

AAT Kings: New Zealand Magic 26/27

From bubbling geysers to yawning gorges; gem-like glaciers to mirrored lakes; snow-tipped mountains to subtropical islands; it's hard to believe that such a small country packs so much natural punch into its two islands. And then there are New Zealand's cosmopolitan cities and towns, and celebration of Māori culture wherever you turn. Make no mistake - this journey from south to north is the ultimate New Zealand tour. Magic is an understatement.



Starts in: Christchurch
 Finishes in: Auckland
 Length: 17days / 16nights
 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: Cruise on the Interislander Ferry
- Included: Te Puia geothermal valley
- Included: Tekapo Dark Sky Experience
- Included: TSS Earnslaw cruise & BBQ dinner at Walter Peak High Country Farm
- Included: Waitomo GlowWorm Caves
- : 16 breakfasts, 7 dinners

- Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
- Included: Church of the Good Shepherd at Tekapo
- Included: Milford Sound Cruise
- Included: Te Puia Indigenous Experience
- Included: TranzAlpine Train
- Included: Waitangi Treaty Grounds
- Included: Visit Arrowtown

Day 1

On arrival in the 'Garden City' you'll have time at leisure to explore or relax. Tonight, meet your Travel Director and fellow travellers for a tour briefing and drinks.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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Day 2

Your New Zealand tour starts on a high as you jump 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. From Arthur's Pass, visit the small town of Hokitika, the heritage and cultural centre of the West Coast well-known for its jade. Things are about to get cool again as you arrive in the town of Franz Josef/Waiau, gateway to Franz Josef Glacier/Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere, a white-out of snow and ice that shimmers like a gem. Get some perspective on an Optional Experience* scenic helicopter flight over this natural wonder – if the weather behaves, you may even get to land on it.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Franz Josef Glacier (1 night)
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Day 3

Over the Haast Pass, the alpine scenery of the Southern Lakes spreads before you. First up there's lovely Lake Hawea and Lake Dunstan, where you'll pause at the Jones Family fruit stall to refuel on flavour-packed stone fruit. We know you'll want to linger in Arrowtown's movie-set-like streets, lined with trees and character-filled boutiques. But Lake Wakatipu and the Remarkables await on your Queenstown tour.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown Lakefront (1 night)
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Day 4

Take today at your own pace. Fancy an Optional Experience*? Like things fast and furious? Feel the wind in your hair on high-octane jet boat ride, perhaps. There's a reason why Queenstown is known as the adventure capital of the country. Nature lover? Discover some of New Zealand's feathered friends at Kiwi Park. Wine aficionado? Sip your way through surrounding vineyards. Wherever you wander, make sure you're back in time to glide across Lake Wakatipu aboard the historic TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak High Country Farm for a gourmet barbecue dinner.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown Lakefront (1 night)
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Day 5

From the moment you step outside today, nature rules. Your route from the Mirror Lakes through the Cleddau Valley is the entrée to your Milford Sound/Piopiotahti tour. Cruising this World Heritage listed expanse will give you goosebumps, a string of waterfalls creating a misty curtain across sheer escarpments. Look out for dolphins – they're a common sight here. Journey back through Fiordland National Park is an intoxicating union of beech forests, alluvial flats, meadows and gin-clear rivers, carving up the countryside en route to Te Anau.

Staying in:

- Distinction Luxmore Hotel (1 night)
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Day 6

Soak up the serenity of the South Island's biggest lake on an early morning walk, perhaps, before leaving the forested slopes of Fiordland behind. Rolling green hills dotted with doe-eyed sheep are your new backdrop as you ease into the Edinburgh of the South: Dunedin. While away the afternoon with an Optional Experience*, in atmospheric art-lined alleys or sipping a lager or two on a visit to Dunedin Craft Distillers, a

MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® experience, or visit grand Larnach Castle, the only one of its kind in the country. You could venture further afield to discover the wildlife that thrives in this pretty pocket of the country – fur seals and penguins among them.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Dunedin City (1 night)
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Day 7

Time is on your side this morning. Sleep in or take a stroll around the manicured grounds of Otago University to the city's main George Street. If you've ever wanted to see New Zealand's oldest public gardens, today you're in luck with a visit to Oamaru, known for its stately tree-lined streets and limestone buildings.

Staying in:

- Distinction Heritage Gateway Hotel (1 night)
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Day 8

Your outlook this morning is the Canterbury Plains: the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo, snow-capped mountains and atmospheric towns. Your Indoor Dark Sky Astronomy Experience at Tekapo, hosted by passionate local specialists, will forever change the way you see the night sky. You'll see for yourself it may be one of the quietest spots on the planet, yet it has one of the busiest skies in the universe. Back on earth, you're becoming reacquainted with Christchurch on a city tour, your in-the-know Travel Director pointing out the city's miraculous transformation over the last decade. You'll view the mind-bending Transitional Cathedral, made largely of cardboard, and Turanga, the gold-clad central library.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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Day 9

There aren't many beaches more dramatic than the sands of Kaikoura. Bonus points if you spot a seal or sperm whale frolicking offshore, Kaikoura is the marine wildlife centre of New Zealand. Your onward route skirts the pink tinged crystallisation ponds of the Lake Grassmere Salt Works, before arriving in the pretty seaside fishing village of Picton.

Staying in:

- Picton Beachcomber Inn, Picton Yacht Club (1 night)
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Day 10

Swap wheels for water aboard the ferry 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. On arrival, enjoy a city sights tour.

Staying in:

- James Cook Grand Chancellor (1 night)
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Day 11

The road ahead unfolds in a broad panorama of Lake Taupō, the largest of its kind in the country. It's a landscape almost as otherworldly as Rotorua, where mud pops and jettisons from bubbling geysers, and steam rushes skywards from cracks in the Earth. Tonight, delve deep into Maori culture and traditions at Te Puia. The Te Pō Indigenous Experience begins with an exhilarating cultural performance in a beautifully carved meeting house, Te Aronui a Rua, followed by views of the Pohutu Geyser, one of New Zealand's geothermal wonderlands, and ends with a delicious buffet dinner of locally sourced hāngī-inspired cuisine.

Staying in:

- Ibis Rotorua Hotel (1 night)
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Day 12

Explore at your own pace today, but with plenty of tips from your Travel Director. Choose an Optional Experience? Want a bit of down time? We wouldn't blame you for simply blissing out at Wai Ariki Hot Springs & Spa. Hobbit fans will want to take advantage of the opportunity to tour the sights featured in The Lord of the Rings movies at Hobbiton. The setting for one of the world's most famous film locations where guests can step inside Middle-earth and hear the stories behind the making of the films.

Staying in:

- Ibis Rotorua Hotel (1 night)
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Day 13

Set your internal GPS to cross the Waikato River and head towards the Waitomo Caves. This place is radiant – quite literally. While cruising cavernous limestone waterways, your route is cast in a magical light by thousands of glowworms. The next thing that glows on your horizon is Auckland, New Zealand's largest city with not one, but two harbours. And plenty of yachts to decorate both, as you'll see from the lookout at the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

Staying in:

- Holiday Inn Express Auckland City Centre (1 night)
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Day 14

Say goodbye to the 'City of Sails' as you journey north to New Zealand's dramatic Bay of Islands – 140 islands ringed by turquoise sea. It's undeniably beautiful, but it also holds a special historical significance: this is where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840, between Captain William Hobson and Māori chiefs. Your local specialist, likely a descendant of one of the original signatories, will explain the significance of the site, while pointing out the world's largest ceremonial war canoe and a carved meeting house.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort (1 night)
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Day 15

If there's a travel destination that inspires wanderlust, the Bay of Islands is it. Today, head off in whatever direction you please. Perhaps choose an Optional Experience*. Travel up to Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua, the very top of New Zealand, via idyllic Ninety Mile Beach. Cruise to the iconic hole in the rock, or join a tour of Russell and learn more about the settling of the Bay of Islands.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort (1 night)
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Day 16

Today, New Zealand's most northerly city is well and truly on your radar. Whangarei is like the country in a tantalizing snapshot – a union of nature and forward-thinking culture. Take a brief stroll before sinking back into your seat for the mesmerizing commute back to Auckland.

Tonight enjoy dinner and drinks to toast your adventure.

Staying in:

- Holiday Inn Express Auckland City Centre (1 night)
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Day 17

It's hard to say goodbye to Auckland – this city is hypnotic. But you have a camera full of New Zealand tour photos to categorise before you get home.

Tour details

Departures: Daily
Tour type: Guided Coach Tour
Starts: Christchurch
Finishes: Auckland
Tour length: 17
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary