



North Island Explorer

Explore volcanoes • Maori culture • Hike in Tongariro National Park • Ski or Snowboard Whakapapa Ski Area • 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 resources, the North Island has a rich cultural history that has been shaped by this dynamic and surprising land. Our North Island Explorer trip packs loads of adventure into just five days – from hiking to biking to caving – you'll be amazed by the diversity and culture of our northern island. The North Island Explorer allows you to see the 'other side' of New Zealand between matches on the North Island.

Day 1 Arrive, hike at Orokawa beach and Mount Maunganui

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 – an extinct volcano which creates an almost perfect dome on the horizon and offers unsurpassed views of the surrounding coast. After the hike we'll travel 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 sulphur that characterises the town.

ACCOMMODATION: Cedar Wood Lodge, Rotorua

(L,D)

Day 2 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 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)

Day 3 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 biking on the trails in Whakarewarewa Forest. We have biking options to suit all abilities, and the biking is a real highlight on the *North Island Explorer* 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 up 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. 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!

Later, your guide will prepare a good old Kiwi BBQ dinner!

ACCOMMODATION: Creel Lodge, Turangi

(B,L,D)

Day 4 Start day options, soak in hot pools

Just south of Turangi are three massive volcanoes –Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, as well as the Tongariro National Park, New Zealand’s oldest park and the fourth oldest national park in the world. Here you’ll have the opportunity to either Ski or Snowboard on Mt. Ruapehu or hike in Tongariro National Park. Whichever option you select you’ll have a great time exploring this volcanic terrain.

HIKES IN TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK OPTION

Day 4 (continued) **Day Hikes in Tongariro NP**

If you prefer to hike today, there’s a few different day hikes for us to choose from in the Tongariro National Park. We’ll begin our day near the base of Mount Ruapehu (the highest active volcano in New Zealand), starting off through mountain beech forest opens into sub-alpine terrain with native tussocks, alpine lakes, streams and stunning waterfalls. We’ll stop to have lunch in scenic spot in amongst the spectacular views of Mt. Ruapehu and the volcanic cone of Mt. Ngauruhoe!

- OR -

SKIING/ SNOWBOARDING ON MT. RUAPEHU OPTION [Add US\$99 + tax]

Day 4 (continued) **A Day’s Skiing or Snowboarding at Whakapapa Ski Area**

If you like the idea of skiing on one of New Zealand’s active volcanoes, then today you’ll have the chance to head up and enjoy some spring skiing at Whakapapa Ski Area. For an additional US\$100, your lift pass and transportation will be provided. If you’re keen to brush up on your skills, or if you’re relatively new to the sport, lessons are a great option. You can bring your own gear, or you can rent gear down here (gear hire is about US\$40 per day). Conditions can vary, but you can expect good skiing and riding, on and off-piste, with scenery that will blow you away!

However you choose to spend your day, we’ll meet up at the end of an awesome day exploring the National Park. We’ll all head to some thermal springs tonight to soak our muscles in natural hot water. Dinner tonight is a staple New Zealand favourite – fish and chips with plenty of fresh salads for our last night together.

ACCOMMODATION: Creel Lodge, Turangi

(B,L,D)

Day 5 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 a café 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 floatation device 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. If wet-caving is not really your thing, you can walk through the dry caves then take a more relaxing boat ride through one of the larger caves to see the glow worms and amazing rock formations. 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 some South Island matches.

(B,L)

Important Information

ACCOMMODATION: Both of the places you'll be staying on the *North Island Explorer* 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 Sunday, and departing from Auckland after 7pm on Thursday. Other flight times may also be possible – if you are considering alternative flight times please let us know.

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 December 2011