

Driving from Queenstown over several days, you can travel via the West Coast.

From the Haast Pass or the glaciers, stay on State Highway 6, through the old gold-mining town of Ross, to Hokitika.

The Arahura River, just north of the town, is where greenstone (jade) is found in New Zealand, and Hokitika is a good place to buy some. Often you can watch the craftspeople working the stone. Rex and Gemma at Tectonic Jade, on Revell St, have some wonderful pieces. Also check out Tracie Piercey, Goldsmith, in Tancred St, opposite the Visitors Centre, for fantastic blue pearls from the native paua, or abalone.

Twenty-three km past Hokitika you will reach Kumara Junction. Turn right here, onto State Highway 73, heading into the mountains. Kumara, a little village seven kilometres along, has a very good craftsman called The Woodworker, who makes beautiful large wooden bowls from heart rimu. This is a good place to top up your petrol tank if it's looking low, as there's not much further on.

Further on, the old pub on the right at Jacksons used to be a Cobb and Co stagecoach stop, in the days of the West Coast goldrush.

After Otira you will be driving up the Otira Gorge, known for its dramatic scenery. Over the summit is Arthur's Pass village, our nearest piece of civilisation. The Arthur's Pass National Park headquarters at the Department of Conservation Field Centre is worth a stop if you're interested in the local flora, fauna, geology or history.

Continue on and you will pass the Bealey Hotel, made famous by the publican's *reported* sighting of a moa bird in 1993. The previous last sighting was at the turn of the century.

Grasmere is 30km past the village, over the wide Waimakariri River and the Cass, on the edge of Arthur's Pass National Park. Don't take the turn on the left to the village of Cass. Grasmere is two km further on, on the right of State Highway 73.