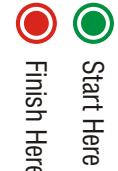


- Be Aware - New Zealand drivers are not as used to cyclists as their European counterparts - cycle with care
- Wearing high viz clothing increases your visibility
- Share the road - be a courteous road user
- Make sure you are familiar with New Zealand road rules - read the road code



Great Southern Cycle Route

WAIMATE TO OAMARU 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.

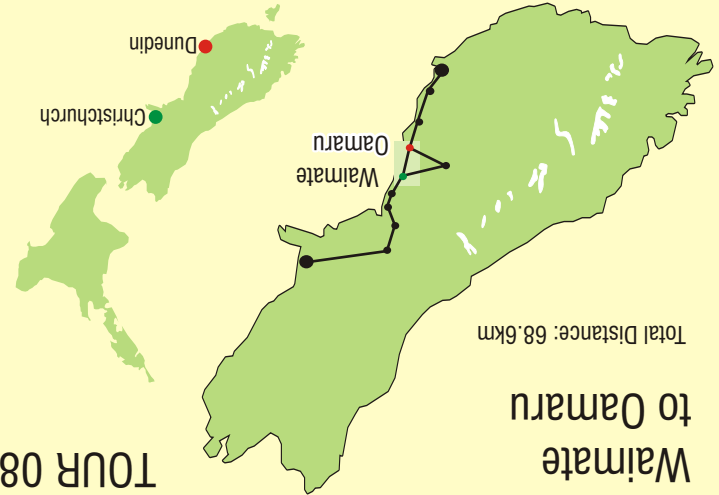
Some tours are significantly shorter than others because they are hillier and more demanding or because they are more conducive to tempting diversions on the way and/or further exploration at days end. For overseas cyclists, “Backpackers” is a lodging (sometimes with only bunk rooms) that features a 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 bicycling 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 bicycle 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.

Waimate to Oamaru Tour

Waimate is a charming rural town with wide streets, parks, gardens and a smattering of Edwardian Buildings. The town has a nice array of accommodation. They include three luxurious B&B homestays – Centrewood Estate (689 6035/www.centrewoodestate.co.nz), a 115 year old French designed homestead, Awatea Retreat (689 7288/www.awatearetreat.co.nz) that features reflexology and two heated outdoor baths for tired muscles, and Te Kiteroa Lodge (689 1088/www.tekiteroa.com), a lovely mansion nestled on a hillside next to a vineyard with sweeping views to the east of the plains below and the sea beyond. All three B&Bs are located on or off Mill Rd northwest of town and provide dinner by prior arrangement.

Other accommodations are Waimate Hotel (689 7373) and Criterion Hotel (689 8079), three motels, Victoria Park Camp & Cabins (689 8079) situated in a stunning urban park that, among other things, features caged wallabies whose cohorts roam wild in the nearby hills, and Kelceys Bush Farmyard Holiday Park (689 8057/www.kiwicamp.com) that is also on Mill Rd and features the largest wallaby enclosure in New Zealand.

If you have the time (and energy), towards the end of Mill Rd you should either walk the White Horse Walkway (3km –2.5 hour return) or drive up to Centrewood Park and a lookout with glorious views of the sea and mountains behind. As stated in a brochure, the walkway takes its name from a 60ft monument to the Clydesdale horse which helped clear the land, assisting in the development of Waimate. A great place for a meal is Café on Queen. Waimate Outdoors, also on Queen St, services cycles. For more information contact the Waimate [i](#) Information Centre also located on Queen St (689 7791/www.waimate.org.nz).

Summary Description

This tour initially takes you on SH82 that soon courses downhill though the Waimate Gorge. The route then exits the state highway onto backcountry roads that involve some climbing, sentinel rock outcrops, winding descents and pastoral nooks – a 10km bucolic gem. You then emerge onto the floor of the broad Waitaki River Valley and head downriver towards the sea and the hamlet of Glenavy where the route turns south on SH1.

The state highway takes you across the multi-channeled Waitaki River on a 1km bicycle unfriendly bridge. (Note: If you are leapfrogging vehicles, the picnic grounds just north of the bridge provide a convenient place for dropping a vehicle, pausing there later for a picnic lunch and then hitching a ride across the river.)

Across the river the route quickly departs from SH1 onto more backcountry roads that zigzag to the south side of the wide flat valley. At the other end a tree-lined hollow awaits you, followed by a steep winding ascent and then a plunge to a farm road that weaves through secluded contoured valleys. A more manageable climb ensues, marked by the spring fed waters at Devils Bridge Wetlands, before you reach and traverse a ridge above Oamaru and then descend to the city.

Note: If you have plenty of time, a tempting alternative to this tour is the two-day Waimate to Kurow Tour 06 and Kurow to Oamaru Tour 07 offered as an optional route to Oamaru. You decide. I found both routes equally appealing.

Total Distance: 68.6km

Detailed Description

Kilometres	Description
K 00.0	From the intersection of Queen and High Streets head southwest on SH82 (initially Queen Street, then Gore Rd) . You will soon be descending through the Waimate Gorge shaped by Deep Creek and the rounded slopes of green bush clad hills.
K 07.4	Exit the gorge and turn left (South) onto Kapua Rd . Brace yourself for another 10km bucolic gem and, because there is no gain without pain, a few manageable hills.
K 09.5	Ahead and to the west elongated rock outcrops rise from the ground as sentinels.
K 10.9	After crossing Waihao River, Kupua Rd ends where Gum Tree Flats Rd comes in from your left. Continue straight onto Waikakahi Valley Rd .
K 17.3	At the T-intersection, turn right (West) onto Pikes Point Rd .
K 18.4	At the next intersection, turn left (South) onto the cheeky Cock and Hen Rd .
K 20.2	At the next intersection turn left (East) onto Ikawai Middle Rd .
K 24.5	Tawai Ikawai Rd enters at an angle from your right.
K 25.7	Turn right (Southeast) onto Glenavy Tawai Rd . Blocks of trees soon punctuate the landscape.
K 31.8	At the T-intersection with SH1, enter Glenavy. A combination general store and outdoor tearoom is located two blocks north on SH1. A block east of SH1 just north of the T-intersection is the Glenavy Hotel (689 3879: dinner served Thursday-Saturday). Turn right (South) onto SH1 .
K 32.7	Just before the bridge across the braided Waitaki River is a picnic area on the right with public toilets🚻. The bridge is about 1km long and, incredibly, provides hardly enough room for two trucks to pass and no pathway for pedestrians and cyclists. If a vehicle to take you and your bicycle to the south side of the river is not available, riding abreast on the bridge may be your safest recourse (though there is on both sides of the roadway a raised foot wide cement catwalk you could walk on while wheeling your bike on the roadway – awkward but doable).
K 34.1	Turn right (West) onto McPherson Rd .
K 39.8	Turn left (South) onto Ferry Rd .
K 42.9	Turn right (West) onto Seven Mile Rd (which is not marked). The silhouettes of towering mountains soon loom in the distance.
K 46.4	Turn left (South) onto Papakaio Rd . Rolling foothills ahead mark the valley's southern boundary.
K 49.1	Disregard Bypass Rd that comes in from your left and continue to follow Papakaio Rd as it turns left (East) a block later.
K 49.3	At the T-intersection, turn right (South) onto Cameron Rd with SH83 in sight.
K 49.4	Turn right (Northwest) onto SH83 that skirts the foothills to the south.

Willow Park soon appears on your left. K 50.7 Turn left (South) onto **Horse Gully Rd** and proceed under a canopy of trees that line both sides of the road.

Note: The next 15km of winding roads and rolling countryside more than offset a somewhat lengthy climb that ascends for about 2km before reaching the top. After a downhill plunge you generally stick to cosy contoured valleys that bypass a number of killer hills found on the more direct route to Oamaru.

K 53.3 Horse Gully Rd turns right (North). Stay on the sealed road that becomes **Airedale Rd** as you reach the top. Then turn south and begin your long descent.

K 54.8 At the bottom of the hill turn left (East) onto **Oamaru Creek Rd** (unmarked but signposted for Oamaru Via Ardgowan). Airedale Rd bears right. If you start climbing again on this road, you have missed your turn!

K 58.7 Turn right (Southwest) onto **Devils Bridge Road**. Less than 1km ahead is a photo stop atop a small spring filled lake that makes up part of the Devils Bridge Wetlands, set aside as a reserve.

K 63.7 At the T-intersection, turn left (East) on **Homestead Rd** and climb a bit.

K 64.5 At the T-intersection, turn right (South) onto **Ardgowan Rd** along a ridgeline and enter Oamaru's residential area. Follow this main road that, after passing the Lark St turnoff on your left, bends east and becomes **Eden St**, taking you down a long hill to the intersection with Thames St (SH1).

K 67.9 At the intersection with Thames St (SH1), turn right (South) onto **Thames St (SH1)** and proceed straight ahead into the downtown area avoiding SH1 that veers right at the roundabout.

K 68.6 The day's tour ends at the intersection of **Thames/Itchen Streets**. The [i](#) Oamaru i-SITE Visitor Centre is on your left at the northeast corner.

Oamaru is another bustling port city renown for (1) its extraordinary array of 19th century Whitestone buildings clustered in the downtown area and in the adjacent historic precinct, (2) the antics of its penguins at the Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony and (3) the childhood home of Janet Frame, a world famous author. Among other attractions are the Oamaru Public Gardens🌳.

The city offers a feast of choices for accommodations – a luxury lodge, Pen-y-bryn Lodge (434 7939/www.penybryn.co.nz), a variety of B&Bs, including Federation House (434 9537/www.federationhouse.co.nz: dinner by prior arrangement), Anne Mieke Guest House (434 8051/www.theoamarubnb.com) and 41 on Tyne B&B (434 5066/carolandads@xtra.co.nz), all of which are located closer to the city centre, Kingsgate Hotel (0800 782 548/www.kingsgatehotels.co.nz), Criterion B&B Hotel (434 6247/www.criterion.net.nz), numerous motels, several Backpackers, including Empire Hotel Backpackers (434 5546) in the centre of town, and a camp/holiday park at Oamaru Top 10 Holiday Park (434 7666) next to the Oamaru Public Gardens.

For atmosphere and good food, a meal at either The Last Post or Fat Sallys (a pub) will serve you well. For great window scenery the Portside Restaurant and Bar is the place to be. Martyn's Cycle (434 8416) and Victor Nelson Oamaru (434 9077), both on Thames St, provide any cycle repair service you may need.

For more information contact the Oamaru [i](#) i-SITE Visitor Centre (434 1656/www.visitoamaru.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.

Graphic Design: Marti Rowe