

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

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

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

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*