

Discover New Zealand's North Island, home to geysers, hot springs and film locations

Awaiting for you in the Antipodes is an amazing country, formed by two large islands and surrounded by many other smaller ones. This is a once-in-a-lifetime tour around New Zealand's North Island, famous for its hot springs, lush vegetation, volcanoes and lakes. In addition to this fascinating reality, you can venture into a world of fantasy and magic, depicted in the cinema by the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy and which has immortalised landscapes of almost unimaginable beauty. In this territory, known by the Maoris as 'the land of the long white cloud', you can delve into the culture of this Polynesian ethnic group that settled in the country centuries ago, and whose vestiges can be seen in truly original and eye-catching artistic expressions. Join us on a road trip that fuses city life with nature, which starts and ends in the two major urban centres, Wellington and Auckland, which in the past and present have battled for capital city status and cultural centre stage. Get ready for an experience packed with surprises.



Departures:

from January 2021 till December 2021

Destinations:

Wellington, Hastings, Napier, Taupo, Rotorua, Hamilton and Auckland.

Categories:

Nature and Adventure.

Day 1: City of origin - Wellington

Flight departure from the city of origin to Wellington. Night on board.

Day 2: In flight.

Day 3: Wellington

Arrival and rental car pick-up at the airport. Head into Wellington, the capital of New Zealand since 1865, after it was moved from Auckland. It owes its name to Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington (homonymous of the English community) and victor of the Battle of Waterloo. It's known as New Zealand's capital of culture thanks to its wealth of museums and venues for music, dance, literature, theatre and film production. Of course, New Zealand is also famous for being the setting for the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy. Wellington itself was a location for filming. You can easily visit the different locations, such as Mount Victoria; Hutt River; Harcourt Park, which was transformed into the Gardens of Isengard; and Kaitoke Park, rechristened Rivendell for the big screen, where Frodo recovered from the knife attack. From the car park you can easily reach the exact location by following the signposts. Fifteen minutes away from the centre is the Miramar film empire, where you can visit the Weta Cave. Back in the city, you can also stroll through Civic Square, with its famous Ferns sculpture, and the picturesque harbour, crowned by verdant hills peppered with stunning colonial houses. Wellington Harbour has three islands: Matiu/Somes, Makaro/Ward and Mokopuna. Only the first is inhabited and can be visited by ferry. In the First World War, it was used as a quarantine camp for people and animals, while in the Second World War, it was an internment camp for foreigners. It's currently a protected island, serving as a refuge for endangered species. There's lots of life in this city, where you can savour great food and some of the country's famous wines. Overnight stay in Wellington.

Day 4: Wellington - Paraparaumu - Hastings - Napier

It's time to bid farewell to this fascinating city and head northwards. Perched at the southern tip of North Island and embraced by its beautiful harbour

and green hills, Wellington has been rated by prestigious publications such as Lonely Planet as 'the world's coolest little capital'. It certainly doesn't lack attractions. Its photogenic golden beach, its leisure options that fuse nature and fun, and its vibrant creative atmosphere make it a unique place. Don't leave Wellington without admiring the stunning views of the coastline from the Makara Peak Bike Trail or the City to Sea Walkway, that will allow you to enjoy the beauty of the coast. A plan for nostalgia lovers? Take the tram up to Kelburn and admire the panoramic views from the top of the hill. Back on the road. Drive along the west coast to Queen Elizabeth Park near Paraparaumu, which was used to film the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. Further along the coast, you'll come across Waitarere Forest (Osgiliath Wood), also a location for the films. Lying off Paraparaumu, about 45 minutes from Wellington, is Kapiti Island, accessible by ferry and home to more than 600 pairs of blue penguins. Onward to Hastings, a drive of three and a quarter hours. Fruit, wine and 1930s architecture make Hastings a truly unique place. At any time of the year, there are more than forty wineries to choose from for a visit. Make sure you enjoy an unforgettable tasting session! Every Sunday morning, the farmers' market is an excellent shopping experience. And then it's just a fifteen-minute drive to Napier, today's destination. Its signature attraction is the perfectly-preserved 1930s architecture. Its Art Deco buildings and Maori details give the city a unique New Zealand personality. Pick up a map from the tourist information centre or the Art Deco Trust and explore its main attractions. If you prefer a visit full of local history tidbits, we recommend paying for the services of a guide. If you have time, pop over to see the colony of gannets that live in Cape Kidnappers. Overnight stay in Napier.

Day 5: Napier - Taupo - Rotorua

Today's destination is Rotorua, nicknamed the "Sulphur City", which is famous for being a geothermal centre and a hub of Maori culture. Stop off en route in Taupo, just under two hours from Napier. The town sits on the shore of Lake Taupo, the largest in the country and drained by the Waikato River. Just under ten minutes away, and without having to take a detour from the route, you can visit the stunning Huka Falls. Taupo is located in a centre of volcanic and geothermal activities, crowned by Mount Tauhara, bestowing it with thermal waters suitable for bathing. After stretching your legs for a bit, continue for another hour to Rotorua. As soon as you arrive, you'll be able to explore its rich history and heritage. We recommend strolling through the beautiful Government Gardens, located in Waahi Tapu and considered a sacred ground for the Maoris; taking a dip in the Blue Baths; and visiting Rotorua Museum, a fascinating space where you can delve into the history of the Te Arawa tribe and admire valuable pieces of local, national and international art. Visiting the buried village of Te Wairoa, destroyed in the 19th century after the eruption of Mount Te Wairoa, will give you an insight into the power of the earth and how the volcanic past has moulded the spirit of local inhabitants. If you're travelling as a family, you can try your hand at fishing in the local rivers and lakes; visit a local farm full of surprises; and get up close to lions, giant eels, deer and other inhabitants of the fabulous Paradise Valley Springs. What's more, the fascinating Rainbow Springs animal conservation park is home to endangered species such as tuatara reptiles and kiwis. Gondola rides to the top of Mount Ngongotaha and laid-back walks through Whakarewarewa Forest are plans that appeal to all ages. Overnight stay in Rotorua.

Day 6: Rotorua

Day at your leisure on which you could delve into the fascinating Maori culture or luxuriate in hot springs and boiling mud pools. This city, on the volcanic plateau, has one of the most turbulent fields of geothermal activity in the world and sits right on the Pacific Ring of Fire. Rotorua is also the ancestral home of the Te Arawa tribe, who settled there more than six hundred years ago and whose presence offers visitors a host of cultural experiences. Try a hāngi banquet, cooked over smouldering embers; take a tour to an authentic pre-European Maori settlement; or treat yourself to a relaxing spa session. Nature and sports lovers will find an authentic paradise in Rotorua and its surroundings. Whakarewarewa Forest alone boasts 130 kilometres of bike trails adapted to all levels, from beginners to experts. If you like thrills and spills, take your pick from fascinating activities such as rafting over the world's highest commercially rafted waterfall on Kaituna River; flying like a superhero on the giant wind column in Agroventures; embarking on the magical Rotorua Canopy Tours through an unexplored forest dotted with mysterious trails, tree platforms, impossible ziplines and suspension bridges; or competing in a go-kart race at the Off Road NZ activity park... If you're a romantic at heart, you can take a trip over to Mokoia Island and learn about the well-known love story of Hinemoa and Tūtāneka. Souvenir hunters will find tempting shops in Rotorua with local art, crafts and textiles. Take home a memory of the ever-welcoming Maori culture! And to recharge batteries, nothing better than savouring the local cuisine at the restaurants on Eat Street. Overnight stay in Rotorua.

Day 7: Rotorua - Matamata - Hamilton - Auckland

Today's drive will take you to Auckland, nicknamed the "city of sails". En route, and just fifty minutes from Rotorua, we suggest a stop-off in Matamata, the most famous "Lord of the Rings" setting. This landscape surrounded by dairy farms and just next to the town of Waikato was the location for Middle-Earth and Hobbiton Village, with its curious miniature houses embedded in the ground like caves. After enjoying this fascinating stop, drive for a further fifty minutes to Hamilton, nestled on the banks of the mighty Waikato River. It's famous for its walks, gardens, cafes and nightlife. The visually stunning Hamilton Gardens are webbed by paths that journey through a gallery of themed gardens from grand Italy to tranquil Asia. Other city highlights include the Waikato Museum and the Hamilton Zoo, which features native birds in a walk-through free-flight aviary. Between February and October, you can watch a rugby match at the Waikato Stadium. Don't forget to wear the local colours: red, yellow and black! Onward to Auckland, just short of two hours away. This major metropolis and former capital is great for relaxing and savouring wonderful cuisine at its seemingly endless restaurants. Boat cruises and ferry trips to the volcanic island of Rangitoto are fantastic options off the mainland. (Note: suggested activities and trips not included). Overnight stay in Auckland.

Day 8: Auckland

Imagine an urban environment where everyone lives just half an hour away from stunning beaches, fantastic hiking trails and a dozen enchanting islands. Add to that a sunny climate, an underlying rhythm of Polynesian culture and a passion for good food, great wines and even better shopping, and you can begin to understand what Auckland is like, the country's largest and most diverse city. In the bustling city centre of Auckland, you can buy everything you could ever imagine, savour delicious food, explore the local art scene and admire breathtaking views. Its huge harbour, as well as its laid-back islands and vibrant city landscape, offer an exciting and easily-accessible fusion of urban, aquatic and wildlife activities. Visit the Sky Tower and ascend 328 metres in the glass-fronted lifts to marvel at the spectacular views. You might want to try a walk around the tower, known as the SkyWalk, or even leap off it, aka the SkyJump. We also recommend the daily Maori cultural performances at the Auckland Museum that include a welcome dance, a Poi dance, a stick exhibition, a weapon display and a Haka; and/or a visit to Auckland Zoo, which is always fun. A hundred seventeen species and more than 700 animals live there. There's always lots to see and do throughout the year, including events and zoom tours (behind the scenes). Daily

zookeeper exhibitions will give you the chance to get very close to some incredible creatures. Thanks to your rental car, you'll get to know a magnificent natural environment. Half an hour from the city centre are the magnificent Waitakere Mountains, which always fascinate visitors with their vegetation, waterfalls and wonderful hiking trails. Nearby are the breathtaking black-sand beaches of Piha, Muriwai, Bethells and Karekare. Goat Island Marine Reserve, Tawharanui Regional Park and the inactive volcanic landscapes of the area are also unforgettable trips. Overnight stay in Auckland.

Day 9: Auckland - City of origin

Arrival at the airport with enough time to drop off your rental car and flight back to the city of origin. Night on board.

Day 10: City of origin

Arrival. End of the trip and our services.

Services included in the trip

- Return flight.
- Stay in selected hotel in Wellington.
- Selected meal plan in Wellington.
- Stay in selected hotel in Napier.
- Selected meal plan in Napier.
- Stay in selected hotel in Rotorua.
- Selected meal plan in Rotorua.
- Stay in selected hotel in Auckland.
- Selected meal plan in Auckland.
- Rent-a-car.

Services NOT included

- Possible toll charges.
- Sports and adventure activities.
- Entrance to historic buildings, museums, natural parks, activities and attractions mentioned during itinerary (some are free).

Important remarks

- - Driving through New Zealand: 1. To drive in New Zealand, you'll need to get an international driving licence, which is a very simple. Procedure that you can do at any traffic office. 2. The roads are in good conditions, but the terrain means that long detours are needed to reach certain places. 3. Obeying speed limits and drink driving levels are important elements to consider, with severe penalties for offenders..
- - - Triple rooms in Oceania are generally rooms with twin beds or a double, in which a folding bed is installed to accommodate the third person. Due to the inconvenience this causes, we advise against using this option as far the possible..
- - - Please check which documents are required to enter the country..
- - - The proposed excursions and tours for each day are purely suggestions, as you can tailor the trip to suit your times, tastes and needs..
- - - A credit card is considered a guarantee, so sometimes you will need one for check-in at hotels..
- - - Hotels usually have cots available. Otherwise, babies will have to share a bed with an adult..
- - - To pick up your rental car, you'll need a credit (not debit) card in the name of the person who made the booking, who must also be the named driver of the vehicle..