



South Island Coastal Self Drive tour

You'll begin this journey with magnificent views of the Pacific Ocean as you travel south from Christchurch. In Dunedin there's time to explore the Otago Peninsula with its abundant wildlife, then you'll follow the Catlins coastline to the bottom of the South Island. On the western side of the island highlights include a nature cruise on the famous Milford Sound, the spectacular West Coast Road edging the Tasman Sea and the remarkable Punakaiki Pancake Rocks. The top of the South Island brings the calm aqua waters of Abel Tasman National Park and the Marlborough Sounds before you return to the Pacific Ocean.

Starts in: Christchurch
Finishes in: Christchurch
Length: 14days / 13nights
Accommodation: Motels
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: Unlimited kms

Includes: Airport & ferry terminal rental car fees

Includes: Comprehensive tour pack (detailed itinerary, driving instructions, map/guidebooks, brochures)

Included activity: Private transfer Christchurch International Airport to your accommodation

Included activity: Te Anau Glowworm Caves with RealNZ

Included activity: TSS Earnslaw Cruise and Walter Peak Gourmet BBQ Dining

Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)

Includes: GPS navigation

Includes: Additional drivers

Includes: 24/7 support while touring New Zealand

Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App

Included activity: Milford Sound Cruise and picnic lunch with RealNZ

: 1 lunch, 1 special dinner

Day 1



Private transfer Christchurch International Airport to your accommodation

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

Welcome to Christchurch City

After checking into your accommodation, the rest of the day is yours to explore at your leisure. Christchurch City is the largest city on the South Island. Often referred to as the Garden City it boasts one of the largest public parks in the country and the city centre is full of very impressive stone buildings reminiscent of the English university towns.

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.

The tour commences in the central city of Christchurch and covers the area which was completely devastated by the Christchurch earthquakes in February 2011. The guide will explain both the history of the city and the effects of the earthquake. On leaving the inner city, the tour travels to Mona Vale a historic homestead and gardens. Then you will travel to the Sign of the Takahe, a historic building with a lookout providing spectacular views over the city, Canterbury Plains and to the Southern Alps. The tour then travels via the Port Hills and Lyttleton Harbour by way of the Sign of the Kiwi and Governors Bay to the Port of Lyttleton. The tour proceeds through the Lyttleton harbour tunnel to the seaside suburb of Sumner and cave rock before returning to the central city where the tour will conclude.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Christchurch

Bella Vista Motel Christchurch offers a great range of comfortable modern units with excellent facilities. Enjoy the convenience of being located in close proximity to the Christchurch CBD, shops, entertainment and other activities.



Day 2



Collect your rental car

This tour can be priced with any of the rental cars available in our fantastic range, from economy hatchbacks to prestige saloons and SUV's.

Christchurch to Dunedin

Crossing the vast Canterbury Plains you'll head South on State Highway one, traversing many braided rivers that start their life as glacial melt water high in the Southern Alps. Go over New Zealand's longest bridge at Rakaia and onwards through Timaru.

Stretch your legs in Oamaru, known for its white stone buildings constructed with the local Oamaru Stone. If you were a little late off the mark this morning you may get the chance to see the local blue penguins come ashore at dusk. Continue down the coast to Moeraki, and take a detour towards the beach to see the Moeraki Boulders, a unique geological feature and well worth the look.

As you arrive in Dunedin, take in the city's Edwardian and Scottish heritage reflected in the buildings around the city centre The Octagon.

Your accommodation: Motel on York

Motel on York is located in the heart of Dunedin city. The property offers superior accommodation only 300 metres away from cafes and restaurants.



Day 3



Explore Dunedin and the Otago Peninsula

Known as the Edinburgh of the South, Dunedin City has a heavy Scottish influence. Surrounded by rugged coastal plains and windswept beaches it's home to an eclectic mix of historical and modern architecture as well as industrial technology. Renowned for its Flemish Baroque-inspired 'gingerbread house' Railway Station, this university town is bustling with life. Head to the Saturday farmers market held in the aforementioned railway grounds for a taste of organic produce, handmade crepes and local honey. Explore the many cafes and wine bars in The Octagon, then continue on a self-guided walking tour of the internationally acclaimed Street Art dotted around the city. Drive to the coast and watch the freighters passing in the distance while you sunbathe, or hire a mountain bike and test your legs on one of the many trails available in the area. For a more immersive historical experience, follow the coast to New Zealand's only castle, Larnach Castle. On your way back be sure to head to the Otago Peninsula to see the largest mainland Albatross colony in the world.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Monarch Wildlife Cruise from Wellers Rock

An unforgettable experience viewing rare and fascinating wildlife. Board the Monarch Boat and take in the fascinating sight of the Northern Royal Albatross as it comes into nest on the spectacular cliffs of Taiaroa, Otago Peninsula. You'll also see eight other species of birds including sooty shearwaters and petrels as well as sea lions and fur seals and if you're lucky dolphins and whales.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Penguin Tour with The Opera

Learn about the endangered Yellow Eyed Penguin when you visit The Opera - Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance, a private conservation reserve dedicated to ensuring the survival of this unique species. The project is entirely funded by guided tours which allow the conservation team to engage in habitat restoration, predator control, a research program, and an on-site rehabilitation facility.

On your tour, you will learn about the issues the Yellow Eyed Penguin faces, their life cycle, and how the project is carried out. Your experience will begin in a theatre before moving to the rehabilitation center where penguins may be seen up close. You'll take a short bus trip over to the reserve and be led on foot approx 2km by your guide through a system of covered trenches to view hides that allow access to the living and breeding habitat of this very shy bird without disturbing them. There is also an opportunity to meet other animals that reside in the reserve including fur seals, sea lions, and several species of shore and land birds.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Albatross Classic Tour with Royal Albatross Centre

This 60 minute tour focuses on the Royal Albatrosses and wildlife that inhabit Pukekura (Taiaroa Head). Begin with a short film, then enjoy the informative commentary provided by your guide about albatrosses as you visit the observatory to see nesting albatross in their natural habitat.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Larnach Castle and Gardens

Larnach is New Zealand's only Castle, built in 1871 by politician and merchant, William Larnach, a man of great vision who helped shape New Zealand's early history. It was built for William's beloved first wife Eliza; it took 200 workmen three years to build the shell and a further twelve years were spent by master craftsmen to embellish the interior. The Castle is located high up on the Otago Peninsula and looks down on Dunedin city giving beautiful views. The gardens have an International Garden of Significance status and have a unique collection of antiques, including a unique nine piece Totara knot suite. The Ballroom cafe is a fantastic place to rest and reflect on all you have seen while enjoying a delicious range of refreshments. As with the entire castle, the ballroom had an interesting and varied history prior to its beautiful restoration, uses ranged from an asylum, antique sales room to the penning of sheep. In this self guided exploration of the castle and gardens, you are free to discover on your own.

Your accommodation: Motel on York

Motel on York is located in the heart of Dunedin city. The property offers superior accommodation only 300 metres away from cafes and restaurants.



Day 4



Dunedin to Invercargill via the Southern Scenic Route

The scenic route from Dunedin to Invercargill takes you via the Southern Scenic Route. Well signposted from Dunedin the route takes you along the rugged Otago coastline and its many secluded beaches and bays and many are great places to spot New Zealand fur seals and sea lions. At Nugget Point, penguins and elephant seals can also be spotted. Curio Bay is home to a 160 million year old fossilised forest. Get an early start for this drive as you can easily pass the whole day exploring the many attractions along the Southern Scenic Route.

Your accommodation: Admiral Court Motel

Admiral Court Motel & Apartments is a modern, warm, spacious, ground floor accommodation complex, with 17 units available including 5 luxury units. Centrally located on Tay Street, Admiral Court is within minutes of all the amenities, including the City Centre, iSite, Queens Park and various sporting and family attractions.



Day 5



Invercargill to Te Anau via Southern Scenic Route

Taking the Southern Scenic Route the drive from Invercargill to Te Anau passes through some wonderful and often overlooked regions of Southland. Riverton is Southland's oldest community established by whalers in the 1830's and many of the original cottages have survived throughout the town. The Riverton Early Settlers Museum tells the story well. Orepuki on the coast was once 'almost' a gold town but the fine dust proved too hard to extract commercially. You can still sometimes see gold dust in the beach sand at Monkey Bay. The early sawmilling settlement of Tautapere is next. Known as the 'hole in the bush' the town features an attractive domain. A little further north is the Clifden suspension bridge which dates back to 1899. The Blackmount Road offers some great side trips if you have the time and one in particular is the 50 kilometre round trip to Lake Haruoko, New Zealand's deepest lake. The Blackmount Road continues to the small township of Manapouri, the departure point for cruises to Doubtful Sound. Te Anau the gateway to Milford Sound is just a further 20 kilometres north.

Te Anau Glowworm Caves with RealNZ

Begin your Te Anau Glowworm experience with a scenic cruise across Lake Te Anau on board the luxury catamaran, Luminosa, to the western side of the lake. On arrival, you'll enter the caves through Cavern House, where informative displays detail the history of this 12,000 year old underground network.

You'll then explore by limestone pathway while your guide points out hidden whirlpools, sculpted rock formations and a rushing underground waterfall. See a magical display of thousands of glowworms as you glide through the darkness in a small boat.

Your accommodation: Lakefront Lodge

Stylish self contained motel units less than one minute walk from Te Anau Lakefront. Close to shops, cafes and restaurants.



Day 6



Te Anau to Milford Sound and return to Te Anau

The road to Milford Sound offers some of the most beautiful and iconic scenery in the country. From crystal clear lakes and towering mountains to lush glacier formed meadows, this area is dramatic and unyielding. Stretch your legs on the Chasm Walk, a short stroll through native beech forest to see several powerful waterfalls. Continue on through the Homer Tunnel, an engineering marvel at 1219 metres long. Arriving into the village of Milford, you will be greeted with an amazing view of Mitre Peak. A day cruise into the heart of the sound is not to be missed. You'll learn about how this magnificent area was formed and experience the wonder of the falls that line the Fiord before back-tracking the way you came.

Please note: Make sure to allow 2.5hrs to Milford Sound, this takes into account the current road works on the Milford Road.

Milford Sound Cruise with RealNZ

Get up close and personal with Milford Sound on a leisurely cruise of this spectacular fiord. From thundering waterfalls to sky-high mountains to lush rainforests, Milford has it all. Experience the spray of a waterfall as you cruise close to sheer rock faces. Informative, participative and relaxed, this is the perfect way to experience Milford Sound to the fullest.

Your accommodation: Lakefront Lodge

Stylish self contained motel units less than one minute walk from Te Anau Lakefront. Close to shops, cafes and restaurants.

Meals included: Lunch



Day 7



Te Anau to Queenstown

Today you'll cross vast tussock lands on your way to Queenstown. Pass through Mossburn, the deer capital of the nation. Continue on through the Southland countryside where the road begins to hug the lake edge and the Remarkables mountain range towers over your approach into the adventure capital of New Zealand.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Shotover Canyon River Jet Boat Adventure

Riding the iconic 'Big Red' Jet Boat through the narrow Shotover Canyon is an exhilarating experience not to be missed. Your skilled jet boat driver pushes the boat to 85 kph, skimming across shallow water and past towering canyon walls. This 25 minute white water ride includes 360 degree spins and maximum thrills.

TSS Earnslaw cruise to Walter Peak including gourmet BBQ dinner and a farm tour

Enjoy a quintessential Kiwi experience, a delicious gourmet BBQ buffet meal and a farm demonstration in a stunning lakeside setting. Take in the stunning views of Lake Wakatipu and its surroundings as you cruise across the lake to the historic Walter Peak high country farm aboard the TSS Earnslaw Steamship.

Enjoy the ambience of the heart of the stately homestead while your Colonel's Homestead Restaurant chef prepares a gourmet BBQ dinner. Your seasonal menu includes an extensive selection of local New Zealand produce, including succulent meats and a selection of delicious vegetables and salads. Complete your meal with your choice of delicious desserts, New Zealand cheeses, tea and coffee.

After dinner, watch the farm dogs in action with a sheep-herding demonstration and say hello to the other farm animals. Finally, cruise home under the southern stars and enjoy the fresh night air as the lights of Queenstown draw ever closer.

Your accommodation: Scenic Suites Queenstown

Scenic Suites Queenstown offers guests exquisite style, comfort and spectacular views over Lake Wakatipu and the Southern Alps. The hotel prides itself on its four star hospitality that will make your stay in Queenstown even more memorable.

Meals included: Speciality Dinner



Day 8



Queenstown to Franz Josef Glacier via Wanaka

From Queenstown you'll cross the Crown Range, the highest sealed road in New Zealand to arrive in the Alpine town of Wanaka, gateway to Mt Aspiring National Park. Skirting the shores of both Lake Wanaka and Hawea, you will enter the small town of Makarora. Stop at Blue Pools for a 1-hour return walk through the native beech forest to a glacier-fed swimming hole. Continue on through the remote seaside settlement of Haast before heading up the wild West Coast highway you pass through ancient temperate rainforests while getting sneak peeks of the wild coast beaches occasionally. Paringa Salmon Farm is worth a stop to stretch your legs, feed the fish, and stop for lunch and refreshments. Keep heading North and be sure to enjoy the view of the ever-changing towering snowcapped Southern Alps Mountain Range. Fox Glacier welcomes you first, then comes your destination for the night Franz Josef township.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

Take a spectacular scenic flight over two of New Zealand's most famous glaciers. Land at the head of one and view the incredible sight of this frozen river as it winds its way through ancient carved valleys. Should weather not be suitable to take this flight you are able to transfer your booking onto a similar tour on any of the Helicopter Line's operations in Queenstown or Mt Cook.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Franz Josef

From the moment you arrive at Bella Vista Franz Josef, you'll enjoy the convenience of being located in close proximity to shops, restaurants and other activities, as well as being a short walk to the Glacier Hot Pools. Franz Josef village is the perfect place to stay when exploring New Zealand's glaciers.



Day 9



Franz Josef to Punakaiki

Driving north on State Highway 6 you pass through many small West Coast towns. Hari Hari is the township that Guy Menzies decided to land in (or rather crash land) as he became the first person to fly solo across the Tasman. Ross is the site of an old gold mining town and some of the old buildings remain. You can even pan for gold. The craft and gift stores in Hokitika are excellent with a great range of locally made items and if you want to explore further here then the Hokitika Gorge is worthy of a detour.

Just south of Greymouth is Shantytown a replica gold rush town with lots of great displays from yesteryear. Be sure to stop at the supermarket in Greymouth as there is none in Punakaiki. Punakaiki is a highlight of this drive so allow plenty of time to walk the paths and explore the formations.

Your accommodation: Havenz Punakaiki (Self check in required)

Havenz Punakaiki offers a selection of traditional Kiwi hideaways: luxury homes, holiday apartments and baches. These holiday retreats are situated in tranquil native forest and offer easy access to beaches, the Paparoa National Park and the famous Punakaiki Pancake Rocks and Blowholes.



Day 10



Punakaiki to Nelson

Heading North a worthwhile divert is to Cape Foulwind just south of Westport. Home to a seal colony and the short walk provides some spectacular scenery. Driving along the Buller Gorge enjoy some wonderful scenery as you follow this magnificent river.

The first major town (by this regions 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 stop 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 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.

Continuing to follow the river you then enter the Kahurangi National Park region and the Nelson Lakes. Trees, rivers and valleys accompany you now as you head into the suburb of Richmond and then Nelson City.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Underworld Rafting and Glowworm Experience with Underworld Adventures

A superb four hour Black Water Rafting adventure in the Paparoa National Park. You meander through a paradise of stalactites and stalagmites in the upper dry levels of the cave. You then enter a slow moving underground river on which you float in your tube using only the natural light of an awe inspiring display of glow worms for navigation. Emerge from the cave into a remote and untouched world before leaving its tranquility for the rushing bubbling waters of the low grade Nile River Rapids.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Underworld Adventures - Glowworm Cave Tour

Delve into an ancient wonderland of stalactites, stalagmites and glowworms in the enormous Nile River Caves. At the Charleston Base you'll be equipped with caving helmets, coats and boots and be taken to the Nile River Rainforest Train where you'll travel through the forest before exploring the dry upper levels of the Aranui Entrance series. Recently discovered, the Metro cave is one of only several caves in the world left in a natural unspoilt state. Exploring the lower level of the cave system, in the dark you will find galaxies of glow worms spanning over you. Your guides will enrich your journey with captivating illustrations, explanations and stories connecting you with this special place. After emerging back to the daylight a short stroll leads back to the train.

Your accommodation: The Hotel Nelson

The Hotel Nelson offers great facilities just 10 minutes walking distance from Nelson City Centre. Well equipped modern units with off street parking.



Day 11



Explore the Nelson and Abel Tasman region

Nelson is a great city to explore on foot. Visit the historic areas, the famous Cathedral or relax and enjoy the atmosphere at one of the many cafes on Trafalgar Street. Nelson is also noted for its many artists, and galleries displaying their work can be enjoyed by following one of the Art trails listed locally. Around 45 minutes drive away is Abel Tasman National Park. The region offers countless opportunities to explore for visitors of every age and capability, from enjoying the golden sand beaches and clear warm waters to guided kayaking trips viewing seals and dolphins, to exploring some of New Zealand's finest walking tracks.

Abel Tasman National Park

Abel Tasman National Park, known for its coastal hiking track has an abundance of golden beaches, inlets and private lagoons. The park has a mild climate and is a special place to visit at any time of the year. 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 parks many animal residents, including native bats, geckos, birds and marine mammals fur seals and dolphins.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - 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.

Your accommodation: The Hotel Nelson

The Hotel Nelson offers great facilities just 10 minutes walking distance from Nelson City Centre. Well equipped modern units with off street parking.



Day 12



Nelson to Blenheim via Queen Charlotte Drive

From city of Nelson you drive along the coast of Tasman Bay towards the Bryant Range. The highway between Nelson and Picton also crosses the Pelorus River and just at this junction is the famous and historic Pelorus Bridge. From here there are a number of forest walks with the most popular the 30 minute loop through beech, rimu and totara forest to the swing-bridge.

Starting in the town of Havelock the Queen Charlotte Drive travels the Marlborough Sounds coastline towards the port town of Picton.

Magnificent views of the sounds can be had from many vantage points so allow plenty of time to enjoy the scenery. If you can spare the time take the narrow windy road to Portage along Mahau Sound and Kenepuru Sound with their bush clad hillsides and secluded sandy coves.

Picton the busy port town of Picton, and its here from that the Interislander ferries arrive and depart. The small town centre has plenty of shops and cafes and the waterfront area is a very pleasant place to spend a few hours watching the activity of the ships. The Edwin Fox Maritime Centre on the wharf is worth a visit with the star attraction being the vessel the Edwin Fox, reputedly the 9th oldest ship in the world.

Just 30 minutes south is Blenheim sitting right at the heart of the New Zealand's largest wine producing region, Marlborough, and is ideally located to enjoy an afternoon sampling of the local produce.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Sip Marlborough Half-Day Wine Tour with Marlborough Tour Company

Sip is perfect for those who want just a taste of Marlborough's expansive wine region over a short period of time.

The afternoon tour visits a select number of top iconic and boutique wineries for special tastings, chosen for their history, fabulous customer service, unique offering and stunning range of wines. Sip is ideal for gaining an introduction to Marlborough's incredible wine region in a fun and relaxed way. Enjoy tasting the delicious wine, wandering the beautiful wineries and meeting the people who know the wine and love sharing their passion for it.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Blenheim

In a quiet location and close to town, Bella Vista Motel is in the heart of Blenheim. Surrounded by the world-famous Marlborough wine growing area and just a few minutes walk from a wide variety of restaurants and bars.



Day 13



Blenheim to Christchurch

Crossing the dry hills of the Marlborough ranges you head towards one of the most spectacular coastlines of the South Island, the Kaikoura Coast. The road hugs the shore for around 50 kilometres and offers many chances to view the native wildlife such as seabirds and New Zealand fur seals. To the east, you see the turquoise waters of the South Pacific Ocean and to the west the towering Kaikoura Ranges. Go through Kaikoura Township a bustling place with many cafes and shops but the main reason for visiting here is the wildlife. Depending on the season you may also see migrating Humpback Whales, Pilot Whales, Blue Whales and Southern Right Whales. Continue along the coast before heading inland through North Canterbury's major wine region, the Waipara Valley. You are also introduced to the South Island's most numerous inhabitants, the sheep. Choose to take a 40 minute detour to Hanmer Springs for a relaxing dip in the thermal pools before arriving in Christchurch, your destination for the night.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Christchurch

Bella Vista Motel Christchurch offers a great range of comfortable modern units with excellent facilities. Enjoy the convenience of being located in close proximity to the Christchurch CBD, shops, entertainment and other activities.



Day 14



Return your vehicle to Christchurch Airport

Explore more of Christchurch before dropping your rental car at the airport depot and continuing your onward journey.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Christchurch
Tour length:	14
Accommodation:	Motels
Car/transport type:	

Included activities

Includes	Private airport transfers
Includes	Real Journeys Milford Sound Cruise

Accommodation summary

Day 1	Bella Vista Christchurch
Day 2	Motel on York
Day 3	Motel on York
Day 4	Admiral Court Motel
Day 5	Lakefront Lodge
Day 6	Lakefront Lodge
Day 7	Scenic Suites Queenstown
Day 8	Bella Vista Franz Josef
Day 9	Havenz Punakaiki (Self check in required)
Day 10	The Hotel Nelson
Day 11	The Hotel Nelson
Day 12	Bella Vista Blenheim
Day 13	Bella Vista Christchurch