

Relax and Explore

Itinerary 1

First stop Huapai. It might surprise you just how much you can thrash your credit card in a tiny place like this. There's gifts and trinkets at **Ambience Gifts**; Homewares and Furnishings at **Black Barn**; antiques and collectables at **Huapai Collectables** and designer samples and seconds from brands such as Trelise Cooper and Sabatini at **Devine**. Make sure you pop into **Gourmet Gannet Kitchen** for a pastry while you're wandering around. Everything is made from scratch on site and everything is ridiculously delicious (*approx 20 minutes from the central city*).

While you're in that area you might as well pop into the small, but perfectly formed **Kumeu Arts Centre**, the exhibitions change regularly so there's always something to see.

Your feet will need a rest after all that pottering and there are two particularly wonderful options for a long lunch very close by. **Provenance**, the lovely eatery from the Hip Group (of Ortolana, Milse, Takapuna Beach Cafe and many more fame) and the highly-awarded **Tasting Shed**. Settle in for a glass of wine and a long lunch and while away an hour or two in either of these relaxing settings (*around 5 minutes from Huapai*).

After lunch, head up to Helensville. There's a couple of pretty Auckland Council walks you can do or pick up a brochure from the information centre (In the **Art Stop Cafe**) which outlines the Heritage trail of historical buildings such as the courthouse and an Edwardian cottage. This can be walked or driven depending on your

level of fitness (*approx 15 minutes from Kumeu*).

Your feet will need a rest after all that pottering and there is a particularly wonderful option as you drive back towards the city. The highly-awarded Landing Restaurant at The Riverhead. This historic venue is the actual building that the early pioneers passed through when they first arrived to the area by steamer, before roads or railway. Pop in for a glass of wine and platter or more while enjoying the stunning views from their large decks, shaded by 100 year old oak trees.

Itinerary 2

Just 40 minutes out of the central city, on the eastern side of the Kaipara Harbour are some true hidden gems. If you drive up SH16 past Kaukaupakaupa you'll come to a sign which says **Omeru Scenic Reserve**. Park your car near the sign and walk down to a series of streams and small but very picturesque waterfalls. It's a magical spot and makes for a lovely walk (take decent shoes).

Once you've had a good walk around, grab a coffee at **Kaipara Coast Sculpture Gardens** before you embark on the 1 km trail of 60 sculptures by New Zealand artists. You can even pick up some plants at the nursery if your garden is in need.

All of this is bound to make you hungry so drive back towards the city, stopping at the highly awarded **Tasting Shed** or **Provenance** restaurant in Kumeu and pass a leisurely afternoon with some innovative and utterly delicious food (*approx 20 minutes from Kaipara Coast Sculpture Garden*).

Wind your way back home, gathering everything you need for a lovely dinner at your place. **Boric Food Market** is like an enormous Farro Fresh or Nosh in the countryside and you'll love their produce and gourmet cheese and cured meats. Pick up some wine from **Matua, Coopers Creek, Kumeu River** or **Soljans** (*would be rude not to do a tasting on the way*) and make sure you make a five minute diversion at Taupaki Road to check out the lovely goat cheeses at **Crescent Dairy** on the way home.