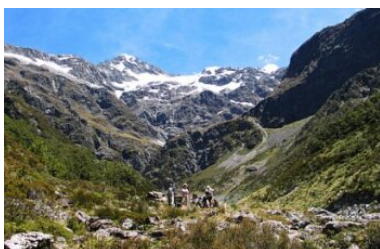


12 Day Ultimate South Island

Starting and finishing in the alpine adventure capital of Queenstown, this route circumnavigates the Southern Alps and its dramatic peaks, glaciers and lakes. Experience what New Zealand is all about. Visit Wanaka before discovering the beauty of the West Coast and glacier country before making your way to Arthur's Pass National Park. On route back to Queenstown you will take an overnight stop in the majestic Mt. Cook National Park.

Starts in: Queenstown
 Finishes in: Queenstown
 Length: 12days / 11nights
 Accommodation: Boutique Lodges & Hotels
 Can be customised: Yes

This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.



Inclusions:

Includes: Late model rental cars

Includes: Unlimited kms

Includes: Airport & ferry terminal rental car fees

Includes: Comprehensive tour pack (detailed itinerary, driving instructions, map/guidebooks, brochures)

Included activity: Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation

Included activity: Glacier Explorers

Included activity: Lake Cruise and Island Nature Walk with Eco Wanaka

Included activity: The Alpine Restaurant Buffet Dinner

Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)

Includes: GPS navigation

Includes: Additional drivers

Includes: 24/7 support while touring New Zealand

Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App

Included activity: TSS Earnslaw Cruise and Walter Peak Gourmet BBQ Dinner

Included activity: Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

: 12 breakfasts, 4 dinners

Day 1



Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation

On arrival you will be met by a private driver and delivered to your Queenstown accommodation.

Welcome to Queenstown

Renowned for its adrenaline inducing activities Queenstown is synonymous with adventure. Parked on the shores of Lake Wakatipu this small alpine town is nestled below soaring vistas of The Remarkables Mountain Range. While arguably the brightest gem in New Zealand's crown, Queenstown offers far more than an action-packed getaway. Spend time on the Gibbston wine trail and end with a meal at Michelin star chef Josh Emmett's restaurant, Rata. Take a trip down memory lane on a 100 year old steamship the TSS Earnslaw. Soak in the scenery on your walk around the lake, or venture further afield into Fiordland National Park. Head over the hill to resort town Wanaka, or re-live scenes from Lord Of The Rings by four wheel drive. But - if you really do want that rush - head out on the Shotover Jet, dive off the Nevis Bungy, freefall on the Canyon swing or Zip line the Gondola. Just be sure it's done on an empty stomach – don't say we didn't warn you!

Your accommodation: The Dairy Private Hotel by Naomi

The Dairy Private Hotel – a unique blend of exquisite design, rich history and warm hospitality in the city centre. Beginning as Queenstown's original 'dairy' (corner store) in 1920, it has now transformed into an interiors masterpiece after an exquisite refurbishment that features wallpapers from British luxury interiors brand House of Hackney.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 2



Collect Rental Car

Choose a car to best suit your needs from our fantastic rental car range. From compact economy, hatchbacks to prestige SUVs.

Queenstown to Wanaka

Leaving Queenstown you'll drive over New Zealand's highest sealed road, the Crown Range before arriving into the resort town of Wanaka.

Your accommodation: Tin Tub Lodge

Experience the Tin Tub Lodge in Wanaka, an alpine hideaway. Enjoy the magnificent views while you relax in the heated swimming pool or from your personal balcony.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3



Wānaka

Nestled on the shores of one of New Zealand's largest lakes and framed by the stunning Southern Alps. Wānaka is an alpine village that perfectly blends adventure, breathtaking scenery, and a laid-back vibe. In winter, Wānaka transforms into a bustling hub as snow sports enthusiasts flock to its renowned ski fields, Treble Cone and Cardrona. As the gateway to Mt Aspiring National Park, it offers endless opportunities for hikers, with trails winding through remote wilderness, majestic peaks, and serene river valleys. Closer to town, you'll find a network of scenic walking tracks, such as the popular Mount Iron Track and from the lakefront, it is a short walk to "That Wanaka Tree". For thrill-seekers, Wānaka is an adrenaline playground, offering skydiving, rock climbing, and jet boating. If you're seeking a sweet treat be sure to try out Black Peak Gelato or if you're after something delicious and nutritious a stop at Big Fig is a must!

Lake Cruise and Island Nature Walk with Eco Wanaka

Lying close to the centre of Lake Wanaka is Mou Waho Island Nature Reserve. A unique glacial remnant of the last ice age, the island is also the historic site of early shipbuilding and used to be a stopping place for the steamers and log rafts that once plied the lake. Accessible from Wanaka by a 35-minute boat cruise, the landing is on the eastern side of the island where the remnants of the early settlement remain; a stone wharf and a hut. A well-formed track leads from the landing and climbs steadily through native bush to near the top of Tyrwhitt Peak. Just before the top, we see Arethusa Pool, a small lake on the island with small islands in it - very intriguing! From the top, we have a sweeping 360-degree view of Lake Wanaka, its surrounding mountains and valleys, and below Arethusa Pool. The perfect spot to stop for tea or coffee. Going back down the track gives us more time to take in our surroundings, listening to and watching the lively bird-life, and just enjoying this unique wildlife reserve. You will feel well rewarded as you re-join the boat for the cruise back to Wanaka. Total cruise time is 1.5 hours. The trip runs subject to weather and lake conditions. Depending on the planting season, you can help The Reforestation of Mou Waho by planting a tree.

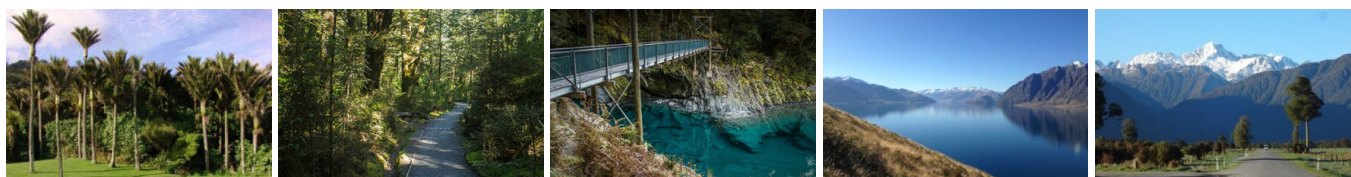
Your accommodation: Tin Tub Lodge

Experience the Tin Tub Lodge in Wanaka, an alpine hideaway. Enjoy the magnificent views while you relax in the heated swimming pool or from your personal balcony.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 4



Wanaka to Franz Josef

The route follows the shores of Lakes Wanaka and Hawea before you enter the village of Makarora, the gateway to Mt. Aspiring National Park. The Blue Pools, just outside Makarora, are a wonderful 30-minute walk through pristine native beech forest. Descending into Mt. Aspiring National Park and towards the Haast Pass, crashing rivers and waterfalls are around every corner. Crossing the Haast River you are now truly on the wild West Coast, a 600-kilometre stretch of bush, rainforest, and podocarp forest.

Paringa Salmon Farm is a great halfway stop to stretch your legs, feed the fish, and stop for lunch or refreshment.

First Fox Glacier welcomes you to the glacier region and Franz Josef township is just a further 45 minutes' drive over the impressive Fox Hills.

Your accommodation: Westwood Lodge

Westwood is a purpose built lodge, crafted entirely from wood and exquisitely decorated throughout. The lounge is the place to meet to watch the Southern Alps turn a soft pink in the setting sun.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 5



Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

A spectacular scenic flight soaring over two of New Zealand's most famous glaciers, Fox and Franz Josef. Landing at the head of one and view the incredible sight of this frozen river as it winds its way through ancient carved valleys.

Walking tracks in and around Franz Josef

Franz Josef offers many walks and hikes. Each trail offers a unique perspective of this remarkable region, from easy strolls through lush rainforest to more challenging hikes that lead to awe-inspiring glacier views. Visit the Department of Conservation (DOC) info center in Franz Josef Village for updates on track conditions, and suitability, and to learn about the area's natural history and people.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Off-Road Quad Bike Adventure Tour with Franz Josef Wilderness Tours

Experience an unforgettable off-road journey through lush rainforest, riverbeds, and breathtaking glacier landscapes, including views of the Southern Alps and Franz Josef Glacier. With expert guides providing gear, training, and fascinating Māori legends, you'll enjoy an exciting quad bike or buggy ride tailored to all skill levels. Choose from single, double, or family-friendly three-seater buggies for an adventure perfect for everyone. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

Your accommodation: Westwood Lodge

Westwood is a purpose built lodge, crafted entirely from wood and exquisitely decorated throughout. The lounge is the place to meet to watch the Southern Alps turn a soft pink in the setting sun.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6



Franz Josef to Arthur's Pass National Park

Driving north on State Highway 6 you pass through many small West Coast towns. Hari Hari is the township that Guy Menzies decided to land in (or rather crash land) as he became the first person to fly solo across the Tasman. Ross is the site of an old gold mining town and some of the old buildings remain. You can even pan for gold. The craft and gift stores in Hokitika are excellent with a great range of locally made items and if you want to explore further here then the Hokitika Gorge is worthy of a 50 minute detour.

State Highway 73 is the main road between the West Coast and Christchurch and the scenery is spectacular, even in the rain and there is a pretty good chance of rain in the high alpine mountains. With hundreds of waterfalls cascading down the bush-clad hillsides, it's not a road to be rushed. Originally the road was a pass used by Maori as they made their seasonal passage to look for the greenstone abundant in the West Coast mountains. When the gold rush hit the West Coast in the late 1800's then a road was quickly developed and not soon after the train. Today the main use for the track is transporting coal to Lyttelton Harbour but once a day the now world famous TransAlpine Scenic Train takes a few hundred tourists and visitors between the two oceans.

The Otira Gorge on the Western side of Arthur's Pass features a remarkable piece of engineering with the road passing high on a viaduct through this large valley. This is a recent addition to the route as the old road was washed away in a rock fall a few years ago. There are numerous lookout points giving great views of the valley and its engineering feat but watch out for the local residents, the kea. this bird is the world's only alpine parrot and can be extremely cheeky.

Arthur's Pass Township is a bustling place in the peak season with many walkers and adventurers using it as a base for the forays into the mountains of Arthur's pass National Park. The Department of Conservation centre here has an excellent display of the local history and is a great source of information for the many short walks in the area.

Arthur's Pass National Park

Arthur's Pass National Park straddles the Southern Alps and because of this, offers a landscape of contrast. The Western regions of the park benefit from the high rainfall that drops from the prevailing winds as it ascends the main divide, creating lush rainforests. The east is much drier and dominated by beech forest. Between the two lies the mountainous areas of the Southern Alps, home to kea and snow tussock. As well as the natural wonders of the park there is a long history of human presence, beginning with early Māori who used the passes to travel between the east and west coasts to trade pounamu-Greenstone. In 1864 Arthur Dobson surveyed the area to create a reliable route and despite his advice that it was 'almost impossible' a large number of men carved a rudimentary road through the Southern Alps - completing it in 1866. The recent Otira Viaduct was a major engineering achievement and greatly minimises the hazards of travelling this way. The West Coast goldfields were the driver for the creation of the road and also led to Arthur's Pass village being developed.

The village still exists and provides amenities including a store, cafes, restaurants and the Department of Conservation visitor centre. There are several ways to explore the National Park, including hiking, caving and bird-watching. Visit the DOC visitor centre, to be advised on the most suitable walks for your ability and the weather conditions.

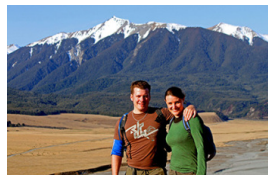
Your accommodation: Wilderness Lodge, Arthurs Pass

Wilderness Lodge sits on its own 3,000-hectare nature reserve and merino sheep farm and is surrounded by the mountains of Arthur's Pass National Park. Join nature guides to walk, canoe and discover kea parrots, giant buttercups, pygmy forests, alpine flower gardens and waterfalls.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 7



Explore Wilderness Lodge, Arthur's Pass

Nestled in mountain beech forest, midway between Christchurch and the West Coast, Wilderness Lodge Arthur's Pass offers stylish accommodation, great food, and warm hospitality in a spectacular mountain setting.

Set on a 4000 acre working sheep farm and nature reserve in the heart of the Southern Alps, a daily program of guided activities will be the highlight of your visit. Join naturalist and farmer guides to hike alpine trails, kayak wildlife refuge lakes, and experience life on a working farm.

Your accommodation: Wilderness Lodge, Arthurs Pass

Wilderness Lodge sits on its own 3,000-hectare nature reserve and merino sheep farm and is surrounded by the mountains of Arthur's Pass National Park. Join nature guides to walk, canoe and discover kea parrots, giant buttercups, pygmy forests, alpine flower gardens and waterfalls.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 8



Arthurs Pass to Windwhistle

Descending from the Southern Alps through the Canterbury High Country, pass by Lake Pearson. A beautiful tranquil lake and a good spot for fishing or bird watching. Further on you'll find Castle Hill, often referred to by climbers as one of the best rock climbing and bouldering locations in New Zealand. The limestone rock makes the area a year-round climbing destination. Follow the inland scenic route through the tiny villages of Glentunnel and Glenroy towards Windwhistle and the spectacular Rakaia Gorge taking time to stop and enjoy the spectacular views on this route.

Your accommodation: Fable Terrace Downs

In the shadow of the majestic Southern Alps, Fable Terrace Downs Resort lies in the heart of the picturesque Canterbury region. An ideal 'getting away from it all' destination close to Mt Hutt ski field and Methven.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 9



Windwhistle to Mt Cook National Park via the Inland Scenic Route

Today's journey begins with the spectacular Rakaia Gorge as you cross the narrow one lane bridge spanning the river below. Continuing on you hug the foothills of the Southern Alps and Peel Forest until you arrive into the township of Geraldine, an ideal refreshment stop (local ice cream, cheeses, bakery etc) before you head into the Mackenzie country. Turning west you continue towards the high country and passing through places such as Beautiful Valley it's not hard to understand how the names originated. Ascending Burkes Pass and onto the high country plateau and the picturesque town of Lake Tekapo, the first of the large Southern Lakes. Lake Pukaki is just another 30 minutes from Lake Tekapo and its from here you can be rewarded with spectacular views the full length of the lake and into Aoraki Mt Cook National Park. In Mt Cook Village a myriad of activities are available from glacier landings by ski plane or helicopter, kayaking on a glacial lake and a host of walks to suit all abilities and time frames. At The Hermitage Hotel the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre is a must see.

The Alpine Restaurant Buffet Dinner

The Alpine Restaurant located at The Hermitage Hotel offers sumptuous buffets for breakfast, lunch and dinner, accompanied by spectacular views of Aoraki Mount Cook from every seat. Enjoy a vast buffet including a wide range of foods such as soup, salads, seafood, hot and cold meats and desserts with tea and coffee to follow.

Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium Plus

Experience the best views in the park from the spacious top floor rooms of the magnificent Hermitage Hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 10



Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

At 3754m Aoraki-Mt Cook is Aotearoa-New Zealand's highest mountain, located deep in the heart of the Southern Alps. As well as its impressive beauty, Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park is also home to a huge range of awe-inspiring sights and activities. Take to the air with Mt Cook Ski Planes for a scenic flight that includes a glacier landing. At around 27 kilometres long the Tasman Glacier is New Zealand's longest and a Glacier Explorers tour allows you to see its unique features up close.

There are many short hikes in and around the park and these are well signposted around the village. Those with an interest in the night sky should take a Big Sky Stargazing tour with the Hermitage Hotel. The region is considered to have one of the clearest night skies in the world and is one of the few gold-rated dark sky reserves worldwide.

Visit the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre for insight into this region's mountain climbing history. You'll also learn of Sir Ed's incredible achievements and his dedication to helping others around the world.

Glacier Explorers

Experience 500-year-old icebergs up close on the Aoraki-Mt Cook terminal lake. The Glacier Explorers tour is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and one of only three in the world! Very few glaciers terminate into lakes and even fewer of them are accessible. See towering ice cliffs and floating icebergs from the safety of a specially designed boat. These boats provide a safe way to view unseen and inaccessible areas of New Zealand's largest glacier The Tasman.

Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium Plus

Experience the best views in the park from the spacious top floor rooms of the magnificent Hermitage Hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 11



Aoraki Mt Cook National Park to Queenstown

Leaving the alpine region of Aoraki Mt Cook, you'll travel through the lakeside town of Twizel, then a little further to Omarama the gliding capital of New Zealand. Continue on over the Lindis Pass, one of New Zealand's highest roads with a summit of 971 metres. Arrive in the quaint village of Tarras, then continue on a short way to the historic Bendigo Reserve, one of Otago's original gold mining settlements. Follow the road to Cromwell, and keep going through the sheer cliffs of the Kawarau Gorge towards Gibbston, one of New Zealand's premier wine growing regions. See the historic Kawarau Bridge where you can bungy jump or relax and watch others take the plunge. Approaching Queenstown, the Remarkables mountain range comes into view as you arrive into the adventure capital of New Zealand.

TSS Earnslaw Cruise and Walter Peak Gourmet BBQ Dinner

Enjoy a quintessential Kiwi experience, a delicious gourmet BBQ buffet meal, and a farm demonstration in a stunning lakeside setting. Take in the stunning views of Lake Wakatipu and its surroundings as you cruise across the lake to the historic Walter Peak high country farm aboard the TSS Earnslaw Steamship. Enjoy the ambiance of the heart of the stately homestead while your Colonel's Homestead Restaurant chef prepares a gourmet BBQ dinner. Your seasonal menu includes an extensive selection of local New Zealand produce, including succulent meats and a selection of delicious vegetables and salads. Complete your meal with your choice of delicious desserts, or New Zealand cheeses. After dinner, watch the farm dogs in action with a sheep-herding demonstration and say hello to the other farm animals. Finally, cruise home under the southern stars and enjoy the fresh night air as the lights of Queenstown draw ever closer.

Your accommodation: The Dairy Private Hotel by Naumi

The Dairy Private Hotel – a unique blend of exquisite design, rich history and warm hospitality in the city centre. Beginning as Queenstown's original 'dairy' (corner store) in 1920, it has now transformed into an interiors masterpiece after an exquisite refurbishment that features wallpapers from British luxury interiors brand House of Hackney.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 12



Return your vehicle to Queenstown Airport

Explore more of Queenstown before dropping your rental car at the airport depot and continuing your onward journey.

Farewell from Aotearoa-New Zealand

Bid farewell to New Zealand, taking with you unforgettable memories of its breathtaking landscapes and incredible adventures. In Maori, it is said mā te wā, which is not goodbye, it is see you soon!

Tour details

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Departures: | Daily |
| Tour type: | South Island Self Drive |
| Starts: | Queenstown |
| Finishes: | Queenstown |
| Tour length: | 12 |
| Accommodation: | Boutique Lodges & Hotels |
| Car/transport type: | |

Included activities

| | |
|----------|---|
| Includes | 4 dinners |
| Includes | 10 breakfasts |
| Includes | Private airport transfers |
| Includes | Wilderness Lodge Arthur's Pass |
| Includes | Glacier Explorers Tour, Mt Cook National Park |
| Includes | TSS Earnslaw cruise and dinner at Walter Peak high country farm, Queenstown |
| Includes | Lake Wanaka Cruise and Island Nature Walk |
| Includes | Entry to Glacier Hot Pools |
| Includes | Twin Glaciers Scenic Helicopter Flight, Franz Josef |

Accommodation summary

| | |
|--------|---|
| Day 1 | The Dairy Private Hotel by Naumi |
| Day 2 | Tin Tub Lodge |
| Day 3 | Tin Tub Lodge |
| Day 4 | Westwood Lodge |
| Day 5 | Westwood Lodge |
| Day 6 | Wilderness Lodge, Arthurs Pass |
| Day 7 | Wilderness Lodge, Arthurs Pass |
| Day 8 | Fable Terrace Downs |
| Day 9 | Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium Plus |
| Day 10 | Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium Plus |
| Day 11 | The Dairy Private Hotel by Naumi |