

West Coast

The West Coast road, State Highway 6 (Coast Road and Glacier Highway), is one of New Zealand's iconic routes; wild, unpopulated, forested, mountainous, coastal and breathtakingly beautiful. It has glaciers, world heritage rain-forests and vast national parks, stunning coastlines, caves, wild mountain rivers, tumbling waterfalls, secluded lakes teeming with wildlife, and a sense of being far removed from a busy world. The Coast Road between Westport and Greymouth has been named one of the top ten coastal drives in the world. Allow time to explore enroute as there are well-marked viewpoints, walks or beach access tracks along the way. The road "starts" at Karamea and "ends" at Jacksons Bay in the deep south. You can join it at either Westport (coming from Nelson) just south of Greymouth (coming from Arthurs Pass) or Haast (coming from Queenstown/Wanaka). You can also catch the Tranz Alpine Train from Christchurch to Greymouth and pick up your rental car there to start your journey of exploration. There are lots of small boutique lodges along the way including some located in spectacular wilderness or beachfront settings.

Westport and Greymouth

Westport is the gateway to the Buller region including Karamea and the Oparara Arches, Reefton and the Reefton Distillery and Punakaiki with its famous limestone rockstacks. Greymouth is known as the heart of the West Coast as the central hub for the whole coast with great surfing and fishing together with Lake Brunner for fishing and boating activities. Both Westport and Greymouth have fabulous gold and coal mining history and thus some great historic trails to explore including Denniston Plateau north of Westport and Brunner Mine Site and Woods creek in Greymouth. Westport and Greymouth are home to part of the NZ cycleway network of trails with Kawatiri Coastal and River Trails starting in Westport and West Coast Wilderness Trail starting in Greymouth. These two trails are grade 2 (user friendly to most) and cover some of the West Coast's most diverse scenery. The Paparoa Track - NZ's latest Great Walk and first dual purpose biking and hiking trail starts in Blackball and finishes in Punakaiki.

Punakaiki and the Paparoa National Park

Most famous for its coastline and pancake rocks and blowholes at Dolomite Point. Also great inland river valleys such as Pororari, Punakaiki and Fox River offering good day hiking. The area is known for dramatic limestone cave systems - such as that in the Paparoa National Park where Underworld Adventures operates near Charleston.

Stop at one of the numerous laybys along the Coast Road to explore the beaches with their rock-stacks out at sea and tidal pools with starfish and seals lazing in the sunshine. Looking south you are often treated to great views of the Southern Alps including Mt Cook and Mt Tasman off in the distance.

Hokitika

A small arts and crafts township with a beautiful beach and close to Lake Kaniere and Lake Mahinapua. Embark on an evening boat cruise through the Mahinapua waterways lined with ancient Rimu and Kamahi trees. Take the drive through pristine dairy farm country out to Hokitika Gorge with its beautiful blue waters. Indulge in some of the freshest fish and chips from the takeaway store on the river esplanade and park up at Sunset Point to enjoy the sunset.

Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers

New Zealand's two most accessible glaciers coming down through the rain forest to sea level. From the coastal drive north of Greymouth, down through Hokitika and to Ross you get magnificent views of Mt Cook. Enjoy a wide choice of walks and guided hikes, glacier tours and flights onto either Franz Josef or Fox Glacier and around Mt Cook. Visit the Wildlife Centre in Franz Josef to learn about NZ's smallest and rarest Kiwi the Rowi. Take a boat tour or kayak beautiful Lake Mapourika or head out to Okarito - NZ's largest natural lagoon opening out to the sea and home to NZ's only breeding colony of Kotuku (White Heron). Great place for kayaking, boating and guided tours. Half an hour south of Franz Josef is Fox Glacier, a slightly smaller township with an equally amazing glacier with options for heli-hiking and scenic flights as well as the famous Lake Matheson for mirror like views of the mountains and fabulous cafe affording great farmland and mountain views with their wrap-around picture postcard windows or deck.

Haast

On route to Haast you'll pass Lake Moeraki, home of The Wilderness Lodge. Fabulous walk to Munro beach through stunning native forest with towering Rimu and Kahikatea trees. This coastline is home to the world's rarest penguins, Tawaki. Also known as the Fiordland crested penguin, there are only about 7000 left in the wild. September through November is the best time for viewing.



Highlights

Glacier Tours

Punakaiki Rocks

Coal mining history

Cycle & Hiking Trails

Eco Tours

