
GEEO ITINERARY

New Zealand 10/9/2025

Day 1: Auckland Arrive in Auckland at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

Arrive in Auckland at any time. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you plan to arrive in New Zealand at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference and overcome any jetlag. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Auckland before the trip. Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

Day 2: Auckland/Rotorua (D) While en route to Rotorua, stop at the Waitomo Glowworm Caves. Take a boat ride through this spectacular underground realm to see thousands of flickering glowworms light up in the dark.

Drive to the lakeside town of Rotorua, situated over an active geothermal zone and known for its volcanic features and rich Maori heritage. Stop en route at the Waitomo Glowworm Caves, where you enjoy a peaceful boat ride through 30-million-year-old caverns covered with magical glowworms that are unique to New Zealand. Hundreds of thousands of these tiny creatures radiate luminescent light in underground caves carved by rivers and time. **Approximate travel time:** 7-8 hrs by private vehicle

Day 3: Rotorua/Maori Village (D) Visit Rotorua and opt to check out the geothermal area or go whitewater rafting. In the evening, visit a Maori village for traditional ceremonies, a Hangi meal, and entertainment.

Rotorua sits over an active volcano and is home to a number of amazing geothermal parks with bubbling mud pits and multi-colored pools. Opt to visit one of the sites, like Hell's Gate, or go whitewater rafting nearby. Visit the Mitai Maori Village and learn the story of Tamatekapua's migration to Aotearoa via the *Te Arawa* canoe and the Māori/Pasifika connection told in dance form. Enjoy a delicious Hangi meal, similar to a Hawaiian lū'au, with dishes such as chicken, sweet potato (kumara), and lamb steamed over heated rocks.

Day 4: Rotorua/Wellington (B) Take in the ever-changing scenery of the North Island and travel to the capital, Wellington.

Pack a book and download your favorite podcasts in preparation for a long travel day on the North Island to the capital, Wellington. **Approximate travel time:** 7-8 hrs by private vehicle

Day 5: Wellington Enjoy the atmosphere in this relaxed but lively city. After an orientation walk, enjoy a free day to explore.

Take a brief orientation walk in Wellington with your tour leader. After the orientation walk, enjoy a free day to explore. Opt to take the cable car up to the botanical gardens or visit the Te Papa Museum, home to historical Maori artifacts and modern exhibits. Find the stairwell just outside the entrance and descend into the foundations of the building to see how the museum is constructed on shock absorbers to withstand New Zealand's many earthquakes. If you opt for a guided tour of the Weta Workshop, you will get a unique behind-the-scenes look at how the workshop helps design some of the world's biggest films. Get up close and personal with props from *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Day 6: Wellington/Kaikoura (B, D) Fly to the South Island, then travel to the seaside town of Kaikoura.

Fly from Wellington to Christchurch on the South Island, then travel by bus to Kaikoura, known for its diverse marine life. Approximate travel time: 1 hr by plane, 3 hrs by private vehicle

Day 7: Kaikoura/Hanmer Springs Enjoy a free morning by the sea in Kaikoura, then stop at a winery on the way to Hanmer Springs.

During a free morning in Kaikoura, opt to follow in the path of Paikea, the Maori "whale rider," and head out to the open seas in search of Giant Sperm Whales as they spray and dive their way through the waters off Kaikoura. Or search for wild dusky dolphins; depending on conditions, most groups have 20-40 minutes of swim time with the dolphins. Next, travel to Hanmer Springs, stopping en route for a wine tasting at a local winery. Upon arrival in Hanmer Springs, opt to take a soak in the hot springs. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private vehicle

Day 8: Hanmer Springs/Franz Josef (B) Take in the scenery while traveling across the Southern Alps to the South Island's West Coast.

Stretch out and enjoy the stunning scenery while traveling across the Southern Alps from Hanmer Springs to Franz Josef. The Southern Alps mountain range extends along much of the length of New Zealand's South Island. Franz Josef is in the rugged and remote West Coast, where you will stay in the rainforest near the world's fastest-moving glacier. The Māori refer to the area as Waiau. Approximate travel time: 8 hrs by private vehicle (including stops)

Day 9: Franz Josef (B) Enjoy a free day to explore the area around Franz Josef. Opt to explore the glacier with a heli hike.

There are plenty of optional activities in the area to suit just about any budget and preference. Feel free to relax, or try optional activities like heli hiking, glacier valley walking, quad biking, lake kayaking, or a hot pool visit. Your tour leader has more ideas if you need them. Just ask! During a helicopter hike, you can take a once-in-a-lifetime helicopter ride high up on Franz Josef Glacier, and then hop out and trek on the white and blue ice. Or you can take a guided interpretive walk that follows ancient glacial pathways carved into the landscape by ice and water along the Franz Josef glacier's retreat. If you'd rather ride than walk or fly, a two-seater ATV quad bike is a great way to explore rainforests, riverbeds, grasslands, sand, and mud. You can also explore the stunning Lake Mapourika by kayak; the lake was created as the Franz Josef glacier retreated 14,000 years ago.

Day 10: Franz Josef/Queenstown Travel through the scenic countryside from Franz Josef to Queenstown.

Continue to Queenstown, the adventure capital of the world. With beautiful scenery and tons of activities, there's something for everyone. Enjoy the great nightlife. Approximate travel time: 8-9 hrs by private vehicle

Day 11: Queenstown (B) Enjoy free time in Queenstown. With beautiful scenery and tons of activities, there's something for everyone.

During your free time in Queenstown, opt to go bungee jumping ("bungy" in New Zealand, its birthplace), jet boating (also born here!), skydiving, paragliding, hiking, or mountain biking. Or take it a little slower and travel by gondola to the top of a local peak. Opt to pre-book a Queenstown jet boating activity along the Shotover River ahead of time. Imagine a fast-paced whitewater ride with sharp turns and spins expertly navigated by a trained driver. Just email travel@geeo.org after booking to sign up. If you prefer a slower pace, discover the breathtaking Lake Wakatipu aboard the TSS Earnslaw, a traditional steamship that was first launched in 1912. This 90-minute cruise highlights the stunning alpine scenery

that surrounds Queenstown and lets you check out the views while relaxing on deck.

Day 12: Queenstown (B, L) Enjoy the stunning scenery of Fiordland National Park and Doubtful Sound on a day cruise.

Cruise through the stunning Doubtful Sound, one of the most untouched, remote places in the world. The only way to get here is by boat across Lake Manapouri, then bus across Wilmont Pass to Doubtful Sound. Marvel at the steep cliff walls and cascading waterfalls, and keep an eye out for area wildlife: dolphins, penguins, seals, and a variety of birds. This isolated part of New Zealand is truly a special place! Take in the waterfalls and wildlife, then return to Queenstown for the night. Approximate travel time: 6 hrs (Queenstown - Doubtful Sound round-trip) by private vehicle

Day 13: Queenstown/Tekapo (B) Visit Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Park and spend the afternoon hiking the region, taking in the alpine scenery.

Head through the center of the South Island New Zealand's highest peak, Mt. Cook. Learn more about mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary at the Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park visitor centre. Aoraki/Mount Cook is both a village, a national park, and the name of New Zealand's highest mountain. Located in central South Island, the park includes a mix of rocks and glaciers, as well as alpine plants including the world's largest buttercup, the Mount Cook lily. There are several short hikes that offer spectacular views. Approximate travel time: 5 hrs by private vehicle

Day 14: Tekapo/Christchurch Continue on to Christchurch and learn about how the city was rebuilt following an earthquake in 2011. Enjoy one final night together with the group.

Travel to the Garden City of Christchurch, a little piece of England in New Zealand, still recovering from a devastating earthquake. Once in Christchurch, take a brief orientation walk with your tour leader, and enjoy free time with your travel companions on your last night in New Zealand. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private vehicle

Day 15: Christchurch (B) Depart at any time.

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Christchurch at any time. If you wish to extend your stay in Christchurch, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEO program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book.

**Itinerary Disclaimer: While it is our intention to adhere to the routes described on our website, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The information on our website is a general guide to the tour and region, and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.*