

Review of Petr Hlavacek's South Island Sojourn Photo Tour - November 1-15, 2016
Best Photography Tour in New Zealand!

I recently had the privilege of attending the 15-day South Island Sojourn New Zealand photo tour led by Petr Hlavacek. This was not only the best photography tour that I have participated in, but also one of my best vacation experiences ever! During this trip, I learned a lot about landscape photography and compositional techniques, as well as about the beautiful South Island of New Zealand itself. I would enthusiastically recommend Petr's tours to anyone who is interested in improving their landscape photography skills, or who wants to experience the dramatic landscapes of New Zealand first hand.

Petr is a very personable fellow, who is as passionate about his photography as he is about the geography, flora and fauna of New Zealand itself. Petr is a renowned New Zealand landscape photographer in his own right, with a wonderful gallery located adjacent to his home (which we were able to visit as part of the tour). He has also acquired an intimate first-hand knowledge of the New Zealand wilderness, throughout his many years of tramping (hiking) and camping along the endless trails, and great walks of New Zealand. In addition, he is very self-educated on the natural history of New Zealand, and seemingly anything New Zealand related. Petr is genuinely interested in passing along his knowledge and experience of both photography and New Zealand, to those attending his tours; and he took many opportunities to do so during our tour. I must say that his enthusiasm and energy is contagious, along with his values for wanting to protect and preserve the fragile ecosystems of New Zealand.

Petr has put together a great itinerary for this photography tour, which includes many built-in contingency options that can be executed as needed depending on the prevailing weather conditions. Over the days of our tour, we traversed across a large percentage of the South Island, visiting both iconic "postcard" locations, as well as many lesser known locations that were slightly off the beaten path (but just as beautiful). We often commented that some of our more cherished shots were the ones where we had put in an effort in order to obtain them.

Petr has chosen many activities, and added personal touches to his tours, which I think make them unique and stand out from other tour providers. For example, Petr's tour provides an opportunity to take a helicopter flight up to one of the glaciers, and have a personal guide that allows you to explore about as you choose. He has also included an overnight cruise into the unspoiled wilderness of Doubtful (or Milford) Sound, which provided not only great photography opportunities, but was also a unique vacation experience in itself. Both of these expeditions were memorable highlights from my tour.

Petr's itinerary allows participants plenty of time at each location, in order to scout out various shooting positions, and to develop a variety of scene compositions (often using a variety of lenses). The distances between waypoints, and the transfer times between them, have been optimized very well in order to maximize our time on location. We were always able to be at the prime locations to photograph during the magical/golden hours.

In conclusion, I would have to say that this was just the type of photographic tour that I was looking for when I decided to do some landscape photography in New Zealand. Petr has certainly set the bar very high, for any future photography tours that I might choose to participate in. I couldn't have asked for a better itinerary, tour guide, or overall New Zealand photographic experience than what Petr provided!

Sincerely,
Rick Hemphill. San Diego, California USA