



TOP RIDE

Loop the top of the South Island • Soak in Hanmer Springs • Swim with dolphins • Cycle the East Coast to Kaikoura • Marlborough wine region • Abel Tasman National Park Queen Charlotte Drive • Ride the West Coast • Cycle Arthur's Pass

14 days: Christchurch to Christchurch Total 696miles (1,123km)* US\$4299 + tax

**All distances are approximate and can be adjusted to suit your level of ability.*

The Top Ride cycling tour is a fantastic two week loop round the top part of New Zealand's South Island. You'll follow our best South Island cycling routes, from the stunning Southern Alps, to the coastal beaches of the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean. We cover various distances on this trip, from 20 and 80 miles (35 - 130km) per day, with the opportunity to do more or less if you prefer. The Top Ride is fully vehicle-supported, so there's flexibility and freedom for you on the road. Our specialist cycling guides are experienced, compassionate and enthusiastic. Here at ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND, we're all very passionate about cycling, and we'd love to show you round New Zealand on the Top Ride cycling tour.

Who did we design this trip for?

This trip is designed for cyclists wanting a scenic and challenging two week cycle tour. You'll complete a full loop of the top of the South Island, with the opportunity to cycle some 700 miles (1123km). There is the chance each day to cycle more than the daily mileage, or jump in the support vehicle and do less, depending on your mood. This is your cycle tour and we are here to help you make it as physically demanding as you like.

Monday Arrive Christchurch, cycle to Hanmer Springs

If you're flying in long-haul, you'll leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Saturday, arriving in New Zealand early Monday morning. It's hard to get your head around at first, as you'll lose a day to the dateline – but you'll get it back on the way home, so just go with the flow! You'll just need to make sure you arrive in Christchurch by around 10am, where we'll meet you to start your trip. Here we'll get your bike sorted and make sure it's adjusted to your liking, although we can always tweak it on the way around. You'll then have a chance to stretch your legs by cycling the Waiau Valley through to Hanmer Springs. Hanmer Springs is a wonderful place of natural hot springs where you can soak, relax and socialize in the fresh water mineral spas while enjoying wonderful mountain views.

Notes: Cycling distance - 48miles (77km) - Waipara to Hanmer Springs (ascent 350m, gradual).

ACCOMMODATION: Hanmer Springs lodgings, Hanmer Springs (L,D)

Tuesday Cycle Hanmer to Kaikoura via Inland route

Today we'll follow the Inland Scenic route past Mt Lyford, cycling over roller-coaster hills and through farmland with plenty of ups and downs to enjoy. We'll finish our ride where the mountains plunge into the sea, once we hit the Pacific Ocean in Kaikoura. Kaikoura is home to an abundance of marine life including dusky dolphins, whales and seals. Keep an eye out on the beach as there may be a seal or two taking a break from a day of hunting in the sea.

Notes: Cycling distance - 80miles (130km) - Hanmer to Kaikoura (ascent 300m, descent 550m, rolling terrain).

ACCOMMODATION: Admiral Creighton B&B, Kaikoura (B,L,D)

Wednesday

Swim with Dolphins, cycle Pacific Coast, sample NZ wine

We'll rise early this morning and start the day with a quick breakfast before heading out to swim with some of Kaikoura's more famous local personalities – the playful Dusky dolphins! This is a dream come true for some and is everything you could hope for. You'll be fitted with all the gear you need before jumping on the boat and heading out into the bay, where you'll have the opportunity to enter the world of the dolphins and swim with them as they pass by. If you prefer not to jump in the water, you can stay on board the boat and marvel at their acrobatic displays from the deck. It's amazing! Afterwards, we'll make good use of the dose of adrenaline, depart Kaikoura and bike along the coastal road, watching the local New Zealand fur seals (*arctocephalus forsteri*) cavorting in the water and sunbathing on the rocks. We'll carry on into the Marlborough wine region and Forrest Estate Winery, where we'll finish up our day sampling their fantastic wines.

Notes: Cycling distance - 80miles (130km) - Kaikoura to Blenheim (ascent 275m, descent 275m).

ACCOMMODATION: *Blenheim lodgings, Blenheim (B,L,D)*

Thursday

Cycle to Portage Resort via Queen Charlotte Drive

Following the route of "the grape ride" we start at Renwick on the outskirts of Blenheim and cycle through the heart of the wine region. Once we arrive in Picton, we'll join on to the scenic Queen Charlotte Drive – one of the best rides in New Zealand and a real highlight of this trip – and wind our way around the fabulous Marlborough Sounds to our destination at Portage Bay in Kenepuru Sound. Enjoy your evening at this peaceful retreat in the heart of nature.

Notes: Cycling distance - 46miles (75km) - Renwick to Portage (ascent 200m, descent 200m, 3 hills).

ACCOMMODATION: *Portage Resort, Marlborough Sounds (B,L,D)*

Friday

Cycle Marlborough Sounds to Nelson

You'll wake up this morning to a wonderful view and the sounds of native birds. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast while you take it all in. When you're ready, we'll cycle from Portage Resort back along Kenepuru Sound and into Havelock. Havelock is well known for their scrumptious green lipped mussels, so if you're a sea food fanatic, they're sure to be on the menu for lunch! We'll cycle back into rolling farmland in the afternoon, and head inland along the Pelorus River, climb over the Rai and Whangamoia Saddles and wind our way down into the sunny, arty and colourful town of Nelson.

Notes: Cycling distance - 65miles (104km) - Portage to Pelorus River to Nelson (ascent 400m, descent 400m, 3 hills).

ACCOMMODATION: *Nelson lodgings, Nelson (B,L)*

Saturday

Free day in Nelson

You've been working hard, so it's time to take a break and make your own plans. There's a heap to do if you want to explore, whether you opt to soak up the local art and café culture that Nelson is well known for, or do something more energetic. If you're opting for a laid back day, Saturday is market day in Montgomery Square in the town centre, so it's always fun to have a poke around there - we recommend trying the home-made gourmet pies! It's all up to you today and there's plenty to do – enjoy yourself.

ACCOMMODATION: *Nelson lodgings, Nelson*

Sunday

Nelson to Abel Tasman

We'll depart Nelson in the morning and make our way through more stunning green New Zealand countryside and fruit orchards out to Motueka. From there we'll head on to Abel Tasman National Park, a place of lush forests, turquoise

waters and golden sands. A fun option for the afternoon is to catch one of the boats round the coast to hike part of the Abel Tasman track, so if you're keen to take a break from the saddle, your guides can easily arrange this for you. Otherwise, we'll bike on the inland roads and enjoy the sea air of the Abel Tasman area.

Notes: Cycling distance - 52miles (83km) - Nelson to Abel Tasman (ascent 275m, descent 275m, 3 hills).

ACCOMMODATION: Abel Tasman lodgings, Abel Tasman (B,L,D)

Monday Takaka Hill – The Big Challenge

Takaka Hill is the largest continuous climb on the *Top Ride* and it's a monster! Category One class, it's 17km from sea level to the top of the mountain, with the first 3km being the hardest at almost 9% gradient – so let's do it! You'll be well rewarded at the top with panoramic views out over Golden Bay and the mountains of Kahurangi National Park. A superb picnic lunch prepared by your co-guide will also be waiting for you at the top and then the most amazing downhill back down! After a fabulous and challenging day, we'll relax and recharge in Abel Tasman over a good meal before preparing for tomorrow's ride.

Notes: Cycling distance - 21miles (34km) - Takaka Hill return (ascent 800m, descent 800m, 1 BIG hill).

ACCOMMODATION: Abel Tasman lodgings, Abel Tasman (B,L,D)

Tuesday Cycle Abel Tasman to Murchison

It's time to farewell the golden sands of the Abel Tasman region and cycle out past fruit orchards and hop fields along the Motueka River. Further inland, we'll join on to the Buller Valley and follow this scenic route south to Murchison. Murchison is the whitewater capital of New Zealand, so look out for rafters and kayakers making their way along the Buller River alongside you. New Zealanders love the outdoors – you're going to fit in well!

Notes: Cycling distance - 80miles (130km) - Abel Tasman to Murchison (ascent 625m, descent 400m, 1 hill).

ACCOMMODATION: Murchison Motels, Murchison (B,L,D)

Wednesday Cycle Murchison to Westport

From Murchison we'll keep following along the path of the Buller River, known for its historic gold mining sites, downstream. If you've got eagle eyes, you may spot rainbow trout in the river. However, the only way you can eat this delicacy in New Zealand is to catch it yourself! Fishing, especially fly fishing, is a very popular sport in New Zealand, so if you're a fly fisherman on the side you'll be delighted at the opportunities here! We'll finish in Westport today, a town located at the mouth of the Buller River where you'll get your first glimpse of the Tasman Sea and the West Coast.

Notes: Cycling distance - 62miles (99km) - Murchison to Westport (descent 250m, rolling hills).

ACCOMMODATION: Westport lodgings, Westport (B,L,D)

Thursday Cycle Westport to Punakaiki

From Westport we'll cross back over the Buller River and cycle south to Cape Foulwind (sounds ominous, we know!). Cape Foulwind is home to a local seal colony and it's also a great beach to watch the local surfers practising their moves. After a lunch stop at one of the best cafés in the area (New Zealand cafés do great coffee – you'll know the coffee menu by heart in no time), we'll hop back on our bikes and veer inland. We'll follow the main coastal highway south to Punakaiki along a beautiful road with many scenic highlights along the way, so keep your camera ready. Once in the small village of Punakaiki, we recommend taking a walk along the remote beach to watch the sun set over the Tasman Sea after dinner.

Notes: Cycling distance - 39miles (64km) - Westport to Punakaiki (ascent 250m, descent 250, 3 hills).

ACCOMMODATION: Punakaiki lodgings, Punakaiki (B,L,D)

Friday **Cycle Punakaiki to Lake Brunner**

The rugged coastline and beautiful beaches of the West Coast will keep our spirits soaring as we make our way further along our journey. Heading inland again, we'll cycle through a couple of small coal mining villages that are the mainstays of this area, and then to Lake Brunner. The lake is popular for water sports, so you're likely to see wake boarders and jet boaters out making the most of the day. Our accommodation tonight is right on the shoreline of this pretty lake, and there's nothing like a body of water to soothe the soul.

Notes: Cycling distance - 50miles (80km) - Punakaiki to Lake Brunner (ascent 150m, rolling hills).

ACCOMMODATION: Lake Brunner lodgings, Lake Brunner (B,L,D)

Saturday **Cycle Otira Gorge and Arthur's Pass – Highest pass in the Southern Alps**

Today it's time to tackle Arthur's Pass – the highest pass through the Southern Alps. We'll start by making our way around the lake and then into the heart of the Southern Alps, where the mountainous peaks tower up to create a magnificent skyline. You can catch a lift to the top of the pass if you like! We'll stop for lunch in the small township of Arthur's Pass, surrounded by beautiful green bushland and stunning mountains. Then it's time for the next phase of the day, so with lunch fuelling our fires, we'll continue over the pass through the national park, watching the land change from scree slopes and snow capped peaks, to beach forests and wide river mouths as we go. Following the Waimakariri River, we'll arrive at Flock Hill, our final destination on the eastern side of the Alps, where we'll have a well-deserved final evening celebration together.

Notes: Cycling distance - 31miles (50km) - Lake Brunner to Otira (ascent 325m, gradual). Then 17miles (27km) - Arthur's Pass to Flockhill (ascent 400m, descent 100m, gradual).

ACCOMMODATION: Flock Hill Station, Flockhill (B,L,D)

Sunday **Cycle Flockhill to Springfield, depart Christchurch**

After a leisurely breakfast, it's back on the bikes once again for our final ride through to the alluvial Canterbury Plains and the farming township of Springfield, where we'll reluctantly swap our bikes for the bus to make our way back into Christchurch. We'll arrive by early afternoon, so book your international flights to depart after 3pm, or we can make 2pm domestic flights with a little notice. International flights from Auckland usually leave early evening, so if you're heading back to North America, you'll get home some time on Sunday, even though you left on Sunday evening (the joys of world travel)! Flights back to Europe, of course, take a little bit longer. We'll send you home fit, healthy and full of energy with a whole bunch of wonderful memories too.

(B,L)

Notes: Cycling distance - 25miles (40km) – Flockhill to Springfield (ascent 120m, descent 625m, 1 hill).

Important Information

ACCOMMODATION: The *Top Ride* is a fully-supported cycling tour with all accommodation included, from the moment we pick you up, to when we drop you off at the end. We stay in comfortable bed and breakfasts, lodges and apartments, so while we appreciate creature comforts on our cycle tours, they're not a scenic tour of luxury hotels of the South Island. Rooming is twin-share, although single rooms are available on request at an extra charge. We find that most solo travellers get on great sharing a room with a fellow cyclist of the same gender. We use a variety of accommodation and most places have ensuite bathrooms, but there are a couple of places where the bathrooms are shared – so we ask you to share with other group members on occasion.

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: If you're flying in on the first day of the tour, or out on the last day, we recommend booking a flight that arrives in Christchurch by 10am on Monday, and departs from Christchurch after 3pm on Sunday. If you're considering alternative flight times, please call us so we can make the arrangements and make sure your trip runs as smoothly as possible.

TRIP START: Monday - on the first day of the tour, we can either pick you up from the Chateau on the Park Hotel in Christchurch at 10.30am or at the Christchurch airport Travel and Info desk at 11am.

TRIP END: Sunday - on the last day of the tour, we can drop you off at the Christchurch airport in time for flights after 3pm or anywhere in central Christchurch in the mid-late afternoon.

FITNESS: You must have a reasonable level of cycling fitness to enjoy yourself on the *Top Ride*. You don't have to be young and extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing at least some regular cycling. Age and experience are not as important as attitude. If you're concerned about your fitness level, have a chat with us so we can help make sure you've chosen the most suitable trip.

EXPERIENCE You don't need any cycle touring experience to enjoy the *Top Ride* cycling tour, but if you're a seasoned cycle tourer you'll still find plenty of challenges. All we ask is that you be energetic and in good shape. We manage the challenge level to suit your experience and we have an impeccable safety record. We hold all relevant government licenses and our staff are highly trained and experienced.

FLEXIBILITY: The off-the-beaten path and non-commercial nature of some of the accommodation on this tour means we occasionally need to make changes to the itinerary. We try to make as few changes as possible, but retain the flexibility to make sure your trip is as good as it can be.

INCLUDED: The trip fare is **US\$4299 + 15% NZ** government taxes. We quote all prices in US dollars, so our guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. You can also join us for shorter periods of time, at a pro-rated fare. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- Good quality road bikes for your entire tour. There is no extra charge for bike rental, but there is the option to upgrade to a high performance bike should you prefer.
- All guiding services. We have two guides per trip. You'll have a lead guide who drives the support vehicle and is responsible for leading the trip and maintaining the bikes. You'll also have a co-guide that will cycle with you and is responsible for your meals and accommodation. Having two guides means we have the flexibility to make sure you always have a great time! We operate with small groups and don't hesitate to offer a second departure when our trips start getting full.
- Accommodation for the entire period you are with us. We can also organise accommodation for you if you want to arrive earlier or leave later.
- All breakfast (B), lunches (L), and dinners (D), except during free time in places like Nelson where we've found people prefer to check out the wide range of restaurants on offer. Alcohol is not generally included, although we do spring for a few drinks here and there!
- All cycling described in the itinerary. Optional extra activities are not included. There are many optional activities available for an extra cost in New Zealand, particularly in Nelson. None of these activities are compulsory and nor will your trip seem less awesome if you don't do any additional options. Although some people enjoy hang gliding, bungy jumping, jet boating, skydiving, and so on, others prefer to focus on their cycling. It's completely up to you, but we're here to help you organise whatever you want to do!

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday, and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you! You'll have a few meals and drinks to cover, extra activities if you choose them, and you'll probably feel like tipping your guides at the end of a fabulous time, but you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your *Top Ride* tour of New Zealand!

DON'T BE A STRANGER! When you get back home, please let us know how you got on! We have an official 'post-trip survey' that we always look forward to receiving as it helps us fine tune our trips, but we like to just stay in touch too. We have other adventures, trips to other destinations and lots going on that we'd like to include you in. Also if you'd tell your friends about this little quirky New Zealand company you've discovered, we'd really appreciate it!

We'll see you soon!