

SOUTHERN CIRCLE (Previously Short Q)

Start: Queenstown*

Finish: Queenstown*

Minimum Days: 8-10

Recommended: 1.5+ weeks

** This pass can start or finish anywhere on this route.*

Queenstown to Aoraki/Mt Cook

Haere mai (welcome!) You meet the Stray bus in the morning and head over the Lindis Pass through the beautiful Mackenzie region and past picturesque Lake Pukaki on the way to our amazing stop at the base of New Zealand's highest mountain, Aoraki/Mt Cook. We arrive in the early afternoon with time to do a 4WD & Argo Tour, check out the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre or do one of the many great short walks in the park. If it's a clear night, make sure you head outside to experience one of the best stargazing spots in the country. There are some incredible longer walks to do if you want to hop off the bus for a few days (we'd recommend you leave climbing Mt Cook to the experienced mountaineers though).

Accommodation: Stunning alpine lodge

Optional paid activities: Alpine Argo tour, visit the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre

Free activities: Take photos of awe-inspiring scenery, do one of the many great short walks to the Hooker glacial lake (weather dependent), stargazing

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 (winter only) 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 a cosy lodge at one of Canterbury's original sheep stations.

Accommodation: Lodge on a Canterbury sheep station

Optional paid activities: Tekapo Hot Springs, ice skating (April-Sept), snow tubing (June-Sept), stargazing (must hop off in Tekapo)

Free activities: Visit Lake Tekapo, Church of the Good Shepherd, Mt John Observatory walk, Rangitata forest walks

Rangitata to Christchurch

This morning, you can sign up for top-notch grade 5 white water rafting on the Rangitata River at the foot of the Southern Alps or choose to explore the stunning Peel Forest scenery

on horseback. Tonight, we'll stay in Christchurch, a city where old meets new, as the rebuild continues following the devastating 2011 earthquake. You will find New Zealand's most modern architecture nestled next to some of the country's oldest buildings. Spend your afternoon wandering the city streets and laneways to discover creative street art intended to bring cheer and colour to a city once buried in rubble.

Accommodation: Comfortable, modern backpackers near the city centre

Optional paid activities: White water rafting (summer only), horse trekking

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

Christchurch (via Greymouth) to Franz Josef

Your Southern Alps transfer will be on the Atomic Shuttle Bus, unless you've opted to upgrade to the highly regarded TranzAlpine Scenic Train. You'll start the day by travelling through the stunning Arthur's Pass to the historic gold mining town of Greymouth on the West Coast. Your new Driver Guide and group will meet you outside the Greymouth train station at 1.00pm. From here we'll make a stop in Hokitika (the best place to buy 'Pounamu', a native greenstone) before continuing on to the quaint township of Franz Josef, home of the famous Franz Josef Glacier and our base for the next two nights.

NB. Please contact the Stray office at least 48 hours before your Christchurch departure to confirm your transfer details and departure times.

Accommodation: Lodge in the middle of the rainforest

Optional Paid Activities: Upgrade to Tranzalpine Scenic Train (+\$99NZD)

Free activities: Hokitika greenstone store, chill out in the spa pool at your accommodation

Franz Josef

Enjoy a free day to get out and experience the Franz Josef Glacier, an iconic highlight of the West Coast. The best way to navigate the maze of ice on the Franz Josef Glacier is with a guided tour, which consistently ranks as a favourite activity amongst Stray travellers. The most popular trip features a short heli-hop onto the glacier with a guided educational tour on the ice and includes entry to the local hot pools afterwards. Other options include kayaking, visiting the glacial terminal face for spectacular photos or doing one of the many excellent bush hikes in the region.

Accommodation: Lodge in the middle of the rainforest

Optional paid activities: Glacier heli-hike (entry to hot pools included), kayaking, skydiving

Free activities: Many excellent bush hikes, relax in one of NZ's largest spa pools at your accommodation

Franz Josef (via Fox Glacier) to Wanaka

It's time to leave the West Coast behind. We stop in the morning for pick-ups at Fox Glacier before heading to the amazing mirror-like Lake Matheson to stretch our legs with a short walk. Then, we'll travel inland through the mountainous Haast Pass and Makarora towards Wanaka. This is another superbly scenic drive and we'll stop for plenty of photo ops along the way as we drive from rainforests to mountains, through beech forest and past great lakes. We'll pass by the beautiful Lake Hawea and arrive in Wanaka late-afternoon in time to

enjoy this picturesque lakeside town.

Accommodation: Central Wanaka hostel

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

Wanaka to Queenstown

Kick start your day with a brisk walk up Mt Iron, an early morning skydive or learn to fly a stunt plane over Wanaka. At mid-morning we'll pack up and make our way to Queenstown, known in New Zealand as the 'Adventure Capital of the World' and the spiritual home of bungy jumping. We stop on our way into town at Kawarau Bridge, the first commercial bungy jumping site in the world, for your chance to take the big leap of faith. Queenstown offers an optional big (make that huge!) night out with heaps of restaurants, pubs and live music to check out.

Accommodation: Central hostel close to all the action

Optional paid activities: Puzzling World, skydiving, mountain biking, pilot your own stunt plane or learn to fly and take a friend for free, bungy jumping

Free activities: Walk Mt Iron, watch people jumping off a bridge!

Queenstown

Spend a free day in Queenstown making the most of the wide range of activities on offer. With a buzzy night life, beautiful mountain scenery and an exciting outdoor lifestyle, it's easy to understand why Stray passengers often hop off here to spend extra time exploring. Options include: bungy or swing, zipline tours, canyoning, jet boating, skiing (in winter), skydiving, local bush walks, or just spend the day relaxing and enjoying the stunning scenery. Whichever way you choose to wrap up your Stray adventure, we hope you've had an absolute blast!

Optional paid activities: Any adventure activity that we mad Kiwis can dream up (bungy, swing, jet boating, skydiving, mountain biking, zipline, horse riding...)

Free activities: Fabulous walks, take in beautiful views surrounding this cool resort town

This itinerary is a guide. Given the spontaneous nature of our trips and lack of control over New Zealand's weather(!), what we do each day might occasionally vary.