



New Zealand Adventure

It's a tale of two islands as our small group journeys from New Zealand's North to its South, through lively cities and pristine fiords, past lush farmland and enchanted forests in a land where the outdoors is the national shrine. Add engaging "Kiwis" and traditional Indigenous cultures – it's a pure New Zealand experience.

Itinerary

Created on Apr 1, 2025

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Day-by-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Auckland, New Zealand

DAY 2: En Route to Auckland, New Zealand

DAY 3: Arrive Auckland

We arrive in New Zealand's largest city early this morning and transfer to our hotel, where our rooms are ready for early check-in. After time to relax and freshen up, we take a casual walking tour of the area around our hotel. This evening we attend a briefing on the journey ahead, followed by a welcome dinner.

Meals: Dinner

DAY 4: Auckland

This morning we tour cosmopolitan Auckland, an eminently livable city. One of only a few world cities straddling two harbors on separate bodies of water, Auckland offers an abundance of natural beauty. A highlight of our tour is the visit to the Auckland Museum, with its prized collections of Māori and Pacific Islander art and artifacts (Auckland has the largest Polynesian population of any city in the world). After lunch at a local restaurant, we embark on a cruise across glittering Auckland Harbour. We return to our hotel mid-afternoon; the remainder of the day is free for independent exploration. Dinner tonight is on our own.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Auckland/Rotorua

En route to Rotorua today, we stop at Ruakuri Caves to see the unique glowworms that illuminate the underground grottos and caves. Late this afternoon we visit Te Puia Thermal Reserve and Māori Cultural Centre for a traditional *hangi* dinner and performance.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Rotorua

With its geysers, bubbling mud pools, and hot thermal springs, Rotorua ranks as a geothermal wonder, as well as a center of indigenous Māori culture (Māoris comprise 40% of Rotorua's population). We encounter this intriguing town on a morning tour that includes a visit to Paradise Valley Springs, which offers an up-close look at New Zealand's biodiversity, with native flora, a freshwater stream that's home to wild trout, and wildlife, including alpaca, llamas, and wallabies. The park also features a variety of birdlife. Then we drive to the National Kiwi Trust, dedicated to rehabilitating injured kiwis, New Zealand's national bird.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7: Rotorua/Napier

Today we set out for one of New Zealand's celebrated wine regions: Hawke's Bay and the seaside city of Napier. We sample the local *terroir* at a wine tasting and lunch at Mission Estate Winery, the country's oldest winery. Reaching Napier after lunch, we embark on a guided walking tour of the city's 1930s Art Deco architecture. After an earthquake leveled the city in 1931, it was rebuilt in "Deco" style; today, Napier ranks as one of the most authentically Art Deco cities in the world. Dinner tonight is on our own.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8: Napier/Wellington

We travel today to New Zealand's capital of Wellington, stopping along the way at a private farm where we learn about the country's vital sheep farming industry. We see the sheepdogs at work and watch a sheep-shearing demonstration then enjoy a barbecue lunch. We continue on, reaching Wellington late this afternoon. We dine together tonight at a local restaurant.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 9: Wellington

We encounter this genial waterfront city on the southern end of the North Island on this morning's tour, featuring a ride on the historic Wellington Cable Car for panoramic views of the city and harbor. We also visit acclaimed Te Papa, New Zealand's national museum with interactive exhibits spanning art, history, Indigenous cultures, and the natural environment. Then the remainder of the afternoon is free to explore as we wish, perhaps to stroll along bohemian Cuba Street, visit the Wellington Zoo, or wander the lively waterfront area. Dinner tonight is on our own in this city known for its vibrant restaurant scene.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: Wellington/Christchurch

Today we fly south to Christchurch, New Zealand's "Garden City." Highlights of our city tour include the Botanic Gardens, the "green heart" of Christchurch dating to 1863; and Cathedral Square, for 150 years the beating heart of Christchurch and site of Christchurch Cathedral. This afternoon is at leisure to explore independently; we dine tonight at our hotel.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 11: Christchurch/Franz Josef

Early today we embark on one of the world's great rail journeys aboard the TranzAlpine train: along the open farmland of the Canterbury Plain, through the foothills of the Southern Alps, and then into the snowcapped peaks themselves. We travel across steel girder bridges above deep gorges and through tunnels on our journey to Arthur's Pass, where we board a motorcoach for the scenic drive to the village of Franz Josef, reaching our hotel this afternoon and dining there tonight.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12: Franz Josef

In Westland National Park this morning, we encounter one of New Zealand's most spectacular sights: Franz Josef Glacier, the mass of ice that descends from the frigid upper reaches of the Southern Alps to a rainforest at sea level. With a local guide we take a walk along the glacier valley, where we have spectacular views of this natural wonder. Then we visit the West Coast Wildlife Centre with its rare kiwi birds, an animal linked so closely to New Zealand that its residents are known colloquially as "Kiwis." This afternoon is free to enjoy the splendid surroundings as we wish. We dine tonight at our hotel.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 13: Franz Josef/Queenstown

Traveling to Queenstown today, we stop first in the lakeside resort of Wanaka then in the Central Otago region at a local winery for a private tasting. Late this afternoon we reach Queenstown and our hotel, where we dine tonight.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 14: Queenstown/Doubtful Sound

More scenic overload is in store on our full-day excursion to Fiordland National Park and Doubtful Sound, one of New Zealand's top attractions. We travel by boat across Lake Manapouri then by coach over Wilmot Pass to reach the "Sound of Silence," as Doubtful is called for the remarkable serenity that prevails here and in the surrounding mountain peaks, rainforest, and waterfalls. This enchanting woodland may seem familiar to moviegoers: director Peter Jackson filmed *The Lord of the Rings'* Fangorn Forest here. Among the wildlife we may see on our three-hour catamaran cruise: dolphins, fur seals, Fiordland crested penguins, and even whales. Surrounding us: rugged mountain peaks, rainforest, waterfalls. After this exhilarating excursion we return to Queenstown early this evening; dinner is on our own.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 15: Queenstown

Today is at leisure to enjoy this outdoor mecca with a spectacular setting on Lake Wakatipu as we wish. Options abound, from jet boating and fly fishing to art gallery hopping or riding the Skyline gondola for outstanding views of this unusually scenic city. Tonight we celebrate our New Zealand adventure over a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 16: Depart for U.S.

We depart this afternoon for the airport and our return flights home.

Meals: Breakfast

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