



South Island Natural Discovery

Explore and enjoy some of New Zealand's unique flora, fauna and scenery on this South Island tour. You begin with an Akaroa Harbour Nature cruise which takes you out to see the world's smallest and rarest dolphin. In Dunedin you'll enjoy a full day encounter with the unique marine life that inhabits the Otago Peninsula before heading south towards Fiordland National Park. Experience the 'Sound of Silence' with an overnight cruise in the remote untouched wilderness of Doubtful Sound. No South Island trip is complete without time spent in the alpine playground of Queenstown then you continue to the beautiful West Coast. Here you'll marvel at the glaciers during your on-ice adventure, before crossing the Southern Alps on board the world famous TranzAlpine Scenic Train back to Christchurch.

Starts in: Christchurch
 Finishes in: Christchurch
 Length: 15days / 14nights
 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: Unlimited kms

Included activity: Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch

Accommodation

Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course

Included activity: TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Greymouth to Christchurch

Included activity: Private Transfer from Accommodation to Airport with Christchurch Touring Company

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

Included activity: Wildlife Peninsula Encounter Tour and Wildlife Cruise with Monarch

Included activity: Doubtful Sound Fiordland Navigator Overnight Cruise

Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)

Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring

Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App

Included activity: Franz Josef Nature Tour with Glacier Valley Eco Tours

Included activity: Shared Transfer from Christchurch Train Station to Christchurch CBD Accommodation with Christchurch Touring Company

Included activity: Akaroa Harbour Nature Cruise with Black Cat

Included activity: Dinner at Camp Estate, Larnach Castle

Included activity: Dinner at Camp Estate, Larnach Castle

: 14 breakfasts, 3 dinners, 2 special dinners

Day 1



Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation

On arrival, you will be met by a private driver and transferred to your Christchurch accommodation.

Welcome to Christchurch City

New Zealand's garden city is steadily being transformed into a vibrant urban destination. Encompassing a large green belt, it is known for its wide tree lined avenues and lush gardens. A great way to explore the city or easy way to see the sights or ride the historic trams across town to the renowned botanic gardens and the unique cardboard Transitional Cathedral, that's right it is built of cardboard!

Your accommodation: Orari Bed & Breakfast

Orari Bed and Breakfast offers elegant and inviting accommodation in the heart of Christchurch city. This heritage building has all the charm of a grand Victorian home, but with modern comforts providing for an enjoyable stay.



Day 2



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.

Christchurch to Akaroa

The Banks Peninsula offers a great contrast to the South Island's largest city. Just around a 1 1/2 hours drive from the city centre are rolling green hills, streams, golden sand beaches and small settlements that offer a unique insight into New Zealand's history and development. Just on the other side of the Port Hills is Lyttelton, a busy port town that was crucial to the development of Christchurch and the Canterbury Plains. Following the road around the beautiful natural harbour the names, such as Magazine Bay, Battery Point, Corsair Point and Governors Bay, remind of the importance the navy placed on this harbour.

The Banks Peninsula itself is actually the remains of a long extinct volcano, the rim of which collapsed some time ago allowing the sea to flood into and create what is now the Akaroa Harbour. In 1840 French colonists settled in Akaroa in a bid to stake a claim for the South Island. Unbeknown the British had already declared sovereignty and a long drawn out dispute ensued with the British eventually being given government. However the French stayed and made this stunning part of the South Pacific their home and still to this day the town boasts French street names and every year a French Festival is held.

The Harbour itself is teeming with wildlife and a nature cruise is a must do activity. One of the world's smallest and rarest dolphins, hectors dolphin, are often seen and cruises also offer excursions with the chance to swim amongst them.

Akaroa Harbour Nature Cruise with Black Cat

Experience majestic scenery and stunning wildlife daily on a Black Cat Akaroa Harbour Nature Cruise. You'll see the rare, native dolphin – the Hector's or New Zealand Dolphin. There's also the chance to spot the world's smallest penguin, the White Flipped Little Blue Penguin, Fur Seals and other sea birds. Other cruise highlights are some majestic volcanic cliffs (including the impressive Cathedral Cave) and signs of Akaroa's fascinating past including early Maori, French and British settlements.

Your accommodation: Beaufort House Akaroa

This beautiful historic home and garden has been lovingly restored with old world charm and modern conveniences offering quality accommodation. Relax on the verandahs or wander around the gracious traditional garden containing protected trees, rare camellias, roses and a small private vineyard. Secluded and private it is just a short stroll to the village and harbour.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3



Akaroa to Aoraki Mt Cook National Park

Today you head into the heart of the South Island. Crossing the vast Canterbury Plains along the inland scenic route the first township of Geraldine offers an ideal refreshment stop before you head into Mackenzie country.

Passing through places such as Beautiful Valley it's not hard to understand where the names originate. Ascending Burkes Pass and onto the high country plateau and the picturesque town of Lake Tekapo, the first of the large Southern Lakes. It's a great place to take a scenic flight, enjoy a guided horse trek, a boat trip on the pristine lake, or just enjoy the magnificent views.

Lake Pukaki is just another 30 minutes from Lake Tekapo and from here you can be rewarded with spectacular views of the full length of the lake and into Aoraki Mt Cook National Park. In Mt Cook Village a myriad of activities are available from glacier landings by ski plane or helicopter, kayaking on a glacial lake and a host of walks to suit all abilities and time frames. At The Hermitage Hotel, the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre is a must-see.

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 - 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.

Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium

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 4



Aoraki Mt Cook National Park to Dunedin

Leave Aoraki Mt Cook National Park and travel past Twizel, one of the locations for the Lord of the Rings films. Go through Omarama, the gliding capital of New Zealand. Continue down the Waitaki Valley follow the hydro power generating system to the rural town of Kurow, home to the divine Valli Wines. Stop for a sip or continue on to the east coast. Stretch your legs in Oamaru, known for its white stone buildings constructed with the local Oamaru Stone and Steampunk influence. If you were a little late off the mark this morning you may get the chance to see the blue penguins come ashore at dusk. Continue south down the coast to Moeraki, and take a detour towards the beach to see the Moeraki Boulders, a unique geological feature well worth a look. As you arrive in Dunedin, take in the city's Edwardian and Scottish heritage reflected in the buildings around the city centre The Octagon.

Dinner at Camp Estate, Larnach Castle

Keeping with the historical setting of Larnach Castle, a four-course dinner is offered in a grand Castle Dining Room. This is a trust-the-chef experience where you may indulge in incredible meals and meet other guests. The menu reflects local meats and vegetables, served in a traditional New Zealand-style cuisine with the opportunity to pair with regional wines.

Your accommodation: Camp Estate at Larnach Castle

A luxurious country house built from blue stone and features a spectacular marble staircase. The modern rooms are all double glazed and the reception rooms are all heated by open fires and underfloor heating. Staying at Camp Estate includes entry to Larnach Castle and the grounds.

Meals included: Breakfast, Speciality Dinner



Day 5



Wildlife Peninsula Encounter Tour and Wildlife Cruise with Monarch

Join a small-group bus tour led by a local guide across the Otago Peninsula, featuring stunning harbour views, rural landscapes, and unique wildlife. Visit a remote beach to spot sea lions, take a Monarch Wildlife Cruise to see albatross, seals, and rare seabirds, and explore a Yellow-eyed Penguin conservation reserve with hidden viewing hides. This unforgettable journey blends breathtaking scenery with intimate wildlife encounters before a relaxed return to Dunedin.

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Meals included: Breakfast, Speciality Dinner



Day 6



Dunedin to Te Anau (via Invercargill)

The drive to Te Anau takes you through classic Southland farming scenery. Head off-the-beaten-track today and follow the coastline instead of the inland route. Go through The Catlins area and be sure to take a detour to Kaka Point to view its majestic cliffs and pounding surf. If time permits, keep driving towards Nugget Point, iconic for its steep headland with a lighthouse perched atop. Continue through Invercargill to Riverton and Colac Bay, and then head north to Manapouri. From here you can embark on a day or overnight cruise to the remote Doubtful Sound, renowned for its natural beauty. Just a short way further will bring you to your lakeside destination of Te Anau, gateway to Fiordland National Park and Milford Sound.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Te Anau Glowworm Caves with RealNZ

Begin your Te Anau Glowworm experience with a scenic cruise across Lake Te Anau on board the luxury catamaran, Luminosa, to the western side of the lake. On arrival, you'll enter the caves through Cavern House, where informative displays detail the history of this 12,000 year old underground network. You'll then explore by limestone pathway while your guide points out hidden whirlpools, sculpted rock formations, and a rushing underground waterfall. See a magical display of thousands of glowworms as you glide through the darkness in a small boat.

Your accommodation: Te Anau Lodge

Te Anau Lodge began its existence as a Catholic convent in 1936 before being converted into a wonderful lodge. A beautiful Rimu wood interior awaits you and each of the 7 rooms house furniture made from stunning native woods.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7



Te Anau to Manapouri

This short drive takes you along the lake edge of Te Anau and across lush southern farmlands to the small township of Lake Manapouri, gateway to Doubtful Sound.

Doubtful Sound Fiordland Navigator Overnight Cruise

Take in the tranquillity of remote Doubtful Sound on this unique overnight wilderness cruise. Beginning in Manapouri with a short boat ride across the lake, you'll be taken by coach over the Wilmot Pass to Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound. Board the Fiordland Navigator, a purpose-built vessel designed like a traditional coastal trading scow. Be accommodated in a private cabin with an ensuite bathroom or a quad-share bunk room with shared bathroom facilities. The Navigator has a large spacious deck for viewing the scenery and wildlife as well as a dining saloon, bar and observation lounge. As you take in the stunning scenery of the Fiord, you'll be provided with a running commentary of the area and its history, points of interest and wildlife. You'll have the opportunity to see dolphins, fur seals and, if you're lucky rare Fiordland penguins. After anchoring in a sheltered cove, choose to explore the shoreline by kayak or stabicraft, or if you're really brave take a dip in the water. In the evening enjoy a buffet dinner prepared on board and served in the dining saloon. Enjoy beer and fine wines from the licensed bar, and spend time star gazing on the upper deck. Following hearty cooked breakfast the next morning you will spend your remaining time exploring other parts of the fiord before returning to Deep Cove for the trip back to Manapouri.

Your accommodation: Fiordland Navigator Overnight Boat in Doubtful Sound

The Fiordland Navigator is purpose built for cruising in the fiords. The vessel offers spacious viewing decks, a comfortable dining saloon and observation lounge.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 8



Manapouri to Queenstown

Your Doubtful Sound Overnight Cruise returns to Manapouri at midday.

Crossing the rolling tussock lands, pass through Mossburn, the deer capital of New Zealand. Continue north through lush Southland countryside towards Lake Wakatipu. The road now hugs the lake edge and the Remarkable mountain range towers over your approach to Queenstown, the adventure capital of New Zealand.

Your accommodation: The Dairy Hotel Queenstown, A Naumi Chapter

The Dairy Private Hotel – a unique blend of exquisite design, rich history and warm hospitality in the city centre. Beginning as Queenstown's original 'dairy' (corner store) in 1920, it has now transformed into an interiors masterpiece after an exquisite refurbishment that features wallpapers from British luxury interiors brand House of Hackney.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 9



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.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Wilderness Jet Experience with Dart River Safaris

Journey deep into the heart of the world-renowned Mt Aspiring National Park, where myth, heritage, and fantasy come to life. As one of Queenstown's most exhilarating activities, the Wilderness Jet adventures on a spectacular journey deep into the heart of the world-renowned Mount Aspiring National Park. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

Your accommodation: The Dairy Hotel Queenstown, A Naumi Chapter

The Dairy Private Hotel – a unique blend of exquisite design, rich history and warm hospitality in the city centre. Beginning as Queenstown's original 'dairy' (corner store) in 1920, it has now transformed into an interiors masterpiece after an exquisite refurbishment that features wallpapers from British luxury interiors brand House of Hackney.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 10



Queenstown to Lake Moeraki

Crossing the Crown Range, the highest sealed road in the country, you arrive into the alpine town of Wanaka. The route follows the shores of Lakes Wanaka and Hawea before you enter the township of Makarora, the gateway to Mt. Aspiring National Park and the Blue Pools here are a wonderful 30 minute walk through pristine native beech forest. Descending into Mt. Aspiring National Park and towards the Haast Pass, crashing rivers and waterfalls are around every corner. Crossing the Haast River you are now truly on the wild West Coast, a 600 kilometre stretch of bush, rainforest and podocarp forest. The tranquil bush surroundings of Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki are just a few extra kilometres.

Your accommodation: Wilderness Lodge, Lake Moeraki

Few places on earth can match the unique natural setting of the Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki, in the heart of the 2.7 million hectares South West New Zealand World Heritage Area. Spectacular beaches that are home to fur seals and crested penguins, untouched lowland rainforests spread between pristine lakes and rivers which drain the snow-capped Southern Alps.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 11



Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki

Twice daily complimentary activities are led by expert naturalists and introduce guests to the area's remarkable natural history (approx. 1-hour duration each). If you'd prefer to a guide to explore further afield, there are other, charged experiences available. These trips are generally 3 to 4 hours in length and are a great way to learn about wild New Zealand. There are also great self-guided options available, including a 10km network of walking trails, kayaking on the calm waters of Lake Moeraki, and of course, relaxing and soaking up the views.

Your accommodation: Wilderness Lodge, Lake Moeraki

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Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 12



Lake Moeraki to Franz Josef Glacier

Heading North along the mighty West Coast highway you pass through ancient temperate rainforests while getting sneak peeks of the wild coast beach occasionally. Keep heading North and be sure to enjoy the view of the everchanging towering snowcapped Southern Alps Mountain Range. If you are wanting to view Fox Glacier on foot, the start of the track is 2kms before Fox Glacier Township the walk is an easy grade and will take two hours to return. Fox Glacier welcomes you to the glacier region, take a short 5-minute drive west to see the impressive Lake Matheson famous for its reflections of snow-capped mountains. From Fox, you have a 45-minute drive over the Fox Hills to Franz Josef Township.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

A spectacular scenic flight soaring over two of New Zealand's most famous glaciers, Fox and Franz Josef. Landing at the head of one and view the incredible sight of this frozen river as it winds its way through ancient carved valleys. It is important to read and understand the risks associated with this activity. A full risk disclosure can be found [here](#).

Your accommodation: Westwood Lodge

Westwood is a purpose built lodge, crafted entirely from wood and exquisitely decorated throughout. The lounge is the place to meet to watch the Southern Alps turn a soft pink in the setting sun.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 13



Franz Josef Nature Tour with Glacier Valley Eco Tours

Unveil the hidden wonders of the Franz Josef Glacier Valley on this immersive, eco-conscious walking journey. Perfect for nature enthusiasts of all ages, this tour leads you through ancient podocarp rainforests and along pristine glacial rivers to witness the raw power of the ice from spectacular viewpoints. With a small group guarantee and expert local guides, you'll discover secret waterfalls, learn the fascinating stories of West Coast glaciology, and enjoy a relaxing break with hot drinks and cookies amidst the Southern Alps.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Okarito Lagoon Guided Kayak Trip (2 hours) with Okarito Kayaks

Kayaking is by far the best way to enjoy the flora, fauna, and scenic grandeur of New Zealand's largest unmodified coastal wetland. Previous experience is not necessary. Okarito Lagoon covers more than 3240 hectares of shallow open water and is well known for its outstanding bird life, including white heron and royal spoonbill. Exploring the open water and river channels that lead you deep into the heart of the rainforest is like stepping back in time to pre-European conditions and on a clear day you enjoy fantastic views of Mt. Cook and the Southern Alps. Your guide will take you to their favourite spots where you'll discover the flora, fauna, and history of the lagoon.

Your accommodation: Westwood Lodge

Westwood is a purpose built lodge, crafted entirely from wood and exquisitely decorated throughout. The lounge is the place to meet to watch the Southern Alps turn a soft pink in the setting sun.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 14



Franz Josef to Greymouth Train Station (Return Rental Car)

Head north along the mighty West Coast highway you pass through ancient temperate rainforests while getting sneak peeks of the wild coast beach occasionally. Whataroa is the next town where you can see one of the world's rarest birds, the Kōtuku - White Heron. The Kōtuku nest at the Waitangi Roto Nature Reserve, only accessible with a guided tour from October to March. The next town is Ross which is the site of an old gold mining settlement where the local information centre offers you the chance to pan for gold. Hokitika is a great place to explore craft and gift stores and head to the coast and take in the endless sea views. The Pounamu-Greenstone on offer in Hokitika is probably some of the best you will see in the country. Continue on to Greymouth, the largest town on the West Coast and the starting point for the next leg of your journey the TransAlpine Scenic Train. Drop your rental car at the Greymouth Train Station depot located at the train station building before boarding your train to Christchurch.

TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Greymouth to Christchurch

Considered one of the world's great train journeys, the TranzAlpine Scenic Train takes you from Greymouth to Christchurch. Travel across the South Island from the west to the east coast through Arthur's Pass National Park. From the comfort of your carriage see lush beech forest, deep river valleys and the spectacular peaks of the Southern Alps. Descend to the windswept Canterbury Plains before arriving in the city of Christchurch.

Shared Transfer from Christchurch Train Station to Christchurch CBD Accommodation with Christchurch Touring Company

On arrival at the Christchurch railway station, you will be met by a driver and transferred to your Christchurch accommodation.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - TranzAlpine Scenic Plus Addon - KiwiRail

Feel like luxurious service, exclusive meals, inclusive drinks and priority check-in and boarding? The Scenic Plus add-on option is for you. Enjoy personal service with panoramic windows, spacious carriages and comfortable seating. The exclusive open-air viewing carriage is available if you feel like capturing the ultimate photo or simply wish to experience the great outdoors whilst travelling through the Southern Alps. Your food is prepared exclusively in a kitchen carriage, with paired drinks and a paddock-to-plate regionally inspired food menu all your senses will be fully engaged on this journey.

Your accommodation: Orari Bed & Breakfast

Orari Bed and Breakfast offers elegant and inviting accommodation in the heart of Christchurch city. This heritage building has all the charm of a grand Victorian home, but with modern comforts providing for an enjoyable stay.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 15



Private Transfer from Accommodation to Airport with Christchurch Touring Company

Enjoy a seamless, private transfer from your Christchurch city accommodation directly to the Christchurch Airport in time for your departing flight.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	15
Accommodation:	Boutique Lodges & Hotels
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Orari Bed & Breakfast
Day 2	Beaufort House Akaroa
Day 3	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium
Day 4	Camp Estate at Larnach Castle
Day 5	Camp Estate at Larnach Castle
Day 6	Te Anau Lodge
Day 7	Fiordland Navigator Overnight Boat in Doubtful Sound
Day 8	The Dairy Hotel Queenstown, A Naumi Chapter
Day 9	The Dairy Hotel Queenstown, A Naumi Chapter
Day 10	Wilderness Lodge, Lake Moeraki
Day 11	Wilderness Lodge, Lake Moeraki
Day 12	Westwood Lodge
Day 13	Westwood Lodge
Day 14	Orari Bed & Breakfast