



Intrepid Travel: Ultimate New Zealand

Between old forest landscapes, mountainscapes and glacial hikes, you'll journey through New Zealand's diverse natural beauty on this unforgettable adventure. Explore sub-tropical islands and soak up the coastal beauty of Tutukaka – home to one of the world's most gorgeous coastlines (as voted by National Geographic Traveller). Cruise through the scenic Poor Knights Islands, visit a hot water beach for a swim in Coromandel and ride a train across the Southern Alps. Learn about local cultural history at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds, spot wildlife in Wellington and live it up in the South Island's 'adventure capital of the world' (Queenstown) during your free time.

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: Auckland
 Finishes in: Christchurch
 Length: 24days / 23nights
 Accommodation: Hotel 4 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: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring	Included activity: Intrepid Travel
Included: Cathedral Cove & Hot Water Beach on the Coromandel Peninsula	Included: Explore Matapouri Beach
Included: Greenstone pendant carving, Franz Josef	Included: Hobbiton Movie Set Tour
Included: Huka Falls	Included: Mou Waho Island Cruise & Guided Nature Walk, Lake Wanaka
Included: Mt John Lookout, Lake Tekapo	Included: Poor Knights Islands day cruise from Tutukaka
Included: Redwoods Treewalk, Pohutu Geyser, hangi dinner & haka experience at Rotorua	Included: Stop at Whangarei Falls
Included: TranzAlpine Train journey boarding at Greymouth	Included: Zealandia Wildlife Sanctuary
: 23 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners, 1 special dinner	



Day 1



Welcome to New Zealand! Your adventure begins in Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland) with a welcome meeting tonight at 6 pm. If you arrive early, why not check out the Auckland Sky Tower – the tallest building in New Zealand. If the mood strikes, you can also jump off the Sky Tower (with a harness, of course). Maybe visit the Auckland War Memorial Museum or walk around the CBD at your own pace and pick one of the excellent spots for lunch. Tonight, you'll head out for a welcome dinner with your group to get to know each other.

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)

Day 2

Start your day with a hearty breakfast at a local café for a dose of warm Kiwi hospitality. Then, take a scenic drive to Tutukaka, stopping at Whangarei Falls along the way. This 26 m-high waterfall is a great spot for a photo! Continue along the coastline to Matapouri Beach. With the soft sand under your feet, you can take some time to enjoy the soothing sounds of the ocean. This is a perfect spot to relax, unwind and appreciate the surroundings. Arrive in Tutukaka tonight – a coastal city known for its scenic views, world-famous beaches and coastline (rated one of the top three coastlines in the world by National Geographic Traveller!).

Your travel time today will be approximately 3.5 hours.

Activities:

- Matapouri Beach - Visit
- Whangarei Falls - Visit

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)

Day 3

After breakfast this morning, you'll set sail on a full-day cruise to the Poor Knights Islands. As a total Marine Reserve, the islands boast 11-million-year-old volcanic origins, featuring some pretty memorable drop-offs, walls, caves, arches and tunnels both above and below the water. The rich biodiversity includes plant, animal and fish life unique to the area, so if you're a wildlife buff this might be the highlight of your trip! Your day will be filled with sightseeing, kayaking, exploring caves, snorkelling, swimming, spotting sea mammals and learning the history of the islands. The highlight of the day is a visit to the world's largest sea cave – Rikoriko Cave, only accessible by boat. Finish your day with a scenic drive to Paihia, where you'll spend the night.

Your travel time today will be approximately 1.5 hours.

Activities:

- Tutukaka - Poor Knights Islands Day Cruise

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)

Day 4

Today is a free day in Paihia – this coastal town is known as the gateway to the popular dive sites and sandy beaches of the bay. With more than 140 sub-tropical islands dotted around the coastline, there's plenty to see and do here! Maybe hit the water and explore the many coves and beaches or take a cruise through the natural rock archway. Explore the ocean floor on a scuba mission or maybe set sail in search of local

dolphins. If you're looking for a hit of adrenaline, why not consider going skydiving? Your leader will have the inside scoop on optional activities and the best places to refuel for lunch and dinner.

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)

Day 5

Today, you'll discover the Bay of Islands' important role in New Zealand's history with a trip to the Waitangi Treaty Grounds. Get an insight into Māori culture and see the 35 m carved waka (a ceremonial war canoe) – the biggest in the world! After lunch, say goodbye to the bay and start the journey back to Auckland via Northland's east coast. Make sure to grab a window seat if you can, as the scenic beaches and coastal walks along the way pass you by. Arrive back in Auckland in the late afternoon and check into your hotel. You'll have another welcome meeting tonight at 6 pm, then the rest of the evening is yours to do as you please – you might like to take a dip into Auckland's nightlife.

Your travel time today will be approximately 3.5 hours. This is a combination trip, meaning your trip leader and group will likely change today.

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)

Day 6

This morning, leave the city in the rear-view mirror as you drive to the Coromandel Peninsula, following the coastline. A land of white-sand beaches and 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 water that's found beneath its golden sand. If the tide allows, you can dig a hole on the beach and enjoy your own natural hot tub! After a visit to Cathedral Cove, you'll arrive at your accommodation in the afternoon.

Activities:

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

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)

Day 7

Hit the road and make the scenic drive along the Coromandel Peninsula. Join your local leader as they show you some of the most beautiful beaches in the area. This afternoon, maybe stop into Kuaotunu to try their famous ice cream and check out Coromandel Township. Tonight, maybe find a local restaurant for dinner – your leader will have the best recommendations!

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)

Day 8

This morning, watch the landscape change from beach to farmland as you drive to Waikato. Stop at Karangahake Gorge to see the remains of gold mining tunnels and railway tracks. Then, continue to Hobbiton – the living set where part of the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit films were shot. After wandering through Middle Earth, continue your journey to Rotorua, known for its Maori heritage and hotbed of geothermal activity with its distinctive sulphur smell (you'll get used to it!). When you arrive, take a treetop walk through an ancient redwood forest over a network of suspension bridges, reaching 12 m at the highest point.

Activities:

- Rotorua - Redwood Forest Canopy Walk
- Rotorua - Hobbiton Movie Set Tour

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)

Day 9

Spend the day discovering the natural and cultural wonders of Rotorua – home to simmering mud pools, dramatic geysers and fluorescent lakes. If you've got a head for heights, ziplining through Rotorua's ancient forests is an unbeatable way to take it all in. This evening, you'll get a true taste of Maori culture during a visit to a cultural and geothermal wonderland. Here, you'll enjoy a hangi dinner alongside a soul-stirring haka performance.

Activities:

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

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)

Day 10

Rotorua's Polynesian Spa is the perfect place to unwind with your free morning. Or, maybe head to Kuirau Park to walk through a landscape of hissing natural hot pools. This afternoon, say goodbye to Rotorua and hit the road for Taupo, stopping at the thundering Huka Falls along the way. Set on the shores of the mighty Lake Taupo – New Zealand's largest lake – this town is one of the most scenic spots in the North Island. You'll spend two nights here, as it's the perfect base to explore the area and the nearby Tongariro National Park.

Activities:

- Taupo - Huka Falls

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)

Day 11

A volcanic eruption 70,000 years ago created the magnificent Lake Taupo, which now hosts visitors from 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 through bushland.

Today's hike on the 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 a 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)

Day 12

Wellington is calling – leave Taupo behind and drive on to New Zealand's trendy capital city. Strung between green hills and the harbour, Wellington holds onto its small-town charm despite its capital status. Along the way, you'll stop in the small of Taumarunui, where you'll visit a local marae (Maori meeting house). You'll be welcomed onto Morero marae with a traditional Powhiri. Once at the marae, you can sit down for a korero (conversation) with members of the local iwi about their way of life in this special region. After, share some kai (food) before continuing to Wellington. When you arrive, your leader will give you a brief introduction to the city. Then, you have free time to explore at your own pace. Maybe head up Mt Victoria for a the views or explore the city's booming food scene.

Your travel time today will be approximately 5.5 hours.

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)

Day 13

Kick the day off with a visit to Zealandia – a conservation project that has successfully reintroduced over 20 species of native wildlife into this area, some previously absent from mainland New Zealand for over 100 years. Then, visit the Weta Workshop – this special effects studio was 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 created movie magic. This afternoon, maybe check out the Te Papa Museum. Displaying a combination of history and cultural heritage, the exhibits feature interactive displays and there's something here for everyone.

Activities:

- Wellington - Zealandia Wildlife Sanctuary

Staying in:

- Hotel (1 night)

Day 14

Say goodbye to the North Island and cross the Cook Strait on board a ferry, taking in some pretty unforgettable views along the way. Your introduction to New Zealand's South Island sets the tone for the rest of the journey – pass through the iconic landscapes of the Marlborough Sounds as you cruise into Picton Harbour. Aside from its marvellous scenery, the Marlborough region is known for its production of world-class white wine, so what better way to get a taste of the South Island than by visiting some of its best wineries? Stop by and sample their goods while learning what makes Marlborough wine so renowned. Continue your journey south, eventually arriving in Kaikoura where you will stop for the night. This seaside town is known for its abundance of marine wildlife. This evening perhaps head out for a crayfish dinner – it's a real specialty here!

Staying in:

- Hotel or Motel (1 night)

Day 15

Today is a free morning in Kaikoura. This region is famously one of the world's top spots for whale watching, so maybe take advantage of your time here and head out on a boat trip in search of humpbacks, orcas and sperm whales. Regroup and see a colony of native fur seals, then depart Kaikoura and travel down to Christchurch – the South Island's biggest city. You'll have another welcome meeting tonight at 6 pm, then the rest of the evening is yours to do as you please. Perhaps head out for dinner, or rest up for an exciting day ahead tomorrow.

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 16

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)

Day 17

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 18

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)

Day 19

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)

Day 20

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 21

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)

Day 22

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 23

Begin the journey up the west coast – this is the雨iest 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)

Day 24

Your adventure comes to an end after breakfast this morning. If you'd like to spend some more time in Christchurch, just get in touch with your booking agent ahead of time.

Tour details

Departures: Daily
Tour type: Small Group Escorted Tour
Starts: Auckland
Finishes: Christchurch
Tour length: 24
Accommodation: Hotel 4 star
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary