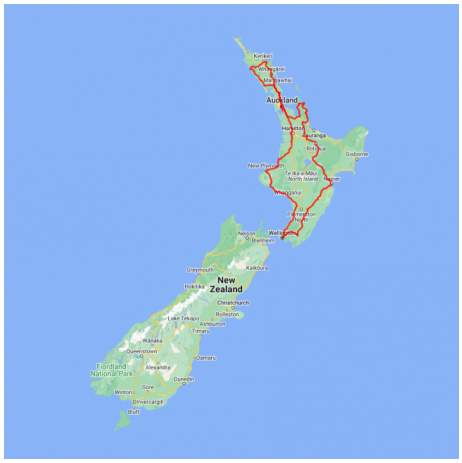
Daniel Collins - Fine Travel
64 9 363 2754
www.finetravel.co.nz

Ultimate North Island Explorer

Explore every corner of the North Island with this 21 day self drive tour. As well as the iconic destinations of Rotorua and the Bay of Islands, you'll also have time to explore some out of the way hidden gems, like Cape Palliser and the spectacular Taranaki coastline. Highlights of this tour include the wine growing regions of Martinborough and the Hawkes Bay; idyllic beach communities of the Coromandel Peninsula and Bay of Islands; the unique Maori culture of Rotorua and the vibrant cities of Auckland and Wellington.

Starts in:	Auckland
Finishes in:	Auckland
Length:	21days / 20nights
Accommodation:	Motels
Can be customised:	Yes

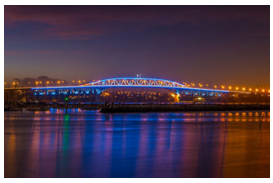
This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.



Inclusions:

Includes: Late model rental cars	Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)
Includes: Unlimited kms	Includes: GPS navigation
Includes: Airport & ferry terminal rental car fees	Includes: Additional drivers
Includes: Comprehensive tour pack (detailed itinerary, driving instructions, map/guidebooks, brochures)	Includes: 24/7 support while touring New Zealand
Included activity: Private Transfer Auckland Airport to Auckland accommodation with Tourcorp	Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App
Included activity: Te Pā Tū Evening Maori Cultural Experience - Dinner Included	Included activity: Zealandia By Night Wildlife Sanctuary Tour
Included activity: Waitomo and Aranui Caves tour Combo	Included activity: Hole in the Rock Cruise with Fullers GreatSights
Included activity: Waitangi Treaty Grounds	Included activity: Cathedral Cove Scenic Cruise
Included activity: Hobbiton Movie Set Tour	

Day 1



Private Transfer Auckland Airport to Auckland Accommodation

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

Welcome to Auckland

Auckland, New Zealand's self-proclaimed "City of Sails" is the country's largest metro area. Resting between the Pacific Ocean and the Tasman Sea, this urban paradise has something for everyone. Surrounded by native bush, rainforests, and an abundance of beaches, Auckland is a playground for both the city savvy and those with an eye for adventure. Explore the central museums and galleries on foot, or get out onto the water to experience the best views of the city.

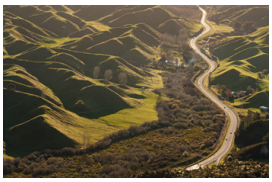
SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Harbour Sailing Dinner Cruise with Explore

This unique on-water sailing and dining experience is not to be missed while you're in Auckland. Enjoy smooth sailing on the Waitemata Harbour - then watch this photogenic city come alive with twinkling lights. Enjoy your meal as you sail around the beautiful Auckland Harbour taking in the view as the sun slowly sets. You'll be treated to canapes and a drink as you set off towards Westhaven Marina. Choose between dining in the downstairs cabin or on deck to take in the iconic sights of the Auckland Harbour. To finish the evening off, savour your dessert course as you leisurely sail back to Auckland's vibrant Viaduct Harbour.

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 your rental car

This tour can be priced with any of the rental cars available in our fantastic range, from economy hatchbacks to prestige saloons and SUV's.

Explore Auckland City

Perched on the edge of a large natural harbour, New Zealand's ‘City of Sails’ offers the best of both worlds. Sandy beaches, native bush and lush rainforests give way to a vibrant urban culture, humming with life. Spend time in the Viaduct Harbour, try your hand at sailing an America’s Cup yacht or take the ferry to nearby Waiheke Island for a gourmet food and wine experience.
If you're looking for a lovely hike, walk (if you're that way inclined) to the top of Auckland's highest volcano, Mt Eden, and take in soaring views of the gulf. Immerse yourself in nature's beauty at the expansive Auckland Botanic Gardens, sprawled across 156 acres of lush land and native forest on Hill Road. Pack a picnic, soak up the sunshine, and delight in the melodious birdsong during a peaceful lunch. Head up the Sky Tower, standing at just over 300m tall (about 1,000 feet) and have a meal in the 360 degree revolving restaurant. Scale the outermost perimeter of the Harbour Bridge or test your stomach and bungy off both. To end your day, catch a cab to Ponsonby Road and sample some upmarket culinary delights.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Waiheke Island Explorer Hop On Hop Off Tour

The most flexible tour on Waiheke Island, introducing you to the island's top spots! Start the tour of at Auckland harbor cruising on the ferry to reach Waiheke Island where you can hop on and off as much as you like at any of the 16 convenient stops which include vineyards, beaches and restaurants. If you prefer, stay on board and enjoy a 1 1/2 hour scenic tour of the island.
The buses stop at some of the island's iconic spots including Oneroa Village, Onetangi Beach, Batch Winery, the new Tantalus winery/brewery, Mudbrick Vineyard, Cable Bay Vineyard and more.
Knowledgeable tour drivers, and the addition of an on-board host, ensure you'll receive the most informative commentary as you travel around and you can get all the local tips and tricks for how best to enjoy Waiheke.
The Explorer Hop on Hop off departs from each hop on hop-off location approximately every 60 minutes throughout the day. At the end of the tour hop on the ferry and cruise the sparkling waters back to the Auckland harbor.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Fullers Ferry Auckland to Rangitoto Island return trip

A short 25-minute cruise through the Waitemata Harbour to the Hauraki Gulf delivers you to Rangitoto Island. Rangitoto Island is the largest and youngest of the many volcanoes that make up the Auckland volcanic field. It erupted around 600 years ago, but is extinct now and safe to explore. During your cruise to and from the island enjoy fantastic views of Rangitoto Island and Auckland the 'City of Sails'. On reaching the island you can walk to the summit (1 hour direct) for great views of the Hauraki Gulf and over Waitemata Harbour looking back towards Auckland. There are a number of walking trails to explore this volcanic island, further information can be found at the Department of Conservation website.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Auckland Harbour Bridge Bungy with AJ Hackett

Auckland is home to the World's First Harbour Bridge Bungy Jump, 40 metres above Waitemata Harbour. The Bungy Pod is attached underneath the bridge, and is ready to go for thrill-seekers looking for a buzz in New Zealand’s biggest city. You can even dip your head in the ocean below, bouncing back up feeling fierce and unstoppable. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information see here.

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 3

Auckland to Paihia, Bay of Islands

The trip from Auckland to the Bay Of Islands takes around 3.5 hours but give yourself some leeway for stops and sightseeing. As you go through Puhoi, take in the bohemian atmosphere of this historical township. Stop for a breath of fresh salty air in Whangarei and take another break at Kawakawa, home to the world famous Hundertwasser toilets. Enjoy the native bush surrounds and marvel at the endless golden beaches as you arrive into central Bay Of The Islands, Paihia.

Your accommodation: Sea Spray Suites

Sea Spray Suites offers comfortable and relaxing accommodation close to Paihia’s best activities and attractions. Directly across the road is the beautiful Te Ti Beach, exploring Paihia’s beautiful waters and wildlife is only a short step away. If you are interested in experiencing New Zealand’s heritage, The Waitangi Treaty House is only 1km away.

Day 4

Explore the Bay of Islands

Commonly known as the ‘winterless north’ New Zealand’s Bay of Islands is made up of over 140 subtropical atolls. Renowned for its untouched beaches, abundant marine life and idyllic climate, this tropical paradise ticks all the boxes. Spend some time on a remote stretch of beach, or see the dolphins on an ocean safari. If diving is your thing, take the morning to descend the Rainbow Warrior - The Greenpeace flagship sunk by French saboteurs in 1985. Wander around Russell, a whaling port founded in 1843. Learn about our culture in historic Waitangi, the site where The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 between the Maori and European settlers dictating the terms by which New Zealand would become a British colony. Alternatively you may like to take a day tour to Cape Reinga, the very top of the North Island.

Hole in the Rock Cruise with Fullers GreatSights

Board your cruise and take in the stunning views as you glide out through the islands and along the Rakaumangamanga Peninsula to Cape Brett, where a historic lighthouse keeps watch over and Piercy Island/Motukōkako, or as it is popularly known as the Hole in the Rock. According to Māori legend, local warriors used to paddle through the Hole in the Rock in their canoes before departing for battle. Drops of water from the cave roof above were a good omen. If conditions permit, your skipper will expertly guide the ship through the narrow space. Keep an eye out for common and bottlenose dolphins, whales, and other marine life during your cruise, and have your camera ready as you get up close to the action. Stop off at Otehei Bay on Urupukapuka Island where you have time to relax, take a walk, have a swim, or enjoy a bite to eat and drink from the on-site fully licensed café. The purpose-built catamaran is licensed by DOC (the Department of Conservation) for dolphin viewing and the crew has years of experience locating dolphins in these waters.

Waitangi Treaty Grounds Guided Tour and Cultural Performance

Waitangi is one of New Zealand's most historic sites where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 between the local Maori and the British Government. This two day pass allows you access to the Treaty of Waitangi Grounds and includes admission to the Te Kōngahu Museum and Te Rau Aroha Museum and a Maori Cultural performance. During your guided tour, you'll learn about the history of the treaty and discover the stories and events that shaped New Zealand. The cultural performance inside the carved meeting house includes waiata (singing), poi, a display of Maori weaponry and the haka - a war dance New Zealand is well known for.

Your accommodation: Sea Spray Suites

Sea Spray Suites offers comfortable and relaxing accommodation close to Paihia’s best activities and attractions. Directly across the road is the beautiful Te Ti Beach, exploring Paihia’s beautiful waters and wildlife is only a short step away. If you are interested in experiencing New Zealand’s heritage, The Waitangi Treaty House is only 1km away.

Day 5

The Far North

The Far North is a beautiful and tranquil place. Golden sand beaches stretch for miles, seas teeming with wildlife and forests full of birds. The best known location is Cape Reinga, situated at the northwestern tip of the Aupouri peninsular. The Pacific Ocean and Tasman Sea meet here and the surging tides make this section of coastline a very lively place.
Built in 1941 the Cape Lighthouse replaced the original structure built in 1879 on Motuopao Island and has been in operation since. In 1987 the lighthouse was fully automated marking an end to the traditional lighthouse keeper's role at the Cape.
In Maori mythology the Cape holds a special place. The Maori name of Te Rerenga Wairua literally translates to 'the leaping off place of spirits'. The spirits of the dead follow the curve of ninety mile beach heading north to the cape where they leap from a pohutukawa branch. Pausing briefly at the Three Kings Islands to take one last glance behind, they head to their homeland of Hawaiiki.
Also worthwhile is a trip down to Tapotupoto Bay. This beautiful sheltered bay has a gorgeous beach and is a ideal place for a short rest stop.
Spirits Bay to the east of Cape Reinga is another worthwhile diversion. The name was given by the Pakeha in acknowledgement of the belief that Maori spirits departed from the shores here. The original Maori name of Kapowairua originated when Tohe, a chief of the Ngati Kahu, set out to visit his daughter. He asked those he left behind that if he was to die they should grasp (kapo) his spirit (wairua).
Ninety Mile Beach is situated on the west coast of Northland and runs from Ahipara in the south to near Cape Reinga at the northern tip of New Zealand. Interestingly, it's accurate length is about 30 miles shorter than its name would have us believe.
At low tide 4WD vehicles can drive the length of the beach with many access points along the coastline. At the northern end the Te Paki stream is the most popular access point.
The small settlement on Doubtless Bay (now known as Taipa) was the site of the first Maori landing. Navigator Kupe explored this area around 900 AD before returning to Hawaiiki to boast of his discovery. Nearly 900 years later Captain James Cook sailed past the entrance to the harbour and recorded that it was "doubtless a harbour". The name eventually became Doubtless Bay. The Maori tribes that inhabited the area made great use of the bay's abundant shellfish and also travelled in the summer to the fishing villages established in the Rangaunu Harbour on the other side of Karikari Peninsular. Mangonui, at the entrance to the harbour, grew from whaling with the first ship arriving in 1792. The port became extraordinarily busy housing up to 30 ships at any one time.
Cape Reinga is around a 6 hour return drive from the Bay of Islands and we highly recommend taking the Dune Rider day tour. Rental Vehicles are not permitted to travel on Ninety Mile Beach and so taking the Dune Rider tour adds a whole new dimension to your Far North Experience.

Cape Reinga

Cape Reinga, situated at the northwestern tip of the Aupouri peninsular, it's not as many would have you believe the northernmost point of the New Zealand mainland but certainly the most accessible. The northernmost point is Surville Cliffs 30 km to the east. The Pacific Ocean and Tasman Sea meet here and the surging tides make this section of coastline a very lively place. Built in 1941 the Cape Lighthouse replaced the original structure built in 1879 on Motuopao Island and has been in operation since. In 1987 the lighthouse was fully automated marking an end to the traditional lighthouse keeper's role at the Cape.
In Maori mythology, the Cape holds a special place. The Maori name of Te Rerenga Wairua translates to 'the leaping off place of spirits'. The spirits of the dead follow the curve of a ninety-mile beach heading north to the cape where they leap from a pohutukawa branch. Pausing briefly at the Three Kings Islands to take one last glance behind, they head to their homeland of Hawaiiki.
Also worthwhile is a trip down to Tapotupoto Bay. This beautiful sheltered bay has a gorgeous beach and is an ideal place for a short rest stop.
Spirits Bay to the east of Cape Reinga is another worthwhile diversion. The name was given by the Pakeha in acknowledgment of the belief that Maori spirits departed from the shores here. The original Maori name of Kapowairua originated when Tohe, a chief of the Ngati Kahu, set out to visit his daughter. He asked those he left behind that if he was to die they should grasp (kapo) his spirit (wairua).

Ninety Mile Beach

Situated on the west coast of Northland, Ninety Mile Beach runs from Ahipara in the south to near Cape Reinga at the northern tip of New Zealand. Interestingly, it's accurate length is about 30 miles shorter than its name would have us believe.
At low tide 4WD vehicles can drive the length of the beach with many access points along the coastline. At the northern end the Te Paki stream is the most popular access point.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Cape Reinga Scenic Aeroplane Flight and Guided Tour

Today experience the beauty of the North from both air and land. Take a spectacular scenic flight to Cape Reinga over Whangaroa Harbour and the Rangaunu Harbour as well as Coopers Beach, Doubtless Bay and Ninety Mile Beach. The tour also includes a visit to the Cape Reinga lighthouse.

Your accommodation: Sea Spray Suites

Sea Spray Suites offers comfortable and relaxing accommodation close to Paihia’s best activities and attractions. Directly across the road is the beautiful Te Ti Beach, exploring Paihia’s beautiful waters and wildlife is only a short step away. If you are interested in experiencing New Zealand’s heritage, The Waitangi Treaty House is only 1km away.

Day 6

Bay of Islands to Waipoua Forest to Matakana

Heading west from the Bay of Islands you leave the Pacific Ocean and soon and arrive into the Hokianga and the wilder seas of the Tasman. The small townships of Omapere and Opononi have a great seaside feel and the perfect place to stop for an ice cream. The route now heads south and into the Waipoua Forest, home to the massive Kauri trees. Make sure you allow time to take a few short walks that are signposted as you pass through the region. Not to be missed is the 5-minute loop to view the largest of all the trees Tane Mahuta.
Heading back across country the Matakohe Kauri Museum is an award winning museum and has extensive displays of the regions logging, farming and social history. Just a short drive from Warkworth towards the coast is the small township of Matakana and a little further you will find the often deserted beaches of the Tawharanui Marine Reserve.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Ngawha Springs

Bathe in the healing waters at Ngawha Springs and let the ancient energy revitalize your senses while the minerals from deep in the earth permeate your body. The mineral-rich hot waters of Ngawha Springs bubble up from deep within the Earth. Nestled in the heart of Te Tai Tokerau, Northland, the springs have a long history of being a restorative and healing place to visit. The people of Ngapuhi have attended the natural springs to replenish wairua (spirit), alleviate the sensation of pain, and repair common ailments.

Your accommodation: Snells Beach Motel

Snells Beach Motel is perfectly situated, on the Mahurangi East Peninsula, overlooking the beautiful Kawau Bay and in the heart of the wonderful Matakana Coast Wine Country area.

Day 7

Matakana to Coromandel Township

Continuing south you pass through New Zealand's biggest city, Auckland and soon you will pass the city boundaries where the landscape changes to rolling lush farmland. The fertile Hauraki Plains are one of New Zealand's largest dairy producing regions. The Thames Estuary is a haven for wildlife in particular shore birds and a short detour to Miranda (well sign posted) is worthwhile to see the large flocks of godwits and oyster catchers amongst others. Arriving into the old gold town of Thames you can choose two different routes to the Coromandel's east coast. Straight over the Coromandel Ranges on highway 25A will deliver you to the coast in around 45 minutes. The more scenic route however takes you north to Coromandel Township along the Pohutukawa Coast (part of the Pacific Coast Highway). This is one of the most spectacular drives in the region and not to be missed.

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.

Your accommodation: Coromandel Court Motel

The Motels are in an excellent location with just a 3-minute stroll to shops and restaurants. Well equipped to ensure a comfortable stay.

Day 8

Coromandel Township to Tairua

Head east from Coromandel Township along the scenic coastline of Whangapoua Harbour and Kuaotunu Beach. For this drive leave plenty of time for stops and detours, as there are multiple side roads leading to secluded picnic spots and golden bays. Stop in Whitianga, and grab a bite at one of its many local cafes and eateries. Stretch your legs with a short walking detour and take a ferry over to Cooks Beach and Flaxmill Bay. Continue south, and be sure to take the scenic route down Hot Water Beach Road to Hot Water Beach and the Holiday town of Hahei. Finish your drive to Tairua and feel relaxed as you reach this calm seaside community. Before you leave, head up Paku Hill and take in the spectacular views of the natural harbour and the Pacific Ocean.

Coves, Caves and Coastline Cruise from Whitianga

Explore the volcanic coastline with its many caves, blowholes and golden beaches all from the comfort and safety of an ex coastguard 28 ft cruiser. Departing from Whitianga Wharf journey past the towering Shakespeare's Cliffs and historic Cooks Beach. Visit Cathedral Cove and the islands in the marine reserve. There is also a chance to swim with the abundant fish in the reserve (on board snorkel gear provided - don't forget your swimsuit and towel). For those who prefer to stay dry an underwater camera relays images to an onboard TV.

Your accommodation: Paku Lodge

Located midway between Whitianga and Whangamata on the sunrise coast of the Coromandel Peninsula, Tairua has the ambience of a New Zealand beach town from years ago.

Day 9

Tairua to Matamata

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 the beautiful Edwardian spa town of Te Aroha "The Mountain of Love" is famous for sparkling hot mineral spas and the world's only hot soda water geyser. Once you reach Matamata you are in hobbit country and the route takes you to the town of Matamata where you can still visit the film locations made famous in the Lord of the Rings trilogy at Hobbiton Movie Set and Farm Tours.

Hobbiton Movie Set tour from Shires Rest

Become immersed in the The Lord of the Rings and Hobbit films when you visit the actual Hobbiton movie set. Located just outside of Matamata in the heart of the lush Waikato farming region, your tour will begin with a drive through a picturesque sheep farm. You'll then be taken through Hobbit Holes, the Green Dragon Inn, the Mill and the Party Tree while your guide shares behind-the-scenes tales and insight into the making of the films. Spend time wandering through Bagshot Row before being led inside a Hobbit Hole to view the detailed interiors, designed to provide an authentic glimpse into the dwelling of a Hobbit.

Matamata to Rotorua

Just south of Matamata is the township of Tirau, home to the largest tin sheep and sheepdog, but it also offers a surprising number of bric a brac, art, craft and antique stores if you feel like browsing.
Arriving 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. Dominating the display is the devastating volcanic eruption of Mt. Tarawera in 1886 but also of great interest is the Maori battalion display which portrays stories of this once feared military unit.
Nearby Ohinemutu Village is the original site of the first Maori settlers in the area and despite its now modern surroundings and buildings you can still gain a sense of what the original village was like. The magnificent meeting house and historic carvings along with the unique 'Tudor-style' St Faiths Church feature in many visitors photo albums.
One of the most popular introductions to the Maori Culture is through an evening at Mitai Maori Village where you can enjoy performances and demonstrations followed by a traditionally cooked hangi meal.
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.

Your accommodation: Quest Rotorua Central

Located in the heart of Rotorua, just a stone’s throw from the restaurant and shopping precinct. Purpose built in 2012, all apartments are equipped with modern fixtures, full cooking and laundry facilities that make Quest Rotorua Central your perfect home away from home.

Day 10

Explore Rotorua

Peppered with natural hot springs, boiling mud pools and steaming geysers, Rotorua sits within one of the worlds most active volcanic regions. Geothermal landmarks aside, this city of sulphur has a rich indigenous history. Home to several prominent Maori tribes, a visit to one of the Maori Villages should be high on your agenda, as should an excursion to the Polynesian Spa for an invigorating soak in its natural mineral hot springs.
Spike your adrenaline at Velocity Valley Adventure Park on stomach-dropping attractions such as static skydiving, or a giant swing reaching 130 km per hour. Alternatively, head up the Rotorua Gondola for soaring lake views, and ride the luge at night for an extra thrill.
Fans of Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit should drive to nearby Matamata and experience the actual movie set ‘Hobbiton’. 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.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - National Kiwi Hatchery Tour

The National Kiwi Hatchery Tour 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 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.

Te Pā Tū Evening Maori Cultural Experience

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.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland

Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland is a spectacular showcase of New Zealand’s most colourful and unique geothermal elements sculpted by thousands of years of volcanic activity. You are introduced to a uniquely different natural landscape – the key to what you see lies below the surface – one of the most extensive geothermal systems in New Zealand, extending over 18-sq. km. Enjoy viewing unique 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. Lady Knox Geyser provides a unique opportunity to see an eruption to heights of 10 to 20 metres.

Your accommodation: Quest Rotorua Central

Located in the heart of Rotorua, just a stone’s throw from the restaurant and shopping precinct. Purpose built in 2012, all apartments are equipped with modern fixtures, full cooking and laundry facilities that make Quest Rotorua Central your perfect home away from home.

Day 11

Rotorua to Napier

This drive will take you through the thermal region just south of Rotorua. Home to a plethora of unique geothermal attractions including boiling mud pits, natural hot springs and steaming geysers, this area is a must do before you move on to Napier. Notable attractions are Wai-O-Tapu, Waimangu and Craters of the Moon.
Continue on to Taupo and marvel at the lake, a giant crater formed following a volcanic eruption in the year 180 CE. As you approach the city, be sure to stop at Huka Falls to view the spectacular sight of hundreds of cubic metres of water spilling every second down the narrow 11 metre drop.
For an extra thrill take a jet-boat ride to the base of the falls. Leaving Taupo, follow the road as it climbs the rugged Ahimanawa Range before descending back down the Pacific Coast to art deco Napier.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Walking tracks in and around Hawkes Bay

There are some excellent walks in and around the Hawkes Bay region. The information below is provided by the Department of Conservation. Listed below are a selection of short walks but check with the Department of Conservation information centre for weather conditions, track suitability and conditions first. Tangoio Falls Scenic Reserve Tracks
Discover Te Ana or Tangoio Falls on a short, easy walk suitable for kids, or take a longer walk through native bush on the Tangoio Walkway. .
Distance: 2 - 4.4 km one way. Completion Time: 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on which track you choose.

White Pine Bush Scenic Reserve
Experience New Zealand's remaining coastal forest on these short, easy walks that are good for children.
Distance: 1.6 km loop. Completion Time: 40 minutes.

Ahuriri Estuary
View a community of wading birds, fish, mud dwellers and aquatic plant life from the estuary track and boardwalk. Over 70 species of resident and migratory waterbirds use the estuary as a feeding and resting area.
Distance: 2.8 km one way. Completion Time: 1 hour.

Te Mata Park
Te Mata Park has a rich human and geological history, and is home to a range of unique plants and native birds. The park has five different walking options varying in difficulty and distance.
Distance: 1.3 km - 5.4 km. Completion Time: 40 minutes - 1 hours 15 minutes.

Lake Tūtira
There are two main walks at Lake Tūtira, a short walk along the edge of the lake or a longer loop through the reserve. Both offer great views of the lake as well as native and introduced plant species.
Distance: 1.3 km - 5.4 km. Completion Time: 40 minutes - 1 hours 15 minutes.

Cape Kidnappers/Te Kauwae-a-Māui Walking Track
Follow the beach from Clifton to Cape Kidnappers/Te Kauwae-a-Māui alongside cliffs that show fragmented fault and tilt lines, recording the gradual rise of New Zealand. Black Reef is the first gannet nesting site, 7.5 km from Clifton. A 1 km climb takes you from the shelter on the beach to a benched area on the hill where you can view the second colony, and spectacular views of Hawke's Bay.
Distance: 19 km loop. Completion Time: 5 hour return.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Napier

Bella Vista Motel Napier invites you to experience its friendly service and modern motel units. Located close to shops, restaurants and the renowned Marine Parade with its majestic Norfolk pines.

Day 12

Explore Napier and the Hawke's Bay

With its Mediterranean climate and Art Deco style, Hawke's Bay is an attractive holiday prospect. As the nation's first winemaking region, a visit to one of its 30 wineries is a must. A trip to Mission Estate touted as the birthplace of NZ wine can't be missed. For the truly enthused head out on a tour of the vines. Those into Gatsby will enjoy the chance to view prominent Art Deco landmarks on a 1930s Vintage Car Tour. Passengers will spend just over an hour learning about the history of the city's architecture including the Napier Municipal Theatre, one of the top ten Art Deco Buildings in the world. If you're after some fresh air, hire a bike and take your pick of one of over 200km of cycling trails or head on down to one of the many beaches that ring the area. Ocean or Waimarama beach are good choices and both are patrolled by surf lifeguards during the summer. Indulge in some local produce and head out on a cheese, chocolate, honey or orchard tour.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Gannet Safaris

Drive along the scenic coast from Napier to Te Awanga and join Gannet Safaris Overland and the world's largest, most accessible gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers. Gannet Safaris has been guiding visitors over Cape Kidnappers for over 35 years and their safaris are the only way to be driven right to within a few feet of these remarkable birds. You will travel in comfort in air-conditioned 4 x 4 wheeled vehicles, through Cape Kidnappers Station - traversing riverbeds, broad rolling pastures, stands of native bush, steep gullies and breath-taking inclines. There is a stop on the way at a spectacular cliff top with panoramic views of Hawke Bay right across to Mahia peninsular. The 36km, three hour trip includes a commentary by your tour guide/driver on the farming operation on Cape Kidnappers Station and an introduction to the gannets. On arrival at the gannets you can stretch your legs and take in the scenery from your position at the brink of the cliff's edge, 100 metres above the ocean!

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Grape Escape half day Hawke's Bay Wine tour

This wine tasting tour is designed for casual imbibers and wine aficionados. Meet like-minded people and share an appreciation of Hawke's Bay's fantastic wines. Taste great wines made with passion and learn of the areas unique growing conditions. Take home outstanding wines and wonderful memories. Join a fun filled wine tasting afternoon in the sun driving through absolutely stunning scenery. Meet like-minded people and share an appreciation of this region's fantastic wine. Visit four to five wineries and enjoy a cheese platter on the grounds of the Ngatarawa Vineyard beside the lily pond.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Napier

Bella Vista Motel Napier invites you to experience its friendly service and modern motel units. Located close to shops, restaurants and the renowned Marine Parade with its majestic Norfolk pines.

Day 13

Napier to Martinborough

As you leave the rolling countryside of the Hawke's Bay you'll be greeted with some of the country's richest dairy farmland in the Manawatu Gorge. Continue on through the Wairarapa region and stop in the Pukaha Mount Bruce Wildlife Centre, where you can see some of New Zealand native animals. Take another break in Masterson, and visit the interactive Woolshed Museum to learn about sheep farming in New Zealand. As you drive south, a visit to historic Greytown is a must-do. Take in the restored Victorian buildings and make time for a cup of tea at one of its quaint cafes. Leaving state highway 2 you will cross over the Ruamahanga River into Martinborough wine country your destination for the day.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Martinborough Half Day Wine Tour with Martinborough Wine Tours

Visit wonderful vineyards such as Te Kairangi Wines, Tirohana Estate, Cabbage Tree Vineyard and Martinborough Vineyard on this half day tour of the premium wine region of Martinborough. Taste the wines, learn about the development of the region, its people and characters from knowledgeable guides.

Your accommodation: The Claremont, Martinborough

Set just outside the main village, The Claremont is the ideal base for you to enjoy everything the region has to offer. Well-appointed, self-contained apartments and units will make your stay very comfortable.

Day 14

Cape Palliser and the South Coast

Just around 45 minutes south of the town of Martinborough will bring you to one of the most spectacular coastlines in the country. Rocky shores and tiny settlements feature as you head towards the magnificent views from the Cape Palliser lighthouse. New Zealand fur seals make these rocky shores and outcrops their home and offer some great photo opportunities. The small township of Ngawi is also quite a unique spot. As you approach you will be forgiven for thinking it's a massive graveyard for old tractors but in fact it's a bustling fishing community. Crayfish are the main catch and massive tractors and bulldozers are used to haul the boats from the water and over the pebble beach. Heading back towards Martinborough a detour to the Lake Ferry Hotel and some local seafood is highly recommended.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Pinot to Palliser Guided Tour with Martinborough Wine Tours

This tour combines the picturesque countryside of the southeastern coastline of the North Island with Martinborough village and wine tasting. After a drive through the village, drive through the country-side to the rugged and spectacular Palliser Bay coastline. The bay is one of New Zealand’s most important early Maori settled areas. Driving along the dynamic coast you will pass beach terraces raised by past earthquakes, see the old abandoned homes falling into the sea due to wave action, and view the precariously placed rock formation known as Kupe’s Sail.
Then go on to Cape Palliser lighthouse where you can climb up to the lighthouse and enjoy spectacular views of Palliser Bay. Before and after the lighthouse stop, visit the seal colonies and enjoy the antics of the young seal pups.

Your accommodation: The Claremont, Martinborough

Set just outside the main village, The Claremont is the ideal base for you to enjoy everything the region has to offer. Well-appointed, self-contained apartments and units will make your stay very comfortable.

Day 15

Martinborough to Wellington City

Today you will cross the Rimutaka Ranges as you make your way to New Zealand's capital city, Wellington. Often compared to Melbourne, Wellington is vibrant cultural hub.Home to the nation’s centre of government. Legislation happens in the aptly named ‘Beehive,’ an executive wing attached to the Houses of Parliament. At one kilometre squared, the city centre (easily traversed on foot) has an international feel and is peppered with underground art shows, alleyway cafes and New York style delis. Take in the boardwalk view as you stroll to Te Papa Museum or indulge your cinematic side exploring Weta Workshop, the Oscar Award winning design studio for Lord Of The Rings. For a taste of vintage fashion, spend some time (and dollars!) on Cuba Street browsing the boutiques. Work off last night’s dinner with a cycling tour of Oriental Bay and undo your good work with a Hokey Pokey ice-cream in the sun. For those heading further down, the capital is where you board the ferry crossing the Cook Strait to the South Island.

Your accommodation: CityLife Wellington

City Life Wellington is a suite style hotel with every amenity required for a comfortable stay, as well as being in a superb location to explore the compact city centre. Situated on Lambton Quay, you’ll find the best shopping, tourist attractions and cultural landmarks all within easy walking distance.

Day 16

Wellington City

Wellington home to New Zealand’s centre of government has a largely cosmopolitan feel. Often referred to as ‘mini Melbourne', this (self-described) windy city is a melting pot of art, culture, food, and fashion. Quirky laneway bars, underground art shows, and hipster eateries make up its inner-city vibe, while a host of sandy beaches outside the urban bustle bring a cheerful holiday feel.
Head to Te Papa Museum for a history lesson and a ticket to one of its many international exhibitions or jump aboard the Wellington Cable Car at Lambton Quay - the only running funicular railway in the country. For those with an eye for boutique, fashion wander through Cuba St to sample some of the city's best vintage stores. Break for coffee at a hipster cafe and be sure to snap a pic outside the ‘Beehive,’ New Zealand’s parliamentary debate chamber.
Go behind the scenes at Weta Workshop Experience, the Oscar Award Winning design studio behind Lord Of The Rings, The Hobbit, and Avatar. If you're a foodie at heart, a two-hour round trip to Martinborough is a must-do. Take your time as you wind through spectacular wine country, and be sure to stop in at Martinborough Wines or Ata Rangi Martinborough. For an educational day out, learn about New Zealand's native species at Zealandia, the world's first fully-fenced eco-sanctuary and home to over 40 types of endangered and native birds.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Wellington Half Day Tour

Witness the best sights of New Zealand's capital city up close and personal, before experiencing the beauty of the coastline that surrounds central Wellington and its harbour. On this tour, you will head for the hills of Mt Victoria to witness the stunning landscape of Wellington and its harbour below. You will then follow the coastline round to the Weta Cave Museum, which is the showpiece of Peter Jackson's film empire. After a drive around the south coast, you will head back into the city for a ride on the Cable Car and a walk around the lady Norwood rose gardens. The tour concludes with a visit to the Beehive and our Parliament buildings.

Zealandia By Night Wildlife Sanctuary Tour

Taking a night tour of Zealandia wildlife eco-sanctuary is an unforgettable experience and one that comes highly recommended. A conservation success and safe haven for some of New Zealand's rarest native animals, Zealandia is home to many remarkable species of birds, reptiles and insects living wild within a beautiful 225 hectare (one square mile) valley, just 10 minutes from the central city.
Your tour begins with an interactive exhibition before you walk through the gates of Zealandia predator-exclusion fence into the sanctuary. Your guide will then lead you on a torch-light walk through the native New Zealand bush. Possible sights include Kiwi foraging on the forest floor, tuatara hunting for food, glowworms shining, tiny Maud Island frogs in their enclosure, pateke (brown teal) ducks feeding at night and kaka (parrots) coming in to roost. Zealandia is one of the best places to see kiwi in the wild. Over 100 of these nocturnal birds live freely in their natural environment inside the safety of the sanctuary valley, so your chances of seeing one are high!

Your accommodation: CityLife Wellington

City Life Wellington is a suite style hotel with every amenity required for a comfortable stay, as well as being in a superb location to explore the compact city centre. Situated on Lambton Quay, you'll find the best shopping, tourist attractions and cultural landmarks all within easy walking distance.

Day 17

Wellington to Whanganui

Follow the main highway north along the Kapiti Coast towards the rich farmland of the Manawatu and Taranaki. Continue north-west towards the city of Whanganui which rests on the banks of the spectacular Whanganui River. Take the old town heritage walk or visit one of the many private gardens that are open to the public. For more natural and human history visit the Whanganui Regional Museum and Art Gallery. There are commanding views from Durie Hill. Whanganui River provides the main access route to Whanganui National Park. Kayaking along the remote and historic river from Pipiriki to Taumarunui takes 5 days so jet boating is the faster option. A number of walks begin at Pipiriki village. As the area was once intensively cultivated for wheat, you can visit remnants of old mills. At the Parks southern extremity, the Skyline Track day walk passes through magnificent stands of lowland native forest. One of several mills built last century, the Kawana Mill operated for 50 years. The Mill and its water wheel have now been completely rebuilt and the miller's colonial style cottage has also been restored.

Your accommodation: The Avenue Wanganui

The Avenue Wanganui is located on the main road into Wanganui just a 10 minute walk from the central business district, arts and cultural centre, sports venues, Whanganui river and Virginia Lake. Set in large grounds with beautiful gardens and an outdoor swimming pool & BBQ area.

Day 18

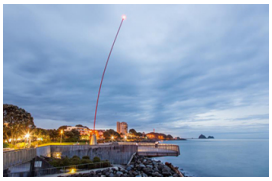
Whanganui to New Plymouth

Follow the coast of the South Taranaki Bight towards the volcanically formed region of New Plymouth. The dominant and perfect volcanic cone of Mt Egmont/Taranaki is visible for many miles as you approach the region. New Plymouth is the largest town in Taranaki. Situated on the coast this busy centre has a great range of restaurants and accommodation. The coastal highway and the magnificent Mt. Taranaki are the main attractions. The Taranaki region is very popular for its gardens and hosts the Rhododendron festival each year. New Plymouth has over 70 000 people with a beautiful coastal walkway running from Port Taranaki to the Waiwhakaiho River mouth. Pukekura Park, just a 5 minute walk from the city centre, is a haven of over 25ha of native bush including a beautiful lake. The district boasts 16 parks and reserves, with 13 official beaches, 60km of walkways as well as many "tucked away" spots for a peaceful moment.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista New Plymouth

Bella Vista New Plymouth offers modern, well-equipped units to provide a comfortable stay in a great central city location. Just a few minutes walk from the cities fabulous coastal walkway.

Day 19



New Plymouth to Waitomo

Follow the coastline of the North Taranaki right before turning inland through the beef and cattle farming regions on North Taranaki. The small townships en route provide an insight into the real rural New Zealand. The township of Te Kuiti sits within the King Country, named after the movement of the Maori warrior Chief King Tawhiao, who during the Maori Wars, led a resistance against the European's who coveted their land. The rich rolling countryside accompanies you to the limestone valleys and caves that have attracted visitors for the past century.

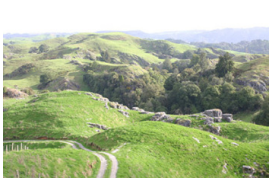
Waitomo Glowworm Caves and Aranui Cave tour

For over 100 years Waitomo Glowworm Caves have attracted people from all over the world to this subterranean wonderland. An ancient underground labyrinth of limestone caves and grottos, and amazing stalactites and stalagmites.
Waitomo Glowworm Caves
Formed over 30 million years ago there are two levels to the Waitomo Glowworm Caves which are 16 metres apart. The upper level is dry and includes the entrance to the cave, the Catacombs and the Organ Loft. The lower level consists of stream passages and the Cathedral. As you glide quietly beneath the lights of thousands of glowworms, it is only the gentle sound of dripping water that reminds you that you are deep underground and not beneath a star filled sky.
Aranui Cave
Located in Ruakuri Scenic Reserve, Aranui is a dry cave. There is only one entrance to Aranui and without a river flowing through, it houses very little life past the entrance. However, just inside the entrance is a colony of cave wetas. Aranui is famous for its beautiful arrays of stalactites, stalagmites, flowstones and unusual formations.

Your accommodation: Palm Court Motel Otorohanga

Palm Court Motel is conveniently located 200 metres from cafes, restaurants, village shopping and the railway station. Stay just a few minutes drive to Waitomo Caves, Black-Water Rafting, Adventure Tours, Kiwi House and the golf course.

Day 20



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.

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 before being lead through 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, tackle interactive zones where you can try out your kicking, catching, line-out and accuracy skills against legendary All Blacks.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Auckland Sky Tower Admission

Standing at 328 metres (just over 1000 feet) - the Sky Tower is the tallest man-made structure in New Zealand and offers panoramic views of the Auckland landscape. Travel in the glass-fronted lift to one of three spectacular viewing platforms, or for a little more excitement do a SkyWalk - an outside loop around the pergola 192 metres (just over 600 feet) above ground. If you're really bold, Take the quick way down and SkyJump off the tower - a controlled free fall to the base.
Inside, the Sky Lounge offers coffee and light meals while the iconic Orbit Restaurant is Auckland's only 360 degree revolving dining experience.

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 21

Depart Auckland today

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

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	North Island Self Drive
Starts:	Auckland
Finishes:	Auckland
Tour length:	21
Accomodation:	Motels
Car/transport type:	

Included activities

Includes	Private airport transfers
Includes	Hobbiton Movie Set Tour, Matamata
Includes	Waitomo Glow Worm and Aranui Caves
Includes	Zealandia Wildife Sanctuary Night Tour, Wellington

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Sudima Auckland City
Day 2	Sudima Auckland City
Day 3	Sea Spray Suites
Day 4	Sea Spray Suites
Day 5	Sea Spray Suites
Day 6	Snells Beach Motel
Day 7	Coromandel Court Motel
Day 8	Paku Lodge
Day 9	Quest Rotorua Central
Day 10	Quest Rotorua Central
Day 11	Bella Vista Napier
Day 12	Bella Vista Napier
Day 13	The Claremont, Martinborough
Day 14	The Claremont, Martinborough
Day 15	CityLife Wellington
Day 16	CityLife Wellington
Day 17	The Avenue Wanganui
Day 18	Bella Vista New Plymouth
Day 19	Palm Court Motel Otorohanga
Day 20	Sudima Auckland City