

“Expedition Pure New Zealand”

Epic Adventure North to South Islands

April 11 to 21, 2019

Kia Ora all, it's time to meet the Kiwis! Join us on a journey to this proud nation that's surging to the top travelers' choice for 2019. This scenic jewel is like the best of Scotland and Switzerland combined. A dream for photographers with ice-blue lakes, bubbling geysers, snow-capped alps and lush forests. Imagine a country of just 3 million people but 66 million sheep, New Zealand is a world away and 100% pure natural beauty.

Seeking large fun? We begin and in sparkling Auckland to explore its harbor, beaches, bird sanctuaries and a renowned wine estate. On to culture-filled Rotorua, a Geothermal Wonderland and home to the friendly Maori. You'll rub noses with them at our Hangi Feast. Visit Tamaki Village, the country's top awarded cultural experience! Wander the bubbling geyser valley and at twilight, soak in a spa under the stars. Visit the world famous Agrodome, a delightfully entertaining working farm with the craziest looking animals you've ever seen.

In the verdant hills of Cambridge, the highlight is our AFS exclusive Farm Stay. Pairs of you are collected for an overnight and authentic connection with a Kiwi family! (Some AFSers still keep touch with the farmers.) Continue to Waitomo for a float into the glittery Gloworm Caves. Then visit bucolic Hobbiton for lunch in a Hobbit Shire.

Fly south over the alps into Queenstown set on a glacial lake under the Remrkables. Ride gondolas up Bob's Peak, journey into Fjordland National Park and cruise breathtaking Milford Sound. The Kiwis invented bungy and zorb balls. Action-packed Queenstown is the capital of adventure with countless activities like zip lines, hiking, gorge swings and a must – canyon jet boating!

Our past groups loved New Zealand. It's expensive destination, but April is the perfect shoulder season for the best prices. At our trips end, you can do your own air and even add-on Australia on own if you like. Come escape the ordinary. This is a “Safari of the Senses” in a country like no other. The adrenaline is free. The memories are priceless.

Our Glorious AFS Itinerary

Apr 11 Depart the U.S. for Auckland

Remember you will be crossing the International Date Line, so you will lose a day.

Apr 13 Arrive to sparkling Auckland (Land portion begins)

Kia Ora! Welcome to the land of the Kiwis! On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel, the Scenic Auckland, located right in the heart of the city and very near the Waitemata Harbor.

City tour - In the afternoon, we set out on a tour of the city to get acquainted. Journey over the iconic Harbour Bridge where you can see sailing regattas taking place on St. Mary's Bay. We'll the drive by the Viaduct Harbour. Once a commercial harbor, it now a trendy place to visit for shops and its restaurant scene. We then make our way to the Auckland Domain. With its classic charm, the Auckland Domain is the city's oldest and one of its largest parks. It is situated on a 62,000 year old volcano and features an amazing array of habitats and gardens as well as sculptures from some of New Zealand's top artists.

You are free in the evening to explore Auckland with so much to do! Do Sky Walk off Sky Tower, Aquarium, shop Queen St. and dine The Warf. www.newzealand.com for more ideas.

Overnight: Scenic Hotel Auckland (2 nights)

Apr 14 Auckland Beaches & Winery tour

B/L

After breakfast, we travel along the rugged west coast to visit black sand surf beach settlement of **Muriwai**. It's a unique region where locals flock for fun get aways. Here, we will see the famed Gannet Colony. These snowy white seabirds provide a stark contrast against the black sand beaches below. The scenery alone at this location is worth the visit with its spectacular cliffs and black beaches and it's nesting season! The antics of these gannets who soar and dive and interact with each other is fascinating.

We then head over to visit the popular **Soljans Estate Winery**. In operation since 1937, this winery had been family owned for three generations. It sits t the gateway to Kumeu Wine Country, Auckland's heritage wine region. Here, you will have the opportunity to sample some of their award-winning wines, take a short tour of their vineyards and cellars and enjoy a delicious lunch.

After lunch we return to the hotel and your afternoon is free.

Overnight: Scenic Hotel Auckland

Apr 15 Auckland to Cambridge- including Waitomo Caves and Farm Stay

B/D

We leave Auckland in the morning to travel through the lush farmland of the Waikato and King Country regions. We arrive at the small town of Waitomo to go on a guided tour through the world famous **Waitomo Glowworm Caves!** The caves are stunning enough with their amazing stalactites, stalagmites and other limestone formations, but the ceiling glitters with these unique earthworms which give a bioluminescent glow! We finish the tour with a silent, yet magical boat ride through the Glowworm Grotto - a subterranean cavern lit up by the lights of thousands of tiny glowworms.

(For the extreme fit - if you crave a little extra adrenaline rush, you can do an **optional 3-hour tubing adventure** at Waitomo. Under the Waitomo Caves lies a labyrinth of limestone cave systems -many explored, others yet to be discovered - a mecca for caving and adventure enthusiasts! Gear up in wetsuit, 'goofy boots', 'eel pants' and 'hard hat' with custom-built electric light for your cave tubing adventure this afternoon. The essential piece of equipment is the tire inner tube which you fit firmly

over your backside in order to float through the hidden recesses of Mother Nature! \$85 limited to 14. Weight limit 165lbs. Must be booked by Feb 1.)

The Farmer in the Dell

We then continue to **Cambridge** where you will meet your overnight rural hosts. This is such a special treat only with AFS. Tractors, trucks and carts will collect 2 AFSers per farm. Everyone's experience will be different because the farms and the farm families all vary. Maybe help on the farm if you feel like it; feeding the calves or sheep, mending a fence, rounding up the herds. Similar to a Bed & Breakfast, with a few extra hands-on activity options thrown in, you stay in the home of your hosts. Farmstay accommodation lets you feel like part of the farming family. Enjoy a hearty home cooked dinner with your hosts.

Overnight: **Farmstay (1 night)**

Apr 16 Cambridge via Hobbiton to Rotorua and a Spa Night

B/L

Wake to the smell of a plentiful farmstead breakfast before rejoining the group to continue your tour to Hobbiton

Travel across the scenic **Mamaku Ranges** and through the native Fitzgerald Glade before arriving in the **Waikato** region and the rolling hills of "**The Shire**". The reason why this area was chosen for The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings is readily apparent as you arrive at The Shires Rest Cafe and commence your tour of The Hobbiton Movie Set. Drive through a picturesque 1,250 acre working sheep farm (there are 13,000 sheep and 300 beef cattle on the property) with spectacular views across to the Kaimai Ranges.

Most of the Hobbiton Movie Set has been returned to its natural state however, hobbit holes and some structures remain. You will feel like you have stepped into the movie itself as you enter the shire. It's a magical location and you half expect to see Bilbo Baggins to walk around the corner at any time. A tour guide will escort us through the ten acre Hobbiton site recounting fascinating details on how the movie set was created.

At the end of the tour, enjoy a Marquee Festive Lunch before continuing onto Rotorua. The Distinction Hotel near the center of town includes a pool and a wonderful spa. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure to explore Rotorua. There are numerous activities available to book on your own including the quintessential Zorbing experience. With Zorbing, you pile into a big rubber ball and bounce your way down a downhill course. Zorbing was invented here in Rotorua. Since the entire town is known for its spa treatments related to the geothermal baths, you may want to take advantage of the opportunities.

Tonight we visit at twilight **The Hells Gate Mud Spa**. Hells Gate Geothermal Park & Mud Spa is New Zealand's Historic Spa experience. This geothermal area with unique thermal muds and acidic sulfurous waters has been used by the local Maori (Ngati Rangiteaorere) for bathing, relaxation, healing and overall wellbeing for more than 800 years. Past groups loved this.

The natural geothermal mud can be liberally smoothed over the skin while relaxing in the warm sulfurous waters for 20 minutes. The mud bath is followed by a cool shower which helps restore blood circulation before relaxing in the hot sulfur mineral spas. The warm geothermal mud opens and cleans the skin's pores, while the sulfur spa's give your skin a gentle exfoliation and deep cleansing, leaving your skin clean, soft and smooth to touch. Escape into another world of geothermal wonder, overlooking New Zealand's spectacular geothermal scenery from the freeform sulfur pools in our landscaped bathing area surrounded by native trees and plants. Cool off under the mineral enriched waterfall cascading into the cool plunge pool to refresh during your spa experience.

Overnight: Distinction Hotel Rotorua (2 nights)

Apr 17 Te Puia and Agrodome, Tamaki Village, Hangi Dinner & Concert

B/D

After breakfast we head out for a day of Rotorua sightseeing. Our first stop is **Te Puia**, New Zealand's living Maori cultural center, situated in the **Whakarewarewa Geothermal Valley**. Te Puia's 148 acre site is home to **Maori Arts and Crafts Institute**, a live kiwi enclosure, the world-famous Pohutu Geyser, and more than 500 geothermal wonders. With land steeped in ancestral history, and a guiding legacy that stretches back to the 1800s, Te Puia offers unique hospitality and rich cultural heritage.

Next, we visit the World Famous **Agrodome** for an authentic farm experience, a 350 acre working farm that is totally entertaining. The Sheep show will take you through a fascinating insight into the world of New Zealand agriculture. During this multi award winning show you will be entertained and informed as a real kiwi shearer (black singlet and all) presents 19 breeds of champion sheep, shears a sheep using the world record Bowen technique, works noisy Huntaway and silent Strong-Eyed dogs and completes the NZ dog trial. Have the opportunity to milk a cow and feed a lamb... maybe even a little sheep shearing yourself? Free time will be allocated during the tour for lunch on our own.

Afterwards, we provide free time with an opportunity of a zipline canopy tour booked locally. This is great fun and highly suggested by previous AFSers who loved the chance to zip through the trees of an ancient forest. During your 3-hour Canopy Tour, you will be guided through this magical place on a ¾ of a mile network of 6 ziplines, swing bridges and treetop platforms up to 72 feet high. The tour funds a massive conservation project to protect the native plants and birds that live in the forest – almost everything that lives here, is not found in any other country on earth. They will tell you about what they are doing, during your Canopy Tour, it's an awesome story. Nearby you can find Sky Swings, Zorbing, Bungee, free racers and more.

Later in the evening, we have dinner among the Maoris with a combined Hangi (Dinner) and Concert tour. Welcome to a world of ancient Maori and proud warriors - a world that unfolds with a journey back in time through the Maori village of 'Te Tawa Ngahere Pa'. A Maori guide will help instruct us on protocol. Experience the pre-European lifestyle and customs of the ancient Maori ancestors as the village comes alive with tribal songs, dances and activities. Enjoy a night of truly authentic, traditional culture and entertainment. Feast on a selection of foods cooked the traditional Maori way on hot stones in an authentic earthen oven.

Overnight: Distinction hotel Rotorua (2 nights)

Apr 18 Fly Rotorua to Queenstown

B/D

Head to the South Island, home to stunning beauty and endless adventures.

After breakfast we will take a short flight over to Queenstown. The heart of the eastern cape of the South Island, this town is great fun to explore with its location on the shores of Lake Wakatipu and the **Remarkables** hills behind. Our hotel is the Novotel Lakeside with is a prime location to help you just walk to anything downtown.

Your afternoon is mostly free but in the early evening we will be picked up at the hotel to take a gondola up **Bob's Peak** for dinner. From the Skyline Restaurant check-in point we will take a cable car 10 minutes to reach the top. The views from this complex atop Bob's Peak are amazing. The Skyline Gondola complex includes the restaurant and a luge, all sitting almost 2600 feet above sea level and overlooking the town and lake. The gondola consists of an Austrian Doppelmayr system with a vertical rise of 1500 feet and an incline of 37.1 degrees it carries 700 people per hour in four seater cabins. Dinner in the restaurant offers a tempting six course 'Taste of New Zealand' buffet in a relaxed atmosphere. A tiered seating design and floor to ceiling windows allows an unhindered view of the Wakatipu panorama. The restaurant is fully licensed and has live entertainment every evening. After dinner return on the cableway and take a walk down the hill back to your hotel.

Overnight: Novotel Lakeside, Queenstown (3 nights)

Apr 19 Milford Sound tour and cruise, (12 hour day)

BL

Today is a full day excursion to the incomparable Milford Sound. Throughout the trip to and from, you will see the scenery that brings people back to New Zealand time and time again. Enjoy the great Kiwi hospitality while you sit back and relax as we travel from Queenstown into the farm country of Southland and around the mountains into the breath-taking Fiordland National Park. AFS will be divided into 3 fun buses with 3 fabulous guides. The beauty of the Milford Sound Tours is that around every corner there is something new to discover.

We'll stop for a barbeque lunch in the world-famous **Fiordland National Park** where each view is more stunning than the next. While they are preparing lunch, we'll take a short walk and breathe in the fresh alpine air. There are some fantastic walks in the area and this is a great opportunity to experience the beautiful alpine beech forest up close. We'll see several creatures which can only be found in New Zealand.

Then we arrive for our **Milford Sound Cruise** out into a sound that is truly like no other. Jagged cliffs and waterfalls are all around. Our spacious boat has open decks where you can get views from all sides, or you can choose to stay in the comfortable interior where there are snacks and drinks available. You'll need to keep a look out for native wildlife such as dolphins, seals, and penguins! At the end of the cruise, re-board your coach for the journey back to Queenstown

Overnight: Novotel Lakeside, Queenstown (3 nights)

Apr 20 FREE DAY

B

Feel the inspiration in the capital of adventure. Today, we have a completely free day for you to explore and focus on your own interests in this scenic wonderland. There's countless options to check off your bucket list here. www.queenstown.co.nz

There are enumerable activities which you may want to try and your guide or the hotel can help you arrange. A favorite is jet-boating through the narrow canyons and down rivers. Or you could choose to take a dive and go bungy jumping. Perhaps a trip up the tortuous Skippers Canyon road? A Lord of the Rings tour? Hiking? (Yes, Anna) Or even paragliding? Maybe even several of the above? Our clients Gibston Valley for its wines. I love TSC Earnslow Ferry Boat to Walter Peak Farm.

Overnight: Novotel Lakeside, Queenstown (3 nights)

Apr 21 Depart Queenstown

B

After breakfast, we head to the airport to head home. Once again, you will cross the dateline and for some, you may arrive home earlier than when you left New Zealand!

Land Price \$ 2760 land pp twin share (we can find a match)

Deposit \$600

Limited to 36 participants

Group air details emailed later in AFS Trip Tips: LA to Auckland to Rotorua to Christ Church to Queens Town to Auckland to LA