

ZeL CuraTours

New Zealand in Winter

A PRIVATE SELF-DRIVE JOURNEY • THE FULL ITINERARY

NEW ZEALAND • BOTH ISLANDS

DELIVERED • 16 DAYS • 14 NIGHTS

ZeL CuraTours
Operated in partnership with Boustead Travel Services Sdn Bhd • KPK/LN 10169
PRIVATE SELF-DRIVE JOURNEY • FULL ITINERARY

Sixteen days in the New Zealand winter, and the nights planned too.

Both islands, five places to sleep, and no day spent driving back the way you came. Winter dark comes early, so the dark is part of the plan.

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01 **No backtracking**

Drive the North Island, fly south, drive to Queenstown and fly back. No day is spent driving the way you came.

02 **The nights are part of it**

Glowworms at midday, a geyser lit at night, penguins at dusk, and two nights inside a dark sky reserve.

03 **Every weather day has a fallback**

If the glacier helicopter cannot fly, the Hooker Valley Track. If Milford is grounded, four nights in Queenstown leave room to move it.

04 **Long drives in daylight**

Only one drive runs past four hours, and it arrives before dark.

What it gives up is most of the North Island: no Wellington, and no West Coast glaciers. For a winter journey built around ice, stars and animals, that is the right trade.

ZELTS YANG
JOURNEY DESIGNER
ZEL CURATOURS

THE ROUTE

Both islands, one direction.

Two cars, two domestic flights, five places to sleep.



DAY	LEG	HOW
03	Auckland → Waitomo → Rotorua	Drive
05	Rotorua → Hobbiton → Auckland	Drive
06	Auckland → Christchurch → Akaroa	Flight · drive
08	Akaroa → Lake Tekapo	Drive
09	Tekapo → Aoraki / Mount Cook → Tekapo	Drive · helicopter
10	Tekapo → Queenstown	Drive
11	Queenstown → Milford Sound → Queenstown	Light aircraft · cruise
14	Queenstown → Auckland	Flight

DAY 01 – 03

ARRIVAL

KUALA LUMPUR • AUCKLAND • WAITOMO • ROTORUA

Kuala Lumpur → Auckland → Rotorua

THE WAY IN

A first day left empty, then a sky of glowworms underground.

DAY 01	Kuala Lumpur → Auckland	The night flight south.
DAY 02	Auckland	The car collected at the airport, then over the harbour to Birkenhead, a quiet north-shore suburb. Nothing is booked: rest, or walk the village street.
DAY 03	South into farm country	About two and a half hours to Waitomo.
MIDDAY	Waitomo Glowworm Caves	Limestone chambers on foot, then a boat drifting in silence under a ceiling of glowworms.
AFTERNOON	On to Rotorua	About two hours east.
EVENING	Secret Spot Hot Tubs	A private cedar tub in the forest, with drinks brought to the water.





THE WAITOMO GLOWWORM CAVES

DESIGN INTENT • WHY THE FIRST DAY IS LEFT EMPTY

A night flight that lands late morning leaves a half-day nobody can use well. Spending it on a quiet street means the driver has slept before the first long road.

NIGHT 1–2

FERNZ Motel, Birkenhead • then Redwoods Getaway, Rotorua

DAY 04

GEYSER

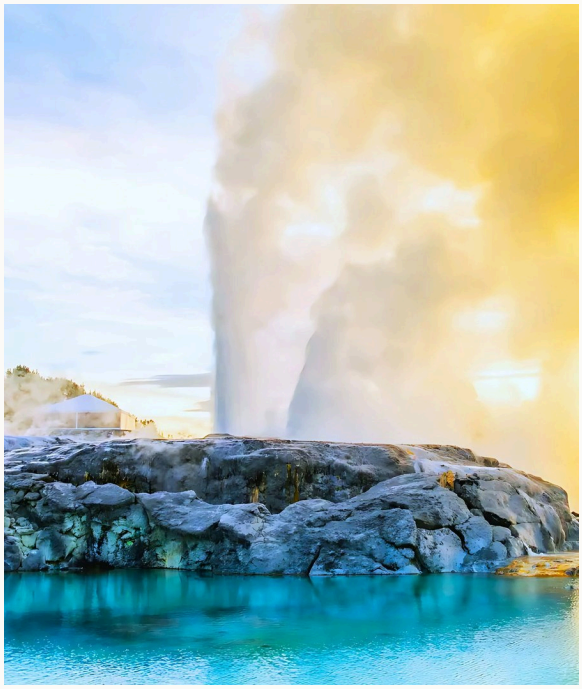
ROTORUA

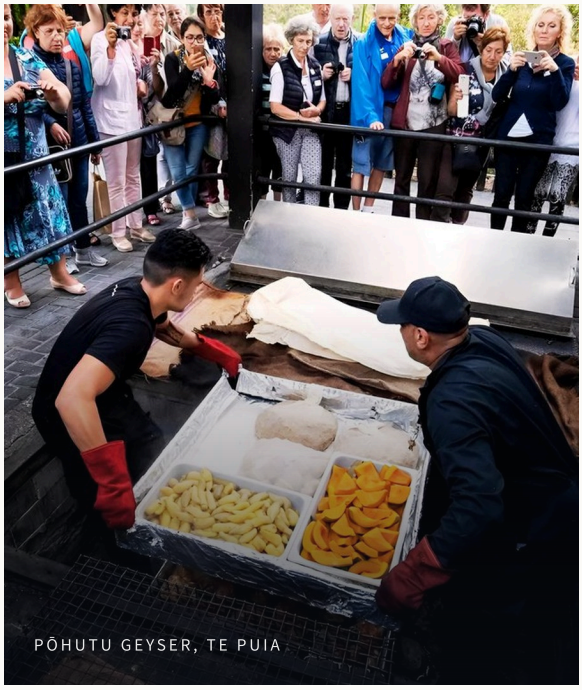
Rotorua · Te Puia by night

FIRE AND WATER

The national bird in the morning, the geyser lit up at night.

MORNING	National Kiwi Hatchery	Not a zoo but a nursery: eggs under glass, and chicks in their first weeks if the season allows.
AFTERNOON	ZORB Rotorua	A giant inflatable ball rolled down a grass hill.
EVENING	Te Puia • Te Pō	A formal Māori welcome, song and the haka in the meeting house, and a hāngī feast cooked for hours under hot stones.
NIGHT	Pōhutu Geyser	Lit up against the dark, twenty to thirty metres high, with hot chocolate and the old stories outside.





PŌHUTU GEYSER, TE PUIA

DESIGN INTENT • WHY THE GEYSER IS SEEN AT NIGHT

In August the light goes by six. Pōhutu lit up in the dark, after a hāngī dinner, is a better evening than a geyser in grey afternoon light.

NIGHT 3

Redwoods Getaway, Rotorua

MEALS • Hāngī dinner at Te Puia

DAY 05 – 06

CROSSING

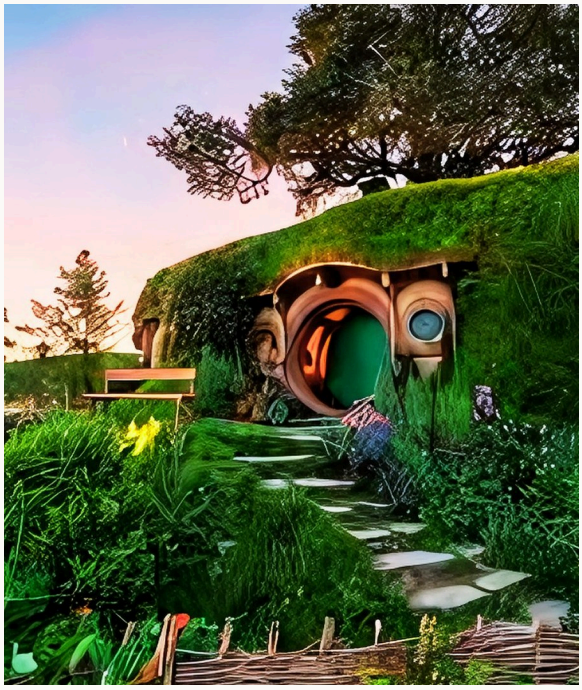
HOBBITON • AUCKLAND • CHRISTCHURCH • AKAROA

Hobbiton → Auckland → Akaroa

TWO ISLANDS

The Shire on the drive north, then the crater rim above Akaroa at dusk.

DAY 05	Hobbiton Movie Set	An hour from Rotorua: the hobbit holes, the Party Tree, and a drink by the fire at the Green Dragon Inn. Lunch in the Shire.
AFTERNOON	Back to Auckland	About two and a half hours, and a night in Birkenhead.
DAY 06	Auckland → Christchurch	A domestic flight, with the Southern Alps in the windows over Cook Strait.
AFTERNOON	Out to Banks Peninsula	A second car at Christchurch airport, and about an hour and a half to the crater rim.
EVENING	Akaroa	A French-settled village at the bottom of a blue harbour. Dinner on the waterfront, green-lipped mussels if they came in.





AKAROA HARBOUR

DESIGN INTENT • WHY THE SOUTH ISLAND IS REACHED BY AIR

Driving the length of the country and back would cost about two full days of road. The flight pays for the time spent in Queenstown later.

NIGHT 4–5

FERNZ Motel, Birkenhead • then Harbour View Retreat, Akaroa

DAY 07

HARBOUR

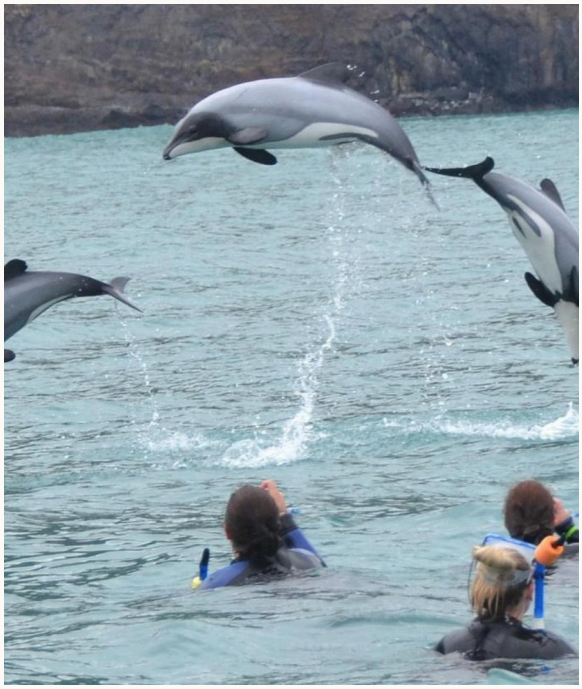
AKAROA

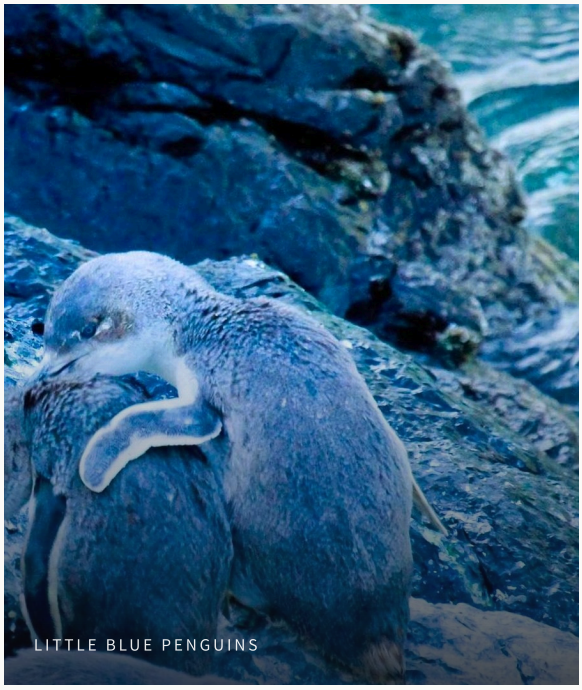
Akaroa · dolphins and penguins

TWO TIDES

Dolphins beside the boat in the morning, penguins walking home at dusk.

MORNING	**Akaroa Nature Cruise** Out through the flooded crater for Hector's dolphins, among the smallest and rarest in the world, with fur seals on the rocks.
MIDDAY	**Fish and chips on the wharf**
DUSK	**Pohatu penguins** A hide in a private bay holding the largest mainland colony of little blue penguins. They come out of the surf after dark and walk up to their burrows.
EVENING	**Back over the hill**





LITTLE BLUE PENGUINS

DESIGN INTENT • WHY A SMALL VILLAGE HAS TWO NIGHTS

The dolphins want a calm morning and the penguins land after dark. Two nights also give a winter cruise blown out one day somewhere to go.

NIGHT 6

Harbour View Retreat, Akaroa

DAY 08

TURQUOISE

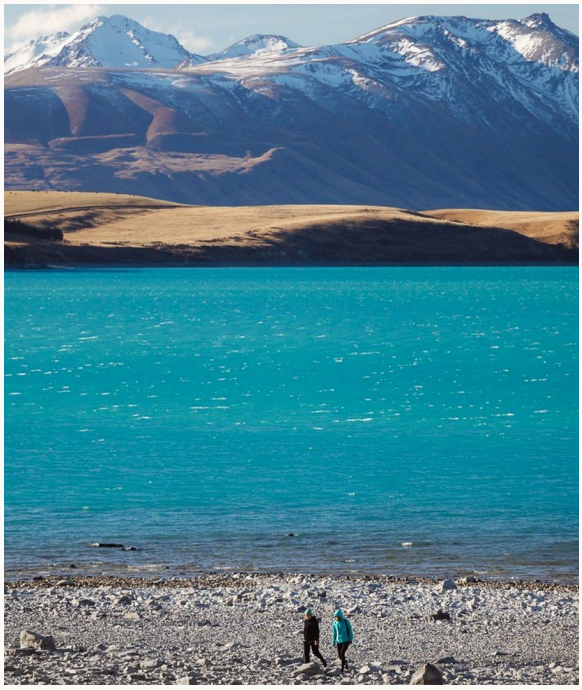
AKAROA • LAKE TEKAPO

Akaroa → Lake Tekapo

INLAND

The longest drive of the trip, and a lake the colour of milk and glass.

MORNING	Across the Canterbury Plains	About four to four and a half hours, the only drive of this length, done in daylight.
AFTERNOON	Lake Tekapo	Milky turquoise water, the Church of the Good Shepherd at the edge, and the sheepdog statue.
DUSK	Tekapo Springs	Open-air hot pools, with the sun going down behind snow.
EVENING	Inside the dark sky reserve	A first look up after dinner.





LAKE TEKAPO

DESIGN INTENT • WHY THE LONG DRIVE IS DONE IN ONE GO

It is the one long leg, placed in daylight and arriving with the afternoon intact, because the reason for coming is the sky above the town.

NIGHT 7

Hillcrest Lodge B, Lake Tekapo

DAY 09

GLACIER

AORAKI / MOUNT COOK · LAKE TEKAPO

The Tasman Glacier · the dark sky

ICE AND SKY

Blue ice under crampons at midday, the Magellanic Clouds at night.

MORNING	Into Aoraki / Mount Cook National Park	About an hour and a half up the lake road.
MIDDAY	Tasman Glacier heli-hike	A helicopter landing high on the glacier, crampons on, and a guided walk on the ice. Weather permitting.
PLAN B	Hooker Valley Track	If the helicopter cannot fly: three swing bridges to a lake with icebergs, under the same mountain.
NIGHT	Dark Sky Project Crater Experience	Reclined under blankets while a guide traces the Southern Cross and the Magellanic Clouds.





HELI-HIKING ON THE TASMAN GLACIER

DESIGN INTENT · WHY THE NIGHT IS SPENT IN TEKAPO

Sleeping at Mount Cook Village would save three hours of driving. Tekapo keeps the night inside the dark sky reserve, and on this day the sky wins.

NIGHT 8

Hillcrest Lodge B, Lake Tekapo

DAY 10 – 11

FIORD

LINDIS PASS · QUEENSTOWN · MILFORD SOUND

Tekapo → Queenstown · Milford by air

THE FIORD

Over the Alps in a small plane, and a jet boat in the afternoon.

DAY 10	Over the Lindis Pass	About three and a half hours to Queenstown.
AFTERNOON	Skyline Gondola and luge	Up Bob's Peak for the whole lake, and six runs on the luge.
DAY 11	Milford Sound by air	A light aircraft over the Southern Alps, a cruise under cliffs and waterfalls, and a second flight back on a different line. Half a day.
AFTERNOON	Shotover jet boat	A shallow river canyon at speed, with the 360-degree spins.





DESIGN INTENT · WHY MILFORD IS REACHED BY AIR

By road it is four hours each way. By air it is under an hour, and the time saved goes to the jet boat. Aircraft do not fly into Fiordland on bad days, which is why Queenstown has four nights.

NIGHT 9–10

The Lairds Bothy, Queenstown

DAY 12

LAKE

LAKE WAKATIPU • WALTER PEAK • GLENORCHY

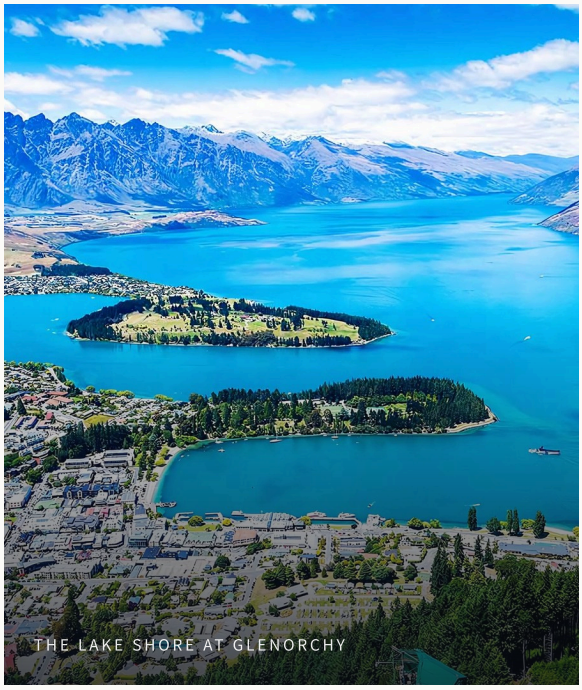
Walter Peak · Glenorchy

ACROSS THE LAKE

A farm reached only by water, then the most beautiful road in the country.

MORNING	Across Lake Wakatipu	By boat to Walter Peak High Country Farm, a working station reached only by water.
MIDDAY	Sheep shearing and a gourmet barbecue	In the lakeside gardens.
AFTERNOON	The road to Glenorchy	Forty-five kilometres along the lake shore.
LATE	Glenorchy Lagoon walkway	When the wind drops, the Humboldt Mountains appear twice, once in the water.





THE LAKE SHORE AT GLENORCHY

DESIGN INTENT • WHY GLENORCHY GOES IN THE AFTERNOON

The reflection needs still air, usually early or late, and the drive back is better with the sun low behind you.

NIGHT 11

The Lairds Bothy, Queenstown

MEALS • Barbecue lunch at Walter Peak

DAY 13

SNOW

CARDRONA • QUEENSTOWN

Cardrona · a first day on skis

SNOW

A first ski lesson, and the car left parked for the day.

MORNING	**Shuttle up to Cardrona** A first-timer package: boots, skis, lift pass and a professional lesson.
AFTERNOON	**On the gentle slopes** By afternoon most people are turning.
EVENING	**Back down to town**





CARDRONA

DESIGN INTENT • WHY THE CAR STAYS PARKED

An alpine road in winter, with ski gear in the back, is not where a holiday should be spent. Someone else drives, and the day is about the snow.

NIGHT 12

The Lairds Bothy, Queenstown

DAY 14 – 16

HOME

QUEENSTOWN • AUCKLAND • KUALA LUMPUR

Queenstown → Auckland → Kuala Lumpur

NORTH AGAIN

One city day at the very end, and home the same night.

DAY 14	A last morning in Queenstown	The lakefront and a coffee.
MIDDAY	Queenstown → Auckland	The car returned, the flight north, and a car again at Auckland for the road to Birkenhead.
DAY 15	Auckland	The Sky Tower for both harbours, then Commercial Bay and Queen Street.
DAY 16	Auckland → Kuala Lumpur	A midday flight, home the same night.





THE SKY TOWER, AUCKLAND

DESIGN INTENT • WHY THE CITY DAY COMES LAST

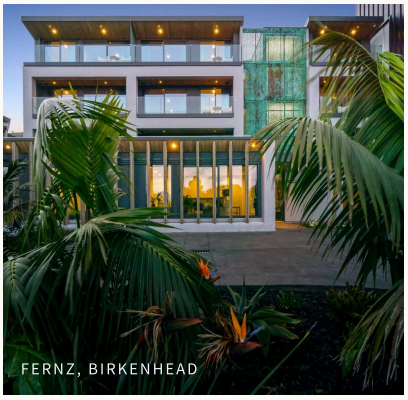
Placed earlier it would compete with a glacier and a fiord. At the end it is the right size: easy, indoors if it rains, and close to the airport.

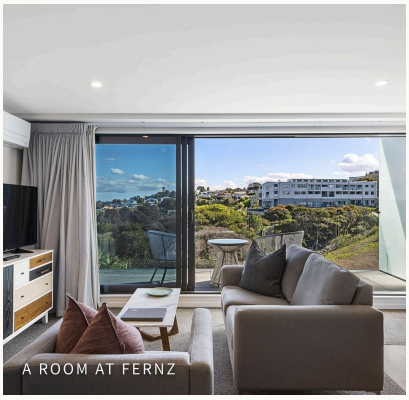
NIGHT 13–14

FERNZ Motel & Apartments, Birkenhead

Fourteen nights, five homes.

Houses and apartments with room for the whole group, so evenings are shared.


FERNZ, BIRKENHEAD


A ROOM AT FERNZ

NIGHTS 1, 4, 13–14 • AUCKLAND

FERNZ Motel & Apartments

Birkenhead, on the north shore

A quiet suburb instead of the city centre, for the first night and the last two.


REDWOODS GETAWAY


THE LIVING ROOM

NIGHTS 2–3 • ROTORUA

Redwoods Getaway

On the edge of the Whakarewarewa Forest

A house with decks onto the forest, close to Te Puia.


HARBOUR VIEW RETREAT


THE HARBOUR FROM THE TABLE

NIGHTS 5–6 • AKAROA

Harbour View 3-Bedroom Retreat

Above the harbour

Two nights, for the dolphins in the morning and the penguins after dark.

Under the stars, and by the lake.



HILLCREST LODGE BY NIGHT



THE LAKE FROM THE LIVING ROOM

NIGHTS 7–8 • LAKE TEKAPO

Hillcrest Lodge B

Inside the dark sky reserve

Views over the lake to the Southern Alps, and the night sky from the door.



THE LAIRDS BOTHY



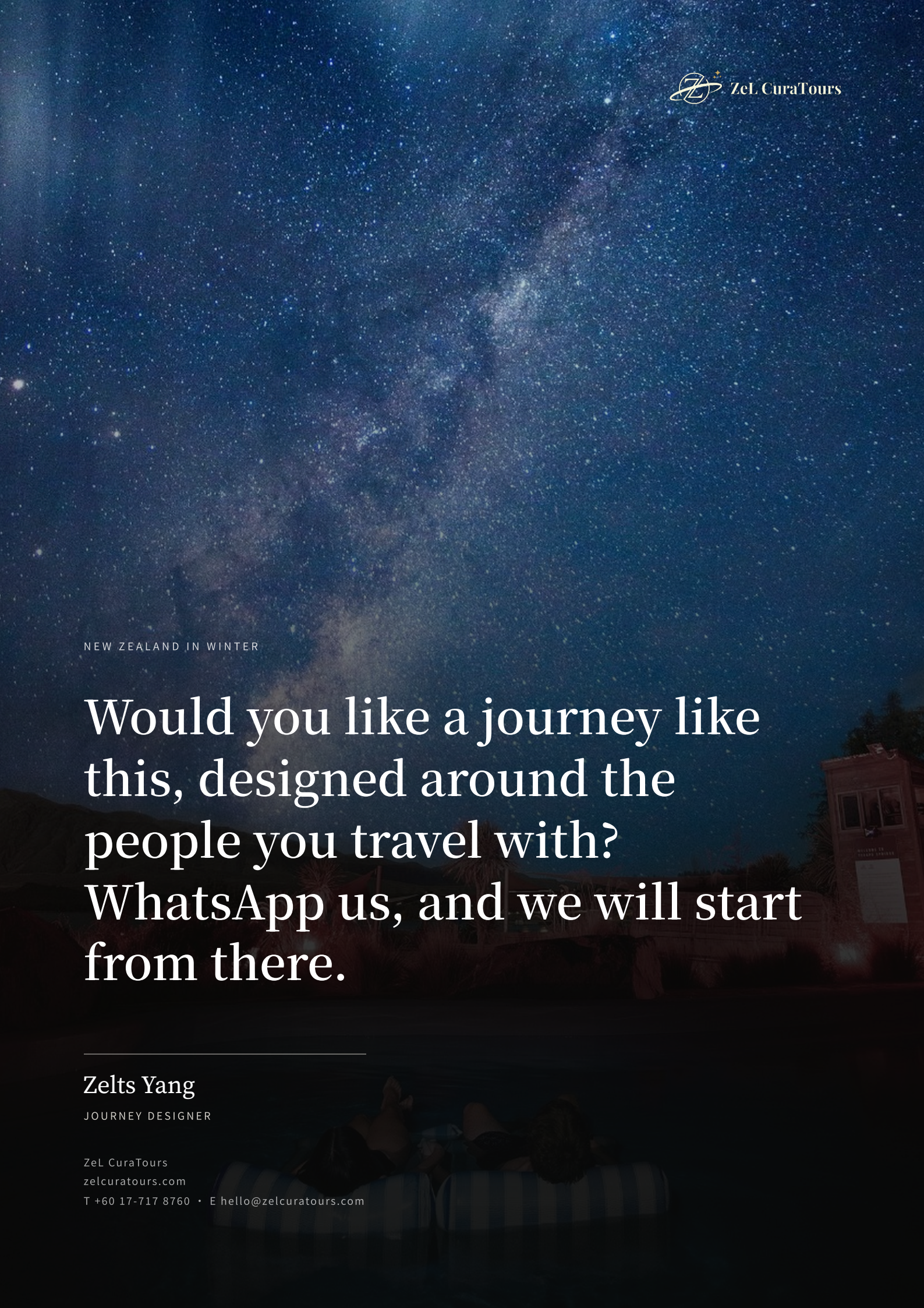
THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM

NIGHTS 9–12 • QUEENSTOWN

The Lairds Bothy

Above Lake Wakatipu

Four nights, so a morning grounded by weather can move to another day.



ZeL CuraTours

NEW ZEALAND IN WINTER

Would you like a journey like this, designed around the people you travel with? WhatsApp us, and we will start from there.

Zelts Yang

JOURNEY DESIGNER

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