



NEW ZEALAND

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES



Welcome to New Zealand

As our planet heats up environmentally and politically, it's good to know New Zealand exists. This uncrowded, peaceful and accepting country is the ultimate escape for travellers seeking spectacle, adventure and excellent food and wine.

The scenic highlights of this southern superstar are the forests, mountains, lakes, beaches and fiords that make NZ one of the world's best hiking (locals call it 'tramping') destinations. Tackle one of nine 'Great Walks' – you've probably heard of the Milford Track – or spend a few hours wandering along a beach, paddling a canoe or mountain biking through easily accessible wilderness.

After a day's adventuring, relax and recharge with time spent on NZ's brilliant eating and drinking scene, enjoying local lamb, venison and seafood permeated with Pacific and Asian influences. Pick up artisan produce at farmers' markets for on-the-road picnics, and be charmed by NZ's stellar cool-climate wines – anyone for pinot noir or sauvignon blanc? – and flavourful craft beers.

A *hangi* (Māori feast) is another essential NZ food experience and throughout your travels other traditional Māori experiences await. Catch a cultural performance incorporating *waiata* (songs), dance, and the muscular *haka* (war dance), as performed by NZ's all-conquering All Blacks rugby team, or learn about indigenous New Zealanders' spiritual connection with the land and ocean while paddling a *waka* (war canoe) or strolling high above a surf beach.

And everyday, expect a thoroughly warm welcome from the irreverent and easygoing locals.

the ultimate escape for travellers seeking spectacle, adventure and excellent food and wine

Plan Your Trip

Ultimate New Zealand Itinerary



Week 1

Christchurch to Te Anau

- 1 Explore **Christchurch's** recovery after the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes.
 🚗 1½ hours or 🚝 1¾ hours
- 2 Take a day trip to **Akaroa**, combining French colonial history with wildlife-watching.
 🚗 3½ hours or 🚝 4½ hours
- 3 From Christchurch, cross the Southern Alps to **Greymouth** and the nearby **Pancake Rocks**.
 🚗 2½ hours or 🚝 4 hours
- 4 Continue from Greymouth down the West Coast to stunning **Franz Josef Glacier**.
 🚗 4½ hours or 🚝 8 hours
- 5 Travel from Franz Josef Glacier to **Queenstown** for adventures and views.
 🚗 2 hours or 🚝 3 hours
- 6 Head to **Te Anau** to explore spectacular Milford Sound.
 🚗 7½ hours or 🚗 2 hours then ✈️ 45 minutes

This is Lonely Planet's ultimate New Zealand itinerary, which ensures you'll see the best of everything the country has to offer.

For other recommended paths to travel, check out our itineraries section (p26). For inspiration on themed travel, see If You Like... (p20).

From left: Hiker on the Routeburn Track (p265); Whale-watching, Kaikoura (p188); Urupukapuka Island, Bay of Islands (p64)
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Week 2

Te Anau to Wellington

7 From Te Anau travel back to Queenstown and from there fly or drive back to **Christchurch**.

2½ hours or 3 hours

8 From Christchurch head up the east coast for whale-watching in the cool Pacific waters off **Kaikoura**.

3¾ hours or 5 hours

9 Head to **Nelson** and the **Marlborough region** for wine touring around Blenheim and kayaking or hiking around **Abel Tasman National Park**.

1¾ hours then 3 hours or 35 minutes

10 Cross by ferry from **Picton** to the North Island and enjoy excellent museums and a happening craft beer scene in **Wellington**. Flying's faster but much less spectacular.

5½ hours or 10 hours



Staying Longer

Wellington to the Bay of Islands

11 Head north to **Taupo**, stopping to hike the one-day **Tongariro Alpine Crossing**.

45 minutes or 1 hour

12 From Taupo, continue to **Rotorua** for more geothermal thrills and Māori culture.

1½ hours or 2 hours

13 Next stop is riverside **Hamilton**, a convenient base the **Waitomo Caves** and **Hobbiton**.

2 hours or 4 hours

14 From Hamilton, continue to **Hahei** and **Cathedral Cove**.

3 hours or 4½ hours

15 Time for **Auckland's** cosmopolitan Pacific vibe and **Waiheke Island**.

3 hours or 4¾ hours

16 Finish off with history and marine excursions around the **Bay of Islands**.

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Rotorua

Centre of Māori culture and steaming thrills

Geothermal activity is what you're here to see: gushing geysers, bubbling mud and boiling pools of mineral-rich water. Māori culture is also strong in Rotorua (p116) – take time to attend a *hangi* and Māori concert – and enjoy the region's exciting array of adventure activities including zip-lining, river rafting and mountain biking. Slow things down with a leisurely walk through the beautiful Redwoods Whakarewarewa Forest.



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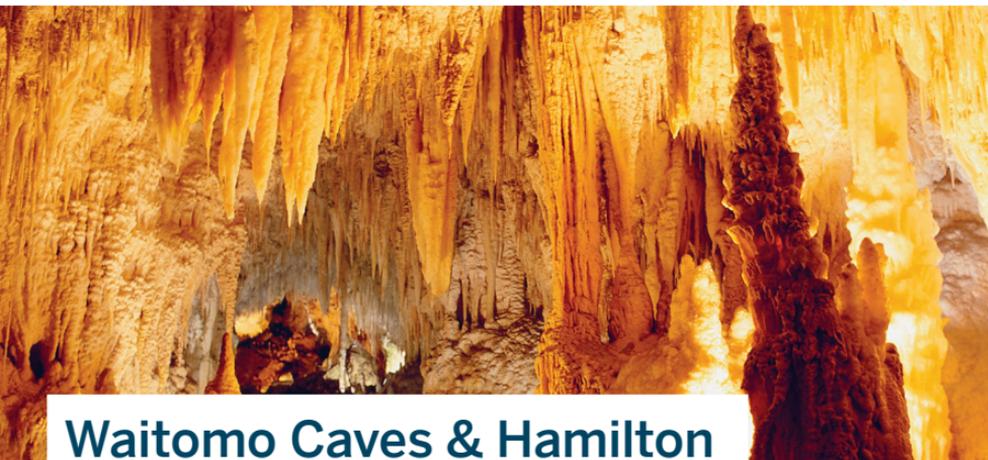
Wellington

Harbourside setting for up-to-the-minute drinking and dining

One of the coolest little capitals in the world, windy Wellington (p152) keeps things hip and diverse. It's long famed for a vibrant arts and music scene, fuelled by excellent cafes, restaurants and craft beer bars. Te Papa, the country's national museum, is a brilliant showcase of all things NZ, and a short trip up the coast, Kapiti Island offers great walking and bird-watching. Bottom right: *Solace in the Wind* sculpture by

Max Patté

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Waitomo Caves & Hamilton

Beaut caves and hobbits, too

Waitomo Caves (p102) are a must-see: a maze of subterranean caverns, canyons and rivers. Black-water rafting is the big lure here (like white-water rafting but through a dark cave), plus glowworm grottoes, underground abseiling and hidden stalactites and stalagmites. With good museums and an enviable eating and drinking scene, riverside Hamilton (p108) is also a centrally located base to visit Middle-earth cinematic highlights at Hobbiton (p106).

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West Coast

Powerful glaciers grind towards wild, windswept coasts

Hemmed in by the Tasman Sea and the Southern Alps, the West Coast (p212) is like nowhere else in New Zealand with a remote, end-of-the-road vibe. There's an alluring combination of wild coastline, rich wilderness, and must-see sights like Punakaiki's Pancake Rocks, and the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers. Sleepy Hokitika is all about heritage and a spectacular hinterland. Fox Glacier (p220)

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Plan Your Trip

Need to Know



When to Go



High Season (Dec–Feb)

- Summer: busy beaches, festivals and sporting events.
- Big-city accommodation prices rise.
- High season in the ski towns is winter (Jun–Aug).

Shoulder (Mar & Apr)

- Prime travelling time: fine weather, short queues, kids in school and warm(ish) ocean.
- Long evenings sipping Kiwi wines and craft beers.
- Spring (Sep–Nov) is shoulder season, too.

Low Season (May–Aug)

- Head for the slopes of the Southern Alps for some brilliant southern-hemisphere skiing.
- No crowds, good accommodation deals.
- Warm-weather beach towns may be half asleep.

Currency

New Zealand dollar (\$)

Languages

English, Māori and New Zealand Sign Language

Visas

Citizens of Australia, the UK and 58 other countries don't need visas for NZ (length-of-stay allowances vary). See www.immigration.govt.nz.

Money

ATMs are widely available in cities and larger towns. Credit cards accepted in most hotels and restaurants.

Mobile Phones

European phones will work on NZ's network, but most US or Japanese phones will not. Use global roaming or a local SIM card and prepaid account.

Time

GMT/UTC plus 12 hours (two hours ahead of Australian Eastern Standard Time)

Daily Costs

Budget: Less than \$150

- Dorm beds or campsites: \$25–38
- Main course in a budget eatery: less than \$15
- Naked Bus or InterCity bus pass: five trips from \$15

Midrange: \$150–250

- Double room in a midrange hotel/motel: \$120–200
- Main course in a midrange restaurant: \$15–32
- Car hire from \$30 per day

Top End: More than \$250

- Double room in a top-end hotel: from \$200
- Three-course meal in a classy restaurant: \$80
- Flight Auckland to Christchurch: from \$100

Websites

100% Pure New Zealand (www.newzealand.com) Official tourism site.

Department of Conservation (DOC: www.doc.govt.nz) Parks and camping info.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com/new-zealand) Destination information, hotel bookings, traveller forum and more.

Destination New Zealand (www.destination-nz.com) Resourceful tourism site.

DineOut (www.dineout.co.nz) Restaurant reviews.

Te Ara (www.teara.govt.nz) Online encyclopedia of NZ.

Opening Hours

Opening hours vary seasonally, but these are a general guide. Note that most places close on Christmas Day and Good Friday.

Banks 9.30am–4.30pm Monday to Friday, some also 9am–noon Saturday

Cafes 7am–4pm

Post offices 8.30am–5pm Monday to Friday; larger branches also 9.30am–1pm Saturday

Pubs & bars noon–late ('late' varies by region and day)

Restaurants noon–2.30pm and 6.30–9pm

Shops & businesses 9am–5.30pm Monday to Friday and 9am to noon or 5pm Saturday

Supermarkets 8am–7pm, often 9pm or later in cities

Arriving in New Zealand

Auckland Airport (p305) Airbus Express buses run into the city every 10 to 30 minutes around the clock. Door-to-door shuttle buses also run 24 hours. A taxi into the city costs \$75 to \$90 (45 minutes).

Wellington Airport (p306) Airport Flyer buses run into the city every 10 to 20 minutes from 6.30am to 9.30pm. Door-to-door shuttle buses run 24 hours. A taxi into the city costs around \$30 (20 minutes).

Christchurch Airport (p305) Christchurch Metro Purple Line runs into the city regularly from 6.45am to 11pm. Door-to-door shuttles run 24 hours. A taxi into the city costs around \$50 (20 minutes).

Getting Around

New Zealand is long and skinny and many roads are two-lane country byways: getting from A to B requires some patience.

Car Travel at your own tempo, explore remote areas and visit regions with no public transport. Hire cars in major towns.

Bus Reliable, frequent services around the country (usually cheaper than flying).

Plane Fast-track your holiday with affordable, frequent and fast internal flights.

Train Reliable, regular services (if not fast or cheap) along specific routes on both islands.