

New Zealand Road Cycling – 14 Days South Island Experience



This South Island road cycling tour takes us from the southernmost point of the South Island to Christchurch via the scenic West Coast or to Picton. We enjoy some of the best road cycling to be had in New Zealand on a tour designed for the rider serious about cycling. Fully supported and guided by Pacific Cycle Tours' experienced guides, we cover the entire distance from hotel door to hotel door on our bikes. As we travel north we take in the many sights and activities that make New Zealand one of the world's most popular cycling destinations. Choose to finish your tour on day 10 with a trip on the famous Trans Alpine train through the Southern Alps to Christchurch or extend your tour crossing the Southern Alps to the Nelson Lakes and finishing in Picton.

Serious or recreational cyclist: Whilst this tour has been designed for the serious cyclist who prefers to ride 100km+ per day, we also welcome participants who prefer to ride 60km to 100km per day. The riding is varied from flat-out fast and undulating to lung-wrenching, leg-burning climbs followed by fast downhill. The surface is smooth tarseal.

Unsurpassed scenery: Rugged coastline, undulating arable farmland, dry and arid landscapes, dense rainforest, glaciers, glittering lakes: experience great riding through stunning scenery. This tour offers it all!

Rest up and relax in Queenstown: On day five we welcome a day to unwind in New Zealand's adventure capital - Queenstown. Choose from many attractions including a fly-cruise-fly package into the famous Milford Sound or for the more adventurous there is bungy jumping, white water rafting, jet boating, mountain biking and many other options. Of course if you really want to relax choose a massage or an afternoon cruise on the TSS Earnslaw.

Tour itinerary

Day 1: Bluff (Arrival Day)

We fly into the South Island's southernmost domestic airport of Invercargill where we meet our guide for the first time. We board our support vehicle and drive further south to the small port town of Bluff, where we check into our accommodation. After assembling our bikes, we have time to relax before dinner, when we get the chance to taste the local delicacies, including those famous big and delicious Bluff oysters.

Meals: none

Day 2: Bluff to Gore

Today is our first day's cycling. We have a leisurely 96 km ahead of us which will test our bike set up and allow us to cycle any of the dreaded jetlag out of our bodies. The route winds its way through undulating farmland and takes us in a northerly direction to our destination of Gore.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Bluff to Gore - 96km

Day 3: Gore to Clyde (or Alexandra)

After yesterday's warm-up day we up the pace as this is one of our three 140km days. We notice how dramatically the scenery changes from the green Southland pastures to the dry and barren hills of Central Otago. As we ride beside the Blue Mountains and the Old Man Range we pass gold mining areas and hydro-electricity stations. The riding today is mostly undulating with some steeper climbs to test the legs as we approach the small farm servicing town of Alexandra, located on the banks of the Clutha river. From here it is just a 10km 'warm down' to our accommodation for the night, located right below the Clyde Dam. (Note: some tours may overnight at Alexandra instead of Clyde.)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Gore to Clyde - 150km (or 140km to Alexandra)

Day 4: Clyde to Queenstown

With our first long day behind us, we now have an easier, flatter day riding alongside Lake Dunstan and the Kawarau Gorge into Queenstown, the adventure capital of New Zealand. There are no major climbs today, but instead, plenty of distractions tempting us to stop along the way. For those who suffer from cramps, why not straighten out the legs with a bungy jump as we pass AJ Hackett's famous first location.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Clyde to Queenstown – 84km

Day 5: Queenstown (Rest day)

Today is a rest day, having already completed 330km of our tour with plenty more to come. There are many exciting things to do in Queenstown, including a fly-cruise-fly package into the famous Milford Sound. For the more adventurous there is bungy jumping, white water rafting, jet boating, mountain biking and many other options. If you wish to just relax, a massage and afternoon cruise on the TSS Earnslaw is a great option.

Meals: Breakfast

Day 6: Queenstown to Wanaka

After a day's rest our legs will be ready for the most challenging climb on our tour, the Crown Range. The ride is fairly easy for the first few kilometres to the historic gold mining town of Arrowtown, with only one real climb. The next stage is a hard 3km ride up steep hairpins until we reach a plateau for another 5km followed by a lung-wrenching, leg-burning additional 3.5 kilometres to the summit of the highest highway in New Zealand at 1080 metres. From here it's all plain sailing as we follow the Cardrona River down the valley to Lake Wanaka where we replenish ourselves with the local cuisine and vino in this quaint lakeside town.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Queenstown to Wanaka – 77km

Day 7: Wanaka to Haast

Today we have a longer ride across the Southern Alps and down into the West Coast. As we travel from east to west we notice a dramatic change in the scenery. The dry, arid landscapes of Central Otago are left far behind as we travel through the dense rainforest to the Coast. We ride up over the Haast Pass and from there, follow the Haast River from its inception to where it meets the Tasman Sea.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Wanaka to Haast – 145km

Day 8: Haast to Franz Josef

Today we follow the coastline north, initially flat for the first 35 kilometres after which we climb and descend until we pass Lake Paringa. A nice flat section until just before Fox Glacier at 120 kilometres lets us recover, but from there it's three steep climbs and descents for an additional 22 kilometres to Franz Josef. The rugged coastal scenery and dense rainforest make today's ride one of the more spectacular on the tour although it's hard to pick a favourite.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Haast to Franz Josef – 142km

Day 9: Franz Josef – Rest Day

Meals: Breakfast

Day 10: Franz Josef to Hokitika

Today we have a relatively flat to slightly undulating ride to Hokitika. The only hills are a short climb over Mt Hercules on a beautiful winding and twisting bush-clad road and some small undulations around Pukekura, home of the Bushman's centre and some tall tails.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Franz Josef to Hokitika – 134km

Day 11: Hokitika to Westport

Today continue northward again towards our overnight town of Westport. We have a flat easy ride until we reach Punakaiki, home of the Pancake Rocks and blowholes. After this stop we ride over Perpendicular Point and Pakihi Hill before descending into Westport for a pint of the local Miner's beer.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Hokitika to Westport – 140km

Day 12: Westport to St Arnaud

After following the coast for three days we now head inland following the Buller River past Fern Arch, Hawks Crag, Inangahua Junction and Murchison to Kawatiri, where we turn off the main road and head northeast towards the alpine village of St Arnaud. This is where we spend the night in the Nelson Lakes National Park beside Lake Rotoiti and the towering Mt Robert. Today is our longest day and whilst overall it's entirely uphill for 158 kilometres, we only climb from the sea to 700 metres above sea level.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: Westport to St Arnaud – 158km

Day 13: St Arnaud to Picton

Sadly today is our last day's riding to finish off our 1246 kilometres in 11 days. We ride from the lake to the ocean via the Wairau Valley to Blenheim and then onwards to the port of Picton. Mostly downhill with a short final climb before Picton, we finish the ride with a celebration meal and a feast of the local seafood on offer.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cycling: St Arnaud to Picton – 120km

Day 14: Depart Picton (or return to Christchurch)

After 11 great days of riding we pack up our bikes and continue on our travels to our next exciting destination. If you are heading to Wellington and the North Island, the Interislander ferry terminal is only a short walk from the hotel. For those who wish to return to Christchurch, our support vehicle leaves for the five hour drive back via Kaikoura and the east coast.

Meals: Breakfast

Cycling: none

Tour Information

10 Day Tour - Total distance cycled: 760km

10 Day Tour Includes:

- * 9 overnight stays in excellent accommodation (3-4* NZ Standard)
- * Meals as specified on itinerary (breakfast and/or lunch)
- * Support vehicle and luggage transfer
- * Tour guide
- * Department of Conservation fees
- * TranzAlpine train trip from Greymouth to Christchurch
- * Transfer from Christchurch train station to hotel (day 9)
- * Airport transfer day 10 (between 7am & 3.30pm)

Tour Grade: This tour is graded 5/6 Intermediate (on a scale of 1-10 with 9/10 being extreme)

2011 Departure Dates

OCT 24
NOV 21
DEC 19

2012 Departure Dates

JAN 23
MAR 19