



Top to Tip Tour

31 days



This itinerary takes you from our hub in Christchurch, up to the top of the North Island, and down to the tip of the South. Along the way, over 28 days, you will experience a comprehensive sampling of New Zealand scenery, culture, wildlife, cuisine, wine, weather and more. Read on to enjoy all about your holiday



Day 1

Christchurch to Kaikoura (3h)

Begin in Christchurch and drive north through Canterbury and its newest wine region, Waipara. There are numerous vineyards where you can stop and stretch your legs, taste some local vino, and have a long lunch. Enjoy the views along the coastline and take a moment to pull over for scenery and a few photo opportunities. Kaikoura translates into English as a good place to eat kai (crayfish) koura and indeed it is! Don't miss the chance to sample some of the freshest shellfish and crustaceans around.

Venture onto the coastal walkway and you may see sperm whales, dusky dolphins, fur seals and albatross play in the waters off shore. Alternatively, join them in their own environment and take one of the many oceanic tours on offer. Kaikoura experienced major earthquakes in 2016, which disrupted their roads and some attractions. Check <http://www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz/traffic/regions/11> for live updates to be sure your road trip will be a safe and enjoyable one.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Peketa Beach Holiday Park 665 Main South Rd/SH1, Kaikoura www.kaikourapeketabeach.co.nz	Cribb Creek Inland Kaikoura Rd, Kaikoura www.kaikoura.govt.nz	NZMCA Park Kaikoura Trotting Club South Bay Pde, Kaikoura



Day 2

Kaikoura to Hanmer Springs (2h)

Hanmer Springs has been a destination for visitors wanting to soak in her hot springs since the early days of Maori settlement, and in Victorian times, hotels and a sanatorium were established. These days, Hanmer Springs is an even more popular destination. Thermal springs heat many of the pools in the extensive pool complex and the recently opened spa welcomes visitors for luxurious treatments.

There are biking and walking trails for all abilities, golf courses, skiing, a town full of shopping and restaurants and a general air of peace and tranquility about the place. This is a lovely place to park your home on wheels and soak up the atmosphere as well as the healing waters.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Alpine Adventure Holiday Park 200 Jacks Pass Rd, Hanmer Springs www.hanmerspringsaccommodation.co.nz	Rotherham Reserve Cnr of Heaton & East Sts, Rotherham www.hurunui.govt.nz	Hamner River Bridge NZMCA Park SH7A/Hamner Springs Road Hanmer Springs



Day 3

Hanmer Springs to Picton (5h)

After your visit in Hanmer, follow the road north, through Maruia, which is also a thermal spring hot spot, Murchison, and the alpine village of St Anaud before heading into Blenheim for meals and supplies and on to Picton and the interisland ferry.

Picton's Marlborough Sounds are home to one of New Zealand's Great Walks, the Queen Charlotte Walkway, and there are dozens of other hiking opportunities in the area. It's worth stopping a while to take in the sights of one of the loveliest parts of New Zealand – full of history, inlets, bays, and spectacular views of the Sounds and surrounding hills.

In Picton, drive onto a ferry to the North Island, via the Cook Strait, into the capital city of Wellington.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Parklands Marina Holiday Park 10 Beach Rd, Waikawa Marina, Picton www.parktostay.co.nz	Collins Memorial Reserve Cnr of SH1 & Freeths Rd, Koromiko www.marlborough.govt.nz	POP Crow Tavern 15 Nelson Square Picton



Day 4

Ferry to Wellington (4h)

New Zealand's capital city, Wellington is a great walking city, full of character, charm, history and of course, politicians. It is home to Victoria University, and the presence of the students lends a hip, young, artistic air to the place. Its hills are legendary and will keep you on your toes, but the relaxing and foot friendly harbour area is never far away. Wellington has shopping, restaurants, nightlife, street art and theatre, beautiful parks and a gorgeous waterfront. Of particular note are Te Papa, the National Museum, and for fans of the Lord of the Rings movies, Weta Cave Workshops, where visitors can experience the art and science behind the creation of these award winning films.

Wellington hosts sport, music, theatre, dance and cultural performances year-round, and is proud home of WOW, NZ's World of Wearable Arts extravaganza, held in early spring each year.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Camp Elsdon 18 Raiha St, Elsdon, Porirua www.campelsdon.co.nz	Evans Bay Marina Carpark Cnr Evans Bay Pde & Cobham Dr, Kilbirnie, Wellington www.wellington.govt.nz	Plimmerton NZMCA Park 7 Ulric St, Plimmerton, Porirua



Day 5

Wellington to Palmerston North (2h) and Napier (plus 3h)

Heading north from Wellington through the rural towns of the area, visitors will notice a real change in the scenery from the South Island. In Palmerston North, stop for lunch amidst picturesque 1920s and 1930s boutique buildings, and admire the public gardens.

Your journey will continue north to Shannon, home to a native owl sanctuary. Up this stretch of the Kapiti Coast, offshore from Waikanae, is Kapiti Island, a nature reserve where visitors can visit on escorted tours. A car museum and gourmet cheese factory are other attractions in this area.

In Napier you can walk the streets to see beautiful 1930s Art Deco buildings, built in response to the devastating earthquake in 1931 which levelled the whole town. This city is proudly known as the world's Art Deco capital. Other attractions are the gannet colony, aquarium and world class golf course at Cape Kidnappers. Multiple vineyards and farms dot the area, making Hawkes Bay a mecca for serious foodies. Stop into nearby Hastings for its famous weekend Farmers Market and stock up for the next leg of your trip.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Kennedy Park Resort 11 Storkey St, Napier www.kennedypark.co.nz	Puketapu Reserve Dartmoor Rd, Puketapu, Napier www.hastingsdc.govt.nz	Erikson Road NZMCA Park 165 Eriksen Rd, Napier

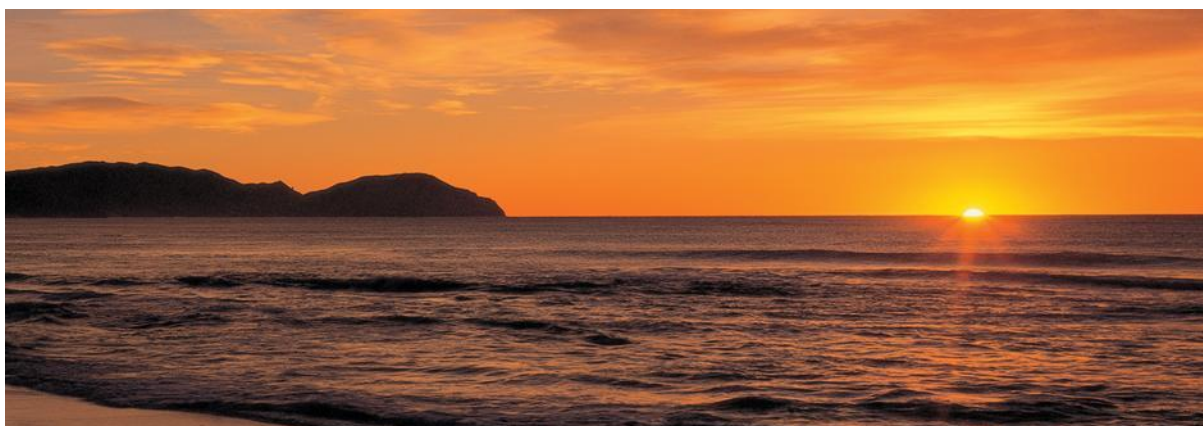


Day 6

Napier to Gisborne (3.5h)

As you leave Napier, and drive north, Gisborne, Waipatiki Beach and Lake Tutira are nice stopping places along the way. There are two ways to approach the trip to Gisborne. The coastal route provides access to Morere Hot Springs and the fabulous beaches of the Mahia Peninsula. The peninsula is worth stopping at to walk its sandy, secluded and unspoiled beaches and take in the view of uninterrupted Pacific Ocean.

Gisborne is the first place the sun shines on New Zealand each day and its vineyards have soaked up those extra rays to their advantage. The area is best known for its chardonnay and many lovely vineyard cafes that serve it. Gisborne is also known for its surf beaches.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Waikanae Beach TOP 10 Holiday Park 280 Grey St, Awapuni, Gisborne www.waikanaebeachtop10.co.nz	Opoutama Beach Reserve Upoko Tataramoa Dr, Mahia www.wairoadc.govt.nz	POP Kahutia Bowling Club Cobden St, Gisborne, Gisborne



Day 7

Gisborne to Whakatane (2h)

The first leg of your journey passes through the foothills of the Urewera Ranges – this is a land of native bush, and historic Maori settlement. Next, stop in Opotiki to stretch your legs and have a look around. The beaches and forest environment provide lots to do - horse trekking, kayaking, river rafting, and dolphin swimming are just some of the options.

On your way into Whakatane, stop to admire one of the best views in the Bay of Plenty, overlooking Ohope Beach, and then head into this bustling town for some lunch by the bay, a game of golf, or a visit to the local museum. Take a tour out to White Island, one of New Zealand's most active volcanoes, or take a fishing boat out to catch some dinner to cook on the beach. Swimming with dolphins and eco-tours are available here, too, and some of the best fish and chips, mussels, and berries (in season) you'll find anywhere.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
All Seasons Holiday Park 50-58 Lee Rd, Hannahs Bay, Rotorua www.allseasonsrotorua.co.nz	Maraetotara Reserve Maraetotara Rd, Ohope www.whakatane.govt.nz	Opotiki NZMCA Park 130 ST John Street Opotiki



Day 8

Whakatane to Tauranga (1.5h)

There are two roads north toward Tauranga, one of which passes through Te Puke, a town that has turned its kiwifruit industry into visitor entertainment. Enroute is Okere Falls Scenic Reserve, where you can walk to see the hydroelectric power station. Back on the coast is Papamoa, a long stretch of sun-drenched white sand beach leading all the way to Tauranga, a large port city, with an attractive harbour and plenty of shops and restaurants to replenish supplies.

Further along the coast is Mt Maunganui, a beautiful beach to visit at any time of year. There is a beckoning mount to climb for the view, and a wealth of varied and popular cafes and shops along its boardwalk. Watch the surfers and try to spot the seals that visit the area. This is a great place to spend a night and enjoy the beauty of the Bay.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Te Puna Holiday Park 4 Minden Rd, Te Puna, Tauranga www.accommodationtepuna.co.nz	Harrisons Cut Harrisons Cut Carpark, off Papamoa Beach Rd, Papamoa	Tauriko NZMCA Park Gargen Road, Tauriko Tauranga



Day 9

Tauranga to Whitianga (3h)

Once you experience the Coromandel Peninsula, you may never want to leave; it is one of the prettiest areas in New Zealand. The road from Tauranga will take you past historic Waihi, another gold mining town. Stop for photo opportunities at the Athenree Gorge, and for coffee in Katikati, where you can take a stroll and admire the town's famous murals.

The road is curvy and you may want to have several breaks to visit each little town along the way. Whangamata is one of the country's most attractive surf towns, with white sand beaches fringed with pohutakawa, New Zealand's native Christmas tree (it blooms red flowers at Christmastime). Enjoy the beach, cafes, and bush walks. Tours for fishing and diving are available here. You can also hire bikes, windsurfers, and kayaks. Several charter companies run day trips to Mayor Island, the summit of a volcano rising from the sea floor.

The road north gives you the opportunity to visit Hot Water Beach, where geothermally heated water bubbles up through the sand. For generations, New Zealanders have been digging out their own hot spas on the beach here at low tide. Another highlight of this journey is the walk to spectacular Cathedral Cove, which begins at Hahei. Boat tours are available here, too. If you have time, indulge in a round of golf at Pauanui or enjoy fish and chips in Tairua. The beach town of Whitianga is a great place to just stop, relax, and enjoy the holiday atmosphere.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Harbourside Holiday Park 135 Albert St, Whitianga www.harboursideholidaypark.co.nz	Buffalo Beach Buffalo Beach Rd, Whitianga	Whitianga NZMCA Park 101 John Gaskell Dr Whitianga



Day 10

Whitianga to Coromandel Town (1h) and to Auckland (3h)

The very curvy inland road to Coromandel is an option, as is the northern route, which clings to the edge of the coast. You'll enjoy amazing sub-tropical views and beach after beautiful beach, edged with pohutukawa trees, on the second option.

Coromandel was settled by gold miners and later, foresters. It is now an artsy seaside village full of craftspeople and environmentalists. The town itself is historic and pleasant to walk around and there is an interesting museum.

The road to Auckland hugs the coast of the Firth of Thames and affords views out to sea for the duration. Stop a while in Thames, a beautiful and historic mining town, and then Pokeno to take a break, have a meal, and explore the area.

Auckland is New Zealand's largest city, with over 1 million people spread across multiple centres. It is situated between two harbours, Waitemata (Auckland) and Manukau, and sits amongst dozens of volcanic cones. Auckland is a great place to visit museums, art galleries, war memorials, historic Maori sites, parks and gardens, and climb small volcanic hills. It hosts concerts, the ballet and opera, numerous theatre productions, and offers unlimited eating and drinking options, as well as vineyards.

Its Sky Tower holds a casino and sky walk, where visitors can view the expanse of the city. Take a ferry over to the Victorian charm of Devonport, or out to Waiheke Island, full of vineyards and craft shops, or venture further to Rangitoto, the volcano that watches over the harbour. St Heliers and Kohimarama are beach areas not far from the city along beautiful Tamaki Drive, and the newly developed Viaduct Harbour area and Wynyard Quarter is a pleasure to wander around or stop for a meal and a bit of people watching. There is so much to do in Auckland that it is worth a return trip.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Remuera Motor Lodge 16 Minto Rd, Remuera, Auckland www.remueramotorlodge.co.nz	Waikato River Riverbank Rd, Mercer www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz	NZMCA Park Harvard Ln, Ardmore, Auckland

Day 11

[Auckland](#) to [Kaitaia](#) (4.5h)

It's another long and winding road to Kaitaia, but with lots of attractions along the way. The Whangaparaoa Peninsula offers inspiring views and beckoning beaches, worth a detour for. Near Warkworth, head east to the town of Matakana, which has seen a sort of reinvention in recent years. It has a boutique cinema, excellent craft shops and restaurants, a famous Farmers Market and toward Snells beach, wineries which include cafes and a fabulous outdoor sculpture park.

Whangarei is a large town where you can re-equip yourself, or head from here out to Tutukaka and Matapouri for some of the best beaches New Zealand has to offer. Farther north lies Kaitaia, the hub for activities in the Far North. From here you can catch a bus tour along Ninety Mile Beach, or visit the very tiptop of the North Island, Cape Reinga. Some roads may only be accessible to official Tour vehicles.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Norfolk Motel and Campervan Park 29 SH10 Awanui Kaitaia	Ramp Road 149-155 Ramp Rd Tokerau Beach	POP The Warehouse 11 Matthews Ave Kaitaia

Day 12

[Kaitaia](#) to [Kerikeri](#) to [Paihia](#) (1.5h)

You'll transverse the Far North as you head east to Kerikeri from Kaitaia. Enjoy the subtropical feel of the place and anticipate lots to do on the other side. At Kerikeri, you'll find lots of fresh produce to buy from road side stalls year-round, and plenty of local chocolates, crafts and cafes to enjoy. Take time to visit the Stone Store, New Zealand's oldest stone structure, and the Mission House. There are many walks in the area, plenty to fill an afternoon.

There are waterfalls throughout the area, such as Rainbow and Haruru Falls. Paihia caters well to tourists and you can fill a day in the area. Ferry over to Russell, New Zealand's first capital, or visit the Treaty House at Waitangi, where New Zealand first became a bicultural nation. Enjoy the restaurants, cafes, and crafts here and stock up for the next day.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Beachside Holiday Park 1290 Paihia Road Paihia	Ocean Beach Ranui Road Ocean Beach Whangarei Heads	Manganes Point NZMCA Park 232 Manganes Point Road Whangarei

Day 13

[Paihia](#) to [Whangarei](#) to [Auckland](#) (3.5h)

Head south toward Whangarei, but be sure to have a pitstop at the Hundertwasser toilets in Kawakawa, an unlikely but worthwhile tourist attraction that showcases the art and flair of Frederick Hundertwasser in the public restrooms. After some more lovely small towns you'll find Whangarei, which acts as the capital of the north. Despite its size and population, it is still a peaceful and inviting place with its beautiful harbour, museums, art galleries, shops, and natural attractions.

A drive through the Dome Forest leads you into Warkworth, and on to Waiwera, famous for its hot springs spas and pools. And now, meander back to Auckland to enjoy the places you didn't have time for on your way north.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Remuera Motor Lodge 16 Minto Rd, Remuera, Auckland www.remueramotorlodge.co.nz	Waikato River Riverbank Rd, Mercer www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz	NZMCA Park Harvard Ln, Ardmore, Auckland

Day 14

[Auckland](#) to [Rotorua](#) (3.25h)

Your journey south will take you through the fertile dairy farming region of the Waikato, accompanied much of the way by the mighty Waikato River. Take a detour at Matamata if you'd like to visit the Hobbiton Movie Set, where some of the early Lord of the Rings movies were filmed.

Enjoy driving through plantation pine forest before you encounter the unusual volcanic terrain of the Mamaku district. On approaching Rotorua, visitors will be greeted by beautiful Lake Rotoehu, followed by Lake Rotoma - home to a hybrid 'Tiger' trout, and Lake Rotoiti, a fisherman's paradise.

Rotorua sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, so volcanic and geothermal activity are part of the city's environment and visitors will notice an underlying sulphuric smell upon entering the region. Hot springs abound in the area, some found out in native bush, some easier to access at purpose built spas around town, like the Polynesian Pools. Rotorua is an excellent place to experience Maori culture, history, art, food, and performances.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
All Seasons Holiday Park 50-58 Lee Rd, Hannahs Bay, Rotorua www.allseasonsrotorua.co.nz	Lakefront Parking Mataiawhea St, Ohinemutu, Rotorua www.rotoruanz.com	Ngongotaha NZMCA 61 Ngongotaha Road Rotorua

Day 15

Rotorua to Taupo (1.5h)

The road from Rotorua to Taupo will take you right through the heart of the North Island. This is forestry land and the road is easy and interesting. Take a side road to a geothermal park, where you'll discover geysers, silica terraces, and craters of boiling mud. The resort town of Taupo sits on the edge of New Zealand's largest lake, a result of a sizeable but long-ago volcano.

The lake is a haven for boaties and fishermen as the lake is stocked with sizeable trout. In New Zealand, it is not legal for restaurants to serve or sell trout, but with the right license, you are welcome to take your own. Be sure to make a trip out to the impressive Huka Falls for a refreshing walk and scenery. For something more leisurely, take a boat trip out to the Maori rock carvings at Mine Bay.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Taupo DeBretts Spa Resort 76 Napier-Taupo Rd, SH5, Taupo www.taupodebretts.co.nz	Taupo Marina 75 Redoubt St, Taupo	Taupo Airport NZMCA Park Anzac Memorial Dr, Taupo

Day 16

Taupo to Turangi (1h) to National Park (plus 1h)

The drive to Turangi hugs the eastern edge of Lake Taupo, allowing for a scenic drive and lots of choices for a picnic lunch.

The town of Turangi is the trout fishing capital of New Zealand. The nearby hot springs of Tokaanu are another attraction, or you can try rafting the Tongariro River.

National Park Village is well positioned for those who want to explore the Tongariro National Park. The volcanic peaks of Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro can be seen from here, occasionally acting volcanic, and there are many different walks. The Tongariro Crossing is regarded as one of the best one-day walks in the world.

Spend some time appreciating one of the most spectacular areas of New Zealand. Take a drive or perhaps have lunch at one of the many cafes and restaurants in the village or high tea at the elegant Chateau, built during the roaring twenties and as charming as ever.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Turangi Holiday Park 13 Te Reiti Tamara Gr, Turangi www.turangiholidaypark.co.nz	Ruatiti Domain Ruatiti Rd Turnoff, SH4, Ruatiti www.ruapehudc.govt.nz	POP Owhango Lodge SH4 Main Road South Owhango

Day 17

[National Park](#) to [Whanganui](#) (2.5h) to [Wellington](#) (2.5h)

From National Park, head south and make tracks to Whanganui/Wanganui. This historic riverside town has a lot to offer for a midday stop. Head down to the riverside markets or take a ride or a steamship, once the main form of transport in these parts when the river trade was king. Visit one of many museums and galleries or go for a stroll in lovely Victoria Park.

Your journey south first takes you through Foxton, Levin and Otaki. Offshore from Paraparaumu is Kapiti Island, a nature reserve for close encounters with rare birds. The Kapiti Coast is known for its gourmet delights and lovely beaches; take some time to explore before making your way back to Wellington.



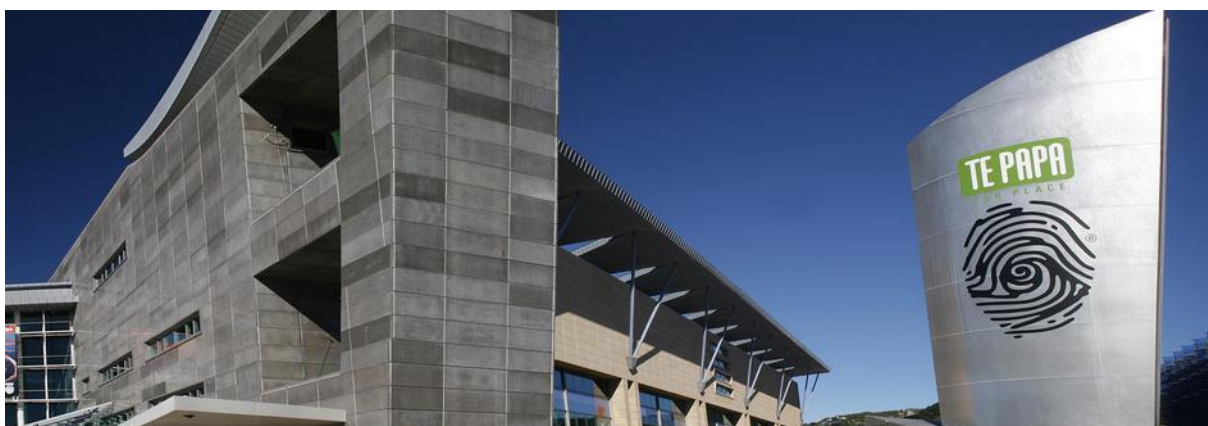
Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Camp Elsdon 18 Raiha St, Elsdon, Porirua www.campelsdon.co.nz	Evans Bay Marina Carpark Cnr Evans Bay Pde & Cobham Dr, Kilbirnie, Wellington www.wellington.govt.nz	Plimmerton NZMCA Park 7 Ulric St, Plimmerton, Porirua

Day 18

Spend the day in [Wellington](#)

Spend some more time in Wellington catching upon the things you may have missed on your last trip through.





Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Camp Elsdon 18 Raiha St, Elsdon, Porirua www.campelsdon.co.nz	Evans Bay Marina Carpark Cnr Evans Bay Pde & Cobham Dr, Kilbirnie, Wellington www.wellington.govt.nz	Plimmerton NZMCA Park 7 Ulric St, Plimmerton, Porirua

Day 19

Wellington to Picton (4h) to Nelson (1.5h)

The passage across Cook Strait and through the Marlborough Sounds is one of the most scenic ferry trips in the world. Highlights along the way include the Red Rocks seal colony, Tory Channel, Cook's Lookout, and the beautiful coves of the sounds. Consider taking some time for a short walk into some of the beautiful bush around Picton before heading on to Nelson

The drive to Nelson first takes you to the town of Havelock, which is known as the Green Shell Mussel Capital of the World. At Pelorus Bridge Scenic Reserve you can enjoy a bush walk or a swim, depending on the time of the year.

The city of Nelson is home to an artsy, interesting community, great galleries and crafts, lovely beaches, and an almost tropical feel when compared to the rest of the South Island. Indulge in the coffee, wine, top notch restaurants, and historic architecture.





Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Nelson City TOP 10 Holiday Park 230 Vanguard St, Nelson www.nelsonholidaypark.co.nz	Collins Memorial Reserve Cnr of SH1 & Freeths Rd, Koromiko www.marlborough.govt.nz	POP The Honest Lawyer Country Pub and Hotel 1 Point Road Monaco Nelson

Day 20

Nelson to Nelson Lakes National Park (1.5h)

The shortest route to the Nelson Lakes National Park begins on State Highway 6. This is a pleasant drive through hill country, forest, and farms.

The alpine village of St Arnaud sits on the edge of the lake against a stunning backdrop of mountains. It's the perfect base for exploring the Nelson Lakes National Park, New Zealand's second-largest national park. There are magnificent hiking trails – short and long. Local adventure operators offer you a choice of kayaking, river rafting, mountain biking, horse trekking, and 4WD motorbiking.





Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Riverside Holiday Park 19 Riverview Rd, Murchison www.riversidemurchison.co.nz	Louis Creek Camping Spot Howard Valley Rd, Howard, St Arnaud www.tasman.govt.nz	POP Armageddon Paintball & Redstone Golf Park 334 Waiiti Valley Road Wakefield

Day 21

[Nelson Lakes National Park](#) to [Hanmer Springs](#) (3.5h)

From St Arnaud, follow the Buller River west. Just after Murchison, turn onto State Highway 65. This beautiful section of road leads through the enchanting Maruia Forest, which has New Zealand's largest natural population of Kakariki (a native parakeet). At Maruia Springs, enjoy a hot soak before Lewis Pass takes you through red and silver beech forest to Hanmer.

Hanmer Springs is a destination for relaxation and indulgence. Soak in the hot springs or treat yourself to a range of spa therapies. Outdoor activities include forest walks, bike tracks, horse trekking, trout fishing, jet boating, bungee jumping, and golf.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Alpine Adventure Holiday Park 200 Jacks Pass Rd, Hanmer Springs www.hanmerspringsaccommodation.co.nz	Rotherham Reserve Cnr of Heaton & East Sts, Rotherham www.hurunui.govt.nz	Hanmer River Bridge NZMCA Park SH7A/Hanmer Springs Rd, Hanmer Springs



Day 22

Hanmer Springs to Christchurch (2h)

The relaxed and easy drive Christchurch initially follows the beautiful Waiau River, through the Balmoral Forest and across the Hurunui River. Next is the Waipara region, which is fast becoming known for its food and wine, with many vineyards to stop along the way. The last leg of your journey takes you past the surf beaches of Amberley, Leithfield, Waikuku, and Woodend. These long, white sand, peaceful beaches are worth stopping at for a picnic lunch or a night on the beach.

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, plan to spend the day enjoying this everchanging 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.



Recommended accommodation options:

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

Day 23

Christchurch to Lake Tekapo (3.45h) to Aoraki/Mt Cook Village (1.45h)

We recommend beginning your tour in Rangiora, an historic town 30 minutes out of Christchurch city, which has fully embraced its rebuild after the 2011 earthquakes. Stock up for your trip at one of three supermarkets or enjoy a meal at one of more than a dozen interesting and varied cafes and restaurants. From here, travel west through the small towns, large farms, and endless skies of the Canterbury Plains. Stop for a picnic and explore the old coal mining settlement of Glentunnel, before travelling through Staveley, with its lime kilns, Mt Somers, and the town of Geraldine.

Geraldine is a stopover for many travellers and accommodates caravans easily while providing all a traveller needs for a lunch and a cup of tea, provisions, or just a place to stretch one's legs while meandering through its gift and chocolate shops. After Fairlie, you'll ascend to the region known as the Mackenzie Country, named after the legendary Scottish sheep rustler who settled this land. Here, the scenery changes dramatically. Plan a few photo stops.



Make a stop in Lake Tekapo, the township which lies at the end of this stunning lake. There are shops and restaurants, lovely lakeside areas for short strolls, and photo opportunities at the famous Church of the Good Shepherd. Visitors also enjoy bike riding, more strenuous walks, kayaking, horse trekking, and in the right season, skiing, where the fields are especially good for families and those new to the sport. For our winter travellers who prefer not to ski, enjoy ice skating at the outdoor rink or warming up at Tekapo's own hot springs spa. It's worth staying a night in the area if time allows, to experience one of the world's clearest night skies from the Mt John Observatory, which gives a variety of tours and is part of the Southern Hemisphere's only (and one of the world's eight) International Dark Sky Reserve. Then, turn off the lights, open up your sky light, and enjoy your very own view of our sky from the comfort of your caravan.

From Tekapo, head on toward Aoraki/Mt Cook, New Zealand's highest peak (at 3755m), where Sir Edmund Hillary began his climbing career. The high-country drive through New Zealand's distinctive tussocks and native grasses, glorious swaths of lupin in summer, and majestic snowy mountains in the winter, skirts the edge of Lake Pukaki. This glacier-fed lake is famous for its incredibly turquoise waters. The colour is attributed to the fine particles, ground finely over millennia by the glaciers, which are suspended in the cold, clear waters and produce an otherworldly hue.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Glentanner Park Centre SH80, Aoraki, Mount Cook www.glentanner.co.nz	Lake Pukaki Pukaki	Lake Tekapo NZMCA Park Lilybank Rd, Tekapo

Day 24

Aoraki/Mt Cook to Queenstown (3.45h)

Aoraki/Mt Cook is the main attraction in this town and mountainous activities abound, from heli skiing, to heli sightseeing, to more down to earth attractions ranging from short walks to world class tramps. The mountain, when you can catch sight of her, is one of New Zealand's most photographed icons.

Twizel is an outdoors-person's dream, where you can do it yourself, or hire a tour guide, for everything from fly fishing to motorcycling and from kayaking to skiing. On the right weekend, you can catch sight of New Zealand's best young rowers as secondary school teams from around the country battle on the waters of Lake Ruataniwha for the national titles. For the more quirkily inclined, Twizel is a great base for Lord of the Rings location tours.

The next stop is Omarama. Its giant sheep statue gives a clue to the importance of sheep products to the area's history and economy. The locale is also known for unique wind patterns, which make it a mecca for glider enthusiasts. If gliding is not what you are here for, spread your picnic rug and spend some time watching the more adventurous take to the skies.

Your trip to Queenstown begins on the beautiful Lindis Pass. Pull over and have a cup of tea for no other reason than to enjoy this stunning scenery. Continue on to Cromwell, a restored 19th century village with plenty of modern fare to indulge in. The area is also full of award winning vineyards, each which will have its own café. New Zealand's wine industry has developed in leaps and bounds over the past couple of decades and our wines are regularly winning overseas awards. In response, our vineyards have opened their cellar doors to visitors and provide wine tastings and meals. You'll find many of these throughout your tour.

Central Otago is also famous for its development during the early gold rush period of New Zealand's history, and Bannockburn is a good reference point for this. Before coming in to Queenstown, you'll find the Kawarau Bridge, home to the earliest bungee jumpers. Now, on into Queenstown, the South Island's hottest tourist spot.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Queenstown Lakeview Holiday Park 4 Cemetery Rd, Queenstown http://holidaypark.net.nz	Shotover River Shotover Delta Rd, Queenstown	POP Glenorchy Hotel and Backpackers Ltd 42 Mull St Glenorchy

Day 25

Spend the day in [Queenstown](#)

The alpine resort of Queenstown is unlike anywhere else in New Zealand, as its tourist numbers in high seasons will attest. However, in your luxury accommodation on wheels, the town is yours to explore without the bother of advance bookings. Tourists young and old flock to Queenstown to soak in its atmosphere, literally soak in luxury spas, partake of its many award-winning restaurants and cafes, and shop at upmarket boutiques.

It's also the place to be if adventure tourism is your thing: bungee jumping, jet boating, river rafting, river surfing, horse trekking, skiing, snowboarding, sky diving...all are available here, and all are provided to the highest standards. Some quieter adventures also await, from high tea at the end of Lake Wakatipu after a leisurely ride on the SS Earnslaw, to world class golf, to wine tastings – Queenstown has got you covered.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Queenstown Lakeview Holiday Park 4 Cemetery Rd, Queenstown http://holidaypark.net.nz	Shotover River Shotover Delta Rd, Queenstown	POP Glenorchy Hotel and Backpackers Ltd 42 Mull St Glenorchy

Day 26

Queenstown to Milford Sound (4h)

Visitors will find that they have to take quite a roundabout route to get from Queenstown to Milford Sound. This route will take you through Te Anau and Matapouri, two beautiful spots to experience some of the most wondrous scenery, day hikes, walks, and views in New Zealand. Te Anau township sits on the shores of Lake Te Anau. Fiordland National Park, New Zealand's largest national park, can be accessed here, including the start of the Milford Track. This far-flung part of the country offers views of the High Country, where settlers conquered the rugged scenery in the early days. Rivers full of trout meander through the countryside and you will be spoiled for choice of picnic spots.

The road to Milford is one of New Zealand's most scenic and it is worth coming this far south just to be a part of it. Stop for photos and try to spot the "Disappearing Mountain", near the Mirror Lakes. You'll see Mitre Peak on a clear day after venturing through the Homer Tunnel. From here, it's worth taking the time for a cruise on the Milford Sounds; a once in a lifetime experience. There are day cruises, but you won't regret taking the time for an overnight jaunt amongst the fjords and waterfalls.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Gunn's Camp 801 Lower Hollyford Rd, Fiordland National Park, Te Anau www.gunnscamp.org.nz	Hillside Manapouri Road Bridge Hillside Manapouri Rd, Manapouri	No closer option than NZMCA Alpine Park 15 Alpine Dr, Te Anau

Day 27

Milford Sound to Invercargill (4h)

Backtrack to head toward Invercargill, New Zealand's main centre in this southernmost area. Stop in the historic town Riverton, and visit its settlers' museum after a meal and cup of tea.

In Invercargill, try the local seafood, especially its Bluff Oysters in season, and consider a trip out to the rugged shores of New Zealand's third island, Stewart Island. This is the best place in New Zealand to get away from it all, literally and figuratively. Stewart Island has a fascinating history and an important future as a conservation area.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Otatara Beach Road Motor Camp 375 Dunns Rd, Invercargill www.beachroadholidaypark.co.nz	Seaward Downs Scenic Reserve Tramway Rd West, Seaward Downs	POP Whitehouse Hotel 39 Wallacetown – Lorneville Hwy Invercargill

Day 28

Invercargill to Dunedin (2.45h)

Visitors can skirt the southeast coast of New Zealand to head to Dunedin, or head into the Catlins, and take a day hike to see this beautiful forest, majestic waterfalls and rugged coastline.

Dunedin is a university town, and full of interesting restaurants, pubs, and a laid-back feel amongst the grandeur of beautiful buildings. It is famous for being an early gold mining town and its historic riches are still evident in the wealth of Victorian and Edwardian architecture. The town founders filled their streets with impressive civic and commercial buildings, which still take pride of place today alongside more modern museums, galleries, and entertainment venues. The Otago Peninsula is a wonder, and worth heading out to, to visit its albatross colony and its excellent visitors' centre, as well as refuges for penguins, and its fur seal colonies.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Dunedin Holiday Park 41 Victoria Rd, Dunedin www.dunedinholidaypark.co.nz	Puddle Alley Puddle Alley, Mosgiel	Woodhaugh Park 7 Woodhaugh St, Woodhaugh, Dunedin

Day 29

Spend the day in [Dunedin](#)

More to do in Dunedin: Dunedin has a rich and proud Scottish heritage, and the name itself comes from the Scottish Gaelic for Edinburgh. Its founders' love of the old country is evident in the architecture, the Robbie Burns statue in the main square, even a bit of the accent you can catch in the city's old timers. One of its early wealthier citizens built a Scottish sort of home for his family, Larnach Castle, which is well worth a visit.

For those interested in older homes, visit the historic homestead of Olveston. The city also has a great collection of boutique fashion stores, along with excellent cafes and restaurants. Take a boat tour around the harbour, or just park by one of the beaches to watch the surfers take on the waves.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Dunedin Holiday Park 41 Victoria Rd, Dunedin www.dunedinholidaypark.co.nz	Puddle Alley Puddle Alley, Mosgiel	Woodhaugh Park 7 Woodhaugh St, Woodhaugh, Dunedin

Day 30

Dunedin to Oamaru (1.45h)

The time to Oamaru is short, but this is a road to meander on, and plan for many short breaks. The Moeraki Boulders, on the beach by Moeraki, are one of New Zealand's natural wonders; it looks as though giants once used giant rocks as playthings and left them strewn around the beach. There are also seal and penguin colonies along the way, especially at Moeraki Lighthouse, and many more pristine beaches to stop at along the way.

Oamaru boasts some of New Zealand's best 19th century limestone architecture including the Opera House, Forrester Gallery, and Victorian Precinct. Riverstone Kitchen and Whitestone Cheese Factory are just two places to stop for a bite, and there are wine tours to join and a whiskey factory as well. More recently, Oamaru has become something of a Steampunk headquarters and these futuristic fans of Victoriana can often be seen wandering about town in full costume. There are many bike tracks and bike rentals in town, and more penguins at the Blue Penguin Colony, one of the best eco-tourism attractions around.



Recommended accommodation options:

Campground Option	Free Parking Option	NZMCA Option
Oamaru Harbour Tourist Park 5 Esplanade, Oamaru www.oamaruharbour.co.nz	Kakanui River Gemmells Crossing Rd, Oamaru	Awamoko Domain 1796 Georgetown-Pukeuri Road Awamoko

Day 31

Oamaru to Christchurch (3.5h)

The road north toward Christchurch cuts through Timaru. Stop here for a break, for an excellent lunch, and to replenish your wine supplies. For some local culture, visit the Te Ana Rock Art Centre, to see local Maori tribe Ngai Tahu's rock art. Ashburton offers visitors an aviation museum, beautiful public parks and gardens, a vintage railway, and plenty of restaurants and cafes.

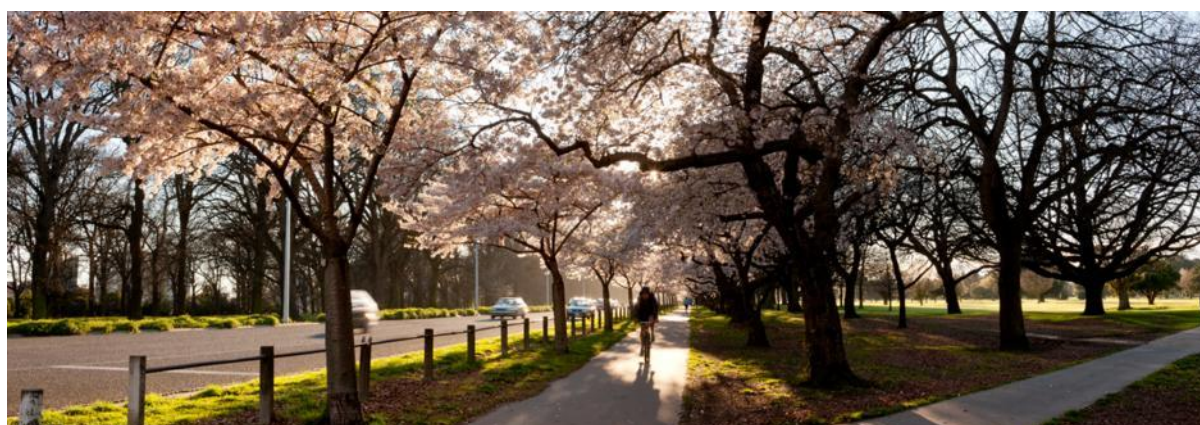
Christchurch is traditionally New Zealand's most English city – imagined, laid out, planned and even settled by decree over in England. It was built around its Christ Church Cathedral and Four Avenues, furnished with the University of Canterbury and Christ's College, peopled by the first four ships, 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, plan to spend the day enjoying this everchanging 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.



Recommended accommodation options:

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