

active earth Adventures | HIKING New Zealand

NORTH ISLAND GRAND HIKES

ITINERARY





From volcanic summits to glowworm-lit caves, experience the incredible contrasts of Aotearoa New Zealand's North Island. Join a small group journey through this elemental landscape. Our expert Kiwi guides lead the way, bringing the land to life and taking care of every detail.

Hike a mix of day walks and short trails that reveal the North Island's most beautiful and diverse wilderness. From strenuous volcanic hikes to lakeside strolls, choose the activities that suit you. This trip is perfect for people who love hiking and their creature comforts. Stay in handpicked accommodation set within the landscapes you've come to see; enjoy wonderful meals that celebrate fresh local flavours. Connect with Kiwi culture and witness Māori heartland traditions for a deeper sense of this place and its people.

Travel with us and experience Aotearoa's wild beauty in the company of like-minded travellers. Could this be the trip you've been looking for?

LENGTH	5 days	
GRADE	B - Up to 4-5 hours physical activity per day	
START	Auckland, Rydges Hotel foyer, 59 Federal Street at 6:30 am	
FINISH	Wellington, 5:00pm (approximately)	
ACCOMMODATION	Hotels and Lodges	
INCLUDED ACTIVITIES	Māori Village Experience Wai-o-tapu Thermal Wonderland	
OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES	All activities outlined in itinerary are included in trip price.	
DEPARTURES	2026 Nov: 19 2027 Jan: 14, 28 | Feb: 11, 25 | Mar: 11	2027 Oct: 28 | Nov: 18 | Dec: 9 2028 Jan: 13, 27 | Feb: 10, 24 | Mar: 9
PRICE	**1 Jul 2026 - 30 Jun 2027** Adult NZD $5,200.00 Single Supplement NZD $600.00	**1 Jul 2027 - 30 Jun 2028** Adult NZD $5,400.00 Single Supplement NZD $600.00

"WONDERFUL ITINERARY, GUIDES, HIKES"

Every detail was taken care of. I loved not having to think about driving, food, lodgings, pit stops, trail maps, etc. Hiking New Zealand even offered to supply rain gear (no charge), which I took them up on and it saved me from having to check a bag. They provided excellent information in advance so I was well prepared with what I did bring. As a solo traveller, I was very comfortable with the small group and our two knowledgeable, engaging guides. I saw and learned more than I ever would have on my own.

~ Amanda - California, January, **Trip Advisor**

"THOROUGHLY ENJOYABLE"

In 5 days there is a lot packed in, but the pace feels about right. Lots of lovely walks, with the Tongariro crossing the last and most spectacular. Very good accommodation and meals along the way. A thoroughly enjoyable way to see the natural beauty of the north island.

~ Linda M - Australia, January, **Trip Advisor**











ITINERARY

DAY 1 AUCKLAND - ROTORUA

Up to 2 km (1.3 miles), 2 hours hiking, elevation +/-60 m (200 ft)
Meet your North Island guide and the rest of the group in the Rydges Hotel foyer at 6.30am before driving south through classic patchwork green farming country alongside the Waikato River.

We make a quick cafe stop enroute to Waitomo for those who need a coffee and bite to eat. Arriving at the Waitomo Caves area descend into the vaulted galleries of the Ruakuri Cave with its limestone formations and crystals. Be enchanted by the thousands of tiny glow worms that cling to the cave ceiling and mimic a starlit night sky. Later we emerge into the sunshine and wander on a loop trail through an outstanding limestone canyon.

We arrive in the volcanically active area of Rotorua late afternoon. Rotorua is also the centre of Māori cultural tourism in New Zealand and tonight we enjoy an evening meal in the city. *Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Rotorua. Includes lunch and dinner.*

DAY 2 ROTORUA - LAKE TARAWERA

12 km (7.2 miles), 4 hours hiking, elevation +480m (1,500 ft) –250 m (900 ft)
A short drive leads us to the stunning forests and beaches of Lake Tarawera. Take a scenic water taxi ride to the lake end. From here we hike back alongside this beautifully clear lake, enjoying the shade that towering tree ferns and ignimbrite cliffs offer. Plunge into the lake to cool off at any one of the tiny pumice beaches as you wait for the others to catch up. There are astonishing views all along this trail, and usually the chance for a natural hot creek dip along the way. This is an expansive wilderness of forest, lakes and volcanoes.

After we return, we have the chance to look around Rotorua including the short Redwoods Trail. Later explore through the historic waterfront area including the fascinating Faith church. Rotorua is also the centre of Maori cultural tourism in New Zealand and late afternoon we enjoy an evening meal and cultural performance. *Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Rotorua. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 3 ROTORUA - TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK

10 km (5.5 miles), 2-4 hours hiking, elevation +/-200 m (600 ft)
In the morning we explore some of the amazing thermal areas located a little south of Rotorua. Wander along boardwalks that connect pools of bubbling mud, mineralised hot pools and plumes of rising steam, and wonder at the uniqueness of this area. Grab a cuppa before we drive south to Huka Falls and feel the power as the huge Waikato River gets pinched through a narrow rock corridor. Enjoy a café lunch at the lakeside town of Taupo before heading south around Lake Taupo's shores to New Zealand's first national park - Tongariro. The next two nights are spent in a hotel on the edge of the park, providing a great opportunity for you to explore the area at your leisure.

In the afternoon hike to Taranaki Falls, cascading 20 metres over a 15,000 year old lava flow. Enjoy dinner with the group in the comfort of your hotel. *Accommodation: Hotel at the gateway to Tongariro National Park. Includes breakfast and dinner.*

DAY 4 TONGARIRO ALPINE CROSSING

Up to 21 km (12 miles), 7-8 hours hiking, elevation +900 m (3,000 ft) -1,250 m (4,100 ft)
Join the guide today for a full-day hike of the famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing, regarded as one of the best day walks in the world. The well-built track climbs, steeply at times, to the craters of Mt Tongariro. Stop and admire the views of the Red Crater, Emerald Lakes and steaming vents that make this hike so outstanding. After what is often a long and physically challenging day, enjoy a well-earned dinner and swap stories with your hiking group.

Those who prefer a more restful day can find plenty to do at the village: Soda Springs walk, Taranaki Falls walk, or simply drink coffee and view the great exhibits at the Park Visitor Centre. Enjoy your second night in this village.. *Accommodation: Hotel at the gateway to Tongariro National Park. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*





DAY 5 TONGARIRO - WELLINGTON

Rest your legs this morning as we drive south through rolling green hill country to the capital city of Wellington. Stroll along the fabulous waterfront and absorb some of New Zealand's history in the national museum - Te Papa, or simply get lost admiring the heritage houses along one of the many improbably steep streets. Nowhere is very far in Wellington. There is a vibrant café and restaurant scene here – enjoy. *Includes breakfast*.





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active earth Adventures

HIKING New Zealand

LIFE ON THE TRAIL

GRADE B

- Up to 4-5 hours of physical activity per day
- At times carrying a backpack of 4-5kgs
- Tracks generally in good condition
- Altitude gains of up to 600m (2000ft) on harder days
- No hiking experience necessary

The full (optional) Tongariro Alpine Crossing on day 4 takes 6-8 hours and has an altitude gain of 900m.

GUIDES AND SAFETY

An excellent guide can make the difference between a trip of a lifetime and just an ordinary trip. That is why we work hard to make sure we hire the best guides. Our handpicked professionals come from a range of backgrounds. Each has extensive outdoor and hiking experience and a passion for New Zealand's wild and beautiful backcountry. Our guides' energy and dedication will ensure that your time with us is truly inspiring, a huge amount of fun and safe. Structuring breaks for the guide to rest is important to keep them fresh, focused and ready to give their best. Occasionally, we engage local experts to add value to experiences which your guide may or may not join. Also, there may be nights your guide stays in alternate nearby accommodation but rest assured you will be able to reach them if needed. Please be gentle with your guide - good guides are hard to find.

All walks described in the itinerary are guided, however, the guide can suggest a number of shorter self-guided walks if you wish to do a little more or a little less walking on some of the days.



FOOD

Almost all of the meals are included on this tour, but when staying in the cities we let you do your own thing and try some of the excellent local restaurants (see "Additional Costs" section). There are plenty of opportunities to graze the local cafes if you would prefer to explore in the morning. Our guides usually set out lunch food for you and you simply help yourself. We provide healthy and wholesome food and include a lot of fresh produce.

Our customised trailers have a fold down table and cooking area that is perfect for preparing picnics at all those secret places we will take you. Included dinners are frequently in lodge restaurants (either set menu or a la carte), or in a restaurant in the town but occasionally somewhere out of the ordinary!

ELEVATIONS

Track distances and elevations are approximate only. Advertised hiking routes may be amended by the guide for any reason (usually due to weather, or track conditions). The guide will notify clients in advance of day-to-day routes.



TRANSPORT

The average driving time per day varies; we have some days where we hardly drive at all. On a typical day we might be in the vehicle for 2-3 hours. But some days we will drive for longer. The driving time is a chance to rest and enjoy the fantastic scenery that is forever changing. We travel in a luxury minibus towing a lockable trailer with food, equipment and your luggage. The guides are easily convinced to stop the vehicle if there is a great photo opportunity, vineyard or notable ice cream shop!



ACCOMMODATION

The North Island Grand Hikes tour uses a range of hotels and quality lodges chosen for their well appointed and wonderful locations. All rooms have ensuite bathrooms. Some lodges have units with two bedrooms per unit. Rooms are twin share or doubles. If you are travelling on your own you will be given a twin share room with a fellow traveller of the same gender. Single supplements are available on this tour. The North Island Grand Hikes tour has been created for those that appreciate a high standard of accommodation after a good day of hiking. Please note accommodation is subject to availability, and an equivalent style of property could be used if the advertised property is no longer available.

PACKING LIST

What to take

New Zealand's weather is very changeable and cold weather can be experienced at any time of year, especially in the mountains. We recommend wearing lightweight and breathable fabrics while hiking. Merino or polypropylene underwear is great in cold weather and will still keep you warm when it gets wet, unlike cotton. Jeans are not suitable for hiking.

WALKING

- ☐ Hiking boots or shoes
- ☐ Daypack (25-30 litres)
- ☐ Water bottle – 1L min (2L for Tongariro Crossing)
- ☐ Waterproof raincoat (gore-tex or similar)
- ☐ Warm fleece/wool jersey (not cotton)
- ☐ Thermal underwear (top and bottom, wool or polypropylene)
- ☐ Socks (we suggest 3 pairs)
- ☐ Warm hat or balaclava
- ☐ Long sleeve shirt (for sun protection)
- ☐ Shorts for hiking (or lightweight hiking trousers)
- ☐ Gloves or mittens (wool or fleece)

GENERAL

- ☐ Spare lightweight shoes or sandals
- ☐ Insect repellent (sandflies like foreign blood)
- ☐ Casual clothing for travel and evenings
- ☐ Dry bag for clothes/valuables

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

- ☐ Sunscreen, sunhat and sunglasses
- ☐ Rain trousers
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Togs (swimming costume)
- ☐ Towel (lightweight travel towels are great)

SUPPLIED

- ☐ First Aid kit
- ☐ Drinking water
- ☐ Safety equipment
- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Walking poles (must request when booking tour)

LAUNDRY

Laundry facilities are available most nights, either as the hotel laundry service (additional charge) or as access to laundry facilities for hotel guests.

CHARGING DEVICES

Devices such as cameras and cellphones can be charged throughout the tour - while travelling in the vehicle (bring along a charger adaptor) and during the hotel nights.



ADDITIONAL COSTS

What is included in the price of the North Island Grand Hikes Trip?
The North Island Grand Hikes is all inclusive of accommodation, guide services, and most meals, as noted in the itinerary.

What additional costs can I expect on the North Island Grand Hikes Trip?
Just a small number of meals, giving you the opportunity to explore and try local cuisine at your own pace. be at your own expense.

DIRECT BOOKING CONDITIONS

Payment
For bookings made four or more months prior to the departure date, a 25% deposit is required, with the remainder due 95 days before your trip. For bookings made within four months of the departure date, full payment is required at the time of booking.

Cancellations
95 days or more prior to departure date: Full refund less a $500 transferable deposit per person to a future departure.
94 to 35 days: 50% of tour price forfeited.
34 days or less: 100% of tour price forfeited.

The tour price is all-inclusive. There will be no partial refunds or credits for unused services within a tour. Any unpaid forfeited amount may be pursued as a debt.

Travel Insurance
It is suggested that clients take out comprehensive travel insurance.