

Big Five Presents
New Zealand

New Zealand's two main islands are like fraternal twins with so much in common yet markedly distinct from one another.

New Zealand is known for the drama of its landscapes. North Island possesses natural geysers and thermal springs around Rotorua, the subterranean Glow Worm Caves of Waitomo, and the exquisite Bay of Islands with its miles of deserted beach landscapes dotted with boulders. South Island, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, boasts some of the most impossibly beautiful scenery... rugged mountains, glaciers, fjords and waterfalls. North Island produces fine wool products while South Island is gaining an international reputation for its vineyards. The cities are equally distinctive from the Art Deco city of Napier, to casually elegant Auckland, to the adventurous township of Queenstown. The ancient culture of the indigenous Maoris is found throughout New Zealand. Enchanting cities, wide-ranging adventures and extraordinary panoramas create a kaleidoscope of opportunities that allows each traveler to craft that once-in-a-lifetime journey in this fascinating destination.



Suggested Itinerary

Day 1: Auckland, New Zealand

Auckland enjoys a water-oriented lifestyle, from sailing to whale watching to deep-sea fishing.

Day 2: Auckland

Nicknamed the City of Sails, it has more boat owners than in any other city in the world.

Day 3: Auckland / Taupo

Taupo is on the shore of New Zealand's largest lake with plenty of outdoor adventure options.

Day 4: Taupo / Rotorua

Rotorua is renowned for its melodramatic boiling mud pools and active geysers.

Day 5: Rotorua / Hawkes Bay

Hawkes Bay is known for outdoor activities from bird watching and hiking to fishing and cycling.

Day 6: Hawkes Bay

The area is home to award-winning wineries and Napier is renowned for its Art Deco architecture.

Day 7: Hawkes Bay / Nelson

More than 350 contemporary, traditional and Maori working artists and craftspeople have studios in the Nelson area.

Day 8: Nelson / Abel Tasman National Park

At the top of South Island, Nelson encompasses long beaches, intact forests and rugged mountains.

Day 9: Nelson / Kaikoura

Kaikoura area has been inhabited by Maori for 1,000 years, and is the setting for one of the best Maori cultural tours.

Day 10: Kaikoura

Whale watching is perhaps the best in the world with several species seen offshore with pods of dusky dolphins.

Day 11: Kaikoura / Christchurch / Queenstown

Christchurch is the garden city, known for festivals that encompass the arts, hot-air ballooning and flowers.

Day 12: Queenstown

This area is rich in activities from adrenaline-pumping bungee jumping to more relaxing pursuits like hikes.

Day 13: Queenstown / Milford Sound

This UNESCO World Heritage Site is noted for its incomparable landscapes.

Day 14: Queenstown / Depart

Custom Options

Arthurs Pass (5 days)

In the heart of New Zealand's South Island, Arthur's Pass is the center of the Southern Alps.

Bay Of Islands (3 days)

Dramatic beaches and chiseled islands of the far north of the North Island are gems of extraordinary beauty.

Christchurch (3 days)

Christchurch dates back to 1856, making it the oldest established city in New Zealand.

Glenorchy (4 days)

This splendid landscape is exceptional horseback riding country as well as mountain biking, heli-skiing in winter, kayaking and jet boating on the Dart River.

Homesteads Of New Zealand (3-5 days)

New Zealand's homesteads are nothing short of brilliant, offering history, adventure and superb settings.

Lake Moeraki (5 days)

Spectacular beaches, fur seals, crested penguin colonies, rainforests and pristine rivers make for a raft of adventures.

Marlborough Sounds (4 days)

Picture-book forest scenery, rivers, backcountry, vineyards and year-round sunshine make the region a favorite.

Southern Alps (5 days)

The glacier region of Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers is simply stunning.

Wellington (3 days)

In the midst of rolling hills and a lovely harbor, the capital city is easily walkable with boutique shops, galleries and great restaurants downtown.

About New Zealand

Arthur's Pass: In the heart of New Zealand's South Island, Arthur's Pass climbs to more than 900 meters / 2,953 feet, making it the highest pass across the Southern Alps. It is surrounded by Arthur's Pass National Park. A wide range of adventure activities includes hiking, canoeing, kayaking, wildlife treks and much more.

Auckland: The largest city in New Zealand, it is both cosmopolitan and relaxed. Howick Historical Village reflects life as it was in the mid-1800s. National Maritime Museum, Parnell Colonial Village and Rose Gardens are interesting as well as Town Hall. Great shopping and dining make the city a delicious way to begin any New Zealand adventure.

Bay Of Islands: The North Island's Bay of Islands is regarded as the birthplace of modern New Zealand, since it was here that European settlement first began in 1814. Ninety Mile Beach (actually 88 kilometers / 55 miles) runs west of Kaitiaki towards Cape Reinga along the Aupouri Peninsula. Cape Brett's 1908 lighthouse sees the majestic display of the Tasman Sea clashing with the Pacific Ocean. According to Maori legend, the cape is where the spirits of the dead enter the underworld. The area offers some of the best deep-sea and big-game fishing in the world.

Christchurch: The Maori may have inhabited this area over a millennium ago. In 1840, the first Europeans settled on the plains and Christchurch became a city by Royal Charter in 1856. Today, Christchurch, the garden city, is known for its festivals that encompass arts, hot-air ballooning and flowers. It also boasts fine restaurants, galleries, gardens and shops. The unique International Antarctic Centre is the only attraction where you can experience an Antarctic storm, first hand.

Glenorchy: During the gold rush of the 1860s, miners came to the area seeking their fortunes. Remnants of several mines still exist. But today's travelers come here for the dramatic landscapes and the vast number of adventure activities. Scenic helicopter flights provide a birds-eye view of this breathtaking alpine countryside. Hiking is done along renowned trails such as the Milford Track, often described as "the finest walk in the world." Horseback riding, mountain biking, heli-skiing in winter and kayaking are popular as well as jet boats on the Dart River. Fishing in wild and untouched rivers offers outstanding fly-fishing.



Hawke's Bay: Hawke's Bay has dozens of wineries as well as orchards and olive groves. Year-round events related to food and wine includes the annual Harvest Hawke's Bay in February. Napier experienced a devastating earthquake and fire in 1931, and was rebuilt in the Art Deco-style popular at the time. It represents the most significant group of Art Deco buildings in the world.

Homesteads Of New Zealand: New Zealand excels at being exceptional. Among its many assets are a range of extraordinary homesteads that are nothing short of brilliant. Less than a dozen of these meet Big Five's sustainability standards. They share a profound respect for the land, local culture and their reputations for excellence. Yet each has its own distinctive character. One began as a successful farming operation in the mid-1800s; another is an elegant island retreat accommodating just seven guests; and yet another is ideally located at the edge of a national park. They offer rewarding glimpses of life in New Zealand.

Kaikoura: Once a center for the whaling industry, it offers some of the best whale watching in the world. A variety of species can be seen offshore along with pods of dusky dolphins. There is also a large colony of Southern fur seals at the edge of the town. Bird watchers may catch sight of albatross, petrel and shearwater. The Seaward Kaikoura Mountains is a branch of the Southern Alps that reaches down to the sea. Hiking trails wind through this scenic setting. The area has been inhabited by Maori for 1,000 years, and provides for one of the best Maori cultural tours.

Lake Moeraki: Lake Moeraki rests in the wild heart of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. The area boasts spectacular beaches, fur seals and crested penguins colonies, lowland rainforests, lakes and rivers that drain the Southern Alps.

Marlborough Sounds: The region appears in stories and legends of the indigenous Maori. The famous Captain James Cook favored Marlborough Sounds as a base while charting New Zealand in the 18th century. Marlborough is known for its mussel farms. With forests, trout-filled rivers, rugged backcountry and sheltered bays, it is a favorite for outdoor enthusiasts. There are opportunities for sailing, diving, biking, kayaking and hiking. More leisurely pursuits include vineyard tours and browsing galleries and craft studios. Wildlife includes dolphin, seal and blue penguin.

Milford And Doubtful Sound (Te Anau): The region has achieved UNESCO World Heritage status for its famous landscapes, including Mitre Peak, Milford and Doubtful Sounds and Mount Aspiring National Parks. Doubtful Sound possesses a sheltered serenity that contrasts with Milford Sound. New Zealand fur seal and Fiordland crested penguin inhabit many small islets. Doubtful Sound is also the deepest fiord, with several outstanding waterfalls. It can be explored by kayak, on a cruise, as a day trip or overnight. The hub of the fiord region is the attractive town of Te Anau, nestled on the edge of a lake, with a backdrop of Mt. Luxmore and the Murchison Mountain.

Nelson & Abel Tasman National Park: Sitting at the top northwest corner of South Island, Nelson encompasses superb beaches, unscathed forests and rugged mountains. More than 350 contemporary, traditional and Maori working artists and craftspeople have studios here. The Inland region is notable for its cave systems, and country's

deepest vertical shaft, Harwood's Hole. Te Waikoropupu Springs holds the world record for fresh water clarity. Abel Tasman National Park was founded in 1942. The Tonga Island Marine Reserve adjoins part of the park.

Queenstown: Born during the 1860s gold rush era as a mining camp, Queenstown retains an element of that frontier energy. This is the place for adventure sports – bungee jumping, skiing, snowboarding, white-water rafting, sky diving, hot-air ballooning, hang gliding and mountain biking as well as golf, biking, walking, sailing and fishing.

Rotorua: Rotorua is the remarkable "Thermal City." Te Puia Thermal Reserve and Whakarewarewa Thermal Reserves have boiling mud pools and active geysers. In the area, working farms showcase the talents of working sheep dogs and the variety of sheep that contribute to New Zealand's worldwide reputation for fine wool products. The Waitomo Glow Worm Caves are a stunning underground wonderland, magically lit by glow worms.

Southern Alps (Franz Josef / Greymouth): Haast Pass is the entryway to World Heritage Westland National Park with its dramatic mountain ranges, native forests and lakes. Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers offer rewarding adventures such as optional scenic flights over, or guided walks on one of the glaciers. Greymouth is home to the Tranz Alpine Train, which travels through beech forests and past the village of Arthur's Pass before crossing the Southern Alps.

Taupo: The town sits on the shore of Lake Taupo, New Zealand's largest lake and a trout fishery with stocks of introduced brown and rainbow trout. It is a center of volcanic and geothermal activity and hot springs. The lake was created nearly 2,000 years ago by a volcanic eruption that darkened the skies over Europe and China. The Craters of the Moon has a fascinating geology with geysers, steaming craters and boiling mud pools.

Wellington: New Zealand's capital city is set on the edge of a peaceful harbor surrounded by rolling hills. It is an amiable city with boutique shops, galleries and great restaurants within easy walking distance of downtown. The city on the North Island is bounded on three sides by water. In 1839, the first Europeans settled here. As the nation's capital, Wellington has a rich cultural life that includes Royal New Zealand Ballet, Te Whaea National Dance and Drama Centre and National Portrait Gallery.

Best Time To Go

There is no bad time to visit New Zealand. The Southern Hemisphere's seasons are the opposite of North America. Summer lasts from December to February; spring is September through November; autumn from March to May; and winter is from June through August.

*\$650 - \$2000 per person per day
Land only, double occupancy*

Consider enhancing your adventure by including the following destinations: Australia (p151-156)



