



New Zealand Hiking Adventure

12 Days



Day 1 | Christchurch

Kia Ora (Hello!)

To ramp up for this adventure-amplified trip, most Wild Women choose to arrive a day or two early to shake off the long haul flight and properly reset.

There are no scheduled activities on Day 1. Take advantage of this slow-motion time to wander and stretch. We rendezvous in the evening (in the hotel lobby of Sudima Hotel, where our Wild Women group is staying) for a trip orientation and icebreaker welcome dinner.

It's time to pinch ourselves—we've arrived! Our New Zealand dreams are unfolding, together!

Included Meals

Dinner

Accommodations

Sudima Hotel



Day 2 | Arthur's Pass

Hiking and Hot Tubs

Today we travel from the east coast into the granite folds of the Southern Alps in the west to hike Devil's Punchbowl in Arthur's Pass.

The Punchbowl is an easy walk that slips through tall stands of native beech forest to the pounding rush of the powerful 430 feet (131 m) waterfall. For the birders in our crew, there's the impressive cinnamon-breasted fantail and endemic tomtit, a small species of bird with a distinct large head and short tail.

After the Punchbowl, we wind down the coast to Franz Josef, the nerve centre of New Zealand's glacier country. We spend an extremely elemental night in the subtropical rainforest in the foothills of the Southern Alps. The Rainforest Retreat strongly adheres to the sacred Tiaki Promise. Tiaki means to care for People and Place and this sustainably-minded property is committed to being a generational guardian. Extra bonus: there's a hot tub!

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

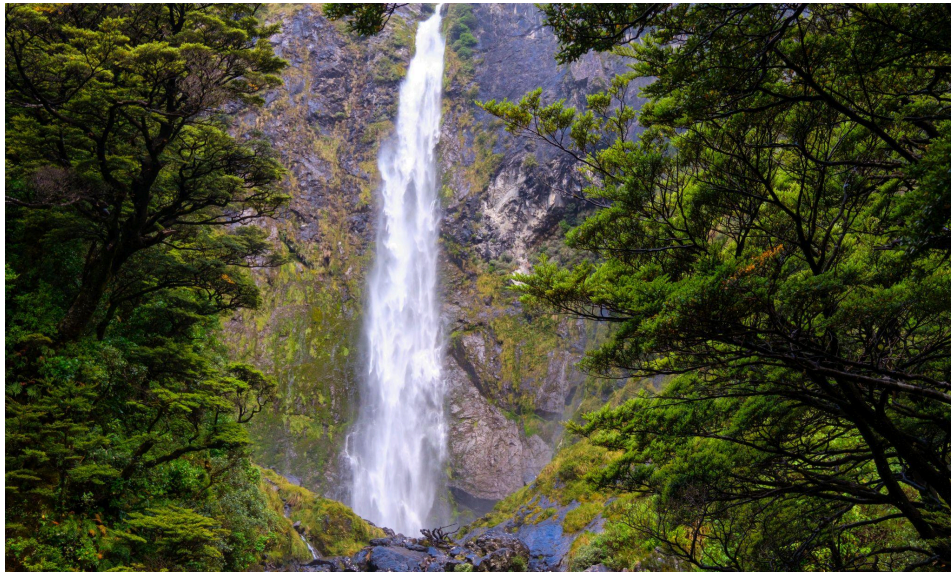
Rainforest Retreat, Franz Josef

The Hike

1.2 miles (2 km) or 45 minutes, with an elevation of 330 feet (100 m)

Travel

3 to 4 hours of driving



Day 3 | Franz Josef Glacier

Paddle into the Peaks

This morning we drive to Okarito, a bijou beach community. Okarito is home to the only native white heron colony in New Zealand. The herons (kōtuku) are symbolic and integral in Māori myth and folklore. Here, we slide tandem sea kayaks into the sheltered tidal lagoon and paddle towards the reflection of the snowy peaks mirrored in the water.

After lunch we hike along the Waiho riverbed to the terminal face of Franz Josef Glacier (*if time and group pace permits). This area is known as glacier country with more than 140 glaciers. Few sights rival the natural spectacle of Franz Josef and Fox Glacier's frozen rivers grinding their way down through the temperate rainforest.

In the small mountain village of Makarora, we kick back at our chalets and taste some authentic local fare at the Wonderland Lodge. Enjoy the bird soundtrack of chatty fantails and boisterous tūī!

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Wonderland Lodge, Makarora

The Paddle

1 hour (beginner-friendly and optional)

The Hike

Franz Josef Glacier: 3 miles (4.8 km), 2–3 hours, with an elevation gain of 66 feet (20 m). Note: There will be two guides, so if you wish to opt out of the hike, you may travel onward to the lodge instead.

Travel

30 minutes of driving



Day 4 | Siberia Valley Flight

Supersized Scenery

We are on the move early today, driving two hours to Makarora Village to catch a short but super scenic flight into Mt. Aspiring National Park. The flight provides a true bird's eye view of the tarns and iced caps of the lower Southern Alps before we land in the glacial ribbons of the remote Siberia Valley. We will be guaranteed to have WET FEET today as the hike involves a river crossing. You may wish to bring an extra pair of shoes as it's too rocky to cross barefoot.

Finding our land legs, we hike downstream along the Wilkin River, through serene silver beech forests to our jet boat. It will be a thrilling 45-minute jet boat ride on the glacial river to Makarora for dinner and a celebratory drink at the local pub.

Tonight, we have another fun night in the simple, rustic A-frame cottages of Wonderland Lodge.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Wonderland Lodge, Makarora

The Hike

6 miles (9.5 km) or 2–3 hours, with approximately 164 feet (50 m) elevation gain

Travel

2 hours (driving), 20 minutes (scenic flight), 45 minutes (jet boat)



Day 5 | The Blue Pools

Following the Arrow River

This morning, we take in the panorama from Haast Pass Lookout before visiting the iconic teal Blue Pools in the mature beech and podocarp (plum pine) forest. In Makarora, we have a picnic lunch before our drive through the glacier-carved valleys, and semi-arid mountainous terrain to Wanaka. In Arrowtown, we visit a small historic gold mining village established in the 1800s. If time permits, we can elbow up to the bar of the Cardrona Hotel—rumor has it that this historic hotel is the most photographed building in all of New Zealand.

We hop on bikes to tear up a portion of the well-packed surface of the Queenstown Bike Trail that runs parallel to the Arrow River. After our ride, we head on to the alpine town of Queenstown and Lake Wakatipu's captivating views. We have two nights at this lakefront hotel so we can unpack a little!

Included Meals

Breakfast and lunch

Accommodations

Queenstown Heritage Hotel, Queenstown

The Hike

Haast Pass Hike: 2.2 miles (3.5 km) or approximately 1 hour return, with an elevation gain of 351 feet (107 m)

Blue Pools Hike: 0.9 miles (1.5 km), 1 hour return, with an elevation gain of 177 feet (54 m)

Both hikes are optional today.

The Bike

Arrow Bridges Trail: 4.6–8.1 miles (7.5–13 km) or 1–2 hours, with an elevation gain of 416 feet (127 m)

This bike ride is optional. Those who don't wish to participate can take a bus shuttle. You may also ride this trail part way and take advantage of the shuttle at any point.

Travel

90 minutes of driving



Day 6 | Hike Ben Lomond Track

The Summit vs. Sidewalk Stroll

Today our group can entertain two tempting options: a full-day hike or a totally free day in Queenstown. Keen hikers can make tracks on the famed Ben Lomond Track. There's a short

gondola ride up to Bob's Peak to the Ben Lomond trailhead, which hovers 1,476 feet (450 m) above Queenstown. At the summit or "saddle" of Ben Lomond we are spoiled with incredible views over Queenstown, Lake Wakatipu and Mt. Aspiring.

For those who want to wander in Queenstown, this cosmopolitan city has endless restaurants, sidewalk cafés, day spas and boutique shops. Optional activities that our guide can help arrange include horse trekking, kayaking, winery tours, hang gliding, bungee jumping, jet boating and skydiving.

Dinner is NOT included tonight, but our hotel is located less than 1.2 miles (2 km) from downtown, where we can find empanadas, New Zealand beef burgers, craft beer and Indian and Thai menus.

Included Meals

Boxed lunch (*Note: lunch will be provided for the hikers, but if you choose a free day in Queenstown, your lunch will be independent.)

Accommodations

Queenstown Heritage Hotel, Queenstown

The Hike

5 miles (8 km) or 4–5 hours, with an elevation gain of 3,208 feet (978 m)



Day 7 | Hike Kepler Track

The Great Walk

Today we drive around Lake Wakatipu, leaving behind the towering Remarkables (how great is that name?). We head west through the pastoral landscape to the small town of Te Anau, the gateway to Milford Sound in Fiordland National Park. This region is home to the stunning takahē, a flightless swamphen.

In the afternoon, we double-knot our hiking shoes and experience a section of one of New Zealand's Great Walks—the famous 37-mile (60 km) Kepler Track. We follow the trail through mountain beech forest and along the Waiau River, leisurely enjoying all the sights—this isn't a strenuous hike by any stretch.

Tonight, we stay on the edge of Lake Te Anau and absorb a big dose of scenery and swap stories and laughs over local fare.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Matai Lodge, Te Anau

The Hike

6 miles (9.5 km) or 2–3 hours, with an elevation gain of 165 feet (50 m)

Travel

2.5–3 hours of driving



Day 8 | Milford Sound & Routeburn Track

Peaks and Parrots

We set off for the largest and perhaps most spectacular national park, Fiordland, through Darran mountain range to the shore of Milford Sound.

On our boat cruise we may encounter curious fur seals and see the bottlenose dolphins that sometimes frequent the area. The Fiordland crested penguin is a truly rare sighting (as are whales), but Mother Nature always has surprises up her sleeve.

After the cruise, we explore Fiordland wilderness on foot again, with a hike to Key Summit on a section of the famous 20-mile (32 km) Routeburn Track. This hike is more physical due to the steep and quick elevation gain. On this tramping track we're bound to see New Zealand's notoriously cheeky and hyper intelligent alpine parrot, the kea parrot.

After this exhilarating out and back tramp, we head out of Milford Sound to spend our last night on the shores of Lake Te Anau.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Matai Lodge, Te Anau

The Hike

2 miles (3.4 km) or 3–4 hours, with an elevation gain of 1,246 feet (380 m)

Travel

1.5 hours (driving), 1.5 hour (boat cruise)



Day 9 | Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail

A Mobile Lesson on Native Plants

After an early breakfast, we drive back through Queenstown and head north, cutting through the tussock-country of Lindis Pass to Lake Pukaki. Here, we stretch our legs on a flat, beginner-friendly section of the well-groomed Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail around the alpine lake with views across to the startling Aoraki Mount Cook.

On this ride we learn more about the native plants of this area from a Maori perspective—the trail is dotted with the brilliant yellow blooms of the Kowhai (it's a popular one with the endemic Tui

birds), flax and tussocks. The trail then slices through farmland across the Mackenzie Country basin before we muscle our way back to Twizel and bike straight to our accommodation!

For our last two nights we have stunning views that stretch like open arms across the Southern Alps. We'll be sleeping in the cloak of the Aoraki Mackenzie International Dark Sky Reserve!

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Mackenzie Country Hotel

The Bike

15 miles (24 km) or 2–3 hours

Travel

2.5 hours of driving



Day 10 | Hike the Cloud Piercer

Touch the Sky

Mount Cook is known as Aoraki or 'Cloud Piercer' by South Island Maori. It's the highest mountain in New Zealand with 23 peaks over 9,843 feet (3,000 m). We strike off on a stunning but challenging hike to the main ridge above Mueller Glacier through the Sealey Tarns and along Mueller Ridge to the famed Mueller Hut.

Weather conditions in this area are typical of an alpine climate and notorious for sudden shifts. We can always opt for the Mueller Glacier hike or a flatter (but still impressive) hike up to a glacial lake (complete with icebergs!) at the base of the Hooker Glacier.

After a good grind, we visit the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre at the Hermitage Hotel. This gallery tribute to one of the world's greatest explorers also houses the world's southernmost digital dome planetarium.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Mackenzie Country Hotel

The Hike

Mueller Ridge Hike: 4.4 miles (7.2 km) or 5–6 hours, with an elevation gain of 3,200 feet (975 m)

Hooker Glacier Hike: 5.6 miles (9 km) or 3–4 hours, with an elevation gain of 328 feet (100 m)



Day 11 | Christchurch

Christchurch Chillout

After breakfast, we make our way to Christchurch (a four-hour drive). We will have lunch en route before checking in at the Scenic Hotel Cotswold. If our group is interested, we can stop at a salmon breeding farm and opt for hyper local fish on the “barbie” tonight.

We have a free afternoon to poke around Christchurch. We can see the blooms of the Botanic Gardens, take a punt down the River Avon, ride the vintage tram or take a gondola ride with startling views of Pegasus Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Just a reminder: this is your last chance to try Jaffas, pineapple lumps and hokey pokey (vanilla-flavored ice cream with small lumps of honeycomb toffee dispersed throughout it).

Later, we’ll swap pics, stories and laughs tonight over our last celebratory dinner together.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Scenic Hotel Cotswold

Travel

4 hours of driving



Day 12 | Christchurch

Departure

Invigorated and inspired from the South Island hikes, paddles and pedals, it's time to unwind on the flight home. You may book flights out of Christchurch International Airport (CHC) at any time today. The hotel staff can help arrange a taxi transfer to the airport (not included).

Hug your Wild Women crew tight and figure out when and where you'll hike together again!

Included Meals

Breakfast



Trip Details

Know Before You Go

For all of the logistical details you'll need to know prior to departure—including the packing list, arrival and departure details and suggested tipping information, click [HERE](#).

Itinerary version as of April 9, 2024.