

## Top of the South Island Self Drive Loop

Visit the less explored upper South Island, home to amazing wildlife, including whales in Kaikoura and the delightful seal colony in Abel Tasman National Park. In Blenheim, you'll sample the region's best known export, the Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc before heading south to the West Coast and Punakaiki Rocks. You return to Christchurch via Arthur's Pass National Park, where you stay at the Wilderness Lodge an amazing place to discover natural New Zealand and experience life on a high country station.

Starts in: Christchurch  
Finishes in: Christchurch  
Length: 10days / 9nights  
Accommodation: Boutique Lodges & Hotels  
Can be customised: Yes

This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.



### Inclusions:

Includes: Late model rental cars  
Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)  
Includes: Unlimited kms  
Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring  
Included activity: Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation  
Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App  
Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course  
Included activity: Ocean's Cabin with Whale Watch Kaikōura  
Included activity: Half Day Marlborough Wine Tour with Sounds Connection  
Included activity: Seals, Beach Cruise and Walk with Wilsons - Includes Lunch  
Meals included: 9 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners

## Day 1



### Private Transfer Christchurch International Airport to Christchurch Accommodation

On arrival, you will be met by a private driver and transferred to your Christchurch accommodation.

### Welcome to Christchurch City

Christchurch New Zealand's garden city is steadily being transformed into a vibrant urban destination. Encompassing a large green belt, it is known for its wide tree lined avenues and lush gardens. A great way to explore the city or easy way to see the sights or ride the historic trams across town to the renowned botanic gardens and the unique cardboard Transitional Cathedral, that's right it is built of cardboard!

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Discover Christchurch Afternoon Tour

A half-day sightseeing tour of Christchurch highlighting both the damage to the city inflicted by several large earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 and the rebuild which is currently in progress, together with the surviving beauty of the city and the historical landmarks. Experience the grand architecture, beautiful gardens, and scenic viewpoints on a half-day city tour of Christchurch.

### Your accommodation: Hotel Montreal

A true original, Hotel Montreal is a unique, luxury escape in the heart of Christchurch city. Hotel Montreal is often recognised for the five-star comfort and convenience it affords those passing through the Garden City.



## Day 2



### Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

### Christchurch to Kaikoura

The drive north from Christchurch to Kaikoura takes you through the rolling hills of North Canterbury's major wine region, the Waipara Valley. Allow time for a detour and visit Hanmer Springs for a dip in the mineral hot pools. Continue on and cross the Hawkswood Range before descending to the spectacular Kaikoura coastline - where the road hugs the ocean for the last leg of the drive.

### Ocean's Cabin with Whale Watch Kaikōura

Experience New Zealand's only marine-based whale-watching company. Whale Watch Kaikōura offers a once-in-a-lifetime, up-close encounter with the giant Sperm Whale. You are also likely to encounter New Zealand fur seals, dolphins, and albatross. Depending on the season you may also see Pilot, Blue, and Southern Right whales as well as migrating humpbacks. Often orcas can be spotted here and the world's smallest dolphin, the Hector's, occasionally makes an appearance.

### Your accommodation: Bendamere House B&B

Bendamere House B&B has quality ensuite rooms, detached from the main house adding to the privacy and comfort, with superb views overlooking the Pacific Ocean and Seaward Kaikoura mountain range.

Meals included: Breakfast





## Day 3



### Kaikoura to Blenheim

Heading north from Kaikoura, the road hugs the shore for approximately 50 kilometres and offers many opportunities to view the native wildlife such as seabirds and New Zealand fur seals. One of the best seal watching locations is Ohau Point (25km north of Kaikoura), where you can observe the adults on the shoreline and the pups frolicking in the waterfall, just a short walk from the road (signposted). As you drive you will have turquoise waters of the South Pacific Ocean to your east and to the west the towering Kaikoura Ranges. Crossing the dry hills of the Marlborough ranges you head towards Marlborough, New Zealand's largest wine producing region. Blenheim sits right at the heart of Marlborough and is ideally located to enjoy an afternoon sampling the local produce. A great way to do this is to take a guided wine tour with Sounds Connection Wine Tours.

### Your accommodation: The Peppertree

The Peppertree is situated in the midst of an extensive country garden a boutique vineyard and an olive grove. Choose from one of the five spacious suites, each of which reflects a different character. Days at The Peppertree begin with a delicious breakfast, served in the Dining Room or on the verandah.

Meals included: Breakfast



## Day 4



### Half Day Marlborough Wine Tour with Sounds Connection

An afternoon among the vines! Be immersed in the Marlborough wine country with the Sounds Connection half day wine tour. Get collected from your accommodation and taken through three or four hand-picked wineries to taste the award-winning produce this region is known for. Hear about the history of winemaking in Marlborough as well as learning the unique processes each winery goes through.

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Meals included: Breakfast



## Day 5



## Blenheim to Mapua via Queen Charlotte Drive

Take a short drive to the small port of Picton where the interislander ferry connects with Wellington. A bustling seaside destination, Picton is well equipped with shops, cafes - and is also the starting point for the famous Queen Charlotte Walk. You'll travel along Queen Charlotte Drive, traversing the length of the Marlborough Sounds coastline. Magnificent views are abundant - so be sure to make time to stop and enjoy the scenery as you go.

Continue through the small port town of Havelock, home to a variety of cafes and restaurants. The highway between Nelson and Picton crosses the pelorus river, and at this junction you'll find the famous pelorus bridge. From here there are a number of forest walks - the most popular - a 30 minute loop through beech, rimu, and totara forest. Traverse Tasman Bay passing through Richmond, a short drive from there you turn off to Mapua.

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### Your accommodation: Pihopa Retreat

Relax in style at this historical boutique retreat. Pihopa Retreat encompasses park-like gardens with six premium suites, creating a comfortable home away from home feel for your stay. The Pihopa property has 5.5. acres of peaceful gardens, a heated swimming pool and large spacious areas to create a truly relaxing visit.

Meals included: Breakfast



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## Day 6



### Mapua to Kaiteriteri and return

Hugging the shore line you arrive into Motueka, the last large town before the quiet and secluded townships of Kaiteriteri and Marahau. Zig-zag your way through the apples and kiwi fruit orchards around Riwaka you soon return to the magnificent coast and wind your way to the golden sands of Kaiteriteri, gateway to the Abel Tasman National Park. Following your visit, retrace your steps and journey back to Mapua.

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### Abel Tasman National Park

Experience the golden beauty of Abel Tasman National Park, a coastal paradise renowned for its spectacular hiking track, pristine golden beaches, secluded inlets, and private lagoons. With its mild climate and stunning natural environment, it's a cherished destination for New Zealanders nationwide. Why not enjoy a scenic cruise through the Sounds or take a kayaking tour around its many sheltered bays? Relax to the melodious birdsong and get up close to some of the park's many animal residents, including native bats, geckos, birds, marine mammals, fur seals, and dolphins.

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### Seals, Beach Cruise and Walk

Experience the best of Abel Tasman on this combined beach cruise and walk tour. Cruise into the Tonga Island Marine Reserve and pause to watch the antics of the Resident Fur Seal Colony. After landing at the historic Tonga Quarry Beach, take a two hour, fifteen minute walk over forested land and around the spectacular Bark Bay Estuary, renowned for its cascading waterfalls. Rejoin the cruise at the sheltered golden cove on Medlands Beach.

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Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



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## Day 7





## Marahau to Punakaiki

The drive today takes you along the Buller Gorge and offers some wonderful scenery as you follow this magnificent river. The town of Murchison is a quiet place and a great lunch stop. Underneath its sleepy farming facade is an adventurers' paradise with white water rafting, kayaking, 4WD trips, and some great trout fishing.

The first major town (by this region's standard) is Inangahua, and a small museum tells of the earthquake that hit the region in 1968, leaving 70% of the buildings damaged or inhabitable. Further along the river, one of the must-visit places is Whites Creek and New Zealand's longest swing bridge. Crossing the river, you get magnificent views of the gorge, and once on the other side, there are short bush walks, jet boat rides, and some of the historic gold mining remnants.

The port town of Westport is the largest on the Northern West Coast. A history of gold mining, logging, fishing coal mining gives the town a hard-working feeling. And to reward the hard workers the town has an extraordinary amount of pubs.

There are plenty of activities here, such as caving, bush walks, and surfing, but one of the most popular is to take a trip to Tauranga Bay and the seal colony. Just 15 kilometres south at Cape Foulwind (named by Captain Cook for the difficult sailing conditions and not the smell of the seals!), you will find a breeding colony of New Zealand fur seals. A well-marked and easy 10-minute walking track takes you to the colony where you can see the creatures lazing around or swimming in the ocean.

The spectacular West Coast coastline guides you to Paparoa National Park and to Punakaiki where a walk along the paths around the pancake rocks is a must. Please note there is no supermarket facilities in Punakaiki.

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### Your accommodation: Scenic Hotel Punakaiki

Scenic Hotel Punakaiki is a modern, award-winning hotel complex, architecturally designed to harmonious with the local environment. Nestled in the foothills of Paparoa National Park the resort has spectacular views of the Wild West Coast beaches while all rooms have rainforest and/or ocean views.

Meals included: Breakfast



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## Day 8



### Punakaiki to Arthur's Pass National Park

Today you'll head south towards Greymouth, before turning onto State Highway 73 as you make your way to Arthur's Pass. Winding your way up and over the Southern Alps, this route takes you through some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, even in the rain when hundreds of waterfalls cascade down the bush clad hillsides.

Originally the road was used as a pass by the Maori as they made their seasonal passage to collect Greenstone in the West Coast mountains. Following the 1800's gold rush a road and railway was developed through the area. Today, the railway is used predominantly for the world renowned TransAlpine Scenic Train, transporting several hundred tourists per day from Christchurch to Greymouth or the other way round. Continue on through the Otira Gorge, before arriving at your destination for the night, Arthur's Pass.

Note: If you're feeling like a more leisurely drive, there is the option to take a more scenic route around Lake Brunner. Well signposted, this road begins just before the town of Kumara.

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### Your accommodation: Wilderness Lodge, Arthurs Pass

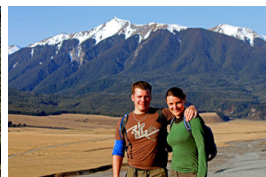
Wilderness Lodge sits on its own 3,000-hectare nature reserve and merino sheep farm and is surrounded by the mountains of Arthur's Pass National Park. Join nature guides to walk, canoe and discover kea parrots, giant buttercups, pygmy forests, alpine flower gardens and waterfalls.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



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## Day 9



## Explore Wilderness Lodge, Arthur's Pass

Nestled in mountain beech forest, midway between Christchurch and the West Coast, Wilderness Lodge Arthur's Pass offers stylish accommodation, great food, and warm hospitality in a spectacular mountain setting.

Set on a 4000 acre working sheep farm and nature reserve in the heart of the Southern Alps, a daily program of guided activities will be the highlight of your visit. Join naturalist and farmer guides to hike alpine trails, kayak wildlife refuge lakes, and experience life on a working farm.

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Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



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## Day 10



### Arthur's Pass to Christchurch

Descending into the valleys of the Waimakariri this drive offers some spectacular views of the braided river valleys. Castle Hill Scenic Reserve sits in limestone country and the area is dotted with remarkable rock outcrops. A popular place with climbers it was also an important place for Maori in past years as they provided shelter on their seasonal journeys between the coasts. There is a network of walking paths allowing you to explore.

Descending onto the Canterbury Plains the rich farmland that attracted and helped settlers prosper becomes apparent as you head into the city of Christchurch.

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### Return Your Vehicle to Christchurch Airport

It's time to return your rental car and let the South Island journey come to an end. If time allows spend the day exploring more of Christchurch, we'd suggest a leisurely drive up the Port Hills for some great sites and then over to the harbour of Lyttleton, before circling through the tunnel and back to the airport to continue your journey home.&nbsp;

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### Farewell from Aotearoa-New Zealand

Bid farewell to Aotearoa-New Zealand, taking with you unforgettable memories of its breathtaking landscapes and incredible adventures. In Maori, it is said mā te wā, which is not goodbye, it is see you soon!

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## Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	10
Accommodation:	Boutique Lodges & Hotels
Car/transport type:	

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## Included activities

Includes	All breakfasts
Includes	2 dinners
Includes	Private airport transfers
Includes	Abel Tasman Seals and Beach walk
Includes	Half day Marlborough wine tour
Includes	Whale Watch Kaikoura tour

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## Accommodation summary

Day 1	Hotel Montreal
Day 2	Bendamere House B&B
Day 3	The Peppertree
Day 4	The Peppertree
Day 5	Pihopa Retreat
Day 6	Pihopa Retreat
Day 7	Scenic Hotel Punakaiki
Day 8	Wilderness Lodge, Arthurs Pass
Day 9	Wilderness Lodge, Arthurs Pass