

NEW ZEALAND GRAND HIKES

ITINERARY





From cruising ice-carved fiords to summiting volcanoes, this is the full Aotearoa New Zealand travel experience. Join a small group journey from north to south. Our expert Kiwi guides lead the way, bringing the land to life and taking care of every detail.

Hike a mix of day walks and short trails that reveal New Zealand's most beautiful and diverse wilderness. From strenuous alpine hikes to strolls along the beach, choose the activities that suit you. This trip is perfect for people who love hiking and their creature comforts. Stay in handpicked accommodation set within the landscapes you've come to see; enjoy wonderful meals that celebrate fresh local flavours. Connect with Māori tradition and Kiwi culture for a deeper sense of this place and its people.

Travel with us and experience Aotearoa's wild beauty in the company of like-minded travellers. Could this be the trip you've been looking for?

The trip can also be split into North and South Island options - the North Island Grand Hikes and South Island Grand Hikes.

LENGTH	15 days	
GRADE	B (Average of 4-5 hours physical activity per day)	
START	Auckland, Rydges Hotel foyer, 59 Federal Street at 6:30 am	
FINISH	Queenstown, 5:00pm (approximately)	
ACCOMMODATION	Hotels and Lodges	
INCLUDED ACTIVITIES	Māori Village Experience, Wai-o-tapu Thermal Wonderland, scenic flight from the North to the South Island, Abel Tasman boat cruise, Natural Flames, Glacier boat trip and Milford Sound cruise	
OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES	All activities outlined in itinerary are included in trip price.	
DEPARTURES	2026 Nov: 19 2027 Jan: 14, 28 | Feb: 11, 25 | Mar: 11	2027 Oct: 28 | Nov: 18 | Dec: 9 2028 Jan: 13, 27 | Feb: 10, 24 | Mar: 9
PRICE	**1 Jul 2026 - 30 Jun 2027** Adult NZD $16,500.00 Single Supplement NZD $2,550.00	**1 Jul 2027 - 30 Jun 2028** Adult NZD $16,750.00 Single Supplement NZD $2,550.00

"THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME"

The guides were so accomodating, very well educated on the animals, fauna and treks and they were so much fun. The food, the accomodations and the logistics all went perfectly. This was a 10 out of a 10! Grace, Oli, Andy and Mark - best guides ever

~ Diane K - February, **Trip Advisor**

"FANTASTIC NZ TOUR"

So glad I chose the New Zealand Grand Hikes tour (New Zealand Uncut) for my trip. It was a great way to explore both islands and our guides were great as well. The small group really added to the enjoyment. I highly recommend this trip.

~ Larry W - January, **Trip Advisor**

ITINERARY









DAY 1 AUCKLAND - ROTORUA

Up to 2 km (1.3 miles), 2 hours hiking, elevation +/-60 m (200 ft)
Meet your North Island guide and the rest of the group in the Rydges Hotel foyer at 6.30am before driving south through classic patchwork green farming country alongside the Waikato River.

We make a quick cafe stop enroute to Waitomo for those who need a coffee and bite to eat. Arriving at the Waitomo Caves area descend into the vaulted galleries of the Ruakuri Cave with its limestone formations and crystals. Be enchanted by the thousands of tiny glow worms that cling to the cave ceiling and mimic a starlit night sky. Later we emerge into the sunshine and wander on a loop trail through an outstanding limestone canyon.

We arrive in the volcanically active area of Rotorua late afternoon. Rotorua is also the centre of Māori cultural tourism in New Zealand and tonight we enjoy an evening meal in the city. *Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Rotorua. Includes lunch and dinner.*

DAY 2 ROTORUA - LAKE TARAWERA

12 km (7.2 miles), 4 hours hiking, elevation +480m (1,500 ft) –250 m (900 ft)
A short drive leads us to the stunning forests and beaches of Lake Tarawera. Take a scenic water taxi ride to the lake end. From here we hike back alongside this beautifully clear lake, enjoying the shade that towering tree ferns and ignimbrite cliffs offer. Plunge into the lake to cool off at any one of the tiny pumice beaches as you wait for the others to catch up. There are astonishing views all along this trail, and usually the chance for a natural hot creek dip along the way. This is an expansive wilderness of forest, lakes and volcanoes.

After we return, we have the chance to look around Rotorua including the short Redwoods Trail. Later explore through the historic waterfront area including the fascinating Faith church. Rotorua is also the centre of Maori cultural tourism in New Zealand and late afternoon we enjoy an evening meal and cultural performance. *Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Rotorua. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 3 ROTORUA - TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK

10 km (5.5 miles), 2-4 hours hiking, elevation +/-200 m (600 ft)
In the morning we explore some of the amazing thermal areas located a little south of Rotorua. Wander along boardwalks that connect pools of bubbling mud, mineralised hot pools and plumes of rising steam, and wonder at the uniqueness of this area. Grab a cuppa before we drive south to Huka Falls and feel the power as the huge Waikato River gets pinched through a narrow rock corridor. Enjoy a café lunch at the lakeside town of Taupo before heading south around Lake Taupo's shores to New Zealand's first national park - Tongariro. The next two nights are spent in a hotel on the edge of the park, providing a great opportunity for you to explore the area at your leisure.

In the afternoon hike to Taranaki Falls, cascading 20 metres over a 15,000 year old lava flow. Enjoy dinner with the group in the comfort of your hotel. *Accommodation: Hotel at the gateway to Tongariro National Park. Includes breakfast and dinner.*

DAY 4 TONGARIRO ALPINE CROSSING

Up to 21 km (12 miles), 7-8 hours hiking, elevation +900 m (3,000 ft) -1,250 m (4,100 ft)
Join the guide today for a full days walking on the famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing, regarded as one of the best day walks in the world. The well-built track climbs, steeply at times, to the craters of Mt Tongariro. Stop and admire the views of the Red Crater, Emerald Lakes and steaming vents that make this hike so outstanding. After a sometimes long and physically challenging day celebrate your achievement at dinner with a bottle of fine New Zealand wine.

Those who prefer a more restful day can find plenty to do at the village: Soda Springs walk, Taranaki Falls walk, or simply drink coffee and view the great exhibits at the Park Visitor Centre. Enjoy your second night in this village. *Accommodation: Hotel at the gateway to Tongariro National Park. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 5 TONGARIRO - WELLINGTON

Rest your legs this morning as we drive south through rolling green hill country to the capital city of Wellington. Stroll along the fabulous waterfront and absorb some of New Zealand's history in the national museum - Te Papa, or simply get lost admiring the heritage houses along one of the many improbably steep streets. Nowhere is very far in Wellington. There is a vibrant café and restaurant scene here – enjoy. *Accommodation: Copthorne Hotel, Wellington. Includes breakfast.*

DAY 6 WELLINGTON - NELSON

Up to 3.3 km (2 miles), 1-1.5 hours hiking, elevation +/-170 m (560 ft)
There is more time to enjoy this busy harbourside capital or relax before grabbing an early lunch and heading to the airport. Enjoy a scenic early-afternoon flight over Cook Strait as you hop from the North to the South Island. Your driver will meet you at Nelson Airport to transfer you to the Rutherford Hotel to later meet your guides and those joining for the South Island Grand Hikes tour at 4pm.

There will be opportunity for a guided hike up Botanical Hill, also known as the "Centre of New Zealand" to enjoy sweeping views of Tasman Bay and Nelson City, or an alternative option to independently explore this lively town suggested by your guides.

Later we celebrate the start of our South Island tour by dining together in one of Nelson's fine restaurants. *Accommodation: Rutherford Hotel, Nelson. Includes breakfast and dinner.*

DAY 7 NELSON - ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK

Up to 12.2 km (7.6 miles), 4 hours hiking, elevation +/-700 m (2,300 ft)
After an early breakfast, we set off for Abel Tasman National Park. At the beach resort of Kaiteriteri, board a water taxi and cruise the coastline past golden sand beaches, rugged granite headlands and bush clad islands.

Step ashore at Bark Bay and follow the famed Abel Tasman Coast Track through native forests and past cascading streams. A well-formed trail leads us up and over gentle ridges to Torrent Bay, where the lovely clear fresh waters of Cleopatra's Pool may tempt you to take a dip or for those more daring - a slide down the naturally formed hydro-slide!





















At Anchorage, we will meet the water taxi for a return journey to Kaiteriteri before heading back to Nelson in the late afternoon.

There is an opportunity to further explore this vibrant and arty little town this evening with the many great restaurant dining options. *Accommodation: Rutherford Hotel. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 8 NELSON - PUNAKAIKI

Up to 6 km (3.7 miles), 2 hours hiking, elevation +/-170 m (560 ft)
On the way to the West Coast we stop for a remarkable hike to marvel at natural flames which have been burning since the 1920's. We access this phenomena with a local guide through a privately-owned working deer farm. Unlike the Eternal Flames of the Chimera in Turkey these flames are surrounded by lush tree ferns and beech forest. A cup of 'billy tea' and hot cakes prepared over the flames gives this experience a distinctly 'kiwi' flavour.

Our journey resumes alongside the mighty Buller River as it cuts its way through the massive wilderness of the upper South Island to the coast at Westport. We then traverse a section of spectacular coastline and catch the sunset at Punakaiki. Take an evening stroll around the famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes – we try to time our visit with high tide so we may leave the rocks until tomorrow if tide times are more favourable. *Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Punakaiki. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 9 PUNAKAIKI - METHVEN

Up to 9.6 km (6 miles), 3-3.5 hours hiking, elevation +/-360 m (1,180 ft)
Hike the Inland Pack Track from the Pororari to the Punakaiki River. This historic route once used by prospectors and miners to avoid immense coastal cliffs while travelling the West Coast now forms part of our newest Great Walk, the Paparoa Track. Pass through deep limestone canyons and towering rainforest with groves of tropical nikau palms. You may not be able to resist a speedy swim in one of the many deep clear pools you pass on the way!

After the hike, we travel a remarkable highway which takes us from the lush green rainforests of the West Coast and over the glaciated Southern Alps to the parched soft yellow tussock grasslands of the eastern high country. This is one of the most cleverly engineered roads in New Zealand.

East of Arthur's Pass, stretch your legs and stroll around the enchanting limestone outcrops of Kura Tawhiti (Castle Hill). This area was an important meeting place and food gathering area for early Māori people. Interestingly it was named "Spiritual Centre of the Universe" by the Dalai Lama when he visited in 2002. Today it is a haven for rock climbers who climb and boulder on the multitude of rock forms.

We then leave the highway and follow the back roads around Lake Lyndon and on to Methven, a ski town by winter and laid-back rural town the rest of the year. The Southern Alps form a spectacular backdrop. *Accommodation: Ski Time, Methven. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 10 METHVEN - AORAKI/MOUNT COOK

8.2 km (5.1 miles), 3 hours hiking, +/-380 m (1,280 ft)
We continue south, at first following the edge of the extensive Canterbury Plains then up into the intermontane Mackenzie Basin to Lake Tekapo, famous for its stunning turquoise waters and the quaint Church of the Good Shepherd, perched daintily by the lake. Hike via the lakeshore to the elevated viewing platform afforded by Mt John and revel in the expansiveness of the Patagonia-like landscape. The sweeping Mackenzie "Country" is a sparsely populated region in the rain shadow of the Southern Alps; tawny-brown drylands, braided riverbeds and startling glacial lakes extend to distant mountains.

On arrival at Mount Cook village relax in the splendour of Aoraki/Mt Cook and the surrounding alps in our accommodation, where we stay for the next two nights. *Accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*



DAY 11 AORAKI/MT COOK

5.3 km (3.3 miles), 3 hours hiking, elevation +/-590 (1,940 ft) or
10.2 km (6.3 miles), 3 hours hiking, elevation +/-270 m (890 ft)
Climb up to Sealy Tarns and enjoy awesome views to hanging glaciers on Mt Sefton and up the Hooker Valley to Aoraki/Mt Cook. Those wanting to immerse themsleves further in this specatcular alpine landscape or take an easier alternative to the Sealy Tarns hike can explore the valley floor independently, with the walk up the Hooker Valley for views of the Mueller and Hooker Glacier terminal lakes and the towering south face of Aoraki/Mt Cook, or learn more about the wonders of the national park in the world-class visitor centre. *Accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. Includes breakfast and lunch.*





DAY 12 AORAKI/MT COOK - WĀNAKA

2.9 km (1.8 miles), 1 hour hiking, elevation +/-70 m (230 ft)
Travel up the Tasman Valley towards the Tasman Glacier, the longest glacier in New Zealand. Take a short walk through glacial moraine and board a custom-built boat for a unique spin around the terminal lake. Like most glaciers in the world, the Tasman Glacier is retreating and the terminal lake increases in size every year. This dynamic environment is dotted with icebergs of all shapes and sizes from the collapsing terminal face of the glacier.



Our drive south takes us out of the Mackenzie Country and over the Lindis Pass, famous for its stunning tussock-covered landscapes and rugged hills. As we enter the southern lakes district of Central Otago, we are greeted with spectacular scenery and awe inspiring landscapes welcoming us to the lovely lake-side holiday town of Wānaka. *Accommodation: Oakridge Resort, Wānaka. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 13 WĀNAKA - TE ANAU

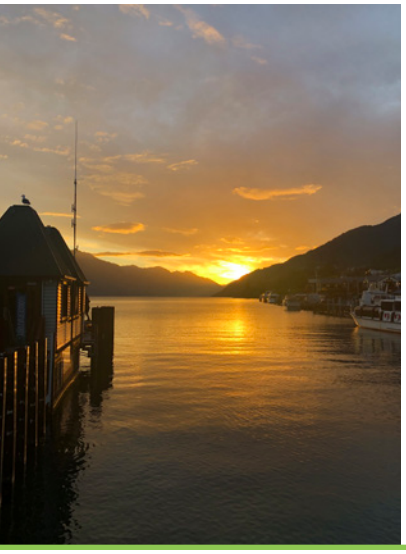
Up to 7.2 km (4.5 miles), 3 hours hiking, elevation +/-650 m (2,130 ft)
A beautiful drive alongside Lake Wānaka leads us toward the peaks of Aspiring National Park. We hike in the lower Matukituki Valley on the Diamond Lake walk and on up Rocky Mountain, a distinctive glacially sculpted "roche moutonnee" (rock sheep) for spectacular views over the lake, and to the Southern Alps and Mount Aspiring/Tititea. This area has several hike options, from the gentle Diamond Lake circuit to the more energetic Rocky Mountain summit climb.











After the hike and lunch we drive over the Crown Range and along the shores of Lake Wakatipu and through to Te Anau, the gateway to Fiordland National Park. Time to relax in the afternoon or take a stroll along the beautiful lakeshore with stunning view across the water of the vast Fiordland wilderness. *Accommodation: Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas, Te Anau. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 14 TE ANAU - MILFORD SOUND

7.2 km (4.5 miles), 3 hours hiking, elevation +/-490 m (1,610 ft)
Our day excursion takes us through the stunning Fiordland mountains to Milford Sound, one of New Zealand's most iconic visitor destinations. We stop at The Divide to walk a section of the Routeburn Track to Key Summit for panoramic views of the Humboldt and Darran Mountains. Easier short walks, and the preferred option if cloud is likely to rob Key Summit of views, are located below in the Hollyford Valley.

The topography will leave you spell bound as we continue on to Milford Sound and experience the true magnificence of the fiord, cruising between glaciated mountains under sheer cliffs which plummet hundreds of metres into deep dark waters. Enjoy wonderful views of mile-high Mitre Peak and Lady Bowen Falls as you keep an eye out for marine wildlife. You may spot dusky dolphins, New Zealand fur seals and if you're lucky the rare Fiordland crested penguin. We return to Te Anau in the afternoon. *Accommodation: Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas, Te Anau. Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 15 TE ANAU - QUEENSTOWN

9.8 km (6.1 miles), 3 hours hiking, elevation +/-180 m (430 ft)
This morning we hike part of the famed Kepler Track onto the shores of Lake Manapouri, described as the 'loveliest of all lakes' for its array of small islands, bush fringed beaches and coves, and mountain backdrop. From here, the southern extent of our journey, we then backtrack northwards towards the lively scene of Queenstown. In the wine country, on the outskirts of Queenstown, we celebrate our adventures together with lunch out at a fine local restaurant. Enjoy some fine local food and wine before arriving in Queenstown in the late afternoon where the tour concludes. *Includes breakfast and lunch.*

*Drop off locations at the end of our trip are limited, as many Queenstown accommodations are inaccessible to our touring vehicle. Available drop-off locations are Queenstown Airport, or in central Queenstown at the Copthorne Hotel Lakefront, or iSite Visitor Centre.

ADVENTURES FROM QUEENSTOWN

Queenstown is a beautiful town tucked under the mountains and beside the crystal clear Lake Wakatipu. There are a huge number of adventure activities on offer here. You might like to take a thrilling jet boat ride, face your fears on the highest bungy in New Zealand, or paddle peacefully down a river on an inflatable 'funyak'.

"EXCELLENT GUIDES"

We did the New Zealand Uncut (New Zealand Grand Hikes) hike of the north and south islands in February. We were tentative about doing a group tour, but we experienced a great adventure with like minded people. We were escorted by some very talented people. Not only were they excellent guides, but also naturalists, and entertainers (Justin). The food and accommodation were everything we needed and the snacks outstanding (thank you Eva). The variation in terrain was well planned and provided ample opportunities to hike at different levels. New Zealand's natural beauty combined volcanoes, beautiful coastal hikes and rugged mountains topped by glacial waterfalls. A once in a lifetime trip - that should be done more than once !!! We would not go with anyone else but Hiking New Zealand.

~ Debbie B, April, **Trip Advisor**

LIFE ON THE TRAIL

GRADE B

- Up to 4-5 hours of physical activity per day
- At times carrying a backpack of 4-5kgs
- Tracks generally in good condition
- Altitude gains of up to 600m (2000ft) on harder days
- No hiking experience necessary

The full (optional) Tongariro Alpine Crossing on day 4 takes 6-8 hours and has an altitude gain of 900m.

GUIDES AND SAFETY

An excellent guide can make the difference between a trip of a lifetime and just an ordinary trip. That is why we work hard to make sure we hire the best guides. 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. Our guides' energy and dedication will ensure that your time with us is truly inspiring, a huge amount of fun and safe. Structuring breaks for the guide to rest is important to keep them fresh, focused and ready to give their best. Occasionally, we engage local experts to add value to experiences which your guide may or may not join. Also, there may be nights your guide stays in alternate nearby accommodation but rest assured you will be able to reach them if needed. Please be gentle with your guide - good guides are hard to find.

All walks described in the itinerary are guided, however, the guide can suggest a number of shorter self-guided walks if you wish to do a little more or a little less walking on some of the days.

GROUP SIZE

This trip is a small group trip with a minimum of 2 hikers and a maximum of 15 hikers.



FOOD

Almost all of the meals are included on this tour, but when staying in the cities we let you do your own thing and try some of the excellent local restaurants (see "Additional Costs" section). There are plenty of opportunities to graze the local cafes if you would prefer to explore in the morning. Our guides usually set out lunch food for you and you simply help yourself. We provide healthy and wholesome food and include a lot of fresh produce.

Our customised trailers have a fold down table and cooking area that is perfect for preparing picnics at all those secret places we will take you. Included dinners are frequently in lodge restaurants (either set menu or a la carte), or in a restaurant in the town but occasionally somewhere out of the ordinary!

ELEVATIONS

Track distances and elevations are approximate only. Advertised hiking routes may be amended by the guide for any reason (usually due to weather, or track conditions). The guide will notify clients in advance of day-to-day routes.



TRANSPORT

The average driving time per day varies; we have some days where we hardly drive at all. On a typical day we might be in the vehicle for 2-3 hours. But some days we will drive for longer. The driving time is a chance to rest and enjoy the fantastic scenery that is forever changing. We travel in a luxury minibus towing a lockable trailer with food, equipment and your luggage. The guides are easily convinced to stop the vehicle if there is a great photo opportunity, vineyard or notable ice cream shop!



ACCOMMODATION

The New Zealand Grand Hikes tour uses a range of hotels and quality lodges chosen for their well appointed and wonderful locations. All rooms have ensuite bathrooms. Some lodges have units with two bedrooms per unit. Rooms are twin share or doubles. If you are travelling on your own you will be given a twin share room with a fellow traveller of the same gender. Single supplements are available on this tour. The New Zealand Grand Hikes tour has been created for those that appreciate a high standard of accommodation after a good day of hiking. Please note accommodation is subject to availability, and an equivalent style of property could be used if the advertised property is no longer available.

PACKING LIST

GROUP SIZE
This trip is a small gorup trip with a maximum of 15 hikers.

WHAT TO TAKE
New Zealand's weather is very changeable and cold weather can be experienced at any time of year, especially in the mountains. We recommend wearing lightweight and breathable fabrics while hiking. Merino or polypropylene underwear is great in cold weather and will still keep you warm when it gets wet, unlike cotton. Jeans are not suitable for hiking.

WALKING
- ☐ Hiking boots or shoes
- ☐ Daypack (25-30 litres)
- ☐ Water bottle – 1L min (2L for Tongariro Crossing)
- ☐ Waterproof raincoat (gore-tex or similar)
- ☐ Warm fleece/wool jersey (not cotton)
- ☐ Thermal underwear (top and bottom, wool or polypropylene)
- ☐ Socks (we suggest 3 pairs)
- ☐ Warm hat or balaclava
- ☐ Long sleeve shirt (for sun protection)
- ☐ Shorts for hiking (or lightweight hiking trousers)
- ☐ Gloves or mittens (wool or fleece)

GENERAL
- ☐ Spare lightweight shoes or sandals
- ☐ Insect repellent (sandflies like foreign blood)
- ☐ Casual clothing for travel and evenings
- ☐ Dry bag for clothes/valuables

RECOMMENDED ITEMS
- ☐ Sunscreen, sunhat and sunglasses
- ☐ Rain trousers
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Togs (swimming costume)
- ☐ Towel (lightweight travel towels are great)

SUPPLIED
- ☐ First Aid kit
- ☐ Drinking water
- ☐ Safety equipment
- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Walking poles (must request when booking tour)

LAUNDRY
Laundry facilities are available most nights, either as the hotel laundry service (additional charge) or as access to laundry facilities for hotel guests.

CHARGING DEVICES
Devices such as cameras and cellphones can be charged throughout the tour - while travelling in the vehicle (bring along a charger adaptor) and during the hotel nights.

LUGGAGE
For the flight between Wellington and Nelson, the checked luggage allowance is 23kgs per person, with a carry-on luggage allowance of 7kg.

ADDITIONAL COSTS

What is included in the price of the New Zealand Grand Hikes trip?
The New Zealand Grand Hikes is all inclusive of accommodation, guide services, transport (including your domestic flight between Wellington and Nelson), and most meals, as noted in the itinerary.

What additional costs can I expect on the New Zealand Grand Hikes Trip?
Just a small number of meals, giving you the opportunity to explore and try local cuisine at your own pace.

DIRECT BOOKING CONDITIONS

Payment
For bookings made four or more months prior to the departure date, a 25% deposit is required, with the remainder due 95 days before your trip. For bookings made within four months of the departure date, full payment is required at the time of booking.

Cancellations
95 days or more prior to departure date: Full refund less a $500 transferable deposit per person to a future departure.
94 to 35 days: 50% of tour price forfeited.
34 days or less: 100% of tour price forfeited.

The tour price is all-inclusive. There will be no partial refunds or credits for unused services within a tour. Any unpaid forfeited amount may be pursued as a debt.

Travel Insurance
It is suggested that clients take out comprehensive travel insurance.