

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Meet in Christchurch, Travel to Kaikoura

After meeting at the Christchurch airport on the South Island we'll start our adventure with a 2.5 hour drive up the coast to the seaside town of Kaikoura. Kaikoura is known for its marine mammals, especially its local colony of fur seals. Passing weathered limestone cliffs, we'll watch a colony of fur seals basking on the rocks and playing in the eddies, on a stretch of rugged coastline that was uplifted in the Kaikoura earthquake - it's amazing to see this brand new land! Today is a relaxed introduction to New Zealand.

Overnight: Kaikoura. (L, D)

DAY 2

Wine Tasting, Travel to Nelson Lakes National Park

From Kaikoura, we'll travel along spectacular coastline for a couple of hours to Blenheim, in the Marlborough wine region. We'll visit Forrest Estate Winery to sample some of their fantastic wines and have a picnic lunch. Then we head off to Nelson Lakes National Park, known as being wilderness country, with incredible views and marvelous solitude. The park straddles the upper Southern Alps, an area composed of beech forests, big lakes, and even bigger mountains. Our 3-day hike starts on a relatively gentle trail through the forest alongside Lake Rotoiti to Lakehead Hut, a small mountain cabin at the head of the lake and our home for the night. We'll each carry a backpack with sleeping bag, a few spare clothes, and a share of our food. To protect this beautiful and fragile environment, we always keep our group sizes small and our exact route flexible. Hike: approx. 7 miles, mostly flat terrain, carrying an overnight backpack.

Hiking: 7 miles

Overnight: Lakehead Hut, Nelson Lakes National Park. (B, L, D)

DAY 3

Hike Lakehead Hut to Angelus Hut or St Arnaud

Today we'll split the group in two based on your desire for challenge and desire for a 2nd night at a hut. The first option is to hike to an alpine hut, Angelus Hut. Both groups will start Day 2 by crossing the Travers river and hiking around the Lake Rotoiti shoreline.

One group will then ascend up to Angelus Hut (Option A) for amazing views over the lake, which is a steeper hike with an elevation gain of 3,280 ft up to the ridgeline. The other option (Option B) is to continue along to the township of St Arnaud, and so is a gentler option. This group will spend the night in St Arnaud at a local lodge. Because reservations need to be made at the lodge and the hut has a limited number of spaces we will ask you for your hiking choice a few months prior to the start of the trip.

Hiking: Option A - 7 miles, 3,500 ft elevation gain

Hiking: Option B - 6 miles, mostly flat

Overnight: Angelus Hut (Option A) or stay in St Arnaud (Option B) (B, L, D)

DAY 4

Hiking in Nelson Lakes National Park

After breakfast, those who stayed in the Hut will hike out along the barren Robert Ridge with dramatic views of Tasman Bay and the mountainous Kahurangi National Park in the distance. Those who stayed in St Arnaud will hike up Robert Ridge, meeting those descending from Angelus Hut. Together we'll descend below the treeline

mark in the distance. Those who stayed in St Arnaud will hike up Robert Ridge, meeting those descending from Angelus Hut. Together we'll descend below the treeline again into native beech forest, completing the circuit on the shores of Lake Rotoiti.

After arriving back in Saint Arnaud, we'll head across the Southern Alps to New Zealand's iconic West Coast - a dramatic and rugged coastline stretching 372 miles, with a population of only 40,000 people. From the high mountains to the sea - indeed, this is a day of the contrasts that make New Zealand such an amazing country. We'll spend tonight in the seaside village of Punakaiki, recounting tales of our adventures over dinner.

From Angelus Hut, it's 7 miles with 450 ft elevation gain and 2,900 ft loss. From St Arnaud it's an out and back so the distance depends on when the other group is met.

Hiking: Option A - 7 miles, 2,700 ft descent

Hiking: Option B - 7 miles, 1,300 ft elevation gain Overnight: Punakaiki. (B, L, D)

DAY 5

Hike Punakaiki Rainforest

We'll spend the morning hiking the Inland Pack Track through temperate rainforest and limestone canyons, following in the footsteps of gold miners who established this trail over a century ago. While we're in Punakaiki, we'll also check out the famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes - aptly named limestone formations that have been sculpted through the relentless pounding of the Tasman Sea. Travelling along the scenic coastline, we'll stretch our legs in Hokitika and check out local art galleries and pounamu-carving workshops (pounamu is Maori for jade), before carrying on to the township of Franz Josef where we'll stay for the next couple of nights. Nestled in the rainforest-clad foothills of the Southern Alps, Franz Josef is the heart of New Zealand glacier country. Approx. total for day is a mostly flat 4 miles hiking.

Hiking: 4 miles, 425 ft elevation gain

Overnight: [Rainforest Retreat](#), Franz Josef. (B, L, D)

DAY 6

Hiking and Kayaking in Okarito

This morning we'll take a short journey over to Okarito, a little-known beach community on the coast. We'll take to the water in sea kayaks and glide along a picturesque lagoon, set against a stunning backdrop of snow-capped peaks. Okarito is home to the only native white heron colony in New Zealand, as well as a host of other interesting birds. Later we'll hike through lush coastal forest to Three Mile Lagoon, and wander along the beautiful stony beach next to crashing waves. Later we'll head back to Franz Josef where you'll have the option to take another hike or relax in the hot tub, before enjoying a traditional Kiwi roast dinner. Kayak 2-4 hours and hike 4.5 miles.

Hiking: 3 miles

Kayaking: 2 - 3 hours

Overnight: Rainforest Retreat (B, L, D)

DAY 7

Hike near Franz Josef Glacier, Visit Mt. Aspiring National Park

With some 140 glaciers making their way down from the Southern Alps, this area is fittingly known as glacier country. Few sights equal the spectacle of two of these giant frozen rivers (Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers) imperceptibly grinding their way down through temperate rainforest to just 250 meters (820 feet) above sea level. We'll spend most of the day near Franz Josef Glacier hiking up through the forest to Alex Knob, which gives incredible views of the ice.

From Franz Josef, we'll travel down the coast through lush forest and then inland to Makarora, a small village bordering Mt Aspiring National Park, with incredible views of the snow-capped mountains.

Hiking: 5 miles, 3,600 ft elevation gain

Overnight: Makarora. (B, L, D)

DAY 8

Hike Rocky Mountain Track, Visit Wanaka

The landscape this morning changes rapidly from dense beech forest to semi-arid mountainous terrain. We'll hike the Rocky Mountain track today, a spectacular circuit through an area carved out by ice age glaciers, with stands of native forest and shrub land. We'll enjoy lunch after our hike in Wanaka before a short but dramatic journey over the Cardrona Saddle to Queenstown on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, our base for the next couple of days. You'll sleep sweetly tonight at a lakefront hotel located in the heart of Queenstown.

Hiking Distance: 4.5 miles, 2-3 hours. Elevation Gain/Loss 1,230 feet.

Overnight: Queenstown, Crowne Plaza Hotel or similar. (B, L)

DAY 9

Free Day in Queenstown

Queenstown is the adventure capital of New Zealand (if not the world!) and all the comforts of civilization are packed into this tiny resort town: restaurants galore, sidewalk cafes, stylish lounge bars, day spas, and boutiques. There is an endless variety of incredible optional activities here: kayaking, fishing, winery tours, horse trekking, a gondola, mountain biking, jet boating, as well as some great hiking opportunities. Or you can just soak up the atmosphere or lounge about reading a book. The guides will happily share their favorite haunts and point you in the right direction for anything you want to do on your free day today.

Overnight: Queenstown. (no meals included)

DAY 10

Takahe Bird Park, Hike Kepler Track

This morning we'll make our way around Lake Wakatipu, leaving behind the towering Remarkables and head west to the small town of Te Anau, the gateway to Milford Sound. This afternoon we'll take a hike on the famous Kepler Track, one of New Zealand's Great Walks - we follow the track through mountain beech forest and along the Waiau River. It's an awesome hike with spectacular views! We will also visit the local bird sanctuary and discover some of New Zealand's endemic wildlife. Tonight we'll stay on the edge of Lake Te Anau, enjoying the scenery and the delicious local fare.

Hiking: 6 miles, negligible elevation gain

Overnight: Matai Lodge, Te Anau. (B, L, D)

DAY 11

Cruise Milford Sound, Hike Routeburn Track

We'll jump on board the first boat cruise of the day, where we'll have the water to ourselves, as we gaze in wonder at the waterfalls tumbling down enormous vertical rock faces all around and journey right out to the entrance of the fiord. We may be lucky enough to encounter the friendly fur seals and dolphins that are sometimes in the area.

After the cruise, we'll enjoy a tasty lunch before heading out to explore more of Fiordland's wilderness on foot. We'll hike part of the Routeburn Track for unsurpassed views of the Hollyford Valley, as well as Lake Marian and Mt Christina, before making our way back to Te Anau for the night.

Hiking: 2 miles, 1,200 ft elevation gain

Overnight: Matai Lodge, Te Anau. (B, L, D)

DAY 12

Journey over Lindis Pass, Bike the Alps to Ocean Trail

After a relaxed start, we return to Queenstown, where you'll have a couple of hours to get some lunch before heading on to the remainder of the trip. Then we'll drive through the tussock country of Lindis Pass to Lake Pukaki, where we'll hop on bikes and ride a portion of the Alps to Ocean Trail, following the well-groomed trail around the alpine lake with views across to the magnificent Aoraki Mount Cook. We'll bike straight to our accommodation for our last two nights, with stunning views stretching across the Southern Alps.

Biking: 2 hours on gravel paths

Overnight: MacKenzie Lodgings, Twizel. (B, L, D)

DAY 13

Hiking in Mount Cook National Park

Mt Cook, named Aoraki or 'cloud piercer' by South Island Maori, is the highest mountain in New Zealand. Directly opposite the mountain, we have a stunning day hike to the main ridge above Mueller Glacier. It's a bit of a hike, but you'll remember the view of the glacier and the surrounding peaks forever! The weather conditions are very important in this area, as it's a true alpine climate notorious for sudden weather shifts. If we aren't able to do the Mueller hike, or you'd like to take it a little easier, there's an impressive hike up to a glacial lake (complete with icebergs!) at the base of the Hooker Glacier. Then we head back to our accommodation for the last night to enjoy a farewell dinner.

Overnight: MacKenzie Lodgings, Twizel. (B, L, D)

DAY 14

Return to Christchurch for flights out after 3pm

After breakfast we'll head to Christchurch, arriving in time for afternoon flights. It's a 4-hour drive but we will stop for a picnic along the way. You will leave refreshed and invigorated from the good food, exercise, rest, and great times you'll have had in New Zealand! You can fly out any time after 3:00 PM. (B, L)