

THE SIR EDMUND HILLARY EXPLORER

“Adventure for the sake of a dream, for the pleasure of searching”

- Sir Edmund Hillary

SOUTH ISLAND RAIL & COACH TOUR

Departing Christchurch (return)

2026/27 Season (September 2026 – April 2027)

11 Day Tour



INCLUDES “THE BIG 5” RAIL ADVENTURES OF THE SOUTH ISLAND

TranzAlpine • Kingston Flyer (Steam) • The Mainlander (Invercargill-Dunedin)
Taieri Gorge • The Mainlander (Dunedin-Oamaru)

Inspired by one of the greatest and most iconic adventurers of our time, The Sir Edmund Hillary Explorer invites you on an epic journey by rail and luxury coach throughout the majestic South Island of Aotearoa.



TranzAlpine



Kingston Flyer



The Mainlander (Invercargill-Dunedin-Oamaru)



Taieri Gorge

SIR EDMUND HILLARY EXPLORER TOUR

Featuring the “Big 5” Rail Adventures of the South Island of New Zealand, and so much more...

TranzAlpine • Kingston Flyer (Steam) • The Mainlander (Invercargill-Dunedin) • Taieri Gorge • The Mainlander (Dunedin-Oamaru)



Sir Edmund Hillary epitomised the New Zealand spirit of adventure and he is our inspiration when planning your experience of a lifetime. We pay homage to Sir Edmund Hillary as we explore Te Waipounamu South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand and experience the postcard perfect vistas and dramatic alpine scenery that this part of the world is renowned for.

Your guided journey begins in “The Garden City” Ōtautahi Christchurch, where the iconic TranzAlpine awaits. Often regarded to be one of the worlds great train journeys for the scenery through which it passes. The journey is 223 Kilometres one-way, taking almost five hours, you will see epic vistas, travel the edges of the ice-fed Waimakariri River, traverse the majestic Canterbury Plains and Southern Alps via Arthurs Pass. Your guided tour is escorted by luxury coaches that provide seamless transfers from the train to your accommodation in Franz Josef.



Arrive in Franz Josef, where an optional helicopter flight of the Franz Josef glacier is available for the adventurous.



Departing the West Coast, we will travel through the Haast Pass, journeying through large tracts of native rain forest and over the Southern Alps. This remote area has a ruggedly beautiful landscape of vast rainforests, gushing waterfalls and snow-capped mountains. Journeying through Makarora on the border of Mount Aspiring World Heritage Park, we pass by the crystal-clear waters of Lake Wanaka, Lake Hawea and Lake Dunstan. The adventure playground of Queenstown awaits. Cap off a special day as we take in The Remarkables Mountain Range and the view of Lake Wakatipu from the hotel. The next day, we join a lake cruise on board the historic TSS Earnslaw, the 1912 Edwardian steamboat, which takes us across Lake Wakatipu to Walter Peak High Country Farm for a gourmet BBQ lunch. Queenstown highlights include the historic and picturesque goldmining town, Arrowtown, on the banks of the Arrow River and taking in the Lakes District Museum.



We depart Queenstown to ride on the iconic Kingston Flyer Steam Train between Kingston and Fairlight. Then onward to the Fiordland National Park district, where we pause to experience the wonders of Te Anau and Milford Sound.

An optional alternative tour of Doubtful Sound is available.



In Waihōpai Invercargill, we board a recently re-established train that is a rail experience exclusive to our tours - “The Mainlander” which weaves its way through rolling hills and lush scenic rural landscapes of the deep south of New Zealand, to Ōtepoti Dunedin. Whilst in Dunedin, we journey by rail over river gorges, towering viaducts and through a myriad of historic tunnels along the remote Taieri Gorge. Later we have the option to explore Larnach Castle and indulge in High Tea or visit the Taīaroa Head Albatross Colony, explore the hidden underground Fort Taīaroa and the world’s only Armstrong Disappearing Gun.



Our departure from Ōtepoti Dunedin is by “The Mainlander” train along the coastal route to Oamaru. Then a detour inland by luxury coach to Aoraki Mt Cook, the tallest mountain in New Zealand - a familiar playground of Sir Edmund Hillary where he developed his climbing skills in preparation for the ascent of Everest. Highlights include a presentation from a guest speaker from the Hillary family, a visit to Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre and the option for a Glacier Lake cruise, Helicopter/Ski Plane flight to Tasman Glacier or Planetarium Show.



Returning to the coast by coach via Lake Tekapo, where your journey ends on arrival at Ōtautahi Christchurch. There is optional post-tour accommodation available at Distinction Hotel, Christchurch.

TOUR DATES

11-DAYS DEPARTING FROM CHRISTCHURCH (RETURN)

- 5 October 2026 (ending 15 October 2026)
- 2 November 2026 (ending 12 November 2026)
- 30 November 2026 (ending 10 December 2026)
- 1 February 2027 (ending 11 February 2027)
- 22 February 2027 (ending 4 March 2027)
- 1 March 2027 (ending 11 March 2027)
- 29 March 2027 (ending 8 April 2027)

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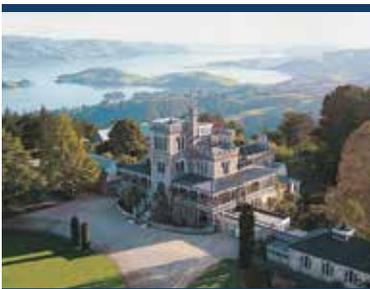
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11-DAY TOUR DEPARTING CHRISTCHURCH

- TranzAlpine
- Luxury Coach
- Kingston Flyer
- Dunedin Railways
- The Mainlander



DAY	ITINERARY	HOTEL	MODE
1	CHRISTCHURCH Tour Registration at hotel from 2:30pm – 5:00pm Meal Inclusions - Welcome dinner	Sudima Airport Hotel, Christchurch	
2	CHRISTCHURCH - GREYMOUTH - FRANZ JOSEF TranzAlpine via Arthurs Pass Pounamu Pathway Meal Inclusions - Breakfast & dinner (lunch on your own)	Scenic Hotel Franz Josef	Train / Coach
3	FRANZ JOSEF - HAAST - QUEENSTOWN Franz Josef Glacier helicopter ride (optional) Haast Pass canyon lookout Meal Inclusions - Breakfast, lunch & dinner	Mercure Queenstown Resort	Coach
4	QUEENSTOWN TSS Earnslaw & Walter Peak Homestead Gourmet BBQ Lunch Meal Inclusions - Breakfast & barbeque lunch (dinner on your own)	Mercure Queenstown Resort	Coach / Steam Ship
5	QUEENSTOWN - TE ANAU Kingston Flyer Takahe bird sanctuary Te Anau glow worm cave tour or Jet boat experience (both optional) Meal Inclusions - Breakfast, lunch & dinner	Distinction Hotel Luxmore	Coach / Steam Train
6	TE ANAU - MILFORD SOUND - TE ANAU Coach along Eglinton Valley to Milford Sound via Homer Tunnel Milford Sound Cruise (or Doubtful Sound cruise as an option) Meal Inclusions - Breakfast & lunch on cruise (dinner on your own)	Distinction Hotel Luxmore	Coach / Cruise
7	TE ANAU - INVERCARGILL - DUNEDIN Coach from Te Anau to Invercargill The Mainlander train to Dunedin Meal Inclusions – Breakfast, lunch & dinner	Distinction Hotel, Dunedin	Coach / Train
8	DUNEDIN Taieri Gorge train trip Larnach Castle or Albatross & Fort Tairaroa Tour (both optional) Meal Inclusions - Breakfast & lunch (dinner on your own)	Distinction Hotel, Dunedin	Train / Coach
9	DUNEDIN - OAMARU - AORAKI MT COOK The Mainlander train from Dunedin to Oamaru Coach to Aoraki Mt Cook Meal Inclusions - Breakfast, lunch & dinner	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Mt Cook	Train / Coach
10	AORAKI MT COOK Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre & scenic drive Ski plane & helicopter scenic flight & Glacier Explorer Cruise (both optional) Presentation by guest speaker from the Hillary family Galactic Journey Show in Planetarium after Hillary presentation (optional) Meal Inclusions - Breakfast & dinner (lunch on your own)	Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Mt Cook	Coach
11	AORAKI MT COOK - CHRISTCHURCH Coach to Christchurch (via Lake Tekapo) Lunch at Barkers in Geraldine Christchurch Airport drop off / Christchurch Distinction Hotel drop off Meal Inclusions – Breakfast & lunch	Distinction Christchurch Hotel (Optional)	Coach

Please note that this Itinerary is subject to change

DAY 1

Christchurch

Registration to meet your fellow explorers and tour guides is from 2.30pm – 5pm at Sudima Airport Hotel in Christchurch.

Welcome Dinner and Tour Briefing will be held at the hotel restaurant at 6.30pm.

Tour Guests stay at the Sudima Airport Hotel in Christchurch.

DAY 2

Christchurch – Greymouth – Franz Josef

Your journey begins at Christchurch Railway Station, where the iconic TranzAlpine awaits. Often regarded to be one of the world's great train journeys for the scenery through which it passes. The journey is 223 kilometres one-way, taking almost five hours. You will see epic vistas, travel the edges of the ice-fed Waimakariri River, traverse the majestic Canterbury Plains and Southern Alps, and see large tracts of native beech forest.

On arrival in Greymouth, the “Pounamu Pathway” is a newly opened immersive visitor experience highlighting the rich Māori Culture, history, and West Coast heritage - crafted by Wētā Workshop. Luxury coaches await to transport you to your hotel in the ruggedly beautiful Franz Josef.

Tour Guests stay at the Scenic Hotel Franz Josef.



South Island 11-Day Sir Edmund Hillary Explorer



DAY 3

Franz Josef – Haast – Queenstown

Wake up to enjoy the option for a helicopter tour of the Franz Josef glacier. Leaving Franz Josef, we travel down the West Coast through the Haast Pass, journeying through large tracts of native rain forest and over the Southern Alps. This remote area has a ruggedly beautiful landscape of vast rainforests, gushing waterfalls and snow-capped mountains. Continuing through Makarora on the border of Mount Aspiring World Heritage Park, we pass by the crystal-clear waters of Lake Wanaka, Lake Hawea and Lake Dunstan.

The adventure playground of Queenstown then awaits! Cap off a special day as we take in The Remarkables Mountain Range and the view of Lake Wakatipu from the hotel.

Tour Guests stay at the Mercure Queenstown Resort with breathtaking views over Lake Wakatipu and the Remarkables Mountain range.



DAY 4

Queenstown

Wake up to join a lake cruise on board the historic TSS Earnslaw, the 1912 Edwardian steamboat, which takes us across Lake Wakatipu to Walter Peak High Country Farm for a gourmet BBQ lunch.

Tour Guests stay again at the Mercure Queenstown Resort.



DAY 5

Queenstown – Kingston – Te Anau

Departing Queenstown, we continue to the village of Kingston which is nestled on southernmost end of Lake Wakatipu. Here, the iconic Kingston Flyer Steam Train awaits to take you on a memorable return journey between Kingston & Fairlight.

Then, we enter the Fiordland National Park district, continuing to traverse the Southern Scenic Route, our journey calls in to visit the Takahe Bird Sanctuary. Takahe are the stars of the show and meeting these prehistoric-looking characters is a 'must do' for Fiordland visitors. The sanctuary is a large part of the success of the Takahe Recovery Programme.

Experience breathtaking landscapes and for those who wish to add on a unique experience, take part in a guided Glowworm cave tour for a truly magical experience or an optional jet boat experience.

Tour Guests stay at the Distinction Hotel Luxmore in Te Anau.

DAY 6

Te Anau – Milford Sound – Te Anau

Traveling along the Milford Road (between Te Anau and Milford) is one of the finest alpine drives in the world. The scenery is exceptional, ranging from broad grassy flats, dense rainforest and towering mountains through to glacial lakes and alpine herb fields. A day tour to Milford Sound offers some of the most spectacular natural scenery to be viewed anywhere in the world. Board the coach and travel through stunning scenery along the Milford Road and into Fiordland, where your cruise boat awaits you. The tour includes a cruise around the fiord so you can experience its wonders up close and see landmarks like Mitre Peak and amazing wildlife, such as dolphins and seals. Cruise the inner most reaches of Milford Sound to the open Tasman Sea and back (or there is the optional upgrade to explore Doubtful Sound instead).

A one-day itinerary is enough to see all the beautiful views along the way, take a scenic cruise around the fiord, and get back to Te Anau in time for dinner.

Tour Guests stay again at the Distinction Hotel Luxmore.



DAY 7

Te Anau – Invercargill – Dunedin

Departing Te Anau for Invercargill, where we board a recently re-established train, “The Mainlander”, which weaves its way through rolling hills and lush scenic rural landscapes of the deep south of New Zealand, to Dunedin.

Tour Guests will stay at Dunedin’s premier luxury hotel, the Distinction Hotel, nestled in the heart of the city.



DAY 8

Dunedin

In the morning, we explore the remote Taieri Gorge by Dunedin Rail over river gorges, weaving our way through a myriad of historic tunnels and guide you to the historic Wingatui Viaduct, a marvel of 1880s construction that remains the largest wrought iron structure in New Zealand.

An afternoon at leisure is planned or there are the optional excursions visit to Larnach Castle for a high tea & garden tour or explore the 'hidden' underground Fort Taiaeroa, located underneath the Royal Albatross breeding colony at Taiaeroa Head..

Tour Guests stay again at the luxurious Distinction Hotel in Dunedin.



DAY 9

Dunedin – Oamaru – Aoraki Mt Cook

Departing Dunedin by The Mainlander Train, we continue to hug the coast towards Oamaru. We then detour inland via Waitaki Valley & Omarama by coach and onwards towards the spectacular Aoraki Mt Cook. Here, we find the home of the tallest mountain in New Zealand, which helped Sir Edmund Hillary to develop his climbing skills in preparation for the conquest of Mt Everest. Recognised as part of the Te Wahipounamu UNESCO World Heritage Area, the National Park is a breath-taking environment of glaciers, terminal lakes, turbulent rivers and Australasia's tallest peak, the mighty Aoraki Mt Cook soaring above at 3,724 metres.

Tour Guests stay at the iconic Hermitage Hotel with majestic mountain views of Aoraki Mt Cook.





DAY 10

Aoraki Mt Cook

Enjoy a leisurely morning and then a visit to the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre, which is a tribute to New Zealand's global icon as well as discovering New Zealand's colourful transport, climbing and hotel history. Followed by an afternoon drive to Mueller Lake walk & lookout surrounded by the silent splendour of the Southern Alps. Morning optional activities include a glacier explorer cruise or a scenic ski plane flight with expert pilots navigating their way over the glacial lake, passing soaring mountain tops over NZ's longest glacier - the 600 metre thick, Tasman Glacier. Guest speaker is a Hillary family representative in the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre Theatre before dinner. The optional Planetarium Show takes place in the theatre after the Hillary presentation.

Tour Guests stay again at the Hermitage Hotel.



DAY 11

Aoraki Mt Cook – Geraldine – Christchurch

A morning departure from the hotel leaving Aoraki Mt Cook by coach, we journey back to the coast via Tekapo, Geraldine and Rakaia on the way to Christchurch. On arrival in Christchurch, this brings us to the end of the tour.

There is the option for post-tour accommodation at the Distinction Hotel in Christchurch.



INCLUSIONS: For your convenience the following has all been included in your tour price.

ACCOMMODATION

10 nights accommodation is included in the 11-day tour. We have selected minimum 4-star standard accommodation for the Sir Edmund Hillary Explorer Tour to ensure the comfort and quality of your experience for your journey of a lifetime.

LUXURY COACHES & TOUR OPTIONS

Two coaches will escort the train throughout the journey, providing seamless transfers to your accommodation and excursions. You will be accompanied by experienced Tour Guides who are there to guide and assist you throughout your journey.

PREPAID ATTRACTIONS (INCLUDED)

- TranzAlpine Train Journey
- Pounamu Pathway
- Cruise Lake Wakatipu on the TSS Earnslaw
- Walter Peak Farm Experience
- Kingston Flyer Historic Train Excursion
- Milford Sound Day Trip & Cruise
- Takahē Sanctuary
- Mainlander Train journey from Invercargill to Dunedin
- Taieri Gorge Train Journey
- Mainlander Train journey from Dunedin to Oamaru
- Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre at Aoraki Mt Cook
- Guest speaker from the Hillary family

INCLUSIONS - MEALS

- 10 cooked breakfasts
- 7 sumptuous dinners
- 8 lunches including Gourmet BBQ lunch at Walter Peak Homestead (other lunches on your own)

THE FOLLOWING OPTIONAL EXTRA EXCURSIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR BOOKING PRE-TOUR:

- TranzAlpine Train upgrade to Scenic Plus
- Franz Josef Helicopter Flight
- Doubtful Sounds Cruise (instead of Milford Sound cruise)
- Te Anau Glow Worm Tour
- Te Anau Jet Boat Experience
- Albatross Colony & Fort Taiaroa Tour
- Larnach Castle Tour & High Tea
- Tasman Glacier Explorer Cruise
- Tasman Glacier Helicopter Flights
- “Galactic Journey” Planetarium Show

EXCLUSIONS:

Flights to and from your points of arrival/departure are not included. Pre and post tour accommodation is optional and also not included. We recommend that you take out comprehensive travel insurance.

PLEASE NOTE:

For your own enjoyment and safety during the tour, please note that a reasonable level of fitness and mobility is required as there will be the need to climb and descend stairs (on coaches, excursions and at hotels), carry your own bag at times, and be able to walk some distances on uneven ground. Please refer to the Terms & Conditions found on www.siredmundhillaryexplorer.com/terms-and-conditions

11-DAY TOUR FROM CHRISTCHURCH

Per Person Sharing NZ \$7,495

Single Supplement NZ \$1,495

BOOKINGS

A 20% deposit is required to secure a booking; 40% six months before your tour departs and the balance due the month before your tour departs.

For all bookings and for further information:

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