



- Start Here
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- State Highway
- i-SITE Visitor Centre
- Toilet
- Preferred Route
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- Be Aware - New Zealand drivers are not as used to cyclists as their European counterparts - cycle with care
- Wearing high viz clothing increases your visibility
- Share the road - be a courteous road user
- Make sure you are familiar with New Zealand road rules - read the road code

Great Southern Cycle Route CHRISTCHURCH TO METHVEN TOUR

This Map, based on Topographical Map Series NZMS 262, is reproduced with the permission of Land Information New Zealand. The image has been digitally manipulated from the original LINZ sources.



This map and the accompanying narrative describe one of eleven proposed all-day cycle tours (Tour 1 through 11). Together, they take you from Christchurch to Dunedin on a route I call The Great Southern Cycle Route. Included in each tour are, when found, accommodations (including camping grounds) along the way that allow you to pick and choose in planning a day's ride. To that end you can either subdivide a tour into two days or combine into one day all or a portion of two or more succeeding tours.

Some tours are significantly shorter than others because they are hillier and more demanding or because they are more conducive to tempting diversions on the way and/or further exploration at days end. For overseas cyclists, “Backpackers” is a lodging (sometimes with only bunk rooms) that features a communal kitchen, a “Domain” is a community park that normally provides toilets and often allows camping, and a “Holiday Park” provides sites for camper vans and tent camping and often motel units.

Most of The Great Southern Cycle Route is on quiet backcountry roads almost all of which (with 1km exception) are sealed (paved in USA lingo). The trip first traverses the fertile farmland of the level Canterbury Plains, then winds through rolling pastoral countryside with stop offs in picturesque cities and towns. Three memorable gorges and some classic coastal scenery add spice to the route. At all times the rugged Southern Alps that morph into other mountain ranges (foothills in Kiwi speak) as you proceed south, serve as a stunning backdrop.

Admittedly the route meanders a bit (at times even doubles back). But who cares so long as the scenery is soothing, the route is (mostly) untrammled and the road is sealed! Savour the solitude and enjoy! Cycle in authentic New Zealand – off the beaten path.

If you are cycling with friends, consider leapfrogging with your vehicles so that at the end of the day you will have advanced those vehicles to where you are spending the night. I did that, and it worked quite well (though admittedly it helped that my wife was more than happy to drive most of the route, join us for lunch and cycle to meet us as the muse moved her).

State Highways are designated SH followed by a number. The heavily trafficked SH1 is used sparingly and only when unavoidable. The Area Code for all the telephone numbers herein given (e.g., 302 8955) is 03 if the call is made within



New Zealand. If calling from overseas, the Country Code is 64 and the Area Code is 3.

The total distance of the route is about 579km (always taking the Preferred Route when given a choice). This distance assumes that you have decided to take the Waimate to Kurow Tour and then the Kurow to Oamaru Tour instead of the alternative Waimate to Oamaru Tour. If you choose the latter, the distance is about 518km. All distances are good faith estimates based on odometer readings but are not guaranteed.

All accommodations, eateries and cycle shops (if any) mentioned herein were confirmed as of April 2010. No assurances can be given that they will remain open. Nor can the author warrant the safety of the route. The recommended roads have no special provisions for cyclists. You must therefore assume the responsibilities and risks for your own safety when cycling the route. There, the mostly retired lawyer-author has spoken. Now go and have a good time.

Christchurch to Methven Tour

Christchurch, the Garden City, is the route's launch pad. No attempt will be made here to recite the countless accommodations and attractions the city offers to the visiting cyclist. Suffice it to say that available lodging ranges from the luxurious to the budget minded communal. Contact the Christchurch i-SITE Visitor Centre at 379 9629/ www.christchurchnz.net for your feast of choices. Other useful websites are www.bethere.org.nz and www.whatsonchristchurch.co.nz. If you need a cycle, City Cycle Hire (339-4020/ www.cyclehire-tours.co.nz) will gladly accommodate you and even deliver the bike to your lodgings.

Summary Description

This Tour takes you west through Hagley Park and onward out of bustling Christchurch to the Inland Scenic Route a little over 70km away. You will emerge out of Christchurch into the countryside in less than 10km. From then on, save for a barely discernable climb, you will encounter hardly a ripple on the flat Canterbury Plains (except if you opt for the more scenic Preferred Route west of Hororata). But beware of a few fords in wet weather.

At the junction with the Scenic Inland Route, a dramatic change takes place. By now the foothills of the Southern Alps are within your grasp. On cue the Inland Scenic Route plummets into the Rakaia Gorge. A testing ascent follows as you head south and soak in the stunning views of the Rakaia River Valley to your west. On top, Methven lies less than 12km away as you begin a near imperceptible descent that carries over into the following day's tour all the way to Geraldine.

Total Distance: 99.4km (or 96.9km if you take the Easier Route described below).

Detailed Description

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- K 00.0 The route begins at the hub of City Centre - Cathedral Square. Head east on the **promenade (along south side of Worchester Blvd)** towards Hagley Park and the Botanic Gardens.
- K 00.7 At the T-intersection turn left (South) onto the **sidewalk (along the west side of Rolleston Ave)** that parallels the park and gardens.
- K 01.0 Turn right (South) onto the first bridge that spans the Avon River (at a point opposite Cashel St, pass through an entrance that is signposted “Restricted Access”) and head west on **the path** (that soon turns to fine gravel) on your right **along the river**.
- K 01.5 Pick up the sealed **path that parallels Riccarton Ave** on its north side, heading northwest.
- K 01.7 At the signal light cross to the opposite side of Riccarton Ave just before the roundabout, then cross Deans Ave and head west on **Riccarton Rd** through a bustling retail district.
- K 05.0 At a Y intersection DO NOT follow the road when it bends left as the Main South Rd (SH73A) signposted for Timaru. Instead veer right onto **Yaldhurst Rd (SH73)** that heads for the West Coast.
- K 10 .0 At the intersection with Pound Road west of Yaldhurst, SH73 angles left as the West Coast Rd. (The Old West Coast Rd bears right.) Stay on SH73 (**West Coast Rd**). By now you have emerged from the city into the countryside.
- K 21.3 Pass through West Melton (a tavern is on your right).
- K 29.3 At an intersection and railway crossing where a number of roads converge (Aylesbury), leave SH73 (which bears right along the north side of the railway tracks). Instead cross to the south side of the railway tracks and continue west onto **Bealey Rd** signposted for Hororata.
- K 38.3 Pass the Charing Cross intersection.

Decision Point: In Hororata at the roundabout, take either (1) the Easier Route – a flat (in every sense of the word) direct route to the Inland Scenic Route (SH72/77) or (2) the Preferred Route – a much more scenic route that gently roller coasters through a more settled area to the Inland Scenic Route and is 2.5km longer than the Easier Route. In either event be sure to break for lunch at the delightful Hororata Café and Wine Bar (for out or indoor dining) just a block ahead on the right hand side of Hororata Rd (second road at the roundabout). (Across the street from the café is a hotel and bar/restaurant. A Domain with picnic grounds and toilets ♀ (camping allowed) is just a little further along the road on your right.)

Preferred Route

- K 54.7 At the roundabout, take the second turn onto **Hororata Rd** and head northwest.
- K 54.8 Hororata Café and Wine Bar (which also permits camping in its rear parking lot: 318 7059) is on your right, and Horotato Hotel (318 0841: Dinners served Thursday through Sunday) is on your left.
- K 55.1 The Horotata Domain is on your right.
- K 56.7 Turn left (West) onto **Downs Rd** and begin a gentle roller coaster ride along the low lying fringe of scenic foothills to your north.
- K 65.9 For antique lovers, spend a night at the upmarket Gunyah Country Estate (318 6800/www.gunyah.co.nz) that features one of New Zealand's most complete collections of 19th century colonial furniture. To get there, turn left (South) onto Sleesman Rd for a 1.8km ride to the front door.
- K 66.0 Turn left (West) onto the **Inland Scenic Route (72/77) – Windwhistle Rd**. Soon on your right is Glendown B&B (318 6509/www.glendownbnb.co.nz).
- K 70.4 A picnic area is on your right. The towering Mt Hutt Range looms ahead.
- K 77.7 Windwhistle (marked by the petrol station on your right). If you are into extreme elegance, continue straight onto Coleridge Rd and follow that road 7km to the turnoff on your left to Terrace Downs (318 6943/ www.terracedowns.co.nz). Spend a night in deluxe accommodations before doubling back the next day to the Inland Scenic Route. Otherwise bear left (Southwest) on the Inland Scenic Route (now aptly called **Rakaia Gorge Rd**).
- K 78.3 Leaches Rd enters from your left, marking the point where the Preferred Route and the Easier Route converge.
- K 79.7 Begin a long dramatic descent into Rakaia Gorge. The descent momentarily levels off a couple of times before it bottoms out.
- K 83.8 Just before the bridge that spans the gorge, a hairpin turn to your right takes you up a hill (Zig Zag Rd) for 0.4km to the Mt Hutt Lodge and Motel (318 6898/www.mthuttlodge.co.nz) that provides comfortable accommodations overlooking the gorge and also includes a restaurant. This place may be the perfect overnight stop for those cyclists who would prefer to tackle the ascent out of the gorge in the morning and forsake altogether the resort town of

- Methven. (See **Note** below.)
- Otherwise turn onto the narrow historic bridge that towers over the raging Rakaia River and on the other side begin an equally long but more gradual ascent out of the gorge, pausing on the way to behold the stunning views of the Rakaia River Valley looking to your right (West).
- K 84.1 On your left is a turnoff to the Rakaia Gorge Society (302 9353: camping ground and toilets ♀).
- K 88.2 At a point marked by an imposing Mt Hutt Station sign etched in stone, turn left (South) onto **Mt Hutt Station Rd** for a slight 1.4km climb and head for Methven .
- Note:** If you do not plan to stay overnight in Methven, you could bypass the town, stay instead on the Inland Scenic Route and enjoy more eye appealing pastoral scenery than provided along the roads to and from Methven. After 8.8km, Pudding Hill Rd enters on your left, at which point the Methven to Geraldine Tour - Tour 02 comes into play at K 75.8. (If you elect to cycle through Methven, the distance to the same point would be 20.8km.)
- K 99.6 The tour ends at the intersection of Main Street and Forest Dr in downtown Methven. The Methven ♀ i-SITE Visitor Centre is on your left about a block before the intersection.

Easier Route

- K 54.7 At the roundabout in Hororata, turn left (Southwest) onto **Cordys Rd**.
- K 57.7 At the T-intersection, turn left (South) onto **Milnes Rd**.
- K 58.3 At the intersection where several roads converge, turn right (West) onto **Leaches Rd** for the straightest, flattest and least eventful ride of the tour.
- K 66.8 At the intersection with Sleemans Rd, the Gunyah Country Estate is located 2.3km to your right (North) along the gravel Sleemans Rd. (See above description of the estate along the Preferred Route at K 65.9.)
- K 75.8 At the intersection with the Inland **Scenic Route (72/77) - Rakaia Gorge Rd**, the Easier Route converges with the Preferred Route. At this point, follow the Preferred Route from K 78.3, but subtract 2.5km from the kilometre markers for that route. (Terrace Downs, described above in the Preferred Route at K 77.7, can be reached by crossing the highway and continuing straight onto Coleridge Rd for about 7km.)

Methven is an attractive and popular resort town for outdoor lovers (with the Mt Hutt snowfields nearby). It offers a broad array of accommodations. They include lodging with upmarket units such as The Lodge on Chertsey (302 2000/ www.thelodgenz.com), Southern Cross Lodge (302 8464/ www.southern-x.co.nz), Ski Time (302 8398/www.skitime.co.nz), and Beluga Lodge B&B (302 8290/ www.beluga.co.nz), numerous other B&Bs, homestays and nearby farmstays, several motels, including Methven Motels & Apartments (302 9200/ www.methvenapartments.co.nz), backpackers including Pinedale Lodge (302 8590/www.pinedalelodge.co.nz) and Methven Camping Ground (302 8005). Big Al's Snow Sports (302 8003) provides a cycle repair service. For more information, check out the Methven i-SITE Visitor Centre (♀ 302 8955/www.methveninfo.co.nz.)

About the Author and His Wife

Peter Seed and his wife, Linda, divide their time between White Bear Lake, Minnesota, Vero Beach, Florida, and Dunedin, New Zealand. Peter co-authored a cycle touring book for Minnesota/Wisconsin (Biking With The Wind) and a walking book about the South West Coast Path in England (A Coastal Affair). Linda tries to keep Peter reined in. Both love the outdoors and cycling. Peter can be reached at slinda5938@aol.com.

How To Get More Maps

You may download this or any of the other maps of the Great Southern Cycle Route free at www.southisland.org.nz/maps.asp or www.seftonhomestay.com by clicking Cycle Tourism. The maps are also available at most visitor centres and cycle shops along the route.