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TAILOR MADE RAIL

New Zealand Explorer

From £2,259 per person // 19 days



From north to south, discover the best of New Zealand on this essential itinerary, taking in the country's diverse cities, jaw-dropping landscapes and unforgettable train journeys, including the world-famous TranzAlpine.

The Essentials

- 3-night stays in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown
- Journeys on the Northern Explorer, Coastal Pacific and TranzAlpine trains along with the Interislander Ferry
- Kaikoura with its rugged mountain backdrop, basking seals and sperm whales
- Car hire from Greymouth to Queenstown with nights on the wild west coast and Tekapo near Mt. Cook

What's included

- Standard Class rail travel with seat reservations
- 18 nights' handpicked hotel accommodation with breakfast
- Ferry journey from Wellington to Picton
- 5 days car hire from Greymouth to Queenstown
- City maps and comprehensive directions to your hotels
- Clearly-presented wallets for your rail tickets, hotel vouchers and other documentation
- All credit card surcharges and complimentary delivery of your travel documents

Tailor make your holiday

- Decide when you would like to travel
- Adapt the route to suit your plans
- Upgrade your hotels
- Add extra nights, destinations and/or tours

- Suggested Itinerary -



Days 1, 2 & 3 - Auckland

Welcome to New Zealand! You have two full days in Auckland, the country's largest city, to start your Kiwi adventure. Your base in Auckland is at the Heritage Hotel (or similar). Auckland occupies a fabulous geographical location with two harbours on the Hauraki Gulf. As well as a wide choice of museums and galleries, there's also some great viewpoints to take in like Mount Eden as well as getting on the ferry and discovering stunning destinations on the Gulf such as Devonport and the island paradise of Waiheke.



Day 4 - Auckland To Wellington On The Northern Explorer

Make an early start this morning for your first KiwiRail Experience. The Northern Explorer departs from Auckland Strand station around 7:45am and winds its way slowly south towards the city of Hamilton. Pass through the dramatic Raurimu Spiral, catch glimpses of the spectacular volcano Mt Ruapehu, and marvel at the huge viaducts such as the one traversing the Rangitikei river gorge. Relax with a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc from the buffet car and watch the scenery unfold as the train winds its way eventually into the nation's capital, Wellington. On arrival check into the Copthorne Hotel Oriental Bay (or similar) for a 3-night stay.



Days 5 & 6 - Wellington

You have two full days in Wellington, New Zealand's stunning capital city. Not to be missed attractions include the famous hundred-year-old red cable car and Te Papa – the National Museum of New Zealand which contains, amongst other things, a scarily realistic earthquake simulator and the world's largest specimen of rare colossal squid. Film buffs will love taking a tour of Weta Studios in Miramar and if you love birds, don't miss a visit to Kapiti Island, a national nature reserve.



Day 7 - Wellington To Kaikoura Via Ferry And Coastal Pacific

Today you take a morning crossing from Wellington to the South Island on the iconic Interislander Ferry. The first part of the ferry ride takes you out of Wellington Harbour and into the open waters of the Cook Strait. Before you know it, you are winding your way through the fjords in the northern part of the South Island before arriving into the town of Picton. Here, you disembark the ferry and take the short walk to the railway station for your onward train travel aboard the Coastal Pacific train. After around 2 hours twisting and turning through the lush green landscapes and rugged mountainous topography, you catch your first glimpse of the Pacific Ocean. The train runs alongside the ocean for almost all the remainder of the journey and offers breathtaking views of the beaches, mountain landscapes and wildlife. Once you reach the town of Kaikoura, you alight right next to a glorious beach, and make your way to the Austin Heights B&B (or similar) for the next 2 nights.



Day 8 - Kaikoura

Thanks to a deep offshore trench, Kaikoura is home to an abundance of marine life, particularly sperm whales and dolphins. During your free day here, you can choose to take a whale watching tour, either by boat or sea plane. There are also many walking tracks up into the Seaward Kaikouras which give the town its stunning backdrop. A popular route is the Mt. Fyffe track, offering spectacular panoramic views of the Kaikoura peninsula from the summit.



Days 9, 10 & 11 - Christchurch

Continue your journey aboard the Coastal Pacific to Christchurch and check in for 3 nights at the Rendezvous Hotel (or similar). The largest city in the South Island and capital of the Canterbury Region, Christchurch is dubbed The Garden City thanks to its large number of parks and gardens, including Hagley Park and the beautiful Botanical Gardens. Spend a day exploring the best of everything the city has to offer, re-energised after the devastating earthquake of February 2011. On your second day, you could hire a car locally and drive over to Lyttelton, a picturesque harbour town, then across to Akaroa on the nearby Banks Peninsula, hope to an array of boutiques, delicatessens and a unique French influence thanks to 19th-century French settlers who were the first Europeans to inhabit the town.



Day 12 - Christchurch To Hokitika Via The Tranzalpine

Make your way from your hotel to Christchurch station this morning for one of the world's most iconic scenic rail journeys, the TranzAlpine. The train will take you 140 miles from the east to the west coast of New Zealand's South Island in 4½ hours. The train first passes across the Canterbury Plains before the scenery takes a more dramatic twist on entering the Southern Alps. Pass through the jaw-dropping Arthur's Pass National Park including Arthur's Pass itself, where the train makes a brief stop, before continuing through the Otira Tunnel, the longest in the world at the time of its construction in 1923. Once in Greymouth, pick up your hire car from the station and drive the short 30-minute journey down the wild west coast of the South Island to Hokitika. On arrival, check in at the Beachfront Hotel (or similar) where you have an overnight stay.



Day 13 - Hokitika To Tekapo

Hokitika, is the 'jade capital of the world' with many stores selling pounamu (the Maori name) jewellery. Just remember that, according to Maori tradition, pounamu should be bought as a gift rather than for yourself! It's around a 5-hour drive from Hokitika to Tekapo, through Arthurs Pass high in the Southern Alps. It's a truly spectacular journey and you will want to stop often for photos. If you decide to have a picnic lunch on the road, look out for keas. These cheeky green parrots can not only make off with your sandwich but also damage your hire car! On arrival in Tekapo, check in at the Mantra Lake Tekapo (or similar) for a 2-night stay.



Day 14 - Tekapo

Tekapo faces north across the beautiful turquoise coloured lake of the same name to the majestic peaks of the Southern Alps. You can spend your free day here walking in the area, perhaps visiting the endlessly photographable Church of the Good Shepherd (pictured) or relax in the some of the local hot pools, take an air safari over Mt Cook or simply take a scenic road loop through this spectacular region. If the weather is clear, you're in for a treat in the evening as Lake Tekapo is part of a UNESCO Dark Sky Reserve, one of one only eight in the world. You can visit the Mount John Stargazing Observatory, or simply stand on the lakeshore and look up at the awe-inspiring display.



Day 15 - Tekapo To Queenstown

Another beautiful drive today brings you to Queenstown. The route is around 3 hours but you may choose to stop along the way for lunch or more photos. A popular stop close to Queenstown is Arrowtown, a historic gold mining town where you can pan for gold and buy precious metal souvenirs. You might also like to stop and watch brave souls take on the world's highest bungee jump at the Kawarau Gorge Suspension Bridge over the Nevis River, though you may not wish to take part! On arrival in Queenstown, check in for 3 nights at the Crowne Plaza Queenstown (or similar).



Days 16 & 17 - Queenstown

Enjoy two full days in Queenstown, New Zealand's adventure sports capital. If you're not an adventure sports fan, there is still plenty to do here. For your first day, you still have your hire car, so perhaps take advantage by driving to the beautiful settlement of Glenorchy, surrounded by the peaks of the Southern Alps. On your other free day, why not take a wine-tasting tour, or try a jet-boat ride? Alternatively, you might like to take a full day trip to the stunning Milford Sound, via Te Anu.



Day 18 - Queenstown To Auckland

Depending on your flight time, you should have at least another free morning in Queenstown. Perhaps take the Skyline Gondola up to Bob's Peak for breathtaking views of over the area? You can also have lunch at the summit or take a luge ride back down to town, but you may prefer just to buy a return gondola ticket. Later in the day, make your way to Queenstown airport for an internal flight back to Auckland. On arrival, check back into the Heritage Hotel (or similar) for your last night.



Day 19 - Depart Auckland

Leave Auckland today for your onward journey. We can arrange flights for you or if you prefer, you can book these separately. You may also like to combine New Zealand with Australia or break your journey home with a stop somewhere en route such as Singapore or Los Angeles. Please let us know if you would like us to include any additional arrangements with your trip.

Pricing

From £2,259 per person

These prices are based on two people sharing a twin or double room. Single supplements will apply for sole occupancy. It is based on Standard Class rail travel and includes seat reservations as necessary. It is based on the best fares on the trains. If you travel during a peak period, particularly at short notice, then supplements may apply.