



COMPLETE EXAMPLE CLIENT GUIDE

John & Sarah's South Island summer adventure

Four weeks of rugged mountains, wild coastlines and room to wander.



TRAVEL WINDOW

4-31 January 2027 / 28 days

TRAVELLERS

John & Sarah

GUIDE STYLE

Independent road trip

This public example shows the thinking, detail and flexibility inside a personalised Southern Guides plan. Every real guide is built around the people taking the trip.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE. YOUR ADVENTURE.

A PERSONAL NOTE

This guide was built around you.

The best trip does not feel completed. It feels discovered - with room for weather, energy and the places you only hear about once you arrive.

John and Sarah, you want the South Island to feel wild without turning every day into a test. That means protecting weather windows for serious adventures, leaving recovery space after them and choosing local places that make the route feel like yours.

YOUR TRAVEL STYLE

TRAVEL WINDOW	4-31 January 2027 / 28 days
HOW YOU MOVE	Rental car / cabins / camps / two hut nights
YOUR PACE	One demanding day, then a slower one
OUTDOOR ABILITY	Fit hikers / rough tracks / navigation aware
INTERESTS	Mountains / water / food / small towns
BOUNDARIES	No forced river crossings or marginal access

WHAT THIS EXAMPLE INCLUDES

A considered route, adventure levels, regional options, local finds, wet-weather alternatives, a realistic working budget, booking priorities and the official sources that should make the final call.

A PUBLIC EXAMPLE

A paid guide also includes the private saved map, direct booking links and the customer's final revision.

YOUR ROUTE AT A GLANCE

A long lap of the South.

Move north to south down the west, curl through Otago, the Catlins and Fiordland, then finish beneath Aoraki.



THE RHYTHM

Three weather-sensitive objectives sit inside flexible regional blocks. If a forecast closes one window, move the easier experience forward and keep the hard day available.

ROUTE RULE

One big movement or one big adventure in a day. Sometimes both work; building every day that way usually does not.

Orientation only - not a navigation tool or the private saved map included with a customer guide.

REGION 01 / DAYS 1-9

Nelson, Tasman & Marlborough

Begin lightly around the coast, then earn the remoteness of Kahurangi. St Arnaud and Marlborough give the legs a proper reset.

LEVEL 4 / SIGNATURE ADVENTURE

Mount Owen via Granity Pass

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

Marble country, alpine tarns and the highest summit in Kahurangi. The northern approach gives the clearest progression from tramping track to unmarked route.

PLAN IT WELL Allow a proper weather window. Carry a PLB, topo map and navigation tools; snow and unmarked karst shafts can remain hazards in summer.

LEVEL 2 / FLEXIBLE COAST DAY

Wharariki near low tide

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

A windswept reset before the mountain days: dunes, sea caves and Archway Islands without needing a fixed start.

PLAN IT WELL Allow 2-3 hours. Treat the sea as scenery rather than a swimming beach and check tide and wind.

LEVEL 2-3 / RECOVERY WITH A VIEW

Lake Rotoiti & Mount Robert

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

Choose a lakeside walk for genuine recovery or the ridge circuit if the legs and weather both agree.

PLAN IT WELL Check current conditions with the Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre. Keep the day optional after Mount Owen.

LEVEL 1 / LOCAL CONTRAST

Pelorus Bridge to one cellar door

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

Native forest and river shade in the morning, then one selected Marlborough tasting instead of a rushed circuit.

PLAN IT WELL Nominate a driver or book transport. Confirm current opening hours before shaping the day.

REGION 02 / DAYS 10-14

West Coast

Here the forecast sets the order. The goal is not to beat the rain; it is to recognise the dry windows and use every other day well.

LEVEL 4 / SOUTHERN GUIDES DISCOVERY

Ballroom Overhang

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

Limestone walls, riverbed travel and a natural overhang make this feel far more exploratory than the roadside highlights.

PLAN IT WELL Experienced trampers only. Many unbridged Fox River crossings; choose another track if rain is forecast or has recently fallen.

LEVEL 1 / SHORT WILD-COAST WALK

Truman Track & Punakaiki

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

A compact rainforest-to-coast walk that keeps the day dramatic without using the energy reserved for Ballroom.

PLAN IT WELL Allow an hour. Stay clear of the sea and follow all current coastal warnings.

LEVEL 1-2 / QUIET LOCAL DAY

Ōkārito lagoon and village

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

A low-key wetland day for when the mountains are hidden. Paddle with a local operator only if conditions are suitable.

PLAN IT WELL Confirm any departure locally and protect the lagoon wildlife. Make this the slow day before or after glacier country.

LEVEL 2 / WEATHER REWARD

Lake Matheson near first light

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

The familiar loop becomes personal as a dawn option, especially when calm air gives the mountains a chance to reflect.

PLAN IT WELL Allow roughly 90 minutes. Wet roots and mud remain possible; skip the early start if low cloud removes the reward.

REGION 03 / DAYS 15-20

Otago

Wānaka and Queenstown are not treated as a checklist. One mountain day, local evenings and easy water time shape the week.

LEVEL 2 / LOCAL RIVER PAUSE

Motatapu River afternoon

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

A short rural river walk and a careful cold-water stop suit the desire for simple adventure between bigger days.

PLAN IT WELL Swim only at a calm accessible point after checking current, depth and exit. Cold water changes capability quickly.

LEVEL 1 / LOCAL EVENING

Cinema Paradiso

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

Couches, the old Morris Minor and warm cookies at intermission keep the guide human on a tired or wet evening.

PLAN IT WELL Screenings change weekly. Check the live programme rather than planning a specific film months ahead.

LEVEL 3 / SIGNATURE DAY WALK

Rob Roy Track

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

Beech forest, waterfalls and glacier views create a proper mountain day without becoming a technical alpine objective.

PLAN IT WELL Check DOC alerts and the access road. Never cross flooded fords or continue beyond the official track end.

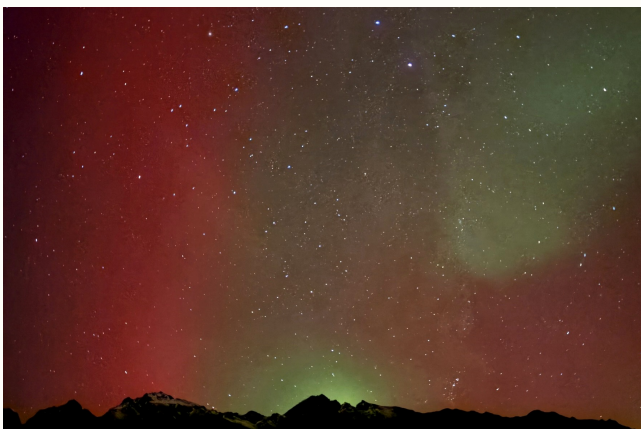
LEVEL 1-3 / CHOOSE YOUR ENERGY

Glenorchy road & Bob's Cove

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

Build the day around viewpoints and a short lakeside walk; add one paid adventure only if budget and energy agree.

PLAN IT WELL Keep the free scenic version complete in its own right and choose flexible booking terms where possible.



REGION 04 / DAYS 21-25

Southland & Fiordland

The Catlins provides surf and wildlife before Fiordland raises the scale. The hardest option stays conditional.

LEVEL 2 / COASTAL LOCAL PICK

Curio Bay / Porpoise Bay

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

A beginner-friendly surf lesson can make the south coast more than a drive-through. Wildlife may appear, but never chase the encounter.

PLAN IT WELL Enter the water at least 50 m from dolphins and keep at least 30 m from seals and sea lions. Follow current DOC guidance.

LEVEL 4 / EXPERT WEATHER WINDOW

Gertrude Saddle

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

The route delivers the dramatic Fiordland scale, but only for experienced trampers in completely dry, stable conditions.

PLAN IT WELL If there is rain, snow or ice, do not go. Carry a PLB, use a topo map and check with the Fiordland visitor centre.

LEVEL 1-3 / WEATHER-PROOF WONDER

Piopiotahi from the water

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

A cruise can work in rain; a guided paddle is the active choice on a suitable calm morning.

PLAN IT WELL Check Milford Road conditions and use a registered operator for guided water experiences.

LEVEL 3 / BIG DAY, CLEARER LINE

Kepler Track toward Luxmore

[OFFICIAL DETAILS →](#)

A sustained lake-to-alpine climb is a strong alternative when the harder route is unsuitable.

PLAN IT WELL Brod Bay to Luxmore Hut alone is 3.5-4.5 hours one way. Turn around for daylight, weather and energy.



REGION 05 / DAYS 26-28

Canterbury & Aoraki

Finish with one well-chosen glacier day, two nights beneath Aoraki and an unhurried pause around Takapō.

LEVEL 3-4 / CONDITIONAL GLACIER VIEW

Ball Hut Track - early section

[OFFICIAL DETAILS](#) →

The historic road gives a closer sense of Haupapa / Tasman Glacier than the short car-park viewpoint.

PLAN IT WELL The moraine is unstable. Beyond Husky Flat is unmarked exposed terrain requiring high-level skills; check with the visitor centre.

LEVEL 2-3 / CHOOSE FOR CONDITIONS

Hooker Valley or Sealy Tarns

[OFFICIAL DETAILS](#) →

The valley is the gentler option; Sealy Tarns is the steep leg-burner if the weather is clear and energy remains.

PLAN IT WELL Check same-day DOC alerts and alpine weather. Let the recovery plan stay a recovery plan.

LEVEL 2 / SHORT VISUAL REWARD

Tasman Glacier View

[OFFICIAL DETAILS](#) →

A compact climb for a panoramic view across Tasman Lake when the longer Ball Hut option is ruled out.

PLAN IT WELL Stay on the formed track and away from unstable moraine edges. Carry a head torch if returning near sunset.

LEVEL 1 / FINAL EVENING

Takapō dark-sky finish

[OFFICIAL DETAILS](#) →

A calm last-night experience after four active weeks. Choose outdoor astronomy only if the sky agrees.

PLAN IT WELL Book once the route is stable or choose flexible conditions. Protect sleep before the final drive.

FOUR-WEEK ROUTE / PART ONE

Days 1-14: coast, karst & river country

These are anchors, not instructions. Hard objectives move within their regional block when the forecast says they should.

01 Days 1-3 / Nelson to Golden Bay

ANCHOR	Settle in, Wharariki near low tide and one easy local evening.
KEEP FLEXIBLE	Riwaka Resurgence, Tākaka cafés or an empty afternoon.
WHY IT WORKS	A gentle start protects energy for Kahurangi.

02 Days 4-7 / Kahurangi block

ANCHOR	Preparation day followed by the three-day Mount Owen plan.
KEEP FLEXIBLE	Shift the tramp for visibility, snow, high rivers or unsafe vehicle access.
WHY IT WORKS	The first major objective receives a real forecast window.

03 Days 8-9 / St Arnaud to Marlborough

ANCHOR	Lake Rotoiti recovery, Pelorus Bridge and one cellar door.
KEEP FLEXIBLE	Choose the ridge only if the legs are ready.
WHY IT WORKS	This avoids stacking remote tramps back-to-back.

04 Days 10-14 / Punakaiki to glacier country

ANCHOR	Hold one dry day for Ballroom; use the rest for coast and lagoon.
KEEP FLEXIBLE	Substitute a coastal or indoor day after rain.
WHY IT WORKS	Five days lets West Coast weather behave without breaking the trip.

FORECAST RULE

Move a hard objective inside its regional block. Do not push it into the next region and create a chain of rushed drives.

FOUR-WEEK ROUTE / PART TWO

Days 15-28: lakes, surf & alpine finish

The second half alternates active days with local evenings and short water experiences. The final Aoraki block remains flexible.

01 Days 15-18 / Wānaka

- ANCHOR** Motatapu River, Cinema Paradiso and one full Rob Roy day.
- KEEP FLEXIBLE** Use the cinema on the tired or wet evening.
- WHY IT WORKS** Four nights keeps the big hike away from drive days.

02 Days 19-20 / Queenstown & Glenorchy

- ANCHOR** Bob's Cove, viewpoints and one chosen premium adventure.
- KEEP FLEXIBLE** Keep one day free for Arrowtown or a cancelled activity.
- WHY IT WORKS** This is the social pause before the remote south.

03 Days 21-22 / Catlins & Curio Bay

- ANCHOR** Surf lesson, fossil forest near low tide and a coastal evening.
- KEEP FLEXIBLE** Weather and wildlife decide the exact rhythm.
- WHY IT WORKS** A short but distinctive stop avoids a drive-through.

04 Days 23-25 / Te Anau & Milford Road

- ANCHOR** One water experience, one active day and one buffer day.
- KEEP FLEXIBLE** Gertrude only in a safe dry window; Kepler remains strong.
- WHY IT WORKS** Three chances give Fiordland room to change.

05 Days 26-28 / Aoraki to Christchurch

- ANCHOR** Two nights beneath Aoraki and one glacier-focused day.
- KEEP FLEXIBLE** Shorten the walk if arrival or access conditions demand it.
- WHY IT WORKS** The finish stays memorable without becoming a race.

COST & COMMITMENT

A budget that protects the adventure

Working ceiling: NZ\$16,000 for two people, excluding international flights. Planning figures are broad estimates, not quotes.

CATEGORY	PLANNING FIGURE	WHAT IT PROTECTS
Vehicle hire	NZ\$4,800	High-clearance vehicle for 28 days; confirm each access road.
Fuel + road costs	NZ\$1,400	Room for the full route and local detours.
Stays + hut nights	NZ\$3,200	Simple cabins, holiday parks, camps and two hut nights.
Food	NZ\$3,000	Self-catering, casual local meals and one wine afternoon.
Experiences	NZ\$2,200	Surf lesson, one premium water day, cinema and stargazing.
Contingency	NZ\$1,400	Weather changes, late bookings and one unplanned splurge.
PLANNING TOTAL NZ\$16,000 for two		Prioritise the right vehicle, safe access and flexible stays - not a paid activity every day.

BOOK FIRST

Summer stays around Aoraki, Wānaka and Te Anau; required hut tickets or passes; the preferred Milford experience; any qualified guide.

DECIDE LOCALLY

Cinema programme, cellar door, optional jet boat and the exact Takapō astronomy experience.

BEFORE YOU GO

Adventure decisions, made clearly

A good guide makes the “no” decision easy before a marginal day becomes a serious problem.

NON-NEGOTIABLES

No Ballroom after heavy rain or with rain forecast. No Gertrude in rain, snow, ice or on wet slabs. Mount Owen needs safe access, clear visibility and confident navigation.

EACH MORNING

Check current DOC alerts, NIWA park weather and NZTA roads. Tell someone the route and overdue time. Choose the turnaround before leaving.

REMOTE-DAY KIT

Waterproof shell, warm layer, sun protection, head torch, first aid, spare food, offline topo map and a personally carried locator beacon.

WATER & WILDLIFE

Cold water changes breathing and swimming ability. Keep exits close. Never approach dolphins; keep at least 30 m from seals and sea lions.

EMERGENCY BASICS

Call 111 in an emergency. Do not rely on mobile coverage. Use AdventureSmart intentions for remote trips.

WHAT SOUTHERN GUIDES DOES

Southern Guides provides researched recommendations and a flexible planning framework. It does not provide physical guiding, bookings, emergency monitoring, access permission or safety guarantees. Conditions, prices and availability change; travellers remain responsible for current checks, insurance and personal suitability.

[DOC alerts](#)[NZTA Journey Planner](#)[NIWA parks weather](#)[AdventureSmart](#)

FINAL NOTE

Leave with options, not obligations

The point is not to complete every page. It is to recognise the right day for the right experience - and know that changing course is still part of the trip.

TROY'S PICK

If you receive one perfect dry window, use it for the experience with the narrowest safety margin. The cinema, cellar door and shorter viewpoints will still be there when the weather closes in.

The moments that stay with you may be smaller: the shock of cold river water, a warm cookie halfway through a Wānaka film, the long light at Curio Bay or the first open glacier view. This is your adventure. Give yourself time to enjoy it.

KEY OFFICIAL SOURCES

[DOC track alerts](#)

[NZTA Journey Planner](#)

[NIWA parks weather](#)

[AdventureSmart](#)

[Mount Owen route](#)

[Gertrude Saddle](#)



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Local knowledge. Your adventure.

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