



Christchurch
& Canterbury. New Zealand

Top of the South Island Itinerary – Coastal Discovery
9 day Tour - including Best Kept Secrets (shhhhh!)

Find countless places to explore discover and expand your mind in the top of the South Island of New Zealand. Follow the coastline by road or rail and discover the immense diversity of terrain that New Zealand has to offer. From wild and rugged beaches to sheltered golden bays with endless views. Have you ever experienced the tranquility of having the coastline all yourself? The time is now.

Day 1 Arrive in Christchurch

Arrive in the South Island at Christchurch International Airport. As you prepare for landing, take in the breathtaking views of the Southern Alps and the stunning Canterbury plains. An Alps to Ocean backdrop makes Christchurch one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Centrally located on the South Island's east coast, Christchurch is surrounded by the diverse Canterbury region. From the spectacular Pacific coastline and mighty Southern Alps to a world-class wine valley and ancient volcanic peninsula – the South Island starts here.

Best Kept secrets:

- Best post-flight coffee. Upon arrival go and see Bianca at Underground for a coffee. Those in the know, know she makes the best!
- Widest welcome. Christchurch Airport features Australasia's largest video wall showcasing Canterbury's amazing landscapes. Head to Customs for this large-scale window into the South Island. (Opening in October 2010)
- Best link to Antarctica. In the summer months at Christchurch International Airport you can check out unique aircraft like the C17 Globemaster (US Air Force) and the C130 Hercules (RNZAF), departing and arriving from the Antarctic.



Day 2 Christchurch

Explore the city. By foot, explore the growing network of urban laneways packed with bars, eateries and an eclectic mix of boutique shops. You will find a range of national award-winning restaurants, stylish cafes and bars and a fantastic range of shopping options from markets through to international brands. Venture west out of the city just 20 minutes and you will find yourself in Selwyn, home to some of the best boutique wineries in the country.



Best Kept secrets:

- Best home brew. Discover the English style microbrewery tucked inside revitalized inner city laneways.
- Best Ocean to Alps view. This can be seen from almost anywhere along the Summit Road, 15 minutes from the city.
- Best inner city forest. Riccarton Bush - simply untouched nature at its best.
- Best harbourside coffee. Get amongst the funky café scene in Lyttelton village.
- Best double scoop ice-cream. Sumner Beach Dairy - the double scooped ice creams are not to be missed.
- Best beach cricket. Head to Taylors Mistake for plenty of room to hit a six.

Day 3 Christchurch - Kaikoura

Head north. Cross the Waimakariri River, be the first to see what shape the ever-changing braided river has formed today. Arrive in Kaikoura. The rugged coastline here is one of a kind and its coastal waters are home to an amazing array of marine mammals and birdlife. Perhaps the most famous residents who can be seen on virtually a daily basis are the mighty sperm whales, so be sure to keep an eye out for them.

Best Kept secrets:

- The dusky dolphins - swim with them in their natural environment.
- Maori history. In this area of immense natural beauty, you can gain a deep insight and understanding of the Maori way of life and spiritual connection to the environment.
- Best fresh seafood. Nin's Bin. An eclectic lunch stop at this beach side caravan. Seize the day and a freshly caught crayfish from Nin's.



Day 4 Kaikoura – Picton/Blenheim

Continue your journey to the top of the South Island, where spectacular scenery awaits. It's impossible to pick the best way to travel north to the delightful port of Picton – you're spoilt for choice. The iconic TranzCoastal train journey is "one of the world's most scenic train journeys," with Kaikoura mountain ranges on one side and the Pacific coastline on the other. You may even see dolphins, seals or penguins from the comfort of your carriage, traversing 22 tunnels and 175 bridges.



Best Kept Secrets:

- Best chance of seeing wildlife. You have a 98% chance of viewing a dolphin or 80% of swimming with dolphins on a specialised tour.
- Wondering what that interesting smell is up the Kaikoura coastline? It's not a secret, it's a seal colony! To check them out just pull over at a rest area.
- Cellar doors. In Marlborough you can experience 42 cellar doors and taste award-winning boutique beers and international award-winning vodka.

Day 5 Picton/Blenheim – Havelock - Nelson

Nelson city lies in the middle of a large, sunny north-facing bay. Life here revolves around the sheltered "haven" with fishing boats and pleasure craft coming and going on the calm waters.



Best Kept Secrets:

- Walk to the Centre of New Zealand! – a hill walk to a summit overlooking the city, wide sandy Tasman Bay, and beyond to the Abel Tasman National Park.
- Just 5 minutes from the city is the sweeping expanse of Tahunanui Beach. Great for swimming, and at high tide, you can take the ladder down the sea wall from the road above. Plunge straight into the deep water – no sandy feet!
- Don't miss the Nelson Market every Saturday morning from 8. Join visitors and locals - coffee in-hand - prowling the lanes of fresh local produce, gourmet food, art, jewellery, ceramics, vintage clothing and many more tempting offerings.

Day 6 Nelson – Abel Tasman National Park

There are no roads in the Abel Tasman National Park. You can only access it by watertaxi, kayak, by air, or on foot.

Best Kept Secrets:

- The region's huge tides, of up to 4.5Mtrs create an ever-changing seascape. Calm sheltered waters at high tides, are contrasted with sandy estuaries that can be crossed at low tide. The Abel Tasman National Park is just 60 minutes from Nelson city, and is one of New Zealand's favourites
- The Abel Tasman Coast Track is 52km long and follows the coastline over limestone tracks, through beech forest, crossing golden sandy beaches and tidal estuaries along the way. Use the watertaxi network to access the part you like the look of best. Stay overnight in huts or campgrounds, or stay for just the day
- Head to the north-western tip of the South Island. The shifting sands of Farewell Spit stretches for 35km into the Tasman Sea. An extraordinary landscape – sheltered tidal flats on one side, and thumping surf and sandunes, just 5 minutes walk across the Spit



Day 7 Abel Tasman National Park – West Coast

Travel south from Nelson through the rugged Buller Gorge where you will arrive in Westport. Then head south along the spectacular Coast Road where a postcard photo opportunity awaits around every corner.

Best Kept Secrets:

- Going underground. Oparara Basin – visit the Honeycomb Hill Caves, ancient home of the moa.
- West Coast Luxury Lodges. Try Rough 'n' Tumble, Birds Ferry, Rimu Lodge.
- Greenstone hunting. For Maori, the river valleys and mountains of this region were the traditional source of pounamu (greenstone). Today, a find is rare –but it's always worth looking
- Heritage pubs. Experience unique West Coast culture, in a region that represents 9% of the country's area but holds less than 1% of the population



Day 8 West Coast

The words “rugged” and “spectacular” feature in most descriptions of the West Coast – usually in the same sentence. The Southern Alps to the east and Tasman Sea to the west create wild coastlines and stunning mountain backdrops. The West Coast has five national parks within its boundaries; in fact, nearly 90% of the land in this region is administered by the Department of Conservation. From Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, to Punakaiki’s Pancake Rocks, trout fishing at Lake Brunner and tramping along the Heaphy Track, the West Coast is, according to Lonely Planet, “like nowhere else in New Zealand.”



Best Kept Secrets:

- Glacier climbing – Nowhere else in the world at this latitude do glaciers come so close to the ocean.
- Wild Foods. An annual festival (early March) invites thousands of Kiwis and travelers alike to sample the wildest West Coast foods – from wasp larvae ice cream to traditional favourites like huhu grubs.
- Crafting your own unique keepsake. From pounamu pendants to bone carving and even knife making.
- Coastal hamlets. Okarito (with its lagoon and white herons, and setting for best-seller *The Bone People*), Granity (home to world-class adventure racer Emily Miagza) and Jackson Bay (breathtaking).
- White water and whitebait – paddling, surfing, fishing or just enjoying local favourites for supper!

Day 9 West Coast – Christchurch, depart Christchurch

Travel west to Christchurch through Arthur’s Pass National Park. Emerging from the Southern Alps, you will enter a world of braided river, wide, shingle-filled riverbeds and vast beech forests as you head back into Canterbury. Catch your departure flight from Christchurch International Airport.



Best Kept Secrets:

- Best place to spot a kea. In Arthur’s Pass village, these cheeky mountain parrots can always be seen hopping around the village.
- Leading footprints. From the main terminal at Christchurch Airport follow the blue footprints and you’ll end up at the very cool Antarctic Attraction. You might need to save this one for next time though as your plane is nearly ready to depart!

For more information; www.westcoastnz.com