

OCEANIA · HIKING · MOUNTAINS · ADVENTURE · ROAD TRIPS · WILDLIFE · WINE

 New Zealand

New Zealand fits glaciers, fiords, volcanoes and vineyards into two islands slightly larger than the UK. The North Island has Auckland's harbour, Rotorua's geothermal valleys and Māori culture, and the Tongariro Crossing; the South has Queenstown's adrenaline sports, Milford Sound and the Southern Alps. Most visitors road-trip by campervan, and every drive takes longer than expected.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for New Zealand and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 19 March 2026.

 CAPITAL Wellington	 CURRENCY New Zealand dollar (NZD) £1 ≈ NZ\$2.35	 LANGUAGE English, Māori	 BEST TIME Dec–Mar
 DAILY BUDGET £80–£380 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type I 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 26h via Singapore, Dubai or Los Angeles ~£1,000–£2,000 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+12 standard time

New Zealand's appeal is landscape on a grand scale, backed by excellent infrastructure. Most first trips fly into Auckland and either loop the North Island via the Bay of Islands, Waitomo's glow-worm caves, Hobbiton, Rotorua and Tongariro, or fly straight south to Christchurch or Queenstown. With three weeks, a classic route drives Auckland to Wellington, takes the ferry to Picton, then runs down the West Coast past the Franz Josef and Fox glaciers to Wānaka, Queenstown and Fiordland, finishing in Christchurch via Aoraki/Mount Cook. Māori culture, from te reo place names to the hāngī, runs through the whole trip.

It is expensive: accommodation, eating out and campervan hire cost at least as much as in Britain, though Department of Conservation campsites and hostels help. Roads are mostly two-lane and winding, so a 300 km day can take five hours. Summer brings crowds to Milford Sound, Hobbiton and Queenstown, while March and April are calmer and often more settled. Hut places on the most popular Great Walks sell out within hours of release. It suits hikers, road-trippers, adrenaline seekers and families; history and nightlife are thinner on the ground than in Europe.

Top 5 highlights

- 1** NATURE

Milford Sound

Fiordland's most famous fiord, where Mitre Peak rises 1,692 m from the water and waterfalls multiply after rain. Cruise or kayak it, ideally early or late to avoid the coach crowds, or arrive on foot via the Milford Track.
- 2** ADVENTURE

Tongariro Alpine Crossing

A 19.4 km day hike across a volcanic landscape of steaming vents, Red Crater and the Emerald Lakes, beneath Ngāuruhoe, the films' Mount Doom. Book a shuttle, start early and check the mountain forecast, as weather often closes it.

3

CULTURE

Rotorua

Geothermal Rotorua is the easiest place to experience Māori culture: Te Puia's Pōhutu geyser and carving school, a hāngī feast with kapa haka, or Whakarewarewa living village. Wai-O-Tapu's Champagne Pool lies about 30 km south.

4

NATURE

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park

New Zealand's highest mountain (3,724 m) towers over this alpine park. The easy Hooker Valley Track crosses swing bridges to an iceberg-dotted glacier lake, and the surrounding Mackenzie Basin is an international dark-sky reserve.

5

BEACH

Abel Tasman National Park

Golden beaches and granite headlands at the top of the South Island, best explored by sea kayak or on the Coast Track, a Great Walk usually done in three to five days, with water taxis for shortcuts.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Auckland

≈ 1.5 million people

A harbour city spread across around 50 volcanic cones: climb Maungawhau/Mount Eden, take a ferry to Waiheke's vineyards or Rangitoto, then head north to the Bay of Islands.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Christchurch

≈ 400,000 people

Rebuilt after the 2011 earthquake with a creative streak: the Cardboard Cathedral, street art, punting on the Avon and the Botanic Gardens; the gateway to Akaroa, Kaikōura and the Southern Alps.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Wellington

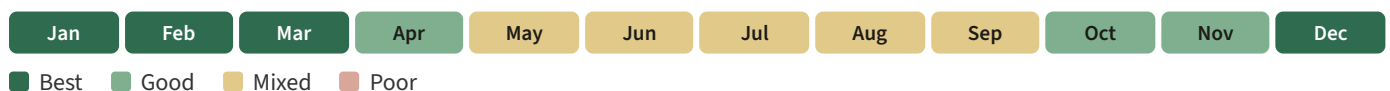
≈ 215,000 people

The compact, windy capital has Te Papa, the national museum, a cable car, a serious coffee and craft-beer scene, and the ferries across Cook Strait to the South Island.

Figures are Stats NZ urban areas. Wellington's wider metro area, including Lower Hutt, Upper Hutt and Porirua, has about 440,000 people, though Greater Christchurch is larger still.

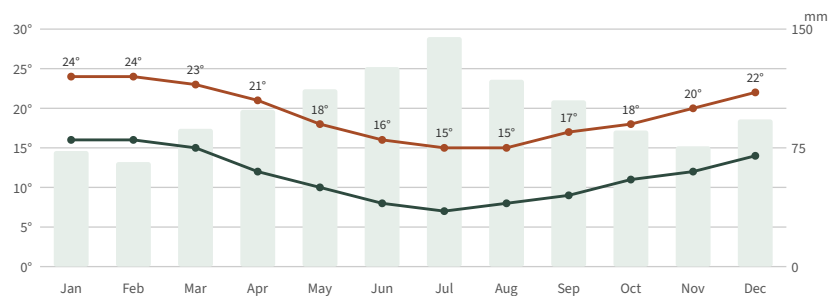
When to go to New Zealand

Best time: **Dec–Mar**.



Average climate in Auckland

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb	Waitangi Day The national day on 6 February marks the 1840 signing of the Treaty of Waitangi; the Treaty Grounds in the Bay of Islands host waka (canoe) displays, speeches and music.
Jun–Jul	Matariki The Māori New Year, marked when the Matariki star cluster (the Pleiades) rises in midwinter; a public holiday since 2022, with light shows, food and events in cities nationwide.

How much does New Zealand cost?

SHOESTRING £80 per person / day ≈ NZ\$188 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £180 per person / day ≈ NZ\$424 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £380 per person / day ≈ NZ\$894 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Hāngī Meat, kūmara (sweet potato) and vegetables steamed for hours in an earth oven over hot stones, the traditional Māori way of feeding a crowd; try one in Rotorua.	Pavlova Meringue with a crisp shell and marshmallowy centre, topped with whipped cream and kiwifruit; New Zealand and Australia still argue over who invented it.	Whitebait fritters Tiny juvenile fish bound in egg and fried into patties, a West Coast speciality during the spring season; eat one between buttered white bread with a squeeze of lemon.
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Getting around

Most visitors hire a car or campervan; roads are good but slow, with frequent one-lane bridges. InterCity coaches link towns on both islands, and Air New Zealand and Jetstar fly between the main cities. The Interislander and Bluebridge ferries cross Cook Strait between Wellington and Picton in about three and a half hours. The scenic Northern Explorer, Coastal Pacific and TranzAlpine trains are memorable but infrequent. Uber operates in the main cities.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  I 230V — bring a UK-to-I adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 111 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +64	TIME ZONE UTC+12 (standard time)
TAP WATER Generally safe to drink	DRIVING On the left
TIPPING Not expected, and wages are higher than in Britain; leave a little extra only for exceptional service in restaurants or on guided tours.	

ETIQUETTE

Remove shoes before entering homes and a marae, follow your hosts' lead during a pōwhiri welcome, and don't sit on tables. Treat sacred sites with respect and take all rubbish out of the backcountry.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Auckland Airport (AKL), Auckland; Christchurch Airport (CHC), Christchurch; Queenstown Airport (ZQN), Queenstown

Visas & entry for New Zealand

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit New Zealand without a visa for up to 6 months. However you do need a New Zealand Electronic Travel Authority (NZeTA).

At New Zealand border control, you will also need to show:

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

None listed

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in New Zealand

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Mon 26 Oct 2026	Labour Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Mon 28 Dec 2026	Boxing Day (observed)
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sat 2 Jan 2027	Day after New Year's Day

Mon 4 Jan 2027	Day after New Year's Day (observed)
Sat 6 Feb 2027	Waitangi Day
Mon 8 Feb 2027	Waitangi Day (observed)
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sun 25 Apr 2027	Anzac Day
Mon 26 Apr 2027	Anzac Day (observed)
Mon 7 Jun 2027	King's Birthday
Fri 25 Jun 2027	Matariki

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Know before you go

Biosecurity is strict: declare all food, used hiking boots and camping gear on arrival, and clean boots and tents beforehand, as undeclared items bring on-the-spot fines.

Book campervans, Great Walks huts and Milford Sound cruises months ahead for December to February, and leave buffer days in Fiordland, where weather often grounds scenic flights.

Fuel stations and supermarkets are sparse on the West Coast and in Fiordland; fill up in Te Anau before driving the Milford Road, as there is no fuel at Milford Sound.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.