



Steady Plus

NAKED NEW ZEALAND



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.



Copland Valley

- **Volcanoes, rainforest, hot springs, summits, caves, gorges, lagoons, glaciers and remote beaches – ‘off the beaten track’ New Zealand**
- **More than just hiking. Is this the first ‘reality’ holiday?**
- **Travel almost the entire length of New Zealand**
- **Regular departures November - April**

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. It is a stylish and relaxed place and a great place to visit during any trip to New Zealand!

The trip ‘Naked New Zealand’

This is our adventurous journey across both Islands far from the main roads and normal tours. For most of the time we are well away from our support bus, walking and sometimes kayaking, wading and swimming through the whole range of New Zealand’s ‘great outdoors’ - volcanoes, rainforest, hot springs, summits, caves, gorges, lagoons, glaciers and beaches. The style is informal with backpacking, camping, cave bivouacs, mountain huts, and beach campfires setting the trend.

In between the North Island and South Island expeditions there is a day of free time around sunny Nelson after your ferry boat ride across the Cook Strait between the islands.

This is an unashamedly long trip, with 26 days in New Zealand, but with a flight halfway round the world and a few inevitable days tuning in to the 'time reversal', it is still barely enough to do justice to this remarkable country. Even so the trip doesn't quite complete the south to north traverse. The perfect finale for a first time visit would be to continue south from Queenstown into the Fiordland wilderness, hiking the Routeburn or Milford Track, and taking in the spectacle of majestic Milford Sound before going home (see separate extension notes), a further 5 or 6 days!

Conversely if time is short it is quite feasible to do only one of the expeditions. Our New Zealand Office staff can 'pick 'n mix' all sorts of options if you drop them a mail.

Although this combined trip is the brainchild of 'High Places', the two expeditions are organised and led by another NZ company who our New Zealand staff know well and work closely with. They have great leaders and an informative and laissez-faire relaxed style very much in the 'High Places' mould.

Our dates don't fit?

This trip has the added advantage of also running on a number of extra dates throughout the New Zealand summer season (Nov to April) with fortnightly departures. Contact our NZ Office us for details. treks@highplaces.co.nz

Grade – Steady Plus

This trip is graded 'Steady plus'. If you are used to backpacking it may seem easier – but if not, the converse may be true! That apart, it is neither a marathon nor test of stamina and most days are no more than 'Steady' grade. However the self-sufficient and 'mucking-in' nature of the group and the fact that trip itinerary will be followed as much as possible even in bad weather could make extra demands.

Accommodation

In Auckland, Wellington, Nelson, Queenstown and Christchurch we book comfortable accommodation with twin or double rooms. Elsewhere we camp (up to 15 nights), sometimes stay in a mountain hut, with the odd bivouac and the occasional backpacker type lodge or cabin.

Food

On the 10 day North and 11 day South Island trips, all the food is included and everyone will be involved in the planning, buying and cooking of the food/meals. In towns where breakfast is not provided at your accommodation you can buy it in a nearby café or make it in a self catering kitchen. There are plenty of lively and inexpensive places to eat out.

Health and Hygiene

New Zealand generally has a high standard of health and hygiene and much of the outdoors is pristine. However on some of the more popular trails warnings about giardia are appearing. You may wish to 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 'bug' to concern us are sandflies, a cross between mosquitoes and midges. 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 '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 rainfall when it does fall tends to be heavy. The West Coast and the Mt

Taranaki/Tongariro areas are wetter than elsewhere. Mountain weather can change quickly but local forecasting is excellent and is readily available.

Transport

A small bus will be an integral part of the travelling. The connection between the islands i.e. from Wellington to Nelson will be by ferry and a public bus service. A domestic flight from Queenstown returns to Christchurch at the end of the trip.

The ideal flights from overseas will fly into Auckland at the start and out of Christchurch at the end. A number of airlines do this (e.g. Singapore Airlines).

Pacific Island stopover

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, 35kms 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.

Longer in New Zealand?

If you are staying longer after the trip (or arriving early) our High Places NZ Office will be pleased to suggest and design itineraries, book walking tracks, hotels, buses, flights and arrange campervan or car hire. They offer a friendly service which can be more reliable and personal than websites and usually less expensive than booking in your own country. Contact them direct:

Email: pyo@highplaces.co.nz

You may also wish to consider the **Routeburn Track, Milford Track and Milford Sound Extension** at the end of the trip. See separate extension notes.

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

This daily description will always need to remain flexible. Times and distances are approximate. 'B,L,D' refers to meals inclusive in the tour, ie breakfast, lunch, dinner.

This trip is 26 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.

DAY 1 Arrive Auckland and transfer to your accommodation. It is natural if you are arriving after a long flight to succumb to jet lag but try not to go to sleep too soon. Auckland is known as the 'The City of Sails' so at least try and walk down to the waterfront by the America's Cup Village and then perhaps the Sky Tower! Hostel.

DAY 2 And we are off! The drive to Rotorua out of Auckland is approx 3 hours. Our nostrils will confirm that we have arrived in the heart of New Zealand's geothermal area with its clouds of steaming sulphur. Some essential shopping and then a 2 hour drive out of town we hike into Whirinaki Forest Park. This Park covers an area of 60,000 hectares and is famous for its Jurassic Park-like rain forest. We follow an easy trail through the forest, to a simple hut beside a river. While we cook our meal there is time to relax, get to know everyone else and have a briefing on the forthcoming days. 2 hours backpacking (7km). Camp/hut. (L,D)

DAY 3 We follow the track further into the forest, learn New Zealand river crossing techniques and have a quick swim in the cascades - crystal clear water you can drink. This remote wilderness is completely off the tourist trail. We often see rare blue duck, robins, and hear kaka (a large bush parrot). An evening campfire, and time to enjoy the surrounds. 6 hours backpacking (14km). Camp/hut. (B,L,D)



DAY 4 Our hike takes us out through cascading creeks on a rougher trail. We hike over a small pass into a world of weeping ferns, creepers and forest giants and reach the track exit around mid-day. On the way we have a swim in a natural hot river hidden in bush - complete with a small waterfall. 2 hour drive to our accommodation with hot showers. 5 hours backpacking (10km). Camp/cabin. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 Up early to kayak on Lake Tarawera, an ancient crater lake and an area rich in Maori history. We paddle past the site of a Maori village which was buried under the ash from the 1886 Mt Tarawera eruption, and through numerous steaming thermal springs along the lake edge. Another chance for a soak in a hot stream. In the afternoon we drive 1 hour south to a thermal area before camping beside the impressive aqua-blue waters of the Waikato River. 5 hours kayaking. Camp. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 A leisurely breakfast before heading a short distance south to the clear waters of Lake Taupo for some swimming and relaxing. Lake Taupo is the largest lake in New Zealand created by the world's largest volcanic explosion in 186 AD. After lunch we drive 1½ hours to Tongariro National Park and volcano country. We hike across alpine grasslands to a hut set in native beech forest beside a bubbling stream. 1-2 hours backpacking (5km). Camp/hut. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 We hike across this area of beech forests, streams, and desert landscapes to the next hut/camp on this remote side of Tongariro National Park. The volcanoes in the park rumble from time to time: the most recent was in September 1995 when Mt Ruapehu, the highest mountain in the Park at 2,797m spewed clouds of ash and steam. Another much younger volcano, Mt Ngauruhoe is almost perfectly symmetrical and stands 2,291m. All around this scarlet moonscape are turquoise and green-blue crater lakes, adding their surreal colours to the landscape. 4 hours backpacking (7km). Camp/hut. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 We hike gently up through a moon valley of contorted lava flows and ash fields before a steep climb up the last steep section to the emerald lakes - our usual lunch stop. We cross the volcanic plateau - lava valleys, scarlet moonscapes, steaming

explosion craters, before descending on the western side. In good conditions, there is an option to climb one of the volcanic peaks. A short drive take us to a nice lodge in a sleepy little farming town which we have to ourselves. Hot showers , a good meal and a rural 'kiwi' pub down the road. 6 hours backpacking (15km). Lodge. (B,L,D)



Ngauruhoe

DAY 9 After an early start we drive 2 hours westwards through a hill country farming region to the Waitomo Caves area. The name Waitomo comes from the Maori wai (water) and tomo (shaft). This limestone area is famous for its thousands of caves and we descend into a secret river cave - glow worms, waterfalls and limestone formations. Later we drive 2 hours through the remote Waitomo back-country to the wild west coast. We camp beside the beach, swim, and cook our meal on the beach in a hangi (Maori earth oven). In the evening we light a beach fire and enjoy being beside the ocean. 1 hour caving. Camp. (B,L,D)

DAY 10 We spend the morning at the coast, clambering through the bush and exploring the site of an ancient Maori pa (fortified Village) before driving 2-3 hours south to Mt Egmont National Park. This dormant volcano stands at 2518m. Its last eruption was in 1755 and it was still smoking when Captain James Cook sailed past in 1769, naming it after the Earl of Egmont. Maori know the mountain as the spirit/god Taranaki. We hike through twisted moss-covered forest to a cosy alpine hut high on the side of the volcano. From here there are spectacular views of Mt Egmont /Taranaki and across to Tongariro National Park - usually above the evening cloud. 1.5 hours backpacking (3km). Hut. (B,L,D)

DAY 11 If the mountain conditions are reasonable, we get up early to climb up the side of Mt Egmont/Taranaki as far as Fantham's peak where there are commanding views. Late morning we descend on ancient lava flows covered in goblin forest

back to the bus. On the way south we stop at a wild Wanganui beach for lunch, a big sort out of gear and a swim. The drive to Wellington takes 4-5 hours and we arrive between 5 and 8pm. Head out for an evening meal and farewell drink in our capital city. 2-5 hours backpacking (6km). Hotel/hostel. (B,L)

DAY 12 A dramatic new chapter on the trip. By mid-morning we are on the Inter-Island ferry sailing towards the South Island! The final hour of the crossing is really exciting, sailing up the narrow and wooded Tory Channel in the Marlborough Sounds, with the South Island mountains away in the distance. We transfer straight on to a coach for the 2 hour drive through attractive scenery to Nelson. Hostel. (B)

DAY 13 **Nelson area interlude.**
Nelson is 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. Nelson is a great place, with street cafes, attractive parks and gardens, a Cathedral and an easy 'clear the cobwebs' walk up Botanical Hill to 'the Centre of New Zealand'. If you are feeling energetic, the Abel Tasman National Park is just over an hour's drive away. Water taxis leave daily from Kaiteriteri and you can get dropped off for a days walking or sea kayaking. Take your time and do what you want. Hostel. (B)



Abel Tasman kayak

SOUTH ISLAND: WEST COAST

DAY 14 Our tour begins at the Visitor's Centre in Nelson. After a short briefing by the guide, we collect our food supplies and head for the mountains (1.5 hour drive). The Kahurangi Range can be accessed from a high car park, the Flora Saddle (1000m) where we follow an easy trail through the evergreen New Zealand beech forest. Gold was discovered here in the late 1850's and our first night is spent in an old gold miner's rock shelter, a great place to get to know each other around a cosy campfire. 4 hours backpacking (11km). Rock shelter. (B,L,D)

DAY 15 A fine mountain day to climb Mt Arthur (1795m) one of the highest peaks in the Kahurangi National Park. The rock is marble limestone and as we traverse a landscape of sinkholes and caves, beneath the surface is one of biggest cave systems in the southern hemisphere. From the summit of Mount Arthur there are great views of endless mountains stretching from coast to coast. We drop down to Flora Saddle and drive 2 hours inland to camp close to one of New Zealand's great rivers, the Buller. 7 hours backpacking (15km). Camp. (B,L,D)

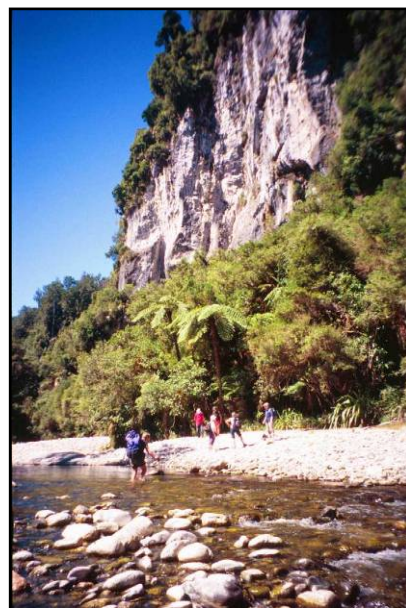
DAY 16 An exciting 3 hour drive over the northern flanks of the Southern Alps and down the Buller River gorges to the west coast. At Cape Foulwind we hike an easy track over the headland to the northernmost colony of fur seals found in NZ before continuing on to the Paparoa National Park. The road south becomes more dramatic and is only a few metres from the roaring Pacific Ocean rollers. On either side is the rain forest with palm trees, cabbage trees, giant ferns, the hardwood rimu and the towering kahikatea, tallest of all NZ trees.

We stop at the first of the limestone gorges, the Fox River, and follow a trail inland. The cliffs are up to 300m high and in places, overhanging. One section known locally as 'The Ballroom' could provide shelter for a small army and we spend the night here with a campfire to keep away the Dinosaurs. That's what it feels like! 4 hours backpacking (8km). Camp/bivouac. (B,L,D)

DAY 17

Today we have a chance to walk up a nearby limestone canyon and to go down a cave (some people may want to swim) with stalactites and stalagmites. We then hike through pristine rainforest along the historic Inland Pack track. We meet the vehicle at Bullock Creek and make the short drive to our accommodation at Punakaiki, better known as Pancake Rocks, because of the horizontal layering of the sea cliffs.

In the afternoon, we take a leisurely stroll along the coast and check out some sea caves that were once used as shelter by early Maori. 6 hours backpacking (12km). Camp/cabin. (B,L,D)



West coast gorge

DAY 18

After breakfast, we visit the Pancake Rocks, and if the tide is high, watch the water surging into the caverns below the rocks and up through mighty blowholes. Driving 4 hours south, we follow the coast and stop briefly at Greymouth to stock up on food, before continuing on to Okarito, where the rainforest meets the sea. For dinner tonight, we enjoy a hangi feast (the traditional way of cooking food in an underground earth oven), and we have a relaxing evening sitting around the beach bonfire listening to the pounding surf. 2 hours hiking (5km). Camp. (B,L,D)

DAY 19

This morning we kayak (optional), and catch the in-going tide into the Okarito Lagoon (the largest unmodified wetland in New Zealand) to see birdlife – including white herons, black swans and tui. We explore a river delta and channels into kahikatea (white pine) forest. A free afternoon to wander the remote beach or hike to a viewpoint of the Southern Alps skyline – on a clear day??!

Remember you are in one of the wettest places in New Zealand and if it is not raining it will be a bonus. But whatever the weather, the glaciers area is always exciting. Spend a second night at this special place. 4 hours kayaking. Camp. (B,L,D)

DAY 20

We continue on hour's drive to the Fox Glacier – where the glaciers flow down from the Southern Alps almost to the sea. We take an optional guided half day glacier walk to explore its crevasses and ice caves. There is free time in the afternoon to relax in one of the local cafes in this charming village, or join the guide for a 2 hour hike locally. 5 hours hiking (12km). Cabin. (B,L,D)

DAY 21

A further short drive down the coast we come to one of the few trails which cut through the rainforest towards the Southern Alps, the Copland Valley.

We cross swing-bridges and mountain streams, and may sight the endangered and very primitive blue duck. An energetic hike through the forest and beside the river finally ends at Welcome Flat, where we stay in a mountain hut. We have the opportunity of relaxing our weary muscles with a soak in natural hot pools with

views of 3000 metre peaks – the best in New Zealand! 7 hours backpacking (18km). Camp/hut. (B,L,D)

DAY 22 Today we can either rest in the pools or hike further up this alpine valley. A short off-track hike, with some boulder hopping, takes us up to beautiful waterfalls high in the alps for a refreshing shower. On our walk there are great views of some of New Zealand's highest mountains. Tonight we prepare dinner and afterwards spend another evening immersed in these incredible hot pools – one is too hot, one just right, the other just warm! Rest day or 4 hours hiking (8km). Camp/hut. (B,L,D)

DAY 23 We hike back down the valley, wading the rivers (if dry) or using the swing bridges (if wet). Back on the highway we drive south (2 hours) through the all-enveloping rainforest and past some idyllic wood-fringed large lakes. We camp near one of them, Lake Moeraki, on a secluded site and bake fresh salmon on a campfire. 6 hours backpacking (18km). Camp. (B.L.D)

DAY 24 We follow the road down the coast until it finally turns inland and climbs steadily to Haast Pass one of the few crossings of the Main Divide, a wild and almost unpopulated area. We cross the pass and instantly the annual rainfall has reduced three times. The rainforest has been replaced by the drier beech forests of the Mt Aspiring National Park. Some bus and gear cleaning at a lakeside halt before taking the high road over the winter skiing hills to the 'adventure capital of the world' – Queenstown (4-5 hour drive) and the end of the trip. 2 hours hiking (3km). Hostel. (B,L)

DAY 25 Free day in **Queenstown**. Relax by the lakeside or be tempted by an overload of excitement for which Queenstown is famous – bungy jumping, tandem paragliding and parachuting, ballooning, mountain biking, river sledging, 4WD trips, jet boating, rafting and kayaking and much much more –as they say! Late afternoon flight to Christchurch (OR stay on in Queenstown for longer if you have time). Hostel/hotel.

DAY 26 Depart Christchurch or continue with your own arrangements.



Walking track above Queenstown

Or delay the day and begin the Milford or Routeburn Track options

ML10/10