



*Above: Paula Sinclair and Brian Lucas.*

*Below: With roads like ours, for some overseas visitors it's probably safer to take a guided tour.*



## Where cost is secondary to the experience

IN 1994, Brian Lucas hit on the idea of creating tours that guided guests on journeys of exploration and discovery in the South Island.

In 2009, he was a finalist in the ITOC "Operator of the Year" awards. For various reasons he sold Canterbury Trails in 2010.

But, as he says, you can take the guide out of guiding but not the guiding out of the guide.

In 2014, with partner Paula Sinclair, he created Wildsouth Discovery. They offer deluxe safari style tours.

The business specialises in exclusive private tours and, for this coming season, is offering a personal, small group tour focusing on the West Coast.

They host and guide each tour and have now employed another couple to guide and host, as well as companion touring. Their tours cover the South island and can last up to 15 days.

English-born and WA-educated Mr Lucas says he is really a Kiwi born in the wrong country.

Ms Sinclair, a fourth-generation New Zealander, ran a B&B in Christchurch until the earthquakes put paid to that. The house was condemned.

Travellers are typically retired or semi-retired, active, well-educated and usually well-travelled North Americans and Europeans aged over 40.

Mr Lucas openly admits their tours can be slightly more expensive than other operators, but there have been no complaints about the service, inclusions, style of tour or their wow factors, or stopping and being served a chilled NZ sav and cheese from the rear of the tour vehicle.

Quite rightly, the company motto is:

"Come as a tourist. Experience like a local. Depart as a friend."

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