

A Romantic Journey through the

SOUTH ISLAND

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Images courtesy of NEW ZEALAND TOURISM

Spend quality one on one time with your significant other and discover the South Island of New Zealand from the comfort of a modern motorhome. The land of the long white cloud oft evokes images of dramatic coastlines, lakes reflecting otherworldly landscapes and snow-capped mountain tops.

Explore the wild wonderland that surrounds Mt Cook. Take time out and take the road less travelled to the far south of the Catlin Coast zone. Visit the cascading fjord falls of Milford Sound and round out your trip with a few days R&R in the cosmopolitan hub of Queenstown.

Self-drive holidays mean you can set your own pace. Why not find a special place, converse with your lover and stay another day? Read on for our suggested top spots to stop, including isolated lighthouses, coastal villages and picture-perfect glacier lakes.

DAY 1: CHRISTCHURCH – RAKAIA GORGE – LAKE TEKAPO

Fly into Christchurch via Fiji Airways and collect your selected RV. If you don't want to hit the open road straight away, book into the elegant Hotel Montreal for an evening of luxury indulgence.

Take state Highway 72 Inland Scenic Route to Rakaia Gorge. There's an abundance of easy nature walks or longer hikes on offer here. Option; overnight the RV at the Rakaia Gorge Camp Ground, a splendid place that features excellent sites overlooking the mesmerising Rakaia River.

Lake Tekapo is a further 2.5-hour drive on and an absolute 'must see' New Zealand destination. The township faces north across the remarkable milky-turquoise coloured lake to the mountainous drama of the Southern Alps. The natural hot springs nearby are ideal for a romantic and healing dip.

Tip; stay the night and do the 'Earth & Sky Stargazing Tour' for this locale is a UNESCO Dark Sky Reserve.





DAY 2. LAKE PUKAKI - MT COOK NATIONAL PARK

A short leisurely drive from Lake Tekapo through the heart of the Mackenzie Basin brings you to the equally majestic Lake Pukaki. This terrific place is the foreground to Mt Cook so set your camera to panorama.

Continue to Mt Cook National Park. Stay at White Horse Hill Camping Ground; a most amazing site at the base of the incredible snow-covered peaks of Mount Cook. A Great location with good facilities.

Why not book a Mt Cook Ski Plane or Helicopter tour with your lover? Landing on a glacier sure ranks as numero uno romantic experience.

DAY 3: OAMARU – MOERAKI – DUNEDIN

Leave the lush forestry of Mt Cook and amble your way to the limestone townscape of Oamaru via the gorgeous Waitaki Valley Way. Oamaru, on the west coast is renowned for its colony of little blue penguins, heritage buildings and boutique shopping precinct.

Overnight the RV at the Oamaru Harbour Tourist Park and head south early to explore the ever impressive Moeraki Boulders. Early morning is a prime time to photograph these large spherical stones as brilliant soft sunlight is casts over the black glazed rocks.

Lunch at 'Fleur's Place' a dreamy rustic waterfront restaurant. Popular for it's amazing seafood cuisine, dishes change regularly based on the selection of seafood caught by the Moeraki Bay fishing boats that unload their daily catch on the adjacent wharf.

Arrive in Dunedin by night fall. Overnight in one of the best-preserved Victorian and Edwardian cities in the Southern Hemisphere. Between it's splendored castles and varied native wildlife there's plenty to see.

OUTDOORS

DAY 4: THE CATLIN COAST

Spend the day in cruise mode from Dunedin south through the Catlin Coast. Take your time and stop often for the Catlin's are a major highlight of the remote New Zealand Southland.

Check out Nugget Point Lighthouse – perfect for an intimate picnic setting overlooking a tumultuous and curious sea.

Visit its many not so hidden waterfalls. The hypnotic 22 metre McLean Falls are divine to see up close.

Coffee up at the quirky Lost Gypsy Gallery, an interactive and offbeat mini museum.

We recommend Kaka Point Camping Ground to park your wheels for the night. Surrounded by native bush and a short walk to sheltered swimming beaches.

DAY 5: INVERCARGILL – THE BLUFF – TE ANAU

Venture on to New Zealand's most southern city, Invercargill. Leave Kaka Point by mid-morning and you'll breeze in to this art deco inspired town by lunchtime. From here you're close to the port of Bluff. You must stop in and enjoy the Bluff's rugged charm! The port is the gateway to Stewart Island, and home of Bluff oysters – reputed to be the best in the world. Sample a dozen with your lover, spring for a fancy champagne and create a special couple's moment on the coast.

Next stop, north to Te Anau. Nestled on the lakeside, Te Anau is the main visitor base for the glacier-carved wilderness that is Fiordland National Park. There's plenty of stunning locations abound to pull the RV and admire the area's awe inspiring natural beauty.

Check out the mystical Te Anau Caves with its intricate limestone grotto of glow-worms and a unique underground waterfall. Best to overnight at Te Anau, leave early and begin your romantic adventure to the famed Milford Sound.





DAY 6: MILFORD SOUND – QUEENSTOWN

Might we suggest leaving the RV behind at Te Anau and take a day trip to Milford Sound instead. Real Journeys offer a scenic coach and cruise tour that departs Te Anau daily. That way you can make the most of the Milford Sound experience. With purpose built boats featuring spacious viewing decks, expect to see a variety of marine life such as fur seals and dolphins amid rainforest and waterfalls. Tours include a bounty of delicious on-board lunch choices.

Queenstown is a 2.5-hour drive from Te Anau that boasts epic views of high country landscapes and trout fishing rivers. Arrive and unwind as you explore the awesome alpine resort that is Queenstown or swing by to nearby Moke Lake for the night. A stunning spot off the beaten track with a pretty mirrored lake framed by towering mountain ranges.

Of course, you can continue your romantic RV adventure to the nearby towns of Wanaka and Arrowtown if you desire. If, however it's time to go from motorhome to the luxury hotel zone, check into the Sofitel Hotel in central Queenstown and treat yourselves to a heavenly couple's massage at their award-winning day spa.

Spend a few days wining and dining your way on a gourmet escapade of the region's top restaurants. Or, step the adrenaline levels up a notch get involved in the many adventure activities on offer such as jet boating, bungee jumping and river rafting.

NB: Most travellers find it convenient to leave the RV in Queenstown and fly back to Christchurch. For other intrepid self-drive South Island itineraries visit www.newzealand.com