

9 Day Southern Explorer

Starting and finishing in Queenstown this tour begins with a journey to the world famous Mt. Cook National Park, where Sir Edmund Hillary prepared to conquer Everest. You then continue onto the evolving city of Christchurch, where you'll have a day to explore this remarkable city. From Christchurch take the spectacular Tranz Alpine Scenic Train to Greymouth. The West Coast Glaciers are next and two nights allow time to enjoy one of the many guided walk options or scenic flights. Then back to Queenstown where you'll have time to relax or enjoy the countless activities on offer here.

Starts in: Queenstown
 Finishes in: Queenstown
 Length: 9days / 8nights
 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: 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: TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Christchurch to Greymouth
 Meals included: 8 breakfasts

Day 1



Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation

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

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!

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](#).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - TSS Earnslaw Cruise and Walter Peak Gourmet BBQ Dinner

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 ambiance 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, or New Zealand cheeses. 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: Rendezvous Heritage Queenstown

At the Rendezvous Heritage Queenstown, you could be forgiven for thinking you were in a postcard. Soak in the amazing view of the towering Remarkables mountain range rising from Lake Wakatipu from the comfort of the hotel. Crafted from centuries-old schist stone and cedar, this sophisticated Queenstown hotel is the perfect base to explore the adventure capital.



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.

Queenstown to Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

Depart Queenstown and head through the Kawarau Gorge and over the historic Kawarau Bridge, a popular bungee jumping location. Choose to participate in this daredevil sport or watch others instead. Continue through Gibbston home to some of the best wines in the country. Follow the gorge to arrive in Cromwell, known for its many fruit orchards. Cromwell was completely submerged when the Clyde Dam was built and Lake Dunstan was established in 1992, the remnants of the old Cromwell town provide a unique snapshot into the history of this area. 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

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 3



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.

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 4



Explore Christchurch

Following earthquakes that razed its centre and much of the outlying suburbs, Ōtautahi-Christchurch is well into a billion-dollar makeover. In the middle of the Canterbury Plains, bordering the Pacific Ocean, New Zealand's newest city is an ideal gateway to exploring the middle of the South. Go punting on the Avon River, take a historic tram ride, catch the gondola to the rim of an extinct volcano or do all three! See the world's only Cardboard Cathedral and for nature enthusiasts - wander the renowned Christchurch Botanic Gardens, or head to Oxford Terrace in the city to find a great spot to eat or drink. Drive an hour in any direction to ski, mountain bike, wine taste, whale-watch, bungee jump or play golf. Take the winding Port Hills road to the French settlement of Akaroa & Banks Peninsula and tour the vines in Waipara for an authentic New Zealand wine-tasting experience.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Christchurch Triple Pass - Tram, Punting and Gondola

Experience three of Christchurch's iconic attractions in one day: the Christchurch Tram, Christchurch Gondola, and Punting on the Avon River. The historic tram is a delightful way to explore the evolving inner city, taking in the various sights with the hop-on hop-off pass and learning about the city from the live commentary. You'll also enjoy a bird's eye view of Christchurch and the Canterbury region including the distant peaks of the Southern Alps when you ride the gondola cableway to the top of the Port Hills in Heathcote Valley. Punting on the Avon River takes you through the city's green belt: a relaxing way to explore what is affectionately known as the 'Garden City'.

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 5



TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Christchurch to Greymouth

The 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 the East Coast, Christchurch and the West Coast, Greymouth. 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. The train then climbs into the Southern Alps passing through small settlements and Arthur's Pass National Park 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 Rental Car

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Greymouth to Franz Josef

Leaving Greymouth you will head south into Glacier Country. Pass through Hokitika and be sure to take a 50 minute detour to the spectacular Hokitika Gorge, the famous turquoise-coloured river surrounded by native bush-clad cliffs.

Continue on through Ross, a historic gold mining town where several buildings still remain intact and still to this day one of New Zealand's working gold mines. As you travel further down the coast you'll also go through Hari Hari, the town where Guy Menzies, the first person to fly solo over the Tasman crashed landed. Heading south along the mighty West Coast highway you pass through ancient temperate rainforests while getting sneak peeks of the wild west coast beach occasionally. Whataroa is the next town where you can see one of the world's rarest birds, 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 Franz Josef township is a lively place with a great atmosphere, restaurants including Blue Ice and Snakebite are worth a meal. This small town is packed with walks, adventure, and scenic activities, something for everyone.

Your accommodation: Scenic Hotel Franz Josef Glacier

Only a breath away from the Franz Josef Glacier, Scenic Hotel is located in the heart of Franz Josef Village. Here you will find all of the amenities you would expect, as well as being close to the shops, restaurants and activities on offer in the beautiful Westland region.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6



Explore Franz Josef

Franz Josef is a small yet lively town in the heart of New Zealand's West Coast, best known for its spectacular 12 km-long glacier. The township is surrounded by lush, rainforest-clad mountains and has a vibrant atmosphere with plenty to explore. A variety of scenic walking trails offer incredible views of the glacier, but for a truly up-close experience, a licensed helicopter tour is the only way to set foot on the ice. Beyond the glacier, unwind in the rejuvenating Hot Pools or visit the West Coast Wildlife Centre to spot rare kiwi birds. If you're in the mood for a more relaxed day, the township is home to charming souvenir and gift shops, as well as great dining spots like SnakeBite Brewery and King Tiger. Whether you're chasing adventure or relaxation, Franz Josef is a stunning blend of wild beauty and welcoming hospitality.

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.

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](#).

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.

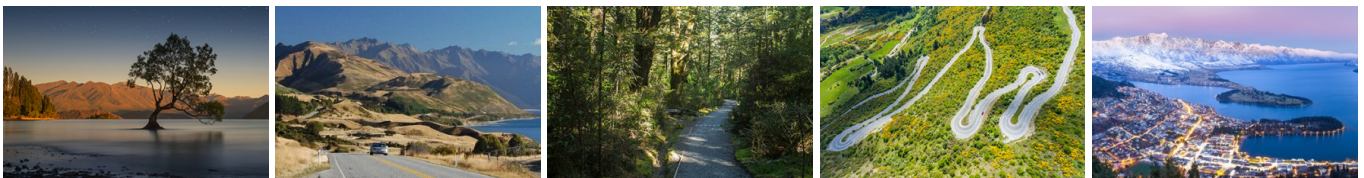
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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7



Franz Josef to Queenstown (via Wānaka)

Heading south you pass through the second glacier town of Fox Glacier before heading along the coast and into more classic West Coast bush scenery. We can recommend a stop at Knights Point Lookout where 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. Along the way there is ample opportunity to admire Aspiring National Park and a stop at Roaring Billy Falls will leave you in awe. The Blue Pools near Makarora are a great 30-minute walk. The road from Makarora leads to Lakes Wānaka and Hāwea which will guide you into the stunning lakeside township of Wānaka before heading over New Zealand's highest sealed road, Crown Range Road and dropping into the Wakatipu basin, home to Queenstown. .

Your accommodation: Rendezvous Heritage Queenstown

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 8



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](#).

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 9



Return your vehicle to Queenstown Airport

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

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!

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Queenstown
Finishes:	Queenstown
Tour length:	9
Accommodation:	Hotel 4 star
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Rendezvous Heritage Queenstown
Day 2	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Wing Premium
Day 3	The George Hotel
Day 4	The George Hotel
Day 5	Scenic Hotel Franz Josef Glacier
Day 6	Scenic Hotel Franz Josef Glacier
Day 7	Rendezvous Heritage Queenstown
Day 8	Rendezvous Heritage Queenstown