

New Zealand Magic Itinerary

February 25 – March 11, 2017

Note: Some of the activities and hikes may change, depending on weather conditions. To receive more information, email judyshane@aol.com or kentporter@mac.com. Or visit our website <http://www.independenttours.net/newzealand.html> to check for any updates.

Feb. 25 LOS ANGELES or SAN FRANCISCO TO AUCKLAND

Check-in at airport at

Feb. 26 Cross the International Dateline

Feb. 27 ARRIVE AUCKLAND – TRAVEL TO TAUPO

Pass Immigration and Customs, meet our private bus sometime between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. depending on length of time in Immigration and Customs, and take a short bus tour of Auckland before proceeding to Taupo. We'll stop in a shopping area, so you can use an ATM and buy water and snacks.

Please wear clothes and walking/hiking shoes on the plane that are comfortable for hiking and keep a swimsuit in your daypack.

GROUP HIKE: We will have several stops en route to Taupo. One stop will be to the Waipahihi Botanical Reserve to explore numerous trails and become acquainted with native plants, flowers, and trees. <http://www.greatlaketapo.com/things-to-do/outdoors/gardens/>.

We also plan a 2-hour walk to Huka Falls en route to Taupo. If you wish to soak in the river (highly recommended), which runs along the trail to Huka Falls, put your swimsuit on under your hiking clothes when we have a restroom stop near the trailhead. The hot springs and hot waterfalls in the river are guaranteed to sooth your tired muscles. Tevas or hiking shoes will work for this day's activities. Plan to wear water shoes or Tevas in the water because the bottom of the river is rocky. <http://www.hikespeak.com/trails/huka-falls-taupo-nz/>

Hotel Location: Taupo

<http://www.suncourt.nz>

Feb. 28 TAUPO (breakfast at hotel)

GROUP HIKES: We have a 1-hour drive to Rotorua where we will experience a landscape of erupting geysers, hot thermal springs and bubbling mud pools. We will visit the Whakarewarewa Thermal Reserve, a living Maori village. We will learn about the history of Maori settling in New Zealand and experience a Maori haka. After exploring the village, we'll do some short hikes in the reserve. You

may bring your own lunch or buy food in the village. <http://www.whakarewarewa.com>.

Hotel Location: Taupo
<http://www.suncourt.nz>

Mar. 01 TAUPO (breakfast at hotel)

GROUP HIKES: Kinlock to Kawakawa Bay. It's an "out and back" 9 mile hike with a 1760' gain. Depending on the wishes of the hikers, one group may turn around before reaching Kawakawa Bay if they would like a shorter option. That group can hang out in the small village of Kinlock until the other groups return.

Some options you can arrange on your own in Taupo include:

- **Soaking in the thermal hot pools** – You may take a taxi to Taupo Hot Springs located off State Highway 5 (in the direction of Napier – east) just past Kiddle Drive behind the De Brett Thermal Hotel. Bring your swimsuits, towels, and water bottles. You can bring a picnic lunch or dinner and eat on the premises. <http://www.taupodebretts.co.nz/taupo-debretts-hot-springs-pools>
- **Golfing at the Wairakei International Golf Course** – This world famous course is located in a sanctuary for native plants and wildlife and was rated in the top 1,000 world courses in *Golf Digest*. <http://www.wairakeigolfcourse.co.nz>
- **Jet boating on the Waikato River.** <http://www.hukafallsjet.com>
- **Trout fishing.** You can ask about fishing arrangements and purchase a license at the Visitor's Centre when we arrive in Taupo. Fishing is best in the late afternoon. Taupo's Visitor Centre is on Tongariro St. <http://www.greatlaketapu.com/things-to-do/trout-fishing/>

Hotel Location: Taupo
<http://www.suncourt.nz>

Mar. 02 TAUPO – TRAVEL TO WELLINGTON THEN PICTON
(breakfast at hotel in Taupo)

[DRIVE TIME: 5:30 HOURS] Early Start! We have a long travel day today – try and relax into it if you can. If time permits, we will have a short visit of Wellington's Te Papa Museum (Admission is free; you can take a self guided tour; you may pick up city maps at the information desk if you wish to explore Wellington further.) Our bus will park adjacent to the museum to transport us to the ferry building.

Ferry crossing Cook Strait [TIME: 3 HOURS 30 MINUTES], ferry departure at 17:00 (5:00 p.m.)

(NOTE: They sell “fast food” on the ferry, but the selection is limited. You might want to buy snacks and lunch/dinner in Wellington to eat on the ferry. New World Market is across the street from the Te Papa Museum.

Hotel Location: Picton

<http://www.pictonhotel.com>

Mar. 03 **PICTON TO MARUIA** (breakfast at hotel)

GROUP HIKE: We’ll be enjoying the Queen Charlotte Track today, a well-groomed trail in the Marlborough Sounds. There is an elevation gain of 600 feet along the western part of the track, but after just one hour of climbing, we’ll be walking a gradual downhill. We’ll meander through a dense forest dominated by beech with tree ferns and enjoy views of the sea. We will lead an easy 4-hour, 8½-mile hike. Those who wish to join us will take a “water taxi” from our motel to Mistletoe Bay to begin our walk to Anakiwa. If you wish to hike a shorter distance, you can take our bus to the trail end and do an “out and back” walk, starting and ending in Anakiwa. There is a covered picnic area in Anakiwa and also restrooms. After the hike, we’ll head by bus to Maruia Hot Springs. <http://www.qctrack.co.nz>

Bus to Maruia Hot Springs. [DRIVE TIME: 3.25 HOURS]

Hotel Location: Maruia

<http://maruiahotsprings.nz>

Mar. 04 **MARUIA HOT SPRINGS TO CHRISTCHURCH** (breakfast at hotel in Maruia Hot Springs)

We will have time in the morning to enjoy the area and its hot springs.

Afternoon bus to Christchurch (departure time TBA). [DRIVE TIME: 2.75 HOURS]

During our stay in Christchurch, you will have free time to enjoy at your leisure. (For more ideas and maps of walking tracks, visit the Visitor Centre in the botanical gardens adjacent to the YMCA. See <http://www.newzealand.com/us/article/top-10/> or look at the following activities you can do on your own in Christchurch.

- City walks, museums and art galleries: Hagley Park, Botanic Gardens, McDougall Art Museum, Modern Art Museum, Avon River, and Canterbury Museum. These are all in walking distance from our accommodations.
- To learn more about the earthquake damage, you may join a bike tour with an experienced guide. Other bike tours may focus on art and architecture or history. You may also rent a bike to take an independent tour. <http://www.chchbiketours.co.nz>
- Visit the International Antarctica Centre – check out the simulated weather and the historic and contemporary equipment used to reach the isolated continent.
- Kayak or go punting on the Avon River.
- Hot Air Ballooning
- You may also explore taking a side trip on your own to Arthur’s Pass by train – the Alpine Express.
- Willowbank – A restaurant and museum, which features Maori cultural performances and provides opportunities to see the kiwi bird.
- For more activities go to <http://www.newzealand.com/us/article/top-10/>.

Hotel Location: Christchurch

<http://www.ymcachch.org.nz/accommodation-facilities/christchurch-accomodation/>

Mar. 05 **CHRISTCHURCH** (breakfast at hotel)
Free day

Hotel Location: Christchurch

<http://www.ymcachch.org.nz/accommodation-facilities/christchurch-accomodation/>

Mar. 06 **CHRISTCHURCH** (breakfast at hotel)
You have the option to join us on the bus to visit Akaroa, a French village on the Banks Peninsula with gorgeous scenery, about 1.5 hours by bus from Christchurch. Here you might want to see galleries and arts-and-crafts shops, go kayaking, or participate in a dolphin swim. We will leave at 8:00 a.m. and return by 6:30 p.m.

Akaroa activities:

<http://ecoseaker.nz>

<http://www.akaroa.com/activities/akaroa-adventure-centre>

Hotel Location: Christchurch

<http://www.ymcachch.org.nz/accommodation-facilities/christchurch-accomodation/>

Mar. 07

CHRISTCHURCH TO MOUNT COOK (breakfast at hotel in Christchurch)

Bus to Mount Cook with an en route photo stop and lakefront walk

at Lake Tekapo. Wear your hiking clothes and have your daypack prepared when you get on the bus. We have two possible hikes scheduled for this travel day.

http://www.mtcooknz.com/mackenzie/lake_tekapo_walks/

[DRIVE TIME: 4.75 HOURS]

GROUP HIKE: Depending upon our arrival time, we may have time for a choice of short group hikes.

Hotel Location: Mt. Cook National Park (Dinner included)

<http://www.hermitage.co.nz> (buffet dinner at hotel)

Mar. 08

MOUNT COOK TO QUEENSTOWN (breakfast at hotel in Mount Cook)

GROUP HIKE: After checking out and loading the bus with our luggage, we will have a lovely morning hike on the Hooker Valley and Red Tarns Tracks. One of the most popular walks in Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, this one leads up the Hooker Valley towards Mt Cook. We'll continue on to Hooker River, crossing twice on swing bridges before reaching Stocking Stream shelter. Our goal is to continue beside the river to its source at the Hooker Glacier terminal lake (approximately a 4-hour hike with an elevation gain of 1500 feet.) The track is well formed, but heavy snowfalls can occur any time of the year. You'll need to take warm clothes, a hat, and sun block. This area encompasses 65 km of the Southern Alps and the longest glacier in New Zealand (Tasman Glacier). The scenery is alpine; the native flora is alpine shrubs and tussock grasslands. After the hike, we'll get on the bus and head for Queenstown. For those who want a shorter hiking option, you can turn around after the swinging bridge and meet the group at the campground.

Bus to Queenstown [DRIVE TIME: 3 HOURS]

Hotel Location: Queenstown

<http://holidaypark.net.nz>

Mar. 09

QUEENSTOWN (breakfast at hotel)

Free Day

While in Queenstown, here are some options you may want to arrange on your own:

- **(Highly recommended) A side trip to Milford Sound** by bus or small plane to see the fiords. Both the bus and plane trip include a boat excursion to the fiords. To book a trip to Milford Sound, you can visit the Dept. of Conservation on 37 Shotover St. <http://www.cruisemilfordnz.com>
- **Cruise on the vintage TSS Earnslaw steamship.** You can choose to do just a cruise, or combine a cruise with a visit to Walter Peak High Country Farm for a guided farm tour, horse trek, barbecue lunch or evening dining. <https://www.realjourneys.co.nz/en/experiences/cruises/tss-earnslaw-vintage-steamship-cruises/>

- **Hike on your own:** Here are some hiking options:

Stroll on a beautiful footpath in front of Lake Wakatipu leading to a botanical garden.

Take the gondola up to the top where you can pick up information on various tracks that start from the top, ranging from 30 minutes to 6 hours. <http://www.skyline.co.nz/queenstown/walking/>.

Hike up to the gondola via the Ben Lomond trail <http://activeadventures.com/new-zealand/about/activities/hiking/day-hikes-and-walks/ben-lomond-day-hike>. At the top, you may want to take a ride on the luge cars and then take the gondola back down.

- **Explore Arrowtown**, a nearby old gold mining town. To find information on getting to Arrowtown, go to <http://connectabus.com/timetables/Route-10-Arrowtown>.
- **Go bungee (bungy in NZ) jumping or just watch.** <http://www.bungy.co.nz>
- **Explore shops** and sights in Queenstown.
- **Go horse riding.** <http://www.everythingqueenstown.com/category/horse-riding/>
- **Ride the Shotover Jet boat.** <http://www.shotoverjet.com>.

Hotel Location: Queenstown
<http://holidaypark.net.nz>

Mar. 10 QUEENSTOWN (breakfast at hotel)

GROUP HIKE: We plan a leisurely day hike on the Routeburn Track. Our day begins with about a 60-kilometer journey from Queenstown along the Glenorchy highway and follows the beautiful shores of Lake Wakatipu into the wilderness sanctuary of the Mt Aspiring National Park and the South Westland World Heritage area. We'll walk up the wide, smooth surfaced track to Routeburn Flats. Walking distance is about 7 miles round trip. There are some inclines of 200-300 feet, but no strenuous uphill work.

Hotel Location: Queenstown
<http://holidaypark.net.nz>

Mar. 11 QUEENSTOWN TO AUCKLAND TO LOS ANGELES FLIGHTS
(breakfast at hotel)

Check out of rooms this morning and store bags at the hotel or under the bus until transfer time. We'll advise you of the precise time our bus will leave for the Queenstown airport. (approximately 10:30 a.m. hotel departure, flight is at 14:30)

★ NOTE: If you are inclined to extend your trip to New Zealand, you will need to pay a deviation fee with Air New Zealand (contact [Kent Porter](#) to find out how). There are, of course, many other things to see and do after your group trip ends. For example, there are tour operators who organize multi-day hiking trips to Milford Sound out of Queenstown. One of those is: <https://www.viator.com/Fiordland-and-Milford-Sound-attractions/Milford-Track/d756-a13776> . Please be sure to [let Kent know](#) about your plans as soon as possible. He will be finalizing the purchase of the plane tickets in early October and will need to know your specific request for any flight deviation/extension before then.