



Christchurch & Canterbury

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Best Places to Eat

- Pegasus Bay (p489)
- Cornershop Bistro (p473)
- C1 Espresso (p471)
- Saggio di Vino (p472)
- Addington Coffee Co-op (p472)

Best Places to Stay

- Double Dutch (p483)
- Maison de la Mer (p483)
- Chalet Boutique Motel (p501)
- Halfmoon Cottage (p483)

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 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 dramatic wilderness of the Southern Alps.

Canterbury's 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 skifields. Throughout the seasons, Aoraki/Mt Cook, the country's tallest peak, stands sentinel over this diverse region.

When to Go

➤ Canterbury is one of NZ's driest regions, as moisture-laden westerlies from the Tasman Sea dump their rainfall on the West Coast before hitting the eastern South Island. Visit from January to March for hot and settled summer weather and plenty of opportunities to get active amid the region's spectacular landscapes.

➤ It's also festival time in Christchurch with January's World Buskers Festival and the Ellerslie International Flower Show in March.

➤ Hit the winter slopes from July to October at Mt Hutt or on Canterbury's smaller club ski fields.

i Getting There & Around

AIR

Christchurch's international airport is the South Island's main hub. Air New Zealand flies here from 15 domestic destinations, while Jetstar has flights from Auckland, Wellington and Queens-town. Air New Zealand also flies between Timaru and Wellington.

BUS

Christchurch is the hub for coaches and shuttles heading up the coast as far as Picton, down the coast to Dunedin (and on to Te Anau), through the Alps to Greymouth and across country to Queenstown.

TRAIN

The *TranzAlpine* service connects Christchurch and Greymouth, and the *Coastal Pacific* chugs north to Picton, with ferry connections across Cook Strait to the North Island.

CHRISTCHURCH

POP 342,000

Welcome to a vibrant city in transition, coping creatively with the aftermath of NZ's second-worst natural disaster. Traditionally the most English of NZ cities, Christchurch's heritage heart was all but hollowed out following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes that left 186 people dead.

Punts still glide gently down the Avon River, and the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park remain some of NZ's finest public spaces. But in the empty lots and abandoned buildings left in the wake of the earthquakes, interesting art projects have sprung up, and clever, creative people are slowly starting to make things happen. Each new opening and restoration is greeted with enthusiasm by a grateful public, frustrated by the pace of the rebuild and eager to see what shape their future city will take.

If you're worried that your interest in post-earthquake Christchurch may seem in poor taste, don't be. Locals are genuinely keen to welcome sensitive visitors back to their city – and despite the heartache, they're the first to acknowledge how fascinating it all is.

History

The first people to live in what is now Christchurch were moa hunters, who arrived around 1250. Immediately prior to colonisation, the Ngai Tahu tribe had a small

seasonal village on the banks of the Avon called Otautahi.

When British settlers arrived in 1880 it was an ordered Church of England project; the passengers on the 'First Four Ships' were dubbed by the British press 'the Canterbury Pilgrims'. 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, the fertile farming land was deliberately placed in the hands of the gentry, and wool made the elite of Christchurch wealthy.

In 1856 Christchurch officially became NZ's first city, and a very English one at that. Town planning and architecture assumed a close affinity with the 'Mother Country' and English-style gardens were planted, earning it the nickname, the 'Garden City'. To this day, Christchurch in spring is a glorious place to be.

Sights

City Centre

★ Botanic Gardens

GARDENS

(Map p464; www.ccc.govt.nz; Rolleston Ave; ☀ 7am–8.30pm Oct–Mar, to 6.30pm Apr–Sep) **FREE**
Strolling through these blissful 30 riverside hectares of arboreal and floral splendour is a

ESSENTIAL CANTERBURY

Eat Salmon spawned in the shadow of NZ's tallest mountains

Drink NZ's best craft beer at Pomeroy's Old Brewery Inn (p473)

Read *Old Bucky & Me*, a poignant account of the 2011 earthquake by Christchurch journalist Jane Bowron

Listen to Scribe's *The Crusader* (2003), still the best shout-out to the region, with a name that references Canterbury's Super Rugby team

Watch *Heavenly Creatures*, Sir Peter Jackson's best film not involving hobbits, set in Christchurch

Go green At the ecofriendly Okuti Garden (p483) on Banks Peninsula

Online www.christchurchnz.com, www.mtcooknz.com

Area code 03