

# New Zealand volcano: five dead after White Island eruption

**No survivors left on island, say police after disaster leaves up to two dozen people missing**

- **Latest: Five people dead and eight missing after volcanic eruption**
- Mon 9 Dec 2019 06.59 EST First published on Sun 8 Dec 2019 22.06 EST  
New Zealand volcano: fatal eruption on White Island

Police in New Zealand have said they do not expect to find any more survivors from a volcanic eruption on White Island that killed at least five people and injured up to 20.

“No signs of life have been seen at any point,” police said after rescue helicopters and other aircraft had carried out a number of aerial reconnaissance flights over the island following the eruption on Monday afternoon. “Police believe that anyone who could have been taken from the island alive was rescued at the time of the evacuation.”

Up to two dozen people remain unaccounted for, and officers are “urgently” working to confirm the exact number of those who have died, a police statement said.

Unstable conditions, toxic gases and ash fall prevented rescue teams from searching the island – which lies 30 miles from the east coast of New Zealand’s North Island, in the Bay of Plenty – on foot.

The country’s most active cone volcano erupted at 2.11pm on Monday, sending up a huge plume of ash that was visible from the North Island.

Police said about 50 people were on the island at the time, more than 20 of whom were Australian tourists. Twenty-three people have been rescued. All of those rescued had sustained injuries, mostly burns, police said, and seven people who were in a critical condition had been flown to hospitals in Tauranga and Auckland.



## White Island volcano erupts: what we know so far

The prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, who visited the nearby coastal town of Whakatāne on Monday evening, said the situation was “significant and evolving”. Ardern said she was liaising closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and police confirmed that those missing on the island were New Zealanders and foreign nationals.



John Tims, the deputy police commissioner of district operations, said at least two dozen people remained on the island, but he could not be sure of the exact number. “The physical environment is unsafe for us to return to the island,” he said.

The Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, confirmed Australians had been “caught up” in the eruption and offered emergency support.

Kevin O’Sullivan, the chief executive officer of the New Zealand Cruise Association, said a tour party of 30 to 38 people from the Ovation of the Seas had been touring White Island when the eruption took place, and the party had not returned. Their names and nationalities were being given to the police, he said. The ship would remain in Tauranga port at least overnight.

Royal Caribbean, which owns the Ovation of the Seas, asked for prayers to be said for all involved.

Ardern said police were unable to land on the island because of the danger of another eruption and dangerous, unstable conditions on the ground.