

## SHORT NORTH (Previously Jill)

**Start:** Auckland\*

**Finish:** Auckland\*

**Minimum Days:** 10

**Recommended:** 1.5+ weeks

*\*This pass can start or finish anywhere on this route, however most people start/finish in Auckland.*

### Auckland to Hahei

Haere mai (welcome)! Your Stray adventure kicks off in New Zealand's largest city, Auckland. We depart and head south, travelling to the Coromandel Peninsula via the old colonial town of Thames. Renowned for its natural beauty and pristine swimming beaches, the Coromandel has plenty to offer the active traveller but is also a great place to kick back and relax. When the tides are right, we'll head over to Hot Water Beach, where you can dig your own natural spa pool! Tonight, you have the option to join a group dinner for a classic Kiwi BBQ.

**Accommodation:** Exclusive Stray accommodation by the waterfront

**Free activities:** Visit Hot Water Beach for a natural beach spa (tide & weather dependent), walk to Cathedral Cove, explore old cultural sites or simply relax on the beach

### Hahei

Today you have a full free day to embrace the laid-back lifestyle that makes this such a popular NZ holiday destination. Make the most of this special place by taking a scenic walk or kayak trip to a hidden paradise at nearby Cathedral Cove or opt to relax on the white sands of Hahei Beach. The coast off Hahei is also part of the protected Te-Whanganui-a-Hei Marine Reserve, which makes it a prime place for a guided coastal boat tour.

**Accommodation:** Exclusive Stray accommodation by the waterfront

**Optional paid activities:** Kayaking, guided boat tour

**Free activities:** Walk to Cathedral Cove, watch the sunrise on the beach, explore old cultural sites or simply relax on the beach

### Hahei to Rotorua

We leave Hahei early, travelling through to Paeroa, home of New Zealand's oldest and largest soft drink company L&P, where we'll stop for a fun photo op at a local landmark. Carrying on, we'll arrive in Rotorua, known for its lively geothermal activity, rich Maori history and adventure tourism. Get the adrenalin pumping this afternoon and sign up for a white water rafting adventure, head to the adventure park, or take a walk around town.

**Accommodation:** Comfortable central city hostel

**Optional paid activities:** White water rafting, zorbing, adrenaline-fuelled adventure park (big swings, bungys and more)

**Free activities:** Whakarewarewa Redwood Forest walk, see the bubbling mud pools at Kuirau Park

## Rotorua

Often labelled the adventure capital of the North Island, you have a full free day in Rotorua to discover a wealth of adventure activities and geothermal wonders. Go ziplining through native bush, zorbing or take a truly unique guided jet boat adventure to bathe in a hot waterfall. Looking to relax instead? Visit the hots pools and bubbling mud baths at one of Rotorua's geothermal parks or take in a Maori cultural performance. Film buffs may want to sign up for a guided tour through the world-famous Hobbiton Movie Set. The choice is yours!

**Accommodation:** Comfortable central city hostel

**Optional paid activities:** River jet tour, white water rafting, ziplining, zorbing, geothermal attractions, Maori village & performance experience, Hobbiton Movie Set tour

**Free activities:** Whakarewarewa Redwood Forest walk

## Rotorua to Lake Aniwhenua

There's time to squeeze in one last Rotorua activity this morning - many people choose to visit Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland. From here our journey ventures right off the beaten track into the remote area of Lake Aniwhenua for an immersive cultural experience like no other. Your Maori host family will share with you their story and traditions, as well as their vision for making a difference in their remote community. You'll see sacred Maori rock art, play traditional stick games for hand-eye coordination and watch the preparation of a ground cooked 'hangi', before tasting it for yourself!

**Exclusive 'Strademark' experience includes:** (Additional cost \$89)

- 1 night's accommodation at the serene lakeside Kohutapu Lodge
- Full hangi buffet dinner & dessert and a continental breakfast
- Guided tour to sacred Maori rock carvings
- Introduction to the Murupara area, its people, history and challenges
- Participation in a local school program designed to inspire the next generation (*participation available on school days only*)

*NB. A minimum of 9 people is required to stay at Lake Aniwhenua. This 'Strademark' overnight experience is optional, but in our opinion, it's an absolute must do! To skip this experience, you need to catch a public bus from Rotorua to Taupo and then hop back on the Stray bus the next day in Taupo. Please confirm your pickup with our Reservations team.*

**Accommodation:** Scenic lakefront lodge

**Optional paid activities:** Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland, learn the Haka, Maori flax weaving

**See More moment:** Meet a respected Maori guide and view NZ's oldest Maori rock carvings at a sacred archaeological site. Learn about Maori traditions, local history and enjoy a sumptuous feast of 'Hangi', cooked underground!

**Do More moment:** Leftover Hangi is packaged and delivered to community members in need. Sometimes it is donated to elderly people in the area or during the school term donations go to the children at the local school. Meet the children and participate in an inspirational program aimed at driving cross-cultural education in an otherwise isolated part of NZ.

### Lake Aniwhenua (via Taupo) to Blue Duck Station

After breakfast we'll make a special visit to the local school to deliver packed lunches to kids that often go without (dependent on school timetable). Then it's on to Taupo, where the brave hearted can opt to plunge from a plane to skydive over Australasia's largest lake or bungy into a canyon! If you're not up for an adrenaline hit, walk the Huka Falls Walkway track, or spend time exploring this popular lakeside town. Our next destination is about as far off the beaten track as you can get in the North Island! Blue Duck Station is a sprawling 7,200-acre high country farm that is both a working station and an environmental conservation leader. On arrival, we will settle in to learn a little about daily life at Blue Duck, then relax and chill out around an evening fire.

**Accommodation:** Country station lodge

**Optional paid activities:** Skydiving, bungy

**Free activities:** Huka Falls Walkway, Spa Park walk

### Blue Duck Station

Today is yours to fully explore this truly incredible location. Jump on a 4WD and travel up farm roads, over hilly peaks and through native bush to learn about the station's interesting settlement history and their current conservation efforts. Don your cowboy hat for a guided horse trek or kayak on the river through bush clad valleys and lush green hills. It doesn't matter which option you choose, just get outdoors and enjoy all that Blue Duck has to offer!

**Accommodation:** Country station lodge

**Optional paid activities:** 4WD farm tour, half-day horse trek, clay bird shooting, pest control, kayaking (summer only), jet boating (summer only)

**Free activities:** Walk around the amazing property to take in the lush scenery, walk to Kaiwhakauka waterfall, enjoy your hosts' fantastic hospitality and stories of the local wildlife and history

**See More moment:** See the three peaks of Mount Ruapehu, Mount Tongariro, and Mount Ngauruhoe from 'The Top of the World', the highest point of the station.

**Do More moment:** Assist with the farm's pest control efforts by going on a guided hunt and bring back dinner!

## Blue Duck Station (via Tongariro) to Raetihi

We'll be up at the crack of dawn for an early departure to make our way to the UNESCO Dual World Heritage Site, Tongariro National Park. Today you get the chance to tick off one of the most popular hikes in New Zealand, the epic Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Considered one of the world's top one-day walks, this 19km hike takes you across a rocky plateau with dramatic volcanic peaks, craters and turquoise lakes that you'll remember for a lifetime. The Crossing is open to walk year-round (alpine gear and guide are required in winter), but subject to the weather conditions. Ensure you pack a day pack with plenty of supplies and clothing for all conditions. If the weather prevents you from doing the Crossing, there are alternative shorter walks in the area. Tonight, unwind after a big day in a cosy historic lodge in Raetihi, with friendly farm animals, a pamper room and spa bath with mountain views.

**Accommodation:** Historic restored lodge with mountain views

**Optional paid activities:** The Tongariro Alpine Crossing, hop off to go skiing/snowboarding (winter only)

**Free activities:** Taranaki Falls walk, visit the Volcanic Centre, Tawhai Falls (Gollum's pool), pet the local farm animals, volunteer tree planting

## Raetihi to Wellington

This morning we travel to the bottom of the North Island via the rural towns of Ohakune, Taihape and Bulls. Today is mostly an express day to get to Wellington, our capital city and home to New Zealand's parliament and the iconic Beehive government building. Also known as the 'coolest little capital in the world', thanks to Lonely Planet, Wellington is a great place to check out the lively arts, craft beer and café culture scenes or do some shopping. The afternoon is yours to explore the sights - we recommend wandering down Oriental Parade or viewing the excellent exhibits on display at Te Papa National Museum.

**Accommodation:** Central city hostel

**Optional paid activities:** Wellington Movie Tours, check out the great cafes and bars

**Free activities:** Walk Oriental Parade, head up Mt Victoria for fantastic views, visit Te Papa National Museum, gumboot (welly) throwing

## Wellington (via National Park) to Auckland

We depart in the early morning. This is an express day heading back to the 'City of Sails', Auckland. For those who may have missed out on hiking the Tongariro Crossing, you have the option to hop off in National Park and try again. With an early evening arrival, there's still time to wander the streets of Auckland, visit the Viaduct, do some souvenir shopping or hang out with new friends and share stories about your recent adventures. If you are hanging around Auckland for another day or two, don't miss your chance to jump off the Harbour Bridge or Sky Tower, skydive, or take a wildlife cruise around the Hauraki Gulf. We hope you had a blast on your Stray adventure!

This itinerary is a guide. Given the spontaneous nature of our trips and lack of control over New Zealand's weather(!), what we do each day might occasionally vary.