



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

This tour has an essential mix of nature and culture. With a good dose of food and wine on the side, you'll be delivered a well-rounded taste of the North and South. Whether you're into wide, open spaces - Milford Sound, we're looking at you - bubbling geysers, gem-like glaciers or windswept coasts you will find it right here. This New Zealand guided tour is for the history, sport, architecture, geography or culture buff.

Starts in: Christchurch  
Finishes in: Auckland  
Length: 18days / 17nights  
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  
Included: Huka Falls  
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  
Included: Milford Sound Cruise

## Day 1



You'll want to arrive early to see just how Christchurch has transformed itself since the devastating 2010/11 earthquakes. Your Travel Director will welcome you this evening with a tour briefing and drinks.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
- 

## Day 2



Tour the city 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. Begin with a visit to 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 snow-capped 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 with optional experiences. You may choose 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. 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)
- 

## 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)
- 

## 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. Plus, 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)
-

## 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 option 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)
- 

## Day 8



Visit 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, 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 Good Shepherd. Continue through the aptly named Canterbury Plains to Christchurch.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
- 

## Day 9

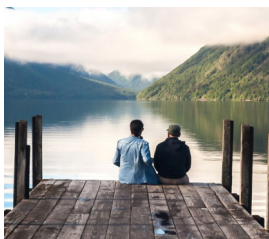


All aboard the TranzAlpine train bound for Arthur's Pass, through tunnels and over viaducts with panoramic views of snow-capped peaks, icy rivers, beech forests, gorges and river valleys. Visit Greymouth, known for its rich mining history, and prepare yourself for Punakaiki's Pancake Rocks and blowholes; 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)
-

## 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 swing bridge – and Kahurangi National Park, a place of wild rivers, high plateaus, alpine herb fields and coastal forests.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)
- 

## 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. Sign up for an optional experience? Travel to the Abel Tasman National Park for the ultimate cruise and walk combination. This pocket in the north 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)
- 

## Day 12



You'll want a window seat for the cruise from the South Island to the North Island aboard the ferry. Breathtaking views unfold as you glide through Queen Charlotte Sound, up the Tory Channel and across the Cook Strait, navigating a maze of arms and inlets into New Zealand's cool little capital of Wellington.

Staying in:

- James Cook Grand Chancellor (1 night)
-

## Day 13



View the sights of Wellington including the Beehive and Parliament grounds this morning before you travel to Napier. Beautifully preserved 1930s architecture is Napier's special point of difference.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)
- 

## 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.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)
- 

## Day 15



Today, view the mighty Huka Falls before continuing to Rotorua, famed for its bubbling mud pools, geysers, and rich Māori culture. Visit a traditional Pounamu workshop for an insight into jade carving and its cultural meaning, a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience. 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)
-

## Day 16



You could spend weeks discovering Rotorua. But you have today, so seize the moment and set out to explore. Book an optional experience? Hobbit fans will want to take advantage of the opportunity to tour the Hobbiton Movie Set featured in The Lord of the Rings & Hobbit movies. Want a bit of down time? Bliss out at Wai Ariki Hotel Springs & Spa. Or arguably the best way to understand just how otherworldly your destination is, from the air. Ask us about a scenic flight.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)

---

## 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 on your city tour. But today's Auckland tour sees your sights set firmly on New Zealand's national game: rugby. The interactive All Blacks Experience explores an introduction to the game as a part of New Zealand culture and ends with a traditional haka with you front and centre. Later, end your tour on a high note with drinks with your Travel Director and travel companions.

Staying in:

- Radisson RED Auckland (1 night)

---

## Day 18



How do you pick a favourite adventure from the last 18 days? You don't have to - let them all shine in equal measure in your memory.

## Tour details

|                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Departures:         | Daily             |
| Tour type:          | Guided Coach Tour |
| Starts:             | Christchurch      |
| Finishes:           | Auckland          |
| Tour length:        | 18                |
| Accommodation:      | Hotel 3 star      |
| Car/transport type: |                   |

---

## Accommodation summary