

HeartCycle Bicycle Touring Club

South Island, New Zealand

- Dates:** Plan to arrive no later than Thursday, March 6, 2025. Riding Friday, March 7 – Saturday, March 22, with 2 days in the middle to explore Queenstown (14 riding days).
- Coordinator:** Janet Slate
- Miles:** 600 to 700 miles with up to 33,000 feet of climbing.
- Rating:** Intermediate-Advanced. Options for additional riding are available. Stronger riders may cycle from lodging to lodging.
- Riders:** 14 (includes tour coordinator)
- Price:** \$5,100 (double occupancy). \$1,300 at registration. Balance due by December 6, 2024. Single supplement \$6,300 (limited availability).
- Cancellation:** [Standard cancellation policy](#)

Travel insurance is strongly recommended.

OVERVIEW

Cycle the lakes, mountains, and coasts of the South Island of New Zealand on a small group tour with experienced local guides. Unmatched for geographic coverage, originality, and overall quality, our tour will provide a unique experience beyond the more popular and busy routes.

Trip highlights include Banks Peninsula from the Summit Road, hydro-canals along Lake Tekapo, Aoraki (Mount Cook) glacial lake hike, dams and lakes of the Waitaki Valley, the Victorian quarter of Oamaru, Central Otago's gold-mining settlements, iconic Queenstown, Catlins rugged coastline, McLean Falls, remote beaches of Surat and Cannibal Bays (tide dependent; home to sea lions), Nugget Point lighthouse, and the hills of the Otago Peninsula.



From Christchurch to Queenstown and back, we start in Christchurch riding on the Banks Peninsula with views of Lyttelton Harbour. We travel southwest through farm country then westerly to ride along glacial lakes Tekapo and Pukaki in the Mackenzie Basin between snow-capped mountains. We follow the Waitaki River to the coast through the “big sky country” of Central Otago. Back inland we go for our mid-tour, 2-day break in New Zealand’s adventure capital, Queenstown.

Rolling plains, windswept coastlines, and wildlife experiences characterize the second half of our adventure in the south of the South Island. We cycle the rural roads of Fiordland National Park on our way to Invercargill, the world’s southernmost city. Along the remote Catlins Coast, we will visit a petrified forest and may see fur seals, Hector’s dolphins, and yellow-eyed penguins. Making our way northeast, perched on the rim of an ancient volcano, Dunedin is the oldest city in New Zealand and retains much of its Scottish heritage.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Friday, March 7

Christchurch: Port Hills and Banks Peninsula. 33 miles and 2800 feet of elevation gain.

We warm up for our tour by riding on Summit Road around the crater rim of an extinct volcano in the Port Hills, which are between Christchurch and the port town of Lyttelton. Descending to the entrance to the harbor at Godley Head, we pedal on bumpy terrain around the seashore to Governors Bay where we’ll load the bikes and return to Christchurch for our first group dinner.



Day 2: Saturday, March 8

Christchurch/Temuka to Lake Tekapo. 48 miles and 1600 feet of elevation gain.

After breakfast, we’ll transfer by van across the Canterbury Plains to Temuka. Our ride will take us on quiet rural roads to Geraldine, the gateway to the lakes and mountains in the foothills of the Southern Alps. More quiet rural roads will take us to the historic St. Davids Church in Raincliff on our way to Fairlie where we will transfer to Lake

Tekapo. Among snow-capped mountains and glacial lakes, spend the rest of your afternoon enjoying local hot pools or visiting the famous Church of the Good Shepherd.

Day 3: Sunday, March 9

Lake Tekapo to Aoraki (Mount Cook). 35 miles and 1200 feet of elevation gain.

A relaxed start after a hearty breakfast will have us walking or driving to the Mt. John lookout to view the lake and surrounding mountains. Bicycling the quiet hydro-canal roads will enable us to view the mountains as we get closer.

Today's shorter ride allows time for a scenic drive along Lake Pukaki up to Mt. Cook National Park, a short walk to a panoramic vista, a visit to the Edmund Hillary Museum, or the visitor center. Another group dinner will provide the opportunity to watch the sun set on New Zealand's highest mountains and view the stars at dark.



Day 4: Monday, March 10

Aoraki (Mount Cook) to Lake Ohau. 52 miles and 2800 feet of elevation gain.

Two optional hikes in the morning will enable us to walk to the terminal lake of the Hooker Glacier or to the Tasman Glacier. A gradual downhill with prevailing tailwinds will speed us to our accommodations at Lake Ohau in the afternoon.

Day 5: Tuesday, March 11

Lake Ohau to Oamaru. 59 miles and 2800 feet of elevation gain.

After another hearty breakfast, we'll transfer by van to our morning ride, an optional climb to the Benmore Dam, then a sweeping downhill to a quiet back road around Lake Aviemore. The dam and lake are part of the Waitaki hydroelectric scheme. We'll ride across two dams at either end of the lake. To avoid a main highway, we'll take a short van transfer to continue with our afternoon ride via the large, weathered limestone formations of Elephant Rocks and some pastoral country to the Victorian town of Oamaru. Nestled on the Pacific Coast, Oamaru is home to a thriving art culture and some of New Zealand's oldest and best-restored buildings. Dinner on your own.

Day 6: Wednesday, March 12

Oamaru/Palmerston to Ranfurly. 59 miles and 5100 feet of elevation gain.

We'll transfer an hour before we begin our ride in Palmerston in the heart of Central Otago, among ancient, weathered mountains, alpine herb fields, and fast flowing rivers where gold was mined in the 1860s (and can still be panned today). The ride includes an optional challenge over Macraes pass before descending to the Taieri Plains. Tonight, you'll have an option to go curling (at your own expense) at an indoor ice rink before enjoying a traditional Kiwi barbecue.



Day 7: Thursday, March 13

Ranfurly to Clyde/Queenstown. 54 miles and 2300 feet of elevation gain.

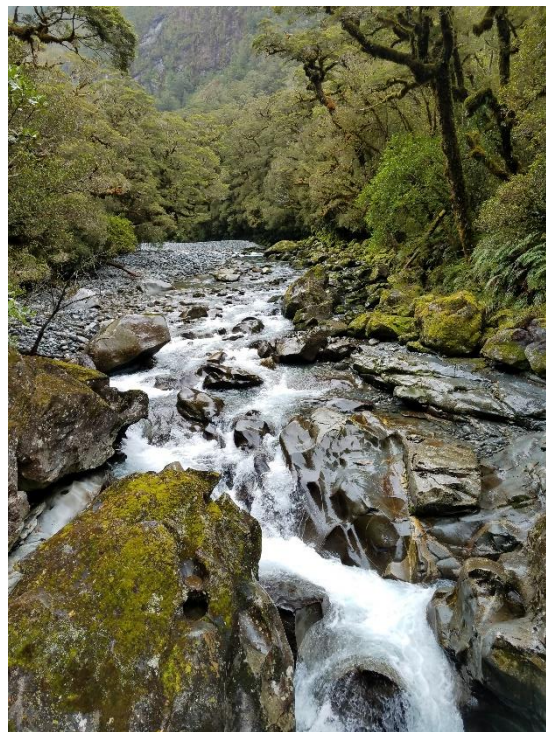
We continue in the Central Otago region cycling the scenic Ida Valley to the historic village of Ophir via the challenging (but optional) climb over the Raggedy Range, offering 360-degree views. On to historic Clyde, another former gold-mining village, where we celebrate the end to the first part of our tour at the local pub. We transfer to Queenstown, where we'll be on our own for the next 2 days before resuming our tour.



Day 8: Friday, March 14

Queenstown. On our own.

Optional activities include a day trip to Milford Sound, a long narrow inlet at the northernmost end of Fiordland National Park, which opens into the Tasman Sea; a jetboat or canoe adventure on the Dart River at the north end of Lake Whakatipu; or a horseback ride in Glenorchy's high country. The birthplace of bungee jumping, Queenstown also has a wealth of hiking and biking trails. The nearby Gibbston Valley produces some of New Zealand's best Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc wines. So many choices—this resort town is popular; you'll want to plan ahead to reserve activities and restaurants. Our guides can help with advice and bookings but will be legally unable to provide transport while we're in Queenstown.



Day 9: Saturday, March 15

Queenstown. On our own.

Another day to enjoy Queenstown and environs.

Day 10: Sunday, March 16

Queenstown/Kingston to Te Anau. 53 miles and 1800 feet of elevation gain.

We begin the second leg of our tour at 7:30 am for a group breakfast at a local café.

We'll drive the narrow, lakeside road to Kingston, where we'll start riding the rolling rural roads of upper Southland. We finish our morning ride at the small settlement of Five Rivers, so named because of the five streams in the surrounding Eyre Mountains.

We then transfer past a busy section of highway to resume riding from the Sprig & Thistle Caravan at the base of the Takitimu Mountains. Native red tussock, a perennial

grass, covers the hills on our afternoon ride to Te Anau, on the eastern edge of Fiordland National Park.



Day 11: Monday, March 17

Te Anau/Manapouri to Riverton/Invercargill. 80 miles and 2800 feet of elevation gain.

A short van transfer will take us to Lake Manapouri from where we'll head south to Southland farm country. Small communities dot the landscape, and the final 20 miles is along the windswept coast. We'll transfer from Riverton to Invercargill, the southernmost city in the world, where we'll stay the night. Dinner on your own.

Day 12: Tuesday, March 18

Invercargill to McLean Falls. 66 miles and 3200 feet of elevation gain.

Between Catlins Forest Park and the coastline, we ride quiet roads to Curio Bay where we'll enjoy lunch and visit a petrified forest on the seashore. A renowned wildlife area, you may see rare Hector's Dolphins, fur seals, and yellow-eyed penguins. Ride your bicycle or take the van to our accommodations near McLean Falls.

**Day 13: Wednesday,
March 19**

*McLean Falls to Owaka.
24 miles and 1900 feet of
elevation gain.*

*Owaka to Purekireki (and
back). 21 miles and 700
feet of elevation gain.*

Today's main ride is relatively short, allowing time to explore the Catlins coast off the bike.



We'll start with a short walk, through native forest to McLean Falls. We're in for more scenic cycling along quiet roads with views of the coastline as we tackle some climbs. Today's official ride finishes in the farming community of Owaka. You may opt for an out-and-back ride to Purekireki or a drive to Surat Bay from where we'll walk the beach to Cannibal Bay to visit the resident sea lions.

Day 14: Thursday, March 20

Owaka to Brighton/Dunedin.

Owaka to Kaka Point via Nugget Point. 28 miles and 1100 feet of elevation gain.

We'll ride to the seaside village of Kaka Point, then to Nugget Point to enjoy a short walk to the lighthouse. We'll drive the busy main road through rural landscapes to Balclutha for lunch.

Waihola to Brighton. 18 miles and 1300 feet of elevation gain.

We'll continue our cycling at Waihola, from where we'll climb then descend to Taieri Mouth. A gentle ride along the coast will take us to Brighton, on the outskirts of Dunedin. Dinner on your own.



Day 15: Friday, March 21

Dunedin to Oamaru.

Otago Peninsula. 34 miles and 2500 feet of elevation gain.

This morning, we explore the Otago Peninsula by bicycle. Our first challenge is up and over Portobello hill for views of the peninsula, then dropping down to finish with some flat riding next to the ocean.

Dunedin to Karitane. 21 miles and 2200 feet of elevation gain.

After lunch on your own, an optional second ride will explore the other side of the harbor. Our second challenge will be to climb above the harbor to get a view. After descending to Karitane, we'll load the bikes and transfer to Oamaru for our second visit. We'll celebrate the end of the tour with our final group dinner.



Day 16: Saturday, March 22

Oamaru to Christchurch.

Pareora to Pleasant Point. 34 miles and 750 feet of elevation gain.

After breakfast, we transfer to Pareora to ride quiet roads along the Pareora River valley. An optional challenge is the climb over Pareora Gorge before we visit St. Davids Pioneer Church, which is made of local river stones and timbers without nails. Another 11 miles takes us to lunch at Pleasant Point from where we'll drive back to Christchurch. A 4 pm arrival is anticipated.

SPECIAL NOTES: In addition to two local guides and accommodations, 13 breakfasts, 11 picnic or café lunches, and 8 dinners are included. Beverages, other than those at breakfast are not included. Bicycles, helmets, and water bottles are not included.

You may bring your own bike (~\$100 USD to store your bike box while on tour), rent one from the touring company (info below), or rent from another local bike rental company (which our touring company can facilitate).

Avanti Gran Durance 3 road bikes with carbon forks, 22-speed gearing, hydraulic disc brakes, Shimano GRX componentry, and 32-mm tires are available to rent including a bicycle helmet (700 NZD = \$450 USD).

Sinch e-bikes are available to rent including a bicycle helmet (1200 NZD = \$770 USD).

Stronger riders may cycle the whole route from lodging to lodging.

For more information contact:

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