

Auckland, New Zealand

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Introduction

As the largest city in New Zealand, Auckland is the most likely arrival point for visitors from overseas.

One of the great attractions of Auckland is its natural beauty. In the centre of the city, one may not immediately notice this natural beauty, except that there seem to be quite a lot of hills to climb. A little exploration, however, will soon reveal, that, even from the centre of the largest city in the nation, one can just walk into beautiful countryside.

Situated on an isthmus, Auckland has harbours on both east and west sides and is almost surrounded by sea with lots of islands to visit. It is locally known as the 'City of Sails' and is a noted yachting centre. Beaches too are within easy reach. There are a lot of Auckland attractions to enjoy which include museums, art galleries and fun attractions.

The city centre of Auckland runs around the shores of Waitemata Harbour. Queen Street is the main street and it meets the harbour at the ferry building where you can catch ferries to the islands and to Devonport.

Albert Park is between the university and the Auckland Art Gallery. The Domain is the main open area in the city centre.

South of Auckland is Manukau City where you will find Rainbow's End theme park and the Auckland Botanic Gardens. Waitakere City is a scenic area with vineyards, bushwalks and beaches. North Shore City is north of the Auckland harbour bridge and includes the town of Devonport with its Victorian villas, beaches and stylish shops. Parnell is the oldest suburb in Auckland with fashion boutiques, restaurants and heritage listed buildings.

Facts & Figures

The population of the Auckland region, the most densely inhabited in the nation, is 1.4 million or 31% of New Zealand's population. Auckland city, the most populous city in the nation, contains 9% of the population of New Zealand.

Auckland has 48 dormant (not extinct) volcanoes within its limits and every one of them has erupted during the last 150,000 years. The most prominent is Mt. Eden, which is within walking distance from the city centre.

The area around Auckland was first explored by Europeans in 1820, with first European habitation dating from 1833, when a saw mill was established in nearby Warkworth. In 1840, following the signing the Treaty of Waitangi between Maoris and Europeans, Captain William Hobson, Lieutenant Governor of New Zealand, established the nation's capital in Auckland and 500 Scottish settlers arrived there in 1842. Auckland remained the capital for twenty-five years.

Today, 12% of Auckland's population remains of Maori extraction and a surprisingly large proportion of 11% is of Polynesian descent. In fact, Auckland claims to be the largest Polynesian city in the world. It also claims to have more boats per head of population than any other city in the world!

Climate

Auckland has a moderate climate, with warm conditions during summer although it can get quite cool during Winter. Due to its coastal outlook, winds from the bays can be quite cool and strong. The average temperatures are: during summer, 24°C; and during winter, 14°C.

Tourist Information

Essentials

Emergency = 111

Tipping

Tipping is not expected but, like other places, has started to take hold.

Ambulance

For medical emergencies call 111, or for an ambulance call 0800 229 6757.

Banks

Banking hours are from 9am to 4.30pm. There is a branch of the Bank of New Zealand at the airport as well as many in the city. You can exchange money here or at money exchange centres in and around Auckland.

Police Services

In case of an emergency contact 111. The main police station in Auckland is located on the corner of Fort Street and Jan Baxter Place.

Telephones

Phone cards can be purchased at convenience stores. There are plenty of public phones in Auckland. Dial 018 for the operator.

Medical Services

Medical services are not free to tourists in New Zealand, therefore health insurance is advised. The following Auckland public hospitals all have accident and emergency services.

Auckland Hospital Park Road, Grafton (09 379 7440).

Middlemore Hospital, Hospital Road, Otahuhu (09 486 1491).

North Shore Hospital, Shakespeare Road, Takapuna (09 486 1491).

Libraries

Auckland Central Library, Lorne Street (09 377 0209).

Grey Lynne Library, Great North Road (09 376 3577).

Parnell Library, Parnell Road – (09 373 5082).

Tourist Information

Auckland Travel and Information Centre, 287 Queen Street (09 979 2333).

New Zealand Visitor Centre, Corner of Quay and Hobson Streets (09 979 7005).

There is also a visitor information centre at Auckland Airport.

Post Offices

Downtown Shopping Centre (09 309 6343).

Wyndham Street (09 302 1059).

Wellesley Street West (09 379 6710).

Getting About**Auckland Airport**

Auckland Airport is located twenty kilometres to the south of the city centre and takes about 45 minutes from the city centre. A taxi to the city centre costs approximately \$60.

Quarantine regulations are strict in New Zealand. It is best not to carry in any food or other vegetable or animal materials.

There is a Visitor Information Office at the airport. Turn left after passing through Customs and it is almost at the end of the building hidden behind a café. This office has free telephones to many hotels and backpackers hostels, so you can make your reservation here, and know where you are going. The officer on duty will also have details of any special offers available.

The Airbus service operates every twenty minutes and provides transport to almost anywhere within the city centre. It serves all major hotels and backpackers hostels within the area. The trip can take up to an hour, with 45 minutes as an average time. The first departure from the city to the airport is at 5am and the last departure from the airport to the city is at 10pm. There are also minibuses available for the same journey.

Auckland Transport**Car**

Car hire is very popular in New Zealand as most people like to get out and do their own thing when it comes to touring the beautiful countryside. All the major companies have branches in Auckland, including Avis, Budget, Hertz and Thrifty. Some of the companies rent out camper vans as well.

Auckland is quite an expansive city and so hiring a car is a good idea. The roads are well signposted and motorists are courteous so driving in the city is fairly hassle free, although the downtown area gets very busy in rush hour so is best avoided at these times. Parking in the city centre can be a problem, though the 24-hour car parks ease matters somewhat (located on Albert Street, Customs Street West and Beresford Street). If you choose to rent a car, be aware that some companies charge extra for drivers under 25 years old.

Taxi

There are many taxi ranks in and around the city centre, or you can flag one down if you see an empty one or sometimes it is easier just to telephone for one. The major taxi company in Auckland is Auckland Taxi Co Op (09 300 3000).

Pushbike

Another convenient way to get around the city is by bicycle. There is a sign-posted cycle route running for 31 miles along the waterfront and around the city. It is a great way to move around easily and get the most out of the scenery. Auckland Cycle Hire is located in downtown Auckland, open 7 days a week and provides helmets and locks.

Public Transport

Public transport information is available by calling 366 6400.

Bus

The main downtown bus service is located on Commerce Street, however not all buses leave from here. Local timetables can be picked up at the bus terminal, information centres and most newsagents.

The best way to get around the CBD in Auckland, and the cheapest, is the city circuit buses. They are free and operate every 10 minutes. You can go from Britomart, through Queen Street, past Albert Park and the university and past the Sky Tower. You can hop on and off at nine city stops. Just look for the red city circuit buses or some normal buses that have the city circuit sign on them.

The Auckland Explorer Bus is a sightseeing bus that takes in the main attractions that includes Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter, Parnell Village, Auckland Museum and operates as a hop-on-hop-off service. Central pickup points are the Ferry building, Civic Theatre and at the Sky Tower.

There are several types of coach passes available from Auckland – not only those issued by InterCity, but several offered by combinations of smaller companies. Some of these, in particular, are good value if they fit your travelling plans and they can be 24 hour trips or up to 12 days of seeing New Zealand, depending on your time frame and budget.

Ferry

Ferries operate 7 days a week, travelling from the terminal on Quay Street. Fullers are the major ferry company in Auckland and they operate out of the Auckland Harbour. The ferries provide services to most of the islands and regular trips to Devonport, Stanley Head, Birkenhead and Bayswater. Fullers (09 367 9111).

For an excellent day trip, try taking a ferry to visit the nearby island of Rangitoto, which is only 45 minutes away.

Train

The inner city train service in Auckland is quite limited and that is why most people use the buses. There are two main lines, one runs west to Waitakere and the other travels south to Papakura. The train station is located on Beach Road. Ride Link (09 366 6400).

One of New Zealand's three remaining passenger train routes runs from Auckland to Wellington and this is a very pleasant journey – by far the best way of covering the distance. The train is comfortable and the scenery beautiful. However, the service has now been reduced to one train per day and is quite expensive. The Overlander runs during daylight hours.

Water taxis

Water taxis area based in the Viaduct and a good way to cross to Devonport and visit some of the islands.

Accommodation

Due to the huge quantity and variety of accommodation available in Auckland, we recommend that you browse to find your choice and book online at [Auckland eGuide](#) prior to your departure.

Restaurants

There is one thing Auckland does very well ... food! Aucklanders love to eat and the eateries in and around the city reflect this passion. There is a wonderful multicultural approach to the dining in Auckland with all nationalities' cuisines catered for. A large Asian dining presence can be found in the city central area, from restaurants to small takeaways.

The more upmarket areas for dining are Ponsonby Road and Parnell Road. If you wish to take a ferry ride first, Devonport has some fine dining establishments. However, the mecca for dining is Viaduct Harbour where restaurants line every inch of the waterfront, with plenty of outdoor and indoor dining available.

Fresh is always considered best in Auckland and the seafood dining here is a perfect example of this. The waters around Auckland are home to wonderful fish varieties which are served up simply but deliciously in a lot of the restaurants in the city.

Tipping and service charges. Tipping is not expected in Auckland but accepted for special service, and usually there are no extra service charges added to your food and drinks bill.

Tours

Similarly to accommodation, there is a large choice of tours available in Auckland. Again, we recommend that you browse to find your choice and book online at [Auckland eGuide](#).

Walking Tours

Coast to Coast Walk

It sounds like a major expedition to walk from the east coast of New Zealand to the west coast, but actually this walk covers just seventeen kilometres and takes about six hours, allowing some time for sightseeing along the way. The walk, despite taking one from the east coast to the west coast, is in a north to south direction, cutting through the narrow isthmus upon which Auckland is situated and travelling from Waitemata Harbour in the north to Manukau Harbour in the south. The walkway is a signposted route and a brochure is available free from the Visitor Information Centre in Auckland or at the airport.

City Walk

This is a short walk around the centre of Auckland covering some three kilometres and looking mainly at the architecture of the city. It can be covered in about an hour, but perhaps ninety minutes would be a more suitable time to allow in order to give a little more attention to the features.

Attractions

Auckland Sky Tower

The Sky Tower is the tallest tower in the southern hemisphere and the twelfth tallest in the world, stretching up 328 metres into the Auckland skyline. It offers a good view from the main observation deck (186 metres elevation). On a clear day, one can see as far as 82 kilometres. There are also restaurants in this area of the tower. However, if you want an even better view, you can continue ever upward to the Sky Deck (220 metres elevation).

The tower is made mainly of concrete and weighs 20,000 tonnes. It has been built to withstand winds gusting up to 200 kmph, or an earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale and centred only 20 kilometres away. The ride to the top is in a glass-sided lift travelling at 18kmph and taking 40 seconds (or climb up 1,029 steps, if one prefers). The floor of the main observation deck is also made of glass, 38 millimetres thick, so that one can see down between one's toes onto the street. At the top of the tower is an FM antenna which broadcasts seventeen stations simultaneously; more stations, it is claimed, than any other single antenna in the world.

Sky Jump

Located on the top of the Sky Tower observation deck is Sky Jump, which is an external descent on a wire from a height of 192 metres. It takes sixteen seconds at a maximum speed of 75kmph to reach the base. It is not a cheap thrill but will please all height-loving daredevils. A less scary thing to do is sit and watch the jumpers flying off the tower, much more fun! If you prefer going up than down there is the Vertigo Climb, where you climb up a small internal staircase ending up at 270metres above ground in the crows nest and, if you are game to open your eyes, the view is stupendous. Sky Jump (0800 759 586).

The Sky City complex at the base of the tower incorporates a hotel, restaurants, bars, three casinos and a theatre.

Art Galleries

Auckland Art Gallery

There are over 12,000 works of art in the Auckland Art Gallery, with an emphasis on New Zealand works, but with plenty of international art too. This is the largest collection in the country. The Art Gallery occupies two buildings in the centre of Auckland. Up to 32 art exhibitions are highlighted throughout the year and there are also cafés, a shop and an art library. Wellesley Street (09 307 7700).

Mataora

Located in Ponsonby this gallery showcases Maori art. Here you can view art work in many forms including painting, pottery, jewellery, weaving and much more. Most of the work is created by local artists. Ponsonby Road, Ponsonby.

Parnell Gallery

Exhibitions at this gallery are predominately original New Zealand art works, in many mediums. There is an impressive display of bronze sculptures and there are often exhibitions highlighting local artists and their works. 263 Parnell Road, Parnell (09 377 3133).

The Gallery Pacific

This showroom has some stunning pieces that are also available for purchase. There are south sea pearls, opals and a range of jewellery and artefacts all with New Zealand themes. 105 Queen Street (09 308 9231).

Museums

Auckland Museum

The museum is housed in a magnificent building surrounded by the Domain parkland and overlooking Waitemata Harbour. Within is a comprehensive display of all that makes up the history and geography of New Zealand, including priceless Maori artefacts. The museum also serves as a war memorial and a library of historic books. There are Maori cultural performances three times a day. The Domain, Parnell (09 306 7067).

National Maritime Museum

New Zealand is a nation which has developed as a result of great seafaring expeditions, and the Maritime Museum emphasises this theme. The Maori name Te Huitēananui - A- Tangaroa gives a flavour of the maritime museum and translates as "holder of the treasures of Tangaroa- God of the Sea". The Pacific Discovery Theatre takes you aboard a Polynesian voyaging canoe. Hawaiki features canoes and waka from the South Pacific. The Hall of Yachting features many yachts and details on the America's Cup. It is possible to take trips on some of the working heritage vessels. It is located in Viaduct Harbour which is walking distance from the city centre. Quay Streets, Viaduct Basin (09 373 0800).

Stardome

The Stardome is a planetarium, offering nightly presentations. If the weather is suitable, use of an outdoor telescope is included. On a clear night you can see the Milky Way, Southern Cross and many more constellations. Manukau Road, Royal Oak (09 624 1246).

Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT)

Adjacent to the Zoo, the Museum of Transport and Technology opened in 1964 and now has over 300,000 exhibits including aircraft, trains, trams and road vehicles. There are sections dealing with pioneering machinery and primary industry and there is a Victorian village. There is a working steam railway, operating on special occasions, and 1.1 kilometres of electric tram track, operating every day. 805 Great North Road, Western Springs (09 846 7020).

Howick Historical Village

This is a recreated living museum, showing Howick as it was in the 1850s, bringing early Auckland back to life. It contains a collection of 30 restored period buildings. The village is located in Lloyd Elsmore Park in Pakuranga, to the east of Auckland city. Bells Road, Pakuranga (09 576 9506).

Glenbrook Vintage Railway

An old fashioned steam train will take you on a 12km return trip at this Vintage Railway. There is also a farm park, café and souvenir shop. Glenbrook Station Road, Drury-Waiuku (09 235 8924).

Devonport

Devonport is a rather overgrown fishing village on the north side of the harbour, only a short ferry ride from the city centre. Devonport is one of the earliest European settlements and this is reflected in some of its grand Victorian and Edwardian buildings. A 15 minute ferry ride will get you to Devonport and when you disembark, on the jetty you will find souvenir shops and little art galleries, setting the tone for this visit. Ashore, the pattern continues, with restaurants and cafés contributing to the impression that this is a place where visitors are expected. The village is dominated by the twin cones of Mount Victoria and North Head, both dormant volcanoes.

Devonport Museum

This museum is only open on weekends and has historical displays of Devonport over the years. Located at Mt Cambrai Reserve.

Jackson's Museum

Housed in Devonport's old post office buildings this museum is recognisable by the old red telephone boxes out the front. This Museum is chock-a-block with everything old and quaint and in a lot of cases useless bits and pieces. Victoria Street.

Navy Museum

Devonport has a strong naval background and you can find out all about it here as well as view the artillery and uniform displays. Spring Street.

Cheltenham Beach

This golden-sanded beach is Devonport's favourite swimming area. This is a safe swimming beach and is popular with families.

Mount Victoria

Stunning 360 degree views of Auckland greet you from the top of Mount Victoria. This mountain looms over Devonport and you can walk up the steep grassy hill or drive up a winding road.

North Head

This is Devonport's other volcanic mountain and is worth exploring as it is full of old tunnels that were constructed out of the fear of a Russian invasion at the end of the 19th century. You can access the mountain by car or foot.

Waterfront Promenade

There is a wonderful view of Auckland across the bay from the Promenade. There are shops, cafés and restaurants all with that lovely seaside town feel of yesteryear.

Animal Attractions**Auckland Zoo**

This is the best chance to spot a real Kiwi, the native bird that is, although, as it is nocturnal, it is sometimes hard to spot. A highlight of this zoo is the natural habitats provided for the animals and the excellent breeding programmes conducted here. There is a 'Pridelands' area where the wild animals appear to be roaming free, as well as a rainforest walk that has plenty of mischievous monkeys. The Zoo is in Western Springs, to the north-west of the city centre, near the Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT). A tram service runs to it from MOTAT. The zoo is located in Western Springs, 4km west of Auckland at Motions Road.

Butterfly Creek

A tropical butterfly house where you can get close to butterflies. The Red Admiral express train travels around Butterfly Creek. Tom Pearce Drive, Auckland International Airport (09 275 8880).

Dolphin and Whale Watching

Whale watching and dolphin viewing is a popular pastime for tourists to Auckland and the Hauraki Gulf is the best place to view these marine mammals. The Dolphin Explorer does 5-hour cruises and they guarantee dolphin viewing. There is an opportunity to swim with the dolphins, and whales are often sighted on the tour as well. (09 357 6032).

SheepWorld Farm and Nature Park

SheepWorld is set in 30 acres and provides a range of rural and natural attractions with farm animals and sheep dog shows. 4kms north of Warkworth (09 425 7444).

Underwater World

This aquarium located at Okahu Bay opened in 1985. It is one of the first aquariums to have opened with walk through clear tunnels to optimise the viewing area. It is a great chance to view the Southern Ocean's sea life, and there are many other sea creatures from all over the world here as well. Also located here is the Antarctic Encounter which traces the historical background of that area as well as having a penguin atrium. 23 Tamaki Drive.

Fun Attractions**Auckland Lionzone**

This is a tour of New Zealand's most famous and largest brewery, Lion Brewery. The brewery is in Newmarket, which has become, in recent years, a fashionable shopping area. Khyber Pass Road, Newmarket (09 377 8840).

Auckland Harbour Bridge Climb

Similar to the famous climb of Sydney Harbour Bridge, a climb of Auckland Harbour Bridge is now offered. The climb itself lasts for approximately ninety minutes and a further hour is required for preparations and for return of equipment after the adventure. The starting point for this climb is at Westhaven Reserve at the bottom of Curran Street, Herne Bay, that is to say, right at the foot of the Harbour Bridge on the city (south) side. 70 Nelson Street (09 625 0445).

Auckland Bungy Jump

The Auckland Harbour Bridge also offers the chance to launch oneself into space depending solely upon the reliability of Mr. Hackett's rubber band. The jump is 40 metres, actually the lowest of the jumps offered by A.J. Hackett in New Zealand.

Canyonz

This company provides plenty of excitement for the adventurous in the form of abseiling and canoeing. The Blue Canyon, located 40mins from Auckland, provides the perfect back drop for these activities. Canyonz provides a pick up service, all the equipment and a picnic lunch. (09 623 9355).

Kelly Tarton's Antarctic Adventure and Underwater World

This is a display of the Antarctic, as in Scott's time as well as now, and of many types of fish and water dwellers, including penguins, sharks, whales, stingrays, octopuses, sea horses and piranha. There are clear underwater tunnels from which to study the inhabitants and educational displays. 23 Tamaki Drive.

Pakiri Beach Horse Rides

Located 90mins from Auckland is this horse stud that offers horse riding to beginners and experienced riders. You can ride on the beach, through the forest or go for a twilight ride. Rahui Kiri Road, Pakiri (09 433 6275).

Rainbow's End

Rainbow's End is the principal theme park in Auckland. Opened in 1982, it is at Manukau, about an hour from the centre of the city, and offers all of the big scream rides as well as shows, cinemas and lots of children-friendly activities. Corner Great South and Wiri Station Roads, Manukau City (09 262 2030).

Rain Forest Express

This is a tram ride that takes you through rainforest, under tunnels, over bridges and provides brilliant views of the Manukau Harbour. The track is only 5.5km long but allow two and a half hours to take it all in. Jacobson's Depot (0800 788 788).

Natural Areas

Achilles Point

Good viewpoint with a viewing platform. Cliff Road, St Heliers.

Mt. Eden

Auckland is a city of volcanoes – 48 of them. One of the most conspicuous is Mt. Eden, a park area near Newmarket. It is on the Coast to Coast Walk route and it offers a splendid view over city and sea as well as an interesting crater at its summit. Mt Eden Road.

Cornwall Park and One Tree Hill

One of the great pioneers of Auckland was Sir John Logan Campbell. Often called 'the Father of Auckland', he was born in Edinburgh in 1817 and arrived in this city in 1840 at the age of 23. He spent the rest of his long life based here and in 1902 he was knighted. He owned the land which is now Cornwall Park and donated it to the city in 1901. His home was Acacia Cottage, built in 1841 and on display in the park. He is buried at the top of One Tree Hill, another volcanic cone, with Maori ruins evident. This is an interesting park to visit as it tells much of the history of the city. There is an information centre in the park and Acacia Cottage serves as a little museum.

Mission Bay

Mission Bay offers beautiful views of Waitemata Harbour and Rangitoto Island beyond, with Hauraki Gulf in the distance. Mission House here was built in the 1850s using stone brought from Rangitoto Island, while the Norfolk pines were planted by Anglican bishops a decade later. There is a fountain, which reaches as high as twelve metres and is illuminated by night. The Savage Memorial at Bastion Point, at the western end of the bay, commemorates Michael Joseph Savage, the first Labour prime minister of New Zealand and the founder of the welfare state system in the country. This is also an area of bayside restaurants and cafés.

Waitakere Ranges

These ranges were once huge Kauri forests but unfortunately were logged to almost extinction. The Centennial Memorial Park is located here and is a popular forest area due to its close proximity to Auckland. The ranges are bordered by beaches and the Tasman Sea and there are up to 143 walking tracks through some rugged parkland.

Waiwera Thermal Pools

One million litres of water per day emerges from the ground at Waiwera at a constant 53°C. There are 26 naturally heated indoor and outdoor mineral water pools here, ranging in temperature from 28°C to 43°C, and various water slides. The pools are in a valley of native bushland not far from the beach, where there are coastal walks.

Beaches

Auckland has a line of beaches and bays stretches north of Auckland city centre, from Devonport, just across the harbour, right up to Long Bay. The total length of coastline is 120 kilometres. Nude beaches are located at Pohutukawa Bay, which is a short walk north of Long Bay, and at St. Leonard 's', a little way south of Takapuna.

Karekare

This beach is a 45 minute drive from Auckland, this is a good surf beach and a great beach for running or playing on. Only swim between the flags when they are displayed here. You can also walk to the Karekare Falls from this beach. West Coast.

Long Bay

Long Bay, to the north of Auckland city, is known for its beaches and for its seaside atmosphere. The kilometre-long beach is at the northern end of a series of small bays. There is a children's playground, a miniature railway and a cliff-top walk to neighbouring bays, one of which serves as a nude beach.

Medlands Beach

This is a great east coast beach and is very popular. There are estuaries here as well as sand dunes, rocks, white sand and good swimming. The surf fishing is good here and further north is the popular surf beach, Kaitoke. Great Barrier Island.

Mission Bay Beach

This is Aucklanders favourite beach which makes it very populated on summer days. It is a sandy beach that features a promenade of shops and cafés as well as cinemas. Rollerblading and cycling are popular pastimes on the promenade and the beach is good for swimming. Located 10 minutes from the CBD.

Orewa Beach

Located 30 minutes north of the city, this beach offers lots and lots of shoreline as well as plenty of off-beach activities. There are many cafés and eateries here as well as an amusement park, playground, swimming pool and walkways.

Takapuna Beach

This beach is located in the North Shore area and is 10 minutes from the Harbour Bridge. It is a long beach so great for walking or jogging on. North Shore.

Islands

Great Barrier Island

Also known as Aotea, this rugged island lies 90 kilometres northeast of Auckland. The island is only 30 kilometres wide and 15 kilometres long but it packs plenty of choice scenery into its small space. There are mountains, bays, forests and plenty of beaches to explore here. Tramping, cycling, swimming, fishing, boating and kayaking are just some of the activities to do on the island. The west coast has safe, sandy beaches, whilst the east coast is best for surfing.

Great Barrier Island is sparsely populated. There is no electricity supply on the island; the islanders survive using powered generators. Tryphena is the main settlement and is the arrival point for the ferries. Claris is a smaller settlement and is where the airport is located. The other town is Port Fitzroy. There are camping grounds, lodges, hostels and motels providing accommodation on the island which get booked out in peak periods. There are two ferry services and two airlines that service the island. The ferry ride is a two hour trip from Auckland. The roads on the island are mostly unsealed, however there is a public bus service to get you around.

Kawau Island

This island is home to the stately mansion of the first governor of New Zealand, Sir George Grey. There are walking tracks here through native forests and beaches. The ferry travels to Kawau from Sanspit, one hour North of Auckland.

Motutapu Island

This is Rangitoto's closest neighbour but it is a lot older and very different geologically. Motutapu was occupied by Maoris even before Rangitoto erupted from the sea. The island is full of archaeological sites as well as old and recent relics. Visitors are welcome to explore Motutapu Island and there are many walking tracks. Rangitoto Island can be accessed from the causeway and the ferry stops at both islands. It has a campsite.

Rangitoto Island

Rangitoto Island is quite different from Waiheke. It is a volcano – the youngest of the volcanoes in and around Auckland, being a mere 600 years old. It suddenly erupted from the sea bed and left behind a cone 259 metres high. The island is roughly circular, five kilometres across and almost entirely made up of black volcanic basalt. Its cone can be seen on the horizon from Auckland and becomes more spectacular as one approaches.

The island was evidently not much used by Maoris, except as a lookout. However, there are some burial caves, presumably for those who lived and died on neighbouring Motutapu Island.

During the Second World War, the island was used for defence purposes and there was a lookout at the summit of the volcano. Rangitoto is well vegetated and has the largest remaining forest of native pohutukawa trees in the country. It also has several species of orchid and some unusual hybrid plants. It has colonies of sea birds but relatively few land birds. Possums and wallabies, which had been introduced here, have been eradicated to protect the trees.

The main attraction, though, is the volcano. One can walk to the summit. The return journey takes about two hours, plus whatever time one chooses to spend at the top. A path runs right round the rim of the crater giving splendid views all round and inside as well. Fortunately the volcano is now extinct. Note that there is no water available on the island so be sure to bring an adequate supply.

Remember not to be left behind by the last ferry, although there is a camp site on neighbouring Motutapu Island. The two islands are connected by a causeway. There is no accommodation on Rangitoto Island.

Tiritiri Matangi Island

This island is a sanctuary for rare bird species and here you can view some of New Zealand's native birds in their natural habitat. There are many walking tracks here and a whole day could be spent exploring the island. A ferry service runs to the island.

Waiheke Island

Waiheke Island is a picturesque island located nineteen kilometres from Auckland. The ferry journey takes approximately 45 minutes and ferries generally operate hourly from the ferry terminal, docking at Matiatia Wharf on Waiheke Island. Once you dock there are several tour bus services operating to take you around the island, as well as taxis. The public buses are also available and usually run on an hourly schedule.

Waiheke Island covers 92 square kilometres and is the second largest island in the Hauraki Gulf. It was inhabited by Europeans soon after Auckland, and livings were made from farming, fishing, timber and ship-building. However, now tourism is one of the island's most important industries, an importance increased by the introduction, in 1987, of a fast catamaran service. Now thousands of people cross to the island every day for pleasure. There are 7,500 residents of the island, of whom nearly 20% commute to Auckland to work.

The island offers beautiful sandy beaches, ocean kayaking, fishing, bush walks, vineyards and wineries, olive groves, mountain biking and horse riding. There are also Second World War fortifications and tunnels. The main town is Oneroa.

Waiheke has 22 vineyards with a lot producing award-winning wines, however not all of them open their doors to the public for sales and tastings.

It is not necessary to limit a visit to a day trip as there is plenty of accommodation available on the island, including two backpackers hostels and a wide range of more opulent options.

Oneroa

This is Waiheke's main town and is located one kilometre from the ferry wharf at the western end of the island. The visitor information centre is located here as well as a main street with cafés and many art and craft shops selling the local's works. Oneroa Bay is the local beach and is the most popular and accessible on the island.

Artworks Centre - This is home to many of the local artists art and craft works. Ocean View Road, Oneroa.

Palm Beach - This beautiful stretch of coastline is located six kilometres east of Oneroa. The western end of this beach, behind the rocks, is Waiheke's nude beach.

Waiheke Potteries - Here you can view a range of homemade pottery pieces and decorate your own as well. Oneroa

Whittaker's Musical Experience - This place is full of instruments that are old, different and delightful. If you hang around you can become involved in a musical performance. Oneroa

Onetangi

This is Waiheke's longest, exposed beach and is very popular for swimming, surfing and windsurfing.

Waiheke's Vineyards

A trip to the Waiheke Island isn't complete without a visit to at least one of the quality vineyards here.

Cable Bay Vineyards - Located a five minute drive from the ferry, this working winery has a restaurant, wine bar and tasting rooms. There are some stunning views of the surrounding countryside and bay. 12 Nick Johnstone Drive, Oneroa (09 372 5889).

Mudbrick Vineyard and Restaurant - Offers lunch and dinner with the local wines as well as cellar sales and tastings. Church Bay Road (09 372 9050).

Onetangi Road Vineyard and Brewery - If the wine doesn't appeal you can get a beer here as well.

Peninsula Estate - Located one kilometre northwest of Oneroa, it has tastings, tours and sales, but you will need to telephone first to make an appointment. 52a Korora Road (09 372 7866).

Stoneyridge Vineyard - Touted to be the one of the top ten wineries in the world to visit, this vineyard produces top quality organic red wines as well as premium whites. The picturesque buildings that house the restaurant and wine tasting area have great views of the valleys and rolling hills on the island. 80 Onetangi Road (09 372 8822).

Parks and Gardens

Albert Park

Albert Park stands on the site of a volcano and is situated on a hill in the middle of the city. Once a defence post and an army barracks it is now a lovely green place to sit and relax and get away from the noise of Auckland. There is fountain, statues and cannons as well as some wonderful old trees including oaks and, unusually, Australia's native Moreton Bay fig trees. The Laidlaw floral clock is very pretty when blooming and has been lovingly tended since 1953.

Auckland Domain

This huge park area of 81 hectares is set in the city and is Auckland's oldest park. There are plenty of walks, ponds and gardens as well as picnic areas. The Domain is the home to many sportsgrounds and also hosts large concerts. The Winter Garden and Fernz Fernery are botanical highlights showcasing some of New Zealand's native flora. The Auckland Museum is located in this park as well (09 379 2020).

Botanic Gardens

The Botanic Gardens are relatively new, having been opened in 1982. They cover 65 hectares and include over 10,000 plants from all over the world but with an emphasis on New Zealand natives. Hill Road, Manurewa (09 267 1457).

Coyle Park

This park is very popular as it has access to Point Chevalier Beach. There is a kids' playground as well as picnic areas and BBQs. Point Chevalier Road, Point Chevalier.

Eden Garden

Once a disused quarry, Eden Garden is now a gardening paradise. Located only minutes from the CBD, these gardens have New Zealand's largest display of camellias as well as many other natives trees and shrubs. Omana Ave, Epsom (09 638 8395).

Grey Lynn Park

This is a popular city park especially with Auckland's youth. Highlights are the paddling pool, skateboard ramps and the flying fox. There is a BBQ area and picnic facilities. Williamson Avenue, Grey Lynn.

Outhwaite Park

Located close to the huge Domain park, this much smaller park has flower beds, plenty of shaded spots, a children's playground, BBQ and picnic facilities. Carlton Gore Road, Grafton.

Parnell Rose Garden

When these beautiful flowers are in bloom, the scent from over 5,000 roses is very, very strong. There are modern varieties as well as the old fashioned original roses. There are pretty of paths to stroll through as well as lovely views of the harbour. Gladstone Road, Parnell (09 379 2020).

Western Park

This park was established in the 1800s and contains many walking and running trails. Ponsonby Road, Ponsonby.

Selwyn Domain

This very popular park is located at Mission Bay. Here you can access the beach and there are plenty of cafés close by. Tamaaki Drive, Mission Bay.

Entertainment

Nightlife

Aucklanders love their nightlife, but not so much on week nights; the inner city entertainment venues usually only come alive on weekends. Bars and nightclubs are popular, with most of the frequented nightclubs being located in Karangahape Road. A lot of the clubs are free or if there is a surcharge it is often quite cheap. Some of the pubs and clubs have live local bands with others opting for the DJ scene.

Aotoa Square has plenty of evening activities in the form of cinemas and also has an Imax theatre. The Sky City complex also draws a lot of interest due to it being home to the city's casino as well as housing many restaurants and bars.

Bungalow 8 - Located on the waterfront, this trendy bar has a very popular cocktail list and offers dancing until late. Corner Market Place and Customs Street West, South Viaduct (09 307 1500).

Centro - This restaurant and club offers drink lounges and dance floors with DJs. Wyndham Street (09 377 3225).

Crome - This is one of Auckland's larger dance venues and offers plenty of loud music until the wee small hours. 258 Karangahape Road, Newton (09 307 0890).

Galatos - This venue offers a variety of music styles, including jazz, blues, funk and soul music. Live music is featured on Thursday nights. 17 Galatos Street, Newton (09 303 1928).

Kiss - This venue is very popular with the young as it is a dance mecca with accompanying very loud beats. 309 Karangahape Road (09 303 2726).

The Fu Bar - This club is located in a basement and often hosts some big name DJs. 166 Queen Street.

The Jazz Bar - Features a small dance floor but good live jazz acts. Corner Queen and Rutland Streets (09 309 2512).

Sky City

There are over 10 restaurants and bars in the Sky City complex catering to a variety of cuisines and budgets. The Fortuna Buffet Restaurant is a good quality buffet with plenty of New Zealand and Polynesian temptations. The Sky Tower has a revolving restaurant with the observatory having a fresh seafood buffet eatery.

Sky City also houses Auckland's casino which has all the usual gambling attractions as well as many bars and often live music performances. Corner of Federal and Victoria Streets (0800 759 2486).

Cinemas

Academy Cinema - Mainly screens international art house movies. 64 Lorne Street (09 373 2761).

Bridgeway Cinema - This historic building houses two cinemas. 122 Queen Street, Northcote Point (09 418 3308).

Berkeley Cinema - There are three Berkeley cinemas located around Auckland. The major one is at Mission Bay with others at Takapuna and Hibiscus Coast. 5 Tamaki Drive, Mission Bay (09 521 9222).

Civic Theatre - This very swanky cinema is known to be one of Auckland's most opulent theatres. Corner Queen and Wellersley Streets (09 307 5000).

Devonport 3 Cinemas - This venue is more than 100 years old. There are ferry and movie passes available for purchase at the harbour. 48 Victoria Road, Devonport (09 446 0967).

Hollywood Cinema - This cinema is for serious movie buffs due to the fact that the movies are usually classic Hollywood favourites. 20 Georges Road, Avondale (09 828 8393).

Lido Cinema - This large comfortable cinema offers a glass a beer with your movie. 427 Manukau Road, Epsom (09 630 1500).

Rialto Cinema - This cinema screens mainstream movies as well as art house films. Rialto Centre, Broadway, Newmarket (09 357 8311).

Village Hoyts - There are eight screens here all showing mainstream releases. Queen Street (09 979 2400).

Theatres

Aotea Centre - This purpose-built opera house opened in 1990 and hosts performances by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the New Zealand Ballet Company and the Auckland Theatre Company. Queen Street (09 307 5060).

Civic Theatre - This magnificently restored theatre often hosts dance and theatre performances as well as screening movies. Corner Queen and Wellesley Streets (09 307 5058).

Classic - This is Auckland's premier comedy venue and hosts local and international acts. 321 Queen Street (09 373 4321).

Maidment Theatre - There are two venues located here, both are part of the University of Auckland. The Maidment Theatre seats 448 and the smaller Studio Theatre seats 104 patrons. Both host theatre and dramatic arts performances. 8 Alfred Street (09 308 2382).

Sky City Theatre - This theatre, located at Auckland's Sky City casino complex, hosts cabarets, concerts and variety shows. Level 3 Sky City (09 307 5000).

Shopping

The main shopping inner city area is around Queen Street. Most suburbs have their own shopping districts to browse through. Aucklanders love their markets and there are plenty scattered around.

The main department stores in Auckland are Smith and Caughery, located in Queen Street, or the less stylish but more budget wise, Farmers. Listed below are the main shopping areas of Auckland, the shopping centres and the popular markets.

Auckland Shopping Hours

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Saturday and Sunday 10am to 4pm. Some stores have later trading on Thursday or Friday evenings.

Newmarket

This is one of the main shopping areas in Auckland, with Broadway the area where the most fashionable stores are located.

Parnell

Parnell is another fashionable area of Auckland, this being a rather up-market part of the city. Victorian villas line the streets, now transformed into boutiques or restaurants. This is the place for arts, crafts, jewellery and cafés.

Ponsonby

Ponsonby is also a shopping area, but this time a much more basic area, characterised by its unrestored Edwardian terraces. It offers nightclubs, bars, corner stores, telephone card shops, eating establishments of all types, and a surprising variety of nationalities. It is an area popular with young people and several of the backpackers' hostels are nearby.

Queen Street

This is the main shopping street in Auckland and runs for several blocks with retailers lining the street as well as some arcades and shopping malls running off it.

Remuera

Known to be Auckland's swankiest suburb and the shopping reflects this. The streets are tree-lined and have a range of quality boutiques at matching prices.

Takapuna

This area offers good value shopping, with discount department style stores as well as the trendy fashion ones. Parking is usually easier to find here and there are plenty of cafés and eateries available.

Victoria Street

Located in the seaside hamlet of Devonport, this street is full of old-world shops, restaurants and is a great place for browsers looking for something a bit different to take home.

Auckland Shopping Centres

Atrium on Elliot

This is a great shopping mall located in the heart of the city. It is spread over several floors with a large food court located on the bottom level. There are some trendy clothes, jewellery and shoe shops here as well as beauty salons, book stores and home wares. 21 Elliot Street (09 300 3290).

Botany Town Centre

This is Auckland's newest and largest shopping centre and has a village feel about it. All styles of shopping tastes are catered for in the one large area, as well as having plenty of eateries. 588 Chapel Road, East Tamaki (09 272 3888).

Downtown Shopping Centre

This centre really is downtown and just a two-minute walk from Auckland's waterfront area. There are at least 70 shops and service centres located here with a food hall on the first floor. QEII Square, Customs Street West (09 978 5262).

Dress-Smart Factory Outlet

The name tells the purpose of this centre, where there are more than seventy stores offering products with well-known brand names – clothing, electrical items, shoes and household goods. 151 Arthur Street, Onehunga (09 622 2400).

Auckland Markets

Aotea Square Markets

Located in the city centre on Fridays and Saturdays are 80 colourful little tents selling a lot of new bits and pieces with souvenirs that are typically from New Zealand. Aotea Square Queen Street (09 309 2677).

Avondale Sunday Market

This market is large and sells a lot of everything, mostly second-hand goods and fresh produce. Avondale Race Course, Ash Street, Avondale (09 818 4931).

Collectors' Market

This market is a great place to look for that rare collectors' item or to pick up something unique. There are plenty of antique dealers selling a wide range of goods. Held on the second Sunday of the month. Auckland Showgrounds, Greenlane (09 524 2462).

Mangere Town Centre Market

Often there is live entertainment here and mostly new products for sale as well as food. Opens on Saturdays only. Mangere Town Centre (09 275 7078).

Ostend Market

This is a very popular market on Waiheke Island and is held every Saturday morning. Here you can find fresh local produce, including fresh seafood. There are plenty of second-hand treasures and a little trash as well. Ostend Road, Waiheke Island (09 372 6375).

Otara Markets

This is a multicultural market, which gives it an appeal of its own. It is held in the shopping centre car park on Saturdays only at Otara, to the south of Auckland city. Otara Shopping Centre, Newbury (09 274 0830).

St Helliars Handcraft Market

Most of the products at this market are 100% New Zealand made. There are up to 36 stalls of crafts, arts and freshly baked goods. Held on the first and third Sundays of the month. RSA Hall, Turua Street, St Helliars (09 521 5671).

Titirangi Village Market

This market fundraiser for the local school and can have over 100 stalls of art, crafts and bric-a-brac. There is live music to listen as well as plenty of food stalls and cafés nearby. This market is held on the last Sunday of the month. War Memorial Hall, Titirangi Village (09 817 3584).

Victoria Park Market

Within walking distance of the city centre, or a short bus ride if one prefers, this market offers a huge range of products, particularly of the souvenir type. A tall red brick chimney marks the location. Transport – Link Bus (5 minutes, runs every 10 minutes).

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