

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



/ Aotearoa – New Zealand / By Tohu Travellers

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

Quick Overview

- **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 scenic **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.



Day 2: Mount Sunday → Twizel (Pelennor Fields)

What to Do

- Visit the **Mackenzie plains** where the Pelennor Fields battle was 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.

Day 3: Twizel → Jet Boating & River Anduin (Kawarau River)

What to Do

- Take a **Jet Boat or Rafting Tour** through the Kawarau River — aka the **Anduin**
- Visit **Arrowtown** — 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 

Day 4: 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 or DOC 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  

Day 5: Adventure Day or Film Tour in Queenstown

What to Do

- Optional: Full-day **LOTR Guided Location Tour**
- Or: Bungy jumping, 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.

Day 6: 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.

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