

# *New Zealand Nature & Sights Tour*

*By*

## *IN QUEST OF THE CLASSICS*

**Day 1: AUCKLAND.** Upon arrival at Auckland airport you will be met and privately transferred to the **Mollies on Tweed Hotel** for a two night stay. Set in an historic villa, originally built in the 1870s, Mollies is a luxury boutique hotel, which offers individual fully self-contained apartments within a private hotel environment. Mollies retain the spaciousness and opulence of that era with antique furnishings that blend comfortably with modern amenities and fittings. It has just 12 suites and is located in St Mary's Bay overlooking the Harbor Bridge and inner Waitemata Harbor. It is an easy walk to the popular Ponsonby Road shopping and dining area, and a short drive to downtown Auckland.



This afternoon enjoy a sightseeing tour of Auckland by private car and driver including stops for fantastic views from Mt. Eden, the tallest of the many extinct volcanic cones around which Auckland is sited, the Domain, and the Maori Court at the Auckland War Museum,



where there is a superb collection of Maori artifacts including a large magnificently carved Maori war canoe launched in 1836. That was 4 years before New Zealand was colonized... Also, see the quaint Parnell Village and Rose Gardens, and Tarlton's amazing Underwater World and Antarctic Encounter. As well as a wide variety of colorful fish and species such as stingrays and sharks, Emperor and Gentoo penguins can also be seen in a special subzero enclosure.

**Day 2: TIRITIRI MANTANGI ISLAND.** This morning enjoy breakfast at the hotel and then transfer to the Wharf for a full day trip on a Kawau Cat to Tiritiri Matangi Island. This island, which is located in the Hauraki Gulf off the shore from Auckland, is a Department of Conservation bird sanctuary. It has been cleared of rats, cats and other predators, allowing many of New Zealand's rarest and most endangered species to breed in relative safety. Among the birds to be seen here are the Takahe – thought to be extinct until discovered in 1947 in a remote part of the Fiordland National Park. Even today there are only 248 of them in the whole world. There are also saddlebacks, stitch birds, bellbirds, tuis wood pigeons, bush robins and the kokako. A 60 minute guided tour will be provided on arrival on the island and then you are free to roam the island yourselves looking for the birds or taking a swim at Hobbs Beach. The boat departs at 9 am and returns at 4.30 pm (operates weekends and Thursdays only, also Fridays in summer).



**Day 3: AUCKLAND / HOKIANGA.** This morning collect a full size Holden Commodore or similar with automatic transmission and drive north across the Harbor Bridge and through the North Shore. Pass lovely Orewa and Waiwera Beaches on the Pacific Ocean Shore. Time permitting you may wish to stop for a stroll or maybe a swim along one of these beaches. Visit the excellent Matakoho Timber Museum, where the gum digging and timber milling history of this Northland Region is on show. Continue on through Dargaville and up the west coast to Omapere on the southern shores of the Hokianga Harbor. In Hokianga you will be staying at the **Copthorne Hokianga Hotel** for 1 night. The hotel is delightfully located on the sea front with views out to the Tasman Sea and to the huge sand hills across the harbor.

This evening undertake a 4 hour Twilight Encounter Tour. Step along the tracks of Te Matua Ngahere (the father of the forest) and Tane Mahuta to visit the mystical triangle of The Four Sisters, Te Matua Ngahere and Tane Mahuta. Your footpath guide will show you the largest Kauri tree in the world and share his knowledge of this special environment with stories about Maori ancestors and inhabitants of the forest such as the nocturnal Kiwis.



**Day 4: HOKIANGA / BAY OF ISLANDS.** This morning enjoy breakfast at the hotel before driving around the Hokianga Harbor and across the Northland Peninsula through Kaikohe to the Bay of Islands. In the afternoon take a guided tour of the Waitangi Treaty House. It was here on 6 February 1840 that the Maori and British signed an historic Treaty, which gave birth to the nation of New Zealand. The carved Maori Meeting house in the grounds is an especially fine example of the woodcarving and weaving skills of the Maori people. After your tour take the car ferry from



Opua across to Russell, where you will be staying at the **Orongo Bay Homestead** for 2 nights. The Orongo Bay Homestead is a historic homestead originally built in the 1860's for the first American Consular Agent in New Zealand and commands sweeping views across the bay. After full restoration, it features the original native timbers, kauri ceilings, large open fire with a grand piano in the lounge, a good art collection and a 1000 bottle underground wine cellar. The homestead is set in 17 acres of coastal land with delightful gardens and a spring fed duck pond.

**Day 5: BAY OF ISLANDS.** This morning take a Dolphin Discovery cruise out among the islands of the lovely Bay of Islands seeking out the dolphins which are resident in these waters – Bottlenose dolphins are the dominant species. Conditions permitting there is the opportunity to swim with the dolphins. Wet suits, snorkels and fins will be provided. Sometimes penguins and whales can also be seen, as well as a wide variety of seabirds. This afternoon is free for you to explore historic Russell, relax on the beach or maybe play golf.



**Day 6: BAY OF ISLANDS / ROTORUA (by air).** After breakfast this morning drive to the Bay of Islands Airport at Kerikeri and return your rental car. Board your flight from Kerikeri to Rotorua via Auckland (flight not arranged by IQOTC). Upon arrival at Rotorua, collect another rental car and drive through Rotorua to the **Hamurana Country Estate** for your 2 night stay. The



Hamurana Country Estate is located in the countryside across the other side of Lake Rotorua from the city. This boutique hotel is situated in 6 acres of park-like gardens and farmland. There are just 12 en suite guest rooms, a lovely lounge with open fire, a heated pool, tennis court, billiard room, bar and an a la carte restaurant on site for lunches and evening dining. The rest of your afternoon is free to explore this charming town.

**Day 7: ROTORUA SIGHTSEEING AND CULTURAL SHOW.** Today enjoy a self drive sightseeing tour including a tour of Te Puia, the Whakarewarewa Thermal Reserve, where there are spectacular geysers and boiling mud pools, the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, where young Maori are being taught traditional carving and weaving skills, lovely Rainbow Springs to see the trout and rare Kiwis, and the popular Agrodome sheep show. This evening, drive yourselves into the city for Mai Ora – a hangi (dinner) and concert of Maori song and dance on the Marae (village) at Whakarewarewa.



**Day 8: ROTORUA / CHRISTCHURCH.** After breakfast return your rental car to Rotorua Airport and board your morning flight to Christchurch (flight not arranged by IQOTC). Upon arrival at Christchurch collect another rental car and drive to the **Charlotte Jane Hotel** for a 2 night stay. The Charlotte Jane is a lovely boutique Bed and Breakfast which was originally built



as a school house in 1891 and has since been extensively renovated and furnished with colonial antiques. This afternoon is free for your own sightseeing in Christchurch. Perhaps take the tram or stroll through the city centre past the Cathedral to the interesting Canterbury Arts Centre and the Art Gallery. A walk through the adjacent Christchurch Botanic Gardens is “a must”. There is also the option for punting on the River Avon.

**Day 9: KAIKOURA WHALE WATCHING.** This morning after breakfast drive north up the Pacific Coast to Kaikoura for a whale watching cruise. The sea in this area is especially rich in nutrients, which attract a wide variety of sea life including Sperm Whales – the largest of all the toothed whales, which can be seen in these waters. There are also pods of playful Dusky Dolphins, seals, penguins and an occasionally orca can be seen. Visit a seal colony before driving back to Christchurch. If you are interested in wines why not stop at one of the North Canterbury wineries, where you can taste some of the fine estate wines.



**Day 10: CHRISTCHURCH / ARTHUR’S PASS.** Today visit the fascinating International Antarctic Centre to learn about the exploration of the great southern continent. Afterwards, drive inland across the sheep and cropping farmlands on the Canterbury Plains, through Porter’s Pass to the **Wilderness Lodge Arthur’s Pass** for a 3 night stay. The Wilderness Lodge is located on a 6,000 acre high country sheep station and surrounded by native beach forests and tussock lands. There are wonderful views from the modern 20 room lodge across the Waikmakirri River Valley toward the mighty Southern Alps.



**Day 11: AT WILDERNESS LODGE.** Enjoy a day to relax and explore. There is a complimentary daily guided program of two half day activities such as bird watching, forest, wetland and tussock land walks, shearing and wool spinning, historical and night sky walks.

**Day 12: ATHRUR’S PASS / THE GLACIERS / LAKE MOERAKI.**

Today drive over Arthur’s Pass and through the Southern Alps to the West Coast and descend through native rainforest to Hokitika. Time permitting we suggest a visit to one of the greenstone factories where a local jade like stone, highly prized by pre European Maori, is crafted into the most exquisite jewellery. Continue on south through forests and farmlands with the mighty Southern Alps rising sharply to the east and glimpses of the Tasman Sea to the west. The Franz Josef Glacier is a huge river of snow and ice that flows from the vast snowfields high in the Southern Alps almost to sea level, which is quite unusual in a temperature climate. On arrival take a 40 minute Grand Tour by helicopter over the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, also crossing the main divide in the Alps to the Mt Cook National Park to view Mt. Cook, New Zealand’s highest mountain and the Tasman Glacier. A snow landing on one of the glaciers is included. Afterwards drive south past the Fox Glacier and some lovely bush fringed lakes to Lake Moeraki and **Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki** for a 2 night stay.



The Wilderness Lodge is sited on the banks of the Moeraki River where it flows from Lake Moeraki and is 2 kms from the Tasman Sea. The Lodge's remoteness is its prime feature, giving access to a pristine area of New Zealand including 1,000 year old native trees. Rare crested Fiordland penguins, Elephant seals (in season), and Fur seals can be seen. There are canoes for the use of guests and a daily program of naturalist guided wilderness walks.

**Day 13: AT WILDERNESS LODGE LAKE MOERAKI.** The day is free to relax and explore the area on your own. Perhaps join one of the naturalist guided activities, such as rainforest and birding walks, lake canoeing, giant eel feeding, evening historic and glow/night sky walks.

**Day 14: LAKE MOERAKI / HAAST PASS / QUEENSTOWN.** Today travel south through magnificent forest crossing several fast running mountain streams. At Haast Township turn east and cross Haast Pass through the Alps. The scenery is stunning with high mountains all around. Descend past glacially formed Lake Hawea and Wanaka, and drive through Central Otago, and past Lake Dunstan. If you are interested in wines, stop at the Big Picture in Cromwell, where many of the fine Central Otago wines can be tasted. Then continue through the rugged Kawarau Gorge into Queenstown and the **Spire Queenstown Hotel**, where you will be staying for 3 nights. The Spire Queenstown Hotel is a centrally located boutique hotel with just 10 delightful guestrooms.



**Day 15: QUEENSTOWN.** Enjoy a free day to relax and enjoy this wonderful alpine resort. There is a wide choice of optional tours and activities available. A pass to the Skyline Gondola, which operates to Bob's Peak, from where there are wonderful views over Queenstown is highly recommended.

**Day 16: DART RIVER SAFARI.** This morning drive around Lake Wakatipu to Glenorchy for a Dart River Safari. This is more than a jet boat ride! Each safari is a total wilderness experience into Mt. Aspiring National Park World Heritage area. This journey into "Middle-Earth" combines 1 ½ hours of jet boating amidst the spectacular scenery of the Southern Alps, a gentle walk through ancient forests amidst birdsong and cultural heritage, and a back road journey through the high country farmland and forests around Paradise - film location for the Lord of the Rings film trilogy. This Safari is highly personalised and informative. This afternoon perhaps take a hike on the famous Routeburn Walk which starts beside the Dart River before returning to Queenstown.



**Day 17: QUEENSTOWN / MANAPOURI / DOUBTFUL SOUND.** This morning depart Queenstown and drive around the northeastern side of Lake Wakatipu in the lee of the Remarkables Ranges to Kingston and on across the picturesque Southland countryside to Manapouri village on the shores of Lake Manapouri. Wander around the town until 12:30PM before you board the high speed launch across Lake Manapouri to West Arm, where there is a large underground hydro-power station . Leave your car in Manapouri. Upon arrival at West Arm



board a coach and head across the Wilmot Pass through Fiordland National Park to Deep Cove. This is one of the most remote parts of New Zealand – the isolation is splendid. On arrival at Deep Cove board the **MV Fiordland Navigator** for an overnight cruise on the Doubtful Sound fiord. Cruise down the fiord out to the open sea where seals and dolphins are often seen. There are opportunities to go ashore with a nature guide and for sea kayaking. The boat anchors for the night in an isolated cove where the only sounds are the sounds of nature. Dinner is served aboard the Navigator.

**Day 18: DOUBTFUL SOUND / MANAPORUI / BLUFF / STEWART ISLAND.** The MV Navigator will berth at 10:00AM at which time you will return to West Arm by coach across the Wilmot Pass and then head back across Lake Manapouri to the Manapouri Township by 12:15PM. Collect your rental car and drive south through the Southland farmlands to Invercargill, the most southern city in the world. Drive past the huge Tiwai Point aluminium smelter out to the port of Bluff. Bluff is 'world famous in New Zealand' for its oysters dredged from the waters of the Foveaux Strait. Spend some time exploring Bluff before leaving your car at the port and boarding a high speed catamaran ferry across the Foveaux Strait to Stewart Island. On arrival at Stewart Island head to Oban, the only significant settlement on the island, where you will be met and transferred to the **Stewart Island Lodge** for a 2 night stay. Stewart Island Lodge is the finest accommodation on the island with just 5 well appointed rooms with a private patio and wonderful views out to the southern ocean. Stewart Island is a relatively unspoiled paradise of native bush, rainforests, sand dunes and wet lands that boast a wonderful bird life. It is home to 130 different species of birds some of them rare and some endangered, including the Southern Tokoeka, one of five species of Kiwi.



**Day 19: ULVA ISLAND DAY EXCURSION.** Today meet your guide at the Ruggedy Range at Golden Bay Wharf, a 15 minute walk from the hotel, for a Birds and Forest full day tour. Ulva



Island is the ultimate for bird watchers; it is free of predators and is a haven for native birds and plants. The birds are almost tame! Since 2004 numerous species of birds have been released on Ulva island including rare South Island Saddleback, yellowhead and the threatened Stewart Island Robin. Among other species to be seen here are the Weka, Tui, Robins, the Spotted Shag, the Brown Creeper and the Kiwi. Lunch is included.

**Day 20: STEWART ISLAND / INVERCARGILL / AUCKLAND / DEPART.** Sadly today leave Stewart Island via the catamaran ferry and return to Bluff. Collect your rental car and drive to Invercargill Airport where you will return your rental car and board your flight to Auckland (flight not provided by IQTOC). Upon arrival in Auckland take the shuttle bus across the airport to the International Terminal and check in for your return flight home. At this time IQOTC services will end.