



# SECRET SOUTH

# ITINERARY



Get a group of four or more together and take a journey to secret locations where rare wildlife play and exquisite scenery takes over. Enjoy the serenity of beautiful mountain ranges, crystal clear lakes and calm fiords while hiking, kayaking, cycling and camping through the deep south. Hike into the rugged mountains of Fiordland National Park to beautiful alpine lakes with stunning mountain views. You'll kayak beneath massive sea cliffs in Milford Sound while watching out for basking seals and leaping dolphins. Explore the spectacular Catlins coast, with beautiful beaches, luxuriant rainforest, fossilised trees, and rare species of sea lions, dolphins and penguins. Hike up the rocky slopes of the Ohau Range and look down on turquoise glacial lakes. Gaze in awe at the contorted forms of glaciers and the snow capped peaks of Aoraki / Mount Cook. Explore the remarkable (but extinct) volcanic topography of Mount Somers with its waterfalls and narrow canyons.

| LENGTH        | 11 days  |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| GRADE         | D - River crossings, some uneven terrain, you need to be reasonably fit and enthusiastic |  |  |
| START         | Queenstown – 8:00am i-Site Visitor Centre, corner Shotover & Camp Sts                    |  |  |
| FINISH        | Christchurch - 6.00pm (approx.)  |  |  |
| ACCOMMODATION | Backcountry huts, Cabins, Camping  |  |  |
| PRICE         | NZ\$3,050 per person   |  |  |

This is a sample itinerary of what we can offer for custom groups. If you have a group of four or more, we can craft a trip that suits your group.

#### "HIGHLY RECOMMENDED"

What a way to experience South Island NZ! Beautiful, intense! A great bunch of folks (and new friends) to hike with, and thanks to Super Dave our tireless, knowledgeable guide, it was a most enjoyable and rewarding experience. Highly recommended, and probably will come back for more (well worth the 24 hour plane ride).

~ Shiu Shing - November 2014

#### "GREAT SCENERY!"

Had such a wonderful time that even after I got back home, I keep reminiscing of the tour. New Zealand is indeed beautiful, and the guides are very capable, knowledgeable, caring and interactive. Overall, with the great scenery, group camaraderie, and talented guides, it kept me wanting to go back for more. Other tours will do well to try to meet Hiking NZ's standards!

~ Julianna - USA, April 2014











ITINERARY

## DAY 1 QUEENSTOWN - HOLLYFORD VALLEY

#### 6 km/3 hours hiking

Meet up with your guide and the rest of the group in downtown Queenstown before leaving the bustle behind and driving south along the eastern shore of Lake Wakatipu. This morning we pass through typical New Zealand farm scenes, including deer farms, before stopping for lunch on the shore of lake Te Anau, the largest body of fresh water in Australasia. Here we picnic on the shore and gain our first views of Fiordland National Park, New Zealand's largest National Park, and the fifth largest in the world. After lunch we drive into the park via the expansive Eglinton Valley, before pulling over to begin an easy walk up to Key Summit, the final section of the famous Routeburn Track. On the summit, take time to learn about the vegetation and geography of the area along an informative nature walk, and soak up the views of the Darran Mountains and Hollyford Valley to the west. We return to the van after about three hours and then drive to our accommodation for the night, the famous and eccentric Gunns Camp. Includes lunch and dinner. *Includes lunch and dinner*.

### DAY 2 HOLLYFORD - MILFORD SOUND

#### 8 km/4 hours kayaking

This morning we leave early and drive to one of New Zealand's most famous destinations, Milford Sound. Here you have the option of being guided around the Sound (even though its really a fiord!) in sea kayaks, the most tranquil and natural way possible to experience this World Heritage Site. Floating just above the surface, feel at one with nature as you marvel at the size and majesty of the surrounding peaks. Penguins, seals and dolphins are common in the fiord, and often play near groups as they paddle. In the afternoon, relax in the van as we drive back through Te Anau and south toward our campsite for the evening, stopping at the stunning Lake Manapouri for a swim and afternoon tea on the way. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*.

### DAY 3 FIORDLAND NATIONAL PARK

#### 12 km/7 hours hiking

We prepare for our first overnight hike at the campsite this morning, before taking the short drive up to Borland Saddle. Beech forest aligns the track before we ascend onto the gentle tussock peaks of the Hunter Range, where we gradually climb to Mt Burns. From here we navigate along the tops, enjoying striking views of the granite peaks of southern Fiordland across the dark colours of Green Lake. Tarns (small mountain lakes) are dotted along the route and wild deer are prominent in the area. Eventually we drop down into beech forest from the tops and link up with the southern shore of Green Lake, which leads us to a cosy mountain hut. Feel free to take a dip in the frigid waters of the lake before settling down in front of the hut fire for the night. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*.

## DAY 4 FIORDLAND - CATLINS COAST

#### 12 km/6 hours hiking

Take it easy this morning and enjoy this remote setting before we hike back to the road through beech forest and areas of alpine tussock. Sit back this afternoon and enjoy the rolling farm country of Southland from the comfort of your seat as we drive toward the southern coast. Along the way we pull into New Zealand's southern most city, the Scottish settled Invercargill, before continuing on to the secluded coastal region known as the Catlin's. Often overlooked by tourists visiting New Zealand, the Catlins region, with its unspoiled rivers, lush podocarp forest, rolling hills and sweeping golden-sand beaches is

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a hidden gem of the south. We spend the night at Curio Bay, a famous surf spot and home to a resident pod of the native Hectors dolphin in the summer. Once we arrive, feel free to try and spot them with a walk along the beach or simply relax with a beer in the evening sun *Includes breakfast*, *lunch and dinner*.

## DAY 5 CANNIBAL BAY

#### 6 km/2 hours hiking

Take the early morning for yourself and wander the bay, have a leisurely breakfast or sleep a little longer. Curio Bay is home to one of the world's best examples of a fossilised forest, which lies on a tidal platform at the north end of the bay and contains fossilised tree stumps and logs, destroyed in a volcanic eruption 180 million years ago. Feel free to wander up for a look this morning with your guide. We usually leave Curio Bay around mid morning and drive along the scenic coastal route, stopping to do short walks and to take in some of the sites along the way. In the afternoon your guide will drop the group off at the idyllic Surat Bay, where sea lions often bask in the sand. Walk along the bay and meet your guide at our exclusive campsite in Cannibal Bay, named after human bones were discovered in an old earth oven here over 100 years ago. Help your guide to prepare tonight's dinner, a hangi feast, before taking a short drive to view native hoiho (yellow eyed penguins) as they make their way up the beach after a hard day at sea. We then return to the campsite, light a campfire, dig up dinner and get stuck in. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*.

## DAY 6 CENTRAL OTAGO

#### Rest day or optional biking

Today we drive out of the Catlins and up to the picturesque town of Alexandra in Central Otago. Once we arrive, the remainder of the day is yours to do what you wish. You may want to join a cycle tour along the popular Otago Rail Trail, an easy cycle path constructed along the old rail route built through the mountains during the New Zealand gold rush. The trail offers great views of the local landscape, crosses old viaducts and passes by newly renovated pubs. Otherwise feel free to wander the shops of Alexandra or indulge in the delicacies on offer in the local cafes and vineyards. There are some great restaurants in Alexandra, so go exploring tonight and find one that tickles your fancy. Includes breakfast and lunch.

## DAY 7 OHAU RANGE

#### 7 km/3 hours hiking

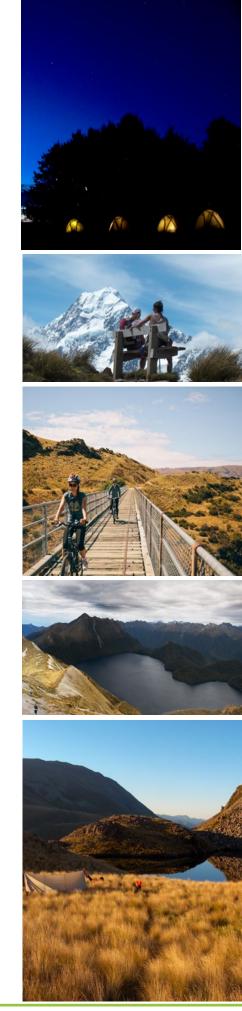
After a leisurely breakfast we drive north through the high country, passing over the dramatic Lindis Pass. This is sheep rearing country, and is home to some of the countries largest sheep stations, often farming the rugged merino breed. Turning off the main road, we drive to secluded Lake Ohau, stopping to have lunch and a swim if the sun is shining. This is also where we ditch the van and head into the hills once more for an overnight adventure. It normally takes a couple of hours to hike up through beech forest beside the mountain stream of Freehold Creek, to a quiet campsite just below the tree line. Pitch a tent and take a seat around the campfire as you listen to the creeks waters rush past. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*.

## DAY 8 OHAU RANGE

#### 14 km/7 hours hiking

Leaving most of our gear at the campsite, we ascend above the treeline this morning into a brilliant alpine basin, home to a variety of native alpine plants including the Mt. Cook Lily (Ranunculus Iyalli), the world is largest buttercup. If you i're feeling energetic, join the guide for a dash up to the ridgeline above the basin and onto the Ohau range (1915 metres), where you get a superb vista of the surrounding Southern Alps, Mt. Cook and the Mackenzie Basin. In the afternoon we wander back down the valley and

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drive the short distance to Buscott Station, a high country homestead converted into a backpackers and run by the owner of the sheep station. If you?'re eager for more views, climb up one of the hills behind the station for the sunset. Having a wine on the lawn is nice too. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.* 

## DAY 9 MT COOK NATIONAL PARK

#### 8 km/5 hours hiking

Enjoy the short drive to Mt. Cook Village as we venture north through the Mackenzie Country and along the shores of the mystic blue waters of Lake Pukaki. Grab your daypack and join your guide for a hike up the well formed track to Sealey Tarns and Mueller Hut. The higher you climb, the more impressive the views as you ascend above the Mueller Glacier and stare straight up the Hooker Valley to the commanding presence of Aoraki/ Mt.Cook. Watch out for kea (native alpine parrot) soaring off the cliffs and observe ice and rock fall off the bulking east face of Mt. Sefton from the safe side of the valley. The section up to Mueller Hut is slightly more challenging, but the views on a clear day are worth the effort. For those more content to stay on the flats, there are a number of easier options, including a gentle hike up the Hooker Valley or a wander through the Sir Edmund Hillary Centre Plocated in the luxurious Hermitage Hotel. Tonight we camp in a sheltered site at the southern tip of Lake Pukaki, with regal views across the lake of the Aoraki/Mt. Cook massif. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*.

## DAY 10 MT SOMERS

#### 5 km/4 hours hiking

This morning we drive away from the parched lands of the Mackenzie Basin via Lake Tekapo and Burkes Pass. Observe the changing landscape as we get closer to the east coast and the extensive Canterbury Plains. The final hike of the trip begins at the base of Mt. Somers, a rhyolite dome, and quite geologically unique to the region. Spend the afternoon walking up a brilliant river canyon, lined with steep beech covered walls and filled with a clear mountain river. Eventually we climb out of the canyon and emerge onto a ridgeline offering magnificent views of the Arrowsmith Range to the west. Descending down from the ridgeline we quickly reach the newly constructed Mt. Somers Hut, grab a cup of tea and enjoy the tranquillity from the deck before dinner. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*.

## DAY 11 MT SOMERS - CHRISTCHURCH

#### 5 km/4 hours hiking

Before walking back to the van, spend a few hours with your guide exploring the water caves located just above the hut. More like big rocks than caves, this is a really fun time and even though you get a bit wet, everyone always loves it. Return to the hut to dry off before walking out via an easy mountain track. Make sure you keep an eye out for karearea (New Zealand falcon) if you haven' It seen them from the hut already. The track descends down through various sequences of alpine vegetation and passes by an old coal mine where relics still sit in their original place. Have a quick bite of lunch and a bit of a sort out before driving across the sun drenched plains to the city of Christchurch, where your guide will drop you off at your accommodation. Get your glad rags on and head out for a group dinner in one of the cities new restaurants. *Includes breakfast and lunch*.

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## LIFE ON THE TRAIL

#### **GRADE D**

- Average of 4-5 hours physical activity per day, up to 8-9 hours on longer days.
- Pack weights of 10-12kgs on some days.
- Altitude gains of up to 800m.
- Some uneven track surfaces and river crossings.
- No multi-day hiking experience necessary.
- You need to be reasonably fit and enthusiastic and have good agility.
- Terrain mostly tracks. Some may be slippery or rough; some off-track hiking and river crossings.



#### **GUIDES AND SAFETY**

An excellent guide can make the difference between a trip of a lifetime and just an ordinary trip. Our handpicked professionals come from a range of backgrounds. Each has extensive outdoor and hiking experience and a passion for New Zealand's wild and beautiful backcountry. The guides will ensure that your trip is truly inspiring, a huge amount of fun and safe. All guides are trained in Mountain Safety First Aid.



#### FOOD

Everybody is involved with the preparation and cooking of meals: barbecues, salads, pancakes, curries, pasta, stir-fries etc. Vegetarian meals are no problem. For all specific dietary requirements we ask that you notify us prior to departure. That way we can ensure we are catering correctly for your needs. When you are on overnight hikes the group will usually eat pasta and rice meals (gluten free is usually an option). There is always a lot of hiking food - muesli bars, chocolate, biscuits fruit and dried fruit. The vehicles carry a full range of cooking equipment including gas burners, woks, frying pans and billies. When you go on an overnight hike the group will carry portable stoves.



#### TRANSPORT

You will travel in a 10 or 12 seat minibus towing a trailer with camp equipment and your luggage. All vehicles have a public address system, and a stereo with a variety of music. It is also equipped with a range of natural history reference books. The average driving time per day is around 2-3 hours and there will be a range of roads - sealed and unsealed. The guide will often stop the vehicle for you to take photos. On some of the nights you will be camping by the vehicle.



#### ACCOMMODATION

"This trip is a combination of "wild nights", which are the nights where you are truly in the wilderness, staying in backcountry huts or camping in locations that may be several hours walk from the nearest road or populated are - versus nights in civilisation where you may stay in cabins or camp by the vehicle at Department of Conservation campsites. Some of these locations may still be relatively remote and in the wilderness but they can be reached by

Some of these locations may still be relatively remote and in the wilderness but they can be reached by the vehicle.

Camping - You will camp in a range of campsites, on the "wild nights" you may camp under natural rock shelters, on remote beaches or even sleep out under the stars! On the non-"wild nights" you will camp near the vehicle in Department of Conservation campsites. If the weather is not great for camping, eg very wet, stormy or cold conditions your guide will seek out alternative accommodation, eg lodge, cabin or crib.



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## LIFE ON THE TRAIL

Huts - New Zealand has an excellent network of backcountry huts and you will stay in huts on several nights. They are equipped with mattresses, running water and an outside toilet. Cooking is done on a portable stove. Huts are only accessible on foot and shared with other hikers. You also have the option of camping near the hut if that is your preference.



Cabins/Cribs - some nights may be spent in private cribs (summer house) or cabins at a campground. Staying in the cribs is a real authentic New Zealand experience and you may even start to feel like a kiwi on holiday!



Bathroom facilities - on the wild nights there will be long drop (pit) toilets. There will be rivers or lakes nearby for washing, and sometimes there are even natural hot pools! The kiwi-style hiking trips are set up so after a couple of nights of "roughing it" in the wilderness, you will stay somewhere where you can enjoy a shower and a few home comforts (including laundry facilities) before the next foray into the wild!

\* Just kidding! (the toilets have



#### ADDITIONAL COSTS

#### Meals

Meals that are included in the trip price are detailed in the intinerary.

One evening meal in Alexandra on day 6 is not included.

#### **Optional activities**

Sea kayaking (\$149), Otago Rail Trail Cycle (NZ\$90)

Optional activities are paid for during the trip. \*Prices are correct at time of publishing.

#### **BOOKING CONDITIONS**

#### Payment

For bookings four or more months in advance of the departure a 25% deposit can be paid with the remainder due 65 days prior to your trip. For bookings within four months of the departure, full payment is required.

#### **Cancellations**

More than 20 days prior to departure - 80% refund of full ticket price.

20 to 10 days prior to departure - 50% refund of full ticket price.

Less than 10 days prior to departure - NO REFUND.

#### **Travel Insurance**

It is suggested that clients take out comprehensive travel insurance.

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Items shown in bold can be hired from us (see the rate table below). Please arrange hire at least one week prior to your departure date.

#### EQUIPMENT

- D Backpack (minimum 60 litres)
- □ Sleeping bag (minimum 3 season, preferably down, lightweight, between 1-2 kg)
- □ Flashlight/headlamp
- Drink bottle or camel back 1 litre
- □ Small Day pack
- □ Sunscreen and sunglasses
- □ Insect repellent (sandflies like foreign blood)
- Personal toiletries, medication and first aid
- Walking Poles (optional)
- □ Gaiters

#### HOW TO PACK

We recommend that you bring two bags on your trip, a hiking backpack with an internal frame (at least 60 litres in capacity) for the overnight hikes, and a smaller day pack for the day hikes. We supply kit bags for the stowage of your gear in the trailer when you are away on a multi day hike.

#### WE SUPPLY

- Safety equipment
- Maps
- Emergency first aid kit
- Thermarests (3/4 length)
- Plates, cutlery, mugs, pots, etc

#### CLOTHING - one set for walking, one set for evenings

WALKING CLOTHES: New Zealand's weather is changeable and we can experience extremely cold weather at any time of year, especially in the mountains. Our huts/camps vary in altitude from sea level to over 1000 metres. It is necessary to have warm clothing. Jeans are not suitable for hiking.

- □ Raincoat (goretex or similar)
- **Thermal underwear** (top and bottom, wool or polypropylene)
- Hiking boots (not shoes)
- Spare lightweight shoes or sandals
- □ Shorts or lightweight trousers (preferably quick-dry)
- □ Short-sleeved shirt x 2 (quick-dry, polypropylene or wool)
- □ Warm fleece/wool jersey (not cotton) x 2
- □ Wind or waterproof over-trousers
- □ Socks (we suggest 3 pairs)
- Warm hat or balaclava
- □ Sunhat and sunglasses
- Gloves or mittens (wool or fleece)
- □ Togs (swimming costume)
- □ Towel (lightweight travel towels are great)

SPARE CLOTHING: Extra socks and polypropylene layers are always handy - ensure you have enough warm items. Comfortable clothes for non hiking days. Spare clothing can be left in the secure trailer when we are away on the hikes, so don't worry about the extra weight – ensure you have enough warm items. Outside November to March thermals and warm hats are required. Note: there are only limited opportunities to do laundry during a tour, so quick drying clothing is an advantage. Weather can change rapidly in the locations we hike so layers of clothing is ideal.

| Hire gear (NZ\$)           | 5-7 days trip | 8-11 days trip | 11+ days trip |
|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Backpack (60 litres)       | \$30          | \$50           | \$75          |
| Sleeping bag               | \$20          | \$50           | \$75          |
| Fleece jacket              | \$20          | \$20           | \$25          |
| Thermal top and long-johns | \$20          | \$20           | \$25          |
| Raincoat                   | \$20          | \$40           | \$65          |
| Full set (all of above)    | \$90          | \$140          | \$245         |
| Gaiters                    | \$20          | \$20           | \$25          |
| Walking pole               | \$20 each     | \$20 each      | \$25 each     |

It's not always easy packing - feel free to drop us a line if you have any questions.

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IMPORTANT INFO

#### Here is a kickstart on a few things you need to know...

#### WHEN HIKING

- Stay together. Wait if you have not seen the group for 10 minutes.
- Wait at all track junctions, huts, or river crossings for everyone to catch up.
- If you get separated, stop and wait until your guide finds you.
- Watch out for sunburn. Remember, NZ sun burns fast, wear a hat and
- sun block at all times until you are familiar with its strength.
- Drink plenty of water, it is safe to drink from most of the streams in the wilderness without treating the water but do ask.
- $\bullet\,$  Help and look out for each other on river crossings, bush bashing and rock scrambling.
- Ensure you have correct clothing see 'packing' list.
- Hiking tracks in NZ can be quite muddy and sometimes rough with tree roots and rocks. But this is part of the fun.
- Snow slopes are extremely dangerous guide leads on snow. No fooling around unless guide gives the OK.

#### **CROSSING RIVERS**

• River crossing accidents are a major cause of fatalities in the NZ wilderness so learning correct techniques from your guide is imperative.

• If your pack has a quick-release hip belt keep it fastened (to prevent the pack riding over your head if you end up swimming). Chest straps and other hip belts should be undone.

- Wear shorts not long pants. If wearing a rain-coat turn up and tuck under hip belt so pockets don't fill with water.
- You must wear boots when crossing rivers.
- To prevent the spread of Didymo (an invasive algae) boots, gaiters, socks
- etc. must be washed and dried before entering another waterway.

#### KAYAKING

• Always attend the safety briefing.

- Always take spare warm clothing in case the weather turns bad.
- Go to the toilet before you get into the kayak.
- Wrap valuables and cameras securely in bags or dry bags and
- close PROPERLY. Put adsorbent cloth/t-shirt with camera.
- Always stay together.

#### **CYCLING & MOUNTAIN BIKING**

- Always attend the safety briefing, know the meet times and 'back up' plans.
- High visibility clothes if road sections.
- Be aware if you are in the front or back of group (otherwise you might be chasing imaginary people).
- Stop to smell the roses you might be wearing yellow, but its not the Tour de France!
- Helmets are compulsory in NZ.
- In NZ front and rear brakes are opposite to US and Europe.

#### CAVING

- Does your torch/headlamp have good batteries carry spares if you need.
- If you want to take a camera, make sure that it is wrapped securely in plastic bags or dry bags.
- Go to the toilet beforehand.
- Talk to guide if you are nervous about caving beforehand.
- Cave formations take thousands of years to form please don't touch them unless your guide okays it.

#### **SWIMMING & BEACHES**

Many NZ beaches are too dangerous for swimming, in particular the West Coast beaches.

Where conditions are suitable....

- Talk to your guide before you go swimming and don't swim alone.
- Respect the sea never turn your back on the sea and watch out for freak waves & rips even when beach walking.
- If you get into difficulty while swimming raise one of your hands up above your head stay calm.

 $\bullet$  Be careful entering the sea. Don't run into the sea - there may be rocks below the water.

For rescues, things that float are - sleeping mats, spare tyre, empty water bottles (jerry cans), thermarests and dry bags stuffed with clothing
Look for Jellyfish - (check along water edge and don't swim if there are lots about) - treat with vinegar

#### HOT POOLS (NATURAL)

- Keep head above water at all times water may contain amoebic meningitis.
- Watch out for boiling water/mud hazards around and in the pool
- Remove jewellery as it tends to turn green or black.

#### **FIRES**

• Observe all fire bans. Keep fires small, use only dead wood and completely put out with water before leaving and at night (includes wood burners in huts).

• Always have a bucket of water near fire to extinguish it and for burns (or stream/river nearby).

• Be careful when wearing synthetic clothing around fires. Sparks put holes in Gore-Tex and tents.

• Do not use axe without guide's okay - wear boots.

#### **HYGIENE & TOILETS**

• You'll get to a shower mostly every 1-2 days, otherwise there are rivers to have a wash in.

• Keep streams, lakes and rivers clean - when cleaning and washing, take water and wash well away from the water source (drain used water into soil to allow it to be filtered) – all soaps/detergents are harmful to water-life.

• Laundry facilities are limited while on trips (every 2-3 days).

• Always use toilets when they are provided even though long-drops may be a bit rustic!

• In situations where there is no toilet, bury toilet waste. No 1's (pee) off

the track - No 2's (poop) in 5-10 cm deep hole 50-100m from any water (lake, river or stream), bury toilet paper, cover up hole with soil/leaf litter. Please do not burn toilet paper.

• Sanitary pads/tampons are treated as rubbish - carried out by user – ask guide for sanitary rubbish bags.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL CARE**

• Correct hygiene and toilet practices are essential to keep water supplies (rivers, lakes) safe to drink.

- Remove rubbish pack it in, pack it out. Please help guide to separate rubbish, recycling and compost.
- Keep to the track where there is one protect native plants and animals
- Respect cultural heritage.
- Enjoy your visit camp carefully and leave no trace of your visit.

Will the next visitor know you have been there?

#### OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER...

- Hypothermia make sure you wear & carry the correct clothing!
- Fitness hiking all day with a backpack on is hard work, get fit before you come on a kiwi-style trip. If you are fit enough you will be able to take part in all the hikes.
- Hire gear use the supplied liner with sleeping bags, carry all hire gear in pack not tied to outside. Please tell us if any repairs are required.
- $\bullet$  Equipment it is so easy to lose stuff in shared huts. Help us keep an eye on gear.
- Roads remember kiwis drive on the left, look carefully when crossing the street for an ice-cream.
- Tipping it is not expected in NZ to tip for service, but if you feel your guide has done an excellent job, tips will be accepted graciously.

#### Thank you for reading. Have a wonderful trip.

#### Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerso

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