Wattletree Garden Tours

New Zealand South Island Spring Tour 2026

A full 15 day tour to explore the South Island top to bottom.

Nelson, Blenheim, Christchurch, Franz Josef Glacier, Queenstown, Akaroa, Queenstown, Milford Sound, Te Anau and Dunedin!

Join Brian Sams
& Wattletree Garden Tours
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Wattletree Garden Tours

Tour highlights

- Superb gardens at their best in Spring
- Franz Josef Glacier
- Experienced local operator
- Giant House
- Trans Alpine railway journey
- Milford Sound tour and cruise
- Well located quality hotels
- Tasman Cruise
- Wineries
- Hortensia House
- Many meals
- All organised

We have planned this tour to coincide with the best of spring gardens. New Zealand has some of the best gardens in the world and we will visit many of the best! This tour will take us on a great sightseeing journey of this wonderful country. We hope you decide to join us!

Brian Sams is a Toowoomba based horticulturist involved in running gardening workshops, consultation and of course leading garden based tours.

Brian has been leading garden tours overseas and within Australia since 2006. Why? He loves it!

Day 1 Tuesday 10 November Australia to Nelson, New Zealand (D and meals in flight)

This morning we fly to NZ departing Brisbane or other ports as arranged.

Accommodation: Hotel Nelson or similar – 2 nights

Day 2 Wednesday 11 November – Day tour to Kaiteriteri (B, L, D)

This morning travel by coach to Kaiteriteri to take the very scenic cruise from Kaiteriteri to Totara Nui and return. This narrated cruise stops to see famous landmarks and hopefully NZ fur seals. Lunch is included. We will have a little free time back in Nelson before our welcome dinner in the hotel restaurant this evening.

Day 3 Thursday 12 November – Nelson to Blenheim (B, L)

Depart Nelson and drive through farmlands, pine plantations then the Rai Valley to the vineyards surrounding Blenheim in the Marlborough Wine Country. On arrival explore Huguette Michel-Fleurie's Monet inspired hydrangea garden at Hortensia House. It is beautiful. The Marlborough district is the top wine producing area in New Zealand with its wines winning awards around the world. This afternoon we will visit a local winery for wine tastings and lunch. After lunch we will visit local winery for wine tastings and lunch. After lunch we will visit **Welton House** this lovely garden blends structured borders, native plantings and productive gardens in a working farm and vineyard. Later head to Blenheim.

Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Blenheim or similar– 1 night

Day 4 Friday 13 November – Blenheim to Christchurch (B, D)

Depart Blenheim and travel along a thin ledge of land pinned between the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean and the rugged ranges to visit Fyffe House, an old whaling station restored as a museum. We then head into Kaikoura for a lunch stop (own cost). Continue across the farmlands of the North Canterbury Plains to reach Christchurch. Dinner in the hotel this evening.

Accommodation: Distinction Christchurch or similar – 4 nights

Day 5 Saturday 14 November – Christchurch sightseeing (B) (B)

This morning we will undertake a sightseeing tour of Christchurch City, including the "Cardboard Cathedral", Victoria Square and the Bridge of Remembrance. View the site of the Christchurch Cathedral which is now being restored after having been in badly damaged after the February 2011 earthquake and a tour of the wonderful 21 hectare Christchurch Botanic Garden. This afternoon visit Mona Vale garden featuring rose and iris gardens, woodland plantings along the river and colour-themed borders. It is a lovely garden. This evening is at leisure to explore the nearby restaurant scene.

Day 6 Sunday 15 November – Christchurch to Banks Peninsula (B)

Our first visit is to visit Ohinetahi, the famous private garden of Sir Miles Warren located on Banks Peninsula where we will have morning tea. Later travel to Broadfield Garden which aims for excellence in design, planting and maintenance using natives and New Zealand raised varieties of Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Camellias, Cherry, Maples, Peony, Daffodils, Lily, and Roses. We will then return to Christchurch for a free afternoon and evening.

Day 7 Monday 16 November – Christchurch area garden day (B, Morning tea)
This morning visit Fisherman's Bay garden a famous if somewhat hard to get to garden that has outstanding range of plantings and great views over the Pacific coastline with a profusion of wildlife in and around the area. Then travel to the beautiful unspoilt old French whaling depot of Akaroa. Akaroa was settled by the French in an early attempt to colonise New Zealand and still retains a good deal of French character in its street names, boutique shops and cafes. Here you will have time to wander the shops and purchase lunch (own cost) before a visit to the Giant House, an historic Akaroa house with terraced gardens. This place is something special and one of the most amazing gardens I have visited…..

Day 8 Tuesday 17 November – Christchurch to Franz Josef via Tranz Alpine railway (B, D)
We depart Christchurch and traverse the Southern Alps aboard the famous Tranz-Alpine railway to Arthurs Pass. We will journey over the Canterbury Plains, followed by the spectacular gorges and river valleys of the Waimakariri River. Once we have crossed into the Southern Alps we will be met at the Village of Arthurs Pass by our coach to continue our journey to the West Coast. We will stop in Hokitika to visit the Greenstone and Glass Blowing factories. Continue towards the Westland National Park, the home of Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers before arriving for dinner at the hotel.
Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Franz Josef or similar (1 night)

Day 9 Wednesday 18 November – Franz Josef to Queenstown (B, D)
This morning there will be time for an optional flight to land on the Glacier (at additional cost approx. NZ$280pp). The scenic flight travels towards the southern end of the South Island's West Coast Road in a real wilderness experience. For those who do not take the scenic flight you may like to do a self-guided walk to the bottom of the glacier – it's 5.4km return walk. The path takes you over a shingle and rock riverbed and is a relatively easy walk. Later we have a beautiful drive via Haast, the Westland National Park and Lake Wanaka to Queenstown. Dinner is in the hotel.
Accommodation: Scenic Suites Hotel or similar (2 nights)

Day 10 Thursday 19 November – Queenstown (B)
This morning we will have a sightseeing tour of Queenstown and Arrowtown - a community with a colourful history. In its heyday Arrowtown was a frontier city which now has some lovely walks around the historic area and of course galleries and cafes. The afternoon is at your leisure – and there are plenty of options—jetboat, cruise the lake on the vintage steamer, join a winery tour to some of the most southern vineyards in the world, ride the aerial gondola to Bob's Peak for the panoramic view across the lake to the mountains, join a 4WD tour into the home of 'Middle Earth' where much of the filming was done for 'Lord of the Rings' or if you dare – try bungy-jumping (all at extra cost). Tonight is free.

Day 11 Friday 20 November – Queenstown to Te Anau (B, D)
Morning visit to the Botanical garden and some free time for lunch before travelling to Te Anua On arrival we will undertake a trip to see the Glow worm caves. Dinner tonight in the hotel or nearby
Accommodation: Distinction Te Anau Hotel and Villas or similar for 2 nights

Day 12 Saturday 21 November Milford Sound and return (B, L,)
Today we journey to Milford Sound which is located in the World Heritage Fiordland National Park. It is a lovely drive into the Sound through stunning scenery and entering via the Homer Tunnel, a 1.2km tunnel. Upon arrival at Milford Sound, board a comfortable vessel for a truly spectacular cruise where we will see Mitre Peak, glacier scarred rock walls that rise 1,200m vertically from the sea and waterfalls. Picnic box lunch included. Dinner is at your leisure this evening.

Day 13 Sunday 22 November – Te Anau to Dunedin (B, D)
Depart Te Anau to travel across the rolling farmland to visit the beautiful Maple Glen - a private garden that is one of the best of its kind I have visited. Cool climate plantings on a massive scale reflecting the passion of the owners. Later continue the interesting drive to Dunedin, a city established by settlers from Scotland. Scottish heritage is everywhere!
Accommodation: Scenic Hotel Dunedin or similar (2 nights)

Day 14 Monday 23 November – Dunedin day (B, L, D)
This morning we visit Larnach Castle where we will have a guided tour of the lovely gardens and gain an understanding of the history of the settlement. We will then have lunch in the castle restaurant. Next is a chance to explore Glenfalloch Garden - 30 acres of historic garden begun in 1871 and filled with splendid plantings. Stroll amongst the beautiful seasonal displays and enjoy the lush surrounds. Our farewell dinner tonight is in a local restaurant.

Day 15 Tuesday 24 November – Dunedin to Auckland to Australia (B and meals in flight)
Depart New Zealand this morning transferring to Dunedin Airport to fly home via Wellington. Flight times tbc.

Quality matters!
⇒ **Comfortable modern hotels**
⇒ **Experienced tour guides**
⇒ **We always s have a wonderful, friendly & fun group to travel with!**

Tour price	
Full tour including land and all airfares per person twin share	**$10495**
Land only price - no airfares - please email to confirm	**$9245**
Tour deposit - deductible from final tour price	**$500**
Single supplement	**$2590**

Important dates
1. Deposit – Payable asap to secure a place as seats are limited, please complete booking form.
2. Final payment 60 days before departure

The tour prices includes:
- Beautiful hotel accommodation
- Exclusive coach travel, cruises, train journey and all airfares
- Entry to all sightseeing, national parks and gardens as detailed in itinerary
- Quality meals listed in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- English speaking driver guide and accompanied all the way with Australian garden guide – Brian Sams
- Taxes where appropriate (but subject to change based on prevailing rates)
- Airport transfers (for whole group only—other arrangements to be made as required)

The tour price excludes:
- All items not stated as included
- Travel insurance—recommended for all travelers. Please discuss if you need help to organize.

Full terms and conditions are on the booking form.

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