



Pen-y-bryn
L O D G E

The Pen-y-bryn Guide

to Ōamaru & the Waitaki District



A comprehensive introduction to the iconic attractions and hidden delights of Ōamaru, the Waitaki Valley and the wider North Otago region

www.penybryn.co.nz

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On the cover: The 2025 Weston School Fireworks

Ōamaru and the surrounding Waitaki District have been growing in popularity over the past decade or so, with more and more visitors coming to experience our little section of the South Island from all over New Zealand and from around the world.

To help visitors (and new inhabitants) find their way around and make the most of their time here, we thought we'd put together this guide that reflects some of our favourite spots, tells you how to enjoy them to maximum effect, and offers tips to help you get around. Of course, this is a 100% subjective guide, and our opinions will almost certainly differ from other people's, and possibly from your own, so do feel free to let us know if your experience is markedly different or if you have found something that we have omitted!

This guide is broken down as follows: first, we have divided things into the district's three main sub-regions: Ōamaru and the surrounding area, Coastal Waitaki, and the Waitaki Valley.

Within these, we have organised our recommendations into several categories: Food and Drink, Shopping, and Things to Do.

Please note: While every endeavour has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented here, things change, businesses close, and we may not be able to keep up to date, so please phone ahead before setting off on a long drive or walk to any of the listings herein.

Ōamaru and surrounds

Ōamaru is the main town of the Waitaki District, and home to approximately 14,000 people (and growing!).

Located three hours south of Christchurch, and approximately 75 minutes north of Dunedin, it is very much at the crossroads of the middle part of the South Island. The town received its charter in 1863 and grew rapidly in the late 1800s, becoming the most heavily mortgaged town in the Southern Hemisphere, with the most banks of anywhere in the hemisphere, along with the tallest building and the most brothels. It was here that New Zealand's meat exporting industry was born, and the tremendous wealth and importance of the town nearly saw it designated the capital of the colony. Unfortunately, the limitations of the port and the expense of keeping it dredged from the silt of the Waitaki River led to the removal of the port to Dunedin and the decision to locate the capital in Wellington, leading to the decline of the town's economy.



Food and Drink

Ōamaru's soils are famously rich and productive, and cooks around New Zealand seek out Ōamaru-raised produce, especially the famed Jersey Benne potatoes. For a small town we have more than our fair share of excellent restaurants, perhaps because of the quality of our produce.

Restaurants and Pubs

Bangkok Recipe, 220 Thames Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 6245. Open 11:30am to 2:30pm and 5pm to 9pm daily. www.bangkokrecipe.co.nz You might not expect authentic Thai cuisine in a small South Island town, but you can find it here, along with cocktails and local beers and wines.

Burger, Baby, 22 Tees Street, Ōamaru. Open Thursday to Saturday, 5:30pm to 8:30pm. [@burger_baby_amaru](https://www.instagram.com/burger_baby_amaru) A small takeaway offering a range of burgers and burger-like items in Ōamaru's historic centre.

Cucina, 1 Tees Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 5696. Open 5pm to 9pm Tuesday to Saturday. www.cucinaoamaru.co.nz Located in a prime location in Ōamaru's historic precinct, the beauty of the location is matched by Chef-Owner Pablo Tacchini's exquisite cuisine.

The Criterion, 3 Tyne Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 6247. Open for lunch and dinner Wednesday through Sunday, 11:30 until close; open Monday for dinner from 5:30pm (hours differ in winter). www.criterionoamaru.co.nz One of Ōamaru's most distinctive landmarks, the Cri' (as locals call it) has a menu focused on traditional English-style pub dishes, along with local wines, beers and spirits.

Del Mar, 2 Waterfront Road, Ōamaru (03) 434 0455. Hours 11am to late Thursday through Monday. www.delmar.nz Opened in December 2020, this is the second restaurant of the owners of Cucina. This is a family-friendly restaurant featuring fish and seafood (along with other non-fishy dishes), and gelato made on-site.

Fat Sally's Pub, 84 Thames Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 8368. Open Tuesday to Sunday 11:30am to late, Monday 5pm to late. www.fatsallys.co.nz Located in a former bank building, the pub is a popular spot in the evenings, especially on quiz night (normally a Wednesday).

Fort Enfield Tavern, 625 Weston-Ngapara Road, Weston (03) 432 4118. Open 10am to late Wednesday to Sunday, 4pm to 10pm Monday. Country pub offering lunch and dinners.

Indian and Nepalese Kitchen, 360a Thames Highway, Ōamaru (03) 437 1414. Open for lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday. Very popular Indian restaurant in Ōamaru's North End, serving traditional North Indian dishes.

The Last Post, 12 Thames Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 8080. Housed in the town's original post office building (built in 1864), this has been a popular restaurant since 1992, offering a varied menu of traditional pub-style dishes in a very friendly atmosphere.

Riverstone Kitchen, 1431 Glenavy-Hilderthorpe Road (SH1), (03) 431-3505. Open for breakfast and lunch Thursday through Monday, 9am to 4pm; open for dinner Friday and Saturday, 6pm until late. www.riverstonekitchen.co.nz Riverstone Kitchen is located about 15 minutes' drive north of Ōamaru. Led by Chef-Owner Bevan Smith, Riverstone has won many awards for its innovative cuisine, reflecting Bevan's extensive travels and his experience working overseas.

Scott's Brewing Company, 1 Wansbeck Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 2244. www.scottsbrewing.co.nz The first brewery to open in Ōamaru since the town went dry in 1905, Scott's has become a true local landmark in the short time it has been open (since 2014), producing an exceptional range of craft beers (including NZ's first gluten-free beers) that they supplement with "guest" beers from around the country. Food options include very good pizzas, and, in good weather, barbecued ribs.

Star and Garter, 9 Itchen Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 5246. Open 11am to 8pm Sunday to Thursday, to 8:30pm Friday and Saturday. Popular with Ōamaruvians for decades, and the site of many a local's wedding celebrations, as evidenced by the walls covered in photographs from the countless wedding meals served here, the Star and Garter is one of NZ's oldest restaurants in continuous operation, serving a range of traditional Kiwi delights, from fish and chips to lamb's fry and the famed "Colonial goose".

Whitestone Cheese Diner & Deli, 469 Thames Highway, Ōamaru (0800) 892 433. Open Tuesdays to Saturdays, 8am to 5pm. Cheese sales only Mondays 9am to 3pm. www.whitestonecheese.com/pages/diner-deli Ōamaru's famed cheese-maker, Whitestone Cheese, have taken over an old milk bar and turned it into a retro diner where they offer a broad menu showcasing their award-winning cheeses. Both dine-in and takeaways available, and they have the whole range of cheeses and things to go with cheese available to take home.

Yumee Bento Bowl, 152 Thames Street, Ōamaru (027) 353 7293. Open daily. Yumee offers a Kiwi twist on the Japanese bento bowl concept, a nice change of pace for lunch or dinner.

Cafés

Badger and Mackerel, 175 Thames Street, Ōamaru (027) 521 3939. Open 7am to 5pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 3pm Saturday. Café with a good range of food options, including gluten-free and vegan options.

The Galley, 1 Esplanade, Ōamaru (03) 434 0475. Open 9am to 4pm daily. Prime location right next to Friendly Bay at the bottom of Wansbeck Street in Ōamaru, adjacent to the Steampunk playground (which inspired the décor), The Galley serves breakfast and lunch items with a beautiful view of the water.

Harbour Street Collective, 8 Harbour Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 3246. Open Monday to Wednesday 7am to 4pm, Thursday 7am to 6pm, Friday 7am to 8:30pm, Saturday 8:30am to 8:30pm and Sunday 8:30am to 6pm. Located on Ōamaru's historic Harbour Street, in the heart of the Victorian Precinct, the Harbour Street Collective is a café that serves a range of traditional café foods, along with excellent coffee.

Ōamaru Opera House Café & Bar, 90 Thames Street, Ōamaru (027) 468 2462. Open 8:30am to 2:30pm Monday to Friday, and for one hour before each show on the main stage. The range of delectable treats, light meals and coffee have made it one of Ōamaru's favourite places to meet. The Cafe & Bar also features a great selection of New Zealand wines and boutique beers.

Taste Café, 19 Thames Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 8827. Open 7am to 4pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 3pm Saturday. A cosy café in the heart of Ōamaru with good coffee, breakfast and lunch items, and sweet treats.

Tees Street Café, 3 Tees Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 5696. www.teesstcafe.com Open Monday to Friday 7am to 3pm, Saturday and Sunday 8:30am to 3pm. Kitchen closes 2pm. Co-located with Cucina, Tees Street Café offers a delightful range of breakfast and lunch items that run the gamut from the usual (muesli, eggs and baked goods) to the unexpected.

Other

Craftwork, Harbour Street, Ōamaru (0210) 226 3007. Open 2pm to 7pm Friday to Sunday. www.craftworkbrewery.co.nz
The second craft brewery to open in Ōamaru in 2014, Craftwork specialises in Belgian-style beers, all with clever names that reflect the sense of humour of brewer-owners Michael and Lee-Ann. While the beers can be found in many spots around Ōamaru and around the country, there is no better place to enjoy them than at their Belgian style tap room in the Historic Precinct, where you can drink your beer alongside a platter of New Zealand cheeses.

Harbour Street Bakery, 4 Harbour Street, Ōamaru. Open daily except Mondays. Traditional European and New Zealand handcrafted baked goods. Their pies are excellent.

The Bagel Shop, 26 Arun Street, Ōamaru. Open Monday to Friday, 7:30am to 2pm. Bagels and coffees served on-site or to take away.



Shopping

Arthur's Antiques, 360 Thames Highway, Ōamaru (03) 437 0053. Open daily from 10am. Large selection of antiques, collectables, architectural hardware and other interesting items. Restoration services also available.

Boho Jo, 7 Tyne Street, Ōamaru (021) 0299 2214. www.bohojo.shop Open 9:30am to 4pm Wednesday through Sunday. Handcrafted beeswax candles, soy candles, soaps, and essential oil perfumes.

Crafted, 3 Harbour Street, Ōamaru (027) 465 5149. Open 10am to 4pm daily. www.craftedoamaru.nz An artisan gallery, featuring works by local artisans who create quality wares using traditional skills and contemporary style and design.

Donna Demente's Grainstore Gallery, 5 Harbour Street, Ōamaru (027) 366 6201. Hours vary. The Grainstore Gallery is quite unlike any other you will find anywhere, a simply astonishing array of original artworks amidst an extraordinarily magnificent ambience, best experienced live and consumed fresh!

The Flying Penguin, 2 Itchen Street, Ōamaru. An eclectic shop selling a range of old-style toys and games in the historic precinct of Ōamaru.

Home Gallery Fine Arts, 1 Tyne Street, Ōamaru. Open 10:30am to 4pm (approx.). www.homegalleryfinearts.com Established to help create a space to deliver art for the local community and to engage with, and provide audiences for, local artists and their work. Situated within a heritage limestone building overlooking the South Pacific Ocean.



Housekeeper's Design, 18 Harbour Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 2550. Open 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 4pm Saturday; 10am to 3pm Sunday. www.housekeepersdesign.nz Dedicated to supplying exciting products and design brands to warm the heart of your home.

Ian Andersen Sculptor, 15 Tyne Street, Ōamaru. Internationally renowned limestone sculptor, producing a range of sculptures made with the iconic Ōamaru whitestone. Shipping is available.

Inc. Design Store, 6 Itchen Street, Ōamaru (021) 226 692. Open 10am to 4pm Friday, Saturday and Sunday, or by appointment. www.incdesignstore.co.nz A curated selection of fresh finds by creatives and design thinkers.

Miss Purple's Studio Realm, 9 Harbour Street, Ōamaru. Studio on site with handcrafted art, both wearable and not, by NZ artisans.

New Zealand Whisky Company, 9 Thames Street, Ōamaru. Open 11am to 4pm daily except Tuesday. www.thenzwhisky.com Tastings and sales of one of New Zealand's premium whiskies.

North Otago Arts Society, 29 Tyne Street, Ōamaru. Open 10am to 3pm Tuesday, 11am to 3pm Friday through Sunday. Venue for local artists to practice their craft and sell their works to the public.

Ōamaru Farmers Market, Corner of Wansbeck Street and Tyne Street, Ōamaru. Sundays 9:30am to 1pm. Weekly market for local food producers, including fresh produce, breads, jams, and more. Buskers perform regularly.



Oasis, 8-12 Tees Street, Ōamaru (029) 283 7882. Open 10:30am to 4:30pm daily. www.oasisnz.com Ever-changing stock of international antique furniture and ephemera with a substantial stock of New Zealand vintage photography and books.

Presence on Harbour, 1 Harbour Street, Ōamaru (0274) 395 170. Open daily 10am to 4pm. www.presenceonharbour.co.nz The place to go for NZ-made and NZ-designed gifts and souvenirs, including high-quality merino possum knitwear, kiwiana and Ōamaru-centric memorabilia.

Purple Sprouting, 12A Harbour Street, Ōamaru. <https://www.facebook.com/purplesproutingnz>. A small, independent, yarn-dyeing studio in the heart of Ōamaru's Historic Precinct. Every skein is hand-dyed and there is a broad range of wools and related goods on offer.

Rainbow Confectionery 459 Thames Highway, Ōamaru. (03) 437 1847. Open 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday. 9am to 4pm Saturday. Established in 1884, this is the largest confectionery manufacturer in New Zealand, and the originator of the famed Pineapple Chunks. Factory store sells the complete assortment of iconic confectionery.

Regalia's Timepieces, 9 Harbour Street, Ōamaru. Hours vary. Garments and jewellery that stand the test of time, with a Steampunk or Neo-Victorian theme.

Rose's General Store and Information, 5 Tyne Street, Ōamaru (021) 515 205. Open 9:30am to 5:30pm daily (10am to 4pm during winter). www.rosesoamaru.co.nz One of those quirky little stores where you never know what you will find. Filled with products from NZ and some from further afield, and local information. Rawleigh's independent distributor, stockist of haberdashery, confectionery, local preserves and regional honey and peanut butter, eco-friendly items and penny farthing and cycle supplies.

Silenzio Pottery, 207 Thames Street, Ōamaru www.silenziopottery.co.nz Andrew Killick sells his handmade ceramic works out of the front of this shop, and in the back there are wheels where you can throw your own pots as well (lessons are available).

Silica Gallery, 12 Harbour Street, Ōamaru (022) 633 5002. Art gallery for local artists specialising in glass, ceramic and beadwork art.

Slightly Foxed Secondhand Books, 11 Tyne Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 2155. Open 10am to 4pm daily. Ōamaru institution selling second-hand books in all categories.

Smith & Peony Makers, Corner Fairfax and Fenwick Streets, Kakanui (021) 0239 3924. Open Saturdays 10am to 4pm and by appointment. A treasure-trove of handmade goods, including carpentry by Lindsay Murray, hand-forged knives by his son Will Murray, and an ever-growing range of other local craftspeople. Bespoke items are available.



Stitchcraft Corner (Rose's Enhanced), 119 Thames Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 2144. Open 10am to 5pm Monday to Friday, 10am to 2pm Saturday. Everything you need for sewing, quilting, and other fabric-related arts.

Taylor Made, 9 Tyne Street, Ōamaru (027) 246 1456. Locally made Ōamaru limestone sculptures made by Sandy Taylor. Also stocks waistcoats, and Steampunk hats and accessories.

Totara Store, 451 Alma-Maheno Road, Ōamaru. Open weekdays 8:30am to 5:30pm, weekends 9am to 3pm. Local farm store offering raw and prepared foods, crafts and other goods with a North Otago focus.

William Bee General Merchants, 1 Itchen Street, Ōamaru (03) 434 9924. Open 9:30am to 5pm daily. www.williambee.co.nz A modern store in an historic storefront, selling a range of NZ giftware and brands, fashion, and Moke Apparel outerwear.

Things to do

Beaches

Though the ocean water can be chilly at this latitude, there are some beautiful beaches in the Ōamaru area. In Ōamaru itself there is Friendly Bay, located just in front of the Galley Café. Here the water is shallower (and thus warmer) and perfect for visiting with children, who would also enjoy the nearby Steampunk Playground. A bit south, between Ōamaru and Kakanui, is the stunning “14s” Beach, named after the nearby 14th hole of the North Otago Golf Course. Ideal for a walk or for a swim, you’ll also see surfers plying the waves. Kakanui itself is home to several beaches, which are very popular in the summer.



Clarks Mill

An important part of the local industrial history, Clarks Mill is the only surviving working water-powered flour mill in NZ, with its original machinery largely intact. The machinery is maintained by local volunteers who regularly get it all grinding into action.



Cycling

With the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail terminating in Ōamaru, it’s no surprise that cycling is a popular pastime in the area and that there are trails dotted all over the area. In the Ōamaru Harbour area, there’s even a little cycle track where children learn to bike safely around cars and other road hazards. If you’d like to hire a bicycle for a wander around town, or to use for the full Alps 2 Ocean experience, there are several operators in town, including Cycle Ventures (www.cycleventures.co.nz) and Martyn’s Cycles (www.martynscycles.co.nz), which happens to be the oldest cycle shop in NZ.

Forrester Gallery

The Forrester is an art and exhibition gallery housed in a former bank building on Ōamaru’s main street. The exhibits rotate regularly and usually include temporary exhibitions by a wide range of artists from far and wide. It’s worth a visit just to gape at the incredible architecture in this beautiful Victorian building. <http://www.culturewaitaki.org.nz/forrester-gallery>

Golf

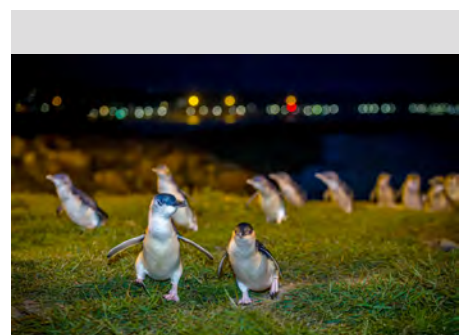
There are several golf courses in the Ōamaru area, so if you’re keen to get out on the links you’re sure to find a spot with an available tee time. The North Otago Golf Club is just outside of town on the Pacific Coast, while the Lower Waitaki Golf Club is north of town. There are several other clubs dotted around the area, as well.

Janet Frame House

The former Ōamaru home of one of New Zealand’s most famed writers at 56 Eden Street is open for visitors seasonally.

Ōamaru Penguins

For many people, Ōamaru is synonymous with penguins. The blue penguins that nest all along the coast in this part of New Zealand are the world’s smallest penguins, standing just about 25 centimetres tall. While they spend most of the time out to sea, many of them return to their land-based nests in the evenings, with as many as 300 coming in at the Ōamaru blue penguin colony after dusk. Viewing time changes throughout the year, ranging from 5:30pm in the winter to 9:30pm in the summer. Visit www.penguins.co.nz for timings, and to book tickets. Leave time to visit the informative displays before your viewing.



Ōamaru Business Hive The Business Hive is Oamaru's award-winning co-working space if you need to get some work done while in the region. Offering day passes to the business lounge plus private meeting rooms and private offices - you get what you need to get the work sorted and enjoy our incredible district. <https://www.thebusinesshive.co.nz/>

Ōamaru Historic Precinct Walking Tour

Join a knowledgeable local guide for a 60-90-minute tour of Ōamaru's Victorian centre, one of the best-preserved historic streetscapes in New Zealand. Learn the fascinating history of how Ōamaru became the birthplace of New Zealand's meat-exporting industry and nearly became the "New York of the South Seas".

Ōamaru Observatory

A volunteer group of amateur astronomers maintains the Ōamaru observatory, which is open during favourable conditions for visitors to take in a view through the telescopes of the stars, planets and other celestial objects. Gold coin donation, special rates for groups. www.facebook.com/northotagoastronomicalsociety

Ōamaru Opera House

Ōamaru's opera house was built in 1905 and is one of seven opera houses in New Zealand. Fully renovated in the early 2000s, the opera house is now a true jewel, hosting regular performances from around NZ and around the world, as well as having a popular café in the main foyer. www.oamaruoperahouse.co.nz

Ōamaru Public Gardens

Considered one of New Zealand's finest public gardens, the Ōamaru Public Gardens were established in the late 1800s and feature numerous planting areas, aviaries, ponds and other features that make for a beautiful space to stroll through or to enjoy a picnic. www.gardens.org.nz/waitaki-gardens/oamaru-public-gardens/

Ōamaru Steam and Rail

The Ōamaru Steam and Rail Society restore and maintain a number of historic railroad engines and passenger cars that regularly ply the rails between the Harbourside Station in the centre of town and the penguin colony. www.oamaru-steam.org.nz

Ōamaru Victorian Heritage Celebrations

Each November Ōamaru hosts a celebration of the town's Victorian past, with an ever-changing theme, culminating in a Victorian-era street festival. www.vhc.co.nz

Penguin Entertainers Club

The Penguin Entertainers Club is a small venue in an alley between Harbour Street and the Esplanade in the Historic Precinct of Ōamaru that hosts musical acts, both local and from around the country (and around the world). Jam nights are held at 8pm on every 2nd and last Friday of the month. facebook.com/thepenguinclub/

Rod Tempero Motor Body Builder

It might be a surprise to find out that there is a car factory just outside of Ōamaru, but it's true. Rod Tempero is a fourth-generation motor car builder, who



restores and replicates classic racing cars of the 1950s and 1960s in a repurposed chicken shed south of town. If you don't have the cash to take one home, you are still welcome to come and see the process, which is done all by hand. rodtempero.com

Skyline Walk

A 4.5km (one way) walk in Ōamaru that starts at Fenwick Park and proceeds uphill through the pine trees and native forest to see countless birds and take in a bird's eye view of Ōamaru and the sea beyond.

South Hill Walk

This walking track takes in Ōamaru's historic precinct with an optional detour out to Cape Wanbrow overlooking the blue penguin colony. The views from Lookout Point over the town and out to the Kakanui Ranges are spectacular.

Steampunk HQ

Ōamaru's Victorian heritage made it the perfect base for a nascent Steampunk movement—which is best described as “Victorian retro-futurism”. Steampunk HQ is housed in the former Meek's Elevator building, which at one time was the tallest building in the Southern Hemisphere. Today it is filled with artworks created by local and national artists, often made with reclaimed machinery and other repurposed items. Don't miss the Infinity Portal. www.steampunkoamaru.co.nz

Steampunk NZ Festival

On King's Birthday weekend (before the first Monday in June) Ōamaru is transformed by the arrival of hundreds of costumed Steampunks celebrating this quirky genre of sci-fi and heritage. Come and watch such events as teapot racing, tea duelling, and the ever-popular street parade and fashion show. www.steampunknz.co.nz

Totara Estate

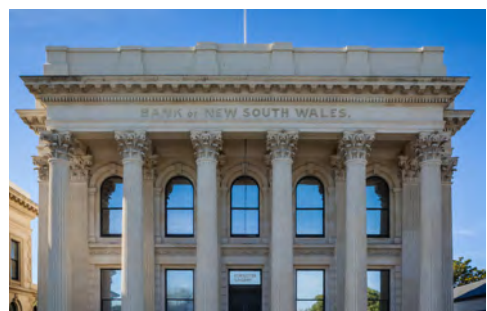
This large historic farm is the birthplace of New Zealand's billion-dollar a year frozen meat industry. Today it is an ideal spot for a look into what farm life was like back in the 1800s, with guides on hand to show you around and explain the history of this critical part of New Zealand's past. Several heritage breeds of sheep are on site to be hand-fed (and to have their back scratched), and regular teas are held, offering a traditional taste of old-time life, complete with stories from the “swaggers” who pass through.

Waitaki Aquatic Centre

Go for a swim at the Waitaki Aquatic Centre in the centre of Ōamaru, where you can enjoy a 25m lap pool, a learner's pool, and a spa hot pool. <https://www.waitaki.govt.nz/our-facilities/aquatic-centre/Pages/default.aspx>

Waitaki Museum

The Waitaki Museum is the place to learn more about this most interesting and historic of South Island regions. With displays that range from the famed Willets Collection of Māori artifacts, to fossils, to relics of the area's Victorian past, the museum is a wonderful place to spend some time during your visit to Ōamaru. <https://culturewaitaki.org.nz/waitaki-museum>



Waitaki Whitestone UNESCO Global Geopark

The Waitaki was formed under an ancient sea and is built on the remains of prehistoric creatures from a vanished world. In this Geopark, find an abundance of unique geological and geomorphological features including the Moeraki Boulders, karst limestone at Elephant Rocks, as well as “badlands” and faults at Clay Cliffs. Straddling the 45th parallel South, on the east coast of the South Island, the geopark is bounded by mountains and sea, the remnants of fire and ice, and the powerful Waitaki River. The park covers just over 7,200km². At the heart of it all are spectacular areas of karst. Karst landscapes are underlain by limestone which has been eroded by dissolution, producing ridges, towers, fissures, sinkholes and other characteristic landforms. www.whitestonegeopark.co.nz



Whitestone Cheese Factory Tour

Whitestone Cheese is a true Ōamaru success story, making top-quality European-style cheeses with top-quality New Zealand milk. You can join a tour to see the cheesemaking process in action daily at 10am, after which you will get to taste the delicious range that is exported around the world—including to Europe and North America. And of course, you’re welcome to take some home from their adjacent shop and café. <https://www.whitestonecheese.com/collections/guided-tours>

Whitestone City

Whitestone City is a re-creation of old Ōamaru in one of the historic precinct’s warehouse buildings. Beautifully restored and filled with artifacts from Ōamaru’s heyday in the late 19th Century, Whitestone City offers a glimpse into what made Ōamaru one of the boomtowns of the late Victorian era. www.whitestonecity.co.nz

Whitestone Model Rail

Located above The Ōamaru Textile Exchange at 13 Tyne Street in the Ōamaru Historic Precinct, the Whitestone Model Rail society has five scale layouts, one of which is based on Ōamaru and features numerous local landmarks.

Look Up!

The Waitaki District is fortunate to be largely devoid of light pollution, and our local council have recently begun replacing the street lights with new, dimmable, heads that can be turned down at night when they are not needed. This means that our area is one of the best places in the world to enjoy the majesty of the night sky, affording the chance to see the Milky Way and its satellite galaxies known as the Magellanic Clouds on a clear night. On occasion we also are able to see the aurora australis, known as the southern lights—if conditions are conducive, go to any spot that offers an unobstructed view to the south when the aurora is active and prepare to be amazed!



Coastal Waitaki

The Waitaki District extends along the East Coast of the South Island from the south shore of the Waitaki River to the north of Ōamaru, all the way south to Palmerston, approximately 45 minutes south of Ōamaru.

There is a lot of history in this part of Waitaki, and tremendous scenic beauty, including the world-famous Moeraki Boulders. This is a fantastic region to delve into and explore.



Food and Drink

Given the location's proximity to the sea, it'll come as no surprise that the cafés and restaurants of Coastal Waitaki focus on the bounty that comes from the Pacific Ocean just offshore, with blue cod, crayfish and other local treats especially prominent. But for non-seafood lovers there are plenty of other offerings, too, so there is truly something for everyone in this popular part of our district.

Restaurants and Pubs

Coast Cafe, 913 Beach Road, Kakanui (03) 439 5969. Open Thursday through Sunday 11am to 7pm. Iconic location overlooking the dramatic Kakanui coastline on the north edge of the village, serving fish and chips, burgers and other treats.

The FishWife, Haven Street, Moeraki (027) 201 5171. Open Friday through Monday from approximately 10am to approximately 5pm, or while supplies last. The Fish Wife is a Kiwi classic-style fish and chip shop on the waterfront in Moeraki serving fresh-as fish, along with crayfish, all locally caught and exceptionally good.

Hampden Takeaways, 30 London Street, Hampden (03) 439 4744. Open 11am to 7pm daily. Famed fish and chip shop in the beach town of Hampden. Take your lunch to the nearby beach for an iconic Kiwiana experience.

Moeraki Tavern, 144 Haven Street, Moeraki (03) 439 4705. The only pub located in the beautiful fishing town of Moeraki. Serving a range of beers, wines and a wide variety of restaurant meals. The fish and chips are particularly good.

Cafes

Moeraki Boulders Café, 7 Moeraki Boulders Road, Moeraki (03) 439 4827. Open 9am to 3pm daily. Café offering food and drinks overlooking the Moeraki Boulders.

Vanessa's Cottage Café, 24 London Street, Hampden (03) 439 4839. Open 5:30am to 4:30pm Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; 8am to 4pm Saturday and Sunday. Closed Wednesday. Popular café on the main road in Hampden offering good coffees, breakfast and lunch items.

Other

Hampden Four Square, 31 London Street, Hampden (03) 439 4706. Open 7:30am to 9pm daily. Small grocery store famed throughout NZ for the generous portions of ice cream they serve for takeaways.

Shopping

Boulders Gift Shop, 5 Moeraki Boulders Road, Moeraki (021) 909 980. Open 9am to 5pm daily. The Moeraki Boulders Gift Shop has a range of beautiful souvenirs, clothing and jewellery from New Zealand artists and crafts people. Whether you're visiting from around the corner, or the other side of the world, there is friendly service, a relaxed atmosphere and a magnificent ocean view all waiting for you.

Hampden Stores, 1 Liverpool Street, Hampden (03) 439 4802. Open 10am to 5pm Friday through Monday. Antique and collectables shop with a huge range of vintage tools and practical everyday items.

Things to do

Hampden Beach

This sandy beach is regarded as a safe bathing beach and when the tide is out it offers a great walk to the Moeraki Boulders and back. The Kuri Stream which joins the sea at Hampden Beach is a good place for children to play, as is the adjacent playground with its artificial boulders which children love climbing on. Tennis courts, a skateboard park and public toilets are also located at the beach. Nearby, behind the holiday park, the Hampden Cemetery offers a chance to get a flavour of local history as does the World War One Memorial Grove on the left as you drive or walk towards the cemetery.

Herbert Forest

Herbert Forest near the village of Herbert south of Ōamaru comprises several tracks of varying lengths and strenuousness. Some include waterfall views, large podocarp trees and native forests. All are well signposted. ([See map at the end of this guide.](#))

Horseback Riding

Sanctum Grove Equine offers relaxing adventure trekking along the Waianakarua River, where you can see the "Moeraki Boulder nursery", numerous rivers and streams, and countless tūī, kererū and bell birds. A truly unique way to take in the sights of the beautiful Waitaki coast.

Kakanui Sunflower Fields

Topflite, a large seed company based in Ōamaru, plants sunflowers around the area each year that become a tourist attraction when the stunning flowers are in full bloom each January and February. The fields are rotated each year, so part of the fun is exploring the area to find out where they're located!



Katiki Point Walk

Just south of Moeraki is the Katiki peninsula, anchored by the historic lighthouse. A short track from the lighthouse heads out to the peninsula, where a large colony of NZ fur seals and a small colony of the critically endangered yellow-eyed penguin can be found. Stunning views.

Macraes Town Centre and Gold Trail

The Macraes area was settled in the 1850s by farmers, and later by miners after the discovery of gold here in the 1860s. In this area you can still see New Zealand's largest operational gold mine (producing 50% of the country's gold), as well as elements of Otago's Gold Rush past at the Golden Point Historic Reserve. Located 5km from Macraes, access via Golden Point Road.

Moeraki Boulders

These massive spherical concretions, commonly known to locals as boulders, were formed from around 60 million years ago and can be seen scattered along Koekohe Beach north of Moeraki. Each boulder started life as a pebble or fossil on an ancient seafloor. Over time, these 'grew' by mud accretion and calcification. They were buried in muds and the sea continues to erode these from the seashore. One of the most famous landmarks in the Waitaki, the Moeraki Boulders really are a must-visit location and are conveniently located just off SH1 south of Hampden.



Palmerston Historic Walk

This walk through the historic town of Palmerston starts in the 1876-vintage Athenaeum and takes in the numerous historic spots that dot this proud coastal town that today is the base for many people who work at the nearby Macraes Goldmine. <http://waitakinz.com/palmerston-historic-walk>

Shag Point

The Shag Point/Matakaea Reserve is a great spot for viewing wildlife south of Moeraki. There are usually fur seals here, as well as numerous varieties of seabird (including occasional penguins), viewable from two short walks.

Tavora Reserve

This reserve near Palmerston is home to a small colony of critically endangered yellow-eyed penguins. Because of this, visitors are requested not to visit the beach after 3pm, in order to avoid disturbing the birds' return to their nests from their time at sea. Closed to the public during penguin breeding season (November to February).

Trotter's Gorge

With three walks of varying lengths to choose from, this is a beautiful reserve to visit for those who want to experience native forests, streams and more. Located just south of Moeraki.

Waitaki Whitestone UNESCO Global Geopark

Numerous sites of the Whitestone UNESCO Geopark are located around Coastal Waitaki, including Bridge Point, a natural arch formation in the coastal rock. For more information, [see the listing in the Ōamaru section of this guide](#), or visit www.whitestonegeopark.co.nz. A list of all the sites is available at this link.

Waitaki Valley

The Waitaki Valley is defined by the mighty braided Waitaki River, which cuts through the landscape from its source high in the Southern Alps.

The area has long been a popular getaway for locals who enjoy the man-made lakes for summertime activities, but with the advent of the Alps 2 Ocean cycle trail, the area has really begun to boom as more and more people discover the many charms of the valley.



Food and Drink

Restaurants and Pubs

The Flying Pig, Main Road, Duntroon (021) 431 2717. Open 8am to 3-4pm Thursday to Sunday. Newly reopened café serving breakfast and lunch along with coffees and snacks.

River-T Estate, 5292/1 Kurow-Duntroon Road, Kurow. (021) 190 8875. Open 10am to 6pm daily during summer. Enjoy a platter of local specialities while sipping the wines of the Waitaki—New Zealand’s newest wine region, and regarded as “the Burgundy of the South”, all while enjoying the view of the vineyards and the stunning countryside of the Waitaki Valley. www.rivertestate.co.nz

Valli Wine Bar, 45 Bledisloe Street, Kurow. The tasting room for Valli wines in Kurow’s old Post Office building. www.valliwine.com

Waitaki Braids Café, 61 Bledisloe Street, Kurow (0274) 333 913. Charming café serving breakfast and lunch on the main street in Kurow. www.waitakibraids.com

Shopping

Big Rooster Antiques and Collectables, 16 Chain Hills Highway, Ōmārama (03) 438 9757. Open 10am to 4pm daily. An eclectic mix of antiques, rare books, gifts, collectables and more, along with an ever-changing range of fun and fine gift items.

Glen Craig’s Clothing, 6 Chain Hills Highway, Ōmārama (03) 438 9816. Open 8am to 6pm daily. A source for well-known NZ and international clothing brands, including NZ-made merino and knitwear.

Merino Country Café and Gifts, 7 Chain Hills Highway, Ōmārama (03) 438 9844. Open 8:30am to 5pm daily (to 4pm in winter). A wide-ranging selection is on offer in this well-established shop in Ōmārama, where you can stock up on souvenirs, clothing and gifts, including clothing made with locally raised Merino wool.



Things to do

Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail

The longest cycle trail in New Zealand at more than 310km, the A2O, as it's known locally, winds its way from Mt Cook through the Waitaki Valley to its culmination in Ōamaru Harbour. The vast range of scenery that the trail takes in makes it one of the most popular of NZ's 22 Great Rides. ([See map at end of guide.](#))

Anatini Fossil Site

A beautiful gorge that features the fossils of a prehistoric baleen whale as well as several fascinating stone formations. Please note that, like Elephant Rocks, this is part of a working farm, so please be respectful of the land.



Benmore Peninsula Track

A 90-minute (4km) circuit that passes through forest and around a peninsula jutting into Lake Benmore. The views are truly impressive, especially in the morning when the weather is usually calm.

Braided River Jetboating

Enjoy a private jetboating experience on the braided Waitaki River with your professional guide as you take in the sites of this beautiful river. Since it's a private tour, you can dictate what you see, whether you're interested in exploring the upper reaches near the Waitaki Dam, or the lower reaches near the ocean mouth. www.braidedriverjetboating.co.nz

Clay Cliffs

Just outside of Ōmārama, the Clay Cliffs make for an interesting walk among a true geological wonder. The pinnacles and ridges make for a “bad lands” landscape, formed out of silt and gravel deposited by glaciers more than 20 million years ago. These were then compressed and uplifted by geological activity, after which the wind eroded them into their current forms. During early summer, the sight of the blooming lupins in the Ahuriri River makes for a particularly photogenic visit. On private land, so please respect the honesty box (\$5 requested donation).



Deep Stream Track

This is a walk near Lake Aviemore within a flooded canyon to the river delta where a shady picnic or fishing spot can be found. It is a great spot for a walk surrounded by nature that offers spectacular views (and photo opportunities!) with a colourful vegetation, deep dark water and perfect reflections.

Earthquakes

An intriguing name, especially in a country known for seismic activity! But this area was given its name when explorers thought the house-sized rocks that dot the landscape were dislodged by earthquakes. In actual fact, they were exposed when the land slumped away millennia ago. Access via Earthquakes Road near Duntroon.

Elephant Rocks

The large formations of limestone in this privately-owned farm were formed 23-25 million years ago and can be likened to elephants (sort of) and make for an intriguing spot to visit. Be sure to watch out for the sheep “patties”.

Fishing & Hunting

The Waitaki and Hakataramea Rivers are phenomenal sites for people eager to ply the waters to drop a line in search of trout and salmon. The waters here are fantastically clear, so you can often see the fish you’re aiming for as you cast your line. Numerous guides are available to take you to just the right spots. The same is true for hunting, whether you’re after deer, boar or wild ducks. Licenses are required, and can be purchased at numerous locations.

Gliding

The Ōmārama area is one of the world’s premier gliding centres, where the rivers, lakes and mountains create ample thermal currents to allow for lengthy flights and offer stunning vistas to admire from the air. Kahu Gliding offers private gliding lessons both for novices and those with experience offering a great way to experience the magic of powerless flight.

Golf

There are several golf courses in the Waitaki Valley area, including Tokarahi, Kurow and Ōtemātātā, so if you are keen to get on the green, you will be spoiled for choice.

Hiking

Local guides take guests on personalised walks in the expansive Waitaki High Country. Whether it be a walk to increase the heart rate, slow the mind, tap the creativity or just enjoy the amazing scenery, they can design a walk that will leave you feeling stronger, healthier and happier.

Hot Tubs Ōmārama

Soak in your own tub filled with heated high-country water while soaking in the views of the surrounding mountains. A spot like no other! Ten private spas are available, two with their own saunas. Open 10am to 10pm year-round.

Kurow Hill

Take in the beautiful sight of the braided Waitaki River and the Hakataramea Valley from atop Kurow Hill, a 45 minute to 2-hour climb (steep in spots) that is in a working farm outside of Kurow.

Lake Ohau

In the far reaches of the Waitaki District abutting the Mackenzie District and Mt Cook, this area features numerous hikes and walks, as well as hunting and bike trails. In winter, there are ski fields, and in summer there’s boating, kayaking and fishing.

Māori Rock Art

There are two significant Māori rock art sites in the Waitaki Valley area near Duntroon. Takiroa is a significant landmark in the traditions of Ngāi Tahu, while Maerewhenua is one of the best-known Māori rock art sites in New Zealand.



Nicol's Blacksmith

Restored by local volunteers in 2015, this is a working historic blacksmith's shop in Duntroon where local amateur smiths can be seen operating the hearth and making a variety of items that are available for sale. On Saturdays during the season visitors can try their hand (and arms) at forging iron items to take home—a large selection is also available for purchase. The “Brewery Hole” behind the smithy is a sunken limestone cavern created by an underground stream that was a source of pure water. www.blacksmith.net.nz



Quailburn Track

The track here starts uphill from the historic area of Quailburn near Ōmārama and takes in a mountain beech forest with several crossings of the Quailburn stream, culminating in a viewpoint above the bushline.

Vanished World

The Vanished World Centre at Duntroon is the heart of the Vanished World Trail with displays that help explain and interpret the fossils, rocks, localities, and landforms along the Trail, forming the centre of the Waitaki Whitestone UNESCO Global. ([See map at end of guide.](#))

Waitaki Hydro-Lakes

The damming of the Waitaki River, begun in the 1930s, has resulted in there being several man-made lakes along the river that today are popular recreational and scenic sites for locals and visitors alike. Starting with Lake Waitaki near Kurow, the oldest and smallest of the lakes, there then follow Lake Aviemore and Lake Benmore as you head upriver toward the Southern Alps.

Wetlands

The wetlands in Duntroon, Kurow and Ōtemātātā are beautiful natural sites that are maintained by local volunteers eager to preserve the local flora and fauna that make the region so interesting and beautiful. Along the shores of Lake Aviemore, the Ōtemātātā Wetlands offer a network of small tracks, trails, picnic areas and swimming spots, as well, making it an ideal spot for a break while visiting the region.

Wine tasting

There are now around 15 wineries in the Waitaki Valley, the newest of New Zealand's wine appellations, planted in the early 2000s. The soil conditions, latitude and climate are quite distinct from nearby Central Otago, resulting in vastly different styles of wine, which have earned the region the sobriquet “Burgundy of the South”. Most of the vineyards here are small, so the wines often do not make it far beyond the borders of New Zealand, and sometimes even not to the North Island, so the best way to sample them is to do so on-site. Two vineyards have cellar doors that are regularly open to visitors, River T Estate (which also offers delicious platters of food to go with a glass or two of wine), and Valli Winery. Both of these are in the vicinity of Kurow.



Waitaki Whitestone UNESCO Global Geopark Numerous sites of the Whitestone UNESCO Geopark are located around the Waitaki Valley. For more information, [see the listing in the Ōamaru section of this guide](#), or visit www.whitestonegeopark.co.nz A list of all the sites with links to maps is at this link.

Annual calendar of events

Throughout the year, Ōamaru and the Waitaki host a number of events, some of which take place regularly, while others are annual celebrations. This is a rough sketch of some of the main events; it is always wise to check in advance to ensure that schedules have not changed.

January: Kurow Festival Market (Kurow, New Year's Day)

March: Harbour Street Jazz Festival (Ōamaru, during Otago Anniversary weekend)

May: Fire & Steam (Ōamaru, the Friday of King's Birthday weekend); Steampunk NZ Festival (Ōamaru, Thursday through Sunday of Queen's Birthday weekend)

November: Victorian Heritage Celebrations (Ōamaru, five days from Wednesday to the third Sunday of the month); Victorian Fête (Ōamaru, third Sunday of the month)

December: Ōamaru Farmers Market Christmas Market (Ōamaru, Friday before Christmas)



Herbert Forest Map



Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail Map



Ōtemātātā Wetlands Trail Map



Waitaki Whitestone Geopark Map



Queenstown to Oamaru

Through Mackenzie Country & the Waitaki Valley

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 370 km

DRIVING TIME
4.5 – 5 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
7 – 8 hrs

MAIN ROADS
SH1 · SH83 · SH8



START

Queenstown

Adventure Capital of New Zealand

Depart Queenstown heading northeast on **SH6**, joining **SH8** east. Climb over the scenic **Lindis Pass** (971 m) and descend into the Mackenzie Basin.

Queenstown SH6 → SH8

▼ Head northeast on **SH8** over **Lindis Pass** and through **Omarama**. Turn onto **Henburn Road** (north of Omarama) for the **Clay Cliffs**. ~190 km ≈ 2 hrs

STOP 1

Clay Cliffs

Henburn Road, Omarama

Dramatic pinnacles and ravines of compressed silt and gravel — New Zealand's own Badlands. The last 2 km of Henburn Road is unsealed private road; pay **\$10/car cash** at the honesty box gate. A 2WD car handles it fine in dry conditions. 25-minute return walk from the car park.

\$10/car cash Gravel road Allow 1 hr

▼ Return to **SH8**, continue northeast joining **SH83** through **Kurow** and the **Waitaki Valley**. Take the **Island Cliff Road** turnoff to the **Elephant Rocks**. ~130 km ≈ 2.5 hrs

STOP 2

Elephant Rocks

Island Cliff–Duntroon Road, near Duntroon

A surreal field of ancient limestone boulders sculpted by millions of years of weathering. Free entry with a donation box at the gate. Explore at will — look for the namesake elephant shape, and the surprise hippo. Bring walking shoes; the paddock has resident sheep.

Open 24 hrs Donation entry Allow 1–2 hrs

▼ Return to **SH83**, continue northeast to **SH1**. Head south through **Weston** into **Oamaru**. ~45 km ≈ 45 min

DESTINATION

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Arrive into Oamaru via **SH1**. New Zealand's Victorian heritage town offers whitestone architecture, the historic precinct, blue penguin colony, and warm North Otago hospitality.

via SH1 Oamaru

PRACTICAL NOTES

- Carry **\$10 NZD cash** for the Clay Cliffs entry fee
- Fill up with fuel in **Omarama** before Lindis Pass
- SH83 is a well-maintained sealed road throughout
- Henburn Road is unsealed — drive slowly (20 km/h)
- Mobile coverage is limited in Waitaki Valley

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Waitaki Valley: limestone geology, tawny farmland
- Lake Benmore: vivid turquoise hydro lake
- Omarama: renowned gliding destination
- Lindis Pass: golden tussock, no services
- Cromwell: Central Otago stone fruit country

Distances and times are approximate · Always check road conditions before departure · NZ road conditions: nzta.govt.nz

Lake Tekapo to Oamaru

Through the Heart of Mackenzie Country & the Waitaki Valley

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 260 km

DRIVING TIME
3 – 3.5 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
6 – 7 hrs

MAIN ROADS
SH1 · SH83 · SH8



START

Lake Tekapo

Heart of the Mackenzie Basin

Depart Lake Tekapo heading south on **SH8**. Pass the vivid turquoise shores of **Lake Pukaki** and continue south to the Clay Cliffs turnoff.

Lake Tekapo SH8 south

▼ Head south on **SH8** past **Lake Pukaki**. Turn onto **Henburn Road** (north of Oamaru) for the Clay Cliffs. ~85 km

≈ 1 hr

STOP 1

Clay Cliffs

Henburn Road, Oamaru

Dramatic pinnacles and ravines of compressed silt and gravel — New Zealand's own Badlands. The last 2 km of Henburn Road is unsealed private road; pay **\$10/car cash** at the honesty box gate. A 2WD car handles it fine in dry conditions. 25-minute return walk from the car park.

\$10/car cash Gravel road Allow 1 hr

▼ Return to **SH8**, continue south joining **SH83** through Kurow and the Waitaki Valley. Take the **Island Cliff Road** turnoff to the Elephant Rocks. ~130 km

≈ 2.5 hrs

STOP 2

Elephant Rocks

Island Cliff–Duntroun Road, near Duntroun

A surreal field of ancient limestone boulders sculpted by millions of years of weathering. Free entry with a donation box at the gate. Explore at will — look for the namesake elephant shape, and the surprise hippo. Bring walking shoes; the paddock has resident sheep.

Open 24 hrs Donation entry Allow 1–2 hrs

▼ Return to **SH83**, continue northeast to **SH1**. Head south through **Weston** into Oamaru. ~45 km

≈ 45 min

DESTINATION

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Arrive into Oamaru via **SH1**. New Zealand's Victorian heritage town offers whitestone architecture, the historic precinct, a blue penguin colony, and warm North Otago hospitality.

via SH1 Oamaru

PRACTICAL NOTES

- Carry **\$10 NZD cash** for the Clay Cliffs entry fee
- Fill up with fuel in **Oamaru** — limited services before Tekapo
- SH83 is a well-maintained sealed road throughout
- Henburn Road is unsealed — drive slowly (20 km/h)
- Mobile coverage is limited in the Waitaki Valley

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Waitaki Valley: limestone geology, tawny farmland
- Lake Benmore: vivid turquoise hydro lake
- Oamaru: renowned gliding destination
- Lake Pukaki: breathtaking turquoise glacial lake
- Tekapo: stargazing, lupins & the Good Shepherd Church

Distances and times are approximate · Always check road conditions before departure · NZ road conditions: nzta.govt.nz

Dunedin to Oamaru

Along the Wildlife of the Catlins Gateway & the North Otago Coast

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 115 km

DRIVING TIME
1.5 – 2 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
5 – 6 hrs

MAIN ROAD
SH1 south



START

Dunedin

The Edinburgh of the South

Depart Dunedin heading **north on SH1** via the Northern Motorway. All three stops on this route are easy signed turnoffs from SH1.

Dunedin SH1 north

▼ Head **north on SH1**. Turn left onto **Blueskin Road** — Orokonui is signed from the highway.

~18 km
≈ 20 min

STOP 1

Orokonui Ecosanctuary

600 Blueskin Road, Dunedin

A remarkable predator-free native forest sanctuary behind a 9 km pest-exclusion fence. Home to takahē, kākā, South Island robins, kererū and more — many approachable at close range. Self-guided and guided walks available. The visitor centre and café are excellent. Allow at least 2 hours.

▲ Thu–Mon only 9:30am–4:30pm Allow 2+ hrs

▼ Return to **SH1** and continue north through Waitati and Palmerston. Turn right into **Moeraki village** and follow the road out to **Katiki Point**.

~55 km
≈ 50 min

STOP 2

Katiki Point

Moeraki Village, near Hampden

A short walk from the car park leads to a spectacular headland where fur seals haul out year-round and — if you time it right — rare yellow-eyed penguins (hoiho) come ashore. Visit in the **late afternoon** for the best penguin sightings. Please stay behind fencing near nesting areas.

Open 7:30am–5:30pm Free entry Allow 30–60 min

▼ Return to **SH1**, continue north ~3 km, then turn right onto **Moeraki Boulders Road** — well signed from the highway.

~6 km
≈ 10 min

STOP 3

Moeraki Boulders

Moeraki Boulders Road, Hampden

Among New Zealand's most striking natural curiosities — enormous spherical boulders scattered along the beach, formed over 60 million years from calcite-rich sediment. Walk down to the beach and explore freely. A café with parking sits just above the beach. Best visited at low tide when more boulders are exposed.

Open 24 hrs Free entry Allow 30–45 min

▼ Return to **SH1** and continue **north** into Oamaru.

~38 km
≈ 35 min

DESTINATION

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Arrive into Oamaru via **SH1**. New Zealand's Victorian heritage town offers whitestone architecture, the historic precinct, a blue penguin colony, and warm North Otago hospitality.

via SH1 north Oamaru

PRACTICAL NOTES

- Orokonui is closed **Tuesdays & Wednesdays** — plan accordingly
- Katiki Point closes at 5:30pm — visit late afternoon for penguins
- Moeraki Boulders best at low tide — check tide tables in advance
- The entire route follows sealed SH1 — no gravel roads
- Fuel available in Oamaru, Palmerston, and Dunedin

WHAT TO EXPECT

- North Otago coast: dramatic Pacific cliffs and farmland
- Moeraki: ancient spherical boulders on a wild beach
- Katiki Point: fur seals year-round, penguins at dusk
- Orokonui: rare native birds in predator-free forest
- Dunedin: heritage architecture and Otago Peninsula wildlife

Distances and times are approximate · Always check road conditions before departure · NZ road conditions: nzta.govt.nz

Christchurch to Oamaru

Via Rakaia Gorge, the Inland Scenic Route & Waimate

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 330 km

DRIVING TIME
4 – 4.5 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
7 – 8 hrs

MAIN ROADS
SH1 · SH79 · SH72



START

Christchurch

The Garden City of New Zealand

Depart Christchurch heading west on **SH73**. At **West Melton** join **SH72** south — the beginning of the Inland Scenic Route through the Canterbury foothills.

Christchurch SH73 → SH72

▼ Head west on **SH73**, join **SH72** south through the Canterbury foothills to the **Rakaia Gorge**.

~130 km
≈ 1.5 hrs

STOP 1

Rakaia Gorge

Inland Scenic Route, SH72, Canterbury

The Inland Scenic Route crests a rise to reveal the sudden drama of the Rakaia Gorge — a deep river canyon cut through the Canterbury foothills, its water a brilliant turquoise. Pull into the **Rakaia Gorge Camping Area** for the best viewpoint. A short walking track leads to the gorge rim and a swing bridge. Allow time to linger.

Free — roadside stop Allow 30–45 min SH72 Inland Scenic Route

▼ Continue south on **SH72** through **Geraldine**. At **Winchester** join **SH1** south, then take the **Waimate** turnoff (**SH82**) into town and follow signs to **Bathgate Road**.

~65 km
≈ 50 min

STOP 2

Tame Wallabies — EnkleDooVery Korna

71 Bathgate Road, Waimate

A charming family-run sanctuary where you can hand-feed and pet Bennett's wallabies — among the tamest in New Zealand. The knowledgeable owner provides an entertaining introduction before you enter. Also home to peacocks, parrots, and other animals. A genuinely unique and unhurried experience.

Open daily 10am–5pm \$15 adult / \$10 child Allow 1–1.5 hrs

▼ Return to **SH1** and continue **south** into Oamaru.

~45 km
≈ 45 min

DESTINATION

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Arrive into Oamaru via **SH1**. New Zealand's Victorian heritage town offers whitestone architecture, the historic precinct, a blue penguin colony, and warm North Otago hospitality.

via SH1 south Oamaru

PRACTICAL NOTES

- Wallaby sanctuary: **\$15 adult / \$10 child** — NZ eftpos or cash
- The Inland Scenic Route (SH72) is fully sealed throughout
- Fuel available in Oamaru, Waimate, Geraldine, and Christchurch
- Geraldine (on SH72) is a good lunch stop with excellent cafés
- Allow extra time on SH72 — the scenery invites frequent stops

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Waimate: a quiet South Canterbury market town
- SH79/Geraldine: rolling foothills, stone-fruit orchards
- Inland Scenic Route: dramatic gorges, tussock, big skies
- Rakaia Gorge: turquoise river canyon and swing bridge
- Canterbury Plains: vast flatlands with Alps on the horizon

Distances and times are approximate · Always check road conditions before departure · NZ road conditions: nzta.govt.nz

Oamaru to Queenstown

Through the Waitaki Valley & Mackenzie Country

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 370 km

DRIVING TIME
4.5 – 5 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
7 – 8 hrs

MAIN ROADS
SH1 · SH83 · SH8



START

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Depart Oamaru heading south on **SH1**. Take the turnoff to **Weston**, then follow **Weston–Ngapara Road** inland. Turn onto **Island Cliff Road** to reach the Elephant Rocks.

Oamaru SH1 → Weston → Island Cliff Rd

▼ Head south on **SH1**, take the **Weston** turnoff, then follow **Weston–Ngapara Road** inland. Turn onto **Island Cliff Road** to the Elephant Rocks. **~45 km**
≈ 45 min

STOP 1

Elephant Rocks

Island Cliff–Duntroon Road, near Duntroon

A surreal field of ancient limestone boulders sculpted by millions of years of weathering. Free entry with a donation box at the gate. Explore at will — look for the namesake elephant shape, and the surprise hippo. Bring walking shoes; the paddock has resident sheep.

Open 24 hrs Donation entry Allow 1–2 hrs

▼ Return to **SH83** and continue southwest through **Kurow** and along **Lake Benmore**. Turn left onto **Henburn Road** before **Omarama** for the Clay Cliffs. **~130 km**
≈ 2.5 hrs

STOP 2

Clay Cliffs

Henburn Road, Omarama

Dramatic pinnacles and ravines of compressed silt and gravel — New Zealand's own Badlands. The last 2 km of Henburn Road is unsealed private road; pay **\$10/car cash** at the honesty box gate. A 2WD car handles it fine in dry conditions. 25-minute return walk from the car park.

\$10/car cash Gravel road Allow 1 hr

▼ Return to **SH8**, turning south through **Omarama**. Climb over the scenic **Lindis Pass** (971 m), descend to **Cromwell** and follow the shores of **Lake Dunstan** into **Queenstown**. **~190 km**
≈ 2 hrs

DESTINATION

Queenstown

Adventure Capital of New Zealand

Arrive via **SH6** into Queenstown town centre. The Lindis Pass approach offers some of the finest tussock highland scenery on the island — allow time for a brief roadside stop at the summit.

via Lindis Pass SH8 → SH6

PRACTICAL NOTES

- Carry **\$10 NZD cash** for the Clay Cliffs entry fee
- Fill up with fuel in **Omarama** before Lindis Pass
- SH83 is a well-maintained sealed road throughout
- Henburn Road is unsealed — drive slowly (20 km/h)
- Mobile coverage is limited in Waitaki Valley

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Waitaki Valley: limestone geology, tawny farmland
- Lake Benmore: vivid turquoise hydro lake
- Omarama: renowned gliding destination
- Lindis Pass: golden tussock, no services
- Cromwell: Central Otago stone fruit country

Oamaru to *Lake Tekapo*

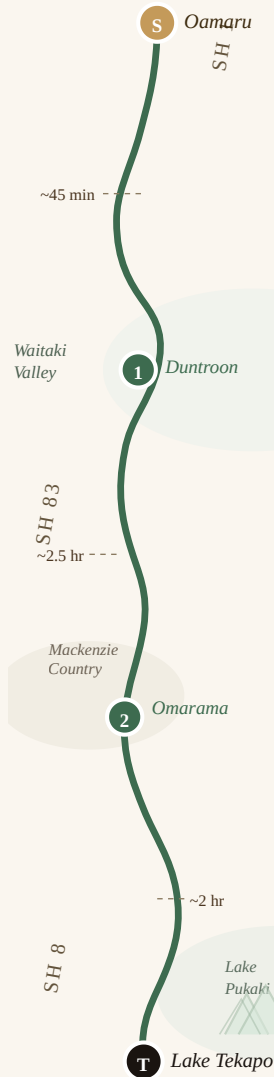
Through the Waitaki Valley & the Heart of Mackenzie Country

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 260 km

DRIVING TIME
3 – 3.5 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
6 – 7 hrs

MAIN ROADS
SH1 · SH83 · SH8



START

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Depart Oamaru heading south on **SH1**. Take the turnoff to **Weston**, then follow **Weston–Ngapara Road** inland. Turn onto **Island Cliff Road** to reach the Elephant Rocks.

Oamaru

SH1 → Weston → Island Cliff Rd

▼ Head south on SH1, take the **Weston** turnoff, then follow **Weston–Ngapara Road** inland. Turn onto **Island Cliff Road** to the Elephant Rocks.

~45 km
≈ 45 min

STOP 1

Elephant Rocks

Island Cliff–Duntroon Road, near Duntroon

A surreal field of ancient limestone boulders sculpted by millions of years of weathering. Free entry with a donation box at the gate. Explore at will — look for the namesake elephant shape, and the surprise hippo. Bring walking shoes; the paddock has resident sheep.

Open 24 hrs

Donation entry

Allow 1–2 hrs

▼ Return to SH83 and continue southwest through **Kurow** and along **Lake Benmore**. Join **SH8** and turn onto **Henburn Road** (north of Omarama) for the Clay Cliffs.

~130 km
≈ 2.5 hrs

STOP 2

Clay Cliffs

Henburn Road, Omarama

Dramatic pinnacles and ravines of compressed silt and gravel — New Zealand's own Badlands. The last 2 km of Henburn Road is unsealed private road; pay **\$10/car cash** at the honesty box gate. A 2WD car handles it fine in dry conditions. 25-minute return walk from the car park.

\$10/car cash

Gravel road

Allow 1 hr

▼ Return to **SH8** and turn **north**. Follow SH8 northwest past **Lake Pukaki** and its stunning turquoise waters, then continue to **Lake Tekapo**.

~85 km
≈ 1 hr

DESTINATION

Lake Tekapo

Heart of the Mackenzie Basin

Arrive into the village of Tekapo on the shores of its famous glacially-fed lake. The water's extraordinary turquoise colour comes from fine glacial rock flour suspended in the lake. The **Church of the Good Shepherd** on the lakefront is one of New Zealand's most photographed landmarks, and Tekapo is one of the world's premier **stargazing destinations** — a Dark Sky Reserve.

via Lake Pukaki

SH8 north

Dark Sky Reserve

PRACTICAL NOTES

- Carry **\$10 NZD cash** for the Clay Cliffs entry fee
- Fill up with fuel in **Omarama** — limited services before Tekapo
- SH83 is a well-maintained sealed road throughout
- Henburn Road is unsealed — drive slowly (20 km/h)
- Mobile coverage is limited in the Waitaki Valley

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Waitaki Valley: limestone geology, tawny farmland
- Lake Benmore: vivid turquoise hydro lake
- Omarama: renowned gliding destination
- Lake Pukaki: breathtaking turquoise glacial lake
- Tekapo: stargazing, lupins & the Good Shepherd Church

Oamaru to *Dunedin*

Along the North Otago Coast & the Wildlife of the Catlins Gateway

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 115 km

DRIVING TIME
1.5 – 2 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
5 – 6 hrs

MAIN ROAD
SH1 south



START

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Depart Oamaru heading south on **SH1**. The highway follows the Pacific coast through North Otago. All three stops on this route are easy signed turnoffs from SH1.

Oamaru

SH1 south

▼ Follow **SH1 south** for ~38 km. Turn left onto **Moeraki Boulders Road** — well signed from the highway.

~38 km
≈ 35 min

STOP 1

Moeraki Boulders

Moeraki Boulders Road, Hampden

Among New Zealand's most striking natural curiosities — enormous spherical boulders scattered along the beach, formed over 60 million years from calcite-rich sediment. Walk down to the beach and explore freely. A café with parking sits just above the beach. Best visited at low tide when more boulders are exposed.

Open 24 hrs

Free entry

Allow 30–45 min

▼ Return to **SH1**, continue south ~3 km, then turn left into **Moeraki village** and follow the road out to **Katiki Point**.

~6 km
≈ 10 min

STOP 2

Katiki Point

Moeraki Village, near Hampden

A short walk from the car park leads to a spectacular headland where fur seals haul out year-round and — if you time it right — rare yellow-eyed penguins (hoiho) come ashore. Visit in the **late afternoon** for the best penguin sightings. Please stay behind fencing near nesting areas.

Open 7:30am–5:30pm

Free entry

Allow 30–60 min

▼ Return to **SH1** and continue south through Palmerston and Waitati. Turn right onto **Blueskin Road** — Orokonui is signed from the highway.

~55 km
≈ 50 min

STOP 3

Orokonui Ecosanctuary

600 Blueskin Road, Dunedin

A remarkable predator-free native forest sanctuary behind a 9 km pest-exclusion fence. Home to takahē, kākā, South Island robins, kererū and more — many approachable at close range. Self-guided and guided walks available. The visitor centre and café are excellent. Allow at least 2 hours.

△ Thu–Mon only

9:30am–4:30pm

Allow 2+ hrs

▼ Return to **SH1** and continue south into **Dunedin** city centre via the Northern Motorway.

~18 km
≈ 20 min

DESTINATION

Dunedin

The Edinburgh of the South

Arrive into central Dunedin via **SH1**. New Zealand's most Scottish city offers Victorian and Edwardian architecture, the world's steepest street, the Otago Peninsula's wildlife (royal albatross, penguins, sea lions), and a thriving café and arts scene.

via SH1 south

Otago Peninsula nearby

PRACTICAL NOTES

- **Orokonui is closed Tuesdays & Wednesdays** — plan accordingly
- Katiki Point closes at 5:30pm — visit late afternoon for penguins
- Moeraki Boulders best at low tide — check tide tables in advance
- The entire route follows sealed SH1 — no gravel roads
- Fuel available in Oamaru, Palmerston, and Dunedin

WHAT TO EXPECT

- North Otago coast: dramatic Pacific cliffs and farmland
- Moeraki: ancient spherical boulders on a wild beach
- Katiki Point: fur seals year-round, penguins at dusk
- Orokonui: rare native birds in predator-free forest
- Dunedin: heritage architecture and Otago Peninsula wildlife

Oamaru to Christchurch

Via Waimate, the Inland Scenic Route & Rakaia Gorge

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 330 km

DRIVING TIME
4 – 4.5 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
7 – 8 hrs

MAIN ROADS
SH1 · SH79 · SH72



START

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Depart Oamaru heading **north on SH1**. After ~38 km take the **Waimate turnoff** (SH82 west), drive into Waimate township, then follow signs ~5 km out to **Bathgate Road** for the wallaby sanctuary.

Oamaru

SH1 north → SH82 → Waimate

Head **north on SH1**, take the **Waimate turnoff** onto SH82, drive into town and follow signs to **Bathgate Road**.

≈45 km
≈ 45 min

STOP 1

Tame Wallabies — EnkleDooVery Korna

71 Bathgate Road, Waimate

A charming family-run sanctuary where you can hand-feed and pet Bennett's wallabies — among the tamest in New Zealand. The knowledgeable owner provides an entertaining introduction before you enter. Also home to peacocks, parrots, and other animals. A genuinely unique and unhurried experience.

Open daily 10am–5pm

\$15 adult / \$10 child

Allow 1–1.5 hrs

Return to Waimate township and continue north via **SH1** to **Winchester**. At Winchester, turn left (west) onto **SH79** toward Geraldine, joining the **Inland Scenic Route (SH72)** northwest.

≈65 km
≈ 50 min

STOP 2

Rakaia Gorge

Inland Scenic Route, SH72, Canterbury

The Inland Scenic Route crests a rise to reveal the sudden drama of the Rakaia Gorge — a deep river canyon cut through the Canterbury foothills, its water a brilliant turquoise. Pull into the **Rakaia Gorge Camping Area** for the best viewpoint. A short walking track leads to the gorge rim and a swing bridge. Allow time to linger.

Free — roadside stop

Allow 30–45 min

SH72 Inland Scenic Route

Continue **northeast on SH72** through the Canterbury foothills and plains. At **West Melton** join **SH73** east into Christchurch.

≈130 km
≈ 1.5 hrs

DESTINATION

Christchurch

The Garden City of New Zealand

Arrive into Christchurch via **SH73** from the west. New Zealand's largest South Island city offers the Botanic Gardens, the revitalised post-earthquake city centre, the Re:START container precinct, tram rides, and the magnificent Canterbury Museum.

via SH72 · SH73

Garden City

PRACTICAL NOTES

- Wallaby sanctuary: **\$15 adult / \$10 child** — NZ eftpos or cash
- The Inland Scenic Route (SH72) is fully sealed throughout
- Fuel available in Oamaru, Waimate, Geraldine, and Christchurch
- Geraldine (on SH72) is a good lunch stop with excellent cafés
- Allow extra time on SH72 — the scenery invites frequent stops

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Waimate: a quiet South Canterbury market town
- SH79/Geraldine: rolling foothills, stone-fruit orchards
- Inland Scenic Route: dramatic gorges, tussock, big skies
- Rakaia Gorge: turquoise river canyon and swing bridge
- Canterbury Plains: vast flatlands with Alps on the horizon



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