

Queenstown - West Coast - Christchurch

High Country, Valleys, Coastlines, Geology, History
Short Hop : 2 Days 1 Night

Tour Code: SH03a

Day 1: Queenstown to Franz Joseph via West Coast

Depart Queenstown and head over the rugged and remote Crown Range after first visiting Arrowtown, the site of gold diggings in the 1860's. Stop in Wanaka for a break on the shore of Lake Wanaka with stunning views of Mt Aspiring. From Wanaka head towards the West Coast crossing the Haast Pass. On the way, you can take 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. North of Haast we join the West Coast Highway which passes through primeval temperate rainforest where we can take the opportunity to explore. The coastline is also spectacular and there is a possibility of seeing Hector's Dolphins, the smallest and rarest dolphin in New Zealand.

Continuing north, we enter glacier country to spend the night at Franz Joseph. Here there is the opportunity to explore the glaciers with your guide who can take you to the glacier face or you can book a walk on the glacier with one of the local guiding companies. Scenic helicopter flights can also be booked. These trips are also available on the following morning if you wish. (Guided Walks and Helicopter flights at not included in the price).

Day 2: Franz Joseph to Christchurch

Depending on whether you want to explore the glacier in more detail there is the opportunity to visit the Okarito Lagoon, 12 km north of Franz Joseph. Take a boat cruise or kayak on New Zealand's largest area of un-spoilt wetlands. This area is host to the largest number of species of birds in New Zealand including the White Heron, spoonbills, godwits and shags.

Continuing north we head to Hokitika for lunch. Once the capital of Westland and a roaring gold mining town, and also a place where the Maori sought their treasured greenstone (jade). Greenstone, glass and native timbers are features in this town's bustling centre of art and craft shops.

A short drive after Hokitika we turn East inland to head across the Southern Alps. In a mere distance of 50 miles we experience 4 different climates and vegetation zones and weather permitting take the opportunity to walk among New Zealand's flora and fauna in Arthur's Pass National Park and view one of several spectacular waterfalls.

Afternoon tea is taken by Lake Pearson home to the Australian Crested Grebe (one of the oldest birds in evolutionary terms) and at the centre of the South Island. As the shadows grow we pass Maori sacred sight of Castle Hill before descending onto the Canterbury Plains and driving an hour or so to reach your final destination of Christchurch - The Garden City.



Inclusions:

- Travel by deluxe mini-van
- Picnic morning or afternoon teas
- Café lunches on each day
- Guided walks to explore the alpine landscape (as required)
- Fully escorted with local knowledgeable guide

Not included:

- Guest accommodations, breakfasts, evening meals or optional activities

Depart Queenstown at 8.30am on Day 1, finish in Christchurch at approximately 5.30pm on Day 2