

New Zealand South Island

NZ FRENZY

SCOTT COOK

All the must-see places plus
non-touristy hidden wonders



100 OUTINGS
EXACT DIRECTIONS
ESSENTIAL DETAILS

- DAY HIKES/WALKING TRACKS
- NATIONAL PARKS
- GLACIERS & FIORDS
- PENGUIN & SEA LION VIEWING
- HOT SPRINGS
- MAORI ROCK ART

New Zealand South Island

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Scott Cook's Top-10 MUST-SEE South Island list:

Milford Sound drive (G20)
Mt Cook's Hooker Track (E5)
Franz Josef Glacier Walk (D7)
Rob Roy Glacier, Wanaka (G6)
Punakaiki Rocks (C8)
Queenstown's drives (G11, 12)
Curio Bay (F6)
Lake Tekapo's Mt John (E2)
Devil's Punchbowl Falls (B10)
Kaikoura Coast drive (A15)

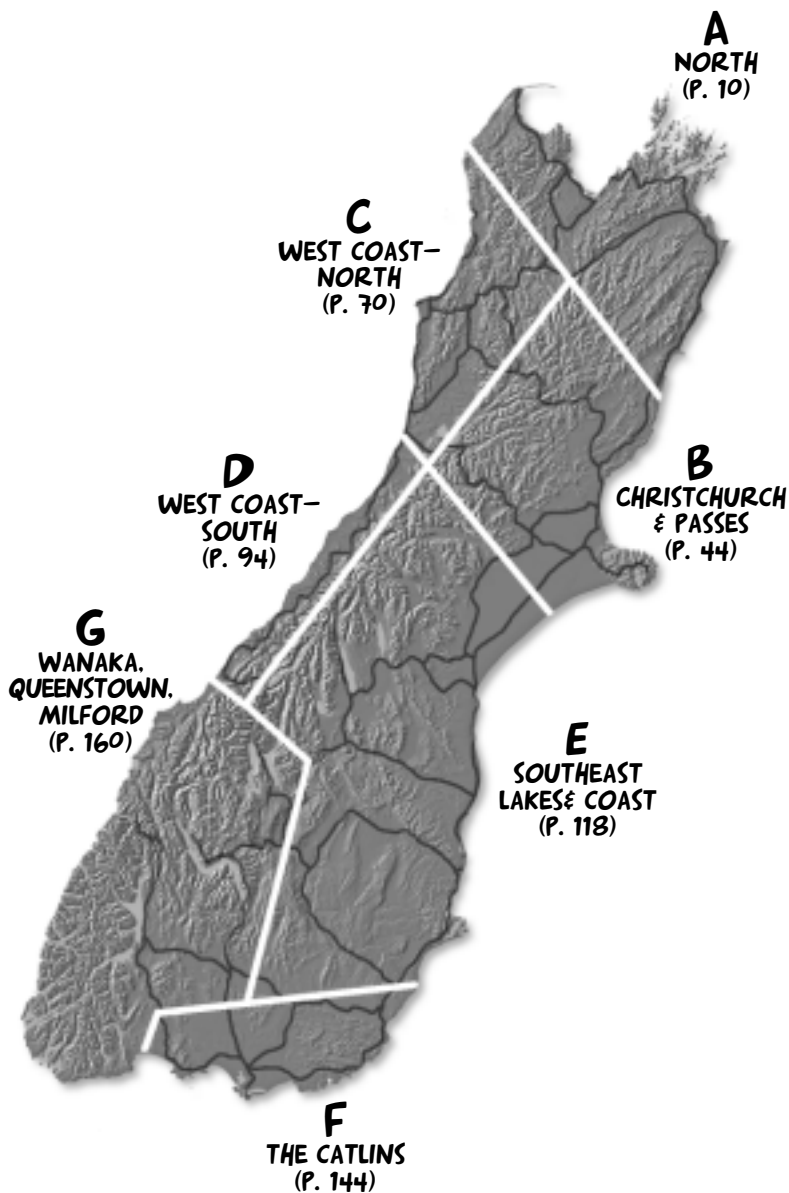
Cookie's favorite "off-the-beaten-path" outings (in no order, as that'd be way too tough)

Cave Stream (B7)	Motukiekie Beach (C11)
Halpins Falls (B9)	Moeraki penguins (E9)
Monro Beach (D13)	Amethyst hot pool (D4)
Timaru Maori Art (E1)	Wharariki/Pillar Pt (A2)
Shag Pt boulders (E10)	Cape Foulwind/Holcim's (C6)
Humboldt Falls (G16)	Sawcut Gorge (A13)
Clifden cave (F9)	Shadow Basin/ Lake Alta (G11)
Charming Creek (C4)	Rawhiti Cave (A3)
Haumuri Bluffs (A16)	Oparara Arches (C2)

Be sure to check FLICKR for color photos, maps, and additional info.

The best place to get this book within New Zealand is at the 9 *Bivouac Outdoor* shops, or from their online store. Check www.bivouac.co.nz, search NZ Frenzy.

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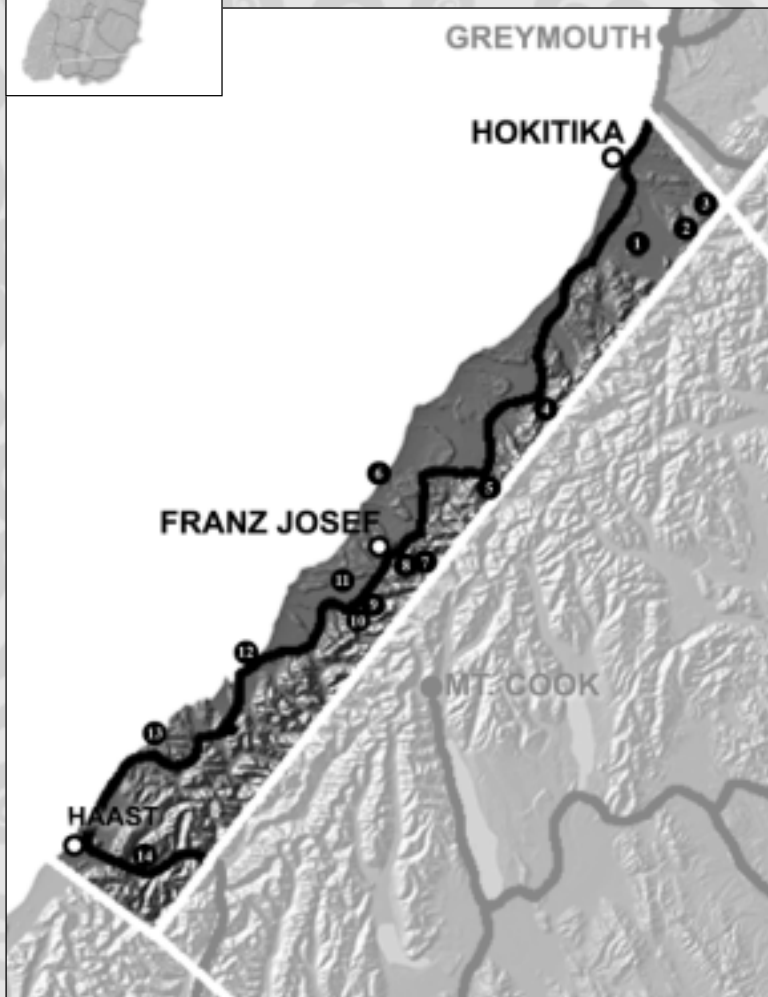
Base map courtesy of Geographx, Wellington, NZ



West Coast - SOUTH

MAPS ON FLICKR!!!

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- D1 Hokitika Gorge
- D2 Lake Kaniere/Dorothy Falls
- D3 Cesspool of Arahura River
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- D6 Okarito Beach Track
- D7 Franz Josef Glacier

- D8 Robert's Point Track
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- D12 Bruce Bay/Maori Beach
- D13 Monro Beach Track
- D14 Haast Pass

WEST COAST - SOUTH

The southern half of Westland is where the grandeur of the Southern Alps impressively towers over the West Coast rainforest jungle. **Very Impressive!** Sadly, it rains in buckets in these parts and most travelers on hurried South Island itineraries speed through the area, rarely hanging around long enough to give the clouds a chance to part in order to reveal the majestic snow-capped peaks rising above the iconic glaciers. These two glaciers, Franz Josef and Fox, are undoubtedly the scenic highlight of the entire West Coast. Both these glacier-named towns are deservedly popular, so expect full car parks, plenty of tour buses, and nearly 100% tourism-orientation. Regardless of the Heli-tour hoopla, these glaciers are unique in the world and easily accessible whether you're a keen trumper or drive-by sight-seer.

The main town of interest in this area of the coast is Hokitika. Hokitika is still a small Kiwi town that does a good job of attracting travelers without selling-out its small-town soul. Hokitika has fashioned itself as the Greenstone/Jade capitol of NZ, as well as the artsy beach driftwood capitol.

Of special note is the tiny village of Okarito. Aside from its wonderful Southern Alps skyline panorama, it may be the only chance most South Island travelers have at spotting an actual Kiwi bird on the local Ranger-lead night-time walks. If you're keen on Kiwis and not bound for Stewart Island, then Okarito is your best bet to see an oh-so-rare Kiwi.

Haast Pass is the island's "waterfall pass" leaving the wet coast for the much drier and sunnier (and sandfly-free) Wanaka/Queenstown areas. The SH 6 road is curvy and slow-going, but gorgeous the entire way, especially after heavy rain. If you're sick and tired of Westland's sandflies, welcome relief awaits at Lake Wanaka on the far side of the pass. On the other hand, if you're heading west from Wanaka, you better be armed with DEET (see Appendix 1).

Don't miss:

Glaciers (7-11)

Hokitika Gorge (1)



D1

HOKITIKA GORGE

(Hoe-ka-tick-a)

SURREAL BLUE WATER

Walk: short, easy 7-minute stroll

- watch YouTube: wnzctLmL6ha



Visitors to Hokitika often combine a visit to Hokitika Gorge and Lake Kaniere into a long 80km-driving outing. It's probably best to see the Gorge first, and then plan to spend more time around the lake relaxing if the weather's fine.

The Hokitika Gorge is a long drive—33km—from Hokitika, so the question is, “is the photo-op worth it?” Yes is the easy answer, especially if you are coming from the north. Even on a grey drizzly day the Gorge's colors are impressive. There are many powder-blue rivers in the south of the South Island, but none more easily photographed than Hokitika's Gorge. The water is an otherworldly milky opaque blue due to suspended glacier-ground “rock flour”. It's the same eerie blue as Lakes Pukaki/Tekapo and rivers just to the south like Whataroa/Haast. What makes Hokitika Gorge so special is that the water pools up and is penned-in by grey rocks for a 300m stretch, all surrounded by verdant green bush and spanned by a scenic swingbridge. This makes the scene super-easy to photograph and appreciate. It's almost impossible to take a bad photo of Hokitika Gorge, and when you get home, it'll be the kind of photo that you'll show others to make them salivate over your NZ trip.

There's not much to do at the Gorge than just look. From the carpark an easy track heads 7 minutes over to the swingbridge, and from there

you can scramble down to the rocks and water for a quick icy splash. There are no other walks or anything else to explore nearby.



DRIVING: A local map from the i-Site is a big help. In Hokitika on SH 6 turn at the signs for Kaniere Lake and Hokitika Gorge. In about 5km you'll turn right to go to the Gorge, then follow signs zig-zagging through the farm lands.

(kaan-ee-err)

SWIMMING/BOATING LAKE WITH A WATERFALL

Walk: short walks

- various drive-up access points



Lake Kaniere is a natural lake set amidst bush-clad hills with some distant views of snow-capped peaks. There are a number of lake-access points around the lake and a DOC campground at the NE end (Hans Bay—\$6pp). The 2WD gravel road around the east side of the lake is kept in good condition. The north end of the lake is more popular with

water-skiers and such, while the south end near Dorothy Falls is more quiet and mellow.

Dorothy Falls are signed along the east-side road and for most people the 30m falls make for a quick photo-stop. Scrambling adventurers may see that there's an upper portion to the falls just barely visible from the bottom. Dorothy's drop is listed at 64m...and that's a lot more than you see at the bottom, so...hmmm, maybe there's a lot more falls hidden above. Go see...a rough path investigates the tops.

The lake access path at Dorothy Falls provides some of the nicest swimming on the lake. Surprisingly, this lake warms up during a rare spell of hot west coast weather. The brown waters of Kaniere are a tannin-stained (from the ferns), but the water is clean.

FYI

For a unique trip through the Hokitika area you can see 3 oddly different types of water in a day—Hokitika Gorge's milky blue, Kaniere's tannin browned, and then Cesspool's crystal-clear aquamarine. Ya won't find that combo many places on Earth!



DRIVING: It's best to check a local map from the i-Site. From Hokitika the lake is 18km. Just north of town turn east on the signed road and follow it to the lake.

If you are coming from Hokitika Gorge, turn in Kokatahi at signs for the lake to get to the south end of shoreline road.

D3

THE CESSPOOL OF THE ARAHURA

(ara-hoora)

REMOTE RIVER SWIMMING HOLE

Walk: easy/mod 25-minute one-way (2 km)

- bring: swimsuit, picnic, bug spray



By definition a cesspool is “a sewage pit or morally disgusting place”. The Cesspool Gorge on the upper Arahura River in no way resembles that definition. Maybe, in some long-ago NZ time, this river gorge was trashed by mining and such...but nowadays the river runs pure, though stuck with the uninviting name. The Cesspool Gorge, reached via a long drive from Hokitika and then a short walk, is a fabulous swimming hole on the crystal-blue Arahura. Making the scene even more interesting is an old-timey swingbridge spanning the gorge—one of the older ones without wood planking, just wiring...making for a real swinger! The pool is rimmed with boulders to sun on/leap from and there are also sandy and grassy areas beside the river to picnic/sun/hang out. Of course, a sunny day sure helps to enjoy a swimming hole in Westland—if it's grey out the Cesspool won't be too scenic or inviting.

The Cesspool swingbridge is just the beginning of the multi-day Arahura/Styx Rivers tramp, so feel free to continue the track upriver for however long you'd like before turning back, (or 4-5 days if you feel so inclined). Formerly the Cesspool area was the carpark for the multi-day tramp, but most of the final 2km of the road has washed out and become a walking track. Thus, the Cesspool is nowadays even more private because you have to walk a bit on the old road to get to it instead of driving directly to it.

West Coast - SOUTH





Arahura Cesspool

FYI

For a quick ‘n’ easy overnight backpack outing, the Cesspool makes a good destination—plenty of grassy areas for tents and morning sun to chase away the sandflies.

Walk

Walk up and down the eroded road bed until it deposits you at the riverside swimming hole and swingbridge area. The track up to the bridge starts at a DOC arrow just back up the road a few meters from the riverside area.

If you see some locals poking around (fossicking) in the riverbed, they’re most likely looking for Pounamu (Greenstone), which the river is justifiably famous for. Keep your eyes peeled and you find your own hunk of rare Greenstone treasure.

DRIVING: From Hokitika drive 18km to Lake Kaniere. Just past the Canoe Creek area near the northern lakeshore, turn left onto gravel Milltown Rd. Follow this 10km through the scenic Arahura Valley until you cross the Arahura River bridge. Just after the bridge you’ll see a heavy-duty iron gate on the right which you need to open and go through. The gate is heavy and difficult to get open, but it does function—pull the big “pin” to start. Once through bump-bump along the road 2km to the grassy riverside area just before the road wash-out (if you can’t get the gate open you’ll have to walk the extra 2km.)

D4

AMETHYST HOT SPRINGS



A SMALL SANDY HOT NATURAL POOL

Walk: easy 12-minute one-way (1.0 km)

- bring: bug spray for sandflies, digging shovel



Amethyst
Stream
mouth

Hot Pool

Wanganui River carpark view

West Coast - SOUTH

Amethyst Hot Springs, along with Sylvia Flats, are the only easy-to-reach natural hot springs on the South Island. Also like Sylvia Flats (B5) these springs are along a flood-prone river bank and the quality of the pools depends on the enthusiasm of the digger-outers. Unlike Sylvia Flats though, very few mainstream guidebook authors, and thus few travelers, know of the existence of the Amethyst hot pools. Every winter the Wanganui River floods and re-engineers its channel, recently washing away the road where you now park. By the time you're reading this the river and the path may have changed again and the pools may have been swamped under a new load of sand. Whether the Amethyst hot pools are "good" is anyone's guess, but at least it doesn't take a long detour to investigate. Hope these pix can direct you fairly well to find the hot pool, and at least the entire adventure is only minutes off the main Westland SH 6 travel route...Go See!

What you get, at least as of Feb 2010, is a sandy two-person shoveled-out hot pool—too hot for a sunny day, but perfect in typical Westland grey. It's best to bring some sort of digging implement with you, even if it's just a traveler's cooking pan. At dusk and dawn sandflies WILL definitely swarm, as well as on grey days. You Are Warned! Just like at Sylvia Flats though,

the sandflies go to bed at dark leaving just you, your mermaid, a box of wine, and the Southern Cross rising over the mountains. If you visit by day, even if the springs are too hot, the huge sandy riverbed “beach” surrounding the pools makes a great place to play Frisbee, skip stones, and lessen your tan lines.

The Amethyst hot pool area is also perfect short overnight tent outing—just set up camp on the huge sandbar (of course, not when rain pours and flood threatens). There’s heaps of available driftwood for a nice night of hot-pool ‘n’ bonfire riversong serenity.

Pssst, nobody tell Lonely Planet about this spot!

Walk From the road-end “Wanganui Valley” sign head straight for the river then follow the user-path along the top of the bluff where the road was washed away. The springs are just 1km ahead along the sandy left bank of the river. Go through some bush and then onto the “closed” road for a few hundred meters to the Amethyst Stream bridge. Cross the bridge and go exactly 200m and look for the path on the right leading quickly down to the Wanganui Riverbed. At the riverbed the springs are to the right (downstream), halfway to mouth of the Amethyst Stream, tucked next to the bush line. (As you emerge from the path to the riverbed, make sure to take a look back so you can find the path on the way out—it’s easy to misplace.)



DRIVING: On SH 6, 5km north of Harihari, on the north side of the Wanganui River bridge, turn upstream on the unsigned road and go just 1km until the road ends at the wash out (with the private gate on the left.)

Coming from the north the Wanganui Bridge is about 11km south of Lake lanthe.

D5

WHATAROA RIVER

(faata-row-a)

A RIVER OF CAR-STOPPING BLUE

Walk: easy, short sightseeing walk

- discount glacier flights
- watch YouTube: qbb5q9b2kLa



The Whataroa River often runs remarkably blue. BLUE to make you slow the car while crossing the bridge, BLUE to make you park and gawk! Not just BLUE though, there's also a backdrop of jagged grey snow-capped peaks and a helicopter waiting to whisk you up and around the heights. If you're coming from the North, this BLUE is like that of the Hokitika Gorge...simply eye-boggling! If you've yet to witness Lake Tekapo, Lake Pukaki or any of the famed Southland glacial rivers, then the Whataroa River is a glimpse of the eye candy that awaits as you tour southwards.

The BLUE may stop you, but make sure to turn up the short road on the south side of the bridge. Have a splash in the BLUE there at the carpark, but also check-out this helicopter's rates for a glacier flight. All I can say is that it's a way cheaper flight than you'll find in the upcoming glacier tourist-a-ramas, and you get a fly-over this amazing BLUE river to boot. This is probably the most old-school, non-touristy-feeling glacier flight operation in the glacier area (Glacier Country Scenic Flights).

OK, enough commercialized promotion, (I've received nothing for this, nor have I actually taken the flight...but the travelers I met loved their flights). For an even better photo of the Whataroa River and the mountain backdrop than the one you've undoubtedly already taken from the carpark, ask the Heli-man for permission to walk up the signed farm track. Just 5 minutes up the track the photo-op becomes smashingly better, and you may spy an elusive Okarito white heron on the way.

West Coast - SOUTH



Southern Alps over the Whataroa River



DRIVING: The Whataroa Bridge is 36km north of Franz Josef... also a few km north of Whataroa town, or 26km south of Harihari.

D6**OKARITO BEACH LOOP ROUTE**

(oka-reeto)

VIEW—PACKED BEACH/BLUFFS LOOP WALK**Walk: moderate 2-hour beach and bluffs loop walk (7km round-trip)**

- watch Meet the Locals: "Rarest Kiwi"
- bring: tide chart, Kiwi bird curiosity



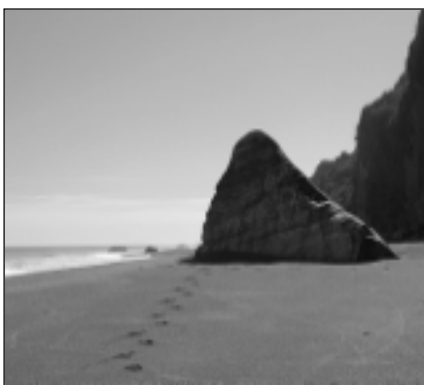
Okarito often gets tourism publicity for its commercial Okarito Lagoon tours and kayak rentals as well as the night-time Kiwi bird tours where you can actually **see a live Kiwi bird in the wild!** These one-of-a-kind night-time tours, led by a dedicated local Kiwi-conservationist, cost about \$60pp, which is way cheaper than a trip to Stewart Island. (The North Island has two such opportunities to see a Kiwi in the wild...at Trounson Park and Aroha Island, both in my North guidebook.)

Much lesser-known about Okarito is its excellent beach 'n' bluffs loop track. The track heads south from the road-end Okarito beach carpark. **The beach portion of the loop is only accessible half-tide or lower.** Thankfully, DOC posts a low-tide time chart on their sign at the beach carpark. The beach walk is under the bluffs for about 45 minutes (3km) to Three-Mile Lagoon, and then the forested bluff walk is a more strenuous 50 minutes (3.5km) back to the carpark with plenty of ups and downs along the age-old miner's pack track.

What Tourism Okarito fails to tell the world, because possibly few people ever get to see it (given that it rains here 110% of the time)...is that on a clear day the 180° panoramic view looking south over the 3-Mile Lagoon bridge is the finest on the West Coast! Whoa, substantial claim, but here's the details; first, the foreground is a scenic bridge crossing the

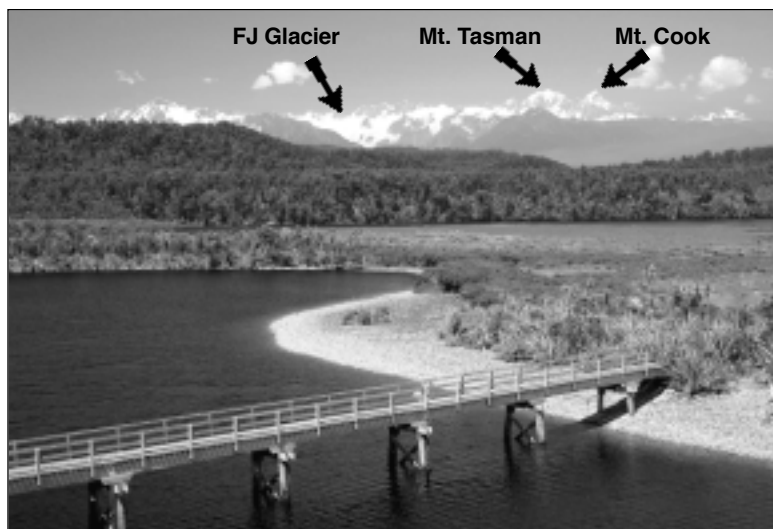


dark waters of jungle-clad 3-Mile Lagoon. Above the lagoon to the east an array of snow-capped Alps dazzle, showing the top snowfields of the Franz Josef Glacier and the peaks of Mt Tasman and Mt Cook. To complete the scene, looking SW, a driftwood-strewn beach and turquoise sea stretch endlessly south to Gillespies Point. Yup, Mtn tops to deep sea, glacier to lagoon—pray for a clear day, cuz this is the best viewpoint the West Coast offers...and one few people or other guidebooks seem to know about!!



Walk You gotta time the tide. If you're within 2 hours of low-tide, then hurry along the beach route—the “pinch point” is half way. If the tide is high, take the high route and maybe check-in on the Trig en route. You could do the bluffs route as an out/back if the tide is high...or, when you get to 3-Mile Lagoon bridge, you could spend some time walking south on the long beach over there until the tide ebbs enough to allow you back along the beach under the bluffs.

FYI Camping. Okarito has a little-publicized but nice community campground near the driftwood-strewn beach, about \$10pp with hot showers for a dollar. This camp is popular with some of the “off-the-beaten-path” adventure tour bus groups who try to avoid the Franz/Fox mob scene.



DRIVING: Okarito is signed from SH 6 between Whataroa and Franz Josef, then 10km down the paved road.

D7**FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER VALLEY TRACK****THE BETTER GLACIER VALLEY WALK**

Walk: easy 30 minute (2.5 km) one-way

- watch YouTube: 06y7h8qdyyu & h9xqLqL1yfu
- bring: swimsuit, sandals



West Coast - SOUTH



The Franz Josef Glacier Valley walk is the more interesting of the two glacier valley walks, and it seems less crowded since tourists are spread out over a longer distance than at Fox Glacier. It takes an easy 30 minutes from the carpark to reach the roped-off end of the track some 200m before the glacier's snout. Along the way there are a bunch of waterfalls in side canyons and a very photogenic triple falls directly on the track. Red-blossomed Southern Rata trees adorn the towering canyon walls in the summertime. Sheer jagged walls tower overhead and you get a good look up the face of FJ's canyon-filling ice field as you walk towards it. At the track's end near the crumbling nose of the glacier you'll get a good look at the cave from whence pours the icy Waiho River. Ropes and signs prevent people from attempting to get closer to the wall of ice (people have died getting too close and having ice chunks "knock 'em cold"). Often you'll also see parties of guided glacier-walkers making their way down the hyper-steep front face of the gravel-covered portion of the snout.

If you're the type for wacky off-the-beaten-path ideas, then wear a bathing suit under your regular clothes for this track. The scenic triple waterfall that tumbles down the canyon wall about half-way to the glacier, surprisingly, isn't ice cold—it's the "temperate" part of this wondrously unique glacier/rainforest combo that makes this area so special in the world (it's a



rain-fed waterfall rather than an ice-melt flow). So, what better way to celebrate NZ's unique marvels than to strip down to your swimsuit and then have a bit of a waterfall shower—in sight of the frozen wall of ice! Where else in the world can you do this and not be freezing cold?? The left-most of the three waterfalls even has a dry photo spot where your friends can take some memorable pix. Woo-hooo, Fun at the Franz!



DRIVING: Franz's glacier access is signed at the south end of the river bridge, just south of Franz Josef town.

D8

ROBERT'S POINT, FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER

GLACIERLAND'S BEST DAY-WALK TRACK

Tramp: strenuous 2 hours (5-6 km) one-way

- watch YouTube: p6bfuyirvLe
- elevation Waiho River: 200m
- elevation Robert's Point: 600m



The Robert's Point track is the **ONLY** day-walking track, at either FJ or Fox Glacier, which delivers you to a viewpoint above the ice fields. Robert's Pt itself is a rock knob about 400m above the valley floor, directly across from 800m waterfall stair-stepping its wispy way down to the ice field. The track is rough, rocky and steep—superb for fit trampers in fine weather, but maybe best to avoid it in wet weather. The track itself packs plenty of interests, including heaps of swingbridges and the century-old Hendes Hut (look for 1913 signatures on the hut's tin walls!) Additionally, just past the hut is one of most unique track-engineering feats on the South Island. This so-called “Hendes Galley” is a 50-meter steep, suspended planked semi-stairway bolted against the cliff face high above the valley floor—definitely no place for those with fear of heights! 100 years ago you went down this galley-way directly onto the glacier, but now the glacier has retreated another 2km up the valley.

Reaching Robert's Pt you'll find a picnic table and a somewhat obscured view directly down onto the glacial face—a view only the helicopters otherwise get. All the jagged glory of Franz Josef Glacier wrinkles below in white-blue-black majesty. If you want an even better view for all the effort it took to reach this point, then be sure to pick your way down a bit

from the picnic table and then to the right where you'll finally come out onto an open rock slope that sports excellent down-valley views all the way to Lake Mapourika and the Tasman Sea—wow! You'll also see heaps of glacier-walkers marching like ants on the ice field below... and of course the view across the glacier to the stupendous waterfall is unmatched. If you want a strenuous tramp in the glaciers region that delivers good bang-for-the-buck and gets you away from the tourist mob, then Robert's Pt it is!!





Tramp Expect a strenuous true tramping track with lots of wet roots, rocks, and swing-bridges. The track is marked the entire way with no junctions or options. It's 10 min to the first bridge, then 20 more drops you back to the valley floor via steps. Now the real climbing begins...20 minutes to Hendes Hut, then a non-stop 50-minute ascent to the Point. All along the way there are plenty of stream-crossing splash spots.



West Coast-SOUTH

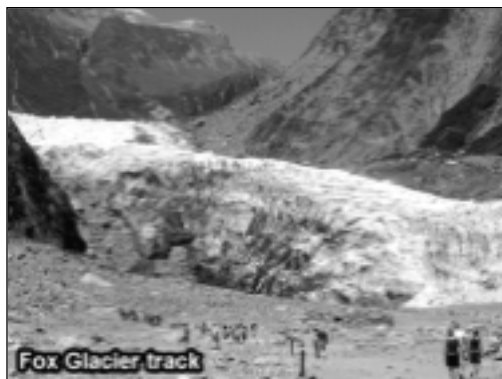
DRIVING: Head up the FJ Glacier Valley road. You can begin at the road-end carpark, but doing so adds an extra dullish 1.0km. The better start point is 1km before the glacier road-end at the Lake Wombat trailhead. Across from the Wombat track you'll see a track that quickly leads to the DOC sign announcing the track.



CROWDED ROUTE TO THE SNOUT

Walk: easy 17-minute (1.5km) one-way

- watch YouTube: bhkLvijcoga & pnqg3yj2iLk
- bring: plastic bag, hammer



The easy viewpoint walk to Fox Glacier's snout only takes half the time and effort as the walk to Franz Josef, and thus EVERY tour bus and EVERY tourist chooses this walk if they only have time for one glacier walk. Expect LARGE walking groups. Even though it can seem fairly crowded, everyone

should do it, even if you've already walked up FJ's valley. Fox's ice-wall snout is more impressive than FJ's...more crevassed and buckled and less covered with dirt and debris than Franz's, showing more of that wonderful glacial blue between all the black streaking.

The walk is short, and since you can't see as high up the valley from where the track is, the actual walk is less captivating than FJ's. To liven the walk up a bit bring a plastic grocery sack and take note of the gravel-covered block of "dead ice" oozing water just 100m into the track from the carpark. On the way back from the ice wall take a step up the "dead ice" and give the edges a knock to chip off your own handful of dirty glacial ice. This big hunk of glacial ice has been sitting there melting for 50 years—since the glacier's retreat up the valley in the 1960s! Chip off some hunks, give 'em a rinse, and then either have a mouthful of glacier or use them to glacier-chill a cocktail!



DRIVING: 2km south of Fox Glacier town turn onto the glacier-access road on the north side of the bridge.

AN ELEVATED VIEW OF FOX GLACIER'S UPPER REACHES



Walk: moderate 30-minute (2km) one-way

- elevation carpark: 260m
- elevation viewpoint: 440m

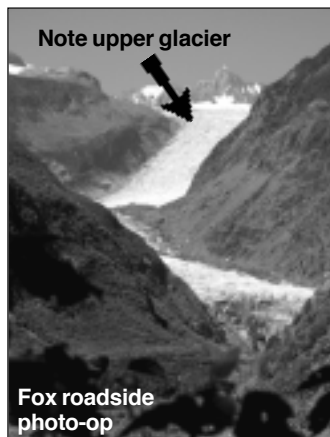


The Chalet track is a moderately uphill track ending at a view platform overlooking Fox Glacier's blue-black icy snout. This is an impressive glacial view for a relatively paltry effort...and better yet, no tour buses bring their hordes up here. The Chalet track is fine-weather-only, as drizzle makes it slippery and lots of rain makes a stream-crossing impassable. On a sunny day, this track, more than any other FJ/Fox Glacier track, highlights the unique nature of these NZ glaciers—alpine ice mixed with rainforest. On the way to the historic “chalet” view you’ll think you’re in the tropics as tree ferns hung with moss line the track, epiphytic plants hang from tree limbs, and the summertime red blossoms of the Southern Rata trees are reminiscent of tropical Hibiscus.



Chalet view

West Coast • SOUTH



Note upper glacier

Fox roadside photo-op

Arriving at the track's-end viewpoint, you'll find one of the few locations in the world where you can frame both ferns and glacier in the same photo—neat! Looking closely at the upper glacier you'll undoubtedly see the ant-like ice-walkers, and below to the left is the Fox Glacier valley-walk viewpoint. Surrounding the viewpoint the Southern Alps ridgelines tower 1,200 meters above you!

FYI The better view of the complete top-to-bottom Fox Glacier is from the roadside signed viewpoint, not the steep 15-min track to the disappointingly overgrown “Fox Glacier viewpoint”.

DRIVING: South of Fox Glacier town, turn onto the glacier access road on the south side of the Fox River bridge, then 3km to the road-end carpark.



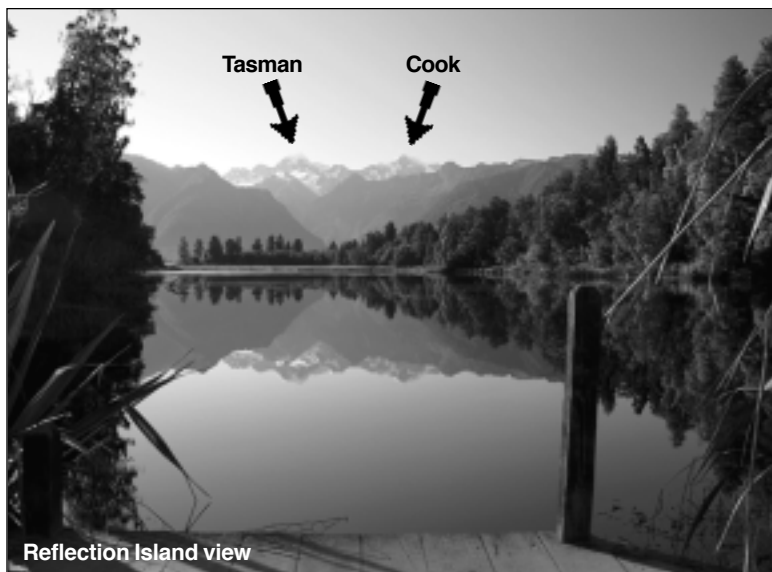
FAMOUS ALPS-REFLECTION PHOTO-OP

Walk: easy one-hour (4km) loop walk

- watch YouTube: 65Lvfp5bo-u



The early morning reflection of Mts Tasman and Cook in the still tannin-stained waters of Lake Matheson is as perfect as a reflection photo gets. Wonderfully, DOC has extended the “Reflection Island” viewpoint steps right down to the lakeside point where the reflection shines best. Expect plenty of tourist company on this lakeshore loop because every tour bus stops here and the easy walk over to the lake makes the outing all-ages friendly. The track makes a loop around the entire lake with stops at two viewpoint platforms (Reflection Island is the better one.)



Reflection Island view

For keen photographers, neither dawn nor sunset is best for lighting the reflection scene. Dawn is WAY too back-lit and near dusk the entire Fox Glacier canyon is in deep shadow. In the afternoon, when the light may be best, that's when the glacier breeze stirs up the lake. Thus, the time that the photo-pros go to get their “shot” would be mid-morning on a calm sunny day—about 8:30-9am (of course on a clear calm sunny day...Ha!) This lets the rising sun creep high enough to light some of the foreground ridges, but before the thermal winds begin to blow. As a photographer, don't bother to sleep in the carpark and hustle out at dawn, because dawn only disappoints. Wait for the tourist airplanes to begin

their daily rumble, have a nice brekkie at the Lake café, then go. Regrettably, this is when the daily tour buses begin arriving. Best of luck—it is a smashing photo when the elements are kind.

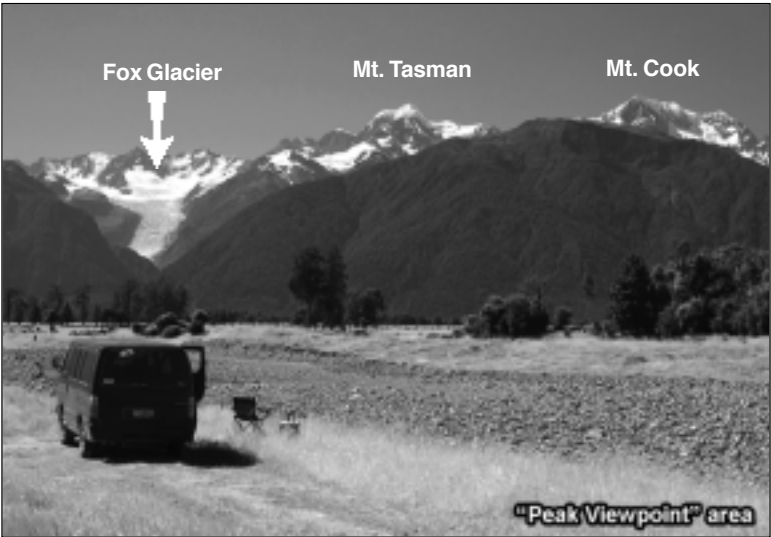
From the Reflection Island photo platform be sure to look for the “friendly” eel family that lives under the platform. Every now and then one or more may swim out from under the platform to check-out the daily human parade... yikes!



Walk An easy one-hour track (4km) circles the lake. Going clockwise, the small, cramped “View of Views” platform is about 25 minutes, then 8 more minutes to Reflection Island. To speed your way to Reflection Island, begin the track then turn right to go counter-clockwise.



FYI There’s another great photo-op “Peak Viewpoint” another 5km past the Lake Matheson turn, on the way to Gillespies Beach at the stream crossing—check it out, as it lets you see the upper Fox Glacier.



DRIVING: From Fox Glacier town take the signed road 4km to the signed Lake Matheson turn.



HELLO/GOODBYE WEST COAST!!

Walk: Roadside beach sculptures

- watch YouTube: [_avzcupe-re](#)



This section of the West Coast highway runs right along the beach for a couple km, and if you're traveling southwards, this is the first time the highway has hugged the shoreline since Punakaiki. For some reason travelers stop along this section of coastline every year to stack rocks into some peculiar balance combinations. Who knows why?? Because it's the final glimpse of the Tasman for southbound travelers? Because it's the first glimpse for northbounders? Call it whimsy, joy, love.....whatever it is, people stop and create traveler tributes to NZ every year. Always the same, but always different.

Where's yours?



DRIVING: 45km south of Fox Glacier, or 25km north of Lake Paringa.



A BEACH WITH RARE PENGUINS

Walk: easy 30-minute (2.5km) one-way to beach

- watch YouTube: 6s2y_ff4abo & 7fk3-oohckw



Monro Beach is probably your best chance to spot an elusive Fiordland Crested Penguin, as well as taking a peaceful jungle walk to a sandy beach cove. Numerous signs at the beach and trailhead describe the rare and poorly-understood penguins. Unlike the Yellow-Eyed penguins, the FC penguins go to sea for months at a time without returning to their nests. The best time to see the FCPs is July-December when they come ashore to breed, and then again in Jan-Feb when they come ashore again to moult. (I've seen one, and feel lucky. On Jan 30, 2010 at 3:30pm it popped ashore and waddled up the beach and then quickly hopped up the brushy slope to its nest.)



Regardless of whether you'll see a penguin, the easy 30-minute walk to the beach cove is very pleasant. It's a nearly-flat walking tour through a dense Westland jungle of fern, moss, Rata and Kahikatea with birdsong and stream gurgle accompanying your steps. A very nice easy walk!

A low-tide is the best time to visit Monro Beach. First,

because a lower tide gives the penguins farther to walk up the sand to get to the bush (and thus more chance to see them). Second, about two hours either side of low tide you can sneak around the headland cliffs to explore longer beaches either north or south. Head north on the wild beach for 20 minutes (1.3km) and you may find a clear-water lagoon where the next stream enters the beach. Head south for 10 minutes to see the stream that empties Lake Moeraki.



DRIVING: The signed beach track is on SH 6 at the western end of Moeraki Lake, near the Lodge. It's about 30km north of Haast or 19km south of Lake Paringa.

D14

HAAST PASS DRIVE



RIVERS AND WATERFALLS

Drive: 90 km from Sea to Lake Wanaka

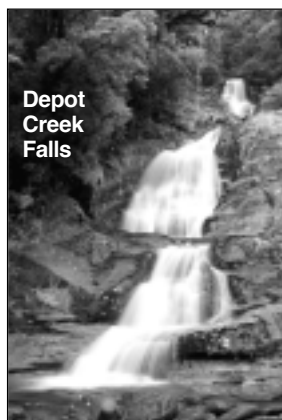
- watch YouTube: [rngwLLgL7bg](#) & [m9czruu_t5y](#)



Haast Pass is the most southern, the rainiest, and the lowest of the three passes. Haast is the ethereal rainforest and waterfalls pass compared to Arthur's alpine grandeur and Lewis's hot springs. The 90km journey over Haast Pass from Tasman Sea to Lake Wanaka (or vice versa) features plenty of quick bang-for-the-buck stops, but no substantial walking tracks or all-day interest points. Most travelers hustle the Haast, eager to either get to Wanaka...or get to the coast. There are a few DOC camps along the route for people who want to break up the Haast Pass drive. Otherwise, waterfalls and river/mountain views will greet you around every corner of the drive.

Here's a km-by-km run-down of some of the Haast stopping-point attractions, beginning on the west coast at Haast Township (not the VisCtr) (0km). 22km to Depot Creek Falls...27km to Roaring Billy Falls...47km to Pleasant Flats DOC camp...51km to Thunder Creek Falls...57km to Fantail Falls...61km to Haast Pass...71km to Blue Pools...80km to Makaroa town...90km to Lake Wanaka.

Depot Creek Falls. This 35m-ish falls is one of the Haast's secrets. There's no sign on the road, but there is a gravel carpark immediately east of the signed Depot Creek bridge. From the parking a wee path leads one minute to the secretive waterfall. It's the "secret" nature of this spot that makes it special, not because the waterfall is overly special. Pretty much guaranteed solitude. Maybe climb up a bit and have a splash in the couple-sized pool with your partner and share a smile that none of the rushing Haast tourists even know you and this waterfall are hiding in the forest.

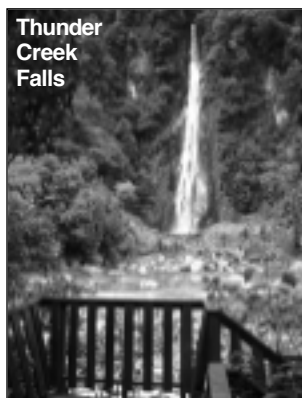


Drive: 22km east of Haast Township (1.0km past the signed Cache Creek bridge), or 5km west of Roaring Billy.

Roaring Billy Falls. Roaring Billy is a good stop for a short little walk, especially if you're coming from the east and have just spent time on the island's dry side. The flat 5-minute track to Roaring Billy's view is a wonderful re-introduction to the wet West Coast jungle. Palms and hanging moss everywhere, dense impenetrable bush, and even a big tree that you can stand inside of. On the other hand, if you've just come down the wet coast, you're probably sick of jungle and can't wait for Wanaka's sunshine...so skip this. Once down the track you get a distant view of the

so-so falls (most impressive after mega-rain), but if you descend to the shingle riverbed and walk over, the Haast River shows an alluring opaque blue as it quietly glides by the Roaring Billy.

Drive: 27km from Haast or 20km west of Pleasant Flats. There's a signed turn-around carpark.



Thunder Creek Falls. This is the tour-bus favorite. One minute stop, take picture, hurry on the way. Signs say 28m, but it's quite obviously a good bit higher—more like 40m. No place to explore or play much, just a photo-op.

Drive: 5km east of Pleasants Flats or 10km west of the pass, obviously signed.

Fantail Falls. Fantail Falls has a secret. Walk the 1-minute track to view the falls across the still-young and crystalline Haast River....and you'll think, "What's the secret...this seems just a quick photo-

stop?" Fantail Falls itself is simply a picturesque stair-step waterfall pouring into the Haast River...and if it hasn't rained too much you may be able to scramble a bit up the left side of the falls for fun or photo angles.

But Fantail's secret is downstream 200 meters. You may have seen it from the road if you came from the west. Fantail's neighbor stream charges out of a gushing slot canyon. Simply walk down the shingle bed from Fantail and then up the stream pouring from within the jungle. In a minute you'll see that "mist-belching waterfall chasm" sums up the scene pretty well. The only way to get close is to wade through the bottom pool and then scamper up and over the rocks. In fair weather the bottom pool is chest deep, but if you grapple along the left side you can make it through. Fantail's secret provides a good exciting little adventure for gung-ho travelers tired of Haast's tourist photo-ops. Water sandals and swimsuit are the call here.



Drive: Fantail is clearly signed 6km east of Thunder Creek or just 3.5km west of the Pass.

Blue Pools. The Blue Pools is a short walk over a fun swingbridge to a fenced viewpoint overlooking a deep blue crystal clear river section. The Blue is akin to Hokitika Gorge (D1), but this Blue is clear rather than opaque. Simply eye-candy yummy on a sunny day!

Drive: 10km east of the Pass or 9km west of Makaroa.