

Seal Pups in New Zealand: Where and When to See

New Zealand Fur Seal Pups

This guide focuses specifically on New Zealand fur seal pups (kekeno) and seasonal opportunities to see pups in the wild. Other natural phenomena and wildlife experiences in New Zealand are covered in separate guides.



Photo: Kaikōura, Canterbury, New Zealand; Credit: Miles Holden

Seal pups in New Zealand: at a glance

- **Phenomenon:** New Zealand fur seal pups (kekeno) — young seals born along the coast who gather in nurseries to play, learn to swim, and develop survival skills
- **Best months:** January – March (coastal nurseries) and May – September (Ohau Point waterfall creche)
- **Best locations:** Wharariki Beach, Golden Bay, Nelson Tasman; Ohau Point Waterfall Track, Kaikōura, Canterbury; Cape Foulwind, Westport, West Coast; Kaikōura Peninsula, Canterbury
- **Why New Zealand:** New Zealand offers rare opportunities to safely observe large numbers of seal pups on land, including unique inland waterfall nurseries found almost nowhere else in the world

Why seeing seal pups in New Zealand is unique

New Zealand is one of the world's most extraordinary places to witness New Zealand fur seal pups (kekeno) playing, learning, and growing in their natural habitat. From tidal pool nurseries to waterfall hideaways, Aotearoa offers wildlife experiences found almost nowhere else on earth.

Each summer, fur seals give birth along New Zealand's wild coastlines, and from mid-January through winter, pups can be seen exploring tidal pools, practising their swimming, wrestling with siblings, and developing the skills they'll need to survive in the ocean. At certain sites, you can safely observe hundreds of pups at once—an unforgettable, joy filled spectacle of nature.

Where to see seal pups in New Zealand

Wharariki Beach, Golden Bay, Nelson Tasman

New Zealand's most magical seal pup nursery. At low tide, natural pools form among the rocks where pups play, practise swimming, and interact while adults rest nearby. One of the most iconic wildlife experiences in the country.

- Best time: Mid-January to June
- Explore the area with [Farewell Spit Tours](#)

Ohau Point Waterfall Track, Kaikōura, Canterbury

A uniquely enchanting spot where, each winter, hundreds of pups travel up the stream to a hidden waterfall to play while their mothers feed at sea.

- Best time: May to September

Kaikōura Peninsula, Kaikōura, Canterbury

A thriving colony where seal activity is constant year-round, with pups often visible during summer breeding months.

- Best time: All year round
- Explore the area with:
 - Seal Swim Kaikōura - <https://www.sealswimkaikoura.co.nz/>
 - Kaikōura Kayaks - <https://www.kaikourakayaks.nz/>
 - Seal Kayak Kaikōura - <https://www.sealkayakkaikoura.com/>

Tauranga Bay / Cape Foulwind, Westport, West Coast

One of New Zealand's most accessible fur seal colonies, known for lively summer pup activity.

- Best time: October to March

The Best Time to See Seal Pups in New Zealand

The timing depends on the colony, but broadly:

Summer to Early Autumn (Jan–March)

- Prime time for coastal nurseries such as Wharariki Beach and Cape Foulwind, when pups are newly born and most active.

Winter (May–September)

- The spectacular Ohau Point waterfall pup creche, where pups gather inland at a waterfall—a behaviour unique to this region.

Responsible wildlife viewing

Wildlife viewing advice aligns with Department of Conservation (DOC) guidelines to ensure seal pups remain safe and undisturbed in their natural environment.

- Safe distance viewing
- Respect for animals and habitats
- Respecting DOC wildlife guidelines
- Low tide (especially at Wharariki Beach)
- Calm weather

Food and beverage experiences near seal pup viewing areas

Enjoy some of the areas best food by dining at [Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses](#) with an Estate to Plate dining experience! Or, get involved with onr of their hands on cooking experience focussed on local ingredients, farm connenctions and seasonal Kaikōura menus.