

JNZ17R 17 Day Kiwi Encounter Reverse

DAY 1 Christchurch to Nelson via Kaikoura

We start our journey in Christchurch, amongst grand architecture and green parklands. We head to Kaikoura for lunch (own expense) and the chance to go on an optional whale watching or dolphin swimming escapade! Then it's on towards Ohau Point where we'll stop to check out some local fur seals from afar. Finally we reach our stop for the next two nights, Nelson.

DAY 2 Nelson

You're free to explore the local area today, with a multitude of options on the table. Hike through the nearby Abel Tasman National Park, where the bush meets pristine beaches. Explore the park by boat or kayak, take to horseback or quad bike for a more grounded option, even tandem skydive for the ultimate view of the Park. We'll catch up over dinner. (B, D)

DAY 3 Nelson to West Coast (Greymouth)

Spend the morning exploring the stunning natural landscapes of Nelson Lakes National Park – there are a few walks available. Then in the afternoon, we'll get a chance to explore the spectacular Punakaiki National Park, best known for its “pancake” stacks of rocks and majestic blowholes. Tonight we'll head to Monteith's Brewery for a tour and dinner. (B, D)

DAY 4 West Coast to Fox Glacier

We pass through the rugged natural beauty of the West Coast, visiting Hokitika and the local jade factory – perhaps a souvenir is on the cards? Then it's further south through to Franz Josef and the option of taking a scenic helicopter ride over the glaciers to our afternoon destination, Westland National Park. The Park itself is teeming with lofty mountains and icy rivers – to really discover the beauty of the glacier and surrounding area up close, take on the optional half-day guided hike. Of course, you might prefer the optional heli-hike, which offers views from higher up. (B, D)

DAY 5 Fox Glacier to Queenstown

Take an early morning walk and get a picture of beautiful Lake Matheson, with New Zealand's two tallest peaks in the background. Then we make tracks for mountain country, passing through Thunder Creek Falls before stopping at Makaroa to visit nearby the glistening lakes of Hawea and Wanaka. Finally, we arrive in the mecca of adrenalin junkies the world over, Queenstown. (B, D)

DAY 6 Queenstown

With the day ahead of you, prepare to up the excitement levels! Options include the traditional bungee jump, zooming around canyons with the Shotover Jet, or more leisurely pursuits such as horse or mountain bike riding. Then again, perhaps you'd like to admire all from above whilst aboard the skyline gondola? The choice is yours. (B)

DAY 7 Queenstown to Fiordland

Say goodbye to adventure town, as the crew travels to Te Anau and Lake Wakatipu – here we'll jump aboard our overnight cruise through the fiords. Expect gorgeous views, with the chance of spotting some local fur seals and bottlenose dolphins! We'll also have time to go kayaking or go exploring with a nature guide. As the sun fades we'll drop anchor and head for dinner. (B, D)

DAY 8 Fiordland Experience to Lake Ohau

We continue our cruise in the morning, before making land and passing through a veritable cavalcade of picturesque spots – Mirror Lake, the chasm of Hollyford Valley and the local charms of Te Anau are all on this morning's agenda. Then we travel to the Kawarau River and the location of AJ Hackett's original 'Bridge Bungy' – the first commercial bungy in the world. We head onwards to our nightly destination of Lake Ohau: settle in and get comfortable. (B, D)

DAY 9 Lake Ohau to Christchurch

Let's kick things off with a trip to Lake Pukaki and the chance for some truly spectacular photos of the still waters with Mt Cook in the distance. Trust us, it's something special. Then we stop at Lake Tekapo, with an optional 40 minute flight available (well worth it if you can afford). From here, it's

onwards to Mackenzie country and the heart of sheep farming. We'll discover what it's like to run a sheep farm, before arriving in Christchurch and an optional dinner at a local spot. (B, Afternoon Tea)

DAY 10 Christchurch to Hanmer Springs

We arrive at Hanmer Springs, giving you time to get a feel for this amazing region of NZ. There's a variety of optional activities from relaxing in the thermal pools to jet-boating down the Waiau Gorge. (B)

DAY 11 Hanmer Springs to Wellington

Heading north up the coast, we make tracks for the friendly town of Picton, set right on the edge of Queen Charlotte Sound. Here we'll jump on a ferry and head across Cook Strait for the North Island and the city of Wellington. Don't miss the chance to check out the natural beauty of Marlborough Sound as we cross. Arriving in Wellington, you'll have the chance to explore the nightlife on offer. (B)

DAY 12 Wellington to Tongariro National Park

Standing as we are in NZ's capital, let's do a little exploring! First we'll take a city tour, checking out the sights. From here, you could continue on to Te Papa, the National Museum? There's the cable car up to the Botanic Gardens? Or perhaps you'd prefer to catch up with civilisation and your inbox? Either way, we head off later in the day for the volcanic world of Tongariro National Park, home to the majestic peaks Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu. It's a place of great cultural significance to the Maori people. We'll stay here for two nights. (B, D)

DAY 13 Tongariro National Park

Use this free day to explore the National Park – there's loads of activities to keep you busy. Some of the finest walking trails in NZ are found here, including the stunning traverse of Mount Tongariro. If you're not up for hikes, there is an absolute plethora of other options for you to try! (B)

DAY 14 Tongariro National Park to Rotorua

Continuing north, we pass through Lake Taupo, an area brimming with geothermal energy that manifests itself as crater lakes, hot springs and volcanic mountains. Stopping at the thundering Huka Falls, there's time to discover the imposing beauty of this region. Then in the afternoon we travel to Whakarewarewa Village and Thermal Reserve, to learn more about Maori culture. Study displays of traditional weapons and instruments. After dinner, perhaps take in a hot spa or swim – all thermally heated of course! (B)

DAY 15 Rotorua (Marae Stay)

You have the morning to explore Rotorua, with plenty of options available – perhaps travel to Waitomo, or maybe visit Hobbiton to see part of the original *Lord of the Rings* movie set? Of course you can always visit the local mud baths or get a massage right here in town. Then tonight is one of the highlights of a Topdeck trip through NZ – a chance to stay in a traditional Maori Marae, learning a little of their culture as honoured guests. (B, D)

DAY 16 Marae Stay to Coromandel

We'll ease our way into the day, with a relaxed start to proceedings. Then we head to a place renowned for its beauty – Coromandel. It's so pretty that New Zealanders often spend their holidays here! Sweeping beaches meet lush rainforest, coupled with gorgeous blue waters. Take time to explore the area, with optional walks along Long Bay Beach. If possible we'll visit Hot Water Beach, where the bubbling waters naturally warm the sands. (B)

DAY 17 Coromandel to Auckland

Prepare yourself for a heartwarming gourmet breakfast, Topdeck style! After this we'll head for the City of Sails and NZ's largest city, Auckland. It's here that we'll say our goodbyes to fellow travellers and head our separate ways. (B)