

24 Day North and South

Winter departures: May - September 2019

Start: Auckland

Finish: Auckland

Duration: 24 days/23 nights

Departs: Tuesdays & Thursdays

DAY 1: Auckland to Hahei

Haere mai (welcome)! Your Stray adventure kicks off in New Zealand's largest city, Auckland. We depart southbound for the Coromandel Peninsula via the old colonial town of Thames. We'll settle into our accommodation in Hahei before heading to Hot Water Beach, where you can dig your own natural spa pool in the sand (tide dependent).

Accommodation included: Hahei Holiday Resort - Exclusive accommodation by the waterfront

Activities included: Hot Water Beach visit

DAY 2: Hahei (free day)

Today you have a full free day to embrace the laid-back Coromandel lifestyle. Get up early to catch the sunrise on the beach, then take a scenic coastal walk or opt to kayak to stunning Cathedral Cove. Another option is to take a guided boat tour through the cliffs and caves of the nearby marine reserve.

Accommodation included: Hahei Holiday Resort - Exclusive accommodation by the waterfront

Optional activities: Kayaking, guided boat tour

Free activities: Walk to Cathedral Cove, sunrise on the beach

DAY 3: Hahei to Rotorua

We leave Hahei early travelling through to Paeroa, home of New Zealand's oldest and largest soft drinks company – L&P, where we'll stop for breakfast. Our drive today will take us through the Waikato region, known for its many dairy farms, rolling hills and the mighty Waikato River (the largest river in New Zealand). This afternoon you'll have free time to explore the sights and smells of Rotorua.

Accommodation included: Comfortable central city hostel

Optional activities: White-water rafting, zorbing, adrenaline fuelled adventure park (big swings, bungees and more)

Free activities: Whakarewarewa Redwood Forest walk

DAY 4: Rotorua (free day)

Often labelled the adventure capital of the North Island, you have a full free day in Rotorua to discover an area rich in Maori heritage, adventure activities and bubbling geothermal wonders. There are plenty of exciting local activities to get the adrenaline pumping, such as whitewater rafting, ziplining through native bush, zorbing or a truly unique guided jet boat adventure up to bath in a hot waterfall. Alternatively you can sign up for a guided tour through the world famous Hobbiton Movie Set. The choice is yours!

Accommodation included: YHA Rotorua - Comfortable central city hostel

Optional activities: Hobbiton Movie Set tour, Waitomo 'must do' caving options

Free activities: Walk around Ruakuri Reserve, Waitomo Valley Caves walk.

DAY 5: Rotorua to Lake Aniwhenua

Today we head further off the beaten track to the remote area of Lake Aniwhenua. A local Maori guide will share the area's history and lead us to visit the area's sacred archaeological sites. Tonight, your hosts will teach you how to prepare a traditional 'Hangi' (a feast cooked underground) and introduce you to a fun stick game to challenge your hand-eye coordination. For those visiting during school term, you will be both touched and inspired as you learn about a local community program in which Stray passengers are participating. (D)

Accommodation included: Kohutapu Lodge - Scenic lakefront lodge

Activities included: Kohutapu 'Strademark' Experience – guided tour of sacred Maori rock carvings, introduction to the Murupara area, delicious ground cooked hangi feast, dessert and continental breakfast

Optional activities: White water rafting, Zorbing, ziplining

DAY 6: Lake Aniwhenua (via Taupo) to Blue Duck Station

After breakfast we depart and head to Taupo to see the mighty Huka Falls, and for the brave we have time for skydiving! In the afternoon, we make our way to Blue Duck Station, an award-winning 7,200 acre high country farm that is both a working station and an environmental conservation leader. Settle in and spend the evening learning a little more about what makes this unique destination one of Stray's top rated stops. (B)

Accommodation included: Blue Duck Station - Country station lodge

Optional activities: Skydiving

Free activities: Huka Falls, enjoy your hosts' hospitality and stories on the local wildlife and history

DAY 7: Blue Duck Station (free day)

Today you have a free day to explore this truly amazing and secluded location in depth. The included 4WD farm tour will give you a tantalising taste of life in remote, rural New Zealand. There are plenty of other optional farming and conservation-based activities for you to experience around the property as well.

Accommodation included: Blue Duck Station - Country station lodge

Activities included: Eco-Warrior 4WD farm tour

Optional activities: Horse riding, clay pigeon shooting and goat hunting

Free activities: Walk around the property, take in the lush scenery, Kaiwhakauka waterfall

DAY 8: Blue Duck Station (via Tongariro) to Raetihi

We depart at 6am and head to the active volcanoes of the nearby dual World Heritage Site of Tongariro National Park. Today you get a chance to do what is rated as one of the world's best one day walks: the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Be prepared for some epic scenery as you walk around the base of "Mt Doom" from the Lord of the Rings films. Tonight, you can soothe your tired muscles from the big walk in the spa pool at your accommodation or relax with a celebratory drink by the fire.

Accommodation included: Snowy Waters Lodge - Historic residence with mountain views

Optional activities: Tongariro Alpine Crossing

Free activities: Taranaki Falls walk, visit the Volcanic Centre

DAY 9: Raetihi to Wellington

Today we head to Wellington, New Zealand's capital city, via Ohakune, Taihape and Bulls. You have the afternoon to cruise around the shops and cafes along popular Cuba Street, discover the New Zealand wonders on display in Te Papa Museum or stroll along the waterfront.

Accommodation included: Nomads Capital - Central city hostel

Free activities: Walk Oriental Parade, head up Mt Victoria for fantastic views, visit Te Papa National Museum

DAY 10: Wellington to Marahau (Abel Tasman)

We catch an early Bluebridge Ferry across the Cook Strait to the South Island where you meet the Stray bus in Picton. We will cruise through the famous Marlborough vineyard area and the coastal town of Nelson on our way to our amazing overnight stop of Marahau, right on the edge of the Abel Tasman National Park.

Accommodation included: The Barn - Unique accommodation on the edge of the national park

Included: Ferry crossing from Wellington to Picton

Optional activities: Wine tasting, Skydiving

Free Activities: Swim, walk, mussel tasting around the fire.

DAY 11: Marahau (Abel Tasman) (free day)

You have the entire day free to explore this stunning coastal national park renowned for its golden sand beaches. An Aqua Taxi ride is included in your tour, but you are welcome to upgrade to sailing or kayaking. Hike, sail, kayak or skydive – Abel Tasman National Park is gorgeous no matter which option you choose.

Accommodation included: The Barn - Unique accommodation on the edge of the national park.

Activities included: Walk part of the Abel Tasman track and catch an Aqua Taxi home.

Optional activities: Full day sailing trip, kayaking, skydiving, swim

DAY 12: Marahau (Abel Tasman) to Franz Josef

Buckle up for an awesome day driving down the incredibly scenic 'wild' West Coast, an area known for its untamed beaches and spectacular rainforest. We'll pass through Buller Gorge and down a stretch of road that was labelled one of the top ten drives in the world

by Lonely Planet. We'll view the seal colony at Cape Foulwind before continuing further down the coast to the geographic wonder of Punakaiki's Pancake Rocks and blowholes. Here we'll take a walk around these unique limestone rock formations and stop for a bite of lunch. Our next stop is the historic gold mining town of Greymouth to collect passengers connecting from Christchurch. From here we'll continue on, via Hokitika, to the quaint township of Franz Josef, home to the mighty Franz Josef Glacier.

Accommodation included: Rainforest Retreat - Lodge in the middle of the rainforest

Free activities: Buller Gorge, Cape Foulwind Seal Colony, Pancake Rocks and Blow holes, Hokitika greenstone store

DAY 13: Franz Josef (free day)

Enjoy a full free day to explore the glacier. Live your glacier walking dream with a guided tour through a world of ice on the glacier or hike from town to view it from below, then unwind in the relaxing spa pools afterwards.

Accommodation included: Rainforest Retreat - Lodge in the middle of the rainforest

Optional activities: Guided Glacier Heli-hike, Glacier Valley Walk

Free Activities: Any of the good bush walks in the area

DAY 14: Franz Josef to Wanaka

Depart early to take a walk along the shores of the amazing mirror-like Lake Matheson, and then travel through the mountainous Haast Pass and Makarora with plenty of photo stops along the way. We pass by the beautiful Lake Hawea on our way to arrive in Wanaka by late afternoon.

Accommodation included: Base Wanaka - Central hostel

Free activities: Lake Matheson walk, Ship Creek walk, Blue Pools walk, Thunder Creek Falls walk, explore Wanaka

DAY 15: Wanaka to Queenstown

This morning, head out to cycle some of New Zealand's most beautiful bike paths along the lake before we depart Wanaka and cruise down to the famous original A.J. Hackett bungy site, where you can take the plunge - if you dare! Then, it's on to the 'Adventure Capital of the World!' Queenstown offers an optional big (make that huge) night out with a variety of excellent restaurants, pubs and live music.

Accommodation included: Central hostel

Included activities: Scenic bike ride around the lake (suitable for all levels)

DAY 16: Queenstown (free day)

With so much to see and do in and around Queenstown, you need three full days to take it all in! To get you started, a couple highlight activities are included in your package. Today, you'll take an exhilarating jet boat ride amongst breathtaking scenery in the morning and then have the afternoon free for more Queenstown fun.

Accommodation included: Central hostel

Activities included: Jet boat ride

DAY 17: Queenstown (free day)

Depart early on a day long trip to the jaw dropping Doubtful Sound in stunning Fiordland National Park, where you'll take a three hour wilderness cruise and learn more about this incredible natural wonder. You will return to Queenstown in the evening. Lunch is not included (you can purchase sandwiches and snacks on the day), so make sure you bring lunch, snacks and water.

Accommodation included: Central hostel

Activities included: Doubtful Sound day trip

DAY 18: Queenstown (free day)

Make the most of your final free day doing any of the other incredible activities on offer or further exploring Queenstown. If you haven't already, we recommend riding the gondola or walking to the top of the hill for spectacular views of the town, lake and surrounding mountains.

Accommodation included: Central hostel

Optional activities: Any adventure activity that we mad Kiwis can dream up (bungy, swing, jetboating, skydiving, mountain biking, zipline, horse riding...), trip to Milford Sound

DAY 19: Queenstown to Aoraki/Mt Cook

Depart Queenstown early to drive over the Lindis Pass through the beautiful Mackenzie Country and past the vivid blue waters of Lake Pukaki. Then, we head north to our amazing stop at the base of New Zealand's highest mountain Aoraki/Mt Cook, arriving in the early afternoon.

Accommodation included: Mt Cook Backpacker Lodge - Stunning alpine lodge

Optional activities: Visit the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre, scenic flights, 4WD Tasman Valley tour

Free activities: Take photos of awe-inspiring scenery, do one of the many great short walks to the Hooker Glacial Lake

DAY 20: Mt Cook (via Tekapo) to Rangitata

Leaving Mt Cook, we make our way through a landscape made famous in the Lord of the Rings films. We'll stop to admire the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo and the Church of the Good Shepherd – a famous photo stop. Relax in the Tekapo hot pools, go snow tubing or ice skating or hike up to the Mt John observatory where you'll witness stunning views of the lake from above. After lunch, we will continue to our overnight stop in Rangitata Peel Forest. Tonight, we'll stay in one of Canterbury's original sheep stations.

Accommodation included: Rangitata Rafts Lodge - one of Canterbury's original sheep stations

Optional activities: Tekapo Hot Springs, Ice skating (April-Sept), Snow tubing (June-Sept)

Free activities: Visit Lake Tekapo, Mt John walk, Rangitata forest walks

DAY 21: Rangitata to Christchurch

This morning, you will have the opportunity to sign up to a Lord of the Rings tour or to explore the stunning Peel Forest scenery on horseback. Tonight, we'll stay in Christchurch where you can spend your afternoon exploring the city or getting involved in one of the

activities on offer.

Accommodation included: Comfortable, modern backpackers near the city centre

Optional paid activities: LOTR tour, horse trekking

Free activities: Explore Christchurch by foot, check out the Cardboard Cathedral and inner-city street art

DAY 22: Christchurch to Kaikoura

We depart early this morning for a beautiful drive up the coast to seaside Kaikoura. You have the afternoon free for activities to check out the amazing marine wildlife that call this area home. Go on a whale and dolphin spotting tour, search for seals sunning themselves at Goose Bay or walk to the peninsula lookout for breathtaking views.

Accommodation included: Dusky Lodge - warm modern hostel

Optional activities: Whale watching by boat or by plane, swimming with dolphins, guided fishing trip

Free activities: Walk around the peninsula and up to the lookout

DAY 23: Kaikoura (via Picton) to Wellington

Leaving Kaikoura this morning, we wind our way up the rugged coastal roads for the top of the South Island. When we get to Picton there is time to stretch your legs and grab some lunch before we board the ferry to carry us over the Cook Strait to Wellington where you can spend the evening checking out the fantastic craft breweries and restaurants of the capital city.

Accommodation included: Nomads Capital - Central Wellington hostel

Included: Ferry crossing from Picton to Wellington

DAY 24: Wellington to Auckland

Today is a very early departure out of Wellington - this is an express day via Raetihi to Auckland, where your trip comes to an end when you arrive in the early evening. We hope you had a blast on your Stray Journey!

Tour Inclusions

All transport: You'll travel in our comfortable mid-sized coaches around New Zealand and your inter-island transport between the North and South Island is included too.

Experienced tour guide: Expect entertaining commentary, insight into local secrets and extra support from your tour guide.

Accommodation: 23 nights' dorm-share accommodation in a variety of quality backpacker hostels, wilderness lodges and cabins. Upgrades to twin and single rooms are available.

Top rated activities:

- Lake Aniwhenua: Kohutapu experience – guided tour of sacred Maori rock carvings, introduction to the Murupara area, Hangi and Maori bread cooking demonstration, delicious ground cooked hangi feast, dessert and continental breakfast.
- Blue Duck Station: Eco-Warrior 4WD farm tour
- Marahau/Abel Tasman: Aqua Taxi
- Wanaka: Scenic bike ride around the lake
- Queenstown: Jet boat ride
- Queenstown: Day trip to Doubtful Sound

What's not included?

- Additional activities not specified as included on the itinerary. These can be booked via your guide, often at an exclusive Stray special price!
- No meals are included with Winter Itineraries except for at Lake Aniwhenua (includes afternoon tea, dinner and breakfast).

What to Bring

Sturdy walking shoes (ankle high), swimming gear, hat and sunscreen, motion sickness tablets, water bottle, towel and toiletries, warm clothing and waterproof jacket, insect repellent, camera.

Please note:

- During Winter our Stray Journeys are operated on our hop-on hop-off bus network. This means some passengers on your trip who are travelling on flexible passes will be hopping on and off the bus. Stray Journeys passengers will follow a fixed itinerary with specified inclusions. You can expect to travel on a modern comfortable bus (mid-coach) and to be led by a knowledgeable Driver Guide.
- No meals are included with Winter Itineraries except for at Lake Aniwhenua (includes afternoon tea, dinner and breakfast). Winter itineraries are discounted to compensate for this.