



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

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Great Southern Cycle Route MOERAKI TO WAIKOUAITI TOUR

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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.

Moeraki to Waikouaiti Tour

Moeraki is a wee laid-back fishing village. Most of the settlement is tucked around the bay of a peninsula framed by the Razorback Mountain Range to the west and the sea looking south. Accommodations consist of Noah's Boutique Accommodation (439 4998/www.noahsaccommodation.co.nz), a Backpackers with one bedroom (439 4106), Moeraki Motels (439 4862/john.bev@xtra.co.nz)Moeraki Haven Motel (439 4859) and Moeraki Village Holiday Park (439 4759/moerakimotorcamp@xtra.co.nz: includes motel accommodations). The closest grocery store is in Hampden.

Near the end of the line is a special attraction in the village - the delightful and funky bayside restaurant, Fleurs Place, which has a well-deserved national reputation for superb food. (Meals are also served at the Moeraki Tavern - in addition of course to the Moeraki Boulders Restaurant accessed at K 37.8).

On your left about 1km along Moeraki Rd from the turnoff is a parking area that provides access to the beach where the astonishing spherical Moeraki Boulders can be reached about 1.7km north. (This approach is best taken at low tide.)

If you have the time, take Tenby St (accessed about 0.9km from the SH1 turnoff) southeast about1km and then right (South) onto the gravel Lighthouse Rd about 3km to Katiki Point, a lovely headland topped by a lighthouse and teeming with sea mammals and the occasional yellow-eyed penguin. Best viewing is at low tide. The headland was once the site for a Pa (a Maori fortress) from which were launched in the 18th century, attacks on another Pa located in Karitane. (See Waikouaiti To Dunedin Tour 11.) Both fortresses proved to be impregnable.

Summary Description

Once you have exited back onto busy SH1, this tour offers a variety of options: If you follow the Preferred Routes described below, you will travel on SH1 for 10.3km and on near traffic free backcountry roads for 28.7km. The back roads offer two scenic romps – one for 15.3km to the turnoff to the stunning Trotters Gorge lined with sheer rock bluffs, then up and over a pass and thence downward to the outskirts of Palmerston. (This route bypasses 15.1km of SH1.)

The other romp starts in Palmerston and for 13.4km winds through rolling countryside that offers a short optional side trip to Tovar​a Reserve – a secluded beach where seals and the yellow-eyed penguin nestle and a majestic headland provides stunning coastal views. (This route bypasses 6.2km of SH1.) If instead you decide to stay on SH1, you avoid some serious climbing (particularly over Trotters Gorge) and get some relief from the traffic on a sealed shoulder along most of the highway. Also, as a consolation prize for passing up the Trotters Gorge route, you peddle a scenic 7km stretch along the coastline and are given the option of a 5km (return) side trip to Shag Point where seals and cormorants abound.

Of course your other option is to take only one of the two romps.

Total Distance: 40.4km (or 32.4km if the Easier Routes are taken).

Detailed Description

Kilometres	Description
K 00.0 K 02.8	From the end of Moeraki Rd, head west back to the SH1 turnoff for the village. Turn left (South) onto SH1 .
K 05.1	Turn right (Southwest) onto Horse Range Rd signposted for Trotters Gorge. This narrow back road is a scenic gem but includes some serious climbing followed of course by a seemingly endless downhill plunge.
K 09.2	Optional turnoff to Trotters Gorge Scenic Reserve is on your right. About 0.5km inland is the entrance to the gorge. It is flanked by high bluffs of sheer rock that look like sandstone but actually consist of a greywacke-breccia conglomerate formed some 80 million years ago. At the turnoff the climb up and over a pass also begins and 1.4km later gets steeper for the final assault.
K 12.0	The summit is reached! A rewarding 6km descent immediately follows.
K 19.3	Cross Shag River (Waihemo).
K 20.4	At the T-intersection with SH1 , turn right (South) onto SH1 and enter Palmerston.
K 21.1	You reach the intersection of SH1 and SH85 (heading north) and Tiverton St (heading south).

Preferred Route: Moeraki to Palmerston

Easier Route: Moeraki to Palmerston

K 05.1	Stay on SH1. See above description of this option. There are picnic areas by the beach at the beginning and end of the coastal stretch.
K 11.8	On your left is the turnoff for Shag Point.
K 21.9	Enter the intersection of SH1 and SH85 (heading north) and Tiverton St (heading south) in downtown Palmerston.

Accommodations in or near Palmerston are the Pioneer Motels (465 1234), the Waihemo Lodge Hotel (465 1700), Dubliner (465 1896: a Backpackers), and Mount Royal Bed and Breakfast (465 1884/ mt.royal.bandb@clear.net.nz), a charming retreat located just 2.6km further south on SH1 where you turn right (West) onto Mt. Royal Rd and go another 0.4km. The B&B owners do not serve dinner, so you will have to bike back into town for that meal. There are ample places in Palmerston for eating or buying picnic items.

Preferred Route: Palmerston to Waikouaiti

See above for description of this route. It is at times a bit hilly and almost twice as long as the Easier Route on SH1 but well worth the effort.

K 21.1	At the intersection of SH1 and SH85 (heading north) and Tiverton St (heading south), turn left (South) onto Tiverton St (signposted to Goodwood Rd). Just before the intersection on your left are public toilets♿.
K 21.4	The road becomes Goodwood Rd .
K 27.4	Bobbys Head Rd enters from your left. DO NOT TAKE THIS ROAD TO BOBBYS HEAD. Stay on the sealed Goodwood Rd. Your optional turnoff onto

Bobbys Head Rd for the Tovar​a Reserve is 1.3km ahead. Highly recommended is an optional side trip on your left (East) onto the gravel, Bobbys Head Rd is signposted for Tovar​a Reserve 0.3km away. This pristine reserve takes you on a short walk from a grassy carpark to a secluded beach where you may spot one or more yellow-eyed penguins and seals at the north end of the beach (maintaining of course a respectful distance from them). A 1-hour circle walk takes you from a point just shy of the beach north around Bobbys Head. The headland offers stunning views of the coastline, with high bluffs of sheer rock extending both north and south. Proceed anti (counter in USA lingo) clockwise to Bobbys Head Rd and return south to the carpark. In any event stop for a picnic lunch on the beach.

K 31.9 K 33.1	Cross Pleasant River. Goodwood Rd T-intersects with SH1 . Turn left (South) onto SH1. Though SH1 is busy, rolling farmland against a backdrop of close in foothills and mountains in the distance provide pleasant views south and west along this stretch of the state highway, most of which is blessed with a sealed shoulder.
K 31.9	Jefferis Rd enters SH1 from the right. For cyclists who will opt anytime for a hilly and scenic gravel road in place of a busy albeit scenic SH1, an alternative bypass (NOT THE PREFERRED ROUTE) takes you 1.6km west on this road, then at a T-intersection left (South) 2.2km on Flag Swamp Rd and finally left (East) another 0.4km east back to SH1 at the K 36.9 kilometre marker on SH1 for the Preferred Route, thus adding 2km to your trip.

Note: Just 1km west along on Jefferis Rd from SH1 is Boutique B&B (465 7239/ www.boutiquebedandbreakfast.co.nz), three upscale studio units set in peaceful country surroundings. Though dinner is not served there, the owners will provide transport to and from a restaurant in either Palmerston or Waikouaiti.

K 36.6 K 39.3 K 40.4	The exit from the Flag Swamp Rd bypass is on your right (see K 31.9 above). Enter Waikouaiti. The day's tour ends at the point where Kildare St in Waikouaiti intersects SH1 on your left.
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Easier Route: Palmerston to Waikouaiti

K 21.1	At the intersection of SH1 and SH85 (heading north) and Tiverton St (heading south), continue southwest on SH1 for a gradual accent up a long hill out of Palmerston followed by a nice descent with the Silver Peak mountain range looming in the distance. Carry on towards Waikouaiti.
K 27.3	Goodwood Rd enters on your left. At this point, follow the Preferred Route from K31.9, but subtract 5.8km from the kilometre markers for that route.

Waikouaiti provides convenient accommodations at the Golden Fleece Hotel Motel (465 7395: restaurant included) that is located on your left where the day's tour ends. Another 0.6km further south on SH1 is the turnoff east onto Beach St. Waikouaiti Beach Tavern and Motels (465 7340/beachmotels@xtra.co.nz) is located 1.4km down this road (just 0.5km from the Waikouaiti Beach). Just beyond the motel is Waikouaiti Camping Gound (465 7432/7432/holidaywaikouaiti@xtra.co.nz).

The beach stretches all the way to the Karitane estuary and is worth a visit. You may even see horses being exercised on the beach. The giant headland situated just north of the beach was part of Matanaka, the homestead of the legendary Johnny Jones. He was a sealer, whaler and entrepreneur (in that order) who enticed early settlers to farm his property in time for it to become a critical breadbasket for a fledgling Dunedin settlement. Jones even coined his own currency. Remnants of his homestead (including a restored schoolhouse) can be found by taking a gravel road at the north end of the beach for a climb of about 100m.

Include in your exploration the Hawksbury Lagoon accessed from the beach by a path leading west from the north end of the beach or from the north end of Scofia St that exits south onto Beach St 0.7km east of SH1. The lagoon is a haven for a variety of water fowl – ducks, geese, black swans, gray herons and the like, plus many other water prone birds such as stilts and oystercatchers.

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.

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