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NEW ZEALAND GUIDED TOURS

17 Day Wonderland



Tour Summary

Tour name: Wonderland

Days: 17

Tour Inclusions

17 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, Bay of Islands, Rotorua, Queenstown, Dunedin and Christchurch
Dining Option in Queenstown – choose from 4 restaurants
Matakohe Pioneer Museum
Waitangi Treaty Grounds
Cape Brett 'Hole in the Rock' Cruise
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, Bay of Islands (BD)

This morning we journey across the Auckland Harbour Bridge travelling through the farming communities of Warkworth and Wellsford. Visit the Matakoho Kauri Museum, home to the world's largest collection of Kauri gum. Continue to the majestic Waipoua Forest Reserve where we view the giant Kauri tree 'Tane Mahuta' (Lord of the Forest). View the magnificent Hokianga Harbour before travelling across country to the subtropical Bay of Islands, a beautiful unspoilt paradise, rich in history and culture. On arrival a visit to the Waitangi Treaty House, Maori Meeting House and War Canoe.

Accommodation: Bay of Islands, Paihia Pacific Resort, 2 nights.

Day 3. Bay of Islands, Exclusive Experiences (B)

Not only is the Bay of Islands the birthplace of the Nation and thus full of New Zealand history, it is also home to 144 islands and renowned as a favourite playground for lovers of anything aquatic; diving, sailing and big game fishing. Today you have the opportunity to choose the sightseeing activity that most interests you and we will include it. Whether it be a day trip to Cape Reinga at the very tip of New Zealand, a tour to Russell, the first capital of New Zealand, sailing on the "R Tucker Thompson" a unique tall ship, swimming with the dolphins, a round of golf at the scenic Waitangi Golf Course, a Bay of Islands fishing experience or simply relaxing on a beautiful golden sandy beach. The choice is yours!

Day 4. Bay of Islands, Auckland (BD)

This morning our Bay of Islands cruise takes us to Cape Brett and the famous 'Hole' in the rock. In these world-renowned deep sea-fishing grounds, dolphins and schools of fish are frequently seen. Meander through the inner islands, viewing sandy beaches, rocky outcrops and visit a secluded bay with time for relaxation. Return this afternoon to Auckland via the pretty Whangarei city basin.

Accommodation: Auckland, Sky City Hotel.

Day 5. 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, Heritage Hotel for 2 nights

Day 6. 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. 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. The Choice is Yours!

Country Homestay option available tonight.

Day 7. Rotorua, Wellington (BD)

Follow the Thermal Explorer Highway through the heart of the North Island travelling through green countryside, beautiful native bush and some of the largest alpine forests in the Southern Hemisphere. We view Wairakei Steam Valley, where thermal energy is harnessed in the world's second largest geothermal power plant. See the spectacular Huka Falls, mouth of the mighty Waikato River, and tranquil Lake Taupo, the water filled crater of an ancient volcano. We continue our journey 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 bound by its magnificent harbour.

Accommodation: Wellington, James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor.

Day 8. Wellington, Blenheim (BD)

This morning enjoy a brief city sightseeing tour, including Parliament Buildings and Mt Victoria for spectacular views, 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. This afternoon we join our cruise from Wellington Harbour across Cook Strait and through the breath taking natural beauty of the Marlborough Sounds, this cruise is renowned as one of the most beautiful crossings in the world. Arrive in Picton and rejoin our coach for the short journey to Blenheim for our overnight stay.

Accommodation: Blenheim, Blenheim Country Hotel.

Day 9. 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 10. 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 11. 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 12. 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 13. 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 14. 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 15. 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 16. 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 17. 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)