

## **Dunedin's Wildlife experience**

Category - Wildlife

The waves tumble in from the South Seas and crash into the remote white sand wind swept beaches and thud against high jagged cliffs. This sets the scene for an exhilarating wildlife experience and it is right on the doorstep of Dunedin city situated on the Otago Peninsula. Few cities anywhere on earth have such a richly diverse population of coastal wildlife, including many Antarctic species preferring Dunedin's kinder climes. Dunedin's amazing beaches provide not only superb views but are also home to some of the rarest wildlife in the world.

As the sun disappears over the horizon, small duck like figures bob up in down in the thunderous surf, the 'Hoiho' or Yellow Eyed Penguin, one of the worlds rarest Penguins, begins its short journey home for the night. The Penguin waddles along the white sands but has to be careful to not walk along the same path as the Hookers Sea Lion which also makes its home on these beaches. It is also the rarest of its type. They are massive creatures who occupy this habitat along with another species that was hunted to near extinction in the early 1800s, the New Zealand Fur Seal, these mammals can be seen playing around in various rock pools where the young seal pups begin their apprenticeship of swimming, before they venture into the Pacific Ocean. The Yellow Eyed Penguin is not the only species of Penguin you can find. The Blue Penguin, smaller than the latter, is a popular resident of the rugged coastline. A diverse variety of birds; Oyster Catchers, Shags and Gulls can also be found in the tidal estuaries littered along the coast.

If you think you have had your dose of wildlife then you are missing out on truly one of the world's most amazing creatures, the Royal Albatross, the largest sea bird in the world. The Otago Peninsula plays host to the only place in the world where Albatross breed on the mainland, this historical place is called Tairoa Head. At various times of the year birds can be pictured in flight with wingspans expanding to 3.3metres as they return from sea to feed their young.

There is so many ways to live this experience, whether it is by foot, boat, land vehicle or air it is so accessible yet the environment is left in its natural state and the conversation process to protect this habitat is paramount.

## **Experience the steepest street – Baldwin Street.**

Category – Scenic Splendour

Picture 34 suburban houses along a small street. Now you are probably thinking that this is just another street found anywhere in suburbia. Baldwin Street is no ordinary street and has surprised many who have visited. This is one place where you do have to have the utmost sympathy for the postman who does their daily drop. You may ask why? The sign at the beginning of the street gives you some indication. "the worlds steepest street" (image) Dunedin's Baldwin Street is listed in the Guinness Book of records as being the steepest street in the world. A 30m stretch of tar seal and concrete climbs 69.2m at a gradient of 1m in 2.86m. In simpler terms, this means that for every 2.86m travelled horizontally you will vertically climb 1 metre. It is so steep that the steepest part can not be sealed with asphalt. In fact when it was designed, specially grooved concrete was used to enable car tyres to grip the road so residents could get up to there home's.

There are many ways you can experience this well known attraction in Dunedin. Running, walking or even crawling are the main ways to climb this testing incline. You have the choice of 270 steps on the right side of the road where you will find a railing that will assist you on your hike up or for the more hardy, an concrete inclined path on the left that will really test the lactic threshold of your calf muscles and body for that matter. If you are cringing at the thought of this, think about how many people feel when they participate in the annual Gutbuster event. The name speaks for itself. Participants take part in a run of sorts that crowns the fastest person to the top and back down to the bottom.

If that doesn't sound like your cup of tea, then maybe the sight of thousands of Jaffa's racing down Baldwin St during the Cadbury Chocolate Carnival in July each year will excite you, especially if your Jaffa is the first one home.

Baldwin Street, a must for all visitors to Dunedin.

## **The 'Scarfie' Experience.**

Category – Art/Culture & History

The chime of the University Clock Tower signals the beginning of the new semester at the University of Otago, New Zealand's oldest university. 20,000 young people the majority being between the ages of 18 – 23 converge on Dunedin City each year from many areas of New Zealand. Then the north of Dunedin comes alight, the 'Scarflies' have arrived in town to begin their year of study. The students add a youthful vibrancy and contribute to a distinctive culture that no other city experiences in New Zealand. Dunedin is truly a student city.

You too can join in on the Scarfie experience. All year round there is always something going on in 'studentville'. It all begins with Orientation week, where the first year students begin to work their way around campus and some of Dunedin's famous student pubs. A week long of activities takes place with market stalls, bands, hall competitions, activities and much, much more.

To indulge in the Scarfie experience it is not a necessity to actually be one! With 20,000 young creative and bright people in such a small confined space, the place is always lively. You only have to get along to some of the student haunts such as The Cook which is a famous student pub that caters for everyone's needs or enjoy a coffee at Governors on George Street. Take a leisurely stroll through the central path of the graceful university and absorb the historical surroundings.

No visit to the campus is complete without a stroll around the student flatting environment of North Dunedin. The traditional student flats in iconic streets like Castle, Dundas, Queen, Leith St North, Clyde and Hyde Street keep up a proud tradition and come complete with their own take on New Zealand House and Garden.

Otago University, its buildings and its students are truly integrated into Dunedin and provide the city with a culture unique not only to Dunedin but in New Zealand.

## **Experience NZ's only castle**

Category – Heritage/History

Standing alone atop of the Otago Peninsula is beyond doubt the most magnificent site of Larnach Castle, New Zealand's only castle is a centrepiece to only marvel at. It is surrounded by New Zealand native and exotic flora and fauna and beautiful gardens of national significance shroud the historical property. While standing at the front stairs you can only imagine how much effort went into this spectacular residence. It took 200 artisans 3 years to construct only the exterior and a further 12 years to complete the interior of the building. There is an array of features that will greet you inside, comprising of NZ native woods, Italian marble, England tiles and Venetian glass.

The views from the castle tower are magnificent. Tarioa Head points out at the end of the harbour along with the Aromoana spit to the north, while on the east side, the rugged terrain of the peninsula and its small inlets and beaches can be seen. As you peruse southwards there stands a panoramic view of the main Dunedin beaches of St Kilda and St Clair, South Dunedin, the centre of the city, north Dunedin and the beginning of the Otago harbour. To the west you can see rolling bush clad hills with Signal Hill standing out in the background.

While absorbing the craftsmanship and views from Larnach Castle, the story continues. Larnach Castle was originally the home of Australian born merchant, banker and politician William Larnach and his family. It is entrenched in history and has a scandalous past that is an experience in itself.

Larnach Castle is today the private residence of the Barker family, its grandeur and beauty are testament to the vision and tenacity of Margaret Barker who has spent 37 years bringing the castle back to its former glory.

## **The Rail Experience**

Category – Heritage/History

A couple take photographs of an elaborate Flemish building, an occurrence that happens throughout the day, 365 days of the year. For this is New Zealand's most photographed building, the Dunedin Railway Station. Opened 1906, it boasts many stunning features, including Royal Doulton mosaic tiles and intricate stained glass windows. The main feature of this building is the large square tower at the south-west corner which houses three clocks facing the city.

It is also home to the Taieri Gorge Railway, one of the great train trips. You can experience an amazing variety of landscapes including, city, farmland, forests and the wild Taieri River Gorge. The train departs from Dunedin Railway station and comes to an end at Pukerangi, deep in the heart of Otago.

Middlemarch and the Strath-Taieri plain offer a variety of experiences with the Otago Rail Trail being one of those. At the end of the line is the unique 150km Otago Central Rail Trail, the former railway from Middlemarch to Clyde. It is a year round recreational facility, designed for walkers, mountain bikers and occasional horse use on some sections. It can be walked or ridden in either direction.

From the bustling city through the wild river gorge over magnificent stone and wrought iron viaducts and bridges and through a series of tunnels, to the top of the vast plains at the beginning of Central Otago, a journey not to be missed.

## **Experience Architectural Heritage.**

Category – Heritage/History

Take a walk back in time and discover New Zealand's and Dunedin's unique and diverse architectural heritage. Experience how the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Central Otago gold rush provided a legacy of outstanding Victorian and Edwardian buildings. One of Dunedin's great strengths is the way it lives and values its heritage. Rather than turning its many fine Victorian and Edwardian buildings into museum pieces, the city cherishes and uses them. The more adventurous you become, the more you will be rewarded. There is an abundance of historical sites, fine examples of Edwardian and Victorian architecture and general living heritage in and around the city.

You only have to amble through The Exchange, once the hub of the city in the late 1800s early 1900s to understand how significant the heritage of Dunedin is. It is like you are going back in time as you gaze at these well preserved buildings and ponder what it was like only 100 years ago. The old National and BNZ bank buildings, post office and Consultancy House, the first sky scraper in New Zealand can be found around this one part of town. This is only a small part of the cities origins. Once you move into and around town you will discover historical houses, churches and statues. This can be experienced in various ways, you can choose to walk, take a car or travel on the Double Decker city sites bus.

Larnach Castle and Olveston are fine examples of this legacy. On a more humble scale is Fletcher House, the bungalow home of an early New Zealand industrial magnate. The Dunedin Railway Station is a wonderful fairytale building and there are several outstanding churches in the city and suburbs.

New Zealand's oldest farm buildings are at Matanaka and Waikouaiti. And you can tour the famous Speight's Brewery

Dunedin's Scottish heritage is still very much alive and well. A statue of the Scottish bard, Robbie Burns presides over the city that boasts fine pipe bands and highland dancers, and still delights in traditions such as the haggis ceremony. It is all part of the mix that makes Dunedin a city of living heritage.

Dunedin is a place where its past lives easily with it present.

## **The Speight's experience**

Category – Heritage/History

Speight's – Pride of the south for over 100 years- Sound familiar? The Speight's beer brand has now taken New Zealand by storm and is currently the fastest selling beer in New Zealand.

The home of Speight's can be found right here in Dunedin. Where the heart of the 'Southern Man' first started beating and the legend began. The beer has been brewed here since 1876 and still occupies its original Dunedin site. A lot of the buildings date back to the late 1800s. Speight's Gold Medal Ale is the flag ship beer made at the historic brewery. This is the beer that immortalised the Southern Man legend, celebrated in story, song and deed here in the south for 130 years.

There is one thing to note thus far, the experience is not just about swilling down a pint of Speight's, the Dunedin Speight's experience is over and beyond this and there is much more to this remarkable symbol of Southern pride.

The whole 'Speight's' experience can be lived through the Speight's Heritage Tour which provides all you need to know about the famous drop. It is a fun, entertaining and educational tour that starts from the beginning of how it was founded, when and how it was first made and particular events that occurred throughout its history. Like they say no brewery tour would be complete without the sampling of the product and array of mouth watering ales await to be tasted and enjoyed at the end of the tour.

The experience does not just stop there. Situated right next to the brewery is the original Speight' Ale house which serve hearty Southern food and is accompanied by a selection of the Speight's beers that are brewed on site.

Once you have tasted this wonderful drop and experienced its amazing heritage don't be surprised if you catch yourself humming the words to the Southern Man song as you waltz down the street to wherever it is you may be going.

## **NEW ZEALAND – MUST DOs**

1. Bike the Central Otago Rail Trail
2. Drive to Taumanui (check sp) and stop at the Republic of Whangamomona
3. Visit Waitangi – birth place of a nation
4. Drive the Crown range and call into the Cardrona for a speights
5. See the sunrise at Hicks Bay/East Cape
6. View Mt Cook from the Church of the good shepherd at Lake Tekapo
7. Journey up the Wanganui River
8. Climb One Tree Hill and Mt Eden
9. Visit the Beehive and take a cable car in Wellington
10. Stand on a Moeraki Boulder
11. Drive through Oamaru's historic precinct
12. Walk one of New Zealand's great walks
  - Milford Track
  - Hollyford track
13. Visit Cape Ranga and Bluff
14. Have a bath at Hot Water Beach