



Northern Beaches & Sounds Explorer

11 days | starts/finishes in Christchurch

This tour explores the mid to northern-most regions of the South Island. It encompasses four of New Zealand's National Parks – the Abel Tasman National Park, the Nelson Lakes National Park, the Paparoa National Park, and the Arthur's Pass National Park. We visit the seaside community of Kaikoura in a beautiful location nestled between the ocean and the mountains. The area is renowned for its abundance of sea creatures including whales, seals, dolphins and the amazing albatross. The Marlborough region features a warm sunny climate and takes us through New Zealand's premier vineyard region famous for its uniquely flavoursome sauvignon blanc wines. We spend two days in the Marlborough Sounds taking in the beautiful bays, inlets and walking trails.

The quiet relaxing Golden Bay gives us access to the northern section of the famous Abel Tasman track with its white sandy beaches and hidden coves; and the fascinating Farewell Spit area, the most northern aspect of the South Island. In the Nelson Lakes National Park, where rugged mountains fall away into ancient glacial lakes, we stay in the heart of the park for two nights. We take in the highlights of the contrasting wild west coast nestled between the Tasman Sea, and dramatic limestone cliffs and lush tropical rain forest. We visit the well known pancake rocks at Punakaiki in the heart of Paparoa National Park.

This tour is designed to allow you to experience the best features of these regions with their uniquely different characteristics. We enjoy a range of hikes along the way, some of which are unguided, which immerse you in the landscapes, giving you a real feel for the unique features of each region. The relaxed pace provides you with the opportunity for a great holiday – we are proud to share this region of New Zealand with you.

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)

Tour Map



Grade



Tour Details

Tour Price: \$4,400
Single supplement: \$750

Deposit: \$500
What's included? See bottom of page.

Departure Dates:

Oct 24 – Nov 3, 2011
Feb 3 – 13, 2012
Mar 3 – 13, 2012

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

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 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)

Included in the tour package:

All prices are in New Zealand dollars and include New Zealand Goods & Services Tax of 15%. The fare covers just about everything: 10 nights accommodation; 7 evening meals, 10 lunches, 10 breakfasts and plenty of healthy snacks in between (as indicated on the itinerary); 2 fantastic, friendly guides; water taxi transfers; and all transport and guided hikes.

Not included in the tour price are 3 evening meals, 1 lunch, wine and beer (you are welcome to BYO) and any other adventure activities you would like to do along the way, such as a sea kayaking. We have indicated just some of the options in the itinerary, but the possibilities are endless!

Testimonials

"We had one of the best holidays with you and we especially loved our time in Christchurch. We are so sorry for the terrible losses in that beautiful city. We look forward to returning some day."
Angela Braniff, Feb 11

"I thoroughly enjoyed the tour. It was well planned and Sue was very capable and considerate"
Jan 11

"Lovely part of the world and we saw the best of it through the tour."
Jan 11

"To Sue & Sue, What a wonderful trip we've had. One that's met and surpassed all our expectations. The outstanding walks - the coastal views, the forest trees and ferns, all were superb. Not to be forgotten are the gourmet meals, the picnic lunches, which together with a very comfortable bus, made for a pleasant journey."
Melbourne Women's Walking Club, Australia, Mar 08

"Everything exceeded my expectations, even the weather. The two Sue's were wonderful, always cheerful and friendly. It would be hard to find 2 with talents in so many areas, driving, cooking, an endless list of their capabilities. The walking program was so varied, all so enjoyable. Accommodation excellent."
Margaret Stahel, Australia, Feb 07

"I have nothing but praise for the Sue duo who conducted a superb trip. I had the best time with the best people and thoroughly enjoyed every minute."
Richard Wendon, UK, Feb 07

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.