

ITINERARY
CHC NEW ZEALAND (AOTEAROA) EXCURSION
MARCH 3 - 21, 2023 (NEW ZEALAND TIME)
Dated June 30, 2022

Day 1 Friday March 3 - NEW ZEALAND TIME NELSON

Our excursion begins in Nelson, a city of 50,000 on the northern coast of the South Island. Its prime location to national parks, backcountry hiking and biking, and the Tasman Bay along with an abundance of sunshine makes Nelson a popular place for trampers, bikers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

For those traveling directly from Cleveland it will be close to a 24 hour journey door-to-door and because you cross the International Date Line it will be 2-days ago on the calendar that you will have left home. It's a long trip from Cleveland and goes without saying, the key to a good beginning to the excursion will be getting sufficient sleep on your overnight flight.

You'll likely arrive in Auckland early in the morning and from there a domestic flight transports you to Nelson. If a large number from our group arrive in Nelson on the same flight then a vehicle will be available to transport the group to our lodging. Hotel check-in is normally 2:00 p.m. Of course an early check-in would be nice but don't count on it as this could be a busy tourist time for the hotel. The hotel will store luggage until your room is ready. As the day proceeds don't be surprised if you're feeling slow and foggy. Take it easy and pace yourself. A good night's rest will do wonders.

Several coffee shops, restaurants, taverns, a pharmacy and a grocery store are located within a few blocks of the hotel.

Late in the afternoon we'll meet for a brief orientation meeting after which we'll take a short walk to a nearby restaurant/tavern for our first meal together. Time and location TBD (to be determined).

Dinner: purchase TBD

Lodging: Quest Nelson, 108 Collingwood St., Nelson Tele: +64 3 929 5503

Day 2 Saturday March 4 NELSON

Our first full day together in New Zealand and likely some in the group are still feeling a bit out of sorts from their recent travels. As you adjust to the time change you probably awoke early so we might as well get the day going. We'll start with coffee and breakfast and then explore Nelson and the nearby hills overlooking the city and the Tasman Bay. Meet in the hotel lobby at 8:00 a.m. and from there we'll walk a few blocks through town to the Nelson Saturday Market with its fresh produce, food stalls, cafes, local arts, crafts and more located in the Montgomery Square Car Park, i.e. parking lot. Take your time and enjoy the immersion. Meet up at 9:15 a.m. for our hike.

Directions to meetup point: At the Nelson Saturday Market, head toward the tall building with the MidCity Motel sign at the top. At the foot of the building is Bank Lane (or what we would label back home an arcade). Walk to the other end of the Lane to Trafalgar St. and gather up on the sidewalk.

Walk: 6 mi. Energetic. Moderately paced loop walk providing a look at Nelson from the streets and hills above the city, harbor and sea. Elevation gain: 500 ft. We'll finish our hike back in town near the hotel.

The rest of the day is yours to explore the city. Choices are abundant including shopping, cafes, eateries, arts, culture, beach, numerous walking options, and more. It just so happens that March Fest, Nelson's annual craft beer festival, will be taking place that day and is walking distance from our hotel. For those wanting to pick up food items, in addition to the nearby grocery store there are several nearby convenience stores. If you want to browse the outdoor adventure stores for clothing, equipment and supplies there are several nearby. Whatever your fancy, ask and I can point you the way.

If you're still feeling worn from your long travels, this afternoon may be an opportunity for a bit of rest...but it's probably best not to let yourself go to bed too early as you will want to get yourself back to an ordinary sleep schedule.

I'll lead a group to dinner this evening, as I will be doing so on many evenings that dinner is not an included meal, but don't feel obligated to always join in. Feel free to explore and discover New Zealand's dining options on your own or with others.

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner: purchase.

Lodging: Quest Nelson

Day 3	Sunday March 5	NELSON
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Begin with a good breakfast, fill your water supply, pack a lunch, include a few snacks and we're off walking from the hotel. Today's loop hike takes us upstream along the Maitai River, into the Maitai Valley, over the Tantragee Saddle, and down along a lower section of the Dun Mountain Trail before leading us back into town. At the end of today's hike there will be a stop at Prince Albert (local tavern and backpacker (113 Nile St., Nelson; at the corner of Nile St. and Tasman St.) for refreshment before our short walk back to the hotel

Walk: 9 mi. Energetic. Elevation gain: 1,000 ft. See "Breakfast" below for the meetup time and place. For those looking to lengthen this hike by a couple of miles and wanting another 1,000 ft. or so of elevation gain, toward the end of our hike we'll pass near the road that leads to the top of the Grampians Reserve with nice views of the city, bay, harbor and distant mountains. So long as there are at least two of you, go for it and see you back at the hotel or make a stop of your own at Prince Albert.

Alternative Walk: For our second full day in Nelson I originally planned a one-way 16 mi. with 3,000 ft. elevation gain hike of a more difficult section of the [Dun Mountain Trail](#) but that was when Nelson was at the end of the excursion, not the beginning as is now. This strenuous all-day hike is quite demanding and made more challenging being that it comes so soon after a long and tiring trip to reach New Zealand. Despite the challenges of this hike so early on in the excursion I suspect that some in the group may feel ready, willing and able. If there are enough wanting to take on the hike then I'll arrange for both hikes to go forward and each with a leader. I'll need a head count for our 8:00 a.m. transportation to the trailhead so let me know by January 30 if you're in.

The alternative hike begins at the Maitai Dam and although we'll be shaded at first, we steadily climb higher, the trail becomes steeper, the trees and bush grow sparse, and the landscape grows dramatic and sun-blazed as we enter the Mineral Belt, characterized by stunted vegetation and reddish-brown soil and rocks. After the bend at Windy Point the second half of the route heads gradually down the mountainside with increased shade and along the alignment of the historic Dun Mountain Railway,

New Zealand's first railway, which was in operation from 1862 to 1901 to transport chromite extracted from the mineral mines. Like those in the other hiking group, at the end of the hike there will also be a stop at Prince Albert for refreshment and an opportunity for fish and chips, and a catch-up on Sunday rugby on the tele.

Breakfast: purchase. For those choosing the regularly scheduled morning hike we'll meet up for coffee and breakfast at the River Kitchen Nelson (81 Trafalgar St., Nelson) at 8:30. The hike will begin at 9:30 a.m. on the Maitai Walkway which runs along the river side of the restaurant.

For those choosing the alternative and considerably more difficult all-day hike we'll meet our transportation vehicle at 8:00 a.m. in the hotel parking lot and head straight away to the trailhead. Bring plenty of water, a hearty lunch and a snack.

Lunch/Dinner: purchase

Note: Pack your lunch for today's hike.

Lodging: Quest Nelson

Day 4 Monday March 6 NELSON TO ABEL TASMAN NP

Before leaving the hotel this morning be certain to prepare both the day pack you'll carry and the sports bag (provided by the vendor in advance) that will be transported by water taxi and ready for you upon arrival at each night's lodging along the [Abel Tasman Coastal Track](#). The sports bag will contain a plastic bag insert to protect your contents from possible water penetration. The remainder of your luggage will be stored at the vendor's offices. Along the track today and each of the other days expect several ocean beach swimming opportunities and long stretches of beach walking. Be certain to carry insect repellent to protect from annoying sandflies. This is not a typical rugged NZ track but rather a well-worn one with beauty galore. You may want to consider packing away your hiking boots and wearing a lighter trail shoe.

Today's adventure begins with a mid-morning departure (Time TBD) from our hotel and a drive along the coast of Tasman Bay (Te Tai-o-Aorere) to Kaiteriteri. From there we'll catch our water taxi and travel north along the coast of the Abel Tasman National Park making several quick stops to drop-off and pick-up section hikers. Sit back and enjoy the ride, sea life and coastal scenery.

Walk: 5 mi. Energetic. Self-paced. Elevation gain: 900 ft. From the beach at Tōtaranui you'll head south on the trail passing through secluded golden sand beaches and mature native forest with plenty of birds about to keep us company. The section of trail near the end of today's hike at Awaroa Inlet can only be crossed near low tide so you must time your estuary crossing within 1.5 hrs. before and 2 hrs. after low tide. Low tide is forecasted to be 4:31 p.m. Allow 20-25 minutes to cross the estuary. NOTE: There is no alternative route around the inlet.

Breakfast/Lunch: purchase

Dinner: included

Lodging: Meadowbank Lodge

Day 5 Tuesday March 7 ABEL TASMAN

Today's walk follows the coastal track through native forest and a sandy beach, an opportunity for a morning swim.

Walk: 11 mi. from Awaroa to Torrent Bay. Energetic+. Self-paced. Elevation gain: 1,800 ft. Head out from Awaroa to Onetahuti then climb the low saddle out of Onetahuti. Here's a chance to explore the site of Tonga Quarry with its granite rockscape and archways. Descend to Bark Bay via the Waterfall Trail. At Bark Bay there's a shelter, picnic tables, filtered drinking water and another swimming opportunity. The next section of track winds through gullies of mature beech forest, fern grottos and groves of fragrant manuka. Cross the swing bridge at Falls River and continue to our night's lodging at Torrent Bay.

For those still wanting more adventure after reaching Torrent Bay consider a hike up the lesser visited Falls River Track. Trailhead is 0.25 mi. past Torrent Bay Lodge. On the track you'll pass through areas of unspoiled first generation native bush to the Falls River with large swimming holes and cascading falls. Hike: 4 mi. RT. Elevation gain: 800 ft. Allow 2-3 hrs RT.

Breakfast/Lunch/Afternoon tea/Dinner: included

Lodging: Torrent Bay Lodge

Day 6 Wednesday March 8 ABEL TASMAN TO MOTUEKA

Today's walk from Torrent Bay to Mārahau follows a relatively moderate section of coastal track with panoramic views across Tasman Bay to Nelson.

Walk: Hike 8 mi. from Torrent Bay to Mārahau. Energetic. Self-paced. Elevation gain: 1,000 ft. The tides will determine whether you are able to take the short-cut across the inlet to continue on the main coastal track or instead need to walk around the inlet (add 2.5 mi. and 300 ft. elevation gain). Since low tide is forecasted for 5:24 a.m. it's unlikely you'll cross the estuary as it must be crossed within 2 hours either side of low tide. On today's walk you'll also be crossing a 150-foot suspension bridge and passing through beech forests with large kanuka trees. A good choice for a lunch stop is the sheltered beach with views toward Adele Island. No need to rush off in the morning from the hotel today or speed through your hike as you have plenty of time for enjoying the walk and surroundings.

We'll meet up in the late afternoon (Time TBD) at The Park Cafe in Mārahau located at the southern terminus of the track and just outside the national park boundary. From there we'll be transported a short distance to tonight and tomorrow's lodging in Motueka. Laundry facilities will be available at the motel. A full service grocery store is only a few blocks from our lodging.

For dinner we'll be meeting at Smoking Barrel, a very short walk from our lodging. (Time TBD)

Breakfast/Lunch: included

Dinner: purchase

Lodging: Nautilus Lodge Motel, 67 High St., Motueka

Day 7 Thursday March 9 MT. ARTHUR

Today's major adventure will be summiting [Mt. Arthur](#) (Tu Ao Wharepapa) (5,889 ft.) in Kahurangi National Park. To ensure we have the best part of the day for experiencing the wildlife on this popular mountain climb we'll depart early in the morning (Time TBD) for a drive up the Graham Valley to the Flora Car Park at 3,050 ft. Bring water and a hearty lunch with you. You may pre-order a packed lunch from the bakery near our lodging.

Walk: Mt. Arthur. Hike 10.5 mi RT with a rock scramble at the top to reach the summit. Strenuous. Elevation gain: 3,100 ft. Allow 6 hrs RT. The lower mossy section of today's hike is lush and diverse with flora and fauna and populated with numerous bird species including weka, riflemen and bellbird. The upper portion of our tramp will be alpine country where the risk of rapidly changing weather conditions including cold, wind and rain/snow is always something of concern, so pack appropriate clothing and safety gear. Return to the car park by 4:00 p.m.

For dinner we'll be meeting at Sprig & Fern, a block past where we gathered last night.

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner: purchase **Note:** Pack your lunch for today's hike.

Lodging: Nautilus Lodge Motel

Day 8 Friday March 10 MOTUEKA TO QUEENSTOWN

Today we fly to the southwestern region of the island where we'll begin our visit to Fiordland National Park - a rugged mountainous glacier-carved wilderness region and home of the Milford Track and Milford Sound. Be prepared to depart our hotel at 6:00 a.m. for our pre-booked 8:10 a.m. flight from Nelson Airport to Queenstown with a connection in Christchurch. Pre-arranged ground transportation will take us to our hotel in central Queenstown.

At 2:45 p.m. we have a Milford Track briefing at the Ultimate Hikes center, a 10 minute walk from our hotel. You'll be provided a 40L pack for storing and carrying your clothing, snacks and other desired items on our five-day tramp. Food and lodging are provided along the way. Following our briefing, the remainder of today is free to explore the Queenstown area, an adventurer's haven located along clean and cold Lake Wakatipu. <https://www.queenstownnz.co.nz/>

Walk: No planned hike today.

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner: purchase

Lodging: Holiday Inn Express, Corner Stanley and Sydney Street, Queenstown

Day 9 Saturday March 11 QUEENSTOWN TO MILFORD TRACK

Before leaving the hotel this morning be certain to prepare the clothing and equipment you'll carry in your pack on the Milford Track. The remainder of your belongings will be stored at the hotel until we return in five days. You should expect to encounter rain over the next several days.

Bring your pre-prepared pack with you to our 9:15 a.m. meetup at the Ultimate Hikes center from where we'll travel by bus around Lake Wakatipu with a brief stop in Mossburn followed by a lunch stop in Te Anau at the Hollywood Café (2.5 hrs.). After lunch we'll motor 30 km further along Lake Te Anau to Te Anau Downs where we'll meet our water ferry for the remainder of our trip to Glade Wharf at the headwaters of Lake Te Anau and the start of our trek along the Milford Track.

Walk: Milford Track. 1 mi. Easy. Elevation gain: 100 ft. Today's walk is short and flat along the banks of the Clinton River. We'll pass through beech forest and once arriving at our lodging our guide will take us on a short nature walk before dinner.

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner: included

Lodging: Glade House

Breakfast/Lunch: included

Dinner: purchase

Lodging: Holiday Inn Express, Corner Stanley and Sydney Street, Queenstown

Day 14 Thursday March 16

QUEENSTOWN TO PICTON

You'll have the early part of the morning free to enjoy Queenstown before our late morning departure from our hotel to the airport. Time TBA. Our 12:55 p.m. AirNZ flight will connect through Christchurch and arrive in Blenheim at 3:55 p.m. Blenheim is primarily an agricultural community but its notoriety is the heart of the Marlborough wine region.

From the airport we'll be transported to the nearby [St. Clair Family Estate Vineyard](#) for tastings and dinner - vineyard style. (NOTE: Due to the long period of NZ's closed borders the vineyard restaurant, like so many others, reduced dining operating hours. If need be, come March an alternative will be arranged.) Following dinner we head to tonight's lodging in the small harbor town of Picton.

Walk: TBD

Breakfast: included

Lunch/Dinner: purchase

Lodging: Picton Yacht Club, 25 Waikawa Road, Picton

Day 15 Friday March 17

PICTON AND BLENHEIM

For today, there are many options to choose from. Right out the door from our hotel is a pleasant, energetic 9 mi. walk through the marina and onto The Snout Track to enjoy the views of the surrounding hills, waterways and the Queen Charlotte Sound. Or if you're looking for a bit more adventure and something extra special, again right out the door of our hotel, a roundtrip water taxi ride for a full day's hike and a lunch along a section of the Queen Charlotte Track. Or for those wanting a full or partial day among wineries, there are numerous options for wine tours and tastings in the Blenheim area.

Note: Pre-arrangements will be needed for a water taxi to/from the Queen Charlotte or ground transportation to the Blenheim/Marlborough wineries.

Walk: The Snout Track. 9 mi. Energetic. This is an out and back walk with an elevation gain of 1,500 ft.

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner: purchase

Lodging: Picton Yacht Club

Day 16 Saturday March 18

PICTON TO WELLINGTON

Today we leave Picton by ferry at 11:00 a.m. for the capital city of Wellington in the North Island (3.5 hrs.). The ferry will take us through the Marlborough Sounds and across the Cook Strait (Te Moana-o-Raukawa) separating the North and South Islands and onto Wellington, our last destination city. Winds through the Cook Strait and in Wellington can at times be strong as ocean winds from the west are naturally funneled by mountain ranges into and through the strait - thus the moniker Windy Wellington. Transportation provided from the Wellington ferry dock to our hotel.

For tonight's group dinner, we'll be walking to the nearby Fortune Favours Brewery with food prepared next door by Gorilla Burger. CBR: Very high. Checkout the online menu..

Walk: No planned hike today.

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner: purchase

Lodging: Oaks Wellington, 89 Courtenay Place, Wellington

Day 17 Sunday March 19 WELLINGTON

Today's morning hike provides views of central Wellington and transits through numerous neighborhoods and parks, part of the Aro Valley with its turn-of-the-century cottages, and into the Botanic Garden - a sixty acre delight established in 1868 full of mature flowers, trees, landscaping, a tropical conservatory, formal beds, winding paths, views and more. The Garden borders the upper Cable Car station at which point feel free to ride the cable car down to the city center to explore on your own or to continue on the hike with a pleasant self-paced downhill walk through the Botanic Garden and the historic Bolton Street Cemetery toward the government center area where our hike ends. At this point you're on your own to continue exploring or to find your way back to the hotel (1 mi.), or both.

Walk: [City to Sea Walkway](#) 6 mi. Energetic. Elevation gain: 900 ft. Our hike of a section of the Walkway begins early with a 1.5 mile city walk from our hotel to the point on the marked walkway where we'll start today's trek toward the city.

Following today's walk the remainder of the day and evening are yours to explore [Wellington](#). A few areas to consider - Cuba Street/Oriental Bay/Central Business District/Waterfront.

Breakfast: included

Lunch/Dinner: purchase

Lodging: Oaks Wellington

Day 18 Monday March 20 WELLINGTON

Two options to choose from for today's adventure - either a train ride north of the city to hike the [Paekākāriki Escarpment Trail](#) or staying back to explore more of Wellington on your own.

For those hiking the Escarpment our day begins with a 1 mile walk from our hotel, along the harbor to the Railway Station. Trains run every 20 minutes and our 45 minute ride takes us through northern suburbs and into the countryside to Paekākāriki. RT train tickets: NZD\$9.50. In Paekākāriki there will be an opportunity for coffee and a snack before heading out along the trail eventually climbing high above the Kāpiti Coastline to sweeping views all the while navigating a steep, narrow and exposed pathway with 1,500 steps (no handrails) and two swing bridges. This section of trail is one of the many highlights of New Zealand's nationwide Te Araroa (The Long Path), an 1,800 mile trail extending the length of New Zealand's two main Islands. For New Zealanders the Escarpment is considered intermediate and is popular with families but this hike is not for the faint-hearted. In Pukerua Bay at the opposite end of the trail section we'll board a train back to Wellington. The weather on the coast can be breezy and chilly so check the forecast and consider bringing a fleece and/or a rain jacket.

Walk: Paekākāriki Escarpment Trail. 6 mi. Strenuous. Elevation gain: 1,200 ft. From the train station allow 4.5 hrs roundtrip.

If you're staying in town there are numerous choices to fill your day. A few thoughts - international eateries, shopping, a walk to the top of Mt. Victoria, the beach at Oriental Bay, Te Papa or Zealandia.

- Te Papa - For those with an historical and cultural interest, the [Te Papa Tongarewa](#) - NZ's National Museum - is a cultural gem worthy of several hours of your time. Admission is free.
- Zealandia - If nature and birds are more to your liking, visit [ZEALANDIA](#) Te Māra a Tāne, a fully-fenced predator-free urban ecosanctuary. This 225-hectare (approx. 500+ acres) sanctuary protects over 40 rare native wildlife species and is home to some of NZ's rarest and extraordinary wildlife. Zealandia's vision is to restore the area to the way it was before the arrival of humans and the predator mammals they introduced with them. Entrance fee at the gate. Pick up the Free Shuttle on Wakefield Street near the i-SITE (Visitor Information Center). 10-15 min. ride each way. An option to consider when leaving Zealandia is to instead of taking the free shuttle back to the iSITE is to walk to the Wellington Cable Car via Upland Rd, stop for a coffee along the way and ride the cable car (NZD\$5) down to the central business district.

This evening's dinner will be a farewell occasion. Time and place TBD.

Breakfast: included

Lunch/Dinner: purchase

Lodging: Oaks Wellington

Day 19	Tuesday March 21	WELLINGTON
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This morning concludes the CHC Excursion to New Zealand. For some this will be departure day from Wellington to Auckland then onward to the USA. For others this will be the beginning of an extended visit to New Zealand or lands elsewhere. Safe travels. Ka kite anō.

Breakfast: included