



Iconic South Island Tour

Explore the South Island's heart taking in all the iconic scenery that makes this such a beautiful destination. From Christchurch you cross the Southern Alps on the spectacular TransAlpine train journey. On the West Coast you'll travel from the rainforests of Punakaiki to the Glaciers of Franz Josef. 3 nights in Queenstown allow time for a fabulous flight over Milford Sound and Dart River Safari, before returning to Christchurch via Mt Cook National Park.

Starts in: Christchurch
Finishes in: Christchurch
Length: 11days / 10nights
Accommodation: Luxury 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

Includes: Airport & ferry terminal rental car fees

Includes: Comprehensive tour pack (detailed itinerary, driving instructions, map/guidebooks, brochures)

Included activity: Private transfer Christchurch International Airport to your accommodation

Included activity: Private transfer accommodation to Christchurch Train Station with Christchurch Touring

Included activity: Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

Included activity: TSS Earnslaw Cruise and Walter Peak Gourmet BBQ Dining

: 10 breakfasts, 2 dinners, 1 special dinner

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

Includes: GPS navigation

Includes: Additional drivers

Includes: 24/7 support while touring New Zealand

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

Included activity: TransAlpine Scenic Train: Christchurch to Greymouth

Included activity: Milford Sound Fly, Cruise, Fly with Milford Sound Scenic Flights

Included activity: Glacier Explorers

Day 1



Private transfer Christchurch International Airport to your accommodation

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

Welcome to Christchurch City

Christchurch 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!

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Discover Christchurch Afternoon Tour

A half day sightseeing tour of Christchurch highlighting both the damage to the city inflicted by several large earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 and the rebuild which is currently in progress, together with the surviving beauty of the city and the historical landmarks. Experience the grand architecture, beautiful gardens and scenic viewpoints on a half-day city tour of Christchurch.

The tour commences in the central city of Christchurch and covers the area which was completely devastated by the Christchurch earthquakes in February 2011. The guide will explain both the history of the city and the effects of the earthquake. On leaving the inner city, the tour travels to Mona Vale a historic homestead and gardens. Then you will travel to the Sign of the Takahe, a historic building with a lookout providing spectacular views over the city, Canterbury Plains and to the Southern Alps. The tour then travels via the Port Hills and Lyttleton Harbour by way of the Sign of the Kiwi and Governors Bay to the Port of Lyttleton. The tour proceeds through the Lyttleton harbour tunnel to the seaside suburb of Sumner and cave rock before returning to the central city where the tour will conclude.

Your accommodation: The George Hotel

The George is the essence of supreme comfort. The award-winning 5 star hotel is opposite Hagley Park and just a few minutes stroll from the Botanic Gardens. It also has an award-winning restaurant, 50 Bistro onsite.



Day 2



Private transfer accommodation to Christchurch Train Station with Christchurch Touring

A private driver will collect you from your accommodation and transfer you to the Christchurch train station in time for your train journey.

TranzAlpine Scenic Train Christchurch to Greymouth

Your early morning departure is rewarded with incredible scenery today onboard the TranzAlpine Scenic Train, considered one of the world's great train journeys. It travels between Christchurch and Greymouth, from one coast of New Zealand to the other. From your carriage you'll see the fields of the Canterbury Plains and farmland, followed by the spectacular gorges and river valleys of the Waimakariri River. Your train then climbs into the Southern Alps before descending through the lush beech rain forest to the West Coast town of Greymouth, a great base for visits to Punakaiki and the West Coast glaciers.

Collect your rental car

This tour can be priced with any of the rental cars available in our fantastic range, from economy hatchbacks to prestige saloons and SUV's.

Greymouth to Punakaiki

The short drive north to Punakaiki takes you along the wonderful west coast with ample opportunity to view the surf and the steep bush clad mountains. Punakaiki is most famous for the Pancake Rocks and Blowholes. Visitors are often less aware of the great many other experiences available. Located in the heart of the Paparoa National Park, the area offers guided beach, forest and mountain walks, canoeing, wildlife, horse trekking, surfing, gemstone hunting, caving and climbing, heritage sites. There are taverns, cafes and restaurants, and a great range of accommodation. The area also boasts a vibrant arts and crafts community and a cooperative gallery.

Your accommodation: Scenic Hotel Punakaiki

Scenic Hotel Punakaiki is a modern, award-winning hotel complex, architecturally designed to harmonious with the local environment. Nestled in the foothills of Paparoa National Park the resort has spectacular views of the Wild West Coast beaches while all rooms have rainforest and/or ocean views.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3



Punakaiki to Franz Josef Glacier

The drive South on State Highway 6 takes you through many West Coast towns. The first is Greymouth, the commercial centre for the West Coast. Just south of the town is Shantytown a replica gold rush town with lots of great displays from yesteryear.

The next town is Hokitika and this is a great place to explore the craft and gift stores. The Jade or Greenstone on offer in Hokitika is probably some of the best you will see in the country. The Hokitika Gorge, off the beaten track and inland a little is a spectacular detour. Turquoise waters flowing through a narrow gorge. A great short walk will deliver you to this piece of paradise.

Ross is the site of an old gold mining town and some of the old buildings and workings remain. In fact Ross is still home to one of the few working gold mines left in New Zealand and the local information centre offers you the chance to pan for gold.

Continuing south Hari Hari is the township that Guy Menzies decided to land in (or rather crash land) as he became the first person to fly solo across the Tasman.

Whataroa, a small township on the main road is where you would head off to see one of the worlds rarest birds. The entire population (somewhere between 150 and 200 birds) of the New Zealand white heron or kotuku nest at the Waitangi Roto Nature Reserve and guided tours from October to March will take you there.

Arriving in to the Glacier region you catch your first glimpse of Franz Josef Glacier from a few kilometres out as it flows from the Southern Alps. Franz Josef township is a lively place with a great atmosphere, plenty of choice to dine out and some wonderful activities to enjoy.

Your accommodation: Te Waonui Forest Retreat

Nestled amongst native West Coast rainforest at Franz Josef is a very special five-star retreat. Designed with utmost care of its precious environment, guests at Te Waonui Forest Retreat will find themselves encircled by rainforest and accommodated in natural and sustainable luxury.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 4



Explore Franz Josef

Franz Josef is a small but lively town in the heart of the West Coast, known for its 12 km long glacier. Surrounded by lush rainforest-clad mountains the township has a vibrant and bustling atmosphere. To see the ice from a viewpoint you can walk along the valley floor to the viewpoint below the terminal face. However, to go on the glacier itself you must take a licensed helicopter tour.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Franz Josef Nature Tour with Glacier Valley Eco Tours

Nestled in thick historic West Coast forest and a stone's throw from wild black sand beaches, this is one of the world's most unusual glaciers. Beautiful blue skies or magical misty rain, whatever the weather - you will feel like you are in Narnia or LOTR.

With easy walking at your pace, information on glaciology, geology, geomorphology, flora and fauna, local legends, history, and small guided groups with fantastic guides, you will experience this glacier in style and in the best hands with the only local company. Wander past glacier rivers and streams and through beautiful podocarp forest; discover hidden natural treasures such as native snails, wild native mushrooms, and dozens of species of native orchids; listen to native bird song and waterfalls; see if you can spot a Chamois or a Tahr on the huge snow-capped mountains above while drinking a cup of tea and talking one-on-one with your guide. This tour will be a highlight of your travels in New Zealand.

Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

Take a spectacular scenic flight over two of New Zealand's most famous glaciers. Land at the head of one and view the incredible sight of this frozen river as it winds its way through ancient carved valleys. Should weather not be suitable to take this flight you are able to transfer your booking onto a similar tour on any of the Helicopter Line's operations in Queenstown or Mt Cook.

Your accommodation: Te Waonui Forest Retreat

Nestled amongst native West Coast rainforest at Franz Josef is a very special five-star retreat. Designed with utmost care of its precious environment, guests at Te Waonui Forest Retreat will find themselves encircled by rainforest and accommodated in natural and sustainable luxury.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 5



Franz Josef to Queenstown (via Wanaka)

Heading south you pass through the second glacier town of Fox Glacier before heading along the coast and more classic West Coast bush scenery. Be sure you stop at the Paringa Salmon Farm for lunch or a refreshment make sure you feed the fish, it's very impressive. At Knights Point Lookout elephant seals can often be seen basking on the sandy beaches at the far end of the point.

Crossing the massive Haast River you turn inland and head into the valley climbing through mountains littered with waterfalls.

The Haast Valley offers a spectacular view of the river and its enormous power. The Blue Pools near Makarora are a great 30-minute walk. Lakes Wanaka and Hawea guide you into the township of Wanaka before you head over New Zealand's highest sealed road, Crown Range Road before dropping into Queenstown. This drive should be planned as a whole day to really enjoy the scenery and to allow time to explore the walks, and many stops en route.

Your accommodation: Sofitel Queenstown

The stunning five-star Sofitel Queenstown is located in the heart of New Zealand's premier four season lake and alpine resort. New Zealand's very first Sofitel, this luxury boutique hotel occupies one of the best locations to get the most from the vibrant town.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6



Milford Sound Fly, Cruise, Fly with Milford Sound Scenic Flights

Fly above the rugged backcountry of Central Otago. Witness what the power of nature has created over the years, as you journey over Mt Aspiring National Park and the world heritage listed Fiordland National Park. Then, take to the water on a cruise through the iconic Milford Sound before flying back over even more stunning landscapes.

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7



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 a plethora of 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-ski.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Shotover Canyon River Jet Boat Adventure

Riding the iconic 'Big Red' Jet Boat through the narrow Shotover Canyon is an exhilarating experience not to be missed. Your skilled jet boat driver pushes the boat to 85 kph, skimming across shallow water and past towering canyon walls. This 25 minute white water ride includes 360 degree spins and maximum thrills.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Skyline Gondola Queenstown and 3 Luge Rides

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.

TSS Earnslaw cruise to Walter Peak including gourmet BBQ dinner and a farm tour

Enjoy a quintessential Kiwi experience, a delicious gourmet BBQ buffet meal and a farm demonstration in a stunning lakeside setting. Take in the stunning views of Lake Wakatipu and its surroundings as you cruise across the lake to the historic Walter Peak high country farm aboard the TSS Earnslaw Steamship.

Enjoy the ambience of the heart of the stately homestead while your Colonel's Homestead Restaurant chef prepares a gourmet BBQ dinner. Your seasonal menu includes an extensive selection of local New Zealand produce, including succulent meats and a selection of delicious vegetables and salads. Complete your meal with your choice of delicious desserts, New Zealand cheeses, tea and coffee.

After dinner, watch the farm dogs in action with a sheep-herding demonstration and say hello to the other farm animals. Finally, cruise home under the southern stars and enjoy the fresh night air as the lights of Queenstown draw ever closer.

Your accommodation: Sofitel Queenstown

The stunning five-star Sofitel Queenstown is located in the heart of New Zealand's premier four season lake and alpine resort. New Zealand's very first Sofitel, this luxury boutique hotel occupies one of the best locations to get the most from the vibrant town.

Meals included: Breakfast, Speciality Dinner



Day 8



Queenstown to Aoraki Mt Cook National Park

Leaving Queenstown you'll head through the Kawarau Gorge and over the historic Kawarau Bridge, a popular bungy jumping location. Choose to participate in this daredevil sport or watch others instead. Continue through Gibbston and be sure to stop at one of its many vineyards for a tasting. As you leave the gorge you'll arrive in Cromwell, known for its many fruit orchards. If you're a foodie at heart, we recommend taking a side trip to Bannockburn for a complete food and wine experience at one of its many award-winning wineries and restaurants.

Cromwell itself sits at the head of the Kawarau Gorge and the old historic town is well worth the visit. Completely submerged when the Clyde Dam was built and Lake Dunstan established in 1992, the remnants of the old Cromwell town provides a unique snapshot into this area's history. Head over through the Lindis Pass, one of New Zealand's highest roads, with the summit reaching 971 metres. Its tussock covered hills are a barren but beautiful sight as you descend into the Mackenzie Basin. You'll go through the towns of Omarama and Twizel, the last stops before you arrive at Lake Pukaki and take the Aoraki Mt Cook Highway to arrive in the small village.

Please note: There are no food shops at Mt Cook, and dinner options are limited to one restaurant. If you wish to self-cater, you must stock up before arriving in Mt Cook, or make dinner reservations in advance.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Museum and Theatre Explorer Pass

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.

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 9



Glacier Explorers Mt. Cook

Experience 500 year old icebergs up-close on the 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.

Walking tracks in and around Aoraki / Mt. Cook National Park

There are many short scenic walks beginning in and around the Mt Cook Village, suitable for all ages and abilities. Located within the Mount Cook Village is the Department of Conservation information centre, where updates on the track conditions and suitability is available as well as information on the history of the area and its wildlife.

Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 10



Aoraki Mt Cook National Park to Christchurch

Leaving Aoraki Mt Cook National Park, travel a short distance before stopping 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 Mount Cook. Lake Tekapo also displays the same reflective qualities of Lake Pukaki, making the waters a bright turquoise. You'll go through the small town of Tekapo, home to some of the most photographed subjects in the country, the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Collie Dog statue. It's a great place to take a scenic flight, enjoy a guided horse trek, a boat trip on the pristine lake or just marvel at the magnificent views. From here you travel through Burkes Pass and into the rich farming valley that surrounds Geraldine. Continue on across the vast Canterbury Plains to arrive in Christchurch City, your destination for the night.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Discover Christchurch Afternoon Tour

A half day sightseeing tour of Christchurch highlighting both the damage to the city inflicted by several large earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 and the rebuild which is currently in progress, together with the surviving beauty of the city and the historical landmarks. Experience the grand architecture, beautiful gardens and scenic viewpoints on a half-day city tour of Christchurch.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Dinner onboard the Christchurch Restaurant Tram

A truly unique dining experience in the heart of Christchurch. You'll board New Zealand's only dining tram for an unforgettable moving four-course restaurant experience. Enjoy a curated fine dining-style menu while taking in the city sights on your journey through the streets of central Christchurch. This experience includes a meal with multiple courses as the tramway route passes New Regent Street, the Avon River, High Street, and Victoria Square.

Your accommodation: The George Hotel

The George is the essence of supreme comfort. The award-winning 5 star hotel is opposite Hagley Park and just a few minutes stroll from the Botanic Gardens. It also has an award-winning restaurant, 50 Bistro onsite.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 11



Return your vehicle to Christchurch Airport

Explore more of Christchurch before dropping your rental car at the airport depot and continuing your onward journey.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	11
Accommodation:	Luxury Lodges & Hotels
Car/transport type:	

Included activities

Includes	All breakfasts
Includes	Private airport transfers
Includes	Private train station transfers
Includes	TranzAlpine Train from Christchurch to Greymouth
Includes	Glacier Explorers Tour, Mt Cook National Park
Includes	Milford Sound Fly-Cruise-Fly and Dart River combo
Includes	Entry to Glacier Hot Pools

Accommodation summary

Day 1	The George Hotel
Day 2	Scenic Hotel Punakaiki
Day 3	Te Waonui Forest Retreat
Day 4	Te Waonui Forest Retreat
Day 5	Sofitel Queenstown
Day 6	Sofitel Queenstown
Day 7	Sofitel Queenstown
Day 8	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium
Day 9	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium
Day 10	The George Hotel