

Otago Rail Trail

brings economic success

It's a huge economic boom to the local area, attracting more than 12,000 tourists each year.

The Otago Central Rail Trail spans a breath-taking 150km along the tracks of the former Otago Central Railway, running in a half loop from Middelmarsh to Clyde.

It's a "must-do" for cyclists and anyone who wants to experience the beauty of Otago at a leisurely pace, taking in the unique rugged scenery, stopping in at country pubs and exploring historic gold mining villages.

And it's been credited with completely reversing the economic decline of the area, bringing international tourists as well as Kiwis from around the country to view the beauty in their own backyards.

A 2015 report from the Central Otago District Council showed the Rail Trail contributed over \$5 million to the Otago and Central Otago GDP in that year, and created around 102 full-time equivalent employment positions.

International tourists made up close to 40% of those visiting the trail and most scoring their experience 9 out of a possible 10.

Last year it was voted "New Zealand's Favourite Place to Cycle" as part of Bike Wise month, and its popularity is such that other cycleways around the country have received government funding in the hopes of emulating its economic benefits. New proposals for cycleways are also underway, including one down the east coast of the South Island between Picton and Christchurch.

Otago Rail Trail Facts:

- The Otago Central Railway was completed in 1906
- It stopped being used in 1990
- The Otago Rail Trail officially opened in February 2000
- It's total distance, from Middelmarsh to Clyde, is 151km
- Average time taken to travel the Rail Trail is three nights and four days
- The maximum gradient is 1.5m or 2%, which is a gentle up and down slope.

Wine and cherries in the Central Otago lifestyle and rural market

The Central Otago lifestyle and rural market is benefiting from the strong demand and high prices of Wanaka and Queenstown.

Harcourts Cromwell manager John Petre says prices have reached such heights in the Queenstown Lakes area that people are increasingly looking further afield for affordable properties.

"The Cromwell area has benefited from this markedly over the past 12 months. We are seeing people selling up in Queenstown and Wanaka, and reinvesting in a lifestyle property in Cromwell.

I predict Alexandra and the rest of Central Otago will benefit from this trend in 2017."

As well as those looking to relocate from Queenstown Lakes, Petre says there is interest from around the country.

"And such is the pull of Queenstown, we also have increasing international interest looking in the surrounding areas."

Cherry orchards and smaller vineyards are popular with buyers looking to make lifestyle purchases.

"A cherry orchard is an ideal way to spend your early retirement and supplement your income. And who

doesn't dream of owning their own vineyard?"

Petre says a four-hectare vineyard will sell for anywhere between \$400,000 and \$800,000, with a house additional to that. He

And he recently listed a four-hectare cherry orchard, with price expectations close to \$1.5m.



John Petre

Cherry Fever

According to Summerfruit NZ's latest reports, the 2016 export value for cherries was \$68 million, up by 30% on 2015's \$52 million. There were 3,408 tonnes exported in 2016, that's up by 25% on 2015.

The Central Otago region is dominating exports, estimated at being responsible for 95% of 2016's exports. Around 3,800 workers are required in Central Otago for the peak employment period of January.

Did you know?

In January this year Singapore Airlines put on four special charter flights to get around 300 tonnes of South Island cherries to Asia in time for Chinese New Year. Taiwan is the largest consumer, followed by China, Thailand, South Korea and Vietnam.