

The Mighty Waikato

Where magic runs deep

PRE & POST SELF-DRIVE 'MIX & MATCH' FAMIL 8-11

Dates: Any time between 1-7 May and 12-19 May.

Situated in the heart of the North Island the diverse Waikato region encompasses New Zealand's fourth-largest city, the country's longest river, and the world-famous glowworm caves in Waitomo. Well-known for its nature-based tourism, underground adventures and Middle-earth movie magic the Waikato region offers something for every traveler.

Self-Drive Mix & Match Itinerary Notes

To make it easier for our friends in the travel trade to experience the best of what we have to offer we've created this flexible pre and post famil option, allowing you to choose your own activities and combine your Waikato experience with other regional famils as required.

Once you have selected the activities and accommodation you'd like to famil while in our region we can tailor-make your itinerary to suit your travel plans.

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WAIKATO EXPERIENCES OPTIONS

Famil opportunities and site visits are available at the following experiences

- **Hamilton Gardens, Hamilton – 75-minute tour – guided**

The award-winning Hamilton Gardens is undoubtedly one of the region's most popular destinations with an estimated 1 million visitors per year.

This visually stunning 54-hectare canvas is webbed by paths that journey through a gallery of gardens including grand Italy, modern America, tranquil China, contemplative Japan, New Zealand's only traditional Māori garden, Te Parapara, and the Fantasy Gardens collection including the Surrealist Garden, where everything is five times the normal size. The recently opened Egyptian Garden is also a must-see and is believed to be the first recreation of this sacred garden type.

Guided tours of Hamilton Gardens are available for groups and can include dining options in and around the various gardens. The new purpose-built Summer House offers private dining and event space for groups overlooking the Mansfield Garden. Tours for FITs are also available as well as gourmet picnic options.

www.hamiltongardens.co.nz

- **Hobbiton Movie Set, Matamata – 2-hour tour – guided**

Guided tours of the set take visitors through the 12-acre 'Shire' which is the picturesque home of hobbits in both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* Trilogies. The two-hour tour finishes with refreshments at The Green Dragon pub in its tranquil setting beside the lake and Millhouse.

Hobbiton offers a range of other experiences including daytime dining options, private tours and The Evening Banquet Tour experience – a day tour followed by a dinner feast fit for a hobbit at The Green Dragon and concluding with a special tour back through the set lit up and under the night sky.

The set was completely rebuilt for *The Hobbit* Trilogy and is now a permanent tourist attraction – the only permanent movie set in the world.

www.hobbitontours.com

- **Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari, Te Awamutu – 50 minutes or 1.5 hour tour – guided**

A totally unique experience, just southeast of Hamilton, Sanctuary Mountain is an internationally significant conservation project encompassing 3,400 hectares of native forest all surrounded by a state of the art pest-proof fence.

Guided tours (day-time and night-time) are available, where visitors can discover New Zealand's native bush and bird life as it was hundreds of years ago. Spot Tuatara and Takahe in the Tautari Wetland walk and check out the views from the canopy tower in the Southern Enclosure. After dark, spot native Weta and glowworms and listen for the call of the Kiwi, all within this wildlife haven.

Note: This product is easily accessible being located on the main road driven between Waitomo Caves and Hobbiton Movie Set/Rotorua.

www.sanctuarymountain.co.nz

- **The Red Barn – Dining and Farm Experiences - 1 -2 hours**

The Red Barn is a historic venue on a 500-acre dairy farm with spectacular views of stunning rural pastures and mountain ranges. The Red Barn offers groups and premium FITs pasture-to-plate style dining inside the barn venue or in their well-appointed courtyard.

Red Barn's Taste Waikato degustation showcases the best of Waikato's artisanal food presented over five courses by their executive chef, leaving guests with an unforgettable experience and a real taste for the flavour of Waikato.

Their Farm Tours offer traditional hospitality at its best. Guests can enjoy a guided tour of the working dairy farm to learn about the history behind the dairy industry and get a real understanding of pasture-to-plate dining.

www.redbarn.co.nz

- **Riverside Adventures – Kayak & Cycle experiences – 2 hours**

Riverside Adventures operates across the Waikato region offering half-day, one-day or multi-day cycling and kayaking experiences centered around the Hauraki Rail Trail and Te Awa River Ride cycleway and Lake Karapiro.

Offering both full and partial services including bike hire, kayak hire, guides, shuttles, F&B and accommodation, the experiences cater to all ages and fitness levels and can be as gentle or active as you choose.

www.riversideadventures.co.nz

- **Roselands – Dining – New Zealand style BBQ experience – 1 hour**

Roselands sits on an 18acre site that features a large restaurant catering up to 300 people, a large conference room, a relaxing lounge area, and an indoor-outdoor area and walking trails around the extensive grounds.

Roselands offers a variety of delicious lunches and dinner experiences, including the renowned New Zealand styled BBQ experience.

roselandsresortwaitomo.com

- **Cornerstone Alpacas – Classic Alpaca Tour – 1 hour**

During the classic tour, you'll be treated to a fun and informative alpaca farm visit. Take the opportunity to feed the alpacas and learn more about them, their history and their beautiful coats! Cornerstone caters to groups and FITs alike with onsite dining and retail offerings.

www.cornerstonestud.co.nz

WAITOMO CAVES – SCENIC & DINING

- **Waitomo Glowworm Caves - dry trip – 45min**

Experience the world-famous Waitomo Glowworm Caves, formed over 30 million years ago with their majestic and ornate cave decorations, the deep limestone shaft known as the Tomo and the equally magnificent Cathedral cavern known for its world-renowned acoustics, the home of where New Zealand's own opera diva Kiri Te Kanawa once performed.

A local tour guide will provide an informative and entertaining commentary, sharing stories and cultural legends as you journey through the cave. Enjoy the awe-inspiring boat ride under thousands of magical glowworms unique to New Zealand.

www.waitomo.com/waitomo-glowworm-caves

- **Ruakuri Cave Tour – dry trip – 1 h 30 min**

Ruakuri Cave is an experience that must be seen to be believed. Offering a captivating blend of the most compelling subterranean experiences, visitors begin the tour by journeying down through the spectacular, man-made spiral entrance, marvel at the softly folding shawl-like limestone formations and crystal tapestries while listening to the distant thunder of subterranean waterfalls. See glowworms up close and learn about their fascinating life.

Major features of the Ruakuri Cave tour include Holdens Cavern, named after James Holden who first opened the cave to the public, The Drum Passage, The Pretties, and The Ghost Passage.

With clever and innovative design, Ruakuri Cave has full wheelchair and pushchair access and both the cave and its visitor centre are proudly powered by 100% renewable energy.

www.waitomo.com/ruakuri-cave

- **Spellbound – dry trip – 2 h 30 min**

Visit two unique caves on this tour. Firstly, enjoy the Spellbound Glowworm Cave for Waitomo's brightest boat ride. Then experience the mystery of The Cave of the Spirit. This is a special small group experience with no more than 12 people.

Photography is allowed and hot drinks are served. Easy walks between caves through beautiful limestone scenery top off a really memorable tour.

www.glowworm.co.nz

WAITOMO CAVES – ADVENTURE EXPERIENCES

- **Legendary Black Water Rafting Company, Black Labyrinth - wet trip – 3 hours**

What began as a special treat for a brave few has developed into a spectacular tourism attraction that gives visitors of all ages the chance to jump, weave, and float down subterranean streams in a glowworm-studded wonderland.

<http://www.waitomo.com/black-water-rafting.aspx>

- **Legendary Black Water Rafting Company, Black Odyssey - wet trip – 5 hours**

Challenge yourself on this extreme dry-caving adventure. Test yourself with extreme traversing and mind-blowing heights. Edge over crossings high above roaring stream ways. You'll also spider-walk through ancient rift passages and experience the challenges of technical high rope work and flying foxes.

<http://www.waitomo.com/Black-Water-Rafting/Pages/black-odyssey-tour.aspx>

- **Waitomo Adventures, Lost World – dry trip – 4 hours**

Abseil 100m into the surreal Lost World. Descend slowly, suspended in the massive void. Look around into upper levels of the cave and see weird plants clinging to the sheer walls and all the while the roar of the Mangapu river echoes up from caverns far below.

Once down in the cave, catch your breath, because this is actually just the beginning - there's a lot more to do and see as you explore the massive vaults - See excellent glowworms and gigantic flowstone formations. Gradually climb back to the surface through massive craggy caverns ledges and ladders including the legendary 30m "stairway to heaven".

www.waitomo.co.nz/adventure/lost-world-half-day-adventure

WAIKATO ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

HAMILTON CITY

Famil opportunities and site visits are available at the following properties

- **Novotel Tainui Hamilton**

Novotel Tainui Hamilton is Hamilton's only 4.5 star hotel conveniently located in the CBD, on the banks of the Waikato River. This contemporary hotel boasts 177 well-appointed rooms and is complete with restaurant, bar and conference facilities.

www.novotel.com/hamilton

- **Ibis Tainui Hamilton**

Situated on the banks of the Waikato River, Ibis Tainui Hamilton is your gateway to the Waikato region. Positioned in the heart of Hamilton City, just 20 minutes from Hamilton International Airport, offers easy access to relaxing river walkways, cafes, restaurants, SkyCity, shopping and entertainment options.

Ibis Tainui Hamilton is undergoing an extensive renovation and will be re-opened in December 2022 and the concept is the first of its kind for Accor in the Pacific!

www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-6690-ibis-hamilton-tainui/index.shtml

- **Jet Park Hamilton Airport**

Just a 5-minute walk from Hamilton airport, Jet Park is the perfect space to recuperate after a long journey or a great place to start before it begins. After completing its multi-million-dollar makeover in 2022, the hotel is now equipped with 62 newly revamped rooms and an updated restaurant & bar – Propeller.

www.jetparkhamilton.co.nz

- **Ramada Hamilton**

Ramada Hamilton is situated in the vibrant centre of Hamilton's bustling CBD, Ramada Encore by Wyndham puts guests in the heart of the action. The property is a modern hotel set in a historic 19th-century building, offering 69 guest rooms and suites for every kind of traveller.

www.ramadahamilton.co.nz

- **Distinction Hotel, Hamilton**

Situated to the north of Hamilton's CBD Distinction Hotel offers 147 rooms and suites, onsite dining and fitness facilities. The property is perfect for families and groups due to its large footprint and expansive green outdoor spaces.

www.distinctionhotels.co.nz/hotels-hamilton

WIDER WAIKATO

Famil opportunities and site visits are available at the following properties

- **Hidden Lake Hotel, Cambridge**

Located in the boutique town of Cambridge, the contemporary property includes a gourmet restaurant and bar and 33 superiorly appointed rooms and apartments. This environmentally conscious hotel prides itself on locally made, organic products and blends modernity with heritage architecture to reveal a new style of Waikato accommodation.

www.hiddenlakehotel.co.nz

- **Castaways Resort, North Waikato**

With 15 well-appointed spacious two-bedroom Chalets and 10 stylish Studio units, Castaways Resort offers accommodation options to suit every guest. The Castaways restaurant and bar offers panoramic views over Kariotahi beach and the Tasman sea reflecting the rugged beauty of its west coast location. Castaways are continuing their resort extension programme adding a number of two-bedroom villas to their studio and chalet offerings.

www.castaways.co.nz

- **Te Tiro, Waitomo**

Situated halfway between Waitomo Village and Marakopa Falls, Te Tiro offers two self-contained pioneer-style cottages and a lotus belle glamping tent. Enjoy panoramic views of the central north island and mountain during the day and discover glowworms at night nestled in the native New Zealand bush only metres from the accommodation.

www.waitomocavesnz.com

- **Podium Lodge, Cambridge**

An 'Olympic Village' inspired design, Podium Lodge offers a one-of-a-kind Cambridge accommodation experience. Located on the outskirts of picturesque Cambridge the property is perfect for groups, families and independent travelers.

www.podiumlodge.co.nz