

## 5 Day Pacific Coast Highway

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### The Journey

The Pacific Coast Highway offers you spectacular views along the east coast of New Zealand's North Island. It links the Coromandel, Bay of Plenty & Whakatane and Eastland with Auckland in the north and Hawke's Bay in the south.

You'll find it easy to navigate along the Pacific Coast Highway as it is well signposted. You can take in memorable experiences such as the sunrise over the Pacific Ocean, with the sun's rays casting over the superb white sand beaches that stretch along the highway.

If you are a wine buff or foodie, your senses will be overloading with some of the world's best seafood, innovative cuisine and award winning wines on offer. While in the Coromandel, take the time to enjoy a maui winery haven at [Mercury Bay Winery](#) and wake up amongst the vines.

The regions you will travel through also have plenty of cultural highlights including buildings from another era and ancient Maori pa sites. The arts are also alive in this vibrant region, with talented local artists' work on display.

\*PLEASE note that campervan drop off location for this route is Auckland



### Highlights of the trip

Cathedral Cove

Hot Water Beach

East Cape

Tairawhiti Museum

Hawke's Bay

## Day 1 Auckland to Coromandel Town

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**Distance:**

166km



**Driving Time:**

2 hours

There are two routes to Thames. The fast way whisks you along the motorway and over the Bombay Hills, then across the serene, green Hauraki Plains to Waitakaruru. The slower, scenic route winds through farmland to the village of Clevedon before leading you around the edge of the Firth of Thames. Kawakawa Bay, Orere Point and Kaiaua are beachside settlements to visit.

Both routes make it possible to visit Miranda's hot springs and bird sanctuary. The historic township of Thames was founded during the Coromandel gold rush. It's a great place for walks – around the town, through the bush and on the mangrove board walk. Visit the museum and discover an interesting range of shops.

The road to Coromandel clings to the edge of the coast. You'll enjoy amazing views and a constant procession of beautiful beaches fringed with Pohutukawa trees. Formerly a gold-mining and timber town, Coromandel is now a haven for artists, craftspeople and conservationists. It has many well-preserved Victorian buildings and an interesting museum.

## Day 2 Coromandel Town to Tauranga

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**Distance:**

214km



**Driving Time:**

2 hours

From Coromandel Town you can explore the tip of the peninsula – the roads aren't highly developed, so expect slow going. Colville, Port Jackson, Port Charles and Kennedy Bay are known for their untouched beauty. You could call into Matarangi, a recently developed beach settlement. Kuaotunu is another area of pretty beaches.

The beach town of Whitianga is home to a fishing fleet - expect to eat some excellent seafood while you're here. Best things to do include surfing, surf casting and beach walks.

The road south gives you the opportunity to visit Hot Water Beach, where geothermally heated water bubbles up through the sand. At low tide you can dig your own spa. Another highlight of this journey is the walk to spectacular Cathedral Cove, which begins at Hahei. If you have time, indulge in a round of golf at Pauanui or enjoy fish and chips in Tairua.

Whangamata is one of the country's most attractive surf towns. Enjoy the beach, cafes and bush walks. Dive and fishing tours are easily arranged. The journey to Tauranga will take you past historic Waihi, a gold mining town. You'll enjoy the fresh green scenery of the Athenree Gorge and roadside stalls are an opportunity to buy seasonal fruit, such as oranges, kiwifruit and avocados.

The prosperous city of Tauranga sprawls along the edge of an attractive harbour. There's a well developed café culture and boat charters are available to take you big game fishing, snorkelling or dolphin watching. Nearby Mt Maunganui is a destination for surfing and beach walking.

## Day 3 Tauranga to Whakatane

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**Distance:**

112km



**Driving Time:**

1.5 hours

It's an easy drive to Te Puke, a town that has turned its kiwifruit industry into visitor entertainment. As you drive eastward, fabulous views of the surf coast are with you nearly all the way. At Matata you can choose to take the main highway through the town of Edgecumbe, famous for its 1987 earthquake, or you can follow the scenic coastal route via Thornton and Paroa.

Whakatane is one of the sunniest towns in New Zealand. Just offshore is White Island, a spectacular active volcano that can be visited by launch or helicopter. Other Whakatane attractions include the museum, an observatory and Maori historical sites. In summer, dolphin swimming is the thing to do.

## Day 4 Whakatane to Gisborne

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**Distance:**

386km



**Driving Time:**

5 hours

The short trip to Opotiki takes you past Ohope, a friendly coastal town with 11 kms of uninterrupted beach for swimming, walking, surfing and fishing. You'll drive through gently rolling hill country – the foothills of the Urewera Ranges. Small settlements appear regularly. Local Maori culture is strong in this region, so look for carved meeting houses and unique churches.

Opotiki is an ideal base for explorations of Eastland. There's a lot to see and do as you drive around the edge of East Cape. Have fun jetboating, kayaking or white-water rafting on the Motu River. The village of Te Araroa is rich in Maori history. It has a 600-year-old pohutukawa tree, the largest and oldest in New Zealand, and a hotel that serves delicious meals. If you need to stretch your legs, there's a walkway to the East Cape lighthouse.

At Tikitiki you'll see one of the most marvellously ornate Maori churches in New Zealand. Further south is Waipiro Bay, which has three historical marae. Te Puia Springs is a place for a hot soak in mineral water. Then at Tolaga Bay you can walk along the historic 660 metre wharf.

Gisborne is a sunny city with a reputation for good wine and fantastic surf beaches. There are more than 20 vineyards in the area – the emphasis is on Chardonnay. Kaiti Beach was the first European landing place in New Zealand.

## Day 5 Gisborne to Napier

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**Distance:**

342km



**Driving Time:**

4.25 hours

There are two routes to Waikaremoana – inland, via State Highway 36, or along the coast on State Highway 2. The inland route gives you the chance to visit Hackfalls Arboratum, one of the largest private collections of trees in New Zealand. Te Reinga Falls is another local attraction. The coastal route provides access to Morere Hot Springs and the fabulous beaches of the Mahia Peninsula.

Waikaremoana is one of the North Island's most beautiful wilderness lakes, and the gateway to the Urewera National Park. The Onepoto Caves are a highlight. Also on the lake shore is a motor camp with motels, cabins and tent-sites.

After the wilds of the Urewera National Park, the town of Wairoa will feel like a bustling metropolis. On the road south you'll cross the Mohaka River, known for its fishing, kayaking and rafting adventures. The last leg of your journey takes you past Lake Tutira and the turn off to Waipatiki Beach.

In 1931 a devastating earthquake nearly levelled the city of Napier. It was rebuilt in the style of the times, and is now considered the Art Deco Capital of the world. The vineyards of Hawke's Bay are all within easy reach of Napier. Another attraction is the gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers.