

Southern Explorer Christchurch to Queenstown

Taking you south from Christchurch, this 10 day includes the majestic scenery of the lower South Island. Beginning with the large open spaces of the McKenzie Country and Mt. Cook National Park, you then travel to the coast and the Scottish influenced city of Dunedin with its nearby wildlife havens. In Fiordland there is a full day to explore Milford Sound including a Real Journeys Nature Cruise, before you continue to the mountains and lakes of the Southern Lakes region.

Starts in: Christchurch
Finishes in: Queenstown
Length: 10days / 9nights
Accommodation: Hotel 4 star
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: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)
Includes: Unlimited kms
Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring
Included activity: Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation
Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App
Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course
Included activity: Milford Sound Cruise with Real NZ - Lunch Included
Included activity: Shotover Canyon Jet Boat Ride
9 breakfasts, 1 lunch



Day 1



Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation

On arrival, you will be met by a private driver and transferred to your Christchurch accommodation.

Welcome to Christchurch City

Christchurch New Zealand's garden city is steadily being transformed into a vibrant urban destination. Encompassing a large green belt, it is known for its wide tree lined avenues and lush gardens. A great way to explore the city or easy way to see the sights or ride the historic trams across town to the renowned botanic gardens and the unique cardboard Transitional Cathedral, that's right it is built of cardboard!

Your accommodation: Sudima Christchurch City

Sudima Christchurch City is a brand new 5-star boutique hotel, ideally located on Victoria Street. Amidst an array of cafes, restaurants and bars, stay only a martini olive pips' throw from beautiful Hagley Park and Christchurch's CBD. Experience the garden city in comfort and style.



Day 2



Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

Explore Christchurch

Following earthquakes that razed its centre and much of the outlying suburbs, Ōtautahi-Christchurch is well into a billion-dollar makeover. In the middle of the Canterbury Plains, bordering the Pacific Ocean, New Zealand's newest city is an ideal gateway to exploring the middle of the South. Go punting on the Avon River, take a historic tram ride, catch the gondola to the rim of an extinct volcano or do all three! See the world's only Cardboard Cathedral and for nature enthusiasts - wander the renowned Christchurch Botanic Gardens, or head to Oxford Terrace in the city to find a great spot to eat or drink. Drive an hour in any direction to ski, mountain bike, wine taste, whale-watch, bungee jump or play golf. Take the winding Port Hills road to the French settlement of Akaroa & Banks Peninsula and tour the vines in Waipara for an authentic New Zealand wine-tasting experience.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Christchurch Triple Pass - Tram, Punting and Gondola

Experience three of Christchurch's iconic attractions in one day: the Christchurch Tram, Christchurch Gondola, and Punting on the Avon River. The historic tram is a delightful way to explore the evolving inner city, taking in the various sights with the hop-on hop-off pass and learning about the city from the live commentary. You'll also enjoy a bird's eye view of Christchurch and the Canterbury region including the distant peaks of the Southern Alps when you ride the gondola cableway to the top of the Port Hills in Heathcote Valley. Punting on the Avon River takes you through the city's green belt: a relaxing way to explore what is affectionately known as the 'Garden City'.

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3



Christchurch to Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

Drive through the heart of the South Island, crossing the vast Canterbury plains. Catch your breath in Geraldine before continuing through Fairlie. Ascending Burkes pass you'll come to the picturesque town of Lake Tekapo. Follow the road and take in the view of Aoraki-Mt Cook (New Zealand's tallest mountain) from the shores of Lake Pukaki, known for its glacier fed turquoise blue colour. Continue along the lake to your final destination Aoraki-Mt Cook Village.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - 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.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Museum and Theatre Explorer Pass with Hermitage

A tribute to New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary, a humanitarian, ambassador, and one of the world's greatest explorers. The centre showcases the Aoraki Mount Cook region, the history of climbing, and early transport used throughout the region. This comprehensive museum details the life of Sir Edmund Hillary, the Hermitage, and provides access to the 126-seat custom-designed theatre. Check out the daily film schedule which includes 3D Movies, documentaries, and 360-degree digital dome features.

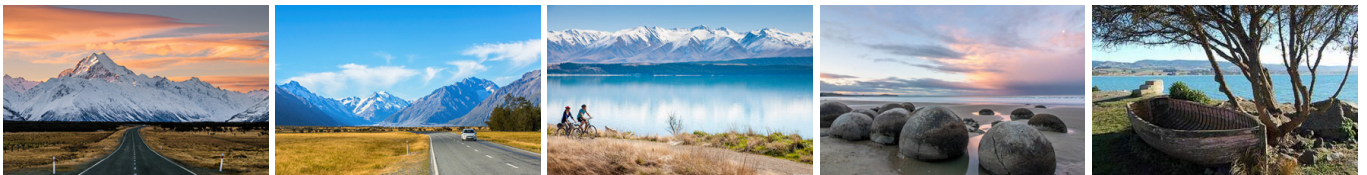
Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Wakefield Wing Superior Room

The Hermitage Hotel ringed by magnificent snow-capped peaks of the Southern Alps, is a world-renowned tourist destination and has been an icon of superior accommodation and dining since 1884. Room type - Wakefield Wing Superior room facing Aoraki/Mt. Cook.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 4



Aoraki Mt Cook National Park to Dunedin

Leave Aoraki Mt Cook National Park and travel past Twizel, one of the locations for the Lord of the Rings films. Go through Omarama, the gliding capital of New Zealand. Continue down the Waitaki Valley follow the hydro power generating system to the rural town of Kurow, home to the divine Valli Wines. Stop for a sip or continue on to the east coast. Stretch your legs in Oamaru, known for its white stone buildings constructed with the local Oamaru Stone and Steampunk influence. If you were a little late off the mark this morning you may get the chance to see the blue penguins come ashore at dusk. Continue south down the coast to Moeraki, and take a detour towards the beach to see the Moeraki Boulders, a unique geological feature well worth a look. As you arrive in Dunedin, take in the city's Edwardian and Scottish heritage reflected in the buildings around the city centre The Octagon.

Your accommodation: Scenic Hotel Dunedin City

Just two blocks from the Octagon in the heart of the city, Scenic Hotel Dunedin City is close to shops, parks and the best city attractions and services. The hotel provides excellent 4-star accommodation to Dunedin's visitors.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 5



Explore Dunedin and the Otago Peninsula

Known as the Edinburgh of the South, Dunedin City has a heavy Scottish influence. Surrounded by rugged coastal plains and windswept beaches it's home to an eclectic mix of historical and modern architecture as well as industrial technology. Renowned for its Flemish Baroque-inspired 'gingerbread house' Railway Station, this university town is bustling with life. Head to the Saturday farmers market held in the aforementioned railway grounds for a taste of organic produce, handmade crepes and local honey. Explore the many cafes and wine bars in The Octagon, then continue on a self-guided walking tour of the internationally acclaimed Street Art dotted around the city. Drive to the coast and watch the freighters passing in the distance while you sunbathe, or hire a mountain bike and test your legs on one of the many trails available in the area. For a more immersive historical experience, follow the coast to New Zealand's only castle, Larnach Castle. On your way back be sure to head to the Otago Peninsula to see the largest mainland Albatross colony in the world.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Penguin Tour with The Opera

Learn about the endangered Yellow Eyed Penguin when you visit The Opera - Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance, a private conservation reserve dedicated to ensuring the survival of this unique species. The project is entirely funded by guided tours which allow the conservation team to engage in habitat restoration, predator control, a research program, and an on-site rehabilitation facility.

On your tour, you will learn about the issues the Yellow Eyed Penguin faces, their life cycle, and how the project is carried out. Your experience will begin in a theatre before moving to the rehabilitation center where penguins may be seen up close. You'll take a short bus trip over to the reserve and be led on foot approx 2km by your guide through a system of covered trenches to view hides that allow access to the living and breeding habitat of this very shy bird without disturbing them. There is also an opportunity to meet other animals that reside in the reserve including fur seals, sea lions, and several species of shore and land birds.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Royal Albatross Centre - Unique Albatross and Fort Taiaroa Tour

The Royal Albatross colony at Taiaroa Head on the Otago Peninsula is the only mainland breeding colony of Royal Albatross in the world. From the centre, it's a short walk to the observatory for the privilege of seeing the greatest of all seabirds. Wander through the McMillan Gallery and learn more of the history and wildlife of the area. The Unique Taiaroa experience offers a comprehensive 90 minutes guided tour of both the Albatross colony and Fort Taiaroa. Enjoy spectacular Albatross viewing from the Richdale Observatory including the introductory "Attenborough" video and albatross breeding cycle information. The Fort Taiaroa guided tour takes you back into New Zealand's colonial past. It covers the Maori and European occupation of the headland with a visit to 'Fort Taiaroa,' underground fortifications beneath the Albatross Colony. Walk through the underground tunnels to the 1886 Armstrong Disappearing Gun that is still in working order. This was established to counter the anticipated threat of invasion from Tsarist Russia.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Larnach Castle and Gardens

Larnach Castle, New Zealand's only castle, was built in 1871 by politician and merchant William Larnach, a visionary who played a key role in shaping the country's early history. Constructed for his beloved first wife, Eliza, the castle's shell took 200 workmen three years to complete, followed by twelve years of intricate interior craftsmanship. Perched high on the Otago Peninsula, the castle offers stunning views over Dunedin City. Its gardens hold International Garden of Significance status and feature a unique collection of antiques, including a rare nine-piece Totara knot suite. The Ballroom Café provides the perfect spot to relax and enjoy refreshments while reflecting on your visit. The ballroom itself has a fascinating history, having once served as an asylum, an antique sales room, and even a sheep pen before its beautiful restoration. With a self-guided tour, you can explore the castle and gardens at your own pace.

Your accommodation: Scenic Hotel Dunedin City

Just two blocks from the Octagon in the heart of the city, Scenic Hotel Dunedin City is close to shops, parks and the best city attractions and services. The hotel provides excellent 4-star accommodation to Dunedin's visitors.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6



Dunedin to Te Anau (via Invercargill)

The drive to Te Anau takes you through classic Southland farming scenery. Head off-the-beaten-track today and follow the coastline instead of the inland route. Go through The Catlins area and be sure to take a detour to Kaka Point to view its majestic cliffs and pounding surf. If time permits, keep driving towards Nugget Point, iconic for its steep headland with a lighthouse perched atop. Continue through Invercargill to Riverton and Colac Bay, and then head north to Manapouri. From here you can embark on a day or overnight cruise to the remote Doubtful Sound, renowned for its natural beauty. Just a short way further will bring you to your lakeside destination of Te Anau, gateway to Fiordland National Park and Milford Sound.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Te Anau Glowworm Caves with RealNZ

Begin your Te Anau Glowworm experience with a scenic cruise across Lake Te Anau on board the luxury catamaran, Luminosa, to the western side of the lake. On arrival, you'll enter the caves through Cavern House, where informative displays detail the history of this 12,000 year old underground network. You'll then explore by limestone pathway while your guide points out hidden whirlpools, sculpted rock formations, and a rushing underground waterfall. See a magical display of thousands of glowworms as you glide through the darkness in a small boat.

Your accommodation: Distinction Luxmore Hotel

The perfect base for all your Fiordland travel, Distinction Luxmore Hotel provides comfortable accommodation right in the heart of Te Anau.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7



Te Anau to Milford Sound, returning to Te Anau

The magnificent Milford Road leading to Milford Sound offers some of the most beautiful and iconic scenery in the country. Countless photo opportunities mean this drive should not be rushed. From crystal clear lakes and towering mountains to lush glacier-formed meadows, this area is abundant with picture-perfect scenes. Continue on through the Homer Tunnel, an engineering marvel at 1219 meters long. Arriving in the village of Milford, you will be greeted with an amazing view of Mitre Peak. A day cruise into the heart of the sound is not to be missed. You'll learn about how this magnificent area was formed and experience the wonder of the falls that line the Fjord before back-tracking the way you came.

Milford Sound Cruise with Real NZ - Lunch Included

Get up close and personal with Milford Sound on a leisurely cruise of this spectacular fiord. From thundering waterfalls to sky-high mountains to lush rainforests, Milford has it all. Experience the spray of a waterfall as you cruise close to sheer rock faces. Informative, participative and relaxed, this is the perfect way to experience Milford Sound to the fullest.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Milford Sound Lunch Cruise on the Fiordland Jewel with Fiordland Discovery

Embark on an unforgettable Milford Sound adventure aboard a boutique catamaran, the Fiordland Jewel. Designed for ultimate comfort and breathtaking views, our small group cruise offers cozy lounges, dining booths, and panoramic sea vistas from the main saloon or the outdoor dining area. Regardless of the weather, you'll be immersed in the stunning scenery and nature that surround you. Our knowledgeable crew will share fascinating stories and point out wildlife such as seals, penguins, and dolphins along the way. Enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by the onboard chef as you sail through the fiord. With ample outdoor space, you can fully experience the tranquillity and beauty of Milford Sound.

Your accommodation: Distinction Luxmore Hotel

The perfect base for all your Fiordland travel, Distinction Luxmore Hotel provides comfortable accommodation right in the heart of Te Anau.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 8



Te Anau to Queenstown

Journey across expansive tussock lands en route to Queenstown. Pass through Mossburn, renowned as the deer capital of New Zealand, and continue through the picturesque Southland countryside. As the road begins to trace the edge of Lake Wakatipu, marvel at the breathtaking views from the Devil's Staircase. Finally, approach Queenstown, the adventure capital of New Zealand, with the Remarkables mountain range standing majestically in the backdrop.

Shotover Jet Canyon Jet Boat Ride

Shotover Jet is the only company permitted to operate in the Shotover River Canyons. It's a thrilling ride! Skim past rocky outcrops at close range in your Shotover Jet 'Big Red', as you twist and turn through the narrow canyons at breathtaking speeds. And a major highlight - hold tight for the world-famous Shotover Jet full 360-degree spins! It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

Your accommodation: Millennium Hotel Queenstown

Right in the heart of the action, the Millennium Hotel is just minutes from Queenstown's central shopping and entertainment district. Outdoor activities such as bungy jumping, white water rafting and jet boating are just some of the easily accessible activities nearby in New Zealand's adventure capital.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 9



Explore Queenstown

Well-known as New Zealand's 'adventure capital', Queenstown is home to a range of adventures, from the world's first and most famous bungy jumps to jet boat thrills, white-water rafting, and skydiving. However, Queenstown offers far more than a fast-paced, action-packed holiday. Settled on the shores of beautiful Lake Wakatipu beneath a soaring panorama of the Remarkables Mountain Range, this alpine town is surrounded by many historic, gastronomic, and scenic wonders. Take a stroll through the beautiful lakefront parks and gardens, browse through market stalls on weekends, dine in wonderful al-fresco restaurants, or ride on the 100-year-old historic Steamship - TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak Station. Take the Queenstown Gondola up to Bob's Peak and soak up the panoramic views of the magnificent lake and mountain ranges. And after all of that, if you do want the adrenaline rush, Queenstown is known for taking your pick from the Shotover Jet, Canyon Swing, Zipline, Luge, or Heli-hike.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Gondola and 3 Luge Rides with Skyline Queenstown

In the heart of Queenstown, located 450 metres above town in the Ben Lomond Scenic Reserve is the Skyline Complex. A gondola ride to the summit makes for awe-inspiring views of the city surround. Arrive at the complex and wander the outside viewing decks for a picture perfect outlook. Then onto the Luge! The 800 metre luge track offers an exhilarating journey through banked corners, tunnels and dippers.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - 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.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Arrowtown and Wānaka Highlights Tour with Remarkable Scenic Tours

Discover the charm of historic Arrowtown, the serene beauty of Wānaka, and the iconic Cardrona Hotel on this guided tour. Highlights include the Chinese Village in Arrowtown, the famous Wānaka tree, Lake Wānaka's stunning views, the quirky bra fence, and breathtaking lookouts from the Crown Range and Crown Terrace.

Your accommodation: Millennium Hotel Queenstown

Right in the heart of the action, the Millennium Hotel is just minutes from Queenstown's central shopping and entertainment district. Outdoor activities such as bungy jumping, white water rafting and jet boating are just some of the easily accessible activities nearby in New Zealand's adventure capital.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 10



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 Aotearoa-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:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Queenstown
Tour length:	10
Accommodation:	Hotel 4 star
Car/transport type:	

Included activities

Includes	All breakfasts
Includes	Private airport transfers
Includes	Real Journeys Milford Sound Cruise

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Sudima Christchurch City
Day 2	Sudima Christchurch City
Day 3	Hermitage Hotel, Wakefield Wing Superior Room
Day 4	Scenic Hotel Dunedin City
Day 5	Scenic Hotel Dunedin City
Day 6	Distinction Luxmore Hotel
Day 7	Distinction Luxmore Hotel
Day 8	Millennium Hotel Queenstown
Day 9	Millennium Hotel Queenstown