



BANKS PENINSULA

New Zealand's Natural Treasure



**YOUR
BIG
LITTLE
GUIDE**

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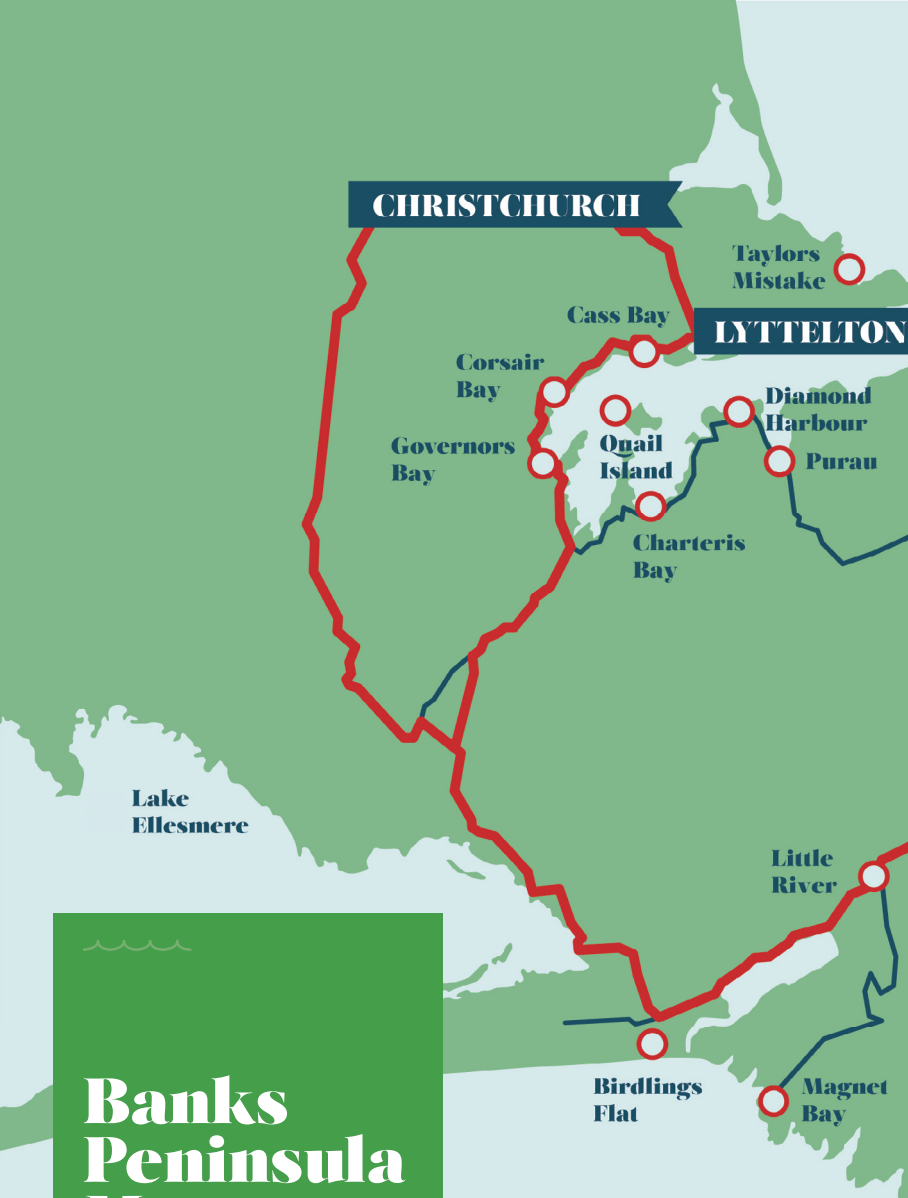
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CHRISTCHURCH

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Purau

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Little River

Birdlings Flat

Magnet Bay

Banks Peninsula Map



As the original Akaroa Harbour Nature Cruise and longest serving tourism operator on the Peninsula we are lucky enough to operate in this unique environment and wanted to share with you some of the hidden secrets. In this guide you will discover just some of the gems to be found on the peninsula. From wildlife to walks, food to festivals we'll give you the heads up on the best places to explore.

PAUL MILLIGAN

Chief Executive, Black Cat Cruises





Geology + History

Ever wondered how Banks Peninsula got to be so beautiful? How the red cliffs of Quail Island came to life? Or how the deep blues and greens of Lyttelton Harbour became as stunning as they are today?

Geology

Banks Peninsula began its life as two overlapping volcanic cones protruding from what is now known as the Port Hills. These cones formed between 6 and 11 million years ago as volcanic activity built them up from the sea. Eventually, the activity settled down, and over thousands of years, the extinct volcanoes eroded to half their original size and revealed the gorgeous cliff faces of the area. The erosion also formed deep valleys, which flooded to become the harbours and bays of the Banks Peninsula we know today.

Fun Fact

Akaroa and Lyttelton Harbours are actually flooded valleys. About 7000

years ago, after the hills formed from the volcanic activity eroded, the area saw a rise in sea level. This filled the deep troughs created by erosion to form these two beautiful harbours.

History

MĀORI SETTLEMENT TANGATA WHENUA

The Māori people have a deep connection with Banks Peninsula, and in particular, with the seaside village of Akaroa. Sources estimate that early Māori settlers arrived in Akaroa between 700 and 800 years ago. As Banks Peninsula was full of fertile soil and so close to a bountiful sea, the location proved to be a fruitful source for food, and a good place to settle in.



The Māori population of the South Island spread across the peninsula, through to places like Tai Tapu and Birdlings Flat. However, following civil wars between several villages, by the mid 1830s, the Māori population had dwindled to only about 500 people.

FRENCH SETTLEMENT

With whaling becoming a lucrative business, seafaring explorers roamed to far corners of the earth to find new resources for their endeavours. In 1838, French whaler Jean Francois L'Anglois saw the potential for Akaroa as a lucrative business opportunity, and the activity in the Pacific meant that the French had an eye on colonising the South Island. In August 1838, L'Anglois provisionally purchased Banks Peninsula from local Māori for 1,000 francs. He told the locals he would pay them in full when he returned from France after setting up his business.



After two years of working with the French government to see through his plans, L'Anglois and 53 French and German emigrants left Rochefort on 20 March 1840. Unfortunately for the French, the British beat them to it - they arrived to find the South Island claimed under the Treaty of Waitangi just a few weeks earlier.

Despite things not quite going to plan, the French emigrants still settled into Akaroa, which was the first planned township in the South Island, and boasts the first post office, customs house, and police force in the lower half of the country.

BRITISH SETTLEMENT

Roughly ten years on, Lyttelton and Christchurch took over as the main settlements in the area, and Canterbury began to take shape around the peninsula. The famous First Four Ships the Charlotte Jane, the Randolph, the Cressy, and the Sir George Seymour brought in the region's first British settlers, who brought their Anglican faith and gothic architecture to Christchurch.



Wildlife

Banks Peninsula is full of creatures great and small. From humpback whales to the world's smallest dolphin, little blue penguins to fluffy fur seals, Banks Peninsula is the place to be for up close and personal encounters with some of the world's rarest and most wonderful wildlife.



Birds

Banks Peninsula is also a bird lover's paradise. Famous for its collection of coastal birds and native species, you'll be sure to spot an adorable creature or two on your travels. Hidden in the foliage you'll find Fantails, Shining Cuckoo, and the carnivorous Morepork - a native New Zealand owl that is known to catch and eat prey larger than its relatively small self. On the seaside you might see the red-billed South Island Oystercatcher, the bright blue Kingfisher, or a wide-winged Mollymawk (Albatross) swooping around the rocks at the edge of the bay.

Penguins

Banks Peninsula is also home to the biggest little blue penguin colony on New Zealand's mainland. There you can see the white flippered variety of the Little Blue Penguin. Little Blue Penguins are elusive creatures, and up close and personal tours sometimes provide you with camouflage gear for an encounter. Perhaps this is because at only 25cm tall and weighing in at less than a kilogram, the tiniest penguin in the world scares pretty easily. The larger Yellow-eyed Penguins can also be spotted around Banks Peninsula. Yellow-eyed penguins are very rare, and conservation efforts have been in full swing to try to protect them from hazards and predators introduced by humans.

Seals

The furriest critters that Banks Peninsula boasts are a colony of New Zealand fur seals. Found along the coasts of the North and South Island, and sometimes even in southern Australia, these adorable animals can be seen in small tour groups or by boat. New Zealand fur seals can get up to 2.5 metres long, can weigh up to 185 kilograms, and the large males eat ten kilograms of meat a day.





Hector's Dolphins

Banks Peninsula is a fabulous place, but the jewel in its crown is without doubt the local dolphins. These are New Zealand dolphins, also known as Hector's dolphins. Nowhere are they more accessible than around Banks Peninsula.

BY PROFESSORS STEVE DAWSON
AND LIZ SLOOTEN

In the two largest harbours, Akaroa and Lyttelton, these dolphins can be found just about every day, usually within minutes of leaving the jetty. As their name suggests, they are found only in New Zealand, mostly in South Island waters. They prefer shallow waters (less than 100m deep), are

commonly seen in bays and harbours, often venturing into water just a few metres deep. Off open coasts they are often seen surfing. They are playful and curious - strongly attracted to slow-moving boats.

Two features make NZ dolphins very easy to identify. They are small, reaching 1.4-1.5m long (up to 60kg), obviously smaller than any dolphin species in NZ waters. Their dorsal fin is characteristically



rounded. The trailing edge of the fin is rounded, not concave or shark-like, like the fins of other dolphins.

NZ dolphins are usually found in groups of 2-10 individuals, often with other small groups nearby. These groups come together, mingle and separate again, frequently swapping members in the process. While mothers and their calves stay together for 2-3 years, the typical groups that you see are not stable - they are not family groups. This is known as a 'fission-fusion' social system, and is the norm among dolphins.

While the social system is very dynamic, group membership is certainly not random. Mothers with young calves, for example, often hang around together. They have similar needs for a very high food intake (to provide milk for their calf), and seem to want to a quieter life - away from (often rambunctious) males. Even outside these nursery groups segregation by sex or age is common. Groups with fewer than half a dozen members are often all males, or all females. Likewise juveniles sometimes form their own groups (just like teenagers!).

They are not fussy eaters; their diet includes a wide range of fish species and even some squid and octopus. NZ dolphins feed throughout the water column, taking bottom-dwelling fish (including stargazer) as well as species that school in mid-water (e.g. squid) and at surface (e.g. sprats). They are strongly attracted to inshore trawlers, which they follow to feed on fish stirred up by the trawl. We quite often see groups of 50 or more following trawlers. These groups seldom last more than an hour or two.

Females mature at 7-9 years old and have one calf every 2-3 years. This adds up to a rather slow reproductive rate. Combined with a relatively short lifespan (25 years

or so), their maximum population growth rate is only about 2%, at the low end of the usual range for dolphins (2-4%). Their preference for inshore waters, where human impacts are greatest, and their low potential for population growth, make NZ dolphins especially vulnerable to decline. They are considered an endangered species. The main conservation problem is bycatch in fishing nets, especially gillnets, but also trawls.

One of the most enthralling experiences that Banks Peninsula offers is an encounter with the endangered Hector's Dolphins. Eco-tourism pioneers Black Cat Cruises were the first to offer daily wildlife cruises, along with dolphin swimming a few years later (after all the local company was founded purely by the family's love of the area and it's unique aquatic inhabitants). Their cruise is voted the number 1 wildlife activity in New Zealand, and their dolphin swim is recognised by Lonely Planet as one of the top 10 marine mammal experiences in the world. Both offer a dolphin guarantee. How many places in the world can you encounter an endangered animal on a daily basis, all in the surrounds of a majestic volcanic harbour?!

Professors Steve Dawson and Liz Slooten have been studying NZ dolphins, based from Akaroa, for more than 30 years. Their studies developed alongside Ron and Durelle Bingham's "Akaroa Harbour Nature Cruises". Steve and Liz are professors at University of Otago. They dedicate this chapter to the memory of Ron Bingham.

For more information about the dolphins, and what you can do to help, go to whaledolphintrust.org.nz.



Lyttelton

Lyttelton is a great place to start exploring Banks Peninsula by sea. In the summertime, holidaymakers get out on the water in their kayaks, boats, and jet skis, and Black Cat Cruises operates ferries all year round. They offer daily ferries to and from [Ogail Island](#) and [Diamond Harbour](#).





FARMERS' MARKET

If you're out and about in Lyttelton on a Saturday morning, the Farmers' Market is the place to be. Lyttelton's main drag, London Street, is closed off to traffic and filled with a stunning array of artisan products from local merchants.

With its lively atmosphere and friendly charm, it attracts Cantabrians and tourists from far and wide. Delicious food, fresh fruit and veg, crafty treasures and vintage bric a brac are just some of the highlights from the weekly affair, lovingly put together by local not-for-profit, Project Lyttelton.

Never turn up to the Farmer's Market with a belly full of breakfast - with so much food to choose from, there's no doubt you'll regret it. For breakfast or brunch, locals' top picks include the classic bacon and egg buttie with the works, or a tasty mushroom pie.

Stalls also offer tastings of the sauces, dips, and spreads they sell, all of which are to die for. Be sure to check out the cakes, fudge, and other sweet treats as well - a perfect way to finish off a morning at the market.





BLACK CAT'S PRIVATE CHARTERS

For a very special Banks Peninsula experience, Black Cat Cruises offer Charter Cruises for private events. The catamaran offers a full bar, food, music, and can be catered with a spit roast buffet, making it popular for Christmas parties, social club functions, and even weddings.

Summer evenings are a great time to get out on the water, with the sun setting over the seas as you cruise around the harbour.

Top Tip

Jump on a ferry. Whether it's to the Department of Conservation reserve Quail Island or a day over at Diamond Harbour you're guaranteed to experience peninsula life at it's best.

Must do



LYTTELTON FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Every year Project Lyttelton celebrates all things bright and beautiful with the Lyttelton Festival of Lights. In the dead of winter, life is pumped into the community with a Matariki Street Party, a wearable arts parade, buskers, music, and a special winter market. To top it off, on the night of the winter solstice, the harbour lights up with a spectacular fireworks display. Check lyttelton.net.nz for dates.

Eats



With a friendly atmosphere, quirky charm, and locally sourced ingredients, Lyttelton's restaurant and bar scene is one of Canterbury's best-kept secrets. In such a small place, it's surprising to see just how much is on offer. If you're stuck on where to start, check out these gems:

For something gourmet

FREEMANS DINING ROOM

Freemans is a cosy affair that serves simple, honest food with a gourmet flair. The team really know their stuff and will keep you well looked after as you get stuck into their tasty gourmet pizzas or locally sourced roasted Canterbury Lamb. Freemans also offers harbour views, a mini cook-and-cocktail-book library, and is a great place to spend an evening with that special someone.

For something local

LYTTELTON COFFEE COMPANY

After being out of action for some time post-quake, the Lyttelton Coffee Company is back and better than ever. With its boho feel, excellent coffee, and tempting menu, it's the perfect place to spend a lazy morning soaking in that Lyttelton charm.

For something quirky

WUNDERBAR

Wunderbar is something of a Lyttelton icon. Known for its bold eclectic décor and twisted, creative vibe, you'll often find local musicians, writers, and poets at the bar having a pint or practising their latest tune. It also has a sweet dance floor, hosts some excellent gigs, and boasts some of the best views of the harbour after dark.





Akaroa

Akaroa is the only place in the world you can experience dolphin cruising and swimming with the world's rarest and smallest Hector's dolphin. Did you also know that Akaroa is the oldest town in Canterbury – the town and surrounding area are steeped in rich history.

The dramatic formation and landscape of Banks Peninsula allows you to experience breath-taking scenery en-route to Akaroa. This wonderful scenery complimented by the charm of the French inspired village has assured Akaroa's popularity as a unique tourist destination, even for day visitors looking for things to do in Akaroa.

The Maori were the first to inhabit the land, followed by a British and French colony. To this day Akaroa village still has a distinct French flavour and influence and is home to Black Cat Cruises award winning Akaroa Harbour Nature Cruise and Swimming with Dolphins. Both have a Hector's dolphin guarantee and the cruise is a great way to find out about the history of the area, not only the significant maori stories but the geology of the place as well.

Today it is home year round to 1000 people. Akaroa has superb examples of historic homes and there are approximately fifteen gardens within 20 minutes of Akaroa which are open to the public. The area is unique for its heritage roses and micro climates, the popular Akaroa Herb Farm, Akaroa Salmon, street scenes and historic churches.

Did You Know

Akaroa has a significant relationship with the Treaty of Waitangi? On May 30 1840, Ōnuku Marae became the first place in the South Island where the Treaty was signed. Two Ngāi Tahu chiefs, Iwikau and Hone Tikao, signed the document.

Fun Fact

Akaroa is the Kāi Tahu Māori word for 'Long Harbour'. Kāi Tahu, also known as Ngāi Tahu, is the principle tribe of the South Island, and uses a different spelling to standard Māori. In standard Māori, Akaroa would be spelt 'Whangaroa'.

Festivals



EN FRANÇAIS



To celebrate its French heritage, Akaroa holds a biennial French Fest in the early spring. French food, wine, and entertainment fill three days and nights in the little village, and thousands flock to be part of it all. Travel back in time on the beach to when the first French settlers landed, or peruse the market stalls and play a game of French cricket. At night there is music and dancing galore, and if you're lucky, you might even spot a can-can girl.

WALKING FESTIVAL

November brings the annual Banks Peninsula Walking Festival. For four weekends in the early summer, the peninsula celebrates its stunning scenery and tight-knit communities by hosting every kind of walk - from brisk walks along the coastline to challenging tramps up and down the hills. The programme has something for all skill levels, so book yourself in and be sure to bring comfortable shoes.

AKAROA HARVEST FESTIVAL

With so much award winning food coming out of the area, Akaroa decided it was high time they celebrated their excellent produce. Held in April at the Akaroa Area School, the Harvest Festival showcases all things local and delicious. Highlights include the cake auction, with all proceeds going to the Akaroa Health Hub, and the competition for the town's best jam.

See akaroa.com/local-events.



Must do



SWIMMING WITH DOLPHINS



Swim with the world's rarest and smallest dolphin set in the harbour of an extinct volcano. This is the only place in the world that you can swim with the Hector's dolphins and with the stunning scenery it's possibly the reason why the Lonely Planet listed it as the best dolphin swim experience in the world.

LE RACE

In March keen cyclists jump on their bikes and ride from Cathedral Square in Christchurch to Akaroa. This 100km journey brings a taste of the Tour de France to Canterbury's own backyard.

Top Tip

If you can't make the Harvest Festival in April, there are still plenty of ways to get your fix of Akaroa cuisine. Local restaurants often have the famous Akaroa salmon on the menu, or take a class at [The Akaroa Cooking School](#). If you can't get enough, stop into the local Akaroa butcher to pick up Kingfisher smoked salmon to take home...it's been recognised and awarded New Zealand's best smoked salmon! For your sugar fix, try the handmade cream and butter fudge from Pot Purri gifts.

AKAROA HARBOUR NATURE CRUISE



Take time out to discover the true beauty of Akaroa harbour. Climb aboard Black Cat cruises luxury catamaran and cruise through the volcanic harbour whilst viewing Hector's dolphins, fur seals, penguins and an abundance of coastal birdlife. The local skipper offers a fantastic and informative commentary which covers the wildlife, geology and history of the area.

MINI GOLF

Akaroa's 'World Famous' mini golf club is set amongst lush green trees and a gentle stream. Take the family down for a round, or book yourself in for the club's next tournament.





KAYAKING

Akaroa Adventure Centre on Rue Lavaud offers a range of water and land based adventure gear. Hire a kayak or paddle board to explore the bay by sea, or grab yourself a mountain bike or electric skateboard for a day on dry land.

THE GIANT'S HOUSE

This internationally recognised quirky bed and breakfast is a unique Akaroa experience. Filled to the brim with gorgeous artworks, it's guaranteed to make a lasting impression. The house originally belonged to the first bank manager in Akaroa, and has been immaculately maintained. The Artist's Garden out the front is also a Banks Peninsula icon. Even if you aren't booked in for the night, it's well worth a stroll through to marvel at the garden's mosaic sculptures by Josie Martin.



Eats



BULLY HAYES

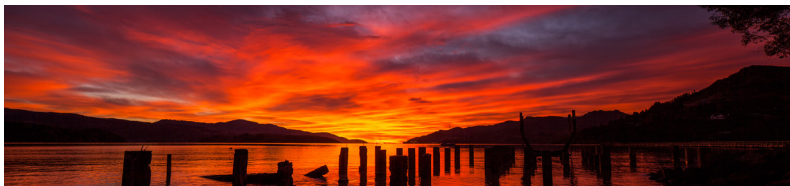
Named after the swashbuckling pirate of the early 1800s, Bully Hayes has become a classic Akaroa restaurant. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, its extensive menu and great service brings in crowds all year round. Bookings are recommended.

AKAROA FISH & CHIPS

After surviving the great fire of 2012, this popular takeaway rose from the ashes to reclaim its place as one of best fish and chips shops in the country. The Akaroa cod and a scoop of chunky chips is a must-try for any hungry visitor.

THE LITTLE BISTRO

Fine wine and the freshest cuisine - what more could you ask for? The Little Bistro is located in a charming refitted cottage, and its comforting, hearty meals regularly get rave reviews. It's also a more intimate setting than some restaurants, making it perfect for a romantic evening with that special someone.



Along the way

The 90 minute scenic drive from Christchurch to Akaroa can be done 1 of 2 ways. Either from out towards the airport via Halswell Junction, this is very straightforward, or choose a more scenic route and go via Lyttelton.



Should you take the latter you'll come across:

SHE UNIVERSE

Words cannot describe the kind of chocolate lovers paradise that awaits you at She. Decadent dishes and heavenly treats are made on site with a creative, gourmet flair and the view of the harbour is incredible. But be warned - one bite will have you tempted to take the whole shop home.

Either way you go you'll visit the following:

LITTLE RIVER

Little River is often referred to as the gateway to Banks Peninsula. But don't let its title fool you - this tiny town is much more than just a place to pass through.

See



BIRDLINGS FLAT

Full of fascinating gem stones shaped by thousands of years of pounding surf, Birdlings Flat is a great place to stretch your legs and explore the scenery on your way to Akaroa. The stunning view makes for some great photos too.

LITTLE RIVER ART GALLERY

Little River Art Gallery is home to high quality New Zealand art, much of which is made by locals in the area. Featuring a mix of classic and contemporary pieces, as well as a range of sculptures, prints, and paintings, there's always something gorgeous to tempt you when you stop by.

Stay



OKUTI VALLEY GARDEN

Choose from a house truck, earth brick studio or farmhouse, situated amongst the idyllic gardens, streams, and ponds. This picture-perfect setting is a great place to relax and unwind after a long day.

SILO STAY

Silo Stay hosts guests in refurbished grain silos. Fitted with all the comforts you'd expect from an inner city hotel room, but with starry night sky views and eco friendly design features, this is one of Banks Peninsula's most unique accommodation experiences.

PUREPOD

Rough it in the outdoors, all while in the comfort of modern luxury. Pure Pod

allows guests to rent out a sleek and stylish self-contained unit room with a glass roof and walls, giving you 360-degree views of the breathtaking scenery day and night. Photo opposite.

Must do



THE RAIL TRAIL

If you're athletically inclined, get on your bike and give the Little River Rail Trail a go. The whole trail is 49km long, but people tend to choose a section and do a return trip. Watching the scenery pass by as you ride through this majestic part of Canterbury is not to be missed.

Top Tip

Little River's petrol station is a good place to refill the tank before you head over the hill. Stop in for a pie or sweet treat at the dairy to refuel yourself too.

THE HILL TOP TAVERN

Stop for a bite and a pint at the Hill Top Tavern. Friendly local staff, great food, and incredible views make for an excellent lunch break on your way to Akaroa. If you don't have time to visit the pub, be sure to park up and admire the panoramic view that's one of the finest in New Zealand.

BARRY'S BAY CHEESE

Not long before you reach Akaroa you'll pass Barry's Bay. Founded over a century ago they are famous for their historical factory that produces award winning traditional hand-crafted cheeses the good old fashion way. Check their online calendar as you can even watch them in the cheese making process. The shop is open year round.



Quail Island

Catch the Black Cat ferry out to Quail Island for a day of picnics, sunbathing, and getting acquainted with this fascinating piece of Banks Peninsula.

DOC AND QUAIL ISLAND TRUST

The Department of Conservation NZ and the Quail Island Trust have come together to make this island a special place for generations to come. As part of their eco-restoration project, these groups have almost eradicated pests from the island, and have put in over 79,500 plants. This project relies heavily on volunteers, so if you have a spare day or two and would like to help, get in touch and do something good for Mother Nature.

Top Tips

Quail Island is a rubbish free zone, so be sure to bring a plastic bag for food scraps or empty packaging after a picnic.

Don't forget to pack all of your summer essentials as there's nowhere to stock up on the island should you forget something.

Plenty of water is a must too!



Sights to see



THE SHIPS GRAVEYARD

Off the western side of the island, eight shipwrecks lay rusting along the beach and in the water. The view from the top of the track is a great place to try and spot them all, but for those who want to get a little closer, there is a track down the steep cliff face to access the Ships Graveyard. The ships remain here because of a tradition from the 19th and early 20th centuries in which old, worn down vessels would be laid to rest in major ports.

WHAKAMARU BEACH

As the most popular summer destination on Quail Island, you can guarantee that Whakamaru Beach will be a hub of activity on a sunny day. Bring the family, pack a picnic, and go for a swim in the beautiful, clear water. This little beach is a top place for the whole family. Gas-fired barbeques are also allowed in this area (although nowhere else on the island), so if you're keen for a beachside barbeque be sure to bring one along.

THE ANIMALS' GATEWAY TO ANTARCTICA

Back when explorers were still racing each other to the South Pole, Lyttelton became known as the gateway to Antarctica. But while legendary figures like Shackleton, Scott, and Byrd prepared for the journey to the Deep South in the port, their livestock was kept on Quail Island. Scott and Shackleton took advantage of the island to train their sled dogs and ponies before setting off, and Commander Byrd's huskies lived there between 1928 and 1930.

Explore



Take a left from the jetty after disembarking and you'll find a track that follows a loop around the whole island. There are many great spots to stop and enjoy the view, and even more places to take a detour and check out the amazing history of the island. The whole track takes about 2 hours and 30 mins, but allow extra time to get distracted along the way.

TRACKS ON THE ISLAND

Whakamaru Beach (Swimmers' Beach)
10 mins from jetty

Discovery Trail
1 hour

Ōtamahua Island Walkway
2 hours 30 mins (full island circuit)



Diamond Harbour

Just a 10 minute ferry ride from Lyttelton lies the beautiful village of Diamond Harbour. The name itself comes from a legend that the early settlers observed the sun reflecting across the water of Diamond Harbour and thought it looked like a thousand shining stars.



To get there it's a 50 minute drive from the Christchurch city centre, or a quick 10 minute ferry ride across from Lyttelton. The ferry is our recommended way to travel. It's been running since 1888 and offers some of the best views of the harbour.

Top Tip

If the weather's hot and you want to cool off do like the locals do and take a refreshing plunge off of the wharf. There's a great old rope swing and the shining blue 'diamond water' is pretty hard to resist.

Eats



PRESERVED CAFÉ

Tucked away with the corner shop, Preserved Café is a popular brunch destination on a Sunday drive. The café boasts a great selection of breakfast classics, alongside freshly baked goodies in the cabinet and a great view of the harbour.



experience is desirable. However, if you take it easy and have a good level of fitness, it shouldn't be a problem.

Explore



ORTON BRADLEY PARK

Full of early Banks Peninsula history and thick with lush, green forest, Orton Bradley Park is like another world. Its winding tracks lead to a collection of brilliant lookouts, and make all that hard exercise entirely worthwhile. Don't forget to pack a picnic and enjoy the view once you're up there.

OTHER WALKS AT ORTON BRADLEY PARK

Magnificent Gully	Tablelands Track
2 ¼ hr loop	2 ½ - 3 hr return
Lookout Track	Big Rock
3-4 hr return	1 hr 10 m return

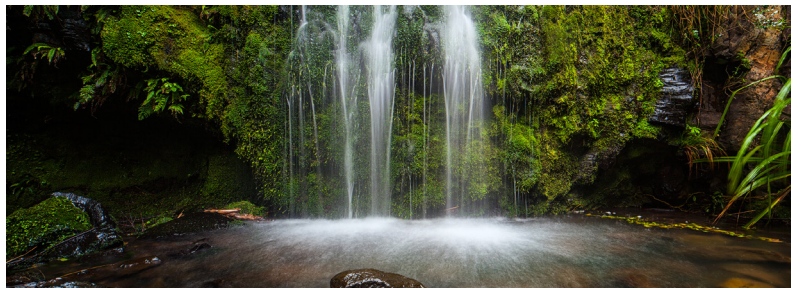
MT HERBERT WALKWAY

One of the most spectacular ways to spend a day at Orton Bradley is on the Mt Herbert Walkway. The peak of the trip takes you to the highest point in Banks Peninsula, 919 metres above sea level. A round trip takes between six and eight hours, and it can get moderately challenging in some parts, so some hiking

Music & Art



SPRIG (Stoddart Point Regeneration Ideas Group) is a community group in Diamond Harbour dedicated to bringing some life back to the area after the Christchurch earthquakes. Since 2011, they have been holding events such as Live at the Point and Sculpture at the Point, where artists come together to get people out and about in Diamond Harbour. Keep an eye out for upcoming events at diamondharbour.info.





The Bays

Although there is a lot to see and do in Banks Peninsula's main centres, its numerous bays attract plenty of attention too. The bays are homes to wharfs, picnic spots, playgrounds, swimming beaches, and much, much more. There's a little piece of paradise to suit everyone.

CASS BAY

5 min drive from Lyttelton



Hire out a kayak and get up close and personal with the volcanic crater. Lyttelton Kayaks offers one-hour sessions around Cass Bay, or four-hour hires if you want to explore a little more. There's also a great swimming beach for those warmer summer days and playground for the kids.

Top Tip

There's plenty for the kids at Cass - a playground and picnic area make it a great lunch spot with the family.

PIGEON BAY

30 mins from Akaroa, 1 ½ hours from Christchurch



Take an afternoon stroll with the kids around Hay Reserve, just at the turnoff to Pigeon Bay. Or if you're after more of a work out, there's the Pigeon Bay Walkway - a 4-5 hour return route includes spectacular views of the coastline and some beautiful native greenery.

Top Tip

If you like seafood, get amongst the green-lipped mussels found in Pigeon Bay. Pick them off the rocks, and cook them up for a great shellfish feast for dinner.



PORT LEVY

1 hour drive from Christchurch



On the north side of Banks Peninsula you'll find Port Levy. The tiny town recently found fame as the set of a Hollywood production! But don't let its brush with the big time fool you - it's still a great spot for a day of boating and fishing with the family.

Top Tip

Absorb some local history at St Paul's Anglican Church. Built in 1888, it's the earliest Anglican Church in Canterbury and is a gorgeous place to wander around.

CORSAIR BAY

5 min drive from Lyttelton



Locals swarm to this favourite spot for fun in the summer sun. With a safe swimming area, picnic tables, and plenty of parking, you'll find its one of Christchurch's most popular summer destinations for a very good reason.

Top Tip

Corsair Bay's still and sheltered water makes for a great place for kids to get acquainted with sea swimming. Be sure to bring along your boogie boards and water wings to teach your little ones about the ocean.

LE BONS BAY

20 mins drive from Akaroa



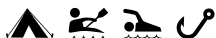
This charming little bay is a quaint, secluded spot, perfect for getting some quiet time in on your travels. Le Bons Bay is also safe for swimming, and offers some highly praised homestead and cottage accommodation for those who want a more rural experience of the peninsula.

Top Tip

For a look at a local piece of global history, wander down to the Le Bons Bay Peace Memorial Library. Built in 1919, it commemorates the local lives lost in the Great War, and provides a fascinating window into New Zealand's history.

OKAINS BAY

25 min drive from Akaroa



Okains Bay has a lot to offer. A popular spot for camping, fishing, kayaking, and swimming, the idyllic location boasts all the essentials for your classic kiwi holiday. If you're here in the colder months, the local camping ground operates on an honesty box system, so you can stay in the bay all year round. Be sure to check out the Okains Bay Māori and Colonial museum for some interesting exhibits about the history of the area.

Top Tip

Art aficionados should keep an eye out around these parts – Banks Peninsula is a popular source of inspiration for local artists, and you can see many of their works in the area. This painting by Canterbury artist Juliette Buss hangs in the Okains Bay local store, which has been going strong in the community since 1873.



MAGNET BAY

60 min drive from Christchurch



Not for the faint of heart, this rocky beach sports some excellent waves for daring intermediate to advanced surfers. If you watch out for the boulders, the bay produces some brilliant waves off a point break and makes for a great time in the water.

Top Tip

The NZ Surf guide recommends that you head out when it's low-to-mid tide, as the wave shape is better then.

HICKORY BAY

90 min drive from Christchurch



Although a little further out than Magnet, Hickory Bay is well worth the extra time on the road. This sandy beach is well placed to catch swells right from the south up to the north east, and can be a real hot spot when the surf's up.

Top Tip

Keep an eye out for seals around the area!



WAINUI

1 ¼ hour drive from Christchurch



Wainui is a beautiful little bay with majestic views of the peninsula. The stony beach is often used as a launch pad for boaters and kayakers, and the jetty to the right of the beach is a great spot for fishing.

Top Tips

Searching for a camp for the kids? The YMCA has an excellent programme for youngsters in the school holidays where they can get an authentic kiwi outdoors experience at Wainui.

Between the first of December and the first of March, dogs are a no-no at Canterbury beaches between 9am and 7pm without

a leash. So if you want to take your pooch for a stroll, it's best to wait for an evening sunset or early sunrise. This rule is in place because of the crowds at the beach throughout summer, and as a precaution to keep the treasured wildlife safe.

Fun Fact

Lights, Camera, Action! Banks Peninsula has been scouted out for a number of film projects over the years. Governor's Bay was the backdrop for the homegrown TV series, Kaitangata Twitch, based on the novel by Margaret Mahy, while Hollywood production, Z for Zacharia, was also on the scene in Port Levy back in 2014. And our very own national treasure, Peter Jackson, filmed the cult classic, The Frighteners, in the township of Lyttelton, and his Academy Award nominated film, Heavenly Creatures, in the Port Hills.



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Special thanks to photographer Rob Dickinson for his collaboration, Professors Steve Dawson and Liz Slooton, and to all of our customers and colleagues past and present.

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