

# New Zealand – The Best Bits 29<sup>th</sup> Jan – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019



New Zealand is a stunningly beautiful country combining snow-capped mountains, glaciers, fjords, tumbling rivers, azure blue waters, tropical forests, volcanoes, pristine beaches, vibrant wildlife, uncrowded, wide-open spaces and wine. I have yet to see an ugly view. All of the above makes me want to return time after time. It would be selfish of me to want to keep it to myself, so I have put together an itinerary that highlights some of the best bits. It is impossible to include everything that is good about New Zealand; you need a lifetime for that. What I have provided is an opportunity to experience all of the above features, giving you lasting memories. I hope you are as excited about this as I am.

## Itinerary

### Day 1 – Tues. 29<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Depart UK (The best flight option for the corresponding dates in 2018 is with Emirates from Birmingham - £865. I will be able to update you on flight details in late Feb./early March when the schedules come on to the system. Booking 11 months in advance may well give us more options and better prices.)

Possible flight details:-

Dep. Birmingham 20.50....2 stops – Dubai & Brisbane....Arr. Auckland 14.45 (+2)

### Day 2 – Wed. 30<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Travelling

### Day 3 – Thurs. 31<sup>st</sup> Jan.

Arrive Auckland to be met and transferred to our accommodation – Poenamo Hotel, 31 Northcote Road, Northcote, Auckland (\$150 per room (\$75pp)

### Day 4 – Fri. 1<sup>st</sup> Feb.

Recovery day and the sights of Auckland. There are a number of options available for us to enjoy.

- A walk up Mt. Eden, an extinct volcano with a view across the city
- A wander around the waterfront with a visit to the Maritime Museum - \$17 or \$40 to include a boat trip around the harbour.
- A two hour trip on the winning America's Cup yacht - \$180
- \*A visit to the Sky Tower (\$23). You can, if you so desire, take the Sky Walk around the canopy (\$150) or the Sky Jump (\$225).
- \*Rangitoto Island (\$25 return ferry ride) is a good option, offering the chance to walk up to the crater summit with expansive 360° views around the Hauraki Gulf. There are also lava tubes that can be explored. Rangitoto only formed 600 years ago when a series of eruption brought it above sea level. The summit is

269m and the island is now home to the world's largest Pohutukawa forest, New Zealand's Christmas tree.

\* My personal recommendations

Overnight at Poenamo Hotel - \$150 per room (\$75pp)



*Looking across at Auckland from the crater rim of Rangitoto*

**Day 5 – Sat. 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb.**

Drive to Paihia (227km/3hrs) in the Bay of Islands. Check into accommodation, Haka Lodge (\$89 for double and twin rooms.) Rest of the day free to explore.

**Day 6 – Sun. 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb.**

“The Cream Trip” (\$129) starting at 9.30am and finishing at 4.15pm takes us to the most interesting and beautiful parts of this group of islands. It gets its name



*Bay of Islands*



*Dolphin leaping at the side of the boat*

from the supply vessel that used to ply these waters supplying the islands with their daily needs, collecting the milk and post as it did so. We first call in at Russell, the first capital of New Zealand, to pick up more passengers. Then we travel between the islands, often encountering pods of dolphins while learning something of the history, management and protection of the islands. We land on one for lunch, giving us a chance to explore a little, to gain height for an elevated view of the islands, or to enjoy the opportunity for a swim in the tepid water. If the weather is favourable, and there is not too much swell, our captain will take us through a rock arch before returning us to Paihia the Haka Lodge (\$89)



**Day 7 – Mon. 4<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Drive from Paihia to Whitianga on the Coromandel Peninsular (416km/5.5hrs.) There will be plenty of opportunities for us to break up the journey and look at places of interest en route. The Coromandel Peninsular forms the eastern edge of the Hauraki Gulf and juts out into the Pacific Ocean. Its eastern shore boasts some of the world's finest white sand beaches, while the spine of the peninsular is ribbed with impressive forested mountains. Check into accommodation – On the Beach Backpackers Lodge (single \$42, double \$82.)

**Day 8 – Tues. 5<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Take a short drive to Whangapoua, then walk for about 30 minutes to New Chums Beach. This beach is only accessible on foot, and only when the tide is favourable, so it is rarely visited. In 2006 it was included in the Daily Telegraph Top 10 Beaches of the World. It is well worth a visit and at this time of year the water is lovely and warm.



*New Chums Beach*



*Cathedral Cove*

Return to Whitianga to take the afternoon ferry trip to Cathedral Cove (\$80). Cathedral Cove is a very popular destination for people who want to walk with crowds to see it. By taking the boat trip, we avoid the crowds and see lots more besides.

Overnight at On the Beach Backpackers Lodge (single \$42, double \$82)

**Day 9 – Wed. 6<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Drive to Rotorua, stopping en route at Hot Water Beach (if the tides are right) to experience the thermal water bubbling up through the sand.

Continue to Rotorua (230km/3hrs). Rotorua is one of the thermal hotspots of New Zealand with thermal pools, bubbling mud baths, fumaroles and geysers. It also holds significant importance to the Maori culture. Check into our accommodation – Rotorua YHA (single \$75, double/twin \$80 - \$94 (without/with en suite)). In the evening

experience the Hangi and a cultural evening (£99). The Hangi is the traditional method of cooking using hot stones in a pit to cook the meat.

**Day 10 – Thurs. 7<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Spend the morning visiting more examples of thermal activity before we drive to Whakapapa via Huka Falls and Lake Taupo (185km/2.5hrs). Huka Falls, while not very high (only 10m) the force of the water is incredible as the river is squeezed between two slabs of rock.

Lake Taupo has an interesting stony beach, when the stones are thrown into the lake they float for a while before, eventually, sinking to the bottom. This is because the stone are volcanic cinders, full of holes and very light. Lake Taupo sits in a volcanic caldera formed some 300,000 year ago and is surrounded by volcanic peaks, which form the crater rim.

After a very varied visual day we check into our accommodation – Chateau Tongariro Hotel (\$210 for a single bedroom apartment, \$235 for a two-bedroom apartment)

**Day 11 – Fri. 8<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

The Tongariro Crossing. This requires an early start if we are to complete the crossing in a day. It is only 19km but, because there is so much of interest in that 19km, we might be tempted to go off the trail for a while. It is a full day's walk. Transport, provided by the hotel (\$30) will take us to the start point. The walk starts off quite gently and, only after we have warmed up, does it become steeper, taking us into an orange volcanic desert. To our right is the wonderfully symmetrical cone of Mt Ngauruhoe, to our left the less distinctive peak of Mt. Tongariro. It is this that we can detour to if we feel we have both the energy and the time. Continuing our crossing, we encounter some wonderful volcanic features like the Red Crater, the Emerald Lakes and Blue Lake, as well as hot spots with steam rising lazily into the air. One of the volcanoes is still active, with a plume of steam constantly rising from its crater. There are warning signs along the route about what to do in the event of a full eruption. Don't ask!

By the time we reach the far end of the crossing, we will be tired and grateful that the transport is there to take us back to our hotel - Chateau Tongariro Hotel (\$210 for a single bedroom apartment, \$235 for a two-bedroom apartment).



*Emerald Lake*



**Day 12 – Sat. 9<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Drive to Wellington (343km/4hrs) Check into accommodation – Quest Hotel, Wellington – from \$169.

**Day 13 – Sun. 10<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

In Wellington. There are a number of options available, and we don't all have to do the same thing.

- Te Papa, (free) an ultra modern museum that tells you everything about New Zealand, from its geology, vulcanicity, flora and fauna, Maori culture, European settlers. It is easy to spend a whole day in this fascinating museum.
- Zealandia, (\$19.50) is a long-term project to create a sanctuary for the indigenous creatures of New Zealand. Behind its high sunken fences it is trying to eradicate all those predatory creatures brought in by early settlers. Living wild within the fenced valley are 30 species of native birds and the tuatara lizard.
- A trip out to Matui-Somes Island (\$23 return) in the middle of Wellington harbour. This island is a nature reserve now but was once used as a quarantine outpost for all incoming settlers. Like Zealandia, it is predatory free. There are a number of walks that can be done on the island.

Overnight in Quest Hotel, Wellington – from \$169.

**Day 14 – Mon. 11<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Return hire vehicle to depot and take the ferry as foot passengers (\$65) across Cook Strait and Marlborough Sound to Picton. Rest of the day free to explore Picton and to buy extra supplies for the trek. Overnight at Picton Gateway Motel or similar (approx. \$120) Any kit not required for the trek can be left in store at the motel.

**Day 15 – Tues. 12<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Queen Charlotte Track – (\$18 for a five-day pass)

The Queen Charlotte Track (70km) is one of New Zealand's classic walks. It offers gorgeous coastal scenery.

We will use a water taxi to transport us to the start point, Ship Cove where Captain Cook liked to anchor his ship while discovering New Zealand. (\$105 includes our transport at the start and finish of the trek and the daily transporting of our kit to the next destination)

Meretoto/Ship Cove to Endeavour Inlet (15km/5hrs)

There is no road to Meretoto/Ship Cove, hence the need for a water taxi to take us to the start. The track climbs away from the beach, passing through a largely unmodified forest, where the high canopy is complemented by a diverse understorey of shrubs and small trees. On the ridges higher up, beech trees dominate. After 50 minutes walking, you will reach a lookout point at a saddle, where you will enjoy good views of both the inner and outer Queen Charlotte Sound/Tōtaranui. Beyond the saddle, the track drops into Resolution Bay, From Resolution Bay the track follows a well-graded old bridle path over a ridge and into Endeavour Inlet. It winds downward and follows the shoreline to the head of the inlet, where interpretation signs recall the antimony mining era.

Overnight at Bluewater Lodge (twin \$75 per bed, double \$165)

**Day 16 – Wed. 13<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Trek from Endeavour Inlet to Camp Bay (11.5km/4hrs)

From Endeavour Inlet the track stays near the shoreline and wanders through regenerating forest rich in small birds. It rounds Big Bay to Camp Bay  
Overnight at Punga Cove Resort (\$63 per person)



*Looking down on to the still waters of Kenepuru Sound*

**Day 17 – Thurs. 14<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Trek from Camp Bay to Torea Saddle (23km/8hrs) This is the longest and most arduous section of the journey, however, from the top of the ridge you will be well rewarded with magnificent panoramas of the Sounds. Climb out of Camp Bay to Kenepuru Saddle and follow the ridge separating Queen Charlotte Sound from Kenepuru Sound. Eventually the track descends to Torea Saddle between Portage and Torea Bay.

Overnight at The Portage (\$225 per double/twin room)

**Day 18 – Fri. 15<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Trek from Torea Saddle to Anakiwa (20.5km/8hrs) This part of the journey also follows the ridgeline. Here gorse and mānuka are prolific, sheltering shrubs and trees that will one day shade the way. A side walk leads to the Onahau Lookout just before the descent to Te Mahia Saddle begins. Beginning on the road above Mistletoe Bay, this section follows old bridle paths high above the water. The final hour's walking is on an easy path through mature beech forest to Anakiwa. At the end of the trek the water taxi will transport us back to Picton to overnight in Picton Gateway Motel or similar (approx. \$120)

**Day 19 – Sat. 16<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Pick up new hire vehicle from Picton (approx. \$200 per day) and drive from Picton to Marahau via Nelson (170km/2hrs 45mins) Check into Abel Tasman Barns (\$89 for twin or double rooms per night) Take a walk down to Split Apple Rock Bay with its beautiful golden beach and an amazing rock feature standing proud on a reef in the bay.





*Split Apple Rock*

**Day 20 – Sun. 17<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

A full day guided tour by sea kayak and water taxi (\$215).

Travel by water taxi to Onetahuti in the morning to join your guided kayak trip. Paddle with your expert local guide southward through the Tonga Island Marine Reserve visiting the friendly local wildlife. Enjoy your lunch on a golden beach before continuing on your kayaking trip southwards to Anchorage. Water taxi from Anchorage back to Marahau.

Overnight at Abel Tasman Barns (\$89 for twin or double rooms per night)



*Anchorage Bay*



**Day 21 – Mon. 18<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Take the water taxi to Anchorage Bay (\$37) and walk back, leisurely to Marahau (12km/4hrs but longer with stops) stopping off en route to enjoy the beaches and clear waters of the Tasman Sea.

Overnight at Abel Tasman Barns (\$89 for twin or double rooms per night)

**Day 22 – Tues. 19<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Drive down the west coast to Westport and beyond to Punakaik where there is a fascinating formation of pancake rocks. We will stop off here and explore for an hour or so. Continuing the journey we end up at Hokitika where we will overnight in the Birdsong YHA (double and twin rooms \$89) (342km/4hrs 40mins)

**Day 23 – Wed. 20<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

In the morning take a walk along the Hokitika Gorge. Then drive to Franz Josef (134km/1hr 45mins) If weather is clear, take a late afternoon/early evening walk to view the glacier. Stay overnight in Franz Josef at Rainforest Retreat with rooms from \$105.



*Hokitika Gorge*



*Franz Josef Glacier*

**Day 24 – Thurs. 21<sup>st</sup> Feb.**

Possible further glacier visit in the morning to the Fox Glacier before driving over the Hasst Pass to Wanaka (286km/4hrs 40mins) Overnight at Wanaka Hotel (\$130 per room)

**Day 25 – Fri. 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb.**

A day-walk from Wanaka for some of the most amazing views in New Zealand. Roys Peak Track (16km/5 – 6hrs). With beautiful Wanaka as the backdrop, you'll climb from lake level through farmland then up into the tussock tops to the 1578 m summit. The sounds of grasshoppers and skylarks surround you as you climb 1,500 m on a well-formed track with the most spectacular views of Lake Wanaka, its islands, bays, and the mighty snow-capped mountains of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, including Mount Aspiring/Tititea. Overnight at Wanaka Hotel (\$130 per room)

**Day 26 – Sat. 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb.**

Drive to Queenstown (67km/1hr) Explore the adventure capital of New Zealand, buying the necessary food for the trek that is to follow. There are a number of activities that you might like to try from bungee jumping to jet boating, or simply take a gentle



cruise on the lake. Return hire vehicle to depot. Overnight at Queenstown Lakeside YHA (twin rooms \$99)



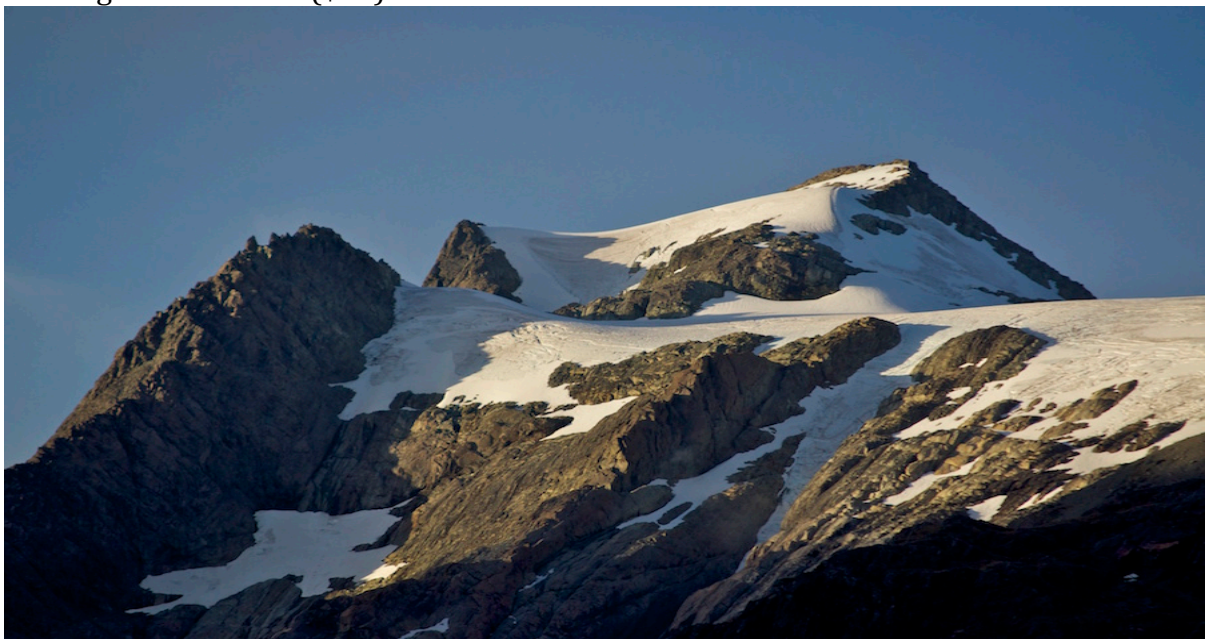
*Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown*

**Day 27 – Sun. 24<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Pick up transport to take us to the start of the Routeburn Trek (We will be able to leave all unnecessary kit in store at the YHA) – bus leaves Queenstown at 06.55. Journey time 4hrs. (We will take the loop option, which includes going to Milford Sound after the trek - \$139). Walk from Routeburn Shelter to Routeburn Falls Hut (8.8km/3 – 4hrs)

The track begins at Routeburn Shelter, gently winding alongside the crystal-clear Route Burn (river). After passing Sugarloaf Stream, you'll climb to Bridal Veil Waterfall and continue above the gorge. A swing bridge leads to open grassed flats, and the Routeburn Flats Hut and Campsite. The track climbs steadily through stunning beech forest, providing views of the Humboldt Mountains. End the day at Routeburn Falls Hut, on the edge of the bushline and close to the impressive Routeburn Falls cascade.

Overnight at Falls Hut (\$65)



*Snow-capped Mt. Aspiring from near the Falls hut*

**Day 28 – Mon. 25<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Trek from Routeburn Falls to Lake Mackenzie Hut (11.3km/5.5 – 6hrs)

On day 2, you'll climb steadily up the valley, through wetlands and tussock-covered flats, before sidling along the bluffs above Lake Harris to reach the highest point on the track at Harris Saddle/Tarahaka Whakatipu (1,255 m). From Harris Saddle we can make a short detour to climb to the summit of Conical Hill (1515m). The track then descends and traverses along the exposed Hollyford Face, with expansive views over the Darran Mountains. This section of the track is well-known for its impressive array of alpine plants. A steady descent leads to Lake Mackenzie Hut, set beside the enchanting Lake Mackenzie.

Overnight at Lake Mackenzie Hut (\$65)

**Day 29 – Tues. 26<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Trek from Lake Mackenzie to the Routeburn Divide (12km/4-5hrs)

Leaving Lake Mackenzie Hut the track crosses a small flat before climbing to the bushline. A gradual descent then leads past the 'Orchard', an open grassy area dotted with ribbonwood trees, to the impressive Earland Falls (174 metres). The track continues its descent through beech forest to Lake Howden Hut and on to The Divide. If time allows we might be able to fit in a popular side trip (1 hr 30 min) to Key Summit climbs to an alpine wetland with panoramic views over Fiordland mountains and alpine lakes.

At the end of the trek we will be picked up by bus and taken to Te Anau and on to Milford Sound. While at Milford Sound, we will take a 1hr. 45min cruise around the sound (\$95) Afterwards the coach will return us to Queenstown where we will again stay at the Waterfront YHA (twin rooms \$99)



*Milford Sound still impressive on a less-than-perfect day*



**Day 30 – Wed. 27<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Pick up new hire vehicle and drive to Otago Peninsula (Dunedin) (293km/4hrs)  
The Otago Peninsula is fascinating for its wildlife and I plan we make the most of our time there. It is home to the only mainland albatross colony in the world and we will have an opportunity to visit the Albatross Centre (\$50). We will see adults birds sitting on their cliff-edge nest while young albatross practice their flying skills above us.



*Albatross long-haul training*



*Otago seal colony*

In addition to the Albatross Centre there is a seal colony we can visit, numerous vantage points to see a variety of seabirds, particularly the Stewart Island Shag. I would also recommend waiting for the blue penguins coming ashore after dark (\$35)  
Overnight at Otago Peninsula Motel (\$160)

**Day 31 – Thurs. 28<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Drive to Christchurch (361km/4hrs. 30mins) Check into accommodation, The Jailhouse (twin and double rooms \$69 - \$80, single \$54 - \$79) Rest of day free to explore Christchurch.

**Day 32 – Fri. 1<sup>st</sup> March**

Drive to Kaikoura (202km/3hrs) for a whale-watching trip (\$150). Kaikoura was rocked by an earthquake in 2016 and is now getting back on its feet. The fleet of boats that take whale-watching trips were lifted out of the water by the uplifting of the land. They have only recently rebuilt their wharf. On this trip, for which we need to allow 3.5hrs, we are guaranteed to see humpback whale and several varieties of dolphin. There is also a good chance we might see sperm whale.



*The fluke of a diving Humpback whale*

Return to Christchurch. Overnight at The Jailhouse (twin and double rooms \$69 - \$80, single \$54 - \$79)

### **Day 33 – Sat. 2<sup>nd</sup> March**

Return hire bus to Christchurch Airport. Take an internal flight from Christchurch to Auckland (approx. \$54) to connect with the return flight to the UK.

Dep. Christchurch 14.00      Arr. Auckland 15.20 flying with Jetstar 236

Connecting with – International flight with Emirates

Dep. Auckland 18.50      2 stops Melbourne and Dubai      Arr. Birmingham 11.25 (+1)

### **Day 34 – Sun. 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

Arrive UK

## **Cost**

All prices quoted in this document, unless otherwise marked, are in New Zealand dollars.

### **Accommodation**

I want to point out that it is impossible to give an exact price without knowing the gender and relationship make-up of the group. For the sake of cost effectiveness, couples would obviously have double rooms and singles of the same gender would pair up for twin rooms. What we might do, once we know the numbers, is, on those occasions when we have more than one night in a place, book a bach with sufficient bedrooms to cater for the whole group. This would give us quality accommodation at a cost effective price.

The price I am quoting you does not include food. Eating out in New Zealand can be expensive, but then the quality of the food is excellent. There will be opportunities, particularly if we take the bach option, for us to self-cater, allowing us greater control of our finances. Even if we don't take the bach option there will still be opportunities for us to self cater in hostels and motels.

### **Transport**

This will cost approx.\$200 a day for a small minibus. Fuel is added on to that. It may be that we could use a large people carrier. What we must bear in mind is that we need a vehicle that is large enough to be comfortable and will also carry our luggage.

### **Activities**

These costs have been able to work out accurately. I would recommend that you participate in all on offer. Obviously, if you choose not to participate, in a particular activity, you will not be charged.

**NB The New Zealand Government** has proposals for imposing a tourist tax on overseas tourists. At the moment, nobody knows what form that will take, or whether it will be in place by February 2019. It could come as a visa payment on entry, which would be far simpler, or a percentage increase in the cost of everything related to accommodation, activities and vehicle hire. We can only wait and see.



We also have to be aware of fluctuating exchange rates and I have allowed a buffer zone in the costing to accommodate that. Obviously, if it is not needed it will be either returned or used as a kitty for the benefit of the group.

### **How much?**

I am confident that we can fulfil this itinerary for **£3000 per person**

### **What is included in the price?**

All accommodation  
All activities  
Vehicle hire and fuel  
Internal flight from Christchurch to Auckland

### **What is not included in the price?**

International airfare  
Food and meals throughout the duration of the trip  
Insurance  
Personal expenditure

If this trip takes place, I will travel out to New Zealand a week in advance of the group, so that I can make final arrangements. I will stay on to have some family time after you have returned to the UK.

## **Timetable to departure**

### **January 2018**

I would like to know how many people are committed to this trip by the end of January, a year prior to departure. This means that I can start booking accommodation and services well in advance to guarantee availability.

A completed registration form and a £500 deposit, will give me the capacity to secure bookings, should they be required.

### **February 2018**

By the end of February, when flights come on to the system, I can begin to price compare and make sure that you get the best deal. I will advise you and expect you to book the flights recommended.

**NB If you wish to break up your journey into small chunks and take advantage of the opportunity to visit other places en route, that is fine, provided your schedule ensures that you arrive in Auckland on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019.**

### **July 2018**

I would like a second payment of £1000 by the end of July, allowing me to maintain paying for items as I organise them.

### **November 2018**

A final payment of £1500 will be due by the 30<sup>th</sup> November.