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New Zealand Founders Trip January 24 - February 2, 2023



Trip Style

Hiking

Duration

10 Days



Active 2-3



Hiking



Scenic Cruise



Kayak

Per Person: \$6,799 USD

Single Supplement: \$749 USD

Trip Summary

On this exclusive 10-day trip, we leave the trodden path behind to explore the most awe-inspiring landscapes of the North and South Islands. Starting in Auckland, your journey begins as you head north to hike coastal trails, cruise crystal clear waters of the Poor Knights Islands and ponder ancient kauri trees towering above. Next, experience a dramatic shift in landscapes as you travel to the South Island. Trade sandy beaches for thunderous waterfalls, jet boat between Mt Aspiring National Park's snowcapped peaks and witness Franz Josef glacier shooting straight out of a temperate rainforest. If you're ready to discover New Zealand's best-kept secrets, hop about our Founders Trip for an adventure like no other.

Highlights

- Hike under giant kauri trees in the Waipoua Forest
- Walk or sandboard the sand dune at Te Pouahi Reserve
- Explore Cape Brett through the Manawahuna Scenic Reserve
- Spend a day cruising, snorkel and kayaking poor Knights Islands
- Jet boat along the Wilkin River in Mt Aspiring National Park
- Take in incredible views over Queenstown with a hike up Ben Lomond

Day 1: Arrive, journey north, Waipoua Forest and Footprints tour

If you leave the northern hemisphere on a Sunday evening, you'll arrive into Auckland early on Tuesday morning where we'll meet you. You'll lose a day to the dateline, but you get it back on the way home! Leaving the city behind us, we'll follow the road along the banks of the Wairoa River and head north to Waipoua Forest, where we'll stretch our legs, greeted by native birdlife as we pass beneath huge kauri trees. We'll then continue through to the west coast settlement of Opononi, a harbour town made famous in the mid-1950s by the tame dolphin, Opo, who used to let children ride on his back. Later, after dinner we'll head back out into the Waipoua Forest for a twilight walk, where we'll be joined by local Maori guides. It's a memorable and spiritual experience to witness the greeting of these colossal trees with a spine-tingling waiata (sacred chant). We'll also visit Tane Mahuta (meaning Lord of the Forest), New Zealand's largest known living kauri tree. At a height of 51.2 metres (168 feet), and with a trunk girth of 13.7 metres (45 feet), this silent giant, with ancient limbs, seems to grasp at the stars.

Copthorne Hokianga, Hokianga Harbour (Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking Time: 3 hours, relaxed stroll



Day 2: Te Pouahi Reserve, hike Puketi Forest, Bay of Islands

After breakfast, we'll board a water taxi to the other side of the Hokianga Harbour to walk the sand dunes at Te Pouahi Reserve. We'll take some sandboards along too, for those who're keen to take the fast route down! More than 1000 years ago, Maori warrior chief Kupe and his people were the first to arrive in New Zealand, landing on the shores of Hokianga Harbour. The area was also one of the first points of Maori and European contact. With our sandboarding fix satisfied, we'll head east across the island to Puketi Forest. Later, we'll head to 'the Jewel of the Bay of Islands,' Paihia, a bustling seaside town with golden sand beaches.

Paihia Lodgings, Paihia (All meals)

Hiking Distance: 1.6 kilometres (1 mile), 1 hour

Elevation Gain: 20 metres (65 feet)

Elevation Loss: 20 metres (65 feet)

Day 3: Hike Cape Brett, scenic cruise to Paihia

This morning, we'll take a water taxi from Paihia out to Deep Water Cove for a ridgeline hike to Cape Brett through the Manawahuna Scenic Reserve. On route, you'll experience the Bay of Islands from the ridge tops and get magnificent views. This is a 3-4 hour hike with rewarding views of the Bay of Islands the entire way - you may even see dolphins and seals from your vantage point high up on the cliffs. The mountains that we're crossing are very important to the local Iwi (Maori tribe). The mountain "Rakaumangamanga" is one point of the Polynesian Triangle - Hawaii and Rapanui are the other 2. If you're not feeling up to the hike, have a chat with your guides and they can arrange an alternative boat trip around the Bay of Islands. Later, we'll be picked up at Cape Brett by water taxi for the scenic cruise back to Paihia.

Hotel: Pacific Rendezvous, Tutukaka (All meals)

Hiking Distance: 5 kilometres (3 miles), 3 hours

Elevation Gain: 473 metres (1,550 feet)

Elevation Loss: 473 metres (1,550 feet)



Day 4: Cruise Poor Knights Islands, snorkel or kayak

After breakfast, we'll head out for an early morning walk before boarding a purpose-built boat for a cruise to the Poor Knights Islands. This small cluster of islets is home to a wealth of biodiversity both above and below the water. While you head across from the mainland, keep your eyes peeled for flocks of petrels, shearwaters and gannets – many of these shorebirds nest almost exclusively on the islands you'll be visiting. The Poor Knights is the second oldest marine reserve in New Zealand, and the sub-tropical environment is now an important conservation area for many species of marine-life. Whales, dolphins and orca can often be spotted, as well as a myriad of fish species that constantly trawl the reserve. You'll visit the world's largest sea cave and hear all about the islands' history including their occupation by ancient Maori. Our guides will then give you the chance to explore under your own steam, by providing you with either a snorkel and mask, or a kayak. If you're a keen scuba diver, there's an option to upgrade to diving for an additional fee, including all the necessary gear. This option must be pre-arranged, so please let the team know well before-hand.

Pacific Rendezvous, Tutukaka (All meals)

Day 5: Hike Northland coastline, fly to the South Island

This morning, we'll follow the coastal road as it winds its way south alongside tree-lined white sand beaches to Waipu, a quaint village with strong Scottish heritage dating back to the 1850s. Then we'll make our way to Mangawhai Heads for one of the finest coastal cliff top walks in the country. The walk offers glorious views of the Northland coastline, passing through shady bush and beneath giant old pohutukawa trees, and then returns along the beach. After lunch, we'll continue south from Mangawhai Heads towards the city of Auckland to catch your quick flight to Christchurch.

Sudima, Christchurch (All meals)

Hiking Distance: 5 kilometres (3 miles), 3 hours

Elevation Gain: 40 metres (130 feet)

Elevation Loss: 40 metres (130 feet)

Day 6: Hike in Arthur's Pass

Today we'll travel into the Southern Alps to hike Devil's Punchbowl in Arthur's Pass. The walk will take you through native beech forest to an awesome 131 metre (430 feet) waterfall, so make sure you have your camera handy! From there, we'll head down the coast to Franz Josef where we'll stay the night. Nestled in the rainforest-clad foothills of the Southern Alps, Franz Josef is the heart of New Zealand glacier country.

Rainforest Retreat, Franz Josef (All meals)

Hiking Distance: 2 kilometres (1.2 miles), 0.5-1 hour

Elevation Gain: 100 metres (330 feet)

Elevation Loss: 100 metres (330 feet)



Day 7: Franz Josef Glacier, Mt. Aspiring National Park

With some 140 glaciers making their way down from the Southern Alps, this area is fittingly known as glacier country. Begin the day by witnessing the jaw-dropping beauty of the Franz Josef glacier – a giant frozen river imperceptibly gliding its way from temperate rainforest to just 250 metres (820 feet) above sea level. Arrive this afternoon at Mt. Aspiring National Park to jump in a jet boat to speed along the Wilkin River. Feel the wind in your hair and take in stellar views of snowcapped peaks and ancient lands. Relax tonight at your lakeside hotel in Wanaka.

Edgewater Hotel, Wanaka (All meals)

Hiking Distance: 2 kilometres (1.2 miles), 0.5-1 hour

Elevation Gain: 100 metres (330 feet)

Elevation Loss: 100 metres (330 feet)



Day 8: Mt. Iron hike, bike Queenstown Trail

Feast your eyes on 360-degree views of Wanaka and beyond after your morning hike of Mt. Iron – a rocky knoll carved by glaciers. A short but dramatic journey over the Cardrona Saddle brings you toward Queenstown, where we'll hop on bikes to ride a portion of the Queenstown Bike Trail. The trail is well packed and winds along beside the Arrow River to Arrowtown, a small historic gold mining village established in the 1800s. After our ride we'll check out the charming town before heading on to Queenstown and Lake Wakatipu. You'll sleep sweetly tonight at a lakefront hotel located in the heart of this alpine town.

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Queenstown (All meals)

Biking Distance: 4.5 kilometres (2.7 miles), 1.5 hour

Elevation Gain: 200 metres (660 feet)

Elevation Loss: 200 metres (660 feet)

Day 9: Gondola ride, hike Ben Lomond or free day in Queenstown

Today you have two options – a full day hike or a free day to yourself. For those keen for an alpine hike, you'll meet your guide at reception at 9am, ready to head up the Ben Lomond Track. To save our legs a little, we'll take a short gondola ride up to Bob's Peak, which is 450 metres (1476 feet) above Queenstown. From there, we'll head out along the trail through alpine tussock-land towards the summit of Ben Lomond. From this vantage point, you'll find yourself immersed in amazing views over Queenstown and Lake Wakatipu, which are themselves dwarfed by the surrounding mountains including Mt Aspiring. As an alternative, you can have a free day to explore on your own. Queenstown is the adventure capital of New Zealand (if not the world!) and all the comforts of civilisation are packed into this tiny resort town: restaurants galore, sidewalk cafés, stylish lounge bars, day spas, and boutiques. You'll also find incredible optional activities here including horse trekking, kayaking, fishing, winery tours, hang gliding, mountain biking, bungee jumping, jet boating and skydiving. Or you can just soak up the atmosphere or lounge about reading a book. Your guides will happily share their favourite haunts and point you in the right direction if you choose to have a free day today.

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Queenstown (All meals)

Ben Lomond Hiking Distance (from the gondola): 8 kilometres (5 miles), 4-5 hours

Elevation Gain: 978 metres (3,208 feet)

Elevation Loss: 978 metres (3,208 feet)



Day 10: Farewell

Today concludes our New Zealand Founders Trip. We'll leave you buzzing with excitement, but feeling relaxed and refreshed as well! After breakfast, you'll head to the Queenstown airport where you'll fly to Auckland to catch your flight home.* (Breakfast)

*Be sure to add the Queenstown to Auckland flight in your international flight arrangements.