

WILDERNESS SOUTH HIGHLIGHTS

Christchurch- West Coast- Queenstown- Milford Sound

6 day nature and wilderness safari tour

Tour Code: WSH

Canterbury Trails offer a personally guided small group - Taking you "off the beaten track" (where only the locals usually dare to go!) this tour is fully escorted with first class service, good food and comfortable accommodations. Maximum group size for this tour is six guests.

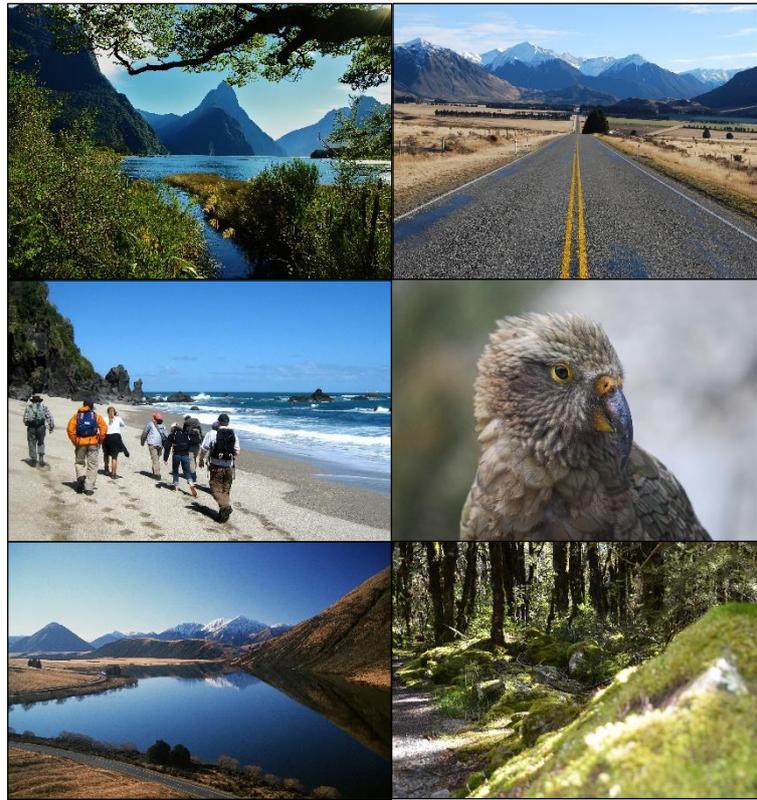
- *6 days of scenic splendor
- *Diverse landscapes
- *Get in touch with nature
- *A photographer's dream!

Explore New Zealand's spectacular South Island with a guide who will help you discover the natural wonders and heritage of this land. You will meet the local people, walk along deserted beaches, through ancient rain forests, view Pacific Island glaciers, experience the stillness of lagoon and lake and be inspired by the magnificence of Milford Sound. Visit a remote farm, National Parks and the South-West New Zealand World Heritage Area, all in the shadow of the Southern Alps and their rugged snowcapped peaks. Highlights include the High Country, Arthur's Pass National Park, Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, The West Coast, Queenstown and Milford Sound.

Day 1... Christchurch over Arthur's Pass to The West Coast

"Orientation, High country, valleys and kear"

After being met by your guide, you will be driven through the "Garden City", escape the city and start your journey west across the Canterbury Plains. As the distant mountains become closer, you may wonder, just like the Maori and the early settlers before us how you will find a way through. Crossing Porter's Pass, a dramatic landscape change occurs as you enter the high-country, a high tussock grass basin bounded by the Torlesse Mountains to the east and the Craigieburn Mountains to the west. Travelling through this region you will pass glacial formed lakes (L Pearson) before reaching the limestone formations of Castle Hill. These mystic rocks dominate the landscape and are held sacred by many, including the Maori and the Deli Lama.



Farther on, we reach the wide expanse of the Waimakariri River and Arthur's Pass National Park. This is a day to discover the real high country - a day where you can explore and also learn about the early pioneers, alpine landscape, plants (Bealey Chasm / Dobson Nature Walk) and the animals in the spectacular Southern Alps.

Arthur's Pass National Park has an incredible diversity of flora and landscape ranging from the eastern beech clad hills and tussock grass valleys to the luxuriant rain forest in the west. It is also home to a unique South Island personality who is mischievous, inquisitive, comical and rowdy; the cheeky kea - the world's only alpine parrot. We may have to bring out the macro lens as they have been known to try and remove shoe laces with their beaks!

Our route was originally used by the Maori to move greenstone from the west coast and later as a link to the gold rush fields. It will reveal great mountain valleys as it winds its way down the spectacular Otira Gorge - a geographer's dream. On the other side of the Divide we turn north to head round Lake Brunner making our way along the spectacular coastal road to Punakaiki in time for sunset.

(MT, L, AT)

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Day 2... Down the West Coast "Blowholes, coast, forest and lagoon"

Punakaiki is famous for its Pancake Rocks - layered limestone rock formations with arches, caves and blow holes. Our black and white fans will love the early morning haze before we head south. A quick visit to Hokitika, once the capital of Westland, a roaring gold mining town and also a place where the Maori sought their treasured greenstone (jade). Greenstone is a feature in the town's bustling centre of art and craft shops. The nearby Gorge has amazing turquoise clear water

As you journey south, you will see the West Coast bush and further evidence of the last Ice Age in the kettle lakes created by the melting ice sheets. Arrive at Okarito with time to explore New Zealand's largest expanse of natural wetland by boat or kayak. Your nights' accommodation will be in the Franz Josef area.

(B, MT, L, AT)

Day 3... Glaciers - The Haast "Geology, Ice and Rainforest"

A morning to explore the glaciated landscape of the Franz Josef Glacier region. We can walk to the terminal face of the Glacier or to a glacier viewpoint to witness the Glacier's descent down the mountain into the rainforest. You can also take an Alpine Guide to experience a hike on the Glacier or perhaps fly by helicopter to view the Southern Alps with a snow landing on the upper reaches of the glacier. (Please note that the optional glacial hike and helicopter trips are not included in the tour cost and are subject to the weather).

After lunch we explore the Temperate Rainforest and Wild Coastline of the region with a choice of walks. A beautiful and tranquil walk can be taken around the edge of Lake Matheson where incredible reflections of Mount Cook and Mount Tasman in the lake can often be seen. Alternatively, following a drive south we walk through lush rainforest to a remote beach on the Tasman Sea where in Spring we can look for the rare Fiordland Penguin. We travel to nearby Ship Creek. Here, there is a good chance of seeing the rare Hector's Dolphin playing beyond the surf. Walk through a primeval swamp forest to see ancient "dinosaur" trees, view a coastal lagoon and fossick for greenstone on the remote beach.

Your accommodation will be in Haast.

(B, MT, AT)



Day 4... Across the Haast Pass to Wanaka "Wilderness, Waterfalls and Lakes"

Following a short swampland walk we continue our drive. From Haast the road turns east, following the Haast Highway. You can now observe how the landscape again changes dramatically as the road climbs over the Haast Pass from the dense rain forest of the West Coast to the drier tussock lands of the Otago province.

On the way, there are short walks to see waterfalls and if there has been recent rainfall, the Haast River passing through the gorge known as the Gates of Haast can be truly spectacular. A while after the Haast Pass the road skirts first along the banks of Lake Wanaka and then making a slight turn and rising over a ridge, Lake Wanaka is left behind and Lake Hawea is before you. The road follows the shoreline of this lake and then we reach the alpine village of Wanaka. This is a quiet mountain resort on the southern shores of Lake Wanaka. In the afternoon the choice of relaxing, taking a stunning hike, taxing your brain at 'Puzzling World' or riding monster vehicles is yours? Your accommodation for the night will be here in Wanaka.

(B, MT, L, AT)



Day 5... Wanaka - Queenstown "Estuaries, explorers, tussocks and gold"

From Wanaka, we drive via Lake Dunstan and head for the vineyards of Central Otago. An introduction to the wine (Pinot Noir) of the area through its unique Aroma Room and tasting experience. We then visit a couple of vineyards for tastings and lunch. Heading towards Arrowtown we stop of at the home of Bungy on the Kawarau Bridge. This was the first Bungy jumping site in the world. Arrowtown is a quaint and historic village where we can imagine what it would have been like to be involved with gold prospecting in the 1800's. Your guide will take you to your over-night Queenstown accommodation.

(B, MT, L, AT)

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WE'LL GUIDE YOU
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Day 6... Queenstown - Milford Sound Excursion "Milford Sound, glacial lakes, alps and fiords"

The road to Milford Sound through the Fiordland National Park is justifiably almost as famous as the Sound itself. To Te Anau there is farmland, then there are lakes and tussock flats and then the breathtaking sheer U shaped glaciated valleys. As the road proceeds, the landscape becomes more rugged and the sound of water becomes more prominent, especially after rain when it roars and there are waterfalls everywhere.

On the journey to Milford Sound, you can see waterfalls, spectacular alpine views and lakes. The Homer Tunnel, started in the Great Depression is a tribute to the labourers who made this route possible. Dug through the Darran Mountains into the Cleddau Valley, it gives us access to Milford Sound, a truly majestic place voted as one of the seven scenic wonders of the world.

You will then explore the magic of the fiord on a spectacular boat cruise before heading back to Queenstown* with a short stop in Te Anau. Back in Queenstown your guide will bid you 'good-bye' with a farewell drink.

*[Optional extras (not included in tour cost) for the day are a return flight from Milford to Queenstown by plane or perhaps a private helicopter charter with a snow landing.]

(B, MT, L, AT)

Tour Inclusions:

- Fully escorted small group "off the beaten track" tours
- Six nights in comfortable accommodation
- Breakfasts on six mornings
- Lunches on six days
- Picnic morning or afternoon teas with NZ cookies
- Personal, experienced and knowledgeable local guides
- The incredible scenery of New Zealand's South Island
- Guided walks and excursions each day to experience the diverse and varied landscapes
- Seasonal sightings of the Fiordland Crested Penguins
- Full day excursion to Fiordland and Milford Sound with fiord cruise
- Travel by deluxe mini-coach
- Meet and greet at Christchurch or Queenstown
- **Option to extend tour and guide services in Queenstown**

**Meal codes indicating meals which are included in your wilderness experience...B - Full breakfast; MT - Picnic morning tea; L - Lunch
AT - Picnic afternoon tea; D - Dinner**



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