

17 Day Ultimate Cruise & Coach Tour New Zealand

Day 1 - Arrive Auckland

Kia Ora!

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 – 4.5 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Welcome Dinner & Cocktail

Activities

Welcome Dinner

Day 2 - Auckland to Hamilton

The Northern Explorer Scenic Train

The beginning of your Scenic Journey. 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.

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

Sanctuary Mountain: Custom Tour
Waitomo Glowworm Caves

Day 4 - Hamilton to Tongariro National Park

Explore Tongariro National Park

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 volcanic landscapes

Day 5 - Tongariro National Park

Explore Tongariro National Park

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

Enjoy the ambiance as you spend a few hours in Taumarunui, exploring a local garden before your lunchtime feast at Lauren's Lavender Farm. Indulge in a hot meat dish accompanied by an array of refreshing salads, followed by a walk amidst the fragrant lavender fields and a visit to the lavender shop.

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

Activities

Lauren's Lavender Farm

Day 6 - Tongariro National Park 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 volcanic landscapes

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

Crossing Cook Strait

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.

After lunch, the adventure continues with visits to two more wineries for included tastings, and a stop at the Makana Boutique Chocolate Factory, promising a sweet conclusion to your day.

Accommodation

4 – 4.5 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Interislander Ferry

Marlborough Wine Tour

Day 9 - Marlborough to Kaikōura

The 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

Paua Pearl Farm Tour

Day 10 - 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 (2 nights in Christchurch)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Dolphin Encounter Experience

Coastal Pacific Scenic Plus

Day 11 - 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 12 - Christchurch to West Coast

The TranzAlpine Scenic Train

The moment has arrived to experience the world-famous *TranzAlpine*, indulging in the *Scenic Plus* service as you journey through the breathtaking Southern Alps and emerge onto the untamed West Coast.

On this unforgettable escape, marvel at dramatic alpine vistas, glide along the ice-fed Waimakariri River, and cross the Great Divide. As the landscape transforms before your eyes, you'll also traverse the historic Otira Tunnel—an engineering triumph over a century old. Along the way, enjoy regionally inspired food and rich commentary that enhances your Scenic Plus experience.

Arriving in Greymouth, you'll be met by a private coach and taken even further off the beaten track. Enjoy a *custom Greenstone experience*—a special insight into the cultural significance and artistry of pounamu (New Zealand jade). Then stretch your legs on a *guided walk through the stunning Hokitika Gorge*, where vivid turquoise waters wind through lush native bush.

Accommodation

4 – 4.5 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Lunch

Activities

TranzAlpine Scenic Plus
Custom Greenstone Experience & guided walk around Hokitika Gorge

Day 13 - West Coast to Franz Josef

Explore the West Coast

This morning, your West Coast journey continues with a *VIP experience at the West Coast Wildlife Centre*—a special, guided walkthrough designed exclusively for Great Journeys New Zealand guests. Go behind the scenes to learn about the conservation efforts for the rare Rowi kiwi and discover the secrets of this fascinating native species in a truly immersive encounter.

After your wildlife experience, enjoy free time in *Franz Josef* to explore at your own pace. Take a short scenic walk to the glacier viewpoint, browse the charming local shops, or choose from optional adventures such as a thrilling *helicopter flight* over the glacier or a serene *wilderness tour* through the rainforest.

This evening, rejoin your group for a culinary highlight: a *four-course dinner at Te Waonui Forest Retreat*, where locally sourced ingredients and refined flavours are served in a tranquil rainforest setting.

Accommodation

4 – 4.5 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Coach journey to Franz Josef
VIP West Coast Wildlife centre, guided walkthrough of Kiwi (exclusive to Great Journeys New Zealand)
4 course dinner at Te Waonui

Day 14 - Franz Josef to Queenstown

Explore the Southern Lakes

Today you will explore the Haast Pass. With changing landscapes around every bend, this journey of about five hours to Queenstown, will be one of the most scenic drives you may ever take. While aboard an exciting river boat and private coach, marvel at the beaches, crystal blue lakes and rivers, mountain peaks, lush vineyards, charming plains and majestic glaciers as your Tour Director guides you between local hidden gems. Stop in unique locations that only locals know about.

After an exciting plunge into the history of this gold rush village, you will arrive in the world-famous resort town of Queenstown!

Accommodation

4 – 4.5 Star Accommodation (3 nights in Queenstown)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Scenic coach journey through Haast Pass with stops along the way
Haast River Safari

Day 15 - Queenstown and Milford Sound

Explore Milford Sound

The 8th Wonder of the World

Charge your camera and prepare for one of the most awe-inspiring adventures of your journey. Today, you'll travel to the majestic *Milford Sound / Piopiotahi*, often called the *8th Wonder of the World*, aboard our exclusive *Cruise Milford Coach* service.

Relax in comfort as we wind through native rainforests, alpine meadows, and mirror-like reflective pools—complete with *custom stops tailored to your group's interests*. On arrival, step aboard your boutique cruise and journey deep into the heart of the fjord. Feel the mist from *Bowen and Stirling Falls*, marvel at the vertical face of *Mitre Peak*, and take in the dramatic beauty carved by ancient glaciers.

For those looking to elevate the experience, there's an *optional scenic flight* available for your return—soaring above the Southern Alps for a breathtaking aerial perspective of Fiordland.

After this unforgettable day, return to Queenstown for a relaxing evening at your own pace.

Accommodation

4 – 4.5 Star Accommodation (3 nights in Queenstown)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Lunch

Activities

Milford Sound Day Excursion

Day 16 - Queenstown

Explore Queenstown

Queenstown truly has something for everyone. Personalise your day to be as active or relaxed as you'd like. Whether it's exploring Walter Peak on a horse trekking adventure, hopping on the gondola for inspiring views, or sipping wine in Gibbston Valley, there is no shortage of activities to delight your senses.

Enjoy a 'final hurrah' this evening as we board the TSS Earnslaw Steamship Cruise, dinner, and show. Reflect on your great adventure with your fellow travellers as you cruise to your dining experience at Walter peak overlooking the beautiful Table Bay. Sit back and watch a true Kiwi experience as you learn about sheep shearing and dog herding in this beautiful setting. This evening will truly encapsulate your great journey as a truly New Zealand highlight.

Not ready to call it a night? Sip cocktails and indulge in Queenstown's exciting nightlife alongside the sparkling Lake Wakatipu.

Accommodation

4 – 4.5 Star Accommodation (3 nights in Queenstown)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Farewell Dinner at Walter Peak Farm

TSS Earnslaw Cruise & Farm Show

Day 17 - Depart Queenstown

Departing Queenstown

Your journey will end after enjoying a final breakfast with your fellow travellers.

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Transfer to airport

