

Surat Beach

?! What the...?!

In spite of the protests of the passengers, the Captain of the *Surat* allowed all luggage as well as the vessel and its cargo to be sold at auction, leaving the recent immigrants with no possessions. The ship was bought by William Larnach and an associate for £7,050, and eventually the Dunedin City Council paid Larnach £350 to secure the return of the personal luggage.

X marks the spot

Surat Bay is located next to Cannibal Bay, south of Nugget Point on the east coast of Otago. Access is by road from the township of Owaka in the Catlins.

A shipwreck is not a great way to see in the New Year, but in the early hours of the morning on 1 January 1874, the crew and passengers of the *Surat* were experiencing first hand how to survive one.

After stopping at Stewart Island on the voyage from England, the Captain and first mate retired below decks to see in the New Year with some female companions. The second mate was left to take control of the final leg of the journey to Port Chalmers. The Captain came up on deck at 10pm after the *Surat* struck a reef, but instructed that they sail on for Port Chalmers as the vessel had floated free. The ship then began to take on water, and by the early hours of the morning passengers and crew were calling for the *Surat* to be run aground. Despite the efforts of the Captain and first mate to prevent this, the *Surat* was run aground north of the Catlins river mouth and passengers and crew were taken to shore. From this event, Surat Bay gets its name.



Surat Beach view

The ship has long since broken up and disappeared beneath the waves, and a marble figurehead is all that remains. Surat Bay is now far less notorious, but is still a popular beach in the Catlins. It forms part of a walk from Cannibal Bay over False Islet which provides a beautiful view of the coastline.



Sea lions are frequent visitors to Surat Beach

