



South Island Explorer Trail

Weight limit: 120kg

Nearest airport: Christchurch

8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding

Get completely off-grid and spend a week exploring the iconic high country stations of the South Island in deepest New Zealand. Stay in basic shearers huts or tents and gain an insight of how life works on these remote sheep and cattle stations. This is an adventurous participatory ride and you will be involved in the daily work of looking after the horses and setting up camp on the trip.



The Riding

The terrain on this ride can be very challenging. As well as long (and potentially deep) river crossings, there are steep ascents and descents although the horses are used to this terrain. The pace of the ride is taken at a walk due to the rough terrain and the pack horses which accompany the ride, carrying all the food and equipment so all levels of rider can be accommodated.

You will need to be able to dismount and lead your horse on the downhill which can sometimes be for up to one hour. Each day you will be in the saddle for between 4-7 hours with one day slightly longer than this, therefore a good level of general fitness is required. Please note there is no mobile phone coverage during the ride but the guides carry a satellite phone.



Level of riding and fitness

This ride is suitable for any level of rider although due to the terrain it is not suitable for nervous riders nor for those who suffer from vertigo. You will be spending long hours in the saddle and

so it is important to be physically fit and able to mount and dismount unaided. Hard hats are mandatory on this ride.

This is an adventurous, participatory ride and you will be involved in the daily work on the trip. If you are an experienced rider you will help in the mornings getting the horses ready and may also be asked to help with the free running packhorses and loose horses. That might mean leading and keeping them in order when needed. If you are not an experienced rider, there are plenty of other jobs to do such as helping in the kitchen, doing dishes and cleaning the huts in the morning before you leave.

Guides & Groups sizes

You will be guided by Lawrie, who together with his wife, Jenny has been guiding trips in the region for almost 30 years.. Lawrie's in-depth knowledge and experience of the area is invaluable on these safaris and Jenny's wonderful cooking will keep you full of energy at all times. Together they have over 80 years of experience of breaking, riding, training and packing horses. Their unequalled knowledge of the area and understanding of horses means they are able to offer some of the most adventurous riding in New Zealand.

Horses & Tack

There are 40 horses available for riding at this destination. Both the riding horses and pack horses are a delightful mix of Clydesdale X Thoroughbred, they are sure-footed having been bred in the hills and are very comfortable to ride. The horses range between 16hh and 18hh and the tack used on this ride is Australian stock saddles and single-rein bridles. The riding is English style.

Accommodation and Dining

This is an adventurous trail and the accommodation when on the ride is basic. You could be staying in a tent, woolshed, shepherds hut or conservation hut. For most of the nights on the trail there are no showers or electricity but there will usually be a stream or river nearby to wash in. You'll need to bring your own warm sleeping bag and will be provided with an airbed. Some of the accommodation does have bunkbeds. Single accommodation is not possible at this destination.



The food on this ride is all cooked from scratch using local ingredients by your host. Expect hearty farm food - it is intended to fill riders up and give them energy. Meals could be steak, mince or stroganoff. Tea, coffee and water are included, alcohol and canned drinks are not included, nor provided, but riders are invited to bring along their own supply with them. This can be pre-ordered in advance before travel commences and will be waiting for the rider upon arrival. Gluten-free, dairy-free and vegetarian diets can also be catered for with advance notice.

Itinerary

Day 1

Transfer from Christchurch to your host's farm. Meet your fellow riders over dinner and settle in for a good night's sleep before starting the trail the following morning.

Day 2

Leaving from the stables at approximately 9.00 – 9.30am you'll ride to the influx of the Mandamus River into the Hurunui River. Cross the Hurunui River and ride up Mandamus River

onto the road, until reaching Island Hills Station, which covers an area of 6,850 hectares running 5,000 sheep and 300 cattle.

Continue on to the Glencoe River, passing hill country of native scrub and scattered silver tussock on the way to reaching the Mandamus River again. You'll travel up the east bank crossing for the last time and follow the track through dense manuka scrub into Organ Stream where the first night is spent in Valley Camp Hut.



Day 3

Leave the Valley Hut at approximately 8.30 a.m. and head up the pack track through beech bush and down to Darkies Gully, follow the pack track through a beech forest to Gorge Creek Saddle. Descend down a steep face into Gorge Creek, follow down the creek for approximately ½ mile and take the track on the west side of Gorge Creek. Ride onto the top of the Little Organs Range. From here a magnificent view can be seen of Glynn Wye Station, the Lewis Pass Road, also views up the Doubtful and Hope Rivers with the Southern Alps in the background. Glynn Wye station covers an area of 24,300 hectares (60,000 acres) running 16,000 sheep, 1,400 cattle and 1,400 deer. After lunch you'll ride down to the Organ Hut.

Day 4

Today you will be following the Hope River to reach your evening accommodation; a DOC (Department of Conservation) hut, known as Hope Kiwi Lodge where only hikers (and horse riders) are allowed to stay.

Day 5

You'll head through the native beech forest for approx. 2 hours, following an old pack track and get out of the beech forest at the top end of Lake Sumner.

Over Catherine Saddle we will get to Lake Mason where you'll camp for the night. This is an old hut, with only four bunks and an open fire to cook!! A romantic spot where you will feel like you're in a wilderness paradise! The lake will welcome you to swim with the horses and have a bath if you like.

Day 6

Today, you'll follow a track through some native wide open country, typical New Zealand South Island scenery and finally get to Eskhead Station, where you can return to civilization as you will find some hot showers again. The huts you'll stay in are tidy and clean but still rustic and a little romantic.

Day 7

On the final day, you will head along the banks of the Hurunui River, back to the stables. Stay the night at your host's base in comfortable beds with hot showers.

Day 8

Depart back to Christchurch after breakfast.

Price includes

- 7 nights accommodation
- 6 days of riding
- Breakfasts
- Lunches
- Dinners
- Coffee and tea

Not included

- International flights
- Airport transfers
- Alcoholic and canned drinks

Flights & Airport transfers

Do not book flights until you have received the Booking confirmation email from saddletravel.com.

Please plan your flights to/from as follows:

Please book your flight to arrive in Christchurch between 1-3pm if possible
For your departure flight please book to leave after midday



What to bring

We recommend wearing your riding boots when travelling and carrying one set of riding clothing and your helmet in your hand luggage, so should your luggage not make it to the destination you'll still be able to ride. Your hosts will supply helmets, canvas bedrolls (to transport clothes and sleeping bag), airbeds, lunchboxes, drink bottles and saddle bags.

Please use the packing list as a guideline, bearing in mind the time of year you are riding.

- Strong sturdy boots e.g. Hiking boots. NOT jodhpur boots or wellies
- Thermal underwear/pyjamas
- A warm sleeping bag
- Camera and films or battery charger
- Towel
- Sun block
- Insect repellent
- Waterproof gloves
- Jodhpurs or comfortable trousers to ride in
- Hats – Rain, sun, wind and cold
- Long-sleeved shirts to protect from sun and wind
- Swimwear
- Warm jacket and scarf
- Laundry soap
- Light shoes to wear in huts
- Torch with batteries

Climate

The weather in New Zealand can vary at any time of year, from sunny days to frosty nights with rain at any time. Be prepared for all weather conditions. October and May can even see snow falls. be prepared for all weather conditions.

Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>.

Travel documents

For entry requirements to New Zealand for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website:
<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/new-zealand/entry-requirements>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.

Currency & Tipping

Tipping is not expected on this trail. We recommend bringing enough money for any alcohol/canned drinks if you have pre-ordered them and airport transfer costs.

Cancellation policy

Payment & Cancellation Terms saddletravel.com

Holidays are confirmed with a 20% non-refundable deposit. The full balance is due 56 days before the start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50%

30 days or more - 30%

less than 30 days - nil

Book with confidence – Covid Guarantee:

If the ride operator is closed or you are unable to travel due to lockdown:

1/ The deposit is reissued as a rebooking voucher to rebook anytime.

2/ Any balance payment will be refunded to you in full within 1 week of departure date.

Insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during the booking process.



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