



## AAT Kings: Essence of New Zealand - Small Group Tour 26/27

Culture and nature unite in this inter-island New Zealand tour. Oh, and there's a good dose of food and wine on the side to deliver a well-rounded taste of North and South. Whether you're into wide open spaces, bubbling geysers or windswept coasts. Whether you're a history, sport, architecture or culture buff. This New Zealand guided tour is for you.

Starts in: Christchurch

Finishes in: Auckland

Length: 18days / 17nights

Accommodation: Hotel 3 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: All coach transport

Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring

Included: Art Deco tour in Napier

Included: Christchurch City Tour

Included: Cruise on the Interislander Ferry

Included: Milford Sound Cruise

Included: Punakaiki Pancake Rocks walk

Included: Te Puia geothermal valley

Included: TranzAlpine Train

Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations

Included: All Blacks Experience

Included: Bill Richardson Transport World

Included: Church of the Good Shepherd at Tekapo

Included: Huka Falls

Included: Pounamu (Greenstone) Studio visit

Included: Farm experience at Real Country

Included: Templeton Flax Mill tour

: 17 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 5 dinners

## Day 1

You'll want to arrive early to see just how Christchurch has transformed itself since the devastating 2010/11 earthquakes. Your Driver Guide will welcome you this evening and provide you with a tour briefing.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)

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## Day 2

Tour the city of Christchurch to view the innovative Cardboard Cathedral and enjoy a stop at the Botanic Gardens, famed for its stunning collection of plants from around the world, beautifully landscaped gardens, and tranquil riverside setting. Today's journey offers a variety of scenic contrasts. Begin with a visit to Geraldine, a quaint rural town famous for its local cheeses and produce, which you can sample at the historic Barkers Store. Next, travel along the East Coast to the Waitaki Valley, a picturesque region of winding rivers and rolling farmlands, with the snow-capped mountains providing a stunning backdrop to Lake Benmore. Finally, continue to Omarama, a quintessential country town, where you'll spend the evening.

Staying in:

- Distinction Heritage Gateway Hotel (1 night)

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## Day 3

Your visit to Clyde will have your camera clicking non-stop. This charming historic town may be small, but it's full of character, with its town centre designated as a historic precinct, featuring buildings from its gold mining past now transformed into cafes and shops. Today's destination is Invercargill, a city obsessed with motor vehicles. Tributes to speed legends colour the city, so it's only fitting that you visit Transport World for a guided tour and Highlight Dinner. Explore classic vehicles as you are transported on a nostalgic walk back in time. Bill Richardson began collecting old trucks in 1967 and, in his words, sometimes "bought a truck more with our hearts than with our heads." The collection now comprises of many rare and unusual vehicles, along with popular classic vehicles.

Staying in:

- Kelvin Hotel (1 night)

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## Day 4

Journey through the rolling farmland and lush pastures of Southland to Templeton Flax Mill. Here, you will have a guided tour and presentation from Nathan Templeton, Mill curator and grandson of the Mill founder. Learn about the history and importance of the flax mill industry to the Southland economy on this MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience. All proceeds go directly to maintaining the Mill as a living Museum. Continue to Riverton, a charming seaside town known for its charming local cafes and on to Fiordland National Park and the stunning Te Anau, nestled on the shores of the South Island's largest lake. Immerse yourself in the serenity - this is as good as it gets.

Staying in:

- Distinction Luxmore Hotel (1 night)

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## Day 5

From the moment you step outside today, nature rules. Your route through Fiordland National Park is an intoxicating union of beech forests, alluvial flats, meadows and mirror-like lakes. Gin-clear rivers carve the countryside, with all roads leading to Milford Sound/Piopiotahi. Venture out into the pristine fiord on an included sightseeing cruise for awe-inspiring scenery with towering cliffs, tumbling waterfalls and abundant wildlife. The Kea is a common sight.

Staying in:

- Distinction Luxmore Hotel (1 night)

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## Day 6

Today on your New Zealand tour, get a taste of country life combined with good old-fashioned southern hospitality as you meet a local farmer at Real Country. Get a feel for life on the farm as you have demonstrations of horse communication and working sheep dog mustering. Plus, for every guest, we donate funds to The Fairlight Foundation, Advancing Women in Agriculture, a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience. Visit the historic gold rush village of Arrowtown, where you can wander the movie-set-like streets, lined with trees and character-filled boutiques, then continue to Queenstown for your two-night stay in the adventure capital of New Zealand.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown (1 night)

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## Day 7

You have time today to appreciate Queenstown and its surrounds. Enjoy an included lunch at your leisure at cult eatery Fergburger, famous for its mouthwatering gourmet burgers and vibrant atmosphere. You may like to sign up for an Optional Experience or two. Like adventure? Feel the wind in your hair on the high-octane jet boat ride, perhaps, twisting and revving along Queenstown's Shotover River. Wine aficionado? Sip your way through surrounding vineyards. Tours of the South Island don't get much tastier than this. There's also the option of an afternoon cruise on Lake Wakatipu aboard the historic TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak High Country Farm for a gourmet barbecue dinner (all own expense).

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown (1 night)

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## Day 8

Visit Jones Family Fruit Stall for fresh local stone fruit and then travel over the breathtaking alpine crossing of the Lindis Pass between Otago and the Mackenzie Basin, offering panoramic views of rugged Mountain peaks, Mount Cook among them. Visit Tekapo, located on the shores of the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo, it's quite the backdrop for the stone-hewn Church of Good Shepherd. Continue through the aptly named Canterbury Plains to Christchurch.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)

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## Day 9

All aboard the TranzAlpine train bound for Arthur's Pass, through tunnels and over viaducts with panoramic views of snow-capped peaks, icy rivers, beech forests, gorges and river valleys. Visit Greymouth, known for its rich mining history, and prepare yourself for Punakaiki's Pancake Rocks and blowholes; they owe their existence to the thundering surf that will lull you to sleep at your coastal eco retreat tonight.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Punakaiki (1 night)

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## Day 10

Sit back and relax – that's all you have to do today as you ease along the Heritage Highway toward Nelson. Press your nose against the glass as your coach weaves through Buller Gorge – a deep canyon home to New Zealand's longest swing bridge – and Kahurangi National Park, a place of wild rivers, high plateaus, alpine herb fields and coastal forests.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)

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## Day 11

Sleep in or work up a sweat – today is completely at your leisure. We have a few ideas up our sleeve, of course. Travel to the Abel Tasman National Park for the ultimate cruise and walk combination (own expense). This pocket in the north of the island inspires calm, its golden beaches framed by sculpted granite cliffs that all unite to create one of the country's most legendary coastal tracks.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)

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## Day 12

You'll want a window seat for the cruise from the South Island to the North Island aboard the ferry. Breathtaking views unfold as you glide through Queen Charlotte Sound, up the Tory Channel and across the Cook Strait, navigating a maze of arms and inlets into New Zealand's cool little capital of Wellington.

Staying in:

- James Cook Grand Chancellor (1 night)

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## Day 13

View the sights of Wellington including the Beehive and Parliament grounds this morning before you travel to Napier. Beautifully preserved 1930s architecture is Napier's special point of difference.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)

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## Day 14

This morning meet your informative and entertaining local guide from the Art Deco Trust who will bring Napier's fascinating architectural history to life as you take an easy stroll through the compact Art Deco Quarter in the vibrant city centre. On this MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience, your participation helps preserve Napier's Art Deco heritage. This afternoon relax or perhaps choose an optional experience of either a wine tour of local Hawkes Bay vineyards, or a safari to the famous Gannet nesting colony at cape Kidnappers with Gannet Safaris Overland (both own expense).

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)

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## Day 15

Today, visit the mighty Huka Falls before continuing to Rotorua, famed for its bubbling mud pools, geysers, and rich Māori culture. Visit a traditional Pounamu workshop to learn about jade carving and its cultural meaning. Tonight, delve deep into Māori culture with the Te Pō Indigenous Experience at Te Puia. It begins with an exhilarating cultural performance in a beautifully carved meeting house, Te Aronui a Rua, followed by a view of the Pohutu Geyser, one of New Zealand's geothermal wonderlands, and ends with a delicious buffet dinner of hāngī-inspired cuisine - a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)

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## Day 16

You could spend weeks discovering Rotorua. But you have today, so seize the moment and set out to explore. Hobbit fans will want to take advantage of the opportunity to tour the Hobbiton Movie Set featured in The Lord of the Rings & Hobbit movies. Want a bit of down time? Bliss out at Wai Ariki Hotel Springs & Spa. Or arguably the best way to understand just how otherworldly your destination is, from the air. Ask us about a scenic flight (all own expense).

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)

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## Day 17

From New Zealand's longest waterway, the Waikato River, to its largest city, welcome to Auckland, the 'City of Sails'. You'll understand how it got its moniker when you glimpse yachts gliding around its two harbours on your city tour. But today's Auckland tour sees your sights set firmly on New Zealand's national game: rugby. The interactive All Blacks Experience explores an introduction to the game as a part of New Zealand culture and ends with a traditional haka with you front and centre. Later, end your tour on a high note with drinks with your Travel Director and

travel companions.

Staying in:

- Adina Apartment Hotel Britomart (1 night)

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## Day 18

How do you pick a favourite adventure from the last 18 days? You don't have to - let them all shine in equal measure in your memory.

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## Tour details

Departures: Daily  
Tour type: Small Group Escorted Tour  
Starts: Christchurch  
Finishes: Auckland  
Tour length: 18  
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star  
Car/transport type:

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## Accommodation summary