

Classic | Southern Highlights Tour

Wellington to Queenstown – 11 Days

Southern Highlights is also offered as a Queenstown to Wellington tour.
See the end of this itinerary for details.

Day 1

Wellington

Welcome to Wellington

Kia ora!

Welcome to Wellington – New Zealand’s capital city! Wellington is known for its world-class dining, great coffee and eccentric shops.

After checking into your hotel and reading your welcome letter from your Tour Director, head out and explore all that Wellington has to offer. This is the perfect opportunity to get cultured at Te Papa Museum or grab a drink at one of the many quirky bars on Cuba Street. You may even fancy a ride on the cable car!

After an exciting day on the town, your tour will officially begin as you join your fellow travellers and Tour Director at this evening’s welcome reception.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

A welcome drink is included in tonight's reception

Activities

Welcome Reception

Day 2

Wellington to Marlborough

Crossing Cook Strait

This morning you will say poroporoaki ki te motu raki (good-bye to the North Island) as you sail to the South Island, crossing the Cook Strait on the Interislander ferry. As the shores of the North Island slowly disappear, enjoy a hearty seafaring breakfast on board.

Around midday, you will be spoiled with captivating harbour views as you enter the Queen Charlotte Sound. Admire the beauty of this coastal paradise as you arrive at the gateway of the South Island, Picton. Step off the Interislander Ferry and experience Marlborough.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Interislander Ferry

Day 3

Marlborough to Kaikōura

The Coastal Pacific Scenic Train

The morning is yours to explore. Meander through the local craft stores and coastal walks in Picton, or perhaps discover the Omas Aviation Museum in Blenheim. Enjoy the waterfront cafés before boarding the Coastal Pacific train for a highlight rail journey through the Marlborough Wine Region.

Today you will be travelling to Kaikōura. Relax and let the train glide you across remote beaches, between mountains and sea, on a timeless journey of breathtaking beauty. Keep an eye out for the fur seals lazing on the rocks!

Once in Kaikōura, the evening will be yours to enjoy some iconic kai moana (seafood) at one of the quaint restaurants.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Coastal Pacific Scenic Train Experience

Day 4

Kaikōura to Christchurch

Explore Kaikōura

Today will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. You will have the opportunity to go whale watching! Enjoy today's optional thrill of an up-close encounter with the world's largest-toothed predator, the Giant Sperm Whale who live in the waters of Kaikōura year-round.

Want to get an aerial experience of the wildlife? Why not request a plane ride to capture the true grandeur of it all?

Whether you have decided to go whale watching or swimming with the dolphins and seals, we're sure you will be feeling peckish. Head to the hub of the action on the main street to sample some iconic New Zealand food - you can't go wrong with the humble Kiwiana fish and chips. Work off the deep-fried delights by wandering through the wonderful array of local artisan stores and souvenir shops.

In the late afternoon, your journey will continue, once again, on the Coastal Pacific Train en route to Christchurch, or "The Garden City". The spectacular scenery won't cease to amaze as you journey south through the rolling hills and extensive plains. Enjoy the relaxing journey with a glass of wine in hand.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Christchurch)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner on train

Activities

Coastal Pacific Scenic Train Experience

Day 5

Christchurch

Explore Christchurch

Christchurch, the hub for South Island exploration is also a wonderful city that blends modern architecture and technology with the existing 19th-century Anglican 'gothic revival' architectural influence. Often remembered for its earthquake in 2011, the city is rebuilding itself as a multicultural haven. So, without further delay, jump on the historic tram to learn the history, tales, and culture of Ōtautahi Christchurch.

Enjoy your free time as you explore the Arts Centre, Quake City Museum, Christchurch Art Gallery, and Botanical Gardens.

Ride on the city tram to uncover Christchurch's great history, or relax as you punt on the Avon River. There is also a multitude of delicious cafés tucked into quaint side streets we're sure you will love. If you are in the mood for something different, set off for Akaroa, an 'incroyable' French coastal settlement just an hour and half from the city centre.

Dinner awaits as you join your fellow travellers once again to tell them about the exciting places you have discovered.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Christchurch)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Christchurch Tram City Tour

Group Dinner

Day 6

Christchurch to West Coast

The TranzAlpine Scenic Train

The moment has come to experience the world-famous TranzAlpine scenic train journey through the Southern Alps, emerging in the West Coast!

On this fantastic escape, you will see epic vistas, soar on the edges of the ice fed Waimakariri River, traverse through the Great Divide, and experience ever-changing landscapes. The natural scenery isn't the only marvel, though. The TranzAlpine passes through the Otira Tunnel, a true engineering marvel of 100 years!

Once you arrive at the West Coast, a private coach will take you even further off the beaten track to Punakaiki, where you will explore curious limestone rock formations and blowholes.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

TranzAlpine Scenic Train Experience

Punakaiki Pancake Rock Excursion

Day 7

West Coast to Franz Josef

Explore the West Coast

This morning you'll start your West Coast adventure by visiting one of the South Island's most popular activities– the West Coast Tree Top Walk. This elevated adventure will get you acquainted with the locals – the ancient Rimu and Kamahi trees.

After your sky-high experience, continue south into Glacier Country. Franz Josef Glacier is quite special in that it survives in the warm coastal rainforest temperatures. With a short walk to a viewpoint, you'll get a fantastic view of the vast valley, as well as a sneak peak of Franz Josef Glacier itself. If you would prefer to get up close, we recommend booking an optional helicopter flight. This will ensure you are getting the best possible view of this natural wonder.

After your glacial experience and checking into the hotel, you'll have some free time to enjoy Franz Josef town. Indulge in a helicopter flight, nature walk or tap into some natural tranquility at the local hot pools.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

West Coast Tree Top Walk

Short Nature Walk to Glacier Viewing Point

Day 8

Franz Josef to Queenstown

Exploring the South

Today you will be exploring the mountainous Haast Pass. With changing landscapes around every bend, this journey to Queenstown will be one of the most scenic drives you may ever take. Marvel at the beaches, crystal blue lakes and rivers, mountain peaks, lush vineyards, charming plains and stunning glaciers as your Tour Director guides you between local hidden gems.

Emerging on the other side of the pass, explore a local fruit hotspot before exploring the cobblestone streets of the historic goldmining settlement of Arrowtown.

After an exciting plunge into the history of this gold rush village, you will arrive in the world-famous resort town of Queenstown!

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (3 nights in Queenstown)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Scenic coach journey through Haast Pass with stops along the way
Haast Visitors Centre, Mrs Jones' Fruit Stall and Arrowtown Visit

Day 9

Queenstown

Explore Queenstown

Enjoy a free day to explore everything Queenstown has to offer.

Today, we highly recommend you join an excursion to the 8th Wonder of the World – it truly is a remarkable experience. Milford Sound / Piopiotahi is a scenic escape approximately three hours from Queenstown. The natural landscape will engulf you as you waltz through plunging valleys and towering peaks.

Take this encounter to the next level by booking a return visit by plane and soar like the Piopio (ancient bird) back to Queenstown.

Whether you've decided to hop aboard the steamship lake cruise on the iconic TSS Earnslaw, or marvel at the power of ancient roaring rivers – tonight you have a free evening to indulge in Queenstown's exciting nightlife. Sip cocktails and indulge in the sparkling views of Lake Wakatipu.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (3 nights in Queenstown)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Day 10

Queenstown

The Close to an Adventure of a Lifetime

Queenstown truly has something for everyone. Personalise your day to be as active or relaxed as you'd like. Whether it's exploring Walter Peak on a horse trekking adventure, joining the historic steamship across Lake Wakatipu or sipping wine in Gibbston Valley, there is no shortage of activities to delight your senses.

This evening is your 'final hurrah' as you enjoy a farewell dinner. This is the perfect time to reminisce and share photos and phone numbers with your new friends.

Accommodation

4 - 4.5 Star Accommodation (3 nights in Queenstown)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Farewell Dinner

Day 11

Queenstown

Departing Queenstown

Your journey will end after enjoying a final breakfast with your fellow travellers.

Not ready to leave Queenstown? Reach out to our Travel Centre to pre-organise your extended stay.

Meals

Breakfast

Activities

Transfer to airport

Classic | Southern Highlights Tour

Queenstown to Wellington – 11 Days

Southern Highlights is also offered as a Wellington to Queenstown tour.
See the start of this itinerary for details.

Day 1

Queenstown

Welcome to Queenstown

Kia Ora!

Welcome to Queenstown, New Zealand's adventure capital! Queenstown is known for its dramatic mountain ranges, nearby vineyards, restaurants, and Lake Wakatipu.

After checking into your hotel and reading your welcome letter from your Tour Director, head out and explore all that Queenstown has to offer.

Explore the beach front, indulge in some retail therapy, and explore the beautiful rose gardens. Your journey will officially begin as you join your fellow travelers and Tour Director at this evening's welcome reception.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Queenstown)

Meals Included

A welcome drink is included in tonight's reception

Activities

Welcome Reception

Day 2

Queenstown

Explore Queenstown

Enjoy a free day to explore everything Queenstown has to offer. Today we highly recommend you join an excursion to the 8th Wonder of the World - it truly is a remarkable experience.

Milford Sound / Piopiotahi is a scenic escape approximately three hours from Queenstown. The natural landscape will engulf you as you waltz through plunging valleys and towering peaks. Take this encounter to the next level by booking a return visit by plane and soar like the Piopio (ancient bird) back to Queenstown.

Whether you've decided to hop aboard the iconic steamship the TSS Earnslaw to cruise on Lake Wakatipu, or marvel at the power of ancient roaring rivers - tonight you have the evening to indulge in Queenstown's exciting nightlife. Sip cocktails and indulge in the sparkling views across the lake.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Queenstown)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Day 3

Queenstown to Franz Josef

Exploring the South

Today you'll be exploring the mountainous Haast Pass. With changing landscapes around every bend, this journey of about five hours to Franz Josef will be one of the most scenic drives you may ever take. Marvel at the beaches, crystal blue lakes and rivers, mountain peaks, lush vineyards, charming plains and glaciers as your Tour Director guides you between local hidden gems. Stop in unique locations only the locals tend to stop at.

Tonight, is a free evening to experience Franz Josef. Schedule an amazing helicopter flight to the spectacular Franz Josef Glacier, go on nature walk or tap into some natural tranquility at the local hot pools.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Scenic coach journey through Haast Pass with stops along the way

Day 4

Franz Josef to West Coast

Explore the West Coast

Franz Josef Glacier is quite special in that it survives in coastal rainforest temperatures. Before you head off up the coast, why not set off on a short nature walk? No matter which one you choose, you'll get a fantastic view of the vast valley and maybe even a sneak peak of Franz Josef Glacier itself.

Aboard the private coach, you'll journey further along the coastline, reaching the TreeTop Walkway. This elevated adventure will get you acquainted with the locals – the ancient Rimu and Kamahi trees of course.

This evening, you'll have free time to explore the beach at your leisure.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

West Coast Treetop Walkway & Cafe

Day 5

West Coast to Christchurch

The TranzAlpine Scenic Train

Before you escape into the Southern Alps aboard the world-famous TranzAlpine scenic train, a special excursion is beckoning - the Punakaiki Pancake Rocks. Here you will explore curious limestone formations and blowholes before joining the scenic journey to Christchurch at the Greymouth Railway Station.

Comfortably resting in plush, reclined seats, you will be surrounded by panoramic views. Start the journey by passing through the engineering marvel of the Otira Tunnel before emerging into a new landscape. Enjoy traversing through the Great Divide before a brief photo opportunity at Arthur's Pass. As you soar on the edges of the ice fed Waimakariri River, you'll see epic vistas in all directions while breathing fresh mountain air in the open carriage.

Just a few hours later, you'll arrive into 'The Garden City'.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Christchurch)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Punakaiki Pancake Rock Excursion

TranzAlpine Scenic Train Experience

Day 6

Christchurch

Explore Christchurch

Christchurch, the hub for South Island exploration is also a wonderful city that blends modern architecture and technology with the existing 19th-century Anglican influence. Often remembered for its earthquake in 2011, the city is rebuilding itself into a multi-cultural haven.

Today you are free to explore the museums, Riverside Markets, Punting on the Avon, Gondola and botanical gardens. There is also a multitude of delicious cafes tucked into quaint side streets we're sure you will love.

This evening you will re-join your fellow travelers for a special dinner at one of Christchurch's impeccable restaurants.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Christchurch)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Hop on hop off tram

Group Dinner

Day 7

Christchurch to Kaikōura

The Coastal Pacific to Kaikōura

Your next train journey departs Christchurch on route to Kaikōura. Enjoy breakfast on board as the smell of aromatic coffee dances through the carriages. In a few short hours, you will step foot into marine wildlife paradise.

Kaikōura has a range of exciting activities to choose from. Will you seek the whale watching, albatross, or dolphin encounter, or simply peruse the local artisan and gift shops? The rest of the day is yours to explore.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Coastal Pacific Scenic Train Experience

Day 8

Kaikōura to Marlborough

The Coastal Pacific Train to Marlborough

After breakfast, your Tour Director will guide you back to the Kaikōura Railway Station to board the Coastal Pacific train for the next leg of your journey.

Relax and let the train glide you across remote beaches, between mountains and sea, on a timeless journey of breath-taking beauty. Keep an eye out for the fur seals lazing on the rocks!

This afternoon you'll arrive into your final South Island destination. Soak up the views and maybe even join a wine tour to enjoy delicious wine amongst the vines. Listen to passionate wine makers describe the history and processes of these flavorful grapes. The evening is free for you to explore.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (1 night)

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Coastal Pacific Scenic Train Experience

Day 9

Marlborough to Wellington

Crossing Cook Strait

This morning you'll say good-bye to the South Island as you sail towards the capital. Crossing Cook Strait on the Interislander Ferry, the South Island shores will slowly disappear as you enjoy a hearty

seafaring lunch onboard.

Spoiled with harbour views, admire the coastal paradise as you glide through the scenic Queen Charlotte Sound and arrive into Wellington. Step off the Interislander Ferry and start your North Island adventure by exploring Wellington city.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Wellington)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Lunch

Activities

Interislander Ferry

Day 10

Wellington

Explore Wellington

The perfect day does exist – and it includes exploring Wellington!

Today is free for you to experience vibrant Wellington as you please. Start by joining a Te Papa Introduction Tour and then head off to explore Cuba Street's cafes, bookstores, and eccentric shops. Zealandia Eco-Sanctuary is just around the corner where you can surround yourself by native birdlife and regenerating forest. You won't get bored with the plethora of activities on offer. From coffee, culture, historic buildings botanic gardens and more, the list goes on! If you need any suggestions or recommendations, just reach out to your helpful Tour Director or our Travel Centre to pre-book an experience.

A farewell dinner awaits as you join your fellow travelers once again to tell them about the exciting places you have discovered.

Accommodation

3 - 4 Star Accommodation (2 nights in Wellington)

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner

Activities

Te Papa Introduction Tour

Farewell Dinner

Day 11

Wellington

Departing Wellington

Your journey will end after enjoying a final breakfast with your fellow travelers.

Not ready to leave Wellington? Reach out to our Travel Centre to pre-organise your extended stay.

Meals Included

Breakfast

Activities

Transfer to airport