

RURU SELECT

19 Day Auckland to Christchurch Tour

Stray Journey - New Zealand

STARTS: Auckland

FINISHES: Christchurch

DURATION: 19 days / 18 nights

DEPARTS: Wednesday

ENDS: Sunday

MIN/MAX NUMBERS: 6/24 passengers



START INFORMATION

Arrive at Oaks Auckland Hotel, 40 Beach Road, Auckland CBD at any time on DAY 1. Check in at the hotel is from 3pm. The group dinner is at 6pm.

DAY 1: Arrival Day Auckland

Kia Ora (hello) and welcome to your New Zealand adventure. Your tour begins in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), the largest city in New Zealand and home to over 2 million people and around 50 volcanoes.

You can arrive at any time today and we encourage you to explore the city. Walk down to the viaduct for a spot of lunch, wander over to Britomart for a coffee or head to Commercial Bay if you'd like to do some shopping. You can check into your hotel from 3pm, and this evening you'll meet your group and Stray guide at reception at 6pm for a welcome dinner (own cost) to get to know your new travel mates.

Accommodation: Oaks Auckland Hotel or similar

Optional activities: Have lunch at the viaduct, enjoy coffee in Britomart, go shopping at Commercial Bay

DAY 2: Auckland to Rotorua via Waitomo Caves

We'll head out this morning and travel south to Waitomo, famous for its limestone caves lit by thousands of glowworms. You have the option to glide down a cave stream in a boat as you gaze at the hundreds of glittering glowworms above you, or don a wetsuit and harness and do some abseiling and rock climbing through the famous caves - whichever option you choose it will be a magical way to begin your adventure!

Continuing on we'll head for Rotorua, the North Island's geothermal hotspot and a great place to experience Maori culture. We'll arrive in the early evening so we'll head straight to our hotel, which is home to a spa, swimming pool and unlimited Wi-Fi (not the norm here in New Zealand)!

Accommodation: Distinction Rotorua or similar

Meal Options: Local eateries

Optional paid activities: Waitomo Cave activities

DAY 3: Rotorua

Today it's all about the Roto (Māori for 'Lake'). After breakfast we'll travel past the vibrant Blue and Green Lakes on our way to Lake Tarawera where the mighty volcano Mt Tarawera looms on the horizon. From there we'll take an aqua taxi to Te Rata Bay, home to Hot Water Beach (note: not the Hot Water Beach located next to Hahei), where a hot thermal spring feeds into lake water. For those keen for a hike, take a quick soak before embarking on the 15km (4.5-5hrs) Tarawera Trail, where you'll enjoy incredible views over Lakes Rotomahana and Tarawera. If you prefer to spend the morning in a more relaxing way, indulge in a long soak in the steamy waters, sit on the warm sands and spend your morning in geothermal heaven before heading back to Rotorua after lunch.

In the afternoon, we'll collect you from the beach to take you back to the city where you'll have the opportunity to go white water rafting down the Kaituna River, zipline through the trees on an eco-tour, or relax at a geothermal spa. If you'd like to see some geothermal activity for free, head to Kuirau Park to see boiling mud pools and steaming lakes.

Accommodation: Distinction Rotorua or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Included activity: Water Taxi to Hot Water Beach - Te Rata Bay

Meal options: Local restaurants

Free activities: Tarawera Trail hike, Kuirau Park

Optional paid activities: Ziplining, White Water Rafting, Hell's Gate Geothermal Reserve and Mud Spa

DAY 4: Rotorua to Lake Aniwhenua

After a couple of days in a major tourist destination like Rotorua, it's time to recharge our batteries and experience a more authentic slice of New Zealand culture. After lunch, we'll travel to the shores of Lake Aniwhenua and the incredible Kohutapu Lodge. Owned by a local Maori family whose passion about their Maori tribal heritage is matched only by their commitment to the local community.

We'll receive a welcome to the tribal lands before travelling on to Kohutapu Lodge where we'll watch the preparation of a ground cooked 'hangi' before enjoying an afternoon tea of freshly made fried bread as we chat with the team at the lodge and practise our weaving and haka skills. In the evening, we'll sit down and feast on our lovingly prepared hangi - this will probably be the best meal you'll eat in New Zealand!

Exclusive experience includes:

- Welcome to the tribal lands and a guided tour to sacred Maori rock carvings
- Introduction to the Murupara area, its people, history, and challenges
- Afternoon tea
- Mau Rakau (Maori stick games)
- Weaving Lesson
- Haka Lesson
- 1-night accommodation at the lakeside Kohutapu Lodge
- Full traditional hangi buffet dinner & dessert
- Storytelling around the fire pit
- Continental breakfast

Accommodation: Scenic lakefront cabins

Meals included: Breakfast, full traditional hangi dinner and dessert

Free activities: Maori rock carvings, volleyball

DAY 5: Lake Aniwhenua to Blue Duck Station

This morning after our buffet breakfast we'll say goodbye to our wonderful hosts at the lakeside lodge before departing to Taupo to see Australasia's largest lake and the frothy Huka Falls before heading inland to Blue Duck Station for an immersive and off the grid experience.

Blue Duck Station is the most sustainable high-country sheep and cattle station in New Zealand. Surrounded by the stunning Whanganui National Park, driving into the station is like entering the world of King Kong or Jurassic Park! The team at Blue Duck have made it their mission to protect their native environment for its namesake, the rare Whio (blue duck).

On arrival, we'll settle in to learn a little about daily life at the station, their interesting settlement history and their sustainability efforts before eating a home-cooked meal and relaxing around the campfire.

Accommodation: Country station lodge

Meals included: Continental breakfast, Dinner

Free activities: Huka Falls, Spa Park walk Taupo

Optional paid activities: Skydiving or bungy in Taupo

DAY 6: Blue Duck Station

This morning you'll jump on a 4WD and travel through native bush to the 'Top of the World' where you can see the three peaks of Mount Ruapehu, Mount Tongariro and Mount Ngauruhoe. You'll learn about the history of the station, see some amazing views, and enjoy a sweet ride with the crew!

Later you'll have some time to explore the station on your own. Hike to the Kaiwhakauka waterfall and spot the rare blue duck in the flesh and this evening play some games at the lodge or relax around the campfire and make s'mores. Whatever you decide, we have no doubt this will be the start of your love affair with this lush kiwi paradise!

Accommodation: Country station lodge

Meals included: Continental breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Included activities: 4WD farm eco-tour

Free activities: Hike to Kaiwhakauka waterfall, evening glowworm viewing

DAY 7: Blue Duck Station to Tongariro National Park

This morning we rise early and make our way to Tongariro National Park to tackle what is widely regarded as the best one-day walk in the world - the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. This unforgettable 19 km journey traverses an awe-inspiring landscape of volcanic peaks, vast craters, and striking turquoise alpine lakes - the kind of scenery you'll remember long after you return home.

The Crossing can be walked year-round, and when there is snow or ice present, a qualified alpine guide and specialised equipment are required (**additional cost may apply**). These alpine conditions - typically from May to October, but possible at any time - can make the experience even more spectacular, showcasing Tongariro in its purest form. All plans remain weather dependent for comfort and safety, and if conditions aren't suitable, there are other excellent walks in the national park to enjoy.

After an incredible day on the trails, return to your accommodation and soak in the outdoor spa while admiring the surrounding mountain views - the perfect way to unwind.

Accommodation: The Park Hotel (or similar)

Meals included: Continental breakfast

Meal options: A range of local restaurants and cafés. For Crossing, pack a lunch & plenty of snacks and water

Included: Tongariro Alpine Crossing (snow & ice, extra cost)

Optional paid upgrade: Alpine guide and specialist winter gear (required in snow/ice conditions)

DAY 8: Tongariro National Park to Wellington

After breakfast we'll head down to Wellington - New Zealand's capital city! We humbly recommend a visit to the Te Papa National Museum first (own cost), and then you're free to grab a craft beer at a brewery, hike to the top of Mt Victoria for panoramic views, take a stroll along the waterfront or simply enjoy the best cup of coffee you'll have in New Zealand (oh yes, they are very proud of their coffee scene in Wellington!).

Accommodation: Ibis Wellington or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Meal options: Local restaurants

Free activities: Walk Oriental Parade, head up Mt Victoria for fantastic views

Optional paid activities: Te Papa National Museum

DAY 9: Wellington to Marahau (Abel Tasman)

We'll catch an early Bluebridge Ferry across the Cook Strait to the South Island today. If the weather's good, head out to the viewing deck for incredible views of the Marlborough Sounds!

When we arrive in Picton, the top of the South Island, we'll set off through the picturesque Marlborough region and up to Marahau, situated right on the edge of the spectacular Abel Tasman National Park.

We'll spend our evening in this beautiful location relaxing around the campfire and looking at the stars.

Accommodation: The Barn or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Meal options: We'll stop at a supermarket to stock up on supplies - self-cater or join the optional group dinner

Free activities: Stargazing

Optional paid activities: Wine tasting

DAY 10: Marahau (Abel Tasman)

Today is a free day in Abel Tasman National Park. From our accommodation we can hike straight into the park (no water taxi required) and walk the Abel Tasman Coastal track up to Anchorage Bay.

The park is full of lush bush and there are plenty of opportunities to explore the golden sand beaches and swim in the brilliant blue waters throughout your journey. The walk is approximately 4 hours each way but you can get a water taxi back if you'd like extra time to soak it all in.

Accommodation: The Barn or similar

Meals included: Continental breakfast

Meal options: Pack a picnic lunch and lots of snacks for the hike, self-cater in the kitchen or use the BBQs

Free activities: Hike in the national park, relax on the golden sand beaches, see Cleopatra's Pools

Optional paid activities: Kayaking, water taxi, canyoning, sailing.

DAY 11: Marahau (Abel Tasman) to Hokitika

Today we're heading down New Zealand's wild West Coast! A super scenic drive, this area is known for its untamed beaches and masses of lush rainforest. Named one of the top drives in the world by Lonely Planet, this road offers views for days! We'll stop at the Punakaiki Pancake Rocks and blowholes to explore this unique part of coastline and then we'll head into Hokitika, famous for its arts scene and greenstone (pounamu).

Our accommodation tonight is located on the shores of the Tasman Sea. Treat yourself to some dinner in their Ocean View restaurant or go for a walk and explore Hokitika. We highly recommend a visit to sunset point where you can explore the Tambo 'shipwreck', see amazing views of Hokitika beach with Aoraki Mt Cook in the distance and watch the sun setting over the horizon. Once it's dark, go for a walk to the glowworm dell and see the glittering lights above you before heading back to your accommodation for a peaceful night of rest.

Accommodation: Hokitika Beachfront Hotel or similar

Meals included: Continental breakfast

Meal options: Local eateries

Free activities: Head down to Hokitika Beach for sunset

DAY 12: Hokitika to Franz Josef Glacier

It's a short drive today towards the charming little village of Franz Josef. The landscape will change from coastline to dramatic, lush rainforest so just another day of incredible NZ scenery (have your phone charged for pics).

We'll get to Franz Josef around lunchtime, giving you plenty of time to experience Franz Josef Glacier, an iconic highlight of the West Coast and New Zealand in general. Get a shuttle to the beginning of the track and then hike through native bush and across glacial streams to the terminal face of the glacier for spectacular photos or just relax in the township and enjoy the views. If you'd like to see the glacier up close (before that pesky climate change melts it for good) you can go for an incredible heli-hike and actually stand on the glacier!

Accommodation: Franz Josef Motel or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Meal options: Local restaurants

Free activities: Glacier Valley hike, bush tracks

Optional paid activities: Heli Hike to Franz Josef Glacier, Shuttle to Track

DAY 13: Franz Josef Glacier to Queenstown

We'll start our day with a relaxed walk around Lake Matheson, known for its stunning views of Aoraki Mt Cook which reflects back onto the lake on still days! Next we'll visit charming Wanaka, famous for its stunning lake and breathtaking mountain scenery. We'll enjoy a late lunch and take time to soak in the views and perhaps even snap a picture of THAT Wanaka tree.

Afterwards, we'll make our way to Queenstown - the 'Adventure Capital of the World'! Queenstown is the spiritual home of bungy jumping, and offers unlimited adventure and entertainment. When we arrive we'll head straight to our accommodation which offers a swimming pool, fitness centre and sauna, so you have plenty of opportunities to relax after all that excitement!

Accommodation: Mercure Queenstown or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Meal options: Local restaurants and cafes

Free activities: Lake Matheson scenic walk

DAY 14: Queenstown

Today is a free day in Queenstown. After breakfast, go and explore the beautiful mountain scenery with one of the many free hikes or join an activity of your choice! This evening, we recommend trying the famous Fergburger, checking out the nightlife, or enjoying a hot chocolate on the lakefront and listening to the live artists scattered across the shore.

Accommodation: Mercure Queenstown or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Meal options: Local restaurants

Free activities: Hike Ben Lomond, the Queenstown Hill, or Bob's Peak

Optional paid activities: Bungy, jet boating, skydiving, ziplining, horse riding, wine tasting, luging

DAY 15: Queenstown to Te Anau

After all that adventure it's time to depart Queenstown towards Te Anau, the gateway to the stunning Fiordland National Park. On arrival in Te Anau, we'll make our way to the Fiordland Cinema to watch the breathtaking short film Ata Whenua - Shadowland. We'll see incredible footage over the National Park and its wondrous landscapes and unique wildlife, before we see it for ourselves on our cruise along the Milford Sound tomorrow!

In the afternoon we'll take a water taxi to Brod Bay where we'll be able to walk a part of the Kepler track, one of New Zealand's Great Walks, across the Coal Creek Bridge and along the shores of Lake Te Anau back to our accommodation (summer only). We'll spend the night at our hotel in this serene lakeside town.

Accommodation: Te Anau Distinction Luxmore Hotel or similar

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Included activity: Entrance to Ata Whenua movie, Water Taxi to Brod Bay (Oct-Apr)

Free activities: Kepler Track Great Walk

Meal options: Local restaurants

Day 16: Day Trip to Milford Sound

This morning we'll depart Te Anau and head towards the iconic Milford Sound where we'll board a boat and cruise across the Sound (fun fact: it's not actually a sound, it's a fjord!) to see towering Mitre Peak plus rainforests, waterfalls, and loads of amazing wildlife like Fur Seals, Penguins and Dolphins.

In the evening you have the option to see the glowworm caves in Te Anau, go for a stroll through the town or around the lake, or relax at our lakeside accommodation.

Accommodation: Te Anau Distinction Luxmore Hotel or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Included activity: Milford Sound Day Trip including Scenic Cruise

Meal options: Local restaurants

Optional paid activities: Glow worms

DAY 17: Te Anau to Aoraki Mount Cook

We'll depart Te Anau early to drive over the Lindis Pass and through the Mackenzie Country, past the vivid blue waters of Lake Pukaki on the way to our amazing stop at the base of New Zealand's highest mountain, Aoraki Mt Cook. We've made this drive sound great but honestly - we reckon it's one of the most stunning days you'll have in the whole of NZ.

We arrive in the early afternoon with time to do an optional experience like a boat tour on a glacial lake surrounded by snow-capped alps (sounds epic? It is). Alternatively, we can check out the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre or do one of the many great short walks in the park. We would be remiss if we didn't recommend the Hooker Valley track (weather dependent) which in our opinion is in the top 3-hour walks in NZ. If it's a clear night, head outside to experience one of the best stargazing spots in the country.

Accommodation: Mount Cook Alpine Lodge or similar

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Optional paid activities: Visit the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre (entrance included May-Sep), Glacier Explorer boat tour

Free activities: Take photos of awe-inspiring scenery, walk the incredible Hooker Valley track (weather dependent), stargazing

DAY 18: Aoraki Mount Cook to Christchurch

Leaving Aoraki Mount Cook we'll make our way through a landscape made famous by the 'Lord of the Rings' films. We'll stop to check out the turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo and the Church of the Good Shepherd (an iconic photo stop), and if you like you can go and relax in the Tekapo hot pools, do some snow tubing or ice skating (winter only) or hike up to the Mt John Observatory for incredible views of the lake from above. After lunch, we'll continue to our final overnight stop in Christchurch where we can head out for our final group dinner together (own cost) to celebrate an incredible journey around Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Cotswold or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Free activities: Hike to Tekapo Mt John Summit, check out the historic Church of Good Shepherd, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch Botanic Gardens, Hagley Park

DAY 19: Depart Christchurch

This morning we highly recommend exploring Christchurch. Wander the city streets and laneways to discover creative street art intended to bring cheer and colour to a city once buried in rubble, check out the incredible modern shopping district, go for a beer at one of the quirky local pubs, spend an hour punting down the Avon River, explore the stunning Botanic Gardens or hop on the historic tourist tram and see it all!

As today is our final day, our adventure is coming to an end and we can't believe it's over! We'll say goodbye (or see you soon) to our mates and go our separate ways for now. We hope everyone had a blast and remains Stray Mates for forever!

Meals included: Breakfast

What's Included:

- Experienced tour guide
- Private coach transport
- 18 nights' accommodation
- 17 Breakfasts, 5 Dinners & 1 Lunch
- Hot Water Beach Tarawera Water Taxi
- Lake Aniwhenua Cultural Experience & Hangi
- Lake Taupo & Haka Falls Visit
- 4WD Eco Tour at Blue Duck Station
- Hike the Tongariro Alpine Crossing (snow & ice, extra cost)
- Inter-island ferry
- Time to explore Abel Tasman National Park
- Trip to Punakaiki Pancake Rocks
- Lake Matheson (mirror lake) visit
- Entrance to Ata Whenua movie
- Water Taxi to Brod Bay (Oct-Apr)
- Milford Sound Day Cruise
- Entrance to Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre (May-Sep)
- Lake Tekapo and the church of the Good Shepherd visits
- Plenty of stops at lakes, lookouts, mountains, hikes, beaches, national parks, rivers, waterfalls and more...

What to Bring:

- Camera, Sturdy walking shoes/boots, Warm clothing, Waterproof jacket, Hat & Sunscreen, Bathers/towel, Water bottle, Toiletries, Motion sickness tablets, Insect repellent

Please Note:

- Luggage is limited to one piece per person with a maximum weight of 23kg plus a day pack
- Tour starts on a Wednesday and ends 19 days later on a Sunday

- A basic level of fitness is required for medium length walks
- Single travellers will be put in a twin room with another single traveller of the same gender. For single travellers wanting a private room, they will need to purchase the single upgrade option.
- Accommodation at Lake Aniwhenua, Blue Duck Station and Marahau (Abel Tasman) is specialist. All cabins are private, but facilities are shared.
- Our itinerary is a guide. Given the spontaneous nature of our trips and lack of control over New Zealand's weather(!), what we do each day might occasionally vary.

Highlights:

- Explore the iconic Waitomo Glowworm Caves
- Take a water taxi to the stunning geothermal Hot Water Beach Te Rata Bay and hike the Tarawera Trail
- Experience life with a modern Maori family in an idyllic lakeside location as you feast on a traditional Hangi meal and play traditional games
- Jump on the high country 4WD Eco Safari in remote Blue Duck Station
- Hike the world famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing
- Cross the Cook Strait with the BlueBridge Ferry and enjoy the amazing views of the Marlborough Sounds
- Stay in cute cabins a stone's throw from the beach in Abel Tasman National Park and spend a day exploring the park's natural golden sand beaches and blue waters.
- See the stunning Ata Whenua movie at Fiordland Cinema
- Take a water taxi and complete part of the Kepler Track - one of New Zealand's great walks
- Immerse yourself in NZ 'Must Do' - Milford Sound Day Trip including a scenic road trip and cruise in Fiordland National Park
- Enjoy a touch of luxury at the Mercure hotel Queenstown complete with swimming pool
- Stay at a stunning alpine lodge at the base of NZ's highest mountain - Aoraki Mt Cook
- Hike the breathtaking Hooker Valley Track
- Free time in Rotorua, Blue Duck Station, Wellington, Marahau & Queenstown
- Plenty of stops at lakes, lookouts, mountains, hikes, beaches, national parks, rivers, waterfalls and more...