Four Corner's Ultimate Discovery

27 days | starts/finishes in Christchurch

The Four Corners is an active hiking tour that combines the 11 day Northern Beaches & Sounds Tour and the 14 day Southern Lakes and Mountains Tour to create an extensive vacation of the whole South Island, with plenty of time for exploration and relaxation along the way. Between the two tours you have a 3 night break in garden city of Christchurch. This tour is THE tour for people who have plenty of time, and are seeking an exceptional guided hiking trip that covers all the best places in the South Island.

Day 1 Christchurch – Kaikoura
We start the trip off with a walk [2.5hrs; Grade 2] on Christchurch's Port Hills, offering great views of the coast and mountainous isle to the north. Departing the city we head north over the vast Canterbury Plains. After a picnic lunch we continue up the rugged eastern coast to the seaside town of Kaikoura. Explore the local crafts and cafes, and enjoy a short afternoon walk [1.5hrs; Grade 1] around the peninsula looking out for the resident New Zealand fur seals on the rocks below and the dolphins and whales in the waters beyond. Relax over dinner at our secluded accommodation. (L/D)

Day 2 Kaikoura - Marlborough Sounds
Leaving Kaikoura we continue up the coast to the premier wine-growing region of Marlborough. A wine-tasting stop gives you the chance to sample world-renowned Sauvignon Blanc. We make our way by water taxi to a quiet, secluded bay in the Marlborough Sounds and spend the next two nights at a lodge in the sounds close by the Queen Charlotte Walkway. A selection of unguided walks are available this afternoon, including a hike up to a viewpoint offering stunning views of the sounds [4hrs; Grade 2]. (B/L/D)

Day 3 Marlborough Sounds
Today you can relax and enjoy the stunning Marlborough Sounds. You have several unguided walking options including hiking part of the Queen Charlotte walkway. This excellent walk [4-5 hrs; Grade 2] gently meanders through regenerating native forest around the top of the numerous bays, occasionally dropping in to a secluded bay. There may also be kayaking and fishing trip options, or you may wish to simply relax, take in the views and write postcards. (B/L/D)

Day 4 Marlborough Sounds - Golden Bay
Leaving the sounds we make our way to sunny Tasman Bay, through the delightful city of Nelson. We then drive on to Golden Bay, one of the most beautiful regions in the country with its lovely sandy beaches and secluded coves fringed by native forest, and best of all, few people. We stay at our accommodation base here for 3 nights while we explore the area. (B/L/D)

Day 5 Abel Tasman National Park
Today you have the opportunity to hike unguided on one of the most beautiful sections of the famed coastal trail in the Abel Tasman National Park [5hrs; Grade 2]. From native forest, secluded coves and sandy white beaches, it doesn't get much better than this! Shorter Grade 1&2 walk options are also possible. Alternatively, explore the lovely golden beaches and secluded bays on an optional guided sea kayaking. Eat out at a local restaurant. (B/L)

Day 6 Farewell Spit
Enjoy exploring the remote northern tip of the South Island. Hike [1-3hrs; Grade 2] along the spectacular coastline, or take an optional nature tour to Farewell Spit, the longest natural sandbar in the world. Do an optional horse trek on Cape Farewell, or simply take time out to

Tour Map

Grade

Tour Details

Tour Price: $9,500
Single supplement: $1,830
Deposit: $1,000

What's included? See bottom of page.

Departure Dates:

Oct 24 – Nov 19, 2011
Feb 3 – 29, 2012
Mar 3 – 29, 2012

Tours outside these dates are run on demand for groups of 8+ people and can be customised to suit your requirements.

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relax on the beach and write postcards. Enjoy a short walk [Grade 1] beside the crystal clear waters of Pupu Springs. Golden Bay features numerous artists in residence and quirky cafes that we will also have time to explore. Eat out at a local restaurant. (B)

Day 7 Golden Bay - Nelson Lakes
We leave Golden Bay and head inland over Takaka Hill to the Nelson Lakes National Park. In the afternoon relax beside beautiful Lake Rotoiti or take a gentle hike [2hrs; Grade 1] along its shores in the native beech forest. We stay in log chalets near the lake for the next two nights. (B/L/D)

Day 8 Nelson Lakes
Spend the day exploring the park. Hike [4hrs; Grade 2] through the beech forest and discover the hidden bays of Lake Rotoiti, or venture beyond for a hike [5hrs; Grade 3] up Mt Robert, for stunning views of the surrounding peaks and the lake below. Alternatively, try your hand at fishing on the lake or in the trout filled rivers, or simply relax by the lake. Eat out at a local restaurant. (B/L)

Day 9 Nelson Lakes – Cape Foulwind
We head toward the west coast along the mighty Buller River. Continuing up the beautiful palm fringed coast, we spend the afternoon hiking [3hrs; Grade 1] along an old mining railway line through lush rainforest. Our accommodation this evening is on a beautiful stretch of coastline (much nicer than the name suggests!). We eat out at a colourful local pub. (B/L/D)

Day 10 Cape Foulwind - Punakaiki
Enjoy a leisurely walk [1.5hrs; Grade 1] along the coast to view a New Zealand fur seal colony at play. We then continue along the wild coastal road to the enthralling village of Punakaiki, perched between the wild coast and the rainforest clad limestone cliffs of the Paparoa National Park. Hike [3hrs; Grade 1] beside (or canoe up) the beautiful Pororari River, dwarfed by towering limestone cliffs and gently weaving through the lush tropical rainforest. (B/L/D)

Day 11 Punakaiki - Christchurch
This morning we view the blowholes of the famous Pancake Rocks. Continuing down the spectacular coast road, we enjoy a walk [1.5hrs; Grade 1] through forest and coastal flax bushes before heading to Greymouth. Sit back and relax for the last leg of our journey, the drive over the spectacular Arthur's Pass, stopping for an alpine walk [1hr; Grade 2] to stretch our legs on the way back to Christchurch. Alternatively opt to take the TranzAlpine train across the Pass to Canterbury, acclaimed as one of the best alpine train journeys in the world. We arrive in Christchurch at approximately 5pm. (B/L)

Day 12 & 13 Christchurch
These two days are free days for you to have a break between the tours and take some time to explore the city of Christchurch. Explore the many shops, restaurants, parks and local sights that this lovely city has to offer. Your meals and accommodation on these two days are not provided, although we are happy to organise you accommodation in a central city B&B on your behalf.

Day 14 Christchurch – Aoraki/Mt Cook
We depart Christchurch and head south over the Canterbury Plains to Lake Tekapo. This surreal lake is a terrific aqua blue colour due to the presence of glacial rock flour in the water, and is most striking against the yellow and brown hues of the surrounding hills of the Mackenzie Basin. We enjoy this stunning vista with a gentle hike [3hrs; Grade 2] up to a viewpoint providing a tremendous 360 degree view of the lake and Alps beyond. Our drive continues along the scenic canal system to Lake Pukaki where the imposing peak of Aoraki/Mt Cook can be seen in the distance. We spend the next two evenings in a B&B lodge on a high country station, with a million dollar view of Aoraki/Mt Cook. (L/D)

Day 15 Aoraki/Mt Cook
Spend the day in the awe inspiring Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park. Hike up to the Sealy Tarns [3.5hrs; Grade 3+] for mind-boggling views of the surrounding mountains, or alternatively do a gentle hike up the Hooker Valley to a glacial lake [4hrs; Grade 2]. Options for the remainder of the day include visiting the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Museum; a boat tour on the glacier lake at the foot of the Tasman Glacier; horse riding in the high country terrain; or if you're up for it, take a stunning scenic helicopter flight round the many peaks of the park. (B/L/D)

Day 16 Aoraki/Mt Cook - Clyde
We make our way over the Lindis Pass and into the dry region of Central Otago. Walk along a ridgeline that takes us through alpine herb fields, great schist rock tors and gold mining relics that afford magnificent views of the basin below [3hrs; Grade 2]. Alternatively walk beside the Clutha River under the restful willow trees where, during the 1860's, gold rush miners would have abound [3hrs; Grade 1]. We stay at a beautifully restored historic hotel in the old gold mining precinct of Clyde, and eat out at a local restaurant. (B/L)

Testimonials

"This is the last day of our 'Four Corners' tour. What a fantastic adventure it was. It is difficult to choose a favourite place, but the Abel Tasman was awesome. The Milford Sound after rain was magical, we have never seen anything like it. Many thanks to our guides – you looked so well after us and cooked yummy meals. We had a great time, it was so much fun. Your country is beautiful. All the best to PureTrails and all the guides, We will certainly recommend you to our friends."

Mickey & Fritz Clauer, Canada, Nov/Dec 08

"In all my years of travelling around the world, particularly in small groups, I can honestly say that PureTrails produced the best tour I have ever had the good fortune to go on. The quality of the guides, the excellent local accommodation and the thoroughly well-thought through itineraries made this an experience I will treasure for years. Thank you Sue and Hilary - you're an example to other tour companies on how these things should be done!"
Paul Latham, UK, Nov 06

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Day 17 Clyde - The Catlins
Travel down the Clutha River valley into the remote Catlins area, at the southern tip of the island. The Catlins is a special place with its beautiful forests, waterfalls and wildlife, yet it remains largely 'non-touristy'. First up, we visit a seal colony on a battered rocky point with great views of the South Pacific Ocean and beyond. Explore the picture-perfect waterfalls nestled amongst the lush virgin native podocarp forest, the vast sweeping white beaches, and hidden lakes with several shorter walks [Grade 1]. We make our way to our accommodation near Curio Bay, home of an incredible petrified forest that is visible at low tide - the original floor of the Jurassic forest, dating back some 160 million years. The very rare Yellow Eyed Penguins are resident in this bay, and we may be lucky enough to see the birds arriving back from a days fishing at sea in the late afternoon. Hector's dolphins, one of the smallest dolphin's in the world, are also resident in the bay. (B/L/D)

Day 18 The Catlins – Stewart Island
We head down the coast to the port town of Bluff where we catch the ferry over to Stewart Island, arriving on the island for lunch. Stewart Island lies 30km south of the South Island. It has a population of around 400 people, and only 20km of roads. It is our newest National Park, covering 157,000 hectares, or around 85% of the island. The quaint and friendly village of Oban is our base as we explore the island. In the afternoon your guides take you on a guided walk through the village and along a lovely coastal track with great views into Patterson's Inlet [2hrs; Grade 2]. Our giant forest parrot, the Kaka, abounds in this area. Then at twilight we take a locally guided tour out to an area where our rare and endangered kiwi are known to feed in the evening – this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to see kiwi in the natural habitat – something that most New Zealanders have never seen. (B/L/D)

Day 19 Stewart Island
Today we have left the options open to you to fill in as you please. Enjoy an unguided day walk in the Rakiura National Park, exploring the beautiful forest and coastline [Grade 1-2]. Alternatively take a tour to a wildlife sanctuary island; fly to the remote western side of the island and do a challenging 5-6 hour walk back; go sea kayaking or out on a boat fishing. In the evening we catch up on the day's adventures at one of the local restaurants. (B)

Day 20 Stewart Island – Te Anau
We take the ferry back to the mainland and drive inland to Fiordland and Lake Manapouri, one of the prettiest and deepest lakes in the country, flanked by high mountain ranges and fringed with native beech forest. After a picnic lunch by the lake, we do a superb hike through the cool cover of the beech forest with springy leaf litter underfoot on the Kepler Track, one of our country's 'Great Walks' [2hrs; Grade 2]. We continue a short distance to our accommodation in the sleepy town of Te Anau. (B/L/D)

Day 21 Te Anau – Milford Sound
Today we take the time to explore the amazing Milford Road on the way into Milford Sound, stopping to admire some of the many small lakes and viewpoints along the way. We do a lovely walk into the Hollyford River Valley [3hrs; Grade 1]. In the evening when most of the tourists have departed for the day, we board our vessel which takes us out into the sound. Seals, penguins, dolphins and an array of birds are commonly seen as dusk falls, as we spend the evening on board the vessel, the MV Wanderer. There is the option of sea kayaking in the sound to appreciate the nature at a closer level. (B/L/D)

Day 22 Milford Sound – Arrowtown
Disembarking from our overnight cruise, we make our way to the lovely quiet village of Arrowtown, via the famous Kawarau Suspension Bridge to view Queenstown's most famous pursuit – the bungy jump, where any adventure vacation junkies are invited to make a jump! We spend the next two evenings in a lovely cottage a stones throw from Arrowtown's restaurants and cafes. (B/D)

Day 23 Arrowtown/Queenstown
Today you can explore the area at your own pace. Arrowtown is a mere 20 minutes from Queenstown and there is the option of visiting the hustle and bustle of the 'adrenalin capital of the world' for the day. There are many adventure activities at hand to invigorate the body and soul such as mountain biking, horse riding, and paragliding to name but a few. Alternatively you can relax in idyllic Arrowtown where there are plenty of cafes and shops to keep you occupied, or even some pleasant hiking trails. (B)

Day 24 Arrowtown – Haast
We tackle the spectacular Crown Range road and head into the beautiful lakeside town of Wanaka. After a quick chance to explore and a latte, we continue to the mystical Haast Pass where you can stretch your legs and walk the final few kilometres to the top on the old bridle path [2hrs; Grade 2]. This trail follows a crystal clear stream through mountain beech forest, and the area is a habitat for our rare Mohua bird (yellowhead), which often can be heard singing high in the canopy as we walk. We continue in the bus on to one of the country's most remote towns, Haast, nestled by the roaring sea in the World Heritage Park. In the afternoon we experience one of New Zealand's greatest inventions, a jet boat ride. This exhilarating ride takes us up a remote and beautiful river as our guide provides us with

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excellent information about the local area whilst negotiating rapids and submerged logs. (B/L/D)

Day 25 Haast – Franz Josef
We do a short walk [Grade 1] to explore a rugged driftwood strewn beach at the forest edge on our way up the coast to the mighty glaciers. At Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers, remarkable in that they snake right down into temperate rain forest, you can opt to do the additional activities of a guided walk on the ice [Grade 3], or perhaps a helihike where you explore the upper reaches of the glacier after first viewing the river of ice from a helicopter. Alternatively, we can take you on a hike to the terminal face of the glacier [2hrs; Grade 1], or around a forest fringed lake offering unparallel photo opportunities on a clear day [2hrs; Grade 1]. We stay in the alpine village of Franz Josef. (B/L/D)

Day 26 Franz Josef – Hokitika
We visit a tiny seaside settlement of Okarito. Here we do a boat tour that takes us deep into the Okarito Lagoon, a huge unmodified wetland full of birds including the elusive Kotuku or White Heron, where we learn about the amazing history of the area and appreciate the large variety of wading birds. On clear days the view of the Southern Alps from the across the lagoon are second to none. In the afternoon we enjoy a walk [3hrs; Grade 2] in the hills behind the village, featuring more great views. We then head up the coast to our final stopover of Hokitika. Eat out at a local restaurant. (B/L)

Day 27 Hokitika – Christchurch
We explore the town of Hokitika and visit a pounamu (greenstone) workshop where we learn about the history and significance of pounamu to Maori from this region and indeed the whole of the country. Then we drive over the spectacular Arthur's Pass, stopping for a short walk through mountain beech forest, alpine tussock and herbfields, [2hrs; Grade 2] to stretch our legs on the way back to Christchurch and the end of the tour. We will be back in Christchurch by approximately 5 pm. (B/L)

Included in the tour package:

All prices are in New Zealand dollars and include GST of 15%. The fare includes just about everything including: 23 nights accommodation; 16 evening meals, 21 lunches, 23 breakfasts and plenty of healthy snacks in between [as indicated on the itinerary]; 2 guides; a twilight kiwi watching tour on Stewart Island; a Milford Sound overnight cruise and kayak; a West Coast jetboat ride; an Okarito Lagoon boat tour; water taxi transfers; and all transport and guided hikes.

Not included in the tour price are 7 evening meals; 4 lunches; wine and beer (you are welcome to BYO); your food and accommodation whilst in Christchurch; and any other adventure activities you would like to do along the way. We have indicated just some of the options in the itinerary, but the possibilities are endless!

Level of Difficulty:

Grade 1
Walks on well formed walking trails or beaches with a mostly even surface, possibly with some slopes or steps. Distances walked average 5 - 10km, with a 50-150m altitude gain. For this grade we recommend an average level of fitness.

Grade 2
Walks on well formed walking trails with some slopes or steps. There may be muddy patches, tree roots and rocks to negotiate. Distances walked average 5 - 12km, with a 150-400m altitude gain. For this grade we recommend an average level of fitness.

Grade 3
Walks on walking trails with some steep slopes or steps. There may be muddy patches, tree roots, minor stream crossings and rocks to negotiate. Distances walked average 5 - 12km, with a 300-650m altitude gain. For this grade we recommend an above average level of fitness.

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