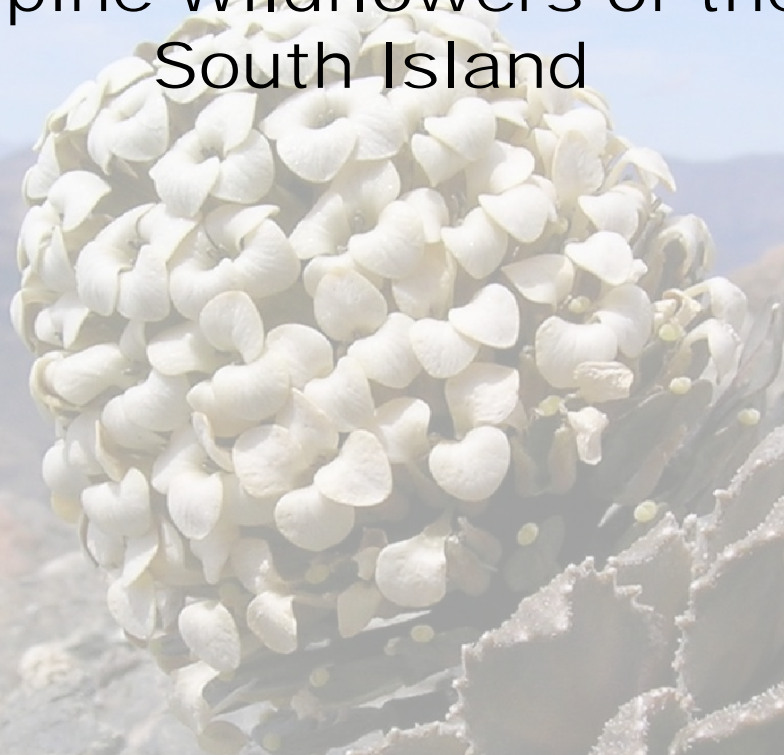


Alpine Spectacular

Alpine Wildflowers of the
South Island



Alpine Spectacular Alpine Wildflowers of the South Island

The alpine zone, of all the plant habitats is perhaps the most exciting to naturalists. From tree-line to the nival zone the changing pattern of life is as fascinating as it is diverse. On this journey through the alpine wonderlands of the South Island, New Zealand, more than 10 major vegetation types are explored in some detail, and in addition we study the effect of both recent and present glaciation on the alpine flora.

Of over 600 indigenous special alpine species 93% are unique to this country. Few other places in the world offer such variety of collections of high altitude plants in such a small area.

Amidst New Zealand's Southern Alps, the backbone mountain range of the South Island, the flora is as spectacular as the scenery. We ensure you have the time and energy to enjoy both.

Trip departs December each year.

- 2009 departures - December 05
- 2010 departures - December 04

2009 Itinerary

Dec 05

At the head of the Wairau Valley lies the Nelson Lakes National Park. The beautiful Lakes Rotoiti and Rotoroa nestle amongst the northern peaks of the Southern Alps. Surrounding the lakes is New Zealand evergreen beech forest. Today enjoy short walks in this enchanting forest. The more energetic may opt to walk up through the forest beyond the tree-line and out into the sub-alpine tussocklands for breathtaking panoramas of the national park, its mountain ranges and lakes, and an insight into New Zealand's sub-alpine flora

Dec 06

The Graham Valley provides the easiest access to the recently created Kahurangi National Park. Superb *Dracophyllum* (pineapple tree) tracts, and an excellent array of sub-alpine shrubs and herbs make for a fascinating hike to bush-line on Mt Arthur. Thereafter open herbfields and tussocklands clothe the slopes. All manner of herbfield species abound, with fields of alpine daisies to the fore. Return to St Arnaud this afternoon

Dec 07

The journey today takes us back eastwards. A study of NZ alpine scree and rock outcrop vegetation begins with a trip to the summit of Blackbirch. Here giant vegetable sheep abound amidst a dry cushion flora. Scree plants, rock outcrop species, herb field daisies, and cushion plants are featured today. If the plants do not take your breath away the panoramic views are sure to! Mid-afternoon return again to sea level and continue to Kaikoura.

Dec 08

Early this morning an optional three-hour marine trip should enable viewing of sperm whales which inhabit deep water just off the coast. (Approx. price \$NZ125.00). Alternatively you may opt for the Oceanwings Albatross excursion (Approx. price \$NZ75.00). Late morning depart along the rugged and moody Kaikoura coast for the Canterbury Plains.

Dec 09

Mt Hutt overlooks the Canterbury Plains and it is the upper slopes of this peak that are our foci today. Fascinating scree and rock outcrop species will enthrall, while around the small creeks a magnificent array of plants make their home. We move on to the sharply-contrasting Mackenzie Country - a vast dry intermontane basin with three large glacial lakes. Beyond beckon the raw young mountains of the Southern Alps. Near the northernmost there should be time for those wishing to take an optional flight over Aoraki/ Mount Cook National Park and the highest peaks and glaciers of the Southern Alps, before we arrive at Lake Ohau.

Dec 10

A day to explore the renowned Aoraki National Park. At the foot of the trail enables us to study the changes in vegetation on successive moraines as the Hooker then Mueller Glaciers are reached. Giant Mt Cook buttercups, golden Spaniards and sub-alpine shrubs abound amidst unforgettable landscapes. An alternative for the more energetic is to walk up the Sealy Range to Sealy Tarns. Several alpine communities are walked through en route with tussocklands, herb field, and outcrop plants most conspicuous. Examples of the famed Mt Cook 'lily' (actually a buttercup) may be found up here. Descend past Lake Pukaki to Ohau.

Dec 11

The Ohau range rises directly from Lake Ohau. Little visited the tarns, slopes and bluffs of this range hold a fascinating array of alpines. Cushion 'spaniards' with the ball like inflorescences are spectacular, not to mention the fields of the blue leaved *Celmisia*, cushions of *Donatia*, and delicate mats of alpine *Raoulia*. Leave the Mackenzie Basin and the Waitaki Valley early afternoon to cross the Lindis Pass - gateway to Central Otago. Stay Alexandra one night.

Dec 12

Inland Otago is a great fragmented schist plateau that now appears as a series of block mountain ranges. A region of climatic extremes, the dry core of New Zealand is also home to a vast array of cushion alpine tussock species. The morning and early afternoon is spent on the Old Man Range near Alexandra. The range is typical of the block mountains of Otago, and its extremes of climate have produced a cushion flora unsurpassed elsewhere. Snowbank vegetation is also seen here. Mid afternoon travel west to the Fiordland World Heritage Area. Stay Te Anau three nights.

Dec 13

The upper Hollyford Valley through which the famed Milford Road passes contains superb boulder fields and herb fields. The Gertrude Cirque has arguably the finest accessible alpine communities in the country. The day is devoted to discovering, at your own pace, this botanical treasure trove in the Darran Mountains. Studying nature in such awesome surroundings is guaranteed to put all in perspective. Early afternoon descend to sea level at Milford Sound. There will be time for an optional cruise to the fjord entrance before we return early evening to Lake Te Anau.

Dec 14

South of Te Anau lies Lake Manapouri, and beyond is Borland Saddle in the Hunter Mountains. Unsurpassed alpine vistas and local endemics characterise this area. This truly memorable day shall enable us to view the bizarre local speargrasses, endemic giant buttercups, plus several species of *Celmisia* alpine daisies, and all the while partaking of a wonderful hike to the string bog system on the slopes of Mt Burns.

Dec 15

Alas we must leave this wild land and cross the southern South Island to Dunedin Airport to connect with your flights north.

Inclusions

Departs
from Blenheim

Price
Prices per person \$(NZ)3565.00

Includes

- * Services of tour naturalist.
- * All tour travel departing from Blenheim and terminating in Dunedin
- * All Meals (three daily) excepting one night in Te Anau.
- * All accommodation, twin-share basis in quality hotels, motels and motor lodges, with private facilities in all locations.
- * On-board nature library
- * Information folio including background ecological information and species lists for areas visited.
- * Admission fees where applicable
- * Goods and Services Tax of 12.5%

Add-ons

For single room add \$(NZ)680.00 per person

For Milford Sound cruise add \$NZ55.00 per person