

OTAGO CENTRAL Rail Trail



OTAGO CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL

CLYDE to MIDDLEMARCH

1-5 days

152km

Qtago Central Rail Trail © Miles Holden

beautifully preserved buildings have stood the test of time.

There are over 20 townships located on and off the trail. Take the opportunity to meet the big-hearted locals and take detours and side trips deeper into the region. As if the trail doesn't have enough to keep you occupied, off-trail activities abound, including curling.

If you don't have at least four days to ride the full trail, there are numerous townships located along the way where you can start or end your ride, and many places to stop for the night. There are plenty of friendly folk to transport your luggage for you, and no shortage of expertise to really make your journey come alive.

producing the finest stone fruit and Pinot Noir.

There's a hearty dose of pioneering spirit along this trail. The story of the hardy folk of the gold-rush days is told through abandoned gold-mining villages, dark tunnels, trestle and stone bridges, railway sidings and small friendly towns where

The Otago Central Rail Trail reveals breathtaking treasures not readily accessible by any other means. It leads you through a rocky region cradled by mountain ranges surging with wild rivers and dramatic gorges, dotted with shimmering lakes and charming towns and

look out for...

Alexandra activities

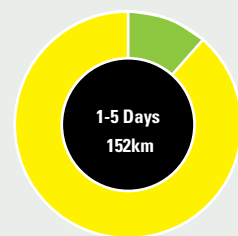
Alexandra is a colourful oasis amid the rocky Central Otago landscape. An area of contrasts, it changes beautifully with the seasons and is particularly captivating in spring when the blossoms bloom and wild thyme colours the hills purple. There's plenty to see and do here. Walk alongside or

cruise the Clutha River, marvel at the hillside clock, check out the historical Shaky Bridge, fish for trout on the Clutha or Manuherikia rivers, visit the museum or the Earnsclough Tailings Historic Reserve, go wine tasting, visit an artists' studio or craft market, check out the aquatic centre and go skating at the outdoor ice rink in winter.

Interplanetary Cycle Trail - a world first

A model solar system has been reduced to scale 100 million to 1, and model planets are located along the trail. Grab a brochure from operators and i-SITES on the trail, or visit otagocentrailtrail.co.nz

TRAIL INFO



TRAIL GRADES:

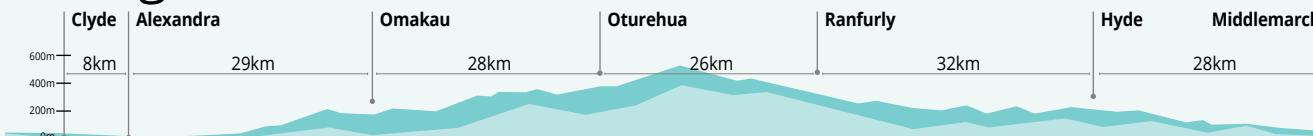
- CLYDE TO ALEXANDRA
 - ALEXANDRA TO CHATTO CREEK
 - CHATTO CREEK TO OMAKAU
 - OMAKAU TO LAUDER
 - LAUDER TO OTUREHUA
 - OTUREHUA TO WEDDERBURN
 - WEDDERBURN TO RANFURLY
 - RANFURLY TO WAIPIATA
 - WAIPIATA TO KOKONGA TO TIROIITI TO HYDE
 - HYDE TO MIDDLEMARCH
- ALL GRADE 1 (EASIEST)

MOBILE PHONE COVERAGE: Coverage is good in the open plains but limited to non-existent in the gorges and tunnels, and limited sometimes during bad weather.

DRINKING WATER: Please buy water as many local schemes have limited capacity and are funded locally.



riding the trail



"I found the Rail Trail to be beyond my expectations. It was a great five days of beautiful scenery, pleasant and excellent accommodation, food and meeting great people along the way."

Deborah P, 11/07/17, TripAdvisor

► CLYDE TO ALEXANDRA, 8KM

Stay overnight in historic Clyde before you start your journey. There's a hotel and other dining and accommodation options in and around Clyde through to Alexandra. While in Clyde see the restored Clyde Railway Station and cycle through the Daphne Hull underpass, with an amazing mural inside, connecting Clyde to the railhead. Start at the trail railhead. This flat section is a good way to get settled. You'll also cycle across the wooden Muttontown Viaduct. The trail is a few kilometres from the retail part of Alexandra so if you need to shop there, allow time. Alexandra is the largest town along the trail.

► ALEXANDRA TO CHATTO CREEK, 17KM

Heading north, this section follows the

Manuherikia River, which flows south to join the mighty Clutha Mata-Au. The trail traverses the farming area of Galloway as well as Chatto Creek, which is home to New Zealand's smallest operating post office.

► CHATTO CREEK TO OMAKAU, 12KM

Ride up Tiger Hill on a sweeping rise crossing the state highway twice. Enjoy the views and the ganger shed information boards along the way. Then you have a straight descent into Omakau, a town with most services. A side trip to historic Ophir, with its 1880 suspension bridge and the Ophir Post Office, is well worth the additional few kilometres. There are dining and accommodation options in both towns.

► OMAKAU TO LAUDER, 7KM

Riding into the widening Manuherikia Valley with the stunning block mountain landscape with the Dunstan Range to the west and the Hawkdun Range to the north, it is a short ride to Lauder where there is accommodation, a hotel and a café. Explore the recently relocated and restored Lauder Station by the trail. Lauder also has the world-renowned NIWA atmospheric weather base.

► LAUDER TO OTUREHUA, 21KM

There is a gentle rise north into the Poolburn Gorge with its two tunnels.

Then it is a straight ride up the Ida Valley past historic Hayes Engineering, the home of Kiwi ingenuity - well worth visiting. This is a popular day-trip section of the trail. Otarehua boasts Gilchrist's general store, which is still set out as it was 100 years ago, a hotel and a range of accommodation options.

► OTUREHUA TO WEDDERBURN, 12KM

Immediately you are offered a diversion to Golden Progress Mine where there are gold-mining remains and a stamper battery. Then it is a slow climb out of the Ida Valley to the highest point of the trail before you start swinging east into the Maniototo. Wedderburn has pub food and accommodation. Popular diversions are to St Bathans or to Naseby. Both have gold remnants worth a visit while the latter has mountain biking, indoor curling, night-sky viewing as well as dining and accommodation options.

► WEDDERBURN TO RANFURLY, 14KM

Easy riding east across the open Maniototo Plain to the second biggest service town on the trail. 'Art Deco Ranfurly' has accommodation options, a hotel and a café. Explore the restored railway station that now houses the i-SITE and the goods shed that contains a tractor museum. Ranfurly is a good place to consider a diversion to Naseby.

► RANFURLY TO WAIPIATA, 8KM

Easy downhill ride to small rural township with hotel and some accommodation. Great fly fishing available in the Taieri River.

► WAIPIATA TO KOKONGA TO TIROIITI TO HYDE, 24KM

The trail now leaves the Maniototo through the upper Taieri Gorge, following the river. Kokonga and Tiroiti have accommodation and nice picnic sites. It's a flat, easy ride across the recently repainted historic stone Cap Burn Bridge, then follow the trail across a viaduct and tunnel that makes this section a perfect one-day taste-tester. Hyde has accommodation and fuel.

► HYDE TO MIDDLEMARCH, 28KM

Explore the recently restored Hyde Railway Station before continuing on an easy downhill ride south, unless a southerly is blowing, into the Strath Taieri valley. The Rock and Pillar Range is on your right. The trail passes through the Ngapuna Siding site to the township of Middlemarch, which is also the end of the trail and the terminus for the Taieri Gorge Railway. There is a hotel, café and a range of accommodation options in Middlemarch. A walk around New Zealand's only inland salt lake to the south of the valley is a nice time-filler. For more information, visit www.otagocentrailtrail.co.nz

OTAGO CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL

Cycling through history

Immerse yourself in the history and romance of the Otago railway and gold rush.

A momentous accomplishment, the Otago Central Railway was once an economic lifeline for the Central Otago region. Built to connect Dunedin with Central Otago, a thriving gold-mining area, the track took 16 years to complete and was finished in 1907.

It truly is a testament to human endeavour – the detailed workmanship of the stone bridges and tunnel facings have stood the test of time and the mountains still bear scars of the races, built back in the 1860s to bring water to the long-gone gold mines.

Steam trains chugged along this railway line for 83 years, but once the roads were improved and the

gold rush was long over, the line was officially closed in 1990 and the railway tracks removed, leaving a long, relatively flat path through Central Otago – what better place for a cycling journey?

Nowadays, the Department of Conservation and the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust manage the trail and have turned it into an adventure of its own merits. The

countless reminders of the railway and gold rush, including long, dark tunnels, trestle and stone bridges, abandoned gold diggings and the remains of mining machinery, old stone and mudbrick dwellings and beautifully preserved gold-mining settlements, showcase our pioneering history like never before.

MANIOTOTO

The Maniototo Plain is a wide, open space where the sky is a deep, vivid blue in stark contrast with the rugged plains and often-snowy peaks.

SPRING BLOSSOM

Pretty in shades of pink and purple, Central Otago is breathtaking in spring when fruit trees flower and blossom trees burst into pale-pink bloom.

This is a region worth exploring. From short detours to nearby towns to adding a train journey to the end of your cycle ride, there are many opportunities to delve deeper into this fascinating region and meet the pioneer-spirited locals that call it home.

Cromwell ■
after Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England • 224km NW of Dunedin

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Alexandra ■
after Princess Alexandra of Denmark • 191km NW of Dunedin

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Naseby ■
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Middlemarch, Otago Central Rail Trail
© Miles Holden

Shortcuts & detours

Before you embark on your cycling journey, **Cromwell** is an excellent place to spend a night or two. Located

23km from the start of the trail at Clyde, Cromwell is known as the 'fruit bowl of the south'. The stone fruit produced here is a national

treasure, as is the Pinot Noir. Learn about the history of gold mining at Goldfields Mine, drive a lap at Highlands motorsport park, visit the elegant Cromwell Heritage Precinct and admire the beauty of **Lake Dunstan** – and the fact that the town's original business district lies beneath its waters.

Ophir, a short detour from the trail, has many great historical buildings, such as the Ophir Post Office. In St Bathans, a side-trip from Lauder, stop for a drink at the reputedly haunted Vulcan Hotel and take a dip in the stunning Blue Lake with its glaring white cliffs.

Apart from curling in **Naseby**, you can also swim in the dam in summer, mountain bike in the Naseby Forest and ride the Naseby

Luge, the first snow and ice luge track in the southern hemisphere. If you're staying the night here, be sure to look up – the pristine night sky makes for dazzling viewing.

Palmerston has heritage trails and a butterfly and bird haven. For great views, climb Puketapu, the sacred hill that overlooks the town.

The huge marble-like boulders strewn along the beach at **Moeraki** are a sight to behold and are best seen at low tide. They were formed over millions of years by a layering process similar to the formation of oyster pearls. Enjoy a memorable meal at Fleur's Place, a world-famous restaurant and favourite of chefs from around the world. It's located in a scenic setting right on the waterfront.

RIGHT: Ophir Post Office
BELOW: Curling, Naseby
BOTH © Tourism Central Otago



CURLING

The ancient sport of curling – think lawn bowls on ice – is alive and well in New Zealand. You can try this time-honoured sport at Maniototo Curling International in Naseby.



Along the trail

This is a journey of varied and distinctive landscapes. Take in the magical scenery, including views of Alexandra, the Poolburn Gorge, the Maniototo Plains and Ida Valley.

Clyde's historic precinct has many buildings preserved from the gold-rush era. Visit the museum and the controversial Clyde Dam – the largest concrete gravity dam in New Zealand.

Omakau is a relaxed rural town with pretty historic buildings set against the backdrop of the Dunstan Mountains. The Central Otago A&P Show is hosted at the Omakau Showgrounds every February, attracting visitors from all over the South Island.

Oturehua has a heritage trail where you can visit the Hayes Engineering Works – an example of Kiwi ingenuity. At nearby **Wedderburn**, visit the goods shed made famous by a Grahame Sydney painting. **Ranfurly** is New Zealand's rural art deco town because of its 1930s-style architecture. The focal point of the town is the refurbished railway station housing the information centre. If you're looking for a novel way to explore the area, you can

take a thrilling ride with a sled dog team here – with or without snow. With its historic buildings and accommodation, **Hyde** is a good place to take a break; be sure to see the restored Railway Station. **Waipiata** is home to a night sky star-gazing facility with an impressive telescope, ideal for Maniototo's vast night skies. **Middlemarch** lies at the foot of the Rock and Pillar Range. Visit the museum, check out the salt-water lake, play golf and fish the Taieri River.

SAMPLING TIME AT CLYDE WINE FESTIVAL

Clyde holds its annual Wine and Food Harvest Festival on Easter Sunday just before the grape harvest. This is Pinot Noir country and more than 20 vineyards showcase their top wines at the event.

Middlemarch

after a creek that formed a boundary (march) • 77km NW of Dunedin

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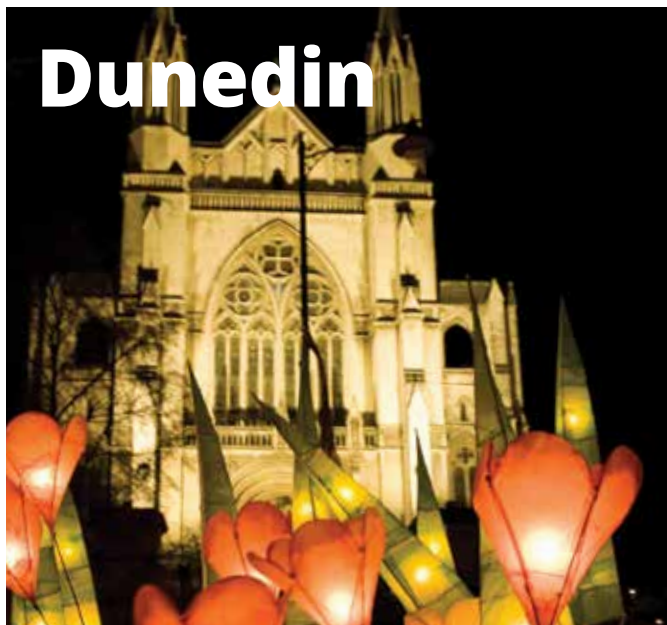
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Dunedin




'Dunedin' is an ancient name for Edinburgh, and the resemblance doesn't stop at the names. It's said to be the best-preserved Victorian and Edwardian heritage city in the southern hemisphere – a place where you feel you have stepped back in time. It's far from being a museum, though – this bustling place is packed with students and awash with creativity.

The heart of the city, the Octagon, is lined with St Paul's Cathedral, the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and restaurants, cafés and bars.

Eco-tourism flourishes in the city thanks to the easy access to the diverse wildlife of the Otago Peninsula. Fur seals, yellow-eyed penguins, sea lions and the mighty northern royal albatross all call this spectacular place home.

Dunedin

Gaelic name for Edinburgh, Scotland • 283km E of Queenstown




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Photographer at the Notches © Dunedin Railways

LEFT: St Paul's Cathedral
Dunedin Midwinter Carnival
lanterns © Tourism Dunedin

Taieri Gorge Railway

All aboard the Taieri Gorge Railway for a scenic train ride that is breathtakingly different.

The Taieri Gorge Railway passes through a range of landscapes that provide gorgeous views the entire length of the ride. It travels over old bridges and through a series of cliff-hugging tunnels, negotiates the exhilaratingly narrow Taieri Gorge and crosses the sparkling blue Taieri River over historical stone and wrought-iron viaducts. With live commentary, friendly well-informed staff, sightseeing stops, modern and traditional carriages and a fully licensed snack bar, this is a fantastic experience, whatever the weather.

Running between the official end of the Otago Central Rail Trail at Middlemarch and the architecturally stunning Dunedin Railway Station, the spectacular Taieri Gorge Railway is the ideal way to end (or begin) your Rail Trail experience.

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