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"Listener" Holiday Guide

COAST TO COAST

FROM Hamner, where we stopped at the end of the second leg of our South Island journey, to Kaikoura (the next stage) is less than 50 miles as the crow flies, but crows have never gone in for roadbuilding and for the motorist the most direct route from one to the other is the secondary highway which runs north from Rotherham through Waiau and over Palmer Saddle. If you like to keep a little closer to civilisation, however, it's southabout by Culverden again and back on to the main coastal route to Parnassus and beyond.

To Northerners—well to about 100,000 of them anyway—Kaikoura means simply the white peaks which hang floating over the Cook Strait haze on a clear spring day, but those who have been there think not so much of the mountains as the sea. It's a rich coast for the fisherman and the camper (there's a motor camp, too, in the domain north of Kaikoura township) but there's scope both on the coast and inland for more strenuous activity. In the Parnassus region, for example, pig-shooting is practically big-game hunting. Some of the largest tusks ever recorded in New Zealand have come from there.

Beyond Kaikoura the main tourist route follows the coast past Tapuaeenuku (9467ft.), high point of the Kaikouras—a more imposing sight in winter than in summer—and across the swift Clarence River. This river, like the Waiau, has its source in the Spencer ranges, and an old Maori legend has it that these two rivers were spirit lovers who were parted, and now each year (in spring) flood in bitter tears.

At Lake Grassmere, where the road cuts the corner of Cape Campbell, they gather salt by evaporation and for the sightseer it's worth turning off the road to see, though the spectacle of so much spilled salt might make the superstitious uneasy. Just beyond Seddon, however, is the Awatere River and for the experienced motorist this more picturesque turnoff introduces one to the true Marlborough back-country: the swiftly running river, the wild gorge, the incredible jumble of spurs, ridges and flanking mountains—and the hair-raising road.

The way now lies through Blenheim to Picton, and then over the Queen Charlotte Drive to Nelson. Picton, one of the most popular resorts in New Zealand, needs no publicising here. For those who like sun, who like to boat, fish, or swim, the charm of the Marlborough Sounds is never-failing, even if, in a few places, the fish get harder to catch.

The drive onward to Havelock in summer is a blaze of fierce colour from the sky, the bush, and the sea. This road, on the route of the old Grove Track, affords beautiful views of Queen Charlotte and Pelorus Sounds. Twelve miles from Havelock, at Pelorus Bridge, is the well-known scenic reserve. It was in this area that New Zealand's sole outbreak of serious bushranging occurred,

which ended in a multiple hanging of the offenders at Nelson Gaol. The bush-rangers have gone but the bush and the birds fortunately remains to delight us.

So much has been said about the fishing in the Sounds that the equally fine fishing to be had in the lakes and rivers of Nelson too seldom gets a mention. Perhaps the Nelson fisherman would have it so, perhaps if the advantages they enjoy were better known outside the province they would not long be advantages. There are not many brown trout districts, however, which can list several rivers producing fish of an average weight in the region of three or four pounds. The Motueka (a comfortable day's outing from Nelson) is almost as good as that just off the main road; and those who camp by Lakes Rotorua or Rotoiti, halfway between Nelson and Westport, are in the centre of a first-class angling area. Rotorua has produced brown trout of over 20lb.

From Nelson the coast road runs on to Takaka and Collingwood, on Golden Bay (the Murderers' or Massacre Bay where Tasman lost four of his men in an affray with the Maoris).

Near Takaka are the Waikoropupu (or Puppu) Springs, that have been calculated to pump out 475,000,000 gallons every twenty-four hours—a useful statistic if one meets any American visitors. Geologically speaking, the Golden Bay area is one of the most interesting in New Zealand. The earliest discovery of alluvial gold in this country was made at Collingwood in 1857. At Onekaka over a strip of some four miles long, lie deposits of Limonite ore from which some day may be recovered over three million tons of iron. Silver, copper, and asbestos have also been found here, but holiday travellers will be more interested to find the motor camp—about six miles from Takaka, at Pohara Beach.

Back at Motueka one can turn off up the Motueka River to Motupiko and the main road to the coast. Seven miles from Motupiko, at Korere Junction, a turn left will take the traveller through to Lake Rotoiti, and from the Rotoiti township motor camp, one can take the launch or walk to the lunch huts at the head of this very pretty lake. The experienced walker could well continue on a bit up the valley, for a better view of the St. Arnaud mountains.

Leaving Rotoiti one rejoins the main road at Kawatiri and continues on to the coast. But one should not use a small c for The Coast, for here is an area that has lent itself to superlatives and capitals from travellers all over the world. The writer once met an old man in a truly beautiful part of Canada, who talked nostalgically about his days on the Coast. When asked if he ever thought of going back for a holiday, he replied indignantly—"A holiday? I'm going back for good soon." He had been away for forty years.

The West Coast is a land of contrasts. Mountains lie reflected in lakes set in bush of almost tropical luxuriance, glaciers push down to within several hundred feet of sea-level. A land of timber and coal now, the Coast was once called the Golden West—in the days when thousands of adventurers staked everything on their luck in the diggings. Even now on the sweeping beaches, up the wild rivers, or on the walls of the deep cleft



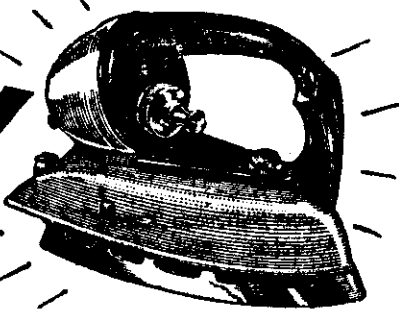
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