

the West Coast of the Southern Alps

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Media and Trade FACT SHEET

Discover the real New Zealand ...

With a rich environmental heritage, the West Coast of the Southern Alps boasts 5 National Parks and a World heritage Area as well as an array of scenic wonders and activities including:

- New Zealand's highest mountains,
- lowest and most accessible glaciers,
- most exquisite lowland forests (with the tallest tree's),
- wildest beaches and the most stunning natural rivers
- forest walks to suit all ages and abilities, - with some great back country trails and huts
- world class eco-tourism experiences with fascinating wildlife in abundance
- Adventure options everywhere! - caving, rafting, canoeing, kayaking, surfing, jet boating, jet skiing, scenic flights, mountain biking and horse trekking!
- river and sea fishing
- A wealth of history and heritage (try some gold panning and exploring of old gold mines and ghost towns!)

Once you get here, highways to and within the Coast are easy to drive and there are regular air links with Christchurch and Wellington. One of the world's great rail journey's onboard the Tranz Alpine train begins and ends right here in Greymouth.

And let's not forget the breathtakingly spectacular Coast Road, which winds its way South from Charleston and is rated by Lonely Planet as **"One of the top 10 coastal drives in the world"**.



The West Coast - Key facts and figures

The region: The West Coast covers the length of the South Island from Karamea and the Kahurangi National Park in the north to Jackson Bay and the Mount Aspiring National Park in the south. A distance of approx. 550kms but no wider than 70kms at any point.

Main Centres; Westport (Buller District), Greymouth (Grey District) and Hokitika (Westland District)

Main Airports;

- Hokitika (flights from/to Christchurch)
- Westport (flights from/to Wellington),
- Also numerous small airstrips offering charter services

Population; Approx. 33000

Although the West Coast region covers 8.7% of the land area of New Zealand, it has only 0.8% of the people. Most of the small population live in towns near the mouths of major rivers, and the rest of the region is sparsely settled.

Visitor profile;

- The top 5 international visitor markets to the West Coast in 2008 were Australia (32.6%), UK (20.3%), USA (8.9%), Germany (8.0%) and Canada (3.3%).
- During the same period Japan, South Korea and China (combined) equated to 2.1% of total international visitors.
- The largest domestic markets were from Canterbury (36.9%), Nelson-Tasman (9.8%), Auckland (9%) Otago (5.7%) and Wellington (5.6%).
- The International visitors 'purpose of travel' were Holiday (78.5%), Visiting friends and relatives (13.9%), Education travellers (4.8%) Business travellers (1%) and other (1.8%).
- The Domestic markets 'purpose of travel' were Holiday (60.7%), visiting friends and relatives (23%), business (12.8%), Education (0.8%) and other (2.7%)

Visitor numbers;

- Total visits by travellers to West Coast RTO are forecast to rise from 2.32m in 2008 to 2.53m in 2015 - an increase of 9.1% (212,100) or 1.3% p.a.
- International visits are expected to increase from 1.15m in 2008 to 1.32m in 2015, representing growth of 178,500 or 15.6%. The share of total visits generated by international visitors is expected to increase from 49.4% to 52.3%.
- Domestic visits are expected to increase from 1.17m in 2008 to 1.21m in 2015, representing growth of 33,600 or 2.9%. The share of total visits generated by domestic visitors is expected to decrease from 50.6% to 47.7%.
- Total visitor nights in West Coast RTO are forecast to rise from 2.38m in 2008 to 2.59m in 2015 - an increase of 8.7% (207,400) or 1.2% p.a.

- International visitor nights are expected to increase from 1.18m in 2008 to 1.34m in 2015, representing growth of 161,500 or 13.7%. The share of total visitor nights generated by international visitors is expected to increase from 49.5% to 51.7%
- Domestic visitor nights are expected to increase from 1.20m in 2008 to 1.25m in 2015, representing growth of 45,900 or 3.8%. The share of total visitor nights generated by domestic visitors is expected to decrease from 50.5% to 48.3%.

(Source: Tourism Research New Zealand)

History;

- The tribal affiliations of the earliest settlers are uncertain, but they are generally thought to be Waitaha, the first settlers of the South Island. The West Coast was occupied by Ngāti Wairangi in the 16th or 17th centuries. By the time of first European contact in the early 19th century Ngāti Waewae, a *hapū* of Ngāti Tahu, claimed ownership of much of the West Coast. They also came to be known as Poutini Ngāi Tahu.
- Although most of the North Island and the eastern side of the South Island had been explored by Europeans by the mid-1840s, there was little interest in the West coast until the need for agricultural land led to renewed interest in the region.
- Before Europeans could settle on the land, it was necessary to come to an agreement with the Māori occupants, Poutini Ngāi Tahu. In 1859 James Mackay was instructed by the government to purchase the land. After detailed negotiations, the Arahura Deed was signed by leading Poutini Ngāi Tahu chiefs on 21 May 1860. One of the reserved areas was the settlement of Māwhera, part of the present town of Greymouth.
- The discovery of payable quantities of alluvial gold in Greenstone Creek near Hokitika in mid-1864 led to a major gold rush. With a succession of gold discoveries in different parts of the West Coast through 1865 and 1866, the population exploded, to peak at about 28,700 in late 1867.
- Most of the miners who arrived on the West Coast had been born in the United Kingdom (which then included the whole of Ireland). More than a third were Irish. This was followed by the Chinese, Shetland islanders and British Coal miners in the 1860's and 1870's.

(**Source:** Simon Nathan. 'West Coast region', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 3-Mar-09 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/west-coast-region>).

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