



BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND

20 DAY BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND TOUR

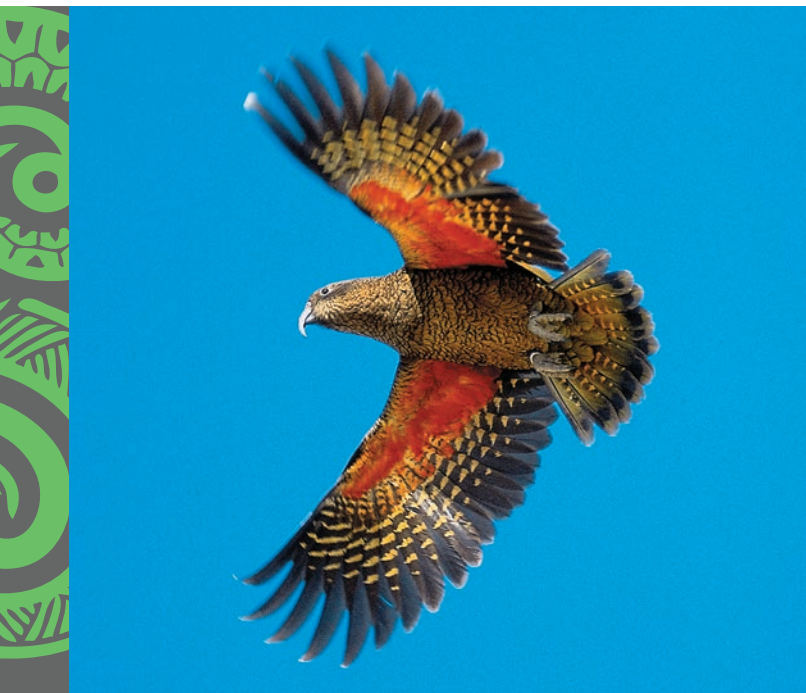


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PRICE ON
REQUEST

New Zealand is known as the seabird capital of the world and also has a wealth of unique and unusual forest birds. Meet dancing Gannets, graceful Kotuku White Herons, giant Albatross and cheeky Kea parrots. Guided tours of Cape Kidnappers and the Otago Peninsula, out on the waters of Milford Sound and off the coast of Kaikoura, in to our National Parks and over to the off shore predator free sanctuaries of Tiritiri Matangi and Ulva Islands are all included. Unique predator-proof fencing developed in New Zealand has created the successful inland sanctuaries of Mt Bruce, Karori and Maungatautari and the 8500 hectares of mud flats on the Firth of Thames can not be missed supporting tens of thousands of migratory wading birds from October to March. This truly is a tour by bird lovers for bird lovers!

Day 1 WELCOME TO CHRISTCHURCH; NEW ZEALAND

Arrive Christchurch Airport where you will be met by our staff, who will provide you with the final documents and vouchers for your New Zealand tour. Collect your rental car and drive into Christchurch City. The balance of the day is free for you to rest and explore the 'Garden City' of Christchurch.

Day 2 CHRISTCHURCH / ARTHURS PASS / FRANZ JOSEF

Today drive inland across the Canterbury Plains to Arthur's Pass National Park in the heart of the mighty Southern Alps - the alpine scenery here is magnificent. Time for a walk (unguided) in the podocarp beech forests and to see some of the birdlife - the Kea, which is a large green mountain parrot is common in these mountains. Then continue across Arthur's Pass through the Alps and descend to Hokitika on the Tasman Sea coast. Suggest visit a greenstone studio, where a local jade stone is crafted into the jewellery and ornaments of traditional and modern design before driving on south through forests and farmlands to Franz Josef Village.

Day 3 AT FRANZ JOSEF

The Franz Josef Glacier is a huge river of snow and ice that flows from vast snowfields high in the Southern Alps - quite an unusual so close to sea level in a temperate climate. Take a guided tour of the White Heron Sanctuary in the Waitangi Roto Nature Reserve where about 150 White Herons nest each year. This is the only known breeding ground in New Zealand for these elegant birds, which the Maori call 'Kotuku' (please note: these birds migrate to Australia for winter and begin leaving the colony late February / early March). Other birds such as the Royal Spoonbill and the little Black Shag also nest here. There are also half and full day guided walks onto the glacier, and a choice of scenic flights over the glacier available.

Day 4 FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER / HAAST PASS / QUEENSTOWN

Today drive south through magnificent rainforests and pass pretty bush fringed lakes. At Haast turn inland and cross the Haast Pass through the Southern Alps. Descend past glacial Lakes Wanaka and Hawea to Wanaka Township on the shores of the lovely lake. Wanaka is a very popular holiday resort - there is a good golf course, excellent trout fishing and two ski fields in the area. From Wanaka drive through the Central Otago sheep and cattle country past Lake Dunstan and the wine producing and fruit growing area around Cromwell and through the Kawarau Gorge into the delightful lakeside resort of Queenstown.

Day 5 IN QUEENSTOWN

Day at leisure. There is a wide variety of optional tours and activity available in and around Queenstown such as lake cruises, jet boating, river rafting, tours to Lord of the Rings filming sites, wine tours and day hikes.

Day 6 QUEENSTOWN / MILFORD SOUND

Morning drive around Lake Wakatipu and across the picturesque Southland countryside to Te Anau and Fiordland National Park. The scenery is stunning with high mountains and deep valleys carved out by Ice Age Glaciers. There are clear rushing streams and cascading waterfalls set in magnificent native rainforest. Time en route to see the Mirror Lakes and The Chasm.

At Milford Sound board the MV Milford Mariner for an overnight cruise down Milford Sound past Bowen Falls and Mitre Peak to the open sea - seals, dolphins and penguins are often seen. There are opportunities for sea kayaking or exploring the coastline with a nature guide in a tender craft. The vessel anchors overnight in a sheltered cove, where the only sounds are the sounds of nature. The MV Milford Mariner is a modern vessel with all en suite cabins but has been built along the lines of a 19th century sailing scow of the type common around this coast 100 years ago. Dinner is served aboard.

Day 7 MILFORD SOUND / INVERCARGILL / STEWART ISLAND

After breakfast aboard the boat returns to Milford Wharf. Return to Te Anau travelling via the Cleddau Gorge, Homer Tunnel and lovely Eglinton Valley. From here drive on south through the picturesque Southland dairying and sheep farming country to Invercargill, which is the most southern city in the world. Continue to Bluff and cross the Foveaux Strait by ferry to Stewart Island.

Stewart Island is a relatively unspoilt paradise of native bush, rain forests, sand dunes and wetlands boasting wonderful bird life. It is home to 130 different species of birds - some of them rare, and some endangered including the Southern Tokoeka, one of five species of Kiwi.

Tonight go Kiwi spotting with a top local guide.



Day 8 ULVA ISLAND DAY EXCURSION

Today enjoy a guided full day Birds and Forest Tour on Ulva Island - the ultimate for bird watchers. The island is free of predators and is a haven for rare plants and native birds, which are almost tame. Since 2000, species of birds have been released on Ulva Island include the rare South Island Saddleback, Yellowhead and the threatened Stewart Island Robin. Among other species to be seen here are the Weka, Tui, Robins, the Spotted Shag, the Brown Creeper and the Kiwi. Boat transfers and lunch are included.

Day 9 STEWART ISLAND / INVERCARGILL / THE CATLINS / DUNEDIN

This morning transfer back to Bluff on the ferry, collect your vehicle and drive back to Invercargill and east around the south coast of New Zealand through an area known as The Catlins. This is a lightly populated and remote area with a mix of pastoral farming, lovely native rainforest and rugged coastline with some lovely golden sand beaches, kelp strewn rocks and impressive cliffs and headlands. Sometimes the seas of the Southern Ocean are relatively calm and other times they are wild and dangerous with huge surf crashing into the shore. Suggest stop to see the lighthouses at Waipapa and Nugget Points, the fossilised forest at Curio Bay is of world significance and is a 'must see'. Time permitting, recommend a walk through the forest to the Purakaunui Falls and a drive out past the Catlins Lake to Pounawea and Surat Bay. Fur Seals, Elephant Seals and the rare Yellow Eyed Penguin can be seen around this coastline and there are a variety of native birds in the forests. Owaka is the largest centre in the area. Cross the Clutha River at Balclutha and drive on past Dunedin Airport into Dunedin City

Day 10 AT DUNEDIN

Dunedin was originally settled by the Scots and retains a great deal of tartan character. It is also a popular University City with its own 'scarfie' culture. Suggest a stroll through the popular Botanic Gardens or a visit to the Early Settlers Museum. Then drive (or take a tour) out to Otago Peninsula to visit the Royal Albatross Colony at Taiaroa Heads on the tip of the Otago Peninsula. This is the only mainland nesting place in the world for these giant seabirds whose wingspan can exceed 11 ft. There will be a talk on the life cycle of these birds then a visit to the Observatory (steep path but leisurely pace) from where birds can be seen in the air and sometimes on their nests - Observatory is closed between 17 September - 23 November, however Albatross can be seen from a Monarch Wildlife Cruise during this time). Afterwards drive on to view the rare Yellow Eyed Penguins from specially built 'hides' in a series of tunnels. In the late evening the Penguins can be seen coming ashore from a day fishing at sea. There is also a seal colony in the area.

Day 11 DUNEDIN / OAMARU / TWIZEL

Today drive north across the Dunedin hills following the Pacific coastline. Time permitting you may wish to stop at Moeraki Beach to see the unusual large marble like boulders there. At Oamaru visit the Blue Penguin colony where there are several hundred and those which haven't gone to sea fishing can be seen in their burrows (or if you can be in Oamaru in the evening it is a fantastic sight watching them come ashore and make their way from the sea to their burrows. There is also a large Shag colony here. From Oamaru drive inland up the Waitaki Valley to Twizel for a visit to the Black Stilt Sanctuary there. These birds are on the rare and endangered list. Stay tonight at Twizel or go on to Mt Cook (60 minutes drive away) and stay at the famous Hermitage Hotel.

Day 12 TWIZEL / KAIKOURA

Drive north across the MacKenzie Basin past glacially formed Lakes Pukaki and Twizel. On a fine day there are stunning views of the snow-capped Southern Alps. Descend through Burke's Pass to Fairlie and cross the Canterbury Plains to Christchurch and continue north up the Pacific Coast to Kaikoura.

Day 13 KAIKOURA / PICTON / WELLINGTON

The sea in the Kaikoura area is especially rich in nutrients, which attract a wide variety of sea life including Sperm Whales - the largest of all the toothed whales, which can be seen in these waters on 95% of days year round. There are also pods of playful Dusky Dolphins, seals, penguins and occasionally Orca can be seen. There is also a large variety of seabirds in the area, including the Wandering Albatross. Your choice this morning of a Whale Watch cruise, Swimming with the Dolphins or an Albatross Encounter Cruise.

Afterwards continue north up the Pacific Sea coast to Blenheim in the heart of the Marlborough Wine Region; and cross the hill to Picton at the head of Queen Charlotte Sound. Here board the Interislander ferry and cross Cook Strait to Wellington on the North Island.

Day 14 IN WELLINGTON

This morning visit Te Papa - the National Museum of New Zealand, where there are some amazing exhibits and interactive displays. (admission is free). Then in the afternoon drive out to the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. This Sanctuary has been ring-fenced from rodents, stoats, cats and other predators in an effort to allow rare and endangered native birds to inhabit the area in relative safety. There are over 30 species of native birds here and 18 kms of walking tracks. As well as native New Zealand bush there are two lakes and a wetlands area with bird feeding posts and 'Bird Cams' (remote cameras on nests).



Day 15 WELLINGTON/ MT BRUCE / NAPIER

Drive around Wellington Harbour and north through the Hutt Valley crossing the Rimutaka Ranges to the Wairarapa Region where the Department of Conservation's Pukaha Mt Bruce Wildlife Sanctuary is located. Many of New Zealand's most rare and endangered native bird species are held here in captive breeding programmes. Among them are Kaka, Kiwis, Kakariki, Kakako, Stitchbird and Takahe. Afterwards continue north through pretty farming country to the Hawkes Bay.

The Hawkes Bay is an important fruit and vegetable growing area and one of New Zealand's top wine regions. Many of the wineries have cafes and restaurants where you may like to enjoy lunch or dinner. Napier, which is the largest centre in the region was devastated by a huge earthquake in 1931, and has been rebuilt in an art deco style of architecture.

Day 16 NAPIER / TAUPO / ROTORUA

This morning take a safari tour to the huge Gannet Sanctuary at Cape Kidnappers. This is the largest and most spectacular mainland nesting place of Gannets in the world with over 20,000 birds – members of the Booby family with distinctive black eye markings and a pale gold crown. Visitors to the colony will see adults and young nesting in serried rows. In the air birds swoop and dive as they bring back fish. On the ground the pairs preen and perform the dance of the gannets recognition ritual.

In the afternoon drive west across the Kaimanawa Ranges to Taupo on the shores of New Zealand's largest lake before driving north through forests and farmlands to Rotorua.

Day 17 AT ROTORUA

Sightseeing in Rotorua, includes a guided tour of Te Puia - the Whakarewarewa Thermal Reserve to see the geysers and other thermal activity and the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute where young Maori are learning traditional carving and weaving skills. Also visit Rainbow Springs where there are crystal clear streams and pools teeming with trout as well as the nocturnal Kiwi house and Tuatara display, plus visit Kiwi Encounter to learn more about New Zealand's emblem bird and the breeding and release programme.

In the evening enjoy a powhiri (traditional welcome), hangi (dinner) and concert of Maori song and dance including the vigorous Haka on a local Marae (Maori Village).

Day 18 ROTORUA / MAUNGATAUTARI / MIRANDA / AUCKLAND

This morning drive over the bush-clad Mamaku Ranges to Putaruru. Here take the road to Arapuni and the village of Pukeatua, for the access road to Maungatautari Mountain. This mountain which is covered in magnificent native rainforest dominates the surrounding countryside has been completely ring fenced with 47 kms of pest proof fencing and cleared of all mice, rats, stoats and other predators; and over the past 5 years endangered native bird species are being reintroduced back into the forest bringing it alive again with bird song. This is one of the most exciting ecological projects taking place in New Zealand.

In the afternoon drive on north through the Waikato dairy farmlands and Hamilton City to the Miranda Shorebird Centre on the Firth of Thames where there are 8500 hectares of mud flats that attract huge numbers of Godwits, Lesser Knots, Sandpipers, Stilts, Oystercatchers, Dotterels, Plovers, Wrybills, Shags and many more wading birds (note - the Godwits migrate to the northern hemisphere for winter). Afterwards continue north over the Bombay Hills to Auckland.

Day 19 TIRITIRI MATANGI ISLAND

This morning take a 75-minute cruise by twin hulled catamaran across the Hauraki Gulf to Tiritiri Matangi Island. This island is a Department of Conservation bird sanctuary, which has been cleared of rats, cats and other predators allowing many of New Zealand's rarest and most endangered species to breed in relative safety. Among the birds to be seen here are the Takahe, thought to be extinct until discovered in 1947 in a remote part of Fiordland National Park. Even today there are only a few hundred of them in the whole world. There are also Saddlebacks, Stitchbirds, Bellbirds, Tuis, Kereru, Bush Robins and the Kokako on the island. A 60-minute guided tour will be provided on arrival and then you are free to roam the island yourselves looking for the birds. Return to Auckland late afternoon.

Day 20 DEPART AUCKLAND

Today visit the Auckland War Memorial Museum where there is an excellent collection of Maori artefacts; and Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World to learn about the famous explorer Captain Scott with a full-sized replica of his historic hut. There is also a ride through the frozen habitat of the live King and Gentoo Penguins. Travel beneath the ocean on a moving walkway to experience a scuba diver's view of ocean life, seeing sharks, giant eels, stingrays and thousands of fish - a truly unique experience.

In the afternoon drive to Auckland International Airport, return the rental vehicle and check in for your departure flight.

Important Note

The itinerary is just a guide and summarises our favourite places, sights and experiences. Any or all of them may be enjoyed as part of a tour.

Have a look at our recommendations, highlight places you wish to include and get in touch with us: together we can create a unique and unforgettable holiday experience.