

South Island Coastal – 14 Days – Christchurch/Christchurch From \$1,749pp

Begin this journey with magnificent views of the Pacific Ocean and follow the Catlins coastline to the bottom of the South Island. Back up to the top of the South Island on the western side.

Included in this journey:

13 nights' accommodation

Rental car with full insurance coverage - medium size car (Toyota Corolla sedan or similar)

Unlimited kilometres, GPS navigation, airport and ferry fee

Day 1 – Arrive in Christchurch

Collect your rental car from the airport and drive to the city centre. Check-in at the hotel (after 3:00pm). Christchurch, known for its English heritage, is located on the east coast of New Zealand's South Island. Flat-bottomed punts glide on the Avon River, which meanders through the city centre. On its banks are cycling paths, the green expanse of Hagley Park and Christchurch Botanic Gardens. In Christchurch you will find historic buildings, epic street art murals, award-winning restaurants and of course an array of cafes, bars and restaurants.

Overnight: Christchurch

See & Do: Christchurch Botanic Gardens and Punting | Cardboard Cathedral | Port Hills | Local markets | The Canterbury Museum | Sumner Beach

Day 2 – Christchurch – Dunedin

Today you'll head South on State Highway one and go over New Zealand's longest bridge at Rakaia and onwards through Timaru. A stop in Oamaru is recommended so you have some time enjoy the white stone buildings that Oamaru is well known for! Continue down the coast to Moeraki, and take a detour towards the beach to see the Moeraki Boulders – a unique geological feature well worth a 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.

Approximate distance and time: 350 kms – 4.2 hours

Overnight: Dunedin

See & Do: Museums and Galleries | World's steepest street | Botanic Garden | Lovers Leap | Dunedin Railway Station | Larnach Castle | Wildlife Cruise

Day 3 – Dunedin

You are in Dunedin for the full day today and explore the many delights Dunedin has to offer at your own leisurely pace. If you are here on a Saturday, a visit to the local market held on the grounds of the railway station. Explore the many cafes and wine bars in The Octagon. Explore the internationally acclaimed Street Art dotted around the city. For a spot of sunbathing head to the beach or for those looking for something a bit more active, hire a bike and go on one of the many trails available in the area. For a historical experience follow the coast and visit Larnach Castle – New Zealand's only castle. On the way back and if you have the time, visit the Otago Peninsula to see the largest mainland Albatross colony in the world.

Overnight: Dunedin

See & Do: Museums and Galleries | World's steepest street | Botanic Garden | Lovers Leap | Dunedin Railway Station | Larnach Castle | Wildlife Cruise

Day 4 – Dunedin – Invercargill

Head to your overnight destination today – Invercargill – via the Southern Scenic Route. You'll drive along the rugged Otago coastline and its many secluded beaches and bays. Travelling time from Dunedin to Invercargill is only around three hours so take your time and explore one or two – and many of these places 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. An early start is highly recommended so that you can stop at many of the attractions along the Southern Scenic Route.

Approximate distance and time: 236 kms – 3.0 hours

Overnight: Invercargill

See & Do: Aurora Australis (between April – September) | Nugget Point lighthouse | Pūrākaunui Falls | Bill Richardson Transport World | Classic Motorcycle Mecca

Day 5 – Invercargill – Te Anau

Continue your journey on the Southern Scenic Route to Te Anau and through some wonderful regions of Southland. Stop at Riverton – Southland's oldest community established by whalers in the 1830's. Onwards to Orepuki and to the early sawmilling settlement of Tautapere. Continue travelling north and you'll soon see the Clifden suspension bridge which dates back to 1899. If you have the time, a trip to Lake Haruoko – New Zealand's deepest lake – is recommended (approx. 50 kilometre round trip). Soon you'll be in Te Anau the gateway to Milford Sound.

Approximate distance and time: 180 kms – 2.1 hours

Overnight: Te Anau

See & Do: Te Hiko Culture Heritage Museum | Clifden Caves

Day 6 – Te Anau

Head off to Milford Sound and enjoy some of the most beautiful and iconic scenery in the country – from crystal clear lakes and towering mountains to lush glacier formed meadows.

Stop and stretch your legs on the Chasm Walk, a short stroll through native beech forest to see several powerful waterfalls. Enjoy the drive through the Homer Tunnel (1219 metres long) and head into the village of Milford.

We highly recommend that you take a day cruise into the heart of the sound and 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.

Approximate distance and time: 235 kms – 3.6 hours

Overnight: Te Anau

See & Do: Chasm walk | Milford Sound Cruise

Day 7 – Te Anau – Queenstown

Today you'll cross vast tussock lands on your way to New Zealand's adventure capital – Queenstown. Drive through Mosburn (the deer capital of the Nation) and continue on through the Southland countryside. The drive along the lake with the Remarkables mountain range towering over you as you approach Queenstown is simply breath-taking.

Approximate distance and time: 165 kms – 2 hours

Overnight: Queenstown

See & Do: Lake Wakatipu | Skippers Canyon | Jet Boating on the Shotover River | Skyline Gondola | Bungy Jump Queenstown Gardens

Day 8 – Queenstown – Franz Josef Glacier

Today you'll cross the Crown Range and arrive in the Alpine town of Wanaka – gateway to Mt Aspiring National Park. Drive along the shores of Lake Wanaka and Lake Hawea and get to the small town of Makarora. Stop at Blue Pools for a 1 hour return walk through native beech forest to a glacier-fed swimming hole. Continue driving pass the remote seaside settlement of Haast before heading up the wild West Coast – a 600 km stretch of bush and native rainforest. You will soon be welcomed by Fox Glacier before your destination for the night – Franz Josef township.

Approximate distance and time: 350 kms – 5 hours

Overnight: Franz Josef

See & Do: Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight | Glacier Hot Pools | West Coast Wildlife Center | Franz Josef Valley Glacier Walk

Day 9 – Queenstown – Punakaiki

Get on to State Highway 6 and head north and pas through many small West Coast towns – Hari Hari (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 (the site of an old gold mining town). Stop in Hokitika. This seaside town has a rich history that dates back to the 1860's and is well known for its Greenstone (Pounamu). Have a stroll and pick up a souvenir or two at one of the many craft shops. Before you set off to your overnight destination, a trip to the supermarket is recommended as there is none in Punakaiki. Plan to arrive in Punakaiki early so that you have the time to enjoy and explore.

Approximate distance and time: 212 kms – 2.6 hours

Overnight: Punakaiki

See & Do: The Pancake Rocks | The Punakaiki Cavern | The Paparoa Track | The Paparoa National Park | Horse Trek | Jade carving class

Day 10 – Punakaiki – Nelson

A divert to Cape Foulwind – home to a seal colony – situated just south of Westport is well worthwhile. Continue driving along the Buller Gorge enjoy the wonderful scenery and the magnificent river. The first town of some size and interest you'll get to is Inangahua. Stop and visit the small museum that 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. Stop in the quiet town of Murchison for some launch. If you are feeling active and energetic and you can do a bit of white water rafting, kayaking, 4WD trips or 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.

Approximate distance and time: 249 kms – 3.0 hours

Overnight: Nelson

See & Do: Jetboat down the Buller Canyon | Cross New Zealand's longest swing-bridge

Day 11 – Nelson

At leisure explore and enjoy Nelson. Take a break from driving and explore on foot the city. Visit the historic areas, the famous Cathedral or stop and enjoy a cup of coffee at a cafe on Trafalgar Street. If you are keen on a short drive (approx. 45 minutes), a drive to Abel Tasman National Park is recommended. Nelson offers options to keep all ages fully engaged.

Overnight: Nelson

See & Do: Abel Tasman National Park Coast Track | World of WearableArt & Classic Cars Museum | Harwoods Hole Walk | Tahunanui Beach | Garden Hopping | The Suter Art Gallery | The Founders Heritage Park

Day 12 – Nelson – Blenheim

Drive along the coast of Tasman Bay towards the Bryant Range. Stop at the famous and historic Pelorus Bridge and go on one of the many forest walks – most popular is the 30 minute loop through beech, rimu and totara forest to the swing-bridge. Travel on the Marlborough Sounds coastline towards the port town of Picton where the Interislander ferries arrive and depart. Stop here and enjoy the array of shops and cafes and the waterfront before you continue onto Blenheim which is only 30 minutes away. Blenheim sits 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.

Approximate distance and time: 131 kms – 2.0 hours

Overnight: Blenheim

See & Do: The Edwin Fox Maritime Centre | Art Galleries | Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre | The Marlborough Museum | Vineyards | Pollard Park | The Marlborough Wine & Food Festival (normally held in February)

Day 13 – Blenheim – Christchurch

Today you head towards one of the most spectacular coastlines of the South Island, the Kaikoura Coast. This coastal drive offers many opportunities to view the native wildlife such as seabirds and New Zealand fur seals. Soon you will be in the Kaikoura – known for its abundant wildlife and its sperm whale population. Depending on the season you may see migrating Humpback Whales, Pilot Whales, Blue Whales and Southern Right Whales. Another great Kaikoura activity is Swimming with the Seals – highly recommended if you have time. Continue along the coast and then head inland through North Canterbury's major wine region – the Waipara Valley. A small detour (approx 40 minutes) to Hammer Springs for a relaxing dip in the thermal pools is recommended. Relaxed and refreshed, head to your destination for the night.

Approximate distance and time: 300 kms – 3.6 hours

Overnight: Christchurch

See & Do: Whale Watching Tour | Swim With Dolphins | Christchurch CBD

Day 14 – Depart Christchurch

Check out of the hotel, head to the airport, return your rental and catch your flight home.

See & Do: Christchurch Botanic Gardens and Punting | Cardboard Cathedral | Port Hills | Local markets | The Canterbury Museum | Sumner Beach

General notes & conditions:

All prices from, twin share on a room only basis starting on a Monday & subject to availability. All activities at own expense. All distances and times are approximate.