

Northland Journey: 5 Days from Auckland to Cape Reinga

Quick Overview

- **Duration:** 5 days
- **Start/End Point:** Auckland (circular route)
- **Best Time:** October-April
- **Driving Time:** About 13 hours total
- **Highlights:** Ancient forests, pristine beaches, Māori culture, 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

Hole in the Rock



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
- Explore the coastal charm of Paihia, the gateway to the Bay of Islands — [click here](#) to discover cruises, island adventures, and cultural experiences.


Afternoon

-  Arrive in Paihia
-  Explore Paihia Beach or unwind by the sea
-  Sunset walk to Waitangi Bridge — stunning in the evening light

Evening

-  Dine at a waterfront restaurant like Charlotte's Kitchen
-  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

Waka at Waitangi Treaty Grounds

Morning

- 🏛️ Visit the Waitangi Treaty Grounds
Join a cultural tour, see a waka, and walk through the Treaty House
- 🚣 Learn about Māori navigation and storytelling traditions
- [Click here](#) to view tour options and entry details

Afternoon

- 🚢 Catch the passenger ferry to Kororāreka – Russell
- 🏰 Explore historical sites like Christ Church and Flagstaff Hill
- 📜 Visit the Pompallier Mission – one of NZ's oldest buildings
- 🍴 Lunch at The Duke of Marlborough

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

Tāne Mahuta

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, soaking in dramatic coastal landscapes. Our favourite route is to head to **Rawene**, take the **Hokianga Ferry** to **Kohukohu**, and continue through **Mangamuka Gorge** and over the hill. Alternatively, drive from the ferry terminal up to **Ahipara**, but be prepared for **gravel roads** along the way.
- 🌅 Unwind at your accommodation or stroll a quiet Far North beach

🏡 Where to Stay (Campervan Style)

- 🆓 *Freedom Camp*: Awanui – close to the road so can be a bit noisy
 - 🏡 *Campgrounds*:
 - Ahipara Top 10 Holiday Park – peaceful and well equipped
 - Ngapae Holiday Park – right by 90 Mile Beach and heading toward Cape Reinga
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🌅 Day 4: Cape Reinga & 90 Mile Beach

90 Mile Beach

Morning

- 🌅 Optional sunrise at Cape Reinga Lighthouse — where oceans meet
- 🌀 Walk to **Te Rerenga Wairua**, a sacred place in Māori tradition
- [Click here](#) to explore guided tours, including options from Paihia

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
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🚗 Day 5: Scenic Return to Tāmaki Makaurau – Auckland

Tāmaki Makaurau – Auckland City

Morning

-  Head south via the east coast loop
-  Stop in **Kerikeri** to explore the Stone Store and Rainbow Falls
-  Snap a quirky shot at the **Hundertwasser Toilets** in Kawakawa
- [Click here](#) to explore top-rated Auckland tours and experiences

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

What to Pack

- Walking shoes
- Swimming gear
- Sun protection
- Light rain jacket
- Camera
- Cash for small shops

Local Tips

- Mangonui Fish Shop gets busy between 12-2 pm—arrive early to avoid queues
- Book Waitangi Treaty Grounds tours ahead of time
- Clean your shoes at the gate before entering Kauri forests to prevent Kauri dieback
- Fill up on petrol in main towns
- Download offline maps for areas with limited phone signal

Activity Prices (NZD) Prices start from

- Waitangi Treaty Grounds: Adult \$50, Child free
- Russell Ferry: \$13 return
- Forest guide walks: \$40-\$120
- Cape Reinga tours: \$150
- Kawiti Glowworm Caves: \$45

Recommended Operators

- Footprints Waipoua (forest guides) See details
- Waitangi Cultural Tours Book cultural experience
- Fullers GreatSights Check schedules

- Sand Safaris Book sand dune tours

Photo Spots

- Cape Reinga Lighthouse
- Tāne Mahuta
- Kororāreka - Russell waterfront
- Kerikeri Stone Store
- Te Paki sand dunes
- Waitangi Treaty Grounds

Seasonal Tips

Summer (Dec-Feb)

- **Pros:** Warm weather, long days
- **Cons:** Busy roads, book accommodation in advance
- **Best for:** Beach activities and outdoor fun

Shoulder Season (Oct-Nov, Mar-Apr)

- **Pros:** Quieter attractions, mild weather
- **Cons:** Potential windy conditions
- **Best for:** Scenic walks and cultural sightseeing

Family-Friendly Options

- Short forest walks
- Beach stops for swimming and picnics
- Sand boarding fun at Te Paki dunes
- Cultural activities at Waitangi
- Fish and chip picnics by the harbour

Money-Saving Tips

- Book your accommodation ahead to get deals
- Pack picnic lunches to save on dining costs
- Use DOC campsites for affordable stays
- Look for combo tickets for attractions

Need to Know

- Show respect at Māori cultural sites—follow posted guidelines
- Clean your shoes before and after forest walks
- Check tide times if visiting 90 Mile Beach
- Early starts help avoid crowds at popular spots
- Be aware that some areas have limited phone signal

TohuTravellers.com – *Trust the Journey*