

Top of the South Island

Sunday 15 - Thursday 26 March, 2026 | 11 nights



TOUR OVERVIEW

The top third of the South Island is an area of wonderful contrasts, from the glittering waterways of the Marlborough Sounds and Abel Tasman National Park to the spectacular high country of Hanmer Springs and Molesworth Station. Take your time seeing the best of the region with several two-night stays. You might have flown over Farewell Spit many times, now is your chance to see it at ground level.

For nature lovers, marine and bird life abound in the Marlborough Sounds and at Farewell Spit. The late summer weather, luscious local wine, fresh food and produce, compelling history and scenic grandeur will make this a trip to remember.

Whether you're soaking in the mineral pools of Hanmer Springs, tasting world-class wines in Marlborough or riding the Coastal Pacific train along the rugged coastline, this is a journey that will share the best that the top of the South Island has to offer.

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Sunday 15 March – Thursday 26 March, 2026 | 11 nights

TOUR INCLUSIONS

- The services of an experienced Calder & Lawson tour manager
- 11 nights' accommodation
- Meals as specified in the itinerary
- Local guides
- All group transfers
- All admission & entrance fees as detailed in the itinerary
- Activities and sightseeing tours with local guides as detailed in the itinerary

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- Domestic travel to Christchurch (flights can be booked for you at an additional cost)
- Travel Insurance
- Personal expenses
- Meals not specified in the Itinerary
- Beverages during included meals
- Hotel portorage
- Credit card fees

TOUR MANAGER: PENNY PICKETT

Penny has worked for many years in travel and for Calder & Lawson Tours. She has taken many of our New Zealand, Australian and South Pacific tours, including multiple tours of the East Cape. Penny is a fun and caring tour manager, always keen to make sure you get the most out of your adventure.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore New Zealand's largest farm, the spectacular high-country Molesworth Station
- Take a 4-wheel drive tour to learn about Farewell Spit, a wetland of international significance
- View the impressive collection of WW1 and WW2 aircraft and artefacts at Omaka aviation heritage centre
- Spend a full day on Pelorus Sound on the mail round cruise
- Cruise the azure waters of the Abel Tasman National Park on a water taxi between Kaiteriteri and Totaranui beaches
- Peer through the crystal clear water at the largest cold water spring in the Southern Hemisphere
- Learn what it takes to run a farm on a tour of Meadowbank Station in Marlborough
- Meet the amazing birds and staff of the Kārearea falcon trust
- Rummage through the museum, galleries, distillery and antique shops of Reefton
- Ride the rails on a daytime trip on the Coastal Pacific train from Blenheim to Christchurch



IS THIS TOUR FOR ME?

While we take care of the logistics, you'll need a good level of fitness, mobility and stamina to get the most out of the experience. This is important not just for your enjoyment of the tour, but so that you can keep up with the group. You'll also need to manage your own luggage, such as through airports, hotels, and on and off buses.

All the images and photos on this itinerary were taken on our previous tours.

TOUR PRICE

Twin share per person \$6,990

Single supplement \$1,990

The above prices are in NZ dollars.

- If you would like a single room please contact us as these spots are limited
- If you are a single traveller wanting to twin share with someone of the same sex, please let us know as we may be able to find a suitable person willing to share.

GROUP SIZE Minimum 10, maximum 18

VARIATIONS IN TRAVEL We can make arrangements for any travel you would like to do before or after this tour, or book your flights. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ONLINE](#)



DAILY ITINERARY

Sunday 15 March, 2026
Christchurch to Hanmer Springs

Meals: D
Coach: 2 hours
Overnight: Hanmer Springs

Meet your group in Christchurch and depart late morning towards Hanmer Springs, arriving in time for lunch. After lunch, check into your hotel and have the rest of the day to relax and enjoy this laid-back alpine resort town. You may wish to have a soak in the warm mineral pools this afternoon. Gather with the group for a welcome dinner tonight.

Monday 16 March
Molesworth Station

Meals: B/L
Overnight: Hanmer Springs

A full day awaits you on the largest farm in New Zealand, the high-country station of Molesworth. Visit century-old Cob homesteads and marvel at the rugged yet beautiful landscape. Drive through the Acheron and Awatere valleys and follow Jollies Pass back to Hanmer Springs. You will visit with a local expert guide and learn the challenges of the multiple operations of farming, conservation and recreation in a half-million-acre 'backyard'.

Tuesday 17 March
Hanmer to St Arnaud

Meals: B/D
Coach: 5 hours plus stops
Overnight: St Arnaud Alpine Lodge

Today you will drive from Hanmer Springs to beautiful St Arnaud on the shores of Lake Rotoiti.

On the way you will stop in the historic settlement of Reefton. In 1868 it became the first town in the Southern Hemisphere to receive electricity, hence its moniker 'the Town of Light'. An old gold mining town, Reefton is now home to an excellent museum, gallery, distillery, and antique shops, and has retained many of its heritage buildings and historic charm.

Optional stops along the road today include the Buller Gorge, Maruia Falls Scenic Reserve, and the Kawatiri Historic Railway Walk.

Settle into the St Arnaud Alpine Lodge for the evening.

Wednesday 18 March
St Arnaud to Nelson

Meals: B/D
Coach: 1.5 hours
Overnight: Nelson

Enjoy a morning at the lake. Wander down to the jetty where masses of eels swarm, you could even brave the cold waters for a swim!

Take a one-hour tour of the lake by boat, or if you are looking for some more exercise, there will be options to take a ferry to a walking track and return to the jetty on foot. Walks between 1 and 4 hours are possible.

Take the chance to visit the classic boat museum, which features a collection of power and sailboats, and appreciate the fine craftsmanship of the vessels on display.

In the afternoon, head to Nelson. On arrival you might want to stretch your legs with a walk around the city and Queens Gardens or visit the Centre of New Zealand monument in the botanical reserve before joining the group for dinner this evening.

DAILY ITINERARY

Thursday 19 March **Nelson**

Meals: B

Overnight: Nelson

Visit Pics Peanut Butter for a factory tour. Hear the history of Pics, see their products being made, and of course, enjoy a tasting.

Step back in time at Broadgreen Historic House, a beautifully preserved 19th-century colonial home nestled in the heart of Nelson. Discover elegant Victorian furnishings, lush heritage gardens, and stories of the pioneering Marsden family who once lived here.

Visit the artisans at Hoglund glass art studio and showroom and watch a demonstration of glass blowing. Your evening will be free to relax or explore.

Friday 20 March **Abel Tasman National Park**

Meals: B/D

Driving: 1 hour & 30 minutes

Water taxi: 1 hour 40 minutes

Overnight: Ratanui Lodge,
Pohara Beach

An early start this morning as you travel north around the coast and through Motueka to the stunning Kaiteriteri Beach, famous for its golden sands and turquoise waters. You will board a water taxi for a leisurely cruise around the Abel Tasman National Park from Kaiteriteri to Totaranui Beach. You will view the world-famous Split Apple Rock and visit the fur seals at Adele Island along the way.

On arrival at Totaranui beach in Golden Bay, your coach will pick you up and transfer you to Pohara Beach where you will be staying in an elegant lodge across the road from the beach for the next two nights.

After a lunch at leisure, enjoy the afternoon in Golden Bay, visiting Te Waikoropupu Springs, home of some of the worlds clearest water and take a relaxed 45 minute loop walk through the forest to a platform overlooking the Springs. Enjoy a special group dinner at your lodge in Pohara Beach tonight.



DAILY ITINERARY

Saturday 21 March

Farewell Spit

Meals: B/D

Coach: 30 minutes each way

Plus Farewell Spit tour

Overnight: Ratanui Lodge,
Pohara Beach

Farewell Spit Nature Reserve is a bird sanctuary and wetland of international importance, and is more strictly protected than a national park. Your guided 4WD safari is run by an operator approved by the Department of Conservation to take tours into the sanctuary.

The Spit itself is approximately 35 km long and has been a bird sanctuary since the 1930s, providing a home to over 90 bird species. Bar-tailed godwits, knots, curlews, whimbrels and turnstones fly around 12,000 kilometres every northern hemisphere autumn to spend the summer here in the south.

You can explore the geological past at Fossil Point, climb a low sand dune and visit an area to watch wading birds. A highlight is the historic lighthouse reserve, with its 19th-century lighthouse (still keeping ships safe from the shifting sands) and reminders of the pioneering families who lived here and tended the light.

Tours are scheduled according to the tides. Your tour will start at 2:00 PM from Collingwood and you will return to the lodge around 9:30 PM. You will have a boxed picnic dinner at the lighthouse on Farewell Spit.

Sunday 22 March

Pohara Beach - Marlborough

Meals: B

Coach: 4hrs

Overnight: Chateau

Marlborough, Blenheim

Leaving Golden Bay behind, you will drive over the Takaka Hill and through the Motueka valley towards Nelson.

Have a lunch stop and stretch your legs at Pelorus Bridge before arriving in Blenheim, home to a plethora of wineries. You will stop at a local winery for a tasting this afternoon before checking into your hotel for the next three nights.



DAILY ITINERARY

Monday 23 March

Pelorus Sound

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Chateau

Marlborough, Blenheim

Embark on the Pelorus Mail Run from Havelock, a full-day cruise through Pelorus Sound / Te Hoiere where you will you can relax on a comfortable and spacious catamaran while the mail, parcels and provisions will be delivered to secluded bays and island homesteads just as the sea postie has since 1918. Along the way, you will have a commentary from your friendly crew. Try to spot dolphins, seals, little blue penguins, king shag colonies and more, pause for a BYO picnic on a remote beach or forested jetty, and meet both human and four-legged residents eager to greet the boat at each stop.

Following a serene day on the water return to Blenheim for dinner.

Tuesday 24 March

Meadowbank Station and Kārearea falcon trust

Meals: B/D

Coach: 45 mins each way

Overnight: Chateau

Marlborough, Blenheim

This morning, you get to learn about New Zealand's only endemic bird of prey, the Kārearea/NZ Falcon, the threats they face, and how a local trust is working on their goal of restoring kārearea populations in the wild. You will have a walk-through of the aviary and a training demonstration with one of the falcons. A great chance to learn of and meet these beautiful birds up close and support a good cause.

Visit Meadowbank Station for a farm tour, where you'll learn about the day-to-day operations of the farm. You'll also get to watch a shearing and farm dog demonstration and enjoy smoko afternoon tea in the woolshed. A chance to connect with rural New Zealanders on a family-run farm with Simon, the stock manager and his wife Tarsh.

Wednesday 25 March

Coastal Pacific train to Christchurch

Meals: B

Overnight: Christchurch

Your first stop will be the Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre which houses two spectacular exhibitions. The 'Knights of the Sky' is Sir Peter Jackson's collection of WW1 aircraft brought to life in vivid staging. 'The Dangerous Skies' display features warbirds from WW2 including Spitfire, Yak-3, FW-190 Focke Wulf and a 44 foot Lockheed Hudson. You will have time to enjoy the displays and learn more with a private guided tour of both collections.

Then board the Coastal Pacific train for your journey back to Christchurch. Sit back and enjoy views of the rugged South Island coastline on this spectacular train journey. You will have an opportunity to buy dinner on the train and will arrive into Christchurch in the evening.

Thursday 26 March

Homebound

Meals: B

Check out and transfer to the airport for your homebound flights, or you may like to stay in Christchurch or perhaps explore the South Island further. Calder & Lawson Tours can help arrange extensions and activities for you.

HOW TO SECURE YOUR PLACE ON THIS TOUR

A deposit of \$1,000 is required to secure your place on the tour. This deposit becomes non-refundable once the tour has reached minimum numbers and becomes a confirmed departure.

Click below to complete the online registration form, pay the \$1,000 deposit, and your place on this tour is secured. Or you can complete a paper registration form. You can download one from our website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz/forms or give us a call and we will email or post one to you.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Can be found on our website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz/forms on the back of the paper registration form, or on the summary page when you complete an online registration. There is a 1.5% surcharge if you pay by Visa or MasterCard or 3% for American Express.

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