

NEW ZEALAND

Jan. 15 – Feb. 1, 2022

18 Days / 17 Nights

\$5795*

Single supplement \$1480

***Postponement due to Covid restrictions in 2020 could result in a slight change in price.**



Why Visit New Zealand?

Made up of two main islands and a host of smaller ones, New Zealand has an amazing range of breathtaking scenery, from subtropical forests, beaches, and offshore islands in the north to glaciers, lakes, snow-covered mountains, and large flat plains in the south. There are also fjords, volcanoes, hot springs, and beautiful rolling green pastures, a diversity like no other place on earth.

"Kiwis," as the locals are called, are a friendly bunch and very welcoming to visitors. A wide range of cultures is represented here, but New Zealand is an ex-British colony and the European influence remains strong. Captain Cook found New Zealand populated by natives called the Maori when he arrived here in 1769. New Zealand has since developed into a unique South Pacific blend of cultures, but the Maori still play a role. You'll find the ethnic diversity reflected throughout the tour.

With a land area the size of Great Britain, yet with only 4.5 million inhabitants, you don't have to go far to find complete solitude in New Zealand. Most of the population is concentrated in five main cities, of which Auckland is the largest with a third of the country's people living there. This leaves plenty of open space to explore in between.

New Zealand has a temperate climate. It is warmest in the north, coldest in the south. Traveling in December, we will experience one of the most pleasant times of the year, with daytime temperatures ranging in the low 60s to mid 70s, without much rain to contend with and plenty of bird activity.

As we venture off the beaten track into the wilderness, here's more good news: New Zealand isn't home to any nasty plants, critters, or creatures. In fact, it's one of only two countries in the world that doesn't have snakes, the other being Ireland.

New Zealand split from the large landmass that once joined Australia and Antarctica about 85 million years ago. As a result, bird and plant species can be found here that exist nowhere else in the world. Forests are full of an abundance of interesting plant life, from the towering ancient kauri trees to fronds of nikau palms. We expect to see most of the 91 endemic land birds of New Zealand on this tour, including multiple species of Kiwi, the small, flightless bird that has become New Zealand's national symbol.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 00, Thursday, January 13: Departure

You will depart the US today in order to arrive in Auckland on January 15. Crossing the international date line means you will lose a day during your transoceanic flight. (You will get this day back on your return flight)

Day 0, Friday, January 14: En route

Day 1, Saturday, January 15: Arrival

When you arrive in Auckland today, you will take a free shuttle to a hotel near the airport. The group will meet in the hotel restaurant at 6:30 PM for a welcome dinner.

Airport Garden Inn or similar (D)

Day 2, Sunday, January 16: Auckland to Warkworth with birding en route

We will depart from Auckland after breakfast at the hotel and head west to Muriwai Beach to encounter an amazing Australasian Gannet colony, which can be viewed from a scenic viewpoint. Red-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns also attend their nests at this location. Other species of note are the Tui (endemic honeyeater), the very large New Zealand Pigeon, and the New Zealand Fantail. Afterwards, we will proceed northerly to Waipu Estuary, stopping en route for lunch. Once at Waipu, we will conduct a target search for the Fairy Tern and the endemic New Zealand Plover. We will then continue onward to Warkworth, where we will spend the next 3 nights. Nearby, in the evening, is the first opportunity to find the fantastic North Island Brown Kiwi.

Bridge House Lodge (BLD)



New Zealand Pigeon

Day 3, Monday, January 17: Warkworth area birding

We will explore a collection of wetlands in the area surrounding Warkworth. Some species to look for include Paradise Shelduck, Masked Lapwing, Little Black and Pied Cormorants, Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, Australasian Shoveler, Grey Teal, endemics New Zealand Scaup and New Zealand Grebe, Buff-banded Rail, Caspian Tern, Pacific Reef Heron and Swamp Harrier. A nearby Regional Park will be visited to look for the endangered North Island Saddleback, New Zealand Bellbird and the critically endangered Takahe. We will also have another chance for New Zealand Pigeon, New Zealand Fantail, and Tui, in addition to Red-crowned Parakeet, Whitehead and New Zealand Robin.

Bridge House Lodge (BLD)



Saddleback

Day 4, Tuesday, January 18: Tiritiri Matangi Island

We will take a water taxi to the island of Tiritiri Matangi, which is a predator-free habitat for many species that are no longer found on the mainland. Primary species here are the Saddleback, Stitchbird, Kokako, New Zealand Bellbird and Takahe, in addition to chances for Spotless Crake, Fern Bird, Brown Teal and Brown Quail. We will take a packed lunch with us, as no food is sold on the island.

Bridge House Lodge (BLD)

Day 5, Wednesday, January 19: Warkworth to Turangi

This morning we will depart after breakfast to head south via Miranda to Turangi for an overnight stay. Pūkoro Miranda Shorebird Centre is known for its large flocks of shorebirds, in particular the endemic Wrybill, which is the only bird in the world with a laterally curved bill. Other species at Miranda include both the Variable and Pied Oystercatchers, Ruddy Turnstone, Pacific Golden Plover, Whimbrel, Red-necked Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Curlew and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and the Eastern Curlew. Lake Taupo provides a good break point en route to Turangi.



Wrybill

Turangi Bridge Motel (BLD)

Day 6, Thursday, January 20: Kapiti Island

We will start the day in Turangi at the Tongariro River looking for Blue Duck, which prefers fast-flowing water. We will then head south to catch a ferry to Kapiti Island for another overnight stay. Kapiti Island is another predator-free island, which has a population of the endangered Little Spotted Kiwi. Other

species here that could be found include the New Zealand Kaka, Long-tailed and Shining Bronze Cuckoos, Red-crowned Parakeet, Whitehead, and Morepork, including more opportunities for Takahe and New Zealand Robin.

Kapiti Island (BLD)

Day 7, Friday, January 21: Kapiti Island to Wellington to South Island

We will enjoy some morning birding before heading back to the mainland. Once on the mainland we will proceed south to the capital city of Wellington to catch a ferry across the Cook Strait to the South Island of New Zealand. The ferry crossing provides some pelagic opportunities for numerous albatross species, prions and shearwaters. We will spend the next two nights in the town of Picton.

Broadway Motel (BLD)

Day 8, Saturday, January 22: Marlborough Sounds

We will start the day by taking a boat into the Marlborough Sounds to head to Blumine Island Bird Sanctuary. Here we will have opportunities to see the South Island Saddleback and the South Island form of the New Zealand Robin, in addition to other bush species like the New Zealand Bellbird. A localized species of shag, the King Shag, will be one of the primary targets, although it's known to be very difficult to find. Marine mammals such as sea lions or dolphins may be spotted along the way. In the afternoon a walk around Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary allows for good photography options of the bush birds, or possibly even a Little Blue Penguin.

Broadway Motel (BLD)

Day 9, Sunday, January 23: Picton to Arthur's Pass

A scenic drive awaits as the tour continues further south into the heart of the South Island. A stop in Moana at Lake Brunner might allow a viewing of the White Heron (Kotuku), known in other countries as the Great Egret, which isn't a commonly sighted species in New Zealand. Weka, a large flightless rail, could be spotted as well, if missed previously. Black-fronted Terns and the alpine parrot, Kea, will be sought out upon arrival into Arthur's Pass. The Great Spotted Kiwi typically calls in the evening in the forest surroundings.

Alpine Motel (BLD)



Kea

Day 10, Monday, January 24: Arthur's Pass to Omarama

We will take a walk to start the day through a fantastic beech forest near the village to search for Rifleman, Tomtit and Brown Creeper (Pipipi). A search for the critically endangered Black Stilt, thought to be one of the world's rarest wading birds, will occur before the arrival into Omarama in the late afternoon/early evening.

Big Sky Motel (BLD)

Day 11, Tuesday, January 25: Omarama and Mount Cook

A further search for Black Stilt will commence the day if not found the day before. An assortment of species are possible today, along with views of New Zealand's highest peak, Mount Cook (3724m). Species could include the Banded Dotterel (Double-banded Plover), Black-fronted Tern, Wrybill, New Zealand Falcon, New Zealand Scaup, Grey Teal, Swamp Harrier, and Great Crested Grebe.

Big Sky Motel (BLD)

Day 12, Wednesday, January 26: Omarama to Te Anau via Wanaka

From Wanaka, we will take a short boat trip to Mou Waho Island, where we should have very close encounters with Buff Weka, a subspecies of the Weka. We can also expect to find Rock Wren, New Zealand Bellbird, Rifleman, and Tomtit. We will continue to Te Anau.

Aden Motel (BLD)



New Zealand Falcon

Day 13, Thursday, January 27: Te Anau

Several wetlands will be visited to search for the Banded Dotteral again, in addition to Black-fronted Terns, Black-billed Gulls and the New Zealand Pipit.

Aden Motel (BLD)

Day 14, Friday, January 28: Fiordland National Park

A visit to New Zealand's largest national park, a World Heritage Area, and a boat tour on Milford Sound. The New Zealand Falcon and Blue Duck can both be found in this area. Walks in the beech forests will allow chances for New Zealand Kaka, Tomtit and the localized New Zealand Rockwren, along with more opportunities for Rifleman, New Zealand Robin and Brown Creeper.

Aden Motel (BLD)



Tomtit



Rock Wren

Day 15, Saturday, January 29: Te Anau to Stewart Island

We will drive to Invercargill and catch a ferry from the nearby town of Bluff to Stewart Island, which is an island without many roads and is known for its ruggedness and its birdlife. A water taxi from Stewart Island will be taken to another predator-free haven for birds called Ulva Island. Many species can be found along the trail system, such as the Stewart Island form of Weka, Red-crowned and Yellow-crowned Parakeets, South Island Saddleback, New Zealand Kaka and the endangered Yellowhead. Water taxi back to the main portion of Stewart Island for two nights.

South Sea Hotel (BLD)



Red-crowned Parakeet

Day 16, Sunday, January 30: Stewart Island

Full-day of birding the immediate surroundings followed by an evening search of the localized Stewart Island form of the Southern Brown Kiwi.

South Sea Hotel (BLD)

Day 17, Monday, January 31: Stewart Island to Dunedin

We will depart Stewart Island and drive to Dunedin this morning. Once in Dunedin, the only Northern Royal Albatross colony in the mainland will be the focal point. These large birds fly past the headland along with Spotted Shags, Red-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns. The late afternoon will be filled with a visit to a nature reserve for the endemic Yellow-eyed Penguin.

Wains Hotel (BLD)



Yellow-eyed Penguin

Day 18, Tuesday, February 1 - Departure day

After breakfast, the tour will conclude at the Dunedin International Airport.

Price Includes:

- ~ Lodging in comfortable hotel/lodges
- ~ Meals as indicated
- ~ All ground transportation
- ~ Entrance fees
- ~ Ferries
- ~ Bottled water
- ~ Services of an expert birding guide and 2 *Cheepers!*
Tour Leaders (Jim & Cindy Beckman)
- ~ Pre-trip gift package, including customized checklist
- ~ Post-trip digital photo collection
- ~ Post-trip electronic copy of final checklist

Price does not Include:

- ~ International airfare US-Auckland and Dunedin-US
- ~ Alcoholic drinks, extra snacks, etc.
- ~ Travel insurance (highly recommended)
- ~ Gratuities
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature (laundry, phone calls, souvenirs, etc.)