
GEEO ITINERARY

Australia and New Zealand 9/25/2025

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

Arrive in Cairns at any time. The closest airport is **Cairns Airport (CNS)**. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you arrive in Ireland at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference and overcome any jet lag. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Cairns before the trip. **Hotel Check-in and Welcome Meeting:** Day 1 is an arrival day with no scheduled activities. Check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. Your introduction meeting will begin 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. This meeting is important, as you will meet your tour leader and group and receive important tour information. If you are delayed, please notify us; your tour leader will leave instructions at the front desk regarding where and when to meet the following day. 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. **Joining Instructions:** Traveling to the hotel from the Cairns Airport by taxi will cost approximately \$25-30 AUD. The Cairns Airport Shuttle is \$20-25 AUD per person; shuttle buses leave the airport every 15-20 minutes. The airport information desk can assist with purchasing a ticket. **Accommodation:** Rydges Esplanade Resort Cairns (or similar) * *For the actual hotel your specific departure will be using, please check your voucher.*

Day 2: Cairns/Cape Tribulation Head north to Cape Tribulation. Stop en route to explore Mossman Gorge and take an interpretive walk through the Daintree Rainforest.

Today we head north to Cape Tribulation. We will stop en route to explore Mossman Gorge and take an interpretive walk through the Daintree Rainforest. Follow the Aboriginal guide and learn about bush food, medicinal plants and the lasting relationship of the Kuku Yalanji people with their natural environment. Find out how to make bush soap, watch an ochre painting demonstration, and sample some bush tea. **Approximate travel time:** 3.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Cape Tribulation Beach House (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

Day 3: Cape Tribulation With a free day, opt for a trip to the Great Barrier Reef or to explore Daintree National Park.

With a free day, opt for a trip to the Great Barrier Reef or to explore Daintree National Park. See our optional activities section further below for more details. **Accommodation:** Cape Tribulation Beach House (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 4: Cape Tribulation/Cairns Return to Cairns in the afternoon with free time to explore this laid-back city. En route, stop by Port Douglas and opt to have lunch at a local market.

Return to Cairns in the afternoon with free time to explore this laid-back city. En route, stop by Port Douglas and opt to have lunch at a local market. **Approximate travel time:** 3.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Rydges Esplanade Resort Cairns (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 5: Cairns/Airlie Beach Depart early for a full day of travel to reach Airlie Beach, enjoying scenic views along the way.

Depart early for a full day of travel to reach Airlie Beach with time to explore the town. Airlie Beach is a relaxed Australian resort town on Queensland's Whitsunday Coast. It's a gateway to the Whitsunday Islands and the Great Barrier Reef. **Approximate travel time:** 9-10 hrs by private vehicle

Accommodation: Whitsunday Vista Holiday Apartments (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 6: Airlie Beach Spend the day out on the water boating around the Whitsunday Islands, visiting the Great Barrier Reef. Opt to swim or snorkel, and hike to an island lookout over Whitehaven Beach, known for its stunning white sand. Return to Airlie Beach for the night.

Enjoy a day out on the water amidst some of the 74 tropical islands that make up the Whitsunday archipelago. The Whitsunday Islands are in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef. When it gets too hot, pull on a mask and snorkel (provided free of charge) and dive overboard to check out the variety of brightly colored marine plants, coral, and fish that thrive in these warm tropical waters. (Note that fins are not provided in order to adhere with local coral conservation efforts.) **Accommodation:** Whitsunday Vista Holiday Apartments (or similar) **Meals included:** Lunch

Day 7: Airlie Beach/Byron Bay Fly to Brisbane and transfer to Byron Bay for two nights in this "hippie" paradise.

Fly to Brisbane and transfer to Byron Bay for two nights in this "hippie" paradise. **Approximate travel time:** 2.5 hr by plane; 2-2.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Byron Beachcomber (or similar)

Day 8: Byron Bay Spend the morning down at the beach for a surf lesson with a trained surf instructor. Enjoy a few hours of instruction before hitting the waves for some practice rides.

Spend the morning down at the beach for a surf lesson with a trained surf instructor. Spend some time in the water getting familiar with the waves, practice paddling, and then pop up to balance on the wider, softer beginner boards. You will have the afternoon free in Byron Bay. One option is to pre-book the "Byron Bay Ocean Kayaking" activity. Slice through the waters of the iconic Byron Bay on this half-day kayaking adventure. Paddle past the most easterly point of the Australian mainland, see the Julian Rocks Marine Reserve, and ride the waves into shore. On top of it all, keep a close eye out for dolphins and whales (in season) who call these waters home. You can book this by emailing GEE0 at least 60 days before departure. You could also take a walk to the Cape Byron Lighthouse, 3km (1.9 mi) northeast of Byron Bay. The popular white structure emits the most powerful light of all working lighthouses in the country, and it's also located at the most easterly point of the Australian continent. Head up to the top of the tower to scan the ocean for whales (the Southern Cross University's Whale Research Centre is located here). **Accommodation:** Byron Beachcomber (or similar)

Day 9: Byron Bay/Port Macquarie Spend the morning in Byron Bay before heading to the coastal township of Port Macquarie, featuring all the beauty of the beach set alongside gorgeous national parks.

Spend your free time in the morning at Byron Bay wandering the town to check out the local shops or have one last coffee on the beach. Then head to the coastal township of Port Macquarie, featuring all the beauty of the beach set alongside gorgeous national parks. Enjoy an evening in Port Macquarie. **Approximate travel time:** 5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** El Paso Motor Inn (or similar)

Day 10: Port Macquarie/Blue Mountains Travel from Port Macquarie to the Blue Mountains, passing by charming mountain towns, ancient Aboriginal rock art, lush green valleys, and loads of craggy cliffs.

Today we travel from Port Macquarie to the Blue Mountains. These mountains in Australia are best known for their soaring sandstone ridges. As you drive, pass by charming mountain towns, ancient Aboriginal rock art, lush green valleys, and loads of craggy cliffs. It doesn't matter if the journey is shrouded in clouds or glowing in the sinking sun, you'll still spot beauty around every turn. **Approximate travel time:** 6-7 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Leisure Inn Spires (or similar) **Meals included:**

Breakfast

Day 11: Blue Mountains Travel deeper into the majestic Blue Mountains and experience the natural beauty of this World Heritage Area. Explore the landscape around Leura and Katoomba, view the Three Sisters, take a walk in Jamison Valley, and ride on the Scenic Railway, the steepest railway in the world.

With charming Leura as our base, we will explore the major attractions of the Blue Mountains from sightseeing to bushwalking to cafés and more. As a group, we will take in some amazing lookouts over the Jamison Valley, via the iconic Three Sisters. Descend down the 900-step giant staircase to the valley floor. Walk amongst the beautiful forest to the steepest incline railway in the world, the Katoomba Scenic Railway. This railway is steep and plunges into the rainforest and through the valley. Opt to ride its 52-degree angle, or take the Scenic Cableway. If you're keen for more walking, and time permitting, take the 900 stairs back up. **Accommodation:** Leisure Inn Spires (or similar)

Day 12: Blue Mountains/Sydney Continue onward to Sydney, where you'll have an orientation walk and some free time. Opt to rent a bike, stroll the botanical gardens, or visit the iconic Opera House.

This morning, leave the Blue Mountains behind and continue onward to Sydney. Once you arrive, head out for a group orientation walk before taking advantage of some free time to keep exploring. Opt to rent a bike, stroll the botanical gardens, or visit the iconic Opera House. **Approximate travel time:** 2 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Rydges Sydney Central (or similar)

Day 13: Sydney Get a feel for the city. Relax seaside at Bondi Beach. Enjoy an optional final night out with the group.

You will have this whole day free to explore Sydney as you choose. See our optional activities list further below. **Accommodation:** Rydges Sydney Central (or similar)

Day 14: Sydney/Auckland Head to New Zealand. After transferring from the airport, enjoy some free time to explore Auckland.

Say goodbye to Australia and hop on a flight to Auckland, New Zealand. After transferring from the airport, enjoy some free time to explore this vibrant city.

Day 15: Auckland Enjoy a free day to explore Auckland.

Enjoy a free day to explore Auckland. Visit the Maritime Museum, walk the waterfront, or even take the ferry to Waiheke Island. If you are interested in visiting the Hobbiton Movie Set while in New Zealand we suggest you pre-book before arriving in New Zealand. We do not currently offer this as a tour add-on. Hobbiton is accessible as a day trip from Auckland or Rotorua. Check out other optional activities at the bottom of this page. **Accommodation:** Nesuto Stadium Hotel & Apartments (or similar)

Day 16: Auckland/Rotorua 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 **Accommodation:** Sudima Lake Rotorua (or similar)

Day 17: Rotorua/Maori Village 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. **Accommodation:** Sudima Lake Rotorua (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Dinner

Day 18: Rotorua/Wellington 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 **Accommodation:** Naumi Studio Hotel Wellington (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 19: 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*. **Accommodation:** Naumi Studio Hotel Wellington (or similar)

Day 20: Wellington/Kaikoura 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 **Accommodation:** The White Morph (or similar) **Meals included:** Dinner

Day 21: 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 **Accommodation:** Drifters Inn Hanmer Springs (or similar)

Day 22: Hanmer Springs/Franz Josef 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) **Accommodation:** Rainforest Retreat (or similar)
Meals included: Breakfast

Day 23: Franz Josef 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. **Accommodation:** Rainforest Retreat (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 24: 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 **Accommodation:** Heartland Hotel Queenstown (or similar)

Day 25: Queenstown 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. **Accommodation:** Heartland Hotel Queenstown (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 26: Queenstown 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 **Accommodation:** Heartland Hotel Queenstown (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

Day 27: Queenstown/Tekapo 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 **Accommodation:** Godley Hotel (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 28: 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 **Accommodation:** Bealey Quarter (or similar)

Day 29: Christchurch Depart at any time.

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Christchurch at any time. The nearest airport is **Christchurch Airport (CHC)**. 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. **Meals included:** Breakfast

**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.*