



Iconic South Island Tour

Explore the South Island's heart taking in all the iconic scenery that makes this such a beautiful destination. From Christchurch you cross the Southern Alps on the spectacular TranzAlpine train journey. On the West Coast you'll travel from the rainforests of Punakaiki to the Glaciers of Franz Josef. 3 nights in Queenstown allow time for a fabulous flight over Milford Sound and Dart River Safari, before returning to Christchurch via Mt Cook National Park.

Starts in: Christchurch
Finishes in: Christchurch
Length: 11days / 10nights
Accommodation: Luxury Lodges
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

plus much more...

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

Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring

Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App

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 - Dinner onboard the Christchurch Restaurant Tram

A truly unique dining experience in the heart of Christchurch. You'll board New Zealand's only dining tram for an unforgettable moving four-course restaurant experience. Enjoy a curated fine dining-style menu while taking in the city sights on your journey through the streets of central Christchurch. This experience includes a meal with multiple courses as the tramway route passes New Regent Street, the Avon River, High Street, and Victoria Square.

Your accommodation: The George Hotel

The George is the essence of supreme comfort. The award-winning 5 star hotel is opposite Hagley Park and just a few minutes stroll from the Botanic Gardens. It also has an award-winning restaurant, 50 Bistro onsite.



Day 2



Private Transfer Accommodation to Christchurch Train Station with Christchurch Touring

A private driver will collect you from your accommodation and transfer you to the Christchurch train station in time for your train journey.

TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Christchurch to Greymouth

The early morning departure is rewarded with incredible scenery today onboard the TranzAlpine Scenic Train. Considered one of the world's great train journeys, it travels between the East Coast, Christchurch and the West Coast, Greymouth. From your carriage, you'll see the fields of the Canterbury Plains and farmland, followed by the spectacular gorges and river valleys of the Waimakariri River. The train then climbs into the Southern Alps passing through small settlements and Arthur's Pass National Park before descending through the lush beech rain forest to the West Coast town of Greymouth, a great base for visits to Punakaiki and the West Coast glaciers.

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.

Greymouth to Punakaiki

The short drive north to Punakaiki takes you along the wonderful west coast with ample opportunity to view the surf and the steep bush-clad mountains. Punakaiki is most famous for the Pancake Rocks and Blowholes. Visitors are often less aware of the many other great experiences available. Located in the heart of the Paparoa National Park, the area offers guided beach, forest, and mountain walks, canoeing, wildlife, horse trekking, surfing, gemstone hunting, caving, and climbing, heritage sites. There are taverns, cafes, and restaurants, and a great range of accommodation. The area also boasts a vibrant arts and crafts community and a cooperative gallery.

Your accommodation: Scenic Hotel Punakaiki

Scenic Hotel Punakaiki is a modern, award-winning hotel complex, architecturally designed to harmonious with the local environment. Nestled in the foothills of Paparoa National Park the resort has spectacular views of the Wild West Coast beaches while all rooms have rainforest and/or ocean views.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3



Punakaiki to Franz Josef Glacier

The drive South on State Highway 6 takes you through many West Coast towns. The first is Greymouth, the commercial centre for the West Coast. Just south of the town is Shantytown a replica gold rush town with lots of great displays from yesteryear.

The next town is Hokitika and this is a great place to explore the craft and gift stores. The Jade or Greenstone on offer in Hokitika is probably some of the best you will see in the country. The Hokitika Gorge, off the beaten track and inland a little is a spectacular 50 minute detour.

Turquoise waters flowing through a narrow gorge. A great short walk will deliver you to this piece of paradise.

Ross is the site of an old gold mining town and some of the old buildings and workings remain. In fact Ross is still home to one of the few working gold mines left in New Zealand and the local information centre offers you the chance to pan for gold.

Continuing south Hari Hari is the township that Guy Menzies decided to land in (or rather crash land) as he became the first person to fly solo across the Tasman.

Whataroa, a small township on the main road is where you would head off to see one of the worlds rarest birds. The entire population (somewhere between 150 and 200 birds) of the New Zealand white heron or kotuku nest at the Waitangi Roto Nature Reserve and guided tours from October to March will take you there.

Arriving in to the Glacier region you catch your first glimpse of Franz Josef Glacier from a few kilometres out as it flows from the Southern Alps.

Franz Josef township is a lively place with a great atmosphere, plenty of choice to dine out and some wonderful activities to enjoy.

Your accommodation: Legacy Te Waonui Hotel Franz Josef

Set within dense native podocarp forest at Franz Josef, Te Waonui Forest Retreat pairs low-impact timber architecture with deep wilderness immersion. Broad glass walls and private balconies open into tree-fern canopies, drawing natural light, dense greenery, and shifting West Coast weather into quiet interior spaces. Positioned on the boundary of Westland Tai Poutini National Park, the lodge provides a calm, atmospheric base for exploring glacier valleys, rainforest tracks, and regional dining at an unhurried pace.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 4



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 Nature Tour with Glacier Valley Eco Tours

Unveil the hidden wonders of the Franz Josef Glacier Valley on this immersive, eco-conscious walking journey. Perfect for nature enthusiasts of all ages, this tour leads you through ancient podocarp rainforests and along pristine glacial rivers to witness the raw power of the ice from spectacular viewpoints. With a small group guarantee and expert local guides, you'll discover secret waterfalls, learn the fascinating stories of West Coast glaciology, and enjoy a relaxing break with hot drinks and cookies amidst the Southern Alps.

Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

A spectacular scenic flight soaring over two of New Zealand's most famous glaciers, Fox and Franz Josef. Landing at the head of one and view the incredible sight of this frozen river as it winds its way through ancient carved valleys. It is important to read and understand the risks associated with this activity. A full risk disclosure can be found [here](#).

Your accommodation: Legacy Te Waonui Hotel Franz Josef

Set within dense native podocarp forest at Franz Josef, Te Waonui Forest Retreat pairs low-impact timber architecture with deep wilderness immersion. Broad glass walls and private balconies open into tree-fern canopies, drawing natural light, dense greenery, and shifting West Coast weather into quiet interior spaces. Positioned on the boundary of Westland Tai Poutini National Park, the lodge provides a calm, atmospheric base for exploring glacier valleys, rainforest tracks, and regional dining at an unhurried pace.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 5



Franz Josef to Queenstown (via Wānaka)

Heading south you pass through the second glacier town of Fox Glacier before heading along the coast and into more classic West Coast bush scenery. We can recommend a stop at Knights Point Lookout where elephant seals can often be seen basking on the sandy beaches at the far end of the point. Crossing the massive Haast River you turn inland and head into the valley climbing through mountains littered with waterfalls. The Haast Valley offers a spectacular view of the river and its enormous power. Along the way there is ample opportunity to admire Aspiring National Park and a stop at Roaring Billy Falls will leave you in awe. The Blue Pools near Makarora are a great 30-minute walk. The road from Makarora leads to Lakes Wānaka and Hāwea which will guide you into the stunning lakeside township of Wānaka before heading over New Zealand's highest sealed road, Crown Range Road and dropping into the Wakatipu basin, home to Queenstown. .

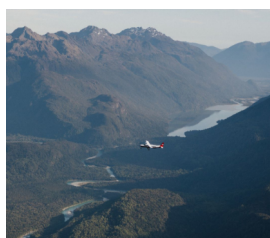
Your accommodation: The Spire Hotel

Be entranced by the superior level of design features and service you'll encounter at the boutique Spire Hotel. Each suite exudes elegance with a contemporary twist.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6



Milford Sound Fly, Cruise, Fly with Milford Sound Scenic Flights

Fly above the rugged backcountry of Central Otago. Witness what the power of nature has created over the years, as you journey over Mt Aspiring National Park and the world heritage listed Fiordland National Park. Then, take to the water on a cruise through the iconic Milford Sound before flying back over even more stunning landscapes.

Your accommodation: The Spire Hotel

Be entranced by the superior level of design features and service you'll encounter at the boutique Spire Hotel. Each suite exudes elegance with a contemporary twist.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7



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 bungee 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](#).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Gondola and 3 Luge Rides with Skyline Queenstown

In the heart of Queenstown, located 450 metres above town in the Ben Lomond Scenic Reserve is the Skyline Complex. A gondola ride to the summit makes for awe-inspiring views of the city surround. Arrive at the complex and wander the outside viewing decks for a picture perfect outlook. Then onto the Luge! The 800 metre luge track offers an exhilarating journey through banked corners, tunnels and dippers.

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: The Spire Hotel

Be entranced by the superior level of design features and service you'll encounter at the boutique Spire Hotel. Each suite exudes elegance with a contemporary twist.

Meals included: Breakfast, Speciality Dinner



Day 8



Queenstown to Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

Depart Queenstown and head through the Kawarau Gorge and over the historic Kawarau Bridge, a popular bungee jumping location. Choose to participate in this daredevil sport or watch others instead. Continue through Gibbston home to some of the best wines in the country. Follow the gorge to arrive in Cromwell, known for its many fruit orchards. Cromwell was completely submerged when the Clyde Dam was built and Lake Dunstan was established in 1992, the remnants of the old Cromwell town provide a unique snapshot into the history of this area. Head over through the Lindis Pass, one of New Zealand's highest roads, with the summit reaching 971 metres. Its tussock-covered hills are a barren but beautiful sight as you descend into the Mackenzie Basin. You'll go through the towns of Omarama and Twizel, the last stops before you arrive at Lake Pukaki and take the Aoraki-Mt Cook Highway to arrive in the small village

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Museum and Theatre Explorer Pass with Hermitage

A tribute to New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary, a humanitarian, ambassador, and one of the world's greatest explorers. The centre showcases the Aoraki Mount Cook region, the history of climbing, and early transport used throughout the region. This comprehensive museum details the life of Sir Edmund Hillary, the Hermitage, and provides access to the 126-seat custom-designed theatre. Check out the daily film schedule which includes 3D Movies, documentaries, and 360-degree digital dome features.

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



Day 9



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.

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.

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



Day 10



Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park to Christchurch

Leaving Aoraki Mt Cook National Park, travel a short distance for a stop at the visitor centre on the southern shores of Lake Pukaki. Learn about the formation of the region and take in the spectacular views of Aoraki-Mount Cook. Along the way, you'll reach Lake Tekapo which also displays the same reflective qualities as Lake Pukaki, making the waters bright turquoise. It's a great place to take a scenic flight, soak in a hot spring or just marvel at the magnificent views. From here you travel through Burkes Pass and into the rich farming valley that surrounds Geraldine. Continue across the vast Canterbury Plains to Christchurch.

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: The George Hotel

The George is the essence of supreme comfort. The award-winning 5 star hotel is opposite Hagley Park and just a few minutes stroll from the Botanic Gardens. It also has an award-winning restaurant, 50 Bistro onsite.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 11



Return Your Vehicle to Christchurch Airport

It's time to return your rental car and let the South Island journey come to an end. If time allows spend the day exploring more of Christchurch, we'd suggest a leisurely drive up the Port Hills for some great sites and then over to the harbour of Lyttleton, before circling through the tunnel and back to the airport to continue your journey home.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	11
Accommodation:	Luxury Lodges
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	The George Hotel
Day 2	Scenic Hotel Punakaiki
Day 3	Legacy Te Waonui Hotel Franz Josef
Day 4	Legacy Te Waonui Hotel Franz Josef
Day 5	The Spire Hotel
Day 6	The Spire Hotel
Day 7	The Spire Hotel
Day 8	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium
Day 9	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium
Day 10	The George Hotel