

March 2026

Issued: 7 April 2026

## A dry start to autumn for much of New Zealand

Temperature	Temperatures were well above average ( $>1.20^{\circ}\text{C}$ above average) for Central Otago and western Tasman. Above average temperatures ( $0.51\text{-}1.20^{\circ}\text{C}$ above average) were recorded for Southland, Westland, remainder Otago, and the far south of Canterbury. Below average temperatures ( $0.51\text{-}1.20^{\circ}\text{C}$ below average) occurred in the Wairarapa and about Gisborne, with near normal temperatures ( $\pm 0.50^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) elsewhere.
Rainfall	Rainfall was well above normal ( $>149\%$ of normal) or above normal ( $120\text{-}149\%$ of normal) for Northland, western Auckland, coastal Bay of Plenty, the Coromandel, western Tasman, North Canterbury, and a portion of Southland. Rainfall was below normal ( $50\text{-}79\%$ of normal) or well below normal ( $<50\%$ of normal) for Central Otago, the Canterbury High Country, most of Westland, the Marlborough Sounds, a majority of Wellington, the Manawatū-Whanganui, Hawke's Bay, southern Gisborne, Taranaki, inland Bay of Plenty, and most of the Waikato. Elsewhere, near normal rainfall ( $80\text{-}119\%$ of normal) fell in March.
Soil Moisture	At the end of March, soil moisture levels were lower than normal in Hawke's Bay, in the southern and eastern portions of the Manawatū-Whanganui, Taranaki, most of Central Otago, and Westland about Reefton. Soil moisture levels were higher than normal in Southland, the Canterbury low country, western Tasman region, about Mount Tongariro, the Bay of Plenty, the Coromandel, Auckland, and Northland. Near normal soil moisture levels were typical for the remainder of the country.

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### Overview

March was a mild and mostly settled month for Aotearoa New Zealand, with one significant rain event in the upper North Island, brought on by a tropical low pressure system during the final week of the month. Higher than average air pressure was experienced for the South Island and lower North Island, while lower than average air pressure dominated over the upper North Island in March. ENSO (El Niño Southern Oscillation) neutral conditions continued through the month, though La Niña-like weather patterns persisted despite the demise of the recent La Niña event. Sea Surface Temperature (SSTs) remained cooler than average for the month of March along the east and west coasts of the North Island and in the Cook Strait but were generally warmer than average around the South Island.

The nationwide average temperature in March 2025 was  $15.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This is right at the 1991-2020 March average. Aside from occasional fronts, March brought mainly settled weather until the

third week of the month. Colder than average temperatures were experienced for the first several days of the month, with several locations experiencing record or near-record cold maximum temperatures on 2 March. Temperatures were generally warmer toward the middle and end of March. A tropical low brought in warm, humid air on 25-26 March.

With high pressure the dominant feature for the South Island and much of the lower and central North Island, drier than normal rainfall was experienced in most of these areas. March rainfall was well above normal (>149% of normal) or above normal (120-149% of normal) in parts of Northland, western Auckland, the Coromandel, coastal Bay of Plenty, western Tasman, North Canterbury (around Christchurch and Waipara), and near Winton in Southland, while below normal (50-79% of normal) or well below normal (<50% of normal) affected much of the central and eastern South Island, and large areas of the lower North Island. On 25-26 March, a deep subtropical low caused heavy rain, wind, and flooding across much of the country. A red warning for heavy rain was declared for Northland. From Northland to the Bay of Plenty, states of emergency, mass evacuations, power outages, emergency rescues and widespread road closures occurred. Several locations experienced near record March daily rainfall totals (see [Highlights and extreme events](#) section for more details).

Further Highlights:

- The highest temperature was 30.9°C, observed at Alexandra on 7 March.
- The lowest temperature was -2.6°C, observed at Pūkaki Airport 3 March.
- The highest 1-day rainfall was 214 mm, recorded at Cathedral Cove on 26 March.
- The highest wind gust was 163 km/h, observed at South West Cape on 6 March.
- Of the six main centres, Tauranga and Auckland was the warmest, Auckland was the sunniest, Tauranga was the wettest, Dunedin was the driest, Christchurch was the coolest, and Wellington was the least sunny.
- The sunniest four regions in 2026 so far are Taranaki (802 hours), Tasman (774 hours), wider Nelson (769 hours), and Auckland (723 hours).

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## Temperature: Near average March for most of country

No location observed record breaking high or low mean air temperatures. March started off cold for much of the country, under a region of high pressure that moved over New Zealand for the first week of the month. The remainder of March saw alternating periods of warm and cool weather, the warmest of which occurred in the final seven days of the month as warm tropical air flowed over the country.

**Record<sup>1</sup> or near-record mean air temperatures for March were recorded at:**

Location	Mean air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Raoul Island	23.6	0.9	1991	3rd-highest
Low records or near-records				
None observed				

**Record or near-record mean maximum air temperatures for March were recorded at:**

Location	Mean maximum air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Tākaka	23.2	1.8	1978	2nd-highest
Raoul Island	26.1	0.8	1991	2nd-highest
Waipounamu	20.1	1.6	1980	3rd-highest
Cromwell	24.0	2.1	1949	3rd-highest
Farewell Spit	23.9	3.1	1971	4th-highest
Secretary Island	18.6	1.4	1985	4th-highest
South West Cape	16.2	1.4	1991	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
None observed				

**Record or near-record mean minimum air temperatures for March were recorded at:**

Location	Mean minimum air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Raoul Island	21.0	1.0	1991	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Blenheim	7.8	-1.7	1932	2nd-lowest
Martinborough	8.5	-1.7	1986	4th-lowest

**Rainfall: Wet for the upper North Island**

March was mostly settled month, with one significant rain event in the upper North Island. The wettest weather of the month occurred from 25-27 March as a remnant tropical low impacted the upper North Island. Kaitaia and Purerua both recorded more than two times their normal monthly rain, most of which fell during the 25-27 March event. Elsewhere, four stations recorded a record or a near record dry March, including the driest March on record at Whakatu in Hawke's Bay, recording just 6 mm of rainfall.

<sup>1</sup> The rankings (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> etc.) in all Tables in this summary are relative to climate data from a group of nearby stations, some of which may no longer be operating. The current climate value is compared against all values from any member of the group, without any regard for homogeneity between one station's record, and another. This approach is used due to the practical limitations of performing homogeneity checks in real-time.

**Record or near-record March rainfall totals were recorded at:**

Location	Rainfall total (mm)	Percentage of normal	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Kaitaia	242	286	1948	2nd-highest
Purerua	229	242	1983	3rd-highest
Low records or near-records				
Whakatu	6	12	1982	Lowest
Taumarunui	23	29	1913	4th-lowest
Clyde	10	32	1978	4th-lowest
Cromwell	7	23	1949	Equal 4th-lowest

**March climate in the six main centres**

Temperatures for five of the six main centres were near average, the exception being Dunedin, which experienced a warmer than average March. Rainfall was below normal for Hamilton and Wellington, near normal for Dunedin, above normal for Christchurch and Auckland, and Tauranga registered well above normal rain in March. Of the six main centres, Tauranga and Auckland was the warmest, Auckland was the sunniest, Tauranga was the wettest, Dunedin was the driest, Christchurch was the coolest, and Wellington was the least sunny.

**March 2026 main centre climate statistics:**

Temperature			
Location	Mean temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Comments
Auckland <sup>a</sup>	18.8	-0.1	Near average
Tauranga <sup>b</sup>	18.8	+0.4	Near average
Hamilton <sup>c</sup>	16.9	-0.2	Near average
Wellington <sup>d</sup>	15.5	-0.4	Near average
Christchurch <sup>e</sup>	14.6	-0.3	Near average
Dunedin <sup>f</sup>	14.9	+1.0	Above average
Rainfall			
Location	Rainfall (mm)	% of normal	Comments
Auckland <sup>a</sup>	113	126	Above normal
Tauranga <sup>b</sup>	177 <sup>2</sup>	186	Well above normal
Hamilton <sup>c</sup>	67	84	Below normal
Wellington <sup>d</sup>	68	68	Below normal
Christchurch <sup>e</sup>	63	139	Above normal
Dunedin <sup>f</sup>	45	84	Near normal
Sunshine			

<sup>2</sup> Missing one day of data.

Location	Sunshine (hours)
Auckland <sup>a</sup>	240
Tauranga <sup>b</sup>	230
Hamilton <sup>c</sup>	235
Wellington <sup>d</sup>	180
Christchurch <sup>e</sup>	203
Dunedin <sup>f</sup>	221

<sup>a</sup> Māngere <sup>b</sup> Tauranga Airport <sup>c</sup> Hamilton Airport <sup>d</sup> Kelburn <sup>e</sup> Christchurch Airport <sup>f</sup> Musselburgh <sup>g</sup> Ruakura

## Highlights and extreme events

### Temperatures

The highest temperature of March was 30.9°C, observed at Alexandra on 7 March. Two warm periods, 5-6 of March and 13-14 March, brought near-record warm daily maximum temperature to several locations. Conversely, seven locations recorded record or near-record cold daily maximum temperature on the 2nd of March, including a record tying max temperature of only 12.2°C for Paraparaumu in the Wellington region.

The lowest temperature of the month was -2.6°C, observed at Pūkaki Airport 3 March.

During 2–3 March, New Zealand experienced some of its coldest weather of the year-to-date as a front moved across the country followed by a sharp southerly flow, driving temperatures into the single digits and near freezing in several inland areas. Early on 3 March, Gore recorded a temperature of 1.5°C, with Invercargill and Dunedin also sitting near 2°C. Parts of the North Island, including Rotorua, Taupō, and Hamilton, dropped to between 3°C and 6°C. Major centres were comparatively warmer.

### Record or near-record daily maximum air temperatures for March were recorded at:

Location	Extreme maximum (°C)	Date of extreme temperature	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Hawera	26.6	13th	1977	2nd-highest
Dunedin (Musselburgh)	30.4	6th	1947	2nd-highest
Nugget Point	28.3	6th	1970	2nd-highest
Waipounamu	28.0	6th	1980	3rd-highest
Whakatāne	28.7	14th	1975	Equal 3rd-highest
Port Taharoa	28.5	13th	1973	4th-highest
Oamaru	30.1	6th	1967	Equal 4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Paraparaumu Airport	12.2	2nd	1972	Equal lowest
Brothers Island	12.2	2nd	1997	2nd-lowest
Kaikōura	10.2	2nd	1972	2nd-lowest
Wellington Airport	12.6	2nd	1972	3rd-lowest
Upper Hutt (Trentham)	12.2	2nd	1972	3rd-lowest
Waipara	10.6	2nd	1973	3rd-lowest

Martinborough	13.3	2nd	1986	Equal 3rd-lowest
Stratford	11.7	2nd	1972	4th-lowest
Takapau Plains	11.3	2nd	1972	4th-lowest
Waiau School	10.1	2nd	1974	4th-lowest
Le Bons Bay	9.7	2nd	1984	4th-lowest
Hanmer Forest	7.8	2nd	1972	4th-lowest
Diamond Harbour	11.3	2nd	2004	Equal 4th-lowest

#### Record or near-record daily minimum air temperatures for March were recorded at:

Location	Extreme minimum (°C)	Date of extreme temperature	Year records began	Comments
<b>Low records or near-records</b>				
Mokohinau Island	12.6	3rd	1994	Lowest
Brothers Island	9.0	3rd	1997	3rd-lowest
Waipounamu	-0.7	3rd	1980	3rd-lowest
Campbell Island	-1.2	10th	1991	4th-lowest
Balclutha	-0.4	10th	1964	Equal 4th-lowest
<b>High records or near-records</b>				
Oamaru	16.8	28th	1972	Equal highest
Motu	16.4	14th	1990	2nd-highest
Matamata	19.6	14th	1999	Equal 2nd-highest
Whitianga	21.2	14th	1971	3rd-highest
Te Puke	19.9	14th	1973	3rd-highest
Rotorua Airport	18.9	14th	1972	3rd-highest
Raoul Island	24.4	13th	1992	4th-highest

#### Rain, flooding, and slips

On 25-26 March, heavy rain and strong winds swept across the country as a deep sub-tropical low moved from Northland to the Bay of Plenty, bringing large northeast waves and widespread weather warnings. Northland was the hardest hit, where a red warning for heavy rain was issued by MetService, and multiple regions, including Auckland, Coromandel, Taranaki, Tasman, Canterbury and North Otago, were put under orange warnings for rain and/or wind. After more than a month's worth of rain fell in just days, the Far North and Whangārei mayors declared states of emergency as flooding intensified.

- The Far North and Whangārei mayors declared states of emergency on 26 March due to widespread flooding.
- Approximately 335 households in Northland lost power.
- Fire and Emergency New Zealand carried out 54 weather-related callouts across the upper North Island, including rescuing three people from vehicles trapped in floodwaters.
- Kaitaia was the worst affected area, with 22 callouts for flooding and multiple precautionary evacuations after the river breached its stopbank.
- Police estimated 400–500 residents were evacuated from Kaitaia, with assistance provided along Donald Road, North Park Drive, Davis Street and Matilda Place.

- Additional weather-related callouts occurred in Auckland (14), Waikato (7) and Bay of Plenty (5).
- Flooding caused multiple road closures, including SH25 near Whitianga, SH25 between Tairua and Hikuai, and SH25 between Waihi and Whangamatā.
- Waka Kotahi closed several state highways in Northland, including sections of SH1, SH10, SH11 and SH15, due to flooding, slips and surface water.
- The settlement of Ōakura was cut off again after being previously impacted by severe flooding and slips in January 2026.
- Slips were reported in the Bay of Plenty and Auckland on 26 March, with Tamaki Drive closed or restricted for much of the day.

#### Record or near-record March extreme 1-day rainfall totals were recorded at:

Location	Extreme 1-day rainfall (mm)	Date of extreme rainfall	Year records began	Comments
Purerua	143	25th	1983	Highest
Kaitaia	118	26th	1948	2nd-highest
Whitianga Airport	197	26th	1961	2nd-highest
Te Puke	148	26th	1973	2nd-highest
Christchurch (Riccarton)	44	1st	2002	2nd-highest
Kerikeri	190	25th	1945	3rd-highest
Mt Ruapehu, Chateau	53	13th	2000	3rd-highest
Motueka	131	26th	1956	3rd-highest
Campbell Island	43	17th	1991	3rd-highest
Kerikeri Airport	168	25th	1945	4th-highest
Dargaville	72	26th	1943	4th-highest
Russell	157	25th	1919	4th-highest
Windsor	21	26th	2000	4th-highest

#### Wind

The highest wind gust was 163 km/h, observed at South West Cape on 6 March.

Two ferry sailings were cancelled on 2 March due to rough conditions, southerly swells and winds just over 80 km/h. The next day, 3 March, Tuesday morning's Interislander sailings were delayed due to three metre swells and forecast winds of up to 74 km/h in Cook Strait.

#### Record or near-record March extreme wind gusts were recorded at:

Location	Extreme wind gust (km/h)	Date of extreme gust	Year records began	Comments
Māhia	96	27th	1991	2nd-highest
Diamond Harbour	96	26th	1980	2nd-highest
Te Kuiti	53	2nd	2003	2nd-highest
South West Cape	163	6th	1991	4th-highest
Waiouru Airport	98	27th	1970	4th-highest

#### Cloud and fog

On 20 March, fog disrupted flights in Wellington. Wellington airport said 12 flights had been cancelled and a further 10 delayed on Friday morning.

On 24 March, intermittent fog at Christchurch Airport led to the cancellation or delays of flights before 8 am. Eight domestic flights were cancelled due to fog.

On 29 March, more than 50 flights were affected by fog, with both cancellations and delays occurring.

### **Snow and ice**

On 2 March, the first dusting of snow in 2026 was observed in Hawke's Bay. In Central Hawke's Bay snow was visible on the Ruahine Ranges.

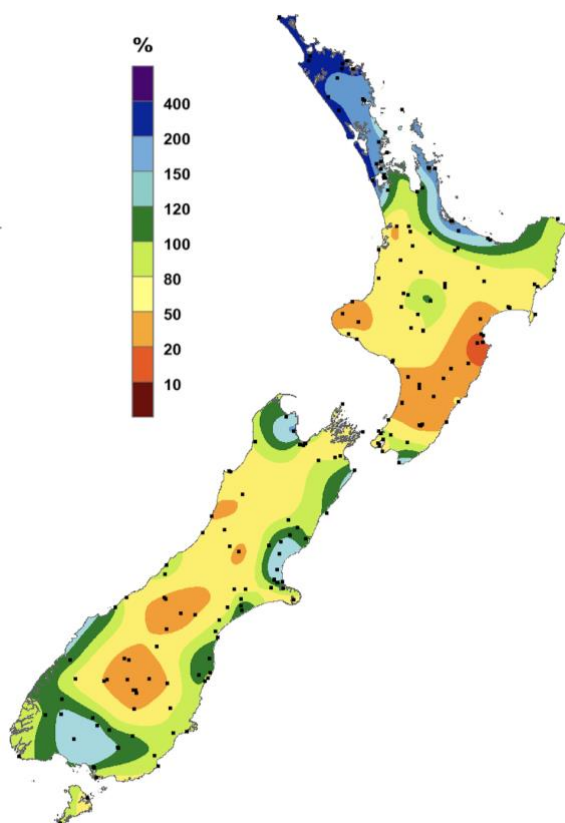
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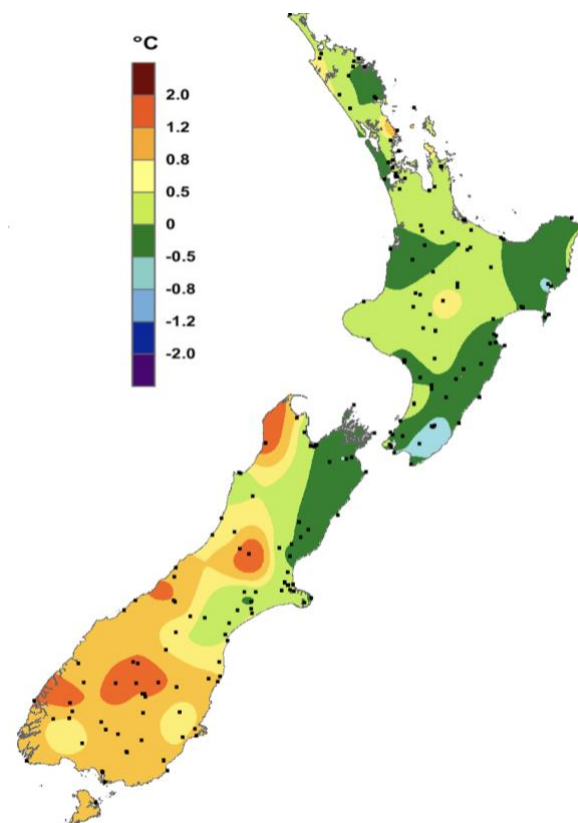
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### **March rainfall**

Expressed as a percentage of the 1991-2020 normal.



### **March temperature**

Expressed as a departure from the 1991-2020 average in degrees Celsius.

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