



# First Light Marathon Optional Extension

## LAKES AND LEGENDS



30 JANUARY – 04 FEBRUARY 2023

6 DAYS

DOUBLE/TWIN

\$ 2762 AUD

SINGLE

\$ 3499 AUD

Get a taste of the many different sides of Aotearoa New Zealand on this exciting extension.

Explore beautiful natural landscapes, trek one of the most famous day hikes in the world and see the geological remnants of seismic activities with your own eyes.



### Day 1 - 30 Jan: Tairāwhiti Gisborne to Rotorua

On the first day of our extension, we'll travel north through the scenic Waioeka Gorge before reaching Opotiki, and the lovely beach town of Ohope. From Whakatane, we'll travel along the Matata Straights before turning inland to arrive at Rotorua.

Before Rotorua, there is an optional rafting excursion. Participants can experience the thrills and spills of the mighty Kaituna River and take on the world-famous Tutea Falls. Standing at 7 meters tall, the falls are the highest commercially rafted waterfall. Together with your expert guide, your team will enjoy an action-packed 50-minute ride through 14 rapids as the river winds its way through a jungle canyon. No prior experience is necessary, as participants will receive full and comprehensive training beforehand. All you need is a reasonable level of fitness, a sense of fun and adventure, swimwear and a towel.

For guests who do not choose to participate in the rafting, the coach will continue into Rotorua so you can check into the hotel. Due to its unique thermal and volcanic landscape and rich Māori culture, Rotorua is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most popular destinations. The town forms part of the geologically active "Pacific Ring of Fire," and the bubbling thermal activity just below Earth's crust is evident throughout the city, from natural hot springs to bubbling mud pools.

In the evening, guests will experience the warmth of the Māori people with a night of ceremonial rituals and storytelling. We will enter a replica pre-European Māori village, where we will see the hangi pit opened and then enter the ancestral Meeting House to enjoy a powerful cultural performance featuring tribal songs, myths, legends, and dance, including the vigorous haka. We will also enjoy a hangi buffet dinner, cooked in the traditional way in an earth oven.

After dinner, we'll bid our hosts farewell and return to our accommodation for tonight and the next night, the Distinction Hotel Rotorua.

#### Meals: Breakfast\* and dinner

\*Breakfast this day is only included at select hotels (see: inclusions in the 5-day Package)

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## LAKES AND LEGENDS – FULL ITINERARY



### Day 2 - 31 Jan: Rotorua

This morning, after breakfast, guests are free to choose what they would like to do. We will be offering an optional excursion: zip-lining.

**Zip-lining:** On this exciting adventure, we'll explore native forest on a 1,2km network of Rotorua ziplines, swing bridges, and treetop platforms. In total, there are 6 ziplines that total more than 650 meters. The highlight is the jaw-dropping, 220-meter Tui Son zipline that departs from 22 meters up a 1000 year-old tree. There are also two treetop swing bridges - the longest suspended a full 50 meters!

The treetop platforms are located at varying platforms to allow participants to pause and absorb the magic of the environment. Since 2012, the zip-lining operators have been working to restore the native forest in which they operate. With the help of every customer, the forest is flourishing in a mutually beneficial relationship. Come and forget about the real world for a few hours!

If guests would not like to join the optional excursion, there will be a coach provided to take guests for a visit to Lake Tikitapu. Famous for its striking colour, the lake is known as "Blue Lake" by the locals. There is an easy 1,5 hour walk the lake that offers good views of both Lake Tikitapu and the nearby Green Lake, Rotokakahi. Alternatively, guests may simply relax on their own in Rotorua.

The whole group will meet in the afternoon for a special Polynesian Spa experience. We'll drive by coach out to Lake Spa, a deluxe hot mineral bathing and relaxation area that overlooks Lake Rotorua. Enjoy tranquil bathing and lake views in the four alkaline rock pools, each with different temperatures (from 36°C to 42°C). Sink into the serene environment as the sounds of waterfalls and reflections of the glistening water in the grotto relax you completely.

Later in the evening, we'll travel out to Redwoods Nightlights, a 700-meter-long eco-tourism walking experience in the heart of Rotorua's Redwood Forest. The tour consists of a series of 28 suspension bridges and 27 majestic Redwood trees that are more than 118 years old. The walk also features 30 exquisite lanterns floating between 9-20 meters above the forest floor, designed by world-renowned designer and sustainability champion David Trubridge. Upon completion of the tour, we'll transfer back to the Distinction Hotel.

**Meals: Breakfast**

### Day 3 - 1 Feb: Rotorua to Taupo

This morning, after breakfast, we'll begin with a guided walk through Waimangu Volcanic Valley. The walk will take around 2 hours as we embark on an ecology-focused exploration of the craters in this beautiful valley. Heading downhill, we'll pass through some of the youngest eco-systems in the world as we view a wide variety of geothermal activity, native plants, and bird-life. See Echo Crater and Frying Pan Lake, the world's largest hot water spring, as well as the mysterious and dramatic Inferno Crater and its beautiful blue hot lake. When we reach Lake Rotomahana, we'll join a 45-minute boat trip to see the Steaming Cliffs, fumaroles, lake edge geysers, unusual thermal plants, and the site of the Pink and White Terraces that were destroyed in the Mt. Tarawera eruption.

After the boat ride, we'll be shuttled back to the car park, where we'll reboard the coach and travel south through Kaingaroa Forest plantation and the Wairakei Steam fields. Enjoy a stop at the Huka Falls, where the clear waters of the Waikato River gush through a narrow canyon. We'll continue around the shores of Lake Taupo, New Zealand's largest lake, to our accommodation for the next two nights, Lakeland Resort Taupo, where we'll settle in and try to get some good sleep in preparation for the coming day's challenge: the Tongariro Crossing.

**Meals: Breakfast**

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### Day 4 - 2 Feb: The Tongariro Crossing

This morning, we'll take a short drive to the beginning of our trek. The Tongariro Alpine Crossing is 19.4km of pure, rugged Aotearoa New Zealand beauty. The trek is considered the best one-day walk in the country and is consistently ranked in the Top 10 one-day walks in the world. The Tongariro National Park is a dual World Heritage site - rich in both cultural identity as well as breathtaking natural scenery.

Our trail leads up to the saddle between Mount Ngauruhoe and Mount Tongariro, and then diverts over Mount Tongariro. Fans of Lord of the Rings might recognize Mount Ngauruhoe as Mount Doom itself! At the top of the pass, in the presence of two active volcanoes, we'll experience some of the National Park's special gifts. A cold mountain spring, an active crater, emerald lakes, and hot springs combine to make this is challenging and deeply rewarding experience.

Total walking time is around 7 hours, including stops. No alpine experience is required, and we will be accompanied by a guide.

**Meals: Breakfast and packed lunch**

### Day 5 - 3 Feb: Taupo to Auckland

This morning, we'll take it easy as we travel north to Waitomo. In Waitomo, we'll stop for a Footwhistle Glowworm Tour. A short, 3,5 km scenic shuttle will take us to the cave, while an experienced guide reveals the rich history of the area. Then, we'll take a short walk through the native forest and past waterfalls to the cave entrance. From there, walk down into the cave through a natural chasm.

The scene in the cave is set for an intimate cave experience, with solar-powered lights kept low so that we can appreciate the magnificent glowworm displays at their best. Around a corner lies the bones of one of the country's lost treasures, the ancient Moa - a long-extinct bird. The soothing sound of the Footwhistle cave's stream trickles in the darkness below.

After the tour, we'll stop for an included lunch at a local cafe before travelling north yet again, through rolling countryside into Hamilton City, Aotearoa New Zealand's largest inland city. Then continue north, following the Waikato River, over Bombay Hills and into Auckland City. Auckland is built atop 50 extinct volcanoes - while most of them appear either as small, green hilltop or are completely removed, the three largest - Mount Albert, Mount Eden, and One Tree Hill - stand proudly over the landscape.

Upon arrival in Auckland, you'll have time for a tour of the city. Drive through the cozy suburbs of Parnell, with old, well-restored houses, small restaurants, and galleries. Visit Bastion Point for panoramic views of the city and the sparkling Hauraki Gulf. Perhaps you'd like to stretch out the soreness from the trek at the Auckland Domain, the city's oldest park that is one of the largest in the city.

We'll spend the night at Grand Millennium Hotel Auckland City.

**Meals: Breakfast and lunch**

### Day 6 - 4 Feb: Farewell Aotearoa New Zealand

Sadly, it is time to say haere rā to Aotearoa New Zealand. Taxis to the airport are available from the hotel (departure transfer not provided).

**Meals: Breakfast**

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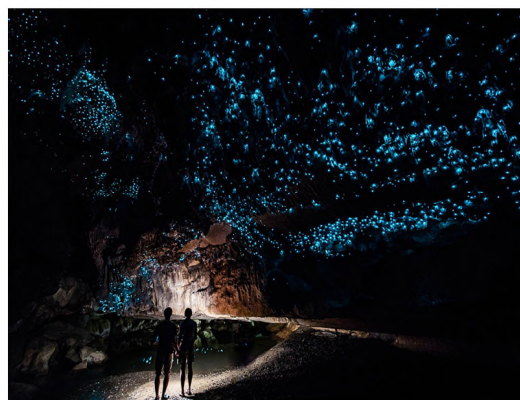
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## *Inclusions:*

- 5 nights' accommodation
- Transportation as per the itinerary
- Meals as per the itinerary
- Polynesian Spa experience
- Redwoods Nightlights tour
- Guide across the Tongariro Crossing
- Footwhistle Glow-worm Tour

## *Optional Excursions:*

- 30 Jan - Rafting on the Kaituna River  
**\$144 per person**
- 31 Jan - Ziplining in Okere Falls  
**\$163 per person**

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