



Bays & Beyond

Feb/Mar 2024 | 9 nights

Auckland Islands - Bay of Plenty - Waikato

Sat 24 Feb

AUCKLAND

Arrive Auckland today. If you arrive around midday, we can spend the afternoon doing a nice scenic walk around one of the many little volcanoes in Auckland – there are over 50 of these but we'll just choose one or two - perhaps One Tree Hill and Mt Eden. These are not onerous walks and the views from the top are fabulous looking out over the "City of Sails". The city is surrounded by ocean and harbours (Manukau, Waitemata and Kaipara) and is built on a vast volcanic field – in fact, it is recognised as the most volcanic city in the world! After checking in to our hotel in the Viaduct, we'll get freshened up and ready for an evening out dining in a speciality restaurant that not only serves amazing food, but is a people-watching paradise.

Accommodation: 4* hotel 4 nights

Sun 25 Feb

WAIHEKE ISLAND

We'll have a leisurely start to the day, with breakfast and maybe a little shopping in the Commercial Bay complex. At 11am we're on the ferry for a 40 min journey across to Waiheke Island. Over the next few hours we'll be visiting some carefully selected vineyards for tastings. These venues have been selected for their incredible locations with fab views, architecture, colour palettes and of course their delicious wines! This will be a great day out and a super way to see this popular island. On arrival back in Auckland, it's an easy walk back to our hotel and many bars and restaurants along the way. Up to you what time you arrive home but be sure not to overdo it before tomorrow! 😊

Mon 26 Feb

TIRITIRI MATANGI ISLAND

This morning we stroll down to the ferry for a 9am departure cruising up the Gulf to Tiritiri Matangi Island (approx. 1 hr 20 min journey). Once on the Island, we meet our nature guide. For the next couple of hours we're wowed with birdlife, native bush and fantastic views of the coastline. There's time for a picnic lunch and swim before jumping on the ferry back to Auckland.

Tue 27 Feb

RANGITOTO ISLAND

A short ferry ride this morning to Rangitoto Island - New Zealand's youngest volcano at just 600 years old. We fill in the morning with a steady climb on a well-maintained track past rugged lava scree and through the world's largest pohutukawa forest to the peak at 259 metres above sea level. At the top we'll be

rewarded (weather permitting) with spectacular views of the Hauraki Gulf and Auckland. Well worth the effort! We'll take a picnic lunch to have at the top.
Free afternoon for shopping, museum, galleries etc.

Wed 28 Feb KARANGAHAKE GORGE – WAIHI

We bid the city farewell after breakfast, and drive south over the Bombay Hills. Over the next week we'll be roaming around the Mighty Waikato and Bay of Plenty exploring some great little spots. First stop is Paeroa, a country town with a big legend - the home of the famous Kiwi "Lemon & Paeroa" drink which dates back to 1907. After a little poke around the antique shops and some lunch, we'll drive in to the Karangahake Gorge at the base of the Coromandel Range. Our walk this afternoon will take us deep in to the gorge following the old railway line through tunnels, over bridges, past mining remains and the "windows". Very scenic and tons of history.

Late afternoon arrival to the beach town of Waihi.

Accommodation: Waihi Beach House 2 nights

Thu 29 Feb COASTAL WALK TO WAIHI BEACH

Early this morning we will walk along a picturesque track across Homunga and Orokawa Bays to Waihi Beach. This is a truly captivating trail following the coastline across farmland and through native bush. Get in tune with the cicadas anthem, chortling tuis and the ocean crashing on to the coast as you roam along the track enjoying an untouristy walk with stunning views.

Afternoon free to relax or do a bit of shopping at Waihi Beach this afternoon.

Fri 01 Mar TE AROHA – MORRINSVILLE – CAMBRIDGE

This morning, is a nice easy walk on the Pit Rim taking us around the edge of the dramatic open cast Martha Mine in the "heart of gold" Waihi. Driving back through the Gorge and across vast dairy land to Te Aroha. This is only place in the world where you can see a natural soda water geyser. We'll take a stroll through New Zealand's oldest intact Edwardian domain before visiting a local artist and having a tour of the studio.

In cow-crazy Morrinsville we stop to view some of the colourful life-size hand-painted cow sculptures scattered around the town, before having afternoon tea at "Frock" the base of Anna Stretton design.

Later this afternoon, arrive at our base for the next few days - the charming town of Cambridge. Before dinner, we'll have a walking orientation of the town including a stroll down Cambridge's own walk of fame - it's not quite Hollywood but you never know which famous Kiwi you might spot.

Accomm: 4 hotel Cambridge 3 nights*

Sat 02 Mar ARAPUNI - TIRAU – TE WAIHOU

Cambridge is known for its sporting champions. This morning we will visit the Velodrome - home of New Zealand Cycling. This is a fascinating building and we never know who may be on the track training or competing when we visit. Horse studs also dot the landscape, and we'll visit one of these to learn about the breeding and upkeep of racing legends.

Later, walk along the rural Te Waihou Walkway to the internationally acclaimed Blue Spring. The water here is so pure and supplies around 70% of NZ's bottled water. Late lunch/shopping break in the quirky little town of Tirau where you'll come face-to-face with some corrugated characters. Afternoon visit the tiny town of Arapuni for a walk over the Arapuni swingbridge and dam.

Early picnic tea on the shores of Lake Karapiro before our Gloworm Kayak. We board kayaks for an easy paddle along the southern edge of the lake. Enjoy the twilight & silence of being on the water as the day draws to an end. As night arrives over the lake, paddle slowly up the Pokaiwhenua Stream and through the canyon carved out by water over many hundreds of years. Native ferns & trees drape over you, bird life is all around. When darkness falls we float silently back downstream, being guided by the glow worms on either side sparkling like Christmas lights. A magical experience.

Sun 03 Mar

ZEALONG TEA & HAMILTON GARDENS

This morning we'll visit Zealong Tea Plantation. Who would have thought in the middle of the Waikato you'd find an award-winning tea plantation! It all started with a camellia tree apparently. Our guide will lead us along the tea trail to learn how tea is picked and processed. We'll then learn the art of tea appreciation followed by a scrumptious high tea.

Enjoy the afternoon roaming through the popular Hamilton Gardens. The Gardens tell the story of gardening through different civilisations and time, and showcase a wonderful collection of plants and architecture. You will be astounded that Hamilton has such a fabulous internationally renowned treasure. Special dinner out for our final evening together.

Mon 06 Mar

HOBBITON – TOUR ENDS

This morning is a visit to "Middle Earth". Even if you're not a 'Lord of the Rings' fan, a visit to Hobbiton is a truly amazing experience. Stroll through the lush pastures of "The Shire" on a guided movie-set tour, past Hobbit Holes, the Mill and on to the world-famous Green Dragon Inn for a well-earned beverage.

Your adventure ends this afternoon. You can either depart from Hamilton or Auckland.

Price

NZ\$3600 per person twin share*

NZ\$900 single supplement

*if you would like to twin share, let us know and we'll endeavour to find you a room-mate

Tour Inclusions

- 9 nights accommodation (hotels, beach house)
- Daily breakfast, 1 high tea, 2 dinners
- Tour leader / walking guide
- Transportation in modern air-conditioned mini-coach
- Sightseeing & entry as specified
- Arrival transfer in Auckland on Day 1
- Departure transfer to Hamilton or Auckland Airport on Day 10

Excludes

- Meals and refreshments (unless specified in inclusions)
- Items of a personal nature

About the Walks

On average you will walk 5km per day, however some days may be longer and some shorter, some easy and some hard. The tour is aimed at leisure walkers who appreciate the outdoors. Walks are optional.