

New Zealand Birding & Nature

with Naturalist Journeys



October 13 – 25, 2022

REVISED ITINERARY
updated 07.27.2022

Thurs., Oct. 13 Main Tour Begins—Welcome to Auckland!

Meet your Naturalist Journey guide and our partner company, Nature Quest New Zealand, guides for lunch at the hotel. Please take a taxi from the airport, they are readily available for the ride into the central city. After a lunch meet-up hosted by Naturalist Journeys, we head out for a sample adventure—if you are just arriving and tired from travel you can opt out, but it is a beautiful place to start!

Auckland is an area characterized by water, volcanoes, and islands. We escape from the bustle of the city to enjoy a gentle introduction to the West Coast, and to watch Australasian Gannet soar in towards their dotted rock outcrop colonies.

Accommodations at the Grand Millennium Hotel (L,D)

Fri., Oct. 14 Tiritiri Matangi Island | Auckland

Tiritiri Matangi is an island sanctuary in the Hauraki Gulf, just north of Auckland. Many of New Zealand's rare and endangered species now only remain on islands such as this, as the habitat can be protected from the ravages of rats, possums, and stoats. Tiritiri Matangi is the site of an ambitious restoration project started 17 years ago, and already the fruits of many people's efforts are being appreciated by many. We cross by ferry to the island and keep our eyes peeled for Australasian Gannet, Black Petrel, Cook's Petrel, and Buller's Shearwater.

We have a day on this picturesque island to enjoy birdsong in regenerating forest, including that of re-introduced rare species such as the Saddleback, Stitchbird, Whitehead, and Red-crowned Parakeet. Also on the island are the unique Takahe and Brown Teal.

Dinner tonight is at leisure, and there are multiple places to choose from within walking distance from the hotel.
Accommodations at the Grand Millennium Hotel (B,L)

Sat., Oct. 15

Depart Auckland | Miranda Wildlife Sanctuary (Shorebirds Galore!)

Within an hour's drive southeast of Auckland lies Miranda Wildlife Sanctuary, a fine feeding ground for many wading birds, which migrate from the tundra of the arctic regions for the northern winter. Among the thousands of Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit on the shell banks or silt flats, we may view many knots and South Island Pied Oystercatcher, the rare endemic Wrybill, the endangered New Zealand Dotterel, Far Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, several sandpipers, Caspian Tern, Little Tern, and Sacred Kingfisher.

Later this morning, we travel towards Lake Rotorua, where New Zealand Dabchick, New Zealand Scaup, and Little Black Shag are often feeding or roosting. Rotorua is situated in the central plateau of the North Island, a region of much geothermal activity.

Accommodations at Lakeland Resort, Taupo (B,L,D)

Sun., Oct. 16 Pureora Forest Park | Tongariro National Park

This morning we have a dawn start to experience the haunting call of the endangered Kokako in its natural, misty rainforest environment. Pureora Forest Park contains one of the finest areas of podocarp forest in the country, as well as a large variety of native invertebrates, like the curious Peripatus, and numerous birds. We have most of today to gain more insight into the nature and conservation of this special forest, and to enjoy the sounds of the Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Tomtit, New Zealand Robin, Long-tailed Cuckoo, New Zealand Falcon, Whitehead, and Grey Warbler.

Later, our day winds up in Tongariro National Park. On the rivers running off the volcanoes a small number of the endangered Whio, or Blue Duck survive. Today we also make a special trip to search for these birds.

Accommodations at Skotel, Whakapapa (B,L,D)

Mon., Oct. 17 Mt. Ruapehu, North Island | Ferry Crossing to South Island

We enjoy a morning walk amongst sub-alpine forest and tussocklands on the slopes of Mt. Ruapehu, the North Island's highest peak. We have a longer day today as we travel to Wellington and cross to the South Island. En route to Wellington we deviate to the Foxton Estuary with opportunities for Pacific Golden Plover and Royal Spoonbill.

Our journey continues southwards through to Wellington, where we embark on an evening ferry crossing to the South Island. Three hours, however, is at times not enough for all the wildlife watching to be done! Wandering and Shy Albatrosses often pass by, as do Giant Petrel, Arctic Skua, and many shearwaters. Towards the entrance to the Marlborough Sounds can often see Little Blue Penguin, Spotted Shag, and sometimes dolphins.

Dinner tonight is at leisure and can be purchased on the ferry.

Accommodations at the Picton Beachcomber Hotel, Picton (B,L)

Tues., Oct. 18 Marlborough Sounds Boat Cruise

The waters and inlets of the Marlborough Sounds are our playground this morning. The cruise vessel carries us through Queen Charlotte Sound to a small rocky islet, where a small colony of the rare King Shag breeds and roosts. There may also be an opportunity to listen for the endangered Orange-fronted Parakeet on one of the sound's predator-free islands. Before returning to Picton, we land to introduce ourselves to the curious Weka.

Mid-afternoon sees us heading south down the east coast to Kaikoura, where we stay for two nights.

Accommodations at White Morph Inn, Kaikoura (B,L,D)

Wed., Oct. 19 Kaikoura Seabird Cruise

Kaikoura is a breath-taking place where snow-iced mountains reach down to a turquoise sea. The continental shelf drops abruptly very close to shore here, resulting in upwellings of nutrients from the sea's depths, attracting a rich and abundant marine life. An excellent opportunity for bird lovers and generalists alike is a seabird excursion, where one can see flocks of cawing albatrosses (4-5 species), and numerous petrels and shearwaters, just meters from the boat.

In the afternoon we are at leisure to stroll on Kaikoura Peninsula, or you may opt to go out for a second pelagic or join a whale watching excursion for Sperm Whale.

Accommodations at White Morph Inn, Kaikoura (B)

Thurs., Oct. 20 Canterbury Plains | Southern Alps

We depart Kaikoura and travel south to cross the Canterbury Plains. Now one of New Zealand's most intensive agricultural regions the plains run down from the foothills to the central Southern Alps. Nestled between two passes, Porter's and Arthur's, lies the Craigieburn Range and the renowned Castle Hill Basin. We walk amidst the limestone formations that make up this basin. Later, our destination is the Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge, set amidst a delightful mix of high-country beech forest and tussocklands, and a working sheep farm.

Accommodations at Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge (B,L,D)

Fri., Oct. 21 Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge | Mountains & Lakes

We enjoy a day amidst the Mountain Beech Forests and braided rivers of the upper Waimakariri Valley. The Moa Forest discovery morning involves no driving from the Lodge for those who want a "no driving" morning. A relaxed and fascinating discovery of a "micro world" of riverbed, rock bluff, shrubland, beech forest plants, and animals.

We enjoy lunch in the Mt. Rolleston Restaurant. An afternoon guided excursion is available for those wishing to explore further the mountains and lakes near the lodge.

Accommodations at Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge (B,L,D)

Sat., Oct. 22 Lake Tekapo | Mount Cook National Park | Mackenzie Country

This morning we cross back onto the Canterbury Plains and head south over Burkes Pass. As we wind across the foothills, with snow-capped mountains in the background, we overlook the vivid turquoise waters of Lake Tekapo and other large glacial lakes. There is time for birding the area, or for those wishing to take an optional flight over Mount Cook National Park (additional cost), flying over the highest peaks and glaciers of the Southern Alps, before continuing to Mackenzie Country Hotel.

Accommodations at the Mackenzie Country Hotel, Twizel (B,L,D)

Sun., Oct. 23 Braided Rivers | Mount Cook National Park

The braided rivers in this region are the habitat of the endangered Black Stilt, and we also look for Banded Dotterel and a range of inland waterfowl. Later today we travel up the Aoraki (Mount Cook National Park). Walk amidst the alpine splendor, search for the rare New Zealand Falcon, and take further opportunities to look for Black Stilt and Wrybill Plover on their breeding grounds.

Accommodations at the Mackenzie Country Hotel, Twizel (B,L,D)

Mon., Oct. 24 Southeastern Coast | Dunedin | Harbor Cruise

We depart for the southeastern coast, arriving in Dunedin, New Zealand's "wildlife capital", in the early afternoon. A charming harbor cruise takes us around Taiaroa Head, the only mainland breeding site of Northern Royal Albatross. With a wingspan of three meters, these seabirds are certainly impressive, soaring over cliffs dotted with nests of Spotted Shag and the rare Stewart Island Shag. Past rocky shelves of lounging fur seals we sail, on our way back down the harbor towards the central city. Indeed, a magical wildlife experience, drawing to a close our rich and diverse discovery of New Zealand's native treasures.

Accommodations in the Heritage Leisure Lodge, Dunedin (B,L,D)

Tues., Oct. 25 Departures | Steward Island & Fiordland Extension

If you are not taking the post-tour extension, please plan to transfer to Dunedin Airport at leisure for flights back to North America via Auckland. (B)

Pre-Tour Extension October 11 – 13, 2022

Tues., Oct. 11 Welcome to New Zealand

Welcome! You meet your Nature Quest New Zealand naturalist in central Auckland today and immediately travel north to the Warkworth area and search for extremely rare Fairy Tern and other coastal species.

Accommodations at Warkworth (L,D)

Wed., Oct. 12 Hauraki Gulf

Today we enjoy a half day charter into Hauraki Gulf. New Zealand stands out as having some of the greatest diversity of seabirds and marine mammals in the entire world. There are several species we may encounter that are less likely or unlikely elsewhere on the tour, including Little, Fluttering, and Buller's Shearwaters, Parkinson's (Black), Gray-faced, and Cook's Petrels (and more rarely Pycroft's and Black-winged), and White-faced Storm-Petrel. But what makes this trip of particular interest is the possibility of encountering the endangered New Zealand Storm-Petrel. Sightings often include interesting cetaceans as well, with several dolphin species and Bryde's Whale being highlights.

If we return from the cruise in time, we plan to visit Tawharanui Sanctuary this afternoon. An intriguing Kiwi search this evening is included.

Accommodations at Warkworth (B,L,D)

Thurs., Oct. 13 Return to Auckland

We return this morning to meet up with the rest of the group in Auckland. (B)

Post-Tour Extension: Stewart Island & Spectacular Fiordland October 25 – 29, 2022

Tues., Oct. 25 Tautuku Estuary | Ferry to Stewart Island | Brown Kiwi Outing

This morning we depart Dunedin for Invercargill, travelling via the Catlins coast. We stop at Tautuku Estuary to search for Fernbird and other species and enjoy our lunch in route.

In the late-afternoon we take the ferry across to Stewart Island, watching for seabirds as we go. We settle into our lodgings and do some local birding before dinner at the lodge. We plan on an evening trip to view Stewart Island Brown Kiwi on one of our two evenings here.

Accommodations at Kaka Retreat (B,L,D)

Wed., Oct. 26 Paterson Inlet | South Pacific Seabirds

A day marine charter to Paterson Inlet and into the South Pacific invigorates us with opportunities to observe a

rich diversity of seabirds. Among the bays of the inlet, we scan for two very rare penguin species: the Yellow-eyed Penguin and the Fiordland Crested Penguin. Out at sea we may encounter several species of albatross, including Shy, Black-browed, and Buller's, and the Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Great Skua, and Broad-billed Prion. We are also likely to come across large flocks of Sooty Shearwater, which breed nearby on the small outer islands. A treat awaits us on Ulva Island, a bird sanctuary rich in lush podocarp forest, and ringing with the songs of the Kaka, Tui, Bellbird, and the rare Red-crowned Parakeet. The Stewart Island Weka is also a popular resident.

Accommodations at Kaka Retreat (B,L,D)

Thurs., Oct. 27 Fiordland National Park

Back on the mainland, we are enticed by the glacially sculptured mountains and valleys of Fiordland National Park. We spend the afternoon in the wonderful beech forests of the Eglinton Valley, home to Long-tailed Cuckoo, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Brown Creeper, and Mohua/Yellowhead and has an excellent opportunity for final views of New Zealand forest birds. Expect a full field day with a picnic or local lunch.

Accommodations at the Distinction Luxmore Hotel, Te Anau (B,L,D)

Fri., Oct. 28 Milford Sound

After breakfast at the hotel, we head out for an excursion to Milford Sound. A drive to the Hollyford Valley delights us with mountain scenery. In this valley we seek out some endemic species, including the ubiquitous and cheeky Kea and the elusive Rock Wren. We have lunch along the way.

We hope for good weather as we enjoy a grand finale cruise on famous Milford Sound.

Accommodations at the Distinction Luxmore Hotel, Te Anau (B,L,D)

Sat., Oct. 29 Departures

Depart this land of fiords, to make our way again to the east, arriving in Dunedin early afternoon, in time for onwards connections to Auckland and evening flights to North America. We expect to be back at the airport by noon to 1PM or as needed for flights out. (B)

Tour Details

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey

The cost of the main tour is \$5890 DBL / \$6690 SGL, from Auckland, New Zealand, based on double occupancy. Cost of the pre-tour extension is \$850 DBL / \$990 SGL. Cost of the post-tour extension is \$1690 DBL / \$1950 SGL. All pricing is calculated on the exchange rate on XE.com as of July 1, 2020. If a significant shift in this rate occurs, we will need to adjust tour pricing accordingly, up to the time that final payment is made.

The tour and extension costs include: all accommodations, most meals as specified in the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=Lunch, D= dinner), professional guide services, ferry and boat day-tour fees, park and program entrance fees and miscellaneous program expenses.

Tour does not include: transportation from your home city to Auckland or from Dunedin back to your home city. It does not include arrival transfers in Auckland or departure transfers for the main tour, optional activities such as horseback riding, scenic viewing plane rides, or fishing with a guide, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, luggage portage, telephone charges, maid gratuities, or beverages from the bar.

Travel Information

Arrival airport is Auckland International (AKL), departure airport is Dunedin Airport (DUD). Please arrive by the morning of October 13, 2022 in time for a group lunch. If you plan on joining us for the pre-trip extension, please plan to arrive by morning on October 11; we transfer to our hotel in directly from the airport. We recommend coming in a day or two early to adjust to the time change and be well rested for the start of the tour. We recommend the Grand Millennium Hotel in Auckland, where we stay on the first night of our tour, for a reasonable extra cost. We can help you book this—please let us know.

Please be sure to let us know where you are staying before the start of the tour when you send us your flight details. Please plan flights out of Dunedin from 10:00 AM onward on either October 25 (for those leaving from the main tour) or October 29 (for those leaving from the Stewart Island extension).

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.