

Aotearoa



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NEW ZEALAND

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TOURING MAP

Many destinations in New Zealand are just hours from each other. An extensive network of air, train and road services mean most places can be reached by public transport. Buses and coaches link up with rail and ferry operators to take you the length of the country, and air travel is also available to most destinations.

There are several popular driving routes for visitors who want to explore the country for themselves. These themed highways around New Zealand take in the main highlights but also help uncover some of the lesser known gems. Most of these highways are signposted but detours are encouraged along the way and combining a few routes will ensure a varied experience.

THEMED HIGHWAYS - NORTH ISLAND

Twin Coast Discovery Highway: Recommend 6 Days

This route begins in Auckland and travels north, tracing both coasts to Cape Reinga and back. Driving is easy and interesting. Highlights include a procession of beautiful beaches, opportunities for fishing, surfing, diving and dolphin encounters; cultural experiences at Waitangi; Forest hikes and craft shopping.

Pacific Coast Highway: Recommend 7 Days

Linking the Coromandel, Bay of Plenty and Eastland with Auckland in the north and Hawke's Bay in the south, the Pacific Coast Highway takes you to spectacular coastal scenery and beaches, forest wilderness and grape growing districts. This route should go down the Pōhutakawa Coast, through Clevedon and around the Firth of Thames. The cities of Tauranga, Gisborne, Napier and Hastings will satisfy your urge to wine, dine and shop.

Thermal Explorer Highway: Recommend 6 days

This route runs between Auckland and Hawke's Bay, travelling through the volcanic centre of the island. You'll have the chance to discover the caves around Waitomo in the Hamilton & Waikato region, geothermal areas in Rotorua and Lake Taupō, the amazing Tongariro National Park and Hawke's Bay Wine Country. Expect equal quantities of relaxation and adventure. When combined, the Pacific Coast Highway and Thermal Explorer are known as The Great New Zealand Touring Route.

Forgotten World Highway: Recommend 2 Days

The 150km Forgotten World Highway (State Highway 43) is a memorable driving journey through stunningly scenic untouched landscapes. Following ancient Māori trade routes and 19th century bridle paths, the highway connects Taumarunui to Stratford. The route wriggles its way over four mountain saddles, through an eerie one-way tunnel and along a sinuous river gorge, passing through the unique Republic of Whangamomona.

Volcanic Loop: Recommend 5 Days

From the trout town of Turangi, you can circle the volcanoes of Tongariro National Park by following state highways 47, 4, 49 and 1. On a clear day, you'll enjoy spectacular views of the mountains and the volcanic terrain that surrounds them. The stretch known as the 'Desert Road', which cuts across the desolate Rangipo Desert, is particularly memorable.

Surf Highway 45: Recommend 2 Days

The 105km highway that traces the Taranaki coast is known as Surf Highway 45 for the countless surf breaks that can be found at the end of almost every road that leads to the coast. The top spots have fascinating names - the Kumara Patch, Graveyards, Secret Spot, and Green Meadows to mention a few, and they are handily punctuated by cosy cafés feeding surfers and adventurers alike.

Manawatu Scenic Route: Recommend 2 Days

A scenic alternative to State Highway One, this route takes you on journeys between the highways through rural landscapes. Discover hidden places and tucked away treasures ranging from country cafés and pubs; heritage sites, galleries and gardens, to scenic reserves, day walks, swimming holes, glow-worm caves, picnic areas, and camping spots. Meet the locals and enjoy world-class scenery from the roadside.

Classic New Zealand Wine Trail: Recommend 7 Days

Weaving through three major wine regions, the Classic New Zealand Wine Trail serves up unforgettable wine and food experiences along the 380km route, spanning the North and South Islands. This self-guided drive takes visitors through Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa, and Marlborough, home to some 230 wineries. At the heart of the trail lies Wellington, New Zealand's capital, the perfect place for a culinary and cultural stopover.

NORTH ISLAND / TE IKA-A-MĀUI



AUCKLAND

Warkworth

Papamoa

HAMILTON

Rotorua

Tauranga

Whakatāne

Gisborne

Napier

Hastings

Wellington

Upper Hutt

Lower Hutt

Westport

Greymouth

Hokitika

CHRISTCHURCH

Timaru

Damara

Queenstown

Wanaka

Dunedin

Invercargill

Stewart Island / RAKIURA

SOUTH ISLAND / TE WAIPOUNAMU



Westport

Greymouth

Hokitika

CHRISTCHURCH

Timaru

Damara

Queenstown

Wanaka

Dunedin

Invercargill

Stewart Island / RAKIURA

2:15	8:00	3:30	2:00	7:00	6:30	8:15	4:45	5:15	4:30	3:30	7:30	4:30	9:45	Whangarei	Westport
8:00	6:30	6:30	12:00	4:00	4:30	2:00	5:45	4:45	6:30	7:00	2:30	8:15		Wellington	Wanaka
2:30	6:00	2:30	6:30	5:30	6:30	3:00	3:45	2:30	1:30	6:15				Whitianga	Te Anau
5:15	5:45	4:00	9:30	3:00	2:00	1:00	3:45	2:45	4:30	5:00				Whanganui	Queenstown
1:30	5:00	1:30	5:30	4:15	4:15	5:30	2:00	2:30	1:30					Thames	Picton
2:30	3:30	1:30	6:30	3:30	4:00	4:45	1:00	2:00						Tauranga	Nelson
3:15	4:00	2:00	7:15	2:00	3:30	3:00	1:00							Taupo	Aoraki / Mt Cook
2:45	3:30	1:30	6:45	3:00	4:00	4:00								Rotorua	Milford Sound
6:15	5:00	4:45	10:00	2:15	3:00									Palmerston North	Invercargill
4:30	7:00	3:00	8:30	5:15										New Plymouth	Haast
5:00	2:45	3:30	9:00											Napier	Greyouth
4:15	10:00	5:30	Kaitiaki												Franz Josef
1:30	5:00		Hamilton												Dunedin
6:00			Gisborne												Christchurch
															Blenheim
															Auckland

THEMED HIGHWAYS - SOUTH ISLAND

Alpine Pacific Touring Route: Recommend 4 Days

The Alpine Pacific Touring Route takes you to the wine and food experiences of Waipara, the spa delights of Hanmer Springs and the marine mammal encounters of Kaikoura. Between destinations, you'll enjoy beautiful country scenery.

The Inland Scenic 72 Route: Recommend 4 Days

The perfect road journey for travellers who like to get off the main highways and find real rural life. The route starts at Amberley, in the north of the Canterbury region, and runs to Winchester, where it links to State Highway 1. There are fabulous views of the Southern Alps on one side of the road, complemented by the green serenity of the Canterbury Plains on the other.

The Great Alpine Highway: Recommend 2 Days

This coast-to-coast route traverses the Southern Alps. From Christchurch, the 255-kilometre route follows State Highway 73 west across river plains before rising to traverse through Porters Pass and Arthur's Pass National Park. Highlights include the impressive Waimakariri and Otira River gorges, driving along the Otira Viaduct and exploring natural wonders like the Castle Hill Rocks and Cave Stream Reserve.

Great Coast Road: Recommend 3 Days

The Great Coast Road stretches from Westport down to Kumara. It meanders alongside the ancient limestone cliffs of Paparoa National Park, where the world's smallest penguin resides, through Charleston and down to Punakaiki, home to the famous Pancake Rocks and Blowholes. Driving it in one go only takes about 90 minutes, but it's best to slow down, enjoy the ride and explore some of New Zealand's small towns.

Glacier Highway: Recommend 4 Days

The Glacier Highway hugs the coastline from Kumara, through Hokitika and all the way down to Glacier Country. This 300-kilometre journey is surrounded with dense coastal scrub and West Coast rainforest, making it one of New Zealand's most scenic routes. It passes through a national park, seal colonies, beaches, lakes, and as its namesake states, mighty glaciers.

Southern Scenic Route: Recommend 7 Days

Starting in the historic city of Dunedin, this route follows the wild southern coast to Invercargill, then continues west and north to Te Anau before ending at Queenstown. Highlights include wildlife encounters along The Catlins coast, the classic motors of Invercargill, cruising Fiordland, walking the Milford Track and the southern local delicacies found throughout.

OTHER SCENIC ROUTES

These routes are not specifically signposted but are still popular routes to reach some of New Zealand's famous landmarks.

Treasured Pathway: Recommend 5 Days

Enjoy a mix of history, hiking and hedonism as you discover heritage sites, vineyards, national parks and fabulous beaches. The Treasured Pathway runs across the top of the South Island, from the seaport town of Picton to the sand dunes of Farewell Spit. The city of Nelson provides a dash of urban fun in the middle of the journey.

Southern Heritage Route: Recommend 7 Days

Head inland to Mount Hutt ski field, then travel south to Geraldine, pausing at Lake Tekapo to see the beautiful Church of the Good Shepherd. Continue through Twizel, then on to Mount Cook Village for alpine adventures. Drive on to Wanaka or Queenstown, then loop back to see the heritage architecture of Dunedin.

State Highway
Main Road
Railway
Ferry Route