

Kauri



Explore volcanoes • Maori culture • Hike Tongariro Alpine Crossing • Hike mountains, beach and headland • Bike Whakarewarewa Forest • Hike alongside Rotorua's lakes • Caving in Waitomo

5 days: Auckland–Auckland

Fare: US\$1999 + tax

New Zealand's North Island, named *Te Ika-a-Maui* by the Maori, is remarkably different to the South Island. It is a land of active volcanoes, hot springs, geysers, waterfalls, and unique flora and fauna. Favoured by the Maori people for its bountiful natural resources, the North Island has a rich cultural history that has been shaped by this dynamic and surprising land. Our Kauri trip packs loads of adventure into just five days – from hiking and soaking in hot pools to biking and caving – you'll be amazed by the diversity and culture of our northern island. The Kauri allows you to see the 'other side' of New Zealand, and we have arranged the departure dates to link up with our South Island trips.

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

TUESDAY

Arrive, hike to Orokawa beach and visit Karangahake Gorge

Most people leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Sunday evening and arrive in Auckland early on Tuesday morning. You'll lose a day to the dateline – but you get it back on the way home! We'll pick you up in central Auckland at 9.30am, or at the airport at 10am on our way out of the city. From Waihi Beach, well beyond the city limits, we'll hike around a series of headlands clad in native Pohutakawa trees to the impressive and secluded Orokawa Beach where, if the weather's nice, we'll have a swim in the warm South Pacific waters. Then we'll head to Karangahake Gorge, for a hike through a spectacular landscape that has a rich gold mining history. After the hike, we'll travel further south through kiwifruit-growing country to Rotorua. There's a great deal of geothermal activity beneath Rotorua, so you'll see steaming pools of mud, fumaroles and smell the distinctive whiff of sulfur that characterises this town.

ACCOMMODATION: Rotorua lodge, Rotorua (L,D)

WEDNESDAY

Hike Lakes Okataina and Tarawera, Maori feast and culture

Today we'll explore the virgin forest around Lake Okataina and hike alongside its deep blue waters to explore the site of an ancient Maori settlement. We'll then continue over the ridge to Lake Tarawera. The entire area has been sculpted by intermittent volcanic activity, which continues in various forms to this day. Mt. Tarawera was the scene of an enormous eruption in the late 19th century and we'll see the effects of this cataclysmic event during our time here. Tonight you'll get to know a bit more about the local Maori culture and share a traditional Maori feast – called a *hangi* – prepared by the Ngati Rongomai tribe. The meal is prepared by wrapping the food and burying it in the earth to cook over hot stones. This method is very healthy – akin to steaming – and *hangi* food has a wonderful smoky flavour. Vegetarians, of course, are well catered for.

ACCOMMODATION: Rotorua lodge, Rotorua (B,L,D)

"If you're looking for an experience of adventure, friendships, culture, and tremendous amounts of fun, then the answer is simple: book now! This is exactly what you are looking for. Not only will you get a full grasp of the New Zealand culture and landscape, but you will enjoy every minute of it, from the first hike to the final coffee stop. Your adventurous side will not be left unsatisfied, you will find the perfect combination of activity and relaxation. This is a trip that you will never forget! Have you booked yet?"

Georgina Lean (California, USA)
Kauri Dec 2008

THURSDAY

Mountain bike Whakarewarewa Forest, hike to Huka Falls

Rotorua is the centre of Maori culture in New Zealand and the influence of the Maori people can be seen everywhere. Although it's a well-known tourist spot, there's plenty going on behind the glitz that is worth checking out. We'll show you our favourite highlights of Rotorua before heading out for some biking on the trails in Whakarewarewa Forest. We have biking options to suit all abilities, and the biking is a real highlight on the Kauri trip. If you prefer not to bike, there are other options available, such as visiting the local mineral spas for a relaxing soak. We then go hiking along New Zealand's longest river – the Waikato – to the impressive Huka Falls before heading south to Turangi. We'll follow the shores of Lake Taupo, the biggest volcanic crater in the world, to this evening's accommodation. Our hosts, Richard and Jill, are a lovely local couple who'll point out some of the best walks and fishing spots in the area. We're right next door to the Tongariro River, New Zealand's most famous trout fishing river, so this is a great chance to cast a line! Tonight your guide will prepare a good old Kiwi BBQ dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: Local lodge, Tongariro (B,L,D)

FRIDAY

Hike Tongariro Alpine Crossing, soak in hot pools

Just south of Turangi are three massive volcanoes – Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu – as well as Tongariro National Park, New

Andrew: "I once spent quite a bit of time hiking around the three great volcanoes of the central North Island plateau, and I can say that this challenging day hike is worth every drop of sweat! The Crossing is very different to the majority of our hikes - you'll feel like you're walking on Mars!"

Zealand's oldest park and the fourth oldest national park in the world. Here you'll have the opportunity to do what is considered the best mountain day-hike in the country, the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Not an easy day, this hike takes around seven hours unguided through arid volcanic terrain. Mount Tongariro offers remarkable volcanic landscapes including emerald lakes, cold mountain springs, lava flows, active craters and steam vents, so it's unlike anything else in New Zealand. If you prefer to do an easier hike, you can walk through native tussock to a waterfall at the base of the highest active volcano in New Zealand, Mount Ruapehu, and around an isolated mountain lake in the middle of the virgin prehistoric rainforest. However you choose to spend your day, we'll all head to some thermal springs tonight to soak tired muscles in

Specific Information – Kauri

ACCOMMODATIONS: Both of the places you'll be staying on the Kauri are comfortable waterside lodges with modern facilities.

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: If you're flying in on the first day of the trip, or out on the last day, we recommend arriving in Auckland by 9am on Tuesday, and departing from Auckland after 7pm on Saturday. Other flight times may also be possible – if you are considering alternative flight times please let us know.

natural hot water. Dinner tonight is a Kiwi favourite – fish and chips with plenty of fresh salads for our last night together.

ACCOMMODATION: Local lodge, Tongariro (B,L,D)

SATURDAY

Caving at Waitomo Caves, depart for home

For our last day together, we'll head over the spectacular Pureora Forest Range through groves of huge native trees, then into sheep farming country, before arriving at Waitomo Caves. After lunch, it's an afternoon of caving (a.k.a. spelunking). Or if you prefer to stay dry, you'll take a walk through Ruakuri cave to learn more about the geological significance of the area. For the more adventurous, you'll head 'down under' to explore an underground cave system. You'll be fitted with a wetsuit, helmet, headlamp and rubber tube in order to float down a subterranean stream, slide down waterfalls and at one point, switch off your headlamp to check out the incredible glow worms that live on the limestone ceiling of the cave. After a shower and some hot soup, we'll head back to Auckland, where we'll have you at the airport in time to catch evening flights back home, or down south for one of our South Island trips. (B,L)

TRIP START: On the first day of the trip we can either pick you up from the Quest Hotel, 363 Queen St, at 9.30am, or at the Auckland international airport at 10am.

TRIP END: On the last day of the trip we'll drop you back at Auckland airport in time for the flights above, or anywhere in central Auckland in the late afternoon/early evening.

For more information on accommodation, fitness and experience requirements and what's included in the trip fare, see 'General Information' overleaf..



General Information

We've included trip-specific details in the Specific Information section at the end of each itinerary. This is also where you can find details on recommended flights, pick ups and drop offs.

ACCOMMODATION: We've chosen interesting and comfortable accommodations for all of our trips. Some places are quite civilised, but many of the other locations we visit are off-the-beaten-track – and don't have many accommodation options – but they are really, really spectacular. We think you'll love the places we stay! We prefer to stay in comfortable bed and breakfasts, lodges and apartments. Rooming is based on twin-share, although single room upgrades are available on request. As there's such a variety of accommodation on our trips, some places will have ensuite bathrooms and some will have shared bathrooms – so we may ask you to share a bathroom with other group members on occasion.

FITNESS: You must have a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself on our trips. You don't have to be young and extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing at least some exercise. Age and experience are not important, but our trips are not passive scenic tours of New Zealand. For example, a person in their 50s who hikes every couple of weeks will be happier than a 22-year-old couch potato. If you're concerned about your fitness level, have a chat with us so we can help you choose between our trips.

Our focus is on getting you out of the vehicle, out of stress-mode, and into the scenery.

EXPERIENCE: You don't need any outdoor experience at all to enjoy our trips. All our trips allow you to make the most of New Zealand's incredible environment. Our experienced guides are highly trained and will look after you!

You don't have to carry a heavy pack on hikes and you don't have to have been kayaking or rafting to enjoy taking to the water. You don't even need to be a serious cyclist to enjoy some of the rides we have available. In fact we have so many options available that you don't need to ride at all if you'd rather hike, fish, or just laze around!

All we ask is that you be energetic, in reasonable shape and we guarantee you'll have an incredible time. The challenges are there though, if you're looking for them. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience and we have an impeccable safety record. We hold all relevant government licenses and permits.

FLEXIBILITY: Because of the off-the-beaten-path and non-commercial nature of some of our accommodation, we sometimes need to change a night stop. When we do this the daily activities don't change and we use accommodation of a similar level. We try

to make as few changes as possible, but we ask that you know we retain the flexibility to make sure your trip is as good as it can be.

INCLUDED: Your trip fare is quoted in US dollars so our guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. The trip fare doesn't include air fares to or from the trip start and end points or NZ government taxes which are 15%. You can join most of our trips for shorter periods of time, at a pro-rated fare. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We have two guides per trip, a Lead Guide/driver and a Co-Guide who is responsible for meals and accommodation. This means we can really make sure you have a great time! We operate with small groups and we are happy to offer a second departure when our trips start filling up.
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire period you are with us. We can also organise pre- and post-trip accommodation for you if you let us know.
- Breakfast (B), lunch (L), and dinner (D), except during free time in places like Queenstown where we've found people prefer to check out the wide range of restaurants. Alcohol is not generally included, although we do spring for a few drinks here and there!
- All hiking, kayaking, cycling, rafting and caving described in the itineraries, except the optional extra activities. Optional activities are available at extra cost, particularly in Franz Josef and Queenstown. We have estimated the rates for optional extra activities operated by local activity operators in US dollars, including all required equipment, but these rates may vary according to the USD/NZD exchange rate on the day.
- None of these activities are compulsory, nor will your trip seem less awesome if you do the cheap or free options. Although some people enjoy sampling extra activities others prefer to focus more on the hiking, paddling and cycling, which is of course the reason you're coming to New Zealand in the first place!
- Transport during our trips, in a comfortable vehicle.

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday, and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you! You'll have a few meals and drinks to cover, extra activities if you choose them, and you'll probably feel like tipping your guides at the end of a fabulous time, but you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND trip!

ITINERARY UPDATES: We update our itineraries each April so please check our website for the most up-to-date itineraries and pricing.

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