

8 Day Northern Explorer

DAY 1 Auckland to Pahia (Bay of Islands)

We start our trip in Auckland, the City of Sails. Travelling around the scenic harbour, we head north and reach Pahia, a seaside town amongst over 140 spectacular islands and secluded bays. Once settled in, feel free to go for a swim in the hotel's pool or have a meal in town (own expense). Note: you can upgrade to the optional "Rock the Boat" houseboat accommodation for a party atmosphere.

DAY 2 Pahia, Bay of Islands

A free day to explore the area at your own pace! Heaps of optional activities on offer: drive to Cape Reinga and board down the Te Pahi sand dunes. Sail the inner bay on a catamaran and spot dolphins. Or maybe even hike through bushland to the Haruru falls. (B, D)

DAY 3 Bay of Islands to Coromandel

Heading back southwards, we'll visit the soaring Whangarei Falls if the weather permits. Then we drive down to Auckland for lunch, before meeting some extra travellers and heading to the Coromandel. It's a major tourist destination, home to sweeping beaches and lush rainforests. (B)

DAY 4 Coromandel to Rotorua

We start the day with brunch fit for a king (or queen). Then you'll have time to explore the region: Long Bay Beach is often popular, with plenty of room for catching the sun's rays or cooling off with a swim during the warmer months. If possible we'll visit Hot Water Beach, where the bubbling waters naturally warm the sands. Then we'll make our way to Rotorua – check out the thermally heated pool after dinner! (B)

DAY 5 Rotorua to Marae Stay

You have the whole day to explore Rotorua, with plenty of options available – perhaps travel to Waitomo, or maybe visit Hobbiton to see part of the original *Lord of the Rings* movie set? Of course you can always visit the local mud baths or get a massage right here in town. Then tonight is one of the highlights of a Topdeck trip through NZ – a chance to stay in a traditional Maori Marae, learning a little of their culture as honoured guests. (B, D)

DAY 6 Rotorua to Tongariro National Park

After breakfast we head to Whakarewarewa Village and Thermal Reserve, to learn more about Maori culture and to experience a moving traditional concert. Travelling past the roaring Huka Falls, we'll reach Lake Taupo for an optional bungee jump, before reaching Tongariro National Park, our home for the next two nights. (B, D)

DAY 7 Tongariro National Park

Use this free day to explore the National Park – there's heaps of activities to do in the area! (B)

DAY 8 Tongariro National Park to Wellington

We leave the natural world today, and head back to civilisation in the form of Wellington. When we reach New Zealand's capital, we've come to the end of our own particular road together – good luck on your trails! (B)