

Christchurch to Wellington 12 Day South Adrenalin Junkie

Day 1: Christchurch – Lake Tekapo

This morning we'll explore iconic downtown Christchurch and your guide will show you the cool ways the city has reunited and is being rebuilt after the 2011 earthquake. With lots of quirky shops, cool cafes and spots to dine, along with a young fun Kiwi culture, Christchurch shouldn't be missed.

After lunch we leave the city behind and head for MacKenzie Country, named for James MacKenzie, one of New Zealand's most enduring folk heroes. There's even a statue of his faithful dog at today's destination - Lake Tekapo.

The lake's breathtaking turquoise colour and mountain backdrop is a photographer's dream come true. The iconic Church of the Good Shepherd stands right at the water's edge. Grab some confetti and congratulate any passing brides - couples travel from all over the world for wedding shots in front of the chapel.

If you're feeling energetic, hike up to the summit of Mt John. With awesome views of the Southern Alps, you'll feel like you're on top of the world. Or take a scenic flight over the mountains, glaciers and lakes of this beautiful part of the world.

Thanks to the super clear skies, the area around Tekapo has been declared a "Dark Sky Reserve" and it's the best place in New Zealand to see the stars and galaxies on a clear night. Sit back, relax and enjoy.

Add-On Activities

- Sightseeing Flight

Day 2: Lake Tekapo – Queenstown

Today's drive to Queenstown is a show-stopper.

From the golden tussocklands of MacKenzie country - where the epic battles of Return of the King were filmed - to the dramatic mountain peaks of the Southern Alps surrounding us, it's like you're driving into a postcard. We'll pause to admire these stunning views so get ready to give those camera batteries another workout.

At the end of the route, we may also have time for some wine tasting in the famous Otago region, or a stop at a local salmon farm, so you'll have the chance to see a more diverse side of the South Island.

Whether you're an adrenalin junkie, an avid hiker, wine taster or scenery lover, Queenstown has something for absolutely everyone.

Together we'll hop on up the gondola and see Queenstown from above. There is nothing like watching the sunset over New Zealand's prettiest town with new friends before experiencing the famous nightlife in town. Tomorrow is going to be action packed, so be sure to get at least a few hours sleep!

Add-On Activities

- Bungy Jump from Kawara Bridge
- Sightseeing Flight
- Paragliding

Day 3: Queenstown

With a full day in Queenstown, it's time to get cracking on your bucket list.

There are many different options to choose from: paragliding, mountain biking, bungy jumping while your new found friends cheer you on, horse riding through some stunning "Lord of the Rings" locations in Glenorchy, and swinging through a canyon are all on offer.

Queenstown is also home to New Zealand's most famous burger: Fergburger. Why not grab one with your new friends as you explore the town?

For scenery lovers, Milford Sound is not to be missed. Whether you choose a scenic flight or a cruisey coach trip, you'll love the scenic journey as much as the destination. Once on the Sound, sailing around the fjords beneath thundering waterfalls and towering cliff faces, you'll understand why some call it the "8th Wonder of the World".

Beautiful in rain or shine, Milford takes the biscuit as one of the most jaw-droppingly beautiful areas of the South Island.

Back in Queenstown, with around 40 bars to choose from, there are plenty of spots to catch up with your travel buddies and share stories of your day.

Add-On Activities

- Bungy Jump from Kawarau Bridge
- Bungy Jump in Nevis
- Canyon Swing
- Canyoning
- Extreme Jet Boating
- Horse Trekking
- Lord of the Rings 4WD Safari
- Milford Sound (Full Day / Half Day)
- Paragliding
- Skydive

Day 4: Queenstown – Wanaka

After all the excitement of Queenstown, today is a chance to chill. Wanaka is Queenstown's slightly quieter little sister, only an hour's drive away.

A year round destination, Wanaka is blessed with towering mountains and a glacial blue lake. It's widely regarded as one of New Zealand's most beautiful mountain towns. There are stunning hikes and bike rides all around the area for a welcome change of pace.

One of the best ways to admire Wanaka is from the air. Treat yourself to a skydive or a scenic flight in a vintage plane - you can even take a flying lesson. Or if you prefer to keep your feet on the ground, stroll around the lake and check out the famous Wanaka Tree, standing all alone in the water. It's up to you.

Add-On Activities

- Aerobatic Plane Flight
- Bungy Jump from Kawarau Bridge
- Canyoning
- Extreme Jet Boating
- Horse Trekking
- Lord of the Rings 4WD Safari
- Milford Sound (Full Day / Half Day)
- Paragliding
- Skydive

Day 5 : Wanaka – Franz Josef

After a free morning in Wanaka, the journey to Franz Josef is an absolute stunner - many of our guides rate it as their favourite drive in New Zealand (and they should know!)

From mountain passes to cascading waterfalls to classic Kiwi coastal views, you won't even dare to take a nap on the bus in case you miss anything. Your Guide will have some epic surprise stops for you along the route as well.

Between September and December it's whitebait season (a small fish that's a delicacy in New Zealand). Fried up with eggs and served on toast, it's a local treat and shouldn't be missed. We'll stop at one of the local spots to try it out.

We roll into Franz Josef around late afternoon/early evening. This world heritage area is famous for its spectacular glacier, just 5km from town, which is begging to be explored tomorrow.

Add-On Activities

- Aerobatic Plane Flight
- Skydive

Day 6: Franz Josef

With Aoraki (Mt. Cook - New Zealand's highest mountain) twinkling behind the glaciers, Franz Josef is about as beautiful a setting as you can find in New Zealand.

You cannot visit the South Island, let alone Franz Josef, without seeing one of the glaciers. Both the Fox and Franz Josef glaciers are world-renowned on account of their relative accessibility and the low level to which they descend, although they no longer extend far enough down their valleys to reach the forest.

There are heaps of ways to enjoy Franz Josef Glacier; weather permitting, to get up onto the bluest ice you can take a scenic helicopter flight and hike onto the glaciers. Maybe you'd prefer to kayak on a glacial lake; or just relax in the steamy hot springs down below. As well as the awesome glacier activities you could also try out quad biking, horseback riding and even a bit of group karaoke tonight in Franz Josef!

Add-On Activities

- Glacier Heli Hike
- Glacier Kayaking
- Heli Experience with Snow Landing
- Quad Biking

Day 7: Franz Josef – Punakaiki

Driving along the incredible coastal road and exploring the lush forests around Punakaiki, it almost feels like you've stepped back in time. It's a rare treat to see such remote prehistoric landscapes these days, so make the most of this awesome opportunity to unplug from the world outside.

Get excited; our trusty guides always have some surprises up their sleeves for this part of the trip, including a spot or two to get your feet wet.

We'll visit one of the famous artisan greenstone factories in Hokitika as we make our way north, as well as passing through some old gold mining towns before arriving in Punakaiki.

One of Punakaiki's many natural wonders is the subtropical rainforest. We are staying in the heart of it for the next two nights at the gorgeous Te Nikau Rainforest Retreat.

Cook up a group dinner in your rainforest paradise, and be sure to end the day watching the sun set over the ocean tonight.

Day 8: Punakaiki

The West Coast is known for its laid-back vibes and hey, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Whether you decide to soak up the sun on the unspoilt beaches or stroll through the rainforest to a chorus of birdsong, you'll shed all your cares in this magical place.

A short walk to Punakaiki's Pancake Rocks is definitely on the cards - these astounding formations developed over 30 million years as immense water pressure solidified the limestone. You'll see what water pressure can do when the waves power through some seriously impressive blowholes - watch out for that spray!

Around Punakaiki there are opportunities for kayaking and for exploring the region's underground caves by raft. There are also opportunities for horseback riding in the Paparoa National Park.

On a clear night, head to the beach with your buddies and watch the stars come out to play - seriously, is there a better way to end the day?

Add-On Activities

- Cave Tubing

Day 9: Punakaiki – Abel Tasman

Cruising up north from Punakaiki, the scenery and weather gets better and better. The powerful untouched coastline gives way to rivers and gorges before we drive over the hills towards the bays of Nelson.

We return briefly to civilisation to stock up on some final supplies before continuing on to our next remote hideaway in Marahau, the gateway to Abel Tasman National Park. Golden beaches, tranquil lagoons and crystal clear waters make Abel Tasman the perfect contrast to our time in the mountains.

Why will you fall in love with Abel Tasman? Lush forests, sandy beaches, sheltered bays, and jaw-dropping views... not to mention the resident wildlife. Get ready to lose your heart to the most popular National Park in New Zealand.

Add-On Activities

- Skydive

Day 10: Abel Tasman

Abel Tasman... you beauty.

Whether it's adventure or relaxation you're looking for, you can find it here. You could tackle part of the Abel Tasman Coast Track - one of New Zealand's nine Great Walks - or explore the bays with a leisurely kayak trip. For thrills and spills you can abseil down waterfalls on a canyoning expedition.

One of New Zealand's great walks, the Abel Tasman trail is easy and meanders along the coastline. Anyone can do it. There are great viewpoints, secluded beaches and even waterfalls hidden about this part of the South Island. And the best part: it's one of the sunniest regions of New Zealand!

In the warmer months we'll stay at a "floating backpackers" on a former army boat moored in Anchorage Bay. Dive off the side and swim to your heart's content before enjoying a classic Kiwi BBQ as the sun goes down. In winter we drive a little further and stop in the artsy town of Nelson for the night.

Add-On Activities

- Canyoning
- Kayaking
- Skydive

Day 11: Abel Tasman – Wellington

After a few days in the wild it's time to get back to civilisation. Nelson, known as the sunniest place in New Zealand, is a traveller's paradise.

From beautiful beaches and bays with drastic tidal flows, to bright blue skies and more vineyards than you can imagine, Nelson has a lot to offer.

In addition to beautiful landscapes, Nelson also has great cafes, unique art galleries and boutique shops waiting to be discovered.

Our road trip continues along the northern edge of the South Island this afternoon. There are wineries we could explore and a chance to taste some famous New Zealand mussels in Havelock as we wind our way towards Picton to catch the evening ferry to Wellington.

As the lights of Picton harbour fade into the night, relax on board together and swap contact details as the final day of our tour approaches.

Add-On Activities

- Skydive

Day 12: Wellington

Our tour ends today after breakfast, but you do have the option to jump on our bus for a ride back to Auckland - just let your guide know.

For those spending the day in Wellington, while your guide will not be with you after breakfast, he or she will give you the run down on your options in Wellington.

Te Papa, the Museum of New Zealand is a short walk from the YHA and is well worth the visit, but don't hesitate to ask your guide about other things to see and do.