

OUR DISTRICT - the first to see the light

The Māori name for the district is Tairāwhiti which means "The coast (Tai) where the new sun (ra) shines (whiti)". Kaiti Beach, near the city, was where the Māori immigrational waka Te Ikaroa-ā-Rauru landed; and is also the first landing place of Captain Cook in New Zealand. Tūranganui-ā-Kiwa is the pre-European Māori name for the Poverty-Bay area. There are many versions as to how the name was derived. However, it generally means "The waiting place of Kiwa". (Kiwa was said to have landed on these shores around 1450AD).

Captain Cook first set foot here in 1769. European settlement was established in 1831 and the town which developed was named after Hon. William Gisborne, the Colonial Secretary, in 1870. Prior to this the settlement was known as Tūranga but confusion with Tauranga, Bay of Plenty, led to the name change. Gisborne became a borough in 1877 and a city in 1955.

Our Landscape and Climate

Our district covers the largest land area in the North Island of New Zealand. We have 8,355 square kilometres of land with 1,855 kilometres of local roads. Our district is located in the northeastern corner of the central North Island. We are also referred to as the East Cape, East Coast or Eastland region. Gisborne is the easternmost city in New Zealand.

Gisborne is also known as the city of rivers. The Taruheru and Waimata Rivers join to form the 1200 metre Turanganui River, the shortest river in the country.

Titirangi (Kaiti Hill) overlooks the city and offers views of Poverty Bay and the surrounding rural areas. The white cliff headland of Young Nick's Head is visible from the city. The Māori name for the cliffs is Te Kurī-ā-Paoa, meaning The Dog of Paoa.

Mount Hikurangi is the fifth highest mountain in the North Island, but the highest non-volcanic peak. Hikurangi is the first mountain in the world to see the sun.

Gisborne is renowned for its Mediterranean style climate. The total sunshine hours are 2,200 per annum, with a variation in rainfall from about 1,000mm near the coast to over 2,500mm in the higher inland country. On average, 65 days a year have a maximum temperature of over 24°C.

Source: National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Ltd.

Our People

Our region has a unique population mix. We have the highest proportion of Māori compared with non-Māori in New Zealand, (44% compared to the national average of 14.3%). Thirty nine percent of our population is under the age of 24 years, and we have an increasing ageing population (projected to increase by 2021 from 5,500 to 10,400).

Source: Statistics NZ, Census 2006 GDC growth model 2008.

Our Economy

Our district is predominantly a district of primary produce with an emphasis on agriculture, forestry and fishing.



Twenty nine percent of employment in the region is in the meat and wool production sectors. The other main areas of employment are horticulture production and processing, manufacturing retail trade, health and community services and education. Tourism has been targeted as an industry of high potential growth.

Source: Statistics NZ, Business Demography Statistics, February 2007 and McDermott Miller Regional Economic Outlook 2009.

Statistical Data

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| District Land Area: | 8,360,060 hectares * |
| Percentage of Total NZ Land Area: | 4.9% |
| Reserves: | 950 hectares ** |
| Population: | 44,460 (2006 Census) |
| Capital Value: | \$9.2 billion as at 1 September 2008 |
| Land Value: | \$5.6 billion as at 1 September 2008 |
| Average Population Density: | 5.3 persons per sq km |
| Number of Dwellings: | 18,956 |
| Number of Rateable Properties: | 21,610 |
| Council's Total Asset Value: | \$1.76 billion |

* Based on the high water mark.

** Land zoned "reserve".