DriveNow

Helping travellers since 2003 find the best deals on campervan and car rental

BOTH ISLANDS · 12 DAYS ONE WAY

The Full Monty - Auckland to Queenstown in 12 nights

DISTANCE
About 2,155 km

DAYS
12 days, 12 drives

ROUTE
One way, Auckland to Queenstown, with the Cook Strait ferry

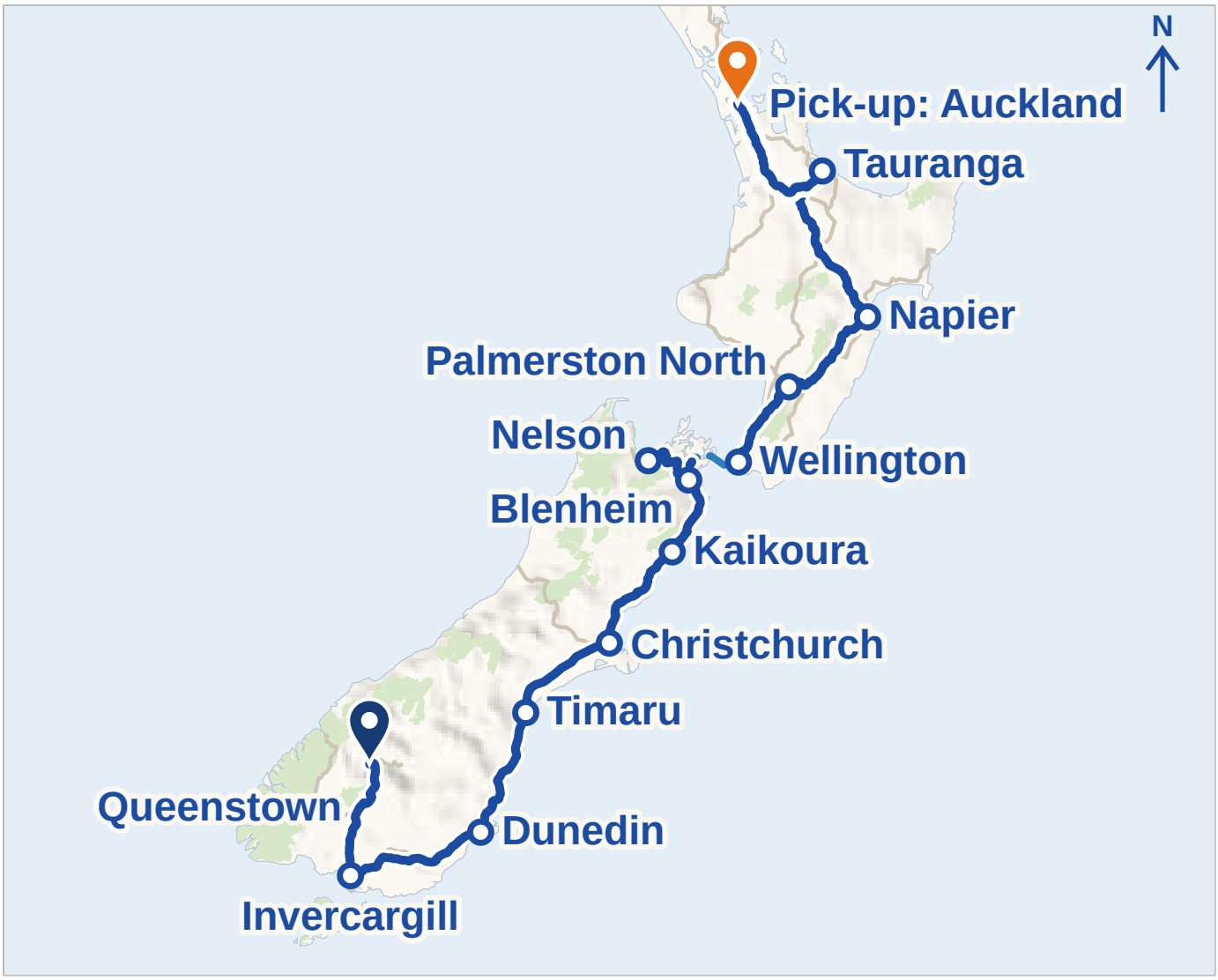
DRIVING TIME
About 36 h by campervan

LONGEST DRIVE
290 km, Tauranga to Napier

VEHICLE
Campervan



Kaikoura Peninsula, day 7 · 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 Queenstown
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

225 km from Auckland | **about 3 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Waikato Expressway**

DAY 1

Auckland to Tauranga

PICK-UP

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

Depart this morning and follow State Highway 1 and State Highway 2 to Glasgow Street in Tauranga.

If you are a fan of The Lord of the Rings films, why not take a tour to Hobbiton to see where the films were made. 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, including everything from mountains to farmlands, even if you are not a fan of the films, you will still find something to love about New Zealand's beauty and this tour.

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.

Stay Silverbirch Holiday Park and Motel

DRIVE

290 km from Tauranga | **about 4 h 45 min** by campervan

Via **State Highway 5**

DAY 2

Tauranga to Napier

Depart this morning and take Takitimu Drive to State Highway 29 in Tauriko. Continue on State Highway 29 to Tapapa. Take State Highway 1 and Thermal Explorer Highway to Thackeray Street in Napier.

Napier is home to the National Aquarium of New Zealand, showcasing marine life from international and New Zealand waters. A particular highlight is the 1.5 million litre Oceanarium, where you can explore from the unique perspective of the underwater viewing tunnel.

Just 30 minutes south of Napier is Te Mata Peak. Standing at 400 metres above sea level, from the top of the mountain you can see picturesque views of Ruahine, Kaweka, Cape Kidnappers and Maungaharuru Ranges. The climb is challenging, but completely worth it to enjoy the stunning views of New Zealand from up high.

Stay Napier Beach TOP 10 Holiday Park (formerly Napier Beach Kiwi Holiday Park & Motels)

DRIVE

180 km from Napier | **about 3 h** by campervan | Via **State Highway 50**

DAY 3

Napier to Palmerston North

Depart this morning and take the State Highway 50 from Kennedy Road. Follow to State Highway 2 in Takapau. Continue on State Highway 2 to State Highway 3 in Palmerston North.

A favourite amongst locals, the New Zealand Rugby Museum is a place to learn about the heroics of the All Blacks (New Zealand's national rugby team), and have a go at honing your own rugby skills. With relics from as early as the 1870s, trace New Zealand's rugby history, and see how integral the sport is to the country. The interactive "Have a Go" area is popular with children and adults alike, as it allows you to test your skills.

If you're a connoisseur of cars and racing, a visit to the Robertson Prestige International Speedway (formerly Robertson Holden International Speedway) will be of interest. Seating 15,000 people, the speedway hosts hundreds of competitors on what is considered to be one of the best circuits in the southern hemisphere. With a variety of vehicles from the Sprintcars to the Solo motorcycles, it is sure to be a fun evening.

Stay Palmerston North Holiday Park

DRIVE

140 km from Palmerston North | **about 2 h 20 min** by campervan | Via **Kāpiti Expressway**

DAY 4

Palmerston North to Wellington

Depart this morning and take State Highway 56 and State Highway 57 to State Highway 1 in Levin. Follow State Highway 1 to Murphy Street in Wellington.

Visit Kelburn Hill, situated 119 metres above Wellington, via a cable car. Enjoy the views as your car climbs up the hill to the lookouts above. Spend time enjoying the panoramic views of the city and harbour Te Whanganui-a-Tara. You can decide to take a cable car back, or enjoy a walk through the Botanic Gardens to return to the city.

Stay Wellington: book a powered site ahead

DRIVE

31 km from Wellington | **about 40 min** by campervan | Via **State Highway 1**

DAY 5

Wellington to Blenheim

COOK STRAIT FERRY

Depart this morning and drive to Waterloo Quay and Aotea Quay to Pipitea. Take the Interislander Cook Strait Ferry. The tickets can be bought online for both passengers and vehicles. From Picton, take the State Highway 1 to Blenheim.

Before booking the Wellington to Picton ferry crossing, check your rental company's conditions for taking the campervan between islands.

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.

The Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre was opened to provide a proper appreciation and education about historic aircrafts. Some of the exhibitions involve filmmakers and craft makers coming together to rebuild aircrafts, including some from director Peter Jackson's personal collection. The recreations create a vivid and lifelike picture of the aircrafts and the people who flew them.

Blenheim is in the Marlborough region, making it the perfect place to spend the day on a wine tour. With delicious foods and wines sampled throughout the day, there is no doubt that you will expand your taste buds and learn a lot about the local produce.

Stay Blenheim Bridges Holiday Park (formerly Blenheim TOP10 Holiday Park)

DRIVE

115 km from Blenheim | **about 2 h** by campervan | Via **State Highway 6**

DAY 6

Blenheim to Nelson

Depart this morning and take State Highway 1. At the second roundabout, take the first exit onto State Highway 6. At the roundabout, take the first exit onto Trafalgar Street in Nelson.

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.

The Nelson Lakes National Park is home to the beginning of the Southern Alps. This natural wonder will leave you mesmerised, and you can enjoy the national park in your own time. Whether you want a more challenging hike through the alpine, or an easy lakeside walk, you must take some time to take in and enjoy the wonderment of this feature.

Stay Tāhuna Beach Holiday Park (formerly Tahuna Beach Kiwi Holiday Park & Motel)

DRIVE

245 km from Nelson | **about 4 h 15 min** by campervan

Via **State Highway 1**

DAY 7

Nelson to Kaikoura

Depart this morning and follow State Highway 6 to State Highway 1 in W End in Kaikoura.

Explore the area through the Ohau Stream Walk. The short walk will take you alongside the Ohau stream to a small waterfall. During the winter months, seal pups swim up from the ocean and will playfully swim in the water.

Check first:
The Ohau Stream Walk has been closed since the 2016 Kaikōura earthquake. You can still see seals from the lookout beside the track on State Highway 1, about 20 km north of Kaikoura, but check whether the walk has reopened before you go.

Kaikoura is famous for their spectacular whale watching, where the magnificent Sperm Whales are drawn by the deep sea trenches. Get up and as close as you can on a whale-watching tour, where you can not only experience the whales but the vivacious and vibrant marine life.

Stay Kaikoura TOP10 Holiday Park

DRIVE

180 km from Kaikoura | **about 3 h 15 min** by campervan

Via **Parnassus Road**

DAY 8

Kaikoura to Christchurch

Depart this morning and follow State Highway 1 to Edgeware Road in Saint Albans. Take Manchester Street to Hereford Street in Christchurch Central.

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 real life Amiens Prison Raid.

Quake City is a multi-sensory experience, as run by the Canterbury Museum. See the active liquefaction of a volcano, and be captivated by the stories of emergency services teams during Canterbury's major earthquakes.

Stay Amber Kiwi Holiday Park

DRIVE

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

Via **Main South Road**

DAY 9

Christchurch to Timaru

Depart this morning and follow State Highway 1 to State Highway 78 in Timaru Central.

Learn about the local Maori culture at the Te Ana Maori Rock Art tours, where a guide will take you through how the rock art is formed and you will see the original rock art paintings. You will hear stories about the ancestors who lived here thousands of years ago, and what they did to preserve their paintings for today.

Season Te Ana's guided tours run from November to April, or by arrangement either side of those months.

To continue this educational experience, the South Canterbury Museum has an extensive collection focussing on the heritage and people of the area. Learn about the Maori people and the European settlement, as well as the natural histories which is a must-see and learn of this area.

Check first:
The South Canterbury Museum closed on 27 October 2026 to move to its new building, Te Kura Marumaru South Canterbury Museum, which is due to open in April 2027. Check it's open before you go.

Stay Timaru Top 10 Holiday Park

DRIVE

195 km from Timaru | **about 3 h 15 min** by campervan

Via **Waimate Highway**

DAY 10

Timaru to Dunedin

Depart this morning and head south east on Stafford Street towards George Street. Continue onto King Street. Continue onto State Highway 1 and follow to Dunedin.

Visit the Dunedin Chinese Garden, which celebrates the Chinese population of Dunedin, as many of the families arriving in the 1860s during the gold rush and are therefore paramount to the local history. Walk around and enjoy the beautifully crafted gardens and buildings and have a go at the Chinese puzzles. Afterwards indulge in an authentic Chinese Tea Shop, where you can sample teas, dumplings and buns.

Stay Dunedin Holiday Park & Motels

DRIVE

205 km from Dunedin | **about 3 h 30 min** by campervan

Via **Old Coach Road**

DAY 11

Dunedin to Invercargill

Depart this morning and follow State Highway 1 to Gorge Road in Clinton. Follow Old Coach Road to State Highway 1 in Mataura. Turn left onto State Highway 1, and follow signs for Route 1/ Invercargill.

Visit the E Hayes Motorworks Collection, and see the ‘World’s Fastest Indian’ in person. Housed in a hardware store, the collection showcases vintage motorcycles, engines, equipment and memorabilia. At the centre is the ‘World’s Fastest Indian’, the very same motorcycle in which Burt Munro claimed his world records for his explorations and achievements in speed.

Spend the day at Queens Park, which is no average park. From golf, to playgrounds, to animals, there is something for everyone in the family to enjoy or try. Take a picnic on a nice day, and enjoy the peace away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Stay Invercargill Holiday Park & Motels (formerly Invercargill Top 10 Holiday Park)

DRIVE

185 km from Invercargill | **about 3 h** by campervan | Via **Kingston Road**

DAY 12

Invercargill to Queenstown

RETURN

Depart this morning and head south west on State Highway 1 towards Deveron Street. At the roundabout, take the third exit onto State Highway 6. At the next roundabout, take the second exit to remain on State Highway 6. At the next roundabout, take the first exit onto State Highway 6A. At the final roundabout, take the first exit onto Ballarat Street in Queenstown.

Queenstown is one of the bungy-jumping capitals of the world, drawing adrenaline-seekers from every corner to bungy jump from great heights into some of the most beautiful gorges in New Zealand. Take up the challenge as it is an experience that you will definitely not forget, with nearly all places providing photographic evidence of your brave accomplishments.

If the weather permits, skiing in New Zealand is something you must do before you leave. A ski area like Treble Cone has long, uncrowded slopes, providing great skiing and unparalleled views. If you are a beginner, they have a free ski lift and protected slope to get their practice out on!

Stay Queenstown Holiday Park Creeksyde

Returning in Queenstown

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 Queenstown.

Enjoy the drive, from Auckland all the way south.

DriveNow Disclaimer

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DriveNow's suggested itineraries help you plan your own trip. Distances and times are from mapped routes and are a guide only; campervan driving times are car times plus about 20%. Road conditions, closures, opening hours and prices change, so check them before you travel. Any reliance on this itinerary is at your own discretion.

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