



Kauri

**Explore volcanoes • Maori culture • Hike the Tongariro Alpine Crossing
Hike to Orakawa beach, Mount Maunganui and alongside Lake Rotoiti • Mountain bike
Whakarewarewa Forest • Caving in Waitomo**

5 days: Auckland – Auckland

Fare: US\$1599 + 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.

Tuesday

Arrive, hike at Orokawa beach and Mount Maunganui

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. Once we're out of 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 Mt. Maunganui, a scenic seaside town and popular summer vacation spot for locals, for a hike up Mt. Maunganui itself. This an extinct volcano, creates an almost perfect dome on the horizon and offers unsurpassed views of the surrounding coast. 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: Cedar Wood 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: Cedar Wood Lodge, Rotorua

(B,L,D)

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, John and

Lyn, 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: Creel Lodge, Turangi

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

ACCOMMODATION: Creel Lodge, Turangi

(B,L,D)

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!"

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)

Important Information

ACCOMMODATION: Both of the places you'll be staying on the *Kauri* are comfortable waterside lodges with modern facilities. Rooming is based on twin-share, although single rooms are available upon request.

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 so we can help make your trip as smooth as possible.

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 after 7pm, or anywhere in central Auckland in the late afternoon/early evening.

FITNESS: Our focus is on getting you out of the vehicle, out of stress-mode, and into the scenery! So we incorporate plenty of adventure activities. Like all our trips, you don't need to be young or really fit - but this trip has lots of action at a reasonable pace, and it's not designed for couch potatoes. Every one of the days on the trip will be unforgettable. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience (nothing is compulsory!), and we have an impeccable safety record. We hold all relevant government transport and outdoor guiding licenses and our staff are highly trained and experienced.

EXPERIENCE: You don't have to have any outdoor experience to take our trips. We offer trips that allow you to make the most of New Zealand's incredible outdoor environment. Our experienced staff will look after you! You don't need to be a serious cyclist to enjoy the rides we have available. There are plenty of active options, but if you'd rather fish or just laze around one day, we can make that happen too! All we ask is that you be energetic and in reasonable shape – and we guarantee you'll have an incredible time.

FLEXIBILITY: Because of the off-the-beaten-path and non-commercial nature of some of our accommodations on this trip, we sometimes need to change a night stop. But we try to make as few changes as possible.

INCLUDED: The trip fare is US\$1599 + 12.5% NZ government taxes. We quote all prices in US dollars, so our guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We operate with small groups, and we generally have two guides per trip, a lead guide/driver and a co-guide who looks after your meals and accommodations. This means we can really make sure you have a great time!
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire period you are with us. We can also organise accommodation for you if you want to arrive earlier or leave later.
- All your meals are included. Alcohol is not generally included, although we do spring for a few drinks here and there!
- All hiking, caving and biking as described in the itinerary.

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday, and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you! You'll have a few extra activities to cover, 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!

We'll see you soon!

Itinerary valid through April 2010