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Travel

There's no
shortage
of walking
tracks.

Cannibal Bay
is well worth
a stop.

Just a two-hour drive south of Dunedin, this breathtaking coastline offers lush forests, diverse wildlife, stunning waterfalls, and rolling views. Park the car and explore on foot – there's no shortage of walking tracks. Nugget Point Lighthouse sits atop a cliff, providing spectacular views well worth the hike. Keep an eye out for seals along the way!

MUST DO

YELLOW-EYED PENGUINS SUNRISE TOUR

As I sit on a cliff, I hear the penguins calling in the dark. It's 6.30am, and the sun is just rising, casting stunning pink and purple hues across the sky – like a scene from a Kate Bush song! My tour guide, Lyndon, who grew up in the area, knows The Catlins inside out. Yellow-eyed penguins are becoming increasingly rare, but today we're fortunate and spot four waddling across the rocky bank before hopping into the sea.

I met Lyndon in Owaka at 6am. After a 15-minute drive, we park by a paddock and set off on foot. The landowner, a friend of Lyndon's, allows access to the paddocks leading to the cliffs. As we walk, I use my phone's torch to navigate the slippery terrain. After 20 minutes, we reach our viewing spot. Lyndon hands me some binoculars, and we settle in to wait. The experience lasts about three hours, and while wildlife is unpredictable, witnessing a beautiful sunrise is always

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Experience New Zealand's natural wonders in Clutha

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Waterfall-hopping is a fun way to see the area.

worthwhile. A raincoat, warm jacket, beanie and quality boots are essential!

catlinstours.co.nz

DRIVE AROUND THE INCREDIBLE CATLINS

I spent three hours with Sarah Homer from Clutha Tourism, driving around to visit stunning beaches and waterfalls. We made stops at Cannibal Bay, Purakaunui Falls, Purakaunui Bay, Surat Bay, and Nugget Point Lighthouse. The beaches were gorgeous, and we spotted 16 surfers at one beach. As we walked along the shoreline, we encountered a seal napping, and on our way to Nugget Point, we saw seals swimming in a rock pool below. The Catlins is remarkably unspoiled, full of vibrant green fields dotted with cattle and sheep. With gravel roads and few cars, it feels like a true escape – a beach holiday from the '80s, complete with friendly locals.

EAT & DRINK

Coffee fans can't miss Tahatika Coffee Traders in Clutha, New Zealand. This cafe is a must-visit for coffee lovers seeking a unique, local experience. Known for its rich, sustainably sourced beans, this cosy spot offers expertly brewed coffee with a genuine Kiwi touch. The friendly atmosphere, combined with fresh pastries and scenic

views, makes it perfect for a relaxing break. Whether you're passing through or staying local, Tahatika is a hidden gem worth discovering.

STAY

MOHUA PARK – CATLINS ECO ACCOMMODATION

What's the best part of this cabin? No neighbours! I spent a night in Karearea Cottage, which overlooks lush farmland and offers fantastic views of the Morris Saddle bush. Mohua is nestled on an eight-hectare bush sanctuary, and owners Tracy and Mike are committed to sustainability and respecting the surrounding nature.

As I drove in, the long winding gravel road under a canopy of trees felt almost like a rainforest. The cabin was clean, spacious, and had breathtaking views. With no shops nearby, the cabin is equipped with a kitchenette featuring a mini fridge, toaster, kettle, microwave, and hotplate. If cooking isn't your thing, they offer delicious catering options – I highly recommend ordering the antipasto platter.

Luckily the cabin has air-conditioning, but the real treat was finding that the electric blanket had been turned on before I crawled into bed, making for a cosy night in.

catlinsmohuapark.co.nz

Get your caffeine hit at Tahatika Coffee Traders.



See the stars from your own private deck.

BERESFORD HEIGHTS – FARM LUXURY

I arrived during a beautiful afternoon and received a warm welcome from owner Steph and her adorable cat, Percy. I was supposed to do an ATV farm tour the next morning, but Steph suggested that we go immediately since the weather forecast didn't look promising. We strapped my suitcase to the back of the ATV, put on our helmets, and sped off through the paddocks, breathing in the fresh country air.

Steph and her husband, Warren, are third-generation farmers on their 1,330-hectare property, which is home to cattle, sheep, horses, goats, pigs and dogs. Their farm is stunning, and we stopped off to feed pigs Brenda and Barbara while a farrier was changing a horseshoe in the stables. After an hour spent exploring the property, Steph drove me to my lodge on top of Table Hill. The views were breathtaking!

The luxurious lodge features

a fireplace in the living room, an impressive king-sized bed and a fully equipped kitchen, including an outdoor barbecue. An expansive deck runs along the entire length of the lodge, complete with a hot tub for relaxing while watching the sunset. One side is all glass, allowing me to gaze at the stars from bed. Steph had stocked the fridge with salmon and baby potatoes for dinner, along with a delicious brownie for dessert. A continental breakfast was also provided.

I woke up early the next day, excited not to miss the sunrise. With a cup of coffee, I enjoyed the view from my bed! Steph picked me up at 10am, and even though it was raining, we drove back to my car, and I was off to Invercargill via the Southern Scenic Route. I can't recommend this unforgettable experience enough – the views are panoramic, making it the ultimate romantic getaway or relaxing solo trip.

beresfordheights.nz

Words: Julie Hunkinson

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