



Rotorua



Hobbiton

SUPER NATURAL NEW ZEALAND

March 12, 2024 – 23 Days

An in-depth discovery of the North and South Islands

New Zealand consists of 2 major islands and about 600 smaller ones. The largest city is Auckland with 1.6 million people, and the second largest is Wellington. Otherwise, most of the country is rural. This leisurely tour has enough time for a comprehensive visit to the North and South Islands. We fly to Auckland and home from Queenstown via Auckland. Highlights on the North Island are a cruise in the Bay of Islands, the geysers of Rotorua, Waitomo Glow-worm Cave, the Hobbiton Movie Set, the Te Papa National Museum, and the beautiful capital of Wellington. The South Island is more rugged with high peaks, glaciers, and splendid coastlines. Highlights are the International Antarctic Centre, Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre, Mount Cook, a Zodiac trip among the icebergs of Tasman Lake, Moeraki Boulders, Royal Albatross Centre, Larnach Castle, and Milford Sound. Some wonderful hotels are featured including the renowned Hermitage. Come with Wells Gray Tours for an amazing itinerary around New Zealand!

Activity Level: 2



TOUR
25

45 Meals Included:

20 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 16 dinners

Fares per person:

\$16,610 double/twin; \$19,325 single

Tour is exempt from GST.

Experience Points:

Earn 271 points on this tour.

Redeem 271 points if you book by December 5, 2023.

Departures from: Lower Mainland



ITINERARY

Day 1: Tuesday, March 12

Meet the other Wells Gray travellers at Vancouver Airport in late afternoon. Our non-stop flight to Auckland departs in the evening and flight time is 14 hours.

Day 2: Wednesday, March 13

We cross the International Date Line, regaining this day on our return.

Day 3: Thursday, March 14

Welcome to New Zealand! After clearing Customs in Auckland, we are met by our local driver and guide. Home to more than 1.6 million people, **Auckland** is the largest urban area in New Zealand and has the largest concentration of Polynesian people in the world. We drive into the city, then board Fullers Ferry and cruise through Auckland's harbour and Hauraki Gulf to the island suburb of Devonport. This afternoon, we visit the **Maritime Museum** to discover New Zealand's seafaring story. Through different themed galleries, explore how the first Polynesians got here, experience the hardships that European settlers faced, try your hand at yacht design, relax in a kiwi style bach, test your sea legs, and batten down the hatches in the rocking cabin. We return to the city by coach over the Harbour Bridge. The next two nights are in downtown Auckland. Meet your fellow travellers during a welcome dinner.

Meals included: Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Grand Millennium Hotel

Day 4: Friday, March 15

This morning, we take the ferry to **Waiheke Island** and enjoy its gorgeous sandy beaches and walking trails along the cliff top. Next is **Stonyridge Winery** where we take a tour and savour some wine tastings with lunch.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Grand Millennium Hotel

Day 5: Saturday, March 16

Leaving Auckland, we head north to Matakohē and visit the amazing Kauri Museum, dedicated to the **gigantic Kauri tree**. It produces resins such as kauri gum, Manila copal, and dammar gum, and the wood is used for yacht hulls, guitars, and ukuleles. We see Tāne Mahuta, New Zealand's

largest Kauri tree which is about 2,000 years old, 45 metres tall, and 15.5 metres around. At Parkia Lookout, we admire the panoramic view stretching from the Tasman Sea through the 30-km long **Hokianga Harbour**.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: The Heads Hokianga Hotel

Day 6: Sunday, March 17

We drive across the North Island, only 70 km wide, to the **Bay of Islands**, a stunning region consisting of 144 islands abundant in natural beauty and marine life. Waitangi is considered the birthplace of New Zealand where the **Treaty of Waitangi** was signed in 1840 by the Māori Chiefs and the British Crown. The village of Kerikeri was the site of a colonial settlement in 1819 by the missionary Samuel Marsden, and we visit two of New Zealand's oldest buildings, Kemp House (1821) and Stone Store (1832). We stay for two nights in Paihia at Kingsgate Hotel which has a beautiful waterfront location. Tonight, we take a dinner cruise up the **Waitangi River** as far as Haruru Falls.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Kingsgate Hotel, Paihia

Day 7: Monday, March 18

We take a four-hour cruise in the Bay of Islands, watching for dolphins, whales, and other marine life. The excursion passes the Cape Brett Lighthouse with a stop at iconic **Hole in the Rock**. We get off at the old town of Russell and have a walking tour, then lunch at the Duke of Marlborough



Hotel which has been serving guests since 1827. Later, there is a tour of Pompallier House, once a printer's office, and the original 1842 press has been restored. A ferry takes us back to Paihia.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Kingsgate Hotel, Paihia

Day 8: Tuesday, March 19

Our first stop is **Whangarei Falls** where the Hatea River drops 26 metres. Lunch is in the quaint village of Matakana. After passing through Auckland, we continue south to the Waikato region. New Zealand's dairy industry is centred here, and education and dairy research have turned **Hamilton** into its fourth largest city. We enjoy a leisurely stroll through the beautifully-designed Hamilton Gardens.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Hamilton

Day 9: Wednesday, March 20

We visit the **Waitomo Glow-worm Cave**. This tiny luminescent creature is unique to New Zealand, creating a magical feel to the subterranean wonderland. We admire shawl-like limestone formations, crystal tapestries, and thousands of pinpoint lights overhead, while floating through the dark caverns. This region is best known as the filming locations for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and the **Hobbiton Movie Set** is a must-see for fans of the movies. Enjoy a guided walk past Hobbit holes and Hobbit homes with filming scenes explained by the guides. Lunch is included at Hobbiton. We continue to the thermal wonderland of **Rotorua** and stay three nights.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Millennium Hotel, Rotorua

Day 10: Thursday, March 21

Rotorua is renowned for its geothermal wonders. We start by exploring **Wai-o-tapu** and its champagne pool, primrose terrace, and the Lady Knox Geyser. Then we visit the Agrodome for an exhibition of 19 breeds of sheep. Witness a live **sheep shearing demonstration**, a fun sheep auction with bidding from the floor, and the amazing ability of farm dogs to respond to commands and keep the sheep in line. You can even feed the baby lambs or hand-milk a cow! Later we tour the **National Kiwi Centre** and see kiwi eggs being

incubated, the hatching process, and newly hatched kiwi chicks. Tonight is a memorable event at the **Mitai Maori Cultural Experience**. There is an introduction to Māori customs and traditions, followed by an authentic Hangi meal that is cooked in an earth oven. The performance includes songs, dances, legends, displays of weaponry and combat, the grace and beauty of the poi dance, and the spine-tingling haka finale.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Millennium Hotel, Rotorua



Day 11: Friday, March 22

This afternoon, we are guests at **Whakarewarewa**, The Living Māori Village. For over 200 years, the Tuhourangi/Ngati Wahiao tribe has welcomed visitors, opening doors to their way of life, and sharing the geothermal treasures. The guides are direct descendants of the early Māori and share their insights, knowledge, and legendary hospitality. The marvels of Rotorua continue as we watch an eruption of **Pōhutu Geyser**, then visit the Spa Complex at Hells Gate to enjoy a **mud bath**. The Māori acclaimed the therapeutic benefits of the water and bathed for centuries in these thermal pools. After some rest time at the hotel, we board gondolas for the ride to the top of **Mount Ngongotaha** and an awesome view over the Rotorua Valley with dinner in the Stratosfare Restaurant.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Millennium Hotel, Rotorua

Day 12: Saturday, March 23

We head south from Rotorua to Huka Falls where the Waikato River leaves giant Lake Taupo and hurtles through a narrow chasm. In **Napier**, we stop at a panoramic lookout encompassing

Hawkes Bay and Cape Kidnappers, and see many Art Deco buildings including one suburb with stylish, lovingly maintained buildings.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Te Panier, Napier

Day 13: Sunday, March 24

Pukaha National Wildlife Centre is home to conservation breeding programs for many of New Zealand's most endangered wildlife such as kiwi, pāteke, whio, takahē, kōkako, kākā, and tuturu-atu. Kiwi can be viewed in the nocturnal kiwi house aviary. We continue to Wellington, New Zealand's capital city, for a two-night stay.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Rydges Hotel, Wellington

Day 14: Monday, March 25

The day is devoted to touring **Wellington**. We start with a ride up the funicular railway from downtown onto one of the high hills that divide the city. There is a panoramic view from Mount Victoria. We also visit the Parliament Buildings, the Beehive, the Botanical Gardens, and Old St. Paul's Cathedral. Next is the amazing **Te Papa National Museum** and a guided tour visits its highlights. There are exhibits about the natural environment, vitality of Maori culture, art heritage, and history, and the original Treaty of Waitangi document can be viewed. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Doubletree Hotel, Wellington

Day 15: Tuesday, March 26

We fly to **Christchurch**. Welcome to the South Island. This is the oldest city in New Zealand, dating to 1856. Our tour includes its best-known sights - the University district, Mona Vale Gardens, Hagley Park, and the Botanical Gardens. At the **International Antarctic Centre**, we have an insight into life in Antarctica - the coldest, windiest, driest, and most remote place on earth. See a volunteer dressed in extreme clothing, taste Antarctic food, meet penguins, watch the movie *Beyond the Frozen Sunset*, and ride an Antarctic all-terrain vehicle. At **Quake City Museum**, we hear stories about the devastating earthquake of 2011 and learn about seismic events.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Distinction Hotel, Christchurch

Day 16: Wednesday, March 27

Before leaving Christchurch, we go **punting** on the placid Avon River. Then we head west across the Canterbury Plains, ascending into the spectacular Southern Alps. We stop at the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Collie Dog statue at Lake Tekapo, and drive along the shore of Lake Pukaki to reach **Mount Cook**, New Zealand's highest peak at 3,764 metres. We stay two nights at the renowned Hermitage Hotel which offers awesome views of Mount Cook. The **Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre** is at the hotel, and you have an unlimited entry pass for the Planetarium, 3D movie *Mount Cook Magic*, and Hillary Museum. Savour dinner in the Alpine Restaurant where huge windows overlook Mount Cook.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Mount Cook

Day 17: Thursday, March 28

Another day of magnificent mountain scenery! We take a **Zodiac excursion on Tasman Lake**, skirting floating icebergs, to reach the icy 50-metre high face of the Tasman Glacier. This lake has been steadily growing as the glacier has retreated over the last 30 years. The glacier is now 23 km long and up to 600 metres deep. The afternoon is free time to explore the vistas near the Hermitage. You may wish to book a helicopter excursion to fly closer to Mount Cook.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Mt. Cook



Day 18: Friday, March 29

Leaving the mountains, we drive to the east coast and the city of Oamaru which is full of 19th century architecture. Nearby are the **Moeraki Boulders** which are unusually large and spherical rocks lying along a stretch of Koekohe Beach on the wave-cut Otago coast. Port Chalmers is a long inlet from the east coast and at its head is the city of **Dunedin** which has played an important role in New Zealand's history. Long inhabited by Māori, the discovery of gold inland from Dunedin in 1861 transformed the area into the new colony's main commercial centre. We stroll through the **Dunedin Chinese Garden** which is the only authentic Chinese Scholar's Garden in the Southern Hemisphere and is a permanent reminder of the city's Chinese heritage. Tonight, we take a tour of Speight's Brewery with six samples and dinner at the Ale House.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel, Dunedin

Day 19: Saturday, March 30

This morning, we visit the **Royal Albatross Centre** at Tairoa Head where we learn about this remarkable bird and see nesting albatross in their natural habitat. Next, we go to **Nature's Wonders Wildlife Centre**, travelling on an 8-wheel drive, all-terrain vehicle for an exhilarating cross-country tour. We visit a breeding colony of cormorants (spotted shag) and a colony of New Zealand fur seals and their pups basking on the rocks, then a beach-front ride takes us to a group of blue penguins and possibly a sighting of the rare and shy yellow-eyed penguin. Then we tour **Larnach**



Castle, built in 1874, with panoramic views of the Otago Peninsula and exquisite gardens.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel, Dunedin



Day 20: Sunday, March 31

We drive to the foot of the mountains at Wanaka and visit **Puzzling World** which offers a mix of bizarre buildings, rooms of illusion, and the Great Maze. Next, we stroll through Wanaka Lavender Farm with 20 acres of beautiful lavender fields and display gardens. At Queenstown, we board a jetboat for a thrilling ride on the **Shotover River**. Speed past rocky outcrops, skim around boulders, zip through dramatic canyons, and hold on tight during a 360° spin. (Life jacket and full-length spray coat are supplied.) Tonight, ride the **Skyline Gondola** to the top of Bob's Peak and enjoy dinner with a breathtaking view of Coronet Park, Lake Wakatipu, and Queenstown.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Millennium Hotel, Queenstown

Day 21: Monday, April 1

The Road to Milford is the awesome drive from Queenstown, along Lake Te Anau, and through the Southern Alps to **Milford Sound**, one of the iconic attractions of New Zealand. These high peaks and fjords have been protected in **Fiordland National Park**, the largest of 13 federal parks, and Milford Sound with Mitre Peak is one of the most famous vistas in New Zealand. We take a cruise in Milford Sound with a stunning backdrop of sheer cliffs and cascading waterfalls.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Millennium Hotel, Queenstown



Day 22: Tuesday, April 2

We board the *TSS Earnslaw* for a 1½ hour cruise on **Lake Wakatipu**. It is believed to be the oldest working coal-fired passenger steamship in the Southern Hemisphere. Nearby is the restored village of Arrowtown which boomed in 1862 during the Otago gold rush. In mid-afternoon, we fly from Queenstown to Auckland on Air New

Zealand. In downtown Auckland, we ride the fast elevators up the **Sky Tower**. At 328 metres, it is the tallest tower in the Southern Hemisphere and offers unparalleled coast to coast views from four observation decks. Are you brave enough to stand on the glass floor and photograph your feet and the big drop below? Our farewell dinner is atop the tower in **Orbit 360°** which revolves once an hour.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Grand Millennium Hotel

Day 23: Wednesday, April 3

This is a day of leisure. The hotel has an excellent downtown location if you wish to do any more shopping. A transfer is provided to Auckland Airport, then at 8 pm our flight leaves for Vancouver. We cross the International Date Line and arrive at noon on the same date.

Meals included: Breakfast

AOTEAROA

Since the first people arrived in Aotearoa, the Maori name for New Zealand, a thousand years ago, many cultures have made it their home. The country has a unique and dynamic culture, with European, Maori, Pacific, and Asian influences. New Zealand's awesome landscapes, lush forests, amazing wildlife, and pleasant climate make it a haven for many outdoor activities and a great place to unwind. The islands offer everything from snowy peaks and ancient glaciers to smoking active volcanoes and intriguing thermal activity; from crystal clear lakes to the surging Pacific Coast surf, from verdant rainforests to desert-like plains. New Zealand society is diverse, sophisticated, and multicultural, and the honesty, friendliness and openness of Kiwis will impress you. A great advantage of New Zealand is that all its diverse physical and artistic landscapes are so close to each other!



Activity Level 2: Due to the historic nature of some attractions and the nature walks looking for birds and animals, it will be necessary to climb stairs, walk on uneven surfaces, and walk at least a kilometre, plus stand for an extended time on walking tours. This tour is not appropriate for people who require the use of a walker. Some days are long or have early departures. There can be long walks in the airports. The coaches and vessels cannot carry a scooter or motorized wheelchair. There are many stops during this tour and you must be able to get on and off the coach by yourself without delaying your fellow travellers. **Everybody** participating in this tour is expected to be capable of handling Activity Level 2. The tour director, drivers and local guides have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some tour days. In extreme situations, you may be asked to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flight from Vancouver to Auckland
- Current air taxes, fees, and fuel surcharges
- Airline luggage fee for 1 suitcase per person
- 20 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- 20 days coach transportation in New Zealand
- Fullers Ferry to Devonport
- Auckland Maritime Museum
- Ferry to Waiheke Island
- Stonyridge Winery tour and tastings
- Matakohe Kauri Museum
- Tāne Mahuta — “Lord of the Forest”
- Kemp House and Stone Store
- Waitangi River dinner cruise to Haruru Falls
- Bay of Islands cruise with Hole in the Rock
- Pompallier House
- Ferry from Russell to Paihia
- Whangarei Falls
- Hamilton Gardens
- Waitomo Glow-worm Cave
- Tour of the Hobbiton Movie Set
- Wai-o-tapu thermal wonderland
- Agrodome with sheep shearing demonstration
- National Kiwi Centre
- Mitai Maori Cultural Experience with traditional Hangi meal and entertainment
- Pōhutu Geyser
- Whakarewarewa, The Living Māori Village
- Hells Gate Mud Baths at Rotorua
- Skyline Rotorua gondola ride with dinner
- Huka Falls Park
- Napier tour of Art Deco buildings
- Pukaha National Wildlife Centre
- Wellington funicular railway ride
- Wellington sightseeing tour
- Te Papa National Museum of New Zealand
- Flight from Wellington to Christchurch
- Christchurch sightseeing tour
- Botanical Gardens
- International Antarctic Centre with movie *Beyond the Frozen Sunset* and all-terrain vehicle ride
- Quake City Museum
- Avon River punting excursion
- Church of the Good Shepherd
- Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre
- Zodiac trip on Tasman Lake to the glacier
- Moeraki Boulders
- Dunedin Chinese Garden
- Speight’s Brewery Tour with 6 samples
- Royal Albatross Centre
- Nature’s Wonders Wildlife Centre
- Larnach Castle tour
- Puzzling World
- Wanaka Lavender Farm
- Jetboat excursion on Shotover River
- Skyline Gondola at Queenstown
- Milford Sound cruise
- Cruise on Lake Wakatipu
- Historic Arrowtown visit
- Flight from Queenstown to Auckland
- Auckland Sky Tower with dinner in Orbit 360°
- Flight from Auckland to Vancouver
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Gratuities for New Zealand guides and drivers
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **45 meals:** 20 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 16 dinners

TOUR NOTES

Currency & Expenses: The currency in New Zealand is the dollar and, as of February 2023, a Canadian dollar is worth NZ\$1.16. You should order New Zealand dollars from your bank 1-2 weeks before departure, or plan to use ATMs. Credit cards are accepted almost everywhere. Gratuities are included for all group meals and for New Zealand guides and drivers. Tipping is not expected for meals you buy on your own and tax is included on menu prices. Costs for meals you choose yourself are higher than in Canada.

Documentation: A passport is required and must be valid for 3 months after your return date. A Visa is not required for Canadians, but you must obtain a New Zealand Electronic Travel Authority before arrival.

Accommodation is booked in superior hotels in the range of 3 to 5 stars. Hotel costs are similar to those in large Canadian cities, so many travellers would consider them expensive. However, on an extensive holiday like this, you want to be staying in well-located and memorable accommodations.

Tour Notes continued

Beverages: All included meals have complimentary coffee, tea, or water. Wine, beer, or soft drinks can be purchased. Please bring a refillable water bottle for use during the travelling days.

Flight upgrades: Please enquire about current prices for upgrades on the flights between Vancouver and Auckland. Premium economy and business class may be available.

Flight seating: We are unable to take requests for window or aisle seating on the planes. The airline will not accept them, as group seating is assigned as a block. If this is important to you, we suggest you take the "No Flight" option with a fare reduction of \$2,200 and book your own flight which allows seat selection.



This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning the tour is limited to 25 participants, a more intimate travel experience.

TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at time of booking and balance is due December 5, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined. Payments can be made by online banking or cheque (1.5% discount on tour fare), or by Visa or Mastercard (\$5,000 limit per person on credit cards).

Cancellation Policy: Up to November 1, 2023, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From November 2 to December 5, the cancellation charge is \$500 per person. From December 6, 2023 to January 5, 2024, the cancellation charge is 40% of the tour fare. From January 6 to February 5, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After February 5, there is no refund.

Itinerary and Fare Changes: As the world emerges from the pandemic, many of our suppliers such as hotels, restaurants, attractions, and transportation providers are struggling with shortage of staff, inflated costs, and supply line challenges. Sometimes we are notified about changes to the itinerary prior to departure and sometimes during the tour. We do our best to substitute a similar service if something cancels, but occasionally the only alternative is to provide a refund for the missed activity. Please note that if we are forced to cancel a component of an extensive tour due to an issue beyond our control, the current penalties still apply if you choose to cancel the entire tour. Flights cannot be booked until May 2023, so airfares are estimated and could result in the tour fare increasing or decreasing. Fuel surcharges and changes to taxes, foreign currency exchange rate, or other tour costs can occur at any time, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes until departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Food Allergies: You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. Restaurants in remote areas may not be able to satisfy all food allergies. As restaurants recover from two years of pandemic restrictions, many facing severe labour shortages, we have been informed that food allergies should be honoured, but it is impossible to handle everybody's requests for food preferences. (An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not.) For some allergies, please consider bringing or buying your own snacks or food items so you are not dependent on what restaurants are able to serve.

Home pickups are available within Greater Vancouver for an additional charge of \$75 per person round trip. Transfer is to and from YVR. Please request no later than at final payment.

Photo Credits: Tourism New Zealand (Rotorua, Tasman Lake, Milford Sound), Roland Neave (Hobbiton, Bay of Islands, sheep shearing, albatross, Larnach Castle)

Experience Points: This tour earns 271 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until December 5, 2023.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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