

21 Day North & South (AKAK21)

New Zealand National Tour Itinerary

Start location / day: Auckland / Wednesdays
Finish location / day: Auckland / Tuesdays
Duration: 21 days / 20 nights
Departure dates: 10/10/18 – 01/05/19

Day 1: Auckland to Hahei

Nau mai, haere mai (welcome)! Your journey kicks off in New Zealand's largest city, Auckland. We depart Auckland and head south east to the pristine sands of Hahei Beach, from which you can access the famous Cathedral Cove. Accessible only by foot, boat or kayak, you'll discover some of New Zealand's most spectacular scenery and stunning sea views in this beautiful coastal spot. Cathedral Cove is a definite 'must see' on the Coromandel Peninsula.

After an afternoon of seaside exploration, we gather as a group for an entertaining hands-on cooking demonstration to prepare some delicious 'kai' (Maori for 'food') together for dinner. (D)

Accommodation included: Comfortable beachside accommodation
Activities included: Walk to Cathedral Cove, Kai cooking demonstration
Optional activities: Cathedral Cove Kayaks

Day 2: Hahei to Rotorua

Today we start by driving to Hot Water Beach, a unique surf beach where you can dig a hole in the sand to create in your own personal spa pool (tide dependent). After the beach, we'll make our way towards Rotorua, stopping on the way to drop off those who want to visit the hobbit holes at the world-famous Hobbiton Movie Set. For those who choose to head straight to Rotorua, we'll stop before we get to town to stretch our legs with an easy walk to watch white water rafters navigate the waterfalls of the Kaituna River.

This evening you will be welcomed into the authentic Tamaki Maori Village, where you will discover Maori art, ancient rituals and traditions. Tonight we dine on a delicious hangi (Maori feast), enjoy an interactive cultural performance and the company of our Maori hosts. (B,D)

Accommodation included: Central city lodge
Activities included: Dig your own spa pool at Hot Water Beach (tide dependent), Kaituna waterfall walk, Tamaki cultural experience with traditional hangi meal, Kapa Haka (Maori song and dance) and interactive cultural performance
Optional activities: Visit Hobbiton

Day 3: Full day in Rotorua

You have a full free day in Rotorua to discover an area well-known for its Maori heritage, adventure activities and geothermal wonders. Here you have plenty of great optional activities to choose from, such as a visit to the Hobbiton Movie Set, white water rafting,

ziplining through native bush, mountain biking and much more. A great option to finish the day is to spend the evening soaking in the hot pools at the luxurious Polynesian Spa. (B)

Accommodation included: Central city lodge

Optional activities: Visit Hobbiton, white water rafting, Zorbing, the luge, ziplining, mountain biking, Polynesian Spa

Day 4: Rotorua to National Park

It's a very early start this morning so we can make our way to the UNESCO World Heritage Site Tongariro National Park, where you'll get the chance to do what is rated as one of the world's best one day walks, the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Trek through dramatic natural scenery past volcanic peaks, vast craters and stunning turquoise lakes on one of the most spectacular treks in New Zealand. Alternatively you can go on one of the shorter walks within this volcanic region or visit the Volcanic Centre Museum. (B,L,D)

Accommodation included: Alpine lodge

Activities included: Tongariro Alpine Crossing and transfers, or Taranaki Falls walk and Tawhai Falls (Gollum's Pool)

Day 5: National Park to Blue Duck Station

After your big day of hiking, you get a chance to sleep in because we won't depart until mid-morning. Our destination today is one of the most remote parts of the North Island accessible by road. We're heading for the award winning Blue Duck Station in Whakahoro, a 7,200 acre high country farm that is both a working sheep and beef station and an environmental conservation leader. This afternoon you get the opportunity to take part in a 4WD Bush Safari and farm adventure, where you'll explore this vast land and the New Zealand native bush, discover the remains of an unbelievable local history, and learn about the farm's conservation efforts. Your dinner tonight is cooked using local produce. (B,D)

Accommodation included: Remote country station lodge

Activities included: 4WD eco-wilderness farm adventure

Day 6: Blue Duck Station to Wellington

We depart early to arrive into Wellington around midday. Wellington is known as the 'coolest little capital in the world' thanks to Lonely Planet, and it's a great place to check out the lively arts, shopping and craft beer and café culture scene. As New Zealand's capital city, it is home to New Zealand's parliament and the iconic Beehive government building. This afternoon, you have the option to tour the world famous Weta Workshop, marvel at the natural and cultural wonders of Te Papa National Museum or wander along the waterfront Oriental Parade. (B)

Accommodation included: Central city hostel

Optional activities: Weta Workshop Tour, Te Papa National Museum, craft beer sampling

Day 7: Wellington (via Picton) to Abel Tasman

Leaving Wellington we'll travel across the Cook Strait on the Bluebridge Ferry to the South Island's coastal town of Picton. Here we meet our coach and cruise through the famous Marlborough wine region. We visit the cellar door shop at a local vineyard to sample New Zealand's world famous Sauvignon Blanc before heading to the spectacular Abel Tasman National Park. Tonight we enjoy some delicious seafood and a BBQ dinner at our exclusive campsite accommodation on the edge of the national park. (B,D)

Accommodation included: Beach accommodation in the national park

Activities included: Bluebridge Ferry trip, winery cellar door visit

Day 8: Full day in Abel Tasman

Today is a free day to experience the incredible Abel Tasman National Park. Explore this stunning, coastal area famous for being one of the sunniest spots in New Zealand. Walk the coastal track and discover some of New Zealand's best natural golden beaches or choose an optional activity like sailing or sea kayaking (own expense). Tonight you can self-cater and use the BBQ facilities at our accommodation from dinner. (B)

Accommodation included: Beach accommodation in the national park

Activities included: Abel Tasman Track and Aqua Taxi or stand-up paddle board hire (SUP)

Day 9: Abel Tasman to Franz Josef

We start early to head south along the 'wild' West Coast, travelling on the rugged rocky coastline that makes this stretch of road one of the country's top drives. We'll stop at Cape Foulwind to view a wild seal colony that's active year round, and then make our way further down the coast to visit the spectacular limestone Punakaiki Pancake Rocks and blowholes. From there, we carry on to our next overnight stop in the quaint little West Coast town of Franz Josef, home to the mighty Franz Josef Glacier. (D)

Accommodation included: Hostel close to all attractions

Activities included: Cape Foulwind seal colony, Punakaiki Pancake Rocks walk-

Day 10: Full day in Franz Josef

Enjoy a free day to get out and explore the natural wonder of Franz Josef Glacier. We highlight recommend a guided glacier tour to navigate the maze of ice and explore the incredible glacier (own expense). There are also many excellent bush hikes available in the region if you decide not to get up on the glacier. Tonight's dinner is up to you with the opportunity to dine at one of the local cafes or restaurants in town or make use of the self-catering kitchen at our accommodation. (B)

Accommodation included: Hostel close to all attractions

Optional activities: Glacier heli-hike, scenic helicopter flight

Day 11: Franz Josef to Makarora

Today we head down the West Coast towards Mount Aspiring National Park, stopping to

take in some breathtaking scenery at the amazing mirror-like Lake Matheson, NZ's most photographed lake. We'll see the region's best waterfalls as we travel through the mountainous Haast Pass towards Makarora then visit the stunning Blue Pools. On arrival in Mount Aspiring National Park we go jet boating to experience the best in shallow water boating skimming just inches from the riverbed, see pristine waterways, snow-capped peaks and native bush. (B,D)

Accommodation included: Unique mountain chalets

Activities included: Walk around Lake Matheson, walk through beech forest to the Blue Pools, jet boat in Mt Aspiring National Park

Day 12: Makarora to Doubtful Sound

Today we venture into Fiordland National Park, one of New Zealand's most beautiful and untouched locations, with stunning ice-carved fiords, valleys, lakes and mountain scenery. Within Fiordland we visit the magnificent Doubtful Sound, deepest of all the fiords, for a truly magical cruise experience surrounded by towering peaks and unspoiled wilderness. We will board a purpose-built boat and enjoy complimentary afternoon tea while cruising past fur seals, penguins and dolphins on our way to tonight's anchorage. There are sea kayaks available if you're keen to paddle in the fiord. If it's a clear night, make sure to go up to the upper deck after dinner for exceptional stargazing. (B,D)

Accommodation included: Overnight on the boat, anchored within a secluded bay in a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Activities included: Doubtful Sound Overnight Cruise, sea kayaking, wildlife spotting

Day 13: Doubtful Sound to Queenstown

We depart Doubtful Sound around midday, leaving behind stunning Fiordland to head for the thrill and excitement of the 'adventure capital of the world' Queenstown. For your first evening here, Queenstown offers an optional big (make that huge!) night out with many excellent restaurants, pubs and live music. (B)

Accommodation included: Lodge located close to town with awesome views

Days 14 & 15: Full days in Queenstown

You have two free days in Queenstown to fully explore everything on offer. With so many fantastic activity options, it's a great place to spend a couple days, no matter what your past-time of choice is. Options include: bungee jumping, zipline tours, canyoning, Shotover River jet boating, skiing, skydiving, a walk up Ben Lomond or Queenstown hill for amazing views, or just enjoy the stunning scenery and do nothing. Optional activities and meals not indicated are at your own expense. (B)

Accommodation included: Lodge located close to town with awesome views

Optional activities: AJ Hackett Bungy, Canyon Swing, Skyline Gondola and Lugging

Day 16: Queenstown to Mt Cook

We'll jump back on the bus for a short drive to Wanaka, where we'll spend the morning biking along some of the world's most scenic lakeside trails. After lunch, we head over the Lindis Pass through the picturesque Mackenzie region to the base of the country's highest mountain, Aoraki/Mt Cook. There is time for a hike through the Hooker Valley for

brehtaking views of the dramatic mountain landscape, or opt to take an alpine scenic flight (own expense). With very little manmade light interference, this is also one of the best places in New Zealand to join an evening stargazing tour. (B,D)

Accommodation included: Alpine lodge

Activities included: Mountain biking in Wanaka, scenic walk along the Hooker Valley track

Optional activities: Big Sky Stargazing or scenic heli-flight

Day 17: Mt Cook to Christchurch

Today we make our way through a landscape made famous in the 'Lord of the Rings' films. We'll take a break for a stroll on the shores of Lake Tekapo, iconic for its historic church and turquoise waters. Between Tekapo and Christchurch there is an option for thrill seekers to hop-off and join a top-notch Grade 5 white water adventure on the Rangitata River (own expense). Those not rafting will continue on to Christchurch, where your driver guide will point out the highlights of the South Island's largest city. The rafters will re-join the group back at the accommodation in Christchurch this evening. (B)

Accommodation included: Modern central city backpackers

Activities included: Explore Lake Tekapo area

Optional activities: Rangitata white water rafting

Day 18: Christchurch to Hanmer Springs

This morning we drive from the city centre to the historic French settlement of Akaroa on the Banks Peninsula. After exploring the delights of the village, we'll have time for lunch – make sure you sample one of the wonderful French pastries on offer in the charming cafes. Next, we head to the peaceful alpine town of Hanmer Springs, where you can spend the evening surrounded by mountains and forest as you relax in the thermal hot pools. Tonight is a group dinner. (D)

Accommodation included: Cozy alpine chalets

Activities included: Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools and Spa

Day 19: Hanmer Springs to Kaikoura

We start today with an invigorating walk up Conical Hill for the best views in Hanmer Springs. Then, we'll make our way to the East Coast and the coastal village of Kaikoura, famous for a huge array of natural wonders from land to sea. We arrive in Kaikoura so you have free time to experience all this location has to offer. Why not go out on the water and experience one of Kaikoura's famous dolphin and whale spotting tours (own expense), see seals sitting right beside the road at Goose Bay or wander around the peninsula and check out the breathtaking views from the lookout. (B)

Accommodation included: Warm modern hostel

Activities included: Conical Hill walk, peninsula walk and seal colony visit

Optional activities: Whale watching, swim with dolphins

Day 20: Kaikoura to Wellington

Today we'll travel north on a scenic drive along rugged coastal roads to Picton, where we catch the interisland ferry crossing over the Cook Strait back to Wellington. The evening in Wellington is free – why not discover some of this funky town's culinary delights at one of the top notch restaurants along Cuba Street.

Accommodation included: Central city hostel

Activities included: Ferry from Picton to Wellington

Day 21: Wellington to Auckland

Today is an express day via National Park back to New Zealand's largest city, Auckland. We stop along the way for photo opportunities and have lunch in National Park village, before heading back to Auckland for a late afternoon arrival. We hope you had a blast on your New Zealand journey! (B)

What's Included

- + Experienced tour guide
- + 20 nights' accommodation
- + Meals: 18 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 10 dinners
- + Multi-share accommodation (or upgrade to twin/double/single)
- + Bluebridge Ferry between North and South Islands

Activities Included

- + Walk to Cathedral Cove, Hahei
- + Kai cooking demonstration, Hahei
- + Hot Water Beach, Hahei
- + Maori cultural experience, including traditional hangi meal and interactive performance, Rotorua
- + 4WD eco-wilderness farm adventure, Blue Duck Station
- + Tongariro Alpine Crossing, Tongariro National Park
- + Winery cellar door visit, Marlborough
- + Walk in Abel Tasman National Park, Abel Tasman
- + Aqua Taxi ride or stand-up paddle board hire (SUP), Abel Tasman
- + Visit Cape Foulwind seal colony, West Coast
- + Punakaiki Pancake Rocks walk, West Coast
- + Walks around Lake Matheson and the Blue Pools, Mt Aspiring National Park

- + Jet Boat Ride in Makarora
- + Doubtful Sound overnight cruise, Fiordland National Park
- + Sea kayaking in Doubtful Sound, Fiordland National Park
- + Mountain biking in Wanaka
- + Walk on Hooker Valley track, Mt Cook National Park
- + Explore Lake Tekapo area
- + Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools and Spa
- + Conical Hill walk, Hanmer Springs
- + Seal spotting in Kaikoura

What to Bring

- + Camera
- + Sturdy walking shoes/boots
- + Warm clothing
- + Waterproof jacket
- + Hat & sunscreen
- + Bathers/towel
- + Water bottle
- + Toiletries
- + Motion sickness tablets
- + Insect repellent

Note:

- ^Upgrade accommodation is excluded in Hahei and Doubtful Sound.
- *Standard accommodation is 6-share in Whakahoro.
- Tours should be reconfirmed at least 48 hours in advance by calling +64 9 526 2140.
- Luggage should be restricted to 15kg in a single bag, plus a small day pack.