



Endless Summer

Alice Galletly takes a Kombi on a classic Kiwi roadtrip

THE FIRST NOTES of 'Surfin' USA' crackle through the old stereo, accompanied by feeble protests from the driver's seat.

"Really," Finn asks, "The Beach Boys? Isn't that a bit of a cliché?"

I crank up the volume and stick my head out the window like a dog, letting the wind whip my hair into a frenzy. This is an old-school Kiwi road trip in a turmeric-yellow time machine – a rented 1974 Kombi van, to be exact – and we're heading for the coast. How could I *not* play The Beach Boys?

As we rattle along Auckland's southern motorway towards Raglan, the suburbs start giving way to wide

open farms. It hasn't rained in weeks and the land is parched; dull grass is yellowing beneath the summer sky, looking more like Middle America than dairy-green Waikato.

The first compulsory stop is Pokeno, where two adjacent ice cream shops each boast the largest scoops in the country. Though it's not yet 11am, the pavement is crowded with people – all licking furiously at the Tip Top melting steadily over their knuckles. Finn briefly considers buying the 15-scoop cone advertised in one shop – "just to see how it stands up" – but, in the end, we opt for single scoops the size of our heads and move on.

After descending a winding, bush-lined valley, we touch down

on the wild west coast of Raglan.

At the camping ground we park up beside a retro Oxford caravan with a letterbox and little garden outside, which obviously isn't going anywhere fast. Wandering around the little grass avenues, we find plenty of permanent constructions like this, squeezed in beside modern campers, beat-up vans and multi-roomed tents overflowing with camping gear and kids.

Half the town seems to be swarming around the Raglan footbridge, which is either a symbol of triumph or terror depending on your relationship with heights. Some kids sail through the air in bold arcs – tucking their feet under to create maximum splash – while others



stand shivering against the railings while their Dads yell unhelpful things from the water. Finn jumps; I claim to have important photography duties and stay dry.

For dinner we cook sausages on the time machine's little gas cooker (I call it a Kombi-q, at which Finn laughs politely), and Finn fixes us a favourite Mexican cocktail of cheap lager with spices and lime. We eat knee-to-knee on the Kombi's original orange tartan seats until, at some point, we look out of the window and notice the sky is on fire. Carefully holding our micheladas steady, we run over the dunes and flop down on the still-warm sand, just in time to catch the last slice of blood-orange sun.

You can't come to Raglan in a Kombi and not surf. At least, this is what I tell Finn the next morning, as he anxiously monitors the swells at Whale Bay. His surfboard hasn't

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Raglan's glorious sunset; mum and Bob at Mount Maunganui, 1974; the sea at Whangamata beckons; digging for treasures at The Mount; our ride for the trip – a 1974 Kombi van; mum and her friends at The Mount.

been wet for 10 years, and he decides it's best he breaks it in at the less-challenging Ngarunui Beach instead. It's a good move. I watch from the black sand dunes, as he stands for a wobbly few seconds and then tumbles, victorious, into the surf.

Leaving the salty, overcast skies of Raglan behind, we head inland towards Mount Maunganui. The day

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is turning into a sizzler. Cicadas do their best to drown out Syd Barrett (we've moved on to Pink Floyd now), and as we roll on through pine forests, farms and cornfields, the blue Kaimai range shimmers in the January heat.

The week before the trip I had been round at Mum's place, where I found an album of yellowed Kodachromes taken at the Mount Maunganui campgrounds. There was Mum as a teenager: lounging in an ancient ex-army tent while her skinny, blond boyfriend plucked at a guitar. They were taken in 1974 – the year our Kombi came out – and so I decided we had to stay there too.

Unlike scruffy-in-a-good-way Raglan, The Mount is well-groomed, even at the beach. A slice of squeaky white sand separates the ocean from the promenade, which is lined with Norfolk pines and shops selling 'resort wear'. Everybody looks young and



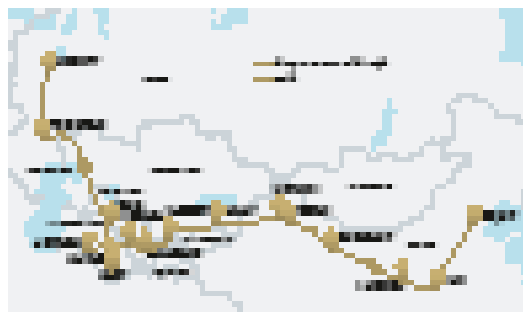
THE SILK ROAD

BY PRIVATE TRAIN

2025 YILI İÇİŞİLER BAKANLIĞI İÇİŞİLER GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ YEREL İLİŞİMLER VE İÇİŞİLER GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ

ÖZETİNE VE KONUSUNA

Bu belge, Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu ve Asya ülkeleriyle ticari ve kültürel ilişkilerini güçlendirmek amacıyla düzenlenen "The Silk Road" adlı özel tren seferi hakkında detaylı bilgi içermektedir. Sefer, İstanbul'dan başlayarak, Ankara, İzmir, Antalya ve diğer önemli şehirleri ziyaret ederek, Ortadoğu ve Asya ülkelerine ulaşmaktadır.



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SEFERİN AMACI VE KONUSU

Bu seferin amacı, Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu ve Asya ülkeleriyle ticari ve kültürel ilişkilerini güçlendirmek ve bu alanlardaki işbirliklerini artırmaktır. Sefer, Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu ve Asya ülkeleriyle ticari ve kültürel ilişkilerini güçlendirmek amacıyla düzenlenen "The Silk Road" adlı özel tren seferi hakkında detaylı bilgi içermektedir.

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SEFERİN DETAYLARI

- Seferin başlangıç tarihi: 2025 Yılı Eylül Ayı
- Seferin bitiş tarihi: 2025 Yılı Ocak Ayı
- Seferin başlangıç noktası: İstanbul
- Seferin bitiş noktası: Ortadoğu ve Asya ülkeleri
- Seferin güzergahı: İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Antalya, Ortadoğu ve Asya ülkeleri
- Seferin amacı: Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu ve Asya ülkeleriyle ticari ve kültürel ilişkilerini güçlendirmek
- Seferin konusu: Ortadoğu ve Asya ülkeleriyle ticari ve kültürel ilişkileri

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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Taking the leap of faith; a retro Oxford caravan at Raglan; eating watermelon at Granddad and Granny's bach.

fit and ready to appear in a Coke commercial at short notice.

The town is in holiday mode, and so are we. We swim, amble around the mountain, and that evening soak in the seawater hot pools by the campgrounds – just like Mum did 40 years ago.

Until I was about six, my grandparents owned a bach at The Mount. I only remember snapshots: eating watermelon on the big dry lawn that stretched to the beach; star-gazing in the sunroom when it was too hot to sleep; the taste of a passionfruit drink called Zing that Granny Moi kept in the fridge. In my blurry-edged memory this was the Ultimate Kiwi Bach, but I try to find it now and it's gone. Knocked down and replaced with two ugly houses.

At least the dairy still sells Zing.

I buy a bottle and swig at it, as we follow the Norfolk pines out of town.

We're tracking up the East Coast and, as the mercury rises, the sea glittering on our right grows more tempting. At Waihi Beach we give in, sprinting across the hot sand and shrieking with delight as the bubbling surf swallows us whole.

We roll into Whangamata, finding it half-empty and half-asleep following the New Year's Eve influx. Too tired for another Kombi-q, we spread fish 'n' chips across the grass next to our van, down the last few Coronas from the mini fridge and turn the bed down for an early night.

One last swim, one final ice cream, and then we're taking the time machine home. We look different from when we left – hair curly and thick with salt, noses red despite best

intentions, and both wearing the new threads we picked up at a Waihi op shop. And is that 'Good Vibrations' I can hear Finn humming?

I knew he was a Beach Boy at heart. 📌



VISITOR INFORMATION

Alice hired her retro Kombi from kiwikombis.com

