

Winter Rimu



Multi-day sea kayak and cycle at Manapouri and Milford Sound, or ski/snowboard in Queenstown
Hike to Copland hot pools • Hike West Coast beaches and rainforests • Hike at Fox Glacier, Mt. Aspiring and
Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Parks • Queenstown • Sea kayak Okarito Lagoon

14 days: Christchurch–Christchurch

Fare: US\$3499 + tax

Winter is one of the best times to hike in New Zealand as we'll almost always have the tracks to ourselves, and with all the snow-capped mountains, it's a beautiful time of year to explore. Our maritime climate ensures we have mild winters suitable for outdoor pursuits (typical day temperature is about 45-60°F or 8-15°C) and the Winter Rimu trip is well adapted to suit the cooler conditions. We do two incredible multi-day guided backpacking trips to alpine hot pools, glaciers and remote snowfields. We take some of the best day hikes in the country and head out for unforgettable sea kayaking and biking, or if you prefer, a couple of days of skiing or snowboarding in the mountains surrounding Queenstown. We maintain plenty of options so we can make sure the trip suits everyone and we generally have two guides per trip to take good care of you. The accommodations vary – for over half the trip we stay in accommodations of comfortable standards (B&Bs, lodges, etc...) and for the rest of the trip we have chosen more rustic accommodations in order to be in the most beautiful, isolated and off-the-beaten-track places in New Zealand. The Winter Rimu is simply an awesome trip.

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

MONDAY

Arrive, hike Mt. John

Most people leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Saturday evening, and arrive in Auckland early on Monday morning. You'll lose a day to the dateline – but you get it back on the way home! You'll take a short flight to Christchurch in the South Island arriving by around 10am. We'll meet you there, and then head south for a hike at Mt. John. We'll walk along the shores of Lake Tekapo then head uphill through fragrant wilding pine, before emerging above the treeline for breathtaking views of the lake and surrounding mountains. Then we'll drive to the remote and beautiful Lake Ohau Lodge, near Mt. Cook. With awesome views of Lake Ohau, Glen Mary Glacier, Mt. Cook and the Lake Ohau Range, you'll see why this is one of our favourite winter hideaways! The stars here are amazing too, as there is no artificial light for miles in any direction. You'll have the rest of the afternoon to relax at the lodge or head out for another short walk to explore your surroundings. We always make sure the first day of our trips is relaxing and undemanding, so you can 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 five-hour time difference between New Zealand and US Pacific time. If you have more time, by all means try to arrive in New Zealand a day or so early, especially if you're coming from further afield.

ACCOMMODATION: Lake Ohau Lodge, Lake Ohau (L,D)

TUESDAY

Hike Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Park or ski Ohau Ski Area

We'll have a leisurely start today. After a late breakfast on the balcony overlooking Lake Ohau, it's a short drive to Mt. Cook village, at the head of Lake Pukaki. Here we'll take an impressive hike up Hooker Valley to a glacial lake complete with icebergs! This is a great spot for lunch and on a clear day the views of Mt. Cook, New Zealand's

highest mountain, are stunning. Then we'll return to Lake Ohau where we'll enjoy a sumptuous dinner. Another option today is to spend the day skiing at the small and friendly Ohau Ski Area, one of the South Island's more remote backcountry ski fields (for about US\$100 including gear).

ACCOMMODATION: Lake Ohau Lodge, Lake Ohau (B,L,D)

WEDNESDAY

Hike Mt. Aspiring National Park

Today we start the first of two memorable multi-day hikes. This hike is well suited to winter conditions, due to the sheer beauty and unpopulated nature of the area at this time of year. It is a gentle valley walk of less than three hours, but we have a great side hike to Rob Roy Glacier on the way to the hut, which is considered one of the best day hikes in the South Island on a good day. The trail passes tumbling rivers, towering snowfields and huge mountain peaks straight from the set of "The Lord of the Rings"! We hike up a narrow glacial valley, coming out of the forest in a dramatic alpine cirque, with incredible views of the Southern Alps. When we arrive at the hut, you can continue further up the valley or simply head for the cosy fireplace and relax. Mt. Aspiring Hut is a spacious mountain hut, albeit in the middle of nowhere, with floor to ceiling windows that perfectly frame Mt. Aspiring – one of New Zealand's tallest peaks at nearly 10,000 feet – at the head of the valley. We limit numbers on this hike to minimise our impact on the area. If you prefer not to stay in the hut, we offer an alternative option, staying at the more luxurious Lake Wanaka Lodge and doing day hikes into the surrounding hills, or just relaxing and enjoying Wanaka's laid-back, small town atmosphere! The choice is yours.

ACCOMMODATION: Mt. Aspiring Hut, Mt. Aspiring National Park (B,L,D)

THURSDAY

Hike Mt. Aspiring National Park

We have a leisurely start today, enjoying a healthy breakfast and admiring the views, before hiking back out to the trailhead. From

here we have a short drive to Wanaka where we'll meet up with the rest of the group. Then we'll cross the Cardrona Saddle and drop into Queenstown, a picturesque town set in a basin on the edge of Lake Wakatipu and surrounded by snowy peaks. It's a great place to spend a couple of days, and you'll find all sorts of options to pique your interest!

ACCOMMODATION: *Queenstown apartments, Queenstown (B,L)*

FRIDAY

Free day in Queenstown

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, window-shopping and adrenaline-pumping activities! You'll also find incredible optional activities here too, such as hang gliding, bungee jumping, jet boating, skydiving, horse trekking, fishing and winery tours. Many of our clients have noted that the *Winter Rimu* caters very well to people with quite different interests and our time in Queenstown is a good example. For instance, there are great hiking, biking and kayaking opportunities in this region. Also, being winter, you can go skiing or snowboarding for the day at one of four ski areas – with some of the world's best ski field views – all within an hour's drive from central Queenstown (approximate cost US\$100 for ski or snowboard hire, transport and lift pass – available as snow conditions suit, generally from July to September). Or you can do nothing and just soak up the atmosphere, or lounge about reading a book.

ACCOMMODATION: *Queenstown apartments, Queenstown*

CUSTOMISE YOUR TRIP

When you book, you have the choice of a multi-day cycling and kayaking option in Fiordland National Park, or a skiing/snowboarding option in Queenstown. Each is wonderful in its own way, so we'll let you decide!

SATURDAY

Start multi-day options

After breakfast together, we head off for our various activities.

OPTION I

Cycling and kayaking in Queenstown and Milford Sound

SATURDAY

Cycling or a free day in Queenstown

Today is a cycling day, for the keen cyclists among us! You'll be fitted with a 21-speed front-suspension *Specialized* mountain bike for a spectacular ride near Queenstown, or if you prefer to avoid cycling in winter, you'll have most of today available for extra Queenstown options. We'll do one of the many cycling tracks in the area, and the biking is guaranteed to suit all levels of ability. At the end of the day, we have a two-hour drive to Lake Manapouri, which will be the base for our sea kayaking adventure to Milford Sound. We'll stay at Lake Manapouri Inn, with great views over the

lake and the surrounding mountains of Fiordland National Park.

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

SUNDAY

Sea kayak Milford Sound

The day starts very early this morning as we head towards Milford Sound. Milford was rated the 8th Natural Wonder of the World by Rudyard Kipling and it's easy to see why. Sheer granite walls plunge thousands of feet into calm indigo water, broken only by the reflection of the towering snowy peaks that border the sound. Most people see Milford Sound from the deck of a cruise ship, but we've got a better way – gliding along in a sea kayak, causing minimum disruption to the seals and dolphins that are very friendly and often eager to visit. This is an awesome trip, run by specialist kayak outfitters and suitable for beginners or experts. When you finish your paddle, we'll head back to Lake Manapouri and arrive by mid afternoon for a BBQ dinner.

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

MONDAY (morning)

Morning walk or jog near Lake Manapouri

Manapouri is surrounded by beautiful rolling farmland which is great for a morning stroll or run if you're keen to stretch your legs. The earlier you set out, the more ground you'll cover. The rest of the group can enjoy a late-morning start and we'll pick up the runners on our way to Queenstown, where we'll stop for lunch and meet up with the skiers/snowboarders. You'll have the chance to do any last-minute shopping, send post cards home, or whatever you need before heading back into the wilderness for the rest of the trip.

OPTION II

Skiing or snowboarding in Queenstown

(available as snow conditions suit – generally July to September)

SATURDAY

Skiing or snowboarding in Queenstown

With Coronet Peak, the Remarkables, Cardrona and Treble Cone ski areas all within an hours drive of Queenstown, there are plenty of skiing and snowboarding options for novices and experts alike, and being locals we'll be happy to point you to the best of them! You'll get two full days enjoying the snow, with lift passes and transportation to either ski area provided. If you want to brush up on your skills, or if you're relatively new to the sport, lessons are a great option. You can bring your own gear, or you can rent gear down here (gear hire is about US\$40 per day). Conditions vary throughout the season, but you can expect good skiing and riding, on and off-piste, with scenery that will blow you away! If you want to go skiing, but you don't want to miss out on Milford Sound, you can also use today or tomorrow to take a day trip to the world famous Fiordland National Park. We'll pass onto your guide that it's something that you're keen to do and they can help arrange this for you.

ACCOMMODATION: *Queenstown apartments, Queenstown (B)*

SUNDAY

Skiing or snowboarding

Now that you've got your 'ski-legs', today is the day to really carve it up – have fun out there!

ACCOMMODATION: Queenstown apartments, Queenstown (B)

MONDAY (morning)

Skiing or snowboarding

We'll spend the morning relaxing in Queenstown before rejoining the cycling and kayaking group around lunch time and heading north to Makarora.

MONDAY (afternoon)

Finish multi-day options

After regrouping we'll head through the stunning South Lakes over Haast Pass to the tiny hamlet of Haast, located on the West Coast, where we'll enjoy a homely meal – venison pie!

ACCOMMODATION: World Heritage Heartland Hotel, Haast (B,D)

TUESDAY

Hike to Copland Hot Pools, Westland National Park

We are very privileged to be able to do this hike. We'll walk into a stunningly beautiful mountain basin, set directly underneath the towering peaks of the Southern Alps, with an awesome accoutrement – reliable natural hot pools! It's a challenging six to seven hour hike (17km/10 miles) up the Copland Valley with a gradual 1,000 foot elevation gain, but it's worth it to have all of tomorrow to take side hikes, soak in the hot pools and enjoy your alpine surroundings. 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. You'll be carrying a backpack with your sleeping bag, a few spare clothes, and some food – no need for any more than that. Once we reach the hot pools, we stay in one of New Zealand's most modern and spacious backcountry huts. It's a hut in name only – it's a comfortable two-storied building (a palace compared to many New Zealand huts) and one of the best things about hiking this track in winter is we may well have it all to ourselves!

ACCOMMODATION: Welcome Flat Hut, Westland National Park (B,L,D)

Andrew: "The natural hot pools are a fabulous reward for the slog up to the hut, not to mention a well-deserved soak for tired bodies. - and on a clear night they're unbeatable as a star gazing spot!"

WEDNESDAY

Hike to Douglas Rock and soak in the hot pools

Today we will hike further up the track towards Douglas Rock for even more amazing scenery and views of multiple glaciers clinging to the top of the mountain valley. If you prefer, you can have a relaxing day at the hut – soak in the hot pools, enjoy the stunning scenery, or even just hang out with a book! Either way, the hot pools are without a doubt the star attraction here; closely followed by the spectacular meals we'll be serving up!

ACCOMMODATION: Welcome Flat Hut, Westland National Park (B,L,D)

"The Winter Rimu itinerary was just a perfect balance of activity and scenery, our guides had deep knowledge of everything New Zealand: history, flora and fauna, out of the way places to stop - ranging from craft galleries to beach caves with penguins, views that were a must-stop for photos, preparing us for how to dress, how to spend our free time... Their total support, warmth and sense of humour, personal attention, organization and enthusiasm plus great food, weather and accommodations made this truly the trip of a lifetime for us!"

Susan Jacobs (New York, USA) September 2009

THURSDAY

Hike Copland Valley and relax in Okarito

An early start sees us on the track and walking back to the trailhead. It's a little quicker this time, being slightly downhill, and we'll be back by mid-afternoon. With a really early start, we'll have time to stop at Fox Glacier afterwards, for a walk to a view of the terminal face. Fox Glacier is an enormous river of ice, unusual in that it comes right down through the rainforest to sea level. Then we'll carry on to Okarito Lagoon, a West Coast gem that is all but untouched due to it being 10 miles down a one-way road from an obscure highway turnoff. There are no shops, no restaurants, no traffic, and a population of only 31 people! We stay at the Okarito Beach House, and you'll love this place. There's plenty to do here so we'll stay two nights, to catch our breath and relax. Tonight you can sprawl by the fire with a glass of mulled wine (or hot chocolate!) after your long hike.

ACCOMMODATION: Okarito Beach House, Okarito (B,L,D)

FRIDAY

Kayak Okarito Lagoon, hike beach and forest

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 Lagoon is home to the only native white heron colony in New Zealand, as well as lots of other amazing birdlife including the Okarito Brown kiwi. You can sea kayak on the lagoon with a backdrop of snow-capped mountains for a few hours, then spend the rest of the day hiking along the beach or in coastal rainforest.

ACCOMMODATION: Okarito Beach House, Okarito (B,L,D)

SATURDAY

Hike Punakaiki rainforest and beaches

This morning we'll drive along the coast to Hokitika to check out local art galleries and a pounamu carving workshop ('pounamu' is Maori for jade). Then after lunch, we'll carry on to Punakaiki, where we'll spend the afternoon hiking among the limestone canyons and lush rainforest of the Inland Park Track. We start at a classic 'submergence' – where the river suddenly dries up mid-stream and goes underground for a mile or so before resurfacing at Cave Creek. The rainforest in this area is unbelievably lush, and the limestone canyons and distant hazy mountains of Paparoa National Park make this an awesome day hike. The trail was originally established by gold miners over a century ago, so there's plenty of history in the area as well.

We'll also check out Punakaiki's famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes.

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

SUNDAY

Depart for home

This is the last day of your two-week trip around the South Island. We'll leave after breakfast for the four-hour drive to Christchurch, and arrive early in the afternoon for flights back to Auckland.

Any flight after 4pm is ideal but we can make 3pm flights with a little notice. International flights from Auckland usually leave early evening, so if you're crossing the dateline you'll get home some time on Sunday, even though you left on Sunday evening! Flights to Europe, of course, take a little longer. Wherever you're travelling to, you'll go back refreshed and invigorated from the good food, exercise, rest and great times you'll have had with us in New Zealand! (B,L)

Specific Information – Winter 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 approximately 9–10am on Monday, and departing from Christchurch after 3–4pm on Sunday. 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 pick you up from the Heartland Hotel Cotswold in Christchurch at 10.30am, or at the Christchurch 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 Christchurch airport in time for the flights above, or anywhere in

central Christchurch in mid/late afternoon.

TRIP DIRECTION: To keep our group sizes down, we run the *Winter Rimu* in two different directions around the South Island – northbound (refers to the initial direction of travel from Christchurch) and southbound. This itinerary happens to be written up in the southbound format. Whichever direction you take, you'll do all the activities we've mentioned, just in a different order. This trip is a product of many years of evolution and fine-tuning – it works well whichever way you do it!

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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