Custom Rimu - Estes family

Hike Routeburn Track, Punakaiki and Franz Josef Glacier • Wilderness Backpacking in Nelson Lakes National Park • Cycle Hawea to Wanaka • Sea kayak Milford Sound and Okarito Lagoon • Hike West Coast Beaches and Rainforests • Queenstown • Snorkel with seals

12 days: Christchurch - Queenstown ***Fare: US$4999 + tax***

The Rimu *is our signature New Zealand trip. It's our longest running trip, now entering its fourteenth year, with constant evolution to make it as good as we can possibly make it. We go to the most beautiful places in New Zealand – both famous and little-known – and if you only come here once in your life, you'll have seen the best we have to offer and missed very little! We snorkel to a seal colony; do an incredible multi-day guided backpacking, biking or sea kayaking trip; take some of New Zealand's most stunning day hikes; and go sea kayaking and cycling in various parts of the South Island. We maintain plenty of options so we can make sure the trip suits all tastes and abilities, and we have two guides per trip to take extra good care of you. The Rimu is a great way to see New Zealand if you enjoy the outdoors and like a challenge. The accommodations vary – for over half the trip we have chosen accommodations of very comfortable standards (B&Bs, lodges, etc...) and for the rest of the trip we stay in more rustic lodgings in order to be in the most beautiful and off-the-beaten-track places in New Zealand. The* Rimu *is simply an awesome trip.*

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

TUESDAY

Arrive, snorkel with seals or hike seal colony in Kaikoura

Most people leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Saturday evening, arriving in Auckland early Monday morning. You'll lose a day crossing the dateline – but you get it back on the way home! You'll immediately take a short flight to Christchurch in the South Island arriving by around 10am. We'll meet you there and travel up the coast to the seaside town of Kaikoura where you can snorkel with friendly New Zealand fur seals (*Arctocephalus forsteri*). You'll be supplied with a wetsuit, mask and snorkel, and have the chance to swim to within a couple of feet of seals as they cavort in the water. If you prefer not to snorkel, you can hike out to the scenic Kaikoura Peninsula past weather-sculpted limestone cliffs to watch another local seal colony bask on the rocks and play in the eddies, all from the comfort of dry land. Today is a relaxed introduction to New Zealand, giving you the chance to recover from your flight. Depending on where you're coming from you'll probably find jetlag is no big deal. For instance, it's a 12-hour direct overnight flight from the West Coast of the USA to Auckland and there's only a 3-hour time difference between New Zealand and US Pacific time. If you're coming from further afield, you'll appreciate the gentle start to your New Zealand adventure.

ACCOMMODATION: A cosy bed & breakfast, Kaikoura (L,D)

CUSTOMISE YOUR TRIP

When you book, you have the choice of one of three multi-day options – a backpacking trip in Nelson Lakes National Park, a sea-kayaking trip in the Marlborough Sounds, or a biking trip on the Queen Charlotte Track. The backpacking trip stays in mountain huts.

WEDNESDAY (morning)

Visit vineyard, start multi-day options

From Kaikoura we'll travel north for a couple of hours to Blenheim, in the Marlborough wine region, and visit Forrest Estate Winery to sample some of their fantastic wines and enjoy a picnic on the vineyard lawn. After lunch, we head off for our various activities.

Hiking in Nelson Lakes National Park

WEDNESDAY (afternoon)

Hike Angelus Circuit

Our hike begins in the charming village of Saint Arnaud, on the edge of Nelson Lakes National Park. To keep our group sizes down in this beautiful but fragile environment, we keep our exact route and group composition flexible. Occasionally overnight hiking is unavailable, so we will stay in Saint Arnaud and do day hikes into the national park instead. We'll hike the relatively gentle trail alongside Lake Rotoiti to Lakehead Hut, a small mountain cabin at the head of the lake. Nelson Lakes National Park straddles the upper Southern Alps, an area composed of beech forests, big lakes and even bigger mountains. It's a special place and in our opinion, vastly superior to its more famous neighbour, Abel Tasman National Park. This is serious wilderness country – no roads, no shops, no TVs – just incredible views and marvellous solitude. You don't have to carry a very heavy pack – our guides are pretty tough and they'll carry the lion's share of the load. All you'll be carrying is a backpack with your sleeping bag, a few spare clothes, and some food and we'll provide tents and so on if you'd like to camp under the stars.

ACCOMMODATION: Nelson Lakes National Park (B,L,D)

THURSDAY

Hike Angelus Circuit

Today is an unforgettable day – the scenery gets better with each step! We walk along the Travers River through beech forest, before heading up the Hukere Stream towards the ridgeline. This is a steep

hike, with an elevation gain of 3000 feet (1000m), but it's absolutely worth it. There is a gorgeous alpine lake at the top and we have plenty of experience in getting people to the top, whatever your fitness levels. If you're still keen for more, we'll scramble up a nearby peak to enjoy stunning views in every direction. If you prefer to relax with a cuppa, that's fine too! Many people tell us that the Angelus Circuit – still unspoiled and non-commercial – was the highlight of their New Zealand adventure, and a lot of Kiwis prefer this trip to some of New Zealand's better-known tracks. The Angelus Circuit has exceptional scenic diversity, so it provides a great return for the effort put in.

ACCOMMODATION: Nelson Lakes National Park (B,L,D)

FRIDAY

Hike Angelus Circuit

This morning we'll wake up on top of the world. After breakfast, it's a four to five hour hike out along Robert Ridge with dramatic views of Tasman Bay and the mountainous Kahurangi National Park, before dropping below the treeline into native beech forest. It's a challenging walk, but it's worth every drop of sweat!

Andrew: *"This is my single favourite day of all the trips we offer. The hike up Hukere Stream has its challenges, but seeing the elated faces of people as they reach the top has always been one of my personal highlights as a guide. It's a magic spot and a great way to step outside your comfort zone in a safe, supported environment."*

FRIDAY (afternoon)

Finish multi-day backpacking

After arriving in Saint Arnaud we'll head to the West Coast – 400 miles of gorgeous coastline with a population of only 40,000 people along its entire length. For dinner this evening, we'll have the quintessential Kiwi dinner - fish and chips! If it's a fine evening, we'll enjoy our dinner on the beach before heading south along the stunning coastline towards the coastal village of Punakaiki.

ACCOMMODATION: West Coast lodgings, Punakaiki (B,L,D)

SATURDAY

Hike Punakaiki rainforest

We'll spend most of the day in Punakaiki hiking among the limestone canyons and lush rainforest of the Inland Pack Track. Gold miners established this trail over a century ago, so there is a lot of pioneering history in the area. While we're in Punakaiki we'll also head to the famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes – bizarre limestone formations that have been sculpted by the relentless pounding of the Tasman Sea to resemble giant stacks of pancakes. Then we'll head down the scenic coastal road to Hokitika to check out local art galleries and pounamu carving workshops ('pounamu' is Maori for jade) before carrying on to Franz Josef.

ACCOMMODATION: Rainforest Retrreat, Franz Josef (B,L,D)

SUNDAY

Kayak Okarito Lagoon, hike beach and forest

You have a lot of options today. You can spend a relaxing day in this sleepy but beautiful beach town to recharge your batteries, or get out for awesome hiking and kayaking. Okarito is home to the only native white heron colony in New Zealand, as well as a host of other interesting birds including the Okarito brown kiwi. You can sea kayak on the lagoon with a backdrop of snow-capped mountains for a few hours, then hike through lush coastal forest to Three Mile Lagoon, and walk back along deserted beach next to crashing waves. Okarito is also a great spot just to hang out and enjoy a good book, or talk philosophy with some of the locals!

ACCOMMODATION: Rainforest Retreat, Franz Josef (B,L,D)

MONDAY

Hike near Franz Josef Glacier

Here there are two formidable glaciers descending from the mountains to the sea. In terms of scenery, this place is off the charts, and we'll spend most of the day hiking at Franz Josef Glacier. We'll hike up through the rainforest to either Alex Knob or Roberts Point, both of which give great views of the terminal face, lower reaches and lateral moraines of Franz Josef Glacier. We only do these hikes in good weather, as the rocks get very slippery in the rain. If it's raining, we'll do a shorter walk to a view of the terminal face of Fox Glacier, hike around Lake Matheson and visit the Blue Pools near the Haast Pass.

HELI-HIKE OPTION

(add US$350 + tax)

A less strenuous, but outrageously scenic option today is to heli-hike on Franz Josef Glacier itself. After being fitted with crampons, ice axes and so on, you'll board a modern turbine helicopter and fly towards the highest peaks of the Southern Alps, landing on the glacier at 4,000 feet (1300m) above sea level. Led by specialist glacier guides, you'll hike through the grand ice formations of the glacier, checking out its crevasses, seracs and tunnels – no previous experience required! The constant movement of the glacier means every day is different, so your guides will cut steps in the ice and make sure you make the most of the conditions. At the end of your hike on the ice, you'll take another helicopter ride out of the mountains and back to civilisation.

The heli-hike is extremely popular, so we offer advance reservations with the helicopter operators and guiding company. At the time of booking, or up until one month before your trip, you can reserve a space on the heli-hike and we'll make sure a spot is held for you. Or you can leave your decision until you're actually on your trip, and we'll get you a spot if it's available.

"ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND exceeded our wildest expectations for an unforgettable and once in a lifetime trip. From the guides, to the food, to the scenery, there wasn't one day of this trip that I would not want to relive over and over again and we can't wait to return to New Zealand."

Elizabeth Stone (North Carolina,USA)
December 2008

Heli-hikers generally return a little earlier, so we'll rendezvous at a local café before heading south. From Franz Josef it's about three hours down the coast to Makarora (pop. 30), a small farming village bordering Mt. Aspiring National Park. We'll stay at a beautifully landscaped, family-style homestead on the edge of the village with incredible views of the mountains right outside your window.

ACCOMMODATION: Makarora Homestead, Makarora (B,L,D)

TUESDAY

Mt. Aspiring National Park to Queenstown , cycle Hawea trail

This morning we'll exchange mountainous beech forests for grassy foothills as we head inland to Lake Hawea. Here you'll be fitted with a 21-speed front-suspension Specialized mountain bike for a scenic bike ride along the Te Araroa track to Wanaka. This gently undulating section of the track follows the crystal clear Hawea and Clutha Rivers through the rugged Central Otago landscape for 10 miles (17km) to the charming mountain town of Wanaka where we'll stop for lunch.

From there, it's a short drive over Cardrona Saddle to Queenstown, on the shores of Lake Wakatipu. ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND is based in Queenstown for a good reason – it's the adventure capital of New Zealand – and you'll find all the comforts of civilisation: massage therapists, restaurants, sidewalk cafés and window-shopping. You'll also find incredible optional activities here, including hang gliding, bungy jumping, jet boating, skydiving, horse trekking, fishing and winery tours. Many of our clients have noted how the *Rimu* caters very well to people with different interests and our time in Queenstown is a good example. For instance, keen mountain bikers can go single track riding in Skippers Canyon, famed through New Zealand for its mountain biking trails. There are also great hiking and kayaking opportunities here. Queenstown isn't a big place – the population is about 8000 – but there's plenty to do! Or you can do nothing and just soak up the atmosphere or lounge about reading a book.

ACCOMMODATION: Queenstown apartments, Queenstown (B,L)

WEDNESDAY

Free day in Queenstown

It's all up to you today – enjoy!

ACCOMMODATION: Queenstown apartments, Queenstown

THURSDAY

Hike Routeburn Track

This morning we head down to Te Anau for lunch, before continuing on to The Divide where we'll hike part of the Routeburn Track. Located in the heart of Fiordland, our largest and arguably most spectacular national park, this hike gives us unsurpassed views of the Hollyford Valley, from mountains to sea, as well as Lake Marian and Mt. Christina. We'll take a short drive through the Homer Tunnel, emerging at the top of a spectacular alpine road that winds its way down to Milford Sound. As we descend, the steep waterfall lined granite walls of the Darran Range give way to the rainforest carpeted lower slopes of the mountains and eventually the deep, clear waters of the sound itself. Milford Sound is truly breathtaking; sheer rock walls plunge thousands of feet to the Tasman Sea and waterfalls cascade into the deep blue water, it's no wonder Rudyard Kipling rated it as the eighth Natural Wonder of the World. Tonight we'll stay in some fairly basic accommodation, but it's the only place to stay and the location alone makes up for it – take a walk outside and experience the true sound of silence.

ACCOMMODATION: Milford Lodge, Milford Sound (B,L,D)

> "The Rimu trip offered me the opportunity to experience New Zealand in all its beauty in a very personal way. It was a very intimate way to experience a different country, as we stayed in B&Bs and slept in huts with other Kiwis. I learned about the land, the industries, the food, farming, horticulture, history, geology, environmentalism, glaciers, birds, music and people of New Zealand!"
>
> ***Janice Prichett (New York, USA) April 2009***

FRIDAY

Sea kayak Milford Sound, explore Fiordland National Park

It's an early start today! Most people see Milford Sound from the deck of a big cruise ship but we've got a better way – gliding along in sea kayaks, getting up close and personal with the sound while causing very little disruption to the friendly seals and dolphins that are often eager to visit if they're in the area. This is an awesome trip, run by specialist kayak outfitters, and it's equally suitable for beginners or experts. After your morning's paddle, we'll have a well-earned lunch before continuing on to Lake Manapouri. Along the way we'll spend more time exploring the Fiordland wilderness, checking out some of its more interesting residents like the kea (*nestor notabilis*) New Zealand's notoriously cheeky alpine parrot, the Kotukutuku (*fuchsia excorticate*) the world's largest fuchsia and evidence of the landslides and avalanches that are a frequent occurrence in this dynamic landscape.

ACCOMMODATION: Lake Manapouri Inn, Manapouri (B,L,D)

SATURDAY

Depart for home

This is the last day of your two-week trip around the South Island. We'll leave after breakfast for the two-hour drive to Queenstown, and arrive around midday in time for the flights back to Auckland. Flights after 12:30pm are ideal. International flights from Auckland usually leave early evening, so if you're heading back to North America, you'll get home some time on Saturday, even though you left on Saturday evening! You'll be refreshed and invigorated from the good food, exercise, rest, and great times you'll have had with us in New Zealand! (

Specific Information – *Rimu*

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: If you're flying in on the first day of the trip, or out on the last day, we recommend arriving in Christchurch by about 9–10.30am on Tuesday, and departing from Queenstown after 12.30pm on Saturday. Other flight times may also be possible. If you are considering alternative flight times please let us know.

TRIP START: On the first day of the trip we can either pick you up from the Heartland Hotel Cotswold in Christchurch at 10.30am, or at the Christchurch domestic airport in front of the information desk at 11am.

TRIP END: On the last day of the trip we can drop you off at the Queenstown airport in time for the above flights, or anywhere in central Queenstown in mid-late afternoon.

For more information on accommodation, fitness and experience requirements and what's included in the trip fare, see 'General Information' overleaf..

General Information

We've included trip-specific details in the Specific Information section at the end of each itinerary. This is also where you can find details on recommended flights, pick ups and drop offs.

ACCOMMODATION: We've chosen interesting and comfortable accommodations for all of our trips. Some places are quite civilised, but many of the other locations we visit are off-the-beaten-track – and don't have many accommodation options – but they are really, really spectacular. We think you'll love the places we stay! We prefer to stay in comfortable bed and breakfasts, lodges and apartments. Rooming is based on twin-share, although single room upgrades are available on request. As there's such a variety of accommodation on our trips, some places will have ensuite bathrooms and some will have shared bathrooms – so we may ask you to share a bathroom with other group members on occasion.

FITNESS: You must have a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself on our trips. You don't have to be young and extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing at least some exercise. Age and experience are not important, but our trips are not passive scenic tours of New Zealand. For example, a person in their 50s who hikes every couple of weeks will be happier than a 22-year-old couch potato. If you're concerned about your fitness level, have a chat with us so we can help you choose between our trips.

Our focus is on getting you out of the vehicle, out of stress-mode, and into the scenery.

EXPERIENCE: You don't need any outdoor experience at all to enjoy our trips. All our trips allow you to make the most of New Zealand's incredible environment. Our experienced guides are highly trained and will look after you!

You don't have to carry a heavy pack on hikes and you don't have to have been kayaking or rafting to enjoy taking to the water. You don't even need to be a serious cyclist to enjoy some of the rides we have available. In fact we have so many options available that you don't need to ride at all if you'd rather hike, fish, or just laze around!

All we ask is that you be energetic, in reasonable shape and we guarantee you'll have an incredible time. The challenges are there though, if you're looking for them. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience and we have an impeccable safety record. We hold all relevant government licenses and permits.

FLEXIBILITY: Because of the off-the-beaten-path and non-commercial nature of some of our accommodation, we sometimes need to change a night stop. When we do this the daily activities don't change and we use accommodation of a similar level. We try to make as few changes as possible, but we ask that you know we retain the flexibility to make sure your trip is as good as it can be.

INCLUDED: Your trip fare is quoted in US dollars so our guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. The trip fare doesn't include air fares to or from the trip start and end points or NZ government taxes which are 15%. You can join most of our trips for shorter periods of time, at a pro-rated fare. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We have two guides per trip, a Lead Guide/driver and a Co-Guide who is responsible for meals and accommodation. This means we can really make sure you have a great time! We operate with small groups and we are happy to offer a second departure when our trips start filling up.
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire period you are with us. We can also organise pre- and post-trip accommodation for you if you let us know.
- Breakfast (B), lunch (L), and dinner (D), except during free time in places like Queenstown where we've found people prefer to check out the wide range of restaurants. Alcohol is not generally included, although we do spring for a few drinks here and there!
- All hiking, kayaking, cycling, rafting and caving described in the itineraries, except the optional extra activities. Optional activities are available at extra cost, particularly in Franz Josef and Queenstown. We have estimated the rates for optional extra activities operated by local activity operators in US dollars, including all required equipment, but these rates may vary according to the USD/NZD exchange rate on the day.
- None of these activities are compulsory, nor will your trip seem less awesome if you do the cheap or free options. Although some people enjoy sampling extra activities others prefer to focus more on the hiking, paddling and cycling, which is of course the reason you're coming to New Zealand in the first place!
- Transport during our trips, in a comfortable vehicle.

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday, and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you! You'll have a few meals and drinks to cover, extra activities if you choose them, and you'll probably feel like tipping your guides at the end of a fabulous time, but you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND trip!

ITINERARY UPDATES: We update our itineraries each April so please check our website for the most up-to-date itineraries and pricing.

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