

NEW ZEALAND

— North Island · South Island —

“Roads unfold like poetry—where oceans kiss under lighthouses and mountains whisper in mist.”



desk2destinations.com · Honesty over hype. Slow over rushed. Practical over pretty.

By Ayushi & Harshit Jain

New Zealand at a glance

16-day couple's road trip across two islands: South Island's Milford Sound and Mount Cook, North Island's Cape Reinga and Coldplay concert at Eden Park. Rental car, ferries, glowworm caves, and the kind of silence that rewires you.



Best time	October to November (spring, clear skies, minimal rain)
Visa (IN)	Australian/NZ Working Holiday or tourist visas; Indians typically 3-6 months visitor
Currency	NZD
Getting around	Domestic flights between islands; excellent road network; rental cars ideal.
If we did it again	Fox Glacier couldn't be seen due to rain; observatory tour canceled. But that's weather, not place.

The top 10 — our personal highlights

Ten moments worth flying back for. Ranked roughly in the order they made us go “oh.”

- 1 Milford Sound cruise** · South Island
Towering cliffs, waterfalls, dolphins in the eighth wonder—hot coffee in hand.
- 2 Tasman Glacier hike** · South Island
Floating icebergs, glacier evaporation crisis made tangible, mountain silence.
- 3 Hooker Valley Trek** · South Island
3-hour trek, 4.5 hours with photo stops; vastness pulling you into nature.
- 4 Mount Cook panoramas** · South Island
Aoraki snow-capped peak; Sir Edmund Hillary's gateway.
- 5 Queenstown lakeside** · South Island
Fergburger queues, Patagonia gelato, lake views, adventure hub.
- 6 Cape Reinga lighthouse** · North Island
Pacific meets Tasman Sea; Māori souls begin final journey here.
- 7 Coldplay concert at Eden Park** · North Island
Dream fulfilled; three hours of luminous magic in Auckland.
- 8 Rotorua canopy ziplines and mud baths** · North Island
Six ziplines through native forest; thermal mud for skin and soul.
- 9 Waitomo Glowworm Caves** · North Island
Underground galaxy of bioluminescent lights; boat drift through stone.
- 10 Haka and Māori cultural evening** · North Island
Hangi food, war chants, carving tradition—honored to witness.

South Island

Milford Sound, Mount Cook, Queenstown, Milford, rain delays.

12-day road trip: Christchurch entry through Dunedin and penguin colonies, Milford Sound's fiords, Queenstown's adrenaline and gelato, Mount Cook's Hooker Valley, Lake Tekapo's lupins, the Tasman Glacier, Pancake Rocks, and rain that tested patience but added story.



Top 5 here

- 📍 **Milford Sound cruise** — Cliffs, waterfalls, dolphins, fiord magic.
- 📍 **Mount Cook and Tasman Glacier** — Highest peak, glacier hike, star-gazing.
- 📍 **Queenstown lakeside and Patagonia gelato** — Fergburger fame, adventure hub.
- 📍 **Pancake Rocks in Punakaiki** — Layered limestone formations.
- 📍 **Hooker Valley Trek** — Alpine grasslands, mountain vastness, 4.5 hours of awe.

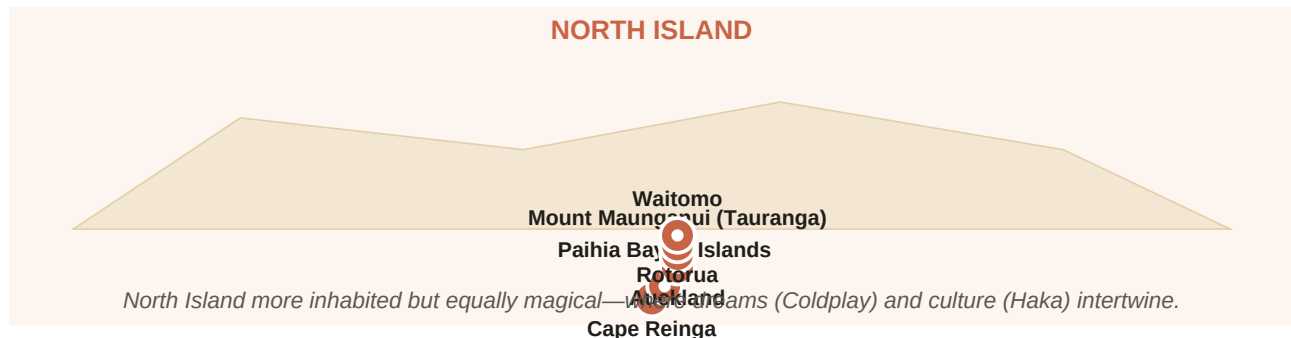
Days	12 days minimum for South without feeling rushed.
Where we stayed	Hostels in main towns; mix of budget and splurge resorts.
Getting around	650+ km over 12 days; daily drives 2-5 hours. Scenic stops add time—plan accordingly.
Where we ate	Pizza culture; burgers; Pak'nSave supermarket staple; ice cream treats.
Reality check	Weather unpredictable—rain closed roads Day 9-10. Fox Glacier couldn't be seen. Plan flexibility.

→ Read the full South Island guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/nz-south.html

North Island

Cape Reinga, Coldplay, Rotorua thermal, Waitomo glowworms.

5-day leg post-South Island. Early 11-hour Auckland-Cape Reinga drive (northernmost tip where Pacific meets Tasman), Coldplay concert dream at Eden Park, Māori Treaty Grounds and Whangarei Falls, Mount Maunganui, Rotorua's canopy ziplines and mud baths, Waitomo's glowworm caves, final gelato in Auckland.



Top 5 here

- **Cape Reinga lighthouse and twin-ocean view** — Sacred Māori site; soul departure point.
- **Coldplay concert at Eden Park** — Lifetime dream; three golden hours.
- **Rotorua Māori cultural evening and haka** — Hangi dinner, carving demos, war chants.
- **Canopy zipline through native forest** — Six lines, Silver Fern symbolism, overcoming fear.
- **Waitomo Glowworm Caves** — Underground bioluminescent galaxy.

Days	5 days minimalist; 6-7 recommended for less fatigue.
Where we stayed	Hostels in Paihia, Rotorua, Waitomo; mid-range in Auckland.
Getting around	800 km over 5 days; long days (800 km Day 1; mixed after). One driver (Harshit) per day.
Where we ate	Indian restaurants as comfort; café culture in Auckland; burger truck in Lake Tekapo.
Reality check	Long drives tire driver. Rain frequent. Observatory tours may cancel. Coldplay timing was perfect but unplanned.

→ Read the full North Island guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/nz-north.html

Costs — where the rupees went

Mid-range, vegetarian-friendly, two travellers splitting stays. Numbers are per-person, rounded honestly. Flights vary the most.

Rental car	Toyota Aqua Hybrid, fuel efficient	3500-5000 NZD for 2 weeks
Accommodation	Mix of hostels (80-120 NZD/night) and resorts (150-250 NZD)	120 NZD/night average
Food	Pizza, protein bars, grocery meals; ice cream and café splurges	60-100 NZD/day
Activities	Milford cruise 180, canopy 150, mud baths 80, concerts 150+	300-500 NZD total
Fuel	Petrol varies; North Island cheaper than South	150-200 NZD per fill
Domestic flights	Christchurch-Auckland inter-island transfer	200-300 NZD each
Geothermal and nature attractions	Most parks free or low cost	50-100 NZD
Overall daily	Budget couple mix of splurge and frugal	300-400 NZD/day

Total: 16 days (12 South, 5 North)

One last thing

Both islands have excellent, well-signed roads. Left-hand driving. Scenic drives are the journey itself.

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