



TOUR INFORMATION FOR NEW ZEALAND

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING NEW ZEALAND: United Kingdom citizens will need six months validity on their passport, an onward or return air ticket and, as of July 2019, have registered for an Electronic Travel Authority (**ETA**) with the New Zealand Department of Immigration. The New Zealand ETA is valid for 2 years and can be used for multiple visits for the purposes of tourism. Each visit has a maximum stay of six months.

The New Zealand e-Visitor service is free of charge when you apply using the official site of the New Zealand Department of Immigration at <https://www.etanewzealand.com/application-form/> If you don't have access to the internet please call the New Zealand High Commission in London for advice (Tel: 020 7930 8422).

Citizens of other nations should contact their nearest New Zealand Embassy to obtain entry requirements

Note: Upon entry into Auckland, Biosecurity New Zealand is very strict. Please make sure all footwear, tripod legs etc are spotless - free from any dirt or foreign material. Specific information can be found here: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/enter/personal>

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES: *This tour starts in Auckland and ends in Christchurch. We strongly advise participants to arrive in New Zealand at least a day before the tour starts. This will allow time to rest and start to acclimate. Day One is busy and long; it starts early and typically ends with a late night kiwi walk, so a good night's sleep the night before is an excellent idea.*

If you do intend to arrive the same day as the start of the tour, please let us know in advance, as we must confirm that your flight arrival time gives you plenty of time to get to the hotel where the introductory meeting is held at 08.00 on Day 1.

On the last day of the tour we normally arrive into Christchurch in early afternoon. Arrival at the Christchurch International Airport will be around 1300 hrs, please do not book flights departing earlier than 1530 (3:30pm) on the final day of the tour. For your outbound flight please also make sure you have at least 2 hours between your arrival into Auckland from Christchurch and your onward International flight.

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: The tour begins at our Auckland hotel **at 08.00 on Day 1** then we take the 4-hour drive to Kerikeri. This informal meeting gives the leader the opportunity to introduce everyone to each other and to let you know generally what to expect on the trip - pace of the tour, daily routine, etc.

CURRENCY: The currency is the New Zealand Dollar (NZD). Credit cards (Mastercard, American Express, Visa) are accepted by many businesses with Visa the most widely accepted. Most petrol stations, cafés, and restaurants accept credit cards, but cash is useful for smaller items such as snacks or drinks in some of the more out-of-the-way places. Cash can easily be withdrawn at banks or ATMs.

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Most retail outlets do not accept overseas currency or travellers cheques; most banks can change foreign currency but the best rates are often those at exchange centres in airports. As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature such as laundry, drinks, postcards, souvenirs, etc.

CLIMATE: The weather in New Zealand can change rapidly, particularly at sites near the coast. Generally, we should experience mild to warm weather, but at times it can be cold, wet, and windy, especially on the pelagic trips. Summer (December to February) is generally warm (68-86°F). At any season, even mid-summer, the weather can be cool, especially in the South and Stewart Islands, and rain is possible at any time.

ALTITUDE: We will spend most of our time at sea level and at altitudes below approximately 3,000 feet.

PACE OF THE TOUR: The general pace of the tour will be easy to moderate. Most of our walks will last no more than a few hours, in easy to moderate conditions; some trails will be wet if there has been rain recently. This tour is considered low impact and requires a low to moderate (or better) level of fitness. Low to moderate fitness is defined as "able to walk for at least 30 minutes or more on undulating terrain without significant help. Our days will often last from early morning (typically leaving the motel around 07.30 each morning) until late afternoon or early evening; our lunches will typically be picnics in the field. Sometimes we will bird at night, walking across uneven, sandy terrain, or up and down forest trails. Whenever possible we will make our birding excursions optional so that those who want to can have a few hours off to relax but, due to the nature of this tour, this happens infrequently.

New Zealand may seem small on the map, but most overseas visitors are surprised at how big the country really is--and even more at the length of time it can take to drive from one location to another. This tour is designed to cover the North, South, and Stewart Islands at a reasonable pace, limiting the driving times each day as much as possible. Most of New Zealand's roads are single-lane, paved, and sometimes winding. In a few areas, we will travel on gravel roads.

The pelagic trips will range from three hours to all day (10-12 hours); the all-day trips include lunch on board. Our boats have adequate cabin space to provide shelter from the weather.

Please note that circumstances such as adverse weather or local events may require a shift in our exact day-to-day itinerary. This applies most obviously to our pelagic trips, but even visits to land-based sites may be modified if the leaders determine that such changes are advised.

NEW ZEALAND PELAGIC TRIPS:

WEATHER: Climate conditions play a big part in the events of the day. We trust the skipper of the vessel to decide to whether the trip will run or not. However, our tour leader reserves the right to cancel the trip. We will always try to run the outing if possible, but safety comes first. The boats we use are all officially certified vessels and carry the appropriate safety equipment. The skippers are well known to us, and follow strict safety and legal guidelines for safe boat use.

SEASICKNESS: Seasickness can be a problem for some people. If you know you get seasick, or if you haven't been on a pelagic for some time and suspect there is a chance of getting seasick, you should consider some sort of medication. It is also a good idea to test any medication for side effects prior to using it on the trip.

It is best to avoid alcohol the night before a pelagic, and you should eat at least a light breakfast that morning, as it often seems better to have a little something in your stomach.

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Many medications suggest taking a dose the night before the trip. Ginger snaps or ginger ale often work, as ginger itself has anti-nausea properties. Coca Cola or other caffeinated drinks can help fight the drowsiness than often accompanies some seasickness remedies.

WHAT TO BRING: Other than binoculars, cameras, and other normal birding equipment, there are a few things that may make your day on the water more comfortable. If there is spray or it's a little drizzly and you need to be on the deck to see the birds, it can be useful to have lightweight wet weather clothing, including a waterproof-coat and trousers that can easily fit into your day bag.

Most of the boats we use on the New Zealand coast are small (10-15 passengers) or very small (6-7 passengers). You are not going to see a lot unless you are out on the deck, and in some cases the cabin of the boat is too small to comfortably fit more than a couple of people anyway.

That said, there is usually enough comfortable seating, even if it is outside, and we never pack so many people onto a boat that there is not adequate space to move and see the birds.

Even in mid-summer it can be cool on the water. It is best to dress in layers, bringing enough warm clothing just in case. That said, the New Zealand sun is very harsh, and precautions such as sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses will be used.

On full-day trips, you will need to bring your own food and drink (the leader will advise on this), but there is usually tea and coffee available on the boat.

PELAGIC LOCATIONS:

HAURAKI GULF (Auckland) Hauraki Gulf trips leave from Sandspit near Warkworth. We generally depart at 08:00 and return around 19:00.

WHITIANGA (The Coromandel) trips usually depart the marina about midday and return around 19:00.

STEWART ISLAND Run or full-day trips. We usually leave the main wharf in Oban at 08:00 returning around 18:00. Because of the weather and conditions around Stewart Island, we use a slightly larger boat, with a large cabin and seating area and a large open deck; the larger boat makes it possible for us to get out to some of the reefs and sea-mounts.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

There are no major health risks in New Zealand. No immunisations are required for visitors unless you are visiting other countries en route. It is recommended, however, that you have up to date tetanus, polio immunisations and your yearly flu jab.

Tap water is safe to drink and can be used to fill water bottles for daytime use.

New Zealand has no snakes, and poisonous spiders are very rare and almost never encountered.

Insects: Bring a strong insect repellent for protection against mosquitoes and sand flies. Citrinella oil has been recommended by many residents of New Zealand as a deterrent against sand flies, while any DEET-based repellent should suffice against mosquitoes.

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Motion Sickness: If you suffer from motion sickness using appropriate pills/wrist bands/patches are strongly advised. This tour includes several pelagic trips ranging from three to twelve hours. The birds are fantastic, but we may encounter rough water, so if you are prone to motion sickness, remember to bring appropriate medication. Both prescription and over-the-counter medications are available to combat motion sickness. It is a good idea to test any medication for side effects before using it on the tour.

As it may be difficult to obtain personal medication during the tour, be sure to bring appropriate amounts of prescription and other medications with you.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: With the exception of our one night on Tiritiri Matangi, we'll be staying at good-quality motels with private bathrooms. On Tiritiri Matangi we will be staying in the only accommodation on the island, where we will stay in shared bunkrooms with a communal kitchen area and unisex bathroom. A sleeping bag and liner, small towel, and pillow case are provided. We'll leave most of our luggage on the mainland that night, so you will need to pack your necessities in an overnight bag or daypack.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Most motels in New Zealand offer self-service laundry rooms. Full laundry service will not likely be available.

FOOD: The food in New Zealand is of a very good to excellent standard. Local dairy products and organic produce are known for their freshness and taste, while the humble fish-and-chip shop is the typical fast food outlet. Regional treats include Gingernuts and ANZAC biscuits, meat and veggie pies, and pavlova ("pav") for dessert. New Zealand is celebrated around the world for its wonderful cheeses and wines.

Breakfasts are standard continental style; we will often pick up our lunches in the morning and eat them at a birding location during the day. A sandwich or filled roll, piece of fruit or cake, and a small drink are included. Dinner is regularly at a café or restaurant, with a selection from the normal menu. Tea/coffee stops and snacks are not included in the tour price.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regretfully, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to take supplemental food with them.

ELECTRICITY: Current is 220V/50HZ AC and most outlets accept plugs with two flat slanted prongs. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

DRINKS: The leader will provide bottled water or a soft drink at lunch. One dinner beverage is included in the tour price. Other drinks, such as bottled water for use in your room, during the day in the vehicle, or additional drinks at the evening meal are to be purchased by the individual tour participants.

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INTERNET ACCESS: Widely available and relatively cheap (around NZ\$5 or less per hour). There is generally time during the tour to check emails, etc. but do not depend on regular email access unless you bring your own laptop or tablet. Many of the motels we stay in have some form of WIFI internet access which you can buy time for, some give this for free.

FIELD CLOTHING: Informal dress is acceptable everywhere.

Sun hat	Sturdy, comfortable shoes for day use
Shirts for warm and cool weather	Lightweight cotton trousers
Sweater (polar fleece, down, or wool)	Gloves and warm hat
Warm jacket	Waterproof over-trousers (useful for boat trips and windy conditions)
Good waterproof jacket (preferably Gore-tex or equivalent fabric)	Waterproof shoes or sandals rubber boots (for boat trips)

IMPORTANT MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

Sunglasses and sunscreen (15-30+ SPF)	Folding travel umbrella
Water bottle or canteen	Small rucksack/ day-pack
Notebook and pencil	Motion sickness medication for pelagic trips
Alarm clock	Plastic bags of various sizes
Headlamp or small torch with extra batteries	Universal bath/sink plug
Insect repellent	Personal medication

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide.

LUGGAGE: The checked-luggage weight limit on most international flights is usually 20kg (44lbs). If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours porters are not available to carry your luggage to the room. **Please do not bring any bag that is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself.** As a general rule, in addition to using your Sunbird luggage tags, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

As there will be a couple nights on the tour where you'll leave your main luggage with the tour vehicle and take an overnight bag to the night's lodging on an island (Steward and Tiritiri Matangi Islands) a duffel or day pack is also useful for this process.

Rules governing the luggage that may be checked in for flights or carried on board vary considerably between airlines with some companies now allowing only one checked bag per person, while others still allow two. Our Final Information document which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure will give details of the specific regulations imposed by the airline that we will be using for this tour.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT:

Telescope & Tripod	Basic first aid kit
Field guides	Maps
Laser pointer	Cooler for food/drinks in vehicle

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PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenic opportunities will be plentiful and simple to obtain, but birds can be difficult to photograph. Photographic opportunities will abound on several of the islands and although a birdwatching tour is not normally the best means of pursuing this aim, this tour does offer many superb chances. Digiscoping is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope will not be available for this activity. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

INSURANCE: Theft is a worldwide problem. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are adequately insured, and pack such valuables in your carry on luggage. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TRANSPORT: Transportation throughout the tour will be by minibus driven by the leader. A rotational system will be used in the minibus so that all participants have opportunities to enjoy the advantages of sitting near the front of the bus. There will be frequent long drives, occasionally on winding roads. Pelagic trips will be on small boats with small but adequate cabin space. Some of the boats we use are chartered exclusively for our group, but at some times there may be boats with other passengers onboard to offset costs.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Each couple/participant will be provided with their own copy of the Scofield/Stephenson guide:

Scofield P., and Stephenson, B., 2013. *Birds of New Zealand: A Photographic Guide*. A definitive introduction to the identification and behaviour of the country's extraordinary avian life. Illustrated with nearly a thousand new photographs, drawing on the latest information from birders and biologists. There is also now an App version of this book, available for iPhones/iPads, Androids, and Windows-based smart phones, available through the usual methods (iTunes App store, Android store, etc). **Recommended guide for this tour.**

Chudleigh, B. *Shorebirds of New Zealand: A Photographic Showcase*. Privately published. ISBN 0-473-07647-0. Good overview with good photographs.

Heather, B., and H. Robertson. 2015. *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. Oxford UP. A thorough guide to the birds of New Zealand with color plates, status, range maps, descriptions, and information on population sizes, breeding, behaviour, etc. **Recommended.**

Moon, G. 2000. *The Reed Field Guide to New Zealand Birds*. Reed Publishing. A photographic guide to the birds found on the mainland of New Zealand. Basic, but provides some photos in a small portable format.

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Onley, D., and P. Scofield, 2007. *Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World*. Princeton UP. The most comprehensive guide covering all tubenose species. **Recommended.**

Parkinson, B. 2001. *Field Guide to New Zealand Seabirds*. New Holland Publishers. Photographic guide that gives status and distribution information for all pelagic birds occurring in New Zealand waters.

Robertson, H., B. Heather, and D. Onley 2015. *Hand Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. Oxford UP. A portable field guide condensed from the original work by the same authors listed above; includes just the color plates, maps, and descriptions of all species occurring in New Zealand. **Recommended.**

Shirihai, H., and B. Jarret. 2007. *Whales, Dolphins and Seals: A Field Guide to Marine Mammals of the World*. Princeton University Press. The most comprehensive field guide available to marine mammals, covering all the species we are likely to encounter, in a compact and travel-friendly format. **Recommended.**

Shirihai, H. 2002. *A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife*. Alula P. A comprehensive guide covering birds and mammals of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic, including New Zealand. Color plates and photographs (many taken in New Zealand) and text covering subspecies; an excellent reference. **Recommended.**

Other Guides:

Dawson, J., and R. Luca, 2000. *Nature Guide to the New Zealand Forest*. Godwit/Random House. Excellent introduction to New Zealand's forest flora with a broad overview of forest birds and other fauna.

Hutching, G. 1998. *The Natural World of New Zealand*. Penguin. An excellent reference covering mammals, birds, fish, invertebrates, insects, plants, and ecology.

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, motel addresses, etc, and your international air tickets for the tour will be sent to you about three weeks before departure. If you have any questions about any aspect of the tour, please contact us.