

experience **new zealand**

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NEW ZEALAND GUIDED TOURS

15 Day Grand Rail Experience



Tour Summary

Tour name: Grand Rail Experience

Days: 15

Tour Inclusions

15 nights Superior Accommodation

7 Spectacular Rail Journeys

Tour Director and Professional Driver

Luxury coaches featuring panoramic windows, reclining seats and restroom

Tour Highlights

Exclusive Experiences in Auckland, Rotorua, Queenstown, Dunedin and Christchurch

Dining Option in Queenstown – choose from 4 restaurants

The Overlander Train

Guided tour of Waitomo Caves

Wairakei Steam Valley

Huka Falls and Lake Taupo

Tongariro National Park

TranzMetro service between Featherston and Wellington

Fell Engine Museum

Te Papa – the Museum of New Zealand

Wellington City Sights Tour

Wellington Cable Car

Cruise Cook Strait between the North and South Island

The TranzCoastal Train journey

TranzAlpine Train journey

See Jade being carved into jewellery in Hokitika

West Coast Glaciers

The Kingston Flyer Vintage Steam Train

Breathtaking Milford Sound Cruise

Unusual Moeraki Beach boulders

Amazing Mt Cook National Park

Lake Tekapo and the Church of the Good Shepherd

Tour Itinerary

Day 1. Arrive Auckland, Exclusive Experiences

On arrival at Auckland Airport, you will be met and transferred to your accommodation. This afternoon choose from a selection of touring options, included at no extra cost! Perhaps take a trip to the top of the Sky Tower, Visit the Auckland museum, Enjoy a half day Auckland City sightseeing tour, Explore Kelly Tarltons Underwater World, Visit Auckland's Maritime Museum, Cruise aboard the 'Pride of Auckland', Relax with a Bliss Reflexology Treatment, or Trek through the Waitakere Rainforest. The choice is yours.

Accommodation: Auckland, Sky City Hotel

Day 2. Auckland, The Overlander, Rotorua (BD)

This morning we board the Overlander Train. Journey alongside the Waikato River and pass by Taupiri Mountain, the sacred burial ground of the Maori. Continue through Ngaruawahia before disembarking at Otorohanga. We then travel south to the world famous Waitomo Caves and discover stunning underground scenery as we are guided into an ancient labyrinth of limestone caverns and grottos. Travelling onto geothermal Rotorua, this evening enjoy the warmth of the Maori people with a New Zealand Hangi (feast) and cultural performance of Maori song and dance.

Accommodation: Rotorua, Heritage Hotel for 2 nights.

Day 3. Rotorua, Exclusive Experiences (BD)

Rotorua is New Zealand's oldest and best known resort, where generations of visitors have enjoyed its waters, marvelled at its fascinating geothermal activity and experienced the regions unique Maori culture. Today we give you the opportunity to choose the activity and we will include it. You may choose to visit the "must see three" Te Puia, the Agrodome sheep show and Rainbow Springs or perhaps visit the Polynesian Spa for a spa treatment and leisurely soak in a natural thermal mineral pool, a half day Eco thermal Tour might appeal or a tour of the Rotorua Museum and cultural experience at the "Realm of Tane.

Country Homestay option available tonight.

Day 4. Rotorua, The Overlander, Tongariro National Park (BD)

Join the Overlander Train and journey through the heart of the North Island. Disembark at the ski village of Tongariro National Park surrounded by three might mountains; Mt Ruapehu, Mt Ngauruhoe and Mt Tongariro. Spend this evening nestled at the base of majestic Mt Ruapehu in the grand old Chateau Hotel.

Accommodation: Tongariro National Park, Chateau Tongariro

Day 5. TranzMetro Train, Wellington (BD)

This morning we head south to Featherston. Travel through Taihape, renowned as the 'Gumboot Capital' of New Zealand. Every year a festival is held here to celebrate this essential item of rural 'kiwi' footwear. Continue through the Manawatu Gorge and the Wairarapa region to Featherston. On arrival into Featherston, we visit the Fell Engine Museum before we board the TranzMetro train for our short journey to Wellington, via the 8.8 kilometre Rimutaka Tunnel.

Accommodation: Wellington, James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor for 2 nights

Day 6. Wellington (B)

Today we take a short stroll to the Wellington Cable Car whose service from Lambton Quay to Kelburn began in 1902. Ascend to the top by cable car perhaps visit the Cable Car Museum or take a tranquil walk around the Botanic Gardens. The gardens contain native bush and other gardens including the Lady Norwood Rose Garden with over 100 rose species. Rejoin your coach and journey to Mount Victoria for the best view of the city, harbour and surrounding regions. View Parliament buildings and opposite the "Beehive the 1876 Government Buildings one of the largest all wooden buildings in the world. Continue onto Te Papa (the Museum of New Zealand) where our morning sightseeing tour concludes. The remainder of today is at leisure in Wellington.

Day 7. The TranzCoastal, Christchurch (BD)

A morning cruise across Cook Strait and through the picturesque Marlborough Sounds to Picton. Join the TranzCoastal train for a scenic trip along the east coast. Journey between mountain and sea as we travel along a thin ledge of land pinned between the Pacific Ocean and the rugged Kaikoura Ranges. Continue to Christchurch.

Accommodation: Christchurch, Hotel Grand Chancellor

Day 8. The TranzAlpine, Franz Josef (BD)

This morning board the award winning TranzAlpine train, voted one of the top rail journeys in the world. Travel through spectacular gorges, river valleys and across the country's greatest mountain range, the mighty Southern Alps. Disembark at Greymouth and continue to Hokitika where you will have the opportunity to see beautiful native Pounamu (Jade). We continue south along the west coast, travelling through dense rain forest. There is an opportunity for a scenic flight over the glaciers this region is renowned for (own expense, weather permitting).

Accommodation: Franz Josef, Franz Josef Glacier Hotel

Day 9. Franz Josef, Queenstown Dine Around Dinner (BD)

Enjoy incredible scenery today as we leave this World Heritage-listed area. See spectacular mountain ranges, untouched native forests, lakes and glaciers. Journey along the shores of beautiful Lakes Wanaka and Hawea.

Continue to the year-round, alpine resort of Queenstown. Tonight enjoy our Dining choice in Queenstown, where you get to choose from one of four restaurants and we will include it! Perhaps enjoy a leisurely cruise to Walter Peak to enjoy a candlelight dinner at the Colonel's homestead or ride the Queenstown gondola to the Skyline Restaurant for dinner and spectacular views over Queenstown. A quiet night may appeal, so perhaps dine at your hotel or a local restaurant.

Accommodation: Queenstown, Novotel Gardens Hotel for 2 nights

Day 10. Queenstown, Exclusive Experiences (B)

Queenstown is an exhilarating, year-round, alpine resort, perfect for adventurers and leisure-seekers alike. Nestled on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, overlooked by the majestic Southern Alps, the town was named because "...it was fit for a Queen". Today we have a selection of activities for you to choose from and we will include it! A Queenstown "Double Decker Explorer" tour, an "Original Wine Tour" of some of the local and award-winning wineries, an exhilarating jetboat ride on the Shotover river or a relaxing garden tour might be for you. Perhaps the "Safari of the Scenes" tour or an adventure into Skippers Canyon by 4WD might appeal or a leisurely walk around Lake Wakatipu on a "Lakeshore Forest and Bird Walk". The choice is yours!

Day 11. Kingston Flyer, Milford Sound Cruise (BD)

Trip back in time today aboard the Kingston Flyer, New Zealand's famous vintage steam train. Travel from Kingston to Fairlight through alpine desert and tussock grasslands. Continue to Milford Sound and on arrival into Milford join a cruise for a journey on this magnificent, glacier-carved fiord (weather permitting). Enjoy views of stunning natural scenery and cascading waterfalls. This afternoon return to the delightful town of Te Anau.

Accommodation: Te Anau, Luxmore Hotel

Day 12. Dunedin, Exclusive Experiences (BD)

Travel across the South Island through small farming communities to Dunedin. The city was settled by the Scottish in 1848 and is now renowned as the 'Edinburgh of the South' - Dunedin is the old Gaelic name for Edinburgh. The Scottish heritage is still apparent today in the architecture of the many fine buildings including the University of Otago, modelled on the University of Glasgow buildings. This afternoon you choose the activity and we will include it. Perhaps a visit to Speights Brewery and Heritage Centre where they brew the popular Speights ale. A visit to the Otago Peninsula to visit the Royal Albatross Colony or combine it with a visit to Penguin Place to visit the rare yellow-eyed penguins the "Hoiho", or maybe a visit to New Zealand's only castle "Larnach Castle" for a tour of the castle and stroll around the beautiful gardens. Or perhaps join the Taieri Gorge Train at Dunedin's stately railway station and journey through the heart of Otago. The choice is yours!

Accommodation: Dunedin, Dunedin City Hotel

Day 13. Dunedin, Mt Cook (BD)

This morning we board "The Seaside" at Dunedin's railway station, journey north along the east coast. View the spectacular eastern coastline before disembarking at Palmerston. At Oamaru view the town's beautiful preserved Victorian stone buildings, which were created with local cream-coloured limestone. We turn inland and travel to Mt Cook National Park, this World Heritage-listed area is home to New Zealand's highest mountain. You may wish to enjoy a scenic flight over this awe-inspiring alpine region (own expense, weather permitting).

Accommodation: Mt Cook, The Hermitage Hotel

Day 14. Mt Cook, Christchurch (BD)

Visit picturesque Lake Tekapo and view the tiny Church of the Good Shepherd built of locally gathered stone and oak in 1935. Leaving the High Country and its sheep stations, we travel through Burkes Pass and descend to the vast Canterbury Plains. Cross the braided Rakaia River, through mixed cropping and sheep grazing holdings to return to the beautiful city of Christchurch.

Accommodation: Christchurch, Hotel Grand Chancellor

Day 15. Depart Christchurch, Exclusive Experiences (B)

This morning choose from a range of exciting activities. Christchurch's "Must see Four" tour including the Antarctic Centre, Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, Christchurch Tram and Christchurch Gondola. Perhaps a leisurely punt on the Avon River may appeal or a bike ride around Christchurch City or maybe wander around some of Christchurch's local gardens. The choice is yours and we will include it. On conclusion you will be transferred to Christchurch Airport for your departing flight.

Key (B: breakfast; L: lunch; D: dinner)