

Hokies Abroad: Sustaining Human Societies and the Environment

26 December 2023 - 17 January 2024, New Zealand

Itinerary Highlights



Day 1 - 3 Christchurch

Group flight arrives. Orientation and welcome dinner

Wildlife reserve

See the endangered kiwi bird, and visit with the cheeky Kea in the free flight aviary. There will also be free time to explore the wildlife reserve to visit with all of the resident farm animals, native and exotic wildlife.

Service-learning and lab experiences

Participate in the restoration of the Tutaepatu Lagoon, a place of cultural significance to Ngai Tahu for its mahinga kai (traditional food sources) and spiritual values.

Visit the Hinewai Reserve, an historic block of farmland that has been regenerated with native bush and abundant birdlife. Learn about the reserve from managers and experts before exploring it on foot to view the regeneration first-hand.



Waka on Avon

Paddle a hand-crafted waka down the river Avon and learn about the importance of the waka to Māori culture.

Academic highlights and class sessions: Māori belief system of their universe, Sustainable tourism - A New Zealand perspective, topographic maps, introduction to modules.

Day 4 - 5 Rural Canterbury

Agriculture, technology and tourism

Tour a farm with a local family to an insight into livestock and agricultural practices.

Visit Opuke Thermal Pools, with water sourced from the mountains and business powered by the sun, this is a unique experience where you can soak in the southern alpine views. Discuss and view power generation schemes

Rakaia River lab experience

New Zealand is famous for beautiful and rich braided rivers. With the support of a local environmental worker/farmer, you will make observations of both the geomorphology of a braided river and the plant and bird wildlife habitats it forms.

Day 6 - 8 The Wild South

Hooker Valley hike

Enjoy the awe-inspiring landscapes of the Southern Alps on one of New Zealand's most iconic hikes. The track winds up the Hooker Valley past alpine streams, over swing bridges and alongside glaciers in the shadow of Aoraki Mount Cook.



Cardrona Alpine Resort

Learn about Cardrona Alpine Resort's sustainable and environmental initiatives from a member of the Cardrona crew and ride on the McDougall's Express Gondola to the top of the mountain to enjoy spectacular 360° views.

Milford Sound

Scenic cruise travelling the length of Milford Sound for excellent views of waterfalls, rainforest, mountains and wildlife. Learn from specialist nature guides with insightful commentary.



Bird sanctuary

Visit one of the few places in New Zealand where you can see the rare flightless takahe, as well as native waterfowl, parakeets, tui, kea, kaka and wood pigeons.

Day 9 - 11 Queenstown

Coach tour of the Lakes District

Take a guided trip through Queenstown, Arrowtown and surrounds with a local tourism expert, learning about the history of the area and local business.



Routeburn Track

Led by local guides, you will walk part of one of New Zealand's Great Walks. Make your way through spectacular beech forest with birds flitting through the trees, and follow the Routeburn River as it roars through a magnificent gorge before plunging beneath the rocks.



Free time

A full day to explore Queenstown and everything it has to offer, at your own leisure.

Day 12 - 14 West Coast

Fox Dairy Farm

Hear about the challenging conversion to dairy and making marginal land more productive at this 400 hectare farm.

Lake Matheson walk

If the weather is right, Lake Matheson is the photographer's dream, offering reflective panoramas of the western face of Aoraki Mount Cook, New Zealand's tallest mountain.

Franz Josef Glacier Valley walk

Hike ancient paths to see first-hand the effects of climate change on New Zealand's glaciers, as you learn about the legends, history, flora and fauna along the way.

Punakaiki Pancake Rocks

These curious structures of limestone look like stacks of giant pancakes. They were formed 30 million years ago beneath the sea surface, and seismic activity eventually lifted the limestone to the surface, where waves burst through the blowholes in spectacular fashion at high tide.



Academic highlights and class sessions

Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project, Introduction to Abel Tasman National Park, A tourism operator's perspective: Abel Tasman Kayaks, Sustainability in fisheries.

Abel Tasman kayak and walk

Explore the breathtakingly beautiful Abel Tasman National Park on foot and by guided kayak. Abel Tasman National Park is renowned for its golden beaches, sculptured granite cliffs, and its world-famous coast track. Bring your camera!



Carbon credit field lecture

New Zealand participates in the world carbon system, in which forest owners receive cash credits for planting trees, and pay those credits back when they are harvested. This system has made for an interesting and incentivized economy that has affected forest planting since 1990.

Day 18 Kaikoura

Dolphin encounter

Swim with the graceful, curious and sociable dusky dolphins in their natural environment in the coastal waters off Kaikoura.

You're in for a treat with this unique experience!

Seal colony walk

Walk the magnificent peninsula coastline and visit the fur seal colony. Information panels located along the Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway introduce the history, geology, flora and fauna of the area.

Day 19 - 21 Canterbury / Christchurch

Forestry site visit

Visit Bottle Lake forest, the home of a large plantation managed by a forest company dedicated to providing sustainable forest and land, resource and recreational management practices. Learn about aspects of tree planting, management, thinning and harvesting, and geographic components of species success.

There may also be time to visit the adjacent beach.

Group farewell dinner