11 DAY NORTH ISLAND DISCOVER TOUR
FOR 2026/2027 SEASON

Intro

This Small Group Tour takes in the stunning sights of the North Island starting with a journey to the sparkling Pacific waters of the Bay of Islands. Further south you'll visit the Art Deco town of Napier and enjoy the wonderful wines of the Hawke's Bay region before arriving in Wellington, 'The coolest little capital in the world'.

Featured Experiences

- Entry to Waitangi Treaty Grounds
- Journey along 90 Mile Beach – or – take a Hole in the Rock Cruise & Tour of Russell
- Visit the Auckland Museum
- Narrow-gauge railway journey through native Coromandel bush
- Visit Hot Water Beach and photogenic Cathedral Cove
- Tour around a geothermal valley with geysers, mud pools and hot springs
- Visit Waimangu Volcanic Valley – or – experience Hobbiton Movie Set
- Delve into Māori life and enjoy a powerful cultural performance and feast
- Discover Napier's history and architecture on foot during a tour from a local guide
- Enjoy an evening meal at Mission Estate in Napier
- Travel on Wellington's famous Cable Car and visit Te Papa museum

Culinary Inclusions

- 12 meals included
  10 breakfasts **(B)** 2 dinners **(D)**

Day 1 Auckland

Haere mai – welcome! Arrive in Auckland where you will be met and transferred to your accommodation. Spend the afternoon and evening at your leisure exploring the 'City of Sails'.
Accommodation: M Social, Auckland, *Social view room – 1 night*

Day 2 Auckland to Bay of Islands (B)

Travel north via Auckland's iconic Harbour Bridge to visit Reed Memorial Park. Here, walk along an elevated canopy walkway through a remnant of the original kauri forests – some kauri trees are known to be at least 500 years old. Take in the picturesque Whangārei Falls, formed more than 2 million years ago, before continuing to the Bay of Islands - a stunning region of 144 subtropical islands scattered through warm shallow waters and bays abundant in natural wonders and marine life. Regarded as the birthplace of New Zealand, the Bay of Islands is rich in both Māori culture and early European history. You are welcomed to the Waitangi Treaty Grounds to learn the story of Waitangi, including the signing of the 1840 treaty between Māori tribes and British settlers; the magnificent meeting house; the interactive and contemporary museum; and the war canoe (waka). Next, take a ferry to the seaside village of Russell, spending the next two nights at the historic Duke of Marlborough Hotel.
Accommodation: Duke of Marlborough Hotel, Russell, *Superior room – 2 nights*

Day 3 Bay of Islands (B)

Today you have the choice of two excursions:

a) **Discover the Far North of New Zealand -** This full-day coach tour will take you to Cape Reinga, the northernmost tip of New Zealand, where you can watch the Pacific Ocean collide with the Tasman Sea - and where according to Māori legend, spirits depart on their journey to the

homeland of Hawaiki. In the morning, we will travel from Russell to Paihia on the Belle Bay Ferry, where we'll join a Great Sights coach (other passengers will be on board) for an unforgettable journey to the very tip of the North Island, travelling along the sand-swept shore of Ninety Mile Beach (Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe). During the trip you will have the opportunity to try sandboarding down sand dunes on boogie boards, take in magical views as you stand beneath the iconic Cape Reinga lighthouse, and enjoy the drive on the vast and empty Ninety Mile Beach. A knowledgeable local guide will share fascinating stories and insights throughout the day, bringing the region's rich history and culture vividly to life. At day's end, we'll return to Russell from Paihia aboard the Bay Belle Ferry. Depart Russell at 7.00am and return to Russell at approximately 7.00pm. Lunch is included.

b) **Enjoy a Hole in the Rock cruise -** This morning, enjoy a breathtaking cruise aboard a purpose-built catamaran through the pristine waters of the Bay of Islands and along the dramatic Cape Brett Peninsula. Take in views of the historic Cape Brett Lighthouse and the famous 'Hole in the Rock' - a highlight of the journey. Weather permitting, the boat will cruise slowly through the Hole and into the stunning Grand Cathedral Cave. Your skipper will provide engaging and informative commentary throughout the cruise. The Bay is rich with marine life and native bird species, so keep watch for dolphins, whales, and seabirds along the way. The cruise includes a stop at Otehei Bay on Urupukapuka Island, where you can purchase lunch (own cost), take a swim, or go for a leisurely walk. This afternoon, return to Russell and meet a local guide for an entertaining insight into this pretty little town's rip-roaring past, when drunken sailors earned it the name 'the hell hole of the Pacific'. Visit some of New Zealand's most historically significant buildings and enjoy sweeping views from Flagstaff Hill.

Day 4 Bay of Islands to Auckland (B)

Head south through rural towns and past delightful beaches before arriving in Auckland, New Zealand's largest and most cosmopolitan city, to enjoy a sightseeing tour of the 'City of Sails' including panoramic views from Bastion Point; trendy Parnell Village; the lovely bays of the waterfront drive; and the vibrant Viaduct Harbour area. We also enjoy a guided tour of the Auckland Museum, which gives an excellent introduction to the artistic legacy and cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific.

Accommodation: M Social, Auckland, *Social view room – 1 night*

Day 5 Auckland to Coromandel Peninsula (B)

Travel across the fertile Hauraki Plains to Thames, then head up the western side of the Coromandel Peninsula. This coastal drive is quite spectacular, and on a clear day, keep an eye out for the SkyTower which can be seen across the Firth of Thames. Ride the nearby Driving Creek Railway, climbing 120 metres on a narrow-gauge line to the 'EyeFull' Tower for panoramic views of the surrounding countryside and back over the Hauraki Gulf. Next, drive east across the Peninsula through beautiful scenery to reach the resort of Whitianga on Mercury Bay.

Accommodation: Oceans Resort, Whitianga, *One bedroom apartment – 2 nights*

Day 6 Coromandel Peninsula (B)

White cliffs, golden beaches, inviting turquoise waters, and green forests are the colours of the Coromandel, with scarlet highlights courtesy of the flowers of Pohutukawa trees in summer, making this one of our favourite regions. Rightly famous is Hot Water Beach, where warm springs bubble up through the sand, and when the tide is right you can dig out your very own 'spa' pool for a wallow in the warm waters. Afterwards, enjoy a scenic walk to Cathedral Cove, where you'll spend time soaking up the beauty of one of New Zealand's most photogenic beaches before returning the same way. Next, your driver will take you to Cooks Beach – named after Captain James Cook who sailed on the HMS Endeavour into Mercury Bay in 1769. Famous for its long golden sandy beach, it is now a popular retreat for Kiwis during summer months.

From Cooks Beach you can choose to catch the short ferry ride back to Whitianga and walk to your accommodation or travel back with your driver.

Day 7 Coromandel Peninsula – Rotorua (B)

Taking the Pacific Coast Highway through the beachside towns of Whangamatā and Tauranga in the beautiful Bay of Plenty before turning inland to visit a well-formed bushwalk with scenic lookouts over Okere Falls. From there, we continue on to Rotorua, the epicentre of New Zealand's geothermal activity and Māori heritage. No visit to Rotorua would be complete without a stop at Te Puia, where we explore its active geothermal sites, experience the nation's centre for indigenous arts and crafts, and learn about Kiwi conservation projects. At Te Puia it's part of their culture to welcome, guide, entertain, and treat you like part of the family and you are treated to a private guide throughout your time here.

Accommodation: Millennium Hotel, Rotorua, *Superior room – 2 nights*

Day 8 Rotorua (B,D)

Today you have the choice of two excursions:

a) **Visit the Waimangu Volcanic Valley -** Site of the eruption of Mt. Tarawera in 1886, the devastating eruption buried local Māori villages and destroyed the world-famous 'Pink and White' silica terraces, once considered to be the eighth wonder of the world. This catastrophic event changed the landscape forever and created the valley you can now walk through, past boiling craters and jewel-coloured steaming lakes. Take a cruise across Lake Rotomahana to the site of the old silica terraces, hear the story of Guide Sophia, and see the new terraces of silica slowly forming.

b) **Experience the real Middle-earth with a visit to the Hobbiton Movie Set -** Visit the delightful setting for The Shire that featured in Peter Jackson's films, The Lord of the Rings trilogy and The Hobbit film series. Your Hobbiton guide will escort you through the ten-acre site, recounting fascinating details of how the movie set was created (other visitors will join this tour). The Hobbit Holes, Green Dragon Inn, The Millhouse and other structures created for the films can be viewed, and you will see how this beautiful piece of Waikato farmland was transformed into The Shire from Middle-earth. At Bagshot Row, you'll get an authentic glimpse into Hobbit life, including time to explore one of two beautifully detailed Hobbit Holes.

This evening visit Tamaki Māori Village for Te Pā Tū. The evening experience and feast is aligned to and changes with the maramataka (Māori lunar calendar). Feast on Māori song, tradition, and divine seasonal kai (cuisine) within the forest Pā (village) amidst towering Tawa trees, blazing bonfires, and forest-formed amphitheatre. Hākari (feasting) begins with forest horotai (canapes) and culminates in a lavish four-course fusion feast. Hāngī is featured in varied seasonal menus designed by Māori chefs served to table - al fresco when warm, or in the wharekai (dining room) if cooler.

During summer months, Tū Te Rā celebrates harvest and concepts concerning ancient Māori warfare and peace. Over winter months, Tū Te Ihi celebrates the Matariki star cluster with mystical ritual, energy, and passion. Return hotel transfers included – other travellers will be on board.

Day 9 Rotorua to Napier (B,D)

Visit the powerful Huka Falls then view the vast Lake Taupō – more inland sea than lake, though its fresh waters teem with trout. Across the lake stands the mighty volcanic peaks of Ruapehu, Ngāuruhoe, and Tongariro, within the Tongariro National Park. Then continue on to Napier to view one of the world's most complete examples of Art Deco architecture, second (arguably) only to Miami

Beach. This joyful seaside town had a tragic birth, being virtually levelled by fierce fires that followed the devastating 1931 earthquake. Napier was rebuilt in the most up-to-date style of the time, which today is referred to as Art Deco. This afternoon our local guide brings history and architecture alive with entertaining stories as we discover Napier on foot. Today's journey has brought us to the North Island's wine country, so this evening's treat is dinner at New Zealand's oldest winery, Mission Estate, where you enjoy dinner in the restored seminary buildings with sweeping views of Napier.
Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Te Pania, Napier, *Pacific view room – 1 night*

Day 10 Napier to Wellington (B)

Travel through the vineyards and orchards of Hawke's Bay and the bush-clad ranges of the Wairarapa into New Zealand's capital city, Wellington. On arrival, view New Zealand's magnificent Parliament Buildings including the iconic 'Beehive' building. From the Kelburn lookout take the Wellington Cable Car down into the central city precinct before visiting Te Papa – one of the most exciting museums in the world, featuring New Zealand insights; the shaping of its land, the spirit of its diverse peoples, its unique wildlife, landscapes and its distinctive popular culture.
Accommodation: DoubleTree by Hilton, Wellington, *Standard room – 1 night*

Day 11 Depart Wellington (B)

Haere rā – farewell from New Zealand. After breakfast you are transferred to the Wellington Airport for your return home, taking with you your fond memories of your time in New Zealand. Alternatively, should you wish to extend your stay, we can assist you with additional travel arrangements.