

Christchurch - West Coast - Queenstown

High Country, Valleys, Coastlines, Geology, History
Short Hop : 2 Days 1 Night

Tour Code: SH03

Day 1: Christchurch to the West Coast and the glaciers

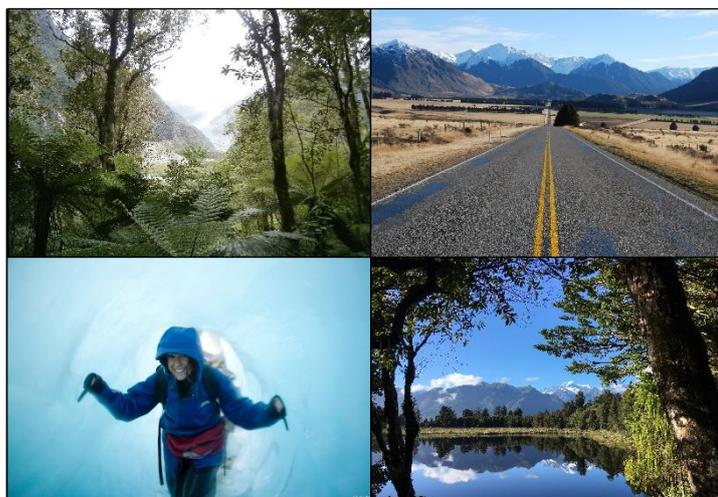
Depart Christchurch on the world famous TranzAlpine™ train and cross the vast expanses of the Canterbury Plains. Travel through the dramatic gorge of the Waimakariri River and enter Arthur's Pass National Park. Here, your guide will meet you and show you some of the highlights of the national park. Journey through the Arthur's Pass National Park and depart Canterbury province for Westland ("The West Coast"). Originally used by the Maori to move greenstone from the west coast and later as a link to the gold rush fields, this route will reveal great mountain valleys and you will marvel at the road as it winds its way down the spectacular Oira Gorge – a Geographer's dream.

You will follow rivers that flow to the West Coast and observe the changes to the rainforest and the many varieties of ferns that dominate this region. Visit Hokitika, once the capital of Westland and a roaring gold mining town, and also a place where the Maori sought their treasured greenstone (jade). Greenstone and gold are features in this town's bustling centre of art and craft shops. As you journey south you will see the West Coast forests and further evidence of the last Ice Age in the kettle lakes created by the melting ice sheets. You will then arrive at *Glacier Country* and a walk can be made to view the Franz Josef Glacier pushing into rainforest – truly incredible! Your overnight stay will be taken at the nearby village.

Day 2: Glacier Country to Queenstown

Explore this unique glaciated region with its glaciers pushing into re-generating temperate rainforest and happening on a Pacific Island - truly very special! Short walks can be made to experience the rainforest with the glacier in the background and it's shattered, glacier formed landscape. Overlooking this are the Southern Alps and the high peaks of Mt Cook and Mt Tasman. Walks that are available are to glacier viewpoints to witness the glacier's descent down the mountain into the rainforest. An exciting helicopter ride to view the Southern Alps with a snow landing on the upper reaches of the glacier is also available. (Please note that the optional helicopter trips and scenic flights are not included in the tour cost) From Glacier Country, travel south and reach the mighty Haast River valley.

Following the Haast Highway, you can observe how the landscape again changes dramatically as the road climbs over the Haast Pass from the dense rain forest of the West Coast to the drier tussock lands of Otago. On the way, you can take short walks on a remote beach or to see waterfalls and if there has been recent rainfall, the Haast River passing through the gorge known as the Gates of Haast can be truly spectacular. After crossing the Haast Pass the road skirts first the banks of the headwaters of Lake Wanaka, then making a slight turn and rising over a ridge, Lake Wanaka is left behind and Lake Hawea is before you. The road follows the shoreline of this lake and then you reach Wanaka village on the southern shores of Lake Wanaka. From Wanaka, head over the rugged and remote Crown Range, the site of gold diggings in the 1860's and arrive in quaint old gold mining village of Arrowtown. It is then a short drive to your Queenstown accommodation where your Canterbury Trails guide will bid you farewell.



Inclusions:

- Travel by deluxe mini-van
- Picnic morning or afternoon teas
- Café lunches on each day
- Guided walks to explore the alpine and rainforest landscapes (as required)
- TranzAlpine train Christchurch to Arthur's Pass on Day 1
- Fully escorted with local knowledgeable guide

Not included:

- Guest accommodations, breakfasts, evening meals or optional activities

Depart Christchurch at 7.30am on Day 1, finish in Queenstown at 5.30pm on Day 2