

Lake Tekapo to Oamaru

Through the Heart of Mackenzie Country & the Waitaki Valley

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 260 km

DRIVING TIME
3 – 3.5 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
6 – 7 hrs

MAIN ROADS
SH1 · SH83 · SH8



START

Lake Tekapo

Heart of the Mackenzie Basin

Depart Lake Tekapo heading south on **SH8**. Pass the vivid turquoise shores of **Lake Pukaki** and continue south to the Clay Cliffs turnoff.

Lake Tekapo SH8 south

▼ Head south on **SH8** past **Lake Pukaki**. Turn onto **Henburn Road** (north of Omarama) for the Clay Cliffs. ~85 km

≈ 1 hr

STOP 1

Clay Cliffs

Henburn Road, Omarama

Dramatic pinnacles and ravines of compressed silt and gravel — New Zealand's own Badlands. The last 2 km of Henburn Road is unsealed private road; pay **\$10/car cash** at the honesty box gate. A 2WD car handles it fine in dry conditions. 25-minute return walk from the car park.

\$10/car cash Gravel road Allow 1 hr

▼ Return to **SH8**, continue south joining **SH83** through Kurow and the Waitaki Valley. Take the **Island Cliff Road** turnoff to the Elephant Rocks. ~130 km

≈ 2.5 hrs

STOP 2

Elephant Rocks

Island Cliff–Duntroon Road, near Duntroon

A surreal field of ancient limestone boulders sculpted by millions of years of weathering. Free entry with a donation box at the gate. Explore at will — look for the namesake elephant shape, and the surprise hippo. Bring walking shoes; the paddock has resident sheep.

Open 24 hrs Donation entry Allow 1–2 hrs

▼ Return to **SH83**, continue northeast to **SH1**. Head south through **Weston** into Oamaru. ~45 km

≈ 45 min

DESTINATION

Oamaru

North Otago, New Zealand

Arrive into Oamaru via **SH1**. New Zealand's Victorian heritage town offers whitestone architecture, the historic precinct, a blue penguin colony, and warm North Otago hospitality.

via SH1 Oamaru

PRACTICAL NOTES

- Carry **\$10 NZD cash** for the Clay Cliffs entry fee
- Fill up with fuel in **Omarama** — limited services before Tekapo
- SH83 is a well-maintained sealed road throughout
- Henburn Road is unsealed — drive slowly (20 km/h)
- Mobile coverage is limited in the Waitaki Valley

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Waitaki Valley: limestone geology, tawny farmland
- Lake Benmore: vivid turquoise hydro lake
- Omarama: renowned gliding destination
- Lake Pukaki: breathtaking turquoise glacial lake
- Tekapo: stargazing, lupins & the Good Shepherd Church

Distances and times are approximate · Always check road conditions before departure · NZ road conditions: nzta.govt.nz