

# Kowhai

19 DAYS NORTH & SOUTH ISLANDS

FROM £4,670



Explore the sandy beaches of the Coromandel coastline on North Island, and dip your toes in the azure waters of Abel Tasman National Park at ‘the top of the South’. Come with us deep into Fiordland National Park to cruise on iconic Milford Sound – one of the all-time ‘must do’ experiences on a trip to New Zealand.

ITINERARY

**Day 1 Auckland**  
We meet you on arrival at the airport, and take you to our recommended hotel. You are free to relax in the City of Sails.  
*M Social, Auckland*

**Day 2 Auckland to Bay of Islands**  
Leaving the city behind, it does not take us long to find New Zealand’s natural beauty in the Kauri forest. Arriving in the Bay of Islands we step back in time at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds to 1840 when Maori tribes signed a treaty with the British settlers. We arrive in Russell by ferry, to stay at the oldest hotel in town.  
*Duke of Marlborough Hotel, Russell (2 nights)*

**Day 3 Bay of Islands YOUR CHOICE**  
Today you have the choice of two excursions:  
**Discover the Far North**, travelling along 90 Mile Beach to Cape Reinga where the Tasman Sea meets the Pacific Ocean (lunch included).  
Enjoy a **Bay of Islands cruise**. Dolphins often race the boat on our way to the Hole in the Rock (sea permitting). Returning to Russell, this option includes a walking tour with an expert on the town’s rip-roaring past!

**Day 4 Bay of Islands to Auckland**  
Return to Auckland to tour the city sights: panoramic views from Bastion Point, trendy Parnell Village and the vibrant Viaduct Harbour area. A guided tour of Auckland Museum reveals treasures of the Pacific peoples.  
*M Social, Auckland*

**Day 5 Auckland to Coromandel Peninsula**  
How should we depart the City of Sails? By boat of course! Crossing the Hauraki Gulf to land on the Coromandel Peninsula, we take a narrow-gauge railway to a superb viewpoint. Rejoining our vehicle, we head to the east coast and beautiful Mercury Bay.  
*Oceans Resort, Whitianga (2 nights)*

**Day 6 Coromandel Peninsula**  
A day exploring this paradise of golden beaches, turquoise seas and green forests, including Hot Water Beach, Cathedral Cove and Cooks Beach. At the end of the day you can choose either to take the ferry to Whitianga and return to the hotel on foot, or – if you have walked enough – return with our vehicle.

**Day 7 Coromandel Peninsula to Rotorua**  
To Rotorua, famous not only as a geothermal hotspot, but as a centre for Maori culture. We enjoy a guided tour of Te Puia, where the arts of weaving, carving and tattooing are kept alive. We also see, smell and hear the extraordinary mud pools and steam vents!  
*Prince’s Gate Hotel, Rotorua (2 nights)*

**Day 8 Rotorua YOUR CHOICE**  
Your choice today is either:  
**Waimangu Volcanic Valley** – A walk through an evolving landscape of boiling craters and jewel-coloured steaming lakes, then a cruise across Lake Rotomahana.  
**Hobbiton™ Movie Set** – Step into Middle Earth on a memorable guided tour of the ‘set’ where *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* were filmed.

This evening we all visit a Marae (Maori Village) to discover the culture of New Zealand’s indigenous people, and feast at a Hangi, with food cooked in the heat of the earth.

**Day 9 Rotorua to Napier**  
Our drive across the volcanic plateau takes us from ‘Mordor’ to ‘Miami’. On the east coast, Napier is a contender for Miami’s Art Deco crown, and our local expert reveals all on an entertaining walking tour. This evening’s treat is dinner together at Mission Estate, the country’s oldest wine producer.  
*Scenic Hotel Te Pania, Napier*



**Day 10 Napier to Wellington**  
Travel through vineyards and orchards to Wellington. On arrival in the capital, we see the quirky ‘Beehive’ Parliament building, ride the Cable Car and visit Te Papa – one of the most creative museums in the world.  
*James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor, Wellington*

**Day 11 Wellington to Nelson**  
As *HMS Endeavour* did 250 years ago, we cross the Cook Strait. Landing in South Island, we pause at Blenheim to taste Sauvignon Blanc, the grape synonymous with New Zealand wine, then on to Nelson, which boasts a sunny microclimate and thriving arts scene.  
*Heritage Rutherford Hotel, Nelson (2 nights)*

**Day 12 Abel Tasman National Park YOUR CHOICE**  
The idyllic Abel Tasman National Park is best explored by boat and on foot. Sailing from Kaiteriteri, today offers a choice:  
**Scenic Cruise:** 3-4 hours (no walking) – A morning cruise reveals golden sands and turquoise waters, returning to Nelson for a free afternoon.  
**Astrolabe Beaches & Bays** (plus 2.5 hour walk) – After the Scenic Cruise, disembark at Apple Tree Bay for a self-guided walk (7 kms) to Anchorage Beach. Later transfer to Nelson.  
**Forest & Swing-Bridge** (plus 4 hour walk) – After the Scenic Cruise, disembark at Medlands Beach for a self-guided hike (10.5 kms) that includes South Head lookout and Cleopatra’s Pool. Later transfer to Nelson.



**Day 13 Nelson to Punakaiki**  
We travel through Nelson Lakes National Park pausing at Lake Rotoiti before taking the old gold miners’ Buller River road. Emerge onto the west coast at Punakaiki to see the stratified limestone stacks known as the Pancake Rocks.  
*Punakaiki Resort, Punakaiki*

**Day 14 Punakaiki to Fox Glacier**  
Following the Great Coast Road through Hokitika and Franz Josef, we come to Fox Village. This is a good base from which to access the glaciers and one of the best options is a scenic helicopter flight (at own cost, weather permitting) which lands in a snow-bowl in the mountains!  
*Distinction Hotel, Fox Glacier*

**Day 15 Fox Glacier to Wanaka**  
After a diversion to Lake Matheson, we turn towards the Southern Alps, penetrating Mt Aspiring National Park via the Haast Pass. South Islanders love the friendly township and beauty of Lake Wanaka, where we relax for two nights.  
*Edgewater Resort, Wanaka (2 nights)*

**Day 16 Wanaka YOUR CHOICE**  
Nature lovers may take a **lake cruise to a conservation island with an eco-guide** to discover native birds like the flightless Buff Weka OR you can choose to enjoy a **scenic 4WD adventure to a high country farm** above the lake.

**Day 17 Wanaka to Te Anau**  
The journey south takes us to Arrowtown and alongside Lake Wakatipu to Te Anau. This little town on the shores of the lake is the best starting point for adventures in Fiordland and is a beautiful spot in its own right.  
*Distinction Hotel Luxmore, Te Anau*

**Day 18 Te Anau to Milford Sound to Queenstown**  
Today’s drive is spectacular, winding through a landscape sculpted by Ice Age glaciers. Awe-inspiring Milford Sound opens onto the Tasman Sea, and our vessel cruises past Mitre Peak to the narrow mouth. The return by road to Queenstown is equally scenic.  
*Scenic Suites Queenstown (2 nights)*

**Day 19 Depart Queenstown**  
Sadly, we have reached the end of this road. If you are flying home, we transfer you to the airport, but why not ask us to extend your stay?

EXPERIENCES INCLUDED

- Entry to Waitangi Treaty Grounds
- Journey along 90-mile beach – OR – take a dolphin-spotting and Hole in the Rock cruise
- A scenic cruise from Auckland to the Coromandel Peninsula
- Narrow-gauge railway journey through native Coromandel bush
- Visit Hot Water Beach and photogenic Cathedral Cove
- A private guide around a geothermal valley with geysers, mud pools and hot springs
- Visit Waimangu Volcanic Valley – OR – experience *Hobbiton™* Movie Set
- Delve into Maori life and enjoy a powerful cultural performance and feast
- Enjoy a wine tasting and evening meal at Mission Estate in Napier
- Travel on Wellington’s famous Cable Car and visit Te Papa museum
- Scenic Interislander Ferry journey across the Cook Strait
- Wine tasting at one of Marlborough’s premier wineries
- Cruise the turquoise waters of Abel Tasman National Park
- Visit world-famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes at Punakaiki
- See native birds on a conservation island – OR – take a scenic 4WD adventure in Wanaka
- Explore the historic gold rush village of Arrowtown
- Cruise, with a picnic lunch, on the breath-taking Milford Sound

1. Abel Tasman National Park  
2. Coromandel  
3. Troll figure at Weta Workshop  
4. TSS Earnslaw