

South Island: Lord of the Rings Scenic Trail – 7 Days

Wander through the real-life backdrops of Edoras, Isengard, Lothlórien, and more on this unforgettable journey.

Best For: Film fans, nature lovers, self-drive explorers

Duration: 7 Days

Start: Ōtautahi – Christchurch

End: Tāhuna – Queenstown

Recommended Vehicle: Car or Campervan

Day 1: Christchurch → Mount Sunday (Edoras)

What to Do:

- Drive through the Ashburton Lakes region
- Hike to the summit of Mount Sunday — the filming site for Edoras
- Take in sweeping views of the Rangitata River valley

Where to Stay:

- 🚐 *Freedom camping:* Lake Clearwater (self-contained only)
- 🏕️ *Campground:* Rakaia Gorge Camping Ground

Local Travel Tip:

- Access is via a gravel road — allow extra time and check weather conditions.
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Day 2: Mount Sunday → Twizel (Pelennor Fields)

What to Do:

- Visit the vast Mackenzie plains where the epic battle scenes were filmed
- Optional: Join a Lord of the Rings 4WD tour from Twizel
- Stargaze under the Dark Sky Reserve

Where to Stay:

- 🚐 *Freedom camping:* Lake Pukaki Reserve
- 🏕️ *Campground:* Twizel Holiday Park

What to Pack:

- Warm layers — alpine nights can be chilly even in summer.
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Day 3: Twizel → Queenstown via Lake Alta (Dimrill Dale)

What to Do:

- Detour to The Remarkables ski field
- Hike to Lake Alta — used as the exit from the Mines of Moria
- Arrive in Queenstown in the afternoon

Where to Stay:

- 🚐 *Freedom camping:* 12 Mile Delta DOC Campsite (also a filming location!)
- 🏕️ *Campground:* Queenstown Lakeview Holiday Park

Must-Try Local Flavours:

- Fergburger or Patagonia Chocolates — your call 🍔🍫
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Day 4: Glenorchy & Paradise (Isengard & Lothlórien)

What to Do:

- Scenic drive to Paradise near Glenorchy
- Visit filming sites for Isengard, Lothlórien, and Fangorn Forest
- Walk through native beech forests and reflective river flats

Where to Stay:

- 🚐 *Freedom camping:* Diamond Lake
- 🏕️ *Campground:* Glenorchy Holiday Park

Need to Know:

- Roads beyond Glenorchy can be rough — drive with care.
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Day 5: Jet Boating & River Anduin (Kawarau River)

What to Do:

- Take a jet boat or rafting tour through the Kawarau River (Anduin scenes)
- Visit Arrowtown's historic village — also the site of the Ford of Bruinen
- Relax by Lake Wakatipu in the afternoon

Where to Stay:

- 🚐 *Freedom camping:* Arrowtown River Reserve

- 🏕️ *Campground:* Arrowtown Holiday Park

Local Tip:

- Autumn colours in Arrowtown are absolutely stunning 🍁
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Day 6: Adventure Day or Film Tour in Queenstown

What to Do:

- Optional: Full-day LOTR guided location tour
- Or: Bungy, ziplining, lake cruises, or wine tasting
- Enjoy Queenstown's bustling vibe

Rest Day Option:

- Soak in the views from the Skyline Gondola or chill lakeside.
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Day 7: Return Loop or Extend to Fiordland (Optional)

What to Do:

- Return to Christchurch via Lake Tekapo, or
- Extend your journey to Fiordland National Park
 - While not a LOTR filming location, it's a place Tolkien would've dreamed up
 - Cruise Piopiotahi – Milford Sound, one of the world's natural wonders

Where to Stay in Fiordland:

- 🚐 *Freedom camping:* Cascade Creek (DOC, on Milford Road)
- 🏕️ *Campground:* Te Anau Kiwi Holiday Park

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