

## Intrepid Travel: New Zealand South Island Adventure



From an ancient world of forests and glaciers to a culture of hospitality that has long defined New Zealand's people, discover the best of the South Island on an Intrepid Original adventure. Take in highlights from Reefton to Fox Glacier, Pancake Rocks to botanical gins, kayaking to spa soaking. Make your way to the shores of the South Island's biggest lake and sail the silent waters of glacier-carved Fiordland National Park on an unforgettable cruise on Milford Sound. Cross to the cliffs of the Catlins and hike to coastal caves, then span the gap to untouched Stewart Island to explore the wilderness, listening out for the call of the kiwi. When it comes to natural wonders, it doesn't get better than this.

\*This itinerary is valid for departures from 01 October 2026 to 30 September 2027. Please consult your Travel Specialist for details on itinerary variations outside these dates.\*

Starts in: Christchurch  
 Finishes in: Queenstown  
 Length: 12days / 11nights  
 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: Billy Tea experience with 'The Bearded Miners', Reefton
- Included: Experience Hokitika Gorge & the mighty ancient forest of the West Coast
- Included: Historic town visit of Reefton
- Included: Leader-led walk to Nugget Point & McLean Falls at The Catlins
- Included: Nile River Rainforest Train at Charleston
- Included: Punakaiki Pancake Rocks walk
- Included: Stewart Island scenic ferry crossing

- Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
- Included activity: Intrepid Travel
- Included: Cape Foulwind walkway & lighthouse, Westport
- Included: Goldfields Museum, Reefton, with local storyteller
- Included: Lake Matheson walk
- Included: Milford Sound day trip & cruise
- Included: Okarito Lagoon walk
- Included: Seal colony viewing at Tauranga Bay, Westport
- : 11 breakfasts

## Day 1



Welcome to your Intrepid exploration of the South Island! Your adventure begins in Christchurch, where a welcome meeting will take place at 8am for you to meet up with your local leader and fellow travellers. After your meeting, it's time to hit the road, first heading to Hanmer Springs in the Lewis Pass national reserve. Check out the natural hot pools surrounded by greenery as the snow dusted peaks of the Southern Alps look on. You can even opt to take a dip. Next up, travel to Reefton, a tiny town that punches above its size. Step back in time and meet a local storyteller, learning about the town's gold mining past, the miners' families, the storekeepers, and embrace the Cornish influence. You'll even have the opportunity to see the water powered gold stamping battery working. Head into the town centre proper where you'll meet the 'bearded miners' for a cup of manuka enhanced black billy tea and to watch the technique of gold panning. Finally, drive through the spectacular Buller Gorge to the town of Westport and perhaps round off the day with a group dinner.

It's very important that you attend the welcome meeting this morning as we will be checking insurance and emergency contact details at this time. If you are going to be late, please let an Intrepid representative or your travel agent know. Find details of the meeting point in your Essential Trip Information.

### Activities:

- Reefton - Historic Town Visit
- Reefton - Goldfields Museum with Local Storyteller
- Reefton - Billy Tea with 'The Bearded Miners'

### Staying in:

- Motel (1 night)
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## Day 2

Start your day with a stop at the wild Cape Foulwind and admire incredible views of the mountains and rugged coastline. The headland is home to a fur seal breeding colony so keep your eyes peeled, they can easily blend in with the rocks! Continue to Charleston this morning to join a train ride in open carriages through primeval rain forest. 'The Nile River Rainforest Train' recreates a bygone era where bush trams once prevailed. Experience the spectacular wilderness of the Nile River Canyon in Paparoa National Park. Next up is Punakaiki, a town with less than 100 residents, but famed for its so-called Pancake Rocks. These layers of fossilised animals and plants, formed over 30 million years ago, were thrust above the surface by the moving earth and sculpted by wind and water. At high tide the sea is forced through blowholes in the limestone to burst metres into the air – it's an entertaining sight! Continue to Kumara, a former goldrush town with an intriguing history (this little place was the home of New Zealand's longest serving Prime Minister!). On arrival, settle into your hotel. Once the sun has gone down, be sure to look up. With very little light pollution, the stargazing in Kumara is absolutely out of this world (literally!).

### Activities:

- Punakaiki - Pancake Rocks & Blowholes Walk
- Charleston - Nile River Gorge Rainforest Train Ride
- Westport - Seal Colony at Tauranga Bay
- Westport - Cape Foulwind Walkway & Lighthouse

### Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 3

Today begins with a visit to the Hokitika Gorge, one of the West Coast's most stunning spots. Shimmering turquoise waters wreathed with lush native bush make a sight to remember. Then it's on to the Okarito Lagoon, alive with the calls of over 70 unique species of birds. Head out on a nature walk culminating in a lookout point from which, on a clear day, you can enjoy an unbeatable view over Westland (Tai Poutini) National Park from the snow-capped Southern Alps (Ka Tiritiri o te Moana) across extensive native forest to the lagoons and beaches of the coast.

Continue your journey south to the Fox Glacier township, your gateway to the dramatic and enormous Fox Glacier and your base for the evening.

Please note that the visit to the Okarito Lagoon is weather dependent. In case of inclement weather the trip to the lagoon doesn't make much sense and an alternative activity will be suggested by the leader.

Activities:

- Hokitika - Gorge Visit
- Okarito - Okarito Lagoon Walk

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 4

Kick off the day with a gentle walk around the glittering Lake Matheson, dubbed the 'mirror lake' for its dark waters which perfectly reflect the towering Southern Alps – if you take one picture of your West Coast adventure, this should be it! The rest of the day is yours to make the most of what this amazing slice of the country has to offer. Perhaps head back to Franz Josef Glacier or you may want to visit a pounamu (greenstone) workshop and learn how to carve your own original piece. There's also no shortage of interesting walks and cosy pubs if you fancy a more low-key afternoon – have a chat to your leader about your options for the day.

Activities:

- Fox Glacier - Lake Matheson Walk

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 5

Make tracks for Wanaka, making plenty of interesting stops along the way. First up is Ship Creek, where you'll take a walk through quintessentially rugged West Coast scenery. You can either walk through shady swamp forest, or explore windswept sand dunes and coastal forest. Then it's on to Mt Aspiring National Park. Make the short walk to the incredible Thunder Creek Falls, featuring an impressive 96-metre-tall cascade. Arrive in Wanaka and enjoy an evening at leisure.

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 6

With Lake Wanaka as the star of the show and surrounding mountains only complimenting its beauty, there's no doubt this is one of the most attractive towns in New Zealand. Today is completely free for you to enjoy the surroundings of Wanaka, and there's certainly no shortage of amazing things to see and do here, so be sure to chat to your leader for their top tips. You may like to take a pleasant bike ride along the shores of Lake Wanaka or get on the water and cruise to Mou Waho Island, where you'll find an island in a lake on an island in a lake! There are heaps of beautiful short walks in the area, and a visit to the famous #thatwanakatree is a must. Or simply find a cosy cafe to admire the view.

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 7

Depart Wanaka this morning and drive through the magnificent scenery of the Crown Range. Arrive in Queenstown in the late morning, then a meeting will take place to welcome any new travellers joining you for the next leg of your journey. After the meeting, head to the lovely lakeside town of Te Anau – gateway to Fiordland National Park. Watch the stunning landscapes pass by as you round the bottom of Lake Wakatipu with the aptly named The Remarkables mountains in the background. The five-hour drive will take you to the shores of the South Island's biggest lake, which extends into the fiords and deeply forested mountains. Tonight you there's an optional chance to head underground by boat and see thousands of glow worms illuminate subterranean caves, to spectacular effect.

As this is a combination trip, your group leader and the composition of your group will likely change at this location. There will be a group meeting to discuss the next stage of your itinerary.

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 8

The stunning, unforgettable sights of the fiords are best experienced by boat, so today you'll set off for a memorable cruise on Milford Sound, known locally as Piopiotahi. Sail along the waters that pour out into the Tasman Sea, and look out for bottlenose dolphins and fur seals at play. Nature feels close here in the silence of the sound as you make your way past countless tumbling, misting cascades, soaring icy peaks, lush rainforest and twisting inlets. Soak up the surrounds so stunning that they feel almost fake, and breathe in the crisp mountain air. Afterwards get a different perspective of the sound, surrounded by native bush, as you take on the lookout track with your leader. There's a bit of a climb, but the views are more than worth it to look down on the water and up at the peaks. The spectacular views keep on coming with a Mirror Lakes walk, where the peaks and greenery reflect in the clear lake waters. Return to Te Anau in time for dinner this evening – maybe seek out some local fare like venison or even lobster for dinner.

Activities:

- Milford Sound - Nature Boat Cruise
- Milford Sound - Leader-led walk to Milford Lookout
- Milford Sound - Walk to Mirror Lakes & Lake Gunn

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 9

This morning it's time to swap one side of the island for the other as you make your way to what feels like a forgotten corner of Otago – the Catlins. This untamed coastal wilderness is home to rugged cliffs, dense forest, and some spectacular hidden waterfalls. Visit Nugget Point and its lighthouse, situated on a rocky outcrop jutting out into the South Pacific Ocean, and hike through dense forest to pretty McLean Falls.

Please note that due to limited accommodation options in the Catlins the group will stay in twin room accommodation with shared facilities. If you have booked a single supplement you will be allocated a single room, however bathroom facilities will still be shared.

Activities:

- The Catlins - Leader-led walk to Nugget Point & McLean Falls

Staying in:

- Lodge (1 night)
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## Day 10

Head to the very bottom of the island and take a ferry across the Foveaux Strait to the country's third largest landmass, remote and rugged Stewart Island. It takes about one hour to travel the 30-kilometre strait. The island is almost entirely national park, which makes its unspoiled forests, beaches and bays a haven for hikers of all abilities as well as birdwatchers – it's home to endangered brown kiwi and the flightless Stewart Island kiwi. In the Maori language the island is known as Rakiura, which means 'the land of glowing skies'.

Please note that the passage to Stewart Island can be quite rough, depending on weather. Make sure you prepare yourself for this leg of the journey. Please also note that due to limited accommodation options on Stewart Island the group will stay in a mix of motel units and hostel style twin room accommodation with shared facilities. If you have booked a single supplement you will be allocated a single room, however bathroom facilities will still be shared. Due to the remote location of Stewart Island, internet and mobile phone reception can be very patchy or non-existent.

Activities:

- Stewart Island - Scenic Ferry Crossing

Staying in:

- Motel (1 night)
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## Day 11

Enjoy a full free day to explore the island as you discover the coast and Rakiura National Park. Optional activities include cruises on the bays and inlets spotting penguins and seabirds and walks along forested coastal tracks past early Maori settlements. Learn about the local flora and fauna, and relax on the beach for a picnic lunch. Take in the views over glistening William Bay and see if you can spot the mountains of the South Island in the distance. Return to your accommodation and enjoy the rest of the evening to relax after your full day of island exploration.

Perhaps join the group for dinner at a local restaurant tonight.

Staying in:

- Motel (1 night)
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## Day 12

Head back over to the mainland, then continue back to Queenstown. Your trip comes to an end today when you arrive back in Queenstown at approximately 2pm. If you have extra time to spend in Queenstown, make sure to get out and take advantage of the numerous adventure activities on offer. The Remarkables and Lake Wakatipu not only serve as spectacular props to get your adrenaline fix, they're also beautiful to look at. The town is also a great base for exploring Central Otago's excellent vineyards and historic mining towns.

Activities:

- Stewart Island - Scenic Ferry Crossing
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## Tour details

Departures: Daily  
Tour type: Small Group Escorted Tour  
Starts: Christchurch  
Finishes: Queenstown  
Tour length: 12  
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star  
Car/transport type:

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## Accommodation summary