

New Zealand: Ultimate South Island

HIKE THE “GREAT WALKS” IN FOUR NATIONAL PARKS



Wilderness Travel



New Zealand: Ultimate South Island

TRIP DATES

- March 16-30, 2025
- November 9-23, 2025
- November 30-December 14, 2025
- December 7-21, 2025
- January 4-18, 2026
- January 11-25, 2026
- January 18-February 1, 2026
- February 1-15, 2026
- February 8-22, 2026
- February 15-March 1, 2026
- February 22-March 8, 2026
- March 1-15, 2026
- March 8-22, 2026
- March 15-29, 2026

This journey brings you everything you could want to do on the South Island—that’s why we call it “ultimate” South Island! We hike four of the country’s Great Walks: the alpine Routeburn Track, plus the lush pathways of the Rakiura, Kepler, and Abel Tasman tracks, all protected in pristine national parks filled with soaring landscapes. We’ll also savor an overnight cruise in Milford Sound (the jewel of Fiordland National Park), hike and sea kayak in the coastal paradise of Abel Tasman National Park, look for kiwis (the feathered kind) on remote Stewart Island, and sip wines in Central Otago. We’ve arranged three internal flights so we can easily get to the South Island’s most diverse settings.





Itinerary

TRIP DETAILS AT-A-GLANCE

- Length:** 15 days
Arrive: Queenstown, New Zealand
Depart: Nelson, New Zealand
Lodging: 14 nights hotels, B&Bs, and lodges
Meals: All meals included except 2 dinners (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
Activity: Hiking / Trekking, Walking
Trip Level: 1 2 3 4 5 6
Moderate hiking, 3-6 hours a day on hiking days, optional sea kayaking (no previous experience necessary)

DAY 1 QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

Welcome to Queenstown, a beautiful lakeside town surrounded by dramatic mountains and known as the “adventure capital” of New Zealand. Transfer on your own via taxi to the group hotel, where you will meet your Trip Leaders in the evening for a trip briefing and Welcome Dinner. Overnight at the Heritage Hotel...D

DAY 2 MOUNT CRICHTON LOOP / GLENORCHY

We begin our hiking journey with a brisk climb through forest along the Mount Crichton Loop Track, with red beech, mountain beech, and manuka trees along the trail. We'll stop to visit the historic Sam Summers Hut and learn about the role gold mining has played in the settlement of the area, and at the top of the hike, we'll have a magnificent viewpoint overlooking Lake Wakatipu, New Zealand's longest lake (almost 50 miles). At hike's end, we enjoy a picnic lunch by this mountain-ringed lake. Our afternoon drive is one of the most scenic on the island, as it reaches the head of the lake and brings us to the tiny township of Glenorchy, which lies on the border of Te Wahipounamu, a World Heritage Site. We'll spend the afternoon exploring the area and, time permitting, enjoy a drink at the pub. Overnight at Headwaters Eco Lodge in Glenorchy...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 4-5 hours, 4.7 miles; Mount Crichton Loop Track elevation gain/loss 1,050 feet

Driving Details: Approximately 1 hour

DAY 3 ROUTEBURN TRACK

This morning in Mt. Aspiring National Park, we'll hike the Routeburn Track, once a route for Maori who were collecting greenstone (New Zealand's nephrite jade). Today it is one of New Zealand's "Great Walks." Our hike brings us across swing bridges above the crystal-clear jade waters of the Routeburn River as we follow a well-graded track through beech forest to Routeburn Flats. For hardy hikers wanting more of a challenge, there is an option to hike further up to the impressive cascades of Routeburn Falls. We return to our hotel in Glenorchy for overnight...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 3-5 hours, 9.2 miles, elevation gain/loss 850 feet; optional hike to Routeburn Falls, 3 additional miles, total elevation gain 2,562 feet

Driving Details: Approximately 1.5 hours

DAY 4 FLY TO STEWART ISLAND / ISLAND NATURE WALK

As we drive along Lake Wakatipu and into the Southland plains this morning, we'll see some of the country's most productive farmlands. We'll board a small plane for a short flight to nearby Stewart Island. Te Punga o Te Waka a Maui, the original Maori name for Stewart Island, means "the anchor stone of Maui's canoe." The name refers to a Maori myth in which the demi-god Maui and his crew, in their canoe (the South Island), caught and raised up a great fish (the North Island). Today, Rakiura is the more commonly used

Maori name for this island, and it translates as "glowing skies" for the sunsets for which the island is famous.

In the afternoon, we'll hike through podocarp forest with scenic views of peaceful Halfmoon Bay. Keep an eye out for native birds including the kererū and tūi. Dinner tonight is at the South Seas Hotel, where we'll rub shoulders with local fisherman and other characters that call the island home. After dinner, head out on a kiwi spotting excursion to search for the flightless and nocturnal Stewart Island kiwi. Overnight at Stewart Island Lodge or one of the many beautiful holiday homes that dot the bay, all quiet sanctuaries nestled in native bush with expansive views of Halfmoon Bay out to the ocean...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 3 hours, 3.8 miles (slowed pace for birdwatching), elevation gain/loss 390 feet

Driving Details: Approximately 2.5 hours

Flight Time: 30 minutes

DAY 5 PORT WILLIAM/ RAKIURA NATIONAL PARK / RAKIURA TRACK

This morning, a water taxi brings us to Port William, an early Maori settlement site. From the 1800s on, it provided a harbor for whalers and sealers. In the 1870s, a group of Shetland Island immigrants attempted to establish farms and a fishery here. This scheme failed—all that remains are the eucalyptus (gum) trees they planted along the beachfront. Here we'll



enjoy a hike on our second “Great Walk,” the Rakiura Track, passing through Maori Beach, where relics of early saw mills can still be seen. Our hike ends at Lee Bay, gateway to Rakiura National Park. This evening we enjoy a BBQ prepared by our Trip Leaders. We return to Stewart Island Lodge or holiday homes for overnight...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 4 hours, 5.2 miles, elevation gain/loss 950 feet

DAY 6 THE SOUTH COAST / FIORDLAND AND THE KEPLER TRACK

We fly back over the Foveaux Strait to Invercargill this morning—views from the air are spectacular as we pass over the Titi islands where Maori still gather “mutton birds.” We’ll drive from Invercargill through Fiordland National Park to reach Te Anau, a picturesque town nestled on the edge of Lake Te Anau, stopping enroute to tour the Templeton Flaxmill Heritage Museum. Here, we’ll visit the *last* remaining operational flax mill and learn the important role this fiber played before the introduction of plastics. Afterwards, we head out to hike our third “Great Walk,” the Kepler Track, where we’ll enjoy a relatively gentle and serene hiking through red beech forest along the edge of the Waiiau River and along Lake Te Anau. Overnight at the Distinction Hotel overlooking Lake Te Anau and the Fiordland ranges, with dinner on your own...BL

Hiking Details: Approximately 3 hours, 6 miles

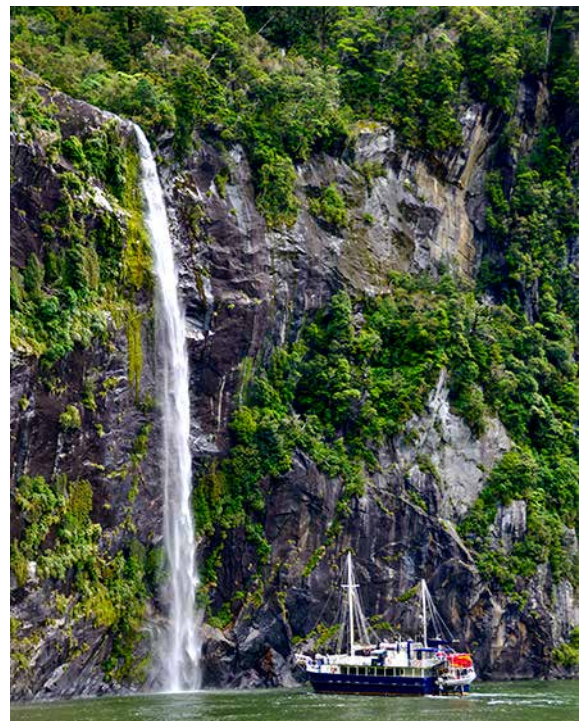
Driving Details: Approximately 2.5 hours

Flight Time: 20 minutes

DAY 7 FIORDLAND NATIONAL PARK / MILFORD SOUND OVERNIGHT CRUISE

This morning we’ll visit a wildlife park to see the flightless takahe, a rare species now restricted to the tussock grasslands of the Murchison Mountains of Fiordland. Until the 1940s, these unique birds, a species of rail, were thought to be extinct but were rediscovered in the Murchison Mountains. Then we drive to Milford Sound through upended land that was carved, tumbled, and jumbled by grinding glaciers during the last Ice Age. Along the way, we stop for a hike on the Routeburn Track to Key Summit in Fiordland National Park, the largest national park in New Zealand.

Arriving in Milford Sound in the late afternoon, we meet our “water-based bed-and-breakfast” at the dock, a comfortable three-sailed cruising vessel with a design inspired by the traditional trading scow. After settling into our private cabins, we set out for an overnight cruise through this spectacular body of water. Set among the towering peaks of Fiordland National Park, Milford Sound is a deep watery chasm that flows to the Tasman Sea. It is one of the world’s most spectacular meetings of mountain and sea, where 4,000-foot-high walls rise directly from the water’s edge and waterfalls cascade down the cliff faces. We cruise past waterfalls and out





to the edge of the Tasman Sea, and anchor for the night in sheltered Harrison Cove beneath towering Mount Pembroke. Before sunset, we can explore the fjord by kayak or tender craft, or simply relax on deck to enjoy the vistas, keeping our eyes out for dolphins who frequent these waters. To spend the night enveloped by the majesty of this environment is simply the best way to experience Milford Sound! Overnight in private cabins with en suite bathrooms...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 3 hours, 5 miles, elevation gain/loss 1,400 feet
Driving Details: 1.5 hours

DAY 8 FIORDLAND NATIONAL PARK / GIBBSTON VINEYARDS

Awaking to the silence and serenity of Milford Sound, we have breakfast on board as we cruise through the fiord and enjoy the spectacular scenery in the early morning light. After the ship returns to shore, we'll enjoy a number of short walks as we make our way along the Milford Highway. Weather and time permitting, you can enjoy an optional scenic helicopter flight over Milford Sound to Tutoko Glacier, the highest peak in Fiordland National Park. (Note: This option is an "on your own" expense). In the afternoon, we arrive at our vineyard cottages in Gibbston, set in the heart of Central Otago wine country. Overnight at the Kinross Cottages...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 30 minutes
Driving Details: Approximately 4 hours

DAY 9 GIBBSTON WINE REGION / HISTORIC ARROWTOWN

This morning we hike to Jack's Point along the shores of Lake Wakatipu, where a massive glacier once carved its way through the mountains. We'll spend the rest of the day exploring the wine region, sampling the pinot noir wines for which Central Otago is famous, and strolling the quaint streets of the historic gold mining town of Arrowtown. This evening, we gather for an al fresco dinner amid the vineyards at the Kinross Cottages...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 2 hours, 4.5 miles

DAY 10 WANAKA / DIAMOND LAKE / ROCKY MOUNTAIN

A morning drive brings us to the pretty township of Wanaka and through the majestic Matukituki Valley, with stunning views of Mount Aspiring National Park. Declared a World Heritage Site, this immense alpine reserve is dominated by a pyramid-shaped peak of snow and ice that the Maori call Tititeaor ("Upright Glistening Mountain"). At 9,961 feet, Mt. Aspiring towers above a sea of mighty peaks and more than 50 named glaciers. Hiking beside picturesque Diamond Lake, we'll ascend Rocky Mountain. Around every corner on this trail, we are rewarded with increasingly spectacular views out



over Lake Wanaka and into the heart of the Southern Alps until we finally reach the summit, where we're greeted by a 360-degree panorama of mountains, glaciers, and green valleys. Overnight at the Edgewater Resort Hotel, right on the shores of sapphire-blue Lake Wanaka, with dinner on your own...BL

Hiking Details: Approximately 2.5 hours, 4.5 miles, elevation gain/loss 1,600 feet

Driving Details: Approximately 1.5 hours

DAY 11 MT. ASPIRING NATIONAL PARK / ROB ROY GLACIER TRACK OR MILLENNIUM TRACK

Today we have a choice between two of our favorite hikes: The Rob Roy Glacier or The Millennium Track. The Rob Roy Track is arguably one of the most challenging of our trip, with an elevation gain and loss of about 1,550 feet. It climbs a narrow gorge and follows a crystal-clear stream through a fern-filled beech forest. Emerging from the shade of the bush at the top of the trail, we enter an amphitheater of wonder, surrounded by a dramatic world of snowfields, hanging glaciers, sheer rock cliffs, and waterfalls, with a breathtaking view of the Rob Roy Glacier at the upper lookout. The Millennium Track departs right from our lakeside hotel and meanders along the shores of beautiful Lake Wanaka. During the last Ice Age, a glacier filled the lake and carved its way through the surrounding mountains like a sculptor, leaving the masterpiece before us. Overnight at the Edgewater Resort... BLD

Hiking Details, Rob Roy hike (A): Approximately 3.5-4

hours, 6 miles, elevation gain/loss 1,550 feet

Millennium hike (B): Approximately 3.5-4 hours, 8.5 miles, elevation gain/loss 800 feet

Driving Details: Approximately 1.5 hours

DAY 12 FLY TO NELSON / ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK HIKE

A flight brings us to the "city" of Nelson, known to have the best weather in New Zealand. From here we'll drive along the coast to Marahau, where we set out for a scenic jaunt by water taxi to Abel Tasman National Park, a world of aquamarine waters, native forests, and magnificent coastal trails. Wading to shore from the boat, we'll hike a coastal trail through mystical fern forests, past lagoons, and up into headlands, with fantastic coastal views all along the way. Our remote lodge, the Awaroa, is set in a 47-acre private reserve inside Abel Tasman National Park itself. Overnight at Awaroa Lodge...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 1 hour, 2 miles

Driving Details: Approximately 1 hour

Flight Details: Approximately 2.5-3 hours

Water Taxi: 1.5 hours

DAY 13 ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK / SEA KAYAKING

The mild climate, stunning beaches, impressive headlands, and ocean bays of Abel Tasman are a showcase for the



stunning beauty of New Zealand. This park is also a renowned sea kayaking paradise, so we'll head out for a sea kayaking excursion this morning, with a picnic lunch, then hike the coastal trail back to the lodge or return by water taxi. Overnight at Awaroa Lodge...BLD

Sea Kayaking Details: Approximately 4 hours, no previous experience necessary

Hiking Details: Approximately 3 hours, 6 miles, elevation gain/loss 900 feet

DAY 14 ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK / HIKE TO TOTARANUI BEACH

Our hike to the long, golden beach at Totaranui brings us along the picturesque Abel Tasman Coastal Track through a lush panorama of giant tree ferns and past aquamarine lagoons. We'll gather for our Farewell Dinner tonight. Overnight at Awaroa Lodge...BLD

Hiking Details: Approximately 3 hours, 5 miles, elevation gain/loss 1,400 feet

DAY 15 WATER TAXI TO MARAHAU / NELSON AIRPORT / DEPART

A transfer by water taxi brings us back to Marahau for a drive to the Nelson Airport. We'll arrive in time to check in for domestic flights departing after 2:00 pm...B

Pricing

TRIP COST

Prices are per person, valid through Spring 2025

\$10,595 (10-12 members)

\$10,995 (4-9 members)

Single supplement: \$2,495

Internal airfare: \$285 (subject to change)

Please contact us for future years' pricing

To offer the lowest possible cost, our trips are priced according to the number of participants on the trip. All costs are per person, based on double occupancy. If you wish to have a single room, you must pay the single supplement fee. Please note that Wilderness Travel staff, or guests of Wilderness Travel such as travel writers, photographers, or leaders-in-training, are not included in the tier pricing count.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE

Because the prices published for our program are set so far in advance of the trip dates, we are occasionally faced with exceptional cost increases and/or currency fluctuations that affect the actual cost of running the trip. In most years, no price changes are necessary. However, we do reserve the right to raise or lower the trip price if there is a significant change in costs or exchange rates. If this is the case, your final invoice will reflect the difference in trip cost.

TRIP COST INCLUDES

- Expert leadership of Wilderness Travel Trip Leaders and local guides
- Accommodations as noted
- All meals included except 2 dinners as indicated in the Detailed Itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- A glass of wine or beer at dinner
- Land and boat transportation as noted
- Airport or hotel transfer on the last day of the trip

TRIP COST DOES NOT INCLUDE

International airfare, any meals not specified after each itinerary day, airport departure taxes, optional activities, optional tipping or gratuities to leaders or staff, additional hotel nights that may be necessitated by airline schedule changes or other factors, pre-trip expenses of medical immunizations (if any), travel insurance, or passports and visas, and other expenses of a personal nature (alcoholic drinks, laundry, etc.).

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation: \$600

90 days prior to departure: Balance

CANCELLATION AND TRANSFER FEE SCHEDULE

Up to 91 days prior to departure: No charge!

61-90 days prior to departure: 25% of trip cost

46-60 days prior to departure: 50% of trip cost

45 days or less: 100% of trip cost

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend you purchase travel insurance. You can take advantage of a comprehensive Travel Protection Plan designed for Wilderness Travel by Travelex, or purchase other insurance on your own. See our website for details:

www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance

Extend Your Adventure

To help you make the most of your adventure, we've created several exciting trip extensions. For detailed information, including full itineraries and complete pricing, please visit our webpage and click on "Extend Your Trip": www.wildernesstravel.com/trip/new-zealand/north-south-island-hike-araroa/extensions



AUCKLAND AND THE ISLANDS OF THE HAURAKI GULF EXTENSION

Considered to be some of the best cruising grounds in the world, the islands of the Hauraki gulf lie within close proximity to Auckland, but offer experiences that are a world away from bustling city life. You'll explore this diverse range of islands as well as Auckland's vibrant waterfront on this five-day extension before or after one of our New Zealand adventures. Based from your Auckland waterfront hotel and accompanied by one of our fantastic Trip Leaders, visit the Auckland War Memorial Museum, sample some of the city's fabulous "kai moana," or seafood, at lovely restaurants, and take day trips by ferry to three distinct islands. Spend a day on Tiritiri Matangi, a wildlife sanctuary and successful conservation story with prolific birdlife, climb to the top of Rangitoto, a volcanic island that juts dramatically from the sea, and walk along gorgeous sandy beaches on Waiheke Island, a haven for artists and winemakers.

5 days. From \$2,895.

Lodging



HERITAGE HOTEL QUEENSTOWN

Queenstown, New Zealand

Day 1 (1 night)

The Heritage Hotel Queenstown is set in a quiet location on a hillside just above the town and offers panoramas of Lake Wakapitu and the majestic Remarkables Mountain Range. It's far enough away from the hustle and bustle of town but just a 20-minute walk into the town center. The guest service is friendly and efficient, and the main building holds a bar, restaurant, pool, spa, and sauna.



HEADWATERS ECO LODGE

Glenorchy, New Zealand

Days 2 to 3 (2 nights)

Surrounded by snow-capped mountains and lush landscaping, this net-zero eco retreat brings New Zealand's birdsong right into your room. Creatively appointed chalets feature fine linens, original artwork, and rustic décor. Each chalet includes an en-suite bathroom with a walk-in rain shower as well as an outdoor deck where you can relax under the stars after a day of hiking.



STEWART ISLAND LODGE

Oban, New Zealand

Days 4 to 5 (2 nights)

This secluded bed-and-breakfast is set on a hillside overlooking Halfmoon Bay. Six comfy rooms look out onto an expansive shared balcony and the communal guest lounge is a great place to gather and admire the postcard-perfect views of the bay. If you're an early riser, take a stroll around the gardens, home to native birds including the kaka. With a warm and friendly staff, the hospitality here is second to none.

Lodging



TE ANAU DISTINCTION HOTEL

Te Anau, New Zealand

Day 6 (1 night)

With a lakefront location and extensive landscaped grounds, the Te Anau Distinction Hotel cascades along beautiful expanses of Te Anau's waterfront on the southern edge of the largest lake on the South Island. Indulge in picturesque scenery straight out of Middle Earth, unwind in the spa or heated swimming pool, or relax in the cozy rooms, each with outdoor access.



MILFORD MARINER

Milford Sound, New Zealand

Day 7 (1 night)

For our overnight cruise in spectacular Milford Sound, we have comfortable private cabins with en suite bathrooms on the 60-passenger Milford Mariner, a traditional-style motor vessel with staysail schooner-rigged sails. By choosing an overnight cruise rather than a day cruise, we get to explore the full length of this world-famous mountain fjord, experiencing its many moods as the light changes from day to night. Along the way, we keep an eye out for wildlife including penguins, dolphins, and seals, with options for exploring by small boat or by sit-on-top kayak with the onboard naturalists. The chef serves up delicious meals in the dining salon.



KINROSS COTTAGES & VINEYARD

Gibbston, New Zealand

Days 8 to 9 (2 nights)

These chalet-style duplex cottages are set on a 50-acre vineyard in the Gibbston Valley just a 20-minute drive from Queenstown. Here you'll soak up the pioneering history of the Kinross station and family, plus enjoy the romance of a working vineyard that grows Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, and Gewürztraminer grape varieties. Kinross offers comfortable studio and family cottages for up to 28 guests, each with bath or shower option, full kitchen, and super king or split twin beds.

Lodging



EDGEWATER HOTEL

Wanaka, New Zealand

Days 10 to 11 (2 nights)

The Edgewater has a wonderful and peaceful lakefront location just outside the town of Wanaka (it's about a 20-minute walk to the town center). Guest rooms are spacious and comfortable, and sport spectacular lake views right from the balcony or patio. Hotel facilities include a day spa and sauna.



AWAROA LODGE

Kaiteriteri, Abel Tasman Nat'l Park, New Zealand

Days 12 to 14 (3 nights)

This lodge's spectacular location can't be beat—right on the pristine shores of Abel Tasman National Park and accessible only by water taxi, helicopter, or a day's hike on the park trails. Surrounded by aquamarine waterways and native forest, the Awaroa has well-appointed rooms and a cozy main lounge with a log fireplace. The restaurant has its own organic garden and serves farm-to-table Kiwi specialties, from Marlborough mussels to local lamb, paired with the finest New Zealand wines. Our hikes start right from the front door!

These are our signature accommodations for this trip. Although it is highly unlikely, we may make substitutions when necessary. To see more photos and descriptions, please visit our *New Zealand: Ultimate South Island* webpage and click on "Accommodations."

Arrival & Departure

Upon confirming your trip reservation, we will send you a Welcome Packet that includes a list of documents (passport, visas, etc.) required for your trip. Please feel free to call if you would like this information before making your air arrangements.

If you have booked extra services before or after the trip, an Extra Services Confirmation will be sent with your Final Documents.

ARRIVAL & MEETING PLACE

Queenstown, New Zealand

Suggested Airport: Queenstown International Airport (ZQN)

Suggested Date & Time: Day 1, anytime before 2:30 pm

Meeting Place: You will meet your Trip Leader in the lobby of the Heritage Hotel Queenstown for an orientation meeting and welcome dinner at 5:30 pm on Day 1.

Trip members are responsible for transferring from Queenstown International Airport to the Heritage Hotel. Taxi/Uber fare is approximately \$50-\$60 NZD. Service by shared shuttle is also available from the airport outside the terminal building (easy to recognize mini-vans usually painted with bright colors). The fare for a shuttle is approximately \$30 NZD for a single (\$40 NZD for 2 guests) and can be booked ahead of time at www.supershuttle.co.nz.

DEPARTURE

Nelson, New Zealand

Suggested Airport: Nelson Airport (NSN)

Suggested Date & Time: Day 15, after 2:00 pm

A complimentary transfer to the Nelson airport will be provided to all trip members on the last day of the trip. All trip members' flights must be scheduled to depart after 2:00 pm.

INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for flights to and from New Zealand. There are many online consolidators for booking travel, but for more personal help arranging air transport, you can contact Exito Travel at 970-818-8459 in the US or Canada. They are very adept at putting flight itineraries together, to even the most far-flung places. More information can be found at www.exitotravel.com.

Depending on your routing, it is necessary to depart from the US one or possibly two days prior to Day 1 of the trip itinerary. The name on your airline ticket must match the name on your passport exactly, and your passport must be valid for at least six months after your date of return to the US.

Please do not purchase your tickets until you are confirmed on the trip. Once tickets are purchased, please forward a copy of your email flight confirmation from the airline. It is your responsibility to ensure your flight times coordinate with the arrival and departure logistics for this trip.

Trip Leaders

Our New Zealand Trip Leaders are the best and most experienced guides in the country, with a gift for bringing history and culture to life. Their long-term friendships with locals and deep knowledge and insights give you the privilege of an authentic insider's perspective as they introduce you to the welcoming people and natural beauty of this wonderful part of the world.



CHRIS COCHRANE

Chris Cochrane hails from Sydney, Australia, where he spent four years training as a chef. After graduation, he traveled to New Zealand to further his career. Upon arrival in Queenstown, he realized his chosen path was not the one he really wanted and set out to retrain himself for a life in the “Great Outdoors.” His first task was to learn how to ski, followed by several years working as a ski patroller before moving on to heli-skiing. Chris has been a heli-skiing guide based in Queenstown for over 20 years, taking his clients to some of the remotest parts of New Zealand. His thirst for adventure is great, from Himalayan journeys to yacht racing, and he has tried most adventure sports (not always twice!). He has worked as a guide on the Routeburn Track for the last six years and looks forward to showing trip members his special blend of exotic South Island secrets.



JON IMHOOF

Jon Imhoof has a degree in Anthropology from the University of Hawaii, where he first began leading hiking and sailing trips in the 1980s. He moved to Queenstown, New Zealand, in 1989, and has since been an innovator in adventure tourism, starting the first river-surfing company in the world in Queenstown, and then also on the Zambezi River in Southern Africa. Jon began leading our hiking trips in New Zealand, and guides our snorkeling and swimming with whales journeys in Tonga, as well as our exploration of the islands of Vanuatu. He loves to show off his adopted homeland of New Zealand. Jon lives in Gibbston, a world renowned pinot noir growing area outside of Queenstown, with his wife Ali and enjoys surfing, kayaking, kitesurfing, scuba diving, mountain biking, and just about anything else outdoors.



ZAC IMHOOF

Born and raised in Tahuna (Queenstown), New Zealand's adventure capital, Zac thrives in the outdoors and is the perfect travel companion on our New Zealand adventures. As the son of beloved WT Trip Leader Jon Imhoof, Zac takes to any adventure like a fish to water and has spent most of his life snowboarding, surfing, climbing, and biking. Zac is right at home in the New Zealand bush and will enlighten you with his knowledge of food foraging, medicinal plants, and traditional uses of plants for weaving baskets, braiding rope, or carving. He has also been fortunate enough to sail around Australia and the South Pacific, becoming well-versed in the ways of the Pacific Ocean and the many cultures that thrive there. Outside of leading trips, Zac started two community-based projects in Ōtautahi (Christchurch), where he helps people be more sustainable through repairing worn goods and upcycling plastic items.

Trip Leaders



TONY MCCUTCHEON

Tony McCutcheon is a home-grown Kiwi, born and raised in Dunedin, New Zealand. He worked as a professional ski guide, and after 10 winters in the French and Swiss Alps, he is able to speak German (fluently, and with a Kiwi accent). “I’m so lucky to have been able to work in some of the world’s most beautiful mountain locations.” With all his years of travel, he loves nothing more than being back home in the South Island of New Zealand. “The amazing thing about New Zealand is its diversity and the spectacular light shows that Mother Nature provides for us all to enjoy.” He now lives in the heart of New Zealand’s adventure playground, Wanaka, with his wife and two children.



GORDAN RAYNER

Gordon, a native Kiwi, is an active kayaker, and the sport has taken him and his family to many different parts of the world (he met his wife, Mary, on a kayaking and rafting rally in Russia in 1989). The two of them have coached whitewater and slalom kayaking to local kids for 20 years, many of whom have represented New Zealand internationally. He has advocated for the protection of Central Otago’s whitewater rivers for many years, and retired from full time practice as a lawyer at the end of 2019, which now allows him to pursue other interests that include ecological projects and travel to wild places. An experienced hiker, Gordon has an abiding love of New Zealand’s natural history.



MARY RAYNER

Mary was born and raised in California. As a whitewater river guide, she was part of the USA’s women’s team to compete in an international peace exchange in Russia in 1989 where she met her husband, Gordon, from New Zealand. Mary is an early childhood teacher and continues to love all sorts of adventure sports, especially kayaking and mountain bike riding. Both she and her husband, Gordon, have a deep love of New Zealand’s natural history and are experienced hikers. She recently took the opportunity to travel the length of New Zealand to visit all sorts of special places, and continues to indulge in a few of her favorite domestic activities including knitting, crocheting, and cooking delicious meals.



KAREN STUART

As a fifth generation “coaster” (resident of the West Coast of New Zealand’s South Island), Karen loves introducing travelers to her home island and sharing her turangawaewae (Maori for place of being). With a background in the non-profit sector helping sustainable housing, environment, and community projects, Karen brings unique insight during our explorations and is a wonderful travel companion both on and off the trails. Karen splits her time between Queenstown and Hokitika, and when she’s not guiding, enjoys skiing, biking, hiking, kayaking, and paddle boarding, as well as riding her horse along expansive and unpopulated beaches near Hokitika or exploring the hills with her border collie, Dot, by her side.

Trip Leaders

WILLIAM FULLER

William is a New Zealander through and through. He has lived in the Bay of Islands or Bay of Plenty regions his entire life, and loves exploring all this country has to offer. He earned a degree in Mathematics from Auckland University, and was a primary school teacher for 35 years (including being a principal). He has walked the North Island section of the Te Araroa trail in 2015, and is also a keen kayaker of both oceans and lakes. William's interest in Te Reo Maori (Maori language) allows him to translate many of the place names in New Zealand, and assists greatly in identifying local birds and plants.



KAREN KOENS

Born and raised on the South Island of New Zealand, Karen has been fortunate to have had both the majestic Southern Alps and the vast ocean beaches on her doorstep. She is an accomplished downhill and backcountry skier, ice climber, and mountaineer, having scaled multiple 10,000-foot peaks and participated in remote multi-day expeditions. On the ocean, she owns her own 45-foot sailboat, and is a proven boat captain, having completed four ocean passages. Karen resides in Auckland and loves exploring the volcanic islands, discovering the multitude of hiking tracks, and enjoying the lush landscapes and cultural diversity. Her interests include mountain biking, road cycling, whitewater rafting, wakeboarding, pickleball, and tennis.



PETER BERSANI

We always love a good expat story and Peter Bersani is no exception. Originally from Boston, Massachusetts, Peter has made his adopted home in the adventurous country of New Zealand for more than 25 years. An avid skier, hiker, and mountain biker, he loves exploring the many trails throughout Queenstown and the South Island, and his background as a chef and winemaker also makes him quite the connoisseur for local flavors. He enjoys a good quality craft beer and is eager to share his favorite places to eat and drink in the area. When not leading trips, you can often find Peter behind the wheel of his classic Alfa Romeo cruising the back roads of Central Otago.



MALIA STAUFFER

Originally from Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i, Malia's love for the natural world runs as deep as the ocean she grew up next to. Chasing endless summers, she splits her time between the scenic wonders of Aotearoa (the Maori name for New Zealand) and Southeast Alaska. Malia holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Strategic and Environmental Communications and Sustainability. Alongside her guiding career, she has worked in digital communications for mission-driven companies, startups, and climate-tech nonprofits, aiming to amplify positive impact across diverse sectors. Her commitment to Kaitiakitanga (guardianship of the environment) is at the heart of her guiding style—she believes connecting with nature is essential for the well-being of both people and the planet. A trip with Malia is a chance to live a little more in tune with the wild.

What to Expect

WHAT THE TRIP IS LIKE

This trip is rated a Level 3+ (Moderate) according to our trip grading system, with softer options available for anyone who prefers a gentler hike. You will need to be comfortable hiking 8 miles in a day, being on your feet for up to 5 hours a day. Trail conditions, weather, and the group's level of fitness can affect hiking times and pacing.

TERRAIN

Although you carry only a daypack, there are some steep ascents and descents and some sections that cross rough or rocky trails. On one or two occasions, our hiking routes cross an estuary or small stream, and you will get your shoes wet (bring some Tevas or shoes appropriate for walking through water).

GETTING IN SHAPE

For your own enjoyment, we recommend that you make a special effort to be in good physical condition for the trip. The best training for a hike is to hike, especially over hills or rough terrain. Next best are running, swimming, bicycling, or other cardiovascular exercise. Stair climbing machines are excellent preparation for hiking uphill. Your feet should also be well prepared—make sure your hiking boots are sturdy, comfortable, and thoroughly broken-in.

WEATHER

The weather in New Zealand is notorious for changing throughout the day. Average temperatures in New Zealand's spring (September to November) typically range from the low to mid-60s. Crisp, sunny days can briskly change to cool temperatures and spring showers. Summer temperatures (December to February) are generally warm and pleasant with averages in the high 60s and low 70s and minimal rain, though it can get much colder in certain places and in the evenings. In autumn (March to May), long sunny days linger with temperatures still averaging in the mid-60s to low 70s, and you'll hardly notice that summer has officially ended. Although it is rare, we have even experienced snowfall in the mountains in mid-summer. The pressure systems travel west to east, so the Southern Alps have a noticeable "wet" and "dry" side. The west side gets the greatest amount of rain. Cold and snow are permanent fixtures on the highest peaks. On the east side, temperatures are a bit warmer. Since the weather in New Zealand is often variable, we may occasionally have to wait for it to change in order to participate in our planned activities or possibly change our activities altogether.

HIKING DETAILS BY DAY				DRIVING DETAILS
DAY	HOURS	MILES	ELEV. GAIN/LOSS	HOURS
1				
2	4-5 hours	4.7 miles	+1,050' & +/-400'	1 hour
3	3-5 hours	9.2 miles	+/-850' (total 2,562')	1.5 hours
4	3 hours	3.8 miles	+/-390'	2.5 hours, 30-minute flight
5	4 hours	5.2 miles	+/-950'	
6	3 hours	6 miles		2.5 hours, 20-minute flight
7	3 hours	5 miles	+/-1,400'	1.5 hours
8	30 mins			3.5 hours
9	2 hours	4.5 miles		
10	2.5 hours	4.5 miles	+/-1,600'	1.5 hours
11	(A) 3.5-4 hours	6 miles	+/-1,550'	1.5 hours
	(B) 3.5-4 hours	8.5 miles	+/-800'	1.5 hours
12	1 hour	2 miles		1 hour; 2.5-3 hour flight; 1.5 hours by water taxi
13	3 hours	6 miles	+/-900'	
14	3 hours	5 miles	+/-1,400'	

AVERAGE DAILY MAX/MIN °F												
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Queenstown	71/49	70/48	66/46	59/40	52/35	46/30	46/30	50/32	55/36	59/40	64/43	68/47
Nelson	74/54	73/54	70/51	66/48	60/42	56/39	54/37	56/38	63/42	64/43	68/48	71/52
RAINFALL - INCHES												
Queenstown	3.2	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.6	2.2	2.2	2.5	2.6	3.0	2.5	2.4
Nelson	2.9	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.0	3.0

ACCOMMODATIONS

We stay a range of delightful accommodations along the way, including a lakeside alpine hotel, a charming bed-and-breakfast, vineyard cottages, an overnight aboard a boat, and a luxurious lodge accessible only by water taxi.

CUISINE

Most of the meals we eat on our journey will be very local and wonderfully fresh. With a thriving agricultural economy and thousands of miles of coastline, New Zealand offers a bountiful variety of ingredients, from abundant seafood to a famous lamb held in high esteem around the world. Local farm-grown produce is on most menus. Of course, New Zealand's wine is known around the world, from full-bodied pinot noirs to fruity sauvignon blancs, and artful craft beers are widely available.

TRANSPORTATION

Our vehicle touring is over good roads in a comfortable van or minibus. The trip includes three short internal flights, and is designed to make the most of our time exploring the diverse landscapes the South Island has to offer.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TRIP

Adventure travel often involves exotic destinations, unusual levels of physical exertion, or activities you may not have participated in previously. We work hard to help you choose the right trip for you, paying attention to your individual interests, abilities, and needs. If you have questions about the level of comfort or any of the activities described in this itinerary, please call Wilderness Travel at 1-800-368-2794 and ask for the Pacific Manager or email us at pacific@wildernesstravel.com.

REFERENCES

We'd be happy to put you in touch with a past client that has traveled with us on this or a similar trip.

TOUCAN CLUB

We're proud to have one of the highest rates of repeat travelers in the business! The Wilderness Travel Toucan Club was established to reward our travelers for their loyalty. For details, please visit the Toucan Club page of our website at www.wildernesstravel.com/resources/toucan-club.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

At www.wildernesstravel.com, you can book your trip online or find out about added departures, last-minute deals, and one-time Limited Edition adventures that aren't listed in our catalog. You can also access our complete library of detailed itineraries filled with enticing photos and videos, read bios of our Trip Leaders, find descriptions of trip accommodations, and check real-time availability of any trips that interest you.



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Best Travel Specialists in the World: *Conde Nast Traveler*, 2024, 4-time winner

World's Best Tour Operators: *Travel + Leisure*, 11-time winner

Best Wildlife, Hiking & Walking Trips: *AFAR Magazine*, 3 years in a row

Best Adventure Travel Companies: *USA Today*

Trip of the Year: *Outside Magazine*, 9-time winner

50 Tours of a Lifetime: *National Geographic Traveler*, 9 years in a row

Best Adventure Travel Companies: *National Geographic Adventure*, 3-time winner

Please be advised that California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund under the California Seller of Travel Law that took effect January 1, 1996. This fund is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices by discount airfare ticket sellers or air charter operators. Unfortunately, this law does not cover non-California residents and, even in the case of California residents, it does not cover any foreign travel where the foreign "providers of transportation or travel services" are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (compliance being defined as registered as a Seller of Travel in California and a participant in the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund). Thus none of Wilderness Travel's tours qualify and we are required by law to advise each client that they are not covered by the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account. California Seller of Travel #100769640

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