

# Alps to Ocean Trail *EPIC* Trip Notes

An epic 320km bike ride from the mountains of the majestic Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, through the Mackenzie Basin and down the Waitaki Valley all the way to the Pacific Ocean at Oamaru Harbour.



## Tour Highlights

- + Cycle 320km of the Alps 2 Ocean Trail from the mountains to the sea
- + Enjoy the spectacular scenery of the Mackenzie Basin
- + Admire the engineering of the Waitaki Valley hydro scheme
- + Explore the small communities of Omarama, Kurow and Duntroon
- + Discover the Maori Rock art and limestone outcrops of North Otago
- + Step back in time in Oamaru's splendid Victorian Precinct
- + Stargaze in the 'Aoraki Mackenzie international dark sky reserve'

## Tour Details

- + 6 days
- + Grade 2+
- + 320km cycling with full vehicle support [57% gravel cycle trail, 17% gravel roads, 26% sealed roads]
- + Starts/Ends in Christchurch or Queenstown

## Tour Cost

Tour Price: \$2,070  
Deposit: \$400

Grade 2



### What's included?

- + 5 nights twin-share en-suite accommodation
- + 5 evening meals; 4 lunches; 4 breakfasts
- + fruit, snacks & morning teas on the trail
- + the services of a tour leader who provides vehicle support & information
- + cycle repair support
- + all transport from/to Christchurch
- + commercial guiding fees on the Alps 2 Ocean Trail
- + Goods & Services Tax of 15%

### Not included:

- + wine; beer; espresso coffees
- + lunch on Days 1 & 6; breakfast on Day 6
- + bike hire (standard \$190; e-bike \$450)
- + single accommodation supplement (\$400)
- + transfers from Queenstown to Lake Tekapo Day 1 (\$42 approx)
- + transfers from Oamaru to Queenstown Day 6 (\$65 approx)



## Departure Dates

Refer to our website for current 2018-2019 departure dates and tour availability



Official Partner



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## Itinerary

### Day 1 Christchurch - Twizel

We head south across the plains to the Mackenzie Basin, driving past Lake Tekapo to Lake Pukaki and the start of our great cycling epic. The first 6km cycle section is on a sealed road providing a good opportunity to get familiar with your bike. You then enter the trail on the Lake Pukaki foreshore that follows the fringe of Lake Pukaki, featuring fantastic views of Aoraki Mount Cook and the snow-capped Southern Alps, all the way to the spillway (9km). Enjoy a refreshment break at the Lake Pukaki foreshore before embarking on the next section of trail across the Pukaki Flats to Twizel (10km) featuring great views of the immense Mackenzie Basin and the afternoon sun falling across the Benmore Range. Check into our comfortable accommodation for the next two evenings.

**Meals (D) | Cycle Distance: 25km**

### Day 2 Twizel

We drive to the north eastern side of Lake Pukaki. This morning's cycle is a highlight. The 21km section travels deep into the mountains of the Southern Alps. The views here are quite simply superb and will take your breath away. The trail then retraces south to the carpark. Enjoy a picnic lunch surrounded by the mountains before completing the next section, 34km of gentle cycling following the shores of Lake Pukaki back to yesterday's starting point. At the conclusion of the ride we load our bikes and drive back to Twizel.

**Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 55km**

### Day 3 Twizel – Omarama

Cycle out of Twizel on a sealed road to the Pukaki - Ohau canal. This 19km section follows the road alongside the canal to the Ohau weir. Here we enjoy morning tea with a fabulous view overlooking Lake Ohau and the Ben Ohau Range. The next 14km section is on new purpose built trail along the edge of Lake Ohau and across to Lake Middleton. Continue 5km to Ohau Lodge where a sumptuous lunch awaits. From here a challenging but spectacular 19km section of trail awaits, featuring a climb to the Tarnbrae highpoint and down again to the Quailburn. The final 23km section takes you on an easy descent of the Quailburn Road, and a short distance along trail to Omarama and our accommodation. Enjoy an optional visit to the Omarama Hot Tubs.

**Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 80km**

### Day 4 Omarama – Oamaru

Today's ride takes us down the Waitaki Valley. The first 24km cycle section takes you from Omarama to Otematata, following the lakeside of Lake Benmore for part of the way. From here there is a short but steep climb to the Benmore Dam, past the power station and along the pleasant sealed road beside Lake Aviemore (30km). From here we follow the Waitaki River down the valley to Kurow (14km) and (conditions pending) onto Duntroon (28km). This section features an ancient Maori rock drawing site. In Duntroon explore the township and enjoy a beverage in the country hotel before we transfer a short distance to the town of Oamaru and our accommodation for the next two evenings. **Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 96km**

### Day 5 Oamaru

Today the trail leaves the Waitaki river valley and heads inland through the North Otago countryside, home to the unusual limestone 'Elephant Rocks' to Windsor (32km). Enjoy lunch before the next 22km section through very attractive looking 'English' countryside, into Oamaru, finishing up by the sea at Friendly Bay. Explore in the splendid Victorian precinct of Oamaru featuring some of New Zealand's best 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture and enjoy a celebratory meal together.

**Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 54km**

### Day 6 Oamaru – Christchurch

Have a well deserved lie in and leisurely breakfast. Spend the morning taking in the sights of the amazing Victorian precinct of Oamaru. We head back to Christchurch arriving at approximately 5:30pm. Alternatively catch a travel connection through to Queenstown.

**Meals (nil) | Cycle Distance: 0km**



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### Accommodation in Christchurch

If you need accommodation before and/or after your tour we recommend the following places. We provide **courtesy transfers from any of these locations** before/after your trip:

Airport Precinct:

[Airport Palms Motel](#)

56 Roydvale Avenue | Phone: 0800 200 529 | [www.airportpalmsmotelchch.co.nz](http://www.airportpalmsmotelchch.co.nz)  
Motel complex with a range of room options and free airport transfers. Breakfast available. Close proximity to the airport.



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## Airport Gateway Motel

45 Roydvale Avenue | Phone: 0800 242 8392 | [www.airportgateway.co.nz](http://www.airportgateway.co.nz)

Motel complex with a range of room options and free airport transfers. It also has an on-site café/restaurant & bar for convenient dining. Close proximity to the airport.

## Copthorne Hotel Commodore Christchurch Airport

449 Memorial Avenue | Phone: 0508 226 663 | [www.commodore.net.nz](http://www.commodore.net.nz)

Hotel complex in close proximity to Christchurch airport. Free 24 hour courtesy shuttle. Free bike's available to explore the local area.

## Sudima Hotel

550 Memorial Avenue | Phone: 03 358 3139 | [www.sudimahotels.com/christchurch](http://www.sudimahotels.com/christchurch)

Closest hotel to Christchurch Airport.

## Papanui Precinct:

### Quality Hotel Elms

456 Papanui Road | Phone: 0800 109910 | [www.elmshotel.co.nz](http://www.elmshotel.co.nz)

Hotel complex with a range of room options. On-site café/restaurant & bar for convenient dining. Close proximity to shops & restaurants and the PureTrails depot.

### Christchurch Top10 Holiday Park & Motels

39 Meadow Street | Phone: 0800 396323 | [www.christchurchtop10.co.nz](http://www.christchurchtop10.co.nz)

Holiday park with a range of motel style accommodation at budget-wise prices. Close proximity to shops & restaurants and the PureTrails depot.

## **Accommodation on the tour**

Our comfortable accommodation on this tour includes studio motel & hotel rooms. Accommodation is based on double or twin share rooms, with en-suite facilities. Single travellers are required to pay the single room supplement fee, however if there are other singles on the trip willing to share a twin room we can arrange this for you in which case no single supplement fee will be payable.

On our website you will find links to some of the accommodations we use within the tour itinerary description. We do not send out a list of accommodation venues for your trip prior to the tour departure unless specifically requested.

## **Bike hire**

Standard bike hire is available at a rate of \$190 for the 6 days. The bikes we use are hybrid style mountain bikes that are high quality and well maintained. We also have a small fleet of electric bikes (ebikes) available for hire at a rate of \$450 for the 6 days. Ebike availability is strictly limited so if you'd like to secure an ebike for your trip you need to book this in with us at your earliest convenience. For standard or ebike hire we need an **accurate measurement** of your height before we can confirm availability.

All bikes are fitted with comfortable gel seats and a small handlebar pannier bag. We also supply you with a helmet. To read more about our bikes, refer to our website: [www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/cycling-nz-information/cycle-trail-bike-hire](http://www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/cycling-nz-information/cycle-trail-bike-hire).

Please note the wearing of cycle helmets on PureTrails tours, whether you are cycling on a public road or cycle trail, is a compulsory requirement.

### **'Saddle Sore' Tip:**

No amount of gel seats or padding will protect you from saddle sore if you do not cycle regularly. The best way to prepare your backside for your tour is to cycle regularly (3 or more 20km+ rides per week) during the month leading up to your trip. Failing that you are welcome to bring a gel seat cover or even your own bike saddle to fit to your hire bike.

You are also welcome to bring your own spd pedals and cleat shoes to fit to your hire bike.



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## **Bringing your own bike**

You are welcome to bring your own bike. Please ensure it is in good condition, recently serviced, and suitable for the terrain you will be riding on. Your bike must not weigh more than **20kgs** as anything over this weight is unmanageable for our guides to handle. You need to supply your own spare inner-tubes and other spare parts. Your guide can assist with basic repairs such as repairing punctures, however any running repairs required beyond this are your own responsibility.

If you require the services of a bike mechanic to unpack and assemble your bike prior to your trip and/or box it up again at the end of your trip, this service is available for \$25 (for those starting/finishing in Christchurch only).

## **Booking Conditions & Cancellation & Refunds policy**

Bookings will be confirmed and held on receipt of a deposit by PureTrails New Zealand. The full name and contact details (phone, email & postal address) for each person booking the tour are required at the time of booking.

Prices quoted are in New Zealand dollars. The balance of the tour price is payable **60 days** prior to departure and payments must be made in New Zealand dollars. Payment is accepted by:

- + direct credit;
- + visa or mastercard & debit cards (add 2.5% surcharge);
- + cheque (in NZ currency);
- + international bank transfer (add \$25 funds clearance fee);
- + international bank draft

Cancellations must be received in writing and the following conditions apply:

- + Cancellations outside 90 days of the tour departure date will receive a full refund;
- + Cancellations between 90-61 days prior to the departure date will lose the deposit; this deposit can be transferred to an alternative tour within 12 months of the original departure date
- + Cancellations between 60-31 days of the departure date will receive no refund; however a 50% credit can be transferred to an alternative tour within 12 months of the original departure date
- + Cancellations within 30 days of the departure date will receive **no refund**; and no transfers or credits are available.

PureTrails New Zealand strongly recommends all clients, including **domestic** travellers, purchase travel insurance to protect against unexpected cancellations. We strongly recommend you obtain travel insurance should you need to cancel your trip unexpectedly within 3 months of departure.

Tour departures are subject to a **minimum of 4 people**. You can enquire with us as to the status of your tour at any stage. The full conditions are available on our website at [www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/booking-terms-conditions](http://www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/booking-terms-conditions).

## **Car Storage**

In Christchurch secure car storage is available at our depot in Papanui for \$10 per day. This needs to be booked in advance.



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## **Cash facilities**

The only places you will encounter a cash ATM machine or bank during the 5 days is Geraldine, Twizel, & Oamaru. EFTPOS and credit cards can be used at virtually all the cafes and hotels along the trail.

## **Contact details while on the tour**

If your friends or family need to contact you urgently during the tour, they can contact you via our office on: Phone: +64 21 178 8287. Please note there is good mobile phone coverage throughout most of the region.

## **Degree of difficulty & What to Expect**

The 'Alps 2 Ocean Trail EPIC' is a challenging 320km cycle trail that consists of a mix of purpose built firm **gravel trails**, and sealed and **gravel public roads**. Our tour features 57% cycling on gravel cycle trails, 26% cycling on sealed roads, and 17% cycling on gravel roads. The trail features some of the best scenery in the country from the awe inspiring snow capped peaks of the Southern Alps, to the tawny tussock of the Mackenzie Basin, down to the fertile farmland of North Otago and the coast at Oamaru, a delightfully impressive Victorian city.

The riding is rated Grade 2 and there are **a few longer rides and challenging climbs** that can be skipped if desired. Refer to our website for more information on our Difficulty Gradings. [www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/cycling-nz-information/level-of-difficulty](http://www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/cycling-nz-information/level-of-difficulty). Cycling experience is necessary, as well as the ability to change gears proficiently. If this itinerary sounds too ambitious for you, we now also have an 'EASY' grade 1 version of the Alps to Ocean Trail which you may like to consider.

**If you do minimal training before your tour or are not 'cycle fit', you may find that you are not able to cycle all of the sections of the trail, and may require the use of our support vehicle.**

## **Departure time and place (Christchurch)**

PureTrails offer courtesy pick ups and drop offs from the locations recommended on pages 3 & 4. If you are staying at one of these locations, we will pick you up between 8:00am and 8:20am approximately. For those staying elsewhere, we ask that you make your way to our depot in Papanui (11a Langstone Lane) **by 8:15am**. Please be ready wearing your cycle gear at the start of the tour.

Unfortunately we are not able to provide pick ups or drop offs at Christchurch Airport. The nearest pick up point available is at the Airport Gateway Motel, 2kms from the terminals.

## **Departure time and place (Queenstown)**

If you opt to start your tour from Queenstown rather than Christchurch, the tour will meet you in Tekapo at approximately 1pm on Day 1, at the bus stop alongside the Tekapo Village or in that vicinity.

For those flying into Queenstown, we can organise a bus connection to Tekapo for you. Bus times available vary from day to day and month to month, so please check the timetable with us before finalising your flights. Please note tour transfers need to be booked and paid for at least one month in advance. The cost is Queenstown – Tekapo (\$40 pp approx).



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## **International Transfers Tip:**

Conventional Banks have high fees when it comes to international transfers (hence our \$25 funds clearance fee). Third party institutions such as Western Union or CurrencyFair or TransferWise will offer you a competitive currency exchange rate and significantly lower transfer fees. We are happy to refund you the difference (in NZ\$ cash) in funds clearance fees if you manage to secure a better rate.

Bicycles are not easily transported on public buses so you may find you are not able to bring your own bike if you require a bus connection from Queenstown.

## **Final Payment**

Your final payment is required **60 days prior** to your tour departure date, and will include items which may not be listed on your original invoice such as bike hire and any tour transfers required. You will receive an updated invoice around 10 weeks prior to departure once we have received your Tour Information & Safety Declaration Form – see page 9.

Payment can be made by:

- + visa or mastercard (Inc debit cards) - subject to a 2.5% surcharge;
- + direct transfer (NZ bank account holders only);
- + international transfer (subject to a \$25 funds clearance fee which covers the fee NZ banks charge to receive your payment);
- + cheque in NZ currency ;
- + international bank draft (cheque)

## **Finishing your tour**

If you are finishing your tour in Christchurch, you are likely to be back in the city by 5:30pm on Day 6. Your guide can drop you off at any of the accommodation locations on pages 3 & 4. If you are flying out of Christchurch on Day 6, do not book flights that require check in before 6:30pm.

## **Finishing your tour in Queenstown**

If you opt to finish your tour in Queenstown rather than Christchurch, we can organise a bus connection to Queenstown for you from Oamaru (via Dunedin). Bus times available vary from day to day and month to month, so please check the timetable with us before finalising your flights. Please note tour transfers need to be booked and paid for at least one month in advance. The cost is Oamaru – Queenstown (\$63 pp approx).

Bicycles are not easily transported on public buses so you may find you are not able to bring your own bike if you require a bus connection to Queenstown.

## **Guide**

Your tour will be led by one of our friendly and professional guides who drives the support vehicle and will be at hand for (almost) anything you need or want to know during your tour (we try our best anyway!) We are very approachable so please do ask if you have any queries or concerns. Your guide **does not participate in the cycling** with the group, but meets up with you along the trail in our vehicle every 8 – 15kms or so.

## **Health & fitness**

You will be cycling 320km of the Alps 2 Ocean Trail over 5 days so you should be reasonably fit and in good health. While the trail is not technically difficult, the more comfortable you are riding your bike beforehand, the more you will enjoy the trail. You bike at your own pace and can have plenty of photo and snack stops. Our emphasis is on having fun and enjoying the scenery. If you need a rest, there is always the option of taking the **support vehicle**.

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## Insurance Tip:

Domestic New Zealand travellers can obtain a Domestic Travel Insurance Policy online from [www.1Cover.co.nz](http://www.1Cover.co.nz) (Comprehensive Domestic) or [www.CoverMore.co.nz](http://www.CoverMore.co.nz) (Domestic Plan D) for reasonable prices (approx \$100-\$150 for two seniors for 8 days cover). Ensure your policy includes cover for 'Cancellations & Lost Deposits'. Pre-existing medical conditions are not generally covered so check the policy wording and exclusions carefully.

## Laundry Tip:

If you need to give your cycle gear a wash during your trip, bring some travel liquid detergent and an elastic travel clothes line (available from Kathmandu etc). You can wash your garments and hang them out to dry in your room overnight. Merino and quick-dry fabric garments will dry out overnight.

We strongly encourage you to get out and do some biking before your tour, on gravel roads if possible, starting out with half an hour a day, building up to 3-4 longer rides (20km+) per week during the month prior to your tour (at the very minimum). The secret is to start slowly and increase your exercise gradually. The fitter you are the more enjoyable your experience will be.

If this itinerary sounds too ambitious for you, we now also have an 'EASY' grade 1 version of the Alps to Ocean Trail which you may like to consider.

**If you do minimal training before your tour or are not 'cycle fit', you may find that you are not able to cycle all of the sections of the trail, and may require the use of our support vehicle.**

## Insurance

You never know when either yourself or a family member may fall ill. You are urged to take out travel insurance to cover yourself in the event that you need to cancel your tour with us within three months of the tour departure date. **This includes New Zealander's travelling within New Zealand.** PureTrails New Zealand Ltd is not obligated to give you a refund within this period. Refer to our website for the full terms and conditions [www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/booking-terms-conditions](http://www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/booking-terms-conditions).

## Laundry facilities

There are laundry facilities for you to use at our accommodation during the tour. There is usually a \$4 - 5 charge per wash and dry cycle.

## Luggage

We urge you to try to keep your luggage to a minimum. Please limit yourself to 18kgs. All luggage is transported in our vehicle during the day. Anything you need access to during the days cycle ride should be stored in a small bag which can be left on the bus rather than in your suitcase. On Day 1 when you join the tour, please be ready wearing your cycle gear. Those with excess luggage not needed on the tour are welcome to store bags at our depot free of charge while you are away.

## Meals & Special Dietary Requirements

Meals are supplied as indicated on the itinerary (B/L/D). Beer and wine, tea & coffee etc are not included in the tour package however there will be the opportunity for you to buy beverages along the way.

Breakfasts are a continental style breakfast supplied by our accommodation hosts, and lunches are taken either as a trail-side picnic or in cafes along the trail. For dinner we dine in the local restaurants in the villages where we stay following a two course set menu format.

We provide a range of high energy healthy snacks while biking such as bananas and fruit, froyze balls, muesli bars, fruit cake and biscuits.

PureTrails New Zealand will **endeavour** to cater to any special dietary requirements you may have (please disclose this on the Tour Info & Health & Safety Declaration form). Vegetarian and gluten free and dairy free diets are not a problem for our meal providers. Requests such as a sugar free or grain free diet and vegan meals etc are a



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little more problematic given the remote rural location of the tour. In these instances you may need to bring your own snacks and specialty foods. We are unable to guarantee a peanut free or allergen free trip, and therefore we strongly encourage that travellers with life threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self administering these medications.

## **Medical conditions**

If you have a medical, physical or mental condition that may affect your ability to participate in the tour you must disclose this to us on our Tour Information and Safety Declaration form (see page 8). Your guide may follow up on your condition with you on Day 1 to help us manage your safety in the event of a medical event.

## **Phone reception/Wifi**

There is very good mobile phone coverage throughout most of the Mackenzie Basin. Wifi is becoming more widely available and in most case (but not all) is offered free of charge, and there is also good 3G/4G coverage.

## **Tour Information and Safety Declaration Form**

All tour participants (including non-riders) are required to complete a separate copy of our 'Tour Information and Safety Declaration Form', and return it to us **3 months** prior to your tour departure date. Please note this includes those who have been on another PureTrails New Zealand tour at some point in the past. Although we keep a database of information from previous tours, medical/dietary/emergency contact details can change from year to year so we require that a new form be completed for each tour you join.

## **Weather conditions**

The Mackenzie Basin has one of the greatest extremes of weather variation in New Zealand, with temperatures ranging from -10 to 38°C. The altitude of the basin ranges from 500 – 700 metres above sea level, and the region can be subject to strong winds. You could experience very hot or cold temperatures at any time of the year.

Generally, you can expect the temperature to be around 15-30°C in Jan/Feb, and 15 - 25°C in Nov/Dec/Mar/April. By April, it tends to get quite cold in the evenings with frosts, and possibly snow in late April (!) The visual landscape is impossibly beautiful regardless of season or temperature. You will gain maximum enjoyment by being prepared for both hot and cold temperatures.



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## Help us go green:

Help us save the planet by bringing your own reusable drink bottle and coffee cup. Alternatively a branded PureTrails 'Specialised' drink bottle can be purchased for \$10.

## Cycle Clothing Tip:

Bright reflective cycling gear makes you far more visible to other road users and increases your safety significantly. We require that those not wearing bright reflective cycle clothing wear a PureTrails supplied high-vis safety vest for all cycle sections that are on public roads.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Aid Kit Tip:

PureTrails NZ carries a comprehensive 1<sup>st</sup> Aid Kit and an Emergency Response Kit in our support vehicle; however this is kept for emergency situations only. Please bring your own supply of paracetamol, voltaren, antihistamine and any other medication you take, as well as bandaids and some dressings etc in a small kit that you can take with you on your bike.

## Wet Weather Tip:

Bring a large plastic zip-lock bag that you can use inside the pannier bag of your hire bike to store your camera, phone, wallet etc to prevent them from getting wet (the pannier bags are not 100% waterproof).

## What to bring

In the interest of safety and enjoyment, please ensure you are adequately equipped for your tour. **Warm clothing is essential even in January/February.** The following is a list of what you need to bring:

- Clothing:**
- Waterproof raincoat – **essential**
  - Thermal top – **essential**
  - Thermal leggings – **essential in Spring/Autumn**
  - Shorts, bike pants or light trousers for cycling
  - Woollen or fleece jacket layers (not cotton)
  - T-shirts (breathable fabrics are best)
  - Warm hat and gloves
  - A comfortable pair of shoes for cycling
  - Sports socks for cycling
  - Comfortable casual wear for evenings
- Equipment:**
- A drink bottle (or buy a PureTrails branded bottle for \$10)
  - A cup for tea/coffee stops
  - Padded cycle gloves
  - Sunscreen, sunglasses & sunhat
  - Personal toilet gear
  - Personal first aid kit** containing paracetamol, voltaren, antihistamine and any other medication you take
  - A supply of toilet tissue as it may not be provided in the public toilets along the trails
  - Torch/flashlight for the tunnel on the trail (Day 5)
- Optional:**
- Gel seat cover
  - Camera
  - A large plastic ziplock bag for use inside the hire bike pannier bag if it is very wet
  - Mobile phone to enable phone contact with your guide
  - Swimming costume (Omarama Hot tubs)

On Day 1 when you join the tour, please be ready wearing your cycle gear.

For excellent quality NZ made cycle specific clothing and accessories, visit [www.groundeffect.co.nz](http://www.groundeffect.co.nz)

# Alps to Ocean Trail *EPIC* Trip Notes

*An epic 320km bike ride from the mountains of the majestic Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, through the Mackenzie Basin and down the Waitaki Valley all the way to the Pacific Ocean at Oamaru Harbour.*

