



New Zealand - South Island Singletrack

When you're heading to the other side of the world you want your mountain biking holiday to be the best it can be. That's why we recruited the best guides, actively sought out the best NZ Department of Conservation trail permissions and spent over 18 months developing the amazing itinerary you see here.

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Superb mountain bike trails in varied landscapes**
- **Queenstown biking and adventure day**
- **Access to remote locations and wilderness biking**
- **Small groups led by expert guides**

LEADERS IN MOUNTAIN BIKE HOLIDAYS

CycleActive has been dedicated to cycling since 1996. We are experts when it comes to travel and training on bikes – so everyone from novices to experienced mountain bikers can feel totally safe and secure when travelling with us. From tour planning to on-the-ground operations, every holiday is overseen by a team of qualified, experienced professionals.

Each New Zealand tour is run by a combination of national and local guides. The main guide is a NZ national guide - qualified, experienced and responsible for the overall smooth running of your tour. At many locations he works with a local guide to give access to the best trails, expert local knowledge and to let us split the group by ability or interest (eg more or less technical biking options). This staff combination ensures that we can cater for a mixed ability range, and operate to the highest standards of safety and service in the cycle travel industry.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT HOLIDAY

Fitness grade 3. The biking in New Zealand is relatively challenging with plenty of full days on the bike, including some optional tough climbs. We therefore recommend that all participants have good fitness, although there are days with shorter ride options if you need a break.

Skill grade C. This tour contains a great deal of singletrack riding, mixed in with dirt roads, rocky tracks, high mountain trails and a variety of other surfaces. There are some choices so the hardest trails can be avoided, but a good level of confidence on narrow or loose terrain is still needed.

SUMMARY ITINERARY From the UK

Days 1 & 2. Fly to Christchurch on the South Island.

3. Bike fitting, explore the city and relax after the journey.

4. Port Hills trails with ocean views and great singletrack.

5. Southern Alps and the Cragieburn Valley.

6. High country Alpine biking on the Pinnacle Track to Harper Valley.

7. Cross into Central Otago by bike over the Omarama saddle.

8. Danseys Pass ride with optional downhill or rest day.

9. Naseby Forest singletrack and Alexandra "mtb heaven".

10. Bike the Old Man Range, then transfer to Queenstown.

11. Full day for activities in and around Queenstown.

12. Fox Glacier, Haast Pass and the west coast.

13. Rainforests, beaches and Lake Kaniere.

14. Ride the Braeburn Pass to Lake Rotoroa. Stay at Nelson Lakes National Park.

15. Ride the famous singletrack of the Queen Charlotte Trail.

16. Continue Queen Charlotte Trail, then on to Kaikoura.

17. Free morning or whale watching then transfer to airport.

18. Arrive UK.

Full details of dates, prices and what is included can be found on our website.



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Detailed Itinerary

Days 1 to 2 - Travel to Christchurch

You leave the UK on day 1, travelling either west or east, via Los Angeles or one of the main Asian hubs. Journey times vary by airline, and Christchurch is generally 13 hours ahead of UK time in our winter (their summer).

Day 3 – Explore Christchurch (0km)

The flight arrives in Christchurch in the morning and we'll collect you from the airport and bring you to our lovely city centre hotel. Here you can relax a while before heading out for a tour of this picturesque city, including a highlight stop at the "Sign of the Takahe" where you get a birds-eye view of the city, Canterbury Plains, Southern Alps and Pacific Ocean.

On returning to the hotel we build up the bikes, or fit you to your rental bikes, before heading out to one of the many great restaurants in the area.

Day 4 - Port Hills Trails (20km to 40km)

The Port Hills are the backbone of Christchurch's amazing mountain biking scene, with a real mix of terrain, great scenery and easy access from the city. We start by riding from the hotel to Sumner, a seaside town with its own culture and surf scene. From there we ride up to the high ridges and descend mostly on singletrack which combines fast, banked corners, rocky sections and tight, twisty trails that drop down towards the Ocean. There are many ways to go and our expert, local guide will choose the best routes.

In the late afternoon we pack up the bikes and bags and transfer across the Canterbury Plains to Lake Lyndon, at the foot of the Alps. We then drive alongside the Rakaia River to Ryton Station, where we'll be based for the next two days.

Day 5 - Southern Alp and Craigieburn Valley (16km or 47km)

Today we have some biking choices as we ride out into the Alps from the doors of the station. Our destination is the Craigieburn Valley, an area covered in native beech forest, rough scree slopes and loose boulder fields.

The biking here is a mix of alpine climbs and descents on dirt tracks and forest roads, then superb singletrack that hugs the side of the mountain as it winds down into the valley. There are some options for uplifts or shortening the ride if you wish, and we have our vehicle on hand some of the time, should we need it.

Further Information

There are numerous flight options to choose from and we can organise these for you, or let you book your own. Air New Zealand flights tend to offer greater baggage allowances than other airlines, but do require you to fly via the USA. Please talk to us before you book flights to ensure that arrival and departure times fit with transfer arrangements, or to book extra transfers or hotel nights.

The expert knowledge shown by our guide in Port Hills will be a theme that runs right through the tour. By having the best local guides running our tours, with permits to access some of the most interesting trails, we can guarantee a fantastic day out, every day.

"Stations" in New Zealand are not railway stations, but large homesteads located in the heart of sheep farms. Ryton is a 14,000 hectare high alpine merino sheep station.



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Day 6 – Pinnacle Track and Omarama (44km)

The private farmlands of Ryton Station extend right across the mountains, and our whole morning is spent riding through this spectacular landscape. The good tracks progress into rough mountain trails with ruts, creek crossings and plenty of excitement. The descent into the Harper Valley is a real treat and a great conclusion to our day of exploration.

At the end of the ride we load up for the drive to Omarama, or “place of light”, passing the turquoise lakes of Tekapo and Pukaki with views of Mount Cook, the highest peak in New Zealand.

Day 7 – Into Central Otago (45km)

Today we ride out of MacKenzie county and into Central Otago, across the Omarama Saddle. Our ride takes us on an old gold mining track, through the ghost town of St Bathans and along the Manuherikia River.

There’s some fun, fast and exciting biking but you need to be ready for plenty of river crossings as we journey on rough, seldom used trails in a beautiful natural environment. At the end of the ride we load up the bikes for the short transfer to our farmhouse accommodation at Shortlands Station.

Day 8 – Danseys Pass(0km, 20km or 37km)

Today you have the chance to relax completely, or take a lift for the major climb, or enjoy a full day of high mountain riding. If you want a day off you can stay at the farmhouse with out hosts, and no doubt get an insight from David into the secrets of high country sheep farming.

For those keen to ride we have a stunning route, taking us high over Danseys Pass. This ride, which climbs beyond the pass and onto a fantastic ridgeline, gives views right across the mountains, plains and all the way to the Pacific. Those feeling a little tired can use the vehicle to reach the pass, but can’t avoid the last short climb before the superb ridge ride and descent, all the way back to the farm.

Day 9 – Naseby and Alexandra (20km to 80km)

This morning we head into Naseby Forest – the highest exotic forest in New Zealand. With our main guide and a local expert guide working together we can flex the riding to suit you. There are miles of breathtaking singletrack trails that twist and roll, with plenty of swooping descents and great jumps for those who want them.

After a picnic lunch at the local swimming dam we make the short journey to Alexandra, known locally as “mtb heaven.” The biking here is totally different, but just as exciting, as we explore the craggy mountains that overlook the town. This is an area that demands confidence and good skills at riding on rocks, but there’s a fabulous, scenic and less technical trail through the valley for those who prefer something different.

Shortlands is another remote sheep station and the owners, David and Glenys, are perfect hosts. David has a huge amount of outdoor knowledge and experience, while Glenys is a superb cook and ensures that every day ends with a fantastic, home prepared meal.

The vast area of private land that belongs to this station allows us to create unique and exclusive bike rides, like this one. Getting into such remote country, with not a soul around, is a real highlight of the Shortlands experience.

Today you can choose your level of biking, and the amount of biking too. The aim is to give everyone the best experience of these classic NZ biking regions, whatever your ability or interests.



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Day 10 – Bannockburn and the Old Man Range (20km to 35km)

The final day with our Otago expert guide is another one of choices. Those who want a physical challenge, high mountain views and a great trail to ride can take the route across the Bannockburn Range. Those who prefer a little assistance from the support vehicle, but love their downhill, can get a lift into the Old Man Range. This takes us into true Alpine wilderness, with great ridge riding followed by steeper and steeper descents into the valley far below.

Whichever option you prefer, the rides end in the middle of the afternoon and we load up for the short transfer to Queenstown.

Day 11 - Queenstown Explored (0km or 38km)

They call it the Adventure Capital or Adrenalin Capital of the world. Queenstown is the original home of bungee jumping and it's still the place to try a whole range of superb activities - bungee jumping, heli-biking, jetboating or a more leisurely day trip into the fjords of Milford Sound.

If you want to ride there are short or long circuits to explore, many with good signage, as well as a great freeride park. One favourite, though, is the 38km Moke Lake circuit. This beautiful ride combines stunning views with some easy riding and a few harder singletrack sections, making it a great day out for most riders.

Day 12 – Fox Glacier (0km or 84km road ride)

After an action packed itinerary so far we recommend taking a break today, as we journey northwards and westwards to the Fox Glacier. The drive is truly spectacular and characterises the amazing variety of New Zealand. We traverse Lakes Hawea and Wanaka then enter the Makarora Valley and Mount Aspiring National Park.

The further west we go, the more lush the landscape, as we enter Westland National Park, the largest in New Zealand. Here we have the option of a road ride across the Haast Pass and down the Haast River. At the township we load up for the final drive to our accommodation, a short distance from the base of Fox Glacier.

Day 13 – Best of the West (43km)

There's time for a walk to the face of the glacier this morning before we drive on up the coast. As we travel there's a change in landscape, as the road leaves the dense rainforests and follows sandy beaches, scattered with driftwood.

We have lunch at Lake Kaniere then head out for a fantastic two hour singletrack ride through diverse native forests. At the end we transfer to Paparoa National Park, just outside Punakaiki, for another classic west coast ride. The trail has a fantastic finale as we hit a long section of singletrack, winding through dense west coast rainforests and, right at the end, taking us through a "real" river crossing (i.e. deep!) before we return to civilisation.

The Lord of the Rings was filmed in New Zealand and much of the wilderness of this region was featured. Ask your guide about the areas you're riding, and those nearby, for more details.

Although famous for its activities Queenstown is also set in a fabulous mountain location, well worth exploring. You can go for short rides or walks, or the complete Moke Lake circuit, to see the best of this area.

The Fox and FranzJoseph glaciers are unique in many ways. They move at around 10 times the speed of other valley glaciers around the world, as they cut down 2600 vertical metres from the slopes of Mount Cook to within 250 vertical metres of the ocean.

The coast of Punakaiki is famous for its "pancake rocks" – pillars that stack up in tight formation, creating blow holes as seawater is forced up through the gaps at high tide.



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Day 14 – Braeburn Pass to Lake Rotoroa (28km)

We take it easy today, conserving strength for the final two days of epic riding on the Queen Charlotte Track that start tomorrow. However, easy can still be highly enjoyable as we ride the beautiful Buller Gorge, through old gold mining towns, then over the Braeburn Pass to Lake Rotoroa. Our final destination is the village of St. Arnaud, in the Nelson Lakes National Park.

Days 15 and 16 - The Queen Charlotte Track (51km then 44km)

New Zealand's longest singletrack mountain bike trail, renowned across the Southern Hemisphere and probably one of the world's most stunning mountain bike rides - the Queen Charlotte Track is an experience not to be missed.

After an early breakfast we drive to Picton, get into the ferry with our bikes, and journey across the bay to the furthest point of the trail. From here it's a rollercoaster mountain bike journey for a full 2 days.

The first day takes us through dense forests, escorted by singing birds, and down to Punga Cove for lunch. In the afternoon there are some challenges as we ride this superb singletrack, with its views of Marlborough Sound, all the way to Portage for our mid-way overnight stop.

The second day on the Queen Charlotte is equally as impressive. This time the trail winds over mountain ridges, taking you high above the Sound for some incredible views. The final descent brings us sweeping down from Te Mahia saddle on a smooth, flowing singletrack into Anakiwa. Then the final 20km is a fast spin along the sealed road, past the bush-clad bays and back to our waiting vehicle at Picton.

At the end of the day we transfer south to our hotel in the fishing village of Kaikoura, famous for its whale watching.

Days 17 to 18 – Whales then Journey home (0km)

This morning you have the option to join one of the renowned whale watching tours that leave from Kaikoura. After lunch we drive back to Christchurch and those people heading for flights will be transferred directly to the airport for their overnight journey home.

If you have organised extra time in Christchurch, or further travels, we'll drop you off at your city hotel.

The ride today is on easy terrain – a mixture of gravel tracks and 4x4 tracks - and is a great time to spin the legs, relax and enjoy the great views.

Queen Charlotte is one of the highlight singletrack trails in New Zealand. As a result it has become popular for local and visiting cyclists so permits are now required for all tours – which we have for all of our groups. The result is a quiet trail that follows the stunning coastal peaks and passes as you journey through some of the most beautiful terrain in the country.

Note that from 1st December to 1st March the first day of biking starts at what is normally the half way point for that day, as the trail is closed to mountain bikes between Ship Cove and Kenepuru Saddle.



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TRAVEL FACTS

Geography & Climate

New Zealand is made up of two main islands, known as the North and South islands, located in the South Pacific Ocean. The length of the combined islands gives the country a huge range of climate zones, from temperate in the south to subtropical in the north. The South Island is significantly more mountainous and less populated than the North, and contains New Zealand's highest peak – Mount Cook at 3754m – which forms part of the impressive Southern Alps mountain range.

Visits to the South Island are best made visited during late spring, summer and early autumn – ie from October to March. This allows access to most trails and mountainous regions although the peak season of December to January/February can be busy in certain popular locations. In recent years the tourism policy has changed in New Zealand to try and attract fewer but higher quality/higher spend visitors to counter the risk of overcrowding small towns like Queenstown. One element of this policy has been the development of quality assured accommodation and services for visitors, another is the strict restriction of access to key trails and regions by issuing permits to a very limited number of commercial operators.

Accommodation & Food

The quality of accommodation and food make this a very comfortable tour. We spend 10 nights in 3 or 4 star hotels/motels and the other 4 nights in sheep stations, renowned for their character and amazing locations, and still with twin or double rooms and a high level of comfort. We have included as many meals as possible in the tour price, and most special diets can be catered for, if notified in advance.

Cycling Support

During the trip a support vehicle will take you from destination to destination to enjoy the riding. The vehicle cannot actually support the rides as they go into remote terrain where no vehicles can follow, although at times we will keep the vehicle close to the group, if required. Your guide will be with you throughout all rides and will be an experienced, qualified leader with an expert knowledge of this region, good mechanical skills and excellent biking skills. He will be partnered by local guides at certain locations to add extra local knowledge and more flexibility with ride choices. The support vehicle will carry a range of bike spares and the guide will know which bike shops are most suitable for any major repairs or equipment purchases.

Cycle Rental

We have a range of excellent bikes available to rent in New Zealand. For this tour we recommend front suspension or full suspension bikes only, due to the rough terrain. The hire fee is dependant upon the bike chosen and the trip dates - please call us to discuss what bike is most suitable for you.

Flights

We can book your flight through an ATOL bonded agent and you will have a separate contract for your flight with them. They will provide all flight confirmations and tickets. Alternatively you can organise your own flights. Transfers on arrival are included if you arrive between 7am and 2pm on day 3, and on departure if you have an evening flight on day 17 (for drop offs on the drive into Christchurch from Kaikoura).

Passports, Visas and Vaccinations

For entry into New Zealand you do not require a visa as a UK citizen but you must have a passport valid for at least 6 months from the date of entry. For the latest advice on recommended inoculations either consult your doctor, your nearest travel clinic or go online and check the NHS travel website: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Clothing and Equipment

On booking, a detailed list of useful and essential items will be sent to you. You must bring your own cycle helmet that must be worn for all cycle rides. All clothing and equipment must be packed in one bag, either a soft holdall or soft rucksack. This is the maximum luggage allowed other than your day-sack, which should be a Camelbak or similar, ideally with 3 litre water carrying capacity.

Tour Guidebook

When you book, a more detailed pre-travel pack will be sent to you with information on clothing to bring, money, bike packing and other useful topics. If you need any further information on these things now, please just contact the CycleActive office.



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