

12 Day Southern Explorer ex Wellington



TOUR THE BEST OF THE SOUTH ISLAND & A TASTE OF WELLINGTON

Welcome to the 12 Day Southern Explorer.

You're never far from either the sea or the mountains on this journey as you cross the Cook Strait from Wellington, the nation's capital, to the quaint town of Picton in the beautiful Marlborough Sounds. From here you venture into the heart of the majestic Southern Alps and on to the adventure playground of Queenstown.

Created for travellers in their mid-thirties and upwards, over the course of your week and a half tour you'll travel through some of the most magical scenery you could hope to see. National Parks, rainforests, mountain ranges, UNESCO World Heritage Areas...

everywhere you turn, there's something different to behold.

This South Island tour includes special activities such as one of the world's most scenic train as well as one of the world's most scenic ferry journeys, a guided e-bike tour along Wanaka's lakeside, a night of glamping and the opportunity to carve your own greenstone pendant.

You'll have the opportunity to swim, kayak, skydive, hike, horse ride, see kiwis (and whales and dolphins), relax in hot pools, eat and drink like a local, and more!

But only if you want to; this is your trip. It's designed to be flexible – we include some high-end essentials, but let you make the call on what kind of activities appeal to you. You can pre-book the things you are certain you want to do before the trip starts – and then add more on while you're on tour.

We'll fill your days with the best things to see in do in South Island and also give you a great insight into New Zealand life and culture. At the end of the day, you can relax in comfortable 3–4 star accommodation to ensure you have a great night's sleep ready for the following day's activities.

Itinerary

Day 1: Wellington

Settle into your accommodation and be ready for the 6pm pre-tour meeting. Here you will get to know your Tour Manager and be introduced to your new roadtrip friends. Afterwards, the evening is yours to enjoy. We recommend a good night's sleep to be ready for tomorrow's early start, but you may want to experience Wellington's exciting nightlife - the choice is yours!

Day 2: Wellington to Kaikoura

Rise and shine! It's time to head straight for our main destination – the South Island. We take one of the world's most scenic ferry journeys as we cross the Cook Strait. The South Island has a stunning welcome in store for us – gliding through the Marlborough Sounds as we approach Picton Harbour, you'll feel like you're in another world.

One of the best ways to explore Marlborough, the region at the top of the South Island, is with your tastebuds. That's why we jump straight on a wine tasting, to sample some of the best vineyards in the country.

After lunch, our next destination is Kaikoura which literally means "to eat crayfish" – and the area is teeming with them. The nutrient-rich waters of this area attract a wide variety of marine wildlife including the stars of the show – the whales and dolphins.

INCLUDED

- Cook Strait Ferry
- Wine Tasting

Day 3: Kaikoura to Christchurch

The chance to swim with dolphins in the wild is a massive New Zealand highlight for many travellers, and Kaikōura is one of the best places to find them, with pods of up to 300 of these playful creatures hanging out here at any one time.

If you want to get up close to the giants of the ocean, a whale watching tour here is the way to do it. Humpbacks, sperm whales and orca all stop by at various times of year, so this is a great chance to meet some of them.

After visiting the local seals on our way out of town, our road trip continues to our home for the night – Christchurch, known as the "Garden City" for its peaceful parklands and lazy rivers.

Day 4: Christchurch to Ohau (via Lake Tekapo)

This morning we'll explore iconic downtown Christchurch and your guide will show you the cool and creative ways the city is being rebuilt after the life-changing 2011 earthquake here. Christchurch folk are an innovative and creative bunch – the Transitional Cathedral, created from cardboard, is totally inspirational.

Mid-morning we head for Lake Tekapo. Ready your camera – the lake's breathtaking turquoise colour and mountain backdrop is a photographer's dream come true.

The tiny Church of the Good Shepherd stands right at the water's edge, proving that small is bold and definitely beautiful. Grab some confetti and congratulate any passing brides – couples travel from all over the world for wedding shots in front of the chapel!

INCLUDED

- Breakfast
- Dinner
- Mt John Lookout

Day 5: Ohau to Queenstown

From the golden tussocklands of Mackenzie country – where epic battles of Return of the King were filmed – to the dramatic peaks of the Southern Alps, it's like you're driving into a postcard.

We'll pause for lots of photo stops en route to give your camera a workout, including a stop at the spectacular Kawarau Gorge. This also happens to be the world home of bungy! Give it a go or enjoy watching the jumpers scream their way into the gorge. Whether you're an adrenaline junkie, an avid hiker, wine taster or scenery lover, Queenstown has something for absolutely everyone. With 2 nights and plenty of daylight hours here, get ready – this town certainly knows how to live life to the max.

INCLUDED

Breakfast

Day 6: Queenstown

With a full day in Queenstown, let's work on that bucket list!

There are heaps of options to choose from: extreme jet boat rides, , river kayaking, horseback riding through Lord of the Rings scenery, and the skyline gondola are just a few of our favourites.

For scenery lovers, Milford Sound is a must-see. Whether you fly or drive, the scenery en route is as awesome as the destination. Once on the Sound, as you sail beneath thundering waterfalls and towering cliff faces you'll understand why we call it the "8th Wonder of the World".

Day 7: Queenstown to Wanaka

With the morning in Queenstown, you have another chance to tick off your bucket list today. What will it be? A trip to the top of the Skyline Gondola, or perhaps an adrenaline-pumping jet boat ride through the Shotover Canyon? You decide!

This afternoon we jump back onto the road and head off to Wanaka, a quick one hour drive away.

The drive is a scenic highlight in itself, so make sure your camera is fully charged and ready to go. En route we'll stop in charming Arrowtown, a historic gold rush village with heaps of old-world character.

This afternoon is your chance to relax in stunning Wanaka, known as Queenstown's slightly quieter little sister.

Blessed with towering peaks and a glacial blue lake, you'll soon see why Wanaka's considered to be one of New Zealand's most beautiful mountain towns. There are breathtaking hikes and easy bike rides for a welcome chance to relax.

Day 8: Wanaka

Today is your chance to explore one of the most beautiful towns in the southern lakes region with plenty of activities to tempt every lover of the outdoors.

Included this morning is a guided e-bike tour along Wanaka's lakeside. An e-bike, for those wondering, is an electronic bicycle. It's like a normal bike but has a small motor so you don't need to pedal as hard.

One optional activity today – a visit to Mou Waho Island. Accessible only by boat from Wanaka and famous for being home to an (unnamed) island, in a lake (Arethusa Pool), on an island (Mou Waho), in a lake (Lake Wanaka), on an island (the South Island) in the ocean (the Pacific!). Sounds complicated, but once you are there it will all make sense! In Wanaka there are many walks, hikes and biking trails to choose from – check out the famous "Wanaka Tree" while making your way around the lake! Or, if you feel like relaxing, ask your guide to recommend their favourite secret spots to enjoy the surrounding scenery.

One of the best ways to admire Wanaka is from the air. Treat yourself to a skydive or a scenic flight in a vintage plane – you can even take a flying lesson. As always, it's your trip and your choice: you do you!

We mix things up tonight by heading to the stunning Criffel Station for a night of glamping (AKA glamorous camping)! Think fancy canvas tents with decadently comfortable beds and the great outdoors right on your doorstep. The views from Criffel are sublime... to get the real experience, you'll have to see it for yourself!

INCLUDED

- Dinner
- Millennium Trail Guided e-bike Tour
- Glamping Experience at Criffel Station

Day 9: Wanaka to Franz Josef

After a relaxing morning in Wanaka, the journey to Franz is another stunner – many of our Guides rate it as their most favourite drive in New Zealand.

As we hit the road, we'll stop at one of our most popular lakeside lookout points at Lake Hawea or Lake Wanaka. Your guide will keep an eye on the weather and pick the best option.

From the cascading waterfalls of Haast Pass to classic Kiwi coastal views, you won't want to nap on the bus in case you miss anything. Your guide will have some epic surprise photo stops and short walks along the way.

Between September and December it's whitebait season (a small fish that's a delicacy in New Zealand). Fried up with eggs and served on toast, it's a local treat and shouldn't be missed. We'll stop at one of the local spots for a taste during the season.

We roll into Franz Josef around late afternoon/early evening. This UNESCO World Heritage area is famous for its spectacular glacier, just 5km from town, which is begging to be explored tomorrow.

INCLUDED

- Breakfast
- Blue Pools Walkway

Day 10: Franz Josef

With Aoraki/Mount Cook (New Zealand's highest mountain) twinkling behind the glaciers, Franz Josef is about as beautiful a setting as you can find in New Zealand.

Te Wahi Pounamu (which means 'the place of greenstone' in Maori) is the name given to this part of the West Coast because of the abundance of pounamu (greenstone/jade) to be found here. Included in your tour today is a special opportunity to carve your very own pounamu pendant at a local gallery.

There are heaps of ways to enjoy Franz Josef Glacier; weather permitting, to get up onto the bluest ice you can take a scenic helicopter flight and hike onto the glaciers. Maybe you'd prefer to kayak on a glacial lake; or just relax in the steamy hot springs down below.

As well as the awesome glacier activities, you could also try out quad biking, horseback riding and even a bit of group karaoke tonight in Franz Josef!

INCLUDED

- Breakfast
- Greenstone pendant carving

Day 11: Franz Josef to Christchurch

Before you know it, it's your last full day!

After breakfast we head further along the beautiful west coast on another of the most spectacular drives in the country (and, some would say, the world): a rugged, primeval landscape of luxuriant rainforest juxtaposed against breathtaking beach and ocean waves. We stop at Hokitika and visit a greenstone factory, a great place to stock up on souvenirs for your friends and family back home.

Time permitting, we may also visit the National Kiwi Centre, where there is guaranteed viewing of rare kiwi birds in their nocturnal house.

On the way back to Christchurch, you'll traverse the South Island on the stunning TranzAlpine train crossing. Travelling across the Southern Alps through Arthur's Pass, this is considered as one of the world's most scenic train journeys. Along the way you'll see epic vistas, travel the edges of the ice-fed Waimakariri River and see miles of native beech forest.

You'll arrive in Christchurch around 6.30pm before transferring to your accommodation.

INCLUDED

- Breakfast
- Visit the Mountain Jade Factory in Hokitika
- TranzAlpine Train

Day 12: Christchurch

Today is the final day of the tour, where we exchange photos and stories over breakfast before saying our goodbyes and parting ways.

INCLUDED

- Breakfast

Teilnehmer: max. 16 Personen

Transport: Reisebus

Includierte Mahlzeiten: 6x Frühstück, 2x Mittagessen

Übernachtung: 11 Nächte in 3-4 Sterne Unterkunft - ein Mix aus Motel, Hotel und Lodges and rainforest retreats

Gepäck Limit: keine Angabe

Rollstuhlgeeignet: nein

Geeignet für Menschen eingeschränkter Mobilität: nein
(genauere Informationen auf Anfrage)

Die Sprache während der Tour ist englisch