



Great Journeys of New Zealand - Signature Cities & Seas Tour (via Rotorua) 2026/2027

Get ready for an elevated rail adventure from Auckland to Christchurch designed for luxury and unforgettable scenery. Travelling off the beaten track in premium comfort, you'll ride the world-famous Northern Explorer and Coastal Pacific trains, complete with a Scenic Plus dining experience. This exceptional itinerary guides you through the cultural heart of the North Island via Rotorua, where you can immerse yourself in geothermal wonders and Indigenous Māori culture, alongside cruising the glowworm-lit Waitomo Caves. Meet like-minded travellers while experiencing world-class activities in charming locations, like exploring Wellington's vibrant capital. Crossing the Cook Strait, the South Island awaits with gourmet wine tasting in Marlborough and a chance to spot dolphins in Kaikōura. This fully guided journey is the ultimate stress-free way to discover the magic of New Zealand.



Starts in: Auckland
 Finishes in: Christchurch
 Length: 13days / 12nights
 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: Afterhours emergency support while touring
- Included: Paua Pearl Farm Tour
- Included: Christchurch City Walking Tour
- Included: Raglan Sunset Cruise
- Included: Zealand Estate Tour, Tea Ceremony & Signature High Tea
- Included: Sanctuary Mountain
- Included: Northern Explorer Scenic Plus Train from Taumaranui to Wellington
- Included: Marlborough Wine Tour
- Included: Omaka Aviation Museum

- Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations
- Included: Coastal Pacific Train
- Included: Dolphin Encounter Experience
- Included: Hop-on Hop-off Tram
- Included: Northern Explorer Train Auckland to Hamilton
- Included: Waitomo GlowWorm Caves
- Included: Te Pā Tū Māori Experience
- Included: Wellington City Tour
- Included: Cruise on the Interislander Ferry
- Included: Water Taxi Cruise through Marlborough Sounds

: 12 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 6 dinners



Day 1



Explore Auckland

Kia ora! Welcome to Auckland, New Zealand's City of Sails! Auckland is known for its multicultural hub of food, music, arts, and culture. After checking into your hotel and reading your welcome letter from your Tour Director, head out and explore all that Auckland has to offer. This is the perfect opportunity to visit the Sky Tower or go shopping along bustling Queen Street. You may even fancy a drink in one of the charming bars or eateries of Vulcan Lane. Your tour officially begins this evening, as you join your fellow travellers and Tour Director this evening for a welcome reception.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Dinner

Day 2



The Beginning of your Scenic Journey

Your journey awaits as you join the Northern Explorer Scenic train. Marvel at rural New Zealand's lush landscapes from the comfort of your scenic carriage. From the sparkling waters of the Waitematā Harbour to the green pastures of the Waikato - you won't want to miss a moment. Arriving in Hamilton, your coach awaits you to bring you to the enchanting Zealong Tea Estate, where an immersive 1.5-hour tour and tea ceremony await, followed by the renowned Signature High Tea experience. Discover the art of tea-making amidst breathtaking surroundings. In the early afternoon, enjoy some free time in the heart of Hamilton before departing for an evening visit to Raglan - a seaside surfer town. It's here that you'll enjoy a Sunset Dinner Cruise on the pristine harbour.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3



Discover Endangered and Bioluminescent Species

Immerse yourself in the wonders of Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari on a bespoke two-hour tour through its ancient forests. Discover the indigenous flora and fauna, their traditional uses, and gain fascinating insights into Māori herbal medicinal practices, the unique Rongoā Rākau. This unforgettable journey will take you deep into the heart of New Zealand's natural beauty and cultural heritage. Your expedition continues after a lunch stop in New Zealand's "Kiwiana Capital", Otorohanga. Make sure you capture a photo of the giant Kiwi birds! Next, discover the famous Waitomo Glow-worm Caves and be dazzled by the seemingly star-filled sky as you glide by boat through this impressive cave formation. Tonight, explore Hamilton's riverside walks and shops on this free evening. Enjoy one of the many nearby restaurants as the sun sets over the Waikato River.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 4



Journey from Hamilton to Rotorua

You'll make your way into Rotorua, check in and enjoy the evening at your leisure.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 5



Explore Rotorua

Start your day surrounded by the soaring giants of the Whakarewarewa Forest with the Redwoods Treewalk Treetops Experience. Suspended high above the forest floor, this tranquil daytime walk offers breathtaking views, fresh forest air, and a unique perspective of Rotorua's natural beauty. In the evening, immerse yourself in a rich cultural and culinary journey with the Summer Harvest Experience at Te Pā Tū. This intimate event weaves Māori traditions, storytelling, seasonal cuisine, and captivating performances into an unforgettable night under the stars.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 6



Taumarunui to Wellington on the Northern Explorer Train

Travel from Rotorua to Taumarunui to board the Northern Explorer for your Scenic Plus journey to Wellington. You've arrived at Wellington Railway Station which is just a stone's throw from downtown, the Beehive and Parliament Buildings. You won't want to waste a moment of time after checking into the hotel - your evening is free to explore this culinary capital from Queen's Wharf to Cuba street and beyond.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 7



Explore Wellington

The perfect day does exist - and it includes exploring Wellington! Today is free for you to experience vibrant Wellington as you please. Start by joining our Wellington City introduction tour and then head off to explore Cuba Street's cafes, bookstores, and eccentric shops. Get cultured at Te Papa, New Zealand's National Museum, or visit Zealandia Eco-Sanctuary to surround yourself by native birdlife and regenerating forest. You won't get bored with the plethora of activities on offer. From coffee, culture, historic buildings to botanic gardens and much more... the list goes on! If you need any suggestions or recommendations, just reach out to your helpful Tour Director or our Travel Centre to pre-book an experience. Enjoy dinner tonight with your fellow travellers.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 8



Cook Strait Ferry Crossing to Marlborough

This morning you will say poroporoaki ki te motu raki (good-bye to the North Island) as you sail to the South Island, crossing the Cook Strait on the Interislander ferry. As the shores of the North Island slowly disappear, settle down in the comfy seats in the Premium Lounge. Treat yourself to a mimosa and enjoy a hearty seafaring breakfast, but save some room for morning tea! On your journey across Cook Strait you may spot pods of dolphins playing in the wake or, if you are very lucky, whales. Don't spend all your time inside - as you enter the stunning Queen Charlotte Sound, enjoy the views as you cruise past the remnants of whaling stations, remote working sheep farms, pristine native bush and mussel farms. Admire the beauty of this coastal paradise as you arrive into the gateway of the South Island, Picton. Once in Marlborough, indulge in a gourmet experience as you journey through the renowned Marlborough region, savoring a three-course lunch menu at Allan Scott Wines Bistro, accompanied by a glass of wine with your main meal.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 9



Aviation & the Marlborough Sounds

After breakfast, take a short trip to the world-renowned Omas Aviation Heritage Centre - home to one of the most significant private collections of WWI and WWII aircraft and memorabilia. The museum's immersive exhibits, brought to life with the help of Weta Workshop, make this a must-see experience for history and aviation enthusiasts alike. Later, board a scenic water taxi into the Marlborough Sounds, where your accommodation awaits nestled in the natural serenity of a Marlborough Sounds resort. After check-in, enjoy free time to explore - relax in a hammock, take a walk through native bush, or kayak in the calm waters of the bay.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 10



Marlborough to Kaikoura on the Coastal Pacific Train

Immerse yourself in the captivating world of the Pāua Pearl Farm Tour, where innovation meets tradition along New Zealand's scenic coastline. After a 45 minute cruise to the outer Marlborough Sounds, begin your journey with a warm welcome and morning tea, followed by a guided tour through the hatchery and growing tanks where these iridescent treasures are nurtured. Learn about the fascinating process of cultivating pāua pearls, then indulge in a tasting of fresh, locally harvested pāua - an ocean delicacy. Board the Coastal Pacific Scenic Train and relax as the train glides across remote beaches, between mountains and sea, on a timeless journey of breath-taking beauty. Keep an eye out for the fur seals lazing on the rocks! Once in Kaikōura, the evening will be yours to enjoy some iconic kai moana (seafood) at one of the quaint restaurants before enjoying your luxurious ocean-front hotel.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 11



Kaikoura to Christchurch on the Coastal Pacific Train

Set out on an unforgettable Dolphin Encounter in Kaikōura, where the ocean comes alive with the playful energy of wild dusky dolphins. Cruise along the stunning coastline as knowledgeable guides share insights into these intelligent marine mammals. Watch as pods leap, spin, and interact in their natural habitat - or elevate your adventure with the option to upgrade and swim alongside them for a truly immersive and exhilarating experience. After this outstanding experience, we're sure you will be feeling peckish. Head to the beach to sample some iconic New Zealand food - you can't go wrong with the humble Kiwiana fish and chips. Work off the deep-fried delights by wandering through the wonderful array of local artisan stores and souvenir shops. Gather again for the next leg of your journey. Late afternoon, board the Coastal Pacific for the Scenic Plus experience, treating yourself to unparalleled vistas as you glide along the coastline. Revel in dinner and drinks, included with your Scenic Plus package, as you unwind and soak in the breathtaking scenery.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 12



Explore Christchurch

Christchurch, the gateway to South Island exploration, beautifully blends cutting-edge innovation with 19th-century Anglican Gothic Revival architecture. While the city is often remembered for the 2011 earthquake, today it stands as a vibrant, multicultural hub with a strong sense of renewal and creativity. Your day begins with the convenience of the Hop-On Hop-Off Tram, a charming way to navigate the central city and discover its highlights at your own pace. Enjoy a custom walking tour with your Great Journeys New Zealand guide, who will bring the city's stories, landmarks, and hidden gems to life. Explore must-see attractions like the Riverside Markets, Punting on the Avon, the Gondola, and the tranquil Botanical Gardens. Along the way, uncover a variety of boutique cafés tucked into laneways and side streets. This evening, unwind and reflect on your discoveries over a beautifully curated dinner at Earl, one of Christchurch's most acclaimed dining spots, known for its relaxed elegance and refined seasonal cuisine.

Your accommodation: 4-4.5 Star Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 13



Depart Christchurch

Your journey will end after enjoying a final breakfast at your hotel. You will be transferred to Christchurch Airport for your departing flight.

Tour details

Departures: Daily
Tour type: Guided Coach & Train Tours
Starts: Auckland
Finishes: Christchurch
Tour length: 13
Accommodation: Hotel 4 star
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary

Day 1	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 2	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 3	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 4	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 5	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 6	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 7	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 8	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 9	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 10	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 11	4-4.5 Star Hotel
Day 12	4-4.5 Star Hotel