

Otago Rail Trail RELAXED Trip Notes

150km of flat cycling on NZ's iconic rail trail which follows the former Otago Central Branch railway line through historic mining towns and farming communities of Central Otago, with plenty of time to smell the roses.



Tour Highlights

- + Cycle the 150km Otago Rail Trail
- + Discover the impressive hand built stone culverts and viaducts
- + Enjoy the vast and raw 'big sky' scenery
- + Meet the locals and enjoy southern hospitality at its best
- + Explore the historic gold mining town of St Bathans
- + Meet a 4th generation farming family and tour their high country station
- + Try your hand at the ancient sport of curling in Naseby
- + Relax and enjoy two nights at the beautiful Wedderburn Cottages
- + Take a tour Clachanburn Gardens, a garden of National Significance

Tour Details

- + 6 days
- + Grade 1
- + 150km cycling [100% cycle trail]
- + Starts in Christchurch Queenstown or Dunedin; ends in Christchurch or Dunedin*

Tour Cost

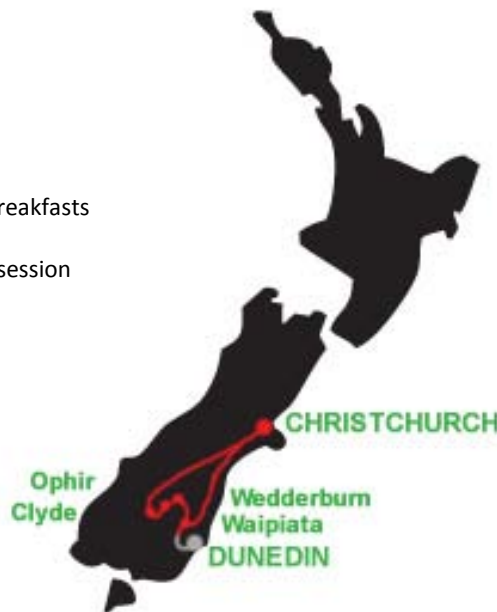
Tour Price: \$2,075
Deposit: \$400

What's included?

- + 5 nights twinshare ensuite accommodation
- + 5 evening meals; 4 lunches; 5 continental breakfasts
- + fruit, snacks & morning teas on the trail
- + side trips to St Bathans and Naseby curling session
- + Wedderburn farm tour
- + Clachanburn Garden guided tour
- + the services of a tour leader who provides vehicle support & information
- + all transport from/to Christchurch
- + Goods & Services Tax of 15%

Not included:

- + lunch on Days 1/6
- + single accommodation supplement (\$350)
- + wine; beer; espresso coffees
- + bike hire (standard \$190; e-bike \$450)
- + Taieri Gorge Train to Dunedin (\$81 - \$97)
- + optional round of golf \$10
- + transfers from Queenstown/Dunedin to Clyde on Day 1 (\$35/\$20 approx)
- + transfers from Middlemarch to Clyde/Queenstown on Day 6 (\$55/\$115 approx)



Departure Dates

Refer to our website for current departure dates and tour availability

Grade 1



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Tour Itinerary

Day 1 Christchurch - Clyde

We depart Christchurch for the drive south through the Mackenzie Country to Central Otago via the scenic inland route that passes by Lakes Tekapo and Pukaki, and over the Lindis Pass to Clyde. Alternatively there is the option of meeting the tour in Clyde in the afternoon from Queenstown or Dunedin which we can organise for you. We stay in the charming historic precinct of Clyde.

Meals (D) | Cycle Distance: 0km

Day 2 Clyde - Ophir

Begin the Otago Central Rail Trail, cycling from Clyde to Ophir (40km). Highlights of today's ride include the wooden trestle Muttontown Viaduct, the Old Tucker Hill gold diggings, lunch in the historic Chatto Creek Tavern, views of the Dunstan Mountains and Raggedy Range, spotting brown trout in the Manuherikia River, and staying at the charming historic town of Ophir at Blacks Hotel. Snuggle up to the fire at Blacks Hotel and enjoy a night of great food and a warm atmosphere.

Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 40km

Day 3 Ophir - Wedderburn

Bike from Ophir to Wedderburn (42km). Highlights of today's ride on the rail trail include the engineering marvel that is the Poolburn Gorge Viaduct and tunnels, and the vast wide open Ida Valley (made famous by the painter Grahame Sydney), the Idaburn dam (famous for its winter curling), a visit to Hayes Engineering Works at Oturehua, and the wee town of Wedderburn at the top of the rail trail. We stay in cosy cottages on a working farm with stunning views of the Hawkdun and Kakanui Ranges for the next two nights. This afternoon there is an opportunity to meet and enjoy afternoon tea with our hosts, the Duncan family - 5th generation farmers, and tour their high country station and learn about the farming lifestyle (pending group numbers). Eat out at the Wedderburn Tavern.

Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 43km

Day 4 Wedderburn

Have a relaxing start to the day with coffee and breakfast on the veranda of your cottage. Today is a rest day off the trail to explore some of the other points of interest in the Maniototo area. We visit Clachanburn Gardens, a Garden of National Significance, and enjoy a guided tour of this stunning garden. Later in the afternoon we visit Naseby, 2000ft above worry level, where you can try your hand at the ancient sport of curling on an indoor purpose built ice facility. We then head back to Wedderburn to our cosy cottages for the evening.

Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 0km

Day 5 Wedderburn - Waipiata

Cycle from Wedderburn to Hyde (45km). Highlights of today's ride include crossing the Maniototo Plains, visiting the rural art deco town of Ranfurly, following the Taieri River as it snakes around the Rock and Pillar Range, crossing the unaltered stone bridge over Cap Burn, the 32m high Price's Creek Viaduct and 152m long tunnel, to Hyde. We travel a short distance back to Waipiata and stay at the Waipiata Country Hotel & Tussock Lodge.

Meals (B/L/D) | Cycle Distance: 46km

Day 6 Waipiata - Christchurch/Dunedin/Queenstown

Bike from Hyde to Middlemarch (27km) Highlights of the final days ride include views of the Rock and Pillar and Taieri Ranges, the Hyde Railway Disaster memorial, and dropping down into the Strath Taieri Plain to Middlemarch. We make our way back to Christchurch, arriving at around 6pm. Alternatively opt to end your journey in Dunedin in true style by taking the historic Taieri Gorge Railway to Dunedin, or catch a shuttle back to Clyde or Queenstown.

Meals (B) | Cycle Distance: 27km

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Accommodation in Christchurch

If you need accommodation before and/or after your tour we recommend the following places. We provide **courtesy transfers from any of these locations** before/after your trip:

Airport Precinct:

[Airport Palms Motel](#)

56 Roydvale Avenue | Phone: 0800 200 529 | www.airportpalmsmotelchch.co.nz
Motel complex with a range of room options and free airport transfers. Breakfast available. Close proximity to the airport.

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www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz

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Airport Gateway Motel

45 Roydvale Avenue | Phone: 0800 242 8392 | www.airportgateway.co.nz
Motel complex with a range of room options and free airport transfers. It also has an on-site café/restaurant & bar for convenient dining. Close proximity to the airport.

Copthorne Hotel Commodore Christchurch Airport

449 Memorial Avenue | Phone: 0508 226 663 | www.commodore.net.nz
Hotel complex in close proximity to Christchurch airport. Free 24 hour courtesy shuttle. Free bike's available to explore the local area.

Sudima Hotel

550 Memorial Avenue | Phone: 03 358 3139 | www.sudimahotels.com/christchurch
Closest hotel to Christchurch Airport.

Papanui Precinct:

Quality Hotel Elms

456 Papanui Road | Phone: 0800 109910 | www.elmshotel.co.nz
Hotel complex with a range of room options. On-site café/restaurant & bar for convenient dining. Close proximity to shops & restaurants and the PureTrails depot.

Christchurch Top10 Holiday Park & Motels

39 Meadow Street | Phone: 0800 396323 | www.christchurchtop10.co.nz
Holiday park with a range of motel style accommodation at budget-wise prices. Close proximity to shops & restaurants and the PureTrails depot.

Accommodation on the tour

Our comfortable accommodation on this tour includes restored historic hotels, B&B lodges and cottages. Accommodation is based on double or twin share rooms, with en-suite facilities. Single travellers are required to pay the single room supplement fee, however if there are other singles on the trip willing to share a twin room we can arrange this for you in which case no single supplement fee will be payable.

On our website you will find links to some of the accommodations we use within the tour itinerary description. We do not send out a list of accommodation venues for your trip prior to the tour departure unless specifically requested.

Bike hire

Standard bike hire is available at a rate of \$190 for the 6 days. The bikes we use are hybrid style mountain bikes that are high quality and well maintained. We also have a small fleet of electric bikes (ebikes) available for hire at a rate of \$450 for the 6 days. Ebike availability is strictly limited so if you'd like to secure an ebike for your trip you need to book this in with us at your earliest convenience. For standard or ebike hire we need an **accurate measurement** of your height before we can confirm availability.

All bikes are fitted with comfortable seats and a small handlebar pannier bag. We also supply you with a helmet. To read more about our bikes, refer to our website: www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/cycling-nz-information/cycle-trail-bike-hire

Please note the wearing of cycle helmets on PureTrails tours, whether you are cycling on a public road or cycle trail, is a compulsory requirement.

'Saddle Sore' Tip:

No amount of gel seats or padding will protect you from saddle sore if you do not cycle regularly. The best way to prepare your backside for your tour is to cycle regularly (3 or more 20km+ rides per week) during the month leading up to your trip. Failing that you are welcome to bring a gel seat cover or even your own bike saddle to fit to your hire bike. You are also welcome to bring your own spd pedals and cleat shoes to fit to your hire bike.

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Bringing your own bike

You are welcome to bring your own bike. Please ensure it is in good condition, recently serviced, and suitable for the terrain you will be riding on. Your bike must not weigh more than **20kgs** as anything over this weight is unmanageable for our guides to handle. You need to supply your own spare inner-tubes and other spare parts. Your guide can assist with basic repairs such as repairing punctures, however any running repairs required beyond this are your own responsibility.

If you require the services of a bike mechanic to unpack and assemble your bike prior to your trip and/or box it up again at the end of your trip, this service is available for \$25 (for those starting/finishing in Christchurch only).

Booking Conditions & Cancellation & Refunds policy

Bookings will be confirmed and held on receipt of a deposit by PureTrails New Zealand. The full name and contact details (phone, email & postal address) for each person booking the tour are required at the time of booking.

Prices quoted are in New Zealand dollars. The balance of the tour price is payable **60 days** prior to departure and payments must be made in New Zealand dollars.

Payment is accepted by:

- + direct credit;
- + visa or mastercard & debit cards (add 2.5% surcharge);
- + cheque (in NZ currency);
- + international bank transfer (add \$25 funds clearance fee);
- + international bank draft

Cancellations must be received in writing and the following conditions apply:

- + Cancellations outside 90 days of the tour departure date will receive a full refund;
- + Cancellations between 90-61 days prior to the departure date will lose the deposit; this deposit can be transferred to an alternative tour within 12 months of the original departure date
- + Cancellations between 60-31 days of the departure date will receive no refund; however a 50% credit can be transferred to an alternative tour within 12 months of the original departure date
- + Cancellations within 30 days of the departure date will receive **no refund**; and no transfers or credits are available.

PureTrails New Zealand strongly recommends all clients, including **domestic** travellers, purchase travel insurance to protect against unexpected cancellations.

We strongly recommend you obtain travel insurance should you need to cancel your trip unexpectedly within 3 months of departure.

Tour departures are subject to a **minimum of 4 people**. You can enquire with us as to the status of your tour at any stage. The full conditions are available on our website at www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/booking-terms-conditions.

Car Storage

In Christchurch secure car storage is available at our depot in Papanui for \$10 per day. In Clyde or Middlemarch, car storage is available from Trail Journeys (www.trailjourneys.co.nz) from \$10 per day approx. Car storage in both Christchurch and Clyde needs to be booked in advance. We can organise a shuttle to get you from



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one end of the trail to another to fit in with your tour which costs approximately \$55 per person + \$10 per bike (if you are bringing your own bike).

Cash facilities

The only places you will encounter a cash ATM machine or bank during the 5 days is Alexandra & Ranfurly. EFTPOS and credit cards can be used at virtually all the cafes and hotels along the trail.

Contact details while on the tour

If your friends or family need to contact you urgently during the tour, they can contact you via our office on: Phone: +64 21 178 8287. Please note there is good mobile phone reception along most of the Otago Rail Trail.

Curling

Curling is an ancient sport played on the ice. Originating in Scotland, the game has been played in the Maniototo for close to 150 years. The town of Naseby in the Maniototo has an indoor curling ice rink that is open year round. PureTrails has organised a 1.5 hour 'Have a Go' session for the group on Day 4 which is included in the tour package. On some occasions this may not be available if there are professional curling events taking place.

Degree of difficulty & What to expect

The Otago Rail trail rates as among the easiest of all the cycle trails in New Zealand, and is a good trail to start with if you are new to cycling. The 150km cycle trail is a disused railway corridor originally built for steam trains so the gradient is a very gentle incline. The surface of the trail is **hard packed gravel** for its entire length. The trail passes through many small communities, some dating back to the 1860s, providing lots of opportunities to explore the history of the area. Many of the 4th/5th generation farming families still live locally and enjoy conversing with those cycling the trail.

The trail is rated easy (Grade 1) to negotiate with no steep hills or obstacles. Refer to our website for more information on our Difficulty Gradings.

www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/cycling-nz-information/level-of-difficulty

Departure time and place (Christchurch)

PureTrails offer courtesy pick ups and drop offs from the locations recommended on pages 3 & 4. If you are staying at one of these locations, we will pick you up between 8:00am and 8:20am approximately. For those staying elsewhere, we ask that you make your way to our depot in Papanui (11a Langstone Lane) **by 8:15am**.

Unfortunately we are not able to provide pick ups or drop offs at Christchurch Airport. The nearest pick up point available is at the Airport Gateway Motel, 2kms from the terminals.

Departure time and place (Queenstown or Clyde or Dunedin)

If you opt to start your tour from Queenstown or Clyde or Dunedin rather than Christchurch, the tour will meet you in Clyde at approximately 4:30-5pm on Day 1, at our accommodation at the Antique Motor Lodge.



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International Transfers Tip:

Conventional Banks have high fees when it comes to international transfers (hence our \$25 funds clearance fee). Third party institutions such as Western Union or CurrencyFair or TransferWise will offer you a competitive currency exchange rate and significantly lower transfer fees. We are happy to refund you the difference (in NZ\$ cash) in funds clearance fees if you manage to secure a better rate.

For those flying into Queenstown or Dunedin, we can organise a bus connection to Clyde for you. Bus times available vary from day to day and month to month, so please check the timetable with us before finalising your flights. Please note tour transfers need to be booked and paid for at least one month in advance. The cost is Queenstown – Clyde (\$35 pp approx) and Dunedin to Clyde (\$20 approx).

Bicycles are not easily transported on public buses so you may find you are not able to bring your own bike if you require a bus connection from Queenstown or Dunedin.

Final Payment

Your final payment is required **60 days prior** to your tour departure date, and will include items which may not be listed on your original invoice such as bike hire and any tour transfers required. You will receive an updated invoice around 10 weeks prior to departure once we have received your Tour Information & Safety Declaration Form – see page 9.

Payment can be made by:

- + visa or mastercard (Inc debit cards) - subject to a 2.5% surcharge;
- + direct transfer (NZ bank account holders only);
- + international transfer (subject to a \$25 funds clearance fee which covers the fee NZ banks charge to receive your payment);
- + cheque in NZ currency ;
- + international bank draft (cheque)

Finishing your tour in Christchurch

If you are finishing your tour in Christchurch, you are likely to be back in the city by 6:30pm on Day 6. Your guide can drop you off at any of the accommodation locations on pages 3 & 4. If you are flying out of Christchurch on Day 5, do not book flights that require check in before 7:00pm.

Finishing your tour in Clyde or Queenstown

If you are finishing your tour in Clyde or Queenstown we can organise a shuttle bus connection for you. Bus times available vary from day to day and month to month, so please check the timetable with us before booking any onward travel. Please note tour transfers need to be booked and paid for at least one month in advance. The cost is \$55 pp approx to Clyde and \$115 pp approx to Queenstown.

Finishing your tour in Dunedin via the Taieri Gorge Train

You can finish your tour in Dunedin via the highly recommended Taieri Gorge Railway (2.5hrs), which is a magnificent way to end your journey. The cost for taking the train is \$81 - \$97 (approx). Bicycles can be transported for \$10. The departure time from Middlemarch (or sometimes the nearby settlement of Pukerangi) varies from day to day and month to month, and on some occasions the train may not be available due to their timetable, so please check the timetable with us before booking any onward travel. Please note if you take the train to Dunedin you will not be able to get a ride back to Christchurch in our bus as well as it does not go via Dunedin.

For those flying out of Dunedin off the Taieri Gorge Train, we recommend you ask the train conductor when you get on the train if you can disembark at Wingatui rather than Dunedin city. If asked, the train staff will also organise a taxi to meet you at Wingatui to take you the short distance to the airport

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Guide

Your tour will be led by one of our friendly and professional guides who drives the support vehicle and will be at hand for (almost) anything you need or want to know during your tour (we try our best anyway!) We are very approachable so please do ask if you have any queries or concerns. Your guide **does not participate in the cycling** with the group, but meets up with you along the trail in our vehicle every 8 – 15kms or so.

Health & fitness

You will be cycling 150km of the Central Otago Rail Trail over 3½ days so you should be reasonably fit and in good health. While the trail is not technically difficult, the more comfortable you are riding your bike beforehand, the more you will enjoy the trail. You bike at your own pace and can have plenty of photo and snack stops. Our emphasis is on having fun and enjoying the scenery and hospitality of the locals... If you need a rest, there is always the option of taking the **support vehicle**.

We strongly encourage you to get out and do some biking before your tour, on gravel roads if possible, starting out with half an hour a day, building up to 3-4 longer rides (20km+) per week during the month prior to your tour (at the very minimum). The secret is to start slowly and increase your exercise gradually. The fitter you are the more enjoyable your experience will be.

Insurance

You never know when either yourself or a family member may fall ill. You are urged to take out travel insurance to cover yourself in the event that you need to cancel your tour with us within three months of the tour departure date. **This includes New Zealander's travelling within New Zealand.** PureTrails New Zealand Ltd is not obligated to give you a refund within this period. Refer to our website for the full terms and conditions www.puretrailsnewzealand.co.nz/booking-terms-conditions.

Laundry facilities

Central Otago and particularly the Maniototo often experience drought conditions and water shortages and, as such, there are limited laundry facilities for you to use during the tour. Well, that's what holidays are all about aren't they?! Please bring enough clothing for the 6 days.

Luggage

We urge you to try to keep your luggage to a minimum. Please limit yourself to 18kgs. All luggage is transported in our vehicle during the day. Anything you need access to during the days cycle ride should be stored in a small bag which can be left on the bus rather than in your suitcase. Those starting and finishing in Christchurch with excess luggage not needed on the tour are welcome to store bags at our depot free of charge while you are away.

Meals & Special Dietary Requirements

Meals are supplied as indicated on the itinerary (B/L/D). Beer and wine, tea & coffee etc are not included in the tour package however there will be the opportunity for you to buy beverages along the way.

Insurance Tip:

Domestic New Zealand travellers can obtain a Domestic Travel Insurance Policy online from www.1Cover.co.nz (Comprehensive Domestic) or www.CoverMore.co.nz (Domestic Plan D) for reasonable prices (approx \$100-\$150 for two seniors for 8 days cover). Ensure your policy includes cover for 'Cancellations & Lost Deposits'. Pre-existing medical conditions are not generally covered so check the policy wording and exclusions carefully.

Laundry Tip:

If you need to give your cycle gear a wash during your trip, bring some travel liquid detergent and an elastic travel clothes line (available from Kathmandu etc). You can wash your garments and hang them out to dry in your room overnight. Merino and quick-dry fabric garments will dry out overnight.

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Breakfasts are a continental style breakfast supplied by our accommodation hosts, and lunches are taken either in taverns along the trail or as a trail-side picnic. For dinner we dine in the local taverns in the villages where we stay following a two course set menu format.

We provide a range of high energy healthy snacks while biking such as bananas and fruit, froye balls, muesli bars, fruit cake and biscuits.

PureTrails New Zealand will **endeavour** to cater to any special dietary requirements you may have (please disclose this on the Tour Info & Health & Safety Declaration form). Vegetarian and gluten free and dairy free diets are not a problem for our meal providers. Requests such as a sugar free or grain free diet and vegan meals etc are a little more problematic given the remote rural location of the tour. In these instances you may need to bring your own snacks and specialty foods. We are unable to guarantee a peanut free or allergen free trip, and therefore we strongly encourage that travellers with life threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self administering these medications.

Medical conditions

If you have a medical, physical or mental condition that may affect your ability to participate in the tour you must disclose this to us on our Tour Information and Safety Declaration form (see page 9). Your guide may follow up on your condition with you on Day 1 to help us manage your safety in the event of a medical event.

Phone reception/Wifi

There is very good mobile phone reception along the Otago Rail Trail. Wifi in this area is still not readily available at most accommodation places, and it can be very slow. There is good 3G/4G coverage however.

Tour Information and Safety Declaration Form

All tour participants (including non-riders) are required to complete a separate copy of our 'Tour Information and Safety Declaration Form' **3 months** prior to your tour departure date. Please note this includes those who have been on another PureTrails New Zealand tour at some point in the past. Although we keep a database of information from previous tours, medical/dietary/emergency contact details can change from year to year so we require that a new form be completed for each tour you join.

Weather conditions

Central Otago has one of the greatest extremes of weather variation in New Zealand, with temperatures ranging from -10 to 38°C. The altitude of the rail trail ranges from 200 – 600 metres above sea level, and the region can be subject to strong winds. You could experience very hot or cold temperatures at any time of the year.

Generally, you can expect the temperature to be around 15-30°C in Jan/Feb, and 15 - 25°C in Nov/Dec/Mar/April. By April, it tends to get quite cold in the evenings with frosts, and possibly snow in late April (!) The visual landscape is impossibly beautiful regardless of season or temperature. You will gain maximum enjoyment by being prepared for both hot and cold temperatures.



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Help us go green:

Help us save the planet by bringing your own reusable drink bottle and coffee cup. Alternatively a branded PureTrails 'Specialised' drink bottle can be purchased for \$10.

1st Aid Kit Tip:

PureTrails NZ carries a comprehensive 1st Aid Kit and an Emergency Response Kit in our support vehicle; however this is kept for emergency situations only. Please bring your own supply of paracetamol, voltaren, antihistamine and any other medication you take, as well as bandaids and some dressings etc in a small kit that you can take with you on your bike.

Wet Weather Tip:

Bring a large plastic zip-lock bag that you can use inside the pannier bag of your hire bike to store your camera, phone, wallet etc to prevent them from getting wet (the pannier bags are not 100% waterproof).

What to bring

In the interest of safety and enjoyment, please ensure you are adequately equipped for your tour. **Warm clothing is essential even in January/February.** The following is a list of what you need to bring:

- Clothing:**
- Waterproof raincoat – **essential**
 - Thermal top – **essential**
 - Thermal leggings – **essential in Spring/Autumn**
 - Shorts, bike pants or light trousers for cycling
 - Woollen or fleece jacket layers (not cotton)
 - T-shirts (breathable fabrics are best)
 - Warm hat and gloves
 - A comfortable pair of shoes for cycling
 - Sports socks for cycling
 - Comfortable casual wear for evenings

- Equipment:**
- A drink bottle (or buy a PureTrails branded bottle for \$10)
 - A cup for tea/coffee stops
 - Padded cycle gloves
 - Sunscreen, sunglasses & sunhat
 - Personal toilet gear
 - Personal first aid kit** containing paracetamol, voltaren, antihistamine and any other medication you take
 - A supply of toilet tissue as it is not provided in the public toilets along the trail
 - Small torch/flashlight for the tunnels on the trail

- Optional:**
- Gel seat cover
 - Camera
 - A large plastic ziplock bag for use inside the hire bike pannier bag if it is very wet
 - Mobile phone to enable phone contact with your guide

For excellent quality NZ made cycle specific clothing and accessories, visit www.groundeffect.co.nz

Winter Departures

Departures during May - September are in the off season, so some transport connections may not be available (Middlemarch to Queenstown shuttle). Hayes Engineering may also be closed during this period. However in Naseby there may be the option of outdoor ice skating and curling. We will adjust our itinerary during this period depending on the availability of activities/shuttles accordingly.