

Dunedin & Otago



Coastal Otago, and its one major city, Dunedin, has attractions both urban and rural, offering travellers a chance to escape the crowds of Queenstown, party down in the South Island's coolest city, and get up close and personal with the island's most accessible wildlife.

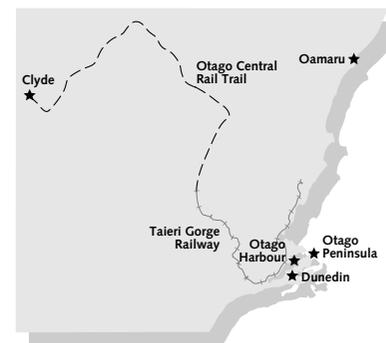
The heart of Otago is Dunedin, long credited as New Zealand's indie musical heartland and definitive student party town. With a plateful of fabulous restaurants and cafés, it's also a great place to lay off the two-minute noodles and indulge your stomach. From its stately train station (one of many grand old Victorian buildings in town), you can catch the famous Taieri Gorge Railway inland, or continue further on NZ's greatest bike trail, the Otago Central Rail Trail.

Those seeking quiet backcountry NZ, and noisy backcountry New Zealanders, will love the tiny towns of inland Otago: historical Clyde, sweet little St Bathans, Disney-cute Naseby – wonderful dots of humanity that don't see a lot of tourist traffic. If you're seeking wildlife, head to the Otago Peninsula, where penguins, albatross, sea lions and seals are easily sighted amid stunning views. Or visit seaside Oamaru, with its active historic district and resident penguin colonies.

Unhurried, and rife with picturesque scenery, Otago is generous to explorers who are after something a little less intense. The best part is, there are few crowds to share it with.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Air guitaring to live music or wriggling to DJ sounds in the cool bars and clubs of **Dunedin** (p587)
- Discovering charm along the quiet northern shore of **Otago Harbour** (p594) and **north coast** (p607)
- Peering at penguins, admiring albatross and staring at sea lions and fur seals on **Otago Peninsula** (p591)
- Cycling through lonely vistas of brown and gold along the **Otago Central Rail Trail** (p596)
- Reliving the days of the gold rush when the penny-farthing was king in the cobbled streets of the **Oamaru Historic Precinct** (p601)
- Winding through gorges, alongside canyons and across tall viaducts on the snaking **Taieri Gorge Railway** (p590)
- Embracing cuteness in quaint backcountry villages such as **Clyde** (p596)
- Tucking into organic gastronomic excellence in the cafés and restaurants of **Dunedin** (p585)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.cityofdunedin.com

■ www.otago.co.nz

DUNEDIN & OTAGO FACTS

Eat Kina or mutton bird at Fleur's in Moeraki (p608)

Drink A teapot of cocktails at a messy student pub in Dunedin (p588)

Read *Faces in the Water* by Janet Frame

Listen to ... *But I Can Write Songs Okay*, a compilation of 40 years of the Dunedin sound

Watch *Scarflies* (1999), about murderous Dunedin university students

Swim in The surf at St Kilda or St Clair Beach (p583)

Festival Victorian Heritage Celebrations (Oamaru; late November; p604)

Tackiest tourist attraction Cromwell's heinous giant fruit thing (p595)

Go green Tiptoe down to Otago Peninsula beaches in search of yellow-eyed penguins (p591)

Climate

With the Southern Alps blocking the prevailing wet winds from the Tasman Sea, the east coast of Otago has a relatively dry climate, similar to that of Canterbury to the north. Summer days are generally warm to hot and rainfall is very low. In winter it's a different story: temperatures can drop to well below freezing, as hinted at by the name of NZ's most famous motorcycle rally, the Brass Monkey (as in 'freeze the nuts off a...').

Getting There & Around

Air New Zealand (www.airnewzealand.co.nz) flies from Dunedin to the major centres of Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland.

Numerous bus and shuttle companies criss-cross Otago and service most destinations within the region. Major operators include InterCity, Atomic Shuttles, Bottom Bus, Catch-A-Bus, Naked Bus and Wanaka Connexions.

For more information on getting to and from Dunedin, see p589.

DUNEDIN & THE OTAGO PENINSULA

Nestled at the end of Otago Harbour, Dunedin captures the hearts of locals and travellers alike. It's a surprisingly artsy town, and has more great bars and eateries than its small size deserves. If you can unglue yourself from the city's live music and café scene, the rugged Otago Peninsula and northern harbour

provide easy day trips (or longer), and are rich with wildlife and outdoor activities.

DUNEDIN

pop 110,800

Dunedin's compact little town centre is a comfortable blend of the historic and the contemporary, reflected in its alluring museums, tempting cafés and restaurants, and smorgasbord of bars. Weatherboard houses ranging from stately to ramshackle pepper its hilly suburbs, and nicely preserved bluestone Victorian buildings are dotted throughout the centre. The country's oldest university provides an energy that might otherwise be missing, and drives a thriving theatre, live-music and – it must be said – *drinking* scene.

The city and its surrounds also support a collection of activities and tours, many of which centre on the wildlife of the nearby Otago Peninsula. Dunedin is an easy city to while away a few days, and more than a few travellers find themselves staying here longer than they expected as they recover from the noise, adrenaline and crowds of Queenstown.

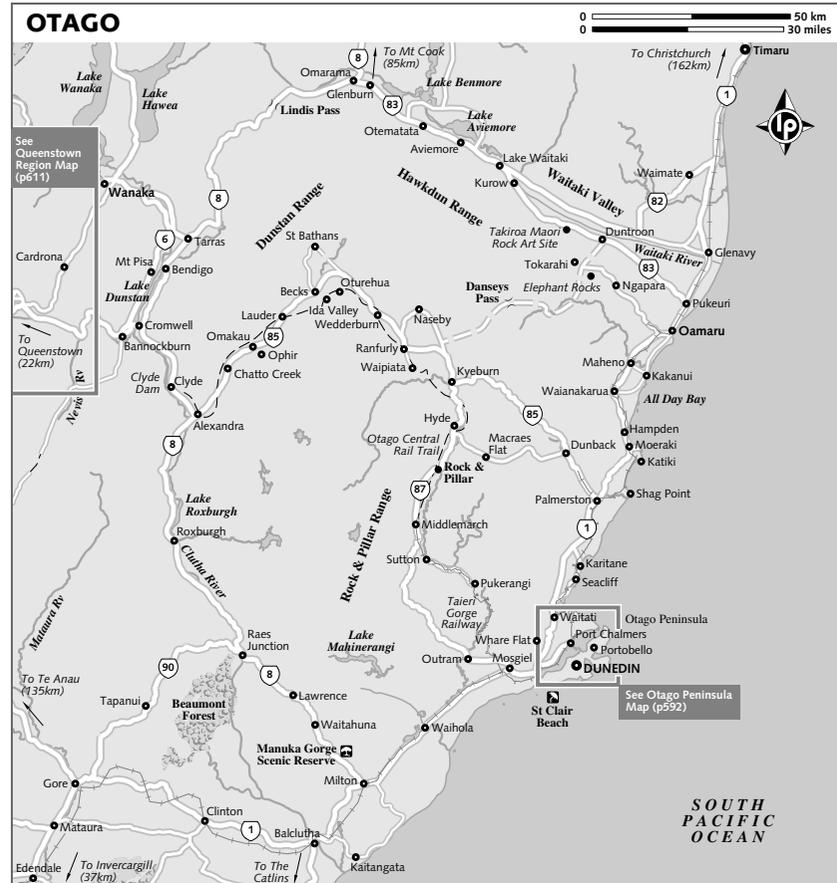
History

The Otakau area's early history was particularly bloody, involving a three-way feud between peninsular tribes that escalated in the early 19th century. This brutal warfare was closely followed by devastating diseases and interracial conflict ushered in via coastal sealing and whaling. The first permanent European settlers, two shiploads of pious, hard-working Scots, arrived at Port Chalmers in 1848, including the nephew of the patron saint of Scots poetry, Robbie Burns. That the city's founders were Scottish is a source of fierce pride today: a statue of Robbie still frowns down upon the city centre, there are a handful of civic haggis-n-bagpipe occasions every year, and the city even has its own tartan.

Information BOOKSHOPS

Dunedin is particularly blessed with second-hand bookshops, and bibliophiles will find plenty of reading matter here to see them through the rest of their holiday.

Galaxy (☎ 03-477 5170; 841 Great King St) Shelves from floor to ceiling – use the sliding ladder and breathing apparatus to access the ones at the top.



Otago Books (32 Moray Pl) Recapture your youth via *Biggles* and *Adventure Stories for Girls*.

Scribes (☎ 03-477 6874; cnr Great King & St David Sts) Dunedin's greatest selection of second-hand books: towering stacks of books on every level surface.

University Book Shop (☎ 03-477 6976; www.uni-books.co.nz; 378 Great King St) One of the widest selections of books in the city, with an excellent selection of fiction, poetry, children's books and NZ titles. As a uni bookstore there's a particularly good range of Maori/Pacific titles.

EMERGENCY

Ambulance, fire service & police (☎ 111)

Dunedin Hospital (☎ 03-474 0999; 201 Great King St)

Urgent Doctors & Accident Centre (☎ 03-479 2900; 95 Hanover St) Deals with emergencies and has a pharmacy open outside normal business hours.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is available at several hostels and cafés. Wireless can be found at the airport, Otago Museum, and St Lee's and Fix cafés. The following internet cafés are all in the centre of town and open late:

Central Backpackers & Internet (237 Moray Pl)

Common Room (18 George St) Coffee plus internet.

Net Planet (78 St Andrew St)

POST

Post office (233 Moray Pl)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Automobile Association (AA); (☎ 0800 500 222, 03-477 5945; 450 Moray Pl; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) For members' driving queries.

events at Otago Museum and other museums and galleries around town.

DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY

Explore NZ's art scene at Dunedin's top-notch **Public Art Gallery** (☎ 03-474 4000; www.dunedin.art.museum; 30 The Octagon; permanent exhibition free; ☞ 10am-5pm). Huge and airy, with light pouring in the large glass windows, this is a really nice space to view art. Climb the fabulous iron staircase to the upper floors for a great view across the city. Works on permanent show are mainly contemporary, and include some clever international chaps such as Monet, but also a big NZ collection: local kids Ralph Hotere and Frances Hodgkins, Cantabrian Colin McCahon, and some old CF Goldie oils. Rotating exhibits include some European works and Kiwi masters. Pause for a coffee next door at Nova Cafe (p586) after you've finished.

OTHER MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

The eclectic collection at the **Otago Settlers Museum** (☎ 03-477 5052; www.otago.settlers.museum; 31 Queens Gardens; admission free; ☞ 10am-5pm) gives insights into past residents, whether Maori or Scots, whalers or farmers. Petrol heads and trainspotters will love the old Buick straight eight and 1872-built steam engine; style hounds will love the original Art Deco bus depot foyer; and it's difficult not to be captivated by the thousand-plus photos of be-whiskered early settlers in the Smith Gallery. See p584 for walking tours that cover more of the city's history.

If you're a serious sports fan you might enjoy a visit to the **New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame** (☎ 03-477 7775; www.nzhalloffame.co.nz; Dunedin Railway Station, Anzac Ave; adult/child \$5/2; ☞ 10am-4pm). Try to match bike-champ Karen Holliday's average speed of 45.629 km/h, or check out the famous high-stepping style (and mediocre singing voice) of famous All Black fullback George Nepia.

At the end of a steep path zigzagging up through lush gardens, the **Temple Gallery** (☎ 03-477 7235; 29 Moray Pl; admission free; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) is as interesting for the building that houses it as for the works within. Dunedin's first synagogue (1863), and then for 30 years a Masonic temple, the building retains marks of both, and is a fabulous space for arts. No wonder the Chills chose to record their last album here, and Dunedin bands even now use it to

launch new offerings. Works are predominantly local and include some by Ralph Hotere (of Port Chalmers on the Otago Harbour), Donna Dementé (Oamaru) and Aniti Desoto (Waitati, just north of Dunedin). Feel free to browse to buy, but there's little here that would leave change from a thousand-dollar note.

Grab a copy of **Otago Arts Guide** (\$20) from bookshops or galleries for an excellent description of galleries and the arts scene across Dunedin and Otago, or see www.otagoartsguide.co.nz for a handy travellers' map of Otago galleries.

OTHER SIGHTS

If you're a die-hard chocolate-lover, or if the small people in your entourage simply *must* have an oompa loompa, follow your cravings to the massive **Cadbury World** (☎ 0800 223 287, 03-467 7967; www.cadburyworld.co.nz; 280 Cumberland St; adult/child/family \$18/12/48; ☞ tours every half hr 9am-3.30pm, reduced tours some Sundays) and don a paper hairnet for a 75-minute tour of the factory that includes a spiel on history and production, a look at their version of a liquid-chocolate waterfall and a taste of the end product.

You can also take a 90-minute, interactive tour of **Speight's Brewery** (☎ 03-477 7697; www.speights.co.nz; 200 Rattray St; adult/child/family \$17/6/38; ☞ tours every 2hr from 10am-6pm), which has been churning out beer since the late 1800s. At the end, you can sample a taste of each of Speight's six beers, all the alternatives much nicer than the standard drop you'll find on tap around Otago. A tap on the wall outside the brewery provides clear artesian (spring) water to passers-by. Feel free to join local health nuts filling their recycled drink bottles here.

The world's steepest residential street (or so says the *Guinness Book of World Records*), **Baldwin St** has a clambering gradient of 1 in 1.286 (19°). From the city centre, head 2km north up Great King St to where the road branches sharp left to Timaru, get in the right-hand lane and continue straight ahead – this becomes North Rd; Baldwin St will be on the right after 1km. If you've any doubts about your brakes, park at the bottom. Alternatively, grab a Normanby bus at the Octagon (\$1.20) and ask the driver to let you know when you're there. Once at Baldwin St it is mandatory to take a photo of yourself leaning crazily forward to stay upright. The annual 'Gutbuster' race in February sees up to 1000 athletes run

to the top of Baldwin St and back. Even more weirdly, in July each year 10,000 oversized chocolate candies (Jaffas) are rolled down the hill for charity.

King of the city's gardens and parklands, **Dunedin Botanic Gardens** (nr Great King St & Opoho Rd; admission free; ☞ dawn-dusk) dates from the 1860s and spreads across 22 peaceful, shady hectares. There's lots of grass to lounge on, a small children's playground and a café.

Dunedin's striking Edwardian **railway station** celebrated its hundredth birthday recently, and claims to be NZ's most-photographed building (or perhaps the South Island's, or the southern hemisphere's – no-one really measures these things). There are plenty of reasons to visit even without the mosaic-tile floors and the Thomas the Tank Engine stained-glass windows: the station houses the NZ Sports Hall of Fame (opposite), hosts the Otago farmers market (p587) and is the departing point for the Taieri Gorge Railway (see p590).

Activities

There's more walking and kayaking out on Otago Peninsula (p593).

SWIMMING, SURFING & DIVING

St Clair and St Kilda are both popular swimming beaches (though you need to watch for rips at St Clair when the surf is up). St Clair also has the heated, outdoor, saltwater **St Clair Pool** (☎ 03-455 6352; Esplanade, St Clair Beach; adult/child \$4.80/2.20; ☞ 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-7pm Sat & Sun, closed Apr-Oct). Back in town, take your togs to **Moana Pool** (☎ 03-471 9780; 60 Littlebourne Rd; adult/child \$4.80/2.20; ☞ 6am-10pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat & Sun), which has Olympic diving boards, waterslides and wave machines and a spa.

St Clair and St Kilda have consistently good left-hand breaks, and you'll also find good surfing at Blackhead further south, and at Aramoana on Otago Harbour's north shore. **Esplanade Surf School** (☎ 03-455 7728; www.espsurf.school.co.nz; lessons from \$40) is based at St Clair beach and provides all equipment for lessons ranging from two-hour group sessions to one-on-one or multiple sessions.

WALKING, TREKKING & CLIMBING

Short and spectacular, **Tunnel Beach Walkway** (45 minutes return; closed August to October for lambing) crosses farmland before descending the sea cliffs to Tunnel Beach. There you'll find sea stacks, arches and unusual rock

shapes, all carved out by the wild Pacific. If you're lucky, you might also find a fossil or two in the sandstone cliffs. It impressed civic father John Cargill so much, he had a hand-hewn stone tunnel built to give his family access to secluded beachside picnics. The walk is southwest of central Dunedin. Catch a Corstorphine bus from the Octagon to Stenhope Cres and walk 1.4km along Blackhead Rd to Tunnel Beach Rd, then 400m to the start of the walkway. Strong currents make swimming here dangerous.

Catch a Normanby bus to the start of Norwood St, which leads to Cluny St and the **Mt Cargill-Bethunes Gully Walkway** (3½ hours return). The highlight is the view from Mt Cargill (also accessible by car). From Mt Cargill, a trail continues to the 10-million-year-old lava-formed **Organ Pipes** and, after another half-hour, to Mt Cargill Rd on the other side of the mountain.

Northwest of Dunedin, the 5km-long **Pineapple-Flagstaff Walk** (two hours return) has great views of the harbour, coastline and inland ranges; look out for the signpost at Flagstaff-Whare Flat Rd, off Taieri Rd.

The **Otago Tramping & Mountaineering Club** (www.otmc.co.nz) organises weekend day and overnight treks, often to the Silver Peaks Reserve north of Dunedin. Nonmembers are welcome but must contact trip leaders beforehand (see website for details).

Traditional rock climbing (nonbolted) is popular at **Long Beach** and the cliffs at **Mihiwaka** (both accessed via Blueskin Rd north of Port Chalmers, p594), and **Lovers Leap** (bolted and natural) on the peninsula (p592). Dave Brash, Dunedin's climbing guru, has written *Dunedin Rock*, which is packed with details on local climbs. You can pick it up at the Dunedin i-SITE or at Bivouac (p589).

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Cycle Surgery (☎ 03-477 7473; www.cyclesurgery.co.nz; 67 Stuart St; per day \$35) rents out bikes (including tandems, kids' bikes and panniers), and the passionate bikers here are a good source of mountain-biking info. Pick up the free brochure *Fat Tyre Trails* from the Dunedin i-SITE for local mountain-bike routes.

Bums 'n' Saddles (☎ 03-488 0097) offers two-hour horse rides (\$35) for all levels. **Hare Hill** (Map p592; ☎ 0800 437 837, 03-472 8496; www.horsesiding-dunedin.co.nz; 207 Aramoana Rd, Deborah Bay) also runs horse treks (from \$50).

Tours

Urban tour options:

Death Rattle Haunted Graveyard Tour (☎ 021 060 1450; adult/child \$30/15; ☹ 10pm Thu-Sun Oct-Mar, 7pm Thu & Sun Apr-Sep) A scary walking tour of Dunedin's dark corners, with backpacker discounts and a beer at the Empire to finish up.

Dunedin City Explorer (☎ 0800 322 240; day ticket adult/child \$20/10; ☹ buses depart the Octagon 9.45am, 11.30am, 1pm, 2.30pm & 4pm) One-hour bus tour that loops around the city's major sites and lets you hop on and off at as many places as you like. Stops include the Otago Museum, Speights, Botanic Gardens and Baldwin St.

Walk Dunedin (☎ 03-477 5052; walks \$15; ☹ 11am) A 90-minute history-themed stroll around the city, organised by the Otago Settlers Museum. Meet at the i-SITE; bookings aren't necessary.

For tours that take in the nearby wildlife, see p593.

Sleeping

There are some magical places to stay in Dunedin, across all budget ranges. If all of these are full, you will find an endless line of motels at the northern end of George St. Most accommodation is within easy walking distance of the city centre.

BUDGET

Dunedin Holiday Park (Map p592; ☎ 0800 945 455, 03-455 4690; www.dunedinholidaypark.co.nz; 41 Victoria Rd; tent sites per adult/child \$14/7, powered sites \$31, cabins from \$45; ☹) Over the sand dunes from St Kilda Beach, this huge complex has a kids' playground, barbecue area, a zillion campsites and a variety of well-equipped cabins, flats and motel units. Packed out in the summer.

Leith Valley Touring Park (☎ 0800 555 331, 03-467 9936; www.leithvalleytouringpark.co.nz; 103 Malvern St; sites per person \$16, units d \$47-97; ☹) Only a short drive from the town centre, this camping ground really feels like it's in the wilderness. It's surrounded by native bush, with a couple of nearby walks, glowworm caves and a wee creek. Self-contained modern motel units are spacious and relatively stylish. Self-contained timber tourist flats are smaller but have a more earthy feel (linen required). Bus access is via the Garden Village bus from the Octagon.

Arden Street House (☎ 0800 428 689, 03-473 8860; www.ardenstreethouse.co.nz; 36 Arden St; dm/s/d \$20/40/80, B&B s/d from \$55/75; ☹) North of the city up Northeast Valley, this pair of homes atop a (steep) hill share an organic garden and a

very welcoming host. With a recurring leopard theme, crazy artworks and a porthole in the bathroom, the B&B is a pretty amazing space. Several readers raved about fabulous social dinners (\$12 to \$15) with neighbours, artists, wwoofers and guests. Head up North Rd toward Baldwin St, then turn right up Glending St.

Manor House Backpackers (☎ 0800 477 0484, 03-477 0484; www.manorhousebackpackers.co.nz; 28 Manor Pl; dm \$22-24, d \$60; ☹) These two stately old villas are surrounded by gardens and trees, and rooms here are comfortable and roomy. The large shared kitchen/dining area, pool room and BBQ area see travel stories being shared late into the night.

Elm Lodge (☎ 0800 356 563, 03-474 1872; elmlodge@xtra.co.nz; 74 Elm Row; dm/s/d \$23/46/56; ☹) Two sweet old houses with views over the harbour and peninsula, and a messy shared backyard, Elm Lodge is a popular choice for travellers looking to relax a while. Rooms are comfortable without being so modern you're too scared to sit down, and the back garden is a great place to have a barbecue or a few cold beers on a summer's eve. Elm Lodge is a fairly steep walk into (or particularly *out from*) town.

Stafford Gables YHA (☎ 0800 600 100, 03-474 1919; www.yha.co.nz, yha.dunedin@yha.org.nz; 71 Stafford St; dm/s/d from \$23/45/65; ☹) Sprawling and mazelike, this century-old former hospital has a curious and comfortable air. Rooms are fairly big and each one is unique, many with their own small balconies (sunny Room 38 having one of the nicest). The shared kitchen is large enough for a crowd, a dungeonlike cellar keeps the sports hounds from imposing their TV habits on everyone else, and upstairs is a rooftop garden for beers in the sun.

Chalet Backpackers (☎ 0800 242 538, 03-479 2075; kirsti@paradise.net.nz; 296 High St; dm/s/d \$24/38/54; ☹) Up a fairly steep hill, and with a correspondingly fabulous view, this rambling, sunny old building quickly makes guests feel at home, as demonstrated by the multilingual efforts to encourage cleanliness. The kitchen is big and sunny and festooned with flowers, and the dining room has one huge long table so you quickly get to know your neighbours. There's also a sweet little garden out back, pool table, piano and rumours of a ghost.

Central Backpackers (☎ 0800 423 687, 03-477 9985; www.centralbackpackers.co.nz; 243 Moray Pl; dm/tw/d \$24/56/62; ☹) Located in the heart of town, this modern upstairs hostel has warm, inviting

common TV lounge and kitchen areas, and a welcoming host in Gizmo the cat. Dorm rooms sleep two to 10 on bunks and private rooms are roomy.

On Top Backpackers (☎ 0800 668 672, 03-477 6121; www.ontopbackpackers.co.nz; cnr Filleul St & Moray Pl; dm \$25-26, s \$50, d with/without bathroom \$60/78; ☹) A modern, well-located hostel atop a pool hall (a nice place to kill some hours sinking balls or beers). Kitchen, dining, and large outside sundeck and BBQ areas are welcoming and spacious.

our pick Hogwartz (☎ 03-474 1487; www.hogwartz.co.nz; 277 Rattray St; dm \$26-27, s/d \$40/72; ☹) The Catholic bishop's residence since the 1870s, this beautiful old building has now been converted into a wonderfully complicated warren of comfortable rooms and 'projects', such as a mezzanine in the dining room and a bathroom in a corridor. The five-bed dorm, the bishop's old formal dining room, would almost certainly be the grandest dorm room you have ever stayed in. There's a short, steep walk up a winding path through lush bush from Rattray St.

Other hostels worth a look-in:
Law Courts Hotel (☎ 03-477 8036; www.lawcourtshtel.co.nz; cnr Cumberland & Stuart Sts; dm/s/d \$20/65/99; ☹) Rooms above this mazelike old pub are basic, though all but the dorm rooms have their own en suite.
Next Stop (☎ 03-477 0447; www.nextstop.co.nz; 2 View St; dm/s \$21/38, d \$50-58) Slightly tired rooms, but with a huge, warm common area, and castlelike outlook down on the central city.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hilltop on High St (☎ 03-477 1056; www.hilltoponhighst.co.nz; 433 High St; d \$90-150; ☹) A wonderful four-bedroom villa atop a steep hill, this place is really great value for money. The fabulous shared lounge has leather armchairs and a nice little library, the kitchen sings out to cater a large meal, and rooms have a touch of luxury about them. Two rooms have their own en suite, but in such a cosy villa it's no stretch to walk to the bathroom.

526 George Street Boutique Hotel (☎ 0800 779 779, 03-477 1261; www.hotel526.co.nz; 526 George St; s \$125-165, d \$140-180; ☹) A quiet, comfortable villa, with suites including doubles, twins and family rooms. Rooms are spacious and classy, but don't have a great deal of character. There's a breakfast restaurant, a cosy little bar and a small guests' lounge.

Brothers Boutique Hotel (☎ 0800 477 004, 03-477 0043; www.brothershotel.co.nz; 295 Rattray St; d & tw \$130-285; ☹) Rooms in this distinctive old 1920s

Christian Brothers residence have been refurbished beyond any monk's dreams, while still retaining many unique features. The chapel room (\$285 double) includes the original arched stained-glass windows of its past life. Perched high on a hill, so there's a great view from the rooftop units. The concierge, Baron, greets all guests in the snuffly way only a 10-year-old labrador can get away with.

Eating

If you can't find a meal that satisfies in Dunedin, you're just not trying hard enough. Whether you're looking for cheap-n-cheerful with plastic menus, organic/vegan/herbal omelettes, or fine white cotton tablecloths, Dunedin's got it.

RESTAURANTS

Izakaya Yuki (☎ 03-477 9539; 29 Bath St; dishes \$4-12; ☹ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Cute and cosy, with a huge array of small dishes on which to graze, Yuki is a lovely spot for supper or a relaxed, drawn-out meal. They pride themselves on doing something slightly different with each dish, so even if you're a veteran of Japanese food, you'll find this an interesting experience.

Minami (☎ 03-477 9596; 126-132 Stuart St; meals from \$9; ☹ lunch & dinner) Popular for its simplicity and its prices, Minami is almost always packed with locals enjoying its famous bento and sushi. Real connoisseurs of Japanese food reckon this is food as Mama used to cook it.

Palms Restaurant (☎ 03-477 6534; 18 Queens Garden; lunch \$10-17, dinner \$29-36; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Hidden away at the bottom of Dowling St, Palms has long been a landmark Dunedin eatery, but only under its most recent owners has it started to live up to that reputation. Food is innovative and usually locally sourced, the atmosphere is sophisticated but relaxed, and service is excellent.

Etrusco at the Savoy (☎ 03-477 3737; www.etrusco.co.nz; 8a Moray Pl; pasta \$12-23; ☹ from 5.30pm) A wonderful, large and noisy space, with magnificent marble pillars, high ceiling, fireplace and central bar, Etrusco is great for large groups of family or friends; less wonderful for a quiet romantic dinner. Pastas and thin-crust pizzas are the mainstay, and wine is encouraged. A fun night is guaranteed, though reports of the pasta itself range from *magnifica* to *non*.

our pick Bisztro (☎ 03-471 9265; www.bisztro.co.nz; 95 Filleul St; mains \$18-25; ☹ from 4pm Tue-Sun) Warmed

by open fires and with service smooth but relaxed, this restaurant is hidden away in an old wooden house on an almost-suburban street. Ingredients are largely locally sourced and carefully selected. The restaurant also sells its own preserves and relishes, so if your meal inspires, grab some chilli paste or pickle to cater your slow-food, roadside meals later in your travels.

Bell Pepper Blues (☎ 03-474 0973; www.bellpepperblues.co.nz; 474 Princes St; mains \$30-38; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) One of Dunedin's finer dining options, this restaurant boasts one of the region's best-known chefs and is famous for its venison, freshly baked bread and desserts. There's a \$10-per-bottle corkage fee for BYO.

Bacchus Wine Bar & Restaurant (☎ 03-474 824; upstairs, 12 The Octagon; mains \$32-37; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Classy but relaxed, Bacchus is particularly nice for a meal for two or to celebrate a special occasion. There's a wine list that the god of wine himself would approve, with bottles from \$32 to \$780 (that one's for *really* special occasions), and tasty, interesting meals considering the very reasonable prices.

Many of the pubs and bars around town, including most of those around the Octagon, provide food, and it's generally tasty enough. They usually display their menus out front.

CAFÉS

See p589 for cafés that specialise in coffee only.

Governors (☎ 03-477 6871; 438 George St; mains \$10-15; ☎ 9am-10pm) Popular with students (check out the paper-napkin artwork), Governors is a sunny little café with a nice line in early morning pancakes and other light meals. If you're feeling a bit blahsie blahsie from last night's party, Governors is just what the doctor ordered, with strong coffee and eggy omelettes.

Potpourri (☎ 03-477 9983; 97 Lower Stuart St; meals \$6-10; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat; ☎) Funky, homey and very kid-friendly, this small café has been fattening up Dunedin's vegetarians and vegans for 35 years. Tuck into big, inexpensive portions of scrumptious quiche, pizza, flatbread melts and spicy samosas. Potpourri strives to source ingredients that are as organic, free-range, gluten-free and as deliciously fresh as humanly possible. Takeaways available.

Jizo (☎ 03-479 2692; 56 Princes St; dishes \$7-17; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) A dark and very funky little sushi café. Watch your sushi

being expertly snapped together and soak up the delicious smells from the kitchen, or just sit back and relax to the strains of gentle jazz with a warm pot of sake.

Tangente (☎ 03-477 0232; 111 Moray Pl; meals \$7.50-17; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat) A cheerful, welcoming space with mismatched tables, toys for kids, a funky soundtrack, and permeated in the early hours by the smell of fresh baked bread. Tangente's food is generally organic, free-range and locally sourced, and always interesting. Wrap your laughing gear around fresh bread and tasty spreads to set yourself up for the day.

Circadian Rhythm Café (☎ 03-474 9994; 72 St Andrew St; curry buffet \$8; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Wed, 8am-11.30pm Thu-Sun; ☎) Specialising in organic Indian curries, this all-vegan café is also known for its cookies and cakes. The superhelpful, superfriendly staff will also try to tweak things to oblige the gluten-free, so you're not limited to just one item on the menu. Circadian Rhythm is also well known as a music venue, with a variety of interesting acts on Friday and Saturday nights.

Metro Café & Bar (☎ 03-477 7084; 153 Stuart St; meals \$8.50-12.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) A safe haven for travellers, veggie/vegans, or just people after a chilled-out place for a pot of tea and a mean steak sandwich atop an inventive salad. Be warned that the delightful laid-back attitude applies to meal preparation too – not a place to go if you're in a hurry. Occasional live music/DJs.

Modaks (☎ 03-477 6563; 337-339 George St; meals from \$8.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) This funky little café and bar, with brick walls, mismatched formica tables and couches for slouching, is popular with students and those who appreciate chilled-out reggae while they nurse a pot of tea. Sundaes, smoothies and beer make it a great escape from the heat, and grilled homemade focaccia bread with yummy, interesting toppings warm the insides in winter.

Nova Café (☎ 03-479 0808; 29 The Octagon; mains \$15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) Not surprisingly, this extension of the Public Art Gallery has a stylish look about it. It's not snooty in the least though – kids are made very welcome. Cakes and snacks from here are famously creative, and you can choose between a postgallery coffee and a postgallery wine.

St Lees (☎ 03-477 9090; 50 Dundas St; meals from \$15.50; ☎ 8am-late) Making great use of an old Methodist church, St Lees has interesting

artworks, an open fire and plenty of comfy lounge chairs on which to sit as you enjoy coffee, a meal or a glass of wine. Their speciality is pizzas and pastas (available for takeaway too) but you should also try their unique salads and burgers.

QUICK EATS

A collection of interesting, inexpensive Asian restaurants are clustered along George St, just before the St Andrews intersection. Most of these also do takeaways. The following is just a selection.

Thai Kai-Tom Café (☎ 03-477 7438; 369 George St; lunch \$5-10, dinner \$15-17; ☎ lunch & dinner) Cheap and cheerful Thai food.

Apsara (☎ 03-477 1628; 380 George St; dishes \$6-13; ☎ lunch & dinner) Cheap Cambodian, more popular for takeaways than eating in (perhaps it's those peachy walls?).

Anarkali (☎ 03-477 1120; 365 George St; meals \$6-17; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Even the most difficult-to-please fans of Indian food rave about Anarkali. Get the sampler dinner to try a bit of everything.

SELF-CATERING

Guilty by Confection (☎ 03-474 0835; 44-46 Lower Stuart St) A vastly superior selection of handmade chocolates, fudges and sweets than the factory-produced stuff a few blocks away – a must for anyone with a sweet tooth.

Every Saturday morning there's a thriving **farmers market** (www.otagofarmersmarket.org.nz) in a car park at the Dunedin Railway Station. Strict rules govern who can sell here – it's all local, it's all eatable (or drinkable) and much of it is organic. There's usually music of some type, and a healthy, passionate foodies' vibe. Grab felafels or espressos to sustain you while you browse, and stock up on interesting fresh meats and seafood, vegies and cheeses for the rest of your journey.

Head to **Countdown supermarket** (309 Cumberland St) for 24-hour supplies.

For coffee supplies head to either Mazagran or Strictly Coffee for freshly roasted beans; see p589.

Dunedin is so health conscious it even has its own organic beer: check out Green Man beers at several alcohol outlets.

Drinking

Pick up a free copy of *f*INK* (www.fink.net.nz) or caffeine-lefty *Deadline* from cafés and bars around the city for listings of arts, music, films, theatre and dance.

As befits NZ's musical heartland, and supported by a thirsty population of students, Dunedin boasts a great collection of bars and pubs, and with most of them free to enter, there's no problem with ducking your head into bar after bar till you find the one that's right. You'll find a few bars happy to provide a pot of tea to dilute the constant flow of Speights, and you should also try local brews Green Man (organic) and Emerson's (magnificent).

The Octagon is the heart of the city's bar scene, and lively until the wee hours. It's a veritable lolly shop of bars: you can stand in one spot and assess by eye and ear the crowds and the music in no less than eight different bars (plus two downstairs out of sight).

BARS & LIVE MUSIC

12 Below (☎ 03-474 5055; www.bennu.co.nz/xiib.html; alleyway behind 12 Moray Pl; occasional cover charge \$5-10; ☎ Tue-Sat) Tucked down a small alleyway across from the Rialto, 12 Below is a deadly cool little underground bar. There's mismatched comfy seats and couches, and nooks aplenty for chatting to mates, or floor space for those here to listen to live-music acts (a lot of funk and reggae), or wriggle along with the DJ's choice of hip-hop and drum 'n' bass.

Arc Café (☎ 03-474 1135; 135 High St; ☎ 10am-late Mon-Sat; occasional cover charge; ☎) Wonderful Arc Café would be an asset in any city: out front there's a laid-back, grungy bar-café with mismatched tables and a gentle, welcoming vibe from the be-dreaded staff and drinkers; in back there's a dark live-music venue where fine bands play to packed crowds, or lousy bands play for their own entertainment. Good for a midday coffee or a late night beer. The vegetarian fare here is some of the best (and certainly the healthiest) options for late-night snacking.

Backstage (☎ 03-477 3246; www.myspace.com/backstage; Bath St; cover charge varies) Hidden down an appropriately seedy backstreet, magnificently grungy Backstage is the live-music venue in Dunedin. This is where NZ's bigger acts usually play when they're in town, whether they're pop, metal, rock, jazz or dub. Check local media or the website to see who's playing when you're in town. Acts here can be pretty loud, but it's a big bar, so you can generally escape far enough to be able to think, if not talk. It even does bar food, but you'd have to be pretty hungry...

Empire (☎ 03-470 1397; 396 Princes St; cover charge for live music) The stately old dame of Dunedin's pubs, this is a 'must visit' if you're one of the army of Flying Nun pilgrims that visit Dunedin each year. It's not in the hot list of *greatest* live-music venues these days, but is still a damn fine venue, with bars on each of three floors, each providing a different vibe, and often hosting local bands (perhaps blues or acoustic) or jam sessions on the bottom floor.

Murphy's Irish Bar (☎ 03-477 9198; 131 High St) Less painfully Irish than most of the country's Irish bars, rustic, no-nonsense Murphy's has live music, generally of the foot stompin' and fiddle-playin' variety, on Friday nights. Couches in front of the gas heater are a nice spot to lounge on a cold winter evening.

our pick Pequeno (☎ 03-477 7830; www.pequeno.co.nz; alleyway behind 12 Moray Pl) A dark, sophisticated lounge bar down the same alleyway as 12 Below (opposite the Rialto), Pequeno attracts a slightly older, more sophisticated crowd. There are cosy leather couches on which to repose as you discuss the galleries you visited today, a fireplace to keep you warm, an excellent wine selection, interesting tapas menu, and even a humidifier in case the genteel vibe inspires you towards a cigar. Music is generally laid-back and never too loud to intrude on discussions of the latest architectural fashions.

The dark, comfy booths at small, intimate **Toast** (☎ 03-479 2177; 57 Princes St) are a nice spot to catch your breath between livelier, noisier bars.

NIGHTCLUBS & COCKTAIL BARS

10 Bar (☎ 03-477 6310; www.10bar.co.nz; 10 The Octagon) Deep downstairs is a complex space filled with loud music, pulsing lights and dancing bogan princesses. Fun late into the night.

Bath Street (☎ 03-477 6750; Myspace.com/bathst; 1 Bath St; ☎ Wed-Sat) When all the other bars are closed, Bath Street's famously good sound system summons Dunedin's unsleeping dance crowd for drum 'n' bass, house and hip-hop.

Carousel (☎ 03-477 4141; upstairs 141 Stuart St) Dark and sophisticated, with great cocktails, loungey music and a late-30s crowd looking pretty pleased with themselves to be seen somewhere so deadily cool. Pretentious? Moi? The smokers' alleyway is a nice escape.

di lusso (☎ 03-477 3776; 12 The Octagon) Grooving to a sexier-than-average house DJ, and darkly cool with backlit drinks display, di lusso serves

seriously good cocktails and offers a submarine perspective through to the toilets.

Monkey Bar (☎ 03-477 1637; 65 Hanover St) Hundreds of young dance hounds heed the call of funky dance music at this grand 100-year-old Anglican church. If you always thought the only thing missing from church was a strobe light in the belltower and hot babes dancing on the pulpit, you'll love this place. Occasional live acts.

Pop (☎ 03-474 0842; downstairs, 14 The Octagon) Downstairs from di lusso, and if possible even cooler, Pop serves Dunedin's best martinis (however watch for needless bartender wankery with the glassware), and prides itself on seriously good DJs playing funk and house.

DRINKING BARNs

There's a number of cavernously large drinking-barn pubs in Dunedin, mostly catering to the thirsts of students, but popular among the older and more employed crowd too. 'When the Students Are in Town', these will be packed to the gulleys; during the summer months you might find some of them echoing empty.

Bog (☎ 03-477 8035; cnr George & London Sts) Faux-Irish pub with comfy seats upstairs and hearty pub food.

Bowler (☎ 03-477 5272; 71 Frederick St) If you've never drunk cocktails from a teapot before, now's your chance.

Captain Cook (☎ 03-474 1935; 354 Great King St) This grand-daddy of Dunedin student pubs, with a fun garden bar that's packed with the nation's youth over winter, shrinks to a sad pokies venue over the summer months.

Speights Ale House (☎ 03-477 9480; 200 Rattray St) Busy even through the off months, the Ale House is a favourite of young bogans in their best collared shirts. A good spot to watch the rugby on TV. Substantial meals early on fuel raging to Cold Chisel late in the evening.

Entertainment CINEMAS

Rates are often cheaper on Tuesday or before 5pm.

Academy Cinema (☎ 03-479 2980; www.theacademycinema.co.nz; 50 Dundas St; adult/child \$11/6) Foreign, art-house and Kiwi flicks. Come early to snare a couch or bean bag.

Hoys Cinema (☎ 03-477 3250, info line 03-477 7019; www.hoys.co.nz; 33 The Octagon; adult/child \$15/8) Recent blockbusters amid the aroma of popcorn.

Metro Cinema (☎ 03-471 9635; www.metrocinema.co.nz; Moray Pl; adult/student \$12/10) Below the Town Hall; art-house and nostalgic.

Rialto Cinemas (☎ 03-474 2200; www.rialto.co.nz; 11 Moray Pl; adult/child \$14.50/8) Supersized Renaissance art on the walls, but on screen it's mostly blockbusters.

JUST GIVE ME THE COFFEE & NO-ONE WILL GET HURT

Dunedin has particularly excellent coffee, and some unique coffee bars to enjoy it.

Fix (☎ 03-479 2660; 15 Frederick St; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-3.30pm Sat, 9.30am-late Sun) Wage slaves line up at the pavement window every morning for their early morning fix while students and others with time on their hands relax inside or in the courtyard with tinkling water feature and outside loo. They don't serve food themselves, but if you're after something to eat, you're encouraged to bring your own food (or takeaways) along to eat at their tables.

Mazagran Espresso Bar (☎ 03-477 9959; 36 Moray Pl; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) The godfather of Dunedin's coffee scene, this cramped wood-and-brick coffee house is the source of the magic bean for many of the city's restaurants and cafés.

Strictly Coffee (☎ 03-479 0017; 23 Bath St) The second of Dunedin's seriously serious coffee bars, Strictly Coffee is a stylish retro coffee bar hidden down grungy Bath St. Different rooms provide varying views and artworks to enjoy while you sip and sup, and if it's a cold day you can snuggle up near the gleaming coffee roaster in the back room.

THEATRE

Fortune Theatre (☎ 03-477 8323; www.fortunetheatre.co.nz; 231 Stuart St; adult/child \$30/15) The world's southernmost professional theatre company has been running dramas, comedies, pantomimes, classics and contemporary NZ productions for the past 35 years. Shows are performed - watched over by the obligatory theatre ghost - in a Gothic-styled old Wesleyan church.

Shopping

George St is Dunedin's main shopping strip, although most of the shops here are chain stores and not very interesting.

MUSIC

Disk Den (☎ 03-477; 118 Princes St) Although it mostly carries new and recent-release CDs (and their associated posters, DVDs and other tat), the Den also has a collection of old vinyl, and even some cassette tapes, handy if your rental car happens to date from the Stone Age.

Records Records (☎ 03-474 0789; 215 Stuart St) This near-legend of a shop, with records stacked all about, seems constantly on the verge of closing down, but clings to life by the skin of its teeth. Do us a favour - hunt it out and buy a record. Places like this need to be kept alive, especially here in the homeland of NZ indie music.

CLOTHING & OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

Bivouac (☎ 03-477 3679; 171 George St) The serious outdoors hound's place to come for climbing, camping and trekking gear, with everything from boots to packs to tents and camping

stoves. You'll also find a good selection of maps and specialist guidebooks. The guys here are dead-keen rock climbers, so feel free to ask them rocky questions.

Wild South (☎ 03-477 7856; 78 George St) Fashionable but useful outdoorsy clothes. Jackets, fleeces, coats and pullovers all have a stylish edge.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The only international flights into Dunedin are on **Air New Zealand** (☎ 0800 737 000, 03-479 6594; www.airnz.co.nz; cnr Princes St & The Octagon) from Australia's east coast. The same airline's domestic arm has flights to and from Auckland (from \$120), Christchurch (from \$80) and Wellington (from \$110).

BUS

InterCity (☎ 03-471 7143; www.intercity.co.nz; 205 St Andrew St; ☎ ticket office 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat, 11am-5.15pm Sun, tickets by phone 7am-9pm daily) has direct services to Oamaru (\$26, one hour 40 minutes), Christchurch (\$47, six hours), Queenstown (\$42, 4½ hours), Te Anau (\$44, 4½ hours) and Invercargill (\$42, four hours).

Southern Link (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkcoaches.co.nz) connects Dunedin to Christchurch (\$34) and Oamaru (\$24). A door-to-door service costs an additional \$12 to \$22. **Coastline Tours** (☎ 03-434 7744; www.coastline-tours.co.nz) runs between Dunedin and Oamaru (\$28), and will detour to Moeraki, Karitane, Sealcliff or the airport if needed. **Naked Bus** (☎ 0900 625 33; www.nakedbus.com) connects Dunedin with Christchurch (\$33), Queenstown (\$33), Invercargill (\$29) and Te Anau (\$33).

TAIERI GORGE RAILWAY

With narrow tunnels, deep gorges, winding tracks, rugged canyons and more than a dozen stone and wrought-iron viaduct crossings (up to 50m high), the scenic **Taieri Gorge Railway** (☎ 03-477 4449; www.taieri.co.nz; Dunedin Railway Station, Anzac Ave) consistently rates highly with visitors.

The four-hour return trip aboard 1920s heritage coaches travels to Pukerangi (one-way/return \$46/69), 58km away. Some trips carry on to Middlemarch (one-way/return \$51/77) or you can opt for a train-coach trip to Queenstown (one-way \$115). You can also bring your bike along and hit the rail trail; see the boxed text, p596. In summer (October to April), trains depart 2.30pm daily for Pukerangi, plus trips to Middlemarch or Pukerangi some mornings. In winter (May to September) trains depart for Pukerangi at 12.30pm daily.

A couple of services connect Dunedin to the Catlins and Southland. The **Bottom Bus** (☎ 03-434 0753; www.bottombus.co.nz) does a circuit from Dunedin through the Catlins to Invercargill, Te Anau, Queenstown and back to Dunedin. **Catlins Coaster** (☎ 0800 304 333, 021 682 461; www.catlinscoaster.co.nz) connects Dunedin with Invercargill, returning via the scenic Catlins; see p670.

Other shuttles:

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz) To and from Christchurch (\$35), Oamaru (\$20), Invercargill (\$35), Queenstown (\$40) and Wanaka (\$40).

Catch-A-Bus (☎ 03-479 9960; www.catchabus.co.nz) Door to door daily between Dunedin and Wanaka (\$50), stopping at Otago Rail Trail towns along the way. Bikes cost an additional \$10.

Knightrider (☎ 03-342 8055; www.knightrider.co.nz) Night-time service to Christchurch (\$49), Oamaru (\$32) and Invercargill (\$42).

Wanaka Connexions (☎ 03-443 9122; www.time2.co.nz/transport/wanaka_connexions) Shuttles between Dunedin and Mt Cook (\$75), Wanaka (\$45) and Queenstown (\$45).

TRAIN

A couple of interesting train journeys start at Dunedin's magnificent **railway station** (Anzac Ave): the Taieri Gorge Railway journey (see above), and the Pacific Coast Railway journey to Palmerston and back (departs 9.30am and returns 1.30pm, one-way/return \$43/63). Book via the Taieri Gorge Railway.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Dunedin Airport (☎ 03-486 2879; www.dnairport.co.nz) is 27km southwest of the city. The cheapest way to reach it is by a door-to-door shuttle, which will set you back about \$15 per adult. Try **Kiwi Shuttles** (☎ 03-473 7017; www.kiwishuttles.co.nz), **Super Shuttle** (☎ 0800 748 885; www.supershuttle

.co.nz), **Dunedin Taxis** (☎ 03-477 7777) or **Otago Taxis** (☎ 03-477 3333). A standard taxi ride between the city and airport costs around \$65. There is no public bus service to the airport.

BUS

City buses (☎ 0800 474 082; www.orc.govt.nz) leave from stops in the Octagon, while buses to districts around Dunedin depart a block away from stands along Cumberland St. Buses run regularly during the week, but services are greatly reduced (or nonexistent) on weekends and holidays. You can view the *Dunedin Bus Timetable* at the Dunedin i-Site, or see the website. An average trip costs \$2 or less.

For details of the hop-on, hop-off Dunedin City Explorer, see p584.

CAR

The big nationwide car-rental companies all have offices in Dunedin, and you'll find a few inexpensive local outfits here too, such as **Getaway** (☎ 0800 489 761, 03-489 7614; www.getawaycarhire.co.nz) and **Driven Rentals** (☎ 0508 123 7483, 03-456 3600; andrew@drivengroup.co.nz). See www.findacarrental.co.nz/dunedin for more.

Parking is tight in the central city. The closest free parking is along Cargill and London Sts, northeast of the Octagon.

BICYCLE

Although some of those hills are *steep*, Dunedin's crap parking still makes a bicycle a good option for transport 'round the city. **Cycle Surgery** (☎ 03-477 7473; www.cyclesurgery.co.nz; 67 Stuart St; per day \$35) rents out bikes (including tandems, kids' bikes and panniers).

TAXI

Try **Dunedin Taxis** (☎ 03-477 7777) or **Otago Taxis** (☎ 03-477 3333).

OTAGO PENINSULA

With the most easily accessible variety of wildlife on the South Island, Otago Peninsula is a near compulsory excursion unless you hate animals. Albatross, penguins, fur seals and sea lions are all to be found here, along with some rugged countryside, wild walks and beaches, and interesting historical sites. Despite the host of tours that have consequently made the peninsula their stomping ground, the area maintains its quiet rural air. For an overview, pick up the *Otago Peninsula* brochure and map from the Dunedin i-SITE and check out www.otago-peninsula.co.nz.

Sights

ROYAL ALBATROSS CENTRE

Taiaroa Head, at the peninsula's eastern tip, has the world's only mainland royal albatross colony. The best time to visit is from December to February, when one parent is constantly guarding the young while the other delivers food throughout the day. Sightings are most common in the afternoon when the winds pick up; calm days don't see much bird action.

The only public access to the colony is through the **Royal Albatross Centre** (☎ 03-478 0499; www.albatross.org.nz; Taiaroa Head; ☎ 9am-dusk summer, 10am-4pm winter) where you can take a one-hour tour (adult/child/family \$30/14/75) that includes viewing from a glassed-in hut overlooking the nesting sites. There's no viewing from mid-September to late November, and from the end of November to December, the birds are generally nestbound so there's little opportunity then to see that magnificent wingspan. Opens slightly later in the morning on Tuesdays.

If you want to make sure you're going to see the birds in the air, just ask the staff whether the birds are flying before you pay. If you're not sure you want to pay the entry fee, you can sometimes see albatross flying from the car park, particularly from the fine clifftop lookout out to sea. Time it for the late afternoon when winds are strongest and you might get lucky. Pilot Beach, on the harbour side of the car park, is a lovely little spot which often sees blue-eyed penguins, sea lions and fur seals.

Also on the albatross-centre site are the remains of **Fort Tairaroa** and its 1886 Armstrong Disappearing Gun, built along with other gun emplacements on the peninsula when NZ was certain a Russian invasion was imminent. The gun is loaded and aimed underground, then

pops up like the world's slowest jack-in-the-box to be fired (and it's still in perfect working order, so don't even think about it, Russia!). If you're into big guns, check it out on the Fort Tairaroa tour (adults \$15) or the Tairaroa Experience (\$35), which includes guns and birds in one package. The centre also has some interesting exhibits on peninsula wildlife, and a café (mains \$10 to \$23).

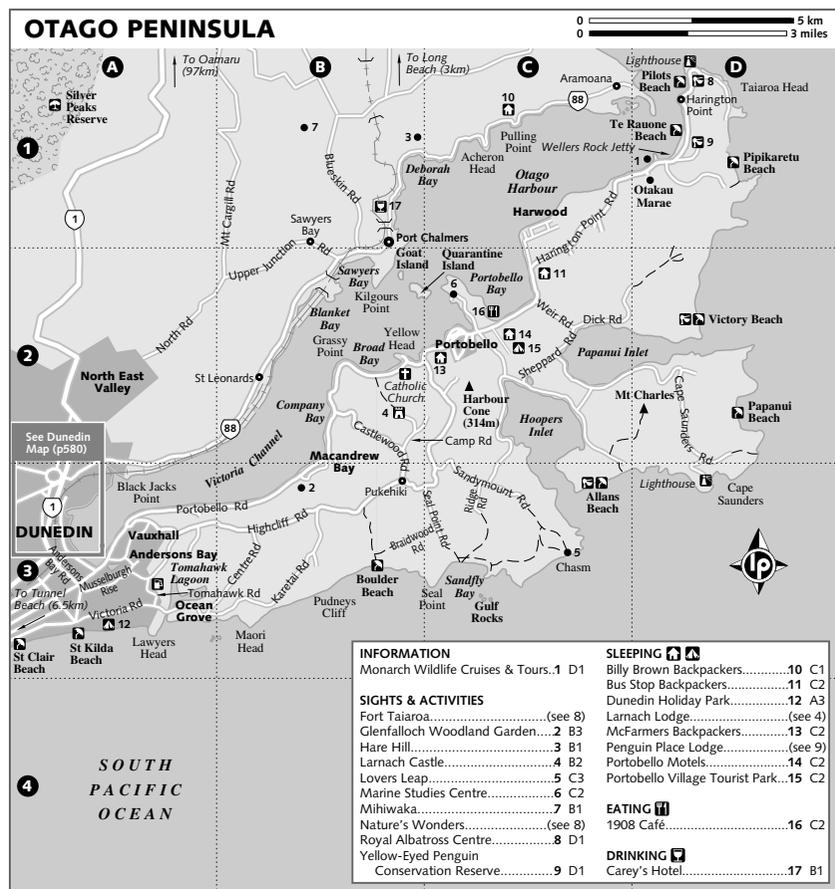
YELLOW-EYED PENGUIN RESERVES

One of the world's rarest penguins, the *hoiho* (yellow-eyed penguin) is found along the Otago coast, and several peninsula beaches are good places to watch them come ashore (any time after 4pm).

There is a couple of private operators on the peninsula leading tours to yellow-eye colonies across private land (see following), and several other tours (see p593) also visit habitats on private farmland not accessible to the public. The birds also nest at a couple of public beaches, including **Sandfly Bay**, which has a DOC hide. If you go alone, stay on the trails, view penguins *only* from the hide and don't approach these shy creatures; even loud voices can disturb them. The penguins have been badly distressed by tourists using flash photography or traipsing through the nesting grounds. Please don't loiter on the beach, as this will deter them from coming ashore.

The **Yellow-Eyed Penguin Conservation Reserve** (☎ 03-478 0286; McGrouther's Farm, Harrington Point Rd; tours adult/child \$35/12) has replanted the penguins' breeding grounds, built nesting sites, cared for sick and injured birds and trapped predators. Ninety-minute tours include a talk on penguin conservation and close-up viewing from a system of hides. You can see the birds all year-round, but summer is best. Between October and March, tours run regularly from 10.15am to 90 minutes before sunset; between April and September they're just 3.15pm to 4.45pm. The tours are popular, so book ahead. For accommodation at the Penguin Place Lodge, see p594.

Situated just 1km past the albatross colony, and based on a large sheep farm that covers most of the peninsula's tip, **Nature's Wonders** (☎ 0800 246 446, 03-478 1150; www.natureswondersnatu rally.com; Taiaroa Head; tours adult/child \$45/35; ☎ tours from 10.15am) runs one-hour tours that book you up close to Stewart Island shags, New Zealand fur seals, and finally along a private little beach to a yellow-eyed penguin colony, where you can



get within metres of the birds without disturbing them. There's a café, with a great view out to sea, at the office.

BLUE PENGUINS

Blue penguins can be viewed at Pilots Beach, just below the albatross centre car park. The penguins come ashore just before dusk. Walk down the gravel road to the viewing area near the beach, and remain there until the birds have returned to their burrows. There may be as many as 80 or more in summer and sometimes none in winter.

SEA LIONS

Sea lions are most easily seen on a tour (see opposite) but are regularly present at **Sandfly**

Bay, Allans and Victory Beaches. They are predominantly bachelor males vacationing from Campbell Island or the Auckland Islands. Give them plenty of space – having been chased up a sand bank by one of these monsters, your faithful writer can confirm they can move that bulk a lot faster than you'd guess.

LARNACH CASTLE

Standing proudly on the highest point of the peninsula, **Larnach Castle** (☎ 03-476 1616; www.larnachcastle.co.nz; Camp Rd; castle & grounds adult/child \$25/10, grounds only \$10/3; ☎ 9am-5pm) was an extravagance of the slightly dodgy Dunedin merchant and politician William Larnach. Built in 1871 to impress his French nobility-descended wife (she didn't like it much),

the ostentatious, Gothic mansion is filled with exquisite antique furnishings. Larnach committed suicide in Parliament House in 1898, financially ruined and with his latest wife and his favourite son romantically linked.

The **gardens** offer fantastic views of the peninsula and harbour; walk from the furthest car park through the native rainforest early in the morning to catch some impressive birdsong. There's a café in the rather grand old ballroom, and unique accommodation (see p594). You can reach the castle via the Portobello bus to Company Bay, followed by a 4km walk uphill. Open until 7pm during daylight savings hours.

OTHER SIGHTS

Glenfalloch Woodland Garden (☎ 03-476 1006; www.glenfalloch.co.nz; 430 Portobello Rd; admission by donation; ☎ gardens 9.30am-dusk, café-wine bar 11am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4.30pm Sat & Sun Sep-Apr) covers 12 hectares with a gorgeous profusion of colourful flowers, walking tracks and swaying, mature trees such as a 1000-year-old matai. You'll also catch some spectacular views over the harbour. The Portobello bus stops out the front. The café serves up a mean pikelet.

The **Marine Studies Centre** (☎ 03-479 5826; www.marine.ac.nz; Hatchery Rd; adult/child/family \$9/4.50/18, ☎ noon-4.30pm) gives youngsters (and their folks) the chance to see octopus, seahorses, crayfish, sharks and a huge pink model squid, as well as get their hands salty in the touch tanks. You can join in with fish-feeding (Wednesday and Saturday 2pm to 3pm) or take a guided tour of the wee facility at 10.30am (adult/child/family \$18/9/42 for entry plus tour). The centre showcases the work of the adjacent university-run marine laboratory.

Activities

The peninsula's coastal and farmland walkways offer stunning views and the chance to see wildlife on your own. Pick up a free copy of the detailed *Otago Peninsula Tracks* from the Dunedin i-SITE. A popular walking destination is the beautiful **Sandfly Bay**, reached from Seal Point Rd (moderate; 40 minutes) or Ridge Rd (difficult; 40 minutes). From the end of Sandymount Rd, you can follow a trail to the impressive **Chasm** (20 minutes). Most trails are closed during September and October for lambing.

Wild Earth Adventures (☎ 03-473 6535; www.wildearth.co.nz; trips from \$95) offers trips in double sea

kayaks, with wildlife often sighted en route. No previous experience is necessary. Various trips run between four hours and a full day, with some starting from Dunedin and some from the peninsula. **Peninsula Bike & Kayak** (☎ 03-478 0724; www.bike-kayak.com) rents bikes (\$25/35 per hour/day) and kayaks (\$50 for two hours). It also does guided kayak tours, which depart from Portobello and run for two or three hours (\$120/170 for one/two people).

Tours

For tours where you play a more active role, see the previous section.

Back to Nature Tours (☎ 03-479 2009; www.backtonaturetours.co.nz; adult/child \$75/45)

Citibus (☎ 03-477 5577; www.transportplace.co.nz; adult/child from \$80/40) Offers a few tours combining albatross and penguin viewing.

Elm Wildlife Tours (☎ 0800 356 563, 03-454 4121; www.elmwildlifetours.co.nz; standard tour \$83) Gets rave reviews from travellers. Elm leads small groups on excellent, informative wildlife-spotting trips of up to six hours. Pick-up and drop-off from Dunedin is included.

Monarch Wildlife Cruises & Tours (☎ 03-477 4276; www.wildlife.co.nz) Runs one-hour boat trips from Wellers Rock (adult/child \$40/15), as well as half- (\$80/25) and full-day (\$190/95) tours from Dunedin. The tours visit breeding grounds for sea lions, penguins, albatross and seals, some of which are inaccessible by land. Monarch are famously accommodating, and well informed about the wildlife you see.

Otago Explorer (☎ 0800 322 240, 03-474 3300; www.otagoexplorer.com) Runs tours of Larnach Castle (adult/child \$50/25, 2½ hours) and wildlife tours (\$80/40, 3½ hours). The company also runs summertime wildlife tours. All include transport from Dunedin.

Twilight Wildlife Tour (☎ 03-474 3300; www.wilddunedin.co.nz; adult \$75, backpacker or child \$69)

Sleeping

BUDGET

Bus Stop Backpackers (☎ 03-478 0330; www.bus-stop.co.nz; 252 Harington Point Rd; per person \$30;

dm/s/d \$27/39/64, cottage d \$85; (P) On a working farm with a view of the harbour and its own toy train (!), this beautifully constructed rustic timber lodge and self-contained cottage are steeped in character and feel instantly like home. Lounge on the window seat or sun-deck for fabulous harbour views, BBQ out the back, or get warm in front of the wood-burning stove. With lots of colour and light, you'll almost forget that you came to visit the nearby albatross and penguins. The cottage is particularly well suited to families. Go on, chill with the chickens. The Portobello bus goes past the gate.

Penguin Place Lodge (☎ 03-478 0286; McGrouther's Farm, Harington Point Rd; adult/child \$20/10) Atop the hill behind the penguin-tour office and surrounded by farmland, this lodge has a good kitchen, bright lounge and basic rooms. Beautiful views across the farm and harbour can be had from the deck, and you're close to the seals and albatross, and next-door neighbours with the penguins. Linen is \$5 extra.

Portobello Village Tourist Park (☎ 03-478 0359; portobellopark@xtra.co.nz; 27 Hereweka St, Portobello; unpowered/powerd sites per adult \$13/15, units d \$45-85, tourist flats \$90-120; (P)) With enough trees and grass to make it feel like a park, this is a pleasant place to stake your tent. There's a kids' play area (and a good new playground just down the road), a modern kitchen and wheelchair-accessible facilities. Backpacker rooms are BYO everything; self-contained units are cosy and newly renovated.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Larnach Lodge (☎ 03-476 1616; www.larnachcastle.co.nz; Camp Rd; stable d \$130, lodge d \$250-280, all incl breakfast) Want to feel like royalty? Stay in one of a dozen rooms in Larnach Castle's back-garden lodge. Rooms are individually and entertainingly decorated: the Queen Victoria Room offers the chance to sleep in a giant four-poster; the Goldrush Room the chance to sleep in an old horse-drawn carriage (horses not supplied). While they're plush, rooms are also flirting with naiffness. Less frivolous but still atmospheric are the rooms in the 125-year-old Coach House with sloping Tudor ceilings (watch your head). Dinner available by arrangement.

Portobello Motels (☎ 03-478 0155; www.portobello motels.com; 10 Harington Point Rd, Portobello; d \$130-140; (P)) Sunny, modern, self-contained units just off the main road in Portobello. Studio

units are the best (and cheapest) with small decks overlooking the bay. One- and two-bedroom units are also available (add \$25/15 per extra adult/child), but viewless apart from the car park.

Eating

1908 Café (☎ 03-478 0801; 7 Harington Point Rd, Portobello; mains \$18-31; ☺ lunch Thu-Sun, dinner daily) For the tastiest meal on the peninsula (outside your own frying pan that is), head to this café, where salmon, venison and steak are joined by fresh fish and blackboard specials. Kids have their own options, and a box of toys. It's a beautiful old building inside and out, and cheerfully embellished indoors with local art.

Other dining options include the Portobello Hotel (where a beer will also be welcome after a hot Otago afternoon chasing wildlife) and the Portobello Coffee Shop & Café. There's takeaways, ideally to be eaten sitting beside the harbour somewhere, at the Portobello Store. The cafés attached to Larnach Castle, Nature's Wonders, Glenfalloch Woodland Garden and the Royal Albatross Centre are other options.

Getting There & Around

There are a half-dozen bus services each weekday between Dunedin's Cumberland St and Portobello Village (\$4), with one or two a day continuing on to Harington Point. Weekend services are more limited. Once you get to the peninsula, you'll find it's tough to get around without your own transport. Most tours will pick you up from your accommodation.

There's a petrol station in Portobello and one on Highcliff Rd at the western end of the peninsula but its opening hours are unpredictable. It's wisest to fill up in Dunedin before driving out.

OTAGO HARBOUR'S NORTH SHORE

The north shore of Otago Harbour provides a worthy detour from the main tourist track. It's well worth a day trip and has at least one excellent accommodation option should you decide to stay longer.

Little **Port Chalmers** (population 3000; www.portchalmers.com) may be only 15km out of the city (15 minutes' drive, or take the bus from Cumberland St) but it feels a world away. Somewhere between working class and bohemian, Port Chalmers has a history

as a port town but has increasingly attracted Dunedin's arty types.

The 150-year-old bluestone **Carey's Hotel** (☎ 03-472 8022; 17 MacAndrew Rd, Carey's Bay; mains \$14-22; ☺ 11am-late), 1km past the docks, has a lovely, busy bar with a view of fishing boats and the harbour. It's popular with 'townies' as well as locals, and has a great collection of art from local painter Ralph Hotere, plus some other Otago artworks. Meals tend to be focussed on seafood – the fish cakes are great.

Just over 5km down the road from Port Chalmers, on a sheep-and-deer farm high on a hill, sits **Billy Brown Backpackers** (☎ 03-472 8323; www.billybrowns.co.nz; 423 Aramoana Rd, Hamilton Bay; dm \$25, s & d \$60, tr \$75; (P)), commanding a magnificent view across the harbour to the peninsula. There's a lovely rustic shared lounge with cosy woodburner, and plenty of vinyl to spin while you get to know your fellow guests.

CENTRAL OTAGO

Rolling hills, grassy paddocks and a succession of tiny, charming little gold-rush towns make this region worth exploring, though most travellers barely pause for breath as they pass through. However it rewards a bit of effort: Naseby and Clyde compete for the title of NZ's cutest towns; the near mythical 'Southern Man' can be seen propping up the bar in backcountry hotels; and there are fantastic opportunities for those on two wheels, whether speeding down old gold-mining trails or taking it easy on the rail trail (see p596). If the brown pastoral hills and jagged rock formations look familiar, try imagining hordes of horse-riding warriors galloping around. These hills were the setting for several Rohan scenes in that hobbit film.

CROMWELL

pop 2610

There's a couple of really good reasons to visit Cromwell: the sweet little historic precinct near the lake, and to eat (and eat, and eat). Courtesy of great local farms and orchards the little town has way more than its fair share of great eateries. If you're passing through on your way east to Dunedin or west to Queenstown, it's worth stopping here for lunch. Oh, and a third reason: take a photo of yourself the beside spectacularly ugly giant fruit salad at the entrance to town.

Inside the town's monstrous shopping mall is the **Cromwell i-SITE** (☎ 03-445 0212; cromwellwin@xtra.co.nz), with an abundance of local info and a disturbing stuffed sheep. Grab a copy of *Walk Cromwell*, which covers some cool local mountain-bike and walking trails, including the nearby gold-rush ghost-town of Bendigo. Bikes can be hired from the nearby **Cycle Surgery** (☎ 03-445 4100; www.cyclesurgery.co.nz) for \$35 per day.

Cromwell has a legendary chip on its shoulder. Back in 1992 when the Clyde Dam was completed, it flooded the original Cromwell village including the town centre, 280 homes, six farms and 17 orchards. Luckily, many of the town's historic buildings were disassembled and moved uphill before they were flooded, and they've since been restored as **Old Cromwell Town**. This peaceful pedestrianised zone sits beside the lake that swallowed the old town, and as well as having interesting historical buildings to look through, it offers yummy eating and a couple of interesting galleries. Many of the buildings are now home to artisans; see cool artworks at **Hullabaloo Art Space** (www.odelle.com) or interesting metalworks at **Stoop Gallery** (www.stoop.co.nz). And don't miss the excellent Grain & Seed Café (p596). Grab a copy of *Old Cromwell Town Historic Precinct* for a self-guided tour.

Bannockburn, about 5km south of town, has a couple of great restaurants and old gold works to look around (grab brochures on Bannockburn and Carricktown from the i-SITE). On the way you pass the Chafer Beetle Nature Reserve. That's right...beetles.

You can speed around the gorgeous Kawarau River at five-zillion km/h on a 40-minute jet-boat ride with **Goldfields Jet** (☎ 03-445 1038; www.goldfieldsjet.co.nz; adult/child \$85/49). Or for a more gentle option, check out local bird life on a four-hour boat trip with **Eco Experience** (☎ 03-445 1745; www.eco-tour.co.nz; 4 people \$350).

Sleeping

If you're staying, these are all fine options. **Cairnmuir Camping Ground** (☎ 021 264 1391; Cairnmuir Rd, Bannockburn; sites adult/child \$12/6, cabins adult/child \$20/10; (P)) Peaceful grassy camping ground beside the lake 10 minutes' drive from Cromwell.

Cromwell Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 107 275, 03-445 0164; www.cromwellholidaypark.co.nz; 1 Alpha St; sites adult/child \$16/8, cabins d \$55-65, self-contained \$95-141; (P) (Q)) The size of a small European nation

TWO WHEELS GOOD: OTAGO CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL

Stretching from Dunedin to Clyde, the Central Otago rail branch linked small, inland goldfield towns with the big city from the early 20th century through to the 1990s. After the 150km stretch from Middlemarch to Clyde was permanently closed, the rails were ripped up and the trail resurfaced. The result is a year-round trail that takes bikers, walkers and horseback riders along a historic route containing old rail bridges, viaducts and tunnels. With excellent trailside facilities (toilets, shelters and information), no steep hills, gob-smacking scenery and profound remoteness, the trail attracts well over 10,000 visitors annually.

The trail can be followed in either direction. One option is to travel from Dunedin on the scenic Taieri Gorge Railway (p590), cycle from Pukerangi to Middlemarch (19km by road) and begin the trail the following day. The entire trail takes approximately four to five days to complete by bike (or a week on foot), but you can obviously choose to do as short or long a stretch as suits your plans. There are also easy detours to towns such as Naseby and St Bathans. See the map on p579 for the route. All of these offer accommodation and dining of some sort.

Zeroing the bike computer at Middlemarch, the towns through which you pass, in order of increasing distance away from Dunedin, are: Hyde (27km), Waipiata (49km), Ranfurly (59km, with a possible detour to Naseby), Wedderburn (63km), Lauder (107km, possible detour to St Bathans), Omakau (117km), Chatto Creek (106km), Alexandra (143km), and finally Clyde (151km).

Mountain bikes can be rented in Clyde, Alexandra, Ranfurly, Middlemarch and Dunedin. Any of the area's major i-SITES or other information centres (including Alexandra, Cromwell and Dunedin) can provide detailed information on the trail. Grab a copy of the free booklet *Otago Central Rail Trail* to aid with planning, or hop online at www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz to get track information, accommodation options and tour companies.

and packed with cabins, units and rooms of various descriptions.

Golden Gate Lodge (☎ 0800 104 451, 03-445 1777; www.goldengate.co.nz; Barry Ave; r \$115-180; P, ♿) Nice views. Get a room at the back if traffic noise might bother you.

Eating

It's in the eating department that Cromwell excels. Any of the following are wonderful options for a meal.

Juice Café (☎ 03-445 2211; SH8B; meals from \$9; ☎ 8am-5pm) Sitting beside the state highway at the entry to town, this sunny little café dishes up far better meals than it has any right to. Grab a delicious salad or doner kebab, or get stuck into one of their famous juicy smoothies (\$6).

Grain & Seed Café (☎ 03-445 1007; Old Cromwell Town; lunch from \$10; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily) Set in a beautiful stone building that was once Jolly's Grain Store, this cute little café serves up big, delicious, inexpensive meals. If it's sunny, grab a table outside next to the lake.

Lazy Dog (☎ 03-445 3211; Cairnmuir Rd, Bannockburn; dishes from \$10; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Wed, to 11.30pm Thu-Sun) Attached to the Akarua Winery, 10 minutes out of Cromwell, this is a relaxed café-bar where lingering is welcome and even

the simplest of food is tasty and interesting. Very traveller-friendly and very kid-friendly. The eponymous pooch is a retired sheepdog, and not to be fed. Courtesy vehicle available.

Getting There & Away

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-349 0697; www.atomictravel.co.nz), **Catch-a-Bus** (☎ 03-479 9960; www.catchabus.co.nz), **InterCity** (☎ 03-474 9600; www.intercity.co.nz), **Naked Bus** (☎ 0900 625 33; www.nakedbus.com) and **Wanaka Connexions** (☎ 03-443 9122; www.time2.co.nz/transport/wanaka_connexions) all run from Cromwell to Queenstown and Alexandra for \$15 to \$20 and to Dunedin for \$35 to \$40. All services except Wanaka Connexions connect on to Christchurch and Invercargill.

CLYDE

pop 850

The little village of Clyde (www.clyde.co.nz) on the bank of the emerald green Clutha River looks more like a cute 19th-century gold-rush film set than a real town. Despite a recent influx of retirees (or perhaps because of them) Clyde retains a friendly, small-town feel, even when holidaymakers arrive in numbers over summer, and is a great place to chill out for a couple of days. It's also one end of the Otago Central Rail Trail (above).

Sights & Activities

Pick up a copy of *Walk Around Historic Clyde*, which leads you on an interesting self-guided walk through the town and its past. **Clyde Historical Museum** (☎ 03-449 2711; Blyth St; adult/child \$3/1; ☎ 2-4pm Tue-Sun, closed May-Oct) has random Maori and Victorian bits and pieces and some information about the Clyde Dam. Check the lovely old oil *Gathering of the Clans* to confirm that the ancestor of Canterbury's Jock Mackenzie (p565) was a wistful, layabout sort of chap.

The **Alexandra-Clyde 150th Anniversary Walk** (three hours one-way) is a riverside trail that's fairly flat with ample resting spots and shade. Or you can cycle the first bit of the rail trail towards Alexandra (8km) and Chatto Creek (another 17km). **Trail Journeys** (☎ 0800 724 587; www.trailjourneys.co.nz; Clyde Railhead; ☎ tours Sep-Apr) rents bikes (from \$25 per day) and kayaks (from \$35) and offers cycling tours.

Sleeping & Eating

Hartley Arms Backpackers (☎ 03-449 2700; hartleyarms@xtra.co.nz; 25 Sunderland St; dm/s/d \$35/50/70) In the old stables behind a beautiful 1869 building that was once the Hartley Arms Hotel, these three cosy rooms look out to a peaceful, private, stone-walled garden and share a small kitchen/lounge. Tables and chairs in the shade of the cherry tree are a fine place to stretch limbs weary from 150km of rail trail.

Dunstan Hotel (☎ 03-449 2817; 35 Sunderland St; s/d \$35/55) This lovely old stone hotel has comfortable pub rooms upstairs and a bar downstairs with meals (mains from \$11 to \$17) and very occasional live music.

Dunstan House (☎ 03-449 2295; www.dunstanhouse.co.nz; 29 Sunderland St; d \$100-200; ♿) This Victorian-aged balconey inn has been restored with a fine-tooth comb. The lovely guests' bar and lounge areas encourage delusions of colonial grandeur – you'll find yourself with port in hand in front of the roaring fire before you know it. Rooms with en suites, individually decorated in period style, are a little pricier; most have claw-foot tubs. Less expensive (but still flash) rooms are next door in 'Miners Lane'.

Post Office Café & Bar (☎ 03-449 2488; 2 Blyth St; mains \$8-25; ☎ 10am-9pm) Clyde's stately old 1899 post office houses a popular restaurant famous for its garden tables and gourmet versions of substantial favourites such as hotpot or BBQ steak sandwiches. The neighbouring old

postmaster's house has lovely rooms (doubles from \$95) with antique furnishings such as travelling trunks and bureaus. If you need to wash away the cares of the trail, take the king room (\$125) with its large claw-foot tub.

Getting There & Away

Although no-one has a dedicated stop here, buses travelling between Cromwell and Alexandra pick up and drop off in Clyde on request (it may incur a small surcharge). See opposite for details.

ALEXANDRA

pop 4620

Unless you've come to Alexandra especially for September's NZ Merino Shearing Championships or the Easter Bunny Hunt (both events that draw *hundreds* to the town), the reason to visit this rather nondescript service hub is for the nearby mountain biking. Some travellers, entranced by well-shorn sheep and rabbit-free slopes, stay for seasonal fruit-picking work.

There's an informative **Alexandra i-SITE** (☎ 03-448 9515; www.tco.org.nz; 22 Centennial Ave; ☎ 9am-6pm; ♿), which has pamphlets, maps and internet access. Alexandra's a fairly large, spread-out town so grab a copy of the free map.

Sights & Activities

The modern **Alexandra Museum** (☎ 03-448 6230; 22 Centennial Ave; admission by donation; ☎ 9am-6pm) attached to the i-SITE has exhibits on geology, exploration and gold-mining.

Mountain bikers, you will have found El Dorado here, with old gold trails weaving through the hills, and of course the **Otago Central Rail Trail** (see boxed text, opposite). Collect the relevant maps from the i-SITE, along with a series of mountain-biking pamphlets that detail many more rides, from family-friendly pootling to advanced adrenaline. **Altitude Adventures** (☎ 03-448 8917; www.altitudeadventures.co.nz; 88 Centennial Ave, Alexandra) and **Trail Journeys** (☎ 0800 724 587; www.trailjourneys.co.nz; Clyde Railhead) both rent bikes, offer back-country cycling tours and provide transport to trailheads.

Sleeping

There's a dire shortage of good sleeping options in Alex.

Alexandra Holiday Park (☎ 03-448 8297; alex.hol.park@xtra.co.nz; 44 Manuherikia Rd; sites \$27, cabins d \$38-55; P) Sitting beside the road out to Ranfurly,

this big field offers plenty of shade and backs onto Manuherikia River, where you can take a dip. It's close to where the rail trail enters town. Self-contained units (which sleep up to six) start at \$82 for two.

Marj's Place (☎ 03-448 7098; 5 Theyers St; dm \$25; (P) (Q)) Two houses have myriad higgly piggly rooms and a nice communal vibe, helped by the peaceful rose garden out back. Modern homestay rooms attached to the main house are \$45 per person.

Fruitlands B&B (p600) is an interesting option, 13km south towards Roxburgh.

Eating & Entertainment

Blues Lounge (☎ 03-448 9599; 49 Centennial Ave; lunch from \$9.50, dinner from \$11.50; ☎ 8.30am-late Tue-Sat) With local artworks (and guitars) on the walls, and bluesy music on the sound system, this funky, retro little café-bar is worth stopping in at even if you're not looking for a full meal. Instead just pop in for a quick Cajun bite and a glass of one of many beers.

Shaky Bridge Café (☎ 03-448 5111; Graveyard Gully Rd; lunch \$13-19, dinner mains \$28-30; ☎ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Thu-Sat) Over a 110-year-old foot-bridge near the rail trail, Shaky Bridge is a winery café in a sweet old mudbrick building with a magnificent view of the Manuherikia River. Tuck into locally sourced delicacies such as venison, duck or salmon, and appreciate the subtle Asian flavours.

our pick Red Brick Café (☎ 03-448 9174; www.redbrickcafe.co.nz; Centrepoint car park off Limerick St; mains \$15-30; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Wed, 11am-late Thu-Sun; (V)) It's a wonderful surprise to come across this funky café-wine bar insalubriously positioned beside an Alexandra shoppers' car park. It's the last place you'd expect to find a café so comfortably stylish, or scallops that are so perfectly seared. Yum! Most ingredients (and wines) are locally sourced. Reduced dinner nights in midwinter.

Sagun Indian Cuisine (☎ 03-448 7454; 24 Tarbert St; ☎ 11am-9.30pm Tue-Sun, 5-9.30pm Mon) is a good takeaway option. Head to **Foursquare** (91 Tarbert St) for self-catering.

Getting There & Away

See the Cromwell section (p596) for buses that pass along this route. From Alex you can head northwest past Cromwell towards Queenstown, south past Roxburgh and Lawrence towards the east coast (p600), or northeast along the Pig Root (see right).

ALEXANDRA TO PALMERSTON

Northeast of Alexandra, an irrigated strip of land tags alongside the highway – a running oasis of rolling pastures and tiny woods. The Dunstan and North Rough Ranges rise impressively either side of the highway. This is the Manuherikia Valley, which tumbles into the Maniototo plain as State Hwy 85 (SH85). From here to Palmerston and the sea, the winding, scenic road is charmingly known as the 'Pig Root'.

Chatto Creek Tavern (☎ 03-447 3710; SH85; meals \$8-15; (P)) is a cute stone hotel from the 1880s right beside the rail trail and the highway. Pop in for a whitebait fritter (in season) or steak sandwich, or sling your rucksack under one of its bunks (dorms \$15).

Made up of half a handful of historic buildings, and home to just 50 souls, tiny **Ophir** lies across the Manuherikia River and lays claim to the country's largest range of temperatures (from 35°C above to 22°C below). Take the gravel exit south off SH85 to rattle across the cute, 1870s wooden-planked Dan O'Connell Bridge, a bumpy but scenic crossing. **Black's Hotel** (☎ 03-447 3826; steven.chapman@paradise.net.au; s/d incl breakfast \$80/110) has cycle-friendly accommodation.

Back on SH85, the next couple of towns don't offer much reason to stop unless you're a rail trailer with a sore bum and a need for a bed. If that's the case, each of these towns has accommodation options, the most interesting of which are probably the hotels (and you'll get to meet some interesting backcountry Kiwis too). The **Omakau Commercial Hotel** (☎ 03-447 3715; omakaucommercial@xtra.xo.nz; 1 Harvey St; s/d \$45/80) was made famous by 'Southern Man' Speights adverts, and has sunny, quaint rooms. You'll also find a limited number of beds, and surprisingly tasty, healthy pub food at the **Lauder Hotel** (☎ 03-447 3706; laudertavern@paradise.net.nz; SH85; r per person \$50).

Take the turn-off north, into the foothills of the imposing Dunstan Range and on to tiny **St Bathans**, 17km from SH85. This once-thriving gold-mining town of 2000 people is now home to only a half-dozen permanent residents. **Blue Lake** is an accidental man-made attraction: a large hollow filled with amazingly blue mineral water that's run off abandoned gold workings. Walk around the alien-looking lake's edge to a lookout (one hour return).

The **Vulcan Hotel** (☎ 03-447 3629; Main Rd; dm/d \$35/\$90) dates from 1863 and has a number

of rooms to let as well as doing pub meals (mains \$20). Considering a population of only six people (plus one labrador and a ghost or two), you'll find the bar here pretty busy on a Friday night. The Vulcan also rents some empty houses nearby. Guide (the labrador) will escort you down to a handful of cute cottages (singles/doubles \$45/90), including the old gaol.

If you can manage it, get along to the annual Wooden Cup rugby match (September). St Bathans (and helpers) versus the lads from Becks, down the road – a near-legendary celebration of small-town rugby. You won't find a room empty for miles around, but might get a campsite at the rugby domain.

Back on SH85, the road swings around to run southeast and passes the historic **Wedderburn Tavern** (☎ 03-444 9548; www.wedderburntavern.co.nz; SH85; dm/d \$35/70; (P)). Seven kilometres later is the turn-off for Naseby, or it's straight through to Ranfurly.

Naseby pop 100

Cute as a button, surrounded by forest and dotted with 19th-century stone buildings, little old Naseby is the kind of small town where life moves slowly. That the town is pleasantly obsessed with the fairly insignificant world of NZ curling (www.curling.co.nz) indicates there's not much else going on. It's that lazy small-town vibe, along with good bike and walk trails through the surrounding forest, that make Naseby an interesting place to stay a couple of days.

Naseby Information & Crafts (☎ 03-444 9961; nasebyinfocentre@xtra.co.nz Derwent St), in the grand old post office, has information on local walks and bike trails. **Naseby Forest Headquarters** (☎ 03-444 9995; Derwent St) is also good for maps of walks through the Black Forest. In winter, ice-skate at the small, outdoor **Maniototo Ice Rink** (☎ 03-444 9270; Channel Rd; half-day adult/child \$10/8; ☎ 10am-6pm Jun-Aug), or get curling tuition for \$20.

Set in 17 acres of woods, **Larchview Holiday Park** (☎ 03-444 9904; www.larchviewholidaypark.co.nz; Swimming Dam Rd; sites per person \$12, s \$25-35, d \$35-65; (P) (Q)) has an alpine feel, a small on-site playground and swimming at the neighbouring dam nearby. There are also basic timber cabins, chalets and houses.

Mountain View Accommodation (☎ 03-444-9972; eileenherd@xtra.co.nz; 13a Channel Rd; s \$65, d \$85-100; (P)) has comfortable lemony flats attached to the

owners' house with plush bedding, and the more expensive options have cooking facilities. On the hill across the road, the cottage is a steal at \$120 for two (\$20 per extra adult; sleeps up to 10!).

A mudbrick hotel dating from 1863, **Ancient Briton** (☎ 03-444 9990; www.nasebytoppub.co.nz; 16 Leven St; s \$75, d from \$105) has a rambling range of basic-to-comfortable accommodation, including options that are good for families. Inside, line your stomach with traditional pub grub (dinner mains \$21 to \$25), or prop yourself up at the bar to admire the trophies of the pub's 'Blue Hats' curling team and get to know the locals.

Tasty fresh baking and good coffee is a delight in the cosy **Black Forest Café** (☎ 03-444-9820; 5 Derwent St; meals from \$9; ☎ 9am-5pm), gorgeous inside with its stone walls, red walls and warm polished wood. (The author feels honour bound to point out that he was *busted* in this café, and was then bribed with a slice of delicious fudge.)

The pub has a courtesy van and will pick up from Ranfurly or the rail trail. If prebooked, **Catch-a-bus** (☎ 03-479 9960; www.catchabus.co.nz) stops in Naseby on its Dunedin-Cromwell route. If you're driving, take the exit off SH85, just north of Ranfurly. From Naseby, if you want, you can wind your way northeast through spectacular scenery to **Danseys Pass** and through to Duntroon and the Waitaki Valley (p606).

Ranfurly pop 840

Ranfurly is trying hard to cash in on its Art Deco buildings (much of the town was rebuilt in the architecture of the day after a series of fires in the 1930s) but while there are a few attractive buildings, the town itself is fairly bleak.

The **Maniototo visitor information centre** (☎ 03-444 1005; Charlemont St; ☎ 10am-4pm daily Oct-Apr, Mon-Fri May-Sep; (Q)) is in the old train station. Grab a copy of *Rural Art Deco - Ranfurly Walk* for a self-guided tour of the days when the Charlestone and boater hats were still cool.

The **Old Post Office Backpackers** (☎ 03-444 9588; www.oldpostbackpackers.co.nz; 11 Pery St; s/d \$38/55; (P)) is popular with rail trailers, who rate the showers here among the best on the trail. The Art Deco **Ranfurly Lion Hotel** (☎ 03-444 9140; 10 Charlemont St; s \$50, d from \$70; (Q)) has 16 comfortable rooms, a couple of fairly unattractive bars and does substantial pub meals (dinner \$20 to \$27).

Cheery and warm, with an open fire, local art and the (fairly modest) Maniototo sports wall of fame, **E-Central Café** (☎ 03-444 8300; 14 Charlemont St; mains \$7-15; ☺ breakfast & lunch) is definitely the best lunch option in town. Home-baked *panini* and giant toasties will find favour, and its coffee is excellent.

A daily **Catch-a-Bus** (☎ 03-479 9960; www.catchabus.co.nz) shuttle passes through Ranfurly on its way between Wanaka and Dunedin. You can rent bikes from **Ranfurly Bike Hire** (☎ 03-444 9245; r.j.parker@xtra.co.nz; 20 Charlemont St; per day \$35).

WAIPIATA

About 10km southeast of Ranfurly and directly on the rail trail, Waipiata is a tiny little village with an interesting 110-year-old country hotel, the **Waipiata Tavern** (☎ 03-444 9470; www.waipiaata.co.nz; dinner mains \$19-22; ☑ ☒), good for a cool beer and a natter with the locals, a hearty meal, and/or a comfy bed (adult/child \$55/40). If you want to stay a while they'll direct you to local places of interest.

The tavern runs the **Iron Horse Backpackers** (Tregonning Rd; adult/child \$55/40), on a farm 4km out of town. This fantastic 1880s mudbrick farmhouse is fabulously rustic inside and out, so you'll easily imagine yourself in gold-rush times, yet the rooms are extremely comfortable. You can make your own way there or avail yourself of the tavern's courtesy van. They'll even run you back in for dinner at the pub.

Ranfurly to Dunedin

After Ranfurly, SH85 runs 62km to Palmerston, then 55km south to Dunedin or 59km north to Oamaru. Another option is to hop on the southbound SH87 directly to Dunedin, 129km via Hyde and Middlemarch. In Hyde, the **Otago Central Hotel** (☎ 03-444 4800; dm \$45, d from \$130; ☑ ☒) provides boutique accommodation.

MIDDLEMARCH

With the Rock & Pillar Range as an impressive backdrop, the small town of Middlemarch (pop 200; www.middlemarch.co.nz) is one end of the Taieri Gorge Railway (see p590), and also a start or end-point of the Otago Central Rail Trail (see p596). If you haven't got your own wheels, you can rent bikes and gear from **Cycle Surgery** (☎ 03-477 7473; www.cyclesurgery.co.nz; 67 Stuart St; per day \$35).

If those Speights adverts get your heart all a flutter, stick around for the famous

Middlemarch Singles Ball each Easter, when southern men gather to woo city gals.

There's a few good accommodation options in town. **Blind Billy's Holiday Camp** (☎ 03-464 3355; middlemarch-motels.co.nz; Mold St, Middlemarch; tent sites per adult/child \$11/7, dm \$22, cabins d \$60) has a range of cheap accommodation (including self-contained units for \$90 to \$100 for two people, \$20 for extras), meals and excellent advice for bikers. The **Straith Taieri Hotel** (☎ 03-464 3800; www.straithtaierihotel.co.nz; Snow Ave; s/d \$50/100) also has rooms.

ALEXANDRA TO DUNEDIN

Heading south from Alexandra, SH8 winds along rugged, rock-strewn hills above Lake Roxburgh, then follows the Clutha River as it passes lush farms and orchards and cool, shady forestry plantations. En route are a number of small towns, many being leftovers of the gold-rush days.

Only 13km south of Alexandra, **Fruitlands Lodge** (☎ 03-449 2192; www.fruitlandscountrylodge.co.nz; SH8; d \$125) has three units in attractive gardens behind a charming 1860s building. The outdoors guests' lounge is a great place to relax fireside with a glass of port and a pack of cards.

The productive orchards surrounding the little township of **Roxburgh** provide excellent roadside stalls and equally plentiful seasonal fruit-picking work. **Roxburgh i-SITE** (☎ 03-446 8920; 120 Scotland St, ☺ 10am-4pm) has information on mountain biking and water sports. **Villa Rose Backpackers** (☎ 03-446 8761; remarkableorchards@xtra.co.nz; 79 Scotland St; dm \$23, d from \$50; ☑ ☒) is an old-fashioned villa with comfortable rooms and a modern kitchen. The manager can help sort out seasonal fruit-picking work. For a little more luxury, **Lake Roxburgh Lodge** (☎ 03-446 8220; www.lakeroxburghlodge.co.nz; Lake Roxburgh Village; studio \$110-150, 2-bdrm d \$145) has very comfortable stylish units. Staff will help you arrange tours, day trips, bike rides and kayaking, or you can just sit in the lakeside restaurant and enjoy the local fare.

From here, the road passes through Lawrence and the **Manuka Gorge Scenic Reserve**, a scenic route through wooded hills and gullies. SH8 joins SH1 in **Milton**.

Lawrence pop 480

Lawrence is a sweet little town in a valley surrounded by farmland and forestry plantations. For most travellers, it's not much more

than a place to stop for lunch – a particularly great idea as it's home to one of the best cafés in Otago. If lunch impresses you so much you want to stay for dinner (and breakfast, and lunch again...), a bit of investigation at the **visitor information centre** (☎ 03-485 9222; www.lawrence.co.nz; 17 Ross Pl; ☺ 9.30am-4.30pm, closed for lunch) will turn up some interesting gold-rush sites, walking and mountain-bike trails and jetboating.

An impressive old house dating from 1875, **Marama Lodge** (☎ 03-485 9638; www.maramalodge.co.nz; SH8; lodge d \$100, cottages s/d from \$30/80; ☑ ☒) has a big guest lounge and country-style rooms. Self-contained cottages are less grand but very comfortable. Breakfast and dinner options are available.

The three studio units and two one-bedroom flats at **Jafas Motels** (☎ 03-485 9005; www.jafaslawrence.co.nz; d \$120; ☑ ☒) are very comfortable and modern, and the shower pressure will pin you against the wall. Rent a mountain bike (\$40 per day) to explore the surrounding countryside. Wheelchair friendly.

Lemon Tree Café (☎ 03-485 9965; 28 Ross Pl; brunch \$7.50-17; ☺ 9.30am-4pm Thu-Mon) is the finest eatery between Dunedin and Gore. This sunny German oasis in rural Otago serves vaguely Mediterranean fare with lots of organic ingredients. If it's a sunny day, sit in the garden area alongside.

CLUTHA DISTRICT

The mighty Clutha River is NZ's highest-volume river, and is dammed in several places to feed hydroelectric power stations. **Balclutha** is South Otago's largest town but is of little interest to travellers other than as a place to stock up on supplies before setting off into the Catlins. The **Balclutha i-SITE** (☎ 03-418 0388; balclutha@i-site.org; 4 Clyde St) has local info.

NORTH OTAGO & WAITAKI

The broad, braided Waitaki River rushes across the northern boundary of Otago, setting the boundary with the one-eyed Cantabrians to the north. South of the river on the coast lies Oamaru, a town of penguins and penny-farthings that's worthy of a day or two of your time. The Waitaki Valley itself is an alternative route inland, featuring freaky

rock formations, Maori rock paintings and ancient fossils. Good sources of information on the area are www.tourismwaitaki.co.nz and www.waitaki.net.nz.

OAMARU pop 12,000

Nothing moves very fast in Oamaru: tourists saunter, locals languish and penguins waddle. Even the chosen forms of transportation – penny-farthings and steam trains – reflect an unhurried pace. For travellers, the town focuses mostly on penguins and the historic district, but eccentric gems such as the South Island's yummiest cheese factory, cool galleries and a peculiar live-music venue are other distractions.

A questionably glamorous history of refrigerated-meat shipping made Oamaru prosperous enough in the 19th century to build the imposing limestone buildings that grace the town today. Oamaru also has an affinity with the arts that may well be rooted in its claim to Janet Frame (see the boxed text, p604), but extends to a lively arty and crafty community today, including Donna Dementé, whose works can be seen at the Grainstore Gallery (p603).

Information

Get cash from ATMs on the main drag. **Oamaru i-SITE** (☎ 03-434 1656; www.visitoamaru.co.nz; 1 Thames St; ☺ 9am-6pm) Tonnes of information can be found here, including details on local walking trips and wildlife. You can also get online here.

Post office (cnr Coquet & Severn Sts) Send penguin-plastered postcards from here.

Small Bytes Computing (187 Thames St) Internet, next door to the Lagonda Tearooms.

Sights

HARBOUR-TYNE HISTORIC PRECINCT

Oamaru has some of NZ's best-preserved historic commercial buildings, particularly around the harbour and Tyne St, an area designated the Historic Precinct. They were built, largely using the local limestone (known as Oamaru stone or whitestone), from the 19th century in fashionable classic forms, from Gothic revival to neoclassical Italianate and Venetian palazzo. Pick up the free *Historic Oamaru* pamphlet, and see www.historicoamaru.co.nz.

This fascinating area of ancient buildings and narrow streets is now home to bookshops, antique stores, galleries, herbalists and more.



The **Woolstore** (1 Tyne St) has a café, tat and souvenirs, and the **Auto Museum** (☎ 03-434 1556; adult/child \$6/free; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) for car buffs (the racing cars from the '30s through '80s are particularly cool). Upstairs, there's a **craft market** (☎ 10am-4pm Sun) and giant novelty chess set. Around the corner at the **Photo Shoppe** (☎ 03-434 3372; ☎ 10.30am-1pm, 2-4pm), you can

get an olde-style photo of yeeself in period dress-ups for \$30.

In the world's most ornate **grain storehouse** (9 Tyne St), you'll find the lavishly decorated stage of the theatre company **Living History** (☎ 0800 548 344; www.livinghistory.co.nz; adult/concession/family \$20/15/50; ☎ Wed-Sun 6pm, summer only), which does live theatre around historical

themes. Their energetic **Great Storm** show, based in 1868, receives rave reviews. Much of the set and many of the props incorporate 'found' objects, and displays the work of locals artists, including Oamaru's best-known artist, Donna Dementé, who is one of the artists that run the **Grainstore Gallery** (☎ 10am-5pm) upstairs.

There are a couple of other interesting galleries: check out Oamaru limestone actually being carved at **Ian Andersen's gallery** (www.ianandersensculptor.co.nz; 15 Tyne St) and buy some smaller works to take home. You'll find more across the road at **Crucible** (16 Tyne St), with some nice bronzes and custom-made jewellery.

At the end of the Harbour St, the **NZ Malt Whisky Company** (☎ 03-434 8842; www.nzmal whisky.co.nz; 14 Harbour St; ☎ 10am-5pm) uses the upper story of a handsome 130-year-old warehouse to mature barrel-loads of single-malt and blended whisky. A walk around the barrel room (\$5 including a snifter downstairs) is interesting even if you're not a whisky connoisseur, and if you are, there's a guided tour (\$15 including four snifters; 11.30am and 4pm). The café-bar (open until late Wednesday to Saturday) serves bar meals from \$6, and you can buy bottles of the good stuff at the shop (open 10am to 5pm).

If you're here on a Sunday you can ride the old **steam train** (adult/child/family one way \$8/3/18, return \$5/2/12; ☎ 11am-4pm) from the historical district to the waterfront area. Get out and look around before catching a later train back (or walk). The two steam trains date from 1877 and 1924, but in winter, they're occasionally replaced by a diesel.

PENGUINS

Welcome to Penguintown. You can't spend more than an hour or two in Oamaru without realising the town is completely fixated on penguins – penguin postage stamps, penguin statues, penguin burgers, penguin cocktails... It's all due to the large **blue-penguin colony** in the old limestone quarry down near the waterfront, where tourists gather to watch cute little blue penguins slip, slide, scuttle and waddle ashore at the **visitors centre** (☎ 03-433 1195; www.penguins.co.nz; Waterfront Rd; adult \$20; ☎ 9am-sunset). The penguins arrive in numbers just before dark (5.30pm in midwinter, 9.30pm midsummer) and it takes them about an hour to all come ashore. You'll see the most penguins (up to 150) in November/December; in the

cold months from March to August there may be only 30 to 50 birds. It's cold, so dress warmly! Kids are \$10 and under fives are free. If you're interested in the conservation work the centre is doing, take the 30-minute daytime behind the scenes tour of the colony (adult/child \$15/7.50).

If you head towards the penguin visitors centre around dark, and wait quietly in the car park, you'll see a few penguins waddling across the car park about the time the penguin centre empties out and people head back to their cars and buses. If you want to contribute towards the health of the penguins, pop into the centre and drop some coins in the donation box – their conservation efforts have helped increase the bird population dramatically.

Do not under any circumstances wander around the rocks beside the sea here at night looking for penguins. It's damaging to their environment as well as bugging up studies on the effect of humans on the little birds. If any hostel owner tells you differently, tell them to stop being such a dick.

There are large hides and good trails to the **yellow-eyed penguin colony** at Bushy Beach, where the penguins come ashore in late afternoon to feed their young. Two hours before dark is the best time to see them. Despite their Maori name *hoiho* (noisy), they're extremely shy; if they see or hear you they'll head back into the water. **Graves Trail**, a 2.5km low-tide walk starts from the end of Waterfront Rd and follows the rugged coastline around to the yellow-eyed colony at Bushy Beach. Watch out for fur seals.

FORRESTER GALLERY

Housed in a beautiful, columned 1880s bank building, **Forrester Gallery** (☎ 03-434 1653; www.forrestergallery.com; 9 Thames St; admission free; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm) has an excellent collection of regional art and hosts diverse temporary exhibits, including contemporary media. It's a good place to see Colin McCahon's works. This really is a fantastic gallery, which is shockingly free. Check the website for current shows.

OTHER SIGHTS

The **Oamaru public gardens** (main entry on Severn St) was first opened in 1876 and is a lovely place to chill out on a hot day. Waterways, bridges, a children's playground (and crazy elephant slide) and endless acres of lawn make it a gorgeous place to lose yourself in.

OAMARU IN FRAME

One of NZ's best-known novelists, Janet Frame, is intimately linked with Oamaru. The town, disguised in her novels as 'Waimaru', was Frame's home throughout most of her early years. Her writing is often described as 'dense', with early books also somewhat grim, a reflection of her own troubled life. But they are also unique in the construction of their stories and the nature in which the story is told. Later books remain intense, with wordplays, mythological clues and illusions, but are less gloomy.

It was in 1951 while a (misdiagnosed) sufferer of schizophrenia at Seacliff Lunatic Asylum (p608) that Frame found sudden recognition as a writer, happily causing her doctors to rethink her planned lobotomy. Released, with frontal lobe intact, she moved on to gain international recognition in 1957 with her first novel *Owls Do Cry*, in which 'Waimaru' features strongly. Her subsequent literary accomplishments include *Faces in the Water* (1961) and *The Edge of the Alphabet* (1962), *Scented Gardens for the Blind* (1963), *A State of Siege* (1967) and *Intensive Care* (1970). Keep an eye out in NZ bookstores and you'll find new or second-hand copies. Or get Jane Campion's film version of *An Angel at my Table*, based on the second volume of Frame's autobiographical trilogy, to watch on DVD.

Many of the settings for these novels can be found in Oamaru. Pick up a free copy of *Janet Frame's Oamaru* from the Oamaru i-SITE and follow their 1½-hour self-guided tour.

Frame received numerous NZ and international awards, and was twice short-listed for the Nobel Prize for literature, most recently in 2003. She died the following year.

In the grand old 19th-century library, the **North Otago Museum** (☎ 03-434 1652; www.northotago.museum.co.nz; 60 Thames St; admission free; 🕒 10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 1-4.30pm Sat & Sun) has exhibits on Maori and Pakeha history, writer Janet Frame, architecture and geology.

Festivals & Events

Organic Food & Wine Festival Held in March.

Victorian Heritage Celebrations (www.historicoamaru.co.nz) Oamaru livens up in late November with locals wearing old-fashioned garb, penny-farthing races, singing, dancing and theatre during the five-day

Tours

Great Estates (☎ 800 548344; www.livinghistorynz.com; \$95) Seven-hour tour of Oamaru's (and surrounds') most fabulous manors, with staff at each dressed in period costume: Totara estate, Burnside homestead and Elderslie estate. Includes a tour of the historic precinct and lunch/snacks.

MP3 Self-Guided Tour (\$15) Grab an MP3 player from the i-SITE and conduct your own tour.

Penguin Express (☎ 03-434 7744; www.coastline-tours.co.nz; adult/child \$34/14) Door-to-door 2½-hour tour taking in the blue and yellow-eyed colonies. Price includes admission to yellow-eyed colony. Times vary throughout the year.

Ralph's Rambles (tours 🕒 11am & 2pm) Short (\$10) and long (\$20) tours of Oamaru highlights, and tours of Janet Frame literary sites (\$25). Tours range from 45 minutes to three hours. Enquire at Oamaru i-SITE.

Sleeping BUDGET

Oamaru Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 0800 280 202, 03-434 7666; www.oamarutop10.co.nz; Chelmer St; unpowered/powered sites \$25/26, cabins d \$50, self-contained d \$75-150; 🕒 📺) Grassy and well-maintained, this holiday park has trees out the back and the fantastic public gardens next door. Cabins are pretty basic but units with kitchen and varying levels of self-contained comfort are much nicer.

Empire Hotel (☎ 03-434 3446; www.empirebackpackers.co.nz; 13 Thames St; dm/s/d \$22/34/54; 🕒 📺) This 150-year-old hotel has been fitted out with cosy but modern backpackers' rooms. The two kitchens are large enough for everyone, the communal TV room is warmed by a nice wood burner, and bathrooms are clean and modern. Sitting right on the main street, it's the best-located accommodation in Oamaru. Even the penguins think so – they sometimes nest in the Empire's car park.

Red Kettle YHA (☎ 0800 600 100, 03-434 5008; www.yha.co.nz, yhaooamaru@hotmail.com; cnr Reed & Cross Sts; dm/d \$25/60; 📺) This cute, red-roofed cottage has colourfully painted inner walls courtesy of a past guest, and has a good kitchen and cosy lounge. A good vinyl collection will keep you and fellow guests entertained; enjoy singing along with Kenny Rogers or shaking it like Kylie or Travolta. It's on a quiet side street, a short walk from the town centre.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Criterion Hotel (☎ 03-434 6247; www.criterion.net.nz; 3 Tyne St; s \$95, d \$145-180) Period rooms at this 1877 hotel are small, but the guests' lounge is large, and both are lovingly restored. Also includes home baking and preserves in a homey dining room. Room prices include breakfast.

Pen-y-bryn Lodge (☎ 03-434 7939; www.penybryn.co.nz; 41 Towey St; s/d from \$495/790; 🕒 📺) Nearing its 120th birthday, this incredible old manor has lavish period rooms and guests' areas. Rates include a full breakfast, predinner drinks in the drawing room, and a five-course, gourmet dinner in the fabulous dining room. Retire afterwards to the billiard room and show off on the giant billiards table while Miss Scarlett reclines on the chaise longue and Prof Plum fetches the drinks.

The following are other midrange motel options:

Alpine Motel (☎ 0800 272 710, 03-434 5038; alpine.motel.oamaru@xtra.co.nz; 285 Thames St; d \$98-120; 🕒 📺) Kids \$10.

AAA Thames Court Motel (☎ 0800 223 644, 03-434 6963; www.aaathamescourt.co.nz; 252 Thames St; d \$98-140; 🕒 📺) Good option for families. Extra people \$15 each.

Eating

Espresso (☎ 03-434 1165; 30 Thames St; meals \$5-15; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sun) A superb option for early morning coffee, and the toasted sandwiches (\$7 to \$12) make it a good lunch option too. Grab a seat out the back if you want to soak up some afternoon sun.

Filadelfios (☎ 03-434 8884; 70 Thames St; pizzas \$15.50-29; 🕒 11.30am-late; 🍷) A brick restaurant-bar that specialises in rather special pizzas and pastas. Read other travellers' notes on the wall while you wait for it to arrive. Dips and antipasto are also popular, particularly late at night when it becomes a lively bar.

Steam (☎ 03-434 3344; 7 Thames St; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) Another great coffee option! Steam specialises in coffees and fruit juices, but if you want to bring along a snack from elsewhere, they're perfectly happy for you to eat it at their tables. This is also a good spot to stock up on freshly ground coffee for your own travels if you have the required equipment.

Whitestone Cheese Factory & Café (☎ 03-434 8098; www.whitestonecheese.co.nz; 3 Torridge St; mains \$10; 🕒 lunch 11am-2.30pm, shop 9am-5pm) The home of tasty, award-winning organic cheeses, famous in these here parts. Try the lovely, creamy

Mature Windsor Blue, the ultrarich Mt Domet Double Cream, and more. You can buy cheese to take away here, or dine here on various cheesy treats.

In the centre of town, **Countdown Supermarket** (cnr Thames & Coquet Sts) is well stocked for self-caterers.

Drinking

Fat Sally's (☎ 03-434 8368; 84 Thames St) Popular with locals, especially early on when they're often tucking into a substantial pub meal.

The restored **Criterion Hotel** (3 Tyne St) and **Whiskey Café & Bar** (14 Harbour St; 🕒 10am-late Wed-Sat) are both in the historic precinct.

Entertainment

There's a fairly active nightlife in Oamaru, better than towns twice its size.

Penguin Club (☎ 03-434 1402; Emulsion Lane off Harbour St; admission usually \$10-15) Certainly the greatest live-music venue between Dunedin and Christchurch, and some would argue, beyond. Tucked down a seedy industrial alley off a 19th-century street, the Penguin's bizarre location matches its acts: everything from Flying Nun stalwarts the Clean to punky/grungy/rocky/country locals, big national acts, moderately big international acts, or the Oamaru Mens' Singing Group. Fridays are open-stage jam night with free admission. If there's something on at Penguin, *anything*, go and see it.

Movie World 3 (☎ 03-434 1077, info line 03-434 1070; www.movieworld3.com; 239 Thames St; adult/child \$12.50/7.50) Strictly blockbuster territory. Cheaper before 5pm and on Tuesdays.

Globe (12 Coquet St; 🕒 Fri & Sat) is the town's nightclub. The café **Filadelfios** (70 Thames St) is another good late-night hotspot with occasional live music and delicious snacks (see left).

Getting There & Around

Bookings for all buses can be made through the Oamaru i-SITE. Most leave/arrive at **Lagonda Tearooms** (191 Thames St).

The following buses and shuttle buses go to Dunedin (1¼ hours) and Christchurch (3½ hours).

Atomic Shuttles (☎ 03-322 8883; www.atomictravel.co.nz) Dunedin/Christchurch \$20/30.

Coastline Tours (☎ 03-434 7744; www.coastline-tours.co.nz) Runs between Dunedin and Oamaru (\$28), and will detour to Moeraki, Karitane, Seacliff or the airport if needed.

InterCity (☎ 03-474 9600; www.intercity.co.nz)

Dunedin/Christchurch \$26/38.

Knightrider (☎ 03-342 8055; www.knightrider.co.nz)

Dunedin/Christchurch \$20/44.

Naked Bus (☎ 0900 625 33; www.nakedbus.com)

Dunedin/Christchurch \$19/\$25.

Southern Link (☎ 0508 458 835, 03-358 8355; www.southernlinkcoaches.com) Dunedin/Christchurch \$24/32.

WAITAKI VALLEY

The flat-bottomed pastoral Waitaki Valley is a little-travelled route but includes some unique sights and scenery between the turn-off at SH1 and Oamaru. Predominantly farmland, bordered by increasingly impressive hills as you near the Alps, the valley is also a blokes' paradise, known to all red-blooded Kiwi males as a place to shoot ducks, catch trout and salmon, water ski on the strikingly blue hydro lakes, and marvel at their associated hydroelectric engineering wonders. All that and some great Pinot Noirs too. Woof! This is a possible route to Wanaka/Queenstown if you're heading south, or to Twizel and Mt Cook if you're heading north.

After following SH83 almost to Duntroon, detour left at the signposted turn-off to Danseys Pass. Just on your left, under an impressive limestone overhang on a hill with great views to the mountains, you'll find the Maraewhenua **Maori rock paintings**. The charcoal-and-ochre paintings date back several centuries, tracing everything from pre-European hunting to sailing ships, as well as tributes to the ancient god Supergroove.

Follow the road southish another 4km then hang a left towards Ngatapa. Two kilometres further on in a peaceful sheep paddock are **Elephant Rocks**. Sculpted by wind, rain and rivers these giant limestone boulders lie about like slumbering mutant monsters (or, if you squint, a bit like elephants). It's certainly a bizarre, otherworldly landscape, which is why it was Aslan's Camp in the NZ-filmed *Narnia* blockbuster (2005). If the spirit of adventure takes you, you can continue on over Danseys Pass to Naseby from 2km back at the intersection.

Back on SH83 at Duntroon is the **Vanished World Centre** (☎ 03-431 2024; www.vanishedworld.co.nz; 7 Campbell St; adult/family \$5/10; ☎ 10am-5pm), with small but interesting displays of 25-million-year-old fossils, including NZ's shark-toothed dolphins and giant penguins. If fossils yank your chain, buy a small handbook (\$6) to find

other local sites. There's also a selection of books on geology, history and talking lions. The centre closes earlier in winter. Just west of Duntroon is the **Takiroa Maori Rock Art Site**, with more drawings dating back many centuries; the fluidity of the shapes is still clear enough to be admired.

Tiny **Kurow** (www.kurow.co.nz) is at the junction of the Waitaki and Hakatarama Rivers. If you're in the mood for good coffee, a great burger or home baking, it's worth stopping in at **Te Koharau Restaurant & Café** (☎ 03-436 0603). Kurow is the turn-off for the small, little-known Awakino ski field (which is not really set up for non club members, but if you have your own gear and want to join in on a club ski, contact Waitaki ski club, ☎ 03-434 5110). Pop into the **information centre** (☎ 03-436 0812; kurowcc@xtra.co.nz; main road) for pamphlets about huntin', fishin' and campin'.

Instead of continuing west from Kurow on SH83, take the 21km scenic detour over the Aviemore dam, around the northern lake shore past walking tracks and scenic **campsites** (\$10), then over the huge Benmore Dam earthworks. You rejoin SH83 just west of Otematata.

Oamaru pop 360

At the head of the Waitaki Valley, surrounded by mountain ranges, the Oamaru area is at the centre of fabulous landscapes. The bizarre moonscape of the **Clay Cliffs** (admission \$5) is the result of two million years of erosion on layers of silt and gravel that were exposed along the active Osler fault line. The cliffs are on private land; the turn-off is 3.5km north of Oamaru, then it's another 10km on unsealed road.

See where the wool in your fancy new Icebreaker top came from. **Wrinkly Rams** (☎ 03-438 9751; www.thewrinklyrams.co.nz; SH8; adult/child/family \$20/10/50; ☎ 2 or 3 shows daily 10.30am-4.30pm) does 30-minute stage shows of merino sheep being shorn using both modern and traditional methods, along with a sheep-dog show. A BBQ lunch is included. Attached is one of the town's better restaurants.

If you can time your visit to coincide with the Oamaru **rodeo** (28 December), or the Oamaru **sheep-dog trials** (March), you should do it.

The area's westerlies and warm summer thermals allow for world-class gliding over the

hills and spectacular Southern Alps, and the **national gliding meet** is held here in December or January. Two companies will get you aloft from around \$240.

Southern Soaring (☎ 0800 762 746; www.soaring.co.nz)
Glideomarama.com (☎ 0508 585 588; www.glideomarama.com)

SLEEPING

Buscot Station (☎ 03-438 9646; buscotstn@xtra.co.nz; SH8; tent per person \$12.50, dm/d \$20/50; ☎ ☎) A slightly chintzy, but very comfortable farmhouse on a huge farm with big, open views. Large doubles in the main house and a large modern dormitory out back are all comfortable, or there are semipermanent tents. Tony shares his kitchen and lounge as well as his theories on farming and politics. The lounge is cosy and packed with comfy armchairs – leave the telly off and enjoy the vinyl: 123, *Prosit!* You'll find the turn-off to Buscot's 10km north of Oamaru.

Oamaru Top 10 Holiday Park (☎ 03-438 9875; www.omaramatop10.co.nz; SH8; sites per adult/child \$15/7.50, cabins d \$45-70; ☎ ☎) Streamside and duckponded, this is a peaceful green space to camp in. Cabins are teeny tiny. Larger en suite and self-contained units are \$95 for two.

Heritage Gateway Hotel (☎ 03-438 9850; www.heritagegateway.co.nz; SH8; d \$145-190; ☎ ☎ ☎) A large complex of comfortable, modern rooms (all with en suite) and a restaurant-bar on the road towards Queenstown.

EATING

Wrinkly Rams (☎ 03-438 9751; SH8; breakfast \$8-15, dinner \$18-27; ☎ 7am-9pm) Restaurants attached to tourist attractions are notoriously dodgy, but the dinners here (pan-fried cod, tender lamb shanks...) are quite delicious and staff are relaxed and welcoming. Big glass windows and outside tables give a nice view of the mountains while you eat.

Clay Cliffs Estate (☎ 03-438 9654; 1 Pinot Noir Ct, off SH8; mains \$15-28; ☎ 11am-midnight Wed-Sun) This classy Tuscan-style winery restaurant looks out on lovely peaceful gardens and duck ponds. Be sure to accompany your meal with some of the winery's own Pinot Gris, Muscat or Pinot Blanc.

Oamaru Hotel (☎ 03-438 9713; cnr SH8 & SH83; meals \$12-23) A circular pub that does pub food, displays several things to shoot or catch locally and proudly records local sheep-dog winners.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Oamaru you have the choice of heading north up SH8 past beautiful Lake Ohau to Twizel and Mt Cook, or southwest through striking Lindis Pass towards Cromwell and Queenstown. Stop before Lindis Pass to add your own roadside cairn.

OAMARU TO DUNEDIN

It's 114km along SH1 from Oamaru to Dunedin and all too easy to blast up at the open-road speed limit without stopping on the way. There are some really delightful places to stay along here though, and they alone justify spending more time. The narrow, ocean-hugging road travelling south from Oamaru provides a break from SH1, and has some gorgeous coastal views; take Wharfe St out of town (following the signs for Kakanui).

About 5km south of Oamaru, **Old Bones Backpackers** (☎ 03-434 8115; www.oldbones.co.nz; Beach Rd; dm/s/d \$30/43/60; ☎ ☎) is beautifully designed, with rooms off a sunny, central space which encourages a safe, communal feeling. Close enough to the sea to hear the surf at night, this is a place to just relax in front of a huge bank of windows looking over farmland to the sea, and get stuck into a favourite book. A number of readers named this hostel the highlight of their stay in NZ.

Also near the beach, 16km from Oamaru, is **Coastal Backpackers** (☎ 03-439 5411; www.coastalbackpackers.co.nz; Waianakarua Rd, All Day Bay; dm/d \$24/50, self-contained d \$75; ☎ closed Jun-Sep). With a big garden and good swimming at the beach, you may find yourself extending your stay here. Choose from rooms in the main lodge, a teeny-tiny cabin for two or the self-contained unit in the main house.

Rejoining SH1 again at Waianakarua, you just need to backtrack a couple of hundred metres north to find the delightful gardens of the **Olive Grove Backpacker & Campsite** (☎ 03-439 5830; www.olivebranch.co.nz; SH1 Waianakarua; sites per adult/child \$12/6, powered sites \$30, dm/d \$25/60; ☎). Surrounded by farm, encircled by the Waianakarua River, with birdsong and shady trees, this is an extremely popular campsite for Kiwis around summer. The backpacker rooms are brightly painted, with interesting artworks, and the sunny communal lounge is a treat. Kids will love the adventure playground and highland cattle; parents will love the spa, eco lifestyle, organic vegies and peaceful vibe. En

suite rooms (doubles \$70, \$15 extra for a third person) are good options for families.

Further south on SH1, 30km south of Oamaru, stop to check out the **Moeraki Boulders** (Te Kaihinaki; honesty-box fee \$2), a collection of large spherical boulders that sit on a stunning stretch of beach, scattered about like a giant kid's discarded marbles. Try to time your visit with low tide. There's a perfectly fine restaurant here, but it would be a crime to be hungry in Moeraki and not dine at Fleur's (below).

Moeraki township is a charming little fishing village that you really should visit *now* before it's overrun by real-estate agents and retired Aucklanders. It's a nice 1½-hour walk along the beach between the village and the boulders, or head in the other direction towards the Kaiks wildlife trail and a cute old wooden lighthouse – a great spot to see yellow-eyed penguins and fur seals up close. For such a small town, Moeraki's nurtured the creation of more than its fair share of national treasures, from Francis Hodgkins' paintings to Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*...and Fleur Sullivan's cooking.

our pick **Fleur's Place** (☎ 03-439 5980; www.fleur.space.com; Old Jetty, Moeraki; mains \$13-34; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) has a rumble-tumble look about it, but this stylish timber hut serves up some of the South Island's best food. Not surprisingly, the speciality is seafood, fresh off the boats that tie up only metres away; however, it's equally popular among locals for an evening wine (and occasional live music). Head for the upstairs deck and smell the ocean while you tuck into fresh chowder, tender mutton bird or whatever fish the boats caught last night.

There's a handful of accommodation options here. **Moeraki Motel** (☎ 03-439 4862; nr Beach & Haven Sts; d \$95; 📍) has self-contained units with balconies. **Moeraki Village Holiday Camp** (☎ 03-439 4759; moerakivillageholidaypark.co.nz; 114 Haven St; tent sites \$12, powered sites \$24, d \$40-120; 📍) occupies a

small field above the road into town and has cabins and motel units. **Stan Lusby** (☎ 03-439 4106; stanley.richard.lusby@xtra.co.nz; 50 Haven St; d \$50) lets a room behind his cottage.

Detouring off SH1 to the coast again at Karitane, you wind down the scenic coastal road, crossing and recrossing the Dunedin–Palmerston rail line, and passing through a couple of blink-and-you-miss-'em villages.

our pick **Asylum Backpackers** (☎ 03-465 8123; Russell Rd, Seacliff; dm/s/d \$23/38/54; 📍), on the grounds of the old, fabulously named Seacliff Lunatic Asylum, is a lovely chilled-out place to while away some days. The communal lounge, with its giant palm, has an excellent selection of music for relaxing in front of the wood-burner, or if you can get off your bum there's kayaking and fishing (\$30), surfing (\$10), biking (free) and horse riding (\$55) to be done (the horses roam freely around the grounds, occasionally peering in the windows). Many people come here for a day and stay for weeks, those with mechanical skills sometimes pitching in to help with the 50-odd wonderful old classic cars (1920s to '60s), or with restoring the old bluestone building.

The rest of the old asylum grounds are now the **Truby King Reserve**, with parklands, overgrown gardens and native forest – a nice spot for a picnic or a stroll. To be honest, even though it's a beautiful park, it's a site with a scary, horrible history. Far too many people were essentially imprisoned here with dodgy justification, and far too many of them were brutalised by the experience, or by the staff – these were the days when lobotomies and de-sexing operations were still *de rigueur*. Almost 30 women, locked in their dorms, were killed in a fire here in 1942. Among Seacliff's most famous residents was one of NZ's greatest novelists, Oamaru's Janet Frame (see p604). If you wander through the gardens you'll find a plaque recording some of her thoughts.

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