

# 17 DAY PREMIUM NORTH AND SOUTH ISLAND JOURNEY FOR 2026/2027 SEASON

## Intro

The Rimu Small Group Journey explores the highlights of the North and South Islands. Explore the geothermal activities and authentic Māori culture of Rotorua, cruise Milford Sound and make the most of the abundance of walking opportunities the country has to offer as you travel through New Zealand's fabulous landscapes.

## Featured Experiences

- Narrow-gauge railway journey through native Coromandel bush
- Visit Hot Water Beach and photogenic Cathedral Cove
- Tour around a geothermal valley with geysers, mud pools and hot springs
- Visit Waimangu Volcanic Valley – or – experience Hobbiton Movie Set
- Delve into Māori life and enjoy a powerful cultural performance and feast
- Discover Napier's history and architecture on foot during a tour from a local guide
- Enjoy an evening meal at Mission Estate in Napier
- Travel on Wellington's famous Cable Car and visit Te Papa museum
- 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

## Culinary Inclusions

- 20 meals included  
16 breakfasts **(B)** 2 lunches **(L)** 2 dinners **(D)**

## Day 1 Auckland

Haere mai – welcome! Arrive in Auckland where you will be met and transferred to your accommodation. Spend the afternoon and evening at your leisure exploring the 'City of Sails'.

**Accommodation: M Social, Auckland, Social view room – 1 night**

## Day 2 Auckland to Coromandel Peninsula **(B)**

Travel across the fertile Hauraki Plains to Thames, then head up the western side of the Coromandel Peninsula. This coastal drive is quite spectacular, and on a clear day, keep an eye out for the SkyTower which can be seen across the Firth of Thames. Ride the nearby Driving Creek Railway, climbing 120 metres on a narrow-gauge line to the 'EyeFull' Tower for panoramic views of the surrounding

countryside and back over the Hauraki Gulf. Next, drive east across the Peninsula through beautiful scenery to reach the resort of Whitianga on Mercury Bay.

**Accommodation: Oceans Resort, Whitianga, One bedroom apartment – 2 nights**

### **Day 3 Coromandel Peninsula (B)**

White cliffs, golden beaches, inviting turquoise waters, and green forests are the colours of the Coromandel, with scarlet highlights courtesy of the flowers of Pōhutukawa trees in summer, making this one of our favourite regions. Rightly famous is Hot Water Beach, where warm springs bubble up through the sand, and when the tide is right you can dig out your very own 'spa' pool for a wallow in the warm waters. Afterwards, enjoy a scenic walk to Cathedral Cove, where you'll spend time soaking up the beauty of one of New Zealand's most photogenic beaches before returning the same way. Next, your driver will take you to Cooks Beach – named after Captain James Cook, who sailed on the HMS Endeavour into Mercury Bay in 1769. Famous for its long golden sandy beach, it is now a popular retreat for Kiwis during summer months.

**From Cooks Beach you can choose to catch the short ferry ride back to Whitianga and walk to your accommodation or travel back with your driver.**

### **Day 4 Coromandel Peninsula – Rotorua (B)**

Taking the Pacific Coast Highway through the beachside towns of Whangamatā and Tauranga in the beautiful Bay of Plenty before turning inland to visit a well-formed bushwalk with scenic lookouts over Okere Falls. From there, we continue on to Rotorua, the epicentre of New Zealand's geothermal activity and Māori heritage. No visit to Rotorua would be complete without a stop at Te Puia, where we explore its active geothermal sites, experience the nation's centre for indigenous arts and crafts, and learn about Kiwi conservation projects. At Te Puia it's part of their culture to welcome, guide, entertain, and treat you like part of the family.

**Accommodation: Millennium Hotel, Rotorua, Superior room – 2 nights**

### **Day 5 Rotorua (B,D)**

Today you have the choice of two excursions:

- a) **Visit the Waimangu Volcanic Valley** - Site of the eruption of Mt. Tarawera in 1886, the devastating eruption buried local Māori villages and destroyed the world-famous 'Pink and White' silica terraces, once considered to be the eighth wonder of the world. This catastrophic event changed the landscape forever and created the valley you can now walk through, past boiling craters and jewel-coloured steaming lakes. Take a cruise across Lake Rotomahana to the site of the old silica terraces, hear the story of Guide Sophia and see the new terraces of silica slowly forming.
- b) **Experience the real Middle-earth with a visit to the Hobbiton Movie Set** - Visit the delightful setting for The Shire that featured in Peter Jackson's films, The Lord of the Rings trilogy and The Hobbit film series. Your Hobbiton guide will escort you through the ten-acre site, recounting fascinating details of how the movie set was created (other visitors will join this tour). The Hobbit Holes, Green Dragon Inn, The Millhouse and other structures created for the films can be viewed, and you will see how this beautiful piece of Waikato farmland was transformed into The Shire from Middle-earth. At Bagshot Row, you'll get an authentic glimpse into Hobbit life, including time to explore one of two beautifully detailed Hobbit Holes.

This evening visit Tamaki Māori Village for Te Pā Tū. The evening experience and feast is aligned to and changes with the maramataka (Māori lunar calendar). Feast on Māori song, tradition, and divine seasonal kai (cuisine) within the forest Pā (village) amidst towering Tawa trees, blazing bonfires, and forest-formed amphitheatre. Hākari (feasting) begins with forest horotai (canapes) and culminates in

a lavish four-course fusion feast. Hāngī is featured in varied seasonal menus designed by Māori chefs served to table, al fresco when warm, or in the wharekai (dining room) if cooler.

During summer months, Tū Te Rā celebrates harvest and concepts concerning ancient Māori warfare and peace. Over winter months, Tū Te Ihi celebrates the Matariki star cluster with mystical ritual, energy, and passion. Return hotel transfers included – other travellers will be on board.

### **Day 6 Rotorua to Napier (B,D)**

Visit the powerful Huka Falls then view the vast Lake Taupō – more inland sea than lake, though its fresh waters teem with trout. Across the lake stands the mighty volcanic peaks of Ruapehu, Ngāuruhoe and Tongariro within the Tongariro National Park. Then continue on to Napier to view one of the world's most complete examples of Art Deco architecture, second (arguably) only to Miami Beach. This joyful seaside town had a tragic birth, being virtually levelled by fierce fires that followed the devastating 1931 earthquake. Napier was rebuilt in the most up-to-date style of the time, which today is referred to as Art Deco. This afternoon your local guide brings history and architecture alive with entertaining stories as you discover Napier on foot. Today's journey has brought us to the North Island's wine country, so this evening's treat is dinner at New Zealand's oldest winery, Mission Estate, where you enjoy dinner in the restored seminary buildings with sweeping views of Napier.

**Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Te Pania, Napier, Pacific view room – 1 night**

### **Day 7 Napier to Wellington (B)**

Travel through the vineyards and orchards of Hawke's Bay and the bush-clad ranges of the Wairarapa into New Zealand's capital city, Wellington. On arrival, view New Zealand's magnificent Parliament Buildings including the iconic 'Beehive' building. From the Kelburn lookout take the Wellington Cable Car down into the central city precinct before visiting Te Papa – one of the most exciting museums in the world, featuring New Zealand insights; the shaping of its land, the spirit of its diverse peoples, its unique wildlife, landscapes, and its distinctive popular culture.

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

### **Day 8 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 9 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 10 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 11 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 12 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 13 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 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 14 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 15 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 16

#### 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 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 – 1 night**

**Day 17**

**Depart Queenstown (B)**

Haere rā – farewell from New Zealand. After breakfast you are transferred to the Queenstown 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 in New Zealand, we can assist you with additional travel arrangements.