

Southern Starlight Trail: 8 Days of Stars, Snow and Sounds ✨

/ Suggested Itineraries – South Island / By Tohu Travellers

Quick Overview

- 🕒 **Duration:** 6–8 Days
- 🗺️ **Start Point:** Ōtautahi – Christchurch
- 📍 **End Point:** Tāhuna – Queenstown
- 🌌 **Best Time:** March – October (for optimal stargazing)
- 🚗 **Driving Time:** ~15 hours total
- 🏔️ **Highlights:** Dark sky reserves, alpine hikes, majestic fjords

Venture into Aotearoa's southern heartlands on a journey carved by **stars and snow**. From stargazing in **Takapō** to glacier hikes and the dramatic soundscapes of **Fiordland**, this itinerary promises awe at every turn — all at your own pace in a campervan.

📄 **Grab your FREE printable version here** – *Download the itinerary PDF*

Days 1–2: Christchurch to Takapō – Lake Tekapo 🌌

Day 1: Starry Beginnings



- 🚗 Drive Christchurch to Takapō–Lake Tekapo (approx. 3.5 hrs)
- 📷 Visit the Church of the Good Shepherd – iconic photo spot
- 🌊 Soak in Tekapo Springs Hot Pools while stargazing

*Experience the magic of Lake Tekapo — **click here** to explore stargazing tours, scenic 4WD adventures, and more.*

Day 2: Dark Sky Discovery




- 🌅 Slow morning after a late night of stargazing
- 🏔️ Hike up Mount John for breathtaking 360° views
- 🌌 Book a guided Dark Sky Experience at the observatory

🏠 **Where to Stay (Campervan Style)**




-  *Freedom Camp*: Lake Pukaki Reserve – stunning starlit views
 -  *Campground*: Lake Tekapo Motels & Holiday Park – powered sites + lake access
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Days 3–4: Aoraki – Mount Cook

Day 3: Alpine Glory



-  Drive to Aoraki – Mt Cook Village (1.5 hrs)
 -  Hike the Hooker Valley Track – swing bridges & glacier lakes
 -  Set up for astrophotography under Aoraki’s watchful peak
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Day 4: Glaciers & Legends

-  Walk to the Tasman Glacier Viewpoint
-  Explore the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre
-  Wrap up with another clear night of stargazing




*Explore the majestic landscapes of Aoraki / Mount Cook — **click here** to discover scenic hikes, glacier adventures, and stargazing experiences.*

Where to Stay (Campervan Style)

-  *Freedom Camp*: White Horse Hill (DOC site) – at the track start
 -  *Campground*: Glentanner Park – powered sites and epic views
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Days 5–6: Tāhuna – Queenstown

Day 5: Welcome to Adventure

-  Drive to Tāhuna – Queenstown (3.5 hrs)
-  Ride the Skyline Gondola to Bob’s Peak
-  Dine on the TSS Earnslaw – lake cruise + buffet

*Experience the adventure capital of Aotearoa — **click here** to browse tours, activities, and adrenaline-packed experiences.*

Day 6: Chill or Thrill




-  Morning free for shopping or lakeside wandering
-  Depart from Queenstown Airport

Where to Stay (Campervan Style)




-  *Freedom Camp*: 12 Mile Delta DOC campsite (short drive from town)
-  *Campground*: Queenstown TOP 10 – well-equipped, close to the centre

Days 7–8: Piopiotahi – Milford Sound

Day 7: Road to Fiordland


-  Drive to Te Anau (2 hrs) – peaceful lakeside base
-  Explore the Te Anau Glowworm Caves
-  Take a tranquil lakeside sunset walk

Day 8: Fjord Wonders

-  Cruise Milford Sound – waterfalls, seals, sheer cliffs
-  Stop at Mirror Lakes, The Chasm, and Monkey Creek on your return
-  Overnight back in Te Anau for a final southern sky show






*Cruise through the stunning beauty of Piopiotahi / Milford Sound — **click here** to explore tour and cruise options.*

Where to Stay (Campervan Style)






-  *Freedom Camp*: Fiordland National Park (DOC designated zones)
-  *Campground*: Te Anau Kiwi Holiday Park – powered sites + amenities

 Return to Queenstown Airport





What to Pack

-  Warm layers – even in summer
-  Camera + tripod for night photography
-  Red torch for stargazing
-  Sturdy walking shoes
-  Rain jacket – especially in Fiordland

Travel Tips from the South

-  Check the moon phase for best star visibility
-  Fill your tank before leaving major towns
-  Expect limited phone signal in remote areas
-  Book Dark Sky tours in advance
-  Winter driving? Carry snow chains and check roads daily





Must-Try Local Food

-  Aoraki Alpine Salmon – fresh and melt-in-your-mouth
-  Venison stew – hearty and warming
-  South Island artisan cheese – grab some at local markets
-  High-country salmon sashimi – served with a view

Top Photo Spots

| Region | Iconic Spots |
|------------|--|
| Takapō | Church of the Good Shepherd, Mt John views |
| Aoraki | Hooker Valley, Tasman Glacier, Peters Pool |
| Milford | Mitre Peak, The Chasm, Mirror Lakes |
| Queenstown | Bob's Peak, Lake Wakatipu jetty, Glenorchy |

Optional Add-Ons

-  *Glacier heli-hike* (Franz Josef or Aoraki area)
-  *Shotover Jet ride* – adrenaline in Queenstown
-  *Onsen Hot Pools* – book a sunset soak
-  *Skyline Luge* – fun for all ages

Final Thoughts

The **Southern Starlight Trail** is a breathtaking journey through **Aotearoa's alpine south** — perfect for those chasing **quiet night skies**, **mountain majesty**, and the **wild edge of**

Fiordland. Whether it's stargazing, glacier hikes, or fjord cruising, this trail is a deep breath of fresh, star-filled air.

TohuTravellers.com – *Trust the Journey*