

New Zealand North Island Contrasts



Cruise the Bay of Islands, explore the Parliament Buildings in Wellington, sample fine wines on Waiheke Island, and join a traditional Maori feast in Rotorua on this self-drive tour of New Zealand's beautiful North Island. This tour is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the island, from its beautiful eastern coast and its remote hinterlands to its two largest cities, Auckland and Wellington.

This is very much a "highlights" tour, intended to provide a broad overview of North Island. It can easily be adapted to suit your preferences or to take in more remote areas of the island. Whether your interest is in sightseeing, walking, adventure or family activities, we can help prepare an itinerary to suit.

Day 01: Arrive Auckland

You will be met on arrival at Auckland International Airport and transferred by private vehicle to the Rendezvous Grand Hotel for two nights (deluxe room, B&B basis)

In the afternoon, board a Pride of Auckland yacht for a 1½-hour cruise within the harbor, affording you're the opportunity to admire the city from the water and to sail beneath Harbour Bridge. You can sit back and relax or, if you fancy yourself a capable mariner, have a go at steering the yacht and trimming the sails!

Your Financial Protection

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

Return to your hotel late afternoon. Evening at leisure.

Day 02: Waiheke Island wineries

After breakfast at the Rendezvous, take the high-speed catamaran (about half an hour) across the waters of Waitemata Harbour and the Hauraki Gulf to Waiheke Island, where you embark on a tour of the island's famous wineries.

Aided by a comparatively warm climate, Waiheke Island's wineries produce a small quantity of very high quality wines. They are mostly boutique wineries, small operations producing their own distinctive artisan wines. Among the best-known are Mudbrick, Cable Bay and Goldwater.

Upon arrival at Waiheke, join with a small group for a guided tour of the wineries – wine tasting included! During the course of the day, you'll also have the chance to explore some of the island's beautiful beaches, sample olive oil from one of the local olive mills, and time permitting, visit one of the local art studios. Return to Auckland in the afternoon or, if preferred, relax on the beach and/or enjoy dinner on the island before returning on the evening ferry.



Day 03: Auckland – Bay of Islands

After breakfast, collect your hire car (a Toyota Camry or similar) from the central city depot.

Depart Auckland via Harbour Bridge and drive north along the coast, passing the scenic Waiwera and Orewa Pacific Ocean beaches, and stopping for a stroll and a swim if the mood takes you.

Late morning, stop at the Matakoho Timber Museum to learn more about the history of the Northland Region from the perspective of its chief industries: timber milling and gum digging.

In the afternoon, drive via Dargaville to Waipoua Kauri Forest, where you can view the 50 metre tall Tane Mahuta, the greatest of all the giant kauri trees. Afterwards, continue to Paihia, in the lovely Bay of Islands region, via Hokianga harbour and Kaikohe.

Check into Kingsgate Hotel in Paihia for two nights (B&B basis).

Day 04: Bay of Islands

After breakfast at Kingsgate, embark on a half-day cruise in the Bay of Islands, stopping at Cape Brett and Piercy Island, the famous 'Hole in the Rock'. With any luck, you might spot dolphins

during the cruise. On your return voyage, make a stop at Urupukapuka Island for a swim or stroll around Otehei Bay.



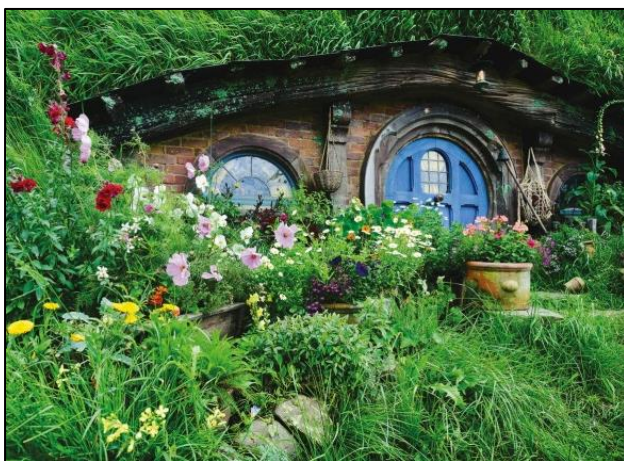
Christ Church, Bay of Islands

Back in Paihia, take an afternoon tour of the Waitangi Treaty House. It was here that the nation of New Zealand was born in 1840, when the native Maori and British colonists signed an historic treaty. The Treaty House is of more than historic interest, however; situated within its grounds is a particularly beautiful example of Maori woodcarving in the form of the old Meeting House.

Day 05: Bay of islands - Hamilton

Depart Paihia and travel south to Hamilton, New Zealand's largest inland city. It's a long drive, taking much of the morning and early afternoon, but also a very scenic one, as you travel through rich agricultural land, past tiny settlements such as Hikurangi and Wellsford, over the Bombay Hills and down the Hibiscus Coast past Auckland, before entering the Waikato Valley.

On arrival in Hamilton, check into the Ibis Hotel for one night (B&B basis). Situated on the banks of the Waikato River, the Ibis is close to the heart of the city, and within walking distance of a number of restaurants and bars.



Day 06: Hamilton - Rotorua

After breakfast at the Ibis continue your journey south to Matamata. Situated at the foot of the Kaimai Ranges, this small town of 12,000 is one of New Zealand's most idyllic spots. Take the time to explore the town, stopping at one of its many cafes, or go for a drive and stroll in the surrounding hills.

While in Matamata, families might also like to take the time to visit Hobbiton, the bucolic Shire that formed the set for Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings films. Accompanied by a guide, you'll have a chance to tour the 10 acre site in full, visiting the Green Dragon Inn, the Mill and the Hobbit Holes. The tour is likely to be of interest to children and adults, providing much amusement as well as a fascinating insight into the amount of work that went into the construction of the set.

After the tour, travel over the bush-clad Mamaku Ranges to the Rotorua region. Rotorua is situated directly on the Pacific Rim of Fire, and is famous for its volcanic lakes, geysers and all other manner of geothermal wonders. Equally, it is renowned as a centre of Maori culture.

Check into Sudima Hotel on Lake Rotorua for two nights (B&B basis).



Day 07: Rotorua sightseeing

Following breakfast, begin your full-day exploration of the Rotorua region. This is a self-drive tour, allowing you to take things at your own pace, but included is a guided tour of Te Puia and the Whakarewarewa Thermal Reserve, to view the geysers and mud pools, and the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, where you can learn more about Maori traditional crafts. Also take the time to visit the beautiful Rainbow Springs, where you can see trout and rare kiwis.

In the evening, visit a Maori village, or Marae, for a night of Hanga (feasting) and Haka, traditional Maori song and dance.

Day 08: Rotorua - Napier

After breakfast at your hotel, depart Rotorua and continue south through the Kaingoroa pine forests to the small town of Taupo, on the shores of Lake Taupo. From Taupo, continue east through the small settlements of Tarawera and Rangitaiki until you reach Napier, Hawke's Bay.

Sometimes referred to as the Art Deco city – Napier was levelled by a huge earthquake in 1931 and rebuilt during the interwar years when the Art Deco fashion was at its peak – Napier is also one of New Zealand's top wine-producing regions.

Check into the Quality Inn for 2 nights (B&B).

Day 09: Hawke's Bay

After breakfast at the inn, join the guided Art Deco Walk, which will take you through the centre of Napier and provide an entertaining look at the town's iconic 1930s architecture.

The afternoon is at leisure. You may like to take a tour of the wineries in nearby Taradale, visit the Bay, or perhaps hire a bike and tour the coast.



Day 10: Napier - Wellington

After breakfast, depart Napier and travel south through Hastings and the wine valleys of Wairarapa and Hutt – you can make a detour here to visit the town of Martinborough, part of the classic wine trail, if of interest – and then into Wellington.

The capital of New Zealand, Wellington clings to steep hillsides that form a natural harbour at the southern tip of North Island. The geographic heart of the country, it is also the administrative centre.

Much like Auckland, Wellington has a very cosmopolitan atmosphere, its centre dominated by department stores, galleries, boutiques and stylish cafes that line the office-block canyons.

Check into the Ibis Hotel for two nights (B&B basis).

Day 11: Wellington

Today is free for you to explore Wellington. A visit to Te Papa, the National Museum of New Zealand, to learn more about the land and its people is highly recommended. In the afternoon, perhaps journey to the top of Mt Victoria for the stunning view of the harbour, or take the historic Wellington Cable Car to the Carter Observatory. In the afternoon, take the time to explore Cuba Street, Wellington's inner city bohemia.

There's no shortage of great restaurants in Wellington, many within walking distance of the Ibis.



Tongariro National Park

Day 12: Wellington – Tongariro National Park

Continue north along the Kapiti Coast and into the Manawatu region. This mountainous zone, which contains within it Tongariro National Park, is one of New Zealand's most scenically beautiful regions. Your destination is Whakapapa Village, on the northern slopes of Mount Ruapehu. Expect to arrive early afternoon – the rest of the day is at leisure.

During the winter, Whakapapa and Turoa becomes one of New Zealand's most popular skiing spots, while in the summer it's a highly popular destination for keen walkers, with a number of hiking routes, the most famous of which is the full-day Tongariro Crossing.

Check into Chateau Tongariro for one night (B&B basis).

Day 13: Tongariro National Park - Auckland

After breakfast, continue your journey north through Taumaranui and the rural heartlands of King Country to Waitomo. On arrival, join a guided tour of the region's famous limestone caves, which includes a boat ride on a subterranean river into the spectacular glow-work grotto, where you will discover remarkable stalactite formations.

In the afternoon, continue north to Auckland International Airport, where you check-in for your international flight home. *NB.* If flying out in the morning, we can arrange for a night at an Auckland hotel.

Price Guide:

The cost of this itinerary is from **£1,580** based on a two travellers staying in twin share accommodation. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).

Includes:

Accommodation and meals as described
 Activities as per itinerary
 National Park entry fees
 Car hire (Toyota Camry or similar)
 Meet and greet at Auckland Airport
 15% mandatory Goods & Services Tax

Excludes:

International and domestic flights
 Visa fees
 Meals other than those specified
 Travel Insurance – ask us for a quote
 Items of a personal nature

