

The east is the more populated coast of the South Island, with Christchurch and Dunedin cities and the larger towns, Timaru, Oamaru and Invercargill. SH1 between Blenheim and Invercargill runs the full length of the east coast. Christchurch is the main airport hub for the South Island.

Kaikoura

The Kaikoura Coast is one of New Zealand's great coastal drives. The road hugs the shoreline with the sea on one side and the Kaikoura ranges on the other. Allow lots of time for seal and surf spotting on your drive south. The small town of Kaikoura sits on a promontory of land bordering the marine depths of the Kaikoura Canyon and Hikurangi Trench, an abundant feeding ground and part of the Pacific "highway" for marine life that extends up the east coast of New Zealand and far up into the Pacific Ocean. "Kai" means food in Maori and "koura" means crayfish - and the coast here is famous for its seafood and crayfish. Whale-watching (by air or sea) is an absolute must here, but there are several other good options to explore the local coast and birdlife. The dramatic Kaikoura ranges offer excellent hiking and quite a different landscape from what you find on other New Zealand walks.



Highlights

Whale watching cruises or flights

Dolphin swimming tours

Albatross Encounters & Bird watching tours

Local hikes and day walks

Seafood restaurants

