NEW ZEALAND'S SOUTH ISLAND
A BIOGEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL EXPLORATION

December 1-10, 2017
LAND OF SOARING BEAUTY

Join Professor Rob Phillips and some of his grad students to learn about how to perform DNA sequencing and what it teaches us about biogeography.

Accompany the Caltech Alumni Association in New Zealand to explore a tropical rainforest...at the foot of a glacier. A climatic impossibility? No, it’s just the gorgeous, startling South Island. This was the real-world setting for The Lord of the Rings movies, so spectacular scenery is to be expected. But Caltech will also introduce you to a land you would not find on your own. We’ll spend a day walking through beech forest spotting birds. You’ll sip the best pressings at some of the region’s fast-emerging vineyards, and stargaze by ship-deck on a fiordland cruise. Our local guide also arranges for naturalists, historians and other experts to share their knowledge. As you learn about the startling biogeography of New Zealand you’ll remember this as one of the most unique journeys of your life.
DAY 1

Christchurch

- Arrive Christchurch and transfer independently to the Heritage Christchurch hotel
- Day at leisure to relax, or explore town on your own

Arrive into Christchurch at your leisure - with independent transfer to your hotel.

Founded in 1850, Christchurch was a planned Church of England settlement and is often called "the most English city outside England". If you have free time, wind your way through the historic and charming streets - past striking Gothic architecture, stone buildings, lush green parks and flower-filled gardens. Maybe you'll opt to indulge in a wonderfully local custom - a punt on one of the historic wooden boats on the Avon. Whatever you may choose, the day is yours to enjoy.

OVERNIGHT: CHRISTCHURCH   MEALS: NONE

Heritage Christchurch
Located in the heart of Christchurch on Cathedral Square, this hotel offers a magnificent blend of old world charm and contemporary comfort. The tower wing offers breathtaking views over Christchurch and the Southern Alps.

DAY 2

Banks Peninsula - Canterbury Plains

- Drive to the Banks Peninsula
- Dolphin swim or cruise
- Welcome dinner at Arthur's Pass

We meet early morning in the lobby of our hotel for a fascinating exploration to the Banks Peninsula, just east of Christchurch. Along the way, we first skirt Lake Ellesmere, then wind around the bays of Akaroa Harbor onto the peninsula, formed by the eruption of two volcanoes. The craters make up the harbors of Akaroa and Lyttleton with smaller bays indenting the rest of the coastline. This morning we have the wonderful opportunity to swim with (or just watch, if you prefer) the world's smallest and rarest dolphins - the Hector's or New Zealand Dolphin. Our enthusiastic friend and fellow resident naturalists provide us instruction on how to approach the dolphins, so we can concentrate on interacting with these special creatures in the crystal blue waters of Akaroa Bay. After our refreshing swim, we stop to enjoy lunch before transferring to Arthur's Pass. We'll cross the lovely Canterbury Plains—featured in the "The Lord of the Rings" as Edoras and the Plains of Rohann.

We'll arrive at our lodge to relax before enjoying a high-country dinner. The chef will select fresh, local ingredients and the menu will vary seasonally. A typical meal might be grilled duck breast with roasted peppers and fresh basil, followed by a dessert of pear tarte tatin with vanilla anglaise sauce or Whitestone Windsor blue cheese, homemade fruit bread and tamarillo chutney (our personal favorite).

OVERNIGHT: ARTHUR'S PASS   MEALS: B, D

Wilderness Lodge Arthur's Pass
Nestled beneath a beech forest in the heart of the Southern Alps, this wilderness lodge is on its own 3,000 hectare nature reserve/merino sheep farm dating to 1860. The spacious guestrooms offer superb views of the Southern Alps and the river below.

DAY 3

Arthur's Pass

- Walk through fields of alpine flowers
- Spot mountain parrots - The Cheeky Kea
- Enjoy excellent birding opportunities

Awaking in Arthur's Pass, we walk from our lodge into a natural paradise of beech forest, tussock clearings, moss-lined streams and lakes on a network of nature trails. Depending on the season, our walks often find us following footpaths through fields of alpine flowers, accompanying the ranch hands to check on the baby lambs, and enjoying excellent birding opportunities from Bellbirds, Tomtits and Fantails. Our activity during the day will depend on weather, which may include a tramp to a nearby summit or visit and walk around limestone landscape. We will take a packed picnic lunch to enjoy.

Later in the afternoon, we'll stretch our legs with a valley walk through beech forest and past pools and cascades fed by mountain streams. Along the way, we may see Keas (mountain parrots),
fascinating birds that are camouflaged with forest green feathers, but with beautiful orange underwings, and large powerful beaks, who are known for being very mischievous. They even have a reputation of removing shoelaces from boots left outside by hikers over-nighting at mountain huts.

OVERNIGHT: ARTHUR’S PASS   MEALS: B, L, D

DAY 4

Fox Glacier

• Enjoy your first views of the lush west coast
• Spot rare white herons on Okarito Lagoon
• Bird lovers can join the optional boat cruise on the lagoon

Start your day with a short guided walk at the lodge. After breakfast, we continue through Arthur’s Pass to the west coast, crossing the Oitra viaduct, which is a technical engineering highlight.

As we follow the coast south our views change to lush forests and wetlands, spectacular beach views and ferns along the roadside. Back down to sea level, our route takes us through small towns along the coast of the Tasman Sea with a backdrop of soaring snow-capped mountains. We’ll make a stop in Hokitika, founded in the gold rush 1865, to explore Pounamu (jade) and glass shops. We’ll have a picnic lunch overlooking a lake near the dairy farming settlement of Hari Hari.

Just as the afternoon sun hits the best angle, we arrive in Okarito, a historic town (population: 30). It rests on a sand spit that juts into the sweeping Okarito Lagoon, the largest untouched wetland area in New Zealand. You can poke around the town or take a guided walk to the beach with our guide. Alternatively, join Swade, a local guide, for a boat ride on the lagoon, which is home to a number of bird species, rare white Herons, Spoonbills and Godwits. After a day of exploration, we continue south via Franz Josef Glacier to our peacefully secluded hotel in Fox Glacier village. Dinner tonight is at one of our favorite local hotels.

OVERNIGHT: FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER   MEALS: B, L, D

DAY 5

Lake Matheson

• Follow expert guides on a spectacular glacier-side walk
• Linger lakeside around mirror smooth Lake Matheson
• Enjoy a guided evening stroll to view the stars of the Southern Cross

Today, our morning walk leads us to Fox Glacier face. Leaving the Glacier we head for a walk around Lake Matheson. The calm, morning air allows for the best reflection of Aoraki (Mt. Cook) and Mt. Tasman in its deep crystal-blue waters. The lake was formed when a massive slab of ice was left behind 14,000 years ago when Fox Glacier retreated very rapidly. Our walk follows a track through native bush that surrounds the lake. This fine nature walk has excellent viewing on land and water. The lake is populated with Paradise ducks and Scaup, and the fields with brightly plumed Pukekos.

After lunch, we drive south to our lakeside lodge. You’ll have time to opt for a kayak on the lake or a short riverside walk. Following dinner, join our guide for an evening stroll to see glow-worms and the Southern Cross as it lights up the night sky.

OVERNIGHT: LAKE MOERAKI   MEALS: B, D

Te Waonui Forest Retreat  Surrounded by rainforest, this serene resort occupies a rustic-chic, timber property. The airy, contemporary rooms have private balconies or courtyards and a refined restaurant with forest views.

Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki  This lodge is set in a lakeside clearing surrounded by 1000 year-old rainforest trees overlooking the Moeraki rapids. An array of trails from the lodge offers access to abundant birdlife and a nearby coastline of wild beaches and wildlife.
DAY 6

Lake Moeraki
- Explore the rainforest and beach on walks to view marine wildlife
- Bird watch by canoe
- Enjoy an after dinner chat in the lounge

Our lodge sits on the shore of Lake Moeraki, famous for trout fishing and surrounded by a native 1,000 year old forest boasting New Zealand’s tallest trees, the Kahikatea and the Rimu. We have a leisurely start to the morning to enjoy a number of the options available at the lodge or to just relax over breakfast, then join our guide along a scenic rainforest track to Munro Beach.

Munro Beach, a World Heritage Site, is noted for its abundance of wildlife. We spend time on the beach, seeing and learning about the rare Tawaki (Fiordland crested penguins), who populate the beach during the June to November nesting season, as well as dolphins and seals that also populate the area at certain times of the year.

At your leisure, you can head back to the lodge with your guides or choose to stay at the beach and enjoy our beautiful natural surroundings. Our lodge’s location means that we have a wide variety of dinner options, including whitebait from the river, seafood from the coast, or game from the forest. After dinner, relax in the lounge with our friendly hosts, listening to stories of the early settlers of this area.

OVERNIGHT: LAKE MOERAKI MEALS: B, L, D

DAY 7

Queenstown
- See scenic waterfalls and Lake Wanaka
- Wine taste at an award-winning winery
- Make a leap on an optional bungee jump

Fuel up over a delicious breakfast of fresh yogurt mixed with local fruits and preserves spread on warm rolls. The road in which our journey sets out was opened in the 1960's and only asphalted several years ago, leading us to Ships Creek. Here, we will explore the beach and visit an historic swamp forest. We will then cross the Haast River on the island’s largest one-way bridge. Then we’ll take the wooded Haast Pass across the Southern Alps, and take a stroll to either the crystal clear blue pools or soaring Thunder Creek Falls. Lunch is at a scenic café or at the historic Cardrona Pub.

After lunch, we drive along the scenic Crown Range to the historic gold-mining village of Arrowtown. The Amisfield Winery nestles at the foot of the mountains, and we’ll take time in this great setting to taste their award-winning pinot noir.

Then we wrap our afternoon with a visit to the 100-year-old Kawarau Suspension Bridge, better known as the world’s original bungee jumping site. (We will be glad to arrange a jump for you. You can go tandem or solo, stop just short of the water or go for the full-immersion experience. Just let us know in advance, and we’ll help you make your reservations.)

Later this afternoon, we settle into Queenstown, our home for the next two nights and known as one of New Zealand’s wine and cuisine centers. The resort town is nestled on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, one of the many glacial lakes that are found in the deep south of the island. Surrounded by majestic snow-capped peaks, local accounts suggest the town was so named by a resident gold digger who declared the area “fit for Queen Victoria.”

OVERNIGHT: QUEENSTOWN MEALS: B, L

DAY 8

Queenstown
- Thrill to a jet boat ride
- Marvel at the stories and anecdotes about Maori folklore

Our favorite way to spend the day is on a jet boat safari and discovery walk. New Zealanders boast they have the market cornered on jet boating, since their very own Sir William Hamilton designed it for just this type of shallow river skimming adventure. On our journey, experienced local guides take us for a thrilling ride along the Dart River. We disembark and enjoy a lovely cultural walk along the edge of Te Wahipounamu, New Zealand’s World Heritage Area, which embraces Fiordland and Mt. Aspiring National Parks. Our guides share with us Maori folklore, stories of early settlers, and their considerable knowledge of the local flora and fauna, while we take in the outstanding views.

If you’d prefer something a little more low-key, you may opt to explore Queenstown on your own. Take in some shopping, enjoy a lake cruise on a historic Earnslw - restored steamboat, or visit a Kiwi house for the chance to see the country’s elusive national bird. We reunite this evening along the shores of Lake Wakatipu for a festive dinner celebrating the beautiful south Island of New Zealand, its friendly people, unique culture and natural history.

OVERNIGHT: QUEENSTOWN MEALS: B, D
DAY 9

Fiordland Cruise

- Immerse yourself in spectacular Fiordland National Park
- Spot the incredible bird and animal wildlife with naturalist guides

We depart Queenstown early morning for Te Anau, the gateway to the World Heritage Fiordland National Park. It's a true natural wonder, and we'll see it in the very best way – from the decks of the overnight cruise onboard the Navigator. It’s not just a ship. It’s what some travelers call the ultimate bed and breakfast.

From the observation lounge and the large open deck, you’ll have a front-row seat for the waterfalls, rainforests, mountains and wildlife. Experienced onboard naturalists offer commentary and answer your questions. We’ll cruise the entire length of the sound, all the way to the Tasman Sea. Tonight, enjoy some of the best stargazing we’ve ever experienced.

OVERNIGHT: FIORDLAND NAVIGATOR  MEALS: B, D

Fiordland Navigator The Fiordland Navigator cruises the Doubtful Sound past cascading waterfalls, sheer cliffs, dense rainforests, and towering mountains. It has a spacious dining saloon, observation lounge, and open deck areas. The private cabins have ensuite bathrooms.

DAY 10

Return to Queenstown

- Relax on a scenic journey back to Queenstown
- Make connections home

The Fiordland Navigator returns to Manapouri after breakfast from where we make the scenic transfer back to Queenstown.

MEALS: B

CALTECH FACULTY HOST

Professor Rob Phillips
Fred and Nancy Morris Professor of Biophysics and Biology

Our Caltech faculty host is biology professor Rob Phillips, whose work centers on physical biology of the cell, the use of physical models to explore biological phenomena, and the construction of experiments designed to test them. Some of the key areas of interest include the physics of genome management such as how viruses and cells physically manipulate DNA as part of their standard repertoire during their life cycles, how transcriptional networks lead to regulatory decisions and how the physical properties of lipid bilayers are tied to the behavior of ion channels.

Talk 1: How the great naturalists discovered biology’s greatest idea

Talk 2: The Wonders of Biogeography: “A science of the improbable, the rare, the mysterious, and the miraculous.”

Talk 3: “Explain New Zealand and the world falls in place around it.”

Prior to the privilege of a life in science, Phillips spent seven years of travel and self-study (and work as an electrician). Over the last decade, he has merged his love of travel with this research theme by exploring the ways in which the study of DNA sequences can help us understand the living world around us, with special emphasis on the hidden world of viruses and bacteria. As a result, he has traveled with students to the Galapagos Islands, the Wallace Line in Indonesia and the South Island of New Zealand.

As part of this trip, Phillips and several of his students will provide an optional (not included in tour price) weekend long molecular biology boot camp at Caltech on September 9 and 10, 2017 aimed at giving our travelers the chance to see how to obtain DNA sequences and how such sequences can be used to understand how the animals and plants of New Zealand got there. During the trip, he will give several presentations that build on the themes discussed in the boot camp with special emphasis on the different views of the biogeography of New Zealand.

MEALS: B

Professor Rob Phillips | Biophysics and Biology
TRIP INFORMATION
NEW ZEALAND'S SOUTH ISLAND

TRIP ESSENTIALS
TOURS BEGIN: The Heritage Christchurch hotel, with independent arrival and transfer - Dec. 2, lobby of Heritage Christchurch Hotel at 7:00am
TOURS END: Queenstown - 3:00pm upon returning from Fiordland Cruise
TERRAIN: Easy to moderate
TRIP LENGTH: 10 Days & 9 Nights

 WHAT'S INCLUDED

TRIP PRICE INCLUDES

THE FOLLOWING:
• Memorable accommodations for 9 nights
• 9 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 7 dinners
• Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip, handle behind-the-scenes logistics
• Support vehicle(s)
• Admissions to tastings, historic sites and other scheduled events as noted in the detailed itinerary
• All gratuities
• Trip literature
• All land transportation during the trip

OPTIONAL ADD ON
DNA Boot Camp
With Professor Rob Phillips and his grad students

September 9 and 10, 2017
Caltech Campus
RSVP: To Elizabeth Emerald at eemerald@caltech.edu by August 4, 2017
Hotel, travel and some meals at your own expense. Please make your own travel reservations--this is separate from the main tour.

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