



Southbound Highlights

Begin your bespoke adventure in Auckland, then journey through rolling farmlands to Middle Earth, where an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of Hobbiton awaits. Fly over the volcanic landscapes of Mount Tarawera, before retreating to hidden rainforest hot tubs for a tranquil soak. Immerse yourself in authentic Māori culture in Rotorua with a memorable evening at Te Pā Tū, followed by a private tour of the National Kiwi Hatchery, where you'll meet New Zealand's iconic Kiwi bird. Experience one of the world's most scenic ferry rides across the Cook Strait, taking you to the stunning Marlborough Sounds. Indulge in a Seafood Odyssea Cruise, savouring local Kai (food) amidst breathtaking views. Continue your journey down the coast to the picturesque town of Kaikoura, famous for its wildlife, before concluding in Christchurch, New Zealand's largest city. Your tailor-made experience blends luxury, exclusive access, and cultural immersion into a once-in-a-lifetime New Zealand adventure.

Starts in: Auckland
 Finishes in: Christchurch
 Length: 9days / 8nights
 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: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)
Includes: Unlimited kms	Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring
Included activity: Private Transfer Auckland Airport to your Auckland Accommodation with Tourcorp	Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App
Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course	Included activity: Behind the Scenes Tour at Hobbiton
Included activity: Redwoods Nightlights with Glowworms Fast Pass	Included activity: Mount Tarawera Helicopter Landing and Geothermal Parks with Volcanic Air
Included activity: Hot Tub Session with Secret Spot Hot Tubs	Included activity: Te Pā Tū Evening Māori Cultural Experience - Dinner Included
Included activity: Behind The Scenes Exclusive Tour with National Kiwi Hatchery	Included activity: Zealandia by Night Wildlife Sanctuary Tour
Included activity: Private transfer from Wellington Hotel to Interislander Ferry with In Style Executive	Included activity: Interislander Ferry Wellington to Picton with Premium Plus Lounge
Included activity: Seafood Odyssea Cruise with Marlborough Tour Company	: 8 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 1 special dinner

Day 1



Private Transfer Auckland Airport to your Auckland Accommodation with Tourcorp

You will be met at the Auckland airport by the driver and transferred to your Auckland accommodation.

Welcome to Auckland

Welcome to Auckland, known in Māori as Tāmaki Makaurau. Auckland is New Zealand's vibrant "City of Sails," and the country's largest metropolitan area. Nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the Tasman Sea. Surrounded by native bush, lush rainforests, and pristine beaches, Auckland is a haven for both adventurers and urban explorers. Wander through world-class museums and galleries in the city centre or enjoy a peaceful retreat at the Auckland Gardens, where stunning landscapes showcase New Zealand's diverse flora. Stroll along the lively waterfront to savour fresh seafood and international cuisine at Viaduct restaurants. For an unforgettable perspective, ascend the iconic SkyTower, New Zealand's tallest structure, and take in panoramic views of the city and its picturesque islands.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - When in Auckland with Aucky Walky Tour

Explore the City by foot with a 3-hour walking tour around Auckland also known as the 'City of Sails'. Your local guide will ensure that you get the history of Auckland along with discovering the hidden treasures that the City has to offer. Throughout your tour, you will be shown around the City hotspots, taken down hidden lanes, past street art, pointed out the best spots to eat, and learn firsthand the best parts of Auckland. During your walk you will stop by a local cafe for a refreshing bite to eat, and the chance to meet and mingle with the locals of the town.

Your accommodation: M Social Hotel Auckland

A contemporary hotel for the curious, the explorers and those who thrive on new experiences. Functionally chic, this contemporary hotel overlooks the vibrant Princes Wharf that is home to a good array of dining, entertainment and shopping experiences.



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.

Auckland to Hobbiton via Matamata

Head southbound on State Highway one through the lush farmland and dairy pastures of the Waikato region. The Bombay Hills mark the outer boundary of the greater Auckland area and its here you turn inland towards Matamata. This is the real Middle Earth, and you'll see many locations used in the filming of The Lord of The Rings and The Hobbit, as well as visiting the actual set of Hobbiton.

Behind the Scenes Tour at Hobbiton

Immerse yourself in the magic of Middle-earth on this exclusive walking tour of the Hobbiton Movie Set. In a small group of up to 30, explore the iconic 12-acre set, wander past famous Hobbit Holes and Bagshot Row, and step inside a Hobbit's home. Relax at The Green Dragon Inn with a drink from the Southfarthing range, then savour a hearty banquet lunch at The Millhouse, with second helpings encouraged. Go behind the scenes in the Art Department's workshop to uncover the craftsmanship behind Hobbiton's enchanting details. Conclude your adventure with a Hobbit-style platter of cheese, chutneys, and fruit at a hidden spot with stunning views.

Matamata to Rotorua

Just south of Matamata is the township of Tirau, home to the largest tin sheep and sheepdog, but it also offers a surprising number of bric-a-brac, art, craft, and antique stores if you feel like browsing.

Arriving into the City of Rotorua the region's geothermal activity becomes evident as you see steam rising from the roadside and surrounding hills.

Considered the cultural center for the Maori people, Rotorua is the ideal place to gain an insight into the history and culture. Nearby Ohinemutu Village is the original site of the first Maori settlers in the area and despite its modern surroundings and buildings, you can still gain a sense of what the original village was like. The magnificent meeting house and historic carvings along with the unique 'Tudor-style' St Faiths Church feature in many visitors' photo albums.

One of the most popular introductions to the Maori Culture is through an evening at Mitai Maori Village where you can enjoy performances and demonstrations followed by a traditionally cooked hangi meal.

Of course, Rotorua is also a great place to enjoy many other activities including, fishing, 4WD trips, relaxing spa treatments, mountain biking, walking, and hiking plus helicopter and float plane trips.

Redwoods Nightlights with Glowworms Fast Pass

Discover the magic of the Redwoods with this unforgettable eco-tourism experience. Venture into a breathtaking 70-metre eco cave at Redwoods Glowworms, filled with dramatic rock formations and a dazzling display of over 5,000 glowworms, then continue the magic with Redwoods Nightlights, a 700-metre award-winning treetop walk featuring 34 exquisite lanterns by renowned designer David Trubridge, suspended 9–20 metres above the forest floor. Perfect for nature lovers and night-time explorers alike. With the fast pass, you will be able to skip lines and get straight into the fun!

Your accommodation: Hana Lodge Boutique Hotel

Surrounded by 15 acres of farmland, the Hana Lodge is a relaxing lodging on the edge of Lake Rotorua.

Relax by the pool or sauna, play a set of tennis, or escape to the games room for a round of snooker.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 3



Mount Tarawera Helicopter Landing and Geothermal Parks with Volcanic Air

Combine the thrill of landing on Mount Tarawera with a flight that includes spectacular views on the stunning crater lakes, the renowned Tarawera Falls and the vibrant Waimangu and Wai-O-Tapu geothermal reserves. This Tour highlights these amazing features unique to this region because of their location on the faultline relative to the Pacific Rim of Fire.

Hot Tub Session with Secret Spot Hot Tubs

Indulge in tranquillity with a soak in private cedar hot tubs nestled among ferns, overlooking the serene Whakarewarewa Forest and Puarenga Stream. Perfect for unwinding with family or friends, these 39.9°C non-geothermal tubs offer 45 minutes of pure relaxation, with drinks just a button away. By day, enjoy the natural beauty of ancient trees, and by night, marvel at the forest illuminated by colourful lights. After your soak, treat yourself to a complimentary "shinny dip" foot tub at the Basecamp cafe; while sipping a beverage or enjoying a delicious bite to eat.

Te Pā Tū Evening Māori Cultural Experience - Dinner Included

New Zealand's Most Awarded Cultural Attraction, presenting Te Pā Tū. Feast on song, drama, tradition, and divine seasonal kai (cuisine) within the forest Pā (village) blanketed by towering Tawa trees, blazing bonfires, and a forest-formed amphitheatre. Te Pā Tū shares Māori history, traditions, and cultural aspirations across 4-hours of celebration and feasting. These events change with each season of the Maramataka, the Māori lunar calendar.

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Relax by the pool or sauna, play a set of tennis, or escape to the games room for a round of snooker.

Meals included: Breakfast, Speciality Dinner



Day 4



Behind The Scenes Exclusive Tour with National Kiwi Hatchery

This exclusive guided experience is a truly unique opportunity to learn about the world-renowned kiwi hatchery conservation program. You are invited to step 'behind the glass' for an immersive experience to join the hatchery team in a staff-only area to learn about the incubation and chick rearing techniques from global experts. Learn all about New Zealand's intriguing national icon and the efforts of the kiwi husbandry team, see and discover what it takes to hatch and rare chicks, and if you're lucky, see baby chicks in person! Afterwards, take more time to learn in the interactive kiwi burrow and see adult kiwi roam and forage in our purpose-built Nocturnal house.

Rotorua to Taupo

Today drive through the heart of the Central North Island volcanic plateau. Visit the geothermal regions Wai O Tapu Thermal Wonderland and Waimangu Volcanic Valley, before arriving into the town of Taupo, which sits on New Zealand's largest lake - Lake Taupo. Just north of the town are the Huka Falls and a short detour to view is highly recommended, as is a visit to the nearby Craters of the Moon geothermal reserve.

Explore Taupo

Nestled on the shores of New Zealand's largest lake, Taupō is a vibrant town surrounded by stunning volcanic landscapes and the peaks of Tongariro National Park, including Mt Ruapehu. The town buzzes with cafes, shops, and bars, while outdoor enthusiasts can choose from bungy jumping, skydiving, fishing, kayaking, sailing, horse riding, or hiking. Don't miss the quirky L'Arte Cafe and Gallery with its mosaic outdoor living room and iconic 'Alice's Chair'. Just outside town, explore the geothermal wonders of Craters of the Moon, the power of Huka Falls, or take a jet boat ride for an unforgettable view. Taupō perfectly blends natural beauty, thrilling adventures, and unique cultural experiences.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Maori Rock Carving Cruise

Sit back and relax in luxury bean bags on board the yacht *Barbary* as you enjoy a scenic sail across Lake Taupo to the 10-metre high Maori rock art, only accessible by boat. You're guaranteed amazing photo opportunities as you experience one of life's postcard moments on this Maori tour. Glide across a smooth lake as you soak up the warming sun or go for a swim before you enjoy free light refreshments at the rock carvings. If you're looking for a little more activity you can help hoist the sails or take a turn at the wheel. Taupo's Maori rock carvings may look like the remains of a 1,000-year-old Maori village, but these rock carvings were created in the late 70s by local artists lead by John Randall. Duration of cruise is 2 to 2.5 hours.

Your accommodation: Chalet Eiger

Situated above picturesque Acacia Bay overlooking Lake Taupo, Chalet Eiger's accommodation is set in a tranquil environment where each guest room has full views of the magnificent lake, Mount Tauhara and Taupo town.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 5



Taupo to Wellington

The drive around the edge of New Zealand's largest lake leads you to Turangi, the self proclaimed Trout Fishing Capital. You can view the Department of Conservations' National Trout Centre and Hatchery here. You then climb up onto the central plateau and the high country Rangipo Desert. Skirting Tongariro National Park, one of New Zealand's three world heritage sites and clouds permitting you can see the 2,500 metre peak of the still volcanically active Mt. Ruapehu. You might recognise the symmetrical shape of Mt. Ngauruhoe as this was used as the scenery of Mt. Doom in the Lord of the Rings Trilogy. A little further the military town of Waiau also hosts the Army Museum, an incredible collection of New Zealand's military history and a memorial to its servicemen. Heading south you pass through the rural towns of Taihape, Mangaweka and Bulls before arriving on the Kapiti Coast. The coastal seaside towns of Paraparaumu, Paekakariki and Plimmerton are worth a short detour before arriving into the capital city of Wellington. Plan to take most of the day for this drive.

Wellington City is New Zealand's capital. It sits on a wonderful deep natural harbour and is surrounded by bush clad hills. The city centre itself is quite compact (only around 1 square kilometre) and so exploring on foot is relatively easy. From your city centre accommodation you can easily stroll the cafes and restaurants around Courtenay Place and if you arrive early enough New Zealand's national museum, Te Papa, is also close by.

Wellington

Wellington known in Māori as Te Whanganui-a-Tara is home to New Zealand's centre of government. Often referred to as 'mini Melbourne', this windy city is a melting pot of art, culture, food, and fashion. Quirky laneway bars, underground art shows, and hipster eateries make up its inner-city vibe, while a host of sandy beaches outside the urban bustle bring a cheerful holiday feel. Head to Te Papa Museum for a history lesson and a ticket to one of its many international exhibitions or jump aboard the Wellington Cable Car - the only running funicular railway in the country. For those with an eye for boutique, fashion wander through Cuba St to sample some of the city's best vintage stores. Break for coffee at a hipster cafe and be sure to snap a pic outside the 'Beehive', New Zealand's parliamentary debate chamber. Go behind the scenes at Weta Workshop Experience, the Oscar Award Winning design studio behind Lord Of The Rings, The Hobbit, and Avatar. If you're a foodie at heart, a two-hour round trip to Martinborough is a must-do. Take your time as you wind through spectacular wine country. For an educational day out, learn about New Zealand's native species at Zealandia, the world's first fully-fenced eco-sanctuary and home to over 40 types of endangered and native birds.

Return your vehicle to Wellington City depot

Drop your vehicle at the Wellington City depot as stipulated in your itinerary.

Zealandia By Night Wildlife Sanctuary Tour

Taking a night tour of Zealandia wildlife eco-sanctuary is an unforgettable experience and one that comes highly recommended. A conservation success and safe haven for some of New Zealand's rarest native animals, Zealandia is home to many remarkable species of birds, reptiles and insects living wild within a beautiful 225 hectare (one square mile) valley, just 10 minutes from the central city.

Your accommodation: Naumi Hotel Wellington

Naumi Studio Wellington, an iconic heritage landmark in the heart of the Cuba Street precinct. After an extensive renovation, this 116-room property has transformed into a visual feast for the senses, enthralling guests with eclectic spaces inspired from seafaring, the library world and enduring love.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6



Private transfer from Wellington Hotel to Interislander Ferry with In Style Executive

You will be collected from your hotel and transferred to the Interislander ferry terminal in time for your ferry check in.

Interislander Ferry Wellington to Picton with Premium Plus Lounge

The 92 km ferry journey between Wellington and Picton, taking around 3 hours, is hailed as one of the world's most beautiful ferry rides. Departing Wellington Harbour, you'll pass landmarks like Pencarrow Head with New Zealand's oldest lighthouse, Red Rocks; seal colony, and Oterangi Bay, famous for its record wind speed. From the Cook Strait, marvel at views of the Kaikōura Ranges and spot dolphins and seabirds. An hour of the trip winds through the stunning Marlborough Sounds, featuring bush-clad mountains, tranquil bays, and crystal-clear waters—a photographer's dream. The journey concludes in the charming town of Picton at the end of Queen Charlotte Sound. When not soaking up the views from the deck, relax in the Premium Plus lounge, offering complimentary drinks, snacks, internet, and luxurious seating for the most comfortable way to cross the Cook Strait.

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Picton

Picton is a picturesque portside town at the top of the South Island. Gateway to the forest, marine and island attractions of the Marlborough Sounds, Picton is built around a sheltered harbour. Home to cafes, restaurants and galleries it also has a floating maritime museum and aquarium. Picton is also the starting point for Queen Charlotte Track, one of New Zealand's leading hiking trails.

Seafood Odyssea Cruise with Marlborough Tour Company

Enjoy the sights and sounds of the Queen Charlotte Sound with seemingly endless bays and coves to explore and different scenery around each corner. Seafood Odyssea Cruise offers a unique range of sightseeing, birdlife and wildlife. Learn about the Marlborough Sounds area, the local seafoods grown and enjoy a fabulous seafood tasting on board.

Your accommodation: Escape to Picton Boutique Hotel

Escape to Picton is a beautiful boutique hotel situated on the waterfront overlooking the marina in Picton. Just a two minute walk to the boats, where you can take advantage of the many activities on offer in the region.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 7



Picton to Kaikoura

From Picton head south on State Highway One towards Blenheim, and the wine-producing region of Marlborough. Ideally located to enjoy an afternoon sampling the local produce, stop for a guided wine tour with Full Day Marlborough Wine Tour. Crossing the dry hills of the Marlborough ranges you head towards one of the most spectacular coastlines of the South Island, the Kaikoura Coast. The road hugs the shore for around 50 kilometres and offers many chances to view the native wildlife such as seabirds and New Zealand fur seals. To the east is the Pacific Ocean and to the west you'll follow alongside the Kaikoura Ranges before arriving into the bustling Kaikoura Township.

Kaikōura

Kaikōura is a stunning coastal town known for its rich marine life and dramatic scenery. Visit the fur seal colony, take a whale-watching cruise, or swim with playful dusky dolphins. The town is rich with attractions, walking tracks, and activities for every visitor. A walk around the Kaikōura Peninsula is a must, where you can explore tide pools teeming with marine life, observe sea creatures basking on the rocks, and, for bird lovers, spot the impressive native albatross. Just be sure to keep a respectful distance from any sea lions you meet. Highlights like Ohau Point and historic Fyffe House offer insight into the region's wildlife and whaling past. Finish your visit by sampling the fresh local seafood, renowned for having some of the best fish and chips in the country, or by taking a relaxing wander through the tranquil Lavendyl Lavender Farm.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Heli Gin Experience with South Pacific Helicopters

Are you ready for the ultimate helicopter experience for gin lovers? Sit back, relax, and enjoy a stunning scenic helicopter flight around the Peninsula and the Kaikoura Seaward Mountain Ranges. Take in the beautiful scenery from high above, while your pilot educates you on the incredible surroundings. Then enjoy a landing at Mt Fyffe for a tasting and to learn about the artisanal boutique gins made there.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Taste of the Farm with Hapuku Kitchen

Experience the magic of Kaikōura's wild landscape through a unique farm-to-table cooking class with Chef Fiona. Join her in her charming rural kitchen and learn to create uncomplicated yet delicious dishes inspired by the region's bounty. Harvest fresh ingredients from her extensive gardens and discover the secrets to transforming them into culinary masterpieces. Enjoy a welcome of locally roasted coffee, New Zealand tea, and fresh baking before venturing into the gardens. The day's menu is crafted based on the freshest harvest, ensuring peak flavour.

Your accommodation: Kaikoura Boutique Hotel

Kaikoura Boutique Hotel sits on the Esplanade overlooking Kaikoura's waterfront, just a short walk from tourist attractions, shops and cafes. The hotel has been lovingly refurbished with modern décor and a uniquely New Zealand design.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 8



Kaikōura to Christchurch

Travel down the coast before heading inland through the North Canterbury wine region - the Waipara Valley. If you've time on your hands we recommend taking a detour to Hanmer Springs for relaxing dip in its thermal pools. Arriving into Christchurch you'll see a new and improved city, steadily rising from the ruins of the 2011 and 2010 earthquakes.

Christchurch

Christchurch known in Māori as Ōtautahi, is the largest metro area in the South Island. Commonly referred to as New Zealand's "Garden City", Christchurch is home to one of the biggest public parks in the country, and beautiful botanic gardens. The city was hit with devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011, now the city crosses the line between its English heritage and a new modern architecture. To take in some arts and culture, pay a visit to the Canterbury Museum or the Christchurch Art Gallery. Take a step back in time with a tram around the city or punt along the Avon River. If tasting your way around the city is your means of travel, try out a cultural eating tour. A short drive from the CBD will lead you to the outskirts of the Banks Peninsula beachside suburb of Sumner or through the tunnel to Lyttleton Harbour which hosts fantastic markets on Saturday mornings.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Kai Safari with Amiki Cultural Food Tours

Immerse yourself in the vibrant atmosphere of the new city while exploring its emerging foodie scene. Learn about the lives of early Māori and their contemporary lifestyle. Uncover hidden gems and hear stories of how Ōtautahi-Christchurch envisions the future. Enjoy visits to beloved modern New Zealand restaurants, where you can sample seasonal shared plates made from local produce. Indulge in new favourite dishes, savouring a variety of local food and beverages, each with its own unique story that highlights the region's offerings..

Your accommodation: Merivale Manor House

Originally built in the 1880's, Merivale Manor has been transformed into elegant motel and apartment accommodation. Less than 200 metres to central Merivale with its premier shopping, restaurants, cafes and bars.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 9



Return Your Vehicle to Christchurch Airport

It's time to return your rental car and let the South Island journey come to an end. If time allows spend the day exploring more of Christchurch, we'd suggest a leisurely drive up the Port Hills for some great sites and then over to the harbour of Lyttleton, before circling through the tunnel and back to the airport to continue your journey home.

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: Self Drive Tour (FTNZ ONLY)
Starts: Auckland
Finishes: Christchurch
Tour length: 9
Accommodation: Boutique Lodges & Hotels
Car/transport type:

Accommodation summary

Day 1	M Social Hotel Auckland
Day 2	Hana Lodge Boutique Hotel
Day 3	Hana Lodge Boutique Hotel
Day 4	Chalet Eiger
Day 5	Naumi Hotel Wellington
Day 6	Escape to Picton Boutique Hotel
Day 7	Kaikoura Boutique Hotel
Day 8	Merivale Manor House