

Southern Gourmet Grapes and Serenity Tour

Combine the wonderful and dramatic scenery of the South Island with some of its finest foods and wines. Spend a full day at the Akaroa Cooking School where you can get first-hand knowledge of New Zealand ingredients and styles. You then journey north to Marlborough, where you'll discover the world renowned wines on a half day tour. After free time spent in Nelson where you can enjoy an Abel Tasman National Park adventure or taste the craft wines and beers of the region, you then journey south along the spectacular West Coast Road. Ending on a high, spend two days in the alpine village of Wanaka, where you will enjoy a boutique wine tour, tasting Central Otago's best grapes.



Starts in: Christchurch
 Finishes in: Queenstown
 Length: 12days / 11nights
 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: Unlimited kms

Includes: Airport & ferry terminal rental car fees

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

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

Included activity: Akaroa Dolphins Harbour Nature Cruise

Included activity: Half Day Marlborough Wine Tour

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: Wanaka Boutique Wine Tour with Wanaka Wine Tour

Included activity: Cooking Class with Hapuku Kitchen

: 11 breakfasts, 1 lunch

Day 1



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!

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.

Your accommodation: The George Hotel

The George is the essence of supreme comfort. The award-winning 5 star hotel is opposite Hagley Park and just a few minutes stroll from the Botanic Gardens. It also has an award-winning restaurant, 50 Bistro onsite.



Day 2



Christchurch to Akaroa

The Banks Peninsula offers a great contrast to the South Island's largest city. Just around a 1 1/2 hours drive from the city centre are rolling green hills, streams, golden sand beaches and small settlements that offer a unique insight into New Zealand's history and development. Just on the other side of the Port Hills is Lyttelton, a busy port town that was crucial to the development of Christchurch and the Canterbury Plains. Following the road around the beautiful natural harbour the names, such as Magazine Bay, Battery Point, Corsair Point and Governors Bay, remind of the importance the navy placed on this harbour.

The Banks Peninsula itself is actually the remains of a long extinct volcano, the rim of which collapsed some time ago allowing the sea to flood into and create what is now the Akaroa Harbour. In 1840 French colonists settled in Akaroa in a bid to stake a claim for the South Island.

Unbeknown the British had already declared sovereignty and a long drawn out dispute ensued with the British eventually being given government. However the French stayed and made this stunning part of the South Pacific their home and still to this day the town boasts French street names and every year a French Festival is held.

The Harbour itself is teeming with wildlife and a nature cruise is a must do activity. One of the world's smallest and rarest dolphins, hectors dolphin, are often seen and cruises also offer excursions with the chance to swim amongst them.

Akaroa Dolphins Harbour Nature Cruise

A cruise around Akaroa Harbour is the perfect way to view the smallest and rarest dolphins in the world, the Hector's Dolphin, along with fascinating birdlife, New Zealand fur seals and white-flipped penguins. Their custom built catamaran accommodates a small number of guests so you are able to enjoy a more personal cruise experience around the spectacular seascape including sea caves, high cliffs and volcanic rock formations.

Your accommodation: Beaufort House Akaroa

This beautiful historic home and garden has been lovingly restored with old world charm and modern conveniences offering quality accommodation. Relax on the verandahs or wander around the gracious traditional garden containing protected trees, rare camellias, roses and a small private vineyard. Secluded and private it is just a short stroll to the village and harbour.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 3



Akaroa to Kaikoura

The drive takes you over the Port Hills and through the city of Christchurch and then north through some fine rolling farmland and North Canterbury's major wine region, the Waipara Valley. A great detour to take is to head inland and visit Hanmer Springs for a dip in the natural hot pools. Crossing the Hawkswood Range you descend towards the spectacular Kaikoura coastline and the road hugs the ocean as it winds its way the remaining 15 kilometres to the township.

Kaikoura Township is a bustling little place with many cafes, restaurants and shops but the main reason for visiting here is the wildlife. Whale Watch Kaikoura is New Zealand's only marine-based whale watching company offering visitors an exciting up-close encounter with the Giant Sperm Whale at all times of the year. Kaikoura is New Zealand's world famous whale watching destination. Sperm Whales can be seen here year-round while depending on the season you may also see migrating Humpback Whales, Pilot Whales, Blue Whales and Southern Right Whales.

Another great Kaikoura activity is Swimming with the Seals. Donning a wet suit you have the opportunity to interact with these inquisitive creatures on their terms. Wings over Whales also offer tours from fixed wing aircraft to view the whales and other marine creatures from 500 feet in the air.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Ocean's Cabin with Whale Watch Kaikoura

Experience New Zealand's only marine based whale watching company. Whale Watch Kaikoura offer a once-in-a-lifetime, up close encounter with the giant Sperm Whale. You are also likely to encounter New Zealand fur seals, dusky 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 make an appearance.

Cruise in style on modern catamarans, specifically designed for whale watching, featuring large passenger cabins and outside viewing decks. Passenger numbers for each tour are kept below the vessel carrying capacity to ensure your tour experience remains a personal one.

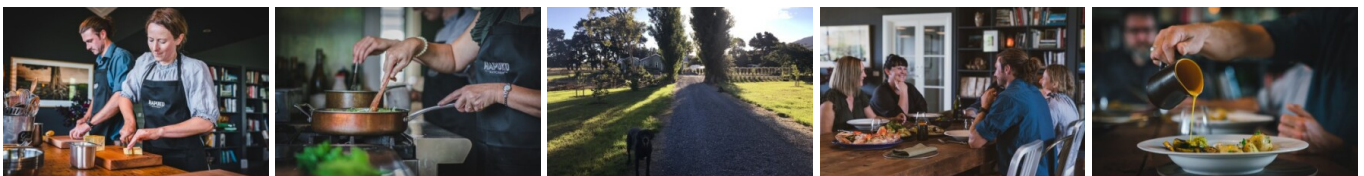
Your accommodation: Bendamere House B&B

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 4



Cooking Class with Hapuku Kitchen

Join chef Fiona and prepare a simple, but delicious seasonal feast cooked with ingredients harvested and foraged from her extensive garden. While sipping on a cup of locally roasted coffee or a refreshing drink, begin with an introduction to the kitchen and menu for the day. Together you will prepare and cook a seasonal feast, explore the extensive cookbook library and enjoy stunning views of the Kaikōura coast and mountain range. Learn many tips and techniques for the creation of the dishes. To finish, sit down with a glass of wine or beer and enjoy your meal.

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, Lunch



Day 5



Half Day Wine Tour

An afternoon among the vines! Be immersed in the Marlborough wine country with the Sounds Connection half day wine tour. You'll be collected from your accommodation and taken through three or four hand-picked wineries to taste the award-winning produce this region is known for. You'll also hear about the history of winemaking in Marlborough as well as learning the unique processes each winery goes through. A lunch stop is not included in this tour so we do advise you have something to eat prior to this activity.

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 6



Blenheim to Nelson via Queen Charlotte Drive

A short drive from Blenheim to the busy port town of Picton, and its here from that the Interislander ferries arrive and depart. The town centre is quite small with 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. Its also the starting point the for the famous Queen Charlotte Walk.

Queen Charlotte Drive travels the Marlborough Sounds coastline between Picton and Havelock. 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.

The small port town of Havelock has a great variety of cafes and restaurants to choose from so plan your journey to arrive in time for lunch. 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. Crossing the Bryant Range you arrive onto Tasman Bay and the city of Nelson.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Explore the Plains Half Day Tour with Bay Tours Nelson

This 4.5hr afternoon tour of the Nelson region is a great taster of the area, you will enjoy a couple of wine-tasting experiences along with one or two artisan and scenic spots eg: Rabbit Island Beach, Pecs Peanut Butter shop, Hoglund glass - Tasman Artisan Cheese shop. To end the tour we will visit NZ's Oldest Pub in the hop-growing region of NZ and enjoy a glass of craft beer/cider or wine from the local area. If time allows we can also visit the popular and historic Mapua Wharf to browse the shops and grab a coffee or ice cream.

Your accommodation: The Waters Bed and Breakfast

The Waters is an oasis of luxury that has few peers in the Nelson Region. 3 purpose built luxury suites at The Waters have been designed to offer a unique accommodation experience. Just metres from the shores of Kina Beach, in the centre of spectacular Tasman bay, with cantilevered decks that extend over the pond, The Waters is a stunning location.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7



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.

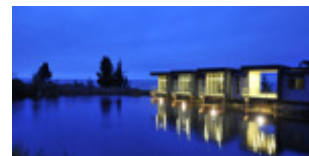
SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Seals, Beach Cruise and Walk

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.

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 8



Nelson to Punakaiki

Leaving Nelson City you will pass through the suburb of Richmond. Moving on you will pass through the Nelson Lakes and Kahurangi National Park region. Trees, rivers and valleys accompany you now as you head towards the town of Murchison. Murchison is a quiet place and a great lunch stop. Underneath its sleepy farming facade is an adventurers paradise with white water rafting, jet boating, gold panning, kayaking, 4WD trips and excellent trout fishing. Heading South you will drive along the Buller Gorge, enjoy some wonderful scenery as you follow this magnificent river. Further along the river from the west coast turn off 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. Continuing on your journey 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. Heading south a worthwhile divert is to Cape Foulwind just south of Westport. Home to a seal colony and the short walk provides some spectacular scenery. Continuing south on the road to Punakaiki you will pass through Paparoa National Park. On arrival to Punakaiki you may want to visit Pancake rocks. Pancake rocks are open to the public free of charge all year round. These are awesome natural blow holes and rock formations, the name says it all. The west coast is very rugged, mountains meet sea and the coast is covered with beautiful fauna and flora including nikau palms.

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



Day 9



Punakaiki to Franz Josef Glacier

The drive South on State Highway 6 takes you through many West Coast towns. The first is Greymouth, the commercial centre for the West Coast. Just south of the town is Shantytown a replica gold rush town with lots of great displays from yesteryear. The next town is Hokitika and this is a great place to explore the craft and gift stores. The Jade or Greenstone on offer in Hokitika is probably some of the best you will see in the country. The Hokitika Gorge, off the beaten track and inland a little is a spectacular detour. Turquoise waters flowing through a narrow gorge. A great short walk will deliver you to this piece of paradise. Ross is the site of an old gold mining town and some of the old buildings and workings remain. In fact Ross is still home to one of the few working gold mines left in New Zealand and the local information centre offers you the chance to pan for gold. Continuing south 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. Whataroa, a small township on the main road is where you would head off to see one of the worlds rarest birds. The entire population (somewhere between 150 and 200 birds) of the New Zealand white heron or kotuku nest at the Waitangi Roto Nature Reserve and guided tours from October to March will take you there. Arriving in the Glacier region you catch your first glimpse of Franz Josef Glacier from a few kilometres out as it flows from the Southern Alps. Franz Josef township is a lively place with a great atmosphere, plenty of choice to dine out and some wonderful activities to enjoy.

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: Westwood Lodge

Westwood is a purpose built lodge, crafted entirely from wood and exquisitely decorated throughout. The lounge is the place to meet to watch the Southern Alps turn a soft pink in the setting sun.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 10



Franz Josef to Wanaka

Heading south you will climb over the Fox hills before arriving at the small town of Fox Glacier. If it's a nice day enjoy spectacular reflections of snowcapped mountains in Lake Matheson, located just 5 minutes west of Fox. Heading south from fox enjoy the amazing scenery of the Southern Alps, and sneak peeks of the rugged beaches while winding through ancient temperate rainforests. Paringa Salmon Farm is worth a stop to stretch your legs, feed the fish, and stop for lunch and refreshments. At Knights Point Lookout, elephant seals can often be seen basking on the sandy beaches at the far end of the point. Crossing the Haast River you'll turn inland and through the mountainous valley littered with waterfalls. A great suggested stop along this route is the Blue Pools. Continue on past lakes Hawea and Wanaka into the alpine township of Wanaka.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Lake Wanaka Happy Hour Cruise

Leaving from the Wanaka lakefront, take a gentle cruise around picturesque Lake Wanaka while relaxing with a glass of local wine or beer and a selection of cheeses. The cruise is fully licensed so further drinks can be purchased on board. The cruise takes you toward the 'Wanaka Tree' before tracking up to Waterfall Creek and Ruby Island. You then head across to Stevensons Peninsula before returning via Beacon Point and Eely Point.

Your accommodation: Tin Tub Luxury Lodge

Experience the Tin Tub Luxury Lodge in Wanaka, an alpine hideaway you won't want to leave. Enjoy the magnificent views while you relax in the heated swimming pool or from your personal balcony.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 11



Wanaka Wine Tours Boutique Central Otago Wine Trail

This small group wine tour (maximum 8) offers a relaxed and personal introduction to the wines and scenery of the Central Otago region. This tour is a great way to explore award-winning vineyards hidden amongst the rugged landscape of Central Otago. Visit and enjoy tastings at 4 Central Otago vineyards including a delicious mid-afternoon platter to enjoy with your tastings. You'll also discover the history of the region with a visit to Old Cromwell Town, a charming heritage precinct that has been revitalised into a boutique arts and crafts village.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Cruise and Island Nature Walk with Eco Wanaka

Lying close to the centre of Lake Wanaka is Mou Waho Island Nature Reserve. A unique glacial remnant of the last ice age, the island is also the historic site of early shipbuilding and used to be a stopping place for the steamers and log rafts that once plied the lake. Accessible from Wanaka by a 35-minute boat cruise, the landing is on the eastern side of the island where the remnants of the early settlement remain; a stone wharf and a hut. A well-formed track leads from the landing and climbs steadily through native bush to near the top of Tyrwhitt Peak. Just before the top, we see Arethusa Pool, a small lake on the island with small islands in it - very intriguing! From the top, we have a sweeping 360-degree view of Lake Wanaka, its surrounding mountains and valleys, and below Arethusa Pool. The perfect spot to stop for tea or coffee. Going back down the track gives us more time to take in our surroundings, listening to and watching the lively bird-life, and just enjoying this unique wildlife reserve. You will feel well rewarded as you re-join the boat for the cruise back to Wanaka. Total cruise time is 1.5 hours. The trip runs subject to weather and lake conditions. Depending on the planting season, you can help The Reforestation of Mou Waho by planting a tree.

Your accommodation: Tin Tub Luxury Lodge

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Meals included: Breakfast



Day 12



Wanaka to Queenstown

Leaving Wanaka, you head over New Zealand's highest sealed road, Crown Range Road, before dropping into Queenstown. This drive only takes about an hour, but you should allow more time to enjoy the magnificent scenery and explore the walks and many stops en route, including the Cardrona Distillery, wonderful views from Crown Range's highest point over Queenstown, the picturesque town of Arrowtown, and if time allows, even the wineries in Gibbston.

Your final morning in Queenstown before driving to the airport and catching your next flight

Depending on when your flight departs you might have time for one last Queenstown adventure before dropping your car off at the airport and catching your flight.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Queenstown
Tour length:	12
Accommodation:	Boutique Lodges & Hotels
Car/transport type:	

Included activities

Includes	1 dinner
Includes	All breakfasts
Includes	Private airport transfers
Includes	Half day Marlborough wine tour
Includes	Full day at the Akaroa Cooking School
Includes	Boutique Half Day Wanaka Wine Tour
Includes	Tiger Moth Freedom of Romance flight and picnic, Wanaka

Accommodation summary

Day 1	The George Hotel
Day 2	Beaufort House Akaroa
Day 3	Bendamere House B&B
Day 4	The Peppertree
Day 5	The Peppertree
Day 6	The Waters Bed and Breakfast
Day 7	The Waters Bed and Breakfast
Day 8	Scenic Hotel Punakaiki
Day 9	Westwood Lodge
Day 10	Tin Tub Luxury Lodge
Day 11	Tin Tub Luxury Lodge