

FIRST LIGHT TRAVEL



Your South Pacific Travel Specialists



Hiking New Zealand

- 2019 -



ULTIMATE NORTH

ITINERARY



The Ultimate North is the ideal choice for those who have a little less time but want to experience the very best that the North Island can offer; it is day 1 to 8 of the Ultimate New Zealand. Hike into a river-side hut in the middle of Jurassic-like rainforest. Explore thermal areas in Rotorua. Trek the high sections of the remote Lake Waikaremoana Great Walk deep in the magical rain forests of Te Urewera. Relax in lodges in beautiful locations. Discover the surreal volcanic wonderland of Tongariro National Park, staying high above the world in an alpine hut.

The Ultimate North has short hikes, as well as two overnight hikes staying in backcountry huts.

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| LENGTH | 8 days |
| GRADE | D - River crossings, some uneven terrain, you need to be reasonably fit and enthusiastic |
| START | Auckland – 7:00am, pick up zone outside Sky City, 20m from Sky Tower base, corner Victoria and Federal Streets (Rotorua pickup by arrangement) |
| FINISH | Wellington – 3:30pm (approx.). Option to bus or train to Auckland from National Park (not included). |
| ACCOMMODATION | Cabins, camping and backcountry huts |
| INCLUDED ACTIVITIES | Wai-o-tapu Thermal Wonderland |
| DEPARTURES | 2019 Oct: 30 Nov: 20, 27 Dec: 11, 25 2020 Jan: 8, 22 Feb: 5, 12 Mar: 4, 18 |

“BEAUTIFUL BACKCOUNTRY AND NATURE”

I just completed the 7 day Ultimate North Island tour. It was an amazing adventure that was made even better by our knowledgeable guide Justin. He is a former park ranger who kept us well informed (and entertained) on such subjects as local history, Maori culture, flora, fauna and politics. He also had lots of options available whenever the volatile New Zealand weather decided to take a turn for the worse. It was an immensely enjoyable trip and I learned a lot.

~ Jaspersize, Canada, February 2018, Trip Advisor

“WOW. WHAT A TRIP!”

The friendly atmosphere was brilliant within the group while our guides hospitality, knowledge and relaxed nature made an already brilliant adventure even more memorable. The sights you see, people you meet and knowledge you gain was invaluable to me and I'm sure the others in my group also. What a way to test your limits or just enjoy what nature has to offer. Thanks again!

~ MiaSmith7, Australia, November 2017, Trip Advisor

ITINERARY

DAY 1 AUCKLAND TO WHIRINAKI

11 km/3 hours hiking

We head south to Rotorua, with a café stop at 9am for those who missed breakfast. Rotorua is renowned for its steaming thermal vents, bubbling mud-pools and stunning lakes. The area is also rich in Māori and early European history, including the violent 1886 Mt Tarawera eruption that buried a Māori village. We enjoy a quick stop by Lake Rotorua before heading away from the beaten track – southeast into the Whirinaki.

After a picnic lunch, we sort out gear and pack our backpacks for the hike into the rainforest. A further hours' drive get us to the south end of this huge park.

The Whirinaki Forest is a preserved remnant of the vast forests believed to have covered the super-continent of Gondwanaland more than 150 million years ago. Our first hike is an easy one, descending 300m on a track through native beech forest, to a simple forest hut beside the stunning Whirinaki river. We cook up our meal together and relax. We either camp or stay in the nearby hut with an evening campfire and time to enjoy the surrounds. *Includes lunch and dinner.*

DAY 2 WHIRINAKI TO TE UREWERA

16 km/5 hours hiking

This morning we continue down the valley track. This wilderness is off the tourist trail and we rarely see others, but we do often see rare blue ducks and robins, and hear kaka (a large bush parrot)! Lower down the valley, we hike beneath giant tree ferns and some of New Zealand's most stunning podocarp rainforest trees.

Later in the afternoon we drive east, into the rugged forest ranges of Te Urewera. This is the traditional home of the Tūhoe (Māori tribe) and one of the last places to have been reached by European settlers.

After two hours winding through the most incredible rain forest, we reach the western arm of remote Lake Waikaremoana. We continue around the lake before stopping for the night at a camping area with sweet little cabins. Here we relax and cook a meal together in the communal kitchen. We usually stay in the simple cabins but occasionally camp. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 3 LAKE WAIKAREMOANA

17 km/8 hours hiking

This morning we drive 20 min to the trail-head at the south end of the lake and ready ourselves for some spectacular views. We climb up the Panekiri Range through gnarled beech and bright green tawa forest ascending to a point over 500 metres above the lake. From here, we hike along with breath-taking vistas in every direction. After enjoying a lunch stop at Bald Knob, we return back along this undulating trail, and if time permits once back at the road end, we explore the fascinating 'caves' trail. Enjoy a second night at the cabins (occasionally we camp). *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*



DAY 4 LAKE WAIKAREMOANA TO TAUPO

4 km/2 hours hiking

This morning we drive to the Volcanic Plateau where we explore an extraordinary thermal park (price included), bathe in a natural hot river and view the impressive Huka Falls. Feel the spray here as the mighty Waikato River plunges 11 metres into a stadium-like pool. This is New Zealand's longest river.

Later we arrive at Lake Taupo, the largest lake in New Zealand. Incredibly, this 600 square kilometre crater lake was formed in 186 AD by the most powerful volcanic explosion in recorded history.

At Taupo, we either grab takeaway food (own cost) or rustle up a quick 'trailer' meal at a lovely lake-side spot. Here we can relax on the unusual pumice beach and in summer enjoy an evening swim before continuing to our cabin accommodation in Tongariro National Park. *Includes breakfast and lunch.*



DAY 5 TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK

15 km/6 hours hiking

Tongariro National Park is the oldest National Park in New Zealand and the fourth oldest in the world. In 1993, the park became a UNESCO mixed cultural and natural World Heritage Site. Although many hikers walk the busy one-day Tongariro Alpine Crossing, few explore the more remote and drier east side of this volcanic range. Enjoy our secret side trips and short cuts but rest assured we will hike the famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing – considered one of the world's finest day walks – but at a less busy time of the day whenever possible.

We sort out gear and pack our backpacks ready for our two nights away. In the late morning hike out of Whakapapa through tussock-grasslands and over the low saddle that cuts between the volcanoes Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe. Late afternoon we arrive at a simple but modern hut beside a quiet stream and among patches of mountain beech forest. There are great mountain-views from the spacious common room. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*



DAY 6 TONGARIRO

8-15 km/3-8 hours hiking

The trail to the next hut takes just 3 hours, so we have the morning to explore.

Either amble (about an hour) to the splendid Ohineopango Springs and visit an historic hut and then return to hut for lunch, or we can negotiate an adventurous off-trail route over ash-moraine ridges and skirt lava cliffs to reach a viewpoint high above a remote lake. After lunch continue on, traversing stony deserts to an alpine hut at 1400m situated on the edge of an old lava flow.

We stop to enjoy fantastic views of the Park's three main peaks: Ruapehu, Tongariro and Ngauruhoe. The latter starred as Mount Doom in Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings films. It's an extraordinary landscape of active volcanoes and lava valleys.

Evening provides an opportunity to share an alpine hut with hikers from all over the world. Oturere 'sardine tin' Hut is small, quite busy, but still our favourite spot. We usually sleep in the hut, but sometimes we camp. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*





DAY 7 TONGARIRO

12 km/6 hours hiking

We hike through a moon-like valley of lava flows and ash fields before climbing steeply to the remarkable Emerald Lakes, which have graced the covers of many guidebooks.

From here we join the spectacular Tongariro Alpine Crossing.

The next few hours of hiking take us through an unforgettable wonderland of lava valleys, steaming craters and brooding volcanoes before our descent through bonsai-like alpine foliage and alongside mineral-infused streams. In good conditions, we have the option of climbing high on the volcanic peaks.

An evening drive takes us to a lodge in the heart of the National Park – the perfect place to relax with a beer and enjoy million-dollar volcanic views before dining in the alpine village. *Includes breakfast and lunch.*

DAY 8 TONGARIRO TO WELLINGTON

1 km/1-2 hours hiking

Driving south, we leave the volcanoes to descend through the beautiful river valleys of the Rangitikei and along the coast to Wellington, where we arrive mid-afternoon after a café break.

Wellington is so much more than just New Zealand's capital. It is also the nation's stylish hub for arts, culture, cafés and politics. Enclosed by hills and a harbour, this compact city has many attractions within easy walking distance.

Options include enjoying the National Museum of New Zealand (Te Papa) or watching the political shenanigans of the 'Beehive' (Parliament House). Many visitors immerse themselves in the vibrant café scene and the accessible downtown area. *Includes breakfast.*

Note: Returning to Auckland by bus or train? Contact us for the latest timetable information.

"FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE"

We had a great experience hiking the northern loop in Tongariro National park, despite bad weather conditions. The scenery was spectacular, the hikes challenging enough but not crazy and with definitely less crowd than the Alpine crossing. Because of bad weather conditions, we were able to experience both the camping and the Hut accommodations, which was a treat. Our guide was well experienced, making sure to meet our needs but always leaning towards safety when appropriate. The packing list was right, as we had warm weather, cold weather and lots of rain. The return at the end of the storm was memorable and we admired many single and double rainbows set on the Tongariro park background. I will work with this company again for my trip to the Southern Island.

~ Agnes R, January 2017, Trip Advisor

LIFE ON THE TRAIL

This is a facilitated adventure - we believe great trips/ adventures are a team effort. So we will need your help from time to time when it comes to cooking meals, sharing the load on hikes, and washing up - many hands make light work.

GRADE D

- Average of 4-5 hours physical activity per day, up to 8-9 hours on longer days.
- Pack weights of 10-12kgs* on some days (1, 2, 5, 6 and 7).
- Altitude gains of up to 800m.
- Some uneven track surfaces and river crossings.
- No multi-day hiking experience necessary.
- You need to be reasonably fit and enthusiastic and have good agility.
- Some tracks may be slippery or rough and there will be some off-track hiking and river crossings.

*Will vary depending on the weight of personal discretionary items.



GUIDES AND SAFETY

An excellent guide can make the difference between a trip of a lifetime and just an ordinary trip. Our handpicked professionals come from a range of backgrounds. Each has extensive outdoor and hiking experience and a passion for New Zealand's wild and beautiful backcountry. The guides will ensure that your trip is truly inspiring, a huge amount of fun and safe. All guides are trained in Mountain Safety First Aid.

FOOD

As well as being the time to rest, refuel and recharge, meal times are also a great time to get to know your fellow travellers better, sit back and enjoy the amazing surroundings and enjoy some great food! Everybody has a turn with the preparation and cooking of meals: barbecues, salads, pancakes, curries, pasta, stir-fries, hangi...

Vegetarian meals are no problem. On the "wild nights" the group will usually eat pasta and rice meals (special "secret" recipes used). There is always a lot of hiking food - chocolate, nuts, raisins, biscuits. The vehicles carry a full range of cooking equipment including gas burners, woks, frying pans and billies (cooking pot). When you go on an overnight hike the group will carry a portable stove.



TRANSPORT

The average driving time per day varies, some times you are in the wilderness and won't see the vehicle for 2 or 3 days! On other days you might be in the vehicle for 2-3 hours or occasionally more. The driving time is a chance to rest and enjoy the fantastic scenery which is forever changing. You will travel in a 12 seat minibus towing a custom-built trailer with camp equipment and your luggage. They are also equipped with a range of natural history reference books. There will be a range of roads - sealed and unsealed. The guide will often stop the vehicle if there is a great photo opportunity or primo ice cream shop!



ACCOMMODATION

"Wild nights" vs nights in civilisation: Wild nights are the nights where you are truly in the wilderness, staying in backcountry huts or camping in locations that may be several hours walk from the nearest road or populated area, versus nights in civilisation where you may stay in cabins, lodges or camp by the vehicle at Department of Conservation campsites. Some of these locations may still be relatively remote and in the wilderness but they can be reached by the vehicle.

Camping - You will camp in a range of campsites. On the "wild nights" you may camp under natural rock shelters, on remote beaches or even sleep out under the stars! On the non-"wild nights" you will occasionally camp near the vehicle in Department of Conservation or private campsites. If the weather is not great for camping, eg very wet, stormy or very cold conditions, your guide will seek out alternative accommodation, eg lodge, cabin or crib.

LIFE ON THE TRAIL



Huts - New Zealand has an excellent network of backcountry huts and you will stay in huts on several nights. They are equipped with mattresses, running water and an outside toilet. Cooking is done on a portable stove. Huts are only accessible on foot and shared with other hikers. You also have the option of camping near the hut if that is your preference.



Lodges - You will stay in lodge type accommodation on some of the nights. The lodges are often conveniently located near the start or end of a hike and have multi-share and sometimes twin/double rooms.



Bathroom facilities - on the wild nights there will be long drop (pit) toilets. There will be rivers or lakes nearby for a swim, and sometimes there are even natural hot pools! The Kiwi-style Hiking trips are set up so after a couple of nights of "roughing it" in the wilderness, you will stay somewhere where you can enjoy a shower and a few home comforts (including laundry facilities) before the next foray into the wild!

A very outdoor toilet - don't worry, just an actor!



ADDITIONAL COSTS

Meals

Meals that are not included in the trip price are detailed at the bottom of each day's itinerary.

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Payment

For bookings four or more months in advance of the departure a 25% deposit can be paid with the remainder due 65 days prior to your trip. For bookings within four months of the departure, full payment is required.

Cancellations

More than 20 days prior to departure - 80% refund of full ticket price.

20 to 10 days prior to departure - 50% refund of full ticket price.

Less than 10 days prior to departure - NO REFUND.

Travel Insurance

It is suggested that clients take out comprehensive travel insurance.

PACKING LIST

Items shown in bold can be hired from us (see the rate table below).
Please arrange hire at least one week prior to your departure date.

CLOTHING - one set for walking, one set for evenings

WALKING CLOTHES: Several layers of wool, polypropylene and/or polar fleece will ensure you remain a comfortable temperature regardless of the weather. **No cotton shirts hiking/kayaking in the wet please!** Cotton gets cold when wet and is difficult to dry.

- Raincoat** (goretex or similar)
- Thermal underwear** (top and bottom, wool or polypropylene)
- Hiking boots or good hiking shoes
- Spare lightweight shoes or sandals
- Shorts or lightweight trousers (preferably quick-dry)
- Short-sleeved shirt x 2 (quick-dry, polypropylene or wool)
- Warm fleece/wool jersey** (not cotton) x 2
- Socks (we suggest 3 pairs)
- Warm hat or balaclava
- Sunhat
- Gloves or mittens (wool or fleece)
- Togs (swimming costume)
- Towel (lightweight travel towels are great)

SPARE CLOTHING: Extra socks and polypropylene layers are always handy - ensure you have enough warm items. Comfortable clothes for non hiking days. Spare clothing can be left in the secure trailer when we are away on the hikes, so don't worry about the extra weight - ensure you have enough warm items. Note: there are only limited opportunities to do laundry during a tour, so quick drying clothing is an advantage. Weather can change rapidly in the locations we hike so layers of clothing is ideal.

EQUIPMENT

- Backpack** (minimum 60 litres)
- Sleeping bag** (minimum 3 season, preferably down, lightweight, between 1-2 kg)
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Drink bottle or camel back - 1 litre
- Small Day pack
- Sunscreen and sunglasses
- Insect repellent (sandflies like foreign blood)
- Personal toiletries, medication and first aid
- Walking Poles** (optional)
- Gaiters (optional)

HOW TO PACK

We recommend that you bring two bags on your trip, a hiking backpack with an internal frame (at least 60 litres in capacity) for the overnight hikes, and a smaller day pack for the day hikes. We supply kit bags for the stowage of your gear in the trailer when you are away on a multi day hike.

WE SUPPLY

- Pack-liner to keep things dry inside your backpack
- Kit bag to hold your spare gear when you're out hiking
- Emergency first aid kit
- Thermarests
- Plates, cutlery, mugs, pots, etc.
- Tents

CONTACT US TODAY FOR THE BEST PRICES AND SERVICES

EMAIL US

OR PHONE US NOW

+64 92814481

IMPORTANT INFO

Here is a kickstart on a few things you need to know...

WHEN HIKING

- Stay together. If you get separated, stop and wait until your guide finds you.
- Wait at all track junctions, huts and hazards, as well as river crossings, for the rest of the group to catch up.
- Tell someone if you are heading off the track to use "the bathroom" in case you get lost! It happens! If lost - shout or whistle!
- Watch out for sunburn. Remember, NZ sun burns fast, wear a hat and sun block at all times until you are familiar with its strength.
- Drink plenty of water, it is safe to drink from most of the rivers and streams in the wilderness without treating the water, but do ask.
- Help and look out for each other on river crossings, bush bashing and rock scrambling.
- Ensure you have correct clothing - see 'packing' list.
- Snow slopes are extremely dangerous - guide leads on snow. No fooling around unless guide gives the OK.
- Wasps - be observant (especially in beech forests). If you see a nest back off SLOWLY, unless they start to sting you - then move like greased lightning.

CROSSING RIVERS

- River crossing accidents are a major cause of fatalities in the NZ wilderness so learning correct techniques from your guide is imperative.
- If wearing a rain-coat turn up and tuck under hip belt so pockets don't fill with water.
- You must wear boots when crossing rivers!
- To prevent the spread of Didymo (an invasive algae) boots, gaiters, socks etc. must be washed and treated before entering another waterway.

KAYAKING

- Always attend the safety briefing.
- Always take spare warm clothing in case the weather turns bad.
- Go to the toilet before you get into the kayak!
- Wrap valuables and cameras securely in bags or dry bags and close PROPERLY. Put adsorbent cloth/t-shirt with camera.
- Always stay together.
- Sun protection - the reflection off water doubles the intensity!

CYCLING & MOUNTAIN BIKING

- Always attend the safety briefing, know the meet times and 'back up' plans.
- High visibility clothes if there are road sections.
- Be aware if you are in the front or back of group (otherwise you might be chasing imaginary people).
- Stop to smell the roses - you might be wearing yellow, but its not the Tour de France!
- Helmets are compulsory in NZ.
- In NZ front and rear brakes are opposite to US and Europe.

SWIMMING & BEACHES

Many NZ beaches are too dangerous for swimming, in particular the West Coast beaches.

Where conditions are suitable...

- Talk to your guide before you go swimming and don't swim alone.
- Respect the sea - never turn your back on the sea and watch out for freak waves & rips.
- If you get into difficulty while swimming - raise one of your hands up above your head - stay calm.
- Be careful entering the sea or body surfing, there may be rocks below the water.

- For rescues, things that float are - sleeping mats, spare tyre, empty water bottles (jerry cans), thermarests and dry bags stuffed with clothing.
- Look for jellyfish and stingrays (check along water edge and don't swim if there are lots about).

HOT POOLS (NATURAL)

- Keep head above water at all times - water may contain amoebic meningitis.
- Watch out for boiling water/mud around and in the pool.
- Remove jewellery as it tends to turn green or black.

FIRES

- Observe all fire bans. Keep fires small, use only dead wood and completely put out with water before leaving and at night (includes wood burners in huts).
- Always have a bucket of water near fire to extinguish it and for burns (or stream/river nearby).
- Be careful when wearing synthetic clothing around fires. Sparks put holes in Gore-Tex and tents.
- Do not use axe without guide's okay - wear boots.

HYGIENE & TOILETS

- You'll get to a shower generally every 1-2 days, otherwise there are rivers to swim in and freshwater to wash with.
- Keep streams, lakes and rivers clean - when cleaning and washing, take water and wash well away from the water source (drain used water into soil to allow it to be filtered) - all soaps/detergents are harmful to water-life.
- Always use toilets when they are provided even though long-drops may be a bit rustic.
- In situations where there is no toilet, bury toilet waste. No 1's (pee) off the track - No 2's (poop) in 5-10 cm deep hole 50-100m from any water (lake, river or stream), bury toilet paper, cover up hole with soil/leaf litter. Please do not burn toilet paper.
- Sanitary pads/tampons are treated as rubbish - carried out by user.

ENVIRONMENTAL CARE

- Remove rubbish - pack it in, pack it out. Please help guide to separate rubbish, recycling and compost.
- Keep to the track where there is one - protect native plants and animals.
- Respect cultural heritage.
- Enjoy your visit - camp carefully and leave no trace of your visit. Will the next visitor know you have been there?

OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER...

- Laundry facilities are limited while on trips (every 2-3 days).
- Hypothermia - make sure you have the correct clothing! Be prepared for any weather!
- Hire gear - use the supplied liner with sleeping bags, carry all hire gear in pack not tied to outside. Please don't overextend walking poles - they will snap! Please tell us if any repairs are required.
- Equipment - it is so easy to lose stuff in shared huts. Help us keep an eye on gear, thanks.
- Roads - remember kiwis drive on the left, look carefully when crossing the street for an ice-cream.
- Tipping - it is not expected in NZ to tip for service, but if you feel your guide has done an excellent job, tips will be accepted graciously.
- Wild food & berries - always ask before you eat, many are poisonous to us.

Thank you for reading. Have a wonderful trip.

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson