads and tracks lead to huge drop shafts that fall deep inside the mountain and to natural springs where the water wells up onto the plains below. This is all part of the karst landscape of weathered rock formations that make up this fascinating area.

1 RIWAKA VALLEY

The trip starts at Motueka. Drive north-west 11 km on SH 60 to the Riwaka Valley turn-off on the left and follow the unsealed road that runs west along the Riwaka River for 7 km.

The Riwaka Valley has a bush reserve and some good swimming pools in the river which issues from a spring fed by water from the labyrinth of tunnels inside the Takaka Hill.

2 HARWOODS HOLE

Return to SH 60 and drive 7 km up onto Takaka Hill. Turn right onto the unsealed Canaan Saddle Road and drive 11 km north to the start of the Harwoods Hole walking track. The road passes through an impressive karst landscape with weathered limestone rock outcrops bordering dried-up stream beds where the rivers have long since disappeared underground.

A half-hour walk through the beech forest leads to the edge of the largest drop shaft in the Southern Hemisphere. The track passes a number of sinkholes or dolines, some covered in moss and others filled up with water.

Carved out of the limestone rock by a river that cut deep into the hillside and created a huge waterfall into an underground cave system, Harwoods Hole is 50 m across and 200 m straight down. Experienced cavers abseil down the sheer face into a cave system that emerges at Gorge Creek. Be extremely cautious near the edge of the drop shaft especially in wet weather. A short side track climbs to a viewpoint above the shaft from where you can also see out to the coast.

3 TAKAKA HILL

Return to SH 60 and drive 4 km up to the Takaka Hill summit, 791 m above sea level. The Ngarua Caves, not far from the summit, have fascinating limestone formations and moa bones have been found inside. The lookout point at the Takaka Hill summit is on the right.

The Takaka Hill summit provides views right across the plains towards Nelson and the distant Marlborough Sounds. Known locally as the Marble Mountain, the hill features distinctive weathered outcrops of fluted rock which can be seen from the lookout point.

4 TAKAKA

Continue west 9 km down from Takaka Hill to Upper Takaka in the river valley below and drive north 22 km following the Takaka River to Takaka.

Takaka is the last major township as you head north. You will notice large stretches of dried-up riverbeds in this part of the countryside where streams have cut their way underground into the limestone rock. These have created extensive subterranean river systems, some of which emerge out at sea off the coast of Golden Bay.

5 LOOKOUT ROCK

Take the road from Takaka signposted to Tataranui and head north-east 9 km to Pohara on the coast. A few kilometres past Pohara the seal ends. Travel 16 km north-



The rocky coast near Pohara on the way to Tataranui.



The view looking east from Takaka Hill with the Marlborough Sounds on the horizon.

east on the dusty road which continues around the headlands to Anatimo before crossing forest-clad hills to reach Lookout Rock Track signposted on the left.

The first part of the track provides an interesting 20-minute walk through rainforest along the Pigeon Saddle in Abel

Tasman National Park. In this section of forest there is great diversity. Instructional material posted along the walk identifies the forest species and enables you to recognise tangled supplejack vines, miro, kamahi, red beech, rata and old rimu and matai covered in epiphytes (perching plants), as well as find out how all these grow and adapt in the forest. A further 10 minutes' walk beyond the forest brings you to Lookout Rock which has superb views out to the coast.

TOTARANUI

Continue north-east 8 km to Totaranui.

With its magnificent stretch of golden beach, Totaranui is one of the most attractive locations on the northern coastline of the South Island. There are a number of walking tracks from Totaranui, including the famous Abel Tasman Coastal Walk, but the best track for visitors on a day trip is the 20-minute walk to Anapai Bay. The track crosses a ridge-line then heads down to the coast through sub-tropical rainforest where huge tree ferns and nikau palms fill the valley. The knowledge gained on the Lookout Rock forest walk (above) will give you an appreciation of this stretch of forest. Anapai Bay is an

idyllic, small golden-sand beach framed by unusual granite rock formations, the lush rainforest and clear blue water.

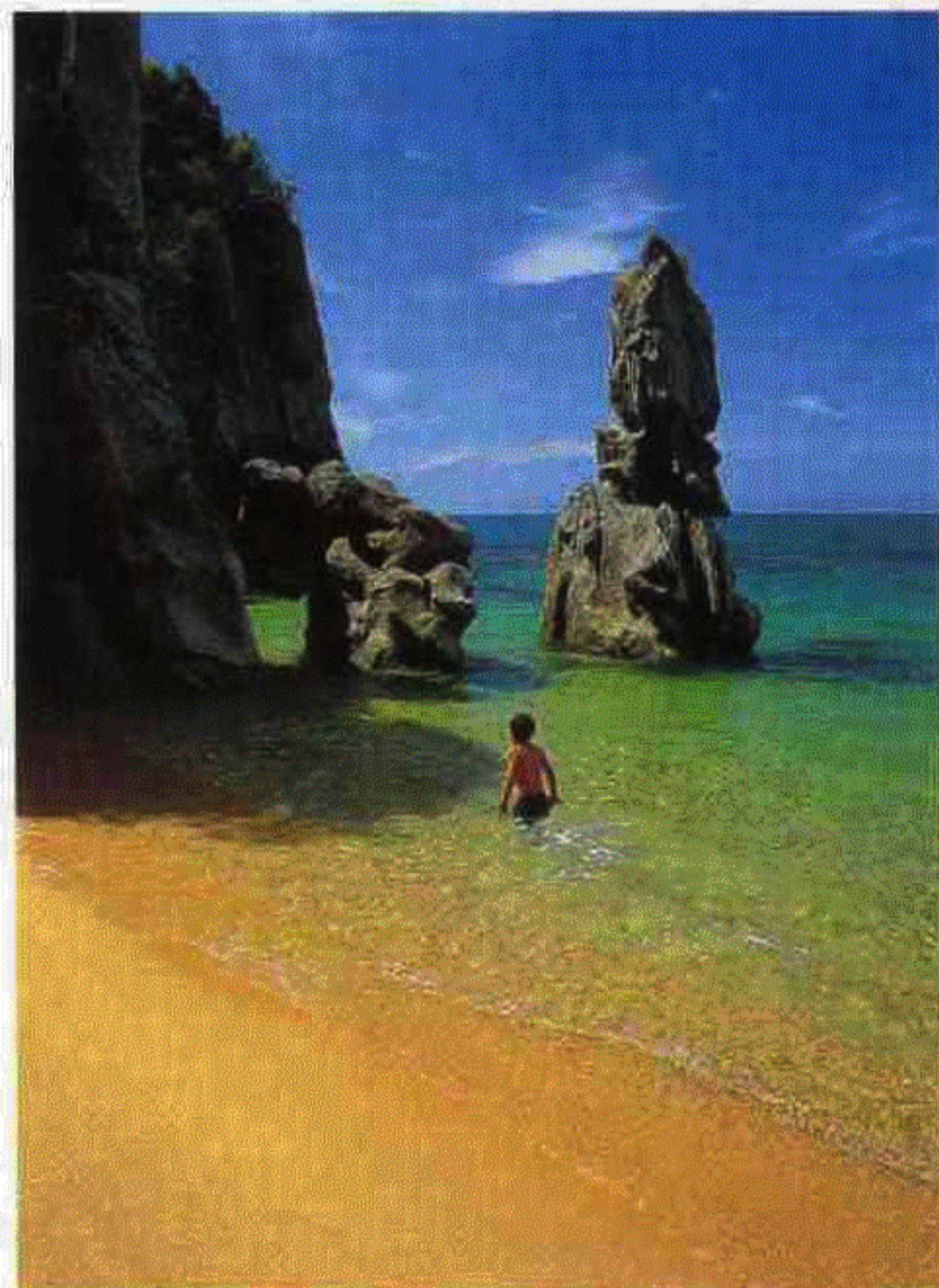
WAIKOROPUPU SPRINGS

Return 33 km to Takaka and turn right onto SH 60. Drive 4 km north-west and turn off left just past Waitapu, then travel south 3 km to the Waikoropupu Springs Scenic Reserve.

The 'Pupu' Springs, as they are usually known, are the largest springs in New Zealand. A series of tracks lead around the 16 main springs in the reserve. From two large vents that make up the biggest spring, incredibly clear, cold and slightly salty water bubbles up out of sand, while several smaller vents make up the 'Dancing Sands' group of springs. The springs are tidal, but the cycle indicates earth rather than sea tides. Researchers believe the enormous volumes of water come from the Takaka River which dries up most summers at a point near Lindsays Bridge, on the way to Waikoropupu Springs. Water is also fed in from Gorge Creek on the Canaan Plateau, where the stream runs underground below Harwoods Hole.

Tracks from the springs lead through a goldmining area that dates back to 1901. Still in evidence are the water races and 'working faces' where men from the Takaka Sluicing Company washed river material over riffle boards to trap the particles of gold. Large boulders were stacked neatly to one side while the finer sands and gravels were removed by a tail race. The company processed nearly 4000 ounces (112 kg) of gold, making it one of the most successful Golden Bay companies, but by 1909 the gold and the enterprise had come to an end.

Return to Takaka and travel 53 km back to Motueka.



Remote Anapai Bay is a corner of paradise with golden sands and clear turquoise water.