



## 18 Day AAT Kings Essence of New Zealand 25/26

This tour has a mix of Nature and Culture. With good dose of food and wine on the side you'll be delivered a well-rounded taste of the North and South. Whether you're into wide, open spaces - Milford Sound, we're looking at you – bubbling geysers, gem-like glaciers or windswept coasts you will find it right here. This New Zealand guided tour is for the history, sport, architecture, geography or culture buff.

Starts in: Christchurch  
Finishes in: Auckland  
Length: 18days / 17nights  
Accommodation: Hotel 3 star  
Can be customised: Yes

This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.



### Inclusions:

Includes: All coach transport  
Includes: All pick ups/drop offs at destinations  
Includes: Comprehensive tour pack (detailed itinerary, driving, instructions, map/guidebooks, brochures)  
Includes: 24/7 support while touring in New Zealand  
Included: All Blacks Experience  
Included: Cruise on the Interislander Ferry  
Included: Day trip to Stewart Island  
Included: Huka Falls  
Included: Maori Village Experience & Hangi (dinner), Rotorua  
Included: Punakaiki Rocks

## Day 1

You'll want to arrive early to see just how Christchurch has transformed itself since the devastating 2010/11 earthquakes. The best way to do this? Aboard the city's tram. On its Christchurch tour, the historic tram loops past important historic attractions as well as some new ones, like the Transitional Cathedral, made largely of cardboard, and Turanga, the gold-clad central library. Your conductors provide on-board commentary – they're a hoot.

Staying in:

- Ibis Hotel Christchurch (1 night)
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## Day 2

Day two of your tour of the South Island of New Zealand sees you step out with your guide for a deeper dive into 'The City of Gardens' before traversing the colourful Canterbury Plains: the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo, snow-capped mountains and wildflower-strewn meadows. It's quite the backdrop for the stone-hewn Church of Good Shepherd. Opt to take in the drama from the air on a scenic flight over Mount Cook and the Southern Alps, Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers.

Staying in:

- Heritage Gateway Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 3

Easing through the Waitaki Valley, you're en route toward New Zealand's oldest public gardens. They lie in the pretty town of Oamaru, known for its stately tree-lined streets and limestone buildings. Architectural drama of a different kind awaits in Dunedin. The afternoon is yours to while away. Perhaps sipping a lager or two at Speights Brewery (a national institution). Or venturing further afield to discover Larnach Castle (the only one of its kind in the country), or cruising to spot fur seals and penguins. Trips to New Zealand don't get much more diverse than this.

Staying in:

- Kingsgate Hotel Dunedin (1 night)
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## Day 4

If you've got an odd urge to listen to twanging Slim Dusty tunes while traversing rolling green pastures en route to Gore, you're not alone. Fun fact: this is the country music capital of New Zealand. Invercargill is obsessed with something else: motor vehicles. Tributes to speed legends colour the city, telling the story of everyone from Burt Munro to Bill Richardson – his shed full of classic vehicles is the largest private collection of its type in the world.

Staying in:

- Kelvin Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 5

The ferry ride out to Stewart Island is wild, wide and wonderful. When you arrive, you're welcomed by the country's southernmost community. It's largely untouched – 97% is national parkland – which means that endemic flora and fauna (including a menagerie of birds) thrive here. But don't take our word for it. Meet the locals on a South Island tour through valleys and bays and out to avian heaven at Ulva Island. Or, jump on an e-bike for a little pedal power and to discover hidden nooks at your leisure. Because some adventures are those that are not planned.

Staying in:

- Kelvin Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 6

Queenstown is known as the adventure capital of New Zealand for good reason. If you'd like to discover why, we can point you in the direction of the world's first bungee jump, the Shotover Jet to speed along the Shotover River, or 4WDs to explore Skippers Canyon. But there are also plenty of Queenstown tour alternatives for gourmands and sybarites. Like postcard-worthy vineyards, onsen hot pools with a view, and Lake

Wakatipu walking trails. Speaking of which, there's also an afternoon cruise across the lake aboard historic TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak High Country Farm for a gourmet barbecue dinner. The choice is yours.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown (1 night)
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## Day 7

You clearly need more than one day to appreciate Queenstown and its surrounds. And when we say surrounds, we mean Milford Sound. Today, sign up to dive deep into this yawning gorge within World Heritage-listed Fiordland National Park – it's within easy reach of your base, and is best explored on an optional South Island tour that sees you jumping aboard boat to cruise the mirror-like waterway. Don't be surprised if you see dolphins and seals playing in the wake of waterfalls.

Staying in:

- Copthorne Hotel and Resort Queenstown (1 night)
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## Day 8

Arrowtown found its riches in gold, its residents building stately homes – now filled with boutiques and restaurants – that still line the street to this day. It's a bit like stepping onto a movie set. Around the next bend is the Alpine countryside of the Southern Lakes, from Lake Dunstan, where you'll refuel on stone fruit picked fresh from the tree, to oh-so-blue Lake Hawea and lovely Lake Wanaka, with its Instagrammable shoreline of poplars and willows. Over the Haast Pass, Franz Josef Glacier shimmers like a gem. Get some perspective on an optional Franz Josef flight tour – if the weather behaves, you may even get to land on it. New Zealand tours don't get much cooler than this.

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## Day 9

Wandering Hokitika's windswept shore on the West Coast feels a bit like you've discovered the end of the Earth. The town's other natural beauty is pounamu (native greenstone or jade). In Māori tradition, it's bad luck to buy this sacred stone for yourself; when you find a trinket you like, flutter your eyelids at your loved one. Prepare yourself for Punakaiki's Pancake Rocks and blowholes; they owe their existence to the thundering surf that will lull you to sleep.

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## Day 10

Sit back and relax – that's all you have to do today as you ease along the Heritage Highway toward Nelson. Press your nose against the glass as your coach weaves through Buller Gorge – a deep canyon home to New Zealand's longest swingbridge – and Kahurangi National Park, a place of wild rivers, high plateaus, alpine herb-fields and coastal forests.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 11

Sleep in or work up a sweat – today is completely at your leisure. We have a few ideas up our sleeve, of course. Lace up your hiking shoes and head off on a bushwalk, or sit back on a boat and soak up the silence of Abel Tasman National Park. This pocket in the north of the island inspires calm, its golden beaches framed by sculpted granite cliffs that all unite to create one of the country's most legendary coastal tracks.

Staying in:

- The Rutherford Hotel (1 night)
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## Day 12

You'll want a window seat for the cruise from the South Island to the North Island aboard the Inter-islander. This spectacle unfolds as you glide through Queen Charlotte Sound, up the Tory Channel and across Cook Strait, navigating a maze of arms and inlets into New Zealand's cool

little capital of Wellington. We'll gladly point you in the direction of one of the city's happening restaurants for dinner tonight.

Staying in:

- Travelodge Wellington (1 night)
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## Day 13

The best way to start a Wellington day is in one of its cafes. There are too many to count, and all are fab. You'll need it to fuel your free day, whether that sees you catching up on Māori culture at Te Papa, the city's mindboggling museum, or perhaps taking a Wellington tour of the Parliament. Peter Jackson fans will have their sights set firmly on a Lord of the Rings movie tour or visit to Weta Workshop, where special-effects wizards work their magic creating goblins and dinosaurs for blockbuster films.

Staying in:

- Travelodge Wellington (1 night)
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## Day 14

Napier has a remarkable rebirth story. After it was flattened by an earthquake in 1931, locals rallied together to rebuild it in just two years. They did a rather remarkable job, and now the city is home to the world's greatest concentration of Art Deco, Spanish Mission and Stripped Classical buildings. Your local guide will give you the architectural lowdown on a Napier tour.

Staying in:

- Scenic Hotel Te Pania (1 night)
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## Day 15

Lake Taupo, the largest of its kind in the country, is rather remarkable not only for its blinding blue colour, but also for the fact that it feeds thundering Huka Falls – you'll hear them before you see them. Nature continues to rule as you arrive in Rotorua, where mud pops and jettisons from bubbling geysers, and steam rushes skywards from cracks in the Earth. Tonight, Maori culture and traditions are in the spotlight at Te Puia. Your journey starts with a guided tour including the Māori Arts & Crafts Institute and Pohutu Geyser, followed by a hangi dinner overlooking the geothermal valley, and a Māori cultural performance in the meeting house, Te Aronui a Rua.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)
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## Day 16

You could spend weeks discovering Rotorua. But you have today, so seize the moment and set out to explore. Your Travel Director can point you in the direction of a kiwi nursery and hatchery. Hobbit fans will want to take advantage of the opportunity to tour the sights featured in The Lord of the Rings movies at Hobbiton. Want a bit of down time? Bliss out at the Polynesian Spa. Arguably the best way to understand just how otherworldly your destination is, is from the air. Ask us about a scenic flight.

Staying in:

- Sudima Lake Rotorua (1 night)
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## Day 17

From New Zealand's longest waterway, the Waikato River, to its largest city: welcome to Auckland, the 'City of Sails'. You'll understand how it got its moniker when you glimpse yachts gliding around its two harbours. But today's Auckland tour sees your sights set firmly on the city's other love: rugby. The interactive All Blacks Experience begins with a haka before journeying through the sporting team's remarkable history.

Staying in:

- Holiday Inn Express, Auckland (1 night)
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## Day 18

It's amazing how much of two attraction-packed islands you can see in 18 days. Provided you have the right people at the helm, and like-minded company, that is.

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## Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	Guided Coach Tour
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Auckland
Tour length:	18
Accommodation:	Hotel 3 star
Car/transport type:	

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## Included activities

Includes	17 breakfasts
Includes	7 dinners
Includes	Airport transfers
Includes	Interislander ferry crossing
Includes	Tamaki Maori Village show and dinner, Rotorua
Includes	Te Puia Maori Arts & Crafts
Includes	Huka Falls Taupo
Includes	Te Anau Glow Worm Caves
Includes	Real Journeys Milford Sound overnight cruise
Includes	Napier City Sights Tour
Includes	Auckland City Sights Tour
Includes	Punakaiki Rocks
Includes	Greenstone Jade craft experience
Includes	Dunedin City Sights tour
Includes	Te Papa Museum of New Zealand
Includes	Wellington City Sights Tour

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## Accommodation summary