

Guest Information Book



Akaroa & Banks Peninsula Guided Tour

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ADVENTURE
BY NATURE

Akaroa & Banks Peninsula Tour

A small group or private scenic driving tour to Akaroa & Banks Peninsula. Suitable for all ages and physical abilities.

Duration: 7 - 7 ½ hours

Transport: Provided – Minivan or luxury car (private tours)

Food: Morning tea and café lunch included

Start/Finish: Christchurch City Centre, Hotel or Port Pickup

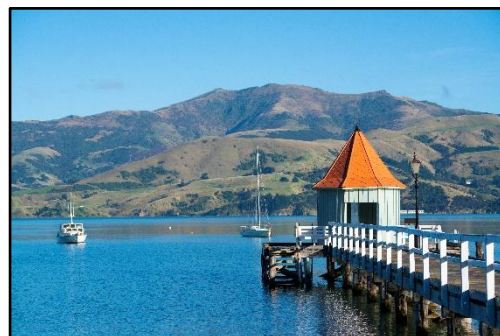
Start time: 7:30 - 8:30 am (Exact time confirmed in email)

Finish time: 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Min/Max numbers: 2 – 8 pax

Options:

- Akaroa & Banks Peninsula, including The Giant's House (mosaic sculpture garden)
- Akaroa & Banks Peninsula including Dolphin/Harbour Cruise



Tour starts – Christchurch

○ Travel – 15-30 minutes



1. **Sign of the Kiwi** – Photo stop, 10 minutes

○ Travel - 25 minutes



2. **Sign of the Bellbird** – Photo stop, 10 minutes

○ Travel - 25 minutes



3. **Little River** – Morning tea, 15 minutes

○ Travel - 30 minutes



4. **Akaroa** – Lunch, shopping, sightseeing, The Giant's House or Dolphin/Harbour Cruise, 3 hours

○ Travel – 50 minutes



5. **Kaituna Valley Scenic Reserve** – Guided Walk, 30 minutes

○ Travel - 45 minutes

Tour finishes – Christchurch

Akaroa Tour Itinerary

Prepare for an extraordinary adventure! From Christchurch, our guide will lead us up the Port Hills to the historic "Sign of the Kiwi," where we can bask in breathtaking views of Christchurch and the stunning Lyttelton Harbour. We'll journey along Summit Road to the Sign of the Bellbird and Gebbies Pass.

Our next stop is Little River, a quaint small town where we can unwind and enjoy some morning tea.

Afterwards, we'll travel over the hills to Akaroa, where you can visit The Giant's House, a mesmerising mosaic sculpture garden, or embark on a thrilling dolphin and wildlife cruise in the harbour. For those not doing the harbour cruise, there is also the option of the Solar Explorer tour at the Akaroa Lighthouse (this is an optional extra). Here you can safely observe our closest star, the Sun, using specialised solar equipment, including the ZWO Seestar S50 telescope. Following these unforgettable experiences, take time to savour a café lunch and explore the shops, all while soaking in the beauty of this idyllic harbour town.

As our adventure concludes, your guide will take you back to Christchurch, with the chance for scenic stops along the way, including a visit to the Kaituna Valley Scenic Reserve. This tour is a promise of a day filled with stunning views, charming towns, and inspiring experiences.



Local Information – Akaroa & Banks Peninsula

Whakaraupō / Lyttelton Harbour

Whakaraupō, or Lyttelton Harbour, was shaped by volcanic activity between 11 and 6 million years ago. Over time, this ancient landscape has been filled with water due to rising sea levels, creating the stunning harbour we see today.

The name Whakaraupō means "harbour of the raupō reed," a vital resource for Māori. Raupō is a well-known and easily recognisable wetland plant. Traditionally, raupō stalks were used for thatching walls and roofs, and the down was used to stuff bedding. The leaves were used for canoe sails and kites, while bundles of the stalks made temporary rafts. The starchy rhizomes were an important food, and the yellow pollen was gathered and baked into a sweet, light cake.



Māori have inhabited this region since around 1250 AD, with a strong focus on moa hunting. In 1770, James Cook mistook Banks Peninsula for an island, marking a significant moment in its history. Fast forward to 1850, when the first four ships brought immigrants from Great Britain to Lyttelton, setting the stage for a diverse community. Remarkably, the world's first rail tunnel through volcanic rock opened here in 1867, followed by a road tunnel in 1964.

Ōtamahua / Quail Island

Ōtamahua, known as Quail Island, has its own unique history. The name means "place children gather sea bird eggs," and it honours the now-extinct native quail. This island also features King Billy Island, or Aua, where large schools of yellow-eyed mullet can be seen in summer. Historically, the island served as a quarantine station beginning in 1875, later becoming New Zealand's only leprosy quarantine colony from 1906 to 1925. In the early 1900's, dogs and ponies were trained here for Scott and Shackleton's Antarctic expeditions.

After being leased for farming from 1934 to 1975, the island transformed into a recreational reserve. Visitors can explore the ship graveyard, which holds the remains of eight vessels, including the Mullogh, an iron steamer, and the Darra. The Darra, built in 1886, was primarily used to transport immigrants and goods. It was beached at Quail Island in 1951, and in 1953, attempts by the army to destroy the remains only resulted in a hole, now accessible by paddling.

For those seeking adventure, the island offers a delightful two-hour loop track, a thirty-minute walk to the summit for breathtaking views, and facilities for camping on Swimmer's Beach.



Ripapa Island

Ripapa Island is steeped in history as well. It was originally a pā, or fortified village, built by Ngāi Tahu chief Taununu in the early 1800's. The island witnessed several battles between rival Ngāi Tahu hapū, and by 1832, it was abandoned after being overrun by Te Rauparaha. In 1872 and 1873, pacifist protesters from Parihaka were held on the island without trial, marking a significant chapter in its history. Construction of Fort Jervis began in 1885, and the fort was later upgraded for World War I. Today, Ripapa Island holds Tōpuni status, meaning the Rapaki hapū has a say in its management.

Governors Bay

Governors Bay is a charming settlement with a population of roughly 864 residents. One of the highlights of the area is its historic hotel, founded in 1870. This is one of New Zealand's oldest hotels still in operation, having survived various earthquakes. The jetty, built in 1874, stretches 300 meters and has been restored after being closed due to damage from the 2011 earthquake. It's a lovely spot to take in the views of the bay.

The Sign of the Kiwi and the Sign of the Takahe

In 1909, the Summit Road Scenic Reserves Board was established to champion Ell's ambitious dream of creating a scenic roadway that would grant public access to the breathtaking landscapes of the Port Hills. Ell was a strong proponent for the inclusion of rest houses along the Summit Road, ensuring that travellers could pause and appreciate the natural beauty surrounding them. Among the most notable of these were the Sign of the Kiwi, completed in 1916, and the Sign of



Sign of the Kiwi. Image: Allie Hogg

the Takahe, whose construction spanned from 1918 to 1948. Other notable rest houses included the Sign of the Bellbird and the Sign of the Packhorse.

In 1989, Heritage New Zealand registered the Sign of the Kiwi as a Category I historic place. This building was originally designed by architect Samuel Hurst Seager, who also created two other smaller rest houses: the Sign of the Packhorse (built between 1916 and 1917) and the Sign of the Bellbird (constructed in 1914).

The Sign of the Takahe, initially known as the Tram Terminus Rest House, opened for business in 1920, although it was only a small part of the final building. Although the initial stone for it was laid in 1918, the project took three decades to complete, culminating in a testament to Ell's enduring legacy in 1948.

The Sign of the Kiwi and the Sign of the Takahe stand as two remarkable rest houses that survived the 2010-2011 earthquakes but required extensive restorations to preserve their integrity and charm. Each of these structures not only represents a vital piece of history but also serves as a welcoming point for those exploring the picturesque vistas along the Summit Road.

Kaituna Valley Scenic Reserve

Kaituna Valley Scenic Reserve covers approximately six hectares of bush remnant and features several large matai and kahikatea trees. The standout characteristic of this reserve is the healthy, even-aged stand of New Zealand ash (tītoki), which dominates the forest. This is one of the largest tītoki stands remaining in Canterbury, known for its striking display of brilliant scarlet and black fruits. The tītoki trees flower in the spring, and the bitter-tasting fruits take a year to ripen. Māori traditionally steamed these fruits open and extracted oil from the seeds for use in medicine and perfume. The strong, straight-grained wood from the tītoki was highly valued by Māori, leading to the phrase “peka tītoki,” which is used in proverbs to describe someone who is strong and resilient in the face of adversity. Early European settlers also recognized the wood's utility, employing it for tool handles, coach building, wheels, and horse yokes.

Lake Ellesmere (Te Waihora)

Lake Ellesmere, known as Te Waihora, is a shallow, brackish coastal lake ranging from 1.4 to 2.7 meters deep, covering an area of 20,000 hectares—roughly the same size as Lake Wanaka. It ranks as the fifth largest lake in New Zealand and serves as an internationally important wildlife habitat. The wetland area is home to a remarkable variety of birds, plants, and invertebrates, with 166 species of birds recorded, making it a paradise for nature enthusiasts.

Little River



main shops.

Little River developed as a sawmilling settlement that supplied timber to Christchurch. In the late 19th century, it boasted a branch line railway that was part of New Zealand's national rail network, operating from 1886 to 1962. Today, visitors can explore a display featuring this history and view one of the old railway carriages located behind the

Barrys Bay Cheese Mongers

Barrys Bay Cheese started making cheddar in 1895. At that time, there were nine small, family-owned dairy cooperatives on Banks Peninsula. Over time, those other family businesses closed, and the Barrys Bay factory near Duvauchelle became the last traditional cheese-making factory on the Peninsula. In the early 1950's, a new factory was built, the same factory you see today on your way to Akaroa. Traditional cheesemaking methods are still used to make their cheese today.



Barrysbaycheese.co.nz

Akaroa History

Akaroa's history is marked by its unique blend of Māori and European influences. The area was originally inhabited by Māori, primarily the Ngāi Tahu iwi, who valued the rich marine resources of the region. They established settlements and used the natural harbour for fishing and trade.

In the early 19th century, European explorers began to visit the area, and whalers and traders (including French whalers) were among the first significant European presences. In 1838-39 the French whaling captain Jean François Langlois negotiated a dubious purchase of most of Banks Peninsula (on the east coast of the South Island) from Māori chiefs, with the aim of establishing a French colony.

In 1840, a group of French settlers, organised by the French company Nanto-Bordelaise Company and led by Charles François Lavaud (appointed “Commissaire du Roi”), sailed to New Zealand aboard the ships *Comte de Paris* and *L’Aube* to found a settlement. They landed at Akaroa on 18 August 1840, establishing the French settlement.

However, British sovereignty over New Zealand had already been proclaimed earlier in 1840. On 21 May 1840, William Hobson declared British sovereignty over New Zealand — the North Island by treaty and the South Island (and Stewart Island) by “right of discovery”. On 17 June 1840, his deputy Thomas Bunbury proclaimed British sovereignty over the South Island at Cloudy Bay.

To reinforce this claim, the British sloop HMS Britomart arrived at Akaroa on 10 August 1840, a week before the French-settler ship arrived, and raised the Union Jack, held a court session and thus symbolically asserted British sovereignty in the area.

Although the French settlers proceeded with their settlement and were permitted to remain under British governance, the French colony plan did not proceed to sovereignty and was overshadowed by British colonial governance. Today, the French influence remains in Akaroa’s architecture and some street names, but the area became firmly part of the British colony.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Akaroa thrived as a port town, with activities centred around shipbuilding, agriculture, and trading. The arrival of the railway in the late 19th century facilitated the transport of goods and tourists, further boosting the local economy.

In the modern era, Akaroa has become a popular tourist destination, renowned for its picturesque harbour, wildlife—such as the rare Hector's dolphin—and outdoor activities. Its rich history, combined with stunning natural beauty, continues to attract visitors seeking both adventure and a glimpse into its unique past. Today, Akaroa celebrates its heritage through festivals, local museums, and preservation of its historical sites, making it a vibrant community with a deep sense of identity.



Takapūneke – A Place of National Significance

Takapūneke, located between Akaroa and Ōnuku on Banks Peninsula, is a sacred site of great importance to Ngāi Tahu and to the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. Once a prosperous Māori trading village led by the rangatira Te Maiharanui, it became the scene of tragedy in 1830 when northern chief Te Rauparaha, with the assistance of the British ship *Elizabeth*, attacked the settlement, capturing Te Maiharanui and killing or enslaving many of his people. This event, known as the *Elizabeth Affair*, exposed the lack of British law in New Zealand and helped prompt later moves toward formal British governance. A decade later, the nearby landing of HMS *Britomart* in 1840, just before the arrival of French settlers at Akaroa, symbolically secured British sovereignty over the South Island. Today, Takapūneke is protected as a Wāhi Tapu and Nationally Significant Historic Reserve — a place of remembrance, reflection, and cultural reconciliation, honouring both its tragic past and enduring significance to Ngāi Tahu.



What You'll Spot Along the Way

Livestock – Sheep Breeds

- **Romney** – White face, sturdy build. Most popular sheep breed in New Zealand, valued for both wool and meat. Found in lowland farms and hills throughout Canterbury.
- **Merino** – Smaller frame, often horned rams. Extremely fine, soft wool used in high-end clothing. Found in high country stations.
- **Perendale** – White face, thick wool, medium build. Hardy and good for mixed terrain. Common in hill country; bred from Romney and Cheviot sheep breeds.
- **Coopworth** – Similar to Romney, slightly larger with heavy fleece. Dual-purpose for wool and meat. Find them throughout Canterbury plains.



Livestock – Cow Breeds

- **Friesian (Holstein-Friesian)** – Large black-and-white dairy cow. High milk production. Dominant on dairy farms.
- **Jersey** – Smaller, light brown with a gentle face. Produce rich, creamy milk (high butterfat). Found on specialist dairy farms, often mixed with Friesians.
- **Hereford** – Red body with white face and underbelly. Beef cattle. Graze on hill country farms or finishing on Canterbury Plains.
- **Angus** – All black or red, solid build. Premium beef breed. Frequently found on hill farms and in mixed livestock operations.
- **Belted Galloway** - This breed is known for its distinctive white belt that encircles the black or sometimes red body. Known for their hardiness and ability to thrive in cold and rugged environments. Produce high-quality beef.



Other Wildlife

- **Pūkeko (Australasian Swamphen)** – Bright blue with red beak and long red legs. Common near roadside wetlands and drains.
- **Pūtangitangi (Paradise Shelduck)** – Large, striking duck; males are black, females have a white head. Frequently seen grazing in paddocks and flying in pairs.
- **Piwakawaka (New Zealand Fantail)** – Small, friendly bird with fanned tail. Often seen fluttering near rest areas or forest edges.



- **Kāhu (Harrier Hawk)** – Large brown bird of prey seen gliding low over fields. Commonly spotted while driving.



- **Black Swan** – Elegant with red bill, native to Australia but naturalised in New Zealand. Seen on lakes like Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere and roadside ponds.



- **Papango (New Zealand Scaup)** – Small diving duck, black (male), or brown (female). Seen on lakes and braided rivers.



- **Karoro (Southern Black-backed Gull)** – Large gull, common along coastlines and in fields (paddocks).



Introduced Animals Commonly Seen

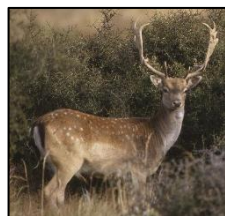
- **European Rabbits** – Often seen on roadsides, pastures, and high-country hills. Especially noticeable in dry, open areas.
- **Hedgehogs** – Nocturnal but sometimes seen in grass verges or rural gardens.
- **Deer (Farmed or Wild)** – Only Red deer are farmed in New Zealand due to the fact they grow large quickly compared to Fallow deer. Farmed deer are visible behind high fences. Both Red deer and Fallow deer are found in the wild (rare in lowlands, but possible in high country).



Wild Rabbit



Hedgehog



Fallow Deer - Buck

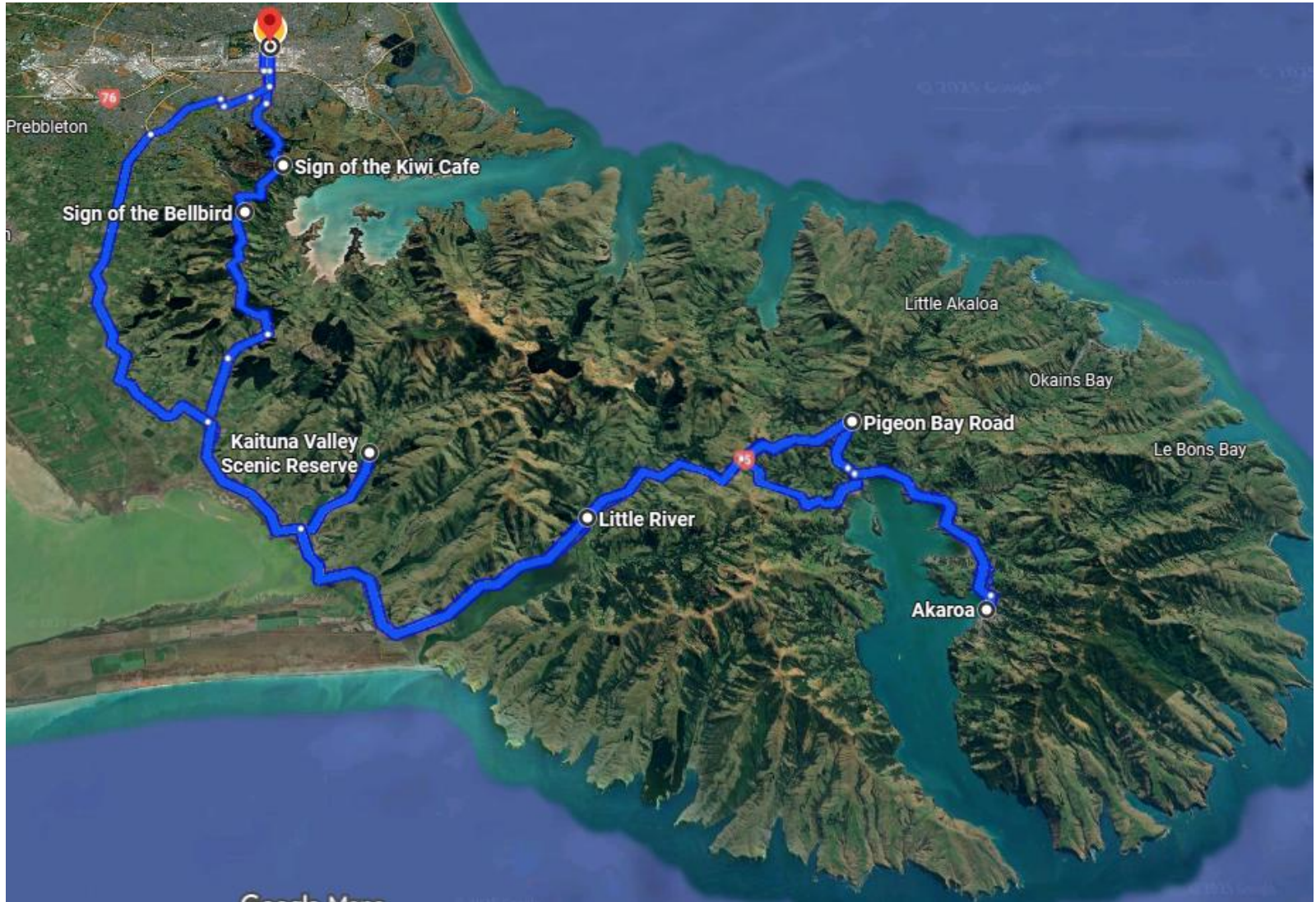


Red Deer - Hind

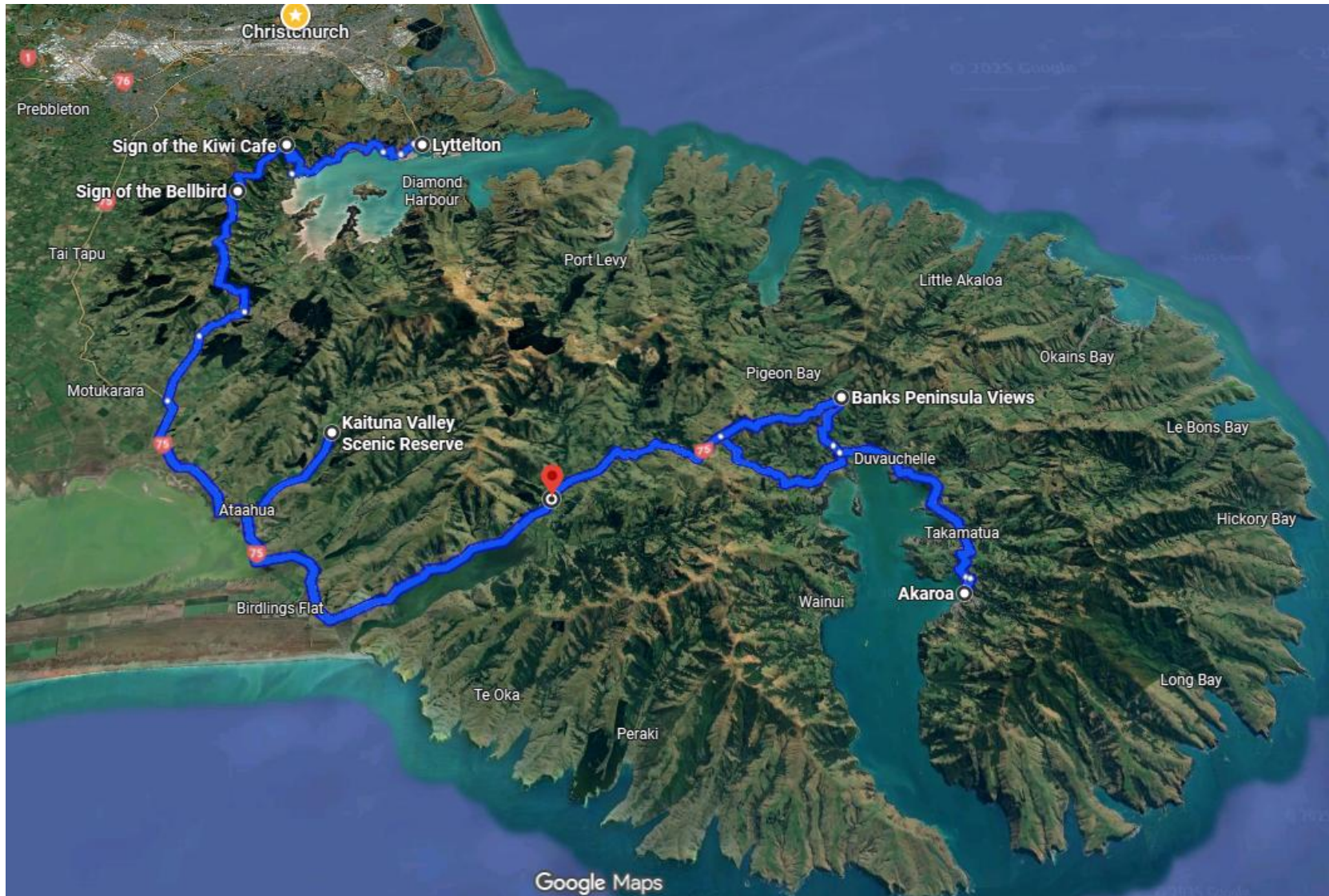
Maps and Routes



Christchurch To Akaroa:



Lyttelton To Akaroa:



Akaroa Town Drive:

