

14 DAY GRAND SOUTH ISLAND TOUR

FOR 2026/2027 SEASON

Intro

This tour squeezes more jaw-dropping scenery into two weeks than any other! The South Island has an unparalleled variety of landscapes, from the majestic Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers, to the stunning views across Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown, to the Remarkable Mountains.

Featured Experiences

- Scenic Interislander Ferry journey across the Cook Strait
- Wine tasting at one of Marlborough's premier wineries
- Cruise the turquoise waters of Abel Tasman National Park
- Kaikōura Whale Watch cruise – or Scenic Fixed Wing Flight featuring marine life and views
- Relax as you're guided along Christchurch's Avon River on an authentic Edwardian punt
- Journey aboard a beautifully restored heritage tram through Christchurch's city centre
- Journey on the famous TranzAlpine Train from Christchurch to Arthurs Pass
- Lake Wānaka cruise with eco-guided island tour – or – an off-road 4WD safari through a High Country farm
- Explore the historic gold rush village of Arrowtown
- Experience the excitement of a Fiordland jet boat ride and a guided farm visit
- Cruise, with a picnic lunch, on the breathtaking Milford Sound
- Enjoy true kiwi hospitality with morning tea at a local home on the shores of Lake Tekapo

Culinary Inclusions

- 16 meals included
13 breakfasts **(B)** 2 lunches **(L)** 1 dinner **(D)**

Day 1 Wellington

Haere mai – welcome! Today is yours to explore New Zealand's friendly capital city. Wander along Oriental Parade and around the bays, or explore Cuba Street with its eclectic mix of boutiques, cafes, and restaurants. A visit to Te Papa, the national museum and one of the most exciting museums in the world, is highly recommended for insights into New Zealand's history, culture, wildlife and landscapes.

Accommodation: DoubleTree by Hilton, Wellington, Standard room – 1 night

Day 2 Wellington to Nelson **(B)**

Your day commences with one of the most beautiful ferry journeys in the world. Travelling through the waters of Cook Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound, the ferry is often accompanied by dolphins riding the bow waves. Disembarking in Picton, travel the short distance to Blenheim in the heart of the Marlborough wine country. Enjoy a wine tasting at one of Marlborough's premier wineries - what better way to enjoy this region famous for its Sauvignon Blanc? From Marlborough, cross to the Nelson district - a corner of the South Island blessed with a sunny microclimate and your base for the next two nights.

Accommodation: Heritage Rutherford Hotel, Premium room – 2 nights

Day 3 Abel Tasman National Park **(B,L)**

Paradise found! Abel Tasman National Park is a mosaic of golden coves, and turquoise lagoons sheltered by forested ranges to the south. With few roads in this pristine wilderness, most journeys are made by boat. Enjoy a morning cruise exploration of New Zealand's smallest National Park. View

world-famous Split Apple Rock, New Zealand Fur Seals, golden sands, and the turquoise waters of Anchorage, Bark Bay, Tonga Quarry, Awaroa, and Tōtaranui Beach. After the cruise, transfer back to Nelson for an orientation tour of the charming city before having the afternoon at leisure to explore at your own pace.

Day 4 Nelson to Kaikōura (B)

Depart Nelson and drive through farmlands and pine plantations, then the Rai Valley to the vineyards surrounding Blenheim in the Marlborough Wine Country. From here travel south down the stunning eastern coastline, along the thin ledge of land pinned between the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean and the rugged ranges, to Kaikōura - where the mountains meet the sea.

Today you have the choice of two excursions:

a. Whale Watch Cruise

Take a 2-hour Whale Watch cruise experience, aboard a modern purpose-built catamaran for an exciting, close-up encounter with the Giant Sperm Whale in their natural environment. The upwelling of nutrient rich waters around Kaikōura support an abundant and diverse fauna of vertebrates, fish and marine mammals. At times you may also see Dusky Dolphins and the rare Hector Dolphins, NZ fur seals, sea lions, and a large variety of seabirds, including the smallest of the penguins, the Little Blue Penguin.

b. Wings over Whales

Gain an aerial perspective during a 30min “flightseeing” tour on the world of whales and dolphins in Kaikōura’s stunning marine environment from the comfort of a high fixed-winged aircraft for unobstructed viewing. Enjoy panoramic views of Kaikōura’s stunning coastline, towering mountains, and sparkling Pacific Ocean, combining incredible marine life encounters with breathtaking scenery.

Accommodation: Sudima Hotel, Kaikōura, Deluxe room – 1 night

Day 5 Kaikōura to Christchurch (B)

The road south follows the wild coastline, affording constantly changing seascapes and spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean before turning inland and climbing the Hundalee Ranges. Then descend into the rolling farmland of North Canterbury, passing through a number of small country towns before entering the city of Christchurch. This afternoon we join punting boatmen, resplendent with straw boaters and traditional Edwardian dress, for a relaxing cruise in flat-bottomed punts along the River Avon through the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. Afterwards, enjoy a journey in style onboard a beautifully restored heritage tram through the changing face of Christchurch’s city centre.

Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Christchurch, Classic room – 1 night

Day 6 Christchurch to Fox Glacier (B)

From Christchurch, traverse the Southern Alps aboard the famous TranzAlpine rail journey to Arthurs Pass. From your carriage you’ll see the fields of the Canterbury Plains and farmland, followed by the spectacular gorges and river valleys of the Waimakariri River. Your train then climbs into the Southern Alps. On arrival in Arthurs Pass, reboard your coach to continue the journey to the West Coast. Pass through historic towns reaching Hokitika and its galleries specialising in pounamu (greenstone) jewellery and art works. Continue south through forests and farmland, with views of the Alps to the east and the Tasman Sea to the west, to Franz Josef, then on to the small remote village of Fox. The huge rivers of snow and ice of the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers flow from vast snowfields high in the Southern Alps, down almost to sea level.

Accommodation: Te Weheka Retreat, Fox Glacier, Run of house rooms – 1 night

Day 7 Fox Glacier to Wānaka (B)

Have your camera ready for your visit to nearby Lake Matheson for a morning stroll - when conditions are right the lake perfectly mirrors beautiful Mount Cook in its still waters. Head over the Haast Pass

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along the river road beside the icy river and deep into Mt. Aspiring National Park. The atmosphere lightens as we reach lovely Lake Wānaka, reflecting the mountain peaks that in winter offer superb skiing, and the pretty resort town of Wānaka.

Accommodation: Edgewater Resort, Wānaka, Premium suite – 2 nights

Day 8 Wānaka (B)

This morning you have the choice of two excursions:

- a) **Lake Cruise & Island Nature Walk** - Join a passionate local eco-guide as you depart Wānaka by boat and cruise to the predator-free Mou Waho Island. From the beach landing, a walking track climbs steadily through native vegetation, alive with birdsong, leading to the island's secret – a hidden lake, complete with its own tiny islands. The 3km return track is uneven in places however hiking poles are provided and the guide moves at the pace of the group, with breaks and seating at regular intervals. Upon reaching the lake you can relax or even swim, or choose to continue a little further to the summit for sweeping 360-degree views of Lake Wānaka, its surrounding mountains, and the Arethusa Pool below.
Take part in the island's future by planting a native tree, leaving your mark on this important conservation refuge. Predator-free sanctuaries like Mou Waho are vital for the protection of many birds including the Buff Weka. Thanks to a successful programme here, a thriving population has been established, and these charismatic, flightless birds often appear during your visit.

- b) **Experience a rugged off-road adventure with a Kiwi twist** - the perfect mix of incredible scenery, history, heritage, and farming life. Explore remote and seldom-travelled back roads of an authentic New Zealand High Country farm overlooking sparkling Lake Wānaka. Surrounded by snow-capped peaks, glaciers and wild river valleys, you'll see farm animals including Red Deer, cattle, and sheep, up close and in their natural environment. Visit historical sites and experience what life was like for Wānaka's first farmers. With two optional walks through pristine alpine meadows and ancient lakeside forests, this journey offers a unique insight into Wānaka's rich history, heritage, modern-day farming life, and breathtaking scenery.

This afternoon is at your leisure to relax or enjoy your own choice of activities.

Day 9 Wānaka to Te Anau (B)

Depart Wānaka, with your first stop at the much-photographed Cardrona Pub, before traversing the Crown Range Road to visit historic Arrowtown – a delightful gold rush village nestled below the beautiful peaks that surround the sparkling Arrow River. Continue your journey via the road pinned between the base of the Remarkables mountain range and spectacular Lake Wakatipu. Journey through a glacial-formed valley that is now farmland, to reach Lake Te Anau, the largest (by volume) freshwater lake in the South Island and gateway to Fiordland National Park. On arrival in Te Anau, discover the wild beauty of Fiordland by jet boat. Journey from the glistening lakefront in Te Anau to the quiet banks of the Waiau River, travelling the waters as far as the deserted shores of Lake Manapouri. Experience a hidden world framed by solemn mountains and wild forest, steeped in natural beauty and rich in history. Visit a 220-acre working support farm, featuring a fully restored 100-year-old woolshed, for an authentic Southland experience. Meet a local farmer and gain insight into New Zealand's agricultural heritage, and enjoy a sheep-shearing and dog-mustering demonstration.

Accommodation: Distinction Hotel Luxmore, Te Anau, Deluxe room – 1 night

Day 10

Te Anau to Milford Sound to Queenstown (B,L)

The journey from Te Anau to Milford Sound is one of the most scenic experiences you can have on four wheels. Fiordland National Park, part of the Southwest New Zealand World Heritage Area is one of the great wilderness areas of the Southern Hemisphere. The scenery is spectacular with lofty

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mountains and deep valleys carved out by Ice Age glaciers. Described by Rudyard Kipling as the 'eighth wonder of the world', Milford Sound is breathtaking in any weather. Board a comfortable vessel for a cruise past towering Mitre Peak to the Tasman Sea. Keep an eye peeled for seals and dolphins which are often seen in the waters of the fiord. Following the cruise, retrace your journey back to Te Anau, travelling via the Cledeau Gorge, Homer Tunnel, and the lovely Eglinton Valley, then across the Southland farmlands and around spectacular Lake Wakatipu to Queenstown.

Accommodation: Scenic Suites Queenstown, Superior room – 2 nights

Day 11 Queenstown (B)

Surrounded by majestic mountains and set on the shores of crystal-clear Lake Wakatipu, the natural beauty and the unique energy of Queenstown create the perfect backdrop for a visit full of adventure, exploration, or relaxation. Today is free for you to do your own thing: thrill-seekers may choose to zip-line at Bob's Peak, get drenched on a Shotover jet-boat ride or go white-water rafting. Other enjoyable but less hair-raising activities include the gondola ride up to Bob's Peak, or a 4WD safari to Skippers Canyon. Boutique wineries and local gardens welcome visitors, and the classic steamship TSS Earnslaw is an elegant way to discover Lake Wakatipu during a cruise to Walter Peak High Country Farm.

Day 12 Queenstown to Mt. Cook to Twizel (B)

Continue north through the rugged Kawarau Gorge, past pretty Lake Dunstan, and across the distinctive Central Otago countryside to the Lindis Pass. Descend into the unique Mackenzie Basin, where the Southern Alps dominate the horizon. Take a beautiful drive along Lake Pukaki to Mt. Cook Village, home to New Zealand's tallest peak, Aoraki/Mt. Cook, then stay overnight in the small town of Twizel.

Accommodation: Distinction Mackenzie Country Hotel, Twizel, Deluxe room – 1 night

Day 13 Twizel to Christchurch (B, D)

Visit a local home set on the shores of Lake Tekapo and learn the secrets of making a Pavlova - a truly Kiwi dessert! For morning tea, enjoy the taste of your pavlova as you drink in the views of this beautiful lake. View the Church of the Good Shepherd, one of New Zealand's most-photographed spots; a tiny church set against a majestic backdrop of the Southern Alps. Pass across the high country's tussock plains, through the small rural towns of Fairlie and Geraldine, and onto Ashburton. From here travel across the fertile Canterbury Plains to Christchurch. This most English of New Zealand cities suffered a succession of terrible earthquakes in 2010/11. Post-earthquake the city combines urban regeneration and innovation with heritage, culture, and creativity. This is the final part of our journey together, so tonight we enjoy a relaxed farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Christchurch, Classic room – 1 night

Day 14 Depart Christchurch (B)

Haere rā – farewell from New Zealand. After breakfast you are transferred to the Christchurch Airport for your return home, taking with you your fond memories of your time in New Zealand. Alternatively, should you wish to extend your stay, we can assist you with additional travel arrangements.