

## OTAGO RAIL TRAIL

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



Reviving former railway lines as rail trails has become popular both in Australia and New Zealand. The latest to attract cyclists of all abilities offers self-guided cycling over five days along the former Otago Central Branch railway line from Clyde to Middlemarch on New Zealand's South Island. And, for a truly authentic experience, our tour will finish the trip with 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 was closed after 83-years and the Department of Conservation acquired the disused railway in 1993 and spent six years preparing and upgrading the route for use as a walking and 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 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.

**Departs:** Daily from November 2011 to April 2012 – usually starts in Queenstown and ends in Dunedin.

**Duration:** 5 Days / 4 Nights

**Cost:** AUD\$685 per person twin share Single room surcharge \$280 (limited availability)

**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 10kg bag per person, per day), briefing and route information, emergency assistance, use of rental car in Wedderburn (as per itinerary) 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 but with a number of road crossings with no steep hills.

Please note early booking is essential on this cycling route as accommodation is limited especially in March.

**Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations**

## Suggested itinerary:

### **Day 1 - One-way transfer - Queenstown to Clyde, then cycle to Alexandra** *(Cycling either 8 or 16km)*

Departure early from Queenstown to Clyde, where you will be fitted for your bikes and get a briefing. Clyde is a quaint, well-preserved town of the gold rush era. Cycle to Alexandra (8km on the Rail Trail or 16km on the picturesque river track). Overnight in Alexandra.

**Accommodation: Alexandra Heights Motel** - very spacious units with full kitchen and en-suite bathrooms. Secure bike storage. Your stay tonight includes Continental Breakfast

### **Day 2 – Alexandra to Omakau** *(Cycling approx 27km)*

Cycle from your accommodation in Alexandra to the Rail Trail where your 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 you 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 Tiger Hill Lodge** - on the Rail Trail, this relaxing purpose-built stone lodge, comprises 4 super-king/twin ensuites, spacious living areas and a spa. There are commanding mountain views. Your overnight stay includes provisions to prepare your own breakfast.

### **Day 3 – Omakau to Wedderburn** *(Cycling approx. 44km)*

Begin with a morning cycle onto 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.

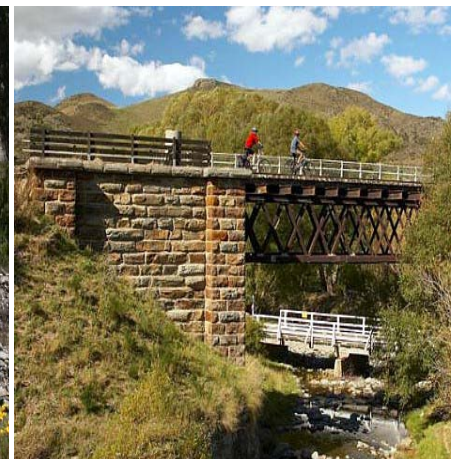
A gradual climb to the northern tip of Rough Ridge followed by an easy descent onto the Maniototo Plains into Wedderburn and your overnight stay. For licensed drivers there is a rental car available until the next morning (you are asked to pay for the petrol used) and we book you in for a curling session nearby at Naseby.

Naseby is a quaint small town and maybe if time permits take a drive to Danseys Pass or into Ranfurly. The Wedderburn Tavern is a good choice for old farm style cooked meal.

**The Lodge & Cottages, Wedderburn** – beautifully situated right on the Rail Trail and surrounded by amazing scenery, wide open valleys the cottages offer comfortable self-contained accommodation with en-suite bathrooms and a porch to watch the sunset. The Wedderburn Tavern is 200m away. Your stay includes a continental breakfast.

### **Day 4 – Wedderburn to Hyde** *(Cycling: approx. 42km)*

From the trail the ride is mostly downhill to Ranfurly, the Art Deco Capital of Otago. We suggest you stop here for morning tea. From here you cross the Maniototo Plains on to the Waipiata perhaps with lunch at the local Tavern. A highlight today must be ride 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. You stay overnight at the restored Otago Central Hyde Hotel.



**Otago Central Hotel, Hyde** - situated strategically on the Rail Trail and offering traditional pub-style rooms (some with shared bathrooms) the Hyde has been restored to the highest standard. Meals are available in the dining rooms at the Hotel or at the Old School House. Your overnight stay includes Continental breakfast.

## Day 5 – Hyde to Middlemarch – Dunedin

(Cycling: approx. 30km)

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. You will pass three former stations before the end of the trail at Middlemarch.

The Rail Trail finishes at Middlemarch where you need to drop your bikes off. There are showers here (charges apply) if required and there is also access to broadband internet.

From there 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 restored Heritage carriages you will cross spectacular viaducts and bridges, 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** - as New Zealand has an Oceanic climate 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.

Your bike comes with panniers for easy storage. If you experience any adverse weather conditions during your 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 many guided cycling or walking trips in New Zealand including the spectacular and iconic Milford Track, the Routeburn Walk or Grand Traverse, Hollyford Track walk, the Abel Tasman walk or sea-kayaking, Queen Charlotte Walk and the Tongariro Crossing on the North Island.

In Europe inn-to-inn guided or self-guided cycling holidays are available in most destinations including France, Italy, Spain, UK, Germany, Switzerland Croatia, Greece and Turkey

**Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:**

- Toll free on 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: [info@outdoortravel.com.au](mailto:info@outdoortravel.com.au)
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright, VIC 3741
- Travel Agent Licence No 31102