

Milford Track & South Island Explorer

Your journey begins in Tāhuna-Queenstown with a briefing for your stunning 5-day, 4-night guided walk on the Piopiotahi-Milford Track, a remote path through magical Te Rua-o-te-Moko-Fiordland. Following your trek, you'll collect your hire car for a self-drive adventure to Ōtepoti-Dunedin, where you can discover the rare coastal wildlife, including hoiho (yellow-eyed penguins) and royal albatross. The road then leads inland to Aoraki-Mount Cook, giving you time to enjoy the region's glacier explorers and spectacular alpine scenery. Conclude your unforgettable holiday in the revitalized city of Ōtautahi-Christchurch.

The rates displayed for this tour are based on a per-person occupancy in the Milford Queen Room. For single or twin room occupancy, kindly contact our sales consultants.

Starts in: Queenstown
 Finishes in: Christchurch
 Length: 13days / 12nights
 Accommodation: Boutique Lodges & Hotels
 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: Late model rental cars
 Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)
 Includes: Unlimited kms
 Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring
 Included activity: Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation
 Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App
 Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course
 Included activity: Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Museum and Theatre Explorer Pass with Hermitage
 Included activity: Glacier Explorers
 Included activity: The Milford Track 5 Day/4 Night Guided Walk with Ultimate Hikes
 Included activity: Penguin Tour with The Opera
 Included activity: Royal Albatross Centre - Unique Albatross and Fort Taiaroa Tour
 12 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 4 dinners

Day 1



Welcome to Queenstown

Renowned for its adrenaline inducing activities Queenstown is synonymous with adventure. Parked on the shores of Lake Wakatipu this small alpine town is nestled below soaring vistas of The Remarkables Mountain Range. While arguably the brightest gem in New Zealand's crown, Queenstown offers far more than an action-packed getaway. Spend time on the Gibbston wine trail and end with a meal at Michelin star chef Josh Emett's restaurant, Rata. Take a trip down memory lane on a 100 year old steamship the TSS Earnslaw. Soak in the scenery on your walk around the lake, or venture further afield into Fiordland National Park. Head over the hill to resort town Wanaka, or re-live scenes from Lord Of The Rings by four wheel drive. But - if you really do want that rush - head out on the Shotover Jet, dive off the Nevis Bungy, freefall on the Canyon swing or Zip line the Gondola. Just be sure it's done on an empty stomach & don't say we didn't warn you!

Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation

On arrival you will be met by a private driver and delivered to your Queenstown accommodation.

Your accommodation: Millennium Hotel Queenstown

Right in the heart of the action, the Millennium Hotel is just minutes from Queenstown's central shopping and entertainment district. Outdoor activities such as bungy jumping, white water rafting and jet boating are just some of the easily accessible activities nearby in New Zealand's adventure capital.



Day 2



Explore Queenstown

Well-known as New Zealand's 'adventure capital', Queenstown is home to a range of adventures, from the world's first and most famous bungy jumps to jet boat thrills, white-water rafting, and skydiving. However, Queenstown offers far more than a fast-paced, action-packed holiday. Settled on the shores of beautiful Lake Wakatipu beneath a soaring panorama of the Remarkables Mountain Range, this alpine town is surrounded by many historic, gastronomic, and scenic wonders. Take a stroll through the beautiful lakefront parks and gardens, browse through market stalls on weekends, dine in wonderful al-fresco restaurants, or ride on the 100-year-old historic Steamship - TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak Station. Take the Queenstown Gondola up to Bob's Peak and soak up the panoramic views of the magnificent lake and mountain ranges. And after all of that, if you do want the adrenaline rush, Queenstown is known for taking your pick from the Shotover Jet, Canyon Swing, Zipline, Luge, or Heli-hike.

Milford Track Guided Walk Briefing

Please check in at 2:45pm on the day prior to your walk for a group pre-track briefing. The briefing is held at the Ultimate Hikes Centre, Ground Floor, The Station Building, Duke Street Entrance, Queenstown. At the briefing, you will have the opportunity to confirm your dietary, medical information, and emergency contact details. You will be able to pick up any gear you need or purchase any last-minute items. The customer service staff will also give you an overview of what to expect while you are on track. If you cannot make the pre-track briefing, please contact Reservations on +64 3 450 1940 or info@ultimatehikes.co.nz as soon as possible.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Shotover Jet Canyon Jet Boat Ride

Shotover Jet is the only company permitted to operate in the Shotover River Canyons. It's a thrilling ride! Skim past rocky outcrops at close range in your Shotover Jet 'Big Red', as you twist and turn through the narrow canyons at breathtaking speeds. And a major highlight - hold tight for the world-famous Shotover Jet full 360-degree spins! It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see [here](#).

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3



The Milford Track 5 Day/4 Night Guided Walk with Ultimate Hikes

Traversing the heart of New Zealand's wild fjord country, the Milford Track has long been described as "the finest walk in the world". Since Quintin Mackinnon pioneered the route in 1888, everyone from hardened trekkers to novices sporting their first pair of boots has taken up the challenge of the Milford Track.

The Fiordland National Park is the cornerstone of the Te Wahipounamu Southwest New Zealand World Heritage Area. Enjoy close encounters with the native birdlife: the Robin, Kea, Weka, Fantail, Parakeet, Bellbird, and even Kiwi have been spotted! Walkers on the track to Milford Sound encounter Fiordland at its most spectacular: deep lakes, silent fjords, luxuriant forest, and sheer canyons carved out of imposing granite define this landscape. On a fine day, there is a postcard shot around every corner, but only when it rains and torrents of water cascade down the mountainsides have you truly experienced the magic of the Milford Track.

The Milford Track Guided Walk is a 5-day, 4-night all-inclusive guided walk from Queenstown to Queenstown through the heart of Fiordland National Park to Milford Sound. The package includes all transport, accommodation, meals, snacks, backpacks, and rain jackets. Accommodation is in lodges and you will be led by expert Ultimate Hikes guides. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see [here](#).

Queenstown to Glade House

The coach departs from the Ultimate Hikes Centre in Queenstown. Please arrive by 9.15am to meet your guides and board the coach for the two hour drive to Te Anau. We will have lunch in Te Anau before travelling on to Te Anau Downs, where a boat will take you up to the start of the track at the northern end of Lake Te Anau. It's a short walk to the historic Glade House, where you will be greeted with afternoon tea and shown to your room. Your guides will take you on a nature walk in the afternoon to give you an idea of the terrain and the environment you will be walking. In the evening, you'll have time to get to know your group over dinner.

Your accommodation: Milford Track Lodges

Milford Track Lodges have been purpose designed and built, with everything right down to the last nail flown in by helicopter! The result is sheer indulgence in the last place you would expect it. All lodges have drying rooms, flush toilets and hot showers complete with soap, shampoo, conditioner and even hairdryers. A full kitchen treats you with a three course dinner and cooked breakfast or enjoy a drink from the bar before dinner

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 4



Glade House to Pompolona

Your first full day of walking begins by crossing the Clinton River bridge. The smooth track follows the river up the valley to the Hirere Falls lunch shelter. Take a side walk to the wetlands, a complex eco-system unique to this section of track. After lunch look out for your first glimpse of Omani/McKinnon Pass in the distance. You'll stay in the beech forest, until you come out onto the Prairie – detour down to soak your feet in Prairie Lake. From this meadow you can capture the true nature of the ice-carved Clinton Canyon. From here, it's a short climb to Pompolona Lodge. Today's walk is 16 km (10 miles) and takes 5-7 hours.

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Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 5



Pompolona Lodge to Quintin Lodge

From Pompolona Lodge the track leads up to Lake Mintaro at the head of the Clinton Valley, before climbing the Omanui/McKinnon Pass in a series of zig-zags. Take your time and enjoy the views. At the top you can rest at McKinnon memorial before passing the highest point and stopping for lunch in Pass Hut overlooking the Clinton Valley. The descent into the Arthur Valley is steep and uneven so take care and use poles. Viewing platforms give you a great view of the Cascades waterfalls. Quintin Lodge is a welcome sight at the bottom of the Pass. Take a short break to revive with a drink and a snack then we highly recommend doing the optional 90-minute round trip to Sutherland Falls, at 580m/1904ft it is one of the highest in the world and well worth seeing. Today's hike is 15 km (9 miles) and takes 6-8 hours.

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Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 6



Quintin to Mitre Peak Lodge via Sandfly Point

Your final day on the track is the longest section at 21km. You'll walk down the Arthur Valley to the historic Boatshed. After a short break and a hot drink, the track continues on past MacKay Falls through lush beech forest to the lunch spot at Giants Gate waterfall. The final stretch of the track follows tranquil Lake Ada to Sandfly Point. From Sandfly Point it is a short boat trip across the renowned Milford Sound; the fjord often referred to as the eighth wonder of the world. Mitre Peak, the famously photographed pinnacle rises almost sheer from the Sound to a height of 1692m (5551ft). At Mitre Peak Lodge, relax in the bar enjoying the view, before sitting down to a celebratory dinner. Today enjoy 21km (13 miles) 6-8 hours of walking.

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Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 7



Day 5 - Mitre Peak Lodge to Te Anau and Queenstown

This morning after breakfast we'll take you on a cruise on Milford Sound. Watch for dolphins and fur seals and, if the waterfalls are in full flow, you'll have seen Fiordland at its very best! Following the cruise it's time to head back to Queenstown. The coach trip follows the scenic Milford Road through Homer Tunnel and on to Te Anau, where there will be a short break before the last leg of the journey to Queenstown. Lunch will be eaten along the way.

Your accommodation: Millennium Hotel Queenstown

Right in the heart of the action, the Millennium Hotel is just minutes from Queenstown's central shopping and entertainment district. Outdoor activities such as bungy jumping, white water rafting and jet boating are just some of the easily accessible activities nearby in New Zealand's adventure capital.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 8



Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Gondola and 3 Luge Rides with Skyline Queenstown

In the heart of Queenstown, located 450 metres above town in the Ben Lomond Scenic Reserve is the Skyline Complex. A gondola ride to the summit makes for awe-inspiring views of the city surround. Arrive at the complex and wander the outside viewing decks for a picture perfect outlook. Then onto the Luge! The 800 metre luge track offers an exhilarating journey through banked corners, tunnels and dippers.

Queenstown to Dunedin

Your route today is a historic one with many small towns along the way. Go through the Kawarau Gorge and stop at one of its renowned wineries. The gorge is also home to the world's first commercial bungy jumping operation and a viewing platform lets you watch others as you build the courage to try it yourself - or not! A little further you'll come to Cromwell, sitting beside the man-made Lake Dunstan - created when the valley was flooded in 1992 as part of the hydro electric scheme. As a result, much of the original town is now submerged, but several historic buildings were relocated to 'Old Cromwell Town'. Continue on through the Otago Goldfields. Pass the townships of Alexandra, Lawrence and Roxburgh - once with booming populations three times their current at the height of the 1800's gold-rush. Many of the old settlements remain and are worth a look if you can spare the time. Alexandra in more recent times has become the 'stone fruit capital' of New Zealand - named for its ideal fruit growing climate. As you drive further south the landscape changes to rolling hills and windswept farmland - melding fluidly with the rugged coast of Dunedin, your destination for the night.

Dunedin

Dunedin, known in Māori as Ōtepoti, is referred to as the "Edinburgh of the Southern Hemisphere". The city has a rightly deserved reputation as one of the best-preserved Victorian and Edwardian cities in the Southern Hemisphere. Of particular note is Dunedin Railway Station, built 1904 - 1906, and St Paul's Cathedral in the Octagon. The Otago Museum is renowned for its Māori and Pacific Island collections and natural history displays. A visit to the Speights, New Zealand's oldest brewery, is also considered a must while in Dunedin. The Botanic Gardens is a great spot and at the right time of year, you can witness the Rhododendron Dell in bloom. The Otago Peninsula is the only home in the world to the Northern Royal Albatross. The Peninsula can be visited for the day from Dunedin and the stunning harbor landscape and wildlife are worth exploring. High among the rolling hills of the Peninsula is Larnach Castle, the grand home of an early politician. Construction of the castle began in 1871 and was completed 12 years later. From here, views out to sea and back towards the city emphasize the singular beauty of Dunedin and its jewel-like harbor.

Your accommodation: Fable Dunedin

Located in the centre of Dunedin, Fable Hotel is within walking distance of shopping, cafes and restaurants and the central focus of the Octagon. Beautifully appointed accommodation and a chic restaurant and bar are augmented by contemporary touches throughout.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 9



Explore Otago Peninsula

The Otago Peninsula extends from the southern side of Otago Harbour, just minutes from the city center. A short drive takes you past scenic bays and picturesque farmland. Renowned as one of New Zealand's premier eco-tourism destinations, the peninsula is home to the iconic Royal Albatross, with Taiaroa Head at its tip hosting the world's only mainland breeding colony of these majestic birds. In addition to the albatross, the area is rich in wildlife, including New Zealand fur seals, sea lions, and rare yellow-eyed penguins. You can explore a variety of walking tracks, enjoy breathtaking views, and stunning beaches, and visit the magnificent Larnach Castle, a cultural highlight of the region.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Larnach Castle and Gardens

Larnach Castle, New Zealand's only castle, was built in 1871 by politician and merchant William Larnach, a visionary who played a key role in shaping the country's early history. Constructed for his beloved first wife, Eliza, the castle's shell took 200 workmen three years to complete, followed by twelve years of intricate interior craftsmanship. Perched high on the Otago Peninsula, the castle offers stunning views over Dunedin City. Its gardens hold International Garden of Significance status and feature a unique collection of antiques, including a rare nine-piece Totara knot suite. The Ballroom Café provides the perfect spot to relax and enjoy refreshments while reflecting on your visit. The ballroom itself has a fascinating history, having once served as an asylum, an antique sales room, and even a sheep pen before its beautiful restoration. With a self-guided tour, you can explore the castle and gardens at your own pace.

Penguin Tour with The Opera

Learn about the endangered Yellow Eyed Penguin when you visit The Opera - Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance, a private conservation reserve dedicated to ensuring the survival of this unique species. The project is entirely funded by guided tours which allow the conservation team to engage in habitat restoration, predator control, a research program, and an on-site rehabilitation facility.

On your tour, you will learn about the issues the Yellow Eyed Penguin faces, their life cycle, and how the project is carried out. Your experience will begin in a theatre before moving to the rehabilitation center where penguins may be seen up close. You'll take a short bus trip over to the reserve and be led on foot approx 2km by your guide through a system of covered trenches to view hides that allow access to the living and breeding habitat of this very shy bird without disturbing them. There is also an opportunity to meet other animals that reside in the reserve including fur seals, sea lions, and several species of shore and land birds.

Royal Albatross Centre - Unique Albatross and Fort Taiaroa Tour

The Royal Albatross colony at Taiaroa Head on the Otago Peninsula is the only mainland breeding colony of Royal Albatross in the world. From the centre, it's a short walk to the observatory for the privilege of seeing the greatest of all seabirds. Wander through the McMillan Gallery and learn more of the history and wildlife of the area. The Unique Taiaroa experience offers a comprehensive 90 minutes guided tour of both the Albatross colony and Fort Taiaroa. Enjoy spectacular Albatross viewing from the Richdale Observatory including the introductory "Attenborough" video and albatross breeding cycle information. The Fort Taiaroa guided tour takes you back into New Zealand's colonial past. It covers the Maori and European occupation of the headland with a visit to 'Fort Taiaroa,' underground fortifications beneath the Albatross Colony. Walk through the underground tunnels to the 1886 Armstrong Disappearing Gun that is still in working order. This was established to counter the anticipated threat of invasion from Tsarist Russia.

Your accommodation: Fable Dunedin

Located in the centre of Dunedin, Fable Hotel is within walking distance of shopping, cafes and restaurants and the central focus of the Octagon. Beautifully appointed accommodation and a chic restaurant and bar are augmented by contemporary touches throughout.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 10



Dunedin to Mt Cook National Park

Heading north from Dunedin your first stop should be Moeraki to explore the famous and unique boulders strewn on the beach. Before heading inland along the Waitaki Valley you pass through the historic township of Oamaru and its Stone buildings. Take time to head into the old quarter and if your timing is right you may get to see some of the local resident little blue penguins. The Waitaki Valley makes a large contribution to New Zealand's electricity supply with its 3 hydro dams. Arriving into Omarama you are now truly in the high country but don't think these vast empty lands are useless, these are some of the country's most productive merino sheep stations. The turquoise waters of Lake Pukaki guide you the final 45 minutes to Aoraki Mount Cook Village

Walking Tracks in Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

Aoraki-Mt Cook Village offers a variety of short scenic walks suitable for all ages and fitness levels. Start your adventure at the Department of Conservation Information Centre, where you can learn about track conditions, local history, and the area's wildlife. Here are a few popular walks to explore: Bowen Bush Walk: 10-minute return Glencoe Walk: 10-minute return Red Tarns Track: 2-hour return Kea Point Walk: 2-hour return Sealy Tarns Track: 3 - 4 hours return Please be aware that at Aoraki/Mount Cook, you will need to pay for parking at the White Horse Hill car park. The cost is \$5 per hour or \$25 for the full day. A 20-minute free period is available for quick drop-offs.

Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Museum and Theatre Explorer Pass with Hermitage

A tribute to New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary, a humanitarian, ambassador, and one of the world's greatest explorers. The centre showcases the Aoraki Mount Cook region, the history of climbing, and early transport used throughout the region. This comprehensive museum details the life of Sir Edmund Hillary, the Hermitage, and provides access to the 126-seat custom-designed theatre. Check out the daily film schedule which includes 3D Movies, documentaries, and 360-degree digital dome features.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - The Panorama Room 3-course Dinner with The Hermitage Hotel

Since first opening its doors in 1969, The Panorama Room has gained a reputation as being one of the best restaurants in New Zealand. This reputation is reflected in the numerous awards the restaurant has received over the years. A simple philosophy of using just the freshest, local ingredients, in particular from New Zealand's South Island, is still the secret to its success today. The menu has a strong international influence and reflects both the establishment's taste and the fact that most of the chefs have travelled and worked widely throughout the world.

Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel Room Mount Cook View

The Hermitage Hotel ringed by magnificent snow-capped peaks of the Southern Alps, is a world-renowned tourist destination and has been an icon of superior accommodation and dining since 1884.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 11



Glacier Explorers

Experience 500-year-old icebergs up close on the Aoraki-Mt Cook terminal lake. The Glacier Explorers tour is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and one of only three in the world! Very few glaciers terminate into lakes and even fewer of them are accessible. See towering ice cliffs and floating icebergs from the safety of a specially designed boat. These boats provide a safe way to view unseen and inaccessible areas of New Zealand's largest glacier The Tasman.

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Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel Room Mount Cook View

The Hermitage Hotel ringed by magnificent snow-capped peaks of the Southern Alps, is a world-renowned tourist destination and has been an icon of superior accommodation and dining since 1884.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 12



Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park to Christchurch

Leaving Aoraki Mt Cook National Park, travel a short distance for a stop at the visitor centre on the southern shores of Lake Pukaki. Learn about the formation of the region and take in the spectacular views of Aoraki-Mount Cook. Along the way you'll come to Lake Tekapo which also displays the same reflective qualities as Lake Pukaki, making the waters bright turquoise. It's a great place to take a scenic flight, soak in a hot spring or just marvel at the magnificent views. From here you travel through Burkes Pass and into the rich farming valley that surrounds Geraldine. Continue across the vast Canterbury Plains to Christchurch.

Christchurch

Christchurch known in Māori as Ōtautahi, is the largest metro area in the South Island. Commonly referred to as New Zealand's "Garden City", Christchurch is home to one of the biggest public parks in the country, and beautiful botanic gardens. The city was hit with devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011, now the city crosses the line between its English heritage and a new modern architecture. To take in some arts and culture, pay a visit to the Canterbury Museum or the Christchurch Art Gallery. Take a step back in time with a tram around the city or punt along the Avon River. If tasting your way around the city is your means of travel, try out a cultural eating tour. A short drive from the CBD will lead you to the outskirts of the Banks Peninsula beachside suburb of Sumner or through the tunnel to Lyttleton Harbour which hosts fantastic markets on Saturday mornings.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Kai Safari with Amiki Cultural Food Tours

Immerse yourself in the vibrant atmosphere of the new city while exploring its emerging foodie scene. Learn about the lives of early Māori and their contemporary lifestyle. Uncover hidden gems and hear stories of how Ōtautahi-Christchurch envisions the future. Enjoy visits to beloved modern New Zealand restaurants, where you can sample seasonal shared plates made from local produce. Indulge in new favourite dishes, savouring a variety of local food and beverages, each with its own unique story that highlights the region's offerings..

Your accommodation: Sudima Christchurch City

Sudima Christchurch City is a brand new 5-star boutique hotel, ideally located on Victoria Street. Amidst an array of cafes, restaurants and bars, stay only a martini olive pips' throw from beautiful Hagley Park and Christchurch's CBD. Experience the garden city in comfort and style.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 13



Farewell from Aotearoa / New Zealand

Bid farewell to Aotearoa / New Zealand, taking with you unforgettable memories of its breathtaking landscapes and incredible adventures. In Māori, it is said mā te wā, which is not goodbye, it is see you soon!

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - International Antarctic Centre General Admission

The International Antarctic Centre aims to recreate the atmosphere and environment of Antarctica, providing visitors with an interactive, fun, and educational experience. Feel the full Four Seasons of Antarctica, where you'll experience a custom-built snow and ice experience, then warm up in the Scott Base interior exhibit, a replica Antarctic field camp, or other informative displays in the gallery. You'll also learn about life in modern-day Antarctica, view real little blue penguins, and experience a thrilling ride in a Hagglund all-terrain vehicle.

Return Your Vehicle to Christchurch Airport

It's time to return your rental car and let the South Island journey come to an end. If time allows spend the day exploring more of Christchurch, we'd suggest a leisurely drive up the Port Hills for some great sites and then over to the harbour of Lyttleton, before circling through the tunnel and back to the airport to continue your journey home.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Queenstown
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	13
Accommodation:	Boutique Lodges & Hotels
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Millennium Hotel Queenstown
Day 2	Millennium Hotel Queenstown
Day 3	Milford Track Lodges
Day 4	Milford Track Lodges
Day 5	Milford Track Lodges
Day 6	Milford Track Lodges
Day 7	Millennium Hotel Queenstown
Day 8	Fable Dunedin
Day 9	Fable Dunedin
Day 10	Hermitage Hotel Room Mount Cook View
Day 11	Hermitage Hotel Room Mount Cook View
Day 12	Sudima Christchurch City