

South Island West Coast

Packed with stunning scenery and voted by Lonely Planet as one of the "Top 10 coastal drives in the World"

Itinerary Overview

Recommended Days:

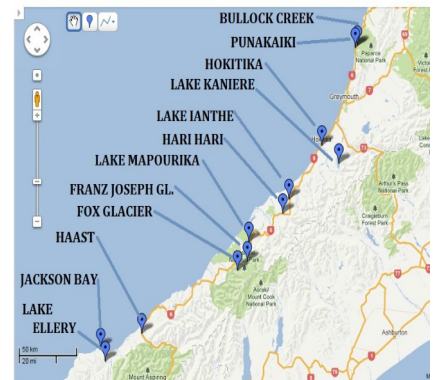
7 Days

Distance:

418kms

Best time of year:

Anytime



Itinerary Highlights

Travel down the West Coast of the South Island and see the amazing rock formations at Punakaiki, then travel through the dense rainforest on the way to the Glaciers region.

Day 2: Westport to Punakaiki

54 kms - 45 mins

Punakaiki is the gateway to the dramatic limestone country of the Paparoa National Park. It lies halfway between Greymouth & Westport on one of the most spectacular coastal highways in New Zealand.

Recommended Activities

- > Pancake Rocks & Blowholes
- > A sub-tropical Rainforest walk
- > The Truman Track Walk

Day 1: Westport to Punakaiki

45 mins

Punakaiki is the gateway to the dramatic limestone country of the Paparoa National Park. It lies halfway between Greymouth and Westport on one of the most spectacular coastal highways in New Zealand. Tourism activities include canoe adventures, horse trekking, caving and guided tours to name just a few. Many crafts people can also be found in this area, including jewellers, carvers, painters and potters.

The Pancake Rocks that Punakaiki is famous for are limestone formations that began forming 30 million years ago, when lime-rich fragments of dead marine creatures were deposited on the seabed, then overlaid by weaker layers of soft mud and clay. The seabed was raised above sea level by earthquakes to form the coastal cliffs and coastline. The sea, wind and rain have since etched out the soft layers to form the unusual rock formations we see today.

When conditions are right, heavy ocean swells thunder into the caverns beneath the rocks and huge water spouts blast skywards through the blowholes in a truly spectacular sight.

Paparoa National Park covers 30,000 hectares of varied landscape from lush West Coast native rainforest and mountain tops, to expansive rugged beaches and coastline.

Recommended Activities

- > Cape Foulwind Walkway
- > Seal Colony Walk

Day: 7 Fox Glacier - Haast

119 kms - 1 hour 40 mins

This is the gateway to Haast Pass that will take you up and over the Southern Alps to the Southern Lakes district of Hawea, Wanaka and Wakatipu (Queenstown).

At this juncture you leave the coast and head inland following the Haast River for quite a way until you reach the actual pass, climbing ever upwards to the summit situated in the Mt Aspiring National Park.

Recommended Activities

- > Seal and Penguin Colonies
- > River Safaris

Day 3: Punakaiki to Greymouth

44 kms - 35 mins

Greymouth is situated at the mouth of the Grey River and is the main rail link between Christchurch and the West Coast. The world famous TranzAlpine rail journey departs from here on a daily return trip to Christchurch.

Take time to explore the town and its many craft shops, in particular those specialising in Greenstone carving or manufacture of jewellery. You will be astounded at the magnificent products that are produced from this raw product, often known as Jade.

Recommended Activities

- > On yer Bike Tour
- > Wild West Adventures
- > Monteith's Brewery Tour

Day 4: Greymouth - Hokitika

39 kms - 35 mins

With a small population in this quaint town, the Westlands Dairy Company is here and it processes all the milk for the entire West Coast.

Known for its popular Greenstone outlets and manufacturers. Hokitika hosts the Wildfoods Festival in March each year, a bit of indulgence of inventive dishes even the famous "Possum Pie".

Recommended Activities

- > Visit the Jade Factories

Day: 5 Hokitika - Whataroa - Franz Josef

139 kms - 2 hours

Whataroa is an agriculture area where dairying is the primary activity.

It is the starting base for trips to The White Heron sanctuary, the only breeding location in New Zealand.

Your stay at Franz Josef will be memorable, with its quaint town filled with arty shops and a great selection of cafes and restuarants.

Recommended Activities

- > West Coast Wildlife Centre
- > Franz Josef Helihike
- > Glacier Hot Pools

Day: 6 Franz Josef - Fox Glacier

23 kms - 30 mins

A small alpine village situated south of Franz Josef and a gateway to the Fox Glacier, set in beautiful scenery this small township offers breath taking views of Aoraki/Mt Cook and Mt Tasman.

Recommended Activities

- > Visit Lake Matheson
- > Blue Pools Eco Adventure
- > Fox Glacier Guiding
- > Glacier Country Kayaks