



Pacific Coast Highway No 2

A journey that will take you to the most prestigious wineries in the Hawkes Bay, enjoying the coastal beaches and forest wilderness.

Itinerary Overview

Recommended Days:

7 days

Distance:

1400 kms

Best time of year:

Anytime

Itinerary Highlights

A journey through spectacular coastal beaches and scenery, forest wilderness and small seaside villages into Hawkes Bay, renowned as the fruit bowl of New Zealand and the home of many fine vineyards and wineries.

Auckland - Thames

106 kms - 1 hour 30 mins

Turning off towards Thames, follow the Pacific Coast Highway to Coromandel. En-route take a little side trip to Miranda Hot Springs and enjoy a soak in the largest thermal pools in the Southern Hemisphere.

Known as the gateway to the Coromandel, Thames during its heydays of the gold rush of the 1880's was one of New Zealand's largest towns with a population greater than that of Auckland. Today, its

colourful history lives on in the many pubs, buildings museums and activities found in the area. The Coromandel region is a popular holiday location for both New Zealanders and overseas travellers alike, and is renowned for its beautiful beaches and panoramic views.

This area is at its scenic best from November to January when the brilliant red flowers of the Pohutukawa tree (known as NZ's Christmas Tree) dominate the coastline. The average summer temperatures is 22 degrees and winter is 13 degrees. Enjoy surfing, diving, snorkelling, kayaking, fishing - in fact just about every water sport you could wish for.

Recommended Activities

- > Miranda Hot Springs,
- > Snorkelling
- > Rapaura Water Gardens
- > Orchid & Butterfly Gardens at Thames

Thames-Coromandel-Whitianga-Whangamata-Waihi

212 kms - 2 hours 45 mins

The Coromandel Peninsula has much to offer and to enjoy it to its utmost take time to meander around the coastline, stopping at the bays and enjoying the views.

There are plenty of overnight stopover locations along the way. Follow the coastal route north from Thames via Coromandel Township, then down the eastern coastline to Waihi, situated at the southern end of the Peninsula. The discovery of gold at Driving Creek in 1852 brought a boom to Coromandel Town, and the area has continued to flourish while retaining much of its history from those times. In the township you will find many fine examples of colonial and Victorian buildings. Whitianga is an excellent area for fishing and local restaurants specialising in fresh seafood cuisine. From Whitianga take a ferry across the oldest stone wharf in Australasia, Stone Steps Wharf built in 1837, and then on to Cooks Beach and Hahei where you can walk to Cathedral Cove, an imposing formation accessible only by foot or boat.

Take some time to dig yourself a warm little haven in the sand at Hot Water Beach where Hot Springs seep through the sand. This natural hot water spring was created by volcanic activity and can reach temperatures as hot as 75 degrees C.

Cooks Beach and Mercury Bay were named by Captain Cook in 1769 on his first visit to New Zealand while observing the Transit of Venus.

Unlike other parts of the region, Waihi is still very much gold mining town, with production hidden behind the leafy slopes closed to the main street. For those who enjoy the simple life, Waihi is your kind of town, with old wooden buildings and nearby spectacular Waihi Beach, one of safest surf beaches in New Zealand offering 9 kms of sweeping white sand and where you can enjoy shellfish collecting and sea fishing.

Recommended Activities

- > Driving Creek Railway
- > Great Sea Cave Adventure
- > Explore the old Gold Mine

Waihi - Tauranga

62 kms - 1 hour

South East from the Coromandel along State Highway 2 is Tauranga, the centre of a large Kiwifruit and citrus growing area, and well known as one of the sunniest towns in New Zealand. Its coastline is favorably dubbed "the coast with the most" and a pleasant climate provides holiday makers with a myriad of water based activities, nature walks and scenic cruises or flights.

Tauranga's waterfront is a busy haven of cafes and bars. Relax under the shade canopies for brunch or dance the night away at one of the night clubs.

Enroute spend some time in the mural town of Katikati. These amazing outdoor paintings began by a group of volunteers to brighten the town and spirits of its community when the economy was facing an economic down turn in the early 90's. While there, visit the nearby park-like Katikati Bird Garden, a lovely spot for a picnic and to see a variety of exotic birds.

Recommended Activities

> Visit the Bird Garden

Tauranga - Whakatane

96 kms - 1 hour 30 mins

With mild winters and long hot summers the Bay of Plenty is a perfect place to camp out for a day or two. Blessed with a great climate, stunning beaches and the clear blue Pacific Ocean, it is a paradise for water and sporting activities.

As the regions name implies there is "Plenty" to occupy the fun seeker. Enjoy the song of the native birds as you walk through lush green New Zealand bush. Tramping, trout fishing and deer hunting in nearby Urewera National Park will satisfy the keenest of sportsmen. Try your hand at big game fishing or just relax at beautiful Ohope Beach.

Off shore is White Island, New Zealand's only live marine volcano. Interestingly, although White Island is totally surrounded by salt water it is chemically sealed from it. Temperatures within the crater have been recorded at up to 800 degrees C, making scenic flights and guided walking tours on the island exciting and memorable adventures (gas masks and hard hats provided).

Recommended Activities

- > Ferry to Mt Maunganui then a walk up the Mount
- > Hot Salt Water or Mineral Pools
- > White Water Rafting
- > Day trip to Matakana or Mayor Island
- > Snorkeling or swimming with the Dolphins

Whakatane - Opotiki - Gisborne via East Cape

334 kms - 6 hours

To explore the eastern extremity of New Zealand, depart from Whakatane, travel to Opotiki and then continue around the eastern coastline to Gisborne.

Allow plenty of time and make sure you have a full tank of fuel when you leave Whakatane as the area is fairly sparsely populated.

You will experience some wonderful scenic spots along the coastline and from November to January the native Pohutukawa tree will be in full bloom.

Recommended Activities

- > Visit Te Kaha Beach
- > Whanarua Bay

Gisborne - Napier

216 kms - 3 hours 15 mins

A half day drive will take you to Napier in the heart of the Hawkes Bay area, well known for its fruit growing and wine industry. The latter produces around 60% of New Zealand's wine product.

Napier's now famous Art Deco reputation was a result of the massive earthquake of February 1931 and the subsequent rebuilding of the city in the Art Deco style so popular in the 1930's. Registering 7.9 on the richter scale, the earthquake levelled almost all of the buildings in Napier and raised the sea bed by 2.5 metres.

Recommended Activities

- > Art Deco Tour
- > Wine Trails
- > National Aquarium
- > Marineland
- > Gannet Sanctuary

Napier - Hastings

20 kms - 15 mins

Regarded as the fruit bowl region of New Zealand, Hastings is particularly beautiful in September when the trees are in full blossom.

Recommended Activities

- > Te Mata Peak