

Tire-gripping road surfaces, glaciers, volcanoes and palm trees!

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RIDING DAY 1: CHRISTCHURCH - TWIZEL

Standard Route (370 km / 230 miles)

Leaving Christchurch behind we start our day - if the weather is right - by climbing up to Summit Road. This spectacular panoramic road follows the rim of the ancient volcanic crater that is now Banks Peninsula and offers fantastic views down to the city and the coast. Then we ride through the green, fertile Canterbury plains, always along the Alps, and finally via Burks Pass up to the MacKenzie High Country. The unique turquoise-colored waters of Lake Pukaki and Lake Tekapo, combined with the snow-covered mountains, make for picture-perfect scenery.

The view of Lake Tekapo through the altar window of the "Church of the Good Shepherd," is amazing, and the ride to and the view from Mt. John Observatory is just as fantastic. Up here you can also find the South Island's highest café.

Just before we arrive in Twizel, we pull over at New Zealand's number one lookout: the view across the turquoise-colored waters of Lake Pukaki towards Mt. Cook will take your breath away.

Highlights:

#1: Summit Road



Very narrow and curvy, gravel patches and gusty wind around almost every corner: Summit Road can be tricky to navigate. But the views of city, hills and Lyttleton Harbour are breathtaking, and on a clear day they can reach all the way to the Southern Alps.



#2: Lake Tekapo



Lake Tekapo is about three hours drive south-west of Christchurch in the Mackenzie Basin. The township faces north across the remarkable turquoise coloured lake to the mountainous drama of the Southern Alps. Lake Tekapo gets its intense milky-turquoise colour from the fine rock-flour (ground by glaciers) which is suspended in the water. On the shores on the lake you'll see the beautiful Church of the

Good Shepherd, where the altar window frames a perfect view of the mountains. The church was built in 1835 for the pioneer families of the Mackenzie District; it's a popular photo spot for visitors.

#3: Lake Pukaki



The neighboring lakes Tekapo and Pukaki are of the same striking blue colour, but Pukaki is more than twice the size of Tekapo. Major highlight here is the sterling lookout that on a clear day gives a picture-perfect view of Mt. Cook and its surrounding peaks, with the ultra-blue lake in the foreground.



RIDING DAY 2: TWIZEL - TE ANAU

Standard Route (370 km / 230 miles)

We leave Twizel behind and follow Highway 8 south. The High Country is very dry, the sun very intense. We cross the scenic Lindis Pass and cruise along Lake Dunstan to Cromwell, New Zealand's fruit orchard. Then the road snakes along Kawarau Gorge and past the historic bridge where the world's first commercial bungy jump took place in 1988.

Just before getting into Queenstown, we turn left and follow the eastern shore of Lake Wakatipu. The crystal clear water of this deep, cold lake is of a very intense blue. Our day ends in Te Anau, a small town that owes its existence to its convenient location for a day trip to Milford Sound.

Highlights:

#1: Kawarau Gorge (Bungy-Bridge)



The towering cliffs and rugged hillsides of the Kawarau Gorge take you through the heart of one of New Zealand's most historic gold mining regions. The road that follows the river is quite amazing and it passes by the old Kawarau Bridge, where the world's first commercial bungee jump took place in November 1988. From here Bungee Jumping conquered the world, and if you want you can try it, too.

But beware, you may get hooked...



#2: Lake Wakatipu



Shaped like a lightning bolt, Lake Wakatipu is the third largest lake in New Zealand. The Dart River flows into its northern end; the Kawarau River, beginning near Queenstown, handles its outflow.

The lake occupies a single, glacier-carved trench and is bordered on all sides by tall mountains, the highest of which is Mount Earnslaw (2819 metres). Settlements

around the lake shore include Queenstown and the villages of Kingston, Glenorchy and Kinloch.

Because of its unusual shape, Lake Wakatipu has a 'tide' (more correctly, an unusually large seiche or "standing wave"), which causes the water to rise and fall about 10 centimetres every 25 minutes or so. Maori legend links this phenomenon to the heartbeat of a huge monster named Matau, who is said to be slumbering at the bottom of the lake.



RIDING DAY 3: TE ANAU - QUEENSTOWN

Standard Route (410 km / 255 miles)

This long riding day will introduce you to one of the most scenic corners of New Zealand. From Te Anau we follow the road along the lake of the same name. The road winds its way through the rainforest and climbs up to an elevation of almost 3,000 ft., then drops down to sea level in only a handful of daring curves. It ends at beautiful Milford Sound, a wonderland of high mountains, numerous waterfalls and abundant wildlife, where you'll have the opportunity to embark on a scenic cruise that typically features a seal colony, probably dolphins and sometimes even penguins. Milford Sound is a must-see for every visitor to New Zealand!

After looking at Milford Sound from every conceivable angle, we take the same road that we used this morning and yesterday, until we get to Frankton. This is a suburb of Queenstown, the world's biggest playground and our home for two nights.

Highlights:

#1: Milford Sound



Described by Rudyard Kipling as the 'eighth wonder of the world', Milford Sound was carved by glaciers during the ice ages. Milford Sound is breathtaking in any weather. The fiord's cliffs rise vertically from the dark waters, mountain peaks scrape the sky and waterfalls cascade downwards, some as high as 500 metres. When it rains in Milford Sound, and it often does, those waterfalls multiply with

magnificent effect.

Boat cruises are an excellent way to experience the Sound (cruise costs around 70 NZ\$ per Person). Scenic flights are also available.



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RIDING DAY 4: QUEENSTOWN

Standard Route (150 km / 93 miles)

Queenstown is a place unlike any other in New Zealand. It is full of backpackers, adventure-seekers and adrenaline-junkies, the average age seems to be somewhere around 25, and the air is saturated with fun, adventure and party.

This beautiful town, nestled between mountains right at Lake Wakatipu, is named the Adventure Capital of the world; after all it's the place where bungy jumping was invented. You can also put your courage to the test at jet boating, white water rafting, aerobatics, sky diving, paragliding, or -sailing. But it's not all about hair-raising adventure activities; there is also relaxing ones like a cruise on the 100+ year old steamer TSS Earnslaw, or a tour from winery to winery.

If you want to ride your bike you should take the road along Lake Wakatipu to Glenorchy and back. If you include a coffee break, this beautiful ride should keep you busy for about three hours. Riding up to Coronet Peak lookout means another hour, and in the pretty gold mining town of Arrowtown you could while away the rest of the afternoon.

Highlights:

#1: Glenorchy



Glenorchy, situated at the head of Lake Wakatipu, is only a 45-minute drive from Queenstown, but it seems to be a world away. The tiny hamlet marks the end of the paved road - which is indeed the actual highlight for us - and conveniently offers some nice cafes...

#2: Coronet Peak



Just outside of Queenstown there is another spectacular road, the highest paved road on the South Island. It leads up to the ski fields of Coronet Peak, during summer a popular launch pad for hang- and paragliders. The views from 4000 ft down to Queenstown and Lake Wakatipu are stunning!



#3: Queenstown



The town sits on the shore of crystal clear Lake Wakatipu among dramatic ranges. The lake and mountain landscape make it suited to all kinds of adventure. There's skiing in the winter and activities such as bungy jumping, sky diving, canyon swinging, jet boating, horse trekking and river rafting all year round. If hardcore adventure is not your thing, there are plenty of mellow options available.

Experience one of the many walking & hiking trails, sightseeing tours or indulge yourself with spa treatments, boutique shopping and excellent food and wine. The T.S.S. Earnslaw cruises the lake every day. Complete with a bright red, 12 meter funnel, white hull and kauri timber decks, this vintage paddle-steamer - built in 1912 - is a New Zealand icon.



RIDING DAY 5: QUEENSTOWN - FOX GLACIER

Standard Route (340 km / 211 miles)

Hotel Change "Route" (370 km / 230 miles)

QUEENSTOWN - ARTHUR'S POINT - CROWN RANGE ROAD - CARDRONA - WANAKA - MAKARORA - HAAST PASS (563 M) - HAAST - WEST COAST SOUTH ISLAND - FOX GLACIER - FRANZ JOSEF

This day is an unforgettable experience. The country's highest mountain pass, a beautiful road with spectacular panoramic views, brings us into Cardrona Valley and to Wanaka, a small town at the southern end of Lake Wanaka.

We ride along beautiful panoramas and past crystal clear mountain lakes that often reflect the surrounding mountains. From the dry steppe of Central Otago we descend to the damp rainforests of the West Coast, an amazing, overwhelming change in scenery. Our route leads us over Haast Pass and along the Haast River down to the Tasman Sea. The West Coast Highway, one of the most beautiful coastal roads in the world, brings us to Fox Glacier.

If the weather is good, you should seize the opportunity and ride a helicopter up to the glacier and experience a snow landing! After dinner you can go for a little walk in the forest and see - at least in dry conditions - the tiny green lights of the glow worms.

Highlights:

#1: Crown Range Road



This spectacular mountain road connects Queenstown and Wanaka via a 3,500 ft (1,070 m) pass, making this New Zealand's highest paved mountain pass. The road features 7 alpine-style hairpin turns and many breathtaking views. Don't get distracted!



#2: Haast Pass (563 m)



From the rather dry Southern Lakes region we cross Haast Pass to reach to West Coast. Haast Pass is one of only three roads that cross the Southern Alps, the other ones being Arthurs Pass and Lewis Pass. The road offers some amazing views of snow-covered mountain peaks as it twists and turns its way through the rainforest towards the West Coast. It is a fantastic ride!

#3: West Coast South Island



The West Coast is a rugged, salt-sprayed stretch of wild rocky beaches and bush-clad hills sweeping up to towering icy peaks. Often the narrow coastal strip is nothing but dried-up swamp, but the contrast on either side between the energetic wash of the ocean and the hilly heights is striking.

#4: Fox Glacier



The two major attractions here are the glaciers - Fox and Franz Josef. The mighty cascades of ice, tumbling down the valley into the rainforest, are a sight to behold and are best viewed from the air; we highly recommend a helicopter ride (from app. 230 NZ\$/person). Like most other glaciers these days Fox and F.J. are retreating, even though the amount of snow falling on the mountains increases year

after year. Global warming brings warmer air across the Tasman Sea, warmer air can hold more moisture, more moisture means more rain and more snow up on the mountains. The feeding ice fields of our two glaciers here receive about 100 ft of snow per year, and the resulting pressure makes the ice advance by around 3 ft per day, but all of that and more melts off.



RIDING DAY 6: FOX GLACIER - PUNAKAIKI

Standard Route (415 km / 258 miles)

Hotel Change "Route" (395 km / 245 miles)

FRANZ JOSEF - WHATAROA - HARIHARI - PUKEKURA - ROSS - HOKITIKA - KUMARA JUNCTION - JACKSONS - ARTHUR'S PASS - JACKSONS - MOANA - STILLWATER - PUNAKAIKI

We leave the ice behind and head towards gold in Hokitika, the old gold digger capital. Due to its historical background the West Coast is also known as the Gold Digger Coast, but nowadays everything around here revolves around jade, also known as greenstone, or Pounamu, as the Maori call it.

Arthurs Pass is the main crossing point of the Southern Alps, the only road in New Zealand that features high alpine scenery as we know it from the European Alps. It is a lovely ride, but the main reason to come up here are the Keas, alpine parrots with a very bad reputation. They are super-smart and highly endangered, and up here on the pass we have the best chance of seeing some.

Highlights:

#1: West Coast Wildlife Centre



The purpose of this feel-good attraction is to breed two of the world's rarest kiwi – the rowi and the Haast tokoeka. As well as a chance to hang out with kiwi in their darkened ferny enclosure, there are tuatara (native reptiles) and conservation, glacier, and heritage displays. The backstage pass into the incubating and rearing area is a rare opportunity to learn how a species can be brought back from the brink of extinction. (Lonely Planet)

There is also a well-stocked shop and a great little café on site!



#2: Hokitika



This sweet seaside town has a glint in its eye: indigenous pounamu (greenstone), carved and buffed to a shine by a thriving community of local artists. Shopping for greenstone, glassware, textiles and other home-grown crafts inspires droves of visitors to dawdle along Hokitika's streets, which are dotted with grand buildings from its 1860s gold-rush days(Lonely Planet). Hokitika has a

beautiful beach where locals and tourists alike turn driftwood into art. The town is also home to the famous Wildfoods Festival where people feast on maggots, bugs, possums, and much more. But don't worry, there are many good restaurants in town that serve "normal" food.

#3: Arthur's Pass



At 920 meters (3,000 ft) Arthurs Pass is the highest pass over the Southern Alps. Long before surveyor Arthur Dudley Dobson found his way over the pass in 1864, it was known to Maori hunting parties as a route between east and west.

The eastern side of Arthur's Pass National Park is characterized by wide, shingle-filled riverbeds and vast

beech forests. The western side of the park, where wet weather is more common than dry, has deeply gorged rivers flowing through dense rainforest. Down the middle of 'the great divide' is an alpine dreamland of snow-covered peaks, glaciers and scree slopes. With a little luck we will get to see some of the rare Kea birds at Arthurs Pass village or at a lookout in Otira Gorge.

#4: Pancake Rocks



Layers of limestone have formed over millions of years to produce the West Coast's famous Pancake Rocks — a truly spectacular sight. The stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the rugged West Coastline will take your breath away as you explore one of New Zealand's most impressive natural wonders. At high tide and during strong winds the surf sometimes rushes in underneath the rocks

and gets blown high up in the air through the aptly named blowholes.



RIDING DAY 7: PUNAKAIKI - NELSON

Standard Route (326 km / 202 miles)

We leave Punakaiki, the site of the famous "Pancake Rocks," and after only 40 miles we take a break at beautiful Cape Foulwind with its seal colony. Historic gold digger sites mark our ride along the legendary Buller River and through the wild, remote bush and forest landscape of the South Island.

Murchison, the biggest town around here, sports a handful of cozy cafes, so we take a break and have lunch. Hope Saddle, a small pass a few miles down the road, separates the (mostly wet) West Coast climate from the (mostly dry) climate of the Tasman Bay. The soil is fertile here, people grow grapes, hops, berries, apples, avocados, and everything else but pineapples.

Our destination is Nelson, "sunniest" city in New Zealand and preferred new home of German emigrants. As you will see, it is a great place to stay.

Highlights:

#1: Cape Foulwind



From the car park at beautiful Tauranga Bay, an easy 10-minute track leads to viewing platforms over the seal colony below. Interpretive panels at the platforms provide information on the activity in the colony and the seals' breeding cycle, as well as historical information about the sealing industry that once existed in New Zealand.

#2: Buller River Gorge



At 105 miles long Buller River may not be New Zealand's longest, but if it comes to maximum discharge it certainly is the country's mightiest. During heavy rains it can reach up to 14,000 m³/s, which is more than the Colorado's (up to 11,000 m³/s). The road that follows its course is simply beautiful, with countless sweepers and barely any traffic. Enjoy!



RIDING DAY 8: NELSON - WELLINGTON

Standard Route (110 km / 68 miles)

Today is a special day because we will embark on a cruise! But first we ride through the scenic Marlborough Sounds, one of the most beautiful parts of New Zealand. Most impressive: a ride on Queen Charlotte Drive, definitively among the world's most phenomenal roads.

In Picton we board the ferry, glide through picturesque Queen Charlotte Sound out to Cook Strait, and after just over three hours we reach Wellington, the nation's capital.

Highlights:

#1: Queen Charlotte Drive



Between Havelock and Picton, a 40-kilometre winding road fringed with native forest offers one of the most scenic drives you're likely to encounter. Navigating this spectacular road is like cruising the Marlborough Sounds without a boat. Due to the many curves and viewpoints you should allow around one hour for this section.

#2: Ferry cruise Cook Strait



This beautiful 3 1/2 hour cruise consists of three parts: gliding slowly past the scenic bays and inlets of Marlborough Sounds is a marvelous spectacle. But once you leave the sheltered sounds it can get rough. Strong currents and high winds in Cook Strait can build up huge waves, so if you're sensitive to sea sickness you should keep your ginger pills close... The third part is entering

Wellington Harbour and approaching the city. It's worth climbing up to the viewing deck with your camera ready.



RIDING DAY 9: WELLINGTON

Standard Route (161 km / 100 miles)

Today's short ride leads to the Kapiti Coast where we can enjoy the beautiful views from a vantage point high above the coast. A bit further north is the Southward Car Museum, the largest vintage car collection in New Zealand and one of the best in the world. Some of the roads we use on today are very, very narrow and feel very much like one-way roads. They are not!!!

Of course you don't have to ride if you don't want to. Wellington has enough on offer to keep you busy for a day. Very busy! Don't miss the TePapa, New Zealand's national museum. On display there is one of the legandary Britten motorcycles!

Highlights:

#1: Wellington



Often referred to as the Harbor City, Wellington is built around the natural harbour of Port Nicholson. New waterfront developments and a proliferation of new bars, cafes and restaurants are constantly changing the inner city's skyline. If you are exploring by foot, take a cable car to the viewpoint at the top of the Botanical Gardens for a stunning vista. Mt. Victoria Lookout, on the opposite side of

the harbour, is an even better spot for harbour views. Wellington's 'must-see' attraction is Te Papa - New Zealand's national museum, which boasts an interesting blend of interactive and traditional exhibits. Other key attractions include the Botanical Gardens and the new Museum of Wellington City & Sea, located in the restored Bond Store at Queens Wharf. For an inside look into the country's political scene, free public tours of the distinctive 'Beehive' are available. The Old Government Building is the world's second-largest wooden building.

Those with a literary bent can visit author Katherine Mansfield's birthplace in Thorndon, which celebrates the life of this famous writer. If you enjoy shopping, Wellington won't disappoint you. Serious shoppers should check out The Golden Mile – the local nickname for the main downtown shopping area of Lambton Quay. It's reputed to be one of New Zealand's best shopping miles and is renowned for its high-fashion stores.



#2: Southward Car Museum



The incredible Southward Car Museum, in Paraparaumu, is not just a world class museum, it's a national treasure. It was designed and built by the late Sir Len Southward and houses the southern hemispheres largest private car collection. The museum itself is home to over 400 automobiles and various other exhibits including aircraft, bicycles, a range of vintage tools and other automobile memorabilia and even a vintage Fire Engine. The collection

includes many famous makes and models of classic and vintage cars. Among the most popular ones is Marlene Dietrich's 1934 Cadillac Town Cabriolet, a 1915 Stutz Indianapolis race car, a gull-winged Mercedes-Benz, a 1950 Cadillac "Gangster Special".



RIDING DAY 10: WELLINGTON - NAPIER

Standard Route (418 km / 260 miles)

We cut through the suburbs of Wellington and climb Rimutaka Hill, a spectacular and usually windswept pass road. Then we leave the highway in favor of small roads without traffic and loop through the Martinborough wine region. "New Zealand's Napa Valley" is a popular place for Wellingtonians to spend their weekends, and on sunny days the area is full of bicycles, motorcycles and convertibles.

Through green, hilly farm country we ride to Pongaroa, where we have lunch in the historic hotel. Be careful, there may be sheep on the road at any time! We'll end up in Napier, the Art Deco capital of New Zealand. If you want to get there as soon as possible just take State Highway 2.

Highlights:

#1: Martinborough



With its many vineyards, Martinborough is a prime weekend destination, mainly for Wellingtonians. At the town's wine center you can buy the local varieties and even have a few bottles shipped home.



#2: Longest place name



Near Porangahau in Hawke's Bay is an unassuming hill known as

Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateaturipukakapikimaungahoronukupokaihenuakitanatahu", which translates into English as "the place where Tamatea, the man with the big knees, who slid, climbed and swallowed mountains, known as 'landeater', played his flute to his loved one." Locals simply call it Taumata Hill. Tamatea was a famous chief and warrior. One day, while travelling through the back of Porangahau, he encountered another tribe and had to fight them to get past. During the fight his brother was killed. Tamatea was so grieved over the loss of his brother that he stayed at the battle site for some days. Each morning he would sit on the hill and play a lament on what is called the koauau or Maori flute.

#3: Napier



A natural disaster resulted in Napier becoming one of the purest Art Deco cities in the world. On the morning of February 3rd 1931 a massive earthquake - 7.9 on the Richter scale - rocked Hawke's Bay for more than three minutes. Nearly 260 lives were lost and the vast majority of buildings in the commercial centre of Napier were destroyed, either by the quake itself or the fires that

followed.

Rebuilding began almost immediately, and much of it was completed in two years. New buildings reflected the architectural styles of the times - Stripped Classical, Spanish Mission and Art Deco. Local architect Louis Hay, an admirer of the great Frank Lloyd Wright, had his chance to shine. Maori motifs were employed to give the city a unique New Zealand character - for example, the ASB bank on the corner of Hastings and Emerson Streets features Maori koru and zigzags.



RIDING DAY 11: NAPIER - ROTORUA

Standard Route (375 km / 233 miles)

If you feel like riding some serious miles today you should consider this detour to the volcanoes. The pass known as Gentle Annie was paved very recently. It will take you across the very sparsely populated hills west of Hastings and bring you to Waiouru. A tank next to the road tells you that you reached the training grounds of the New Zealand Army and their museum, which conveniently features a nice little cafe.

From here we follow State Highay 1, the so-called Desert Highway, past the three volcanoes Mt. Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro. On a clear day their snow-clad peaks offer a sight to behold, try not to be distracted too much. Finally we descend towards Lake Taupo and to the town of the same name. Here we join route 1 again.

Highlights:

#1: Desert Road



We follow the Desert Road to the north, past the three volcanoes Ruapehu, Ngaurahoe and Tongariro on our left hand side. In August 2012 Ruapehu erupted without warning, not damaging anything but reminding New Zealand and the world that the region around the Taupo supervolcano is still very, very active.



#2: Lake Taupo



NZ's largest lake sits in the caldera of a volcano that began erupting about 300,000 years ago. The caldera was formed by a collapse during the Oruanui eruption about 26,500 years ago, which threw out 800 to 1100 cu km of ash and pumice, making Krakatoa (8 cu km) and Mount St. Helens (3 cu km) look like pimples. The last major cataclysm was in 180 AD, shooting up enough ash into the atmosphere for

the red skies to be noted by the ancient Romans and Chinese. The area is still volcanically active and, like Rotorua, has fascinating thermal hot spots. Today the 606-sq-km (234 sq miles) lake and its surrounding waterways are serene enough to attract fishing enthusiasts from all around the world. Due to the lack of predators Brown Trout, once imported from California, can grow incredibly big.

#3: Rotorua



There are more than a dozen thermal areas around Rotorua. Wai-o-tapu ("sacred waters") is the most famous and most popular one, while Orakeikorako ("place of adorning") is off the beaten track and more relaxed. Also Rotorua itself often has an intense smell of sulfur, but you get used to it quickly. The city center has been spruced up in the last years, there are many cosy restaurants and you can take a nice walk.



RIDING DAY 12: ROTORUA - AUCKLAND

Standard Route (359 km / 223 miles)

Leaving Rotorua we head north towards the Bay of Plenty. Wonderful curvy roads lead us past Waihi Beach and across beautiful Coromandel Peninsula.

After crossing the Hauraki Plains, another beautiful ride awaits us - the road along Kawakawa Bay is truly spectacular. If you feel it's time for a second lunch, you can try New Zealand's best fish and chips in Kaiaua.

The city of Auckland, built on 62 extinct volcanoes by the pioneers of the last century, hosts the largest Polynesian population of all the world's cities. Upon arrival, we return our bikes and enjoy our farewell evening.

Highlights:

#1: Waihi Beach



Waihi Beach and its six miles of pristine golden sand are one of the country's prime seaside destinations. Bring your swim trunks!



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