Australian Escapes Holiday & Travel Club
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Fiords, Glaciers and Mountains Self Drive Tour - Reversed

This 10 day tour takes you to the icons of the South Island, with extra nights in Christchurch, Fiordland and Queenstown you'll have time to discover the charms of each destination. You begin with a scenic train journey across the Southern Alps to the ruggedly beautiful West Coast with its spectacular glaciers. Other highlights of this fantastic adventure include a nature cruise in the pristine Milford Sound in Fiordland National Park, the adventure capital of Queenstown and the magnificent mountains of Mt Cook National Park.

Starts in:	Christchurch
Finishes in:	Christchurch
Length:	10days / 9nights
Accommodation:	Hotel 4 star
Can be customised:	Yes

This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.



Inclusions:

Includes: Late model rental cars

Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)

Includes: Unlimited kms

Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring

Included activity: Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation

Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App

plus much more...

Day 1





Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation

On arrival, you will be met by a private driver and transferred to your Christchurch accommodation.

Welcome to Christchurch City

Welcome to Ōtautahi / Christchurch, the South Island’s garden city, where historic heritage meets contemporary urban design. Whether you’re exploring the Avon River, wandering through expansive botanical gardens, or discovering contemporary art galleries, Christchurch offers plenty to uncover. As the gateway to the Canterbury Plains and Southern Alps, the city is also the perfect base for refined farm-to-table dining, scenic adventures, and alpine escapes

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Discover Christchurch Afternoon Tour with Leisure Tours

A half-day sightseeing tour of Christchurch highlighting both the damage to the city inflicted by several large earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 and the rebuild which is currently in progress, together with the surviving beauty of the city and the historical landmarks. Experience the grand architecture, beautiful gardens, and scenic viewpoints on a half-day city tour of Christchurch.

Your accommodation: Sudima Christchurch City

Sudima Christchurch City is a brand new 5-star boutique hotel, ideally located on Victoria Street. Amidst an array of cafes, restaurants and bars, stay only a martini olive pips’ throw from beautiful Hagley Park and Christchurch’s CBD. Experience the garden city in comfort and style.



Day 2







Shared Transfer from Christchurch CBD Accommodation to Christchurch Train Station with Christchurch Touring Company

You will be met by a driver at your Christchurch Accommodation and transferred to the railway station.

TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Christchurch to Greymouth

The early morning departure is rewarded with incredible scenery today onboard the TranzAlpine Scenic Train. Considered one of the world's great train journeys, it travels between the East Coast, Christchurch and the West Coast, Greymouth. From your carriage, you'll see the fields of the Canterbury Plains and farmland, followed by the spectacular gorges and river valleys of the Waimakariri River. The train then climbs into the Southern Alps passing through small settlements and Arthur's Pass National Park before descending through the lush beech rain forest to the West Coast town of Greymouth, a great base for visits to Punakaiki and the West Coast glaciers.

Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

Greymouth to Franz Josef

Leaving Greymouth you will head south into Glacier Country. Pass through Hokitika and be sure to take a 50 minute detour to the spectacular Hokitika Gorge, the famous turquoise-coloured river surrounded by native bush-clad cliffs.
Continue on through Ross, a historic gold mining town where several buildings still remain intact and still to this day one of New Zealand's working gold mines. As you travel further down the coast you’ll also go through Hari Hari, the town where Guy Menzies, the first person to fly solo over the Tasman crash landed. Heading south along the mighty West Coast highway you pass through ancient temperate rainforests while getting sneak peeks of the wild west coast beach occasionally. Whataroa is the next town where you can see one of the world's rarest birds, the New Zealand white heron or Kotuku nest at the Waitangi Roto Nature Reserve, and guided tours from October to March will take you there. Arriving in Franz Josef township is a lively place with a great atmosphere, restaurants including Blue Ice and Snakebite are worth a meal. This small town is packed with walks, adventure, and scenic activities, something for everyone.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

A spectacular scenic flight soaring over two of New Zealand's most famous glaciers, Fox and Franz Josef. Landing at the head of one and view the incredible sight of this frozen river as it winds its way through ancient carved valleys. It is important to read and understand the risks associated with this activity. A full risk disclosure can be found here.

Your accommodation: Scenic Hotel Franz Josef Glacier

Only a breath away from the Franz Josef Glacier, Scenic Hotel is located in the heart of Franz Josef Village. Here you will find all of the amenities you would expect, as well as being close to the shops, restaurants and activities on offer in the beautiful Westland region.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3



Franz Josef to Queenstown (via Wānaka)

Heading south you pass through the second glacier town of Fox Glacier before heading along the coast and into more classic West Coast bush scenery. We can recommend a stop at Knights Point Lookout elephant seals can often be seen basking on the sandy beaches at the far end of the point. Crossing the massive Haast River you turn inland and head into the valley climbing through mountains littered with waterfalls. The Haast Valley offers a spectacular view of the river and its enormous power. Along the way there is ample opportunity to admire Aspiring National Park and a stop at Roarig Billy Falls will leave you in awe. The Blue Pools near Makarora are a great 30-minute walk. The road from Makarora leads to Lakes Wānaka and Hāwea which will guide you into the stunning lakeside township of Wānaka before heading over New Zealand's highest sealed road, Crown Range Road and dropping into the Wakatipu basin, home to Queenstown. .

Your accommodation: Millennium Hotel Queenstown

Right in the heart of the action, the Millennium Hotel is just minutes from Queenstown's central shopping and entertainment district. Outdoor activities such as bungy jumping, white water rafting and jet boating are just some of the easily accessible activities nearby in New Zealand's adventure capital.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 4



Explore Queenstown

Well-known as New Zealand's ‘adventure capital’, Queenstown is home to a range of adventures, from the world's first and most famous bungy jumps to jet boat thrills, white-water rafting, and skydiving. However, Queenstown offers far more than a fast-paced, action-packed holiday. Settled on the shores of beautiful Lake Wakatipu beneath a soaring panorama of the Remarkables Mountain Range, this alpine town is surrounded by many historic, gastronomic, and scenic wonders. Take a stroll through the beautiful lakefront parks and gardens, browse through market stalls on weekends, dine in wonderful al-fresco restaurants, or ride on the 100-year-old historic Steamship - TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak Station. Take the Queenstown Gondola up to Bob's Peak and soak up the panoramic views of the magnificent lake and mountain ranges. And after all of that, if you do want the adrenaline rush, Queenstown is known for taking your pick from the Shotover Jet, Canyon Swing, Zipline, Luge, or Heli-hike.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Lord of the Rings Queenstown Tour with Nomad Safaris

A thrilling Lord of the Rings Queenstown Safari, combining breathtaking filming locations with exhilarating 4WD action. Discover the magic of Middle-earth as expert guides bring Tolkien’s world to life with fascinating facts and tales. Visit iconic sites like the Misty Mountains, the Pillars of the Kings (Argonath), and more. Travel along a historic gold mining road, try your hand at gold panning, and soak in spectacular panoramic views of Queenstown’s stunning landscapes. A must for any Lord of the Rings fan and adventure seeker!

Your accommodation: Millennium Hotel Queenstown

Right in the heart of the action, the Millennium Hotel is just minutes from Queenstown's central shopping and entertainment district. Outdoor activities such as bungy jumping, white water rafting and jet boating are just some of the easily accessible activities nearby in New Zealand's adventure capital.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 5



Queenstown to Te Anau

Passing through the bustling suburb of Frankton, follow the shores of Lake Wakatipu. The Remarkables mountain range towers over you on the stretch of road known as "The Devil's Staircase" leading you to the township of Kingston. You'll venture into Southland before crossing the rolling tussock lands of Mossburn (deer capital of New Zealand) and shortly arriving at Te Anau, the gateway to Fiordland National Park.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Te Anau Glowworm Caves with RealNZ

Begin your Te Anau Glowworm experience with a scenic cruise across Lake Te Anau on board the luxury catamaran, Luminosa, to the western side of the lake. On arrival, you'll enter the caves through Cavern House, where informative displays detail the history of this 12,000 year old underground network. You'll then explore by limestone pathway while your guide points out hidden whirlpools, sculpted rock formations, and a rushing underground waterfall. See a magical display of thousands of glowworms as you glide through the darkness in a small boat.

Your accommodation: Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas

The Te Anau Hotel and Villas offers a range of accommodation from hotel rooms and suites to villas. Ideally located on the lake front this hotel is just a few minutes stroll from the shops, cafes and many activities Te Anau has to offer.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6





Te Anau to Milford Sound, returning to Te Anau

The magnificent Milford Road leading to Milford Sound offers some of the most beautiful and iconic scenery in the country. Countless photo opportunities mean this drive should not be rushed. From crystal clear lakes and towering mountains to lush glacier-formed meadows, this area is abundant with picture-perfect scenes. Continue on through the Homer Tunnel, an engineering marvel at 1219 meters long. Arriving in the village of Milford, you will be greeted with an amazing view of Mitre Peak. A day cruise into the heart of the sound is not to be missed. You’ll learn about how this magnificent area was formed and experience the wonder of the falls that line the Fjord before back-tracking the way you came.

Milford Sound Cruise with Real NZ - Lunch Included

Get up close and personal with Milford Sound on a leisurely cruise of this spectacular fiord. From thundering waterfalls to sky-high mountains to lush rainforests, Milford has it all. Experience the spray of a waterfall as you cruise close to sheer rock faces. Informative, participative, and relaxed, this is the perfect way to experience Milford Sound to the fullest. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information, see here.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Milford Sound Luxury Lunch Cruise with Fiordland Discovery

Embark on an unforgettable Milford Sound adventure aboard a boutique catamaran, the Fiordland Jewel. Designed for ultimate comfort and breathtaking views, our small group cruise offers cozy lounges, dining booths, and panoramic sea vistas from the main saloon or the outdoor dining area. Regardless of the weather, you’ll be immersed in the stunning scenery and nature that surround you. Our knowledgeable crew will share fascinating stories and point out wildlife such as seals, penguins, and dolphins along the way. Enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by the onboard chef as you sail through the fiord. With ample outdoor space, you can fully experience the tranquillity and beauty of Milford Sound.

Your accommodation: Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas

The Te Anau Hotel and Villas offers a range of accommodation from hotel rooms and suites to villas. Ideally located on the lake front this hotel is just a few minutes stroll from the shops, cafes and many activities Te Anau has to offer.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 7



Te Anau to Aoraki Mt Cook National Park

Crossing the rolling tussock lands you pass through Mossburn, the deer capital of New Zealand. Following Lake Wakatipu north the Remarkable mountain range towers over you as you approach the adventure capital of Queenstown, before heading east over the historic Kawarau Bridge and if you haven’t already done so you can take a bungy jump from the bridge, or sit back and watch others throw themselves off. For a more sedate activity, Gibbston which borders the Kawarau River has many vineyards which are open for tastings.
The Kawarau Gorge guides you towards Cromwell and for more wine tastings a side trip to Bannockburn is a must, with many award winning vineyards and winery restaurants to enjoy. Cromwell sits at the head of the Kawarau Gorge and the historic old town is well worth the visit, the buildings are now home to quaint shops and cafes. The old town buildings were relocated from the valley that now sits deep under Lake Dunstan. Continue along Lake Dunstan until you reach the historic and scenic Bendigo Reserve, which was one of Otago’s original gold mining settlements. Well marked paths will guide you to the remains of stone cottages and other buildings from this bygone era.
The Lindis Pass is one of New Zealand’s highest roads with the summit reaching 971 metres. The tussock covered hills offer an unusual contrast as you pass from Central Otago into the Mackenzie Basin. The towns of Omarama and Twizel are the last stops before you arrive at Lake Pukaki and take the Mt Cook Highway along the shores to the village. In Aoraki Mt Cook Village a myriad of activities are available scenic ski plane or helicopter flights with glacier landings to kayaking on a glacial lake and a host of walks to suit all abilities. At The Hermitage Hotel the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre is a must see.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Museum and Theatre Explorer Pass with Hermitage

A tribute to New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary, a humanitarian, ambassador, and one of the world's greatest explorers. The centre showcases the Aoraki Mount Cook region, the history of climbing, and early transport used throughout the region. This comprehensive museum details the life of Sir Edmund Hillary, the Hermitage, and provides access to the 126-seat custom-designed theatre. Check out the daily film schedule which includes 3D Movies, documentaries, and 360-degree digital dome features.

Your accommodation: Hermitage Hotel, Wakefield Wing Superior Room

The Hermitage Hotel ringed by magnificent snow-capped peaks of the Southern Alps, is a world-renowned tourist destination and has been an icon of superior accommodation and dining since 1884. Room type - Wakefield Wing Superior room facing Aoraki/Mt. Cook.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 8



SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Glacier Explorers

Experience 500-year-old icebergs up close on the Aoraki-Mt Cook terminal lake. The Glacier Explorers tour is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and one of only three in the world! Very few glaciers terminate into lakes and even fewer of them are accessible. See towering ice cliffs and floating icebergs from the safety of a specially designed boat. These boats provide a safe way to view unseen and inaccessible areas of New Zealand's largest glacier The Tasman.

Aoraki / Mt Cook National Park to Christchurch

Leaving Aoraki Mt Cook National Park, travel a short distance for a stop at the visitor centre on the southern shores of Lake Pukaki. Learn about the formation of the region and take in the spectacular views of Aoraki-Mount Cook. Along the way, you'll reach Lake Tekapo which also displays the same reflective qualities as Lake Pukaki, making the waters bright turquoise. It's a great place to take a scenic flight, soak in a hot spring or just marvel at the magnificent views. From here you travel through Burkes Pass and into the rich farming valley that surrounds Geraldine. Continue across the vast Canterbury Plains to Christchurch.

Your accommodation: Sudima Christchurch City



Sudima Christchurch City is a brand new 5-star boutique hotel, ideally located on Victoria Street. Amidst an array of cafes, restaurants and bars, stay only a martini olive pips' throw from beautiful Hagley Park and Christchurch's CBD. Experience the garden city in comfort and style.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 9



Explore Christchurch

Following earthquakes that razed its centre and much of the outlying suburbs, Ōtautahi-Christchurch is well into a billion-dollar makeover. In the middle of the Canterbury Plains, bordering the pacific ocean, New Zealand’s newest city is an ideal gateway to exploring the middle of the South. Go punting on the Avon River, take a historic tram ride, catch the gondola to the rim of an extinct volcano or do all three! See the world's only Cardboard Cathedral and for nature enthusiasts - wander the renowned Christchurch Botanic Gardens, or head to Oxford Terrace in the city to find a great spot to eat or drink. Drive an hour in any direction to ski, mountain bike, wine taste, whale-watch, bungy jump or play golf. Take the winding Port Hills road to the French settlement of Akaroa & Banks Peninsula and tour the vines in Waipara for an authentic New Zealand wine-tasting experience.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Willowbank Wildlife Reserve

Nowhere else in New Zealand will you find such a wide range of New Zealand wildlife so close to you. Willowbank provides you with a "Kiwi Guarantee" and is home to New Zealand's largest and most accessible Kiwi viewing area. With this unique experience, you will see New Zealand's natural splendor firsthand, and view Kiwis that are not hidden behind glass. You will explore one of the most complete selections of New Zealand native and introduced wildlife in natural bush surroundings. Much of the Willowbank wildlife wander free and can be petted and fed.
Choose to explore the reserve yourself, or for an up-close Kiwi experience, you can take a guided tour.

Your accommodation: Sudima Christchurch City



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Meals included: Breakfast

Day 10




Return Your Vehicle to Christchurch Airport

It's time to return your rental car and let the South Island journey come to an end. If time allows spend the day exploring more of Christchurch, we'd suggest a leisurely drive up the Port Hills for some great sites and then over to the harbour of Lyttleton, before circling through the tunnel and back to the airport to continue your journey home.

Farewell from Aotearoa / New Zealand

Bid farewell to Aotearoa / New Zealand, taking with you unforgettable memories of its breathtaking landscapes and incredible adventures. In Māori, it is said mā te wā, which is not goodbye, it is see you soon!

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	10
Accomodation:	Hotel 4 star
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Sudima Christchurch City
Day 2	Scenic Hotel Franz Josef Glacier
Day 3	Millennium Hotel Queenstown
Day 4	Millennium Hotel Queenstown
Day 5	Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas
Day 6	Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas
Day 7	Hermitage Hotel, Wakefield Wing Superior Room
Day 8	Sudima Christchurch City
Day 9	Sudima Christchurch City