

Canterbury Backcountry Trail Trip Notes

Take a journey through Canterbury's Backcountry and enjoy a series of cycle rides and side trips that showcase the area's vast glacial river valleys and snow-capped peaks.



Tour Highlights

- + Cycle 180km in Canterbury's vast braided river valleys and plains
- + Take in the amazing and majestic vistas of the Southern Alps
- + Relax beside the crystal clear alpine lakes
- + Stay in small rural towns
- + Visit Mt Sunday - the heart of 'The Lord of the Rings' Middle Earth
- + See the Rakaia River by jet boat
- + Learn the history of Canterbury's early run holders

Tour Details

- + 5 days
- + Grade 1
- + 180km+ cycling [72% sealed roads; 28% gravel roads]
- + Starts/Ends in Christchurch

Tour Cost

Tour Price: from \$1,725
Deposit: \$400

What's included?

- + 4 nights twinshare en-suite accommodation
- + 4 evening meals; 5 lunches; 4 continental breakfasts
- + fruit, snacks & morning teas on the trail
- + the services of a tour leader who provides vehicle support & information
- + cycle repair support
- + Rakaia Gorge jet boat ride
- + all transport from/to Christchurch
- + Goods & Services Tax of 15%

Not included:

- + wine; beer; espresso coffees
- + bike hire (standard \$200; e-bike \$500)
- + single accommodation (\$300)



Departure Dates

Refer to our website for current departure dates and tour availability

Grade 1



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Itinerary

Day 1 Christchurch – Methven

The tour gets underway as we head west across the plains towards the Torlesse Range and through the town of Hororata. After a stop for morning tea we begin the first ride of the day to the Lake Coleridge Village (18km). Relax with a picnic lunch before our second ride on a river terrace with stunning views over the Rakaia River (15km). We head across the Rakaia Gorge to the small Canterbury rural service town of Methven and settle into our lodge accommodation for the next two evenings.

Meals (L/D) | Cycle Distance: 33km

Day 2– Methven

Today our first ride begins as we leave the highway and turn again towards the Southern Alps. Cycle 13km along the river terraces high above the Rakaia. Enjoy morning tea and a bus transfer along a hilly section, to where we can ride (15km) along the flat river terrace past where the Wilberforce and Mathias Valleys meet the Rakaia. Here the valleys become wide and sparse, with amazing views of the surrounding mountain ranges. At the conclusion of the ride we head to the Rakaia Gorge and enjoy an exhilarating jet boat ride on the Rakaia River before heading back to Methven.

Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 28km

Day 3 Methven – Mt Somers

Today we enjoy some riding around the farmland of the fertile and productive Canterbury Plains, taking in the rural vistas (44km). From here we drive to the foothills where there is the opportunity to do a short walk through native beech forest. Enjoy lunch at a local cafe before another short ride (12km) on the Plains. At the conclusion of the ride we travel a short distance to our accommodation for the next two evenings at the settlement of Mt Somers.

Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 56km

Day 4 Mt Somers

Today we drive up through the Ashburton Gorge to Lake Clearwater, and on towards Mt Sunday. From here you have the opportunity to do an [unguided] walk up Mt Sunday – the site of the set for Edoras, the fortress city of the Rohan people in The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers and The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King. Nothing remains of the set, but the views of the surrounding countryside are stunning. We then continue further up the valley to Erewhon Station 'home of the working horse' to visit the Clydesdale horses. Leaving the horses, we travel to an area of the Canterbury backcountry that is dotted with many picturesque lakes, and remnants of ancient glaciers. The largest of these is Lake Heron, sitting at 700m above sea level and a key habitat for the endangered Crested Grebe. There is time to explore the area before our cycle ride, heading 18km down the valley to yet another stunning alpine lake. Our second ride follows the Hakatere River 24km back to Mt Somers.

Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 42km

Day 5 Mt Somers - Christchurch

Today we drive through the Rangitata River Valley and on to the historic Mesopotamia Station, nestled in the centre of middle earth. Take in the breathtaking scenery at the headwaters of the Rangitata, with sweeping views of the Two Thumbs Range and Southern Alps in all directions. We then enjoy a 21km cycle ride adjacent Mt Peel and through the Peel Forest Reserve. Take a short walk in the reserve to appreciate the magnificent old podocarps that once covered this landscape. Visit a lovely church, and ride on to the quaint hamlet of Arundel where our cycling comes to an end. We load up and transfer back to Christchurch, arriving at approximately 5pm.

Meals (B/L) | Cycle Distance: 21km



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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. We do not provide central city or city-wide pick ups at the start or end of your tour.

Airport Precinct:

[Airport Palms Motel](#)

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

[Airport Gateway Motel](#)

45 Roydvale Avenue | Phone: 0800 242 8392 | 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.

Papanui Precinct:

[Quality Hotel Elms](#)

456 Papanui Road | Phone: 0800 109910 | 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.

[Christchurch Top10 Holiday Park & Motels](#)

39 Meadow Street | Phone: 0800 396323 | www.christchurchtop10.co.nz
Holiday park with a range of motel style accommodation at budget-wise prices. Close proximity to shops & restaurants.

Accommodation on the tour

Our comfortable accommodation on this tour includes motels and lodge resorts. 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 \$200 for the 5 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 \$500 for the 5 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 seats and a small handlebar pannier bag. We also supply you with a helmet. To read more about our bikes, refer to our website:

'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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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.

Bringing your own bike

If you are bringing your own, please take the following into consideration:

- Your bicycle **does not weigh more than 20kg** – including e-bikes (with the battery off). Bikes heavier than this are too heavy for our guides to be able to lift on and off the cycle trailer safely and are too heavy for our trailer fittings.
- Your bike **does not have any mudguards fitting on the front tyre** (due to how they are secured on the trailer). Rear mudguards are fine.
- The bike is well maintained, recently serviced, and in a good safe condition.
- Your helmet is in a good safe condition with no cracks, and can be fastened properly.
- The tyres have a good level of tread on them, suitable for trails/gravel. Slick tyres are not recommended.
- A basic bike repair kit must be carried including 2 x spare inner tubes.
- Any major mechanical breakdown is your own responsibility.
- **PureTrails staff will secure your bike on our cycle trailer when in transit during the tour, but the company is not held responsible for any damages that occur during transportation.**

Your guide can assist with basic repairs such as repairing punctures, however any running repairs required beyond this are your own responsibility.

Booking Terms & Conditions

Our Booking Terms & Conditions can be found on our website at:

<https://puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/booking-terms-conditions/>

Please read carefully these terms and conditions of contract. In completing and submitting the Booking Form and/or paying a deposit, you agree to be bound by these conditions which constitute the agreement between PureTrails New Zealand Ltd and you.

Car Storage

In Christchurch secure car storage is available at Superior Airport Parking.

www.superiorairportparking.co.nz

Degree of difficulty & What to expect

The Canterbury Backcountry tour is a collection of cycle rides totalling 180km that we have put together that showcase the dramatic northern Canterbury foothills region. The tour features 72% cycling on sealed roads, 28% cycling on **gravel roads**. As well as lots of additional sightseeing at places of geological and historical interest such as the Mt Sunday walk and Erewhon Station.



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The riding is rated **Grade 1** and there are a few gentle hills 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

Departure time and place

PureTrails offer courtesy pick ups and drop offs from the locations recommended on page 4. If you are staying at one of these locations, we will pick you up between 8:00am and 8:20am approximately. We do not provide central city or city-wide pick ups at the start or end of your tour. If you choose to stay elsewhere in Christchurch we will talk to you about a meeting location at one of the locations below, or a suitable location (*where we can park our 7m bus + 6m cycle trailer off any suburban roads*) en-route (EG Yaldhurst), prior to your tour departure.

Unfortunately we are not able to provide pick ups or drop offs at Christchurch Airport terminals. The nearest pick up point available is at Spitfire Square Shopping Centre, 800m from the terminals. Please factor in a 10 minute walk to get to/from the terminal from there. Our bus stops outside the Lonestar Restaurant.

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. You will receive an updated invoice around 10 weeks prior to departure once we have received your Tour Information & Safety Declaration Form – see page 8.

Payment can be made by:

- + visa or mastercard (Inc debit cards) - subject to a 2.9% 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);

Finishing your tour

The tour finishes in Christchurch at approximately 5pm on Day 5. Your guide can drop you off at any of the accommodation locations on page 4. If you are flying out of Christchurch on Day 5, do not book flights that require check in before 5pm.

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.

Health & fitness

You will be cycling 180km over 5 days so you should be reasonably fit and in good health. While the cycling is not technically difficult, the more comfortable you are riding your bike beforehand, the more you will enjoy the tour. 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**.

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.



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Insurance Tip:

Domestic New Zealand travellers can obtain a Domestic Travel Insurance Policy online from www.1Cover.co.nz (Comprehensive Domestic) or 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.

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. **This includes New Zealander's travelling within New Zealand.** Refer to our website for the full terms and conditions 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.

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, and lunches are taken either as picnics or in cafes. 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, froyee 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 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.



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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. 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 much of the region with the exception of Lake Coleridge. Wifi is becoming more widely available and in most cases (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 online 'Tour Information and Safety Declaration Form' **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

Generally, you can expect the day time temperature to be around 15-30°C in Jan/Feb, and 12-25°C in Nov/Dec/Mar/April. The visual landscape is impossibly beautiful regardless of season or temperature. You will gain maximum enjoyment by being prepared for hot, cold, and wet conditions.



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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.

1st Aid Kit Tip:

PureTrails NZ carries a comprehensive 1st 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).

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.

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
 - Insect repellent

- 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

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