

2026 NZ Trip Itinerary

Overview: The Second NZ Trip. North Island to visit Jorge and Jennifer De Lajara. A short jaunt to the South Island before parking on the beach in Houmoana (Hawkes Bay) for 6 weeks. Will and Rachel and J&J will both visit.

USA>>NZ Entry Requirements

- ✓ USA is a waiver country, so VISA is not required but an NZeTA is; can stay up to 90 days. **NZeTA** is [here](#). Applied Jan 3, approved Jan 5 (07, JK). Mark Reference number: E9976891. Jean Reference number: E9976915. [Traveler declaration](#) is due 24 hours (earliest) before the start of the trip. See calendar reminder.
- ✓ We must have proof of **exit flight**. TBD
- ✓ NZ may require **proof of funds** (paid stays plus \$400/mo, or \$1000/mo). *Show online – Truist or Chase.*
- ✓ Visit the [U.S. Embassy in NZ](#) for regular updates.

Prescriptions – must have a prescription, in original bottle, up to 90-day supply.

Diving – Current DL required (no International required, but I have in paperwork)

Weather – Summer Dec-Feb, Fall March-April. Temp H/L in F, Rain mm//days. [Site here](#)

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| • Wellington (S of North Isle): | Feb 70/61, 20//10; | Mar 68/57, 30//11 | Apr 63/54, 40//13 |
| • Auckland (N of North Isle): | Feb 73/63, 30//10; | Mar 72/59, 40//12 | Apr 68/55, 40//15 |
| • Napier (mid North Isle): | Feb 68/63, 60//22; | Mar 66/61, 90//22 | Apr 63/59, 70//22 |
- Napier average sea temperatures are: 19C 18C 17C*

Resources

- Driving and Weather: <https://www.aa.co.nz/travel/time-and-distance-calculator/>, [NZ Weather](#)
- Best Blogs: [Rambling Shoes](#), [phenomenal globe](#), [discovernz](#), [NeverEndingVoyage NZ](#), and [trip advisor nz forum](#), [Never ending Voyage North Island Itinerary](#), [cycling ideas](#), [misstravelclogs](#)
- Review Later: LoTR Location Guidebook by Ian Brodie, NZ Frenzy Guidebook and [this map](#)

New Zealand Foods – Lamb! Savory pies, boysenberries, manuka honey, green-lipped mussels in Picton.

Feb 16 – Feb 18: Emirates Flight Lisboa – Auckland 2N (Mon-Wed)

Feb 18 – Feb 23: North Island drive to Wellington

Feb 18 – Feb 19: Karaka (Auckland) 1N (Wed – Thurs)

Feb 19 – Feb 20: Taupō 1N (Thurs – Fri)

Feb 20 – Feb 23: Wellington 3N (Fri – Mon)

Feb 23 – Mar 01: South Island

Feb 23 – Feb 25: Lochmara Lodge, Marlborough Sounds 2N (Mon – Wed)

Feb 25 – Feb 28: Kaikoura 3N (Wed – Sat)

Feb 28 – Mar 01: Picton 1N (Sat – Sun)

Mar 01 – Apr 17: Houmoana (Napier), Hawkes Bay

Mar 01 – Mar 02: Martinborough 1N (Sun – Mon)

Mar 02 – Apr 17: Houmoana 40N (Mon – Fri)

Apr 17 – April 21: North Island to Auckland

TBD... maybe Gisborne, Maunganui or Raglan

Apr 28 – April 28: Flight Auckland to DC and Charlotte

2026 NZ Trip Itinerary

Feb 16 – Feb 18: Emirates Flight Lisboa – Auckland 2N (Mon-Wed)

Transit Uber or Bolt Cascais to Lisboa airport

Flight EK (Emirates) | Chase points | Premium Economy Flex Plus | [Check-in](#)
Included in fare : Checked bags, Carry-on bag, Seats, Refund, Exchange
Baggage: 1 personal + 1 carry-on 7kg + 1 checked 22kg (per person)

LIS-DBX EK194 | Dpt 08:45pm – Arv 08:15am (7½ hr, next day) | 15A, 15B |

Layover 1¾ hr DBX. Priority Pass in T1, T2, T3 (if a delay, but no time for a lounge if on time)

DBX-AKL EK448 | Dpt 10:05am – Arv 11:15am (16 hr) | Seats 39F, 39G |

Transit Instructions for Apex [Car Rental Shuttle](#)

1. After bags retrieval click on the “Ready to Collect” button on the email we’ve sent you OR Phone our office toll free on 0800 935 050 (or +64 9 873 4395) to request Apex shuttle.
2. Walk to the Transport Pick-up Zone (about 5-10 minutes via covered walkway):
 - a. Exit the terminal via DOOR 8 located in the Arrivals Hall.
 - b. The covered walkway begins directly opposite the international arrivals area with clear signs to the Transport Pick-up Zone.
3. Load your bags into the shuttle and then it is a 10-minute drive.

Feb 18 – Feb 23: North Island drive to Wellington

Feb 18 – Feb 19: Karaka (Auckland) 1N (Wed – Thurs)

Car Pickup at Auckland Airport. Feb 18 1:00pm – Apr 21 1pm. Booking #: XXXX
Apex Rentals - 46 Verissimo Drive, Auckland Airport NZ Phone +6498734395
Mitsubishi ASX or similar 2WD small SUV. Total NZD\$3954, pay at pickup, cancel by Feb 4
Shuttles from/to the airport for pick-up and drop-off are included.

*Includes inter-island ferry Monday Feb 23, **Check-in closes at 7:15am.** Sail 8:15am – 11:45am
Wellington-Picton via Cook Strait on Bluebridge - Booking ID: 961935, car and 2 people [Schedule](#)*

*Includes inter-island ferry Sunday March 1, **Check-in closes at 8:30am.** Sail 9:30am – 1:00pm
Picton- Wellington on Interislander-Kaiarahi - Booking ID: 961935, car and 2 people [Schedule](#)*

Enroute – 30-min drive, [GM route here](#)

Stay – [Bycroft Lodge](#) – booking.com Check-in 2pm
Double Room with Private Bathroom, parking, wifi, shared kitchen
19 Bycroft Road, 2578 Karaka, New Zealand Phone +64 21 258 4319

2026 NZ Trip Itinerary

Feb 19 – Feb 20: Taupō 1N (Thurs – Fri)

Check-in at hotel and drop our bags about 2pm. Then re-explore Taupo and swim in the [Wairakei Terraces](#) thermal pools to get over jetlag. Also revisit Huka Falls, perhaps hiking 2-3 hrs from Otumuheke Stream (natural warm springs into cold stream) and back. Maybe Craters of the Moon park (see GM pins).

Note – this is an hour south of Rotorua and its hot springs park. We did not visit here last time.

Enroute – 3hr drive, [GM route here](#)

Stay – [Wairakei Resort Taupo](#) – booking.com Check-in 2pm
Standard King, gym, fridge, pools. Walk to Wairakei Terraces
640 Wairakei Drive, 3352 Taupo, New Zealand Phone +64 73749004

Activity – Swim in the [Wairakei Terraces](#) thermal pools to get over jetlag (NZ\$27 pp)

Feb 20 – Feb 23: Wellington 3N (Fri – Mon)

Wellington: Botanical Garden, Tram, Weta, Te Papa Museum, Mt Victoria lookout. Will and Rachel? Jenn?

Ideas: Never Ending Voyage [Walks](#) and [What to Do in Wellington](#)

Visit Jennifer and explore Wellington... or possibly elsewhere. Will and Rachel may be in town?

Enroute – 5hr drive, [GM route here](#)

Stay – with Jennifer

Activity – Various shows with Jennifer and walks about town

2026 NZ Trip Itinerary

Feb 23 – Mar 01: South Island

Feb 23 – Feb 25: Lochmara Lodge, Marlborough Sounds 2N (Mon – Wed)

Ferry – Ferry Wellington – Picton

*Car rental includes inter-island ferry, **Check-in closes at 7:15am**. Sail 8:15am – 11:45am
Wellington-Picton via Cook Strait on Bluebridge - Booking ID: 961935, car and 2 people [Schedule](#)*

Enroute – Ferry the water taxi to Lochmara Lodge. Route in Picton is 3 min.

[Parking options](#): Coathanger Bridge, Dublin Street (both \$6/day), or Short-Term near ferry.

Stay – Lochmara Lodge, Ref #XXXX.

Weka Suite w/balcony, includes scheduled water taxi with return (add'l times for add'l cost)
*Picton Departure times: 0900, 12.15pm or **3.15 pm** from Jetty 6 near coathanger bridge – see map
Lochmara Departure times: 11.00am or 2.45pm
Dinner reservations for 6:15pm each evening*

Activity – hike!

- Hike Queen Charlotte Track: [Portage](#) (6mi, 1400' 4.6 AT) or [Anakiwa](#) (13mi, 2500', 4.9AT).
For both, we could take water taxi out and hike back, or we could hike out and back to the overlooks - tailored to our interest and endurance! Swim after :-)
- Dinner overlooking the water. Indicative [Menu](#)

Feb 25 – Feb 28: Kaikoura 3N (Wed – Sat)

Kaikoura: Whale watching and peninsula hike

Ideas: TBD – ask Jennifer

Enroute – Renwick wineries – Allan Scott, Bladen or Nautilus. 3hr [route](#) w/wineries + taste time :-)

Stay – [The Fairways](#), direct, check-in 2pm

One bedroom apartment, full kitchen, W/D, gas fireplace, BBQ, AC, patio, etc
1 Kersage Drive, Ocean Ridge, Kaikōura 7340, New Zealand Phone +6433193055

Activity – hike, eat crayfish (spiny lobsters) and watch whales!

- Crayfish is the food! *Kaikoura Seafood BBQ* kiosk or *Nin's Bin* food truck
- Feb 27 Fri - Hike [Kaikoura peninsula Loop](#) 8miles, 800' elevation, seal colony 4.7 AllTrails
- Feb 26 Thurs - *Whale Watch Kaikoura* 4pm for ~2-3hr. Ref # XXXX NZ\$350 ppd
*Please arrive at **1 Whaleway Station Road, Kaikoura** 30 minutes prior to your departure time at, check-in will promptly close five minutes prior to the stated departure time*

Feb 28 – Mar 01: Picton 1N (Sat – Sun)

Hike Queen Charlotte Paths

Enroute – Renwick wineries again, [GM route here](#)

Stay – [AAA Marlin Hotel](#), booking, check-in 3pm

Apartment - Ground Floor, Private Bath, small kitchen, full living area 15 min walk to Sisu
33 Devon St, 7230 Picton, New Zealand Phone +64 3-573 6784

Activity – Dinner at [Sisu](#) 7-9pm and harbor walk

2026 NZ Trip Itinerary

Mar 01 – Apr 17: Houmoana (Napier), Hawkes Bay

Mar 01 – Mar 02: Martinborough 1N (Sun – Mon)

Martinborough: Enroute to Hawkes Bay. Walk colonial town

Ideas: see below and wineries on the map

Ferry – Ferry Wellington – Picton

*Car rental includes inter-island ferry, **Check-in closes at 8:30am**. Sail 9:30am – 1:00pm [Manage Picton- Wellington on Interislander-Kaiarahi](#) - Booking ID: 961935, car and 2 people ([Schedule](#))*

Enroute – Rivendell LOTR film location and a winery. 1½hr plus ferry, [GM route here](#)

Stay – [Margrain Vinyard Villas](#), booking, 3pm check-in

Studio Villa, deck, small kitchen, parking Phone: +64800101015

Corner of Ponatahi & Huangarua Roads, 5711 Martinborough, New Zealand

Reception is manned 10am-4pm daily. If Reception is unattended when you arrive, we will leave a labelled envelope with your key in a hanging file just outside to the right of the Reception door. Please see map at <https://margrainvineyard.co.nz/pages/find-us>

Activity – wine!

- Walk colonial old town / city center. Dinner – maybe Karahui Wine Bar & Restaurant or Tōhi Gin Tasting Room & Thai Eatery or Cool Change or Tonic Bar
- Explore local wineries by car, foot, or rent a bike for the day

Mar 02 – Apr 17: Houmoana 40N (Mon – Fri)

Hawk's Bay / Napier / Houmoana: Bike to wineries, Art Deco Napier, hike Te Mata peak, Atrataka honey

Ideas: see below and wineries on the map

Enroute – Te Mata Peak. Driving time is 4hr plus stops, [GM route here](#)

Stay – [Aslantis Beach House](#), Airbnb. Paula is our host. She is an artist and lives next door.

Full house, on the beach, up to 4 adults

158 Beach Road, Haumoana Hastings, Hawke's Bay 4102 Phone TBD

Activities

- **Napier Art Deco.** Town Centre an area best suited to wander, roughly the area bounded by Tennyson, Hastings and Dickens Streets. iSite (information centre) is right on the Parade and at the top of the main street. Pick up a self-guided art deco brochure and wander. You can download here: <https://www.artdeconapier.com/shop/Tours/Downloadable+Self-Guided+Walks+Brochure.html>
- **Day – hike (or drive) Te Mata.** Views, and self-guided [bike wineries](#), gannett colonies tour? Ahuriri area for dinner; it is the original port area, in use for that purpose until the 1931 earthquake. It is now interesting eating areas, shopping and apartments.

2026 NZ Trip Itinerary

Apr 17 – April 27: North Island to Auckland

Apr 17 – Apr 19: Gisborne 2N (Fri – Sun)

Gisborne: Scenic drive up the coast from Napier, chardonnay cellar door, beach run and Tolaga Bay wharf.

Enroute – Coastal views. Driving time is 4hr plus stops, [GM route here](#)

Most scenic segment: Wairoa → Mahia Peninsula coast. Maybe stop for 5-10 minutes at

Waikokopu - a tiny historic port with a photogenic harbor and cliffs. Also views to Mahia Peninsula

Stay – [Waikanae Beach Hotel](#), booking.

Studio Apartment with Queen Bed, free parking and wifi, near the beach.

19 Salisbury Road, 4010 Gisborne, New Zealand

Phone +64 6-868 4139

Activities

- **Cellar Door.** Bushmere or Matawhero as we enter Gisborne. Aromatic whites are the predominant style here. Both options have a nice setting for a glass at the cellar door, and well rated lunch options.
- **Beach Run.** Waikanae Beach paths just outside the hotel. Meander
- **Tolaga Bay Wharf.** Day-trip and picnic, about a 45 minute drive each way.

The historic wooden wharf stretches **about 660 meters (over 2,000 ft)** into the ocean — one of the longest historic piers in the Southern Hemisphere.

Built between 1926 and 1929, the wharf was designed by marine engineer Cyrus J. R. Williams to overcome the bay's shallow waters, enabling direct loading of wool, livestock, and produce onto coastal steamers. The project, financed by community loans totaling £100,000, represented the determination of a small East Coast settlement to connect with national and overseas markets .

Before modern roads reached the area, Tolaga Bay Wharf was the district's lifeline, exporting agricultural goods and importing fuel and supplies. At its peak in the 1930s, more than 130 ships called annually. Commercial shipping ceased in 1966, and the wharf became a community gathering place and a favored fishing spot

Apr 19 – Apr 20: Mount Maunganui 2N (Sun – Mon)

Mount Manganui: We missed this on our first NZ road trip. A relaxed north-coast beach and surf town

Enroute –Driving is 4-5 hr plus stops, [GM route here](#)

The section of SH2 winds between Matawai and Ōpōtiki through the Waioeka Gorge Scenic Reserve, offering several historic and scenic rest areas.

- Eastwoodhill Arboretum and Rere Falls for a colorful autumn hikes (add 45 min driving)
- Historic Manganuku and Tauranga Bridges (just off the route)
- Ohope Beach and Kohi Point Walkway are nice stops also

Stay – [6 on Adams](#), booking.

Studio with Sofa Bed, free parking and wifi, near the beach.

6 Adams Avenue, 3116 Mount Maunganui, New Zealand

Phone +64 7-575 3805

Activities

- **Hike.** If reopened, [Mount Maunganui summit](#) (a.k.a. Mauao, 4mi, 800', 4.8 stars AT) and adjacent [Moturiki Island](#) (a.k.a. Leisure Island, ¾ mile, flat). Easy day, right off the beach, restaurants, and shops.
- **Morning Run.** Mauao Base Track (~3.4 km mostly flat loop) or beach run.
- **Mount Hot Pools.** If reopened, [Saltwater thermal baths](#) at the base of Mauao, nice!

2026 NZ Trip Itinerary

Apr 20 – Apr 27: Raglan 7N (Mon – Mon)

Raglan: Very relaxed west-coast surf town.

Enroute –Driving is 2½ hr plus stops, [GM route here](#) Drive by Hobbiton, but no stopping this year!

Stay – Raglan Home, Airbnb, cancel by April 19

Full home and kitchen overlooking the water. [15 min walk](#) into town
13 Point Street, Raglan, Waikato Region 3225 Phone tbd

Activities

- **Hike.** [Several trails](#). Bridal Veil and Te Toto Gorge Lookout are easy and beautiful. Karioi Summit is hard, and depending on the route, unnerving.
- **Running.** Black sand beach at Ngarunui and the Te Ara Kakariki / Wainui Reserve Trails above (10 min drive) or city center with the harbor and warf.
- **Food.** The Shake (local, seasonal), Raglan Fish (fresh with chips), Wyld Raglan, and La La Land.

Apr 27 – Apr 28: Auckland 1N (Mon – Tues)

Auckland Airport: Relax and repack before long flight to Charlotte

Enroute –Driving time is 2hr no stops, [GM route here](#)

Stay – [Pullman Auckland Airport](#), booking, check-in 2pm

Superior King Room, gym, restaurant
37 Tom Pearce Drive, 2022 Auckland, New Zealand Phone: +64 9-256 7901

Apr 28 – April 28: Flight Auckland to DC and Charlotte

Transit TBD

Flight Qantas | Premium Economy Sale | [Check-in](#)

Included in fare : Checked bags, Carry-on bag, Seats, Refund, Exchange

Baggage: 1 personal + 1 carry-on 7kg + 2 checked 22kg (per person)

AKL-SYD QF142 | Dpt 08:20am – Arv 10:10am (4 hr) | 13B, 13C |

Layover 1¾ hr SYD. Priority Pass in T1, T2, T3 (if a delay, but no time for a lounge if on time)

SYD-DFW QF7 | Dpt 12:00pm – Arv 12:30pm (15½ hr) | Seats 35D, 35E |

Layover 2¾ hr DFW. Priority Pass in Terminal E, Terminal D

DFW-CLT QF4428 | Dpt 03:18pm – Arv 19:02pm (3 hr) | Seats TBD |