

New Zealand Winter Adventure ★ 4.64 118 Reviews

## *New Zealand Winter Adventure*

5 - 14 Days

10 People Max



*Experience the South Island of New Zealand with its winter coat on, draped in serene stillness, on our New Zealand winter adventure.*

Discover the South Island without the crowds on our 14-day New Zealand Winter Adventure hiking trip. To let you in on a secret, exploring the dramatic landscapes of the South Island during New Zealand's winter months is largely underrated. Between May and September, ski fields come to life and mountains look spectacular covered in snow. However, trails once busy during the summer months are now exclusively yours and huts once packed full of keen hikers sit empty, waiting for a small group to enjoy their beautiful surroundings. Our New Zealand Winter Adventure has been crafted specifically for our mild winters. You'll enjoy a sunrise cruise on Milford Sound, soak in hot pools under vibrant stars at Welcome Flats Hut on the Copland Track, hike the Kepler Track, Mount Aspiring National Park and under the towering mountains of Aoraki Mount Cook National Park. If you're short on time we have 5- and 8-day versions of this spectacular trip - [get in touch](#) to ask us about these shorter options. If you're ready to see New Zealand in all its beauty, our New Zealand Winter Adventure is calling your name.

### *Trip Highlights*

Hiking - On the Kepler Track

Hiking - To Welcome Flat Hot Pools

Hiking - West Coast

Hiking - Franz Josef Glacier

Hiking - Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park

Kayaking - Okarito Lagoon

Plus ... - Explore Queenstown

Plus ... - Cruise on Milford Sound

Plus ... - Explore Te Anau glow worm caves

Plus ... - Cycle Wanaka

Plus ... - Ski Ohau (opt.)

### 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 Winter Adventure ~ Itinerary*

### DAY 1

#### Arrive to Christchurch, hike Mt John

Most people leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Saturday evening, arriving in Auckland early Monday 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. We then head to Lake Tekapo for a hike along the lakeshore before emerging above the treeline on Mt. John for breathtaking views of the lake and surrounding mountains. Then we'll carry on to the remote and beautiful Lake Ohau Lodge. The lodge is tucked in beside an alpine lake, with stunning views stretching across to Aoraki/Mt. Cook and the Southern Alps - the ideal spot to soak in the hot tub and star gaze! Today is a relaxed introduction to New Zealand. 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 the west coast of the USA to Auckland so you'll appreciate the gentle start to your New Zealand adventure.

#### **Lake Ohau Lodge, Lake Ohau (Lunch, Dinner)**

**Hiking:** 8 kilometers (5 miles), 2-3 hours, elevation +/- 330 meters (1,080 feet)

### DAY 2

#### Hike Aoraki Mt Cook National Park or ski/snowboard Ohau Ski Area

After a late breakfast on the balcony overlooking Lake Ohau, we'll take an impressive hike at the head of Lake Pukaki, up the Hooker Valley to a glacial lake complete with icebergs! This is a great spot for lunch and on a clear day, the views of Aoraki/Mt. Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain, are stunning. We'll return to the lodge where we'll enjoy a sumptuous dinner. An option today is to spend the day skiing at the small and friendly Ohau Ski Area, one of the South Island's more remote backcountry ski fields (for approx. US\$125 including gear rental).

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

**Hiking:** 9 kilometers (5.6 miles), 2-3 hours, elevation +/- 100 meters (328 feet)

### DAY 3

#### Mt Aspiring Hut: Hike and overnight in Mt Aspiring National Park

After leaving Wanaka, we'll venture up the Matukituki Valley and hike two to three hours into Mt. Aspiring National Park to reach our home for the evening - a spacious mountain hut nestled in a valley in the middle of nowhere. The track meanders past majestic peaks, fresh mountain streams, and natural beech forest. You'll be carrying a sleeping bag, a few spare clothes, and some food, so your pack won't weigh much more than a regular day pack. The scenery is off the charts with Mt. Aspiring rising 3033 meters (9951 feet) into the blue sky. It's amazing how far you'll feel from civilization after this relatively short walk! Tonight your guide will whip up dinner in the backcountry kitchen while you relax by the fire.

#### **Mt Aspiring Hut, Mt Aspiring National Park (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

**Hiking:** 9 kilometers (5.6 miles), 3-5 hours, elevation + 60 meters (197 feet)

### DAY 4

## Hike out of Mt Aspiring National Park and bike Wanaka

We have a leisurely start today, enjoying breakfast and a cuppa while admiring the view, before hiking back to the trailhead. Along the way, we might encounter the cheeky kea – they're really inquisitive and like to get pretty close at times! After regrouping in Wanaka, we'll head out for a bike ride along the lakeshore, and then it's a short but dramatic journey over the Cardrona Saddle to Queenstown, on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, our base for the next couple of days.

### **Heritage Hotel , Queenstown (Breakfast, Lunch)**

**Hiking:** 9 kilometers (5.6 miles), 3-5 hours, elevation - 60 meters (197 feet)

**Biking:** Up to 10 kilometers (6 miles), 2-3 hours

## DAY 5

### 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, a historic steamship, bungee jumping, jet boating, and skydiving as well as some great hiking opportunities. Or you can just soak up the atmosphere by the fire at one of the local cafés or pubs. Your guides will happily share their favorite haunts and point you in the right direction for your free day today. Alternatively, you can go skiing or snowboarding for the day at one of four nearby ski areas (approximate cost US\$150 for ski or snowboard hire, transport and lift pass – available as snow conditions suit, generally from June to September).

### **Heritage Hotel, Queenstown**

**Notes:** The 5-day trip option ends today after your included breakfast.

## DAY 6

### Hike Kepler Track and explore Te Anau glow worm caves

After breakfast, we'll travel to Lake Te Anau to hike the Kepler Track, one of New Zealand's 'Great Walks'. Unlike most of the other 'Great Walks', which evolved from Maori greenstone trails or pioneer exploration routes, the Kepler Track was custom-made and built for pleasure rather than necessity. The track has been carefully crafted to show walkers all the very best features of Fiordland, from the prolific bird life and tussock high country to the huge mountain ranges and vast glacier-carved valleys. This evening we'll take a boat journey across Lake Te Anau to a glittering grotto of glow worms. These fascinating bugs light the way in a 200-meter system of caves, underground waterfalls, sculpted walls, and swirling pools. From the darkness of the glow worm caves, we'll head back into the light of Te Anau where we'll stay the night.

### **Matai Lodge, Te Anau (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

**Hiking:** 9.5 kilometers (6 miles), 2-3 hours, elevation +/-50 meters (165 feet)

## DAY 7

### Cruise on Milford Sound, explore Fiordland National Park

This morning we'll head towards Milford Sound on one of the most dramatically scenic drives in the world. We'll pass through the Eglinton Valley, and wind our way through the mountains of Fiordland. Our drive takes us through the Homer Tunnel, an astounding feat of human engineering which must be seen to be believed. Once we arrive you'll have the opportunity to explore Milford Sound and hopefully spot some friendly fur seals and dolphins. We'll jump on board a boat cruise, where you'll gaze in wonder at the waterfalls tumbling down

enormous vertical rock faces all around, and journey right out to the entrance of the fiord. This afternoon, we'll explore the Fiordland wilderness on foot to check out some of its endemic flora and fauna, like the kea (*Nestor notabilis*), New Zealand's notoriously cheeky and intelligent alpine parrot and the kotukutuku (*Fuchsia excorticata*), the world's largest fuchsia.

**Matai Lodge, Te Anau (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

DAY 8

Scenic journey to the West Coast

Today, we'll be making the scenic journey past beautiful rolling farmland and around the edge of Lake Wakatipu, leaving the dry-arid mountains behind us as we continue driving on the stunning road between Lake Wanaka and Hawea. There will be plenty of time for photo stops and we'll have some lunch on the way before continuing over the Haast Pass, down into impressively dense rain forest as we near the West coast - a long stretch of gorgeous, rugged coastline with a population of only 40,000 people. We'll mingle with the 'coasters' tonight in the tiny township of Haast, exchanging tales of our adventures at the local pub in front of a roaring fire.

**Heartland World Heritage Hotel, Haast (Breakfast, Dinner)**

**Notes:** The 8-day trip option ends today in Queenstown. You will be dropped off en route between Te Anau and Haast.

DAY 9

Start your multi-day hike to Copland Valley hot pools on the West Coast

Today we'll hike into a stunningly beautiful mountain basin, set directly underneath the towering peaks of the Southern Alps, with an awesome highlight - natural hot pools! It's a challenging six to seven-hour hike 17 kilometers (10 miles) up the Copland Valley with a gradual elevation gain, but it's absolutely worth it. Our guides are pretty tough and they'll carry the lion's share of the load. All you'll be carrying is a backpack with your sleeping bag, a few spare clothes, and a share of our food. Tonight, we stay in one of New Zealand's most spacious backcountry huts, a comfortable two-level building. One of the best things about hiking this track in winter is that we may well have the hut all to ourselves! While you soak in the natural hot pools your guide will whip up a hearty dinner.

**Welcome Flat Hut, Westland National Park (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

**Hiking:** 18 kilometers (11 miles), 6-7 hours, elevation +420 meters (1,380 feet), - 40 meters (130 feet)

DAY 10

Multi-day hike continued: Hike up the Copland Valley

Today we'll hike further up the track for even more amazing scenery and views of multiple glaciers clinging to the top of the mountain valley. If you prefer, you can have a relaxing day at the hut - soak in the hot pools, enjoy the stunning scenery, or relax with a good book. Either way, the hot pools are without a doubt the star attraction here, closely followed by the dramatic scenery.

**Welcome Flat Hut, Westland National Park (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

**Hiking:** Up to 8km

DAY 11

## Final day of the multi-day hike, head to Franz Josef township

An early start sees us on the track, a great time to be hiking with the fresh morning air and stillness. You'll be feeling sprightly today after a relaxing evening in the rejuvenating hot pools and with the slightly downhill gradient, you'll be in 'cruise mode' on the outward hike. Once back at the trailhead, we'll rest our bodies with a scenic journey up the coast to the township of Franz Josef where we'll stay for the next couple of nights. Nestled in the rainforest-clad foothills of the Southern Alps, Franz Josef is the heart of New Zealand's glacier country.

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

**Hiking:** 18 kilometers (11 miles), 6-7 hours, elevation -420 meters (1,380 feet), + 40 meters (130 feet)

## DAY 12

### Kayak Okarito Lagoon, hike near Franz Josef Glacier

This morning we'll make a short journey over to Okarito, a little-known beach community on the coast. We'll take to the water in sea kayaks and glide along the picturesque lagoon, set against a stunning backdrop of snow-capped peaks. Okarito is home to the only native white heron colony in New Zealand, as well as a host of other interesting birds. Once back in Franz Josef, you'll have the option to take a hike or relax in the hot tub, before enjoying a traditional Kiwi roast dinner.

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

**Kayaking:** 2-4 hours

**Hiking:** 4.2 kilometers (2.6 miles), 1-2 hours, elevation +/- 120 meters (394 feet)

## DAY 13

### Hike Punakaiki rainforest and beaches

This morning, we'll travel along the coast to check out local art galleries and a pounamu carving workshop (pounamu is Maori for jade) in Hokitika. After lunch, we carry on to Punakaiki, where we'll hike the Inland Pack Track through temperate rainforest and limestone canyons in the footsteps of the gold miners who established this trail over a century ago. While we're in Punakaiki, we'll also check out the famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes - aptly named limestone formations that have been sculpted through relentless pounding by the Tasman Sea. Tonight we'll enjoy a celebratory dinner for the last night of your trip.

### **Scenic Hotel Punakaiki (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

**Hiking:** Inland Pack Track Hike: 6 kilometers (4 miles), 2-3 hours, elevation +/- 130 meters (425 feet)

**Hiking:** Pancake Rocks Hike: 1 kilometer (0.6 mile), 0.5-1 hour

## DAY 14

### Depart for home

We'll leave after breakfast for the beautiful journey over Arthurs Pass to Christchurch. 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's winter landscape.

### **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 9:30am or the Christchurch airport (CHC) in front of the Help Desk (near door 7) at 10am. 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: If you're flying in on the first day of the trip, we recommend arriving in Christchurch before 9.30am on Monday.

Departure: Flying out on the last day of the trip, we recommend departing from Christchurch after 5pm on Sunday. If you are considering alternative flight times please check with us. International flights from Auckland airport (AKL) usually leave early evening, so if you're heading back to North America, you'll get home some time on Sunday, even though you left on Sunday evening! Flights back to Europe, of course, take a little longer.

## How fit do I need to be?

As an [Activity Level 3-4](#) trip, you'll need a good level of fitness for this trip as it's one of our more adventurous trips. Typically, hikes range between two and five hours to complete. While you don't have to be extremely fit, you should be in the habit of doing regular aerobic exercise, ideally involving some hills, steps and carrying a backpack. 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've selected the accommodation on your trip for the stunning settings, unique character and adventuresome feel. We prefer to stay in quaint, comfortable bed and breakfasts, lodges and apartments, some of which have private bathrooms and some shared bathrooms. You may be sharing a two bedroom apartment or bathroom with other group members at some stage. Some places are fairly basic - like when we stay at Mt. Aspiring Hut and Welcome Flat hut on our overnight hikes - and the true Kiwi experience makes it all worthwhile.

If you've selected a single supplement for your trip, the overnight hike(s) are not included as no single rooms are available in the huts, and the single supplement price takes this into account.

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 a couple of times during your trip. The best time will be during your two night stay in Queenstown (during your free day).

## What will the weather be like?

Seeing you're visiting New Zealand during the winter months, temperatures tend to be pretty cold, so be sure to pack those extra warm layers (see the gear list below). On the odd occasion, the weather can get in the way of our planned activities, so we try and be as flexible as possible and we always have great Plan B's up our sleeve! Your guides will always inform you of any changes that need to be made during the trip - we ask for your flexibility and understanding under these circumstances as such decisions are always made with your safety in mind.



## Tell me about the overnight hikes?

### **Mt. Aspiring National Park**

Your first overnight hike, into Mt. Aspiring Hut, is designed to ease you into the overnight hikes. It's a three hour hike (10 kilometres / 6 miles) to Mt. Aspiring Hut, your humble home for the night. Here you'll be treated to a candle-lit dinner - mountain style whilst looking up at New Zealand's second highest peak! The following day you return the way you came, and you'll be treated to spectacular views of the glacier.

### **Copland track to Welcome Flat**

After a few days of creature comforts your next overnight hike is designed to be a bit more of a challenge. You'll be carrying a slightly bigger pack (more clothes and food) and we'll be hiking greater distances (17 kilometres / 11 miles). You've got all day to make your way up the Copland track to Welcome Flat hut - and the rewards are well worth it! Be sure to pack your bathing suit as only five minutes from the hut door there are natural hot pools - the perfect antidote for weary muscles! You'll spend the following day hiking further up the valley, soaking in the pools or reading a book in the hut while we cook up a storm for you! On the third day we retrace our steps down the valley.

While on the overnight hikes you'll be sleeping in Department of Conservation (DOC) owned mountain huts. These unique huts are open to the public and are warm, dry and comfortable. They're located in very remote areas (with amazing scenery) so they don't have private rooms, electricity, hot water, phones or flushing toilets - and the view from the outhouse is second to none! This really is New Zealand's wildest country and because it's not possible to book these huts, you'll meet and share the experience with other mountain adventurers and explorers.

You'll be carrying a large backpack of around 60 litres (3500 cubic inches) in volume - strapping things to the outside of your pack is not recommended in New Zealand. Your other gear will be stored securely for you. Your guides will give you a gear list to check over prior to both overnight hikes.

## 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'll also need a good quality trekking pack with well-fitting shoulder and waist straps. Your pack should be 60 litre size (3500 cubic inches), large enough to fit your sleeping bag inside along with all your multi-day gear.

## 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!