



New Zealand Top 2 Bottom



Tour Summary

Tour name: New Zealand Top 2 Bottom

Days: 21

Overview:

The Top-2-Bottom Tour is for those people who want to do it all! Or at least have the option to do it all. It travels the full length of New Zealand and includes the most dramatic scenery in the country, comfortable accommodations in great locations, excellent activities and excursions, great food, and an element of flexibility seldom found in an adventure tour. This is the holiday all New Zealander's dream of!

With a small group of like-minded travellers and the local knowledge of a Serious Fun guide, this trip explores New Zealand from top to bottom in 21 days. With such a small group, we are able to explore the hidden wonders of New Zealand beyond the tourist crowd. Visit seven national parks and the South-West New Zealand World Heritage area. Kayak the famous Milford Sound, the tranquil waters of the Bay of Islands, the exotic coastline of the Abel Tasman National Park, and many other lakes and streams. Mountain bike the Queen Charlotte Track in the Marlborough Sounds, the rugged West Coast of the South Island, the Southern Alps, and the dramatic descent into Milford Sound. Hike the volcanoes of Tongariro National Park, the famous Routeburn Track, through ancient rainforests, over active glaciers and along deserted beaches. Even try your hand at surfing secret breaks, or venture beneath the surface with a mask and snorkel to look for New Zealand's underwater friends! Each day is an adventure and your choice to mountain bike, hike, kayak, surf, snorkel, or simply relax.

STYLE

The Top-2-Bottom is an activity-oriented trip, high on the adventure scale, with the ultimate in flexibility. Travelling in a small group (no more than 9) and carrying all the toys for a great vacation (bikes, kayaks, body boards, snorkelling gear etc.), each day will be an adventure chosen by the group and guide. With so many options, you can tailor this trip to suit yourself. If you wish to kayak, the guide will show you where; if you wish to ride, the guide will take you to the best track in that area. Our guides will give you basic instruction in all the sports we participate in and then it is up to you! The guide's knowledge of the local areas will allow you to make the best of every destination you visit. This is definitely not your normal sightseeing tour; this is an active adventure tour all about experiencing the places you visit, not just seeing them!

In each area, accommodation is chosen for its location and will be in comfortable hotels, motels, holiday homes & cottages. Some accommodations will be in two or three bedroom apartments or houses with shared bathroom facilities, whilst in others you will have an en suite bathroom. If you wish to have a private room with en suite bathroom for the entire tour, please read the details of the Single Supplement and Accommodation Upgrade.

Meals will be prepared by the guide, with the help of the group. Picnic lunches will be prepared by the guide on location – where ever that day's adventure may take you! Eating out in restaurants is an optional extra at the discretion of the group.

Tour Itinerary

We run the Top-2-Bottom trip in both directions, so you may end up doing this trip from South to North. Either way, the Top-2-Bottom will deliver the best multi-sport adventure New Zealand has to offer! If you can't do the full 21 days, you can choose to do 11 days on the North or South Island , or you are able to do any part of the trip for a pro-rated fare. Let us know and we'll organize a trip to suit you!

DAY 1&2: ARRIVAL IN AUCKLAND / BAY OF ISLANDS (D/B/L/D)

Meet your guide and fellow adventurers upon arrival in Auckland . Then we will drive north to the Bay of Islands arriving in time for a short paddle or stroll on the beach to stretch your legs, followed by a “Welcome Dinner” of local seafood. The Bay of Islands is punctuated by dozens of secluded beaches and coves, clear waters ranging in hue from turquoise to deep blue. Dotted with nearly 150 islands, the region is aptly named. Numerous options for kayaking to offshore islands, surfing or snorkelling exist along the way. Optional scuba diving and sailing trips are also available in this area.

DAY 3 & 4: KAITAIA – THE FAR NORTH (B/L/D both days)

Welcome to the “far north” of New Zealand ! This area is famous for its beautiful beaches, crystal clear water and excellent fishing. The region is steeped in early European and Maori history – check out the museum for the complete story. After an early morning in the surf or paddle, enjoy a hearty breakfast before heading out on an exploration to Cape Reinga . A drive up 90 mile beach is sure to make you realize you're a long way from home! Even try your hand at surfing the huge sand dunes along the way! A BBQ on the beach is a perfect way to immerse yourself in the Kiwi lifestyle!

DAY 5: AUCKLAND (B/L)

Today we head south to Auckland , New Zealand 's largest and most multi-cultural city. You'll get a chance to wander round the Viaduct – a vibrant downtown area, and until recently home to the Americas Cup. While the Cup is no longer there, the vibrant atmosphere continues with numerous bars and restaurants open until late. Although Larry Ellison and Cindy Crawford have moved on, friendly locals abound and are more than willing to share a tale or two.

DAY 6 & 7: COROMANDEL PENINSULA (B/L/D both days)

This morning we drive east to the Coromandel Peninsula – a rugged, densely forested peninsula where rivers force their way through gorges and pour down steep cliffs into the sea. From our base in Hahei, we can hike to Cathedral Cove, accessible only at low tide through a gigantic arched cavern. We then walk south to Hot Water beach where thermal waters brew just below the sand. Our Guide will show you how to dig your very own spa in the sand from where you can sit back and contemplate whether to surf, scuba dive or snorkel. This area also has some great mountain biking trails... so what are you waiting for?!

DAY 8: ROTORUA (B/L/D)

Rotorua has the most energetic thermal activity in NZ, with bubbling mud pools, gurgling hot springs and gushing geysers. We will explore the thermal features of Rotorua. In the evening, attend a traditional Maori feast, a Hangi - meats and vegetables are cooked in the traditional fashion beneath the ground on hot rocks. Our local Maori hosts will introduce us to their underground cooking techniques, culture and history.

DAY 9 & 10: TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK (B/L/D both days)

The Central North Island is an area of distinctive geography and scenery, and Tongariro is New Zealand 's oldest national park (est. 1887) and a World Heritage area. This status recognizes the park's important Maori cultural and spiritual associations as well as its outstanding volcanic features. The Tongariro, Ngaruahoe and Ruapehu mountains are at the heart of the park and form the southern limits of the Taupo Volcanic Zone. It was this area Peter Jackson chose to film part of Lord of the Rings – you will recognize Mordor and the Plains of Gorgoroth as we hike the Tongariro Crossing, a 7-8 hour trek through spectacular terrain, passing two active volcanoes, lava flows, emerald coloured lakes and hot springs. This is undoubtedly one of the most spectacular hikes in the entire country and very different to the rest of New Zealand.

DAY 11: WELLINGTON (B/L/D)

Today we arrive in the capital city of Wellington , the physical and cultural centre of New Zealand. Situated on a beautiful harbour ringed by hills perfect for mountain biking and hiking, Wellington prides itself on being a centre for arts and crafts, with an abundance of restaurants, cafes, nightlife and activities. Affectionately called “Wellywood ”, Wellington is fast becoming a major player in international film and TV circles with the studios used for Lord of the Rings located here. A short hike up Mount Victoria will reward you with stunning vistas of the city and on a clear

day, views as far as the Marlborough Sounds. This afternoon we'll visit Te Papa, the country's national museum before taking the ferry across Cook Strait, through the Marlborough Sounds to Picton.

The Sounds, formed by the sea invading its deep valleys after the Ice Ages, provides the perfect playground for our toys. We take advantage of this and spend the afternoon exploring the area by sea kayak, mountain bike or on foot. The Queen Charlotte Walkway offers excellent mountain biking to those who chose this option. From the water there is a good chance you'll spot dolphins and Little Blue Penguins. In the evening we will cook up a feast of fresh local seafood.

11 Day

Option: If you only wish to do either the North Island, or the South Island, you can depart the trip today.

DAY 12 & 13: ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK (B/L/D both days)

This morning we'll drive west to Abel Tasman National Park, stopping in Nelson - a beautiful town, nestled between stunning beaches and mountains. Local artisans and craftspeople abound and you'll get the chance to pick up some original pieces the area is so well known for. The Abel Tasman National Park was created in 1942; exactly 300 years after the Dutch Explorer Abel Janzoon Tasman sailed into what is now known as Golden Bay, at the northern tip of the Park. On that unfortunate day in December 1642, the Europeans were met by Maori canoes and four of Tasman's men were killed in the ensuing skirmish. Abel Tasman sailed away without setting foot on the land now named in his honour! Today's visitors to the Park can expect a much warmer welcome, and you'll soon discover why the Abel Tasman Coastal Track is the most popular "Great Walk" in New Zealand. The track hugs the picturesque coastline with its pristine golden sand beaches and calm turquoise waters, climbing up to awesome views, then down again for a refreshing swim or picnic. Or, you can experience the park coastline from a seal's-eye view, in a kayak. If you like, you can hike out, and then kayak back for the best of both worlds!

DAY 14: PUNAKAIKI (B/L/D)

Today it's on to the wild West Coast. At Cape Foulwind we hike to a seal colony that offers stunning views of the Tasman Sea and mighty Southern Alps. Similarly you can relax and play on one of the coasts more famous surf beaches. Entering Paparoa National Park, explore miles of deserted beaches, the famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes, and a number of forest walks in the area. Two other great options are a kayak trip on the Pororari River, or ride mountain bikes alongside the limestone cliffs and giant tree ferns of Bullock Creek. This evening we will enjoy a BBQ on the beach as the sun sets into the Tasman Sea.

DAY 15: FOX GLACIER (B/L/D)

Begin the day with an early drive south along the rugged West coast stopping along the way at the craft center of Hokitika, the nation's center for greenstone carvers. In the afternoon hike to the terminal face of the Glacier or take an optional walk on the ice. Hoisting our alpenstocks, we follow the guide as he cuts steps into the ice, leading us on a journey of discovery through crevasses and over moraines. In recent times, the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers have advanced far down the mountains cutting a path of destruction through the surrounding rock and rainforest. "Calving" is a common occurrence at the glacier terminal, and in a dramatic display of the power of nature, large chunks of ice separate from the glacier and crash to the ground. After dinner, we will see New Zealand's famous glow-worms in the rainforest surrounding the town of Fox Glacier.

DAY 16 & 17: WANAKA (B/L/D/B/L)

Start the day with an early walk around Lake Matheson revealing the reflections of New Zealand's highest peaks: Mounts Cook and Tasman. After breakfast we wind our way along the World Heritage Highway. A rainforest hike brings us to an isolated beach where we may catch a glimpse of nesting penguins. Then it's up and over the Haast Pass and along the beautiful shores of Lakes Hawea and Wanaka. In the afternoon we'll make a brief stop to sample local wines at a picturesque winery before continuing on to Wanaka. The next day we will drive through the Matukituki Valley to hike in Mt Aspiring National Park. This is a World Heritage Area of majestic mountains and natural rainforest, and our favourite day hike in New Zealand. We hike up through a narrow gorge beside a crystal clear stream for a couple of hours to a clearing. All around us glaciers cling to cliff faces, broken by a myriad of waterfalls. Occasionally an ice avalanche will shatter the silence. In the afternoon drift downstream on the currents of the Matukituki River while enjoying some of the best mountain scenery in New Zealand. That evening explore the vibrant town of Wanaka and sample some of the great local cuisine.

DAY 18: MILFORD SOUND OVERNIGHT CRUISE (B/L/D)

Drive to Te Anau on our way to Milford Sound. Enjoy a short walk along the Kepler Track, or a kayak in Lake Te Anau. After passing through the Homer Tunnel mountain bike one of the most stunning roads in the world as you descend into Milford Sound. Here we will meet our waiting vessel for an overnight cruise of the Sound. You will cruise the full length of Milford Sound before anchoring for the night. Beneath the towering presence of Mitre Peak, you can kayak around sheltered bays, venture ashore in the tender craft or simply sit back and unwind. As the day draws to a close, enjoy a delicious meal and share stories of the day's adventures.

DAY 19 & 20: QUEENSTOWN (B/L/D/B/D)

After a relaxed breakfast on board, we drive to Queenstown, “The Adventure Capital of the World”. We'll stop along the way to walk part of the famous Routeburn Track up to the Divide for spectacular views of Te Wai Pounamu World Heritage Area. When you get to Queenstown, you can choose from an exciting array of optional activities including rafting, jet boating, bungee jumping, fly-by-wire, canyoning, tandem paragliding, hang gliding, sky diving, horse trekking, river surfing, fishing, vintage plane flights, glider flights, or take a goldfield or sheep station tour. Alternatively, just relax and enjoy the atmosphere of sidewalk cafes in this alpine resort. If you'd rather do some hiking around Queenstown there are a number of excellent walks as well as mountain biking and kayaking opportunities which your guide will be happy to accompany you on. On our final night we will enjoy a “Farewell Dinner” and share stories of our adventures.

DAY 21: DEPART QUEENSTOWN (B)

A final relaxing gourmet breakfast with the group is the perfect way to end your time in Queenstown. There is usually time for another activity or some last minute shopping before your transfer to the Queenstown Airport for flights home or to continue another adventure. If on the other hand you have fallen in love with New Zealand by now, we can direct you to our local Immigration office!

What's Included

The Top-2-Bottom tour is filled with hiking, kayaking, biking, surfing & snorkelling options – the best part is they are all included so you don't have to pay for any of them! Other inclusions are: experienced local Kiwi guides; comfortable accommodations; meals which showcase the best local produce (except for two dinners and one lunch); transportation in very comfortable vehicles with reading materials and snacks; overnight cruise and sea kayaking on Milford Sound; ferry transportation between the North & South Islands; a traditional Maori Hangi; and a Serious Fun t-shirt. As everything is already included, you will not need much spending money!

What's Not Included

The only things not included are flights before or after the tour, two dinners and one lunch, any activities mentioned as “optional” in the itinerary, and expenses of a personal nature.

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