



Royals to make whirlwind visit to Hamilton

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REUTERS

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS: Prince William and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge hold Prince George of Cambridge outside of the Lindo Wing of St Mary's Hospital in London July 23.

Prince William, his wife Catherine and baby Prince George will spend nine days in New Zealand as part of a three-week tour downunder next month, Kensington Palace has confirmed.

On April 12 Prince William will visit Pacific Aerospace at Hamilton while the duchess, who is a patron of East Anglia's children hospices, will visit a children's hospice in Hamilton.

Prime Minister John Key said the visit would entail a "pretty good geographic spread", meaning New Zealanders would have a good chance to see the royal family.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince George would visit four South Island and four North Island centres.

"The duke and duchess will be based at Government House in Wellington and mostly make day trips to different parts of the country, then return to be with Prince George in the evening," he said.

"We're trying to make it as easy as possible for them to have regular family time with their son, while acknowledging thousands of New Zealanders will want to take the opportunity to meet them."

With the tour marking the newest royal's first official overseas trip there is expected to be huge interest in the visit which will start in New Zealand on April 7 and end in Australia on Anzac Day.

While 8-month-old Prince George is not expected to accompany his parents on most public outings, aides expect he will make an appearance before the cameras at "one or two" events over the course of the three-week tour.

"The duke and duchess are content enough to know that he will be with them in the two countries," an aide said.

The trip's highlights include the royal couple racing each other in competing America's Cup yachts on the Auckland Harbour and a ride on Queenstown's famous Shotover jetboat.

Along with their usual staff, the royal couple will be bringing a nanny with them on the trip. While in New Zealand, the tour party will be transported on a New Zealand air force plane.

Prince George is about the same age as his father, Prince William, was when he travelled to New Zealand with his parents Charles and Diana in 1983.

The Duchess of Cambridge has not been to New Zealand or Australia before and an aide said it was her first chance to experience some of the "extraordinary warmth and hospitality for which the people of both countries are renowned the world over".

Prince William was last in New Zealand and Australia in 2011, shortly after the Christchurch earthquakes and natural disasters in Queensland and Victoria.

The royal couple's first engagement will be at Government House in Wellington the day of their arrival in New Zealand.

They will be greeted by a powhiri on the lawn and Prince William will inspect a guard of honour

before a 21 gun salute is fired.

The following day will be kept free for the family who will spend the time away from the capital at a private residence.

On April 9, they will have a full round of engagements including a function at Government House to recognise Plunket, where Prince George may make an appearance.

The following day the duke and duchess will attend a wreath-laying ceremony in Blenheim, attended by veterans from World War II and more-recent conflicts.

The royal couple will also visit the Omaka Aviation Heritage centre where they will be escorted by Sir Peter Jackson around his display of World War I aircraft.

Later that evening they will attend a State reception at Government House and unveil a portrait of the Queen.

On April 11, they will travel to Whenuapai in Auckland, New Zealand's largest air force base, where they will meet base personnel and their families for an informal gathering.

The couple will then travel to Cambridge where they will visit the town centre before meeting Olympic cycling medallists at the new national velodrome.

On April 13, the couple will leave George in Wellington while they travel to Dunedin, Queenstown and Christchurch.

In Dunedin they will be met by Ngai Tahu before attending a Palm Sunday service, followed by a "Rippa Rugby" game.

In Queenstown they will visit the Amisfield vineyard before riding the Shotover Jet.

On April 14 the couple will visit Christchurch where they will visit the central business district and attend a brief ceremony to remember those who were killed during the 2010 earthquake.

On their final morning in New Zealand the royal couple will visit the police college outside Wellington which was opened by the Prince of Wales 30 years ago.

A walkabout in central Wellington may be their final event before they fly to Australia.

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