Tour Code
NZ1

ADVENTURESABROAD

NEW ZEALAND

Aotearoa: Land of the Long White Cloud

15 days

Created on: 11 Nov, 2026

Day 1 Arrival in Auckland

Arrival in Auckland.

Located in the northern part of New Zealand, the cosmopolitan city of Auckland is the largest metropolitan area in the country. The geographical location of Auckland is such that it lies between the Hauraki Gulf of the Pacific Ocean to the east, the low Hunua Ranges to the southeast, the Manukau Harbour to the southwest, and the Waitakere Ranges and smaller ranges to the west and northwest. The region is also the site of Auckland Volcanic Field, comprising of around 50 volcanoes. This is perhaps the most vibrant and bustling 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.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Auckland: City Tour

Auckland spreads across a narrow isthmus between two harbours—Manukau to the west and Waitemat to the east—with the Hauraki Gulf opening to the Pacific beyond. This geography earned the city its nickname "City of Sails," but the landscape itself reveals a more dramatic story. The Auckland Volcanic Field comprises roughly 50 volcanic cones, dormant now but having shaped both the terrain and the cultural history of this region over the past 250,000 years. The most recent eruption, Rangitoto Island, emerged from the sea just 600 years ago, witnessed by Mori inhabitants whose oral histories preserve the event.

Our morning explores this volcanic landscape from multiple vantage points. Mount Eden rises 196 metres above the city, its crater offering panoramic views across both harbours—the strategic geography that led Captain Cook to describe this as one of the finest natural ports in the Pacific. From the crater rim, the full extent of the isthmus becomes clear: a narrow land bridge between two oceans, studded with volcanic cones that once served as fortified p sites for Mori communities. One Tree Hill, another volcanic cone, provides complementary perspectives across the city's 50 volcanic remnants dotting the urban landscape.

Between these volcanic viewpoints, we trace routes through the city's colonial and contemporary layers. Parnell Village preserves heritage buildings from Auckland's Victorian establishment, while the central business district along Queen Street—the city's "Golden Mile"—reveals its commercial evolution. The coastal route along Tamaki Drive passes through Mission Bay and Kohimarama Beach, waterfront suburbs where Edwardian villas face volcanic sand beaches. From Achilles Point, views extend across the harbour toward Rangitoto Island, its symmetrical cone dominating the gulf.

Our tour concludes at Auckland Museum, whose collections document the natural history, Mori culture, and Pacific heritage that define this region. Auckland remains the world's largest Polynesian city, home to more Mori, Samoan, Tongan, and Cook Island peoples than any urban center globally—a demographic reality reflected throughout the city's cultural institutions, cuisine, and civic identity.

Overnight in Auckland.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Auckland - Waitomo Caves - Rotorua

Today marks the beginning of our journey south, and we have a full day of travel and sightseeing ahead as we leave Auckland behind and venture into the heart of the North Island.

Our route takes us through the rich farmland of the Waikato region, New Zealand's agricultural heartland. This is dairy country par excellence, where verdant pastures stretch to the horizon. The landscape is a patchwork of green fields separated by hedgerows and shelter belts, a scene of pastoral plenty that has made this region the economic powerhouse of New Zealand's agricultural sector.

We arrive at the world-famous Waitomo Caves, where we'll experience a guided tour of the underground limestone caverns and glowworm grottos. As we venture deep beneath the surface, we'll discover a hidden world sculpted over millions of years. The limestone formations are spectacular, but the true magic reveals itself when we encounter thousands of tiny glowworms illuminating the cave ceilings like a subterranean night sky. These bioluminescent larvae create an otherworldly spectacle that never fails to captivate.

After this unique underground experience, we continue to Rotorua, an area of abundant geothermal activity. Rotorua sits in the middle of the Taupo Volcanic Zone, which runs from northeast to southwest across the North Island. The locals make ingenious use of the hot steam that rises to the surface for heating their homes, cooking, and building their own private hot pools.

This afternoon we'll visit the Te Puia Thermal Reserve and Maori Arts and Crafts Centre. Here we will discover boiling pools of mud that plop and bubble, and geysers that spout up to 30 metres (100 feet) into the air. The reserve is also home to the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, where we'll gain insight into traditional carving and weaving techniques.

Overnight in Rotorua.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Rotorua - Wellington

Today we follow the 'Thermal Explorer Highway' to the heart of the North Island. This highway takes us through some of the most stunning scenery in New Zealand, along a path well-known for its geological wonders -- from huge limestone caves, to bubbling geothermal areas and volcanic plateaus.

We will view the Wairakei Steam Valley where the thermal energy is harnessed in the world's second largest geothermal power plant. We will see spectacular Huka Falls, located on the rushing Waikato River. We will also visit Lake Taupo, the water-filled crater of an ancient volcano. Surrounded by stunning volcanoes, bush clad mountains and a spectacular landscape; this is the largest freshwater lake in New Zealand and the Southern Hemisphere.

We then continue to travel south to Wellington. Our journey south takes us on the spectacular desert road along the edge of the World Heritage Site at Tongariro National Park. Established in 1887, Tongariro was the first national park in New Zealand and the fourth in the world. This is also a dual World Heritage area, a status that recognizes the park's important Maori cultural and spiritual associations as well as its outstanding volcanic features.

Overnight in Wellington.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Wellington: City Tour - Cook Strait Crossing - Blenheim

Called the world's "coolest little capital," Wellington is known for its vibrant arts scene, world-class café and restaurant culture, and active outdoor lifestyle. Set around an attractive waterfront, you'll be hard pressed to find a city in the world that's easier to get around. A creative, cosmopolitan city, Wellington combines the sophistication of a capital with the warmth and personality of a village.

This morning we enjoy a city sightseeing tour before heading to Te Papa, New Zealand's outstanding national museum. A guided tour leads us through the highlights of the country's natural environment, art, and history — from the geological forces that shaped these islands to the Mori and Pacific cultures that have defined them, and the colonial and contemporary layers that complete the story. It's a rich and accessible introduction to who New Zealanders are and how they got here.

We then board the ferry for the 3.5-hour crossing of Cook Strait to the South Island. Named after James Cook, the strait connects the Tasman Sea to the west with the South Pacific Ocean to the east — and the crossing itself earns its reputation as one of the world's most scenic ferry journeys, with rugged coastal hills framing both shores as the North Island recedes behind us and the mountains of the Marlborough Sounds come into view ahead.

Overnight in Blenheim (we sometimes overnight just down the road in Picton).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Blenheim - Kaikoura - Christchurch

Today we will enjoy a spectacular scenic journey between the mountains and the sea as we travel through the Marlborough region. This geographic region has a growing international reputation for its white wine production. We'll visit a winery en route to the thriving seaside settlement of Kaikoura, an area offering unique whale and dolphin watching experiences. Several different species of whale can be seen off Kaikoura at different times of the year, but almost always the huge Sperm Whales. There is also a large and readily observed colony of Southern Fur Seals at the eastern edge of the town that we will visit.

We continue between the Pacific Ocean and rugged Kaikoura Ranges to Christchurch, the 'Garden City'. Christchurch promises an eclectic mix of historic elegance and contemporary culture. The city is the focal point of what is called the Canterbury Region, which is that portion of the South Island that generally lies east of the Southern Alps. The city's population is a manageable 300,000 or so, and dates from around 1850. It began 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."

Overnight in Christchurch.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Christchurch - TranzAlpine Train - Franz Josef

This morning we will board the award-winning TranzAlpine Train, one of the world's most scenic rail journeys. Our route will take us across the vast patchwork farmlands of the Canterbury Plains and we will enjoy stunning scenery as we journey through spectacular gorges, river valleys and across the country's greatest mountain range, the magnificent Southern Alps.

After approximately 2.5 hours we will disembark at Arthurs Pass and continue to Hokitika by coach, a journey along the west coast and bringing us to the World Heritage-listed area of South West New Zealand (Te Wahipounamu). Shaped by millions of years of glacial movement, the fiords and coasts of South West New Zealand are outstandingly beautiful.

Hokitika was a gold rush town in the 1860s, and the countryside around Hokitika is dotted with historic sites related to its mining past. Today Hokitika is known for its arts and crafts produced by local artisans. After a break for lunch, we continue to Franz Josef. The magnificent Franz Josef Glacier is widely regarded as the gem of New Zealand's West Coast Glaciers.

PLEASE NOTE: In the unlikely event that we are unable to take this trip by train, we will travel by bus along The Great Alpine Highway. While the Tranz Alpine Train will always be our first choice of transport, travelling by road is equally as scenic.

Overnight at Franz Josef (or nearby Fox Glacier).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Franz Josef - Haast River Valley - Queenstown

Today we journey south along the rugged west coast where the Southern Alps meet the Tasman Sea. Towering peaks rise directly from coastal rainforest, creating one of New Zealand's most dramatic landscapes. Our destination is Haast, a small settlement at the mouth of the Haast River where the highway crosses from Westland into Otago.

We experience a river safari cruising the Haast River through the valley carved by glacial forces over millennia. The river drains Mount Aspiring National Park, its waters fed by glaciers and mountain streams. Towering peaks frame the valley, waterfalls cascade down forested slopes, and dense temperate rainforest—part of the Southwest World Heritage Area—cloaks the mountainsides. The river valley reveals landscapes shaped by ice, water, and tectonic forces where the Pacific and Australian plates collide.

Rejoining our coach, we continue inland toward Queenstown through the Haast Pass, crossing from coast to lake country. The Southern Alps' snow-capped peaks rise in the distance as we descend toward Lake Wanaka and ultimately Lake Wakatipu, where Queenstown sits sheltered by The Remarkables mountain range.

Overnight in Queenstown.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Queenstown: Skyline Gondola & Leisure Time

The Skyline Gondola ascends 450 metres up Bob's Peak, rising from Queenstown's lakefront to panoramic views across Lake Wakatipu and The Remarkables range. The lake stretches 80 kilometres through a glacially-carved valley, its distinctive lightning-bolt shape created by three separate ice flows converging during the last glaciation. The Remarkables' jagged ridgeline marks the fault scarp where tectonic forces continue pushing these mountains skyward.

The remainder of the day is yours to explore Queenstown. The compact town center clusters around the lakefront, its pedestrianized streets mixing 1860s gold rush buildings with contemporary insertions. The waterfront promenade extends along Queenstown Bay, where the coal-fired steamer TSS Earnslaw—launched in 1912—still departs for lake cruises to Walter Peak High Country Farm.

Several optional excursions operate from Queenstown, bookable locally. Jet boat operators run the Shotover and Kawarau rivers through rock canyons—an experience born from Bill Hamilton's 1950s development of the jet propulsion unit for shallow, fast-flowing water. Wine tours visit Gibbston Valley subregion, where high-altitude vineyards produce Pinot Noir in a continental climate defined by dramatic diurnal temperature shifts. Lake cruises aboard vintage steamers provide access to high country sheep stations otherwise unreachable by road. More sedate options include Queenstown Gardens' 19th-century plantings on a peninsula extending into the lake, or the trail to Queenstown Hill summit.

Overnight in Queenstown.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Queenstown - Doubtful Sound Cruise - Te Anau

Departing Queenstown this morning, we travel to Lake Manapouri, gateway to Doubtful Sound. We cruise across this pristine lake—its waters reaching depths of 444 metres/1,457 feet—toward West Arm, where New Zealand's largest hydroelectric power station operates entirely underground within the mountain.

From West Arm we travel by coach over Wilmot Pass, climbing through Fiordland's densest temperate rainforest to the pass summit at 671 metres/2,201 feet. The route provides access to landscapes otherwise unreachable—moss-draped beech forests, cascading streams, and alpine vegetation clinging to steep slopes. Captain James Cook named this fiord "Doubtful Harbour" in 1770, doubting whether winds would allow his ship to sail back out if he entered.

In Doubtful Sound we board the purpose-built catamaran Patea Explorer for a cruise through this pristine fiord. Doubtful Sound stretches 40 kilometres inland from the Tasman Sea, its waters reaching 421 metres/1,381 feet deep in places. Sheer rock faces rise over 1,000 metres directly from the water, waterfalls plunge from hanging valleys, and the fiord branches into multiple arms creating a labyrinth of waterways. The fiord receives over 8 metres of annual rainfall, creating a permanent freshwater layer atop the saltwater that supports unique marine ecosystems.

Our nature guides share their knowledge of the region's ecology and point out wildlife: Fiordland crested penguins nesting on rocky shores, New Zealand fur seals hauled out on rocks, and bottlenose dolphins that frequently patrol these waters. The remote location and lack of development mean Doubtful Sound remains far quieter than Milford Sound—sometimes the only sounds are bird calls and water dripping from rainforest canopy.

After our cruise we transfer to Te Anau, the lakeside town serving as gateway to Fiordland National Park.

Overnight in Te Anau.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Te Anau - Nugget Point - Dunedin

Our journey continues across the South Island to the East Coast and the city of Dunedin, renowned as the 'Edinburgh of the South'.

En route we make a stop at Nugget Point, an iconic panoramic platform on the Catlins Coast with one of the country's oldest lighthouses perched above the famous rocks named by Captain Cook because they looked like pieces of gold. It's a short stroll to the Tokata lighthouse, with sensational views of the big blue beyond. If you look down onto the rocks below the lighthouse, you may see a colony of fur seals frolicking in the surf. It is also home to some of the world's rarest penguins and one of the only places you might see seals, sea lions and elephant seals in the same area. There are also, sooty shearwaters, spoonbills, and a breeding colony of gannets.

We'll have a lunch stop en route and expect to arrive in Dunedin in mid-late afternoon. Known as the Wildlife Capital of New Zealand, Dunedin prides itself on its beautiful built heritage, stunning scenery, and unique biodiversity. Surrounded by dramatic hills and at the foot of a long, picturesque harbour, Dunedin is one of the best-preserved Victorian and Edwardian cities in the Southern Hemisphere.

Before checking in to our hotel, we'll stop at Baldwin Street, one of the city's claim to fame as the world's "steepest street." This 350-metre stretch of road is recognised by the Guinness World Records with an official maximum gradient is 19 degrees (though there are little bits that are 21 degrees); in other words, the ground rises a metre for every 2.86 metres you cover horizontally. The concrete upper section adds to the wall-like appearance; asphalt is avoided for safety reasons -- in hot summers, it would melt and slide right off, while in winter it would get too slippery.

Overnight in Dunedin.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Dunedin & Otago Peninsula

Today we journey to the Otago Peninsula, a 20-kilometre volcanic landform extending into the Pacific Ocean. The peninsula's volcanic origins created steep terrain—rugged on the ocean side, relatively sheltered facing Otago Harbour. This geography supports remarkable biodiversity, making the peninsula one of New Zealand's premier wildlife destinations.

Our scenic drive passes green pastures, small bays, sandy beaches, and volcanic landforms before reaching Larnach Castle. Built in the 1870s by entrepreneur William Larnach, the building claims status as "New Zealand's only castle," though it's actually a Gothic Revival mansion. Since 1967, the Barker family has owned and restored the property, retrieving original furniture and developing gardens that now hold "Garden of International Significance" status from the New Zealand Gardens Trust.

After lunch we continue with a wildlife adventure aboard the "Penguin Express" coach, crossing Reid family farmland to breeding habitats of yellow-eyed penguins, blue penguins, and New Zealand fur seals. The yellow-eyed penguin—hoiho in Mori—ranks among the world's rarest penguins, with only about 4,000 remaining. The Otago Peninsula supports one of the largest mainland populations.

Our final activity is a one-hour cruise aboard the Albatross Express on Otago Harbour. The harbour serves as feeding grounds for royal albatross from the nearby breeding colony—the only mainland albatross colony in the world. These massive seabirds, with wingspans reaching 3 metres/10 feet, soar on updrafts along the harbour entrance. We may also observe mollymawks, petrels, shearwaters, cormorants, and royal spoonbills. The purpose-built twin-engine catamaran features open top deck and enclosed lower deck for comfortable viewing.

We return to Dunedin for overnight.

Overnight in Dunedin.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Dunedin - Aoraki/Mount Cook

Today we journey north along the coast to view the unique Moeraki Beach boulders before turning inland and traveling towards New Zealand's highlands and the UNESCO World Heritage listed Mt. Cook National Park. Along the way we'll stop at Oamaru, famous for its impressive streetscapes with many buildings constructed of local limestone.

Mount Cook Village is at the base of Aoraki/Mount Cook, probably the most spectacular national park in the country and one that rivals most scenery you'll see in the European Alps. The park, 680 sq km (270 square miles), contains more than 20 peaks over 3000 m (10,000 feet),

including Aoraki/Mount Cook, the tallest mountain in Australasia; indeed the Maori word Aoraki means 'the Cloud Piercer.' It also features the world's longest temperate-zone glacier, the Tasman.

After some time for some exploration we continue to our hotel.

Overnight in the vicinity of Aoraki/Mount Cook or Lake Tekapo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Aoraki/Mount Cook - Christchurch

This morning, weather permitting, we experience the "Grand Traverse" scenic flight—a flight-seeing adventure exploring Mount Cook and Westland National Parks. The fixed-wing aircraft provides every passenger a window seat, with wings positioned above for optimal viewing below.

The flight encompasses two World Heritage National Parks and 200 square kilometres of New Zealand's most dramatic scenery. We soar above turquoise glacial lakes fed by meltwater, golden tussock lands spreading across the Mackenzie Basin, and braided river systems where multiple channels weave across wide valleys. Remote high country sheep stations occupy valleys accessible only by 4WD tracks, their isolation defining a uniquely Kiwi way of life.

The perspective reveals Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park's scale—over 20 peaks exceeding 3,000 metres/10,000 feet, including Aoraki/Mount Cook itself at 3,724 metres/12,218 feet, Australasia's highest mountain. The Mori name Aoraki means "Cloud Piercer," apt for a peak frequently shrouded in weather. The Tasman Glacier, at 27 kilometres the world's longest temperate-zone glacier, flows down the mountain's eastern flanks. Permanent ice and snow cover the park's upper reaches—a landscape shaped entirely by glacial forces over millions of years.

Pilots provide full commentary throughout the 50-minute flight, explaining the geological processes that created these landscapes where the Pacific and Australian tectonic plates collide, pushing the Southern Alps higher at roughly 7 millimetres per year.

After landing, we visit Lake Tekapo before leaving the high country, crossing the Rakaia River toward Christchurch and the Canterbury Plains.

Overnight in Christchurch.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Departure

Departure from Christchurch.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast