

# Central North Island Itinerary – 7 Days of Adventure, Beaches & Culture

## Quick Snapshot

- **Duration:** 5–7 Days
  - **Start/End:** Tāmaki Makaurau – Auckland (loop route)
  - **Ideal Time to Go:** October to April
  - **Total Drive Time:** Approx. 10 hours
  - **Trip Vibe:** Coastal gems, cultural highlights, natural wonders
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## Day 1–3: Auckland to Kapanga – Coromandel

**Drive time:** 2.5 hours

- Dig your own spa at **Hot Water Beach** (low tide essential).
- Explore **Cathedral Cove** and its stunning rock archway.
- Soak in the geothermal pools at **The Lost Spring**.
- Hike the **Pinnacles** for epic sunrise views.
- Snorkel the **Orua Sea Caves** or take a kayak tour.

### Where to Stay    *Campervan*

*Options:*

- **Freedom Camp:** *Long Bay Reserve, Coromandel Town* – popular beachside freedom camping spot (self-contained only).
- **Paid Camp:** *Shelly Beach TOP 10 Holiday Park* – beachfront powered sites with clean facilities.

*Accommodation Options:*

- **Budget:** Anchor Lodge Backpackers
  - **Mid-Range:** The Olive Motel
  - **Fancy:** Driving Creek Villas
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## Day 3–4: Coromandel to Whakatāne

**Drive time:** 4 hours (scenic route)

- Drive through **Paeroa**, **Waihī**, and **Tauranga** for great stops
- Book a tour to **Whakaari/White Island** (check access)
- Evening stroll along sun-kissed **Ōhope Beach**

**Where to Stay**    *Campervan*

*Options:*

- **Freedom Camp:** *Muriwai Drive Reserve* – 3-night max stay near Whakatāne (SC vehicles only).
- **Paid Camp:** *Ōhope Beach TOP 10 Holiday Park* – excellent location with ocean views and full facilities.

*Accommodation Options:*

- **Budget:** Ōhope Top 10 Holiday Park (also has cabins)
  - **Mid-Range:** White Island Rendezvous
  - **Fancy:** Quayside Apartments
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## Day 4–5: Whakatāne to Rotorua

**Drive time:** 1.5 hours

- Visit **Whakarewarewa – The Living Māori Village**
- Relax at **Polynesian Spa**
- Do the magical **Redwoods Treewalk** after dark
- Ride the **Skyline Gondola** and **Luge** downhill
- Visit **Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland**
- Book a hāngī dinner and show at **Mitai Māori Village**

**Where to Stay**    *Campervan*

*Options:*

- **Freedom Camp:** *Boyce Beach Reserve, Lake Ōkareka* – peaceful lakefront freedom spot (limited spaces, SC only).
- **Paid Camp:** *Rotorua Thermal Holiday Park* – hot pools, powered sites, close to attractions.

*Accommodation Options:*

- **Budget:** Rock Solid Backpackers
  - **Mid-Range:** Regent of Rotorua
  - **Fancy:** Black Swan Lakeside Hotel
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## Day 6–7: Rotorua to Waitomo & Hobbiton

**Drive time:** 2 hours

- Explore the magical **Waitomo Glowworm Caves**
- Visit the real **Hobbiton Movie Set** in Matamata

**Where to Stay**    *Campervan*

*Options:*

- **Freedom Camp:** *Waitomo Caves i-SITE Car Park* – overnight parking permitted for SC vehicles.
- **Paid Camp:** *Waitomo Top 10 Holiday Park* – central location, hot tub, powered sites.

*Accommodation Options:*

- **Budget:** Waitomo Caves Guest Lodge
  - **Mid-Range:** Waitomo Village Chalets
  - **Fancy:** Waitomo Boutique Lodge
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## Return to Auckland (Tāmaki Makaurau)

**Drive time:** 2.5 hours

- Walk through **Hamilton Gardens'** themed landscapes
  - End the trip with a special dinner at **Ahi** in Viaduct Harbour – try the “Trust the Chef” menu for a true culinary experience
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## What to Pack

- Swimmers and towel

- Light rain jacket
  - Good walking shoes
  - Camera or smartphone
  - Sunscreen & insect repellent
  - Power bank
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## Local Travel Tips

- Visit thermal parks early to avoid crowds • Try roadside mānuka honey – it's a sweet local treat
  - Low tide is essential at **Hot Water Beach** • Don't touch the hot mud – it's scalding!
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## Must-Try Local Flavours

- **Coromandel:** Green-lipped mussels from *The Mussel Kitchen* • **Whakatāne:** Oysters at *Ōhiwa Oyster Farm*
  - **Rotorua:** Traditional **hāngī** meal at *Te Puia* or *Whakarewarewa*
  - **Waitomo/Te Kūiti:** “Big As Ice Cream” – try *Hokey Pokey* or *Orange Choc Chip*
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## Need to Know

- Swim only in patrolled or signposted safe areas
- Book tours and stays early in peak months (Dec–Feb)
- Keep valuables locked in your camper or car
- Respect sacred or cultural areas – follow signs and guidance