

The Bridge to Nowhere and The Heartland Revealed - itinerary

DAY ONE

MT, L, D

We'll head out of Tauranga stopping for morning tea along the way. We will then continue our journey on to enjoy a spot of lunch, near Tokaanu, right on the Lakes Taupo's edge at the southern end, you will find excellent food, service and atmosphere. From here we will continue our journey to Ohakune, stopping at the rugged Tree Trunk Gorge along the way. Upon arrival we'll check into the Chateau Powderhorn Hotel located in the cool small town of Ohakune situated in the picturesque surroundings at the foot of Mt Ruapehu, New Zealand's 'carrot capital'.

DAY TWO

B, MT, L, D

After a good breakfast at the hotel, we depart for Pipiriki. We will be met by our guide and enjoy a Bridge to Nowhere Guided adventure, jetboating up the Whanganui River. We will travel 30km into the middle reaches of the Whanganui River. Pristine native bush cloaks the banks, and you will see deep gorges covered with ferns, caves, rapids and other unique and fantastic scenery. See the world-famous Drop Scene, the Dress Circle and the old pegs used by the riverboat crews to help them negotiate these waters a century ago. After all the morning's excitement, we will take a drive to the top of the Turoa Skifield for amazing mountain views before heading back down the hill to the Powderhorn for dinner.

DAY THREE

B, MT, D

We head south today to Palmerston North, home for the remainder of your trip. We will enjoy morning tea on the way and then a garden tour and talk at Merchiston Homestead. Yes, this will knock your socks off an incredible old country estate in pristine condition. After our tour of this magnificent property, we will

lunch at the lovely Mooma café before heading on to Palmerston North. On our way we'll stop in at Villa Condotti a gorgeous Italian inspired garden and villa, whilst here we'll enjoy a tour and meet the owners. After a busy day, we check into our hotel in Palmerston North and enjoy dinner on site.

DAY FOUR

B, MT, L, D

After breakfast, we head to the Coach House Museum in Fielding for a talk and a tour. This world-class museum is home to an outstanding collection of rural New Zealand Heritage, showcasing over 140 years of history. Several collections of horse-drawn vehicles were discovered from storage sheds throughout the district and now reside in the museum. We enjoy a morning tea back in town before our next stop, the lovely Wharerata Gardens at Massey University. Here we will enjoy a lovely catered lunch in the Russel Room and a look around the homestead and gardens. The next stop is the Caccia Birch Historic Home and Gardens for a guided tour before heading back to our hotel to relax and then freshen up for dinner in the house.

DAY FIVE

B, MT, L, D

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel this morning before we leave to explore the stunning surrounds of Caroline's gardens, tucked away between Palmerston North city and Te Apiti - Manawatu Gorge. This is a delightful spot with a wonderful boutique look and feel, an exciting hidden gem waiting to be discovered. We will enjoy a lovely morning tea after the tour of this beautiful garden in the fabulous cafe. From here we take a drive to check out the Te Apiti Wind Farm Turbines on Saddle Hill before heading to Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre in Mt Bruce Wairarapa. See Manukura the white kiwi, feed eels, bushwalk, enjoy a guided tour, and lunch in the Kākā Café. This afternoon -time permitting we will drive-by of the 'Log Cabin' built-in 1923 by Les Arnott. It has a dendomorphic (tree form) fence made to resemble 'logs. Back to the hotel to freshen up for dinner in house.

DAY SIX

B, L

Homeward bound today along scenic highway 54, stopping at the Stormy Point

lookout. To take in the views across the river valley, stretching as far as Mt Taranaki and Mt Ruapehu and out to the west coast. You will also see one of the best-preserved sequences of river terraces in the world. This route takes you high above diverse, lush farmland through winding country lanes and past gardens, a boutique wool mill and a stunning artist's haven. We will stop for morning tea in the quaint little town of Taihape via visit to Brown Sugar Cafe a must do. From here we will continue our journey to the Southern end of Lake Taupo to Oreti Lodge for a delicious lunch with a side of panoramic views to savour. After lunch, we will make our way home to Tauranga.