Australian Escapes Holiday & Travel Club
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The North Island Traverse: From Coast to Crater

Uncover the best of the Central North Island on a trail designed for the adventurous. This journey connects the dots between New Zealand's most iconic landscapes, traverse the world-renowned Tongariro Alpine Crossing, explore the geothermal wonders of Rotorua, and retreat to the golden beaches of the Coromandel. With a mix of guided adventures and the freedom of a self-drive, you'll experience the "must-dos" alongside local secrets, staying in hand-picked comfort every step of the way.

Starts in:	Auckland
Finishes in:	Auckland
Length:	9days / 8nights
Accommodation:	Hotel 4 star
Can be customised:	Yes

This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.



Inclusions:

Includes: Late model rental cars

Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)

Includes: Unlimited kms

Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring

Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course

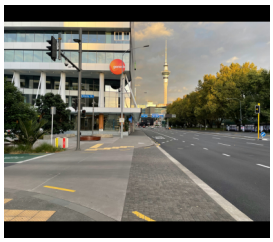
Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App

plus much more...

Day 1







Welcome to Auckland

Welcome to Auckland, known in Māori as Tāmaki Makaurau. Auckland is New Zealand's vibrant "City of Sails," and the country's largest metropolitan area. Nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the Tasman Sea. Surrounded by native bush, lush rainforests, and pristine beaches, Auckland is a haven for both adventurers and urban explorers. Wander through world-class museums and galleries in the city centre or enjoy a peaceful retreat at the Auckland Gardens, where stunning landscapes showcase New Zealand's diverse flora. Stroll along the lively waterfront to savour fresh seafood and international cuisine at Viaduct restaurants. For an unforgettable perspective, ascend the iconic SkyTower, New Zealand's tallest structure, and take in panoramic views of the city and its picturesque islands.

Private Transfer Auckland Airport to your Auckland Accommodation with Tourcorp

You will be met at the Auckland airport by your private driver and be transferred to your Auckland accommodation.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - All Blacks Experience

See what it takes to make, shape and be an All Black. Experience first-hand the excitement and emotion of game day. Discover the stories behind some of world rugby’s most famous players, moments, and matches.
This guided experience introduces you to the game of rugby including state-of-the-art displays combining sound, images, interactive technology, and hands-on activities. Discover New Zealand’s deep passion for our national sport, experience the full force of the All Blacks haka, and tackle interactive zones where you can try out your kicking, catching, line-out, and accuracy skills against legendary All Blacks.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Unleased by Wētā Workshop

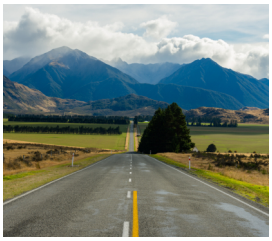
A jaw-dropping, senses-shattering, awe-inspiring adventure into the heart of movie magic! Get hands-on and immerse yourself in an extraordinary world of practical effects, props and larger-than-life sets. On this award-winning tour, you can explore three movie projects imagined by the Wētā crew and uncover how they bring big screen concepts to life. Discover a mind-blowing world of robots, monsters, dinosaurs and more - step right into the action to see, play and experience movie-making up close.

Your accommodation: Sudima Auckland City

Conveniently located within easy walking distance of Auckland’s bustling shopping, arts, dining and entertainment precincts and opposite the New Zealand International Convention Centre.



Day 2




Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

Auckland to Pauanui

Leaving Auckland you will travel through rolling green Waikato countryside and across the Hauraki Plains. The drive will take you near the Firth of Thames, a haven for wildlife, in particular, the shorebirds at Miranda. Arriving in the historic gold town of Thames you then cross the Southern Coromandel Ranges and onto the scenic east coast of the peninsula, littered with white sandy beaches. The destination of Pauanui meaning "Big Paua" in Māori, lies at the mouth of the Tairua River on its south bank, directly opposite the larger town of Tairua.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Driving Creek Railway & Potteries - EyeFull Tower Tour

Driving Creek Railway and Potteries has become a Coromandel icon. The dream of Barry Brickell was to establish a pottery workshop on his land. Using a railway he would have access to the clay on the land and the pine kiln fuel. Over the next 15 years the railway developed until in 1990 it was finally licensed to carry fare paying passengers and ever since thousands of visitors have made the trip to Coromandel to experience this unique attraction. The 1 hour return train trip on the innovatively designed trains takes you through replanted native kauri forest and includes 2 spirals, 3 short tunnels, 5 reversing points and several large viaducts as it climbs up to the mountain-top terminus. The pottery is still producing and you can watch the artists at work as well as purchase items. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

Pauanui

Pauanui is a coastal gem located on New Zealand’s Coromandel Peninsula. Known for its pristine beaches, lush native forests, and laid-back charm, Pauanui offers a slice of paradise for relaxation and adventure alike. Take in the golden sands, enjoy coastal walks, and explore local trails with breathtaking views of the Pacific. Pauanui is a haven for beach lovers, water sports enthusiasts, and anyone looking to experience New Zealand’s stunning natural beauty

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Your accommodation: Grand Mercure Puka Park Resort

Puka Park Resort is situated on the eastern side of the Coromandel Peninsula. Nestled amongst 25 acres of New Zealand's most beautiful native bush this prestigious hideaway offers luxury and seclusion at its best.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3




Explore the Coromandel

Enjoy a day at leisure in the twin seaside towns of Tairua and Pauanui, where the rugged Coromandel Ranges meet the Pacific Ocean. You might choose to head inland to the Kauaeranga Valley to tackle the Pinnacles Track, an iconic hike following historic stone steps to a dramatic summit with panoramic views stretching across the entire peninsula, or take a short drive north to dig your own natural thermal pool in the sands of Hot Water Beach. For a deeper connection to the land, we highly recommend a guided wilderness adventure with local legends, Kiwi Dundee, whose expert-led journeys reveal remote rainforests, hidden gold mining history, and ancient kauri groves far beyond the standard tourist trails. Whether you are summiting the volcanic peaks of Mount Paku for 360-degree vistas, kayaking the serene Tairua estuary, or simply enjoying fresh Pacific oysters at a waterfront café, the pace of your Coromandel discovery is entirely yours to set.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Wilderness Adventure Walk with Kiwi Dundee - Lunch Included

This day is a challenging hiking journey into tranquil and remote pristine rainforest surrounded by giant rock faces, rugged volcanic peaks, and ancient Kauri, Rimu and Rata trees. Wonder at the world’s largest tree ferns, crystal clear rivers and rock pools. Enjoy the fascinating history and learn about the flora and fauna within this magnificent forest.
Includes a picnic lunch to enjoy by the river or up in the mountains.

The Pinnacles Walk - suggested activity

The Pinnacles Track is one of New Zealand’s most popular overnight walks that offers spectacular views of the Coromandel Peninsula. It can also be completed as a day walk. Located upriver from Thames in the stunning Kaueranga Valley, the track follows original steps constructed in the early 1900s for packhorses transporting natural resources through lush forest. The track remains rich with history from the days of kauri loggers, gum diggers and gold miners who plundered the area for many years. The track is 12km in total and should take 5-6 hours to walk. The Pinnacles hut is located 5km in and is a modern, serviced, Department of Conservation hut situated on one of the highest peaks in the valley. The hut has 80 bunks as well as cooking, heating, showering and toileting facilities. Make sure to book the Pinnacles Hut ahead of time. A small charge applies to sleep in the hut.

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 4







Pauanui to Rotorua via Tauranga

Leaving Pauanui, head south to New Zealand's surfing mecca. In addition to lazing on the beach or surfing, Whangamata offers big game fishing, walking and mountain biking in native and exotic forests. Continuing on to Tauranga you will arrive into the harbourside city in the Bay of Plenty region. It hosts historic buildings like the Elms Mission Station, an 1847 Georgian-style home. A bridge over the harbour connects Tauranga to Mount Maunganui, a beach town with hot saltwater pools and an extinct namesake volcano with winding walking paths. Finally, you will arrive into the City of Rotorua. The regions geothermal activity becomes evident as you see steam rising from the roadside and surrounding hills. Considered the cultural centre for the Maori people, Rotorua is the ideal place to gain an insight into the history and culture. Visit the local museum located in the government gardens or the nearby Ohinemutu Village, the original site of the first Maori settlers in the area or enjoy a traditional Maori "Hangi" meal and a cultural performance. Of course, Rotorua is also a great place to enjoy many other activities including, fishing, 4WD trips, relaxing spa treatments, mountain biking, walking and hiking plus helicopter and float plane trips.

Rotorua

Discover the geothermal, adventure, and cultural wonderland of Rotorua. As you explore, you may see steam rising from cracks in the road, bubbling and hissing water in pools along the lake's edge, and the unmistakable smell of Sulfur. Rotorua is rich in Māori culture and history, with many Māori inhabitants recognising the great potential of the volcanic land. For an outdoor adventure, head to The Redwoods and experience the rainforest treetops from high up. There are a few accessible trails for disabled hikers and great biking trails as well. If you’re lucky, you might spot some of New Zealand's native birds, such as the Pīwakawaka (Fantail) and the Tūī. Alternatively, enjoy the Lake Tikitapu Blue Lake Walk or explore Kuirau Park, where you'll find bubbling mud pools and steaming lakes. Don't miss the private thermal reserves such as Te Puia and Wai-O-Tapu, where you can walk among bubbling mud pools, spouting geysers, and Sulfur ponds. Just a few minutes from the town centre, the Agrodome and National Kiwi Hatchery offer an insight into nature. Rotorua's rich Māori culture is a must-see. Spend an evening with Te Pā Tū, complete with a traditional-style dinner or stroll along the lake edge to reach one of the country's oldest Māori villages at Ohinemutu. When hunger strikes, visit Eat Street in Rotorua CBD, a vibrant street lined with delicious eateries and restaurants to satisfy any craving. No visit to Rotorua would be complete without experiencing Rotorua's original tourist attraction - a relaxing spa treatment. This town boasts an array of wellness experiences to unwind in. Whether you are seeking adventure, culture, or relaxation, Rotorua offers an unforgettable experience.

Te Pā Tū Evening Māori Cultural Experience - Dinner Included

New Zealand’s Most Awarded Cultural Attraction, presenting Te Pā Tū. Feast on song, drama, tradition, and divine seasonal kai (cuisine) within the forest Pā (village) blanketed by towering Tawa trees, blazing bonfires, and a forest-formed amphitheatre. Te Pā Tū shares Māori history, traditions, and cultural aspirations across 4-hours of celebration and feasting. These events change with each season of the Maramataka, the Māori lunar calendar.

Your accommodation: Millennium Hotel Rotorua

Millennium Hotel is Rotorua's largest 4-star deluxe hotel. Perfectly situated in the heart of the city overlooking Lake Rotorua. Five levels of accommodation offer guests a wide variety of scenic views.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 5



Explore Rotorua

Peppered with natural hot springs, boiling mud pools and steaming geysers, Rotorua sits within one of the world's most active volcanic regions. Geothermal landmarks aside, this city of sulphur has a rich indigenous history. Home to several prominent Māori tribes, a visit to one of the Māori experiences should be high on your agenda, learn about the special meaning of pounamu-Greenstone with Mountain Jade, explore the geysers and arts of Te Puia or immerse in an evening with Te Pā Tū. An excursion to one of the area's wellness spas is also a must! Try the Polynesian Spa for an invigorating soak in its natural mineral hot springs, Wai Ariki offers an indulging and unwinding restorative journey or pay a quick visit to Secret Spot for a soak and a delicious smash burger! If it is a thrill you are looking for, spike your adrenaline at Rotorua Canopy Tours, soaring above the ancient native forest below. Alternatively, head up the Skyline Rotorua Gondola for soaring lake views, and ride the luge at night for an extra thrill. Make the most of your time in Rotorua with an excursion through the Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland, one of the area’s most colourful volcanic attractions. Whatever you are after, Rotorua is almost certain to have it!

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - National Kiwi Hatchery Experience

The National Kiwi Hatchery Experience is a special opportunity to gain insight into and view this highly regarded conservation centre. Developed with the visitor experience in mind, the hatchery boasts special viewing opportunities and is hosted by kiwi expert guides who ensure guests leave fully informed and all questions answered. Learn all about New Zealand’s intriguing national icon and the efforts of the kiwi husbandry team, see and discover what it takes to hatch and rare chicks, and if you’re lucky see baby chicks in person!

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Original Ziplining Experience with Rotorua Canopy Tours

Embark on a three-hour adventure through the native New Zealand forest. Journey through the beautiful forest canopy via an incredible network of trails, tree platforms, Ziplines and swing bridges. See breathtaking views of the woodland valleys and hills as you fly through tight openings in the trees. In between the thrill of the ziplines and suspended tree bridges, your guides will share their passion and knowledge for the forest and the conservation challenges to preserve it. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information see here.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland

Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland is a spectacular showcase of New Zealand’s colourful and unique geothermal elements sculpted by thousands of years of volcanic activity. You will be introduced to a diversely different natural landscape, extending over 18-sq. km. Enjoy viewing the volcanic features as you walk at your own pace along well-defined tracks. Relax in the first-class Visitor Centre, home to the Gift Shop and Café facilities. Visit the Mud Pool, the largest in New Zealand, it was originally the site of a large mud volcano which was destroyed through erosion in the 1920s. See the history and beauty of the Lady Knox Geyser at 10:15 am every day where a daily eruption happens of up to 20 metres.

Your accommodation: Millennium Hotel Rotorua

Millennium Hotel is Rotorua's largest 4-star deluxe hotel. Perfectly situated in the heart of the city overlooking Lake Rotorua. Five levels of accommodation offer guests a wide variety of scenic views.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6







Rotorua to Waimarino-National Park via Taupō

Today you'll drive from Rotorua to Tongariro National Park along the thermal highway. Pass through Taupō and be sure to check out the Wai O Tapu Thermal Wonderland or Waimangu Volcanic Valley both well worth a visit if you can spare the time. Visit the Huka Falls, New Zealand's largest volume of water or take in the boiling mud pools and steam vents as you wander the nearby geothermal reserve, Craters of the Moon. Continue on to the township of Turangi, known as one of the world's best trout fishing locations before emerging out into Tongariro National Park. Enter the small village Waimarino and enjoy the beautiful scenery that surround it.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Huka Falls Jet Boat Ride

The Huka Jet is 30 minutes of pure fun and exhilaration, skimming close to cliffs, sliding past trees, feeling the adrenalin of full 360 degree spins. The excitement continues right up to the base of the foaming Huka Falls, where you get a spectacular water level view to New Zealand's most visited natural attraction. Nothing compares to watching 220,000 litres per second tumbling over the cliff face towards you. The water from the mighty Huka Falls runs down the Waikato River through a series of Hydro Power Stations. You'll get a view of the Wairakei Geothermal Power Station in the comfort of a powerful Chevrolet V8 jet boat. This unique Geothermal Power Station uses underground geothermal activity to produce hot steamy water. The Waikato Rivers beautiful environment is varied and unique and is New Zealand's longest river flowing north from our largest lake, Lake Taupō. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

Tongariro National Park

Tongariro National Park, New Zealand's oldest national park, is also the fourth place on earth to be designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The park features three prominent volcanoes: Mount Tongariro, Mount Ruapehu, and Mount Ngauruhoe. Mount Ngauruhoe and Mount Ruapehu are two of the world's most active composite volcanoes, with notable eruptions from Ruapehu in 1995 and 1996, and Tongariro in 2012. Despite this activity, the volcanoes are closely monitored to ensure visitor safety. When visiting Tongariro National Park, take advantage of the incredible outdoor activities available. In the winter, you can ski or enjoy snow play on Mt Ruapehu Ski Field. In the summer, the world-famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing is a must-do. This one-day hike, taking 6 to 8 hours, is one of New Zealand's Great Walks and will lead you past the stunning Emerald and Blue Lakes and unique volcanic landscapes. For those looking for other hiking options, the park offers a variety of tracks and trails suitable for all abilities, including shorter walks and a guided 3.5-day Tongariro Northern Circuit. You can also experience true isolation by exploring deep canyons and ancient forests along the Whanganui River or walking along ancient lava flows and glacier streams to the Taranaki Falls. After a day of exploring, stop by Pataka Café at Whakapapa to enjoy a meal with an incredible mountain view.

Sky Waka Gondola Sightseeing Trip with Whakapapa

During the summer months you can take advantage of the skifield facilities and take the gondola over Mt Ruapehu's otherworldly terrain. You'll travel to an altitude of 2020 metres where you'll be treated to magnificent views of Tongariro National Park, including the iconic peaks of Mt Ruapehu, Mt Tongariro and Mt Ngauruhoe, the latter featured as Mt Doom in the Lord of the Rings movies.

Your accommodation: The Park Hotel Ruapehu

Located in the centre of National Park and is the ideal base for exploring New Zealand's Tongariro Crossing. The on-site Spiral Restaurant & Bar is full of character and is open daily. The outdoor hot tubs, courtyard hammocks & open fireplaces are complimentary for guests and offer the perfect opportunity to relax and unwind after a day of adventure in the Ruapehu region.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7



Private Guided Tongariro Alpine Crossing with Adrift

For the exclusive guided trips you'll be provided with a really personal, informative and friendly day you will never forget. This trip is tailored so that group sizes are small, your guides are well informed and are able to provide you with an amazing experience. Your guide will also 'work behind the scenes' constantly assessing the weather and track conditions, timing for your Ketetahi personalised transport pick-up at the end of your hike, and other little details that will maximise your enjoyment. They can also tailor the trip to accommodate different fitness levels and know a few tricks about avoiding weather exposed or crowded areas. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information see here.

Your accommodation: The Park Hotel Ruapehu

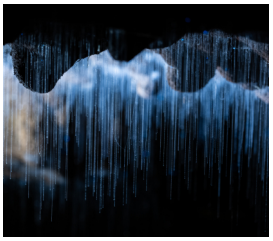
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Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 8







Waimarino-National Park to Waitomo

Head through National Park and across rich rolling farmland to the limestone regions of Waitomo and the famous Waitomo Caves complex. As you drive North you will soon leave behind the mountains wilderness of the Tongariro National Park and head into the rolling green hills of the Waikato region.

Glow Worm Caves Tour with Discover Waitomo

Explore a 30 million year old cave network spread across three levels. You'll travel deep underground through the limestone caves viewing stalactites and stalagmites as well as hearing about the caves historical and geological significance. You'll then hop into a boat and glide silently through the glow worm grotto - a galaxy of tiny living lights.

Waitomo to Auckland City

The lush farmland of the Waikato and the limestone hills of the Waitomo region provide some great scenery as you head north. Visit the Otorohanga Kiwi House en route for a great look at some of New Zealand's native birds in particular our famous flightless namesake.

Your accommodation: Sudima Auckland City



Conveniently located within easy walking distance of Auckland’s bustling shopping, arts, dining and entertainment precincts and opposite the New Zealand International Convention Centre.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 9





Depart Auckland today

Explore more of vibrant Auckland city before dropping your rental car at the airport depot and continuing your onward journey.

Farewell from Aotearoa / New Zealand

Bid farewell to Aotearoa / New Zealand, taking with you unforgettable memories of its breathtaking landscapes and incredible adventures. In Māori, it is said mā te wā, which is not goodbye, it is see you soon!

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	North Island Self Drive
Starts:	Auckland
Finishes:	Auckland
Tour length:	9
Accomodation:	Hotel 4 star
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Sudima Auckland City
Day 2	Grand Mercure Puka Park Resort
Day 3	Grand Mercure Puka Park Resort
Day 4	Millennium Hotel Rotorua
Day 5	Millennium Hotel Rotorua
Day 6	The Park Hotel Ruapehu
Day 7	The Park Hotel Ruapehu
Day 8	Sudima Auckland City