

OTAGO RAIL TRAIL

5 days / 4 nights self-guided inn-to-inn cycling tours from Queenstown to Dunedin



Cycling along rail trails is great fun and has become very popular. The most popular in New Zealand is the self-guided ride over five days along the former Otago Central Branch railway line from Clyde to Middlemarch on the South Island. For a truly authentic experience this tour also includes a train ride along the only section of the original track still in use, the Taieri Gorge Railway tourist train ride to Dunedin.

The railway once provided a vital link between Dunedin, at that time New Zealand's largest city, and the major goldfields of Central Otago. The line closed after 83 years and the Department of Conservation acquired the disused railway in 1993 spending 6 years preparing and upgrading the route for use as a walking or cycling trail.

The riding is generally easy to moderate with the trail surface similar to a good unpaved road with some rougher loose bluestones in places. Highlights of the Rail Trail include the tunnels at Price's Creek and Poolburn Gorge, viaducts and wooden trestle bridges – and of course, the absence of motor traffic. The popularity of the Otago Rail Trail has breathed new life into many of the small towns of the Maniatoto and Central Otago and you will be able to admire the art deco buildings of towns such as Ranfurly, while enjoying meals at classic country pubs. There will also be optional detours to the attractive towns of Naseby and St Bathans.

Cost from: \$1165* per person twin share Single room surcharge from \$250 (limited availability)

* Prices in Australian dollars

Departs: Daily from 1st October 2019 to 30th April 2020 – starts Queenstown, ends Dunedin.

Duration: 5 Days / 4 Nights

Includes: A selection of characterful hotels or B & B/guesthouse accommodation all with private bathrooms, 4 breakfasts (continental or provisions), multi-gear cycle hire with panniers, repair kit, helmet, luggage transfer (limit of 1 x 15kg bag per person, per day), briefing and route information, emergency assistance, transport to/from Naseby and entry to a unique curling rink, Taieri Gorge train to Dunedin.

Additional accommodation can be arranged in Queenstown or Dunedin or additional nights along the route at extra cost – ask for details.

Fitness: This tour is easy to moderate and suitable for anyone with a reasonable level of fitness, who is used to cycling. Being a Rail Trail, it is also fairly flat. One of the main reasons for the popularity of the Otago Rail Trail is the very safe environment in which the activity takes place. You are generally away from the traffic however there are a number of road crossings, but no steep hills.

Early booking is essential on this cycling route as accommodation is limited especially in March 2020

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested itinerary: *Cycling distances shown are all approximate.*

Day 1: One-way transfer - Queenstown to Clyde, then cycle to Alexandra **cycling @ 8 or 16km**

Depart early from Queenstown to Clyde, where you will be fitted for a bike and receive a briefing. Clyde is a quaint, well-preserved town of the gold rush era. Cycle from Clyde to Alexandra either 8km on the Rail Trail or 16km along the picturesque river track. Overnight in Alexandra.

Tonight stay in spacious units with full kitchen and en-suite bathrooms, some with spa bath. Secure bike storage and lovely views from the balcony. Tonight's stay includes Continental Breakfast.

Day 2: Alexandra to Omakau **cycling @ 28km**

Ride from Alexandra accommodation to the Rail Trail where the route crosses the Manuherikia River and on to Manorburn before crossing the river again near Chatto Creek. We suggest a stop here for refreshments and/or lunch. Then travel through irrigated farmland with views across to the Dunstan Mountains gently ascending Tiger Hill before reaching Omakau. This afternoon we suggest a visit the historic goldfields town of Ophir, which was the centre for the local population until the railway was built. There are many historic buildings and bridges on a cycle loop of 6-7km.

Accommodation tonight is on the Rail Trail, in a relaxing purpose-built stone lodge which comprises four superking/twin rooms with ensuite bathrooms, spacious living areas and a spa. There are stunning mountain views. Overnight stay includes provisions to prepare your own breakfast.

Day 3: Omakau to Wedderburn **cycling @ 42km**

Begin with a morning cycle to Lauder where you follow one of the most spectacular sections of the trail: crossing the Manuherikia River on the trail's longest bridge then passing through the Poolburn Gorge, home to the rare New Zealand Falcon, to the Ida Valley. Pass through two tunnels and cross the 37m high Poolburn Viaduct before the slow descent of Blackstone Hill to Oturehua.

A gradual climb to the northern tip of Rough Ridge, then enjoy an easy descent onto the Maniototo Plains into Wedderburn and your overnight stay. This afternoon you'll be collected from the accommodation and taken to the quaint small town of Naseby for a curling session at the ice rink and a tour of the town.

Upon return to Wedderburn, the Wedderburn Tavern is a good choice for an old farm style cooked meal.

Beautifully situated right on the Rail Trail and surrounded by amazing scenery and wide open valleys, the cottages and adjacent lodge offer comfortable self-contained accommodation with en-suite bathrooms and a porch to watch the sunset. The Wedderburn Tavern is 200m away. Stay includes a continental breakfast.

Day 4: Wedderburn to Hyde **cycling @ 43km**

From Wedderburn the ride is mostly downhill to Ranfurly, the Art Deco Capital of Otago, a good spot for morning tea. From here cross the Maniototo Plains on to Waipiata perhaps with lunch at the local Tavern. A highlight today is the section between Daisybank and Hyde alongside the Taieri River which snakes around the Rock and Pillar Range, crossing the stone bridge, the Price's Creek Viaduct which is 32m high and the last tunnel which is 152m long.

Situated on the Rail Trail, Hyde School accommodation has five ensuite bedrooms. The former school building dates back to the heyday of the gold rush in 1869 and served as the town's primary school until 1999. Remodelled and refurbished it is now a B&B. Dinner is available by previous arrangements. Where the usual accommodation is not available we may offer an alternative of a similar standard.



Day 5: Hyde to Middlemarch – Dunedin

cycling @ 29km

Cycling from Hyde, the Gorge opens up into the wide-open spaces of the Strath Taieri plain and crossing flat and gently rolling landscape, as you travel the trail crosses numerous bridges and culverts, which have been dressed with the local stone. Ride past three former stations before the end of the Rail Trail at Middlemarch, where you will return the bikes. There are showers here (charges apply) if required and there is also access to broadband internet. Middlemarch has a couple of cafés for lunch, and on weekends the pub is open for lunch.

From Middlemarch you will be transferred to Pukerangi to connect directly to the Taieri Gorge Railway. The Taieri Gorge Railway Journey is a remarkable 2-hour rail experience through the rugged and unforgiving Taieri Gorge down to the coast. Travelling in a restored heritage railway carriage, cross spectacular viaducts and bridges and through tunnels, with stops along the way for photographs, before arriving at the historic Railway Station in Dunedin in the early evening.

Weather and cycling conditions - New Zealand has an Oceanic climate and the weather conditions can change rapidly throughout the day. Summers can be very hot and sun block is an essential item. Winters are the opposite and good clothing should be carried or worn.

Bikes come with panniers for easy storage. If you experience any adverse weather conditions during the journey assistance is always available. Any of the local pubs, accommodation or services will only be too happy to assist. Strong wind can be quite common and in this case you can contact your next accommodation to see if they are available to come and collect you from your current location or alternatively contact our local operator as they have vehicles travelling up and down the trail regularly throughout the day.



Outdoor Travel offer guided or self-guided cycling or walking trips in **New Zealand**. Try cycling in the **Marlborough** wineries or one or two week guided tours of the North or South Island. Walk the **Milford Sound Track**, **Routeburn Walk** or **Grand Traverse**, **Hollyford Track**, the amazing **Abel Tasman** walk or sea-kayaking, **Queen Charlotte Walk**, or the **Akaroa Walk** near Christchurch.

In Europe inn-to-inn guided or self-guided cycling holidays are available in most destinations including **France**, **Italy**, **Spain**, **UK**, **Germany**, **Switzerland**, **Austria** and along the **River Danube**, **Croatia**, **Greece** and **Turkey**.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

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