DriveNow

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

NORTH ISLAND ROAD TRIP · 7 DAYS ONE WAY

Auckland to Wellington in 7 days

DISTANCE
About 885 km

DAYS
7 days, 7 drives

ROUTE
One way, Auckland to Wellington

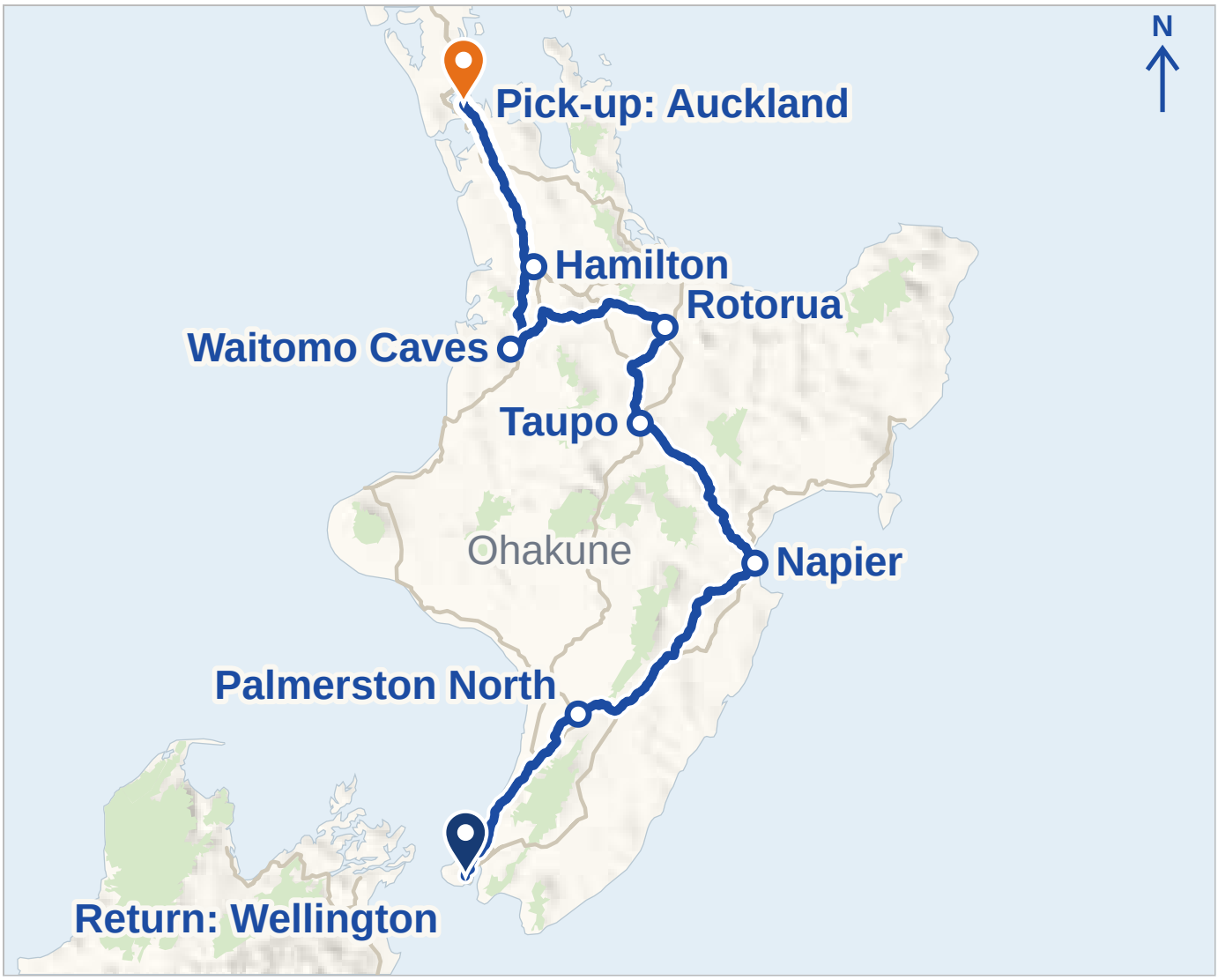
DRIVING TIME
About 15 h by campervan

LONGEST DRIVE
180 km, Napier to Palmerston North

VEHICLE
Campervan



Tongariro River, day 4 · 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 Wellington

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.

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

125 km from Auckland | **about 2 h** by campervan | Via **Waikato Expressway**

DAY 1

Auckland to Hamilton

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.

Take the State Highway 1 from Hobson Street and follow to Avalon in Hamilton.

Check out a rugby union match on at the FMG Stadium Waikato, and cheer on the home side as they tackle competition from all over New Zealand. Rugby Union is one of the national sports of New Zealand, drawing fans from each corner of the islands to support their teams, therefore making it a must-do while here.

The Hamilton Zoo is home to over 600 international and local animals, and is a perfect day out for everyone in the family. From monkeys, tigers, and giraffes, get up and close to these fascinating animals, whilst learning about their origin and the conservation put in place by the zoo.

Stay Hamilton City Holiday Park

DRIVE

75 km from Hamilton | **about 1 h 20 min** by campervan | Via **Kāwhia Road**

DAY 2

Hamilton to Waitomo Caves

Return to the State Highway 1, and take the State Highway 3 to Collins Road in Melville. Continue along State Highway 39 to Hangatiki, and at the roundabout, take the 2nd exit onto State Route 37.

One of New Zealand's most popular natural attractions, the Waitomo Glow Worm Caves are unlike anything you will ever see. The glow worm is native to New Zealand, with thousands of these creatures lighting up the inside of the cave, creating a mystical atmosphere which is fitting to New Zealand.

Ruakuri Cave is Waitomo's longest underground walking tour, with a spiral entrance to allow you to get up and close with every aspect of the limestone formations and crystal tapestries. This is also another opportunity to see the glow worms in a different place.

Stay Waitomo TOP 10 Holiday Park

DRIVE

140 km from Waitomo Caves | **about 2 h 20 min** by campervan | Via **State Highway 5**

DAY 3

Waitomo Caves to Rotorua

Head northwest on State Highway 37, and at the roundabout, take the first exit onto State Highway 3. Follow Arapuni Road to State Highway 1 in Putaruru, and take State Highway 5 to Lake Road in Mangakakahi. Take State Highway 30A and Tarawera Road to Okareka Loop Road in Lake Okareka.

Spend the day discovering the rich history of New Zealand at the Rotorua Museum. With five constantly changing galleries including multi-media exhibitions, you will find everything from the history of the Maori culture, to New Zealand's most dangerous volcanoes.

Check first:
Rotorua Museum has been closed for restoration and earthquake strengthening since 2016 and is due to reopen in 2028. Check it's open before you plan your day around it.

Spend the evening watching a show at the Mitai Maori Village, where the performers take you through the history, tattoos and carvings of the Maori people. A spectacular finale of the haka will leave you breathless at the beauty and fascination of this culture.

Stay Tasman Holiday Parks – Rotorua (formerly Rotorua TOP 10 Holiday Park)

DRIVE

81 km from Rotorua | **about 1 h 20 min** by campervan | Via **State Highway 30**

DAY 4

Rotorua to Taupo

Depart this morning and take Tarawera Road and State Highway 30 to State Highway 5 in Whakarewarewa. Continue onto State Highway 5 and follow the Thermal Explorer Highway to Taupo.

For the thrill-seekers, navigating the white water rapids in New Zealand is a must-do! Tongariro River Rafting takes you along the Tongariro River, as you traverse over 60 rapids with an expert along the way to help. The rapids are a grade 3 level, meaning that both beginners and expert river rafters will enjoy the adventure.

Take the afternoon to relax in the Taupo Debretts Hot Springs, and enjoy the serenity of the hot mineral pools. Sneak away for a massage or treatment, perfect to revitalise the body and soul. Children are also

welcome, with an interactive playground and hydro-slides to keep them entertained.

Stay Taupō TOP 10 Holiday Park (formerly All Seasons Kiwi Holiday Park Taupo)

DRIVE

140 km from Taupo | **about 2 h 40 min** by campervan |

Via **State Highway 5**

DAY 5

Taupo to Napier

Depart this morning and continue to the Thermal Explorer Highway/ State Highway 5 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.

For the wine connoisseurs, a visit to the Mission Estate Winery is where you will find the oldest winery and consequently, the birthplace of wine in New Zealand. Take a tour through the cellar and learn about the Mission, concluding with a wine tasting of course. Finish your time with a meal in their award-winning restaurant, where the combination of local produce and wine will whet your appetite.

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 6

Napier to Palmerston North

Depart this morning and take the State Highway 50 to the State Highway 2 in Takapau. Continue on State Highway 2 and drive 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 allows you to test your skills.

Put on your best walking shoes, and explore the New Zealand wilderness through the Te Apiti – Manawatu Gorge Tawa Loop walking trail. The total distance is a relaxing 4.1 km, and is appropriate for people of a low to moderate fitness level. The two-hour trail will take you through the native bush, with plenty of lookouts, and a sculpture of Whatonga, a Maori warrior.

Stay Palmerston North Holiday Park

DRIVE

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

Via **Kāpiti Expressway**

DAY 7

Palmerston North to Wellington

RETURN

Depart this morning and head southeast on State Highway 3 towards Walding Street. Take State Highway 56 and State Highway 57 to State Highway 1 in Levin. Follow State Highway 1 to Murphy Street in Thorndon. Take the Murphy Street exit from State Highway 1, and follow to Wellington.

Visit the Weta Workshop for an insight into the New Zealand film industry, with everything from The Lord of the Rings to the Thunderbirds tours, there is something for everyone. The workshop itself houses props from King Kong, The Chronicles of Narnia, and of course, The Hobbit. Whether you are a film buff, or a film novice, you will definitely go home wanting to watch more films made in New Zealand.

In the evening, visit the Space Place at the Carter Observatory. Explore the night sky in their state-of-the-art planetarium, and then walk through the exhibitions to learn about space technology from the past and present. On a clear night, it will truly be an experience you will not forget.

Stay Wellington: book a powered site ahead

Returning in Wellington

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 Wellington.

Enjoy the drive down the North Island.

DriveNow Disclaimer

DriveNow receives no money or commission for any holiday park, campground, hotel, restaurant, cafe, pub, tour or attraction named on this page. We include them because they suit a campervan trip, and we check them from time to time.

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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