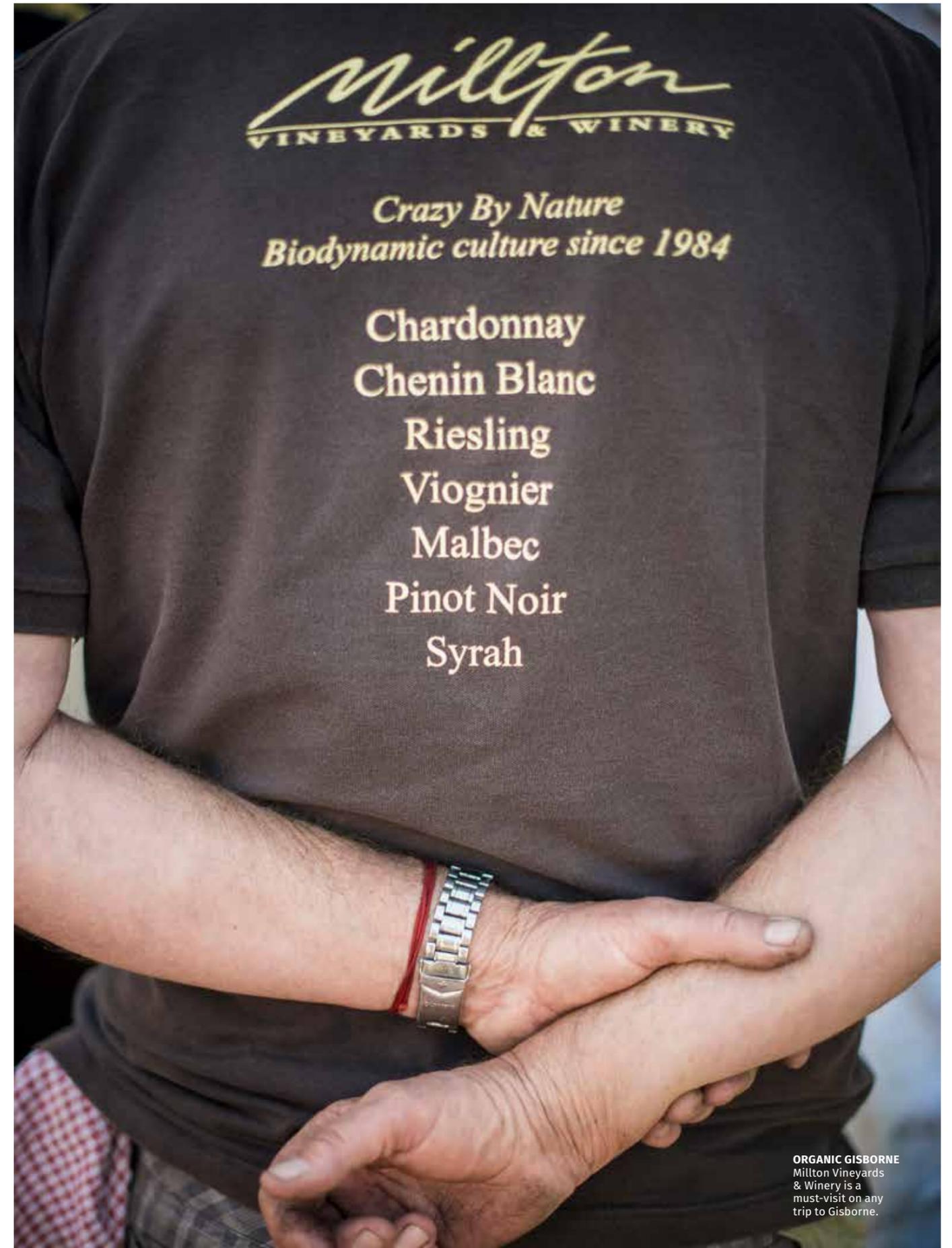




# GET AROUND GISBORNE

It was the biggest area under vine in New Zealand, but Gisborne's downsizing has been a blessing, and it's now brimming with fine wine and historical memories.



**ORGANIC GISBORNE**  
Milton Vineyards & Winery is a must-visit on any trip to Gisborne.

**VINIFUL PLENTIFUL**  
Millton's Clos de Ste.  
Anne vineyard.

**Gisborne is  
'the coast upon  
which the sun  
shines across  
the water'.**

crops and provide fruit for many of the country's largest wine brands.

In the foothills surrounding the Central Valley a further eight subregions have been identified by Gisborne Winegrowers, many of

which produce the region's finest wines.

Warmer inland sites, Ormond and Waipaoa, at the point of the triangle and Ormond Valley running down the eastern border, produce premium wines of generous intensity, particularly gewürztraminer and chardonnay.

At the southern end of Ormond Valley is a narrow, elevated strip of deep clay with a light black topsoil. Known locally as The Golden Slope, it is home to some of the best wines in the region. Across the valley on the western border, the heavy Kaiti clay soils and gentle slopes of Patutahi and Patutahi Plateau receive significantly less rainfall and produce round, ripe, rich wines.

Finally, from the silty alluvial soils of coastal Riverpoint and Manutuke, come some of the region's most notable wines, the warm and sunny maritime climate tempered by cool sea breezes.

Gisborne offers the visitor a slice of New Zealand wine history alongside examples of modern industry structure. The first vines are thought to have been planted in 1840, but in terms of commercial production the industry dates from 1921.

As the country's drinking preferences shifted from fortified to still table wine, the region saw significant investment from larger companies. Beginning in the 1970s, Gisborne grew rapidly to become the country's largest area under vine by 1982.

Expansion continued until 2009 when, after years of corporate consolidation and overproduction, some of the larger producers withdrew from the region.

Perhaps its secluded location on the east coast of New Zealand's North Island is the reason why Gisborne

doesn't trip off the tongue when listing the country's wine regions. Located in NZ's fastest growing tourism region, Te Tairāwhiti, Gisborne is a sparsely populated land of pristine coastlines and warm welcomes.

It is the first city in the world to see the rising summer sun and home to NZ's largest number of te reo Māori speakers. The combination of remarkable natural resources and rich cultural heritage creates a particularly memorable setting in which to sample the region's wines. Those who fail to make the journey will miss out.

A one-hour flight from Wellington or Auckland will transport you to gorgeous Gisborne. Alternatively, drive from Auckland along State Highway 35 and the magnificent East Coast, and then potentially extend your visit and go from Gisborne to Hawke's Bay by taking State Highway 2 south-west – a stop in Wairoa to visit Oslers Bakery for the quintessential Kiwi fare (a pie) is a must.

Te Tairāwhiti translates as 'the coast upon which the sun shines across the water', referencing the brilliantly sunny skies and shimmering beaches that often greet visitors to Gisborne's remarkable countryside.

Vineyards sit in a loose triangle with mountain ranges at the northerly point and the Pacific Ocean forming the easterly base. Flowing down from the hills and traversing the valley floor, the region's rivers deposit a layer of volcanic ash and sand on their way to the ocean.

This combination of volcanic material with a silty clay loam has created some of the country's most fertile soils. Here, in the Central Valley subregion, vines grow alongside a slew of other



**GEWÜRZ THE WORD**  
The Matakawhero  
winery. Right:  
owners Kirsten and  
Richard Searle.



**LUXURY GLAMPING**  
Manutuke Eco Re-  
treat. Left: harvest  
at Millton.

Against this backdrop of corporate manoeuvres, sat a small group of fiercely independent producers including Millton Vineyards & Winery and Matakawhero Wines.

Today Gisborne has only the fifth-largest area under vine, with an industry very much shaped by its history, comprising small- and medium-sized producers, large companies, big-name brands and contract growers.

Of that band of independent producers, **Millton Vineyards & Winery's** ([millton.co.nz](http://millton.co.nz)) site in Manutuke dates back to the 1960s and continues to be family owned and operated. The owners' unwavering sense of self-determination defines this winery.

In 1989, Millton was the first producer in New Zealand to attain organic certification, years before organic and biodynamic farming became familiar entries in the viticultural lexicon, and in 2009 the estate became one of the first in the country to achieve Demeter Biodynamic Certification.

As soon as the business was formally established in 1984, Annie and James Millton set out to promote quality, estate-produced wine at a time when high-volume production defined the region. Over the years there have been additions to the original Opou Vineyard, including the renowned Naboth's and Clos de Ste. Anne vineyards, perched high up on slopes looking out to the sea.

A portfolio that includes chenin blanc, viognier, chardonnay, pinot noir and syrah captivates domestic and international markets alike, demonstrating the potential for quality wine from Gisborne.

Located east of Manutuke is **Matakawhero Wines** ([matakawhero.co.nz](http://matakawhero.co.nz)), established in 1968 by Bill Irwin and currently owned by Kirsten and Richard Searle. Housed

in a stone cottage set amongst olive trees and surrounded by vines, the cellar door is an ideal place to share a platter after tasting the wines.

In a nod to the winery's history, the underground cellar includes library stock from Irwin's personal collection. While not for consumption, it provides a fascinating record of key domestic producers from decades past. As is typical of Gisborne, a variety of wines are produced here.

Gewürztraminer, a highlight of the region, is available together with some excellent chardonnay, particularly the 2017 Irwin and a delicious sauvignon blanc (bound to satisfy the most dubious of sauvignon blanc drinkers), a merlot and a light and juicy malbec. While Millton and Matakawhero have regular cellar door hours, smaller producers often require an appointment – but don't let that put you off.

If you call ahead producers are happy to meet with you and you will often find yourself speaking with the winemaker or vineyard manager, one example being the joint project from Paul Tietjen and Geordie Witters, **TW Wines** ([twwines.co.nz](http://twwines.co.nz)).

After working as contract growers for larger companies the pair decided to create a smaller entity, making use of their vineyards in the Ormond Valley and Golden Slope areas.

The wines, made by Anita Ewart-Croy, embody one of the delights of Gisborne, which is extraordinary value for money, particularly when it comes to chardonnay. If you are looking to dip your toe into the NZ chardonnay pool, Gisborne is a fantastic region to start with.

An appointment with TW Wines may have you weaving among vines and orange groves up towards Witters' house for a tasting. This estate epitomises the region's





**DELICIOUS, INTENSE**  
Longbush Wines  
might just have  
Gisborne's best  
gewürztraminer.



**UNFORGETTABLE**  
The hilltop hide-  
away, Ridge House.

history. The old barn at the property's entrance was built in 1902 by Witters' grandfather.

After starting with beef and sheep farming in the early 1900s, the family then expanded the business to include crops such as sweetcorn and tomatoes, before moving to grapes and citrus in the early 1970s.

If you time your visit right, the orange grove will be laden with blossoms, filling the air with a heady citrus perfume as you make your way up to the tasting table, set outside, looking down over the vineyard and grove. In addition to first-rate chardonnay, the 2013 Verdelho is bound to get the conversation going as is the very satisfying Makauri, a merlot/malbec blend.

Back in the city, a pair of cellar doors sitting side by side are worth a stop. **Spade Oak Vineyard** ([spadeoak.co.nz](http://spadeoak.co.nz)) is the personal project of industry veteran Steve Voysey and a visit is both informative and enjoyable while discovering the diverse range of grapes he works with as well as his love for sparkling wine. Be sure to look for the exceptional value Blanc de Blancs, the Petit Manseng and the delicious Vigneron Chardonnay.

A few steps away is the **Longbush Wines** ([longbushwines.com](http://longbushwines.com)) tasting room, stylishly designed and filled with natural light. Owned and operated by local and long-time industry member, John Thorpe, Longbush could be considered leader of the pack when it comes to gewürztraminer.

The portfolio includes The Family Company range, which is only produced in the best years, the gewürztraminer providing a lesson in restraint, complexity, site specificity and outstanding value.

In the Longbush Bird Series range, the rosé and viognier are also noteworthy as are the stunning labels, featuring detailed depictions of NZ native birds.



## Where to Stay & Eat

If you are planning to stay in Gisborne, book one of the private rooms in the historic **Cedar House** ([cedarhouse.nz](http://cedarhouse.nz)). It's located just a few minutes' walk from the city with the Saturday Farmers' Market just around the corner. It's also within walking distance of the highly recommended **Crawford Road Kitchen** ([crawfordroadkitchen.co.nz](http://crawfordroadkitchen.co.nz)) for harbour dining.

Slightly further afield, two accommodation options help provide an unforgettable visit. Owners of **Ridge House** ([ridgehouse.nz](http://ridgehouse.nz)), Kim Holland and Glen Mills, have created a hilltop hideaway with some of the best views in the region. The very personification of Gisborne's warm and friendly vibe, Holland and Mills offer an experience that is hard to beat.

Floor-to-ceiling windows, views sweeping out towards the coast, enviable stargazing opportunities, a saltwater infinity pool, local produce and house-produced olive oil and honey are just a few of the luxuries available to guests, but the real treasure lies in the extensive knowledge shared by the couple. Conversation is relaxed and easy and interwoven with local tips and insights, making a stay at Ridge House a worthwhile and individual experience.

For something different, go off grid and book a night at the **Manutuke Eco Retreat** ([canopycamping.co.nz/manutuke-eco-retreat](http://canopycamping.co.nz/manutuke-eco-retreat)), a 15 minute drive from Gisborne city.

This luxury glamping experience is set on the edge of a wetland lake in safari-style tents, equipped with a good supply of creature comforts and a generous dose of extravagance to help you unwind. A soak in the claw-foot bath at the water's edge is a must before settling into a comfy beanbag for the evening.

After sating your palate with the region's wines, immerse yourself in the local culture. **Waka Voyagers Tairāwhiti** ([waka voyagers.com](http://waka voyagers.com)) offers visitors the chance to learn more about the history and culture of local Māori, as told by storytellers aboard a traditional double-hulled waka (canoe). For those wanting a more hands-on experience there is also the chance to learn traditional sailing techniques.

Relax and unwind over at the **Dome Cinema** ([domecinema.co.nz](http://domecinema.co.nz)). Housed in the historic Poverty Bay Club building, the site also includes **Winston's Bar and Cafe 1874**.

The bar is styled as a 1920s speakeasy and is home to an eclectic collection of regional memorabilia, while the Club's old billiard room has been repurposed as the cinema. Photographs of past members, hung above the worn leather couches, line the cinema walls, soft light spills down from the ceiling domes and the floor is dotted with beanbags for ultimate comfort during the movie.

If a good coffee is an essential part of the day, head to **Far East Coffee Co** ([fareast.co.nz](http://fareast.co.nz)). A bit of a local secret, but if you drive along Awapuni Road to the TransDiesel sign, turn down the side alley into an industrial area and around the back you will find the best coffee in town.

Gisborne is also home to **Harvest Cidery** ([harvestcider.co.nz](http://harvestcider.co.nz)) and **Sunshine Brewery** ([sunshinebrewing.co.nz](http://sunshinebrewing.co.nz)). Both are open to the public with pizza and light bites available at the brewery.

Gisborne is a region with wines that surprise, delight and impress; scenery to take your breath away; an awe-inspiring wealth of Māori culture and the warmest of welcomes. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find Gisborne making its way to the top of the list of destinations to visit in New Zealand. 🇳🇿

## Wines to Try

**2016 Longbush The Family Company Gewürztraminer, NZ\$25**

Tight knit, deliciously intense, ripe stone fruits, white blossoms, pink roses and spice. Taut, elegant and sleek, dry with a twist of spice to finish, the natural generosity of gewürztraminer is expertly managed.

**2019 Matawhero Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, NZ\$21**

Ripe tropical fruits nicely contained by crisp green apple acidity and fresh nettles. More fresh and crisp than herbaceous, with a dash of phenolic texture from an overnight soak to make this a perfect match with the Gisborne sunshine.

**2017 Millton Te Arai Vineyard Chenin Blanc, NZ\$32**

Heady white flowers, plump, juicy stone fruits, green pear, lemon and lime. Voluptuous and generous, while held tight by succulent acidity. Flavours drive on to a long finish, lifted by a delicate wisp of freshly cut grass at the very end.

**2015 Millton Clos Ste. Anne The Crucible Syrah, NZ\$70**

Luminous violet colour with pretty purple flowers, a waft of white pepper, red and black fruits. Medium palate weight, sleek, precise acidity, smooth, satiny, juicy and peppery. A captivating, polished and intrinsically drinkable wine.

**2017 TW Wines Platinum Chardonnay, NZ\$46**

White blossom, ripe citrus and orchard fruits, framed by discreet oak, vanillin and creamy butter notes. Pithy citrus and lime add a nervy tension to an expertly managed ample, yet elegant structure.

**2014 TW Wines Makauri, NZ\$27**

Intense violets, ripe black fruits, pepper spice, moreish meat notes. Structured yet graceful, medium weight, smooth, finely tailored tannins surround dark chocolate and leather, juicy black fruits and spice.

