

SCENIC ROUTE - FOX TO HAAST - 119km

Mostly easy driving on a gently curving road, though some short winding sections. The road passes through beautiful forests, crosses rivers - allowing grand views up valleys to the mountains - passes lakes and skirts the coast. A glorious section of the Coast road!

❖ **Bruce Bay**



Amidst the beauty of the bay is the incongruous sight of a red and white “Bay Takeaways” caravan diner. You can use the tables and seats fashioned from rough timber for your own picnic.

Early Maori used the bay as a canoe-building centre.

❖ **South Westland Salmon - Cafe and Shop**

About an hour’s drive from Fox, you can buy fresh and smoked salmon, whitebait and crayfish in season, and feed the salmon reared in ponds.

❖ **Paringa River**

A roadside marker records the amazing 1846-48 expedition of explorer Thomas Brunner. With Maori guides he set off for what was to be the longest journey of exploration in New Zealand by a European. He finally called it quits at the Paringa River and headed back to Nelson, where he’d been given up for dead

❖ **Lake Paringa - PICNIC/ADVENTURE/SPORT**

A very pretty picnic area and DOC campsite (small fee for use of water and toilets). Ponga (tree ferns) and tall trees surround a grassy clearing. The lake is a habitat for water

birds: the southern crested grebe breeds in floating nests on the lake; you can also see scaup and grey and mallard ducks as well as the shoveler, the fastest flying waterbird in New Zealand.

Fishing

All year fishing spot for brown trout and you can catch quinnat salmon from 1 October - 31 March.

❖ **Lake Moeraki - ADVENTURE/SPORT**

Fishing

All year fishing spot for brown trout and quinnat salmon from 1 October - 31 March. You can hire rods and boats from the lodge and whitebait nets in the season.

❖ **Munro Beach Walk - 1.5 hours return**

If you do this easy walk between July and December, you have a good chance of seeing Fiordland crested penguins waddling across the northern part of the beach. They nest on the bush-covered slopes and lay their eggs in August and September.

The track takes you through thick coastal forest with some fine examples of tall kahikatea to a sandy beach (dangerous for swimming).

❖ **Knights Point Viewpoint**

Make sure you stop here for a stunning view of rugged headlands, rocky coastline and rainforest.

A plaque records the historic last push into the wilderness. Until the 1960s, isolated South Westlanders had to rely on sea and air services for contact with the outside world. In 1965 their isolation ended when the last section of State Highway 6 between Paringa and Haast was completed.

❖ **Ship Creek - WALK/PICNIC/BEACH/ECOTOUR**

At the World Heritage Centre at Haast you can see a remnant of

the sailing ship which gave the creek its name. The clipper *Schomberg*, bound for Melbourne, was wrecked on the coast of Victoria. Amazingly, part of her hull drifted across the Tasman Sea, beaching at the mouth of Ship Creek.

A lookout tower gives you a view over the beach and forest. Don't be put off by the sandflies here and decide to move on without doing at least one of the walks. You would miss my pick of the best short walk on the West Coast!

Kahikatea Swamp Forest Walk - 20-30 minutes return

This walk is enchanting. The well-formed path leads you first alongside tea-coloured Ship Creek, its water stained by tannin and humic acid from the swamps and forest floor. Take your camera to capture the beauty of flaxes and trees reflected in the water. The track then takes you on boardwalks through the swamp amongst trees eerily swathed with lichens, vines and ferns. You walk through a grove of stately kahikatea, rare now in New Zealand. This magnificent species of tree dating back to the time of the dinosaurs, can reach 60m high. It was once felled for its valuable timber and to clear land for farming. A kahikatea can live up to 800 years and produce about 800kg of fruit. Early Maori gathered the fruit and today it attracts many birds, another delight on the walk.

Dune Lake Walk - 30 minutes return

If time is limited, miss this walk, but not the Swamp Forest Walk!

A boardwalk takes you over sandy dunes through flaxes and rather scrubby coastal forest to attractive Lake Mataketake, surrounded by reddish-orange native pingao. Coastal birds such as oyster-catchers, terns, spotted shags and black swans are often at the lake.

HAAST

Named after explorer and geologist, Julius von Haast, the township has a population of about 300. People who lived here were once known as 'fardowners' because they were isolated from the rest of the Coast. With the completion of the Paringa-Haast road in 1965, their isolation ended. Today Haast caters for tourists with a variety of accommodation. Not to be missed is the wonderful South Westland World Heritage Visitor Centre.

JACKSON BAY

A handful of houses, a cluster of fish-processing buildings and a wharf make up this tiny village at the southern end of a large, sheltered bay.

JACKSON BAY - HERITAGE



Early Maori settled at Okahu (Jackson Bay). It had the advantages of plentiful food, fishing and sealing - and large totara trees nearby for building canoes. The most important resource, though, was pounamu. Found along beaches and inland, the precious greenstone was important for carving and trading.

Sealers and whalers were the first Europeans to visit the area. They learnt about the wildlife from Captain James Cook's descriptions of his 1770 voyage and were quick to exploit this resource. Sealers marooned on Open Bay Island in 1810 killed more than 11,000 seals.

In 1875 colonists arrived as part of a special Government-backed settlement which was doomed to failure. Although many of the settlers had farming experience, they couldn't cope with the difficult country, the lack of a wharf and the weather. In the first two years the rainfall was particularly heavy and floods prevented them from making a living. A few, however, stuck it out, and their descendants live in the area still.

JACKSON BAY - BEACH/PICNIC

Neils Beach

A five minute drive from Jackson Bay, this is a lovely sandy beach and - exceedingly rare for the West Coast - it's safe for swimming!

JACKSON BAY - WALKS/ ECOTOUR

Wharekai Te Kau Walk - 40 minutes return

You cross a low, bush-covered saddle from the shelter of Jackson Bay to a wild, windswept beach with unusual rock formations. The headland is a wildlife refuge. If you're there between July and November, you may see the rare Fiordland crested penguin.

Hapuka Estuary Walk - 20-30 minutes return

Signposted 15km from Haast on Haast-Jackson Bay road.

A great walk in spring when kowhai trees are flowering and attract many birds. You can see or hear bellbirds, tui, native woodpigeons, fantails and grey warblers in the bush, and oyster-catchers, bitterns, pukekos and pied stilts on the estuary.

Panels give information about whitebait, tiny transparent fish, once abundant in the area. They are even more highly prized now they are harder to catch. In spring people line the river banks of South Westland with their nets, ready to scoop up the fish as they flood in from the sea.

The track takes you through coastal forest to the estuary, then through rimu forest to a lookout to the Open Bay Islands. A Maori Reserve, the islands are a breeding place for Fiordland crested penguins and fur seals.