

Intrepid Travel: New Zealand Uncovered (Northbound)

Step into a captivating world of volcanic mountains, icy blue lakes and misty rainforests on an Intrepid Comfort adventure through New Zealand. Visit Mou Waho Island, travel through the geothermal wonders of Rotorua and learn about the cultural significance of pounamu at a local gallery in Franz Josef. Stop by Christchurch Cathedral, which once stood as a symbol of the city before collapsing in the earthquake, relax on the beaches of Coromandel and Raglan and explore the diverse landscapes of Tongariro National Park.

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: Auckland
 Length: 20days / 19nights
 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: Cathedral Cove & Hot Water Beach on the Coromandel Peninsula
- Included: Hobbiton Movie Set Tour
- Included: Mou Waho Island Cruise & Guided Nature Walk, Lake Wanaka
- Included: Redwoods Treewalk, Pohutu Geyser, hangi dinner & haka experience at Rotorua
- Included: Zealandia Wildlife Sanctuary

- Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
- Included activity: Intrepid Travel

- Included: Greenstone pendant carving, Franz Josef
- Included: Huka Falls
- Included: Mt John Lookout, Lake Tekapo

- Included: TranzAlpine Train journey boarding at Greymouth
- : 18 breakfasts, 3 dinners

Day 1



Welcome to Aotearoa (New Zealand). Sparsely populated and spectacularly beautiful, the South Island is a paradise for lovers of nature, wildlife and the great outdoors. Your adventure begins in Christchurch with a welcome meeting at 6 pm. If you arrive early, you may like to stroll through the Christchurch Botanic Gardens to admire the native plants or stop by the Canterbury Museum to learn about the region's cultural heritage.

After the meeting, the night is yours to find the best spot for a cosy dinner.

It's very important that you attend the welcome meeting as we will be collecting insurance and emergency contact details at this time. If you are going to be late, please let your travel agent or hotel reception know. Ask reception or look for a note in the lobby for more information on where the meeting will take place.

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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Day 2

Christchurch is not just a pretty city – it's also remarkably resilient. After a devastating earthquake destroyed much of the downtown area in 2011, the city has begun to rebuild in innovative and creative ways. Head out with your leader this morning to see this for yourself. Stop by the Christchurch Cathedral, which stood as a symbol of the city before collapsing in the earthquake and has now been replaced with an architecturally striking and quake-proof structure made from cardboard. After a morning of exploring, say goodbye to Christchurch and drive inland to Lake Tekapo. An eye-catching combination of purple lupins, turquoise waters and snow-dusted peaks makes this one of the most photo-worthy spots in the country. The Church of the Good Shepherd sits on the shores of the lakes and attracts couples from all over the world to shoot their wedding pictures. Continue to Lake Ohau or Twizel (depending on departure) where you'll spend the night.

Activities:

- Lake Tekapo - Mt John Lookout

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
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Day 3

Hit the road this morning for a journey to remember – watch out the window as you pass the sprawling grasslands of the Mackenzie Basin and showstopping peaks of the Southern Alps. Your drive will be broken up with plenty of scenic stops, including a visit to Kawarau Gorge, a popular spot for bungy jumping. If you're feeling adventurous, get involved and jump off the suspension bridge crossing the gorge, or just stand back and watch brave jumpers take the plunge. Continue on to Queenstown, known as the adventure capital of the world, and rightfully so! Aside from its high-adrenaline attractions, Queenstown has a booming culinary scene, produces some of the world's best wine and boasts unbelievable scenery at every turn.

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
-

Day 4

The day is all yours to discover the varied delights of Queenstown. There are loads of options to get your heartrate up, whether you fancy shooting down the river on a jet boat, river kayaking, flying above the town in a gondola or a 4WD adventure through landscapes of Lord of the Rings fame. If you'd like to take things a little slower, perhaps head to the Gibbston Valley to taste wines only topped by the inspiring scenery. A walk around the stunning Lake Wakatipu will give you a good dose of fresh air and epic views. There's no shortage of dining options to tempt your tastebuds – if you're willing to wait, a famous Fergburger is hard to beat!

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
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Day 5

Take the chance this morning to cross off any Queenstown activities you didn't have time for yesterday – be sure to speak to your leader for tips on the best way to spend a morning here. In the afternoon, get back on the road for the scenic drive to Wanaka, through the Crown Range Mountains. Stop off along the way in Arrowtown – a little goldrush town popular for its heritage buildings and Autumn festival. Take a walk along the tree-lined high street and maybe pop into the old-school lolly shop. Arrive in Wanaka in the afternoon and embrace the vibe of this laidback and beautiful town. With Lake Wanaka as its glittering centrepiece and dramatic mountains as its backdrop, the town is undoubtedly one of New Zealand's best. This afternoon you may like to head out on a hike or just stretch out on the shores of the lake and take it all in.

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
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Day 6

Visit Mou Waho Island today. Accessible only by boat and famous for being home to an (unnamed) island, in a lake (Arethusa Pool), on an island (Mou Waho), in a lake (Lake Wanaka), on an island (the South Island) in the ocean (the Pacific). Sounds complicated, but once you are there it will all make sense! Enjoy a walk as you learn more about this predator-free reserve with a natural glacial-formed lake at its summit.

Your afternoon is free to explore Wanaka and surrounds. No visit to Wanaka would be complete without seeing #thatwanakatree. Springing up from the waters of Lake Wanaka, this sloping willow is one of the most photographed trees in the world. There's no shortage of excellent hiking routes in the region if you'd like to get out and explore on foot, or you may prefer to hire a bike and hit the cycling trails.

Your walking time today will be approximately 2 hours. Please wear rugged-soled outdoor shoes or boots with good tread for grip. The island walk is not compulsory. You may remain on the boat, at the beach on the island or complete part of the walk.

Activities:

- Wanaka - Mou Waho Island Cruise & Guided Nature Walk

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
-

Day 7

Get back on the road and make tracks for Franz Josef. This is another incredible drive, so have your camera ready! Depending on the weather, stop off at either Lake Hawea or Lake Wanaka lookout points. Along the way, your leader will pause at some off the beaten track spots to snap some pictures and stretch your legs. Arrive in Franz Josef in the early evening and perhaps head out to one of the town's cosy pubs for dinner.

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
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Day 8

Rise and shine – you're in one of the most beautiful places in the world, and there's so much to discover here. Known for the dazzling Franz Josef Glacier and awe-inspiring views of Mt Cook, this is natural beauty on the biggest scale. The region also has a cultural history that's every bit as captivating as its natural wonders. Only found in the South Island of New Zealand, pounamu (greenstone) is an important part of Maori culture. Today, you'll visit a local gallery where you'll have the chance to carve your own pounamu pendant while learning about its spiritual and cultural significance. If you'd like to get up close and personal with Franz Josef Glacier in the afternoon, you can arrange for a helicopter to drop you in for a hike. You may prefer to sit back and unwind in local hot springs, or head out kayaking on an icy blue glacial lake.

Activities:

- Franz Josef - Greenstone Pendant Carving

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
-

Day 9

Begin the journey up the west coast – this is the rainiest part of New Zealand, resulting in greenery and lush rainforests like nowhere else in the country. If time allows, there may be the chance to check out the National Kiwi Centre – the nocturnal house here gives visitors the opportunity to see how these nocturnal birds behave. The next stretch of your journey may just be the most magnificent – hop aboard the TranzAlpine train back to Christchurch, widely believed to be one of the top train journeys in the world. Cross through the Southern Alps via Arthur's Pass and travel past the rushing blue waters of the Waimakariri River and endless native beech forest. Arrive in Christchurch in the evening.

Please note that throughout the year maintenance works can take place on the train tracks between Greymouth and Christchurch, which may result in train cancellations. In case the train doesn't run you will travel back to Christchurch by vehicle instead.

Activities:

- Greymouth - Tranz Alpine Train Journey

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
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Day 10

Get back on the road and drive up to Kaikoura, a seaside town known for its abundance of marine wildlife. Kaikoura is famously one of the world's top spots for whale watching, so perhaps take advantage of your time here and head out on a boat trip in search of humpbacks, orcas and sperm whales. This evening perhaps go out for a crayfish dinner – it's a real specialty here!

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
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Day 11

This morning, travel to Marlborough. Aside from its beautiful scenery, the region is known for producing world-class white wine, so what better way to taste the South Island than by visiting some of its best wineries? Then say goodbye to the South Island as you hop aboard a ferry, crossing the Cook Strait and passing through the iconic Marlborough Sounds. On arrival in Wellington, enjoy some free time before your second welcome meeting at 7.30 pm. After your meeting, maybe visit a local brewery for a craft beer or bite to eat – your leader will have the best recommendations!

As this is a combination trip, the travellers in your group and your group leader are likely to change today.

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
-

Day 12

Today is all about getting to know windy Wellington. Kick the day off with a visit to Zealandia – a groundbreaking conservation project that has successfully reintroduced over 20 species of native wildlife into this area, some of which were previously absent from mainland New Zealand for over 100 years. Next up is an orientation tour with your leader, checking out the bays, central Wellington, the Botanic Gardens and the Parliament Building. This afternoon, maybe visit Weta Workshop – the special effects studio used by Peter Jackson for the Lord of the Rings trilogy. While here, you'll have the chance to take an optional tour around the studio to find out how the team creates movie magic. Later, maybe check out the Te Papa Museum.

Activities:

- Wellington - Zealandia Wildlife Sanctuary

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
-

Day 13

Wellington is calling – leave Taupo behind and drive to the Ruapehu region with views over Tongariro National Park. This evening, stop in the

small town of Taumaranui, where you'll visit a local marae (Maori meeting house). You'll be welcomed onto Morero marae. Then, sit down for a korero (conversation) with members of the local iwi about their way of life in this special region. Set on the shores of the mighty Lake Taupo – New Zealand's largest lake – Taupo is one of the most scenic spots on the North Island. You'll spend two nights here, as it's the perfect base to explore Tongariro National Park.

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
-

Day 14

A volcanic eruption 70,000 years ago created the magnificent Lake Taupo, which now hosts visitors from all around New Zealand and the world. With a free day here, you'll have plenty of activities to choose from. Maybe go sailing on Lake Taupo, or if you're a keen hiker, you may want to consider the Tongariro Crossing, New Zealand's most famous day hike. The path takes you around a volcano, past lakes, craters and bushlands.

Today's hike on the famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing is optional, and you can book a transfer to and from the trail head at an additional cost. The transfer service is available from November to April, and the cost does not include a guide. Please note that this is a demanding 19.4 km alpine and volcanic hike with significant risks. It requires a high level of fitness, preparation and personal responsibility. Expect steep, uneven terrain, loose volcanic scree and high elevation – all of which can lead to fatigue, dehydration or health issues. Alpine weather changes rapidly and may cause hypothermia or heat-related illness. Volcanic activity, while unlikely, is a natural hazard in this area. You must be fully self-sufficient, carrying all required gear, food and water. After the Red Crater summit, there are no safe exits until the end of the track. All participants should be fully prepared and are encouraged to disclose any medical conditions. Your leader will assess readiness and has the final say on participation for safety reasons.

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
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Day 15

Leave Lake Taupo behind and get back on the road. Stop at the thundering Huka Falls – this forceful, icy blue torrent of water is a must-see! Continue your journey towards Rotorua, known for its Maori heritage and hotbed of geothermal activity with its distinctive sulphur smell (you'll get used to it!). To get your first look at Rotorua's impressive scenery, take a treetop walk through an ancient redwood forest over a network of suspension bridges, reaching 12 m at the highest point. The evening is yours to relax – maybe explore the world's youngest geothermal system featuring volcanic craters and hot springs at Waimangu Volcanic Valley or hike through the Whakarewarewa Redwood Forest.

Activities:

- Taupo - Huka Falls
- Rotorua - Redwood Forest Canopy Walk

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
-

Day 16

Spend the day discovering the natural and cultural wonders of Rotorua – this unique destination is really like nowhere else in the world. The geothermal activity in the area is second to none – simmering mud pools, geysers and lakes. If you've got a head for heights, maybe zipline through Rotorua's ancient forests. This evening you'll get a true taste of Maori culture during a visit to a cultural and geothermal wonderland. Here, you'll sit down to a hangi dinner and watch a soul-stirring haka performance.

Activities:

- Rotorua - Pohutu Geyser
- Rotorua - Hangi Dinner & Haka Dance

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
-

Day 17

Head to the rolling green hills of Matamata this morning, where you'll visit Hobbiton – this set is where part of the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit films were shot. On a fully guided tour of the set, you'll see Hobbit Holes, the Mill and end with a drink at the Green Dragon Inn. From here, it's on to the Coromandel Peninsula. Along the way, visit Cathedral Cove – a marine reserve known for its sandy beaches, hidden coves and coastline views of the wider Mercury Bay.

Activities:

- Rotorua - Hobbiton Movie Set Tour

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
-

Day 18

This morning, join your leader as they show you around The Coromandel. A land of white sand beaches and lush rainforests, the Coromandel Peninsula feels a world away from where your journey began. Make a stop at Hot Water Beach, named after the famous warm waters found beneath its golden sand. If the tide allows, dig a hole on the beach and enjoy your own natural hot tub – absolute bliss! This afternoon, maybe stop into Kuaotunu to try their famous ice cream and check out Coromandel Township. Then, maybe find a local restaurant for dinner – your leader will have the best recommendations!

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)
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Day 19

This morning, spend some time soaking in the last of Coromandel in your free time before hitting the road to Auckland, New Zealand's biggest city. The journey is a highlight in itself, following the extraordinary coastline and watching clear blue water stream past the window. Tonight, maybe head out for dinner with your fellow travellers – a great way to celebrate a trip well-travelled.

Activities:

- Coromandel Peninsula - Cathedral Cove
- Coromandel Peninsula - Hot Water Beach

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)
-

Day 20

Say your goodbyes this morning as your North Island adventure comes to an end. If you'd like to spend some more time in Auckland, just chat with your booking agent ahead of time.

Tour details

Departures: Daily
Tour type: Small Group Escorted Tour
Starts: Christchurch
Finishes: Auckland
Tour length: 20
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary