TOUR CODE

XMT

ADVENTURESABROAD

NEW ZEALAND

The Milford Track

15 days

Updated 25/10/2012

Day 1 ***Arrival in New Zealand***

Arrival in Auckland.

Auckland is New Zealand's largest urban area and the most vibrant, bustling and multicultural city in New Zealand. Auckland is also the biggest Polynesian city in the world, a cultural influence reflected in many different aspects of city life.

Overnight in Auckland. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Auckland - Wellington***

This morning we fly to Wellington, the "City of a Thousand Views" and New Zealand's scenic capital. It lies perched on the edge of Cook Straight in the southwest corner of the North Island. Hemmed in by the Tararua Ranges to the east, the city spills up and down bush-covered hills around the large sparkling bay of Port Nicholson. Soft sandy beaches, sheltered coves, rocky outcrops, and boat-filled marinas line Wellington's Harbour where the water is always a bright blue dotted with multicoloured sails.

Imposing Parliament buildings, both old and new, and modern skyscrapers dominate Wellington's centre, in contrast with historic pioneer homes and elegant mansions that line the steep and narrow streets of the older suburbs. Scattered throughout the city are flower-filled gardens and shady parks that provide a quiet escape from the continuous hum and bustle of the commercial centre. Wellington is often compared with San Francisco in site and design.

According to the Maori, Wellington Harbour was first discovered in ancient times by the Polynesian navigators, Kupe and Ngahue, and it wasn't until the early 19th century that Europeans first sailed all the way into the magnificent harbour. In 1826, Captain James Herd entered in his barque Rosannna and officially named the harbour Port Nicholson, the name by which it's still known today. The New Zealand Company bought the land that was to become Wellington city from the Maori in 1839, and the first settlers arrived on January 22nd, 1840, nowadays celebrated as a holiday throughout the region. In 1865, after much argument with Aucklanders, Wellington was chosen as the capital of New Zealand with an urban area population of 320,000.

As part of our visit to Wellington we will have to time to visit Te Papa, the National Museum of New Zealand, with it's amazing displays of Maori cultural artifacts and the islands' natural history.

Overnight in Wellington. West Plaza Hotel or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Wellington - Cook Strait - Nelson***

We take the ferry across the Cook Strait, from New Zealand's North Island to the South Island. There are more than 900 km (562 miles) of coastline consisting of drowned river valleys. After a spectacular ride, the ferry cruises up colourful

Queen Charlotte Sound, one of the two major inlets of Marlborough Sounds Maritime Park.

When Captain Cook sailed up Queen Charlotte Sound in 1770 he found about 400 Maori living in huts along shores; the remains of their pits and middens can still be clearly seen today. Ship Cove at the northwest side of Queen Charlotte Sound was the first anchoring spot in Marlborough Sounds for the crew of the HMS Endeavour. After European discovery, Marlborough Sounds became famous for productive whaling stations (the last closed in 1964), gold mining in the 1860s, timber milling from the 1860s to 1915, farming in the 1920s, and from that time for exotic tree plantations.

We spend the night in Nelson, a busy fishing port, secluded from the rest of New Zealand. It has a unique atmosphere, retained from its former colonial period.

Overnight in Nelson. Trailways Motor Inn or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Nelson - Greymouth*

Like the North Island, the South Island is a landscape of great contrast. Spectacular scenery appears to change form, shape, or colour around every bend in the road, and the variable weather and play of light and shade make the area a photographer's dream. You'll find a maze of waterways separated by bush-covered peninsulas and islands edged with gold-flecked sand in the north; mighty forest-edged glaciers that inch their way down, almost to the sea; unusual cliff formations, and grey sandy beaches pounded by surf on the west coast; the towering snow-capped mountains of the Southern Alps; isolated glassy fjords that finger deep into remote and untouched native bush in the south-west corner; and richly coloured farmland and hilly pastureland throughout. Lakes are scattered across the South Island and, along with trout- and salmon-laden rivers, provide excellent fishing, canoeing, swimming, and white-water rafting.

We travel to the West Coast. The Kiwis call the narrow strip between the mountains and the sea ‘Westland'. Its history has mostly evolved around minerals, starting with Maori greenstone and going through the gold rushes to modern-day coalmines. The area is definitely laid back and rife with individualists. It is also one of the most photogenic spots on both islands. Along the narrow strip are grand vistas of ocean and mountain, glaciers and rain forest. The towns are small, many the remnants of once-booming gold rush settlements. We enjoy the beauty of the Buller Gorge and we visit the magnificent marine reserve at Punakaiki. Here rock formations formed of eroded limestone look like grey pancakes. We spend the night in Greymouth, named because it is at the mouth of the Grey River. The city got its start as a gold rush settlement, and now has a population of about 12,000.

Overnight in Greymouth. Ashley Motor Inn or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Greymouth - Fox Glacier*

We continue along the coast of gold-rush country, and visit the replica gold mining village of Shantytown for relics and a chance to pan for gold. We arrive in the Westland National Park, which boasts some 86,800 hectares of alpine peaks, snowfields, forests, lakes, and rivers. We walk to the base of Franz Josef Glacier and visit the informative visitor's centre. The geologist Sir Julius von Haast named the glacier after the Emperor Franz Josef of Austria in 1862. Its broken surface ends abruptly in a terminal ridge. Here the ice beneath the covering shingle is grey, but only a short distance above it is clear white. From an ice cave at the foot of the glacier the turbulent Waiho River ("smoky water") gushes out and flows for 19 km (12 miles) to the coast. The water appears milky from the particles of rock ground to dust by the glacier, with a layer of mist hanging above the surface, formed by the sudden chilling of the warm air as it meets the ice-cold river. A short distance from the source of the river is a small hot mineral spring which emerges beside cold water.

Overnight at Fox Glacier. Glacier Country Inn or simlar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Fox Glacier - Queenstown*

We have the opportunity today of a pre-breakfast visit to Lake Matheson, where we savour a breathtaking sunrise (weather permitting) and admire the reflection of Mount Tasman and Mount Cook. Later in the day, we go to the Fox Glacier and walk up to its magnificent base. Unlike other New Zealand glaciers, the Fox's surface is almost clear of debris. The surface is marked by deep crevasses and jagged pinnacles, owing to tension caused by the more rapid motion of the middle of the glacier or by its movement over steep slopes in the rock floor of the valley. The crevasses are usually confined to the upper layers of the ice where the pressure is not great enough to force the ice to flow. Ice is solid, but the movement of a glacier resembles that of a viscous fluid.

We also travel through magnificent scenery as we pass through Haast Pass to Queenstown.

Overnight in Queenstown. Blue Peaks Lodge or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Queenstown*

Today you are free to enjoy the sights of this most picturesque town. A popular activity is to travel by gondola to the hills and take in the panoramic views of the valley below. Queenstown offers much for everyone.

For those who wish to build up stamina for the Milford Trek, we recommend a number of optional walks. A leisurely climb to the summit of Queenstown Hill gives wide views. The start of the track is signposted at York and Malaghan Streets. Allow two hours for the round trip. A more spectacular view is from Ben Lomond, reached by a track starting in Longford Crescent. Allow six hours for the long walk there and back. Another splendid view over the town, lake and mountains is from Brecon Street. There are many routes to the top of the Remarkables, varying in difficulty. All are full-day walks.

Mt. Iron: A track to the summit is signposted 1.3 km (.8 mile) east of Wanaka on Highway 6. Allow 90 minutes for the walk to the top and back.

Mt. Roy: The walk to the top of Mt. Roy starts 7 km (4.3 miles) from Wanaka on the Glendhu Bay road. Allow five hours for the round trip.

Overnight in Queenstown. Blue Peaks Lodge or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Queenstown - Te Anau*

We arrive in Te Anau for a comfortable overnight stay. We later take a casual walk along the waterfront to Fiordland National Park Headquarters--the lakeside centre includes displays, an audiovisual presentation and museum. Tonight we congregate to discuss our walking schedule.

Overnight Te Anau. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *The Milford Track*

A leisurely breakfast will be followed by the pre-walk briefing, which will answer all of your last minute questions and help to ensure that you have adequate clothing and equipment for your walk. You will then prepare your pack, check

out of the hotel and check in at the Milford Track Office; your luggage can be stored here to await your return or you can choose to have it taken through to Milford Sound.

Today's walk is short--it's only about 1.6 km (1 mile) to our first overnight accommodation at Glade House. Here, as in all the lodges, we can relax before a roaring fire, listen to music, and enjoy books and games. The lodges feature dormitory-style rooms sleeping up to six people and provide warm comforters, towels, and hair dryers, as well as hot showers and shampoo. They are warm and welcoming and the perfect spot to spend the night after an exhilarating day of hiking. (Please note that you'll share the lodges with other hikers for the next few nights while on the Track.)

Overnight Glade House. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 10 *The Milford Track*

We wake to the dawn chorus of native birds. The Milford Track is rich in birdlife with bellbird, tui, native pigeon, fantail, falcon, morepork, weka, and the friendly and inquisitive kea. We later set out across the Clinton River after leaving Glade House, and walk through a beech forest. We have lunch in a bush shelter at Hirere Falls and then on to the grassy plain known as the Prairie. From here we enjoy spectacular views of Clinton Canyon. A rocky climb to Marlene's Creek signals your arrival at Pompolona Lodge. Today's walk is relatively easy -- a little over 16 km (10 miles).

Overnight. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 11 *The Milford Track*

We are still on the upper reaches of the Clinton River with the three giant leaps of the 230 m (759 ft) high St Quintin Falls visible on the side of the canyon. The track is getting steeper but there is a respite at Lake Mintaro. We continue up to Mackinnon Pass in a series of long zigzags, resting upon request, and enjoying the impressive views. We also pause at the memorial Cairn to Mackinnon and Mitchell. We have lunch at the Pass Hut and we then head down; around the base of Mount Balloon, under the sheer face of Jervois Glacier, across Roaring Burn and Morraine Creek and through the rainforest to Quintin Lodge where one may have afternoon tea before the 90 minute round trip to the Sutherland Falls These are the world's 5th highest waterfall. Today's walk is just over 15 km (9 miles). This day is the most physically demanding part of the walk, particularly if the weather is inclement on Mackinnon Pass. It is important to take your time!

Overnight Quintin Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 12 *The Milford Track*

Today is the last day on the Track itself, about 21 km (13 miles). We go down a long steep hill named Gentle Annie. We also enjoy the areas of the Lady of the Snows, the Dumpling Hill, the Sandy Flat, and the Racecourse Flat. After tea at the Boatshed--real bush-brewed tea, we continue onwards to Bell Rock, intriguingly hollowed, and the Mackay Falls. We have lunch beside the cooling mist of Giant's Gate Waterfall and then a final walk alongside tranquil Lake Ada to Sandfly Point followed by a short boat trip to Mitre Peak Lodge for the evening. Today is a long day over terrain that varies from rocky surfaces to boardwalks over fragile areas.

Overnight Mitre Peak Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 13 *Milford Sound - Te Anau*

Today we can sit back and relax (after breakfast in the lodge) on a Red Boats cruise. This takes us past Lady Bowen Falls, beneath towering Mitre Peak which rises sheer from the sea, around Copper and Dale Points to the hidden mouth of Milford Sound and out to the Tasman Sea. You will journey past an old sealer's anchorage at Harrison's Cove, beneath Pembroke Glacier, and visit the recently opened Underwater Observatory. Keep a watch for dolphins, penguins and fur seals. We will also discover the world's only "whisky falls".

Overnight Te Anau. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Te Anau - Christchurch*

Today we travel to Christchurch, New Zealand's "Garden City".

Christchurch has often been described as being "more English than England". Christchurch is the focal point of what is called the Canterbury Region. This portion of the South Island lies east of the Southern Alps, and from just south of Kaikoura to just north of Oamaru along the coast. The city's population is a manageable 300,000 or so-- the third largest in the country -- and dates from around 1850. The city sits just to the north of the Banks Peninsula, with Pegasus Bay and the city's harbour, Lyttelton, to the east. It began life as a Church of England settlement (hence the name) and was supposed to be a haven for landed gentry and good Christian souls of lesser caste! As a church community, it was probably doomed from the start. There were so many clerics in town in the early years, there were church wars with bishops of all sorts stumbling around cheek by jowl trying to take control of minds and souls. Critics also suggested that the calibre of clergy being sent to the community was not the highest -- mostly parsons who couldn't make it in the real world and had to settle for an island in the middle of the South Pacific.

The city was laid out in grids with the Avon River meandering through the heart of town. (The river was named after a Scottish brook, by the way, not William Shakespeare's famous creek). There are many bridges in the city, one of the most poignant being the Bridge of Remembrance, built in 1923 to commemorate the casualties of World War I -- plaques to honour other war dead were added later.

Overnight in Christchurch. Christchurch Autolodge. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Departure*

Departure from Christchurch.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.