NEXTRIP

Discover New Zealand: Both Islands in 17 Days

NEW ZEALAND · AUCKLAND · ROTORUA · CHRISTCHURCH · QUEENSTOWN · DUNEDIN

17D 16N | 25–30 PAX | STARTS AUCKLAND | NOT INCLUDED

See New Zealand from Auckland to the Catlins over 17 unhurried days, combining iconic sights with places many standard routes overlook. Travel through the geothermal North Island, cross Cook Strait by ferry and follow the South Island through Kaikoura, Christchurch, the Mackenzie Basin, Queenstown and Milford Sound before continuing to Dunedin and the wildlife-rich Catlins coast. Included experiences range from Hobbiton, Wai-O-Tapu and Te Puia to Napier's Art Deco district, Te Papa, a Milford Sound cruise and a private Catlins day tour. With accommodation, transfers and guided transport arranged, this journey suits travellers who want both islands covered properly—including the rewarding southern landscapes beyond Queenstown.

DAY

01

AUCKLAND · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Arrive Auckland

Your arrival in Auckland is met with a private transfer to your hotel. The city sits on an isthmus between the Waitematā and Manukau harbours, a geography that becomes clear once you are moving through it. The volcanic cones dotting the city skyline are the remnants of 53 separate eruption points on a field that geologists consider dormant rather than extinct.

Auckland Waterfront — Viaduct Harbour and the Wynyard Quarter are within easy reach of central hotels. The ferry terminal connects to Devonport and Waiheke Island for those arriving early in the day.

Sky Tower — At 328 metres, the observation deck at 186 metres gives the clearest overhead view of Auckland's two-harbour layout. Entry own expense; the Orbit restaurant at the top completes one rotation per hour.

OVERNIGHT

Auckland

DAY

02

AUCKLAND · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

Auckland — city highlights and the west coast

The Best of Both Worlds tour gives Auckland proper attention before the itinerary moves south. The morning covers the city's main viewpoints and harbour; the afternoon crosses the Waitākere Ranges to the west coast — a different Auckland from the harbour city, and one that most visitors on shorter itineraries miss entirely.

Auckland City Morning — A small-group tour of the city's elevated viewpoints, harbour promenades, and central landmarks. The guide covers the city's volcanic and Māori history alongside the modern waterfront development.

Waitākere Ranges and West Coast — The Waitākere Ranges run along Auckland's western edge, cloaked in native kauri and tawa forest. The west coast beyond them has black iron-sand beaches formed by volcanic material from the Taranaki eruption field to the south. Piha, the most well-known beach, sits at the base of a headland called Lion Rock — a basalt plug from an ancient eruption.

Optional: Auckland Harbour Dinner Cruise on return (own expense).

OVERNIGHT

Auckland

DAY

03

ROTORUA · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Auckland to Rotorua — via Hobbiton

The coach heads south through the Waikato to Matamata and the Alexander farm that Peter Jackson's location scouts chose in 1998 as The Shire. The set was permanently rebuilt in aluminium and concrete for The Hobbit trilogy after the original wooden structures were dismantled, and the specialist guide makes the visit coherent whether or not you know the films well.

Hobbiton Movie Set Signature Tour — A guided walk through 44 hobbit holes, the mill, the double-arched bridge, and the gardens of Bag End. The guide covers both the production history and the logistics of the permanent rebuild. Allow 2 hours on set.

Banquet Feast — A sit-down lunch at the Party Marquee, adjacent to the Green Dragon Inn. Included. This is the Signature Tour version, which includes the feast rather than just a drink at the pub.

Drive to Rotorua — Approximately 45 minutes from Matamata. The sulphur on arrival is the hydrothermal field; it intensifies near the parks.

MEALS

Lunch

OVERNIGHT

Rotorua

DAY

04

ROTORUA · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

Rotorua — geothermal parks and Te Po at Te Puia

A full day across two geothermal parks followed by the Te Po evening at Te Puia. Position for the Lady Knox Geyser at 10:15am before the Wai-O-Tapu circuit — the geyser is a natural start to the morning.

Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland — 27 kilometres south of Rotorua. The Champagne Pool is a 65-metre-wide hot spring at 74°C whose orange rim comes from antimony and arsenic deposits along the edge. The Lady Knox Geyser erupts at 10:15am daily, induced with soap powder; the geyser mechanism is natural, only the timing is managed.

Waimangu Volcanic Valley — Created by the 1886 eruption of Mt Tarawera, which tore a 17-kilometre rift through the landscape in four hours. Inferno Crater Lake at 65°C cycles between blue-green and grey on a roughly 38-day schedule. The valley floor has been regrowing native bush since the eruption.

Te Po at Te Puia — Evening at Te Puia's Indigenous Experience on the Whakarewarewa geothermal field: pōwhiri welcome, kapa haka and wero (challenge), hāngī-style buffet dinner, and hot chocolate on the geyser terrace beside the Pōhutu Geyser — the largest active geyser in the Southern Hemisphere at up to 30 metres.

MEALS

Dinner

OVERNIGHT

Rotorua

DAY

05

NAPIER · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Rotorua to Napier — through the central plateau

The drive south from Rotorua to Napier passes Lake Taupo — a caldera lake 616 square kilometres in area, formed by the Taupo supervolcanic eruption around 1,800 years ago, still the largest eruption recorded in the last 5,000 years anywhere on Earth. The road continues through the Hawke's Bay hill country before descending to the coast.

Lake Taupo — New Zealand's largest lake by surface area, sitting inside the caldera of the Taupo volcano. The town of Taupo on the northern shore is a standard coach stop; the lake is visible for much of the drive south.

Hawke's Bay — The region surrounding Napier is one of New Zealand's primary wine-producing areas, planted predominantly in Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chardonnay on the Heretaunga Plains. The drive through the hill country gives a reasonable overview of the terrain before the city.

Napier — The city sits on a peninsula jutting into Hawke Bay, rebuilt entirely in the Art Deco style following the 1931 earthquake that levelled the original town in two minutes.

OVERNIGHT

Napier

DAY

06

NAPIER · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

Napier — Art Deco by vintage car

The 1931 Hawke's Bay earthquake killed 256 people and destroyed nearly every building in Napier. The rebuild happened fast — within two years, at the height of the Art Deco movement — and the result is one of the most coherent concentrations of 1930s architecture outside of Miami Beach. The vintage car tour gives the right pace for the streetscape.

Vintage Car Highlights Tour — A guided city tour in a period-correct vehicle through the main Art Deco precinct. The guide covers the architectural context, the earthquake history, and the specific buildings that define the Napier style. Included. Duration approximately 45 minutes.

Napier City Centre — Free time after the tour to walk the main streets at your own pace. The Emerson Street and Tennyson Street precincts are the core of the Art Deco district. The Hawke's Bay Museum and Art Gallery on the waterfront has a permanent earthquake exhibition.

Optional: Twilight Wine Odyssey — an evening cycle tour through the Hawke's Bay wine district (own expense, seasonal).

OVERNIGHT

Napier

DAY

07

WELLINGTON · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Napier to Wellington

The drive south from Napier to Wellington takes around four hours through the Manawatu Gorge and the Hutt Valley before the descent into the capital. Wellington sits at the southern tip of the North Island on a natural harbour ringed by steep hills; the wind is consistent and the city is compact enough to walk most of it.

Manawatu Gorge Route — The drive through the Tararua Range gives a clear sense of the central North Island's hill country before the flat Manawatu plains and the final approach to Wellington. The SH2 coastal option via Masterton is an alternative route depending on road conditions.

Wellington Waterfront — The city's central waterfront runs from the ferry terminal at Interislander to Te Papa at the eastern end. Lambton Quay, Courtenay Place, and Cuba Street are all within 15 minutes' walk of each other in the compact central city.

Optional: Zealandia by Night Tour — a guided nocturnal wildlife tour inside the Zealandia ecosanctuary, 2 kilometres from the city centre (own expense).

OVERNIGHT

Wellington

DAY

08

WELLINGTON · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

Wellington — Cable Car, Te Papa and the capital

Wellington gets a full day, and the two included activities are the right anchor points for it. The Cable Car gives you the city's topography in four minutes; Te Papa requires at least two hours to do the permanent collections justice.

Wellington Cable Car — A funicular from Lambton Quay to Kelburn, running since 1902. Return ticket included. The top station opens onto the Botanic Garden and a clear view over the harbour and the Kaikoura Ranges on a clear day. The Carter Observatory is adjacent.

Te Papa Tongarewa (Museum of New Zealand) — New Zealand's national museum on the waterfront, opened in 1998. General admission included. The Māori collections on the lower floors — including a full meeting house (marae) — and the natural history floor covering New Zealand's geological origins are the two most substantive sections. The guided tour option (own expense) adds approximately 60 minutes and is worth it for the cultural context.

Optional: Lord of the Rings Half Day Tour covering Wellington filming locations used in the trilogy (own expense).

OVERNIGHT

Wellington

DAY

09

KAIKOURA · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Wellington to Kaikoura — ferry through the Marlborough Sounds

The Cook Strait crossing is the transition point between the two islands and earns its place as a travel experience in its own right. The Interislander ferry departs Wellington and takes three hours to reach Picton — the first hour in the open strait, the final 45 minutes threading through the drowned river valleys of the Marlborough Sounds.

Cook Strait Ferry — Included. The strait is 22 kilometres wide at its narrowest point; the average crossing is 3 hours. The Sounds section at the Picton end is the visual highlight: the Queen Charlotte Sound branches into a series of sheltered inlets with very little development visible from the water.

Coastal Pacific Train — In summer season, the train runs from Picton along the Kaikoura coast to Christchurch, passing through the section where the Southern Alps meet the Pacific at distances sometimes under 100 metres. Included in season. At other times a coach transfer is provided.

Kaikoura — A small seaside town 180 kilometres south of Picton, sitting on a peninsula where a submarine canyon brings nutrient-rich deep water close to the surface. The result is a marine ecosystem that supports sperm whales, dusky dolphins, New Zealand fur seals, and multiple albatross species within a few kilometres of the shore.

OVERNIGHT

Kaikoura

DAY

10

CHRISTCHURCH · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Kaikoura to Christchurch — peninsula seals and the Canterbury coast

The morning is spent on the Kaikoura Peninsula before the afternoon transfer south to Christchurch. The peninsula juts into the ocean from the base of the Kaikoura Ranges; the tip is accessible on foot and is one of the more reliable places in New Zealand to observe New Zealand fur seals in their natural environment without a boat.

Kaikoura Peninsula Sightseeing Tour (3 hours) — Included. The tour covers the peninsula's headland for sea views and rock formations, the fur seal colony at Point Kean, and the town's whaling history. Seal numbers vary by season; summer brings larger numbers hauled out on the rocks. The guide covers the unusual marine geography that makes Kaikoura a globally significant whale-watching location.

Transfer to Christchurch — Approximately 2.5 hours south along the SH1 coastal highway. The drive follows the base of the Kaikoura Ranges with the Pacific on the left for most of the journey.

Christchurch — The South Island's largest city, in a long process of rebuilding since the February 2011 earthquake. The central city has changed substantially; the Avon River precinct and the transitional architecture of the rebuild are worth an evening walk.

OVERNIGHT

Christchurch

DAY

11

QUEENSTOWN · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 3

Christchurch to Queenstown — via Lake Tekapo and Aoraki Mt Cook

A long driving day through the Mackenzie Basin — one of the most geologically distinctive landscapes in the South Island. The Canterbury Plains give way to the tussock high country after the foothills, and the first lake stop is the turn in the road.

Church of the Good Shepherd, Lake Tekapo — A small stone chapel built in 1935 on the lakeshore, with a plain glass window behind the altar that frames the lake and mountains. A brief stop. The lake's turquoise colour comes from glacial rock flour suspended in the water.

Aoraki Mt Cook Village — Free time at the village beneath New Zealand's highest peak at 3,724 metres. The Hooker Valley Track runs from the village to the terminal lake below the Hooker Glacier; allow 90 minutes if you want to walk it. The approach road along Lake Pukaki is the visual introduction to the mountain.

Lindis Pass (971 metres) and Cromwell — The route to Queenstown continues through the Lindis Pass and the fruit-growing region of Cromwell before the final descent through the Kawarau Gorge.

OVERNIGHT

Queenstown

DAY

12

QUEENSTOWN · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 3

Queenstown — free day

Queenstown is a compact lakeside town on Lake Wakatipu, ringed by the Remarkables and Cecil Peak. The town has built its reputation on activity tourism — bungy jumping was commercialised here in 1988, and the industry has expanded significantly since. The free day is yours to structure: the options range from the adrenaline circuit to a slow morning on the TSS Earnslaw steamship.

Skyline Gondola — A cable car from the town centre to Bob's Peak at 450 metres, with views across the lake and the Remarkables range. Luge track available at the top. Own expense.

Shotover Jetboat — High-speed jet boat through the narrow Shotover River canyon. Own expense.

Arrowtown — A 20-minute drive from Queenstown, the former gold rush settlement has its original main street intact and a Chinese settlement precinct from the 1860s gold rush era. Own expense.

All optional activities bookable through your hotel or guide.

OVERNIGHT

Queenstown

DAY

13

QUEENSTOWN · OVERNIGHT 3 OF 3

Milford Sound — Fiordland's granite walls and year-round waterfalls

Approximately 12 hours door to door — worth knowing before you start. The drive through Fiordland National Park is 120 kilometres each way through terrain that has received minimal human modification. Mirror lakes, the Homer Tunnel, and the hanging valleys above the main road are the landmarks on the way in.

Mirror Lakes — Small tarns off the Te Anau–Milford road that reflect the Earl Mountains when the surface is calm. A 10-minute stop.

Homer Tunnel — 1.2 kilometres through the Darran Mountains, opened in 1954. Single lane; traffic managed by lights. The approach through the hanging valley above the portal is one of the more dramatic road moments on the drive.

Milford Sound Fiord Cruise — The fiord is 15 kilometres long with granite and gneiss walls rising 1,200 metres out of the water. Mitre Peak at 1,692 metres is the most photographed point. Stirling Falls and Lady Bowen Falls run year-round; the vessel passes close enough to feel the spray on calm days. Lunch included on board.

Return to Queenstown by coach, arriving early evening.

MEALS

Lunch

OVERNIGHT

Queenstown

DAY

14

DUNEDIN · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Queenstown to Dunedin

The drive from Queenstown to Dunedin takes approximately three hours through the Clutha Valley wine country and the Taieri Plain. Dunedin is the South Island's second-largest city, built at the head of Otago Harbour on wealth from the 1861 gold rush. The Scottish settlers who arrived in the 1840s left an architectural legacy that still defines the city centre.

Alexandra and the Clutha Valley — The road south from Queenstown passes through Central Otago's stone fruit and wine-growing district before following the Clutha River to the coast.

Dunedin Railway Station — The 1906 Flemish Renaissance station on Anzac Square is the city's most photographed building and one of the most elaborately decorated railway stations in the Southern Hemisphere. Worth a 20-minute stop.

Otago Peninsula — The 30-kilometre peninsula east of the city is home to a royal albatross colony at Taiaroa Head — the only mainland albatross colony in the world — alongside little blue penguins and New Zealand fur seals. Peninsula visits are own expense; your hotel can advise on operators.

OVERNIGHT

Dunedin

DAY

15

DUNEDIN · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

The Catlins — New Zealand's least-visited coastline

The Catlins is the stretch of coastline and forest between the Clutha River and Bluff at the southern tip of the South Island. It does not feature on most New Zealand itineraries, which is one of the reasons it remains in good condition.

Purakaunui Falls — A three-tiered waterfall dropping through a curtain of native podocarp forest, 20 minutes from the main highway. A short walk from the carpark; the falls are one of the most photographed natural features in the Catlins.

Curio Bay — A petrified forest at the southern end of the Catlins coast, 180 million years old and exposed at low tide. Yellow-eyed penguins (hoiho) come ashore here in the late afternoon; Hector's dolphins, the world's smallest dolphin, are regularly spotted in the bay.

Nugget Point (Tokata) — A lighthouse headland at the tip of a rocky promontory, with a fur seal colony, spotted shags, and occasionally elephant seals on the rocks below. One of the Catlins' most distinctive landscape features.

Catlins Experience Private Tour — Included. A full-day private tour from Dunedin covering the main Catlins sites with a guide who can cover the ecology and geology in detail.

OVERNIGHT

Dunedin

DAY

16

CHRISTCHURCH · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Dunedin to Christchurch — via Oamaru

The drive north from Dunedin to Christchurch is around four hours, running up the coast through Oamaru and across the Canterbury Plains. Oamaru is worth the stop: the Victorian Precinct on Harbour Street has a concentration of Ōamaru stone buildings from the 1880s that survived long enough to be heritage-listed rather than demolished.

Oamaru Victorian Precinct — Harbour Street's limestone buildings from the 1880s boom years, now housing galleries, cafes, and independent shops. The Whitestone Civic Trust has restored several of the most significant facades. Allow 30–45 minutes.

Braided River Crossings — The Rangitata, Rakaia, and Waimakariri rivers cross the Canterbury Plains between Oamaru and Christchurch as wide, shallow braided channels. The scale of the riverbeds — sometimes a kilometre wide, carrying a fraction of their maximum flow — is one of the more unusual features of the Canterbury landscape.

Optional: Christchurch Tram Dinner on arrival in the city (own expense).

OVERNIGHT

Christchurch

DAY

17

CHRISTCHURCH

Depart Christchurch

The tour concludes with a departure transfer to Christchurch Airport. Your guide confirms pick-up timing the evening before based on your flight schedule.

Christchurch Airport (CHC) — International departures from CHC. Allow at least three hours for international check-in and immigration. The terminal has a reasonable range of dining options airside.

Optional: If your flight departs in the afternoon, the International Antarctic Centre adjacent to the airport is a substantive two-hour stop — covering the history and science of Antarctic exploration with a live penguin encounter and a storm simulation room (own expense).

YOUR TRIP AT A GLANCE

What's Included

DEPARTS FROM	FLIGHTS	GROUP SIZE
Auckland	**Not included**	**25–30 pax**

INCLUDED

- check Meet and greet arrival transfer in Auckland
- check 16 nights accommodation
- check Best of Both Worlds Auckland city and west coast half-day tour
- check Auckland to Rotorua guided coach tour via Hobbiton Movie Set
- check Hobbiton Movie Set Signature Tour with banquet feast
- check Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland admission and guided tour
- check Waimangu Volcanic Valley admission and guided tour
- check Te Po Indigenous Evening Experience with buffet dinner at Te Puia
- check Napier Vintage Car Highlights Tour
- check Wellington Cable Car return trip
- check Te Papa Museum general admission
- check Cook Strait ferry crossing Wellington to Picton
- check Coastal Pacific train Picton to Kaikoura (summer season only — coach transfer at other times)
- check Kaikoura Peninsula sightseeing tour (3 hours)
- check Milford Sound day tour with fiord cruise and lunch
- check Catlins Experience private day tour

NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Optional activities and entrance fees
- Personal expenses, laundry and minibar

check Departure transfer to Christchurch Airport