Driving in NZ - of course the first thing to note is that you drive on the left. Also, don't turn on a red light. Be prepared to use roundabouts (enter and exit by turning left). Kiwis are aggressive drivers, they go too fast. Keep your distance and you'll be fine. The main highways go right through towns, so be prepared to slow down to 50 as you enter each town.

[**Auckland**](https://www.aucklandnz.com/)**:** It's a major city like any other, with a pointy tower much like the CN Tower. The tower is nice for getting a lay of the land if you enjoy that sort of thing. The museum in the Auckland Domain is pretty good. You might want to take a harbour cruise if the weather is good. Walking around the waterfront (the Viaduct) is nice on a sunny day. You can hike or drive up Mt Eden, but it's not really a hike (just a walk up a hill with a good view). There's a pretty good aquarium (Kelly Tarlton’s), but the one in Napier is better.

[**Rotorua**](https://www.rotoruanz.com/things-to-do)**:** The city is known for geothermal activity and for Maori cultural experiences. Because of the geothermal activity, it smells a bit like sulphur.

Visit Wai-o-tapu thermal reserve to see the natural mineral pools of different colours. Go to a Maori hangi (a traditional dinner cooked in the ground over hot stones) one evening. Te Puia is a good one. Whakarewarewa is another good option. They both combine the cultural experience and traditional dinner with a tour of the geothermal landscape. Or if you go during the day, they have a kiwi house (at Te Puia) and Maori crafts (at both places).

There's lots of touristy stuff to do in Rotorua (Kiwis call it Roto-Vegas) so if you want to go bungy jumping, ride in a jet boat, etc. this is your most likely place to do it on the North Island.

[**Taupo**](https://www.lovetaupo.com/en/)**:** You can visit Huka Falls, Craters of the Moon (thermal reserve) and have a stroll along the shore of Lake Taupo. There are also kayaking tours on the lake, I think. If you want to hike the Tongariro Crossing (it’s a challenging full day) you can get a shuttle from Taupo that drops you off at the start and picks you up at the end.

[**Napier**](https://www.newzealand.com/nz/napier/)**:** In Napier, definitely take a walking tour of the city with the Art Deco Trust. The aquarium is also worth a visit. If you're into seabirds you can visit the gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers just south of Napier. There are also lots of wineries in the area, and some craft breweries.

[**Wellington**](https://www.wellingtonnz.com/visit/see-and-do/top-10-wellington-must-dos)**:** Make sure you go to Te Papa, the national museum. The Wellington Museum is also good. Take a tour with [Walk Wellington](https://www.walkwellington.org.nz/). They leave from the i-Site visitor centre at 10am every day. If the weather is good, hike up Mt Victoria to the lookout (you can also drive up). If you're interested in the "Wellywood" film stuff, visit the Weta Cave in Miramar, which has a bunch of Hobbit/LOTR and other movie props etc. Also, at the end of Courtney Place (which is a street of restaurants and shops) is the Embassy Theatre. It was painstakingly restored to its original Art Deco glory in the early 2000s, and it's definitely worth a look inside. The Cable Car is a popular tourist attraction, and the view from the top is nice but no better than from Mt Victoria. It brings you to the Botanic Gardens, which are also nice for walking. The harbour in general is nice to wander around in good weather. The weather can be unpredictable, so if you get a good day do the outdoor stuff and save the museum.

To see New Zealand wildlife (which is mainly birds) visit Kapiti Island, about an hour north of Wellington. You have to book a ferry there (they have restricted numbers and there's probably only one ferry per day when it’s not summer). The island is a predator-free sanctuary for native birds. Lots of nice trails to walk and you'll get a feel for what NZ might have been like before settlement.  If you don't go to Kapiti Island, there's a sanctuary in Wellington called Zealandia that's worth visiting. Lots of trails there and native wildlife including the tuatara. You can take a guided tour.

[**Queenstown**](https://www.queenstownnz.co.nz/)**:** The scenery is beautiful in the Southern Alps. Queenstown is very touristy with a lot of shops and restaurants, including [a bar where everything is made of ice](https://www.minus5icebar.com/). You can go on a jet boat ride or a scenic cruise on Lake Wakatipu. The gondola is popular. Take it to the top of the hill and get a beautiful view of Queenstown and the Remarkables mountains. You can also watch people bungy jumping from a platform at the top of the hill. Below the base of the gondola, there is a kiwi house, where you can see New Zealand’s national bird. They are only active at night, so you won’t see them on your own. There are also wineries near Queenstown. If you want somewhere slightly less touristy you can visit Wanaka, which is also in the Alps.

[**Milford Sound**](https://www.fiordland.org.nz/visit/milford-sound/)**:** From Queenstown you can take a day trip to Milford Sound, one of New Zealand’s most popular scenic locations. This will also give you a chance to see some of the scenery of the South Island along the way. A bus tour is easier that trying to get there on your own, and you will learn more from the tour guide.

Things to try while you're in New Zealand:

Whittaker's chocolate

Kapiti Ice Cream

Kaffee Ies gelato in Wellington (or Giapo's in Auckland)

Feijoa (a fruit only commercially grown in NZ, very tangy, don't eat the skin)

Mussels

Wine (pinot noir and sauvignon blanc are the specialties)