

AAT Kings: Essence of New Zealand 25/26

This tour has a mix of Nature and Culture. With good dose of food and wine on the side you'll be delivered a well-rounded taste of the North and South. Whether you're into wide, open spaces - Milford Sound, we're looking at you – bubbling geysers, gem-like glaciers or windswept coasts you will find it right here. This New Zealand guided tour is for the history, sport, architecture, geography or culture buff.

Starts in: Christchurch
Finishes in: Auckland
Length: 18days / 17nights
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: Te Puia Indigenous Experience
Included: Rotorua Orientation Tour
Included: Queenstown Orientation Tour
Included: Nelson Orientation Tour
Included: Maori Village Experience & Hangi (dinner), Rotorua
Included: Huka Falls
Included: Dunedin Orientation Tour
Included: Cruise on the Interislander Ferry
Included: Christchurch Orientation Tour
Included: All Blacks Experience

Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
Included: Auckland City Tour
Included: Wellington Orientation tour
Included: Te Papa, NZ's National Museum
Included: Farm experience at Real Country
Included: Punakaiki Pancake Rocks walk
Included: Napier City Tour
Included: Indoor Dark Sky Experience
Included: Franz Josef Glacier
Included: Day trip to Stewart Island
Included: Church of the Good Shepherd at Tekapo
Included: Bill Richardson Transport World
: 17 breakfasts, 6 dinners

Day 1

Arrive early to see just how Christchurch has transformed itself since the 2010/11 earthquakes. Your Travel Director will welcome you this evening and provide you with a tour briefing.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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Day 2

Day two of your tour of the South Island of New Zealand sees you step out with your guide for a deeper dive into 'The City of Gardens' before traversing the colourful Canterbury Plains: the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo, snow-capped mountains and wildflower-strewn meadows. It's quite the backdrop for the stone-hewn Church of the 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)
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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 Speights Brewery (a national institution). Or venture further afield to discover Larnach Castle, which nods to Dunedin's Scottish link – it's known as 'Little Edinburgh' for a reason. 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)
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Day 4

Travel through rolling farmlands and lush pastures to Invercargill, a city obsessed with motor vehicles. Tributes to speed legends colour the city so it's only fitting that you visit Transport World for a guided tour and dinner. Explore classic vehicles as you are transported on a nostalgic walk back in time. 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 5

Invercargill is the gateway to Subantarctic Stewart Island, the latest addition to New Zealand's national park portfolio with 85% of the island designated as 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)
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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 when 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. 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 afternoon at your own pace.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown (1 night)
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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)
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Day 8

Visit Arrowtown, which found its riches in gold, its residents building stately homes, now filled with boutiques and restaurants – that still line the street to this day. It's a bit like stepping onto a movie set. Around the next bend is the Alpine countryside of the Southern Lakes, from Lake Dunstan, where you may like to buy 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 town of Franz Josef/Waiau at the edge of the Westland World Heritage Park, awaits. Get some perspective on an optional Franz Josef Glacier/Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere flight tour – if the weather behaves, you may even get to land on it (own expense). New Zealand tours don't get much cooler than this.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Franz Josef Glacier (1 night)
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Day 9

Wandering Hokitika's windswept shore on the West Coast feels a bit like you've discovered the end of the Earth. The town's other natural beauty is 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)
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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 swing bridge – and Kahurangi National Park, a place of wild rivers, high plateaus, alpine herb fields and coastal forests.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)
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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 in the north 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)
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Day 12

You'll want a window seat for the cruise from the South Island to the North Island aboard the ferry. Breathtaking views unfold as you glide through Queen Charlotte Sound, up the Tory Channel and across the Cook Strait, navigating a maze of arms and inlets into New Zealand's cool little capital of Wellington.

Staying in:

- Travelodge Wellington (1 night)
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Day 13

View the sights of Wellington including the Beehive and Parliament grounds this morning before you travel to Napier. Beautifully preserved 1930s architecture is Napier's special point of difference.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)
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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)
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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. This afternoon, explore Te Puia's geothermal valley and learn about Maori history & culture. Take a guided tour of the Maori Arts & Crafts Institute, and later enjoy a Highlight Dinner of hangi inspired cuisine and a cultural performance in a finely carved meeting house, Te Aronui a Rua. It ends on a high at the Pohutu Geyser, where, armed with a hot chocolate you'll view one of New Zealand's geothermal wonderlands.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)
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Day 16

You could spend weeks discovering Rotorua. But you have today, so seize the moment and set out to explore. Hobbit fans will want to take advantage of the opportunity to tour the Hobbiton Movie Set featured in The Lord of the Rings & Hobbit movies. Want a bit of down time? Bliss out at Wai Ariki Hotel Springs & Spa. Or arguably the best way to understand just how otherworldly your destination is, from the air. Ask us about a scenic flight (all own expense).

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)
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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's Auckland tour sees your sights set firmly on New Zealand's national game: rugby. The interactive All Blacks Experience explores an introduction to the game as a part of New Zealand culture, and ends with a traditional haka with you front and centre.

Staying in:

- Adina Apartment Hotel Britomart (1 night)
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Day 18

How do you pick a favourite adventure from the last 18 days? You don't have to - let them all shine in equal measure in your memory.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	Guided Coach Tour
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Auckland
Tour length:	18
Accommodation:	Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary