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NEW ZEALAND GUIDED TOURS

## 14 Day Highlighter



## Tour Summary

**Tour name:** Highlighter

**Days:** 14

### Tour Inclusions

13 nights Superior Accommodation  
Arrival and Departure transfers in New Zealand  
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  
Guided tour of Waitomo Caves  
Wairakei Steam Valley  
Huka Falls and Lake Taupo  
Tongariro National Park  
Te Papa – the Museum of New Zealand  
Wellington City Sights Tour  
Cruise Cook Strait between the North and South Island  
Seaside settlement of Kaikoura  
TranzAlpine Train journey  
See Jade being carved into jewellery in Hokitika  
West Coast Glaciers  
Haast River Safari  
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 hotel. This afternoon you choose the activity and we will include it. 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 Tarlton's Underwater World, visit Auckland's Maritime Museum, cruise aboard the 'Pride of Auckland', relax with a Bliss Royal Reflexology treatment, or trek through the Waitakere Rainforest.

*Accommodation: Auckland, Sky City Hotel*

## Day 2. Auckland, Waitomo, Rotorua (BD)

This morning we journey to the crest of Mt Eden, one of Auckland's extinct volcanoes, to enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the city and its beautiful harbours. Leaving the 'City of Sails' we travel south through the rich dairy land of the Waikato Province to Waitomo Caves. Here we experience a guided tour of the underground limestone caverns, including the magnificent 'Cathedral' cave. Join a silent boat ride and glide through a mystical grotto, carved by an underground river over thousands of years and lit by thousands of tiny glow worms. Emerge into daylight and continue to Rotorua, a city built on an area of geothermal activity and an important centre for North Island Maori culture. Tonight immerse yourself in culture as you enjoy a Hangi (feast) and Maori cultural performance of traditional dances accompanied by song.

*Accommodation: Rotorua, Park 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" attractions - Te Puia thermal reserve, the Agrodome sheep show and Rainbow Springs nature park or perhaps visit the Polynesian Spa for a spa treatment and leisurely soak in a natural thermal mineral pool, a half day ecothermal 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, Wellington (BD)

Follow the Thermal Explorer Highway to the heart of the North Island travelling through green countryside, beautiful native bush and some of the largest alpine forests in the Southern Hemisphere. See the spectacular Huka Falls, mouth of the mighty Waikato River, and tranquil Lake Taupo, the water filled crater of an ancient volcano. We travel south and cross the vast volcanic plateau of World Heritage-listed Tongariro National Park. The three mountains at the heart of the park, Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, have cultural and religious significance for the Maori people. Continue to Wellington, New Zealand's capital city and journey to the top of Mt Victoria. Enjoy a stunning panoramic view of this busy cosmopolitan city and its sparkling harbour.

*Accommodation: Wellington, James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor.*

## Day 5. Wellington, Blenheim (BD)

This morning enjoy a brief city sightseeing tour, including Parliament Buildings, before there is an opportunity to visit Te Papa – the National Museum of New Zealand. Displayed here is the past, present and future of New Zealand. Stunning displays, complex technology, interactive exhibitions and activities provide serious fun. This afternoon we join our cruise for the journey across Cook Strait to the South Island, renowned as one of the most beautiful crossings in the world. Sail through the scenic Wellington Harbour, across Cook Strait and through the breath taking natural beauty of Marlborough Sounds to Picton. Rejoin our coach and travel to Blenheim for our overnight stay.

*Accommodation: Blenheim, Blenheim Country Hotel.*

## Day 6. Blenheim, Kaikoura, Christchurch (BD)

Today is a spectacular scenic journey between mountain and sea. Travel through the Marlborough region, an area with a strong international reputation for white wines. Arrive in the thriving seaside settlement of Kaikoura, an area offering unique whale, seal and dolphin watching experiences. Journey between the Pacific Ocean and rugged Kaikoura Ranges, through North Canterbury to Christchurch, the largest city in the South Island and renowned as the 'Garden City'. On arrival we enjoy a city sightseeing tour then the afternoon is at your leisure to explore the English flavour of this pretty city (own expense).

*Accommodation: Christchurch, Copthorne Central Hotel.*

## Day 7. TranzAlpine Train, Franz Josef (BD)

This morning board the award winning TranzAlpine Train. This journey has been voted one of the top train journeys in the world, and is renowned as New Zealand's 'Great Rail Adventure'. Cross the vast patchwork farmlands of the Canterbury Plains before climbing up into the Main Divide. Enjoy stunning scenery as we journey through spectacular gorges, river valleys and across the country's greatest mountain range, the magnificent Southern Alps. Disembark at Arthur's Pass and continue to Hokitika by coach. Here take the opportunity to see Pounamu (Jade) being carved into beautiful jewellery. Continue along the dramatic West Coast and enter the World Heritage-listed area of Te Wahipounamu - South West New Zealand. View the magnificent Franz Josef Glacier (weather permitting). Nowhere in the world's temperate zones are glaciers as accessible as here. There may be the opportunity to enjoy a scenic flight over this incredible region (own expense, weather permitting).

*Accommodation: Franz Josef, Franz Josef Glacier Hotel.*

### Day 8. Franz Josef, Queenstown Dining Options (BD)

Enjoy a day of incredible scenery as we travel along the West Coast, through a world of mountains and glaciers, limestone landscapes, tranquil lakes, raging rivers and rare bird and plant life. At Haast experience a unique river safari, capturing breathtaking views of the massive glacier formed Haast River Valley, flanked by towering peaks, cascading waterfalls and dense temperate rainforest. Follow the shores of lakes Wanaka and Hawea to the action packed alpine resort of Queenstown. Tonight enjoy our Dining Options 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 9. 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, an adventure into Skippers Canyon by 4WD might appeal or a leisurely walk around Lake Wakatipu on a "Lakeshore Forest and Bird Walk".

### Day 10. Queenstown, Milford Sound, Te Anau (BD)

Today we follow the Remarkable's Mountain Range and trace the shore of Lake Wakatipu to Fiordland National Park where lush rainforests meet snow capped mountains. Journey along the Milford Road, renowned as one of the world's finest alpine drives. Wind down the Eglinton and Hollyford valleys, then through the Homer Tunnel to be met by Mitre Peak rising sheer from the glassy waters of Milford Sound. We board our Red Boat cruise and journey the full length of this beautiful Fiord. View cascading waterfalls, sheer cliffs, dense rainforest and towering mountains in this pristine World Heritage-listed area. This afternoon we have a relaxing drive to the tranquil settlement of Te Anau.

*Accommodation: Te Anau, Village Inn.*

### Day 11. Te Anau, 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 see the Royal Albatross Colony or explore Penguin Place to spot 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.

*Accommodation: Dunedin, Dunedin City Hotel.*

### Day 12. Dunedin, Mt Cook (BD)

Departing Dunedin we journey north to Moeraki Beach with its unusual boulders. According to Maori tradition, the boulders are gourds and calabashes washed from the great voyaging canoe Araiteuru when it was wrecked upon landfall in New Zealand some 1000 years ago. Stop at Oamaru, a historic town renowned for its distinctive cream limestone buildings then continue inland passing beautiful glacier fed lakes of incredible colour. We continue our journey into New Zealand's highland and Mt Cook National Park, which was awarded 'World Heritage' status in recognition of its qualities and rare beauty. View Mt Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain at 3754 metres above sea level. You may wish to take an optional scenic flight over this awe-inspiring alpine region (weather permitting, own expense).

*Accommodation: Mt Cook, The Hermitage.*

### Day 13. Mt Cook, Christchurch (BD)

This morning we stop at the beautiful Lake Tekapo, once an ancient glacier and visit the picturesque tiny stone Church of the Good Shepherd. Leaving the High Country we cross the braided Rakaia River and travel through the mixed cropping and sheep grazing holdings of the vast Canterbury Plains to Christchurch.

*Accommodation: Christchurch, Copthorne Central Hotel*

#### **Day 14. 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)**