



# KIRRA TOURS

## 18 DAY ULTIMATE NEW ZEALAND TOUR

**STARTS/FINISHES:** Auckland / Christchurch

**DURATION:** 18 Days & 17 Nights





## Day 1 – Arrival Day to Auckland

Haere Mai and Welcome to Aotearoa/New Zealand. The first stop on your adventure is Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand. Often referred to as the ‘City of Sails’ by locals, Auckland is home to 2 harbours and over 44 volcanoes! On arrival in the city, make your way to the Oaks Auckland Hotel where you can check in and drop your bags. At the hotel reception, you’ll receive a welcome letter with some tour information, and this evening you’ll meet your group and welcome host at 6:15pm and head for a delicious welcome dinner at 6:30pm.

Below we have listed some transportation options and indicative pricing from Auckland Airport to the City:

- SkyDrive Bus – An Express Bus service from Airport to SkyCity, runs every 30 minutes from 5.00am to 10.30pm / \$20 per person. W: [www.skydrive.co.nz](http://www.skydrive.co.nz)
- Shuttle – Door to door share ride service / \$35 for 1 person, \$8 each extra in the same group. W: [www.supershuttle.co.nz](http://www.supershuttle.co.nz)
- Taxi – various companies operate from the airport. Some have fixed fares available to the city, but may cost around \$100 or more, depending on traffic. W: [www.cooptaxi.co.nz](http://www.cooptaxi.co.nz)
- Uber – approximately \$45. For specific fare pricing, contact the taxi and shuttle companies directly.

**Stay:** Oaks Auckland Hotel (40 Beach Road, Auckland CBD 1010)

**Meals:** Dinner

## Day 2 – Auckland to Rotorua

This morning, we leave Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) for a day of stunning sights. First, we’ll visit Waitomo, famous for its glowworm caves where we’ll enjoy a peaceful boat ride through a cavern lit by thousands of glowworms and explore a limestone cave shaped over millions of years. This tour is a magical experience, and was even filmed by Sir David Attenborough when he visited Aotearoa.

Next, we’ll head to Rotorua, a geothermal wonderland and cultural hub. Experience bubbling mud pools, steaming geysers, and rich Māori traditions. This evening, we’ll enjoy a group dinner and a relaxing night in Rotorua, ready for tomorrow’s adventures.



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**Stay:** Distinction Rotorua or similar

**Visit:** Waitomo, Rotorua

**Experience:** Spellbound Caves Waitomo

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 3 – Visit Rotorua Local Sites

This morning, we'll journey past the stunning Blue and Green Lakes to Lake Tarawera, a place of historical and natural significance. Once home to the world-famous Pink and White Terraces, the area was forever changed by the 1886 eruption of Mount Tarawera.

We'll then visit Te Wairoa, the Buried Village, where a self-guided tour uncovers New Zealand's most visited archaeological site. Next, we return to the tranquil Whakarewarewa Forest to walk among the majestic redwoods, first planted here in 1901.

We'll also stop at the National Kiwi Hatchery, where you can get up close to New Zealand's most iconic and elusive bird. Learn about the conservation work being done to protect this taonga species and, depending on the season, you may even spot chicks in the nursery.

The afternoon is yours to enjoy at your own pace. Consider visiting Kuirau Park, where you can witness geothermal wonders like boiling mud pools for free, or simply relax and soak in the unique atmosphere of Rotorua.

**Stay:** Distinction Rotorua or similar

**Visit:** Rotorua, National Kiwi Hatchery

**Experience:** Lake Tarawera, Buried Village, Whakarewarewa Forest and National Kiwi Hatchery

**Meals:** Breakfast

## Day 4 – Rotorua to Lake Aniwhenua to Taupo

This morning we'll travel to the shores of Lake Aniwhenua in Murupara, where you'll get to experience a slice of the real New Zealand. Owned by a passionate local Maori family who have dedicated their lives to making a difference in their local community, Kohutapu Lodge is situated on the lake, and has been helping to transform the local town of Murupara through community-driven initiatives for years.



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Our experience will begin with a guided tour of the sacred Maori rock carvings and then we'll travel to the Lodge to witness the preparation of a traditional ground cooked hangi.

After lunch, we'll depart for Taupo where we'll get to see the fiercely blue Huka Falls and explore the charming lakeside town.

**Stay:** Anchorage Taupo or similar

**Visit:** Murupara, Taupo, Wai O'Tapu Mud Pools, Huka Falls

**Experience:** Kohutapu Lodge Tribal Tour, Huka Falls

**Meals:** Breakfast, Hangi Lunch + Dessert

## Day 5 – Taupo to Napier

After breakfast, we'll make our way into the picturesque Hawke's Bay Region. Napier is renowned for its world-class wineries and no visit would be complete without a stop at Mission Estate Winery. Established in 1851 by French missionaries, it is New Zealand's oldest winery and steeped in history. Here, we'll enjoy a wine tasting followed by a leisurely lunch, savoring exquisite dishes paired with exceptional wines, all while soaking in the estate's stunning ambiance.

Later, we'll take a short drive to Napier, a coastal city celebrated for its beautifully preserved Art Deco architecture. Spend the evening strolling along the tree-lined promenade and perhaps indulge in fresh seafood at one of the many beachside restaurants.

**Stay:** Scenic Hotel Te Pania or similar

**Visit:** Mission Estate Winery

**Experience:** Wine Tasting

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## Day 6 – Napier to Wellington

This morning we'll depart Napier and journey down to Wellington, the capital city of New Zealand and the home of the best cup of coffee in the country! On the way down, we'll make a stop in Greytown, Wairarapa's oldest town, for a spot of lunch. A picturesque village with restored Victorian buildings, Greytown is a charming place to stop, refuel and browse the boutiques before we continue down to Wellington.



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With a population of less than 220,000 people, no city in NZ combines a relaxed atmosphere and a cultured, bohemian spirit better than Wellington. We highly recommend a visit to our national museum Te Papa which boasts some incredible exhibits.

This evening, join your group for dinner, a great chance to sample the capital's renowned food scene before we cross the strait tomorrow.

**Stay:** Novotel Wellington or similar

**Visit:** Wairarapa, Wellington

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 7 – Wellington to Nelson

This morning, we'll start our journey with breakfast aboard the ferry in the brand-new Pohutukawa Lounge. Designed like a premium airport lounge, it offers a relaxing atmosphere and a delicious spread of food to enjoy as we cross the Cook Strait. If the weather is fine, head up to the deck to take in stunning views of the Marlborough Sounds and keep an eye out for local wildlife.

On arrival in Picton, we'll travel to Blenheim, stopping first at the Omaka Aviation Heritage Museum. Home to an extraordinary collection of WWI and WWII aircraft, many displayed in dioramas created by Sir Peter Jackson's Wingnut Films, this is a must for history and aviation buffs alike.

Then we'll stop for a wine tasting amidst the vines at one of New Zealand's top Sauvignon Blanc producers, before continuing on to Nelson, where we'll have time to unwind, explore the area, and sample some of the region's fantastic local food and beverages.

**Visit:** Picton, Omaka Aviation Heritage Museum, Blenheim, Nelson

**Stay:** Rutherford Nelson or similar

**Experience:** Premium Lounge Ferry journey across the Cook Strait, Omaka Aviation Heritage Museum

**Meals:** Breakfast

## Day 8 – Free Day in Nelson



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Today is a free day in the sunshine capital of New Zealand, Nelson is a small city full of creative spaces, craft beer establishments and arts & crafts. Use the day to take a stroll around the area or take a wine or beer tour - you can even do this by bike if you'd like to get in some exercise. For those wanting to visit Abel Tasman National Park you can take a day tour from Nelson to visit the golden sands and idyllic bays. If you'd like to go for a hike closer to Nelson, we'd recommend the hike to the centre of New Zealand, it's a short but steep walk and you'll be rewarded with amazing panoramic views of the region at the summit!

**Stay:** Rutherford Nelson or similar

**Visit:** Nelson

**Meals:** Breakfast

## Day 9 – Nelson to Hanmer Springs

This morning we'll travel inland, crossing through the Buller Gorge and Lewis Pass as we make our way to Hanmer Springs, a charming alpine village nestled in the Southern Alps. Once we arrive, the rest of the day is yours to explore. Many choose to soak in the famous Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools, a network of natural hot pools surrounded by native bush, the perfect way to unwind. This evening we'll gather for a group dinner in the village.

**Stay:** Heritage Hanmer Springs or similar

**Visit:** Hanmer Springs

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 10 – Hanmer Springs to Christchurch

After breakfast, we'll depart Hanmer Springs and make our way toward Christchurch, stopping en route in the Waipara Valley, one of Canterbury's premier wine regions. Enjoy a tasting at a local winery before continuing on to Christchurch, arriving in the afternoon. This evening we'll enjoy a group dinner at our hotel.

**Stay:** Distinction Christchurch or similar

**Visit:** Waipara Valley, Christchurch

**Experience:** Waipara Valley Wine Tasting

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner



## Day 11 – Christchurch to Dunedin

After breakfast, we'll journey south along the scenic east coast. Our first stop is Oamaru, a charming township renowned for its beautifully preserved heritage buildings, offering a glimpse into New Zealand's Victorian past.

Next, we'll visit the mystical Moeraki Boulders, ancient geological wonders formed around 60 million years ago. These spherical stones, shaped by natural erosion, dot the beach like sentinels silently guarding the coastline, creating a truly captivating sight.

In the late afternoon, we'll arrive in Dunedin whose name is derived from the Scottish Gaelic term for Edinburgh. Steeped in Scottish heritage, the city enjoys a unique blend of history and culture from its striking European architecture to its rich Maori heritage.

**Stay:** Scenic Hotel Dunedin City or similar

**Visit:** Oamaru, Moeraki Boulders, Baldwin Street, Dunedin

**Meals:** Breakfast

## Day 12 – Dunedin to Te Anau

This morning we'll visit the iconic Larnach Castle, a jewel of Dunedin. Built in 1871 by William Larnach, this is New Zealand's only castle. Its magnificent gardens, recently rated by the New Zealand Gardens Trust as a Garden of International Significance, are unique and beautiful and offer breathtaking views of the Otago peninsula and beyond.

Next, our journey takes us to Gore, where we'll delve into the town's colorful past at the Hokonui Moonshine Museum. Discover the daring adventures of Scottish settlers who turned Gore into a hub for illicit whisky distilling and bootlegging. You'll even have the chance to sample Old Hokonui, crafted from the original recipe that defied the law.

In the evening, we'll arrive in Te Anau, the gateway to Fiordland and the spectacular Doubtful Sound. Settle in and prepare for tomorrow's awe-inspiring exploration of one of New Zealand's most pristine natural wonders.

**Stay:** Distinction Luxmore Te Anau or similar

**Visit:** Gore, Te Anau

**Experience:** Larnach Castle, Hokonui Moonshine Museum

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner



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## Day 13 – Te Anau via Doubtful Sound to Queenstown

Departing Te Anau this morning, we'll travel to Manapouri for a scenic cruise across the lake to West Arm. From there, we'll take a short coach journey over Wilmot Pass, New Zealand's most expensive road, pausing to admire the dense Fiordland rainforest and stunning views of Doubtful Sound below.

At Deep Cove, we board a modern catamaran to explore Doubtful Sound, the largest and most tranquil fiord in the region. Known for its serene beauty and lack of crowds compared to Milford Sound, Doubtful Sound offers breathtaking scenery with towering mountains and pristine waters. As we sail, enjoy expert commentary on the area's rich history and keep an eye out for wildlife, including penguins, seals, and dolphins.

After the tour, we'll continue to Queenstown, where we'll check into the stunning alpine resort that will be our accommodation for the next two nights.

**Stay:** Heritage Queenstown or similar

**Visit:** Lake Manapouri, West Arm, Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound, Queenstown

**Experience:** Doubtful Sound Wilderness Cruise

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## Day 14 – Day at leisure in Queenstown

Today is yours to experience the best of Queenstown, a picturesque alpine resort town known for its vast array of adventure activities. If you'd like to explore the area, we recommend taking a ride on the world famous Shotover Jet Boat or taking a tour to the gold mining area of Skippers Canyon. For the best views of the town, travel to the top of Bob's Peak by gondola and have lunch at the Skyline restaurant, why not make your way to the bungee centre to watch people hurling themselves off cliffs – bungee is a NZ invention after all! Alternatively, make your way to the lakeside and enjoy a refreshing drink or stroll through Queenstown's lush park.

**Stay:** Heritage Queenstown or similar

**Meals:** Breakfast

## Day 15 – Queenstown to Haast



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This morning we'll embark on one of the most scenic drives in New Zealand, traveling through Arrowtown, a picturesque village steeped in the rich history of the gold mining era. Next, we'll visit Wanaka, a charming township nestled by the lake's edge surrounded by breathtaking mountain scenery. Here, we'll enjoy lunch and take time to soak in the views.

As we continue north, the journey takes us along the spectacular West Coast, renowned for its rugged beauty and dramatic landscapes. Passing through the Haast Pass, a UNESCO World Heritage site, we'll marvel at ancient rainforests, crystal-clear rivers, and towering peaks. The small town of Haast, set against this remarkable backdrop, is home to the famous Haast River and is steeped in natural heritage.

This evening we'll gather for a group dinner at our hotel, reflecting on the day's awe-inspiring journey.

**Stay:** Heartland Haast or similar

**Visit:** Arrowtown, Wanaka, Haast

**Experience:** Arrowtown, Wanaka, Haast

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 16 – Haast to Franz Josef

Travelling north along the coast of the Westland National Park this morning, we'll travel to Glacier Country, home of the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers. This remarkable part of the country was shaped by dynamic glaciers and boasts lush rainforest which grows beneath towering mountains. We'll make a stop at Lake Matheson, nestled amongst ancient forest and famous for mirror views of Aoraki/Mount Cook and Mount Tasman. Lake Matheson is a serene and beautiful place to enjoy a short stroll to a gorgeous lookout point. This evening, we'll spend the night in the township of Franz Josef, surrounded by rainforest and mountains, arriving in time to take an optional Helicopter Flight, with a snow landing – a tour highlight, but very dependent on weather conditions.

**Stay:** Scenic Franz Josef or similar

**Visit:** Fox Glacier, Lake Matheson, Franz Josef

**Meals:** Breakfast

## Day 17 – Franz Josef to Christchurch



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This morning, we'll depart Franz Josef and head north to the artistic town of Hokitika, renowned for its stunning Greenstone, before continuing on to the TranzAlpine Arthur's Pass train station. From there, we'll board the TranzAlpine train, regarded as one of the world's greatest one-day train journeys. Get ready to be awed by breathtaking views of forests, rolling plains, and snow-capped mountains! At the end of the journey, we'll transfer to our hotel in Christchurch, where we'll gather for a farewell meal to celebrate the final evening of our tour.

**Stay:** Distinction Hotel Christchurch or similar

**Visit:** Hokitika, Arthurs Pass, Christchurch

**Experience:** TranzAlpine Train Journey from Arthurs Pass

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 18 – Depart Christchurch

Today is the final day of the tour, our trip has come to an end. Enjoy breakfast before saying a fond farewell to your tour leader and all your travel companions. Whether you're travelling home today or staying in Christchurch for longer, we hope you leave this tour with happy memories and friends for life.

**Meals:** Breakfast



## What's Included:

- Experienced Driver/Guide
- Small Group Tour - Max 24
- Luxury Touring Vehicle
- 18 days / 17 nights accommodation
- 28 meals (17 Breakfasts, 3 Lunches, 8 Dinners)
- Waitomo Caves Experience
- Lake Tarawera Visit
- Buried Village in Rotorua
- National Kiwi Hatchery Visit
- Lake Aniwhenua Cultural Experience
- Huka Falls
- Mission Estate Winery Lunch and Wine Tasting
- Premium Lounge Ferry journey across the Cook Strait
- Omapere Aviation Heritage Museum
- Waipara Valley Wine Tasting
- Moeraki Boulders
- Larnach Castle visit
- Explore the Hokonui Moonshine Museum
- Doubtful Sound Wilderness Cruise
- Visit Arrowtown, Wanaka
- Overnight in a World Heritage Area
- TransAlpine Train Experience from Arthurs Pass