



AAT Kings: Spirit of New Zealand 25/26

Dozens of lakes, rivers and waterfalls. Just as many beaches. A good dose of Māori history and culture. Glaciers, gorges and bubbling geysers. Wine, wonderful food and wildlife. It sounds like the recipe for the best New Zealand tour ever. We haven't even touched on the forward-thinking cities and atmospheric towns you'll encounter on a Christchurch tour, Wellington tour, Bay of Islands tour... And so much more. Pack your stamina.



Starts in: Christchurch
 Finishes in: Auckland
 Length: 21days / 20nights
 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: Punakaiki Pancake Rocks
 Included: Visit a local fruit orchard
 Included: Farm experience at Real Country
 Included: Napier City Tour

Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
 Included: Auckland City Tour



Included: Interislander Ferry
 Included: Franz Josef Glacier
 Included: Day trip to Stewart Island
 Included: Christchurch City Tour
 : 20 breakfasts, 8 dinners

Included: Waitangi Treaty Grounds
 Included: Te Puia Indigenous Experience
 Included: Punakaiki Pancake Rocks walk
 Included: Maori Village Experience & Hangi (dinner), Rotorua
 Included: Huka Falls
 Included: Dunedin Orientation Tour
 Included: Church of the Good Shepherd at Tekapo
 Included: All Blacks Experience



Day 1

Community spirit is strong in Christchurch, as you'll discover exploring its streets at your leisure. Meet your Travel Director and fellow travellers this evening.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)

Day 2

More of the city is revealed on a Christchurch tour before the colours of the Canterbury Plains spread before you: the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo, snow-capped mountains and atmospheric towns. It's quite the backdrop for the stone-hewn Church of Good Shepherd. Your Indoor Dark Sky Astronomy Experience at Tekapo, hosted by passionate guides, 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.

Staying in:

- Distinction Heritage Gateway Hotel (1 night)

Day 3

Easing through the Waitaki Valley, you're en route toward New Zealand's oldest public gardens. They lie in the pretty town of Oamaru, known for its stately tree-lined streets and limestone buildings. Architectural drama of a different kind awaits in Dunedin. While away the afternoon in atmospheric art-lined alleys or sipping a lager or two in Speight's Brewery (a national institution). Or venture further afield to discover Larnach Castle. Dunedin is widely known as the Edinburgh of the South. In truth, it could also be known as 'Little Galapagos': fur seals and penguins thrive in this part of the South Island.

Staying in:

- Dunedin Leisure Lodge (1 night)

Day 4

Invercargill is obsessed with motor vehicles. Tributes to speed legends colour the city. So it's only fitting that you visit Classic Motorcycle Mecca for a self-guided tour followed by a guided tour and Highlight Dinner at Transport World, exploring classic vehicles as you are transported on a nostalgic walk back in time. From Brough Superior to Burt Munro and John Britten, ride into yesteryear and discover the Southern Hemisphere's leading classic motorcycle collection. Home to more than 300 vintage motorcycles, a visit here is a truly mind-blowing experience for enthusiasts and newbies alike. Housed in two restored historic buildings in the heart of Invercargill, the collection boasts displays of classic British, American, European, and Japanese bikes alongside tributes to motocross and speedway (including legend Ivan Mauger). It is also home to the George Begg Bunker: a tribute to a homegrown hero and a golden age in Kiwi motorsport history. 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)

Day 5

Invercargill is the gateway to the southernmost community in the country. Welcome to Stewart Island, a wild and wonderful drop of land that is 85% national park. Naturally, it's a magnet for endemic flora and fauna, as you'll discover on your guided Village and Bays tour. Later you have the option to join a leisurely cruise, including a picnic lunch, around Paterson Inlet that will take you past unique places including Acker's Cottage before docking at Ulva Island to admire the bird life and native flora.

Staying in:

- Kelvin Hotel (1 night)

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 'Southern Girl' 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. Try your hand at a Stock whip cracking lesson, and feed and interact with the friendly farm animals. Plus, for every guest, we donate funds to The Fairlight Foundation, Advancing Women in Agriculture, a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience. Continue to Queenstown and take the rest of the day at your own pace.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown (1 night)

Day 7

You clearly need more than one day to appreciate Queenstown and its surrounds. And when we say surrounds, we mean Milford Sound. Today, sign up for an Optional Experience to dive deep into this yawning gorge within World Heritage-listed Fiordland National Park – it's within easy reach of your base, and is best explored on an optional South Island tour that sees you jumping aboard boat to cruise the mirror-like waterway. Like things fast and furious? Feel the wind in your hair on the high-octane jet boat ride, perhaps, twisting and revving along Queenstown's Shotover River. There's a reason why Queenstown is known as the adventure capital of the country. 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)

Day 8

We know you'll want to linger in Arrowtown's movie-set-like streets, lined with trees and character-filled boutiques and restaurants. But the Alpine country of the Southern Lakes is calling, from Lake Dunstan – where you can pause to buy juicy stone fruit picked fresh from the tree – to oh-so-blue Lake Hawea and lovely Lake Wanaka, with its Instagrammable shoreline of poplars and willows. Over the Haast Pass, the pretty town of Franz Josef/Waiau at the edge of the Westland World Heritage Park, awaits. Get some perspective on an optional scenic flight over this natural wonder – if the weather behaves, you may even get to land on it. Trips to New Zealand don't get any cooler than this.

Staying in:

- Scenic (1 night)

Day 9

There aren't many communities on the wild West Coast, Hokitika is one, and boy does it make the most of its setting. Wander the windswept coast before discovering the town's other beauty: pounamu (native greenstone or jade). Prepare yourself for Punakaiki's Pancake Rocks and blowholes; they owe their existence to the thundering surf that will lull you to sleep.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Punakaiki (1 night)

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 swingbridge – and Kahurangi National Park, a place of wild rivers, high plateaus, alpine herb fields and coastal forests.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)

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 at the top 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)

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.

Staying in:

- Travelodge Wellington (1 night)

Day 13

Tour Wellington's highlights before travelling to Napier. Beautifully preserved 1930s architecture is Napier's special point of difference. After a massive earthquake in 1931 destroyed the commercial centre of Napier, rebuilding began almost immediately in the architectural styles of the times - Striped Classical, Spanish Mission and Art Deco.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)

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)

Day 15

The road ahead unfolds in a broad panorama of Lake Taupo, the largest (and perhaps bluest) of its kind in the country – it feeds thundering Huka Falls, which you'll hear well before you see. 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. Visit a traditional Pounamu workshop to learn about jade carving. 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. View the Pohutu Geyser, one of New Zealand's geothermal wonderlands and end with a delicious buffet dinner of hāngi-inspired cuisine - a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)

Day 16

Today is Rotorua tour day of many decisions, but with plenty of tips available from your Travel Director. Want a bit of down time? We wouldn't blame you for simply blissing out at in the steamy thermal springs 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 & The Hobbit movies on the Hobbiton Movie Set tour. Or board a scenic flight for a bird's-eye-view (all own expense).

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)

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. But today your sights are firmly set on New Zealand's national game: rugby. As part of your Auckland tour you're kicking about at the interactive All Blacks Experience. Journey through the sporting team's remarkable history via various displays and presentations before you're serenaded by a performance of a traditional haka with you front and centre.

Staying in:

- Adina Apartment Hotel Britomart (1 night)

Day 18

140 – that's how many droplets of land ringed by turquoise sea comprise the Bay of Islands, your tour destination de jour. 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 at your Treaty Grounds tour, perhaps a descendent 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)

Day 19

If there's a travel destination that inspires wanderlust, the Bay of Islands is it. Today, head off in whatever direction you please. Perhaps travel up to Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua, the very top of New Zealand, via idyllic Ninety Mile Beach. Or glide around on an historic tall ship, cruise to the Hole in the Rock or join a tour of Russell and learn more about the settling of the Bay of Islands (all own expense).

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort (1 night)

Day 20

For a little more northern exposure, make your way to Whangarei, the island's most northerly outpost and a place where waterfalls meet beaches, galleries meet museums. It's like the country in a tantalising snapshot – a union of nature and forward-thinking culture. Sink back into your seat for the mesmerising commute back to Auckland to end your tour on a high note at dinner with your Travel Director and travel companions.

Staying in:

- Adina Apartment Hotel Britomart (1 night)

Day 21

Over three weeks, we hope you've packed your address book with the names of new friends and your camera with photos of New Zealand's most inspiring attractions. But at the end of the day, it's the memories that will fuel your flight home. Trips to New Zealand don't get any more epic than this.

Tour details

Departures: Daily
Tour type: Guided Coach Tour
Starts: Christchurch
Finishes: Auckland
Tour length: 21
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary