The Full Circuit: North & South Island, New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND · AUCKLAND · ROTORUA · CHRISTCHURCH · QUEENSTOWN

11D 10N | 25–30 PAX | STARTS AUCKLAND | NOT INCLUDED

Experience both New Zealand islands over eleven days, with meaningful time at the landscapes and attractions that define each. Begin in Auckland before visiting Hobbiton, Rotorua's Wai-O-Tapu and Waimangu geothermal parks, and a Māori cultural evening at Te Puia. Fly independently to Christchurch, cross the Southern Alps aboard the TranzAlpine, then continue through the West Coast glaciers to Queenstown and Milford Sound. The journey closes through Aoraki Mt Cook and Lake Tekapo. Ten nights' accommodation, airport transfers, guided transport, rail travel and key experiences are included; the domestic flight between islands is not. This itinerary suits travellers seeking one comprehensive route through New Zealand's contrasting geothermal, Alpine and fiord landscapes.

DAY

01

AUCKLAND · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Arrive Auckland

A private transfer meets you on arrival and takes you into the city, which sits on an isthmus between two harbours — a geography you'll notice from almost any elevated point, since the volcanic cones dotted across the skyline are the remnants of 53 separate eruption sites on a field that's dormant, not extinct. If there's daylight left, Viaduct Harbour and the Wynyard Quarter are an easy walk from most central hotels, or take the lift up the Sky Tower for the clearest view of how the city's two harbours fit together.

OVERNIGHT

Auckland

DAY

02

ROTORUA · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Auckland to Rotorua — via Hobbiton

The coach heads south through the Waikato to a working sheep farm in Matamata that Peter Jackson's scouts picked in 1998 for The Shire — rebuilt permanently in aluminium and concrete for The Hobbit trilogy, and maintained at a level of detail a good guide knows how to point out. The walk through 44 hobbit holes, the mill and Bag End's gardens takes about two hours, with a complimentary drink included at the Green Dragon Inn before the drive continues on to Rotorua, where the sulphur smell on approach means you've arrived.

OVERNIGHT

Rotorua

DAY

03

ROTORUA · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

Rotorua — geothermal parks and Te Po at Te Puia

Two contrasting geothermal parks fill the day before an included evening at Te Puia. Wai-O-Tapu's Champagne Pool, a 65-metre hot spring rimmed orange by mineral deposits, is the headline, timed around the Lady Knox Geyser's 10:15am eruption; Waimangu, born from the 1886 Tarawera eruption, centres on Inferno Crater Lake, which cycles colour on a roughly 38-day rhythm. In the evening, Te Po at Te Puia brings a welcome ceremony, kapa haka performance and hāngī-style buffet dinner on the terrace beside the Pōhutu Geyser, the largest active geyser in the Southern Hemisphere.

MEALS

Dinner

OVERNIGHT

Rotorua

DAY

04

CHRISTCHURCH · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Rotorua to Christchurch — domestic flight (not included)

The crossing from North Island to South Island today is by domestic flight — about two hours on Air New Zealand — and it isn't included in the tour, so book it independently well ahead, since this sector affects the rest of the ground arrangements. Christchurch, the South Island's largest city, has been substantially rebuilt since the 2011 earthquake and sits between the Pacific and the Southern Alps foothills; if there's time before dark, the Avon River precinct is worth an evening walk.

OVERNIGHT

Christchurch

DAY

05

GREYMOUTH · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Christchurch to Greymouth — TranzAlpine and Punakaiki

The TranzAlpine departs Christchurch in the morning for a 224-kilometre, roughly 4.5-hour run to Greymouth — across the Canterbury Plains, up the Waimakariri Gorge, through Arthur's Pass and down the western face of the Alps to the coast, with open-air viewing carriages for most of the mountain section. From Greymouth, the coach continues north to Punakaiki, where 30-million-year-old limestone has eroded into stacked pancake-like layers, and the blowholes are worth timing around high tide.

OVERNIGHT

Greymouth

DAY

06

FRANZ JOSEF · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Greymouth to Franz Josef — via Shantytown

The morning starts at Shantytown Heritage Park, a recreation of a 1860s West Coast gold rush settlement with a gold-panning demonstration included, before the coach heads south along the narrow strip between the Tasman Sea and the Southern Alps to Franz Josef. The glacier here descends from 2,700 metres to near sea level through temperate rainforest — a combination that exists almost nowhere else — though like most glaciers it has retreated significantly in recent decades, which is worth knowing before you see it.

OVERNIGHT

Franz Josef

DAY

07

QUEENSTOWN · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 3

Franz Josef to Queenstown — through the West Coast and Central Otago

Most of the day goes to the drive south — 4.5 to 5 hours through Fox Glacier township, inland over Haast Pass, the lowest crossing of the Southern Alps, and into Central Otago's dry schist country. The transition from West Coast rainforest to drier landscape happens within a few kilometres of the 563-metre summit. A brief stop in lakeside Wānaka breaks up the drive before the descent into Queenstown, ringed by the Remarkables and Cecil Peak on Lake Wakatipu.

OVERNIGHT

Queenstown

DAY

08

QUEENSTOWN · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 3

Queenstown — free day

Queenstown's reputation runs on bungy and jetboats, but the free day is wider than that if you want it to be. The Skyline Gondola climbs to Bob's Peak at 450 metres for the classic view over Lake Wakatipu and the Remarkables; the Glenorchy road follows the lake's northern shore into the river flats used for several Lord of the Rings scenes; and Arrowtown's gold-rush streetscape is a slower, historical alternative. All bookable through your hotel or guide, at your own pace and own expense.

OVERNIGHT

Queenstown

DAY

09

MILFORD SOUND · OVERNIGHT 3 OF 3

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

It's a 12-hour day door to door, worth knowing before you start. The drive through Fiordland covers 120 kilometres each way past mirror lakes reflecting the Earl Mountains on calm mornings and through the single-lane Homer Tunnel, cut through the Darran Mountains in 1954. The reward is the fiord itself — granite walls rising 1,200 metres straight out of the water, Mitre Peak at 1,692 metres the most photographed point, with Stirling and Lady Bowen Falls running year-round and lunch served on board.

MEALS

Lunch

OVERNIGHT

Queenstown

DAY

10

CHRISTCHURCH · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Queenstown to Christchurch — via Aoraki Mt Cook and Lake Tekapo

The longest drive of the trip is also the most varied — the Kawarau Gorge, Cromwell, and Lindis Pass at 971 metres, tussock on both sides and one of the more photogenic stretches of road in the South Island, before Lake Pukaki's turquoise water leads you to Aoraki Mt Cook Village at the base of New Zealand's highest peak. A stop at the Church of the Good Shepherd on Lake Tekapo's shore — a stone chapel from 1935 framing the lake and mountains through plain glass — closes out the drive to Christchurch.

OVERNIGHT

Christchurch

DAY

11

CHRISTCHURCH · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Depart Christchurch

The tour ends with a departure transfer to Christchurch Airport, timed the evening before around your flight. Allow at least three hours for international check-in and immigration. If you've got an afternoon departure and haven't been yet, the International Antarctic Centre next to the terminal is a solid two-hour stop — live penguins, a storm simulator, and the kind of museum that's worth the detour on a layover day.

OVERNIGHT

—

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 10 nights accommodation
- check Auckland to Rotorua guided coach tour via Hobbiton Movie Set
- check Hobbiton Movie Set Tour
- 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 Transfer to Christchurch Railway Station
- check TranzAlpine scenic train Christchurch to Greymouth (subject to track maintenance)
- check Punakaiki Pancake Rocks and Blowholes self-guided walk
- check Shantytown Heritage Park visit
- check Greymouth to Franz Josef coach transfer
- check Franz Josef to Queenstown coach transfer
- check Milford Sound day tour with fiord cruise and lunch
- check Queenstown to Christchurch tour via Mt Cook Village and Lake Tekapo
- check Departure transfer to Christchurch Airport

NOT INCLUDED

- Domestic flight Rotorua to Christchurch (Day 4) — to be booked independently
- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Optional activities and entrance fees
- Personal expenses, laundry and minibar