

A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake reflecting snow-capped mountains and a dense forest under a clear blue sky. The mountains in the background are rugged and covered in patches of snow, with their peaks reaching into the sky. The forest in the middle ground is lush and green, with various types of trees. The lake in the foreground is still, creating a perfect reflection of the mountains and the sky. The overall scene is peaceful and beautiful, capturing the natural beauty of New Zealand.

A Budget Traveler's Guide To Visiting New Zealand

JOIN THE TRAVELLING PAIR

INTRODUCTION:

Despite living in New Zealand for over five years, we are still often caught off guard by how everything here is quite expensive; food, petrol, rent, and almost all the basic necessities. There is, however, something good that's emerged from this reality. Over the years, we have found and learned some tips and tricks that's allowed us to survive and still do the two things we love most: travel and eat.

DISCLAIMER

The pieces of information in this guide reflect our experiences and does not necessarily apply to EVERYONE. It will cover four of the most common components of traveling: accommodation, food, transportation, and activities. You'll also notice that many of the options require you to SIGN-UP in order to access some deals, these are all for FREE, but it is your responsibility to read through each company's Privacy Policy. All the words/ names that are UNDERLINED are CLICKABLE LINKS for easier navigation. AFFILIATE LINKS are also found in this guide and will have a \diamond beside it. If you have any questions or clarifications about any of the information provided, do not hesitate to send us an email.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Tip # 1: Stay at a BACKPACKERS accommodation.

This option is very popular for the younger generation who are trying to gain travel experience without breaking the bank. It is also suitable for travelers who are not too fussed in sharing a dorm room (with 2 or more people, depending on your selection) and having to use communal toilets and showers. The upside of staying at a backpackers is that most of them are equipped with a full kitchen, a lounge that usually has entertainment facilities, and you get to socialize with other travelers. The cost of staying at a backpackers varies from city to city, but it normally starts from \$30 per night.

However, if you are like us, and you prefer to have your own space, don't fret, the next tip might work for you.



Tip # 2: Access websites that list private accommodations for rent.

From our experience, the least expensive room that we have booked so far was with Holiday Houses, and it was for a studio unit in East Auckland which was a stone's throw away from the Panmure Lagoon and a good five-minute walk to the Panmure transportation hub. The studio (as shown in the photos below) was equipped with all the basic necessities including a bathroom, a kitchenette, and a parking space. It cost us approximately \$60 per night.

You do need to understand that using these websites can be hit-and-miss, so make sure to do ample research.



3 IMPORTANT TIPS WHEN USING THESE WEBSITES:

- a. Always do your research.
- b. Read the reviews.
- c. ALWAYS READ THE INCLUSIONS of every listing because we have found that regardless of how cheap an accommodation is, you might still end up with a hefty bill due to other charges like booking fees, linen fee, cleaning fee, etc.

Websites that you can explore include:

- www.bookabach.co.nz
- www.holidayhouses.co.nz
- www.airbnb.co.nz
- www.bachcare.co.nz



Tip # 3: Camp at a Holiday Park

There are several holiday parks around New Zealand that offer a variety of accommodation options. A common and inexpensive option is camping. If you decide to camp, holiday parks charge on a per-person basis and they also have different rates for kids and adults making it a very popular choice for families. (Camping gear not included)

If you prefer to stay at a holiday park but couldn't be bothered setting-up camping equipment, there are also dorms, cabins, and motel rooms to choose from. We often stay in a cabin when we travel because we don't have any camping gear and have no plans of purchasing any unless we start camping regularly.

We have only been to a few holiday parks, most of which are under the TOP 10 brand, and have not camped in any of them. However, we've found that most of them are equipped with standard facilities (hot showers, full kitchen, dining areas, and lounges) that are adequate in fulfilling the needs of everyone in the park.

For travelers who are planning to stay at a holiday parks around New Zealand, we recommend buying a Top 10 membership card. We have been members for four consecutive years now and the \$49 (valid for TWO YEARS) you spend is worth it.

SOME OF THE TOP 10 MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

10% discount on accommodations at the different TOP 10 Holiday Parks

10% off on Scenic Train Journeys

15% discount when you travel on the Interislander

And so much more.

TOP 10 Holiday Park - Hot Water Beach



Tip # 4: Use Group Buying Websites

Our very first encounter with a group buying website was in 2011 when we were still living in the Philippines. We received an offer from to buy a two-night stay in an Aqua Room at the newly opened Hotel H2O. It was an offer that we just couldn't resist. Since then, we were hooked. As we continued with our adventures around the country, we made sure to check the group buying website in case similar great deals pop-up.



A few years later we moved to New Zealand, and even with a strict budget, we were determined to find a way to maximize what we had. Thus, leading to the discovery of the various group buying sites in the country.

Group buying websites do not only offer discounted rates for accommodations. They also have great deals for restaurants, activities, and even transportation. However, like anything, you have to understand that not all deals on these websites are perfect; again, RESEARCH IS ESSENTIAL.

Group Buying Websites in New Zealand:

- a. GrabOne – www.grabone.co.nz
- b. Groupon – www.grouponnz.co.nz
- c. TreatMe – www.treatme.co.nz

From our experience, (mostly from restaurants) there were instances where we were given a different menu which even had the heading “GrabOne”. Other times, the staff weren't well-versed on how the voucher works. In saying that, we've also had very positive encounters with other companies, especially those that offer hotel accommodations and activities.



Tip # 5: Be an IHG Member (It's FREE to join)

Becoming an IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group) member is similar to signing-up to all the other rewards clubs offered by various hotel chains around the world. We regularly book hotel accommodations with IHG affiliated hotels around New Zealand and we've always been more than satisfied with their service, hence we recommend having an IHG membership.

Booking a hotel room definitely isn't a "budget" option. However, as a member of IHG you get a members-only price offer, you also acquire points for every reservation that you make, and to be 100% honest with you, we've been getting more than what we paid for.

◇ [Do you want to know more about IHG? CLICK HERE!](#)

PERKS THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED SINCE WE BECAME MEMBERS:

- FREE room upgrades.
- Early check-in and late check-out – We have checked in to some of the hotels as early as 10:00 am. You do need to ring them a few minutes before just to make sure that there is an available room.
- Complimentary gifts – A box of chocolates on our wedding anniversary (Crowne Plaza Christchurch), a bottle of champagne on Kay's birthday (Crowne Plaza Auckland), all accompanied by a handwritten letter from the Front Office Staff.
- A call from the manager to ensure that as an IHG member we are being treated well.



BONUS TIP!

Do you WANT to get a 4% rebate (cash back) on your IHG booking?

Sign-up for an EBATES membership.

Yes! It is all about using all the possible resources to SAVE MONEY!

HOW DOES IT WORK?

“Ebates saves you money by using a simple business model: stores pay Ebates a commission for sending our members to shop at their websites. Ebates then splits that commission with you, in the form of Cash Back.” (EBATES’ COMPANY PROFILE)

This means that you can get cash back from several companies!

Don’t worry, an EBATES account is FREE, it is NOT a scam, we’ve been using it for more than a year, and we HAVE RECEIVED our rebates via Paypal.

◇ DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE?
OR ARE YOU READY TO BE A MEMBER? CLICK HERE!



JOINTHETRAVELLINGPAIR.COM

FOOD:

Tip # 6: Sign-up with FIRST TABLE

This is probably the best recommendation that we are going to share. First Table gives you the chance to book the “first” table in any of the restaurants listed on the website for just \$10 NZD and you get 50% off your total FOOD bill.

If you want to know more about how it works, we have written a blog entirely about it [HERE](#).



Dillinger's Brasserie (Wellington)



Lokanta (Auckland)



Johnny Barr's (Auckland)



One80 Restaurant (Wellington)



Tip # 7: Get an ENTERTAINMENT BOOK

If getting discounts while helping out a charity sounds good, then this option is for you. You can purchase the book from any of the fund raising institutions; we are particularly fond of the Auckland SPCA. If you want to support them too [CLICK HERE](#).

An Entertainment Book costs anywhere between \$60-70.00 depending on where you're purchasing from. Deals in the book include 25-50% discount on food, buy one get one deals one ferry tickets, special rates for car rentals, and so much more. You'll definitely get the most out of the book if you either plan your itinerary around it, or if you are staying in New Zealand for an extended period of time.

Here is a sample scenario:

A weekend in Queenstown.

Membership Price (Dunedin, Invercargill, and Queenstown): \$60 NZD

COMPANY	ACTIVITY/ RESTAURANT	REGULAR PRICE	DISCOUNT/ PERK	SAVINGS
Watersports Queenstown	Any watersport activity (e.g. double kayak hire)	\$30 NZD	One complimentary WATERSPORT ACTIVITY when another WATERSPORT ACTIVITY of equal or greater value is purchased	\$25 to \$30 NZD
AJ Hacket	Kawarau Bridge Bungy	\$205 NZD	25% OFF for up to FOUR people	\$51.25 to \$205 NZD (depending on how many people sign-up for the activity)
Below Zero Ice Bar	Family Pass	\$85 NZD	\$25 NZD Family Pass	\$60 NZD
Bella Cucina	Italian Restaurant		25% OFF Total Bill	Up to \$35 NZD
Me & Mee Chinese Restaurant	Chinese Restaurant		One complimentary main course when another main course is purchased	Up to \$35 NZD



Tip # 8: Cook your own meals (make your own coffee)

This is a no-brainer. Cooking your own meals while you are on holiday doesn't sound fun, but it will save you heaps of money.

The average cost of food and drinks in cafes and restaurants in New Zealand

(Please take note that the prices vary depending on where you drink or dine. Of course, you always have the option of eating fastfood)

DRINKS	AVERAGE PRICE
Coffee (medium cup)	\$ 4.00
Tea (per pot)	\$ 4.50
Beer (per bottle)	\$ 8.00
Cocktails (per glass)	\$ 14.00
Wine (per glass)	\$ 10.00
FOOD	AVERAGE PRICE
Fish and chips	\$ 18.00
Main Course (steak and side dish)	\$ 25.00
Desserts	\$ 5.00

If you opt to follow this tip, you have to make sure that the accommodation that you've booked HAS A KITCHEN. Furthermore, creating a menu that you can follow for the duration of your trip. This will not only discourage you from eating out a lot, it will also help you avoid purchasing unnecessary items.

The table below shows how much you can save if you plan your meals.

(Please take note that the prices vary depending on where you shop. The information below is just a sample and is based on our usual travel menu)

DRINKS	AVERAGE PRICE
Coffee (ground per bag)	\$ 10.00 less than \$ 1.00 per cup
Tea (per box of 10 teabags)	\$ 3.50 \$ 0.35 per cup
Beer (per box of 18- Corona brand)	\$ 40.00 \$ 2.22 per bottle
Wine (per bottle - Villa Maria brand)	\$ 14.00 (average)
FOOD	AVERAGE PRICE
Fish and chips e.g. Sealord Fish Fillets McCain Beer Battered Chips	\$ 10.00 per box of 4 pcs \$ 5.00 per 750 gram bag
Main Course e.g. Scotch Fillets Fresh vegetable salad (250g bag of Taylor Farms Salad)	\$ 35.00 per kg \$ 5.99 per bag
Desserts (800g box of Sarah Lee Apple Crumble)	\$ 8.00



TRANSPORTATION:

Tip # 9: Take PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

The public transport system is a good option if you are in New Zealand's big cities (e.g. Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, etc.). There are taxis, buses, trains, and ferries that can take you to your destination.

ADVANTAGES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- a. No need to worry about renting a car.
- b. Petrol will be the least of your worries.
- c. You don't have to think about parking and the fees involved.
- d. As a traveler, you will actually be able to sit back, relax, and enjoy the views around NZ.
- e. You save money.

DISADVANTAGES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- a. Limited timetables and routes.
* In order to maximize your time, it might be worthwhile to plan your activities according to the public transports' schedule.
- b. Sometimes public transportation, especially the buses in Auckland, can be late due to heavy traffic.

For more information about the different public transport systems in New Zealand, click on the locations listed below.

[AUCKLAND](#)

[WELLINGTON](#)

[CHRISTCHURCH](#)

[QUEENSTOWN](#)

For more information about the other public transport options in New Zealand, check out the list below.

[INTERISLANDER FERRY](#)

* Get 15% off Interislander Travel and 10% off Interisland onboard services if you are a TOP 10 Holiday Park member.

[KIWI RAIL'S SCENIC TRAVEL](#)

* Get 10% off Scenic Train Travels if you are a TOP 10 Holiday Park member.



Tip # 10: Fly to your destination (domestic)

Save on travel time by flying to your destination. People often think that flying is the more expensive option. But, if you have the PROPER RESOURCES, have a FLEXIBLE TRAVEL TIME, and you BOOK IN ADVANCE, then you'll definitely save money and time.

There are two airlines that you can choose from when you are flying domestically in New Zealand; Air New Zealand, the country's carrier, and JetStar, a budget-friendly airline.

HOW TO GET THE BEST DEALS

1. SUBSCRIBE TO THEIR NEWSLETTERS

We know that many people hate subscribing to newsletters, but this is probably an option worth considering if you want to save money on flights. Remember that airline deals are only valid for a specific time, there are also limited seats and travel dates available.

2. JETSTAR often rolls out great deals on FRIDAYS.

It is often limited to 3-4 places but the prices are definitely cheap. For example, we bought two return tickets from Auckland to Queenstown with one check-in bag for September at a very affordable price of \$197.60 (NZD). This price is usually for ONE PERSON (return).

3. Visit Grabaseat.co.nz

Grabaseat is an Air New Zealand website and is where all the good airfares are usually found. But like any other site that offers promos, you just have to be patient and consistent in checking for deals. Sometimes, you can get your hands on domestic flights that cost \$19 (NZD) per way with one carry-on bag. You can also get good international fares from Grabaseat; in 2017, we stumbled upon a \$349.00 (NZD) return trip to Honolulu while we were looking for tickets to go the US. The only catch is the strict travel date.



Tip # 11: RENT a car.

Renting a car in New Zealand is a good option especially for travelers who are visiting the country for a limited period of time. Self-driving allows you to go directly to your chosen destination at any given time.

An important tip when renting a car is RESEARCH. Why? Well, because there are several companies that are competing to get customers, deals are found everywhere, it is just a matter of looking for the best one. These tips may get you the best deal possible.

HOW TO GET DISCOUNTED CAR RENTAL RATES

1. Use your Entertainment Book membership. If you are a member, you get special rates or discounts (4-10% off) on car rentals.
2. Watch out for deals from the different group buying websites. In 2015, we saved over \$200 in car rental fees with Jucy Rentals because of a deal on GrabOne.
3. Visit VroomVroomVroom.co.nz, a car rental booking website that allows you to compare the rates offered by various companies. The disadvantage of this website is the limited number of New Zealand rental car companies that are currently part of their list.



ACTIVITIES:

Tip # 12: Take Advantage of the FREE activities.

There are so many activities that you can do in New Zealand and most of them are FREE. If you love the outdoors, you can include hiking the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, swimming around Goat Island, and exploring the Mermaid Pools in your itinerary. For those looking for an activity that isn't too physically challenging, you can visit the Te Papa Museum in Wellington, the Hamilton Gardens in Hamilton, or the Kuirau Park in Rotorua.

OTHER FREE ACTIVITIES IN NEW ZEALAND

ACTIVITY	LOCATION
Cape Reinga Lighthouse Walk	Northland
Catch Paddle Crabs	Marsden Point
Explore and Swim in the Mermaid Pools	Matapouri
Long Bay Regional Park Coastal Walk	Long Bay, Auckland
Visit Whangarei Falls	Whangarei
Blue Lake Walk	Rotorua
Tauranga Art Gallery	Tauranga
Huka Falls Walks	Taupo
Tairāwhiti Museum	Gisborne
Te Mata Peak	Hawke's Bay
Coastal Walkway	New Plymouth
Visit the Te Apiti Wind Farm	Palmerston North
Weta Cave (free without workshop tour)	Wellington
Centre of New Zealand Walk	Nelson
Pollard Park	Blenheim
Akaroa (French Village)	Akaroa
Brunner Mine Site Walk	Greymouth
Caroline Bay Beach	Timaru
Lake Wanaka	Wanaka
Dunedin Botanic Gardens	Dunedin
Invercargill Water Tower	Invercargill






As you can see, there is no shortage of free activities in the country. However, if you are keen on trying sky diving or hopping on a tour bus, then the next tip is for you.



Tip # 13: Use discount vouchers and websites.

BOOKME.CO.NZ

This is a website that houses several deals on various activities all over New Zealand. Like any other promotions, there are limited slots, which means that you need to be quick in making a booking because the best offers do not last long. Below is a screenshot of the sample offers (July 2018) for Queenstown, Southern Lakes, and Fiordland activities.

	Milford Sound Scenic Coach-Cruise-Coach (includes lunch) - VIP Milford	\$99 Save \$76.00	43%	13	30 Jul 07 Aug
	KJet	\$62 Save \$67.00	52%	14	30 Jul 14 Aug
	Go Orange - Milford Sound Cruise	\$50 Save \$30.00	38%	20+	30 Jul 07 Aug
	Heli Tours - Scenic Flight & Alpine Snow Landing Experience	\$270 Save \$105.00	28%	20	30 Jul 07 Aug
	Million Dollar Lake Cruise	\$11 Save \$28.00	72%	2	30 Jul 14 Aug

OTHER OPTIONS:

As mentioned previously, you can also get discounted rates for various activities around New Zealand from group buying websites, like Grabone, Groupon, and TreatMe; from the Entertainment Book; and from your TOP 10 Holiday Park membership.

You will also find that some of the aforementioned options offer different deals for the same activities, so once again, if you really want to save money, do a little more research.



Tip # 14: Need help in planning your itinerary?

[VISIT OUR BLOG](#)

For regular updates on sample itineraries, restaurant and accommodation reviews, and budget travel tips.

We always aim to provide honest and unbiased information about all our trips and experiences.

[DO YOU NEED ONE-ON-ONE HELP WITH YOUR ITINERARY?](#)

We have just launched the New Zealand Itinerary Planning Assistant. Tell us where you want to go, what you want to see, and how much your budget is and we will create with a comprehensive itinerary with various accommodation and restaurant options that will definitely suit your needs.

[DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE
NEW ZEALAND ITINERARY PLANNING ASSISTANT?
CLICK HERE!](#)

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