



# Just beer and tears

**A**USTRALIANS hear plenty about the beauty of Queenstown and its dramatic lakeside setting. We're inundated with talk of Auckland being the City of Sails, but we hear little about Dunedin across the Tasman.

It would appear this chilly city is a secret the Kiwis don't want to share.

This quiet achiever sits on the southeast coast of the South Island in the district of Otago.

Fly in, drive in or go by train on the spectacular Taieri Gorge Railway and pray for rain.

This swarthy city with its stately Victorian and Edwardian architecture, rugged coast and rolling green hills is best seen through an emotional weather pattern.

Similar to Scotland, it's impossible not to be moved by low cloud and mist over the Otago Harbour, twinkling with lights at dusk.

But it's still understandable to be all teary-eyed at the sight of the still waters of Papanui Inlet on a blue sky day, when the waves of Sandfly Bay are pounding and albatrosses soar across the sun.

Dunedin was founded in 1848 by a bunch of kilt-clad blokes who called the town Edinburgh, perhaps after too much scotch whisky, thinking they were home.

Turns out Dunedin is Gaelic for Edinburgh, so they were right.

Today, 20,000 students flock to Dunedin University every year, re-

You can get emotional in a place like Dunedin, or go to the pub. **Rachael Oakes-Ash** does both



**Mystical:** the Otago Harbour (top) as seen from Nature's Wonders wildlife area.

**Imposing:** New Zealand's only castle (left), Larnach Castle.

**Think tank:** students (above) at the University of Otago.

ferred to as "varsity" by the British-obsessed New Zealanders.

You don't get more British than Dunedin, though the Scots would have something to say about that.

The first union established for women workers was in Dunedin. The University of Otago was the country's first and the first in the British Empire to admit women to all its classes.

The list goes on, but all I'm really

interested in is being first at the bar. Why? Because Dunedin is also home to Speights Brewery, a craft beer known as the Pride of the South and brewery tours that finish with beer tastings at the Ale House.

When done here, we make our way to Emersons micro-brewery with its Oatmeal Stout, another fine Dunedin institution.

By now the students are out of class and the back-lane bars are

filling up around town, with New Zealand's future looking for action.

We relive our own heady days of youth at the Captain Cook Tavern, a student hang-out where I hope everyone has their beer goggles on.

Thankfully, we act our age at Pequeno, an intimate alley bar off Moray Place, where a fire is burning and Dunedin's arty types have come out to play.

It's Vodafone ID Fashion Week and the city's famed designers, Tanya Carlson and Nom D, are living it up with the bar's cocktails, served by men with groomed facial hair and clear skin.

I am glad I'm wearing Kate Sylvester, picked up at Dunedin's chic Plume fashion shop where black is de rigueur.

**E**ATING is cheating during Fashion Week when you're competing with twiglets who call themselves models, which is just as well because it would seem our liquid lunch extends to dinner.

Dunedin is an eclectic city filled with enclaves. The students hang out in the northern part of town. The fashion and design folk prefer the CBD and the quaint harbour town of Port Chalmers. The older set sit high on the expensive Maoroi hill. Nature-lovers go wild on the Otago Peninsula where sea lions, fur seals, elephant seals, yellow-eyed penguins and albatross are free.

For some it's the gateway to the Catlins, an oceanside drive that takes road trippers to Bluff for seriously wicked oysters. For others it's the end of the Central Otago Rail Trail, a 150km bicycle track with overnight stops at country pubs.

Dine on deep-fried oysters at Best Cafe, a greasy spoon favoured by the town's legal community. Hang out with the travellers at the Common Room cafe on George St, or frock up to dine at Corstorphine House for a taste of the old world.

I'm not done with Dunedin just yet. It may be a town of firsts . . . but I'm coming back for seconds.

## SNOW REPORT

### HOTHAM ... 105cm

Lifts: 8/13

**Conditions:** Very good to excellent fresh dry snow cover for skiing and boarding. Heavenly Valley and the top of Blue Ribbon are open.

**Inside run:** One-metre parties started yesterday. Snow is as deep as the best recorded in the past 15 years. Gotcha lift is set to open soon, giving access to the Orchard.

Snow-skate event outside the Dinner Plain Hotel tomorrow, with sausage sizzle and live bands at night.

### FALLS CREEK ... 98cm

Lifts: 11/14

**Conditions:** Very good fresh dry snow cover for skiing and boarding, including Ruined Castle.

**Inside run:** Advanced terrain is opening and the Summit should be running for the first time today, which gives access to parts of the International area. Lakeside opens tomorrow and the International poma is not far off. Demo weekend: test all the latest hardware from Rossignol, Atomic, Salomon and Burton.

### MT BULLER ... 75cm

Lifts: 19/25

**Conditions:** Very good fresh dry snow cover for skiing and boarding.

**Inside run:** Both sides of the mountain are open including the Southside chair, giving access to some advanced terrain. More lifts should open for the weekend. TV presenter Jennifer Keyte has been seen enjoying the fresh snow this week with the family.

### MT BUFFALO ... 13cm

**Conditions:** A good to very good cover for cross-country skiing, tobogganing and tubing.

**Inside run:** With this fresh snow the resort is up and running with tobogganing at Cresta. Grooming is in progress on the Horn Rd for cross-country skiing. Dingo Dell cafe, toboggan and gear hire open and snow-tubing opening this weekend \$18 for 10 rides.

### MT BAW BAW ... 60cm

Lifts: 6/7

**Conditions:** Good firm-packed snow cover for skiing and boarding.

**Inside run:** A healthy snowbase. The S-bend tube park is running daily, pending snow conditions \$25 for five rides, \$40 for 10 rides. Activities for the kids during the school holidays.

### LAKE MOUNTAIN ... 20cm

**Conditions:** Good cross-country conditions on fresh snow on the upper trails, fair on the lower trails skidoo-groomed.

**Inside run:** Kids' activities every weekend and during the school holidays include toboggan races, tube challenges, snow sculpture competitions, Jester the clown and Caramello-bear guest appearances with giveaways.

For 24-hour snow, road, weather and event information contact the Mountain Information Line, ph: 1902 240 523, or go to [www.vicsnowreport.com.au](http://www.vicsnowreport.com.au) and subscribe to the Victorian Snow Report.

## THE DEAL

➔ **Getting there:** Air New Zealand flies to Dunedin from Melbourne via Christchurch. [www.airnewzealand.co](http://www.airnewzealand.co) Freedom Air has direct flights in summer (November-March). [www.freedomair.com.au](http://www.freedomair.com.au)

➔ **Staying:** Corstorphine House is a stately historic home overlooking the town. Gwyneth Paltrow stayed there when filming *Sylvia*. From

\$395 for double occupancy, including breakfast. [www.selecthotels.com](http://www.selecthotels.com) Glenfield House is a family-run B&B in a Victorian house overlooking the city. From \$250 a night. [www.glenfieldhouse.co.nz](http://www.glenfieldhouse.co.nz) Mercure Hotel in the CBD has rooms from \$111 a night. [www.accor.com](http://www.accor.com)

➔ **More information:** [www.dunedinnz.com](http://www.dunedinnz.com)



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