Take a break in the outdoors and get in touch with nature. Enjoy some of New Zealand’s best short walks and day hikes, which prove that some of the best things come in small packages. They’re easy to get to, great for families, and can be incorporated into your travel itinerary with ease – there’s something for everyone.

From the far north to the deep south, through lush native bush and ancient forests and along rugged coastlines, New Zealand is lucky to feature many memorable short walks and day hike options. Before you head out, use this guide to help you plan and prepare for an awesome experience.

**Choose the right trip**

New Zealand has lots of different short walks and day hikes – most of these use high-quality, easy tracks with clear orange track markers, but some can cross challenging routes with no track or markings, and require you to be self-sufficient. Before you go, make sure you’ve selected a short walk or day hike that’s suitable for you and your group. Consider the walk length and expected time it will take, how much time you have available, your fitness level and if you’ve got the right clothing and equipment. If you’re not sure about this, then ask a local at the nearest Department of Conservation office or i-SITE (they know lots about the local area) or ask someone at your accommodation for their advice. Kiwis love to help out, so they’ll happily share their knowledge with you.

**Plan your adventure**

It doesn’t take much to plan a short walk or day hike, and a little bit of effort before you go will help ensure you have a great time. It’s important to keep in mind that most of New Zealand’s favourite outdoor playgrounds are considered ‘rural’. Some of these walks can be several hours’ drive from facilities such as petrol stations, supermarkets, police stations, banks and other facilities/services you would expect to find in towns or cities. Knowing this means you can prepare accordingly. If you’re planning a short walk/day hike take the opportunity to stock up on supplies and ensure you have the gear you need before you leave town. Once you’re at your walking destination and you’ve left the carpark area you won’t come across any services or facilities, other than basic huts, track signs and in some places information panels.

**Ever-changing weather**

New Zealand is a collection of islands in the middle of a large ocean, which means our weather changes every day and isn’t stable like most continental parts of Europe, Asia, America and Australia. It’s very common to see the sun one hour, and then have heavy rain and strong winds the next – the weather is always changing, and those changes can occur very quickly. Most of our natural outdoor environments are close to the sea or mountains. Be prepared for four seasons in one day.

**Leave no trace**

Our environment is very special and we treat it with respect. By following these suggestions, you can do your part to help keep New Zealand beautiful: please stay on the marked tracks, take all your rubbish out with you, only use designated toilets, leave the natural environment as you found it (don’t take anything away with you), respect the wildlife you encounter and avoid feeding any birds, especially the South Island’s cheeky mountain kea as it’s harmful to their health.

**Lack of cell reception**

Mobile phone coverage (including internet coverage) is very poor in most outdoor areas across New Zealand. In fact you shouldn’t expect to have any mobile phone coverage on your short walk or day hike, and if you do it will only be temporary. In a lot of locations, you will need to travel to the nearest town before you get mobile phone coverage, and this can be several hours’ drive away in some parts of New Zealand. Always carry your phone with you just in case, but don’t rely on it to always work.
The Kiwi Essentials List

If you ask any New Zealand tramper (our term for a hiker or walker) they’ll tell you what should be in your pack. Here’s a simple list of things the Mountain Safety Council recommends you take. This list will change depending on where you might be going, how long you’re going for and the weather forecast, but use this as a minimum guide and add to it:

- **Good quality solid footwear**: Hiking boots are best. Our tracks can be rough so wear closed-toe, sturdy footwear that you find comfortable – open-toed shoes or sandals aren’t a good idea on New Zealand tracks.
- **Clothing layers**: Layers that you can put on or take off according to the conditions are ideal. Thermal layers of fleece, polypropylene or merino are good for New Zealand’s often damp conditions. Leave your cotton t-shirts and jeans out, as they’re no good for keeping warm and staying dry.
- **A rain jacket**: This is essential. If you’re lucky enough to not need it then that’s a good thing, but always take one just in case, even in summer.
- **Warm hat and gloves**: Even in summer, Kiwi trampers never leave home without these.
- **A minimum of 2 litres/half a gallon of drinking water**: Unless you find a stream or walk past a hut you won’t find water, so take enough for a full day out.
- **Food for the day**: Take a little extra in case you’re hungrier than normal.
- **A head torch and small first-aid kit including any personal medication**: You may not use these items, but they’ll be a great resource if something goes wrong or you’re delayed.
- **Sun safety**: New Zealand’s UV levels are very high. This means you’ll often need sunglasses, sunscreen and a hat regardless of the season.

How will help find you?

Even on a short walk or day hike it’s important to share your plans with someone before you go. In New Zealand it’s expected that you’ll tell someone what you’re doing and where you’re going, before you go. That way if something does go wrong our emergency services can help you as they’ll know your planned route.

Tell someone your plans using whatever method works for you. This could be an email, a phone call, or a detailed SMS message to a friend or family member. Make sure you let them know once you’re back out too. You may not have mobile phone reception on your short walk or day hike, so make sure you tell them your plans before you go.

On your walk

- **Follow the orange track markers and stay on track**
- **Use a bridge when crossing rivers, if available**
- **Follow any advice or information on signs**
- **You do not require a permit to walk on New Zealand tracks**

Things to do before you go out in New Zealand

1. **Plan your trip**
   Seek local knowledge, plan the route you will take and the amount of time you can reasonably expect it to take.

2. **Tell someone your plans**
   Tell someone your plans and leave a time for when to raise the alarm if you haven’t returned.

3. **Be aware of the weather**
   New Zealand’s weather can be highly changeable. Check the forecast and expect weather changes.

4. **Know your limits**
   Challenge yourself within your physical limits and experience.

5. **Take sufficient supplies**
   Make sure you have enough food, clothing, equipment and emergency rations for the worst-case scenario. Take an appropriate means of communication.