

Pacific Coast Highway

Auckland to Napier / Whakatāne, ~7 days Itineraries



Day 1: Auckland → Coromandel Town

- **Drive:** ~2 h (≈166 km)
- **Mode:** Car or campervan
- **Daily scene:** Head over the Bombay Hills into the Coromandel region. Stop in Thames, continue through coastal villages like Kawakawa Bay, and arrive in Coromandel Town. Enjoy beachside cafes, crafts and seaside walks.
- **Highlight:** Coastal scenery with artsy small-town charm.

Day 2: Coromandel → Hahei / Cathedral Cove / Hot Water Beach

- **Drive:** ~1 h from town to Hahei
- **Mode:** Car
- **Day structure:** Explore Coromandel Town in the morning, then drive to Hahei. Walk to Cathedral Cove, snorkel, paddle or relax. At low tide, dig a thermal pool at Hot Water Beach and unwind on the sand.
- **Highlight:** The stunning Cathedral Cove and hands-on hot pools.

Day 3: Hahei → Tauranga / Bay of Plenty

- **Drive:** ~2 h 20 min (≈150 km)
- **Mode:** Car or campervan
- **Day path:** Travel through Waihi and Katikati, stopping at roadside fruit stalls. Arrive in Tauranga; enjoy waterfront walks, kayaking or dolphin cruises, or climb Mauao at sunset.
- **Highlight:** Bay of Plenty marine life and hillside panoramas

Day 4: Bay of Plenty Exploration (e.g. Waihi Beach → Ōrokawa Bay)

- **Travel within region:** Walking or short drives
- **Mode:** Car or campervan, plus foot-hiking
- **Day description:** Hike from Waihi Beach to secluded Ōrokawa Bay (~45 min) or continue to Homunga (~90 min). Enjoy swimming, art, beach cafés or simply relax amidst native pōhutukawa forest.
- **Highlight:** Remote hiking trail into rainforest-backed bays and creative local food stops

Day 5: Tauranga → Whakatāne (via Te Puke & Ōtanewainuku Forest)

- **Drive:** ~1 h 10 min total, with forest detour
- **Mode:** Car
- **Day structure:** Drive via Te Puke for kiwifruit farms and Ōtanewainuku Forest for a waterfall swim or summit walk. Reach Whakatāne and opt for marine sanctuary trips or beach time.
- **Highlight:** Forest immersion and marine nature tours in Whakatāne.

Day 6: Whakatāne → Gisborne (via East Cape)

- **Drive:** ~3 h via East Cape or inland route (~100 km coastal route ~1 h 40 min to Tokomaru Bay then on)
- **Mode:** Car
- **Day routine:** Drive the East Cape Road past Hikurangi and Tokomaru Bay. Visit sacred St Mary's Church and local art villages. Continue to Gisborne for its surf beaches, wine and historic Cook landing site.
- **Highlight:** Easternmost sunrise, Māori culture and riverside vineyards.

Day 7: Gisborne → Napier

- **Drive:** ~3 h (≈214 km) via coastal or inland route
- **Mode:** Car
- **The day looks like:** Morning in Gisborne for wine tastings and beach walks. After lunch, drive down to Napier—arriving in time to wander Art Deco streets, cycle through vineyards or head out to Cape Kidnappers.
- **Highlight:** Worldclass wines, heritage architecture and gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers