



Southern Lakes & Mountains Explorer

14 days | starts/finishes in Christchurch

This tour covers the mid and southern region of the South Island. It encompasses the stunning natural beauty of five of our National Parks - Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, Fiordland National Park, Westland Tai Poutini National Park, Rakiura/ Stewart Island National Park and Arthur's Pass National Park. The South West region of New Zealand is also a World Heritage site recognised internationally for its outstanding natural features taking us back millions of years to the ice age and our links with Gondwanaland, the ancient super continent. We visit the historic and beautiful central Otago region, exploring the landscapes of Clyde and Alexandra, Queenstown and Arrowtown. Also included in our itinerary is the relatively un-explored but beautiful Catlins region in the south west.

This tour is designed to allow you to experience the best features of these regions with their great variation in terrain and vegetation. We enjoy a range of hikes along the way, which immerse you in the landscapes giving you a real feel for the unique features of each region. We include some extra activities which we feel will enhance your experience, including a nature cruise on Milford Sound, a night kiwi spotting adventure on Stewart Island, and a nature boat tour on a west coast lagoon. We try to keep the trip flexible, so there are many other optional activities that you may be interested in such as a scenic flight or a guided walk on the ice at Fox Glacier. The Southern Lakes and Mountains is an excellent trip, showcasing the grandeur of much of the South Island.

Day 1 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 2 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 3 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 abounded [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)

Day 4 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

Tour Map



Grade



Tour Details

Tour Price: \$5,450
Single supplement: \$975

Deposit: \$500

What's included? See bottom of page.

Departure Dates:

Oct 30 – Nov 12, 2012
Dec 3 – 16, 2012
Jan 6 – 19, 2013
Feb 12 – 25, 2013
Apr 9 – 22, 2013

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

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 5 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 6 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 7 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 8 Milford Sound

We head to Milford early and enjoy a nature cruise on this magnificent sound. Seals, penguins, dolphins and an array of birds are commonly seen and your nature guide is on hand to provide interesting commentary. Following the cruise we head into the depths of Fiordland and do a lovely walk in the beech forest into the Hollyford River Valley [4hrs; Grade 1]. In the late afternoon on the way back to Te Anau we take the time to explore the amazing Milford Road, stopping to admire some of the many small lakes and viewpoints along the way. (B/L)

Day 9 Te Anau – Arrowtown

This morning we enjoy another stunning walk in paradise – a lovely lakeside walk that takes us up to a viewpoint offering fantastic views of Lake Manapouri and the distant Kepler Mountains [4hrs; Grade 2]. We then 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/L/D)

Day 10 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 'adrenaline 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 11 Arrowtown – Fox Glacier

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 on to the coast and do a short walk [Grade 1] to explore a rugged driftwood strewn beach at the forest edge. Another drive takes us further north to our accommodation in the town of Fox Glacier. (B/L/D)

Testimonials

"This tour was superb in every way imaginable and richly deserves the coveted "Super Star" status. First of all, the country is extraordinarily beautiful in all its natural varieties. Even the few drops of rain we experienced added a unique quality to the light of our photography. PureTrails is obviously a quality organisation and their organisation always met or exceeded our expectations. Without question the real super stars of the tour were Robin & Heather. They skilfully kept a highly diverse group of people together and happy. They made the trip more enjoyable than any reasonable expectations. They shared thought and courage and grace after the earthquake that most of us could not have shown. They are exceptional people who are positive ambassadors of their company, their country and of humanity in general. Thank you!"
Don & Marti Burrows, USA, Feb 11

"As a first time walker/tramper this was a new challenge for me. I must admit I was a little nervous. It took no time for me to realise I was in good hands and I have enjoyed this wonderful experience lead by Heather & Robin. What a team!! They are both professional and caring. Nothing is too much trouble. It was amazing to see how quickly Heather could produce an 'excellent' meal for 10 in such a short time. A great trip with new friendships formed. Thanks so much."
Faye Robinson, Australia, Feb 11

"Thank you for our amazing NZ experiences. We really appreciated all the efforts of our wonderful guides, Heather and Robin, and everyone else who made our 'Southern Lakes and Mountains' trip so exceptional. We hope to return to NZ to enjoy another of your trips. In the meantime we recommend PureTrails to anyone who will listen!"
Rochelle & Barry Tocher, Canada, Feb 11

"I really enjoyed the whole trip even though everyone else was an Aussie! They were all great fun. I like the fact that the guides are the same age group as the clients and I think the tour was very well planned and thought out."
Dian McWilliam, UK, Nov 10

"The past two weeks have been a hugely enjoyable experience; essentially in being introduced to such a diverse and beautiful country but specifically in the manner this has been done - tramping in the care of dedicated, knowledgeable and friendly guides Heather & Robin. Thank you Pure Trails."
Peter Davidson Smith, UK, Dec 08

Day 12 Fox Glacier – Franz Josef

This morning we have several great walk options to explore the Westland wilderness and glaciers. Hike to the terminal face of the glacier [2hrs; Grade 1], or around a forest fringed lake offering unparalleled photo opportunities on a clear day [2hrs; Grade 1]. Or 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. After lunch we drive over the hill to the village of Franz Josef. There are other short walk opportunities here, or you can visit a hot pool complex nestled within the rainforest for a relaxing soak in the tranquil pools. (B/L/D)

Day 13 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 14 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: 13 nights accommodation; 8 evening meals, 12 lunches, 13 breakfasts and plenty of healthy snacks in between [as indicated on the itinerary]; 2 fantastic friendly guides; a Milford Sound nature cruise; a twilight kiwi watching tour on Stewart Island; an Okarito Lagoon boat tour; and all transport and guided hikes.

Not included in the tour price are 5 evening meals; 2 lunches, wine and beer [you are welcome to BYO], 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.

"It's hard to write about how wonderful everything was when we are all feeling a bit sad that it is over. What a wonderful experience in every respect... well maybe excluding the sandflies. And Robin & Heather were superb!"
Eileen & Max Listgarten, USA, Feb 08

"The trip has lived up to all our expectations, and a wonderful opportunity to see NZ from a different perspective. All helped by Robin & Heathers super guiding and excellent food/good driving. We will be back again - Cheers."
Jan & David, UK, Feb 08