

Sir Edmund Hillary Rail Explorer : 15-Day Tour Christchurch to Wellington - itinerary

This is not Guided by No8 Tours, you will part of a larger independent Tour group. You will need to fully independent and mobile.

DAY ONE

Arrival in Christchurch

Today you will be picked from your door and will be dropped off at the Airport to fly to Christchurch. Once here you will be transferred from the airport to your pre-tour accommodation at the Sudima Airport Hotel. There will be a registration to meet your fellow explorers and tour guides is from 2:30pm – 5:00pm. Please note dinner is not included and will need to be booked independently tonight.

DAY TWO

B, D

Christchurch - Greymouth - Franz Josef

You will be staying at the Sudima Airport Hotel and will be transported by coach to the Addington Train Station. Your journey begins at Christchurch Railway Station, where the iconic TranzAlpine awaits. Often regarded to be one of the world's great train journeys for the scenery through which it passes. The journey is 223 kilometres one-way, taking almost five hours. You will see epic vistas, travel the edges of the ice-fed Waimakariri River, traverse the majestic Canterbury Plains and Southern Alps, and see large tracts of native beech forest. Luxury coaches await in Greymouth to transport you to your hotel in the ruggedly beautiful Franz Josef.

DAY THREE

B,L

Franz Josef - Haast - Queenstown

Wake up to enjoy the option for a helicopter tour of the Franz Josef glacier. Leaving Franz Josef, we travel down the West Coast through the Haast Pass, journeying through large tracts of native rain forest and over the Southern Alps. This remote

area has a ruggedly beautiful landscape of vast rainforests, gushing waterfalls and snow-capped mountains. Continuing through Makarora on the border of Mount Aspiring World Heritage Park, we pass by the crystal-clear waters of Lake Wanaka, Lake Hawea and Lake Dunstan. The adventure playground of Queenstown then awaits! Cap off a special day as we take in The Remarkables Mountain Range and the view of Lake Wakatipu from the hotel.

DAY FOUR

B, L

Queenstown

Wake up to join a lake cruise on board the historic TSS Earnslaw, the 1912 Edwardian steamboat, which takes us across Lake Wakatipu to Walter Peak High Country Farm for a gourmet BBQ lunch. Enjoy an afternoon visit to the historic and picturesque goldmining town, Arrowtown, with a visit to the Lakes District Museum. Tonight, you will oversee your own dinner option.

DAY FIVE

B,L,D

Queenstown - Kingston - Te Anau

Departing Queenstown, we continue to the village of Kingston which is nestled on southernmost end of Lake Wakatipu. Here, the iconic Kingston Flyer Steam Train awaits to take you on a memorable return journey between Kingston & Fairlight. Then, we enter the Fiordland National Park district, continuing to traverse the Southern Scenic Route, our journey calls in to visit the Takahe Bird Sanctuary. Takahe are the stars of the show and meeting these prehistoric-looking characters is a 'must do' for Fiordland visitors. The sanctuary is a large part of the success of the Takahe Recovery Programme. We spend an extended time experiencing the wonders of Te Anau and Milford Sound.

DAY SIX

B,L,D

Te Anau - Milford Sound - Te Anau

Traveling along the Milford Road (between Te Anau and Milford) is one of the finest alpine drives in the world. The scenery is exceptional, ranging from broad grassy flats, dense rainforest and towering mountains through to glacial lakes and alpine

herb fields. A day tour to Milford Sound offers some of the most spectacular natural scenery to be viewed anywhere in the world. Board the coach and travel through stunning scenery along the Milford Road and into Fiordland, where your cruise boat awaits you. The tour includes a cruise around the fiord so you can experience its wonders up close and see landmarks like Mitre Peak and amazing wildlife, such as dolphins and seals. Cruise the inner most reaches of Milford Sound to the open Tasman Sea and back (or there is the optional upgrade to explore Doubtful Sound instead). A one-day itinerary is enough to see all the beautiful views along the way, take a scenic cruise around the fiord, and get back to Te Anau in time for dinner.

DAY SEVEN

B,L,D

Te Anau - Mandeville - Dunedin

Departing Te Anau for Dunedin, via Mandeville and the Croydon Aviation Museum and Waimea Plains Railway – where we “fire-up” the Rogers K92 Steam Locomotive (the original Kingston Flyer). During this luxury coach journey, we take in the unmatched pristine beauty and rugged countryside that the Southland region is renowned for.

DAY EIGHT

B

Dunedin

In the morning, we explore the remote Taieri Gorge by Dunedin Rail over river gorges, weaving our way through a myriad of historic tunnels and guide you to the historic Wingatui Viaduct, a marvel of 1880s construction that remains the largest wrought iron structure in New Zealand. An afternoon at leisure is planned or there are the optional excursions visit to Larnach Castle for a high tea & garden tour or explore the ‘hidden’ underground Fort Taiaaroa, located underneath the local Albatross colony.

DAY NINE

B,L,D

Dunedin - Oamaru - Aoraki/Mt Cook

Departing from Dunedin by rail, we continue to hug the coast towards Oamaru. We then detour inland via Waitaki Valley & Omarama by coach and onwards towards

the spectacular Aoraki Mt Cook. Here, we find the home of the tallest mountain in New Zealand, which helped Sir Edmund Hillary to develop his climbing skills in preparation for the conquest of Mt Everest. Recognised as part of the Te Wahipounamu UNESCO World Heritage Area, the National Park is a breath-taking environment of glaciers, terminal lakes, turbulent rivers and Australasia's tallest peak, the mighty Aoraki Mt Cook soaring above at 3,724 metres. There is the option after dinner to enjoy stargazing at the Planetarium, digitally immersed in what has been voted the world's largest "International Dark Sky Reserve"

DAY TEN

B,D

Aoraki/Mt Cook

Enjoy a leisurely morning and then a visit to the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre, which is a tribute to New Zealand's global icon as well as discovering New Zealand's colourful transport, climbing and hotel history. Followed by an afternoon scenic drive through the National Park surrounded by the silent splendour of the Southern Alps. Morning optional activities include a glacier explorer cruise or a scenic ski plane flight with expert pilots navigating their way over the glacial lake, passing soaring mountain tops over NZ's longest glacier - the 600-metre thick, Tasman Glacier. Guest speaker is a Hillary family representative in the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Theatre before dinner. The optional Planetarium Show takes place in the theatre after the Hillary presentation.

DAY ELEVEN

B,L,D

Aoraki/Mt Cook - Geraldine - Christchurch

A morning departure from the hotel leaving Aoraki Mt Cook by coach, we journey back to the coast via Tekapo, Geraldine and Rakaia on the way to Christchurch. On arrival in Christchurch, enjoy either a privately chartered Tram for a historic tram journey around the city or explore modern day Antarctica at the International Antarctic Centre and experience a taste of this unique and breathtaking continent – just like the explorers before you.

DAY TWELVE

B,D

Christchurch - Kaikoura

Departing Christchurch on the Coastal Pacific Scenic Train, our destination is Kaikoura, home of resident whales, where the guardians of the seas – the mountains of the Southern Alps – rise majestically from the deep trenches of the Pacific Ocean. Several different species of whale can be seen off the coast of Kaikoura at different times of the year, and most of the time, the huge resident Sperm Whales can be sighted. The ocean trench just off the coast means sperm whales are often seen close to shore.

DAY THIRTEEN

B,L,D

Kaikoura - Marlborough

This morning, we introduce you to a true “rockstar of rail” and a grand finale of epic proportions, as the train is then hauled under a full head of steam by the glorious Marlborough Flyer. It is “all aboard” and we continue to take in the spectacular coastal journey as we depart Kaikoura. Onwards north via the Dashwood Pass and Awatere Valley to Marlborough, the famous wine region boasting over 100 vineyards. This historic WW1 memorial steam locomotive Ab608 Passchendaele, named in honour of our fallen soldiers at The Battle of Passchendaele in 1917. Having hauled royal trains on two previous royal visits in the early 1900’s, this is a journey fit for a king.

DAY FOURTEEN

B

Marlborough-Wellington

Today we'll travel across Cook Strait one of the most picturesque ferry crossings in the world awaits. We weave our way through the Queen Charlotte Sound and cruise across the Cook Strait to the harbour city of Wellington. The group tour ends in Wellington. Upon arrival you will be shuttled to your accommodation in Wellington. Here you can choose how you would like to spend your afternoon and where you would like to dine for dinner that evening. Please note some of the main tour group and No8 Tours customers will be staying the evening in Wellington

DAY FIFTEEN

B

Wellington-Home.

Today you will transfer to Wellington Airport to return home as you reflect on the amazing experience you've just had. Upon arrival back you will be picked and dropped back to the comfort of your home.