

DAYOUT IN THE CATLINS



The Catlins is not on the main tourist route, and for many that's part of its charm. 20 kilometres of State Highway 92 have yet to be sealed. If you're an overseas visitor, prepared to venture over some unsealed - and very corrugated - side roads to explore this relatively unpopulated south-

east corner of the country, we recommend spending at least three days to make your journey worthwhile. New Zealanders who haven't yet discovered the area, you have a scenic treat in store.

Rugged coastline, unspoiled golden sand beaches, waterfalls, nature walks, the east coast's most significant native forests, a fossil forest and coastal wildlife all make this a special place. And if you love surfing, it's New Zealand's best-kept secret, according to an American enthusiast we met.

HERITAGE

Early Maori found this coast a plentiful food source. They also hunted the now extinct, giant flightless bird, the moa, whose bones have been excavated by archeologists.

Whaling brought the first Europeans in the mid 1800s, and stations were established at Fortrose, Waikawa and Tautuku. The region got its name (slightly misspelt) from a ship's captain, Edward Cattlin who supplied the southern whaling stations. He bought a vast area of land from Maori chief Tuhawaiki in 1840, but after the Treaty of Waitangi, this was reduced to about 100 hectares.

When whaling declined, sawmilling became the predominant industry. In the 1870s sawmills were built near the harbours so small coastal ships could take the sawn timber to markets. A railway line from Owaka allowed sawmills to be built further away. As the once extensive forest diminished, roads were added in the 1920s to make transporting logs easier. The boom years were over by about 1955 and, of the 182 sawmills that operated at some time in the Catlins, only one is working today.

Farmers tried their luck on land cleared for timber. Some were successful, but the less fertile lands were left to revert to scrub and bush.

CATLINS -SIGHTSEEING

The Catlins divides into three districts for three days comfortable sightseeing, but any extra time you can spend getting to know the area will be rewarding.

1. DAYOUT IN SOUTH CATLINS

Entering the region from Invercargill on the Southern Scenic Route, you come first of all to Fortrose.

FORTROSE

Site of an early, short-lived whaling station. Turn off SH92 here to detour around the coast. The unsealed road's terrible (though still OK for campervans), but the scenery and wildlife are worth the discomfort!

WAIPAPA POINT

The attractive wooden lighthouse on the point was built after the *SS Tararua* was wrecked here in 1881. Only 20 of the 151 people on board survived when the ship struck a reef.

This is a great place to see seals surfing in the waves or resting on the beach and around the lighthouse.

SLOPE POINT



The name is said to come from the slope of the hill. It could equally refer to the trees dotted around, sloping dramatically from the force of southerly gales. If you want to 'bag' the southernmost point of the South Island, this is it! There's an

invigorating walk across two paddocks to the wave-lashed cliff top with its signpost giving directions to the equator and the Antarctic.

PORPOISE BAY - BEACH/PICNIC/ECOTOUR

A holiday settlement with a sweeping, sandy beach, good for **surfing**. There's a lovely view of the beach from the camping ground and picnic area

on the headland. In the summer you can see **rare Hector's dolphins** cavorting in the surf.

CURIO BAY

An important geological site.

Curio Bay, only a few minutes from Porpoise Bay, is an internationally significant geological site. It is recognised as one of the best examples of a Jurassic fossil forest in the world. Low tide is the best time to view the fossilised trees which go back to the time of the dinosaurs and the ancient continent of Gondwanaland. It's amazing to think these trees were growing when much of New Zealand was below the sea.

WAIKAWA

A small settlement which has developed from the whaling station of the mid 1880s. The former Anglican church houses an Information Centre and the old schoolhouse a local museum.

WAIKAWA - MUSEUM

- Open daily in summer holidays; otherwise Sundays.
- Learn more about the whaling, goldmining and milling industries and the history of the early settlers.

2. DAYOUT IN CENTRAL CATLINS

Enjoy some special walks on your dayout here.

CATHEDRAL CAVES - SIGHTSEEING/WALK

Signposted off SH92 . Gates to the private road are open approximately 2 hours either side of low tide. Fee collected at the carpark.

Don't miss this example of nature's magnificence!

Be prepared to get wettish feet, sometimes even at low tide, or take your shoes off and have the pleasure of strolling barefoot along the beautiful, golden sand beach to the caves. On a sunny day, it's a great place for a swim and picnic lunch, if the tide's right.

From the carpark there's a 15 minute steep walk down to the beach through native bush, sprinkled with ferns and pongas. The caves, testimony to the power of water which has shaped them, look almost hand-carved inside - like the great cathedrals which inspired their name. They rise some 30 metres high and join about 30 metres into the cliff. The smaller of the two gives a greater feeling of height, because it's narrower.

TAUTUKU - TECHNOLOGY

Trails Tractor Site



Interesting information panels give a very worthwhile insight into sawmilling and its dangers. The historic tractor on display, designed by Riverton sawmiller Frank Traills, transformed logging in the New Zealand bush. He adapted Fordson farm tractors to work on wooden rails and to carry greater loads of logs on bogies at the front and behind.

WALKS/ECOTOURS

• Tautuku Estuary Walk - 20 minute return

You walk to the estuary through extensive manuka shrubland which has replaced the forest, logged in the 1930s. Birds and their song are a feature: unafraid, they fly close to you and land on trees nearby. The saltmarsh rushes are the habitat of the fern bird, but they're more elusive than the forest birds. Another delight is walking along the narrow boardwalk amongst the jointed rushes - you almost feel you're walking on water!

• Lake Wilkie Walk - 30 minutes return

A gem of a walk and ecotour! Information panels show you how the forest is developing from the wetland. Rimu, southern rata - spectacular in flower - and other podocarps form the canopy, while crown ferns are resplendent underneath. At the lake, the reflections of the tall forest trees and the flaxes are superb. When you move beyond the lake, a patch of manuka, nursery trees for young totara and rimu, provides an excellent example of the evolving forest.

- **Tautuku Beach**

Access road signposted off the highway at the foot of the hill at the northern end of the beach.

Take a walk along this magnificent beach with its forest backdrop for an exhilarating feeling of being away from civilisation - even if you can see the cribs on the headland!

Florence Hill Lookout

A wonderful view of Tautuku Beach and Peninsula with its scattering of fairly inaccessible cribs. The Peninsula was once the site of a whaling station and later a port. Today crib owners have to ford or row across the river to reach their holiday houses.

The large building complex visible from the lookout is the Tautuku Outdoor Education Centre where, each year, hundreds of Otago children come to learn about the natural wonders of the area.

PAPATOWAI

This tiny settlement on the edge of a picturesque estuary with store, camping ground and motels is an ideal centre from which to explore the Catlins, if you don't mind retracing your steps each day. You need to book ahead in summer.

PAPATOWAI - WALKS

- **Picnic Point Walk - 40 minutes return**

Take the road to the beach and picnic area.

A short walk along the beach brings you to a signpost commemorating Papatowai painter, Edna Peterson. A well-formed track takes you through the bush to emerge on the road just above your starting place.

- **Tahakopa Bay, Old Coach Road Walk - 40 - 60 minutes return**

Signposted over the bridge as you go north from Papatowai.

The track follows the early coach road to the beach. The mouth of the estuary is a significant archeological site where relics and moa bones have been found; it also has a fine stand of totara trees.

PAPTOWAI - SIGHTSEEING

Purakaunui Falls - 20 minutes return



Loop road signposted off SH92 N of Papatowai

An easy forest walk to the most visited and photographed waterfalls in the area. Mid-morning is the best time for impressive photos when the sun shines on the water cascading over three terraces.

3. DAYOUT IN NORTH CATLINS

OWAKA

The main township in the Catlins services farming, forestry and, increasingly, tourism. Owaka, meaning 'place of canoes' refers to a time when Maori came here to build their canoes from the mighty totara trees. A small museum has displays of local history. Quilters will be surprised to find a flourishing fabric and patchwork shop here.

POUNAWEA

4km from Owaka, Pounaweia has a camping ground and a few permanent houses and holiday cribs. You can swim in the estuary, popular for boating and fishing, and walk along the banks of the Owaka River, or through saltmarsh and forest (starts from the camping ground).

POUNAWEA - WALK

- **Jacks Bay Blowhole - 1 hour return**

You walk over farm land (no access during lambing in September/October) to a 55m deep blowhole. It's best to go at high tide in a strong southerly, when the sea surges through a subterranean tunnel and 'blows' spectacularly.

SURAT BAY/ CANNIBAL BAY - ECOTOUR/WALK

Signposted off SH92 north of Owaka.

Surat Bay was named after a ship, wrecked here in 1874. Its passengers were fortunate to make it safely ashore in Jacks Bay after the *Surat* struck rocks.

This is the place to see massive sea lions which mostly breed in the Subantarctic Islands. Weighing up to 400 kilogrammes, they can be aggressive if you get too close. Undisturbed, they like to lie on the sand and flip it over them to keep cool.

From Surat Bay, you can walk across dunes to Cannibal Bay, so called when geologist James Hector unearthed human bones here. Morning and evening are the best times to see the yellow-eyed penguins which nest here.

NUGGET POINT - ECOTOUR/SIGHTSEEING

Nugget Point Lighthouse

Road signposted north of Owaka on SH92. 20 minutes return from the carpark.



A dramatic path with cliffs falling sharply from either side takes you to the lighthouse, built in 1869. Below you are the nuggets, stacks of sea-eroded rocks, named because of their resemblance to the shapes of gold nuggets - wishful thinking, perhaps!

The gold of the area, though, is the wildlife. This is the only place in the country where fur seals, sea lions and southern elephant seals all live together. Sea birds flourish: around the cliffs you can see spotted shags roosting and colonies of sooty shearwater or muttonbirds; Australasian gannets and royal spoonbills are also visitors. Yellow-eyed penguins can be seen from the viewing hide at **Roaring Bay**, just down the road from the lighthouse carpark.

Don't miss this combination of spectacular coastal scenery and free viewing of fascinating wildlife in a unique setting.

KAKA POINT

A small, mainly holiday settlement, close to Nugget Point. It has a store and cafe, visitor accommodation, and the beach is patrolled in summer.