

Service Learning in New Zealand: *Ecological Restoration & Maori Culture on the North Island*

Please note: This itinerary is a sample of potential program activities, based on previous years' programs. Deviations from this plan may be expected.

Pre-Departure

Orientation at home institution

Day 1: Auckland to Tauranga

Focus: Introduction to New Zealand conservation and the service learning program outcomes.

After arriving in Auckland, travel to Tauranga by coach. En route, explore a bush-clad gorge that is home to rare species such as Hochstetter's frog. We introduce New Zealand's forest ecosystems and learn about the impact of gold mining on the area. This afternoon we will have a program orientation and introduction to ecosystem conservation and habitat restoration on the North Island.

Day 2: Tauranga

Focus: Watershed management and riparian zone revegetation project

Today the program focuses on watershed systems and their management. We tour one watershed from upland forests to the harbour fringe, exploring the role of forests, rivers, wetlands and salt marshes within the watershed. Learn the importance of revegetation in stabilising riparian zones by participating in conservation planting at one of the largest wetland restoration projects in the southern hemisphere. End the day with a swim in naturally heated thermal pools.

Day 3: Tauranga

Focus: Estuarine ecosystems, sedimentation and mangroves

Spend the day working with a local community group called Estuary Care on the estuarine fringes and intertidal zones. Activities include maintenance of riparian plantings and propagating young native plants for coastal restoration. Discuss issues of sedimentation and the resulting spread of mangroves across much of the estuary, and understand how research is addressing the problem. Complete environmental surveys using transects and quadrat sampling to measure the abundance and diversity of estuarine species known to respond negatively to increased sediment levels. This is part of a long-term study assessing the impacts of sedimentation and mangrove removal on the estuary ecosystem.

Day 4: Tauranga

Focus: Maori world views and conservation practices, overnight at Maori marae

Today tour the Tauranga area to learn about local Maori and European history and geography before arriving at Papanoa Marae. The tour includes a walk in mature podocarp forest to understand how Maori use the forest for food and medicine, an overview of the tribal area at the Minden Lookout, and a visit to a replica Maori waka (canoe). Participants will receive a full briefing prior to being welcomed onto the marae (cultural centre) for an evening of learning and overnight stay. During our marae stay, we will participate in a local Maori environmental project.

Day 5: Tauranga to Rotorua

Focus: Habitat restoration and endangered species management

Kuaka NZ has set up a forest restoration project to both offset carbon and to improve habitat for native species. The goal is to revegetate an ecological corridor that effectively joins different fragments of mature rainforest. The corridor will extend the range of native species and will eventually enable the reintroduction of endangered species as kiwi and kokako. Activities will include maintaining existing plantings and monitoring native species. Each volunteer will be able to calculate how much his/her work has offset the carbon impacts of studying abroad.

Continue to Rotorua and visit the Kiwi Encounter at Rainbow Springs to view the endangered species breeding program at one of the leading facilities in New Zealand. You will see kiwi and other endemic birds and reptiles, and relate the Kiwi Recovery Programme to the restoration project just experienced.

Day 6: Rotorua

Focus: Conservation of geothermal areas

Visit Te Puia geothermal area, home to the magnificent Pohutu geyser, hot springs and boiling mud pools. Learn how vegetation adapts to this geothermal environment, and visit the Maori cultural centre, where traditional Maori arts and crafts are on display. The rest of the day is free to experience Rotorua and its adventure and cultural activities.

Day 7: Rotorua to Maungatautiri

Focus: Mainland Island sanctuaries and large-scale ecological restoration.

Travel to the Maungatautiri “Mainland Island” conservation project to learn about ecological research in this 10,000 acre nature reserve. A 32-mile long, predator-proof fence protects the area from introduced predators to enable endangered species to be reintroduced and thrive. Assist the Maungatautiri Ecological Island Trust with its research by monitoring tracking tunnels, undertaking bird counts, or other similar activities dependent on current research at the time of your visit.

Day 8: Maungatautiri to Auckland

Focus: Ecological survey techniques in restoration

Spend the morning conducting vegetation surveys or monitoring bird calls within the Maungatautiri ecological reserve. These surveys set a baseline for future ecological study, and AUIP/Kuaka groups will survey these same sites each year. This afternoon travel to Waitomo for an underground adventure in the limestone caves. See glowworms in their natural habitat and understand the management practices that maintain conditions for their survival. Continue by coach to Auckland.

Day 9: Auckland

Focus: Wrap-up: individual and community roles in ecological restoration

Today we conclude the program with a discussion of how individuals and community groups can contribute to ecological restoration work, and how you can implement the things learned in this course back at home.

Day 10: Auckland to USA

Depart for the US