

Full Itinerary

NEW ZEALAND BY RAIL



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:

New Zealand

by Rail

DURATION:

14 days / 13 nights

FLIGHT INFORMATION:

Please arrange your flights to arrive into Auckland Airport [AKL] on Day 1 and depart Queenstown Airport [ZQN] on Day 14

PICKUP LOCATION:

Auckland Airport [AKL]

OVERVIEW

Nov 02-15, 2024

Explore New Zealand by rail and be amazed by the contrasts of the North and South Islands on this 14 day escorted 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 rail on three superb train journeys. Travel on the Northern Explorer through the central North Island, relax as we ride along the spectacular Coastal Pacific line, linking Picton and Christchurch and be amazed as we join the world-renowned Tranz Alpine railway from Christchurch through the majestic Southern Alps. Join us as we explore the highlights of New Zealand on this 14 day itinerary where we will also discover the sights, history and culture of the islands and visit the cities of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch too!

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAY 1 - Welcome to Auckland

DAY 2 - Auckland - The 'City of Sails'

DAY 3 - Auckland to the Bay of Islands

DAY 4 - The Bay of Islands

DAY 5 - Sailing the Bay of Islands & Return to Auckland

DAY 6 - The Northern Explorer to Wellington

DAY 7 - Exploring Wellington

DAY 8 - Sailing to South Island & The Coastal Pacific to Christchurch

DAY 9 - Discovering Akaroa

DAY 10 - The Tranz-Alpine Train & to Franz Josef

DAY 11 - The West Coast Road, Haast Pass & Lake Wanaka

DAY 12 - Milford Sound & Fiordland National Park

DAY 13 - Queenstown at Leisure

DAY 14 - Goodbye New Zealand

FULL ITINERARY

DAY 1 - WELCOME TO AUCKLAND

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: Rydges Auckland (Mar 24) / Grand Millennium Hotel, Auckland (Nov 24)

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', exploring the lively waterfront area. Enjoy the relaxing views along Tamaki Drive, which runs east past peaceful sheltered bays to Auckland's most expensive real estate. Drive through the Auckland Domain Gardens, to arrive at Auckland Museum for a visit which gives an excellent introduction to the people of the Pacific and New Zealand and the remarkable flora, fauna and geography of the area.

We return to the hotel this afternoon allowing you some free time to enjoy Auckland city before later this evening visiting Auckland's Sky Tower – at 328m tall is one of the tallest buildings in the Southern Hemisphere offering you outstanding views of the Auckland CBD and the surrounding region. Here we enjoy a welcome dinner in the Orbit revolving restaurant.

Included meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Accommodation: Rydges Auckland (Mar 24) / Grand Millennium Hotel, Auckland (Nov 24)

DAY 3 - AUCKLAND TO THE BAY OF ISLANDS

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before we check out and make our way to the Bay of Islands, a few hours north of Auckland. There's no place in the world like the Bay of Islands, a stunning region of 144 secluded islands, abundant in natural wonders and marine life.

Regarded as the birthplace of New Zealand as a bi-cultural nation, the Bay of Islands is rich in both Maori culture and early European history. Discover well-preserved Maori and European relics of the past, and learn more about the unique history that has shaped this country.

Departing Auckland city, we tour to the Bay of Islands taking you through spectacular scenery of native forests and sub-tropical bush to the foreshores of the National Maritime Park. Continuing our journey we reach Paihia in the beautiful Bay of Islands, where we'll take a guided tour of the Waitangi Treaty House where New Zealand's history began. Dinner will be served at the hotel this evening.

Included meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Bay of Islands, Paihia (Mar 24) / Kingsgate Autolodge Paihia (Nov 24)

DAY 4 - THE BAY OF ISLANDS

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and then today is a day at leisure. The Bay of Islands has so many options for you to discover - perhaps a day trip to the light house at Cape Reinga the most northern tip of New Zealand, followed by a safari along 90 Mile Beach on the way home. Maybe try your luck at deep-sea fishing, or take the plunge swimming with the dolphins or just take time out to relax within Paihia or Russell - New Zealand's first Capital. Your Tour Director will be on hand to assist with any arrangements you wish to make for today.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Bay of Islands, Paihia (Mar 24) / Kingsgate Autolodge Paihia (Nov 24)

DAY 5 - SAILING THE BAY OF ISLANDS & RETURN TO AUCKLAND

This morning after breakfast at the hotel, we board a luxury catamaran to cruise the Bay of Islands. We will sail out to Cape Brett before making a passage through the Hole in the Rock.

On return to the harbour in Paihia, we will disembark back and make our way back south to Auckland. Our journey will take us past scenic native forests and sub-tropical bush, before we cross the Auckland Harbour Bridge to arrive back into the spectacular city scene of Auckland city at twilight.

Here, the evening is at leisure before we head south the following morning.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Rydges Auckland (Mar 24) / Grand Millennium Hotel, Auckland (Nov 24)

DAY 6 - THE NORTHERN EXPLORER TO WELLINGTON

Today we are transferred from our hotel to the Auckland Train Station to board the first of the scenic train journeys of the tour - The Northern Explorer.

The Northern Explorer is a journey through the heart of the North Island, travelling between Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand's arts and culture capital.

Along the way, we pass the Central North Island ski towns of National Park and Ohakune, popular with young and old alike. You will also see fantastic views of New Zealand's farmland, the volcanic plateau, Mount Ruapehu, the world famous Raurimu Spiral, and stunning river gorges - all from our panoramic windows or open-air viewing decks allowing you the best possible views.

On arrival into Wellington, we will be transferred to our accommodation and will enjoy dinner together.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: James Cook Grand Chancellor Hotel, Wellington

DAY 7 - EXPLORING WELLINGTON

A sightseeing tour of Wellington, New Zealand's capital city, awaits us this morning. Set around a magnificent natural harbour, Wellington's highlights include the famous Beehive and Parliament Buildings; Old Saint Paul's Cathedral, a fine example of Revival Gothic architecture; the lovely Lady Norwood Rose Gardens and the breathtaking views from Mt Victoria.

There will also be time to visit Te Papa - the National Museum of New Zealand, which offers visitors a unique and authentic experience of New Zealand's treasures and stories.

The afternoon and evening are at leisure to further explore Wellington at your own pace.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: James Cook Grand Chancellor Hotel, Wellington

DAY 8 - SAILING TO SOUTH ISLAND & THE COASTAL PACIFIC TO CHRISTCHURCH

Today we cruise the Cook Strait from Wellington on the North Island heading through the beautiful Queen Charlotte Sounds to Picton on the South Island.

On arrival in Picton, we will board the second of New Zealand's famous trains - The Coastal Pacific. This journey takes us from the delightful port of Picton through to Christchurch, the South Island's largest city. This journey is a scenic feast of New Zealand, with the Kaikoura mountain ranges on one side of your train and the rugged Pacific Ocean coastline on the other. One of the world's most scenic train journeys, the Coastal Pacific travels through 22 tunnels and crosses 175 bridges and includes an open air viewing carriage where all your senses are awakened with the clean, fresh, sea air.

On arrival in Christchurch, we will be transferred to our accommodation and we will enjoy dinner together at our hotel tonight.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Crowne Plaza, Christchurch (Mar 24) / Distinction Christchurch (Nov 24)

DAY 9 - DISCOVERING AKAROA

We depart the hotel by coach this morning to visit the beautiful unspoilt old French whaling depot of Akaroa on the Banks Peninsula. Akaroa was settled by the French in an early attempt to colonise New Zealand and still retains a good deal of French character in its street names, boutique shops and cafes.

En route to Akaroa, we will visit a cheese factory and sample the local produce, before exploring the charming village with its cafes, art and craft

shops and colonial style architecture. We will have free time to explore the delightful village and for lunch at your leisure.

In the afternoon, we will enjoy a cruise in Akaroa Harbour which is famously known for its wildlife including penguins, marine birdlife and the very rare Hector's Dolphins - the smallest species in the world!

Later in the afternoon, we return to our hotel in Christchurch for an evening at leisure.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Crowne Plaza, Christchurch (Mar 24) / Distinction Christchurch (Nov 24)

DAY 10 - THE TRANZ-ALPINE TRAIN & TO FRANZ JOSEF

From Christchurch we traverse the Southern Alps aboard the famous Tranz-Alpine train to Arthurs Pass, the last of the three amazing rail journeys on the tour.

From the carriage we'll see the fields of the Canterbury Plains and farmland, followed by the spectacular gorges and river valleys of the Waimakariri River. The train then climbs into the Southern Alps.

Once we have crossed into the Southern Alps, we are met at the village of Arthurs Pass by our coach for us to continue our journey to the West Coast – or the Coast as locals call it. We will stop in Hokitika, where we will visit the Greenstone and Glass Blowing factories.

Continuing further south, we will tour the Westland National Park, the home of the famous Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers. On arrival, time is available for optional scenic flights, before continuing to Franz Josef and our accommodation for the night. Dinner will be served at our hotel tonight.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel, Franz Josef

DAY 11 - THE WEST COAST ROAD, HAAST PASS & LAKE WANAKA

After breakfast, we depart Franz Josef to drive the southern end of the South Island's West Coast Road. Visitors have described there being a strong sense of entering a primeval land here, and a feeling of total isolation.

Arriving at Haast, we are surrounded by a landscape of rainforest, wetlands, sand dunes and surf-pounded shingle beaches. This wilderness forms part of the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area, so designated because South Westland and Fiordland have some of the most dramatic forest and mountain scenery and natural resources in the world.

From the Westland National Park we travel through the Haast River Valleys and over the Haast Pass to Makaroa and onto the upper reaches of Lake Wanaka. Travelling past Lake Hawea we reach the popular Lake Wanaka, the starting point of the mighty Clutha River.

This afternoon we travel via Cromwell following the Kawerau Gorge Road into Queenstown. Dinner will be served at our hotel tonight.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Copthorne Hotel Lakefront, Queenstown

DAY 12 - MILFORD SOUND & FIORDLAND NATIONAL PARK

Today, we travel by coach on an unforgettable journey from Queenstown into Milford Sound. Located within the World Heritage Fiordland National Park, this region is rich with dense rainforest, lakes and waterfalls cascading from rugged mountain peaks.

We will journey through the Southern Alps via the Homer Tunnel, a 1.2km tunnel drilled through a solid mountain of rock. Upon arrival at Milford Sound, we will board our vessel for a spectacular cruise where you will see the wonders of Mitre Peak, glacier scarred rock walls that rise 1,200m vertically from the sea and waterfalls that tumble from hanging valleys and crash into the sound far below.

Later, we'll return to Queenstown where the evening is spent at leisure.

Included meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Accommodation: Copthorne Hotel Lakefront, Queenstown

DAY 13 - QUEENSTOWN AT LEISURE

Your last full day in New Zealand is a day at leisure to relax and discover Queenstown or explore the wealth of natural wonders the area has to offer.

Perhaps visit The Remarkables, a stunning nearby mountain range, or Coronet Peak. Experience the thrill of a jet-boat ride along the Shotover or Kawerau Rivers or maybe a scenic 4-wheel drive excursion through Skippers Canyon, it's up to you! Your Tour Director can help you plan how you spend your time.

This evening we round off our time in New Zealand with a special farewell dinner. We will cruise across Lake Wakatipu on the steamer TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak Station to dine at the Colonel's Homestead.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Copthorne Hotel Lakefront, Queenstown

DAY 14 - GOODBYE 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

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transfer from 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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