

# Lakes and Glaciers of New Zealand

## 5 days



This trip takes you to some of the South Island's most beautiful destinations. From Christchurch you journey south towards the turquoise glacial lakes that stand at the gateway to the Mount Cook National Park. Get your dose of excitement in Queenstown, the action and adventure capital of New Zealand. See the glaciers, then drive on to explore the historic towns of the west coast. The road to Arthur's Pass village is mountainous and memorable - stretch your legs on a bush walk before you continue on to the heritage and art attractions of Christchurch.



## Day 1

### Christchurch to Lake Tekapo (3.45h) to Aoraki/Mt Cook Village (1.45h)

Begin your tour in Rangiora, an historic town 30 minutes out of Christchurch city, which has fully embraced its rebuild after the 2011 earthquakes. Stock up for your trip at one of three supermarkets or enjoy a meal at one of more than a dozen interesting and varied cafes and restaurants. From here, travel west through the small towns, large farms, and endless skies of the Canterbury Plains. Stop for a picnic and explore the old coal mining settlement of Glentunnel, before travelling through Staveley, with its lime kilns, Mt Somers, and the town of Geraldine. Geraldine is a stopover for many travellers and accommodates caravans easily while providing all a traveller needs for a lunch, cup of tea, provisions, or just a place to stretch one's legs while meandering through its gift and chocolate shops. After Fairlie, you'll ascend to the region known as the Mackenzie Country, named after the legendary Scottish sheep rustler who settled this land. Here, the scenery changes dramatically. Plan a few photo stops.

Stop in Lake Tekapo, the township which lies at the end of this stunning lake. There are shops and restaurants, lovely lakeside areas for short strolls, and photo opportunities at the famous Church of the Good Shepherd. Visitors also enjoy bike riding, more strenuous walks, kayaking, horse trekking, and in the right season, skiing, where the fields are especially good for families and those new to the sport. For our winter travellers who prefer not to ski, enjoy ice skating at the outdoor rink or warming up at Tekapo's own hot springs spa. It's worth staying a night in the area if time allows, to experience one of the world's clearest night skies from the Mt John Observatory, which gives a variety of tours and is part of the Southern Hemisphere's only (and one of the world's eight) International Dark Sky Reserve. Then, turn off the lights, open up your sky light, and enjoy your very own view of our sky from the comfort of your caravan.

From Tekapo, head on toward Aoraki/Mt Cook, New Zealand's highest peak (at 3755m), where Sir Edmund Hillary began his climbing career. The high-country drive through New Zealand's distinctive tussocks and native grasses, glorious swaths of lupin in summer, and majestic snowy mountains in the winter, skirts the edge of Lake Pukaki. This glacier-fed lake is famous for its incredibly turquoise waters. The colour is attributed to the fine particles, ground finely over millennia by the glaciers, which are suspended in the cold, clear waters and produce an otherworldly hue.





Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Glentanner Park Centre SH80, Aoraki, Mount Cook <a href="http://www.glentanner.co.nz">www.glentanner.co.nz</a>	Lake Pukaki Pukaki	Lake Tekapo NZMCA Park Lilybank Rd, Tekapo

## Day 2

### [Aoraki/Mt Cook](#) to [Queenstown](#) (3.45h)

Aoraki/Mt Cook is the main attraction in this town and mountainous activities abound, from heli skiing, to heli sightseeing, to more down to earth attractions ranging from short walks to world class tramps. The mountain, when you can catch sight of her, is one of New Zealand's most photographed icons.

Twizel is an outdoors-person's dream, where you can do it yourself, or hire a tour guide, for everything from fly fishing to motorcycling and from kayaking to skiing. On the right weekend, you can catch sight of New Zealand's best young rowers as secondary school teams from around the country battle on the waters of Lake Ruataniwha for the national titles. For the more quirkily inclined, Twizel is a great base for Lord of the Rings location tours.

The next stop is Omarama. Its giant sheep statue gives a clue to the importance of sheep products to the area's history and economy. The locale is also known for unique wind patterns, which make it a mecca for glider enthusiasts. If gliding is not what you are here for, spread your picnic rug and spend some time watching the more adventurous take to the skies.

Your trip to Queenstown begins on the beautiful Lindis Pass. Pull over and have a cup of tea for no other reason than to enjoy this stunning scenery. Continue on to Cromwell, a restored 19<sup>th</sup> century village with plenty of modern fare to indulge in. The area is also full of award winning vineyards, each which will have its own café. New Zealand's wine industry has



developed in leaps and bounds over the past couple of decades and our wines are regularly winning overseas awards.

In response, our vineyards have opened their cellar doors to visitors and provide wine tastings and meals. You'll find many of these throughout your tour. Central Otago is also famous for its early gold rushes, which helped to build the area, and Bannockburn is a good reference point for this. Before coming in to Queenstown, you'll find the Kawarau Bridge, home to the earliest bungy jumpers. Now, on into Queenstown, the South Island's hottest tourist spot.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Queenstown Lakeview Holiday Park 4 Cemetery Rd, Queenstown <a href="http://holidaypark.net.nz">http://holidaypark.net.nz</a>	Shotover River Shotover Delta Rd, Queenstown	Queenstown Holiday Park & Motels Creeksyde 54 Robins Rd, Queenstown

## Day 3

### Queenstown to Fox Glacier (4.5h)

The alpine resort of Queenstown is unlike anywhere else in New Zealand, as its tourist numbers in high seasons will attest. However, in your luxury accommodation on wheels, the town is yours to explore without the bother of advance bookings. Tourists young and old flock to Queenstown to soak in its atmosphere, literally soak in luxury spas, partake of its many award-winning restaurants and cafes, and shop at upmarket boutiques. It's also the place to be if adventure tourism is your thing: bungy jumping, jet boating, river rafting, river surfing, horse trekking, skiing, snowboarding, sky diving...all are available here, and all are provided to the highest standards. Some quieter adventures also await, from high tea at the end of Lake Wakatipu after a leisurely ride on the SS Earnslaw, to world class golf, to wine tastings – Queenstown has got you covered.



Be sure to stop in Arrowtown on your way to Wanaka. This small settlement is a contradiction of sorts, with humble old mining cottages hugging tree-lined roads which lead to a quaint town centre that boasts luxury spas, designer shops and gourmet restaurants. Visit the historic mining huts along the river, sample local fudges, ice creams and confections and stop in at a local winery before continuing onto Wanaka. The shortest route to Wanaka is over the Crown Range Road, a challenging drive, but the views are amazing and you'll probably encounter friendly keas (mountain parrots). A more moderate driving route runs beside the Shotover River, Lake Dunstan, and the Clutha River.

Wanaka can provide you with an appealing mix of fine living, family fun, and adventure. It has a high concentration of cafes, restaurants and interesting shops. You'll also find some unique attractions, like the 3D maze and the 'warbird' air show, which is held every two years. Wanaka's lake is the main attraction in the warmer months, and is a boatie's delight, in the winter, the local cafes and restaurants cater to the skiing set. You're sure to find a warm welcome in town at any time of year.

Lake Hawea is the first scenic highlight of your journey north, and the town of Makarora is a good place to fuel up and refresh before you take on the dramatic twists and turns of the Haast Pass. Enjoy waterfalls and river scenery as you arrive in rainforest country.

The settlement of Haast is a town with a touch of the wild west, and another good place to stretch the legs and have a look around. Just north of Haast is Lake Moeraki, a peaceful forest lake with good fishing. From here, a 40 minute walk takes you to the penguin colony at Monro Beach. Then, drive on to Fox Glacier. Fox Glacier, at 13km long, is fed by four alpine glaciers and makes its way downward 2,600m on its way toward the coast. It is unusual in that it ends in rainforest, nearly at sea level, unlike most glaciers, which prefer to stay at higher altitudes. There are numerous walking tracks at different grades of difficulty, as well as professional tours, on foot and by helicopter, available for visitors.





Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Fox Glacier Lodge & Caravan Park 41 Sullivan Rd, Fox Glacier <a href="http://www.foxglacierlodge.com">www.foxglacierlodge.com</a>	Moeraki (Blue) River Haast Hwy, Fox Glacier	Fox Glacier TOP 10 Holiday Park & Motels Kerr Rd, Fox Glacier

## Day 4

### Fox Glacier to Franz Josef (1h)

After some time spent at Fox Glacier, it's on to yet another of New Zealand's great attractions, perhaps to spend the day. Franz Josef glacier is just a short drive north. You can walk to the terminal of the glacier in about 10 minutes; alternatively arrange a heli-hike to get on top of the glacier and explore its ice caves. Franz Josef township has a good range of accommodation and eating establishments, as well as hot pools filled with heated glacial water.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Rainforest Holiday Park 46 Cron St, Franz Josef <a href="http://www.rainforestholidaypark.co.nz">www.rainforestholidaypark.co.nz</a>	Forks-Okarito Road Rest Area Forks-Okarito Rd, Okarito	Franz Josef NZMCA Park Douglas Dr, Franz Josef



## Day 5

### Franz Josef to Christchurch (5.5h)

From Franz Josef, make your way up the rugged West Coast, through the old gold mining settlement of Hokitika. Stop here for supplies, a wander through town, and the highly recommended short and easy walk into the Hokitika Gorge for photo opportunities of this beautiful forest and the bright blue waters of the river. Enjoy your scenic drive through this new landscape of native bush forest and wild rivers, before heading east and into the mountains, our Southern Alps. You will be heading onto Arthur's Pass, a wonder of both sightseeing and engineering. Do be aware of your weather in the winter months, as the climate here can change quickly, and snow can require roads to be closed. Stop at the township for a hot drink and to have a look at the view. Be wary of leaving any food around, and keep an eye on your caravan – the large mountain parrots here, called kea, are very curious, very clever, and a little too friendly at times!

The road from here to Christchurch offers some of the loveliest views and a chance to really enjoy the open road. Once in Christchurch, park up and plan to spend a few hours enjoying this ever-changing city. Christchurch is the South Island's largest city, and is known for its beautiful public gardens, old world charm and architecture, and its quaint and very walkable city centre. Much of this changed in the 2011 earthquakes when so much of the city was lost. However, the city is rising to the challenges, quite literally, and it is now home to funky and unique pop up malls, dozens of new buildings, high street, designer and boutique shops, and restaurants galore.

Many of its heritage buildings have been restored, the beautiful Botanic Gardens remain, and the trams have returned to its streets. Take a punt down the Avon, check out the new civic areas along the river, take in a show at the Court Theatre or Isaac Theatre Royale, or meander over the Sumner Beach for some fish and chips. Make sure you check out the transitional cardboard cathedral in the city centre, and the Margaret Mahy playground, designed with the help of the children of New Zealand to be the biggest and best play space in the country.

Outside of the city, Orana Wildlife Park hosts New Zealand's only gorilla encounter, and you may find a kiwi or two of the feathered kind both here and at Willowbank Nature Reserve, where you can also take in a Maori Cultural performance. For a bit of history, head out to Ferrymead, a purpose built 19th century village, where you can experience what colonial life was like for early inhabitants. Once there, spend some time at the shore at Sumner and Redcliffs and enjoy some fish and chips on the beach.





Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
North South 530 Sawyers Arms Rd, Christchurch Holiday Park <a href="https://www.northsouth.co.nz">https://www.northsouth.co.nz</a>	Waimakariri River West Harris Rd, aiapoi	Harewood Gold Club 371 McLeans Island Rd, McLeans Island Christchurch