



# AUCKLAND & THE BAY OF ISLANDS

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## ROAD TRIPS

This edition written and researched by

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# 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.

## Map Legend

### Routes

- Trip Route
- Trip Detour
- Linked Trip
- Walk Route
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed Road
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian
- Overpass
- Walk Track/Path

### Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Cliff

### Hydrography

- River/Creek
- Intermittent River
- Swamp/Mangrove
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/
- Intermittent Lake
- Glacier

### Highway Markers

- Highway Marker

### Trips

- Trip Numbers
- Trip Stop
- Walking tour
- Trip Detour

### Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

### Areas

- Beach
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Park
- Forest
- Reservation
- Urban Area
- Sportsground

### Transport

- Airport
- Cable Car/Funicular
- Parking
- Train/Railway
- Tram

## Symbols In This Book

- Top Tips
- Link Your Trips
- Tips from Locals
- Trip Detour
- History & Culture
- Family
- Food & Drink
- Outdoors
- Essential Photo
- Walking Tour
- Eating
- Sleeping

- Sights
- Beaches
- Activities
- Courses
- Tours
- Festivals & Events
- Sleeping
- Eating
- Drinking
- Entertainment
- Shopping
- Information & Transport

## These symbols and abbreviations give vital information for each listing:

- Telephone number
- Opening hours
- Parking
- Nonsmoking
- Air-conditioning
- Internet access
- Wi-fi access
- Swimming pool
- Vegetarian selection
- English-language menu
- Family-friendly
- Pet-friendly
- Bus
- Ferry
- Tram
- Train
- apt apartments
- d double rooms
- dm dorm beds
- q quad rooms
- r rooms
- s single rooms
- ste suites
- tr triple rooms
- tw twin rooms

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book

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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](http://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** (☎09-303 3112, 0800 502 277; [www.acerentalcars.co.nz](http://www.acerentalcars.co.nz))

**Apex Car Rentals** (☎03-363 3000, 0800 500 660; [www.apexrentals.co.nz](http://www.apexrentals.co.nz))

**Go Rentals** (☎09-974 1598, 0800 467 368; [www.gorentals.co.nz](http://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** (☎09-889 2976, 0800 113 131; [www.apollocamper.co.nz](http://www.apollocamper.co.nz))

**Jucy** (☎09-929 2462, 0800 399 736; [www.jucy.co.nz](http://www.jucy.co.nz))

## Road Trip Websites

### AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATIONS

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

### CONDITIONS & TRAFFIC

**New Zealand Transport Agency** ([www.nzta.govt.nz/traffic](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/traffic)) Advice on road works, road closures and potential delays.

### ROAD RULES

**Drive Safe** ([www.drivesafe.org.nz](http://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](http://www.nzta.govt.nz)) Search for 'Road Code' for the full version of NZ's road rules.

**Maui** (☎09-255 3910, ☎0800 688 558; [www.maui.co.nz](http://www.maui.co.nz))

Another option is to contact **Transfer-car** (☎09-630 7533; [www.transfercar.co.nz](http://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](http://www.turners.co.nz)) is NZ's biggest car-auction 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](http://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](http://www.aa.co.nz/travel)).

➔ To have a car inspected before you purchase it (around \$150), see **Vehicle Inspection New Zealand** (VINZ; ☎09-573 3230, 0800 468 469; [www.vinz.co.nz](http://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](http://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](http://www.nzta.govt.nz).

## MAPS

➔ Excellent national and regional maps published by the **New Zealand Automobile Association** ([www.aa.co.nz](http://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](http://www.jasons.co.nz)).

➔ More detailed maps including street and topographic information are published by **Land Information New Zealand** (LINZ; [www.linz.govt.nz](http://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.







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](http://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](http://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](http://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 car-hire 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](http://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 (☎111) 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](http://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.

## 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** (☎04-471 6188, 0800 844 844; [www.bluebridge.co.nz](http://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** (☎04-498 3302, 0800 802 802; [www.interislander.co.nz](http://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](http://www.radionz.co.nz/national)) News-oriented station with excellent coverage of local issues, arts and culture.

**Newstalk ZB** ([www.newstalkzb.co.nz](http://www.newstalkzb.co.nz)) Talkback station where the issues of the day are discussed passionately.

**Radio Sport** ([www.radiosport.co.nz](http://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](http://www.hauraki.co.nz)) Iconic rock music station with a quintessentially irreverent Kiwi tone.

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