



## 10 Day Top of the South

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### The Journey

While not the only regions bathed in sunshine and wrapped in beautiful coastlines, Nelson and Marlborough join forces to deliver one of New Zealand's most diverse and satisfying holiday destinations.

Three national parks, beaches and bays, world-famous wineries, delectable produce, art, culture, adrenaline activities and family fun – all this and more can be found on this scenic loop from Britz's Christchurch depot.



### Highlights of the trip

Christchurch

Kaikoura

Marlborough Sounds

Nelson Lakes National Park

## Day 1 Christchurch

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Christchurch is a welcoming city and a convenient departure point for the road trips that lead in almost every direction. Immerse yourself in its dynamic vibe by visiting the arty centre and Re:Start precinct, its parks, gardens and beaches, and suburban hotspots such as Addington and Woolston Tannery. There are several leafy holiday parks out east, including North South, handy to the Britz depot.

## Day 2 Christchurch to Kaikoura

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Head up SH1, and in less than 30 minutes you'll reach Waipara, a burgeoning wine region where Pegasus Bay and Black Estate offer tastings and winery lunches; the Waipara Valley Wine Growers lists other cellar doors. SH1 then leaves the Canterbury Plains and winds over the Hundalee Hills before kissing the coast.

Kaikoura lies at the southern boundary of Marlborough, straddling a peninsula guarded by the Seaward Kaikoura Range. It's world-renown for Whale Watch tours, but there is plenty of other wildlife to see including dolphins, seals and seabirds. Other ways to encounter wildlife are Seal Swimming and Kayak Tours, and the walk along the view-filled Kaikoura Peninsula that passes the Point Kean Seal Colony. Sample the local delicacy, crayfish, at the roadside Kaikoura Seafood BBQ, or at the historic Pier Hotel – fabulous around sundown. Kaikoura has two good holiday parks within five minutes' walk of town – Alpine-Pacific and Top 10.



**Distance:**

129km



**Driving Time:**

1.75 hours

## Day 3 Kaikoura to Blenheim

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H1 winds up the east coast through increasingly vine-lined territory, which reaches critical mass in the Wairau Valley, the epicentre of New Zealand's wine industry. Its 35-odd cellar doors, many with restaurants, can be toured on mini-bus or bicycle if you don't want to drive; this can easily be arranged from Blenheim i-SITE or the town's only holiday park, Top 10.

Blenheim's star attraction is Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre, which displays a collection of World War One aircraft in powerfully evocative and moving ways. Don't miss it.



**Distance:**

28km



**Driving Time:**

0.5 hours

## Day 4 Blenheim to Picton

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Stay on SH1 to reach Picton. Well known as the interisland ferry port, the town offers so much more with its welcoming disposition, trim foreshore park and harbour outlook, town walks, and ready access to the labyrinthine Marlborough Sounds.

Queen Charlotte Sound cruises can easily be combined with a kayak, hike or bike ride along the Queen Charlotte Track. Both the Top 10 and Parklands Marina holiday parks are excellent.

## Day 5 Picton to Nelson

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**Distance:**

134km



**Driving Time:**

2 hours

Follow the signs along Queen Charlotte Drive, the winding but wonderfully scenic drive through to Havelock. Around halfway, family-friendly Smith Farms Holiday Park is a great base for exploring the Anakiwa and Kenepuru Sounds area. At Havelock, join SH6 to Nelson, stopping at Pelorus Bridge for nature walks, river swimming, and home-baked goodies at the cafe; book ahead for the popular DOC campsite.

The highway snakes over the Whangamoia Range and emerges at Nelson, on the shores of Tasman Bay. The region's capital is small and confident, blessed with beautiful Tahunanui Beach (site of a huge holiday park) and enhanced by an active arts scene. Other highlights include Founders Heritage Park, Queens Gardens, and the Centre of New Zealand Walkway, as well as boutique shopping and craft galleries, and great eating and drinking including several craft beer bars.

## Day 6 Nelson to Motueka

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**Distance:**

47km



**Driving Time:**

1 hours

The roads between Nelson and Motueka are lined with attractions, including wineries, Höglund Art Glass, Rabbit Island recreation reserve and the Moutere Highway with its artisans, fruit stalls and historic pub.

Close to Abel Tasman National Park, Motueka has a pleasant high street and coastal walkway, along with an exceptional Top 10 that hires bikes to cruise the predominantly flat Great Taste Trail, a dedicated cycleway stretching across the region.

## Day 7 Golden Bay

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### Ancient limestone caverns

It's an hour's drive from Motueka over Takaka Hill to Golden Bay, a quiet and idyllic region carpeted with farms and bush, and lined with sandy beaches. Both Abel Tasman and Kahurangi National Parks can be accessed from the bay; other reasons to visit are beaches such as Pohara and Wharariki, the crazy Canaan Downs, Takaka town, the Mussel Inn brewpub, and Farewell Spit, an otherworldly duneland with fascinating stories to tell. There are beautiful campervan sites from one end of Golden Bay to the other, and you'll need at least two full days to do it justice.

## Day 8 Motueka to Nelson Lakes National Park

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### Distance:

106km



### Driving Time:

1.75 hours

Take the Motueka Valley Highway to Kohatu and onward to St Arnaud, the quiet alpine village on the edge of Nelson Lakes National Park. The park's two glacier-formed lakes – Rotoiti ('little lake') and Rotoroa ('long lake') – are fringed with dense beech forest and surrounded by bald peaks.

It's a dramatic and beautiful scene indeed, which can be surveyed from DOC's Kerr Bay campsite (powered sites, hot showers, laundry), or explored on easy nature walks or day-hikes such as the highly memorable Mt Robert Circuit.

## Day 9 Nelson Lakes to Hanmer Springs

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**Distance:**

235km



**Driving Time:**

3.25 hours

This long but scenic leg begins westwards on SH63, before following SH6 past Murchison and heading south on SH65 towards Springs Junction. From there, SH7 heads through Lewis Pass, passing significant forest reserves on its way through the Southern Alps.

The small resort town of Hanmer Springs nestles into a basin, 10km off the highway. Its Thermal Pools & Spa are a pleasure-seekers' paradise, with open-air pools, fun slides and day spa facilities. Conical Hill Lookout offers panoramic views of the leafy town and countryside, throughout which are hikes, horse trekking, mountain biking, jet boating and bungee jumping. Hanmer Springs has two holiday parks – the Top 10 in town, and the larger Alpine Adventure Holiday Park, a short drive from the centre.

## Day 10 Hanmer Springs to Christchurch

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**Distance:**

134km



**Driving Time:**

2 hours

It's a pretty drive on SH7 through to SH1, which it meets at Waipara, thus closing your loop. With luck you'll have time left for another cellar door visit before the final drive south back to Christchurch.