

This chapter was researched in December 2011 for the 16th edition of Lonely Planet's *New Zealand* (to be published September 2012). It is provided free, without finalised editing or full mapping, in order to provide the most up-to-date post-quake travel information to travellers as quickly as possible.

Christchurch & Canterbury

Includes »

Christchurch	2
Around Christchurch	22
Lyttelton	22
Akaroa & Banks Peninsula	23
North Canterbury	28
Hanmer Springs	28
Lewis Pass Hwy	31
Central Canterbury	32
Craigieburn Forest Park	32
Arthur's Pass	32
Methven	34
Mt Somers	35
South Canterbury	36
Timaru	36
Inland & Mackenzie Country	38
Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park	44

Best Places to Eat

- » Bodhi Tree (p15)
- » Simo's Deli (p17)
- » Christchurch Farmers Market (p17)
- » Almeidas Tapas Bar (p15)

Best Places to Stay

- » Orari B&B (p12)
- » Le Petit Hotel (p15)
- » Coombe Farm (p26)
- » Okuti Garden (p26)

Why Go?

Nowhere in New Zealand is changing and developing as fast as post-earthquake Christchurch, and visiting the country's second largest city as it's being rebuilt and reborn is both interesting and inspiring.

A short drive from Christchurch's dynamic re-emergence, Banks Peninsula conceals hidden bays and beaches – a backdrop for kayaking and wildlife cruises with a sunset return to the attractions of Akaroa. To the north are the vineyards of the Waipara Valley and the family-holiday ambience of Hanmer Springs. Westwards, the well-ordered farms of the Canterbury Plains morph quickly into the rough-and-tumble wilderness of the Southern Alps.

Canterbury summertime attractions include tramping along the braided rivers and alpine valleys around Arthur's Pass and mountain biking around the turquoise lakes of the Mackenzie Country. During winter, the attention switches to the mountains, with skiing at Mt Hutt. Throughout the seasons, Aoraki/Mt Cook, the country's tallest peak, stands sentinel over this diverse region.

When to Go

January

Christchurch comes alive with the World Buskers Festival, a global showcase of street performance.

February to March

Long summer days provide plenty of opportunity to get active amid Canterbury's spectacular landscapes.

July to October

Hit the slopes at Mt Hutt, or go local on Canterbury's smaller ski fields.

i Getting There & Away

Christchurch has an international airport serviced by domestic airlines flying to key destinations around NZ. International connections include Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast in Australia, and Kuala Lumpur and Singapore in Asia.

Bus and shuttle operators scurry along the east coast, connecting Canterbury's coastal (and near-coastal) settlements with northern destinations such as Picton and Nelson, and southern towns like Dunedin and Queenstown. Other operators connect Christchurch to Arthur's Pass, the West Coast and Mt Cook.

Rail options for east-coast and coast-to-coast travel are provided by **KiwiRail Scenic** (www.tranzscenic.co.nz). The *TranzAlpine* service connects Christchurch and Greymouth, and the *Coastal Pacific* trains chug north to Picton, with ferry connections across Cook Strait to the North Island.

CHRISTCHURCH

380,900

Welcome to a vibrant city in transition, coping resiliently and creatively with the aftermath of NZ's second-biggest natural disaster (especially as tremors can still be felt regularly). Traditionally the most English of NZ cities, Christchurch is now adding a modern

and innovative layer to its damaged heritage heart. Punts still glide gently down the Avon River, and the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park are still amongst NZ's finest public spaces, but an energetic entrepreneurial edge is also evident, harnessing the opportunities emerging from the city's recent seismic heartache.

History

The settlement of Christchurch in 1850 was an ordered Church of England enterprise, and the fertile farming land was deliberately placed in the hands of the gentry. Christchurch was meant to be a model of class-structured England in the South Pacific, not just another scruffy colonial outpost. Churches were built rather than pubs, and wool made the elite of Christchurch wealthy. In 1862, Christchurch was incorporated as a very English city, and town planning and architecture assumed a close affinity with the 'Mother Country'. As other migrants arrived, the city's character slowly evolved. New industries followed, and the city forged its own aesthetic and cultural notions, often derived from the rich rural hinterland of the Canterbury Plains. From September 2010, the city's reverie as the South Island's cultural and economic hub was savagely torn asunder, and Christchurch was forced to look to the future with both significant challenges and significant opportunities.

Sights

FREE Botanic Gardens

GARDENS

(www.ccc.govt.nz; Rolleston Ave; admission free, guided walks \$10, train tour adult/child \$18/9; ☺grounds 7am-1hr before sunset, conservatories 10.15am-4pm, cafe 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10.15am-4pm Sat & Sun; 📍) The Botanic Gardens comprise 30 riverside hectares planted with 10,000-plus specimens of indigenous and introduced plants. There are conservatories and thematic gardens to explore, lawns to sprawl on, and a cafe at the **Botanic Gardens visitors centre**. Get the kids active in the playground adjacent to the cafe. Guided walks depart daily at 1.30pm (September to April) from the Canterbury Museum, or you can ride around the gardens in the electric 'Caterpillar' train: hop-on/hop-off tickets (www.gardentour.co.nz) are valid for two days (from 10am-4pm) and include a commentary.

ESSENTIAL CHRISTCHURCH & CANTERBURY FACTS

- » **Eat** Amid the emerging Addington restaurant scene in Christchurch
- » **Drink** NZ's best craft beer at Christchurch's Pomeroy's Old Brewery In (p17)n
- » **Read** *Old Bucky & Me*, a poignant account of the 2011 earthquake by Christchurch journalist Jane Bowron
- » **Listen** To the best of up-and-coming bands at Christchurch's Dux Live (p18) and darkroom (p19)
- » **Watch** *When a City Falls*, a moving documentary about the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes
- » **Go green** At the ecofriendly Okuti Garden (p26) on Banks Peninsula
- » **Get info** at www.christchurchnz.com and www.mtcooknz.com
- » **Telephone code** ☎03

CHRISTCHURCH & CANTERBURY HIGHLIGHTS

- » Supporting the exciting rebuild and re-emergence of **Christchurch** (p2)
- » Meandering along Christchurch's **Avon River** (p6) by punt or bicycle
- » Marvelling at the views of the Mackenzie Country from atop **Mt John** (p40)
- » Taking a soothing soak at Lake Tekapo's **Alpine Springs & Spa** (p41)
- » Negotiating the outer reaches of **Banks Peninsula** (p23) by bike, kayak and boat
- » Tramping in the shadow of NZ's highest peak in **Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park** (p44)
- » Being surprised by the size of the Canterbury Plains on a balloon flight from **Methven** (p34)

Canterbury Museum

MUSEUM
(☎03-366 5000; www.canterburymuseum.com; Rolleston Ave; admission by donation; ☀9am-5pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Oct-Mar) The absorbing Canterbury Museum has a wonderful collection of items of significance to NZ. Highlights include the Maori gallery, with some stunning *pounamu* (greenstone) pieces on display; the coracle in the Antarctic Hall used by a group shipwrecked on Disappointment Island in 1907; and a wide array of stuffed birds from the Pacific and beyond – don't miss the statuesque Emperor penguin. Guided tours (donations appreciated) run from 3.30pm to 4.30pm on Tuesday and Thursday. Kids will enjoy the interactive displays in the Discovery Centre (admission \$2). Don't miss the gloriously kitsch Kiwiana of Fred & Myrtle's Paua Shell House.

Arts Centre

HISTORIC SITE
(www.artscentre.org.nz; 2 Worcester St; admission free; 📍) This precinct is currently closed, pending strengthening and repairs estimated to cost \$240 million. An enclave of Gothic Revival buildings (built from 1877), it was the original site of Canterbury College, which later became Canterbury University. One graduate of the college was Sir Ernest Rutherford, the NZ-born physicist who first split the atom in 1917. Before the earthquakes, the Arts Centre was a popular cultural precinct comprising artists' studios and galleries, weekend craft markets, restaurants and cinemas. One business still operating from a modern building within the Arts Centre is the excellent Canterbury Cheesemongers (p17).

Cathedral Square

SQUARE
(☎03-366 0046; www.christchurchcathedral.co.nz; admission free; ☀8.30am-7pm Oct-Mar, 9am-5pm Apr-Sep) Christchurch's historic hub is Ca-

thedral Square. At the time of writing the square was in the heart of the city's cordoned-off CBD (Central Business District), but was planned to be reopened around April or May of 2012.

At the centre of the square, ChristChurch Cathedral was originally constructed in 1881, and is a much-loved icon of the city. The cathedral suffered devastating damage in the 22 February 2011 earthquake, bringing down the Gothic church's 63m-high spire and leaving only the bottom half of the tower remaining. At the time of the earthquake, it was feared up to 20 people had been in the spire when it collapsed, but it was later found that no one had actually died at the site. Subsequent earthquakes in June 2011 and December 2011 destroyed the Cathedral's prized stained-glass rose window, and the cathedral was deconsecrated in October 2011.

At the time of writing, the future of the cathedral was uncertain, and no decision had been made on its demolition or rebuild. See www.christchurchcathedral.co.nz for the latest information. The draft plan to rebuild Christchurch recommends that Cathedral Square be transformed into a park.

Other heritage buildings around Cathedral Square were also badly damaged, but one modern landmark was unscathed following the earthquakes. Designed by Neil Dawson, the 18m-high metal **sculpture** *Chalice* was erected in 2001 to commemorate the new millennium.

International Antarctic Centre

WILDLIFE
(☎03-353 7798, 0508 736 4846; www.iceberg.co.nz; 38 Orchard Rd; adult/child/family from \$35/20/95, Penguin Backstage Pass adult/child/family \$25/15/80; ☀9am-5.30pm; 📍; 🚗airport bus) The International Antarctic Centre is part of a huge complex built for the admin-

THE CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKES

Christchurch's seismic nightmare began at 4.35am on 4 September 2010. Centered 40km west of the city, a 40-second, 7.1-magnitude earthquake jolted Cantabrians from their sleep, and caused widespread damage to older buildings in the central city. Close to the quake's epicentre in rural Darfield, huge gashes erupted amid grassy pastures, and the South Island's main railway line was bent and buckled. Because the tremor struck in the early hours of the morning, there were no fatalities, and many Christchurch residents really felt the city had dodged a bullet.

Fast forward to 12.51pm on 22 February 2011, when central Christchurch was busy with shoppers and office and retail workers enjoying their lunch break. This time the 6.8-magnitude quake was much closer, centred just 10km southeast of the city and only 5km deep. The tremor was significantly more extreme, and many locals report being flung violently and almost vertically into the air. The peak ground acceleration (PGA) exceeded 1.8, almost twice the acceleration of gravity.

When the dust settled after 24 traumatic seconds, NZ's second-largest city had changed forever. The towering spire of the iconic Christ Church Cathedral lay in ruins; walls and verandahs had cascaded down on the city's central retail hub; and two multi-storey buildings had pancaked, causing scores of deaths. Around half of the quake's total of 181 deaths (across 20 nationalities) occurred in the Canterbury TV building, including many international students at a language school. Elsewhere in the city, the historic port town of Lyttelton was badly damaged; roads and bridges were crumpled by nature's fury; and residential suburbs in the east were inundated by tonnes of oozing, silty liquefaction rising from the ground.

After 22 February, the resilience and bravery of Cantabrians quickly became evident. From the region's rural heartland, the 'Farmy Army' descended on the city, armed with shovels and food hampers. Social media mobilised 10,000 students, and the Student Volunteer Army became a vital force for residential clean-ups in the city's beleaguered eastern suburbs. Heartfelt aid and support arrived from across NZ's close-knit population of just 4.4 million, and seven other nations sent specialised urban-search-and-rescue teams.

Twelve months after the events of February 2011, the city's population was still bravely coping with their lives, besieged by thousands of aftershocks. Most tremors were small and there were no fatalities or injuries after February 2011, but significant jolts were recorded in June 2011 and December 2011. At the time of writing, earthquake activity was reported to be moving further east into the Pacific Ocean, and peak ground acceleration was decreasing.

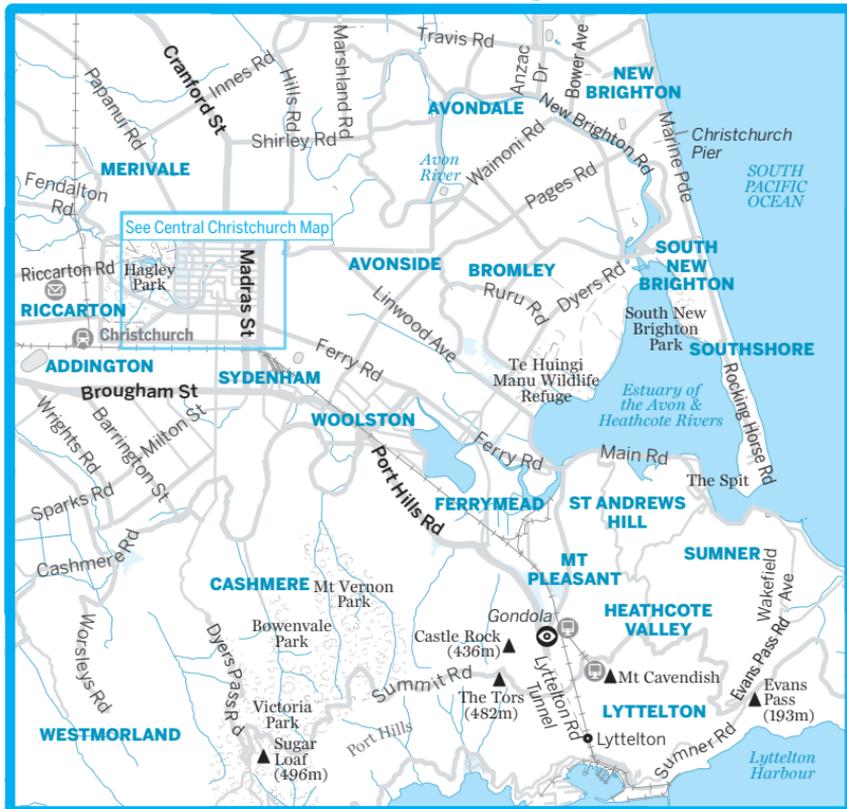
The impact of a warm summer's day in early 2011 will take longer than a generation to resolve. Around a quarter of the buildings within the city's famed four avenues need to be demolished. Entire streets and family neighbourhoods in the eastern suburbs will be abandoned, and Christchurch's heritage architecture is irrevocably damaged. The cost to repair and rebuild the city could exceed NZ\$30 billion, making it history's third most costly natural disaster.

In December 2011, the influential United States magazine *Foreign Policy* nominated Christchurch one of the urban centres of the 21st century, opining that the 'massive rebuilding effort is a unique opportunity to rethink urban form.' Draft plans for the city's rebuild over 20 years include a compact, low-rise city centre, neighbourhood green spaces and parks and cycleways along the Avon River. Coupled with the endurance and energy of the people of Christchurch, the city's future promises to be both interesting and innovative.

istration of the NZ, US and Italian Antarctic programs. See penguins and learn about the icy continent via historical, geological and zoological exhibits. There's also an aquarium of creatures gathered under the

ice in McMurdo Sound. Other attractions include a '4D' theatre – a 3D film plus moving seats and a watery spray – and the Antarctic Storm chamber, where you can get a first-hand taste of -18°C wind chill. An Ex-

Greater Christchurch



treme Pass (adult/child/family \$65/35/165) includes unlimited rides on the Hægglund outdoor adventure course. An optional extra is the Penguin Backstage Pass, which takes visitors behind the scenes of the Penguin Encounter. Transport options include the City Flyer (p21) airport bus – it's just a short walk from the main terminal – or the free **Penguin Express** shuttle that departs from outside the Canterbury Museum.

FREE Christchurch Art Gallery GALLERY
 (www.christchurchartgallery.org.nz; cnr Worcester & Montreal Sts; admission free, guided tours free; ☉10am–5pm Thu–Tue, to 9pm Wed, guided tours 11am Mon–Sun, plus 2pm Sat & Sun & 7.15pm Wed) Set in an eye-catching metal-and-glass construction built in 2003, the city's art gallery – closed at the time of writing, with a definite reopening being planned – has an engrossing permanent collection divided into historical, 20th-century and contemporary gal-

leries, plus temporary exhibitions featuring NZ artists. Check the website for the latest information about gallery reopenings; the gallery's shop is currently open, however.

Tramway TRAM
 (☎03-366 7830; www.tram.co.nz) Prior to the February 2011 earthquake, historic trams operated on a 2.5km inner-city loop, taking in local attractions and shopping areas. At the time of writing the tramway was not operating because the city's CBD was closed. Check the website for an update.

Orana Wildlife Park WILDLIFE RESERVE
 (www.oranawildlifepark.co.nz; McLeans Island Rd; adult/child \$25/8; ☉10am–5pm; P) Orana has an excellent, walk-through native-bird aviary, a nocturnal kiwi house, and a reptile exhibit featuring the wrinkly tuatara. Most of the grounds are devoted to Africana, including lions, rhinos, giraffes, zebras, lemurs, oryx and cheetahs. Guided walks start at

10.40am daily, taking in feeding time for the Sumatra tigers; another 2.30pm departure visits the lion enclosure. Check the website for feeding times and other optional Orana experiences for more personal interactions with some of the animals. Phone 03-379 1699 for shuttle transport to Orana.

Willowbank Wildlife Reserve WILDLIFE RESERVE (www.willowbank.co.nz; 60 Hussey Rd; adult/child/family \$25/10/65; ☀9.30am-dusk; ♿) About 6km north of the city, Willowbank is another good animal reserve, focusing on native NZ animals and hands-on enclosures with alpacas, wallabies and deer. Tours are held several times a day, and Willowbank's escorted after-dark tours are a good opportunity to see a kiwi. Phone 03-359 6226 or ask at the i-SITE about free shuttle transport to Willowbank.

Gondola CABLE CAR (www.gondola.co.nz; 10 Bridle Path Rd; return adult/child/family \$24/10/59; ☀10am-9pm; ♿; 🚰 Lyttelton 28) At the time of writing, this attraction was closed following the 2011 earthquakes, but was planned to reopen by September 2012. Check the website for the latest information. Before the quakes, the gondola whisked visitors from the Heathcote Valley terminal to the cafe-restaurant complex on Mt Cavendish (500m) in 10 minutes. Expect great views over Lyttelton Harbour and towards the Southern Alps.

Activities

Christchurch's most popular activities are gentler than the adrenaline-fuelled pursuits of Queenstown and Wanaka: the city is better suited to punting down the Avon River, cycling through the easy terrain of Hagley Park or negotiating the walking trails at Lyttelton Harbour. The closest **beaches** to the city are Waimairi, North Beach, New Brighton and South Brighton; buses 5, 49 and 60 head here. Summer, to the city's southeast, is another popular beach, with good restaurants (take bus 3), while further east at Taylors Mistake are some good **surfing** breaks. Several **skiing** areas lie within a two-hour drive of Christchurch. Other active options accessible from Christchurch include cruising on Akaroa Harbour, rafting on the Rangitara River, tandem skydiving, hot-air ballooning, jetboating the Waimakariri River and horse trekking. Inquire at the i-SITE (p20).

The i-SITE also has information on walks around Christchurch and in the Port Hills. Some of the following popular walks were closed at the time of writing due to rock falls and instability following the earthquakes, so it's vital to check the current situation at the i-SITE before setting off. Also search www.ccc.govt.nz with the keywords 'Port Hills' for the current status of all of the following tracks.

For great views of the city, take the walk from the **Sign of the Takahē** on Dyers

MAORI NZ: CHRISTCHURCH & CANTERBURY

Only 5% of NZ's Maori live on the South Island. The south was settled a few hundred years later than the north, with significant numbers coming south only after land became scarcer on the North Island. Before that, Maori mostly travelled to the south in search of moa, fish and West Coast *pounamu* (greenstone).

The major *iwi* (tribe) of the South Island is **Ngai Tahu** (www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz), ironically now one of the country's wealthiest as it's much richer in land and natural resources (per person) than the North Island tribes. In Christchurch, as in other cities, there are urban Maori of many other *iwi* as well.

Ko Tane (☎03-359 6226; www.kotane.co.nz; 60 Hussey Rd; dancing-tour-dinner package adult/child \$110/54; ☀5.30pm Mon & Thu-Sat) at the Willowbank Wildlife Reserve (p6) features traditional dancing, including the *haka* and the *poi* dance.

If you're feeling creative, the Bone Dude (p7), John Fraser, trains visitors to do their own bone carving at his studio in Christchurch.

You'll unearth Maori artefacts at Christchurch's Canterbury Museum (p3) and at the Akaroa Museum (p24) and the Maori & Colonial Museum (p24) in Okains Bay on the Banks Peninsula.

Further north in Timaru, the Te Ana Maori Rock Art Centre (p36) presents the fascinating story of NZ's indigenous rock art, and also arranges tours to see the centuries-old work in situ.

CHRISTCHURCH IN...

Two Days

After breakfast at the Addington Coffee Co-op (p16), amble back to the city through leafy South Hagley Park. Stop at the Antigua Boatsheds (p7) for punting on the Avon, and put together your own informal lunch at Canterbury Cheesemongers (p17) in the Arts Centre. After lunch, explore the excellent Canterbury Museum (p3) before heading to meet the locals over NZ craft beers and great pub food at Pomeroy's Old Brewery Inn (p17).

On day two, explore Hagley Park on a vintage bike (p7) courtesy of Vintage Peddler Bike Hire, or walk through the lovely Botanic Gardens (p2), perhaps picking up some goodies from Vic's Cafe & Bakery (p17) or Simo's Deli (p17) for a riverside picnic. In the evening, jump on a bus to hit the excellent restaurants at **Lyttelton** or **Sumner**.

Four Days

Follow the two-day itinerary, then head to **Akaroa** to explore its wildlife-rich harbour, and the peninsula's beautiful outer bays. On day four it's time for **shopping** in the funky Re:START (p19) precinct before chilling at the International Antarctic Centre (p3), or enjoying a traditional Maori feast, Ko Tane, at Willowbank Wildlife Reserve.

Pass Rd. The various 'Sign of the...' places in this area were originally roadhouses built during the Depression as rest stops. This walk leads up to the **Sign of the Kiwi** through Victoria Park and then along Summit Rd to Scotts Reserve, with several look-out points along the way.

You can walk to Lyttelton on the **Bridle Path** (1½ hours), which starts at Heathcote Valley (take bus 28). The **Godley Head Walkway** (two hours return) begins at Taylors Mistake, crossing and recrossing Summit Rd, and offers beautiful views on a clear day.

The **Crater Rim Walkway** (nine hours) around Lyttelton Harbour goes some 20km from Evans Pass to the Ahuriri Scenic Reserve. From the gondola terminal on Mt Cavendish, walk to **Cavendish Bluff Lookout** (30 minutes return) or the **Pioneer Women's Memorial** (one hour return).

Antigua Boatsheds

BOATING

(www.punting.co.nz; 2 Cambridge Tce; punting adult/child/family \$25/12/65; ☀9am-6pm, cafe 7am-5pm) Dating from 1882, the photogenic green-and-white Antigua Boatsheds are the starting point for **Punting on the Avon**, where someone else does all the work during a half-hour return trip in a flat-bottomed boat. There's also an excellent cafe, which is a great spot for brunch or lunch. Kayaks and rowboats can be rented for independent Avon River exploration.

Bone Dude

ART

(☎0-385 4509; www.thebonedude.co.nz; 153 Marshland Rd; per person \$60; ☀1-4pm Mon-Fri,

Sat 10am-1pm) Creative types should book a session with the Bone Dude, now relocated to the suburb of Shirley, where you can craft your own bone carving (allow three hours). Owner John Fraser, who's of Ngati Rangitihui ancestry, provides a range of traditional Maori templates, or else you can work on your own design. Sessions are limited to eight participants, so booking ahead is highly recommended. John can also run evening sessions for a group of at least three participants. Catch bus number 60 from the Central Bus Station.

City Cycle Hire

BICYCLE RENTAL

(☎0800 424 534; www.cyclehire-tours.co.nz; touring bikes half/full day \$25/35) Mountain bikes (half/full day \$30/45) will get you nicely off-road. Bikes can be delivered to where you're staying. Before the earthquakes, a mountain bike ride from the top of the gondola was also on offer. Check the website for the latest.

Natural High

BICYCLE RENTAL

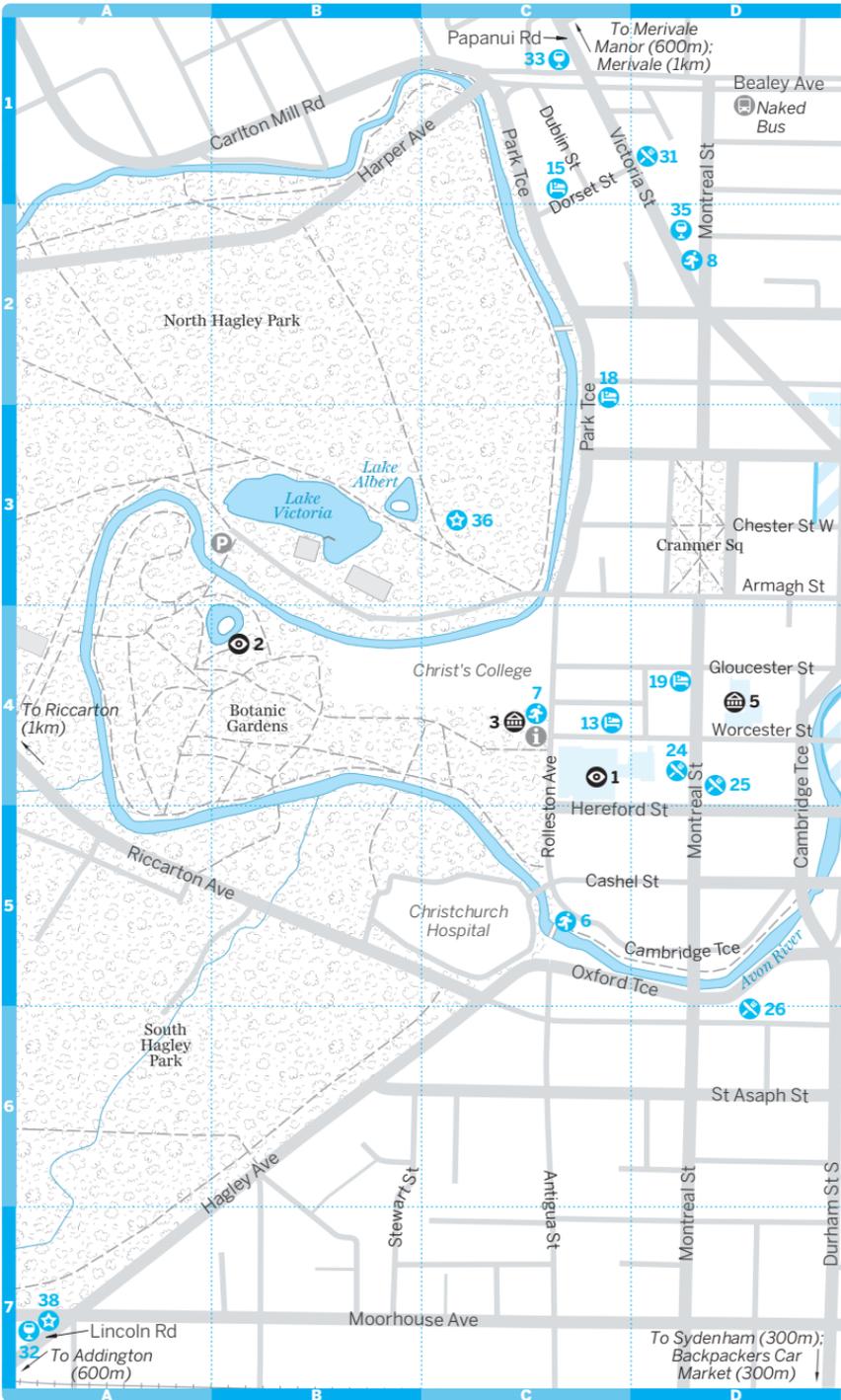
(☎0800 444 144, 03-982 2966; www.naturalhigh.co.nz) Rents touring and mountain bikes (per day/week from \$40/154), and can advise on guided and self-guided bicycle touring through Canterbury and the South Island.

Vintage Peddler Bike Hire Co

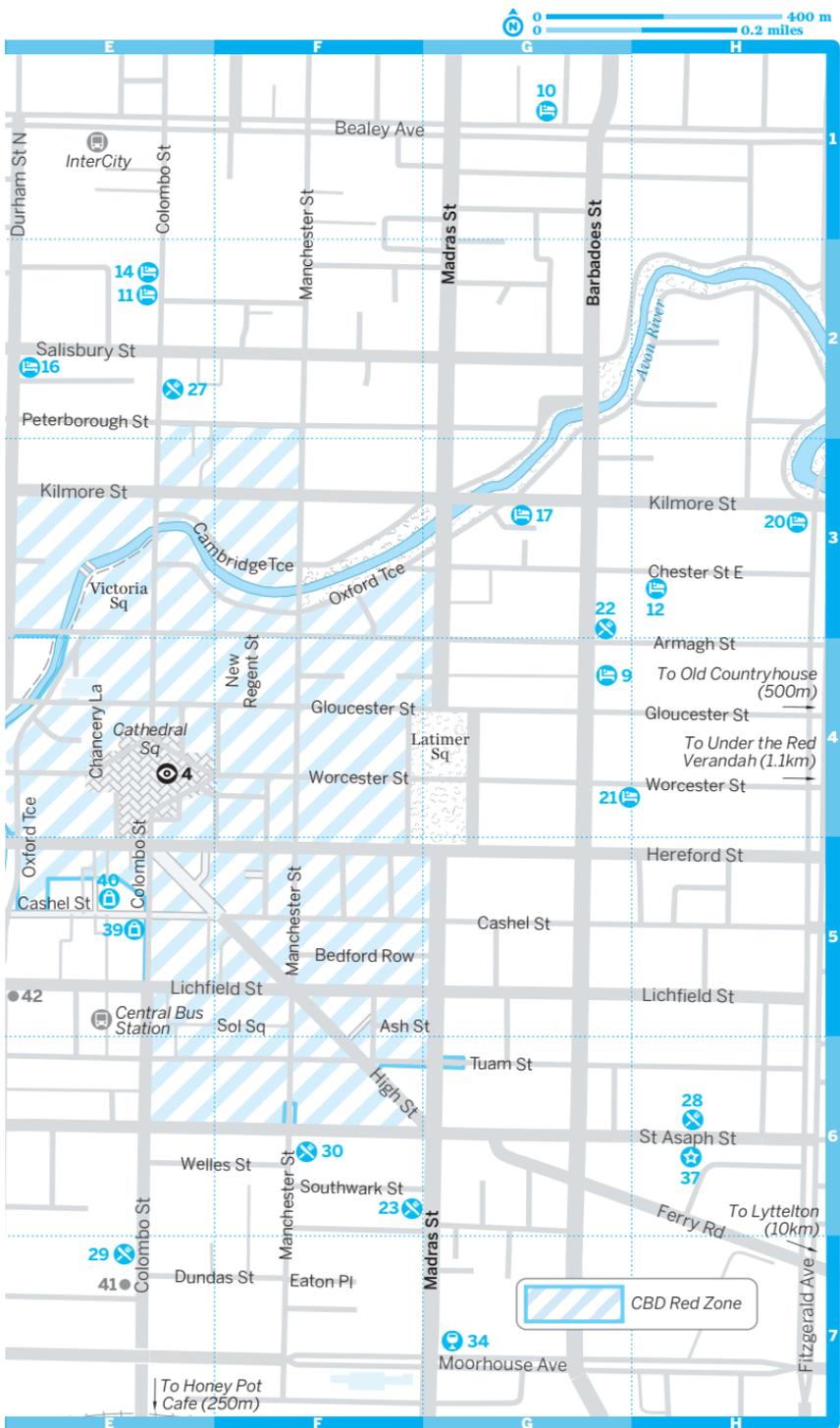
BICYCLE RENTAL

(☎03-365-6530; www.thevintagepeddler.co.nz; 399 Montreal St; per hour/day \$10/25) Take to two retro wheels on these funky vintage bicycles. Helmets, locks and local knowledge are all supplied.

Central Christchurch



LONELY PLANET - NEW ZEALAND CHRISTCHURCH & CANTERBURY



Central Christchurch

📍 Sights

- 1 Arts Centre C4
- 2 Botanic Gardens B4
- Botanic Gardens Visitors Centre .. (see 2)
- 3 Canterbury Museum C4
- 4 Cathedral Square E4
- 5 Christchurch Art Gallery D4

🚗 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 6 Antigua Boatsheds C5
- 7 Christchurch Personal Guiding
 Service C4
- 8 Vintage Peddler Bike Hire Co D2

🛏 Sleeping

- 9 Around the World Backpackers G4
- 10 Canterbury House G1
- 11 CentrePoint on Colombo E2
- 12 Chester Street Backpackers H3
- 13 Classic Villa C4
- 14 Colombo in the City E2
- 15 Dorset House C1
- 16 Focus Motel E2
- 17 Foley Towers G3
- 18 George C2
- 19 Orari B&B D4
- 20 Pomeroy's on Kilmore H3
- 21 Vagabond Backpackers G4

🍴 Eating

- 50 Bistro (see 18)

- 22 Beat St G3
- 23 Black Betty F6
- 24 Canterbury Cheesemongers D4
- 25 Coffee House D4
- 26 Dose D6
- 27 Himalayas E2
- 28 Lotus Heart H6
- 29 New World Supermarket E7
- 30 Topkapi F6
- 31 Vic's Cafe & Bakery D1

🍷 Drinking

- 32 Cargo A7
- 33 Carlton Country Club C1
- 34 Monday Room G7
- Pomeroy's Old Brewery Inn (see 20)
- 35 Revival D2

🎪 Entertainment

- 36 Christchurch Events Village C3
- 37 Darkroom H6
- 38 Dux Live A7

🛍 Shopping

- 39 Ballantynes E5
- 40 Re:START Mall E5

🚗 Transport

- 41 Air New Zealand E7
- 42 Omega Rental Cars E5

Garden City Heliflights

SCENIC FLIGHT

(☎03-358 4360; www.helicopters.net.nz; per person \$145) Flights above the city and Lyttelton let you observe the impact of the earthquake and rebuilding efforts.

👉 Tours

Ask at the i-SITE about city tours and excursions to Lyttelton, Akaroa, Arthur's Pass, Hanmer Springs, and the Waipara Valley.

Canterbury Leisure Tours

GUIDED TOUR

(☎0800 484 485, 03-384 0999; www.leisuretours.co.nz; tours from \$60) Touring options in and around Christchurch, with everything from three-hour city tours to full-day outings to Akaroa, Mt Cook, Arthur's Pass and Kaikoura.

Canterbury Wine Tours

WINE TASTING

(☎0800 081 155; www.waiparavalley.co.nz; tours from \$90) Experience three Waipara vine-

yards on the half-day trip, or make a day of it and sample four different wineries with lunch (\$125).

Christchurch Bike Tours

GUIDED TOUR

(☎0800 733 257; www.chchbiketours.co.nz; tours from \$40; ☺ departs 2pm daily) Informative, two-hour tours loop around the city along quiet cycle ways and leafy park tracks. Also available is a gourmet food tour and a Saturday morning foodie spin, taking in the Christchurch Farmers Market. Prior booking is essential and tours leave from the Antigua Boatsheds (p7).

Christchurch Personal Guiding Service

WALKING TOUR

(☎03-379 9629; tours \$15; ☺ tours 11am & 1pm Oct-Apr, 1pm May-Sep) Nonprofit organisation offering informative two-hour city walks. Buy tickets and join tours at the i-SITE departure point.

CHRISTCHURCH FOR CHILDREN

There's no shortage of kid-friendly sights and activities in Christchurch. If family fun is a priority, consider planning your travels around NZ's biggest children's festival, **KidsFest** (www.kidsfest.org.nz). It's held every July and is chock-full of shows, workshops and parties. The annual World Buskers Festival (p11), in late January, is also bound to be a hit.

For picnics and open-air frolicking, visit the Botanic Gardens (p2); there's a playground beside the cafe, and the kids will love riding on the Caterpillar train. Extend your nature-based experience with a wildlife encounter at the Orana Wildlife Park (p5) or the Willowbank Wildlife Reserve (p6), or get them burning off excess energy in a rowboat or paddleboat from the Antigua Boatsheds (p7). At the engrossing International Antarctic Centre (p3), kids will love the Antarctic Storm chamber, the Hägglund Ride and (of course) the penguins. Educational and attention-getting factors also run high at the Discovery Centre at Canterbury Museum (p3).

If the weather's good, hit the beaches at Sumner or New Brighton.

Christchurch Sightseeing Tours GUIDED TOUR
(☎0508 669 660, 03-366 9660; www.christchurchtours.co.nz; tours from \$75) City tours and further-afield detours to Akaroa, Hanmer Springs and the Waipara wine region.

Discovery Tours GUIDED TOUR
(☎0800 372 879; www.discoverytravel.co.nz; from \$130) Excursions to Akaroa, Hanmer Springs, Kakoura and the Waipara Valley wine region. The Alpine Safari option (adult/child \$375/276) packs the *Tranzalpine* train, jetboating and a spin in a 4WD into one action-packed day.

Hassle Free Tours GUIDED TOUR
(☎0800 141 148; www.hasslefree.co.nz; tours from \$29) Explore Christchurch on an open-top, bright-red double-decker bus. Regional options include a 4WD alpine safari, jetboating on the Waimakariri River, and visiting the location of Edoras from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Combo deals with the International Antarctic Centre (p3) are also available.

Hiking Guys TRAMPING
(☎09-281 4481; www.hikingguys.co.nz; adult/child \$395/198) Day trips incorporating the *Tranzalpine* train and tramping around Arthur's Pass.



Festivals & Events

Check www.bethere.co.nz for a comprehensive listing.

World Buskers Festival ARTS
(www.worldbuskersfestival.com; ☺January) National and international talent entertain passers-by for 10 days in mid- to late Janu-

ary. Check the website for locations – and don't forget to put money in the hat.

Garden City SummerTimes MUSIC
(www.summertimes.co.nz; ☺Dec-Mar) Say g'day to summer at a huge array of outdoor events. Sweet as.

Festival of Flowers CULTURAL
(www.festivalofflowers.co.nz; ☺Feb-Mar) A blooming spectacle around Christchurch's heritage gardens.

Ellerslie Flower Show CULTURAL
(www.ellerslieflowershow.co.nz; ☺Mar) Hagley Park comes alive in early March with NZ's biggest flower show.

Christchurch Arts Festival ARTS
(www.artsfestival.co.nz; ☺Aug-Sep) Midwinter arts extravaganza celebrating music, theatre and dance.

NZ Cup and Show Week CULTURAL
(www.nzcupandshow.co.nz; ☺Nov) Includes the NZ Cup horse race, fashion shows, fireworks and the centrepiece A&P Show, where the country comes to town.

Sleeping

At the time of writing, Christchurch's CBD was closed following earthquake damage, and accommodation was focused in and around the city's inner suburbs. Several international hotels within the CBD were demolished after the earthquake, but the Novotel (www.novotel.com) and Ibis (www.ibishotel.com) hotels are potentially to reopen once the CBD cordon is lifted; at the time of writing the Rendezvous (www.rendezvoushotels.com) hotel was planning to

WORTH A TRIP

THE SLOW ROAD TO LITTLE RIVER

The Little River Rail Trail will eventually traverse 45km, from the Christchurch suburb of Hornby to the Banks Peninsula hamlet of Little River. At the time of writing, all sections excluding a 14km stretch were open. See www.littleriverrailtrail.co.nz for the latest information. Join the trail 20km from Little River at Motukarara for the best of the ride. Ask at the Christchurch i-SITE about bike rental and public transport options. Rail trail day trips including transport can be booked with Natural High (p7). Natural High can also rent out bikes and offer advice for multiday, self-guided cycling trips incorporating the Little River Rail Trail. Two funky accommodation options at Little River are Okuti Garden (p26) and the Little River Campground (p27), both also well-placed for exploring Akaroa and Banks Peninsula.

reopen on 1 March 2012. Check the hotel websites and www.cera.govt.nz for the status of Christchurch's CBD.

Motels are clustered around Bealey Ave and Papanui Rd, north of the centre, and Riccarton Rd, west of town beyond Hagley Park. Many inner-city hostels closed after the earthquake, and most open hostels are now to the east of the CBD or in Addington.

Booking ahead for accommodation is recommended as motels and hostels in the city are in high demand for tradespeople working on the city's rebuild.

Orari B&B

B&B \$\$\$

(☎03-365 6569; www.orari.net.nz; 42 Gloucester St; d \$195-255; 📞) Orari is a late-19th-century home that has been stylishly updated with light-filled, pastel-toned rooms and inviting guest areas, as well as a lovely front garden. Art connoisseurs take note: it's right across the road from Christchurch Art Gallery. Wine connoisseurs can look forward to complimentary wine after a busy day.

Pomeroy's on Kilmore

B&B \$\$\$

(☎03-365 1523; www.pomeroysonkilmore.co.nz; 292 Kilmore St; d \$145-245; 📞) What could be better than staying in an elegantly furnished five-room boutique guesthouse? How about knowing it's just a short, thirsty stroll to Pomeroy's Old Brewery Inn (p17), Christchurch's best craft beer pub? Rates include breakfast, and you're also welcome to have a private beer tasting with the friendly owners. Several of the rooms open onto a sunny garden.



Wish

B&B \$\$

(☎03-356 2455; www.wishnz.com; 38 Edgeware Rd, St Albans; s/d incl breakfast from \$125/150; 📞) The rooms and beds at the stylish Wish are supercomfy, but it could be the

locally sourced, sustainable and organic breakfasts that you recommend to other travellers. Contemporary NZ art dots the walls, and the huge native-timber kitchen table is just made for catching up around with an end-of-day glass of wine. Wish is very popular and booking ahead is necessary. It's located slightly north of the CBD, in St Albans.

Jailhouse

HOSTEL \$

(☎0800 524 546, 03-982 7777; www.jail.co.nz; 338 Lincoln Rd; dm/s/d \$30/79/85; 📞) Housed in an old prison that was built in 1874 (and only decommissioned in 1999), the Jailhouse is one of NZ's most unique hostels. Twins and doubles are a bit on the small side – remember, it *was* a prison – but it's still an exceptionally well-run and friendly spot. The surrounding Addington area has good cafes, restaurants and entertainment venues.

CentrePoint on Colombo

MOTEL \$\$

(☎03-377 0859, 0800 859 000; www.centrepointhoncolombo.co.nz; 859 Colombo St; d \$155-165, apt \$180-260; 📞) CentrePoint on Colombo has super-comfortable facilities and the bonus of a friendly Kiwi-Japanese management. The owners are a mine of information on how Christchurch is bouncing back after the earthquakes, and happily provide guests with up-to-date information on the best places to eat around town.

George

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎03-379 4560, 0800 100 220; www.thegeorge.com; 50 Park Tce; d \$506-886; 📞) The George has 53 handsomely decorated rooms and suites on the fringe of Christchurch's sweeping Hagley Park. Discreet staff attend to every whim, there are two excellent restaurants, and ritzy features including huge TVs, luxury toiletries and glossy magazines.

Check online for good-value packages and discounts.

Classic Villa

B&B \$\$\$

(☎03-377 7905; www.theclassicvilla.co.nz; 17 Worcester Ave; d \$269-489; ) Ideally located near the Botanic Gardens and Canterbury Museum, the Classic Villa is one of Christchurch's most elegant accommodation options. Rooms are trimmed with antiques and Turkish rugs for a classy ambience, and the expansive, Mediterranean-style breakfast is a shared social occasion around the dining room's big wooden table. No children under 12 years old allowed.

Elm Tree House

B&B \$\$\$

(☎03-355 9731; www.elmtreehouse.co.nz; 236 Papanui Rd; d \$365-445; ) Originally built in the 1920s, the elegant Elm Tree House has six stylish rooms, a dining area leading to sunny rose gardens, and a spacious, wood-lined guests' lounge. Top-end shopping and Merivale's good restaurants are a short walk away, and yes – the classic Wurlitzer jukebox downstairs is still in working order.

Anselm House

B&B \$\$\$

(☎03-343 4260; www.anselmhouse.co.nz; 34 Kahu Rd; s/d \$190/230; ) Designed by renowned NZ architect Heathcote Helmore and constructed partially of unique Oamaru pink marble, Anselm House in Fendalton is one of the city's iconic heritage residences. The decor is elegant and restrained, and the property also features a beautiful riverside garden, just perfect for an end-of-the-day glass of wine and conversation with the friendly, well-travelled owners.

Merivale Manor

MOTEL \$\$\$

(☎03-355 7731; www.merivalemanor.com; 122 Papanui Rd; d \$145-185; ) A gracious 19th-century Victorian residence is now the hub of an elegant motel. Accommodation ranges from studios – some with spa baths – to one- and two-bedroom apartments. In keeping with the property's history, decor is understated, and the classy shopping and good bars and restaurants of Merivale are just a few hundred metres away.

Roma on Riccarton

MOTEL \$\$\$

(☎03-341 2100; www.romaonriccarton.com; 38 Riccarton Rd; d \$150-205; ) Handily located near Hagley Park and the city end of Riccarton Rd, the Mediterranean-style Roma on Riccarton is also a short stroll from cinemas, bars and restaurants, and Christchurch's

best shopping mall. Studio units – some with spa baths – and larger, two-bedroom apartments are all spotless and thoroughly modern.

Chester Street Backpackers

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-377 1897; www.chesterst.co.nz; 148 Chester St E; dm/tw/d \$30/64/66; ) This relaxed wooden villa is painted in bright colours and has a huge library in the sunny front room. The friendly house cat is a regular guest at hostel barbecues. It's popular, so try to book ahead. Across the road, the equally charming **Entwhistle Cottage** is often used as an overflow facility, offering twin and double rooms.

Fendalton House

B&B \$\$\$

(☎0800 374 298, 03-343 1661; www.fendaltonhouse.co.nz; 28a Kotare St; d \$145; ) A friendly, homestay-style B&B amid the pleasant streets of leafy Fendalton. Rates include a cooked breakfast, and on Wednesday nights and Saturday mornings, the foodie attractions of the Christchurch Farmers Market (p17) are just around the corner.

Foley Towers

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-366 9720; www.backpack.co.nz/foley.html; 208 Kilmore St; dm \$24-26, d with/without bathroom \$68/62; ) Sheltered by well-established trees, Foley Towers provides well-maintained rooms encircling quiet inner courtyards and a friendly welcome in dorms warmed by underfloor heating. Check-ins after 9pm are available only by arrangement.

Dorset House

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-366 8268; www.dorsethouse.co.nz; 1 Dorset St; dm/s/d \$32/69/84; ) This 145-year-old wooden villa has a large regal lounge with log fire, pool table, DVDs and beds instead of bunks. It's a short stroll to Hagley Park and the bars and restaurants of Victoria St and Papanui Rd.

Old Countryhouse

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-381 5504; www.oldcountryhouse.nz; 437 Gloucester St; dm \$31-35, d \$90-110; ) The Old Countryhouse features two separate villas with handmade wooden furniture, a reading lounge and a lovely garden filled with native ferns. It's slightly further out than other hostels, but still only 1km east of Latimer Sq. Bus 21 stops opposite.

Around the World Backpackers

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-365 4363; www.aroundtheworld.co.nz; 314 Barbadoes St; dm/d/tw \$30/68/68; ) Around the World gets rave recommendations for its

'Kiwiiana' decor and sunny back garden (complete with a private outdoor bath). Ask about the hostel's 'Love Shack' if you're visiting with the closest of travelling companions.

Haka Lodge HOSTEL \$
(☎03-980 4252; www.hakalodge.com; 518 Lincoln Ave; dm/d/tw \$28/70/70, self-contained apt \$160;                                            

SEASIDE AT SUMNER

Just 12km southeast of Christchurch by bus 3, the beachy suburb of Sumner is a relaxing place to stay. Commute to central Christchurch for sightseeing and return to Sumner for good restaurants and an arthouse cinema at night.

Le Petit Hotel (☎03-326 6675; www.lepetithotel.co.nz; 16 Marriner St; d \$135; 📍📞📺)

Relaxed coffee, croissant breakfasts and Kara the friendly Scottish terrier are among the highlights at this intimate, French-themed boutique hotel. Factor in the friendly owners, the close proximity to Sumner beach and some of Christchurch's best restaurants, and it's a definite *oui* from us.

Sumner Bay Motel and Apartments (☎03-326 5969, 0800 496 949; www.sumnermotel.co.nz; 26 Marriner St; d \$159-185) Studios and one- and two-bedroom units all have a balcony and courtyard, quality furniture, and Sky TV and DVD players. Bikes and surfboards can be rented.

Almeidas Tapas Bar (☎03-326 5220; 41a Nayland St; tapas \$8-12; 🕒5pm-late Wed-Sat)

Beachy Sumner meets the back streets of Barcelona at this rustic, Spanish-themed tapas bar. More than 20 different small-plate offerings include haloumi and roasted garlic in prosciutto, artichoke hearts wrapped in lemon and mint, and prawns sautéed in garlic, lime and coriander. Try and resist the urge for 'just one more plate' before settling on *churros* (Spanish donuts) for dessert.

Bamboozle (☎03-326 7878; 6 Wakefield St; mains \$25-30) Asian fusion is the name of the game at the stylish Bamboozle, where talented chefs conjure up innovative spins on traditional flavours. Dishes include Burmese-style fish with chilli, and wasabi, salmon, and cream-cheese dumplings. Leave room for dessert with one of Christchurch's best crème brûlées, or ginger steamed-pudding topped with a lime sauce and coffee ice cream.

Cornershop Bistro (☎03-326 6720; www.cornershopbistro.co.nz; 32 Nayland St; brunch & lunch \$12-17, dinner \$23-34; 🕒5pm-late Wed-Fri & 10am-late Sat-Sun) This is a superior, French-style bistro that never forgets it's in a relaxed beachside suburb. Spend longer than you planned to lingering over brunch.

Note that most of the venues listed under Drinking are also good spots for lunch or dinner.

Restaurants

Bodhi Tree BURMESE \$\$
(☎03-377 6808; www.bodhitree.co.nz; 39 Ilam Rd; dishes \$13-24; 🕒6-10pm Tue-Sun; 📍) Christchurch's only Burmese restaurant is also one of the city's best eateries. Don't come expecting spicy flavours from neighbouring Thailand, but look forward to subtle food crafted from exceptionally fresh ingredients. Stand-out dishes include the *le pet thoke* (pickled tea-leaf salad) and the *ciandi thoke* (grilled eggplant). Meat and seafood also feature. Dishes are starter-sized, so drum up a group and sample lots of different flavours. Bookings are essential.

50 Bistro RESTAURANT \$\$
(☎03-371 0250; www.thegeorge.com; 50 Park Tce; dinner mains \$35-37) The more casual restaurant at the George (p12) is a bustling affair; doing savvy local twists on classic bistro fla-

vours. Try the Nifty 50 lunch menu - \$29 for soup and a main dish - or sample more robust evening meals like lamb shoulder ragu with kumara (sweet potato) gnocchi. Travelling gourmands should book for **Pescatore**, the George's more formal restaurant (dinner only; mains \$42-50). Dishes like citrus-cured salmon or Canterbury lamb help make Pescatore a regular finalist in *Cuisine* magazine's NZ Restaurant of the Year awards.

Edesia MODERN NZ \$\$
(☎03-943 2144; www.edesia.co.nz; 12 Show Pl; lunch mains \$21-29 & dinner mains \$28-39; 🕒11.30am-3pm Mon-Fri & 5.30pm-late Mon-Sat) Ignore the office-park location, because Edesia's version of fine dining is worth seeking out. The dinner menu includes innovative spins on local venison, salmon, quail, while lunch is a more informal affair; with prime Canterbury steaks and gossamer-light pasta. The wine list is one of Christchurch's best, and after work Edesia morphs into a cosy bar for local desk jockeys.

Himalayas

(03-377 8935; www.himalayas.co.nz; 830a Colombo St; mains \$18-22; ☺11.30am-2pm Tue-Fri & 5pm-late Tue-Sun; 🍴) Every city needs a great Indian eatery, and Himalayas ticks the box in Christchurch. A stylish dining room showcases lots of sub-continental favourites, including vegetarian options like the creamy *dal makhani* (black lentils cooked with aromatic spices). The *kadhai* chicken is studded with chilli, ginger and coriander – perfect with a cold beer. Takeaways are also available.

INDIAN \$\$

Holy Smoke

(www.holysmoke.co.nz; 650 Ferry Rd; brunch & lunch mains \$18-25, dinner mains \$26-36; ☺9am-late Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun) Here's your chance to get acquainted with the unique smoky character of *manuka* (NZ tea tree). At Holy Smoke, the native wood is used to smoke everything from pork ribs and chicken wings to bacon and salmon. Other menu items include robust slabs of venison, lamb and beef, all teamed with Kiwi craft beers and Central Otago wines.

STEAKHOUSE \$\$

**Lotus Heart**

(www.thelotusheart.co.nz; 363 St Asaph St; mains \$14-25; ☺8am-4pm daily & 6-10pm Thu-Sat; 🍴) Relocated to the edge of the CBD, this organic and vegetarian eatery does curries, freshly squeezed organic juices and filled pita pockets. Try the chilli, coriander and garlic-studded eggs Akoori for breakfast, or drop by for a healthy pizza, wrap, or shared platter for lunch or dinner. Organic, vegan, and gluten-free options abound, and there's an interesting gift shop onsite.

VEGETARIAN \$\$

Topkapi

(www.topkapi.co.nz; 64 Manchester St; mains \$14-22; ☺closed Mon) Grab yourself a cushioned, low-slung bench in the tapestry-draped interior and enjoy some great Turkish food, including a wide range of meat or veg kebabs and the all-important baklava finisher. The takeaway counter also does brisk business.

TURKISH \$\$

Cafes**Addington Coffee Co-op**

(www.addingtoncoffee.org.nz; 297 Lincoln Rd; snacks and mains \$6-20; ☺🍴) One of Christchurch's biggest and most bustling cafes is also one of its best. Fair-trade coffee and a compact stall selling organic cotton T-shirts jostle for attention with delicious cakes and slices, while a cross-section of the city comes

CAFE \$

for the free wi-fi, gourmet pies and wraps and the legendary big breakfasts. An onsite laundromat completes the deal for busy travellers.

Black Betty

(www.blackbetty.co.nz; 163a Madras St; mains \$10-20; ☺) Infused with glorious caffeine-enriched aromas from Switch Espresso's roasting operation, Black Betty's chic industrial warehouse is a popular destination for students from nearby CPIT. Essential culinary attractions include all-day breakfasts – try the ciabatta toast with creamy mushrooms – and excellent counter food including wraps and bagels, as well as the best of NZ wine and craft beers.

CAFE \$

Under the Red Verandah

(www.utrv.co.nz; Cnr Tancred & Worcester Sts; mains \$15-25; 🍴) After losing their original premises in the 2011 earthquake, Under the Red Verandah re-opened in a spacious villa at the same location. Christchurch foodie types quickly returned, and now fill the shady garden for leisurely combinations of coffee, oaty pancakes and the city's best corn fritters. Look forward also to lots of organic and gluten-free baking.

CAFE \$\$

Beat St

(324 Barbadoes St; snacks & mains \$8-16; 🍴) Welcome to the grungy hub of Christchurch cafe-cool. Free range this and organic that combine with terrific eggy breakfasts, gourmet pies – try the feta and vege one – and robust Havana coffee. Beat Street hosts a bohemian open mic night featuring music and poetry on the third Thursday of every month from 6pm.

CAFE \$

Honey Pot Cafe

(www.honeypotcafe.co.nz; 458 Colombo St; mains \$20-30) One of the first CBD cafes to relocate after the earthquakes, the Honey Pot Cafe set the scene for the emergence of Sydenham as a dining destination. Great eggs Benedict for breakfast give way to spiced lamb and feta salad for lunch, and sirloin steak and chunky, hand-cut chips for dinner. Christchurch's very own 3 Boys beer is on tap.

CAFE \$\$

Coffee House

(290 Montreal St; breakfast & lunch mains \$11-22 & dinner mains \$27-32) Housed in a heritage villa complete with sunny patio, the Coffee House has a great location near the Arts Centre and the Botanic Gardens. Highlights include feta-cheese-studded Mediterranean scram-

CAFE \$\$

bled eggs for breakfast and herb-marinated lamb for dinner. Emerson's beer on tap and a concise wine list will probably see you lingering over something stronger than coffee.

Dose

CAFE \$

(77 Tuam St; snacks & mains \$8-18; ☺closed Sun) Excellent coffee from the Lyttelton Coffee Company and superior counter food combine here with toasted bagels and what may just be Christchurch's best eggs Benedict. Downstairs is almost unbearably cosy, so head upstairs for bigger tables and a quirky ambience with graffiti-style art. From Wednesday to Saturday from 4pm, Dose morphs into a *yakitori* bar with tasty grilled skewers and ice-cold Japanese beer.

Vic's Cafe & Bakery

CAFE \$

(www.vics.co.nz; 132 Victoria St; snacks & mains \$8-20) Always busy, Vic's attracts a wide cross-section of Christchurch folk – we even saw the city's mayor there on our Sunday-morning visit. Pop in for a robust breakfast on the big shared tables, or grab baked goodies and still-warm artisan bread for an affordable DIY riverside picnic. Get there early (before 10am) for Vic's world-famous-in-Christchurch nutty porridge (\$10.50).

Quick Eats



Simo's Deli

MOROCCAN \$

(www.simos.co.nz; 3/300 Lincoln Rd; wraps \$6.50-\$9.50, tapas & mains \$7-17) Part cafe and part deli, Simo's in Addington is popular for its takeaway *bocadillos* (grilled wraps filled with a huge selection of Middle Eastern and African-inspired fillings, sauces and toppings). Other tasty offerings include small plates of grilled calamari or spicy *merguez* sausages, or more robust *tagines* (Moroccan casseroles) and beef kofta with pomegranat sauce.

Serious Sandwich

SANDWICHES \$

(www.theserioussandwich.com; 363 Colombo St; sandwiches \$7-10) Serious in name and serious in flavour. Concealed in Sydenham's new Colombo shopping mall, this compact kitchen dishes up tasty gourmet sammies, including the breakfast BLAT (available from 9am) and a meatballs-on-toasted-ciabatta variant (available from around 11am). Look forward to a serious attitude to good coffee, too.

Burgers & Beers Inc

BURGERS \$

(www.burgersandbeersinc.co.nz; 355 Colombo St; burgers \$12.50-16) Quirkily named gourmet burgers – try the Moroccan-spiced Woolly

Sahara Sand Hopper (lamb with lemon yoghurt) or the Shagged Stag (venison with tamarillo and plum chutney) – give this place a funky, laidback air. An ever-changing selection of Kiwi craft beers give you further reasons to tarry longer. Definitely worth the short hop south to Sydenham.

Self-Catering

Canterbury Cheesemongers

SANDWICHES \$

(www.cheesemongers.co.nz; 301 Montreal St; sandwiches around \$7; ☺closed Sun-Mon) Pop in to buy artisan cheeses, or craft your own favourite sandwich by combining freshly-baked *ficelles* (thin baguettes) and ciabatta with a whole cheese shop of dairy goodies. Coffee and juices are also available to complete a good-value lunch. No Monty Python jokes, please.



Christchurch

Farmers Market

FARMERS MARKET \$

(www.christchurchfarmersmarket.co.nz; 16 Kahu Rd, Riccarton House; ☺9am-noon Sat year-round & 4-7pm Wed Nov-Sat) Welcome to one of New Zealand's best farmers markets, a tasty labyrinth of organic fruit and vegies, South Island cheeses and salmon, local craft beer, and ethnic treats including Colombian *empanadas* (savoury turnovers) and Moroccan *briouats* (filo parcels). Other tasty stalls to track down are Posh Porridge and She Chocolat. Check out the website before you go to create your own foodie hit list.

New World Supermarket

SUPERMARKET

(South City Centre, Colombo St) Centrally located.



Drinking

Before the earthquakes, Christchurch's after-dark scene was focused around Oxford Tee ('the Strip') and the inner-city laneways around SOL ('South of Lichfield') Sq and Poplar St. Both precincts were closed at the time of writing, and areas like Riccarton, Addington, Victoria St and Merivale were becoming popular.



Pomeroy's Old

Brewery Inn

CRAFT BEER

(www.pomeroysonkilmore.co.nz; 292 Kilmore St) The welcoming Pomeroy's is the city's hoppy hub for fans of NZ's rapidly expanding craft beer scene. A wide range of guest taps showcase brews from around the country, often including seasonal beers and limited releases. Check the website for what's coming

up. There's occasional live music, and the attached Victoria's Kitchen does great pub food (mains \$20-30).

Volstead Trading Company

BAR

(www.volstead.co.nz; 55 Riccarton Rd) Volstead is a great example of what Christchurch has always done better than the rest of NZ: shabbily chic bars with a real sense of individuality. Comfy old sofas from your last student flat combine with quirky artwork, interesting beers from the Moa Brewery, and funky cocktails. If you're peckish, dig into unpretentious popcorn, nachos and toasted sandwiches.

The Brewery

CRAFT BEER

(www.casselsbrewery.co.nz; 3 Garlands Rd) Out in Woolston, it's a fair schlep from the city, but the Brewery is an essential destination for beer-loving travellers. Cassels & Sons craft all their beer using a wood-fired brew kettle, resulting in big, bold beers like their IPA and Best Bitter. Tasting trays are available for the curious and the indecisive, and the food – including wood-fired pizzas – is top-notch, too.

Monday Room

WINE BAR

(367 Moorhouse Ave; ☺7am-late) Part cafe, part restaurant and part wine bar, the versatile Monday Room is the kind of place to hang out in any time of any day of the week. Occupying a restored heritage building, the funky interior is a background for interesting brunch and lunch options; later in the day, tapas, craft beers and cocktails take centre stage.

Cargo

BAR

(379 Lincoln Rd) Welcome to the city of shipping containers, a popular option for business owners re-establishing after the earthquake. In the case of Addington's Cargo, there's even an astroturf putting green in the corner. The utilitarian decor won't score points for a romantic night out, but on Friday and Saturday nights it's crammed with locals celebrating the end of the working week.

Carlton Country Club

PUB

(1 Papanui Rd) Only in innovative, post-earthquake Christchurch would a bunch of shipping containers and a truck-and-trailer come together as one of the city's most popular pubs. Perched on a busy urban corner, the Carlton is a thoroughly unpretentious spot, with lots of thirsty locals tucked away

in its nooks and crannies. Don't miss the rooftop deck on a sunny afternoon.

Revival

BAR

(www.revivalbar.co.nz; 94 Victoria St) More shipping-container bar tomfoolery, this time with the added attraction of its own onsite Lebanese food caravan, Revival is the hippest of Christchurch's container bars, with regular DJs and a funky lounge area dotted with a quirky collection of automotive rear ends and vintage steamer trunks. Yet another classic example of post-earthquake Christchurch drinking chic.

Wood's Mill

BAR & CAFE PRECINCT

(Woods Mill) Before the earthquakes, Christchurch had a thriving eating and drinking scene in the bricklined thoroughfares around SOL Sq and Lichfield Lane. At the time of writing these areas were still cordoned off, and the Wood's Mill precinct in Addington was being repurposed as a similar development. The area is scheduled to open in mid-2012.

★ Entertainment

Like the city's pub and bar scene, many of Christchurch's traditional entertainment venues were damaged by the earthquakes, and newer, more suburban areas have emerged. For live music and club listings, see www.christchurchmusic.org.nz or www.mukuna.co.nz. Look out for the *Groove Guide* magazine in cafes.

Both Pomey's Old Brewery Inn (p17) and The Brewery (p18) are also good live-music venues. Check their websites for listings.

Christchurch Events Village

CONCERT VENUE

(www.eventsvillage.co.nz; Hagley Park) Many of Christchurch's entertainment venues were destroyed by the earthquake, so this Hagley Park collection of temporary venues is now used for everything from concerts to live theatre.

Dux Live

LIVE MUSIC

(363 Lincoln Rd) Dux de Lux was an excellent restaurant, microbrewery and live-music venue in Christchurch's Arts Centre, but it was forced to close after the February 2011 earthquake. The beer is still being brewed – try it at Dux de Lux in Queenstown – and in late 2011 this Addington venue opened for live music. Search Facebook for Dux de Lux for what's on.

Darkroom

LIVE MUSIC

(www.facebook.com/darkroom.nz; 336 St Asaphs St; ☎5pm-late Thu-Sun) Darkroom is a hip combination of live-music venue and bar, with lots of Kiwi beers, great cocktails and the moreish delights of mini-pizzas and the 'Pie of the Week'. There's lots of live gigs, often free – it's a cool introduction to the renaissance of Christchurch's music scene. Check their Facebook page for gig info.

Court Theatre

THEATRE

(☎0800 333 100, 03-963 0870; www.courttheatre.org.nz; off Bernard St) Christchurch's original Court Theatre was an iconic part of the city's Arts Centre, but they were forced to relocate after the earthquakes. Their new premises in up-and-coming Addington are now more modern and spacious, and it's a great venue to see popular international plays and works by NZ playwrights. Check the website for what's playing.

Club 22

CLUB

(22 Harewood Rd; ☎8pm-2am Thu-Sat) Energetic DJ-driven dance club for the younger traveller – some nights the good people of suburban Papanui don't know what's hit them. Search Facebook for Club 22 to see what's planned and who's playing.

The Venue

CLUB

(6 Tower St) Another suburban nightclub worth the trek to Hornby for occasional hip hop, dubstep and gloriously noisy rock and roll from Kiwi acts. Check www.christchurchmusic.org.nz for what's on or search Facebook for The Venue.

Addington Rugby League Park

STADIUM

(www.crfu.co.nz) Along with much of Christchurch's sporting infrastructure, the earthquakes forced the closure of AMI Stadium, the traditional home of rugby and cricket in the city. After a 2011 season playing all their games away from home – and still coming in as runners-up – the Canterbury Crusaders Super 15 rugby team moved to a new ground in Addington for the 2012 season. Super-15 games are played from late February to July; from July to September, Canterbury plays in NZ's domestic championship.

Hoyts Riccarton

CINEMA

(☎0508 446 987; www.hoyts.co.nz; Riccarton Rd) Hollywood blockbusters and the occasional arthouse gem feature at Christchurch's most central multiplex. Catch a bus to Riccarton Mall from platform C at the Central Bus Sta-

tion. Check listings in the *Press* newspaper or at www.flicks.co.nz

Hollywood 3

CINEMA

(☎03-326-6104; www.hollywoodcinema.co.nz; 28 Marriner St; adult/child \$16/10) Mainly arthouse and foreign language flicks in a seaside suburb of Sumner. Catch bus 3 from platform A at the Central Bus Station.

**Shopping**

Since the earthquakes, shopping in Christchurch has largely been focused on the city's suburban malls. The most convenient for visitors is the Westfield Riccarton Mall. At the time of writing, the CBD was closed, but green shoots of retail commerce were evident nearby in the new RE:Start shopping precinct. The gift shops at the Canterbury Museum (p3) and the Christchurch Art Gallery (p5) are also worth browsing.

Re:START Mall

MALL

(www.restart.org.nz) Opened in late October 2011, this colourful labyrinth of shops based in shipping containers was the first retail activity in the Christchurch CBD after the February 2011 earthquake. With a couple of decent cafes, and including two iconic Christchurch stores – Scorpio Books and Johnson's Grocers – it's a pleasant place to stroll. Visit Hapu for a good selection of design and crafts from local artists.

Ballantynes

DEPARTMENT STORE

(cnr Colombo & Cashel Sts) A venerable Christchurch department store selling men's and women's fashions, cosmetics, travel goods and speciality NZ gifts. Ballantynes was one of the first stores to reopen the CBD following the earthquakes.

Sunday Artisan Market

MARKET

(www.sundayartisanmarket.co.nz; 16 Kahu Rd; ☎11am-3pm Sun) This Sunday morning market in the leafy grounds of Riccarton House combines local arts and crafts vendors with gourmet food stalls and live music and entertainment.

Westfield Riccarton Mall

MALL

(www.westfield.co.nz; Riccarton Rd) To the west of central Christchurch, this mega mall has a huge selection of fashion, homeware and entertainment outlets. There's a cinema multiplex and the surrounding area around Riccarton Rd also has many shops. Catch a bus from platform C at Christchurch's Central Bus Station

i Information

Emergency

Ambulance, fire service & police ([tel] 111)

Police station (☎03-348 6640; www.police.govt.nz; Church Corner, Riccarton Rd, Riccarton) The police kiosk in Cathedral Sq was inaccessible at the time of writing, so the station in Riccarton is currently the most central police station.

Internet Resources

Christchurch & Canterbury (www.christchurchnz.com) Official tourism website for the city and region. Also see www.popucity.co.nz for their ongoing blog of new eating and drinking opportunities around town.

Christchurch.org.nz (www.christchurch.org.nz) The Christchurch City Council's website.

CERA (www.cera.govt.nz) Check the website of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority for up-to-date maps of the cordon around the city's Central Business District. Also available is a download of the draft plan to rebuild the city.

Neat Places (www.neatplaces.co.nz) A local blogger's authoritative view of the best of Christchurch's shopping, eating and drinking.

Media

Cityscape (www.cityscape-christchurch.co.nz) Entertainment and events magazine available in inner-city cafes and retailers. Check their website for updates on new openings around town.

Press (www.stuff.co.nz) Christchurch's newspaper, published Monday to Saturday. Check out Friday's edition for the best entertainment listings.

Medical Services

24-Hour Surgery (Bealey Ave Medical Centre; ☎03-365 7777; www.pegasus.org.nz; cnr Bealey Ave & Colombo St; ☎24hr) Located north of town, with no appointment necessary.

AFTER-HOURS PHARMACY (☎03-366 4439; 931 Colombo St; ☎6-11pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11pm Sat & Sun, plus public holidays) Located beside the 24-Hour Surgery.

Christchurch Hospital (☎03-364 0640, emergency dept 03-364 0270; www.cdhb.govt.nz; 2 Riccarton Ave) Centrally located.

Post

Post Office (103 Riccarton Rd) At the time of writing, Christchurch's main post office was closed. The most central location is in Riccarton.

Tourist Information

Airport Information Desks (☎03-353 7774; www.christchurchairport.co.nz; ☎7.30am-

8pm) Transport and accommodation bookings, and a handy post office (open 8am to 4.30pm)

Christchurch i-SITE (☎03-379 9629; www.christchurchnz.com; Rolleston Ave, beside the Canterbury Museum; ☎8.30am-5pm, later in summer) Transport, activities and accommodation. Note that this location may change during the life of this book. Check online for the current location when you visit.

Department of Conservation (☎03-371 3700; www.doc.govt.nz; 38 Orchard Rd; ☎8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Has information on South Island national parks and walkways. At the time of writing DOC had relocated to the International Antarctic Centre near the airport, but check online for the current location.

i Getting There & Away

Air

Christchurch Airport (CHC; ☎03-358 5029; www.christchurchairport.co.nz) is the South Island's main international gateway. The newly-modernised and expanded airport has excellent facilities, including baggage storage and visitor information desks in both the domestic and international terminals. Prices listed below are for one-way flights.

INTERNATIONAL

Air Asia X (www.airasia.com) Low-cost flights to/from Kuala Lumpur (from \$373).

Air New Zealand (☎0800 737 000; www.airnewzealand.co.nz) Direct flights to/from Melbourne (from \$139), Sydney (\$159), and Brisbane (\$159)

Jetstar (☎800 800 995; www.jetstar.com) Direct flights to/from Melbourne (from \$139), Sydney (from \$139), Brisbane (from \$169) and the Gold Coast (from \$139). Corporate cousin Qantas also flies the same routes at higher fares.

Singapore Airlines (www.singaporeair.com) Direct flights to/from around \$1100.

Virgin Australia (www.virginaustralia.com) Direct flights to/from Sydney (from \$149), Melbourne (from \$149) and Brisbane (from \$149).

DOMESTIC

Air New Zealand (☎0800 737 000; www.airnewzealand.co.nz) Direct flights to/from Auckland (from \$79), Blenheim (from \$99), Dunedin (from \$79), Hamilton (from \$109), Hokitika (from \$109), Invercargill (from \$109), Napier (from \$109), Nelson (from \$79), New Plymouth (from \$109), Palmerston North (from \$119), Queenstown (from \$59), Rotorua (from \$119), Tauranga (from \$109), Wanaka (from \$99) and Wellington (from \$59).

Jetstar (☎0800 800 995; www.jetstar.com) Direct flights to/from Auckland (\$79), Queenstown (\$59), and Wellington (\$59).

Bus

Shuttles run to Akaroa, Arthur's Pass, Dunedin, Greymouth, Hanmer Springs, Picton, Queenstown, Twizel, Wanaka, Westport and points in-between; see the i-SITE. Departure points vary, so check when you book.

InterCity (☎03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz; 118 Bealey Ave) Buses depart from 118 Bealey Ave, but that may change during the life of this book – check the website. North bound buses go to Kaikoura (2¾ hours), Blenheim (five hours) and Picton (5½ hours), with connections to Nelson (eight hours). One daily bus also goes southwest to Queenstown direct (eight hours). There are services to Wanaka (seven hours) involving a change in Tarras. Heading south, two buses run daily along the coast via the towns along SH1 to Dunedin (six hours), with connections via Gore to Invercargill (9¾ hours) and Te Anau (10½ hours). Book online or at the i-SITE.

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com; 70 Bealey Ave) Heads north to Picton and Nelson, south to Dunedin and southwest to Queenstown. Most buses depart 70 Bealey Ave, but buses to Kaikoura, Picton and Nelson depart from outside the Canterbury Museum (p3). Check the website or when you book.

Train

Christchurch railway station (☎03-341 2588, 0800 872 467; www.tranzscenic.co.nz; Troup Dr; ☎ticket office 6.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat & Sun) is serviced by a free shuttle that picks up from various accommodation; ring the i-SITE to request pick-up. An alternative is Steve's Airport Shuttle (p21) for \$5.

The *Coastal Pacific* runs daily each way between Christchurch and Picton via Kaikoura and Blenheim, departing from Christchurch at 7am and arriving at Picton at 12.13pm. The standard adult one-way fare to Picton is \$99, but fares can be discounted to \$59.

The *TranzAlpine* has a daily route between Christchurch and Greymouth via Arthur's Pass. The standard adult one-way fare is \$129, but fares can be discounted to \$89.

Contact **Kiwi Rail Scenic** (☎0800 872 467; www.tranzscenic.co.nz).

① Getting Around

To/From the Airport

The airport is 12km from the city centre.

Super Shuttle (☎0800 748 885; www.super-shuttle.co.nz) operates 24 hours and charges \$24 for one person between the city and the airport, plus \$5 for each additional person. A cheaper alternative is **Steve's Airport Shuttle** (☎0800 101 021; one/two/three persons \$15/20/20) offering a door-to-door service from 3am.

The airport is serviced by the **City Flyer bus** (☎0800 733 287; www.redbus.co.nz; adult/child \$7.50/4.50), which runs to/from the Central Bus Station between 7.15am and 10.15pm Monday to Friday and 7.15am to 9.15pm Saturday and Sunday. Pick up the red City Flyer timetable at the i-SITE.

A taxi between the city centre and airport costs around \$45 to \$55.

Car & Motorcycle

HIRE Major car- and campervan-rental companies all have offices in Christchurch, as do numerous smaller local companies. Operators with national networks often want cars to be returned from Christchurch to Auckland because most renters travel in the opposite direction, so special rates may apply on this northbound route.

Ace Rental Cars (☎0800 202 029, 03-360 3270; www.acerentalcars.co.nz; 20 Abros Pl) Located near the airport.

First Choice (☎03-357 3243, 0800 736 822; www.firstchoice.co.nz; 577 Wairekei Rd) Located near the airport.

Omega Rental Cars (☎0800 112 121, 03-377 4558; www.omegarentalcars.com; 20 Lichfield St) Centrally located.

Pegasus Rental Cars (☎0800 354 504; www.rentalcars.co.nz; 578 Wairakei Rd) Located near the airport.

New Zealand Motorcycle Rentals & Tours (☎03-348 1106; www.nzbike.com; 22 Lowther St) Also does guided motorbike tours.

PURCHASE Many vehicles are offered for sale on noticeboards at hostels, cafes and internet places. Check out **Backpackers Car Market** (☎03-377 3177; www.backpackerscarmarket.co.nz; 33 Battersea St; ☎9.30am-5pm), or the weekly **Canterbury Car Fair** (☎03-338 5525; Wrights Rd entrance; ☎9am-noon Sun) held at Addington Raceway. **Turners Auctions** (☎09-525 1920; www.turners.co.nz; 1 Detroit Pl) buys and sells used cars by auction; vehicles priced under \$7000 are auctioned at 6pm on Tuesday and Thursday.

Online see www.trademe.co.nz and www.autotrader.co.nz.

Public Transport

The Christchurch **bus network** (Metro; ☎03-366 8855; www.metroinfo.org.nz; ☎7am-9pm Mon-Sat & Sun 9am-7pm) is inexpensive and efficient. Most buses run from the **Central Bus Station** (46-50 Lichfield St) between Tuam and Lichfield Sts. Get timetables from the i-SITE or the station's information kiosk. Tickets (adult/child \$3.20) include one free transfer within two hours. Metrocards allow unlimited two-hour/full-day travel for \$2.30/4.60, but the cards must be loaded up with a minimum of \$10.

Taxi**Blue Star** (☎0800 379 979; www.bluestar.taxis)**First Direct** (☎0800 505 555; www.firstdirect.nz.nz)**Gold Band** (☎0800 379 5795; www.goldband.taxis.co.nz)

AROUND CHRISTCHURCH

Lyttelton

POP 3100

Southeast of Christchurch are the prominent Port Hills, which slope down to the city's port at Lyttelton Harbour. Christchurch's first European settlers landed here in 1850 to embark on their historic trek over the hills.

Lyttelton was badly damaged during the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, and many of the town's heritage buildings along London St were subsequently demolished. Also fatally damaged was the neogothic **Timeball Station** (www.timeball.co.nz), built in 1876, and where for 58 years a huge time-ball was hoisted on a mast and then dropped at exactly 1pm Greenwich Mean Time. This allowed ships in Lyttelton Harbour to set their clocks and thereby accurately calculate longitude.

Following the earthquakes, Lyttelton has re-emerged as one of Christchurch's most interesting and resilient communities. The town's artsy, independent and bohemian vibe is stronger than ever, and it's again becoming a hub for good bars, cafes and restaurants. It's well worth catching the bus from Christchurch and getting immersed in the local scene.

From Lyttelton, ferries and boat cruises provide access to sheltered Quail Island, as well as across the water to sleepy Diamond Harbour. See www.blackcat.co.nz for details.

If you've got your own transport, the harbour road wends a scenic 15-minute route to pretty Governors Bay, with a couple of good spots for lunch.

The **Lyttelton visitor information centre** (☎03-328 9093; www.lytteltonharbour.info; London St; ☉9am-5pm Sep-May, to 4pm Jun-Aug) has accommodation and transport information.

Sights

Lyttelton is linked to Christchurch via a road tunnel, but there's a more scenic (and 10km longer) route along the narrow Summit Rd,

which has breathtaking city, hill and harbour views, as well as vistas of the Southern Alps.

Eating & Drinking

Freeman's Dining Room

RESTAURANT \$\$

(www.freemansdiningroom.co.nz; 47 London St; pizza \$20, mains \$25-35; ☉3pm-late Mon-Thu, from 11.30am Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun) Freeman's does fresh pasta, top-notch pizzas and regular wine and beer specials featuring brews from Christchurch's Cassels & Son Brewery. Grab a spot on the deck for great town and harbour views, and take in Sunday afternoon jazz concerts from 3pm. Definitely the kind of neighbourhood local you'd like in your town.

Lyttelton Coffee Company

CAFE \$

(www.lytteltoncoffee.co.nz; 29 London St; mains \$10-20) This iconic Lyttelton cafe was destroyed in the February 2011 earthquake, but at the time of writing was planning an April 2012 reopening. Check the website: hopefully you can drop by to sample some of Canterbury's best coffee and tasty and robust brunches. Live music on Saturday afternoons was also a pre-earthquake staple.

Monster Yakitori

JAPANESE \$\$

(☎03-328 9166; www.monsterbar.co.nz; 29 London St; per 2 skewers \$8-12; ☉5pm-late Wed-Sun) Another Lyttelton classic that was working hard towards an April 2012 reopening at the time of writing. Pre-earthquake, classic cocktails and Kiwi craft beers combined with skewered and grilled *yakitori* goodies in a funky, anime-themed interior. Try the *ebi* bacon – prawns wrapped in bacon with plum wasabi. Check the website for Monster's current status.

Fisherman's Wharf

SEAFOOD \$\$

(www.lytteltonwharf.co.nz; 39 Norwich Quay; snacks \$7-12, mains \$18-20; ☉11am-8pm) Part alfresco bar and part gourmet fish-and-chippie, Fisherman's Wharf is a top spot for a cold beer and tasty seafood bar snacks and mains. Try the fish of the day – prepared any of three ways – or smaller plates like salmon with lemongrass, chilli and lime, and look forward to views of the harbour and the rugged working port.

Porthole

BAR

(cnr Canterbury & London Sts) On the former site of the much-loved Volcano Cafe and

Lava Bar, Porthole is another funky reinvention of the humble shipping container. Local wines and Kiwi craft beers are served in the buzzy interior, while laidback Lyttelton folk chill on the alfresco deck. The Volcano Cafe is still involved too, serving up tasty bar snacks.

Wunderbar

BAR

(www.wunderbar.co.nz; 19 London St; ☎5pm-late Mon-Fri, 1pm-late Sat & Sun) Wunderbar is a top spot to see NZ's more interesting acts, from raucous rock to late-night/early-morning dub. The funky decor alone is worth a trip to Lyttelton. At the time of writing, the venue was closed due to earthquake damage, but a reopening was definitely planned. Check the website or www.christchurchmusic.org.nz.

Governor's Bay Hotel

PUB \$\$

(☎03-329 9433; www.governorsbayhotel.co.nz; Main Rd; mains \$14-33) The Governor's Bay Hotel serves tasty burgers, steaks and fish and chips, and more international meals like slow-cooked lamb shanks with Moroccan cous cous. Enjoy a beer on the cool verandah that's dotted with memoirs of the hotel's 145 years of history. Upstairs is accommodation in chic and recently refurbished rooms with shared bathrooms (doubles \$100 to \$150).

She Chocolat

CAFE \$\$

(☎03-329 9825; www.shechocolat.com; 79 Main Rd; mains \$15-34) She Chocolat serves excellent brunches and lunches with an organic and new-age tinge. After ricotta-and-raisin crepes, make room for locally-made Belgian chocolates and take in the harbour views. The cafe is also open for dinner on Friday and Saturday nights; the menu includes a unique chocolate-imbued degustation menu with Pegasus Bay wine matches (per person \$125). Bookings recommended.

Farmers Market

(www.lyttelton.net.nz; ☎10am-1pm Sat) Lyttelton's foodie credentials are enhanced by the farmers market held in the local primary school on Saturdays.

i Getting There & Away

Buses 28 and 35 run from Christchurch to Lyttelton (25 minutes). From Lyttelton by car, you can continue around Lyttelton Harbour on to Akaroa. This winding route is longer and more scenic than the route via SH75 between Christchurch and Akaroa.

Akaroa & Banks Peninsula

Banks Peninsula and its hills were formed by two giant volcanic eruptions about 8 million years ago. Small harbours such as Le Bons, Pigeon and Little Akaloa Bays radiate out from the peninsula's centre, giving it a cogwheel shape. The historic town of Akaroa is a highlight, as is the absurdly beautiful drive along Summit Rd around the edge of the original crater.

Akaroa means 'Long Harbour' in Maori and was the site of the country's first French settlement; descendants of the original French settlers still reside here. Located 83km from Christchurch, it's a charming town that strives to recreate the feel of a French provincial village, down to the names of its streets (Rues Lavaud, Balguerrie and Jolie) and houses (Langlois-Eteveneaux). There's also a few choice eateries.

If you're not in a hurry, it's definitely worth spending a few leisurely days in the excellent budget accommodations that dot the outer bays of Banks Peninsula. Most accommodation will arrange pick-up in Akaroa after you arrive from Christchurch.

HISTORY

James Cook sighted the peninsula in 1770. Thinking it was an island he named it after the naturalist Sir Joseph Banks. The Ngai Tahu tribe, who occupied the peninsula at the time, were attacked at the fortified Onawe pa (Maori village) by the Ngati Toa chief Te Rauparaha in 1831 and their population was dramatically reduced.

In 1838, whaling captain Jean Langlois negotiated the purchase of Banks Peninsula from local Maori and returned to France to form a trading company. With French government backing, 63 settlers headed for the peninsula in 1840, but only days before they arrived, panicked British officials sent their own warship to raise the flag at Akaroa, claiming British sovereignty under the Treaty of Waitangi. Had the settlers arrived two years earlier, the entire South Island could have become a French colony, and NZ's future might have been quite different.

The French did settle at Akaroa, but in 1849 their land claim was sold to the New Zealand Company, and in 1850 a large group of British settlers arrived. The heavily forested land was cleared and soon farming became the peninsula's main industry.

Sights

The Giant's House

GARDEN

(www.thegiantshouse.co.nz; 68 Rue Balguerie; adult/child/family \$20/10/45; ☀️noon-5pm Dec 26-April 22, 2-4pm in winter) An ongoing labour of love from local artist Josie Martin, this playful and whimsical combination of sculpture and mosaics cascades down a hillside garden above Akaroa. Echoes of Gaudí and Miró can be found in the intricate collages of mirrors, tiles, and broken china, and there are many surprising nooks and crannies to discover and explore. Josie Martin also exhibits her other paintings and sculpture in the lovely 1880 house, the former residence of Akaroa's first bank manager.

Akaroa Museum

MUSEUM

(cnr Rues Lavaud & Balguerie; adult/child/family \$4/1/8; ☀️10.30am-4.30pm Oct-Apr, to 4pm May-Sep) This interesting museum is spread over several historic buildings, including the old courthouse; the tiny Custom House by Daly's Wharf; and one of NZ's oldest houses, Langlois-Eteveneaux. It has modest displays on the peninsula's once-significant Maori population, a courtroom diorama, a 20-minute audiovisual on peninsular history, and Akaroa community archives.

Tree Crop Farm

WALKING

(☎️03-304 7158; www.treecrofarm.com; admission \$10; ☀️10am-5pm in good weather only; 📶) The quirky Tree Crop Farm is 1.8km off the main road through Akaroa (take Rue Grehan). This private wilderness garden has rambling, overgrown tracks, sheepskin-covered couches on a ramshackle verandah, and a cafe/travel library with loads of old *National Geographic* magazines. Rustic and romantic accommodation (\$200 to \$250) is also available.

Maori & Colonial Museum

MUSEUM

(www.okainsbaymuseum.co.nz; adult/child \$10/2; ☀️10am-5pm) At Okains Bay, northeast of Akaroa, this collection of indigenous and pioneer artefacts includes a reproduction Maori meeting house, a sacred 15th-century god stick, and a war canoe.

Barrys Bay Cheese

(☎️03-304 5809; www.barrysbaycheese.co.nz; ☀️9am-5pm) At Barrys Bay, on the western side of Akaroa Harbour (12km from Akaroa), is the enticing Barrys Bay Cheese, where you can taste and purchase fine cheddar, havarti and gouda. Crackers and chutney are available for a spontaneous seaside snack.

Activities

See the visitor information centre if you like the sound of jetboating, kayaking or sailing on Akaroa Harbour, touring a working sheep farm or visiting a seal colony.

The *Akaroa – An Historic Walk* booklet (\$9.50) details a walking tour starting at the 1876 **Waeckerle Cottage** (Rue Lavaud) and finishing at the old Taylor's Emporium premises near the main wharf. The route takes in the old wooden buildings and churches that give Akaroa its character. Audio guides for self-guided walking tours (\$10 per 90 minutes) are also available at the visitor information centre.

Akaroa Cooking School

COOKING COURSE

(☎️021 166 3737; www.akaroacooking.co.nz; 81 Beach Rd; per person \$195) Options include popular 'Gourmet in a Day' sessions (10am to 4pm) on Saturdays, and occasional specialised seafood and barbecue classes. All sessions end with tucking into your self-prepared feast, all accompanied by local wines. Check the website for the school's occasional forays into specific ethnic cuisines, including Thai and Italian. Booking ahead is highly recommended.

Banks Peninsula Track

WALKING

(☎️03-304 7612; www.bankstrack.co.nz; per person \$220) This 35km four-day walk traverses private farmland around the dramatic coastline of Banks Peninsula. Costs includes transport from Akaroa and hut accommodation. A two-day option (\$145) covers the same ground at twice the speed.

Akaroa Walk

WALKING

(☎️03-962 3280, 0800 377 378; www.tuataratours.co.nz; per person \$1575; ☀️Nov-Apr) A leisurely upmarket 46km stroll, across three days, from Christchurch to Akaroa. Includes good accommodation and lots of gourmet food. You'll only need to carry your daypack.

Akaroa Adventure Centre

ADVENTURE SPORTS

(☎️03-304 8709; Rue Lavaud; ☀️8.30am-5.30pm) The Akaroa Adventure Centre rents out sea kayaks, bikes, golf clubs, fishing rods and windsurfing gear. Ask here about staying at Purple Peak Backpackers (p27).

Pohatu Plunge

WILDLIFE

(☎️03-304 8552; www.pohatu.co.nz) Runs evening penguin-viewing tours (per adult/child \$70/55); spying the white-flipped penguin is best between August and January. Sea kayaking (adult/child \$80/60) and

4WD nature tours (adult/child \$90/50) are also available, with the option of staying overnight in a secluded cottage (additional \$20 per person) in the Pohutu Nature Reserve.

Onuku Heights Horse Treks HORSE RIDING
(☎03-304 7112; www.onuku-heights.co.nz; 166 Haylocks Rd; from \$110; ☺Nov-May) Surround yourself with the best of the spectacular scenery of Banks Peninsula. Onuku Heights is 15 minutes from Akaroa: follow the signs to Onuku Marae, continue uphill and turn left into Haylocks Rd.

Fox II Sailing Adventures SAILING
(☎0800 369 7245; www.akaroafoxsail.co.nz; Daly's Wharf; adult/child \$70/30; ☺departures 10.30am & 1.30pm Dec-May) History, scenery and wildlife on NZ's oldest gaff-rigged ketch.

Coast Up Close BOAT TOUR
(☎021 228 8091, 0800 126 278; www.coastupclose.co.nz; adult/child from \$65/25; ☺departs 10.15am & 1.45pm) Fishing and scenic boat trips with plenty of birds and wildlife.

Captain Hector's Sea Kayaks KAYAKING
(☎03-304 7866; www.akaroaseakayaks.co.nz; Beach Rd; kayak hire per half-/full day \$35/60) Rental kayaks, canoes and rowboats for self-exploration.

Tours

Akaroa Dolphins WILDLIFE
(☎03-304 7866, 0800 990 102; www.akaroadolphins.co.nz; 65 Beach Rd; adult/child \$70/35; ☺departures 10.15am, 12.45pm & 3.15pm in summer, 10.15am only in winter) Two-hour wildlife cruises, plus evening cruises and bird-watching trips by arrangement. Say hi to Murphy, wildlife-spotting dog extraordinaire, for us – he even stars in his own children's picture book, available at the Akaroa Dolphins office.

Black Cat Cruises WILDLIFE
(☎03-304 7641; www.blackcat.co.nz; Main Wharf; ☺5 tours daily 6am-3.30pm Oct-April, 1 tour daily 11.30am May-Sep) The waters around Akaroa are home to the world's smallest and rarest dolphin, the Hector's dolphin, found only in NZ waters. If viewing the dolphins on a harbour cruise isn't enough, Black Cat Cruises can also get you swimming alongside the dolphins (assuming it's not the calving season). Trips operate year-round and carry only 10 swimmers per trip, so book ahead. Wet suits and snorkelling gear are provided,

plus hot showers back on dry land. Count on a 2½-hour outing including time in and on the water, and a \$59 refund if you don't get to swim with the dolphins. Cruises have around a 98% success rate in seeing dolphins, and an 81% success rate in actually swimming with them. Costs are \$139/115 per adult/child for a cruise and swim, and \$72/35 per adult/child for a cruise only.

Eastern Bays Scenic Mail Run TOUR
(☎03-304 8600; tour \$60; ☺9am Mon-Fri) This is a 120km, 4½-hour delivery service to remote parts of the peninsula, and visitors can travel along with the posties to visit isolated communities and bays (beachfront picnic included). The minibus departs the visitor information centre; bookings are essential as there are only eight seats available.

Festivals & Events

French Fest Akaroa FOOD & WINE
(www.frenchfest.co.nz) French Fest Akaroa is a Gallic-inspired get-together held annually in late September/early October, with an emphasis on food, wine, music and art. Don't miss (or stand on) *Le Race D'Escargots*, where sleek, highly trained snails negotiate a compact course. There's also a French Waiter's Race later in the day.

Sleeping

Most Banks Peninsula accommodation is around Akaroa, but the outer bays are also blessed with excellent and interesting budget lodgings. Akaroa has some splurge-worthy, romantic B&B accommodation.

Akaroa Garthowen B&B \$\$\$
(☎03-304 7419; www.garthowen.co.nz; 7 Beach Rd; s/d \$280-345; @☎) With two vintage Citroën cars, two friendly Jack Russell terriers and four super-comfortable en suite rooms, (almost) everything comes in twos at this upscale B&B rebuilt in heritage style using recycled cedar. Breakfast on the deck comes with a side order of the best view in town.

Oinako Lodge B&B \$\$\$
(☎03-304 8787; www.oinako.co.nz; 99 Beach Rd; d incl breakfast \$245-285; @☎) This glorious timber mansion was built in 1865 for the British magistrate. It's now an upmarket bed and breakfast with five themed rooms and expansive bay windows with sea and garden views. Oinako Lodge was damaged during the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes,

but at the time of writing was scheduled to reopen in September 2012. Check the website for the latest news.

Chez la Mer

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-304 7024; www.chezlamer.co.nz; 50 Rue Lavaud; dm \$25-28, d with/without bathroom \$80/70; @☎) A friendly backpackers with well-kept rooms and a shaded garden, complete with fish ponds, hammocks, barbecue and outdoor seating; it's also a TV-free zone. Free bikes and fishing rods are available.

Bon Accord

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-304 7782; www.bon-accord.co.nz; 57 Rue Lavaud; dm \$27-30, d \$59-89; @☎) This colourful and quirky backpackers fills a compact 155-year-old house. Relax on the deck or in the two cosy lounges, or dive into the herb-filled garden to release your inner French chef. There are free bikes to get you exploring.

Old Shipping Office

APARTMENT \$\$\$

(☎0800 695 2000; www.akaroavillageinn.co.nz; Church St; d \$230) A self-contained apartment in a restored heritage building with an interesting past. (No prizes for guessing the building's former incarnation.) Two bedrooms, a spacious shared lounge and an outdoor spa pool make the Old Shipping Office a good option for families or for two couples. Check-in is at the adjacent Akaroa Village Inn.

Tresori Motor Lodge

MOTEL \$\$

(☎0800 273 747, 03-304 7500; www.tresori.co.nz; cnr Rue Jolie & Church St; d \$155-205; @☎) For designer-conscious lodgings treat yourself to the Tresori; its rich, colourful decor is anything but bland. It's a short walk to Akaroa's waterfront cafe and restaurant strip.

La Rive Motel

MOTEL \$\$

(☎0800 247 651, 03-304 7651; www.larive.co.nz; 1 Rue Lavaud; d \$125-135; ☎) Old-style motel with big rooms and good facilities; well priced considering each unit (studio, two- and three-bedroom options) is fully self-contained. The decor is slightly dated compared to other more modern motels, but La Rive represents good value in a sometimes pricey destination. Most downstairs units open out onto compact courtyards.

Akaroa Top 10 Holiday Park

HOLIDAY PARK \$

(☎0800 727 525, 03-304 7471; www.akaroa-holidaypark.co.nz; 96 Morgans Rd; sites from \$35, units \$70-118; @☎) On a terraced hillside above town and connected by a pathway to Woo-

dhills Rd, this pleasant park has good harbour views and versatile options for every budget.

Around Banks Peninsula

TOP CHOICE Coombe Farm

B&B

(☎03-304 7239; www.coombefarm.co.nz; 18 Old Le Bons Track; d incl breakfast \$145-165) Choose between staying in the private and romantic Shepherd's Hut – complete with an outdoor bath – or in the historic farm house, now lovingly restored and dotted with interesting contemporary art and Asian antiques. Hosts Hugh and Kathrine are a friendly Kiwi-English couple. After breakfast (including homemade jam and organic yoghurt), you can negotiate Coombe Farm's private forest and stream walkway.

TOP CHOICE Okuti Garden

HOMESTAY \$

(www.okuti.co.nz; 216 Okuti Valley Rd; per person \$40; ☺open year-round, teepees and yurts late Oct-Easter only; @☎) Part eco-aware homestay, part WWOOFer's haven – and an all-round funky and friendly place to stay. Options include sleeping in a teepee, a Mongolian yurt, house truck, earth-brick cottage or farmhouse. Organic breakfasts (\$15) and dinners (\$40) are available, many ingredients sourced from Okuti's own gardens. There're plenty of natural nooks and crannies for reading or relaxing, and there's a generous supply of fresh herbs to kickstart your creativity in the shared kitchen.

Halfmoon Cottage

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-304 5050; www.halfmoon.co.nz; dm/s/d \$30/52/75; ☺often closed Jun-Sep; ☎) This marvellous cottage at Barrys Bay (12km from Akaroa) is a blissful place to spend a few days lazing on the big verandahs or in the hammocks dotting the lush gardens. The rooms – mostly doubles – are warmly decorated, and the local landscapes and seascapes can be explored by bicycle or kayak.

Double Dutch

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-304 7229; www.doubledutch.co.nz; 32 Chorlton Rd; dm/s \$30/55, d with/without bathroom \$76/70; @) Posh enough to be a B&B but budget-friendly, this relaxed hostel is perched on a secluded river estuary in farmland. There's a general store (and a beach) just a short walk away, but it's best to bring your own ingredients for the flash kitchen.

Onuku Farm Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-304 7066; www.onuku.co.nz; Onuku Rd; sites per person from \$12.50, dm/d from \$28/66; ☺closed Jun-Aug; @📶) An eco-minded backpackers with basic huts, tent sites and a comfy house on a sheep farm near Onuku, 6km south of Akaroa. From November to March the owners organise swimming-with-dolphins tours (\$100) and kayaking trips (\$50) for guests, and will pick up from Akaroa. The same family has owned the farm since the 1860s, so you should trust them when they say there's some great walks on the 340-hectare spread. A newly-developed campsite area makes it a great option for travellers with tents or campervans. Dolphin and kayaking trips are also open to non-guests.

Purple Peak Backpackers

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-420 0199; www.purplepeak.co.nz; camping by donation, dm/d \$25/60; @) This rustic surf lodge and backpackers has glorious sea views and a rugged, out-of-the-way location. Accommodation is simple but clean, and during summer there's the occasional tasty seafood barbecue and an outdoor wood-fired pizza oven. Surfboards and gear are available for hire. Free shuttles are provided from Akaroa. See Darin at the Akaroa Adventure Centre (p24).

Little River Campground

HOLIDAY PARK \$

(☎03-325 1014; www.littlerivercampground.co.nz; 287 Okuti Valley Rd; sites from \$25, cabins \$40-110) This sprawling campground near the hamlet of Little River is arrayed around a forest and riverside setting. Accommodation ranges from grassy tent sites through to rustic Kiwiana cabins. There's a really cruisy family atmosphere: added benefits for the kids include campfires, trampolines and a natural swimming hole in the river.

Okains Bay Camping Ground

CAMPSITE \$

(☎03-304 8789; www.okainsbaycamp.co.nz; 1162 Okains Bay Rd; adult/child \$12/6) On pine-tree-peppered ground right by a beach, with spick-and-span kitchen facilities and coin-operated hot showers. Pay your fees at the house at the camping ground's entrance. There's a small general store around 1km down the road, and a terrific adventure playground for the kids.

Eating & Drinking**The Little Bistro**

FRENCH \$\$

(☎03-304 7314; 33 Rue Lavaud; mains \$27-35; ☺6pm-late Tue-Sun; 🍷) *Très petite, très chic* and very tasty. Look forward to classic bistro style given a proud Kiwi spin with local seafood, South Island wines and Canterbury craft beers. The menu changes seasonally, but usually includes favourites like pistachio-encrusted lamb or Akaroa salmon terrine; vegetarians are not ignored. Booking ahead is definitely necessary. Sometimes open for lunch in summer – check the blackboard out the front.

Vangionis

ITALIAN

(www.vangionis.co.nz; Rue Brittan; tapas \$8-18, pizza \$18-28) Thin-crust pizzas, tapas, pasta and Canterbury beers and wines all feature at this Tuscan-style trattoria. Secure an outside table and while away lunchtime, afternoon, or evening. Takeaway pizzas are also available.

L'Escargot Rouge

CAFE \$

(www.lescargotrouge.co.nz; 67 Beach Rd; meals \$8-14) Tasty gourmet pies (\$7), picnic fixings and French-accented breakfasts are the main attractions at the 'Red Snail'. Try the homemade toasted muesli with fruit, yoghurt and honey (\$12) before exploring Akaroa harbour by kayak.

Bully Hayes

RESTAURANT \$\$

(www.bullyhayes.co.nz; 57 Beach Rd; lunch \$15-25, dinner mains \$22-35) Named after a well-travelled American buccaneer, the menu at this sunny spot kicks off with Akaroa salmon before touching down for gourmet burgers, pasta, and tapas. Monteith's beers and a good local wine list make it a worthwhile place to linger. Try the seafood platter (\$31) for lots of briny bounty from local waters. It's a good spot for breakfast, too.

Akaroa Fish & Chips

FISH & CHIPS \$

(59 Beach Rd; snacks & meals \$6-15) Order takeaways and sit beside the ocean, or grab a table and tuck into blue cod, scallops, oysters and other assorted deep-fried goodness. Either way, keep a close eye on the local posse of eager cats and seagulls.

Truby's Bar on the Beach

BAR

(Rue Jolie) A perfect waterfront location combines with rustic outdoor seating to produce Akaroa's best place for a sundowner drink. Truby's blue cod and chips for dinner are

world-famous in Akaroa, and baked cheese-cake and good coffee are other distractions earlier in the day.

Four Square Supermarket SUPERMARKET \$
(Rue Lavaud; ☎8am-8pm) Good deli and wine selection.

★ Entertainment

Cine Café CINEMA
(☎03-304 7678; www.cinecafe.co.nz; cnr Rue Jolie & Selwyn Ave; adult/child \$15/13; ☎2-10pm; 📺) Part cafe with excellent pastries, soups and wi-fi, and part cinema showing art-house flicks.

i Information

Akaroa Information Centre (☎03-304 8600; www.akaroa.com; 80 Rue Lavaud; ☎9am-5pm) Tours, activities and accommodation.

i Getting There & Away

From November to April the **Akaroa Shuttle** (☎0800 500 929; www.akaroashuttle.co.nz; return \$45) departs Christchurch daily at 8.30am and 2pm, returning from Akaroa at 10.30am, 3.35pm and 4.30pm. Bookings are recommended. From May to September, there's only a 10am departure from Christchurch. Check the website for Christchurch pick-up options. Scenic tours from Christchurch exploring Banks Peninsula are also available.

French Connection (☎0800 800 575; www.akaroabus.co.nz; return \$45) has a year-round daily departure from Christchurch at 9.15am, returning from Akaroa at 4pm.

NORTH CANTERBURY

From Christchurch, SH1 heads north for 57km through Woodend and Amberley to Waipara. From here it continues northeast to Kaikoura, while SH7 branches due north to Hurunui, through flat farming country, to reach Culverden. About 27km from Culverden is the turn-off from SH7 to Hanmer Springs, a thermal resort. The *Alpine Pacific Triangle Touring Guide* outlines things to see and do in this region. See also www.visithurunui.co.nz.

If you're a wine buff or foodie, look for the *North Canterbury Food & Wine Trail* touring map at the i-SITE in Christchurch. Online, see www.foodandwinetrail.co.nz.

The **Brew Moon Garden Café & Brewery** (www.brewmooncafe.co.nz; 150 Ashworths

Rd; mains \$15-26; 🍷🍺) on SH75 in Amberley crafts four different beers; sample them all for \$12. Our favourite is the gloriously hoppy Hophead IPA. Gourmet pizzas (\$20 to \$25) and meals including Akaroa salmon and steak sandwiches are also available. Coffee and New York-style baked cheesecake (\$10) are other tasty options.

A few kilometres up SH1, the scenic **Waipara Valley** is home to around 20 wineries; see www.waiparawines.co.nz. Sample a pinot noir or riesling and stop for lunch at one of the spectacular vineyard restaurants. **Waipara Springs** (www.waiparasprings.co.nz; SH1), **Pegasus Bay** (www.pegasusbay.com; Stockgrove Rd; mains \$27-39; ☎noon-4pm) and the **Mud House** (www.themudhousewinery.co.nz; SH1) are open daily for wine tasting and sales, and all have restaurant-cafes for a leisurely lunch. During summer, the Mud House also hosts occasional local and international concerts; see www.dayonthe.green.com.au. The annual **Waipara Wine and Food Festival** (www.waiparawineandfood.co.nz) is held in early March. Wine tours are available from several Christchurch-based companies.

The **Pegasus Bay Restaurant** (☎03-314 6869; www.pegasusbay.com; Stockgrove Rd; mains \$27-39; ☎noon-4pm) has an old-world ambience set amid a lovely European-style garden. The menu takes advantage of superb local produce and recommends appropriate wine matches – Pegasus Bay is a regular contender for NZ's Best Winery Restaurant award. Booking ahead is recommended.

Near the intersection with SH7 is **Waipara Sleepers** (☎03-314 6003; www.waiparasleepers.co.nz; 12 Glenmark Dr; sites from \$20, dm \$25, s \$35-45, d \$55-65; 🍷🍺), where you can camp, bunk down in converted train carriages, and cook your own meals in the 'station house'. The local pub and general store are located close by.

Hanmer Springs

POP 750

Hanmer Springs, the main thermal resort on the South Island, is 10km off SH7. It's a pleasantly low-key spot to indulge in bathing in hot pools and being pampered in the spa complex. There are good restaurants and lots of family-friendly activities.

Sights

Hammer Springs Thermal Pools BATHHOUSE
(☎03-315 0000; www.hammersprings.co.nz; entry on Amuri Ave; adult/child \$18/9; ☀10am-9pm)
Visitors have been soaking in the waters of Hammer Springs Thermal Pools for over a hundred years. Local legend has it that the thermal springs are the fires of Tamatea, which fell from the sky after an eruption of Mt Ngauruhoe on the North Island; Maori call the springs Waitapu (Sacred Waters).

The hot-spring water mixes with freshwater to produce pools of varying temperatures. In addition to mineral pools, there are landscaped rock pools, a freshwater 25m lap pool, private thermal pools (\$25 per half-hour) and a restaurant. Loads of fun for kids of all ages include a waterslide and the exciting Superbowl (\$10). The adjacent **Hammer Springs Spa** (☎0800 873 529, 03-315 0029; www.hammerspa.co.nz; ☀10am-7pm) has massage and beauty treatments from \$70. A recent refurbishment has lifted the spa to international standards, and entry to the pools is discounted to \$12 if you also partake of the spa's facilities.

Molesworth Station WORKING FARM

At 180,500 hectares, Molesworth Station, northeast of Hammer Springs, is NZ's largest farm, with the country's largest cattle herd (up to 10,000). Inquire at the i-SITE about independent visits to Molesworth, which is under DOC control. Visits are usually only possible when the Acheron Rd through the station is open from late December to early April (weather permitting). The drive from Hammer Springs north to Blenheim on this narrow, unsealed backcountry road takes around six hours; note that the gates are only open from 7am to 7pm, and overnight camping (adult/child \$6/1.50) is permitted in certain areas (no open fires allowed). Pick up the Department of Conservation *Molesworth Station* brochure from the Hammer Springs i-SITE or download it from www.doc.govt.nz. **Molesworth Heritage Tours** (☎03-315 7401; www.molesworth.co.nz; tours \$198-695; ☀Oct-May) offer 4WD tours of the station and the remote private land stretching north to St Arnaud. Day tours include a picnic lunch, but there's also a five-hour 'no frills' option.

Activities

Other Hammer Springs activities include kayaking, scenic flights, fishing trips and

claybird shooting. Family-friendly activities include mini-golf and tandem bicycles.

The *Hammer Forest Recreation* pamphlet (\$2) outlines short walks near town, mostly through picturesque forest. The easy **Woodland Walk** starts from Jollies Pass Rd, 1km from town, and goes through Douglas fir, poplar and redwood stands. It joins the **Majuba Walk** (1½ hours), which leads to Conical Hill Lookout and then back towards town. The i-SITE has details of longer tramps, including those in Lake Sumner Forest Park to the west.

There are two skiing areas nearby. **Hammer Springs Ski Field** is the closest, 17km (unsealed) from town, and **Mt Lyford Ski Field** is 60km away. They're cheaper than larger resorts. The Hammer Springs Adventure Centre operates transport.

Thrillseekers Canyon ADVENTURE SPORTS

(☎03-315 7046; www.thrillseekerscanyon.co.nz; SH7) Bungy off a 35m-high bridge (\$169), jet-boat the Waiiau Gorge (adult/child \$115/60) or go white-water rafting (Grade II to III) down the Waiiau River (adult/child \$149/79). Other activities include quad-biking (adult/child \$129/99). Book at the Thrillseekers Canyon centre, next to the bridge where the Hammer Springs turn-off meets SH7. There's another **booking office** (☎03-315 7346; www.thrillseekerscanyon.co.nz; Conical Hill Rd; ☀10am-6pm) in town.

Hammer Springs Adventure Centre ADVENTURE SPORTS

(☎0800 368 7386, 03-315 7233; www.hammeradventure.co.nz; 20 Conical Hill Rd; ☀9am-5pm) Books activities, and rents quad-bikes (from \$129), mountain bikes (per hour/day from \$19/45), fishing rods (per day \$25) and ski and snowboard gear. Mountain biking maps are available at the i-SITE.

Wai Ariki Farm Park FARM

(☎03-315 7772; www.waiariki-farmpark.co.nz; 108 Rippingale Rd; adult/child/family \$12/6/35 ; ☀10am-4pm Tue-Sat, open daily during school holidays) With more animals than Dr Dolittle's Facebook page, Wai Ariki is a great spot for kids. Llamas, Tibetan yaks, rabbits, guinea pigs and goats all feature, and many of the critters can be hand-fed; horse treks for the young ones are also available. For Mum and Dad there's a cafe and craft gallery.

Hammer Horses HORSE RIDING

(☎0800 873 546; www.hammerhorses.co.nz; 1hr rides adult/child \$59/49, 2½hr treks \$99) Rides

depart from a forested setting 10 minutes from town on Rogerson Rd. Younger children can be led on a pony for 30 minutes (\$25).

Sleeping

Woodbank Park Cottages COTTAGES \$\$
(☎03-315 5075; www.woodbankcottages.co.nz; 381 Woodbank Rd; d \$180-200) These two matching cottages in a woodland setting are around 10 minutes' drive from Hanmer, but feel a million miles away. Decor is crisp and modern, bathrooms and kitchens are well-appointed and expansive wooden decks come equipped with gas barbecues and rural views.

Cheltenham House B&B \$\$\$
(☎03-315 7545; www.cheltenham.co.nz; 13 Cheltenham St; s \$195-235, d \$235-265; @☎) Centrally located B&B with six snooze-inducing suites, all with bathroom, and including two in cosy garden cottages; there's a billiard table, grand piano and complimentary pre-dinner wine. Cooked gourmet breakfasts can be delivered to your room. Avoid the crowds up the road in the private hot tub.

Le Gîte HOSTEL \$\$
(☎03-315 5111; www.legite.co.nz; 3 Devon St; dm \$28, d with/without bathroom \$76/64; @☎) This charming old converted home is a 10-minute walk from the centre. Large rooms (no bunks), relaxing gardens and a lovely lounge area are drawcards. For extra privacy, book a garden 'chalet' with private bathroom.

Tussock Peak Motor Lodge MOTEL \$\$
(☎03-315 5191, 0800 8877 625; www.tussockpeak.co.nz; cnr Amuri Ave & Leamington St; d \$145-225; ☎) Modern, spotless and central, Tussock Peak has colourful decor and friendly service that's an eclectic cut above other motels on Hanmer's main drag. The hardest part is choosing what kind of room to get: studio, one- or two-bedroom units, spas, courtyards or balconies.

Scenic View Motels MOTEL \$\$
(☎03-315 7419; www.hanmerscenicviews.co.nz; 10 Amuri Ave; d \$135-200; @☎) An attractive timber-and-stone complex with modern, colourful studios and two- and three-bedroom apartments. Mountain views come as standard.

Hanmer Backpackers HOSTEL \$\$
(☎03-315 7196; www.hanmerbackpackers.co.nz; 41 Conical Hill Rd; dm \$27, s \$55, d \$58-70; @☎) Centrally located, the township's original back-

packers is a cosy, woodlined haven with a friendly and well-travelled host. Well-maintained shared social areas, cheap wi-fi access and free fruit and coffee all add further big ticks. There's even another edible surprise which we can't talk about.

Rosie's B&B \$
(☎03-315 7095; roxyrosie@clearnet.nz; 9 Cheltenham St; s \$55-90, d \$85-130, all incl breakfast) Rosie was originally from Australia, but she's now offering great Kiwi hospitality at this welcoming and reader-recommended spot. Rooms offer either en suite or with shared facilities. Look forward to recently decorated bathrooms and a friendly cat called Kiri. The garden cottage (\$130) is a nicely private option.

Hanmer Springs Top 10 Holiday Park HOLIDAY PARK \$
(☎0800 904 545, 03-315 7113; www.mountainviewtop10.co.nz; Bath St; sites from \$32, units \$80-160; @☎) Family-friendly park a few minutes' walk from the Hanmer thermal reserve. Kids will love the playground and the trampoline. Take your pick from basic cabins (BYO everything) to two-bedroom motel units with everything supplied. There are two more camping grounds in town if it's full.

Kakapo Lodge HOSTEL \$
(☎03-315 7472; www.kakapolodge.co.nz; 14 Amuri Ave; dm \$28, d \$66-90; @☎) The spartan, YHA-affiliated Kakapo has a roomy kitchen and lounge, chill-busting underfloor heating and an outdoor deck. Bunk-free dorms (some with bathroom) are joined by a motel-style unit (\$100) with TV and cooking facilities.

Eating & Drinking

Chantellini's FRENCH \$\$
(☎03-315 7667; www.chantellinis.com; 11 Jollies Pass Rd; mains \$30-36; ☎10am-10:30pm) Tucked away behind the main street, this quiet oasis is a relaxed cafe with outdoor garden seating by day, and an intimate French bar and restaurant by night. Chandeliers and black drapes create an elegant ambience. Portions are generous, and the daily two/three-course lunch for \$25/30 is great value – try the leek tart or onion soup. Bookings are recommended for dinner.

Powerhouse Café CAFE \$\$
(☎03-315 5252; www.powerhousecafe.co.nz; 6 Jacks Pass Rd; mains \$12-20; ☎☎) Recharge your batteries with a huge High Country

breakfast, or linger for a more sophisticated lunch of a creamy goats-cheese salad. During summer, return for dinner of Akaroa salmon in the Powerhouse's spacious courtyard. An organic fair-trade coffee is a good trade for wi-fi access, and there are plenty of gluten-free and vegetarian options.

Thai Chilli

(The Mall; mains \$14-20) Run by a friendly Thai family, the cosy Thai Chilli respects requests for 'spicy, please', and also offers good-value lunch specials (\$14). Service – usually by the family's kids – can be hit and miss, but that's part of the low-key charm. Takeaways are also available.

THAI \$

Malabar Restaurant & Bar

(☎03-315 7745; www.malabar.co.nz; 5 Conical Hill Rd; lunch & breakfast \$10-22 dinner \$28-36) This elegant eatery presents Asian cuisine from Beijing to Bangalore. Try the Malabar *thali* showcasing four different curries, or the moreish five-spice crackling pork belly. Breakfast and lunch options are less-Asian influenced – think bagels, omelettes, or burgers – but equally tasty. A limited takeaway menu of Indian, Chinese and Thai favourites is also available (around \$13).

ASIAN \$

Monteith's Brewery Bar

(www.mbbh.co.nz; 47 Amuri Ave) The best pub in town features lots of different Monteiths beers and tasty tucker from bar snacks (\$10 to \$17) to full meals (\$17 to \$32). Platters (\$27 to \$54) are good value if you've just met some new friends in the hot pools across the road.

PUB

Hanmer Springs Bakery

(16 Conical Hill Rd; pies \$5; ☎6am-4pm) Grab a takeaway coffee or gourmet pie.

BAKERY \$

Four Square Supermarket

(Conical Hill Rd) In Hanmer's shopping mall.

SUPERMARKET \$



Information

Hanmer Springs i-SITE (☎03-315 7128, 0800 733 426; www.visithanmersprings.co.nz; 42 Amuri Ave; ☎10am-5pm) Books transport, accommodation and activities.



Getting There & Away

Hanmer Backpackers run daily shuttles between Hanmer and Christchurch (90 minutes) and also operate a convenient service to and from Kaikoura (two hours; Monday, Wednesday and Friday). **Hanmer Connection** (☎0800 242 663;

www.atsnz.com) also links Hanmer Springs to Christchurch. Shuttles depart from the Hanmer i-SITE.

Check the websites of both companies for current departure points from Christchurch.

Lewis Pass Hwy

At the northern end of the Southern Alps, the beautiful Lewis Pass Hwy (SH7) wiggles west from the Hanmer Springs turn-off to Lewis Pass, Maruia Springs and Springs Junction. The 907m-high **Lewis Pass** is not as steep or the forest as dense as Arthur's and Haast Passes, with mainly red and silver beech and kowhai trees growing along river terraces.

The area has some interesting tramps; see the DOC pamphlet *Lake Sumner & Lewis Pass* (\$2). Most tracks pass through beech forest with a backdrop of snowcapped mountains, lakes, and alpine tarns and rivers. The most popular tramps are around Lake Sumner in the Lake Sumner Forest Park and the **St James Walkway** (66km; three to five days) in the Lewis Pass National Reserve. Subalpine conditions apply, so make sure you sign the intentions books at the huts.

Maruia Springs (☎03-523 8840; www.maruiasprings.co.nz; SH7; d \$179-199, f \$259; @☎) is a small, Japanese-style hot-spring resort on the banks of the Maruia River, 69km from the Hanmer turn-off, with fairly spartan accommodation, a cafe-bar and a Japanese restaurant (breakfast & dinner only). Despite the name, the cheaper Garden View rooms actually offer the best mountain views. In the **thermal pools** (adult/child \$19/9, free for guests), water with black mineral flakes of 'hot spring flowers' is pumped into a gender-segregated traditional Japanese bathhouse and outdoor rock pools. It's a magical setting during a winter snowfall, but mind the sandflies in summer. Massages (per 30/50 minutes \$45/65) and private spa houses (per person for 45 minutes \$25) are available.

SH7 continues to **Springs Junction**, where the Shenandoah Hwy (SH65) branches north to meet SH6 near Murchison, while SH7 continues west to Reefton and down to Greymouth. Springs Junction has a petrol station and cafe.

CENTRAL CANTERBURY

Two hours west from Christchurch on SH73 is Arthur's Pass National Park. The trans-island crossing from Christchurch to Grey-mouth over Arthur's Pass is covered by buses and the *TranzAlpine* train.

From Christchurch the road traverses the Canterbury Plains and then escalates rapidly into the Porters and Craigieburn skiing areas before following the Waimakariri and Bealey Rivers and Lakes Pearson and Grasmere to Arthur's Pass. Southwest of Christchurch (reached by SH73 and SH77) is the Mt Hutt ski resort and Methven.

Craigieburn Forest Park

Accessed from SH73, this forest park is 110km northwest of Christchurch and 42km south of Arthur's Pass. The park has many walking tracks, with longer tramps possible in the valleys west of the Craigieburn Range; see the DOC pamphlet *Craigieburn Forest Park: Day Walks* (\$1). The surrounding country is also suitable for skiing and rock climbing. Dominating the vegetation is beech, tussock, and turpentine scrub, and even a few patches of South Island edelweiss (*Leucogenes grandiceps*).

Craigieburn has a rise of 503m so is one of NZ's best skiing areas, with wild-country slopes that suit advanced skiers.

Near Broken River Bridge is the **Cave Stream Scenic Reserve**, with a 594m-long cave with a small waterfall at one end. Take all the necessary precautions (two light sources per person etc) if you're doing the one-hour walk in waist-deep cold water through the pitch-black cave. For details, get the DOC brochure *Cave Stream Scenic Reserve* (50c). The reserve is in the **Castle Hill** area, with prominent limestone outcrops loved by rock climbers and boulders. Scenes from *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* were filmed in the area.

Sleeping & Eating

Smylie's Accommodation HOSTEL \$
(☎03-318 4740; www.smylies.co.nz; Main Rd; dm/s/d \$28/45/60; @☎) This welcoming YHA-associated hostel and ski lodge is in the town of Springfield, around 30km southeast of Craigieburn. A handful of self-contained motel units (\$85 to \$120) and a three-bedroom cottage (\$180) are also available. In

winter, packages including ski-equipment rental and ski-field transport are on offer. Nearby year-round activities include jet-boating, rock climbing, mountain biking and horse trekking.

Flock Hill Lodge LODGE \$\$
(☎03-318 8196; www.flockhill.co.nz; SH73; sites from \$30, dm/d \$31/155; @☎) This high-country sheep station is 44km east of Arthur's Pass, adjacent to Lake Pearson and the Craigieburn Forest Park. Backpackers can stay in rustic shearers' quarters, while large groups can opt for two-bedroom motel units or large cottages with kitchenettes. After fishing, exploring, horse riding or mountain biking, recharge in the cosy bar-restaurant. Unpowered camping sites are also available.

Wilderness Lodge LODGE \$\$\$
(☎03-318 9246; www.wildernesslodge.co.nz; SH73; s \$499-649 d \$798-998, all incl breakfast & dinner; @) Luxurious lodge on a mountain-beech-speckled sheep station (2400 hectares in size), 16km east of Arthur's Pass. Alpine views and the world's longest driveway produce an absolute middle-of-nowhere atmosphere, and standalone studios with private spa baths feel even more remote. Walking, birdwatching and canoeing are all on tap.

Bealey Hotel HOTEL \$\$
(☎03-318 9277; www.bealeyhotel.co.nz; s/d without bathroom \$60/80, units \$150-180; @) Just 12km east of Arthur's Pass, tiny Bealey is famous for a hoax by the local pub owner in 1993. He reckoned he'd seen a real live moa, hence the bogus Big Bird statue standing on a rocky outcrop. There are self-contained motel units and the budget and basic Moa Lodge. Enjoy expansive alpine views from the Mad Moa restaurant.

Luxurious Sheffield Pie Shop BAKERY \$
(Main Rd; pies \$4-6) This roadside bakery in the quiet Canterbury Plains hamlet of Sheffield turns out some of NZ's best pies. There's more than 20 different varieties on offer.

Arthur's Pass

POP 62
Arthur's Pass village is 4km from the pass of the same name and is NZ's highest-altitude settlement. The 924m pass was used by Maori to reach Westland, but its European discovery was made by Arthur Dobson in 1864, when the Westland gold rush created the need for a crossing over the Southern

Alps from Christchurch. A coach road was completed within a year, but later on the coal and timber trade demanded a railway, duly completed in 1923.

The town is a handy base for tramps, climbs, views and wintertime skiing in Arthur's Pass National Park. Online see www.arthurspass.com. For specific information on weather conditions see www.softrock.co.nz.

Sights & Activities

Near DOC is the small interfaith **Chapel**, with wonderful views.

Day tramps offer 360-degree views of snowcapped peaks, many of them over 2000m; the highest is Mt Murchison (2400m). There are huts on the tramping tracks and several areas suitable for camping. Tramping is best in the drier months (January to April). The leaflet *Walks in Arthur's Pass National Park* (\$2) details walks to scenic places including **Devils Punchbowl Waterfall** (one hour return), **Temple Basin** (three hours return), and the **Bealey Spur** track (four to six hours return) with expansive views of the Waimakariri River valley and surrounding mountains. The pleasant **Dobson Nature Walk** (30 minutes return) is best from November to February when the alpine flowers are blooming. Recommended for fit trampers is the **Avalanche Peak** track (six to eight hours return). Longer tramps with superb alpine backdrops include the **Goat Pass Track** (two days), and the longer and more difficult **Harman Pass** and **Harpers Pass Tracks**. These tracks require previous tramping experience as flooding can make the rivers dangerous and the weather is extremely changeable; ask DOC first.

Sleeping & Eating

Camp within Arthur's Pass township at the basic **public shelter** (adult/child \$6/3), opposite DOC, where there's running water, a sink, tables and toilets. Camping is currently free at **Klondyke Corner**, 8km south of Arthur's Pass, where there is a toilet and the water must be boiled before drinking.



Arthurs Pass Village B&B B&B \$\$

(☎021-394 779; www.arthurspass.org.nz; d \$100; ☎) This former railway cottage is now a cosy B&B, complete with open fire, free-range bacon and eggs and homebaked bread for breakfast, and the company and conversa-

tion of the interesting owners. Ask Geoff about his time working for Greenpeace, and tuck into tasty, home-cooked dinners like organic roast chicken (\$35). The two guest bedrooms share one bathroom.

Mountain House YHA Backpackers & Cottages HOSTEL \$

(☎027 419 2354, 03-318 9258; www.trampers.co.nz; SH73; dm \$27-29, s/d/tr/q \$79/82/99/124, cottage d \$140 plus \$15 per person; @☎) Excellent dorms and private rooms on one side of the highway, and older, but still comfortable, rooms across the road. The owners also provide transport to trailheads. Self-contained cottages with cosy open fires are also available. Bookings are recommended from November to April. You can sometimes camp (\$20 per person) near the cottages. Phone ahead to check availability first.

Arthur's Pass Alpine Motel MOTEL \$\$

(☎03-318 9233; www.apam.co.nz; SH73; d \$115-135; @☎) In the southern part of town, with comfortable motel units (some recently refurbished) and with new beds. If you're snowed in there's a good DVD library and Freeview satellite TV.

Arthur's Pass Village Motel MOTEL \$\$

(☎03-318 9233, 021 131 0616; www.apmotel.co.nz; SH73; d \$145) Centrally located, with two luxury units with cosy leather furniture and warm, natural colours. Booking ahead from November to April is highly recommended.

Wobbly Kea CAFE \$\$

(www.wobblykea.co.nz; SH73; meals \$15-32) This friendly cafe-bar serves steaks, pasta and pizza. Takeaway pizza (\$28) is also available. Breakfast at the Wobbly Kea (\$10 to \$18) is a local tradition designed to set you up for the most active of days.

Arthur's Pass Store CAFE \$

(SH73; @☎) Sells sandwiches, burgers, pies and good breakfasts. Limited groceries and petrol are very expensive, so fill up in Christchurch or Greymouth. There's also no ATM in Arthur's Pass.

Information

DOC Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre (☎03-318 9211; www.doc.govt.nz; SH73; ☎8am-5pm) Information on all park tramps, including route guides for longer hut-lined tramps. It doesn't make onward bookings or reservations, but can help with local accommodation and transport information. The centre screens a 17-minute video on the history of Arthur's Pass. Purchase

detailed topographical maps (\$9) and hire locator beacons (highly recommended, \$30). DOC also advises on the park's often savagely changeable weather. Check conditions here and fill out an intentions card before venturing out. Sign in again after returning to avoid a search party being organised.

Getting There & Around

Arthur's Pass sees buses travelling between Christchurch (two hours) and Greymouth (2/12 hours). **Atomic Shuttles** (www.atomictravel.co.nz) and **West Coast Shuttle** ([03-768 0028](tel:03-7680028), [027 492 7488](tel:027-4927488); www.westcoastshuttle.co.nz) stop here; check their websites for current departure points in Christchurch. Bus tickets are sold at the Arthur's Pass Store.

The *TranzAlpine* train runs between Christchurch and Greymouth via Arthur's Pass.

The road over the pass was once winding and very steep, but the spectacular Otira viaduct has removed many of the treacherous hairpin bends.

Mountain House Shuttle ([027 419 2354](tel:027-4192354), [03-318 9258](tel:03-3189258)), based at Mountain House YHA Backpackers, provides transport to various trailheads. See the Trampers Shuttle tab on www.trampers.co.nz for costs.

Methven

POP 1140

Methven is busiest in winter, when it fills up with snow-sports fans heading to nearby Mt Hutt. In summer, Methven town is a laid-back option with quieter (and usually cheaper) accommodation than elsewhere in the country, and a 'what shall I do today?' range of warm-weather activities.

Activities

Ask at the i-SITE about walking trails, horse riding, mountain biking, fishing, scenic helicopter flights and jet boating through the nearby Rakaia Gorge.

Aoraki Balloon Safaris

BALLOONING

([03-302 8172](tel:03-3028172), [0800 256 837](tel:0800256837); www.nzballooning.co.nz; flights \$385) Early morning combos of snowcapped peaks and a champagne breakfast.

Methven Heliskiing

SKIING

([03-302 8108](tel:03-3028108); www.methvenheli.co.nz; Main St; five-run day trips \$950; ☼May-Oct) Trips including guide service, safety equipment and lunch.

Black Diamond Safaris

SKIING

([03-302 1884](tel:03-3021884); www.blackdiamondsafaris.co.nz; ☼May-Oct) Provides access to uncrowded club ski fields by 4WD. Prices start at \$150 for 4WD transport only, while \$270 gets you transport, a lift pass, guiding and lunch.

Skydiving NZ

SKYDIVING

([03-302 9143](tel:03-3029143); www.skydivingnz.com; Pudding Hill Airfield) Offers tandem jumps from 3600m (\$440).

Sleeping

Some accommodation is closed in summer, but the following are open year-round, with lower prices often available outside the ski season. During the ski season, it pays to book well ahead, especially for budget accommodation.

Alpenhorn Chalet

HOSTEL \$

([03-302 8779](tel:03-3028779); www.alpenhorn.co.nz; 44 Allen St; dm \$28, d \$60-85; @☼) This small, inviting home has a conservatory housing an indoor garden and a spa pool; a log fire, free internet and complimentary espresso coffee seal the deal. Bedrooms are spacious and brightly-coloured, there's lots of warm, natural wood, and an in-house reflexologist and massage therapist are on hand if you've come a-cropper on the slopes.

Beluga Lodge

B&B \$\$

([03-302 8290](tel:03-3028290); www.beluga.co.nz; 40 Allen St; d incl breakfast \$165-260; @) Highly relaxing B&B with king-sized beds, fluffy bathrobes, luscious bathrooms and private decks. Extreme privacy-seekers should consider the garden suite, with its own patio and barbecue. A four-bedroom cottage is also available (\$275 to 375 per night; minimum three-night stay from June to October).

Glenthorne Station

LODGE \$\$

([03-318 5818](tel:03-3185818), [0800 926 868](tel:0800926868); www.glenthorne.co.nz; lodges per person \$25-35, holiday house per person \$50) This beautifully isolated 25,800-hectare sheep station is 60km northwest of Methven, on the northern shore of Lake Coleridge. The high-country accommodation ranges from budget lodges to a self-contained holiday house. Activities include 4WD tours, fishing, horse riding and walking.

Redwood Lodge

LODGE \$

([03-302 8964](tel:03-3028964); www.snowboardnz.com; 3 Wayne Pl; s \$58, d \$58-130; @☼) Turkish rugs and a bright decor give this family-friendly spot

with single, double, triple and quad rooms plenty of charm. En suite rooms with TV provide privacy and there's a huge shared TV lounge and kitchen. Larger rooms can be reconfigured to accommodate families.

Big Tree Lodge

LODGE \$

(☎03-302 9575; www.bigtreelodge.co.nz; 25 South Belt; dm \$30-32, d/tw/tr \$69/69/95; @☎) Transformed from a one-time vicarage, this relaxed lodge has lovely, wood-trimmed bathrooms and a comfy, heritage ambience. Long-term discounts are available. Tucked just behind is Little Tree Studio, a self-contained unit sleeping up to four people (\$90/110 summer/winter).

Flashpackers Methven YHA

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-302 8999; www.methvenaccommodation.co.nz; cnr McMillan & Bank Sts; dm/d \$25/70, d with bathroom \$80; @☎) This YHA-associated lodge has appealing dining/living areas, a large kitchen and indoor and outdoor spa pools. Prices include breakfast and equipment hire (bikes, golf clubs, fishing gear etc).



Eating & Drinking

Café Primo

CAFE \$\$

(38 McMillan St; meals \$10-18) A treasure trove of retro Kiwiana, and the coolest part is that everything is for sale. Sandwiched in and around the souvenir teaspoons and Buzzy Bee bookends are tasty cakes, panini, and legendary bacon and egg sandwiches. You'll also unearth Methven's best coffee. Grab a sunny table in the recently added courtyard and kick-start your day with super-healthy granola.

Cafe 131

CAFE \$

(Main St; meals \$10-20; ☎) A warm space with polished timber and leadlight windows. Serves up all-day breakfasts, good-value platters and soup, pasta, and sandwiches. Beer and wine takes over later in the day. There's also paid wi-fi.

Blue Pub

PUB \$\$

(www.thebluepub.co.nz; Main St; mains \$15-30) Drink at the bar crafted from a huge slab of native timber, or tuck into robust meals like sausage and mash or blue cod in the quieter restaurant. Challenge the locals to a game of pool or watch rugby on the big screen (most Friday and Saturday nights from March to June). Across the road, the Brown Pub is the rowdier choice of locals.

Supervalu Supermarket

SUPERMARKET \$

(cnr The Mall & MacMillan St; ☎7am-9pm) Good wine and beer selection.



Entertainment

Cinema Paradiso

CINEMA

(☎03-302 1957; www.cinemaparadiso.co.nz; Main St; adult/child \$14/10) Quirky cinema with an arthouse skew.



Information

Methven i-SITE (☎03-302 8955; www.methveninfo.co.nz; 160 Main St; ☎9am-5pm; @) Books accommodation, skiing packages, transport and activities.

Medical Centre (☎03-302 8105; Main St)



Getting There & Around

Methven Travel (☎0800 684 888, 03-302 8106; www.methventravel.co.nz; 93 Main St; ☎Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat in summer, up to three times daily in winter) picks up from Christchurch (one hour). Christchurch airport departures are also available.

Shuttles operate from Methven to Mt Hutt ski field in winter (\$38).

Mt Somers

Mt Somers is a small settlement just off SH72, the main road between Geraldine and Mt Hutt. The **Mt Somers Subalpine Walkway** (17km, 10 hours) traverses the northern face of Mt Somers, linking the popular picnic spots of Sharplin Falls and Woolshed Creek. Trail highlights include volcanic formations, Maori rock drawings, deep river canyons and botanical diversity. There are two huts on the tramp: Pinnacles Hut and Woolshed Creek Hut (\$10 each). This route is subject to sudden changes in weather and precautions should be taken. Download the Mt Somers track guide from www.doc.govt.nz. Hut tickets and information are available at the **Mt Somers General Store** (Pattons Rd). There are other shorter walks in the area.

The **Mt Somers Holiday Park** (☎03-303 9719; www.mountsomers.co.nz; Hoods Rd; sites from \$22, cabins \$54-79) is small and well-maintained.

At the highway turn-off to Mt Somers is **Stronechrubie** (☎03-303 9814; www.stronechrubie.co.nz; SH72; d \$120-160, restaurant mains \$33-38; ☎restaurant 6.30pm-late Wed-Sat, noon-2pm Sun), with studios and luxury chalets. The intimate **restaurant** features

excellent Canterbury lamb and local venison and duck. Consider a DB&B package (per two people \$230 to \$280).

SOUTH CANTERBURY

SH1 heading south from Christchurch along the coast passes through the port city of Timaru on its way to Dunedin, and carries a lot of traffic. The inland route along SH8 is also busy, but showcases the stunning landscapes of the Mackenzie Country. Studded with the intense blue lakes of Tekapo and Ohau, SH80 veers off at Twizel in the Mackenzie Country to hug Lake Pukaki all the way to the magnificent heights of Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park.

Timaru

POP 26,750

The port city of Timaru is a handy stopping-off point halfway between Christchurch and Dunedin. Many travellers prefer to kick on 85km further south to the smaller, more charming Oamaru, but a few good restaurants and good-value motels means Timaru is worthy of a spot of travellers' R&R. The recently-opened Te Ana Maori Rock Art Centre is also of interest for travellers seeking to understand NZ's indigenous Maori heritage.

The town's name comes from the Maori name Te Maru, meaning the 'Place of Shelter'. No permanent settlement existed here until 1839, when the Weller brothers from Sydney set up a whaling station. The *Caroline*, a sailing ship that picked up whale oil, gave the picturesque bay its name.

Sights

Te Ana Maori Rock Art Centre MUSEUM
(☎0800 468 362; www.teana.co.nz; 2 George St; adult/child/family \$20/10/50; ☉10am-3pm) Interesting showcase of the significance of Maori rock art to the Ngai Tahu tribe. Passionate Maori guides really bring to life the innovative exhibition, and also available are three-hour excursions (departing 3pm, adult/child/family \$125/50/250) around the surrounding region to see isolated rock art in situ. Prior booking is essential for the tours. Entrance is via the i-SITE.

South Canterbury Museum MUSEUM
(www.timaru.govt.nz; Perth St; admission by donation; ☉10am-4.30pm Tue-Fri, 1.30-4.30pm Sat & Sun) Historical and natural artefacts of the

region, including a replica of the aeroplane designed and flown by local pioneer aviator and inventor Richard Pearse. Many believe his mildly successful attempts at manned flight came before the Wright brothers first flew in 1903.

FREE Aigantighe Art Gallery GALLERY
(www.aigantighe.org; 49 Wai-iti Rd; ☉10am-4pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun) One of the South Island's largest public galleries, with a 900-piece collection of NZ and European art from the past four centuries set up in a 1908 mansion, and adorned externally by a sculpture garden (always open). The gallery's Gaelic name means 'at home' and is pronounced 'egg-and-tie'.

FREE Botanic Gardens GARDENS
(cnr King & Queen Sts; ☉8am-dusk) Established in 1864, Timaru's Botanic Gardens feature ponds, a conservatory, and a notable collection of roses and native tree ferns. The gardens are south of town; enter from Queen St.

FREE Trevor Griffiths Rose Garden GARDENS
(Caroline Bay; ☉open daylight hours) Rose fans should visit the Trevor Griffiths Rose Garden, with more than a thousand romantic blooms set around arbours and water features. The finest display is from December to February.

Festivals & Events

Christmas Carnival MUSIC
(www.carolinebay.org.nz; ☉Dec 26-early Jan) There's a fun, crowded Christmas Carnival with concerts and events on Caroline Bay, one of the few safe, sheltered beaches on the east coast. South Canterbury's biggest annual summer bash celebrated its centenary in 2012, so they must be doing something right.

Timaru Festival of Roses CULTURAL
(www.festivalofroses.co.nz; ☉Nov) The Festival of Roses fills two blooming weeks of garden tours, exhibitions and floral workshops.

Sleeping

Panorama Motor Lodge MOTEL \$\$
(☎0800 103 310, 03-688 0097; www.panorama.net.nz; 52 The Bay Hill; d from \$135; @☉) Modern, well-appointed units with spa, sauna and gym. More greenery to soften the concrete would be nice, but Caroline Bay Park

and Bay Hill's cafes are a short walk away. Family units are particularly spacious.

Baywatch Motor Lodge

MOTEL \$\$

(☎03-688 1886, 0800 929 828; www.baywatchtimaru.co.nz; 7 Evans St; d \$130-145; @☎) Busy Evans St is wall-to-wall motels, but one of the best options along Timaru's main drag is the Baywatch Motor Lodge. Units here offer fantastic bay views, and double-glazed windows mask the worst of the road noise from SH1, though it's worth asking for a room at the back if you're a light sleeper.

Anchor Motel and

Timaru Backpackers

MOTEL \$

(☎03-684 5067; www.anchorhotel.co.nz; 42 Evans St; backpackers dm/d \$25/60, motels s/d \$49/99; @☎) Following a recent refurbishment and with energetic new management, the sprawling Anchor complex is a good-value spot a shortish walk from Caroline Bay. Rooms and dorms are simple, but kept spotless, and just fine if you're transiting north or south.

Timaru Top 10 Holiday Park

HOLIDAY PARK \$

(☎0800 242 121, 03-684 7690; www.timaruholidaypark.co.nz; 154a Selwyn St; sites from \$34, units \$65-120; @☎) Parkland site with excellent amenities and a golf course next door that's included in your park tariff.



Eating & Drinking

Arthur St Café

CAFE \$

(8 Arthur St; snacks & meals \$15-18; ☺closed Sun) Excellent coffee and cruisy Kiwi dub is always a good way to ease into the day. Deckerd out with retro furniture and tinged with a green and sustainable ethic, Timaru's funkier eatery offers sandwiches, bagels and world-famous-in-Timaru breakfasts. There's also occasional live music with an alternative and folkie spin.

Fusion

RESTAURANT \$\$

(64 Bay Hill; lunch mains \$17-20, dinner mains \$26-30) Cool and cosmopolitan in red and black, Fusion's modern cuisine channels both Mediterranean and Asian flavours. Pair a Kiwi craft beer with shared plates of kofta or felafel (\$12.50), or partner confit duck leg and Asian slaw with a spicy Central Otago pinot gris. Between meals it's a good spot for coffee and cake, complete with views of Caroline Bay.

Ginger & Garlic

MODERN NZ \$\$

(☎03-688 3981; www.gingerandgarlic.co.nz; 335 Stafford St; mains \$25-34; ☺noon-2pm Mon-Fri & 5-10pm Mon-Sat) Timaru's take on sophisticated food is showcased at this long-running local favourite. Asian-influenced standouts include roasted prawn and sesame toast, and tandoori-style marinated chicken with a laksa cream. The menu also includes dishes with a European and Middle Eastern influence. Try the garlic-cruste Canterbury lamb with a walnut and pumpkin salad. Desserts include a mighty mandarin-infused crème brûlée.

Petite Wine & Dine

BAR

(18 Royal Arcade; ☺4pm-late Tue-Sat) The coolest spot in town is concealed in an arcade showcasing Timaru's most funky and interesting shopping. Look forward to cannily mixed cocktails and a stellar array of local and international beers. Tuck into shared antipasto platters (\$29) and gourmet pizzas (\$12 to 25). A guaranteed bogan-free zone.

Speight's Ale House

PUB

(www.timarualehouse.co.nz; 2 George St) Hands down, the best of Timaru's pubs, and also worth a visit to see the 19th-century Landing Building. Hearty pub meals – burgers, steak and seafood – and the full range of Speight's beers on tap definitely make a trek downtown worthwhile.

Off the Rail Café

CAFE \$

(Station St; meals \$10-20; @☎) This funky licensed cafe is at the train station. Fire up the jukebox crammed with '70s tunes, and sample Kiwi baked goodies and more contemporary globally influenced dishes. It's open late for drinks and occasional live music on Saturday night.

Pak'n Save Supermarket

SUPERMARKET \$

(cnr Ranui & Evans Sts; ☺8am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun) On the main road north.

Information

Timaru i-SITE (☎03-687 9997; www.southisland.org.nz; 2 George St; ☺8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun; @) Activities, information, and transport and accommodation bookings. Inside is the Te Ana Maori Rock Art Centre.

Getting There & Away

InterCity (www.intercity.co.nz) stops outside the train station, with buses to Christchurch (2½

MT COOK SALMON FARM

Some 15km west of Lake Tekapo along SH8 is the signposted turn-off to the **Mt Cook Salmon Farm** (www.mtcookaplinalsalmon.com; Canal Rd; adult/child \$2/free), the highest salmon farm on the planet. The farm, 12km from the turn-off, operates in a hydroelectric canal system; a scenic drive along the canal has popular fishing spots and enjoys great views of Mt Cook. Stop at the farm to feed the fish, or pick up something smoked or fresh for dinner. The sashimi (\$15) is the freshest you'll ever have, guaranteed.

hours), Oamaru (one hour), and Dunedin (three hours).

Atomic Shuttles (www.atomictravel.co.nz) stop in Timaru en route to Christchurch and Dunedin. Departs Timaru from the i-SITE.

There are no direct buses from Timaru to Lake Tekapo and Mt Cook – you'll need to first get to Geraldine or Fairlie to catch buses to the Mackenzie Country. Ask at the i-SITE.

Inland & Mackenzie Country

Heading to Queenstown and the southern lakes from Christchurch means a turn off SH1 onto SH79, a scenic route towards the high country and the Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park's eastern foothills. The road passes through Geraldine and Fairlie before joining SH8, which heads over Burkes Pass to the blue intensity of Lake Tekapo.

The expansive high ground from which the scenic peaks of Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park escalate is known as Mackenzie Country, after the legendary James 'Jock' Mackenzie, who ran his stolen flocks in this then-uninhabited region in the 1840s. When he was finally caught, other settlers realised the potential of the land and followed in his footsteps. The first people to traverse the Mackenzie were the Maori, trekking from Banks Peninsula to Otago hundreds of years ago.

See www.mtcooknz.com and www.mackenziewinter.co.nz for more information.

GERALDINE

POP 2210

Geraldine has a country-village atmosphere with pretty private gardens and an active arts scene.

The **Vintage Car & Machinery Museum** (178 Talbot St; adult/child \$8/free; ☉10am-4pm mid-Sep–early Jun) has more than 30 vintage and veteran cars from as far back as 1907. There's also a rare 1929 Spartan biplane.

The mind-bending **Medieval Mosaic** (www.1066.co.nz; 10 Wilson St; admission free; ☉9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat-Sun, closed Aug) is ideal for fans of medieval history and word games and clever-clogs mathematics types. The world's biggest woollen jersey is also on display.

The **Geraldine i-SITE** (☎03-693 1006; www.gogeraldine.co.nz; cnr Talbot & Cox Sts; ☉8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) has brochures detailing the gardens and galleries in town, and can book rural B&Bs and farmstays.

Sleeping

Scenic Route Motor Lodge

MOTEL \$\$

(☎0800 723 643; www.motelscenicroute.co.nz; 28 Waihi Terrace; d \$125-160; @☉) This spacious motel is built in early-settler style, but the modern studios include double-glazing, flat-screen TVs and broadband internet. Larger studios have spa baths. You'll find Scenic Route at the northern end of town.

Rawhiti House

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-693 8252; www.rawhitihouse.co.nz; 27 Hewlings St; dm/s/d/tr \$32/48/72; @☉) This former maternity hospital is now a sunny and spacious budget accommodation with solar electricity and colourfully furnished rooms. Mountain bikes are available, and guests rave about the comfy beds. It's above town off Peel St. If you ask them when you book, they'll usually pick you up from the bus stop.

Geraldine Holiday Park

HOLIDAY PARK \$

(☎03-693 8147; www.geraldineholidaypark.co.nz; 39 Hislop St; unpowered/powered sites \$24/26, cabins & units \$45-105; @) This holiday park is set amid well-established trees across the road from a grassy oval. Besides budget cabins and self-contained units, there's a TV room and playground.

Eating

Four Peaks Plaza (cnr Talbot & Cox Sts; ☉9am-5pm) has a bakery, cafes and the Talbot Forest cheese shop. Also here is **Barker's**

(www.barkers.co.nz), a fruit-products emporium selling (and sampling) kiwifruit wines, juices, sauces, smoothies and jams. Look out also for **Prenzel** (www.prenzelofgeraldine.co.nz), offering regular tastings of luscious fruit schnapps. Every Saturday during summer the town kicks into organic action with a **farmers market** (☺9.30am-12.30pm).

Cafe Verde CAFÉ \$
(45 Talbot St; mains \$10-18; ☺9am-4pm) Down the lane beside the old post office is this delightful garden cafe. Grown-ups will appreciate the tasty lunch options such as salmon in filo pastry, while the kids can go crazy – with a small, well-behaved ‘c’, please – in the sweet, postage-stamp-sized playground.

Taste RESTAURANT \$\$
(www.tasterestaurant.co.nz; 7 Talbot St; mains \$28-34; ☺5pm-9pm Tue-Sat) The ritziest place in town features robust meals with a cosmopolitan spin. Try the Canterbury lamb rump dusted with *horopito* (a native NZ pepper). Gourmet pizzas or shared platters and a few local beers are more informal alternatives.

Village Inn PUB \$\$
(41 Talbot St; mains \$15-24) Geraldine's best pub meals are available for alfresco dining in the garden bar at the Village Inn. Indecisive travellers may struggle with the 13 different beers on tap.

Coco SWEETS \$
(10 Talbot St) For a quality sugar rush, visit Coco for handmade choccies, plus designer teas, coffee, hot chocolate and cake.

★ Entertainment

Geraldine Cinema CINEMA
(Talbot St; adult/child \$12/8) This quirky local cinema has old sofas and features a mix of Hollywood favourites and arthouse surprises. There's also occasional live music, usually with a folk, blues or country spin.

PEEL FOREST

Peel Forest, 22km north of Geraldine (signed off SH72), is among NZ's most important indigenous podocarp (conifer) forests. A road from nearby Mt Peel station leads to **Mesopotamia**, the run of English writer Samuel Butler (author of the satire *Erewhon*) in the 1860s.

Get the *Peel Forest Park: Track Information* brochure (\$1) from **Peel Forest Store** (☺03-696 3567; www.peelforest.co.nz; ☺9am-6pm Mon-Thu, to 7pm Fri & Sat, 10am-5.30pm Sun), which also stocks petrol, groceries and

takeaway food, and has internet access. The attached Little Mt Peel Cafe & Bar is a cosy spot for steaks, burgers and beers. The store also manages the pleasant **DOC camping ground** (☺03-696 3567; www.peelforest.co.nz; sites from \$12 per person, cabins per person \$22) beside the Rangitata River, about 3km beyond the store and equipped with basic two- to four-berth cabins, showers, a kitchen, laundry and card phone. Check in at the store and ask about renting a mountain bike (\$15/35 per hour/day). Tandem bikes are also available.

More upmarket is **Peel Forest Lodge** (☺03-696 3703; www.peelforestlodge.co.nz; d \$350), a self-contained log-cabin-style lodge deep in the forest. Bring your own food along for leisurely barbecues; meals are also available (breakfast/dinner per person \$25/50) if you don't want to cook. The owners don't live on site, so you'll need to book ahead.

Horse trekking (☺027 246 4423, 03-696 3703; www.peelforesthorsetrekking.co.nz; 1hr/2hr/half-day/full day \$55/110/220/380) in the lush forest is also on offer even if you're not staying at the lodge. Longer multiday treks (\$982 to \$1623) and accommodation and horse-trekking packages (\$550) are available in conjunction with Peel Forest Lodge.

The magnificent podocarp forest consists of totara, kahikatea and matai. One fine example of totara on the **Big Tree Walk** (30 minutes return) has a circumference of 9m and is over 1000 years old. Local bird life includes the rifleman, kereru (NZ pigeon), bellbird, fantail and grey warbler. There are also trails to waterfalls: **Emily Falls** (1½ hours return), **Rata Falls** (two hours return) and **Acland Falls** (one hour return).

Rangitata Rafts (☺0800 251 251, 03-696 3534; www.rafts.co.nz; ☺Oct-Apr) goes white-water rafting on the Rangitata River, which contains exhilarating Grade V rapids. The company's base is at Mt Peel, 13km past the camping ground, and includes budget **lodge accommodation** (unpowered sites/dm/d \$20/25/60). Rafting trips can be joined from either the Rangitata lodge (\$198) or from Christchurch (\$218 including return transport), and include hot showers and a barbecue. Count on three hours on the river. A less frantic option for families is a Family Fun trip (adult/child \$165/120) on the Grade II Lower Rangitata River. Inflatable kayaks are used, and you'll have around two hours on the river followed by a meal at the lodge.

If you can't get enough of NZ's rivers, consider a longer three-day rafting expedition with **Hidden Valleys** (☎03-696 3560; www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz; from \$200; ☺Sep-May). See their website for other rafting journeys exploring the most exciting and remote of the South Island's rivers. One-day rafting trips on the Rangitata River are also available.

FAIRLIE

POP 725

Fairlie is often described as 'the gateway to the Mackenzie'. To the west the landscape changes as the road ascends Burkes Pass to the open spaces of Mackenzie Country. It's a great place to stop for lunch. Make time to also stroll around the **Fairlie Heritage Museum** (www.fairlieheritagemuseum.co.nz; Mt Cook Rd; ☺9am-5pm), packed full of fascinating mementos of NZ rural life.

The **Fairlie visitor information centre** (☎03-685 8496; www.fairlie.co.nz; Allandale St; ☺10am-4pm) can provide information on nearby **mountain biking** tracks. There's **skiing** 29km northwest at Fox Peak in the Two Thumb Range. Mt Dobson, 26km northwest of Fairlie, is in a 3km-wide basin.

Sleeping & Eating

Fairlie Gateway Top 10

Holiday Park

HOLIDAY PARK \$

(☎03-685 8375, 0800 324 754; www.fairlietop10.co.nz; 10 Allandale Rd; sites from \$40, units \$60-129; ☺☺) Tranquil, creek-side park that's perfect for families, with mini-golf and a large playground for the kids. Fishing gear is for hire. Options range from campsites to motel units.

Pinewood Motels

MOTEL \$\$

(☎0800 858 599, 03-685 8599; www.pinewoodmotels.co.nz; 25-27 Mt Cook Rd; d \$99-115; ☺) Comfortable, good-value and self-contained units, recently redecorated, and with Sky TV and new flat-screen TVs.

Eat Deli & Bar

CAFE \$\$

(www.eatdeliandbar.co.nz; 76 Main St; mains \$10-20; ☺8am-5pm Tue-Sun; ☺) Family-friendly, with a kids' play area, Eat also drags in grown-ups with its excellent coffee and counter food, often with a subtle Asian spin. More robust appetites should go for a steak sandwich (\$19). There's also beer, wine, and complimentary internet access.

Old Library Café

CAFE \$\$

(6 Allandale Rd; dinner mains \$18-35; ☺) Damaged in a fire in 2011, this cafe/restaurant in

a former Andrew Carnegie library opened better than ever in 2012. Look forward to fresh, award-winning local food such as roasted Mackenzie rack of lamb or blue cod with a citrus butter. There's also a more casual all-day menu featuring pasta, salads and soups.

Whisk & Page

CAFE \$

(49 Mt Cook Rd; coffee & cake \$5-7; ☺closed Sat) Scones, chocolate brownies and damn fine coffee partner with a retro bookshop. You'll probably recognise a few of the iconic tomes from your childhood, and there's also a good selection of NZ-themed books.

LAKE TEKAPO

POP 315

At the southern end of its namesake lake, this town has unobstructed views across turquoise water and a backdrop of rolling hills and mountains.

Lake Tekapo is a popular stop on tours of the Southern Alps, with buses bound for Mt Cook and Queenstown allowing passengers pop in for a quick ice cream or coffee. Rather than rushing on, it's actually worth staying to experience the region's glorious night sky from atop nearby Mt John.

Sights & Activities

Popular walks include the track to the summit of **Mt John** (three hours return), accessible from just beyond the camping ground. From there, continue on to Alexandrina and McGregor Lakes, making it an all-day walk. Other walks are detailed in the brochure *Lake Tekapo Walkway* (\$1). Mountain bikes can be hired (per hour/half-day \$10/25) from Lakefront Backpackers Lodge and the Lake Tekapo YHA.

In winter, Lake Tekapo is a base for **downhill skiing** at Mt Dobson or Round Hill and **cross-country skiing** on the Two Thumb Range.

Church of the Good Shepherd

CHURCH

(☺9am-5pm) The lakeside Church of the Good Shepherd was built of stone and oak in 1935, and is a firm favourite for weddings. Nearby is a statue of a collie dog, a tribute to the sheepdogs that helped develop the Mackenzie Country. It's at its scenic best before and after the tour buses, so come early morning or late afternoon.

Earth & Sky

ASTRONOMY TOURS

(☎03-680 6960; www.earthandskynz.com; stargazing adult/child \$105/60) Thanks to clear

skies and its distance from any main towns, Lake Tekapo has top-notch stargazing, and the area is known as one of the finest spots on the planet to explore the heavens. Departure times vary, so check when you book. On some night tours visitors can use their own cameras to delve into astrophotography with local photographer Fraser Gunn (www.laketekapo.cc). Forty-minute daytime tours (adult/child \$50/25) of the University of Canterbury observatory also operate on demand from 10am to 4pm.

Alpine Springs & Spa

DAY SPA

(☎0800 353 8283; www.alpinesprings.co.nz; hot pools adult/child \$18/10, cafe snacks \$5-10; ☀10am-9pm, cafe 10am-7pm) Open all year round, with hot pools scattered amid quickly growing native trees. Private pools and saunas (\$26 per hour) are also available, and spa packages start at \$120. 'Skate and Soak' combo deals are available at the adjacent Winter Park. There's a good cafe for coffee and cake, or a snack and something stronger.

Lake Tekapo Winter Park

SNOW SPORTS

(☎0800 353 8283; www.alpinesprings.co.nz; Lakeside Dr; skating adult/child \$16/12, snow-tubing adult/child \$19/15; ☀10am-9pm) At the western edge of the lake, the Lake Tekapo Winter Park at the Alpine Springs complex features a year-round skating rink and a winter mini-snow slope for gentle snow-tubing action. Loads-of-fun tubing is even available in summer on a specially-constructed artificial slope.

Cruise Tekapo

BOAT TOUR

(☎027 479 7675; www.cruisetekapo.co.nz; cruises per person \$40-125, fishing \$60-80 per hour) Fishing and lake cruises from 25 minutes to two hours

Mackenzie Alpine Horse Trekking

HORSE RIDING

(☎0800 628 269; www.maht.co.nz; 1/2hr ride \$50/90, half-/full day \$140/260) Organises high-country equine explorations. Overnight camping trips (\$350) are also available.

Tours

Air Safaris

SCENIC FLIGHTS

(☎03-680 6880; www.airsafaris.co.nz; SH8) Does 50-minute 'Grand Traverse' flights over Mt Cook and its glaciers (adult/child \$325/215), taking you up the Tasman Glacier, over the upper part of the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers, and by Mts Cook, Tasman and Elie de

Beaumont. A similar flight goes from Glen-tanner Park, but with higher prices (adult/child \$375/265).

Tekapo Helicopters

SCENIC FLIGHTS

(☎0800 359 835, 03-680 6229; www.tekapohelicopters.co.nz; SH8) Has five options, from a 25-minute flight (\$195) to a 70-minute trip taking in Mt Cook and Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers (\$500). All flights include icefield landings and views of Mt Cook.

Sleeping

Hamilton Drive and the surrounding streets in the eastern part of town have other good B&Bs.

Glacier Rock Bed and Breakfast

B&B \$\$

(☎03-680 6669; www.glacierrock.co.nz; 35 Lochinver Ave; d incl breakfast \$195-250; @☎) This architecturally designed home doubles as an art gallery. An artist's – or maybe an architect's – eye is evident in the spacious and airy rooms. Breakfast is served in sunny rooms with huge picture windows.

Tailor-Made-Tekapo Backpackers

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-680 6700; www.tailor-made-backpackers.co.nz; 9-11 Aorangi Cres; dm \$29-33, s \$60, d with/without bathroom \$80/70; @) This hostel favours beds rather than bunks and is spread over a pair of well-tended houses on a peaceful street away from the main road. The interior is spick and span and there's a barbecue-equipped garden complete with well-established trees, lovely birdsong and a children's playground.

Lakefront Backpackers Lodge

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-680 6227; www.laketekapo-accommodation.co.nz; Lakeside Dr; dm/d \$28/80; @☎) An impressive lakeside place owned by the nearby holiday park (about 1km from the township). Relax by the open fire in the comfy lounge area or take in the sensational views from the front deck. Rooms are modern and bathrooms are top-notch. Backpacker buses stop by so it can get a tad social.

Lake Tekapo Motels & Holiday Park

HOLIDAY PARK \$\$

(☎03-680 6825, 0800 853 853; www.laketekapo-accommodation.co.nz; Lakeside Dr; sites from \$30, units \$60-150; @☎) Has a pretty and peaceful lakeside locale, plus everything from basic cabins to motel units with full kitchens and Sky TV. Newer chalets come with shared picnic tables, barbecues and spectacular lake vistas.

Peppers Bluewater Resort

(0800 275 373; www.peppers.co.nz; SH8; from \$140; 🍷) A sprawling resort arrayed around rocky pools and tussocky gardens. Rooms are chic and modern – if sometimes on the small side – but last-minute online discounts make this a place worth considering.

MOTEL \$\$

Lake Tekapo YHA

(03-680 6857; www.yha.co.nz; 3 Simpson Lane; dm \$37-78, d/tw \$96; 🍷) Friendly, well-equipped little place with a living room adorned with open fireplaces, a piano and outstanding views across the lake to the mountains beyond.

HOSTEL \$

Eating

The dining scene at Lake Tekapo has traditionally been lacklustre, but a few recent openings have improved culinary choices.

TOP CHOICE Astro Café

(Mt John Observatory; coffee & cake \$4-8, snacks \$7-12) This glass-walled pavilion atop Mt John has spectacular 360-degree views across the entire Mackenzie Basin – quite possibly one of the planet's best locations for a café. Tuck into bagels with local Aoraki salmon, or fresh ham-off-the-bone sandwiches; the coffee and cake is pretty good, too. After dark, Astro becomes the location for astrophotography with local photographer Fraser Gunn.

CAFÉ \$

Kohan

(SH8; lunch \$10-16, dinner \$22-35) The Japanese food at Kohan is among the South Island's best, and with a salmon farm just up the road, you know the sashimi is ultrafresh. Lunch specials are good value, and you should definitely leave room for their hand-made green-tea ice-cream.

JAPANESE \$\$

Pepe's

(SH8; meals \$15-30; 🍷6pm-late) With large booths and walls decorated with skiing paraphernalia, the rustic Pepe's is a cosy little place, with good pizza and pasta. Some of the names are a bit naff (Vinnie's Venison or Spag Bol Bada Bing, anyone?), but the dishes are tasty, and later at night it becomes a good spot for a few quiet drinks.

ITALIAN \$\$

Mackenzie's Bar & Grill

(SH8; mains \$22-34) Serving up interesting spins on steak, chicken and seafood, everything at Mackenzie's comes with a side order of stellar lake and mountain views. Robust dishes like lamb shanks and beef Wellington are the perfect response to an active day's

PUB \$\$

adventuring. Even if you're dining somewhere else, pop in for a Monteiths Summer Ale or glass of sauvignon blanc.

Run 77

(SH8; mains \$10-24) Relax on chunky wooden furniture and enjoy Tekapo's good coffee, or sandwiches, burgers and pies made from local salmon and organic, free-range beef and venison from the owner's high country spread (the *real* Run 77). Soups, salads and antipasto platters tick both the healthy and tasty boxes.

CAFÉ \$

Four Square Supermarket

(SH8) Located beside a handy bakery.

SUPERMARKET

Information

Lake Tekapo i-SITE (03-680 6579; www.laketekapountouched.co.nz; Godley Hotel, SH8; 🍷9am-6pm) Accommodation, activities and transport information

Getting There & Away

Southbound services to Queenstown (four hours) and Wanaka (three hours via Tarras), and northbound services to Christchurch (four hours), are offered by **Atomic Shuttles** (www.atomictravel.co.nz), **InterCity** (www.intercity.co.nz) and **Southern Link Coaches** (0508 458 835; www.southernlinkcoaches.co.nz).

Cook Connection (0800 266 526; www.cookconnect.co.nz) operates to Mt Cook (two hours) and Twizel (one hour). Travel can be over more than one day.

LAKE PUKAKI

On the southern shore of Lake Pukaki, 45km southwest of Lake Tekapo and 2km north-east of the turn-off to Mt Cook, is the **Lake Pukaki visitor information centre** (03-435 3280; www.mtcooknz.com; SH8; 🍷9am-6pm Oct-Apr, 10am-4pm May-Sep). The real highlight here is the sterling **lookout**, which on a clear day gives a picture-perfect view of Mt Cook and its surrounding peaks, with the ultrablue lake in the foreground.

TWIZEL

POP 1015

It wasn't long ago that New Zealanders maligned the town of Twizel, just south of Lake Pukaki. The town was built in 1968 to service construction of the nearby hydroelectric power station, and was due to be abandoned in 1984 when the construction project was completed. Now the town's residents are having the last laugh as new lakeside subdivisions are built to take advantage of the area's relaxed lakes-and-mountains lifestyle. Accommodation and eating options are bet-

BLUE CRUSH

The blazing turquoise colour of Lake Pukaki, a characteristic it shares with other regional bodies of water such as Lake Tekapo, is due to 'rock flour' (sediment) in the water. This so-called flour was created when the lake's basin was gouged out by a stony-bottomed glacier moving across the land's surface, with the rock-on-rock action grinding out fine particles that ended up being suspended in the glacial melt water. This sediment gives the water a milky quality and refracts the sunlight beaming down, hence the brilliant colour.

ter value in Twizel compared to Mt Cook, but you will be forgoing waking up right in the mountains.

The **Twizel i-SITE** (☎03-435 0066; www.twizel.info; Twizel Events Centre; ☀9am-6pm Mon-Fri & noon-3pm Sat-Sun; @) is right in town, and there's an ATM in the main shopping area. Note there's no ATM at Mt Cook or Lake Tekapo. Self-drive travellers should also fill up with petrol in Twizel before heading to Mt Cook.

Activities

Nearby Lake Ruataniwha is popular for rowing, boating and windsurfing. Fishing in local rivers, canals and lakes is also big business and there are a number of guides in the region. Ask at the i-SITE.

Discovery Tours

GUIDED TOUR

(☎0800 213 868, 03-435 0114; www.discoverytours.co.nz) Guided, small-group tours around the Mackenzie Country, including hiking and helibiking, plus a popular two-hour tour (adult/child \$75/40) to the site of the Pelennor battlefield in the *Lord of the Rings* movies – you can even get to charge around like a mad thing wearing *LOTR* replica gear. A shorter one-hour *LOTR* tour (adult/child \$55/30) is also available.

Kaki Visitor Hide

WILDLIFE RESERVE

(☎03-435 3124; adult/child \$15/7; ☀9.30am & 4.30pm late Oct-Apr) The rare *kaki* (black stilt bird) is found only in NZ, and a breeding program is aiming to increase the population at the Ahuriri Conservation Park. Just south of Twizel, the Kaki Visitor Hide gives you a close-up look at these elusive birds. Bookings are essential for the one-hour tour. Book at the Twizel i-SITE (you'll need your own transport).

Helicopter Line

SCENIC FLIGHTS

(☎0800 650 652, 03-435 0370; www.helicopter.co.nz; SH8) Helicopter Line fly over the Mt Cook region, departing from the Lake Pu-

kaki airport. Sightseeing flights last from 25 minutes (\$230) to 60 minutes (\$535) and include a snow landing.

Sleeping

Matuka Lodge

B&B \$\$\$

(☎03-435 0144; www.matukalodge.co.nz; Old Station Rd; d \$465-535; @☎) Surrounded by farmland and mountain scenery, this luxury B&B blends modern design with antiques and Oriental rugs sourced on the owners' travels. A library of well-thumbed Lonely Planet guides is testament to their wanderlust, so look forward to interesting chats over pre-dinner drinks. Breakfast often includes salmon smoked just up the road at the Twizel Aoraki Smokehouse.

Omahau Downs

B&B \$\$

(☎03-435 0199; www.omahau.co.nz; SH8; cottages d \$135, B&B d \$165; ☀closed Jun-Aug) This rural homestead 2km north of Twizel has two cosy, self-contained cottages sleeping up to four, and a B&B lodge with sparkling, modern rooms and a view-enhanced deck looking out on the Ben Ohau Range. An essential experience is a moonlit, wood-fired outdoor bath (\$20). Don't make the mistake of booking for only one night.

Mountain Chalet Motels

MOTEL \$\$

(☎0800 629 999, 03-435 0785; www.mountainchalets.co.nz; Wairepo Rd; dm \$25, d \$95-135; ☎) Reader-recommended place with friendly owners and cosy, well-equipped and self-contained A-frame chalets. The cheapest units are studios, but there are a number of two-bedroom set-ups for larger groups or families. There's also a small, laid-back lodge that's perfect for backpackers.

Parklands Alpine

Tourist Park

HOLIDAY PARK \$

(☎03-435 0507; www.parklandstwizel.co.nz; 122 Mackenzie Dr; sites from \$36, dm \$30, units \$90-150; @☎) Offers green, flower-filled grounds and accommodation in a colourfully refurbished

maternity hospital. There are a few basic cabins and room for tents and campervans; the modern, self-contained cottages are particularly good value.

High Country Lodge & Backpackers

HOSTEL \$

(☎03-435 0671; www.highcountrylodge.co.nz; Mackenzie Dr; dm \$29-35, d \$50-90, units \$125-155; 📶) This sprawling place used to be a basic hostel for construction workers, and is now trimmed with colourful curtains and bright bed linen. Beyond the dorms and the double rooms, a few standalone motel units also see your Kiwi pesos going a long way.

✂ Eating & Drinking

Poppies Café

CAFÉ \$\$

(www.poppiescafe.com; 1 Benmore Pl; breakfast/lunch mains \$9-18, dinner mains \$24-32) Lunch showcases lighter meals like salmon filo parcels, while dinner is a more formal experience with lamb rump or an Asian-style trio of duck; excellent pizzas (\$18 to 26) occupy a tasty middle ground. Where possible, organic and locally sourced produce is used. Poppies is on the outskirts of town near the Mackenzie Country Inn.

Shawty's Café

CAFÉ \$\$

(4 Market Pl; breakfast & lunch \$9-19, dinner mains \$21-31; 📶) Cool beats and craft beers create a mood that's surprisingly sophisticated for Twizel. Big breakfasts and gourmet pizzas (\$12 to \$25) are a good way to start and end an active day amid the surrounding alpine vistas. The adjacent Grappa Lounge has occasional DJs and live music from Wednesday to Saturday across summer.

Jasmine Thai Café

THAI \$\$

(1 Market Pl; lunch \$12, dinner mains \$17-22; ☺noon-2pm Tue-Sun & 5-9pm daily) Thailand comes to Twizel, and the zesty and zingy flavours of your favourite Southeast Asian beach holiday have travelled well to get this far inland. Alcohol is BYO, so grab a few cold beers from the Four Square supermarket to ease Jasmine's authentic Thai heat.

📍 Getting There & Away

Onward services to Mt Cook (one hour) and Queenstown (three hours), and northbound services to Christchurch (five hours), are offered by **Atomic Shuttles** (www.atomictravel.co.nz) and **InterCity** (☎03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz).

Cook Connection (☎0800 266 526; www.cookconnect.co.nz) operates to Mt Cook (one

hour) and Lake Tekapo (one hour). Travel can be over more than one day.

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) travel to Christchurch and Queenstown/Wanaka.

LAKE OHAU & OHAU FORESTS

Lake Ohau Lodge

LODGE \$\$

(☎03-438 9885; www.ohau.co.nz; Lake Ohau Rd; s \$99-175, d \$105-200) Lake Ohau Lodge is idyllically sited on the western shore of the rower-friendly Lake Ohau, 42km west of Twizel. Prices listed are for accommodation only (everything from backpacker-style to upmarket rooms with deck and mountain views). DB&B packages are good value.

Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park

The spectacular 700-sq-km **Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park** (www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/national-parks/aoraki-mount-cook), along with Fiordland, Aspiring and Westland National Parks, incorporates the Southwest New Zealand (Te Wahipounamu) World Heritage Area, which extends from Westland's Cook River down to Fiordland. Fenced in by the Southern Alps and the Two Thumb, Liebig and Ben Ohau Ranges, more than one-third of the park has a blanket of permanent snow and glacial ice.

Of the 27 NZ mountains over 3050m, 22 are in this park. The highest is the mighty Mt Cook – at 3755m it's the tallest peak in Australasia. Known to Maori as Aoraki (Cloud Piercer), after an ancestral deity in Maori mythology, the mountain was named after James Cook by Captain Stokes of the survey ship HMS *Acheron*.

The Mt Cook region has always been the focus of climbing in NZ. On 2 March 1882, William Spotswood Green and two Swiss alpinists failed to reach the summit of Cook after an epic 62-hour ascent. But two years later a trio of local climbers – Tom Fyfe, George Graham and Jack Clarke – were spurred into action by the news that two well-known European alpinists were coming to attempt Cook, and set off to climb it before the visitors. On Christmas Day 1884 they ascended the Hooker Glacier and north ridge, a brilliant climb in those days, and stood on the summit.

In 1913, Australian climber Freda du Faur became the first woman to reach the summit. In 1948, Edmund Hillary's party, along with Tenzing Norgay, climbed the south

ridge; Hillary went on to become the first to reach the summit of Mt Everest. Since then, most of the daunting face routes have been climbed. Among the region's many great peaks are Sefton, Tasman, Silberhorn, Malte Brun, La Perouse, Hicks, De la Beche, Douglas and the Minarets. Many can be ascended from Westland National Park, and there are climbers' huts on both sides of the divide.

Mt Cook is a wonderful sight, assuming there's no cloud in the way. Most visitors arrive on tour buses, stop at the Hermitage hotel for photos, and then zoom off back down SH80. Hang around to soak up this awesome peak and the surrounding landscape and to try the excellent short walks. On the trails, look for the thar, a goatlike creature and excellent climber; the chamois, smaller and of lighter build than the thar; and red deer. Summertime brings the large mountain buttercup (the Mt Cook lily), and mountain daisies, gentians and edelweiss.

Sights

Tasman Glacier

GLACIER

Like the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers on the other side of the divide, the Mt Cook glaciers move fast. The **Alpine Memorial**, near the old Hermitage site on the Hooker Valley Track, commemorating one of the mountain's first climbing disasters. Three climbers were killed by an avalanche in 1914; only one of the bodies was recovered at the time, but 12 years later a second one melted out of the bottom of the Hochstetter Icefall, 2000m below where the party was buried, illustrating the glaciers' speed.

Hermitage

HISTORIC BUILDING

(www.hermitage.co.nz) With fantastic views of Mt Cook, this is arguably the most famous hotel in NZ. Originally constructed in 1884, when the trip from Christchurch took several days, the first hotel was destroyed in a flash flood in 1913. You can still see the foundations in Hooker Valley, 2km from the current Hermitage. Rebuilt, it survived until 1957, when it burnt down. The present Hermitage was built on the same site and a new wing was added for the new millennium.

Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre

MUSEUM, PLANETARIUM

(www.hermitage.co.nz; The Hermitage; one movie adult/child \$18/8, all six movies adult/child/family \$27/13.50/54; ☀7.30am-8.30pm) The new Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre opened in late 2007 – just three weeks before the Janu-

ary 2008 death of the man often regarded as the greatest New Zealander of all time. His commentary tracks were recorded only a few months before he died. The centre includes a full-dome digital planetarium showing four different digital presentations, and a cinema screen showing the Mt Cook Magic 3D movie and a fascinating 75-minute documentary about Sir Ed's conquest of Mt Everest. Another documentary, screened in the museum on a continual basis, reflects the charity and development work that Sir Edmund Hillary achieved in the decades after his conquest of Mt Everest in 1953. Admission to the museum by itself is free.

Big Sky

ASTRONOMY

(www.hermitage.co.nz; adult/child \$50/25; ☀nightly weather permitting) NZ's southern sky is introduced by a 30-minute presentation in the Alpine Centre's digital planetarium, before participants venture outside to study the celestial real deal with telescopes, binoculars, and an astronomy guide.



Activities

Tramping

Various easy walks from the Hermitage area are outlined in the brochures available from DOC. Always be prepared for sudden weather changes. Longer walks are only recommended for those with mountaineering experience, as conditions at higher altitudes are severe and the tracks dangerous. Many people have died here, and most walkers shouldn't consider tackling these trails. If you intend on staying at any of the park's huts, it's essential to register your intentions at the DOC visitor centre and pay the hut fee.

Mountaineering

For the experienced, there's unlimited scope for climbing, but regardless of your skills, take every precaution – more than 200 people have died in climbing accidents in the park. The *Bleak In Memoriam* book in the visitor information centre begins with the first death on Mt Cook in 1907, and since then more than 70 climbers have died on the peak.

Highly changeable weather is typical around here; Mt Cook is only 44km from the coast and weather conditions rolling in from the Tasman Sea can mean sudden storms. Unless you're experienced in such conditions, don't climb anywhere without a guide.

Check with the park rangers before attempting any climb and always heed their

advice. Fill out a climbers-intentions card before starting out – so rangers can check on you if you're overdue coming out – and sign out again when you return.

Kea Point

TRAMPING

The trail to Kea Point (two hours return from the village) is lined with native plant life and ends at a platform with excellent views of Mt Cook, the Hooker Valley and the ice faces of Mt Sefton and the Footstool. If you're lucky, you might share your walk with a few inquisitive kea.

Sealy Tarns

TRAMPING

The walk to Sealy Tarns (three to four hours return) branches off the Kea Point Track and continues up the ridge to **Mueller Hut** (dm \$36), a comfortable 30-bunk hut with gas and cooking facilities.

Hooker Valley

TRAMPING

The walk up the Hooker Valley (three hours return) crosses a couple of swing bridges to Stocking Stream and the terminus of the Hooker Glacier. After the second swing bridge, Mt Cook totally dominates the valley.

Tasman Glacier View Track

TRAMPING

The Tasman Valley walks are popular for their views of the Tasman Glacier. Walks start at the end of the unsealed Tasman Valley Rd, 8km from the village. The Tasman Glacier View Track (50 minutes return) leads to a viewpoint on the moraine wall, passing the Blue Lakes (more green than blue these days) on the way.

Ultimate Hikes

TRAMPING

(☎0800 686 800, 03-435 1899; www.ultimatehikes.co.nz; full-day walk adult/child \$108/67; ☺Nov-Apr) Offers a day-long 8km walk from the Hermitage through the Hooker Valley to the terminal lake of the Hooker Glacier.

Glacier Explorers

BOAT TOUR

(☎03-435 1809, 0800 686 800; www.glacierexplorers.com; per person \$145) Heads out on the terminal lake of the Tasman Glacier. It starts with a 20-minute walk to the shore of Lake Tasman, where you board a custom-built MAC boat and get up close and personal with 300-year-old icebergs. Book at the activities desk at the Hermitage.

Glacier Sea-Kayaking

KAYAKING

(☎03-435 1890; www.mtcook.com; per person \$130-145; ☺early Oct-mid Apr) Has half-day and three-hour kayaking trips negotiating icebergs across glacial bays in the Hooker Val-

ley. Choose from the Tasman Glacier Lake or the pristine Mueller Glacier Lake (recommended for beginner kayakers). Book at the Old Mountaineers Cafe. (p48)

Alpine Recreation

TRAMPING

(☎03-680 6736, 0800 006 096; www.alpinerecreation.com) Based in Lake Tekapo, Alpine Recreation organises high-altitude guided treks, as well as mountaineering courses and ski touring. Also on offer are summertime climbing courses, and guided ascents of Mt Cook or Mt Tasman.

Alpine Guides

SNOW SPORTS

(☎03-435 1834; www.alpineguides.co.nz; Retail Centre, The Hermitage) Ski-touring, heliskiing, and guided climbs and mountaineering courses.

Southern Alps Guiding

SNOW SPORTS

(☎027 342 277, 03-435 1890; www.mtcook.com) Heliskiing and boarding options including the Tasman Glacier. Ask at the Old Mountaineers Cafe

Mount Cook Ski Planes

SCENIC FLIGHTS

(☎03-430 8034, 0800 800 702; www.mtcookskiplanes.com) Based at Mt Cook Airport, offering 40-minute (adult/child \$405/295) and 55-minute (adult/child \$530/405) flights, both with snow landings. Flightseeing without a landing is a cheaper option; try the 25-minute Mini Tasman trip (adult/child \$275/255).

Helicopter Line

SCENIC FLIGHTS

(☎0800 650 651, 03-435 1801; www.helicopter.co.nz) From Glentanner Park, the Helicopter Line does 20-minute Alpine Vista flights (\$215), an exhilarating 30-minute flight over the Ben Ohau Range (\$295) and a 45-minute Mountains High flight over the Tasman Glacier and by Mt Cook (\$399). All feature snow landings.

Glentanner Horse Trekking

HORSE RIDING

(☎03-435 1855; www.glentanner.co.nz; 1/2/3hr ride \$60/80/150; ☺Nov-Apr) Leads guided treks on a high-country sheep station. All levels of experience are welcome.

Tasman Valley 4WD Argo Tours

4WD TOUR

(☎03-435 1601, 0800 686 800; www.mountcooktours.co.nz; adult/child \$75/37.50; ☺year round) Offers a 90-minute Argo (actually an 8WD all-terrain vehicle) tour checking out the Tasman Glacier and its terminal lake. Expect plenty of alpine flora and an interesting commentary along the way. Pre-book online

TITANIC SCENE ON LAKE TASMAN

When you're only a few kilometres from NZ's highest mountain, the last thing you expect to see is a maze of huge icebergs straight from the planet's polar regions. It's a surreal feeling cruising in an inflatable boat amid 500-year-old islands of ice on Lake Tasman in the Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park. An icing-sugar-like dusting of snow may have fallen overnight, and even that could be enough to rebalance an iceberg and send it spinning and rotating in the frigid water. With a decent wind the location of the floating islands can change by the hour.

The ice may be centuries old, but the lake's only been around a few decades. Lake Tasman was first formed around 30 years ago, when huge swathes of ice sheared off the Tasman Glacier's terminal face. The ice-strewn lake continues to be a dynamic environment and there's always the danger of one of the icebergs breaking up. On 22 February 2011, the Christchurch earthquake caused a 30-million-tonne chunk of ice to shear away from the Tasman Glacier. The huge piece of ice was 1.3km long and 300m high, causing substantial waves to roll into tourist boats on the lake at the time. (Fortunately, no one was injured by the waves.)

The ongoing impact of climate change continues to increase the size of one of NZ's newest and coldest lakes, and it's estimated it will eventually grow to a maximum length of 16km.

(recommended) or book at the Hermitage hotel activities desk.

Sleeping

Accommodation is more expensive in Mt Cook Village than in Twizel, but the thrill of waking up so close to the mountains is definitely worth the additional expense.

Campers and walkers can use the **public shelter** (☀8am-7pm Oct-Apr, to 5pm May-Sep) in the village, which has running water, toilets and coin-operated showers. Note that this shelter cannot be used for overnight stays.

Aoraki/Mt Cook Alpine Lodge LODGE \$\$

(☎03-435 1860; www.aorakialpinelodge.co.nz; Bowen Dr; d \$159-189, tr/q \$164/164, f \$220-240; @☎) This modern lodge with twin, double and family rooms is the best place to stay in the village. With Turkish rugs and underfloor heating, the place ensures a warm welcome. Shared facilities include a huge lounge and kitchen area, and the alfresco barbecue with superb mountain views will have you arguing over who's going to grill the steak for dinner.

Mt Cook Backpackers HOSTEL \$

(☎0800 100 512, 03-436 1653; www.mountcookbackpackers.co.nz; dm \$35, d/tw \$120, unit \$170; @☎) Recently redecorated and refurbished, Mt Cook Backpackers is a sprawling, double-storey spot with four-bed dorms, twins and doubles, and self-contained flats with kitchens. All rooms have en suite facilities and

feature private balconies, perfect for taking in the superb alpine views. Attached is the Chamois Bar & Grill.

Hermitage HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎03-435 1809, 0800 686 800; www.hermitage.co.co.nz; Terrace Rd; r \$209-575; @☎) This sprawling complex has long monopolised Mt Cook accommodation in the village. Rooms in well-equipped A-frame chalets (double \$269) sleep up to four and include a kitchen. Also available are motel units (\$239) and refurbished rooms in various wings of the hotel proper. The higher-end hotel rooms are very smart indeed, and include cinematic views of Mt Cook through huge picture windows.

Mt Cook YHA HOSTEL \$

(☎03-435 1820; www.yha.co.nz; cnr Bowen & Kitchener Dr; dm \$37, d/tw \$118; @☎) This excellent hostel has a free sauna, drying room, warming log fires and DVDs. Rooms are clean and spacious, and family rooms and facilities for travellers with disabilities are also available. Try and book a few days in advance. If you're mountain-bound you can store luggage here.

Glentanner Park Centre HOLIDAY PARK \$

(☎03-435 1855, 0800 453 682; www.glentanner.co.nz; SH80; sites from \$34, dm \$27.50, units \$80-155) On the northern shore of Lake Pukaki, this is the nearest facility-laden camping ground to the national park and has great views of Mt Cook, 25km to the north. It's well set up with various cabins and motel

units, a dormitory (open October to April) and a restaurant. Tours and activities can also be booked.

Unwin Lodge

HOSTEL \$

(☎027 817 6860, 03-435 1100; www.alpineclub.org.nz; SH80; dm \$30) About 3.5km before the village, this lodge belongs to the New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC). Members get preference, but beds are usually available for climbing groupies. There are basic bunks in a recently redeveloped bunkroom, and a big common room with a fireplace and kitchen.

White Horse Hill Camping Area

CAMPSITE \$

(☎03-435 1186; Hooker Valley; adult/child \$6/3) A basic DOC-run, self-registration camping ground at the starting point for the Hooker Valley Track, 2km from Aoraki/Mt Cook village. There's running water (boil before drinking) and toilets, but no electricity or cooking facilities.



Eating & Drinking

Old Mountaineers Café, Bar & Restaurant

CAFE \$\$

(www.mtcook.com; Bowen Dr; lunch mains \$17-24 & dinner mains \$22-35; @☎) Cosy in winter, with mountain views from outside tables in summer, this place delivers top-notch burgers, pizza, pasta and salad, and is a good-value alternative to the eateries at the Hermitage. Linger to study the old black-and-white pics and mountaineering memorabilia. The menu features lots of organic, free-range and GM-free options as well.

Glentanner Restaurant

CAFE \$

(SH80, Glentanner; meals \$10-20) The decor might resemble a school cafeteria, but there's plenty of robust Kiwi tucker on offer. Steak sandwiches and fish and chips will get you through the longest of exploring days.

Hermitage

RESTAURANT \$\$

Dining options at the Hermitage include a cafe with light meals and pizzas, fine dining in the Panorama Room (mains \$35-42), and breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets in the Alpine Room.

Chamois Bar & Grill

PUB

Chamois Bar & Grill is upstairs in Mt Cook Backpackers, 500m from the YHA, where it entertains with a pool table, big-screen TV, and the occasional live gig.



Shopping

Alpine Guides

OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

(www.alpineguides.co.nz; Retail Centre, The Hermitage; ☎8am-5pm) Sells travel clothing, outdoor and mountaineering gear, and rents ice axes, crampons, daypacks and sleeping bags.

Information

Stock up on groceries and petrol at Twizel or Lake Tekapo. The nearest ATM is in Twizel.

DOC Aoraki/Mt Cook Visitor Centre

(☎03-435 1186; www.doc.govt.nz; 1 Larch Grove; ☎8.30am-5pm Oct-Apr, to 4.30pm May-Sep) Advises on weather conditions, guided tours and tramping routes, and hires out beacons for trampers (\$35). The centre includes excellent displays on the flora, fauna and history of the Mt Cook region. Most activities can be booked here. Trampers must complete intentions cards when leaving for walks.

Getting There & Away

The village's small airport only serves aerial sightseeing companies. Some of these may be willing to combine transport to the West Coast (ie Franz Josef) with a scenic flight, but flights are heavily dependent on weather.

InterCity (www.intercity.co.nz) links Mt Cook to Christchurch (five hours), Queenstown (four hours) and Wanaka (with a change in Tarras; 4½ hours). Buses stop at the YHA and the Hermitage, both of which handle bookings.

The **Cook Connection** (☎0800 266 526; www.cookconnect.co.nz) has services to Twizel (one hour) and Lake Tekapo (two hours). Bus services in these towns link to Christchurch, Queenstown, Wanaka and Dunedin.

If you're driving, fill up at Lake Tekapo or Twizel. There is petrol at Mt Cook, but it's expensive and involves summoning an attendant from the Hermitage (for a fee).

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