

# 6 reasons why Abel Tasman National Park should be on your winter holiday list

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Hiker Walking Along Anchorage in Abel Tasman. Photo / Tamzin Henderson

Any trip to [Abel Tasman National Park](#) leaves your head swimming with vistas of golden sand, clear streams, native bush, and turquoise seas. But it's during the slower pace of [winter](#) that the park's beauty truly catches you off guard.

[The golden beaches](#) of the Abel Tasman can recharge your soul and energy levels; with no passports or overseas flights required. Here's why a trip there could be the perfect tonic for beating the winter blues.

## 1. The weather

Ask Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle skipper Jackson why the park is so good in winter and he doesn't hesitate.

"Because it is like this," he says – opening his arms and gesturing all around him at the glassy calm seas and sunny temperatures.

In [summer](#) a refreshing sea breeze can arrive mid-morning ruffling the moana, but the weather is most stable in winter, with sunny windless days following cool crisp mornings.

There's also little to no sea haze in winter and views from the water taxi extend all the way across Tasman Bay to [Nelson](#), and north to d'Urville Island.

Average daytime temperatures range from 12-16 degrees, just right for tramping and paddling in the park.



Winter at Abel Tasman: tranquil beaches, calm seas, vibrant wildlife, and crowd-free. Photo / Supplied

## 2. It's not as busy

There's no denying there's a buzz around the national park in summer. But with fewer people visiting, winter offers a more relaxed and personal experience.

It starts from the moment you reach the departure point, [Kaiteriteri](#), where you discover you basically have the famous golden sands to yourself. There are no queues for [coffee or food](#), and parking is plentiful.

On the water taxi, there's plenty of space to ensure you get a great spot to soak up the views and take [unobstructed photos](#).

Once on the track, you'll encounter fewer people and you'll find you largely have the beaches to yourself.

"It's the best-kept secret," Jackson says.

In the park you may encounter fewer people, but those you do meet are relaxed and happy to chat.

Workers aren't as pressured, and trampers are cruising. The vibe is slower and somehow more mindful. Travellers seem more present.

A Dutch tourist I met, who last visited the park 25 years ago, says he can't believe how good his trip has been.

"It's so quiet," he says. "It almost hurts your ears. You turn the corner and what you hear is either nothing or birdsong."

### 3. Winter's soft light is perfect for photography

Most photographers find the harsh summer sun in the top of the south a challenge - it's lower and less harsh in winter.

It's easier to capture the park's beauty as there's no need to wait for the golden hour at dusk and dawn. (Although if you do prise yourself from your cosy bed, you won't regret it.)

### 4. You'll see things in winter you won't see in summer

The top of the south is famed for its [crisp winter nights](#) and frosty starts. If you venture out on a cold frosty morning you might even see Kaiteriteri's golden sands turn white.

If it has been a hard cold frost you can see it on the beach.

"It's just like it has been snowing. The sand is white," a local says.

### 5. You can't beat winter, so why not embrace it

The best way to enjoy winter is to meet it head-on. In summer you need to get up early to see the sunrise, but in winter you can catch the early rays at a more leisurely pace between 7 and 8am, perfect for staying longer under your warm duvet. The sunrises are incredible with the sun pouring into the east-facing park across beautiful Tasman Bay.

Once the sun's up, it's invigorating to venture out on a winter's day. And with the sun going down in the early evening, you can reward days spent outside with a cosy night in. Huts in the Abel Tasman have fires and firewood is supplied if you're planning on making it [a multi-day trip](#).



A New Zealand kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*) spotted. Photo / Supplied

## 6. Encounter the friendly locals

Fewer people means you'll have a greater chance of seeing the park's native birds and other [wildlife](#).

For the past 10 years, the philanthropic conservation trust Project Janszoon has been working with conservationists, iwi, volunteers, the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust and [tourism operators](#) to restore and protect the park's rich wildlife.

One of their success stories is the reintroduction of kākā, now delighting visitors in the area around Bark Bay where they were released.

Whio (blue duck) and pāteke (brown ducks) have also been successfully re-introduced to the park.

This year acoustic monitoring of the park showed that robins / toutouwai, and other rat-sensitive birds – are increasing in number in lower areas of the park.

If you don't see kākā you will see and hear plenty of other native birds, such as weka, tūī and bellbirds.

On the boat trip home if the stars align you might glimpse dolphins, penguins, seals and other [marine life](#).

But there are some locals you won't see at this time of year, which you'll be pleased about. Winter means fewer sandflies and wasps, so there's less need to pack insect repellent.