

Summer 2020/21 visitor insights report

Department of Conservation | Te Papa Atawhai
April 2021



New Zealand Government



Summer 2021 visitor insights report

This report looks at where people went and what impacts were observed over summer.

The 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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- ▶ [What is happening in outdoor areas across Aotearoa](#)
- ▶ [Overview of visitor activity over summer nationally](#)
- ▶ [Visitor activity across DOC's nine regions](#)

What's happening in outdoor
areas across Aotearoa?



A kiwi summer with border restrictions – important takeaways

Many regions continue to have fluctuating visitor patterns – several regions have a large decline in activity.

- The ongoing border closures and changes in Auckland’s regional COVID alert level continue to impact travel across New Zealand. Visitor numbers have fallen in many places when compared to summer last year – this is noticeable in Whakapapa/Tongariro, Taranaki, South Westland, Aoraki/Mt Cook, Queenstown and Piopiotahi/Milford Sound.
- Northland and Coromandel huts and campsites experienced high overnight demand despite no international visitors – especially around Christmas/New Year.

A lot of New Zealanders headed out into the outdoors – especially during holiday periods and weekends.

- Around 108,000 people camped at bookable DOC campsites, 48,000 people experienced a Great Walk and 30,000 people stayed at other bookable huts across New Zealand over summer, many on weekends and holidays.
- New Zealanders undertook many day walking opportunities and connected with New Zealand’s natural landscapes. Yet, many of these iconic DOC places showed a drop in overall visitor numbers.
- Beaches, coastlines or marine reserves were the most commonly visited outdoor environment, followed by parks or reserves in urban areas and lakes or rivers.

Visitor impacts and poor behaviour were noticed over summer – managing these impacts is crucial to ensure Papatūānuku thrives.

- The visitor impacts most commonly observed by New Zealanders include litter, trampling of vegetation and damaged facilities in the outdoors.
- DOC rangers have also noticed litter and facility damage – as well as other visitor impacts concentrated around the Hauraki Gulf Islands, Waikato, Hauraki, Rotorua, Golden Bay, Coastal Dunedin and Rakiura.
- Visitors taking their dogs where they are not allowed was observed by DOC rangers. They also noticed poor boating/jetski behaviour and visitors disturbing wildlife.

Many New Zealanders are having quality experiences across all 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 were more likely to be considered authentic, memorable, personally meaningful, world-class and informative compared with other months. This may be a result of people visiting special places, being with family and friends and increased duration in the outdoors resulting in greater appreciation and wellbeing benefits.

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

Change in COVID-19 settings over summer¹ led to change in New Zealanders' levels of comfort in relation to visiting outdoor environments.

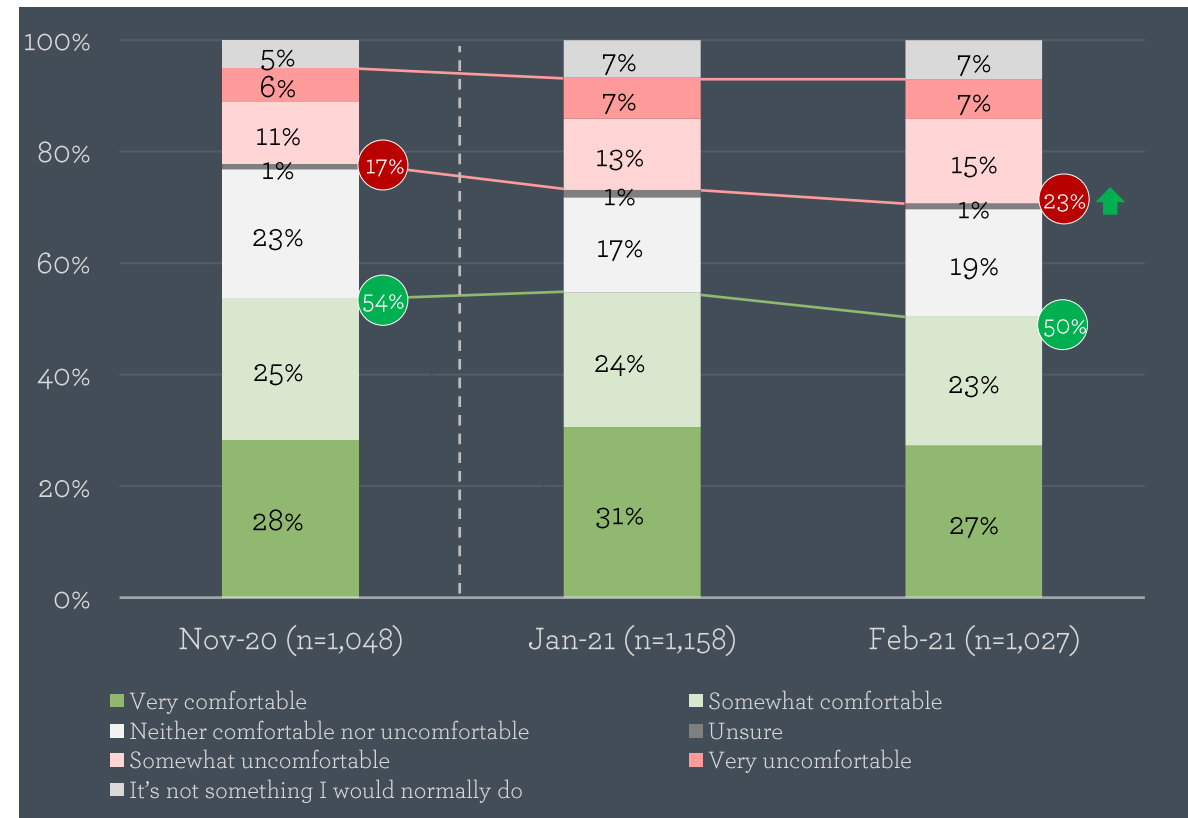
Each month over half of New Zealanders felt either very or somewhat comfortable about visiting outdoor environments. Around one in five felt either very or somewhat uncomfortable.

Between late November (17%) and late February (23%) there was an increase in the proportion of New Zealanders who reported feeling uncomfortable (either somewhat or very).²

New Zealanders who are most likely to have felt either very or somewhat uncomfortable about visiting outdoor environments include Aucklanders, those of Māori, Asian or Pasifika ethnicity, those with dependent children and those aged 18 to 44 years.

UMR Omnibus Survey – Given the current COVID-19 settings (eg, 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 due to Christmas.



¹ Changes to [Alert Levels](#) (particularly in Auckland), but not international border restrictions.

² The January and February data collection periods had small overlaps respectively with potential community cases in Northland, and the second round of February confirmed community cases in Auckland. The latter resulted in changes in Alert Level changes.

Where in the outdoors have New Zealanders been visiting?

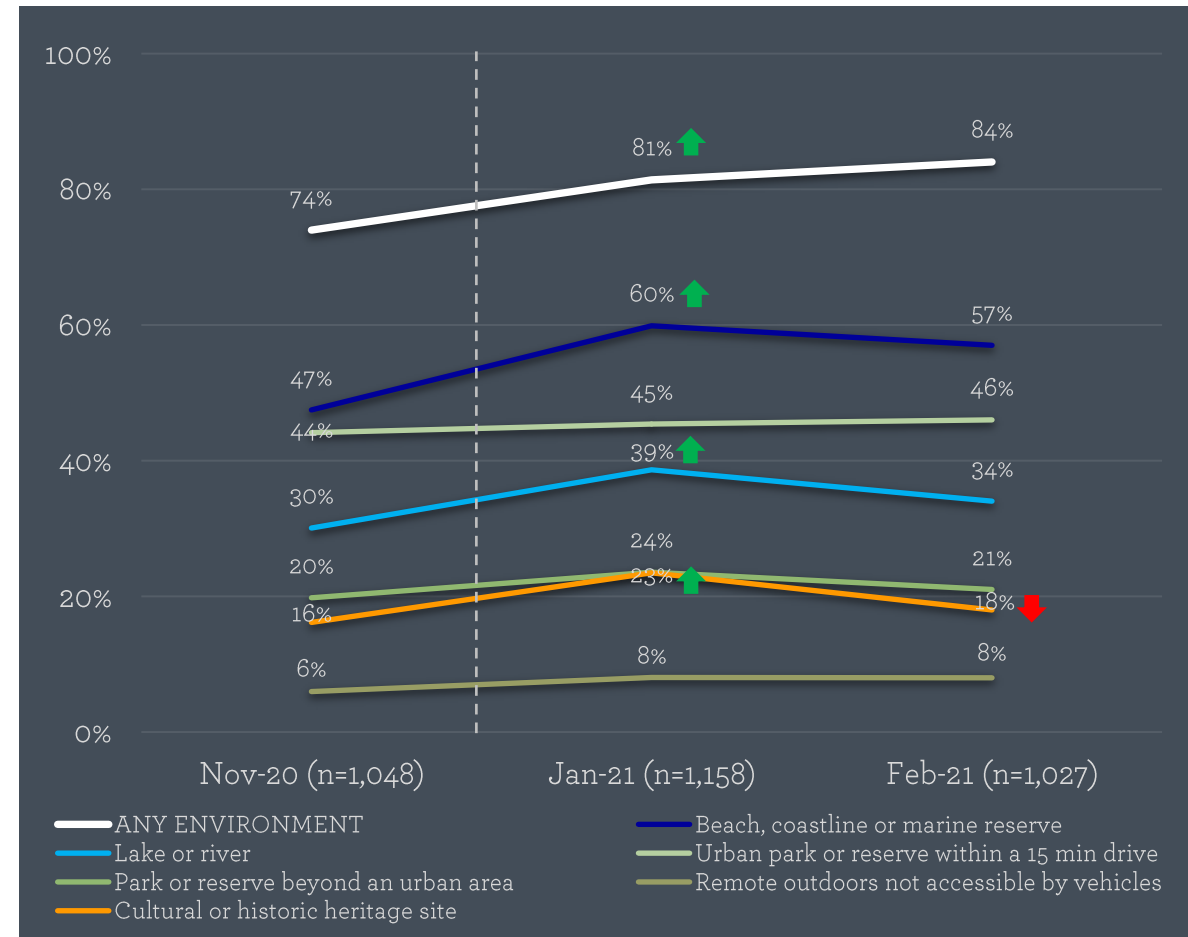
Over summer, around three-quarters or more New Zealanders reported had visited one or more outdoor environments.¹ Reported visitor activity increased month on month; peaking late February (increasing from 74% in late November to 84% in late February).

Beaches, coastlines or marine reserves were the most commonly visited environment, followed by parks or reserves in urban areas² and lakes or rivers. These environments were also the ones visited most recently.³

In late January, reported visitor activity to water-based environments and cultural and historic heritage sites peaked. While visitor activity peaked in February, the typically small decreases in visitor activity to specific environments indicates New Zealanders were making fewer visits in February than in the previous month.

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

Data was not collected in December due to Christmas.



¹ These environments were not limited to public conservation land and waters.

² Within a 15-minute drive of a population of 30,000 or more.

³ Not shown here, relevant for the remainder of the reporting.

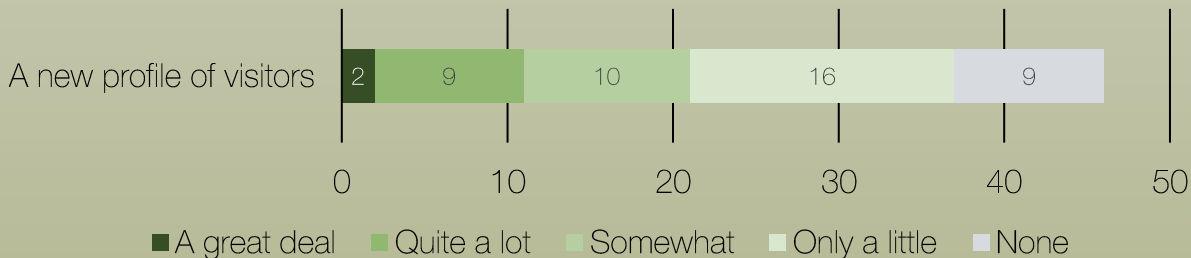
Are New Zealand visitors to the outdoors any different this summer?

The profiles of visitors to each of the six outdoor environments over summer differs.

On their most recent visit in the last four weeks, 12% of visitors to the remote outdoors and 7% of visitors to cultural or historic heritage sites in the outdoors indicated that they had never before visited these outdoor environments.

The large majority of recent visitors to urban parks, beaches and lakes or rivers reported that they visited these environments once a year. Regular visitor activity was highest at urban parks and beaches.

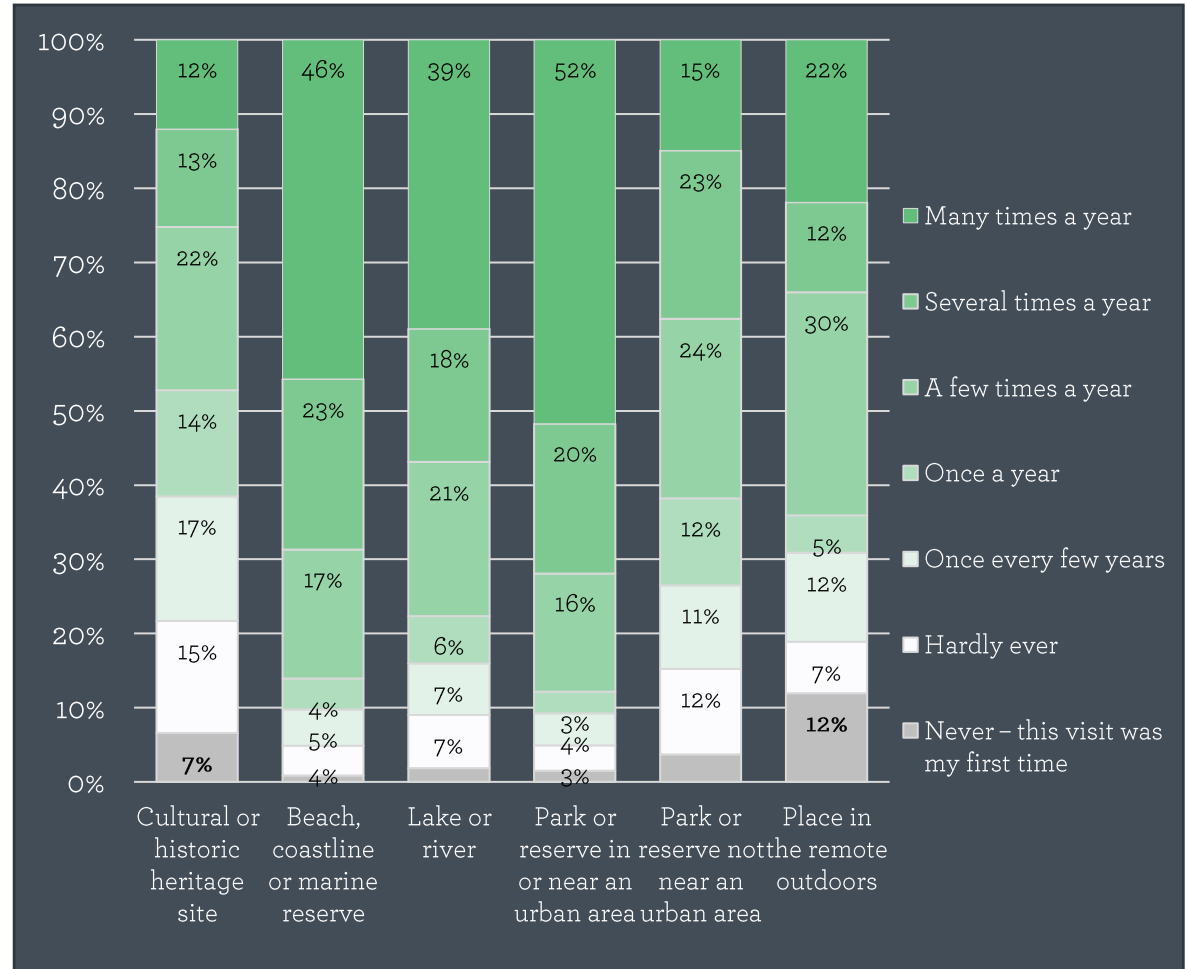
DOC Heritage/Visitor Ranger Survey – Thinking about the behaviour of visitors, how much of the following did you notice in your district? (n=51)
skipped = 1, unsure = 4



Many DOC rangers (37 of 51) noticed to some degree a new profile of visitors in their district. A few rangers (11 of 51) noticed a new profile of visitors ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’.

UMR Omnibus Survey – Which of the following best describes how often you normally visit [the outdoor environment you most recently visited in the last four weeks] (n=50-1,125, NZ adults)

NB: Data collected across late November, late January and late February. Data was not collected in December due to Christmas.



What are New Zealanders experiencing in the outdoors?

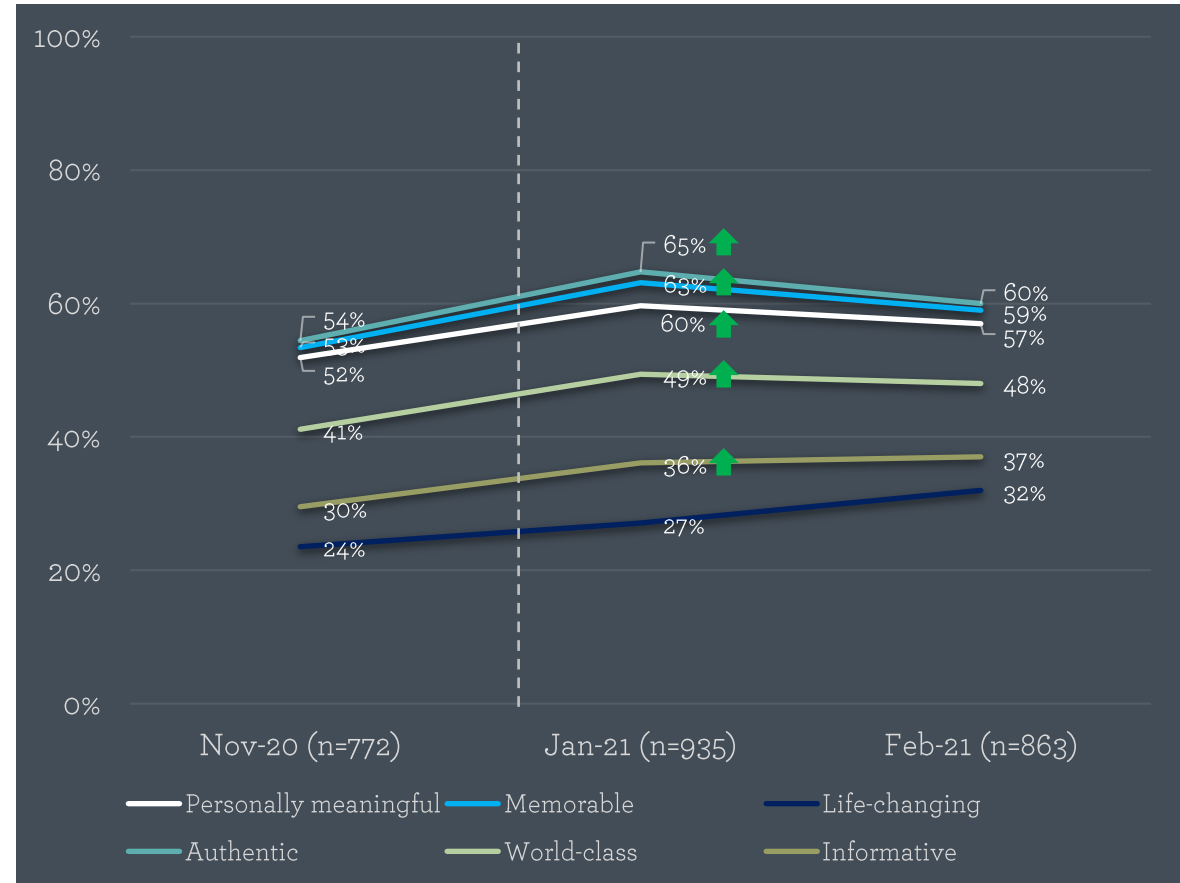
DOC officially has a goal to deliver exceptional experiences, but visitors may describe their experience differently. We sought to understand the three sub-types of exceptional experiences – memorable, meaningful and transformational (i.e. life-changing).¹

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 January² were more likely to be considered authentic, memorable, personally meaningful, world-class and informative compared with other months.³ This may be a result of people visiting special places, being with family and friends and increased duration in the outdoors resulting in greater appreciation and wellbeing benefits.

When compared with visitors to all outdoor environments, visitors to cultural and historic heritage sites were more likely to agree to some degree that their experience could be described positively in a range of ways⁴ while visitors who visited remote outdoors were more likely to report a memorable (80%) experience.

UMR Omnibus Survey – Thinking about your most RECENT EXPERIENCE, how strongly do you agree your experience was? (n= 772, 935 & 863, New Zealand adults)) NB: data was not collected in December.



¹ Duerden, M., Lundberg, N., Ward, P., Taniguchi, S.T., Hill, B., Widmer, M.A., and Zabriskie, R (2018). From ordinary to extra-ordinary: A framework for experience types. Journal of Leisure Research, Vol 49, pp. 196-216
² Which cover the Christmas and New Year timeframe.
³ Given little opportunity for intervention, seasonal elements appear to come into play.
⁴ Visitors to cultural and historic heritage sites located in the outdoors were more likely to agree to some degree that their most recent cultural and historic heritage experience was authentic (73%), informative (72%), world-class (65%), personally meaningful (65%) and life-changing (49%).

What visitor impacts did New Zealanders notice in the outdoors?

Over summer visitors noticed visitor impacts across all types of outdoor environments. The types of visitor impacts being reported by visitors were similar across summer months.

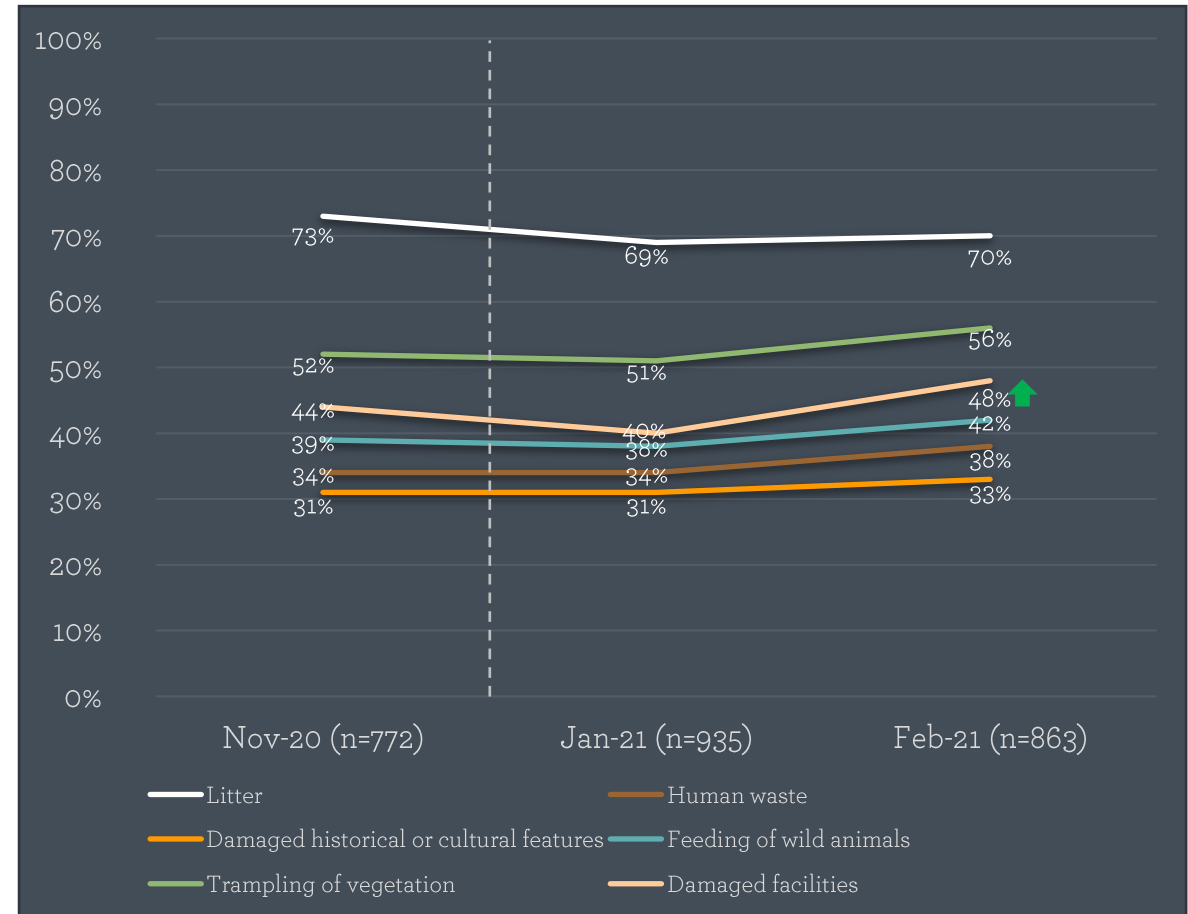
Littering, trampling of vegetation and damaged facilities were most commonly observed by visitors during their most recent experience in the outdoors. Several visitors noticed feeding of wild animals, human waste and damaged historical or cultural features.

Littering was the impact most commonly reported being seen either 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' (18%). Other types of damage asked about had a similar prominence.¹

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

UMR Omnibus Survey – Again, thinking about your most [recent experience], how much of the following did you notice? (n=772, 935, 863 NZ adults)

NB: data was not collected in December



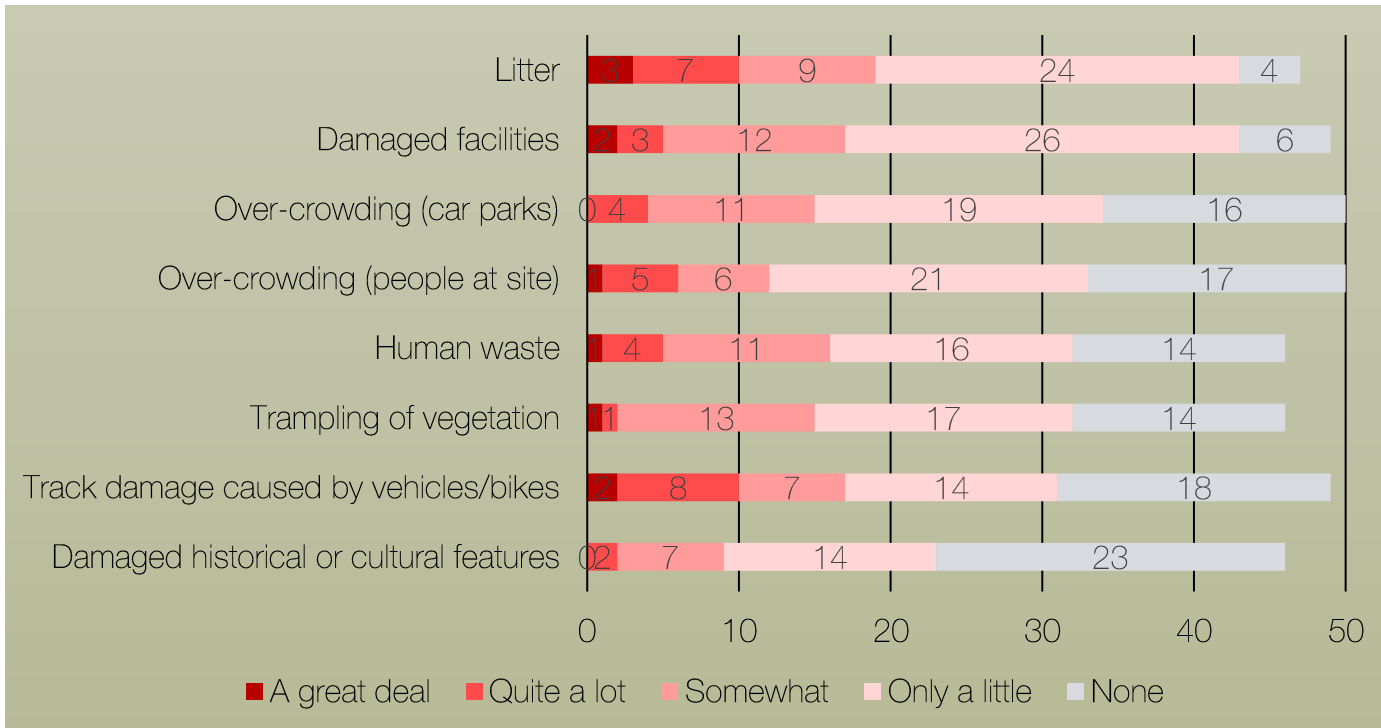
¹ For example, the extent of damage reported for other types of damage was between 11-13%.

What visitor impacts did heritage and visitor rangers see and hear?

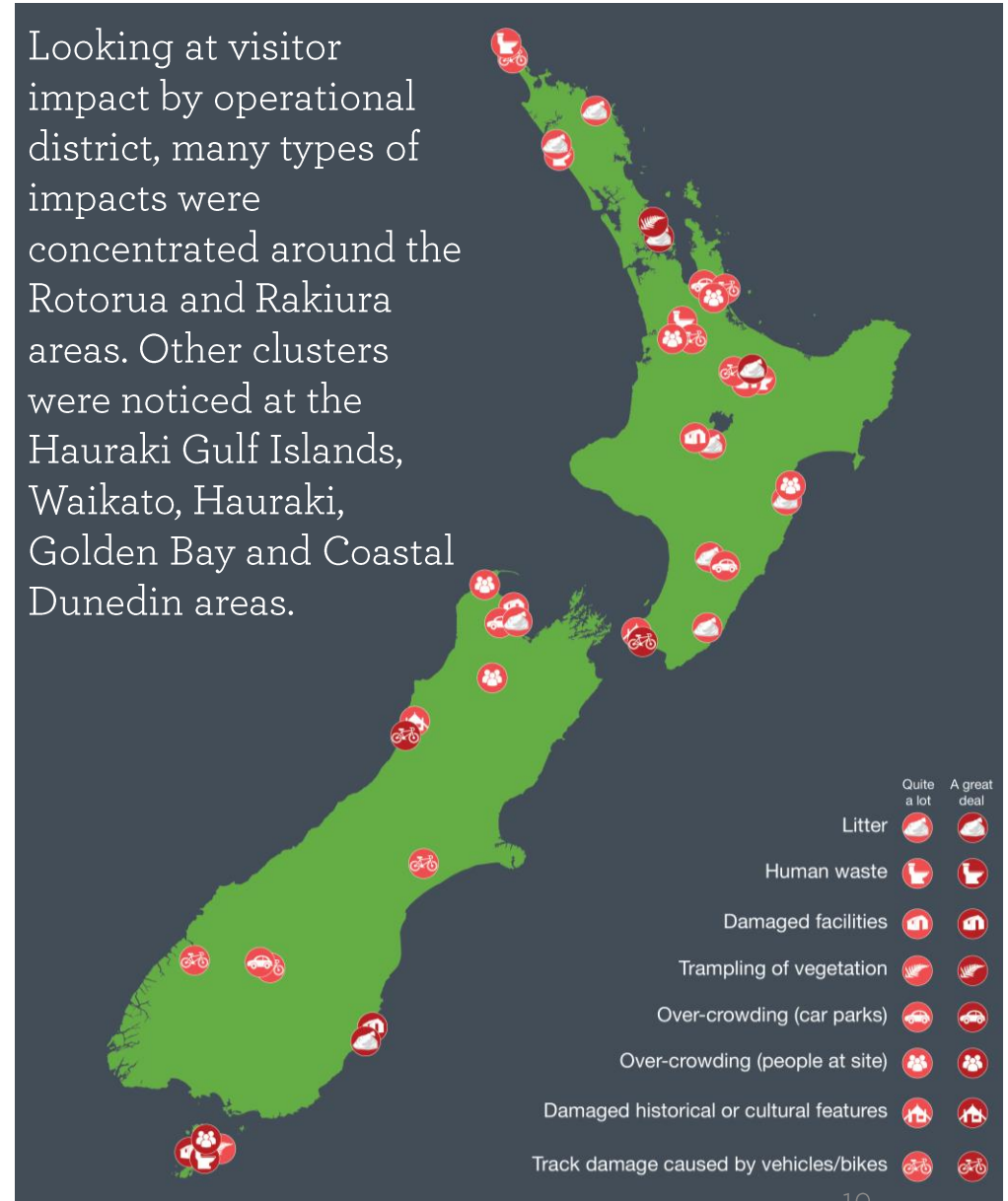
DOC rangers noticed visitor impacts across New Zealand. Most commonly observed visitor impacts by DOC rangers include litter and damaged facilities (43 of 51 staff noticed some impact).

Looking specifically at where ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of visitor impact was observed, litter and track damage caused by vehicles/bikes were the most commonly observed (10 of 51 staff who noticed ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’).

DOC Heritage/Visitor Ranger Survey – Thinking about your work managing visitors, how much of the following did you notice in your district? (n=51) skipped = 0, unsure = varies



Looking at visitor impact by operational district, many types of impacts were concentrated around the Rotorua and Rakiura areas. Other clusters were noticed at the Hauraki Gulf Islands, Waikato, Hauraki, Golden Bay and Coastal Dunedin areas.

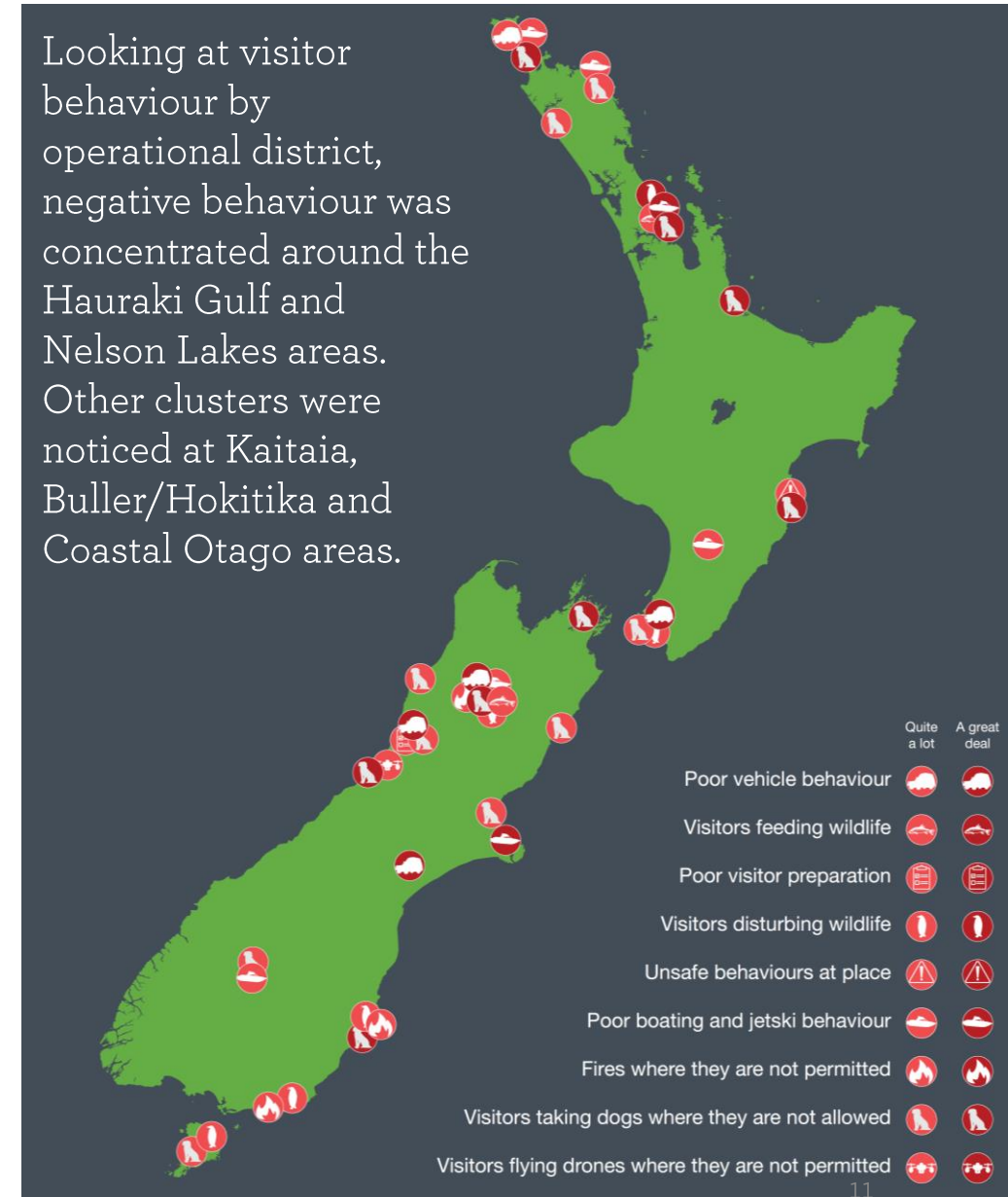
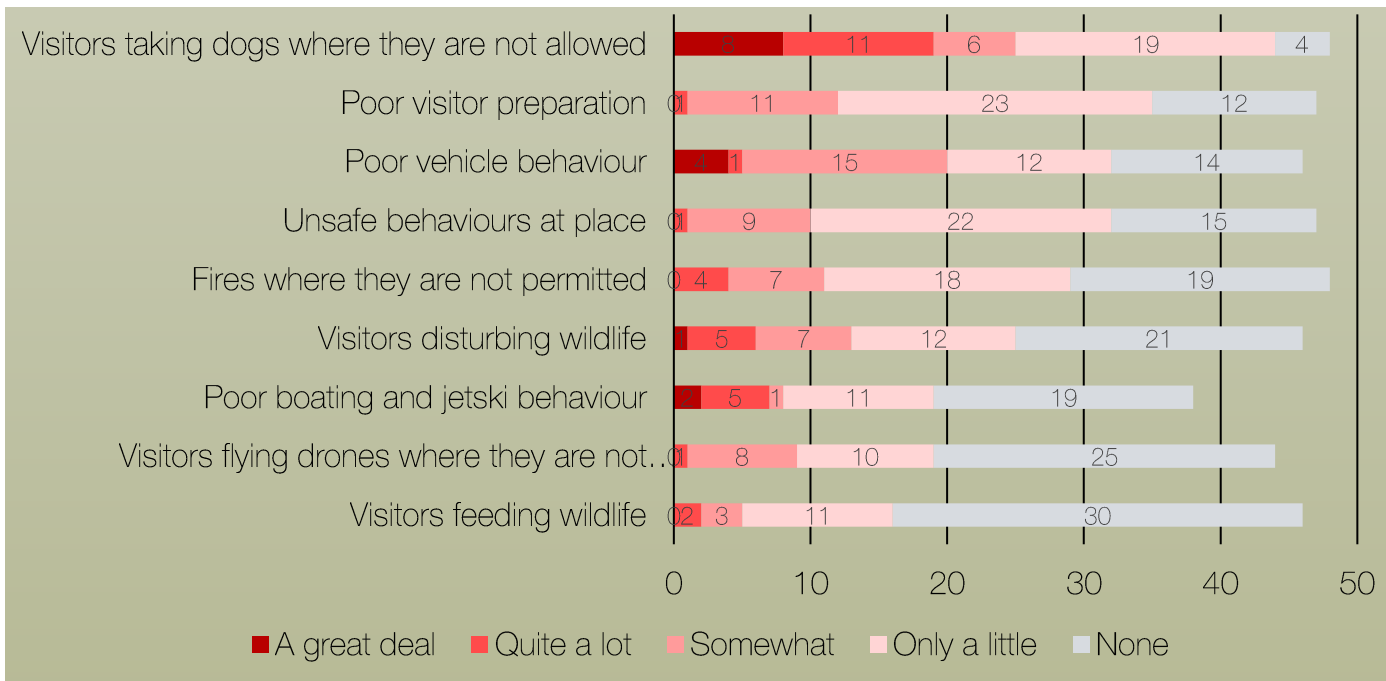


What poor visitor behaviour did heritage and visitor rangers observe?

The poor visitor behaviour which was most commonly observed by DOC rangers was visitors taking dogs where they are not allowed (44 of 51 staff). Poor visitor preparation, poor vehicle behaviour and unsafe behaviour at place were observed to some degree by DOC staff.

Visitors taking their dogs where they are not allowed was most commonly noticed 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' by DOC staff (17 of 51). A few rangers noticed poor boating/jetski behaviour, visitors disturbing wildlife and poor vehicle behaviour and reported it as 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot'.

DOC Heritage/Visitor Ranger Survey – Thinking about the behaviour of visitors, how much of the following did you notice in your district? (n=50) skipped = 1, unsure = varies

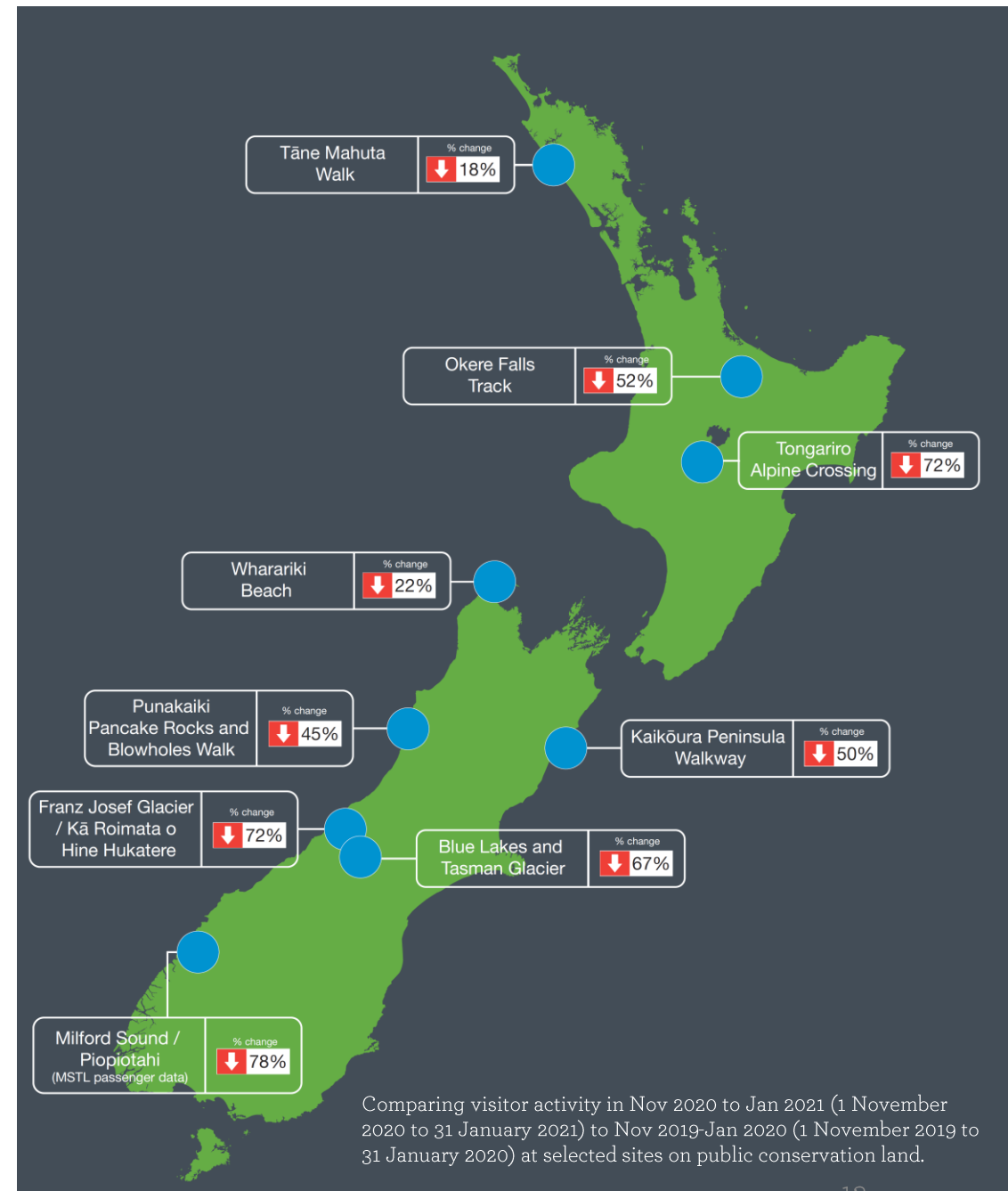


How was summer?



Visitor activity at iconic destinations continues to be lower than last year.

- High-volume iconic destinations in national parks continue to see a huge decline in visitor activity over November 2020 to January 2021 compared to the previous year. This significant decline is expected given the closure of international borders. Places that have been hit significantly include:
 - Milford Sound/Piopirotahi¹ – down 78%
 - Franz Josef Glacier – down 72%
 - Tongariro Alpine Crossing – down 72%.
- Visitor activity over summer dropped at all the selected high-volume places DOC manages, but the decrease was less pronounced at Tāne Mahuta Walk (Northland).

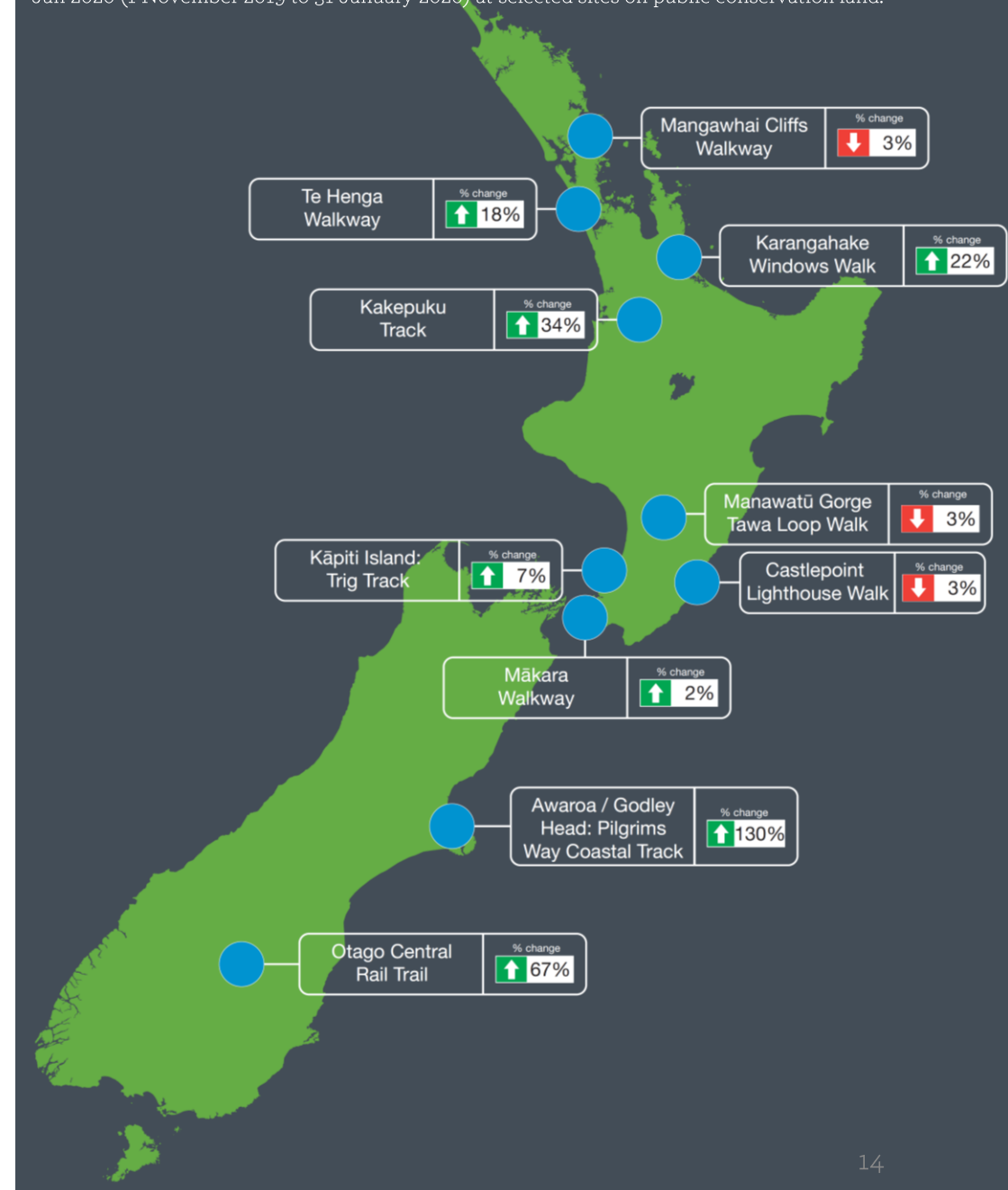


¹Data is from MSTL (Milford Sound Tourism Ltd) passenger figures.

Visitor activity at places near urban areas went up or remained stable.

- While the majority of destinations went significantly down in visitor activity, there were some places that grew in visitor activity or remained stable compared to the previous year.
- Places near urban population centres experienced visitor growth compared to the previous year:
 - Kakepuku Track (Hamilton) – up 34%
 - Karangahake Windows Walk (Tauranga) – up 22%
 - Te Henga Walkway (Auckland) – up 18%.
- Visitor activity in Lower North Island remained steady – the Kāpiti Island Trig Track, Mākara Walkway, Castlepoint Lighthouse Walk and Manawatū Gorge Tawa Loop Walk had similar levels of activity compared to last year.
- Awaroa/Godley Head: Pilgrims Way increased by 130% compared to last year – most likely due to the destination reopening after seismic strengthening following Christchurch earthquake closures.

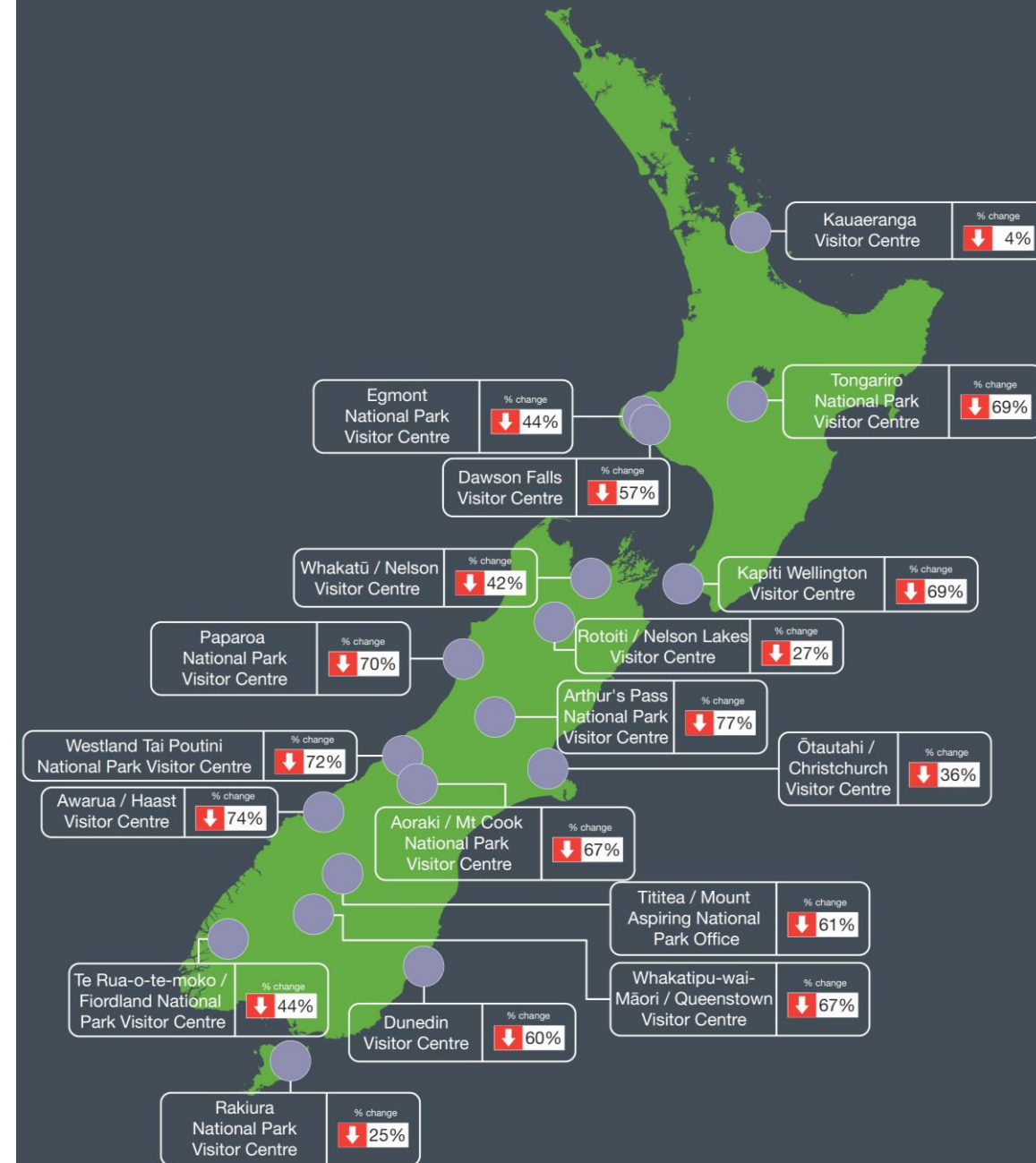
Comparing visitor activity in Nov 2020-Jan 2021 (1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021) to Nov 2019-Jan 2020 (1 November 2019 to 31 January 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land.



Visitor centres had fewer visitors over the summer months.

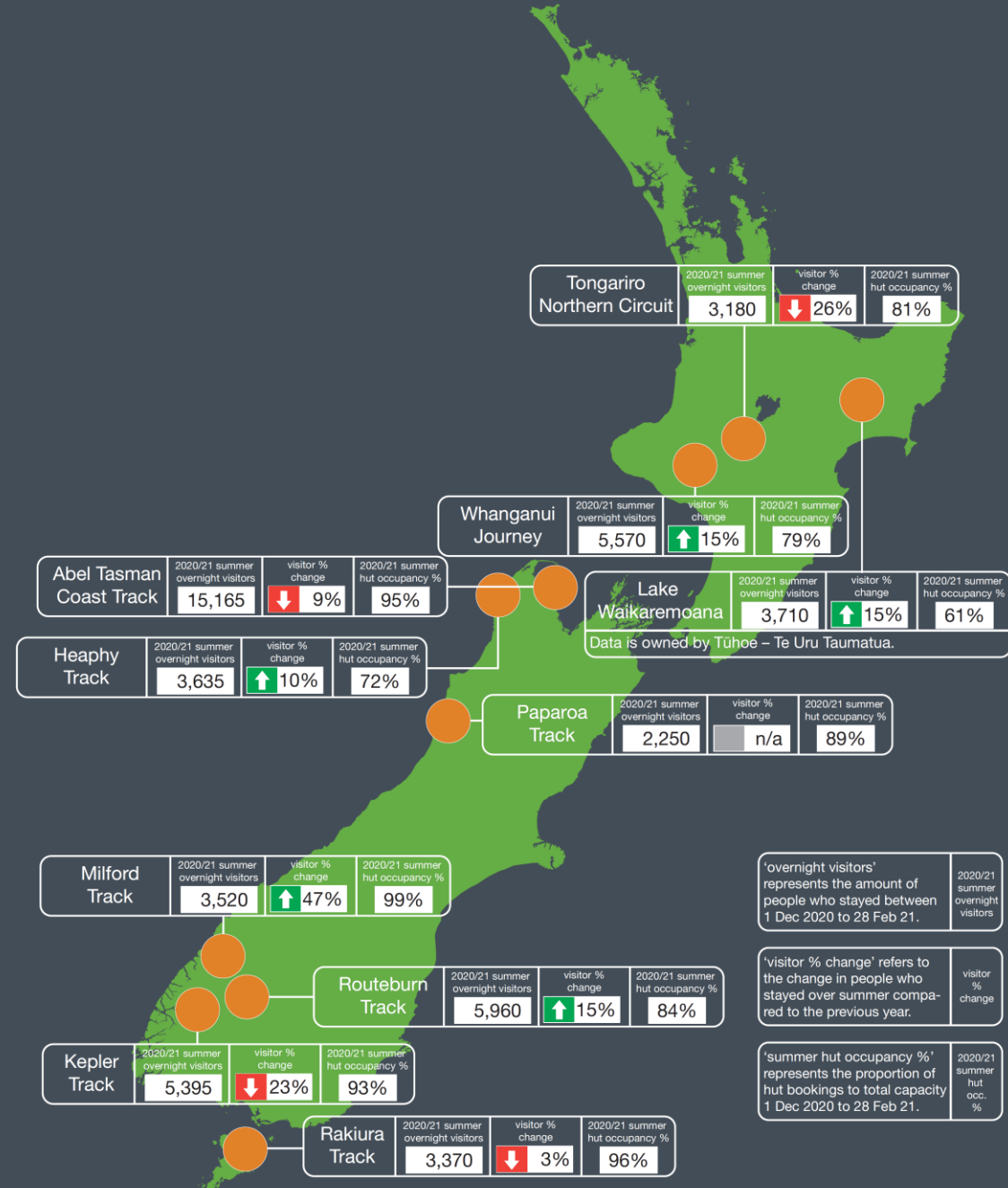
- The number of visits to the DOC Visitor Centre network decreased this summer by 59% when compared to last summer – visit numbers decreased from 640,000 visits to 262,000 visits.
- Kauaeranga held steady while Rakiura and Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes saw relatively modest decreases in visitor activity (down 25% and 27% respectively).
- Arthur's Pass, Awarua/Haast and Westland Te Tai Poutini experienced large decreases in visitor activity (over 70% decrease) when compared to last summer.
- Visitor centre rangers had many visitor enquiries about local walks and attractions, short walks, making or modifying accommodation bookings, dog permits and hunting enquiries.

Comparing visitor activity in Dec 2020 to Feb 2021 (1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021) to Dec 2019-Feb 2020 (1 December 2019 to 28 February 2020) at selected Visitor Centres.



Demand for Great Walks remain strong despite no international visitors.

- There was strong demand for Great Walks with around 48,300 people experiencing the Great Walk network. The Milford Track was at full capacity over summer.
- Looking at summer hut occupancy, Great Walk hut occupancy rates were an average of 84%. Rakiura, Abel Tasman, Kepler, Paparoa huts were close to full capacity.
- The Abel Tasman Coastal Track remains popular and was the busiest Great Walk over summer – more than double the visitors of any other Great Walk.
- Relative to other Great Walks, the Routeburn, Kepler and Whanganui Journey Great Walks had a high number of visitors.

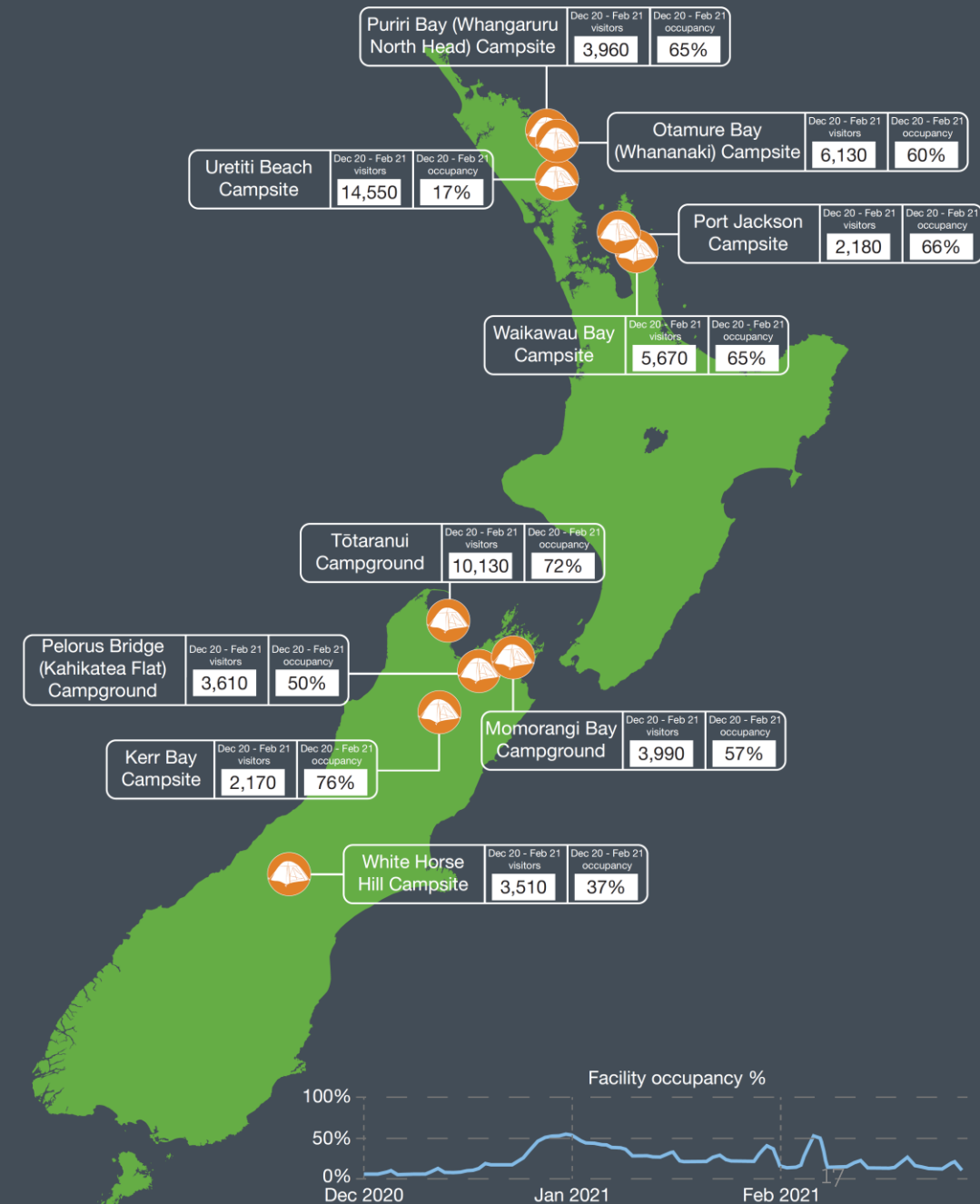


The amount of people who stayed from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at Great Walk accommodation, compared to the same period last year.

Aside from Great Walks campsites, where did people camp?

- Around 108,000 people camped at DOC-managed bookable campgrounds over summer. Many New Zealanders camped at large, coastal campgrounds in warmer climates such as Northland, Coromandel and the upper South Island.
- Uretiti Beach Campsite was the most visited DOC campground in New Zealand over summer. Tōtaranui (Tasman) and Otamure Bay (Northland) were popular too.
- Looking at occupancy rates, Kerr Bay (Tasman) and Tōtaranui campsites had the highest occupancy rates over summer. During the Christmas/New Year period, Coromandel campsites (Waikawau Bay and Port Jackson) were at full capacity.

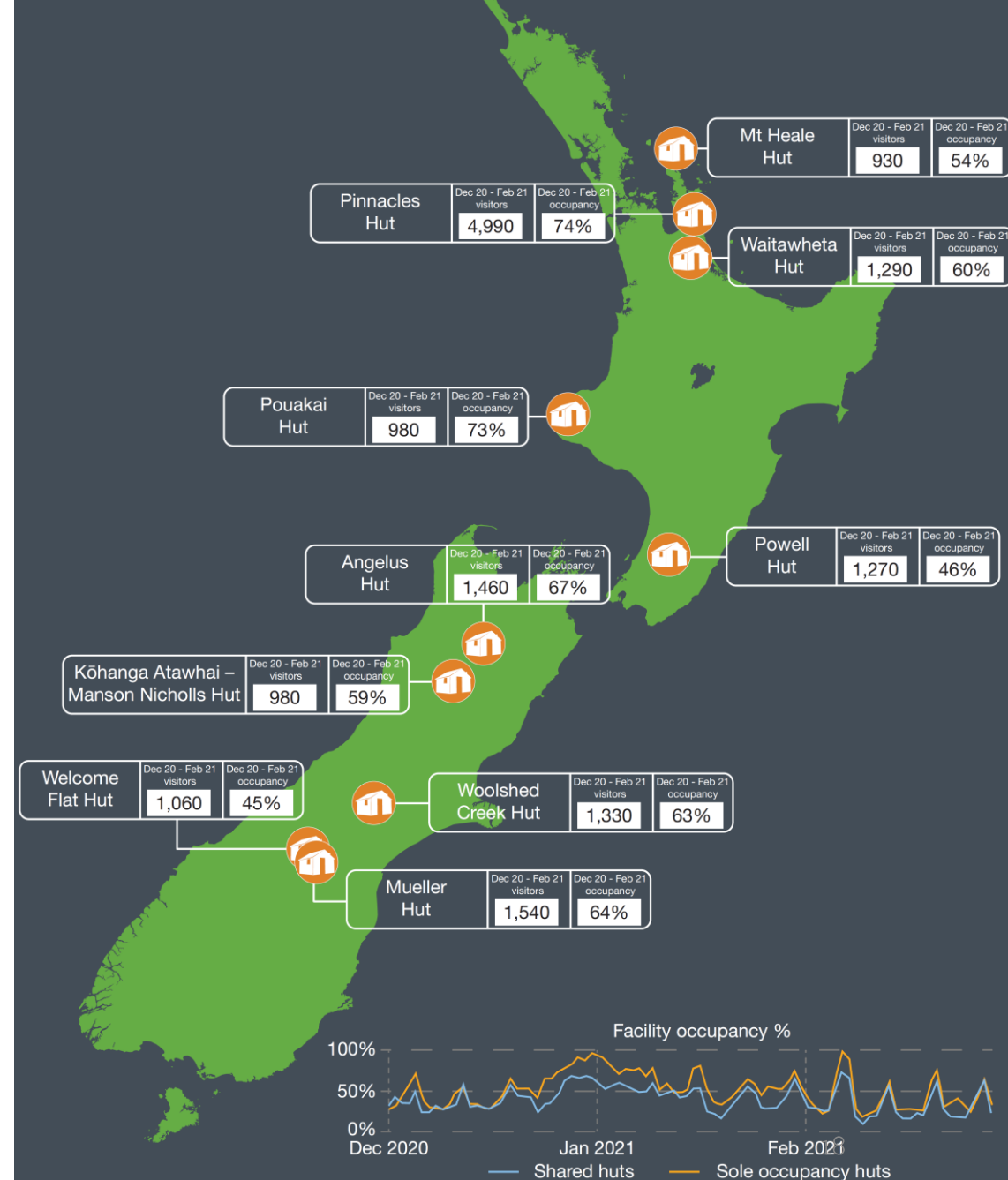
The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at popular campsites (by visitors) on PCL across New Zealand (exc. Great Walks campsites).



What huts did people stay at?

- While the Great Walks network is popular, many other bookable huts experienced high visitor demand. Around 30,500 people stayed overnight at other bookable huts over summer – with hut occupancy rates at an average of 39%.
- The Pinnacles Hut (Coromandel) was the most visited non-GW hut in New Zealand this summer, with close to 5,000 people who stayed there. The serviced 80-bunk hut had an occupancy rate of 74%.
- There was demand for iconic alpine huts located in national parks including Mueller Hut (Aoraki), Angelus Hut (Nelson Lakes) and Welcome Flat (Westland Te Tai Poutini).
- Huts close to population centres and an easy walk from road ends had a high number of visitors, such as Waitawheta Hut (1hr 15min drive from Tauranga) and Woolshed Creek Hut (1hr 30min from Christchurch).

The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at the most popular huts on PCL across New Zealand (exc. Great Walk huts).



How full were huts on weekends during summer?

- While non-Great Walk bookable huts averaged at 39% occupancy over summer, Saturday night occupancy for these huts averaged at 59%. Many huts were at or near full capacity over summer weekends.
- Tiritiri Matangi Island Bunkhouse (Auckland), huts on the Te Ara Pātaka Walkway (Canterbury) and Motukawanui (Northland) were at full capacity every weekend during summer.
- Easily accessible huts such as Peach Cove Hut (1 hour to hut), Rangiwahia Hut (2-3 hours), Otamahua Hut (15 min ferry) were popular on weekends.
- Recently rebuilt huts including Kōhanga Atawhai – Manson Nicholls Hut (West Coast) and Powell Hut (Wairarapa) also had high weekend demand.

Hut occupancy (1 Dec 2020 to 28 Feb 2021) – Saturdays only

Region	Hut	Occ (%)
Auckland	Tiritiri Matangi Island Bunkhouse	100%
Canterbury	Rod Donald Hut	100%
Canterbury	Packhorse Hut	100%
Northland	Motukawanui Hut	100%
Northland	Peach Cove Hut	98%
Taranaki	Pouakai Hut	97%
Coromandel	Pinnacles Hut	96%
West Coast	Kōhanga Atawhai – Manson Nicholls Hut	94%
Manawatu	Rangiwahia Hut	93%
Canterbury	Ōtamahua Hut	92%
Wairarapa	Powell Hut	91%
Coromandel	Crosbies Hut	91%
Canterbury	Woolshed Creek Hut	90%
Otago	Brewster Hut	90%
Nelson/Tasman	Angelus Hut	90%
Bay of Plenty	Waitawheta Hut	88%
Wairarapa	Atiwhakatu Hut	87%
Northland	Lane Cove Hut	87%
Wairarapa	Jumbo Hut	87%
Otago	Siberia Hut	86%

What is going on in the regions?



Summer 2020/21 – an overview of the DOC regions

Northern North Island

- The impacts of border closures are less pronounced in NNI with many places busy.
- New Zealanders visited campgrounds around the Bay of Islands over summer.
- Uretiti Beach welcomed more visitors than any other campsite on PCL in New Zealand.

Central North Island

- Huge decreases in activity at Tongariro National Park, Rotorua and Taupō – due to the lack of international visitors.
- People are staying at huts in the Kaimai Ranges, especially on weekends.
- The Whanganui Journey was busier this summer despite no international visitors.

Western South Island

- Continues to be a significant decrease in visitors – reflecting the high proportion of visitors that were international to WSI.
- The drop in visitors is most evident in South Westland (Franz Josef and Lake Matheson).
- Popular bookable huts were busy, but campsites had low occupancy rates.

Auckland

- Increased visitor activity at the limited sites monitored, including Te Henga Walkway (Muriwai) and at Kaitoke Hot Springs (Great Barrier Island).
- New Zealanders stayed at islands in the Hauraki Gulf over summer, especially on weekends.

Lower North Island

- The impacts of border closures are not noticeable in LNI, as some destinations remain at similar activity levels to last year.
- Demand for overnight huts continue to be strong, especially on weekends and near urban areas including, Powell Hut (Tararua) and Turere Lodge (Remutaka).

Eastern South Island

- Decreases in activity at short walks in Arthur's Pass and Aoraki national parks.
- Overnight tramps and family-friendly experiences, including easy walks from road ends, continue to be popular in Canterbury, especially on weekends and near Christchurch.

Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki

- Decreased visitor activity in the region, notably in Taranaki.
- Coromandel campsites remain popular, especially Waikawau Bay and Port Jackson campsites.
- There is high demand for Pinnacles Hut and other overnight experiences on weekends.

Northern South Island

- Decreased visitor activity in NSI over summer, noticed across the region.
- The Abel Tasman and Heaphy Great Walks, remained busy.
- Accommodation located at Nelson Lakes and Marlborough Sounds were busy too.

Southern South Island

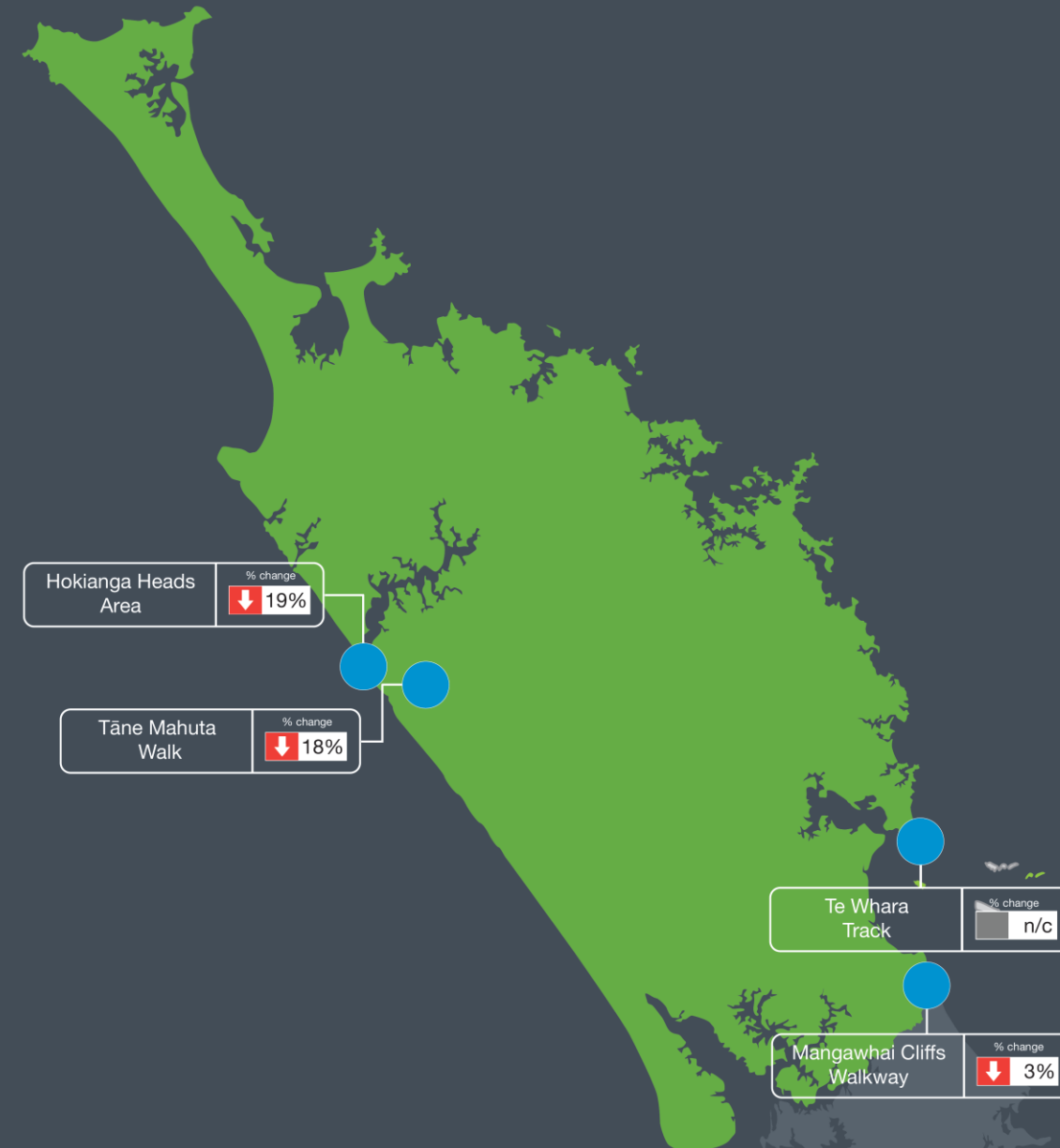
- While some destinations in the region were busy over summer, many destinations had significant decreases in visitor numbers.
- The Great Walks remain a drawcard for SSI – with high hut occupancy rates.

Northern North Island (NNI)



Where did people go in NNI over summer?

- Based on available up-to-date counter data, some destinations in Northland saw no change or a decrease in visitor activity compared to last year.
- Visitor activity at day walking opportunities near Whangārei such as Mangawhai Cliffs Walkway and Te Whara Track remained at similar activity levels to last year, despite having no international visitors.
- Places on the western area of Northland, including at Arai Te Uru, Hokianga Heads area and Tane Māhuta Walk decreased in visitor activity (down 19% and 18% respectively).
- Colloquially, the Bay of Islands had many domestic visitors with a noticeable increase in boat and jetski traffic over the peak holiday period.



Where did people book to stay in NNI over summer?

- Campgrounds located on public conservation land (PCL) in NNI have had a high level of demand, with some of the highest amount of overnight visitor numbers compared to the rest of New Zealand.
- Uretiti Beach and Otamure Bay (Whananaki) campsites were popular over summer, with Uretiti Beach welcoming over 14,500 visitors – more visitors than any other campground on PCL in New Zealand.¹
- NNI bookable huts including Lane Cove, Peach Cove and Motukawanui had high occupancy rates ranging between 67% and 77%, with high weekend demand.



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

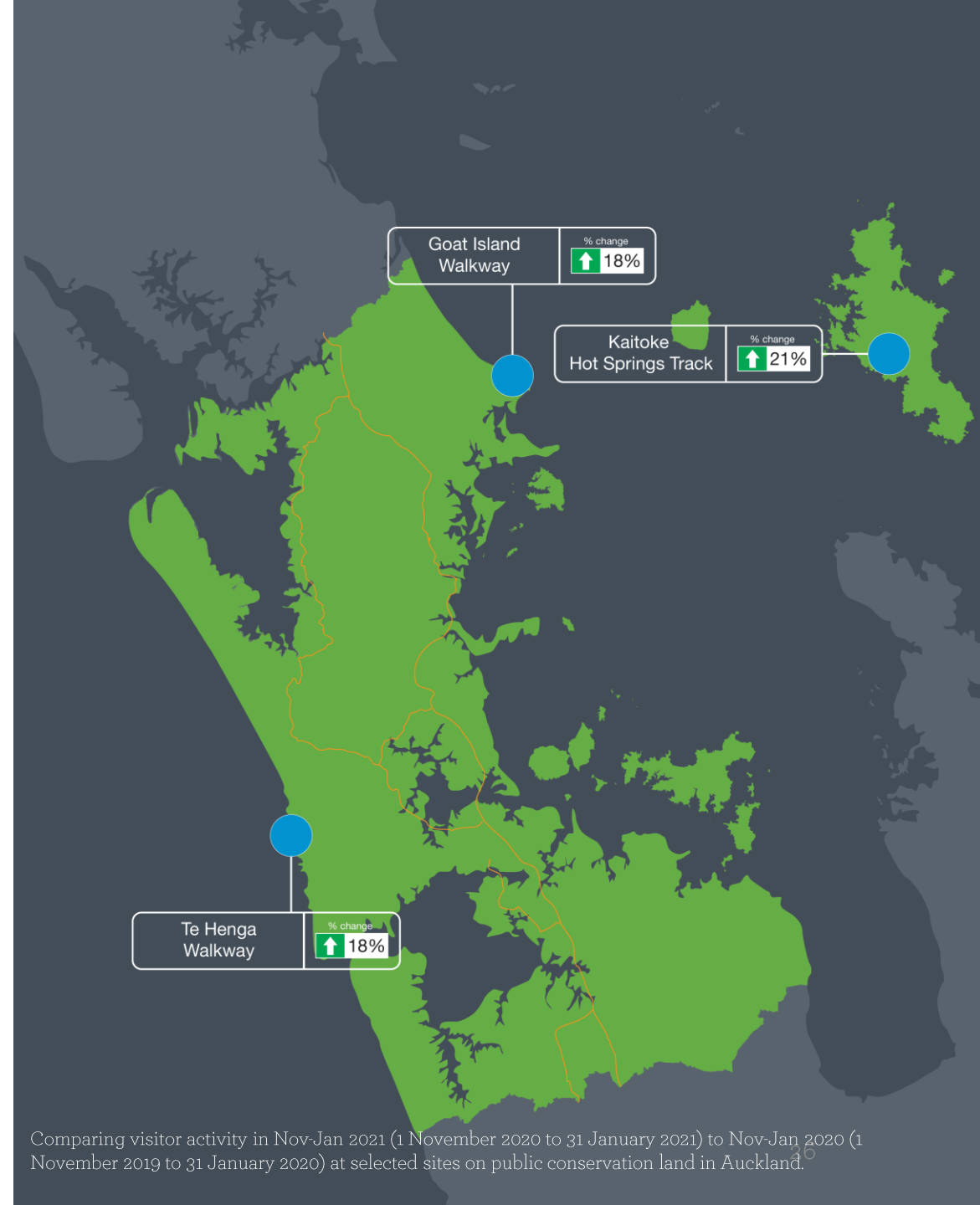
The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on PCL in Northern North Island. Urupukapuka Island campsites includes Cable Bay and Sunset Bay campsites.

Auckland (AKL)



Where did people go in AKL over summer?

- Based on available up-to-date counter data, some destinations in Auckland saw an increase in visitor activity compared to last year, even with regional restrictions¹ for part of the period.
- Local staff in Auckland noticed increased visitor numbers to some islands in the Hauraki Gulf. Visits to Kaitoke Hot Springs, a popular attraction on the Aotea/Great Barrier Island, were up 21% compared to last year.
- Te Henga Walkway (near Muriwai Beach) and Goat Island Walkway (near Cape Rodney-Okakari Point Marine Reserve) also saw an increase in visitor activity – both destinations up 18%.

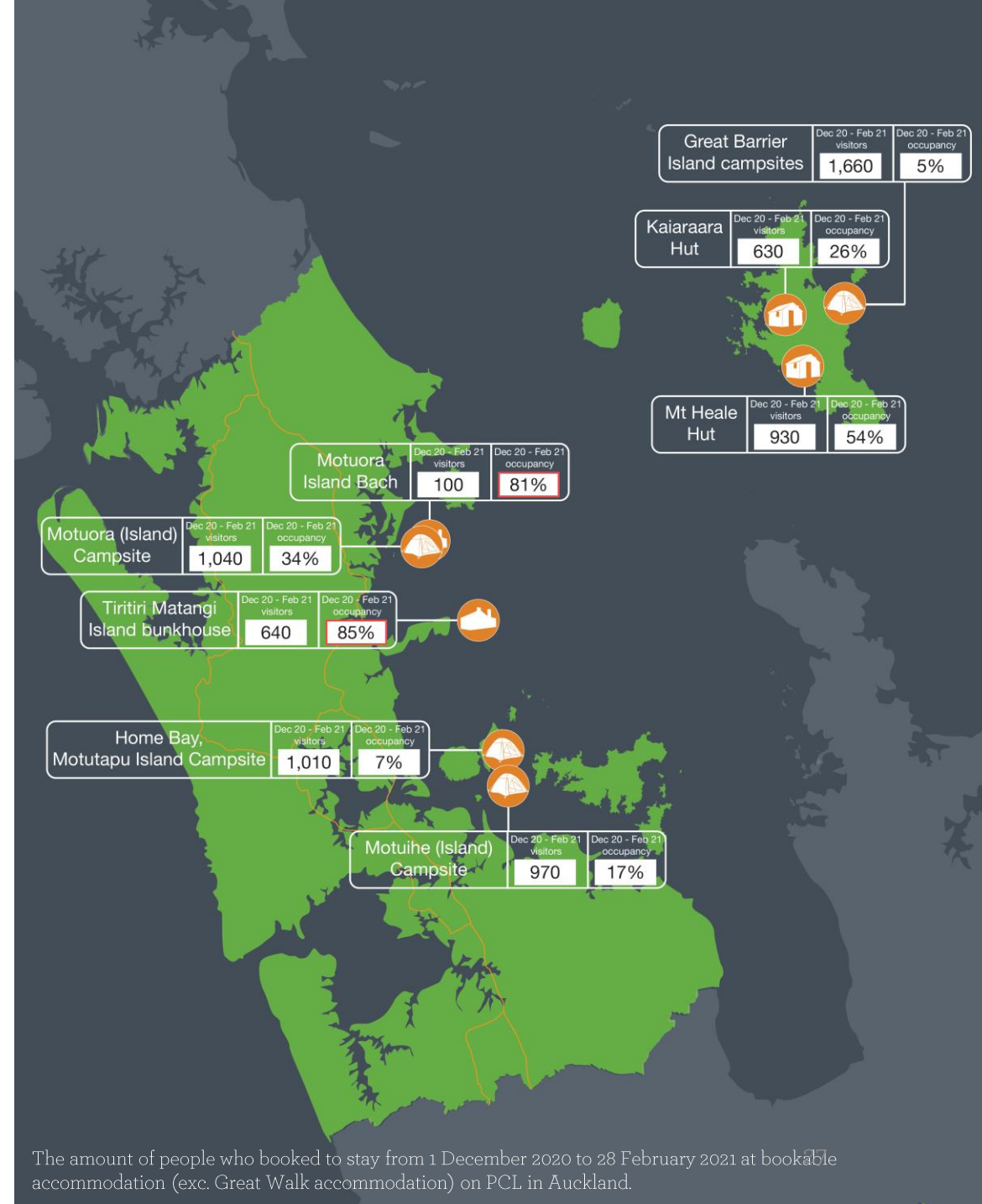


¹Auckland moved from Alert Level 1 to Alert Level 3 on 15 February and moved between Alert Levels 1-3 for the remainder of February.

Comparing visitor activity in Nov-Jan 2021 (1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021) to Nov-Jan 2020 (1 November 2019 to 31 January 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Auckland.

Where did people book to stay in AKL over summer?

- While Aucklanders were in Alert Level 1 for the majority of summer,¹ overnight visitor demand was low but remained high on weekends and holiday periods, such as Christmas/New Year and Waitangi weekend.
- Demand for Great Barrier Island campsites was high over Christmas/New Year while huts on the Aotea Track (Kaiaraara Hut and Mt Heale Hut) were popular on weekends.
- New Zealanders stayed at other islands in the Hauraki Gulf, including Motuora Island (campsite), Motutapu Island (campsite) and Tiritiri Matangi Island (bunkhouse).



¹ Auckland moved from Alert Level 1 to Alert Level 3 on 15 February and moved between Alert Levels 1-3 for the remainder of February.

The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on PCL in Auckland.

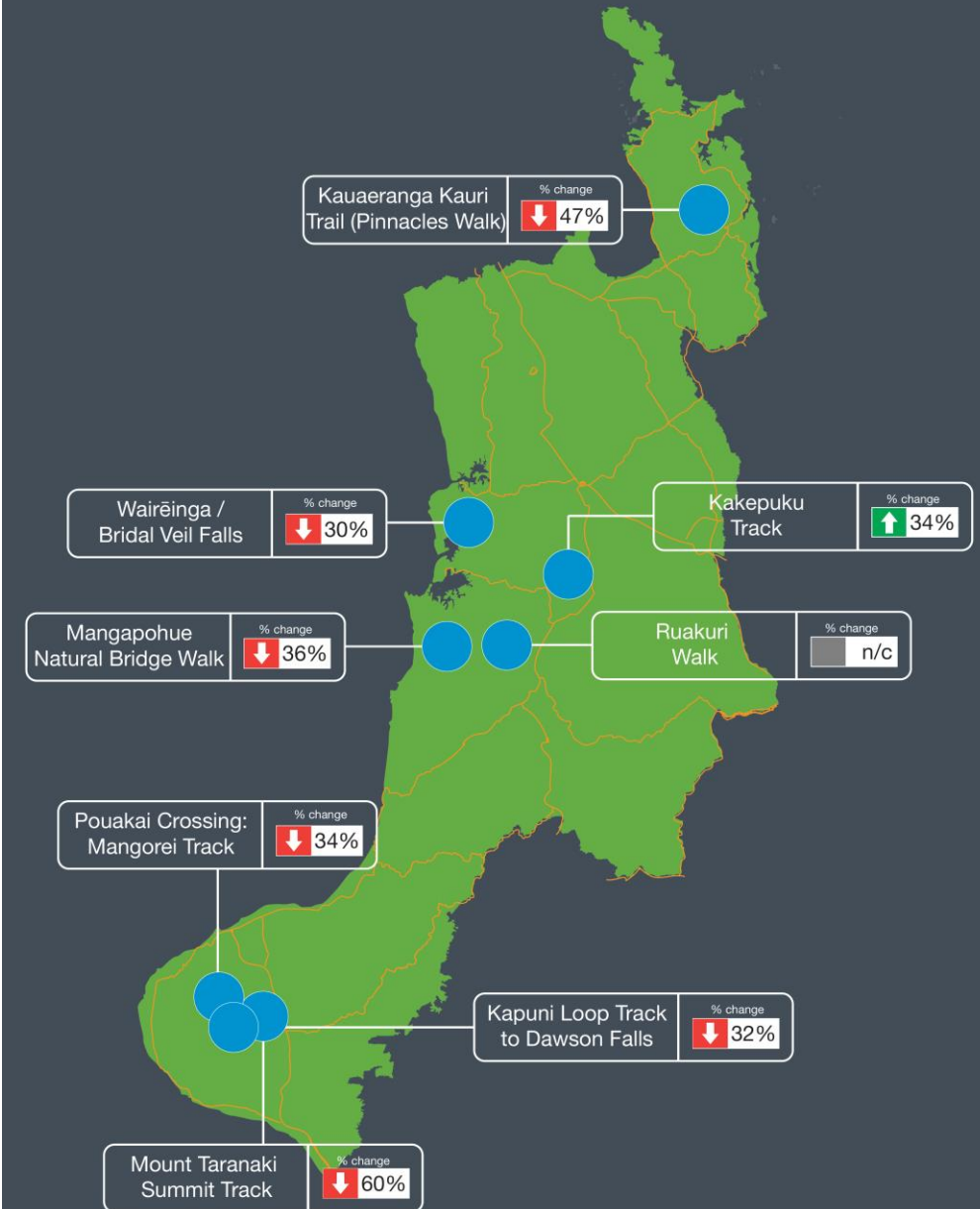
Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki (HWT)



Where did people go in HWT over summer?

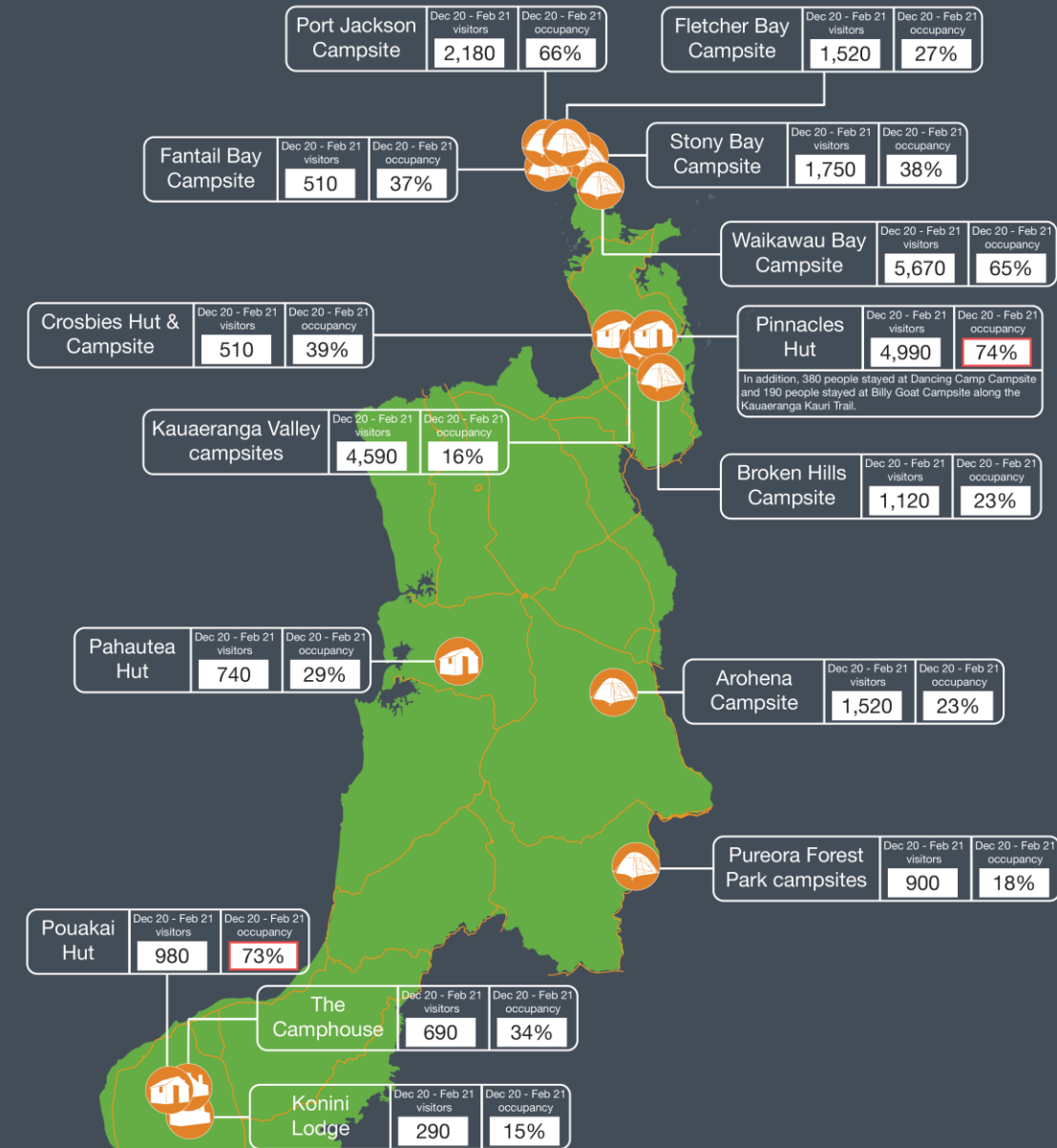
- Although New Zealanders visited many sites in HWT, visitor activity decreased where most selected tracks experienced lower levels of visitors than in previous years.
- Places in Taranaki saw large decreases – the Mount Taranaki Summit Track (down 60%), Mangorei Track (down 34%) and Dawson Falls (down 32%) had lower levels of activity compared to last year.
- Waikato rangers have noticed that some destinations were busier than last year. Visitor activity at Kakepuku Track (near Hamilton) increased, up 34%, but visitor activity at Wairēinga/Bridal Veil Falls (near Raglan) decreased by 30%.
- Activity in the King Country was mixed with decreased activity at Mangapohue Bridge but activity at Ruakuri Walk remaining the same.

Comparing visitor activity in Nov-Jan 2021 (1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021) to Nov-Jan 2020 (1 November 2019 to 31 January 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki.



Where did people book to stay in HWT over summer?

- New Zealanders stayed at campsites in Northern Coromandel (Waikawau Bay, Port Jackson and Stony Bay) – occupancy rates ranged between 27% to 65%, with high peaks (at or near full capacity) during the Christmas/New Year period.
- The Pinnacles Hut (Coromandel) was the most visited non-Great Walk hut in New Zealand this summer, with close to 5,000 people who stayed there. The serviced 80-bunk hut had an occupancy rate of 74% across summer and a rate of 96% on weekends.
- Aside from accommodation in Coromandel and Pouakai Hut (Taranaki), other bookable accommodation in HWT had low occupancy rates, ranging from 18% to 34%.



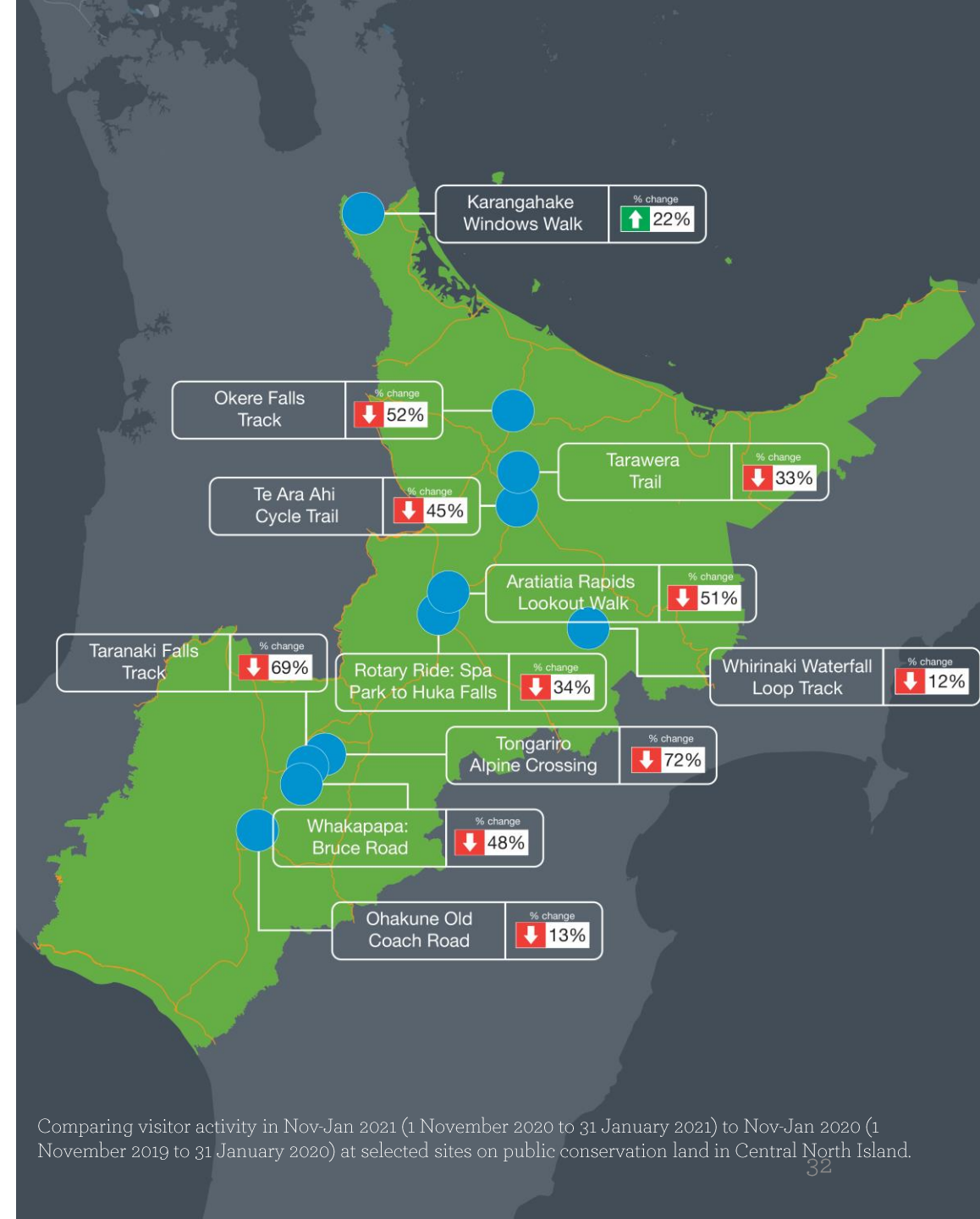
The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on PCL in Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki. Note: Kauaeranga Valley cottages, Kahikatea Campsite and Stony Bay Bach are not included on map as they have low (less than 100) visitor numbers this summer.

Central North Island (CNI)



Where did people go in CNI over summer?

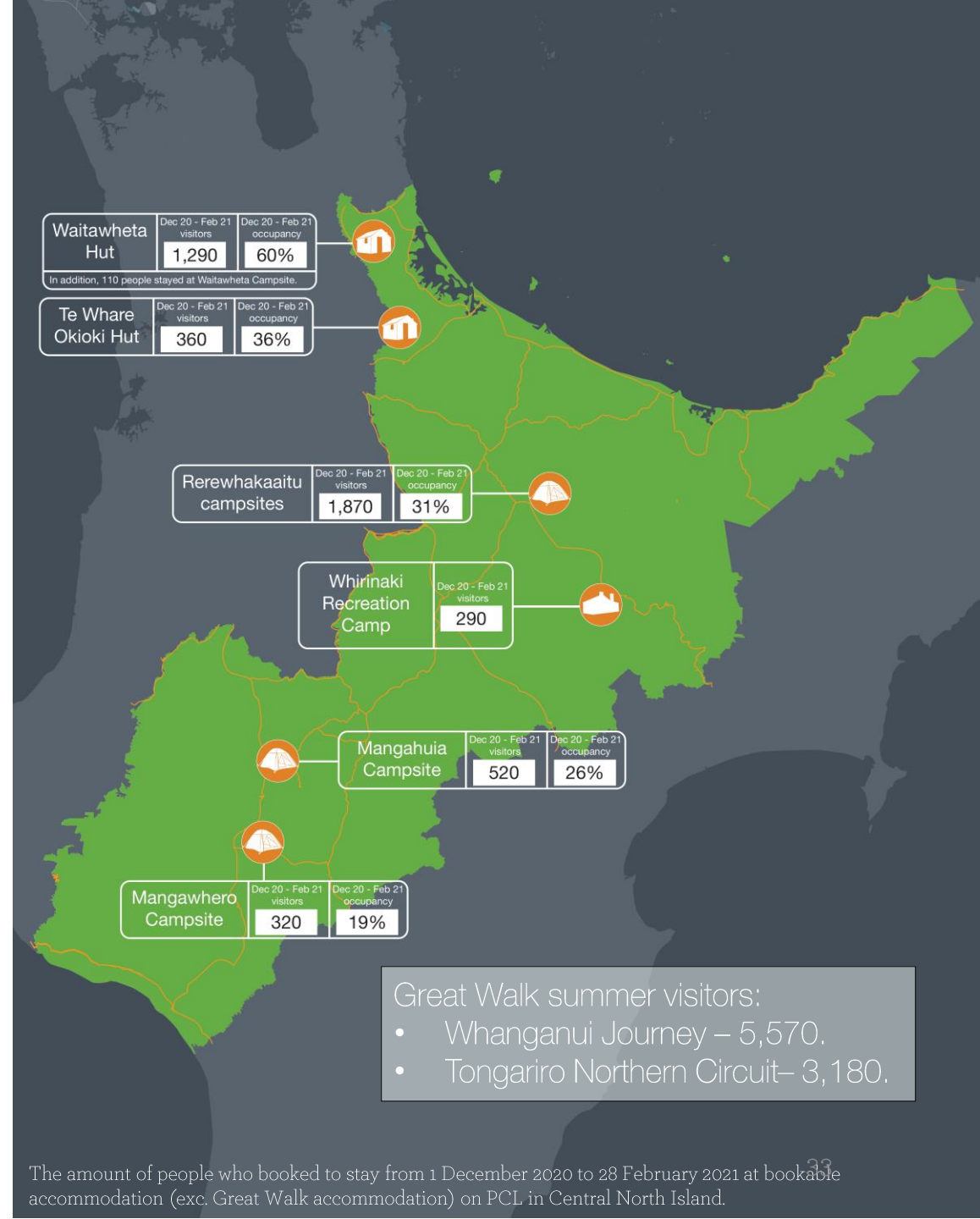
- Visitor activity in CNI decreased – some places saw more of a decline than others when compared to the same period last year.
- Like other regions of New Zealand, places that were visited by international visitors went down in use compared to last year. Tongariro Alpine Crossing visitor activity dropped 72% – reflecting the lack of international tourists. Taranaki Falls had a similar decrease, down 69% in visitor activity.
- Places near Rotorua/Taupō saw large decreases – Okere Falls Track (down 52%), Rotary Ride near Huka Falls (down 34%) and Tarawera Trail (down 33%) had lower levels of activity compared to last year.
- Karangahake Windows walk (less than two hours from Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga) increased in activity, up 22% compared to last year.



Comparing visitor activity in Nov-Jan 2021 (1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021) to Nov-Jan 2020 (1 November 2019 to 31 January 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Central North Island.

Where did people book to stay in CNI over summer?

- New Zealanders are canoeing the Whanganui Journey and walking Tongariro Northern Circuit in greater numbers this summer with NZ bookings significantly higher than last year. Summer hut occupancy rates for these two Great Walks range between 75% to 85%.
- Waitawheta Hut (located in the Kaimai ranges) has high visitor numbers relative to other bookable accommodation in the region. Both Waitawheta Hut and Te Whare Okioki, were near full capacity on weekends.
- Other places that experienced high demand in the region include Rerewhakaaitu campsites, especially during holidays and long weekends.

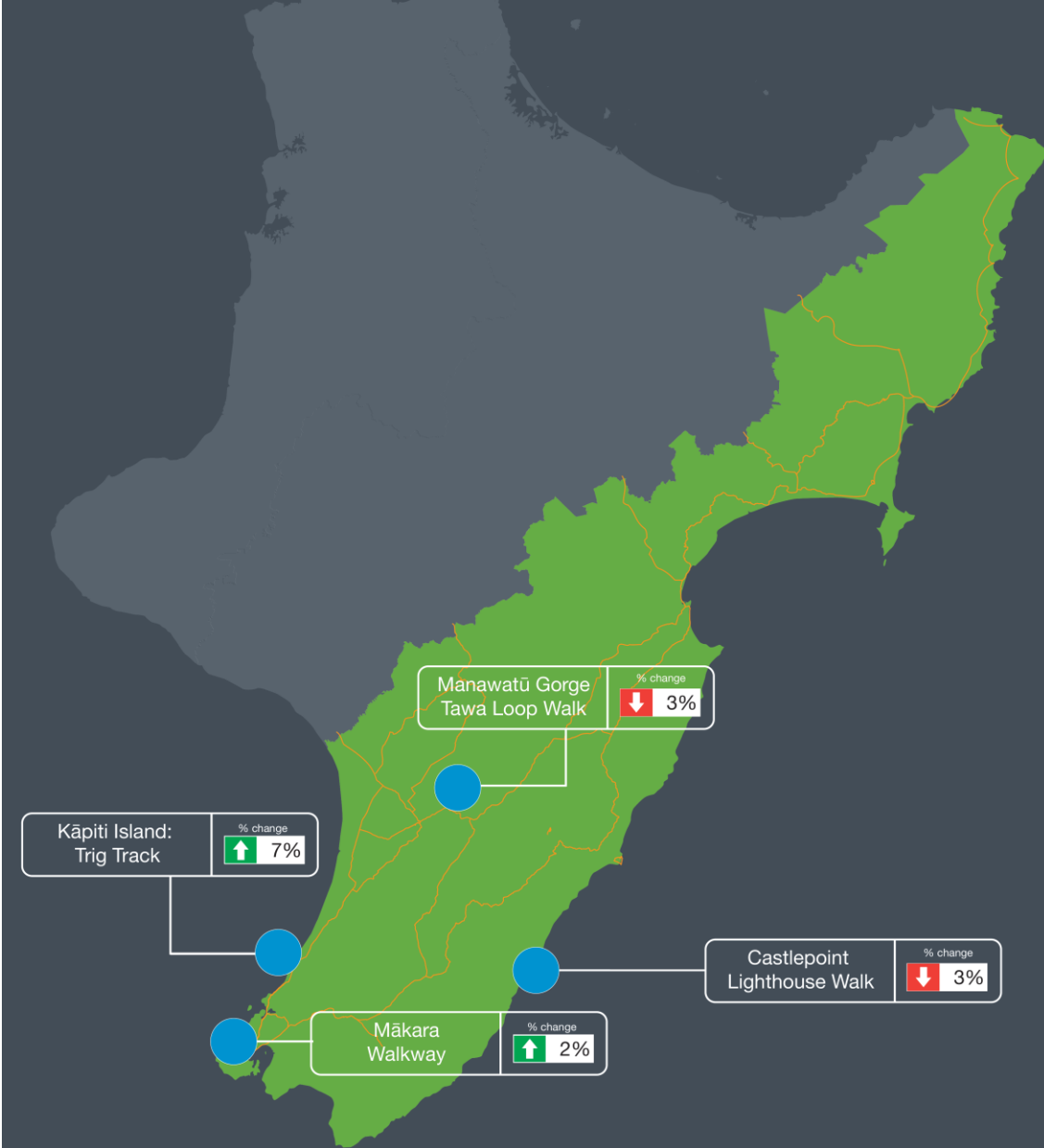


Lower North Island (LNI)



Where did people go in LNI over summer?

- Based on available up-to-date counter data, scenic day-trip opportunities from Wellington (visiting Kāpiti Island or Castlepoint Lighthouse) remained at similar levels compared to last year. Other destinations such as the Mākara Walkway and Manawatū Gorge Tawa Loop Track remained stable.
- Hawkes Bay, Manawatū and Wairarapa staff noticed an increase in New Zealanders visiting front-country and places near urban areas.

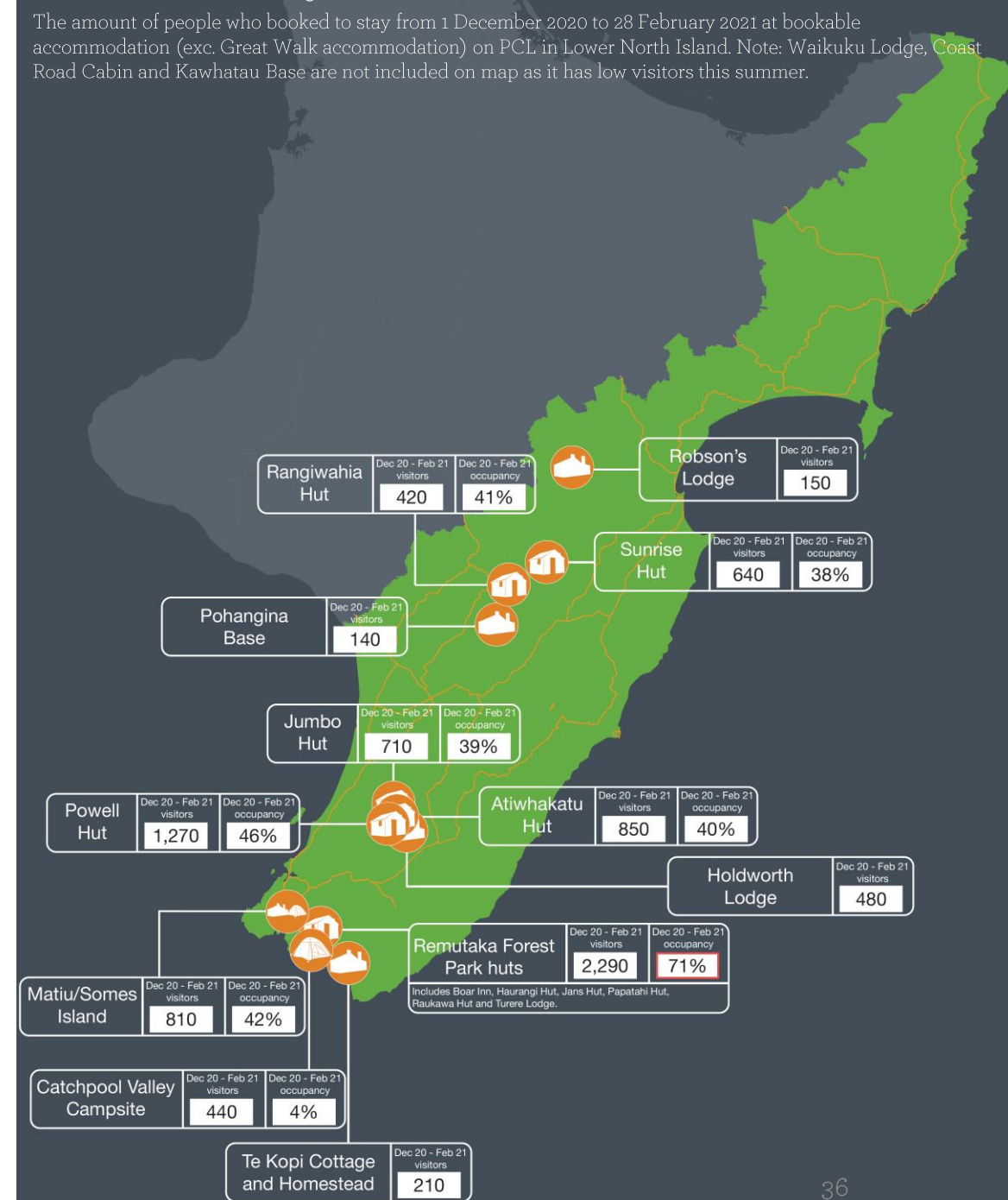


Comparing visitor activity in Nov-Jan 2021 (1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021) to Nov-Jan 2020 (1 November 2019 to 31 January 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Lower North Island.

Where did people book to stay in LNI over summer?

- There was strong demand for bookable Remutaka and Tararua forest park huts. Turere Lodge (1 hr from Wellington, 2hr one-way) and Powell Hut (1hr 30m from Wellington, 4hr one-way) welcomed many visitors – 1,270 people stayed overnight at Powell Hut.
- Weekend hut demand was strong in LNI with many bookable huts operating at or near full capacity. Turere Lodge, Mt Holdsworth-Jumbo Circuit huts (inc. Powell Hut) and Rangiwahia Hut (Manawatu) operated at or near full capacity.
- Matiu/Somes Island campsite was busy compared to other campsites in LNI. Weekend demand was strong with bookings high on weekends and low on weekdays.

The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on PCL in Lower North Island. Note: Waikuku Lodge, Coast Road Cabin and Kawhatau Base are not included on map as it has low visitors this summer.

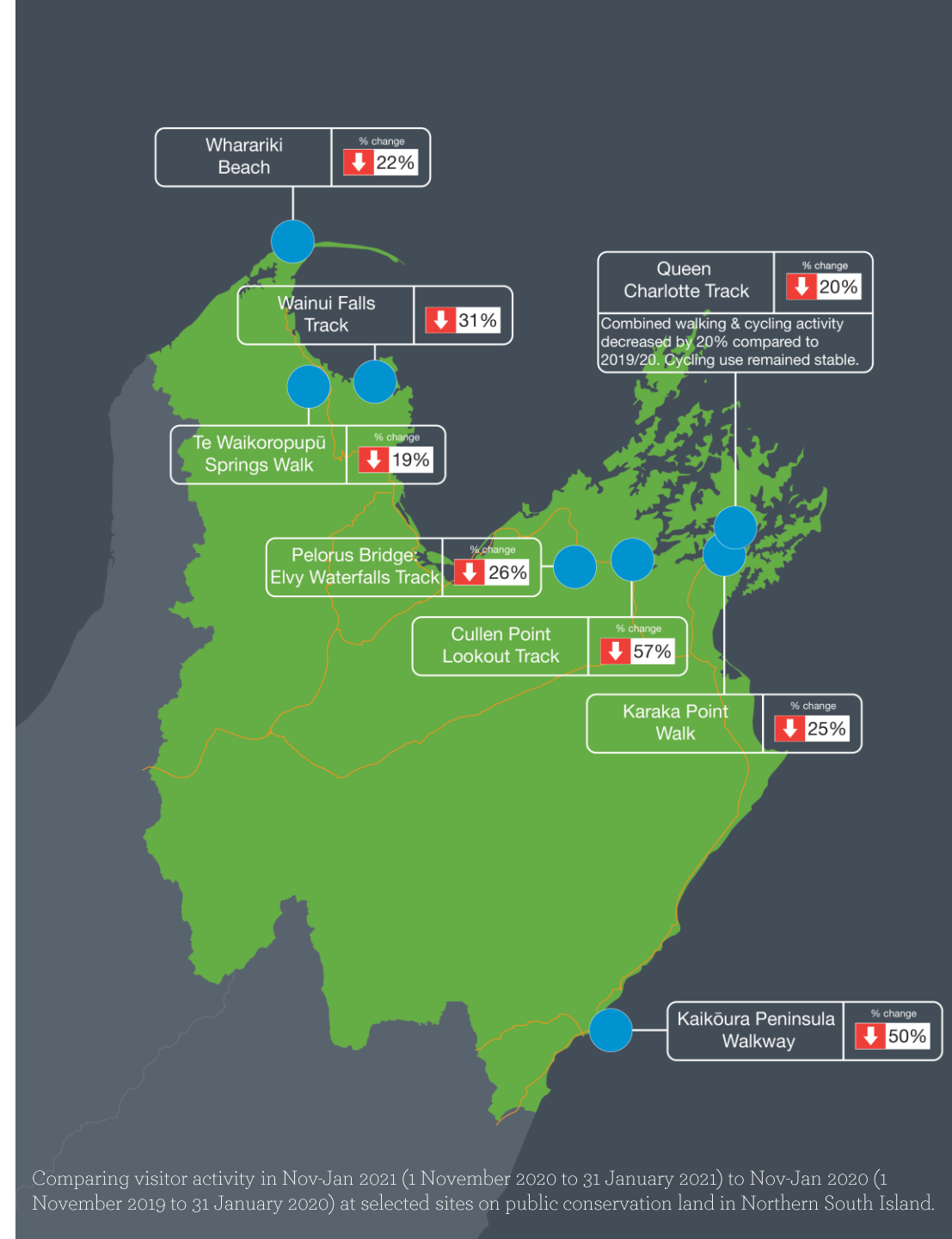


Northern South Island (NSI)



Where did people go in NSI over summer?

- While visitor activity in NSI remained steady during spring, the region saw a decrease in visitor activity over summer – reflecting the drop in international visitors during the peak summer season.
- Popular short walking opportunities saw a decline in visitor activity:
 - Kaikōura Peninsula Walkway – down 50% compared to the same period last year
 - Wharariki Beach – down 22%
 - Te Waikoropupū Springs – down 19%.
- On the dual-use Queen Charlotte Track¹ combined biking and walking activity decreased by 20% while biking activity showed no change to previous years and remained stable.

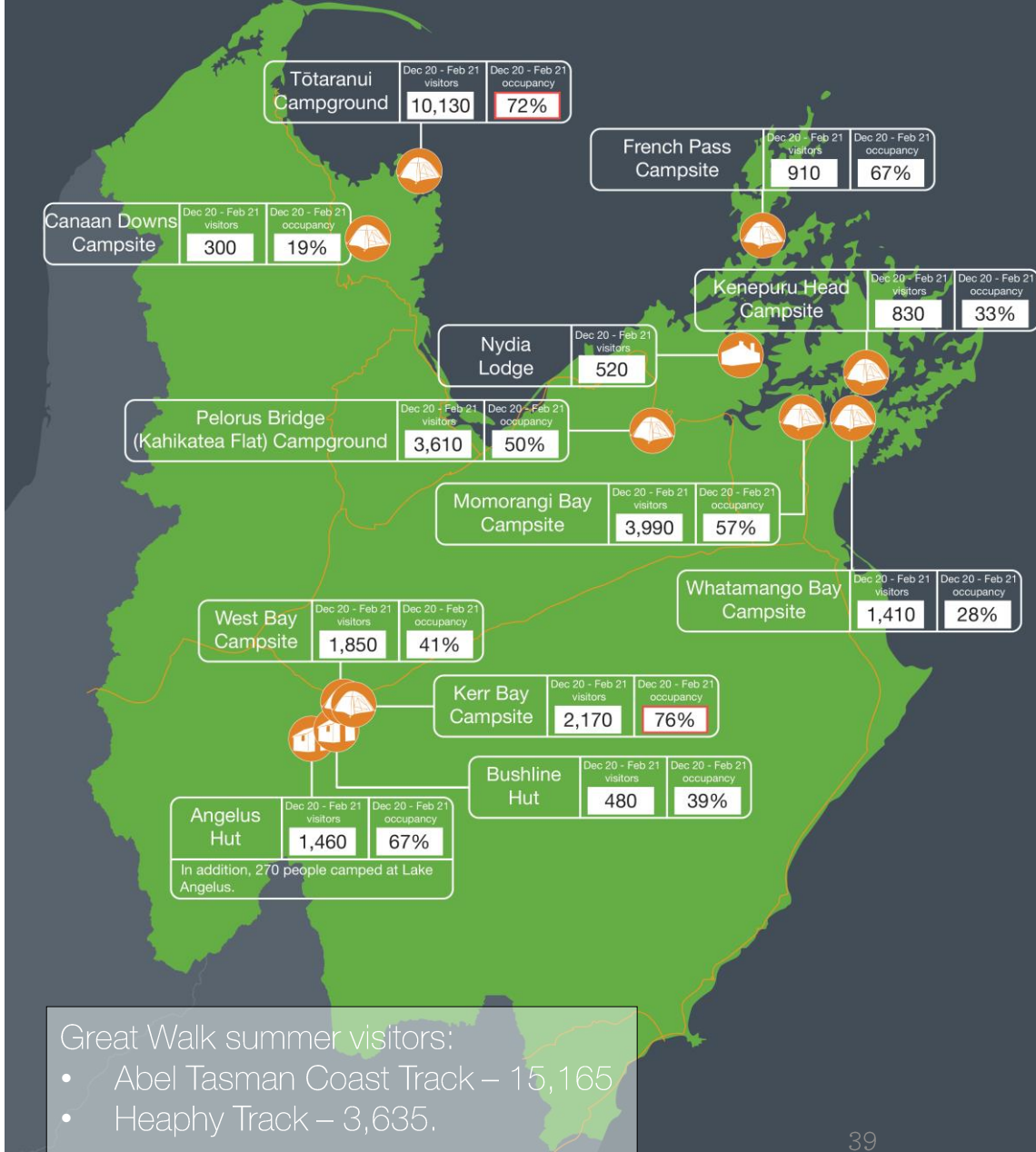


¹There are many counters on the Queen Charlotte Track. The Torea counters were used for this document.

Where did people book to stay in NSI over summer?

- The Abel Tasman Coast Track and Heaphy Track remained popular, with most huts along these Great Walks operating at full capacity.
- Tōtaranui Campground welcomed over 10,000 people – more visitors than any other campground in NSI over summer. It had an occupancy rate of 72% over the summer season.
- Camping opportunities in Marlborough were popular, especially at Momorangi Bay, Pelorus Bridge and Whatamango Bay.
- There is also strong demand for accommodation at Nelson Lakes National Park. Aside from Great Walks, Angelus Hut was the most popular hut in NSI, with 1,460 people staying in the hut over summer. Kerr Bay had the highest occupancy rate in NSI, accounting for an occupancy of 76%.

The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on PCL in Northern South Island. Note: Cobb Hostel is not included on map as it had low (less than 100) visitor numbers this summer.

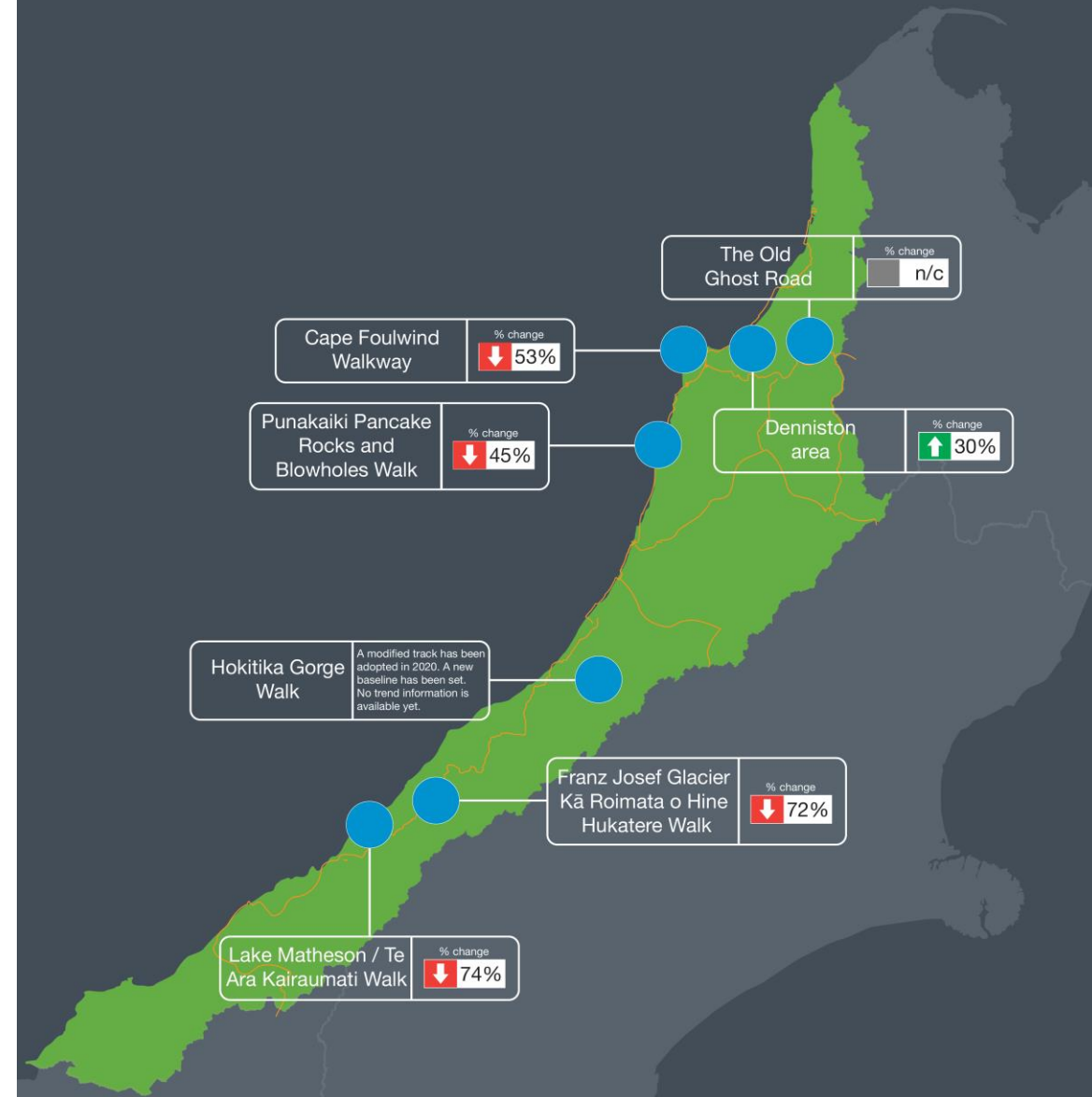


Western South Island (WSI)



Where did people go in WSI over summer?

- There continues to be a significant decrease in visitors in WSI – reflecting the regions high proportion of international visitors.
- The drop in visitor numbers is most evident in South Westland:
 - Lake Matheson/Te Ara Kairaumati Walk – down 74% compared to the same period of the previous year.
 - Franz Josef Glacier/Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere – down 72%.
- There is a large decline in visitor activity around the Greymouth/Buller area:
 - Cape Foulwind – down 53%
 - Punakaiki Pancake Rocks – down 45%.
- Denniston area was popular over summer – up 30% in visitor activity compared to the same time last year.



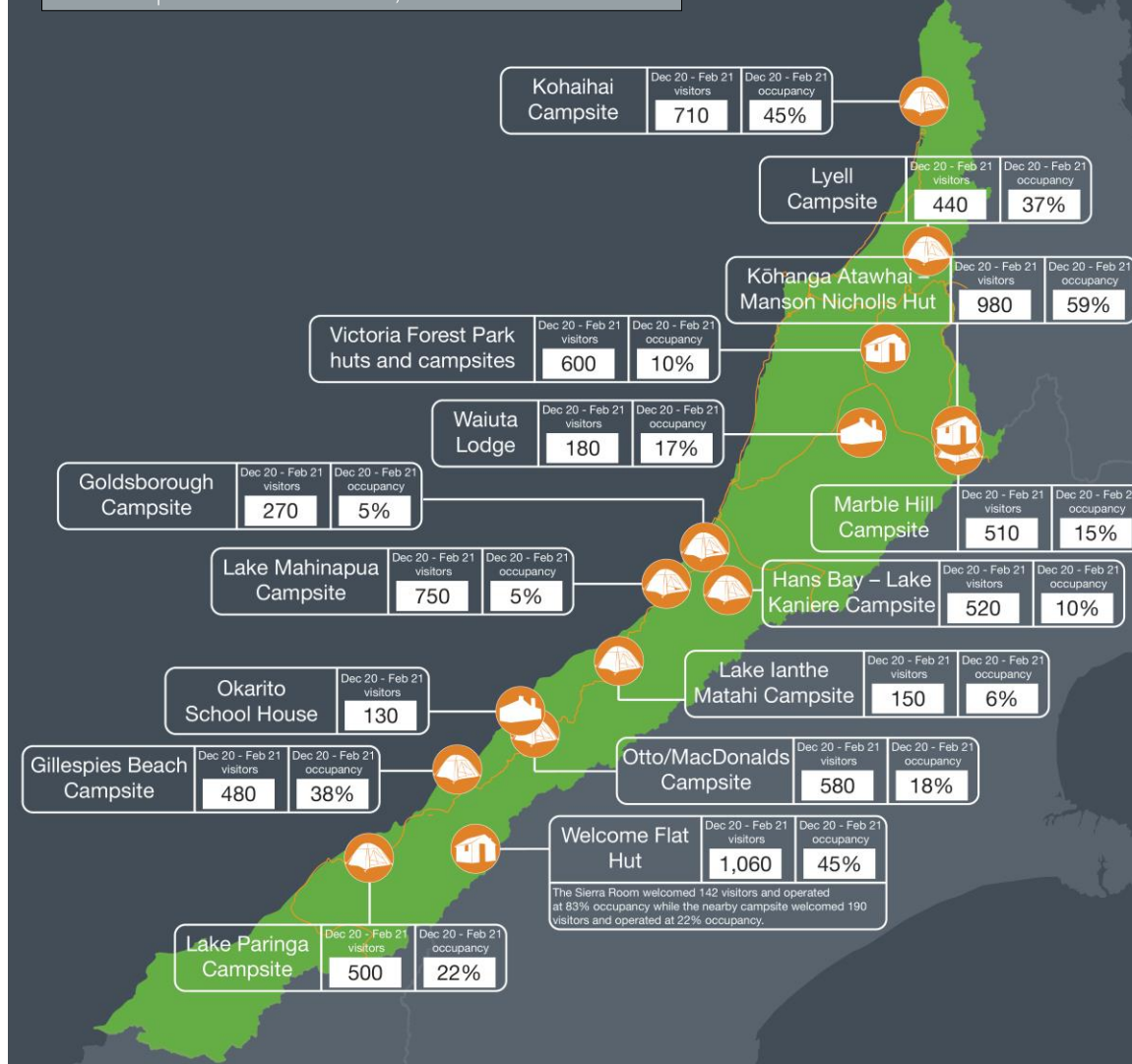
Comparing visitor activity in Nov-Jan 2021 (1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021) to Nov-Jan 2020 (1 November 2019 to 31 January 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Western South Island.

Where did people book to stay in WSI over summer?

- Bookings continue to be low in WSI compared to other regions in New Zealand – reflecting the drop in international visitors with camping occupancy rates of 11% and non-Great Walk hut occupancy rates of 30%.
- Camping activity in WSI was busiest over the Christmas/New Year period. Hut accommodation occupancy rates were highest during Waitangi weekend.
- The Paparoa Track as a network welcomed around 2,250 visitors over summer. Pororari and Moonlight Tops huts were at full capacity for most of the season.
- Aside from Great Walk huts, Welcome Flat Hut attracted the most people with over 1,000 people visiting the hut. The newly-built Kōhanga Atawhai – Manson Nicholls Hut was the most occupied hut in WSI, being at capacity most weekends during summer.

Great Walk summer visitors:

- Heaphy Track – 3,635 visitors.
- Paparoa Track – 2,250 visitors



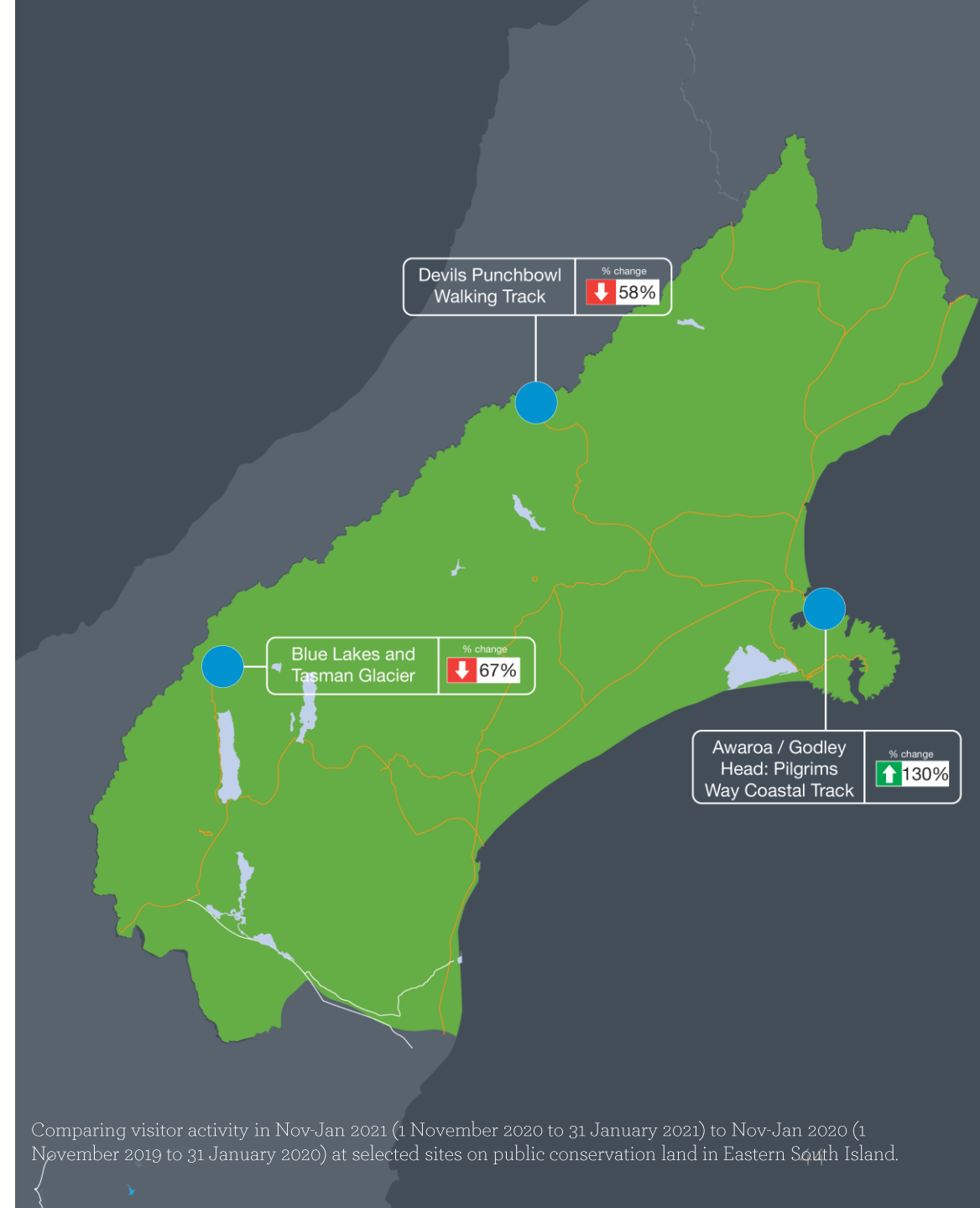
The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on PCL in Western South Island.

Eastern South Island (ESI)



Where did people go in ESI over summer?

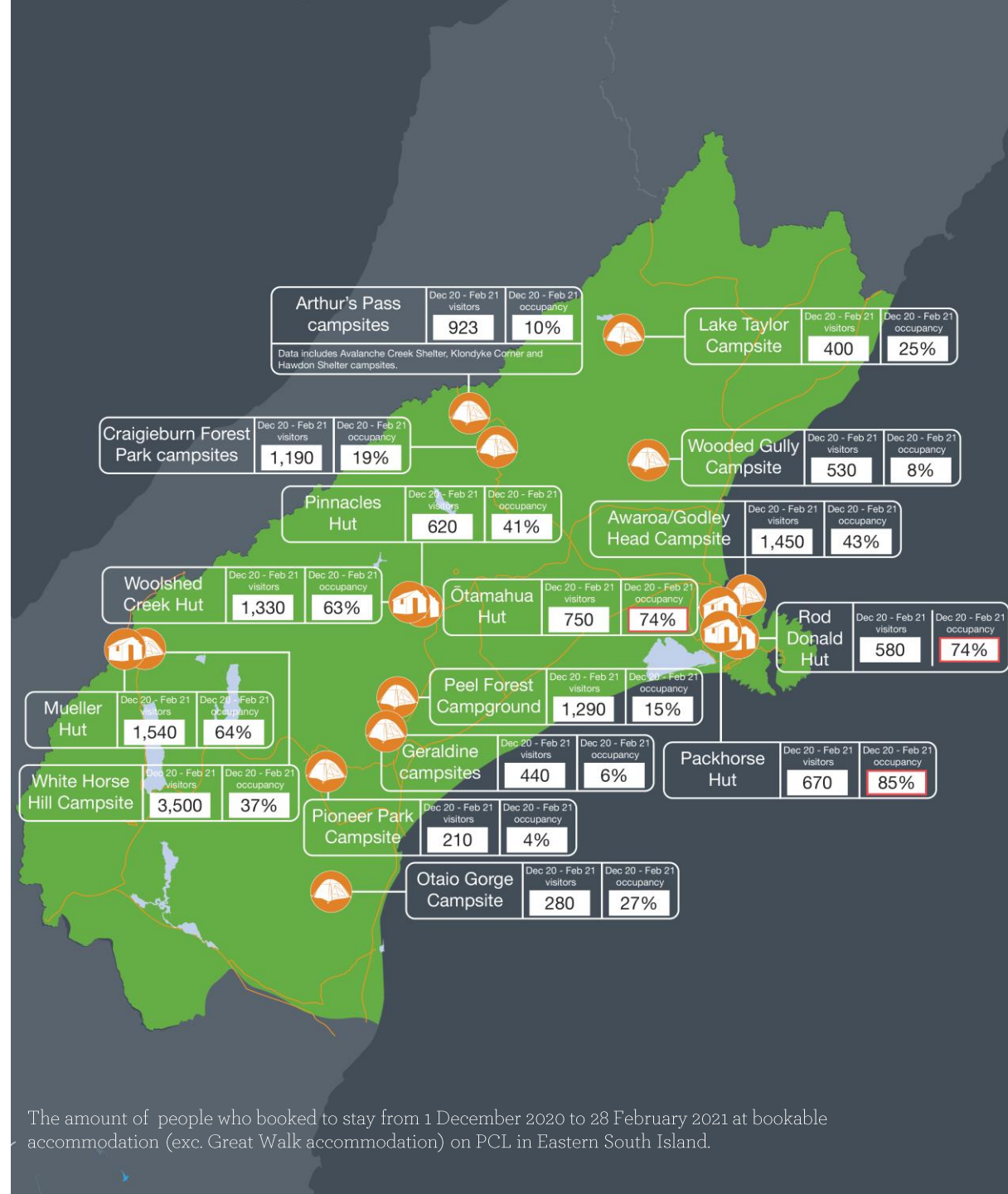
- Based on available up-to-date counter data, the figures for the three destinations on the map do not reflect visitor activity for the entire region in ESI.
- Local staff in Aoraki Mt Cook National Park noticed destinations being less busy in their district. Visitor activity at Blue Lakes and Tasman Glacier dropped 67% – reflecting the lack of international tourists.
- Like other walks in national parks in New Zealand, Devils Punchbowl, located in Arthur's Pass National Park in the ESI region saw a significant decrease in visitor activity, down 58%.
- Awaroa/Godley Head: Pilgrims Way Coastal Track increased by 130% compared to last year – most likely due to the destination reopening after seismic strengthening following Christchurch earthquake closures.



Comparing visitor activity in Nov-Jan 2021 (1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021) to Nov-Jan 2020 (1 November 2019 to 31 January 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Eastern South Island.

Where did people book to stay in ESI over summer?

- Many people stayed at places in Canterbury over summer, especially during the Christmas/New Year period where majority of destinations were at or near full capacity.
- Bookable accommodation near Christchurch was popular with New Zealanders (including families) at:
 - Ōtamahua Hut, Quail Island – 15 min ferry from Lyttelton
 - Packhorse Hut – 45 min drive from Christchurch
 - Peel Forest Campground – 1hr 45 drive from Christchurch.
- Mueller Hut (Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park) attracted the most visitors compared to other bookable huts in ESI.
- Looking at weekend demand, Te Ara Pātaka huts were at full capacity every weekend during summer. Woolshed Creek Hut (located on the Mount Somers track) was near full capacity most weekends.



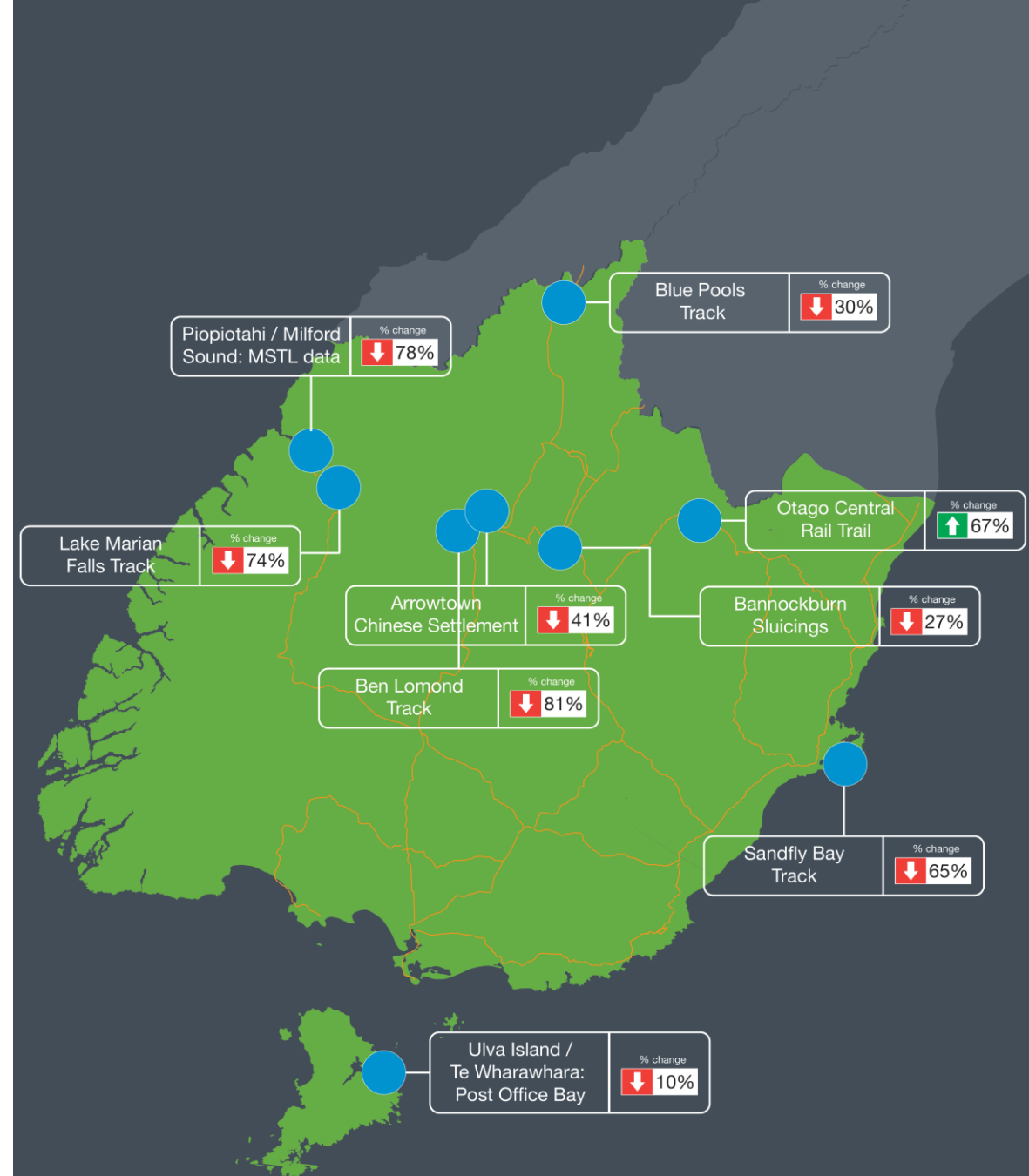
The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on PCL in Eastern South Island.

Southern South Island (SSI)



Where did people go in SSI over summer?

- As expected, there continues to be a significant decrease in visitors in SSI – reflecting the lack of international visitors.
- Milford Sound/Piopiotahi had a significant decrease in visitor activity, with boat passengers down 78% compared to the same period last year.
- Places in the Queenstown/Wānaka area, including the Ben Lomond and Blue Pools tracks decreased in visitor activity (down 81% and 30% respectively).
- The decrease in visitor activity was less pronounced at Ulva Island/Te Wharawhara, down 10%. Local staff observed many people visiting Rakiura National Park.
- Visitor numbers at Sandfly Bay Track (near Dunedin) were significantly lower – down 65% when compared to the same period last year.

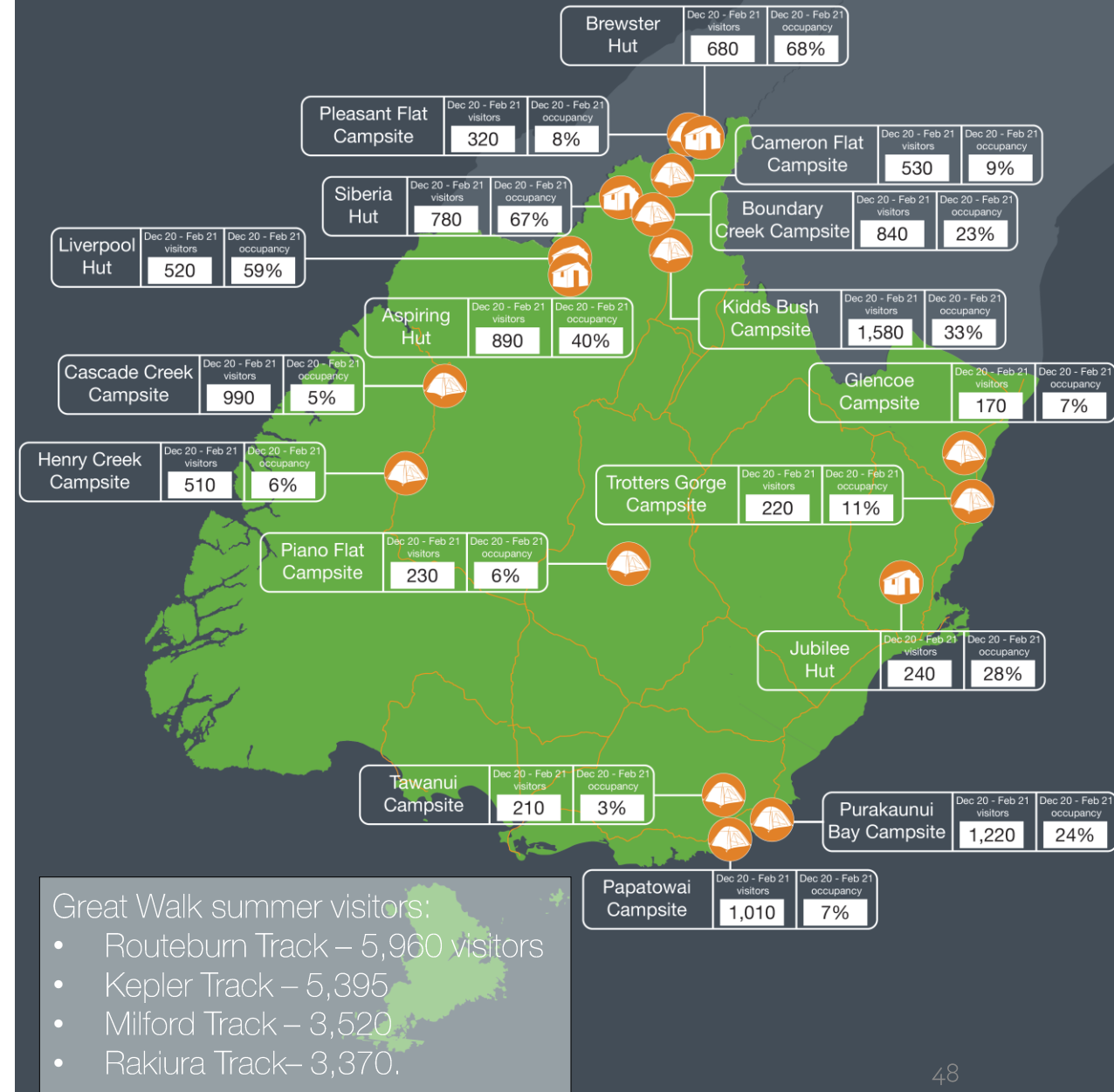


Comparing visitor activity in Nov-Jan 2021 (1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021) to Nov-Jan 2020 (1 November 2019 to 31 January 2020) at selected sites on public conservation land in Southern South Island.

Where did people book to stay in SSI over summer?

- SSI Great Walks remain popular, despite the lack of international visitors. The Milford Track was at full capacity over summer. Routeburn, Kepler and Rakiura huts were at or near full capacity.
- Aside from Great Walk huts, Brewster and Siberia huts, located in Mount Aspiring National Park, were popular, being at full capacity most weekends.
- Most campsite accommodation had low demand over summer, with peaks during the Christmas/New Year period. Kidds Bush (located alongside Lake Hāwea), Boundary Creek (alongside Lake Wānaka) and Catlin coastal campsites were the most popular campsites in SSI this summer.

The amount of people who booked to stay from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 at bookable accommodation (exc. Great Walk accommodation) on PCL in Southern South Island. Note: Deer Flat, Upper Eglington, Kiosk Creek, Totara, Walker Creek campsites are not included on the map below as they had less than 100 overnight visitors over summer.



Ngā mihi!



Data and information sources

DOC Omnibus Survey (n=1,048, n=1,158 & n=1,027)

From 25 Nov to 30 Nov 2020 n=1048, 26 Jan to 31 Jan n=1,158 and 23 Feb to 28 Feb n=1,027 adults (18+) participated in an online panel survey. The results are nationally representative of the New Zealand adult (18+) population.

DOC District Heritage/Visitor Staff Survey (n=51)

DOC created a short online survey for Operational staff to complete. From 26 Jan to 4 Feb n=51 rangers participated. The results cover 37 of DOC's 45 districts.

DOC Activity Counter System

DOC prioritised 98 activity counters (from over 700 nationwide) for data to be downloaded over the summer of 20/21.

DOC Bookable Accommodation Data

DOC's booking system currently collects accommodation booking data for huts, campsites and lodges across New Zealand. Estimated visitor numbers and occupancy rates are from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021.