

Middle Earth Journeys

February 1 – 14, 2020
(with optional 4 day extension to Sydney
February 14 – 18, 2020)

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 & 2 February 1 & 2 - International Flight to Auckland, New Zealand. Cross the International Dateline and lose 1 day.

Day 3 February 3 - Auckland

Transfer from the airport to the hotel in Auckland. Upon arrival, we take the Auckland Hop On Hop Off Explorer, an all day sightseeing tour visiting Auckland's Big 14 Attractions with full commentary. Buses leave each stop every 30 minutes. The all-day bus pass allows you to get on and off all day with the same pass. The major attractions include Winter Gardens, Newmarket Shopping area, Eden Garden, Mt. Eden, St. Luke's Shopping Center, Auckland Zoo, Civic Theater, SkyCity, Auckland Museum, Parnell Village, Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter, Auckland waterfront, Mount Eden and Holy Trinity Cathedral.

Day 4 February 4 - Auckland – Matamata – Waitomo – Rotorua

This morning we depart Auckland and journey south through lush rural farmland to the Hobbiton Movie Set, hidden on private farmland near the town of Matamata. Here, the village of Hobbiton was carefully created in amazing detail as a film location for the Lord of the Rings and Hobbit movie trilogies. During your guided tour of this amazing location you'll see sights like Hobbit holes, the Mill and the Green Dragon Inn, and learn how this farmland was transformed into a living, breathing piece of Middle-earth. After exploring Hobbiton, tuck into a delicious lunch at the Green Dragon Inn. Next we proceed to Waitomo to visit the world-famous Waitomo Glowworm Caves. Here we'll take a guided tour through impressive underground caverns and learn how stalactites, stalagmites and other limestone structures were formed over millions of years. Your tour includes a boat ride through the Glowworm Grotto where you will glide silently along an underground river as you gaze at the twinkling glowworms overhead. After visiting Waitomo and Hobbiton, we continue onto Rotorua, the place of fascinating Māori culture, hot springs, geysers and boiling mud pools. Evening free at leisure.

Please note the order of this tour is subject to change.

Day 5 February 5 - Rotorua

In the morning, take the optional Great Sights tour to Rotorua's top attractions. This half day tour gives you the opportunity to experience Māori culture, New Zealand's natural wonders, and New Zealand's spectacular wildlife all in an action-packed morning

In the evening, take an included journey to the Tamaki Maori Village. This unforgettable experience takes us to the most award-winning Maori culture attraction in New Zealand, a Maori village nestled in an ancient forest. The cultural evening of with music and entertainment ends with a traditional Maori *Hangi* feast cooked underground. Round trip transportation to the village included.

Optional: Rotorua Great Sights

Day 6 February 6 - Rotorua to Wellington

In the morning depart Rotorua for our flight to Wellington, New Zealand's harbor capital city. *This cultural city is nestled between a picturesque harbor and forest clad hills and is filled with museums, galleries, boutique shopping, trendy cafés and fine restaurants.* Its compact size makes it easy to walk around and its proximity to the ocean and native forests makes it an ideal place to enjoy nature. Lonely Planet labeled Wellington "the coolest little capital in the world." It is home to the largest cultural attraction in New Zealand, the Te Papa Museum which we have a guided tour of. Next we take a ride on the Wellington Cable Car for scenic views of the city. The cars run from Lambton Quay to the top entrance of the Wellington Botanic Gardens. We take a relaxing walk through the gardens which feature a large Victorian-style glasshouse, the Begonia House, the Lady Norwood Rose Garden and the Treehouse Visitor Centre before returning to the hotel. Evening is free at leisure.

Day 7 February 7 - Wellington to Picton to Nelson

In the morning we take the 3-hour Interislander ferry across the stunning Cook Strait to the seaside town of Picton in the South Island, through the magnificent Marlborough Sounds. Upon arriving in Picton, we have an award-winning Marlborough winery tour including lunch, then embark on a scenic coach ride to Nelson in the northwest region of the South Island known as the sunshine region of New Zealand, with its sunny weather, sandy beaches, lakes, mountains and native forests.

Day 8 February 8- Nelson

Spend the entire day on your own enjoying Nelson's numerous art galleries, relaxing in the sun, sipping a wine from one of the local vineyards, or dining on the famous Nelson Bay scallops. Another wonderful choice is to take the optional tour to Abel Tasman National Park, known for its golden sandy beaches, sculptured granite cliffs, and world-famous Abel Tasman Coast Track.

Optional: Abel Tasman National Park Scenic Cruise and Hike

Day 9 February 9 - Nelson to Christchurch

This morning we depart Nelson for our flight to Christchurch, also known as "the garden city" and the South Island's largest city. Upon arrival, we go Punting on the Avon River and then take the Christchurch Trams, a unique experience combining history and sightseeing.

Enjoy a journey in style through the changing face of Christchurch's city center on board the beautifully restored heritage Trams, one of Christchurch's leading attractions. You'll be informed about the city, its landmarks and local sights. Your day-long ticket allows you to get on and off the 17 Tram stops as often as you please. In the late afternoon, consider an optional tour to Lyttelton Harbor. Take a local coach ride to the stunning harbor town of Lyttelton. Upon arrival, embark on a scenic gondola ride to the summit complex, on the top of the Port Hills. Take in the spectacular views of Christchurch, Lyttelton Harbor, Banks Peninsula, Canterbury Plains and the distant peaks of the Southern Alps. While at the top, experience the Time Tunnel, a dramatic reconstruction of the history of the Port Hills and Christchurch. The evening is at leisure. Christchurch and the vast Canterbury region have plenty to keep you busy, whether you're a shopaholic, wild adventurer or history buff.

Optional: Tour to Lyttelton Harbor including scenic Gondola Ride with RT coach transportation

Day 10 February 10 Christchurch

Today we will have another entire day to enjoy Christchurch on your own or take the optional tour to Kaikoura, a quaint whale watching village where you will embark on the renowned Whale Watch Safari. This full day tour includes a scenic drive from Christchurch over the Canterbury plains before arriving in the majestic seaside village of Kaikoura. Once in Kaikoura we will make our way to a lookout to enjoy spectacular views of this pretty seaside village, the majestic mountains and the beautiful Pacific Ocean. Next we will visit a fur seal colony before heading into Kaikoura for some free time to explore and enjoy lunch at your leisure. In the afternoon you will board a catamaran with Whale Watch Kaikoura and enjoy an up-close encounter with the Giant Sperm Whale.

Optional: Whale Watch Kaikoura

Day 11 February 11 Christchurch to Queenstown

In the morning we depart Christchurch by bus for Queenstown. Upon arrival, we embark on a walking tour of downtown Queenstown, the number one tourist destination in the country. Then in the late afternoon, consider an optional vintage steamship cruise aboard the TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak High Country Farm where you will tour the farm, feed the animals, and witness a sheep shearing show before cruising back on the steamship.

Optional: TSS Earnslaw Steamship Cruise to Walter Peak High Country Farm

Day 12 February 12 Queenstown

Spend the day exploring New Zealand's adventure capital on your own or take the full day optional tour to Milford Sound. Recently ranked as the world's most beautiful places, the Milford Sound tour departs from our hotel in the early morning and stops at the picturesque

Te Anau township on the lake before heading through the Homer Tunnel into Milford. Once there, you will go on an unforgettable two-hour boat cruise through the sound exploring soaring peaks, towering waterfalls and New Zealand nature at its best checking out the most amazing scenery in New Zealand along the way. See incredible views of mirror lakes, mountains and cascading waterfalls on this full-day trip. Enjoy a delicious buffet luncheon while taking in the breathtaking sights. Then it's back on the bus to take you back to the adventure capital.

Optional: Milford Sound Cruise Day Tour

Day 13 February 13 Queenstown

Today we have the entire day to enjoy Queenstown, New Zealand's adventure capital on your own or take the half day optional Nomad Safari tour of Skippers Canyon where you will experience some of the most stunning scenery in the country. In the evening, take an included ride on the Skyline Gondola for breathtaking views across Queenstown and Lake Wakatipu, then delight in an included sumptuous farewell dinner at one of Queenstown's most popular restaurants.

Optional: Skippers Canyon Nomad Safari Tour

Day 14 February 14 - Depart Queenstown for US or Optional Extension to Sydney, Australia

Spend the morning at leisure, shopping or taking in any of the exciting attractions of this wonderful resort town. After lunch, depart Queenstown for flight to Auckland, then board our international flight back to the US. Cross the international dateline and gain a day. Or take the 4-day optional add-on to Sydney, Australia.

Inclusions:

- Standard or deluxe accommodations
- All airport transfers within New Zealand
- Auckland Hop-On Hop-Off Explorer Pass
- Welcome dinner in Auckland
- Transportation to destinations per itinerary by air and deluxe motor coaches
- Services of Certified New Zealand Specialist Guide throughout tour
- Notorious Hobbiton Movie Set Tour
- World renowned Waitomo Cave Tour
- Tamaki Maori Village Cultural Evening with Traditional Hangi Dinner
- Wellington Cable Car and Botanic Garden Walk
- TePapa Museum Tour, New Zealand's bold and innovative national museum
- 3 hour Interislander ferry ride between North and South Island
- Award Winning Winery Tour of Marlborough region including lunch
- Christchurch Tram Tour
- Punting on the Avon
- Walking City Tour of Queenstown
- Skyline Gondola Ride over Queenstown
- Farewell dinner in Queenstown
- Roommate matching service (if needed)