

Getting outdoors

Local lingo

The backblocks:

A typical Southern expression, used to refer to a location with limited or difficult access, or untamed wilderness. Sometimes also called 'the sticks'.

Off the beaten track:

Off the main road, especially on rough, unpaved tracks.

X marks the spot

One of Otago's best four wheel drive tracks is the Old Dunstan Road, which provides access to Poolburn reservoir, the location for the filming of the 'Village of Rohan' in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings*.

The car's packed to bursting with tent, sleeping bags, stretchers, gas cooker and camp table. The kids are piled in like sardines among the bags and bedding. After a last minute dash to the toilet, the family's finally all sorted and it's off for the great summer camping adventure.

The call of the outdoors has always been particularly strong for residents of the South. The people of Otago are lucky enough to have some of New Zealand's most spectacular country right on their back doorstep, ready and waiting to be explored, and that great kiwi tradition known as 'freedom camping' has long been a part of the Otago back country experience. These days, there aren't many places in the world where you can simply pitch a tent in the middle of nowhere. Freedom camping is a privilege, however, and its future depends on all campers respecting our unique environment.

For at least 50 years, the good old '4WD' has been the vehicle of choice for locals wanting to explore the backblocks of Otago. Barren tussock landscapes and alpine river valleys, goldmining ghost towns and *Lord of the Rings* film sites can all be found off the beaten track. There are at least seven established fourwheel drive clubs in Otago, which organise group trips into the hinterland for club members. A major focus of such clubs is family involvement and safe and responsible driving, and they work hard to set up good relationships with local landowners and the Department of Conservation.



Otago kids enjoying camping by the river



Four wheel drive vehicles making their way across the Otematata River

