

SOUTHERN GEMS (Previously Stew)

Start: Queenstown

Finish: Christchurch

Minimum Days: 7

Recommended: 1+ week

Queenstown (via Milford Sound) to Te Anau

Haere mai (welcome)! Today you are in for a treat. It's an early start as we make our way to Milford Sound, one of NZ's most famous destinations, sometimes called the 'Eighth Wonder of the World'. You won't want to nap on this leg of the journey as we drive past Lake Wakatipu and watch the landscape change from farmland to mountains, glacier-carved valleys and fiords. There is time to do an afternoon boat cruise around Milford Sound to soak up this untouched world, where it's likely you'll spot a few wild dolphins, seals and penguins. We then head through to Te Anau for the night.

Accommodation: Lake side accommodation

Optional paid activities: Milford Sound cruise (ask the driver about the special Milford Sound + Stewart Island combo)

Free activities: Stunning views, visit the historic museum or take in the incredible surroundings at Gunn's Camp, Chasm walk

Te Anau to Invercargill/Stewart Island

This morning we'll travel further south to Invercargill and on to Bluff, where you can catch a ferry to Stewart Island. NZ's third largest island, Stewart Island, has an abundance of activities for the outdoor enthusiast, such as fishing, bird watching and tramping tracks. Those not going to Stewart Island will spend the night in Invercargill.

See More moment: When the solar winds are right, between March – September, you might be lucky enough to see the Aurora Australis, better known as the Southern Lights!

Accommodation: Stewart Island backpackers or central hostel in Invercargill

Optional paid activities: Catch the ferry to Stewart Island (ask the driver about the special Milford Sound + Stewart Island combo)

Invercargill/Stewart Island to Queenstown

For those who stayed overnight on Stewart Island, this morning is free for you to explore, meet the locals, go fishing or enjoy some of the walks before catching an afternoon ferry back to the mainland. Those in Invercargill will have the option to visit Demolition World (a world entirely constructed from demolished buildings and recycled items), race your bus mates around a go-karting track or walk up to the Bluff Hill lookout before reuniting with the island-goers for an express journey back to Queenstown.

Accommodation: Central hostel close to all the action

Optional paid activities: Stewart Island: fishing, Village & Bays tour, a visit to Ulva Island.

Invercargill: Go-karting, Demolition World

Free activities: Stewart Island: explore the island and discover amazing birdlife

Invercargill: Bluff Hill walk

Queenstown

You need at least one free day in Queenstown to make 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: bungee or swing, zipline tours, canyoning, jet boating, skiing (in winter), skydiving, local bush walks, or just spend a day relaxing and enjoying the stunning scenery.

Accommodation: Central hostel close to all the action

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

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

Queenstown to Aoraki/Mt Cook

Today we 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 Peel Forest

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 Peel Forest. Tonight, we'll stay in a cosy lodge at one of Canterbury's original sheep stations.

** Valid until 30 April 2020. From 1 May we will travel from Mount Cook (via Tekapo) to Christchurch*

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

Peel Forest 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. We hope you had a blast on your Stray adventure!

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.

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.