



The Far North Safari



Tour Summary

Tour name: The Far North Safari

Days: 5.5 days

Tour Highlights

The Far North is our shortest and easiest trip. Plenty of swimming and snorkelling in secret coves of turquoise water, and lots of great day hikes. It is also a bit warmer in the 'winterless North'. Highlights include; the remote forested coastal hike on day 1 and 2 near the Bay of Islands, open coast kayaking at Whangaroa, two nights of isolation at the very tip of NZ, and driving along 90 mile beach and Te Pahi.

Hiking and Fitness

Grade: Easy +

Some energetic sections and climbs, but includes lots of time for relaxation and other activities.

Hiking per day up to 5 hours - average 2 hours

Pack weight up to 10 kg normally day-packs

Altitude gain per day up to 500 metres - normally minimal

Terrain mostly good tracks or beaches and sand dunes

Tour Itinerary

Day 1. Tuesday. East Coast Beaches - 1 km/1 hours hiking

Depart Auckland and follow the east coast northwards. A quick stop to supplement supplies for the next 5 days before following crazy coastal back roads to Elliott's Bay. We set up our camp here just above the beach on a private camp. If the weather is wet we have the option of using a classic rustic kiwi bach (NZ holiday house) instead. Have a swim or explore this lovely coastline. Red-tinged Pohutukawa trees (NZ Xmas tree) cover hidden coves and swimming beaches. If the sea conditions are calm there is excellent snorkelling here too.

Day 2. Wednesday. Bay of Islands - 9 km/6 hours hiking

Tumble out of sleeping bags and leap into the sea; refreshed, break camp and hike northwards. Climb up through regenerating native bush to the ridge tops looking down on hidden sandy coves and rocky headlands. Catching your breath, gaze out across the bright blue Pacific Ocean. We pass huge steel pots and ruins of the old whaling station. These stations all over New Zealand are a sad reminder of the many humpback and southern right whales hunted here. Many of New Zealand's first Europeans were here for sealing and whaling rather than our beautiful natural environment! Lunch at a cute cove of turquoise water, secret beaches and funky palm trees. Descend from

Pukehuia - at 345m the highest hill and best viewpoint in the Bay of Islands. The track ends at a perfect bush-fringed bay of lapping water and moored yachts. Sweat from our exertion is washed away by the clear water. A short drive to the historic township of Russel where you can catch the passenger ferry across to Paihia, while your guide drives around to meet you. A brief stop here, the main tourist centre of the Bay of Islands, before driving north to the campsite at Tauranga Bay and welcome hot showers.

Day 3. Thursday. Whangaroa Kayaking - 10 km/5 hours kayaking

Optional and highly recommended guided kayaking (NZ\$80). Using a mix of single and double sea kayaks we launch off a private beach and kayak along this uncluttered coastline past red volcanic headlands, island outcrops and sandy beaches. After passing through sea caves we reach the sheltered waters of Whangaroa harbour with its mangrove forests. Lunch on a beautiful beach before returning. Stories grow and expand with our stomachs over fish and chips at the famous Mangonui Fish Shop. Those not kayaking have free time at the Tauranga beach campsite until early afternoon, ask guide about other options. Later we head to the twin coves campsite of Matai Bay.

Day 4. Friday. 90 Mile Beach, Cape Reinga - 2 km/2 hours hiking

Another swim and snorkel, and off again; this time a fascinating drive up the endless hard packed sands of 90 mile beach. Te Paki's massive sand dunes loom and we jump out and impress each other with out of control fat-air-antics on our sand-boards. We continue onwards setting up camp at a beautiful sandy cove. Later we have the option of a cliff-top walk, or a drive, to the edge of the world at Cape Reinga where the Pacific Ocean meets the Tasman Sea. Watch the sun setting in the western sky from this (almost) northern tip of New Zealand.

Day 5. Saturday. Cape Maria Van Dieman, Kauri forests - 4-12 km/2- 4 hours hiking

Set off to explore a less visited part of the cape's coastline. Crossing Te Paki Station leads us to the surreal iron stained sand dunes of Cape Maria Van Diemen. Climbing high we get grand views of this incredible piece of New Zealand landscape. Wander along an expansive stretch of empty beach before returning for lunch. In the afternoon we leave the Far North and begin the journey southwards passing through Kaitaia, across the Hokianga on a car ferry, and on to the Waipoua Forest. Tane Mahuta, New Zealand's biggest kauri tree, makes us feel humble as we curl up in our comfy cabins. Frequently we hear the screeching call of the endangered North Island Brown Kiwi; whose numbers are sadly dwindling each year.

Day 6. Sunday. Kauri forests - 2 km/1 hour hiking

This morning we visit the Trounson Kauri Reserve to bask in the shadows of these huge trees. An intensively managed mainland conservation 'island' surrounded by a sea of farmland, Trounson is one of the healthiest forests in the country providing refuge for many threatened species. This reserve is also home to a well nurtured and protected (from predators) population of kiwi. We arrive in Auckland at approximately 1:30pm.