

north island volcanic plateau loop



trip highlights

- Enjoy the geothermal attractions of Rotorua and Taupo
- Experience Maori culture with the locals
- Visit Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland
- Ride through remote inland farming country hardly anyone gets to see
- Explore Lake Rotoiti on the unique new boat 'The Airstream Project'
- Options to visit the Hobbiton Movie Set and Waitomo's brightest Glowworm Cave
- Enjoy great hospitality from the locals of back country NZ
- Pedal through Hobbit country, a limestone landscape of remarkable, natural formations
- Enjoy a well earned soak in the natural hotpools in the Wairakei geothermal valley.
- Visit Huka Falls, the largest falls on the Waikato River.



Trip Duration	6 days	Trip Code: RTW
Grade	Moderate	
Activities	Road and gravel biking	
	Short walks	
Accommodation	5 nights motel	

Kia ora from Adventure South

Thank you for your interest in our North Island Volcanic Plateau Loop adventure. It's a superb adventure and we hope you can join us. Adventure South has been operating active holidays throughout New Zealand since 1992. Thanks to our experience we're confident to say that we offer the very best cycling, trekking and adventure travel itineraries available in New Zealand today.

There's simply no other collection of New Zealand itineraries that can match the geographic coverage, originality and overall quality of our active New Zealand adventure holidays. An Adventure South holiday aims to take you beyond the more popular and busy trails to provide you with a truly unique New Zealand wilderness experience.

We're here to show you that there are many, many more trails and cycling routes in our great country that are the new frontiers in adventure tourism - beautiful, scenic, and without the crowds. We aim to explore these delicate environments in a sustainable manner to ensure we leave as little impact as possible from our visit. We'd be honoured to introduce you to the wide variety of natural wonders that New Zealand is famous for. Go forth, go south - join us on this amazing small group, value packed adventure!

why travel with Adventure South?

"Small Groups, Great Guides, Superb Holidays."

This comment encapsulates an Adventure South active holiday in New Zealand. The phrase was not born from a long and tortuous strategic planning process, it came from a client review! We could not have said it any better. Our client feedback also confirms that what helps make our holidays different are the quality of our professional guides. They share their humour, compassion and wilderness experience to ensure that you have a great vacation and the right degree of personal challenge.

On an Adventure South tour you can also expect the right, proven equipment is provided for your tour; the food is delicious, plentiful and can be catered to your dietary requests; your guides are all First Aid trained; that the itinerary you have chosen has been carefully crafted from decades of personal experience in the New Zealand wilderness, not from a guide book recommendation.



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trip dates

2026 06 Oct - 11 Oct

2027 24 Jan - 29 Jan
26 Feb - 03 Mar **H**
03 Apr - 08 Apr

important notes

HS - Holiday Season
H - High Season

the trip

On this trip around Central North Island, you will see geysers spray steam from the earth in Rotorua, witness mud pools bubbling away, soak in natural hot pools near Taupo, experience Maori Culture with the locals and enjoy a boat ride beneath a galaxy of glowworms in the Waitomo Caves. There will also be the option to visit Hobbiton Movie Set, a significant location used for The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit film trilogies

Our first ride is through the rural heart of New Zealand's North Island, specifically the beautiful Waikite Valley, leading us to Wai-O-Tapu thermal wonderland where we'll enjoy a self guided walk around this bubbling, steaming, colourful landscape.

2 nights in Rotorua allows us time to experience rich Maori culture, otherworldly geothermal landscapes, a unique boat excursion on Lake Rotoiti and some great riding among lush forests and sparkling lakes.

From Rotorua we head West through the Waikato region's rich, rolling farmland first to the pretty rural town of Cambridge, and the following day to Waitomo, famous for its labyrinth of limestone caves, underground galleries and grottos. Some of these are illuminated by millions of tiny glowworms that are unique to New Zealand. For those keen to experience Waitomo's brightest Glowworm Cave, we'll head a little off the beaten track to explore the Cave by boat on a rugged and scenic limestone studded farm.

The backdrop for our next ride is the natural limestone landscape of this area, with gorges, valleys and rugged hills delivering a captivating natural environment. Our final night will be in the heart of the region, staying in a thriving rural community and hosted by locals.

We make our way back to Taupo via our final ride, continuing with the theme of quiet rural, back country roads finishing at the Wairakei Terraces, nestled in the Wairakei geothermal valley, for a well-earned soak in the thermal waters. A visit to the nearby Huka Falls is our final trip highlight, the largest falls on the Waikato River and the most visited natural attraction in New Zealand.

about your leader/escort

Our guides are one of our biggest assets and we pride ourselves on their level of quality and high standards. You will have two experienced members of our guiding team. You'll know you're in safe hands as all of our guides are certified in first aid and CPR and many of them are trained bike mechanics. They come from all walks of life but our guides have a common desire to give you the best possible experience, fun and lots of fond memories to take home with you.

at a glance

DAY 1	MEET TAUPO; START TOUR FROM ATIAMURI.
DAY 2	ROTORUA TO LAKE ROTOITI
DAY 3	ROTORUA TO CAMBRIDGE
DAY 4	CAMBRIDGE TO WAITOMO
DAY 5	WAITOMO TO PIOPIO
DAY 6	PIOPIO TO TAUPO

what's included

- 5 nights hotel/motel accommodation, based on twin share
- 5 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 4 dinners
- Entry to Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland
- Entry to Wairakei Thermal Hotpools
- Boat excursion on Lake Rotoiti on the unique Airstream Project
- Locally hosted traditional Maori dinner



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fast facts

Countries Visited:

New Zealand

Singles:

A single supplement is available for this trip*

Leader:

Expert local leader

responsible travel

We all have a responsibility to minimise the impact we have on the environment and communities we visit when we travel.

Since our beginnings this has been a cornerstone of our company.

The New Zealand travel industry has become a world leader in developing an external audit process which monitors tourism businesses based on quality, safety and sustainable experiences.

We're very proud to have received a Gold Qualmark rating, having met standards designed to protect what makes New Zealand unique and special.

Being responsible when we travel isn't about a single process or project but rather a way of thinking and then doing.

We started this journey many years ago and although we are not perfect, we are striving to continually learn and improve.

trip grading

- Comfortable support vehicle throughout
- Speciality bike trailer to carry bikes and luggage
- Snacks, fruit and water while cycling
- Department of Conservation and National Park Fees
- Pick up and drop off from/to Taupo central location

what's not included

- Domestic airfares and taxes
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- All beverages, other than breakfast and water while cycling
- Road/Gravel bike - available to hire
- Optional activities
- Personal expenses (eg. phone calls, internet, laundry, shopping etc)
- Travel insurance

detailed itinerary

DAY 1 Meet Taupo; Start Tour from Atiamuri.

Welcome to Aotearoa New Zealand and your North Island Adventure! Hopefully you should all have arrived yesterday and be ready to ride this morning, with any personal bikes built up and gear prepared.

Meeting at a central location in Taupo, we'll start with an introduction and short tour briefing before loading up and heading off to Ohakuri Dam on the banks of the Waikato River.

After a bike fitting and safety briefing, it's time for our first ride heading through the Waikite Valley with panoramic views of rolling hills, farmland and forested areas. We'll pass the Waikite Valley Hot Pools and take a short stroll to the largest single source of naturally boiling water in New Zealand.

From there we'll ride through to the Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland, a spectacular geothermal area known for its rich volcanic history and unique thermal terrain. After exploring this landscape of colorful terraces, hot springs, boiling mud pools and fumaroles it's just a short drive to our accommodation in Rotorua. Sitting within the Pacific Rim of Fire, the city is known for this geothermal activity and stunning volcanic lakes as well as showcasing our fascinating Maori culture

Cycle : 50km, 752m

meals: D

DAY 2 Rotorua to Lake Rotoiti

Today's ride takes in Rotorua's unique thermal waterfront, offering snapshots of the history of Maori and tourism in the area. Leaving the city's thermal attractions we climb around the back of Mount Ngongotaha, a volcanic dome overlooking the city of Rotorua. Following the well named Paradise Valley through farmland and native forests we head inland, climbing upto the Mamaku plateau. Here

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Moderate

The trip is graded moderate. You will need a good level of fitness and we suggest 2-3 hours of cycling three times a week for the three months leading up to your trip. You will need to be able to cycle 50-60km each day for the Standard itinerary, and as much as 90km on the longest day of the Avid itinerary. The on-road sections will have low to moderate traffic levels on back-roads.

Riders need to be confident riding with some traffic. Ebikes are suitable if ridden appropriately and battery life is managed (i.e. not on turbo the whole time, and in the correct chain ring for climbing hills). The tour is fully supported and if at any stage you feel like having a rest from cycling you will be able to ride in the support vehicle.

adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are mentally flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise.

If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip we recommend that you speak with your consultant or travel agent.

important note

These trip notes represent the most current information for this itinerary, and may supersede any information in the current brochure, including but not limited to the itinerary and price. The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. This itinerary may change at any time due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control.

are natural 'statues' called Tors, unusual rock formations formed by volcanic eruptions, that are strikingly different and look like nature's been busy carving and making an artistic statement across the Plateau!

Loading up, we head around the back of Lake Rotorua and head over to its beautiful neighbour - Lake Rotoiti. Surrounded by lush native bush, it also features glow worm caves and natural thermal springs and is best explored by boat, our afternoon's excursion.

But not on just any boat! The Airstream Project is a unique pontoon vessel with electric drive, built by locals - the shape, form and finish draws its inspiration from classic 1960's Airstream trailers, second world war aircraft and Italian speed boats!

Tonight, a Maori home hosted dinner is a special opportunity to really connect with the indigenous people of New Zealand.

Cycle Options :

Standard: Rotorua to Lake Rotoiti: 41km, +577m

meals: B,L,D

DAY 3 Rotorua to Cambridge

Today starts with a 40 min drive to the start of our ride, immersed in the gently rolling hills of the Waikato region, chosen by Peter Jackson, film director of the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit trilogies, as the home of Hobbiton!

We'll finish the ride on the outskirts of Cambridge, known as "The Town of Trees & Champions", memorable for its leafy streets, heritage buildings, antique shops and thoroughbred horse studs.

This afternoon is free to explore this delightful rural town or you could choose to visit the Hobbiton Movie Set. Here you'll be guided on 2.5hr journey through the unequivocal beauty of the Shire farmland, around the Movie Set, showing the intricate detailing, pointing out the most famous locations and explaining how the movie magic was made. (early bookings essential).

Dinner at your leisure tonight with plenty of options to choose from.

Cycle :

Okoroire to Cambridge : 50km, +626m

meals: B

DAY 4 Cambridge to Waitomo

Today's ride takes us through the bucolic landscape of South Waikato, a region known for its highly productive dairy farming.

We ride through Otorohanga, once a traditional Maori village and today a service town for the surrounding dairy-farming district. From there the route unveils the raw beauty of the Waitomo Valley – gently rolling and bush clad hills, lush greenery, and the Waitomo Stream weaving through the terrain like a silver thread.

The Valley emerges into the village of Waitomo, known for its extensive underground cave systems and thousands of glow-worms hanging from the cave walls.

For those keen to experience Waitomo's brightest Glowworm Cave, a significant cave of New Zealand and a national treasure once used by Sir David Attenborough and the BBC, we'll head off

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the beaten track to visit the Cave on a limestone-studded farm owned by a local family. Another optional activity is the delightful Ruakuri bush walk, a 1km loop with a forested gorge, natural sculpted cliffs and low limestone arches.

Dinner and our accommodation both in the small village of Waitomo tonight.

Cycle Options :

Standard : Rotorangi to Otorohonga : 54km, +476m

Avid : Rotorangi to Waitomo 68km, +604m

meals: B,D

DAY 5 Waitomo to Piopio

We start the day with one of the best short walks in New Zealand! Discover a forested gorge, natural sculpted cliffs and low limestone arches on this spectacular 1km loop walk before embarking on today's ride through equally spectacular geography.

The ride offers an extraordinary blend of scenery alive with sounds and sights, cinematic wonders, and culinary delights. You'll pedal through lush countryside surrounded by rolling hills, limestone features, native forests and serene farmlands, each turn revealing a new vista as equally stunning as the last.

On a clear day you'll see the Central North Island volcanoes including the North Island's highest mountain, Mt Ruapehu and towards the West, the majestic Mt Taranaki standing alone.

We finish at the charming Fat Pigeon Cafe in the quaint village of Piopio, where we'll also be staying and dining at another local gem, the Fat Owl!

Cycle Options :

Standard : Waitomo to Piopio : 41km, +811m

Avid : Waitomo to Piopio : 68km, +1218m

meals: B,L,D

DAY 6 Piopio to Taupo

Our final ride is a very fitting end to a tour of back country North Island New Zealand. After a 1.5hr van transfer, we start the ride from the Whakamaru Domain and travel on quiet secondary roads through typical rural North Island, New Zealand.

Our destination is the Wairakei Terraces hot pools - a geothermal wonderland with healing and curing properties - perfect for tired legs! Significant natural thermal springs, mud and silica waters found in geothermal areas, have long been used by Maori for bathing, healing and wellness. Specific sites were often located in beautiful landscapes, at the junction of rivers and streams, on the shores of pristine lakes or, like this wonderland, below magnificent silica terraces.

After a relaxing soak, our tour ends with a short walk to view the Huka Falls, where you can witness the phenomenon of natural hydro power with more than 220,000 litres of water per sec barreling over an 11 meter high waterfall! This is New Zealand's most visited attraction for good reason.

Returning to where it all began, we'll drop off late afternoon at a central location in Taupo. If you're flying to your next destination, please book flights departing no earlier than 6pm today.

Cycle : Whakamaru to Wairakei : 50km, +874m

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

country information

Stretching North to South for over 2000 km, and split into two main islands - the North and the South Islands - New Zealand is a country of diverse landforms. From the Pacific Island beaches and rolling farmlands in the north, to the volcanic plateau and then onto the soaring

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mountains within view of the sea in the south, and the sub-Antarctic islands that dot the South Island coastline, the contrasts are many.

The South Island is the 12th largest island in the world. The west coast is dominated by the Southern Alps, which contain more mountains than the European Alps altogether, and home to New Zealand's highest peak, Aoraki Mount Cook (3754m / 12,316 ft). The Main Divide, the chain of peaks that forms the backbone of the Alps from Arthur's Pass to Fiordland, splits the South Island into east and west. Several ice ages, and the fact that two continental plates are sliding past each other forming the Southern Alps, means that the scenery is as rugged as the New Zealand fauna and flora is unique. The largest city in the South Island is Christchurch.

The North Island is the smaller of the two main islands of New Zealand. Its northern location means it enjoys a warmer, more temperate climate than much of the South Island, and is much more vastly populated. The centre of the island is primarily a volcanic landscape with vast forests, volcanic peaks, and picturesque lakes. The eastern side of the island is covered with vineyards. Auckland, also known as the 'City of Sails', is the largest city of New Zealand and found on the North Island.

With a population of 4.0 million people, the wilderness areas of New Zealand are many as most 'Kiwis' now live in an urban situation near the coast. The Maori are the indigenous people of the land and they named it Aotearoa 'Land of the Long White Cloud' upon their arrival 1000 years ago. Europeans settled in the early 1800s and the country is alive today with a market driven economy and a blend of European and Asia/Pacific influences to create a buoyant South Pacific culture.

climate

As a general rule, November to April are the most ideal months for travelling in New Zealand's stunning outdoors. One of the most important things travellers need to know about the New Zealand climate is that it's a maritime climate, as opposed to the continental climate typical of larger landmasses.

Thanks to its position in the path of the 'Roaring 40s' and mountainous terrain, New Zealand's weather can frequently change with amazing rapidity. Because the weather can change so unexpectedly you should be prepared for sudden changes in temperature and weather conditions. This basically means having a good waterproof jacket and some warm clothing. You don't need to bring your winter wardrobe but a good fleece/jumper and good thermals are a must.

The temperature during the South Island summers range from 10-30 °C, with a pleasant 40-50% humidity. Higher altitudes are always considerably cooler and snowfall is not uncommon even in summer. The Southern Alps act as a barrier to the moisture laden winds coming west across the Tasman Sea, creating a wet climate on the west side of the mountains and a drier climate on the east side. The geography also creates a wind pattern, which can in summer be very hot, dry and fierce. Maximum temperatures we may encounter range up to 30°C. Minimum temperatures expected in the Southern Alps in Summer time are around -5°C. Weather is an integral facet of any mountain range and getting to understand and work with this major environmental factor is what will make you more prepared for your tour – any questions about what to expect on your tour talk to one of our sales team.

a typical day

Each day will be different but you can expect to make the most of every daylight hour! Cycling will obviously be the main feature of every day and there are 2 ride options on most days. Whilst technically relatively easy there are hills and small sections of gravel terrain to keep you focused and the stunning scenery will be a great distraction. Breakfasts will be at your accommodation or a nearby cafe, packed lunches at scenic spots along the way and dinners in local restaurants.

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dietary requirements

Provided we are advised in advance of your departure we are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance (at least 1 month prior to your trip) to determine whether we can cater to such dietary requirements on your chosen adventure. Please note that options are likely to be limited in very remote locations or alternatives may be more expensive or unavailable. There may be times when those with special requirements may need to provide their own food. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

pre and post tour accommodation

You will need to stay overnight in Taupo the night before the start of the tour. We would advise choosing a central location as the pick up location will be close to the town centre. At the end of the tour, please avoid booking any flights departing from Taupo on the final day before 6pm. If you would like some help booking pre/post tour accommodation speak to our staff as they can help with different suggestions.

joining instructions

On the first day of the tour, you will meet your guides and fellow travelers at a central city location in Taupo, at a time to be advised. Please be dressed to cycle and have any items you may need during the day in a day bag, including any personal saddles or pedals you would like fitting to any hire bikes. If you miss your flight or are unable to reach the meeting point on time, please call us at the Adventure South NZ office (Free phone in NZ 0800 00 11 66 or 03 942 1222).

equipment provided

ROAD BIKE (Additional Charge)

On road cycling tours our road bikes provide the ultimate cycling experience. The drop handle bars offer multi hand positions. Our bikes have wider 32mm tyres and disc brakes which are safer and better suited to NZ road conditions. They have a relaxed geometry and wide range rear cassette to suit people with varying levels of cycling experience and for longer cycle touring routes.

•
HYBRID BIKE (Additional Charge)

These bikes have the same narrower tyres and lightweight frames, only with flat handlebars to give the performance and speed of a road bike. The geometry allows you to sit in a more natural upright riding position that provides the best control of the bike with a well-placed centre of gravity and in a posture that reduces strain on the rider's neck and back.

•
ELECTRIC BIKE (Additional Charge)

Our Sinch ebikes are perfect for cyclists that may require a little assistance on their travels. Pedalling our ebikes is easier on knees and joints than riding a traditional bike. They provide up to 100kms of pedal assistance before requiring recharging. Very simple to operate and they provide people with varying levels of cycling experience, health and fitness levels the opportunity to enjoy our cycling holidays.



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ACCESSORIES

A bicycle helmet will be supplied with all bike rentals.

what you carry

You will need to carry your own personal items while cycling, such as a light rain jacket, camera, sunscreen, water bottle, sunglasses. A pannier bag will be supplied with any hire bikes. You will have access to the support vehicle during most of the days if you wish to leave any other items on board.

equipment required

A hybrid or gravel bike is recommended and both are available to hire. If bringing your own bike, please ensure it has been recently serviced and is in good mechanical order with new brake pads, sealant if tubeless and ideally new tyres. Your guides will carry bike tools and basic repair equipment, but please bring any spare parts that are specific to your bike such as inner tubes, brake pads, hangars and spokes. Ebikes are also acceptable but likely only suitable for the Standard itinerary unless the battery is well managed. A good quality helmet is also recommended. A comprehensive gear list will be provided closer to the date of departure.

protecting the environment

In a world where more and more rubbish is produced every year we are trying to do our little bit to help the planet. We encourage you to please bring your own water bottle. If you are a keen coffee or tea drinker you might like to bring your own reusable cup, as there are many opportunities along the tour to get take-away drinks. Also if you think you might do some shopping, it could be useful to carry small foldable reusable shopping bags to reduce the need for plastic bags.

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follow us

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how to book

To book an Adventure South holiday, you can book directly online or you will need to complete a booking form. You can download a copy from www.adventuresouth.co.nz/Contact/How-to-Book. On completion, please scan/email or post the form to Adventure South, along with your non-refundable deposit. If you're coming from outside New Zealand contact your nearest World Expeditions office or travel agent for assistance with your travel arrangements including flights, travel insurance and additional accommodation or just for some information in your time zone.