

Queenstown to Oamaru

Through Mackenzie Country & the Waitaki Valley

TOTAL DISTANCE
≈ 370 km

DRIVING TIME
4.5 – 5 hrs

FULL DAY INCL. STOPS
7 – 8 hrs

MAIN ROADS
SH1 · SH83 · SH8



START

Queenstown

Adventure Capital of New Zealand

Depart Queenstown heading northeast on **SH6**, joining **SH8** east. Climb over the scenic **Lindis Pass** (971 m) and descend into the Mackenzie Basin.

Queenstown SH6 → SH8

▼ Head northeast on **SH8** over **Lindis Pass** and through **Omarama**. Turn onto **Henburn Road** (north of Omarama) for the **Clay Cliffs**. ~190 km ≈ 2 hrs

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 northeast 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, 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** before Lindis Pass
- SH83 is a well-maintained sealed road throughout
- Henburn Road is unsealed — drive slowly (20 km/h)
- Mobile coverage is limited in Waitaki Valley

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Waitaki Valley: limestone geology, tawny farmland
- Lake Benmore: vivid turquoise hydro lake
- Omarama: renowned gliding destination
- Lindis Pass: golden tussock, no services
- Cromwell: Central Otago stone fruit country

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