

HOKITIKA DAYOUT

On a dayout in Hokitika you can explore its fascinating history with a walk around the heritage part of the town and a visit to the museum (well worthwhile). There will still be time to visit the arts and crafts area of the town to see skilled crafts people working with glass, paua shell, pounamu (greenstone), gold, silver and wood.

On a dayout in the surrounding district you can retrace the steps of the pioneers while enjoying the natural beauty of Hokitika Gorge, Lakes Kaniere and Mahinapua. A grand finale to learning about the goldfields history is a trip to Ross (30 km) for an interesting, easy walk on the historic Water Race Walkway.

If you're travelling to the Coast in early March, check out the date for the **Wildfoods Festival and Dance**. Accommodation bookings are essential as over 1800 visitors descend on Hokitika to experience bizarre offerings such as huhu grubs, worms and snails, as well as the more traditional delicacies of whitebait and venison.

HERITAGE

How the West Was Won!

Nothing populates a wilderness like gold, it's been said. Although the Government had bought the Coast for a mere 300 pounds in 1860 when local Maori reluctantly signed the Arahura Deed, few Europeans were attracted to the inhospitable region.

With the discovery of payable goldfields at Kaniere, Blue Spur and Goldsborough, the rush was on. In two years Hokitika exploded into a town of 6000 people and 100 pubs - more than 80 of which were in Revell Street.

In 1867 more overseas ships visited the river port than any other port in the country, with over 60 overseas and coastal vessels berthing each month. As gold was discovered elsewhere in the district, Hokitika became the commercial centre servicing the goldfields to the north and south. A punt operated on the river taking horses, coaches and carts south to Ross.

The main rush for alluvial gold lasted some three years, but a few diggers stayed on sluicing for gold. In its turn, sluicing declined and dredges took over the search. At the turn of the century over 50 dredges were still working the coast.

HERITAGE/WALK

Start at the intersection of Sewell and Weld Streets.

- **Clock Tower**

A memorial to soldiers of the Boer War, the tower also commemorates King Edward VII's coronation.

Facing the sea, turn left along Sewell Street.

- **Government Building and Seddon Statue**

Begun in 1908, this building housed some government offices and the courts (later transferred to Greymouth).

Richard John Seddon - King Dick

From humble beginnings as a miner, store-keeper and hotel owner, Seddon rose to become Premier of the country from 1893 to 1906. Under his astute leadership 'democratic and humanitarian legislation made New Zealand for a time the most radical state in the world.' (historian, Keith Sinclair). Seddon himself was responsible for introducing an old age pension in 1898.

Continue along Sewell Street to Gibson Quay.

- **Custom House**

Hokitika's first Custom House was built on Gibson Quay in 1865. The present building (1897) was moved to the reconstructed quayside in 1985.

- **Canon**

Presented to the town by Seddon in 1894, the canon is thought to have been brought to New Zealand for the 1860s Land Wars.

Continue along Gibson Quay to the end of the spit.

- **The Tambo**

The reconstructed schooner *Tambo* commemorates the 42 ships wrecked crossing the bar. The *Tambo*, grounded here in 1866, was dragged along the beach in a flood. It was salvaged in 1980.

- **Signal Station Lookout**

Raised balls, coloured flags and painted arms signalled conditions to ships waiting to enter port over the hazardous bar. Climb the Lookout to get a view of the swirling waters at the river mouth.

Retrace your steps to Revell Street Walk to Hamilton Street and turn right.

- **Revell Street**

Try to imagine over 80 hotels crammed into this mile-long street which Julius von Haast wrote of as 'a scene of almost indescribable bustle and activity.' At night time the miners rolled in from the diggings to enjoy the billiard rooms, dancing saloons, gambling and beer, costing sixpence a glass.

On the corner of Hamilton and Tancred Streets you cannot miss the imposing building.

- **Carnegie Building, 1908**

Designed by Nelson architect, A. R. Griffen, it was financed as a library by Scottish American philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. Now it house the West Coast Historical Museum, the Carnegie Gallery and the Information Centre.

- **Hokitika Museum**

A visit is well worth the entry fee of \$5.

You'll see displays of various types of pounamu, learn about the social history of the region and the different nationalities who came to the goldfields. A working model of a gold dredge made from meccano is an unusual display in the Pioneers Room.

Allow 20 minutes to watch a superb audio-visual show which brings goldmining to life. Inspired to try your luck after seeing it? You can pay extra to gold pan in the courtyard - they guarantee gold! The museum also sells pans and a book about gold panning if you want to try recreational gold panning at Goldsbrough or further afield in Ross.

SIGHTSEEING

Plane Table Lookout

Signposted on Airport Drive.

Lovely views over the town and south to the coast and mountains. The church dominating the town is St Mary's Catholic Church, the largest on the West Coast.

Glow Worm Dell

Signposted on SH6 at the town's northern boundary.

A short walk at night takes you to the bush-clad bank where the

worms glow. Take a torch.

Crafts on Display

In Tancred Street in particular, and in Weld Street, you can watch crafts people carving pounamu, blowing glass, carving wood and manufacturing jewellery. Their products are for sale.

Hokitika Gorge

33km SE of Hokitika. Take the road to Kokatahi, turn right at the T-junction and follow the signs.

You drive through dairying country towards the mountains. Just before the gorge the road is unsealed. From the carpark, it's a 5 minute walk to the swingbridge over the river. The views from the bridge are lovely. Turn left over the bridge onto a short track leading to another viewpoint of the rock-strewn gorge.

SIGHTSEEING/PICNIC

Lake Kaniere Scenic Reserve

20km from Hokitika

8km long and 2km wide, the lake which supplies Hokitika's water is surrounded by luxuriant bush. It's regarded as one of New Zealand's most beautiful lakes. At the northern end there are picnic sites at the Landing, Hans Bay and Sunny Bight.

You can camp at Hans Bay in the DOC camping ground; it also has a boat ramp and ski lanes as does Sunny Bight.

Lake Mahinapua

10km south of Hokitika, signposted off main highway

The lake is part of an inland water highway - Hokitika to Ross, enjoyed today by canoeists and yachties. One of the paddle steamers which plied the lake has been restored and is on display. A pleasant picnic area and DOC campsite. Short walks are signposted around the lake.

SCENIC ROUTE

Hokitika - Lake Kaniere - Hokitika Gorge - Hokitika - 64km

A scenic trip around the lake, then travelling through Kokatahi and Kowhitirangi dairy farming valleys.

On the eastern side of the lake (mainly unsealed road), you can stop at the Dorothy Falls and also walk to a pleasant, little beach, 5 minutes from the road.

ADVENTURE/SPORT

Mountainbiking

Many popular circuits:

- Lake Kaniere Rd/ Water Race/ Kennedy's Creek
- Circuit Lake Kaniere/Kokatahi
- Cement Lead Rd/ McKays Creek/ Tuckers Flat Rd.
- Circuit of Palmers Creek
- Humphries/ Miltown Circuit

Hokitika Avanti Pro Cycles & Sportsworld, 33 Tancred Street, hire out mountain bikes (and gold pans) for use on roads, but not on tracks.

Fishing

Fishing on the coast and in Lakes Kaniere and Mahinapua. Buy a licence at sports shops and service stations.

Kayaking

Gentle paddling on the waterways south of Hokitika. Also very challenging white water kayaking in the Upper Hokitika Gorge (accessible only by helicopter).

Paddle Boat Cruises

Travel through magnificent scenery and forests, following an historic route.

www.paddleboatcruises.com

Sailing

Sail on Lake Kaniere.

www.sailwest.co.nz

Gold Panning

Special areas are available for visitors:

- **Ross**

Behind the Visitors' Centre or up Jones Creek.

- **Goldsborough**

Turn off SH6 10km north of Hokitika

A picnic and camping area. The German Gully Pack Track (40 minutes return) starts at the camping area and takes you

past old gold workings.

ROSS

A small township owing its existence to the discovery of gold in the 1860s. Worth looking at are a restored miner's cottage and Westland's oldest wooden church (1866). The Water Race Walkway is an easy, very interesting walk that introduces you to many aspects of goldmining.

WALK

Ross Water Race Walkway - 1.5 hours

Start at the Visitors' Centre carpark, turn left up Bold Street and continue along Mt Greenland Road until you come to the track sign.

As you walk up Mt Greenland Road, you get views of the modern mining operation and walk alongside Jones Creek where gold was first discovered in 1865. Once on the track, you climb through bush for a short distance before the path flattens out. You pass sluice faces, mine tunnels, a replica of a miner's hut, water races, remnants of gold workings and fluming.

The end of the track takes you through the old cemetery whose headstones provide a poignant commentary on the harshness of life in the early days of settlement: it's difficult to find a headstone of anyone who lived for 50 years.

When you emerge onto St James Street, detour around Bond Street back into Bold Street for additional displays associated with goldmining.