

Natural Wonders Tour

This Southern adventure begins appropriately in the adventure capital of New Zealand, Queenstown. From here you head to Mt Cook National Park, where Sir Edmund Hillary prepared to climb the world's highest peak. You'll get a close up view to the magnificent mountains of the Southern Alps during your fabulous scenic helicopter flight. Further north you explore Christchurch and Akaroa, where you get the chance to swim with the rare Hector's Dolphins. Looping south again to Dunedin for more wildlife encounters, then to the beautiful Milford Sound a treasure of waterfalls and lush rainforests. From Fiordland you'll return to Queenstown.

Starts in: Queenstown
Finishes in: Queenstown
Length: 11 days / 10 nights
Accommodation: Motels
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: Late model rental cars

Includes: Unlimited kms

Included activity: Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation

Included activity: TSS Earnslaw Cruise and Walter Peak Gourmet BBQ Dinner

Included activity: Shotover Canyon Jet Boat Ride

Included activity: Akaroa Dolphins Harbour Nature Cruise

Included activity: Te Anau Glowworm Caves with RealNZ

: 1 lunch, 1 special dinner

Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)

Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring

Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App

Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course

Included activity: Alpine Explorer Heli Flight and Snow Landing with The Helicopter Line

Included activity: Wildlife Peninsula Encounter Tour and Wildlife Cruise with Monarch

Included activity: Milford Sound Cruise with Real NZ - Lunch Included

Day 1



Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation

On arrival you will be met by a private driver and delivered to your Queenstown accommodation.

Explore Queenstown

Well-known as New Zealand's 'adventure capital', Queenstown is home to a range of adventures, from the world's first and most famous bungy jumps to jet boat thrills, white-water rafting, and skydiving. However, Queenstown offers far more than a fast-paced, action-packed holiday. Settled on the shores of beautiful Lake Wakatipu beneath a soaring panorama of the Remarkables Mountain Range, this alpine town is surrounded by many historic, gastronomic, and scenic wonders. Take a stroll through the beautiful lakefront parks and gardens, browse through market stalls on weekends, dine in wonderful al-fresco restaurants, or ride on the 100-year-old historic Steamship - TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak Station. Take the Queenstown Gondola up to Bob's Peak and soak up the panoramic views of the magnificent lake and mountain ranges. And after all of that, if you do want the adrenaline rush, Queenstown is known for taking your pick from the Shotover Jet, Canyon Swing, Zipline, Luge, or Heli-hike.

TSS Earnslaw Cruise and Walter Peak Gourmet BBQ Dinner

Enjoy a quintessential Kiwi experience, a delicious gourmet BBQ buffet meal, and a farm demonstration in a stunning lakeside setting. Take in the stunning views of Lake Wakatipu and its surroundings as you cruise across the lake to the historic Walter Peak high country farm aboard the TSS Earnslaw Steamship. Enjoy the ambiance of the heart of the stately homestead while your Colonel's Homestead Restaurant chef prepares a gourmet BBQ dinner. Your seasonal menu includes an extensive selection of local New Zealand produce, including succulent meats and a selection of delicious vegetables and salads. Complete your meal with your choice of delicious desserts, or New Zealand cheeses. After dinner, watch the farm dogs in action with a sheep-herding demonstration and say hello to the other farm animals. Finally, cruise home under the southern stars and enjoy the fresh night air as the lights of Queenstown draw ever closer.

Your accommodation: Scenic Suites Queenstown

Scenic Suites Queenstown offers guests exquisite style and comfort, with a selection of rooms having spectacular views over Lake Wakatipu and the Southern Alps. The hotel prides itself on its 4-star hospitality that will make your stay in Queenstown even more memorable.

Meals included: Speciality Dinner



Day 2



Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

Explore Queenstown

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Shotover Jet Canyon Jet Boat Ride

Shotover Jet is the only company permitted to operate in the Shotover River Canyons. It's a thrilling ride! Skim past rocky outcrops at close range in your Shotover Jet 'Big Red', as you twist and turn through the narrow canyons at breathtaking speeds. And a major highlight - hold tight for the world-famous Shotover Jet full 360-degree spins! It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Lord of the Rings Queenstown Tour with Nomad Safaris

A thrilling Lord of the Rings Queenstown Safari, combining breathtaking filming locations with exhilarating 4WD action. Discover the magic of Middle-earth as expert guides bring Tolkien's world to life with fascinating facts and tales. Visit iconic sites like the Misty Mountains, the Pillars of the Kings (Argonath), and more. Travel along a historic gold mining road, try your hand at gold panning, and soak in spectacular panoramic views of Queenstown's stunning landscapes. A must for any Lord of the Rings fan and adventure seeker!

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Day 3



Queenstown to Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park

Depart Queenstown and head through the Kawarau Gorge and over the historic Kawarau Bridge, a popular bungee jumping location. Choose to participate in this daredevil sport or watch others instead. Continue through Gibbston home to some of the best wines in the country. Follow the gorge to arrive in Cromwell, known for its many fruit orchards. Cromwell was completely submerged when the Clyde Dam was built and Lake Dunstan was established in 1992, the remnants of the old Cromwell town provide a unique snapshot into the history of this area. Head over through the Lindis Pass, one of New Zealand's highest roads, with the summit reaching 971 metres. Its tussock-covered hills are a barren but beautiful sight as you descend into the Mackenzie Basin. You'll go through the towns of Omarama and Twizel, the last stops before you arrive at Lake Pukaki and take the Aoraki-Mt Cook Highway to arrive in the small village

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Glacier Explorers

Experience 500-year-old icebergs up close on the Aoraki-Mt Cook terminal lake. The Glacier Explorers tour is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and one of only three in the world! Very few glaciers terminate into lakes and even fewer of them are accessible. See towering ice cliffs and floating icebergs from the safety of a specially designed boat. These boats provide a safe way to view unseen and inaccessible areas of New Zealand's largest glacier The Tasman.

Alpine Explorer Heli Flight and Snow Landing with The Helicopter Line

Experience this magnificent alpine environment with a 35 minute flight over the Ben Ohau Mountains. Fly close to the steep ridges and rise over a mountain pass which reveals superb views out to Aoraki/Mount Cook and its surrounding peaks. Prepare yourself for an amazing alpine landing where you will be able to step out of the helicopter and play in the snow. Should weather not be suitable to take this flight you are able to transfer your booking onto a similar tour on any of the Helicopter Line's operations in Queenstown or Mt Cook. It is important to read and understand the risks associated with this activity. A full risk disclosure can be found here.

Your accommodation: Mt Cook Motel

Mt Cook Motel, nestled in the heart of Mt. Cook Village, offers spacious self-contained units that provide comfort and convenience. Each unit is surrounded by breathtaking alpine mountain views, making it the perfect retreat for nature lovers and adventurers alike.



Day 4



Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park to Christchurch

Leaving Aoraki Mt Cook National Park, travel a short distance for a stop at the visitor centre on the southern shores of Lake Pukaki. Learn about the formation of the region and take in the spectacular views of Aoraki-Mount Cook. Along the way, you'll reach Lake Tekapo which also displays the same reflective qualities as Lake Pukaki, making the waters bright turquoise. It's a great place to take a scenic flight, soak in a hot spring or just marvel at the magnificent views. From here you travel through Burkes Pass and into the rich farming valley that surrounds Geraldine. Continue across the vast Canterbury Plains to Christchurch.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Christchurch Gondola

In the Heathcote Valley, just a 20-minute drive from the heart of Christchurch City, ride the Christchurch Gondola for nearly a kilometer to the collapsed rim of an extinct volcano, which exploded six million years ago. Take in the spectacular panoramic views of the central city, Lyttelton Harbour, Banks Peninsula, Canterbury Plains, and the distant peaks of the Southern Alps. Wander the summit complex, enjoy a coffee or lunch in the cafe, and choose one of many nature walks to explore or visit the Christchurch Discovery Ridge, a dramatic reconstruction of the history of the Port Hills and Christchurch.

Your accommodation: Terra Vive Luxury Suites and Apartments

Terra Vive Luxury Suites and Apartments offer luxury accommodation in the heart of Christchurch City. Situated within the beautiful tree-lined street of Bealey Avenue, Terra Vive is ideally located in close proximity to the shops, restaurants and cafes.



Day 5



Christchurch to Akaroa

The Banks Peninsula offers a great contrast to the South Island's largest city. Just around a 1 1/2 hours drive from the city centre are rolling green hills, streams, golden sand beaches and small settlements that offer a unique insight into New Zealand's history and development. Just on the other side of the Port Hills is Lyttelton, a busy port town that was crucial to the development of Christchurch and the Canterbury Plains. Following the road around the beautiful natural harbour the names, such as Magazine Bay, Battery Point, Corsair Point and Governors Bay, remind of the importance the navy placed on this harbour.

The Banks Peninsula itself is actually the remains of a long extinct volcano, the rim of which collapsed some time ago allowing the sea to flood into and create what is now the Akaroa Harbour. In 1840 French colonists settled in Akaroa in a bid to stake a claim for the South Island.

Unbeknown the British had already declared sovereignty and a long drawn out dispute ensued with the British eventually being given government. However the French stayed and made this stunning part of the South Pacific their home and still to this day the town boasts French street names and every year a French Festival is held.

The Harbour itself is teeming with wildlife and a nature cruise is a must do activity. One of the world's smallest and rarest dolphins, hectors dolphin, are often seen and cruises also offer excursions with the chance to swim amongst them.

Akaroa Dolphins Harbour Nature Cruise

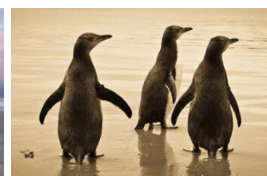
A cruise around Akaroa Harbour is the perfect way to view the smallest and rarest dolphins in the world, the Hector's Dolphin, along with fascinating birdlife, New Zealand fur seals and white-flipped penguins. Their custom built catamaran accommodates a small number of guests so you are able to enjoy a more personal cruise experience around the spectacular seascape including sea caves, high cliffs and volcanic rock formations.

Your accommodation: Criterion Motel

The Criterion Motel offers studio apartments with spectacular views over Akaroa Harbour. You're also just a short walk from the fantastic cafes and restaurants that Akaroa offers.



Day 6



Akaroa to Dunedin

Crossing the vast Canterbury Plains as you head South, State Highway 1 crosses many braided rivers that start their life as glacial melt water high in the Southern Alps. New Zealand's longest bridge at Rakaia crosses such an example. The towns of Timaru followed by Oamaru are worth a short detour to the town centre.

The town of Oamaru is most famous for its buildings constructed with the unique locally quarried white stone. Explore the old quarter or if you don't mind a late arrival into Dunedin then stay around to see the blue penguins come ashore at dusk.

Just a little further south and you arrive at Moeraki and its famous Moeraki Boulders. The last stretch of road follows the coastline before crossing the hills and descending into the city of Dunedin.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Albatross Classic Tour with Royal Albatross Centre

This tour focuses on the Royal Albatrosses and wildlife that inhabit Pukekura (Taiaroa Head). Begin with a short film, then enjoy the informative commentary provided by your guide about albatrosses as you visit the observatory to see nesting albatrosses in their natural habitat.

Your accommodation: Motel on York

Motel on York is located in the heart of Dunedin city. The property offers superior accommodation only 300 metres away from cafes and restaurants.



Day 7



Explore Dunedin and the Otago Peninsula

Known as the Edinburgh of the South, Dunedin City has a heavy Scottish influence. Surrounded by rugged coastal plains and windswept beaches it's home to an eclectic mix of historical and modern architecture as well as industrial technology. Renowned for its Flemish Baroque-inspired 'gingerbread house' Railway Station, this university town is bustling with life. Head to the Saturday farmers market held in the aforementioned railway grounds for a taste of organic produce, handmade crepes and local honey. Explore the many cafes and wine bars in The Octagon, then continue on a self-guided walking tour of the internationally acclaimed Street Art dotted around the city. Drive to the coast and watch the freighters passing in the distance while you sunbathe, or hire a mountain bike and test your legs on one of the many trails available in the area. For a more immersive historical experience, follow the coast to New Zealand's only castle, Larnach Castle. On your way back be sure to head to the Otago Peninsula to see the largest mainland Albatross colony in the world.

Wildlife Peninsula Encounter Tour and Wildlife Cruise with Monarch

Join a small-group bus tour led by a local guide across the Otago Peninsula, featuring stunning harbour views, rural landscapes, and unique wildlife. Visit a remote beach to spot sea lions, take a Monarch Wildlife Cruise to see albatross, seals, and rare seabirds, and explore a Yellow-eyed Penguin conservation reserve with hidden viewing hides. This unforgettable journey blends breathtaking scenery with intimate wildlife encounters before a relaxed return to Dunedin.

Your accommodation: Motel on York

Motel on York is located in the heart of Dunedin city. The property offers superior accommodation only 300 metres away from cafes and restaurants.



Day 8



Dunedin to Te Anau (via Invercargill)

The drive to Te Anau takes you through classic Southland farming scenery. Head off-the-beaten-track today and follow the coastline instead of the inland route. Go through The Catlins area and be sure to take a detour to Kaka Point to view its majestic cliffs and pounding surf. If time permits, keep driving towards Nugget Point, iconic for its steep headland with a lighthouse perched atop. Continue through Invercargill to Riverton and Colac Bay, and then head north to Manapouri. From here you can embark on a day or overnight cruise to the remote Doubtful Sound, renowned for its natural beauty. Just a short way further will bring you to your lakeside destination of Te Anau, gateway to Fiordland National Park and Milford Sound.

Te Anau Glowworm Caves with RealNZ

Begin your Te Anau Glowworm experience with a scenic cruise across Lake Te Anau on board the luxury catamaran, Luminosa, to the western side of the lake. On arrival, you'll enter the caves through Cavern House, where informative displays detail the history of this 12,000 year old underground network. You'll then explore by limestone pathway while your guide points out hidden whirlpools, sculpted rock formations, and a rushing underground waterfall. See a magical display of thousands of glowworms as you glide through the darkness in a small boat.

Your accommodation: Lakefront Lodge

Stylish self-contained motel units less than a minute walk from Te Anau Lakefront. Enjoy a close walk to shops, cafes and restaurants.



Day 9



Te Anau to Milford Sound, returning to Te Anau

The magnificent Milford Road leading to Milford Sound offers some of the most beautiful and iconic scenery in the country. Countless photo opportunities mean this drive should not be rushed. From crystal clear lakes and towering mountains to lush glacier-formed meadows, this area is abundant with picture-perfect scenes. Continue on through the Homer Tunnel, an engineering marvel at 1219 meters long. Arriving in the village of Milford, you will be greeted with an amazing view of Mitre Peak. A day cruise into the heart of the sound is not to be missed. You'll learn about how this magnificent area was formed and experience the wonder of the falls that line the Fjord before back-tracking the way you came.

Milford Sound Cruise with Real NZ - Lunch Included

Get up close and personal with Milford Sound on a leisurely cruise of this spectacular fiord. From thundering waterfalls to sky-high mountains to lush rainforests, Milford has it all. Experience the spray of a waterfall as you cruise close to sheer rock faces. Informative, participative, and relaxed, this is the perfect way to experience Milford Sound to the fullest. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information, see [here](#).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Milford Sound Lunch Cruise on the Fiordland Jewel with Fiordland Discovery

Embark on an unforgettable Milford Sound adventure aboard a boutique catamaran, the Fiordland Jewel. Designed for ultimate comfort and breathtaking views, our small group cruise offers cozy lounges, dining booths, and panoramic sea vistas from the main saloon or the outdoor dining area. Regardless of the weather, you'll be immersed in the stunning scenery and nature that surround you. Our knowledgeable crew will share fascinating stories and point out wildlife such as seals, penguins, and dolphins along the way. Enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by the onboard chef as you sail through the fiord. With ample outdoor space, you can fully experience the tranquillity and beauty of Milford Sound.

Your accommodation: Lakefront Lodge

Stylish self-contained motel units less than a minute walk from Te Anau Lakefront. Enjoy a close walk to shops, cafes and restaurants.

Meals included: Lunch



Day 10



Te Anau to Queenstown

Journey across expansive tussock lands en route to Queenstown. Pass through Mossburn, renowned as the deer capital of New Zealand, and continue through the picturesque Southland countryside. As the road begins to trace the edge of Lake Wakatipu, marvel at the breathtaking views from the Devil's Staircase. Finally, approach Queenstown, the adventure capital of New Zealand, with the Remarkables mountain range standing majestically in the backdrop.

Your accommodation: Scenic Suites Queenstown

Scenic Suites Queenstown offers guests exquisite style and comfort, with a selection of rooms having spectacular views over Lake Wakatipu and the Southern Alps. The hotel prides itself on its 4-star hospitality that will make your stay in Queenstown even more memorable.



Day 11



Depart Queenstown today

Drop your rental car at the Queenstown airport today.

Farewell from Aotearoa / New Zealand

Bid farewell to Aotearoa / New Zealand, taking with you unforgettable memories of its breathtaking landscapes and incredible adventures. In Māori, it is said mā te wā, which is not goodbye, it is see you soon!

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Queenstown
Finishes:	Queenstown
Tour length:	11
Accommodation:	Motels
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Scenic Suites Queenstown
Day 2	Scenic Suites Queenstown
Day 3	Mt Cook Motel
Day 4	Terra Vive Luxury Suites and Apartments
Day 5	Criterion Motel
Day 6	Motel on York
Day 7	Motel on York
Day 8	Lakefront Lodge
Day 9	Lakefront Lodge
Day 10	Scenic Suites Queenstown