

Birds of the South Island Tour

Starting in Christchurch, travel to Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, where alpine parrots, the playful kea, reign supreme. Continue to Dunedin and the Otago Peninsula, home to royal albatross, yellow-eyed penguins, and abundant seabird colonies. Fly to Stewart Island for three nights immersed in untouched wilderness. Enjoy guided tours spotting rare kiwi in their natural habitat and exploring Ulva Island, a predator-free sanctuary teeming with native birds like tūī, saddlebacks, and robins. Travel to Te Anau and the spectacular Milford Sound, staying overnight in the fjord for a serene evening of birdwatching and wildlife encounters. Journey to Queenstown, then venture north to Franz Josef, where lush rainforest is alive with native birdsong. In Hokitika, discover the region's natural beauty before retreating for two magical nights in a Te Aka Treehouse, surrounded by native forest and a symphony of birds. Conclude your adventure with the iconic TranzAlpine train, a scenic ride back to Christchurch.

Starts in: Christchurch
Finishes in: Christchurch
Length: 17days / 16nights
Accommodation: Boutique Lodges & Hotels
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: Unlimited kms

Included activity: Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation

Included activity: Bob's Cove Flora and Fauna Hike with Alpine Luxury Tours

Included activity: White Heron Sanctuary Tour

Included activity: Māwhera Pounamu Pathway Immersive Experience

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

Included activity: The Panorama Room 3-course Dinner with The Hermitage Hotel

Included activity: Dinner at Camp Estate, Larnach Castle

Included activity: Royal Albatross Centre - Unique Albatross and Fort Taiaroa Tour

plus much more...

Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)

Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring

Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course

Included activity: Lake Cruise and Island Nature Walk with Eco Wanaka

Included activity: Okarito Lagoon Guided Kayak Trip with Okarito Kayaks

Included activity: TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Greymouth to Christchurch Scenic Plus with Great Journeys NZ

Included activity: Private Transfer from Accommodation to Airport with Christchurch Touring Company

Included activity: Dinner at Camp Estate, Larnach Castle

Included activity: Penguin Tour with The Opera

Included activity: Invercargill to Stewart Island with Stewart Island flights

Day 1



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!

Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation

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

Christchurch

Christchurch known in Māori as Ōtautahi, is the largest metro area in the South Island. Commonly referred to as New Zealand's "Garden City", Christchurch is home to one of the biggest public parks in the country, and beautiful botanic gardens. The city was hit with devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011, now the city crosses the line between its English heritage and a new modern architecture. To take in some arts and culture, pay a visit to the Canterbury Museum or the Christchurch Art Gallery. Take a step back in time with a tram around the city or punt along the Avon River. If tasting your way around the city is your means of travel, try out a cultural eating tour. A short drive from the CBD will lead you to the outskirts of the Banks Peninsula beachside suburb of Sumner or through the tunnel to Lyttleton Harbour which hosts fantastic markets on Saturday mornings.

Your accommodation: Merivale Manor House

Originally built in the 1880's, Merivale Manor has been transformed into elegant motel and apartment accommodation. Less than 200 metres to central Merivale with its premier shopping, restaurants, cafes and bars.



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.

Walking Tracks in Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

Aoraki-Mt Cook Village offers a variety of short scenic walks suitable for all ages and fitness levels. Start your adventure at the Department of Conservation Information Centre, where you can learn about track conditions, local history, and the area's wildlife. Here are a few popular walks to explore: Hooker Valley Walk: 3-4 hours return Bowen Bush Walk: 10-minute return Glencoe Walk: 10-minute return Red Tarns Track: 2-hour return Kea Point Walk: 2-hour return Sealy Tarns Track: 3 - 4 hours return Please be aware that at Aoraki/Mount Cook, you will need to pay for parking at the White Horse Hill car park. The cost is \$5 per hour or \$25 for the full day. A 20-minute free period is available for quick drop-offs.

The Panorama Room 3-course Dinner with The Hermitage Hotel

Since first opening its doors in 1969, The Panorama Room has gained a reputation as being one of the best restaurants in New Zealand. This reputation is reflected in the numerous awards the restaurant has received over the years. A simple philosophy of using just the freshest, local ingredients, in particular from New Zealand's South Island, is still the secret to its success today. The menu has a strong international influence and reflects both the establishment's taste and the fact that most of the chefs have travelled and worked widely throughout the world.

Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium

The Hermitage Hotel ringed by magnificent snow-capped peaks of the Southern Alps, is a world-renowned tourist destination and has been an icon of superior accommodation and dining since 1884.

Meals included: Breakfast, Speciality Dinner



Day 3



Aoraki Mt Cook National Park to Dunedin

Leave Aoraki Mt Cook National Park and travel past Twizel, one of the locations for the Lord of the Rings films. Go through Omarama, the gliding capital of New Zealand. Continue down the Waitaki Valley follow the hydro power generating system to the rural town of Kurow, home to the divine Valli Wines. Stop for a sip or continue on to the east coast. Stretch your legs in Oamaru, known for its white stone buildings constructed with the local Oamaru Stone and Steampunk influence. If you were a little late off the mark this morning you may get the chance to see the blue penguins come ashore at dusk. Continue south down the coast to Moeraki, and take a detour towards the beach to see the Moeraki Boulders, a unique geological feature well worth a look. As you arrive in Dunedin, take in the city's Edwardian and Scottish heritage reflected in the buildings around the city centre The Octagon.

Dunedin

Dunedin, known in Māori as Ōtepoti, is referred to as the "Edinburgh of the Southern Hemisphere". The city has a rightly deserved reputation as one of the best-preserved Victorian and Edwardian cities in the Southern Hemisphere. Of particular note is Dunedin Railway Station, built 1904 - 1906, and St Paul's Cathedral in the Octagon. The Otago Museum is renowned for its Māori and Pacific Island collections and natural history displays. A visit to the Speights, New Zealand's oldest brewery, is also considered a must while in Dunedin. The Botanic Gardens is a great spot and at the right time of year, you can witness the Rhododendron Dell in bloom. The Otago Peninsula is the only home in the world to the Northern Royal Albatross. The Peninsula can be visited for the day from Dunedin and the stunning harbor landscape and wildlife are worth exploring. High among the rolling hills of the Peninsula is Larnach Castle, the grand home of an early politician. Construction of the castle began in 1871 and was completed 12 years later. From here, views out to sea and back towards the city emphasize the singular beauty of Dunedin and its jewel-like harbor.

Dinner at Camp Estate, Larnach Castle

Keeping with the historical setting of Larnach Castle, a four-course dinner is offered in a grand Castle Dining Room. This is a trust-the-chef experience where you may indulge in incredible meals and meet other guests. The menu reflects local meats and vegetables, served in a traditional New Zealand-style cuisine with the opportunity to pair with regional wines.

Your accommodation: Larnach Lodge at Larnach Castle

Larnach is New Zealand's only Castle, built in 1871 and immaculately restored and maintained. Accommodation is offered in individually themed lodges set in glorious gardens.

Meals included: Breakfast, Speciality Dinner



Day 4



Walking tracks on the Otago Peninsula

There are a number of short walks to enjoy on the Peninsula. The information below is provided by the Department of Conservation. Sandfly Bay

Walking Time: 1 hr return walk from carpark

Getting there - drive is approximately 25 minutes from the centre of Dunedin. Tunnel Beach

Walking Time: 1 hour / 2km return walk from carpark

Getting there - drive is approximately 15 minutes south from the centre of Dunedin. Sandymount

Walking Time: Lovers Leap 50 min return walk from carpark or Sandymount Circuit 1 hr return walk from carpark

Getting there - drive is approximately 30 minutes from the centre of Dunedin. Allans Beach

Walking Time: 5 min walk to the beach from carpark

Getting there - drive is approximately 40 minutes from the centre of Dunedin.

Royal Albatross Centre - Unique Albatross and Fort Taiaroa Tour

The Royal Albatross colony at Taiaroa Head on the Otago Peninsula is the only mainland breeding colony of Royal Albatross in the world. From the centre, it's a short walk to the observatory for the privilege of seeing the greatest of all seabirds. Wander through the McMillan Gallery and learn more of the history and wildlife of the area. The Unique Taiaroa experience offers a comprehensive 90 minutes guided tour of both the Albatross colony and Fort Taiaroa. Enjoy spectacular Albatross viewing from the Richdale Observatory including the introductory "Attenborough" video and albatross breeding cycle information. The Fort Taiaroa guided tour takes you back into New Zealand's colonial past. It covers the Maori and European occupation of the headland with a visit to 'Fort Taiaroa,' underground fortifications beneath the Albatross Colony. Walk through the underground tunnels to the 1886 Armstrong Disappearing Gun that is still in working order. This was established to counter the anticipated threat of invasion from Tsarist Russia.

Penguin Tour with The Opera

Learn about the endangered Yellow Eyed Penguin when you visit The Opera - Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance, a private conservation reserve dedicated to ensuring the survival of this unique species. The project is entirely funded by guided tours which allow the conservation team to engage in habitat restoration, predator control, a research program, and an on-site rehabilitation facility.

On your tour, you will learn about the issues the Yellow Eyed Penguin faces, their life cycle, and how the project is carried out. Your experience will begin in a theatre before moving to the rehabilitation center where penguins may be seen up close. You'll take a short bus trip over to the reserve and be led on foot approx 2km by your guide through a system of covered trenches to view hides that allow access to the living and breeding habitat of this very shy bird without disturbing them. There is also an opportunity to meet other animals that reside in the reserve including fur seals, sea lions, and several species of shore and land birds.

Dinner at Camp Estate, Larnach Castle

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Meals included: Breakfast, Speciality Dinner



Day 5



Dunedin to Invercargill

From Dunedin you'll travel south into the fertile countryside of South Otago. Passing the small town of Milton, you will continue south west to the town of Balclutha. This tranquil river town is the largest in the South Otago region and is memorable for its arched concrete bridge, crossing over the mighty Clutha River - the largest waterway in New Zealand by volume.

From Balclutha you continue west, crossing the Mataura River before turning off to Edendale, a town famous for cheese production since the 1800's. From here it is just 37km to your destination of Invercargill, New Zealand's southern-most city and the gateway to Stewart Island.

Invercargill to Stewart Island with Stewart Island flights

The first air transport to connect Stewart Island and the mainland was Stewart Island Air Service, operating an amphibian aircraft. The plane landed in the harbour and taxied up the beach to the local hotel. Twenty years ago this was succeeded by Southern Air Ltd with the establishment of an airstrip at Ryan's Creek. Today, Stewart Island Flights is a locally owned and operated business who maintain scheduled flights linking Stewart Island and Invercargill as well as a number of exciting alternatives providing access to the more remote reaches of the island. They operate two Britten Norman Islanders, two Piper Cherokee Six and one Cessna 185.

As well as offering scheduled flights between Invercargill and Stewart Island scenic flights can also be arranged on demand to suit your schedule.

Stewart Island - Rakiura National Park

Stewart Island, or Rakiura (meaning "Glowing Sky" in Māori), is New Zealand's third-largest island, located just 30 km south of the South Island across the Foveaux Strait. Despite its size, the island is largely uninhabited, with fewer than 400 residents living primarily around Halfmoon Bay. The island's untouched nature is its defining feature. Approximately 85% of its 1,746 km² area is Rakiura National Park, established in 2002. This protected wilderness is a paradise for those seeking a genuine escape. The island's landscape is diverse, ranging from undulating, forested hills to a coastline featuring sandy beaches, sheer cliffs, and extensive wetlands. The highest point is Mount Anglem/Hananui, at 981 meters. The native bush is home to a rich variety of birdlife, and the surrounding crystal-clear waters teem with marine life, making the island a prime spot for fishing and wildlife watching.

A major attraction is Ulva Island, a nearby predator-free sanctuary for rare and endangered bird species and native plants. With only 28 km of roads and 280 km of walking tracks, Stewart Island is all about immersing yourself in its natural, unspoiled wilderness, stunning sunsets, and aurora displays, which inspired the island's Māori name.

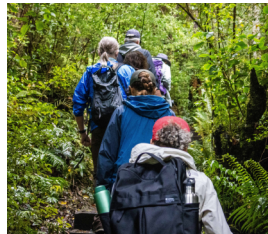
Your accommodation: Church Hill Boutique Lodge & Restaurant

Fully hosted boutique lodge has three spacious, stand alone suites with full glass frontages and private decks maximising views of spectacular Halfmoon Bay where you can relax, unwind and soak up the panoramic views. Ideally located within easy walking distance of all amenities or if a retreat is what you are after all your needs can be met without leaving the lodge.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6



Ulva Island Half Day Guided Walk with Ulva's Guided Walks

Discover the unique, rare, and endangered birds and plants at predator-free Ulva Island with an exceptional local guide. Well-maintained gravel walking tracks weave around fallen trees, through lush native podocarp forest alive with birdsong. See exquisite seasonal orchids and be amazed by the very friendly birdlife that will come too close for your camera lens.

Ulva Island Half Day guided Walk with Ulva's Guided Walks

Spend a memorable evening searching for the largest of New Zealand's iconic kiwi species, the Stewart Island Brown Kiwi (Tokoeke) in its natural habitat. With a local guide, you will explore the forest and favoured hang-outs of these rare iconic birds. Listen for Morepork and Blue Penguin and marvel at the stars above - Stewart Island's spectacular night sky is accredited Dark Sky Sanctuary status by the International Dark Sky Association.

Your accommodation: Church Hill Boutique Lodge & Restaurant

Fully hosted boutique lodge has three spacious, stand alone suites with full glass frontages and private decks maximising views of spectacular Halfmoon Bay where you can relax, unwind and soak up the panoramic views. Ideally located within easy walking distance of all amenities or if a retreat is what you are after all your needs can be met without leaving the lodge.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7



Stewart Island Walking Tracks - suggested activity

Stewart Island (Rakiura) offers a variety of walks suitable to any person ranging from 30 minutes to 7 hours. For those wanting something short but sweet, Observation Rock is a 30 minute return walk that rewards you with panoramic views over Paterson Inlet. Ackers Point track is a three hour coastal walk boasting one of the oldest stone buildings in New Zealand and for those wanting to venture further afield Maori Beach is an excellent choice. Around 6-7 hours long this walk passes through what used to be a bustling settlement prior to the mill closing in 1931, with regenerating forest quickly hiding the evidence the boiler and steam engine can still be found. The weather on this small island can be unpredictable, ensure you check in at the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre to get further information on weather, trail conditions and other walking options.

Your accommodation: Church Hill Boutique Lodge & Restaurant

Fully hosted boutique lodge has three spacious, stand alone suites with full glass frontages and private decks maximising views of spectacular Halfmoon Bay where you can relax, unwind and soak up the panoramic views. Ideally located within easy walking distance of all amenities or if a retreat is what you are after all your needs can be met without leaving the lodge.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 8



Stewart Island to Invercargill with Stewart Island flights

The first air transport to connect Stewart Island and the mainland was Stewart Island Air Service, operating an amphibian aircraft. The plane landed in the harbour and taxied up the beach to the local hotel. Twenty years ago this was succeeded by Southern Air Ltd with the establishment of an airstrip at Ryan's Creek. Today, Stewart Island Flights is a locally owned and operated business who maintain scheduled flights linking Stewart Island and Invercargill as well as a number of exciting alternatives providing access to the more remote reaches of the island. They operate two Britten Norman Islanders, two Piper Cherokee Six and one Cessna 185.

As well as offering scheduled flights between Invercargill and Stewart Island scenic flights can also be arranged on demand to suit your schedule.

Invercargill to Te Anau

Today, you will head north through the Southland towns of Winton, Centre Bush and Dipton. In Lumsden, you will turn west onto State Highway 94, crossing the rolling tussock-lands of Mossburn (the deer capital of New Zealand) and shortly arrive into Te Anau, the gateway to Fiordland National Park.

Te Anau

It is the gateway to Fiordland National Park and a perfect base to visit Piopiotahi-Milford Sound. The Milford Road originates here, and this is arguably one of the most scenic stretches of highway in the country. Te Anau sits on the shores of spectacular Lake Te Anau, which reaches depths of 417 meters. Te Anau Township is the starting point for many walking tracks, including two of New Zealand's Great Walks, the Milford track and the Kepler track. Apart from hiking, you could go kayaking, lake cruising, fishing, or exploring Te Anau Glowworm Caves. You could go for a bike ride alongside the lake towards Lake Manapouri, on a popular Lake to Lake biking route. Along the way, you will pass a bird sanctuary specialising in Takahe, and other native birds.

Ata Whenua - Shadowland Film at Fiordland Cinema

Ata Whenua refers to the southwestern coast of New Zealand and translates to English as "Shadow Land". This breathtaking short film will take you on an unforgettable journey through one of the most awe-inspiring landscapes on earth, Fiordland National Park. Shot by award-winning cinematographers with outstanding musical composition, this is the next best thing to a scenic flight over this spectacular wilderness.

Your accommodation: Te Anau Lodge

Te Anau Lodge began its existence as a Catholic convent in 1936 before being converted into a wonderful lodge. A beautiful Rimu wood interior awaits you and each of the 7 rooms house furniture made from stunning native woods.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 9



Te Anau to Milford Sound

The road to Milford Sound has countless photo opportunities and short walks. The Mirror Lakes create perfectly clear reflections of the surrounding mountains and glacier-formed meadows. Further along, you'll pass through the Homer Tunnel, an incredible feat of engineering at 1219 metres long. Milford Sound is the only sound accessible by road, making it very popular to visit. Coming into the village, you'll be greeted with an amazing view of Mitre Peak, which rises spectacularly from the waters up to the sky. Real Journey cruises can take you out into the sound where you'll receive a wealth of information on how this magnificent area has been formed and experience first-hand the multitude of waterfalls that line the fjord.

Note: Please make sure to allow 2.5hrs to Milford Sound, this takes into account the current road works on the Milford Road."

Milford Sound Overnight Cruise on the Fiordland Jewel with Fiordland Discovery

Indulge in an exclusive overnight cruise aboard the Fiordland Jewel, a luxury boutique catamaran. This intimate experience fully immerses you in the dramatic beauty of Milford Sound's towering peaks and cascading waterfalls. The journey navigates past iconic landmarks like Mitre Peak and Stirling Falls. Wildlife sightings are exceptional, including seals, dolphins, and penguins, with an underwater remote operated vehicle offering views of rare black coral. Anchor in a secluded cove for the evening, where you can explore by kayak before enjoying gourmet dining. The morning begins with a breathtaking sunrise over the majestic fiord, ensuring you experience this natural wonder in unparalleled luxury.

Your accommodation: Fiordland Jewel

Custom-built for small groups, The Fiordland Jewel pairs nine private cabins with unhurried access to Milford Sound. Anchoring overnight in sheltered coves, the catamaran captures the fjord at its most tranquil, when granite walls return to dark stillness. The vessel offers an intimate base for coastal viewing, water excursions, and deep regional immersion.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 10



Milford Sound to Queenstown

Enjoy the wonderful drive along the Milford Road as you head back towards Te Anau. Crossing the rolling tussock lands you pass through Mossburn, the deer capital of New Zealand. Following the lake north the Remarkable mountain range towers over you as you approach the adventure capital of Queenstown.

Note: Please make sure to allow 5.5hrs to Queenstown, this takes into account the current road works on the Milford Road.

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.

Your accommodation: Queenstown Park Boutique Hotel

Queenstown Park Hotel is a boutique hotel with a modern romantic style in the heart of New Zealand's adventure capital. Set in peaceful parkland, savour views of Queenstown's majestic mountains. Enjoy easy access to the vibrant town centre where shopping, cafes and nightlife nestled on the shores of spectacular Lake Wakatipu.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 11



Bob's Cove Flora and Fauna Hike with Alpine Luxury Tours

Today's adventure begins with a luxury transfer from your accommodation, where you'll meet your private guide. Travelling out of Queenstown to the Bob's Cove area, your private guide will introduce you to the region and take you alongside Lake Wakatipu to start the hike. Following the track, hear the local birdsong of the Piwakawaka (Fantail), Tui and Bellbird through the forest and surrounding native bush. Along the way, your guide will provide local knowledge and history of the area, while you walk at your own pace. You will also have the option to head up to Picnic Point. This steep track is well worth it, providing views of the spectacular Lake Wakatipu. On your return stroll back to the car park, wander through the stunning Beech and Manuka trees, before your guide transfers you back to your accommodation.

Your accommodation: Queenstown Park Boutique Hotel

Queenstown Park Hotel is a boutique hotel with a modern romantic style in the heart of New Zealand's adventure capital. Set in peaceful parkland, savour views of Queenstown's majestic mountains. Enjoy easy access to the vibrant town centre where shopping, cafes and nightlife nestled on the shores of spectacular Lake Wakatipu.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 12



Queenstown to Wanaka

Leaving Queenstown you'll drive over New Zealand's highest sealed road, the Crown Range before arriving into the resort town of Wanaka.

Lake Cruise and Island Nature Walk with Eco Wanaka

Lying close to the centre of Lake Wanaka is Mou Waho Island Nature Reserve. A unique glacial remnant of the last ice age, the island is also the historic site of early shipbuilding and used to be a stopping place for the steamers and log rafts that once plied the lake. Accessible from Wanaka by a 35-minute boat cruise, the landing is on the eastern side of the island where the remnants of the early settlement remain; a stone wharf and a hut. A well-formed track leads from the landing and climbs steadily through native bush to near the top of Tyrwhitt Peak. Just before the top, we see Arethusa Pool, a small lake on the island with small islands in it - very intriguing! From the top, we have a sweeping 360-degree view of Lake Wanaka, its surrounding mountains and valleys, and below Arethusa Pool. The perfect spot to stop for tea or coffee. Going back down the track gives us more time to take in our surroundings, listening to and watching the lively bird-life, and just enjoying this unique wildlife reserve. You will feel well rewarded as you re-join the boat for the cruise back to Wanaka. Total cruise time is 1.5 hours. The trip runs subject to weather and lake conditions. Depending on the planting season, you can help The Reforestation of Mou Waho by planting a tree.

Wanaka to Franz Josef

The route follows the shores of Lakes Wanaka and Hawea before you enter the village of Makarora, the gateway to Mt. Aspiring National Park. The Blue Pools, just outside Makarora, are a wonderful 30-minute walk through pristine native beech forest. Descending into Mt. Aspiring National Park and towards the Haast Pass, crashing rivers and waterfalls are around every corner. Crossing the Haast River you are now truly on the wild West Coast, a 600-kilometre stretch of bush, rainforest, and podocarp forest. First Fox Glacier welcomes you to the glacier region and Franz Josef township is just a further 45 minutes' drive over the impressive Fox Hills.

Your accommodation: Rainforest Retreat

Rainforest Retreat is centrally located in the heart of Franz Josef Glacier Village. Nestled in six acres of idyllic native bush each unit was built exclusively to the beautiful, natural environment of Westland National Park.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 13



Franz Josef to Hokitika

The drive north from Franz Josef takes you through the historic gold mining region of Ross and the town of Hokitika, a great place to explore the craft stores, in particular the jade or greenstone.

The township of Hokitika was built on the pioneering spirit of the West Coast settlers. A busy port in its heyday it then became a center for the West Coast gold rush and more recently has become known for its Jade or Greenstone crafts. Here you will find many shops selling intricately carved pieces as well as other fine arts and souvenirs. The town itself has some great old buildings and you will also find some fine restaurants and cafes.

The windswept beach is often covered with driftwood making for an interesting stroll and the scenery of the mountains is quite spectacular with Mt. Cook very often in view. Around 15 kilometers inland you will find Lake Kaniere, an idyllic spot to take bush walks or simply relax and enjoy the bush-clad hill views, and just south of the town on State Highway 6 is Lake Mahinapua Scenic Reserve. The Hokitika Gorge, around 50 minutes detour from the center is a magnificent granite gorge lined with beautiful native bush. A swing bridge just 2 minutes from the car park takes you over milky blue-green pools and a short walk delivers you to large moss-covered boulders to explore.

Okarito Lagoon Guided Kayak Trip (2 hours) with Okarito Kayaks

Kayaking is by far the best way to enjoy the flora, fauna, and scenic grandeur of New Zealand's largest unmodified coastal wetland. Previous experience is not necessary. Okarito Lagoon covers more than 3240 hectares of shallow open water and is well known for its outstanding bird life, including white heron and royal spoonbill. Exploring the open water and river channels that lead you deep into the heart of the rainforest is like stepping back in time to pre-European conditions and on a clear day, you enjoy fantastic views of Mt. Cook and the Southern Alps. Your guide will take you to their favourite spots where you'll discover the flora, fauna, and history of the lagoon.

White Heron Sanctuary Tour

View the magnificent Kotuku (White Heron), the Kotuku Ngutu Papa (Royal Spoonbill), the Kawapaka (Little Black Shag) and other Bird life - all in their natural environment.

Tours to the White Heron Colony open late October and the Kotuku disperse from the colony about the end of February/Early March each year. A unique experience to New Zealand's only Kotuku (White Heron) nesting site, in the Waitangi Roto Nature reserve, the Kotuku Ngutu Papa (Royal Spoonbill) also nests here.

The tour consists of a short minibus ride to the river to connect with the jet boat. The jet boat ride is a gentle 20 minutes each way. From the jetty it is just a short boardwalk (500mtrs) through native bush to where you can stay for 30-40 minutes to view the birds.

Your accommodation: Rimu Lodge

Rimu Lodge is just a short drive from Hokitika, but once you arrive it feels like a world away. Set amidst New Zealand native bush each room takes advantage of the amazing West Coast views making for a relaxing retreat.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 14



Hokitika to Te Aka Treehouse

Continue north to the largest town on the West Coast, Greymouth. Greymouth, the largest town on New Zealand's wild West Coast, is a hub of history, adventure, and local culture. Situated at the mouth of the Grey River, the town is surrounded by rugged landscapes. From Greymouth, head to Nelson Creek settlement, on the West Coast of New Zealand. From Nelson Creek Road turn onto Gows Creek Road. Follow the gravel road for 1.89 km, you will see a sign for Te Aka Treehouse, drive up gravel road through native forest for 300 metres. Look for a sign, your destination is on the left at the carpark.

Māwhera Pounamu Pathway Immersive Experience

Māwhera Pā in Greymouth is the first location along the Pounamu Pathway touring route to open. This self-guided experience is a historical and creative exploration of the Poutini Ngāi Tahu and the Māwhera Pā settlement people, retold by their ancestors. The exhibition will lead you through six different narratives, each tale including a large-scale masterpiece, artistically crafted by Weta Workshop to cultivate an immersive journey of visuals and sound.

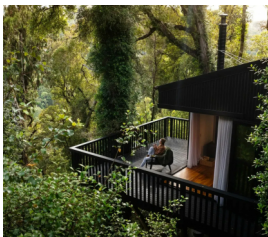
Your accommodation: Te Aka Treehouse Native Forest Retreat

Moving through a temperate West Coast rainforest, this quiet walk enters a dense canopy of ancient podocarps, tree ferns, and mossy ground. Shifting light filters through the understory as native birdlife moves overhead. Taken at a slow pace, the experience offers a grounded, sensory encounter with primeval flora, providing a restorative pause along the Tasman coast.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 15



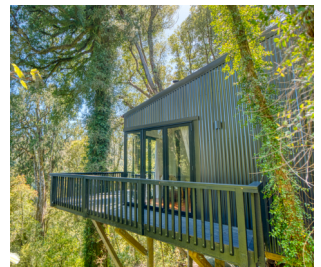
Spend the day at Te Aka Treehouse

Nestled deep within New Zealand's native forest, Te Aka offers an unparalleled escape into the heart of nature and history. Surrounded by lush greenery and alive with the melodic calls of native birds, this retreat is more than just a place to stay—it's an invitation to immerse yourself in the soul of Aotearoa. Awaken to the enchanting dawn chorus, where tūī and bellbirds serenade the morning, and fall asleep to the soothing calls of the ruru under a canopy of stars. By day, explore exclusive private walking tracks that traverse conservation land and unveil hidden relics of the region's gold-mining heritage. These pathways, carefully curated for guests, lead to historical remnants of tunnels, equipment, and forgotten engineering marvels, offering a glimpse into New Zealand's industrious past. For bird enthusiasts, Te Aka is a haven. Equipped with binoculars provided in every accommodation, guests can spot an array of native birds, including the vibrant kererū, playful fantails, and the elusive kākā. Seasonal gatherings of kākā bring lively energy to the retreat, while the evenings resonate with the haunting calls of the ruru.

Your accommodation: Te Aka Treehouse Native Forest Retreat

Moving through a temperate West Coast rainforest, this quiet walk enters a dense canopy of ancient podocarps, tree ferns, and mossy ground. Shifting light filters through the understory as native birdlife moves overhead. Taken at a slow pace, the experience offers a grounded, sensory encounter with primeval flora, providing a restorative pause along the Tasman coast.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 16



Te Aka Treehouse to Greymouth

Leaving Te Aka, you'll soon arrive in the charming village of Nelson Creek, known for its historic gold mining roots, you'll then travel south along State Highway 7. The route weaves through dense native bush and rolling hills, with the Grey River often visible alongside the road, adding to the region's wild, untamed charm. Consider stopping at Dunollie, a small settlement north of Greymouth, to explore its mining heritage or simply enjoy the coastal scenery. As you approach Greymouth, the rugged West Coast begins to unfold, with the Tasman Sea providing a dramatic backdrop.

Return your rental car

Return your rental vehicle to your designated depot before your next adventure.

TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Greymouth to Christchurch Scenic Plus with Great Journeys NZ

Great Journeys New Zealand's Scenic Plus carriage provides comfort and vast panoramic views, making our TranzAlpine scenic train journey the perfect way to explore coast-to-coast through the 'Great Divide' and the indomitable spine of mountains that partitions New Zealand's South Island. Scenic Plus offers an all-inclusive experience on the unique TranzAlpine scenic rail journey to invigorate all the senses! Feast your eyes on epic scenery while you savour regionally inspired cuisine paired with sumptuous wine and beer all from the comfort of your luxurious seat – a hosted dining experience like no other. Quite simply, we have done everything we can to ensure you feel at peace as you sink back in your seat and soak up the scenery.

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: Merivale Manor House

Originally built in the 1880's, Merivale Manor has been transformed into elegant motel and apartment accommodation. Less than 200 metres to central Merivale with its premier shopping, restaurants, cafes and bars.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 17



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:	Self Drive Touring
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	17
Accommodation:	Boutique Lodges & Hotels
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Merivale Manor House
Day 2	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium
Day 3	Larnach Lodge at Larnach Castle
Day 4	Larnach Lodge at Larnach Castle
Day 5	Church Hill Boutique Lodge & Restaurant
Day 6	Church Hill Boutique Lodge & Restaurant
Day 7	Church Hill Boutique Lodge & Restaurant
Day 8	Te Anau Lodge
Day 9	Fiordland Jewel
Day 10	Queenstown Park Boutique Hotel
Day 11	Queenstown Park Boutique Hotel
Day 12	Rainforest Retreat
Day 13	Rimu Lodge
Day 14	Te Aka Treehouse Native Forest Retreat
Day 15	Te Aka Treehouse Native Forest Retreat
Day 16	Merivale Manor House