Aotearoa, New Zealand

New Zealand’s extraordinary geography offers a hugely diverse range of unique things to do, which makes it easy for you to actively experience the breathtaking landscape in all its purity.

Whether you’re kayaking, horse-riding, cycling, skiing, wine tasting, or simply relaxing you will be surrounded by world-class scenery second to none.

Auckland & Northland

Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand but it is the diversity of experiences in such close proximity that makes the region unique. From black sand beaches to amazing dining, rain forests to shopping. Views from the Sky Tower are amazing both day and night. The Waitangi Treaty Grounds and Kerikeri are great places to learn about New Zealand’s history. Northland is well known for its magnificent native forests, including Waiwera, home of the giant kauri tree - Tāne Mahuta.

Western North Island

Visit the summit of snow-topped, volcanic Mount Taranaki or explore national park that surrounds the mountain, or kayak and journey down the Whanganui River – New Zealand’s longest navigable waterway. For an adrenaline rush try a rafting trip on the Rangitikei River. All three of the region’s cities are known for their beautiful gardens, art galleries and innovative museums.

Lower North Island

The lower North Island is a great place for indulging your passions for fine wine, art, theatre and creative cuisine. Soak up New Zealand’s traditional and contemporary culture in the museums, galleries and boutiques of the country’s capital city, Wellington. Wairarapa offers a diverse experience for those who appreciate great wine and character accommodation. On the Kapiti Coast you’ll find an island wildlife sanctuary, fantastic golf and artisan food producers.

North Island

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North Island

For more information visit newzealand.com/int/themed-highways

Twin Coast Discovery Highway: This route begins in Auckland and travels north, tracing both coasts to Cape Reinga and back. Highlights include a procession of beautiful beaches, opportunities for fishing, surfing, diving and dolphin encounters; cultural experiences at Waitangi; forest hikes and craft shopping.

Pacific Coast Highway: Linking The Coromandel, Bay of Plenty and Eastland with Auckland in the north and Hawke’s Bay in the south, covering spectacular coastlines, forest wilderness and grape growing districts. The cities of Tauranga, Gisborne, Napier and Hastings will satisfy your urge to wine, dine and shop.

Thermal Explorer: Running between Auckland and Hawke’s Bay and travelling through the volcanic centre of the island. Discover the Waitomo caves, geothermal areas in Rotorua and Lake Taupo, the amazing Tongariro National Park and Hawke’s Bay Wine Country. When combined, the Pacific Coast Highway and Thermal Explorer are known as The Great New Zealand Touring Route.

Forgotten World Highway: While it’s only 150 kilometres long, the Forgotten World Highway (otherwise known as State Highway 43) is a memorable driving journey. Built on 19th century bridle paths, the highway connects Taumarunui to Stratford. The route wiggles its way over four mountain saddles, through an eerie one-way tunnel and along a sinuous river gorge.

Volcanic Loop: From the trout town of Turangi, you can circle the volcanoes of Tongariro National Park. On a clear day, you’ll enjoy spectacular views of the mountains and the surrounding volcanic terrain. The ‘Desert Road’ cuts across the desolate Rangipo Desert, returning through and the surrounding volcanic terrain. The ‘Desert Road’ cuts across the desolate Rangipo Desert, returning through Ahipara Beach

The Great New Zealand Touring Route.

These routes are not specifically signposted.
Transport options in New Zealand

Many destinations in New Zealand are just hours from each other. An extensive network of air, train and road services mean most places can be reached by public transport. Buses and coaches link up with rail and ferry operators to take you the length of the country, and air travel is also available to most destinations. If you're going to drive around New Zealand (a popular option) driving tips, licences and permits, road rules, recommended trips and general information can all be found on newzealand.com

Nelson & Marlborough

The top of the South Island has exceptionally beautiful terrain, with three national parks, the amazing Mariborough Sounds and lots of warm sunshine. The region boasts some of the finest Sauvignon Blanc in the world and is popular for hiking, cycling, sea kayaking, sailing and fishing. You'll also have many opportunities to improve your art collection – glass artists, painters, potters and sculptors welcome visitors into their studios.

Canterbury & the West Coast

Canterbury's landscape is filled with green pastures and friendly country towns. The buzzing hub of the region, Christchurch, is a stylish modern city with a mix of interesting architecture and parks to relax in. Hanmer Springs is close by, boasting natural spa baths with stonework to admire, museums to explore and a rich architectural history. There's a great alpine ski field and south to Lake Tekapo to see the beautiful Church of the Good Shepherd. Continue on to Mount Cook Village for alpine adventures. Drive on to Wanaka or Queenstown, then loop back to see the heritage architecture of Dunedin.

Coastal Otāgo & Southland

Lovers of history and nature will have plenty to see in the deep south. Oamaru, Dunedin and Invercargill have some of the best-preserved Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the Southern Hemisphere. There's a stonework to admire, museums to explore and peaceful public gardens to relax in. The coastline and Stewart Island have amazing natural attractions like the Morro boulders, little blue penguins and the royal albatrosses and fur seals. Stewart Island is just a ferry ride from Bluff and offers a great white sharks for the serious shark spotters out there!

Southern Lakes

Queenstowm and Wanaka's world famous beauty changes with every season. In winter the mountains are alive with snowboarders and skiers; in spring and summer, adventurers on offer range from gondola and horseriding trekking to bungy jumping and jetboating. A scenic drive south takes you to Fordland where glacier-cut valleys half-filled with deep green water, cascading waterfalls and dense forest is only a bush walk or relaxing cruise away. Further south, Central Otago is rich in history and famous for fine wine.

South Island Themed Highways

For more information visit newzealand.com/int/themed-highways

The Inland Scenic 72 Route: Perfect for travellers who want to get off the main highways and find real rural life. Starting at Amberley, in north Canterbury, the route links to State Highway 1 at Waimakariri. There are fabulous views of the Southern Alps on one side of the road, complemented by the green serenity of the Canterbury Plains on the other.

Alpine Pacific Triangle: This route takes you to the wine and food experiences of Waipara, the spa delights of Hanmer Springs and the marine mammal encounters of Kaikoura. Between destinations, you'll enjoy beautiful country scenery.

Southern Scenic Route: From historic Dunedin city, follow the wild southern coast to Invercargill, then continue north west to Te Anau before ending at Queenstown. Highlights include wildlife encounters along the Catlins coast, hiking the Tustapapa Hump Ridge Track, camping on Stewart Island and viewing the Milford Track - one of New Zealand's 'Great Walks'.

Other South Island Scenic Routes

These routes are not specifically signposted.

Treasured Pathway: Enjoy a mix of history, hiking and hedonism as you discover heritage sites, vineyards, national parks and fabulous beaches. From the seaport town of Picton, travel across the top of the South Island to the sand dunes of Farewell Spit. The city of Nelson provides a dash of urban fun in the middle of the journey.

Alpine Traverse: From Christchurch, enjoy awe-inspiring views as you cross Arthur’s Pass to the West Coast. Drive north to Wairarapa and take the Lewis Pass up to the spa resorts of Marua Springs and Hamner Springs. Journey back via Kaikoura, where the whales are waiting to meet you.

West Coast Touring Route: Between Haast in the south and Karamaiah in the north, the West Coast is one adventure after another. Watch the oceanic performance at Punakaiki’s blow holes, shop for greenstone in Greywacke and Hokitika, explore old gold workings and hike over one of the massive glaciers.

The Great Alpine Highway: From Christchurch, this route travels west across river plains before rising to traverse the Southern Alps through Porters Pass and Arthur’s Pass National Parks. Highlights include the impressive Waimakariri and Otra River gorges, the Otira Viaduct and the Castle Hill Rocks and Cave Stream Reserve.

Southern Heritage Route: Head inland past Mount Hutt ski field and south to Lake Tekapo to see the beautiful Church of the Good Shepherd. Continue on to Mount Cook Village for alpine adventures. Drive on to Wanaka or Queenstown, then loop back to see the heritage architecture of Dunedin.