

AAT Kings: New Zealand Marvel 26/27

One country, two islands, two weeks, countless highs... this could well be the ultimate New Zealand guided tour. Standouts include gem-like Franz Josef / Waiau, cruise through World Heritage listed Milford Sound / Piopiotahi, Waitomo Caves tours to spot glowworms, and expeditions across turquoise lakes. We haven't even mentioned the atmospheric towns and cities yet: tours in Queenstown, Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin and Christchurch all beckon.



Starts in: Christchurch
 Finishes in: Auckland
 Length: 14days / 13nights
 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: Franz Josef Glacier
- Included: Interislander Ferry
- Included: Te Papa Museum of New Zealand
- Included: Te Puia Indigenous Experience
- Included: TranzAlpine Train
- Included: Waitomo GlowWorm Caves
- : 13 breakfasts, 5 dinners

- Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
- Included: Auckland War Memorial Museum
- Included: Church of the Good Shepherd at Tekapo
- Included: Huka Falls
- Included: Milford Sound Cruise
- Included: Te Puia geothermal valley
- Included: Tekapo Dark Sky Experience
- Included: TSS Earnslaw cruise & BBQ dinner at Walter Peak High Country Farm
- Included: Visits to Haast Visitors Centre, Mrs Jones' Fruit Stall and Arrowtown

Day 1

There are plenty of reasons to arrive in New Zealand's 'Garden City' early, among them the astonishing transformation that has reinvigorated streets since the devastating 2010/11 earthquakes. Explore at your leisure. Meet your Travel Director and travelling companions for a tour briefing and drinks tonight.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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Day 2

When the journey matters just as much as the destination, jump aboard the TranzAlpine train. This scenic spectacular – the start of your tour of the South Island of New Zealand – takes you through tunnels and over viaducts, with panoramic views of snow-capped peaks, icy rivers, beech forests, gorges and river valleys along the way. Visit the small town of Hokitika, the heritage and cultural centre of the West Coast well-known for its jade. Around the corner is the town of Franz Josef/Waiau, gateway to Franz Josef Glacier/Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere, compact of snow and ice that shimmers like a gem. Get some perspective on a Franz Josef Glacier/Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere helicopter flight over this natural wonder – if the weather behaves, you may even get to land on it. Now that's cool (own expense).

Staying in:

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

If you thought the scenery yesterday was dramatic, wait until you hit the Haast Pass today: over the saddle, the alpine scenery of the Southern Lakes spreads before you in a patchwork of blues and greens. First up there's lovely Lake Hawea – the colour of an Ice Mint – and Lake Dunstan, where you'll pause at the Jones Family fruit stall to refuel on flavour-packed stone fruits. As tempting as it is to linger in Arrowtown's movie-set-like streets, Lake Wakatipu and The Remarkables await in Queenstown.

Staying in:

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

Today, choose your own adventure – there are plenty to be had. Feel the wind in your hair on a high-octane jet boat ride, perhaps. Or discover some of New Zealand's feathered friends at a wildlife centre. 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

There are some travel days that defy the imagination. Thankfully, you don't have to dream about all the natural highs in today's itinerary – they're about to become a reality. Your route from the Mirror Lakes through the Cleddau Valley is the entrée to Milford Sound/Piopiotahi, a cavernous wonderland where waterfalls thunder from ancient escarpments into inky water. You'll likely spot them on your Milford Sound/Piopiotahi cruise. It's all part of World Heritage listed Fiordland National Park, an intoxicating union of beech forests, alluvial flats, meadows and gin-clear rivers, carving up the countryside. This is your backdrop all the way to Te Anau.

Staying in:

- Distinction Luxmore Hotel (1 night)
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Day 6

On the banks of the South Island's biggest lake, Te Anau turns on the sunrise charms. Enjoy a morning stroll before swapping the forested

slopes of Fiordland for the rolling green hills of the Edinburgh of the South. Welcome to Dunedin, a beguiling union of both Māori and Scottish heritage (it was colonised by Scots in the 19th century). While away the afternoon in atmospheric art-lined alleys or sipping a lager or two or visit a special gin distillery with 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 – albatrosses, anyone? (All own expense).

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Dunedin City (1 night)
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Day 7

Discover the lives of kororā, New Zealand's little blue penguins, at the Ōamaru Penguins Conservation Centre. Learn from an educator about the centre's conservation work on this impactful MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience.

Staying in:

- Distinction Heritage Gateway Hotel (1 night)
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Day 8

This morning, enjoy views across the Canterbury Plains, with turquoise Lake Tekapo and snow-capped mountains. Travel north to Ōtautahi (Christchurch) and view city sights with your Travel Director, highlighting the city's remarkable transformation. Visit landmarks such as the Transitional Cathedral, built largely from cardboard, and Turanga, the gold-clad central library, showcasing Christchurch's mix of history and modern innovation.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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Day 9

There aren't many beaches more dramatic than the shores 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

Cruising through Queen Charlotte Sound, up the Tory Channel and across Cook Strait is a journey as scenic as it is serene. Today's chariot, the Interislander, transports you from the South Island to the North, navigating a maze of arms and inlets into New Zealand's cool little capital of Wellington. We hope you got some rest on your journey, because you'll need all your stamina to explore the award-winning (and eye-opening) Te Papa, the Museum of New Zealand on city highlights (entrance fee applies). Ask your Travel Director for tips on where to sip wine and coffee tonight – this city is known for its uber-cool cafes, restaurants and bars.

Staying in:

- James Cook Grand Chancellor (1 night)
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Day 11

The road ahead unfolds in a broad panorama of Lake Taupo, 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. This evening, explore Te Puia's geothermal valley, and learn about Māori history and culture with the Te Po Indigenous Experience. It begins with a cultural performance in a beautifully carved meeting house, Te Aronui a Rua, followed by views the Pohutu Geyser, one of New Zealand's geothermal wonderlands, and ends with a delicious buffet dinner of hāngī-inspired cuisine.

Staying in:

- Ibis Rotorua Hotel (1 night)
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Day 12

Sometimes, the best adventures are those that you have when you least expect them. Like wandering into Rotorua's Wai Ariki Hot Springs & Spa and falling into a few hours of bliss while soaking in steamy thermal springs. Who knew nature was this relaxing? Hobbit fans will want to take advantage of the opportunity to tour the sights featured in The Lord of the Rings movies at Hobbiton Movie Set. On a guided tour guests can step inside Middle-earth and hear the stories behind the making of the films (both own expense).

Staying in:

- Ibis Rotorua Hotel (1 night)
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Day 13

Before you reach your final destination, get set to glow on a tour through the Waikato River's 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. Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, appears on the horizon, dazzling 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. Tonight, celebrate your tour at drinks with your travel companions and Travel Director.

Staying in:

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

The 'City of Sails' flutters as if waving goodbye as you make your way home – with two weeks' worth of extra baggage (all that wine!) and an innumerable number of memories.

Tour details

Departures: Daily
Tour type: Guided Coach Tour
Starts: Christchurch
Finishes: Auckland
Tour length: 14
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary