

# THE ULTIMATE KIWI ADVENTURE



SMALL GROUP GUIDED TOURS. **RATED #1 IN NZ!**



MTB



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# 12-DAY SOUTHERN EXPLORER TOUR



## ROUTE: WELLINGTON TO CHRISTCHURCH

Welcome to the 12 Day Southern Explorer Tour!

You're never far from either the sea or the mountains on this journey as you cross the Cook Strait from Wellington, the nation's capital, to the quaint town of Picton in the beautiful Marlborough Sounds. From here you venture into the heart of the majestic Southern Alps and on to the adventure playground of Queenstown.

Created for travellers in their mid-thirties and upwards, over the course of your week and a half tour you'll travel through some of the most magical scenery you could hope to see. National Parks, rainforests, mountain ranges, UNESCO World Heritage Areas... everywhere you turn, there's something different to behold.

This South Island tour includes special activities such as one of the world's most scenic train as well as one of the world's most scenic ferry journeys, a guided e-bike tour along Wanaka's lakeside, a night of glamping and the opportunity to carve your own greenstone pendant.

You'll have the opportunity to swim, kayak, skydive, hike, horse ride, see kiwis (and whales and dolphins), relax in hot pools, eat and drink like a local, and more!

But only if you want to; this is your trip. It's designed to be flexible - we include some high-end essentials, but let you make the call on what kind of activities appeal to you. You can pre-book the things you are certain you want to do before the trip starts - and then add more on while you're on tour.

We'll fill your days with the best things to see in do in South Island and also give you a great insight into New Zealand life and culture. At the end of the day, you can relax in comfortable 3-4 star accommodation to ensure you have a great night's sleep ready for the following day's activities.

**FLEXIBLE DEPARTURE DATES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.**



# TOUR INCLUSIONS

All the things on this page are included as part of your tour at no extra cost.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED ON THIS TOUR

- ▶ Stay 11 nights in twin-share 3-4 star accommodation: a mix of hotels, motels, lodges, and rainforest retreats.
- ▶ Feast on 6 continental breakfasts and 2 dinners.
- ▶ Ride one of the most scenic ferry journeys in the world, over Cook Strait.
- ▶ Take in the stunning Southern Alps and the vast Canterbury Plains aboard the TranzAlpine, New Zealand's finest inland rail journey.
- ▶ Taste some of the world's best sauvignon blanc at a Marlborough wine tasting.
- ▶ Spend one night glamping (luxury camping) on Criffel Station - a working deer farm.
- ▶ Cruise along Wanaka's lakeside on a guided e-bike (bicycle with electric motor) tour.
- ▶ Carve your own pounamu (jade) pendant in Franz Josef.
- ▶ Plus, many more surprise stops along the way!

## ALL TOURS INCLUDE

- ▶ **PASSIONATE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE LOCAL KIWI GUIDE**
- ▶ **COMFORTABLE AND AIR-CONDITIONED BUS TRANSPORT**
- ▶ **SMALL GROUPS OF MAXIMUM 16 PEOPLE**
- ▶ **ORIENTATION TOUR OF EACH AND EVERY LOCATION**
- ▶ **EXPERIENCES TO TEACH YOU ABOUT OUR UNIQUE MĀORI CULTURE**



# ITINERARY SUMMARY

## **DAY 1 - WELLINGTON**

Kia ora! Welcome to Wellington! Settle into your accommodation, meet your guide and new tour friends and get a tour briefing before our early start tomorrow morning.

## **DAY 2 - WELLINGTON TO KAIKŌURA**

We travel to the South Island via one of the most scenic ferry journeys in the world and we'll toast our arrival in Marlborough by sampling some world-class wines - Cheers!

## **DAY 3 - KAIKŌURA TO CHRISTCHURCH**

Kaikoura is known as a whale-watching mecca, but there are many other sea creatures to observe in this stunning location: swim, kayak or keep your camera dry and fly!

## **DAY 4 - CHRISTCHURCH TO OHAU (VIA LAKE TEKAPO)**

Explore Christchurch before we visit Lake Tekapo. We'll spend the night on the outskirts of a Dark Sky Reserve where you can feast your eyes on the visible universe!

## **DAY 5 - OHAU TO QUEENSTOWN**

Admire the magnificent alpine scenery and perhaps get a jump in at the world's home of bungee before we arrive in the place famed for being a hub of all things adventure.

## **DAY 6 - QUEENSTOWN**

This is your chance to cross off some NZ must-do items: bungee jumping, trekking through film locations, or visiting beautiful Milford Sound.

## **DAY 7 - QUEENSTOWN TO WANAKA**

More bucket list activities in the morning, set off to Queenstown's slightly quieter little sister, Wanaka, in the afternoon.

## **DAY 8 - WANAKA**

Breathe in the alpine air and admire the surrounding beauty on a guided e-bike tour before a night of 'glamping' with dinner included.

*Continued...*



# ITINERARY SUMMARY

## CONT...

### DAY 9 - WANAKA TO FRANZ JOSEF

Today's drive is packed with scenic highlights and hidden gems before we arrive into the World Heritage area famous for its glaciers. A rainforest retreat is our home for the next two nights.

### DAY 10 - FRANZ JOSEF

Explore Franz Josef glacier by heli-hike (suitable for all abilities), heli-climb, or enjoy a morning kayaking a glacial lake. Today you'll carve your own pounamu pendant.

### DAY 11 - FRANZ JOSEF TO CHRISTCHURCH

Yet another spectacular drive, a quick stop to a jade factory for souvenirs - then all aboard the TranzAlpine that will take us through Arthur's Pass to Christchurch.

### DAY 12 - CHRISTCHURCH (POST TOUR DEBRIEF)

Oh, no, is it over so soon? Last night's accommodation was included in the tour, so be sure to share contact details with your new friends.





## DAY 1 - WELLINGTON

Settle into your accommodation and be ready for the 6pm pre-tour meeting. Here you will get to know your Tour Manager and be introduced to your new roadtrip friends.

Afterwards, the evening is yours to enjoy. We recommend a good night's sleep to be ready for tomorrow's early start, but you may want to experience Wellington's exciting nightlife - the choice is yours!



## DAY 2 - WELLINGTON TO KAIKŌURA

### INCLUDED

- ▶ Cook Strait Ferry
- ▶ Wine Tasting

Rise and shine! It's time to head straight for our main destination - the South Island. We take one of the world's most scenic ferry journeys as we cross the Cook Strait.

The South Island has a stunning welcome in store for us - gliding through the Marlborough Sounds as we approach Picton Harbour, you'll feel like you're in another world.

One of the best ways to explore Marlborough, the region at the top of the South Island, is with your tastebuds. That's why we jump straight on a wine tasting, to sample some of the best vineyards in the country.

After lunch, our next destination is Kaikōura which literally means "to eat crayfish" - and the area is teeming with them. The nutrient-rich waters of this area attract a wide variety of marine wildlife including the stars of the show - the whales and dolphins.



## DAY 3 - KAIKŌURA TO CHRISTCHURCH

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Dolphin Encounter
- ▶ Whale Watching
- ▶ Whale Watching Flight
- ▶ Guided Seal Kayaking
- ▶ Swim with Seals
- ▶ Surf Lesson

The chance to swim with dolphins in the wild is a massive New Zealand highlight for many travellers, and Kaikōura is one of the best places to find them, with pods of up to 300 of these playful creatures hanging out here at any one time.

If you want to get up close to the giants of the ocean, a whale watching tour here is the way to do it. Humpbacks, sperm whales and orca all stop by at various times of year, so this is a great chance to meet some of them.

After visiting the local seals on our way out of town, our road trip continues to our home for the night - Christchurch, known as the "Garden City" for its peaceful parklands and lazy rivers.



## DAY 4 - CHRISTCHURCH TO OHAU (VIA LAKE TEKAPO)

### INCLUDED

- ▶ Breakfast
- ▶ Dinner
- ▶ Mt John Lookout

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Grand Traverse Scenic Flight

This morning we'll explore iconic downtown Christchurch and your guide will show you the cool and creative ways the city is being rebuilt after the life-changing 2011 earthquake here. Christchurch folk are an innovative and creative bunch - the Transitional Cathedral, created from cardboard, is totally inspirational.

Mid-morning we head for Lake Tekapo. Ready your camera - the lake's breathtaking turquoise colour and mountain backdrop is a photographer's dream come true.

The tiny Church of the Good Shepherd stands right at the water's edge, proving that small is bold and definitely beautiful. Grab some confetti and congratulate any passing brides - couples travel from all over the world for wedding shots in front of the chapel!



## DAY 5 - OHAU TO QUEENSTOWN

### INCLUDED

- ▶ Breakfast

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Bungy Jumping
- ▶ Skyline Gondola
- ▶ Shotover Jet Boat
- ▶ Walter Peak Dinner with TSS Earnslaw Cruise

From the golden tussocklands of Mackenzie country - where epic battles of Return of the King were filmed - to the dramatic peaks of the Southern Alps, it's like you're driving into a postcard.

We'll pause for lots of photo stops en route to give your camera a workout, including a stop at the spectacular Kawarau Gorge. This also happens to be the world home of bungy! Give it a go or enjoy watching the jumpers scream their way into the gorge.

Whether you're an adrenaline junkie, an avid hiker, wine taster or scenery lover, Queenstown has something for absolutely everyone. With 2 nights and plenty of daylight hours here, get ready - this town certainly knows how to live life to the max.



## DAY 6 - QUEENSTOWN

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Milford Sound Flight/Cruise
- ▶ Milford Sound Coach/Cruise
- ▶ Doubtful Sound Coach/Cruise
- ▶ Shotover Jet Boat
- ▶ *Lord of the Rings* 4WD Tour
- ▶ Dart River Funyaks
- ▶ Skyline Gondola

With a full day in Queenstown, let's work on that bucket list!

There are heaps of options to choose from: extreme jet boat rides, river kayaking, horseback riding through *Lord of the Rings* scenery, and the skyline gondola are just a few of our favourites.

For scenery lovers, Milford Sound is a must-see. Whether you fly or drive, the scenery en route is as awesome as the destination. Once on the Sound, as you sail beneath thundering waterfalls and towering cliff faces, you'll understand why we call it the "8th Wonder of the World".



## DAY 7 - QUEENSTOWN TO WANAKA

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Shotover Jet Boat
- ▶ *Lord of the Rings* 4WD Tour
- ▶ Dart River Funyaks
- ▶ Skyline Gondola

With the morning in Queenstown, you have another chance to tick off your bucket list today. What will it be? A trip to the top of the Skyline Gondola, or perhaps an adrenaline-pumping jet boat ride through the Shotover Canyon? You decide!

This afternoon we jump back onto the road and head off to Wanaka, a quick one hour drive away.

The drive is a scenic highlight in itself, so make sure your camera is fully charged and ready to go. En route we'll stop in charming Arrowtown, a historic gold rush village with heaps of old-world character.

This afternoon is your chance to relax in stunning Wanaka, known as Queenstown's slightly quieter little sister.

Blessed with towering peaks and a glacial blue lake, you'll soon see why Wanaka's considered to be one of New Zealand's most beautiful mountain towns. There are breathtaking hikes and easy bike rides for a welcome chance to relax.



## DAY 8 - WANAKA

### INCLUDED

- ▶ Dinner
- ▶ Millennium Trail Guided e-bike Tour
- ▶ Glamping Experience at Criffel Station

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Skydiving
- ▶ Mou Waho Sustainable Boat Trip
- ▶ Wild Wire Wanaka
- ▶ Rob Roy Glacier Guided Walk
- ▶ Learn to Fly - One Day Mountain Flying

Today is your chance to explore one of the most beautiful towns in the southern lakes region with plenty of activities to tempt every lover of the outdoors.

Included this morning is a guided e-bike tour along Wanaka's lakeside. An e-bike, for those wondering, is an electronic bicycle. It's like a normal bike but has a small motor so you don't need to pedal as hard.

One optional activity today - a visit to Mou Waho Island. Accessible only by boat from Wanaka and famous for being home to an (unnamed) island, in a lake (Arethusa Pool), on an island (Mou Waho), in a lake (Lake Wanaka), on an island (the South Island) in the ocean (the Pacific!). Sounds complicated, but once you are there it will all make sense!

In Wanaka there are many walks, hikes and biking trails to choose from - check out the famous "Wanaka Tree" while making your way around the lake! Or, if you feel like relaxing, ask your guide to recommend their favourite secret spots to enjoy the surrounding scenery.

One of the best ways to admire Wanaka is from the air. Treat yourself to a skydive or a scenic flight in a vintage plane - you can even take a flying lesson. As always, it's your trip and your choice: you do you!

We mix things up tonight by heading to the stunning Criffel Station for a night of glamping (AKA glamorous camping)! Think fancy canvas tents with decadently comfortable beds and the great outdoors right on your doorstep. The views from Criffel are sublime... to get the real experience, you'll have to see it for yourself!



## DAY 9 - WANAKA TO FRANZ JOSEF

### INCLUDED

- ▶ Breakfast
- ▶ Blue Pools Walkway

After a relaxing morning in Wanaka, the journey to Franz is another stunner - many of our Guides rate it as their most favourite drive in New Zealand.

As we hit the road, we'll stop at one of our most popular lakeside lookout points at Lake Hawea or Lake Wanaka. Your guide will keep an eye on the weather and pick the best option.

From the cascading waterfalls of Haast Pass to classic Kiwi coastal views, you won't want to nap on the bus in case you miss anything. Your guide will have some epic surprise photo stops and short walks along the way.

Between September and December it's whitebait season (a small fish that's a delicacy in New Zealand). Fried up with eggs and served on toast, it's a local treat and shouldn't be missed. We'll stop at one of the local spots for a taste during the season.

We roll into Franz Josef around late afternoon/early evening. This UNESCO World Heritage area is famous for its spectacular glacier, just 5km from town, which is begging to be explored tomorrow.



## DAY 10 - FRANZ JOSEF

### INCLUDED

- ▶ Breakfast
- ▶ Greenstone pendant carving

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Heli Hike
- ▶ Heli Ice Climbing
- ▶ Heli Scenic Flight (with snow landing)
- ▶ Glacier Country Kayaks
- ▶ Skydiving
- ▶ Glacier Valley Walk (guided)

With Aoraki/Mount Cook (New Zealand's highest mountain) twinkling behind the glaciers, Franz Josef is about as beautiful a setting as you can find in New Zealand.

Te Wahi Pounamu (which means 'the place of greenstone' in Māori) is the name given to this part of the West Coast because of the abundance of pounamu (greenstone/jade) to be found here. Included in your tour today is a special opportunity to carve your very own pounamu pendant at a local gallery.

There are heaps of ways to enjoy Franz Josef Glacier; weather permitting, to get up onto the bluest ice you can take a scenic helicopter flight and hike onto the glaciers. Maybe you'd prefer to kayak on a glacial lake; or just relax in the steamy hot springs down below.

As well as the awesome glacier activities, you could also try out quad biking, horseback riding and even a bit of group karaoke tonight in Franz Josef!



## DAY 11 - FRANZ JOSEF TO CHRISTCHURCH

### INCLUDED

- ▶ Breakfast
- ▶ Visit the Mountain Jade Factory in Hokitika
- ▶ TranzAlpine Train

Before you know it, it's your last full day!

After breakfast we head further along the beautiful west coast on another of the most spectacular drives in the country (and, some would say, the world): a rugged, primeval landscape of luxuriant rainforest juxtaposed against breathtaking beach and ocean waves.

We stop at Hokitika and visit a greenstone factory, a great place to stock up on souvenirs for your friends and family back home.

Time permitting, we may also visit the National Kiwi Centre, where there is guaranteed viewing of rare kiwi birds in their nocturnal house.

On the way back to Christchurch, you'll traverse the South Island on the stunning TranzAlpine train crossing. Travelling across the Southern Alps through Arthur's Pass, this is considered as one of the world's most scenic train journeys. Along the way you'll see epic vistas, travel the edges of the ice-fed Waimakariri River and see miles of native beech forest.

You'll arrive in Christchurch around 6.30pm before transferring to your accommodation.



## DAY 12 – CHRISTCHURCH POST TOUR DEBRIEF

### INCLUDED

Today is the final day of the tour, where we exchange photos and stories over breakfast before saying our goodbyes and parting ways.

- ▶ Breakfast

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Akaroa Day Tour
- ▶ Christchurch Adventure Park
- ▶ Rangitata Rafts
- ▶ Antarctic Centre
- ▶ White Water Rafting



## FAQ

### WHERE DOES THE TOUR START AND END?

This tour starts with a 6pm pre-tour meeting at your Wellington accommodation on Day 1 and ends in at 10am Christchurch on Day 12.

### DO YOU VISIT MILFORD SOUND ON THIS TOUR?

We offer an optional trip to the wonderful Milford Sound while in Queenstown. There are a few different options for the excursion, which you can view online.

### WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR ACTIVITIES ON THIS TOUR?

Everyone has their own favourites, but in general we find that these are the most popular:

- ▶ Milford Sound Day Trip - departs Queenstown
- ▶ Heli Hike - Franz Josef
- ▶ Mou Waho Sustainable Boat Trip

Please be aware that your guide will fit your activities in the best way possible depending on what activities are selected - so they may take place on different days or times than those listed on this itinerary.

### I AM TRAVELLING ALONE, CAN I JOIN THIS TOUR?

Yes! Around 70% of our guests are solo so you can absolutely join this, or any other of our tours. There are no single person supplements unless you want to have your own private room - in this case, upgrades are available.

### HOW MUCH SHOULD I BUDGET PER DAY FOR FOOD AND WHAT FOOD IS INCLUDED?

Included in this tour are 6 continental breakfasts and 2 dinners.

Our guides know the best places in each town and city for different budgets and tastes, and they will point these out on the way into each location.

The tour group, along with your guide, will often head out to a local pub for a beer and a meal. Meals can range from NZ\$15 upwards.

### DO YOU CATER FOR VEGETARIANS AND VEGANS?

Yes - we often have vegetarian/vegan guests and all cafes and restaurants in New Zealand will offer meat-free options. If you can't see anything on the menu just ask, as most places will happily prepare something for you.



## FAQ

### HOW FAR IN ADVANCE SHOULD I MAKE A BOOKING?

We recommend booking as soon as you know you can travel, and have decided on which tour you would like to go on. Some of our tours can be quite popular so it's best to secure your spot as soon as possible. Your spot can be booked with just a NZ\$99 deposit, with the full balance due 45 days prior to departure. You can log into your account at any time up until 45 days prior to pay off part of your tour balance, add activities and customise your tour.

### WHAT AGES IS THIS TOUR FOR?

This tour was designed for travellers in their mid thirties and upwards, however anyone over the age of 18 is welcome to join. More important than age is attitude - we have found over the years that if you have a thirst for adventure then age is no barrier. Please do keep in mind, though, that a reasonable level of fitness is required for any optional activities - we can talk you through any concerns you may have.

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