



Southern Highlights & Milford Track Guided Walk

This unique 14-day tour allows you to explore the very best of New Zealand's South Island at your own pace, complemented by a world-class guided hiking experience. The itinerary is carefully paced, blending scenic self-driving to destinations like Aoraki / Mt Cook National Park and the West Coast with the unparalleled comfort of the four-day, fully supported Milford Track Guided Walk. Everything is arranged, from your rental car to your premium lodge accommodation along the trail, culminating in a relaxing journey aboard the iconic TranzAlpine Scenic Train. Designed for active travellers who seek both independence and the assurance of expert guidance on Aotearoa's most famous trail.

Starts in: Christchurch
Finishes in: Christchurch
Length: 14days / 13nights
Accommodation: Motels
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: Late model rental cars
Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)
Includes: Unlimited kms
Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring
plus much more...

Day 1



Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation

On arrival, you will be met by a private driver and transferred to your Christchurch accommodation.

Welcome to Christchurch City

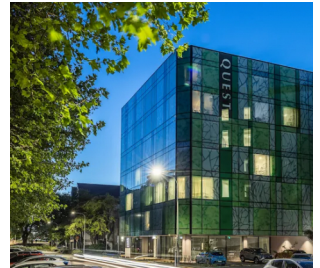
New Zealand's garden city is steadily being transformed into a vibrant urban destination. Encompassing a large green belt, it is known for its wide tree lined avenues and lush gardens. A great way to explore the city or easy way to see the sights or ride the historic trams across town to the renowned botanic gardens and the unique cardboard Transitional Cathedral, that's right it is built of cardboard!

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Discover Christchurch Afternoon Tour with Leisure Tours

A half-day sightseeing tour of Christchurch highlighting both the damage to the city inflicted by several large earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 and the rebuild which is currently in progress, together with the surviving beauty of the city and the historical landmarks. Experience the grand architecture, beautiful gardens, and scenic viewpoints on a half-day city tour of Christchurch.

Your accommodation: Quest on Cambridge

Quest on Cambridge serviced apartment-style hotel rooms offer guests a relaxed and comfortable Christchurch accommodation experience. Each room has an open-plan living area, a fully equipped kitchen, and natural light. Quest on Cambridge is a short walk from the south shopping centre and to the Botanic Gardens.



Day 2



Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

Christchurch to Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

Drive through the heart of the South Island, crossing the vast Canterbury plains. Catch your breath in Geraldine before continuing through Fairlie. Ascending Burkes pass you'll come to the picturesque town of Lake Tekapo. Follow the road and take in the view of Aoraki-Mt Cook (New Zealand's tallest mountain) from the shores of Lake Pukaki, known for its glacier fed turquoise blue colour. Continue along the lake to your final destination Aoraki-Mt Cook Village.

Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

At 3754m Aoraki-Mt Cook is Aotearoa-New Zealand's highest mountain, located deep in the heart of the Southern Alps. As well as its impressive beauty, Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park is also home to a huge range of awe-inspiring sights and activities. Take to the air with Mt Cook Ski Planes for a scenic flight that includes a glacier landing. At around 27 kilometres long the Tasman Glacier is New Zealand's longest and a Glacier Explorers tour allows you to see its unique features up close.

There are many short hikes in and around the park and these are well signposted around the village. Those with an interest in the night sky should take a Big Sky Stargazing tour with the Hermitage Hotel. The region is considered to have one of the clearest night skies in the world and is one of the few gold-rated dark sky reserves worldwide.

Visit the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre for insight into this region's mountain climbing history. You'll also learn of Sir Ed's incredible achievements and his dedication to helping others around the world.

Your accommodation: Mt Cook Motel

Mt Cook Motel, nestled in the heart of Mt. Cook Village, offers spacious self-contained units that provide comfort and convenience. Each unit is surrounded by breathtaking alpine mountain views, making it the perfect retreat for nature lovers and adventurers alike.



Day 3



SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Glacier Explorers

Experience 500-year-old icebergs up close on the Aoraki-Mt Cook terminal lake. The Glacier Explorers tour is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and one of only three in the world! Very few glaciers terminate into lakes and even fewer of them are accessible. See towering ice cliffs and floating icebergs from the safety of a specially designed boat. These boats provide a safe way to view unseen and inaccessible areas of New Zealand's largest glacier The Tasman.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Glacier Highlights - Scenic Flight with Glacier Landing

Take in the spectacular Southern Alps, including New Zealand's highest peak Aoraki Mt Cook and the constantly changing glacial landscape. See the Hochstetter Icefall as you fly beneath the face of Mount Cook then along the length of the Tasman Glacier before landing on the glacier itself. Experience the silence of the mountains, broken only by the rumbling of an avalanche and creaking of the snow and ice beneath your feet. You'll take off again for another incredible flight over peaks, ice falls, alpine lakes and climbing huts. This flight offers fantastic close-up views of Aoraki Mount Cook, Mt Tasman and the Southern Alps from Aoraki Mount Cook National Park. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see [here](#).

Your accommodation: Mt Cook Motel

Mt Cook Motel, nestled in the heart of Mt. Cook Village, offers spacious self-contained units that provide comfort and convenience. Each unit is surrounded by breathtaking alpine mountain views, making it the perfect retreat for nature lovers and adventurers alike.



Day 4



Aoraki Mt Cook National Park to Queenstown

Leaving the alpine region of Aoraki Mt Cook, you'll travel through the lakeside town of Twizel, then a little further to Omarama the gliding capital of New Zealand. Continue on over the Lindis Pass, one of New Zealand's highest roads with a summit of 971 metres. Arrive in the quaint village of Tarras, then continue on a short way to the historic Bendigo Reserve, one of Otago's original gold mining settlements. Follow the road to Cromwell, and keep going through the sheer cliffs of the Kawarau Gorge towards Gibbston, one of New Zealand's premier wine growing regions. See the historic Kawarau Bridge where you can bungee jump or relax and watch others take the plunge. Approaching Queenstown, the Remarkables mountain range comes into view as you arrive into the adventure capital of New Zealand.

Queenstown

Queenstown known in Māori as Tāhuna, is home to many adrenaline-inducing activities. Nestled on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, this alpine town has very distinct seasons, and most adrenaline-filled activities can be accessed year-round. Queenstown is home to jet boating, bungee jumping, rafting, skydiving, paragliding, and even indoor thrills. If you want that rush - head out on the Shotover Jet, dive off the Nevis Bungy, freefall on the Canyon Swing, or Zip line the Gondola. While arguably the brightest gem in New Zealand's crown, Queenstown offers far more than an action-packed getaway. If you're looking for a slightly slower pace, there are plenty of recreational activities, including hiking and biking trails to explore, guided tours, boat cruises, scenic flights, or spa and wellness options to help you get away. Head to the lakefront, eat at one of the al fresco eateries, and soak up the local vibes; catch a ride on the iconic 100-year-old steamship the TSS Earnslaw; or take the Skyline Gondola and enjoy bird's-eye views of the Remarkables mountain ranges and Lake Wakatipu. Pack a picnic and go for a hike, only 20 minutes from Central Queenstown, Coronet Peak opens for summer sightseeing. You can ride the Peak Gondola to the top for panoramic views and hike the trails, or go for a bike ride on many excellent biking trails. In winter, Queenstown becomes a world-class winter resort, with four ski areas and a range of activities, bars, restaurants, and ways to relax and unwind.

Return your vehicle to Queenstown depot

Explore more of Queenstown before dropping your rental car at the depot and attending your track briefing.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - TSS Earnslaw Cruise and Walter Peak Gourmet BBQ Dinner

Enjoy a quintessential Kiwi experience, a delicious gourmet BBQ buffet meal, and a farm demonstration in a stunning lakeside setting. Take in the stunning views of Lake Wakatipu and its surroundings as you cruise across the lake to the historic Walter Peak high country farm aboard the TSS Earnslaw Steamship. Enjoy the ambiance of the heart of the stately homestead while your Colonel's Homestead Restaurant chef prepares a gourmet BBQ dinner. Your seasonal menu includes an extensive selection of local New Zealand produce, including succulent meats and a selection of delicious vegetables and salads. Complete your meal with your choice of delicious desserts, or New Zealand cheeses. After dinner, watch the farm dogs in action with a sheep-herding demonstration and say hello to the other farm animals. Finally, cruise home under the southern stars and enjoy the fresh night air as the lights of Queenstown draw ever closer.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Queenstown

Bella Vista Motel Queenstown is an easy 3-minute walk to Queenstown centre. Offering mountain views and great facilities for visitors to the alpine resort town.



Day 5



Explore Queenstown

Well-known as New Zealand's 'adventure capital', Queenstown is home to a range of adventures, from the world's first and most famous bungy jumps to jet boat thrills, white-water rafting, and skydiving. However, Queenstown offers far more than a fast-paced, action-packed holiday. Settled on the shores of beautiful Lake Wakatipu beneath a soaring panorama of the Remarkables Mountain Range, this alpine town is surrounded by many historic, gastronomic, and scenic wonders. Take a stroll through the beautiful lakefront parks and gardens, browse through market stalls on weekends, dine in wonderful al-fresco restaurants, or ride on the 100-year-old historic Steamship - TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak Station. Take the Queenstown Gondola up to Bob's Peak and soak up the panoramic views of the magnificent lake and mountain ranges. And after all of that, if you do want the adrenaline rush, Queenstown is known for taking your pick from the Shotover Jet, Canyon Swing, Zipline, Luge, or Heli-hike.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Shotover Jet Canyon Jet Boat Ride

Shotover Jet is the only company permitted to operate in the Shotover River Canyons. It's a thrilling ride! Skim past rocky outcrops at close range in your Shotover Jet 'Big Red', as you twist and turn through the narrow canyons at breathtaking speeds. And a major highlight - hold tight for the world-famous Shotover Jet full 360-degree spins! It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see [here](#).

Milford Track Guided Walk Briefing

Please check in at 14:45pm on the day prior to your walk for a group pre-track briefing. The briefing is held at the Ultimate Hikes Centre, Ground Floor, The Station Building, Duke Street Entrance, Queenstown. At the briefing, you will have the opportunity to confirm your dietary, medical information, and emergency contact details. You will be able to pick up any gear you need or purchase any last-minute items. The customer service staff will also give you an overview of what to expect while you are on track. If you cannot make the pre-track briefing, please contact Reservations on +64 3 450 1940 or info@ultimatehikes.co.nz as soon as possible.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Queenstown

Bella Vista Motel Queenstown is an easy 3-minute walk to Queenstown centre. Offering mountain views and great facilities for visitors to the alpine resort town.



Day 6



The Milford Track 5 Day/4 Night Guided Walk with Ultimate Hikes

Traversing the heart of New Zealand's wild fjord country, the Milford Track has long been described as "the finest walk in the world". Since Quintin Mackinnon pioneered the route in 1888, everyone from hardened trekkers to novices sporting their first pair of boots has taken up the challenge of the Milford Track.

The Fiordland National Park is the cornerstone of the Te Wahipounamu Southwest New Zealand World Heritage Area. Enjoy close encounters with the native birdlife: the Robin, Kea, Weka, Fantail, Parakeet, Bellbird, and even Kiwi have been spotted! Walkers on the track to Milford Sound encounter Fiordland at its most spectacular: deep lakes, silent fjords, luxuriant forest, and sheer canyons carved out of imposing granite define this landscape. On a fine day, there is a postcard shot around every corner, but only when it rains and torrents of water cascade down the mountainsides have you truly experienced the magic of the Milford Track.

The Milford Track Guided Walk is a 5-day, 4-night all-inclusive guided walk from Queenstown to Queenstown through the heart of Fiordland National Park to Milford Sound. The package includes all transport, accommodation, meals, snacks, backpacks, and rain jackets. Accommodation is in lodges and you will be led by expert Ultimate Hikes guides. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see [here](#).

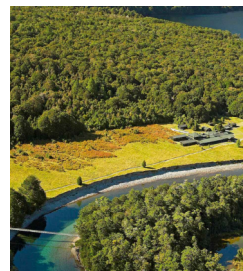
Queenstown to Glade House

The coach departs from the Ultimate Hikes Centre in Queenstown. Please arrive by 9.15am to meet your guides and board the coach for the two hour drive to Te Anau. We will have lunch in Te Anau before travelling on to Te Anau Downs, where a boat will take you up to the start of the track at the northern end of Lake Te Anau. It's a short walk to the historic Glade House, where you will be greeted with afternoon tea and shown to your room. Your guides will take you on a nature walk in the afternoon to give you an idea of the terrain and the environment you will be walking. In the evening, you'll have time to get to know your group over dinner.

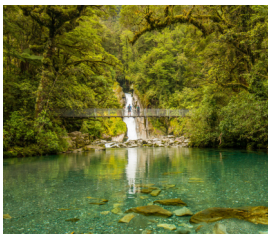
Your accommodation: Glade House

Located at the head of Lake Te Anau and the mouth of the Clinton River, Glade House serves as the historic starting point for the legendary Milford Track. Originally built in 1895 as a holiday house for tourists, the site has been rebuilt several times following fires in 1928 and 1929.

Meals included: Lunch, Dinner



Day 7



Glade House to Pompolona

Your first full day of walking begins by crossing the Clinton River bridge. The smooth track follows the river up the valley to the Hirere Falls lunch shelter. Take a side walk to the wetlands, a complex eco-system unique to this section of track. After lunch look out for your first glimpse of Omanui/McKinnon Pass in the distance. You'll stay in the beech forest, until you come out onto the Prairie – detour down to soak your feet in Prairie Lake. From this meadow you can capture the true nature of the ice-carved Clinton Canyon. From here, it's a short climb to Pompolona Lodge. Today's walk is 16 km (10 miles) and takes 5-7 hours.

Your accommodation: Pompolona Lodge

Nestled in the picturesque Clinton Valley, Pompolona Lodge is a private sanctuary used by guided walkers on the second night of the Milford Track. The lodge is famously named after the traditional "Pompolona" scones once served by explorer Quintin MacKinnon, who reportedly learned the recipe in Pamplona, Spain.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 8



Pompolona Lodge to Quintin Lodge

From Pompolona Lodge the track leads up to Lake Mintaro at the head of the Clinton Valley, before climbing the Omanui/McKinnon Pass in a series of zig-zags. Take your time and enjoy the views. At the top you can rest at McKinnon memorial before passing the highest point and stopping for lunch in Pass Hut overlooking the Clinton Valley. The descent into the Arthur Valley is steep and uneven so take care and use poles. Viewing platforms give you a great view of the Cascades waterfalls. Quintin Lodge is a welcome sight at the bottom of the Pass. Take a short break to revive with a drink and a snack then we highly recommend doing the optional 90-minute round trip to Sutherland Falls, at 580m/1904ft it is one of the highest in the world and well worth seeing. Today's hike is 15 km (9 miles) and takes 6-8 hours.

Your accommodation: Quintin Lodge

The lodge is situated at the foot of the Mackinnon Pass on the Roaring Burn River. It is historically significant, named after Quintin McKinnon, the explorer who discovered the overland route to Milford Sound in 1888.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 9



Quintin to Mitre Peak Lodge via Sandfly Point

Your final day on the track is the longest section at 21km. You'll walk down the Arthur Valley to the historic Boatshed. After a short break and a hot drink, the track continues on past MacKay Falls through lush beech forest to the lunch spot at Giants Gate waterfall. The final stretch of the track follows tranquil Lake Ada to Sandfly Point. From Sandfly Point it is a short boat trip across the renowned Milford Sound; the fjord often referred to as the eighth wonder of the world. Mitre Peak, the famously photographed pinnacle rises almost sheer from the Sound to a height of 1692m (5551ft). At Mitre Peak Lodge, relax in the bar enjoying the view, before sitting down to a celebratory dinner. Today enjoy 21km (13 miles) 6-8 hours of walking.

Your accommodation: Mitre Peak Lodge

Mitre Peak Lodge is a comfortable, motel-style property offering the only overnight accommodation at Milford Sound for guided hikers. It provides a much-needed sanctuary after the final 21km leg of the journey, with captivating views of the iconic Mitre Peak directly from many of its guest rooms.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 10



Mitre Peak Lodge to Te Anau and Queenstown

This morning after breakfast we'll take you on a cruise on Milford Sound. Watch for dolphins and fur seals and, if the waterfalls are in full flow, you'll have seen Fiordland at its very best! Following the cruise it's time to head back to Queenstown. The coach trip follows the scenic Milford Road through Homer Tunnel and on to Te Anau, where there will be a short break before the last leg of the journey to Queenstown. Lunch will be eaten along the way. Pending weather and traffic conditions, the group will return to Queenstown at approximately 16:00.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Queenstown

Bella Vista Motel Queenstown is an easy 3-minute walk to Queenstown centre. Offering mountain views and great facilities for visitors to the alpine resort town.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 11



Private Transfer Queenstown Accommodation to Airport (LSQ)

You will be collected from your hotel and transferred to Queenstown airport.

Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

Queenstown to Franz Josef Glacier via Wānaka

From Queenstown you'll cross the Crown Range, the highest sealed road in New Zealand to arrive in the Alpine town of Wānaka, gateway to Mt Aspiring National Park. Skirting the shores of both Lake Wanaka and Hawea, you will enter the small town of Makarora. Stop at Blue Pools for a 1-hour return walk through the native beech forest to a glacier-fed swimming hole. Continue on through the remote seaside settlement of Haast before heading up the wild West Coast highway you pass through ancient temperate rainforests while getting sneak peeks of the wild coast beaches occasionally. Keep heading North and be sure to enjoy the view of the ever-changing towering snowcapped Southern Alps Mountain Range. Fox Glacier welcomes you first, then comes your destination for the night Franz Josef township.

Franz Josef

Franz Josef, named after both the local village and the nearby glacier, holds special significance in Māori culture as "Ko Roimata o Hine Hukatere" – The Tears of the Ice Maiden. This rare glacier is one of only three in the world that descends from alpine heights into a temperate rainforest, almost reaching sea level. New Zealand is home to two of these unique glaciers, Franz Josef and Fox Glacier, both highly accessible and popular with visitors. The best ways to experience the glacier are through scenic flights or, for the adventurous, a heli-hike. You can also enjoy glacier views with a short drive from the village and walking tracks. Beyond the glacier, Franz Josef offers a wealth of adventure activities and beautiful forest and alpine walks, making it a must-visit destination.

Your accommodation: Punga Grove Motel & Suites

Punga Grove is right in the heart of Franz Josef Glacier village stylish accommodation in a beautiful rainforest setting.



Day 12



Explore Franz Josef

Franz Josef is a small yet lively town in the heart of New Zealand's West Coast, best known for its spectacular 12 km-long glacier. The township is surrounded by lush, rainforest-clad mountains and has a vibrant atmosphere with plenty to explore. A variety of scenic walking trails offer incredible views of the glacier, but for a truly up-close experience, a licensed helicopter tour is the only way to set foot on the ice. Beyond the glacier, unwind in the rejuvenating Hot Pools or visit the West Coast Wildlife Centre to spot rare kiwi birds. If you're in the mood for a more relaxed day, the township is home to charming souvenir and gift shops, as well as great dining spots like SnakeBite Brewery and King Tiger. Whether you're chasing adventure or relaxation, Franz Josef is a stunning blend of wild beauty and welcoming hospitality.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Franz Josef Glacier Helihike with Franz Josef Glacier Guides

After a thrilling scenic flight, high above the rugged terrain, you will land on the glacier, ready to undertake a guided glacier hike. Your friendly guide will lead you through some of the most pristine and awe-inspiring glacial scenery in the world. Your guide will choose your route carefully as you go and, with an eye for the most spectacular ice formations, you'll soon be making your way through an extraordinary landscape of towering peaks and glistening blue ice. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity prior to travel. For more information please see [here](#).

Your accommodation: Punga Grove Motel & Suites

Punga Grove is right in the heart of Franz Josef Glacier village stylish accommodation in a beautiful rainforest setting.



Day 13



Franz Josef to Greymouth Train Station (Return Rental Car)

Head north along the mighty West Coast highway you pass through ancient temperate rainforests while getting sneak peeks of the wild coast beach occasionally. Whataroa is the next town where you can see one of the world's rarest birds, the Kōtuku - White Heron. The Kōtuku nest at the Waitangi Roto Nature Reserve, only accessible with a guided tour from October to March. The next town is Ross which is the site of an old gold mining settlement where the local information centre offers you the chance to pan for gold. Hokitika is a great place to explore craft and gift stores and head to the coast and take in the endless sea views. The Pounamu-Greenstone on offer in Hokitika is probably some of the best you will see in the country. Continue on to Greymouth, the largest town on the West Coast and the starting point for the next leg of your journey the TranzAlpine Scenic Train. Drop your rental car at the Greymouth Train Station depot located at the train station building before boarding your train to Christchurch.

TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Greymouth to Christchurch

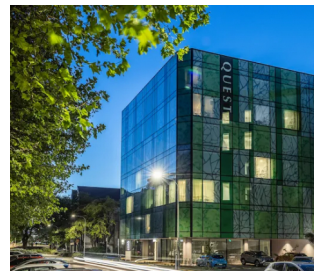
Considered one of the world's great train journeys, the TranzAlpine Scenic Train takes you from Greymouth to Christchurch. Travel across the South Island from the west to the east coast through Arthur's Pass National Park. From the comfort of your carriage see lush beech forest, deep river valleys and the spectacular peaks of the Southern Alps. Descend to the windswept Canterbury Plains before arriving in the city of Christchurch.

Shared Transfer from Christchurch Train Station to Christchurch CBD Accommodation with Christchurch Touring Company

On arrival at the Christchurch railway station, you will be met by a driver and transferred to your Christchurch accommodation.

Your accommodation: Quest on Cambridge

Quest on Cambridge serviced apartment-style hotel rooms offer guests a relaxed and comfortable Christchurch accommodation experience. Each room has an open-plan living area, a fully equipped kitchen, and natural light. Quest on Cambridge is a short walk from the south shopping centre and to the Botanic Gardens.



Day 14



Private Transfer from Accommodation to Airport with Christchurch Touring Company

Enjoy a seamless, private transfer from your Christchurch city accommodation directly to the Christchurch Airport in time for your departing flight.

Farewell from Aotearoa / New Zealand

Bid farewell to Aotearoa / New Zealand, taking with you unforgettable memories of its breathtaking landscapes and incredible adventures. In Māori, it is said mā te wā, which is not goodbye, it is see you soon!

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	14
Accommodation:	Motels
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Quest on Cambridge
Day 2	Mt Cook Motel
Day 3	Mt Cook Motel
Day 4	Bella Vista Queenstown
Day 5	Bella Vista Queenstown
Day 6	Glade House
Day 7	Pompolona Lodge
Day 8	Quintin Lodge
Day 9	Mitre Peak Lodge
Day 10	Bella Vista Queenstown
Day 11	Punga Grove Motel & Suites
Day 12	Punga Grove Motel & Suites
Day 13	Quest on Cambridge