

Gold

Jargon hunter

Sluicing: using water to wash away gravel and other impurities.

Tailings: the leftovers after gold (or any other kind of ore) has been removed.

Hard-rock gold: occurs within quartz veins in schist rock.

Alluvial gold: occurs as grains in the gravel formed by erosion of schist rock.

Hey guess what?

There are still numerous goldmining operations active in Otago today. The largest of these is Macraes gold mine at Macraes Flat in East Otago, which produces around 100kg of gold per week. To see the 320 tonne trucks and 350 tonne excavators in action tours of the mine are available.

In the early 1860s people from New Zealand, Australia, California and Europe flocked to Otago following the gold trail. In 1862 the population of the town of Lawrence stood at 11,472, more than double Dunedin's population at the time.

Gabriel Read discovered gold near Lawrence in May 1861, at Gabriel's Gully on the Tuapeka River. Just over a year later, in August 1862, two Californian miners deposited 87 pounds of gold in Dunedin retrieved from the upper reaches of the Clutha River. The goldrush was on and by the end of 1864 it had spread throughout the whole of Central Otago. It also transformed Dunedin from a struggling settlement into New Zealand's premier 19th century city.

Searching for gold was hard work, with only the most basic of equipment available. Gold pans and sluice boxes were used with gold bearing gravels being shovelled by hand. Invariably water was required to wash away the gravel, which led to long water races built to work mine sites. Hydraulic methods were employed to work elevated terraces using high-pressure water. Steam powered dredges were used to mine gravel deposits along the rivers and rock crushing batteries were employed to recover gold from rocks.

There are plenty of ways to explore Otago's goldmining past. In Lawrence you can visit the Goldfields Museum or take a walk to explore old goldmining sites. Gold pans are available from the Lawrence Information Centre for you to try your luck where it all began, panning for gold at Gabriel's Gully.



Giving gold panning a go



Tailings – a legacy of goldmining days

