

5-Day Southern Alps Crossing: From Christchurch to Greymouth via Arthur's Pass

Cross the spine of Te Waipounamu – the South Island – on this short but unforgettable journey from Ōtautahi – Christchurch to Māwhera – Greymouth.

This 5-day campervan route takes you through epic alpine landscapes, glacial rivers, and lush rainforest. You'll stay in charming mountain villages, explore dramatic natural wonders, and end with ocean sunsets on the rugged West Coast. It's the perfect loop for travellers short on time but big on adventure.



Quick Overview

- **Duration:** 5 days
- **Start Point:** Ōtautahi – Christchurch
- **End Point:** Māwhera – Greymouth
- **Best Time:** October to April for settled weather
- **Total Drive Time:** Approx. 7 hours
- **Highlights:** Castle Hill boulders, Arthur's Pass National Park, Otira Gorge, Greymouth beaches

Day-by-Day Itinerary



Day 1: Christchurch Arrival

Welcome to the South Island! Today is all about getting settled. Pick up your campervan, grab supplies at Pak'nSave, and take a stroll through one of Christchurch's peaceful parks.

What to Do:

- Walk through the **Christchurch Botanic Gardens**

- Glide along the **Avon River**
- Dinner at **Little High Eatery** or **Riverside Market**

Where to Stay (Campervan Friendly):

- **North South Holiday Park** – close to airport
 - **Christchurch TOP 10 Holiday Park** – good facilities
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Day 2: Christchurch → Castle Hill → Arthur's Pass

Drive Time: 2.5 hours (with scenic stops)

Hit the road westward through the Waimakariri Gorge. Stop at the surreal limestone formations of **Kura Tāwhiti – Castle Hill**, then continue into the heart of the Southern Alps.

What to Do:

- Explore **Castle Hill Rocks** (easy 20-min walk)
- Arrive in **Arthur's Pass Village**
- Walk to **Devils Punchbowl Falls** (1 hr return)

Where to Stay:

- **Avalanche Creek Shelter Campsite (DOC)** – basic, walkable to village
 - **Jacksons Retreat Alpine Holiday Park** – powered sites and hot showers
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Day 3: Arthur's Pass National Park

Stay a second night in the mountains and discover alpine tracks and cheeky kea.

What to Do:

- Spot kea at **Otira Viaduct Lookout**
- Wander the **Dobson Nature Walk**
- Hike the **Bealey Spur Track** (3–4 hrs return)

- Optional detour to **Lake Pearson** for lunch

Where to Stay:

- Same as previous night
 - Or try **Greyneys Shelter (DOC)** for a quieter alternative
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Day 4: Arthur's Pass → Greymouth

Drive Time: 2 hours

Descend through the dramatic **Otira Gorge**, with options to detour to historic and scenic gems along the way. Arrive on the West Coast in time for a seaside stroll.

What to Do:

- Stop at **Lake Brunner** – forest walks and picnic spots
- Explore the **Brunner Mine Site** – easy walk through gold mining history
- Watch the sunset at **Greymouth breakwater**

Where to Stay:

- **Greymouth Seaside TOP 10 Holiday Park** – beachfront sites
 - **DOC Nelson Creek Campsite** – 30 mins inland, surrounded by native bush and goldfield relics
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Day 5: Explore Greymouth & Depart

Wrap up your alpine-to-coast journey with a relaxed morning, or keep the adventure going.

Optional Add-ons:

- Tour **Monteith's Brewery** – local West Coast flavours
- Drive to **Punakaiki Pancake Rocks** (45 mins north)
- Begin return leg via **Lewis Pass** to loop back to Christchurch



What to Pack

- Warm layers (even in summer – alpine weather changes fast!)
- Light waterproof jacket
- Sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots
- Reusable water bottle
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Beanie and gloves (for early mornings or higher altitudes)
- Camera or smartphone for those mountain views
- Power bank for devices



Local Travel Tips

- Fill up with fuel before entering Arthur's Pass – stations are limited
- Castle Hill is best enjoyed early morning or late afternoon for softer light and fewer crowds
- Always check **MetService** before heading on longer hikes – weather can change quickly in alpine zones
- Watch for kea (alpine parrots) near car parks – they're curious and clever!
- Cell reception is patchy in Arthur's Pass – download maps in advance



Must-Try Local Flavours

- **Christchurch:** Sample fresh eats at Riverside Market
- **Arthur's Pass Village:** Try the famous pies and espresso from the **Wobbly Kea Café**
- **Greymouth:** Fish and chips on the beach or a tasting tray at **Monteith's Brewery**

- **Roadside stops:** Look out for wild blackberry bushes in summer – perfect for a campervan dessert!
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Need to Know

- Always carry layers and rain gear – alpine areas can be sunny one moment and cold the next
- DOC campsites are first-come, first-served – arrive early during peak season
- Keep an eye out for one-lane bridges and give way signs on the West Coast roads
- Respect **tapu (sacred)** sites like Kura Tāwhiti – Castle Hill: stay on paths and do not climb or carve on rocks
- Rubbish bins are limited in rural areas – pack it in, pack it out

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