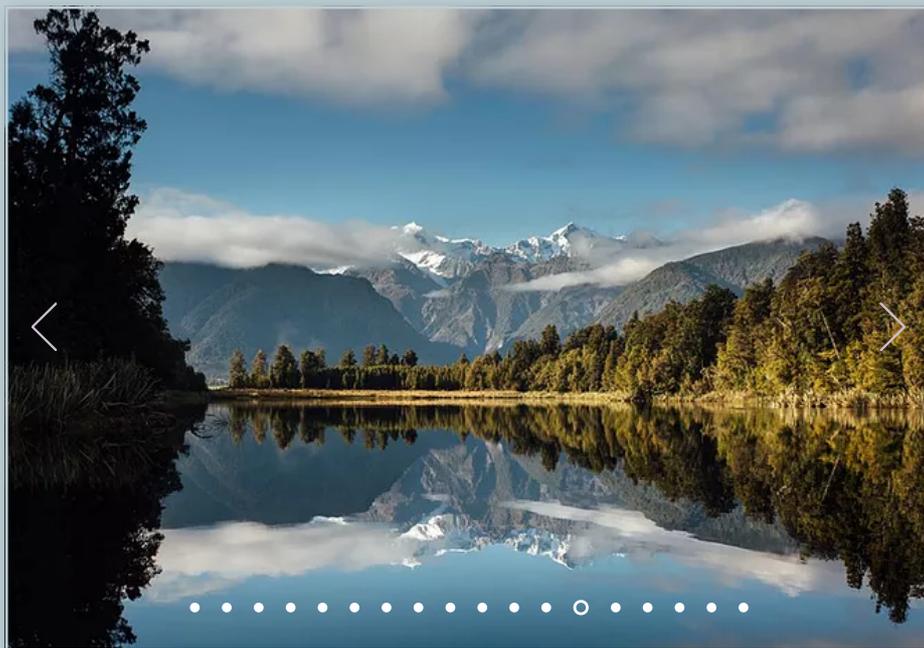


[See our latest news](#)
[See our range of New Zealand Tours](#)

## South Island Ultimate Highlights - now a 14 day New Zealand Tour



### South Island Ultimate Highlights

Picton, Kaikoura, Christchurch, Arthurs Pass, Greymouth, Franz Josef, Haast, Wanaka, Arrowtown, Queenstown, Te Anau, Milford Sound, Gore, Dunedin, Moeraki Boulders, Oamaru, Mt Cook, MacKenzie Country, & more...

Our South Island tour showcases the ultimate sights of the South Island of New Zealand, including Queenstown, Mt Cook, Dunedin, Te Anau, Milford Sound, Christchurch, Franz Josef, Kaikoura, Picton and more. Take the famous Tranz Alpine NZ train trip from Christchurch to Greymouth, cruise on the world renowned Milford Sound, visit Larnach Castle, view whales at Kaikoura and much more. Come with us and experience all the highlights of the South Island.

13th Apr 2021

From \$4995 pp

**DAY 1** After picking you up from home (all part of the Hinterland service) we head south – enjoying a day of each others company on the road to Wellington. Leaving the Bay of Plenty behind, we pass Lake Taupo and then traverse the dramatic Desert Road alongside the stunning scenery of the volcanoes of the central plateau. We then stop for lunch at the Army Museum at Waiouru, with some spare time to view the museum if you wish (entry charge extra).

After lunch we continue south, through the farmland of the Manawatu and aim to reach Wellington late afternoon with our first dinner together at the city central hotel restaurant overlooking Wellington harbour.

**DAY 2** After boarding our ferry its time for breakfast on board as we begin our 3.5 hour cruise to Picton. After crossing the Cook Strait, we pass through to Tory Channel and into the tranquil Marlborough Sounds – keep your eyes peeled for dolphins and maybe seals sunning themselves on the rocks.

Upon arrival into Picton we have time to look around the town, then choose a local cafe as you wish for lunch before we board the recently refurbished Tranz Coastal train for a memorable ride down the coast to Kaikoura. We will past through the wineries of Marlborough and the salt works at Lake Grassmere, then follow the rocky coast to Kaikoura for our first night on the South Island.

**DAY 3** This morning we have a treat instore – a flight from Kaikoura Airport to view the resident sperm whales which frequent the deep ocean trenches off the coast. These natural sea trenches are close to shore and are full of food for a wide variety of marine mammals. Whales, dolphins and seals abound in this part of the world and your flight is a once in a lifetime chance to see these massive creatures from a whole new perspective. You can upgrade from a fixed wing plane to a helicopter for that ultimate bucket list item if you wish! (extra cost applies)

After the excitement of hopefully spotting the whales, we continue south along SH1 which has been almost totally rebuilt following the 2016 earthquake, an amazing feat of engineering which you will see up close. Our lunch venue today is at one of the leading winery's of the fast growing Waipara wine region. Enjoy some wine tasting and then lunch (your cost). We then have just a short drive into Christchurch – the South Island's largest city – where we will spend the next couple of nights, giving us time to explore our "Garden City".

### Whats Included:

- 14 days of touring
- 13 nights quality accommodation
- Door to door service [home pickups]
- Quality Air-conditioned vehicle
- Fully guided with commentary
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Cook Strait crossing by ferry to Picton
- **TranzCoastal train to Kaikoura**
- **Whale watch flight over Kaikoura**
- Christchurch City tour
- **TranzAlpine train to Greymouth**
- Gold panning on the west coast
- Cruise on the historic TSS Earnslaw
- BBQ lunch at Walter Peak Station
- Sheep Show at Walter Peak Station
- Skyline Gondola Queenstown
- Milford Sound Cruise
- Croydon Aviation Heritage visit
- Nugget Point Lighthouse
- Dunedin City & Larnach Castle Tour
- Tour and morning tea at Totara Park
- AIR NZ flight back from Christchurch
- Plus plenty of other interesting stops

**Items shown thus are not included in the "No Frills" option at \$4995, but can be added on for an additional \$500 per person.**



**DAY 4** Today is all about exploring 'The Garden City'. This morning we head into the city with our local guide who will show us around the ever-changing CBD and surrounds. After the devastating earthquakes of 2010/11, Christchurch is getting back on its feet and there is plenty of interesting sights to see.

We visit the scenic suburbs such as Lyttelton and Sumner, ride up and over the Port Hills to enjoy panoramic views of the city and plains, with the Southern Alps standing tall in the distance. We take a stroll through the beautiful grounds of the historic Mona Vale homestead with its picturesque gardens and streams before heading back to the city centre where you can take lunch at any of the local cafes.

The afternoon is free for you to explore the city as you wish, perhaps visit the Canterbury Museum, the new Arts Centre, ride the iconic tram, take a tour through the botanic gardens or go punting on the river Avon (extras at your cost).

**DAY 5** Next morning's highlight is one of the world's best train rides – the TranzAlpine. The scenery from the large panoramic windows will take your breath away as you view plains, rivers, forests and the peaks of the Southern Alps. After reaching Arthurs Pass the train descends through lush West Coast rainforest to finish at Greymouth where the coach is waiting for you. This is a trip that will provide long-lasting memories.

From Greymouth there is more amazing scenery in store as we hit State Highway 6 and head south down the West Coast - what a special part of New Zealand. Our final destination today is Franz Josef, but on the way we stop at historic Hokitika, famous for its jade, glass crafts and the location for the recently screened movie, The Luminaries. Then its on to Ross to try our luck at gold panning, this now small West Coast settlement is where New Zealand's largest nugget of gold was found in 1909, when the population was once the largest on the West Coast.

More rainforest and dramatic scenery to be seen as we continue to Franz Josef – a long but memorable day. Tonight we stay in the village, and will enjoy a lovely dinner out together at a restaurant with an interesting history.

**DAY 6** More dramatic scenery awaits for our next day as we head further south, with innumerable lakes, rivers, forests and mountains offering plenty of photo opportunities along the way. Following the Westland National Park with the Alps as our backdrop, we have breakfast en-route at Lake Matheson – famous as the 'Mirror Lake'. Weather permitting we will have great views to the East to Aoraki - Mount Cook. Sit back and enjoy the scenery as we continue to Haast, our lunch stop today.

Departing Haast we leave the coast behind and head up and into the Aspiring National Park. As we climb ever higher to cross the central divide, we pass the Gates of Haast, where the Haast River cascades through this narrow gorge. Heading over the Haast Pass ( the lowest of the passes that cross the Southern Alps) we will first see Lake Hawea and then Lake Wanaka where we stop briefly to enjoy this popular holiday resort.

Taking the back road towards Queenstown, over the Crown Range we head down the Gibbston Valley towards New Zealand's adventure playground of Queenstown. After today's long drive we will be ready for a good night's sleep in our lake front city central hotel. Our location is ideal for a lakeside stroll or a short walk into town.

**You will see:**

- SH1 scenery all the way to Wellington
- Taupo and the central plateau
- Cook Strait & the Marlborough Sounds
- Kaikoura coastline
- Christchurch & the Canterbury Plains
- Arthurs Pass & Southern Alps
- Greymouth and the West Coast
- Hokitika and Franz Josef
- Aspiring National Park and Haast
- Lakes Hawea and Wanaka
- Queenstown and Arrowtown
- Lake Wakatipu & Walter Peak Station
- Te Anau and Lake Te Anau
- Lake Manapouri
- Milford Sound and Mitre Peak
- Gore and The Catlins Coast
- Central Otago and Dunedin
- The Waitaki Valley and hydro lakes
- Lake Pukaki and Mount Cook
- Mackenzie Country
- Lake Tekapo
- Church of the Good Shepherd

**Not included:**

- Any lunches unless specified\*
- Morning/afternoon tea stops\*
- Any alcoholic beverages with meals



**DAY 7** After a couple of days travelling it's time to relax in Queenstown and enjoy this popular lakeside resort. Following a late start and hearty breakfast, we first ride the Skyline Gondola up to Bob's Peak. Travelling up 450 metres above Queenstown, this must do attraction affords stunning views over Queenstown, The Remarkables and Lake Wakatipu far below. Try your skill on the Luge track, it's fun for all ages.

We then head back down to the lakefront in time to board Queenstown's most iconic attraction – the TSS Earnslaw. Cruising across Lake Wakatipu to Walter Peak Station, this 107 year old steamship provides a taste of yesteryear. You can even view the engine room as she chugs across the lake. Our visit begins with a sumptuous BBQ style buffet lunch, after which you can explore the gardens and grounds or join the resident shepherd for a sheep farming demonstration.

On return to Queenstown the rest of the afternoon and evening is yours to plan as you wish, you may not even need dinner tonight after your amazing lunch.

**DAY 8** Sadly we have to leave Queenstown behind as we make our way south towards Fiordland National Park, but not before our first stop this morning at the historic mining town of Arrowtown, where we enjoy a cafe breakfast in a historic building, after which you can explore the town's historic main street, the Chinese Village or just browse the interesting boutique shops for a while.

Departing Arrowtown, we visit the AJ Hackett bungy jump at Kawerau Bridge in the Gibbston valley, to watch the intrepid adventurers as they plunge head first towards the river 43 metres below. Fancy a go yourself - maybe not - but grab some pictures to remind yourself what you missed. We then head south along the shores of Lake Wakatipu, past Kingston and on towards Te Anau, our next location for two nights.

**DAY 9** Today it's time for another of New Zealand's must see destinations - the majestic Milford Sound. Departing our hotel, the journey begins as we follow the shore line of Lake Te Anau offering amazing views across to Mount Lyall and other snow capped peaks. We then head into the mountains, through the beech forest of the Eglington Valley. We stop at the Mirror Lakes which offer stunning views of the Earl Mountains, and a short walk to the viewpoint allows us to stretch our legs.

Our journey continues as we travel ever higher to cross the central divide again [our third crossing after Arthurs Pass and Haast Pass]. The road offers dramatic landscapes as we head into the Hollyford Valley, crossing river after river, past lakes formed in deep glacial valleys until we reach the Homer Tunnel. Completed in 1953, the 1.2kms long Homer tunnel made the once impossible route to Milford Sound possible for all.

Arriving at Milford Sound there will be time to have lunch before we board our cruise vessel for a truly memorable experience. Our cruise will take us out into the Sound where towering waterfalls cascade thousands of feet into the water and the majestic and aptly named Mitre Peak rises almost 6000 feet out of the deep blue waters.

On our route back to Te Anau after our cruise we will stop at The Chasm, formed by the Cleddau River being forced through a narrow rocky valley on its course down from the Darran mountains. As we take the short easy walk through tranquil native forest along a well-maintained track, listen out for native birdsong as you stroll along the path and as you near the Chasm, you can't miss hearing the powerful thunder of the falls. We return to Te Anau for our last evening in the Southern Alps.

#### **DAY 10**

After a relaxing start to the day we depart for Dunedin, travelling across the extensive Southland region, to our first destination, the Croydon Aviation Heritage Centre. This nationally significant museum is dedicated to preserving and celebrating New Zealand's light civil aviation heritage. On display is the largest collection of de Havilland aircraft in the southern hemisphere. Fancy a flight in a Tiger Moth biplane, it can be arranged! Then to Gore, the self styled capital of the brown trout, chance for a photo of the iconic fish statue and also our lunch stop.

After lunch we continue to the northern part of The Catlins, a rugged and sparsely populated area. The Catlins offers a scenic coastal landscape and dense temperate rainforest and a must see destination has to be the lighthouse at Nugget Point. A short and easy walk to one of the country's oldest lighthouses offers an iconic panoramic view of the coastline with the famous rocks named by Captain Cook because they looked like pieces of gold. It is also home to some of the world's rarest penguins and one of the only places you might see seals, sea lions and elephant seals in the same area. We then head back onto SH1 to Dunedin, arriving in good time for dinner



## DAY 11

After a delicious breakfast this morning, we are met by a local guide who will show us around 'The Edinburgh of the South'. Dunedin is a fascinating city full of history and character and we will get to see some of its most iconic sights. We begin with a drive out to the beach suburbs of St Clair and St Kilda, to watch the Pacific Ocean

waves crash ashore. Then its up onto the High Road of the Otago Peninsula to Larnach Castle, where after a guided tour of the castle and gardens you have time to enjoy your lunch of choice in the Castle's Ballroom cafe.

Heading back the city along the harbour side Low Road we will get to see more of its iconic sights including the ornate Railway Station, Baldwin Street (the world's steepest), the Otago University and many other historic landmarks. Our city central hotel allows you to continue your own exploration on foot if you wish, before or after dinner this evening, perhaps trying some ales at either the two local breweries.

## DAY 12

Departing Dunedin early today, we head north along the coast to see the world famous Moeraki Boulders. These strange rock formations can be seen on the beach just a few steps down from the cafe car park. Though not unique (as similar boulder formations exist in the Hokianga Harbour in the Far North) their origins are still not 100% known.

Continuing north we stop at one of New Zealand's most significant early sheep stations at Totara Estate. Here you will have a guided tour of the original farm buildings followed by refreshments similar to those served to the workers in the 1880's. We then continue on to Oamaru with its lovely Victorian limestone buildings and home of the "Steampunk" movement. Time here to wander the interesting art and craft shops for a while or buy a snack from any of the many cafes.

We then head inland up the Waitaki Valley, passing some of the hydro-electric lakes that power much of the country. Continuing on, the mountains get closer as we head further inland, along Lake Pukaki, to our overnight stay at Mt Cook village. With New Zealand's highest mountain towering over us, we will enjoy a stay at The Hermitage – one of New Zealand's most iconic hotels.

**DAY 13** Before we depart The Hermitage, we have time to visit the Sir Edmund Hillary Centre where we can discover the history of this iconic region. This tribute to Sir Edmund Hillary (humanitarian, ambassador and one of the world's greatest explorers) showcases the Aoraki Mount Cook region, its people and its place in the universe.

We then depart towards Christchurch, our first stop today being the lakeside town of Tekapo, made famous by its iconic chapel situated on the shores of Lake Tekapo. Set amongst the natural beauty of the lake and the mountains, the Church of the Good Shepherd was built to the glory of God and as a memorial to the pioneers of the Mackenzie Country. We then continue on the more interesting inland scenic route to Christchurch, with a stop for a light lunch in Fairlie at its famous Bakery. A special dinner has been planned this evening for our last night together.

**DAY 14** Sadly our South Island Highlights Tour must come to an end, so after our last breakfast together we make our way to Christchurch Airport where our direct flight back to Tauranga awaits, where our drivers will be waiting for your final transfer to home. It's time to say goodbye to your host and guide who will be staying in Christchurch to meet our new travelers who will be arriving to embark on the first of our "West Coast & Nelson" tours for the next 6 days. Why not join them for the total South Island experience as they travel north to Wellington via the West Coast and the Nelson region to see more of the "Mainland". Click [here](#) for more info.

Note that this is a new extended "Ultimate" 14 day tour itinerary, yet the price remains the same at an amazing \$5495, or just \$4995 for the "No Frills" option which excludes the two train trips and the whale watch flight.



\* Please note, that unless specified in the itinerary we do not usually include the cost of lunches or morning and afternoon tea stops in the tour cost, but we always make stops where there are a range of options available so you can choose what you want, and have flexibility to do things on your own if you wish.

If you want the ultimate South Island experience, why not add on the new **"West Coast & Nelson"** 6 day tour from Christchurch back to Wellington.

We also have the new **"Hawkes Bay & Wairarapa"** 6 day tour that runs from Wellington back to Tauranga via the Wairarapa and Hawkes Bay for the total round trip.

[Print this page](#)

[Enquire now](#)