

Northland Journey: 5 Days from Auckland to Cape Reinga

Quick Overview

- **Duration:** 5 Days
- **Start/End Point:** Tāmaki Makaurau – Auckland (loop)
- **Best Time:** October – April
- **Driving Time:** ~13 hours total
- **Highlights:** Ancient kauri forests, stunning beaches, rich Māori history, epic fish & chips

Follow the laid-back rhythm of the North as you explore golden bays, ancient trees, and sacred places. This 5-day campervan-friendly loop offers a beautiful mix of natural beauty, cultural depth, and coastal charm — a perfect slice of Te Tai Tokerau – Northland.

Day 1: Auckland to Pēwhairangi – Bay of Islands

Morning

- Depart Auckland early for a relaxed coastal drive north
- Stop at **Whangārei Town Basin** for coffee, art galleries, and harbour views
- *Campervan Tip:* Fill up with fuel and supplies in Whangārei

Afternoon

- Arrive in **Paihia**, your gateway to the Bay of Islands
- Explore **Paihia Beach**, take a dip, or just unwind by the sea
- Sunset walk to **Waitangi Bridge** — stunning in the evening light

Evening

- Dine at a waterfront restaurant like Charlotte's Kitchen or Alongside
- Enjoy a quiet night walk along the bayfront

Where to Stay (Campervan Style)

- *Freedom Camp*: Te Haumi Beach carpark (limited spaces, arrive early)
 - *Campground*: Bay of Islands Campervan Park – powered sites and central location
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Day 2: Waitangi & Kororāreka – Russell

Morning

- Visit the **Waitangi Treaty Grounds** – a deeply moving site
 - Join a cultural tour, see a waka, and walk through the Treaty House
- Learn about Māori navigation and storytelling traditions

Afternoon • Catch the **passenger ferry** to **Kororāreka – Russell**

- Explore historical sites like **Christ Church** and **Flagstaff Hill**
- Visit the **Pompallier Mission** – one of the oldest buildings in NZ
- Lunch at **The Duke of Marlborough** – iconic and delicious

Evening

- Optional: **Twilight sailing** around the Bay of Islands
 - Return to Paihia for the night
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Day 3: Kauri Forests & the Far North

Morning

- Drive west to **Waipoua Forest** – home of the mighty **Tāne Mahuta**
- Take a guided tour with **Footprints Waipoua** to learn about the spiritual importance of the kauri forests

Lunch

- Grab fish & chips at **Opononi Takeaways** – a local favourite

Afternoon

- Continue north toward **Kaitaia**, taking in dramatic coastlines
- Unwind at your accommodation or stroll a quiet Far North beach

Where to Stay (Campervan Style)

- *Freedom Camp*: Ahipara – Wairoa Stream rest area (DOC approved)
- *Campground*: Houhora Heads Holiday Park – peaceful and well equipped

Day 4: Cape Reinga & 90 Mile Beach

Morning

- Optional sunrise at **Cape Reinga Lighthouse** – where oceans meet
- Walk to **Te Rerenga Wairua**, a sacred place in Māori tradition

Afternoon

- Sandboard the **Te Paki Dunes** – pure fun!
- Drive or join a guided tour on **90 Mile Beach**
- Picnic and swim at **Tapotupotu Bay** – stunning and secluded

Evening

- Stargaze from the beach – some of the clearest skies in the country
- Optional: Bring a thermos and blanket for a peaceful night under the stars

Day 5: Scenic Return to Auckland

Morning

- Head south via the **east coast loop**
 - Stop in **Kerikeri** to explore the **Stone Store** and **Rainbow Falls**
 - Snap a quirky shot at **Hundertwasser Toilets** in Kawakawa
 - **Afternoon**
 - Optional seafood stop at **Mangonui Fish Shop**
 - Visit **Kawiti Glowworm Caves** – magical and family-friendly
 - Final scenic stop at **Piroa Falls** before reaching Auckland
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What to Pack

- Comfortable walking shoes
 - Swimwear & microfibre towel
 - Sunhat + SPF
 - Light rain jacket
 - Camera + spare battery
 - Small change for remote stops
 - Offline maps (some areas have no signal)
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Local Travel Tips

- Scrub your shoes before/after visiting Kauri forests
 - Fuel up in larger towns – petrol stations are scarce up north
 - Expect limited mobile signal in remote areas
 - Visit Mangonui Fish Shop before peak lunch hours (before 12 or after 2)
 - Book cultural and guided tours in advance
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Optional Add-Ons & Experiences

- Fullers Ferry & Twilight Cruise – book ahead
 - Footprints Waipoua Guided Tour – cultural legends & conservation insights
 - Kawiti Glowworm Caves – limestone formations & glowworms
 - Sand Safaris Tour – great for beach driving and dunes
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Final Thoughts

The Northland Journey is a breathtaking mix of coastal beauty, cultural heritage, and untouched nature. From towering kauri to golden sands, historic towns to sacred places, this 5-day itinerary connects you with the true essence of Te Tai Tokerau.

Whether you're in a campervan or car, this is a trip you won't forget. Ready to go?

- **Rentalcars.com** for wheels
- **Booking.com** for extra stays
- **Viator** for tours and tickets

TohuTravellers.com – Trust the Journey