

Full Itinerary

GRAND NEW ZEALAND ADVENTURE



TALK TO OUR WELL
TRAVELLED TEAM OF
EXPERTS

Toll Free US and
Canada:
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Monday - Thursday 9:00am -
8:00pm, Friday 9:00am - 5:30pm
(London time)



JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

ACTIVITY LEVEL:

Level 2

DESTINATION:

Grand New Zealand Adventure

DURATION:

16 days / 15 nights

FLIGHT INFORMATION:

Please arrange your flights to arrive into Auckland
Airport [AKL] on Day 1 and depart Queenstown
Airport [ZQN] on Day 16

PICKUP LOCATION:

Auckland Airport [AKL]

OVERVIEW

Mar 01 - 16, 2025

Explore New Zealand's stunning scenery, fascinating culture & be amazed by the contrasts of the North and South Islands on this journey through some of the world's most scenic landscapes!

New Zealand is well known as having some of the best scenery in the world! And what better way to explore it than by travelling from North to South!

Start in Auckland, the vibrant city atop North Island, before discovering the amazing natural landscapes of Rotorua. Stop for a wine tasting and see the local wildlife before heading along the scenic coastline to the capital, Wellington.

We sail across the Cook Strait to South Island where after exploring the local landscape and national parks, we board one of the world's most scenic trains - the spectacular Coastal Pacific line to Christchurch, passing beside the majestic Kaikoura Mountain range. And no trip to New Zealand would be complete without of course visiting Milford Sound or Queenstown, where the journey ends.

Join us as we explore New Zealand's highlights where we will also discover the sights, history and culture of the islands amongst some of the most outstanding natural backdrops in the world.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAY 1 - Welcome to New Zealand

DAY 2 - Auckland, the City of Sails

DAY 3 - Hobbiton, home of Middle Earth

DAY 4 - Highlights of Rotorua

DAY 5 - North Island's Nature & Napier

DAY 6 - Gannets & Wine Tasting

DAY 7 - Southwards to Wellington

DAY 8 - Across the Cook Strait to South Island

DAY 9 - Kaikoura's Dolphins & Culture in Christchurch

DAY 10 - Exploring Ohinetahi Gardens

DAY 11 - Akaunui Gardens & Journey over Burkes Pass

DAY 12 - Scenic South Island to Te Anau

DAY 13 - Fantastic Fjordland National Park

DAY 15 - At leisure in Queenstown

DAY 15 - Gold Rush & Gondolas

DAY 16 - Goodbye to New Zealand

FULL ITINERARY

DAY 1 - WELCOME TO NEW ZEALAND

Welcome to New Zealand! You will be met on arrival at the Auckland International Airport before being transferred to your hotel. After your long flight to New Zealand, we have left this evening and dinner at your leisure.

Included meals: none

Accommodation: Sudima Hotel Auckland City

DAY 2 - AUCKLAND, THE CITY OF SAILS

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll head out this morning to experience a highlights tour of Auckland, the 'City of Sails', including the panoramic city and harbour views from Bastion Point, trendy Parnell Village, the lovely bays of the waterfront drive and the vibrant Viaduct Harbour area.

We'll visit Eden Garden. This New Zealand Garden Trust 5-star rated garden has become a must-see destination due to the beautiful plant collections that always provide something in bloom. Built in an old quarry in the centre of Auckland, Eden Garden sits on the side of Mount Eden, one of the many volcanic remnants within Auckland. Fifty-three years of garden passion has turned an abandoned wilderness into a memorial garden of great beauty and interest.

Afterwards, we'll head to the All Blacks Experience. An immersive and interactive journey through the New Zealand rugby story! Your time here will help you to understand what it takes to make, shape and be an All Black and even test your rugby skills against All Blacks and Black Ferns in the hands on, interactive zone.

The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure.

We join together to dine this evening in the Auckland Ferry Building. The view from the restaurant's terrace of the ferry traffic, passenger liners and yachts is sensational to kick start our New Zealand adventure

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Sudima Hotel Auckland City

DAY 3 - HOBBITON, HOME OF MIDDLE EARTH

Today we will check out and depart Auckland as we start our travel south through picturesque farmland towards Matamata, home to Hobbiton.

Experience the real "Middle-Earth" with a visit to the Hobbiton Movie Set, the bucolic setting for The Shire that featured in the Peter Jackson's movie trilogy The Lord of the Rings – and more recently, The Hobbit spin offs.

Drive through the picturesque 1,250-acre sheep farm with spectacular views across to the Kaimai Ranges as your guide recounts fascinating details of how the Hobbiton set was created. Afterwards, we'll enjoy a delicious lunch inside the festive Party Marquee.

Later, we continue southwest and climb into the bush-clad Mamaku Ranges and through the lush Fitzgerald Glade before reaching the unique geothermal area of Rotorua.

With a unique thermal and volcanic landscape, living Maori culture, natural hot springs and bubbling mud pools, Rotorua is one of New Zealand's best known and most popular destinations. Rotorua forms part of the geologically active 'Pacific Rim of Fire' and evidence of the bubbling thermal activity just under the earth's crust is surprisingly evident throughout the city.

We check in and enjoy an evening at leisure.

Included meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Accommodation: Sudima Hotel Lake Rotorua

DAY 4 - HIGHLIGHTS OF ROTORUA

This morning, we'll learn about the kiwi, New Zealand's national icon. The National Kiwi Hatchery Aotearoa is a world leader in kiwi husbandry, egg incubation systems, hatching techniques and kiwi chick rearing. Discover how their programmes, hatching over 2100 kiwi chicks so far, are bringing this treasured icon back from the brink of extinction on the New Zealand mainland.

Afterwards, we'll head to a nearby Redwood Grove for a Redwood Treewalk. Consisting of 28 suspension bridges traversing between 22 Californian coastal redwoods that are 120-years old, the elevated walkways gives walkers a unique view of the native undergrowth below from up to 20-metres above the ground. At 700m long, the walkway allows plenty of time to appreciate the beauty of the forest that is quite different from what you experience on the ground. N.B.: maximum weight limit of 120-kgs per person.

In the late afternoon, we'll visit Te Puia for a guided tour followed by the Te Po (the night) experience – an immersive feast of indigenous cultural storytelling, entertainment and food. Combining Maori culture experience with an introduction to the magnificent geothermal activity in the Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley, see the boiling mud pools, steaming silica terraces, hot springs and geysers including the famous Pohutu Geyser which can erupt up to 30 metres high, depending on its mood. You'll also find here the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute where young Maori are learning the traditional carving and weaving skills of their ancestors.

After a buffet dinner including food from the hangi (traditional Maori method of cooking), enjoy a cultural performance in the fully carved Te Aronui-a-Rua meeting house where highlights include waiata (song), moteatea (traditional chant) poi and haka. Following the concert, the evening culminates with hot chocolate served in the geothermal valley bathed in coloured light.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Sudima Hotel Lake Rotorua

DAY 5 - NORTH ISLAND'S NATURE & NAPIER

We depart Rotorua this morning via New Zealand's largest pine tree forests to Taupo, stopping en-route at Huka Falls to marvel as the mighty Waikato River thunders through the narrow canyon.

We continue through the resort town of Taupo and around the shores of lake of the same name, New Zealand's largest lake and a world renowned trout fishery before we travel across the Rangitaiki Plains to Hawke's Bay, and the seaside city of Napier.

Napier was devastated by an earthquake in 1931 and was rebuilt during the period when Art Deco Architecture was fashionable. The area is also one of New Zealand's top grape growing regions with some of the country's best-known wines coming from the Hawke's Bay.

This afternoon, we'll enjoy an Art Deco walking tour as we take a look at the unique 1930s architecture and learn about the earthquake that destroyed the city, hear about the people that led the rebuild, and discover the unique Art Deco style of this unique city.

The evening is at leisure.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Te Pania, Napier

DAY 6 - GANNETS & WINE TASTING

Cape Kidnappers' Gannet Sanctuary is the largest, most accessible and most spectacular mainland nesting place of gannets in the world with over 20,000 birds! This morning we'll take a 4-wheel drive Gannet Safari overland tour to the huge Sanctuary where we can see adults and young nesting or birds swooping and diving as they bring fish home from fishing at sea.

We return to Napier in early afternoon for time at leisure before we rejoin in the evening.

The Napier area is also home to the North Island's wine country. Tonight, enjoy dinner at Mission Estate Winery. Established in 1851, by pioneering French Missionaries, Mission Estate is New Zealand's oldest winery and the birthplace of New Zealand wine. The restaurant is located in an historic building overlooking Napier and Hawkes Bay. Built in 1880, it was known as La Grande Maison or the "big house" and became the home for the early French Marists for three decades.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Te Pania, Napier

DAY 7 - SOUTHWARDS TO WELLINGTON

Today, we make our way to Wellington - New Zealand's capital city and seat of parliament driving through Hastings and the Hawke's Bay sheep and cattle farming country.

We'll stop at the Le Gra Winery, a family-run winery located just out of Masterton and partake in a tasting with a light lunch included as we learn how the winery came to be and the story behind the name and logo.

A vibrant city with a buzzing art, music, theatre and restaurant scene, designer and boutique shopping, Wellington is also home to the New Zealand Parliament and the national museum, Te Papa. A guided tour gives us an overview of what makes New Zealand unique, exploring the diverse natural environment, Maori culture and taonga, and the country's art and colonial history.

The evening is at leisure to explore Wellington at your own pace.

Included meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Accommodation: James Cook Grand Chancellor Hotel, Wellington

DAY 8 - ACROSS THE COOK STRAIT TO SOUTH ISLAND

Today we depart Wellington on the North Island for Picton on the South Island. We cruise across the Cook Strait and through the beautiful Queen Charlotte Sounds. The last part of the cruise through the magnificent Marlborough Sounds is especially scenic.

On arrival in Picton, we'll meet our South Island driver as we board the coach and travel along a thin ledge of land pinned between the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean and the rugged ranges to Kaikoura.

Kaikoura, meaning "to eat crayfish", is a coastal town known for its abundant wildlife and its sperm whale population, which are spotted 95% of the year. The afternoon and evening are at leisure, why not walk the Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway from the town centre to lookout points at Point Kean.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Sudima Hotel, Kaikoura

DAY 9 - KAIKOURA'S DOLPHINS & CULTURE IN CHRISTCHURCH

This morning, we set to the water for a Dolphin Encounter Tour. Remember to pack your goggles as you get the chance to swim with and/or observe Kaikoura's incredible wild dusky dolphins! Full body wetsuit and snorkelling equipment is provided in addition to hot chocolate and biscuits after the swim, but all swimmers must be confident in the open ocean, and though not essential it is preferable to have previous snorkelling experience. (Maximum number of swimmers is 16 per boat per tour.)

After the cruise, we depart Kaikoura and cross the Northern Canterbury Plains through to Christchurch. An orientation tour reveals Christchurch's highlights, including the River Avon, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch Art Gallery; the Canterbury Earthquake National Memorial and the Spanish Mission-inspired New Regent Street. Learn about the effects of the 2011 Christchurch Earthquakes and how the city is rebuilding.

We'll dine tonight aboard the Tramway Restaurant as we sit back and enjoy a delicious dinner in the luxury of an air-conditioned colonial style tramcar while taking in some of Christchurch's most interesting sights.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Christchurch

DAY 10 - EXPLORING OHINETAHI GARDENS

We head out this morning to Governors Bay to visit Ohinetahi Gardens. Originally owned by one of New Zealand's first botanists, Mr. Thomas H Potts in 1865, the garden was restored to its former glory by Sir Warren Miles and gifted to the City of Christchurch in 2012. Today, Ohinetahi is as well known for its displays of art, architectural works and sculptures as it is for its magnificent grounds.

On our return to Christchurch, the afternoon and evening are at your leisure to explore the garden city. Why not use your pass for the restored heritage Christchurch Tram so you can enjoy a journey in style through the changing face of Christchurch's city centre

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Christchurch

DAY 11 - AKAUNUI GARDENS & JOURNEY OVER BURKES PASS

We continue our journey south as we leave Christchurch behind and travel across the Canterbury Plains to Ashburton where we'll stop at the delightful Akaunui Garden & Homestead. Established over 100-years ago, over of the last 15-years the garden has expanded to cover 6 hectares and includes magnificent old trees (both native and exotic) and a wide variety of recently planted species. There is much to see in the gardens before we enjoy a lovely country lunch at the Akaunui Homestead.

Afterwards, we head inland travelling through numerous small country towns before climbing over Burkes Pass into the MacKenzie Country, named after a 19th century sheep stealer. The climatic change is dramatic with vast tussock covered plains framed by the Southern Alps as a backdrop. We pass the turquoise coloured glacier fed waters of Lakes Tekapo and Pukaki with views of the Alps to the west and arrive into Twizel where we spend the night.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Mackenzie Country Hotel, Twizel

DAY 12 - SCENIC SOUTH ISLAND TO TE ANAU

This morning, we depart Twizel and travel south over the Lindis Pass and into the scenic Central Otago countryside, travelling south along the shores of Lake Wakatipu with magnificent views of the south arm of the lake and the mountains.

Leaving the lake, we continue south through the glacial formed valley that is now farmland and pass through small farming towns before reaching Te Anau, the gateway to Fiordland National Park

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Distinction Hotel & Villas, Te Anau

DAY 13 - FANTASTIC FJORDLAND NATIONAL PARK

After breakfast, we'll drive the short distance to Pearl Harbour at Lake Manapouri to board a cruise across the crystal waters of Lake Manapouri to West Arm before re-boarding our coach and crossing the alpine route of Wilmot Pass through some of Fiordland's most dense rainforest. Here catch your first glimpse of Doubtful Sound before descending to Deep Cove.

The cruise on Doubtful Sound will explore the waterways of this serene and isolated fiord. Enjoy the spectacular alpine scenery including waterfalls, rainforest and mountains all the way out to the Tasman Sea. We may be lucky to see bottlenose dolphins and fur seals and, when in season, the rare Fiordland crested penguin. During the cruise knowledgeable and friendly nature guides will share with you their passion for the region as they point out landmarks and share information about the varied wildlife you may see as we enjoy a picnic lunch served onboard.

At the end of the cruise, we'll retrace our journey back across Wilmot Pass and Lake Manapouri to Pearl Harbour where we re-join the coach to travel to Queenstown. Surrounded by majestic mountains and nestled on the shores of crystal-clear Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown offers diverse, world-class experiences, a warm welcome and a cosmopolitan vibe.

Check in and enjoy dinner in hotel restaurant.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Copthorne Hotel & Resort Lakefront, Queenstown

DAY 15 - AT LEISURE IN QUEENSTOWN

Today is a day at leisure to explore the fantastic ray of optional sightseeing activities available in Queenstown! Known as the adventure capital of the south, from jet-boating on the thrilling Shotover Jet; a jet-boat excursion along the scenic and remote Dart River; to the more sedate winery tours of the premier Central Otago wineries; 4WD tours into unforgettable Skippers Canyon; scenic flights; or if you dare - bungee jumping or tandem sky-diving! Or even a stroll by the lakeside to enjoy the stunning views - there's sure to be something for all !

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Copthorne Hotel & Resort Lakefront, Queenstown

DAY 15 - GOLD RUSH & GONDOLAS

Today, our final excursion of the tour leads us to visit Arrowtown, a delightful gold rush village nestled below the beautiful peaks that surround the sparkling Arrow River. The heart of Arrowtown's history is Buckingham Street, a procession of small town heritage buildings that stretches

into a tree-lined avenue of tiny miner's cottages. The buildings in this lovely precinct now house shops, galleries, bars, and restaurants.

We return to Queenstown for a high speed jet boat ride, thundering across Lake Wakatipu at speeds of up to 95kph in the fastest jet boats boats in town to soak up the sights in one of the world's most stunning locations.

The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure before we rejoin for our farewell dinner at Queenstown's most spectacular location.

Ride the aerial gondola high above Queenstown to Bob's Peak where the Stratosfare Restaurant serves up a mouth-watering Taste of New Zealand buffet - feast on South Island salmon, seafood, salads, roast meats and delicious desserts - and feast your eyes on the most spectacular scenery in the country. On the magical night-time cruise home, enjoy the camaraderie of a sing-a-long with the ship's pianist or breathe in the fresh night air on the moonlit decks as you watch the lights of Queenstown draw nearer.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Copthorne Hotel & Resort Lakefront, Queenstown

DAY 16 - GOODBYE TO NEW ZEALAND

Breakfast will be served at the hotel before you are transferred to Queenstown Airport in time to connect with your outbound flight.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: none

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet at Auckland Airport on arrival
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- Transport by rail and coach as detailed in the itinerary
- All entrances, English-speaking guides and visits as indicated in the programme
- National English speaking driver guide
- Tour Director from The Big Journey Company as well as the local driver guide (subject to minimum group size being reached)

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights to Auckland Airport [AKL] and return from Queenstown Airport [ZQN]
- Drinks and any meals not mentioned as included in the itinerary
- Gratuities
- Visas, travel and medical insurance
- Any personal items and anything not mentioned under included in price above
- Any optional activities offered
- Increases in government taxes or fuel surcharges
- Any COVID tests or related entry & exit requirements

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour.
- Check in is after 2 - 3pm and check out is before 10am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90-0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable. Balance payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.

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