

AAT Kings: Southern Spirit - Small Group Tour 26/27

Join a tour which embodies the Southern Spirit. This unforgettable adventure blends rugged natural beauty with unique local experiences. Stay beachside at Punakaiki, enjoy hands-on fun at Real Country and unwind in sunny Nelson near Abel Tasman National Park. From Queenstown's alpine adventure to a highlight dinner at Invercargill's Transport World and Wellington's scenic charm, this tour showcases the best of Aotearoa.



Starts in: Christchurch
 Finishes in: Wellington
 Length: 13days / 12nights
 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: Christchurch City Tour
 Included: Cruise on the Interislander Ferry
 Included: Punakaiki Pancake Rocks walk
 Included: Tekapo Dark Sky Experience
 Included: TranzAlpine Train

Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
 Included: Bill Richardson Transport World
 Included: Church of the Good Shepherd at Tekapo
 Included: Milford Sound Cruise
 Included: Farm experience at Real Country
 Included: Templeton Flax Mill tour
 : 12 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 4 dinners

Day 1

You don't have to arrive in Christchurch early, but we recommend you do – this South Island city has some of New Zealand's most innovative architecture, not to mention forward-thinking restaurants and bars. Tonight, it's time to meet your Travel Director and travelling companions for drinks and a tour briefing.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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Day 2

Onboard this morning's city sights tour discover Christchurch's innovative Cardboard Cathedral and enjoy some free time in the serene Botanic Gardens, showcasing global plant collections and tranquil riverside views. Leaving the Garden city behind, visit Geraldine, renowned for local cheeses and treats at Barkers Store. Travel along the East Coast through the Waitaki Valley's winding rivers, rolling farmlands, and snow-capped mountains framing Lake Benmore. Conclude your day in Omarama, a quintessential country town, where you'll unwind for 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 wheels. Tributes to speed legends colour the city, so it's only fitting that you visit Bill Richardson Transport World for a guided tour. Explore more than 300 vehicles as you are taken on a journey of transport through the ages. 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 a sightseeing cruise for awe-inspiring scenery with towering cliffs, tumbling waterfalls and abundant wildlife. The New Zealand alpine parrot, the Kea are 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. 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 Lakefront (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 Lakefront (1 night)
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Day 8

Visit the 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. See the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo, it's quite the backdrop for the stone-hewn Church of the Good Shepherd. Continue through the aptly named Canterbury Plains to the Garden city of Christchurch, and enjoy a city tour of the major landmarks.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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Day 9

All aboard the scenic 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

After action-packed days, all you need to do today is sit back and enjoy the drama of the Heritage Highway en route to Nelson. Gaze over Buller Gorge and Kahurangi National Park, a place of wild rivers, high plateaus, alpine herbfields and coastal forests.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)
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Day 11

The South Island's oldest city, Nelson is also one of the sunniest. Explore nearby Tahunanui Beach, or you may choose to head further afield to the world-famous Abel Tasman National Park. This pocket in the top of the island is a beautiful union of golden beaches framed by sculpted granite cliffs.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)
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Day 12

All aboard for a cruise through Queen Charlotte Sound, up the Tory Channel and across Cook Strait, from the South Island to the North, navigating a maze of arms and inlets into New Zealand's cool little capital of Wellington. Ask your Travel Director for tips on where to eat tonight.

Staying in:

- James Cook Grand Chancellor (1 night)
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Day 13

Wellington is known for its uber-cool cafes, so grab a coffee before you head out on your city sights tour. After the tour, bid farewell to your NZ crew. You may wish to depart directly, or if you have time, linger in town, discovering Māori culture at Te Papa, the Museum of New Zealand (entrance fee applies).

Tour details

Departures: Daily
Tour type: Small Group Escorted Tour
Starts: Christchurch
Finishes: Wellington
Tour length: 13
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary