

## Auckland and Waiheke Island tour

Stretching between Auckland and the Coromandel Peninsula, the Hauraki Gulf is dotted with islands and is as equally stunning as the Northland's Bay of Islands. Waiheke is the largest and most beautiful of these islands. Only a forty-minute ferry-ride from Auckland, Waiheke has many attractions: its stunning beaches (rocky bays on the landward side, sandy beaches on its ocean flank); beautiful hills covered in forests and crossed with walking trails; an exciting food and wine culture that includes over thirty vineyards and a couple of the region's best restaurants; excellent accommodation; and a vibrant artistic tradition with plenty of quirky galleries and craft stores. It's the perfect place for a Hidden Italy gourmet escape!

This seven-day tour starts with a night in Auckland and then five nights on Waiheke in superior self-contained accommodation with spectacular views overlooking the sea, a short walk from Oneroa and some of the island's best vineyard restaurants. Your visit will include four walks: a shorter one in Auckland (7 kms, 2 hours) on Day 2 and three longer walks on the island (12 to 14 kms; 3 to 4 hours each). The tour includes all breakfasts, four dinners and three lunches at some of the island's best restaurants, two picnic lunches and a scenic tour of the vineyards.

### *The accommodation:*

The accommodation is in beautifully designed, modern, self-contained apartments, each with spectacular views over the western end of the island. The accommodation is a short walk from Oneroa, the main town on Waiheke as well as some of the best vineyard restaurants on the island.

### *Food and wine:*

Waiheke is a food lovers paradise. There are around thirty boutique wineries scattered across the island, many with tasting rooms, excellent restaurants and great views. There is also a number of very good eateries closer to the water. You'll have the opportunity to sample the best of these as well as the islands own produce. The tour includes generous breakfasts each day, four dinners and five lunches as well as a scenic wine tour.

### *The walks:*

Waiheke is a walker's paradise as well, with beautiful trails that take you along the beaches and rocky bays of the island as well as through the hills, forests, vineyards and nature reserves of the interior following sections of the Te Ara Hura trail. Our tour includes four walks starting with a short warm-up walk in Auckland and including three more extensive walks on the island, ranging from three to four hours each.

### *Getting there:*

There are regular flights from most Australian capitals to Auckland. The ferry ride from Auckland to Waiheke takes around forty minutes. Our accommodation is a short transfer from the ferry wharf. The tour price includes a transfer from the airport to our accommodation in Auckland at the beginning of the tour and a transfer back to the airport from the Auckland ferry wharf at the end of the tour.

## Auckland and Waiheke Island tour itinerary

### *Day 1: Saturday*

You will be met at Auckland airport and transferred to a very comfortable 4-star hotel in the centre of Auckland. After an aperitivo at the hotel, we will have dinner at an excellent Italian restaurant a short walk from the hotel.

### *Day 2: Sunday*

This morning we will go for a walk following a section of the 'Coast to Coast' route, climbing up to Maungawhau/Mt Eden, the highest natural point in Auckland, finishing at the fascinating Auckland Museum in the attractive suburb of Parnell, unique for its collection of Māori and Pacific treasures. After a light lunch, we'll take the ferry for Waiheke. After checking in to our gorgeous accommodation on the island (a short drive from the wharf) the rest of the afternoon will be free. Dinner will be a catered BBQ at the accommodation.

### *Day 3: Monday*

Today's walk is the perfect introduction to Waiheke following a section of the Te Ara Hura trail. We walk out of our accommodation and follow a spectacular trail along the coast, passing around the western headlands, via beaches and a number of places of significant importance to the Maori people of Waiheke (**12 kms, 4 hrs**). We finish at Oneroa, where we'll have a relaxed lunch at an Italian restaurant overlooking the beach. In the afternoon, you will have the option of another walk south (**10 kms, 3 hrs**) or explore the galleries and shops of Oneroa. The evening is free.

### *Day 4: Tuesday*

Today we go on guided tour of the vineyards and gourmet treats of the island. The tour includes an introduction to the history of the island; visits to two boutique vineyards and an award-winning olive oil mill; as well as a sampling of the celebrated Waiheke oysters and a vineyard platter lunch. The afternoon is free. Dinner will be at a nearby restaurant with sweeping views from its picturesque verandah.

### *Day 5: Wednesday*

The walk this morning explores the southern coast of the island, following a section of the Te Ara Hura trail along the shore, passing a lovely beach (where there is the possibility of having a swim) before climbing up through forest to a family-owned vineyard where we'll have lunch, with spectacular views across the gulf from Coromandel to Auckland (**13 kms, 4 hrs**). On the way back to base, we'll visit a boutique gin distillery. The evening is free.

### *Day 6: Thursday*

The Far (or eastern) End of Waiheke is a place apart from the rest of the island. Here, you'll get big skies, big views, and fresh air therapy. Our walk takes us from the eastern most point past beaches, through forest back to another lovely boutique vineyard, owned by an Italian family, who specialise in Italian varietals and have an excellent Italian restaurant, where we'll enjoy a light lunch. (**13 kms, 4 hrs**). Back at base, the afternoon is free. We'll have a dinner at a restaurant down at Oneroa, which has a verandah overlooking the beach.

### *Day 7: Friday*

After breakfast, we'll say farewell to Waiheke and catch a ferry back to Auckland. A transfer to Auckland airport will be available for those you require it.