

The Waikato West Coast Wilderness - itinerary

DAY ONE MT, L, D

We have an exciting experience for you all today, as we head north stopping along the way for morning tea. We will call in to the Woodturners Café to pick up our picnic lunch before journeying to Tuakau Jetty. Here, we board the 22 metre houseboat "Discovery 1", a state-of-the-art luxury palace on water. We will partake in a scrumptious boxed lunch on board along with plentiful tea and coffee. We depart historic Lapwood Landing and cruise upriver accompanied by the spectacular moving landscape of the Waikato Riverland, with its Maori culture, towering ancient cliffs, early history, water activities, and abundant bird life. We are following in the wake of the old paddle steamers which plied supplies upriver to Hamilton before the establishment of road and rail. This section of the Waikato River plays a significant part in New Zealand's unsettled colonial history as the backdrop to the Maori Wars that were fought here from 1863 - 1864. As we cruise up the river, we will pass the location of the old Tuakau Sand Plant and if you look carefully under the trees, you'll spy skeletons of abandoned barges. Learn more about the fascinating history of the Tuakau Bridge. Once we've disembarked, we will travel to the west coast township of Raglan where we will be spending our first night.

DAY TWO B, L, D

After breakfast we will be at the wharf to step aboard the Wahinemoe for about an hour's cruise of the Whaingaroa Harbour - discovering for ourselves the delights of its expansive and distinctive coastline. The fascinating geology, natural birdlife habitats and riveting local history will be pointed out to us by our captain and crew on this relaxing and refreshing journey. Afterwards we will be able to explore the local township and main beach - Ngarunui famous for a lot of things - and its left-hand point breaks at beaches to the south of the town making it a mecca for surfers from around the world. Many of the local shops and sights pay homage to the community's surfing customs and traditions. Leaving Raglan mid-morning we

journey through rugged country stopping for lunch and perhaps a cup of the Raglan Roast Coffee before travelling onto the impressive 55-metre high Bridal Veil Falls on the Pakoka River. We next drive to the coastal settlement of Kawhia for a short comfort stop before proceeding to our destination to overnight in Waitomo. Tonight, we will dine at the Motor Inn.

DAY THREE B, MT, L, D

Please note: There's formed gravel tracks over undulating ground, with a few steps in one place so good walking shoes will be required today.

After breakfast we are in for a treat – a hairy feet treat to be exact. Ten years ago, when Sir Peter Jackson's film crew turned up to Mangaotaki Valley near Piopio to film *The Hobbit* and put Warwick and Suzie Denize's farm on the map, no one knew how much life was going to change. Our exploration with the Piopio Hairy Feet Tour will showcase the unusual rock formations, massive limestone cliffs, native forest, working sheep & cattle farm and the locations for the extensive film shoot. After a picnic morning tea, we'll be off to the Awakino Hotel for a pub lunch and from there we will be enjoying a scenic drive to Marokopa Seaside Village and the 35 metre waterfalls of the same name. Some say they are the most impressive and photogenic falls in New Zealand so make sure you click away and marvel at their beauty before we take in another local natural wonder - Mangapohue Natural Bridge and gorge. The 17-metre limestone arch is the remains of an ancient cave system and the walk highlights the stalactite-like formations, farmland and 25 million-year-old fossilised oysters that are exposed in the limestone outcrops. We will dine on-site at the Motor Inn tonight.

DAY FOUR B

We will begin our day after breakfast by gliding silently beneath thousands of magical glowworms in our tour boats within the Waitomo Glowworm Caves. This iconic attraction has been running since the 1880s and the limestone caves have a fascinating history dating back 30 million years to when they began to form. We will have time for morning tea here before setting out for Otorohanga where we will be stopping in for our tour at the Kiwi House and Native Bird Park. Find out

more about the active brown kiwi breeding program and donate to its ongoing work. After our furry encounter it's time for some lunch and a look through town before heading home.