

Maniototo high country

Digging deeper...

St Bathans' Blue Lake is on the site formerly occupied by a 120m high hill. It was created by sluicing and excavation as part of the goldrush. It is now a 69m deep hole!

Hey guess what?

Naseby, like many Central Otago settlements, changed its name several times. It was originally called Parkers after William and Richard Parker, who were the first to discover gold in the area. It was also known as Hogburn for a while but Naseby, after Naseby in England, is the name that eventually stuck.

Sculptured rocky mountain ranges covered in tussocky grasslands... Expansive plains broken only by the Taieri River, lazily snaking its way towards lower ground. This is a land that was first settled by those hoping to strike it rich in the goldrush days of the late 1800s.

The Maniototo's economic history has revolved around gold and farming. Gold was the original driving force behind human settlement in the Maniototo, with towns such as Naseby and St Bathans set up around gold removal. Many goldmining towns have now all but vanished, bar a few visual reminders such as the Kyeburn cemetery.

Naseby is the 'jewel of the Maniototo' and was once the main centre. A town where plenty of Victorian architecture has survived, Naseby was once home to as many as 5,000 goldminers. Its permanent population now is only around 100 but its popularity as a holiday destination periodically swells its numbers to as many as 3,000. In summer, mountain biking and walking are popular pursuits, while in winter you can go ice skating or try your hand at curling.

Ranfurly is now the Maniototo's main settlement and service centre. It grew quickly after the opening of the Central Otago railway. This railway line closed in 1989 and has been extensively redeveloped into the Central Otago Rail Trail – which has become a very popular track for mountain biking, walking and horse riding.

St Bathans sits beside the beautiful Blue Lake, which gets its intense colour from the high mineral content in the surrounding cliffs. Like elsewhere in Central Otago, sun-dried mud brick buildings were built here by goldminers due to the lack of wood available for building.



The Taieri River winds its way through the Maniototo



A schist rock fencepost

