

The Otago Central Rail Trail

Stat attack

The rail trail passes through three tunnels and over 68 bridges. Its highest point, 618m above sea level, is between Ranfurly and Oturehua. Its lowest point is 170m at Clyde.

Those were the days...

Building of the Central Otago railway commenced in 1887 and by 1921 it ran all the way to Cromwell, linking Dunedin to New Zealand's major goldfields. The last major use of this railway line was for the movement of construction materials to build the Clyde Dam, which finished in 1990.

The Otago Central Rail Trail, from Middlemarch to Clyde, leads you through golden, tussock-covered countryside, littered with schist outcrops, and transverses the Rough Ridge mountain range. To get the most out of your rail trail experience you should take about 3-5 days to cycle the 150km, or 5-7 days to walk it.

The rail trail was developed by the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Otago Central Rail Trail Charitable Trust. When the railway was closed in 1990, DOC proposed to make it into a cycling and walking track. With approval from central government, DOC purchased the land as a recreational reserve, but it took until 2000 to transform the railway line into a track suitable for cycling and walking.

The rail trail is now a major tourist attraction. Users have the option of covering as much or as little of the trail as they want. The trail passes all the old railway stations, the distances between them ranging from around 3 to 15km. It costs nothing to enjoy this wonderful resource and, being an old railway, there are no steep sections to contend with!

The trail is open all year round but check the weather forecasts and be prepared for all weather conditions before departing. A range of accommodation and refreshment providers can be found along this magnificent Otago journey.



As a former railway line, the rail trail is largely flat



Fully kitted out for the rail trail experience!

