

NEW ZEALAND GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES

Māori generic term	English generic term	Description	Alternative/related Māori terms	Associated features
ākau	coast	The edge or extremity of coastline. A strip of land of indefinite width that extends from the low-tide line inland to the first major change in landform.	tai, tahatai, takutai, tuku, uta	shore, seaside, seashore
amonga waka	portage	A place where carrying boats or goods between navigable waters is necessary.	tōanga waka	
ana	cave	A recess leading to an underground open space, vertical or horizontal. Natural or man-made. Also, a prominent cliff overhang.	rua, puta, tomo	hole
angotanga	gap	A break or opening in a mountain ridge		
āpiti	arm	A long, narrow confined inlet in the coastline. Used in the same context as a branch of a tree.		chasm, crevasse, gorge
āpiti	gorge	A narrow gorge or ravine.	kāpiti (synonym of āpiti), kawarau	chasm, crevasse, gully
ara	track	A footpath or path created by use. Also, a beaten path or trail, generally through wilderness.	huanui, huarahi, kaupapa, makatea, paparahi	
ara hīkoi	promenade	A paved walkway typically along a seafront.		
arahanga kōaka	viaduct	A man-made bridge structure, generally built for trains to cross deep ravines.		bridge
arapiki	staircase	An evenly graduated incline.		
arapoka	tunnel	A subterranean passage.	anaroa	
arawai	waterway	An artificially made water course.	awakari, awakeri	ditch
arearenga	cirque	A semi-circular basin with a steep headwall and sidewalls created by glacial erosion. Commonly at the head of a glacial valley.		
arero awa kōpaka	glacier tongue	A long narrow extension of the lower part of a glacier.	hukapō	ice tongue, piedmont glacier
arero huka	ice tongue	A long narrow extension of the lower part of a glacier.	arero	glacier tongue
aromaunga	face	The prominent side or surface of a landform usually applied to a mountain.	mata	bluff, cliff, escarpment
au	rapids	The continuous movement of water flowing in the same direction either permanently or seasonally. Also, part of a stream where the current is flowing faster than normal, and the water surface is broken. Due to an obstacle in the water or where the water is forced to flow through a constricted channel.	ia, aupiki	
auhuka	névé	Freshly deposited snow in the accumulation area of a glacier.		
aumoana	sea	An expanse of saltwater smaller than an ocean and generally in proximity to a continent.		coast
awa	river	A relatively large flowing body of water.	tahatika	river mouth
awa kōpaka	glacier	An accumulation of slowly moving ice.	waipara	piedmont glacier

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awa kōpaka paheko	piedmont glacier	A glacier formed by two or more valley glaciers joining together at the base of a mountain range.		glacier
awaawa	trough	Any long narrow depression in the earth's surface.	kōawaawa	
awakeri	ditch	An open channel created to drain excess water, a channel or area filled with stagnant water.	awamate, maioro	waterway
awarua	passage	A narrow water body joining larger water bodies.		pass
haemanga	creek	A small stream or tributary of a river with its mouth at or above sea level.	awa, kuinga, manga, maka [Ngāi Tahu dialect], pininga, mātāpuna, hikuawa	channel
hāpua	pond	A relatively small inland body of still water. Also referred to as a pool.	hāroto	lagoon, delta
haupū huka	snowdrift	A bank of deep snow heaped up by the wind.		
hawai		A narrow channel joining larger water bodies. A constriction in a waterway.		
hawaiti	narrows	A channel through water.		
hikuwai	stream source	An area or point where a stream begins to flow from.	pūkaki, kōhuhutanga, kuinga, matamata, pī, tāuru, ipurangi	branch
hongere	channel	A relatively narrow body of water joining larger bodies of water. Also, a natural or artificial bed of running water on land or under sea.	ara, kawa, roma, awa	
hōpua	deep pools	Can be inland under a waterfall.		waterfall
horo	slip	A small landslide.		
kahiwi	ridge	An elongated elevation of land	hiwi, kahaka, ripa, tuahiwi, tuku	
kahupapa	bridge	An arch like rock formation, generally created by erosion.	kaupapa	viaduct
kahurapa	buttress	A rugged, protruding rocky ridge or face on a mountainside or hillside.	kaurapa, taupae, whirinaki, hirinaki	
kāinga	village	A group of houses and associated buildings smaller than a town located in a rural area. Kāinga can also refer to a settlement.		
karapuke	hillock	A rounded hill of no great elevation or a small rise in the land.	tuapuke	knob
kauanga	ford	A shallow place where a river, stream or creek may be crossed by wading.	raupapa	
kautawa	branch	A branch of a river or waterway. Also referred to as a tributary.	manga, peka, kāpeka	stream source
kira	crag	A steep rugged rock projecting from a mountain or a detached fragment of rock.	tarakira, taratara	
kirikiri	sand	Small loose grains, the fine debris of rocks.	one, onepū, kōhatu, para, paru, pōhatu	
kōaka	gulch	A deep, narrow ravine or gorge.	parari, kopi, pakohu, te koko, whāiti	gorge, chasm
koeko	cone	A landform shaped like a cone with relatively steep slopes and a pointed summit. Koeko also describes a pyramid shaped landform.	kōekoeko	peak
kōhanga mātini	rookery	A place where birds nest in colonies.		

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koi	cape	An extensive extremity of land projecting into a body of water.		bluff
kokoru	inlet	A minor indentation of water between the coast and outlying sand beaches or sand barriers. Often a small bay, or cove, within a larger bay.	kokori, koro	cove
kokuru	sound	A relatively long arm of the sea or ocean forming a channel between an island and a mountain or connecting two larger bodies or two parts of the same body.		
kōpaenga	amphitheatre	A natural formation often circular or oval shaped like a man-made theatre.		
kopia	gully	A small channel produced by running water in earth or unconsolidated material.	awa, kowaka, pakohu, parari	chasm, crevasse, gorge
koraha	desert	An arid region with low rainfall and devoid of vegetation. Also applies to areas of perennial ice and snow.	pākihi	
kōreporepo	swampy	A low-lying area with a high level of water saturation.	kūkūwai, pīpīwai, rei, reporepo	marsh, swamp, wetland
koro	cove	A small bay or indentation along a coastline or in a lake. Semi-enclosed bay, place of shelter.		bay, inlet
korutanga	bight	A large or extensive curved indentation of the coastline.	kokorutanga	
koutu	peninsula	An area of land almost surrounded by water.		
kōwhiuwhiu	fan	A low heap of alluvial material with a roughly triangular shape. Typically formed where fast flowing rivers or streams suddenly slow by reaching a flatter region.		
kūititanga	isthmus	A neck of land joining two larger areas.		
kumete	punchbowl	A round, deep hollow in a hill.	ipu, kōpiha, koropiha, ruakumete	crater, basin
kūmore	promontory	A high point of land projecting into the sea.	hū, koi, koutu, mātārae, ngahu, torouka, tūmū whakarae	bluff, headland
kūrae	point	A tapering piece of land jutting out from the shore or forming a turning point of the coastline.		
kurawai	reservoir	A hole or pit sometimes used for storage or as a reservoir.	hikuwai	cave
maioro	forts	A natural steep formation that resembles a castle or fortress-like structure.	manioro	
manga	stream	The body of water flowing along a defined path, generally between established banks.	awa, wai, maka (Ngāi Tahu dialect)	channel
mānia	plain	A generally flat, open area.		

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mānia huka	ice piedmont	An icefield located on a low lying strip of land between the ocean and a coastal range of mountains, often terminating at an ice-shelf. Formed when valley glaciers come together on a coastal plain to form a thick accumulation of almost stagnant, crevasse-free ice.		
matairangi	lookout	A vantage point used to view the landscape.		
mātārae	headland	An abrupt and prominent land feature, usually extending into water, but can also be used for similar inland features.	kūrae, rae, torouka	spur, cape, bluff
mātārae	spur	A subsidiary ridge that projects laterally and sharply from the crest or side of a mountain.	io, kāniuniu, karahiwi, mātātāu, taukāuki, taukaka, taumutu, utu	ridge
maunga	mountain	Any part of the earth's crust higher than a hill, usually greater than 300m, and characterised by a discrete summit area.	mauka (Ngāi Tahu dialect)	
moana	gulf	A relatively large part of the ocean or sea extending far into the land; the largest of the various forms of inlets or bays.		
moana kūiti	strait	A relatively narrow waterway between two larger bodies of water.	kikī	
motu	island	An area of cut off land usually surrounded by water.	moutere	nunatak
motuiti	islet	A small island or rock.		rock
motunga huka	iceberg	A large floating island of ice. Also called an ice flow.		
muriwai	lagoon	A stretch of water separated from a larger body of water by a low barrier such as a sand or gravel bank.	hāpua, papawai, pūroto	delta, pond
ngahere	forest	An area covered in a dense growth of trees.	hangaruru, hamaruru, ngaruru, wao	
ngāwhā	fumarole	A hole or vent in or near a volcano that releases steam, gases or vapour.		
ngāwhā	geothermal spring	A spring that releases heated groundwater from the earth.	puia, waiariki	
ngutu	estuary	Outlet of a river into the sea or a lake.		river mouth
nonoti	pass	A natural passageway through high, difficult terrain, such as a low point between two peaks; sometimes referred to as a col. Also, a navigable channel connecting a body of water with the sea.		saddle, channel
onepū	sand point	A big, wide, open, sandy beach.	tāhuna	spit
pā		A manmade fortified site.		
pae	bench	A narrow, flat or gently sloping ledge or step, bounded above and below by steeper slopes.		platform
paeroa	foothills	A low line of hills at the foot of a higher mountain range and running parallel to it.	pae	range

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paeroa	range	An aligned and connected series of hills or mountains.	ika tuawhenua, ika whenua, pae, ranga	foothills
pakohu	sinkhole	A cavity in the ground especially in a limestone formation caused by water erosion and providing a route for surface water to disappear underground.		
papa	platform	Any level or nearly level surface, ranging in size from a terrace or bench to a plateau or plain. Usually manmade.		
papa huka	snowfield	An area covered in snow.		
papanga huka	ice sheet	A solid glacier more than 50,000km <sup>2</sup> , forming a continuous cover of ice and snow that is not confined by topography.		
paparite	plateau	A relatively elevated area of comparatively flat land which is commonly limited on at least one side by an abrupt descent to lower ground.		
paparite huka	ice plateau	An elevated area of land covered with ice.		
Papatūānuku	earth	The solid material of the globe, being the land surface not water surface.	nuku	
pārae huka	ice shelf	A floating ice sheet of considerable thickness attached to a coast, generally formed by glacial ice coming off the land and an accumulation of snow.		
parehua	terrace	A relatively level bench or step breaking the continuity of a slope.	whakahua, upane	
pari	cliff	A high, steep or perpendicular rock face usually overhanging and prominent.		bluff, escarpment
pari roa	escarpment	A long, more or less continuous cliff or relatively steep slope facing in one general direction, separating two level or gently sloping surfaces, and produced by erosion or faulting.		bluff, cliff, face
parihaka	low cliff	A vertical or nearly vertical rock face of no great height.		
paripari	precipice	A vertical or steep face of rock, cliff, mountain.		bluff, cliff
piere	crevasse	A fissure or crack in the earth's surface caused by stress from differential movement over an uneven surface.	kāpiti, matata	gorge, chasm, gully
pikitanga	incline	An inclined surface, a slope, gradient, pitch, ramp, bank, ascent, rise, acclivity, upslope.		
piko	river bend	Where the path of a river changes direction. Also, where a braided river flows in multiple channels across a gravel floodplain with evidence of recent channel migration.	awapuni, hawe, kūkūpango	river mouth
pīnakitanga	rise	A broad gently sloping, elevated portion of the sea floor.	pīnekitanga	

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pīnakitanga	slope	An inclined surface, the gradient of which is determined by the amount of incline along the horizontal, and the length of incline along the vertical.	aupaki, auroro, hirinaki, kotautau, panaunau, panaki, pīnekitanga, rapaki, rea, tāwhati, tahitahi	
pito	pole	Either end of the axis of a sphere.	moka	
pohutu	geyser	A violent ejection of steam and super-heated water from an underground source through a hole in the ground.		
pokohiwi	shoulder	A ridge on a mountain, commonly having the appearance of a shoulder.	pakihiwi	crest
pou	pillar	A vertical natural structure, slender in proportion to height.		
pou keokeo	pinnacle	A tall slender pillar of rock rising to a point	kaweka	
pūau	fork	The point at which two separate courses (usually water) meet/join and continue as one.		
puia	volcano	A typically conical mountain or hill that has a crater or vent through which lava rock fragments, hot vapour and gas have erupted from the earth's crust.	ahi tipua	
pūkawa	reef	A rocky elevation in water that may be exposed at low tide.	ākau, kawa, tau	shoal
puke	hill	An elevation of terrain above the level of the surrounding land.	hiwi	
puke kōmata	butte	A conspicuous flat-topped hill with steep sides often capped by a resistant layer of rock.		
puku tio	ice rise	A clearly defined elevation of the otherwise totally flat ice shelf, typically dome-shaped and rising 100 to 200m above the surrounding ice shelf.		
puna	spring	The point or area where water naturally releases from the ground.	pukenga, kōmanawa, matatiki	
pūroto	tarn	A small lake.	pūrotoroto	
pūwaha	harbour mouth	Areas of tidal sea bounded by open sea, land and harbour, and usually narrow between coastal land masses. Also called harbour entrance.	waha, ararua	
pūwaiwaha	delta	A flat alluvial tract of land at the mouth of a river traversed by its diverging branches. Often triangle or fan shaped and resembling the Greek letter delta. Also, the tidal mouth of a river.	hāpua, kōniu, ngutuawa, paenga, parakiwai, wahapū, pūwaha	lagoon, estuary
rae		A steep browed headland. <i>[no specific English equivalent]</i>	kūrae, pari, rae, mātārae	cliff, escarpment, headland
raorao	downs	An area of low, generally flat land or of undulating country.		
raorao	flat	A relatively level area of land. Also referred to as downs.	pārae, mānia	

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raupapa	table	A flat-topped area of land.		
rehutai	seaspray	A place that is subject to sea spray.		
repo	marsh	A tract of low-lying land often flooded and usually characterised by growth of grass and reeds.	kōrepe, hūhi	swampy
repo	swamp	An area of low-lying land, intermittently or permanently covered or saturated with water, usually having shrubs or trees.	hū, hūhi, kōrepo, mātā, mātātā, mato, ngae, ngaeki, ngaengae, rarawa, rawa, roto	swampy
rerewē	railway	A rail track that carries trains.		
ripo	whirlpool	A body of water moving rapidly in a circular path of relatively limited radius	āwhiowhio, au, kōmingomingo, kororipo, ngāwhiowhio, ririno, toiremi	
riu	basin	A bowl-shaped depression in land surrounded by higher land. Similar to a big, open valley.		valley
rohe	district	A defined area for administrative purposes. Rohē are divided into takiwā.	moka, taiwhenua, taiao, takiwā, tapere	region
rohe	region	A large area of defined land.	takiwā, tāpere	district, place
rohe kōreporepo	wetland	A wet, swampy, large expanse of land.	awaawa, taiari, taieri	
roto	lake	A substantial enclosed body of water (fresh or sea), generally fed by a rive and emptying into another river. Such a feature, close to the sea, may be significantly comprised of sea water.		
rua	crater	A depression created by volcanic activity.		hole, cave
rua	hole	A deep and well-defined depression in the ground.		crater, cave
rua puia	geothermal vent	A submerged feature consisting of a vent of hot mineral-rich waters on the ocean floor. Generally, on or near spreading oceanic ridges or on the continental margins of subduction trenches.		
tahā	chasm	A deep breach, cleft, fissure or opening in the earth's surface. Also, a cleft or rent on cliff face.	pakohu	crevasse, gorge, gully
taha moana	seaside	An area at the edge of the sea.		shore, shoreline, seashore
tahataha	cut	A steep to vertical river bank which has been eroded lateral by a river. Also referred to as a cutting.	horonga, korou	
tahatai	seashore	Land adjoining the sea or ocean.	tātahi, tapatai, tauru, uta, matāwhanga	coast, seaside, shore
tāheke	rapid	A swift flowing body of water that may or may not be navigable.	taiheke	waterfall
tāhuna	sandbank	Expanse of sand in the sea or river, often uncovered at low tide. Found in estuaries, rivers and tidal flats.		beach, seaside
tai koraha	shallows	An area of water, usually sea, that has a consistently shallow depth, and is identified for navigational purposes.	mitimiti, pāti	

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tai matapari	fiord	A long narrow arm of the sea, in a valley that is U-shaped and steep walled generally several hundred metres deep, with high rocky cliffs or slopes along a mountainous coast. Also spelled fjord.		
taihekenga huka	icefall	The part of a glacier that flows down a very steep gradient, developing a zone of crevasses.		
taihua	shore	The lower area of beach between low and high tides.	tuku, tai	coast, seaside, shoreline
taikoraha	mudflats	A stretch of muddy land that is uncovered at low tide.		
taipū	dune	A mound or ridge of windblown sand rising to various heights.		
takaripa	edge	A sharply pointed ridge or slope of a hill.	rea, tahatika, tuku	
take	foot	The bottom of a slope or grade.	pū, pūtaka	
takiwā	locality	An identifiable area within a local authority area, usually rural or partly rural in character.	wahi	place
takutai	shoreline	The line where the shore and water meet.	ākau	beach, seaside, seashore
tanuku	fault	A rupture or fracture of rock strata due to strain, where displacement can be seen.		
tāone	town	A large urban area.		city
tāone matua	city	An urban centre with a population of more than 20,000.		town
tapa tāone	suburb	An identifiable area within a local authority area, usually urban in character, with facilities such as those for education, transport and shopping.		town
tāpaenga toka	riegel	A transverse ridge of bedrock that has been exposed by glacial erosion.		
tara	peak	The pointed top or summit of a mountain	keonga	summit, cone
tārake	bank	An elevation of the seafloor generally less than 200m deep.	tuahiwi, maioro	shoal
tārake	shoal	A shallow elevation of unconsolidated material that may be exposed at low tide and may be a hazard to navigation.	matatāhuna, tāhuna, pāti	bank, reef, sand point
tārua	saddle	A low point in the crest line of a ridge, commonly between the heads of streams flowing in opposite directions. Also, a low point between two peaks of a mountain.	tāwhatitanga, tarahanga, tarahaka, nonoti	pass
tātahi	beach	A shore between the land and sea, lakes or rivers which is washed by waves or tides and is generally comprised of sand, rocks and stones.	one, onepū	
taumata	crest	The highest point or summit of a hill or mountain or the highest line along a ridge or range.	kaweka, tihi	summit
taupuni	camp	A temporary camping place, where shelter is known.	nohoanga, nohoaka, puni, tauranga	
tauranga	landing	A level area to embark.		

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tauwharenga	ledge	A narrow shelf or projection of rock, longer than wide, formed on a rock wall or cliff face		
tawaha	river mouth	Outlet of a river flowing into another water feature eg the sea, a lake, another river.	kōngutu, konu, ngutu, ngutuawa, pūahatanga, pūaha, tawa, wahapū	river, river bend
teihana	station	A specified space set aside for a particular purpose.		
tihi	summit	A high point of a mountain or hill. Also referred to as a crest.	akitu, kōtihi, kōtihitihi, matamata, matatihi, raetihi, teitei, tītoitoi, toi, toitoi, taumata	crest, peak
tīramaroa	beacon	A modern convention used as a guiding device located on a coast or high promontory.		
tohu roherohe	trig	A station from which to measure geographic points in the landscape.		
toka	rock	A solid mineral material that forms part of the earth's surface.		
toka tūtahi	nunatak	An isolated rock peak projecting above the surface of land ice or snow.	motu	island
toka whakahara	massif	A massive topographical and structural feature, especially in an orogenic belt, commonly formed of rocks more rigid than those of its surroundings.		
tokamoana	rock	A solid mass of the earth's crust rising from the bottom of water. It is either completely submerged or above the water surface.	tokawai, pohatu, papa, kirikiri	
tokatoka	rocks	An accumulation of rocks. Also referred to as rocky.		
tomokanga	portal	An entrance and exit especially large and imposing.		
tuaka	moraine	A mound or ridge of unstratified glacial drift, usually boulders, gravel, sand and clay, left on the ground by a glacier.		
tuakahiwi	mesa	A tableland; a flat-topped mountain or plateau bounded on at least one side by a steep cliff.		
tuapuke	knob	A small rounded hill, especially an isolated one	huahua	hillock
tūpahipahi	spit	A point of sand or gravel projecting from the shore into a body of water.		sand point
tūpari	bluff	A steep rock face commonly overhanging water.	kūrae, pari, rae	headland, precipice, promontory
urupā	cemetery	An area of land where the dead are buried.		
wahapū	firth	A long, narrow arm of the sea. Also, the opening of a river into the sea. Commonly the lower part of an estuary.		mouth
wahapū	mouth	Where a river flows into the sea.		firth
wāhi	place	Means a city, town, village, site, area, or similar place and includes a locality and suburb; but does not include a district, region or ward of a local authority or Crown protected area.		

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wāhi kōrero nui	historic site	A place of historic occupation or a site of significance.		
wairere	waterfall	A section of river, stream or creek where water descends freely from a higher elevation.	hīrere, rere	rapid
wāpu	wharf	A structure where vessels are moored.		
whanga	bay	A deep indentation in the coastline of seas and large lakes.	aka	harbour
whanga	harbour	A standing water area usually protected by natural or artificial features, suitable for anchoring or mooring vessels. Often has sunken rocks dotted here & there.	aka, haka	bay
whare kōpae	rotunda	A round space sometimes dome like.		
whārua	valley	A low area enclosed by hills and usually with a stream flowing through it.	awaawa, hārua, kakari, kakaritanga, kōaka, mārua, nukuaō, riu, tāwhārua, tāwhati, taiororua, tairua, tapoko, whakarua, whērua	
whenua	land	A solid part of the earth's surface.		
whenua mūhore	treeless	A place that has no trees.		