



WILDERNESS LODGE
LAKE MOERAKI

Guided Nature Adventures



wildernesslodge.co.nz

Explore World Heritage Rainforests, Lakes & Wild Seacoast

Few places on earth can match the wild beauty of Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki. Surrounded by rainforests, lakes, rivers & seacoast, this is an oasis of stylish comfort in the heart of Te Wahipounamu World Heritage Area.

Wilderness Lodge
Lake Moeraki



Explore this unspoilt natural paradise with fun and exciting small-group nature adventures. Hike wilderness beaches, kayak pristine lakes and discover the astonishing diversity of rainforest life. This is a destination for nature lovers, active travellers & anyone seeking wild New Zealand.



The New Zealand Nature Experts

Wilderness Lodge owner-managers Anne Saunders & Dr Gerry McSweeney have been sharing the West Coast wilderness with their guests for nearly 30 years. Dedicated conservationists, Anne & Gerry successfully campaigned to protect this wilderness during the 1980s and have been at the forefront of conservation efforts & nature tourism ever since.



Guided Nature Adventures

Join Wilderness Lodge guides with intimate local knowledge on an exciting programme of guided nature and wilderness adventures.

Every day we offer two complimentary activities. These are fun and not too physically demanding. Normally about an hour's duration, they will introduce you to rainforests, lakes and rivers; their wildlife and the special stories of this landscapes.

Half and full day guided activities are offered at an additional charge. These are a fantastic opportunity to explore further afield with a small group. Hike spectacular wild seacoast, search for penguins & seals or explore the ancient forests of the Moeraki Valley.



Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki is a paradise for nature lovers & the perfect place to escape the well-worn tourist trail.

See the Rainforest Penguin

Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki is the best place in New Zealand to see tawaki (Fiordland crested penguin). Between August and early December tawaki nest beneath rainforest along the Moeraki Coast. Through the breeding season we offer daily penguin trips.

After breeding the penguins disappear far out to sea. Outside penguin season our guided activities focus on the other special wildlife and exciting places to visit. There is always lots to do and see.



Complimentary Guided Activities

Twice daily activities are included in the Wilderness Lodge tariff. These last around an hour each, are not too physically demanding & provide a fun introduction to Lake Moeraki's wildlife and natural history. Some of the regularly offered trips are outlined here.



Freshwater Ecology & Giant Eels

Fed by 3.5 meters annual rain, the Moeraki River teems with life. Understand the river's delicate food web & meet the river's apex predators, NZ long-finned eels, the world's largest freshwater eel.

Glow Worms & Southern Night Sky

Join us for an easy after-dinner walk to see glow worms and the stars of the southern sky. Discover the delicate blue lights of glow worms hidden amongst rainforest ferns and gaze into a brilliantly dark sky to see the Milky Way, Southern Cross, planets & satellites.

Discover the Ancient Rainforest

Explore a forest dating back to the ancient supercontinent Gondwana. Walk beneath towering dinosaur trees up to a thousand years old and discover a myriad of tiny mosses, lush ferns and colourful fungi. Thanks to conservation efforts by the Department of Conservation and the Wilderness Lodge, birdlife here is thriving.

Historic Moeraki

Let yourself be taken on a journey through time. Hear stories of Maori arrival, European settlement and the challenges faced by the men and women who struggled against the elements to make this area home. Learn the history of the campaigns to save the rainforests and how nature tourism has reshaped communities on the West Coast.

Learn Easy Kayaking

Join a guide to kayak our safe and easy kayaks on the gentle waters of Lake Moeraki. After a short training session, make your way up-river into Lake Moeraki beneath giant Matai and Kahikatea trees. Spot brown trout, black swans and take in panoramic views of the upper valley and Southern Alps.



Half & Full Day Activities

Join optional longer guided trips for an additional charge. In a small group, venture 'off the beaten path' alongside guides with expert local knowledge of the forests, waterways and coast. They will help you find wildlife, learn about nature, and make the most of your time in the wilderness.

On your arrival at the lodge, your hosts will outline the trips on offer during your stay. These longer trips can be book at reception the night before. Below is a selection of those on offer.

Challenging Wilderness Seacoast Adventure Hike

The Wilderness Lodge's signature challenging adventure. Traverse a wild coastline home to penguins (in season) and fur seals. Scramble through volcanic boulders, search for jade & picnic beside the Tasman Sea. Finish with a steep climb through rainforest.

Dolphins, Driftwood & Gemstones Easy Coastal Adventure

A relaxed hike along a beautiful and deserted stretch of coastline. Spot the world's smallest marine dolphin playing beyond the surf and collect wave-polished quartz and maybe even jade. Enjoy refreshment beside a waterfall tumbling from basalt sea cliffs and learn about the marine ecology of the Tasman seacoast.



Lake Moeraki Kayak Safari to Glacier Beach

A special trip traversing Lake Moeraki. Explore shorelines of manuka shrublands, flax swamps and floating kahikatea forest on this lake carved out by ice-age glaciers. Visit intimate beaches surrounded by tree ferns and walk beneath *rākau rangatira*, the chiefly rainforest trees. Note: kayaks are easy to use & guides are happy to share a double kayak or tow you.

Explore the Rainforest & Kayak to the Tasman Sea

Hike rich alluvial floodplains of the Moeraki Valley, home to the rainforest's tallest trees. Discover a giant kahikatea home to a world record collection of epiphytes (perching plants) & kayak the Lower Moeraki River to the Tasman Sea. Enjoy refreshments on a beach inaccessible by land before returning up-river to the lodge.

Tawaki Penguin Discovery

During the August to early December breeding season join daily guided trips to see tawaki, the rainforest penguin. Join a guide to hike through rainforest to a wild beach not advertised to the public. Sit quietly and watch as tawaki cross the beach, between the Tasman Sea and their rainforest nests.

Sample Nature Adventures Programme

This is an example only, but gives an idea of the structure of the Wilderness Lodge's activities programme. Trips are planned around weather, tides and guest interests, typically a day or two in advance. We can't promise a particular trip on a given day, however there is always something fun and exciting happening.

If you do wish to know the specific activities happening during your stay, contact us a day or two in advance of your arrival and we will be happy to explain.

Arrival Day

Meet your hosts & settle for a few days of relaxation, nature discovery & adventure.

- 5-6.00pm Giant Eels & Ecology of the Moeraki River. Discover a complex web of freshwater life and get up close to the river's top predator, the New Zealand longfinned eel.
- 7.30pm Join us for a relaxed welcome prior to dinner in the Riverside Restaurant

Second Day

- 7-8.00am Explore the temperate rainforest as it wakes. Listen to a chorus of birdsong and discover delicate ferns, mosses and liverworts at home beneath the dense canopy.
- 7.30-9am Breakfast in the Riverside Restaurant
- 9.00am Lake Moeraki Kayak Safari. Venture up the rainforest-lined river and into the lake. Passing manuka wetlands and floating forest we paddle to scenic beaches and picnic beneath the largest trees in the valley. *Approx. 3 Hours, Extra Charge Applies*
- 12.30pm Challenging Seacoast Adventure. Our signature walk traverses spectacular wild coastline. Search for jade and scramble over volcanic boulders to a fur seal colony, returning via a steep rainforest climb. *Approx. 4 Hours, Extra Charge Applies*

- 5-6.00pm Learn easy kayaking. After training with your guide, paddle up and explore Lake Moeraki, home to rich fish & birdlife.

- 7.30pm Dinner in the Riverside Restaurant

- 10.00pm Join us for an easy after-dinner walk to see glow worms illuminating the rainforest and gaze skywards to the Milky Way, Southern Cross & Clouds of Magellan.

Third Day

- 7.30-9am Breakfast in the Riverside Restaurant

- 9.00am *Either:* Tawaki Penguin Discovery. Hike to a secluded rainforest beach and sit quietly watching tawaki cross the sand between the ocean and their rainforest nests. *Approx. 2.5 Hours, Extra Charge Applies. August to early December only.*

Or: Explore the Lower Moeraki to the Tasman Sea. Walk beneath ancient floodplain forest and kayak a flat water lagoon to the Moeraki Beach beside the Tasman Sea. *Approx. 3 Hours, Extra Charge Applies*

- 12.30pm Easy Seacoast Hike. Explore a stretch of deserted coastal wilderness where Hector's dolphins surf the breakers and jade can be found amongst the beach pebbles. Picnic below waterfalls tumbling from basalt sea-cliffs and learn marine ecology. *Approx. 4 Hours, Extra Charge Applies*

- 5-6.00pm The Ancient Rainforest—a step back in time. Explore the forests around the lodge and learn about their links to the dinosaur forests of the supercontinent Gondwana.

- 6.30pm Join us in the Red Dog Saloon (the historic illegal highway construction bar) to learn the stories of the first Maori inhabitants, European sealers, explorers and settlers.

- 7.30pm Dinner in the Riverside Restaurant

Departure Day

- 7.30-9am Breakfast in the Riverside Restaurant before departing. Happy travels!

Guided Activities FAQs

Below we have attempted to answer common queries you might have about the Wilderness Lake Moeraki guided activities. If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#). We are always happy to help.



Do I need to be in good physical shape?

Our trips vary, from very relaxed to moderately challenging. Where possible we try to offer both easy and harder options. Because we focus mostly on sharing the stories of the natural world rather providing just a physical challenge, our activities are accessible to just about everybody.

Are the activities suitable for families?

Yes! We really enjoy helping families have fun, be active and explore.

Do I need to book in advance?

Trips are planned a couple of days in advance fit with weather and conditions. Longer changed trips can be booked the night before; we don't accept activity bookings in advance of arrival (with the exception of exclusive guiding options which must be pre-booked).

How much do the activities cost?

Two shorter activities are included (typically morning and late afternoon). The pricing for half and full day trips varies from \$120-\$250 per person, depending on duration, destination and number of participants.

Do I have to join the guided activities?

No. You can choose to just relax or explore on your own. There is a network of trails to explore, kayaks available for guests to take out on their own and we are always happy to provide maps and advice.

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Can I book a private guide?

We offer exclusive guiding (subject to availability & booked in advance) to maximise your day's adventure and cater to your specific interests & needs.

I'm a keen birder can you help?

Our guides are good at catering for special interest travellers (birders, botanists, photographers etc). Let us know in advance & we help you plan. Booking a private guide may be the best option (see above).

Can I visit the Glaciers from the Wilderness Lodge?

Fox Glacier is one hour away (Franz Josef 90 mins), an easy daytrip for a scenic flight or ice-hike. Most guests choose to stay nearby and enjoy the activities and peace of Lake Moeraki, but a glacier trip might be a good option for those staying 3 or 4 nights.

Are your activities safe?

We have a strong safety focus and a history of offering well-planned activities. Our guiding has been independently audited & our guides are well trained.

What should I bring?

Bring sturdy walking shoes, sunscreen, insect repellent & plenty of layers. New Zealand's weather can be changeable. You might like to bring along binoculars, a camera and rucksack.

Are sandflies a problem?

There are sandflies here. These small biting flies are a nuisance but do not transmit disease. If you dress appropriately, wear repellent & don't linger in certain places, they shouldn't effect your enjoyment.

