



18 Day RURU Tour

New Zealand National Select Tour

STARTS: Auckland
FINISHES: Christchurch
DURATION: 18 days & 17 nights
DEPARTS: Thursday
MIN/MAX NUMBERS: 6 / 24 passengers



START INFORMATION

8:00AM, Mayoral Drive, Auckland CBD (The bus stop opposite the Four Points by Sheraton Auckland)

**Subject to change. Please be ready at the pickup 15 minutes prior to the departure.*

DAY 1: Auckland to Rotorua

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

We'll head out bright and early this morning and travel down to Rotorua, the North Island's geothermal hotspot and probably second only to Queenstown in terms of its adventure activity offerings. Fondly known as 'Roto-vegas' due the high volume of tourists it receives, Rotorua is a hive of activity and culture.

We'll stop at the Whakarewarewa Forest for a walk through the giant California Redwoods which were planted over 100 years ago before checking in at our hotel, the Distinction Rotorua. Centrally located and home to a spa, swimming pool and unlimited Wi-Fi (not the norm here in New Zealand) it's a great base to explore from.

Accommodation: Distinction Rotorua or similar

Meal Options: Local eateries

Free activities: Whakarewarewa Redwood Forest walk

DAY 2: Rotorua

Today we have a free day in Rotorua. Have breakfast at the hotel and then head off to an activity of your choice. Go white water rafting down the Kaituna River, zipline through the trees on an eco-tour, zorb through rolling hills or just 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. This evening, you'll be taken to Te Puia for a night of dramatic geysers, bubbling mud and beautiful native bush. You'll begin with a guided geothermal walk under the stars by torchlight before eating a traditional kanga waru (GF) pudding cooked in a natural hot spring. Sit under the night skies with a steaming cup of hot chocolate and hear the stories of the past, feeling the beauty of Pohutu in an interactive journey guided by light.

Accommodation: Distinction Rotorua or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Meal options: Local restaurants

Included activity: Geyser by Night Experience

Free activities: Kuirau Park

DAY 3: Rotorua to Lake Aniwhenua

After a couple of days in a major tourist destination like Rotorua, you'll probably want some time to recharge the batteries and experience a more authentic slice of New Zealand culture. After breakfast, we'll venture 'off the beaten track' to the shores of Lake Aniwhenua and the incredible Kohutapu Lodge. Owned by a local Maori family who are passionate about showcasing their Maori tribal heritage, the lodge is a pillar of the local community.

We'll be taken to see sacred Maori rock carvings, play a traditional game of Mau Rakau and watch the preparation of a ground cooked 'hangi'. We'll enjoy an afternoon tea of freshly made fried bread as we speak with the team at Kohutapu Lodge and practise our weaving and haka skills. In the evening, we'll sit down to enjoy our lovingly prepared hangi feast - this will probably be the best meal you'll eat in New Zealand, or dare we say, your lifetime.

Exclusive experience includes:

- Welcome to the tribal lands and a guided tour to waterfall and 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 4: Lake Aniwhenua to Blue Duck Station

We'll tuck into our buffet breakfast and say goodbye to our wonderful hosts at the lakeside lodge before we depart this morning to Kerosene Creek – a naturally hot river and the perfect place for a morning soak. Afterwards we'll drive on 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 a 7,200-acre high country farm and is the most sustainable high-country sheep and cattle station in New Zealand, the team have made it their mission to protect their native environment for its namesake, the rare blue duck. On arrival, we'll settle in to learn a little about daily life at Blue Duck, the station's interesting settlement history and their sustainability efforts before cooking some dinner and relaxing around the bonfire.

Accommodation: Country station lodge

Optional paid activities: Skydiving or bungy in Taupo

Meals included: Continental breakfast, Dinner

Free activities: Huka Falls, Spa Park walk Taupo

DAY 5: Blue Duck Station

Good news - You have a full free day to explore this ruggedly charming destination. 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. Later, if you'd like to explore on foot, you can hike to the Kaiwhakauka waterfall and see if you can spot a rare blue duck in the flesh or simply relax around the campfire and make smores. Whatever you decide, we have no doubt this will be the start of your love affair with this lush kiwi paradise. Those holiday romances, aye!

Accommodation: Country station lodge

Meals included: Continental breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Included activities: 4WD farm eco-tour

Free activities: Hike to Kaiwhakauka waterfall

DAY 6: Blue Duck Station to Ohakune

This morning we're up nice and early to head straight to Tongariro National Park where we'll tick off one of the most popular hikes in New Zealand, the epic Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Considered one of the world's top one-day walks, this 19 km hike takes us across a rocky plateau with dramatic volcanic peaks, craters, and turquoise lakes that we (and our Instagram feed) will remember for a lifetime. The Crossing is open to walk year-round (alpine gear and guide are required in winter), but it is subject to the weather conditions. If the weather prevents us from doing the Crossing, there are other awesome short walks in the area. Tonight, we'll unwind after a big day at our accommodation, the Powderhorn Chateau. Styled like a log cabin, this boutique accommodation is so cosy and even has an indoor heated pool where we can rest our weary bones after our big walk - after all, we're on holiday aren't we?

Accommodation: Powderhorn Chateau or similar

Meals included: Continental breakfast

Meal options: Local restaurants

Optional activities: Tongariro Crossing

DAY 7: Ohakune to Wellington

This morning after breakfast we're going for a scenic bike ride along the Old Coach Road, an easy but epic 4-hour unguided bike trail. We'll cycle on a unique cobbled road, past historic Viaducts and limestone cliffs and there'll be plenty of stops along the way to take photos for the 'gram. This is a great way to spend a morning learning about New Zealand history and seeing some pretty spectacular views as we go.

Afterwards, we're heading down to Wellington, the 'coolest little capital in the world'! Wellington packs a lot of character into its downtown district, with interesting restaurants and bars along Cuba Street and Courtenay Place. We'll have an afternoon to browse through the exhibits at Te Papa National Museum, grab a craft beer at a brewery, climb to the top of Mt Victoria for panoramic views or take a stroll along the waterfront and Oriental Parade. Oh and, most importantly for those who seek 24/7 caffeination, we are happy to say that Wellington's coffee culture and cafe scene is considered one of (if not THE) best in New Zealand.

Accommodation: Naumi Hotel Wellington or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Meal options: Local restaurants

Included activity: Electric bike along the historic Old Coach Road

Free activities: Walk Oriental Parade, head up Mt Victoria for fantastic views, visit Te Papa National Museum

DAY 8: 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, we'll be out on the viewing deck where we'll get some incredible views of the Marlborough Sounds before arriving in Picton and setting off through the picturesque Marlborough region. We'll continue through to Marahau, situated right on the edge of the spectacular Abel Tasman National Park where we'll spend our evening relaxing around the campfire and looking at the stars.

Accommodation: The Barn or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Optional paid activities: Wine tasting (\$15pp)

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

Free activities: Stargazing

DAY 9: Marahau (Abel Tasman)

Today is a full free day to explore New Zealand's most popular national park. From our accommodation we can hike straight into the park (no water taxi required) and then it's a cool 12 kms to Anchorage. The walk is absolutely beautiful with the park's natural golden sand beaches and brilliant blue waters visible throughout. The walk is approx. 4 hours each way but there's enough photo stops en-route to spend an entire day exploring, checking out Cleopatra's Pools (yes there's a natural water slide there), enjoying a picnic on the beach, relaxing in the sunshine - the world is our oyster.

Accommodation: The Barn or similar

Meals included: Continental breakfast

Optional paid activities: Kayaking, water taxi, canyoning

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

DAY 10: Marahau (Abel Tasman) to Hokitika

We're buckling up for an awesome day driving down the incredibly scenic 'wild' West Coast, an area known for its untamed beaches and masses of lush rainforest. Through Buller Gorge and down a stretch of road named one of the top drives in the world by Lonely Planet, there's not much cell phone reception but we're not going to need it. This road offers views for days and we won't want to stop looking out the window for a second. We'll stop at the Punakaiki Pancake Rocks and blowholes to explore this unique part of coastline before continuing on to the vibrant, artistic township of Hokitika. Our accommodation tonight is absolute beachfront, 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.

Accommodation: Hokitika Beachfront Hotel or similar

Meals included: Continental breakfast

Meal options: Local eateries

Free activities: Head down to Hokitika Beach for sunset

DAY 11: 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 basically another day of incredible views and stunning scenery (have your phone charged for pics). We'll get to Franz Josef around lunchtime, and we'll have the rest of the day to explore the town or relax at our accommodation.

Accommodation: Franz Josef Motels or similar

Meals included: Breakfast
Meal options: Local restaurants
Free activities: Relax in Franz Josef

DAY 12: Franz Josef Glacier

Ice, ice baby! Today is about experiencing Franz Josef Glacier, an iconic highlight of the West Coast and New Zealand in general. We can 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 Motels or similar
Meals included: Breakfast
Optional paid activities: Shuttle to the track, heli-hike to the glacier
Meal options: Local restaurants
Free activities: Glacier Valley hike, bush tracks

DAY 13: Franz Josef Glacier to Queenstown

This morning we'll go for a scenic walk around Lake Matheson, known for its stunning views and mirror-like quality on particularly still days, and then we'll make our way to Queenstown. Known in New Zealand as the 'Adventure Capital of the World' and the spiritual home of bungee jumping, Queenstown is a crazy combination of adventure and entertainment. We'll stop at Kawarau Bridge on our way into town a.k.a. the first commercial bungee jumping site in the world and watch people jumping off with only a rope tied to their ankles. We highly recommend ticking this off your list if you're feeling brave but otherwise, we'll just cheer on our mates from the viewing platform! When we get to Queenstown we'll head straight to our accommodation. Stay at the Mercure Resort will provide a touch of luxury to your Queenstown adventure, with a swimming pool, fitness centre and sauna, it's the best way to relax and ease yourself into life in this truly stunning resort town.

Accommodation: Mercure Queenstown or similar
Meals included: Breakfast
Optional paid activities: Puzzling World
Meal options: Local restaurants and cafes
Free activities: Lake Matheson scenic walk, watch people jumping off a bridge!

DAY 14: Queenstown

Today we'll hop aboard a Coach which will take us to the iconic Milford Sound. We'll drive along one of the most scenic alpine roads in the world and then cruise across the Sound (fun fact: it's not actually a sound, it's a fjord!) to see towering Mitre Peak plus rainforests and waterfalls, as well as spotting some amazing wildlife like Fur Seals, Penguins and Dolphins. Once we've snapped as many pics as we possibly can, it's back to Queenstown. This evening, we recommend checking out the buzzy nightlife and sampling a famous Fergburger or just checking out one of the many restaurants Queenstown has to offer.

Accommodation: Mercure Queenstown or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Included activity: Milford Sound Day Trip including Scenic Cruise

Meal options: Local restaurants

DAY 15: Queenstown

Yaaaasssss Queen(stown)! We've got a full day in the adventure capital today. With beautiful mountain scenery and plenty of outdoor activities, it's easy to understand why so many backpackers refuse to leave this place. We'll have brekkie at the hotel and then the rest of the day is freeeee.

Accommodation: Mercure Queenstown or similar

Meals included: Breakfast

Optional paid activities: Any adventure activity that we wild Kiwis can dream up (bungy, swing, jet boating, skydiving, mountain biking, zipline, horse riding...)

Meal options: Local restaurants

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

DAY 16: Queenstown to Mount Cook

We'll depart Queenstown 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-day walks in NZ. If it's a clear night, head outside to experience one of the best stargazing spots in the country.

Accommodation: Stunning alpine lodge

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Optional paid activities: Visit the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre, Glacier Explorer boat tour

Free activities: Take photos of awe-inspiring scenery, do one of the many great short walks to the Hooker glacial lake (weather dependent), stargazing

DAY 17: Mount Cook to Christchurch

Leaving Mount Cook we 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 overnight stop in Christchurch where we'll spend the afternoon wandering the city streets and laneways to discover creative street art intended to bring cheer and colour to a city once buried in rubble.

Accommodation: Bealey Quarter 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 18: Depart Christchurch

Today our adventure comes to an end, 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 4ever!

Meals included: Breakfast

This 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.

What's Included:

- Experienced tour guide
- Private coach transport
- 17 nights' accommodation
- 17 Breakfasts
- Meals as specified
- Inter-island ferry
- Geyser by Night Experience
- Lake Aniwhenua Cultural Experience & Hangi
- 4WD eco tour at Blue Duck Station
- Old Coach Road E-Bike adventure
- Milford Sound Day Cruise

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
- A basic level of fitness is required for medium length walks
- Accommodation at Lake Aniwhenua, Blue Duck Station and Marahau (Abel Tasman) is specialist. All cabins are private, but facilities are shared.