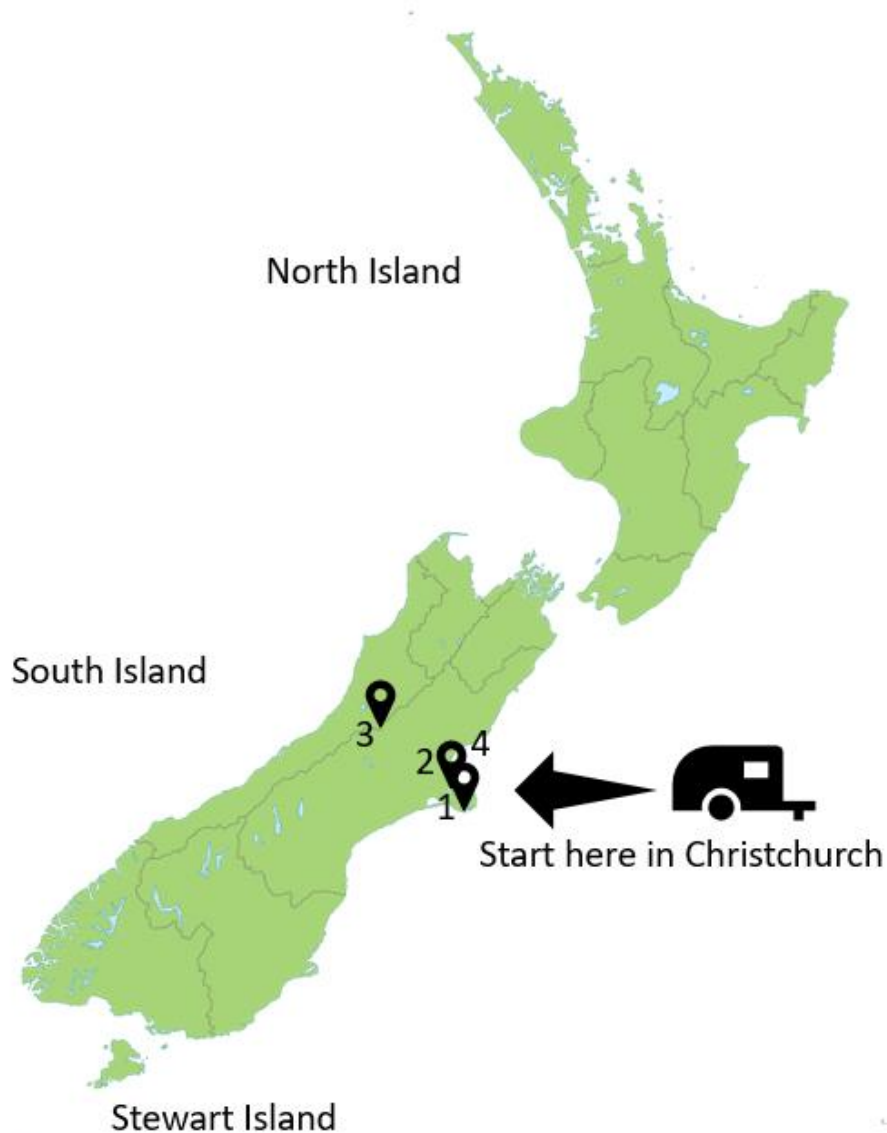


Exploring around Christchurch

4 days



Have a few days to spare. This itinerary follows some of the most amazing scenery on a trip through the alps to the beauty of New Zealand's west coast. Looking for a little bit of something we have included a trip to the quaint town of Akaroa, a French settlement known for its interesting history.

Day 1

[Christchurch](#) to [Akaroa](#) (2h)

Christchurch is traditionally New Zealand's most English city – imagined, laid out, planned and even settled by decree over in England. It was built around its Christ Church Cathedral and Four Avenues, furnished with the University of Canterbury and Christ's College, peopled by the first four ships, and fitted out with Neo Gothic architecture and glorious English gardens; a bit of old England in the South Pacific. Of course, now, it is as Kiwi as anywhere in New Zealand, and a vibrant, international place with its own flair and style. So, park up and plan to spend the day enjoying this ever-changing locale.

Christchurch is the South Island's largest city, known for its beautiful public gardens, old world charm and architecture, and its quaint and very walkable city centre. Much of this changed in the 2011 earthquakes when so much of the city was lost. However, the city is rising to the challenges, quite literally, and it is now home to funky and unique pop up malls, dozens of new buildings, high street, designer and boutique shops, a world class art gallery and museum, and restaurants galore.

Many of its heritage buildings have been restored, the beautiful Botanic Gardens remain, and the trams have returned to its streets. Take a punt down the Avon, check out the new civic areas along the river, enjoy the unique facades of New Regent Street, or go for a run at Hagley Park. Make sure you check out the transitional cardboard cathedral in the city centre, and the Margaret Mahy playground, designed with the help of the children of New Zealand to be the biggest and best play space in the country.

Outside of the city, Orana Wildlife Park hosts New Zealand's only gorilla encounter, and you may find a kiwi or two of the feathered kind both here and at Willowbank Nature reserve, where you can also take in a Maori Cultural performance. For a bit of history, head out to Ferrymead, a purpose built 19th century village, where you can experience what colonial life was like for early inhabitants. Once there, spend some time at the shore at Sumner and Redcliffs and enjoy some fish and chips on the beach.

You have a choice here, to caravan to Akaroa and spend the night of Day 1, or to set out early the next morning and enjoy Akaroa during a lovely day trip, Day 2. This way, travellers have a chance to unhitch the car and go for a bit of a joyride over some spectacular, but slightly hair-raising, cliff top roads (The view may best be enjoyed without the worry of the caravan behind.). However, if you would like to sleep by the shores of Akaroa's many lovely bays, chose the Little River route. Regardless of your decision, you'll enjoy this little Canterbury gem, a French settlement known for its interesting history, Victorian villas, marine life, and wonderful food.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Akaroa TOP 10 Holiday Park 96 Morgans Rd, Akaroa www.akaroa-holidaypark.co.nz	Akaroa Boat Ramp 1 Rue Balguerie, Akaroa	Graeme's POP 4 Kotlowski Rd, Takamatua, Akaroa

Day 2

[Akaroa to Christchurch](#) (2h)

In Akaroa, start the day with a traditional croissant and coffee at one of the French inspired delis or bakeries before taking in the spectacular harbour with one of the touring companies. Akaroa Dolphins offer complimentary refreshments along with an informative nature cruise. If you're looking for something a bit more active, Black Cat provides a chance for swimming with the smallest dolphins in the world, the Hector's dolphins.

When you have returned from your cruise, take some time to explore the boutique shops and art galleries that line the main streets in the town. For something uniquely Akaroa, head up the hill to The Giant's House where terraced gardens with sculptures and mosaics are a creative feast and wonderful experience. This really is unique, and a not to be missed, excursion. Plan to take lots of photos! Further over the hill are lovely little out of the way bays and inlets. Find your way to the Okains Bay museum, to see one of the best collections of Maori art and artefacts in New Zealand, presented in a humble but respectful environment.

Enhance your journey back to Christchurch by stopping at Barry's Bay Cheese, where you can watch cheese being made in the traditional way, taste the various types, and then buy your favourite block along with other delicacies on offer. The main road back to Christchurch, Highway 75, will take you through Little River, a charming town with a small art gallery and cafes.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
North South Holiday Park 530 Sawyers Arms Rd, Christchurch, www.northsouth.co.nz	Waimakariri River West Harris Rd, Kaiapoi	NZMCA Weedons Park 286 Jones Road, Weedons Christchurch South

Day 3

[Christchurch](#) to [Arthur's Pass](#) (1.5h)

Departing Christchurch, you'll travel across the fertile Canterbury plains and through the townships of Darfield and Springfield before starting the ascent to Arthurs Pass. Stop at Castle Hill and enjoy one of the many graded walks nestled around these fascinating natural rock formations, a place with special meaning for local Maori.

Enjoy a scenic drive north to today's destination: Arthur's Pass Village is the halfway point to the West Coast. This quaint village among the mountains is the headquarters for the National Park and there are a number of walks (tramps) which can be begun here, for beginners through to world class hikers. Expect to meet some of the natives here - the large local alpine parrot, the kea, especially if you leave food around. Please don't encourage them, but do enjoy them, take some photos, and hold on to your belongings!

Be aware that the weather changes dramatically in this area. Please be sure to inform staff of your hiking intentions, tramp only to your ability, and check the weather to be sure you don't get caught unprepared in the bush or on the road. Snow frequently shuts the pass in winter and care must be taken.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Jacksons Retreat 4464 SH73, Alpine Hwy, Jacksons www.jacksonsretreat.co.nz	Aitkens Rest Area Otira Hwy, Otira, Westland	The Sanctuary 126 West Coast Rd, Arthur's Pass National Park, Arthur's Pass

Day 4

Christchurch and surrounds

Take time today to revisit the sites of Christchurch you may have missed, such as the array of nightlife on Victoria Street, a show at the Isaac Theatre Royale, an improv performance at the Court Theatre perhaps, or the newly reopened Art Centre.

Slightly further afield are many day trips. Unhitch the caravan and head out to Governor's Bay for lunch and a scenic drive, or go to the port settlement of Littleton and catch a ferry out to Quail Island, a former quarantine site, where you can picnic on white sand beaches, hike through the bush and over rolling hills, and learn about the history of the area. If your itinerary includes a Friday, head north 25k to the village of Ohoka, formerly a thriving mill town, which hosts one of the best farmers markets around. Littleton and the Arts Centre both hold farmers markets on the weekends, too. Waipara and other semi-rural areas not far from Christchurch are home to award winning vineyards, and Christchurch's Port Hills are famous for their scenic walks, gondola rides and new bike paths. Headed for the airport at the end of your stay? Nearby is the Artarctic Centre, where visitors can play in the snow, take a Haglund ride and learn all about the history of the Antarctic and the role Christchurch has played as the gateway to the area. For more ideas and information, visit the award-winning information centre in the Botanic Gardens.



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