

13 Day Cities and Seas Rail Journey New Zealand

Please note some itineraries include Ohakune and some include Rotorua. This will depend on your departure date.

Itinerary is a guide and may change.

Itinerary

Day 1 | Auckland

Welcome to Auckland

Welcome to Auckland, New Zealand's City of Sails. Auckland is known for its multicultural hub of food, music, arts, and culture.

After checking into your hotel and reading your welcome letter from your tour director, head out and explore all that Auckland has to offer. This is the perfect opportunity to visit the Sky Tower or shop along bustling Queen Street. You may even fancy a drink in one of the charming bars or eateries of Vulcan Lane.

Your tour officially begins this evening, as you join your fellow travellers and Tour Director this evening for a welcome reception.

Accommodation

4 - 5 star accommodation (1 night)

Meals included

Welcome dinner & cocktail

Activities

Welcome dinner

Day 2 | Auckland to Hamilton

The Northern Explorer scenic train

Your journey awaits as you join the Northern Explorer scenic train. Marvel at rural New Zealand's lush landscapes from the comfort of your Scenic Plus carriage. From the sparkling waters of the Waitematā Harbour to the green pastures of the Waikato – you won't want to miss a moment.

Arriving in Hamilton, your coach awaits you to bring you to the enchanting Zealong Tea Estate, where an immersive 1.5-hour tour and tea ceremony await, followed by the renowned Signature High Tea experience. Discover the art of tea-making amidst breathtaking surroundings.

In the early afternoon, enjoy some free time in the heart of Hamilton before departing for an evening visit to Raglan – a seaside surfer town. It's here that you'll enjoy a sunset dinner cruise on the pristine harbour and classic kiwi Fish 'n' Chips for dinner.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (2 nights in Hamilton)

Meals included

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Activities

Northern Explorer Scenic Plus

Zealong estate Tour, tea ceremony & signature high tea

Raglan sunset dinner cruise

Day 3 | Hamilton

Discover endangered and bioluminescent species

Immerse yourself in the wonders of Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari on a bespoke two-hour tour through its ancient forests. Discover the indigenous flora and fauna, their traditional uses, and gain fascinating insights into Māori herbal medicinal practices, the unique Rongoā Rākau. This unforgettable journey will take you deep into the heart of New Zealand's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Your expedition continues after a lunch stop in New Zealand's "Kiwiana Capital", Otorohanga. Make sure you capture a photo of the giant Kiwi birds! Next, discover the famous Waitomo Glow worm Caves and be dazzled by the seemingly star-filled sky as you glide by boat through this impressive cave formation.

Tonight, explore Hamilton's riverside walks and shops on this free evening. Enjoy one of the many nearby restaurants as the sun sets over the Waikato River.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (2 nights in Hamilton)

Meals included

Breakfast

Activities

Zealong Tea Estate tour, Tea Ceremony & High Tea

Custom bespoke Sanctuary Mountain tour

Waitomo Glowworm Caves

Raglan sunset dinner cruise

Day 4 | Hamilton to Tongariro National Park OR Rotorua

Explore Tongariro National Park Via Rotorua

Joining the Northern Explorer train once again, today you'll soar over icy mountain streams as you travel to Tongariro National Park, the home of three volcanic mountains.

Tongariro National Park has a diverse range of ecosystems and spectacular landscapes. In 1993, it was recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and was the first property to be inscribed with the criteria describing the cultural values it holds for Māori.

Enjoy a mini excursion up to Tūroa ski field. Here you'll want to capture a panoramic photo of Middle Earth before descending into Ohakune.

Tonight, enjoy a special dinner with your fellow travellers.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (2 nights in Ohakune)

Meals included

Breakfast

Dinner

Activities

Northern Explorer Scenic Plus

Afternoon excursion to view northern volcanic landscapes

Via Rotorua

You'll make your way into Rotorua, stopping at Government Gardens check in and enjoy the evening at your leisure.

Day 5 | Tongariro National Park OR Rotorua

Explore Tongariro National Park

Enjoy the morning with breakfast at your accommodation, then set off on a journey of discovery to Taumarunui.

Enjoy the gentle rhythm of Taumarunui as you spend a few unhurried hours exploring this welcoming riverside town. Your journey continues with guided visits to two of Taumarunui's treasured Forgotten World gardens, each rich with stories of the land.

Settle in for a full home-cooked lunch at Omaka Lodge, where warm hospitality awaits. The lodge's gardens, recently recognised as a garden of national significance, provide a beautiful place to pause and connect with the landscape.

After your garden escapades, you'll return to Ohakune, where the evening is yours to spend how you like. Opt for relaxation in the inviting hot tubs or immerse yourself in the vibrant energy of Ohakune at your leisure.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Ohakune)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Lunch

Activities

Forgotten World gardens and Omaka Lodge

On a tour that includes Rotorua?

Start your day surrounded by the soaring giants of the Whakarewarewa Forest with the Redwoods Treewalk Treetops Experience. Suspended high above the forest floor, this tranquil daytime walk offers breathtaking views, fresh forest air, and a unique perspective of Rotorua's natural beauty.

In the evening, immerse yourself in a rich cultural and culinary journey with the Summer Harvest Experience at Te Pā Tū. This intimate event weaves Māori traditions, storytelling, seasonal cuisine, and captivating performances into an unforgettable night under the stars.

Day 6 | Tongariro National Park OR Rotorua to Wellington

The Northern Explorer scenic train

Your day begins with an elevated experience up the northern face of Mt Ruapehu for panoramic views of the volcanic landscape. Drink in the views of Mt Ngāuruhoe, Mt Tongariro, and beyond across the central North Island.

Joining the Northern Explorer train once again, waving goodbye to Tongariro National Park, as you settle into your uber-comfortable seat. Don't get too comfortable though; dramatic rivers, gorges, and ravines are just around the bend! Stretch your legs and explore the open-air carriage to get the best view from the train.

A little later, why not indulge in a treat from our onboard licensed café? As you glide through rich green farmland and past dramatic coastlines, enjoy the picturesque Porirua Harbour as you arrive into Wellington.

Welcome to Wellington – New Zealand's windy capital. You've arrived at Wellington Railway Station which is just a stone's throw from downtown, the Beehive and Parliament Buildings. You won't want to waste a moment of time after checking into the hotel - your evening is free to explore this culinary capital from Queen's Wharf to Cuba street and beyond.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (2 nights in Wellington)

Meals included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Northern Explorer Scenic Plus

Morning excursion to view southern volcanic landscapes

On a tour that includes Rotorua -

You'll travel to Taumaranui to board the Northern Explorer for your Scenic Plus experience down to Wellington.

Day 7 | Wellington

Explore Wellington

The perfect day does exist – and it includes exploring Wellington.

Today is free for you to experience vibrant Wellington as you please. Start by joining our Wellington City introduction tour and then head off to explore Cuba Street's cafés, bookstores, and eccentric shops. Get cultured at Te Papa, New Zealand's National Museum, or visit Zealandia Eco-Sanctuary to surround yourself by native birdlife and regenerating forest.

You won't get bored with the plethora of activities on offer. From coffee, culture, historic buildings to botanic gardens and much more... the list goes on! If you need any suggestions or recommendations, just reach out to your helpful tour director or our Travel Centre to pre-book an experience.

Enjoy dinner tonight with your fellow travellers.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (2 nights in Wellington)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Dinner

Activities

Wellington city introduction tour

Group dinner

Day 8 | Wellington to Marlborough

Cross the Cook Strait in style

This morning you will say *poroporoaki ki te motu raki* (good-bye to the North Island) as you sail to the South Island, crossing the Cook Strait on the Interislander ferry. As the shores of the North Island slowly disappear, settle down in the comfy seats in the Premium Lounge. Treat yourself to a mimosa and enjoy a hearty seafaring breakfast, but save some room for morning tea!

On your journey across Cook Strait you may spot pods of dolphins playing in the wake or, if you are very lucky, whales. Don't spend all your time inside – as you enter the stunning Queen Charlotte Sound, enjoy the views as you cruise past the remnants of whaling stations, remote working sheep

farms, pristine native bush and mussel farms. Admire the beauty of this coastal paradise as you arrive into the gateway of the South Island, Picton.

Once in Marlborough, indulge in a gourmet experience as you journey through the renowned Marlborough region, savoring a three-course lunch menu at Allan Scott Wines Bistro, accompanied by a glass of wine with your main meal.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (1 night in Blenheim)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Lunch

Activities

Interislander Premium Lounge to Picton

Wine tour Marlborough, full lunch Allan Scott Winery

Day 9 | Marlborough

Marlborough Sounds

Immerse yourself in the captivating world of the Omaka Aviation Museum tour, where you'll see rare WW1 and WW2 aircraft through imaginative displays, offering a world-class experience that brings aviation history and its heroes to life.

After a 45 minute cruise to the outer Marlborough Sounds, begin your journey with a warm welcome and morning tea, followed by a guided tour through the hatchery and growing tanks where these iridescent treasures are nurtured. Learn about the fascinating process of cultivating pāua pearls, then indulge in a tasting of fresh, locally harvested pāua—an unforgettable flavour of the ocean.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (2 night)

Meals included

Breakfast

Activities

Omaka Aviation Museum

Water taxi to Portage Resort Marlborough Sounds

Day 10 | Marlborough to Kaikōura

Coastal Pacific scenic train

Immerse yourself in the captivating world of the Pāua Pearl Farm tour, where innovation meets tradition along New Zealand's scenic coastline. After a 45-minute cruise to the outer Marlborough Sounds, begin your journey with a warm welcome and morning tea, followed by a guided tour through the hatchery and growing tanks where these iridescent treasures are nurtured. Learn about the fascinating process of cultivating pāua pearls, then indulge in a tasting of fresh, locally harvested pāua, an unforgettable flavour of the ocean.

Relax as the train glides across remote beaches, between mountains and sea, on a timeless journey of breath-taking beauty. Keep an eye out for the fur seals lazing on the rocks!

Once in Kaikōura, the evening will be yours to enjoy some iconic kai moana (seafood) at one of the quaint restaurants before enjoying your luxurious ocean-front hotel.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (1 night)

Meals included

Breakfast

Activities

Coastal Pacific Scenic Plus

Pāua pearl farm tour

Day 11 | Kaikōura to Christchurch

Explore Kaikōura

Set out on an unforgettable Dolphin Encounter in Kaikōura, where the ocean comes alive with the playful energy of wild dusky dolphins. Cruise along the stunning coastline as knowledgeable guides share insights into these intelligent marine mammals.

Watch as pods leap, spin, and interact in their natural habitat, or elevate your adventure with the option to upgrade and swim alongside them for a truly immersive and exhilarating experience.

After this outstanding experience, we're sure you will be feeling peckish. Head to the beach to sample some iconic New Zealand food - you can't go wrong with the humble Kiwiana fish and chips. Work off the deep-fried delights by wandering through the wonderful array of local artisan stores and souvenir shops.

Gather again for the next leg of your journey. Late afternoon, board the Coastal Pacific for the Scenic Plus experience, treating yourself to unparalleled vistas as you glide along the coastline. Revel in dinner and drinks, included with your Scenic Plus package, as you unwind and soak in the breathtaking scenery.

Relax for the remainder of the evening before hitting the town the following day.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (1 night in Christchurch)

Meals included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Dolphin Encounter experience

Coastal Pacific Scenic Plus

Day 12 | Christchurch

Explore Christchurch

Christchurch, the gateway to South Island exploration, beautifully blends cutting-edge innovation with 19th-century Anglican Gothic Revival architecture. While the city is often remembered for the 2011 earthquake, today it stands as a vibrant, multicultural hub with a strong sense of renewal and creativity.

Your day begins with the convenience of the Hop-On Hop-Off Tram, a charming way to navigate the central city and discover its highlights at your own pace. Enjoy a custom walking tour with your Great Journeys New Zealand guide, who will bring the city's stories, landmarks, and hidden gems to life. Explore must-see attractions like the Riverside Markets, Punting on the Avon, the Gondola, and the tranquil Botanical Gardens. Along the way, uncover a variety of boutique cafés tucked into laneways and side streets.

This evening, unwind and reflect on your discoveries over a beautifully curated dinner at Earl, one of Christchurch's most acclaimed dining spots, known for its relaxed elegance and refined seasonal cuisine.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 star accommodation (2 nights in Christchurch)

Meals included

Breakfast, dinner

Activities

Hop-on hop-off Tram

Custom walking tour with GJNZ Guide

Dinner at Earl

Day 13 | Christchurch

Departing Christchurch

Your journey will end after enjoying a final breakfast at your hotel.

Not ready to leave Christchurch? Reach out to our Travel Centre to pre-organise your extended stay.

Meals included

Breakfast

Activities

Transfer to airport