

# Billy Connolly drives New Zealand

## Overview

Start Auckland / Finish Christchurch  
Recommended Length: 18 Days  
Distance: 4055 km (2534 miles)

## Billy Connolly's Tours from South to North

During his tour of New Zealand in 2004, Billy Connolly traversed 8,500km - a lot of ground in a country that measures only 1600km in length. Now you can follow in Billy's foot steps. Take your own tour of the country and get to know it as well as the locals.

## Take your own 'World Tour'

This extensive itinerary provides a total view of New Zealand, and takes in all the most significant sights and attractions. In the North Island you'll discover beautiful beaches, kauri forests, caves and phenomenal geothermal activity. In the South Island the emphasis is on grand mountain scenery, adventure activities, historic architecture and wildlife encounters.

Throughout the country there are vineyards and inspired restaurants to discover, while the cities present you with cultural entertainments and the chance to buy quality, locally-made clothing, art works and home wares. By the end of your holiday, you'll know New Zealand from top to toe.



## Day 1 – Auckland to Paihia

### Auckland - Orewa - Warkworth - Whangarei - Paihia

36 km (23 miles)

Approximately 0.5 hour

Road Conditions: Motorway/State Highway

Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, is situated between two enormous harbours and dotted with 48 extinct volcanic cones. It's a place to enjoy marine adventures, wine trails, forest walks and urban sophistication.

At the beginning of your journey, you'll drive over the Auckland Harbour Bridge towards the bays and beaches of Auckland's North Shore. The motorway will quickly sweep you northward, until the suburban scenery gives way to peaceful farmland.

Before you reach Orewa, you have the option of taking an exit that leads to Silverdale and Gulf Harbour. Silverdale is famous for its factory and outlet stores. Gulf Harbour, at the end of the Whangaparaoa Peninsula, has a breathtaking golf course. Beautiful beaches can be found up and down the peninsula.

The town of Orewa spreads along the edge of a large, white sand surf beach. You can explore bush trails at the northern end of the town, visit the friendly shopping centre or dive into the waves for a refreshing swim.

### Auckland - Orewa - Warkworth - Whangarei - Paihia

27 km (17 miles)

Approximately 0.5 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway



Driving north, you'll pass Hatfield's Beach before coming across Waiwera, which means 'hot water' in Maori. The hot springs are the main attraction in this small, seaside village.

The next place of interest is Puhoi, a town originally settled in 1863 by immigrants from Bohemia. Cheese is the local claim to fame – buy some for your next picnic.

Enjoy native forest and farmland scenery all the way to Warkworth, a pretty town located on the banks of the Mahurangi River. From here it's easy to explore the many attractions of the district – surf beaches, marine and wildlife sanctuaries, vineyards, golf courses, regional parks and islands.

#### **Auckland - Orewa - Warkworth - Whangarei - Paihia**

99 km (62 miles)

Approximately 1.25 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

Warkworth is a pretty town on the banks of the Mahurangi River. From here it's easy to explore the attractions of the district - surf beaches, marine and wildlife sanctuaries, vineyards, golf courses, regional parks and islands.

A drive through the Dome Forest will lead you into the rural service town of Wellsford. From here you can take a side trip to Pakiri - a great beach for surfing and horse treks. Kaiwaka is the next town on the map - pause here if you like Dutch cheese. At this point consider an eastern detour past the spectacular beaches of Mangawhai Heads, Langs Beach and Waipu Cove.

Just before Whangarei a right turn will take you to the Marsden Point oil refinery. The visitors' centre has an interesting display that explains the refining process.

#### **Auckland - Orewa - Warkworth - Whangarei - Paihia**

71 km (44 miles)

Approximately 1 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway



Whangarei is a subtropical city on the edge of a beautiful harbour. At the Quayside Town Basin complex you'll find stylish cafes and restaurants, as well as museums, art galleries and shops. Be sure to visit Whangarei Falls.

A series of small settlements will lead you north. Just before Kawakawa, a side road runs to the glow-worm cave at Waiomio. Take a rest stop in Kawakawa, because it has a remarkable public toilet designed by Austrian artist Frederick Hundertwasser.

From here the road to the Bay of Islands becomes quite twisty, but you'll enjoy some delightful scenery along the way. A short detour takes you to the port of Opuia, where cruise ships often call.

The resort town of Paihia makes an excellent base for exploring the Bay of Islands. Catch a cruise to the outer islands or a ferry to the charming township of Russell. The historic Treaty House at Waitangi marks the beginning of New Zealand as a nation.

### **Day 2 Paihia to Kaitia**

#### **Paihia - Kerikeri - Kaitia**

23 km (14 miles)

Approximately 0.5 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway/Arterial

Just beyond Paihia you'll have to chance to visit Haruru Falls. These falls tumble down in a perfect horseshoe. A walking track runs from the falls all the way to Waitangi and includes a board walk through mangrove forest.



The road leading into Kerikeri is bordered by orchards. Roadside stalls offer the chance to buy seasonal fruit. Look also for signs showing the way to artists' studios – resident potters and painters have given this district a creative personality.

#### **Paihia - Kerikeri - Kaitaia**

99 km (62 miles)

Approximately 1.25 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway/Arterial

Kerikeri is a town of things to do. You'll find galleries, cafes and vineyards, gourmet food shops, golf courses and historic sites such as the Stone Store and the Mission House. There are superb bush walks in the area - Rainbow Falls is a perfect picnic spot.

Scenic side trips on the road to Kaitaia include Matauri Bay (the resting place of the Rainbow Warrior) and Tauranga Bay. Nearby Whangaroa Harbour is a game fishing mecca. Further north, the beautiful beaches of Doubtless Bay will tempt you with white sand and crystal clear water. Sailing, sea kayaking, horse treks and golf are some of the other activities available in this district. If you have time, make the trip to the Cape Reinga lighthouse - then you can say you've been to the very top of New Zealand.

Kaitaia is the main centre for the 'subtropical' north. From here you can catch a bus trip along Ninety Mile Beach. Other local attractions include the Far North Regional Museum and the nocturnal park.



### **Day 3 – Kaitaia to Auckland**

#### **Kaitaia - Dargaville - Auckland**

211 km (132 miles)

Approximately 2.75 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

From Kaitaia you can catch a tour to Cape Reinga and Ninety Mile Beach. Find time to investigate the Far North Regional Museum and the local nocturnal park.

The backcountry route to Dargaville takes you past the Herekino Forest, where you can stretch your legs on the Kaitaia Walkway. In Kohukohu you'll find some charming historic buildings. A vehicular ferry will carry you over the harbour to Rawene, a great stop for coffee and crafts. Further on is Opononi, where you can arrange to go sand dune surfing.

Your next adventure is the awesome Waipoua Forest, home of New Zealand's largest kauri trees. The Trounson Kauri Park is another opportunity for tree gazing. Not far from Dargaville are the Kai Iwi lakes. These beautiful sand dune lakes are popular for camping, swimming, fishing and kayaking.

Dargaville is a perfect base for exploring the Kaipara Harbour, which offers fishing, quad biking, schooner trips and bird watching. The west coast beaches in this area form part of the longest driveable beach in New Zealand.

#### **Kaitaia - Dargaville - Auckland**

185 km (116 miles)

Approximately 2.25 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway/Motorway

Travel across the river plain to Matakohē's kauri museum, where you'll discover the district's fascinating history. In the village of Maungaturoto you can explore antique and craft shops.

At Brynderwyn you'll turn towards Kaiwaka, a village known for its Dutch cheese. Further south is Wellsford, where you'll take a right towards Helensville. The hilly rural road provides amazing views of the Kaipara Harbour and surrounding farmland. There are hot springs at

Parakai if you have time to spare. At Kumeu you'll turn towards Waitakere, where you'll embark on a beautiful scenic drive through the Waitakere Ranges. Auckland will reveal itself as you drive down from Titirangi village. With two huge harbours, this city is an ideal base for marine adventures. Other attractions include wine trails, forest walks and highly acclaimed restaurant zones.

#### **Day 4 – Auckland to Waitomo Caves**

##### **Auckland - Hamilton - Waitomo Caves**

127 km (79 miles)

Approximately 1.5 hours

Road Conditions: Motorway/State Highway



Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, is situated between two enormous harbours and dotted with 48 extinct volcanic cones. It's a place to enjoy marine adventures, wine trails, forest walks and urban sophistication.

As you cruise down the southern motorway, suburban scenery gradually gives way to the farmland of South Auckland, an area favoured by bloodstock breeders. You'll enjoy motorway speeds all the way to Bombay, a major market gardening area.

The Waikato River will accompany you for much of your journey through the green countryside. Places of interest along the way include the wine

growing area of Te Kauwhata and the Hamilton, you'll notice side roads leading to Waingaro Hot Springs and Raglan, a surf resort on the west coast.

##### **Auckland - Hamilton - Waitomo Caves**

71 km (44 miles)

Approximately 1 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway

The mighty Waikato River brings a unique beauty to Hamilton city. As well as river boat cruising, local attractions include gardens, museums and a giant free flight aviary. At the southern end of the city's main street you'll discover a wide variety of excellent restaurants and cafes.

The trip south takes you through prime Waikato farmland. In summer, you can pause in the town of Te Awamutu to admire the roses. A detour towards the coast will take you to Kawhia, where hot water bubbles up through the sand - you can dig a pool between low and mid tide. Just before the turn off to Waitomo, you'll come to Otorohanga. The kiwi house in this town is a chance to meet New Zealand's national symbol.

#### **Day 5 – Waitomo Caves to Taupo**

##### **Waitomo Caves - Taupo**

163 km (102 miles)

Approximately 2 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway/Arterial

The Waitomo Caves district is famous for its subterranean splendour. Beneath the surface of this limestone region is a series of vast cave systems decorated with stalactites, stalagmites and glow-worms. Some caves open to the public, and are easy to walk through, others require specialised caving equipment.



The cross-country route to Taupo passes through farmland, lakeland and forest. Te Kuiti is the only major town on the way, so stock up on picnic supplies in preparation for the drive. Keen walkers can explore the beautiful Pureora Forest Park, while Trout fanciers can try their luck at Lake Whakamaru. The hydro power station at Atiamuri is an interesting stop. Just before Taupo you'll encounter the Wairakei Geothermal Power Station and Huka Falls.

## Day 6 – Taupo to Palmerston North

### Taupo - Turangi - Palmerston North

47 km (29 miles)

Approximately 0.75 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway



The resort town of Taupo sits on the edge of New Zealand's largest lake, which is well stocked with sizeable trout. You'll find everything a traveller could wish for, including an excellent choice of restaurants. Most accommodation establishments make good use of the underground thermal activity to provide hot spas for relaxation.

You'll follow the eastern edge of Lake Taupo to reach Turangi. The drive is very scenic and there are many picnic opportunities along the way. Where streams run into the lake, you'll often see trout fisherman trying

their luck.

The town of Turangi is the trout fishing capital of New Zealand. There are famous fishing spots in almost every direction, including 'The Delta', 'The Hole', 'Little Big O' and 'Tailrace' (believed to contain the world's fattest trout). The nearby hot springs of Tokaanu are another attraction, or you can try rafting the Tongariro River. The walks and skifields of the Tongariro National Park are also close by.

### Taupo - Turangi - Palmerston North

195 km (122 miles)

Approximately 2.5 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

The Desert Road is the first lap of your journey – it's long and straight, with amazing views of Tongariro National Park's volcanoes. In Waiouru, an army town, you should check out the QE2 Memorial Museum. As you drive south towards the town of Taihape (the Gumboot Throwing capital of the world), the landscape becomes dominated by rivers and valleys. The Mangaweka Gorge is a scenic masterpiece. By the time you get to Bulls, where you can browse antique shops, you're surrounded by tranquil farmland.

## Day 7 – Palmerston North to Wellington

### Palmerston North - Wellington

139 km (87 miles)

Approximately 1.75 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

One of New Zealand's largest provincial cities, Palmerston North has an attractive historic heart. Many of the original stores built in the 1920s and 1930s have been restored and now function as boutiques, cafes and restaurants. Rose gardens and museums should also be on your agenda of things to see.

Your journey south first takes you to Shannon – pause here to enjoy the owl sanctuary. The town of Levin is next – it has



a thriving clothing industry and many factory shops. Two beautiful dune lakes are an easy detour from here. Offshore from Waikanae is Kapiti Island, a nature reserve for close encounters with rare birds. A car museum and gourmet cheese factory are other attractions in this area.

## Day 8 – Wellington to Kaikoura

### Wellington - Picton - Blenheim - Kaikoura

98 km (61 miles)

Approximately 3 hours

Road Conditions: By Sea



Wellington City is compact, cultured and full of character. Nestled between the harbour and the hills, the downtown area is ideal for explorations on foot. Enjoy cafes, restaurants, museums and all kinds of shops. Dance, theatre and musical performances are a Wellington specialty. As New Zealand's capital, this city is rich in political history.

The passage across Cook Strait and through the Marlborough Sounds is one of the most scenic ferry trips in the world. The fast ferry makes the trip in just over 2 hours, the cruise-style ferry takes 3 hours. Both types of vessel can transport vehicles. Highlights along the way include the Red Rocks seal colony, Tory Channel, Cook's Lookout and the beautiful coves of the sounds.

### Wellington - Picton - Blenheim - Kaikoura

28 km (18 miles)

Approximately 0.5 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway

The picturesque seaside town of Picton is the South Island base for the Interislander ferry service, which links the North and South islands of New Zealand. It's also the gateway to the marine, forest and island attractions of the Marlborough Sounds. Museums and interesting walks will keep you entertained while you're here.

The short drive to Blenheim takes you across the Wairau Plains past vineyards and wineries. Diversions along the way include a golf course and farm parks.

### Wellington - Picton - Blenheim - Kaikoura

129 km (81 miles)

Approximately 1.75 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway



Blenheim is the heart of wine-growing Marlborough. You'll find a pleasing selection of cafes, restaurants, pubs, shops and golf courses. Character accommodation is another Blenheim delight – everything from homestays to boutique hotels.

State Highway 1 takes you through the coastal foothills, and then out into the picturesque Awatere Valley. In the township of Seddon you'll find authentic New Zealand crafts. The Lake Grassmere saltworks is an interesting stop - the ponds turn coral pink in late summer. After the small town of Ward, the road turns toward the awesome beauty of the Pacific Coast. Just north of the Ure River is a road that leads to the walking trails of the

Sawcut Gorge.

Kaikoura is a base for wildlife experiences of all kinds – it's also a great place to eat crayfish. A whale watch tour can take you to see Minke, Humpback and Southern Right

whales mixing it with dolphins and orcas. You can also walk to see fur seal colonies and spy on big seabirds such as mollymawks, albatross and petrels.

## Day 9 – Kaikoura to Christchurch

### Kaikoura - Hanmer Springs - Christchurch

132 km (83 miles)

Approximately 1.5 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway/Arterial

Kaikoura is a base for wildlife experiences of all kinds – it's also a great place to eat crayfish. A whale watch tour can take you to see Minke, Humpback and Southern Right whales mixing it with dolphins and orcas. You can also walk to see fur seal colonies and spy on big seabirds such as mollymawks, albatross and petrels.

There are a number of ways to get to Hanmer Springs from Kaikoura. The most scenic route is via the Inland Road which takes you past the entrance to the ski village of Mount Lyford, or you can travel a bit further south and take the Leader Road. The Leader Road incorporates coastal and rural farming views and finishes at the Waiau Township. On both routes there are plenty of photo opportunities for the avid photographer.



### Kaikoura - Hanmer Springs - Christchurch

135 km (84 miles)

Approximately 1.75 hours

Road Conditions: Motorway/State Highway



Hanmer Springs is a destination for relaxation and indulgence. You can soak in the hot springs or treat yourself to a range of spa therapies. Outdoor activities are also a Hanmer specialty. Forest walks, horse trekking, trout fishing, jet boating, bungee jumping and golf are some of the options.

The route to Christchurch initially follows the beautiful Waiau River. Then it leads you through the Balmoral Forest and across the Hurunui River. Farmland, vineyards and olive groves characterise the Waipara region, which is known for its wine and food – an excellent place to pause for refreshment. The last leg of your journey takes

you past the surf beaches of Amberley, Leithfield, Waikuku and Woodend.

## Day 10 – Christchurch to Dunedin

### Christchurch - Ashburton - Timaru - Oamaru - Dunedin

89 km (56 miles)

Approximately 1.25 hours

Road Conditions: Motorway/State Highway

The South Island's largest city, Christchurch is an entertaining mixture of refined lifestyle and cultural excitement. The tranquil Avon River meanders through the city and adjacent Hagley Park, historic buildings house a lively arts community and restored trams make it easy for visitors to get around. Visit heritage sites, museums and art galleries, and enjoy the highly developed restaurant scene.

The route to Christchurch is about as straight and flat as roads get in New Zealand. On a clear day, the Southern Alps provide



outstanding scenery. The town of Rakaia sits on the southern side of the Rakaia River, and it's 'the salmon capital of New Zealand'. The Rakaia bridge spans 1.8 kilometres of one of the world's best examples of a 'braided' river system.

**Christchurch - Ashburton - Timaru - Oamaru - Dunedin**

77 km (48 miles)

Approximately 1 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway

Ashburton is a large town that serves the local rural community. It sits between the Rakaia and Rangitata rivers, so fly fishing is the local obsession. Ashburton also has about six museums and some excellent craft galleries. The skifields of Mt Hutt are an easy drive from here.

Your trip south is straight and flat. It's worth taking the loop road to Geraldine to visit the gourmet cheese factory and vintage car museum. Rafting in the Rangitata Gorge is another possibility. Just before Timaru you'll drive into Temuka, a town that produces high quality pottery – look for the factory shop if you'd like a useful souvenir.

**Christchurch - Ashburton - Timaru - Oamaru - Dunedin**

80 km (50 miles)

Approximately 1 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway



Timaru is a small but beautifully formed city. The historic walk will introduce you to many of the old buildings. Enjoy the boutique brewery, botanic gardens and the park at Caroline Bay, which has an aviary and a maze. Timaru also has the third largest public art gallery in the South Island and an excellent museum.

River crossings are a feature of the journey south. If you enjoy fly fishing, you could make this trip last a long time. Just beyond the town of Hook, take a detour to Waimate to see the museum and an original thatched cottage – it was made from a single tree. In summer the

Waimate District is overflowing with delicious berry fruits.

**Christchurch - Ashburton - Timaru - Oamaru - Dunedin**

119 km (74 miles)

Approximately 1.5 hours

Road Conditions: Motorway/State Highway

Oamaru has a population of around 12,000 and an impressive heritage. Many of the elegant historic buildings were made from the local sandstone. Visit the Harbour-Tyne area - the best-preserved collection of historic commercial buildings in New Zealand. You should also check out the penguin colony, the museum and the pretty public gardens.

Your journey south is flavoured with history. First up is Totara Estate Centennial Park,

where you can see restored 1860s farm buildings. Clark's Mill is next - a limestone flourmill built in 1866. You could pick up some interesting, ancient stones on the beach at Hampden before visiting the mysterious spherical boulders at Moeraki. The town of Palmerston has a museum devoted to the region's Scottish past.



**Day 11 – Dunedin to Invercargill**





### **Dunedin - Balclutha - Invercargill**

113 km (71 miles)

Approximately 1.5 hours

Road Conditions: Motorway/State Highway/Arterial

In the late 19th century, Dunedin acquired an impressive amount of ostentatious Victorian architecture. No expense was spared. Today you can enjoy the historic public buildings, imposing churches, palatial homes and ornate hotels. There's even a castle. Eco-tourism is the other face of Dunedin – visit penguin, albatross and seal colonies.

Half an hour south you'll come across tranquil Lake Waihola, a popular venue for picnics, yachting and waterskiing. The historic mill town of Milton is next – the slight kink in the main road is where two surveyors didn't quite meet. Balclutha has a distinctive arched concrete bridge and a museum where you can see historic farming and household implements.

### **Dunedin - Balclutha - Invercargill**

158 km (99 miles)

Approximately 2 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway/Arterial

The area known as the Catlins lies between Kaka Point and Fortrose, an early whaling station. The winding road will take you to see seals and sealions, Hector's Dolphins, several species of penguin and the petrified forest in Curio Bay. Wilderness beaches, waterfalls, walkways, lakes and rivers provide non-stop scenery. Accommodation is sprinkled through the area – farmstays, lodges and B & B establishments.

Invercargill is Southland's principal centre and the country's southernmost city. It is known for its elegant old department stores and wide, easy-to-navigate streets. Local food specialties include Bluff Oysters and blue cod. It's a quick journey to Bluff to see the Stirling Point signpost, which indicates the distance to the South Pole and other parts of the world. The Paua Shell House and the maritime museum are other attractions in Bluff.



## **Day 12 – Invercargill to Stewart Island**

### **Invercargill - Stewart Island**

72 km (45 miles)

Approximately 1 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway/By Sea

Air and ferry services bridge the gap across Foveaux Strait. The flight to Stewart Island takes only 20 minutes. The ferry trip, which at times can be rough, takes about an hour.

Much of Stewart Island (in Maori, Rakiura) was recently declared New Zealand's newest national park. Visitors come to the island to enjoy nature at its wildest. Highlights include spotting kiwis on Ocean Beach, walking amidst the birds on Ulva Island and hiking the tracks through the park. Oban, the only major town, offers a variety of accommodation from hotel rooms to lodge retreats. For a potted history of Stewart Island, visit the local museum.

## **Day 13 – Stewart Island to Te Anau**

### **Stewart Island - Invercargill - Te Anau**

72 km (45 miles)

Approximately 1 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway/By Sea





For a potted history of Stewart Island, visit the local museum.

Air and ferry services bridge the gap across Foveaux Strait. The flight to Invercargill airport takes only 20 minutes. The ferry trip, which at times can be rough, takes about an hour.

Invercargill is Southland's principal centre and the country's southernmost city. The museum has a tuatara house and an excellent exhibition about New Zealand's subantarctic islands. Take a stroll around the gardens, aviary and duck ponds of Queens Park.

### **Stewart Island - Invercargill - Te Anau**

157 km (98 miles)

Approximately 2 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

Choose between two routes to reach Te Anau. The longer, wilder route takes you past Riverton, one of the oldest settlements in New Zealand, and then on to Tuatapere and Clifden, where you can investigate caves and discover the historic suspension bridge. Visit spectacular Lake Manapouri before you arrive in Te Anau.

The quicker route takes you north across farmland to Lumsden and then west through the township of Mossburn to Te Anau. At the Hokonui Moonshine Museum you can learn about the region's illicit whisky-making past. Then you'll travel across the river plain to Lumsden. Stop in Mandeville if you'd like to fly in a Tiger Moth.

### **Day 14 – Te Anau to Milford Sound**

#### **Te Anau - Milford Sound**

117 km (73 miles)

Approximately 1.5 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

Te Anau township sits on the shores of Lake Te Anau. From here, the delights of the Fiordland National Park are within easy reach, including the start of the Milford Track. Cruise on the lakes, walk the tracks and visit the Department of Conservation wildlife centre. The Te Ana-au Caves are an excellent adventure.



The road to Milford is one of New Zealand's most scenic drives. The first part is relatively mild farmland, then you'll ease into beech forest near the entrance to the Fiordland National Park. Look for the Avenue of the Disappearing Mountain and the Mirror Lakes. The rough hewn Homer Tunnel brings you into Milford Sound, an amazing 22km-long fiord dominated by Mitre Peak.

A cruise on Milford Sound will be an essential component of your time in Fiordland, or you can get up close and personal in a sea kayak. Tall waterfalls, vertical rock faces and seals are some of the things you'll remember. The underwater observatory is an option with most cruises.

### **Day 15 – Te Anau to Queenstown**

#### **Te Anau - Queenstown**

172 km (108 miles)

Approximately 2.25 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway



Trout fishing rivers and high country scenery are features of the drive to Queenstown. The small towns of Mossburn and Lumsden can be explored for unique shopping opportunities – a farm tour is another possibility. Leave time to take a break in Kingston, the home of a remarkable vintage steam train. From here, the rest of your journey clings scenically to the edge of Lake Wakatipu.

## Day 16 – Queenstown to Franz Josef

### Queenstown - Wanaka - Haast - Fox Glacier - Franz Josef

103 km (64 miles)

Approximately 1.25 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

The alpine resort of Queenstown is exciting, sophisticated and fantastically scenic. It's the place to source almost any kind of adventure, including bungy, jet boating, horse trekking, rafting and river surfing. It's also a destination for luxury experiences – gourmet food and wine, spa treatments and leisurely games of golf.

The shortest route to Wanaka is over the Crown Range Road. It's a challenging drive, but the views are amazing and you'll probably encounter friendly keas (mountain parrots). More conservative drivers can take the route that runs beside the Shotover River, Lake Dunstan and the Clutha River. The vineyards of the Gibbston area and bungy jumpers at the Kawarau River Bridge are interesting distractions along the way.



### Queenstown - Wanaka - Haast - Fox Glacier - Franz Josef

139 km (87 miles)

Approximately 1.75 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

The lakeside town of Wanaka can provide you with an appealing mix of fine living, family fun and adventure. It has a high concentration of cafes, restaurants and interesting shops. You'll also find unique attractions, like the 3D maze and the 'warbird' air show, which is held every two years.



Lake Hawea is the first scenic highlight of your journey, followed closely by the northern end of Lake Wanaka. The famous 'bra fence' is impossible to miss – it started as a joke, but it's become a local legend. At the wilderness town of Makarora you can fuel up and refresh before you take on the dramatic twists and turns of the Haast Pass. Enjoy waterfalls and river scenery as you

arrive in rainforest country.

The settlement of Haast was once a construction camp for the Ministry of Works (the government department responsible for road and bridge building). It's a town with a touch of the wild west – helicopters fly deer hunters into the rugged ranges and local pubs make a feature of stuffed animal trophies.

### Queenstown - Wanaka - Haast - Fox Glacier - Franz Josef

122 km (76 miles)

Approximately 1.75 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

Just north of Haast is Lake Moeraki, a peaceful forest lake with good fishing – a 40 minute walk takes you to the penguin colony at Monro Beach. Next is pretty Lake Paringa, where you can enjoy a delicious meal of salmon at the salmon farm. Just before Fox Glacier is the



western end of the Copland track. In half a day you can walk to the hot springs at Welcome Flat.

The terminal face of Fox Glacier is just 5 kilometres from the township that serves it. The road to the walking track crosses ancient moraine from earlier advances and retreats. Fox Glacier was named after an early New Zealand Prime Minister, William Fox.

#### **Queenstown - Wanaka - Haast - Fox Glacier - Franz Josef**

23 km (14 miles)

Approximately 0.25 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway



The Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers are unique relics of the last ice age. Mighty rivers of solid white, tumbling down ice-hewn rock valleys, they are classically beautiful in the glacial sense. Nowhere else in the world have glaciers advanced so close to the sea at this latitude. While in the area, you can choose from a wide range of adventure activities.

After a short drive north, you'll arrive at Franz Josef Glacier. First explored in 1865, the glacier has been moving forward at a rate of about 1 metre a day since 1985. Previously it was in retreat. You can walk to the terminal of the glacier in about 10 minutes. Franz Josef township has a good range of accommodation and eating establishments.

### **Day 17 – Franz Josef to Greymouth**

#### **Franz Josef - Hokitika - Greymouth**

133 km (83 miles)

Approximately 1.75 hours

Road Conditions: State Highway

The road to the glaciers is rural, but with a wild streak. The farmland is trying to turn back into forest, and the beauty of the rivers is raw and primeval. At Ross there's a goldfield walkway to explore, or enjoy a picnic by the shores of Lake Ianthe. A visit to the White Heron colony near Whataroa is a rare experience.

Hokitika was first settled in 1860, after the discovery of gold on the west coast. It still has the feel of a 'frontier town', and there are some lovely old buildings to admire. Greenstone (NZ jade) is the town's treasure these days – watch it being carved. You might also want to investigate the museum and do the historical walk.

#### **Franz Josef - Hokitika - Greymouth**

40 km (25 miles)

Approximately 0.5 hour

Road Conditions: State Highway

The road between Hokitika and Greymouth provides great views of the wild west coast. Detour to the beach and breathe the salt spray air. Driftwood is the ornamentation of choice for west coast beaches – every shape, size and colour. Shantytown, just south of Greymouth, is a reconstructed 1880s gold rush town – great family entertainment.

Greymouth has a long gold mining history. It's the largest town on the west coast and is known for its awesome seascapes. The local brewery runs tours or you can catch up with west coast history at the museum. White water rafting, sea kayaking and gold panning are other things to do.



### **Day 18 – Greymouth to Christchurch**

#### **Greymouth - Arthur's Pass - Christchurch**



84 km (53 miles)  
Approximately 1 hour  
Road Conditions: State Highway



Greymouth has a long gold mining history. It's the largest town on the west coast and is known for its awesome seascapes. The local brewery runs tours or you can catch up with west coast history at the museum. White water rafting, sea kayaking and gold panning are other things to do.

Classic west coast river and forest scenery leads you east. Rushing water, impressive bridges and tiny towns gradually give way to the misty mountains of the Southern Alps.

The settlement of Arthur's Pass is a base for climbing, hiking, hunting and skiing adventures in the adjacent national park. There's a good choice of shorter walks. Native birds commonly seen include the kea, tui and bellbird.

### **Greymouth - Arthur's Pass - Christchurch**

170 km (106 miles)  
Approximately 2 hours  
Road Conditions: State Highway

The route known as Arthur's Pass was first used by Maori tribes crossing to the west coast to find pounamu (jade). Today it's a sophisticated mountain pass, memorable for its scenery as well as its breathtaking civil engineering.

The road follows the Waimakariri and Bealey Rivers down to the skiing areas of Porter Heights and Craigieburn. Lakes Pearson and Grasmere are photo opportunities along the way. Rural serenity and friendly towns lead you across the Canterbury Plains to Christchurch. You'll pass Kirwee, Darfield, Sheffield and Springfield.

*Source: Tourism New Zealand (Our thanks to the team at Tourism New Zealand for these itineraries).*