



NEW ZEALAND CONTRASTS



This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.



Walking above Mount Cook Village

- **Walking in EIGHT National Parks 5-7 hours most days**
- **Time to savour – no ‘whistle stops’**
- **Option to walk the Milford Track**
- **An overnight cruise on Milford Sound**
- **Flight between South and North Island (included) saves time**
- **Interesting accommodation and good food throughout**
- **The best itinerary...because we live here!!**
- **Option to leave the trip on DAY 20 before flight to North island**

New Zealand Contrasts is a **27 DAY** walking itinerary to both islands.

Not enough time? You can leave the trip on DAY 20 at Christchurch airport after the South Island portion and before the flight to Rotorua and the North Island 6 days.

High Places in New Zealand

In 1999, 'High Places' directors Bob and Mary Lancaster moved from Sheffield, UK to New Zealand and set up the 'High Places NZ' office near Nelson at the top of South Island. Nelson is ringed by mountains and has a sunny 'Mediterranean' micro-climate and golden beaches. In the surrounding countryside there are orchards, vineyards, and markets which support a creative lifestyle of arts and crafts, potters and painters. Nelson is a stylish and relaxed place and a great place to start a trip to New Zealand! It is also near the beautiful Abel Tasman coastline where our walking begins.

The trip - 'steady' grade.

Walking, usually on good trails (5-7 hours daily) through a wide range of contrasting landscapes: mountains, shoreline, valleys, NZ bush and rainforest and finally volcanic lava. On walking days you only need to carry day gear ie. waterproofs, fleece, camera & lunch, unless you opt to walk the Milford Track. Our 2 biggest days - up to an alpine ridge near Mt Cook and to a high viewpoint on Mt Ruapehu – are close to 1000m (3,280ft) of ascent but the remaining days are less energetic. Regular walkers with hillwalking experience will love this trip!

The itinerary offers a range of exciting day walks in **eight of the 14 NZ National Parks**:

- Abel Tasman National Park
- Nelson Lakes National Park
- Paparoa National Park
- Westland National Park
- Aspiring National Park
- Mt Cook National Park
- Fiordland National Park
- Tongariro National Park



Abel Tasman. *Photo Ruth Bamforth*

There is also an option to leave the tour for 4 days to walk the world famous **Milford Track**

Accommodation

The accommodation on this trip is varied and interesting. It includes a Mediterranean eco-style inn, shared houses deep in the rainforest, a small hotel, an alpine lodge near Mt Cook and some friendly motels and chalets and a ski lodge, most with a distinctly New Zealand flavour and quite often exclusive to our group. On much of the trip the rooms are twin or double with ensuite and on some nights we use a mix of one to three bedroom houses, chalets or motels with shared facilities and often with a communal lounge.

On the Milford Sound overnight boat 'The Wanderer', the accommodation is newly renovated with twin berths and shared bathroom/shower facilities - singles may be in a quad berth if the configurations have an odd number!

Food

We often do our own cooking and excellent and plentiful locally sourced food is a highlight. Our meals are usually informal and help will be appreciated with the table laying and clearing away. On walking days we all make packed lunches and on travel days we have alfresco picnics, or sometimes stop at a cafe.

In the main towns and also some smaller towns where there is a choice of restaurants we tend to eat out in the evenings. For details refer to the day by day itinerary 'B,L,D' - Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, to check which meals are/are not included.

Health and Hygiene

New Zealand generally has a high standard of health and hygiene and much of the outdoors is pristine. However with increased numbers on some of the more popular trails, warnings about giardia are appearing. Either bring a water-purifying agent (available locally) or carry enough water for hiking days, normally 1.5 to 2 litres on hot days. The only 'bugs' to concern us are sandflies, a cross between mosquitoes and midges which are prevalent particularly on the west coast and Fiordland. Whilst walking they are not a problem but whilst stationary e.g. lunch stops etc., they can be irritating. Carry a good ozone friendly repellent, available locally, and some mild antihistamine such as 'Anthisan' or similar, to stop bites itching. Our High Places NZ staff assure us that in their opinion sandflies are nowhere as bad as Scottish midges.

Climate

New Zealand is known for its stimulating clear air, powerful skies, and abundant sunshine. The summer months (mid Nov – mid April) have a good record for lengthy periods of fine weather. Be warned however that Fiordland and the west coast have a high rainfall. Mountain weather can change quickly but local forecasting is excellent and is readily available. Be optimistic! Most places we visit have considerably more sunshine hours than anywhere in the UK. London 1,500 hours annually. Nelson 2,300hrs!



West Coast gorges. Photo Cathy Crompton

Transport

During this trip we will travel in our own private bus.

Independent Milford Track option:

If you decide to hike the Milford Track you will leave the 'Contrasts' group for 3 nights/4 days. You depart from Te Anau on DAY 13 around midday by bus and boat to reach the start of the track, which ends at Milford Sound. You then catch a coach back to Queenstown (5 hours) to rejoin the group in the evening of DAY 16.

Note: **Please let us know early!** Places on the Milford Track for the main season are being snapped up 9 months ahead.

You will be responsible for your gear, packing, food etc but there will be time in Wanaka or Te Anau. The huts on the track provide bottled gas cooking facilities - no need to carry stoves. You will need your own sleeping bags, pans, plates and cutlery. **We will book and pay for your hut & all transport, and give you advice but won't come with you! There is no additional cost.**

Usually 2-3 clients each trip choose the independent track option. The remainder stay with us for our own excellent Fiordland walking itinerary and overnight boat trip.

Longer in New Zealand

Consider our **Captain Cook extension** in the Queen Charlotte Sounds as a warm up. See our website or give us a call for more extension ideas including **Great Barrier Island** and the **Bay of Islands**. Our High Places NZ Office can also suggest and design itineraries, book walking tracks, hotels, buses, flights and arrange campervan or car hire. We offer a friendly '**plan your own**' **PYO service** which is reliable and personal. Check out our website or contact High Places NZ direct on pyo@highplaces.co.nz

Pacific Island stopover

If you are flying from or via USA usually with Air New Zealand from Los Angeles, Pacific island stopovers are available and well worth considering. Our favourite is the Cook Islands, with very much a New Zealand style, NZ\$ currency, relaxed living etc. The main island, Rarotonga, is a classic Pacific island, 35km circumference, with palm-fringed beaches, coral lagoons and a rugged mountainous interior. If you are interested, see our Pacific Islands Extension details, check out your international flight options then contact our NZ office for accommodation options.

What our clients say...

"Thank you very much for what we felt was a superb holiday with great memories – Certainly the best way to see outdoor NZ. It was a good group and your personal involvement, support and friendship throughout the whole trip made it very special and with the added bonus of Jenny's company, guidance and gourmet cuisine we thought it could not be better. "

Steve Crowther, New Zealand Contrasts Feb 2011

What did you enjoy most about your trip?

"The variety, the contrasts, the flexibility. Difficult to choose, everything was enjoyable. Expectations were exceeded on all counts. This was the best trip I have done in a long time"

Ann Lindsay, New Zealand Contrasts

Would you recommend High Places to others? YES Why?

"Small groups, friendly staff, stunning locations, well organised"

Ann Lindsay, New Zealand Contrasts

We have been on many guided walking holidays over the past 35 years, but this was so much better led than any other that it is in a class of its own. Thank you for giving us such a brilliant holiday.

Tom & Enid Foley New Zealand Contrasts

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

This daily description will always need to remain flexible. Times and distances are approximate. On the Abel Tasman coast, tide times will affect our walking options. Our itinerary on the west coast could always be affected by weather. 'B,L,D' refers to meals inclusive in the tour, i.e. breakfast, lunch, dinner.

This trip is 27 days ex NZ. The first and last days refer to the days of arrival and departure from New Zealand and are not necessarily the days you depart from or arrive back home.

THE SOUTH ISLAND

DAY 1 Arrive Nelson at the top of the South Island, a stylish and attractive small holiday town and fishing port. It is known for its 'Mediterranean' weather and golden beaches. In the surrounding countryside, orchards, vineyards, and market gardens support a creative lifestyle of craftspeople. If you have come off a long flight we suggest an easy 'clear the cobwebs' walk up Botanical Hill to 'the Centre of New Zealand'. Studio apartments.

DAY 2 Nelson is a great place, with street cafes, attractive parks and gardens, a cathedral and a fine beach. On Saturday mornings there is an open-air market in town, with crafts, music and homemade foods, which is why today is Saturday! In the afternoon a cliff-top traverse (4 hours) allows us to stretch legs and warm up for the trip. Studio apartments. (B)

DAYS 3-4 **BEACHES:** Away from town early. The **Abel Tasman Coastal Track** is a great relaxed start to any New Zealand visit. The walking is easy and with the help of a water taxi we walk two of the best sections of the '4 day' trail. Depending on tides, 5-7 hours walking daily on a good path through luxuriant, native 'bush' linking a series of idyllic, rocky fringed, unspoilt sandy bays. We stay in a Mediterranean eco-style inn for two nights. (B,L,D)



Abel Tasman

DAYS 5-6 **NELSON LAKES:** We leave the beaches behind and drive inland 3 hours to Nelson Lakes National Park. It will be our first encounter with New Zealand's mountains and great beech forests. The mountains here, dominated by Mt Travers, 2338m are the first outliers of the Southern Alps which run the length of the South Island. There are short walks overlooking Lake Rotoiti and on the full day we hope to climb Mt Robert (1411m) and continue onto Robert's Ridge, the high level gateway into the heart of the Travers range. 5-6 hours. Chalets. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 **WEST COAST:** The road down the Buller River to the 'West Coast' must rank as one of New Zealand's most scenic drives. (3 hours) At Cape Foulwind we hike an easy track over the headland to the northernmost colony of fur seals found in NZ

before continuing on to the Paparoa National Park. We stay in seclusion a few metres from the roaring Pacific Ocean rollers, surrounded by rain forest, nikau palms, cabbage trees, giant ferns, and the towering Kahikatea, tallest of all NZ trees. Nearby, the well-known 'Pancake Rocks' are ideal for an evening stroll. Self catering style lodges. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 A dramatic day, with 'Lord of the Rings' overtones! We walk up forested limestone gorges with some 'river bashing' likely and traverse a good path through west coast rain forest, huge rocks and moss covered 'sink' holes, a famous Kiwi track and a real wilderness feel. The weather and river levels will dictate the exact hiking route. Self catering style lodges. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 9 A drive (5 hours) down the 'wild' west coast with untamed beaches on one side and the Southern Alps and wide glacial rivers on the other. We pass through small settlements, shadows of their former glory during the great 'gold rushes' before stopping for lunch at Hokitika. On to Franz Josef or Fox Glacier, reaching almost to sea level and among the fastest flowing glaciers known, with easily accessible terminal faces. Motels. (B,D)

DAY 10 Above us are the permanent snowfields and peaks of the Southern Alps. There are options here to join a full or half-day outing onto the glacier itself, wearing spiked boots and led by local guides. Whatever the weather, the glaciers area is always exciting. But remember you are in one of the wettest places in New Zealand and if it is not raining it will be a bonus. In perfect weather, this is THE place for a scenic helicopter ride up and around NZ's highest alpine peaks. Not cheap at approx NZ\$190-360 for a flight or NZ\$399 for a heli hike, (scenic flight + glacier hike) but a chance seldom repeated. There are also a number of good local walks.



Motels. (B,L)

Franz Josef Glacier. Photo Cathy Crompton

DAY 11 **MOUNTAINS:** We eventually leave the West Coast and the rainforest behind, turning inland to cross the alpine divide at Haast Pass, one of only three crossings along the length of the range. The change in landscape and annual rainfall is dramatic as we drop away from the prevailing weather into the rich beech forests and sparkling rivers of the Aspiring National Park. Today we have a thrilling appointment with a jetboat, New Zealand's highly inventive shallow water speedboat to make a memorable trip up an idyllic high mountain valley, a fine example of the quintessential New Zealand 'backcountry'. Back on the highway we follow the shores of the lake to the town of the same name - Wanaka. Motels. (B,L)

DAY 12 Before we leave we will make time for a fine walk (3 hours) up to a magnificent viewpoint of Lake Wanaka and its awesome mountain setting where a glimpse of

Mt Aspiring is possible. Anticipation mounts now with a drive south to Te Anau (4 hours), fringed by the rugged mountains of Fiordland, a vast area of glaciated mountains, lakes, waterfalls and virtually impenetrable rainforest and Milford Sound! Motels. (B,L)

DAY 13 **FIORDLAND:** Across Lake Te Anau (NZ's 2nd largest lake) the Kepler Track, 3-4 days, climbs out of the rainforest to make a high level traverse of the Kepler mountains. We cross Lake Te Anau by boat and walk the first day to Luxmore Hut. 6-7 hours return. Motels. (B,L,D)

Milford Track Option: *It is possible at this stage to take off independently and walk the world famous Milford Track. See Page 3.*

DAY 14 Today it's an early start for **MILFORD SOUND**, one of the world's great locations. (2-3 hour drive). If the weather is fine we plan to walk (and scramble) up to a dramatic saddle in the wild Darran Mountains (5 hours) where we catch a first glimpse of Milford Sound. A drive through the rough-hewn Homer Tunnel sees us swooping 1000m down into Milford Sound where we board our boat. We sail beneath the mile high sheer cliffs of Mitre Peak and sleep aboard a traditional motor-sailer, moored within the sound. There will be a chance to kayak and dolphins and seals will be a likely bonus. Overnight boat. (B,L,D)



Milford Sound

DAY 15 Another morning sail down the sound to the open sea before returning past vertical waterfalls to disembark. On the way to Queenstown, we can stop at The Divide, (where the Routeburn track meets the Milford Road) and walk easily to Key Summit (2 hours return), an airy vantage point over the Routeburn track and alpine peaks. To Queenstown, 3-4 hour drive. Hotel (B)

DAYS 16 **Queenstown:** For the best view of Queenstown, Lake Wakitipu and the Remarkables, we climb up to the summit of Ben Lomond (1748m) 5 hours return. It is quite a tough 900m of ascent but the view with mountains in every direction is tremendous. Queenstown is also the self-styled adrenalin capital of the world with bungee jumping, tandem paragliding and parachuting, ballooning, mountain biking, jet boating, rafting, kayaking and much much more –as they say and there is time for some late afternoon excitement. If all that overwhelms, then Queenstown is in a beautiful location with lovely lakeside walks, good shops and restaurants. Hotel (B)

DAY 17 **Mount Cook (Aoraki – the cloud piercer):** From Queenstown we drive (4 hours) through a much drier landscape of tussock covered hills into the heart of New Zealand's highest alpine peaks. Mount Cook village nestles dramatically at the foot of the Tasman and Hooker glaciers with Mt. Cook (3750m) towering overhead. In the afternoon we plan to hike up the Hooker valley toward the glacier and terminal face. 3 hours. Lodge or Chalets. (B,L,D)

- DAY 18 We spend a full day hiking up to a ridge (1768m) with staggering views of nearby Mt Sefton (3151m) and its hanging glaciers and seracs and Mt Cook a little further away. 7-8 hours. Lodge or chalets. (B,L)
- DAY 19- The Rakaia is one of the great glacial rivers of the South Island draining parts of the Southern Alps. We stop on our way back to Christchurch for our final afternoon walk (3 hours) along the spectacular Rakaia gorge. Chalets. (B)
- DAY 20 We drive to Christchurch (less than an hour away) and catch our flight to Rotorua in the North Island.

Today marks the end of our South Island trip and it is possible to leave the trip here. Anyone ending the trip in Christchurch can connect with international flights OR proceed with own arrangements.

THE NORTH ISLAND

Alighting in **Rotorua**, our nostrils will confirm that we have arrived in the heart of New Zealand's geothermal area with its clouds of steaming sulphur. There is time to get our bearings with a walk around part of the town's lakeshore before we transfer to our accommodation. New Zealand's indigenous Maori population will be much more evident here and in the evening we invite you to attend a Maori cultural evening and 'Hangi' dinner - you will not be disappointed! Lodge. (B,D)

- DAY 21 A free day to relax and to sightsee at your own pace. The Bath House Museum, situated in the historic part of town is well worth a visit if you are interested in the geothermal history of the area and its impact on the local community. By the lakeside, hot steam issues surreally from pools and craters and there are walks linking the geothermal areas. You can also relax in a Polynesian spa overlooking the lake, swim in the historic Blue Baths, visit the Maori thermal village at Whakarewarewa or the famous Geyser, Pohutu and nearby craft workshops (entry fees apply). There are also a range of guided tours/walks to places outside of the town, or you can even consider a flight out to volcanic White Island.

Even more than Queenstown, Rotorua is a mainstream tourist centre with its crowds, coaches and inevitable packaging. But that aside, the close encounters with traditional Maori culture and crafts together with the geothermal atmosphere and sights are a fascinating insight into the lifeblood of New Zealand. (B)

- DAY 22 **VOLCANOES:** We head off down the Thermal Highway, stopping at Wai-o-Tapu geothermal area. This volcanic country is quite different to any other landscape in New Zealand. We arrive at our lodge/motels in the small settlement of National Park in the evening. 3-4 hour drive from Rotorua plus several short walks of approx 1 hour. Lodge. (B)

- DAYS 23-24 **TONGARIRO CROSSING and MT RUAPEHU.** With its reputation as "*the best day walk in New Zealand*" we make the Tongariro Crossing, a 7-8 hour walk across the geothermal area between the volcanoes of Mt. Tongariro and Ngauruhoe (Mt Doom) and past the emerald lakes. On the other day we climb to the summit ridge viewpoint overlooking the crater lake of Mt. Ruapehu, the North Island's highest mountain (2797m) which witnessed a full scale eruption in 1995. The use of the uplift ski chair to the base of Knoll ridge limits the 1000m height gain to 600m but may not be open for our November departure – aaaggh! Lodge. (B,L)



Emerald Lakes, Tongariro. Photo Steve Lee

DAY 25 An early departure for Waitomo and its renowned limestone caves and the home of another 'Kiwi' invention - 'Blackwater rafting'. It should be a great finale to our North Island visit. 'Underground' remains optional as there are a range of 'wet' and 'dry' trips to choose from. Above ground Waitomo is a green and wooded attractive landscape which possesses a number of short walks and trails for any non-troglodytes! Overnight Waitomo. Chalets. (B,L)

DAY 26 An early departure for the 3 hour drive to Auckland International Airport where the trip ends. Have a safe flight back or continue with your own arrangements! (B)

Optional activities tariffs (May 2011 rates)

Franz Josef glacier hikes: full day hike NZ\$180

Franz Josef heli-hike: NZ\$399 (scenic flight + glacier hike)

Franz Josef scenic helicopter flight: NZ\$190-395

Rotorua: Whakarewarewa Maori thermal village: NZ\$29

Rotorua: Te Puia geyser and Maori arts and crafts institute: NZ\$43

Rotorua: Helicopter to volcanic White Island: NZ\$762

Waitomo Blackwater rafting: NZ\$115

Waitomo Glowworm Caves: various options \$67-79

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