

the north island experience

summary

We're delighted to offer you what we feel is the most exciting and diverse trip to the North Island of New Zealand available. The following summary highlights the features included in your Black Sheep vacation.

accommodation

- Quality, character-filled accommodation, hand-picked and reflecting each region's individual style.
- Double, twin, and single rooms with private baths, except in special circumstances where rooms may be shared with others.

dining

- The best restaurants in each area with a la carte dining featuring regional specialties, accompanied by complimentary tastings of New Zealand's excellent wines.
- Special dietary needs catered for.
- Hearty cooked or continental breakfasts included each morning.
- All lunches included except on Day 9 in Wellington.
- All dinners included, except on Day 4 in Auckland.
- Snacks, fresh fruit, and beverages in the vehicles.

activities

- Scenic tour of Auckland.
- Bay of Islands sailing cruise.
- Visit to the Murawai gannet colony.
- Guided nature hike through the Coromandel rainforest.
- Visit to Hot Water Beach.
- Visit to Rotorua Museum and soak in mineral baths.
- Maori concert and hangi.
- Guided trip to White Island or scenic flight over Mt Tarawera.
- Flight from Rotorua to Wellington.

Plus day hikes, bird-watching, swimming, the inevitable cricket lesson, and much more!

We pride ourselves on the wide range of activities included in your tour package. We've chosen those that we feel will enhance your New Zealand experience. You can participate in as many or as few as you like. If you are unable to participate in an activity or there are weather restrictions, alternatives will be provided where possible.

transportation

- Airport transfers within New Zealand.

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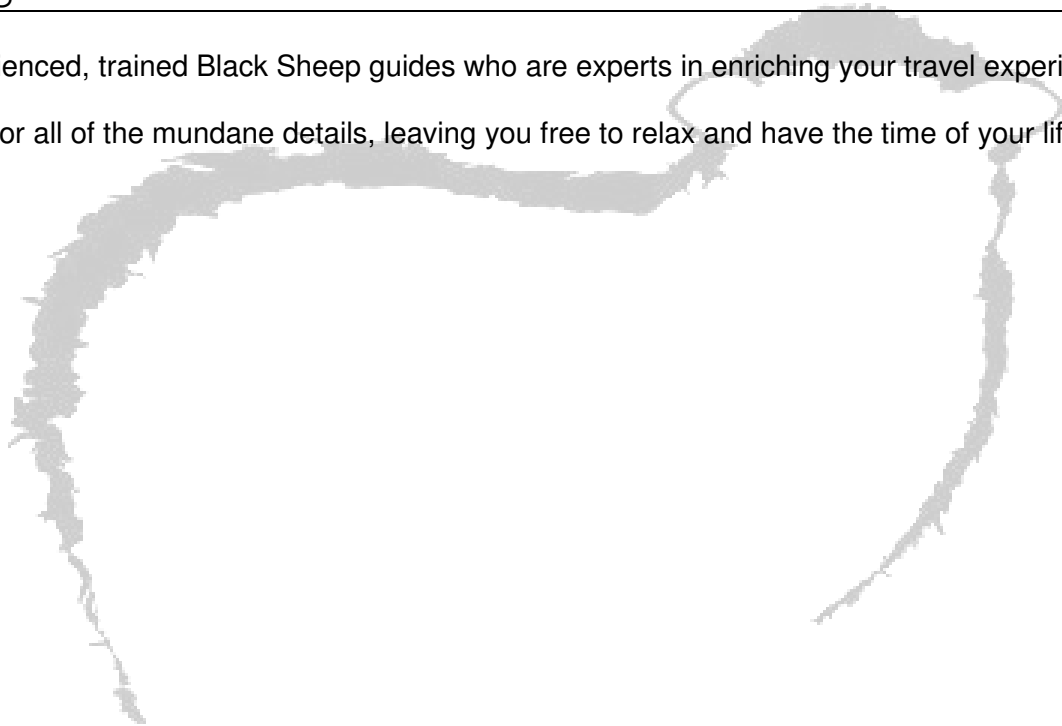
- All land transportation while on tour in comfortable, air-conditioned luxury mini-coaches.
- Various on-board amenities such as a reference library, binoculars, etc to enhance your enjoyment of the trip.
- All ferry and water taxi trips.

support

- Detailed pre-trip information, including passport and visa requirements, packing tips, and arrival details.
- Professional office staff to help you plan every aspect of your trip.

guiding

- Experienced, trained Black Sheep guides who are experts in enriching your travel experience.
- Care for all of the mundane details, leaving you free to relax and have the time of your life.



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itinerary

Our North Island Experience tour truly captures the best of the region of New Zealand.

The itinerary below is broken down into New Zealand's distinct regions to give you a better sense of the diverse areas through which you will travel.

auckland & bay of islands

Day 1: Auckland to Bay of Islands

Welcome to New Zealand! This morning, you are met by your guide for the start of your New Zealand Experience. It's a scenic drive to the Northland region, a remote and breathtaking area that time seems to have forgotten. Our accommodation for the next three nights is in the beautiful Bay of Islands, a popular yet peaceful retreat. An afternoon hike, offering stunning views of the glittering bay, allows you to rejuvenate after your overseas journey. This evening, we enjoy a relaxed dinner overlooking the bay.

Day 2: Sailing on the Bay

This morning, we board a sailing vessel for a cruise around the multitude of picturesque islands. You can help set the sails and take the helm if you wish, or just sit back and enjoy the sea breeze and the views. You may even catch a glimpse of the shy little blue penguin resident here. For lunch, we anchor in a secluded island bay where you can step ashore and take a walk, relax on the beach, or swim in the emerald waters before returning to the mainland for our final dinner on the Bay.

Day 3: Hiking in the Bay

This day is spent enjoying the region. Northland was once blanketed by ancient kauri trees, true lords of the forest rivaled only by the redwoods in girth. We spend a day walking amongst these giants and exploring tracks that highlight the grandeur of the magnificent coastline. Alternatively, you can just relax in the comfort of our lodging and soak in the tranquil atmosphere of this special location. For dinner this evening, we enjoy fresh local cuisine from a lovely bayside restaurant.

Day 4: Bay of Islands to Auckland

We bid the Bay farewell and return to Auckland, stopping at scenic points along the way. Just north of the city, on the ruggedly beautiful west coast, is one of New Zealand's largest gannet colonies. We stop for a close-up view of these wonderful birds as they court, breed, and nest. In Auckland, our hotel is located in the heart of downtown. Dinner this evening is on your own, so you are free to explore the city, its restaurants and nightlife.

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coromandel peninsula

Day 5: Auckland to Coromandel Peninsula

Departing Auckland, we head for the lush and peaceful Coromandel Peninsula. This afternoon, we join a member of an award-winning team of naturalists for a half-day excursion through the Coromandel's subtropical rainforest. We will learn about natural Maori medicines, explore historic goldmines, and stand beneath the world's largest ferns. Our lodge for the next two nights lies in a tiny seaside village, and is just a short stroll from one of the prettiest beaches in New Zealand.

Day 6: Exploring the Peninsula

A casual day is spent enjoying the region. A hike along the coast leads to a secluded cove featuring beautiful sandstone formations – a perfect place to contemplate nature's wonders. During our stay, we take a trip to nearby Hot Water Beach. With thermal waters brewing just below the surface of the sand, we dig our own natural hot pools and soak as we listen to the waves crash against the shore – a truly unique and memorable experience.

rotorua & wellington

Day 7: Coromandel Peninsula to Rotorua

We head south to Rotorua, a cultural centre for Maoridom and an active volcanic region. Here, we visit the Rotorua Museum, housed in the historic Bath House where visitors came over a century ago to "take the cures" in the mineral waters. After an educational and entertaining film about the region, those who wish to test the healing theories of the water can head to Rotorua's modern spa facility for a soak in its thermal pools. This evening, we are welcomed as guests at a Maori meeting house, or marae, for a fascinating introduction to Maori culture. Dinner at the marae is an opportunity to sample both traditional and modern Maori fare.

Day 8: Geothermal Activity

There are two options for experiencing the region's volcanic features today, depending on conditions. The first is to travel by land then by boat to White Island, an active volcano 30 miles off the eastern coast. We explore the volcano on foot, hosted by professional guides. If conditions preclude a trip to white island, the alternative option is to take a scenic flight over the giant crater resulting from the 1886 eruption of Mt. Tarawera, then view some of the active geothermal features of the area by land—boiling lakes, turquoise pools, and hot streams which continue to change and develop. We take a hike in the nearby forest and explore other interesting features of this thermal wonderland.

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Day 9: Rotorua to Wellington

This morning, you depart Rotorua and fly to Wellington, New Zealand's picturesque capital city. As well as Parliament, Wellington is home to Te Papa, the country's spectacular national museum. For those who wish to take in this cultural and architectural feat, along with the other wonderful features of the city, your day is free to explore on your own. Our hotel is located in the heart of the city, and we reconvene this evening to dine at a favorite Wellington restaurant. Wellington is the final destination for the 9-day Experience North Island excursion. We bid you farewell at dinner tonight and wish you well for your onward travel.

Day 10: Homeward -bound

On our final morning, depending on your flight schedule, you'll have time to relax, make final purchases, and even reconsider that bungy jump before travelling home or to your next destination.

We're confident you'll leave New Zealand with memories and friendships that will enrich your life for years to come.

