New Zealand

Highlights (Relaxed)



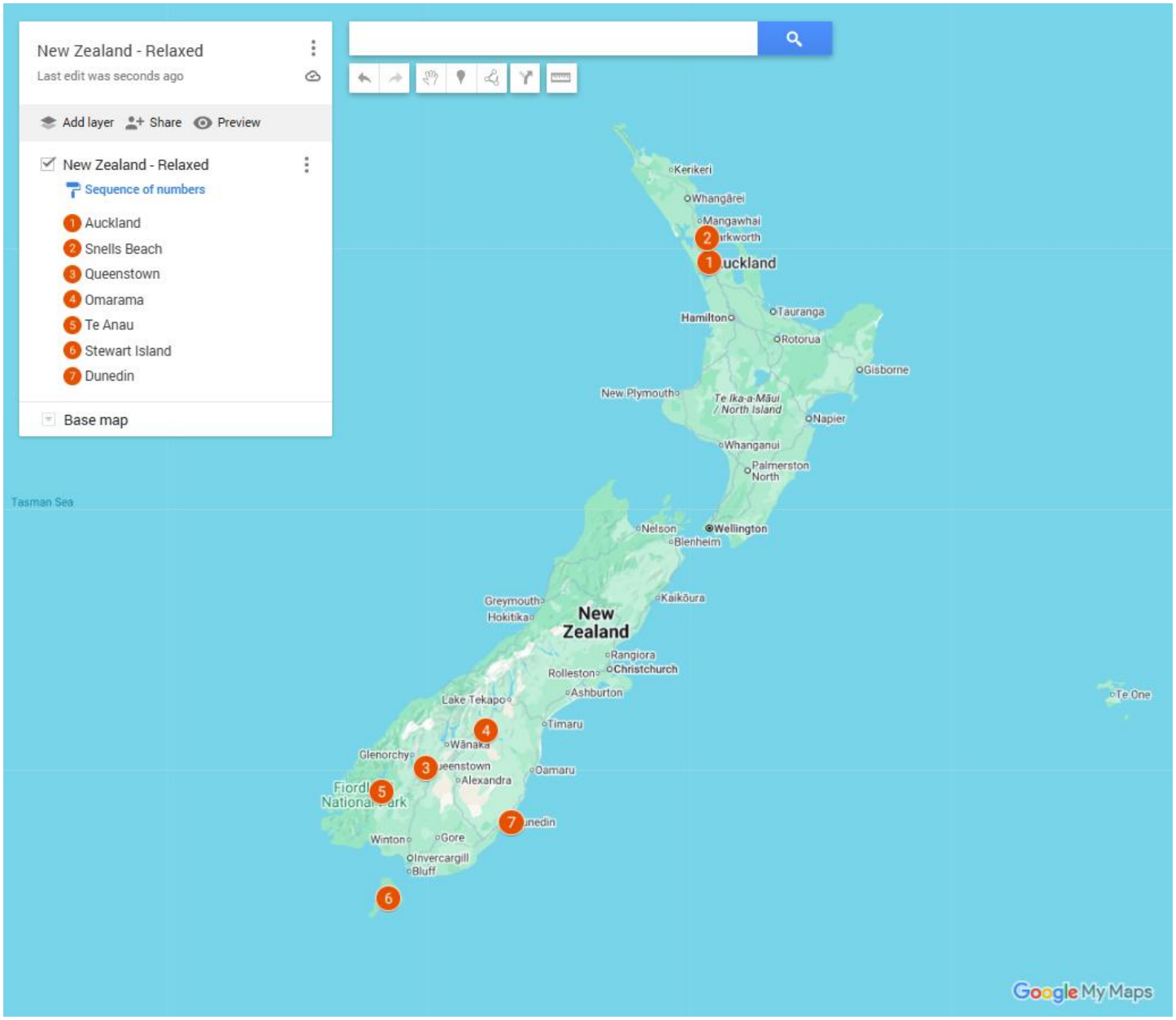
South Island Saddleback by Glen Valentine

New Zealand supports a host of unusual endemic land birds and a rich assemblage of marine birds and mammals. We begin our relaxed tour of the country on the North Island. Around Snells Beach we'll find a multitude of new endemics and head out at night looking for North Island Brown Kiwi. Our pelagic into the Hauraki Gulf searches for the recently rediscovered New Zealand Storm Petrel amongst a myriad of albatrosses, shearwaters and other seabirds. Our time on the north island draws to a close with a visit to the fabled Tiritiri Matangi Island, where we'll bird this predator-free reserve for the prehistoric South Island Takahe, strange North Island Kokako and Stitchbird amongst others.

We make our way south to the beautiful grasslands of the Mackenzie region of the South Island where we will take in the beauty of the Southern Alpine range, while looking for the critically endangered Black Stilt and unusual Wrybill, before hiking through pristine Red Beech forest surrounded by breath-taking glacier-lined mountains, where the massive Kea (an Alpine parrot) can be found. In Fiordland National Park we will search for Blue Duck, the cute New Zealand Rockwren and New Zealand Falcon, before catching our ferry to the rugged Stewart Island in search of Southern Brown Kiwi, Yellow-eyed and Fiordland Crested Penguins and a pelagic outing visiting several nearby islands in search of a variety of seabirds including 8 species of albatross! Our final destination will be Dunedin, where a visit to a Northern Royal Albatross colony will certainly be amongst the many highlights of this rewarding tour. With excellent lodging and meals, awe-inspiring scenery, and fantastically friendly "Kiwis", this is sure to be a tour of a lifetime!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Auckland, transfer to Snells Beach**
Day 2	**Snells Beach & surrounds**
Day 3	**Pelagic off Hauraki Gulf**
Day 4	**Tiritiri Matangi Island**
Day 5	**Snells Beach to Auckland, flight to Queenstown**
Day 6	**Queenstown to Omarama & Mount Cook area**
Day 7	**Omarama to Te Anau**
Day 8	**Fiordland National Park**
Day 9	**Te Anau to Stewart Island**
Day 10	**Stewart Island Pelagic**
Day 11	**Ulva Island**
Day 12	**Stewart Island to Dunedin**
Day 13	**Dunedin area**
Day 14	**Final departure**


New Zealand - Relaxed
Last edit was seconds ago
Add layer
Share
Preview
New Zealand - Relaxed
Sequence of numbers
1 Auckland
2 Snells Beach
3 Queenstown
4 Omarama
5 Te Anau
6 Stewart Island
7 Dunedin
Base map
Kerikeri
Whangārei
Mangawhai
Hamilton
Tauranga
Rotorua
Gisborne
New Plymouth
Te Ika-a-Māui / North Island
Napier
Whanganui
Palmerston North
Tasman Sea
Nelson
Wellington
Blenheim
Greymouth
Hokitika
Kaikōura
New Zealand
Rangiora
Christchurch
Rolleston
Ashburton
Lake Tekapo
Timaru
Wānaka
Glenorchy
Alexandra
Oamaru
Winton
Gore
Invercargill
Bluff
Te Ore
Google My Maps

Birding sites in detail

Snells Beach. We will make several birding stops at a series of wetlands in the Snells Beach area. Possible species to keep our eyes open for include Little Black and Pied Cormorants, White-faced Heron, Masked Lapwing, Paradise Shelduck, Australasian Shoveler, Grey Teal, endemic New Zealand Scaup and New Zealand Grebe, Buff-banded Rail, Swamp Harrier, Pacific Reef Heron, Royal Spoonbill and Caspian Tern.



Whitehead by Adam Riley

We will also explore a nearby regional park for some of New Zealand's most endangered wildlife, including the endangered North Island Saddleback, New Zealand Bellbird, and the prehistoric looking and critically endangered South Island Takahe. We will also look for New Zealand Pigeon, Red-crowned Parakeet, Tui, Whitehead flitting through the undergrowth, the north island forms of New Zealand Robin, Brown Quail, Silvereye and New Zealand Fantail.

A night walk in the area gives us our first opportunity to look for the amazing North Island Brown Kiwi, one of five representatives of this terrestrial bird family that is endemic to New Zealand.

Pelagic – Hauraki Gulf. We depart for a pelagic seabird tour of the Hauraki Gulf. In the gulf, there are a wealth of breeding seabirds, including the endemic Buller's and Fluttering as well as Flesh-footed Shearwaters. Endemic Cook's and the localised Black Petrels are present and may be seen alongside the boat, along with the active White-faced Storm Petrel and Fairy Prions. Little Blue Penguin, Australasian Gannet and White-fronted Tern are often seen at some point throughout the day and if we are very lucky, we might even obtain views of the New Zealand Storm Petrel! This species was only rediscovered in 2004 after a fifty-year absence and the first chicks and nesting burrows were found on Little Barrier Island in January 2013. It is now hoped that a conservation effort can help save this critically endangered species.



New Zealand Storm Petrel by Erik Forsyth

Tiritiri Matangi Island. We depart today by water taxi for the fabled Tiritiri Matangi Island. Several highly endangered endemic species can be seen here, including rare

species sadly extirpated from the mainland. One of the Jewels of the Hauraki Gulf, Tiri is an amazing example of habitat restoration with over 200,000 native trees meticulously replanted. We will explore this predator-free haven for some of New Zealand's most endangered wildlife, including the outrageous North Island Saddleback, localised Stitchbird, New Zealand Bellbird, the spectacular North Island Kokako, and the prehistoric looking Takahe. Throughout our time on the island, we will also see New Zealand Pigeon, Red-crowned Parakeet, Tui, Whitehead flitting through the undergrowth, the north island forms of New Zealand Robin and Fernbird, Brown Quail and New Zealand Fantail. In addition, we'll be on the lookout for Brown Teal and Spotless Crake, which are sometimes seen at a small pond near the jetty.



New Zealand Bellbird by Adam Riley

Omarama area. We will search the Omarama area in earnest for Black Stilt. This is one of New Zealand's most endangered species and thought to be the world's rarest wader at less than 250 individuals. We also have further chances for the beautiful endemic Double-banded Plover (Banded Dotterel) Black-fronted Tern and Wrybill, which nest on the braided riverbeds. The scenery is breath-taking, and we will see New Zealand's highest peak, the snow-covered Mount Cook at (3 724m). Other species possible in this area may include New Zealand Falcon, Swamp Harrier, Paradise Shelduck, New Zealand Scaup, Grey Teal, Eurasian Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Masked Lapwing, New Zealand (Australasian) Pipit, Australian Magpie and Common Redpoll.

Small passerines introduced from Europe are another feature of this area, with possibilities for Yellowhammer, European Greenfinch, European Goldfinch, Common Redpoll, Song Thrush and Dunnock.



Black Stilts by Erik Forsyth

Fiordland National Park. This morning we head through to Fiordland National Park, allowing for breath-taking views of this area, New Zealand's largest national park, also rightfully declared as a World Heritage Area. We'll be on the lookout for the scarce New Zealand Falcon as well as Blue Duck, should we still need this species. Near the Homer Tunnel, we will take a hike of 2 - 3km return, to look for the rare and localised New Zealand Rockwren. We will have to be patient and scan the

large boulders carefully for this tiny bird!

Afterwards, we will take various stops in Beech Forest to look for New Zealand Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, New Zealand Robin, Tomtit, Pipipi (Brown Creeper) and Rifleman, a member of the endemic family of New Zealand Wrens. The fantastic Kea, a true Alpine parrot are also found here.



Wrybill by Erik Forsyth

Stewart Island. After boarding a ferry in Bluff, we'll sail to Stewart Island, New Zealand's third largest island and newest national park. Stewart Island is wild and rugged, with few roads and high numbers of birds, making it a very exciting place indeed!

We'll spend time visiting Ulva Island in Paterson Inlet, a forested jewel, which will put us into some of the best avian bush walking in New Zealand. Ulva Island is a predator-free haven for a variety of birds, including the Stewart Island form of Weka, Tui, New Zealand Bellbird, the South Island form of New Zealand Kaka, both Red-crowned and Yellow-crowned Parakeets, South Island Saddleback, the endangered Yellowhead, New Zealand Robin and New Zealand Pigeon (locally known as the Kereru). There is an excellent series of paths around the island, and we'll be out for several hours before taking the water taxi back to Golden Bay on Stewart Island. On one evening, we will search for the localised Stewart Island form of Southern Brown Kiwi.

Pelagic – Stewart Island. A highlight on Stewart Island is the opportunity for a pelagic tour exploring nearby islands and the spectacular coastal scenery. Again, those who require motion sickness medication will want to plan ahead, as our trip will take us around the south-eastern side of the island, to South Cape and the Southern Muttonbird Islands.



The entertaining Kea by Erik Forsyth

We will encounter several new species of albatross, shearwaters, and diving petrels today, with possibilities including Wandering, Northern Royal, Campbell's, Salvin's and Buller's Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Brown Skua, Sooty Shearwater, Cape and Mottled Petrels, Common Diving Petrel as well as chances for Grey-backed Storm Petrel and three species of penguins – namely Yellow-eyed,

Fiordland and Little (Blue). Antarctic Terns also have a small breeding colony south of here and we will be looking for sightings of this rare bird for New Zealand.



Northern Royal Albatross by Erik Forsyth

Taiaroa Head. We will spend time at this headland looking for Northern Royal Albatross, here at their only mainland breeding site. Depending on the conditions (the windier the better), we can admire these gigantic and extremely impressive birds (weighing up to 9kg!) as they fly past the headland. Active colonies of Spotted Shags, Red-billed Gulls, White-fronted Terns, and a few Royal Spoonbills will vie for our attention as they nest on a nearby cliff face.

Dunedin area. We'll visit a nature reserve dedicated to protecting the Yellow-eyed Penguin, New Zealand's rarest endemic penguin species, where the adults may be seen returning to their nesting burrows after fishing at sea.



Yellowhead by Glen Valentine

Dunedin pelagic. The short boat trip takes place against a dramtically scenic backdrop. Before departing the lagoon, we'll pass an Otago Shag breeding colony and get views of Spotted Shag and New Zealand Fur Seal. We'll then cast our eyes to Taiaroa Head where Northern Royal albatross breed, indeed, these are the only mainland beeding albatross species in New Zealand which numbered 22pairs in 2022. At sea proper, we can expect to have some close encounters with Northern Royal, White-capped and Salvins Albatrosses, Cape and Westland Petrels, Sooty and Buller's Shearwaters and Northern Giant Petrel.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Comfortable. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels & most mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease		Undemanding, most species provide good visuals. Night birding for kiwis can be tricky. A small number of scarce/rare target species.
Accommodation		Comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Moderate. Short walks on flat ground, with a few longer hikes. Night walks for kiwis can be challenging on narrower trails, some might be muddy.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable vehicle on good quality sealed roads. Several medium to long drives.
Photography		Good to very good. Pelagic opportunities can be outstanding in good weather conditions.
Annoyances		Pelagic conditions can vary from calm to rough.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 14.
- All lodgings.
- All ground transportation during the tour.
- All reserve entrance fees.
- Pelagic & boat trips.
- All guiding services.
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees.
- ANY flights.
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels).
- Optional excursions.
- Special gratuities.
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a good standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of range from comfortable to good. There is no camping on this trip.
- Due to the limited accommodation options on Stewart Island, New Zealand, we may stay in lodgings with shared facilities (i.e., without en suite bathrooms). As availability cannot be confirmed far in advance, please be prepared for this possibility.
- Please note that the seas during the pelagic trips can be unpredictable, and guests who opt for this activity, must bear this in mind. It is essential that you bring along some motion sickness medication if you suspect that you could be prone to seasickness. We suggest that you contact your travel doctor for information regarding the various medication options.
- If you have any medical conditions or physical limitations relating to balance and mobility, please do let the Rockjumper office know.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will begin in Auckland on day 1, with a group transfer from the airport to Snells Beach. Please arrive in Auckland before 13:00, or the day before preferably. The tour will conclude after breakfast at Dunedin International Airport on Day 14.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Auckland Airport, Auckland (IATA: AKL) is the main port of entry for international flights into New Zealand and is well serviced by many of the world's major airlines. Dunedin International Airport, Dunedin (IATA: DUD) is well connected via an internal flight to Auckland.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.