

AUCKLAND & THE BAY OF ISLANDS

ROAD TRIPS

This edition written and researched by

Brett Atkinson and Peter Dragicevich

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Reviews

In the Destinations section:

All reviews are ordered in our authors' preference, starting with their most preferred option. Additionally:

Sights are arranged in the geographic order that we suggest you visit them and, within this order, by author preference.

Eating and Sleeping reviews are ordered by price range (budget, midrange, top end) and, within these ranges, by author preference.

Trips

Trip Numbers

Trip Stop

Walking tour

Trip Detour

Capital (National)

(State/Province)

City/Large Town Town/Village

Reach + + + Cemetery

Park

Forest

Sportsground

Transport

Tram

Airport

H⊕H Cable Car/

(Christian)

Reservation

Funicular

Parking

-- Train/Railway

Urban Area

Cemetery (Other)

Population

۵

◉ Capital

Areas

Map Legend

Routes

Trip Route Trip Detour Linked Trip

Walk Route Tollway Freeway

Primary Secondary Tertiary

Unsealed Road Plaza/Mall Steps

= Tunnel Pedestrian Overpass Walk Track/Path

Boundaries

-- International State/Province

Hydrography

River/Creek Intermittent River Swamp/Mangrove Canal

Water Drv/Salt/ Intermittent Lake Glacier

Highway Markers

(1) Highway Marker

ZaiT aoT



Your Trips









Symbols In This Book



Food & Drink



Essential Photo



Walking



Sleeping

Sights



Activities





a Sleeping









Information & Transport

These symbols and abbreviations give vital information for each listing:

Telephone number

Opening hours

P Parking

Nonsmoking

Air-conditioning

Internet access

Wi-fi access

Swimming pool

Vegetarian selection

English-language menu

Family-friendly

Pet-friendly

□ Bus

😟 Ferrv

Tram ☐ Train

apt apartments

d double rooms

dm dorm beds

g guad rooms

r rooms

s single rooms

ste suites

tr triple rooms

tw twin rooms

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Destinations

Auckland & Around (p58)

Cradled by two harbours, cosmopolitan Auckland isn't your average metropolis. Surrounded by wine regions, wild beaches and beautiful Waiheke Island, it's regularly rated one of the world's most liveable cities.

Bay of Islands & Northland (p82)

Turquoise waters lapping pretty bays, dolphins frolicking at the bows of boats, pods of orcas gliding gracefully by: these are the kinds of experiences that the Bay of Islands delivers so well

Coromandel Peninsula (p105)

A favourite destination of Aucklanders for decades, the Coromandel Peninsula conceals superb beaches and hidden coves.



Driving in New Zealand

New Zealand crams diversity into its island borders, and road journeys seamlessly combine ocean-fringed coastal roads, soaring alpine peaks and impressive glaciers.

Driving Fast Facts

- → Right or left? Drive on the left
- → Manual or automatic? Mostly automatic
- **→ Legal driving age** 18
- → Top speed limit 100km/h
- → Best bumper sticker 'Sweet as bro'

DRIVING LICENCE & DOCUMENTS

International visitors can use their home country driving licence, or an International Driving Permit (IDP) issued by their home country's automobile association. If their home country licence is not in English, they must also carry an approved translation of the licence. See www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences

INSURANCE

Rental car companies include basic insurance in hire agreements, but it's often worth paying an additional fee - usually on a per day basis - to reduce your excess. This will bring the amount you need to pay in case of an accident down from around \$1500 or \$2000 to around \$200 or \$300. Note that most insurance agreements won't cover the cost of damage to glass (including the windscreen) or tyres, and insurance coverage is often invalidated on beaches and certain rough (4WD) unsealed roads. Always read the fine print, ask pertinent questions, and definitely refrain from driving a rental car along Ninety Mile Beach, Northland,

HIRING A CAR

Hiring a vehicle is very popular in NZ, and the country is perfect for self-drive adventures. Most – but not all – rental car companies require drivers to be at least 21 years old. The main companies are all represented; the following are good-value independent operators with national networks.

Ace Rental Cars (**2**09-303 3112, 0800 502 277; www.acerentalcars.co.nz)

Apex Car Rentals (**2**03-363 3000, 0800 500 660; www.apexrentals.co.nz)

Go Rentals (209-974 1598, 0800 467 368; www.gorentals.co.nz)

Also very popular is renting a campervan and taking advantage of the Department of Conservation (DOC) network of campsites. The following are three well-regarded local companies.

Apollo (**2**09-889 2976, 0800 113 131; www. apollocamper.co.nz)

Jucy (**2**09-929 2462, 0800 399 736; www. jucy.co.nz)

Road Trip Websites

AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATIONS

New Zealand Automobile Association (www.aa.co.nz/travel) Provides emergency breakdown services, maps and accommodation guides.

CONDITIONS & TRAFFIC

New Zealand Transport Agency

(www.nzta.govt.nz/traffic) Advice on road works, road closures and potential delays.

ROAD RULES

Drive Safe (www.drivesafe.org.nz) A simplified version of NZ's road rules, with the information of most interest to international visitors.

New Zealand Transport Agency

(www.nzta.govt.nz) Search for 'Road Code' for the full version of NZ's road rules.

Maui (**2**09-255 3910, **2**0800 688 558; www.maui.co.nz)

Another option is to contact **Transfer-car** (209-630 7533; www.transfercar.co.nz), one-way relocation specialists for car rental.

BUYING A VEHICLE IN NEW ZEALAND

Buying a car and then selling it at the end of your travels can be one of the cheapest ways to see NZ.

- → Auckland is the easiest place to buy a car, followed by Christchurch. **Turners Auctions** (www.turners.co.nz) is NZ's biggest carauction operator, with 10 locations.
- → Make sure your prospective vehicle has a Warrant of Fitness (WoF) and registration valid for a reasonable period: see **New Zealand Transport Agency** (www.nzta.govt.nz) for details.
- → Buyers should take out third-party insurance, covering the cost of repairs to another vehicle resulting from an accident that is your fault: try the **Automobile Association** (AA; ≥0800 500 444; www.aa.co.nz/travel).

- → To have a car inspected before you purchase it (around \$150), see **Vehicle Inspection New Zealand** (VINZ; **2**09-573 3230, 0800 468 469; www.vinz.co.nz) or the AA.
- → To establish if there's anything dodgy about the car (eg stolen, outstanding debts), try the AA's **LemonCheck** (≥09-420 3090, 0800 536 662; www.lemoncheck.co.nz) service.

BRINGING YOUR OWN VEHICLE

As NZ is an island nation, it is extremely rare for travellers to bring their own vehicle to the country. One exception where it could be financially worthwhile is for Australian visitors who are planning on travelling in their own campervan or caravan. Search for 'Importing a Vehicle Temporarily' on www.nzta.govt.nz.

MAPS

- ➤ Excellent national and regional maps published by the New Zealand Automobile Association (www.aa.co.nz) are available free of charge at regional i-SITEs (tourist information centres) and at main international airports. Also free and available at i-SITEs are regional maps and guides published by Jasons (www.jasons.co.nz).
- → More detailed maps including street and topographic information are published by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ; www.linz.govt.nz).
- → The Automobile Association also has a good online Travel Time and Distance Calculator to plan driving routes around NZ.

ROADS & CONDITIONS

- → Kiwi traffic is usually pretty light, but it's easy to get stuck behind a slow-moving truck or a line of campervans. Be patient.
- → One-way bridges, winding routes and unsealed gravel roads all require a more cautious driving approach.
- → Carry tyre chains with you if you're travelling in alpine areas or over high passes during autumn and winter.
- → If you stop for a photo, pull well over to the left and ensure your vehicle is not in the way of traffic.

Road Distances (km), North Island

Cape Reinga	430)									
Hamilton	125	555									
Napier	420	860	300)							
New Plymouth	360	790	240	410							
Paihia	225	220	340	645	590						
Rotorua	235	670	110	220	300	460					
Taupo	280	720	155	140	300	505	80				
Tauranga	210	635	110	300	330	435	85	155			
Thames	115	540	110	360	340	345	170	210	115		
Waitomo Caves	200	620	75	300	180	420	165	170	150	175	
Wellington	640	1080	520	320	350	860	450	375	530	590	460
	Auckland	Cape Reinga	Hamilton	Napier	New Plymouth	Paihia	Rotorua	Taupo	Tauranga	Thames	Waitomo Caves

- → Distances on the map can be deceptive as narrow roads are often slower going than expected. Allow enough time for travel, and in more remote areas, ask at local petrol stations about the road ahead.
- → Animal hazards often include farmers moving herds of cows or flocks of sheep. Slow your vehicle to a crawl you may need to stop altogether and patiently let the animals move around your car.
- → Because of Auckland's geographic location, squeezed into a narrow coastal isthmus, rush hour motorway traffic from 7am to 9am and 4pm to 7pm can be very slow. If possible, try to avoid heading north or south out of the city around these times.

ROAD RULES

The full version of New Zealand's road code can be found on www.nzta.govt.nz, but here are the basics:

- Drive on the left, overtake on the right.
- → Safety belts (seat belts) must be worn by the driver and all passengers. Younger children must be secured in an approved child

seat (these can be rented from rental-car companies).

- Motorcyclists and their passengers must always wear helmets.
- → When entering a roundabout (traffic circle), always give way to the right.
- Come to a complete halt at STOP signs.
- → The speed limit is 100km/h on motorways and the open road, and usually 50km/h in towns and cities. Always drive to the conditions and reduce speed if it is raining, windy or icy.
- → For drivers over 20 years of age, the legal alcohol limit is 50mg of alcohol per 100mL of blood. This equates to around one to two standard drinks, but as different people process alcohol differently it is recommended that drivers should not drink at all. In NZ, drivers under the age of 20 cannot legally drink any alcohol if they are planning on driving.
- → Driving under the influence of drugs is strictly illegal.

PARKING

Finding a car park gets easier – and substantially cheaper – out of Auckland, but

Road Distances (km), South Island

Christchurch	310)										
Dunedin	665	360										
Franz Josef Glacier	500	390	560)								
Greymouth	330	250	550	180								
Invercargill -	870	570	210	530	710							
Kaikoura	130	185	535	540	330	745						
Milford Sound	1060	760	410	630	805	275	930					
Nelson	115	425	775	470	290	990	245	1100				
Picton	30	340	690	530	355	900	160	1090	120			
Queenstown	785	480	285	355	530	190	660	290	820	815		
Te Anau	945	640	295	515	690	160	815	120	980	975	170	
Timaru	465	165	200	490	350	410	340	605	580	495	330	490
	Blenheim	Christchurch	Dunedin	Franz Josef Glacier	Greymouth	Invercargill	Kaikoura	Milford Sound	Nelson	Picton	Queenstown	Te Anau

locations around key attractions definitely get very busy during peak periods.

- → In city centres, most on-street parking is by 'pay and display' tickets available from onstreet machines.
- → Timing for paid parking is usually from 9am to 6pm Monday to Saturday with free parking on Sundays. This does vary in larger urban centres, however, so always check times carefully.
- → Cash is needed for machines in provincial towns, but most city machines can also be paid by credit card or by smartphone.
- → Most expensive is central Auckland, with costs up to \$6 per hour from Monday to Friday. Prices are usually cheaper on weekends.
- → See www.wilsonparking.co.nz for locations of paid multistorey and underground car parks in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch, Queenstown, Invercargill and Dunedin.
- → Yellow lines along the edge of the road indicate a nonparking area, and drivers should also be aware of 'loading zones', which can only be used by commercial vehicles for short time periods.
- → Clamping of vehicles is not very common in NZ, but council parking wardens and tow-truck

drivers strictly enforce local parking rules – tow-away warnings should definitely be taken seriously.

FUEL

- → Fuel is readily available throughout the country.
- → See www.aa.co.nz/cars/motoring-blog/ petrolwatch for current petrol and diesel prices.
- → Fuel prices are generally cheaper in cities than in provincial areas.
- → Most supermarkets offer fuel discount vouchers with shopping purchases over \$40; check your docket.

SAFETY

- → Driving in NZ is generally a hassle-free experience, but it is not unknown for rental cars and campervans to be targeted by opportunistic thieves.
- → Always keep baggage and valuables locked in the back of the vehicle, out of sight. When parking in unattended car parks in popular tourist spots, consider carrying passports, money and

other valuable items with you while you are away from your vehicle.

- → If you have just arrived in the country after a long international flight, it is strongly recommended that you have a re-energising overnight stay in your city of arrival before getting behind the wheel on NZ roads.
- → **DriveSafe** (www.drivesafe.org.nz) is an excellent online resource published in English, French, German and Chinese for international drivers on NZ roads.

DOC CAMPSITES & FREEDOM CAMPING

A great option for campervan travellers are the 250-plus vehicle-accessible 'Conservation Campsites' run by the Department of Conservation (www.doc.govt.nz). Fees range from free (basic toilets and fresh water) to \$15 per adult (flush toilets and showers). Pick up brochures detailing every campsite from DOC offices and i-SITEs or see online.

New Zealand is so photogenic, it's often tempting to just pull off the road and camp for the night, but there are strict guidelines for 'freedom camping'. See www.camping. org.nz for more freedom-camping tips.

- → Never assume it's OK to camp somewhere: always ask a local or check with the local i-SITE, DOC office or commercial camping ground.
- → If you are freedom camping, treat the area with respect and do not leave any litter.
- → If your chosen campsite doesn't have toilet facilities and neither does your campervan, it's illegal for you to sleep there (your campervan must also have an on-board grey-water storage system).
- → Legislation allows for \$200 instant fines for camping in prohibited areas or improper disposal of waste (in cases where dumping waste could damage the environment, fees are up to \$10,000).

RADIO

New Zealand is well-covered by radio, and national station networks can be listened to on different frequencies around the country. Check each network's website for the relevant frequency in various areas of the country.

Driving Problem-Buster

What should I do if my car breaks down? Call the service number of your carhire company and a local garage will be contacted. If you're travelling in your own vehicle, join the New Zealand Automobile Association; they can attend to breakdowns day and night. Another option is Motoring 24-7 (www.roadside-assistance. co.nz).

What if I have an accident? Exchange basic information with the other party (name, insurance details, driving licence number). No discussion of liability needs to take place at the scene. It's a good idea to photograph the scene of the accident noting key details. Call the police (211) if necessary.

What should I do if I get stopped by the police? They will want to see your driving licence, and a valid form of ID if you are visiting from overseas. Breath testing is mandatory in NZ.

What if I can't find anywhere to stay? Try to book ahead during busy periods. Local i-SITEs can often help with last-minute accommodation bookings.

Will I need to pay tolls in advance? New Zealand has three toll roads: the Northern Gateway Toll Road north of Auckland, and the Tauranga Eastern Link Toll Road and the Takitimu Drive Toll Road, both in Tauranga. Tolls are specific to a vehicle's registration number and can be paid online at www.nzta.govt.nz or at Caltex and BP service stations. Tolls can be paid either prior to travel, or within five days of travelling on a specific toll road.

and culture.

Cruising Cook Strait

On a clear day, sailing into Wellington Harbour, or into Picton in the Marlborough Sounds, is magical. Cook Strait can be rough, but the big ferries handle it well, and distractions include cafes, bars and cinemas. Booking online is easiest; sailings can usually be booked up to a couple of days in advance. Exceptions are during school and public holidays, and from late December to the end of January. There are two ferry options:

Bluebridge Ferries (**2**04-471 6188, 0800 844 844; www.bluebridge.co.nz; 50 Waterloo Quay) Crossing takes 3½ hours; up to four sailings in each direction daily. Bluebridge is based at Waterloo Quay, opposite Wellington train station.

Interislander (②04-498 3302, 0800 802 802; www.interislander.co.nz; Aotea Quay) Crossings take three hours, 10 minutes; up to five sailings in each direction daily. Interislander is about 2km northeast of Wellington's centre at Aotea Quay.

Car-hire companies allow you to pick-up/drop off vehicles at ferry terminals. If you arrive outside business hours, arrangements can be made to collect your vehicle from the terminal car park. In some cases, it may suit the hire company for you to take your rental car with you on the ferry – eg for relocations etc – so ask them to advise what will be the best deal.

Radio New Zealand National (www. radionz.co.nz/national) News-oriented station with excellent coverage of local issues, arts

Newstalk ZB (www.newstalkzb.co.nz) Talkback station where the issues of the day are discussed passionately. Radio Sport (www.radiosport.co.nz) Understand the difference between the All Blacks, Black Caps and Silver Ferns (respectively NZ's national rugby, cricket and netball teams).

Hauraki (www.hauraki.co.nz) Iconic rock music station with a quintessentially irreverent Kiwi tone.



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