

Rings Training content for Hubspot (Knowledge Base)

MASTER

This section provides a range of information on our Half Day and Full Day (FIT and cruise ship) Lord of the Rings tours (tour overviews, tour stories and detailed background tour stories/reference material)

This training covers the Lord of the Rings Half Day & Full Day tours

[1] Tour Overviews: short description of the tour routes, descriptions (Half Day/Full Day; FIT and Cruise Ships) and Health & Safety

[2] Tour Stories (Summaries: model tours): of the 'core' tour stories that should be delivered as part of your tour (as a minimum - take the Quiz when you are ready...)

[3] Tour Stories (Reference material): Guides can develop their own stories and ways of delivering them. This document provides a detailed reference document to draw on of a range of stories and information gathered from experienced guides since the company was first established in 2000.

[1] TOUR OVERVIEWS

(1) FIT HALF DAY

PRE TOUR

- Arrive on time (usually 7:45am morning tour; 12:45pm afternoon tour)
- Make sure you:
 - Check your **Runsheet** on the App (REZDY)
 - Have the correct **photobook** and any **props** you want to use
 - Confirm your **pick-ups** with anyone else helping you
 - Confirm **Wētā tour** start/finish time
 - Check on **traffic conditions** (plan to leave early if there has been a crash/breakdown on the route)
 - Check on **weather conditions** (if likely to be wet take umbrellas).
- Aim to leave the office at 8:00am/1:00pm depending on your first pick up location. It can take up to 30 minutes to the City on busy days in peak hour traffic

ON TOUR

- Rendezvous with anyone assisting with your pick-up run at the prearranged destination [usually Wellington iSite, YHA or Mt Victoria Lookout]. *If you have to*

switch passengers around at this point, ensure you have everyone on board before commencing your tour.

- For all tours welcome the Group, outline the itinerary, and go through the **H & S Checklist**: [ADD LINK]

FIT tours can run in either order (i.e., Wētā Cave tour first, or after Mt Victoria locations). The order of the tour will depend on the Wētā tour booking.

STRAIGHT TO Wētā CAVE:

- If travelling straight to **Wētā Cave, 1 Weka Street** (e.g., for 9:00am/2:00pm), it is usually quickest to go via the Bays (15-20 minutes). Watch your timing, as it can be tight with rush hour morning traffic.
- If you get to Miramar early (before 8:45am), drive past **Stone Street Studios**. Drive past (or if you have time stop for a picture with *Gandalf* at the **Roxy Cinema**) but do not allow your passengers to enter the cinema.
- You should arrive 10 minutes beforehand at Wētā Cave though, which will allow you time to get and distribute the tickets for the group. The Group can get a photo with the trolls/have an initial look around the Wētā Cave shop/mini museum.
- Advise the Group that they will also have time to look around the shop and get their photos printed *after* the tour. Also advise the Group that they can leave their belongings on the bus, as it will be locked. Note that the bus will be in position at the conclusion of the tour (by the Red door).
- FIT Wētā Cave-based tours take 90 minutes. Allow the Group some time to get their photos printed and to purchase merchandise. Round the Group up after 15 minutes. Make sure you do a head count to ensure you have everybody before leaving Wētā Cave.
- If you haven't yet driven past **Stone Street Studios** do so before leaving Miramar for **Mt Victoria**.
- It usually takes 10-15 minutes to reach Mt Victoria.
- Advise the Group how long you will be down **The Hill** and provide an H & S reminder about the hazards walking to/from the location, especially if you have people with clear mobility issues.
- The Mt Victoria locations usually take between 30 - 45 minutes (Drop the **Dunharrow** location if short on time). Alternatively, if you have plenty of time (and a small/fit group) you can also visit **Frodo's Tree**.
- On returning to the bus advise the Group that you are driving up to the **Mt Victoria Lookout**, which is a short five-minute journey.
- At the Lookout assess the weather conditions and advise that you will be stopping for five minutes or so for the view and photos. If the weather and visibility are very poor, consider just noting the location and driving on down to the city.

- After leaving the Lookout and heading down to the city, as you approach the intersection of Majoribanks Street and Kent Terrace start talking about the **Embassy cinema** and the **LoTR World Premiere**.
- Continue on through the intersection to **Courtney Place**, point out the Wētā Workshop *Tripod* film sculpture and continue to talk about the Premiere. Begin drop-offs (e.g., YHA, iSite, Bunny St, The Terrace).
- Return the bus to the Office. Ensure that the bus is at least half full of fuel. Stop at **Z** in Johnsonville to fill if necessary.

MT VICTORIA FIRST:

- After the final passenger pick-up [usually 8:30am; 1:30pm] (e.g., iSite/YHA) loop around to **Courtney Place** to talk about the **Embassy cinema** and the **LoTR World Premiere**. Point out *Tripod* Wētā Workshop film sculpture on cnr. of Courtney Place/Cambridge Terrace.
- Head across the intersection and up Majoribanks Street, via Palliser Road to **Mt Victoria Lookout**.
- At **Mt Victoria** assess the weather conditions and advise that you will be stopping for five minutes or so for the view and photos. If the weather and visibility are very poor, consider just noting the location and continuing on down to the locations.
- On returning to the bus advise the Group that you are driving to the **Mt Victoria Lookout**, which is a short five-minute journey.
- Advise the Group how long you will be down **The Hill** and provide another H & S reminder about the hazards walking to/from the location, especially if you have people with clear mobility issues.
- The **Mt Victoria** locations usually take between 30 - 45 minutes (Drop the **Dunharrow** location if short on time). Alternatively, if you have plenty of time (and a small/fit group) you can also visit **Frodo's Tree**.
- Head to **Miramar** for the **Wētā** tour (usually at 10:30am; 3:30pm). It usually takes about 10-15 minutes to reach Miramar.
- If you have time, drive past **Stone Street Studios** before arriving at Wētā Cave. Drive past (or if you have time stop for a picture with *Gandalf* at the **Roxy Cinema**) but do not allow your passengers to enter the cinema.
- You should arrive 10 minutes beforehand, which will allow you time to get and distribute the tickets for the group.
- The Group can get a photo with the trolls/have an initial look around the **Wētā Cave** shop/mini museum. Advise the group that they will have time to look around the shop and get their photos printed *after* the tour.
 - FIT Wētā tours take 90 minutes. Allow the group some time to get their photos printed and to purchase merchandise. Round the Group up after 15 minutes. Make sure you do a head count to ensure you have everybody before leaving **Wētā Cave**.
- If you haven't yet driven past **Stone Street studios** do so before leaving Miramar to return to the city via the Bays to drop off your passengers.

- Return the bus to the Office. Ensure that the bus is at least half full of fuel. Stop at **Z** in Johnsonville to fill if necessary.
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(2) Cruise ship Half Day

PRE TOUR

- Arrive on time (usually 7:15am)
- Make sure you:
 - Check your **Runsheet** on the App (REZDY)
 - Have the correct **photobook** and any **props** you want to use
 - Confirm **Wētā tour** start/finish time
 - Check on **traffic conditions** (plan to leave early if there has been a crash/breakdown on the route)
 - Check on **weather conditions** (if likely to be wet take umbrellas)
 - Put on your **Hi-Viz vest**
 - Ensure you have your **steel-capped boots** (for the Port)
- Often there will be (at least) two Wanderlust buses taking passengers on tour from the cruise ship (40-42 pax in total), so coordinate with your fellow guide
- Aim to leave the office at 7:30am. It can take up to 30 minutes to the Port on busy days in peak hour traffic

PORT

- It is essential to be on the **Port on time**. Usually 8:00am (do not arrive too early though, as security may not let you through).
- Make sure to keep to the specified speed limits (10k/20k). Exceeding the speed limits is a breach of **CentrePort H & S** rules.
- Say good morning/be polite to all the port officials (CentrePort/Cruise Agent representatives)
- If a 'double-ship' day make sure you are driving to the correct ship for your tour
- Assist the agents with corralling guests and collecting tickets (ensure you check the tickets as passengers sometimes arrive at the wrong tour). Ensure guests do not walk in restricted areas
- For all tours welcome the Group, outline the itinerary, and go through the **H & S Checklist**: [SEE LINK]

ON TOUR

Wētā Workshop FIRST

- Welcome everyone on board, introduce yourself and outline the tour itinerary
- Cruise ship tours often require you to drive straight to **Wētā Workshop 129 Park Road** (the summer cruise ship tour pace – NOT the Wētā Cave)
- Usually take the Bays route (15-20 minutes). Watch your timing, as it can be tight with rush hour morning traffic. If you do manage to get to Miramar early, drive past **Stone Street Studios** first. If you still have some time, stop for a picture with Gandalf at the **Roxy Cinema**, but do not allow your passengers to enter Roxy cinema.
- Aim to arrive five minutes early for a 9:00am tour start *not earlier* as the Wētā staff may not be ready to open the door, and then it can be awkward having a large group waiting in the lobby
- Park in the allocated tour bus stop directly outside 129 Park Road. Occasionally there are other tour buses parked there, or even unauthorised vehicles. Sometimes you may be required to do a short loop around the block until the space is clear
- If you are running early, drive past **Stone Street Studios**, or stop for a picture with *Gandalf* at the **Roxy Cinema** but do not allow your passengers to enter the cinema.
- Accompany the Group into the retail tour space and offer to take photos with the props/Dwarfs etc. (and point out the toilets and water cooler).
- Advise the Wētā tour guide how many passengers you have with you and check whether the retail shopping will be before or after the tour. Remain until the Wētā guide welcomes the Group and then say goodbye and leave
- Drive the bus away immediately after the drop-off and park elsewhere in Miramar for your break. Return to 129 Park Road five minutes before the tour is due to finish.
- Cruise ship **Wētā Workshop 129 Park Road** tours take 60 minutes. Allow the Group some time to purchase retail and go to the bathroom. Round the Group up after 15 minutes.
- Make sure you do a head count to ensure you have everybody before leaving Wētā
- If you haven't yet driven past **Stone Street Studios** do so before leaving Miramar for Mt Victoria.
- It usually takes 10-15 minutes to reach Mt Victoria.
- Advise the Group how long you will be down **The Hill** and provide a H & S reminder about the hazards walking to/from the location, especially if you have people with clear mobility issues. *This briefing is essential with cruise ship passengers, as quite often some have mobility issues*
- The **Mt Victoria** locations usually take between 30 - 45 minutes (Drop the **Dunharrow** location if short on time). Alternatively, if you have plenty of time (and a small/fit group) you could also visit **Frodo's Tree** (unlikely for a cruise ship tour though)

- On returning to the bus, advise the Group that you are driving up to the **Mt Victoria Lookout**, which is a short five-minute journey.
- At Mt Victoria assess the weather conditions and advise that you will be stopping for five minutes or so for the view and photos. If the weather and visibility are very poor, consider just noting the location and driving on to the city.
- After leaving the Lookout and head down to the city, as you approach the intersection of Majoribanks Street and Kent Terrace start talking about the **Embassy Cinema** and the **LoTR World Premiere**.
- Head through Courtney Place and point out the *Tripod* film sculpture (Wētā Workshop), then head onto Taranaki Street and to the Quays.
- If a morning tour (and you are on time), offer to drop off guests at the **official cruise ship shuttle stop by Parliament**.
- On the way to the **Port** remind guests to have their two forms of ID ready to get through the Security on the Port (usually a ship ID and their passport)
- Ensure you return to the Port in time (usually for 12:00pm) to off-load your guests and be ready for an afternoon pick-up (usually 12:30pm).

MT VICTORIA FIRST:

- Leave the Port and drive along the Quays before going onto Taranaki Street and then onto **Courtney Place** to talk about the **Embassy Cinema** and the **LoTR World Premiere**. Point out *Tripod* Wētā Workshop film sculpture on cnr. of Courtney Place/Cambridge Terrace
- Head across the intersection and up Majoribanks Street, via Palliser Road to **Mt Victoria Lookout**
- At **Mt Victoria** assess the weather conditions and advise that you will be stopping for five minutes or so for the view and photos. If the weather and visibility are very poor, consider just noting the location and continuing on down to the locations.
- On returning to the bus advise the Group that you are driving to the **Mt Victoria Lookout**, which is a short five-minute journey.
- Advise the Group how long you will be down **The Hill** and provide a H & S reminder about the hazards walking to/from the location, especially if you have people with clear mobility issues (particularly important with cruise ship passengers some who tend to have mobility issues).
- The **Mt Victoria** locations usually take between 30 - 45 minutes (Drop the **Dunharrow** location if short on time). Alternatively, if you have plenty of time (and a small/fit group) you can also visit **Frodo's Tree** (unlikely for a cruise ship tour though).
- Head to **Miramar** for the **Wētā** tour (usually at 10:30am; 3:30pm). It usually takes about 10-15 minutes to reach Miramar.
- If you have time, drive past **Stone Street Studios** before arriving at Wētā Cave.
- Aim to arrive five minutes early for a 9:00am tour start *not earlier* as the Wētā staff may not be ready to open the door, and then it can be awkward having a large group waiting in the lobby
- Park in the allocated tour bus stop directly outside 129 Park Road. Occasionally there are other tour buses parked there, or even unauthorised vehicles.

Sometimes you may be required to do a short loop around the block until the space is clear

- If you are running early, drive past **Stone Street Studios**, or stop for a picture with **Gandalf** at the **Roxy Cinema** but do not allow your passengers to enter the cinema.
- Accompany the Group into the retail tour space and offer to take photos with the props/Dwarfs etc. (and point out the toilets and water cooler).
- Advise the Wētā tour guide how many passengers you have with you and check whether the retail shopping will be before or after the tour. Remain until the Wētā guide welcomes the Group and then say goodbye and leave
- Drive the bus away immediately after the drop-off and park elsewhere in Miramar for your break. Return to 129 Park Road five minutes before the tour is due to finish.
- Cruise ship **Wētā Workshop 129 Park Road** tours take 60 minutes. Allow the Group some time to purchase retail and go to the bathroom. Round the Group up after 15 minutes.
- Make sure you do a head count to ensure you have everybody before leaving Wētā
- If you haven't yet driven past **Stone Street Studios** do so before leaving Miramar for the Port.
- If a morning tour (and you are on time), offer to drop off guests at the **official cruise ship shuttle stop by Parliament**.
- On the way to the **Port** remind guests to have their two forms of ID ready to get through the Security on the Port (usually a ship ID and their passport)
- Ensure you return to the **Port** in time (usually for 12:00pm) to off-load your guests and be ready for an afternoon pick-up (usually 12:30pm).
- If it is your final tour for the day return the bus to the Office. Ensure that the bus is at least half full of fuel. Stop at **Z** in Johnsonville to fill if necessary.

(3) Full Day tours

PRE-TOUR: OFFICE/DEPOT

- Arrive on time (usually 7:45am)
- Make sure you:
 - Check your **Runsheet** on the App (REZDY)
 - Have the correct **photobook, menus** and any **props** you want to use
 - Confirm your **pick-ups** with anyone else helping you
 - Confirm tour **Wētā tour** start/finish time
 - Check on **traffic conditions** (plan to leave early if there has been a crash/breakdown on the route)
 - Check on **weather conditions** (if likely to be wet take umbrellas).
 - Aim to leave the office at 8:00am/1:00pm depending on your first pick up location. It can take up to 30 minutes to the City/Port on busy days in peak hour traffic

ON TOUR

- Rendezvous with anyone assisting with your pick-up run at the prearranged destination [usually Wellington iSite, YHA or Mt Victoria Lookout]. *If you have to switch passengers around at this point, ensure you have everyone on board before commencing your tour.*

For all tours welcome the Group, outline the itinerary, and go through the **H & S Checklist**: [ADD LINK]

(1) FIT tours

FIT tours can run in either order (i.e., Wellington locations/Wētā first, or out to the Hutt Valley/Kaitoke locations). The order of the tour will depend on the Wētā tour booking.

HUTT VALLEY (FIRST):

- Advise that the drive to the **Hutt River/Kairangi River** for the first location (River Anduin) will take between 20-30 minutes depending on traffic. Before leaving for the Valley circulate the lunch menu and ask people to advise you of their selections at the next stop
- When you arrive at **Poet's Corner park** the bus near the path to the riverbed. Advise the Group to watch their footing on the river stones (the location usually takes around 10 minutes, allow time for photographs). Take the Group's lunch orders and submit these via the App to **Aston Norwood** directly

- Drive on to **Harcourt Park**, which is a 10-minute drive (maximum). Park in the main carpark close to the northern end and the path through the bush that opens out onto the meadows used for filming. The location usually takes about 15-20 minutes (including time for photographs). *Be courteous to other park users (sometimes there are groups playing Frisbee/Disc Golf).*
- Drive on to **Kaitoke Regional Park** for the **Rivendell locations** and the **circular forest walk** and up to the 1100-year-old Northern Rātā. This set of locations and the forest walk takes about an hour in total. Point out the toilet facilities.
- Drive on to **Aston Norwood** for lunch. A table will be reserved for you and the (pre) ordered lunches should come out fairly promptly. Lunch should take around 45 minutes. Suggest to the Group that they may want to go to the toilet before the next part of the journey, as it a one-hour trip back into Wellington City.
- On approaching the **Haywards Interchange** introduce the **Helm's Deep/Minas Tirith** (drive by) location. Head up the off ramp (if you have time) and do one full circuit of the interchange to point out the film location in the terraced hillside where the Quarry used to be.
- Carry on into **Wellington City**. Point out the **Sky Stadium**, which is an opportunity to talk about the stadium being used to record audio for the LoTR (in 2002) at an international cricket match between New Zealand and England
- Depending on time and the rest of the scheduled itinerary you will either:
 - Head straight to **Wētā Cave** in Miramar
 - Head up to **Mt Victoria** to the Lookout and film locations (via the Quays/Bays or the inner city (if exiting the motorway after The Terrace Tunnel)

STRAIGHT TO Wētā cave:

- If travelling straight to **Wētā Cave** (e.g., for 9:00am/2:00pm), it is usually quickest to go via the Bays (15-20 minutes). Watch your timing, as it can be tight with rush hour morning traffic.
- If you get to **Miramar** early (before 8:45am), drive past **Stone Street Studios**. You should arrive 10 minutes beforehand at Wētā Cave though, which will allow you time to get and distribute the tickets for the group. The Group can get a photo with the trolls/have an initial look around the Wētā Cave shop/mini museum.
- Advise the Group that they will have time to look around the shop and get their photos printed after the tour. Also advise the Group that they can leave their belongings in the bus, as it will be locked. Note that the bus will be in position at the conclusion of the tour (by the Red door).

STRAIGHT TO Wētā cave:

- FIT Wētā Cave-based tours take 90 minutes. Allow the Group some time to get their photos printed and to purchase merchandise. Round the Group up after 15 minutes. Make sure you do a head count to ensure you have everybody before leaving **Wētā Cave**.
- If you haven't yet driven past Stone Street studios do so before leaving Miramar for Mt Victoria.

- It usually takes 10-15 minutes to reach Mt Victoria.
- Advise the Group how long you will be down **The Hill** and provide a H & S reminder about the hazards walking to/from the location, especially if you have people with clear mobility issues.
- The **Mt Victoria locations** usually take between 30 - 45 minutes (Drop the **Dunharrow** location if short on time). Conversely, if you have plenty of time (and a small/fit group) you can also visit **Frodo's Tree**.
- On returning to the bus advise the Group that you are driving up to the **Mt Victoria Lookout**, which is a short five-minute journey.
- At Mt Victoria assess the weather conditions and advise that you will be stopping for five minutes or so for the view and photos. If the weather and visibility is very poor, consider just noting the location and continuing to drive to the city.
- After leaving the Lookout and head down to the city, as you approach the intersection of Majoribanks Street and Kent Terrace start talking about the **Embassy Cinema** and the **LoTR World Premiere**.
- Continue on through the intersection to Courtney Place, point out the Wētā Workshop film sculpture *Tripod* and continue to talk about the Premiere. Begin drop-offs (e.g., YHA, iSite, Bunny St, The Terrace).
- Return the bus to the Office. Ensure that the bus is at least half full of fuel. Stop at **Z** in Johnsonville to fill if necessary.

MT VICTORIA FIRST:

- After the final pick-up [usually 8:30am; 1:30pm] (e.g., iSite/YHA) loop around to Courtney Place to talk about the **Embassy Cinema** and the **LoTR World Premiere**. Point out Wētā Workshop sculpture on cnr. of Courtney Place/Cambridge Terrace.
- Head across the intersection and up Majoribanks Street, via Palliser Road to Mt Victoria Lookout
- At **Mt Victoria** assess the weather conditions and advise that you will be stopping for five minutes or so for the view and photos. If the weather and visibility is very poor, consider just noting the location and continuing on down to the locations.
- On returning to the bus advise the Group that you are driving to the Mt Victoria Lookout, which is a short five-minute journey.
- Advise the Group how long you will be down **The Hill** and provide a H & S reminder about the hazards walking to/from the location, especially if you have people with clear mobility issues.
- The **Mt Victoria locations** usually take between 30 - 45 minutes (Drop the **Dunharrow** location if short on time). Conversely, if you have plenty of time (and a small/fit group) you can also visit **Frodo's Tree**.
- Head to **Miramar** to **Wētā Cave** for the tour (usually at 10:30am; 3:30pm). It usually takes about 10-15 minutes to reach Mt Victoria.
- If you have time, drive past **Stone Street Studios** before arriving at Wētā Cave. You should arrive 10 minutes beforehand, which will allow you time to get and distribute the tickets for the group. The Group can get a photo with the trolls/have an initial look around the Wētā Cave shop/mini museum. Advise the

group that they will have time to look around the shop and get their photos printed after the tour.

- FIT Wētā tours take 90 minutes. Allow the group some time to get their photos printed and to purchase merchandise. Round the Group up after 15 minutes. Make sure you do a head count to ensure you have everybody before leaving Wētā Cave.
- If you haven't yet driven past **Stone Street Studios** do so before leaving Miramar to return to the city via the Bays.
- Return the bus to the Office. Ensure that the bus is at least half full of fuel. Stop at **Z** in Johnsonville to fill if necessary.

[2] Tour stories (Summaries - model tour/'core stories')

Half Day tour

Welcome to Wellington: The Capital of Middle Earth

- Welcome, everyone, to Wellington, the vibrant capital of New Zealand and a city that proudly claims the title of "Capital of Middle-earth." Nestled at the southern tip of the North Island, Wellington is not just the seat of New Zealand's government but also the heart of its creative and cultural scene. As the most southerly capital city in the world, it enjoys a unique position, both geographically and culturally. The name 'Wellington' pays homage to Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, a notable British military leader who, despite his significant role in history, never set foot in New Zealand. This naming convention was a common practice in the colonial era, where places were often named after influential figures from the 'Motherland.'
- However, the Māori names for Wellington offer a much richer and more evocative picture. The name 'Te Whanganui-a-Tara,' translates to 'The Great Bay of Tara,' referring to the chief Tara who first settled here in the 13th century. Tara was the son of Chief Whatonga, who had journeyed from the Māhia Peninsula, seeking more fertile lands. This name reflects the deep connection the Māori people have with the land and their ancestral history. On the other hand, 'Te Upoko-o-te-ika-a-Maui'—translating to 'The Head of the Fish of Maui'—draws on Polynesian mythology. It tells of the demi-god Maui who, using his grandmother's jawbone, fished up the North Island from the sea.

Wellington's Journey as the Capital

- Wellington's selection as the capital city was a turning point in New Zealand's history. Prior to Wellington, the capital was located in Okiato, a small town near Kororaraka/Russell, and then Auckland from 1842 to 1865. During this period, most of New Zealand's wealth and population were concentrated in the South Island, particularly in cities like Dunedin, which had thrived during the Otago Gold Rush. As tensions rose between the North and South Islands, with South Island politicians frustrated by the long voyages to Auckland, a solution was sought. An independent decision was made by three Australian Commissioners, who were tasked with finding a more central location for the capital. Their choice fell on Wellington due to its large, sheltered harbour and central location between the two main islands.

- Thus, Wellington's motto, "Supreme in Situ," reflects its strategic significance and near-ideal placement, though the city is known for its 'breeziness' and seismic activity.
- Wellington's current metropolitan population is around 220,000, which gives it a quaint, village-like feel compared to other major cities. However, the Wellington region, including nearby cities, has a combined population of about 440,000. This relatively small but dynamic city is renowned for its liveability, ranking highly due to factors like safety, education, healthcare, and environmental quality. As the world's windiest city—outstripping even Chicago—Wellington benefits from its location between mountain ranges and the Cook Strait. The consistent winds keep pollution levels low and contribute to its clean and vibrant environment.

The Lord of the Rings Stadium: A Sporting and Cinematic Landmark

- Our regional stadium, with a capacity of 35,000 seats, is a significant site in Wellington's cultural landscape. Known for hosting various events from high-profile rugby matches featuring the All Blacks to international rock concerts by legends like David Bowie and Elton John, this stadium is a hub of activity. Notably, it played a role in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, with an amusing anecdote from the film's early days. In March 2002, after the success of "The Fellowship of the Ring," Peter Jackson, the film's director, orchestrated a unique event at the stadium. During a cricket match between New Zealand and England, Jackson enlisted the help of the audience to record the sound of an Orc army for "The Two Towers." The crowd's enthusiastic participation, combined with the stadium's acoustics, captured a powerful roar that was later used to enhance the film's epic battle scenes.
- This creative approach highlights Jackson's innovative filmmaking techniques. Instead of relying on artificial sound effects, he sought an authentic and dynamic audio experience. The roar of 22,000 Wellingtonians, filled with local fervour, added a genuine and immersive element to the film.
- This story not only reflects Jackson's ingenuity but also underscores Wellington's deep connection to the "Lord of the Rings" series, with many locals, including some of our guides, being involved in various capacities. The city's enthusiasm and involvement in the trilogy make it a cherished part of Wellington's cultural heritage.

Wellington's Seismic Story

- Wellington's location on the Pacific Ring of Fire makes it highly earthquake-prone. The city's seismic activity is a crucial aspect of its history and

development. The most significant earthquake near Wellington occurred in 1855, registering 8.2 on the Richter scale, which remains the largest earthquake in New Zealand's history. More recently, the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake, measuring 7.8, caused considerable damage, including to Wellington's port and numerous commercial buildings. These events have shaped the city's approach to earthquake engineering and preparedness.

- Wellington is a leader in earthquake resilience, having pioneered the use of base isolators—large rubber and lead shock absorbers that allow buildings to move independently of ground shaking. This technology, invented here in 1971, has been incorporated into key structures like the New Zealand Parliament and the national museum, Te Papa. The system has been adopted globally, including in California and Japan, showcasing Wellington's commitment to safety and innovation in building design. The city's proactive measures in earthquake engineering highlight its resilience and dedication to safeguarding its infrastructure and residents.

Wellington's Downtown and Historical Significance

- As we explore Wellington's downtown, you'll notice a fascinating blend of history and modernity. The area's development includes significant reclamation of land from the harbour, starting in 1850. What was once a beach against the hillside has been transformed into a bustling urban center, with notable streets like Lambton Quay named for their waterfront origins. The curved shape of Lambton Quay, reminiscent of an 'S,' reflects the natural contours of the land before it was developed into the grid pattern we see today.
- The evolution of Wellington's landscape is also evident in its historical sites. For example, Oriental Parade, now one of the city's most expensive streets, was once a notorious slum where whales were butchered. The area has undergone a dramatic transformation from its smelly and unsightly past to become the 'French Riviera of the South,' offering picturesque views and upscale living. Similarities to San Francisco's 'Painted Ladies' can be seen in the charming houses along Oriental Parade – the 'Seven Sisters', enhancing the area's appeal.

Exploring Peter Jackson's Influence

- (Sir) Peter Jackson, the legendary filmmaker and Wellington's most famous resident, has left an indelible mark on the city. Born on October 31, 1961, in Pukerua Bay, a small seaside suburb north of Wellington, Jackson's humble beginnings contrast sharply with his later achievements. His early fascination with filmmaking was sparked by watching the 1933 classic "King Kong" at the age of nine. This experience ignited his passion for blending reality with fantasy, a

vision that would ultimately shape his future work and lead to the creation of the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

- Jackson's career as a film 'rebel' is a testament to his innovative 'Kiwi' approach to filmmaking. His success in creating immersive worlds has earned him *critical acclaim*, including 17 Academy Awards for the Lord of the Rings - the most successful trilogy in the history of the Awards, and *commercial success* grossing \$3 billion and another \$1 billion in DVD sales. Jackson's dedication to authenticity and creativity is evident in his use of practical effects, detailed set designs, and extensive research. For instance, Jackson's adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's novels involved meticulous planning and collaboration with local artists and craftsmen, resulting in a trilogy that resonates with audiences worldwide. His achievements not only reflect his personal talent but also highlight Wellington's role as a key player in the global film industry.

Heading towards Miramar (Cobham Drive)

- Note the wind sculptures (we make the most of our powerful wind with many kinetic sculptures and let's talk about the 'Wellington' sign and its connection to Wētā)
- Miramar cutting (welcome to 'Wellywood', and our organic approach to creating a world class film industry within the residential suburb. Five companies make up the film industry here: Wingnut Productions; Wētā Workshop; Wētā FX; Park Road Postproduction; Stone Street Studios)

Miramar: The Heart of Wellington's Film Industry

- On driving through the cutting welcome the Group to Wellywood and Miramar ('By the Sea in Spanish), not to be confused with Miramax the film studio (although it does have an important part of play in the LoTR story). Miramax film studio is actually named after Harvey Weinstein's children Mira and Max.. Harvey is now a disgraced figure in Hollywood of course, but he did help get the LoTR juggernaut off the ground.
- As we drive through Miramar, often dubbed 'Wellywood,' you'll see how this residential suburb has become the epicenter of New Zealand's film industry. Unlike traditional Hollywood studios, Miramar's film hub evolved organically, with Peter Jackson repurposing old factories into state-of-the-art film facilities. This unique approach reflects New Zealand's resourcefulness and creativity, creating a world-class film industry within a suburban setting with limited local resources.

- Miramar’s significance extends beyond its film industry. The area is also notable for its conservation efforts, with the Miramar Peninsula being the first New Zealand suburb declared ‘pest-free’ in late 2023 (there are no rats, stoats or possums for example). This achievement, resulting from a massive community effort, has led to a remarkable increase in birdlife and demonstrates the local commitment to environmental stewardship. The integration of film production and conservation highlights the dynamic nature of Wellington’s creative community and its dedication to preserving its natural beauty.
- Miramar was a very working-class suburb and in fact, the very first State house (1937) was built here. New Zealand is a socially liberal country and was a leader in developing the ‘welfare state’ (like Scandinavian countries), where the Government would look after its citizens “from the cradle to the grave” – part of the social contract with its citizens.. alas times have changed..

Location 1: Stone Street Studios: A Filmmaking Powerhouse (Drive-by)

- As we pass Stone Street Studios, this former gasworks and paint factory site has been transformed into a leading film production facility. The studio’s large concrete sound stages, including Stage K, Stages F & G, and the blue screen/backlot, have played crucial roles in various blockbuster films. Stage K, for example, was built specifically for Peter Jackson’s "King Kong," and features sets like Skull Island. The naming of the stages—K for King Kong and F & G for Frodo and Gandalf—reflects the studio’s deep connection to Jackson’s filmography.
- The studio’s evolution also includes the development of outdoor blue screens, initially used for "The Lord of the Rings" and later for other projects like "King Kong" and "The Hobbit." The original low-tech blue at the far end made of old shipping containers and a lick of paint was the largest outdoor blue/green screen in the Southern Hemisphere in 1999, built for the Lord of the Rings. It can be filled with about three feet of water. Explain that scenes like the Dead Marshes were filmed there. Later SS Venture scenes for King Kong (2005), and Lake town for the Hobbit [*show photos*]

Location 2: Roxy Cinema (Drive-by)

- As we approach the intersection on the left, you'll notice the charming Roxy Cinema. Originally built in 1928, this cinema has a rich history, starting as a venue for silent films. It was converted to ‘talkies’ in 1932, marking the beginning of a new era in film. However, it closed its doors in 1964 and was repurposed as a shopping center, eventually falling into disrepair.

- The Roxy Cinema's revival is a story of passion and collaboration. Sir Richard Taylor and Tania Roger, along with Jamie Selkirk, the editor for "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," spearheaded the restoration effort. They enlisted the help of local hospitality experts Valentina and Daminda Dias, who played a crucial role in bringing the cinema back to life. Today, the Roxy Cinema stands as a testament to the dedication and vision of these individuals.
- Outside the cinema, you'll see a bronze statue of Gandalf, hinting at the special nature of this place. Miramar, now home to around 10,000 residents, is a vibrant community deeply intertwined with the film industry. Up to half of the local population works in various capacities related to film, from animation and logistics to catering and costume design. The area becomes even more bustling during major film productions, such as "Avatar," highlighting its significance in the global film landscape.

Location 3: Park Road Post Production (Drive-by)

- As we drive into Park Road, pay attention to the buildings around you. Many of them are integral to the film industry, including Global Film & Entertainment Logistics, Wētā Workshop/Wētā FX, and Victoria University Film School. But the highlight of this area is the Park Road Post Production facility, owned by Sir Peter Jackson. This state-of-the-art post-production house, completed in 2005, cost over \$90 million USD and has since become a global leader in its field.
- Park Road offers comprehensive post-production services, including sound, picture, and VFX for feature films, television, and digital projects, as well as film restoration. The facility boasts cutting-edge sound, editing, and mixing suites, a luxurious 180-seat private cinema, and two deluxe apartments for visiting directors. Sir Peter Jackson's private office is also housed here, along with an impressive collection of Academy Awards, BAFTAs, and memorabilia from his extensive film and music collections. Apparently, the café here serves a delicious steak and cheese pie!
- Continuing our drive, we'll pass by Wētā Workshop. This collection of unassuming buildings, once a dairy factory and a record-pressing plant, is where the magic of Middle-earth was created. Renowned concept artists Alan Lee and John Howe spent years here designing the fantastical world we know and love. As you look around, notice the blue lines on the road indicating Tsunami Safe Zones, reminding us we are in an earthquake-prone area.

Wētā Workshop Tour (Stop/Pick-up) and on to Mt Victoria

- Driving past the New World supermarket, it is suggested that this local supermarket has likely seen more A-list actors doing their own grocery shopping than any other in the Southern Hemisphere! At the next intersection, before leaving Miramar, you'll see a building camouflaged by trees. This is one of 14 Wētā FX buildings scattered throughout Miramar. Wētā FX employs around 1500 staff and has garnered numerous accolades, including six visual effects Academy Awards, ten Academy Sci-Tech Awards, and six visual effects BAFTA Awards. Their groundbreaking work includes iconic characters like Gollum, Kong, Neytiri, and Caesar, and entire worlds like Middle-earth and Pandora.
- Looking to the left, you'll see more Wētā FX facilities on the hill. Wellington Airport has one of the shortest international runways in the world, at only 2000 meters long. The land bridge we'll see more clearly from the top of Matakōwhiri/Mt Victoria rose during an earthquake in the 1460s and is known as Te Hao Whenua, or The Land Destroyer.
- This is also a great time to talk about Peter Jackson's passion for film memorabilia. He has amassed an incredible collection, including the Chitty Chitty Bang Bang car, the James Bond Aston Martin, props from "Alien" and "Terminator," HAL 9000's eye from "2001: A Space Odyssey," and the skeletons from "Jason and the Argonauts." His collection of 1933 "King Kong" memorabilia is particularly noteworthy, featuring the original armature used in the film's stop-motion animation.

Location 4: Mt Victoria/Outer Shire (Tour Stop)

- Before we walk down the path, we'll take a moment to discuss the official Lord of the Rings location sign here. It's curious to note that despite there being over 150 outdoor filming locations for the trilogy across New Zealand, there are only four official signs marking these sites. While the South Island is often associated with the dramatic landscapes of Middle-earth, only one official sign is located there—at Edoras on Mt Sunday. The other three are in the North Island: this one at Mt Victoria, one at Kaitoke Regional Park north of the city, and the Hobbiton movie set.
- Walking down the main track to the locations, you'll notice the unique nature of the forest. The Town Belt features Monterey Pines, which, though not native, look older and more mystical, perfect for creating the spooky atmosphere seen in the films. You'll also see native plants like Ponga (Silver Ferns), Harakeke (flax), Tī Kōuka (cabbage trees), Kawakawa, Tarata, Rangiora, Mānuka, and Rimu. There's

a concerted effort to reintroduce native species to the area, enriching the local biodiversity.

Scene 1: A Shortcut to Mushrooms

- This seemingly ordinary spot holds extraordinary significance in the history of the Lord of the Rings trilogy. It's where the epic journey began on October 11, 1999 (last century now), with the filming of the very first scene. During the 274-day principal photography, one of the longest in cinema history, Peter Jackson chose to start close to home.
- Many of you will remember the scene where those naughty hobbits Merry and Pippin, having stolen vegetables from Farmer Maggot's farm, bump into Frodo and Sam as they set off on their journey. The actual cornfield was in Matamata near the Hobbiton set, but the forest canopy above us here in Mt Victoria was added to the scene.
- Despite being filmed during the day, the scene used fog machines to create a spooky atmosphere and to hide the eucalyptus trees (courtesy of Australia), which were not part of Tolkien's Middle-earth. The hobbits' tumble down this steep hillside was filmed with stunt doubles, who Peter Jackson found in local martial arts clubs and gyms, since New Zealand didn't have a stunt association at the time. Peter's reputation for multiple takes meant the stunt doubles had to roll down the hill more than 20 times. Peter is famous for saying in his gentle Kiwi accent "how about one more for good luck?"
- One memorable moment from the shoot was when the Frodo stunt double, fully airborne, missed the gym mat and landed hard, breaking his shoulder, exclaiming "Ouch, I think I have broken something!". Peter Jackson's immediate reaction was to include the young man's exclamation in the scene, showcasing his ability to turn mishaps into movie magic.
- Dominic Monaghan (who played Merry) made an excellent observation about this first movie scene and how Peter Jackson demonstrated from the outset his dedication to connecting with fans of the books by having Merry and Pippin state that "it was a shortcut, a 'Shortcut to Mushrooms', which of course is the chapter title that this scene is drawn from in the book.

Scene 2: Escape off the Road

- So after rolling down the hill at Scene 1 the Hobbits magically reappear 50 metres down the path in front of this ledge. This type of shot is called 'cheating'. It's exactly the same scene, but different locations/angles to make the shot work

better. So we arrive at Scene 2: One of the most iconic and important early scenes from the Fellowship of the Rings was filmed. It takes place shortly before they leave the Shire, emphasising the imminent danger posed by the Ringwraiths, or Black Riders.

- Most of the hobbits are fixated on the mushrooms. Hobbits are simple folk aren't they? who crave simple pleasures: having a full belly, a pipe, a pint or two, and who love things that grow. A great philosophy to life right? However, poor Frodo - who is now the Ringbearer - has bigger things to think about - and he feels exposed on the road and a sense that some evil is coming down the path towards them. Frodo hears a horse approaching and they quickly hide underneath a tree root, where they just manage to escape the Black Rider who comes looking. As Frodo urgently tells his friends to "Get off the road!".
- Frodo was actually standing here looking at the suburb of Brooklyn, which is not very scary, so a spookier location nearby was chosen, featuring a tunnel-like canopy of trees. This spot isn't as recognizable now due to a new fence.
- In the scene the trees seem to move and twist, with a sudden gust of wind blowing dead leaves towards Frodo, uses a technique called the Dolly Zoom or "Vertigo effect," which creates a sense of disorientation. This effect, invented by Alfred Hitchcock, is a favourite of director Peter Jackson. There were no leaves at the location, so Peter Jackson had film students collect dead leaves from the Wellington Botanic Garden. Initially, Frodo calmly suggests getting off the road, but his friends are distracted by mushrooms. When Frodo panics, he yells, "Get off the Road!"
- This iconic scene features a Ringwraith dismounting and sniffing for the terrified hobbits. Frodo looks up through the tree roots, almost face-to-face with the Ringwraith. Although the Ringwraith is very close, it can't smell the hobbits. Frodo is tempted to put on the Ring, but Sam stops him. They escape when Merry throws a water bottle to distract the Nazgul.
- Another key element is that all living things want to escape the evil of the Black Rider. Peter Jackson, despite his fear of spiders, thought it would be "nice" and "cute" to have spiders, centipedes, and worms crawl out from behind the hobbits' heads during the scene.
- Many consider this "Escape off the Road" scene one of the most memorable in "The Fellowship of the Ring." Peter Jackson took inspiration from various sources, including John Howe's 1987 painting and Ralph Bakshi's 1978 animated/live

action version, which depicted the hobbits huddled under the road while the Black Rider searches for them.

- This scene shows that Frodo and the Ring are being hunted, highlighting the Ring's danger. Sauron's spirit and power live within it, and it wants to reunite with its master, responding to the Wraiths when they are near.
- This scene was shot entirely on location without CGI. The exact spot can be identified by three specific trees: Frodo's Tree, a smaller middle tree, and a unique U-shaped tree. Questions often arise about how the shot was filmed at the actors' eye level. A large scaffold was built among the trees, and the camera was elevated on a dolly system.
- Regarding the tree and roots, a real tree trunk was brought to the path, set on a metal spike, and surrounded by a lifelike fiberglass root system created by Wētā Workshop. The hobbits then scrambled over these roots to hide. The team used a real tree trunk, New Zealand ferns, and then placed tree roots made from fibreglass and integrated seamlessly with the natural environment.
- The Black Rider scene was filmed later because the Ringwraiths' costumes were not ready. This delay makes the arrival of the Black Rider look slightly odd, as you don't see the horse's rear. Peter Jackson kept it this way for a spookier effect.
- *Sound Design and Atmosphere:* Sound plays a crucial role in this scene. The rustling leaves, the distant, eerie cries of the Nazgûl, and the ominous silence as the Rider approaches all contribute to a palpable sense of fear. Sound engineers collected and synthesized various sounds to create the unique and unsettling audio landscape of the scene.
- *Significance in the Narrative:* This scene is not just a thrilling moment but also serves to establish the relentless nature of the Nazgûl and the grave danger that Frodo and his friends are in. It highlights the strength of their friendship and their determination to protect each other, even in the face of overwhelming fear. The scene sets a precedent for the numerous trials and tribulations the fellowship will face as they journey towards Mordor.

Scene 3: Frodo's Tree

- If time permits, we can take a short walk to Frodo's Tree, a large Monterey Pine with a distinctive bough. This is where Frodo and Sam camp overnight and hear the Elves singing as they journey to the Grey Havens. This scene, included in the

DVD extended edition, is a fan favorite and adds depth to the world of Middle-earth.

Scene 4: Dunharrow

- "The Lord of the Rings" (LoTR) was a groundbreaking movie series for several reasons. One of the most significant innovations was Peter Jackson's decision to film all three movies simultaneously. This was a bold and complex approach, as trilogies were usually filmed one after the other. Jackson believed it was more practical and efficient to film all at once.
- About seventy percent of the film was shot outdoors, in regional and national parks and private farms. Jackson was allowed to build access roads but had to return every location to its original state, so he aimed to get all necessary shots in one go.
- For example, scenes filmed in an old quarry nearby demonstrate this approach. The quarry, now the site of the Anne Frank Memorial, hosted scenes from both the first and last movies. Early scenes were filmed on days 1 and 3, while later scenes like the Encampment of Dunharrow were also shot there.
- Looking over the fence at the quarry, you can see a grassy meadow and semi-circular cliff, matching Tolkien's description of Dunharrow. They set up tents and filmed scenes of the Rohirrim gathering before marching to Minas Tirith. A large scaffolding and green screen were used to show King Théoden and Aragorn surveying the troops.
- Peter Jackson chose to film this scene outdoors for authenticity, wanting the actors to experience real wind and rain, making them feel like they were truly in Middle Earth. Although it was expensive, costing a million dollars a day, the results have stood the test of time for nearly 25 years.

Scene 5: Race to the Buckleberry Ferry

- Our final scene to explore is the hobbits' frantic race to the Buckleberry Ferry. The scene, set at night, was actually filmed during the day and darkened in post-production with a blue filter. The actors had to navigate a steep hill and jump into a raft, all while being pursued by the Black Riders.
- Sean Astin, who played Sam, found this scene particularly challenging. Struggling with exercise-induced asthma and a lack of fitness, he had to push himself to perform the physically demanding stunts. Nevertheless, his determination paid off, contributing to the authenticity and urgency of the scene.

- Right that concludes the live action locations from the tour. I hope you've enjoyed discovering the magic and craft that went into bringing Middle-earth to life.

Full Day tour

Route: Valley First

Welcome and Introduction:

- *Greet everyone on board, introduce yourself, and outline the tour itinerary.*
- *Cover health and safety messages for the tour.*
- *Inform the group that the drive to the Hutt River/Te Awa Kairangi River (first location, River Anduin) will take 20-30 minutes depending on traffic.*
- *Circulate the lunch menu and ask for selections at the next stop.*

Wellington – The Capital of Middle-earth:

- Welcome to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, the most southerly capital in the world, and the Capital of Middle-earth.
- Origin of 'Wellington': Named after Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, who never visited New Zealand. Named by Edwin Gibbon Wakefield, a controversial figure who sold land he didn't own.
- Māori Names for Wellington:
 - Te Whanganui-a-Tara: Meaning the Great Bay/Harbour of the Chief Tara, the first resident of Wellington in the 13th century.
 - Te Upoko-o-te-Ika-a-Māui: Refers to Māori mythology where Māui fished the North Island from the sea, likening the shape of New Zealand to a fish, with Wellington as the mouth.
- **History of NZ Capitals:**
 - Okiato: The first capital, set up in 1840 due to a political vacuum and civil unrest.
 - Auckland: Became the capital from 1842 to 1865.
 - Wellington: Chosen as the capital due to its central location and large sheltered harbour, after threats from South Island politicians to form an independent nation.

Wellington Facts:

- Population: Metropolitan Wellington has 220,000 people; the region totals 440,000 across four cities.

- **Windiness:** Known as the world's windiest city due to its location in the Roaring 40s, with an average daily wind speed of 18 mph (30 kph), often gusting to 60 kph.
- **Livability:** Rated one of the most liveable cities in the world due to safety, education, health care, culture, environment, recreation, political-economic stability, and public transport.

Use the drive to the first location to introduce the group to Peter Jackson's backstory.

Peter Jackson: A Local Hero and Homegrown Filmmaking Genius

Early Life and Inspiration

- Peter Jackson, born on October 31, 1961, in Pukerua Bay, a small seaside suburb north of Wellington, New Zealand, is a celebrated filmmaker known for his unique blend of the real and the fantastical. From humble beginnings as the only child of Bill, a postmaster, and Joan, Jackson's journey into filmmaking began at the age of 9 when he was captivated by the 1933 black-and-white film "King Kong." This experience sparked his lifelong fascination with the fusion of reality and fantasy, a theme evident in his later works, including the award-winning "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

Early Influences and Filmmaking Aspirations

- Jackson was also influenced by "Thunderbirds" for its dramatic storylines and handmade models, and the fantasy movies like "The Seven Voyages of Sinbad" and "Jason and the Argonauts" with Ray Harryhausen's groundbreaking stop-motion animation. After watching "King Kong," Jackson announced to his parents his ambition to become a filmmaker. That same year, his parents bought a Super-8 movie camera, and Jackson began making short films, experimenting with special effects by creating pinholes in the film to mimic gunfire.

Macabre Humour and Early Works

- With a taste for macabre humour and physical comedy inspired by Buster Keaton and Monty Python's Flying Circus, Jackson borrowed NZD \$2,500 from his parents in 1982 to buy a second-hand 16mm camera. He started making "Bad Taste," a low-budget splatter movie featuring aliens harvesting humans for fast food. Jackson wrote, produced, directed, and starred in the film, creating most of the gory special effects himself. The movie became a cult classic and marked the beginning of his career.

Partnerships and Breakthrough

- Jackson's subsequent films, "Meet the Feebles" and "Braindead" (released as "Dead Alive" in the U.S.), further developed his filmmaking style. "Meet the

Feebles" also marked the start of his collaboration with Richard Taylor and Tania Rodger, leading to the creation of Wētā Workshop and Wētā Digital/FX, companies renowned for their work on the "Xena: Warrior Princess" and "Hercules" TV series.

- In 1994, Jackson and his partner Fran Walsh gained international attention with "Heavenly Creatures," a film based on a real-life murder in 1950s Christchurch. The film earned them their first Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay and introduced the world to Kate Winslet and Melanie Lynskey.

Hollywood and "The Lord of the Rings"

- Jackson's first Hollywood-financed film was "The Frighteners" in 1995, starring Michael J. Fox. While it wasn't a box office hit, it showcased significant special effects, done entirely in New Zealand. Jackson also created a mockumentary, "Forgotten Silver," which humorously tricked the New Zealand public into believing in a fictional pioneering filmmaker.
- Jackson's dream project, a remake of "King Kong," was shelved by Universal Studios, leading him to pursue the film rights to J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings." Initially backed by Harvey Weinstein at Miramax, Jackson faced budget constraints and creative differences, which led to a turnaround deal allowing him to seek other studios' support. New Line Cinema's Bob Shaye famously asked why Jackson was making only two movies instead of three, given the trilogy of books. This bold move resulted in one of Hollywood's greatest successes, with the "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy grossing \$3 billion at the box office and winning 17 Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

Legacy

- Peter Jackson's journey from a small-town boy with a Super-8 camera to a celebrated director of epic films underscores his genius in blending the real with the fantastical. His work has not only put New Zealand on the filmmaking map but also inspired countless filmmakers and brought Tolkien's world to life in a way that resonates with audiences worldwide.

Location 1: River Anduin (Poet's Corner – Upper Hutt)

- [Show Photo 1] The River Anduin scenes in *The Lord of the Rings* were created by splicing together shots of five different rivers. Dramatic helicopter shots were filmed using South Island rivers like the Waiau and Kawerau. Stunt doubles handled the fast-flowing, dangerous sections, while the main ensemble cast filmed their close-ups in this shallow, safer river. For instance, if Sean Bean fell out, he wouldn't drown.

- Aerial shots depicted gorge-like rivers, as described by Tolkien. [Show Photo 2] For side-on close-ups, they only needed one side of the gorge.
- At first glance, this location might seem random and benign, right next to the state highway. However, film locations are chosen for two main reasons:
 - Matching the look described by Tolkien.
 - Logistical and pragmatic considerations like access and safety.
- This river is typically shallow and flows gently, although it can swell after storms. You can see the stop banks/dikes across the highway to manage flooding.
- One of the biggest challenges in LoTR was managing scale for different-sized characters. [Show Photos 3 and 4] Peter Jackson and Wētā Workshop used forced perspective techniques and variously sized sets and props. They made three different-sized Elven boats for different characters. [Show Photo 3] Look closely: some "Hobbits" are actually mannequins attached to the boats for aerial shots. [Show Photo 5] "Tall Paul," a 7ft local, doubled for taller characters like Gandalf, Boromir, Aragorn, and sometimes Galadriel, only showing his midriff.
- [Show Close-up Photos] This location was used for primary shots of the cast. Here's Orlando Bloom looking concerned, Sean Bean rowing up the river, and Aragorn with a wider shot up the river. In one shot, a power pylon on the hill was visible for a second, but Peter Jackson left it in.
- [Show Photo of Sean Bean, Lesnie, PJ] This behind-the-scenes shot shows the late cinematographer Andrew Lesnie using a Steadicam to achieve dynamic river scenes. Peter Jackson is using the viewfinder. Sean Bean couldn't row an Elven boat, so someone in scuba gear stabilized it underwater for the shot. Jackson described the whole project as "one giant exercise in problem-solving."
- The Fellowship was heading through the Argonath to Amon Hen, where the Fellowship is ultimately broken. The Argonath, described as 700 feet tall in Tolkien's works, were depicted as 120 feet tall in the movies for practical filming purposes. The actual models were about 8 feet tall and were part of over 70 miniatures and bigatures.

Location 2: Isengard (Harcourt's Park)

Start at the main carpark and direct the group to the northern footpath through the bush. At the edge of the grass bank overlooking the meadow:

1. The stones in the grass below are similar to the river stones at the River Anduin because this was the original riverbed in the 15th century. Earthquakes lifted the riverbed and changed the river's course to the northwest.
2. [Show Photo 1] Gandalf galloping towards Isengard was filmed in a South Island basin near Glenorchy with the Orthanc tower added later. The largest Bigature, Orthanc was 22 feet tall and filmed on its side for close-ups. Gandalf bursting through the gate wall was filmed on this meadow using his riding double. The shot was flipped because traditionally, in Greek Tragedies, evil characters enter from the left, so Gandalf had to enter from the right.
3. The massive wall and gateway were created using forced perspective, with the model in the meadow and live action in the frame. CGI was added later.
4. The scene where Gandalf halts before Orthanc and meets Saruman was filmed in this meadow. The final bit with Saruman descending the stairs was filmed at Stone Street studios.
5. [Show Photo] The pebble path is a new addition. The conical tree in the frame has grown larger over the years. To add English country garden color, they brought in potted plants. The photo shows a 'cut and paste' job with replicated trees for depth.
6. [Show Photo] A behind-the-scenes shot shows Gandalf, Saruman, and Peter Jackson. All three became Knights of the Realm. Sir Christopher Lee, at 6 ft 5 inches, was one of the tallest leading men in film.
7. Discuss setting up shots, lighting, sound, and the process of multiple takes from various angles.

Rivendell (Kaitoke Regional Park)

Introduction and Significance:

As you turn off the main road towards Rivendell, point out the official Rivendell sign.

- *Official LOTR Signs in NZ: Only a few official LOTR signs exist in New Zealand. There's one in the South Island (Edoras/Mt Sunday) and three in the North Island (two in Wellington, which we will see today, and the Hobbiton movie set).*
- *Provenance of the Sign: The Park Ranger wanted to look after lost LOTR pilgrims, and there are various stories about how the sign eventually received approval from the Tolkien Estate.*

Driving into the Valley:

- **Conservation Theme:**

- Nau Mai ki Kaitoke: Kaitoke means ‘to eat worms’ or ‘worm food’. This might refer to worms being a good food source or bait.
- Forest Description: This beautiful native forest covers 7,000 acres and is an endemic temperate rainforest, one of the few remaining in the world. Others are found in the U.S., South America, and Australia.
- Historical Logging: Unfortunately, this area was heavily logged to create surrounding farms. Once it would have been lush and thick forest, as you are about to see.
- Ancient Trees: Notice especially the large trees that pop out through the canopy, mainly ancient podocarps like Rimu and Northern Rātā, some of which are over 1,000 years old.

Ecological and Historical Context: Aotearoa's Unique Evolution:

- Aotearoa (New Zealand) is unique because it split from Gondwana about 65 million years ago, creating an ecological life raft with no land mammals except fur seals and a ground-dwelling bat.
- Land of Birds: This isolation led to birds evolving in strange and unusual ways, many becoming large and flightless due to the lack of natural predators.
- Arrival of Polynesians: Polynesians brought the first exotic predators (Pacific rat [kiore] and dog [kurī]), which started preying on native wildlife, leading to the extinction of species like the giant moa and the Haast eagle (Pouākai).
- Forest Coverage Decline: When Polynesians arrived, 85% of the country was covered in virgin forest. By the time Europeans arrived, the forests had been reduced to 55%. Over the last 200 years, forest cover has been reduced to only 20% of the country.
- Land Conversion: Half of New Zealand's total land area was converted into grasslands in just 80 years, a drastic change compared to the thousands of years it took to shape England's countryside.

Arrival and Exploration:

- Parking and Facilities: After parking the bus, note the availability of toilet facilities and direct the group to head across the concrete bridge to the left.
- Filming Locations and Stories:

- Eomer's Scene: On the right is where Eomer looked for Theodred's body in "The Two Towers." Full-size fibreglass horses were constructed for the scene by Weta Workshop, although the scene lasted just a few seconds.
- Extra's Tough Day: An extra recalls lying in the river in winter with rain towers operating, wearing wetsuits and hot water bottles, only to have the scene cut from the final movie.

Rivendell Remnants and Elven Posts:

- First Elven Post: Outside of Hobbiton, Rivendell is the only LOTR location with significant physical reminders. Ask the group about their High Elvish and provide translations from the post.
- Language Creation: Tolkien, a Professor of Language at Oxford, based Elvish languages on Welsh and Finnish, creating detailed cultures and stories around them.

Set Layout and Logistics:

- Aerial View: Show a photo of the aerial layout of the set. The filmmakers commandeered a small part of the park while keeping most of it open to the public. The bridge could be locked off, and there was a great access road for film equipment.

Plant Nursery and Environmental Care:

- Plant Nursery: A large green structure served as a nursery, housing up to 10,000 plants cared for 12 months before being returned to their GPS locations. This showcases the support from various New Zealand agencies.

Elven Posts and Peter Jackson's Role:

- Interactive Elven Post: The next post shows the sizes of different Fellowship members, with heights based on the books. Note how filming the hobbits with Gimli didn't require size manipulation due to the actors' heights.
- Peter Jackson's Vision: Peter Jackson didn't want people to see the trilogy as fantasy but as a recreation of mythology set in a real world. Middle-earth was physically rebuilt to deliver an authentic experience.

Alan Lee and Rivendell's Design:

- Alan Lee's Influence: Peter Jackson chose Alan Lee's art for Rivendell. Alan Lee was the first to create illustrations for the 1991 illustrated edition of LOTR

approved by the Tolkien family. Peter Jackson also brought John Howe, another great Middle-earth illustrator, to lead the conceptual art.

Tolkien's Inspiration:

- Lauterbrunnen Valley: Tolkien's idea for Rivendell came from his walking tour in Switzerland's Lauterbrunnen Valley, a deep valley of waterfalls and the Jungfrau mountain.

Set Construction and Filming:

- Full-Size Set: A full-size version of Lord Elrond's house was constructed here, showcasing the magic of the place. However, some internal scenes were filmed at Stone Street studios.

Frodo and Bilbo's Scenes:

- Bedroom Scene: Frodo's awakening after being stabbed with the Morgul blade was filmed here. Note the perspective and camera techniques used to create depth in the scenes.
- Scariest Scene: Bilbo's transformation when he asks to hold the Ring one last time is considered one of the scariest scenes in the trilogy.

Promotional Photos:

- Legolas' Photoshoot: As the release date neared, Peter Jackson called Orlando Bloom to take promotional shots at Kaitoke Regional Park.

The Gate of Rivendell:

- Physical Reminder: Outside of Hobbiton, this is the only physical reminder of the incredible sets. Built by Weta Workshop, it is hollow with a wooden frame and made from cheap materials like pool noodles.

Symbolic Filming Moments:

- Council of Elrond: The entire Fellowship ensemble cast plus Elrond and Arwen were right here as the Fellowship departs on their epic quest. The reactions of awe seen on the actors' faces were real upon seeing the set.

Final Photo and Departure:

- Rare Group Photo: Show a photo of the entire Fellowship, a composite image with the actors standing still and the smaller members kneeling down.
- Gandalf's Direction: Remember Gandalf directing Frodo to the left when asking the way to Mordor, symbolizing the path to evil.

Rivendell (Kaitoke Regional Park) Walk Summary

Swing Bridge and Ancient Podocarp Forest:

- **Swing Bridge:** Cross the swing bridge for a short walk in the ancient podocarp forest, recently upgraded for better access.
- **River Convergence:** From the middle of the bridge, observe where Te Awa Kairangi (Hutt River) and Pakuratahi River meet.
- **Short Loop Track:** The walk includes various fern species, showcasing New Zealand's unique forest biodiversity.

New Zealand's Biodiversity:

- **Endemic Species:** New Zealand has a high level of endemic biodiversity with around 80,000 native species, unlike the UK with only two.
- **Rainforest Structure:** Notice the epiphytic plants that grow on trees, blocking sunlight from the forest floor and affecting the growth of ground plants like ferns.
- **Forest Decay Process:** Fallen trees decompose, nourishing the soil. Highlight the rotting tree trunk with fungi, mushrooms, and insects like Huhu grubs, a protein-rich food source.

Fern Species:

- **Ferns:** New Zealand has 200 fern species, 40% of which are native. Some of the smallest and largest ferns in the world are found here.
- **Silver Fern:** The Ponga Silver Fern, a national symbol, has practical uses for Māori, including navigation and as a food source.

Forest Layers and Diversity:

Five Forest Layers: Observe the forest floor, undergrowth, sub-canopy, canopy, and emergent layer, showcasing the diversity of species living side by side.

Rimu and Northern Rātā:

- **Parasitic Relationship:** The Northern Rātā, a parasitic plant, starts in the canopy of a host tree like the Rimu. It eventually grows strong enough to support itself, leading to the gradual death of the host tree.
- **Nature's Process:** This slow process is likened to the 'Facehugger' from the Alien franchise.

Boardwalk and Tree Species:

- **Kahikatea Trees:** Predominantly Kahikatea trees, which thrive in riverine and swamp forests.

- **Rimu Trees:** The nutrient-rich volcanic soils of New Zealand support the growth of native and introduced pines, contributing to some of the largest pine forests in the world.

Ancient Northern Rātā:

- **1100-Year-Old Tree:** The Northern Rātā grows vertically, making it hard to date, but this tree is estimated to be over 1100 years old. A larger one, further into the mountains, is thought to be the world's largest Northern Rātā at 40 meters tall.

Conclusion and Reflection:

- **Tolkien's Environmental Views:** Despite Tolkien's dislike for allegory, he was an early environmentalist who valued trees as symbols of the natural environment and the old England of the Shire, opposed to industrialization and mechanization.

Kaitoke Regional Park to Aston Norwood Gardens for Lunch

Lunch at Aston Norwood Garden:

- *Drive to Aston Norwood Garden: Reserved table and pre-ordered lunches to be served promptly.*
- *Duration: Lunch will take approximately 45 minutes.*
- *Toilet Break: Suggest a toilet break before the next part of the journey, as it will be a one-hour trip back to Wellington City.*

Helm's Deep and Minas Tirith

Set Construction and Filming:

- **Quarry Rental:** The quarry was rented for two years for building, filming, and dismantling Helm's Deep (HD) and Minas Tirith (MT).
- **Large Sets:** Helm's Deep was a large set built into the cliffs for ease. Scale models were used for distant shots.
- **Minas Tirith:** Only a few streets were built, with different angles creating the illusion of a larger city.
- **Quarry Selection:** Chosen for its proximity to Wellington and the natural cliff backdrop.

Filming Experiences:

- **Marching Elves:** Early filming involved marching Elves up the causeway, requiring multiple takes.
- **Filming Duration:** Approximately four months of filming for Helm's Deep, including day and night shoots.
- **Rain Tower:** Used to simulate rain. The rain tower was challenging, especially for those in thinner costumes.

Costume Challenges:

- **Uruk-hai Costume:** Involved multiple layers, armor, and makeup. The Elf soldier costume was the most uncomfortable due to its rigid design.
- **Weaponry:** Uruk-hai pikes were 10-12 feet long, and Elven longbows were 6 feet. The 'Uruk-hai haka' was a spontaneous addition.

CGI and Practical Effects:

- **Imaginary Arrows:** Most arrows were CGI, requiring realistic bowstring pulling. Proper quiver use was essential for believability.
- **Minas Tirith Filming:** Shorter filming duration, mainly daytime. Scenes included charging through gates and filming composite shots.

Logistics and Secrecy:

- **Base Camp:** Located across the motorway, with blacked-out bus windows and blankets over costumes for secrecy.
- **Stone Street Studios:** Additional filming for internal scenes of Helm's Deep and other locations.

Overall, the detailed description highlights the logistical and practical aspects of filming Helm's Deep and Minas Tirith, including set construction, costume challenges, and the experience of being on set.