Helen Rolton - Personal Travel Manager
0402 844 720
www.travelmanagers.com.au/HelenRolton/

Southern Gourmet Grapes and Serenity Tour

Combine the wonderful and dramatic scenery of the South Island with some of its finest foods and wines. Spend a full day at the Akaroa Cooking School where you can get first-hand knowledge of New Zealand ingredients and styles. You then journey north to Marlborough, where you'll discover the world renowned wines on a half day tour. After free time spent in Nelson where you can enjoy an Abel Tasman National Park adventure or taste the craft wines and beers of the region, you then journey south along the spectacular West Coast Road. Ending on a high, spend two days in the alpine village of Wanaka, where you will enjoy a boutique wine tour, tasting Central Otago's best grapes.

Starts in:	Christchurch
Finishes in:	Queenstown
Length:	12days / 11nights
Accommodation:	Boutique Lodges & Hotels
Can be customised:	Yes

This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.

Inclusions:

Includes: Late model rental cars
Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)
Includes: Unlimited kms
Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring
Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App
Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course
Included activity: Wanaka Boutique Wine Tour with Wanaka Wine Tour
Included activity: Akaroa Dolphins Harbour Nature Cruise
Included activity: Taste of the Farm with Hapuku Kitchen
Included activity: Half Day Marlborough Wine Tour with Sounds Connection
11 breakfasts, 1 lunch

Day 1

Welcome to Christchurch City

New Zealand's garden city is steadily being transformed into a vibrant urban destination. Encompassing a large green belt, it is known for its wide tree lined avenues and lush gardens. A great way to explore the city or easy way to see the sights or ride the historic trams across town to the renowned botanic gardens and the unique cardboard Transitional Cathedral, that's right it is built of cardboard!

Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

Your accommodation: The George Hotel

The George is the essence of supreme comfort. The award-winning 5 star hotel is opposite Hagley Park and just a few minutes stroll from the Botanic Gardens. It also has an award-winning restaurant, 50 Bistro onsite.

Day 2

Christchurch to Akaroa

The Banks Peninsula offers a great contrast to the South Island's largest city. Just around a 1 1/2 hours drive from the city centre are rolling green hills, streams, golden sand beaches and small settlements that offer a unique insight into New Zealand's history and development.
Just on the other side of the Port Hills is Lyttelton, a busy port town that was crucial to the development of Christchurch and the Canterbury Plains. Following the road around the beautiful natural harbour the names, such as Magazine Bay, Battery Point, Corsair Point and Governers Bay, remind of the importance the navy placed on this harbour.
The Banks Peninsula itself is actually the remains of a long extinct volcano, the rim of which collapsed some time ago allowing the sea to flood into and create what is now the Akaroa Harbour. In 1840 French colonists settled in Akaroa in a bid to stake a claim for the South Island. Unbeknown the British had already declared sovereignty and a long drawn out dispute ensued with the British eventually being given government. However the French stayed and made this stunning part of the South Pacific their home and still to this day the town boasts French street names and every year a French Festival is held.
The Harbour itself is teeming with wildlife and a nature cruise is a must do activity. One of the world's smallest and rarest dolphins, hectors dolphin, are often seen and cruises also offer excursions with the chance to swim amongst them.

Akaroa Dolphins Harbour Nature Cruise

A cruise around Akaroa Harbour is the perfect way to view the smallest and rarest dolphins in the world, the Hector’s Dolphin, along with fascinating birdlife, New Zealand fur seals and white-flippered penguins. Their custom built catamaran accommodates a small number of guests so you are able to enjoy a more personal cruise experience around the spectacular seascape including sea caves, high cliffs and volcanic rock formations.

Your accommodation: Beaufort House Akaroa

This beautiful historic home and garden has been lovingly restored with old world charm and modern conveniences offering quality accommodation. Relax on the verandahs or wander around the gracious traditional garden containing protected trees, rare camellias, roses and a small private vineyard. Secluded and private it is just a short stroll to the village and harbour.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 3

Akaroa to Kaikoura

The drive takes you over the Port Hills and through the city of Christchurch and then north through some fine rolling farmland and North Canterbury's major wine region, the Waipara Valley. A great detour to take is to head inland and visit Hanmer Springs for a dip in the natural hot pools. Crossing the Hawkswood Range you descend towards the spectacular Kaikoura coastline and the road hugs the ocean as it winds its way the remaining 15 kilometres to the township.
Kaikoura Township is a bustling little place with many cafes, restaurants and shops but the main reason for visiting here is the wildlife. Whale Watch Kaikoura is New Zealand's only marine-based whale watching company offering visitors an exciting up-close encounter with the Giant Sperm Whale at all times of the year.Kaikoura is New Zealand's world famous whale watching destination. Sperm Whales can be seen here year-round while depending on the season you may also see migrating Humpback Whales, Pilot Whales, Blue Whales and Southern Right Whales.
Another great Kaikoura activity is Swimming with the Seals. Donning a wet suit you have the opportunity to interact with these inquisitive creatures on their terms. Wings over Whales also offer tours from fixed wing aircraft to view the whales and other marine creatures from 500 feet in the air.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Ocean's Cabin with Whale Watch Kaikōura

Experience New Zealand's only marine-based whale-watching company. Whale Watch Kaikōura offers a once-in-a-lifetime, up-close encounter with the giant Sperm Whale. You are also likely to encounter New Zealand fur seals, dolphins, and albatross. Depending on the season you may also see Pilot, Blue, and Southern Right whales as well as migrating humpbacks. Often orcas can be spotted here and the world's smallest dolphin, the Hectors, occasionally makes an appearance.

Your accommodation: Bendamere House B&B

Bendamere House B&B has quality ensuite rooms, detached from the main house adding to the privacy and comfort, with superb views overlooking the Pacific Ocean and Seaward Kaikoura mountain range.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 4

Taste of the Farm with Hapuku Kitchen

Experience the magic of Kaikōura's wild landscape through a unique farm-to-table cooking class with Chef Fiona. Join her in her charming rural kitchen and learn to create uncomplicated yet delicious dishes inspired by the region's bounty. Harvest fresh ingredients from her extensive gardens and discover the secrets to transforming them into culinary masterpieces. Enjoy a welcome of locally roasted coffee, New Zealand tea, and fresh baking before venturing into the gardens. The day's menu is crafted based on the freshest harvest, ensuring peak flavour.

Kaikoura to Blenheim

Heading north from Kaikoura, the road hugs the shore for approximately 50 kilometres and offers many opportunities to view the native wildlife such as seabirds and New Zealand fur seals. One of the best seal watching locations is Ohau Point (25km north of Kaikoura), where you can observe the adults on the shoreline and the pups frolicking in the waterfall, just a short walk from the road (signposted). As you drive you will have turquoise waters of the South Pacific Ocean to your east and to the west the towering Kaikoura Ranges. Crossing the dry hills of the Marlborough ranges you head towards Marlborough, New Zealand's largest wine producing region. Blenheim sits right at the heart of Marlborough and is ideally located to enjoy an afternoon sampling the local produce. A great way to do this is to take a guided wine tour with Sounds Connection Wine Tours.

Your accommodation: The Peppertree

The Peppertree is situated in the midst of an extensive country garden a boutique vineyard and an olive grove. Choose from one of the five spacious suites, each of which reflects a different character. Days at The Peppertree begin with a delicious breakfast, served in the Dining Room or on the verandah.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 5

Half Day Marlborough Wine Tour with Sounds Connection

An afternoon among the vines! Be immersed in the Marlborough wine country with the Sounds Connection half day wine tour. Get collected from your accommodation and taken through three or four hand-picked wineries to taste the award-winning produce this region is known for. Hear about the history of winemaking in Marlborough as well as learning the unique processes each winery goes through.

Your accommodation: The Peppertree

The Peppertree is situated in the midst of an extensive country garden a boutique vineyard and an olive grove. Choose from one of the five spacious suites, each of which reflects a different character. Days at The Peppertree begin with a delicious breakfast, served in the Dining Room or on the verandah.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 6

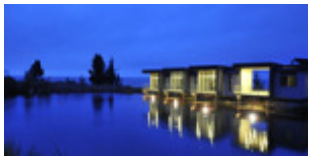
Blenheim to Nelson

A short drive north from Blenheim to you reach Havelock. The small port town of Havelock has a great variety of cafes and restaurants to choose from so plan your journey to arrive in time for lunch. Crossing the Bryant Range you arrive onto Tasman Bay and the city of Nelson.

Your accommodation: The Waters

The Waters is an oasis of luxury that has few peers in the Nelson Region. 3 purpose built luxury suites at The Waters have been designed to offer a unique accommodation experience. Just metres from the shores of Kina Beach, in the centre of spectacular Tasman bay, with cantilevered decks that extend over the pond, The Waters is a stunning location.

Meals included: Breakfast



Day 7

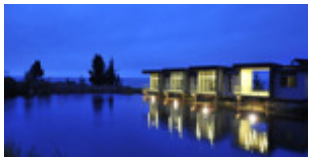
Explore the Nelson and Abel Tasman region

Nelson is a great city to explore on foot. Visit the historic areas, and the famous Cathedral, or relax and enjoy the atmosphere at one of the many cafes on Trafalgar Street. Nelson is also noted for its many artists, and galleries displaying their work can be enjoyed by following one of the Art trails listed locally. Around 45 minutes drive away is Abel Tasman National Park. The region offers countless opportunities to explore for visitors of every age and capability, from enjoying the golden sand beaches and clear warm waters to guided kayaking trips viewing seals and dolphins, to exploring some of New Zealand's finest walking tracks.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Seals, Beach Cruise and Walk

Experience the best of Abel Tasman on this combined beach cruise and walk tour. Cruise into the Tonga Island Marine Reserve and pause to watch the antics of the Resident Fur Seal Colony. After landing at the historic Tonga Quarry Beach, take a two hour, fifteen minute walk over forested land and around the spectacular Bark Bay Estuary, renowned for its cascading waterfalls. Rejoin the cruise at the sheltered golden cove on Medlands Beach.

Your accommodation: The Waters



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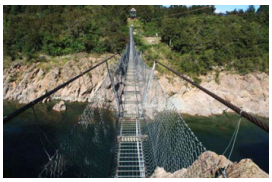
Meals included: Breakfast

Day 8



Nelson to Punakaiki

Leaving Nelson City you will pass through the suburb of Richmond. Moving on, you will pass through the Nelson Lakes and Kahurangi National Park region. Trees, rivers, and valleys accompany you now as you head towards the town of Murchison. Murchison is a quiet place and a great lunch stop. Underneath its sleepy farming facade is an adventurer's paradise with white water rafting, jet boating, gold panning, kayaking, 4WD trips, and excellent trout fishing. Heading south, you will drive along the Buller Gorge, enjoying some wonderful scenery as you follow this magnificent river. Further along the river from the west coast turn off, one of the must-visit places is Whites Creek and New Zealand's longest swing bridge. Crossing the river, you get magnificent views of the gorge, and once on the other side, there are short bush walks, jet boat rides, and some of the historic gold mining remnants. Continuing on your journey, the first major town (by this region's standard) is Inangahua, and a small museum tells of the earthquake that hit the region in 1968, leaving 70% of the buildings damaged or inhabitable. Heading south, a worthwhile divert is to Cape Foulwind just south of Westport. Home to a seal colony and the short walk provides some spectacular scenery. Continuing south on the road to Punakaiki, you will pass through Paparoa National Park. On arrival at Punakaiki you may want to visit Pancake rocks. Pancake rocks are open to the public free of charge all year round. These are awesome natural blow holes and rock formations, the name says it all. The west coast is very rugged, mountains meet the sea, and the coast is covered with beautiful fauna and flora including nikau palms.

Your accommodation: Scenic Hotel Punakaiki

Scenic Hotel Punakaiki is a modern, award-winning hotel complex, architecturally designed to harmonious with the local environment. Nestled in the foothills of Papaproa National Park the resort has spectacular views of the Wild West Coast beaches while all rooms have rainforest and/or ocean views.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 9

Punakaiki to Franz Josef Glacier

The drive South on State Highway 6 takes you through many West Coast towns. The first is Greymouth, the commercial centre for the West Coast. Just south of the town is Shantytown a replica gold rush town with lots of great displays from yesteryear.
The next town is Hokitika and this is a great place to explore the craft and gift stores. The Jade or Greenstone on offer in Hokitika is probably some of the best you will see in the country. The Hokitika Gorge, off the beaten track and inland a little is a spectacular 50 minute detour. Turquoise waters flowing through a narrow gorge. A great short walk will deliver you to this piece of paradise.
Ross is the site of an old gold mining town and some of the old buildings and workings remain. In fact Ross is still home to one of the few working gold mines left in New Zealand and the local information centre offers you the chance to pan for gold.
Continuing south Hari Hari is the township that Guy Menzies decided to land in (or rather crash land) as he became the first person to fly solo across the Tasman.
Whataroa, a small township on the main road is where you would head off to see one of the worlds rarest birds. The entire population (somewhere between 150 and 200 birds) of the New Zealand white heron or kotuku nest at the Waitangi Roto Nature Reserve and guided tours from October to March will take you there.
Arriving in to the Glacier region you catch your first glimpse of Franz Josef Glacier from a few kilometres out as it flows from the Southern Alps. Franz Josef township is a lively place with a great atmosphere, plenty of choice to dine out and some wonderful activities to enjoy.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Twin Glacier Scenic Helicopter Flight with The Helicopter Line

A spectacular scenic flight soaring over two of New Zealand's most famous glaciers, Fox and Franz Josef. Landing at the head of one and view the incredible sight of this frozen river as it winds its way through ancient carved valleys. It is important to read and understand the risks associated with this activity. A full risk disclosure can be found here.

Your accommodation: Westwood Lodge

Westwood is a purpose built lodge, crafted entirely from wood and exquisitely decorated throughout. The lounge is the place to meet to watch the Southern Alps turn a soft pink in the setting sun.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 10

Franz Josef to Wanaka

Heading south you will climb over the Fox hills before arriving at the small town of Fox Glacier. If it's a nice day enjoy spectacular reflections of snowcapped mountains in Lake Matheson, located just 5 minutes west of Fox. Heading south from fox enjoy the amazing scenery of the Southern Alps, and sneak peeks of the rugged beaches while winding through ancient temperate rainforests. At Knights Point Lookout, elephant seals can often be seen basking on the sandy beaches at the far end of the point. Crossing the Haast River you’ll turn inland and through the mountainous valley littered with waterfalls. A great suggested stop along this route is the Blue Pools. Continue on past lakes Hawea and Wanaka into the alpine township of Wanaka.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Lake Wanaka Happy Hour Cruise

Leaving from the Wānaka lakefront, take a gentle cruise around picturesque Lake Wānaka while relaxing with a glass of wine or local beer and a selection of cheeses. The cruise is fully licensed so further drinks can be purchased on board. The cruise takes you toward the 'Wānaka Tree' before tracking up to Waterfall Creek and Ruby Island. You then head across to Stevensons Peninsula before returning via Beacon Point and Eely Point.

Your accommodation: Edgewater Wanaka

Edgewater is Wanaka's leading hotel located right on the edge of Lake Wanaka. A short stroll to the town centres shops, cafes and restaurants and close to many walking trails the resort is ideal to explore this wonderful Alpine setting.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 11

Wanaka Wine Tours Boutique Central Otago Wine Trail

This small group wine tour (maximum 8) offers a relaxed and personal introduction to the wines and scenery of the Central Otago region. This tour is a great way to explore award-winning vineyards hidden amongst the rugged landscape of Central Otago. Visit and enjoy tastings at 4 Central Otago vineyards including a delicious mid-afternoon platter to enjoy with your tastings. You'll also discover the history of the region with a visit to Old Cromwell Town, a charming heritage precinct that has been revitalised into a boutique arts and crafts village.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Lake Cruise and Island Nature Walk with Eco Wanaka

Lying close to the centre of Lake Wanaka is Mou Waho Island Nature Reserve. A unique glacial remnant of the last ice age, the island is also the historic site of early shipbuilding and used to be a stopping place for the steamers and log rafts that once plied the lake. Accessible from Wanaka by a 35-minute boat cruise, the landing is on the eastern side of the island where the remnants of the early settlement remain; a stone wharf and a hut. A well-formed track leads from the landing and climbs steadily through native bush to near the top of Tyrwhitt Peak. Just before the top, we see Arethusa Pool, a small lake on the island with small islands in it - very intriguing! From the top, we have a sweeping 360-degree view of Lake Wanaka, its surrounding mountains and valleys, and below Arethusa Pool. The perfect spot to stop for tea or coffee. Going back down the track gives us more time to take in our surroundings, listening to and watching the lively bird-life, and just enjoying this unique wildlife reserve. You will feel well rewarded as you re-join the boat for the cruise back to Wanaka. Total cruise time is 1.5 hours. The trip runs subject to weather and lake conditions. Depending on the planting season, you can help The Reforestation of Mou Waho by planting a tree.

Your accommodation: Edgewater Wanaka

Edgewater is Wanaka's leading hotel located right on the edge of Lake Wanaka. A short stroll to the town centres shops, cafes and restaurants and close to many walking trails the resort is ideal to explore this wonderful Alpine setting.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 12

Wanaka to Queenstown

Leaving Wanaka, you head over New Zealand's highest sealed road, Crown Range Road, before dropping into Queenstown. This drive only takes about an hour, but you should allow more time to enjoy the magnificent scenery and explore the walks and many stops en route, including the Cardrona Distillery, wonderful views from Crown Range's highest point over Queenstown, the picturesque town of Arrowtown, and if time allows, even the wineries in Gibbston.

Return your vehicle to Queenstown Airport

Explore more of Queenstown before dropping your rental car at the airport depot and continuing your onward journey.

Tour details

Departures:	Daily
Tour type:	South Island Self Drive
Starts:	Christchurch
Finishes:	Queenstown
Tour length:	12
Accomodation:	Boutique Lodges & Hotels
Car/transport type:	

Accommodation summary

Day 1	The George Hotel
Day 2	Beaufort House Akaroa
Day 3	Bendamere House B&B
Day 4	The Peppertree
Day 5	The Peppertree
Day 6	The Waters
Day 7	The Waters
Day 8	Scenic Hotel Punakaiki
Day 9	Westwood Lodge
Day 10	Edgewater Wanaka
Day 11	Edgewater Wanaka