



AAT Kings: Spirit of New Zealand - Small Group Tour 27/28

Dozens of lakes, rivers and waterfalls. Just as many beaches. A good dose of Māori history and culture. Glaciers, gorges and bubbling geysers. Wine, wonderful food and wildlife. It sounds like the recipe for the best New Zealand tour ever. We haven't even touched on the forward-thinking cities and atmospheric towns you'll encounter on a Christchurch tour, Wellington tour, Bay of Islands tour... And so much more. Pack your stamina.

Starts in: Christchurch
Finishes in: Auckland
Length: 21days / 20nights
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star
Can be customised: Yes

This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.



Inclusions:

Includes: All coach transport
Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring
Included: Art Deco tour in Napier
Included: Christchurch City Tour

Included: Cross the Cook Strait by ferry
plus much more...

Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
Included: All Blacks Experience
Included: Bill Richardson Transport World
Included: Church of the Good Shepherd at Tekapo
Included: Farm experience at Real Country

Day 1



Community spirit is strong in Christchurch, as you'll discover exploring its streets at your leisure. Meet your Travel Director and fellow travellers this evening for a tour briefing and drinks.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)

Day 2



Tour the highlights of Christchurch to view the innovative Cardboard Cathedral and enjoy a stop at the Botanic Gardens, famed for its stunning collection of plants from around the world, beautifully landscaped gardens, and tranquil riverside setting. Today's journey offers a variety of scenic contrasts. Travel across the Canterbury Plains and visit Geraldine, a quaint rural town famous for its local cheeses and produce, which you can sample at the historic Barkers Store. Next, travel along the East Coast to the Waitaki Valley, a picturesque region of winding rivers and rolling farmlands, with the rugged mountains providing a stunning backdrop to Lake Benmore. Finally, continue to Omarama, a quintessential country town, where you'll spend the evening.

Staying in:

- Distinction Heritage Gateway Hotel (1 night)

Day 3



Your visit to Clyde will have your camera clicking non-stop. This charming historic town may be small, but it's full of character, with its town centre designated as a historic precinct, featuring buildings from its gold mining past now transformed into cafes and shops. Today's destination is Invercargill, a city obsessed with wheels. Tributes to speed legends colour the city, so it's only fitting that you visit Bill Richardson Transport World for a guided tour. Explore more than 300 vehicles as you are taken on a journey of transport through the ages. Bill Richardson began collecting old trucks in 1967 and, in his words, sometimes "bought a truck more with our hearts than with our heads." The collection now comprises of many rare and unusual vehicles, along with popular classic vehicles.

Staying in:

- Distinction Invercargill (1 night)

Day 4



Today is yours to explore the southern reaches of Aotearoa (New Zealand) at your own pace. You may choose an optional experience. A day trip to Rakiura (Stewart Island), where 85% of the island is protected as national park, creating a sanctuary for native birdlife and wildlife including kiwi, seabirds and rare species. A guided Village and Bays tour reveals rugged coastlines, native bush and local stories, followed by free time to explore this remote island. Or, remain in Invercargill and discover its unique heritage. Perhaps visit Classic Motorcycle Mecca, home to one of the Southern Hemisphere's largest collections of over 300 vintage motorcycles and interactive displays spanning more than a century of motoring history and indulge your sweet tooth at Toot Sweets, a local favourite for handcrafted treats and nostalgic charm.

Staying in:

- Distinction Invercargill (1 night)
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Day 5



Journey through the dramatic landscapes of Fiordland National Park, travelling deep into one of Aotearoa (New Zealand)'s most awe-inspiring natural regions. Arrive at Piopiotahi (Milford Sound) and board a scenic cruise, gliding past towering cliffs, cascading waterfalls and rainforest that clings to sheer rock faces, with opportunities to spot seals, and native birdlife. After your cruise, continue by road through alpine valleys and ancient beech forest to Te Anau, the gateway to Fiordland. Settle in for your overnight stay in this peaceful lakeside town.

Staying in:

- Distinction Luxmore Hotel (1 night)
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Day 6



Today on your New Zealand tour, get a taste of country life combined with good old-fashioned southern hospitality as you meet a local farmer at Real Country. Get a feel for life on the farm as you have demonstrations of horse communication and working sheep dog mustering. For every guest, we donate funds to The Fairlight Foundation, Advancing Women in Agriculture, a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience. Visit the historic gold rush village of Arrowtown, where you can wander the movie-set-like streets, lined with trees and character-filled boutiques, then continue to Queenstown for your two-night stay in the adventure capital of New Zealand.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown Lakefront (1 night)
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Day 7



You have time today to appreciate Queenstown and its surrounds. Enjoy a burger at your leisure at cult eatery Fergburger, famous for its mouthwatering gourmet burgers and vibrant atmosphere. You may like to sign up for an optional experience or two. Like adventure? Feel the wind in your hair on the high-octane jet boat ride, perhaps, twisting and revving along Queenstown's Shotover River. Wine aficionado? Sip your way through surrounding vineyards. Tours of the South Island don't get much tastier than this. There's also the choice of an afternoon cruise on Lake Wakatipu aboard the historic TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak High Country Farm for a gourmet barbecue dinner.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown Lakefront (1 night)
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Day 8



Stop at the Jones Family fruit stall for fresh local stone fruit and then travel over the breathtaking alpine crossing of the Lindis Pass between Otago and the Mackenzie Basin offering panoramic views of rugged Mountain peaks, Aoraki/Mount Cook among them. Visit Tekapo, located on the shores of the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo, it's quite the backdrop for the stone-hewn Church of the Good Shepherd. Continue through the aptly named Canterbury Plains to Christchurch.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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Day 9



All aboard the scenic TranzAlpine train bound for Arthur's Pass. Visit Greymouth, known for its rich mining history, and prepare yourself for Punakaiki's Pancake Rocks and blowholes; they owe their existence to the thundering surf that will lull you to sleep at your coastal eco retreat tonight. Please note: The TranzAlpine Train is unavailable for the 18th March 2027 departure due to track maintenance. Travel by road through the Southern Alps, with sweeping tussock plains and rugged mountain scenery unfolding as you climb towards Arthur's Pass.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Punakaiki (1 night)
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Day 10



Sit back and relax – that's all you have to do today as you ease along the Heritage Highway toward Nelson. Press your nose against the glass as your coach weaves through Buller Gorge – a deep canyon home to New Zealand's longest swingbridge – and Kahurangi National Park, a place of wild rivers, high plateaus, alpine herb fields and coastal forests.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)
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Day 11



Sleep in or work up a sweat – today is completely at your leisure. We have a few ideas up our sleeve, of course. Consider an optional experience. Travel to the Abel Tasman National Park for the ultimate cruise and walk combination. This pocket at the top of the island inspires calm, its golden beaches framed by sculpted granite cliffs that all unite to create one of the country's most legendary coastal tracks.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)
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Day 12



All aboard for a cruise through the Cook Strait, from the South Island to the North, navigating a maze of arms and inlets into New Zealand's cool little capital of Wellington.

Staying in:

- James Cook Grand Chancellor (1 night)
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Day 13



Tour Wellington's highlights before travelling to Napier. Beautifully preserved 1930s architecture is Napier's special point of difference. After a massive earthquake in 1931 destroyed the commercial centre of Napier, rebuilding began almost immediately in the architectural styles of the times - Striped Classical, Spanish Mission and Art Deco.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)
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Day 14



This morning meet your informative and entertaining local guide from the Art Deco Trust who will bring Napier's fascinating architectural history to life as you take an easy stroll through the compact Art Deco Quarter in the vibrant city centre. On this MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience, your participation helps preserve Napier's Art Deco heritage. This afternoon relax or perhaps choose an optional experience of either a wine tour of local Hawkes Bay vineyards, or a safari to the famous Gannet nesting colony at cape Kidnappers with Gannet Safaris Overland (both own expense).

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)
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Day 15



The road ahead unfolds in a broad panorama of Lake Taupo, the largest (and perhaps bluest) of its kind in the country – it feeds thundering Huka Falls, which you'll hear well before you see. It's a landscape almost as otherworldly as Rotorua, where mud pops and jettisons from bubbling geysers, and steam rushes skywards from cracks in the Earth. This afternoon, explore Te Puia's geothermal valley, and learn about Maori history and culture. Visit a traditional Pounamu workshop, a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience, for a fascinating insight the art of jade carving, where you will witness skilled artisans at work, and learn about the cultural significance of pounamu (New Zealand greenstone) in Maori tradition. Tonight, delve deep into Māori culture with the Te Pō Indigenous Experience at Te Puia. It begins with an exhilarating cultural performance in a beautifully carved meeting house, Te Aronui a Rua, followed by a view of the Pohutu Geyser, one of New Zealand's geothermal wonderlands, and ends with a delicious buffet dinner of hāngī-inspired cuisine.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)
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Day 16



Today is Rotorua tour day of many decisions, but with plenty of tips available from your Travel Director. Choose from a range of optional experiences. Want a bit of down time? We wouldn't blame you for simply blissing out at in the steamy thermal springs at Wai Ariki Hot Springs & Spa. Hobbit fans will want to take advantage of the opportunity to tour the sights featured in The Lord of the Rings & The Hobbit movies on the Hobbiton Movie Set tour. Or board a scenic flight for a bird's-eye-view.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)
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Day 17

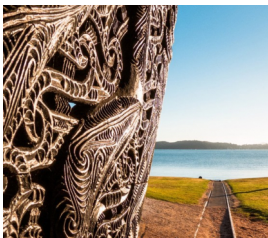


From New Zealand's longest waterway, the Waikato River, to its largest city: welcome to Auckland, the 'City of Sails'. You'll understand how it got its moniker when you glimpse yachts gliding around its two harbours. But today your sights are firmly set on New Zealand's national game: rugby. As part of your Auckland tour you're kicking about at the interactive All Blacks Experience. Journey through the sporting team's remarkable history via various displays and presentations before you're serenaded by a performance of a traditional haka with you front and centre.

Staying in:

- Radisson RED Auckland (1 night)
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Day 18



140 – that's how many droplets of land ringed by turquoise sea comprise the Bay of Islands, your tour destination de jour. It's undeniably beautiful, but it also holds a special historical significance: this is where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840, between Captain William Hobson and Māori chiefs. Your local specialist at your Treaty Grounds tour, perhaps a descendent of one of the original signatories, will explain the significance of the site, while pointing out the world's largest ceremonial war canoe and a carved meeting house.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort (1 night)
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Day 19



If there's a travel destination that inspires wanderlust, the Bay of Islands is it. Today, head off in whatever direction you please. Perhaps book an Optional Experience*. Travel up to Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua, the very top of New Zealand, via idyllic Ninety Mile Beach. Or glide around on an historic tall ship, cruise to the Hole in the Rock or join a tour of Russell and learn more about the settling of the Bay of Islands.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort (1 night)
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Day 20



For a little more northern exposure, head south to Whangarei, the island's most northerly city and a place you can explore the local Whangarei basin, where the riverside attractions include galleries & museums. It's like the country in a tantalising snapshot – a union of nature and forward-thinking culture. Sink back into your seat for the mesmerising commute back to Auckland to end your tour on a high note at dinner and drinks with your Travel Director and travel companions.

Staying in:

- Radisson RED Auckland (1 night)
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Day 21



Over three weeks, we hope you've packed your address book with the names of new friends and your camera with photos of New Zealand's most inspiring attractions. But at the end of the day, it's the memories that will fuel your flight home. Trips to New Zealand don't get any more epic than this.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	Small Group Escorted Tour
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Auckland
Tour length:	21
Accommodation:	Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary