



Dunedin & Otago

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Riverstone Kitchen (p191)
- ➔ Fleur's Place (p192)
- ➔ No 7 Balmac (p199)
- ➔ Bracken (p199)
- ➔ Otago Farmers Market (p198)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Pen-y-bryn Lodge (p190)
- ➔ Oliver's (p211)
- ➔ Pitches Store (p208)
- ➔ Old Bones Backpackers (p189)
- ➔ Kiwi's Nest (p197)

Why Go?

Otago has attractions both urban and rural, ranging from quirky towns to world-class wineries and some of the country's most accessible wildlife. Its historic heart is Dunedin, home to a vibrant student culture and arts scene. From the town's stately Edwardian train station it's possible to catch the famous Taieri Gorge Railway inland, and continue on two wheels along the craggily scenic Otago Central Rail Trail.

Those seeking colonial New Zealand can soak up the frontier atmosphere of gold-rush towns such as Clyde, St Bathans, Naseby and cute-as-a-button Ophir. For wildlife, head to the Otago Peninsula, where penguins, albatross, sea lions and seals are easily sighted. Seaside Oamaru has a wonderful historic precinct, resident penguin colonies and a quirky devotion to steampunk culture.

Unhurried and overflowing with picturesque scenery, Otago is generous to explorers who are after a more leisurely style of holiday.

When to Go

- ➔ February and March have settled, sunny weather (usually...), and the juicy appeal of fresh apricots, peaches and cherries.
- ➔ At Easter, hook yourself a 'Southern Man' at the Middlemarch Singles Ball, or drown your sorrows at the Clyde Wine & Food Festival.
- ➔ Take to two wheels on the Otago Central Rail Trail during the quieter month of September.
- ➔ In November, watch the pros battle it out on the Highlands Motorsport Park, then ride graciously into the past on a penny farthing bicycle at Oamaru's Victorian Heritage Celebrations.

i Getting There & Away

Air New Zealand (☎ 0800 737 000; www.airnewzealand.co.nz) flies from Dunedin to Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, and **Jetstar** (☎ 0800 800 995; www.jetstar.com) flies to Wellington and Auckland.

The only train services are **heritage trips** (p196) from Dunedin to Middlemarch and Dunedin to Palmerston.

The main bus routes follow SH1 or SH8.

WAITAKI DISTRICT

The broad, braided Waitaki River provides a clear dividing line between Otago and Canterbury to the region's north. The Waitaki Valley is a direct but less-travelled route from the Southern Alps to the sea, featuring freaky limestone formations, Māori rock paintings and ancient fossils. The area is also one of NZ's newest winemaking regions, and a major component of the new Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail (p175), which links Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park to Oamaru on the coast. The district's main town, Oamaru, is a place of penguins and glorious heritage architecture.

i Getting There & Away

Buses stop in Oamaru and Moeraki, en route from Christchurch to Dunedin and Te Anau. Other services pass through Oamaru on their journey between Queenstown/Wanaka and Christchurch. No buses traverse the Waitaki Valley.

The only rail service is the Seaside tourist train that heads between Dunedin and Oamaru.

Omarama

POP 267

At the head of the Waitaki Valley, Omarama is surrounded by mountain ranges and fabulous landscapes. Busy times in this sleepy place include the rodeo (28 December) and the sheepdog trials (March).

👁 Sights & Activities

Clay Cliffs Paritea

LANDMARK

(Henburn Rd; vehicles \$5) This bizarre moon-scape is the result of two million years of erosion on layers of silt and gravel that were exposed along the active Ostler fault line. The cliffs are on private land; before setting out, pay the vehicle admission fee at Omarama Hot Tubs. To get to the area, head north from town for 3km on SH8, turn left onto

ESSENTIAL DUNEDIN & OTAGO

Eat Cheese from Oamaru's Whitestone factory (p190).

Drink Central Otago pinot noir.

Read *Owls Do Cry* by Oamaru's Janet Frame.

Listen to *Tally Ho! Flying Nun's Greatest Bits*, a 2011 compilation marking the 30th anniversary of Dunedin's iconic record label.

Watch *In My Father's Den* (2004), set in Central Otago.

Festival Oamaru's Victorian Heritage Celebrations in late November (p189).

Go green Tiptoe down to Otago Peninsula beaches (p202) in search of yellow-eyed penguins.

Online www.dunedinnz.com, www.centralotagonz.com

Area code ☎ 03

Quailburn Rd, and then turn left after 3km onto unsealed Henburn Rd.

Wrinkly Rams

FARM

(☎ 03-438 9751; www.thewrinklyrams.co.nz; 24-30 Omarama Ave/SH8; adult/child \$20/10) A regular stop for four buses, Wrinkly Rams stages 30-minute shearing and sheepdog shows, including lamb-feeding in season. Phone ahead to tag along with a tour group, or book your own one-off show. Attached is one of Omarama's better **cafes** (mains \$10-25; ☎ 7am-4.30pm; 📶).

Omarama Hot Tubs

SPA

(☎ 03-438 9703; www.hottubsomarama.co.nz; 29 Omarama Ave/SH8; per 1/2/3/4-person tub \$52/90/114/136, pod \$75/140/180/200; ☎ 11am-late) If your legs are weary after mountain biking or tramping, or you just want to cosy up with your significant other, these private, wood-fired hot tubs could be just the ticket. Choose between a 90-minute soak in a tub (each has its own dressing room) or a two-hour session in a 'wellness pod', which includes a sauna.

The chemical-free glacier and snow-melt water is changed after each booking, and the used water is recycled for irrigation.

The concept is Japanese, but with the surrounding mountain ranges, the lakeside setting and a pristine night sky, you could