



The HAERE MAI Tour

Start: Auckland

Finish: Auckland

Days: 24

Nights: 23

Day 1: Auckland to Hahei

Today's the day we say 'haere rā' to Auckland and 'haere mai' to the trip of a lifetime! First stop, Hahei Beach on the Coromandel Peninsula. This gorgeous little place will capture your heart (and have you calculating how much it would cost to move to NZ's coast eternally). When the tides are right, we'll drive over to the nearby Hot Water Beach and dig ourselves an all-natural hot pool in the sand. Who said backpackers can't do luxury?

Accommodation: Cabin accommodation by the beach

Free activities: Dig a hot pool at Hot Water Beach

Meal options: We'll stop at a supermarket to stock up on supplies en-route. Self-cater or join the optional group BBQ dinner.

Day 2: Hahei

If you don't believe in magic yet you miiiiight just change your mind after watching a sun rise on Hahei Beach. It's worth the 7am alarm – trust us – but don't even think about going back to bed afterwards. Instead, grab a coffee, pack a picnic and 'carpe diem' by hiking to the hidden paradise we like to call Cathedral Cove. Walk to the north end of Hahei Beach, up the coastal track and along the cliffs to discover heaps of cool little coves and bays!

Accommodation: Cabin accommodation by the beach

Free activities: Hike to Cathedral Cove, explore Hahei or relax on the beach.

Optional paid activities: Kayaking, guided boat tour.

Meal options: Self-catering available (Kitchen and BBQs), Fish and Chips (and craft beer) at the pub.

Day 3: Hahei to Rotorua

It's just a short trip to Rotorua and, let's just say, the 'unusual' sulphur smell will be a telltale sign that you've arrived! Known as the North Island's geothermal hot spot and hub for all the very best adventure activities, Rotorua is 100% one of the best places to explore... even if your nostrils tell you otherwise! We'll stop at the Whakarewarewa Forest for a walk amongst the giant California Redwoods planted over 100 years ago before checking in at our hostel. If you want to see some geothermal activity for free, head across the road to Kuirau Park to see boiling mud pools and steaming lakes.

Accommodation: YHA Rotorua

Free activities: Whakarewarewa Redwood Forest walk, Kuirau Park.

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen.

Day 4: Rotorua

There's so much to see and do around Rotorua, the hard part will be deciding what to do with your free day. You could hire a mountain bike, go ziplining through native bush, try zorbing, go whitewater rafting or hop on the gondola and race your mates down a mountain on a luge. If you're looking to relax instead, have no fear! Visit the thermal pools, sample all the food on Eat Street or explore the lake front area and the Government Gardens.

Accommodation: YHA Rotorua

Free activities: Explore the lake front and the Government Gardens.

Optional paid activities: Hire a bike, Whitewater Rafting, River jet tour, Skyline Luge, ziplining, zorbing, geothermal attractions.

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen.

Day 5: Rotorua to Lake Aniwhenua

After hanging out in a major tourist destination like Rotorua, you'll probably feel ready to experience a more authentic slice of New Zealand culture. Today we venture off the beaten track to the shores of Lake Aniwhenua. Kohutapu Lodge is owned by a local Maori family who are passionate about showcasing their Maori tribal heritage. You'll see sacred Maori rock carvings, play traditional stick games and watch the preparation of a ground cooked 'hangi', before tasting it for yourself! Prepare your tastebuds - this will probably be the best meal you eat in New Zealand, or maybe even in your lifetime!

This exclusive experience includes:

- 1 night's accommodation at the serene lakeside Kohutapu Lodge
- Full traditional hangi buffet dinner & dessert
- Continental breakfast
- Guided tour to sacred Maori rock carvings
- Introduction to the Murupara area, its people, history and challenges
- Participation in a local school program designed to inspire the next generation. *School visit may not be available. If we can't visit the school we will go to Kerosene Creek (natural thermal pools) instead.*

Accommodation: Scenic lakefront cabins

Free activities: Maori rock carvings, volleyball, Maori cultural games

Meal options: Full traditional hangi dinner and dessert included

Optional paid activities: Learn the Haka, Maori flax weaving (\$10 each)

Day 6: Lake Aniwhenua (via Taupo) to Blue Duck Station

Rise and shine, strayers! Enjoy your buffet breakfast and get ready for a day of jam-packed adventure. Keep your togs (swimwear) handy, because our first stop is Kerosene Creek – a naturally hot river and the perfect place for a morning soak. Then it's on to Taupo to see Australasia's largest lake and the mighty Huka Falls before venturing about as far off the beaten track as you can get in the North Island! Blue Duck Station is a sprawling 7,200-acre high country farm that is both a working station and an eco-conservation pioneer dedicated to protecting the native environment for its namesake, the rare blue duck. On arrival, we will settle in to learn a little about daily life at Blue Duck, the station's interesting settlement

history and their sustainability efforts before cooking some dinner and chilling out around the bonfire.

Accommodation: Country station lodge

Free activities: Huka Falls, Spa Park walk Taupo

Optional paid activities: Skydiving or bungy in Taupo

Meal options: Breakfast included. We'll stop at a supermarket to stock up on supplies. Self-cater or join the optional group dinner.

Day 7: Blue Duck Station

Good news - You have a full free day to explore this ruggedly charming destination. For entertainment, you have the option to go horseback riding over rolling green hills, or jump on a 4WD and travel through native bush to the 'Top of the World' where you can see the three peaks of Mount Ruapehu, Mount Tongariro and Mount Ngauruhoe. If you'd prefer to explore on foot, hike to the Kaiwhakauka waterfall and see if you can spot a rare blue duck in the flesh. Whatever you decide, we have no doubt this will be the start of your love affair with this lush kiwi paradise. Those holiday romances, aye!

Accommodation: Country station lodge

Free activities: Hike to Kaiwhakauka waterfall.

Optional paid activities: 4WD farm tour, half-day horse trek.

Meal options: Self-cater in the lodge kitchen.

Day 8: Blue Duck Station (via Tongariro) to Raetihi

Limber up! Today you get the chance to tick off one of the most popular hikes in New Zealand, the epic Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Considered one of the world's top one-day walks, this 19km hike takes you across a rocky plateau with dramatic volcanic peaks, craters and turquoise lakes that you (and your Instagram feed) will remember for a lifetime. The Crossing is open to walk year-round (alpine gear and guide are required in winter), but it is subject to the weather conditions. If the weather prevents you from doing the Crossing, there are other awesome short-walks in the area. Tonight, unwind after a big day in a cosy historic lodge in Raetihi – complete with a pamper room, spa bath and mountain views.

Accommodation: Historic restored lodge with mountain views

Free activities: Taranaki Falls walk, visit the Volcanic Centre, Tawhai Falls (Gollum's pool).

Optional paid activities: The Tongariro Alpine Crossing

Meal options: Pack a lunch & plenty of snacks and water. Group dinner (approx. \$15)

Day 9: Raetihi to Wellington

Onwards to Wellington, the 'coolest little capital in the world'! Wellington packs a lot of character into its downtown district, with funky restaurants and bars along Cuba Street and Courtenay Place. Fill your afternoon by browsing through the exhibits at Te Papa National Museum, grab a craft beer at an edgy brewery, climb to the top of Mt Victoria for panoramic views or take a stroll along the waterfront and Oriental Parade. Oh and, most importantly for those who seek 24/7 caffeination, you'll be glad to know that Wellington's coffee culture and cafe scene is considered one of the best in NZ.

Accommodation: Central city hostel

Free activities: Walk Oriental Parade, head up Mt Victoria for fantastic views, visit Te Papa National Museum. Gumboot (welly) throwing.

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen.

Day 10: Wellington to Marahau (Abel Tasman)

We catch an early Bluebridge Ferry (\$54) across the Cook Strait and through the magnificent Marlborough Sounds to the South Island. If the weather's good, head out to the viewing deck to witness some incredible scenes. From here we'll travel through the picturesque Marlborough region and make a stop at a local vineyard to sample the region's specialty Sauvignon Blanc before heading to Marahau, right on the edge of the spectacular Abel Tasman National Park.

Accommodation: The Barn, waterfront accommodation

Free activities: Mussel tasting, stargazing.

Optional paid activities: Wine tasting (usually \$5-10)

Meal options: We'll stop at a supermarket to stock up on supplies. Self-cater or join the optional group dinner.

Day 11: Marahau (Abel Tasman)

Count yourself lucky - you have a full day to explore New Zealand's most popular national park. From our accommodation you can hike straight into the park (no water taxi required!). It's a cool 12kms to Anchorage and you'll see the park's natural golden sand beaches and brilliant blue waters along the way. The walk is approx. 4 hours each way but there's enough photo stops en-route to spend an entire day exploring. Enjoy a picnic on the beach before checking out Cleopatra's Pools, moss lined fresh water pools with a natural water slide.

Accommodation: The Barn, waterfront accommodation

Free activities: Hike in the national park, relax on the golden sand beaches, see Cleopatra's Pools.

Optional paid activities: Kayaking, skydiving, water taxi, canyoning.

Meal options: Pack a picnic lunch and lots of snacks for your hike. Self-cater in the kitchen or use the BBQs.

Day 12: Marahau (Abel Tasman) to Franz Josef

Buckle up for an awesome day driving down the incredibly scenic 'wild' West Coast, an area known for its untamed beaches and spectacular rainforest. Through Buller Gorge and down a stretch of road named one of the top drives in the world by Lonely Planet, there's not much cell phone reception but you are NOT gonna need it - we dare you to peel your eyes away from the window for even just a second. We'll stop at Cape Foulwind and the Punakaiki Pancake Rocks and blow holes to explore this unique part of coastline before continuing on to the quaint township of Franz Josef, set amongst the rainforest.

Accommodation: Rainforest Retreat

Free activities: Cape Foulwind, Buller Gorge, Pancake Rocks and blowholes, Hokitika.

Meal options: Pizza Party (optional), local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen.

Day 13: Franz Josef

Ice, ice baby! Get ready to experience the Franz Josef Glacier, an iconic highlight of the West Coast. Take a short drive to the beginning of the track. Hike through native bush and across glacial streams to the terminal face of the glacier for spectacular photos or just hang out at the Retreat and relax in one of NZ's largest spa pools.

Accommodation: Rainforest Retreat

Optional paid activities: Shuttle to the track

Free activities: Glacier hike, bush tracks, soak in the spa.

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen.

Day 14: Franz Josef (via Fox Glacier) to Wanaka

It's another scenic journey today with plenty of photo stops – your Mum isn't gonna be the only one who thinks your travel photos are world-class! First up is the amazing mirror-like Lake Matheson for a short walk. We travel inland through the mountainous Haast Pass and alongside beautiful Lake Hawea to arrive in Wanaka late-afternoon. It's the perfect time to get your own photo of the famous Wanaka Tree set against a sunset backdrop. Dreamy!

Accommodation: Central Wanaka hostel

Free activities: Lake Matheson walk, Ship Creek walk, Blue Pools walk, Thunder Creek Falls walk

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen.

Day 15: Wanaka to Queenstown

Kick start your day with a brisk walk up Mt Iron or have a sleep in (we know they're necessary sometimes!). Mid-morning we'll make our way to Queenstown, known in New Zealand as the 'Adventure Capital of the World' and the spiritual home of bungee jumping. We stop at Kawarau Bridge on our way into town a.k.a. the first commercial bungee jumping site in the world. If you're feeling brave you can tick the bungee off your bucket list or if you'd prefer to just watch then you can cheer your mates on from the viewing platform!

Accommodation: Central Queenstown hostel

Free activities: Walk Mt Iron, watch people jumping off a bridge!

Optional paid activities: Puzzling World, skydiving, mountain biking, pilot your own stunt plane or learn to fly and take a friend for free, bungee jumping

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen.

Day 16, 17, 18: Queenstown

Yaaaasssss Queen(stown)! You've got 3 full days in the adventure capital. With a buzzy night life, beautiful mountain scenery and plenty of outdoor activities, it's easy to understand why so many backpackers refuse to leave this place.

Accommodation: Central Queenstown hostel - \$30

Free activities: Hike Ben Lomond, the Queenstown Hill, or Bob's Peak.

Optional paid activities: Any adventure activity that we mad Kiwis can dream up (bungee, swing, jet boating, skydiving, mountain biking, zipline, horse riding...)

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen.

Day 19: Queenstown to Tekapo

Today we let our adrenaline levels return to normal as we head over the Lindis Pass through the Mackenzie region and past Lake Pukaki before arriving into our overnight destination: Lake Tekapo. We arrive in the early afternoon with enough time to do the Mount John Observatory walk and witness incredible views of this electric blue lake and the Southern alps. Or if you'd rather just have a 'self-care' afternoon, then the Tekapo Hot Springs are the perfect place to relax and soak up the scenery. Tonight, if skies are clear, head outside to experience one of the best stargazing spots in the country.

Accommodation: YHA Tekapo

Free activities: Mount John Observatory walk, Church of the Good Shepherd, stargazing

Optional paid activities: Tekapo Hot Springs, ice skating, snow tubing.

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen

Day 20: Tekapo to Christchurch

Leaving Tekapo at lunchtime, we will continue to our overnight stop in Christchurch. This underrated city is where old meets new, as the rebuild continues following the devastating 2011 earthquake. Spend your afternoon wandering the city streets and laneways to discover creative street art and hidden eateries.

Accommodation: All Stars Inn

Free activities: Explore Christchurch by foot, check out the Cardboard Cathedral and inner-city street art.

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen

Day 21: Christchurch

Start your day with a freshly roasted coffee and an artisanal pastry from the Riverside Market then take yourself on a walking tour of Christchurch. Visit the Christchurch Botanic Gardens and see how Christchurch earned its nickname as the Garden City. Visit Canterbury Museum to learn about the past, present and future of the region. Walk down Hereford St to see the 'Cardboard' Cathedral then to the memorial of 185 White Chairs. Wrap up your tour by treating yourself to a burger at Smash Palace (an inner-city icon) – you deserve it after a big day of exploring!

Accommodation: All Stars Inn

Free activities: City sightseeing: Riverside Market, Botanic Gardens, Canterbury Museum, Cardboard Cathedral, 185 White Chairs.

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen

Day 22: Christchurch to Kaikoura

Wakey wakey! We've got an early morning start for a beautiful drive up the coast to Kaikoura. Arriving in Kaikoura around midday, you will have the afternoon free to explore. See the Kekenos (NZ fur seal) colony near Goose Bay and hike around the peninsula to check

out the breathtaking views from the lookout. You're likely to see sea birds, seals and maybe even whales or dolphins if you're lucky!

Accommodation: Warm modern hostel

Free activities: Visit a fur seal colony, walk around the peninsula and up to the lookout

Optional paid activities: Whale watching by boat or by plane, swimming with dolphins, guided fishing trip.

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen

Day 23: Kaikoura (via Picton) to Wellington

This morning we'll hop on the bus and wind our way up the coastal roads towards the top of the South Island. We will catch the afternoon Bluebridge Ferry (\$54) across the Cook Strait. The evening in Wellington is free for a second chance to explore this funky town's nightlife at any of the bars and restaurants along Cuba Street. It's your last night guys – go wild! Alternatively, it's a good time to craft your master plan on how to stay in New Zealand forever. Either or.

Accommodation: Central city hostel

Meal options: Local restaurants or self-cater in the hostel kitchen

Day 24: Wellington (via National Park) to Auckland

All good things must come to an end. After an incredible few weeks of exploring New Zealand it's officially time to head back to the 'City of Sails'. If you had any luck creating that master plan, now would be a good time to implement it – otherwise, today is an express day from Wellington to Auckland, so soak up the last few moments with your new Stray family. We hope you had a blast!

This itinerary is a guide. Given the spontaneous nature of our trips and lack of control over New Zealand's weather(!), what we do each day might vary slightly.