

The Insider

24 Days/23 Nights (or 20D/19N)

The Insider - a journey straight from the heart. This self-drive combines our experience and knowledge with the desire to show guests 'our very own' New Zealand.

Why not stay where Kiwis holiday? Ever heard of Whanganui National Park? Spend two nights at Blue Duck Station, a working sheep and cattle farm amidst lush New Zealand bush.

'Hangi' the way it is meant to be: Enjoy this traditional meal in a small family circle and become part of the 'whanau'.

How about Carters Beach? A real gem north of Punakaiki, yet unnoticed by most.



Secluded beaches - New Chums Beach

Hidden away from the masses and rarely explored by Kiwis this beach ironically has been voted as one of the world's top 10 beaches. This stunning stretch of golden sand is fringed by Pohutukawa and native forest and is deserted for most of the year. This protected beach has no buildings, no roads, no infrastructure or camping - it is a jewel in New Zealand's coastal crown.



Vivid Maori culture

Kohutapu Lodge is owned and operated by a local Maori family, who is delighted to share their stories, culture, and kai (food) and the warmth of their manaakitanga (hospitality) with you. The Toe Toe whanau (family) belong to the Ngati Manawa Tribe and their whakapapa (family tree) stretches back to these lands 400 years before the Great Migration to the first inhabitants of this rohe (land within the tribal boundaries). Many of their stories have been handed down generation to generation and are waiting to be shared especially with you, along with plenty of traditional kai (food). Nau mai, haere mai!

Whanganui National Park - Blue Duck Lodge

Located in the Ruapehu District on the banks of the Whanganui and Retaruke Rivers, and surrounded by Whanganui National Park, Blue Duck Station is an outdoor enthusiast's playground.



It has one of the highest concentrations of whio (blue duck) and kiwi in New Zealand not to mention wetas, native bats and fish. Go on a short kayak tour through the gorge at the base of the Kaiwhakauka falls and spot a blue duck. All of this while soaking up the amazing atmosphere of the New Zealand bush with breathtaking views around every corner!

Carters Beach, Westport

Spend one night at Carters Beach near Westport, a truly undiscovered gem! Listen to rolling breakers, watch stunning sunsets across the Tasman Sea and wander along wide, sandy beaches.



Cardrona Hotel

Situated on the spectacular Crown Range Road between Queenstown and Wanaka, the Cardrona Hotel is one of New Zealand's oldest and most iconic hotels. Its rustic charm, stunning mountain setting and rich history make it a must see while in Central Otago. Said to be the most photographed pub in New Zealand, behind the historic facade lies a stunning beer garden, charming hotel rooms, and an excellent bar and restaurant serving a modern take on traditional pub fare.



THE REST NEW ZEALAND PROMISE

- Comprehensive travel manual to guide you step by step through the country
- Daily tips from our experienced team
- Discover the real New Zealand that others don't get to see



The Insider

24D/23N Tour: As per below itinerary
20D/19N Tour: Skip days 2-5

Day 1: Arrive Auckland

On arrival in Auckland Meet & Greet by REST NEW ZEALAND TOURS. Transfer to your accommodation in Auckland and handover of travel documents. If you are not too tired, we recommend a leisurely stroll along Auckland's waterfront.

Day 2: Auckland - Waipoua Forest - Hokianga Harbour/Omapere

Approximate driving time 4 hours, 290 km

Rental car pick up. Before you drive up north make a side trip to Auckland's west coast and visit the Gannet colony at black sand Muriwai Beach. Further north the interesting Kauri Museum in Matakoho is the ideal stop for lunch and prepares you for the giant Kauri trees in Waipoua Forest later on. You stay overnight in Omapere at Hokianga Harbour. For the evening we recommend a guided Maori tour to the Kauri trees.

Day 3: Omapere - Doubtless Bay - Haruru River/Bay of Islands

Approximate driving time 3.5 hours, 100 km

Cross Hokianga Harbour on the ferry and travel to the subtropical Far North. Take a break at Ahipara, a favourite holiday spot for locals and starting point of famous Ninety Mile Beach. You may wish to do the detour to Cape Reinga, New Zealand's northernmost point before continuing to the Bay of Islands.

Insider Tip: Add a night or two at Ahipara Holiday Park. Stay 'Kiwi-style' in a traditional cabin close to the beach. Simple but beautiful!

Day 4: Haruru River/Bay of Islands

The beauty of the Bay only unfolds on a boat tour. Whatever you choose, it will be a memorable experience: The Hole in the Rock, swimming with dolphins with or without a picnic stop at one of the

islands, go sailing or kayaking. Or wander around the Treaty Grounds and visit historic Treaty House in Waitangi. You can even go on a bus tour to Cape Reinga.

Insider Info: Your accommodation is located at beautiful and tranquil Haruru River. Close to Paihia and all its amenities but away from the hustle and bustle.

Day 5: Bay of Islands - Whangarei - Snells Beach (Warkworth)

Approximate driving time 2.5 hours, 180 km

Head south on side roads, along the east coast, past beautiful beaches and bays until you arrive at Snells Beach, a residential and recreational fishing village.

Insider Info: Perfectly situated, on the Mahurangi East Peninsula, overlooking the beautiful Kawau Bay and right in the heart of the wonderful Matakana coast and country. One of the most desirable regions to visit in New Zealand yet mostly known by locals only. This really is a magic area!

Your accommodation is only a short stroll to wonderfully safe swimming at Kawau Bay and adjacent to a small cluster of shops, cafes and restaurants. You will be close to many stunning surf beaches and fabulous Regional Parks, secluded bays, Vineyards, the Matakana Farmers Markets, the famous Kawau Island ferry and Goat Island Marine Reserve...all yours to discover and explore.

Day 6: Snells Beach - Auckland - Coromandel Peninsula

Approximate driving time 4.5 hours, 280 km

Travel via Auckland and along the western shores of Coromandel Peninsula to Coromandel Town. Cafés and small shops invite you for a stop. Continue via the coastal road to the eastern Coromandel.

Insider Tip: Visit New Chums Beach (Wainuiototo), voted as one of the 101 Must Do's for Kiwis. Hidden away from the masses and rarely explored by Kiwis this beach ironically has been voted as one of the world's top 10 beaches. This stunning stretch of golden sand is fringed by Pohutukawa and native forest and is deserted for most of the year. New Chums Beach embodies the famous slogan 'Coromandel - Good for your Soul.' This protected beach has no buildings, no roads, no infrastructure or camping - it is a jewel in New Zealand's coastal crown.

Day 7: Coromandel Peninsula - Rotorua

Approximate driving time 4 hours, 250 km

Today travel along the East Coast and explore more magic of this beautiful region. At Hot Water Beach you can dig your own thermal pool at low tide. A nice

short walk from Hahei Beach takes you to the famous Cathedral Cove, one of the most interesting bays in the country.

Continue to Te Puke in the Bay of Plenty and visit a kiwi fruit orchard where you learn everything about the iconic national fruit!

Tonight stay in Rotorua, the heartland of Maori culture and centre of thermal activities in New Zealand.

Day 8: Rotorua - Murupara

Approximate driving time 1 hour, 60 km

Travel on the 'Geothermal Highway' alongside boiling mud, sulphur pools and erupting geysers before you take the turn off to an unknown Maori village. Tonight stay at Kohutapu Lodge, enjoy a traditional Hangi family dinner and a cultural tour.

Insider Info: Kohutapu Lodge is owned and operated by a local Maori family, who is delighted to share their stories, culture, and kai (food) and the warmth of their manaakitanga (hospitality) with you. The Toe Toe whanau (family) belong to the Ngati Manawa Tribe and their whakapapa (family tree) stretches back to these lands 400 years before the Great Migration to the first inhabitants of this rohe (land within the tribal boundaries). Many of their stories have been handed down generation to generation and wait to be shared especially with you, along with plenty of interactive cultural activities and traditional kai (food) experiences. Nau mai, haere mai!

Day 9: Murupara - Taupo - Tongariro National Park - Blue Duck Station

Approximate driving time 2.5 hours, 215 km

On a clear day Lake Taupo fascinates with spectacular views to the volcanoes. You travel through Tongariro National Park, the majestic volcanic plateau and on to Whanganui National Park.

Insider Info: Located in the Ruapehu District on the banks of the Whanganui and Retaruke Rivers, and surrounded by Whanganui National Park, Blue Duck Station is an outdoor enthusiast's playground and will be your home for the next two nights.

Blue Duck Station has one of the highest concentrations of whio (blue duck) and kiwi in New Zealand not to mention wetas, native bats and fish. As recognition of its ongoing conservation work Blue Duck Station has been granted three Ballance Farm Environment Awards and a Department of Conservation Services to Conservation Award.

Day 10: Whanganui National Park

Today a variety of experiences is on offer to suit everyone. How about a bush safari? See remains of unbelievable local history, hear all about our

conservation work and witness the everyday workings of this sheep and beef station. Also available: horse trekking, kayaking, mountain biking, helicopter trips, tramping, jet boating, hunting. (Bush Safari included. Other activities are optional and not included.)

Insider Info: During the summer months you have the opportunity to go on a short kayak tour through the gorge at the base of the Kaiwhakauka falls and if you want to spot a blue duck we'll show you to their hang outs. All of this while soaking up the amazing atmosphere of the New Zealand bush with breathtaking views around every corner!

Day 11: Whanganui National Park - Wellington

Approximate driving time 6 hours, 360 km

Travel to Wanganui, one of the oldest settlements in the country. After driving along the Kapiti Coast you'll reach Wellington the capital of New Zealand. We recommend a sightseeing tour and a walk along the waterfront to the National Museum Te Papa. Here you get in depth information about the country's history and culture.

Insider Tip: Enjoy manaakitanga - Whanganui's legendary hospitality. Don't be surprised to find an immediate sense of connection, an unexpected little slice of heaven, and real New Zealand authenticity.

Day 12: Wellington - Picton - Abel Tasman National Park

Approximate driving time 3 hours, 190 km, ferry crossing 3.5 hours

The tour with the ferry through picturesque Marlborough Sound is one of the highlights of your trip. From Picton you drive along the Queen Charlotte Drive with its many bays and beaches. Enjoy sunny Nelson, with its local art scene before you continue to Abel Tasman National Park.

Day 13: Abel Tasman National Park

The park offers a wide range of activities and plenty of walks for all fitness levels. For example you can take a water taxi to Tonga Bay and walk from there to Torrent Bay and take the water taxi back. Or just walk from your accommodation to the next bay or take a kayak along the coast on your own or with a group. Or simply relax on the golden sand of Kaiteriteri Beach.

Insider Tip: Take a drive to Golden Bay, an extraordinary natural environment. Imagine a region with endless variety where beaches, alpine valleys and tranquil fishing rivers share a close proximity with the sea. A chain of steep and rugged mountains cuts its fertile river plains and valleys from the rest of the island.

Day 14: Abel Tasman National Park - Carters Beach, Westport

Approximate driving time 3.5 hours, 240 km

Today, the drive along the winding Buller Gorge takes you to the wild West Coast.

Insider Info: Your accommodation is located at Carters Beach near Westport, a truly undiscovered gem! Listen to rolling breakers, watch stunning sunsets across the Tasman Sea and wander along wide, sandy beaches.

Day 15: Carters Beach - Punakaiki - Westland National Park/Franz Josef

Approximate driving time 4 hours, 275 km

Insider Tip: A side trip to Cape Foulwind is worthwhile. Spectacular ocean views, steeple rocks, and a large year-round fur seal colony.

A visit of Pancake Rocks will be a memorable experience - these bizarre rock formations at the West Coast are simply fascinating. On your way south you travel through Greymouth and Hokitika, the jade centres of the country. Visit a workshop and watch the jade carvers doing their art work. Glaciers, rainforest and coast are close together in Westland National Park. The many different shades of green of the dense rainforest will amaze you.

Insider Tip: There is a lot to see and do, like a jet boat tour in Whataroa to a White Heron Colony where you can watch these rare birds. Or visit the isolated Okarito at the coast and make a kayak trip through the quiet lagoon. Helicopter flights with glacier landing are possible from Fox Glacier and Franz Josef (activities not included).

Day 16: Franz Josef - Wanaka - Cardrona Valley

Approximate driving time 4 hours, 310 km

Take a walk around Lake Matheson near Fox Glacier in the morning, when the lake is still and the surrounding glaciers are reflecting in the water. Or take one of the many walks around the glaciers.

Travel further along the coast. After a stop at Ship Creek Walk and a side trip to Monro Beach Walk you are moving inland from the West Coast. The Haast Pass is a scenic drive with many opportunities to stop and explore. You will be able to see ancient Kahikatea trees from prehistoric time. Via the Crown Range Road, the highest main road in the country, you reach Cardrona Hotel where you stay overnight.

Insider Info: Situated on the spectacular Crown Range Road between Queenstown and Wanaka, the Cardrona Hotel is one of New Zealand's oldest and most iconic hotels. Its rustic charm, stunning mountain setting and rich history make it a must see while in Central Otago.

Said to be the most photographed pub in New Zealand, behind the historic facade lies a stunning beer garden, charming hotel rooms, and an excellent bar and restaurant serving a modern take on traditional pub fare.

Day 17: Cardrona Valley - Queenstown - Fiordland National Park/Te Anau

Approximate driving time 3 hours, 220 km

Enjoy Queenstown's stunning scenery and a huge range of activities before you take the easy drive to Fiordland National Park. The region is home to plenty of hiking and biking trails, guided tours and family activities.

Day 18: Te Anau - Milford Sound - Te Anau

Milford Sound cruise and return coach transfers (included)

The coach takes you through Eglington and Hollyford Valley to the reflecting waters of the sound with its 1,000 meter towering Mitre Peak. As you cruise the length of the fiord, learn about the history of the region and benefit from the knowledge of your specialist nature guide. Experience the spray of a waterfall as you cruise close to sheer rock faces or watch out for dolphins, seals and in season, the rare Fiordland crested penguins.

Day 19: Te Anau - Stewart Island

Approximate driving time 3 hours, 190 km, ferry crossing 1 hour

You follow the Southern Scenic Route through Fiordland National Park past Lake Manapouri. Visit the suspension bridge in Clifden, the oldest in the country. Watch dolphins and whales from the cliffs in Te Waewae Bay. Bluff is the southernmost point of the South Island. You leave your car at the harbour and cross Foveaux Strait by ferry to Stewart Island.

Day 20: Stewart Island/Rakiura National Park

Nature pure! A unique chance to take part in an excursion to a secluded beach where you can observe kiwi birds in their natural surroundings. You can explore Rakiura National Park on one of the many walks. Take a water taxi along the coast where you can watch Hooker see lions if you are lucky. We recommend a visit to the unique Ulva Island and its protected bird life.

Insider Info: Bunkhouse Theatre: 'A Local's Tail' introduces local characters, community colour, and the struggles and triumphs of the island pioneers, both past and present. Independent filmmakers, Stewart Island Bunkhouse Productions, launch this charming

invitation to browse through the island's history, guided by a local dog. Enjoy this quirky 40 minute film with a snack.

(Movie and snack included, during summer months only)

Day 21: Stewart Island - The Catlins - Dunedin

Approximate driving time 5 hours, 282 km, ferry crossing 1 hour

The ferry takes you back to Bluff where you pick up your car. You are driving along the Catlins: Windy and rough coast, many beautiful bays, forest and waterfalls.

Insider Tip: Visit the world oldest Petrified Forest (160 million years) and Nugget Point.

You stay in Dunedin where its Scottish roots are clearly reflected in the buildings.

Day 22: Dunedin

Today you have plenty of time to explore Otago Peninsula and its wildlife. The peninsula contains several fine beaches, and is home to a considerable number of rare species, such as yellow-eyed and little penguins, seals, and shags. Most importantly, it contains the world's only mainland breeding colony of royal albatross at Taiaroa Head on the peninsula's north-eastern point.

Day 23: Dunedin - Moeraki Boulders - Oamaru - Christchurch

Approximate driving time 5 hours, 360 km

Drive north to the famous Moeraki Boulders on the coast. Continue to Oamaru, famous for its Blue Penguin colony, before you continue to Christchurch.

Insider Tip: Oamaru 'Victorian Town at Work': Most unique collection of historic buildings, iconic town and district where citizens and visitors can learn about and experience what life was like in Victorian New Zealand.

Day 24: Christchurch

Drop off your car at the rental car office at the airport.