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Geological tour Itinerary - MARCH 2009

New Zealand had its beginnings 25 million years ago as part of the Zealandia continent. Straddling the Pacific and Indo-Australian Plates, New Zealand is one of the most active seismic places on earth.

Dramatic beginnings are matched by fascinating geology and an unsurpassed natural environment, New Zealand is a delight. We will take you on a journey of a lifetime from the volcanoes of Auckland, to the hydrothermal steaming pools and bubbling mud of the central North Island. You will be walking on the mighty glaciers of the South Island one day and marveling at the spectacular natural beauty of Milford Sound the next.

Your knowledgeable tour leader is a member of the New Zealand Geological Society and the trip has been carefully planned to encompass many experts in their field - be it tour specialist Jens Tourborg (see separate profile), a fourth generation miner, indigenous Maori or an earthquake protection specialist in our Houses of Parliament!

This is sure to be the most varied, informative and visually stunning trip you have ever experienced.

Day1 11TH March

Our tour starts with a short ferry ride from Auckland to **Rangitoto Island**, Auckland's largest volcano and a chance to get your bearings and see the sights of Auckland, New Zealand's largest city.

- Meaning 'Bloody Sky'; in Maori, Rangitoto is the most recent and the largest (2311 hectares) of the approximately 48 volcanoes of the Auckland Volcanic Field and provides us with the opportunity to study an **unmodified volcanic island**. The most recent activity took place 600 years ago, erupting 2.3 cubic kilometres of lava.
- Features of Rangitoto Island include lava **caves**, **lava fields** and the distinctive, symmetrical **260 metre high cone**, which was formed in spectacular fashion by jets of fire and molten lava.
- You will notice in our travels around Auckland, Rangitoto Island is visible from much of the city.

Tonight we stay in Auckland

Day 2 12th March

Today is an opportunity for information gathering with a visit to a museum, finishing with a relaxing drive to Auckland's highest point to gain perspective of the city of 50 volcanoes.

- The **Auckland Museum** is set in the lush green Auckland Domain, with spectacular views over the city and harbour. The Museum itself boasts the most comprehensive display of Maori and Polynesian artifacts in the world and their award winning displays will provide the ideal foundation to understanding New Zealand's cultural, social and natural history.
- We leave the museum to take a leisurely coach ride to the top of **Mt Eden**, which is itself a dormant volcano and at 196 metres above sea level is the highest natural point in Auckland. From here we can see the **Manukau and Waitemata Harbours** plus the remnants of the nearly **50 volcanoes** that formed the Auckland region.

Tonight we stay in Auckland

Day 3 13th March

Boarding the coach we start our journey south by traveling to the township of **Thames**, gateway to the beautiful Coromandel Range, made up of extinct volcanoes. This region is also notable for the presence of **hydrothermal mineral deposits**.

- Thames was the scene of much heady activity following the discovery of gold in 1852 and became a centre for **hard rock mining**. At one stage Thames was the second largest town in New Zealand. However, the rush is now well and truly over and Thames is a bustling town of approximately 8,000 people. Thames is home to the historic **Schools of Mines**. In 1885-1886 some 30 schools were formed to provide practical instruction to goldminers working in the quartz field. Here we can view an extensive mineral collection and the rooms where students studied the science of mining.
- There is time to take a break and stroll around some of the significant historic sights of Thames before boarding the bus to Waihi.
- **Waihi** was home to Martha Mines, which was at one time one of the most important gold and silver mines in the world. Waihi still has a large **opencast mine** operating and we will take a tour of this mine, learning its history from a very knowledgeable local guide.
- From Waihi our journey will take us out over the Hauraki Plains and into the rolling pastures of the Waikato region, which is famous for its dairy industry and then on to Waitomo.
- After your evening meal you have the option to venture out and walk a few local tracks.

Tonight we stay in Waitomo

Day 4 14th March

Underground caves, a museum, farm show and Maori feast make for a truly diverse day packed with inspiring, informative and entertaining activities.

- The morning begins with a trip to the world famous limestone **Waitomo Caves**, which Geological and volcanic activity have created over the last 30 million years. We visit the **Ruakuri** arm of the caves. This is a spectacular underground experience giving us the opportunity to view a range of **speleothems and underground streams**. Stunning stalagmites and stalactites coupled with commentary from your guide on the history of the caves from times of pre-

European Maori to the present lit by thousands of glowworms, combines to make this a truly memorable adventure.

- Prior to leaving Waitomo, we make a visit to the **Waitomo Museum**, which provides fascinating insights into the cultural, biological and geographical history of Waitomo Caves.
- Our next stop is at **Rotorua** which is otherwise known as Thermal City due to its abundance of geysers and hot mud pools. This city owes its presence to the Rotorua **caldera**.
- We visit the **Agrodome**, where a unique farm show will provide an insight into New Zealand's famous farming industry.
- This evening is a real treat. We will be taking in the **Mitai cultural experience and Maori feast**. The evening is a showcase of Maori culture and heritage delivered with humor and color.

Tonight we stay in Rotorua

Day 5 15th March

Very few people have been privileged to make the journey you are about to experience today, so ready your sea legs as we jet boat off to the live volcano that is **White Island**.

- We start the day with a coach ride to Whakatane in the Bay of Plenty and board the PeeJay and motor approx 50km offshore to be greeted by the **sulphur-lipped fumaroles and roaring steam vents** of White Island.
- Experienced guides will provide an in-depth history of the island, which is classed as a **Stratovolcano** and is one of the few still active, although today this is an intermittent and reasonably low level of activity.
- Maori first used the island to catch muttonbird and later Europeans attempted to mine the sulphur deposits of the islands. From the tour you not only are able to view the volcanic wonders close up, but also gain a human perspective on what early visitors to the island must have experienced.
- The Bay of Plenty is world famous for incredible deep-sea fishing and the boat trip provides the opportunity to see the areas marvellous marine life both under and on the water. Keep your eyes out for dolphins and the occasional whale!
- On returning to **Rotorua** we will see some of the many volcanic features that make this area of New Zealand, and the world, truly unique.

Tonight we stay in Rotorua

Day 6 16th March

The human impact of volcanic activity is evident today as we go to the scene of a devastating eruption. Plus we visit the famous **Whakarewarewa** thermal spring and mud pools before finishing the day with a gondola ride.

- We buckle up this morning and take all terrain four-wheel drive vehicles to the top of **Mt Tarawera**, which was the scene of an eruption in 1886. The eruption was over in a matter of hours but the consequences were devastating. The eruption destroyed the famous Pink and White Terraces, which were hailed by some as one of the natural wonders of the world and formed a rift some 14kms long. This was also the only occasion in New Zealand where the eruption led to a direct loss of life - 130 people died.
- Views from Mt Tarawera are stunning in all directions but the most inspiring is the **Chasm** itself, which was formed during Tarawera's first and only **basaltic eruption**; prior to this, eruptions had been of a **rhyolite**.

- The 7km rift on the mountain consists of 9-10 craters. While we are here you can choose to either take a gentle walk or for the more energetic, run down the scree slope of the rift.
- We return to Rotorua and take a visit to the **Whakarewarewa** with its **thermal springs and bubbling mud pools**. A local guide will explain how the Maori lived here in pre-European times and how it carries through to the present in this playground of Mother Nature.
- Our day will finish with a ride by **gondola** above Lake Rotorua enabling us to visualize the scale of the **Rotorua caldera**. This is one of the three principal caldera in the central North Island that has shaped the land.
- Weather permitting we top off the day with the favourite Kiwi way of dining – a **barbeque**.

Tonight we stay in Rotorua

Day 7 17th March

A landscape full of vibrant colours combined with unique ecology, botany, geothermal features and a knowledgeable guide make this a most inspiring and memorable day.

- We take a short drive before arriving at **Waimangu Volcanic Valley**. This is one of the world's newest geothermal eco systems and was formed when Mt Tarawera erupted in 1886. The eruption opened the earth along a 17km rift, splitting Mt Tarawera in two, exploding Lake Rotomahana to 20 times its size, and forming the **seven craters** that today make up Waimangu Volcanic Valley. We take a guided walk down the valley at the southern limit of the **rift**. We pass by native bush that has regenerated since the eruption, flowing streams of **boiling thermal waters, multi-hued pools, bubbling mud** and a lake that rises and falls on a regular cycle.
- A leisurely lunch is spent looking out over the valley and is followed by a drive through thriving dairy farms and the massive Kaingaroa Forest, which is the largest plantation in the southern hemisphere. Millions of Pinus Radiata are grown and harvested for use in the timber and pulp & paper industries.
- We make a short but spectacular stop to watch the spectacular **Aratiatia rapids**. These rapids on the Waikato River are formed when the Aratiatia hydro dam releases an incredible 90,000 litres of churning water per second.
- The day finishes on a dramatic note with a visit to the world famous **Huka Falls**. The mighty Waikato River is forced through a 15 metre wide gap with more than 220,000 litres of water blasting by every second before plunging 11 metres into a maelstrom of foam and boiling water before continuing its journey more sedately to the sea. A walk alongside the river provides prime views of the wonderful clear waters of the river flowing surrounded by exotic and native forest and set against the ever present roar of the mighty falls.

Tonight we stay in Taupo

Day 8 18th March

Make sure you eat a hearty breakfast today as the day starts with a bang with some Kiwi adventure before a more sedate view the human implications of volcanic activity and stunning rock formations.

- We are off to an adrenalin pumping start with a **whitewater raft** on the **Tongariro River**. We ride 60 rapids of a grade 3 but do not fear; your highly experienced guides have your safety in mind at all times while having as much exhilarating fun

as possible. As the river carries us downstream we pass breathtaking areas of pristine native bush, huge cliffs formed from volcanic mudflows and deposition during the various eruptions from the Taupo volcanic complex.

- Your whitewater adventures ends with a well earned lunch before heading back to the coach and ascend the volcanic plateau with spectacular views of the impressive **Mounts Ruapehu, Tongariro, Ngauruhoe** plus a number of slightly smaller volcanic features.
- Created not by lack of rain but by volcanic ash and brutal weather conditions, we stop at the **Rangipo Desert** and investigate the **ignimbrite deposition** complete with remains of burnt bush buried by past eruptions.
- As we head further along the appropriately named Desert Road we can view the path that a **lahar** took down the **Whangaehu River** in 2007, an event that was actually filmed.
- In 1953 a collapse of the crater wall at Mt Ruapehu created a massive lahar that swept down a river and severely weakened a railway bridge at the small settlement of **Tangiwai**. A train crossed the bridge only minutes later killing 153 people, making it New Zealand's worst railway accident. We visit the scene of the disaster to gain some understanding of the power and scale of event.
- A sobering trip to Tangiwai is followed with a scenic drive up to **Whakapapa**. Whakapapa is most famous to sport-mad New Zealanders as the base for the winter skiing on Mt Ruapehu but this area features **stunning rock formations** created by years of activity from this **Stratovolcano** and its mixture of depositional materials.

Tonight we stay at National Park

Day 9 19th March

We visit some natural wonders before taking a look at how man has utilized some of the area's natural resources.

- We journey into the Taranaki region, famous for its black ironsand beaches and majestic **Mt Taranaki** (otherwise known as Mt Egmont), a near-perfect, snow capped cone which last erupted in the mid-18th century, forming the North Island's second highest peak. Along the way we will be passing through landscape made up of a series of sandstones that were laid down in the **early Miocene** and lie on top of the **Mahoenui mudstones** before the **Waitemata uplift**. As we approach the coast some road cuttings will enable us to see ash mixed with mud and sandstone deposits believed to come from eruptions to the west.
- We stretch our legs with a stroll on **Whitecliffs Beach**. The majestic Three Sisters rock formations overlook the contrasting white cliffs and **black iron sands**, rich in **titanomagnetite**, which are mined in for the iron ore industry.
- On to the **Motunui Synfuel plant**. The plant was built in the 1970's as a response to the oil crisis and was the world's first synthetic fuel production facility. The model on display provides an easy to understand explanation of the process involved in turning natural gas into petrol.

Tonight we stay in New Plymouth

Day 10 20th March

Waking up under the classic cone of Mt Taranaki, you would almost think you were in Japan; such are its similarities in appearance to Mt Fuji. Because of this resemblance the Taranaki region was used as the backdrop for the 2003 Tom Cruise film 'Last Samurai'.

- If you take up the challenge of taking a short climb to the top of **Paritutu Rock** you will be rewarded with views of Mt Taranaki, a classic cone volcano, the entire New Plymouth coastline, New Plymouth city and port and the Sugar Loaf Islands.
- Driving south we travel through almost flat farmland but studded with hundreds of lahar mounds before arriving in **Hawera**. Here we take an insight into one man's dream; a private museum dedicated to the history of the Taranaki region and told with some of the most incredible displays and dioramas in the country.
- Now is the time to refresh and refuel before boarding the coach for the drive through the green rolling countryside of the lower North Island, south to the city of **Wellington**, the capital city of New Zealand. If the weather is on our side you will also have the opportunity to see great views of the **Wanganui Wellington embayment**.

Tonight we stay in Wellington

Day 11 21st March

Be prepared for some intellectual stimulation this morning with a visit to two of New Zealand's most important buildings and the opportunity to explore New Zealand's capital at your whim.

- No trip to Wellington is complete without a visit to the **Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa**. This relatively new and sometimes controversial museum is the official museum of New Zealand and a recognised world leader in interactive and visitor-focused museum experiences.
- Luckily we have the coach to take us up the steep incline to **Mt Victoria**. Mt Victoria provides prime views of Wellington city and the **fault line** that bisects the city environs; shaping the harbour and the subject of much research and speculation.
- From the heady heights of Mt Victoria to the hallowed halls of power as we visit the **New Zealand Parliament** buildings or the 'Beehive' – its nickname will become obvious once you see the building! We will be privileged to visit select committee rooms and the main debating chamber. Our guide will provide an explanation of our Westminster system of government and will take a fascinating tour under the Beehive buildings to take a closer look at its **earthquake protection systems**.
- The afternoon is yours to explore Wellington as you wish – be it sight seeing, shopping or snoozing.

Tonight we stay in Wellington.

Day 12 22nd March

After a morning to yourself to relax we take to the sea and road as we make our way from North Island to South before landing in New Zealand's sunniest city, Nelson.

- Feel free to sleep a little longer this morning or catch up on some more sights as we have a few hours until we catch the mid-morning Inter-islander ferry for the **crossing of Cook Strait**.
- Cook Strait is a 24km wide body of water separating the North and South Islands. Crossing the Strait by boat provides stunning views. Make sure you are on the forward deck for entry into the **Marlborough Sounds** via the Tory Channel. A gentle cruise up the Sounds allows plenty of time to view the regenerating bush

clad hills and crystal blue bays before we finally berth in the historic town of **Picton**.

- Take the opportunity to stretch your legs before we board the coach and make our way to **Nelson** - the sunshine capital of New Zealand.

Tonight we stay in Nelson.

DAY 13 23rd March

The Nelson region is famous for its thriving arts and crafts industry and fabulous local food and wine. Today is a chance to relax and unwind and experience all of this.

- After breakfast we visit some **local crafts experts** and have the opportunity to talk about the processes that go into making their products.
- Next stop is Nelson's quietly humming commercial center and a **Cathedral** with its origins dating back to early colonization and made using locally sourced Takaka marble and expert local craftsmanship.
- We sit down to a sumptuous lunch at a **winery** giving you the opportunity to sample some of the fine local food and wine.
- After lunch we visit the fabulous **Grape Escape** where you can sample even more local wines and food in their garden café or take the opportunity to buy some gifts from the arts and crafts stores there.
- We head to **Motueka** and here you have time to relax to swim, take a bush walk or do even more shopping!
- Well worth a look is **The Boulder Bank**, a 13 km long barrier that separates Nelson Haven from Tasman Bay and was formed by **hard igneous grandiorite boulders** eroded out of the cliffs at MacKay Bluff. The Bank is still growing and said to be the second largest in the world.

Tonight we stay in Motueka.

Day 14 24th March

New Zealand is famous for its natural scenic wonders and today you will experience one of the South Island's finest examples. The **Abel Tasman National Park** covers over 22,500 hectares and is renowned for its sparkling, pristine waters fringed by golden beaches, untouched native bush and rocky outcrops.

- The promise of the morning spent on a **boat trip to Anchorage** will be enough to rouse any traveler.
- After the boat trip we walk the track back south to **Marahau**. This walk takes about five hours on a very well maintained track and travels through untouched native bush, bays of white sand and blue waters.
- Dinner is in the township of Motueka, Kiwi style, with a meal cooked on the barbeque using the finest local produce.

Tonight we stay in **Motueka**.

Day 15 25th March

We take to the crystal blue waters in the **Abel Tasman National Park** once again and explore the stunning sights and sounds by what some would argue is the best way, **double sea kayak**.

- An experienced guide will take us past the pristine native bush and golden sands to **Split Apple Rock**, which looks just as it sounds. We take some time for a photo opportunity and to relax on the beach while taking in the stunning scenery and enjoy the company of great travel companions.

- We return to Motueka and the afternoon is yours to explore or catch up on postcards or emails.

Tonight we stay in Motueka

Day 16 26th March

We drive over **Takaka Hill** (Marble Mountain) which affords dramatic mountain, wilderness and ocean views and travel through the magnificent **Golden Bay** region, which is the northern edge of **Kahurangi National Park**, our newest national park.

- We make an unforgettable visit to the **Waikoropupu Springs** (Pupu Springs). These are the largest fresh water springs in the Southern Hemisphere at 2160,000,000 litres a day and exquisitely crystal clear (the clearest in the world, second only to Antarctica). Viewing platforms allow you to catch a glimpse of life under the pure waters.
- We then travel further up the coast and walk the coastal cliffs where you may even see some seals basking on the rocks. The white, sandy **Wharariki Beach** will astound with its sea tunnels, seal colonies and native birdlife. If that is not enough, marvel at the **Archway Islands**, massive, rugged outcrops of rock emerging from Golden Bay.
- After a leisurely picnic lunch there will be plenty of time to explore the beach caves and walk along pristine sandy shores before gathering information on the region from the Visitor's Center and taking in the views of **Farewell Spit**, the longest natural sandbar in the world at over 24kms long and still growing.

Tonight we stay in Motueka.

Day 17 27th March

We head to the West Coast or just 'The Coast' to South Islanders, guided on one side by the roaring Tasman Sea and dense native bush on the other. We stop at the town of Westport, which has its origins in the coal mining industry.

- Along the way we travel through a land rich in gold and coal mining history and natural disaster such as **Murchison**, the scene of a major earthquake in 1929, but still boasting much pristine, virgin rainforest and the remarkable, bush clad, swift flowing **Buller Gorge**.
- The journey provides the opportunity to see and photograph the dramatic consequences of the tectonic forces, which shaped the land with layers of deposited sedimentary layers tilted and folded. Scars from earthquakes are visible on many hills and the very shape of these hills testifies their evolution.
- We make a stop at **Coaltown Museum**, which provides insight the regions mining and industrial history including true to life coalmine with a 20 ton brake drum used to control the Q wagons used on the Denniston incline, along with one of the Q wagons suspended at the amazing 45 degree angle in which the incline operated at.
- We take a bracing evening walk along the West Coast breakwater and gain a sense of the power of the sea. The treacherous and dreaded breakwater crossing is necessary for boats to gain access to the relative safety of the harbour.

Tonight we stay in Westport.

Day 18 28th March

Today is dominated by coal mining, which forms the backbone of industry on the West Coast. From incredible state-of the art open cast mines of the present day to the remarkable and sometimes tragic mines of the past. Nature provides the picture perfect end to a fascinating day.

- Today weather permitting we travel up to the **Stockton mine** situated over 900 metres above sea level. Stockton has been operating since the 1870's and is the **largest open cast mine** in New Zealand. We will take a full tour through the mine and you may even get to ride on one of the massive coal trucks, which weigh 250 tonnes when loaded as it journeys from pit to processing.
- From current mining methods to its historic past, we step back 140 years to the **Denniston mine**. Here our guide will illustrate the utter hardship these early miners faced. Nobody has ever been buried up at Denniston due to a lack of soil but many have died here. For many years there was no road to Denniston and the only access was via a frightening bridle path or the even more frightening **incline railway** that was once touted by some as the eighth wonder of the world.
- The day ends with a glass of wine on the beach at **Punakaiki** and a walk to the remarkable **Pancake Rocks**, which are stratified rock formations emerging from the violent sea. With the addition of booming blowholes, this will be a sunset you will always remember.

Tonight we stay in Punakaiki.

Day 19 29th March

The Alpine Fault that divides the South Island is the subject of much of the day as we take a look at the mighty fault from both air and land.

- We work up an appetite this morning with a bracing walk up **Pororari Gorge**. The effort is rewarded with views of wonderful limestone bluffs fringed with the mighty Rata, one of New Zealand's unique and stunning native trees and providing a stunning contrast to the tannin stained waters, which flow down to the coast.
- We take a short but scenic drive down the coast to Greymouth. From here we take flight on a **chartered plane** and traverse a large part of the **Alpine Fault line** and take in breathtaking views not possible from the ground. This fault line is visible from space and is part of the collision zone from the Indian and Pacific plates as they slide past one another. The Alpine Fault is still active and the subject of ongoing research. The results of some of the analysis have enabled scientists to advance many of the modern theories on plate tectonics.
- Back down to earth with a drive inland to Arthur's Pass. Here we look at the geology around the Pass including **Permian oceanic crust** faulting and the sheer engineering feat of the construction of the road itself. As we head back to the coast and drive over the Alpine Fault the changes of rock types are quite visible.

Tonight we stay in Hokitika

Day 20 30th March

A scenic journey today takes us through the heart of the West Coast and leads to one of New Zealand's most famous glaciers.

- We continue south today and make our way towards New Zealand's famous glacial region. On our drive we are dwarfed on our left by the mighty Southern Alps. The Alps are the fastest growing in the world and in places sit only a few kilometers from the coast. The mountains lie east of the Alpine Fault line and sit on the Pacific Plate.
- We arrive at **Franz Josef**, home to one of the two famous **glaciers**. Here we watch a short film called 'Flowing West', which provides a snapshot on how the weather is influenced by the Alps and its effect on the environment.
- Time to stretch the legs with a short walk up to the St James Anglican Church to experience its wonderful alpine view through the Tudor style windows.

- We take a closer look at the Franz Josef glacier from the top of a **Roche moutonnee** in the valley below the glacier terminus. Here there we find all the classic signs of a glacial valley with the added bonus is the temperate rain forest behind.
- Our final drive today sees us arriving in the Fox Glacier township

Tonight we stay in Fox Glacier.

Day 21 31st March

Glaciers, mountains, forests and rivers – nature puts on an awe-inspiring show for us today.

- We start the day with a pre-breakfast walk to the mesmerizing **Lake Matheson** famous for its still waters reflecting the stunning mountain and bush vistas. Add to this, views of New Zealand's tallest peak, **Aoraki Mount Cook** and you could not find a more appealing way to work up an appetite for breakfast.
- We head up to the **Fox Glacier** and walk to the glacier's terminus. Here we afforded stunning views of the terminus with crumbling ice walls, striations from the movement of the ice evident on vertical rock walls, massive peaks surrounding the valley and behind us is the rainforest. This truly unique setting is made possible by the glaciers location, which is several hundred metres above sea level and a rainfall that is measured at about 9 metres per year but falls as snow on the upper reach's of the glacier.
- We travel further south into arguably the wettest area in New Zealand and see wonderful examples of pristine native bush. Great Podocarps stand tall covered with mosses and lichens. Crystal clear lakes fill the gorges behind terminal moraine left by the glacial retreat and multi-hued rivers flow across our path.
- **Ship Creek** provides a real life time lapse snapshot of the process of the creation of land beginning with sand deposited on the beach and progressing through the stages of lagoon with smaller plants and finally to the mature trees of the forest itself.
- We then cross the **Haast River** on the longest single lane bridge in New Zealand. The river is the vehicle on which 10,000,000 tonnes of sediment a year is carried seaward for the natural coastal building processes to begin.
- The Visitor Centre at Haast provides very good explanation and illustration on some of the more fascinating aspects of the area.

Tonight we stay in Haast.

Day 22 1st April

Say goodbye to the lush West Coast as we enter the setting for much of the Lord of the Rings films. Central Otago's dry tussock country provides a total contrast to our previous days.

- We follow the Haast River with views of vast mountains and untouched beech forests until we reach the Gates of Haast. The Gates is a bridge that was only completed in 1965, built at the bottom of a sheer gorge and over a raging river. The views from here are spectacular.
- We follow the beautiful shores of Lakes Wanaka and Hawea, which enables us to see how both were formed by ancient glacial action. Rock faces tell the tale of power of the ice as it pushed its way down the valleys, carving the striations and other features.
- Crossing the steep and rocky **Crown Range**, New Zealand's highest pass, we coast into the world famous **Queenstown** region, renowned for its unsurpassed scenery and as the adventure capital of the Southern Hemisphere.

- Queenstown is famous as the home of the bungee jump. We stop in at AJ Hackett Bungee to watch people take the big leap over the roaring Shotover River.
- Traveling up the mountains via gondola, our evening meal is at the pinnacle at the **Gondola** Restaurant. Try not to be distracted from your meal by watching the sunset in this glorious setting.

Tonight we stay in Arrowtown.

Day 23 2nd April

There are few better ways to wake up than in the stunning surrounds of Central Otago. Have the camera at the ready today for a delightful **steam boat ride** at **Queenstown** before journeying on to **Te Anau**, the gateway to **Fiordland National Park**.

- Picture postcard **Arrowtown** provides some great photo opportunities as we stroll down its streets and into a restored historic Chinese village, which has its origins in early gold mining times.
- A short drive into Queenstown where we board the historic **SS Earnslaw**, for a two hour cruise across **Lake Wakatipu** surrounded by awe inspiring alpine scenery to Walter Peak Station, which is a high country farm on the banks of the lake.
- We say goodbye to Queenstown and head further south down the side of Lake Wakatipu. The landscape changes from the steep arid mountains to more rounded green hills. We pass through land used for sheep farming before stopping at a scientific reserve that provides a snapshot of land untouched by man. This area is covered in native bush and scrub and depositional material laid down by the retreating glaciers.
- Our final stop for the day is at a Department of Conservation **bird sanctuary** where we can see living examples of some of New Zealand's most endangered native birds.

Tonight we stay in Te Anau.

Day 24 3rd April

As we discover the truly spectacular scenic delights of Fiordland National Park, make sure your camera is close at hand and there are plenty of batteries in it – photo opportunities abound!

- From Te Anau with its deep picturesque lake, we are soon traveling through the native bush and glacial moraine from the glacial retreats of the last ice age.
- We reach the 1.2 kilometre long **Homer Tunnel** after an awe-inspiring drive between sheer mountain faces. Taking 20 years to complete, the tunnel leads a dramatic descent to **Milford Sound**. Milford Sound is a truly breathtaking sheltered harbour dominated by the steep, bushclad **Mitre Peak** rising majestically out of the deep sound. This is New Zealand's most photographed landmark.
- Here we board a boat for a two and a half hour **cruise** through the Sounds. Our onboard guide gives a fascinating and informative commentary of both nature's and man's trials and tribulations when dealing with the mighty Sounds. The scenery is out of this world, from the deep clear waters to the bushclad peaks dotted with pounding waterfalls.
- A picture perfect day is finished with an evening meal in Te Anau and a little surprise.

Tonight we stay in Te Anau.

Day 25 4th April

You may be understandably reluctant to leave the awe-inspiring Fiordland region but the natural wonders you will see today will make magnificent Mitre Peak a distant memory as we depart and head to Invercargill and up the rugged east coast.

- The **Southland Museum** in Invercargill is famous for being home to 40 of New Zealand's only living native dinosaurs in the form of **Tuatara**. Tuatara are an endangered species and has its origins dating back 200 million years ago. The museum also features many other fascinating natural and historic displays.
- We depart Invercargill and driving past lush pastures, wild forests, sandy beaches and rugged seas we enter the **Catlins** area whose coast is battered by the mighty Southern Ocean. Here you may see yellow-eyed penguins, Hooker sea lions, elephant seals and New Zealand fur seals in their natural habitat. Plus abundant sea and forest birds and even a brave surfer or two.
- Our first stop here is Curio Bay and its **Fossil Forest**. The Fossil Forest is 170 million years old and one of the best examples of Jurassic Fossil Forest in the world.
- We continue up the east coast, stopping along the way at some unique and special places of interest before the little town of Owaka is reached.

Tonight we stay in Owaka.

Day 26 5th April

We travel north along the East Coast of the South Island, taking in the South Island's second largest city, Dunedin before passing the famous huge spherical **Moeraki Boulders** on the way into **Oamaru** in North Otago.

- We start the day with an invigorating walk along the rugged and dramatic east coast before travelling to the city of **Dunedin**, claimed to be the most Scottish of cities outside Scotland and home to one of New Zealand's most prestigious universities.
- We then cross the lower reaches of the mighty **Clutha River**. This river is the second longest in New Zealand and became the scene of 19th century gold rushes with everything from a basic pan and shovel to large bucket dredges employed in the frenzied search for gold. Today the river has been somewhat harnessed to serve more human needs in the form of being the contributory for the Roxburgh and Clyde hydro dams.

Tonight we stay in Oamaru.

Day 27 6th April

Stone and hydro-electricity are the themes today. This unusual combination makes for a diverse and informative excursion through the Otago region.

- This morning we visit to the quarry where **Oamaru Stone** is quarried for the building industry. Oamaru stone is a hard, compact limestone and is a creamy, sandy colour in appearance. Some of the most important historic buildings in the South Island are created from Oamaru Stone and is also a favourite of local sculptors.
- Our journey then takes us inland along the **Vanished World Fossil Trail**, which is an opportunity to view ancient limestone landscapes shaped by wind and water, and coastal seascape sculptures eroded from volcanic rock and limestone.
- The **Waitaki River Valley** is next on the map. This is a region of vast importance to the country as the center for much of our hydro energy production. A visit to some of the dams in the area will provide some insight.
- A fitting finale to the day is a visit to the natural wonder of the **Clay Cliffs** with its towering spires and narrow ravines before arriving in **Twizel**. Twizel is nestled in

amongst stunning iridescent blue hydro lakes and the Southern Alps, and was originally built for the workers employed on massive hydro projects in the area

Tonight we stay in Twizel.

DAY 28 **7th April**

From magnificent mountains to iridescent waters and thriving farmland, we travel through Otago and into Canterbury. Have your camera ready!

- A spectacular start to the day with a visit to the Old Mountaineer Café at the Mt Cook Hermitage, which affords stunning views of our tallest peak, **Aoraki Mt Cook**. Mt Cook and the surrounding peaks were where Everest conqueror Sir Edmund Hillary cut his climbing teeth.
- The iridescent blue canals and lakes created by major hydro-electric works provide a scenic guide into the McKenzie district and the picture postcard town of **Lake Tekapo**, which is renowned for its turquoise waters.
- A complete change in scenery once we reach the **Canterbury Plains**, which were created by the alluvial outwash gravels of the Southern Alps that stare out majestically over the plains. Rural Canterbury is host to a booming farming industry both agricultural and pastoral.

Tonight we stay in Christchurch.

DAY 29 **8th April**

All good things must unfortunately come to an end but we still have a few treats left for you in and around Christchurch on our final journey together.

- After breakfast we visit **Halswell Quarry** where much of the rock used to build many of the Christchurch's historic buildings over the last 140 years was sourced. The quarry has ceased operating and is now a picturesque host to recreational walks, historic sites and botanical collections.
- From underground to overland. We follow the historic **Summit Road**, which separates the historic port town of Lyttleton from Christchurch. The best views of the region can be had here. The summit provides spectacular views north over the city and up to the Kaikoura mountain ranges, west to the Canterbury Plains and mighty Southern Alps and east to the ancient volcanic craters of Banks Peninsula.
- We take morning tea in relaxed and picturesque seaside suburb of **Sumner** before returning to Christchurch and the end of our tour at midday.