

AAT Kings: Untamed New Zealand - Small Group Tour 26/27

Traverse New Zealand's North and South Islands, exploring hidden wonders and iconic landscapes. Witness majestic glaciers, shimmering lakes, and ancient rainforests brimming with wildlife. Immerse yourself in rich cultural experiences, fresh seasonal fare, world class wines and scenic stays. Experience a journey like no other.

Starts in: Auckland
 Finishes in: Christchurch
 Length: 17days / 16nights
 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
- Includes: Art Deco tour in Napier
- Includes: Franz Josef Glacier
- Includes: Milford Sound Overnight Boat Cruise
- Includes: Visit Greytown Honey
- Includes: Whirinaki Forest experience
- Includes: Omaka Aviation Museum

- Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
- Includes: Afternoon tea with 'Pavlova Queen', Angie Taylor
- Includes: Cruise on the Interislander Ferry
- Includes: Highlands Motorsport Museum
- Includes: Te Puia geothermal valley
- Includes: Visit the iconic Tui Brewery
- Includes: Wine tasting at Urlar winery in the Wairarapa
- : 16 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 6 dinners

Day 1

Welcome to Auckland, self-proclaimed City of Sails. Meet your Travel Director this afternoon for a city sights tour to get your bearings, sights include historic Parnell, Auckland Museum and the surrounding Domain, Wynyard Quarter and Viaduct Harbour. Later enjoy dinner with drinks, and raise a toast to your journey ahead.

Staying in:

- Mercure Auckland Queen Street (1 night)
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Day 2

Travel to Rotorua, where mud pops and jettisons from bubbling geysers, and steam rushes skywards from cracks in the Earth. This afternoon options abound. Bliss out at Wai Ariki Hot Springs & Spa, take a tour of the surrounding lakes from the comfort of an amphibious vehicle or zip through ancient forest by low impact zipline (own expense). Tonight, delve deep into Māori culture and traditions 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, followed by views of the Pohutu Geyser, one of New Zealand's geothermal wonderlands, and ends with a delicious buffet dinner of locally sourced hāngī-inspired cuisine.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)
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Day 3

Today you'll visit Whirinaki Forest, a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience. Proud and knowledgeable local Maori guides lead you on an intimate, interactive experience, sharing tribal stories, and history of the Ngati Manawa people. Discover Pristine native rainforest trails, meet Nga Rakau Rangatira - the chiefly trees of the forest, see 1,000-year-old Totara, learn about Rakau Rongoa (Natural Medicine Plants), hear and hopefully see native and endangered birds in their natural habitat. Fill your water bottles from pure waterfalls and enjoy a packed picnic lunch infused with traditional cuisine – "Forest to Fork". Relax with whakatauki, (forest bathing) and hot kawakawa tea to end. Continue on to the Art Deco capital of New Zealand, Napier.

Staying in:

- Swiss Belhotel (1 night)
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Day 4

Napier's striking Art Deco architecture is a direct result of the devastating 1931 Hawke's Bay earthquake, which remains New Zealand's deadliest natural disaster. Napier was rapidly rebuilt in the style of the era – Art Deco, Spanish Mission and Striped Classical. Today, Napier is regarded as one of the world's best-preserved Art Deco cities. Join us on a private walking tour of the Art Deco quarter, a MAKE TRAVEL MATTER Experience. Your local expert guide from the Art Deco Trust will regale you with stories of the people and events that shaped the iconic art deco buildings. Later you may choose to partake in a wine tour of Hawkes Bay wineries, or a tour of the local Gannet Colony, the largest nesting colony of its type in the world (both own expense).

Staying in:

- Swiss Belhotel (1 night)
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Day 5

Today travel south through to the boutique wine region and International Dark Sky Reserve, Wairarapa. Visit the iconic Tui Brewery in the town of Mangatainoka. Brewing beer since 1889, the site includes a museum, bar, and restaurant. Continue to the pretty town of Masterton for your overnight stay. Later visit boutique winery Urlar. Meet hosts, Tess and Brian to hear the Urlar story and enjoy a tasting of local wines made onsite. Enjoy country fare with a seasonal platter overlooking the lake at the vineyard.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Solway Park (1 night)
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Day 6

Visit Greytown Honey, a family business producing the very highest quality Mānuka, Wildflower, Kāmahi, Kānuka, Rewarewa, Native and Clover honey. Join Karly, a fifth-generation beekeeper who has beehives on untouched native bush sites and special farmland throughout the Wairarapa region. On this MAKE TRAVEL MATTER experience, partake in a processing factory tour and watch a demonstration to learn about how honey is produced from hive to jar. Take part in a honey tasting session of award-winning honey and produce your own jar of honey to take home. Visit Greytown, known for its well-preserved Victorian architecture and boutique stores and cafes. Continue to Wellington, New Zealand's coolest little capital. This afternoon take an orientation tour where you will visit the peak of Mount Victoria, a short stroll will reward you with 360-degree views of the surrounding harbour and city.

Staying in:

- James Cook Grand Chancellor (1 night)
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Day 7

This morning cruise the Cook Strait into tranquil Queen Charlotte Sound from the North Island to the South, through a maze of arms and inlets into Marlborough and the picturesque town of Blenheim. Often winning the title of sunniest town in New Zealand, Blenheim is known for its world class Sauvignon Blanc, sun-soaked vineyards and aviation heritage. This afternoon during your visit to Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre, immerse yourself in an extraordinary collection of World War I and II aircraft and memorabilia, each piece meticulously brought to life through the stunning craftsmanship of Weta Workshop.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Marlborough (1 night)
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Day 8

Today, explore Marlborough at your own pace. Choose from a wine tour of the local vineyards, or jump onboard the iconic Mail Boat cruise delivering mail and supplies to local residents in Queen Charlotte Sound, offering a unique tour experience with scenic views, wildlife encounters, and insightful commentary (both own expense).

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Blenheim (1 night)
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Day 9

There aren't many beaches more dramatic than the sands of Kaikoura. Bonus points if you spot a sea lion or sperm whale frolicking offshore, Kaikoura is the marine wildlife centre of New Zealand. Talk to your Travel Director for tips on the essential restaurants to dine in tonight – Christchurch has reinvented itself in more ways than one.

Staying in:

- Wyndham Garden (1 night)
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Day 10

Begin your day by exploring Christchurch's city sights before journeying to the brilliant bright blue waters of Lake Tekapo. You'll view the iconic Church of the Good Shepherd, which was built in 1935, and was the first church in the Mackenzie Basin. You are then welcomed to the stunning lakeside home of Angie and Stan Taylor for afternoon tea. Retired Farmers, baker Angie is the undisputed Pavlova Queen who will give a demonstration and explanation of the great trans-Tasman pavlova controversy, while Stan will regale you with tales of a lifetime spent farming. Conclude your day at the charming Lake Ohau Lodge, nestled in the Mackenzie High Country and surrounded by breathtaking wilderness. The Main Lodge boasts a cozy open fire and expansive windows with stunning views of the lake, providing the perfect setting to unwind before a family-style dinner.

Staying in:

- Lake Ohau Lodge (1 night)
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Day 11

Travel through Lindis Pass to Cromwell. Visit the Jones Family fruit stall for fresh produce, then explore Highlands Museum, a paradise for car enthusiasts and novices alike. Continue your journey to Arrowtown, a charming village with a rich gold rush heritage, before reaching scenic Queenstown. Lunch is at your leisure at cult eatery Fergburger, famous for its mouthwatering gourmet burgers and vibrant atmosphere.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown Lakefront (1 night)
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Day 12

Take today at your own pace. Like things fast and furious? Feel the wind in your hair on the high-octane jet boat ride, perhaps. There's a reason why Queenstown is known as the adventure capital of the country. Nature lover? Discover some of New Zealand's feathered friends at a wildlife centre (both own expense).

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown Lakefront (1 night)
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Day 13

Start the day with a journey along the Devil's Staircase, with its dramatic landscapes leading you to the charming town of Te Anau. Continue your adventure through the World Heritage-listed Fiordland National Park sighting glaciers, and mountain ranges en route to the amazing Mirror Lake before driving through the hand-hewn Homer Tunnel. Spend the night aboard the iconic Milford Mariner and wake up in one of the most beautiful places on earth. The cruise style is relaxed, allowing plenty of time to view the fiord's spectacular waterfalls, rainforest, mountains, and diverse wildlife such as Fur Seals and various sea birds. Hear from the specialist nature guide on board and explore the shoreline by kayak or tender. The Milford Mariner offers spacious viewing decks, a dining saloon with fully licensed bar, as well as an observation lounge. Dining included in your cruise are hors d'oeuvres followed by a three-course buffet meal, as well as a delicious cooked breakfast.

Staying in:

- Milford Mariner (1 night)
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Day 14

Depart the serene beauty of Fiordland National Park and journey to the picturesque country town of Wānaka, nestled amidst the majestic Southern Alps and gracing the shores of Lake Wānaka. This idyllic town offers a perfect blend of natural splendour and leisurely pursuits. Your hotel is located in the heart of the village just a short walk from the lakefront and nestled among surrounding cafes and restaurants.

Staying in:

- Wanaka Hotel (1 night)
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Day 15

Begin your journey with a scenic drive from Wānaka, passing the pristine waters of Lake Hawea and the picturesque settlement of Makarora – a hikers hub surrounded by vast alpine scenery and river valleys of lush temperate rainforest. Continue over the Haast Pass, the historic town of Fox Glacier awaits. Get some perspective on an optional scenic flight over Fox and Franz Josef Glacier/Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere – if the weather behaves, you may even get a glacier landing (own expense).

Staying in:

- Heartland Fox Glacier (1 night)
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Day 16

Before you depart this morning, get some perspective on an optional scenic flight over Fox and Franz Josef Glacier/Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere – if the weather behaves, you may even get a glacier landing (own expense). Today's drive north winds past lush rainforests and rugged coastlines to Hokitika, famous for its greenstone and arty, laid-back vibe. From there, the road heads inland through the Southern Alps.

As you climb toward Arthur's Pass, the scenery shifts dramatically. Rainforest gives way to soaring peaks, rocky gorges, and sweeping tussock plains. Keep an eye out for cheeky kea (the world's only alpine parrot) along the way! Once over the pass, the landscape softens again as you roll toward the bright lights of Christchurch. Tonight, enjoy dinner with your Travel Director, a fitting end to your New Zealand adventure.

Staying in:

- Wyndham Garden (1 night)
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Day 17

It's time to say farewell and head home, sorting through snapshots of an unforgettable journey. But the best souvenirs? The lasting memories of two weeks immersed in untamed nature and cultural experiences.

Tour details

Departures: Daily
Tour type: Small Group Escorted Tour
Starts: Auckland
Finishes: Christchurch
Tour length: 17
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary