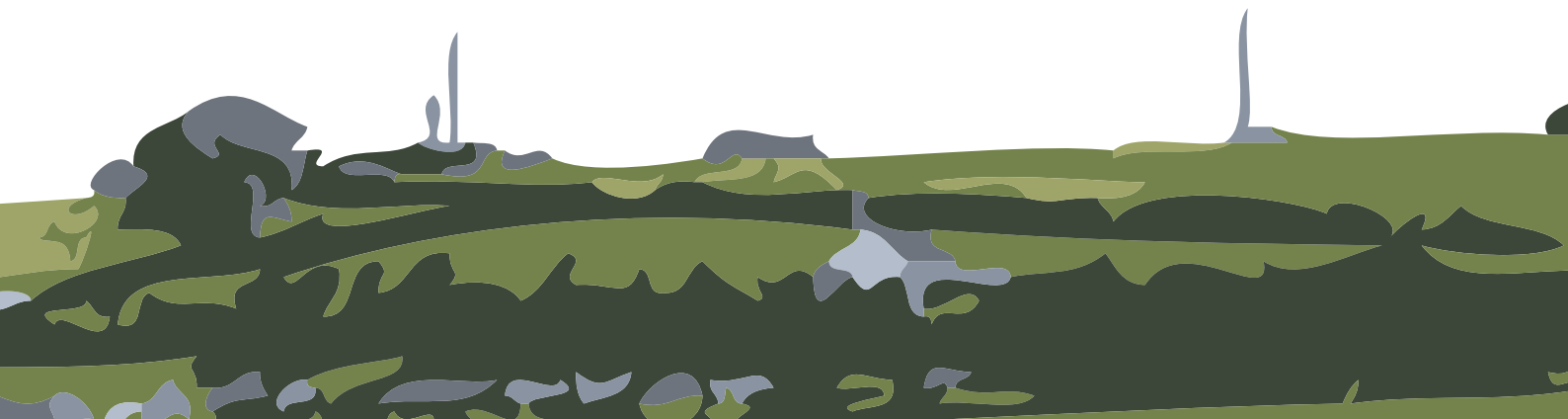


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# West Coast Wilderness Trail

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# West Coast Wilderness Trail

Wilderness... but not *too* wild. The sort of wilderness where you feel you've conquered tough terrain, but you've done it without overly exhausting yourself or encrusting yourself with layers of mud. That's what's on offer in this thoroughly enjoyable cycle trail.

The West Coast Wilderness Trail is a 128km foray from the coast at Greymouth, to the edge of the Southern Alps, and back again to the coast at Hokitika and Ross. It's almost entirely off-road or on lightly trafficked roads, often gravel; recent years have seen the construction of bridges, boardwalks and new paths to ease your progress. Facilities are sparse but sufficient.

## Greymouth (0m)

The route starts on the waterfront at Greymouth, the capital of the West Coast. It follows the coast for the first 17km on a traffic-free (mostly gravel) trail – at first rubbing shoulders with the dunes, before becoming a roadside track along State Highway 6. Turning inland after the road/rail bridge, the track becomes more forested, with the first of the new bridges that have been installed as part of the route.

## Kumara (28km)

Kumara is a small village with food and accommodation available. It's the last "civilisation" you'll see for many miles! From here the trail truly takes on a wild aspect, twisting past reservoirs as the mountains loom up ahead. Again, new bridges and boardwalks have been installed for the trail.

Kawhaka Pass is the destination of the long climb – mostly a steady incline, but with occasional short, sharp hills to test your legs. The views are rarely short of breathtaking with mountains on three sides.

## Cowboy Paradise (61km)

This eccentric replica Wild West town, with its equally eccentric proprietor, is the centrepiece of the West Coast Wilderness Trail for many adventurers. Luxurious it isn't – the rooms are dormitory-like and the generator power is turned off overnight – but you can't help but leave with a smile on your face. Check their website for booking details.

The smile will stay on your face over the next section, which is arguably the finest of the whole route. The twisty descent down to the Arahura River leads to magnificent open vistas. A gravel road links glorious sections of forest cyclepath as you make your way beside the river to Hokitika.

## Hokitika (96km)

Hokitika's official website proudly bears the slogan "Cool Little Town", and it has a point. Particularly if you like whitebait. This is the speciality of the West Coast, and if you've never tasted whitebait pizza before... now's your time. (Honestly. We loved it.) There's plenty of accommodation and seafront eating options here, plus an airport if this is the end of your tour.

Continuing south, the route swings inland along the Mahinapua Tramline, a boardwalk and forest path around the lake. A path beside State Highway 6 brings you back to the coast and the straight, level railway path leading to Ross.

## Ross (128km)

Although there's not a lot to do in this little village, its old-time atmosphere (particularly the Empire Hotel) and friendly welcome make a suitable end to your trip.

