

Welcome Aboard



NEW ZEALAND



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welcome aboard

the grand traverse



Lake Tekapo • Glentanner • Franz Josef
ON BOARD FLIGHT GUIDE



the grand traverse of Aoraki Mount Cook and the glaciers



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1 Lake Tekapo Village
Nestled around the southern shoreline of Lake Tekapo, the village is home to approximately 350 permanent residents. Dominating the skyline to the west is Mt John - a classic example of a Roche Moutonnée (harder bed-rock sculptured by advancing glacial ice). The village itself is built on old glacial terminal moraine and is surrounded by unique glacial features which become obvious from the air.
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2 Mt John Observatory
Lake Tekapo has some of the clearest and darkest night sky in the world and is home to the Mt John Observatory housing the biggest telescope (1.8 metre MOA) in the country. Built in the 1960's the observatory is now mainly used for research purposes by Canterbury University. In 2012 an area of 1,700 sq miles around the observatory was declared as the Aoraki Mackenzie International Dark Sky Reserve.
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3 Lake Alexandrina
Famous for Rainbow and Brown trout fishing, this springfed lake provides a striking contrast to the turquoise-blue glacial water of Lake Tekapo. The lake is one of New Zealand's Scenic Reserves with over 40 species of birds within its biologically rich catchment. Rowing boats are the only mode of transport on the lake as sail and motor boats are prohibited.
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4 Lake Tekapo
Glaciers grinding against rock, produce a fine 'rock flour' that when washed into the lake, creates its unique turquoise-blue colour. 120 metres deep and with an average temperature of 7°C, Lake Tekapo is the first in a chain of 7 lakes providing hydroelectric power to all of New Zealand. During the summer months Lake Tekapo is popular for waterskiing and other watersports as well as trout and salmon fishing.
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5 Godley Peaks and Glenmore Stations
Both these high country sheep stations are 50,000 acres (20,000 hectares) in size. They each farm approximately 10,000 Merino sheep, a breed famous for its super-fine wool and ability to survive in harsh environments. They graze high on the mountains during summer and are mustered on foot by shepherds and their dogs to the lower country for the winter months protected from the deep winter snows.
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6 The Godley River
Carved out by the glacier, which formed Lake Tekapo, the shingle valley floor is over two kilometres across, and criss-crossed with river channels - the famous South Island 'braided' river system. Black Stilt (in Maori: 'Kaki'), one of the world's rarest birds, nest and feed within the channels, well protected from predators.
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7 Lilybank Station
Passing the Maccauley River we fly over the Godley Valley and one of New Zealand's most isolated high country sheep stations Lilybank, famous as a safari game and recreation area. Look out for its 4WD track access fording the Maccauley River; there are no bridges, so when the river is high the station can be isolated for days at a time.
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8 Mt Sibald and the Sibald Range
On our right is the Sibald mountain range with Mt Sibald the dominant peak at 9,200' (2,800 metres). Flanking the eastern edge of the Godley River, this range clearly shows active erosion - typical of the geologically young Southern Alps. Musterers' huts, seen in the valleys below, are used for accommodation and shelter during autumn musters on the sheep stations. There are also many sporting animals in this area including Chamois, Himalayan Tahr and Red Deer.
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9 The Godley Glaciers
As we enter the Mt Cook National Park, located at the headwaters of the mighty Godley River, you will see the isolated Classen and Godley Glaciers'. At their bases are the large terminal lakes - frozen over during the winter months. In summer you can occasionally see icebergs floating in the lakes that have broken off the glaciers, melting, to feed the Godley River.
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10 The Murchison Glacier
16 kilometres long, the Murchison is New Zealand's second longest glacier. Flowing in parallel valleys, the Tasman and Murchison Glaciers are separated by the Malte Brun range, dominated by Mt Malte Brun at 10,400' (3,170m).
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11 Head of the Tasman Glacier
The mighty Tasman is the longest glacier in New Zealand, starting at Hochstetter Dome and flowing 29km down the Tasman Valley past Mt Cook. With 50 metres of annual snow fall covering a base of ice up to 800 metres deep, mountain huts and vast snowfields ensure the upper reaches of the glacier remain popular for skiing and climbing.
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12 Franz Josef Glacier
After crossing the Southern Alps (Main Divide) you will see the Westland National Park spread out below and on a clear day 300km of coastline. At the head of the glacier is the beautiful Geike snowfield, famous for high altitude cross country skiing. Plummeting steeply westward, this magnificent 'river of ice' descends almost to the Tasman Sea at a recorded rate of up to 4 metres per day.
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13 West Coast Rainforest
The Southern Alps stands like a fortress wall in the path of the moisture-laden westerly air flow rolling in off the Tasman Sea. Within a few kilometres of the ice-world of the glaciers is the temperate rainforest of Westland sustained by up to 5 metres of rainfall annually. Of the 140 glaciers that make up the Westland National Park, Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers' are the only two that penetrate the lower forest zones.
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14 Fox Glacier
Maori understanding of the alpine world was based on great myths to enable generations to commit to memory the unique landforms of the area. The Maori name for Fox Glacier, "Te Moeka o Tuawe" was derived from an ancestor Tu Awe who fell to his death while exploring the area. The bed of the glacier was his final resting place and it is said that when his lover Hine Hukatere wept, the bed of the Fox and Franz glaciers filled with her everlasting tears of ice.
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15 Mt Tasman (11,475 ft / 3,497m)
Known as a classic ice-climb, Mt Tasman is New Zealand's second highest mountain. It was first climbed in January 1895 by Mathias Zurbriggen. The Balfour icefall and glacier descends off its western flanks.
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16 Aoraki/Mt Cook (12,316 ft / 3,754m)
'Aoraki' - the Cloud-Piercer! New Zealand's highest mountain stands supreme with its snow and icefields spilling into the glaciers below. It was first climbed on Christmas Day 1894 by locals Tom Fyfe, George Graham and 19 yr old, Jack Clarke. In 1991 a giant rock avalanche occurred on Mt Cook lowering the highest peak by 20m. An estimated 14million cubic metres of rock and debris, travelled 7.3km from its source at an approximate speed of 400-600km/hr.
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17 Mt La Perouse (10,100 ft / 3,078m)
A beautiful peak dominated by its huge southern rock face. In 1948 La Perouse featured in one of the last big ground rescues (before the use of helicopters) - an injured climber successfully rescued from near the summit in an epic effort over 6 days!
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18 Tasman Glacier
29 kilometres long with ice up to 2,600' / 800m deep, the Tasman is easily New Zealand's longest glacier. Moraine (rock and gravel scraped or fallen from the valley walls) covers the ice for much of its length. At its terminus is a glacial lake 150m deep and lined with ice, feeding into the huge braided Tasman River and then into Lake Pukaki.
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19 Tasman Glacier Lake
This lake formed in 1991 and has been growing ever since. The icebergs, which are clearly visible from the air, have taken about 500 years to travel from the neve at the top of the Tasman Glacier to where they appear today. Underneath this lake the ice is still over 200 metres thick.
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20 MacKenzie Basin
Approximately 14,000 years ago the ice that covered this area from the last Ice Age began its retreat - today golden tussock and grasslands cover the glacial deposits that remain clearly visible from the air. Dramatic ice-carved landscape, subtle ever-changing hues, and air of exceptional purity - just some of what make the Mackenzie so special.