

Welcome to Central Otago

Nau mai Haere mai





Alexandra and Cromwell townships are good bases from which to explore Central Otago, a popular outdoor destination for mountain biking, walking, four-wheel driving, fishing and sharing picnics. The vast 'big sky' landscape offers a variety of adventures and places to explore.


Key





Mountain bike tracks

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Grade 1: Easiest |  Grade 3: Intermediate |
|  Grade 2: Easy |  Grade 4: Advanced |
| |  Grade 5: Expert |

Walking tracks

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Short walk |  Walking track |
|  Tramping track |  Route |

- | | |
|---|--|
|  4WD |  Motorcycling |
|  Historic site |  Ski touring |
|  Horse riding |  Picnic |
|  Swimming |  Fishing |
|  Hunting |  Dog walking |
| |  Lookout |

- | |
|---|
|  New Zealand Cycle Trail |
|  Managed by Department of Conservation |
|  Managed by Central Otago District Council |
|  Managed by Cromwell Promotions |

Please note:

- The maps in this brochure are a guide only and should not be used for navigation purposes.
- Track times are for walking one way unless otherwise stated.
- Where horse riding is allowed, an access key or lock combination may be required. Please check with the local DOC office.
- Many tracks in this brochure cross private land. Please respect the landowners' property and livestock.

For more information

Contact the nearest DOC visitor centre for the latest information about facilities and conditions.

Alexandra i-Site
21 Centennial Ave, Alexandra
Phone: 03 448 9515
alexandra@i-SITE.org

Cromwell i-Site
2d The Mall, Cromwell
Phone: (03) 445 0212
cromwell@i-SITE.org

www.doc.govt.nz



Remember, your safety is your responsibility. Leave your intentions with a trusted contact. For more information, visit www.adventuresmart.co.nz.

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



Check, Clean, Dry

Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

Cover: Bannockburn Loop Track, Bannockburn Sluicings Historic Reserve

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Report any safety hazards
or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111



Alexandra Cromwell tracks

CENTRAL OTAGO



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Some quick recreation ideas


Choosing a picnic spot


Great picnic spots can be found at Lanes Dam, Alexandra (Aronui) Dam, Mitchells Cottage and Bendigo/Logantown. For picnic spots with swimming opportunities, visit Blue Lake, St Bathans and Lower Manorburn Dam. For the more adventurous, explore Hyde Rock or the Come in Time Battery.

Choosing a track


Track grades


 **Short walk:** Easy walking for up to an hour.

 **Walking track:** Easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day. Track is mostly well formed; some sections may be steep, rough or muddy. Walking shoes required.

 **Tramping track:** Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking. May have steep grades. Suitable for fit, experienced and adequately equipped people. Tramping boots required.

How long do you want to walk?

 **1-2 hr:** Bannockburn Sluicings, Blue Lake, Earnscleugh Tailings, Alexandra town clock, Flat Top Hill (Butchers Dam), Aurora Track or Shek Harn.

 **3 hr +:** Flat Top Hill, Lake Roxburgh Walkway or Kanuka Loop Track.



Stewart Town, Bannockburn.
Photo: T Bunny




Blue Lake Loop Track. Photo: T Bunny


Cycling


There are a number of cycling and mountain biking options in this region:

- **Short trips:** Millennium Track (Alexandra to Clyde), Cromwell to Pisa Moorings and Manuherikia River Track.
- **Pedal-grinding a-plenty:** Prospect - Omeo loop, Thomsons Gorge Rd, Hawksburn Road (Pylon Track), Cairnmuir Hill Track or cycle along the tops of Kopuwai Conservation Area.
- **Longer or multi-day trips for beginners:** Otago Central Rail Trail, Clutha Gold Trail or Roxburgh Gorge Trail.

Mountain bike track grades

 **Grade 2:** Mostly flat, some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.

 **Grade 3:** Steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles, possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at the track's outside edge.

 **Grade 4:** A mixture of long, steep climbs, narrow track, poor traction and difficult obstacles to avoid or jump over. Generally exposed at the track's outside edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.

Otago Central Rail Trail

New Zealand's original great ride, this easy gradient 150 km trail follows the former railway line from Clyde to Middlemarch.

- **Visit** the Golden Progress Poppet Head near Oturehua.
- **Travel** through the schist bluffs, tunnels and viaduct of the Poolburn gorge.
- **Stop** and enjoy a coffee or beer in the cafés and country pubs in trailside towns.



On the rail trail. Photo: Tourism Central Otago

History

Māori

Although there were never large numbers of Māori living in this area, there are strong connections between tāngata whenua and Central Otago. Moa hunters lived at sites near Hawksburn, Cromwell, Bannockburn, and in the Manuherikia. Stone shelters along the Clutha River/Mata-Au were used by moa hunters, and, later, by Māori who were travelling from kāika/villages in coastal Otago. They went inland to hunt weka and to source stone for tools, especially the prized pounamu/greenstone found on the West Coast. Later these same shelters were used by European and Chinese gold miners.

Gold mining

Gold was discovered in Otago in 1850 but the first rush did not occur until 1861. Miners endured arduous conditions in their search for wealth. Central Otago's climate can be unforgiving, and bitterly cold winters and swollen rivers claimed many lives. Gold mining has left fascinating relics on our landscape and there are many sites to explore.



Paddle found at Bendigo.

Photo: Otago Museum, Dunedin, New Zealand



Pastoralism

The first big stations were started in Central Otago in the 1850s, with run-holders driving their stock inland over untracked and difficult terrain. It could take over a year to get the sheep from the coast to inland stations. There was little timber available, so stone and sods were the main building materials for the earliest run-holders. There are many examples of old farm buildings dotted around the area, some built with such skill that they are largely intact today.



Mitchells Cottage. Photo: T Bunny

Railways

The Central Otago railway was built between 1879 and 1920, with the section between Middlemarch and Clyde taking 16 years. Riding the trail gives you a chance to appreciate the engineering effort involved in linking Central Otago with the coast.



Poolburn Viaduct.

Our local nature

Central Otago is characterised by hot, dry summers and freezing winters. It has many unique species that have adaptations that help them survive in what can be a challenging environment.

The distinctive blocky mountains, with their rock tors and sweeping tussocks are inhabited by the Otago skink, the mountain stone wētā, and the New Zealand eastern falcon/kārearea. Alpine flowers display their fragile beauty in spring, occasionally carpeting the tops in subtle colour.

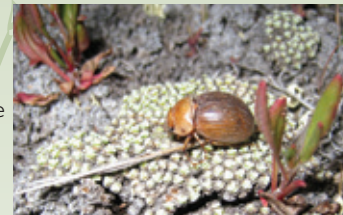
The valleys and river terraces have poor, fragile and often salty soils, where threatened cushion plants and rare invertebrates like the Cromwell chafer beetle live. Central Otago's reservoirs and rivers are also home to rare galaxiid species (small native fish).



Mountain stone wētā.
Photo: Nicola Vallance



Gentian. Photo: Brian Rance



Cromwell chafer beetle.
Photo: Bruce McKinlay



Kārearea. Photo: Florence Gaud

Adventurous experiences

Explore and experience the high country tussocklands. Four-wheel driving and mountain biking are popular in Central Otago, with tracks providing access to many backcountry places (these tracks can be done in either direction).



Above 1,000 m, temperatures can drop quickly, even in midsummer. Please take warm and windproof clothing. It is recommended that 4WD vehicles travel in pairs with recovery gear.

Oteake Conservation Park



NZTopo50 map CA14-16, CB14-17

Traverse the mountain tops by 4WD and experience the landscape of changing light. Or, travel up backcountry tracks that link St Bathans with Omarama. See the DOC brochure *Oteake Conservation Park* for more information.



Above: Oteake Conservation Park.
Photo: Gilbert van Reenen



Right: Buster Diggings.
Photo: Matt Sole

Kopuwait and Old Woman Range conservation areas



NZTopo50 map CD13, CD12

Kopuwait provides many recreation opportunities linking the Old Man Range and Old Woman Range. Explore the Fraser basin and stay overnight in a DOC hut. In summer there is good 4WD access throughout the conservation area (1,600 m).

Please note: roads are inaccessible in winter.

Waikaia Bush Road

This rough road from SH8 (360 m) climbs to a spur (1,300 m) through a peatland swamp to the conservation area.

At Kopuwait Hut.
Photo: Tessa Bunny





Symes Road

This road is often used to access Kopuwai (6 km from SH8 to Kopuwai boundary).

Fraser Dam Road via Omeo or Prospect

The Prospect Hill and Omeo Gully tracks provide foot or mountain bike access only.

Duffers Saddle (1,173 m)

From Nevis Road, turn left at Duffers Saddle.

See the DOC brochure *Rambling around Kopuwai* for more information.

Nevis Road to Nevis valley



Bannockburn to Garston, 65 km

NZTopo50 map CC12, CD 11

The road climbs steeply to Duffers Saddle then descends to the Nevis River. The Nevis is a hidden valley of pastoral landscapes, with good fishing and a vast array of gold mining heritage. From the Nevis valley there are a number of side trips to explore. The 4WD gravel road is in variable condition and has 30 stream crossings. Part of the Nevis Road is closed in winter (from Commissioners Creek to the Southland District boundary).

Thomsons Gorge Road



Tarras to Omakau, 30 km

NZTopo50 map CB13, CB14

The road bisects the Dunstan Range from Lake Dunstan to the Manuherikia Valley. The gravel road is windy and narrow, and is exposed to strong winds. From Ardour Road, the road travels along the flat before climbing steeply up the Dunstan Mountains and levelling out at Thomsons Saddle (900 m), before descending to Racecourse Road near Omakau. During this trip you will see evidence of historical gold mining and pastoral farming. *Please leave gates as you find them.*

Poolburn Reservoir



This scenic dam sited amongst rock tors is a popular fishing spot, and was a filming location for the *Lord of the Rings*.

Serpentine Scenic Reserve



16 km from Poolburn reservoir; closed in winter

NZTopo50 map CD14, CD 15

A NZTopo map and navigation skills are necessary as many farm tracks lead from the road. For experienced four-wheel drivers only. *Note: Closed from 15 June to 15 September.*

View the picturesque historical relics in this isolated environment. Explore the church, stone huts, battery and waterwheel that were used by gold miners from 1882 to 1891.

Access from Old Dunstan Road and turn into Long Valley Ridge Road. If you do not have a 4WD, you can walk or bike from Poolburn Dam.

Poolburn Dam to Serpentine 16 km (mountain bike 2-3 hr, tramping 5 hr)



Serpentine Scenic Reserve battery and waterwheel.

Hawksburn Road to 'The Pylon Road'



Clyde to Bannockburn: 29 km, 4WD only

The road climbs steeply past the Clyde Lookout to Hawksburn Station (800 m). From the gate it is 14 km through a winding gully to Bannockburn.

Lauder Basin Conservation Area



Sailors Creek Tramping Track: 30 min, 2 km

4WD enthusiasts can travel from either the Manuherikia or Lindis valleys through the Lauder Basin Conservation Area during the summer months, 1 December to 30 April. Contact the local DOC office for more information.

Closed for lambing: 20 September to the Thursday prior to Labour Weekend (4th weekend in October).

Pisa Conservation Area

Many recreational opportunities are available (see the DOC brochure *Wanaka outdoor pursuits*).

St Bathans



Blue Lake Loop Track: 50 min return, 2 km

Around Blue Lake Track: 1 hr 30 min return, 3 km

St Bathans to Domain: 30 min return, 1.5 km

Explore the picturesque Blue Lake and St Bathans. Established in 1863 to service the gold rush, the town has a charming streetscape. In the 1860s Blue Lake was the deepest mine in the Southern Hemisphere. Extensive hydraulic mining in the 1930s filled the mine with the mineral-rich water that gives the lake its distinctive colour. The Around Blue Lake Track offers views overlooking the lake.

There is a basic DOC campsite with limited facilities at St Bathans Domain (no charge).



TRACKS AND SIGHTS AROUND CROMWELL AND ALEXANDRA

Please note: times given are for walking one way unless otherwise stated

1. Mitchells Cottage



This cottage is one of the best examples of stone masonry in New Zealand. A popular picnic spot with great views, situated on Symes Road.

2. Roxburgh Gorge Trail



34 km, 1 day by bike

Alexandra to Roxburgh Dam. A spectacular trail that travels alongside the Clutha River/Mata-Au. The trail winds through a gorge with 350m-high bluffs. This trail is undulating with a few steep sections. The 13 km section between Doctors Point and Shingle Creek is travelled by boat. There is access to SH8 via a steep track through Flat Top Hill Conservation Area. This trail is managed by the Roxburgh Gorge Trail Charitable Trust.

2a. Clutha Gold Trail



73 km, 2 days

Starting in Roxburgh, this trail follows the Clutha River/Mata-Au through the beautiful Beaumont Gorge to Lawrence. Parts of the trail follow the old Roxburgh Branch railway line, and include the 440 m Bill Hill Tunnel. This trail links with the Roxburgh Gorge Trail and is managed by the Clutha Gold Trail Charitable Trust.

3. Flat Top Hill Conservation Area



Butchers Dam Loop Track: 1 hr return, 2.5 km

Basin View Track: 3 hr return, 7 km

Flat Top Hill Track: 4 hr, 10 km

The track climbs steadily to a plateau overlooking the Clutha River/Mata-Au. The area features regenerating native plant species that once covered much of the lowland valleys of Central Otago.

4. Aldinga Conservation Area



1 hr 30 min loop, 4 km

Wander at will, explore the historical relics and admire the views through this tussock reserve. There is a well preserved rock shelter 30 minutes from the start of the track. Conroys Dam is a popular picnic and swimming spot. Access is from Conroys Dam Road

5. Omeo Gully Track



9 km, 6 hr return

Characteristically Central Otago, this track starts dry and barren and moves into tussock and shrubland as it climbs up the hill. Thrill-seeking mountain bikers will enjoy the downhill track. Closed for lambing: 15 October – 15 November.

6. Prospect Hill Track



6–8 hr return, 9 km

The track climbs to tussock and herb fields on the top of the Old Man Range. For fit, adventurous mountain bikers, a good loop is up Prospect Hill and down Omeo Gully. Closed for lambing: 15 October – 15 November.

7. Obelisk Loop Track



3 hr 30 min return, 9 km

A pleasant loop starting at Obelisk (known to Māori as Kopuwai), that connects Omeo and Prospect Hill along the tops of the Obelisk/Kopuwai Range.

8. Shek Harn Historic Reserve



2 hr return, 13 km

Access via Fraser Dam Road and a winding gravel road to the DOC sign. From here walk or bike to the dam. A walking track follows the Fraser River to impressive Chinese dwellings and remains of other gold workings. Shek Harn is Cantonese for 'big stone ditch'.

9. Millennium Track 'The River Track'



Alexandra to Clyde, 3 hr, 11.5 km

A popular walking and cycling track that follows the Clutha River/Mata-Au. The track is undulating and provides an alternative route for those cycling the Otago Central Rail Trail.

10. Earnsclough Tailings Historic Reserve



1 hr 30 min loop, 5 km

Walk through an internationally important site of historic dredge tailings. Gold mining occurred on the site from 1863 to 1963; the walk features dredge ponds, buckets and other mining relics. Take a side trip to view the modern gold mine operating adjacent to the reserve. The very rare grasshopper, *Sigauss childi*, is found at this reserve.

11. Lanes Dam and Alexandra (Aronui) Dam



A pleasant short walk in Alexandra around the Lanes dam on Aronui Road, with another short walk around the Aronui dam nearby.

12. Lake Roxburgh Walkway



7 hr return, 10 km

Graveyard Gully to Butchers Point: 1 hr, 4 km

Butchers Point to Doctors Point: 2 hr 30 min, 6 km

From Graveyard Gully this trail follows an old bridal path that transported coal to the gold mining dredges from 1890 to the 1930s. Historic tailings and Chinese miners' shelters include Mary Lee's three-room dwelling. You can bike to Butchers Point, but please note that beyond Leaky Lodge the track becomes rough, less defined and exposed in some places.

13. Manuherikia River Track



15 min, 1 km

The track along the Manuherikia River provides access to popular swimming and fishing spots and links to the Rail Trail, Shaky Bridge and other informal recreation trails.

14. The Alexandra town clock



20 min return, about 500 m

Follow the Manuherikia River Track and cross the river over Shaky Bridge. An uneven rocky path leads up to the 11-m clock built in 1968.

15. Otago Central Rail Trail



153 km, 3–4 days by bike

New Zealand's original great ride, this very popular cycle trail follows the old railway line through small rural towns from Middlemarch to Clyde. If you are short on time, popular sections for day visits include the Poolburn Gorge (Lauder to Auripo) and Tiroiti to Hyde.



Wedderburn Station

16. Lower Manorburn



A popular and scenic picnic and swimming spot.

17. Clyde viewing platform



30 min, 500 m

A short walk that starts from Hazlett St in Clyde, offering a rewarding view of Clyde and the Clutha River/Mata-Au.

18. Clyde Lookout



45 min, 1.5 km

The track starts from Hawksburn Road and leads up to a lookout with views across Lake Dunstan.

19. Along the Tops/Cairnmuir Track



6-8 hr, 25.5 km, 3-5 hr by bike

Bannockburn inlet to Clyde: From Cornish Point Road (200 m) the track climbs steadily to a restored musterer hut. Traversing the tussock tops (1,114 m) of the Cairnmuir Mountains offers views of the Remarkables and Lake Dunstan before a steep descent to Clyde. This is exposed, isolated alpine environment. Closed for lambing: 15 October - 15 November.

20. Waikerikeri Conservation Area



3 hr, 5 km

Lilico Spur is on an easement over private land and climbs to the start of the conservation area. You will need the landowner's permission to continue to Leaning Rock.

21. Young Australian Waterwheel



1 hr from Duffers Saddle, 4.5 km

View the impressive 14 m-high waterwheel that sits in vast tussocklands. A popular mountain bike loop is to ride up the Nevis Road to Duffers Saddle, along the ridge to the waterwheel and then down to Carricktown.

Can be accessed from Duffers Saddle or Carricktown.

22. Carricktown



From Bannockburn: 1 hr, 3 km

The track climbs steadily 400 m up the spur to Carricktown, then another 350 m to the Carrick Water Race and Young Australian Waterwheel.

Access is from Bannockburn: Turn right into School House Road in Bannockburn, then right into Quartzville Road. Can also be accessed from Duffers Saddle via the Young Australian Waterwheel.

23. Bannockburn Sluicings Historic Reserve



1 hr 30 min loop, 3.5 km

The popular walking track has great views over Cromwell and the Clutha River/Mata-Au. The loop track travels through spectacular sluicings and water races to the remains of Stewart Town and Menzies Dam.

Bannockburn. Photo: Tessa Bunny



23a. Long Gully Bluff Track



2 hr, 4 km

This track offers views of the Remarkables and Hector mountains. From the Bannockburn Sluicings there is a rough route to Long Gully Bluff Conservation Area. Public access to Long Gully is restricted to Sundays and Mondays only. Closed for lambing from 1 October - 30 November.

24. Kawarau Trail



1 hr, 4 km

The undulating track starts at Bannockburn bridge and travels up the true left of the Kawarau River, through gold mining tailings to the Goldfields Mining Centre in Kawarau Gorge. Parking is available at the Bannockburn Bridge.

25. Old Cromwell Town to Bannockburn Bridge



3 hr, 11 km



This trail follows the shore of Lake Dunstan. It is easy until the oxidation ponds, then becomes narrower with some steep grades and soft sections. It passes gold workings and ends at the Bannockburn bridge.

26. Cromwell to Pisa Moorings



5 hr, 19 km

An easy track along the shore of Lake Dunstan that links Pisa Moorings to Cromwell. Points of interest include Lowburn (where the original church and hall were located before Lake Dunstan was formed), the 45th Parallel monument and the Lowburn Collie Club. This area can be very windy.

27. Cromwell Old Reservoir



1 hr return, 2.5 km

The track starts at the Bruce Jackson Memorial Lookout on SH8. It then climbs 120 m to the old reservoir and water race that were built after a typhoid outbreak caused by Cromwell's previously open water race. The track then descends steeply to SH8 and a short walk along the road back to the car park.

28. Quartz Reef Point Track



40 min return, 1 km

The best-preserved herringbone tailings in the region are a hidden gem, well worth the short climb from the road.

29. Bendigo



Welshtown Matilda Battery Track: 20 min, 1 km

Aurora Track: 1 hr 30 min, 4 km

Ridge Dray Track: 15 min, 600 m

Kanuka Loop Track: 5 hr, 10 km

Explore the remains of townships and hard-rock gold mining sites, including the Bendigo bakehouse (below). Beware of unfenced mine shafts.

Photo: Sharleen Briden



30. Dry Creek Track



3 hr, 8.5 km

A relatively flat tramp or bike along the dry creek bed, through shrublands to the Neinei i Kura Conservation Area. Closed for lambing: 10 October - 21 November.

31. Cloudy Peak Track



3 hr, 7.5 km

Walk along Dry Creek Track to the start of Cloudy Peak Track, which travels through Dry Creek Conservation Area to join a 4WD track. This climbs along the ridge to Neinei i kura Conservation Area. An unmarked 4WD track leads to the summit of Cloudy Peak and Thomsons Saddle.

