

New Zealand Spectacular South Island



This is a fabulous round-trip covering the length and breadth of New Zealand's South Island. Starting from Christchurch, you'll journey up the east coast and across to Nelson with opportunities for whale watching and wine-tasting along the way. Visit the beautiful golden sand beaches of Abel Tasman National Park for a day of walking, sailing and kayaking, then journey down the stunning West Coast, visiting the famous pancake rocks and Franz Josef Glacier, and stopping at the beautiful lakeside resorts of Wanaka and Queenstown. Spend the night cruising on the Milford Sounds before visiting the Albatross and Penguin colonies near Dunedin. Finally, return to Christchurch via Mt Cook National Park.

This is a self-drive holiday with a number of carefully-chosen guided tours included. It's intended to provide an outline of what's possible on South Island, and can easily be tailored around your interests, whether that's wildlife, sightseeing, walking or adventure sports.

Day 1: Arrive in Christchurch

You will be met on arrival at Christchurch International Airport by our airport representative. They will give a short introductory briefing, hand over your tour documents and vouchers, and then escort you to the hire car desk.

Collect your hire car, a Toyota Camry or similar, and make your way to the Quality Hotel Elms, which is situated a few kilometres from the city centre.

In the afternoon, board one of Christchurch's famous London-style double decker buses for a one-hour tour of the city centre. This is a chance to learn more about Christchurch's remarkable

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All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

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history, from its origins as a pioneers' town to the impact of the 2011 earthquake. Highlights include: the Cashel Street 'Shipping Container Mall', New Regent St, Christchurch Cathedral, Canterbury Provincial Chambers, and Hagley Park.

Return to your hotel late afternoon. Evening at leisure.

Day 2: Christchurch – Kaikoura – Blenheim

Depart Christchurch this morning and begin your journey northwards (2-3 hours) along the Pacific Coast to Kaikoura, where you embark on a whale-watching cruise in a purpose-built boat. The nutrient-rich sea around Kaikoura attracts a huge array of sea life, including sperm whales, which can be seen at Kaikoura at almost any time of year. Dolphin, penguin and seals are also sometimes seen, and if you're very lucky, orca.

After the cruise, continue north along the coast to Blenheim, a lively town in the heart of the Marlborough wine district. Check into the Scenic Hotel Marlborough for two nights in a superior room.



Day 3: The Marlborough Region

This morning, you may like to visit Blenheim's Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre, home to the largest collection of World War I aircraft in the world. Or, if aviation history isn't your cup of tea, use the time to extend your tour of the surrounding wine region.

In the afternoon, take the time to explore the Marlborough wine region independently. This is New Zealand's top winemaking area, famous particularly for its Sauvignon Blanc. You can follow a number of trails that take in the most famous wineries—Brancott, St Clair, Alan Scott—or plot your own journey. It's a beautiful region, and a pleasure to explore at leisure.

There are number of country restaurants where you can stop for lunch or dinner.



Christchurch

Day 4: Blenheim – Nelson (110 kms)

Depart Blenheim this morning and continue across the northern coast of South Island to reach Nelson, a lively harbour city that is renowned for its beautiful weather, gorgeous beaches, and easy lifestyle.

While in Nelson, we suggest you take the time to visit Höglund's Studio, with its famous glass gallery, the fascinating Wearable Arts Museum, and the beautiful Garden of the World. Time-allowing, take a stroll along Tahunanui, the main beach at Nelson.

Late afternoon, check into the Trailways Hotel for two nights.



Abel Tasman walking trail

Day 5: Abel Tasman National Park

After breakfast at Trailways, drive to Kaiteriteri Beach, about one hour from town.

Spend the day exploring the coast around Kaiteriteri, with its beautiful golden beaches, and the Abel Tasman National Park, which offers a number of popular walking routes. Included today is a cruise through the Marine Reserve to Tonga Island, the site of a huge seal colony. The boat travels along the coast as far as Totaranui, and you can get off at several stops along the way to relax on the beach or go for a swim.

We recommend that you spend the morning cruising, and then in the afternoon disembark at Bark or Onetahuti Bay and walk back through the rainforest to Kaiteriteri. However, you have a great deal of flexibility in how you plan your day. If you're not keen on walking, you can spend the whole day on the boat or enjoying a scenic coastal drive!

Late afternoon, drive back to Nelson.



Coastal view from Abel Tasman walking trail

Day 6: Nelson – Punakaiki – Franz Josef (498 kms)

Depart Nelson this morning and travel south via Murchison to the western coast. You will pass some of South Island's most beautiful scenery along the way, as you drive through the Golden Downs Forest and into Buller Gorge. There are any number of possible picnic spots!

Continue south through the Inangahua Junction and follow the Buller River until it reaches the coast. If time allows, you may want to take the time to visit the seal colony at Cape Foulwind, just outside Westport, before carrying on down the coast to Punakaiki to see the famous pancake rocks.

In the afternoon, drive to Greymouth, the largest settlement on the West Coast, with stunning views of the Tasman Sea along the way. You may like to stop here and visit one of Greymouth's many jade factories, where jade stone mined locally is crafted into jewellery.

Late afternoon, continue your journey south, through pockets of forest and arable land to the small settlement of Franz Josef. Surrounded by mountains, Franz Josef is famous for its eponymous glacier, which extends from the vast snowfields at the peak of the Southern Alps almost to sea level. To really get a feel for the scale of the glacier, consider a scenic helicopter flight with the option of a snow landing (additional cost).

Overnight at the Hotel Franz Josef Glacier in a Graham Wing room.

Day 7: Franz Josef – Wanaka (287 kms)

Continue south towards Wanaka, travelling via Haast. Today's journey will take you through stunning forests and past picturesque lakes and the crystal-clear rivers that flow from the Southern Alps. The highlight of the day comes as you cross the beautiful Haast Pass, and witness a dramatic change in the scenery as you descend into Central Otago.

Wanaka is a scenic all-year resort town set on the shores of Lake Wanaka. It is especially popular with New Zealanders vacationing in the summer months. Once you arrive in town, check in at the Edgewater Resort for one night.



Day 8: Wanaka – Queenstown (116 kms)

Today will see you travel across the Central Otago farmlands and along the shores of spectacular Lake Dunstan to Cromwell, a centre of wine production. The best wineries are in the region of Gibbston Valley and Bannockburn.

From Cromwell, continue to Queenstown, passing the rugged Kawarau Gorge. Set on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown is New Zealand's premier year-round alpine resort.

Check into the Heartland Hotel for 2 nights.

Day 9: Queenstown

Today is at leisure to explore Queenstown at your own pace. There is plenty to do. We recommend a leisurely cruise on a vintage Lake Steamer, or, if you prefer a quicker pace, a jetboat ride! There are a number of walks in the region of Queenstown,

including the famous Routeburn Track at Glenorchy.

In the evening, head to the Skyline Restaurant—accessed by an aerial gondola—for dinner and a marvellous view of the city, mountains and lake.



Fiordland National Park

Day 10: Queenstown – Milford Sound (292 kms)

Leave Queenstown this morning and drive to Fiordland National Park, travelling via the beautiful town of Te Anau. This is a region of towering mountains and cascading waterfalls, of deep valleys carved out by ice glaciers and dense woodland. Milford Road, widely regarded as one of the most scenic routes in New Zealand, takes you through the heart of the park, past the Mirror Lakes and the Chasm, where you'll want to stop to admire the view, to Milford Sound.

Aim to arrive at Milford Sound in the afternoon. On arrival, board the MV Milford Mariner for an overnight cruise. The cruise covers the full length of the Milford Sound to the Tasman Sea. You'll have the chance to stop and explore a number of natural landmarks and admire the beauty of the region in the company of an experienced naturalist guide. Depending on the weather conditions, it is usually possible to explore the shoreline by kayak.

The Milford Mariner moors overnight in Harrison Cove. Dinner is a delicious four-course meal.

NB. the Milford Mariner overnight cruises are not available between late May and Sept. During this period, you would instead stay at Te Anau (with the option of a day cruise on Milford Sound.)

Day 11: Milford Sound – Dunedin (408 kms)

Take breakfast on board the Milford Mariner. Disembark later this morning and then return to Te Anau, perhaps stopping at Cleddau Gorge along the way.

From Te Anau it is a four hour drive to Dunedin on the eastern coast, a journey that takes you across the Southland and through some characteristically beautiful countryside.

On arrival in Dunedin, check into Hotel Cargills for two nights.



Cruising on the Milford Sound

Day 12: Dunedin

Dunedin was founded as a Scottish settler town and has retained much of its original ‘tartan’ character to this day. The city boasts some marvellous Victorian architecture, earning it the unofficial title of “the Edinburgh of New Zealand”.

This morning, head to the Otago Peninsula for a visit to the Royal Albatross colony, nesting grounds for thousands of the seabirds. (*NB.* The observatory closes between September and November). In the afternoon, drive to Penguin Place, where you can catch a glimpse of the rare Yellow Eyed Penguin from wildlife hides.

Day 13: Dunedin – Mt Cook (330 kms)

Begin your return journey north, driving along the Pacific Coast and to Mt Cook village. It’s another beautiful drive, with a number of landmarks to see along the way—the Moeraki Boulders, Benmore Dam, Lake Pukaki and the Mackenzie Basin. You’ll have plenty of time to stop and admire the scenery, and to briefly explore the town of Twizel, before you reach Mt Cook in the afternoon. On arrival, check into the Hermitage Hotel for one night in the Mt Cook Wing.



Mt Cook National Park

Home to several of New Zealand's largest peaks, the Mt Cook National Park is a walker's paradise. This afternoon you'll have time to journey along some of the shorter trails close to the hotel. If you're not a keen walker, there's also the option of a scenic flight over the summits (at additional cost).

Day 14: Mt Cook – Christchurch (330 kms)

Return to Christchurch, with a detour en route to visit the Church of the Good Shepherd on the shores of Lake Takapo. Continue over Burkes Pass and on to the fertile Canterbury Plains as you approach Christchurch City.

Overnight at Hotel Elms.

Day 15: Depart Christchurch

Morning at leisure. When ready, transfer to Christchurch Airport, where you return your vehicle and check in for your international flight home.



Christchurch

Price Guide:

The cost of this itinerary is from **£1,595** based on a two travellers staying in twin share/double accommodation. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).

Includes:

Accommodation and meals as described
 Activities as per itinerary
 National Park entry fees
 Car hire (Toyota Camry or similar)
 Meet and greet at Auckland Airport
 15% mandatory Goods & Services Tax

Excludes:

International and domestic flights
 Visa fees
 Meals other than those specified
 Travel Insurance – ask us for a quote
 Items of a personal nature