

Christchurch & Canterbury



The good people of Canterbury are probably only half-joking when they say it would be good if the South Island was a separate country, but when you consider the region surrounding them you can understand their parochial pride and confidence.

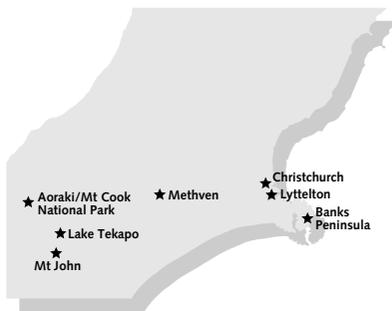
Christchurch is undoubtedly one of New Zealand's most liveable cities, combining an easy-going provincial charm with the emerging energy and verve of a metropolis. Modern bars and restaurants complement Gothic architecture, and locals know how lucky they are to blend all the attractions of a city with the relaxed ambience of a small town.

To the east the volcanically uplifted hills of Banks Peninsula conceal a wealth of hidden bays and isolated beaches, forming a backdrop for kayaking and wildlife cruises with an eventual sunset return to the Francophile attractions of Akaroa. To the north are the up-and-coming vineyards of the Waipara Valley and the take-it-easy spa town of Hanmer Springs, and westwards the preferred weekend backyard of active Cantabrians builds quickly from the well-ordered farms of the Canterbury Plains to the rough-and-tumble wilderness of the Southern Alps.

Summertime attractions include tramping in the braided rivers and alpine valleys around Arthur's Pass or mountain biking around the turquoise lakes of the Mackenzie Country, and during winter the attention switches to the mountains with skiing at Mt Hutt. During all seasons, the country's tallest peak stands sentinel over Canterbury, and indeed all the South Island. Fly over it or walk around it, but you'll never forget your first view of Aoraki/Mt Cook.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring the history of **Christchurch** (opposite) by tram, river punt or two legs – it's a city made for walking
- Marvelling at the views of the Mackenzie Country from atop **Mt John** (p566)
- Discovering funky restaurants and friendly locals in raffish **Lyttelton** (p545)
- Taking a soothing soak at Lake Tekapo's **Alpine Springs & Spa** (p566)
- Negotiating the outer bays of **Banks Peninsula** (p547) by mountain bike, kayak and boat
- Tramping in the shadow of NZ's highest mountain in **Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park** (p571)
- Being surprised by the size of the Canterbury Plains on a hot-air balloon flight from **Methven** (p558)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.christchurchnz.net

■ www.mtcook.org.nz

Climate

Canterbury is one of NZ's driest regions. Moisture-laden westerlies from the Tasman Sea hit the Southern Alps and dump their rainfall on the West Coast before reaching the eastern South Island. The result? Canterbury has an annual rainfall of only 0.75m, compared with a soaking 5m on the West Coast.

Getting There & Around

Christchurch has an international airport serviced by several domestic airlines flying to key destinations around NZ.

Bus and shuttle operators scurry along the east coast, connecting Canterbury's coastal (and near-coastal) settlements with northern destinations such as Picton and Nelson, and southern towns like Dunedin. Operators connect Christchurch to Arthur's Pass, the West Coast and Mt Cook.

Rail options for east-coast and coast-to-coast travel are provided by Tranz Scenic; its *TranzAlpine* service connects Christchurch and Greymouth, and *TranzCoastal* trains chug north to Picton, with connections to the North Island. For information on getting to and from Christchurch, see p552.

CHRISTCHURCH

pop 344,100

Traditionally the most English of the NZ cities, Christchurch has been slower than Auckland and Wellington to embrace the increasingly multicultural nature of urban NZ society. Change is now coming through more diverse immigration and a cosmopolitan tinge is being added to the city's earlier conservatism. There's still plenty to remind visitors of Christchurch's English past though, with a grand Anglican cathedral rising from a stately square, punts gliding down the sleepy Avon River, and trams rattling contentedly along Worcester St. But scratch the surface a little, and a more dynamic Christchurch is reflected in the restored laneways and squares around Lichfield St, High St's hip café scene and locals' immense pride in their beautifully maintained Arts Centre.

HISTORY

Though it still has the Gothic architecture and wooden villas bequeathed by its founders, Christchurch has strayed from

CHRISTCHURCH & CANTERBURY FACTS

Eat Amid the up-and-coming restaurant scene in Lyttelton (p546)

Drink A beer from one of Canterbury's emerging microbreweries, such as Brew Moon, Three Boys or the Wigram Brewing Company

Read *A Land of Two Halves* by Lyttelton local and well-known newspaper columnist Joe Bennett

Listen to NZ's best bands, (and a few international visitors), at the rockin' Southern Amp Festival (p536)

Watch The mighty Canterbury Crusaders Super 14 Rugby team at Christchurch's Holy Grail pub (p541)

Swim at Akaroa, with the dolphins (p549), or soak at Hanmer Springs Thermal Reserve (p553)

Festival Free street performances at Christchurch's World Buskers Festival (p535)

Tackiest tourist attraction Christchurch's floral clock (p533)

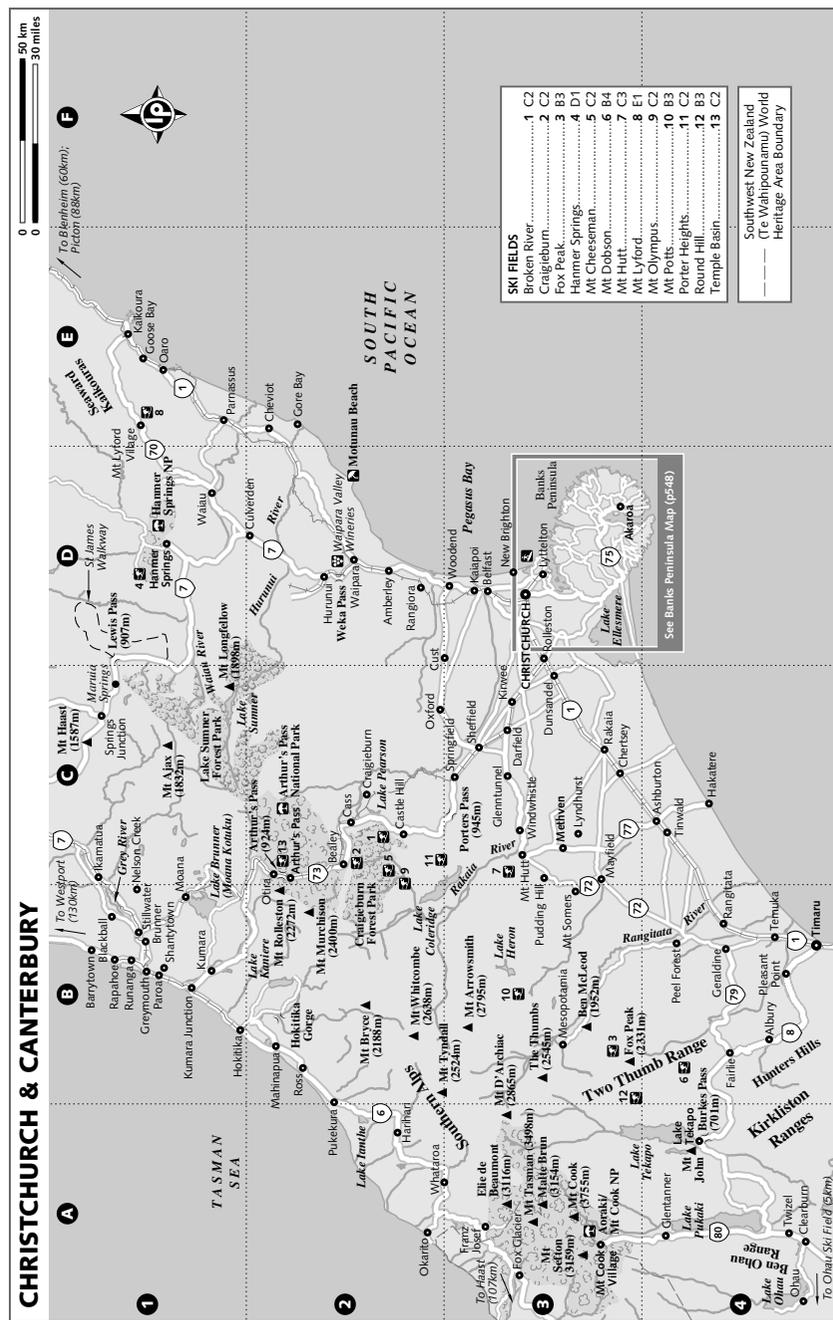
Go green At the ecofriendly Onuku Farm Hostel (p551)

the original urban vision. The settlement of Christchurch in 1850 was an ordered Church of England enterprise, and the fertile farming land was deliberately placed in the hands of the gentry. Christchurch was meant to be a model of class-structured England in the South Pacific, not just another scruffy colonial outpost. Churches were built rather than pubs, and wool made the elite of Christchurch wealthy. In 1862 it was incorporated as a very English city, but its character slowly changed as other migrants arrived; new industries followed, and the city forged its own aesthetic and cultural notions. Compared to Auckland, its economic and sporting rival in the north, Christchurch is still largely a bicultural society, but increasing immigration is finally alerting parochial Cantabrians to the wider world around them.

ORIENTATION

Cathedral Sq is the centre of town and is punctuated by the spire of Christ Church Cathedral. The western inner city is dominated by the Botanic Gardens.

Christchurch is compact and easy to walk around, but slightly complicated by the river twisting through the centre and constantly crossing your path.



Colombo St runs north–south through Cathedral Sq and is the main shopping strip. Southwest the up-and-coming area around Lichfield St and High St has interesting boutiques, galleries, cafés and restaurants. Oxford Tce also features good eating and drinking near the Avon River.

Maps

Christchurch's i-SITE distributes free tourist maps, and maps and road atlases.

Map World (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-374 5399; www.mapworld.co.nz; cnr Manchester & Gloucester Sts) has NZ city and regional maps, guidebooks, and trampers' topographic maps.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Arts Centre Bookshop (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 5277; www.booksnz.com; Arts Centre, 28 Worcester Blvd) Excellent NZ-oriented titles.

Scorpio Books (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 2882; 79 Hereford St) Travel, history and Maori culture, plus international periodicals.

Smith's Bookshop (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 7976; 133 Manchester St) Secondhand bookshop over three floors.

Whitcoulls (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 4580; 111 Cashel St)

Emergency

Ambulance, fire service & police (☎ 111)

Police station (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-363 7400; cnr Hereford St & Cambridge Tce). There is also a police kiosk (Map pp528-9) in the centre of Cathedral Sq.

Internet Access

The going rate in Christchurch is around \$4 an hour. Most accommodation also offers internet services.

dub dub dub (Map pp528-9; 140 Gloucester St)

E Blah Blah (Map pp528-9; 77 Cathedral Sq) Also offers mobile-phone rentals, wi-fi and luggage storage.

high://NET (Map pp528-9; 230 High St)

Internet Resources

Christchurch & Canterbury (www.christchurchnz.net)

Official tourism website for the city and region.

Christchurch.org.nz (www.christchurch.org.nz)

Local Eye (www.localeye.info) Online regional portal.

Media

Indulge (www.brownbear.co.nz) Handy guide to eating, drinking and shopping.

Press (www.stuff.co.nz) Christchurch's newspaper, published Monday to Saturday.

Visitor Guide Christchurch & Canterbury (www.christchurchtodaytonight.co.nz) Useful free guide, published every three months.

Medical Services

24 Hour Surgery (Bealey Ave Medical Centre; Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 7777; cnr Bealey Ave & Colombo St; ☎ 24hr) North of town; no appointment is necessary.

After-hours pharmacy (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 4439; 931 Colombo St; ☎ 6-11pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11pm Sat & Sun, plus public holidays) Beside the 24 Hour Surgery.
Christchurch Hospital (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-364 0640, emergency dept 03-364 0270; 2 Riccarton Ave)

Money

The intersection of Hereford and Colombo Sts is home to major banks.

Travelx At i-SITE (Map pp528-9; Cathedral Sq); United Travel (Map pp528-9; cnr Colombo & Armagh Sts)

Post

Christchurch Mail Centre (Map pp528-9; 53-59 Hereford St)

Post office (Map pp528-9; 736 Colombo St)

Tourist Information

Adventure Centre (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 847 486, 03-366 0302; www.adventures.net.nz; 69 Cathedral Sq) One-stop booking and information centre for all the reasons you travelled to New Zealand. Another branch is at 94 Worcester St (Map pp528-9).

Airport information desks (☎ 03-353 7774) At both terminals of the airport; open to meet all incoming flights for booking transport and accommodation.

Automobile Association (AA; Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-964 3650; 210 Hereford St)

Department of Conservation (DOC; Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-371 3700; www.doc.govt.nz; Level 4, Torrens House, 195 Hereford St ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Has information on South Island national parks and walkways.

The office may have moved in the life of this book, so phone first to confirm the actual location.

i-SITE (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 9629; www.christchurchnz.net; Cathedral Sq; ☎ 8.30am-5pm, open later in summer) Dispenses information and books transport, activities and accommodation; also here is the Southern Encounter Aquarium & Kiwi House (see p526).

SIGHTS

Cathedral Square

Cathedral Sq is where locals and tourists meet, giving the city's flat centrepiece a lively bustle. Featured here is the 18m-high *Metal Chalice sculpture*, created by Neil Dawson to acknowledge the new millennium.

CHRISTCHURCH IN...

Two Days

After breakfast at one of **High Street's cafés** (p540) jump on the **tramway** (p530) and do a full loop to get your bearings. Disembark at the **Arts Centre** (below) to explore the historic area's galleries, and recharge with lunch at **Dux de Lux** (p541). Walk off lunch in the pretty **Botanic Gardens** (below), and head to the **Antigua Boatsheds** (p532) for a late-afternoon **Avon punt** (p532). End the night bar-hopping around the interesting nooks and crannies of **Poplar Street** and **SOL Square** (p541).

On day two, check out the **Canterbury Museum** (p531) and/or the **Christchurch Art Gallery** (p531), before heading out of town to ride the **gondola** (p531) and do some mountain-top walking. In the evening, jump on a bus to the excellent restaurants at **Lyttelton** (p546) or **Sumner** (p539).

Four Days

Follow the two-day itinerary, then head to **Akaroa** (p547) to explore its wildlife-rich harbour, and the peninsula's beautiful outer bays. On day four it's **shopping** time (p543) in funky High St, before chilling at the **International Antarctic Centre** (p531), or paddling a Maori canoe and enjoying a traditional Maori feast at **Willowbank Wildlife Reserve** (p531).

Christ Church Cathedral (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 0046; www.christchurchcathedral.co.nz; Cathedral Sq; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Oct-Mar, 9am-5pm Apr-Sep) was consecrated in 1881 and has an impressive rose window, wooden-ribbed ceiling and tile work emblazoned with the distinctive Fylfot Cross. You can climb halfway up the Gothic church's 63m-high **spire** (adult/child/family \$5/2/10). Taking a camera costs an additional \$2.50, but all proceeds go towards maintaining the building. In 2007 significant restoration marked the cathedral's 125th anniversary. Guided tours (🕒 11am & 2pm Mon-Fri, 11am Sat & 11.30am Sun) are free.

Southern Encounter Aquarium & Kiwi House (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-359 0581; www.southernencounter.co.nz; Cathedral Sq; adult/child/family \$15/5/35; 🕒 9am-4.30pm), accessed through the i-SITE centre, has eels, seahorses, turtles and other marine life. It also has a touch tank and specific feeding times. Don't expect much from the kiwi enclosure; the endangered birds are hypersensitive to sound and light.

Banks of the Avon

The **Botanic Gardens** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-941 8999; www.ccc.govt.nz/parks/botanicgardens; Rolleston Ave; admission free; 🕒 7am-1hr before sunset) comprise 30 riverside hectares planted with 10,000-plus specimens of indigenous and introduced plants. There are conservatories and thematic gardens to explore, lawns to sprawl on and a café at the **Botanic Gardens visitors centre** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-941 8999; Rolleston Ave; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-

Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun). Get the kids active in the playground adjacent to the café. **Guided walks** (adult/child \$5/free; 🕒 1.30pm Sep-Apr) depart daily from the Canterbury Museum (p531).

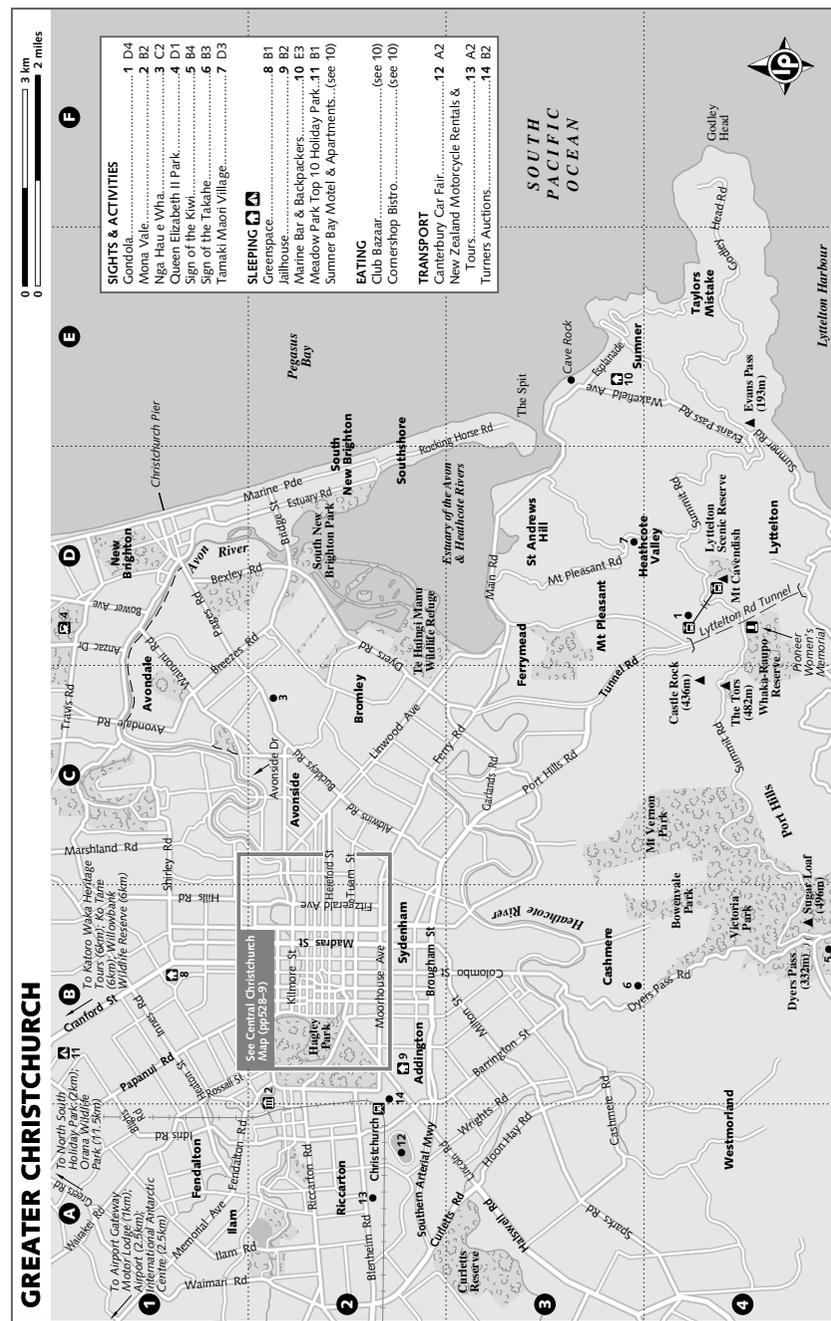
Mona Vale (Map p527; ☎ 03-348 9660; www.monavale.co.nz; 63 Fendalton Rd; admission free; 🕒 9.30am-5pm daily Oct-Apr, 10am-3pm Wed-Sun May-Sep) is a charming Elizabethan-style homestead on 5.5 hectares of landscaped gardens, ponds and fountains. Dine in the café inside the riverside homestead, wander the gorgeous grounds or take a half-hour **Avon River punt** (per person \$17; 🕒 Oct-Apr). Tasty **picnic hampers** (per couple \$25-65) need to be ordered by noon the day prior. Mona Vale is just northwest of Hagley Park by bus 9.

Arts Centre

The former Canterbury College site (later Canterbury University), with its enclave of Gothic Revival buildings, is now the excellent **Arts Centre** (Map pp528-9; www.artscentre.org.nz; 2 Worcester Blvd; admission free), where arts and craft outlets share the premises with cinemas, a live theatre, restaurants and cafés. Visit the workshop and gallery of **Te Toi Mana** (☎ 03-366 4943; toimanamaori@xtra.co.nz; the craft workshop/swimming pool building) for traditional and contemporary Maori carving and design.

There's a good **market** (🕒 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) here on weekends, selling craft and gourmet food items, often with live entertainment and plenty of cheap food stalls.

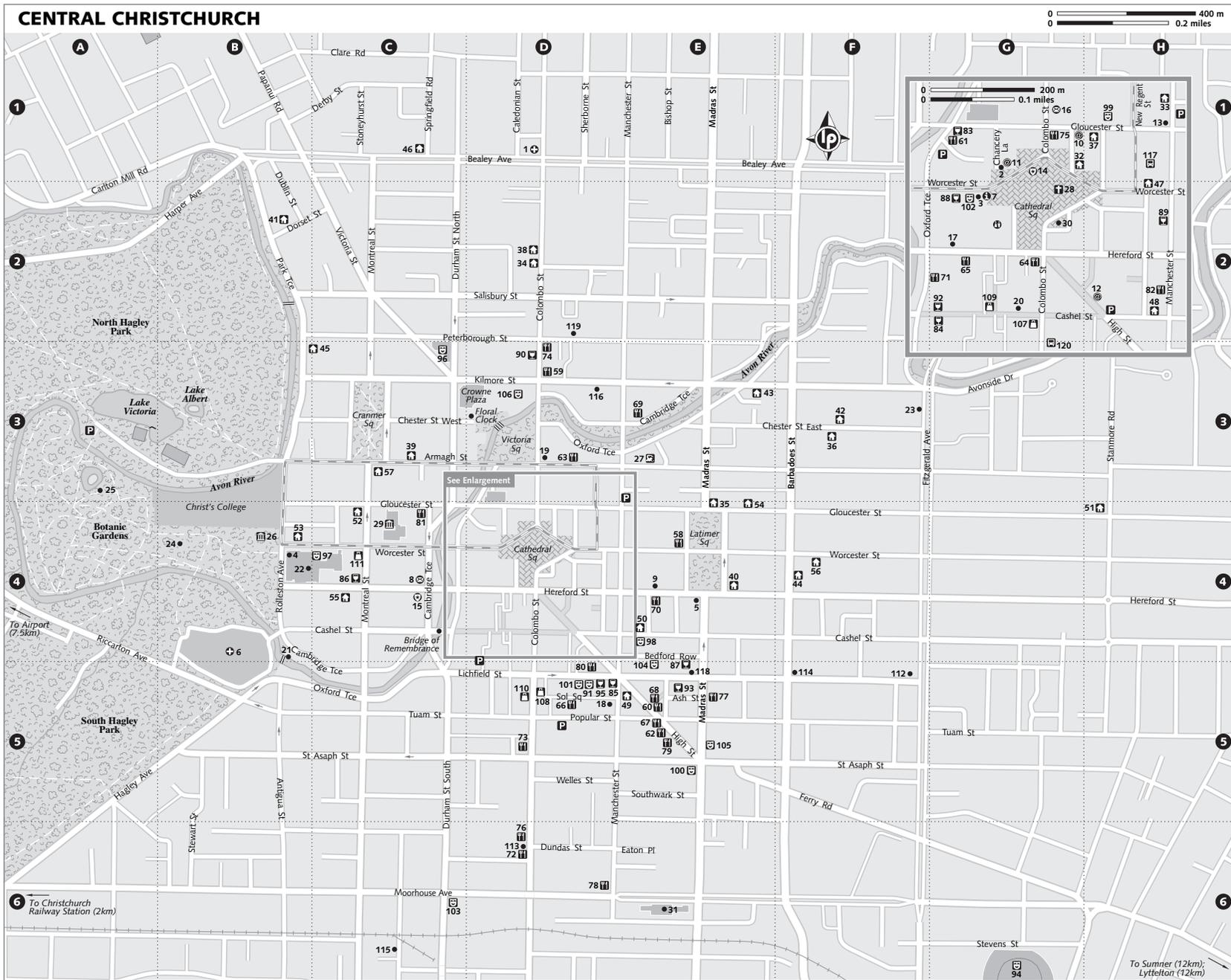
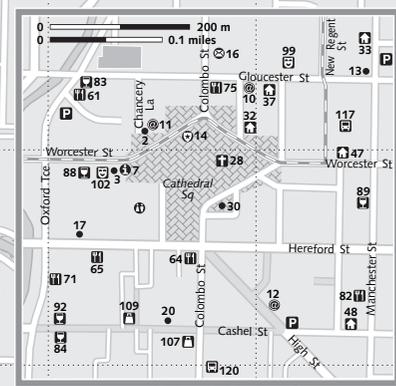
The **Arts Centre visitors centre** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-363 2836; 2 Worcester Blvd; 🕒 9.30am-5pm) is inside the



CHRISTCHURCH & CANTERBURY

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CENTRAL CHRISTCHURCH



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clock tower on Worcester Blvd. The helpful staff can provide information on free guided tours of the complex, including the Rutherford's Den exhibit celebrating the life and work of Ernest Rutherford, the New Zealand physicist who first split the atom in 1917.

Tramway

Trams were introduced to Christchurch streets in 1905 but were discontinued as a means of transport 50 years later. Restored trams (☎ 03-366 7830; www.tram.co.nz; adult/child \$15/5; ☎ 9am-9pm Nov-Mar, to 6pm Apr-Oct) now operate a 2.5km inner-city loop that takes in local attractions and

shopping areas. Tickets are valid for 48 hours and can be bought from the driver. Expect the odd live jazz band to join you in summer and look forward to travelling through the glass atrium at Cathedral Junction. One tram is fitted out as a **restaurant** (☎ 03-366 7511; dinner packages \$68-120; ☎ 7.30pm-late).

You can get combo tickets (adult/child/family \$35/12/75) for the tram and gondola (opposite) – purchase from the tram or gondola staff. If you're planning on punting on the Avon (p526) similar combo tickets including the tram (adult/child \$30/12) are also available.

Canterbury Museum

The absorbing **Canterbury Museum** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 5000; www.canterburymuseum.com; Rolleston Ave; donation \$2; ☎ 9am-5pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Oct-Mar) has a wonderful collection of items of significance to New Zealand. Highlights include the Maori gallery, with some stunning *pounamu* (greenstone) pieces on display; the coracle in the Antarctic Hall used by a group shipwrecked on Disappointment Island in 1907 and a wide array of stuffed bird life from the Pacific and beyond. Don't miss the statuesque Emperor penguin. Guided tours (donations appreciated) run from 3.30pm to 4.30pm on Tuesday and Thursday. Kids will enjoy the interactive displays at Discovery (admission \$2).

Christchurch Art Gallery

Set in an eye-catching metal-and-glass construction built in 2003, the city's **art gallery** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-941 7300; www.christchurchartgallery.org.nz; cnr Worcester & Montreal Sts; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Thu-Tue, to 9pm Wed) has an engrossing permanent collection divided into historical, 20th-century and contemporary galleries, plus temporary exhibitions featuring NZ artists. **Guided tours** (audio hire \$5; ☎ 11am Mon-Sun, 2pm Sat & Sun 7.15pm Wed) provide an excellent overview, and there are good bars and restaurants in the vicinity to bring out your inner art critic after a visit. Ask at i-SITE (p525) in Cathedral Sq for the Cultural Precinct brochure detailing other nearby galleries.

International Antarctic Centre

The **International Antarctic Centre** (☎ 0508 736 4846, 03-353 7798; www.iceberg.co.nz; 38 Orchard Rd; adult/child/family \$35/20/90, audio guide \$6; ☎ 9am-7pm Oct-Mar, to 5.30pm Apr-Sep) is part of a huge complex built for the administration of the NZ, US and Italian Antarctic programmes. Learn about the icy continent via historical, geological and zoological exhibits, including videos of life on Scott Base, an aquarium of creatures gathered under the ice in McMurdo Sound, and an 'Antarctic Storm' chamber where you get a first-hand taste of minus 18°C wind chill (check at reception for 'storm' forecasts). The 15-minute **Hägglund Ride** (admission & ride adult/child/family \$55/38/145) involves a spin around an outdoor adventure course in an all-terrain vehicle, while a **VIP Gold Pass** (adult/child \$90/75) bundles admission and the Hägglund Ride with a 25-minute behind the scenes tour of the Penguin Encounter. Visiting the centre

is expensive, but worthwhile if you dive into the array of Antarctic education on offer. Take the airport bus as it's just a short walk from the main terminal.

Science Alive!

Inside the city's old train station, **Science Alive!** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 5199; www.sciencealive.co.nz; 392 Moorhouse Ave; adult/child/family \$14/10/45; ☎ 10am-5pm) is crammed with ever-changing interactive exhibits, from optical illusions to things that children can push, pull and climb. There's even a glow-in-the-dark minigolf course, the **Black Hole** (entry plus minigolf adult/child/family \$16/12/50). The city's free yellow Shuttle bus runs along Moorhouse Ave. If the sprogs get bored with reality, the make-believe movies (p542) are right next door.

Wildlife Reserves

Orana Wildlife Park (☎ 03-359 7109; www.oranawildlife.co.nz; McLeans Island Rd; adult/child/family \$21/7/49; ☎ 10am-5pm) has an excellent walk-through native bird aviary, a nocturnal kiwi house and a reptile exhibit featuring the wrinkly tuatara. Most of the grounds are devoted to African, including lions, rhinos, giraffes, zebras, lemurs, oryx and cheetahs, and Asia is well represented with an array of Sumatran tigers. Guided walks start from the native bird feed at 10.45am and around the African Lion Enclosure at 2.30pm, and kids can pet slightly less wild creatures at the 'farmyard'.

Willowbank Wildlife Reserve (☎ 03-359 6226; www.willowbank.co.nz; 60 Hussey Rd; adult/child under 5yr/child under 15yr/family \$22/free/11/47; ☎ 9.30am-dusk), about 6km north of the centre, is another good animal reserve focussing on native NZ animals and hands-on enclosures with alpacas, wallabies and deer. Tours are held several times a day. Evening Maori performances also take place here (see p533) and can be combined with escorted wildlife tours after dark. Another recent addition to Willowbank is **Katoro Waka Heritage Tours** (☎ 0800 528 676, 03-388 6375; www.katoro.co.nz; adult/child from \$95/47.50) blending Maori folklore with a paddle in a traditional *waka* (war canoe) and a visit to a *pa* (Maori village).

Gondola

The **gondola** (Map p527; ☎ 03-384 0700; www.gondola.co.nz; 10 Bridle Path Rd; return adult/child/family \$22/10/55; ☎ 10am-9pm) whisks you from the Heathcote Valley terminal to the café-restaurant complex

on Mt Cavendish (500m) in 10 minutes. Expect great views over Lyttelton Harbour and towards the Southern Alps. Paths lead to the Crater Rim Walkway, or you can gondola up and cycle down (see below). Lyttelton bus 28 travels here. Secure a combo deal (adult/child/family \$30/12/65) if you're also planning on riding the tram (see p530).

ACTIVITIES

Christchurch's most popular activities are gentler than the adrenalin-fuelled pursuits of Queenstown and Wanaka. Christchurch is better suited to punting down the Avon River, cycling through the easy terrain of Hagley Park, or negotiating the walking trails at Lyttelton Harbour. The city's best swimming is at Sumner and New Brighton beaches, and there is good skiing at nearby Mt Hutt (p559). Jetboating on the Waimakariri River will appease your excitement gene before you get to Queenstown.

Boating

Dating from 1882, the photogenic green-and-white **Antigua Boatsheds** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 5885; www.boatsheds.co.nz; 2 Cambridge Tce; canoes per hr from \$10, row-/paddleboats per 30min \$15/16; ☎ 9am-5pm) rents out various self-propelled vessels for independent Avon River exploration. There's also an excellent **café** (☎ 7am-6pm) that's a great spot for brunch. The boatsheds are the starting point for **Punting on the Avon** (☎ 03-366 0337; www.punting.co.nz; 30min trip adult/child \$20/10; ☎ 9am-6pm Oct-Apr, 10am-4pm May-Sep), where someone else does all the work during a half-hour return trip in a flat-bottomed boat. There is another departure point for punting from the landing stage at the Worcester St bridge. A combination ticket (adult/child \$30/12) is available that includes the Tramway (p530).

Cycling

City Cycle Hire (☎ 03-339 4020; www.cyclehire-tours.co.nz; half/full day \$25/35) will deliver bikes to where you're staying. Long-term rentals are available (one week from \$175) and mountain bikes (half/full day \$30/45) will get you nicely off road.

You can pedal downhill from the gondola terminal with the **Mountain Bike Adventure Company** (☎ 0800 424 534, 03-339 4020; per ride \$50). Price includes the gondola ride up the mountain; bookings are essential.

Outdoor Antics (☎ 027 272 1210; outdoorantics@clear.net.nz; per day/week \$55/280) offers mountain-bike rental (including delivery), or a day out mountain biking on purpose-built tracks in the Christchurch surrounds (\$125, including pick-up and lunch).

See p535 for details of two-wheeled guided city tours.

Walking

The i-SITE in Cathedral Sq has information on Christchurch walks. Within the city are the **Riverside Walk** and various historical strolls, while further afield is the excellent cliff-top walk to **Taylor's Mistake** (2½ hours).

For great views of the city, take the walkway from the **Sign of the Takaha** (Map p527) on Dyers Pass Rd. The various 'Sign of the...' places in this area were originally roadhouses built during the Depression as rest stops. Now they vary from the impressive tearooms at the Sign of the Takaha to a simple shelter at the Sign of the Bellbird and are referred to primarily as landmarks. This walk leads up to the **Sign of the Kiwi** (Map p527) through Victoria Park and then along Summit Rd to Scotts Reserve, with several lookout points along the way.

You can walk to Lyttelton on the **Bridle Path** (1½ hours), which starts at Heathcote Valley (take bus 28). The **Godley Head Walkway** (two hours return) begins at Taylor's Mistake, crossing and recrossing Summit Rd, and offers beautiful views on a clear day.

The **Crater Rim Walkway** (nine hours) around Lyttelton Harbour goes some 20km from Evans Pass to the Ahuriri Scenic Reserve. From the gondola terminal on Mt Cavendish, walk to **Cavendish Bluff Lookout** (30 minutes return) or the **Pioneer Women's Memorial** (one hour return).

Other Activities

Queen Elizabeth II Park (Map p527; ☎ 03-941 6849; www.queiipark.org.nz; Travis Rd, New Brighton; pool adult/child/family \$5/2.50/12; ☎ 6am-9pm Mon-Fri, 7am-8pm Sat & Sun) is a huge sports complex with indoor pools (including a wave pool), waterslides, a gym and squash courts. You can even rent a canoe for \$3. Take bus 43. Closer to town is the **Centennial Leisure Centre** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-941 7080; www.centennial.org.nz; 181 Armagh St; adult/child/family \$5/2.50/12 ☎ 6am-9pm Mon-Thu, 7am-7pm Fri-Sun), with a heated indoor pool.

MAORI NZ: CHRISTCHURCH & CANTERBURY

Only 5% of NZ's Maori live on the South Island: the south was settled a few hundred years later than the north, with significant numbers coming south only after land became scarcer on the North Island. Before that, Maori mostly travelled to the south in search of moa, fishing and, of course, West Coast *pounamu* (greenstone).

The major *iwi* (tribe) of the South Island is Ngai Tahu (www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz), ironically now one of the country's wealthiest, because it is so much richer in land (per person) than the North Island tribes. In Christchurch, as in other cities, there are urban Maori of many other *iwi* as well.

The country's largest *marae*, **Nga Hau e Wha** (Marae of the Four Winds; Map p527; ☎ 03-388 7685; 250 Pages Rd; marae admission free, daytime tours \$20, 'Night of Maori Magic' package adult \$85; ☎ marae 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) is in Christchurch. You can see carvings, weavings and paintings in the *whare nui* (meeting house) and the *whare wananga* (house of learning). Daytime tours and evening packages only run if groups of 20 or more are booked, but independent travellers are welcome to join a larger group. Phone the *marae* to ask if this is possible. Visiting the *marae* at other times is also possible, only if no other events are taking place. Phone to confirm.

Ko Tane (☎ 03-359 6226; www.kotane.co.nz; 60 Hussey Rd; dancing-tour-dinner package adult/child \$92/54; ☎ 5.30pm & 6.30pm Oct-May, 6.30pm Jun-Sep) at Willowbank Wildlife Reserve (p531) features traditional dancing, a wildlife tour and buffet dinner. Forego the wildlife tour and/or dinner for a cheaper night out – the performance only is adult/child \$41/24. Another option is to incorporate a paddle in a traditional *waka* (Maori canoe) with Katoro Waka Heritage Tours (p531), also based at Willowbank.

Another Maori experience in Christchurch is the **Tamaki Maori Village** (☎ 03-366 7333; www.christchurchinfo.co.nz; adult/child under 5yr/child over 5yr \$120/free/70), where actors bring to life early interaction between Maori and European settlers. The evening is set in a recreated Maori village, and concludes with a traditional *hangi* (Maori feast).

More contemporary is the bone carving done by 'The Bone Dude', John Fraser, who trains visitors to do their own carving at his studio (below), and the work at the Te Toi Mana gallery (p526) at the Arts Centre and the Te Arika Gallery (p564) in Geraldine.

As well as Christchurch's Canterbury Museum (p531), you'll unearth Maori artefacts at museums in Akaroa (p548) and Okains Bay (Maori & Colonial Museum; p549).

The closest **beaches** to the city are Waimairi, North Beach, New Brighton and South Brighton; buses 5, 49 and 60 head here. Sumner (see p539) to the city's southeast, is also popular with a few good restaurants (take bus 3), while further east at Taylor's Mistake are some good **surfing** breaks.

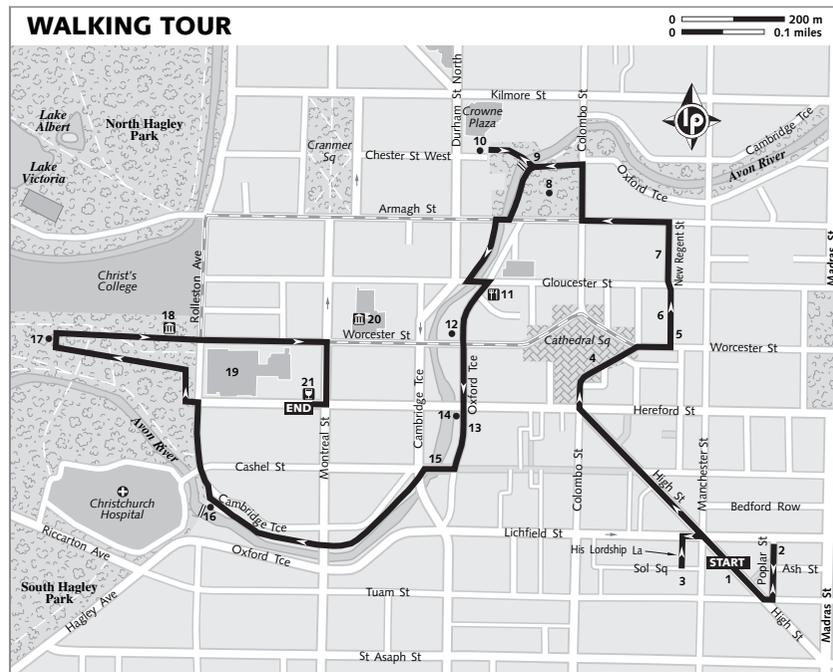
Several **skiing** areas lie within a two-hour drive of Christchurch (see p90). Other active options accessible from Christchurch include cruising on Lyttelton Harbour (p546), rafting on the Rangitata River (p565), tandem skydiving, tandem paragliding, hot-air ballooning, jetboating the Waimakariri River and horse trekking. Inquire at i-SITE (p525).

Creative types should book a session with **The Bone Dude** (☎ 03-379 7530; www.thebonedude.co.nz; 229B Fitzgerald Ave; \$60; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri, Sat 10am-1pm). Allow three hours to craft your own bone carving in a creative and supportive environment. Owner John Fraser of Ngati Rangitihī descent provides a range of tradi-

tional Maori templates, or you can work on your own design. Sessions are limited to 12 carvers, so booking is highly recommended. It's a 15-minute walk from the city, or catch bus 70.

WALKING TOUR

Start your day in **High Street** (1; p543) with a leisurely breakfast at C1 Espresso (p540) or the Savoy Brown (p540) before checking out the boutiques and galleries in this up-and-coming part of town. Detour down Poplar St to explore the interesting shops of the **Lichfield Lanes** (2; p541) precinct, and make a note of which bars to return to after dark. Return to High St and continue to the intersection of Manchester St and Lichfield St. Turn left into Lichfield St and then left again into His Lordship's Lane to explore the quirky design stores around **SOL Square** (3; p541). Return to High St and follow the pedestrian mall to Colombo St. If it's the weekend you'll probably see a few



WALK FACTS

Start High St

Finish Dux de Lux

Distance About 5km

Duration Three hours to one day, depending on stops

of Christchurch's black-clad Goths hanging around. Don't worry, they're harmless. Follow Colombo St to **Cathedral Square (4)**; p525). If you've got time, climb the spire of Christ Church Cathedral (p526). From Cathedral Sq walk along Worcester St with the cathedral on your left. Turn left into the expansive glass atrium of **Cathedral Junction (5)**. Take care because it's also a regular thoroughfare for the **Christchurch Tramway (6)**; p530). Cross Gloucester St and walk up pretty **New Regent Street (7)**, full of pastel-coloured Spanish architecture.

Follow the tramline left down Armagh St, and then turn right up Colombo St. To your left is the greenery of **Victoria Square (8)**. In Victoria Sq admire the statues of Queen Victoria and the English explorer Captain

James Cook. You are in NZ's most English city after all.

Head left down the path opposite Oxford Tce and cross the bridge over the gentle **Avon River (9)**; p526) to smell the time at the **Floral Clock (10)**. Return to the statue of James Cook and turn right to follow the banks of the river. At Armagh St turn right and cross the Armagh St Bridge. Turn left before the Belgian Beer Café (look for the Stella Artois sign) and, keeping the river on your left, follow the meandering path. Turn left at the Gloucester St bridge and turn right into Oxford Tce for a coffee or lunch stop at **Caffe Roma (11)**; p540).

Carry on along Oxford Tce to the Worcester St Bridge where you can arrange to go **punting on the Avon (12)**; p532). Back on dry land follow Oxford Tce to reach the bars and restaurants know locally as **'The Strip' (13)**; p541). It's a great spot for lunch in summer or more energetic late-night carousing all year round. Keep an eye out for the Water Wheel on **Mill Island (14)** on the corner of Oxford Tce and Hereford St. At the end of 'The Strip' turn right at the **Bridge of Remembrance (15)** and cross Durham St Sth to reach Cambridge Tce. Turn left and

follow the riverside path to the candy-striped **Antigua Boatsheds (16)**; p532). Rent a rowboat to explore the Avon at your own pace. Punting can also be arranged here.

Follow Rolleston Ave and lose yourself in the **Botanic Gardens' (17)**; p526) blooming beauty before continuing to the **Canterbury Museum (18)**; p531) on the corner of Rolleston Ave and Worcester St.

Leave the museum at the Hereford St entrance and cross to the **Arts Centre (19)**; p526) to explore diverse galleries and workshops and – if you've timed it right – the regular weekend market. From the Arts Centre visit the **Christchurch Art Gallery (20)**; p531) on the corner of Worcester St and Montreal St. After you've had your fill of visual arts and culture, return along Montreal St to while away a few hours with the excellent microbrews at **Dux de Lux (21)**; p541). Good luck in scoring an outside table. You've earned it.

CHRISTCHURCH FOR CHILDREN

There's no shortage of kid-friendly sights and activities in Christchurch. If family fun is a priority, consider planning your travels around NZ's biggest children's festival, **KidsFest** (www.kidsfest.org.nz). It's held every July and is chock-full of shows, workshops and parties aimed at under-12s.

For picnics and open-air frolicking, visit the **Botanic Gardens** (p526); there's a playground beside the café. Extend your nature-based experience with a **wildlife reserve** (p531) or a ride on the **gondola** (p531), or get them burning off excess energy by hiring a rowboat or a paddleboat at the **Antigua Boatsheds** (p532). At the engrossing **International Antarctic Centre** (p531), kids will love the storm chamber, the Hægglund Ride, and (of course) the penguins. Educational and attention-getting factors are also high at the Discovery centre at **Canterbury Museum** (p531), and **Science Alive!** (p531); at the latter you can try your hand at minigolf on a glow-in-the-dark course.

If the weather's good and the kids are restless, head for the waterslides of **Queen Elizabeth II Park** (p532), or hit the **beaches** (p533) at Sumner or New Brighton.

TOURS

Numerous companies conduct tours of the city and will also transport you out to nearby towns (Lyttelton, Akaroa) and sites further

afield (Arthur's Pass, Hanmer Springs, the Waipara Valley). Ask at the i-SITE (p525).

Canterbury Leisure Tours (☎ 0800 484 485, 03-384 0999; www.leisuretours.co.nz; tours from \$49) Offers touring options in and around Christchurch, with everything from three-hour city tours to full-day Akaroa, Mt Cook, Arthur's Pass and Kaikoura outings (day tours are fine if you're short on time, but these places really deserve more in-depth visits). **Canterbury Sightseeing** (☎ 0800 5687599, 03-338 0982; www.christchurchsightseeing.co.nz; tours from \$150) Offer themed sightseeing tours around the region with a focus on food and wine, especially the vineyards of the Waipara Valley.

Canterbury Wine Tours (☎ 03-335 0866; www.waiparavalley.co.nz; tours from \$65) Experience three Waipara vineyards on the half-day trip, or make a day of it and sample five different wineries.

Christchurch Bike Tours (☎ 03-366 0337; www.chchbiketours.co.nz; tours \$30; ☽ 2pm Nov-Apr) Pedal around on fun, informative, two-hour tours. Depart from i-SITE; bookings are recommended.

Christchurch Personal Guiding Service (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 9629; tours \$10; ☽ tours 10am & 1pm Oct-Apr, 1pm May-Sep) Nonprofit organisation offering informative, two-hour city walks. Get tickets from the i-SITE or the red-and-black kiosk in Cathedral Sq.

Christchurch Sightseeing Tours (☎ 0508 669 660, 03-366 9660; www.christchurchtours.co.nz; tours \$40-46) Offers comprehensive half-day city tours year-round, a 3½-hour circuit of private gardens in spring and summer, and twice-weekly tours of heritage homes.

Hassle Free Tours (☎ 0800 427 753, 03-385-5755; www.hasslefree.co.nz; tours from \$199) More exciting tours with absolutely no vineyards, heritage homes or private gardens. Options include a 4WD alpine safari, jetboating on the Waimakariri River, and visiting the location of Eoraras from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The scenery is stunning but don't expect to see anything from the original set.

Ghost Walk (☎ 03-963 0870; adult/family \$20/60; ☽ 9pm Oct-Mar, 8pm-Apr-Sep) Dr Aloysius Mort (actually an actor from the Court Theatre) leads spooky night-time strolls through the Gothic cloisters of the Arts Centre. Book at the i-SITE or the Court Theatre (p542).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Check at the i-SITE or www.bethere.co.nz for a comprehensive listing. Some notable regular events:

January–February

World Buskers Festival (☎ 03-377 2365; www.worldbuskersfestival.com) National and international talent entertain the city streets for 10 days, concentrated around Cathedral Sq and Victoria Park. There's also regular late-night gigs in SOL Sq. Don't forget to put money in the hat.

January–March

Garden City SummerTimes (☎ 03-941 8999; www.summertimes.co.nz) Say g'day to summer at a huge array of outdoor events. Sweet as.

February

Festival of Flowers (☎ 03-365 5403; www.festivalofflowers.co.nz) Christchurch's gardens bloom with the Christ Church Cathedral Carpet of Flowers and the Wearable Flowers Parade.

July

Christchurch Arts Festival (☎ 03-365 2223; www.artsfestival.co.nz) Biennial midwinter arts event (held in odd-numbered years).

November

NZ Cup & Show Week (☎ 03-379 9629; www.nzcupandshow.co.nz) Includes the New Zealand Cup horse race, fashion shows, fireworks and the centrepiece A&P Show (Agricultural & Pastoral Show; www.theshow.co.nz). Also includes Southern Amp (www.southernamp.co.nz), the South Island's biggest outdoor music festival.

SLEEPING

Christchurch has many hostels, most of them within a 10-minute shuffle of Cathedral Sq. Several budget stalwarts are found around Latimer Sq, with a few smaller options to the east. There are also several well-established hostels near the Botanic Gardens.

Motels are clustered around Bealey Ave and Papanui Rd, north of the centre, and Riccarton Rd, west of town beyond Hagley Park. A number of top-end hotels are around Cathedral Sq.

Christchurch is slightly more expensive than regional New Zealand, so our prices fall into the following categories: budget – doubles (with or without bathroom) for under \$100; midrange – doubles (with bathroom) between \$101 and \$200; top end – over \$201.

Consider also staying in either Lyttleton (p545) or Sumner (see boxed text, p539). Both are pleasant waterfront 'burbs easily reached by public transport and with lots of good eating.

Budget CAMPING

Meadow Park Top 10 Holiday Park (Map p527; ☎ 0800 396 323, 03-352 9176; www.christchurchtop10.co.nz; 39 Meadow St; sites \$38-44, cabins & units \$50-139, motel \$99-160; (P) (Q) (R)) Wall-to-wall campervans here, while accommodation without wheels ranges

from cabins to motel units, and options in-between. Also well equipped for leisure activities, with an indoor pool, and games rooms and playground for the kids.

North South Holiday Park (☎ 0800 567 765, 03-359 5993; www.northsouth.co.nz; cnr John's & Sawyers Arms Rds, State Hwy 1; unpowered/power sites \$28/29, cabins & units \$48-109; (P) (Q) (R)) This place is just five minutes from the airport, and a good first night after picking up your campervan. Facilities include a pool, sauna and playground and newer motel units. Airport transfers are available.

Closer to the city, Stonehurst (opposite) offers powered campervan sites.

HOSTELS

Foley Towers (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 9720; www.backpack.co.nz/foley.html; 208 Kilmore St; dm \$22-24, d with/without bathroom \$60/54; (P) (Q)) Sheltered by well-established trees, Foley Towers provides well-maintained rooms encircling quiet inner courtyards and a friendly welcome in dorms warmed by underfloor heating. It offers a break from places specialising in mass off-the-bus arrivals.

Vagabond Backpackers (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 9677; vagabondbackpackers@hotmail.com; 232 Worcester St; dm/s/d \$23/37/54; (P) (Q)) Small, friendly place reminiscent of a big share-house. There's an appealing garden, rustic but comfy facilities, and Frisbees and barbecues reinforce you're definitely in NZ.

Old Countryhouse (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-381 5504; www.oldcountryhouse.co.nz; 437 Gloucester St; dm \$24-26, d \$56-74; (P) (Q)) Well loved for its easygoing ambience, the Countryhouse features two separate villas with handmade wooden furniture, a reading lounge, and a lovely garden filled with native ferns. It's slightly further out than other hostels, but still only 1km east of Latimer Sq; bus 21 stops opposite.

ourpick Jailhouse (Map p527; ☎ 0800 524 546, 03-982 7777; www.jail.co.nz; 338 Lincoln Rd; dm/d \$25/69; (P) (Q)) Excellent new opening in an old prison that was built in 1874 and only decommissioned in 1999. Twins and doubles are a bit on the small side (remember, it was a prison), but it's still an exceptionally well-run and friendly spot. The city is a pleasant 25-minute walk through Hagley Park, but the upside is that the Jailhouse is quieter than some central hostels.

Coachman Backpackers (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 692 622, 03-377 0908; www.coachmanbackpackers.co.nz; 144 Gloucester St; dm/d \$25/75; (Q)) Centrally located in a heritage

building with stained glass, timber panelling and a grand staircase. Most of the light-filled rooms come with a private bathroom.

Stonehurst (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0508 786 633, 03-379 4620; www.stonehurst.co.nz; 241 Gloucester St; campervan sites \$30, dm \$28, s from \$62, d \$75-90; (P) (Q) (R)) Versatility plus, with three buildings covering half a city block. There's everything from campervan sites to dorms and three-bedroom tourist flats (see p538). Decide in advance what you're after (eg don't get a poolside bunk room if you want some quiet times) and book ahead at peak times. The city centre is a short walk away.

Frauenreisehaus (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 2585; jesse-sandra@quicksilver.net.nz; 272 Barbadoes St; dm/s/tw \$26/38/56; (Q)) Sorry guys, this welcoming hostel is for women only. It offers free bikes and laundry, a huge selection of books and DVDs, two well-equipped kitchens and a garden full of fresh herbs. Reconfirm before you arrive.

Chester Street Backpackers (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 1897; www.chesterst.co.nz; 148 Chester St E; dm/d \$26/56; (P) (Q)) This relaxed wooden villa is painted in bright colours and has a huge library in the sunny front room and the world-renowned 'Car-be-cue' in the boot of an old Ford Anglia. It's popular so try and book ahead. Across the road is a cosy self-contained colonial cottage (see right).

Base Christchurch (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-982 2225; www.stayabase.com; 56 Cathedral Sq; dm \$26-29, d \$65-87; (Q)) Slick and busy hostel pitching itself to young travellers out for social good times. It's right on Cathedral Sq with loads of modern facilities, including plusher women-only 'Sanctuary' dorms.

New Excelsior Backpackers (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 666 237, 03-366 7570; www.newexcelsior.co.nz; cnr Manchester & High Sts; dm \$27-30; d with/without bathroom \$75/62; (Q)) This 120-year-old pub is now a central and well-equipped backpackers, with its own sports bar and an outdoor deck. It's well placed for the restaurants, nightlife and shopping around nearby High and Lichfield Sts.

Dorset House (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 8268; www.dorsethouse.co.nz; 1 Dorset St; dm/s/d from \$28/51/69; (P) (Q)) Recently redecorated, this 140-year-old wooden villa has a large regal lounge with log fire, pool table, DVDs, and beds instead of bunks. It's a short stroll to Hagley Park.

Central City YHA (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 9535; www.yha.co.nz; 273 Manchester St; dm \$29-31, d with/without bathroom \$94/76; (P) (Q)) Comfortable bunks

and beds, huge, spotless lounges and kitchens, a pool table and helpful staff characterise this well-equipped, efficiently run hostel.

Also recommended:

Charlie B's (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 8429; www.charliebs.co.nz; 268 Madras St; dm \$24.50, d \$60-65; (Q)) Recently refurbished, centrally located option with a grassy lawn made for relaxation.

Thomas's Hotel (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 9536; www.gaanz.com; 36 Hereford St; dm \$25-28, d \$75-125; (P) (Q)) Well-run budget spot near the Arts Centre with a huge array of different rooms; a good option for groups.

Rolleston House YHA (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 6564; www.yha.co.nz; 5 Worcester St; dm \$25-29, d \$72-100; (P) (Q)) Quiet with pretty gardens and the Arts Centre just across the road.

Midrange**GUESTHOUSES & B&BS**

Greenspace (Map p527; ☎ 03-356 0228; www.greenspace.co.nz; 16 Sheppard Pl, St Albans; d \$85-110; (Q)) Eco-aware Greenspace offers two modern guest rooms and varying levels of extras according to your budget. Breakfast includes homemade organic muesli and yummy coconut buns, and vegetarians, vegans, and those with food intolerances are all catered for. Much of the organic ingredients come from the nearby English Park market. Dinners and breakfasts are available by arrangement (\$15 to \$30). Greenspace is north of the centre, next door to a park; take bus 14 or 16.

Entwhistle Cottage (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 2001; www.chesterst.co.nz; 147 Chester St; r \$120-150; (P)) This colonial style self-contained cottage is aligned to Chester Street Backpackers (left). Built in 1870, it's now charmingly modern with a sunny courtyard that could hinder your opportunity to look around Christchurch. There are two bedrooms with additional guests costing \$15.

Orari B&B (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 6569; www.orari.net.nz; 42 Gloucester St; r incl breakfast \$130-210; (P)) Orari is a late-19th-century home that has been stylishly updated with light-filled, pastel-toned rooms, inviting guest areas and a lovely front garden. Art connoisseurs take note: it's right across the road from Christchurch Art Gallery. Wine connoisseurs can look forward to complimentary wine.

On Armagh St are several character-filled homes offering guesthouse accommodation: **Windsor Hotel** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 366 1503, 03-366 1503; www.windsorhotel.co.nz; 22 Armagh St; s/d/tr/q \$98/140/177/198; (P) (Q)) Trimmed with stately

red bricks, this heritage abode has 40 simple, sunny and very comfortable rooms. All facilities are shared (fluffy bathrobes provided) and a cooked breakfast is included.

Croydon House (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 5111; www.croydon.co.nz; 63 Armagh St; s \$110-140, d \$140-180, apt from \$220) Flower-filled window boxes decorate this B&B in a charming 1920s building. Rooms have shared facilities or private bathroom; full cooked breakfast is included. The owner also rents out nearby self-contained apartments.

HOTELS & APARTMENTS

Hotel SO (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0508 165 165, 03-968 5050; www.hotelso.co.nz; 165 Cashel St; s \$69, d \$89-125; 📺) The newly opened Hotel SO has (very) compact rooms that are an ode to whip-smart, ergonomic design. Look forward to flat-screen TVs, flash bathrooms, and free wi-fi in hip surroundings. Note that not all rooms have windows. Downstairs there's a good bar with mirrors and bright lights aplenty.

Living Space (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0508 454 846, 03-964 5212; www.livingspace.net; 96 Lichfield St; d \$99-119; 📺) Pitched somewhere between handy central digs for nightlife-loving visitors and compact studios for longer-term visitors, Living Space has mini-kitchens, high-speed internet and Sky TV. There's also an industrial-strength shared kitchen and DVD theatres. Rates are cheaper at weekends and longer-stay discounts are available.

Oaks on Cashel (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 565 111, 03-968 2200; www.theoaksgroup.co.nz; 187 Cashel St; d \$119, apt \$149-209; 📺) Oaks on Cashel features crisply modern rooms with all mod cons including Sky TV, compact kitchens and broadband internet. Smaller studios are complemented by one- and two-bedroom apartments. Check the website for the best deals.

Hotel off the Square (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 633 843, 03-374 9980; www.offthesquare.com; 115 Worcester St; r \$116-398, apt from \$258; 📺) This boutique hotel provides a stylish antidote to clinical business hotels. No two rooms are alike, and the place radiates warmth, with vibrant colours and lots of original art and plants. Loft-style apartments provide a self-contained option. Just watch out for the tram going through Cathedral Junction when you step outside.

MOTELS

Airport Gateway Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 242 8392, 03-358 7093; www.airportgateway.co.nz; 45 Roydvale Ave; d/q from \$125/165; 📺) Handy for those early flights, this lodge has a variety of rooms with good facilities; airport pickups at no extra charge.

Stonehurst (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0508 786 633, 03-379 4620; www.stonehurst.co.nz; 241 Gloucester St; motel d \$130-165, q \$260, apt per week \$805-1800; 📺) The place to go for great deals on a variety of motel rooms (from studios to two-bedroom units) and fully self-contained tourist flats sleeping up to six. The accommodation is central, modern and superbly equipped, and the helpful reception is manned around the clock. It also has backpacker accommodation (see p537).

Colombo in the City (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 265 662, 03-366 8775; www.motelcolombo.co.nz; 863 Colombo St; d \$150-155, apt \$170-255; 📺) has attractive units that are luxuriously equipped (Sky TV, CD players, double glazing, spa baths). Next door, **CentrePoint on Colombo** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 859 000, 03-377 0859; www.centrepointhoncolombo.co.nz; 859 Colombo St; d \$145-155, apt \$170-280; 📺) is a lookalike with all the same facilities. Bus 14 or 16 links to the city.

Top End

Dorothy's (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 6034; www.dorothy's.co.nz; 2 Latimer Sq; r \$180-250; 📺) Six individually-styled en-suite rooms decorated with an eclectic array of antiques give this corner mansion an air of relaxed glamour. A different kind of glam is provided by a *The Wizard of Oz* mural and a wall-mounted pair of ruby red slippers. Dorothy's restaurant specialising in local produce further reinforces you're not in Kansas anymore, Toto.

Hambleton (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 0723; www.hambleton.co.nz; 103 Bealey Ave; ste \$250-315, apt \$750; 📺) This sumptuous antique-furnished heritage mansion has elegantly old-fashioned ensuite rooms (some with four-poster beds) that will take your mind off modern-day worries. The larger Camelia Apartment is wonderfully self-contained.

George (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 100 220, 03-379 4560; www.thegeorge.com; 50 Park Tce; r from \$385; 📺) The George has 55 handsomely decorated rooms and suites on the fringe of Christchurch's sweeping Hagley Park. Discreet staff attend to every whim, there are two excellent restaurants and a stellar roll call of ritzy features including plasma TVs, luxury toiletries and glossy magazines.

EATING

The variety of Christchurch's dining options has increased in recent years. There's a good array of ethnic eateries along Colombo

SEASIDE AT SUMNER

Just 12km southeast of Christchurch by bus 3, the beachy suburb of Sumner is a relaxing place to stay. Commute to central Christchurch for sightseeing and return to Sumner for good restaurants and a cinema at night.

Marine Bar & Backpackers (Map p527; ☎ 03-326 6609; www.themarine.co.nz; 26 Nayland St; dm/s/d \$25/35/55, s/d with bathroom \$45/65; 📺) A welcoming, social place with free breakfast and top-notch facilities. Some doubles open onto a large upstairs balcony. Downstairs is a bar with pool tables and a sunny outdoor area.

Sumner Bay Motel & Apartments (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 496 949, 03-326 5969; www.sumnermotel.co.nz; 26 Marriner St; d \$145-195; 📺) Studios and one- and two-bedroom units all have balcony or courtyard, quality furnishings and Sky TV and DVD players. Bikes and surfboards can be rented.

Cornershop Bistro (Map p527; ☎ 03-326 6720; 32 Nayland St; mains \$18-30; 📺) 9.30am-late Wed-Fri, from 8.30am Sat & Sun, closed Mon & Tue Superior French-style bistro that never forgets it's in a relaxed beachside suburb. Spend longer than you plan to lingering over brunch.

Club Bazaar (Map p527; ☎ 03-326 6155; 15 Wakefield St; pizza \$17-28; 📺) 3pm-late, from noon Sun, closed Tue Surf-themed pizza'n'pasta bar with tables made from retro longboards. And yes, they do have Hawaiian pizza.

St north of Cathedral Sq from Kilmore to Salisbury Sts, and High St and the nearby Lichfield Lanes are the places to go for great cafes with a serious attitude to producing good coffee. Along 'The Strip' on the eastern side of Oxford Tce between Hereford and Cashel Sts, restaurants with outdoor tables are a good place to tuck into various shared tapas platters, steak and seafood. Bring along a thirst, because before you know it, your restaurant may have morphed into a rowdy bar.

Restaurants

our pick Bodhi Tree (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 6808; 808 Colombo St; dishes \$10-15; 📺) 6-11pm Tue-Sun; 📺) Christchurch's only Burmese restaurant is also one of the city's best eateries. Don't come expecting bold flavours from neighbouring Thailand, but look forward to subtle food crafted from exceptionally fresh ingredients. Standout dishes include the *pet thoke* (pickled tea leaf salad) and the *ciondi thoke* (grilled eggplant). Meat and seafood also feature. Dishes are entrée-sized so drum up a group and sample lots of different flavours. Bookings are essential.

Mum's (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 2211; cnr Colombo & Gloucester Sts; mains \$10-18; 📺) 11am-11pm No-nonsense food just like Mum used to make. That's if you grew up in Seoul or Tokyo anyway. More than a few Japanese and Korean language students regularly co-opt Mum's as their tasty home-away-from-home, and the sushi, sashimi and bowls of *ramen* noodles remain authentic.

Topkapi (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 4447; 185 Manchester St; mains \$12-24; 📺) 11.30am-late Mon-Sat, closed Sun; 📺) Grab yourself a cushioned, low-slung bench in the tapestry-draped interior and enjoy good Turkish food, including a wide range of meat or veg kebabs, and the all-important baklava finisher. The takeaway counter does brisk business, especially late at night.

Ebisu (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 9375; 96 Hereford St; mains \$18-20, yakitori \$8.50-10; 📺) 5pm-late) Playful Japanese murals and plenty of *sake* creates a welcoming background for Ebisu's array of good-value *bento* boxes and *teppanyaki* meals. The *yakitori* (grilled skewers of meat, seafood and vegetables) menu is perfect for relaxed grazing with a few Japanese beers.

Mexican Café (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 5515; 110 Lichfield St; mains \$18-28; 📺) 5pm-late, from noon Thu-Sun) With a drinks list that includes 132 tequilas, 10 Mexican beers and even more Kiwi brews, it's hard not to have a good time at the Mexican Café. The food is robustly authentic and good value, and there's Latin music from Thursday to Saturday.

Fish & Chip Shop (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-943 2994; SOLL Sq; mains \$20-25; 📺) 11am-late Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun) With mismatched 1960s furniture and a paua shell-trimmed bar, this gloriously kitsch ode to all things Kiwi and retro is like stepping back into your Nana's house. That's if your Nana served up fish and chips wrapped in newspaper and played back-to-back Kiwi music videos.

Liquidity (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 6088; 128 Oxford Tce; mains \$18-30; 📺) 10am-late) Liquidity's eclectic

and stylish decor mixing chandeliers and warm timber tones translates into a diverse and proudly local menu. Sumac-dusted Canterbury lamb and Akaroa salmon are a cut above other players on 'The Strip'. Later at night good cocktails and plenty of European beer on tap fuels Liquidity's eventual metamorphosis into a bar. House beats kick off most nights from 10pm.

Mulberry Café & Restaurant (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 2387; 818 Colombo St; mains \$20-27; ☎ 7am-late Mon-Sat) Think European bistro with a relaxed Kiwi approach to international flavours. The concise wine list focuses on the best of the South Island, with more than a few obscure gems included.

Chinwag (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 7363; 161 High St; mains \$20-30; ☎ 5pm-late Tue-Sun) Designer Thai food comes to Christchurch with subtle spins on the traditional Thai cookbook. Start the night with a heady Wild Thang cocktail and graduate to zingy, zesty dishes including yellow-fin tuna marinated in mandarin juice. Bookings recommended.

Bicycle Thief (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 2264; 21 Latimer Sq; mains \$20-30; ☎ 8am-late Mon-Fri, from 5pm Sat) Tom Waits on the stereo, a corner spot overlooking leafy Latimer Sq, and an excellent wine and beer list. What more could you want? How about great thin-crust pizzas and lovingly prepared rustic Italian cuisine? Café, bar or restaurant? You choose.

Indochine (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 7323; 209 Cambridge Tce; mains \$18-35; ☎ 5pm-late Mon-Sat) Indochine's menu travels seamlessly from China to Thailand, and it's usual for the mains to also feature a brave pan-Asian fusion focus. The successful experimentation continues on the cocktail list, which includes the mighty Indochine Mojito, blending vanilla-infused rum and palm sugar.

Cafés

Sublime Espresso (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 0836; cnr Gloucester St & Cambridge Tce; snacks \$6-10; ☎ 8am-4pm) Life is really quite simple. Sometimes all you need is a takeaway coffee beside the banks of the Avon River. The bagels and sandwiches are pretty good too.

Gravity (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 2108; Shop 4, Cotters Lane, 158 High St; light meals \$8-10; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat; ♻) Vegan and organic goodies feature at this tiny laneway spot. The coffee-and-muffin deal is good value at \$5, and for \$8 you can tuck into three different salads with bruschetta.

Lotus Heart (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 0324; 595 Colombo St; mains \$5-13; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 9pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun; ♻) This organic, vegetarian eatery makes barbecue buffets reconsider all they hold true. Think delicate veggie curries, freshly squeezed juices and filled pita pockets. Friday night 'themed dinners' are very popular and bookings are recommended.

Savoy Brown (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 7262; 143 High St; meals \$6-18; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) A hip wooden interior filled with jazz students adds up to a laid-back spot for coffee and light meals. There's occasional live music on Saturday nights.

NG Café (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 8683; 212 Madras St; snacks \$8-12; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat) A former warehouse now incorporates an open-plan gallery and clothing boutique. Old meets new with a combination of iconic Kiwi snacks such as Anzac biscuits and relaxing world music beats. Soups and sandwiches tick the box marked 'Comfort Food'.

Caffe Roma (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 3879; 176 Oxford Tce; mains \$9-19; ☎ 7am-3pm) Voted Christchurch's best spot for breakfast in 2007, a relaxed attitude at Caffe Roma means goodies such as salmon with hash browns are available until 3pm everyday. A little slice of Italy in oh-so-English Christchurch.

Globe (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 4704; 171 High St; mains \$10-15; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, from 8am Sat & Sun; ♻) Lots of vegetarian and gluten-free options provide a healthy balance to great coffee and homemade pies. Kick off with breakfast before losing yourself in High St's excellent shopping.

C1 Espresso (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 1917; 150 High St; mains \$10-15; ☎ 7.30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun) C1 is a versatile spot with a global selection of teas and coffees, lots of local beers, and everything from robust breakfasts to bagels, wraps and burritos. Check out the selection of framed postcards and plan your next escape.

Joe's Garage (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 8317; 194 Hereford St; mains \$10-15; ☎ 7am-late) The pride of Queenstown comes to Christchurch and brings along good-value breakfasts and lunches, and a more cosmopolitan after-dark vibe with pizzas and Kiwi microbrews. No wonder Joe's Garage became a local favourite just days after opening in late 2007.

Quick Eats

Food and coffee stands set up daily in Cathedral Sq, or there are many ethnic flavours at the

eclectic food stalls at the Arts Centre weekend market (p526).

Copenhagen Bakery & Café (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 3935; PricewaterhouseCoopers Centre, 119 Armagh St; pies \$3-4; ☎ 7am-5pm) A regular winner in the Supreme Pie Awards – try the chicken satay one – but also highly regarded by locals for tasty sandwiches and cakes.

Little Saigon (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 5889; 547 Colombo St; snacks \$6-10; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 5-9pm) Cheap and cheerful with all your Vietnamese favourites, including excellent fresh spring rolls.

Dimitri's Souvlaki (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 7110; 709 Colombo St; snacks \$7.50-10; ☎ 11am-11pm) Decisions, decisions. Just when you've made a choice from lamb, chicken, pork, beef or falafel, an array of different sauces complicates matters. Honey-sweet baklava makes choosing dessert much easier.

Strange Food Hall (Map pp528-9; Lichfield St; ☎ 11am-9pm) This grab-bag of different cuisines was about to open at the time of research. Find out what's good and let us know.

Self-Catering

Self-caterers can head to **Pak N Save Supermarket** (Map pp528-9; 297 Moorhouse Ave; ☎ 8am-10pm) and **New World Supermarket** (Map pp528-9; South City Centre, Colombo St; ☎ 7.30am-9pm).

DRINKING

Christchurch sees numerous restaurants and cafés packing away their dinner menus later in the evening and distributing cocktail, wine and beer lists. Riverside Oxford Tce, ('The Strip'), is still popular but losing its cachet, and the more interesting spots for late-night shenanigans are now in the Lichfield Lanes area around SOL ('South of Lichfield') Sq and Poplar St.

our pick Cartel (Map pp528-9; ☎ 021 576 857; His Lordships Lane, SOL Sq; ☎ 4pm-late) Cartel may look like the end result of a garage sale at your quirky uncle's house, but inside the retro interior is a wine list and cocktails to die for. In cooler months, pull up a bean bag in front of the toasty outdoor fire and look forward to cool music you thought was your own little secret; everything from Hank Williams to The Smiths and Tom Waits. There's only room for 30 punters, but that doesn't stop Cartel from hosting occasional DJs and live bands. Welcome to Christchurch's best bar.

Dux de Lux (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 6919; cnr Hereford & Montreal Sts; ☎ 10.30am-late; ♻) Quality micro-

brewed beers underpin this Christchurch icon. There's good food too, especially seafood and vegetarian, and live music features at least four nights a week. On weekend afternoons the garden bar is the place to be after exploring the Arts Centre market.

Indochine (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 7323; 209 Cambridge Tce; ☎ 5pm-late Mon-Sat) If you can't score a dinner reservation at this popular eatery, (opposite), swing by for one of its Asian-inspired cocktails. More than 60 are on offer, including a chilli-and-guava margarita and a Baghdad iced tea.

Twisted Hop (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-962 3688; 6 Poplar St; ☎ noon-late) If you think a bar specialising in English-style cask-conditioned beer is old-fashioned, think again. The architectural élan of The Twisted Hop is reinforcing Poplar St as Christchurch's coolest drinking hub. Mix in an excellent wine list, a tasty tapas menu and boutique beers from around NZ, and you've got a spot that could soon become your surrogate local bar.

Cleaners Only (Map pp528-9; SOL Sq; ☎ 5pm-late Wed-Sun) Good luck finding this place – it's tucked away in the corner beside the Fish & Chip Shop (p539) – but once inside you'll be in Christchurch's quirkiest bar. Apparently it used to be the lunch-room for cleaners at nearby warehouses, and a gloriously retro ambience is still intact, complete with comfy old sofas from your first student flat.

Le Plonk (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 7724; 211 Manchester St; ☎ 5pm-late) A wine bar offering superior NZ vintages, lush leather lounges and live jazz on Thursdays. A high class of bar snacks kicks off around \$8. A top place for a quiet chat.

Holy Grail (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 9816; 88 Worcester St; ☎ 11am-late) In a converted Art Deco theatre, the raucous Holy Grail is about as subtle as an All Blacks fan's reaction to a bad refereeing decision. Watch live sport on a huge 10m screen from the indoor grandstand – if you're watching the Canterbury Crusaders rugby team, wearing red and black is recommended, but not mandatory.

Rootes Bar (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-374 9944; 96 Lichfield St; ☎ 4pm-late Mon-Sat) The basement Rootes Bar makes the most of its subterranean outlook. Prop on a neonlit cube, sip a cocktail and admire the commissioned graffiti in the car park.

Lyme (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 2393; 817 Colombo St; ☎ 4.30pm-late Tue-Sat) Good for a drink before or after diving into the restaurant strip along

Colombo St, Lyme was named NZ's best new bar a few years back. Standards are being maintained with an award-winning bartender still creating damn fine cocktails.

Bog (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 7141; 82 Cashel Mall; ☎ 9am-late) The Bog has live music from Thursday to Saturday, a friendly pub quiz on Monday at 8pm, and good-value roast dinners (\$14.50) from noon on Sundays. The best Irish bar in town, to be sure.

Bard on Avon (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 1493; cnr Gloucester St & Cambridge Tce; ☎ 8am-late) The Bard has an authentic English ambience and plenty of traveller-friendly events such as the pub quiz (Sunday at 7pm) and live music from Thursday to Saturday. The pub is a few blocks from 'The Strip', and the better for it.

Tap Room (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 0547; 124 Oxford Tce; ☎ 11am-late) An always-busy option on 'The Strip' with Monteith's beers on tap and bands covering tunes you can sing-along to.

Foam Bar (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 2926; 30 Bedford Row; ☎ 5pm-late Wed-Sat) Sophisticated back-alley bar, worth seeking out for its chilled-out crowd, art-bedecked walls and DJ-spun tunes. Expect occasional live bands, usually on Thursday nights.

ENTERTAINMENT

Christchurch's vigorous bar-club scene is centred on Lichfield St (usually from 10pm Wednesday to Saturday), while many Oxford Tce bars/restaurants transform with DJs and impromptu dance floors. Nightclub admission ranges from free to \$15, though big-name DJ events can cost upwards of \$30; live music in pubs, bars and cafés is mostly free. Get the free fortnightly leaflet *JAGG* (www.jagg.co.nz), at nightlife-conscious cafés, shops and venues, and check out entertainment listings in the *Press* newspaper.

Christchurch is the hub of the South Island's performing-arts scene, with several excellent theatres; the major ticketing company is **Ticketek** (☎ 03-377 8899; www.ticketek.co.nz), with an outlet inside the Town Hall.

Performing Arts

Town Hall (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 8899; www.vbase.co.nz; 86 Kilmore St) The riverside town hall and its two main spaces (the 2500-seat Auditorium and the 1000-seat James Hay Theatre) are the main venues for local performing arts such as orchestras, choirs and bands. The venue's acoustics are excellent.

Isaac Theatre Royal (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 205 050, 03-371 9452; www.isaactheatreroyal.co.nz; 145 Gloucester St) Another versatile stalwart of the local scene, with offers including the Royal New Zealand Ballet, the Canterbury Opera and occasional touring plays.

Court Theatre (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 333 100, 03-963 0870; www.courttheatre.org.nz; 20 Worcester St) In the Arts Centre, this theatre performs everything from Samuel Beckett to Mel Brooks. The resident Court Jesters troupe stages its long-running improvised comedy show, *Scared Scriptless*, Friday nights at 10pm (\$15.50). Also popular is the theatre's regular Ghost Walk (see p535).

Cinemas

Movies are listed in the local newspapers. Adult tickets cost around \$15, children \$10, and most cinemas are cheaper on Tuesdays. From late July to mid-August, the NZ International Film Festival (www.nziff.tel.ecom.co.nz) comes to town.

Arts Centre Cinemas (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 0167; www.artfilms.co.nz; Arts Centre, Worcester St) Comprises two venues (the Academy and Cloisters) and shows art-house films.

Hoys Moorhouse (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 6367; www.hoys.co.nz; 392 Moorhouse Ave) For all the latest Hollywood blockbusters.

Regent on Worcester (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 0140; www.hoys.co.nz; 94 Worcester St) Shows art-house and mainstream titles.

Rialto (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 9404; www.rialto.co.nz; cnr Moorhouse Ave & Durham St) Art-house central with plenty of foreign flicks and the occasional mini-film festival.

Live Music

See listings under Drinking (p541) for pubs and bars offering live music.

Dux de Lux (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 6919; www.thedux.co.nz; cnr Hereford & Montreal Sts) Invites ska, reggae, rock, pop and dub artists to cater to crowds at least four nights a week. On a sunny day the outdoor areas are a mass of raised glasses. See also p541.

Jetset Lounge (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 7675; www.myspace.com/jetsetlounge; 270 St Asaph St) Christchurch is NZ's capital of black T-shirt rock – think heavy metal and punk – and the Jetset Lounge is a pleasantly shabby venue with occasional gigs from nationally known bands.

Sammy's Jazz Review (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 8618; www.sammys.co.nz; 14 Bedford Row; ☎ 4pm-late Tue-Sat) This brick-walled and wooden-floored jazz

den is patronised by notable local singers and the odd funk outfit. In summer, the outdoor courtyard offers alfresco listening, and a string of wine and food awards reinforce Sammy's is not just about trumpet solos. Admission is charged for big-name acts.

Southern Blues Bar (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 1654; 198 Madras St; ☎ 7.30am-late) New Zealand's oldest blues venue is still going strong; gigs kick off nightly around 10.30pm. Expect a friendly crowd of musos, office workers and the confidently unfashionable.

Yellow Cross (Map pp528-9; SOL Sq; ☎ noon-late) An eclectic live-music haven amid the largely manufactured beats of SOL Sq is a good thing. Wood-fired pizzas and Euro brews are the icing on the cake.

Nightclubs

Double Happy (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-374 6463; 182 Cashel St; ☎ 8pm-late Wed-Sun) The city's best bar-club hybrid with great cocktails, Euro beers on tap and an ever changing diet of dub, house and soul. Perfect for chilled late-night/early-morning denizens.

Base (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 7149; www.thebase.co.nz; 92 Struthers Lane; ☎ from 9pm Thu-Sat) Down a slightly seedy side alley (head down the alley next to Rootes Bar, p541, then turn right). Specialises in drum 'n' bass, house and trance. Admission is usually free until midnight.

Ministry/Propaganda (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 2910; www.ministry.co.nz; 90 Lichfield St) Two venues in one big space, with all-star DJs such as Roni Size sometimes in attendance.

Sport

AMI Stadium (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 523 378, tickets 03-377 8899; www.amistadium.co.nz; 30 Stevens St) This stadium hosts cricket internationals, but it's best known as Canterbury's rugby heartland. Watch the Crusaders in Super 14 action from February to May.

Casino

Christchurch Casino (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 9999; www.christchurchcasino.co.nz; 30 Victoria St; ☎ 24hr) The country's oldest casino is open around the clock for visitors aged 20-plus who adhere to the smart dress code.

SHOPPING

Colombo St, High St and the pedestrianised Cashel St are all crammed with credit-card-hungry places. After your fill of woolly jerseys

and sheepskin, head to the funky southern end of High St (between Lichfield and St Asaph Sts). The creative output of young NZ designers is displayed in galleries and boutiques, and, in nearby Poplar St and His Lordship's Lane, design shops share the laneways with bars and restaurants. For a wider range of arts and crafts, visit the Arts Centre and the shops in the art galleries.

Arts Centre (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-363 2836; www.artcentre.org.nz; 2 Worcester St) Dozens of craft shops and art galleries selling pottery, jewellery, woollen goods, Maori carvings and handmade toys.

Arts Centre market (☎ 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) Every weekend the Arts Centre is host to a craft and produce market.

Greenstone Company (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-366 2010; 707 Colombo St) Greenstone jewellery and art from NZ designers.

REAL Aotearoa (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 5418; www.realaotearoa.co.nz; 101 Cashel St) REAL has an eclectic range of Kiwi design from pottery to glassware.

Untouched World (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-962 6551; www.untouchedworld.com; 301 Montreal St) At the Arts Centre, Untouched World has quality NZ-made clothing. Clothes may be made of 'mountainsilk' (machine-washable fine merino wool) or 'merinomink' (a blend of merino wool and possum fur).

Ballantynes (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 7400; cnr Colombo & Cashel Sts) Venerable Christchurch department store selling men's and women's fashions, cosmetics, travel goods and speciality NZ gifts.

For camping gear, hiking boots and outdoor equipment, head to **Snowgum** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-365 4336; 637 Colombo St) or **Mountain Designs** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 8522; 654 Colombo St) around the intersection of Colombo and Lichfield Sts.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Christchurch airport (☎ 03-358 5029; www.christchurchairport.co.nz) is the South Island's main international gateway. For details of international flights, see p709. The airport has excellent facilities, including currency-exchange, ATMs, baggage storage (open 8am to 6.30pm), plus travel centres (☎ 03-353 7774) in both the domestic terminal (open 6.30am until the last domestic flight arrives) and the international terminal (open for all international flight arrivals). Departure tax

on international flights is \$25 with children under 12 exempt. Prices listed below are for one-way flights.

Air New Zealand (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 737 000, 03-363 0600; www.airnz.co.nz; 549 Colombo St) also offers numerous direct domestic flights with connections to other centres. There are direct flights to and from Auckland (\$79 to \$332, 20 flights per day), Blenheim (\$89 to \$224, three daily), Dunedin (\$79 to \$224, nine daily), Hamilton (\$129 to \$362, three daily), Hokitika (\$74 to \$184, five daily), Invercargill (\$89 to \$267, eight daily), Napier (\$139 to \$349, two daily), Nelson (\$79 to \$199, eight daily), New Plymouth (\$138 to \$359, one daily), Palmerston North (\$89 to \$269, five daily), Queenstown (\$89 to \$284, five daily), Rotorua (\$129 to \$327, three daily), Tauranga (\$134 to \$366, one daily), Wanaka (\$99 to \$294, one daily) and Wellington (\$59 to \$222, 15 daily). Check www.grabaseat.co.nz for excellent last-minute deals.

Qantas (☎ 0800 808 767; www.qantas.co.nz) offers direct flights to and from Auckland (\$79 to \$332, six daily), Queenstown (\$89 to \$284, six daily) and Rotorua (\$129 to \$327, one daily).

Pacific Blue (☎ 0800 670 000; www.flypacirfichue.com) flies to and from Auckland (\$79 to \$339, two daily) and Wellington (\$59 to \$259, three daily).

Bus

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz; 123 Worcester St; 🕒 7am-5.15pm Mon-Sat, to 5.30pm Sun) buses depart from Worcester St, between the cathedral and Manchester St. Northbound buses go twice daily to Kaikoura (\$28, 2¾ hours), Blenheim (\$50, five hours) and Picton (\$51, 5½ hours), with connections to Nelson (\$69, eight hours). One daily bus also goes southwest to Queenstown direct (\$66, 7½ hours), or via Mt Cook (\$126 including lunch, 11 hours). There are also services to Wanaka (\$73, seven hours) that involve a change in Tarras. Heading south, two buses run daily along the coast via the towns along SH1 to Dunedin (\$46, 5¾ hours), with connections to Invercargill (\$67, 9¾ hours) and Te Anau (\$74, 10½ hours).

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) heads north to Picton and Nelson, south to Dunedin and southwest to Queenstown.

Shuttles run to Akaroa, Arthur's Pass, Dunedin, Greymouth, Hammer Springs, Picton, Queenstown, Twizel, Wanaka, Westport and points in-between; see the i-SITE (p525).

Train

Christchurch railway station (Map p527; ☎ 0800 872 467, 03-341 2588; Troup Dr, Addington; 🕒 ticket office 6.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat & Sun) is serviced by a free shuttle that picks up from various accommodation; ring the i-SITE (p525) to request pick-up.

The *TranzCoastal* runs daily each way between Christchurch and Picton via Kaikoura and Blenheim, departing from Christchurch at 7am and arriving at Picton at 12.13pm; the standard adult one-way fare to Picton is \$88, but fares can be discounted to \$52.

The *TranzAlpine* has a daily route between Christchurch and Greymouth via Arthur's Pass (see p504); the standard adult one-way fare is \$118, but you fares can be discounted to \$70.

Contact **Tranz Scenic** (☎ 0800 872 467; www.tranzscenic.co.nz).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The airport is 12km from the city centre.

Super Shuttle (☎ 0800 748 885; www.supershuttle.co.nz) operates 24 hours and charges \$17 for one person between the city and the airport, plus \$4 for each additional person. A cheaper alternative is the **Five Dollar Bus** (🕒 8am-5pm; \$5), which runs every 20 minutes between the airport and Cathedral Sq.

The airport is serviced by the **City Flyer bus** (☎ 0800 733 287; www.redbus.co.nz/new-zealand/city-flyer/; adult/child \$7/4), which runs from Cathedral Sq between 6am and 11pm Monday to Friday and 7.30am to 10.30pm Saturday and Sunday (from the airport 35 minutes later); it departs every 20 to 30 minutes up to 5pm or 6pm, then every hour. Note there is a daily 12.55am bus meeting flights and running into town.

A taxi between the city centre and airport costs around \$35 to \$40.

Car & Motorcycle

HIRE

Major car- and campervan-rental companies all have offices in Christchurch, as do numerous smaller local companies. Operators with national networks often want cars to be returned from Christchurch to Auckland because most renters travel in the opposite direction, so special rates may apply on this northbound route. For reliable national rental companies, see p717.

Some smaller-scale companies:

Ace Rental Cars (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 202 029, 03-366 3222; www.acerentalcars.co.nz; 237 Lichfield St)

First Choice (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 736 822, 03-365 9261; www.firstchoice.co.nz; 132 Kilmore St)

New Zealand Motorcycle Rentals & Tours (Map p527; ☎ 03-348 1106; www.nzbike.com; 301a Blenheim Rd) Also does guided motorbike tours; see p718.

Omega Rental Cars (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 112 121, 03-377 4558; www.omegarentals.com; 20 Lichfield St)

Pegasus Rental Cars (Map pp528-9; ☎ 0800 354 506, 03-365 1100; www.rentalcars.co.nz; 127 Peterborough St)

PURCHASE

If you want to buy or sell a car, do some homework, shop around and ask the right questions. Check out **Backpackers Car Market** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-377 3177; www.backpackerscarmarket.co.nz; 33 Battersea St), **Backpackers Bazaar** (Map pp528-9; ☎ 03-379 3700), or the weekly **Canterbury Car Fair** (Map p527; ☎ 03-338 5525; Wrights Rd entrance; 🕒 9am-noon Sun) held at Addington Raceway; seller's fee is \$20. **Turners Auctions** (Map p527; ☎ 03-343 9850; www.turners.co.nz; 1 Detroit Place) buys and sells used cars by auction; vehicles priced under \$6000 are auctioned at 6pm on Tuesday and Thursday.

Public Transport

The Christchurch bus network (Metro; ☎ 03-366 8855; www.metroinfo.org.nz; 🕒 6.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-9pm Sun) is inexpensive and efficient. Most buses run from The Crossing (Map pp528-9), with its pedestrian entrance on Colombo St opposite Ballantynes. The exchange has an information desk here; alternatively, get timetables from the i-SITE (p525). A cash fare to anywhere in the city costs \$2.50. Metrocards allow two-hour/full-day travel for \$1.90/\$3.80, but the cards must be loaded up with a minimum of \$10.

For information on the following two services, contact **Red Bus** (☎ 0800 733 287; www.redbus.co.nz). The big yellow **Shuttle** (fare free; 🕒 7.30am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10.30pm Sat, 10am-8pm Sun) is an inner-city service (as far north as Peterborough St, south to Moorhouse Ave) with about 20 pick-up points. The **After Midnight Express** (fare \$5; 🕒 hourly midnight-4am Sat & Sun) operates on five suburban routes, most of them departing Oxford Tce.

The **Best Attractions Shuttle** (☎ 0800 484 485, 03-384 0999; www.chchatractions.co.nz/shuttlebus.asp; 24-hr pass adult/child \$15/10) links major attractions such as the International Antarctic Centre, the gondola and Willowbank Wildlife Reserve. It departs Cathedral Sq every 1½ to two hours daily.

Taxi

Christchurch's main taxi companies:

Blue Star (☎ 0800 379 979)

First Direct (☎ 0800 505 555)

Gold Band (☎ 0800 379 5795)

AROUND CHRISTCHURCH

LYTTELTON

pop 3100

Southeast of Christchurch are the prominent Port Hills, which slope down to the city's port at Lyttelton Harbour. Christchurch's first European settlers landed here in 1850 to embark on their historic trek over the hills. With attractive heritage architecture and eclectic café-bars, it's now a popular weekend getaway and dining destination for in-the-know foodies. Lyttelton is still a working port, and the raffish charm of the old waterfront pubs contrasts with the gentrifying scene just up the hill along London St.

Regular ferries and boat cruises provide access to sheltered islands and across the water to sleepy Diamond Harbour. If you've got your own transport, the harbour road wends a scenic 15-minute route to pretty Governors Bay with a couple of good spots for lunch.

The **Lyttelton visitor information centre** (☎ 03-328 7350; visitorcentre@lyttelton.net.nz, www.lytteltonharbour.co.nz; 34 London St St; 🕒 9am-5pm) is at Anchor Fine Arts.

Sights

Lyttelton is linked to Christchurch via a **road tunnel**, but there's a more scenic (and 10km longer) route along the narrow **Summit Road**, which has breathtaking city, hill and harbour views, and vistas of the Southern Alps; see the *Lyttelton Port Hills Drive* pamphlet (\$1).

Lyttelton Museum (☎ 03-328 8972; Gladstone Quay; admission by donation; 🕒 2-4pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun) has interesting maritime exhibits such as wreck-recovered artefacts and ship models, plus Lyttelton memorabilia including a 19th-century pipe organ and an Antarctic gallery (both Scott and Shackleton used the port as a base).

The neogothic **Timeball Station** (☎ 03-328 7311; 2 Reserve Tce; adult/child \$7/2; 🕒 10am-5.30pm

daily Oct-Apr, 10am-5.30pm Wed-Sun May-Sep), built in 1876, was where (for 58 years) a huge time ball was hoisted on a mast and then dropped at exactly 1pm, Greenwich Mean Time, allowing ships in the harbour to set their clocks and thereby accurately calculate longitude. The time ball is still dropped at 1pm on days when the station is open. Be aware that access requires a short, steep climb.

Tours

Black Cat (☎ 0800 436 574, 03-328 9078; www.blackcat.co.nz; 17 Norwich Quay; cruises adult/child \$55/20; ☎ tour 1.30pm) operates two-hour Christchurch Wildlife Cruises on Lyttelton Harbour, where you may (but may not) see rare Hector's dolphins, blue penguins and various seabirds. A free shuttle bus for participants leaves Cathedral Sq in Christchurch at 12.50pm. Black Cat also shuttles across to nearby Quail Island (adult/child \$15/7.50; departs daily 10.20am December to March, 12.30pm September to April), and to pretty Diamond Harbour (adult/child \$10/5; departs 23 times daily).

Enquire at the visitor information centre about other ways to get active on the harbour, including kayaking and sailing.

Sleeping & Eating

Pubs down by the waterfront have a rough-around-the-edges charm and serve robust meals alongside plenty of beer, and the odd bit of advertising targeting Filipino and Russian sailors. Most also have budget rooms available. A few B&Bs dot the surrounding hills; the visitor information centre can help with bookings.

Tunnel Vision Backpackers (☎ 03-328 7576; www.tunnelvision.co.nz; 44 London St; dm/tw/d \$25/62/62; ☎) In an old hilltop hotel, Tunnel Vision has a quirky and colourful interior, polished wooden floors, and a sunny deck. Everything from dorms to doubles is on offer. After a night in Lyttelton's bars, you'll have no trouble sleeping.

Dockside Accommodation (☎ 03-328 7344; dockside@xtra.co.nz; 22 Sumner Rd; apt \$90-120; ☎) Three homely self-contained apartments that each sleep up to four. They're a short, easy walk from town, or you can stay put and enjoy the harbour views from your private deck.

Harbour Lodge (☎ 03-328 7755; www.harbourlodgelyttelton.co.nz; 1 Selwyn Rd; d \$140-160, chalet \$280; ☎) Two friendly dogs guard this hillside

B&B with five colourfully decorated en-suite rooms and three guest lounges crammed with CDs, books and DVDs to enjoy if you can tear yourself from the lovely views. Also available is Le Chalet, a restored 1910 cottage with three bedrooms.

Ourpick Lyttelton Roasting Company (☎ 03-328 8096; 29 London St; mains \$5-15; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Tue-Fri, from 8am Sat & Sun) The best coffee in town – and maybe in all of Canterbury – is roasted daily at this bohemian spot with incredibly high ceilings and an eclectic breakfast and lunch menu. Try the Armenian yoghurt cake as you linger for the regular Saturday afternoon live music.

Volcano Cafe (☎ 03-328 7077; 42 London St; mains \$25-32; ☎ dinner) The vaguely Mexican but exceedingly friendly Volcano is a festive, retro-style café serving seafood risotto, enchiladas and good curries and pastas. The attached Lava Bar (see opposite) has a cheaper bar menu.

London St (☎ 03-328 7171; 2 London St; mains \$25-35; ☎ 5.30pm-late Wed-Sun, brunch 10am-1pm Sat) Adored by food writers (even those from Auckland), London St nails a street-corner French ambience with wooden floors, zinc tables and a drinks list featuring the best of Kiwi wines and boutique beers. The menu has a well-travelled European air and is crammed with proudly local ingredients. Bookings recommended.

West round the harbour, the **Governor's Bay Hotel** (☎ 03-329 9433; www.governorsbayhotel.co.nz; Main Rd, Governors Bay; mains \$25-30; ☎ 11am-10pm) serves innovative mains such as pancetta-wrapped chicken, as you sit on a cool veranda dotted with memoirs of the hotel's 140 years of history. Upstairs there is accommodation in simple but sunny rooms with shared bathrooms (doubles \$75 to \$85).

Across the road from the Governor's Bay Hotel, **She Café & Restaurant** (☎ 03-328 9285; 79 Main Rd, Governors Bay; mains \$22-26; ☎ 10am-4pm Wed-Mon, closed Tue) serves excellent brunches and lunches with an organic and new-age tinge. After zucchini and lemon thyme fritters, make room for locally made Belgian chocolate and take in the harbour views.

Lyttelton's growing rep as a foodie destination is enhanced by the Saturday **farmers market** (www.lyttelton.net.nz; ☎ 10am-1pm Sat) held in the local school on Oxford St. Also check out **Ground** (☎ 03-328 7275; www.ground.co.nz; 44a London St; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun), ground zero for the best of Kiwi food, wine and beer.

Drinking & Entertainment

Wunderbar (☎ 03-328 8818; www.wunderbar.co.nz; 19 London St; ☎ 5pm-late Wed-Sun) Under new ownership when we visited, but still deliciously quirky and cool. Wunderbar is a top spot to see NZ's more interesting acts from raucous rock to late night/early morning dub. Look for the sign on London St that says 'Sorry, nice people only' and head down the steps. Be nice.

Lava Bar (☎ 03-328 7077; 42 London St; ☎ 5pm-late) Flowing on from Volcano Cafe (naturally) and open for sociable boozing (and snacking) nightly. Has an outdoor terrace crammed with quirky artistic touches, which may seem only slightly quirky after a few drinks.

Harbour Light (☎ 03-328 8615; www.harbourlight.co.nz; 24 London St; admission \$15-25) This wonderful old theatre (built in 1916) straddles old and new Lyttelton with regular live gigs showcasing jazz, Celtic and world music. Check the website for what's on; there's normally gigs a couple of nights a week. On show nights, drinks and food are served.

Getting There & Away

Buses 28 and 35 run from Christchurch to Lyttelton (25 minutes). From Lyttelton by car, you can continue around Lyttelton Harbour on to Akaroa. This occasionally trying route is longer and more scenic than the route via SH75, between Christchurch and Akaroa.

AKAROA & THE BANKS PENINSULA

Banks Peninsula and its hills were formed by two giant volcanic eruptions. Small harbours such as Le Bons, Pigeon and Little Akaloa Bays radiate out from the peninsula's centre, giving it a cogwheel shape. The historic town of Akaroa is a highlight, as is the absurdly beautiful drive along Summit Rd around the edge of the original crater.

Akaroa means 'Long Harbour' in Maori and is the site of the country's first French settlement; descendants of the original French settlers still reside here. Located 83km from Christchurch, it's a charming town that strives to re-create the feel of a French provincial village, down to the names of its streets (rues Lavaud, Balguerie, Jolie) and houses (Langlois-Eteveneaux), plus a few choice eateries. The Gallic pretence can sometimes be a tad forced, but it's still an undeniably picturesque spot, espe-

cially if you use it as a base for exploring the incredible landscapes and bays of the surrounding area.

If you're not in a hurry, it's worth spending a few leisurely days in excellent budget accommodation that dots the outer bays of Banks Peninsula. Most accommodation will arrange pickup in Akaroa after you arrive from Christchurch.

History

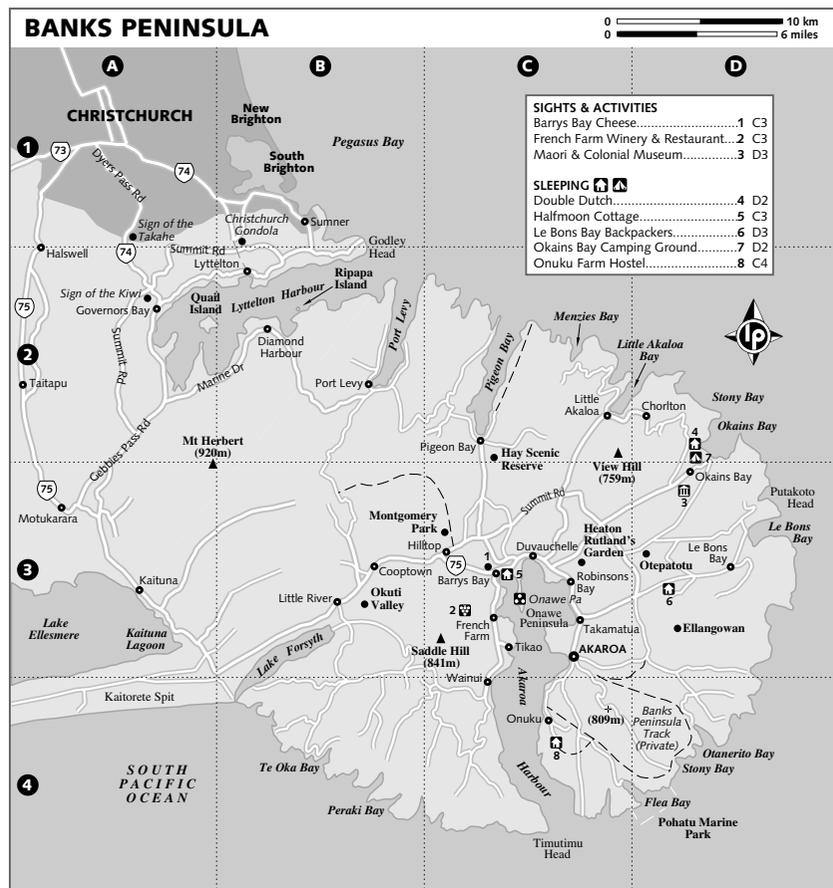
James Cook sighted the peninsula in 1770. Thinking it was an island he named it after the naturalist Sir Joseph Banks. The Ngai Tahu tribe, who occupied the peninsula at the time, were attacked at the fortified Onawe pa (Maori village) by the Ngati Toa chief Te Rauparaha in 1831 and their population was dramatically reduced.

In 1838 whaling captain Jean Langlois negotiated the purchase of Banks Peninsula from local Maori and returned to France to form a trading company. With French-government backing, 63 settlers headed for the peninsula in 1840. But only days before they arrived, panicked British officials sent their own warship to raise the flag at Akaroa, claiming British sovereignty under the Treaty of Waitangi. Had the settlers arrived two years earlier, the entire South Island could have become a French colony, and NZ's future may have been quite different.

The French did settle at Akaroa, but in 1849 their land claim was sold to the New Zealand Company and in 1850 a large group of British settlers arrived. The heavily forested

THE SLOW ROAD TO LITTLE RIVER

The Little River Rail Trail will eventually traverse 45km from the Christchurch suburb of Hornby to the Banks Peninsula hamlet of Little River. At the time of writing, only the trail's last half was open, a meandering 27km from Prebbleton to Little River through wetlands at Lake Ellesmere and alongside pretty Lake Forsyth. Join the trail 20km from Little River at Motukarara for the best of the ride. No company was providing transport to trailheads at the time of writing, but this will no doubt change. Check at Christchurch's i-SITE (p525) for an update. See www.littleriverrailtrail.org.nz for further info.



land was cleared and soon farming became the peninsula's main industry.

Information

Akaroa visitor information centre (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 8600; www.akaroa.com, www.bankspeninsula.info; 80 Rue Lavaud; ☹ 9am-5pm) Information on tours, activities and accommodation, including good farmstays.

Bank of New Zealand (Map p550; Rue Lavaud) With an ATM; opposite the visitor information centre.

Bon-E-Mail (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7447; 41 Rue Lavaud; ☹ 9am-8pm) Internet access.

Sights

The **Akaroa Museum** (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 1013; cnr Rues Lavaud & Balguerrie; adult/child/family \$4/1/8; ☹ 10.30am-4.30pm Oct-Apr, to 4pm May-Sep) is spread

over several historic buildings, including the old courthouse, the tiny Custom House by Daly's Wharf, and one of NZ's oldest houses, Langlois-Eteveneaux. It has modest displays on the peninsula's once-significant Maori population, a courtroom diorama, a 20-minute audiovisual on peninsular history, and Akaroa community archives.

The quirky **Tree Crop Farm Park** (☎ 03-304 7158; www.treecropfarm.com; admission \$10; ☹ 10am-5pm in good weather only) is 1.8km off the main road through Akaroa (take Rue Grehan). This private wilderness garden is perfect for wandering on established tracks, relaxing on sheepskin-covered couches on the ramshackle veranda, or flicking through magazines and playing board games. A drink and snack is

included in the admission price (try the berry juice). Rustic and romantic accommodation (\$299) and a spa are also available here. Don't forget to pack a loved one.

At Barrys Bay, on the western side of Akaroa Harbour (12km from Akaroa), is **Barrys Bay Cheese** (Map p548; ☎ 03-304 5809; Barrys Bay; ☹ 9am-5pm), where you can taste and purchase fine cheddar, Havarti and Gouda. Crackers and chutney are available for a spontaneous seaside snack.

Just west is the turn-off to **French Farm Winery & Restaurant** (Map p548; ☎ 03-304 5784; www.frenchfarm.co.nz; French Farm Valley Rd; pizza \$22.50; ☹ 10am-4pm), set in beautiful grounds with a south of France ambience. Sample French Farm's Chardonnay and Pinot Noir (\$1 per taste and all crafted from local grapes) or unwind with a cheese or antipasto platter. In summer (late October to Easter) wood-fired pizzas are served alfresco from midday.

Maori & Colonial Museum (Map p548; ☎ 03-304 8611; Okains Bay; adult/child \$6/2; ☹ 10am-5pm) at Okains Bay, northeast of Akaroa, began as a private collection of indigenous and pioneer artefacts but went public 28 years ago. It features a reproduction Maori meeting house, a sacred 15th-century god stick and a war canoe.

Activities

See the visitor information centre if you like the sound of jetboating or sailing on Akaroa Harbour, touring a working sheep farm or visiting a seal colony.

The **Banks Peninsula Track** (☎ 03-304 7612; www.bankstrack.co.nz; per person \$225) is a 35km, four-day walk across private farmland and around the dramatic coastline of Banks Peninsula; cost includes transport from Akaroa and hut accommodation. A two-day option (\$150) covers the same ground at twice the speed.

The **Akaroa Walk** (☎ 0800 377 378, 03-962 3282; www.tuatatours.co.nz; per person \$1263) is a leisurely upmarket 42km stroll across three days from Christchurch to Akaroa with good accommodation and lots of gourmet food. You'll only need to carry a daypack.

The *Akaroa - an Historic Walk* booklet (\$9.50) details a walking tour starting at the 1876 **Waeckerle Cottage** (Map p550; Rue Lavaud) and finishing at the old Taylor's Emporium premises near the main wharf. The route takes in the old wooden buildings and churches that give Akaroa its character. Audio guides

for self-guided walking tours are available at the visitor information centre (\$10 per 90 minutes).

The **Akaroa Adventure Centre** (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 8709; 64 Rue Lavaud; sea kayaks per hr/day \$15/50, bikes \$8/25) rents out sea kayaks, bikes, golf clubs, fishing rods and windsurfing gear. For \$39 (including bike hire) they'll transport you to the top of the volcanic crater around Banks Peninsula from where you can ride downhill all the way to Akaroa. Underwater digital cameras can also be hired to shoot your own dolphin swimming video (\$30 including data transfer). The Akaroa Adventure Centre was planning a move, so ask at the visitor information centre in case they've upped camp from this address.

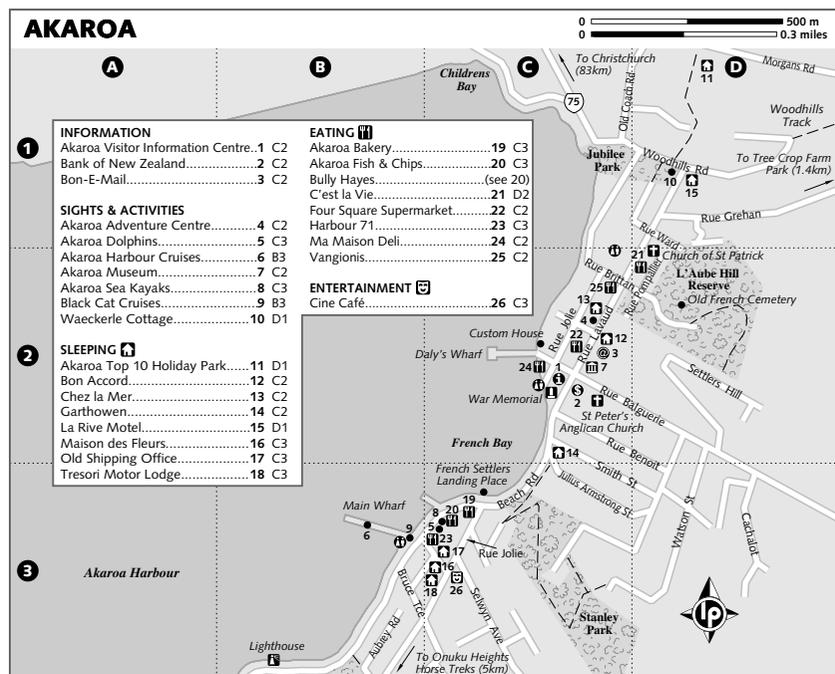
Pohatu Plunge (www.pohatu.co.nz) runs evening penguin-viewing tours (per adult/child \$55/40). Spying the White-flipped penguin is best between September and January. Sea kayaking (\$70) and 4WD nature tours (per adult/child \$70/50) are also available with the option of staying overnight in a secluded cottage

SWIMMING WITH DOLPHINS

The waters around Akaroa are home to the world's smallest and rarest dolphin, the Hector's dolphin, found only in NZ waters. If viewing the dolphins on a harbour cruise isn't enough, two companies attempt to get you swimming alongside the dolphins (assuming it's not the calving season). Both companies operate year-round and carry only 10 swimmers per trip, so book ahead. Wet suits and snorkelling gear are provided, plus hot showers back on dry land. Count on a 2½-hour outing including time in and on the water, and a partial refund if you don't get to swim with the dolphins. Cruises have around a 98% success rate in seeing dolphins, and an 80% success rate in actually swimming with them, so it's pretty good odds. Costs are around \$110/90 per adult/child for a cruise and swim, and \$60/35 per adult/child for a cruise only.

Akaroa Dolphins (Map p550; ☎ 0800 990 102, 03-304 7866; www.akaroadolphins.co.nz; 65 Beach Rd; ☹ 10.15am, 12.45pm & 3.15pm)

Black Cat Cruises (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7641; www.blackcat.co.nz; Main Wharf; ☹ five tours daily 6am-3.30pm, Oct-April, one tour daily 11.30am Mar-Sep)



(\$20) in the Pohutu Nature Reserve. Book through the visitor information centre.

Surround yourself with the best of the spectacular scenery of Banks Peninsula at **Onuku Heights Horse Treks** (☎ 0800 748 732; www.onuku-heights.co.nz; 166 Haylocks Rd; from \$120). Onuku Heights is 15 minutes from Akaroa. Follow the signs to Onuku Marae, continue uphill and turn left into Haylocks Rd.

Tours

Akaroa Sea Kayaks (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 8758; Beach Rd; www.akaroaseakayaks.co.nz; guided tours \$70, kayak hire per half-/full day \$35/50; ☎ 9am Nov-Apr) Offers half-day trips exploring bays and (hopefully) spying dolphins, and fur seals. Reasonable fitness is required as you'll be kayaking up to 14 km.

Eastern Bays Scenic Mail Run (☎ 03-304 8600; tour \$50; ☎ 9am Mon-Sat) A 120km, 4½-hour delivery service to remote parts of the peninsula, and visitors can travel along with the posties to visit isolated communities and bays (beachfront picnic included). The minibus departs the visitor information centre; bookings are essential as there are only eight seats available.

Outer Bays Tours (☎ 0800 229 786; www.outerbays-tours.com; tours \$30-50; ☎ Thu-Sun) Can tour you briefly

around Akaroa (\$12 for one hour) or get you out to more remote parts of the peninsula. The Eastern Bays Tour (\$50; ☎ 1.30pm Saturday and Sunday) is a very spectacular way to spend four hours.

Harbour Cruises

To go spy Hector's dolphins and blue penguins, take a harbour cruise.

Akaroa Dolphins (Map p550; ☎ 0800 990 102, 03-304 7866; www.akaroadolphins.co.nz; 65 Beach Rd; adult/child \$60/30; ☎ 10.15am, 12.45pm & 3.15pm) Two-hour wildlife cruises, plus evening cruises and bird-watching trips by arrangement.

Black Cat Cruises (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7641; www.blackcat.co.nz; Main Wharf; adult/child \$55/20; ☎ five tours daily 6am-3.30pm, Oct-April, one tour daily 11.30am Mar-Sep) Two-hour cruises viewing wildlife, caves and cliffs.

Festivals and Events

French Fest Akaroa (www.frenchfest.co.nz) is an annual Gallic-inspired get-together held annually in late September with an emphasis on food, wine, music and art. Don't miss (or stand on) *Le Race D'Escargots*, where sleek, highly-trained snails negotiate a compact course. There's also a French Waiter's Race later in the day.

Sleeping

Most Banks Peninsula accommodation is around Akaroa, but outer bays such as Le Bons and Okains are blessed with excellent budget lodgings. Take your foot off the travel accelerator for a while and enjoy some leisurely days off the beaten track.

Akaroa

Akaroa Top 10 Holiday Park (Map p550; ☎ 0800 727 525; 03-304 7471; www.akaroa-holidaypark.co.nz; 96 Morgans Rd; sites \$32-36, on-site vans \$55, cabins & units \$45-105; ☎ ☎) On a terraced hillside above town and connected by a pathway to Woodhills Rd, this pleasant park has good harbour views and versatile options for every budget including flash new deluxe cabins.

Bon Accord (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7782; www.bon-accord.co.nz; 57 Rue Lavaud; dm/d \$25/60; ☎ ☎) Colourful and quirky backpackers with a canine help called Boots. It's a compact 150-year-old house with two cosy lounges and a herb-filled garden to bring out your inner French chef.

Chez la Mer (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7024; www.chezlamer.co.nz; 50 Rue Lavaud; dm \$25, d with/without bathroom \$70/60; ☎ ☎) Friendly backpackers with well-kept rooms and a shaded garden, complete with fish ponds, hammocks, barbecue and outdoor seating. Free bikes and fishing rods are available, and it's a TV-free zone.

La Rive Motel (Map p550; ☎ 0800 247 651, 03-304 7651; www.holidayakaroa.com; 1 Rue Lavaud; d \$80-160; ☎ ☎) Old-style motel with big rooms and good facilities; well priced considering each unit (studios, two- and three-bedroom options) is fully self-contained. If it's a rough day on the harbour, the kids can let off steam on the trampoline. Dad can get creative on a barbecue.

Tresori Motor Lodge (Map p550; ☎ 0800 273 747, 03-304 7500; www.tresori.co.nz; cnr Rue Jolie & Church St; d/q from \$140/250; ☎ ☎) For designer-conscious lodgings treat yourself to the Tresori, with rich, colourful décor that's anything but bland.

Old Shipping Office (Map p550; ☎ 0800 695 2000; www.akaroavillageinn.co.nz/index2.htm; Church St; d \$200) Self-contained apartment in restored heritage building with an interesting past. Two bedrooms, a spa and a sunny patio make this a good option for families or for two couples.

Garthowen (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7419; www.garthowen.co.nz; 7 Beach Rd; d \$260-280; ☎ ☎) With two vintage Citroën cars, two friendly Jack Russell terriers and four super-comfortable en-suite rooms, (almost) everything comes in twos

at this new upscale B&B rebuilt in heritage style using recycled cedar. Breakfast on the deck comes with a side order of the best view in town.

Maison des Fleurs (Map p550; ☎ 0800 695 2000; www.maisondesfleurs.co.nz; 6 Church St; d \$350) You could (a) come to Akaroa and stay in a comfortable but boring motel, or (b) tick the romantic box and stay at this intimate two-person retreat built in traditional French style. Premium aromatherapy products and organic juices reinforce why you deserve to splurge.

Around Banks Peninsula

Okains Bay Camping Ground (Map p548; ☎ 03-304 8789; 1162 Okains Bay Rd; adult/child \$8/5) Pine-tree-peppered ground right by the beach, with kitchen facilities and coin-operated hot showers. Pay your fees at the house at the camping ground's entrance. There's a small general store a few hundred metres down the road.

Halfmoon Cottage (Map p548; ☎ 03-304 5050; www.halfmoon.co.nz; Barrys Bay; dm/s/d \$25/45/68; ☎ ☎) (closed Jun-Sep) This marvellous cottage at Barrys Bay (12km from Akaroa) is a blissful place to spend a few days, lazing on the big verandas or in the hammocks dotting the lush gardens. The rooms – mostly doubles – are warmly decorated and there are free bikes and kayaks for guest use.

Onuku Farm Hostel (Map p548; ☎ 03-304 7066; www.onukufarm.co.nz; Onuku Rd; dm/d from \$25/88; ☎ ☎) (closed Jun-Aug; ☎ ☎) An eco-minded backpackers (with basic huts, tent sites and a comfy house) on a sheep farm near Onuku, 6km south of Akaroa. The owners organise swimming-with-dolphins tours (\$90) and kayaking trips (\$40) for guests and will pick up from Akaroa. The same family's owned the farm since the 1860s, so you should trust them when they say there's some great walks on the 340-hectare spread.

our pick Le Bons Bay Backpackers (Map p548; ☎ 03-304 8582; www.lebonsbay.co.nz; Le Bons Bay Rd; dm/s/d \$25/52/58; ☎ ☎) (closed mid-May-Sep; ☎ ☎) At Le Bons Bay it's the little things that make a difference; like evening meals of organic lamb, farm-grown veggies and local seafood, and a claw-foot bath with views over an isolated valley. Kip down either in the restored farmhouse, or in more private, but simpler cabins. Wildlife spotting tours (\$35) on the bay are on offer, and the owners will pick you up off the bus from Christchurch. It's popular so phone ahead.

Double Dutch (Map p548; ☎ 03-304 7229; www.double-dutch.co.nz; 32 Chorlton Rd, Okains Bay; dm \$25, d with/without bathroom \$60/66; 🍷 🍷) Posh enough to be a B&B, but budget-friendly, this brand new spot is perched in farmland on a quiet river estuary. There's a general store (and the beach) just a short walk away, but you're best to bring your own ingredients for the flash kitchen. No prizes for guessing where the friendly owners come from.

Eating & Drinking

Ma Maison Deli (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 8774; 67 Beach Rd; meals \$9-13 🕒 7.30am-4pm) Gourmet hot spot housing a cabinet full of tempting pastries, sandwiches and slices, plus homemade soups. Start your day with damn fine coffee and blueberry hotcakes.

Bully Hayes (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7533; 57 Beach Rd; lunch \$10-20, dinner mains \$20-30; 🕒 8am-late) Named after a well-travelled American buccaneer, the menu at this sunny spot kicks off with Akaroa salmon before touching down in New York for gourmet burgers, Italy for pasta, and a leisurely final stop in Spain for tapas. Monteith's beers and a good local winelist make it a worthwhile place to linger.

Vangionis (Map p550; ☎ 03-308 7144; Rue Brittan; pizza \$15-17, mains \$15-23; 🕒 3pm-late Mon-Fri, from noon Sat & Sun) Thin-crust pizzas, tapas, pasta and Canterbury beers and wines all feature at this Tuscan-style trattoria that was a newly-opened local favourite when we visited. Secure an outside table and while away the afternoon or evening. Takeaway pizzas are also available.

our pick C'est la Vie (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7314; 33 Rue Lavaud; mains \$30-35; 🕒 6pm Tue-Sat) This popular and tiny eatery, about the size of a pétanque green, dishes up superior versions of Gallic goodies like *canard* (duck) and *escargot* (snails). When you're replete following your crème caramel, try and find room to scrawl your own glowing review on the walls.

Harbour 71 (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7656; 71 Beach Rd; mains \$30-35; 🕒 3pm-late Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun) Award-winning service and a waterfront location combine to produce Akaroa's classiest dining. Kick off with a cocktail at the huge wooden bar, before retiring to a leather banquette for meals such as chermoula-rubbed Akaroa groper.

Get yourself an all-day breakfast at **Akaroa Bakery** (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7663; 51 Beach Rd; snacks &

meals \$5-15; 🕒 7am-4pm), or takeaways from **Akaroa Fish & Chips** (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7464; 59 Beach Rd; meals \$5-8; 🕒 10am-7pm Sun-Thru, 10.30am-8pm Fri & Sat).

The **Four Square supermarket** (Map p550; Rue Lavaud; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) has a good deli.

Entertainment

Cine Café (Map p550; ☎ 03-304 7678; www.cinecafe.co.nz; cnr Rue Jolie & Selwyn Ave; adult/child \$13/9; 🕒 3-10pm) is part café with excellent soups and pastries, and part cinema showing arthouse flicks.

Getting There & Away

The **Akaroa Shuttle** (☎ 0800 500 929; www.akaroashuttle.co.nz; one-way/return \$20/30) departs from outside the Christchurch i-SITE in Cathedral Sq at 8.30am and 2pm, returning from Akaroa at 10.30am, 3.35pm and 4.30pm. There's an extra departure from Christchurch at 4.30pm on a Friday. Bookings are recommended.

French Connection (☎ 0800 800 575; www.akaroabus.co.nz; one-way/return \$15/20) has a year-round departure from the Christchurch i-SITE at 8.45am, returning from Akaroa at 2.30pm or 4.30pm daily.

Both companies run scenic tours from Christchurch exploring Banks Peninsula (from \$35).

NORTH CANTERBURY

From Christchurch, SH1 heads north for 57km through Woodend and Amberley to Waipara. From here SH1 continues north-east to Kaikoura, while SH7 branches due north to Hurunui through flat farming country and reaches Culverden. About 27km from Culverden is the turn-off from SH7 to Hanmer Springs, a thermal resort. The *Alpine Pacific Triangle Touring Guide* outlines things to see and do in this region. See www.hurunui.com.

The **Brew Moon Garden Café & Brewery** (☎ 03-314 0830; 150 Ashworths Rd, Amberley; mains \$18-30; 🕒 10.30am-10.30pm Wed-Sun) on SH75 in Amberley crafts four different beers; sample them all for \$8.80. Gourmet pizzas and good value platters (\$30) are also on offer.

A few kilometres up SH1, the scenic **Waipara Valley** is home to over a dozen wineries. Sample a Pinot Noir or riesling and stop for lunch at one of the spectacular vineyard restaurants. **Waipara Springs** (☎ 03-314 6777; SH1, north of Waipara), **Pegasus Bay** (☎ 03-

314 6869; www.pegasusbay.com; Stockgrove Rd, south of Waipara) and the **Mud House** (☎ 03-314 6900; www.themudhouse.co.nz; SH1, south of Waipara) are open daily for wine tasting and sales, and all have restaurant-cafés.

The **Pegasus Bay restaurant** (mains \$26-35, 🕒 noon-4pm) has an old-world ambience set amid a lovely garden. A smidgen of imagination will make you think you're in Europe. The menu takes advantage of superb local produce and suggests wines to complement each dish.

Near the intersection with SH7 is **Waipara Sleepers** (☎ 03-314 6003; www.inet.net.nz/~waipara.sleepers; 12 Glenmark Dr; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/24, dm/s/d from \$20/27/40), where you can camp, bunk down in converted train carriages, and cook your own meals in the 'station house'; the local pub and general store are located closeby.

HANMER SPRINGS

pop 750

Hanmer Springs, the main thermal resort on the South Island, is 10km off SH7. Visitors swell the population year-round, as Hanmer is a weekend destination for Christchurch folk. It's a pleasantly low-key spot to indulge in pampering in the hot pools and a flash new spa complex. Grown-ups will enjoy a couple of good restaurants, and family-friendly activities include forest walks, minigolf, horse treks and jetboating.

Information

Bank of New Zealand ATM (🕒 9am-9pm)

Hanmer Computers (☎ 03 315 7226, 03-315 7128; 14 Jacks Pass Rd; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Sat) Internet access

Hurunui i-SITE (☎ 0800 733 426, 03-315 7128; www.hurunui.com; 42 Amuri Ave; 🕒 10am-5pm) Books accommodation, transport and activities. There is also a **bank** (🕒 10am-2pm Mon-Fri).

Powerhouse Café (p555) Has wi-fi.

Sights

THERMAL RESERVE

Visitors have been soaking in the waters of **Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa** (☎ 0800 873 527, 03-315 0029; www.hanmersprings.co.nz; entry on Jacks Pass Rd; adult/child \$12/6; 🕒 10am-9pm) for over 100 years. Local legend has it that the thermal springs are the fires of Tamatea that fell from the sky after an eruption of Mt Ngauruhoe on the North Island; Maoris call the springs Waitapu (Sacred Waters).

The hot spring water mixes with fresh-water to produce pools of varying temperatures. In addition to mineral pools, there are landscaped rock pools, a freshwater 25m lap pool, private sauna/steam suites (\$22 per half-hour), massage facilities, a restaurant, and a family activity area including a waterslide (\$5). The spa has massage and beauty treatments from \$45.

MOLESWORTH STATION

Northeast of Hanmer Springs, Molesworth Station, at 180,500 hectares, is NZ's largest farm with the country's largest cattle herd (up to 10,000). Inquire at the i-SITE about independent visits to Molesworth which is under DOC control. Visits are usually only possible when the Acheron Rd through the station is open from late December to March, weather permitting. The drive from Hanmer Springs north to Blenheim on this narrow, unsealed backcountry road takes around six hours; note that the gates are only open from 7am to 7pm, and overnight **camping** (adult/child \$6/1.50) is permitted in certain areas (no open fires allowed).

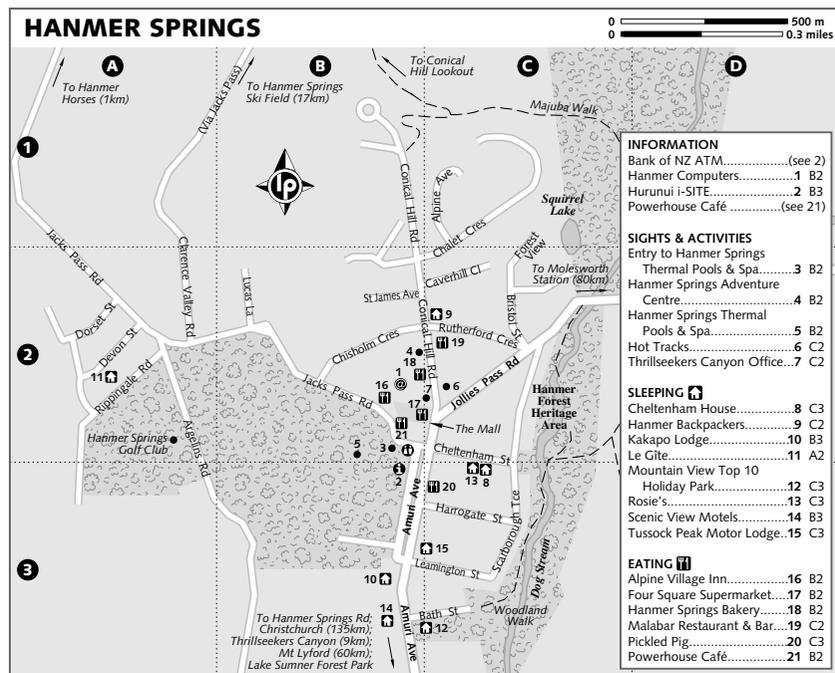
Trailways Safaris (☎ 03-315 7401; www.molesworth.co.nz; tours \$125-495; 🕒 Oct-May) offers 4WD tours of the station and the remote private land stretching north to St Arnaud. Day tours include a picnic lunch and there is a five-hour 'no frills' option.

Activities

Hanmer Springs Adventure Centre (☎ 03-315 7233; www.hanmeradventure.co.nz; 20 Conical Hill Rd; 🕒 9am-5pm) books activities, and rents mountain bikes (per hour/day \$19/45), fishing rods (per day \$25) and ski and snowboard gear. Mountain biking maps (\$2) are available at the i-SITE.

There are two skiing areas nearby. **Hanmer Springs Ski Field** is the closest, 17km (unsealed) from town, and **Mt Lyford Ski Field** is 60km away. They're cheaper than larger resorts (see p90). The Hanmer Springs Adventure Centre operates transport.

The *Hanmer Forest Recreation* pamphlet (\$2) outlines short walks near town, mostly through picturesque forest. The easy **Woodland Walk** starts from Jollies Pass Rd, 1km from town, and goes through Douglas fir, poplar and redwood stands. It joins the **Majuba Walk** (1½ hours), which leads to Conical Hill Lookout and then back to Conical Hill Rd. The i-SITE has details of longer tramps,



including those in Lake Sumner Forest Park to the west.

Thrillseekers Canyon (☎ 03-315 7046; www.thrillseekerscanyon.co.nz; SH7) is the adrenaline centre of Hanmer Springs. Bungy off a 35m-high bridge (\$119), jetboat the Waiau Gorge (adult/child \$89/50) or go white-water rafting (grade II to III) down the Waiau River (adult/child \$95/50). Book at the Thrillseekers Canyon centre, next to the bridge where the Hanmer Springs turn-off meets SH7. Another office (☎ 03-315 7346; The Mall; ☎ 10am-6pm) is in town.

Hanmer Horses (☎ 03-315 7444; www.hanmerhorses.co.nz; 187 Rogerson Rd; 1hr rides adult/child \$45/35, 2½hr treks adult/child \$90/70) is in a forested setting 10 minutes from town. Younger children can be lead on a pony for 30 minutes (\$20).

BackTrax (☎ 0800 422 258, 03-315 7633; www.backtrax.co.nz; 2½hr trips \$110) organises guided quad-bike trips up into the hills, and along (and across) the Hanmer River; minimum age is 16. The region is also popular for mountain biking – the Hanmer Springs Adventure Centre (see p553) offers trail maps, advice and bike rental, and also does an organised ride (\$89) up over Jacks and Jollies Passes.

Hot Tracks (☎ 021 718 551; www.hottracks.co.nz; Conical Hill Rd; adult/child from \$40/30) take all-terrain Hagglund vehicles into the forests and hills surrounding Hanmer. If you're feeling a bit gung-ho, then a self-drive option (\$150) is also available.

Other activities are possible in and around town, including kayaking, scenic flights and fishing trips.

Sleeping

Mountain View Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 904 545, 03-315 7113; www.mountainviewtop10.co.nz; Bath St; unpowered/powerd sites \$26/32, cabins & motels \$45-120; ☎) Family-friendly park a few minutes' walk from the thermal reserve. Kids will love the playground, trampoline and mountain bikes for rent (per hour \$10). Take your pick from basic cabins (BYO everything) to two-bedroom motel units with everything supplied. There are two more camping grounds in town if it's full.

Hanmer Backpackers (☎ 03-315 7196; hanmerbackpackers@xtra.co.nz; 41 Conical Hill Rd; dm/d \$25/56; ☎) Centrally located, the township's original backpackers has a barbecue area for

lazy summer nights and a cosy log fire for cooler climes.

Le Gîte (☎ 03-315 5111; www.legite.co.nz; 3 Devon St; dm \$25, d with/without bathroom \$66/54; ☎) Charming old converted home a 10-minute walk from the centre. Large rooms (no bunks), relaxing gardens and a lovely lounge area are drawcards; for extra privacy, book a garden 'chalet' with private bathroom.

Kakapo Lodge (☎ 03-315 7472; stay-kakapo@xtra.co.nz; 14 Amuri Ave; dm \$26, d \$56-86; ☎) This spartan YHA-affiliated Kakapo has a roomy kitchen and lounge, chill-busting underfloor heating, and an outdoor deck. Bunk-free dorms (some with bathroom) are joined by motel-style units with TV and cooking facilities.

Rosie's (☎ 03-315 7095; roxyrosie@clearnet.nz; 9 Cheltenham St; s \$50, d \$80-130; ☎) Rosie was originally from Australia, but she's now offering great Kiwi hospitality at this welcoming reader-recommended spot. Rooms offer either en-suite or shared facilities.

Scenic View Motels (☎ 0800 843 9748, 03-315 7419; www.hammerscenicviews.co.nz; 10 Amuri Ave; d \$120-180; ☎) An attractive timber-and-stone complex with modern, colourful studios and two- and three-bedroom apartments. Mountain views come as standard.

Tussock Peak Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 8877 625, 03-315 5191; www.tussockpeak.co.nz; cnr Amuri Ave & Leamington St; d \$125-145, q \$195; ☎) Tussock Peak has colourful décor that's an eclectic cut above other motels on Hanmer's main drag. The hardest part is choosing what kind of room: studio, one- or two-bedroom units, spas, courtyards or balconies.

Cheltenham House (☎ 03-315 7545; www.cheltenham.co.nz; 13 Cheltenham St; s \$160-200, d \$190-230; ☎) Superb, centrally located B&B with six snooze-inducing suites, all with private bathroom and two in garden cottages. Cooked breakfasts can be delivered to your room, and there's a billiard table, grand piano and complimentary pre-dinner apéritifs. Avoid the crowds up the road with the private hot tub.

Eating

Hanmer Springs Bakery (☎ 03-315 7714; 16 Conical Hill Rd; pies \$4.50; ☎ 6am-4pm) Grab a takeaway coffee or a gourmet pie at this place that's a taste of old New Zealand in rapidly modernising Hanmer Springs. There's a small park across the road for alfresco snacking.

Powerhouse Café (☎ 03-315 5252; 6 Jacks Pass Rd; meals \$8.50-16.50; ☎ 8am-4pm, open late Thu-Sat in sum-

mer) Recharge your batteries with a huge High Country breakfast, or linger for lunch and an organic fair trade coffee as you jump on their wi-fi network.

Alpine Village Inn (☎ 03-315 7005; 10 Jacks Pass Rd; mains \$10-22; ☎ 11am-11pm) Hanmer's most popular pub also offers good-value bistro meals. Look forward to T-bone steak, chicken schnitzel and mountain views from a sunny deck. Kids have their own tyke-sized menu.

Pickled Pig (☎ 03-315 7441; Shop 4, The Mall; pizza \$14-22; ☎ 11am-8pm) Pizza, pasta, homemade gelato and excellent sushi. It's Italian with a Japanese accent at this versatile spot with picnic-friendly deli offerings.

Malabar Restaurant & Bar (☎ 03-315 7745; 5 Conical Hill Rd; mains \$28-32; ☎ 5.30pm-late) This elegant eatery presents Asian cuisine from Beijing to Bangalore. Try the Malabar thali showcasing four different curries or the mustard and anise flavoured duck. Leave room for superb ice cream and sorbets. A limited takeaway menu is available, priced from \$9 to \$12.

Self-caterers can stock up at the **Four Square supermarket** (Conical Hill Rd; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 10am-5.30pm Sun).

Getting There & Away

Hanmer Connection (☎ 0800 242 663) runs from Hanmer Springs to Christchurch (\$30, three daily) and Kaikoura (\$33, three weekly).

Southern Link Coaches (☎ 0508 458 835; www.southemlink.co.nz) operates a daily service between Christchurch and Nelson that travels via Lewis Pass and will stop at Hanmer Springs (\$36 from Christchurch) on request.

East West Coach (☎ 0800 142 622, 03-789 6251) has a service that runs between Christchurch and Westport via the Lewis Pass but, rather unhelpfully, doesn't go into Hanmer Springs itself – it can pick you up or set you down at the Hanmer Springs turn-off, 10km south of town.

LEWIS PASS HIGHWAY

At the northern end of the Southern Alps, the beautiful Lewis Pass Hwy (SH7) wiggles west from the Hanmer Springs turn-off to Lewis Pass, Maruia Springs and Springs Junction. The 907m-high **Lewis Pass** is not as steep or the forest as dense as Arthur's and Haast Passes, with mainly red and silver beech, and kowhai trees growing along river terraces.

The area has some interesting tramps; see the DOC pamphlet *Lae Sumner/Lewis Pass*

Recreation (\$1). Most tracks pass through beech forest with a backdrop of snow-capped mountains, lakes, and alpine tarns and rivers. The most popular tramps are around **Lake Sumner** in the Lake Sumner Forest Park and the **St James Walkway** (66km; three to five days) in the Lewis Pass National Reserve. Subalpine conditions apply; sign the intentions book at the start of the St James Walkway and at Windy Point for the Lake Sumner area before heading off.

Maruia Springs (☎ 03-523 8840; www.maruiasprings.co.nz; SH7; sites per adult/child \$20/10, d \$159-199, f \$239-259; ♿) is a small thermal resort on the banks of the Maruia River, 69km from the Hanmer turn-off. It has pricey, nondescript units (accommodation includes admission to the pools), a café-bar and a Japanese restaurant. In the **thermal pools** (adult/child/family \$15/8/40; ☎ 8am-9pm) water is pumped into a sex-segregated traditional Japanese bathhouse and outdoor rock pools. It's a magical setting during a winter snowfall, but mind the sandflies in summer. Massages (per 30 minutes/one hour \$45/65) and private spa houses (per person for 45 minutes \$25) are available.

SH7 continues to **Springs Junction**, where the Shenandoah Hwy (SH65) branches north to meet SH6 near Murchison, while SH7 continues west to Reefton and down to Greymouth. Springs Junction has a petrol station and café.

CENTRAL CANTERBURY

Two hours west from Christchurch on SH73 is Arthur's Pass National Park. The trans-island crossing from Christchurch to Greymouth over Arthur's Pass is covered by buses and the *TranzAlpine* train (see p504).

Nowhere else in NZ does the coast rise to the mountains so quickly. From Christchurch the road traverses the Canterbury Plains and then escalates rapidly into the Porter Heights and Craigieburn skiing areas before following the Waimakariri and Bealey Rivers and Lakes Pearson and Grasmere to Arthur's Pass. Southwest of Christchurch (reached by SH73 and SH77) is the Mt Hutt ski resort and Methven.

CRAIGIEBURN FOREST PARK

Accessed from SH73, this forest park is 110km northwest of Christchurch and 42km south of Arthur's Pass. The park has many walk-

ing tracks, with longer tramps possible in the valleys west of the Craigieburn Range; see the DOC pamphlet *Craigieburn Forest Park: Day Walks* (\$1). The surrounding country is also suitable for skiing and rock climbing. Dominating the vegetation is beech, tussock, totara and turpentine scrub, and even a few patches of South Island edelweiss (*Leucogenes grandiceps*).

Craigieburn has a rise of 503m so is one of NZ's best skiing areas. Its wild-country slopes suit the advanced skier; see p91.

Between the entrance to the forest park and the Broken River bridge to the south is **Cave Stream Scenic Reserve**, with a 594m-long cave with a small waterfall at one end. Take all the necessary precautions (two light sources per person etc) if doing the one-hour walk through the pitch-black cave. For details, get the DOC brochure *Cave Stream Scenic Reserve* (50c). The reserve is in the **Castle Hill area** with prominent limestone outcrops loved by rock climbers and boulderers. Scenes from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe* were also filmed in the area. The latter movie set its climatic battle scene in the high country of Flock Hill station.

Sleeping & Eating

Flock Hill Lodge (☎ 03-318 8196; www.flockhill.co.nz; SH73; tent sites per person \$12, dm/d \$25/120; ♿) High-country sheep station 44km east of Arthur's Pass, adjacent to Lake Pearson and the Craigieburn Forest Park. Backpackers can stay in rustic shearers' quarters, while large groups can opt for two-bedroom motel units or large cottages with kitchenette. After fishing, exploring and mountain biking, relax and recharge in the cosy bar-restaurant.

Smylie's Accommodation (☎ 03-318 4740; www.smylies.co.nz; Main Rd, Springfield; dm \$22, d \$50-85; ♿) Welcoming YHA-associated hostel in the town of Springfield, around 30km southeast of Craigieburn. Run by a Dutch-Japanese family there is a popular Japanese bath, a *kotatsu* (foot warmer) and some futon-equipped rooms. A handful of self-contained motel units are available. In winter, ski equipment and ski field transport are provided. Nearby year-round activities include jetboating and horse trekking.

Bealey Hotel (☎ 03-318 9277; www.bealeyhotel.co.nz; s/d with shared facilities \$50/60, motel \$110-165; ♿) Just 12km east of Arthur's Pass, tiny Bealey is

famous for a hoax by the local pub owner in 1993. He reckoned he'd seen a real live *moa*, hence the bogus Big Bird statue standing on a rocky outcrop. There are self-contained motel units and the budget Moa Lodge with 10 doubles rooms. There are expansive alpine views from the Mad Moa restaurant, but go easy in the bar to avoid imagining phantom wildlife.

Wilderness Lodge (☎ 03-318 9246; www.wildernesslodge.co.nz; SH73; s \$475-690, d \$720-980; ☎ closed Jun-Jul; ♿) Luxurious lodge on a mountain beech-speckled sheep station (2400 hectares worth), 16km east of Arthur's Pass. Alpine views and the world's longest driveway produce an absolute middle-of-nowhere atmosphere, and newly built standalone studios with private spa baths feel even more remote. Included in the room rate are breakfast and a gourmet dinner. You'll need both after diving into the lodge's classy catalogue of soft adventure including walking, bird-watching and canoeing.

Original Sheffield Pie Shop (☎ 03-318 3876; Main Rd, Sheffield; pies \$3-5; ☎ 11am-6pm) This roadside bakery in the quiet Canterbury Plains hamlet of Sheffield turns out some of NZ's best pies. Essential before or after negotiating the winding Arthur's Pass.

ARTHUR'S PASS

pop 62
Arthur's Pass village is 4km from the pass of the same name and is NZ's highest-altitude settlement. The 924m pass was used by Maoris to reach Westland, but its European discovery was made by Arthur Dobson in 1864, when the Westland gold rush created the need for a crossing over the Southern Alps from Christchurch. A coach road was completed within a year, but later on the coal and timber trade demanded a railway, duly completed in 1923.

The town is a handy base for tramps, climbs, views and winter-time skiing in Arthur's Pass National Park. It's a good (though long) day trip from Greymouth or Christchurch.

Information

DOC Arthur's Pass visitor information centre (☎ 03-318 9211; www.apinfo.co.nz, arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz; SH73; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm) has information on all park tramps, including route guides for longer hut-lined tramps. It doesn't make onward bookings or reservations, but can help with local accommodation and transport informa-

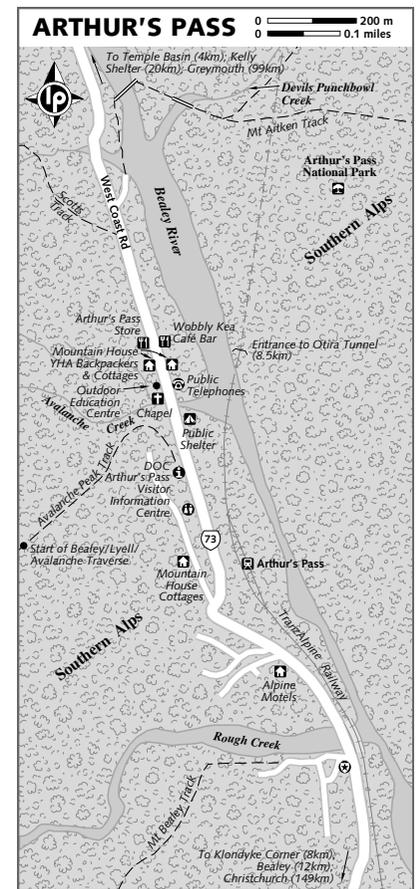
tion. The centre screens a 17-minute video (adult/child \$1/free) on the history of Arthur's Pass and has excellent displays – check out the 1888 Cobb & Co coach.

Hire detailed topo maps (\$1 per day, with \$20 refundable deposit) and locator beacons (\$25) from DOC. DOC also offer invaluable advice on the park's often savagely changeable weather conditions. Check conditions here and fill out an intentions card before venturing out. Sign in again after returning to avoid a search party being organised.

The Arthur's Pass Store has internet access.

Sights & Activities

Near DOC is the small interfaith **chapel**, with wonderful views above the altar.



Day tramps offer 360-degree views of snow-capped peaks, many of them over 2000m; the highest is Mt Murchison (2400m). There are huts on the tramping tracks and several areas suitable for camping. Tramping is best in the drier months (January to April). The leaflet *Walks in Arthur's Pass National Park* (\$2) details walks to scenic places including **Devils Punchbowl Waterfall** (one hour return), **Temple Basin** (three hours return) and **Avalanche Peak** (six to eight hours return). The pleasant **Dobson Nature Walk** (30 minutes return) is best from November to February when the alpine flowers are blooming. Recommended for fit trampers is the **Bealey Spur Track** (four to six hours return) with expansive views of the Waimakariri River valley and surrounding mountains. Longer tramps with superb alpine backdrops include the **Goat Pass Track** (two days) and the longer and more difficult **Harman Pass** and **Harpers Pass Tracks**. These tracks require previous tramping experience as flooding can make the rivers dangerous and the weather is extremely changeable; ask DOC first.

Home In the Hills (☎ 03-318 9220; www.homeinthehills.co.nz) offers short alpine encounters (three to five hours, \$100), guided nature walks and bird-watching (two to three hours, \$80) and longer personalised mountain and bush experiences.

There's also skiing at Temple Basin; see p90.

Sleeping & Eating

Camp within Arthur's Pass township at the basic **public shelter** (adult/child \$5/free), opposite DOC, where there's stream water, a sink, tables and toilets. Camping is free at **Klondyke Corner**, 8km south of Arthur's Pass, and **Kelly Shelter**, 20km to the northwest; both have toilets and the water must be boiled before drinking.

Mountain House YHA Backpackers & Cottages (☎ 03-318 9258; www.trampers.co.nz; SH73; dm \$27-29, s/d/tr/q \$67/70/93/106, cottage sleeping up to 10 from \$200; (P) (Q)) has excellent dorms and private rooms on one side of the highway, and older, but still comfortable rooms across the road in what was one of New Zealand's earliest youth hostels. The owner is a wealth of information on local activities, and also provides transport to trailheads (right). Self-contained cottages with cosy open fires are also available. Bookings recommended from November to April.

In the southern part of town, **Arthur's Pass Alpine Motel** (☎ 03-318 9233; www.apam.co.nz; SH73; d \$105-125; (P) (Q)) has comfortable motel units. Car storage is available (\$3 per day), and if you're snowed in there's Sky TV and a good DVD library.

The village's de facto pub is the **Wobbly Kea** (☎ 03-318 9101; SH73; meals \$10-24; ☎ 8.30am-10.30pm, to 11.30pm Fri & Sat), a friendly café-bar serving steaks, pasta and pizza. Takeaway pizza is also available.

The **Arthur's Pass Store** (☎ 03-318 9235; SH73; ☎ 7am-7pm; (Q)) sells sandwiches, pies and good breakfasts. Limited groceries and petrol are very expensive; fill up in Christchurch or Greymouth.

Getting There & Around

Arthur's Pass sees buses travelling between Christchurch (\$25) and Greymouth (\$25); **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) and **Coast to Coast** (☎ 0800 800 847; www.coast2coast.co.nz) stop here. Bus tickets are sold at the Arthur's Pass Store.

The **TranzAlpine** train operated by **Tranz Scenic** (☎ 0800 872 467; www.transzscenic.co.nz) runs between Christchurch and Greymouth via Arthur's Pass. See the boxed text, p504.

The road over the pass was once winding and very steep, but the spectacular Otira viaduct has removed many of the treacherous hairpin bends.

Mountain House Shuttle (☎ 03-318 9258), based at Mountain House Backpackers (left), offers a transport service to most of the walking tracks and ski fields.

METHVEN

pop 1140

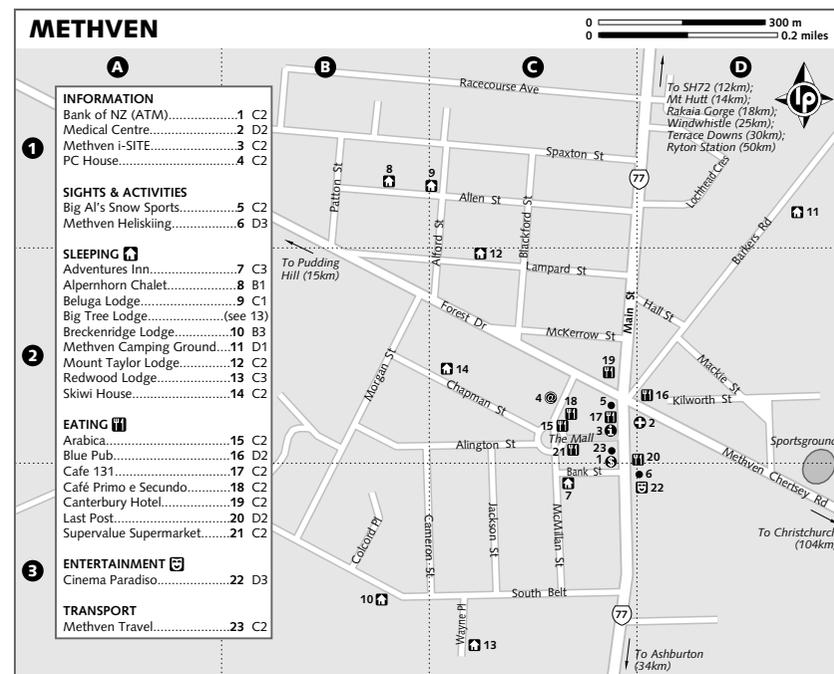
Methven is busiest in winter, when it fills up with snow-sports fans heading to nearby Mt Hutt. If the hustle and bustle of travelling in NZ during the peak summer season is getting you down, Methven town is a laid-back option with quieter (and usually cheaper) accommodation than elsewhere in the country, and a 'what shall I do today?' range of warm-weather activities including ballooning, tramping, fishing and skydiving.

Information

Bank of New Zealand (Main St) With ATM; near the i-SITE.

Medical centre (☎ 03-302 8105; Main St)

Methven i-SITE (☎ 03-302 8955; www.amazingspace.co.nz; 121 Main St; ☎ 8am-6pm daily May-Oct, 9am-



5pm Mon-Fri & 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Apr; (Q) Books accommodation, skiing packages, transport and activities. Internet available.

PC House (McMillan St) For internet access.

Activities

Nearby **Mount Hutt** (see p90) offers five months of skiing (June to October, weather permitting), often the longest ski season of any resort in NZ.

For ski rental and advice see **Big Al's Snow Sports** (☎ 03-302 8003; www.bigals.co.nz; cnr Main St & Forest Dr; golf clubs per day \$12, mountain bikes per hr/day \$12/39).

Methven Heliskiing (☎ 03-302 8108; www.heliskiing.co.nz; Main St; day trips \$825; ☎ Jul-Sep) offer trips including five powder runs, guide service, safety equipment and lunch. **Black Diamond Safaris** (☎ 03-302 9696; www.blackdiamondsafaris.co.nz) can take you to uncrowded club ski fields by 4WD. Prices start at \$150 for 4WD transport only; \$270 gets you transport, a lift pass, guiding and lunch.

Nearby Pudding Hill is a skydiving centre. **Skydiving NZ** (☎ 03-302 9143; www.skydivingnz.com; Pudding Hill Airfield) offer tandem jumps from

3000m (\$265), and the **NZ Skydiving School** (☎ 03-302 9143; www.nzskydivingschool.com) has introductory courses starting at \$395.

More sedate are balloon flights with **Aoraki Balloon Safaris** (☎ 0800 256 837, 03-302 8172; www.nzballooning.co.nz; flights \$345) which start with glorious views of snowcapped peaks and end with a champagne breakfast.

The **Mount Hutt Forest** is predominantly mountain beech; it's 14km west of Methven. Adjoining it are the **Awa Awa Rata Reserve** and the **Pudding Hill Scenic Reserve**. There are two access roads: Pudding Hill Rd leads to foot access for Pudding Hill Stream, and McLennan's Bush Rd leads to both reserves. There are many walking trails, including the water-crossing **Pudding Hill Stream Route** (two hours).

There's a good, easy walk through farmland and the impressive **Rakaia Gorge** (three to four hours return), beginning at the car park just south of the bridge on SH77. There are good picnic spots around the bridge. **Rakaia Gorge Alpine Jet** (☎ 03-318 6574; www.rivertours.co.nz; \$68) and **Rakaia Gorge Scenic Jet** (☎ 03-318 6515; \$65) both do 40-minute jetboat trips through the gorge.

Terrace Downs (☎ 0800 465 373, 03-318 6943; www.terrace-downs.co.nz; SH72; green fees \$120, club hire \$40), 30km from Methven near Windwhistle, is a 'high-country resort' with a world-class 18-hole golf course. Tilley's Bar & Restaurant is open to non-golfing visitors, and there's live jazz most Saturdays from 5pm.

Ask the i-SITE for details of other activities, including horse riding, mountain biking, fishing, scenic helicopter flights and farm tours.

Sleeping

Some accommodation is closed in summer, but the following are open year-round with lower prices applicable outside the ski season.

Methven Camping Ground (☎ 03-302 8005; methvennz@hotmail.com; Barkers Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$22/24, cabins \$34-50) Small park in a scenic location close to the centre of town. Facilities (including a TV room) are serviceable. Tiny budget cabins offer the cheapest bed in town, but it's worth spending a few bucks more at one of the backpackers.

Alpernhorn Chalet (☎ 03-302 8779; alpernhorn@methvenmail.co.nz; 44 Allen St; dm \$25, d \$60-80; 🏠) This small, inviting home has a conservatory housing an indoor garden and spa pool. A log fire, free internet and complimentary espresso coffee might see you staying longer than you plan.

Redwood Lodge (☎ 03-302 8964; www.snowboardnz.com; 3 Wayne Pl; tw & d \$65-85, tr & q \$115; 🏠) Turkish rugs and a new pastel paint job give this family-friendly spot with single, double, triple and quad rooms plenty of charm. En-suite rooms with TV provide privacy and the owner has plenty of ideas for summertime activities.

Big Tree Lodge (☎ 03-302 9575; www.mt-hutt.com; 25 South Belt; dm \$25-27, d/tw \$58-60; 🏠) Transformed from a one-time vicarage, this friendly and relaxed lodge has lovely wood-trimmed bathrooms, and a comfy, heritage ambience.

Adventures Inn (☎ 03-302 8999; www.methvenaccommodation.co.nz; cnr McMillan & Bank Sts; dm/d \$29/74, d with bathroom \$84; 🏠) This YHA-associated lodge has appealing dining/living areas, a large kitchen and indoor and outdoor spa pools. Prices are higher than other hostels in town, but include extras like breakfast and equipment hire (bikes, golf clubs, fishing gear etc).

Ryton Station (☎ 0800 926 868, 03-318 5818; www.ryton.co.nz; sites \$5, lodge per person \$35-45, holiday house per person \$50, chalet per person \$145-165) Beautifully

isolated 14,800-hectare sheep station, 60km northwest of Methven on the north shore of Lake Coleridge. The high-country accommodation ranges from a wilderness camping ground and 15-bed budget lodge (equipped with kitchen, but meals are available from the homestead), to self-contained holiday houses or DB&B (dinner, bed and breakfast) lake-view chalets. There are activities aplenty including 4WD tours, fishing, horse riding and walking.

Beluga Lodge (☎ 03-302 8290; www.beluga.co.nz; 40 Allen St; r \$195-225; 🏠) Highly relaxing B&B with king-sized beds, fluffy bathrobes, and a gardenside hydrotherapy pool. Privacy-seekers should consider the garden suite, with its own patio and barbecue. A four-bedroom cottage is also available (\$350; minimum three-night stay).

Also recommended:
Skiwi House (☎ 03-302 8872; www.skiwihouse.co.nz; 30 Chapman St; dm \$22-24, d \$50; 🏠) Smaller backpackers with a family atmosphere and plenty of DVDs if the mountain is closed. Covered storage area for bicycles.

Breckenridge Lodge (☎ 03-303 8902; www.breck-enridgelodge.co.nz; 49-51 South Belt; s/d/tr/q/f \$75/95/120/140/160; 🏠) Versatile lodge with a wide array of rooms, warm wooden décor, and a comfy bistro and lounge bar. Breakfast is included.

Mount Taylor Lodge (☎ 03-302 9699; www.mounttaylorlodge.co.nz; 32 Lampard St; s \$75, d \$150; 🏠) Stylish 11-room lodge with wooden floors; breakfast included.

Eating & Drinking

Methven's eateries have traditionally closed over winter, but a few places now open year-round.

Café Primo e Secundo (☎ 03-302 9309; 38 McMillan St; meals \$10-18; ☺ 8am-5pm) A treasure trove of retro Kiwiana; the coolest part is that everything is for sale. Sandwiched in and around the souvenir teaspoons and Buzzy Bee bookends are tasty cakes, panini, and legendary bacon and egg sandwiches. You'll also unearth Methven's best coffee.

Café 131 (☎ 03-302 9131; Main St; meals \$6-17; ☺ 7.30am-late; 🏠) A warm space with polished timber and leadlight windows. Serves up all-day breakfasts, good value platters, and soup, pasta, and sandwiches. Beer and wine takes over later in the day.

Arabica (☎ 03-302 8455; 36 McMillan St; mains \$15-20; ☺ 8am-4pm Sat-Thu, to late Fri) Coolly cosmopolitan café with an all-day menu featuring brekkie items like corned beef hash with salmon cakes.

Beer and wine goes well with the special tapas menu available Friday nights.

Blue Pub (☎ 03-302 8046; Main St; mains \$12-26; ☺ noon-late) Classic Kiwi pub with locals and visitors in equal measure. Drink at the bar crafted from a huge slab of native timber, or tuck into surprisingly sophisticated meals like parmesan-crusted blue cod in the quieter restaurant.

Canterbury Hotel (☎ 03-302 8045; cnr Main St & Forest Dr; mains \$10-20; ☺ noon-late) Across the road from the Blue Pub is the 'Brown Pub' (more of a beige colour really) with more basic décor and simpler pub meals like burgers and schnitzel. It's the locals' hangout of choice, especially when there's live rugby on the telly. Go the Crusaders!

Last Post (☎ 03-302 8259; Main St; mains \$15-34; ☺ 6pm-late May-Oct) Popular après ski rendezvous point where the day's downhill escapades are recounted over good cocktails, gourmet pizzas and innovative mains. The excellent wine list features the best of the South Island.

Self-caterers are catered for at the **Supervalve supermarket** (cnr The Mall & MacMillan St; ☺ 7am-9pm).

Entertainment

Cinema Paradiso (☎ 03-302 1957; www.cinemaparadiso.co.nz; Main St; adult/child \$13/10) screens mostly art-house releases.

Getting There & Around

Methven Travel (☎ 03-302 8106; www.methventravel.co.nz) picks up from Christchurch (adult/child one-way \$35/18). Other companies offer this service during winter.

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) has one daily bus between Methven and Christchurch (\$33, one hour).

Shuttles operate from Methven to Mt Hutt ski field in winter for around \$30; inquiries and pick-ups are from the i-SITE.

MT SOMERS

Mt Somers is a small settlement just off SH72, the main road between Geraldine and Mt Hutt. The **Mt Somers Subalpine Walkway** (17km, 10 hours) traverses the northern face of Mt Somers, linking the popular picnic spots of Sharplin Falls and Woolshed Creek. Trail highlights include volcanic formations, Maori rock drawings, deep river canyons and botanical diversity. There are two huts on the tramp: **Pinnacles Hut** and **Woolshed Creek Hut** (each \$10). This route is subject to sudden changes in

weather and precautions should be taken. Hut tickets and information are available at the **Mt Somers General Store** (☎ 03-303 9831; Pattons Rd). There are other shorter walks in the area.

Based in the Mt Somers region is **Back of Beyond** (☎ 03-303 0888; www.mountainbiking.net.nz; ☺ Dec-Apr), offering small-group high-country mountain-bike tours Options range from one day (\$400) to four days (from \$2200, including accommodation, meals and a support vehicle to carry luggage). Self-guided, self-catering tour options are available too.

The **Mt Somers Holiday Park** (☎ 03-303 9719; www.mountsomers.co.nz; Hoods Rd; sites \$22, cabins \$42-63) is small and well-maintained.

At the highway turn-off to Mt Somers is **Stronechrubie** (☎ 03-303 9814; www.stronechrubie.co.nz; SH72; d \$100-160), with studios and luxury chalets scattered across bird-filled gardens. The intimate **restaurant** (mains \$27 to \$30; ☺ 6.30pm-late Wed-Sat, noon-2pm Sun) features excellent Canterbury lamb. Consider a DB&B package (per two people \$220 to \$280).

SOUTH CANTERBURY

SH1 heading south from Christchurch along the coast passes through the port city of Timaru on its way to Dunedin and carries a lot of traffic. The inland route along SH8 is also busy, but comes with the added no-cost attraction of the stunning landscapes of the Mackenzie Country. Studded with the intense blue lakes of Tekapo and Ohau, SH80 veers off at Twizel in the Mackenzie Country to hug Lake Pukaki all the way to the magnificent heights of Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park.

TIMARU

pop 26,750
The port city of Timaru is a handy stopping-off point halfway between Christchurch and Dunedin. Many travellers prefer to kick on 85km further south to the smaller, more charming Oamaru, but a few good restaurants and Timaru's good-value motels means it's worthy of a spot of travellers' R & R. The town's name comes from the Maori name 'Te Maru', meaning 'The Place of Shelter'. No permanent settlement existed here until 1839 when the Weller brothers from Sydney set up a whaling station. The *Caroline*, a sailing ship that picked up whale oil, gave the picturesque bay its name.

Orientation

SH1 is known by many names as it passes through Timaru: the Hilton Hwy north of town, Evans St as it enters town and then Theodasia St and Craigie Ave as it bypasses the central business district around Stafford St. Continuing south, the highway becomes King St and then SH1 again after emerging from town. Confused?

Information

The **Timaru i-SITE** (☎ 0800 484 6278, 03-688 6163; www.southisland.org.nz; 2 George St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) is across from the train station (trains in this area only carry freight, not passengers). The i-SITE has street maps, information on local walks, and also handles transport bookings. Internet is available at Off the Rail Café (opposite).

Sights

South Canterbury Museum (☎ 03-687 7212; www.timaru.govt.nz; Perth St; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Fri, 1.30-4.30pm Sat & Sun) has historical and natural artefacts of the region. Hanging from the ceiling is a replica of the aeroplane designed and flown by local pioneer aviator and inventor Richard Pearse. Many believe his mildly successful attempts at manned flight came before the Wright brothers first flew in 1903.

At the time of writing, a **Maori Rock Art Centre** (including tours around the region to see rock art in situ) was planned near the i-SITE. Ask for an update.

Aigantighe Art Gallery (☎ 03-688 4424; www.timaru.govt.nz; 49 Wai-iti Rd; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun) is one of the South Island's largest public galleries, a 900-piece collection of NZ and European art from the previous four centuries set up in a 1908 mansion, and adorned externally by a sculpture garden (always open). The gallery's Gaelic name means 'at home' and is pronounced 'egg-and-tie'.

DB Mainland Brewery (☎ 03-688 2059; Sheffield St; tours \$5; ☎ tours 10.30am Mon-Fri) is located 6km north of town. Enclosed footwear must be worn and bookings are required.

The **Botanic Gardens** (cnr King & Queen Sts; admission free; ☎ 8am-dusk), established in 1864, have ponds, a conservatory and a notable collection of roses and native tree ferns. The gardens are south of town; enter from Queen St. Passionate rose buffs should also visit the **Trevor Griffiths Rose Garden** (Caroline Bay; admission free; ☎ open daily)

with more than 1000 romantic blooms set around arbors and water features.

Every November Timaru celebrates the **Timaru Festival of Roses** (www.festivalofroses.co.nz) with two weeks of garden tours, exhibitions and floral workshops.

Activities

One of the few safe, sheltered beaches on the east coast is Caroline Bay. There's a fun, crowded **Christmas Carnival** (www.carolinebay.org.nz) with concerts and events here beginning 26 December and running for about 10 days. The beachside **park** has a walk-through aviary, a wading pool, minigolf (\$3), kids playground and a pleasant walkway.

A good one-hour **walk** heads north from town along Caroline Bay, past the Benvenue Cliffs and on to the Dashing Rocks and rock pools at the end of the bay. Ask at the i-SITE for the folder detailing walks in the area. There's good **surfing** in the south of town, east of the hospital at Patiti Point.

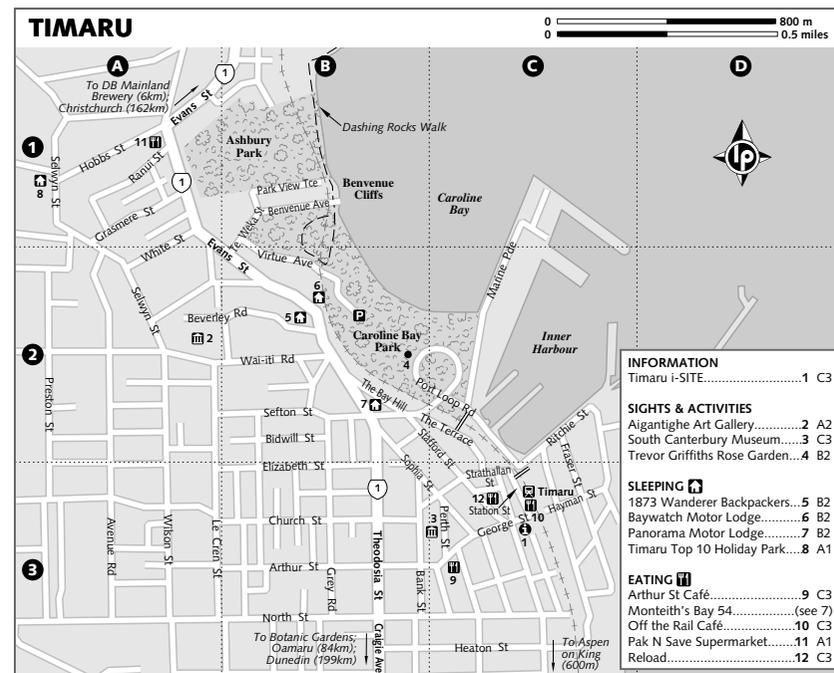
Sleeping

Timaru Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 242 121, 03-684 7690; www.timaruholidaypark.co.nz; 154a Selwyn St; unpowered/powerd sites \$28/30, cabins & motels d \$50-105) Parkland site with excellent amenities and a golf course next door that's included in your park tariff.

1873 Wanderer Backpackers (☎ 0800 187 392, 03-688 8795; 1873wandererbackpackers@xtra.co.nz; 24 Evans St; sites/dm/s/d \$13/23/25/52; ☎) Sprawling spot with friendly owners offering transfers to/from the bus station. Rent a mountain bike, fire up the barbecue and relax in the pretty garden. The owners also organise hunting and fishing trips.

Aspen on King (☎ 0800 822 344, 03-688 3034; www.aspenonking.co.nz; 51 King St; d \$95-140; ☎) This place is striking evidence that Timaru's motels offer excellent value. A three-bedroom apartment features a retro bathroom complete with a bright red bath that's straight from the Playboy mansion. Other newer units are equally spacious and crisply modern.

Panorama Motor Lodge (☎ 03-688 0097; www.panorama.net.nz; 52 The Bay Hill; d from \$120; ☎) Modern, well-appointed units with spa, sauna and gym. More greenery to soften the concrete would be nice, but Caroline Bay park and Bay Hill's cafés are a short walk away. Family units are particularly spacious.



Busy Evans St is wall-to-wall motels, but it's worth asking for a room at the back if you're a light sleeper. The best option is **Baywatch Motor Lodge** (☎ 0800 929 828, 03-688 1886; www.baywatchtimaru.co.nz; 7 Evans St; d \$110-140; ☎). Its units offer Hoff-tastic bay views and double-glazed windows mask the worst of the road noise from SH1.

Eating & Drinking

Reload (☎ 03-688 6616; cnr Stafford & Bewick Sts; wraps & juices \$5-10; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Self-styled 'health fuel stop' with wraps, salads and smoothies. The not-so-virtuous can fuel up on coffee as they read a global array of interesting magazines.

Arthur St Café (☎ 03-688 9449; 8 Arthur St; snacks & meals \$10-15; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm, 7.30am-8pm Fri, 8.30am-3pm Sat) Excellent coffee and cruisy Kiwi dub is always a good way to ease into the day. Timaru's funkiest eatery offers sandwiches, bagels and world famous (in Timaru) breakfasts.

Off the Rail Café (☎ 03-688 3594; Station St; meals \$8-17; ☎ 7.30m-5pm Mon-Fri, to 9.30pm Sat; ☎) This funky licensed café is at the train station. Fire up the jukebox crammed with '70s tunes, and

sample Kiwi baked goodies and more contemporary globally influenced dishes. It's open late for drinks and occasional live music on Saturday night.

Monteith's Bay 54 (☎ 03-688 4367; 56 The Bay Hill; lunch mains \$10-16, dinner mains \$18-27; ☎ 11am-late) Catch a glimpse of Caroline Bay through the palm trees and you could (almost) be in the Mediterranean. Proudly Kiwi beers from Monteith's and classy Kiwi pub tucker such as salmon and venison bring you back to South Canterbury.

Self-caterers shop at **Pak N Save supermarket** (cnr Ranui & Evans Sts; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun).

Getting There & Away

InterCity (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercity.co.nz) stops outside the train station, with buses to Christchurch (\$32, 2½ hours, two daily), Oamaru (\$26, one hour, two daily) and Dunedin (\$37, three hours, two daily). From Dunedin connect to Queenstown, Te Anau and Invercargill.

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) stop in Timaru en route to Christchurch (\$25) and Dunedin (\$25).

There are no direct buses from Timaru to Lake Tekapo and Mt Cook – you'll need to first get to Geraldine or Fairlie to catch buses to the Mackenzie Country. Ask at the i-SITE.

TO MACKENZIE COUNTRY

Heading to Queenstown and the southern lakes from Christchurch means a turn off SH1 onto SH79, a scenic route towards the high country and the Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park's eastern foothills. The road passes through the small towns of Geraldine and Fairlie before joining SH8, which heads over Burkes Pass to the blue intensity of Lake Tekapo.

Geraldine

pop 2210

Geraldine has a country-village atmosphere with pretty private gardens and an active craft scene. See www.geraldine.net.nz.

The **Geraldine i-SITE** (☎ 03-693 1006; www.southisland.org.nz; cnr Talbot & Cox Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) has brochures detailing the gardens and galleries in town, and can book rural B&Bs and farmstays. Ask for the Aoraki District Ariki Trail brochure listing galleries across South Canterbury, including Geraldine's **Te Ariki Art Gallery** (☎ 03-693 9110; www.tearikigallery.co.nz; Four Peaks Plaza), which specialises in authentic Maori art. The i-SITE also has a good range of walking maps.

Four Peaks Plaza (cnr Talbot & Cox Sts; ☎ 9am-5pm), caters to hungry visitors with a bakery, cafés and the Talbot Forest cheese shop. Also here is **Barker's** (☎ 03-693 9727), a fruit-products emporium selling (and sampling) kiwifruit wines, juices, sauces, smoothies and jams. Every Saturday the town kicks into organic action with a **farmer's market** (☎ 9.30am-12.30pm).

The **Vintage Car & Machinery Museum** (☎ 03-693 8005; 178 Talbot St; adult/child \$6/free; ☎ 10am-4pm daily mid-Sep-Jun) has more than 30 vintage and veteran cars from as far back as 1907, while a massive shed at the back houses 100 tractors. There's also a rare 1929 Spartan Biplane.

4x4 New Zealand (☎ 03-693 8847; www.4x4newzealand.co.nz; \$105-230) operates a range of 4WD tours in the surrounding high country, taking in sheep stations, braided rivers and *Lord of the Rings* film sites. Prices vary according to itinerary and length of tours.

The mind-bending **Medieval Mosaic** (☎ 03-693 9820; www.1066.co.nz; 10 Wilson St; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) is ideal for fans of

medieval history, word games and clever-clogs mathematics; not necessarily recommended after a few drinks the night before though. If you're feeling chilly, the world's biggest wool-tennis jersey is also on display.

SLEEPING & EATING

Geraldine Holiday Park (☎ 03-693 8147; www.geraldineholidaypark.co.nz; 39 Hislop St; unpowered/powerd sites \$24/26, cabins & units \$45-105; (P) (Q)) This holiday park is set amid well-established trees across the road from a grassy oval. Besides budget cabins and self-contained units, there's a TV room and playground.

Rawhiti Backpackers (☎ 03-693 8252; www.rawhitibackpackers.co.nz; 27 Hewlings St; dm/s/d \$24/34/58; (P) (Q)) Under new ownership, but standards have been kept up at this an old maternity hospital that's now a spacious hostel with smartly furnished rooms. Pizza, great breakfasts and mountain bikes are all available and guests rave about the comfy beds. It's above town off Peel St; grab a map before setting off.

Scenic Route Motor Lodge (☎ 0800 723 643; www.motelscenicroute.co.nz; 28 Waihi Terrace; d \$120-140; (P) (Q)) Recommended by readers, this new hotel is built in early-settler style, but the modern studios include double-glazing, Sky TV and the attention of a friendly cat who definitely thinks he runs the place. It's at the northern end of town.

Cafe Verde (☎ 03-693 9616; 45 Talbot St; mains \$7-15; ☎ 9am-4pm) Down the lane beside the old post office is this delightful garden café. Grown-ups will appreciate the tasty lunch options such as salmon in filo pastry, while the kids go crazy – that's with a small, well-behaved 'c' – in the postage stamp-sized playground.

Both of Geraldine's pubs do hearty meals at lunch and dinner. Try the **Totara restaurant** (☎ 03-693 8458; 31 Talbot St; mains \$15-25; ☎ noon-2pm, 5-9pm) at the Crown Hotel, or dine alfresco in the garden bar at the **Village Inn** (☎ 03-693 1004; 41 Talbot St; mains \$8-15; ☎ 10am-late).

The eateries at Four Peaks Plaza (left) are ideal for a quick bite. For a quality sugar rush, visit **Chocolate Brown** (☎ 03-693 9982; 10 Talbot St; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) for handmade choccies, plus designer teas, coffee, hot chocolate and cake.

ENTERTAINMENT

Geraldine Cinema (☎ 03-693 8118; Talbot St; adult/child \$10/7) is a quirky local cinema with old sofas.

Peel Forest

Peel Forest, 22km north of Geraldine (signposted off SH72), is among NZ's most important indigenous podocarp (conifer) forests. A road from nearby Mt Peel station leads to **Mesopotamia**, the run of English writer Samuel Butler (author of the satire *Erewhon*) in the 1860s.

Get information such as the *Peel Forest Park: Track Information* brochure (\$1) at **Peel Forest Store** (☎ 03-696 3567; ☎ 9am-6pm; (Q)), which stocks petrol, groceries and takeaway food, and has internet access and an on-site café-restaurant. The store also manages the pleasant DOC **camping ground** (unpowered/powerd sites \$18/22, cabins \$36) beside the Rangitata River, about 3km beyond the store and equipped with basic two- to four-berth cabins, showers, a kitchen, laundry and card phone. Check in at the store and ask about renting a mountain bike (per hour/day \$8/35) when you're there.

More upmarket is the reader-recommended **Peel Forest Lodge** (☎ 03-696 3703; www.peelforestlodge.co.nz; d \$220-350), a self-contained log-cabin-style lodge deep in the forest. Bring your own food along for leisurely barbecues; meals are also available if you can't/won't cook. The owners don't live onsite so you'll need to book ahead.

Horse trekking in the lush forest is also on offer (from \$55) even if you're not staying at the lodge. Bring your swimming trunks in summer for a dip in the Rangitata River.

The magnificent podocarp forest consists of totara, kahikatea and matai. One fine example of totara on the **Big Tree Walk** (30 minutes return) has a circumference of 9m and is over 1000 years old. Local bird life includes the rifleman, NZ pigeon (*kereru*), bellbird, fantail and grey warbler. There are also trails to waterfalls: **Emily Falls** (1½ hours return), **Rata Falls** (two hours return) and **Acland Falls** (one hour return).

Rangitata Rafts (☎ 0800 251 251, 03-696 3534; www.rafts.co.nz; ☎ Oct-Apr) goes white-water rafting on the Rangitata River, which contains exhilarating grade V rapids. The company's base is at Mt Peel, 13km past the camping ground, and includes budget **lodge accommodation** (dm/d \$20/48). Rafting trips can be taken from either Peel Forest (\$175) or Christchurch (\$185 including return transport to Mt Peel), and include hot showers and a barbecue. Count on three hours on the river.

Fairlie

pop 725

Fairlie is often described as 'the gateway to the Mackenzie'. To the west the landscape changes as the road ascends Burkes Pass to the open spaces of Mackenzie Country.

The **Fairlie visitor information centre** (☎ 03-685 8496; www.fairlie.co.nz; Allandale St; ☎ 10am-4pm) can provide information on nearby **mountain-biking** tracks. There's skiing 29km northwest at **Fox Peak** in the Two Thumb Range. **Mt Dobson**, 26km northwest of Fairlie, is in a 3km-wide basin (see p90). The **Ski Shack** (☎ 03-685 8088; Allandale St) has information and gear rental. Internet is available at **eat** (below).

SLEEPING & EATING

Both Main St pubs offer budget accommodation, or you can try one of the local motels, with rooms around the \$85 mark.

Fairlie Gateway Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 324 754, 03-685 8375; www.fairlietop10.co.nz; 10 Allandale Rd; unpowered & powered sites \$30, cabins & units \$50-150; (P) (Q)) Tranquil, creek-side park that's perfect for families, with a large playground for the kids. Fishing gear is for hire.

Rimuwhere Country Retreat (☎ 0800 723 723, 03-685 8058; rimuwhere@xtra.co.nz; 53 Mt Cook Rd; d \$90) Old-fashioned, but spacious units well off the main road amid a well-established garden. Out the front, the heritage house (a former doctor's residence) has a restaurant and conservatory.

Pinewood Motels (☎ 0800 858 599, 03-685 8599; www.pinewoodmotels.co.nz; 25-27 Mt Cook Rd; d from \$85) Reasonable self-contained units, including one that's wheelchair-accessible.

eat (☎ 03-685 6275; 76 Main St; mains \$10-15; ☎ 8am-5pm; (Q)) Family-friendly with a kid's play area, eat also dregs in grown-ups with its interesting food (try the squid, mango and coconut salad), beer and wine, and speedy internet access.

Old Library Café (☎ 03-685 8999; 6 Allandale Rd; dinner mains \$18-30; ☎ 11am-late; (Q)) Has elegant touches such as an old pressed-metal ceiling, and serves fresh, local food such as roasted Mackenzie lamb or smoked Alpine salmon. There's also a more casual all-day menu featuring pasta, salads and soups.

MACKENZIE COUNTRY

The expansive high ground from which the scenic peaks of Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park escalate is known as Mackenzie Country after the legendary James 'Jock' MacKenzie, who

ran his stolen flocks in this then-uninhabited region in the 1840s. When he was finally caught, other settlers realised the potential of the land and followed in his footsteps. The first people to traverse the Mackenzie were the Maori, trekking from Banks Peninsula to Otago hundreds of years ago.

Online see www.mtcook.org.nz; for information on winter activities see www.mackenziewinter.co.nz.

Lake Tekapo

pop 315

At the southern end of its namesake lake, this town has unobstructed views across turquoise water, and a backdrop of rolling hills and mountains worthy of a Peter Jackson movie. The town has boomed in recent times, with new B&Bs, holiday homes and resort accommodation taking advantage of the epic vistas.

Lake Tekapo is a popular stop on tours of the Southern Alps, with Mt Cook- and Queenstown-bound buses popping in for a quick ice cream or coffee. At the time of writing, a new town centre was planned near the lakeside, but for the life of this book expect to still mix and mingle with other Tekapo travellers along the ribbon of eateries and souvenir shops lining the main highway.

For an explanation of why this and other lakes in the region are such a vibrant shade of blue, see the boxed text, p568.

INFORMATION

Kiwi Treasures (☎ 03-680 6686; SH8; 🕒 7.30am-8pm summer, shorter hrs in winter) acts as souvenir shop, post office and visitor information centre. Here you can also book buses and hire fishing gear. Online see www.laketekapountouched.co.nz and www.tekapotourism.co.nz.

There's internet access at the Tekapo Helicopters office (opposite). At the time of writing there was no bank or ATM at Lake Tekapo. For folding cash you'll need to trek to either Twizel or Geraldine.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The diminutive, picturesque **Church of the Good Shepherd** beside the lake was built of stone and oak in 1935 and is a favourite for weddings given its postcard-perfect setting. Nearby is a **statue** of a collie dog, a tribute to the sheepdogs that helped develop the Mackenzie Country. This area is at its scenic best before or after

the last bus group leaves; otherwise the place is swarming with rubberneckers, so come early morning or late afternoon.

Popular walks include the track to the summit of **Mt John** (three hours return) from just beyond the camping ground. From there, continue on to Alexandrina and McGregor Lakes, making it an all-day walk. Other walks are detailed in the brochure *Lake Tekapo Walkway* (\$1).

Cruise Tekapo (☎ 027 479 7675; www.cruisetekapo.co.nz; 25-/40-min cruises \$30/45, fishing per hr \$80) can get you out and about on Lake Tekapo.

Mountain bikes can be hired (per hour/half-day \$10/25) from Lakefront Backpackers Lodge and the Lake Tekapo YHA.

Mackenzie Alpine Horse Trekking (☎ 0800 628 269; www.maht.co.nz; one-/two-hr ride \$45/75, half-/full day \$150/250) organises four-footed high-country explorations.

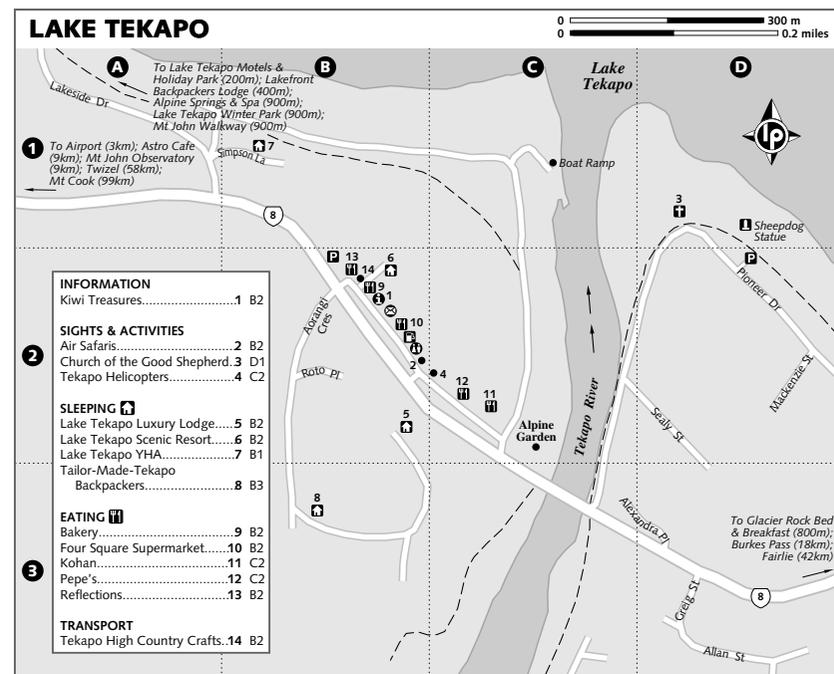
Thanks to clear skies and its distance from any main towns, the stargazing at Lake Tekapo is top-notch, and the University of Canterbury has a scientific observatory on Mt John. Join a two-hour night-time stargazing tour operated by **Earth & Sky** (☎ 03-680 6960; www.earthandsky.co.nz; adult/child \$68/35; 🕒 Apr-Sep). Call for start times as these can vary. One-hour daytime tours (adult/child \$20/5) of the observatory operate by demand from 11am to 3pm.

In winter, Lake Tekapo is a base for **downhill skiing** at Mt Dobson or Round Hill and **cross-country skiing** on the Two Thumb Range.

Opened in late 2007, the **Lake Tekapo Winter Park** (☎ 03-680 6550; www.winterpark.co.nz; Lakeside Dr; skating adult/child \$12/9; 🕒 Apr-Sep) features a skating rink and a mini-snow slope for gentle skiing and tobogganing action. You can also have a go at curling for \$15 before heading to the café for après curling sustenance. Next door, the **Alpine Springs & Spa** (www.alpinesprings.co.nz; 🕒 10am-10pm) is open all year round with a compact selection of hot pools scattered amid 2500 native trees. Private pools and saunas (per hour \$27.50) are also available, and spa packages start at \$90.

TOURS

Air Safaris (☎ 03-680 6880; www.airsafaris.co.nz; SH8) Does 50-minute flights over Mt Cook and its glaciers (adult/child \$280/195), taking you up the Tasman Glacier, over the upper part of the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers, and by Mts Cook, Tasman and Elie de Beaumont. A similar flight is from Glentanner Park (see p575) but with higher prices (adult/child \$320/220).



Tekapo Helicopters (☎ 0800 359 835, 03-680 6229; www.tekapohelicopters.co.nz; SH8) Has five options, from a 25-minute flight (\$195) to a 70-minute trip taking in Mt Cook and Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers (\$500). All flights include icefield landings and views of Mt Cook.

SLEEPING

Lake Tekapo Motels & Holiday Park (☎ 0800 853 853, 03-680 6825; www.laketekapo-accommodation.co.nz; Lakeside Dr; sites \$30, cabins & units \$60-140; 🕒 📺) Has a pretty and peaceful lakeside locale, plus everything from basic cabins to motel units with full kitchen and Sky TV. Newer chalets come with shared picnic tables, barbecues and spectacular lake vistas. In summer expect a fair bit of boat traffic.

Lakefront Backpackers Lodge (☎ 03-680 6227; www.laketekapo-accommodation.co.nz; Lakeside Dr; dm/d \$26/65; 🕒 📺) An impressive lakeside place owned by the nearby holiday park (about 1km from the township). Relax by the open fire in the comfy lounge area or take in the sensational views from the front deck. Rooms are modern and bathrooms are top-notch. Backpacker buses stop most nights so it can be a tad social.

Lake Tekapo YHA (☎ 03-680 6857; www.yha.co.nz; 3 Simpson La; dm/d \$26/70; 🕒 📺) Friendly, well-equipped little place with a living room adorned with open fireplaces, a piano and outstanding views across the lake to the mountains beyond, but with no TV to dominate proceedings (the TV is elsewhere in the building). Campers (not campervans) can pitch a tent for \$12.

Tailor-Made-Tekapo Backpackers (☎ 03-680 6700; www.tailor-made-backpackers.co.nz; 9-11 Aorangi Cres; dm \$25-29, d with/without bathroom \$74/62; 🕒 📺) This hostel favours beds rather than bunks and is spread over a pair of well-tended houses on a peaceful street away from the main road. The interior is spick and span and there's a barbecue-equipped garden complete with well-established trees, birdsong and a children's playground.

Lake Tekapo Scenic Resort (☎ 0800 118 666, 03-680 6808; www.laketekapo.com; SH8; d \$190-280; 🕒 📺) Not so much a self-contained resort as a central complex of modern studio and family units, with only bare parkland separating it from the lake. Lacking in character, but undeniably central.

BLUE CRUSH

The blazing turquoise colour of Lake Tekapo, a characteristic it shares with other regional bodies of water such as Lake Pukaki, is due to 'rock flour' (sediment) in the water. This so-called flour was created when the lake's basin was gouged out by a stony-bottomed glacier moving across the land's surface, with the rock-on-rock action grinding out fine particles that ended up being suspended in the glacial melt water. This sediment gives the water a milky quality and refracts the sunlight beaming down, hence the brilliant colour.

Glacier Rock Bed & Breakfast (☎ 03-680 6669; www.glacierrock.co.nz; 35 Lochinver Ave; d \$190-230; (P) (Q)) This architecturally-designed home doubles as an art gallery. An artist's – or maybe an architect's – eye is evident in the spacious and airy rooms. Breakfast is served in sunny rooms with huge picture windows.

Lake Tekapo Luxury Lodge (☎ 0800 525 383, 03-680 6566; www.laketekapolodge.co.nz; 24 Aorangi Cres; d \$250-395; (P) (Q)) Luxurious hilltop B&B set in an English-manoor style home. Three of the four well-appointed rooms have great views from a back deck, and there's also a handy path leading to the village past the owner's quirky corrugated iron artwork.

Hamilton Dve and the surrounding streets in the eastern part of town is a prime hunting ground for some good B&Bs.

EATING

The dining scene at Lake Tekapo is rather lacklustre, with most places doing OK business from the passing trade and a cavalcade of bus tours. Fingers crossed a few new places will open in the life of this book. Lunchtime is a good excuse for compiling a lakeside picnic from the supermarket and the bakery.

our pick **Astro Café** (Mt John Observatory; coffee & cake \$4-8; ☎ 9am-6pm) This tiny, glass-walled pavilion atop Mt John has insanely spectacular 360-degree views across the entire Mackenzie Basin. Quite possibly one of the best locations on the planet for a café, and the coffee and cake is pretty good too.

Pepe's (☎ 03-680 6677; SH8; meals \$12-30; ☎ 6pm-late) With large booths and walls decorated with skiing paraphernalia, the rustic Pepe's is a cosy little place with good pizza'n'pasta.

Some of the names are a bit naff (Vinnie's Venison or Spag Bol Bada Bing, anyone?), but the dishes are tasty, and later at night it becomes a good spot for a few quiet ones.

Kohan (☎ 03-680 6688; SH8; lunch \$8-12, dinner \$20-30; ☎ 11am-2pm Mon-Sun & 6-9pm Mon-Sat) The décor's a bit ho-hum, but you should be gazing at the lake and mountains outside anyway. The Japanese food is actually among the South Island's best, and with a salmon farm just up the road, you just know the sashimi is ultra-fresh. Lunch specials are particularly good value.

Reflections (☎ 03-680 6808; SH8; lunch mains \$10-17, dinner mains \$25-32; ☎ 8am-late) Grab an outdoor table with views to the lake – try and look past the mini-golf course – then select from a decent menu that includes roasted venison or baked Mt Cook salmon. Lunchtime offerings are more casual (burgers and salads) and next door is the town's pub for more nocturnal action.

Pick up supplies at the **Four Square supermarket** (SH8; ☎ 7am-9pm) and the nearby **bakery** (☎ 03-680 655; SH8; ☎ 7am-4pm).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Southbound services to Mt Cook, Queenstown and Wanaka, and northbound services to Christchurch, are offered by a number of operators such as **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz), **InterCity/Newmans** (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) and **Southern Link Coaches** (☎ 0508 458 835; www.southernlinkcoaches.co.nz). One-way fares range between \$25 and \$45.

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) travel from here to Christchurch and Queenstown/Wanaka.

Cook Connection (☎ 0800 266 526; www.cookconnect.co.nz) operates to Mt Cook (one-way \$28, one daily) and for an additional \$17 you can carry on from Mt Cook to Twizel. Travel can be over more than one day.

Between them, **Kiwi Treasures** (☎ 03-680 6686; SH8) and **Tekapo High Country Crafts** (☎ 03-680 6905; SH8) handle bookings for visiting buses.

Mt Cook Salmon Farm

Some 15km west of Lake Tekapo along SH8 is the signposted turn-off to the **Mt Cook Salmon Farm** (☎ 021 370 038; www.mtcooksalmon.com; Canal Rd; adult/child \$2/free; ☎ daylight hours). The farm operates in a hydroelectric canal system and is 12km from the turn-off – a scenic drive along a canal popular for fishing and enjoying great views of Mt Cook. Stop at the farm

to feed the fish, catch your own salmon (rods supplied) or pick up something for dinner. Continue on this stretch and you'll reach the southeastern shore of Lake Pukaki before the road rejoins SH8.

Lake Pukaki

On the southern shore of Lake Pukaki, 45km southwest of Lake Tekapo and 2km north-east of the turn-off to Mt Cook, is the **Lake Pukaki visitor information centre** (☎ 03-435 3280; info@mtcook.org.nz; SH8; ☎ 9am-6pm Oct-Apr, 10am-4pm May-Sep), with reams of information on Mackenzie Country. But the highlight here is the sterling **lookout** that on a clear day gives a picture-perfect view of Mt Cook and its surrounding peaks, with the ultrablue lake in the foreground.

Twizel pop 1015

It wasn't long ago that New Zealanders maligned the town of Twizel, just south of Lake Pukaki. The town was built in 1968 to service construction of the nearby hydroelectric power station, and was due to be abandoned in 1984 when the construction project was completed. Now the town's tenacious residents are having the last laugh as house prices are increasing and new lakeside subdivisions are being built to take advantage of the area's relaxed lakes and mountains lifestyle. Mt Cook is just 63km down the road, and Twizel's range of affordable accommodation and a few good eateries make it a good alternative to staying in more expensive Mt Cook Village. Twizel as a travellers' nirvana. Who would have thought?

Right in town is the **Twizel i-SITE** (☎ 03-435 3124; www.twizel.com; Twizel Events Centre; ☎ 9am-6pm daily Oct-Apr, 10am-4pm Tue-Sat May-Sep; (P) (Q)), which has internet access. In late January the town hosts the lively Mackenzie Summer Salmon and Wine Festival.

There's an ATM in the main shopping area. Note there's no ATM at Lake Tekapo or Mt Cook. Self-drive travellers should also fill up with petrol in Twizel before heading to Mt Cook.

ACTIVITIES

Nearby Lake Ruataniwha is popular for rowing, boating and windsurfing. Fishing in local rivers, canals and lakes is also big business and there are a number of guides in the region; ask at the i-SITE.

Discovery Tours (☎ 0800 213 868, 03-435 0114; www.discoverytours.co.nz) is based in Twizel and operates guided, small-group tours around the Mackenzie Country and Aoraki/Mt Cook, including hiking and heli-biking, plus a popular two-hour tour (adult/child \$75/40) to the site of the Pelennor battlefield in the *Lord of the Rings* movies. You can even get to charge around like a mad thing wearing LOTR replica gear.

The wading koki (black stilt bird) is found only in NZ and is one of the country's rarest birds. A breeding programme is now attempting to increase the population and the new Ahuriri Conservation Park is part of this effort. Just south of Twizel, the **Kaki Visitor Hide** (☎ 03-435 3124; adult/child \$12.50/5; ☎ Oct-Apr) gives you a close-up look at these elusive fellows. Bookings are essential for the one-hour tour of the hide; for more info, visit the Twizel i-SITE (you'll need your own transport to get to the hide).

Mt Cook Skydive (☎ 0800 2645 344; www.nzskydive.com; Pukaki Airport, SH8; tandem skydive \$295) operates from a small airfield north of town, offering brave souls the chance to jump out of a plane at 12,000ft (the same height of Mt Cook) and enjoy spectacular views of five lakes, the Southern Alps and Mt Cook.

Helicopter Line (☎ 0800 650 652, 03-435 0370; www.helicopter.co.nz; Wairepo Rd) flies over the Mt Cook region from a helipad beside Mackenzie Country Inn. Sightseeing flights last from 25 minutes (\$210) to 60 minutes (\$525) and include a snow landing.

SLEEPING

Parklands Alpine Tourists Park (☎ 03-435 0507; parklands1@xtra.co.nz; 122 Mackenzie Dr; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/24, cabins & cottages \$60-90; (P) (Q)) Offering green, flower-filled grounds and accommodation in a colourfully refurbished maternity hospital. The modern self-contained cottages are particularly good value. Prices are for two people.

High Country Holiday Lodge (☎ 03-435 0671; www.highcountrylodge.co.nz; Mackenzie Dr; dm \$25, s/d \$50/65, d with bathroom \$75, motel from \$115; (P) (Q)) This excellent value place used to be a hostel for construction workers, and new owners have smartened up the décor with colourful curtains and bed linen. A couple of standalone motel units also see your Kiwi pesos going a long way.

Mountain Chalet Motels (☎ 0800 629 999, 03-435 0785; www.mountainchalets.co.nz; Wairepo Rd; dm/dm from \$20/1130) Recommended place with well-equipped, self-contained A-frame chalets. The cheapest units are studios, but there are a number of two-bedroom setups for larger groups or families. There's also a small, laid-back lodge that's perfect for backpackers.

ourpick Omahau Downs (☎ 03-435 0199; www.omahau.co.nz; SH8; dm/d/tr \$22/\$55/\$66, cottage d \$100, B&B d \$115-125; ☎ closed Jun-Aug) There's nothing more relaxing than kicking back at this rural home-stead 2km north of Twizel. It's on a working farm and is run by a Kiwi-South African couple, catering to all tastes with a cosy cottage for backpackers, a self-contained and family-friendly cottage that sleeps four, and a B&B lodge with sparkling modern rooms and a view-enhanced deck looking out on the Ben Ohau Range. Don't make the mistake of booking for only one night.

Lake Ruataniwha Homestays (☎ 03-435 0532; robinandlester@xtra.co.nz; 146 Max Smith Dr; d \$135-170; (P) (Q)) 4km from Twizel, is this modern house with three ground-floor guest rooms (one with private bathroom, two sharing facilities). Cooked breakfasts are delivered with Kiwi grace and humour, and dinner (\$50) is available by request. Ask Lester about his time as a *Lord of the Rings* extra.

Matuka Lodge (☎ 03-435 0144; www.matukalodge.co.nz; Old Station Rd; d \$455-535; (P) (Q)) Surrounded by farmland and mountain scenery, this luxury B&B blends modern design with antiques and Oriental rugs sourced on the owners' travels. A library full of well-thumbed Lonely Planet guides is testament to their wanderlust, so look forward to interesting chats over pre-dinner drinks. Rates also include a picnic lunch and a three-course dinner with wine.

Also recommended:

Aspen Court Motel (☎ 0800 277 364, 03-435 0857; www.aspencourt.co.nz; 10 Mackenzie Dr; d \$130-150;

(P) (Q))

Colonial Motel (☎ 0800 355 722, 03-435 0100; www.twizel.com/colonialmotel; 38 Mackenzie Dr; d \$110-120;

(P) (Q))

EATING

Charming Thai Café (☎ 03-435 3232; 1 Market Pl; mains \$12-18; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-10pm Tue-Sun) Thailand comes to Twizel and the zesty and the zingy flavours of your favourite South East Asian beach have travelled well to get this far inland.

Grab a few cold beers from the Four Square supermarket in the mall to ease the authentic heat. Sadly, Singha is not available.

Hunter's Cafe & Bar (☎ 03-435 0303; 2 Market Pl; meals \$17-26; ☎ 11am-2.30pm & 5-8.30pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 11am-8.30pm Fri, 11am-2.30pm Sun) An airy space with generous mains of local produce (salmon from nearby Lake Benmore or ribeye steak), as well as cheaper bar snacks. Later at night it morphs into a pub.

Shawty's Café (☎ 03-435 3155; 4 Market Pl; meals \$15-32; ☎ 8.30am-late) Cool beats and boutique beers create a mood that's surprisingly sophisticated for Twizel. Big breakfasts and gourmet pizzas are a good way to start and end an active day amid the surrounding alpine vistas.

Poppies Cafe (☎ 03-435 3308; 1 Benmore Pl; pizza \$14-19, dinner mains \$24-30; ☎ 10am-late) The versatile Poppies is a classy addition to the Twizel dining scene. Lunch showcases lighter meals like tempura prawns, and dinner is a slightly more formal experience with Aoraki salmon and lamb rump. Excellent pizzas occupy a tasty middle ground.

ENTERTAINMENT

Big Sky Movies (☎ 03-435 0035; Twizel Events Centre; adult/child \$13/9) Look forward to freshly baked cookies at intermission. Ask at the i-SITE.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Southbound services to Mt Cook, Queenstown and Wanaka, and northbound services to Christchurch are offered by a number of operators such as **Atomic Shuttles** (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz), **InterCity/Newmans** (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) and **Southern Link Coaches** (☎ 0508 458 835; www.southernlinkcoaches.co.nz).

Cook Connection (☎ 0800 266 526; www.cookconnect.co.nz) operates to Mt Cook (one-way \$20, one daily) and for an additional \$25 you can carry on from Mt Cook to Tekapo. Travel can be over more than one day.

Naked Bus (www.nakedbus.com) travel from here to Christchurch and Queenstown/Wanaka.

Lake Ohau & Ohau Forests

Six forests in the Lake Ohau area (Dobson, Hopkins, Huxley, Temple, Ohau and Ahuriri) are administered by DOC. The numerous walks in this vast recreation grove are detailed in the DOC pamphlet *Ohau Conservation Area* (\$1); huts and camping areas are also scattered throughout for adventurous trampers.

Lake Ohau Lodge (☎ 03-438 9885; www.ohau.co.nz; Lake Ohau Rd; s \$80-145, d \$90-160) is idyllically sited on the western shore of the rower-friendly Lake Ohau, 42km west of Twizel. Prices listed are for accommodation only (everything from backpacker-style to upmarket rooms with deck and mountain views); DB&B packages are good value.

The lodge is the wintertime service centre for the **Ohau Ski Field** (see p90). In the summer it's a quieter retreat.

AORAKI/MT COOK NATIONAL PARK

The spectacular 700-sq-km Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park, along with Fiordland, Aspiring and Westland National Parks incorporates the Southwest New Zealand (Te Wahipounamu) World Heritage Area, which extends from Westland's Cook River down to the Fiordland. Fenced in by the Southern Alps and the Two Thumb, Liebig and Ben Ohau Ranges, more than one-third of the park has a blanket of permanent snow and glacial ice.

Of the 27 NZ mountains over 3050m, 22 are in this park. The highest is the mighty Mt Cook, and at 3755m it's the tallest peak in Australasia. Known to Maori as Aoraki (Cloud Piercer), after an ancestral deity in Maori mythology, the mountain was named after James Cook by Captain Stokes of the survey ship HMS *Acheron*.

The Mt Cook region has always been the focus of climbing in NZ. On 2 March 1882, William Spotswood Green and two Swiss alpinists failed to reach the summit of Cook after an epic 62-hour ascent. But two years later a trio of local climbers – Tom Fyfe, George Graham and Jack Clarke – were spurred into action by the news that two well-known European alpinists were coming to attempt Cook, and set off to climb it before the visitors. On Christmas Day 1884 they ascended the Hooker Glacier and north ridge, a brilliant climb in those days, and stood on the summit.

In 1913, Australian climber Freda du Faur became the first woman to reach the summit. In 1948 Edmund Hillary's party, along with Tenzing Norgay, climbed the south ridge; Hillary went on to become the first to reach the summit of Mt Everest. Since then, most of the daunting face routes have been climbed. Among the region's many great peaks are Sefton, Tasman, Silberhorn, Malte Brun, La Perouse, Hicks, De la Beche, Douglas and

the Minarets. Many can be ascended from Westland National Park, and there are climbers' huts on both sides of the divide.

Mt Cook is a wonderful sight – assuming there's no cloud in the way. Most visitors arrive on tour buses, stop at the Hermitage hotel for photos, and then zoom off back down SH80. Hang around to soak up this awesome peak and the surrounding landscape and try the excellent short walks. On the trails, look for the thar, a goatlike creature and excellent climber; the chamois, smaller and of lighter build than the thar, and red deer. Summertime brings the large mountain buttercup (the Mt Cook lily), and mountain daisies, gentians and edelweiss.

Information

The **DOC Aoraki/Mt Cook visitor information centre** (☎ 03-435 1186; mtcookvc@doc.govt.nz; Bowen Dr; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Oct-Apr, to 4.30pm May-Sep) advises on weather conditions, guided tours and tramping routes, and hires out beacons for trampers (\$25). Ask to see the *Mt Cook-Footsteps to the Sky* video in a separate screening room. Online see www.mtcook.org.nz and www.mount-cook.com.

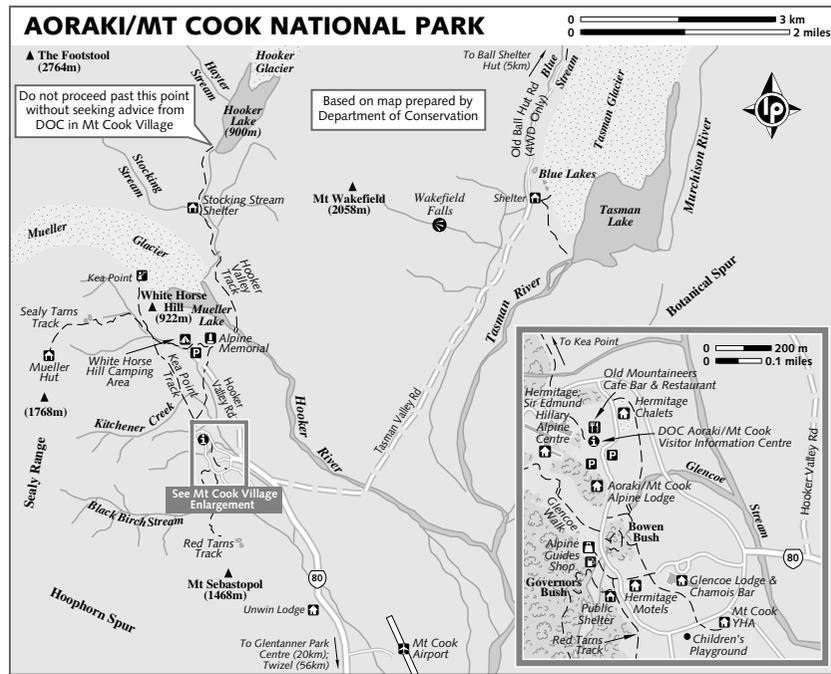
The Hermitage's souvenir shop handles post. The hotel's coffee shop sells some food supplies, as does the YHA (see Sleeping, p575), but you should stock up on groceries and petrol at Twizel or Tekapo. Mt Cook has no banking facilities.

The **Alpine Guides shop** (☎ 03-435 1834; www.alpineguides.co.nz; Bowen Dr) sells skiing and mountaineering gear, and rents ice axes, crampons, day-packs and sleeping bags.

Sights

TASMAN GLACIER

Higher up, the **Tasman Glacier** is a predictably spectacular sweep of ice, but further down it's downright ugly. Glaciers in NZ (and elsewhere in the world) have generally been retreating over the past century, although they are advancing now. Normally as a glacier retreats it melts back up the mountain, but the Tasman is unusual because its last few kilometres are almost horizontal. In recent decades it has melted from the top down, exposing a jumble of stones, rocks and boulders and forming a lake. In other words, in its 'ablation zone' (where it melts), the Tasman is covered in a solid mass of debris, which slows down its melting rate and makes it unsightly.



Despite this considerable melt, the ice by the site of the old Ball Hut is still estimated to be over 600m thick. In its last major advance (17,000 years ago), the glacier crept south far enough to carve out Lake Pukaki. A later advance did not reach out to the valley sides, so the Old Ball Hut Rd runs between the outer valley walls and the lateral moraines of this later advance.

Like the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers on the other side of the divide, the Mt Cook glaciers move fast. The **Alpine Memorial**, near the old Hermitage site on the Hooker Valley Track and commemorating one of the mountain's first climbing disasters, illustrates the glaciers' speed. Three climbers were killed by an avalanche in 1914. Only one of the bodies was recovered at the time but 12 years later a second one melted out of the bottom of the Hochstetter Icefall, 2000m below where the party was buried.

HERMITAGE

With fantastic views of Mt Cook, this is arguably the most famous hotel in NZ. Originally constructed in 1884, when the trip from

Christchurch took several days, the first hotel was destroyed in a flash flood in 1913; you can see the foundations in Hooker Valley, 2km from the current Hermitage. Rebuilt, it survived until 1957, when it burnt down. The present Hermitage was built on the same site and a new wing was added for the new millennium.

In late 2007, the new **Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre** (☎ 0800 686 800; www.hermitage.co.nz; adult/child \$25/\$12.50; ☎ 10am-late) opened just three weeks before the death of the man regarded as the greatest New Zealander of all time. Sir Ed's recorded commentary for the museum was only recorded a few months before he died in January 2008.

After you've lingered in the museum and experienced the new 3D theatre and planetarium, stop for a drink in the bar and look out the huge windows up at Mt Cook's indomitable face.

Activities WALKING

Various easy walks from the Hermitage area are outlined in the brochure *Walks in Aoraki/*

Mt Cook National Park (\$1), available from the visitor information centre. Always be prepared for sudden weather changes.

The trail to **Kea Point** (two hours return from the village) is lined with native plant life and kea, and ends at a platform with excellent views of Mt Cook, the Hooker Valley and the ice faces of Mt Sefton and the Footstool. The walk to **Sealy Tarns** (three to four hours return) branches off the Kea Point Track and continues up the ridge to **Mueller Hut** (dm \$30-35); a comfortable 30-bunk hut with gas and cooking facilities.

The walk up the **Hooker Valley** (three hours return) crosses a couple of swing bridges to Stocking Stream and the terminus of the Hooker Glacier. After the second swing bridge, Mt Cook totally dominates the valley.

The Tasman Valley walks are popular for their views of the Tasman Glacier. Walks start at the end of the unsealed Tasman Valley Rd, 8km from the village. The **Tasman Glacier View track** (50 minutes return) leads to a viewpoint on the moraine wall, passing the **Blue Lakes** (more green than blue these days) on the way. Views of Mt Cook and the surrounding area are spectacular, but the view of the glacier is limited mostly to the icy grey sludge of the terminal lake and the Tasman River. To approach the snub of the glacier, take the route to Ball Shelter (three to four hours one way) from the car park; you can stay here at **Ball Shelter hut** (dm \$5).

If you intend staying at any of the park's huts, register your intentions at the visitor information centre and pay the hut fee; besides the aforementioned two, most huts cost \$10 to \$30 per night.

TITANIC SCENE ON LAKE TASMAN

When you're only a few kilometres from NZ's highest mountain, the last thing you expect to see is a maze of huge icebergs straight from the planet's polar regions. It's a surreal feeling cruising in an inflatable boat (p574) amid 500-year-old islands of ice on Lake Tasman in the Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park. The ice may be centuries old, but the lake's only been around a few decades. Lake Tasman was first formed around 30 years ago, when huge swathes of ice sheared off the Tasman Glacier's terminal face. Global warming has exacerbated the problem, and it's now estimated that up to 5km has been lost from NZ's longest glacier.

The ice-strewn lake is a dynamic environment and there's always the danger of one of the icebergs breaking up. An icing-sugar-like dusting of snow has fallen overnight, and even that could be enough to rebalance an iceberg and send it spinning and rotating in the frigid water. With a decent wind the location of the floating islands can change by the hour.

And come back in a few years, and the ongoing impact of climate change will have further increased the size of one of NZ's newest and coldest lakes.

Longer Walks

Longer walks are only recommended for those with mountaineering experience, as conditions at higher altitudes are severe and the tracks dangerous. Many people have died here, and most walkers shouldn't consider tackling these trails.

Guided Walks

From November to March, **Ultimate Hikes** (☎ 0800 686 800, 03-435 1899; www.ultimatehikes.co.nz; full-day walk adult/child \$110/70) offers a day-long 8km walk from the Hermitage through the Hooker Valley to the terminal lake of the Hooker Glacier; half-day walks can also be organised.

Alpine Recreation (☎ 0800 006 096, 03-680 6736; www.alpinerecreation.com), based in Lake Tekapo, organises high-altitude guided treks in the area, as well as mountaineering courses and ski touring. The challenging three-day Ball Pass Trek between the Tasman and Hooker Valleys costs \$650 (November to April only).

MOUNTAINEERING

For the experienced, there's unlimited scope for climbing, but regardless of your skills, take every precaution as 200 people have died in climbing accidents in the park. The *Bleak In Memoriam* book in the visitor information centre begins with the first death on Mt Cook in 1907, and an experienced South Island mountain guide was killed in January 2008.

The highly changeable weather is vital around here; Mt Cook is only 44km from the coast and weather conditions rolling in from the Tasman Sea can mean sudden storms.

Unless you're experienced in such conditions, don't climb anywhere without a guide.

Check with the park rangers before attempting any climb and always heed their advice. Fill out a climber's intentions card before starting out, so rangers can check on you if you're overdue coming out, and sign out again when you return.

Alpine Guides (☎ 03-435 1834; www.alpineguides.co.nz; Bowen Dr; ☹ Nov-Mar) has guided climbs from seven-day introductory Mountain Experience courses (\$1750) through to week-long ascents of Mt Cook (\$4950).

Alpine Recreation (☎ 0800 006 096, 03-680 6736; www.alpinerecreation.com; ☹ Nov-Apr) also has a summertime programme of climbing courses (a four-day introduction to climbing costs \$1000) and guided ascents of Mt Cook or Mt Tasman (\$8600).

SKI TOURING & HELISKIING

Alpine Guides (☎ 03-435 1834; www.alpineguides.co.nz; Bowen Dr), over the winter months, does tailored ski-touring trips and ski-mountaineering and alpine snowboarding courses. It's specialty is glacier heliskiing (www.heliskiing.co.nz) on the highest peaks in NZ – there are day trips on Tasman Glacier involving two ski runs (each up to 10km long) and three ski-plane flights (\$725), plus a wilderness heliskiing trip with four to five runs (runs average 750 to 1200 vertical metres) in the Liebig or Malte Brun Ranges (\$825).

Southern Alps Guiding (☎ 03-435 1890; www.mtcook.com) has a range of heliskiing and boarding options including Tasman Glacier (\$695). Cheaper one-run options are available. Ask at the Old Mountaineers Café/Bar (opposite).

Alpine Recreation (☎ 0800 006 096, 03-680 6736; www.alpinerecreation.com) has a winter program involving two days touring in the high country around Lake Tekapo, wearing skis or snowshoes (\$500), and other ways to explore the mountains on two feet.

AERIAL SIGHTSEEING

Mount Cook Ski Planes (☎ 0800 800 702, 03-430 8034; www.mtcookskiplanes.com), based at Mt Cook Airport, offers 40-minute (adult/child \$340/250) and 55-minute flights (adult/child \$450/340), both with snow landings. Flightseeing without a landing is a cheaper option; try the 25-minute Mini Tasman trip (adult/child \$230/199).

From Glentanner Park, the **Helicopter Line** (☎ 0800 650 651, 03-435 1801; www.helicopter.co.nz) does 20-minute Alpine Vista flights (\$210), an exhilarating 30-minute flight over the Ben Ohau Range (\$290), and a 45-minute Mountains High flight over the Tasman Glacier and by Mt Cook (\$415). All feature snow landings.

Other operators include **Air Safaris** (see p566) and the Twizel branch of the **Helicopter Line** (see p569).

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The visitor information centre, the Hermitage, the YHA and Glentanner Park provide information and make bookings for activities and tours. Note most of them are weather-dependent and seasonal.

Glacier Explorers (☎ 03-435 1077; www.glacierexplorers.com; adult/child \$120/60) heads out on the terminal lake of the Tasman Glacier. It starts with a half-hour walk to the shore of Lake Tasman, where you board a small motorised inflatable and get up close and personal with 500-year old icebergs. See the boxed text, p573.

Glacier Sea-kayaking (☎ 03-435 1890; www.mtcook.com; trips \$100) has three-hour kayak trips negotiating icebergs across glacial bays in the Hooker Valley. For another \$95 incorporate a glacier hike.

Glentanner Horse Trekking (☎ 03-435 1855; one-/two-hr rides \$50/70; ☹ Oct–mid-Apr) leads guided treks on a high-country sheep station. All levels of experience are welcomed.

Alan's 4WD Tours (☎ 03-435 0441; www.mountcooktours.co.nz; adult/child \$110/55) operates 2½-hour 4WD trips up to Husky Flat with a 15-minute walk to a glacier viewpoint. Expect an interesting commentary and alpine flora along the way.

Discovery Tours (☎ 0800 213 868; www.discoverytours.co.nz; tour \$395; ☹ Oct-May) operates helibiking tours on a high country station. Afterwards, slow down with a farm tour and meet the local sheep. They also offer guided tours blending sightseeing by van with walking, including a guided wilderness hike to the Ball Ridge (from \$130, November to May).

Sleeping

Campers and walkers can use the **public shelter** (☹ 8am to 7pm Oct-Apr, 8am to 5pm May-Sep) in the village, which has running water, toilets and coin-operated showers.

White Horse Hill Camping Area (☎ 03-435 1186; Hooker Valley; per night adult/child \$6/3) This basic

DOC-run, self-registration camping ground at the starting point for the Hooker Valley Track, 2km from Aoraki/Mt Cook village. There's running water (boil before drinking) and a new amenities block, but no electricity or cooking facilities.

Unwin Lodge (☎ 03-435 1100; www.alpineclub.org.nz; SH80; dm \$25; ☎) About 3.5km before the village, this lodge belongs to the New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC). Members get preference, but beds are usually available for climbing groupies. There are basic bunks, and a big common room with a fireplace, kitchen and excellent views up the Tasman Glacier.

Glentanner Park Centre (☎ 0800 453 682, 03-435 1855; www.glentanner.co.nz; unpowered/powerd sites \$26/30, dm \$25, cabins \$70-110) On the northern shore of Lake Pukaki, this is the nearest facility-laden camping ground to the national park and has great views of Mt Cook, 25km to the north. It's well set up with various cabins, a dormitory (open October to April), a restaurant, and books tours and activities.

Mt Cook YHA (☎ 03-435 1820; www.yha.co.nz; cnr Bowen & Kitchener Dr; dm/d \$29/76; ☎) This excellent hostel has a free sauna, drying room, warming log fires and DVDs. Rooms are clean and spacious, and family rooms and facilities for travellers with disabilities are also available. Try and book a few days in advance. If you're mountain-bound you can store luggage here.

our pick Aoraki/Mt Cook Alpine Lodge (☎ 03-435 1860; www.aorakialpnelodge.co.nz; Bowen Dr; tw & d \$144-175, f \$195-220; ☎) With colourful Turkish rugs and underfloor heating, the place ensures a warm welcome. Just a few years old, this cosy lodge with twin, double and family rooms is the best place to stay in the village. Shared facilities include a huge lounge and kitchen area, and the alfresco barbecue with superb mountain views will have you arguing who's going to grill the steak.

Hermitage (☎ 0800 686 800, 03-435 1809; www.thehermitage.co.co.nz; Terrace Rd; r \$220-880; ☎) An enormous and slightly soulless complex that has long monopolised accommodation in the village and continues to leverage that position with its room rates. The least expensive beds are in well-equipped A-frame chalets (double/quad \$255/295) sleeping up to four and including a kitchen. Next are motel units (double/quad \$280/315), hotel-style rooms at Glencoe Lodge (for tour groups), and finally rooms (doubles \$610 to \$880) in various

wings of the hotel proper (hotel rates include dinner and a cooked breakfast). Winter (April to September) sees a welcome reduction in steep accommodation prices.

Eating & Drinking

Glentanner Restaurant (☎ 03-435 1855; SH80; meals \$10-20; ☹ 9am-4pm) The décor might resemble a school cafeteria, but with crispy mushroom risotto cakes and local smoked salmon on the menu, there's a tad more sophistication. Steak sandwiches and fish and chips will please more simple palates.

our pick Old Mountaineers Café, Bar & Restaurant (☎ 03-435 1890; Bowen Dr; mains \$20-35; ☹ 11am-later; ☎) Cosy in winter, with mountain views from outside tables in summer, this place delivers top notch burgers, pizza, pasta and salad and is a good value alternative to the eateries at the Hermitage. Linger to study the old B&W pics and mountaineering memorabilia. You might still be there for happy hour – actually two hours – when it kicks off at 5pm.

The Hermitage (p572) has a **café** (meals \$8-15; ☹ 7.30am-4pm) at the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre. Grab a table outside on the extensive deck, or wait for dinner and dine at the **Panorama Restaurant** (dinner mains \$27-40; ☹ 6pm-late), a top-notch à la carte restaurant with local treats including grilled Mt Cook salmon, Canterbury lamb rack and slow-cooked venison. Raise a glass to the outrageous mountain scenery at the bar at the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre. You'll need to choose between special beer appreciation and wine-tasting menus or sunset cocktails. Don't worry; they all come with stunning views of Mt Cook and Mt Sefton (cloud cover permitting).

A smaller, less formal **Chamois Bar** (☹ 5pm-late daily Oct-Mar, Thu-Sat only Apr-Sep) is upstairs in Glencoe Lodge, 500m from the YHA, where it entertains with a pool table, big-screen TV, and the occasional live gig. It's a good place to catch up over a burger or nachos with the international crew of mountain guides and travellers who call the village home during summer.

Getting There & Away

The village's small airport only serves aerial sightseeing companies. Some of these may be willing to combine transport to, say, the West Coast (ie Franz Josef) with a scenic flight, but flights are heavily dependent on weather.

If you book a one-way trip to/from Mt Cook with **InterCity** (☎ 03-365 1113; www.intercitycoach.co.nz), you'll end up on the morning departure of the Newmans Coach Lines service. Head to Mt Cook from Christchurch (one-way \$69), Queenstown (one-way \$69) and Wanaka (one-way with a change in Tarras, \$53); buses stop at the YHA and the Hermitage, both of which handle bookings.

InterCity subsidiary **Newmans Coach Lines** (www.newmanscoach.co.nz) Christchurch (☎ 03-379 9020) Queenstown (☎ 03-441 1344) runs the Mt Cook Wanderer, a Christchurch–Mt Cook–Queenstown (or reverse) sightseeing trip cost-

ing \$148/99 per adult/child from Christchurch and \$114/76 from Queenstown. Connections from Wanaka are available.

The **Cook Connection** (☎ 0800 266 526, 021 583 211; www.cookconnect.co.nz) has shuttle services to Twizel (one-way \$20) and Lake Tekapo (one-way \$28). Bus services in these towns link to on to major centres such as Christchurch, Queenstown, Wanaka and Dunedin.

If you're driving here, it's best to fill up at Lake Tekapo or Twizel. There is petrol at Mt Cook, but it's expensive and usually involves summoning an attendant from the Hermitage (for a fee).