



The Best of the South Island Summer (14)



Tour Summary

Tour name: The Best of the South Island Summer (14)

Days: 14

Overview:

This trip is exactly as the name suggests! It includes the best activities, accommodations and meals available in the South Island. Before you think this tour is expensive, take a close look at what is included in the cost.

We'll hike and sea kayak in the Abel Tasman National Park, do a private guided walk on Fox Glacier, swim with the friendly Dusky dolphins in Kaikoura, visit Milford Sound when the tourist crowds have left for an exclusive overnight cruise, and walk the famous Routeburn Track 3 day walk. Of course, the accommodations and meals are highlights too!

Compare this trip with other South Island tours and you will soon see that we don't just walk a track with a view of Fox Glacier, we get onto the ice; we don't just do a short part of the Routeburn Track, we do the full 3 day walk; we don't just spot the dolphins off the Kaikoura coast, we swim with them! All activities are included in the cost and highlight the best the South Island has to offer.

Style

This active adventure is suitable for anyone of average fitness. Over days 1 through 9, we'll hike two to six miles daily. On days 10 through 12, we tackle the Routeburn Track which entails 25 miles spread over three days. There will also be plenty of time to relax or enjoy optional activities and excursions such as mountain biking and sea kayaking. Meals are served by our hosts, enjoyed in the best restaurants, or, in the case of several picnic lunches, prepared by our guide. Lodgings are the best available in keeping with the unique character of these special areas... cozy bed and breakfast inns and boutique lodges, unique hotels, and comfortable mountain huts (with hot showers!).

Tour Itinerary

OPTIONS

An 11 day option is available if you don't want to hike the Routeburn Track.

Day 1: Arrive Christchurch / Explore the City (D)

Arrive in Christchurch -the most English city outside England . Spend the afternoon exploring the city and sights, including a visit to Cathedral Square in the heart of Christchurch which is built in Gothic Revival style and symbolising the Church of England. Be sure to look out for the Wizard, a famous eccentric who takes up a soapbox most fine afternoons somewhere in the square. You can also take a stroll along the banks of the Avon meandering through the Botanical Gardens which have an amazing collection of exotic and indigenous plants. Check out the Arts Centre opposite the Botanical Gardens, or experience some Maori culture by visiting the Nga Hau e Wha

National Marae (a traditional complex of Maori buildings). At 6pm you will meet your guide and group for a welcome dinner and orientation. Overnight in Christchurch .

Day 2: Kaikoura / Seal Colony (B/L/D)

The morning begins with a drive north along the coast to the seaside town of Kaikoura . Once a sleepy fishing village, Kaikoura is waking up to its increasing popularity as one of the best places in the world to view marine mammals. Referred to as the “Serengeti of the South Pacific”, Kaikoura has an amazing variety of whales, dolphins, and seals which feed in the krill-rich waters. This afternoon we'll hike around the peninsula and observe seals and sea birds as well as spectacular views of the surrounding coastal mountains. That evening we stay at an historic convent turned charming bed & breakfast lodge.

Day 3: Dolphin Swim / Abel Tasman National Park (B/L/D)

Rise early this morning to greet the day with a pre-breakfast get together with some of Kaikoura's more famous local personalities- the playful Dusky Dolphins! With mask, snorkel, and fins we'll have the opportunity to enter their world and swim amongst them. If you'd prefer, stay on the boat and marvel at their acrobatic displays. Then we drive north to the town of Nelson for lunch, known for its beautiful beaches and local arts & crafts. In the afternoon we continue up to the Abel Tasman National Park where we will spend the next two nights exploring this magnificent area.

Day 4: Sea Kayaking or Hiking in the Abel Tasman National Park (B/L/D)

Today you are able to choose if you would like to sea kayak or hike. The sea kayaking trip explores the many aspects of the natural environment as you paddle along the impressive and diverse coastline of the Abel Tasman National Park. Explore the many secluded bays and islands, look for the friendly seal colonies, or simply take in the beautiful environment and sun! Alternatively, if you would like to go hiking, you will take a water taxi along the coastline deep into the National Park. The hike explores the many golden sand beaches, crystal clear bays and lush forest interior of the Abel Tasman National Park . After a full day of activity enjoy the sunset from a seafood restaurant overlooking the Tasman Bay .

Day 5: West Coast / Paparoa National Park (B/L/D)

Today it's on to the wild West Coast . At Cape Foulwind enjoy a coastal hike and views of the Tasman Sea and surrounding Southern Alps . New Zealand fur seals inhabit the rocky coastline and sea birds soar about the cliff tops. Then we'll enjoy a relaxed lunch at a café overlooking the breakers. In the afternoon we enter Paparoa National Park . Our hike takes us along the Pororari River through limestone landscapes and sub-tropical rainforest. Eventually we emerge from the palm- and fern-filled forest to the sea. If you like, you have the option of canoeing the Pororari River or mountain biking along the bank. Take off your shoes and walk barefoot in the sand to our lodgings for the night. That evening we enjoy a barbecue by the beach.

Day 6: Pancake Rocks / Fox Glacier / Westland National Park (B/L/D)

A morning walk along the beach and a visit to the famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes is a perfect way to start the day. Then it's on to Westland National Park and the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers stopping along the way at the old gold mining town of Hokitika , now a center for local crafts. That afternoon we enjoy a walk through a temperate rainforest for views of the glaciers. Alternatively, there is an option to explore the Okarito Lagoon and its White Heron Colony by sea kayak. Overnight in Fox Glacier.

Day 7: Hiking on the Ice of Fox Glacier (B/L/D)

This morning an early walk around Lake Matheson reveals the reflections of New Zealand 's highest peaks: Mounts Cook and Tasman. Then after a hearty breakfast it's on to the glacier! 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. Overnight in Fox Glacier.

Day 8: SouthWest New Zealand World Heritage Area / Lake Wanaka (B/L/D)

The day begins as we wind our way along the World Heritage Highway . A rainforest walk 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. Overnight at our Wanaka bed and breakfast lodge.

Day 9: Overnight Cruise & Sea Kayaking on Milford Sound (B/L/D)

Drive through upended land which was carved, tumbled and jumbled by grinding glaciers during the last ice age. Stop for short walks at areas of interest in Fiordland National Park on the way to Milford Sound. In the afternoon, board our vessel for a cruise through the Milford Sound to the Tasman Sea . Anchor for the night in sheltered Harrison Cove beneath the towering Mount Pembroke . Before sunset, explore the fiord by sea kayak or tender craft or simply relax on the deck of the vessel. Overnight onboard our luxury vessel with private cabins & ensuite bathrooms enveloped by the majesty of Milford Sound – simply the best way to experience Milford Sound!

Day 10: Milford Sound / Routeburn Track / Fiordland National Park (B/L/D)

Wake to the silence and serenity of Milford Sound. After breakfast we head ashore and drive to the Divide to start the Routeburn Track. For the next three days we'll hike hut-to-hut across the Southern Alps along one of the most spectacular walks in the world. We'll stay in private huts fully stocked with food, comfortable beds, flush toilets and even hot showers! As we are doing the fully guided walk, you'll hike with only an overnight pack containing your clothes and other personal items. Start your hike through dense beech forests along a well graded trail which winds above the tree line at Key Summit, followed by a brief descent to Lake Howden . Then climb steadily upwards to magnificent Earland Falls before descending to our hut at Lake MacKenzie (hiking distance: 9 mi).

Day 11: Routeburn Track / Mount Aspiring National Park (B/L/D)

We leave the emerald waters of Lake MacKenzie , traverse the zigzags above the bush line (3,200 ft) and cross the dramatic alpine terrain of the Hollyford Face. Descend from the Harris Saddle past Lake Harris and into an immense alpine basin that is often carpeted by wildflowers. Hike downward alongside a final pitch of cascading waterfalls and then relax at the Routeburn Falls Huts (hiking distance: 9 mi).

Day 12: Routeburn Track / Queenstown (B/L/D)

Descend from the tiered cascades of Routeburn Falls to the alpine meadows of Routeburn Flat. Wind alongside the deep green pools of the Routeburn River (i.e., the "Route Burn") and through hearty beech forest to our waiting van (hiking distance: 7 mi). In the late afternoon, we drive to our Queenstown lodge. Then gather for dinner with our friends from the trail.

Day 13: Queenstown Free Day(B/D)

Today is a free day in Queenstown, "The Adventure Capital of the World." Sample an exciting array of optional (and extra cost) activities including rafting, kayaking, canoeing, jet boating, bungee jumping, fly-by-wire, canyoning, tandem paragliding, hang gliding, skydiving, horse trekking, river surfing, fishing, vintage plane flights, glider flights, or take a goldfield or sheep station tour. Or 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 other no cost activities. In the evening we'll gather for dinner, swap tales of the day's adventures, and celebrate two weeks of serious fun!

Day 14: Depart Queenstown (B)

After a relaxed gourmet breakfast there's often still time for another activity like a quiet stroll along the lake or some last minute shopping before your transfer to the Queenstown Airport for flights home or to continue another adventure.

What's Included

As the name suggests, this tour includes the BEST the South Island has to offer. Specifically: experienced local Kiwi guides; the finest accommodations available; meals in the best local restaurants of each area (except for one dinner and one lunch); transportation in very comfortable vehicles with spare seats, reading materials and snacks; sea kayaking in the Abel Tasman National Park; luxury overnight cruise and sea kayaking on Milford Sound; swimming with the Dusky Dolphins in Kaikoura; a guided walk on Fox Glacier; the Routeburn Track guided walk; a Serious Fun t-shirt; and various other hikes in the South Island's best national parks. As everything is already included, you will not need much spending money!

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