GAP
Good Aviation Practice

In, out, and around Cook Strait

CAA
CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY
OF NEW ZEALAND
Te Mana Rererangi Tūmatanui o Aotearoa

Abbreviations and terms

Note: Throughout this booklet all altitudes are above mean sea level (AMSL) unless otherwise stated. Macrons are used on place names, but not when referring to aerodromes, VRPs, or MBZs, to be consistent with the language used in the *AIPNZ*.

ACAS	Airborne collision avoidance system
AD	Aerodrome section of *AIPNZ*
ADS-B	Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast
AFIS	Aerodrome flight information service
AGL	Above ground level
AIPNZ	Aeronautical Information Publication New Zealand
ALT	Altitude (setting on transponder)
AMSL	Above mean sea level
ATC	Air traffic control
ATIS	Automatic terminal information service
ATS	Air traffic services
CFZ	Common frequency zone
CTA	Control area
CTR	Control zone
DME	Distance measuring equipment
ENR	Enroute section of *AIPNZ*
FIS	Flight information service
FISCOM	Flight information service communication
GAA	General aviation area
IFR	Instrument flight rules
LFZ	Low flying zone
MBZ	Mandatory broadcast zone
NM	Nautical mile
NORDO	Non radio-equipped
NOTAM	Notice to airmen
PLA	Parachute landing area
PSR	Primary surveillance radar
QNH	A sub-scale setting which causes an altimeter to read altitude above mean sea level
RNAV	Area navigation
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RPA	Remotely piloted aircraft
SSR	Secondary surveillance radar
TM	Transponder mandatory
VFR	Visual flight rules
VHF	Very high frequency
VNC	Visual navigation chart
VRP	Visual reporting point (VRP names are underlined)

Contents

Radio phraseology

Radio calls that are clear, concise, consistent, and correct are essential to good communication. We recommend that you study Advisory Circular AC91-9 *Radiotelephony Manual*. The AC contains examples of standard radiotelephony phraseology for use by pilots and air traffic services. See also the GAP booklet *Plane talking*.

Cover photo: iStock.com/Jamie Fraser

The snips from visual navigation charts (VNCs) in this booklet are for display purposes only and not for operational use.

See the CAA website for civil aviation rules, advisory circulars, airworthiness directives, forms, and more safety publications. Visit aviation.govt.nz.

Every effort is made to ensure the information in this booklet is accurate and up-to-date at the time of publishing. But numerous changes can occur with time, especially in regard to airspace and legislation. Readers are reminded to get appropriate up-to-date information.

Introduction

Cook Strait is the channel of water that separates the South Island of New Zealand from the North Island. It's roughly 22 kilometres in width, averages 128 metres in depth, and connects the Tasman Sea in the west with the Pacific Ocean in the east.

For the purposes of this publication, Cook Strait is defined as that area which starts at Kaikōura in the east of the South Island, and moves up to the Golden Bay area in the north. It then takes in the Strait and on to Paraparaumu on the west coast of the North Island, and over to Masterton on the North Island's east coast.

The aerodromes covered in this booklet are listed below.

South Island

- Kaikoura (NZKI)
- Omaka (NZOM) / Woodbourne (NZWB) / Cloudy Bay (NZCL)
- Picton (NZPN)
- Nelson (NZNS)
- Motueka (NZMK)
- Takaka (NZTK).

North Island

- Wellington (NZWN)
- Paraparaumu (NZPP)
- Masterton (Hood Aerodrome) (NZMS).

Terrain and weather

The mountainous makeup of the terrain in the area provides ideal conditions for strong winds to develop, which can result in strong turbulence and mountain wave conditions. Turbulence can occur around the south coast of the North Island, and affects aircraft primarily when they're joining Wellington from the south in strong northerly conditions.

It's a good idea, in terms of height and safety, to fly controlled VFR through the Wellington controlled airspace sector. In a north-westerly, it's easy to be inadvertently blown into the controlled airspace sector when flying on a line between Cape Jackson and Kapiti Island. The funnel effect of the wind through Cook Strait increases the wind. If you can't get controlled VFR due to controller workload, you can request, and may receive, radar monitoring over the water. Permission depends on controller workload.

Aerial view across Cook Strait separating the North and South Islands, from above Cape Terāwhiti.

The weather over Cook Strait can change quickly, and conditions in the upper South Island may be completely different from those in the lower North Island. It's common for weather to be localised – sunny, calm conditions in Nelson don't necessarily mean the same in Wellington! Crossing the Strait from any of the aerodromes listed on the previous page can easily involve passage through two or three microclimates of weather.

It's vital you familiarise yourself with the safety procedures for flying in, out, and around Cook Strait before embarking on a trip into the area.

This GAP booklet

This Good Aviation Practice (GAP) booklet is designed to give pilots information, tips, and warnings about operating in, out, and around this airspace. It must be supplemented with up-to-date charts, AIP Supplements, and NOTAMs before flying, along with sufficient ground-based study, if you're unfamiliar with the airspace.

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Airspace and communication

Overview

Outside the Wellington and Woodbourne CTRs, the lower level of controlled airspace is 1500 feet AMSL to the immediate south of the Wellington CTR, and then 2500 feet AMSL across the wider Strait area.

Further variable lower levels of controlled airspace are between 3500 feet and 7500 feet AMSL across the extent of the area. VNCs 'C13 Kaikoura', 'C7 Marlborough', and 'C2 Wellington' depict the area, and pilots should carefully review these charts when preflight planning for flights across the Strait and wider area.

In addition to the CTRs at Wellington and Woodbourne, the airspace includes areas of controlled Class C airspace, uncontrolled Class G airspace, MBZs, CFZs, and transit lanes.

Pilots should be aware that the FISCOM service on 121.3 is often unreliable, or even unavailable, at low levels in the area.

Wellington Approach 122.3 provides an Approach Control and Flight Information Service in the Cook Strait area, and can be contacted for flight path monitoring when crossing the Cook Strait (refer to AIP ENR 1.6, section 3.5 *Radar Services to VFR Flights*).

Requests to enter controlled airspace may also be made, although any clearance to enter and transit through controlled airspace will be subject to IFR traffic in the airspace at any given time, and controller workload. ATC remains available to provide surveillance radar to any aircraft experiencing an emergency, or requiring navigational assistance.

For more information about airspace in New Zealand, see our *New Zealand airspace* GAP booklet and our *New Zealand airspace* poster at **aviation.govt.nz/education-resources.**

Snips from the visual navigation charts showing the wider Cook Strait area.
Photos courtesy of Aeropath.

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Common frequency zones (CFZs) in the Cook Strait area

Common frequency zones are established to encourage pilots to use a single VHF frequency allocated for the zone. Pilots should transmit position, altitude, and intentions relevant to prominent reporting points or features at entry, or at other times, for traffic safety.

A CFZ is non-mandatory airspace and advisory in nature, that's to say, airspace not designated under Part 71 *Designation and Classification of Airspace*. Pilots should maintain a good lookout at all times, as it's often necessary for aircraft to be on a variety of frequencies in any uncontrolled airspace.

For example:

- when preparing to join an aerodrome circuit
- en route aircraft on FISCOM frequency
- aircraft entering or leaving controlled airspace on an ATS frequency
- glider operations
- when changing frequency prior to reaching the boundary of the next CFZ.

CFZs in the Cook Strait area include:

- Marlborough Sounds CFZ 123.0
- Tasman CFZ 127.3
- Wairarapa CFZ 122.4
- Hutt CFZ 120.75
- Mana CFZ 118.3
- Tararua CFZ 118.3
- Manawatu CFZ 122.6.

Wellington Airport, as seen from Mount Victoria.

iStock.com/DrewRawcliffe

Aerodromes

Kaikoura (NZKI)

Overview of area

The key geographic feature in this area is the Seaward Kaikōura Range. This mountain range influences both IFR operations (minimum safe altitude, risk of icing) and VFR operations (transit traffic is channelled).

The climate in this area functions as a venturi. Moist conditions from the west often result in greater wind speeds, and lower pressure mid-straits can result in lower cloud bases and fog. Strong mountain wave conditions exist in the lee of the Seaward Kaikōura Range, which can cause mechanical turbulence.

In a strong westerly, south-westerly, or north-westerly, the air will be turbulent in rotor winds with strong updraughts and downdraughts, depending on where you position yourself. If you find yourself in a downdraught or rotor, if you are paralleling the Seaward Kaikōura Range, you will continue experiencing the same conditions. In a downdraught, the best thing to do is turn 90 degrees to your track (downwind) until you encounter the updraught, then parallel the ranges again. You can turn 90 degrees upwind, but you'll have to go through the rotor to get to the updraught. If you're in the rotor, it's best to turn 90 degrees upwind into the updraught.

In any westerly conditions, generally low-level flight tucked closer to the terrain, or just off the coast (within gliding distance), will offer a better ride. However if you're uncomfortable with turbulence, avoid any form of westerly in conditions exceeding 15-20 knots.

Local operations

Local operations in this area include:

- Kaikōura Helicopters Ltd
- Wings Over Whales/South Pacific Helicopters
- Air Kaikōura Aero Club.

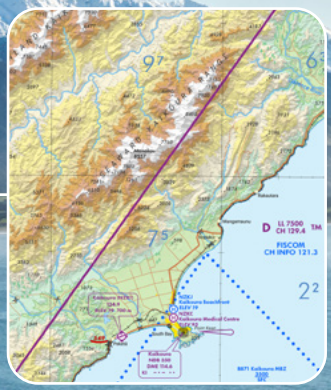
This is a whale watch area that operates under an MOU between the above four companies. Commercial operations are restricted to those holding a Department of Conservation permit. Private operators must be briefed by either Wings Over Whales or Air Kaikōura Aero Club prior to operating.

Air Kaikōura Aero Club holds their training most often north of Kaikōura township, seaward of the coast.

Local airspace and frequencies

The MBZ for this area is Kaikoura MBZ B871 124.9.

Surveillance coverage can be limited in the lee of the Seaward Kaikōura Range at lower levels. While FISCOM 121.3 has been reported as unreliable in some areas at low level, pilots are encouraged to use the FISCOM frequency as appropriate. You don't need to file a VFR flight plan to contact the FISCOM service, and no charges will be made for doing so.



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Seaward Kaikoura Range on VNC.

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Other reporting points

No designated VRPs are promulgated for this area. However, pilots may transmit their position information in relation to other points. These include Hurunui Mouth, Clarence River Mouth, Hāpuku River Mouth, Conway River Mouth, and the northern tip of the Kaikōura Peninsula (Point Kean).

Other points that may be heard from local pilots include Atia Point (Southern Tip), Mount Fyffe carpark, Kowhai Saddle, Mount Fyffe Summit, Goose Bay, Spyglass Point, and South Bay. Local pilots may also refer to "the line", which is a line directly between the "The Southern Tip" and "Spyglass Point". Radio calls using this are typically "I am on the line", or "just outside the line", or "just inside the line". Itinerant pilots may find it difficult to identify these points without prior research, and pilots should consider contacting local area user groups for tips on flying in the area if they have any questions or concerns.

Operating procedures for the Kaikoura Mandatory Broadcast Zone

Information on the commercial whale watching activity is provided in the AIP Kaikoura pages - see the NZKI AD 2 – 31.1 *Kaikoura Mandatory Broadcast Zone* page. Please contact one of the three local operators listed on the page, either on frequency 124.9 or preferably by telephone, to be briefed on the local procedures to use in Kaikōura airspace.

Entering and departing the Kaikoura MBZ

Both circuit directions are left-hand only.

Entering this area:

From the north: VFR via the coast, reporting prior to Hāpuku River Mouth and 3NM north of the Kaikoura airfield. Overhead join is advised.

From the south: VFR via the coast, reporting prior to the Conway River Mouth, Spyglass Point, and Goose Bay. Overhead join is advised.

From the west: VFR reporting 10NM to the west of the airfield and 5NM west of the airfield. Overhead join is advised.

Departing this area:

To the north: VFR via the coast, reporting intentions on rolling call, report at Hāpuku River Mouth.

To the south: VFR via the coast, reporting intentions on rolling call, report at Goose Bay, Spyglass Point, and Conway River Mouth.

To the west: VFR reporting intentions on rolling call, report 10NM to the west of the airfield.

Useful contact information

You can contact Air Kaikōura Aero Club by phone on 03 319 6579.

You can contact Wings Over Whales/South Pacific Helicopters on 03 319 6580.

The Woodbourne, Omaka, and Cloudy Bay aerodromes on a Google Earth image.

Photo: Google Earth.

Omaka (NZOM) / Woodbourne (NZWB) / Cloudy Bay (NZCL)

Blenheim is nestled at the top of the South Island. The valley runs east/west, and across the Cook Strait is Wellington. To the north are the Marlborough Sounds, and to the south the rugged mountains.

Within the lower end of the valley sits three aerodromes - Woodbourne, Omaka, and Cloudy Bay. These aerodromes are in close proximity - Woodbourne and Omaka being separated by only 2.6NM as the crow flies. Woodbourne aerodrome sits within the Woodbourne CTR, as does Cloudy Bay. Omaka lies within Transit Lane T654.

The Woodbourne Control Zone (WB CTR)

The WB CTR is Class D airspace from the surface up to 3500 feet* and is transponder-mandatory. The CTR is separated into distinct areas:

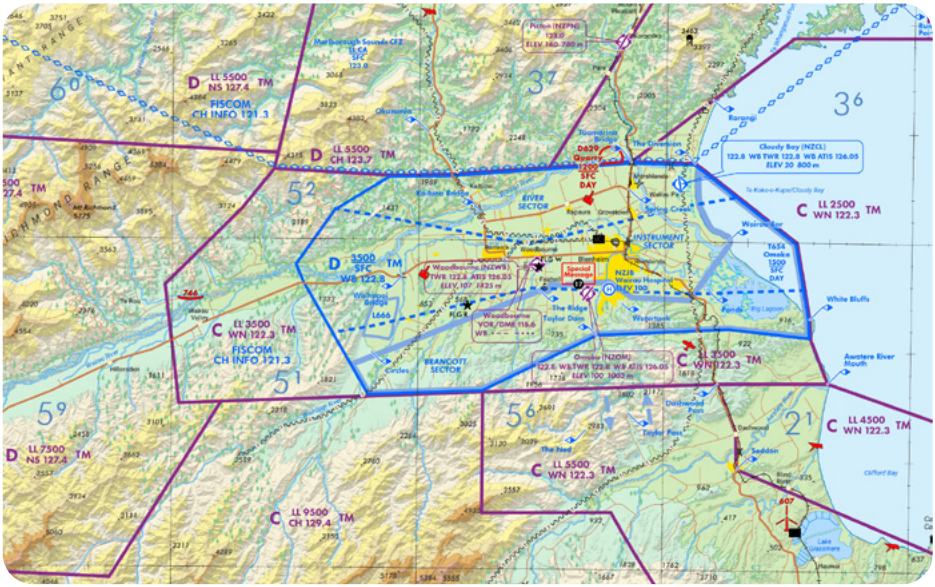
- River sector, to the north of the instrument sector line, to the boundary of the CTR.
- Instrument sector, in the middle between the instrument sector dotted lines.
- Brancott sector, to the south of the instrument sector line, to the boundary of the CTR.

* WB TWR can provide clearances up to 2500 feet. If a pilot requests higher than this, they should expect a short delay. WB TWR needs to coordinate with Wellington Approach to issue clearances above 2500 feet.

While aircraft established in the River and Brancott sectors are separated from aircraft within the Instrument sector, aircraft are generally cleared to track via VRPs within a particular sector, rather than being cleared to operate in the whole sector. Pilots familiar with the sectors can request a clearance to operate within them. An altitude restriction will be included in the clearance.

Also contained within the CTR is low flying zone L666, used for flight training. Itinerant pilots wanting to operate in the LFZ need prior authorisation from the Marlborough Aero Club.

- Woodbourne Tower frequency 122.8
- ATIS 126.05
- Secondary Tower frequency 118.1



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The Woodbourne Control Zone on a VNC.
Photo courtesy of Aeropath.

Transit Lane - T654

T654 is shown here on a map by the light, thick blue line that connects the following visual reporting points:

- The Diversion
- Wairau Bar
- Ponds
- Watertank
- The Ridge
- Circles
- Taylor Dam
- White Bluffs.

Omaka aerodrome sits within the transit lane. T654 is active only during daylight hours, from the surface up to 1500 feet. To operate within the transit lane, you don't need a clearance from Woodbourne Tower, as it's uncontrolled airspace. Make unattended radio calls to 'Omaka Traffic' on 122.8 when operating in T654. You'll hear traffic operating within the Woodbourne CTR, and in the transit lane.

Entering and remaining in T654 can be challenging when transiting to and from Omaka, especially from the north and east. It's common for airspace busts to occur in these two areas.

When transiting to Omaka, it's recommended that you maintain 1500 feet when weather conditions allow. If vacating Omaka to the east, it's recommended that you maintain 1200 feet until Ponds, to keep some vertical separation from joining traffic.

If weather conditions are turbulent, or low cloud on the Wither Hills prevents tracking within the transit lane, call Woodbourne Tower for a clearance to track Omaka via Blenheim township due to weather conditions. The controllers are friendly and understanding, with most being pilots themselves, so don't be afraid to talk to them. It's better to obtain a clearance, than to run wide and cause an airspace incursion.

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Transit lane T654 on a VNC.
Photo courtesy of Aeropath.

Omaka VFR arrival/departure procedures

Omaka VFR arrival and departure procedures are available, if requested, from Woodbourne Tower. These procedures can facilitate traffic transiting to or from Omaka aerodrome from the north, west, or south when pilots can't, or don't want to, transit to Omaka via T654.

There are two arrival procedures:

- Rivers Arrival
- Taylor Arrival.

There are two departure procedures:

- Rivers Departure
- Taylor Departure.

These VFR arrival and departure procedures can be found in the AIP Vol 4 under the Omaka aerodrome plates. Refer to the current AIP for operational use charts - see NZOM AD 2 - 35.1 to 35.3.

Operating at Omaka

Because of Omaka's position in the valley, the wind direction is often different to that at Woodbourne. Because of this, combined with high traffic density, it's recommended to join overhead at 1500 feet AMSL, to ascertain a suitable runway for landing. Circuit altitude is 1000 feet AMSL.

Omaka has both left- and right-hand circuits, designed to keep aircraft in the circuit contained within T654. Use the left-hand circuit for Runways 19, 25, and 30. Use the right-hand circuit for Runways 01, 07, and 12.

Be aware of NORDO traffic operating within the transit lane and Omaka circuit.

When joining overhead, or remaining in the circuit area of Omaka airfield, apply caution in the transit lane boundary as shown on the map. The northern boundary is particularly tight - you need to remain south of New Renwick Road.

Operating at Woodbourne

Woodbourne has left- and right-hand circuits, designed to keep aircraft operating in the circuit at WB clear of the Omaka circuit and T654. Unless otherwise instructed by ATC, circuit altitude is 1000 feet AMSL, and joining altitude is 1500 feet AMSL.

Unless otherwise instructed by ATC, the circuit directions are as follows:

- Left-hand circuit for Runways 06 and 10
- Right-hand circuit for Runways 24 and 28.

Be aware that 0.9NM to the south of Woodbourne is the Omaka transit lane, T654, as shown on the map. Aircraft in the circuit at Woodbourne need to remain north of New Renwick Road.

If parking at Woodbourne, park on the grass within the GA parking area as shown in the AIP. Access to the public areas is available via a pedestrian gate (which has an exit button to open the gate from the GA parking side) to the north of the parking area.

To gain airside access back to your aircraft, phone the Marlborough Airport Limited (MAL) Operations Duty Officer on 03 572 8651, as the gate cannot be opened without fob access from the public side. Entry or exit via the terminal can be arranged by phoning the MAL Operations Duty Officer.

- WB ATIS – 126.05
- WB TWR – 122.8
- Unattended (when ATC is off watch) – 122.8

Woodbourne aerodrome is available 24/7 – check NOTAMs for any changes or closures.

Operating at Cloudy Bay

Cloudy Bay is within WB CTR. ATC clearance is required to join and operate within the circuit, or prior to take-off if parked on the ground. If you want to transit onwards from Cloudy Bay, a clearance is required to leave the circuit area.

Cloudy Bay is an uncontrolled aerodrome, therefore traffic separation is the responsibility of the pilot-in-command. Traffic information will be provided by ATC, but not separation.

It's recommended to join overhead, as the wind can often be different at Cloudy Bay than at Woodbourne or Omaka. The recommended circuit altitude is 800 feet AMSL.

Be aware of NORDO traffic that could be transiting seaward of the coast within T654.

Useful contact information

Woodbourne Tower:
03 572 6006
Press 9 to speak with the controller

Woodbourne ATIS:
03 572 6006
Press 0 to listen to ATIS

MAL Operations Duty Officer:
03 572 8651

Marlborough Aero Club (Omaka):
03 578 5073

Picton (NZPN)

Overview of area

Picton aerodrome sits between Picton and Blenheim townships. It's operated and owned by Sounds Air and requires prior approval to operate there. The airport runs north-south, parallel to the railway line. Often, you'll be landing alongside the running train and bikes on the new cycle trail.

Although it's relatively close to Woodbourne Airport, conditions here are often very different, unpredictable, and at times disproportionately tricky to the pattern of the weather system. The aerodrome is short and surrounded by obstacles. According to the AIP, Sounds Air aircraft may use a right-hand circuit due to local wind conditions, otherwise it is a left-hand circuit. See NZPN AD 2 – 51.1.

Landing north (on Runway 36): on a summer afternoon, there can be a light north-easterly that's fed from the sea breeze pushing over the elevation (which is the narrowing where State Highway 1 curves into the hill, before descending back down into the township of Picton). Northerly wind patterns are often favourable for operating.

Westerly or north-westerly patterns can create bumpy conditions with downdraughts on both approach and departure paths. Once strong enough, and the more westerly the wind becomes, it can end up with wind spilling over the top and creating a swing of westerly to easterly.

Rarangi.

iStock.com/PatrikStedrak

Landing south: in a mild-medium south-westerly pattern, the aerodrome tends to be shielded from the winds. However, once the south-westerly becomes strong enough to push through, it can end up as tail winds at both ends of the runway.

In southerly conditions, if light and straight, heading down the runway can be pleasant. In south-easterly to easterly conditions, it doesn't take much to make things very unpredictable, with tail winds at both ends of the runway and turbulent conditions in the valley.

If you're not familiar with this aerodrome, it's advisable to receive a briefing from an experienced pilot prior to flying, with specific current weather advice.

Local operations

Sounds Air owns and operates regular daily services (up to six times a day in the height of summer) to and from Wellington, with a Cessna 208 Caravan.

Pelorus Air operate scenic flights using a variety of aircraft including Cessna 172, 185 (on amphibious floats), and 206, as well as GA8 Airvan. They are based at the aerodrome.

There's also a local airpark community with various private fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. They're at the aerodrome, with hangars.

Local airspace and frequencies

There are no MBZs for this aerodrome, but it is situated within the Marlborough Sounds CFZ - 123.0.

Visual reporting points

The following positions in this area are mostly not listed in the AIP, with the exception of Rarangi and Tuamarina Bridge.

- Waikawa Bay: the bay with the boat marina to the north/north-east of Picton township.
- Shakespeare Bay: the bay to the north-west of Picton township with all the logs. In summer, you see cruise ships parked there.
- Elevation: the highest point on State Highway 1, past Picton towards Koromiko Valley.
- Tuamarina Bridge: the large bridge on State Highway 1 that crosses the Wairau River, just at the southern end of the Koromiko Valley.
- Anakiwa: the westernmost township on Queen Charlotte Sound.
- Rarangi: The first township on the coast just outside of NZWB control zone, to the north-east.

Transit lanes

The transit lane (T654) that may affect the arrival and departures out of Picton runs along the eastern boundary of the NZWB control zone, and runs along the coastline, coincident with the eastern control zone boundary.

If an aircraft is equipped with two radios and entering/exiting the transit lane through its northern boundary, they should be monitoring 122.8 (NZWB Tower/Omaka frequency) and 123.0 (Sounds traffic).

If an aircraft is equipped with only one radio, they will be on the NZWB Tower/Omaka frequency of 122.8. This can be problematic regarding situational awareness of Sounds traffic, that might be avoiding the NZWB control zone altogether.

You should take extra care travelling along the eastern coastline and the Sounds eastern coastline. This is sometimes a preferred route for GA aircraft trying to avoid ATC.

Something that can sometimes confuse pilots is that the transit lane has the same frequency as NZWB Tower, if you're within its boundaries and under 1500 feet. You just need to listen out and make relevant radio calls of position and intentions. You don't need clearance from NZWB Tower to operate in the transit lane. Be careful not to veer off the boundaries of the transit lane into the NZWB control zone, as the IFR instrument approach fan is very close.

Often there's low cloud pushing against the hills to the north/north-east of the control zone, which can make that 'uncontrolled' corner very tight to operate. Make sure you have the clearances you need before putting yourself in that area, if it's restricted by weather.

Arrival and departure procedures

Picton aerodrome is uncontrolled. Pilots should seek a **specific** day brief from an experienced pilot if they're unfamiliar with this aerodrome.

Since the loading and offloading of passengers from Sounds Air flights in the apron area is at the northern end of the active runway, no landing or take-off can take place at the same time.

When ringing for approval to land, the office crew can advise the times of the daily flights that might be relevant. Pilots should avoid arrival or departure in those times when a Cessna 208 Caravan is operating.

Parking at the airfield can be very limited. No set tie-downs are currently provided.

Useful contact information

Sounds Air can be contacted on 03 520 3080.

Nelson (NZNS)

Overview of area

On a nice day, the trip from Nelson over Cook Strait to the lower North Island, or vice versa, is a beautiful scenic flight across the Marlborough Sounds. It's safest if carried out at a reasonably high altitude. However, keep in mind Cook Strait weather is often windier than you might expect.

Easterlies/South-easterlies

This can be the worst wind for VFR Cook Strait crossings. Because the wind in a south-easterly is funnelled through Cook Strait, around and across the top of the mountains/hills, south-easterlies often give moderate to severe turbulence. The severity depends on the strength of the wind, with mountain wave (sustained updraughts and downdraughts), convergence of different winds, and associated rotors.

If the south-easterly is associated with a low, it can also bring low-level cloud and generally boggy weather around the Sounds and parts of Cook Strait. However, it can be clear in places and in Nelson, apart from the low-level 'waterfall' orographic cloud effect along the Richmond Ranges, and quite a bit of fracto-cumulus cloud (hooked rotor cloud close to the ranges).

Unfortunately, Nelson is in the lee of these easterlies which, when strong, can make taking off or landing very turbulent with strong crosswinds (often a straight 90 degrees). As you get low to the ground, this can sometimes become a 90-degree westerly as it rotates over the hills and back under.

Motueka is generally much calmer than Nelson in these conditions.

Aerial view showing 'The Cut'. Entrance to Nelson Haven from Tasman Bay, between the Boulder Bank and Haulashore Island.

iStock.com/synthetick

North-easterlies

(Not referring to sea breezes or north-easterlies on the edge of a high).

North-easterly conditions in Tasman Bay can bring low-level cloud that can quickly become fog, often within minutes.

This weather comes from the tropics and is modified on the way to absorb lots of moisture. This can be the most dangerous weather for pilots in terms of visibility/VFR flying. It often starts with a big block of cloud sitting out in the bay – if it moves, it can come in extremely quickly with cloud/fog forming right down to the ground.

North-westerlies/Westerlies

North-westerlies and westerlies give mountain waves, and can trigger a "shelf" of orographic low cloud up the coast between Nelson to D'Urville Island. This can also extend up the west coast of the North Island – even if the forecasts/reports for Nelson and Paraparaumu are positive. Nelson Bay is very exposed to north-westerlies, with stable layer type cloud and moisture straight from the tropics.

These conditions can deteriorate quickly, especially with the approach of a front, creating low cloud and rain. Lenticular clouds often (but not always) indicate the wave conditions. It's possible in a light aircraft to be unable to maintain altitude, even with full power in the associated downdraughts all the way from Nelson and through Cook Strait. Mount Taranaki can also sometimes create these lenticulars downwind, and well through the western side of Cook Strait.

North-westerly conditions often lead to low-level flying through French Pass and around the top of the Sounds. There can be severe turbulence in the lee of D'Urville Island and through the outer Sounds. If you're unfamiliar with the area, it can be very confusing to navigate this area at low level, with many similar-looking waterways. Note that the French Pass power line rises to 545 feet.

The other common low-level route is via the Maitai Saddle, Rai Valley, Havelock, and Tory Channel – note there are wires rising to 975 feet in Tory Channel. This can also be turbulent in windy conditions.

In more stable conditions, VFR flying across Cook Strait in west- to north-westerlies is okay – especially away from or under the orographic cloud – which can extend well out into Cook Strait. This cloud can sometimes be scrappy, but there are plenty of gaps. In these conditions, fly to the level of your experience – you could be crossing Cook Strait at higher levels, or down to 600–800 feet.

Flight in the lee of Kapiti Island can be turbulent in westerly conditions, with possible rotor and wave conditions.

Southerlies

Southerly winds can be preceded by strong north-westerlies, and if you look south, you can often see the blackness of the approaching southerly front. This can be accompanied by heavy rain and cloud bases with thunder, lightning, hail, and briefly, very strong winds through Cook Strait and approaching Wellington.

However, light southerlies after a front has gone through can be beautiful, with great visibility and good conditions.

Control zone and frequencies

There are several changes of altitude through the various sections of airspace enroute from Nelson to the lower North Island. With paper charts, it can be helpful to write the lower height of each controlled airspace sector beside your track, for quick and easy reference. This is especially prudent for when you get close

Jacketts Island VRP.
Photo courtesy of Nelson Aviation College.

to Tory Channel. The lower altitude of the controlled airspace sector goes from 5500 feet, to 4500 feet, to 3500 feet, to 2500 feet, within a short distance. Around Paraparaumu especially, the type of airspace can change very quickly and can be confusing.

Visual reporting points

Visual reporting points in this area include Pepin Island, Boulder, Branford, Wakefield, Mapua, Kina, Rabbit Island Bridge, Whangamoa Saddle, Maitai Dam, Jenkins Hill, Racecourse, Goat Hill, Brightwater, Sawmill, Chip Mill, Redwoods Valley, Upper Moutere, Dovedale, Jacketts Island, and Motueka.

Transit lane

Nelson has a transit lane to the south-west - T653 Brightwater. It spans surface-1400 feet, and it's for day use only. Similar to T654 Omaka, pilots can operate in this area without needing to seek permission from Nelson Tower 127.4.

Arrival and departure procedures

There are no promulgated VFR arrival procedures for Nelson in the AIP. However, some suggested VFR arrival procedures are listed below.

Prior to entry, contact Nelson Tower with a position report, and comply with CTR/D entry or circuit joining instructions.

On arrival:

- From the north, call at Pepin Island. A request by ATC to report or hold over Boulder is common. When cleared, you'll be joining straight in for Runway 20, or left-hand downwind for Runway 02.
- From the south, call 2-3 miles before reaching Wakefield. This reporting point is quite close to the control zone border, so some lead-in time is advisable. When cleared, you'll usually be straight in for Runway 02, or right-hand downwind for Runway 20.
- From the west, 2-3 miles before reaching Mapua, or at Kina which is further out and does not require to call early. Depending on the runway in use, you'll be asked to track along the north side of Rabbit Island or to Rabbit Island Bridge. Then join right base leg for Runway 20, or left base leg for Runway 02 respectively.
- From the east, call at Matai Dam or Matai Saddle.

On departure:

There are published VFR departure procedures for Nelson at NZNS AD 2 - 64.2.

- Boulder departure: track via Boulder Bank to Boulder 1500 feet or below.
- Brightwater departure: track via Brightwater 1500 feet or below.
- Bay departure: track via the northern beach of Rabbit Island 1500 feet or below.
- Bridge departure: track to Rabbit Island Bridge 1500 feet or below.
- Branford departure: for Runway 02, track via Nelson Port to Branford 2000 feet or below. For Runway 20, cross overhead Nelson airfield 1500 feet or above, then to Branford 2000 feet or below. A left turn direct to Branford is available on request.

Useful contact information

You can contact Nelson Aviation College on 03 528 8382.

Motueka (NZMK)

Overview of area and weather

The key geographic feature in this area are the Western Ranges. In Motueka, this mountain range creates extensive shadow in the afternoon, downdraughts in the circuit, and turbulence in the LFZ and training areas in westerly and south-westerly winds.

Easterly winds in Nelson can cause significant turbulence for light aircraft in the circuit. Northerlies and north-easterlies can see low-level, fast-moving cloud cover the field in 15 minutes. The westerly wind in the Motueka circuit can create a hook-like effect as it comes off the hills and dumps on the circuit, which can create a lot of turbulence at the end of downwind for Runway 20.

The low-lying but lumpy hills to the south can be uncomfortable in a southerly wind, due to the way the wind funnels through the valleys and over the ridges.

This area also has the Abel Tasman National Park to the north, which sees a lot of traffic up and down the coast.

Summer overhead Motueka aerodrome.

Photo courtesy of Annabel/ Nelson Aviation College.

Local operations

Local operations in this area include:

- local aero club traffic (Motueka Aero Club)
- extensive skydiving operations from Inflite (you can't join overhead while jumping is taking place)
- extensive flight training operations by Nelson Aviation College
- helicopter traffic often joining for maintenance at the northern hangars
- rallies and fly-ins hosted by Motueka Aero Club.

There are also a lot of scenic flights, and training traffic, from Nelson that uses the Motueka side of the Bay for training areas. It isn't just Nelson Aviation College and Motueka Aero Club that are active here.

This can create an area of possible conflict around Mapua, where traffic is changing from the Nelson frequency to the Tasman CFZ, and vice versa. It's a high volume traffic area where you have to be very careful, as it's possible for traffic to be on one of two different frequencies.

Local airspace and frequencies

The MBZs and CFZs in this area are:

- Motueka MBZ 127.3
- Tasman CFZ 127.3
- Marlborough Sounds CFZ 123.0.

The radio frequencies used in this area are:

- 127.3 MK
- 127.4 NS TWR and FISCOM Frequency CH INFO 129.8
- 129.1 NS ATIS.

Be aware, surveillance coverage may not be seen on radar at low levels to the south of Motueka.

Turning Crosswind 02 MK, looking towards L664 and Adele Island VRP.

Photo courtesy of Nelson Aviation College.

Visual reporting points

The visual reporting points in this area are: Tapawera, Golden Mill, Dovedale, Upper Moutere, Redwoods Valley, Mapua, Rabbit Island Bridge, Kina, Motueka, Jacketts Island, and Adele Island.

Familiarise yourself with these VRPs, especially Rabbit Island Bridge, Mapua, Redwoods Valley, and Chip Mill if you're flying between Nelson (NZNS) and Motueka (NZMK).

Transit lanes

The transit lane in this area is T653 (see page 22).

Arrival and departure procedures

As is the case for most uncontrolled aerodromes, there are no formalised arrival and departure procedures for this aerodrome. Locals do transit NZNS-NZMK 0.5NM off the coast, and 0.5NM inland NZMK-NZNS.

It's a good idea to add a 30-minute buffer on to Zone 5 ECT times, if you're coming into Motueka. Joining from the east with the sun in your eyes at the end of the day, makes it hard to spot traffic. It's a good idea to circle around to the Riwaka or Brooklyn area and look at the circuit with the sun at your back, to spot traffic before joining.

Useful contact information

There's a low flying zone in this area – L664. Nelson Aviation College restrictions mean this zone is not available for use on Sundays, and for only limited hours on Saturdays. It has a lower limit of 200 feet to protect wildlife. Contact Nelson Aviation College for a briefing prior to using this zone.

You can contact Nelson Aviation College on 03 528 8382.

Takaka (NZTK)

Overview of area

This aerodrome sits near the shores of Golden Bay, with Tasman Bay to the south-east. These are large bodies of water, backed by the mountainous terrain of Kahurangi National Park.

Mountainous terrain rises quickly in this area. This can create challenging flying conditions in westerly winds, often associated with turbulence in the lee of the national park. Tasman Bay and Golden Bay experience their worst weather when moist northerlies push in low cloud – causing poor visibility and heavy drizzle or rain. Impaired horizon definition, with a lack of landmarks while crossing the bays, can create issues for accurate navigation (unless GPS navigation equipment is fitted).

If transiting from Takaka to Karamea or Westport, low cloud and poor visibility can often be encountered around the Kahurangi Lighthouse area, resulting in air turnbacks in either direction. While conditions can often look good as far as Pākawau from the Golden Bay side, the weather can be far worse on the west coast.

With the Kahurangi National Park, and at altitudes of 6500 feet or more, pilots can fly directly from Takaka to Karamea or Westport. Low-level routing via the coastal routes is often the best routing, and once on the west coast, smooth flight conditions can be experienced. A good route to the west coast from Takaka is often to track initially to Pākawau, then through the cut to the Whanganui Inlet, and then proceed down the coast from there. If heading eastbound, direct routing to Nelson is often suitable, but a low-level route via the Abel Tasman National Park is also an option.

Port Tarakohe and Golden Bay.
Photo courtesy of Tyler/Nelson Aviation College.

Local operations

Golden Bay Air use Piper PA-28 and GA8 Airvan aircraft for their VFR operations, and Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander aircraft for their VFR and IFR operations. Local private operators operate a variety of aircraft types.

The instrument approach to Takaka is often used by Golden Bay Air and training organisations, such as Nelson Aviation College users from Motueka and Nelson. This approach comes in from the north via position MARKO (approximately 11 miles north-east) and joins straight in for Runway 18 or circling. There are no VFR training operations carried out at the aerodrome.

Takaka is a quiet aerodrome in the winter, although there's an annual winter fly-in/ breakfast held every June/July. The aerodrome does get busy during the summer months, with Golden Bay Air operating to Wellington, Motueka, Nelson, and Karamea on a scheduled basis. No fuel or maintenance facilities are provided, but there is ample parking beside the aero club. Commercial operators and private owners require that the gravel area towards the southern hangers be kept clear.

Local airspace and frequencies

If flying into this area from the east, you'll need clearance from Nelson Tower if you're routing through Nelson's controlled airspace. Commercial operators joining from Wellington to Takaka will often be on the direct track at 5500 feet, and in contact with Nelson Tower until approaching the Abel Tasman National Park.

A permanent Restricted Area, NZR601, is positioned over the Farewell Spit peninsula. Flights must be above 2000 feet AMSL when flying across this area.

The radio frequency used for Takaka is 119.1.

Other reporting points

The following reporting points are not official VRPs, but they are widely used.

Reporting points used in this area are Separation Point or Takaka Hill (not labelled on VNCs) if joining from the north or east, and Collingwood or Parapara if joining from the west. These are geographical points in addition to the normal joining or transiting calls.

If joining from the Kahurangi National Park, often pilots will fly down the Anatoki valley from the "dragons teeth" (rocky pinnacles that stand over the headwaters of the Anatoki River) to join.

Arrival and departure procedures

Standard reporting procedures are used in this area.

Useful contact information

If you are new to the area, you can contact Golden Bay Air on 03 525 8725 for weather information and routing advice.

Farewell Spit.
Photo courtesy of TK/Nelson Aviation College.

Wellington (NZWN)

Overview of area

WN CTR/C is surrounded by hilly and built up terrain, with Miramar Peninsula and Mount Crawford to the east of the aerodrome, and Mount Victoria and Brooklyn to the west. Evans Bay is to the north of the aerodrome and Cook Strait to the south.

The terrain around Wellington is linked to the weather conditions. The predominant wind is a northerly, which behaves differently in this area. It bounces off Mount Victoria, causing mechanical turbulence on the south coast, and can cause crosswinds, and localised low cloud. The weather patterns here are highly localised - don't assume that if it's clear over Cook Strait and elsewhere, that it's also clear in Wellington!

Other prevailing winds in the area are westerlies and north-westerlies, southerlies and south-easterlies. Mechanical turbulence can be present in westerly conditions. On occasion there can be surface wind variations up to 180 degrees at either end of the runway at this aerodrome, particularly in light and sea breeze conditions.

Wellington aerodrome is surrounded by hilly terrain and built-up areas. This means there are significant noise abatement procedures in place. Pilots need to be familiar with these procedures and restrictions. Noise curfew is active at NZWN from 0000-0600 local time.

With such a wide variety of aircraft using this area, VFR aircraft should be prepared to be delayed or held for scheduled IFR movements, including delays for wake turbulence.

Somes Island.

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Local operations

The activity in this area is complex, with many different types of aircraft using this airspace. These include many airlines, rescue helicopters, air ambulance, Wellington Aero Club for flight training, the RNZAF, corporate jets, private VFR operators, and light aircraft IFR training.

IFR operations will always be prioritised in this area. Tower notifications need to be filed for VFR traffic via IFIS.

Wellington Aero Club conducts a lot of training around the coastline, to both the west and the south-east of Wellington, often using low flying zone L663 as well.

VFR pilots should be prepared for a varied mix of operations into and out of Wellington Hospital and Queens Wharf heliports. Queens Wharf can be particularly busy when there's a cruise ship in town. Queens Wharf scenic flights can fly either clockwise or anticlockwise around the harbour perimeter, or sometimes a shorter flight down to the south coast. Wellington Tower controls which direction these scenic flights go, depending on other traffic. Garden City Helicopters (operating in this area) have their own arrival and departure procedures.

In terms of medical helicopters, their flight paths can vary quite a lot, depending on if they're priority or not. Wellington Tower do their best to keep others out of the way and may issue holdings if necessary. With regards to operations out of the hospital, the Tower will receive reasonable notice.

Helicopters operate to and from the Western Apron at Wellington. This includes the Life Flight Westpac Rescue Helicopter (Airbus H145), and sometimes the RNZAF NH90 helicopter. Parallel operations are not permitted between RWY 16/34 and the Western Apron, so aircraft will be sequenced for the runway, and VFR flights need to allow room for the helicopters. This may be more room than for a fixed-wing, particularly for the NH90, which is Medium Wake Turbulence and can be slower to land and depart.

There are two active heliports within the WN CTR - NZQW (Queens Wharf) and NZWH (Wellington Hospital).

Control zone and frequencies

There's excellent surveillance coverage for VFR operations to ground level with ADS-B. Hawkins Hill PSR/SSR should be operational from 30 June 2026.

Aircraft flying IFR are frequent users of Wellington Airport.

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The Wellington Control Zone (WN CTR)

The WN CTR is Class C airspace (ATC separate IFR from VFR aircraft) from the surface up to 2500 feet* and is transponder mandatory.

The radio frequencies used in this area are:

- TWR 118.8 for arriving VFR aircraft (coverage can be affected on the south coast between Sinclair Head and Karori Rock)
- Ground 121.9 as instructed
- Delivery 128.2 for VFR departure clearances.

When on the western apron, listen to ATIS 126.9. Check instructions and procedures in the AIP – NZWN AD 2 – 64.2.

Adjacent to WN CTR/C is Hutt CFZ and Mana CFZ.

There is a LFZ south-east of the WN CTR – L663 and a General Aviation Area G674 at Baring Head, which is active with ATC approval and will be advised on the ATIS if active.

Visual reporting points

Key visual reporting points for VFR pilots that air traffic controllers use include Observatory, Island Bay, Karori Rock, Harbour Entrance, Pencarrow, Turakirae, Ward Island, Somes, Point Gordon, Petone Wharf, and Grenada.

* The AIP published VFR arrival and departure procedures have various height restrictions on them that must be complied with when operating in different parts of the control zone. This is to provide separation from IFR procedures.

Transit lanes

The transit lanes for this area are T656 Makara, T651 Porirua, and T652 Turakirae. These are all to be used only during the daytime.

There are no specified procedures for the Wellington transit lanes. T651 and T652 are designed to facilitate people getting into the east sector – note that entering from the south can be quite turbulent. Wellington Aero Club doesn't recommend student pilots arriving from the south or east join via the East sector. Instead report early, and request a clearance via the Turakirae sector. On duty Runway 16 there may be a short delay outside controlled airspace, due to arriving IFR traffic.

VFR arrival and departure procedures

There are currently six different arrivals and eight different departures published, depending on which runway is in use.

Pilots should refer to the Wellington AIP pages to thoroughly prepare and pre-brief for all VFR flights into the Wellington control zone.

Useful contact information

You can contact the Wellington Aero Club on 04 388 8444, to acquire local information and WIAL (IOC) for parking on the Western Apron.

You can contact Wellington Tower on 04 387 1980. If you're unfamiliar with Wellington airspace, or are itinerant, please contact the Tower for guidance.

Pencarrow Head.

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Paraparaumu (NZPP)

Overview of area

This aerodrome is located in the heart of Paraparaumu. It sees a wide variety of users, including a mix of IFR and VFR aircraft, and many training activities through the Kāpiti Districts Aero Club.

Terrain-wise, Kapiti Island is out to the west. In strong north-westerly conditions, this can cause a lot of turbulence in the circuit. To the east lies the southern portion of the Tararua Range. In moderate easterly conditions, the air is very turbulent and almost unflyable. Even mild easterly conditions can make for an uncomfortable flight.

Local operations

Local operations in this area include the training activities of Kāpiti Districts Aero Club, rescue helicopter operations, airline operations such as Air Chathams and Sounds Air, Massey University School of Aviation, and the New Zealand International Commercial Pilot Academy.

Kāpiti Districts Aero Club uses the areas to the north of this aerodrome, in the Ōtaki basin, for training. High traffic areas where students will be operating (between 600 feet and 3000 feet) are from Pekapeka Ponds to Ōtaki River mouth. Pilots are advised to keep a good lookout when approaching these points.

Ōtaki Beach.

Local airspace and frequencies

The local airspace consists of the Paraparaumu MBZ (B680), which borders the Tararua CFZ to the north and east, and Mana CFZ to the south. They all share the same frequency (118.3). They extend from the surface to the lower limit of controlled airspace, which is either 4500 feet or 5500 feet, lowering to 3500 feet and 2500 feet, once you start to get south of Paraparaumu.

What's different about this airspace is that there is a flight service - they are there to help you. When entering the MBZ, pilots should contact the flight service, letting them know your type, position, and intentions in the MBZ. The flight service will reply, giving you the wind on the ground, runway in use, traffic in the circuit, and QNH - after which you should let them know that you copy all information, then repeat the QNH. And, if applicable, modify your intentions.

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A view of Paekākāriki.

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Visual reporting points

Starting from the north and flying south is Otaki Beach, and further east is Ōtaki township.

Next is the Ōtaki River and the river mouth, then Te Horo Beach, Pekapeka Ponds, and Waikanae Beach. To the east, there's Waikanae, Waikanae River and the river mouth, Paekakariki, and finally Pukerua Bay.

Arrival and departure procedures

When joining the circuit at Paraparaumu, if it's attended, you can be told what the surface wind and the runway-in-use are before joining. It's a good idea to check the heading of the runway you're lined up with on your directional indicator, because in some light conditions it's difficult to see the runway clearly until you're quite close to it. It can also be easy to confuse the sealed taxiway with the runway.

Pilots should refer to the preferred arrival and departure plates in the AIP. But a brief overview is that you should get to circuit height as soon as possible once in the MBZ, and join either final or downwind, depending on which way you're coming from and which circuit is in use on the day. A common fault when joining Runway 16 from the north is joining a non-standard left base which is against the circuit pattern and the rules. Make sure to give yourself enough room so that you join final.

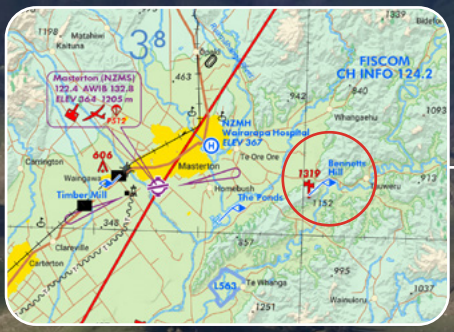
Due to the presence of the aerodrome flight service at this aerodrome, you must make a radio call before entering and exiting the circuit, and at 10-minute intervals, informing the flight service of heights and intentions. You must use landing lights or anticollision lights.

All pilots transiting through, or joining, should track seaward of the coast (northbound seaward of the coast, southbound MIN 0.5NM seaward of the coast). If transiting, be careful to stay out of the circuit (greater than 2NM away and/or greater than 1500 feet AGL).

Useful contact information

You can contact Kapiti Coast Airport on 04 298 1013.

You can contact Kāpiti Districts Aero Club on 04 902 6536.



Masterton (Hood Aerodrome) (NZMS)

Overview of area

Because of its basin-like shape, the Wairarapa valley can be prone to fog. This can be slow to clear at times, often showing signs of clearing, then thickening up again before finally clearing properly.

Getting across the Tararua Range to the west can be difficult. Lower cloud bases and strong winds can make conditions dangerous, especially for light sport or microlight aircraft. The Puffer Saddle is available for use, with cloud bases above 2000 feet. Otherwise, the options to cross the Tararua Range are around Turakirae Head, or north to the Manawatū Gorge.

Bennetts Hill VRP.
Photo courtesy of Walter Taber.

Local operations

Local operations in this area include:

- Wairarapa Aero Club (common aircraft used include the Tecnam P2002 and the Piper PA-28)
- The Vintage Aviator (various WWI NORDO aircraft)
- agricultural operators (common aircraft used include the Cresco and Air Tractor)
- Life Flight (King Air aircraft commonly used)
- IFR training (flights usually run by Massey University and the New Zealand International Commercial Pilot Academy (NZICPA))
- private aircraft owners (many different types of aircraft, from Bantams to Piper Meridians)
- remote control aircraft.

There is the potential for NORDO operations at any time in this area. There are also plans for parachuting activities to soon restart in this area.

Common training areas are between Gladstone and Te Whanga. Some flights move to the Whangaehu Valley north of Bennetts Hill, or the Ōpaki Area, if other training or aerobatic flights are in progress in the Gladstone area.

During summer, vintage aviation enthusiasts carry out extensive formations, and NORDO operations, on the last weekend of every month. This is advised by NOTAM, and a ground radio is operating for information only, offering the last known intentions of the pilot of each aircraft or formation.

As with any aerodrome, it's important to keep a good lookout, keep the overhead standard, and communication is encouraged if a potential conflict is noticed.

Local airspace and frequencies

The CFZ in this area is Wairarapa CFZ 122.4.

The radio frequencies used in this area are Masterton Traffic 122.4, and AWIB 132.8.

Christchurch Information 124.2 is generally easily heard and contactable in this area.

The aforementioned Wellington Control Zone is to the west of the Tararua Range and Lake Wairarapa. Controlled airspace within the Wairarapa valley is rarely an issue below 9500 feet, but closer to Wellington and Lake Ferry (Lake Onoke), the LL Control Area is 4500 feet.

Low flying zones L663 and L563 entry requirements are to get permission from Wellington Aero Club, or Wairarapa Aero Club, respectively (phone numbers are listed below).

Visual reporting points

The visual reporting points (VRPs) for this area include Pinnacle, The Ponds, Bennetts Hill, and Timber Mill.

Transit lanes

There are no transit lanes in this immediate area.

Arrival and departure procedures

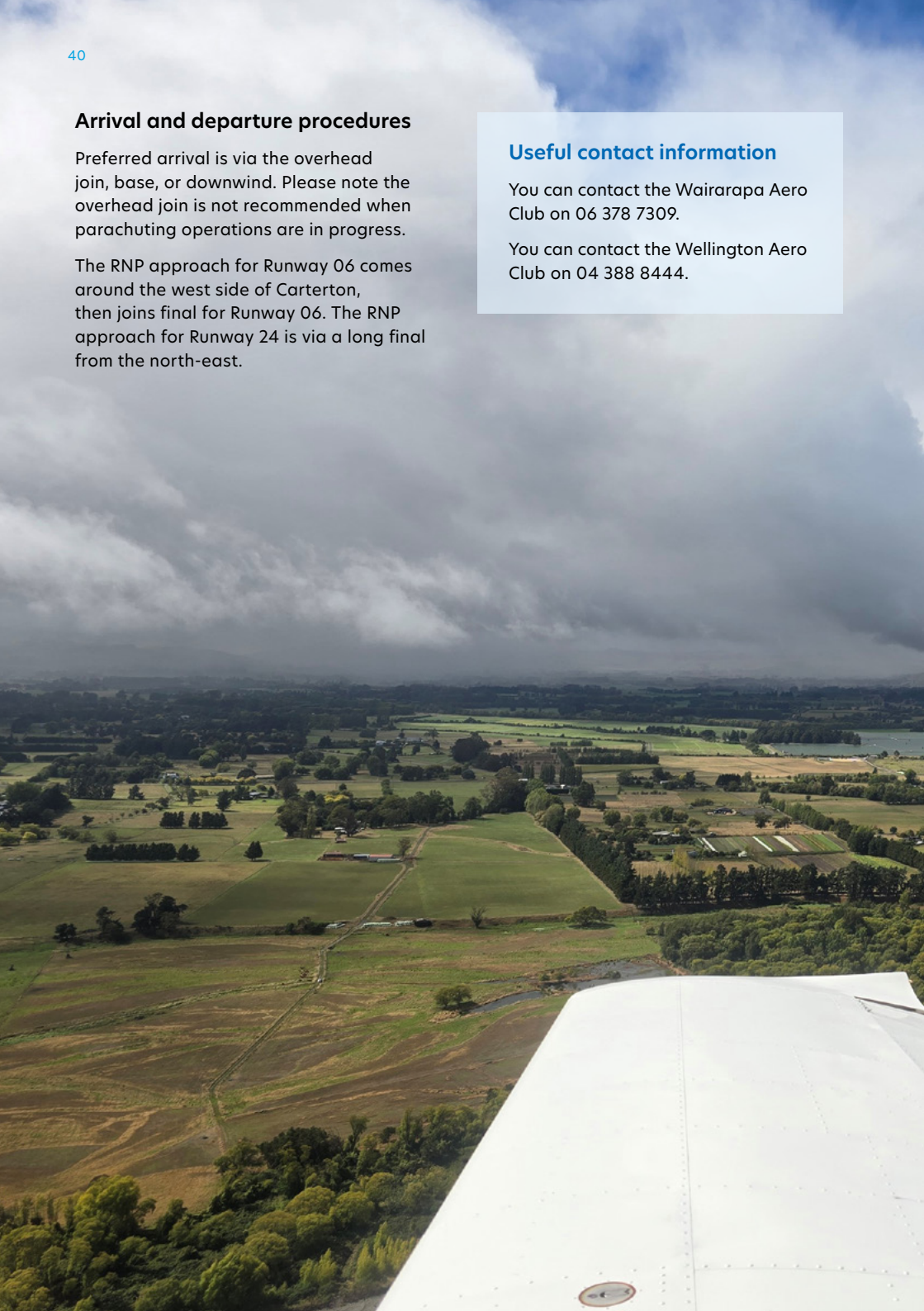
Preferred arrival is via the overhead join, base, or downwind. Please note the overhead join is not recommended when parachuting operations are in progress.

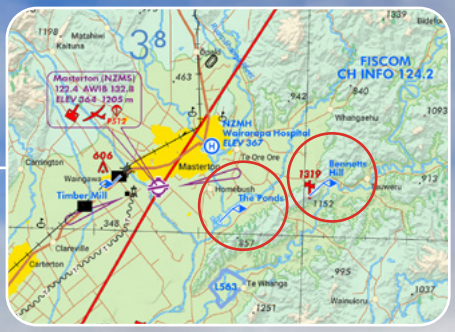
The RNP approach for Runway 06 comes around the west side of Carterton, then joins final for Runway 06. The RNP approach for Runway 24 is via a long final from the north-east.

Useful contact information

You can contact the Wairarapa Aero Club on 06 378 7309.

You can contact the Wellington Aero Club on 04 388 8444.





The Ponds VRP in the mid ground, and Bennetts Hill VRP in the background, with the radio mast covered by cloud.

Photo courtesy of Walter Taber.

Summary

The Cook Strait area consists of numerous types of airspace, both controlled and non-controlled, with varying vertical dimensions.

The controlled airspace is made up of CTRs and CTAs with a mixture of either Class C or D airspace. This determines the level of air traffic control service provided.

The non-controlled airspace consists of Class G airspace, CFZs, MBZs, transit lanes, and a handful of extra airspace types including GAAs, LFZs, and Special Use Airspace (Danger, Restricted, and Military Operating Areas).

Non-controlled airspace does not require pilots to seek permission from ATC to operate within its boundaries, but can receive flight information service if requested, using FISCOM.

As always, if unfamiliar with flying around the Cook Strait area, contact a local operator for a thorough briefing before setting out on your journey.

An aerial view of Wellington Harbour / Port Nicholson.

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GAP
Good Aviation Practice

CAA
CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY
OF NEW ZEALAND
Te Mana Rererangi Tūmatanui o Aotearoa

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Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

See the CAA website for civil aviation rules, advisory circulars, airworthiness directives, forms, and more safety publications.

To order publications such as GAPs and posters, go to aviation.govt.nz/education-resources.

aviation.govt.nz

In, out, and around Cook Strait was published in April 2026.