

Auckland Region



Paris may be the city of love, but Auckland is the city of many lovers, according to its Maori name, Tamaki Makaurau. In fact, her lovers so desired this beautiful place that they fought over her for centuries.

It's hard to imagine a more geographically blessed city. Its two magnificent harbours frame a narrow isthmus punctuated by volcanic cones and surrounded by fertile farmland. From any of its numerous vantage points you'll be astounded at how close the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean come to kissing and forming a new island.

As a result, water's never far away – whether it's the ruggedly beautiful west-coast surf beaches or the glistening Hauraki Gulf with its myriad islands. The 135,000 pleasure crafts filling Auckland's marinas have lent the city its most durable nickname: the 'City of Sails'.

Within an hour's drive from the high-rise heart of the city are dense tracts of rainforest, thermal springs, deserted beaches, wineries and wildlife reserves. Yet big-city comforts have spread to all corners of the Auckland Region: a decent coffee or chardonnay is usually close at hand.

Yet the rest of the country loves to hate it, tut-tutting about its traffic snarls and the supposed self-obsession of the quarter of the country's population that call it home. With its many riches, Auckland can justifiably respond to its detractors, 'Don't hate me because I'm beautiful'.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Going with the flows, exploring Auckland's fascinating **volcanic field** (p98)
- Getting back to nature on the island sanctuaries of the beautiful **Hauraki Gulf** (p129)
- Being awed by the Maori *taonga* (treasures) of the **Auckland Museum** (p98)
- Going west to the mystical and treacherous black sands of **Karekare** (p142) and **Piha** (p142)
- Swimming with the fish at **Goat Island Marine Reserve** (p150)
- Schlepping around world-class wineries and beaches on **Waiheke Island** (p131)
- Buzzing around the cafes and bars of **Kingsland** (p120) and **Ponsonby** (p120)
- Soaking up the Polynesian vibe at the **Pasifika Festival** (p113), held in March at Western Springs Park





MAORI NZ: AUCKLAND REGION

Evidence of Maori occupation is literally carved into Auckland's volcanic cones (p98). The dominant *iwi* (tribe) of the isthmus was Ngati Whatua, but these days there are Maori from almost all NZ's *iwi* living here, sometimes collectively known as Ngati Akarana, or the Auckland Tribe.

For an initial taste of Maori culture, start at Auckland Museum (p98), where there's a wonderful Maori collection, a massive war canoe and a culture show. For a more personalised experience, take either Potiki's Urban Maori tour (p112) or Ngati Whatua's Tamaki Hikoi (p112).

Climate

Auckland has a mild climate, with the occasional frost in winter and high humidity in summer. Summer months have an average of eight days of rain, but the weather is famously fickle, with 'four seasons in one day' possible at any time of the year.

AUCKLAND

pop 1.2 million

Auckland's a city of volcanoes, with the ridges of lava flows forming its main thoroughfares and its many cones providing islands of green within the sea of suburbs. As well as being by far the largest, it's the most multicultural of