



Manuka

Hollyford Track Guided Walk or Milford Track Guided Walk • Hike West Coast beaches and rainforests • Queenstown • Hike Mt. Aspiring National Park and Castle Hill • Hike Paparoa National Park, Fox Glacier and Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Park

14 days: Christchurch – Christchurch

Fare: US\$3799 + tax

The Manuka is an active hiking trip at a relaxed pace. It's designed for people who enjoy the off-the-beaten-track, Kiwi style of our trips, but who also like their creature comforts and want to take things a little easier than the folks on our more physically challenging trips. We have a strong focus on New Zealand's natural history, and the more relaxed pace of the Manuka means our guides have plenty of time to interpret the flora and fauna and explain the geological and social history of the areas we visit. You'll be hiking on most days, from lush rainforest on the West Coast, to the snow-capped mountains of Mt. Aspiring and Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Parks. We've also included your choice of the famed Milford Track Guided Walk and the lesser-known, but more intimate and luxurious, Hollyford Track Guided Walk. Because of the limited availability of the two guided walks, we strongly recommend booking the Manuka as early as possible.

Monday

Arrive, hike Castle Hill

Most people leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Saturday evening and arrive in Auckland early on Monday morning. You'll lose a day to the dateline – but you get it back on the way home! You'll immediately take a short flight to Christchurch in the South Island, arriving by around 10am. We'll meet you there and head west into the heart of the Southern Alps to Castle Hill in the Kuru Tawhiti Conservation Area, for our first hike. We'll take a gentle one-hour walk among imposing limestone tors, which were once a meeting place for Moa hunters of the Ngai Tahu tribe. The Dalai Lama visited this area in 2002 and described it as the 'Spiritual Centre of the Universe'! This afternoon we'll continue on to the West Coast and the gorgeous seaside village of Punakaiki where you'll have the rest of the afternoon to relax or walk on the beach. We always make sure the first day of our trips is relaxing and undemanding so you can recover from your flight. Depending on where you're coming from, you'll probably find jetlag is no big deal – for instance, it's a 12-hour direct overnight flight from Los Angeles to Auckland, and there's only a three-hour time difference between New Zealand and US Pacific time. If you have more time, by all means arrive in New Zealand a day or so early.

ACCOMMODATION: West Coast lodgings, Punakaiki – comfortable and quiet

(L,D)

Tuesday

Rainforest and beach hikes in Punakaiki

We have all day in Punakaiki and we'll certainly make the most of our time. We'll hike part of the Inland Pack Track from Bullock Creek to the Pororari River, starting at a classic 'submergence', where the river suddenly dries up mid-stream and goes underground for a mile or so before resurfacing at Cave Creek. The rainforest in this area is unbelievably lush, and the limestone canyons and distant hazy mountains of Paparoa National Park make this an awesome day hike. We'll also follow the Truman Track to a small surf beach and stroll around Punakaiki's famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes. The Punakaiki coastline is a magnet to marine mammals, like the Hector's dolphin, the world's smallest marine mammal, often seen close to the inner shoreline. There's also a great deal of marine birdlife, including Little Blue penguins that can be spotted at certain times of year.

ACCOMMODATION: West Coast lodgings, Punakaiki

(B,L,D)

Wednesday

Coastal hike, arts and crafts in Hokitika

We'll start with a short drive down the coast for a hike through coastal forest and native flax. A traditional resource for the local Maori, flax was a widely used plant – for footwear and mats to rope to woven food storage baskets. Next it's

on to Hokitika where we'll spend a little time checking out local art galleries and pounamu carving workshops ('pounamu' is Maori for jade). From here it's a couple of hours down the coast to Franz Josef for dinner at a local restaurant. After dinner, we can head out for a short night walk to look for the eerie lights of *Arachnocampa luminosa* – the native glow worm – and listen for some of New Zealand's nocturnal birdlife, such as the distinctive hoot of the Morepork owl.

ACCOMMODATION: *Franz Josef lodgings, Franz Josef*

(B,L,D)

Thursday

Hike to Franz Josef Glacier

Today we'll visit one of the formidable West Coast glaciers. We'll take a morning hike to the historic Tatare Tunnels, and then continue on to Franz Josef Glacier, where we walk to a great view of the terminal face. Franz Josef Glacier is an enormous river of ice, unusual in that it comes right down through the rainforest to sea level from its névé high in the Southern Alps. It is one of the fastest moving glaciers in the world, moving up to ten times faster than other glaciers of its type, and if we're lucky we may even see sections of ice calving off its massive face – from a safe distance of course!

Heli-hike option (add US\$249 + tax)

A less strenuous, but outrageously scenic option today is to heli-hike on Franz Josef Glacier itself. After being fitted with crampons, ice axes and so on, you'll board a modern turbine helicopter and fly towards the highest peaks of the Southern Alps, landing on the glacier at 4,000 feet (1300m) above sea level. Led by specialist glacier guides, you'll hike through the grand ice formations of the glacier, checking out its crevasses, seracs and tunnels – no previous experience required! The constant movement of the glacier means every day is different, so your guides will cut steps in the ice and make sure you make the most of the conditions. At the end of your hike on the ice, you'll take another helicopter ride out of the mountains and back to civilisation.

The heli-hike is extremely popular, so we offer advance reservations with the helicopter operators and guiding company. At the time of booking, or up until one month before your trip, you can reserve a space on the heli-hike, and we'll make sure a spot is held for you. Or you can leave your decision until you're actually on your trip, and we'll get you a spot if it's available.

Heli-hikers generally return a little earlier, so we all rendezvous at a local café, before heading south. From Franz Josef it's about three hours down the coast to Makarora (pop. 30), a small farming village directly next to Mt. Aspiring National Park. At Makarora we have a lovely family-style homestead in the shadow of the mountains to ourselves for the evening.

ACCOMMODATION: *The Homestead, Makarora – comfortable and spacious*

(B,L,D)

Friday

Hike Mt. Aspiring National Park, Queenstown

We begin with a drive from Makarora to Raspberry Creek, where we start a stunning hike up the Matukituki Valley in the heart of Mt. Aspiring National Park. This is one of the best one-day hikes in the South Island, taking in tumbling rivers, towering snowfields, and huge mountain peaks straight from the set of "The Lord of the Rings"! We hike up a narrow glacial valley, coming out of the forest in a dramatic alpine cirque, with fabulous views of the Southern Alps. After lunch, we hike back to the trailhead and head to Queenstown. Queenstown, where ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND is based, is a picturesque town set in a basin on the edge of Lake Wakatipu, surrounded by mountains. It's a great place to spend a couple of days before heading out on the Milford or Hollyford Tracks.

ACCOMMODATION: *Queenstown apartments, Queenstown*

(B,L)

Saturday

Free day in Queenstown

You'll find all the comforts of civilisation in Queenstown: massage therapists, restaurants, cafés and window-shopping. You can also go fishing, kiwi viewing, wine tasting, horse trekking, hang gliding and even bungee jumping! Your guides will help you arrange any extra activities and can also point out the best local hikes. Or you can do nothing and just soak up

the atmosphere. This afternoon we'll have a pre-departure briefing for the Milford and Hollyford Track Guided Walks.

ACCOMMODATION: Queenstown apartments, Queenstown

(B)

Sunday – Thursday Hollyford Track Guided Walk or Milford Track Guided Walk

At the time of booking, you can choose between the Hollyford Track or Milford Track Guided Walks. Both hikes are located in Fiordland National Park, one of the world's largest national parks and a renowned World Heritage area. Each is wonderful in its own way, so we'll let you decide!

HOLLYFORD TRACK GUIDED WALK OPTION: [Add US\$299 + tax]

The Hollyford Track, although relatively unknown outside of New Zealand, has been a popular locals' secret for decades. It still enjoys a complete absence of crowds and we'll have the lodges more or less to ourselves in the pristine wilderness of Fiordland National Park. We'll hike through rainforest in the Hollyford River valley down to Martins Bay, on the Tasman Sea. The Hollyford Track is run by Ngai Tahu, the local Maori people, and they have very comfortable lodges so we can share one of our favourite trails with you in high style. Unlike the Milford Track, all the rooms are twin-share with shared bathrooms – no dorms on the Hollyford! We'll hike through mountain valleys and rainforest, and look for native New Zealand fur seals, dolphins and during the months of November and December, we might be lucky enough to spot the Fiordland Crested penguins (one of the world's rarest obligate marine birds). The Hollyford Track is 24 miles (38km) in total and a little less physically challenging than the Milford Track, but it's still plenty active! Because you are doing the guided walk, you don't have to carry a heavy pack. In fact, you'll just be carrying a change of clothes and a packed lunch, so your pack should be no heavier than what you would bring on a regular day hike. On the Hollyford Track, we have a real emphasis on comfort and gourmet cooking in 'Kiwi style'. For instance, if you catch your own whitebait (a local delicacy) the lodge manager will whip up some whitebait fritters for you! Our Hollyford Track option finishes with a jaw-dropping scenic flight among the Southern Alps to Milford Sound and then a magnificent overnight cruise on the famous fiord, referred to as the 8th Natural Wonder of the World by Rudyard Kipling, before returning to Queenstown.

Sunday Hike through beech forest to Pyke River Lodge

It's an early start this morning as we head from Queenstown through the Eglinton Valley to the start of the Hollyford Track. We'll stop at a historic road workers' camp for a breather, before taking to the trail itself. We follow the Hollyford River through native forest to a well-equipped, comfortable wilderness lodge. Pyke River Lodge is a magical place – it is absolutely secluded, nestled in the rugged Fiordland National Park – but despite its isolation, has private rooms, hot showers and awesome meals. We'll have another opportunity to see glow worms as when we head out after dinner to Pyke River Lodge's own glow worm grotto.

ACCOMMODATION: Pyke River Lodge

(B,L,D)

Monday Hike to Lake Alabaster and alongside Lake McKerrow

Today we hike to Lake Alabaster, which is often shrouded in fog, giving it a wonderfully moody, misty feel in the morning. We then check out the podocarp rainforest in the area before hiking alongside Lake McKerrow towards the coast. This section of the track can be a little challenging, but don't worry, there's a jet boat waiting to pick us up and take us to Martins Bay Lodge at the end of the day. The lodge is very close to the sea, so tonight, after a hot shower, you can dine on *kaimoana*, or seafood, the traditional fare of the Maori people in this area.

ACCOMMODATION: Martins Bay Lodge

(B,L,D)

Andrew: *"Martins Bay Lodge has a great little backcountry airstrip, sort of Alaska-style, and when I have friends come to stay, flying them into Martins Bay is always at the top of my list! The wild craggy mountains of Fiordland National Park, Lake McKerrow, the rainforest and the waterfalls – simply stunning, I love it!"*

Tuesday Scenic flight and overnight cruise on Milford Sound

This morning starts with a jet boat trip to Martins Bay beach for a chance to explore the four mile stretch of sand

dunes and lagoon. After returning to Martins Bay Lodge, we'll take an unforgettable flight through the canyons and valleys of the Darran Mountains to Milford Sound, and then down to Milford Sound village. After lunch, we'll board our charming cruise boat, which has all the mod cons but still maintains its old-world charm. You'll have the chance to explore the fiord by sea kayak or tender craft, and then we'll watch the sun set over the Tasman Sea and visit the resident seal population lazing on the rocks. At some point along the journey, we'll probably be visited by Milford Sound's local pod of dolphins, who like nothing more than to play in the waves made by the boat's bow.

ACCOMMODATION: *Cruise boat on Milford Sound – stable and comfortable* (B,L,D)

Wednesday **Return to Queenstown**

We'll arrive back in Milford Sound and drive through to the lakeside village of Te Anau where you'll be able to grab some lunch, before the short drive back to Queenstown, leaving you with a free afternoon to enjoy all to yourself. An option today is to take a scenic helicopter flight from Milford Sound back to Queenstown. It's a stunning flight and will get you back in time for a free afternoon in Queenstown to enjoy all to yourself (scenic helicopter flight option about US\$340 per person).

ACCOMMODATION: *Queenstown apartments, Queenstown* (B)

Thursday **Hike Ben Lomond**

After a relaxed breakfast we'll ride up the Queenstown Gondola as it climbs its way to the top of a tree-covered rocky crag, known as Bob's Peak, to start our alpine hike. Ben Lomond, one of Queenstown's prominent peaks, was named by the early Scottish settlers in the area who were reminded of the highlands of their home country. From Bob's Peak, we hike through open alpine tussock-land to the Ben Lomond saddle, where you'll find yourself immersed in amazing views over Queenstown Bay and Lake Wakatipu, which are themselves dwarfed by the surrounding mountains of the Southern Alps. For those keen to press on to the top, Ben Lomond's summit reveals views of Mt. Earnslaw and Mt. Aspiring, two of New Zealand's highest peaks. This evening, we'll meet up with those that hiked the Milford Track to chat about our experiences over dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: *Queenstown apartments, Queenstown* (B,L,D)

- OR -

MILFORD TRACK GUIDED WALK OPTION:

The 5-day/4-night Milford Track is one of the longest established and best known walking tracks in the country. It starts on the eastern shore of Lake Te Anau and crosses McKinnon Pass to Milford Sound, taking in glacial peaks, a mountain pass, New Zealand's highest waterfall and the dense rainforest of the West Coast. You'll have four days of exercise, good food and great scenery as you walk 33 miles (53km) from Lake Te Anau to Milford Sound. You'll have three nights in comfortable mountain lodges, and the fourth night in Milford Sound itself, at Mitre Peak Lodge. By the end of this walk you'll see why Rudyard Kipling referred to Milford Sound as the 8th Natural Wonder of the World. Because you are doing the guided walk, you don't have to carry a heavy pack. In fact, you'll just be carrying a change of clothes and a packed lunch, so your pack won't be much heavier than what you would bring on a regular day hike. Everything else is provided, including excellent meals at the lodges and on the trail, hot showers, bedding, guiding and even hairdryers in the rooms! Rooming is in 4 and 6-bed bunk rooms with shared bathroom facilities. A great option, if you prefer your own space, is to request a private twin, queen or single room with private bathroom facilities (contact us for the latest private room rates).

Sunday **Boat ride and short hike**

This morning we'll head from Queenstown to Te Anau Downs, stopping for lunch at the lakeside village of Te Anau. Then we take the boat to the head of Lake Te Anau to the start of the Milford Track. It's a short, easy walk to Glade House, where we stay our first night.

ACCOMMODATION: *Glade House* (B,L,D)

Monday Hike in beech forest

We start the day by crossing Clinton River and wandering through unique beech forest to Hirere Falls, where we have lunch. After crossing the Prairie, the track gets a little steeper as we climb up to Pompolona Lodge. Today's highlights include distinctive beech forest, all sorts of spectacular plants and stunning views up the ice-carved Clinton Canyon toward McKinnon Pass.

ACCOMMODATION: *Pompolona Lodge* (B,L,D)

Tuesday Hike McKinnon Pass

Today is the most spectacular day of the Milford Track! We climb a series of switchbacks to cross McKinnon Pass. From the top of the pass, the views of the Arthur Valley and the surrounding peaks are just magnificent. We'll lunch at Pass Hut, then head down the pass to Quintin Lodge. Once we've arrived, those who are keen can take a 90-minute round trip to see the Sutherland Falls, the fifth highest waterfall in the world.

ACCOMMODATION: *Quintin Lodge* (B,L,D)

Wednesday Hike to Milford Sound

This is your last day on the track. It's 13 miles (21km) of varied terrain, slightly downhill, with no significant climbing. If you weren't in top shape by the time you started your ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND trip, you certainly will be by now! The small waterfalls to be found just off the track make for a delightful day. You'll be picked up at Sandfly Point this afternoon for a short cruise to the jetty, and arrive at Mitre Peak Lodge for the last night in Milford Sound. Now we're back in civilisation – but you'll almost regret it!

ACCOMMODATION: *Mitre Peak Lodge* (B,L,D)

Thursday Milford Sound boat cruise

After breakfast we have a morning boat cruise on Milford Sound. After exploring the full length of Milford Sound, we'll head back to the jetty and drive back to Queenstown via Te Anau, arriving in the late afternoon. An option today is to take a scenic helicopter flight from Milford Sound back to Queenstown. It's a stunning flight and will get you back in time for a free afternoon in Queenstown to enjoy all to yourself (scenic helicopter flight option about US\$340 per person). This evening we'll meet up with those that hiked the Hollyford Track to catch up on our experiences over dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: *Queenstown apartments, Queenstown* (B,L,D)

Friday Hike Sam Summers Loop Track, visit local winery

After breakfast, we head out around Lake Wakatipu to 12 Mile Delta, where we'll hike the Sam Summers Track. The area was mined for gold until the 1930s and there are still many relics to be seen along the way. After this hike, we'll head to the historic village of Arrowtown for lunch before continuing on to Amisfield Winery. This region's dry and sunny climate is ideal for grape growing, and is becoming well known for producing world-class, cool-climate Pinot Noir and other quality wines. We'll enjoy a glass or two, and then head north to Lake Ohau Lodge. Here we're staying beside a beautiful alpine lake, with stunning views stretching across to Mt. Cook and the Southern Alps.

ACCOMMODATION: *Lake Ohau Lodge, Lake Ohau* (B,L,D)

Saturday Hike Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Park

It's a short drive to Mt. Cook village, where we have a stunning and little-known day hike up to the main ridge above Mueller Glacier. This area has a unique alpine environment, and includes endemic flora such as *Ranunculus lyallii* – the world's largest buttercup, more commonly known as the Mt. Cook Lily. It's a tough three-hour slog up this track, but you'll remember the view of the Mueller Glacier and the peaks of the Main Divide forever! Many of our clients have said

this is the best hike they have ever done and it's a fine way to finish off a great trip. There are other hiking options for those who'd like to take it a little easier. The weather conditions are very important in this area, as it's a true alpine climate notorious for sudden weather shifts. If we aren't able to do the ridge hike, we'll take an impressive hike up the Hooker Valley to a glacial lake at the base of the Hooker Glacier, complete with icebergs! After hiking, it's well under two hours to Lake Tekapo village. You'll spend your final night in New Zealand in one last beautiful location, beside sky-blue Lake Tekapo with the mountains in the background.

ACCOMMODATION: Lakeside lodgings, Lake Tekapo

(B,L,D)

Andrew: *"I have often just filled a backpack, grabbed a couple of friends, and wandered up to Mueller Hut, which is where Sir Edmund Hillary practised his mountaineering techniques before climbing Mount Everest. The glacial valleys, active icefalls, and intimacy with our highest mountains mean this is a great place to sit by the hut and simply soak it all in."*

Sunday

Depart for home

This is the last day of your two-week trip around the South Island. See the itinerary for the *Kauri* trip if you want to take a few more days to see the North Island as well. We'll leave after breakfast for the three-hour drive to Christchurch, arriving early afternoon in time for flights back to Auckland. International flights after 4pm are ideal, and we can make domestic flights as early as 2.30pm with a little notice. International flights from Auckland usually leave early evening, so if you're heading back to North America, you'll get home some time on Sunday, even though you left on Sunday evening! Flights back to Europe take a little longer. But you'll be refreshed and invigorated from the good food, exercise, rest, and great times you'll have had with us in New Zealand!

(B,L)

Important Information

ACCOMMODATION: The *Manuka* is a backcountry wilderness trip. You'll be staying in the highest level of accommodations available in the remote places we take you. While it features more creature comforts than some of our other trips, it's not a scenic tour of the luxury hotels of the South Island. We prefer to stay in comfortable bed and breakfasts, lodges and apartments. Rooming is based on twin-share, although an upgrade to a single room is available on request. Rooming on the Milford Track Guided Walk is in 4 and 6-bed bunk rooms – again private rooms are available on request. As there's a variety of accommodation on this trip, most places will have ensuite bathrooms and one or two will have shared bathrooms, so we may ask you to share a bathroom with other group members on occasion.

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: If you're flying in on the first day of the trip, or out on the last day, we recommend arriving in Christchurch by about 9 - 10.30am on Monday, and departing from Christchurch after 3–4pm on Sunday. Other flight times may also be possible. If you are considering alternative flight times please let us know so we can help make your trip as smooth as possible.

TRIP START: On the first day of the trip we can either pick you up from the Heritage Hotel in Christchurch at 10.30am or at the Christchurch domestic airport in front of the information desk at 11am.

TRIP END: On the last day of the trip we can drop you off at the Christchurch airport in time for the flights above, or anywhere in central Christchurch at about 3pm.

TRIP DIRECTION: To keep our group sizes down, we run the *Manuka* trip in two different directions around the South Island - northbound (refers to initial direction of travel from Christchurch) and southbound. This itinerary happens to be written up in the northbound format. We also run the *Manuka* starting and ending in Queenstown. Whichever trip you take, you'll do all the activities we've mentioned, just in a different order. The *Manuka* is a product of many years of evolution and fine-tuning – it works well whichever way you do it!

FITNESS: You must have a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself. The level of fitness required on this trip is lower than on some of our other trips, but you should be in the habit of doing at least some exercise. You don't have

to be young and extremely fit – age and experience is not important, but it is important that you enjoy walking and hiking. This trip is not a passive scenic tour of New Zealand.

EXPERIENCE: You don't have to have any outdoor experience at all to take our trips. We're offering trips that allow you to make the most of New Zealand's incredible wilderness. Our experienced guides are highly trained, knowledgeable and will look after you! You don't have to carry a heavy pack. All we ask is that you are energetic and in reasonable shape and we guarantee you'll have an incredible time. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience, and we have an impeccable safety record. We also hold all relevant government licenses and permits.

FLEXIBILITY: Because of the off-the-beaten-path and non-commercial nature of some of our lodgings on this trip, we sometimes need to stay in different lodgings than specified in the itinerary. When we do this the daily activities don't change and we use accommodations of a similar level.

INCLUDED: The trip fare is US\$3599 + 12.5% NZ government taxes. We quote all prices in US dollars, so our guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. You can also join for shorter periods of time, at a pro-rated fare. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We have two guides per trip, a lead guide/driver and a co-guide who is responsible for meals and accommodations. This means we can really make sure you have a great time! We operate with small groups and we don't hesitate to offer a second departure when our trips start getting full.
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire period you are with us. We can also organize accommodation for you if you want to arrive earlier or leave later.
- All your meals, except in Queenstown where we've found people prefer to check out the wide range of restaurants. Alcohol is not generally included, although we do spring for a few drinks here and there!
- All hiking described in the itinerary, except optional extra activities, such as the scenic helicopter flight from Milford Sound to Queenstown. We have estimated the rates for optional extra activities operated by local activity operators in US dollars, including all required equipment, but these rates may vary according to the USD/NZD exchange rate of the day. There are many optional activities available at extra cost, particularly in Queenstown. None of these activities are compulsory, and nor will your trip seem less awesome if you do the cheap or free options.

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday, and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you! You'll have a few meals and drinks to cover, extra activities if you choose them, and you'll probably feel like tipping your guides at the end of a fabulous time, but you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND trip!

We'll see you soon!

Itinerary valid through April 2010