

Southern Off Road Adventure – 15 Day NZ Mountain Bike Tour & Southern Lakes Sensation



A variety packed 15 day South Island biking adventure for the outdoor-loving mountain biker! This South Island mountain biking tour will provide all the excitement and challenge you could wish for! Bike amidst the breathtaking and diverse scenery in New Zealand's South Island. Experience terrain rarely available to mountain bikers on public and private land. This tour is ideal for the intermediate mountain biker, with plenty of options for the more experienced rider.

Variety-packed biking adventure: Tour through the scenic wonderland of the South Island and experience the diversity of sparkling lakes, sweeping pastoral landscapes, steep alpine passes and the grandeur of breathtaking mountain views. The itinerary takes you across rarely accessible public and private lands. Choose to finish your tour in Queenstown - the adventure capital of New Zealand - or for those with more time, experience the beauty of the West Coast, cross the Southern Alps via the majestic Nelson Lakes and bike the single trails of the beautiful Queen Charlotte Sound.

Adventure, challenge and excitement: This tour is full of adventure, challenge and excitement for the average to experienced mountain biker. Riding is on shingle roads and 4WD farm tracks with opportunities for single track riding on most days. Ride our secret gems in the unspoiled Canterbury High Country, the thyme-filled arid Central Otago and for those with more time, ride the spectacular and scenic Queen Charlotte Track.

Back country hospitality: Spend a total of four nights staying in back country farmstays where you will experience local hospitality, superb home cooking and local wine, a great atmosphere and stunning scenery complete with biking tracks right at the door.

Tour Itinerary

Day 1. Christchurch

You will be met and greeted on arrival at the airport and transferred to your accommodation. Join us for the scenic afternoon tour of this picturesque city including a highlight stop at the Sign of the Takahe, where you will be treated to a bird's eye view of the city, the Canterbury plains, Southern Alps and the South Pacific Ocean. We will fit your bikes before enjoying an evening at one of the many excellent local restaurants.

Cycling: No Cycling **Meals: None**

Whatever the time of year, Christchurch is the perfect choice for a well-deserved short break, longer stay or even just a few hours. Christchurch's unique combination of fascinating heritage, beautiful coastline, peaceful rivers and a spectacular natural harbour appeals to all ages and provides all the ingredients to make your visit extra special.

The Southern Alps provides a fantastic backdrop to the city. Perched on the coast, the city is the doorway to the Canterbury Plains, which spread westwards towards the mountains. To the southeast, Banks Peninsula, formed by two huge volcanic craters, extends into the Pacific Ocean. Nature has been kind to this part of New Zealand and it is nature that offers the richest rewards for the visitor.

Day 2. Christchurch - Lake Coleridge

The nearby Port Hills not only provide us with magnificent views, but are a mountain biker's dream. We have a local Christchurch mountain bike guide with us for the first four days. We ride a selection of the single trails in the morning and finish at the coastal suburb of Sumner with a late picnic lunch by the beach. After lunch we board our bus and will be driven across the Canterbury Plains before we reach the lower peaks of the impressive Southern Alps. Here at the Rakaia River Gorge, we stop for a scenic jet boat ride up and down the river gorge. The final kilometres of the trip to Glenthorne Station are on a gravel road, winding its way through the impressive Canterbury High Country. We will be based at the station for the next two days.

Cycling: 20-30km single trail & gravel road biking, 3.5hrs riding time; Summit Road Tracks 500Am
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3. Lake Coleridge

After a hearty country breakfast we have two riding options. The single trail enthusiasts board the bus and drive to Craigieburn Forest Park for a spectacular loop through the beech forest. After a strenuous climb up the Craigieburn Valley skifield access road we can look forward to one of the best single trails in all of Canterbury. It has everything: exhilarating crossings of steep scree slopes, rooty sections in the forest, gnarly switchback turns and a fast 4WD road to finish off. We have lunch at Flock Hill station and use the break to discuss our riding options for the afternoon. The rest of the group – those not so keen on technical riding can stay back at Glenthorn Station and explore the surroundings of Lake Coleridge by bike. Your guide will select a great ride for you. The group may even decide to do the Pinnacles Loop today (see description Day 4) and have a sleep in tomorrow. You have the whole day to experience the peaceful natural surroundings on private farmland.

Cycling: About 20km biking, 3.5hrs riding time, 750Am, plus extra riding in afternoon.
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4. Lake Coleridge - Omarama

After an early morning breakfast we transfer 8 kilometres further into the High Country to the start of 'The Pinnacle Track'. We start by a little muster's hut straight up a long climb. The track then guides us over meadows and rivers riding up and down with fantastic views of the mountains and valleys. We have all morning to experience the peaceful natural surrounding. We aim to be back at the start of the ride by 12:00 for a picnic lunch, before the transfer to Omarama. During the 3 hour bus ride you will witness a dramatic change in landscape from barren farmland to the rich fertile land of the Fairlie Basin, before we travel past the turquoise coloured lakes of Tekapo and Pukaki. On a clear day, we can view the snow-capped famous peak of Aoraki or Mount Cook, the highest mountain in New Zealand. We then continue to Omarama or the Place of Light which is famed as a gliding centre.

Cycling: 41km biking, 3.5hrs riding time, 860Am **Meals: Breakfast, Lunch**

Day 5. Omarama – Shortlands Station

For the next four days we will be accompanied by our local guide from Alexandra. After a 10 minute transfer to the trail head, we start the day with a longish climb in search of the spring of the east branch of the Manuherikia River. Once we have reached the top of Little St Bathans saddle, we follow the river with many crossings over the back country of a retired cattle farm. Once we reach the old cattle yards, it is a shingle road ride to the pub in St Bathans. This is an old gold mining track and leads us to the little settlement of the same name. Today the former digging hole is a fantastic lake that varies in colour daily. A refreshing dip in the lake or a cold beer at the historic pub is a good way to finish this beautiful ride, before our bus takes us back to the farm.

Cycling: 45km km biking, 1045Am **Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Day 6. Shortlands Station / Danseys Pass

The Station owned by our hosts David & Glenys is huge and a mountain biker's heaven. Today's track provides us with breathtaking views and a fantastic downhill ride. Have we mentioned the 500 metre uphill – even with the lift to the top of Danseys Pass? At the end of the day a scrumptious meal in Glenys' kitchen awaits us.

Cycling: 34km biking, 1140Am **Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Day 7. Shortlands Station - Clyde

Phil our local mountainbike guide will show us some great tracks around Naseby Forest, the highest exotic forest in the South Island. We normally have lunch by a little swimming dam at the end of the forest ride. In the afternoon we can choose to ride along the famous Otago Central Rail Trail or do some more single trail riding in Alexandra. The old railway line, which has been officially converted into a cycling and hiking track is the convivial option for the afternoon as there are many pubs and cafes along the trail. There is a coffee stop at Chatto Creek and then stay on the Rail Trail for the 25 kilometres to Alexandra followed by another 10 kilometres alongside the mighty Clutha River to Clyde. The single trail group will head into an area called Mountainbikers' Heaven – we take you there so that you can see this for yourself and then join the other group for the flowing River Trail along the Clutha from Alex to Clyde.

Cycling: 95km biking, 850Am

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 8. Clyde - Queenstown

This morning two options are available again. The first is to start with a steep ascent to the Bannockburn Range. As always we will be rewarded with magnificent views – this time across the old gold diggers' country and on a clear day we can see M. Cook in the distance. The last stretch for the day is a downhill ride to the well-known wine-growing area of Bannockburn, where our bus is waiting for us. The second option is a bus transfer (1.5 hours) past Alexandra and Roxburgh to the top of Knobbys Range. From the end of the road there is a gentle climb to the top of the range followed by one of the most scenic downhills in the area. The rocky mountain range is particularly beautiful in spring when the thyme is in blossom turning the hills purple. The downhill has two options, an exciting home-made single trail or the historic coach road – a 4WD track meandering its way down to Alexandra, with great views of the town. Both trails meet at an historic gold miner's graveyard site and 1 kilometre further down the road we stop for lunch.

Cycling: 35km biking, 994Am (Bannockburn Ride), 22km biking, 200m uphill – 800m downhill (Knobbys Range Ride)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 9. Queenstown - Rest Day

Queenstown, the outdoor adventure capital of the world!

Take the Gondola ride to the Skyline restaurant, viewpoint and luge ride. Don't miss the lake cruise aboard the historic steamship TSS Earnslaw, jet boating on the Shotover river, bungee jumping, white water rafting, paragliding or a visit to the Kiwi and Birdlife Park to see New Zealand's national icon in the flesh. Take a day trip to Fiordland's, Milford or Doubtful Sound. So many choices!

Meals: Breakfast

Welcome to the original home of the Bungy

The Kawarau Bridge is a 43 metre bungy jump above the Kawarau River, situated 20 minutes from the heart of Queenstown.

It was originally built to link Queenstown to Central Otago during the gold rush of the 1880's and later replaced by the larger and more modern Battling Betty Bridge in the 1960's. The bridge fell into a state of disrepair and was deemed unsafe until Henry van Asch and AJ Hackett applied for a one month license to use the bridge commercially for bungy jumping in 1988.

As they say; the rest is history and a piece of New Zealand heritage has been saved. A fee is paid to the Department of Conservation for every jump by AJ Hackett Bungy to maintain the site.

Day 10. Queenstown - Fox Glacier

Of all the rides, none more than today's ride typifies New Zealand as a land of contrast. After traversing Lakes Hawea and Wanaka, the road enters the Makarora Valley and the Mt Aspiring National Park. You'll notice how the vegetation slowly becomes more lush and dense as we travel towards the west, indicative of an increasing annual rainfall. We start cycling from Makarora to the Haast Pass (563m), from where we bike 60km along the Haast River. Haast Township is situated in New Zealand's largest National Park; the Fiordland National Park. The Park is part of an area, "Te Wahipounamu", which the United Nations awarded World Heritage Park status in recognition of its international importance as a largely unmodified ecosystem.

On reaching Haast we load up the bikes and drive the final 115km through the enchanting rainforest of South Westland and the Pakihi Swamp area to Fox Glacier township.

Cycling: 84km road biking, 5.5hrs riding time, 745Am

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 11. Fox Glacier - Punakaiki

This morning there is time for a walk to the glacier face which is just above sea-level or there may be time for an optional helicopter flight over the glaciers, before we continue our northbound journey in the vehicle. We notice the change of landscape from dense rainforest to the 'real' West Coast with its driftwood-littered beaches. After 165 kilometres we arrive in Hokitika and for those who are interested, there is time to visit a greenstone factory before we drive to our picnic lunch spot at Lake Kaniere. This afternoon we have a 1.5 - 2 hour single trail ride along the 'Water Race' before driving to Punakaiki with its famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes.

Cycling: 15km biking

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 12. Punakaiki - Lake Rotoroa - Picton

An early morning walk along the Truman track before our journey takes us through the beautiful Buller Gorge. Late morning we ride through old West Coast gold and coal mines. We have lunch in Murchison and cycle via the Braeburn Pass to Lake Rotoroa, which is part of the Nelson Lakes National Park. The ride is a mixture of road and gravel with some great climbs. After the ride we have about 1.5-2 hours transfer drive to Picton where we stay overnight.

Cycling: 62km biking, 675 Am, 3.5hrs riding time Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 13. Picton – Portage (Queen Charlotte Track)

A long and exciting day awaits us. After breakfast we pack our bags for the one night in Portage and head down to the marina where we board a small ferry. A boat trip of about an hour will take us through the picturesque Queen Charlotte Sound to Resolution Bay (or Ship Cove), where we start our single trail ride along the amazing coast. We bike through dense forest where we will be escorted by numerous singing birds. After lunch at Punga Cove (not included), a challenging afternoon lies ahead during which we will be rewarded with breathtaking views of the Marlborough Sounds.

Cycling: 51km single trail riding

Meals: Breakfast

Day 14. Portage – Kaikoura

The last section of the Queen Charlotte Track is as attractive as the rest. You bike from lush green coastal forest over mountain ridges, where you again have magnificent views. From Anakiwa we ride along the winding coastal road to Picton, where our bus is waiting to take us to Kaikoura. This fishing village is well known for its Whale Watch tours.

Cycling: 20km single trail, 20km road

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 15. Kaikoura – Christchurch - Departure

The morning is at your own leisure or as a final highlight you can join a Whale Watch tour (optional).

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Welcome...

In the South Island of New Zealand lies Kaikoura, an area steeped in Maori history and legend. Off the coast of the village is a marine environment so rich in nutrients that it attracts some of the most magnificent creatures with which we share our planet. Among them the giant sperm whale which can grow up to 20 metres in length and has the largest brain of any animal alive. Let us take you on the most breath taking adventure of a lifetime. Let us take you right into the world of the whales to meet them face to face.

Not only can we introduce you to the magnificent sperm whale, but also to migratory humpback whales (June & July), orca (summer months), New Zealand's own tiny Hector's dolphin, the high spirited displays of the Dusky dolphins, New Zealand fur seals and the royal albatross.

Late morning we load our bikes onto the trailer for the last time and head back to Christchurch (arriving mid-afternoon) for your departure. If you have enough time then a visit to the Antarctica Centre, which is just a five-minute walk from the airport is well worth a visit.

Please note that your trip may differ from the above itinerary either to better suit the needs of the group or due to circumstances beyond our control such as the weather.

Tour Information**15 Day Tour Included:**

- Airport Transfers
- Day 1 only: Christchurch (between 7 am & 2 pm from the Airport)
- Day 15 only: Christchurch (en-route from Kaikoura - mid-afternoon)

www.innovative-travel.com

Trade Reservations: 0508 100 111

- Transfers outside these days/times are your own arrangements
- 14 nights' accommodation: 10 nights in 3-4 star hotels/motels: 4 nights in farm stays (sometimes with shared facilities)
- Meals: 14 Breakfasts, 13 Lunches, 4 dinners (excluding drinks)
- Support vehicle: (minibus or 4WD) with bike trailer (& luggage space)
- Tour/MTB guide (who is also the driver) & local MTB guide
- Jet boat trip on Rakaia River
- Local fees for use of private land
- Boat trip to Queen Charlotte Track

Tour Exclusions:

- International flights and airport taxes
- Airport transfers outside the days/times specified above
- Travel insurance
- Meals where not specified on the itinerary
- Drinks (except water while riding), phone calls and minibar expenses
- Personal expenses (including any specific medical-related requirements)
- Bike repairs and maintenance (except if hiring a bike)

Tour Grade

This tour is graded as 5/6 Intermediate.

Riding is predominantly on shingle roads and 4WD farm tracks with opportunities for single track riding on some days. (Queen Charlotte Track is predominantly single trail and after rain can become more technical).

2011 Dates

DEC 05

2012 Dates

JAN 09

FEB 06

MAR 05