

New Zealand Biking Adventure ★ 4.77 60 Reviews

New Zealand Biking Adventure

14 Days

10 People Max



Combine the very best of New Zealand's cycling and hiking trails on our New Zealand biking adventure tour.

Specifically designed for biking enthusiasts, our 14-day New Zealand biking adventure tour explores the very best of the South Island's biking trails, with a few iconic hikes thrown in for good measure. You may recognize trails such as the Alps 2 Ocean, Central Otago Rail Trail, and Queenstown Cycle trail, known for their variety of landscapes and breathtaking lookout spots. However, it's the hidden gems like the West Coast Wilderness trail and Hawea River track that will leave a lasting impression on you. Of course, not every landscape is explorable by bike, so we've included hikes on the Routeburn Track and in Aoraki Mount Cook National Park, as well as a cruise on Milford Sound to give guests an all-encompassing adventure of New Zealand's finest vistas. Plus, with fully vehicle-supported rides, you'll be able to challenge yourself as much or as little as you'd like on our New Zealand Biking Adventure tour.

IMPORTANT: The bikes available for our New Zealand Biking Adventure trip are [Specialized Roll Sport Bikes](#). If you're looking for a trip with E-Bike options available, check out our [New Zealand E-Bike Adventure](#).

Trip Highlights

Biking - West Coast Wilderness trail

Biking - Hawea River track

Biking - Queenstown Cycle trail

Biking - Mavora Lakes

Biking - Central Otago Rail trail

Biking - Alps 2 Ocean trail

Hiking - Castle Hill

Hiking - Franz Josef Glacier

Hiking - Routeburn track

Hiking - Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park

Plus ... - Queenstown

Our Active Adventures Assurance

We value loyalty, and appreciate that it goes both ways. So when you book with us we'll make a few assurances to you so you can book with complete confidence, no matter what's happening in your life (or the world).



COVID-Ready Certified: Safe Travel for our Guests Travelling Overseas

Active Adventures has received the World Travel and Tourism Council's Safe Travels stamp, which guarantees you that we'll follow all ATTA and WTTC health and safety guidelines on all our trips. See how our small group, off-the-beaten-track adventures are perfect to start exploring again.

New Zealand Biking Adventure ~ Itinerary

DAY 1

Arrive, set up, bike McLeans Island

Most people leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Friday evening, arriving in Auckland early Sunday morning. You'll lose a day crossing the dateline – but you get it back on the way home! It's a short flight from Auckland to Christchurch on the South Island where we'll meet you. Christchurch, New Zealand's second-largest city, is framed by the Canterbury Plains and the Southern Alps to the West and the Pacific Ocean and Banks Peninsula to the East. After fitting our bikes we'll take a warm-up ride at McLeans Island. Depending on where you're coming from, you'll probably find jetlag is no big deal – for instance, it's a 12 to 13-hour direct overnight flight from Los Angeles to Auckland, and there's only a 3-hour time difference between New Zealand and US Pacific time. If you're coming from further afield, you'll appreciate the gentle start to your New Zealand adventure.

Merivale Manor, Christchurch (Lunch, Dinner)

Biking: 5-10 kilometers (3-6 miles), 1-2 hours

DAY 2

Journey to the West Coast, bike West Coast Wilderness Trail

This morning we'll head west to Kuru Tawhiti Conservation Area in the heart of the Southern Alps. We'll take a gentle one-hour walk among the imposing limestone tors of Castle Hill, which were once a meeting place for moa hunters of the Ngai Tahu tribe. The Dalai Lama visited this area and described it as a 'spiritual center of the universe'. Afterward, we'll continue on to the West Coast via Arthur's Pass, one of New Zealand's impressive alpine passes - look out for the Otira Viaduct. After lunch, we'll take an afternoon ride on a section of the West Coast Wilderness trail from Greymouth to Taramakau and then it's a short drive back down to Kumara. Once an old bustling gold mining town, Kumara is one of the many West Coast towns given a new lease of life by the opening of the West Coast Wilderness Trail cycleway in November 2013. We'll spend the night here, enjoying dinner at the local pub.

Theatre Royal Hotel, Kumara (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Biking: 18 kilometers (11 miles), 2-3 hours

DAY 3

Bike West Coast Wilderness Trail

We'll start of our next ride along another section of the West Coast Wilderness Trail. This trail offers contrasting cycling along water races, tramways and railway lines and through dense, lush rainforest. Beginning in Kumara, passing by the Kapitea Reservoir, we'll head inland towards the Great Southern Divide and the raging Arahura River. We'll find a nice spot for a picnic lunch before continuing along the trail back towards the Tasman Sea and Lake Kaniere. The bike ride today will get your heart pumping and your excitement levels rising, in anticipation of all the trails you're soon to experience. Later we'll carry on down to Franz Josef, nestled in the rainforest-clad foothills of the Southern Alps, where we'll stay for the next couple of nights.

Rainforest Retreat, Franz Josef (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Biking: 38-46 kilometers (24-28 miles), 4 hours - Medium technical riding, elevation +/- 300 meters (984 feet)

DAY 4

Hike near Franz Josef Glacier

With some 140 glaciers making their way down from the Southern Alps, this area is fittingly known as glacier country. Few sights equal the spectacle of this giant frozen river (Franz Josef Glacier) imperceptibly grinding its way down through the temperate rainforest to just 250 meters (820 feet) above sea level. We'll spend most of the day near Franz Josef Glacier hiking up through the forest to incredible views of the ice. Wet weather can inhibit these hikes, so we may opt to hike the Tatara tunnels instead. After settling into our accommodation back in Franz Josef township, we can head out after dark with flashlights for a short night walk to search for the native glowworm while listening to some of New Zealand's nocturnal birdlife, such as the morepork owl.

Rainforest Retreat, Franz Josef (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: Franz Josef Glacier Terminal Face Hiking: 4.8 kilometers (3 miles), 2-3 hours, elevation +/- 20 meters (65 feet)

Hiking: OR Alex Knob Hike: Up to 8 kilometers (5 miles), 5-6 hours, elevation +/- 1,100 meters (3,609 feet)

DAY 5

Hike Lake Matheson and bike Hawea River Track

This morning, we'll hike around Lake Matheson, an enchanting icon of the region that, on a still day, offers impressive reflections of Aoraki/Mt. Cook and Mt. Tasman (New Zealand's two tallest peaks). After lunch, we'll travel down the coast through lush forest and then inland across the Haast Pass to Wanaka, ready to jump back on the bikes and ride the Hawea River Track, linking Lake Hawea township to Wanaka, via Albert town. This is a nice, gentle ride with uninterrupted views of the clear Hawea River.

Edgewater Resort, Wanaka (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: 4.4 kilometers (2.7 miles), 1.5 hours, elevation +/- 40 meters (132 feet)

Biking: 8-26 kilometers (5-16 miles), 2-2.5 hours

DAY 6

Bike Gibbston River and Queenstown Trails

From Wanaka, it's a short but dramatic journey over the Cardrona Saddle to the Gibbston Valley, an area best known for producing world-class grapes. You'll be spoilt for vistas riding along the Gibbston River Trail - with the Kawarau River far below, impressive suspension bridges and iconic Central Otago landscapes. You'll also pass through a rare pre-1900 fruit orchard and rock huts left over from the gold rush. Along the way, there are plenty of award-winning wineries to stop at and sample a drop if you'd like. We'll have lunch in Arrowtown before continuing along the trails to Queenstown, with incredible views of the Remarkables mountain range and Lake Wakatipu.

Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Queenstown (Breakfast, Lunch)

Biking: 40-48 kilometers (25-30 miles), 2-4 hours, mostly flat

DAY 7

Free day in Queenstown

Queenstown is the adventure capital of New Zealand (if not the world!) and all the comforts of civilization are packed into this tiny resort town: restaurants galore, stylish lounge bars, day spas, and boutiques. You'll also find incredible optional activities here including horse trekking, a gondola, fishing, winery tours, bungee jumping, jet boating and skydiving as well as some great hiking opportunities. Or you can just soak up the atmosphere at one of many local cafés. Your guides will happily share their favorite haunts and point you in the right direction for your free day today.

Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Queenstown (Breakfast)

DAY 8

Cruise on the Earnslaw steam ship to Walter Peak, bike to Mavora Lakes

This morning, we'll cross Lake Wakatipu on board the historic steamship TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak Station. Here, you'll follow Mt. Nicholas farm road to the isolated Mavora Lakes. You'll bike alongside the lake before heading gently up through the headwaters of the Von River, surrounded by the Livingston Mountains. This is a true wilderness cycling experience on a quiet back road, and after your time in Queenstown, you'll appreciate the peaceful surroundings! From Mavora Lakes, we'll take a scenic drive through to Te Anau, our base for the next couple of nights.

Matai Lodge or Distinction Luxmore Hotel, Te Anau (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Biking: 48-55 kilometers (30-34 miles), 4-5 hours

DAY 9

Cruise Milford Sound and hike Routeburn Track

It's worth the early start this morning as we set off for our largest and perhaps most spectacular national park, Fiordland. When we arrive, we'll be greeted with jaw-dropping views of Mitre Peak and the surrounding jagged granite peaks – quite possibly the most picturesque mountain range in New Zealand – though we'll let you be the judge of that! For close-up views, we'll jump on board a boat cruise to explore the silky smooth waters and hidden coves of Milford Sound. Gaze in wonder at the waterfalls cascading down enormous vertical rock faces and if you're lucky, you may spot the odd fur seal or dolphin making itself at home in the fiord! After lunch, we'll head back through the Homer Tunnel to hike part of the Routeburn Track to Key Summit, for unsurpassed views of the Hollyford Valley, as well as Lake Marian and Mt. Christina.

Matai Lodge or Distinction Luxmore Hotel, Te Anau (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: 6.8 kilometers (4.2 miles), 3-4 hours, elevation +/-470meters (1540 feet)

DAY 10

Bike the Otago Rail Trail from Lauder to Ranfurly

Today we'll head east from Te Anau right into the heart of the Maniototo region in Central Otago. The trail here follows an old train line built in the early 1900s. The tracks were retired and removed in 1990 and now the Central Otago Rail Trail is one of the most iconic cycling trails in New Zealand. We'll cross numerous bridges and viaducts, winding our way along the smooth track past Raggedy Range and Rough Ridge. We have a gradual climb through the Ida Valley, and once at the summit of the trail, it's a slight downhill all the way into Ranfurly, a small town famous for its Art Deco architecture and warm and welcoming community.

Hawkdun Lodge, Ranfurly (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Biking: 23-48 kilometers (14-30 miles), 4-5 hours, elevation +/- 100 meters (328 feet)

DAY 11

Bike Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail

This morning we'll journey to the East Coast, stopping for a break at Moeraki and visiting the famous Moeraki Boulders, before continuing up the Waitaki Valley where we'll jump on our bikes to ride alongside Lake Aviemore. We'll bike along to Benmore Hydro Dam where the trail winds its way around the Ahuriri arm of Lake Benmore with views over the Benmore Dam. Well hidden from the highway, we'll be on a single track and finish up at Sailors Cutting. Tonight we'll stay at the remote and beautiful Lake Ohau Lodge. The lodge is tucked in beside an alpine lake, with incredible views stretching across to Aoraki/Mt. Cook and the Southern Alps – the ideal spot to rejuvenate the body and soak in the hot tub whilst gazing at the stars!

Lake Ohau Lodge, Ohau (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Biking: 38 kilometers (23 miles), 5-6 hours, elevation +/- 30 meters (98 feet)

DAY 12

Continue Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail

Today is our last day on two wheels, so we'll make it extra special with a ride that'll knock your socks off! We'll set off around Lake Ohau and then alongside the Ohau Canal to Twizel. From Twizel, the dramatic scenery steps up a notch with the shimmering cobalt-blue Lake Pukaki on the left, and Aoraki/Mt. Cook straight ahead. Along this section of the trail, you'll also pass a range of native plants including Kowhai (with brilliant yellow flowers, popular with endemic Tui birds), flax and tussocks. Tonight we'll spend the night in the Mackenzie Country basin, with stunning views stretching across the Southern Alps. The area is known for the Aoraki Mackenzie International Dark Sky Reserve, with light pollution strictly controlled, so it's the ideal spot to stargaze!

MacKenzie Country Hotel, Twizel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Biking: 56 kilometers (37-66 miles), 5-6 hours, elevation +/- 30 meters (98 feet)

DAY 13

Hike Aoraki Mt Cook National Park

A short distance away is Mt. Cook, named Aoraki or 'cloud piercer' by South Island Maori, the highest mountain in New Zealand. Directly opposite Aoraki/Mt. Cook, there's a stunning day hike to the main ridge above Mueller Glacier. This area has a unique alpine environment and includes endemic flora such as the Mt. Cook lily (*Ranunculus lyallii*), the world's largest buttercup. Our travelers often say this is the best hike they've ever done and it's a fine way to finish off a great trip. It's a bit of a hike, and you'll remember the view of the glacier and the surrounding peaks forever! The weather conditions are very important in this area, as it's a true alpine climate notorious for sudden weather shifts. If we aren't able to do the Mueller Glacier hike, or you'd like to take it a little easier, there's an impressive hike up to a glacial lake (complete with icebergs!) at the base of the Hooker Glacier. After hiking, we'll relax at our lodge and have a celebratory dinner for our last night together.

Aoraki Alpine Lodge, Aoraki Mt Cook Village (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: Mueller Ridge Hike : 7.2 kilometers (4.4 miles), 5-6 hours, elevation +975 meters (3,200 feet)

Hiking: OR Hooker Valley Hike : 9 kilometers (5.6 miles), 3-4 hours, elevation +/- 100 meters (328 feet)

DAY 14

Depart for home

This is the last day of your trip and we'll leave you refreshed and invigorated from the good food, exercise, rest, and great times you'll have had with us in New Zealand! If you're keen to extend your trip and see what the North Island has to offer (Maori culture, pristine beaches and geothermal areas) check out our 11-day Ultimate North Island Adventure (5-day options also available).

No Accommodation (Breakfast, Lunch)

Useful Info

Is tipping expected in New Zealand?

Tipping is neither required nor routinely expected in New Zealand, but it is appropriate for very good service. In New Zealand you don't usually tip in restaurants, or if you take a taxi, or get a haircut. Many of our guests do choose to tip our guides and we recommend USD\$20 per day, per guest, per guide. You are welcome to tip an equivalent amount in the local currency. There are plenty of ATM's and banks in the larger towns of New Zealand.

What additional activities are on offer in New Zealand?

You'll be participating in loads of amazing activities during your tour, however, you may be wondering what other cool stuff you can do before or after your trip to make the most of your time in New Zealand.

We've teamed up with the good folk at Everything Travel and you're welcome to book any pre or post-trip 'things to do' directly with them.

For trips starting and/or ending in the South Island, check out things to do before and/or after your trip [here](#).

For trips starting and/or ending in North Island, check out things to do before and/or after your trip [here](#).

Make sure any activities you book are before or after your trip only as your tour itself is already filled to the brim with the adventures we offer!

Where does the trip start?

On the first morning of the trip, our two pick-up locations are [Merivale Manor](#) at 10:30am or the Christchurch airport (CHC) in front of the Help Desk (near door 7) at 11am. You are welcome to book your pre-trip stay at this hotel directly or any other hotel in Christchurch, though you must make your own way to one of the two pick-up points at the pre-designated times.

Where does the trip end?

Your trip ends with a drop-off at either the Christchurch Airport (CHC) in time for flights below or anywhere in Central Christchurch around 3pm.

What flights would you recommend?

Arrival: We recommend arriving in Christchurch before 10am. Many guests like to arrive a day or two early to accommodate potential flight delays and/or explore the city prior to your trip start.

Departure: Flying out on the last day of the trip, we recommend departing from Christchurch after 4pm. Earlier flight times will require a separate transfer booked at your own expense.

Can you tell me more about the bike included?

Due to the varied terrain and conditions we encounter on the trip - gravel roads, paved tracks, forest trails and bridges - we use cross-terrain mountain bikes with semi-slick tires - safe and comfortable off-road. We have a dedicated fleet of quality cross-terrain touring bikes for this trip. Please be aware although we don't do any mountain biking on the trip, we do ride on gravel and roughly paved sections of road, so road bikes with skinny tires are not suitable for use.

Specifically, we most commonly use the Specialized RollElite an excellent lightweight, cross-terrain touring bike with great flexibility. To view the bike, you can check it out here: activeadventures.com/our-bikes-and-cycling-gear

Additionally if you want to bring your own cycling gear such as cycling shoes, pedals, helmet or seat (no seat stems please!) we'd be happy to help fit them for you - note; if you're bringing your own shoes please also bring your own pedals, to be sure they match! All bikes come supplied with the following equipment: safety vests, rear rack and rack bag, a water bottle cage, flat pedals, helmets (small/ medium/large/XL) and water bottles - we provide one for you, though we don't provide electrolytes.

What kind of biking will we be doing?

Everyone has a different perception of what cycling or mountain biking is, so we'll try our best to clarify the type of riding you'll be doing down here with us. This is not a road cycling trip and we don't ride on asphalt or tarmac. Equally, this is not a downhill mountain biking trip or even a single track trip (by single track we mean on trails as wide as your handle bars). We've chosen gravel trails that are generally wide enough for two riders and mostly flat. New Zealand has an incredible off-road trail network and we believe our itinerary will get you onto the best parts of this network, with a few hikes sprinkled in for good measure!

How fit do I need to be?

As an [Activity Level 3-4](#) trip, you'll need a solid level of fitness for this trip. While you don't have to be extremely fit, you should be in the habit of doing regular aerobic exercise, ideally on your bike, and incorporating up hills, down hills and decent distances.

Advance preparation means you'll enjoy the active and outdoor nature of your trip even more.

Please head to our [Fitness Guide](#) for great tips on how to prepare along with a workout plan!

What accommodations do we stay at on this trip?

We have selected the accommodation on the trip for the stunning setting and adventuresome feel. You'll love the places you'll stay in on this trip, though it's not designed as a tour of the fanciest hotels in New Zealand. You'll stay in some nice B&B's and lodges on this trip and some more out of the way places too! As there's such a variety of accommodation, some places have ensuite bathrooms and some will have shared bathrooms.

While there are laundry facilities at most locations, they may not be convenient or there may only be one machine to service your entire group. We recommend bringing enough clothing to only have to do laundry once, maybe twice, during your trip. The best time will be during our two night stay in Queenstown (during your free day).

Will there be a support vehicle?

You'll be accompanied by two guides - one guide/driver and one cycling guide/chef - this gives us the ultimate flexibility depending on the type of ride and terrain we cover each day. At the start of the season all of our guides are put through an intensive training program which includes bike maintenance. On top of this all our bike guides are passionate bikers in their own right, many of whom have years of technical bike experience, so your guides will be more than capable of attending to any bike problems/maintenance you might require along the way - all you need to do is ask!

Our support vehicle is equipped with a portable bike workshop, known as the Park BK-2 Roll-up which includes the following tools: pedal spanner, cone spanners, 8/9/10/11 mm spanners, cassette remover, crank puller, chain breaker, spoke key, wire cutters, bottom bracket remover, Allen key set, tire levers and patch kit, headset spanner (it sounds pretty basic, but with the current technology that's all you need).

How much luggage can I bring on this trip?

You are allowed one piece of luggage on your trip, plus a daypack. Your main piece of luggage should not exceed 50 pounds (23 kilograms) and can be anything from a duffle bag to a sports bag with wheels or a suitcase. You'll also want a good quality backpack sized 25-30 liters (2000 cubic inches) to use throughout the days.

You may also like to bring along a small camelbak to carry your water in and a layer of clothing for when you're on the bike trail.

How do rooming arrangements work?

Trip prices are based on shared arrangements (typically two guests per room), unless otherwise stated. For solo travelers, we'll pair you with another person of the same gender to share rooms and if there's no one suitable to share with, there's no forced single supplement. However, if you specifically request your own rooms, you can opt to pay the single supplement. Solo travelers who book within 90 days of departure, where there are no other solo travelers willing to share, will be required to pay the single supplement.

For Family Vacation bookings, families consisting of four guests traveling with children aged 17 and under will be automatically assigned one shared room. However, the following alternative rooming allocations are available:

Families consisting of four guests with all children aged 13 and above are welcome to opt for additional rooms as per advertised double occupancy adult rates.

Families consisting of four guests with at least one child aged 12 and under are automatically assigned a shared room. However, families can opt to pay the adult rates for all guests in their family to have an additional room.

The same principles apply for families consisting of more than four guests.

Rooming preferences are subject to availability and must be communicated in writing at time of booking. Automatic assignments as per this policy will be applied in the absence of any specification provided by guests. Any request for additional rooms during trips will be at guests' own expense and subject to rates made available by the accommodation provider at the time. All minors (guests aged 17 and under) must be accompanied by at least one adult.

What is not included?

Flights to and from trip start/end points

15% NZ Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Pre/Post Accommodation

Optional extra activities

Travel insurance

Gratuities for your guides

Trekking packs and sleeping bags (if applicable)

General Trip Information

You can find details on recommended flights and fitness, as well as trip start and end in the 'Useful Information' section above.

Accommodation

You'll love the interesting places we've discovered over the years. You'll visit really spectacular and off-the-beaten-track locations and stay in comfortable bed and breakfasts, lodges, apartments and hotels for the most part. Keep in mind the most remote locations have limited accommodation options, but 5-star scenery!

Included

- Our own highly experienced guides, driver, and cook, with you from start to finish
- Industry-leading Guest-to-Guide ratio (averaging 6:1)
- Your own 'Travel Wallet', an online space with everything required for your adventure
- Our knowledgeable Customer Service Team to answer your queries - just a phone call, email or chat away
- Customer Service pre-trip phone calls to ensure you're 'trip ready'
- All accommodations for the duration of your trip
- All meals except where indicated in the itinerary
- Unlimited snacks to keep you fueled
- All activities outlined in the itinerary
- All necessary equipment (well-maintained and safe) for activities, including Hiking Poles
- All park and other entry fees
- Transportation in our air-conditioned vans - safe, clean, modern, and comfortable!

Itinerary Updates

We update our itineraries regularly, so please check our website for the most up-to-date itineraries and pricing. We make every effort to ensure itineraries are updated as necessary, though changes may occur without prior notice due to unforeseen circumstances.

Transportation

Since New Zealand isn't quite small enough to simply walk everywhere and still see all the highlights in a limited amount of time, we travel in fuel-efficient 20-seat Toyota Coasters and our guides make the journey enjoyable. They'll introduce you to some local tunes as well as provide interesting commentary, and we pass the time on the road in a fun, social way, with New Zealand's ever-changing scenery providing a feast for the eyes. Our focus, as always, is getting you out of the vehicle and into the scenery.

Excluded

- International/Domestic Flights to and from the meeting point
- 15% NZ Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- Optional extra activities
- Travel insurance
- Alcoholic beverages
- Gear on packing list (optional to rent some equipment)
- Gratuities for your guides at the end of your fabulous trip

Outdoor Experience

Our trips allow you to make the most of the New Zealand backcountry, whether you're relatively new to hiking or a seasoned trekker. Our highly trained and experienced guides will be at your side, safely guiding you to magnificent places that you wouldn't get to on your own. The challenges are there, if you're looking for them. All we ask is that you're energetic and in reasonable shape and we guarantee you'll have an incredible time. You don't need to have kayaked before to enjoy paddling on the water and you don't need to be a serious cyclist to enjoy most of the rides we do. In fact, we have so many options available that you don't need to paddle or ride at all if you'd rather hike or just laze around!

We hold all relevant government licenses and permits, have an impeccable safety record, and are certified by [OutdoorsMark](#), New Zealand's leading outdoor safety auditors. So, with all the research, logistics, safety and hospitality taken care of, you can focus on the most important thing - making the most of your adventure!