

Trip Dossier

15 Day New Zealand South Island Wildlife & Wilderness Expedition



Accommodated Small Group Tour - Max 12 passengers Queenstown to Queenstown 12 - 26 February 2022

Itinerary Highlights:

- Kawarau Gorge, Lake Dunstan - home to many species of water birds.
- Lake Ohau - explore the Hopkins River.
- Aoraki Mt Cook National Park - spectacular views of New Zealand's highest mountain with Lake Pukaki in the forefront. Visit Tasman glacier lake.
- Hooker Valley - walk to the terminal lake of the Hooker Glacier.
- Otago Peninsula - Royal Albatross nesting site and home to fur seals.
- Orokonui Eco Sanctuary - the largest predator-free forest on the South Island,
- Catlins Coast - little visited coastal area with a variety of seals and sea lions, unspoiled temperate rainforest and waterfalls.
- Stewart Island - cruise for pelagic birds, including several species of Albatross, Cape Petrels, Shearwaters and Prions.
- Ulva Island - a bird sanctuary with unspoilt New Zealand bush.
- Mt Aspiring National Park, Matukituki River Valley.
- Mou Wahou - a pristine island cleared of predators. Take a short walk up to the summit for spectacular views.

Most New Zealand tours only visit the popular highlights while we take you further to remote areas away from the crowds.

You will see spectacular high peaks, massive glaciers, glacial lakes with floating icebergs and wild alpine plants on the valley floor at Mt Cook National Park.

We visit the pristine Nothofagus beech forests of the Ohau and Mt Aspiring regions, home to many New Zealand's native birds such as the Tomtit, Bellbird, Rifleman, South Island Robin and Tui. Your naturalist guide knows the places to search for endangered birds such as the Yellowhead, Black Stilt, Wrybill and New Zealand Falcon.

On the Otago coast, we will be looking for NZ fur seals and endangered Hooker's Sea Lions that have returned here to breed. The Catlins coast is captivating and comprises the last stands of the east coast temperate rainforest home to many bird species. On past tours in Stewart Island, NZ's newest national park, we have seen endangered birds such as Kaka, Saddleback, Yellowhead and Red-Crowned Parakeet.

We finish the tour with three nights in Wanaka, where we will take a private boat cruise to the remote and pristine Mou Waho Island. A guided walk to the top of the island exposes a hidden lake on the summit, the perfect spot for an unforgettable view of the surrounding wilderness.

Your guide, Martin Curtis, is a well known New Zealand wildlife enthusiast, adventurer, mountaineer guide and folk singer. Martin lives in this part of the South Island and knows its natural history better than most. He loves sharing his "back yard" with our guests.



Itinerary

Day 1 Sat 12 Feb Home Port to Queenstown

Today you'll arrive in Queenstown and check in to your accommodation. Your hotel is right on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, with beautiful views of The Remarkables mountain range. Meet your guides and fellow passengers in the hotel restaurant at 7:00 pm for dinner.

Accommodation: Kamana Hotel D

Day 2 Sun 13 Feb Drive to Lake Ohau

We leave Queenstown and drive through the picturesque Kawarau Gorge, to Cromwell, followed by a drive along the shores of the man-made Lake Dunstan, which is home to many species of waterbird. We cross the Lindis Pass and turn off into the isolated and beautiful Ahuriri Valley for lunch, and will have a couple of hours to search for the elusive unique wrybill and the endangered black stilt. We then continue north past Omarama, looking at a couple of exciting places on the way, before turning off into the little-visited Hopkins Valley and Lake Ohau Lodge on the banks of the beautiful lake.

Accommodation: Lake Ohau Lodge BLD

Day 3 Mon 14 Feb Lake Ohau

Lake Ohau area is relatively unvisited by tourists. We will spend the whole day exploring the Hopkins River Valley north of Lake Ohau and the Temple Valley, where we will go for a walk on the track that ascends gently beside the North Temple River through pristine Nothofagus beech forest. We are not likely to meet anyone else in this delightful alpine valley, as we view many native birds along the track. In the late afternoon, we return to Lake Ohau Lodge to enjoy great food and superb views from the outdoor spa.

Accommodation: Lake Ohau Lodge BLD

Day 4 Tue 15 Feb Lake Ohau to Mount Cook

After breakfast, we head back out to the highway across the McKenzie plain and head north a short way until we reach the turn off into the Tasman valley, the entrance to the Aoraki Mt Cook National Park. Given fine weather, we will have spectacular views of New Zealand's highest mountain, which stands sentinel at the head of the valley, with the distinctive blue-coloured Lake Pukaki in front of it. The colour comes from the rock flour, brought down from the Tasman glacier. We'll stop on the way up to look for the rare black stilt. We then continue to the spectacular Mt Cook village, where massive hanging glaciers tower above us. After lunch, we visit the Tasman Glacier Lake, now growing at an alarming rate. We will also spend some time around the village to search for NZ's iconic mountain parrot, the kea, which is now seriously endangered.

Accommodation: Mount Cook Chalets BLD

Day 5 Wed 16 Feb Mount Cook

This morning we will go on a beautiful walk up the Hooker Valley, crossing over several swing bridges and up to the terminal lake of the Hooker Glacier, where we should see icebergs that have calved floating in the lake. New Zealand's highest mountain Aoraki / Mt Cook, is right in front of us here. We will see many unique NZ alpine plants on the way. The walk is on a formed gravel track and takes about 3-4 hours to return. We will then have more time in the Mt Cook area to do other walks and continue our search for the kea. We can also visit the National Park visitor centre, which has impressive displays about the surrounding area, botany, geology, and New Zealand mountaineering history.

Accommodation: Mount Cook Chalets BLD

Day 6 Thur 17 Feb Mount Cook to Dunedin

After breakfast, we leave Mount Cook and head down the Waitaki Valley past several dams and man-made hydro lakes, then through an area of strange limestone outcrops and on to the east coast. On our way south on Highway One, we will turn off to a couple of good coastal vantage points to look for seabirds and seals before arriving in the scenic 'Scottish' city of Dunedin.

Accommodation: Leviathan Heritage Hotel BLD

Day 7 Fri 18 Feb Dunedin

We drive out to the Otago Peninsula today, which is world-famous for its diverse wildlife. We visit the Royal Albatross nesting site at Taiaroa Head, also home to many other birds and fur seals. We will then go to the Orokonui Ecosanctuary, the largest predator-free forest on the South Island, providing safe habitat and conservation of endangered wildlife. After lunch, we spend a couple of hours walking on the tracks through the podocarp forest and observing the many birdlife species in their natural habitat.

Accommodation: Leviathan Heritage Hotel BLD

Day 8 Sat 19 Feb Dunedin to Balclutha

A short two-hour drive takes us to the Catlins coast and the rugged headland of Nugget Point, home to many seals and seabirds. We'll then drive a quick way south for a beach walk at Surat Bay to look for the endangered Hooker's Sea Lion. Along with the coastal areas, the region boasts the last unspoiled temperate rainforest on the east coast of the South Island, where we take a bushwalk through the forest.

Accommodation: Balclutha BLD

Day 9 Sun 20 Feb Balclutha to Stewart Island

Today we maintain our drive south, stopping for short walks to different viewpoints, including MacLean Falls, which at 22 metres are perhaps the best falls in the Southland region.

We continue around this rarely visited coastal area before eventually reaching the southern city of Invercargill and the small port of Bluff, where we park the bus for three days and board the evening ferry across the Foveaux Strait to Stewart Island. On the way, we hope to see albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters that roam the Southern Ocean. We will stay at the island's only pub, the basic but iconic South Sea Hotel on the shores of Halfmoon Bay.

Accommodation: South Sea Hotel BLD

Day 10 Mon 21 Feb Stewart Island

We take a boat trip to see pelagic birds with a local wildlife expert. We'll sail out to a group of islands to see many birds that traverse the Southern Ocean, including several species of albatross, Cape Petrels, shearwaters and prions. For the other half of the day, you may choose to take an enjoyable two-hour walk along the coastline and through the native bush. (NOTE: The two days on Stewart Island may be switched around depending on weather conditions and the availability of the pelagic boat trip).

Accommodation: South Sea Hotel BLD

Day 11 Tue 22 Feb Stewart Island

A short trip this morning by water taxi will take us to Ulva Island, a bird sanctuary in the middle of Patersons Inlet. We will see the New Zealand bush as it was before humans arrived - full of native birds so tame that they will hop onto your boots and pack. We should see endangered species such as the Kaka, Saddleback, Weka, Mohua (Yellowhead) and perhaps even a Kiwi.

Accommodation: South Sea Hotel BLD

Day 12 Wed 23 Feb Stewart Island to Wanaka

After an early breakfast, we board the ferry back to Bluff, collect the bus, and drive three hours towards Queenstown. We can visit several places of interest around the area, including Lake Hayes, where there is a large population of ducks, grebes and swans. Another option is the old gold-mining town of Arrowtown, which dates back to the 1860s. Finally, we have a one hour drive over the spectacular Crown Range (NZ's highest public road) to the beautiful alpine town of Wanaka, situated on the shores of the pristine Lake Wanaka.

Accommodation: Lake Wanaka Hotel BLD

Day 13 Thur 24 Feb Mt Aspiring National Park

The world heritage listed Aspiring National Park is regarded as the most pristine and untouched national park in New Zealand.

We drive up to the spectacular Matukituki River Valley in the national park to enjoy the natural scenery and sense of wilderness, before continuing to the roads end at Raspberry Creek while exploring the area along the way. We should get back to Wanaka in the late afternoon.

Accommodation: Lake Wanaka Hotel

BLD

Day 14 Fri 25 Feb Lake Wanaka

We have several options for the morning in this lovely lake-side town, including a visit to the outlet where the lake becomes the Clutha River, NZ's most significant river by volume. After lunch, we will take a boat trip with a local eco-guide up the lake to the unique island of Mou Wahou. The island has been cleared of predators and was extensively replanted with native bush, encouraging the return of its birdlife and natural fauna, including the cheeky Buff Weka, who will be waiting for us at the landing stage. We'll take a short walk up to the island's summit, to a small lake and magnificent views of the surrounding mountains.

Accommodation: Lake Wanaka Hotel

BLD

Day 15 Sat 26 Feb Wanaka to Queenstown

Your New Zealand wildlife and wilderness experiences come to an end this morning.

Your group transfer to Queenstown Airport will depart from the hotel after check out at around 10.00 am. It is about a one and a half hour drive to the airport and we will arrive at approximately 11.30 am. B

Although this is not a walking tour, some walking is necessary to get to the places where the flora and fauna are at their best.

This itinerary is subject to change due to weather or sea conditions.



Tour Costs

Cost: \$6,775.00 Per Person Twin Share
\$1,375.00 Single Supplement
(only a limited number of single rooms available)

Departs: Queenstown 12 February 2022

Finishes: Queenstown 26 February 2022

Tour Payments

Deposit: At time of booking \$1,000.00 per person

Final Payment: On or before 12 January 2022

Note: The \$1,000.00 deposit is non refundable and the final payment is non-refundable after the 12 January 2022.

Travel insurance covering all payments is strongly recommended.

Prices are based on all known costs and current rates of exchange.

Any significant changes beyond our control will be passed on to passengers.

Included

- Coates tour leader/driver;
- Specialist wildlife/botanical guide;
- Land content as set out in the itinerary;
- Accommodation and breakfast, lunch and dinner as shown in the itinerary;
- All national park entrance fees;
- Entrance fee for the Royal Albatross nesting site at Taiaroa Head;
- Ferry (Stewart Island),

Not Included

- Return airfares, airline and airport taxes from home port to New Zealand;
- Airport transfer on arrival in Queenstown;
- Travel insurance (strongly recommended);
- All other private expenses;
- Alcoholic or carbonated drinks;
- Pre and post tour accommodation.

Special Offers

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Save 5% per person on the second and subsequent tours if more than one tour is booked in the same year. Applies to the cheaper tours.

Loyalty Program

Save \$100 per person on your second, third and fourth tour. Save \$150 per person when you have travelled on 5 or more tours. Tours must be operated by Coates Wildlife Tours.

Tour Information

New Zealand Naturalist Guide: Martin Curtis
Coates Leader/ Driver Guide: TBD

Flights:

The tour starts and ends in Queenstown. The airfare is not included in the tour price. You can book your flights online, or your travel agent will be able to arrange this for you.

Please make sure that you are in Queenstown on or before 12 February in time to meet your guides and fellow passengers at 7.00 pm for dinner.

When you book your departure flight from Queenstown on the 6th March, please allow enough time to travel from Wanaka, which is about one and a half hours. The group transfer to Queenstown Airport will depart from the hotel after check out at around 10.00 am and should arrive at the airport at approximately 11.30 am.

Once you have made your bookings, please send us a copy of your flight itinerary.

Pre & post Tour Accommodation:

The tour includes your accommodation in Queenstown on 26 February. Please contact us if you would like to spend extra days either before or after the tour.

Passport:

Australian residents will require a valid passport with at least three-month validity.

If you do not hold an Australian Passport, please contact the office to advise your requirements.

Travel Insurance:

I strongly recommend that travel insurance be taken out to cover the entire time that you will be travelling. We use Cove-More Travel Insurance and offer our passengers a 10% discount. Please let me know if you would like a quote.

Vehicles:

Coaster bus and ferry.

Accommodation:

Hotels and lodges. We chose our properties for their location, quality and either their historical or general interest features. Accommodation is on a twin share basis. Single rooms are usually available at all the properties.

Meals:

All meals as shown on the itinerary are included (B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner). We can cater for special dietary requirements with prior notice. Please contact the office if you have special dietary needs as a surcharge may apply. Note: trail mix or any other snacks required during the walks are at passengers own expense.

Trek Grading:

Moderate with some steep inclines and many steps in some places. N/B All walks are optional.

Weather:

Summer in New Zealand is from December to February, and average temperatures on the South Island range from 10 - 22 degrees Celsius. The weather can change unexpectedly as cold fronts blow in. So be prepared for sudden changes in climate and temperatures. There is also the risk of rain

Clothing:

A suggested list of items to pack will be included in your pre-departure information which is sent to you about one month before departure. However, we recommend that you pack comfortable casual clothing. Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes are essential.

For detailed **Terms and Conditions** please visit the FAQ page on our website.

To make a booking or further information please contact

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