

New Zealand Experience :: 13 days - Discovery



Christchurch to Auckland

- North Island, South Island

In a geological sense, New Zealand has undergone a colourful past. The last ice age carved our fiords and lakes into the landscape. Huge tectonic forces pushed up the Southern Alps and volcanos continue to gently shape much of the North Island. The result – scenery to die for... Positioned between the Pacific Ocean and the Tasman Sea, New Zealand has coastline on a grand scale (18,000km in fact) with hundreds of small off-shore islands, home to endangered birds and other wildlife found nowhere else on Earth eg tuataras, Hector's dolphins, giant wetas, and much more.

The sensations and scents of cool forest, rushing rivers, sun-warmed rock and salt-washed sand have the power to refresh and rejuvenate your spirit. Peer into the bright blue of glacier ice, smell the sulphurous steam from a seething geothermal vent, delve into a limestone underworld or watch a waterfall plunge more than 600m into one of the world's deepest fiords. Your explorations will be rewarded with a sense of awe that will never quite go away.

The people and places you'll encounter in New Zealand all have stories to tell, some dating back centuries. Trace the emergence of modern New Zealand by exploring the events of the past by experiencing the cultures of both Maori (indigenous people) and Pakeha (non-Maori). Your fantastic New Zealand adventure awaits...

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The dramatic changes in landscape as we move from the (mostly) drier South to the sub-tropical climes of the North Island
- ▶ The experience of Maori hospitality and culture, including a traditional Maori feast (hangi) set amongst the geothermal wonderland of Rotorua
- ▶ A cruise on Doubtful Sound, a world famous iconic attraction, showcasing breathtaking scenery including spectacular waterfalls and abundant wildlife
- ▶ Exploring up close the beautiful countryside and places of historic and cultural interest scattered abundantly throughout both the South and North Islands
- ▶ Meeting local people in their homes, on the farm, or while out shopping – experience the excellent local cuisine and perhaps indulge in our award-winning wines or boutique beers, or just continue savoring all that magnificent scenery!
- ▶ Full sightseeing program included with personal driver/guide on-call at all times

TRAVEL STYLE

This is a Discovery journey. Discovery journeys are almost fully inclusive and use 4 star plus accommodation including hotels and boutique B&Bs. Discovery journeys offer plenty of time to experience the local way of life and enjoy the sights and sounds of each location. Discovery journeys offer an easy pace and suit just about any age. Your own personal driver/guide will accompany you throughout your entire

journey – ensuring you get the most from your New Zealand Experience by showing you firsthand out-of-the-way locations unknown to the larger tour companies. Be prepared to meet a lot of locals along the way – that’s because our Discovery Driver/Guides know almost everyone! Sightseeing, some activities and some meals are included.

Fitness Guidelines

In order to participate fully in this journey you will need an average level of fitness. A typical day will include sightseeing of up to eight hours of combined SUV/car/walking, including some steps, uneven surfaces and infrequent short rests with access to adequate bathroom facilities. During 'free time' you have the option to join your driver/guide in unscheduled activities, or explore independently, or rest. Evening activities are optional also, however your Discovery Driver/Guide will be available to escort you out to a suitable restaurant specializing in local and/or gourmet cuisine and perhaps afterwards onto an evening show if you've got any energy left!

LOCAL PAYMENT

There is no Local Payment applicable to this journey.

YOUR DISCOVERY DRIVER / GUIDE

A Discovery Journey can accommodate up to a maximum of 5 people (including your driver/guide) however most journeys tend towards individual couples only. Every GeoSavvy Tour is accompanied by an experienced driver/guide, chosen for their personal qualities and passion for New Zealand. They take care of all the transport, accommodation, and paperwork necessary to ensure a smooth trip. Their combination of sheer enthusiasm, energy and spirit are your guarantee of an unforgettable travel experience. Our Driver/Guides are a mixture of local specialists and adventurers, and all have an absolute passion for the country in which they work – New Zealand!

ITINERARY

CHRISTCHURCH – WEST COAST – QUEENSTOWN – FIORDLAND – DUNEDIN – LAKE TEKAPO – KAIKOURA – ROTORUA – BAY OF ISLANDS – AUCKLAND

Day 1. Christchurch

Time to explore Christchurch City, often described as the most English city outside of England. There is a plethora of architecturally stunning 19th and 20th century buildings on parade as well as the very modern such as the Christchurch Art Gallery, all surrounded by award-winning parks and botanical gardens. You may be interested in visiting the International Antarctic Centre (located out by the International Airport): take a ride in a Haglund and then experience a very real polar blast! Or perhaps you may want to take a trip out to Banks Peninsula and explore the beautiful French village of Akaroa and even take an award-winning dolphin-watching cruise. You will meet your Discovery driver/guide this evening over pre-dinner drinks at your hotel and then off to dinner as your Discovery guide takes you out on the town to experience just a small part of Christchurch City's vibrant nightlife. (B, D)

Day 2. Christchurch / Franz Josef

Today you begin your circuit of New Zealand's majestic South Island. You begin with a spectacular train ride, often described as one of the most stunning rail journeys in the world. The TranzAlpine takes you across the backbone of the South Island, amongst sheep-studded grassy plains, through forests, and over the Southern Alps – home to New Zealand's highest mountain, Mt Cook/Aoraki, all the time surrounded by glorious snowcapped mountains glistening in the morning sun. The train climbs through the Alps via Arthurs Pass, with your journey taking you from one side of the South Island to the other, all within a morning – and ending on the opposite side of the island: the wild West Coast.

Your driver/guide will meet you at Greymouth Railway Station where you will head north by SUV to visit the spectacular Pancake Rocks at Punakaiki. After viewing this geological wonder you will then continue your journey down the West Coast of the South Island. Along the way you will stop at Hokitika – an old mining town offering unique Maori greenstone/jade (pounamu) jewelry. As we travel down the West Coast we will explore the magnificent scenery and end the day's journey in the beautiful village of Franz Josef. (B)

Day 3. Franz Josef / Queenstown

Today we explore the glacier region, and weather permitting, either yesterday evening or this morning, take a scenic flight over Mt Cook/Aoraki and onto the glaciers. Also we walk to the foot of a moraine field at Fox Glacier and get "up close and personal" with this landscape-changing moving river of ice. If the weather is still, a walk to Lake Mathieson through lowland rainforest filled with the birdcalls of New Zealand's endemic birds, reveals a beautiful reflection of the mountains in the still waters of the lake. We then head further south, eventually turning inland through the Haast Pass visiting windswept Haast Beach along the way (watch those sandflies though!) finishing the day in New Zealand's adventure capital, Queenstown. (B, L)

Day 4. Queenstown

A free day today to explore Queenstown, an alpine town on the shores of Lake Wakatipu. It may be a free day but there's still plenty to do in this adventure-themed wonderland, including the world famous Shotover Jet, flyfishing, whitewater rafting, or short scenic walks. Dinner might be taken tonight at the top of Bob's Peak, with stunning views over the Lakes District. Before ascending to Bob's Peak by cablecar, visit Kiwi House (see New Zealand's national bird and also a well-known colloquialism for a New Zealander) a bird park showcasing a wide range of native (mostly endangered) bird species, including the takahe – only rediscovered in Fiordland in 1947 long after they had been thought extinct! (B)

Day 5. Queenstown / Doubtful Sound / Te Anau

Doubtful Sound is often described as one of the most beautiful and remote waterways in the world. Once we reach Manapouri village, take a short boat ride across Lake Manapouri, and then be transferred by bus over the West Arm to Doubtful Sound (the fiord) where you will then board another boat for the nature cruise itself. The cruise is strongly oriented towards the natural history of Fiordland, and combines stunning scenic beauty with endemic wildlife including penguins, seals, and if you're lucky – dolphins! After the cruise return to Te Anau where you may be interested in crossing Lake Te Anau to visit the world famous glowworm caves – a magnificent example of Mother Nature's complexity – bioluminescence. (B, L)

Day 6. Te Anau / Dunedin

Today we meander across the deep south of the South Island, leaving the rugged Fiordland National Park for the gentler, rolling grasslands of the fertile Waimea Plains. Travel by the Southern Scenic Route via Bluff (the southern most town on the mainland) and the Catlins, an area famous for scenic lowland rainforest, waterfalls, endangered dolphin and penguin species and a 180M fossilized forest. Towards mid-afternoon we roll into the university city of Dunedin, the Edinburgh of the Southern Hemisphere, famous for its Scottish ancestry and Victorian architecture.

From here we take a short drive out to the Otago Peninsula to take a cruise on the *'MV Monarch'* out into Otago Harbour to see the Royal Albatross colony at Taiaroa Head. This is the only mainland colony of albatross in the world, as these large birds usually nest on offshore islands far away from populated areas. The wingspan of the Royal Albatross is 10ft (3m) and hopefully we will see these majestic birds soaring out to sea on their way to catch their favorite meal – juvenile squid, or perhaps sitting on their nests incubating their precious egg. Once the cruise is over, you will then be transferred to a very special nature tour to see the world's rarest (and shyest) penguins – the Yellow-Eyed penguin, plus blue penguins, and New Zealand fur seals and sealions. (B, L)

Day 7. Dunedin / Lake Tekapo

Today we leave the Otago region and head inland towards Mt Cook/Aoraki (but on the other side of the Southern Alps from our Franz Josef adventures). Driving through beautiful scenic countryside we reach Mt Cook village where we will spend some time kayaking or on a small boat gliding amongst icebergs fed into the lake by a melting glacier – spectacular! We then finish the day at Lake Tekapo, a picturesque place famous for its small stone church set against a stunning backdrop – a must for all budding photographers to try and capture on film. (B, D)

Day 8. Lake Tekapo / Kaikoura

One of the highlights of your New Zealand Experience Discovery Tour is a whale-watching trip off the coastal town of Kaikoura ('kai' = food, 'koura' = lobster). The geology of the South Island results in the continental margin dropping steeply into the deep ocean very close offshore. This creates a deep ocean trench that whales use as a travel corridor on their way to the Southern Ocean – so we are pretty much guaranteed a whale sighting as large numbers of whale species use the 'whale corridor' on their journey around the Pacific Ocean.

The spectacular geology of the region creates an upwelling of nutrients from the cold deep ocean encouraging high plankton (which the whales feed upon) and fish numbers, attracting large numbers of seabirds and other marine life, including dolphins and seals. A diverse range of marine life all within a few miles of the beautiful Kaikoura township. (B)

Day 9. Kaikoura / Christchurch / Rotorua

This morning we make the short drive back to Christchurch, where we catch a plane to Rotorua ('roto' = lake, 'rua' = two) located in the middle of the North Island. The first thing you will notice is the smell – a sulphurous odor due to all the geothermal activity in the region. Rotorua is considered New Zealand's foremost base for indigenous Maori culture, and this will be our focus during our time here. A short drive takes us to Te Puia, where we will experience authentic Maori culture firsthand. The center showcases traditional Maori art and craft displays and activities – we will

see Maori artisans at work weaving flax and carving bone, greenstone or wood. Take guided walks through a traditional Maori village and in the evening attend a hangi (hung-ee), a traditional Maori pit-cooked feast complete with Maori dances (kapa haka). In addition to the Maori culture, the center is located within the Whakarewrewa Valley geothermal area. The geysers, steaming vents, and mineral-rich pools have played an important role in Maori culture – the pipes you see steaming away behind many of the homes are Rotorua’s unique geothermal energy system. (B, D)

Day 10. Rotorua / Bay of Islands

We continue to explore more of the cultural and thermal features of the Rotorua region and also make a mid-morning visit to the Agrodome. Here you will see an educational and entertaining show that celebrates New Zealand’s historic reliance upon millions of sheep (and the odd cow), that during the 1970s helped shape at that time one of the richest nations in the world... all because of a few lamb chops and creamy butter!

We then continue our journey heading further north towards Auckland, the ‘City of Sails’, New Zealand’s largest and most multi-cultural city and the capital of Polynesia (more Samoans live in Auckland than live in Samoa!). After stopping for a quick break in Auckland, we continue our journey north towards the beautiful Bay of Islands where we will be spending the next three nights, using Paihia as a base to explore the stunning northern tip of the North Island. (B)

Day 11. Paihia / Bay of Islands / Paihia

A full day enjoying the Bay of Islands today, in probably the best way to appreciate this stunning area – from a sailboat. You can join in with sailing the schooner and do as much (or as little!) as you want. The sights of the islands, bays, wildlife, and sails make this truly a day to remember. (B, L)

Day 12. Paihia / Cape Reinga / Paihia

Today we head north towards the far tip of New Zealand – Cape Reinga (you can then say you’ve been from “the Cape to the Bluff” or in other words, from one end of New Zealand to the other, a feat not that many people, including New Zealanders’, ever achieve!). Along the way you will see a beautiful stretch of sand and sea, the famous 90 Mile Beach. After standing at the tip of New Zealand (about as remote as it gets) we turn south and head down the west coast, and if we have time, visit the Waipoua kauri forest, where our largest native tree, a kauri called “Tane Mahouta” by local Maori (translation = “Forest God”) stands. We then take the short drive across the island back towards Paihia for our final evening in New Zealand. (B, D)

Day 13. Paihia / Auckland

The last day has arrived too soon. Your adventure is nearly complete. We spend the morning visiting Russell (New Zealand’s first capital and early whaling port) and Waitangi – where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between Maori chiefs and the British Crown in 1840, seceding control of NZ to the Crown in exchange for the same rights and privileges for Maori as enjoyed by Pakeha (European) settlers. We then return to Auckland, ending your New Zealand Experience Discovery Tour by saying goodbye to your driver/guide and heading off on your next adventure... home! (B)

SUMMARY ITINERARY – CHRISTCHURCH TO AUCKLAND

Day 1 Christchurch / Hotel / Breakfast
Day 2 Christchurch – Franz Josef / Hotel / Breakfast
Day 3 Franz Josef - Queenstown / B&B / Breakfast / Lunch
Day 4 Queenstown / B&B / Breakfast
Day 5 Queenstown – Doubtful Sound – Te Anau / B&B / Breakfast / Lunch
Day 6 Te Anau - Dunedin / B&B / Breakfast / Lunch
Day 7 Dunedin – Lake Tekapo / B&B / Breakfast / Dinner
Day 8 Lake Tekapo - Kaikoura / B&B / Breakfast
Day 9 Kaikoura - Rotorua / Flight / B&B / Breakfast / Dinner (hangi)
Day 10 Rotorua - Paihia / B&B / Breakfast
Day 11 Paihia – Bay of Islands / B&B / Breakfast / Lunch
Day 12 Paihia / B&B / Breakfast / Dinner
Day 13 Paihia – Auckland / No accommodation / Breakfast

SCHEDULED SIGHTSEEING

Scheduled Sightseeing is part of the itinerary and includes all transport and entrance fees:

- ▶ Christchurch: TranzAlpine train trip
- ▶ Franz Josef: Glacier flight and walk
- ▶ Doubtful Sound: Nature boat cruise
- ▶ Te Anau: Glowworm caves visit
- ▶ Otago Peninsula: Monarch boat cruise and Natures Wonders ARGO tour
- ▶ Mt Cook/Aoraki: Glacier lake kayaking and/or boat trip
- ▶ Kaikoura: Whale watching boat cruise
- ▶ Rotorua: Maori village and hangi and Maori kapa haka show, Agrodome
- ▶ Bay of Islands: Sailing schooner cruise, Waitangi House

EXPLORING

Exploring is optional sightseeing outside the itinerary guideline with the Discovery Driver/Guide. It is designed to be flexible, and may change depending on client wishes and the time available, and is at the discretion of the driver/guide.

Clients will be asked to provide their own entrance fees.

Our Discovery Driver/Guides know the 'off-the-beaten-track' sights and can make suggestions on the best places to explore, eat and relax. By combining Scheduled Sightseeing with Exploring, they aim to share not only the 'must-sees' of each destination, but to introduce the more personal and idiosyncratic aspects they have discovered themselves - it's about getting involved with everyday life, and local people!

Optional Activities

Please note that Exploring and any activities you participate in outside the specified itinerary and scheduled sightseeing are at your own risk. While your Discovery Driver/Guide will be happy to assist you in pursuing other activities and interests, GeoSavvy Tours makes no claims as to the safety of the activity, nor the standard of

the parties operating it. Your driver/guide has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the specified itinerary if it is felt to be unsafe.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels and B&Bs - 13 nights (twin share)

We have chosen hotels and boutique B&Bs of a standard (4 star plus) we consider appropriate to the 'Discovery' Travel Style. Hotel accommodation is based on twin share unless you have requested and paid for sole use of a room. All rooms have private bathroom facilities. Hotels and boutique B&Bs are chosen for the best available combination of location, comfort and facilities.

Single Supplement Option

For clients who would like sole use of a room, a single supplement is available for a single additional payment. Please note that supplement only applies to hotel nights.

GENERAL INFORMATION :: FOR NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE TRAVELLERS



HEALTH

- ▶ The pace of these tours can be tiring due to factors such as change of diet, change of environment, high and low temperatures, distances traveled and busy days.
- ▶ There can be considerable amounts of walking (for example sightseeing tours of several hours), steps and uneven paths to sites of interest.
- ▶ Please advise GeoSavvy Tours of any pre-existing medical conditions.

FIRST AID

- ▶ Medication and other items are widely available throughout New Zealand.
- ▶ All GeoSavvy Tour driver/guides hold current first aid certificates.

PACKING

Since this journey covers a large area and varying terrain you may encounter a range of temperatures and weather conditions, and we would recommend that you bring layers of lighter clothing to allow for changes in temperature along the route. The following items are things that we feel are well worth considering:

- ▶ Money belt
- ▶ Comfortable walking shoes or boots
- ▶ Sweater/fleece
- ▶ Waterproof and/or windproof jacket
- ▶ Sandals
- ▶ Casual lightweight clothes for travel between locations
- ▶ Hat/sun block (SPF30+)/lip balm/sunglasses
- ▶ Toiletries (if you have preferred brands – most essentials are available en-route)
- ▶ Alarm clock
- ▶ A nice outfit for any evenings out

WHILE YOU ARE TRAVELLING...

CONTACT

Hotel/B&B Lists & Details

Since the accommodation we use can vary according to availability, we would suggest you supply GeoSavvy Tour office contact details as your emergency contact details while in New Zealand. We do understand that there are some circumstances where people may need to contact you urgently. Our team will be able to locate and contact the group as quickly as possible, as well as provide accurate information to those at home. Please phone: + 64 3 471 8571 or +64 27 227 1444.

The majority of accommodation used for each Discovery journey has internet and phone/fax access available for visitor use.

MEALS AND FOOD

New Zealand cuisine is characterized by its freshness and diversity owing to the surrounding ocean and New Zealanders obsession with kai moana (seafood) and our cultivation of the fertile lands that produce some of the best lamb and beef in the world. New Zealand cuisine draws inspiration from Europe, Asia, Polynesia and Maori influences. For dishes that have a distinctly New Zealand style try: lamb, pork, cervena (venison), salmon, crayfish (lobster), oysters, paua (abalone), mussels, scallops, kumara (sweet potato), kiwifruit, feijoas – and of course New Zealand's national dessert, pavlova! Perhaps even better known than New Zealand lamb and beef and our luscious seafood, are the country's wines (there are 10 major wine-producing areas).

'Tea' is the main meal of the day, when Kiwi families gather together around the dinner table, discussing the days events over an evening meal (traditionally 'meat and three veg' but as New Zealand becomes more multicultural, so our choices in what we eat evolve). New Zealand summers see many eating outdoors, often gathered around an informal BBQing session. A Maori specialty is the hangi (hung-ee): a pit in which meats and/or fish are cooked with vegetables (truly delicious).

The New Zealand cuisine experience would be incomplete without enjoying a traditional meal of fish and chips, pavlova and lemingtons (although probably not all at once!).

There is a list of the included meals for your trip in the 'Summary Itinerary' - all other meals are at your own expense. Where meals are not included your Group Leader will recommend options for all budgets and taste, and provide opportunities to eat at traditional local restaurants. You should budget US\$10-30 for everyday meals, and have some money aside for special occasions. Local beers cost US\$3-5 and wines US\$6-8 by the glass.

Tea and coffee is readily available en-route, as is bottled water (although New Zealand tap water is safe to drink).

Special Dietary Requirements & General Health

- ▶ The selection and variety of foods is very diverse and vegetarian options are readily available at many restaurants/cafes/accommodation.
- ▶ If you have food allergies or preferences please let your Discovery Driver/Guide know, and they will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met.
- ▶ You do not need to peel fruit or use only bottled water as New Zealand tap water is safe and is fine for drinking and brushing teeth.

DAILY LIVING

Daily expenses

As a guideline we recommend that you budget an average of USD \$50.00-\$100.00 per day over and above meal costs for day to day expenses (eg independent activities, shows, etc). If you are an avid souvenir collector or have a particular indulgence, you may need to increase this amount. Entrance fees will be paid locally for additional sightseeing – see the Scheduled Sightseeing for exact inclusions.

Laundry

Laundry service is available at most hotels and boutique B&Bs along the route.

Tipping

Tipping is not expected by those working with international visitors in New Zealand. However if you receive exceptional service from a waiter or guide and would like to reward them for a job well done then a small token would be graciously accepted.

Commissions

To ensure services are provided in the best interests of our clients, GeoSavvy Tours operates a no commission policy. Driver/guides do not rely on commissions or tips for salary – they are paid industry-leading wages and have their expenses covered while traveling. If you feel your driver/guide has done a fantastic job, and wish to pass on a gratuity, please feel free to do so.

CURRENCY

You should have no problems accessing funds whilst traveling in New Zealand, with a wide range of ATMs (connected to Cirrus, Maestro networks) and banks available at every destination. We recommend that you bring as little cash with you as possible, and use a credit card (eg Visa, Mastercard, Amex) for most transactions.

The monetary unit in New Zealand is the New Zealand Dollar (approx. \$1.25 = \$1USD). Please check the current Foreign Exchange Rate before you travel. Your driver/guide will be able to assist with daily budgets and if necessary suggest the best options for exchanging cash.

THE ENVIRONMENT

GeoSavvy Tours encourages its driver/guides and clients to minimize negative impacts on the environment. Simple ways you can help to minimize impacts on the environment while on-tour include minimizing the amount of packaging you use and disposing of rubbish in rubbish bins.

GeoSavvy Tours donates 5% of profits to environmental projects to ensure the sustainability of our one great resource, New Zealand, for generations to come.

Leave only footprints behind...