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BOTH ISLANDS · 10 DAYS ONE WAY

Auckland to Christchurch in 10 days

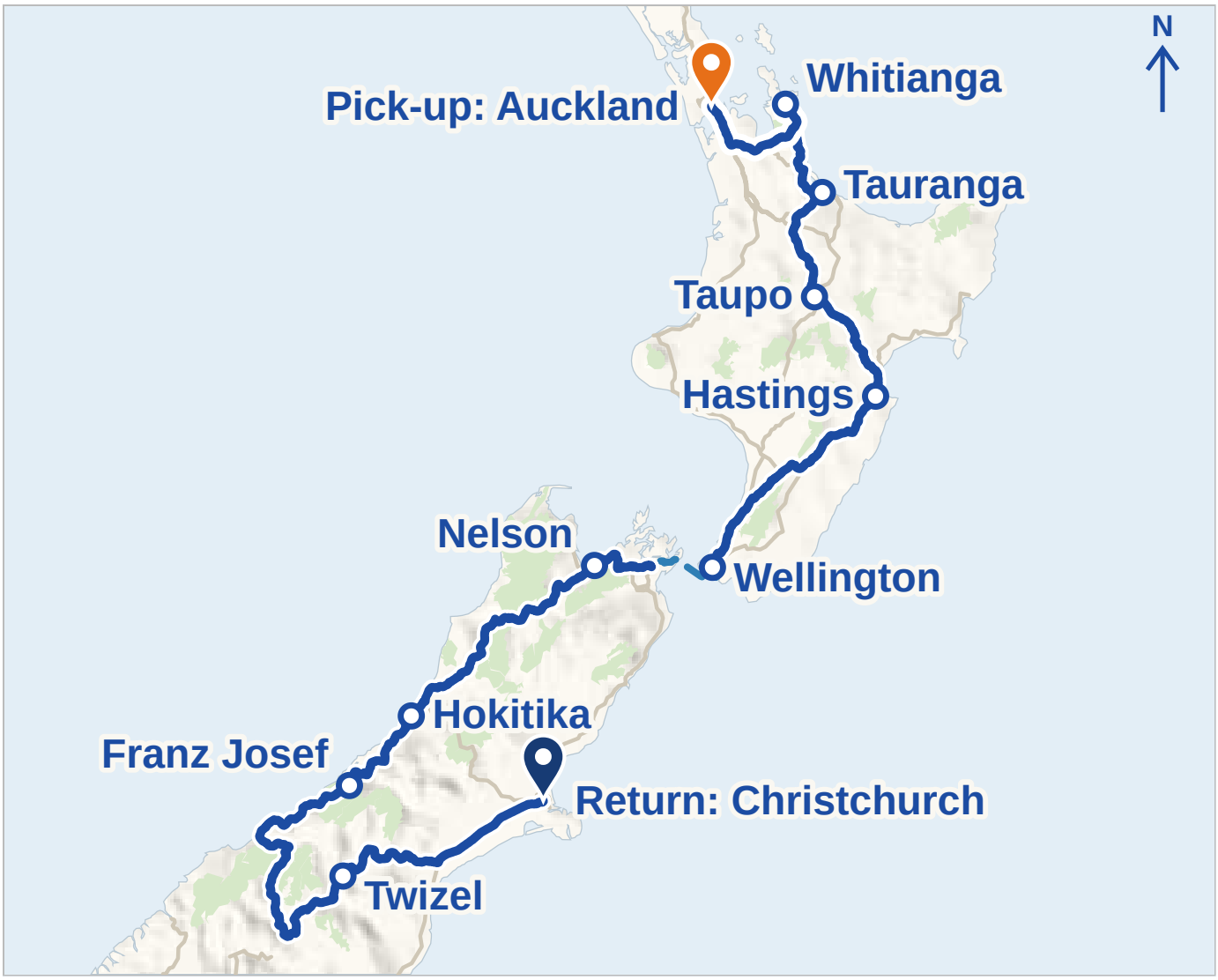
Explore the best of both islands in this 10 day north to south tour of stunning New Zealand.

DISTANCE	DAYS	ROUTE	DRIVING TIME
About 2,225 km	10 days, 10 drives	One way, Auckland to Christchurch, with the Cook Strait ferry	About 37 h by campervan

LONGEST DRIVE	VEHICLE
415 km, Franz Josef to Twizel	Campervan



Franz Josef Glacier valley, day 8 · Illustrative image



Planning overview, not navigation. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors · coastline Natural Earth · relief Terrain Tiles (LINZ, SRTM).

BEFORE YOU BOOK

Hiring a campervan for this trip

One way to Christchurch
One-way fees and minimum hire periods depend on the rental company, route and travel dates. Compare the total quote and the number of hire days before booking flights around the trip. More on one-way campervan hire in New Zealand.

Crossing Cook Strait
Your rental company's ferry conditions come first, so check them before you book a sailing. The booking needs the van, its full length and everyone travelling with you, and vehicle spaces can fill quickly in summer, so it's worth booking ahead. See crossing between the islands.

Picking up in Auckland

Arrive well before the branch closes so staff have time to take you through the van. Bring a driver's licence for every driver, and a credit card in the main driver's name for the bond (a

security deposit). See picking up your campervan in New Zealand and what to check at the vehicle inspection and demonstration. More on campervan hire in Auckland.

DRIVE

190 km from Auckland | **about 3 h** by campervan

Via **Auckland Southern Motorway**

DAY 1

Auckland to Whitianga

PICK-UP

Pick up your campervan or car in Auckland today. If you're collecting a camper, allow plenty of time at the branch so the rental company can show you how it works before you leave.

Depart this morning and take the State Highway 1, SH 2, State Highway 25, State Highway 25A and State Highway 25 to Buffalo Beach in Whitianga.

Te Whanganui-A-Hei, also known as Cathedral Cove, is a must-visit for tourists. Isolated from civilisation, you can only see the cove through walking, boat or kayak. There are several walking trails which will take you to not only Cathedral Cove, but Gemstone Bay and Mares Leg. The vivid turquoise waters and shelter from the cove will entice you into this natural wonder.

Check first:
The Department of Conservation closes the Cathedral Cove tracks after storms and slips, so check DOC's track updates before you go.

Explore the Mercury Bay Museum, located in an old dairy factory from the 1930s. The museum takes you through the history of the Mercury Bay area, touching on both its Maori and European heritage. The museum has an array of displays covering everything from the shipwrecks in the bay, the Polynesian navigator Kupe and displays about the natural history in the area. This fascinating insight into the area will quench your thirst for knowledge, and spouting facts for days about Mercury Bay.

Stay Mercury Bay Holiday Park

DRIVE

165 km from Whitianga | **about 2 h 50 min** by campervan

Via **State Highway 2**

DAY 2

Whitianga to Tauranga

Depart this morning and take the State Highway 25 and SH2 to Cameron Road in Tauranga.

Climb to the summit of Mount Maunganui, also known as Mauao, to see the spectacular sites of the Bay of Plenty coastline, Pacific Ocean and the town of Tauranga. The mountain is very special to the locals,

with mythic tales surrounding how the mountain came to be. The summit is 232 metres high and will take roughly 40 minutes to reach it, so don't forget water. Whilst there, the Mount Maunganui Main Beach has been crowned one of the best beaches in New Zealand, and is perfect for cooling off after your climb up the mountain.

If you are a fan of The Lord of the Rings films, why not take a tour to Hobbiton to see where some of the films were filmed. Walk along the rolling hills of Middle Earth, where Frodo and his friends undertook the ultimate journey to destroy the One Ring, and have a meal in a recreation of one of their taverns. With a diverse range of locations, with everything from mountains to farmlands, so even if you are not a fan of the films, you will still find something to love about New Zealand's beauty.

Stay Silverbirch Holiday Park and Motel

DRIVE

150 km from Tauranga | **about 2 h 20 min** by campervan

Via **State Highway 1**

DAY 3

Tauranga to Taupo

Depart this morning and take Elizabeth Street to SH2. Take Takitimu Drive to State Highway 29 in Tauriko. Continue on State Highway 29 to Tapapa. Turn right onto SH 5/ State Highway 28 to Lichfield. Turn left onto State Highway 1, and follow Thermal Explorer Highway to Tamamutu Street in Taupo.

For the thrill-seekers out there, Taupo is a great place to try jet boating through the Aratiatia Rapids that spill out from the dam each day. Bounce along the top of the rapids as you speed along the river. To get even closer to the water, arm yourself with a helmet and oar and try some river rafting.

The Taupo Museum & Ora Garden of Wellbeing is a great insight into the Maori culture. See an authentic Kiwiana caravan, art galleries, and a virtual tour of the Tongariro Alpine crossing. The award-winning Garden of Wellbeing is a 'living' exhibit, where the native flora and steamy geothermal areas will relax you after a long day.

Stay Great Lake Holiday Park Taupo

DRIVE

155 km from Taupo | **about 2 h 50 min** by campervan

Via **State Highway 5**

DAY 4

Taupo to Hastings

Depart this morning and continue along the Thermal Explorer Highway/ SH5. Follow to Hawke's Bay and then take Evenden Road, Pakowhai Road and St Aubyn Street W to Nelson Street in Hastings.

Visit the Te Mata Park, one of the many nature parks, which holds a strong history and cultural importance to the Maori people. The ‘Drive to the Top’ is a rite of passage for locals and visitors alike. When you reach the top, you will be surrounded by magnificent views of the Heretaunga Plains, the Ruahine and Kaweka Ranges. Take a picnic and spend the day walking the nature trails and enjoying the peacefulness of the mountain.

Pick up some local produce at the Hastings Farmers Market on a Sunday morning. Go with an empty stomach and try some of their famous cheeses and preserves. The market comes alive with buskers and entertainers, and is a great chance to pick up some bargains on locally produced goods.

Stay Hastings TOP 10 Holiday Park

DRIVE

295 km from Hastings | **about 4 h 45 min** by campervan | Via **State Highway 2**

DAY 5

Hastings to Wellington

Depart this morning and take the SH2 to State Highway 57 to State Highway 1 in Levin. Follow the State Highway 1 to Willeston Street in Wellington.

Visit Te Papa, the national museum of New Zealand. Established in 1865, it is a must-visit, especially to see their latest exhibition “Gallipoli: The scale of our war”. It tells the story of eight New Zealanders during the Gallipoli campaign in World War I. Using large sculptures, 2.3 x normal human size, the haunting stories of these brave Kiwis will be with you long after you leave the museum.

Stay Wellington’s Kiwi Holiday Park

DRIVE

110 km from Wellington | **about 2 h 30 min** by campervan | Via **State Highway 6**

DAY 6

Wellington to Nelson

☆ COOK STRAIT FERRY

Depart this morning and drive from Waterloo Quay and Aotea Quay to Pipitea. Pre-book a ticket for the Interislander Cook Strait Ferry, and take the ferry to cross to the South Island. Take the State Highway 6 to Trafalgar Street in The Wood, Nelson.

If you're taking a campervan, check the rental company's conditions before booking the Cook Strait ferry.

Info The ferry crossing to Picton takes about 3½ hours, on top of the driving time shown for today. Follow the check-in time on your ferry confirmation.

In Milton Street, you will find the centre of New Zealand. Marked by a sign, the middle of New Zealand sits up on a hill, so you will find beautiful views of Nelson surrounding you. The best time to go is during either sunrise or sunset for spectacular views – one to definitely bring your camera to. There are many trails around, so why not extend your walk and see more.

For something that you would have never seen anything like before, visit the World of Wearable Art & Classic Cars Museum. Each year, thousands of visitors come to this unique attraction which contains one of Australasia's largest collections of classic cars. Alongside the cars, you can see over 60 pieces of competition-winning wearable art, something you cannot see at many museums.

Stay Nelson City TOP 10 Holiday Park

DRIVE

325 km from Nelson | **about 5 h 30 min** by campervan |

Via **Upper Buller Gorge Road**

DAY 7

Nelson to Hokitika

Depart this morning and take Waimea Road to State Highway 6. Follow State Highway 6 to State Highway 69 in Inangahua. Follow State Highway 69 to State Highway 7 in Reefton. Follow State Highway 7 to State Highway 6 in Hokitika.

Visit the Hokitika Gorge, with lush native bush and vivid blue waters, it is the perfect place to take postcard worthy photos. Hire a kayak and discover the waters up close, or take a picnic and walk along the Gorge Walk to see the podocarp forest and swing bridge.

For an authentically New Zealand experience, visit The National Kiwi Centre. Dedicated to protecting their national icon, see these beautiful birds up close and personal. You can also have a go at feeding the eels, which are up to 100 years old, or see the Tuatara, New Zealand's oldest living dinosaur.

Stay Hokitika: book a powered site ahead

DRIVE

135 km from Hokitika | **about 2 h 10 min** by campervan

Via **Harihari Highway**

DAY 8

Hokitika to Franz Josef Glacier

Depart this morning and head south-west on State Highway 6 towards Weld Street. Turn right and stay on State Highway 6. Turn left onto Cowan Street.

As it says in the title, you must visit the Franz Josef Glacier. The 12 km long glacier offers an experience for everyone in the family, from hiking around it, relaxing in the hot pools, or for the more experienced, actually climbing the glacier. The icy glacier juxtaposed with the surrounding rainforests is a striking picture of beauty, and is a fun day out for the whole family.

Info You can only get onto the ice on a guided heli-hike: the public valley walk stops well short of the glacier.

Stay Rainforest Retreat

DRIVE

415 km from Franz Josef | **about 6 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Haast Highway**

DAY 9

Franz Josef Glacier to Twizel

Depart this morning and take the State Highway 6. Follow to State Highway 8 to Ruataniwha Road in Pukaki. Turn left onto Ruataniwha Road into Twizel.

Twizel is another popular destination to take a Lord of the Rings tour. Dress up as your favourite character or learn about some exclusive behind the scenes trivia. A bit further south, there are even more film locations, utilising all that New Zealand has to offer. Perfect for any fan of the film franchise, and film buffs alike.

Twizel is also a great town for salmon. Visit the Mt. Cook Alpine Salmon Farm for a freshly cooked meal. Nothing beats the flavours from locally-produced food. Match your fish to a local wine and enjoy a relaxing finish to your day.

Stay Twizel Holiday Park

DRIVE

285 km from Twizel | **about 4 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Tekapo-Twizel Road**

DAY 10

Twizel to Christchurch

RETURN

Depart this morning and turn left onto State Highway 8. Follow State Highway 79 to SH 1 in Rangitata. Follow SH 1 to Montreal Street in Sydenham, Christchurch.

The Air Force museum of Christchurch is the national museum for the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Located on a former airbase, the museum has over 30 historic aircrafts and exhibitions. A particular highlight is the Mosquito Flight Simulator, where you can fly through the French countryside during 1944, based upon the Amiens Prison Raid.

Stay Amber Kiwi Holiday Park

Returning in Christchurch

When you return your campervan, allow time for the return inspection. Return it by the time on your booking, as rental companies charge for late returns.

Check your rental agreement for the fuel level and whether the toilet and waste-water tanks need emptying, as the company inspects the van before it releases your bond (returning your campervan in New Zealand). More on campervan hire in Christchurch.

Enjoy the drive, from one island to the other.

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