

DAILY ITINERARY – ALL TOURS

The Outback: September 19 to October 3, 2017

Queensland: October 4 to October 21, 2017

Sydney: October 21 to October 24, 2017

New Zealand: October 24 to November 12, 2017

THE OUTBACK

Enter a fascinatingly remote world when you join us for this RV tour from Darwin, through The Outback, and to Ayer's Rock. You can read stories and you can see photos, but until you experience it in person you really don't know The Outback. In our prior visit to Ayer's Rock, known now by its Aboriginal name, Uluru, we wrote, "Words fail, photos may illuminate, but this is one of those places you must experience to really understand. Uluru (pronounced *ooh la roo*) is one big rock! In sunlight it glows; in shadows it hides. Smooth graceful curves, crater-sized pock marks, 500-ft. cracks, dark waterfall lines. As an elephant touched by blind men, it changes perspective at every turn. With a composition of sandstone, 70% feldspar, its burnt orange color is striking. The enormity of a single rock is overwhelming, especially if standing in its shadow and looking up to the sky. It is the downspout for desert rainstorms, though they may be as infrequent as seven years. Gushing waterfalls bring the water to the base of the rock and submerge into red sand, a bit remaining for a small pool surrounded by tall ironwood trees. Mostly, though, Uluru is surrounded by a vast, flat desert, so arid that Aboriginal survival depended on knowing where waterholes existed."

While Ayer's Rock will be a highlight of the tour, you'll love The Outback as well: the stark silent beauty, the clear nighttime Southern Cross skies, the glimpses of Aboriginal culture. Our tour starts from Darwin, visits Kakadu, one of Australia's best national parks, threads its way through The Outback of Northern Territory to Alice Springs, past historic roadhouses, and thence to Ayer's Rock. Along the way we will

encounter wallabies, kangaroos and the unique birds of this arid region, often surprised by the many parrots and finches that call this home.

Day 1: We will meet at Darwin for orientation and welcoming dinner. Darwin hotel for one evening.

Day 2: We will be renting RV's for travel, sleeping, and many meals. Typically, these are late model Class C turbo diesel vehicles accommodating two to four adults and including double bed, gas stove, refrigerator, microwave, shower, toilet, air-conditioning/heating, pressurized hot & cold water, and radio/CD player. Also included are linen, bedding, and kitchen equipment. After picking up our rental RV's we will purchase groceries and head to our campsite near Darwin, a three-night stay.

Day 3: We will visit Howard Springs Nature Center, followed by Darwin's East Point which overlooks the Timor Sea. At the nature center we may spot the colorful Rainbow Pitta, with its pitch black head and breast, bright green back and wings, a wide sliver of glowing turquoise patching the wings, a crimson red belly and a subtle brown crown stripe. At East Point, shorebirds gather on the rock shelves and we could see an Eastern Curlew with an amazingly long curved bill, so long you might think it could trip over it while walking. We will stay on the Darwin coast for Thursday Market, a kaleidoscope of good food, novel souvenirs and Aboriginal entertainment. In the warm tropical evening we stay for the brilliant orgy of colors in the sunset over the sea.

Day 4: We will visit Fogg Dam, a wet paperbark forest and flooded marshlands that support thousands of birds as well as Australian crocodile and Agile Wallaby.

Day 5: South of Darwin is Kakadu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Park, famous for its landmark Aboriginal rock paintings especially at Ubirr. Aboriginals lived here for at least 40 000 years and we will learn their stories through their art. With the aid of an Aboriginal birding guide, we will spend two days exploring this vast 4.9 million-acre park, visiting the monsoonal forest and billabongs at the end of the dry season. Camp at Kakadu.

Day 7: Before dawn we will board a boat and set out on Yellow Water just as the sun rises over the marsh. Most exciting are the enormous Estuarine Crocodiles that glide silently past the boat. Here we should see thousands of Plumed Whistling-Ducks mixed with a few Radjah Shelducks, and in the trees, the incredible White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Wildlife sightings will come so often your camera will not keep up with the opportunities for close-up shots. Our boat cruise will be followed by breakfast. In the afternoon we head to our next campsite at Katherine.

Day 8: Today we penetrate deeper into The Outback, leaving Katherine, passing Larrimah, and reaching Daly Waters. We will camp at the curiously adorned outpost and enjoy dinner at its restaurant. On the grounds we can find the bowers of the Great Bowerbird, a "bachelor pad" that the male bowerbird makes of upright sticks and decorates with green and white ornaments of stone, glass, bottle caps or anything else that catches his fancy.

Day 9: Continuing southward through Northern Territory, we reach strange rock formations called Devils Marbles which glow fiery red at sunset and dawn. In route, we are likely to encounter the incredibly long truck-trains, semi's pulling three lengthy tractor trailers. Camp off Stuart Highway.

Day 10: We will cross the well-marked Tropic of Capricorn just before we reach Alice Springs. The birders in the group we will want to bird a quiet road in the desert where it seems surprising to find any wildlife at all. Yet here we can find flocks of Zebra Finch, as well as Mulga Parrot, Budgerigar (the popular North American cage bird "budgie"), White-plumed Honeyeater, and Crimson Chat. Others in our group will want to continue to Alice Springs to visit the School of the Air and the Royal Flying Doctors Base. Camp at Alice Springs for two nights.

Day 11: Low mountains, called MacDonald Range, rise near Alice Springs. At a stream passing through a gap in the mountains (Simpson's Gap) is a wonderful oasis that attracts wildlife, including the Splendid Fairy-wren. On the scree of the mountain side lurk Black-footed Rock Wallabies, and, above them, soar Wedge-tailed Eagles. We will also visit Desert Park, an environmental education facility where we learn of plant and animal life in the desert and how the Aboriginals survive in this bleak environment. Alternatively, some may wish to spend more time exploring downtown Alice Springs or sites such as the Historic Telegraph Station.

Day 12: Now we head west to Ayer's Rock, stopping at historic way stations like Stuart's Well, that are an oasis of fuel, food, water, and hospitality. Camp at Ayer's Rock for two nights and view the spectacular orange sunset over Uluru.

Day 13: We will enjoy a full day to view Uluru, sometimes with a guide to explain its history and importance to Aboriginals, but also walking the trails around the huge rock. Near dusk, we will watch the famous rock appear to be on fire with the glow of a setting sun. A lifetime experience will be our tickets to the Sounds of Silence dinner and entertainment. Under the stars (with a resident star talker to locate the Southern Cross) we will enjoy a bush tucker inspired buffet that includes native bush ingredients while listening to the sounds of the didgeridoo.

Day 14: Back again to Alice Springs, this is our last day of viewing scenery of The Outback. Camp at Alice Springs.

Day 15: We will return our RV's in the morning and, in the afternoon, fly to Cairns for the start of our Queensland tour.

The Outback Price Includes:

- Services of professional naturalist and Wagonmaster team
- RV rental (14 days)
- RV park campground fees (some sites do not offer electricity)
- Welcome to Darwin dinner
- Darwin hotel (1 night)
- Entrance fee to Kakadu National Park
- Naturalist and Aboriginal guide at Kakadu

- Boat cruise at Yellow Water
 - Breakfast at Yellow Water
 - Dinner at Daly Waters
 - Entrance fees at School of the Air, Royal Flying Doctors Base, and Historic Telegraph Station
 - Entrance fee to Uluru
 - Naturalist and historical guide at Uluru
 - Sounds of Silence dinner and entertainment
 - Airfare to Cairns
 - Ground transportation from airport to hotel
 - Cairns hotel (1 night)
 - Customized bird and mammal checklists for nature sites
 - Services of staff who will organize tours & optional activities
 - Caravan jackets and nametags
 - "What you should know before you leave" preparatory document
 - Trip preparation packet and checklist
 - Travel logs and regular briefings
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QUEENSLAND

Australia, the “land down under,” is a land of beauty, congenial hospitality, and comfortable travel. Part of its allure is the strange creatures with strange names like platypus, koala, cassowary, and chowchilla. Scientists theorize Australia separated from world’s once contiguous land mass much earlier than other continents, allowing diverse development of plants and animals. In fact, Australia boasts over 820 bird species, 4000 different kinds of fish, and over 25,000 plant varieties, many of which are not found anywhere else in the world.

Or maybe we are attracted to the beauty of Australia: the white-sand beaches, sparkling seas, marine reefs, blue mountains, green rainforests, lush wetlands, and volcanic craters. Adding to the allure, the people of Australia offer a warm welcome to visitors. Their spoken English appeals to the ear and their words have an attractive ring. Friendly and laid back, they are often described as generous and humorous.

Queensland, the sunshine state is the premier state to visit in Australia and is readily amenable to traveling by RV. This tour particularly emphasizes the natural beauty of the area and focuses on viewing its wildlife, yet also includes cultural sites such as Tjapukai.

Day 16: We will start our trip in Cairns, a coastal city in North Queensland. After checking into our hotel we will have our orientation meeting and Welcome to Australia dinner. After dinner, as night closes in, we will watch the incredible arrival of flocks of huge flying-foxes as they descend into roosting palms in the heart of the city. Cairns hotel for two nights.

Day 17: Queensland is noted for its white-sand beaches and, of course, the Great Barrier Reef which stretches 1240 miles from Bundaberg northward. We will visit the magnificent reef—the longest in the world—by charter boat from Cairns for snorkeling to view colorful tropical fish just an arm's reach away. Or, if you'd rather not snorkel, you can view the fish through a glass bottom boat. Also, with a shuttle boat, we will be able to land at Michaelmas Cay and Hastings Reef where noddies and terns nest, and frigatebirds fly overhead.

Day 18: In the morning we will pick up our RV's. We will be renting RV's for travel, sleeping, and many meals. Typically, these are late model Class C turbo diesel vehicles accommodating two to four adults and including double bed, gas stove, refrigerator, microwave, shower, toilet, air-conditioning/heating, pressurized hot & cold water, and radio/CD player. Also included are linen, bedding, and kitchen equipment. We will be able to drive and camp right where the sightseeing action is best. Cairns campground for two nights. (Travel ~5 mi.).

Day 19: It's an easy walk to the Cairns Esplanade and Cairns Botanic Gardens. The Esplanade is famously known for close-up views of up to 2000 shorebirds at high tide in the extensive tidal mudflats. The nearby Botanic Gardens lie in lowland tropical rainforest and display the best of Australia's colorful flowers and unusual trees. Flocks of Pied Imperial-Pigeons fly past our campground at dawn and dusk.

Day 20: After an early morning walk on the Esplanade, we will visit Tjapukai Cultural Park, learn about Aboriginal culture, watch a fire starting demonstration, hear didgeridoo music, and be taught how to throw a boomerang and an atlatl. Then we'll drive northward along the coastal Captain Cook Highway, enjoying the scenery. Our campsite is at Wonga Beach. (Travel ~59 mi.)

Day 21: An early morning start will take us the short distance to Daintree River in time for their first cruise of the morning. From a comfortable river boat, we will see this Wet Tropics World Heritage site and its rare species close up. In a sense, the Daintree Rainforest is like stepping into a real life Jurassic Park, replete with very ancient animals. We will seek the rare Great-billed Heron, the strange wood-like Papuan Frogmouth, and perhaps witness the spring arrivals of Shining Flycatcher, Large-billed Gerygone, and Black Bittern. Most unusual are the Australian Water Dragons and other strange reptiles viewed close enough for great photography.

Leaving the Daintree we will head to our next campground at Julatten in an original rainforest of the Cairns Highlands, 1443 ft. above the coastal plain and an oasis in surrounding farmlands. The ease of walking the trails through the 11 acres surrounding the lodge and the close proximity to wildlife makes this a premier opportunity for wildlife photography. At dusk and dawn, behind the park, Platypus paddle along Bushy Creek. In early evening we can find Northern Brown Bandicoot, Long-nosed Bandicoot, Green Ring-tailed Possum, and other nocturnal animals such as the Boyd's Forest Dragon. Camp at Julatten for one night. (Travel ~37 mi.)

Day 22: We'll start with an excellent early morning nature walk around our campsite, seeking Emerald Dove, Noisy Pitta, Macleay's Honeyeater, Spotted Catbird, and Pied Monarch. An exciting find last tour was watching, through a spotting scope, an Australian Owlet-Nightjar roosting in a tree cavity. We also watched a giant Lace Monitor, a goanna lizard that grows to over 6 ft. Our next campsite has first-class facilities. Camp at Atherton for three nights. (Travel ~55 mi.).

Day 23: We will travel by mini-bus with a well-known professional naturalist to a creek for Platypus and Tree Kangaroos, and in nearby fields find Golden-headed Cisticola and Chestnut-breasted Manikins. We will visit the famous Curtain Fig Tree, where Yellow-breasted Boatbills can be seen from the boardwalk around the huge strangler fig tree and Topknot Pigeons feed at treetops. This is one of the largest trees in North Queensland and displays a curtain of aerial roots almost 50 ft to the ground. We will visit the elusive Golden Bowerbird and Satin Bowerbird bowers. At Hasties Swamp we can watch Plumed Whistling-Ducks and Sarus Cranes and maybe find the attractively patterned Zodiac Moth. Lunch will be at a dairy, cheese, and chocolate factory where you can see Mistletoebirds from the dining room window. In the late afternoon, driving through blue gum (sclerophyll) woodlands we could see Emus and many Eastern Gray Kangaroos, as well as Common Wallaroo, Pretty-face Wallabies, and Whiptail Wallabies. At night we will spotlight on a private tract near Ravenshoe, seeking rainforest possums such as Lemuroid Ring-tailed Possum, Herbert River Ring-tailed Possum, and Coppery Brush-tailed Possum. On our return trip we can drive the quiet roads near Ravenshoe, seeking Rufous Owl and Masked Owl, using our guide to aid in the search.

Day 24: Your choice today: go birding with Bert and our excellent local guide or tour with Shari to The Coffee Works, The Peanut Place, and maybe even squeeze in a visit to a winery, a coffee plantation, a macadamia farm, or pick some strawberries. The Coffee Works displays the world's largest collection of coffee and tea treasures, some as old as the early 1700s, and offers unlimited samples of coffee, tea, chocolate, and liqueur. How about tasting peanut ice cream at The Peanut Place! This popular tourist destination sells 13 high oleic varieties of locally grown peanuts. These peanuts have a different oil chemistry than regular peanuts.

Birders will visit more of the Atherton Tablelands sites such as Green Valley, Dagarty, Tumoulin, and enormous man-made Lake Tinarro. Birds of the day likely could include Cotton Pygmy-Goose, Brolga, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, White-throated Treecreeper, and Jacky Winter. Near the Tinarro dam Scarlet Honeyeaters are attracted to the flowering eucalypts. The rainforests of Queensland yield a disproportionately high number of endemic birds, many localized to the areas we will travel. Visiting Granite Gorge in the dry country we are in range for Tawny Frogmouth, Common Bronzewing, and Weebill, and amongst the huge boulders are numerous Mareeba Rock Wallabies. Along Tinarro Creek Road we can find Blue-winged Kookaburra and Silver-crowned Friarbird.

Day 25: Two choices again today. Shari will take a group to the Gem Gallery which specializes in cutting, polishing, and designing opal jewelry. The group will arrive early enough for breakfast served with locally grown coffee and tea, with still enough time for some shopping before joining the others at Lake Barrine.

Birders may wish to join Bert at Lake Barrine in Crater Lake National Park. The Tablelands is a World Heritage Site known as the Wet Tropics. Atop a high volcanic plateau rising to over 3200 feet, we walk in the dark, cool rainforests. A real prize would be finding the bird-of-paradise Victoria's Riflebird which, at this season, could be showing its strange display, arching its wings to silhouette its head as the male attempts to seduce the female. Camp near Mission Beach. (Travel ~67 mi.).

Day 26: At our secluded seaside campsite near Mission Beach often roams a Southern Cassowary, a threatened species whose numbers have dropped precipitously owing to introduced predators, auto collisions, and destruction of rain forests through storms and clearing. This amazing flightless bird can weigh over 130 lbs. and its Papuan name derives from its unusual horned head, a helmet of tough skin which acts like a bumper as it runs through the rainforest. You will certainly want to photograph this strange bird as it wanders along the sandy beach. Our next campsite is at Ingham. (Travel ~90 mi.).

Day 27: We visit Tyto Wetlands where dozens of Agile Wallabies roam. The wetlands sport a bonanza of wildlife, including colorful birds such as Crimson Finch, Green Pygmy-Goose, and Olive-backed Oriole. Walk the grassy trails or take the story-high boardwalk between the informative visitor's center and gift shop to the cafe that serves delicious iced coffee. From here we travel to Townsville where we will camp two nights. (Travel ~69 mi.).

Day 28: Early morning birders will want to visit the wetlands at Townsville Common Environmental Park where we can see Royal Spoonbill, Pacific Baza, Bush Stone-Curlew, Latham's Snipe, Eastern Koel, and Rainbow Bee-eater. Later, everyone will be anxious to visit the Billabong Sanctuary for the thrill of being close up and personal with Australian animals and learn of the plight of Koalas, Wombats, and other environmentally threatened species.

Day 29: Most of the day will be spent driving north to Cairns where we will return our rental RVs. Overnight at a Cairns hotel. (Travel ~216 mi.).

Day 30: Air flight from Cairns to Brisbane. Van or bus transportation to Lamington National Park, high in the mountains south of Brisbane. Dinner at O'Reilly's, a fabulous resort atop the mountains. Overnight at O'Reilly's resort with stellar views of the valley below (3 nights).

Day 31: Breakfast at O'Reilly's. At the resort we have a smorgasbord of activities to choose from: bird outings, wine tasting, wildlife encounters, and trekking on a sample of the many half-day and full-day walks within the confines of the national park. We could easily be surprised by a Red-necked Pademelon, a cute miniature version of a kangaroo. Pamper yourself with an optional "mind-melting" massage and skin treatment at the Lost World Spa. We will also have available a local naturalist guide and 4-WD transport in Lamington National Park. Dinner at O'Reilly's.

Day 32: Breakfast and Farewell Dinner at O'Reilly's where meals are so good you will want to lick the plate. Guide and 4-WD transport in Lamington National Park.

Day 33: Breakfast at O'Reilly's. Van or bus transportation to Brisbane airport. See Sydney tour for continuation of Australia travel.

Queensland Tour Price Includes:

- Services of professional naturalist and birding guide and Wagonmaster team
 - RV rental (12 days)
 - RV park campground fees
 - Welcome to Australia dinner
 - Cairns downtown hotel (2 nights)
 - Charter cruise to Great Barrier Reef, including snorkeling and lunch
 - Tjapukai Cultural Park entrance fee
 - Daintree River cruise with guide
 - Guided morning and evening nature tours in Julatten
 - Local birding guide and naturalist at Atherton Highlands (3 days)
 - Lunch at Mungalli Creek Dairy
 - Ravenshoe private reserve access
 - EPA land fees
 - National Park entrance fees
 - Billabong Sanctuary entrance fee
 - Bus transportation in Atherton Highlands (2 days)
 - Cairns airport hotel (1 night)
 - Ground transportation in Cairns
 - Airfare from Cairns to Brisbane
 - Bus/van transportation to/from Lamington National Park
 - Mountain resort accommodations at O'Reilly's (3 nights)
 - 4-WD transport within Lamington National Park with naturalist guide
 - Meals (6) at O'Reilly's, including Farewell Dinner
 - Customized bird and mammal checklists for nature sites
 - Services of staff who will organize tours & optional activities
 - Caravan jackets and nametags
 - "What you should know before you leave" preparatory document
 - Trip preparation packet & checklist
 - Travel logs and regular briefings
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SYDNEY

Sydney, home of the world-famous Sydney Opera House, has unmatched allure as a top-of-the-list tourist site. We will be staying right in the heart of all the action near "The Rocks." This tour is the connection between our Queensland tour and our New Zealand tour and thus includes airfare from Brisbane and to Auckland.

Day 33: Coming off our Queensland tour, we will fly from Brisbane to Sydney and a shuttle will transport us to our downtown hotel. We'll have time for a stroll in the city and enjoy dinner on our own. Sydney hotel (3 nights).

Day 34: Breakfast is included at our hotel. Then we board a double-decker tour bus (with commentary) that will take us to the highlights of the city and surrounding area. You will have a hop-on hop-off ticket, so you can spend as little or as much time as you want at each stop. We will see Darling Harbour and Cockle Bay, cross the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and get spectacular views of the Opera House from Milsons Point. Among many other stops, we will get great views of the Pacific Ocean from Arabanoo Lookout, Bondi Beach and Pavilion.

Day 35: After our hotel breakfast, your tour leader will lead us on a morning walk to the Sydney Botanic Gardens where, surprisingly, among the amazing floral displays and labeled plants we can find a large colony of Gray-headed Flying-foxes hanging from wearied trees, squabbling amongst themselves and flying from tree to tree through the national park, often above walkers and bicyclists who enjoy this park as well. You can continue to roam the Darling Harbour and other downtown sites and then join us for the "tour and tasting" at the Sydney Opera House.

Day 36: Following the hotel breakfast, we will be transported to the Sydney airport, fly to Auckland, New Zealand, and be transported to a hotel near the harbor.

Sydney Tour Price Includes:

- Services of professional naturalist and Wagonmaster team
- Airfare from Brisbane to Sydney
- Ground transport to/from airport to downtown Sydney
- Sydney hotel (3 nights)
- Hotel breakfast each morning (3 days)
- All-day on-off tour bus pass for Sydney area, including Bondi Beach
- Tour and tasting at Sydney Opera House
- Airfare from Sydney to Auckland, New Zealand
- Ground transport to Auckland harbor and hotel

NEW ZEALAND

Hard to beat for spectacular scenery, New Zealand offers nutrient-rich blue seas teeming with whales, dolphins, and fur seals over which glide albatrosses, petrels, and skuas; shorelines of penguins; rugged coastlines and dramatic capes hosting gannet and tern colonies; estuaries for spoonbills, stints and tattlers; wetlands supporting bitterns, rails and crakes; mirrored lakes, sheep-grazed hills; mossy forests and ancient podocarpus forests where Kokako glide across the high canopy; alpine meadows and scree slopes; braided rivers spilling down from snow-covered mountains and hanging glaciers; geysers, hot springs, boiling mud pools and volcanoes; and endemic birds with strange names like Kea, Kiwi, Takahe, Tui, Weka, and Wrybill. Take a breath and enjoy it all!

Day 36: Our New Zealand tour originates in Auckland. Those travelers from our Sydney tour will be flying to Auckland this day and be transported to the hotel near Auckland harbor. Hotel in Auckland for two nights.

Day 37: Hotel breakfast will be provided, at which time we will conduct our tour orientation meeting. You have a choice of two itineraries for today. Tiritiri Mantangi Island is a must-visit site for birders and nature lovers hoping to see New Zealand endemics. We will take a 30-minute ferry ride from Auckland and a guided tour of the island that was once farmlands but now is native forests resulting from an enormous revegetation project from 1984 to 1994. Some 78 species of birds have been observed on or near the island, including endangered species such as Little Spotted Kiwi, Brown Teal, Takahe, Stitchbird, and Kokako. Other endemic species are New Zealand Pigeon, New Zealand Bellbird, Tui, New Zealand Robin, and Whitehead. A packed lunch will be included.

Alternatively, an on-off narrated bus tour of Auckland is offered for those less interested in seeing Tiritiri Mantangi. The tour includes Sky City, Auckland waterfront, Parnell Village, Kelly Tarlton's, Moun Eden, Auckland Zoo, and many more stops. Lunch will be included.

Day 38: We will be renting RV's for travel, sleeping, and many meals. Typically, these are late model Class C turbo diesel vehicles accommodating two to four adults and including double bed, gas stove, refrigerator, microwave, shower, toilet, air-conditioning/heating, pressurized hot & cold water, and radio/CD player. Also included are linen, bedding, and kitchen equipment. We will pick up our RVs in the morning, get groceries, and head to the Firth of Thames where thousands of Bar-tailed Godwits gather in the Austral winter. At the Shorebird Centre a local naturalist will explain the godwits phenomenal migration flight across the Pacific from Alaska. The Centre offers an attractive gift shop and a wide selection of New Zealand nature books. At the estuary, we will especially seek out Wrybills, the unusual shorebird with a bill that hooks to the right. At our Miranda campsite we can luxuriate in a swimming pool filled from thermal mineral springs pouring in from below at a temperature of 97-100°. (Travel ~82 mi.).

Day 39: After revisiting the beach in early morning, we drive toward Waitomo. In the afternoon we take a guided walking tour through Ruakuri Cave, first discovered 400-500 years ago by a young Maori hunting for birds. This tour is followed by a boat ride through the underground Waitomo Glowworm Cave where we will marvel at these bioluminescent insects (*Arachnocampa luminosa*) illuminating Glowworm Grotto. We camp at Waitomo for one night. (Travel ~100 mi.).

Day 40: We have a leisurely morning start driving in the direction of Rotorua and stop at a raptor facility that raises endangered New Zealand Falcons for release into the wild. Here we will view a falconry training session, affording amazing close ups of these birds in action and flying freely. We camp at Rotorua for one night. (Travel ~90 mi.).

Day 41: Our travels today take us past Lake Taupo, New Zealand's largest lake, and on to Napier. Ahuriri Estuary offers birders a variety of birds such as Australian Shoveler, Rufous-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, White-headed Stilt, and Double-banded Plover. There will be time to check out the Classic Sheepskins Tannery where you could have a tour of the sheep tanning process and purchase sheepskin products, such as warm clothing made from the fur of Alpaca and possum. In the afternoon we have the unique experience of riding in a wagon pulled by a tractor, racing to beat the incoming tide along the narrow rock-strewn beach and vertical cliffs. Then we visit Cape Kidnappers for a view of the largest mainland colony (7500 pairs) of Australian Gannets and a colony of White-fronted Terns. Camp at Napier. (Travel ~164 mi.).

Day 42: On the way to Wellington we will stop for lunch (optional) at a brewery named after a well-known bird, the Tui, which also can be found in the area. At a stop at Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre we will be introduced to the comical antics of the Kaka, cross a foot bridge over a pool filled with monster eels, and learn what are Takake and Kokako. Camp at Wellington for two nights. (Travel ~200 mi.).

Day 43: A site all enjoyed on our last trip is Kaori Wildlife Sanctuary. This unique protected area excludes the introduced predators that have plagued New Zealand endemics elsewhere on the main islands. A fascinating Kaori exhibition hall traces millions of years of natural history, giving real insight into New Zealand's loss of natural habitat and native animals. At the same time, the sanctuary illustrates the successful wildlife comeback in their enclosure. This sanctuary and its inhabitants are a delight to photographers. Here, in the wild, we can see Bellbird, Saddleback, Whitehead, New Zealand Falcon, Red-crowned Parakeet, and best of all, during a special night tour, Little Spotted Kiwi. We undoubtedly will hear many Morepork calling and might be lucky enough to see the owl as we did last trip. Here also are the prehistoric Tuatara that look like large lizards or small dinosaurs, but are neither.

Day 44: Cook Strait separates North Island and South Island. The 3-hr. car-ferry ride is touted to be one of the most spectacular ferry rides in the world. We have an excellent chance of seeing up to six species of albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, and Buller's Shearwater as well as Common, Dusky and Hector's Dolphins, and Killer Whales. Camp is on the South Island at Kaikoura for two nights (Travel by RV ~105 mi.).

Day 45: We'll take a pelagic boat tour offshore from Kaikoura. These nutrient-rich waters are famous for Humpback, Killer, and Sperm Whales, often seen at close quarters. Albatrosses are notoriously difficult to see close up, but here many come close to the boat and we are likely to see Buller's, Black-browed, and Salvin's, as well as Giant Petrels and lots of an oddly named petrel called a Cape Pigeon. Kaikoura, a small fishing town, is known for its crayfish (rock lobster) and also hosts a New Zealand fur seal colony.

Day 46: We travel to Christchurch, with a free afternoon to visit some sites on your own: the downtown area of this famous city or the impressive Antarctic Centre which includes a Blue Penguin rehabilitation facility. Camp at Christchurch. (Travel ~111 mi.).

Day 47: From Christchurch we travel into the Southern Alps to Twizel, Lake Ruataniwa, and in clear view of Mt. Cook at 12,136 ft. the highest mountain in Australasia. We will tour the Black Stilt Captive Breeding Centre and perhaps be fortunate enough to see these in the wild, the world's rarest wading birds, in the shadow of spectacular snow-covered Mt. Cook. Last trip we found Pied Stilts and an odd hybrid crossed with Black Stilt. Camp at Twizel. (Travel ~177 mi.).

Day 48: Continuing through the Southern Alps, we pass a series of turquoise lakes and a salmon-raising pond, popular for New Zealand Scaup. Alongside the gravel strewn braided streams we can see Black-fronted Terns, Double-banded Dotterel, Skylark, Dunnoch, and the New Zealand rare Great-crested Grebe. The braided streams have become flowerbeds for colorful introduced lupines, pretty to view but environmentally disruptive. In the evening we will take a Lake Wakatipu cruise on a 1912 vintage steamer from Queenstown and enjoy a gourmet dinner prepared from locally grown fresh products. Camp in Queenstown, originally a sheep run, then a gold rush town and now South Island's most popular ski resort, set on Lake Wakatipu among rugged peaks and hills smoothed by glaciers. (Travel ~124 mi.).

Day 49: Passing through mountains, beside large lakes, and then descending to broad farmlands populated by thousands of sheep and large herds of Red Deer, we thread our way toward the west coast, stopping at Te Anau. In the afternoon we can explore part of the expansive 12,000-sq.km. Fiordland National Park, trying to catch a glimpse of Yellowhead, one of the hardest endemics to see. At The Tunnel, undoubtedly we will meet the comical Kea at the parking lot. An alpine parrot, it has a fascination for tires and windshield wipers. Camp at Te Anau for two nights. (Travel ~106+ mi.).

Day 50: The day is dedicated to exploring Fiordland National Park, encompassing wet forests, lakes, braided rivers, alpine meadows, glaciers, snow-capped peaks, and fiords. Rudyard Kipling described magical, unforgettable Milford Sound as the eighth wonder of the world and to this day it is one of the most famous attractions in New Zealand. We will cruise by tour boat through Milford Sound to the Tasman Sea, viewing glacier-capped mountains that rise a mile high directly from the sea. We have a chance at seeing Fiordland Crested Penguins and undoubtedly will find New Zealand Fur Seals lounging on the rocks. In the evening we can visit a favorite restaurant at Te Anau where locally raised venison is a specialty on the menu.

Day 51: After visiting Te Anau Wildlife Centre, we cross to the southeast coast of South Island at Dunedin, choosing among several routes, depending how much of the coastline you want to explore. Camp at Dunedin for two nights. (Travel ~177 mi.).

Day 52: On the Otago Peninsula we will visit the only mainland breeding colony of Royal Albatrosses in the world. We will also see a nesting colony of Steward Island Shags, perhaps a few Spotted Shags, and get a close-up view of the rare Hooker's Sea-lion. At the time of our visit, New Zealand Fur Seals are giving birth and we can see the young, aged from a few hours to a few weeks, huddled next to their mothers. Best of all will be the march of the penguins; this is a must-see for everyone. Yellow-eyed Penguins—rarest in the world—emerge from the sea, pause to survey the beach for sea-lions, and then march across the sand to the grassy slopes where they spend the night in burrows. On the same hillsides we could find a few juvenile Blue Penguins, the smallest penguin species in the world. As we leave the peninsula in the evening, we might chance upon a Little Owl perched on a fence post.

Day 53: We follow the coast to Christchurch. In mid-afternoon you may wish to take the city bus to downtown and see the historic sites. Alternatively, you could visit the Antarctic Centre which includes a ride in the all terrain amphibious Hagglund. Both are optional. Camp at Christchurch. (Travel ~223 mi.).

Day 54: We will turn in our RVs and transfer to a Christchurch hotel near the airport. In the late afternoon and evening we will tour a small wildlife reserve with a captive breeding program for Great Spotted Kiwi, enjoy a cultural performance by native Maori people and celebrate our farewell dinner. In darkness only illuminated by dim flashlights, we will visit the Kiwi enclosures for our farewell to the national bird of New Zealand.

Day 55: Return flights from Christchurch.

New Zealand North & South Island Tour Price Includes:

- Services of professional naturalist and birding guide and Wagonmaster team
- RV rental (17 days)
- RV park campground fees
- Auckland breakfasts (2 days)
- Auckland hotel (2 nights)
- Tiritiri Matangi Island boat transit and island tour, including lunch
- Auckland city tour, including lunch (alternative to Tiritiri Mantangi)
- Entrance fees and naturalist talk at Miranda
- Waitomo Glowworm Cave Tour by boat
- Ruakuri Cave Tour
- Wingspan National Bird of Prey Centre falconry demonstration
- Seashore tractor-trailer transportation to Cape Kidnappers Gannet Reserve
- Lunch at Tui Brewery
- Pakaha Mount Bruce entrance fee
- Karori Wildlife Sanctuary entrance fee
- Nighttime Kiwi tour at Karori Wildlife Sanctuary

- Cook Strait ferry
- Albatross Encounter pelagic boat tour
- Entrance and tour at Kiki Visitor Hide
- Cruise and gourmet dinner on Lake Wakatipu
- Milford Sound boat excursion
- Te Anau Wildlife Centre entrance fee
- Bus/van transport Otago Peninsula
- Royal Albatross Centre entrance fee
- Tour and guide at penguin preserve
- Christchurch hotel (2 nights)
- Shuttle to/from Willowbank
- Willowbank Wildlife Reserve entrance
- Maori cultural performance
- Kiwi nighttime tour
- Farewell dinner
- Shuttle to Christchurch airport
- Customized bird checklists for birding sites
- Services of staff who will organize tours & optional activities
- "What you should know before you leave" preparatory document
- Trip preparation packet & checklist
- Travel logs and regular briefings

**This web site is designed by Bert Frenz.
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