

Winter Rimu

**Multi-Day Sea Kayak/Cycle at Manapouri and Milford Sound, or Ski/Snowboard in Queenstown
Hike to Copland Hot Pools • Hike West Coast Beaches and Rainforests • Hike at Fox Glacier,
Mt. Aspiring and Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Parks • Queenstown
Sea Kayak Okarito Lagoon**

14 days: Christchurch - Christchurch
Fare: US\$2999 + tax

11 day option: Queenstown - Christchurch
Fare: US\$2799 + tax
Shorter options available upon request

Winter is one of the best times to hike in New Zealand as we'll almost always have the tracks to ourselves, and with all the snow-capped mountains, it's a beautiful time of year to explore. Our maritime climate ensures we have mild winters suitable for outdoor pursuits (typical day temperature is about 45-60°F or 8-15°C) and the Winter Rimu trip is well adapted to suit the cooler conditions. We do two incredible multi-day guided backpacking trips to alpine hot pools, glaciers and remote snowfields. We take some of the best day hikes in the country and head out for unforgettable sea kayaking and biking, or if you prefer, a couple of days of skiing or snowboarding in the mountains surrounding Queenstown. We maintain plenty of options so we can make sure the trip suits everyone and we generally have two guides per trip to take good care of you. The accommodations vary – for over half the trip we stay in accommodations of comfortable standards (B&Bs, lodges, etc...) and for the rest of the trip we have chosen more rustic accommodations in order to be in the most beautiful, isolated, and off-the-beaten-track places in New Zealand. The Winter Rimu is simply an awesome trip.

Monday Arrive, hike Mt. John

Most people leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Saturday evening, and arrive in Auckland early on Monday morning. You'll lose a day to the dateline – but you get it back on the way home! You'll take a short flight to Christchurch in the South Island arriving by around 10am. We'll meet you there, and then head south for a hike at Mt. John. We'll walk along the shores of Lake Tekapo then head uphill through fragrant wilding pine, before emerging above the treeline for breathtaking views of the lake and surrounding mountains. Then we'll drive to the remote and beautiful Lake Ohau Lodge, near Mt. Cook. With awesome views of Lake Ohau, Glen Mary Glacier, Mt. Cook and the Lake Ohau Range, you'll see why this is one of our favourite winter hideaways! The stars here are amazing too, as there is no artificial light for miles in any direction. You'll have the rest of the afternoon to relax at the lodge or head out for another short walk to explore your surroundings. We always make sure the first day of our trips is relaxing and undemanding, so you can recover from your flight. Depending on where you're coming from, you'll probably find jetlag is no big deal. For instance, it's a 12-hour direct overnight flight from the West Coast of the USA to Auckland, and there's only a five-hour time difference between New Zealand and US Pacific time. If you have more time, by all means try to arrive in New Zealand a day or so early, especially if you're coming from further afield.

ACCOMMODATION: Lake Ohau Lodge, Lake Ohau

(L,D)

Tuesday Hike Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Park or ski at Ohau Ski Area

We'll have a leisurely start today. After a late breakfast on the balcony overlooking Lake Ohau, it's a short drive to Mt. Cook village, at the head of Lake Pukaki. Here we'll take an impressive hike up Hooker Valley to a glacial lake complete with icebergs! This is a great spot for lunch and on a clear day the views of Mt. Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain, are stunning. Then we'll return to Lake Ohau where we'll enjoy a sumptuous dinner. Another option today is to spend the day skiing at the small and friendly Ohau Ski Area, one of the South Island's more remote backcountry ski fields. (Skiing option about US\$100.)

ACCOMMODATION: Lake Ohau Lodge

(B,L,D)

Wednesday

Hike Mt. Aspiring National Park

Today we start the first of two memorable multi-day hikes. This hike is well suited to winter conditions, due to the sheer beauty and unpopulated nature of the area at this time of year. It is a gentle valley walk of less than three hours, but we have a great side hike to Rob Roy Glacier on the way to the hut which is considered one of the best day hikes in the South Island. The trail passes tumbling rivers, towering snowfields, and huge mountain peaks straight from the set of *The Lord of the Rings*! We hike up a narrow glacial valley, coming out of the forest in a dramatic alpine cirque, with incredible views of the Southern Alps. When we arrive at the hut you can continue further up the valley or simply head for the fireside and relax. Mt. Aspiring Hut is a spacious and modern mountain lodge, albeit in the middle of nowhere, with floor to ceiling windows that perfectly frame Mt. Aspiring – one of New Zealand's tallest peaks at nearly 10,000 feet – at the head of the valley. We limit numbers on this hike to minimise our impact on the area. If you prefer not to stay in the hut we offer an alternative option, staying at the more luxurious Lake Wanaka Lodge and doing day hikes into the mountains, or just relaxing and enjoying Wanaka's laid-back, small town atmosphere! The choice is yours.

ACCOMMODATION: Mt. Aspiring Hut, Mt. Aspiring National Park

(B,L,D)

Thursday

Hike Mt. Aspiring National Park

We have a leisurely start today, enjoying a healthy breakfast and admiring the views, before hiking back out to the trailhead. From here we have a short drive to Wanaka where we'll meet up with the rest of the group. Then we'll cross the Cardrona Saddle and drop into Queenstown, a picturesque town set in a basin on the edge of Lake Wakatipu and surrounded by snowy peaks. It's a great place to spend a couple of days, and you'll find all sorts of options to pique your interest!

ACCOMMODATION: Queenstown apartments, Queenstown

(B,L)

Friday

Free day in Queenstown

ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND is based in Queenstown for a good reason – it's the adventure capital of New Zealand and you'll find all the comforts of civilisation: massage therapists, restaurants, sidewalk cafés, window-shopping, and adrenaline-pumping activities! You'll also find incredible optional activities here too, such as hang gliding, bungy jumping, jet boating, skydiving, horse trekking, fishing and winery tours. Many of our clients have noted that the *Winter Rimu* caters very well to people with quite different interests and our time in Queenstown is a good example. For instance, there are great hiking, biking and kayaking opportunities in this region. Also, being winter you can go skiing or snowboarding for the day at one of Queenstown's nearby ski areas (approximate cost US\$100 for ski or snowboard hire, transport and lift pass – available as snow conditions suit, generally from June to September). Or you can do nothing and just soak up the atmosphere, or lounge about reading a book.

ACCOMMODATION: Queenstown apartments

(B)

Saturday

Start multi-day options

When you book, you have the choice of a 3-day/2 night cycling and kayaking option in Fiordland National Park or a skiing/snowboarding option in Queenstown. Each is wonderful in its own way, so we'll let you decide! After breakfast together, we head off for our various activities:

CYCLING AND KAYAKING OPTION IN MANAPOURI AND MILFORD SOUND

Saturday (continued)

Today is a cycling day, for the keen cyclists among us! You'll be fitted with a 21-speed front-suspension *Specialized* mountain bike for a spectacular ride near Queenstown, or if you prefer to avoid cycling in winter, you'll have most of today available for extra Queenstown options. We'll do one of the many cycling tracks in the area, and the biking is guaranteed to suit all levels of ability. At the end of the day, we have a two-hour drive to Lake Manapouri, which will be the base for our sea kayaking adventure to Milford Sound. We'll stay at Lake Manapouri Inn, with great views over the lake and the surrounding mountains of Fiordland National Park.

ACCOMMODATION: Lake Manapouri Inn, Manapouri (B,L,D)

Sunday **Sea kayak Milford Sound**

The day starts very early this morning as we head towards Milford Sound. Milford was rated the 8th Natural Wonder of the World by Rudyard Kipling and it's easy to see why. Sheer granite walls plunge thousands of feet into calm indigo water, broken only by the reflection of the towering snowy peaks that border the sound. Most people see Milford Sound from the deck of a cruise ship, but we've got a better way – gliding along in a sea kayak, causing minimum disruption to the seals and dolphins that are very friendly and often eager to visit. This is an awesome trip, run by specialist kayak outfitters and suitable for beginners or experts. When you finish your paddle we'll head back to Lake Manapouri, arriving by mid afternoon for a BBQ dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: Lake Manapouri Inn (B,L,D)

Monday **Cycle near Lake Manapouri**

This morning, cyclists will have another opportunity to stretch their legs, biking through the peaceful rolling farmland surrounding Te Anau. The earlier you set out, the more ground you'll cover. The rest of the group can enjoy a late-morning start and we'll pick up cyclists on our way to Queenstown where we'll stop for lunch and meet up with the skiers/snowboarders. You'll have the chance to do any last-minute shopping, send postcards home, or whatever you need before heading back into the wilderness for the rest of the trip.

- OR -

SKIING/SNOWBOARDING OPTION IN QUEENSTOWN

(available as snow conditions suit, generally June-Sep)

Saturday (continued)

With Coronet Peak, the Remarkables and Cardrona ski areas all within an hour of Queenstown, there are plenty of skiing and snowboarding options for novices and experts alike, and being locals we'll be happy to point you to the best of them! If you want to brush up on your skills, or if you're relatively new to the sport, private lessons are a great option (private lessons are about US\$75-80 per person per hour), although not essential. You can bring your own gear, or you can rent gear down here (gear hire is about US\$40 per day). Conditions vary throughout the season, but you can expect good skiing and riding, on and off-piste, with plenty of chairlifts and scenery that will blow you away! If you want to go skiing, but you don't want to miss out on Milford Sound, you can also use today or tomorrow to take a day trip to the world famous Fiordland National Park. At the time of booking, or up until one month before your trip let us know if you would like to organise a day trip to Milford and we'll be happy to arrange this for you.

ACCOMMODATION: Queenstown apartments (B)

Sunday **Skiing or snowboarding**

Now that you've got your 'ski-legs', today is the day to really carve it up – have fun out there!

ACCOMMODATION: Queenstown apartments (B)

Andrew: "After university, I spent a season as a lift operator at Coronet Peak ski area. I sure didn't do it for the money – but it was a fabulous chance to cut loose on the slopes almost every day. What an unforgettable winter!"

Monday **Skiing or snowboarding**

We'll spend the morning relaxing in Queenstown, before rejoining the cycling and kayaking group around lunch time and heading north to Makarora.

Monday (continued) **Finish multi-day options**

After regrouping we'll head to the tiny hamlet of Makarora, on the edge of Mt. Aspiring National Park. We'll stay in a comfortable family-style homestead and enjoy a beautifully prepared meal.

ACCOMMODATION: The Homestead, Makarora – very comfortable and spacious

(B,D)

Tuesday

Hike to Copland Hot Pools, Westland National Park

We are very privileged to be able to do this hike. We'll walk into a stunningly beautiful mountain basin, set directly underneath the towering peaks of the Southern Alps, with an awesome accoutrement – reliable natural hot pools! It's a challenging six to seven hour hike (17km/10 miles) up the Copland Valley with a gradual 1,000 foot elevation gain, but it's worth it to have all of tomorrow to take side hikes, soak in the hot pools and enjoy your alpine surroundings. You don't have to carry a very heavy pack – our guides are pretty tough and they'll carry the lion's share of the load. You'll be carrying a sleeping bag, a few spare clothes, and some food – no need for any more than that. Once we reach the hot pools, we stay in one of New Zealand's most modern and spacious backcountry huts. It's a hut in name only – it's a comfortable two-storied building (a palace compared to many New Zealand huts) and one of the best things about hiking this track in winter is we may well have it all to ourselves!

ACCOMMODATION: Welcome Flat Hut, Westland National Park

(B,L,D)

Wednesday

Hike to Douglas Rock and soak in the hot pools

Today we will hike further up the track towards Douglas Rock for even more amazing scenery and views of multiple glaciers clinging to the top of the mountain valley. If you prefer, you can have a relaxing day at the hut – soak in the hot pools, enjoy the stunning scenery, or even just hang out with a book! Either way, the hot pools are without a doubt the star attraction here; closely followed by the spectacular meals we'll be serving up!

ACCOMMODATION: Welcome Flat Hut

(B,L,D)

Andrew: *“The natural hot pools are a fabulous reward for the slog up to the hut, not to mention a well deserved soak for tired bodies. One time I snuck a bottle of champagne into my pack, and surprised my friends as they relaxed in the hot pools star gazing – the look on their faces was classic!”*

Thursday

Hike Copland Valley and relax in Okarito

An early start sees us on the track and walking back to the trailhead. It's a little quicker this time, being slightly downhill, and we'll be back by mid-afternoon. With a really early start, we'll have time to stop at Fox Glacier afterwards, for a walk right up to the glacier's terminal face. Fox Glacier is an enormous river of ice, unusual in that it comes right down through the rainforest to sea level. Then we'll carry on to Okarito Lagoon, a West Coast gem that is all but untouched due to it being 10 miles down a one-way road from an obscure highway turnoff. There are no shops, no restaurants, no traffic, and a population of only 31 people! We stay at the Okarito Beach House, and you'll love this place. There's plenty to do here so we'll stay two nights, to catch our breath and relax. Tonight you can sprawl by the fire with a glass of mulled wine (or hot chocolate!) after your long hike.

ACCOMMODATION: Okarito Beach House, Okarito – off-the-beaten-path and very cosy

(B,L,D)

Friday

Kayak Okarito Lagoon, hike beach and forest

Today you can spend a relaxing day in this sleepy but beautiful beach town to recharge your batteries, or get out for awesome hiking and kayaking. Okarito Lagoon is home to the only native white heron colony in New Zealand, as well as lots of other amazing birdlife including the Okarito Brown kiwi. You can sea kayak on the lagoon with a backdrop of snow-capped mountains for a few hours, then spend the rest of the day hiking along the beach or in coastal rainforest.

ACCOMMODATION: Okarito Beach House

(B,L,D)

Saturday

Hike Punakaiki rainforest and beaches

This morning we'll drive along the coast to Hokitika to check out local art galleries and a pounamu carving workshops ('pounamu' is Maori for jade). Then after lunch, we'll carry on to Punakaiki, where we'll spend the afternoon hiking

