

Central North Island Canyon Country - itinerary

DAY ONE

MT, L, D

We'll begin our journey south with the first stop at the quaint little town of Putaruru, where we'll take a break for morning tea. From here we'll continue our trip through to Taupo then we'll make our way to Oreti Village Resort situated at Pukawa Bay on the stunning southern shores of Taupo. We'll enjoy a delicious catered lunch in the restaurant whilst taking in the sweeping vistas that have 180-degree panoramic lake and mountain views. Our journey continues onto Tongariro National Park at the base of Whakapapa Ski field. We'll take some time to enjoy this special area by driving to the top of the Bruce. From here we'll head around the mountain to arrive at our accommodation for the evening, the Chateau Powderhorn. Nestled in the heart of the stunning Tongariro National Park, this charming lodge offers comfort in the quaint town of pretty Ohakune. This evening, we will dine onsite at the atmospheric restaurant.

DAY TWO

B, L, D

We start our day at the Matterhorn Restaurant onsite for a delicious breakfast. Afterward, we take a picturesque drive to the Turoa Ski fields marvelling at the stunning views around us. After heading back down we will stop for morning tea before continuing our journey. Our next stop is at the Bradleys Garden Bed and Breakfast Taumarunui, where we are treated to a guided tour of the lush gardens followed by lunch. The vibrant flora and breathtaking scenery make for an unforgettable experience. As we bid farewell to Bradleys, we make our way to the Te Peka Lookout in Taumarunui. The panoramic views of the surrounding landscape from this lookout are truly awe-inspiring. We then move on to the Piriaka Lookout-Main Service Road, Manunui, where the views of the rolling hills and distant mountains make for a truly mesmerizing sight. As the day draws to a close, we head back to Ohakune and settle in for the night at the Powderhorn Chateau accommodation, enjoying the amenities and cosy ambience. Dinner will

be at the Powder Keg Restaurant; We'll leave feeling content and satisfied.

DAY THREE

B, MT, L, D

After breakfast, we take a nature ramble through the craggy bush-covered countryside to arrive for a nourishing morning tea at the charming Blue Duck Café situated within the boundaries of the Station of the same name. Featured on Country Calendar, the farm is famous for being home to one of the highest concentrations of Whio (blue duck), kiwi, native bats and native fish in New Zealand. Get ready to "go bush " as we are off on a safari here. We'll have a tour and talk about the local history, hear stories of the ongoing conservation work and experience up close the workings of this unique sheep and beef station operating in harmony with the native flora and fauna. It's on the bus again, as we head back to the home of the giant carrot - Ohakune and back to our accommodation for our stay. There's time for a spell of rest and recovery before we dine in at the cosy hospitable Powder Keg, the onsite restaurant at our hotel.

DAY FOUR

B, MT, L, D

This morning, we bid farewell to Ohakune and its mountains and travel further south and into the Mokai district. This is a landscape of the abrupt vertical sloped gorges and the former home to Gravity Canyon, the infamous bungee jumping point. We will stop for photos and a walk around at the Mokai Bridge then make our way to Tarata Lodge for morning tea hosted by the wonderful Mattock family. We will hear the story of the lodge whilst taking in the incredible river views and a 4wd trip into the Rangitikei River canyon itself. With all this adventuring behind us, we will no doubt have worked up an appetite. We will travel to Flat Hills for lunch and then make our way to our accommodation in Taihape, making a stop along the way at The Wool Company for a stock-up on the winter woollies. This evening, we will head into town for a meal with French influence and flair, at Le Café Telephonique - a converted telephone exchange.

DAY FIVE

B, MT, L, D

As we depart the Aspen Court Taihape, we embark on a journey filled with

delightful experiences and breathtaking scenery. Our first stop this morning is to view the Rangitikei Viaduct Bridge, one of New Zealand's tallest and longest rail bridges. Next, we'll make our way to Makoura Lodge, the beautiful 600-acre farm of Hugh and Kimberley McIntyre, where we'll savour a delicious lunch and learn about the property's fascinating history and heritage dating back to 1896. Afterward, we'll take a drive along the roads less travelled to experience the natural beauty and geological wonders of Whitecliff's Boulders. These large, perfectly round boulder formations, known as cannonball concretions, are covered in a soft downy crewcut of emerald moss, appearing surreal and other-worldly. This special place is a true marvel to behold, and we're privileged to have access to it. We'll then return to the hotel and relax until it's time for dinner at the lovely Awastone restaurant, where we'll indulge in a delectable meal while enjoying the picturesque river views.

Day SIX

B, MT, L

It's always sad to say farewell to this picturesque part of the North Island. A trip this morning to New Zealand's original adventure lodge, located beside the Rangitikei River. In spectacular surroundings, the River Valley Lodge will certainly cheer us up. We'll learn more about their inspiring conservation programme and environmental protection initiatives over morning tea, followed by a tour of the property. We depart here and head north to Waiouru. Yes, we are homeward bound – but we stop off at the Army Museum, lunching in the aptly named Mess Tent Café for our last-day meal together before taking the well-travelled Desert Road home in the afternoon.