

# WORLD HERITAGE



## South-West New Zealand

by Gerard Hutchings

**T**he Rocky Mountains of North America, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Mt Everest National Park and a total of about 170 of the premier natural areas of the world, have one thing in common: they all share World Heritage status, the highest form of international recognition that can be bestowed upon a natural or cultural area.

Now New Zealand has the opportunity to nominate any of its protected areas of global significance for inclusion on this prestigious register, having signed the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in early 1985.

### International recognition for 1987

By 1987 — New Zealand's National Park Centennial Year — this country is almost certain to have at least one World Heritage site, and perhaps two of three. Deciding exactly what areas we should nominate is of critical importance, for conservationists and the tourist industry alike. World Heritage status greatly elevates an area's international profile, it underlines its conservation significance and gains for it what botanist Dr David Bellamy describes as the best advertisement an area can be given. It also adds the weight of international censure to any activity likely to damage the area's natural or scenic features.

So far, the National Parks and Reserves Authority has said three national parks should be nominated: Fiordland NP, Mt Cook and Westland.

However, the Authority has agreed to consider a larger, more exciting proposal advanced by conservation, recreation and tourism groups: a World Heritage

site encompassing much of the south-west of New Zealand, from Okarito in the north to Waitutu in the south. The grand scale of this proposal befits the grandeur and majesty of this unbroken expanse of untouched forests, lofty mountains, scenic lakes, wild rivers and coastlines — in all a vast tract of temperate wilderness of world significance. Already the Otago National

World Heritage areas can cater for a wide range of activities, from intensive tourism to undeveloped wilderness such as the Landborough Valley shown here.

Photo: Hugh Barr.

Parks and Reserves Board and many tourist operators have strongly supported the proposal.

It is envisaged the proposal would include four existing national parks (Mt

