

# New Zealand's South Island

Wilderness, walks and  
wonderful food

Blue Dot Travel







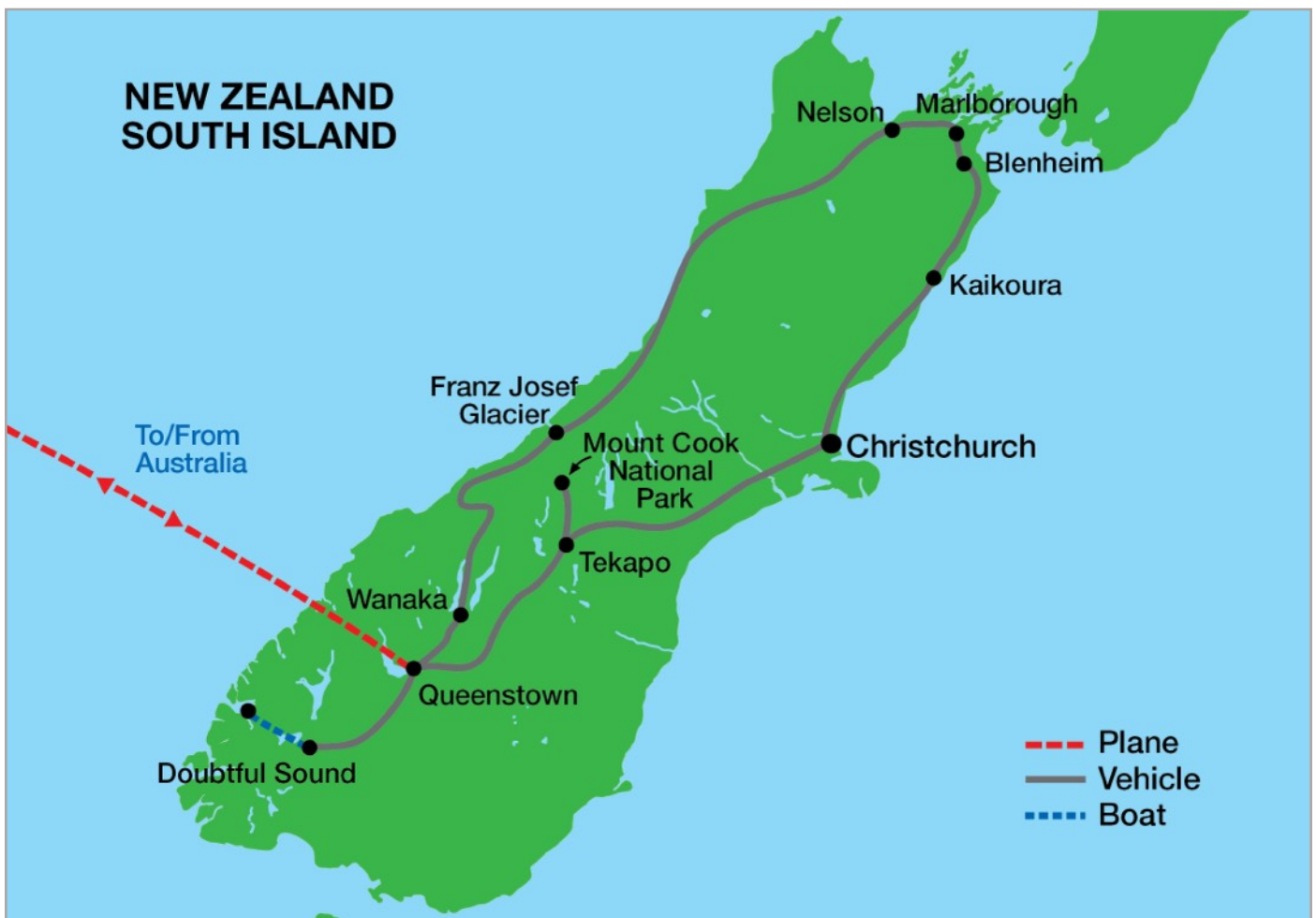
## NEW ZEALAND'S SOUTH ISLAND

There aren't many places on this planet where travellers are so well catered for – in terms of both taste-buds and splendours of the natural realm. New Zealand's South Island is a heavenly mix of ancient forests, mountains, lakes, beaches and fjords. It's renowned for its quality local produce, cool-climate wines and relaxed lifestyle. Join us for the only way to experience New Zealand: at a laid back pace and with a healthy appetite.

Our 12 day South Island tour is a journey through the highlights of the South Island, with a focus on food and wine along the way. The laid back, friendly atmosphere in Queenstown and Christchurch is a reflection of the South Island culture. But beyond the cities is where this island shines: we'll take you through the best of the South Island's stunning landscapes from remote Doubtful Sound to alpine hiking at Mount Cook, to a helicopter ride across the glaciers of the West Coast.

New Zealand's food and wine have established a world-class reputation, with quality produce fresh from the source. You'll be able to indulge in all that's on offer with carefully selected dining experiences included in the tour: restaurants featuring the best local produce, regional farmers markets, an artisan whiskey distillery and a night amongst the vines in the famous Marlborough wine region.

So grab your camera and a healthy appetite, and let's go live the good life with our friends next door!



## Day 1

### Arrive Queenstown

Kia Ora... welcome to New Zealand! Our local guide will meet the group at Queenstown airport and we'll transfer to the hotel. Surrounded by towering mountains, positioned on the edge of a lake, Queenstown is a hub for outdoor activities and one of New Zealand's most picturesque towns. It's rumoured that gold prospectors - captivated by the majestic beauty of the surrounding mountains and rivers - gave this cosmopolitan town its name. The ideal way to appreciate this location is from the water, and this afternoon we'll take a cruise on Lake Wakatipu aboard the iconic steamship the 100 year old TSS Earnslaw. This leisurely cruise not only showcases some of Queenstown's spectacular alpine scenery but is also a piece of Queenstown's living history. You can visit the engine room and see its giant steam engines at work, view the collection of historical photos in the mini museum or check out the bridge. Our cruise takes us to the beautiful Walter Peak High Country Farm where we'll enjoy a barbecue dinner full of local flavours. Check in for two nights at the Rees Hotel (or similar). *D*

## Day 2

### Queenstown — Doubtful Sound

Today we experience the spectacular, remote wilderness of Doubtful Sound. Three times longer than Milford Sound, with twisting arms, it has a surface area ten times larger. With its rugged peaks, verdant rainforest and twisting, hidden inlets, Doubtful Sound will take your breath away. There's no direct road access, so the only way to get to Doubtful Sound is a cruise across the picturesque Lake Manapouri, followed by a bus trip over breathtaking Wilmot Pass - New Zealand's most expensive (and majestic) road. We'll pause along the way to experience the dense Fiordland rainforest and view Doubtful Sound glistening below. The isolation makes this fiord a very special place, only those in the know get to see. During the cruise, knowledgeable and friendly nature guides will share their passion for the region with you, providing information about the varied wildlife you may see, including dolphins, fur seals and the rare Fiordland crested penguins. We'll return to Queenstown late in the afternoon, where your evening is free to enjoy the wonderful atmosphere and dinner is at your leisure. *B/L*







### Day 3 Queenstown — Arrowtown — Mount Cook

After breakfast, we'll stop in at charming Arrowtown, a historic gold rush village with

plenty of old-world character. We'll walk through the quaint tree-lined streets and historic buildings before having free time for lunch. Be sure to check out the local bakeries, said to be among the best on the South Island! We'll continue to Aoraki Mount Cook National Park, home to NZ's highest mountains and longest glaciers. It is alpine in the purest sense - with skyscraping peaks, glaciers and permanent snow fields, all set under a star-studded sky. According to Ngāi Tahu legend, Aoraki and his three brothers were the sons of Rakinui, the Sky Father. While on a sea voyage, their canoe overturned on a reef. When the brothers climbed on top of their canoe, the freezing south wind turned them to stone. The canoe became the South Island (Te Waka o Aoraki) and Aoraki and his brothers became the peaks of the Southern Alps. Let the splendour envelope you, as we spend two nights in Mount Cook National Park staying at the Hermitage (or similar). **B/D**



### Day 4 Mount Cook

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park is a rugged land of ice and rock, and walking is the best way to experience this ancient landscape. Today we'll enjoy the awe-inspiring landscapes of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana on one of the best day hikes, the Hooker Valley Trail. The track leads up the Hooker Valley and along the Hooker River, past alpine streams, ending at the glacier lake, where there are amazing views of Aoraki/Mount Cook on



a clear day. Along the way, we'll cross swing bridges and encounter picturesque icebergs, glaciers and majestic mountains that will have you reaching for your camera at every

turn. The walk is approximately 10 km / 3 hours and requires a moderate level of fitness. For those not up for the full walk, there are many alternative walks nearby, which your guide can assist you in choosing. After returning from our hike, relax and enjoy the stunning surrounding landscapes. **B/D**

### Day 5 Mount Cook — Tekapo — Christchurch

After breakfast, we'll take another scenic drive towards Lake Tekapo. The township of Lake

Tekapo faces north across the remarkable turquoise coloured lake to the mountainous drama of the Southern Alps. Lake Tekapo gets its intense milky-turquoise colour from the fine rock-flour (ground by glaciers) which is suspended in the water. On the shores of the lake, you'll see the beautiful Church of the Good Shepherd, where the altar window frames a perfect view of the Southern Alps beyond the lake. Our journey continues towards Christchurch, through the vast and fertile Canterbury Plains, home to two-thirds of the South Island population. Christchurch is a fascinating city, combining urban regeneration and innovation with heritage and culture, and we'll explore it on foot this afternoon. In the evening we'll enjoy a unique dining experience onboard Christchurch's Tramway Restaurant, as it weaves its way through the inner city upon historic tracks. Check in to the Muse Hotel (or similar). **B/D**

### Day 6 Christchurch — Kaikoura — Blenheim

We'll head North today, along the rugged east coast, to the seaside settlement of Kaikoura. Located on a rocky peninsula, protruding from lush farmland beneath the mountains, few places can boast such a wide range of accessible wildlife, with whales, dolphins, fur seals, penguins and albatrosses frequently spotted. We'll enjoy an (easy) guided walk through the Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway, looking for seals and seabirds and exploring historic pā and whaling sites. After our walk, there'll be free time to enjoy lunch or stroll around the township. We'll continue on a picturesque coastal drive towards the top of the South Island. The Marlborough is famous for its Sauvignon Blanc, delicious fresh seafood and diverse landscapes, from valleys of vines to sheltered waterways. We'll spend tonight amongst the vines in Blenheim, situated in the heart of the Marlborough, and an ideal base to explore the local wine and food culture. Soak in the serenity at our heritage hotel, sipping locally grown wines in the elegant surroundings. Tonight's dinner is all about fresh local produce, paired with wines of the region. Check in to the Scenic Hotel (or similar). **B/D**

### Day 7 Blenheim — Marlborough Wine Region — Nelson

Go easy on breakfast, as we'll be visiting one of the first farmer's markets established in New Zealand this morning. The Marlborough Farmers' Market showcases the region's finest produce straight from the source. Wander around the market, and enjoy the bustling atmosphere and fresh produce - local cheeses, meats and homemade chutneys are a must! We then head to Cloudy Bay Vineyard for wine tasting and lunch. Established in 1985, Cloudy Bay was one of the first wine makers to venture into Marlborough. At the time, it was almost an unimaginable place to set-up a vineyard. But

Cloudy Bay's founder - David Hohnen - was convinced of its potential to produce great wine and invested in the best land of the region. Since then, Marlborough has risen to become New Zealand's leading wine region, as well as one of the finest winemaking locations in the world. This afternoon we continue to Nelson, known for its art scene, sunshine and beautiful surrounds. This is a great place to appreciate New Zealand art, both in galleries and in artists' studios, having attracted creative people who work with an array of different mediums. Check in to Sails (or similar) for two nights. **B/L**



#### Day 8

#### Nelson & Abel Tasman National Park

Today we'll explore the Abel Tasman National Park, a coastal paradise, by boat. We'll cruise past the granite and marble formations that fringe the headlands and crystal clear streams that tumble down mossy valleys to join the ocean. To truly enjoy the beautiful bays and beaches, we'll take a gentle hike (approx 1 hour) through the National Park. We'll walk past golden beaches, viewpoints and through native forest to an idyllic bay which is the perfect setting for our lunch. We'll return to the boat, enjoying the beautiful surrounds as we return to our starting point in Kaiteriteri. The evening is free to explore the local galleries or take a sunset stroll and dinner is at your leisure. **B/L**



#### Day 9

#### Nelson — Franz Josef

Today is a full travel day - but one of everchanging scenery. We'll begin by passing through lush green forests of "Mamaku" tree ferns, towards the subtropical lowland rainforest of the wild west coast. We'll stop for a short hike (time permitting) to Cape Foulwind to observe a large colony of sea lions. Between here and Greymouth, a wild and romantic landscape awaits us: parallel to the coast runs the 1500m high fold mountain belt of the Paparoas. Along the coast near Punakaiki lie "Pancake Rocks", bizarre rock sculptures formed by the relentless wind and sea. The West Coast rains have created an almost fairy-tale rain forest of moss clad trees and ferns. There are not many areas in the world where one can watch seals and penguins at the beach, wander through the dense rain forest and walk on the eternal ice of the glaciers - all in one day. The Westland National Park offers these contrasts. The ice streams of the Franz Josef and the Fox glaciers start at approximately 3000m altitude and reach into the rain forests on a level of 300m, making both glaciers unique in the world. We'll spend the night in the hospitable town of Franz Josef at the Alpine Glacier Hotel (or similar). **B/D**



#### Day 10

#### Franz Josef — Wanaka

Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers are two of New Zealand largest glaciers. To truly appreciate the towering ice formations and vastness of the glaciers, they are best



viewed from above. We'll fly over both the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers by helicopter this morning, soaring first over the townships and then following the ice flow high up into the upper reaches. We'll land in the snow at the head of one of the glaciers, and survey the path the glacier has carved below. After our magnificent flight, we'll travel on towards Wanaka, stopping at the Blue Pools Walk (time permitting). This easy walk winds through beautiful native forests and over a swing bridge to the pristine waters of Makarora River's Blue Pools. Wanaka is an area of outstanding beauty. The stunning mountain and lakeside setting and proximity to Mount Aspiring National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Area, makes it the ultimate base for outdoor activities. We'll arrive late in the afternoon, with time to relax and enjoy the setting before we meet for a cosy dinner at our hotel. Accommodation at the Oakridge Resort (or similar) for two nights. **B/D**



#### Day 11

#### Wanaka and Cardrona

Amid the stunning Southern Alps of New Zealand, Wanaka is the ideal place for hiking amidst the gorgeous natural beauty of mountains, lakes and forests. We'll enjoy a moderate hike this morning (approx 3 hours) to truly immerse ourselves in the beauty of this region. For those not wishing to join the hike, Wanaka has endless gentler walking options, fishing opportunities and lots of lakeside cafes - your guide can assist you. This afternoon we'll head to the village of Cardrona, nestled high in the Cardrona Valley, and the centre of the region's gold mining industry during the late 1800s. The Cardrona Distillery is an artisan Single Malt distillery that uses traditional methods of hand-crafting spirits from malted barley. We'll enjoy a tour of the distillery and learn the art of making hand-distilled artisan spirits, followed by a tasting of course! We'll finish up with a farewell dinner at the historic Cardrona Hotel, one of New Zealand's oldest and most iconic hotels. **B/D**

#### Day 12

#### Queenstown

Our journey comes to an end this morning, and after breakfast, you'll be transferred to Queenstown airport for your flight home. **B**



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



**ACTIVE**

Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.