



Coates Wildlife Tours

*Specialist in Nature Tours since 1986*

## Trip Dossier

### 15-Day New Zealand South Island Wildlife & Wilderness Expedition

Small Group Tour - Max 12 Passengers

Nelson - Dunedin 31 January - 14 February 2024



Tucked away in the southern rim of the Pacific, Aotearoa (New Zealand), is a land with beautiful and refreshing nature. In Te Wai Pounamu, the South Island, morning may be greeted high in majestic mountain valleys, viewing giant buttercups and 'vegetable sheep'; the afternoon may be spent on the sea, watching gliding albatrosses and porpoising fur seals. One day you may be viewing a pod of Dusky Dolphins and the next, you will be hiking in the sub-antarctic rain forest. It's a diverse, ever-changing land full of natural spectacles to be enjoyed, challenged, or held in awe.

In particular, this programme takes you away from the population centres and the tourist 'honey pots' to study and enjoy the lesser-known but equally spectacular parts of New Zealand.

Travel is by comfortable small coach equipped with an excellent botanical and nature reference library. Accommodation is in pleasant hotels and motor lodges with private facilities.

### Itinerary Highlights:

- Explore Mount Arthur in Kahurangi National Park, a marble region with a wide diversity of upland and sub-alpine species
- Cape Farewell - discover the dramatic coastline and seabird restoration project undertaken here
- Enjoy short walks in the tranquil beech forest and the beautiful alpine lakes of Rotoiti and Rotoroa
- Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway - observe seals and seabirds, and enjoy clifftop views of the sea and mountains
- Whale watching cruise to view Sperm Whales, albatrosses (4-5 species), petrels and shearwaters just meters from the boat.
- Walk the dramatic Mueller Ridge with spectacular views of the southern Alps, Aoraki/Mt Cook and Mt Sefton
- Fiordland World Heritage Area - walking amidst the Borland Saddle region's lush beech forests and sub-alpine tussock lands
- Discover this botanical treasure trove in the Darran Mountains
- Take an optional cruise of Milford Sound
- Rakiura Stewart Island - primarily wilderness and home to Kakas and South Island Brown Kiwi
- Predator-free Ulva Island - search for many South Island forest birds
- Taiaroa Head - known for harbouring the only mainland albatross-nesting colony in the world, also look for Yellow-eyed Penguins, the Otago Shag and the endemic Hooker's Sea Lion



## Itinerary

### Day 1      Wed 31 Jan      Arrive Nelson

Arrive in Nelson today and make your way to your accommodation to check in. Meet your guides and fellow passengers at the hotel in the late afternoon.

Accommodation:      Hotel Nelson      D

### Day 2      Thu 1 Feb      Nelson - Kahurangi National Park - Takaka

A day excursion to nearby Mount Arthur, a marble region with a wide diversity of upland and sub-alpine species. The Graham Valley provides the easiest access to the newly formed Kahurangi National Park. Enjoy relaxing or more taxing walks (up to 4 hours) into the Mount Arthur region and the surrounding tablelands.

Mid-afternoon continues to Takaka in Mohua, Golden Bay.

Accommodation:      Mohua Motels      BLD

### Day 3      Fri 2 Feb      Takaka - Cape Farewell - Kaituna Valley - Takaka

The far western edge of Golden Bay holds hidden treasures that will enthral us today. We will discover the dramatic coastline and seabird restoration project undertaken at Cape Farewell, and you can continue and walk the cliffs and seascapes that await at Wharariki. Later we'll drive south to the Whanganui Inlet before walking the western end of the Kaituna Track as far as Knuckle Peak.

Accommodation:      Mohua Motels      BLD

### Day 4      Sat 3 Feb      Takaka - St Arnaud

Continue through to St Arnaud this morning. The beautiful lakes Rotoiti and Rotoroa are nestled amongst the northern peaks of the Southern Alps. Later, enjoy short walks in this enchanting forest, or take a half hike onto Mt Robert for stunning vistas overlooking the lake and sub-alpine flora.

Accommodation:      Alpine Lodge      BLD

### Day 5      Sun 4 Feb      St Arnaud - Kaikoura Coast

This morning will see us heading south down the east coast to Kaikoura, with stop-offs for fur seals and stunning coastal landscapes. The focus for the afternoon is a delightful hike around the coast on the Kaikoura Peninsula.

Accommodation:      Gateway Motor Lodge      BLD

### Day 6      Mon 5 Feb      Kaikoura Coast

Kaikoura is a breathtaking place where snow-capped mountains reach down to a turquoise sea. The continental shelf drops abruptly very close to shore, resulting in the upwelling of nutrients from the sea's depths attracting rich and abundant marine life. This morning we will join a whale-watching excursion for Sperm Whales; also an excellent opportunity for bird lovers and generalists to see albatrosses (4-5 species), petrels and shearwaters just meters from the boat. The afternoon and evening are spent at your leisure.

Accommodation:      Gateway Motor Lodge      B

### Day 7      Tue 6 Feb      Kaikoura Coast - Mackenzie Basin

This morning we depart Kaikoura and travel south to cross the Canterbury Plains and over Burkes Pass. As we wind through the foothills, with snow-capped mountains in the background, we'll overlook the vivid turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo and other large glacial lakes. There will be time to take an optional flight over Mount Cook National Park, flying over the highest peaks and glaciers of the Southern Alps, before continuing to the Mackenzie basin and our accommodation in Twizel.

Accommodation:      Mackenzie Country Hotel, Twizel      BLD

**Day 8            Wed 7 Feb            Mackenzie Basin - Aoraki/Mount Cook NP - Mackenzie Basin**

A day to explore the renowned Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. At the foot of Aoraki/Mt Cook lies the spectacular Hooker Valley.

The dramatic Mueller Ridge hike awaits today with stunning views of the southern Alps, Aoraki/Mt Cook and Mt Sefton. Alternatively, the walk along the trail enables us to study the changes in vegetation on successive moraines as the Hooker then Mueller Glaciers are reached. Giant Mt Cook buttercups, golden Spaniards and sub-alpine shrubs abound amidst unforgettable landscapes. Mid-afternoon, we return to Twizel.

Accommodation:            Mackenzie Country Hotel, Twizel            BLD

**Day 9            Thu 8 Feb            Mackenzie Basin - Central Otago**

Leave Mackenzie Basin and cross into Central Otago with its rocky, rugged landscapes. This area is a schist plateau, now appearing as a series of block mountain ranges. Lodged amid the silvery schist vegetation of the Old Man Range are many species of cushion plants and snowbank vegetation unique to this type of extreme climate. The Lilliputian world of the plants on top of this range starkly contrasts the grandeur and vastness of the surrounding mountains. We will stay in Alexandra tonight.

Accommodation:            Avenue Motel, Alexandra            BLD

**Day 10           Fri 9 Feb            Central Otago - Fiordland World Heritage Area**

This morning we travel to the Fiordland World Heritage Area, which encompasses New Zealand's largest national park, Fiordland National Park. Glacially gouged valleys and lakes nestled between range upon range of mountains characterise the landscape. We spend the afternoon walking amidst the Borland Saddle region's lush beech forests and sub-alpine tussock lands.

Accommodation:            Aaron Court Motels, Lake Te Anau            BLD

**Day 11           Sat 10 Feb            Fiordland National Park & Milford Sound**

The upper Hollyford Valley, which the famed Milford Road passes through, contains superb boulders and herb fields. The Gertrude Cirque has arguably the finest accessible alpine communities in the country. The day is devoted to discovering this botanical treasure trove in the Darran Mountains at your own pace on a 2-mile hike into the valley. Studying nature in such awe-inspiring surroundings is guaranteed to put all in perspective. Early afternoon, descend to sea level at Milford Sound. There will be time for a cruise to the fjord entrance before we return early evening to Lake Te Anau.

Accommodation:            Aaron Court Motels, Lake Te Anau            BLD

**Day 12           Sun 11 Feb            Fiordland World Heritage Area - Stewart Island**

Today we travel south to the Catlins region. We stop in the fascinating Tautuku Basin and Estuary, now the location for a cornerstone conservation project run by Forest & Bird (NZ's largest conservation organisation). Species protection and intensive pest control centre on the Society's largest reserve, the Lenz Reserve. Later, we'll board a ferry to New Zealand's "even more south island", Rakiura Stewart Island. This island contains New Zealand's most recent national park and is primarily wilderness, with few roads around the one community of Oban. Kakas are bold and inquisitive here and will likely be waiting for us on the porch of our hotel. We'll end the day with an optional evening trip to view South Island Brown Kiwi.

Accommodation:            South Seas Hotel Oban            BLD

**Day 13           Mon 12 Feb            Stewart Island - Ulva Island - Stewart Island**

This morning we will land on predator-free Ulva Island and spend time searching for many South Island forest birds such as Weka, Kaka, Yellow- and Red-crowned kakariki, tieke, South Island Saddleback, Mohua, and Pipipi. In the afternoon, we will enjoy local walks around the village.

Accommodation:            South Seas Hotel Oban \*see Tour Information, Accommodation.            BLD



**Day 14            Tue 13 Feb            Stewart Island - Dunedin**

Today we head back to the South Island and travel via the eastern coastline. Dunedin is situated on a spectacular indented harbour and peninsula. Taiaroa Head is famous for harbouring the only mainland albatross-nesting colony in the world; the giant Northern Royal Albatross have been nesting here specially protected for several decades. These are truly giant birds—the world’s largest flying birds—and are absolutely immense, with a three-meter wingspan. Nesting nearby is the superb Yellow-eyed Penguin, a threatened species unlike any other penguin in the world. Sadly, the population has dramatically declined here in recent years, so we will need some luck for a sighting. The third special bird is the Otago Shag, a recent split out of the Stewart Island Shag. There is also a good chance to encounter the endemic Hooker’s Sea Lion.

Accommodation:            Distinction Leisure Lodge Dunedin            BLD

**Day 15            Wed 14 Feb            Depart Dunedin**

Alas, we must depart this grand and rugged corner of New Zealand. The trip ends late this morning with a group transfer to Dunedin Airport, with international connections, or head north to Auckland and join the Coates North Island tour.

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*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 Cost

Cost: \$ 8,565.00 Per Person Twin Share  
\$ 1,300.00 Single Supplement

Departs: Nelson 31 January 2024

Finishes: Dunedin 14 February 2024

## Tour Payments

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

Final Payment: On or before 31 December 2023

Note: The \$1,000.00 deposit is non-refundable, and the final payment is non-refundable after 31 December 2023.

Travel insurance covering all payments is VERY 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 local wildlife/botanical guide;
- Land content as set out in the itinerary;
- Accommodation and breakfast, lunch and dinner as shown in the itinerary;
- All entrance fees for activities set out in itinerary unless stated as optional;
- Kiwi Excursions (Stewart Island);
- Boat excursions (Kaikoura, Otago Harbour, Milford Sounds, Stewart Island, Ulva Island);
- Stewart Island ferry;
- Goods and Services Tax.

## Not Included

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



## Tour Information

### New Zealand Naturalist Guide: Lynette Hartley

Lynette has been involved professionally in ecology and conservation in New Zealand for well over 25 years. She is passionate about our native ecosystems and knowledgeable about the issues they face from introduced predators. Lynette's PhD looked at native birds, and their interactions with the poisons used to battle introduced pests. Lynette has always enjoyed sharing her enthusiasm for New Zealand and its scenery with visitors. She spends a lot of her spare time in the New Zealand outdoors and is actively involved in the reforestation and restoration of the urban reserve adjacent to her house in Christchurch. Lynette's enthusiasm for the natural world extends to drawing and painting New Zealand wildlife. Her work can be seen at <http://www.lynettehartleydesign.co.nz/>

After stints working with the Department of Conservation and the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, Lynette has guided since 2018.

Coates Leader Guide: TBA

### Flights:

The tour starts in Nelson and ends in Dunedin. 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 ensure you are in Nelson on or before 31 January to meet your guides and fellow passengers at 7.00 pm for dinner.

The group transfer to Dunedin Airport will depart from the hotel after check out at around 10.00 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 Nelson on 31 January. Please contact us if you want to spend extra days 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 or your travel agent to advise your requirements.

### Travel Insurance:

We **strongly recommend** that travel insurance be taken out to cover the entire time you travel.

### Vehicles:

Coaster bus and ferry.

### Accommodation:

Hotels and motor lodges. Properties are chosen for location, quality, and historical or general interest features. Accommodation is on a twin-share basis with private facilities. Single rooms are usually available at the properties (will require a single supplement). \* N/B Accommodation on Stewart Island is a mix of motel studios, Beach House and two units at Kaka Retreat.

### Meals:

The itinerary includes all meals (B = breakfast, L = lunch and D = dinner). We can cater for special dietary requirements with prior notice. Please get in touch with 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 the passenger's 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, sent to you about one month before departure. However, we recommend that you pack comfortable casual clothing. Sturdy and comfortable enclosed 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:

Coates Wildlife Tours

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