

the south island experience

summary

We're delighted to offer you what we feel is an exciting and diverse trip to the South Island of New Zealand available. The following summary highlights the features included in your Black Sheep vacation.

accommodation

- Quality, character accommodation, hand-picked and reflecting each region's individual style.
- Double, twin, and single rooms with private baths.

dining

- The best restaurants in each area with a la carte dining featuring regional specialties, accompanied by complimentary tastings of New Zealand's excellent wines.
- Special dietary needs catered for.
- Hearty cooked or continental breakfasts included each morning.
- All lunches included, except on Day 6 in Christchurch, and Day 11 in Queenstown.
- All dinners included, except on Day 11 in Queenstown.
- Snacks, fresh fruit, and beverages in the vehicles.

activities

- Ferry ride between the North and South Island.
- Wine tasting in Marlborough.
- Sea kayaking the Abel Tasman National Park.
- Hiking the Kaikoura Peninsula.
- Whale-watching flight in Kaikoura.
- Seal swimming or pelagic bird watching in Kaikoura.
- Farmstay.
- TranzAlpine train ride over the Southern Alps.
- Cave-rafting or scenic-caving expedition.
- Scenic glacier flight.
- Shotover Canyon jet boat ride.
- Visit to Arrowtown and the bungy bridge.
- Overnight cruise in Fiordland.

Plus day hikes, bird-watching, swimming, and much more!

We pride ourselves on the wide range of activities included in your tour package. We've chosen those that we feel will enhance your South Island experience. You can participate in as many or as few as you like. If you are unable to participate in an activity or there are weather restrictions, alternatives will be provided where possible.

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transportation

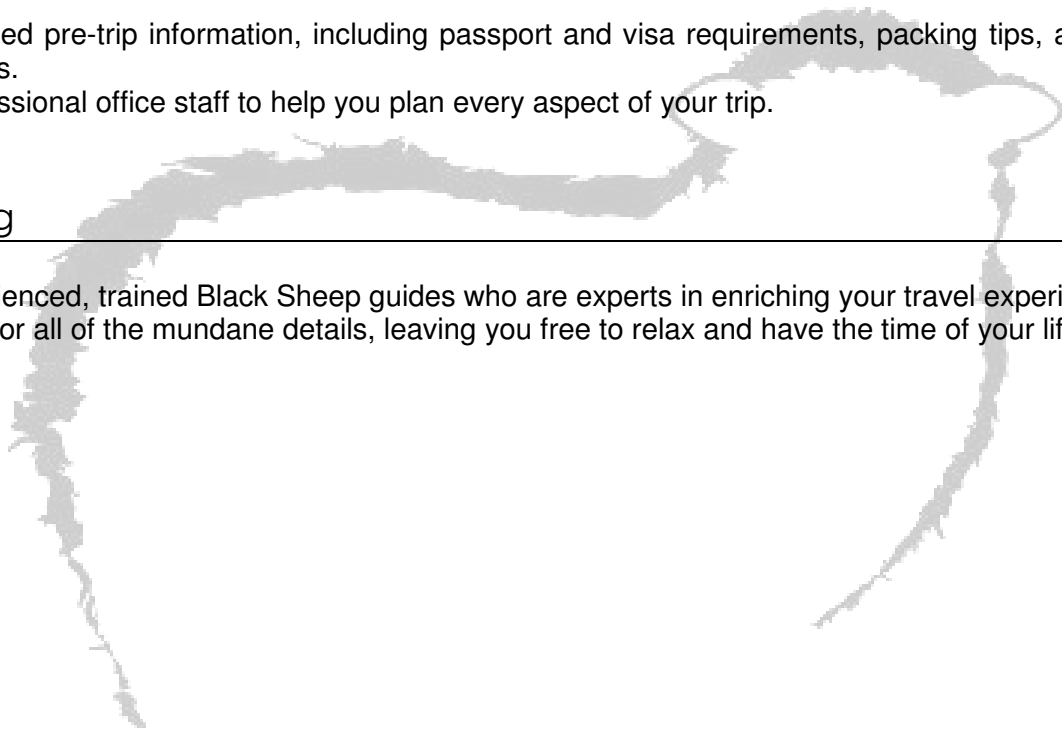
- Airport transfers within New Zealand.
- All land transportation while on tour in comfortable, air-conditioned luxury mini-coaches.
- Various on-board amenities such as a reference library, binoculars, etc to enhance your enjoyment of the trip.
- All ferry and water taxi trips.

support

- Detailed pre-trip information, including passport and visa requirements, packing tips, and arrival details.
- Professional office staff to help you plan every aspect of your trip.

guiding

- Experienced, trained Black Sheep guides who are experts in enriching your travel experience.
- Care for all of the mundane details, leaving you free to relax and have the time of your life.



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itinerary

Our South Island Experience tour truly captures the best of this region of New Zealand. This tour is highly recommended so you can gain a full appreciation of New Zealand's culture and beauty.

The itinerary below is broken down into New Zealand's distinct regions to give you a better sense of the diverse areas through which you will travel.

wellington

Day 1: Arrive in Wellington

Welcome to New Zealand. Your South Island Experience tour starts in Wellington this evening. Your guide will meet you for a tour orientation and then you will join the group for a fabulous evening dinner. You may choose to arrive in Wellington city earlier to self-explore this vibrant city.

marlborough & nelson

Day 2: Wellington to Nelson

We take the ferry across the Cook Strait to the South Island, gliding past the spectacular coastline of the Marlborough Sounds. Landing in Picton, we travel to the Marlborough wine region, renowned for its world-class Sauvignon Blancs and Chardonnays. After tastings and a winery lunch, we continue on to our accommodation in sun-drenched Nelson, pausing for a short hike through native beech forest along the way.

Day 3: The Abel Tasman National Park

The Abel Tasman, with its temperate forest, aquamarine waters, and golden sand beaches, is arguably one of the most beautiful parks in the country. Hike through the park at your own pace this day, or join us for a special sea kayaking experience along its coast, ducking in and out of secluded bays, stopping to stroll along its beaches, and drawing in the tranquil beauty of the sea.

kaikoura & canterbury

Day 4: The Abel Tasman to Kaikoura

We depart the Nelson region and journey east to the dramatic Pacific coast and the seaside hamlet of Kaikoura, New Zealand's marine-life centre. After settling into our waterfront accommodation, we take a spectacular hike around the Kaikoura peninsula, a dominant feature in the region's landscape. The hike offers magnificent views of the surrounding sea and mountains as it winds past intriguing

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limestone formations and fur seals lounging on the rocks. Kaikoura means "to eat crayfish (lobster)" in Maori, and tonight is a chance to sample the local specialty.

Day 5: Marine-life Encounters

Today, we'll have the chance to behold some of Kaikoura's tremendous creatures in their natural habitat. In the morning those feeling adventurous can don wetsuits and snorkel gear for an up-close encounter with Kaikoura's playful fur seals. Alternatively, a fascinating boat trip to the feeding grounds of Kaikoura's sea birds offers a unique opportunity to view albatross, shearwaters, and other pelagic wildlife on the wing and in the waters around us. Perhaps the most famous Kaikoura residents are the sperm whales. An afternoon whale flight offers the unique opportunity of viewing these gentle leviathans from above. From this perspective, one can appreciate the whale's size, as well as the vastness of its feeding ground.

Day 6: Kaikoura to Christchurch

Departing Kaikoura, we journey south to the Canterbury region and the city of Christchurch, described by some as the most English of New Zealand's cities. Lunch is on your own so you can explore--hire a punt on the Avon, stroll through the botanical gardens, or visit the lively open-air market. From Christchurch, it's a short trip through scenic countryside to the home of a New Zealand farming family for your overnight farmstay. Generally, no more than four guests stay at one home, allowing you the chance for an intimate visit.

the west coast & glaciers

Day 7: Christchurch to Punakaiki

After warm farewells to our Kiwi families, we board the famous TranzAlpine train for a trip over the glorious Southern Alps. Crossing alpine rivers and winding beneath snow-capped peaks, we descend to the wild and woolly West Coast region. Upon reaching The Coast, it's a short drive along stunning shoreline to our accommodation for the next two nights, on the edge of the Paparoa National Park. The afternoon allows you time to explore the area's features, including the intriguing Pancake Rocks, and to take in the bounty of talented craftspeople here.

Day 8: Punakaiki

This part of the South Island is known for its limestone landscape and is honeycombed with intricate cave systems. The morning gives us the opportunity to explore one of these systems in a choice of two ways. Scenic Caving is available for those wishing to explore a natural cave virtually unspoiled by humans. We examine chambers filled with delicate formations and the eerie blue constellations of glow worms as we learn about the cave's creation. Those wanting a taste of the surreal can instead go on one of New Zealand's most unusual experiences, Cave Rafting. Outfitted with wetsuits and inner tubes and led by an experienced guide, we hike through the cave to a meandering underground river where we board our tubes and drift through a magnificent glow-worm grotto. Plenty of laughs are had on this memorable adventure. For those wishing to remain aboveground on this day, other enjoyable alternatives can be arranged.

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Day 9: Punakaiki to the Glaciers

This morning, it's a spectacular drive down to New Zealand's glacier region. Upon our arrival in the picturesque village of Franz Josef, we take a scenic flight over the glaciers, passing near Mt. Cook, New Zealand's highest peak. Upon our return, we hike along the glacial riverbed for a view of the imposing glacier face. From Franz Josef, we travel to its sister village of Fox where we settle into our comfortable alpine hotel. Nearby is perhaps one of the prettiest little walking trails in New Zealand where you can stroll beneath a thick canopy of old-growth rainforest before dinner.

queenstown & fiordland

Day 10: The Glaciers to Queenstown

This morning, we walk around a nearby kettle lake, created by retreating glaciers long ago, but now rimmed by lush forest. From here, it's a stunning drive through the Haast Pass on our way to Queenstown. Dense rainforests give way to the stark mountains of the Mt. Aspiring National Park as we enter the Otago region, New Zealand's Outback and home to its high country sheep stations. After pausing in the serene, lake-side town of Wanaka, we cross the spectacular Crown Range and descend into Queenstown. Resting on the shores of lovely Lake Wakatipu and flanked by The Remarkables, this is a stunning setting in which to base ourselves for the next four days.

Day 11: Queenstown

Queenstown is New Zealand's adrenalin centre. In keeping with this, we take an exhilarating jet boat ride through the Shotover Canyon this morning. Before the gold rush of adventure tourism, this was a true gold rush region 140 years ago, reminiscent of America's Wild West. Because there are so many things to do in Queenstown to cater to your diverse interests, we have left the remainder of the day free for you to pick and choose whatever optional activities you desire, be they whitewater rafting, horse-trekking and bungy jumping, or more leisurely pursuits such as walking and wine trails. For that reason, lunch and dinner are on your own this day.

Day 12: Queenstown to Fiordland

This morning, we pack an overnight bag for our excursion to spectacular Fiordland National Park. The journey to the fiord is one of the most scenic on which you could hope to travel, and we stop and explore some of nature's wonders along the way. At the fiord, we board our vessel for the unique experience of an overnight stay. Very few see Fiordland in this way and it allows you maximum time to absorb its overwhelming beauty. We cruise toward the mouth of the fiord, passing alongside thundering waterfalls and fur seals basking on the rocks. From the mouth, we return to our refuge and anchor overnight in a sheltered cove.

Day 13: Fiordland to Queenstown

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This morning, we wake to a hearty breakfast as we cruise back to land, rare witnesses to a Fiordland dawn. We return to Queenstown, stopping along the way for a morning walk through moss-laden beech forest to a pristine alpine lake. We resettle at our accommodation for a relaxing afternoon. Our farewell dinner is tonight, where we reflect upon the highlights of our trip and celebrate the friendships we've made.

Day 14: Homeward Bound

On our final morning, depending on your flight schedule, you'll have time to relax, make final purchases, and even reconsider that bungy jump before travelling home or to your next destination.

We're confident you'll leave New Zealand with memories and friendships that will enrich your life for years to come.

