

The West Coast



What a difference a mountain range makes. Hemmed in by the wild Tasman Sea and the peaks of the Southern Alps, the West Coast (aka Westland), is like nowhere else in New Zealand.

Opposite ends of the coast have a remote end-of-the-road feel. In the north the surf-battered coast highway leads to sleepy Karamea, the preferred getaway for alternative lifestylers drawn by its isolation and surprisingly mild climate. The southern end of spectacular State Hwy 6 continues to Haast, an entrée to the excitement and awe of the surrounding wilderness.

With less than 1% of NZ's population scattered amid almost 9% of the country's area, West Coast locals have adapted to become a rugged and individual breed. They may not be too concerned with what's happening in the country's cities, but in the West Coast's heritage pubs you'll be guaranteed a warm welcome that's tinged with a laconic sense of humour. Just don't be too surprised if 'closing time' is viewed as a recommendation, not a directive.

The coast's sublime scenery can be almost *too* popular, and during summer a phalanx of campervans and tourist buses tick off the 'Must See' Punakaiki Rocks and Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers. The thing is, they are truly 'Must See', and even if you're sharing your glacial gaze with other Franz and Fox aficionados, it's not too hard to return to the heartland of the West Coast in laid-back coastal hamlets such as Okarito, Granity and Jackson Bay.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Crafting your own unique keepsake at Hokitika's **Bonz 'N' Stonz** (p506) or **Barrytown Knifemaking** (p497)
- Kayaking through the bird-adorned channels of the **Okarito Lagoon** (p510)
- Getting wet'n'wild on the rivers around **Murchison** (opposite)
- Marvelling at nature's beautiful fury at the Pancake Rocks at **Punakaiki** (p496)
- Going underground in the limestone caverns of the **Oparara Basin** (p493)
- Hunting out authentic local greenstone in the craft shops of **Hokitika** (p507)
- Exploring the West Coast's true wilderness on a back-of-beyond river trip around **Haast** (p519)
- Feeling just a tad insignificant compared to the imposing ice flows of the **Franz Josef** (p512) and **Fox Glaciers** (p516)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.west-coast.co.nz

■ www.westcoast.org.nz

Climate

During summer the coast roads flood with campervans, but May to September can be warm and clear with fewer crowds and cheaper accommodation. At around 5m annually, the West Coast has serious rainfall (Westland = Wetland), but Westland sees as much sunshine as Christchurch. When it's pouring in the east it's just as likely to be fine here.

Getting There & Around

Air New Zealand flies between Westport and Wellington, and Hokitika and Christchurch. Air West Coast shuttles between Greymouth, Westport and Wellington.

Coaches and shuttles connect to centres like Christchurch, Dunedin, Queenstown and Nelson; major players are Atomic Shuttles, InterCity and Naked Bus.

The *TranzAlpine*, one of the world's great train rides, links Greymouth and Christchurch; see p504.

MURCHISON

pop 850

Up-and-coming Murchison, 125km southwest of Nelson on the Buller Gorge Heritage Hwy/State Hwy 6 (SH6), is the northern gateway to the West Coast. It's an Upper Buller Gorge service town offering lots of summertime ways to get active on the water.

Information

The **Murchison i-SITE** (☎ 03-523 9350; www.murchisonnz.com; 47 Waller St; ☎ 10am-6pm, reduced winter hours) has info on local activities and transport. There are no banks in town; the postal agency is on Fairfax St. The **Commercial Hotel** (cnr Waller & Fairfax Sts) has internet access.

Sights & Activities

Fishing, mountain biking, rafting and kayaking all feature in the area surrounding Murchison.

Ultimate Descents (☎ 0800 748 377, 03-523 9899; www.rivers.co.nz; 51 Fairfax St; half-/full-day rafting \$105/195, half-day kayaking \$115) offers white-water rafting and kayaking trips on the Buller, including half-day, gentler family excursions (adult/child \$95/75). Helirafting trips cost from \$350 and you can combine rafting with fishing (two days, \$395).

The **New Zealand Kayak School** (☎ 03-523 9611; www.nzkayakschool.com; 22 Grey St; kayaks per day \$50, 4-day intro course \$795; ☎ Sep-Apr) hires out and sells kayaks and runs professional courses

THE WEST COAST FACTS

Eat A whitebait pizza at Hokitika's Fat Pipi Pizza (p507)

Drink An organic Green Fern lager at Westport's West Coast Brewing Co (p490)

Read Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, set around peaceful Okarito (p510)

Listen to Karamea's laid-back community radio station on 107.5FM (p495); they'll even let you choose your own tracks

Watch *Bad Blood* (1982), an engrossing portrayal of the Kowhitirangi incident (p508)

Swim at You're joking, right?

Festival Go bush-food crazy at Hokitika's Wild-foods Festival (p506)

Tackiest tourist attraction Pukekura's Bushmans Museum (p509). Just don't tell them you've got friends in Auckland, OK?

Go green Volunteer in the organic veg garden at Rongo Backpackers in Karamea (p495)

for all levels; price includes transport and accommodation but BYO food.

White Water Action Rafting Tours (☎ 0800 100 582, 03-523 9581; www.whitewateraction.com; Waller St; half-day rafting \$110), behind the i-SITE, runs half-day trips with a riverside lunch. Family fun rafting (four hours \$85) is a gentle Grade-2 outing.

The area is threaded with **mountain-bike trails** like the west bank of the Matakita River (16km return) or the Maruia Saddle Trip (83km return). Hire bikes from **Riverview Holiday Park** (☎ 03-523 9591; riverview.hp@xtra.co.nz; Riverside Tce) or **Murchison Motels** (☎ 0800 166 500, 03-523 9026; www.murchisonmotels.co.nz; 53 Fairfax St).

Murchison Museum (☎ 03-523 9335; 60 Fairfax St; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-4pm) showcases local memorabilia, with vintage farm equipment and photos of the 1929 earthquake aftermath.

Murchison **trout fishing** is superb. Full-day guided trips cost around \$680; the i-SITE has the lowdown.

Tiraumea Horse Treks (☎ 03-523 9341; per hr \$35) runs hour-long to full-day treks in the nearby Tutaki Valley.

Try **gold panning** (equipment hire \$5) in Lyell Creek, the Buller River or the Howard Valley; the i-SITE hires out pans and shovels.

Festivals & Events

The **Buller Festival** (www.rivers.co.nz/bullerfestival) kayaking and rafting extravaganza is held over the first weekend in March.



Sleeping BUDGET

Riverview Holiday Park (☎ 03-523 9591; riverview.hp@xtra.co.nz; Riverside Tce; unpowered/powerd sites \$22/24, d \$42-90) Near the river north of town, this park has motel rooms, recently refurbished cabins and the excellent Rock Snot Café (opposite).

Lazy Cow (☎ 03-523 9451; http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/lazycow/; 37 Waller St; dm/d \$26/66) Affordable accommodation with a sun deck to relax on and located close to restaurants and pubs.

Hu-Ha Bikepackers (☎ 03-548 2707; smidley@ihug.co.nz; SH6; unpowered sites \$28, dm/d without bathroom \$23/50, d with bathroom \$66) This laid-back, cyclist-friendly farm 45km north of Murchison has dorms and doubles (including some new en suite options), and plenty of farm animals, in-

cluding the biggest and most relaxed pig you'll ever meet. The house sits above the road, 10km north of Kawatiri Junction. Cash only.

MIDRANGE

Commercial Hotel (☎ 03-523 9848; thecommercialho@xtra.co.nz; cnr Waller & Fairfax Sts; s/d without bathroom \$38/70; (P) (Q)) Excellent value with comfortable rooms and Art Deco touches. All rooms have shared facilities.

River Song (☎ 03-523 9011; www.riversong.co.nz; 30 Fairfax St; d \$95) Two minutes' walk from town, these newish self-contained cottages have big decks and gardens. Postkayaking massages are available.

Murchison Motels (☎ 0800 166 500, 03-523 9026; www.murchisonmotels.co.nz; 53 Fairfax St; d \$110-160)

Tucked behind Rivers Cafe, with snazzy one- and two-bedroom units. There's also an eight-bed cottage, and mountain bikes for hire (half-/full day \$15/30).

TOP END

Murchison Lodge (☎ 03-523 9196; www.murchisonlodge.co.nz; 15 Grey St; s \$115-160, d \$140-180, all incl breakfast) Surrounded by native trees, this B&B overlooks the Buller River. Antipasto platters are available on request (\$20); maybe something to go with the zingy and zesty Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc you've just picked up?

our pick Triple Tui (☎ 03-548 4481; www.tripletui.co.nz; 3360 Dry Weather Rd; d \$160; (☞) Sep-May) What happens, when two busy Aucklanders decide to follow their dream and leave the big smoke? How about two luxury log cabins set in 50 beautiful acres in the Tadmore Valley, 35 minutes north of Murchison? Both private cabins include solar water heating and electricity from Triple Tui's own mini hydroelectricity plant. Once you've explored nearby walking trails, fire up the gas barbecue, and open a bottle of wine. Bookings essential.

Eating & Drinking

Commercial Hotel (☎ 03-523 9696; cnr Waller & Fairfax Sts; lunch \$10-17, dinner \$19-27; (☞) 8am-9pm; (Q)) Set yourself up for rafting with a good breakfast, and celebrate a big day on the river with a few beers and a robust pub meal.

Rock Snot Café (☎ 03-523 9591; Riverview Holiday Park; pizza \$12-20; (☞) 10am-8pm Oct-Apr; (Q)) Don't be put off by the name. Just enjoy the riverside location, and have a gourmet pizza and a bottle of Murchison Moonlight Ale as kayakers drift by.

Rivers Cafe (☎ 03-523 9009; 51 Fairfax St; mains \$18-30; (☞) 9am-9pm Oct-Mar, 10am-2pm Thu-Mon Apr-Sep) Has everything from chicken kebabs and falafel to rib-eye steaks and roast dinners. Make a hard decision between an organic coffee or a frothy pint of Monteith's beer.

Getting There & Away

Buses passing through Murchison from the West Coast to Picton include **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz), **InterCity** (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz), and **K-Bus** (☎ 0508 458 835; www.kbus.co.nz) on its Greymouth-Picton and Greymouth-Nelson routes. Atomic stops at the i-SITE, InterCity at Beechwoods Café on Waller St, and K-Bus at the Midwest Café on Fairfax St.

BULLER GORGE

The road from Murchison to the coast was shaken up by the 1929 and 1968 earthquakes but still snakes through Buller Gorge. The gorge is a base for white-water rafting and kayaking; see p487.

About 14km west of Murchison is the **Buller Gorge Swingbridge** (☎ 03-523 9809; www.bullergorge.co.nz; SH6; bridge crossing adult/child \$5/2; (☞) 8am-7pm Oct-Apr, 9am-5.30pm May-Sep), NZ's longest swing bridge (110m). Across the bridge are some excellent short walks, one to the White Creek Faultline, epicentre of the 1929 earthquake. Coming back, ride the 160m **Comet Line flying fox** (seated ride adult/child \$25/13, 'Supaman' style ride \$35/20). **Buller Experience Jet** (☎ 0800 802 023, 03-523 9595; www.murchison.co.nz; adult/child \$85/60) runs 40-minute jetboat trips, departing under the bridge.

Further west the road forks at Inangahua Junction. Continue to the coast through Lower Buller Gorge on SH6, or head south to Greymouth via Reefton on SH69. SH6 is longer but more interesting.

There's a **DOC camping ground** (adult/child \$6/1.50) on SH6 at Lyell, Upper Buller Gorge, 10km northeast of Inangahua Junction.

Buller Gorge is dark and foreboding; primeval ferns and cabbage trees cling to steep cliffs; toi toi (tall native grass) flanks the road between gorge and river. The road at **Hawks Crag** negotiates an overhang just high enough to fit a bus under, and was hacked out of the road by hand.

Buller Adventure Tours (☎ 0800 697 286, 03-789 7286; www.adventuretours.co.nz; SH6), located 4km from the coast, has white-water rafting on the

MAORI NZ: THE WEST COAST

For Maori, the river valleys and mountains of the West Coast were the traditional source of *pounamu* (greenstone), and the lustrous jade still dominates the craft shops and galleries of Greymouth and Hokitika. In Hokitika, visit the Mana Pounamu exhibit at the West Coast Historical Museum (p504) to polish your knowledge of the precious rock before admiring the classy carving done by Aden Hoglund at Jagosi Jade (p507). If you're lucky enough to be staying at Awatuna Homestead (p507) near Hokitika, owner Hemi recounts stories of the early migration of Pacific peoples to NZ.

Class III to IV 'Earthquake Slip' rapids (\$110); 1¼-hour jetboat rides (adult/child \$75/50); two-hour riverbank horse treks (\$75); and 1¼-hour quad-bike rides (\$130).

Berlins (☎ 0800 526 405, 03-789 0295; www.xtremeadventures.co.nz; SH6; dm \$25-30, d \$60) is a stylish café-meets-backpackers on the site of the old Berlins Hotel. Rent kayaks (\$15) and fishing rods (\$10), and there's a **restaurant** (mains \$14-17.50; ☎ 9.30am-late) that's also a damn fine pub. Berlins is a well-positioned stop for cyclists en route to the West Coast. Don't miss the pics on the wall of the Buller River flowing at dangerously high levels.

WESTPORT

pop 4850

The port of Westport made its fortune in coal mining, though the main mine is at Stockton, 38km north. The town itself is of little interest, but is a good base for active adventures in the Buller Gorge and Charleston ranges. Otherwise head north to relaxed Karamea (for the Heapy Track), or continue south to the Punakaiki Rocks. Fans of Animal Planet should check out the seal colony (see p492) west of town.

Orientation

The town sprawls where the east bank of the Buller River meets the Tasman Sea. Palmerston St is the main drag, while Brougham St goes northeast to Karamea. Free town and regional maps are available at the i-SITE.

Information

The major banks are along Palmerston St.

Buller Hospital (☎ 03-788 9030; Cobden St)

Department of Conservation office (DOC; ☎ 03-788 8008; 72 Russell St; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Tickets for the Wangapeka Track and general tramping info.

Police station (☎ 03-788 8310; 13 Wakefield St)

Post office (cnr Brougham & Palmerston Sts)

Take Note (☎ 03-789 8731; 106 Palmerston St) Bookshop.

Web Shed (☎ 03-788 8002; 204 Palmerston St) Internet access.

Westport i-SITE (☎ 03-789 6658; www.westport.org.nz; 1 Brougham St; ☎ 9am-6pm Nov-Mar, to 4pm Apr-Oct) Provides information on local tracks, walkways, tours, accommodation, transport, and DOC hut tickets for the Heapy Track.

Sights

The **Coaltown Museum** (☎ 03-789 8204; Queen St; www.geocities.com/coaltownnz/; adult/child \$8/4; ☎ 9am-4.30pm) includes an interactive walk-through of

a faux mine. Rusty mining artefacts sit beside a brewery, photographic displays and a huge operational steam dredge.

The **West Coast Brewing Co** (☎ 03-789 6201; www.westcoastbrewing.com; 10 Lyndhurst St; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5.30pm Sat) crafts seven different beers, including the organic Green Fern lager and the Good Bastards dark ale. Tastings are available, and at the time of writing this innovative local brewery was planning to open a West Coast Brewing Co theme bar across the Southern Alps in Christchurch. Ask them for an update if you're heading back that way.

Activities

From Charleston, south of Westport, **Norwest Adventures** (☎ 0800 116 686, 03-789 6686; www.caverafting.com) runs Underworld Rafting cave-rafting trips (\$135, four hours) into the glowworm-filled Nile River Caves. If you want the glow without the flow (no rafting), it's \$75 per person. Both options start with a rainforest railway ride, available separately (adult/child \$20/15, 1½ hours). The Adventure Caving trip (\$270, five hours) includes a 30m abseil into Te Tahi *tomo* (hole) with rock squeezes, waterfalls, prehistoric fossils and trippy cave formations.

Westport's heated **swimming pool** (☎ 03-789 7236; Brougham St; adult/child/family \$31/50/7; ☎ 2.30-5pm Mon-Thu, 3.30-5pm Fri, 12.30-4pm Sat & Sun) is a rainy-day diversion.

Festivals & Events

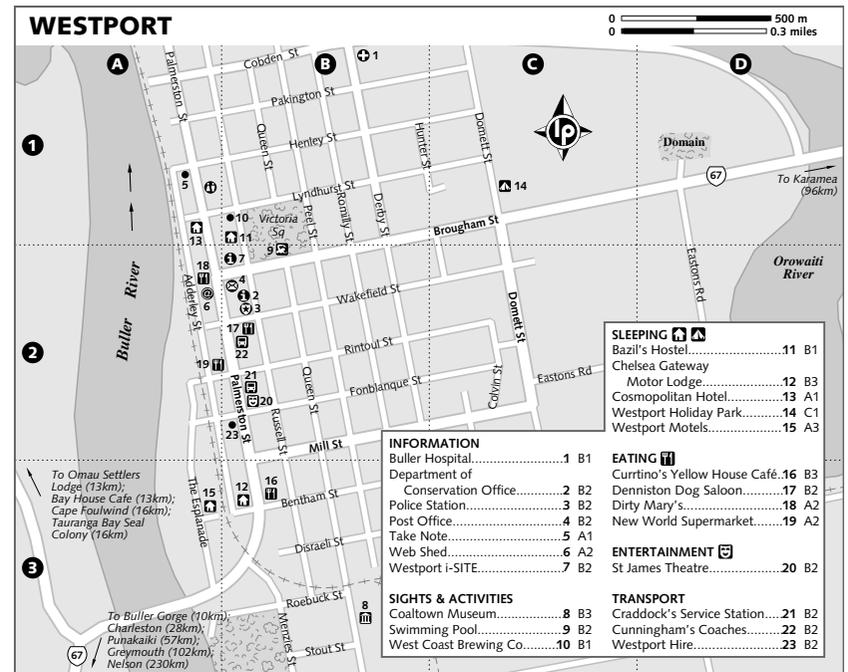
The **Buller Gorge Marathon** (www.bulleramarathon.org.nz) traverses a scenic riverside route on the second weekend in February. The **Cape Classic Surfing** gets radical at Tauranga Bay on late October's Labour Day weekend.

Tours

Westport Shuttles & Tours (☎ 03-789 8962; coast.trips@xttra.co.nz; adult/child \$8/4, per person \$30-120) run trips to Denniston, Karamea and the Tauranga Bay Seal Colony.

Sleeping BUDGET

Westport Holiday Park (☎ 03-789 7043; www.westportholidaypark.co.nz; 31-37 Domett St; dm \$24, unpowered/powered sites \$24/28, d \$55-140; ☎) A-frame 'chalets' stud this bushy glade, with bunk rooms, motel units and new self-contained studios interspersed with decent amenities. Half-day kayak hire is \$25, and there's a flash new



minigolf course for wannabe Tiger Woods and their kids.

Bazil's Hostel (☎ 0800 303 741, 03-789 6410; www.bazils.com; 54 Russell St; dm/tw/d/q \$25/58/58/80; ☎) Mr Fawltly is notably absent at the sprawling Bazil's. Facilities are uniformly good, including excellent kitchens to bring out your inner celebrity chef, and there are beds to suit every budget. If you're travelling in a group of four, ask about the excellent-value mini-apartments (\$80). Larger groups from backpacker buses sometimes swing by.

Cosmopolitan Hotel (☎ 03-789 6305; coshotel@ihug.co.nz; 136 Palmerston St; s \$35-42, d \$68) The rooms upstairs at this corner pub are good value. The \$35 singles are particularly compact, but all the rooms are spic and span. It's quiet and the carousing drinkers downstairs may as well be on the other side of the Southern Alps.

MIDRANGE

Westport Motels (☎ 03-789 7575; www.westportmotels.co.nz; 32 The Esplanade; d \$80-120; ☎) Surrounded by trees, this spot has comfortable beds, outdoor tables, a spa and a swimming pool. Several family units can accommodate

bigger broods. Up and down the Esplanade you'll find other midrange motels.

Chelsea Gateway Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 660 033, 03-789 6835; www.chelseagateway.co.nz; 330 Palmerston St; ste \$120-210; ☎) The exterior's never going to threaten the Architect of the Year Awards, but there's design salvation with the well-appointed interiors. There are standard suites, two- and three-bedroom family units, and flasher spa units.

Eating & Drinking

Dirty Mary's (☎ 03-789 7959; 198 Palmerston St; mains \$7-18; ☎ 8am-late; ☎) Start your day with fair-trade coffee and a breakfast burrito or bagel. If you sleep in, rest assured there are fine lunches on offer. Later at night things get raucous with good pizzas and wine and beer.

our pick Currino's Yellow House Café (☎ 03-789 8765; 243 Palmerston St; lunch \$14-17, dinner \$25-30; ☎ 8am-late, reduced winter hours; ☎) This relaxed and sunny spot has warm wooden floors, the best coffee in town, and a tasty organic tinge to the menu. Try the dips and homemade bread with a glass of wine from nearby Marlborough, or have a latte and hitch your laptop to the

wi-fi network. In the garden try your hand at Swingball, a quintessential Kiwi activity.

Denniston Dog Saloon (☎ 03-789 5030; 18 Wakefield St; mains \$15-30; ☎ 11am-late; 🍷) Lots of wild West Coast wood and Kiwiana antiques give the Denniston Dog a rustic air. Then again, a couple of beers, some tasty scallops and a good steak probably have the same effect. 'The Dog' is both bar and restaurant. After you're watered and fed, take the locals on at pool. Occasional touring bands raise the roof.

For self-catering, try **New World supermarket** (☎ 03-789 7669; 244 Palmerston St; ☎ 8am-8.30pm).

Entertainment

St James Theatre (☎ 03-789 8936; 195 Palmerston St; adult/child \$13/9) Mainstream movie-house with the occasional live show.

Getting There & Around

AIR

Air New Zealand (☎ 0800 737 000; www.airnz.co.nz) has two flights per day to/from Wellington (from \$89, 50 minutes).

Air West Coast (☎ 0800 247 937; www.airwestcoast.co.nz) has four flights per week to/from Wellington (\$130, one hour).

BUS

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz) buses depart from **Craddock's Service Station** (☎ 03-789 7819; 197 Palmerston St) to Nelson (\$42 to \$56, 3½ hours, 3.55pm daily), Greymouth (\$24 to \$32, two hours, 11am daily) and Franz Josef (\$53 to \$70, 6½ hours, 11am daily).

K-Bus (☎ 0800 881 188, 03-578 4075; www.kbus.co.nz) goes to Nelson (\$51, 3½ hours, 11.40am daily) and Greymouth (\$26, 1½ hours, 3.20pm daily), departing from the i-SITE.

East West Coach (☎ 0800 142 622, 03-789 6251) operates a Christchurch service (\$50, five hours, 8am daily) departing from Craddock's and returning from Christchurch at 2pm.

Karamea Express (☎ 03-782 6757; info@karamea-express.co.nz) links Westport and Karamea (\$27, 1½ hours, 11.30am Monday to Friday may to October, plus Saturday from November to April), departing the i-SITE. **Cunningham's Coaches** (☎ 03-789 7177; 179 Palmerston St) does this trip as a mail run (\$20, three hours, 3pm weekdays), returning from Karamea at 5.45pm.

CAR

Hire some wheels at **Wesport Hire** (☎ 03-789 5038; 294 Palmerston St)

TAXI

Buller Taxis (☎ 03-789 6900) can take you to/from the airport (around \$20).

AROUND WESTPORT

Depending on the season, anything from 20 to 200 NZ fur seals dot the rocks at the **Tauranga Bay Seal Colony**, 16km from Westport. Pups are born from late November to early December. For a month afterwards, land-bound mums tend their young before venturing out on feeding forays.

The **Cape Foulwind Walkway** (1½ hours return) extends from the seal colony near its southern end, 4km along the coast to Cape Foulwind, passing a replica of Abel Tasman's astrolabe (a navigational aid) and a lighthouse. The walk's northern end is car-accessible from Lighthouse Rd.

The Maori called the cape Tauranga, meaning 'Sheltered Anchorage'. The first European here was Abel Tasman in December 1642, naming it Clyppyng Hoek (Rocky Point). When James Cook moored the *Endeavour* here in March 1770, a furious storm made it anything but a 'sheltered anchorage'; hence the cape's modern name.

From the car park it's a five-minute walk to the seal colony lookout. The cliffs are unstable, so stick to the path.

Sleeping & Eating

Omau Settlers Lodge (☎ 03-789 5200; www.omau-settlerslodge.co.nz; 1054 Cape Rd, Cape Foulwind; s/d incl breakfast \$110/155) A short stroll from the Cape Foulwind tavern, these contemporary and stylish units offer rest, relaxation and huge buffets breakfasts. A hot tub surrounded by bush maximises the take-it-easy quotient.

Bay House Cafe (☎ 03-789 7133; Tauranga Bay, Cape Foulwind; lunch mains \$18-22, dinner mains \$22-33; ☎ 10.30am-late Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun) Bay House is one of NZ's best restaurants. It's sophisticated without being stuffy, and the chefs use local ingredients like piko piko (fern shoots) and horopito (NZ peppertree) in preparing seafood, West Coast venison and Canterbury lamb. The wine list is easily the best on the West Coast.

WESTPORT TO KARAMEA

North along SH67, the road is pressed against the rocky shoreline by verdant hills. The first town beyond Westport is Waimangaroa, where there's a turn-off to **Denniston**, 9km inland and

600m above sea level. Denniston was once NZ's largest coal producer, with 1500 residents in 1911. By 1981 this had shrunk to eight. The **Denniston Bridle Track** follows sections of the fantastically steep **Denniston Incline**. The Incline was an engineering spectacular – empty coal trucks were hauled back up the 45-degree slope by the weight of descending loaded trucks. An information kiosk and the **'Friends of the Hill' museum** (☎ summer weekends only) bring to life the harsh conditions experienced by the miners and their families. Four kilometres north of Waimangaroa is the **Britannia Track** (four hours return), winding towards the Britannia Battery's gold-mining detritus.

At Granity, 30km north of Westport, head 5km uphill to the semi-ghost town of **Millerton**, and a further 3km to **Stockton**, home of NZ's largest operational coal mine. The **Millerton Incline Walk** (20 minutes return) takes in parts of the old incline, a bridge and an old dam. Granity's now a sleepy haven for alternative lifestyles, and just north at Hector you can sometimes see Hector's dolphins, NZ's smallest dolphins. During summer the **Imagine Café** (☎ 03-782 8867; 37 Main Rd; sandwiches & wraps \$9) is a bohemian spot right on the beach with tasty home baking.

Further north at Ngakawau, just south of Hector, is the **Charming Creek Walk** (six hours return), an all-weather trail following an old coal line through the Ngakawau River Gorge. Alternatively, pursue the track 10km beyond the return point to **Seddonville**, a small bush town on the Mohikini River. The short **Chasm Creek Walkway** links Seddonville with SH67.

A good base is the **Charming Creek B&B** (☎ 03-782 8007; www.bullerbeachstay.co.nz; s \$110-135, d \$130-150; 🍷 🍷) in Ngakawau. Two immaculate rooms sit in a modern bungalow, and across the road there's a beachfront hot tub warmed by an open fire. Local food including seafood chowder and mussels is prepared in a retro caravan right by the crashing surf.

Further north, the Seddonville road leads to **Rough and Tumble Bush Lodge** (☎ 03-782 1337; www.roughandtumble.co.nz; s/d \$250/400; 🍷 🍷). In a gentle bend of the Mohikini River, this luxury ecolodge is surrounded by walking trails and pristine bush. The beautiful isolation is ambushed each night with gourmet food. Advance bookings are essential and rates include all meals. Worth a splurge.

At the Mohikini River mouth, 3km off the highway, is the not-so-gentle **Gentle Annie Beach**, and the **Gentle Annie Coastal Endave** (☎ 03-782 1826; www.gentleannie.co.nz; De Malmanche Rd, Mohikini; unpowered sites & dm \$20, d cabins \$120-140). The surf hammers the coast and the wind shakes the palms at this isolated place that's perfect for quiet contemplation. There's camping, a basic backpacker lodge, and rustic cabins sleeping up to eight. The Cabbage Tree Beach Cottage is a low-key masterpiece of rugged Kiwi architecture.

Between Mohikini and Little Wanganui the road meanders over **Karamea Bluff**, with rata and matai forests, and expansive views of the Tasman Sea below.

KARAMEA

pop 690

The relaxed town of Karamea is literally the end of the road – the end of SH67 and near the southern ends of the Heaphy and Wangapeka Tracks. Debate rages about continuing the road through to Nelson, but any highway would need to bisect the Kahurangi National Park. Don't hold your breath waiting for a resolution. With a subtropical maritime climate, Karamea is often warmer and drier than the rest of the coast, and is actually further north than Wellington. A take-it-easy mix of locals and chilled-out imports means it's ideal for jumping off the well-trod tourist trail for a few lazy days. When you feel like getting active again, there's good caving, mountain biking and tramping.

Information

The **Karamea visitor information centre** (☎ 03-782 6652; www.karameainfo.co.nz; Market Cross; ☎ 9am-5pm daily Jan-Apr, to 5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat May-Dec; 🍷) has the local lowdown, internet access, maps and DOC hut tickets. The **DOC office** (☎ 03-782 6852; 83 Waverley St; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) is irregularly staffed. For detailed information on negotiating the Heaphy Track, see www.heaphytrack.com.

Sights

North of Karamea in the **Oparara Basin** are spectacular limestone arches and the unique Honeycomb Hill Caves (ancient home of the moa), the surrounding karst landscape blanketed by primitive rainforest. Moss-laden trees droop over the Oparara River, illuminated by light filtering through a dense forest canopy.

Ten kilometres along the road to the start of the Heaphy Track, turn off at McCallum's Mill Rd and go 15km past the sawmill along a winding gravel (sometimes rough) road to the arches. It's an easy walk (45 minutes return) through old-growth forest to the 200m-long, 37m-high **Oparara Arch**, spanning its namesake river. Its arch-rival is the **Moria Gate Arch** (43m long, 19m high), accessed via a similar track (one hour return). At the time of writing the switched-on Oparara Valley Trust were planning a further series of walking trails. Ask at the visitor information centre about joining a customised tour, including a guided bush walk.

Other quirky calcified features are **Mirror Tarn** (an easy 20 minutes return), a tree-lined tarn full of reflections, and the **Crazy Paving & Box Canyon Caves** (10 minutes return, BYO torch), a cracked-up cave-floor formation and a roomy cave system with fossils on the ceiling. Beyond these, in a protected area of Kahurangi National Park, are the superb **Honeycomb Hill Caves & Arch**, only accessible by a prebooked **guided tour** (☎ 03-782 6652; adult/child \$75/35); ask at the visitor information centre. These caves contain the bones of nine different moa species and the extinct giant Haast eagle. Gentle river kayaking trips (trips \$75; ☔ mid Dec-Apr) are also on offer, but only outside the breeding season of the rare kowhiwhio (blue duck).

Activities

The Karamea River has good swimming, fishing, whitebaiting and kayaking, but ask a local or use common sense before jumping in. **Karamea Outdoor Adventures** (☎ 03-782 6181; sylvia.mike@slingshot.co.nz; Bridge St) offers kayaking and mountain-biking trips, including taking on the **K-Road** (bike hire only \$35, including transport \$55), an excellent mountain-bike trail (27km return) along logging roads.

The Little Wanganui, Oparara and Kohaihai Rivers have good swimming holes. Again, ask a local. There are good beaches too but also squadrons of sandflies; lashings of repellent (or wind) will help.

Longer walks around Karamea include the **Fenian Track** (four hours return) leading to **Cavern Creek Caves** and **Adams Flat**, where there's a replica gold-miners hut; a steep tramp for the reasonably fit to the 1084m **Mt Stormy** (eight hours return); and the first leg of the **Wangapeka Track** to Belltown Hut. Shorter

walks include the **Lake Hanlon** (30 minutes return), **Big Remu** (45 minutes return), **Flagstaff** (one hour return) and **Zig Zag Track** (one hour return) walks.

If the prospect of walking the entire **Heaphy Track** tires you, just walk as far as the **Heaphy Hut** (five hours, adult/child \$20/10), stay overnight, then head back. Heaphy Track huts must be booked in advance, regardless of season, through DOC or the Karamea visitor information centre. Alternatively, walk as far as **Scotts Beach** (1½ hours return), passing nikau palm groves along the way, or continue to **Crayfish Point**. For detailed information on the Heaphy and Wangapeka Tracks, see p484 and p485.

Helicopter Charter Karamea (☎ 03-782 6111; www.adventuresnz.co.nz; 79 Waverley St) will chopper you to anywhere in the area. Options include a one-day helihike (\$400 per three persons) where you are dropped off at the Heaphy Hut and walk back to Kohaihai at the southern end of the track.

Sleeping

Karamea Holiday Park (☎ 03-782 6758; www.karamea.com; Maori Point Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/22, s \$18-60, d \$28-75) Set among native bush, 3km south of Market Cross, this is the ideal place to perfect your whitebaiting skills.

Wangapeka Backpackers Retreat & Farmstay (☎ 03-782 6663; www.wangapeka.co.nz; Atawhai Farm, Wangapeka Valley; unpowered sites \$20, dm \$20, s/d \$35/55; ☐ ☑) Laid-back and friendly farmstay that's a good place to recharge after completing the Wangapeka Track. Dorms are basic but there's a wood-fired bush bath. Campers are welcome and meals are available. Turn right down Wangapeka Rd just after Little Wanganui and follow the signs. It's 15 minutes' drive south of Karamea.

Last Resort (☎ 0800 505 042, 03-782 6617; www.lastresort.co.nz; 71 Waverley St; sites \$24, dm \$28, d \$69-140) New owners are doing a great job in resurrecting this iconic Karamea property. Options stretch from tent sites to comfortable motel units. Dissolve into a massage or the spa to lose any post-Heaphy aches and pains.

Karamea Motels & Cabins (☎ 03-782 6838; www.karameamotels.com; Bridge Rd; cabins per person \$25, d \$70; ☐ ☑) Most people would modernise 1960s motels after buying them, but owners Paul and Sanae have kept the retro-Kiwiana ambience here gloriously intact, including riotous carpet last seen at your

Nana's place. There are cheaper cabins for frugal travellers.

Rongo Backpackers (☎ 03-782 6667; www.livinginpeace.com; Waverley St; unpowered sites per 2 Rongolians \$50, dm/tw/d \$30/76/76; ☑) Part neohippie artists' haven and part organic veggie garden, this uber-relaxed hostel even has its own community radio station (107.5FM). Go with the flow and submit to the sustainable and ecofriendly volunteer within.

Karamea Beachfront Farmstay B&B (☎ 03-782 6762; www.westcoastbeachaccommodation.co.nz; SH67; d \$80-170) This friendly farmstay has three comfortable rooms and 2.5km of pristine beachfront 16km south of Karamea. Your host studied cooking in France, so expect surprises for dinner (\$50 per person including wine).

Bridge Farm Motels (☎ 03-782 6955; www.karameamotels.co.nz; Bridge Rd; ste \$95-140) Accommodation at this rural motel ranges from studios to two-bedroom units. Ignore the curious alpacas eyeing your freshly baked croissants through the window.

Eating & Drinking

Last Resort (☎ 03-782 6617; 71 Waverley St; lunch mains \$8-12, dinner mains \$22-30; ☔ 7am-late) Under new management, Last Resort is again offering the best food in town, either with breakfast or lunch at the all-day café, or the flasher evening restaurant with local tastes like Karamea reef and beef (\$29.50).

Saracens Café (☎ 03-782 6600; 99 Bridge St; mains \$10-15; ☔ 11am-late) The best place in town for a quick bite and a coffee, Saracens morphs into a live-music venue with occasional gigs on summer evenings.

Karamea Village Hotel (☎ 03-782 6800; Waverley St; mains \$18-22; ☔ 11am-11pm) Treat yourself to life's simple pleasures. A game of pool or darts with the locals, a pint of Monteith's Original Ale, and a whitebait-fritter sandwich (\$11.50). Sorted.

Just behind Saracens, the **Bush Lounge** (☎ 03-782 6711; ☔ mains \$15-20; 6pm-late) aligns a rustic interior with a suitably rustic menu.

Getting There & Away

If you're driving from Westport to Karamea, fill up in Westport as there's no petrol until Karamea, 98km away.

Karamea Express (☎ 03-782 6757; info@karamea-express.co.nz) links Karamea and Westport (adult/child \$27/17, 1½ hours, 7.50am Monday to Friday may to October, plus Saturday from

November to April), departing the Last Resort. **Cunningham's Coaches** (☎ 03-789 7177; 179 Palmerston St, Westport) does this trip as a mail run (\$20, three hours, 5.45pm weekdays), departing from Karamea Hardware.

Karamea Express also services Kohaihai at the southern end of the Heaphy Track, departing Kohaihai at 1pm and 2pm during summer; phone for prices and off-season times. It also services the Wangapeka Track on demand. There are phones at both trailheads to arrange transport out to Karamea.

You can also fly from Karamea to Takaka (around \$2000 per person) then walk back on the Heaphy Track; contact the visitor information centre for details.

Ask at Rongo Backpackers (left) about transport to trailheads (Heaphy \$10 per person, Wangapeka \$15 per person), and to other destinations in the area including the Oparara Basin (per person \$35).

WESTPORT TO GREYMOUTH

SH6 along the surf-pounded coastline proffers fine Tasman Sea views; so fine that Lonely Planet's Blue List dubbed the West Coast highway one of the planet's 10 best road trips. Fill up in Westport if you're low on petrol and cash – there's no fuel until Runanga, 92km away, and the next ATM is in Greymouth. The main attractions along this stretch are the geologically fascinating Pancake Rocks at Punakaiki. To break the journey, consider the following.

Beaconstone (☎ 027 431 0491; www.beaconstone.co.nz; Birds Ferry Rd; dm/tw/d \$28/64/64; ☔ Oct-May) is 17km south of Westport on 52 serene hectares. Solar power, an organic garden and energy-efficient appliances make a bold ecofriendly and sustainable statement. Beaconstone only has room for 12 guests so booking ahead is recommended.

Jack's Gasthof (☎ 03-789 6501; jack.schubert@extra.co.nz; SH6; sites \$10, d \$50; ☔ Oct-May) is 23km south of Westport on the Little Totara River. Laconic Jack swapped Berlin for this gentle spot more than 20 years ago. There are two cruisy doubles, and a **pizzeria** (mains \$16-\$30; ☔ 11am-late) serving pizzas made with organic veggies grown outside the door. Watch out for Jack's huge (and hugely friendly) dog.

For a taste of the region's old mining past, swing into **Mitchell's Gully Gold Mine** (☎ 03-789 6553; www.mitchellsgullygoldmine.8m.com; SH6; adult/child \$5/1; ☔ 9am-4pm), 22km south of Westport, with

a tumbledown water wheel, old rail tracks and hillside tunnels (BYO torch).

Charleston, 28km south of Westport, boomed during the 1860s gold rush, with 80 hotels, three breweries, and hundreds of thirsty gold-diggers staking claims along the Nile River. The only pub left is the **Charleston European Tavern** (☎ 03-789 8862; SH6; mains \$16-26; ☎ 9am-late), now doing double-duty as a café during the day and a boozier at night. It's the base for underground, water-laden trips offered by Norwest Adventures (p490).

Next door, the **Charleston Motel** (☎ 03-789 7599; www.charlestonmotel.co.nz; SH6; d \$90-95) offers comfortable units just off the highway. Up the road, **Pounamu Backpackers** (☎ 03-789 8011; dm/s/d \$23/28/56) has simple rooms in an old villa with comfy armchairs, and the adjoining **Pounamu Gallery** (☎ 10am-6pm) features local art and greenstone.

The broken coastline from Fox River to Runanga will remind Californians of Big Sur. Woodpecker Bay, Tiromoana, Punakaiki, Barrytown, Fourteen Mile, Motukiekie, Ten Mile, Nine Mile and Seven Mile are **beaches** sculpted by relentless ocean fury.

Punakaiki & Paparoa National Park

Located midway between Westport and Greymouth is Punakaiki, a small settlement beside the rugged 38,000-hectare Paparoa National Park. For most travellers, it's a quick stop for an ice cream and a squiz at the Pancake Rocks; a shame because there's also excellent walking on offer.

INFORMATION

The **Paparoa National Park visitor information centre** (☎ 03-731 1895; paparoavc@doc.govt.nz; SH6; ☎ 9am-5pm Oct-Dec, to 6pm Jan-May, to 4.30pm Jun-Sep) has info-laden displays on the park, and details on activities, accommodation and trail conditions. Online see www.punakaiki.co.nz.

SIGHTS

Punakaiki is famous for its fantastic **Pancake Rocks** and **blowholes**. Through a layering-weathering process called stylobedding, the Dolomite Point limestone has formed into what looks like piles of thick pancakes. When the tide is right (tide times are posted at the visitor information centre), the sea surges into caverns and booms menacingly through blowholes. See it on a windy and wild day and be reminded that Mother Nature really is the

boss. An easy 15-minute walk loops from the highway out to the rocks and blowholes.

Paparoa National Park is also blessed with sea cliffs, the mountains of the Paparoa Range, rivers, diverse flora and a Westland petrel colony, the world's only nesting site of this rare sea bird.

ACTIVITIES

Tramps in the national park are detailed in the DOC *Paparoa National Park* pamphlet (\$1), and include the **Inland Pack Track** (two to three days), a route established by miners in 1867 to dodge difficult coastal terrain. The **Croesus Track** (one to two days), covered by another DOC leaflet (50c), is a tramp over the Paparoa Range from Blackball to Barrytown, passing historic gold-mining areas. Register at the Greymouth or Paparoa visitor information centres before setting out. Some inland walks are susceptible to river flooding; check conditions before you depart.

Shorter options include the **Truman Track** (30 minutes return) and the **Porari River Track** (2½ hours return) which follows a spectacular limestone gorge. The **Fox River Tourist Cave** (three hours return) is open to amateur explorers. BYO torch and wear good walking shoes.

Punakaiki Canoes (☎ 03-731 1870; www.riverkayaking.co.nz; SH6; canoe hire 2hr/full day \$35/55) rents canoes and kayaks near the Pororari River bridge. Guided tours start from \$70. **Punakaiki Horse Treks** (☎ 03-731 1839; www.pancake-rocks.co.nz; SH6; 2½hr ride \$120; ☎ Oct-May), based at Hydrangea Cottages, conducts four-legged outings alongside the national park.

TOURS

Green Kiwi Tours (☎ 03 731 1843; www.greenkiwitours.co.nz; guided walking tours from \$60, caving from \$100) runs information-rich excursions throughout the region, including caving, bouldering, helihiking and history tours.

SLEEPING & EATING

Beach Hostel Punakaiki (☎ 03-731 1852; www.punakaikibeachhostel.co.nz; 4 Webb St; tents per person \$10, dm/s/d \$24/40/60; ☎) A sandy, beach-bumming hostel with a deep, sea-view veranda and an outdoor spa, just a short stroll from Pancake Rocks and the beach.

Punakaiki Beach Camp (☎ 03-731 1894; beachcamp@xtra.co.nz; 5 Owen St; unpowered/power sites \$24/28, d \$40-50) This park is drenched with salty scents

and studded with clean, old-style cabins and shipshape amenities.

Te Nikau Retreat (☎ 03-731 1111; www.tenikauretreat.co.nz; Hartmount Pl; dm \$23, d \$46-86, cabins \$76-86; ☎) A labyrinth of split-level dorms and asymmetrical huts in a cool rainforest glade. Chilled-out travellers read/snooze/read in warm communal areas while wood-heaters smoulder. If the weather's clear (or even if it's not), the glass-roofed 'Stargazer' tent is just \$30 per cosy couple.

Rocks Homestay (☎ 0800 272 164, 03-731 1141; www.therockshomestay.com; 33 Hartmount Pl; s/d incl breakfast from \$120/155) Three kilometres north of Punakaiki (100m north of the Truman Track), this house looks over wild scrub to the rolling sea. The breakfasts are tasty, and dinner is available by arrangement. Once you've had your fill of Pancakes, the sunny conservatory promotes curling up with a good book.

Hydrangea Cottages (☎ 03-731 1839; www.pancake-rocks.co.nz; SH6; d \$190-295) On a hillside overlooking Pancake Rocks, these four stand-alone and self-contained cottages are constructed classily from recycled rimu and local river stones. Punakaiki Horse Treks is based here.

Punakaiki Crafts (☎ 03-731 1813; SH6; coffee & cake \$7; ☎ 9am-4.30pm, gallery to 7pm) Good coffee, cakes and slices share an interesting gallery showcasing local artists.

Wild Coast Café (☎ 03-731 1873; SH6; mains \$18-26; ☎ 8am-9pm) Beside the visitor information centre is this tourist-swollen café, serving pancake stacks, good pies and ice creams. There's a small bar for later at night when the tourist buses have departed.

Punakaiki Tavern (☎ 03-731 1188; SH6; mains \$19-31; ☎ 8.30am-late) Most nights the punters are a mix of local and international, and the pub menu with steak, fish and pasta has a similar slant. When you're done, stick a pin in a map of the world to show how far you've come.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz) links to Westport (\$24) and Greymouth (\$17). **K-Bus** (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.kbus.co.nz) has a similar service along SH6 to Westport (\$18) and Greymouth (\$13). Both companies stop allowing enough time to check out Pancake Rocks.

The Coast Road

SH6 from Punakaiki to Greymouth is flanked by white-capped waves and rocky bays on one

side, and the steep, bushy Paparoa Ranges on the other.

Steve used to design women's lingerie, but now he runs one of the South Island's most surprising attractions, **Barrytown Knifemaking** (☎ 0800 256 433; www.barrytownknifemaking.com; SH6; \$110). Put aside a day (9.30am to 3.30pm) as Steve and wife Robyn steer you through the process of making your own knife. We're talking the whole shebang here from hand forging the blade to crafting a handle from native rimu timber. Between the knifemaking, there's lunch, archery, axe-throwing lessons, and a stream of entertainingly bad jokes from Steve. Bookings recommended and transport can be arranged from Greymouth or Punakaiki.

Barrytown, 16km south of Punakaiki, has the **All Nations Hotel** (☎ 03-731 1812; allnations@xtra.co.nz; SH6; unpowered sites \$28, dm/s/d \$25/35/70). Its coaster-covered walls are opposite the western end of the Croesus Track, handy for trampers desperate for a beer and a bed (definitely in that order). Also serves pub meals and attracts backpacker buses.

Ti Kouka House (☎ 03-731 1460; www.tikoukahouse.co.nz; SH6; d \$260-290) is all rugged sea views, global antiques and lots of recycled wood, including history-laden doors and windows. Three luxury rooms stud this excellent B&B that's got a luscious backdrop of subtropical rainforest. Think Santa Fe adobe style meets West Coast rustic.

For food, try **Darcy's Buffalo Bar & Grill** (☎ 03-731 1151; SH6, Barrytown; mains \$10-22; ☎ 11am-late), a spacious café perched above the road with lots of outdoor seating.

GREY VALLEY

From Murchison, an alternative to the SH6 coast route is to turn off at Inangahua Junction and travel inland across winding valley roads via Reefton, and over the mountains into the Grey Valley.

Amid the regenerating forests, small towns are reminders of futile farming attempts, and of the gold rush of the 1860s.

Reefton pop 1050

Reefton is an unconcerned little hamlet in the heart of superb tramping country, and named after the region's gold-infested quartz reefs. As early as 1888, Reefton had its own electricity supply and street lighting, ahead of everywhere else in NZ. If you've crossed Lewis

Pass from Christchurch, this is the first town of any size you come to.

INFORMATION

The **Reefton i-SITE** (☎ 03-732 8391; www.reefton.co.nz; 67 Broadway; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Nov-Mar, to 4.30pm Apr-Oct; 📄) has very helpful staff, and a one-room re-creation of the Quartzopolis Mine (50c). At the time of writing plans were afoot to introduce mine tours in the area.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Quite a few shops on Broadway date from the 1870s, and the town feels like a Western movie backdrop. For more information buy the *Historic Reefton* leaflet (\$1).

The community-run **Blacks Point Museum** (Franklin St, Blacks Point; adult/child/family \$5/3/15; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4pm Wed-Fri & Sun, 1-4pm Sat Oct-Apr), 2km east of Reefton on the Christchurch road, is inside a former Methodist church and crammed with prospecting paraphernalia. Up the road is the still-functional **Golden Fleece Battery** (adult/child \$1/free; ☎ 1-4pm Wed & Sun Oct-Apr), used for crushing gold-flecked quartz.

You can also have a chat with the guys at the **Bearded Miner Company** (☎ 03-732 8377; Broadway; admission by donation; ☎ 11am-4pm). Friendly bearded types will sit you down in an 1860s-style miners hut and give you a cup of billy tea. You might wonder why they haven't formed a ZZ Top tribute band.

Short walks around town include the **Powerhouse Walk** (40 minutes return) and **Reefton Heritage Walk** (30 minutes return). The **Murray Creek Track** (two to seven hours return), from Blacks Point, takes in abandoned coal and gold mines.

There's good tramping in the 182,000-hectare **Victoria Forest Park** (NZ's largest forest park), overgrown by five different species of beech tree. Consider the three-day **Kirwans, Lake Christabel** and **Robinson River Tracks** or the two-day **Big River Track** with good **mountain biking** opportunities. Ask at the i-SITE for information and maps.

SLEEPING & EATING

Reefton Motor Camp (☎ 03-732 8477; roa.reuben@xtra.co.nz; 1 Ross St; unpowered/powerd sites \$16/22, d \$40) On the Inangahua River at the eastern end of town, this park is encircled by birdsong and stately fir trees.

Old Breadshop Backpackers (☎ 03-732 8420; breadshopbackpackers@gmail.com; 155 Buller Rd; dm \$16, d &

tw \$40; 📄) This small, homely backpackers has a handful of doubles and a dorm inside a colourful former bakery. The friendly owners next door are lifelong Reefton residents; ask Trevor about the best fishing spots.

Old Nurses Home (☎ 03-732 8881; reeftonretreat@hotmail.com; 155 Buller Rd; dm/s/d/tw \$23/36/52/52; 📄) In Reefton they're good at transforming stately old buildings into cosy hostels. With colourful duvets and pretty gardens and patios, there's nary a whiff of this place's more buttoned-down institutional past.

Reef Cottage (☎ 0800 770 440, 03-732 8440; www.reefcottage.co.nz; 51-55 Broadway; d \$110-140) This 1867 cottage, popular with couples and groups of up to eight, was formerly a solicitor's office. There's plenty of heritage timber, warming the mood for the (occasional) West Coast downpour. Adjoining the cottage, the Reef Cottage Café (meals \$8 to \$20) serves gourmet pies, cakes, quiches, pastas and salads.

Alfresco (☎ 03-732 8513; 16 Broadway; mains \$12-25; ☎ 11am-7pm) With a family bistro atmosphere, Alfresco serves up meat and seafood grills and a half-dozen tasty pizzas. There are gas heaters or tables inside if the alfresco gets too fresco.

DRINKING

Wilson's (☎ 03-732 8800; 32 Broadway; mains \$12-20; ☎ 11am-11pm) Sleepy Reefton could be the most laid-back place you'll ever visit, but if you do need to slow down, then the two garden bars (count 'em...) at Wilson's will do the trick. Occasional bands raise the excitement level to somewhere under fever pitch.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

East West Coach (☎ 0800 142 622, 03-789 6251; eastwestco@xtra.co.nz) runs daily to Westport (\$22, 1½ hours) and Christchurch (\$44, 3¾ hours). **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 03 349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) swing by on their service linking Nelson (\$38, six hours) and Franz Josef (\$32, 5¾ hours).

State Highway 7 to Greymouth

At Hukarere, 21km south of Reefton, turn east and drive 14km to **Waiuta**, once a burgeoning gold town, now a spectral collection of remnants. The Birthday Reef was unearthed here on King Edward VII's birthday in 1905. By 1906 the Blackwater Mine was booming, and the town's population swelled to 500. In 1951 the mine collapsed and Waiuta was abandoned virtually overnight.

The lonesomely ruinous atmosphere makes Waiuta worth the trip. It's a leafy drive through beech forest, the last 7km on a winding, narrow dirt road. **Waiuta Lodge** (adult/child \$15/7.50, plus key deposit \$10) is a 30-bunk building with full kitchen facilities. Book and collect the key at the **Reefton i-SITE** (☎ 03-732 8391; www.reefton.co.nz; 67 Broadway, Reefton).

BLACKBALL

Northeast of the Grey River, about 25km north of Greymouth, Blackball is a working town established in 1866 to service gold-diggers; coal mining kicked in between 1890 and 1964. The National Federation of Labour (a trade union) was conceived here, born from influential strikes in 1908 and 1931.

On the road 1km from Blackball is the trail-head of the **Croesus Track** (DOC leaflet 50c), tracking 18km across the Paparoa Range to Barrytown on the West Coast. Do it in a day if you're keen/mad, or stay overnight at DOC's **Ces Clark Hut** (adult \$10), halfway along. Book the hut through the Greymouth i-SITE (p500) before you start walking.

The hub of Blackball society is the **Formerly the Blackball Hilton** (☎ 0800 4252 252 255, 03-732 4705; www.blackballhilton.co.nz; 26 Hart St; dm/d \$22.50/110), designated a New Zealand Historic Place. The 'formerly' was added after a certain global hotel chain got antsy. There are B&B doubles and funky dorms. The beer's cold, the gourmet pies are tasty, and the locals (especially the Jack Russell terrier) are friendly. Downstairs there's a solidarity-inducing array of memorabilia showcasing Blackball's proud Left-leaning past.

The **Blackball Salami Co** (☎ 03-732 4111; www.blackballsalami.co.nz; 11 Hilton St; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) sells low-fat venison and beef salami. If you're planning a barbecue pick up some tasty sausages (snarlers in Kiwi-speak).

LAKE BRUNNER

At Stillwater, detour to Lake Brunner, aka Moana Kotuku (Heron Sea). Locals reckon Lake Brunner and the Arnold River have the world's best **trout fishing** – not an uncommon boast in NZ. Hire a fishing guide in Moana (at the Moana Hotel) or corner a local for advice. Moana is going ahead with lots of flash new holiday homes, but peace and quiet is usually just a boat ride away.

Walks include the **Velenski Walk** (20 minutes one-way) from the motor camp through na-

tive forest; the **Arnold Dam Walk** (45 minutes return), which crosses a swing bridge over the Arnold River; and the **Rakaitane Track** (45 minutes return) through mixed podocarp forest with glowworms.

Lake Brunner Motor Camp (☎ 03-738 0600; lake.brunner@paradise.net.nz; Ahau St; powered sites \$26, s \$20) has lake-view sites, small four-berth cabins, and an informative general store selling fishing gear. Ask here about boat hire.

The **Moana Hotel** (☎ 03-738 0083; www.moanahotelmotel.co.nz; 34 Ahau St; s \$25, d \$70-95), the local pub, has older hotel rooms and ritzier hillside motel units dubbed the **Lake Brunner Resort** (☎ 03-738 0083; www.lakebrunnerresort.net.nz; Ahau St; d \$180-290). The resort's **restaurant** (mains \$15-20; ☎ noon-9pm) does old-school favourites like Chicken Kiev. If you're looking for a fishing guide, immerse yourself in the hotel's garden bar and throw out a few lines.

The **Lake Brunner Country Motel** (☎ 03-738 0144; www.lakebrunnermotel.co.nz; 2014 Arnold Valley Rd; powered sites \$28, d \$60-125) has cabins, cottages and campervan sites ringed by native bush. It's a relaxing location, made more relaxing with a spa and the regular chorus of birdsong. It's 2km from Moana; on your right if you're coming from Greymouth.

The **Station House Cafe** (☎ 03-738 0158; 40 Koe St; lunch \$12-18, dinner \$20-28; ☎ noon-10pm, from 10am in summer) is on a hillside opposite the Moana Railway Station, where the *TranzAlpine* train pulls in.

GREYMOUTH pop 13,500

Welcome to the 'Big Smoke' of Westland. Crouched at the mouth of the Grey River (early European settlers had a lot of stuff to name, OK?), the West Coast's largest town has a proud gold-mining history, and a legacy of occasional river floods, now somewhat alleviated by a flood wall.

On the main road and rail route through Arthur's Pass and across the Southern Alps from Christchurch, Greymouth sees its fair share of travellers taking advantage of outstanding budget accommodation. Once you've enjoyed the Montieith's Brewery tour, outdoor adventures including rafting, canyoning and quad-biking can fill another couple of days.

Orientation

The town centre is on the Grey River's south bank, 1km from the river mouth, and around

the intersection of Mackay and Tainui Sts. Free town and regional maps are available at the i-SITE and the **Automobile Association** (AA; ☎ 03-768 4300; www.aatravel.co.nz; 84 Tainui St).

Information

Major banks huddle around Mackay and Tainui Sts. There's internet access at the i-SITE.

DP:One Cafe (108 Mawhera Quay) Internet access.

Greymouth Hospital (☎ 03-768 0499; High St)

Greymouth i-SITE (☎ 0800 473 966, 03-768 5101;

www.greymouth.co.nz; cnr Herbert & Mackay Sts;

☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Nov-Apr, reduced hours May-Oct; ☎) Very helpful crew and DOC information.

Paper Plus (☎ 03-768 5175; 62 Mackay St) Bookshop.

Police station (☎ 03-768 1600; 45-47 Guinness St)

Post office (Tainui St)

Sights

History House Museum (☎ 03-768 4028; www.history-house.co.nz; Gresson St; adult/child \$5/2; ☎) 10am-4pm Mon-Fri) documents Greymouth's gold-prospecting history.

The **Left Bank Art Gallery** (☎ 03-768 0038; www.leftbankart.co.nz; 1 Tainui St; adult/child \$2/free; ☎) 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr, reduced hours May-Sep) houses contemporary NZ jade carvings. Prints, paintings and photographs also get an airing.

Jade Country Greymouth (☎ 03-768 0700; 1 Guinness St; admission free; ☎) 8.30am-8pm Oct-Apr, to 5pm May-Sep) has original jade jewellery costing from \$30 to thousands of dollars. There's a walk-through Jade Trail display on the precious *pounamu*, and the Jade Boulder **café** (mains \$10-21; ☎) 8.30am-4pm) serves organic coffee, whitebait and other 'wild food' that's more difficult to catch.

Activities

The **Point Elizabeth Walkway** (three hours return) heads north of Greymouth into the Rapahoe Range Scenic Reserve. The **Floodwall Walk** from Cobden Bridge towards Blaketown is shorter (30 minutes return).

Sweet-As Adventures & Eco-Rafting (☎ 0508 669 675; www.ecorafting.co.nz; rafting from \$100, kayaking from \$100, canyoning from \$130; ☎) Nov-Apr) runs Grade II to IV ecorafting trips on West Coast rivers plus helirafting (\$300 to \$800) if you're really after remote thrills. Kayaking and canyoning are other ways to get wet'n'wild.

Wild West Adventure Co (☎ 0508 372 466, 03-768 6649; www.fun-nz.com; 8 Whall St) runs rafting excursions (priced from \$135 to \$575), a three-hour

river cruise (\$115) aboard a 'Jungle Boat' and a 5½-hour 'Dragons Cave' expedition (\$145). Inflatable kayak trips start at \$165.

On Yer Bike (☎ 0800 669 372, 03-762 7438; www.onyerbike.co.nz; SH6, Coal Creek; 2hr ride adult/child \$140/120), 5km north of Greymouth, gets down'n'dirty on quad-bikes and rugged go-karts. Take a two-hour 'Bush 'n Bog' ride or jump into the amphibious 8WD 'Argo' (one-hour trips \$70).

The **surf** at Cobden Beach and Seven Mile Beach in Rapahoe is consistent, but too dangerous for swimming.

Tours

Kea Heritage Tours (☎ 0800 532 868; www.keatours.co.nz; day tours \$85-250) Well-informed guides visit West Coast locations like Blackball, Punakaiki and the glaciers. The four-day Te Ara Pounamu tour (\$1445) from Greymouth to Queenstown follows the greenstone trading route traditionally used by Maori.

Monteith's Brewing Co (☎ 03-768 4149; www.monteiths.co.nz; cnr Turumaha & Herbert Sts; admission \$12.50; ☎) tours 11.30am, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm) Finish this excellent 1¼hr-long tour in the bar by working your way through Monteith's eight brews. Bookings recommended, especially for the 6pm tour (\$20) which kicks on for a barbecue at the Railway Hotel.

Festival & Events

Motorcyclists rock in at Labour Weekend for October's **Downtown Street Racing**.

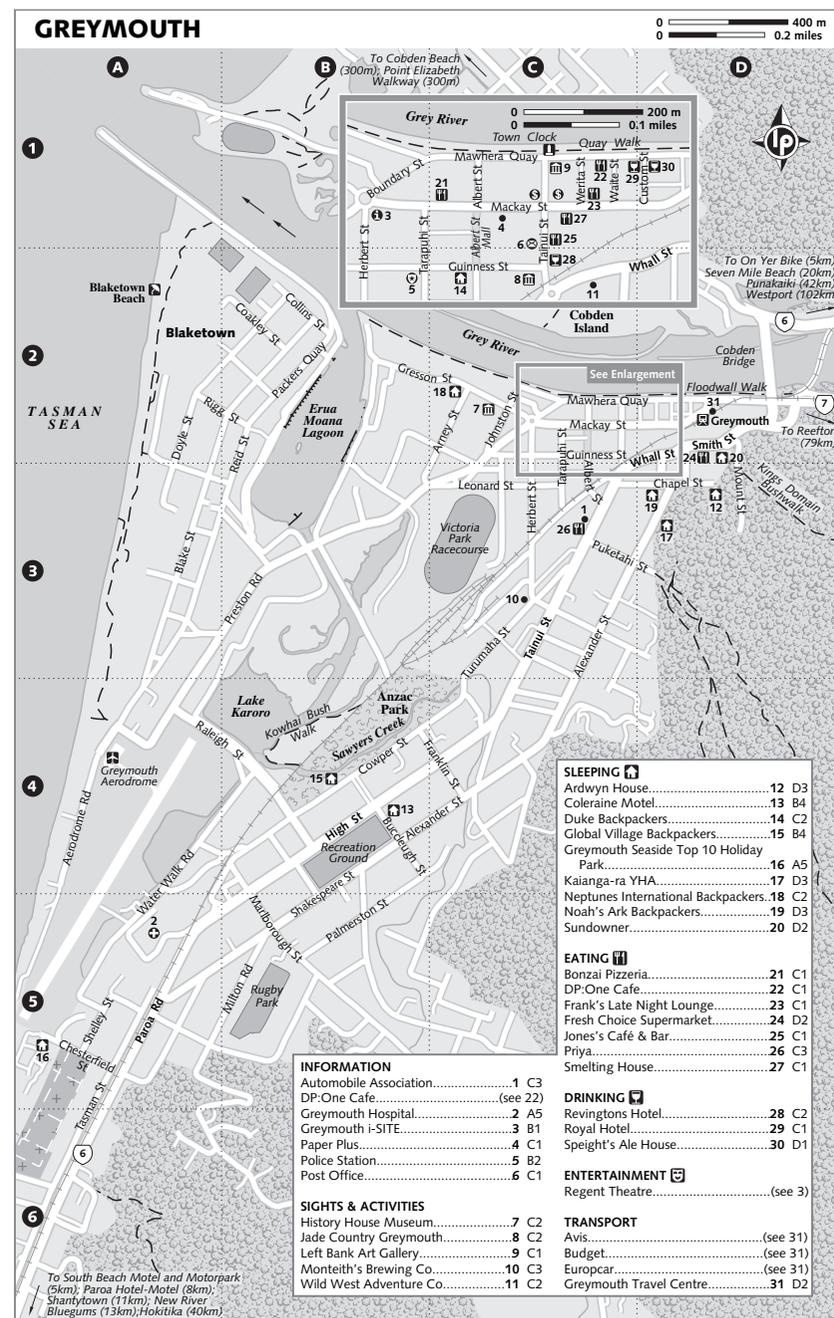
Sleeping

BUDGET

Greymouth Seaside Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 867 104, 03-768 6618; www.top10greymouth.co.nz; 2 Chesterfield St; unpowered/powerd sites \$26/34, d \$52-130; ☎) This well-appointed beachside park is 2.5km south of town. Cabins sleep six, and the good-value self-contained units sleep up to eight. Kid-friendly distractions include an adventure playground.

Noah's Ark Backpackers (☎ 0800 662 472, 03-768 4868; www.noahsarkbackpackers.co.nz; 16 Chapel St; unpowered sites \$34, dm/s/d \$23/36/524; ☎) Originally a monastery, Noah's now has eccentric animal-themed rooms and a sunset-worthy balcony. In true Ark-style, the camping price is for two people. Mountain bikes and fishing rods are provided free of charge.

Neptunes International Backpackers (☎ 0800 003 768, 03-768 4425; www.neptunesbackpackers.co.nz; 43 Gresson St; dm/s/d \$23/43/56; ☎) Travellers rave about this nautical-themed hostel. There's not a bunk in sight, linen is provided, and the wrought-iron



balcony is perfect for sunset drinks. A barbecue gives you tasty dinner options.

Duke Backpackers (☎ 03-768 9470; www.duke.co.nz; 27 Guinness St; dm \$23-24, s \$36, d \$52-66; 📺) The well-travelled owners obviously took notes when they bedded down around the world. Here's their checklist: clean four-bed dorms, en suite doubles, free pool table, loads of DVDs and a free beer at the bar.

our pick Global Village Backpackers (☎ 03-768 7272; www.globalvillagebackpackers.co.nz; 42-54 Cowper St; dm/s/d/tw/tr/q \$23/56/60/60/81/100; 📺) This collage of African and Asian art is infused with a passionate travellers' vibe. Free kayaks – the Lake Karoro wetlands reserve is just metres away – and mountain bikes are on tap, and relaxation comes easy with a spa, sauna and riverside barbecue.

Kaianga-ra YHA (☎ 03-768 4951; www.yha.co.nz; 15 Alexander St; dm \$26-28, s & d \$64; 📺) Built in 1938 as a Marist Brothers' residence, this hostel is big, clean, functional and well behaved – everything you'd expect from YHA. Shatter the monastic ambience by playing guitar on the veranda.

MIDRANGE

Ardwyn House (☎ 03-768 6107; ardwynhouse@hotmail.com; 48 Chapel St; s/d without bathroom \$55/85) This old-fashioned B&B nestles amid steep gardens on a quiet dead-end street. All rooms have shared facilities, and for just \$5 extra, Mary the well-travelled host cooks breakfast. Experience proves it's ideal preparation before a Monteiths Brewery tour (see p500).

South Beach Motel & Motorpark (☎ 0800 101 222, 03-762 6768; www.southbeach.co.nz; 318 Main South Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/25, d \$45-130; 📺) This low-rise motel and cabin complex propositions with a pastel-hued Miami accent, but the well-established nikau palms bring it firmly back to good old Enzed. Use of a spa and the internet are both gratis. Campervans and tents also welcome.

Sundowner (☎ 0800 080 859, 03-768 4666; www.sundowner.co.nz; 14 Smith St; d \$80-105; 📺) Just a short walk from the train station, the Sundowner impresses with a versatile range of options, from cheaper family units to newer studios. Brightly coloured duvets will brighten your day.

New River Bluegums (☎ 03-762 6678; www.bluegumsnz.com; 985 Main South Rd; d incl breakfast \$150; 📺) Stay either in the cosy upstairs room in the rustic family home, or settle into a private

self-contained cabin. Either way there's a farm to be explored, sheep to be shorn (in season), and huge cooked breakfasts to look forward to. Work off that extra rasher of bacon on the tennis court.

TOP END

Coleraine Motel (☎ 0800 270 027, 03-768 077; www.colerainemotel.co.nz; 61 High St South Rd; d \$135-200; 📺) Rattan furniture, spa baths and king-size beds add up to the best accommodation in town at this new opening. We're talking about the luxury units, but the cheaper one- and two-bedroom studios are not far behind.

Eating

DP:One Cafe (☎ 03-768 4005; 108 Mawhera Quay; meals \$6-15; ☎ 8am-5pm; 📺) This bohemian room plugs the grungy cred of a big-city café into the artsy vibe of a ramshackle garage sale. The menu features healthy pies, focaccia, salads and cakes, plus good coffee.

Jones's Café & Bar (☎ 03-768 6468; 37 Tainui St; lunch \$8-15, dinner \$19-30; ☎ 8am-11pm) Jones's bills itself as a blues bar, but the vibe is more Elton John yawn than Stevie Ray Vaughan. It's extremely popular with locals, and the trad meat and fish dishes are as dependable as the 12-bar blues.

Smelting House (☎ 03-768 0012; 102 Mackay St; mains \$10-16; ☎ 8am-4pm) The range of reading material on offer is always a good indicator of a good café. The Smelting House comes up trumps with lots of good magazines to go with tasty bagels, sandwiches and good coffee. Come for breakfast and stay for a good read.

Priya (☎ 03-768 7377; 84 Tainui St; mains \$13-16; ☎ noon-12.30pm & 5-10pm; 📺) An explosion of subcontinental Indian spices on temperate West Coast tastebuds, this seasoned performer is heavily patronised. There's chilled Kingfisher beer and a healthy range of vego delights.

our pick Frank's Late Night Lounge (☎ 03-768 9075; 115 Mackay St; mains \$13-20; ☎ 5pm-late Thu-Sat; 📺) Effortlessly cool and retro late-night lounge/bar/café. A mirror ball hovers blithely above rescued 1950s furniture while Sinatra and Dean Martin bubble away as the soundtrack. An eclectic list of teas and NZ's best boutique beers partner a small global menu with surprises like Tibetan *momos* (dumplings) and Moroccan fish. Occasional live gigs complete the picture.

Bonzai Pizzeria (☎ 03-768 4170; 31 Mackay St; mains \$15-25; ☎ 8am-late Mon-Sat, from 3pm Sun) The name's (kind of) Japanese; the decor is pure 1970s NZ, and the Italian-tinged pizzas, pasta and soup all come reader-recommended. Experience proves it's the ideal spot after a tour of the Monteith's Brewery.

Self-caterers should check out **Fresh Choice** (☎ 03-768 7545; 174b Mawhera Quay; ☎ 7am-9pm) supermarket.

Drinking

Speight's Ale House (☎ 03-768 0667; 130 Mawhera Quay; mains \$20-30; ☎ 11am-late) In a 1909 waterfront building, Dunedin's finest beer has crossed the Southern Alps to take on Monteith's. With Greymouth's best wine list and tasty farm-style meals on offer, it's easy to see why locals have adopted Speight's as their *other* favourite beer.

Royal Hotel (☎ 03-768 4022; 128 Mawhera Quay; ☎ 11am-late) The Royal is an old-fashioned pub with affable Brit owners welcoming all-comers with gusto. Grab a beer, get chatting, or watch the football (soccer) on Sky TV.

Revingtons Hotel (☎ 03-768 7055; 46 Tainui St; ☎ 8.30am-late) Alternate between a Monteith's in Revy's Sports Bar, or a Guinness or Kilkenny next door in Danny Doolan's. Steaks and venison pie tick the box marked 'Pub Grub' (mains \$12 to \$25).

Entertainment

Regent Theatre (☎ 03-768 0920; www.regentgreymouth.co.nz; cnr Herbert & Mackay Sts; adult/child \$12/8) has movies and occasional live performances.

Getting There & Around

The **Greymouth Travel Centre** (☎ 03-768 7080; www.westcoasttravel.co.nz; Railway station, 164 Mackay St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun; 📺) books all forms of transport, including buses, trains and interisland ferries, and has luggage-storage facilities. This is also the bus depot and offers wi-fi access.

AIR

Air West Coast (☎ 0800 247 937, 03-738 0524; www.airwestcoast.co.nz) has daily flights departing at 7.30am to Wellington via Westport (adult/child one-way \$130/109).

BUS

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz) has daily 1.30pm buses north to Westport (\$32,

two hours) and Nelson (\$75, six hours), and south to Franz Josef (\$53, 3½ hours) and Fox Glaciers (\$57, 4¼ hours). Prices vary depending on season and availability.

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) runs north to Nelson and south to Queenstown stopping at Hokitika, Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, Haast and Wanaka.

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) runs daily to Queenstown (\$85, 10½ hours, departs at 7.30am), with daily services to Fox Glacier (\$35, 4¼ hours, departing 3.15pm), Picton (\$60, 7½ hours, departing 1.15pm), and Hokitika (\$15, one hour, departing 2pm).

Coast to Coast (☎ 0800 800 847; www.coast2coast.co.nz) buses go to Christchurch (\$35, five hours, 12.45pm daily) via Arthur's Pass (\$20 from Greymouth, \$25 from Christchurch), also running to Hokitika.

K-Bus (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.kbus.co.nz) departs for Westport (\$26, 1½ hours, 9am daily) continuing to Nelson (\$51, 6¼ hours) and Picton (\$66, 8¼ hours); reduced days in winter.

TrackNET (☎ 0800 483 262, 03-249 7777; www.tracknet.net) has 7am departures to Queenstown (\$85) stopping at Hokitika (\$15), Franz Josef (\$40) and Fox Glaciers (\$45) and Wanaka (\$80).

CAR HIRE

Greymouth Travel Centre has the following branches of the major companies:

Avis (☎ 03-768 0902; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 03-768 4343; www.budget.co.nz)

Europcar (☎ 03-768 9980; www.europcar.co.nz)

A local company is **Alpine West** (☎ 0800 257 736, 03-736 4002; www.alpinerentals.co.nz).

TAXI

Try **Greymouth Taxis** (☎ 03-768 7078). To the airport is around \$20.

AROUND GREYMOOUTH

From Greymouth to Hokitika SH6 crawls along the wild West Coast beside surging waves and tortured driftwood.

Providing context for West Coast history, **Shantytown** (☎ 03-762 6634; www.shantytown.co.nz; Rutherglen Rd, Paroa; adult/child \$16/10; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), 8km south of Greymouth and 3km inland from SH6, re-creates an 1860s gold-mining town, complete with post office, pub and Rosie's House of Ill Repute. There's gold panning (\$4 extra for adults), trains to ride, and a

THE TRANZALPINE

Celebrating its 20th birthday in 2008, the **TranzAlpine** (☎ 0800 872 467, 03-768 7080; www.tranzscenic.co.nz; adult/child \$118/70, rates vary seasonally) is one of the world's great train journeys. Traversing the Southern Alps between Christchurch and Greymouth, and from the Pacific Ocean to the Tasman Sea, the TranzAlpine tracks through a sequence of unbelievable landscapes. Leaving Christchurch at 8.15am, it speeds across the flat, alluvial Canterbury Plains to the Alps' foothills. Here it enters a labyrinth of gorges and hills called the Staircase, a climb made possible by three large viaducts and a plethora of tunnels.

The train emerges into the broad Waimakariri and Bealey Valleys and (on a good day) the vistas are stupendous. The beech-forested river valley gives way to the snowcapped peaks of Arthur's Pass National Park. At Arthur's Pass itself (a small alpine village), the train enters the longest tunnel, the 8.5km 'Otira', burrowing under the mountains to the West Coast.

The western side is just as stunning, with the Otira, Taramakau and Grey River valleys, patches of podocarp forest, and the trout-filled Lake Brunner (Moana Kotuku), fringed with cabbage trees. The train rolls into Greymouth at 12.45pm, heading back to Christchurch an hour later, arriving at 6.05pm.

This awesome journey is diminished only when the weather's bad, but if it's raining on one coast, it's probably fine on the other.

sawmill. Lots of new interactive experiences were planned when we visited.

Popular with locals and highway explorers, the **Paroa Hotel-Motel** (☎ 0800 762 6860, 03-762 6860; www.paroa.co.nz; 508 Main South Rd; d \$110-155) is located opposite the Shantytown turn-off and has spacious, garden-fronted units. Its restaurant, **Ham's** (mains \$16-23; ☎ 7am-8pm), plates meaty schnitzels amid a blokey display of rugby jerseys.

Heading east across Arthur's Pass on SH73, 39 km from Greymouth, the tiny settlement of **Jacksons** is nestled beside the Taramakau River. Campervan travellers and tenters can stay at **Jacksons Retreat** (☎ 03-738 0474; www.jacksonscampervanretreat.co.nz; unpowered/powerd sites \$32/37), with superb facilities set in 15 acres. The owners run scenic jetboat trips on the Taramakau River (adult/child from \$110/55) and just up the road the historic **Jackson's Tavern** (☎ 03-738 0457; ☎ 11am-11pm) is perfect for a pie and a pint.

HOKITIKA

pop 4000

Visit Hokitika's wide and quiet streets in the off season, and you might be excused for thinking you've stumbled into a true Wild West town. Across summer though, there's no room for rogue tumbleweeds in the expansive thoroughfares, and 'Hoki' gets as busy with visitors as when the town was a thriving port during the 1860s gold rush. Only now, green (stone), and not gold, is the colour of choice.

Orientation

The town forms a grid at the mouth of the Hokitika River around Weld and Tancred Sts. Free town maps are available at the **Westland i-SITE** (☎ 03-755 6166; hkkvin@xtra.co.nz; 7 Tancred St); regional maps at **Take Note** (☎ 03-755 8167; cnr Weld & Revell Sts).

Information

Look for banks on Weld St.

102 Books (Seddon House, 23 Sewell St; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm) Buys/sells/exchanges books.

DOC office (☎ 03-756 9100; 10 Sewell St; ☎ 8am-4.45pm Mon-Fri)

Hokitika Travel Centre (☎ 03-755 5251; 64 Tancred St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Books scenic flights and transport. Based inside the National Kiwi Centre.

Photo Corner (☎ 03-755 7768; 15 Weld St) Internet access including wi-fi.

Police station (☎ 03-756 8310; 50 Sewell St)

Post office (Revell St)

Take Note (☎ 03-755 8167; cnr Weld & Revell Sts) Maps, mags and West Coast books.

Westland i-SITE (☎ 03-755 6166; hkkvin@xtra.co.nz; 7 Tancred St; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun)

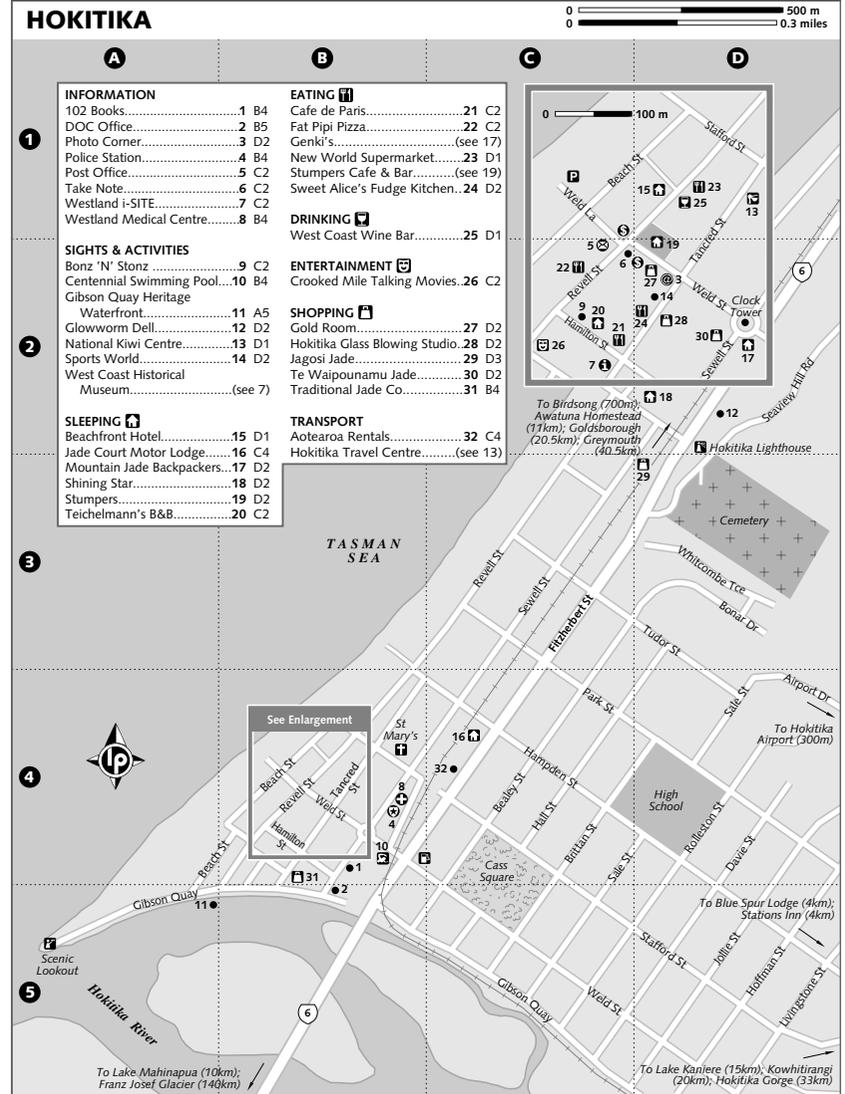
Online see www.hokitika.org.

Westland Medical Centre (☎ 03-755 8180; 54a Sewell St)

Sights

Hoki's premier attractions are its arts-and-crafts shops; see p507.

The **West Coast Historical Museum** (☎ 03-755 6898; enquiries@hokitikamuseum.co.nz; cnr Hamilton & Tancred



Sts; adult/child \$5/1; ☎ 9.30am-5pm) has old photos, Maori artefacts, river and pub-life displays, and the southern hemisphere's biggest Meccano set (a gold dredge replica). The Mana Pounamu exhibition is the ideal primer before you hit the shops looking for greenstone treasures.

Pick up the free *Hokitika Heritage Walk* leaflet from the i-SITE and wander the **Gibson**

Quay Heritage Waterfront, imagining when the wharves were choked with old-time sailing ships.

The rather tired **National Kiwi Centre** (☎ 03-755 5251; natkiwi@xtra.co.nz; 60 Tancred St; adult/child/family \$14/8/36; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) has seen better days, but at least you'll see a kiwi – peer into the dimly lit enclosure and see what's rummaging

about. There are also turtles, tuatara, and 150-year-old eels that get fed everyday at 10am, noon and 3pm.

Just north of town a short stroll from SH6 leads to a **glowworm dell**. Evening darkness maximises the show.

Activities

Dabble in jade carving with Steve Gwaliasi at **Bonz 'N' Stonz** (☎ 0800 214 949, 03-755 6504; www.bonz-n-stonz.co.nz; 16 Hamilton St; full-day workshop \$80-150; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat). Design, carve and polish your own jade, bone or paua masterpiece. Prices vary with materials and design complexity, and bookings are recommended in summer.

If it rains, get really wet in the heated **Centennial Swimming Pool** (☎ 03-755 8119; 53 Weld St; adult/child \$4/2; ☎ 9am-5pm Sep-May).

A good range of mountain-bike trails lurk nearby amid old forestry and mining trails. Hire bikes and get trail maps and advice from **Sports World** (☎ 03-755 8662; 33 Tancred St; per hr \$25; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat).

Tours

Scenic Waterways (☎ 03-755 7239; www.paddleboatcruises.com; adult/child \$30/15; ☎ 2pm Dec-Apr, on demand May-Nov) Runs 1½-hour paddleboat tours on Mahinapua Creek, 10km south of Hokitika.

Wilderness Wings (☎ 0800 755 8118; www.wildernewswings.co.nz; Hokitika Airport; flights from \$320) Has four-hour flights over Hokitika, Aoraki (Mt Cook) and the glaciers.

Festivals & Events

In early March the **Wildfoods Festival** attracts 20,000 curious and brave gourmands. Check out www.wildfoods.co.nz to find out about tasty goodies like huhu bugs and mountain oysters. Less adventurous palates can sample wild venison and pork.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Shining Star (☎ 03-755 8921; www.shiningstar.co.nz; 11 Richards Dr; unpowdered/powdered sites \$24/28, d \$60-149; ☎) Sprawling and versatile beachside spot with everything from camping to classy new seafront units. Kids will love the menagerie, including ducks and alpacas straight from Dr Dolittle's appointment book. Mum and Dad might prefer the spa and sauna.

Mountain Jade Backpackers (☎ 0800 838 301, 03-755 8007; mtjade@minidata.co.nz; 41 Weld St; dm \$19-22,

tw \$38, d \$55-95; ☎) Above the Jade Factory, this place can feel like the Backpacker Factory in summer. Ask for a quieter double overlooking Sewell St. Some twin rooms lack windows.

Birdsong (☎ 03-755 9179; www.birdsong.co.nz; SH6; dm/s/tw/d \$25/40/60/60; ☎) Just north of town, this hostel has sea views, trashy novels, a pair of outdoor baths and a friendly dog. It's the laid-back beach house you'd love to call your own.

Stumpers (☎ 0800 788 673, 03-755 6154; www.stumpers.co.nz; 2 Weld St; dm/s \$25/40, d \$50-60; ☎) Stumpers has comfortable rooms above its bustling café-bar. Doubles have TVs, dorms have a maximum of three beds, and most rooms have shared facilities. En suite doubles are \$10 extra.

Blue Spur Lodge (☎ 03-755 8445; www.bluespur.co.nz; dm \$25, d \$60-80, cottages \$120-240; ☎) Follow the signs up Hampden St to this 37-hectare timber retreat with bush and valley views. There are wood fires in the main rooms, and gumboots to borrow for bush tramps. Kayaks and canoes can be hired to explore nearby Lake Mahinapua. Self-contained cottages sleeping up to six are good for families.

MIDRANGE

Jade Court Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 755 885, 03-755 8855; www.jadecourt.co.nz; 85 Fitzherbert St; d \$85-120) This huge roadside place is quietly professional, all units have full kitchens, and there's a leafy garden for bringing your travel journal up to date. Nearby along Fitzherbert St are several other motels, so you won't have to look far if Jade Court is full.

Beachfront Hotel (☎ 03-755 8344; www.beachfronthotel.co.nz; 111 Revell St; d \$125-230) Ten deluxe waterfront suites raise the bar in Hokitika with modern decor, flat-screen TVs and DVD players, but there are still cheaper standard rooms available with the added extra of occasional weekend noise from the pub downstairs.

TOP END

Teichmann's B&B (☎ 0800 743 742, 03-755 8232; www.teichmanns.co.nz; 20 Hamilton St; d \$145-210) Once home to surgeon, mountaineer and professional beard-cultivator Ebenezer Teichmann, now a luxurious B&B with amicable hosts. All rooms have en suites, and if you're a bit shy consider the more private Teichy's Cottage.

Stations Inn (☎ 0508 782 846, 03-755 5499; www.stations.co.nz; Blue Spur Rd; d \$150-300) King-size beds feature in these cottages amid rolling hills

and rocking alpacas. Brand-new units have flat-screen TVs and spa baths, and a short stroll away is a heritage restaurant with an award-winning relationship with venison, beef and lamb (mains \$26 to \$35; open noon to 2pm Wednesday to Sunday, from 6pm daily). Follow Hampden St and Hau Hau Rd to Burnt Spur Rd.

Awatuna Homestead (☎ 0800 006 888, 03-755 6834; www.awatunahomestead.co.nz; 9 Stafford Rd, Awatuna; s \$230, d \$290-350, all ind breakfast) Set down a quiet road 11km north of Hokitika, the family-run Awatuna Homestead has three lovely guest rooms and a self-contained apartment. Dinner is an additional \$65 per person, and in the evening owners Hemi and Pauline recount cultural stories of the discovery of NZ by the early Pacific explorers.

Eating & Drinking

Sweet Alice's Fudge Kitchen (☎ 03-755 5359; 27 Tancred St; per slice \$6; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat & Sun) Treat yourself with a slice of Alice's handmade, all-natural fudge. Your biggest decision of the day could be which flavour to choose. White chocolate caramel, or Baileys and Kahlua?

Genki's (☎ 03-755 7737; 41 Weld St; light meals \$7-10; ☎ 9am-5pm) Plump *panini* and homemade burgers duke it out with good sushi at this corner spot with outdoor tables.

Stumpers Cafe & Bar (☎ 03-755 6154; 2 Weld St; mains \$12-28; ☎ 7am-late) Eating at Hokitika's pubs is pretty uninspiring, but Stumpers is the best of them with a café-style atmosphere and a (slightly) more imaginative kitchen dishing up colourful food from blue cod to green-lipped mussels.

Cafe de Paris (☎ 03-755 8933; 19 Tancred St; mains \$12-30; ☎ 8am-late) This oh-so-French café is very popular, but we were underwhelmed when we visited for dinner. Breakfast, lunch or coffee and delicious cakes at any time are excellent, but later at night their Gallic culinary aspirations can exceed their abilities in the kitchen. On Saturday nights there's live music from 7pm.

our pick **Fat Pipi Pizza** (☎ 03-755 6263; 83a Revell St; pizza \$19-24; ☎ 5pm-late Thu-Sun; ☎) A slice of the 'Greenpiece' should have the vegos applauding with their Birkenstocks, and if you're in town during whitebait season (September to mid-November) try the Fat Pipi white-bait pizza. From 6.30am to 2pm Monday to

Friday, a bakery serves up warm and crusty goodies in the same premises.

West Coast Wine Bar (☎ 03-755 5417; 108 Revell St; ☎ 9.30am-late Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) No, you're not seeing things. This relaxed spot with a shady garden bar does offer wine by the glass, and a global range of beers, cocktails and cigars.

If you are self-catering, check out **New World** (☎ 03-755 8390; 116 Revell St; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun) supermarket.

Entertainment

Crooked Mile Talking Movies (☎ 03-755 5309; www.crookedmile.co.nz; 36 Revell St; tickets adult/child \$11/6) Assess art-house movies from comfy old couches in this restored bank building.

Shopping

Most of Hokitika's crafty shops are on Tancred St, where things of stone and wood (and glass, gold, bone and shell) are worked into shape. Staff love to talk *pounamu*, and in some studios you can watch carvers in action. Be aware that some shops sell jade imported from Europe and Asia, as local greenstone can often be difficult and expensive to discover in the NZ wilderness.

Traditional Jade Co (☎ 03-755 5233; 2 Tancred St) This family-run studio distils the jade hype into something meaningful. Watch artists carving classic Maori greenstone designs.

Te Waipounamu Jade (☎ 03-755 8304; 19 Sewell St) Te Waipounamu is scrupulously authentic, selling only NZ *pounamu* meticulously crafted into beautiful, sensual designs.

Jagosi Jade (☎ 03-755 6243; 246 Sewell St; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) Carver Aden Hoglund discovers traditional and modern Maori designs from within jade sourced from around the South Island.

Gold Room (☎ 03-755 8362; 37 Tancred St) This shiny room does a healthy jade trade, but is better known for gold jewellery. Most items avoid crossing over to the Land of Kitsch, but not all.

Hokitika Glass Blowing Studio (☎ 03-755 7775; 28 Tancred St) Specialising in glass art, and covering a continuum from garish to glorious. Wear a T-shirt if you've come to watch the glass-blowers; it can get a tad toasty.

Getting There & Around

AIR

Hokitika Airport is on Airport Dr (off Tudor St), 1.5km east of the centre of town. **Air New**

WHITEBAIT FEVER

Author of *The Bone People* Keri Hulme once opined, 'I'm not particularly serious about anything except whitebaiting'. Okarito's most famous resident recluse may have been commenting on behalf of the entire West Coast, because from September to mid-November, the region's rivers and marine estuaries are crowded with fisherfolk of all ages keen to net a few precious kilos of the immature stage of the inanga (river smelt). Catches in recent years have been lower than normal, and in 2007 prices for the wee beasties reached \$150 per kilogram. With some white-baiters securing up to 15kg on a good day, it can be a lucrative business. Little wonder it's a practice enjoyed by a wide range of keen Coasters, all with their own distinct financial goals. Teenagers save up for a shiny cell phone while Mum might be eyeing a new digital TV receiver. The experienced old-timers are usually just happy to make enough to keep them in beer money and pay for their riverside crib (cottage) or caravan for a few more weeks.

Try a whitebait fritter wrapped in fresh white bread, or head to Hokitika's Fat Pipi Pizza (p507) for its tasty whitebait pizza.

Zeland (☎ 0800 737 000, 09-357 3000; www.airnz.co.nz) has morning and afternoon flights (from \$74 one-way) to/from Christchurch.

BUS

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz) buses depart from outside the **National Kiwi Centre** (03-755 5251; 64 Tancred St) daily for Greymouth (\$18, 45 minutes, departing 12.30pm), Nelson (\$82, seven hours, departing 12.30pm) and Fox Glacier (\$49, 3½ hours, departing 2.55pm).

AtomicShuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) departs i-SITE to Fox Glacier (\$30, 3½ hours, departing 8am and 3.15pm), Greymouth (\$15, one hour, departing 11.30am and 4.50pm) and Queenstown (\$40, 10 hours, departing 8am).

Coast to Coast (☎ 0800 800 847; www.coast2coast.co.nz) also runs daily to Christchurch (\$35, 5½ hours, departing 1.05pm) from the National Kiwi Centre.

TrackNET (☎ 0800 483 262, 03-249 7777; www.tracknet.net) has a 7.30am departure to Queenstown (\$80) stopping at Franz Josef (\$35) and Fox Glaciers (\$40) and Wanaka (\$75).

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) head north to Greymouth, and south to Queenstown stopping at Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, Haast and Wanaka.

CAR HIRE

Branches at Hokitika Airport:

Avis (☎ 03-768 0902; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 03-768 4343; www.budget.co.nz)

Hertz (☎ 03-768 0196; www.hertz.co.nz)

A local company good for day rentals is **Aotearoa Rentals** (☎ 03-755 5222; hokitikacc@xtra.co.nz; Hokitika Car Court, 65 Fitzherbert St).

If you're hankering for something different, **Classic Car Rentals** (☎ 03-755 6928; www.classicarrentals.co.nz; per hr \$120) have replica sports cars just made for the West Coast's winding roads. Choose from a Porsche, Alfa Romeo or Maserati. Ask for Maree at the i-SITE.

TAXI

Try **Hokitika Taxis** (☎ 03-755 5075).

AROUND HOKITIKA

A 33km farmland drive or cycle gets you to **Hokitika Gorge**, a ravishing ravine with turquoise waters. Glacial flour (suspended rock particles) imbues the milky hues. Cross the swing bridge for a couple of short forest walks. To get here, head up Stafford St past the dairy factory and follow the signs.

Kowhitirangi, en route to the gorge, was the scene of a massive 12-day manhunt involving the NZ army in 1941. Unhinged farmer Stanley Graham shot dead four Hokitika policemen, disappeared into the bush then returned to murder three others, eventually being killed himself. A grim roadside monument lines up the farmstead site through a stone gun shaft. The 1982 film *Bad Blood* re-enacts the awful incident.

A gravel forest road (lousy for big vehicles) circumnavigates **Lake Kaniere**, passing **Dorothy Falls**, **Kahikatea Forest** and **Canoe Cove**. The Westland i-SITE and DOC in Hokitika (p504) have info on other local walks, including the **Lake Kaniere Walkway** (four hours one-way), along the lake's western shore, and the **Mahinapua Walkway** (2½ hours one-way), through the reserve on Lake Mahinapua's northeast side to a wildlife-engorged swamp.

There are **DOC camping grounds** (adult/child \$6/1.50) at **Goldsborough**, 17km from Hoki on the 1876 'gold trail'; **Hans Bay**, 19km from Hokitika on Lake Kaniere's eastern shore; and 10km south of Hokitika at **Lake Mahinapua**.

HOKITIKA TO WESTLAND TAI POUTINI NATIONAL PARK

From Hokitika it's 140km south to Franz Josef Glacier. Most travellers fast forward without stopping, but there are some interesting historical highlights, and tramping, kayaking, and bird-watching opportunities along the way. **InterCity** (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz), **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) and **TrackNET** (☎ 0800 483 262, 03-249 7777; www.tracknet.net) are all transport options offering stops along SH6.

Ross

Ross is a town of glories lost, 30km south of Hokitika, where the unearthing of NZ's largest gold nugget, the 2.772kg 'Honourable Roddy', caused a kerfuffle in 1907. The **Ross visitor information centre** (☎ 03-755 4077; www.ross.org.nz; 4 Aylmer St; ☎ 9am-5pm Dec-Feb, to 3pm Mar-Nov) features a scale model of the town in its shiny years.

Opposite is the **Miner's Cottage Museum** (admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm), in an 1885 cottage containing two old Pianolas and a replica Roddy. The re-created **Ross Gaol** next door will make you glad you're not staying there for the night.

The **Water Race Walk** (one hour return), starts near the museum, passing old gold-diggings, caves, tunnels and a cemetery. Try **gold panning** at the visitor information centre (\$10), or hire a pan (\$5) and head to Jones Creek to look for Roddy's great, great grandnuggets.

The **Empire Hotel** (☎ 03-755 4005; basilybil@xtra.co.nz; 19 Aylmer St; unpowered/powerd sites \$15/20, dm/s \$20/40, d \$60-75) has a row of basic cabins and backpacker dorms, with authentic old-timer pub rooms upstairs. Tent and camper-van travellers are also welcome to kip down and join the rest of the night's crew in the friendly bar.

The rustic **Roddy Nugget Cafe & Bar** (☎ 03-755 4245; 5 Moorhouse St; meals \$6-15; ☎ 7am-11pm) is a country café serving homemade meals. Occasionally the bar threatens to re-create the energy of the town's glory days.

Ross to Okarito

South of Ross the bush closes in and mist and rain often cling to the verdant surroundings.

About 16km south of Ross, the **Old Church** (☎ 03-755 4000; SH6; unpowered sites \$12.50, dm/d \$20/50) stands remotely on the Kakapotahi River. Bikes, kayaks and fishing are on offer but BYO food as there's no nearby shop.

PUKEKURA

Just north of Lake Ianthe is this tiny place, population two.

The tour buses descend on the **Bushmans Centre** (☎ 03-755 4144; www.pukekura.co.nz; SH6; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm), an overly rustic café-shop with a pathological distrust of possums, animal rights activists and Aucklanders. Inside is a souvenir shop and the **Bushmans Museum** (adult/family \$4/10), laying on blokey bush humour with a 20-minute video on local industry, antipossum displays and some giant eels. The café offers charming snacks like possum jerky, possum pie and possum pâté. Outside in a paddock are chamois and thar that look happier than the caged possums inside.

Across the road is the **Puke Pub** and the **Wild Foods Restaurant** (☎ 03-755 4008; mains \$10-15; ☎ noon-late), specialising in 'road kill' dishes like 'wheel-tread possum' and 'headlight delight'. (Motto: 'You kill 'em, we'll grill 'em').

Pukekura Lodge (☎ 03-755 4008; SH6; unpowered & powered sites \$20, s/d \$20/45) has four rustic rooms right next door. There's a **DOC camping ground** (adult/child \$6/1.50) beside Lake Ianthe, 6km south of Pukekura.

HARI HARI

About 22km south of Lake Ianthe, Hari Hari made headlines in 1931 when swashbuckling Australian aviator Guy Menzies completed the first solo trans-Tasman flight from Sydney. Menzies crash-landed the *Southern Cross Junior* into the La Fontaine swamp. Menzies' flight took 11¾ hours, 2½ hours faster than fellow Australian Charles Kingsford Smith in 1928. At the southern end of town is a replica of his trusty bi-plane.

The **Hari Hari Coastal Walk** (2¾ hours return; aka Doughboy Walk or Coastal Pack Track) is a well-trodden low-tide loop passing the Poerua and Wanganui Rivers. The walk starts 20km from SH6, the last 8km unsealed; follow Wanganui Flats Rd then La Fontaine Dr. There's tidal info at the trailhead, or ask at the Ross visitor information centre.

The **Flaxbush Motel** (☎ 03-753 3116; flaxbush123@xtra.co.nz; SH6; d \$50-150; ☎ P) has friendly new owners who are serious about upgrading the

complex from its previous 1970s vibe. Cabins and units cover a handy range of budgets, and the caring family seems to act as a rehabilitation facility for abandoned wildlife. Say hi to the orphaned possum that was just weeks old when we dropped by.

The **Hari Hari Motor Inn** (☎ 03-753 3026; hhm@xtra.co.nz; SH6; unpowered/powerd sites \$19/22, dm/d \$18.50/100; P) has serviceable doubles but doesn't have a shared kitchen for campers. The **bistro** (mains \$12-29; ☎ noon-late) is Hari Hari's only evening eatery, with tasty pizzas, steak and roasts and cold pints of beer.

WHATAROA & THE KOTUKU SANCTUARY

Near Whataroa, 35km south of Hari Hari, is NZ's only nesting site for the kotuku (white heron), roosting here between November and February. The herons then fly off individually to reconsider the single life over winter.

White Heron Sanctuary Tours (☎ 0800 523 456, 03-753 4120; www.whiteherontours.co.nz; SH6, Whataroa; adult/child \$95/45; ☎ 4 tours daily late Oct-Mar) has the only DOC concession to see the herons, with 2½-hour 'jetboat ecotours' (the jetboat doesn't bug the birds). Year-round a scenic rainforest tour without the herons is available for the same price.

Next door is the **Sanctuary Tours Motel** (☎ 0800 523 456, 03-753 4120; www.whiteherontours.co.nz; SH6, Whataroa; cabins \$50-60, d \$85-105), with basic cabins with shared facilities (\$8 extra for bed linen), and enthusiastically painted motel units.

Okarito

Another 15km south of Whataroa is The Forks and the turn-off to peaceful Okarito, 13km further on the coast. Keri Hulme's Booker Prize-winning bestseller, *The Bone People*, is set in this unpeopled region. The reclusive author is one of a few score permanent residents in this peaceful coastal hamlet. Okarito has no shops, so stock up on food and supplies at New World in Hokitika.

From the southern end of The Strand, there are a couple of coastal walks to **Three Mile Lagoon** (three hours return; low tide only) and to **Okarito Trig** (1½ hours return). Expect Southern Alps and Okarito Lagoon views.

Okarito Nature Tours (☎ 0800 524 666, 03-753 4014; www.okarito.co.nz; kayak rental per half/full day \$45/55) hires out kayaks for paddles into peaceful **Okarito Lagoon**, a fish-laden buffet for waterbirds. The lagoon is NZ's largest unmodified wetland, an intricate ecosystem of shallow

water and tidal flats surrounded by rainforest. Guided tours are available (from \$65), and overnight camping trips (\$80) take you to deserted North Beach or Lake Windemere.

Also explore the lagoon with **Okarito Boat Tours** (☎ 03-753 4223; www.okaritoboatours.co.nz), with morning and evening sightseeing tours starting at \$40. Bookings are recommended for the nature tour with a gourmet picnic lunch (three hours, \$95).

Okarito Kiwi Tours (☎ 03-753 4330; www.okaritokiwi.tours.co.nz; \$60) run nightly expeditions (two to three hours). Numbers are limited to eight kiwi fans per night, so booking is recommended during summer. The company will also pick you up from Franz Josef, and it boasts a 90% success rate in spying the iconic birds.

Okarito Campground (off Russell St; adult/child \$7.50/free) is a breezy patch of community-managed greenery complete with barbecues, toilets, hot showers (\$1) and a public telephone. Drop your cash in the honesty box and you're sweet as.

An 1892 school building is now the community-run **Okarito YHA Hostel** (☎ 03-753 4151; www.yha.co.nz; The Strand; dm \$21). Bunk down in the classroom, and bring dollar coins for hot showers, and buckets of insect repellent for the occasional bout of industrial-strength sandflies.

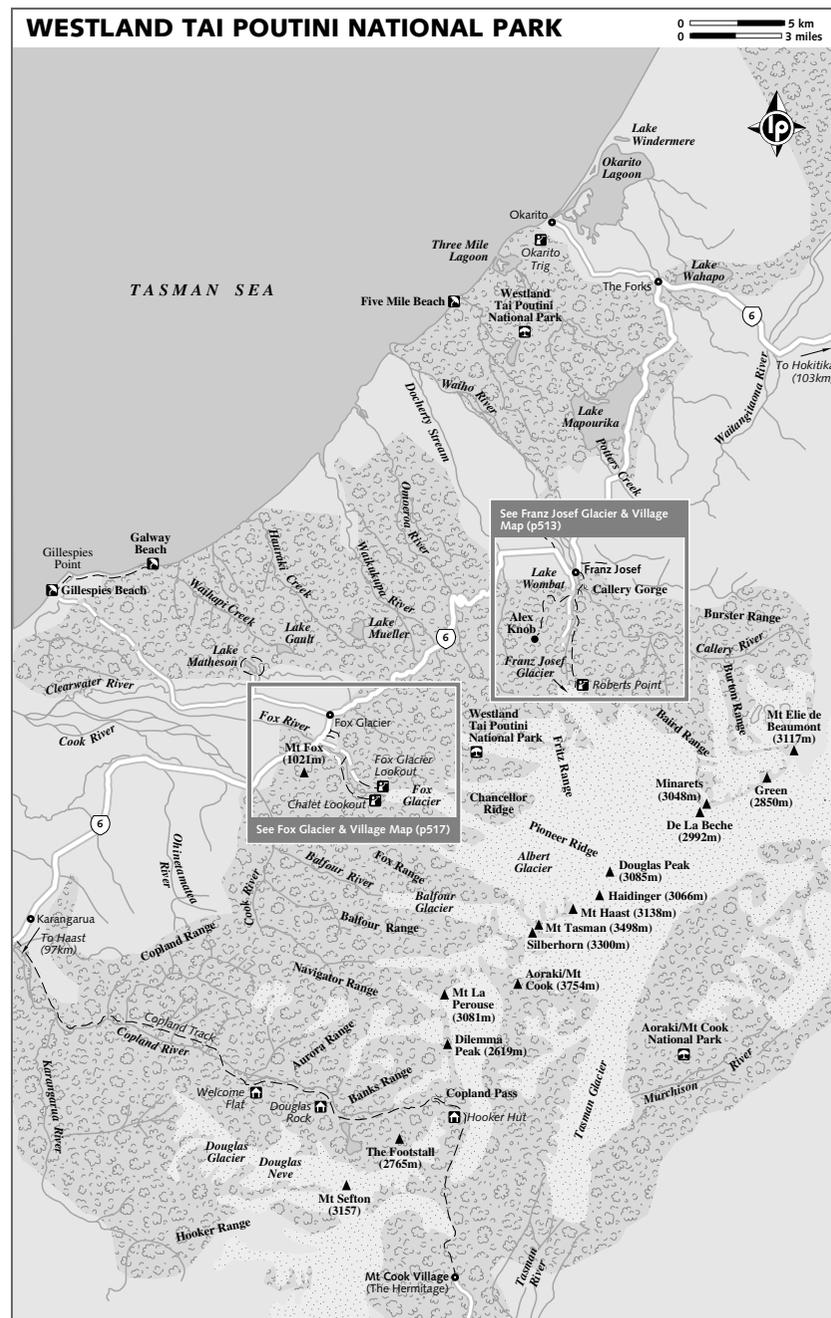
Popular with tour groups (book your bed ahead), the **Okarito Beach House** (☎ 03-753 4080; www.okaritobeachhouse.com; The Strand; dm \$20, d \$60-70; ☎) has semirustic hostel accommodation in two houses. The weathered, self-contained 'Hutel' (\$80) is worth every cent, and just like Keri Hulme, you may never want to leave Okarito.

WESTLAND TAI POUTINI NATIONAL PARK

Literally the biggest highlights of the Westland Tai Poutini National Park are the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers. Nowhere else at this latitude do glaciers come so close to the ocean.

The glaciers' staggering development is largely due to the West Coast's endless rain. Snow falling in the glaciers' broad accumulation zones fuses into clear ice at 20m depth then surges down valleys. The glaciers are particularly steep, so the ice travels a long way before it finally melts.

The rate of descent is mind-blowing: wreckage of a plane that crashed into Franz Josef in 1943, 3.5km from the terminal face, made it down to the bottom 6½ years later – a speed



of 1.5m per day. Big Franz usually advances about 1m per day, but sometimes ramps it up to 5m per day, over 10 times faster than the Swiss Alps' glaciers.

Some say Franz Josef is the superior ice experience, and while it's visually more impressive, the walk to Fox is shorter, more interesting and gets you closer to the ice (80m versus 200m).

Beyond the glaciers, the park's lower reaches harbour deserted Tasman Sea beaches, rising up through colour-splashed podocarp forests to NZ's highest peaks. Virtually unique in the world, diverse ecosystems huddle next to each other in interdependent ecological sequence. Seals frolic in the surf as deer sneak through the forests. The resident endangered bird species include kowhiowhio (blue duck), kaka, kakariki (a parrot) and rowi (Okarito brown kiwi), as well as kea, the South Island's native parrot. Kea are inquisitive and endearing, but feeding them threatens their health.

Heavy tourist traffic often swamps the twin towns of Franz Josef and Fox Glacier, 23km apart and both picture-postcard tourist villages providing accommodation and facilities at higher-than-average prices. Franz is the more action-packed of the two, but Fox has a more subdued alpine charm. From December to February, visitor numbers can get a little crazy in both, so consider travelling in the off season (May to September) for cheaper accommodation.

Franz Josef Glacier

The early Maori knew Franz Joseph as Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere (Tears of the Avalanche Girl). Legend tells of a girl losing her lover who fell from the local peaks, and her flood of tears freezing into the glacier.

The glacier was first explored by Europeans in 1865, Austrian Julius Haast naming it after the Austrian emperor. The glacier started advancing again in 1985 after a period of retreat (see the boxed text, p515).

The glacier is 5km from Franz Joseph village, the terminal face a 40-minute walk from the car park. Both Fox and Franz glacier faces are roped off to prevent people being caught in icefalls and river surges. The danger is very real, and in February 2007, two tourists were injured after being hit by falling ice when they ventured too close. Take a guided tour to get up close and personal.

INFORMATION

There's internet at **Glacier Country Tours & Kayaks** (☎ 03-752 0230; 20 Cron St) and **Scott Base Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 03-752 0288; SH6), and there's an ATM on the main street.

Alpine Adventure Centre (☎ 0800 800 793, 03-752 0793; www.scenic-flights.co.nz; SH6) Books activities and screens the 20-minute *Flowing West* movie (adult/child \$12/6) on a giant screen. Nice visuals, shame about the 1980s soundtrack.

Franz Josef visitor information centre (☎ 03-752 0796; www.glaciercountry.co.nz, www.doc.govt.nz; SH6; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Dec-Feb, to 4.45pm Mar-Nov) Also the regional DOC office; has an excellent display, weather information and tramping-condition updates.

Medical centre (☎ 03-752 0700; SH6; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, doctor 9am-noon Mon-Thu, summer only)

Postal agency (cnr Condon St & SH6) At the Mobil station.

ACTIVITIES

Independent Walks

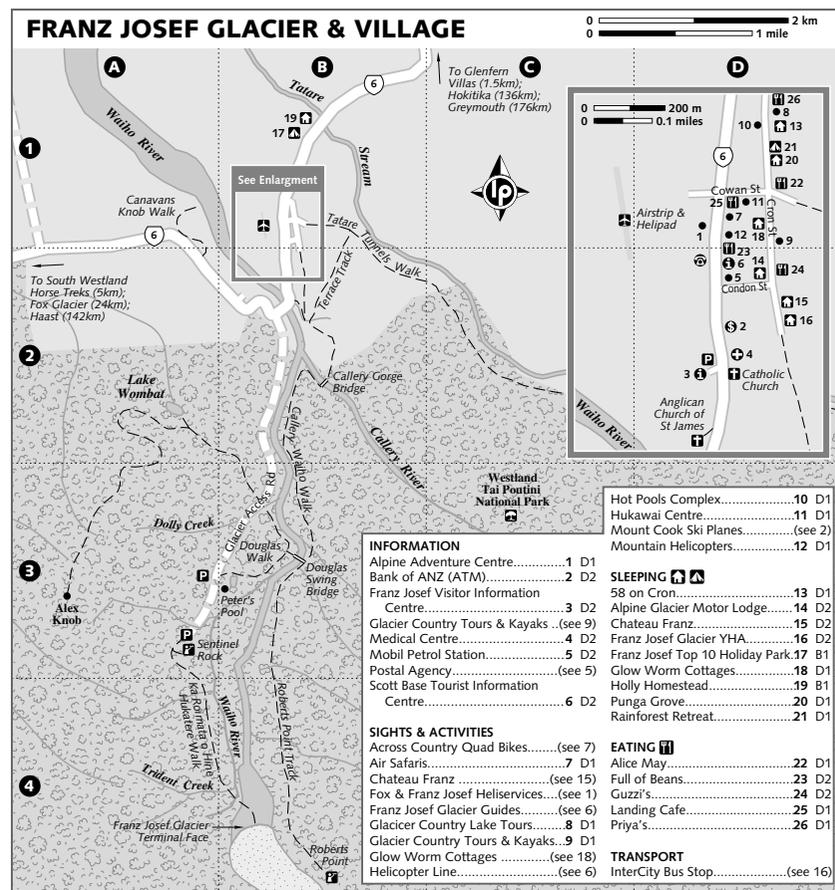
Several glacier viewpoints are accessed from the glacier car park, including **Sentinel Rock** (20 minutes return) and the **Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere Walk** (1½ hours return), leading you to the terminal face.

Other longer walks include the **Douglas Walk** (one hour return), off the Glacier Access Rd, which passes moraine from the 1750 advance and Peter's Pool, a small 'kettle lake'. The **Terrace Track** (30 minutes return) is an easy amble over bushy terraces behind the village with Waiho River views. The rough **Callery-Waiho Walk** (four hours return) heads off from the village to the Douglas Swing Bridge, optionally extending to Roberts Point. The **Alex Knob Track** (eight hours return) runs from the Glacier Access Rd to the 1303m peak of Alex Knob. Look forward to three glacier lookouts and views to the coast (cloud cover permitting).

Check out the glacier in the morning or evening, before the cloud cover sets in or after it lifts. Expect less tour buses as well.

Guided Walks & Helihikes

Small group walks with experienced guides (boots, jackets and equipment supplied) are offered by **Franz Josef Glacier Guides** (☎ 0800 484 337, 03-752 0763; www.franzjosefglacier.com). Half-/three-quarter-/full-day walks are \$90/120/140 per adult (slightly cheaper for children). Full-day trips have around six hours on the ice, half-day trips up to two hours. Full-day ice-climbing trips (\$220 including training) and



three-hour helihikes with two hours on the ice (\$360) are also available. Helihikes take you further up the glacier to explore blue-ice caves, séracs and pristine ice formations.

Aerial Sightseeing

Forget sandflies and mozzies. The buzzing you're hearing is more likely to be helicopters and planes cruising past the glaciers and Aoraki (Mt Cook). Most flights also include a snow landing. A 20-minute flight to the head of Franz Josef or Fox Glacier costs around \$180. Flights past both of the glaciers and to Mt Cook cost from \$280 to \$340. These are adult prices; kids under 15 pay between 60% and 70% of the adult price. Shop around.

Recommended operators are all situated on SH6 in Franz Josef Village:

Air Safaris (☎ 03-752 0716; www.airsafaris.co.nz)

Fox & Franz Josef Heliservices (☎ 0800 800 793,

03-752 0793; www.scenic-flights.co.nz)

Helicopter Line (☎ 0800 807 767, 03-752 0767; www.helicopter.co.nz)

Mount Cook Ski Planes (☎ 0800 368 000, 03-752 0714; www.mtcookskiplanes.com)

Mountain Helicopters (☎ 0800 369 432, 03-752 0046; www.mountainhelicopters.co.nz) Also runs shorter 10-minute flights (\$105).

Other Activities

The **Hukawai Centre** (☎ 0800 485 2921, 03-752 0600; www.hukawai.co.nz; cnr Cowan & Cron Sts; adult/child/family \$25/12.50/65; ☎ 10am-7pm) has an icy walk-through

interactive experience that provides a handy Glaciers 101 before you venture out to see the real thing. Active types will love the indoor ice-climbing wall (1½ hours including tuition \$90). Expect an audience through the huge windows as you scale the 10m wall.

Take a guided kayak trip on Lake Mapourika (7km north of Franz) with **Glacier Country Tours & Kayaks** (☎ 0800 423 262, 03-752 0230; www.glacierkayaks.com; 20 Cron St; 4hr tours \$75). Trips include ecological commentary, mountain views and a serene channel detour. The family deal (\$180) is good value for Mum, Dad and two kids. You can also hire kayaks (\$60 for 2½ hours).

South Westland Horse Treks (☎ 0800 187 357, 03-752 0223; www.horsetreknz.com; Waiho Flats Rd; treks \$50-190), 5km south of town, runs one- to six-hour equine excursions across farmland and remote beaches.

Glacier Valley Eco-Tours (☎ 0800 999 739; www.glaciervalley.co.nz) offers three-hour walks (\$60) that are leisurely and packed with local knowledge. Similar walks are offered down at Fox Glacier.

Faster-paced (and certainly noisier) are the four-wheeled outings from **Across Country Quad Bikes** (☎ 0800 234 288, 03-752 0123; Air Safaris Bldg, SH6). Rockin' and rollin' rainforest quad-bike trips (two hours, adult/child \$115/65) are joined by off-road adventures on 8WD Argo amphibious vehicles (one hour, \$60). Heliquad adventures (2½ hours, \$325) traverse the mountains and coastline by air before taking on a remote West Coast beach.

Join **Glacier Country Lake Tours** (☎ 0800 525 386, 03-752 0244; www.laketours.co.nz; 64 Cron St) on placid Lake Mapourika. Fishing and ecotour excursions (1½ hours, \$65 to \$85) are both available.

Hire bikes from **Chateau Franz** (☎ 03-752 0738; 8 Cron St), **Glow Worm Cottages** (☎ 0800 151 027, 03-752 0172; 27 Cron St) or **Across Country Quad Bikes** (☎ 03-752 0123; Air Safaris Bldg, SH6).

At the time of writing, planing was underway for a new **hot pools complex** on Cron St, with private cabanas and pools surrounded by lush rainforest. Ask at the visitor information centre for the latest news.

SLEEPING Budget

Franz Josef Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 467 897, 03-752 0735; www.mountain-view.co.nz; SH6; unpowered/powered sites \$40, d \$50-170; 📶 📺) Playground-packed

and family-friendly, this camping ground with cabins and swisher motel units was in expansion mode when we swung by.

Chateau Franz (☎ 0800 728 372, 03-752 0738; www.chateaufranz.co.nz; 8 Cron St; dm \$22-26, d \$53-120; 📶 📺) It's about as French as French fries, but this sprawling place is good value with lots of different rooms, and freebies galore (DVDs, popcorn, vegetable soup) on tap. The big-screen TVs make the occasional drizzle more bearable.

Glow Worm Cottages (☎ 0800 151 027, 03-752 0172; www.glowwormcottages.co.nz; 27 Cron St; dm/s from \$25/53, d \$53-105; 📶 📺) After a day of adventure, relax at this quiet haven trimmed by native ferns. Be back by 6pm and there's free veggie soup on offer. If the rain settles in, chill out in the spa or with a good DVD.

Franz Josef Glacier YHA (☎ 03-752 0754; www.yha.co.nz; 2-4 Cron St; dm \$25-29, s \$49, d \$71-102; 📶 📺) A high-standard, colourful place with over 100 beds (linen provided) in 36 heated rooms. There are three family rooms, a Kiwi sauna (keep your bathers on please) and the rainforest at the back door. The needs of travellers with disabilities are well catered for.

Midrange

Rainforest Retreat (☎ 0800 873 346, 03-752 0220; www.rainforestretreat.co.nz; 46 Cron St; unpowered/powered sites \$26/34, dm \$25-27, d \$65-209; 📶 📺) Campsites and dorms share first-rate facilities (including sauna and spa), and there are also en suite cottages and elevated self-contained 'tree houses' (\$249 to \$329) that sleep up to seven. The Monsoon Bar – motto: 'It rains, we pour' – is a social option on rainy days.

Alpine Glacier Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 757 111, 03-752 0226; www.alpineglaciermotel.com; 14 Cron St; d \$165-185) Standard motel offerings for the dorm-weary traveller in a U-shaped configuration. Two units have spas, and king-size units have cooking facilities.

58 on Cron (☎ 0800 662 766, 03-752 0627; www.franz-josef-accommodation.co.nz; 58 Cron St; d \$175-195) No prizes for the name, but with trendy, dark chocolate decor and flash furniture, this new bush-side spot is one of FJ's classier motels.

Top End

Punga Grove (☎ 0800 437 269, 03-752 0001; www.punagrove.co.nz; 40 Cron St; d \$180-250) Priding itself on top-notch service, Punga is a quality motel on the rainforest verge. Split-level self-contained family units mix it up with spacious studios.

Spurge on a luxury rainforest studio with leather couches.

Glenfern Villas (☎ 0800 453 633, 03-752 0054; www.glenfern.co.nz; SH6; d \$195-245) A handy 3km out of the tourist hubbub, these self-contained designer villas sit amid nikau palms and have private decks and gardens. Pour yourself a glass of wine and toast your holiday and the nearby alpine peaks.

Holly Homestead (☎ 03-752 0299; www.hollyhomestead.co.nz; SH6; d \$200-380) Guests are welcomed with fresh home baking at this luxury wisteria-draped 1920s B&B. Five gorgeous rooms all have en suites, and a new guest suite features a private deck just made for early evening wine-tasting. Kids under 12 will have to sleep in the car.

EATING & DRINKING

Full of Beans (☎ 03-752 0139; SH6; mains \$8-17; 📶 7.30am-late) Cruisy café that offers superlative coffee – the best in town – and tasty homemade cakes from go to whoa. Good-value lunch offerings include burgers, Thai curry and venison hotpot.

Landing Cafe (☎ 03-752 0229; SH6; mains \$10-30; 📶 7.30am-late) From early to late, under the market umbrellas at this cosy pub-café is the

place to be. Burgers, soups, pasta and wraps give you plenty of opportunity to overhear other travellers going gaga over the glaciers.

Guzzi's (☎ 03-752 0085; 18 Cron St; pizza \$12-24; 📶 noon-late; 📺) Choose your own toppings – including plenty of vegetarian options – at this bright yellow and purple pizza'n'takeaways shack with a matching cute-as-a-button delivery van.

Alice May (☎ 03-752 0740; cnr Cowan & Cron Sts; mains \$12-30; 📶 4pm-late) At this rustic Nordic-style lodge transplanted from somewhere near the Arctic Circle there's no smorgasbord on offer, but plenty of meaty meals like pork ribs and venison stew. Park yourself on a rustic barstool for happy hour (4pm to 7pm).

Priya's (☎ 03-752 0060; 70 Cron St; mains \$14-20; 📶 lunch 11.30am-2.30pm, dinner 5pm-late) The flashiest of Priya's West Coast spicy curry cartels, this Indian restaurant has a cosy bar that's perfect if the weather gets dodgy. Between lunch and dinner servings, you might find the staff playing cricket in the carpark.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz) has daily buses south to Fox Glacier (\$14, 40 minutes, departing 8am and 5.05pm) and

GLACIERS FOR DUMMIES

During the last ice age (15,000 to 20,000 years ago) the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers reached the sea; in the ensuing thaw they may have crawled back further than their current positions. In the 14th century a mini ice age descended and for centuries the glaciers advanced, reaching their greatest extent around 1750. The terminal moraines from this time are still visible. Since then the West Coast's twin glaciers have both ebbed and advanced on a cyclic basis, and since 1985 it's estimated the Franz Josef glacier has actually advanced by up to 70 cm per day.

If you get rained in during your time in glacier country, here are a few glacier-geek conversation starters for the pub.

ablation zone – where the glacier melts

accumulation zone – where the snow collects

bergschund – a large *crevasse* in the ice near the glacier's starting point

blue ice – as the accumulation zone (*névé*) snow is compressed by subsequent snowfalls, it becomes *firm* and then *blue ice*

crevasse – a crack in the glacial ice formed as it crosses obstacles while descending

dead ice – isolated chunks of ice left behind when a glacier retreats

firn – partly compressed snow en route to becoming *blue ice*

glacial flour – finely ground rock particles in the milky rivers flowing off glaciers

icefall – when a glacier descends so steeply that the upper ice breaks into a jumble of ice blocks

kettle lake – a lake formed by the melt of an area of isolated *dead ice*

moraine – walls of debris formed at the glacier's sides (lateral moraine) or end (terminal moraine)

névé – snowfield area where *firn* is formed

sérac – ice pinnacles formed, like *crevasses*, by the glacier rolling over obstacles

terminal – the final ice face at the bottom of the glacier

Queenstown (\$116, eight hours, departing 8am); and north to Nelson (\$105, 10 hours, departing 9.15am). Book at the YHA or Scott Base Tourist Information Centre; buses depart from the YHA.

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) has daily services south to Queenstown (\$50, 7½ hours, departing 10.15am) via Fox Glacier (\$15, 30 minutes), and north to Greymouth (\$35, 2½ hours, departing 2.40pm), leaving from the Alpine Adventure Centre.

Glacier Valley Eco Tours (☎ 03-752 0699; www.glaciervalley.co.nz) runs shuttles to the glacier car park (return trip \$12).

TrackNET (☎ 0800 483 262, 03-249 7777; www.tracknet.net) has a 9.15am departure to Queenstown (\$50) stopping at Fox Glacier (\$15) and Wanaka (\$40).

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) runs north to Hokitika and Greymouth, and south to Queenstown stopping at Fox Glacier, Haast and Wanaka.

Fox Glacier

Not a shy and retiring type, Sir William Fox was NZ's prime minister when he named the river of ice in 1872. Even if you've already been to Franz Josef Glacier, it's still worth checking out Fox. Take a walk around beautiful Lake Matheson, and dive into Fox's array of glacier-related attractions: glacier walks, flights and travellers wearing thermals.

INFORMATION

There are no banks or ATMs in town; the BP petrol station is the last fuel stop until Haast, 120km south. Get online at the Internet Outpost, beside the Helicopter Line office.

DOC South Westland Area Office (☎ 03-751 0807; SH6; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4.30pm Mon-Fri) No longer a general visitor information centre, but has the usual DOC information and weather/track updates.

Fox Glacier Guiding (☎ 0800 111 600, 03-751 0825; www.foxguides.co.nz; SH6) Books most activities and transport; includes postal services and a money exchange.

Fox Glacier Healthcare (☎ 03-751 0836, after hr 027 464 1193; SH6) The nurse here can patch you up on weekday mornings from 9am to 11.30am, and there's a doctor from 2pm to 5pm on Thursdays.

ACTIVITIES

Independent Walks

It's 1.5km from Fox Village to the glacier turn-off, a further 2km to the car park. The

terminal face is 30 to 40 minutes' walk from there, finishing 80m from the ice.

Short walks around the glacier include the **Moraine Walk** (over a major 18th-century advance) and **Minnehaha Walk**. The **River Walk** extends to the **Chalet Lookout Track** (1½ hours return) leading to a glacier lookout.

About 6km down Cook Flat Rd is the turn-off to **Lake Matheson**. It's an hour's walk around the lake, and at the far end (on a clear day) are improbably photogenic views of Mt Tasman and Mt Cook reflected in the water. Visit during the early morning or when the sun is low in the late afternoon.

Follow Cook Flat Rd for its full 21km (unsealed for the final 12km) to the remote black sand and rimu forest of **Gillespies Beach**, from where there's a dune track to **Galway Beach** (3½ hours return). The **Mt Fox Walk** (1021m above sea level; eight hours return), off the highway 3km south of town, makes for a challenging hike, only recommended for well-equipped trampers.

Glacier Walks & Helihikes

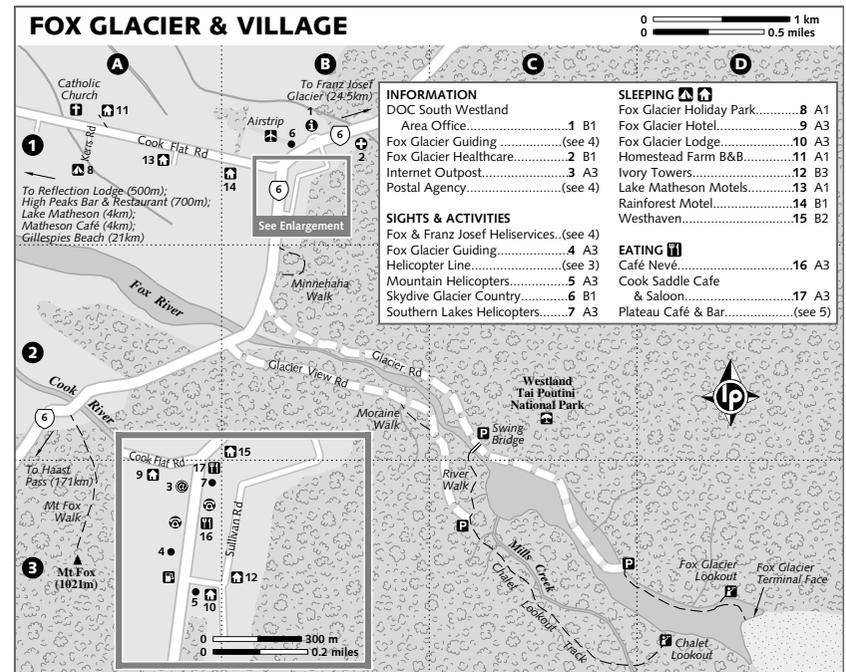
Guided walks (equipment provided) are organised by **Fox Glacier Guiding** (☎ 0800 111 600, 03-751 0825; www.foxguides.co.nz; SH6). Half-day walks cost \$85/49 per adult/child; full-day walks are \$125 (over-13s only). If you're fit, consider the full-day stroll, which takes you further up the glacier; BYO lunch.

Helihikes cost \$265/240 per adult/child, while a day-long introductory ice-climbing course costs \$215 per adult. From October to April, there are also easy-going two-hour interpretive walks to the glacier (adult/child \$45/25). Longer guided helitreks adventures are also available.

Skydiving & Aerial Sightseeing

With Fox Glacier's backdrop of Southern Alps, rainforest and ocean, it's hard to imagine a better place to jump out of a plane. **Skydive Glacier Country** (☎ 0800 751 0080, 03-751 0080; www.skydiving.co.nz; Fox Glacier Airfield, SH6, Fox Glacier Village) is a professional outfit that challenges Isaac Newton with thrilling leaps from 12,000ft (\$295) or 9000ft (\$245). Digitise your terror with a DVD/photo graph package (\$170/30). Smile as you scream.

Aerial sightseeing costs at Fox parallel those at Franz Josef. Unless otherwise indicated, the recommended operators are all on SH6 in Fox Glacier Village:



Fox & Franz Josef Heliservices (☎ 0800 800 793, 03-751 0866; www.scenic-flights.co.nz)

Southern Lakes Helicopters (☎ 0800 800 732, 03-751 0803; www.heli-flights.co.nz)

Helicopter Line (☎ 0800 807 767, 03-751 0767; www.helicopter.co.nz)

Mount Cook Ski Planes (☎ 0800 368 000, 03-752 0714; www.mtcookskiplanes.com; SH6, Franz Josef Village)

Mountain Helicopters (☎ 03-751 0045; www.mountainhelicopters.co.nz)

SLEEPING

Budget

Fox Glacier Holiday Park (☎ 0800 154 366, 03-751 0821; www.foxglacierholidaypark.co.nz; Kerrs Rd; unpowdered/powdered sites \$30/32, tw cabins \$58, d \$92-130; ☎) This park has a range of different sleeping options to suit all budgets. Facilities have always been good, but when we dropped in, they were building a new amenities block.

Fox Glacier Hotel (☎ 03-751 0839; cnr SH6 & Cook Flat Rd; s \$25-70, d \$40-130; ☎) Builders managed to erect this two-storey hotel just in time for the Great Depression. The budget rooms in the main building are quite depressing, so ask for a brighter room in either the

Sullivan or Kowhai wings. Surprisingly good value.

Ivory Towers (☎ 03-751 0838; www.ivorytowerslodge.co.nz; Sullivan Rd; dm/s \$26/48, tw & d \$65-80, f \$90 ☎) This top-notch hostel is tidy, laid-back, colourful, draped in greenery, and endowed with good facilities. The rainy-day 'cinema' has old seats from a derelict Hokitika theatre and a thoroughly modern big-screen TV.

Midrange

Rainforest Motel (☎ 0800 724 636, 03-751 0140; www.rainforestmotel.co.nz; Cook Flat Rd; d \$105-140) Rustic log cabins on the outside with coolly neutral decor on the inside; now with the added attraction of Sky TV for those rainy West Coast days.

Lake Matheson Motels (☎ 0800 452 2437, 03-751 0830; www.lakematheson.co.nz; Cook Flat Rd; d \$115-150) The friendly folk here seem to continually pour their profits into refurbishing the already comfortable units; worthy behaviour we say. A separate house sleeps up to seven (from \$190, minimum of five travellers).

Fox Glacier Lodge (☎ 03-751 0888; www.foxglacierlodge.co.nz; Sullivan Rd; d \$130-250) Well-proportioned timber apartments with mountain views and

that 'just a couple of years old' feel. The B&B spa chalet is top of the heap.

Homestead Farm B&B (☎ 03-751 0835; foxhomestead@slingshot.co.nz; Cook Flat Rd; tw & d \$140-165) This was Fox's first farmhouse, and it's still in the same family. The three rooms are fittingly quaint and all have en suites. Continental breakfasts are included, and cooked breakfasts cost an extra \$7. And it's nothing personal, but kids under seven aren't welcome.

Top End

Reflection Lodge (☎ 03-751 0707; www.reflectionlodge.co.nz; Cook Flat Rd; tw & d \$190; (P) (Q)) Funky '60s ski-lodge style with flash new bathrooms. Blur your eyes a little – well, maybe a bit more – and you could almost be in an old James Bond movie. The West Coast's friendliest little dog brings you back to supercomfy reality.

Westhaven (☎ 03-751 0084; www.thewesthaven.co.nz; SH6; d \$195-225; (P) (Q)) These architecturally precise suites are a classy combo of corrugated steel and local stone amid burnt red and ivory walls. The deluxe king rooms have spas and there are directors chairs for relaxing outside.

EATING & DRINKING

Matheson Café (☎ 03-751 0878; Lake Matheson Rd; mains \$10-17; ☎ 7.30am-5pm) Near the shores of Lake Matheson, this café does everything right: slick interior design, inspiring mountain views, strong coffee and upmarket Kiwi fare. Get your sketchpad out and while away the afternoon.

High Peaks Bar & Restaurant (☎ 03-751 0131; Cooks Flat Rd; bar meals \$14-24, restaurant mains \$27-34; ☎ 6pm-late) Angled towards Mt Cook, High Peaks combines eating and drinking. Forget the calories, this is enjoyment food: steaks, pastas, fish and chips, roasts, chunky soups and stews. Have another Monteith's and wait for the clouds to part.

Café Nevé (☎ 03-751 0110; SH6; mains \$15-30; ☎ 8am-late) Smart choices on the menu include pizza and award-winning ways with beef and lamb, and there's home-baked cookies and cakes available throughout the day. If you're going for a wander take along one of their takeaway focaccia sandwiches.

Plateau Café & Bar (☎ 03-751 0058; cnr Sullivan Rd & SH6; mains \$18-30; ☎ 10am-late) Buzzy and sophisticated (for the West Coast anyway), Plateau combines snappy service with an eclectic menu, boutique Kiwi beers and an excellent

wine list. There are good veggie options and a damn fine Thai seafood curry.

Cook Saddle Cafe & Saloon (☎ 03-751 0700; SH6; meals \$18-30; ☎ 8am-late) The menu trots out every cowboy cliché – anyone for Lone Ranger Lamb? – but later at night it's a more than an OK corral for locals and travellers.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Most buses stop outside the Fox Glacier Guiding building.

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz) runs daily buses north to Franz Josef (\$14, 40 minutes, departing 8.30am and 3.25pm), the morning bus continuing to Nelson (\$107, 11 hours). Daily southbound services run to Queenstown (\$110, 7½ hours, departing 8.45am).

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) runs daily to Franz Josef (\$15, 30 minutes, departing 9am and 1.55pm), continuing to Greymouth (\$40, 3¼ hours). Southbound buses run daily to Queenstown (\$48, 6½ hours, departing 11am).

TrackNET (☎ 0800 483 262, 03-249 7777; www.tracknet.net) has a 9.45am departure to Queenstown (\$48) stopping at Wanaka (\$35).

Fox Glacier Shuttle (☎ 0800 369 287) will drive you to Lake Matheson or Fox Glacier and allow you enough time for a stroll (\$12 return, minimum two people).

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) runs north to Franz Josef Glacier, Hokitika and Greymouth, and south to Queenstown, stopping at Haast and Wanaka.

SOUTH TO HAAST

About 26km south of Fox Glacier, along SH6, the **Copland Valley** is the western end of the **Copland Track** (three days one-way). Challenging and spectacular, the walk is usually tackled east to west (starting from Mt Cook), but from SH6 you can still do a six- to seven-hour walk up Copland Valley to overnight at the **Welcome Flat DOC Hut** (\$15), where thermal springs bubble. Backcountry Hut Passes don't apply here, but you can buy tickets at any West Coast DOC office or visitor information centre.

Popular with Haast to Fox cyclists and Copland Track trampers, the **Pine Grove Motel** (☎ 03-751 0898; pine_grove@xtra.co.nz; SH6; unpowered & powered sites \$20, d \$40-90) is 8km south of the trailhead. Units are affordable and in reasonable shape.

A bit like Dr Evil's shark pool are these fish ponds on the Paringa River. The **Salmon**

Farm Café & Shop (☎ 03-751 0837; SH6; meals \$10-30; ☎ 8am-4pm) serves salmon-filled omelettes, platters, pastas and fresh pâté. It's \$1 to feed the fish, but the plump little buggers don't look hungry.

There's a basic **DOC camping ground** (adult/child \$6/1.50) 70km south of Fox Glacier at **Lake Paringa**, a tranquil trout-filled lake surrounded by swaying forest boughs.

The historic **Haast–Paringa Cattle Track** hoofs off from SH6 (just south of Lake Paringa, 43km northeast of Haast) and emerges on the coast by the Waita River, just north of Haast. The track's first leg to **Blowfly Hut** (four hours return) is an easy-going half-day hike. The full walk takes three days, stopping at **Maori Saddle Hut** and **Coppermine Creek Hut**. The track can get muddy – check conditions and pay hut fees (\$5 per night) at the DOC Haast visitor information centre (right).

Lake Moeraki, 31km north of Haast, is another rippling fishing lake. An easy 40-minute walk from here brings you to **Monro Beach**, a west-facing gravel beach copping the full Tasman Sea force. There's a breeding colony of Fiordland crested penguins here (July to December) and fur seals. **Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki** (☎ 03-750 0881; www.wildernesslodge.co.nz; SH6; d incl breakfast \$720-980; (Q)) is a pricey, private ecolodge with plush rooms and cooked breakfasts. The steep tariff includes a prime coastal location and free guided walking, fishing and canoe trips. Enjoy.

About 5km south of Lake Moeraki is the much-photographed **Knights Point** (named after a surveyor's dog) where the Haast road was eventually opened in 1965. Deep waters just offshore and uninterrupted Antarctic swells make this a favoured eatery for seals, birds and sometimes whales.

Ship Creek, 15km north of Haast, has a lookout platform and two interesting interpretive walks: the **Dune Lake Walk** (30 minutes return) and the **Kahikatea Swamp Forest Walk** (20 minutes return).

HAAST REGION

The Haast region is a major nature refuge with enormous stands of rainforest thriving alongside extensive wetlands. The area's kahikatea and flame-red rimu forests, swamps, sand dunes, seal and penguin colonies, bird life and sweeping beaches ensured its inclusion in the Southwest New Zealand (Te Wahipounamu) World Heritage Area. Birding buffs might

see fantails, bellbirds, kereru (NZ pigeons), falcons, kaka, kiwi and morepork.

Haast pop 300

Some 120km south of Fox Glacier, Haast crouches around the mouth of the wide Haast River in three distinct pockets: Haast Junction, Haast Village and Haast Beach. After the jaw-dropping scenery of the glaciers or Haast Pass, the area is a functional service hub, but local operators are waiting on your call to transport you deeper into some of NZ's most spectacular wilderness areas.

Haast is also big on whitebaiting; see the boxed text, p508.

INFORMATION

The **DOC Haast visitor information centre** (☎ 03-750 0809; www.doc.govt.nz; cnr SH6 & Jackson Bay Rd; ☎ 9am-6pm Nov-Mar, to 4.30pm Apr-Oct) has wall-to-wall regional info and every half-hour it screens the all-too-brief Haast landscape film *Edge of Wilderness* (adult/child \$3/free).

ACTIVITIES & TOURS

Take a hair-toubling two-hour 'sea to mountain' eco-jetboat trip on the wild Waitototo River with **Waitototo River Safaris** (☎ 03-750 0780; www.riversafaris.co.nz; Jackson Bay Rd; adult/child \$130/80; ☎ 10am, 1pm & 4pm), departing from the Waitototo River Bridge 30km south of Haast. **Haast River Safari** (☎ 0800 865 382, 03-750 0101; www.haastriver.co.nz; adult/child \$120/50; ☎ 9am & 2pm), based in the Red Barn between Haast Village and the visitor information centre, runs more leisurely covered-jetboat cruises on the Haast River.

Round About Haast (☎ 03-750 0890; www.roundabouthaast.co.nz; tours \$65-135) runs local boat and minibus tours. Out on Jackson Bay you'll see seals, dolphins and (seasonally) penguins, while the bus takes you to beaches, estuaries and forests, with walks and local folklore thrown in.

SLEEPING

Budget

Haast Lodge (☎ 0800 500 703, 03-750 0703; www.haastlodge.com; Marks Rd; sites \$24, dm \$24-28, tw & d \$56; (Q)) There's a bit much beige and shiny lino going on, but the functional rooms here are spotlessly clean and the whole shebang is very well-managed.

Haast Beach Holiday Park (☎ 0800 843 226, 03-750 0860; haastpark@xtra.co.nz; Jackson Bay Rd; unpowered &

powered sites \$30, dm \$20, d \$36-100) Close to the beach about 15km south of Haast, this caravan park has old but functional facilities. The Hapuka Estuary Walk (right) is across the road.

Wilderness Accommodation (☎ 03-750 0029; www.wildernessaccommodation.co.nz; Marks Rd; dm/s \$24/40, d \$55-95; 📍) A sprawling timber complex with hostel and motel wings, this place is the best value in town. Dorms aren't crowded, doubles are even less crowded, and there is a Bangkok market-worthy range of free DVDs. A leafy courtyard is ideal for rainy-day jigsaws and chess. Bikes and scooters are for hire.

Midrange

Okuru Beach B&B (☎ 03-750 0719; www.okurubeach.co.nz; Cuttance Rd North; homestay s/d \$60/95, cottages d \$95-110) This relaxed beachy house is a leisurely stroll from the sand. The main house has three homestay rooms, and there are two self-contained cottages down the street. To get there turn right at the blue B&B sign 14km south of Haast.

Haast World Heritage Hotel (☎ 0800 502 444, 03-750 0828; www.world-heritage-hotel.com; SH6; s \$90-150, d \$220-260; 📍) This sprawling hotel is staking its claim as the most comfy place to stay in town. The Frontier Café is open for lunch (mains \$12 to \$22) and dinner (mains \$18 to \$32), and the bar has big live-sport-friendly TVs and pool tables. Live bands occasionally rouse the friendly and laid-back locals.

Aspiring Court Motel (☎ 0800 500 703, 03-750 0777; www.aspiringcourtmotel.com; Marks Rd; d \$120-140; 📍) Just as clean and well-run as the associated Haast Lodge are these comfortable motel units just next door.

Top End

Collyer House (☎ 03-750 0022; www.collyerhouse.co.nz; Jackson Bay Rd; s/d incl cooked breakfast \$250/280) Thick bathrobes, complimentary toiletries, quality linen and beach views all make Collyer House an indulgent but good-value choice. Follow the signs off SH6 for 12km down Jackson Bay Rd.

EATING & DRINKING

Fantail Café (☎ 03-750 0055; Marks Rd; breakfast & lunch \$10-15, dinner \$15-27; ☎ 8am-9pm) With café fodder, fish and chips, and smarter evening meals (including beer and wine) on offer, this friendly spot with outside tables is superversatile.

Hard Antler (☎ 03-750 0034; Marks Rd; dinner \$18-27; ☎ dining 11am-9pm) Raucous as hell on a Friday

night, and all the better for it. An expanding array of deer antlers, pool tables and darts, and robust pub grub (lamb, steak and pork) make this an unpretentious spot.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz) and **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 03-322 8883; www.atomictravel.co.nz) buses stop at the visitor information centre on their Fox to Wanaka runs. **TrackNET** (☎ 0800 483 262, 03-249 7777; www.tracknet.net) also swings through linking Queenstown and Greymouth.

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) runs north to the glaciers, Hokitika and Greymouth, and south to Queenstown, stopping at Wanaka.

Haast to Jackson Bay & Cascade River

From Haast Junction a side road heads to Jackson Bay with numerous wilderness walks along the way.

Near Okuru is the **Hapuka Estuary Walk** (20 minutes return), an information-packed boardwalk loop winding its way through a sleepy whitebait sanctuary.

After crossing Arawhata Bridge, turn onto the narrow, unsealed road along the Jackson River to **Martyr Saddle**, with views of the Cascade River Valley and the incredible **Red Hills**. Their ruddy hues are due to high magnesium and iron concentrations. Three kilometres beyond Martyr Saddle is an end-of-the-road lookout above the **Cascade River**.

The main road continues west from Arawhata Bridge to the isolated fishing hamlet of **Jackson Bay**. Southern Alps views from here are unforgettable, and there are colonies of Fiordland crested penguins near the road. Migrants arrived here in 1875 under a doomed assisted-immigration scheme, their farming fantasies mercilessly shattered by never-ending rain and the lack of a wharf, not built until 1938. Today fishing boats bob on the bay, gathering lobster, tuna, tarakihi and gurnard.

The best of the seafood is served at the **Craypot** (☎ 03-750 0035; meals \$7-20; ☎ noon-6pm Sep-Easter, to 7.30pm in summer), a classic Kiwi dining experience. Fish and chips, whitebait sandwiches and mixed grills are served up in an absolute waterfront location. The rustic old caravan with views of snowy peaks is pretty hard to beat.

Walks at Jackson Bay include the **Smooth-water Bay Track** (three hours return) and the

Wharekai Te Kau Walk (40 minutes return) to Ocean Beach, a secluded bay with curious rock formations.

HAAST PASS

Turning inland from Haast towards Wanaka (145km, 2½ hours), SH6 snakes alongside the Haast River, climbing up to Haast Pass and Mt Aspiring National Park. As you move inland the vegetation thins away until you reach the 563m pass – snow country covered in tussock and scrub. There are some stunning waterfalls en route (especially if it's been raining), tumbling down just minutes from the highway: **Fantail** and **Thunder Creek** falls are worth a look.

There's also the **Bridle Track** (1½ hours one-way) between the pass and Davis Flat. See the DOC booklet *Haast Pass/Tioripatea Highway: Walking Opportunities* (\$1).

The Haast Pass road (Tioripatea, meaning 'Clear Path' in Maori) opened in 1965; before then Maori walked this route bringing West Coast greenstone to the Makarora River in Otago. The pass (and river and township) take their European name from geologist Julius Haast, who passed through in 1863.

There are food and fuel stops at Makarora and Lake Hawea. If you're driving north, check your fuel gauge: Haast petrol station is the last one before Fox Glacier, 120km north.

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