Walking New Zealand - South Island Explorer

Trip Code: NZS

Version:

WALK & TREK	GUIDED GROUP	5 MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike sections of three Great Walks: Paparoa, Kepler & Routeburn
- Ride the renowned TranzAlpine Railway
- Stargaze from a private backcountry hut

- Walk, taste & discover with a Christchurch food safari
- Hike to Sealy Tarns with Views of Mount Cook

AT A GLANCE

- Join at Christchurch

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

This two-week trip focuses on the best of New Zealand's South Island – combining scenic day hikes, unique cultural experiences, and time in some of the country's most striking landscapes. Starting in Christchurch, we explore the coastline and surrounding hills before boarding the TranzAlpine train across the Southern Alps.

From Punakaiki's limestone formations and rainforest trails to the glacier region around Fox Glacier, we travel south through the rugged West Coast. Along the way, we meet local Maori storytellers, learn about pounamu (greenstone), and share a home-cooked meal with long-time residents.

The journey includes sections of the country's Great Walks – the Paparoa, Kepler and Routeburn Tracks – as well as time in Wanaka, a cruise on Milford Sound, and hiking beneath Aoraki/Mount Cook. We finish with two nights at a remote hut above Lake Tekapo, in the Aoraki Mackenzie International Dark Sky Reserve, protected against light pollution to give you one of the best experiences of stargazing in the world.

This is a well-paced and varied trip that gets beyond the usual tourist spots and offers a deeper look at the places, people, and stories of Te Waipounamu – the South Island of New Zealand.

Is this holiday for you?

This adventure is designed for active travellers who enjoy exploring on foot and want to go beyond the typical tourist routes. We've included a varied mix of short walks, longer day hikes, and a two-night backcountry hut stay – with walking times ranging from 2 to 6 hours. Some of the hikes follow well-formed tracks, while others involve unmarked terrain, including tussock grasslands, scree slopes, and moderate ascents without a clear path underfoot.

You'll need to be confident walking on uneven ground and comfortable with uphill sections. While this isn't a technical trekking holiday, a good level of fitness will help you get the most out of the experience. The sense of remoteness and wilderness is a key feature of this trip – particularly on our overnight hike to Rex Simpson Hut, where you'll carry your overnight gear in a daypack (bedding is provided at the hut, and main luggage is left behind).

We travel in a comfortable vehicle and keep drive times reasonable, with plenty of opportunities to stop, stretch our legs, and enjoy the scenery. Two experienced driver-guides help ensure a smooth pace throughout the trip. While most of the walks are included, many are optional – and there are a few

shorter or rest days to allow for flexibility and personal choice. This trip suits walkers who are looking for a rewarding, varied, and immersive way to experience New Zealand's South Island.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- 2 Professional and qualified Tour Leader/Drivers
- A single timed transfer from airport to hotel in Christchurch on Day 1
- A single timed transfer to the airport in Christchurch on Day 15
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- All transport required by the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- All activities/excursions/entrance fees described as included in the program

What's not Included

- Travel Insurance
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Tips
- Miscellaneous personal expenditure - drinks and souvenirs etc

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Christchurch.

Transfers are provided from/to Christchurch Airport for all clients arriving on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

12 breakfasts, 8 lunches and 8 dinners are included in the price of this holiday.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Food & Water

Water from the taps is perfectly drinkable on this holiday - please use this to fill your personal bottles for your daily activities. We do not encourage the purchase of single-use plastic bottles.

New Zealand cuisine makes the most of its fresh, locally sourced produce. Meals often feature seasonal vegetables, vibrant salads, artisan breads, and a variety of hearty main dishes ranging from warming stews and pasta to lighter options like wraps, soups, and grain-based salads. Fresh seafood, free-range meats, and vegetarian choices are widely available, and special dietary requirements can usually be catered for.

Many meals are included throughout the trip. Where there's a wide choice of local restaurants or cafés, we've sometimes left meals open so you can explore the local food scene for yourself. A real highlight is our Christchurch evening walking tour with local foodie guides, giving you the chance to sample some of the city's best flavours while learning about its culinary culture.

Accommodation

We use a good standard of accommodation throughout the trip, offering a mix of comfortable city hotels, scenic motels, and alpine-style lodges that reflect the character and diversity of New Zealand's South Island. Accommodation has been carefully chosen for its location, quality, and charm, ranging from our comfortable Christchurch base to welcoming motels on the West Coast and well-located alpine lodges near the mountains.

Most nights will be in well-appointed twin-share rooms with en suite bathrooms. If you're travelling solo, you'll be paired with another guest of the same gender unless you've selected the single supplement option, which is available on a limited number of nights for an additional cost.

A highlight of the tour is our two-night stay at the Rex Simpson Hut, a traditional backcountry hut set in a remote alpine basin above Lake Tekapo. This is a fully hosted, private hut experience that offers a more rustic and adventurous stay. Accommodation here is in mixed bunkrooms with shared facilities. There are no showers, but warm water and a basin will be available for washing, and there's a long-drop toilet with incredible views. The hut is equipped with mattresses, sleeping bags, pillows, sheet-liners, a pot belly stove, gas, and solar lighting – everything you need for a cozy and memorable mountain night. The unique location within a designated Dark Sky Reserve makes this stay truly special.

Group Leader & Support Staff

Each group will be accompanied by 2 professional and qualified tour leaders, who will also share responsibility for driving the support vehicle.

Spending Money

A total of £550 should cover the cost of your miscellaneous expenses, including non included meals. You should take at least some of your travel money in the form of cash and exchange this on arrival in Christchurch. It is not necessary to obtain New Zealand dollars prior to departure. It is possible to withdraw cash from ATM's at towns throughout the trip and credit and debit cards can be widely used. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (plastic cards can be useful in this respect). Also, if you expect to buy considerable quantities of soft drinks or beer, you should make an allowance for this.

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is gratefully received but not expected in New Zealand. It is at your discretion whether or not to reward for excellent service. Tipping in restaurants is also not expected however if you feel the service was of a great standard and you enjoyed the food feel free to tip.

Beat the Jet Lag

Our holidays are normally designed with minimal 'down time' at the start of the trip, but having a day or two at the beginning will have the additional benefit of allowing you time to get over the stress of a long journey or travelling across time zones, leaving you refreshed and ready for your holiday. We can easily arrange for you to have additional nights and airport transfers.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage (with a maximum weight of 20kg) and a daypack. Luggage with wheels is useful for this holiday. For international flights, please check your baggage allowance with your airline. For the nights at the Rex Simpson Hut you will not have access to your main baggage. You will need to carry your overnight essentials with you in your rucksack. Please keep in mind that space in the vehicle is limited, so any extra luggage beyond your main bag may need to be stored elsewhere, as we can't always carry it with us.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

From 1 October 2019, travellers must have an NZeTA (New Zealand Travel Authority) to travel to New Zealand. From July 2019 you can request your NZeTA via the Immigration New Zealand mobile app or the Immigration New Zealand website (www.immigration.govt.nz/nzeta). The app is fast, easy to use, and the most affordable option. The cost of the ETA is NZD$9 for requests made via the mobile app and NZD$12 for requests made via the Immigration NZ website. You will be asked to pay your International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy (IVL) of NZD$35 (Aug 2019) at the same time. ETA requests will take between 5-10 minutes to complete. Once issued, an ETA is valid for up to two years and can be used for multiple visits to NZ.

Currency

The unit of currency in New Zealand is the New Zealand Dollar.

Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking for up to 7 hours. Hill walking is the best training, but running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

Climate

We run our New Zealand trekking trips during the Southern Hemisphere spring and summer period of November through to March. At this time of year, we can expect temperatures of between 20°C and 25°C during the day, falling to between 10°C and 15°C at night. Surrounded by warm oceans, New Zealand has a maritime climate and does experience rainfall throughout the year. In the South Island, the West Coast receives far more rain than the east of the island, which lies in the rain shadow of the mountains.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's **'Travel Aware'** campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

Guide books

- Lonely Planet New Zealand's South Island
- Fodor's Exploring New Zealand
- The Rough Guide to New Zealand
- Lonely Planet Cycling New Zealand
- The Field Guide to New Zealand's Native
- Trees - John Dawson & Rob Lucas
- The Penguin Field Guide to the Birds of New
- Zealand - Barrie Heather & Hugh Robertson

Historical books

- The Penguin History of New Zealand - Michael King
- State of the Maori Nation - Malcolm Mulholland
- The Story of New Zealand - Bassett, Sinclair & Stenson a quick light read

Novels

- The Whale Rider - Witi Ihimaera
- The Bone People - Keri Hulme
- The Luminaries - Elanor Catton
- A Land of Two Halves - Joe Bennett

- Pounamu Pounamu - Witi Ihimaera
- Wild Pork & Watercress - Barry Crump
- Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's
- Dairy - Lynley Dodd

Equipment Information

Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum.

Essential Clothing & Footwear

- **Hiking boots** - Sturdy, waterproof, with firm ankle support and good grip. *(Clean thoroughly before travel - NZ biosecurity will check.)*
- **Waterproof jacket** - Fully waterproof (not just showerproof), with hood. Gore-Tex or similar recommended.
- **Waterproof overtrousers** - Fully waterproof, breathable fabric preferred.
- **Trekking trousers/leggings** - 2-3 pairs. Lightweight and quick-drying. Avoid denim.
- **Thermal baselayers** - 1-2 tops and 1 pair of leggings (merino or synthetic).
- **Fleece or wool jumper** - For insulation.
- **Down or insulated jacket** - Lightweight but warm; ideal for cooler evenings and alpine conditions.
- **Hiking socks** - 3-4 pairs. Wool blend or technical hiking socks.
- **Underwear** - Quick-drying fabrics preferred.

- **T-shirts or walking shirts** - 2-3; synthetic, merino or other moisture-wicking fabrics.
- **Warm hat** - Woolly/beanie-style.
- **Sunhat** - Wide-brimmed for sun protection.
- **Gloves or mittens** - Warm, windproof or waterproof if possible.
- **Sleepwear** - Lightweight and comfortable.
- **Casual evening clothes** - Simple outfit for lodge evenings (e.g., casual trousers and long-sleeved top).
- **Comfortable shoes/trainers** - For evenings or travelling.
- **Sandals** - Optional, useful for kayaking or accommodation.

Essential Equipment

- **Daypack (30-40L)** - For carrying daily essentials and overnight gear to Rex Simpson Hut.
- **Waterproof pack cover** - To protect your pack in rain.
- **Water bottles (x2) or hydration bladder** - Minimum total capacity: 2 litres. *(Reusable, not single-use plastic.)*
- **Headtorch (or small torch)** - With spare batteries.
- **Sunglasses** - 100% UV protection, with neck strap.
- **Sunscreen** - High SPF, plus lip balm with sun protection.
- **Antibacterial hand gel**
- **Washbag & toiletries** - Small, lightweight and eco-friendly where possible.
- **Towel** - Travel or microfibre towel.

- **Reusable shopping bag** - For shopping or laundry.

Highly Recommended

- **Hiking poles** - Great for stability, especially on ascents/descents.
- **Buff or neck scarf** - Versatile for sun, wind or cold.
- **Insect repellent** - DEET-based recommended (sandflies can be bothersome).
- **Small personal first aid kit** - Include:
  - Plasters, blister treatment (e.g. Compeed)
  - Painkillers (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen)
  - Antiseptic cream or wipes
  - Anti-diarrhoea treatment
  - Rehydration salts
  - Antihistamines (cream & tablets)
- **Camera** - With memory cards, charger, and/or spare batteries.
- **Dry bags or zip-lock bags** - To keep gear dry and organised.
- **Cup** - For hot drinks on the go.
- **Earplugs** - Handy in shared huts or lodges.
- **Power bank** - For charging devices where power is limited.

Optional

- **Gaiters** - Protect lower legs from scratchy tussock or mud.

- **Spare laces**
- **Shorts** - For warmer hiking days.
- **Swimming costume** - For lakes or hot pools.
- **Penknife** - Must be in hold luggage.
- **Notebook or journal** - Great for reflections during downtime.
- **Book or Kindle**
- **Playing cards or travel games**
- **Money belt or pouch**
- **Energy bars or snacks** - Optional - local fruit/snacks provided, but personal favourites welcome.
- **GPS device or hiking app** - Optional for navigation/tracking routes.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary starting at the hotel in Christchurch. A single timed transfer is provided from/to Christchurch Airport for all clients arriving on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary.

Flight Inclusive Information

Limited seats are available at the advertised flight price, please book as early as you can. If we are unable to secure seats at the price shown, or you have requested regional departures and/or upgrades, we will provide you with an alternative quote. It is likely that flight payment will be in advance of your final holiday balance. Booking a flight inclusive package means you will benefit from full financial protection, eases your holiday planning, and leaves us to deal with airlines and schedule changes. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will offset the carbon of your flight.

Regional departures and/or alternative carriers are available on request.

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Why Choose KE

Why KE?

A KE Exclusive This brand-new itinerary is a true original – available only with KE. It's the perfect balance of rewarding hikes, remote wilderness, and rich local encounters. From wild coastlines to stargazing above Lake Tekapo, it's meaningful, authentic, and beyond the typical tourist trail.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 11/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change