



## Dunedin Visitor Industry Update February 2026

Kia ora,

Despite the disappointing weather, summer has been steady for much of our visitor facing businesses and it's been lovely to see so many visitors enjoying our city. StatsNZ has reported the country welcomed 3.51M overseas visitors in 2025, up almost 6% bringing us to 90% of 2019 numbers. Australia led the annual growth among the major visitor markets with significant growth in Chinese visitors seen towards the end of the year. With students and their parents back in town, and 14 cruise ships scheduled to arrive this fortnight we expect business activity to remain strong.

I hope you had a chance to enjoy the wonderful array of city events over the past 3 months. A huge well done to our events team who surpassed themselves in delivering outstanding experiences for locals and visitors alike. The bulk of our busy summer event schedule will wrap up with the Chinese Cultural Festival – a highlight not to be missed.

Alongside our Dunedin-focused marketing, there's a lot of Southern Way activity underway thanks to the Regional Tourism Boost Fund. If you haven't already, please ensure your business listings and products are up to date in TripAdvisor/Viator and Dinefind to make the most of the increased attention on our region. With Jetstar and AirNZ campaigns on the horizon, and the addition of a fourth Dunedin-Gold coast service, we are looking forward to seeing more visitors sampling all that's on offer in the lower south.

As trade season approaches, make sure to let us know what's new and what's in development at your business so we can share your updates far and wide. On the subject of new experiences, we are delighted that stage one of the Coastal Connection trail opened last week. Connecting Waitati and the Orokonui Ecosanctuary, the 4.3km-long cycle and walking track offers outstanding views of Blueskin Bay and surrounding hills and is sure to be a hot favourite.

Mark your calendars now for some upcoming meetings. Full details will be emailed soon, I hope to see many of you there.

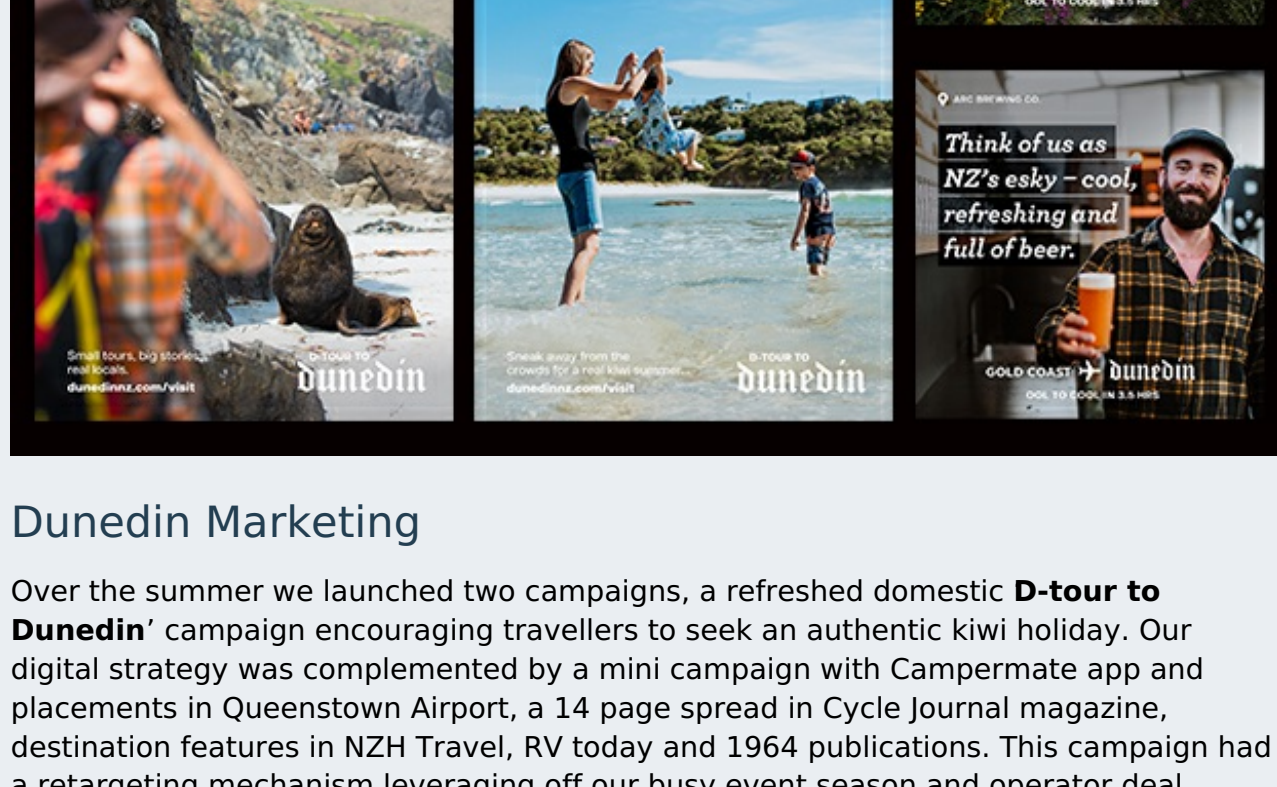
- **Ōtepoti Dunedin Destination Hui - 24 March**
- **Workshop: Successful and Sustainable Events - 24 March**
- **2025/26 Post Cruise Season Meeting - 05 May**

Ngā manaakitanga,

- Teresa Fogarty, Dunedin Destination Manager

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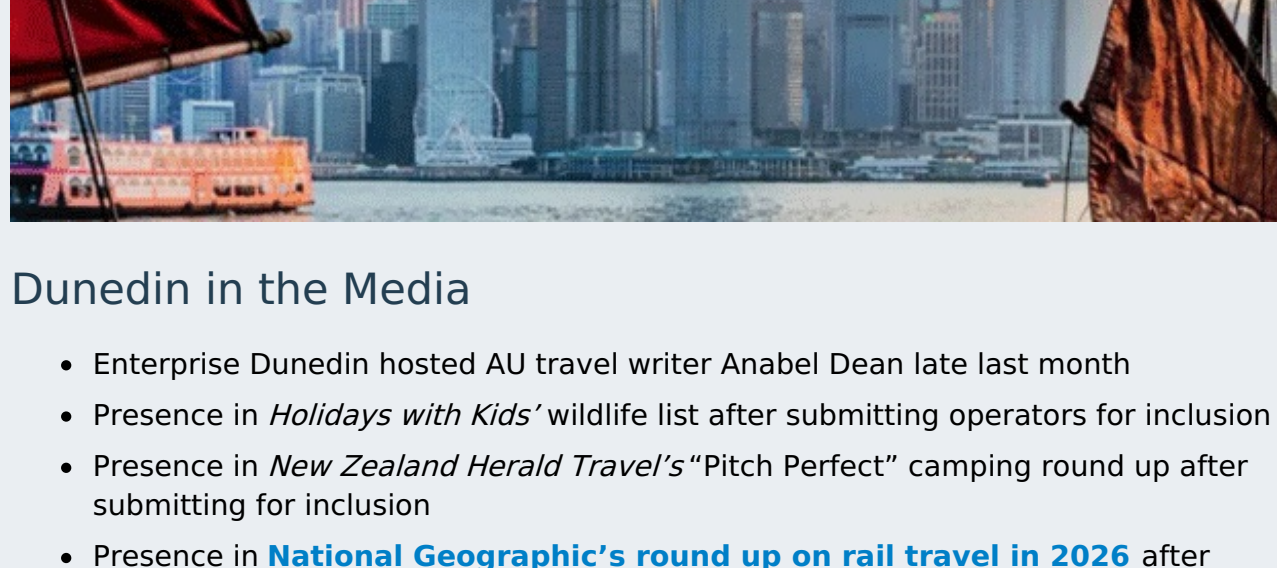
### Dunedin Marketing

Over the summer we launched two campaigns, a refreshed domestic **D-tour to Dunedin** campaign encouraging travellers to seek an authentic Kiwi holiday. Our digital strategy was complemented by a mini campaign with Campermate app and placements in Queenstown Airport, a 14 page spread in Cycle Journal magazine, destination features in NZH Travel, RV today and 1964 publications. This campaign had a retargeting mechanism leveraging off our busy event season and operator deal hooks.

For the past 18 months we have been refreshing our 'always on' Australian awareness campaigns. Our summer campaign, **Coolcation**, invited Australians to hop the ditch for a holiday that's cooler in every sense – from temperature to vibe. We showcased how much you can pack into a Dunedin escape (with no sweat), celebrated our thriving brewery scene by proclaiming we're NZ's esky – cool, refreshing, and full of beer, and told travellers that when you visit Dunedin, humidity is out, and heritage is in. The campaign had a targeted digital strategy and included advertorial in Vacations & Travel and Gold Coast mall placements that brought the Coolcation message directly to Australian audiences.

Next month Filming starts on an exciting project with Southern Way that showcases the great trail rides that connect us to our neighbouring regions. St Clair, Te Awa Otākou, and Port Chalmers will be featured in the Dunedin segment of the documentary.

We have launched a mini campaign with **National Geographic Traveller** highlighting some of our city's hero activities and assets. We have bespoke event ads in multiple publications as we get stuck into Dunedin's peak event season.



### Dunedin in the Media

- Enterprise Dunedin hosted AU travel writer Anabel Dean late last month
- Presence in *Holidays with Kids*' wildlife list after submitting operators for inclusion
- Presence in *New Zealand Herald Travel's* "Pitch Perfect" camping round up after submitting for inclusion
- Presence in **National Geographic's round up on rail travel in 2026** after submitting for inclusion
- Masters Games and Summer of Hockey events included in Kia Ora Magazine (January) after submitting for inclusion
- Dunedin Feature 'Taste and Trails' published in Kia Ora Magazine (February) following famill of writer in August
- Presence in **Stuff Travel's What's new in 2026** after submitting for inclusion
- Mayoral quotes included in **tourism article for The Press**
- Chinese Cultural Festival coverage in **Otago Daily Times** and **The Star** and Kia Ora Magazine (February)
- Foundations Festival coverage in **Otago Daily Times**, **The Star** and **Tourism Ticker**
- Last week we had Australian tv series *Travel Oz Global* in town filming for their upcoming series due to air on Ch 10 in March
- UK travel writer Mark Stratton was in town this month writing a story on the city for UK travel magazine Wanderlust
- Collaborated with tourism operators for BBC tv series on global railway journeys

### Coming up:

Enterprise Dunedin is currently working on several media famils for the months of March and April, these include:

- A UK travel writer and health/fitness columnist for *The Independent*
- A UK travel/health and fitness influencer is coming to Dunedin for a few days to create content for her channels
- An India group media famil including writers for Esquire India, BRUT and Hindu Metro Plus
- A Singapore influencer couple coming in early March to create scenic and wildlife content
- A media famil of an Australian travel writer for *Traveller* on the new Mainlander service in collaboration with fellow RTOs
- Australian travel writer Tim Richards is writing a feature on the Sir Edmund Hillary Explorer, including the section in Dunedin



### Events and Key Dates

The **2026 New Zealand Masters Games** were held in Ōtepoti Dunedin from 31 January to 8 February, welcoming approximately 3,600 participants across more than 64 sports and multiple venues throughout the city.

Around 60 per cent of participants travelled from outside the region, with competitors attending from across New Zealand and Australia, as well as international visitors from the United Kingdom, United States and Sweden to name a few. The Games continue to attract a strong domestic and international participant base, contributing to visitor activity during the summer period.

The 2026 New Zealand Masters Games once again demonstrated Dunedin's capacity to deliver large-scale multi-sport events and attract significant numbers of domestic and international visitors.

The **George Street Market** returned in 2026 bigger and brighter with more market stalls, more performance spaces and a dedicated live music and food zone called **Eats and Beers on Bath Street**, with overall positive and supportive feedback across channels.

With approximately 250 market stalls, 30 food vendors, 25 event assistants, 23 artists/bands, 12 first aid contractors, 11 production and sound crews, 10 street furniture pack in and out, 8 security staff, 7 DCC event team staff, 7 international performers, 3 MCs, 1 music manager, and many more contributing to make this incredible feat of logistics happen.

As one happy resident expressed in an email to our Customer Services team: "The George Street Market was absolutely incredible. I felt so proud to be part of the Dunedin community. I loved how the junctions offered food, information, and entertainment, whilst the stalls were well spread and offered a great variety of goods. A great atmosphere of both locals, visitors and cruise ship passengers. Well done to everyone."

**Waitangi Day 2026** brought strong community engagement across both the coastal and central city programmes, with a focus on reflection, cultural learning, and shared storytelling.

Early interest in the Karitāne experiences was high, with waka tours and guided hīkoi around Huriawa selling out soon after promotion. Approximately 50 participants travelled to Karitāne, highlighting strong demand for authentic, place-based cultural experiences beyond the city centre.

The Ōtepoti city gathering welcomed around 1,000 attendees, including a number of kaumātua supported to attend through Te Rōopu Tautoko ki te Toanga. Workshops led by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa kaiako remained busy throughout the event, offering hands-on experiences such as poi making, mahi toi, mau rakau, and mirimiri, creating an accessible learning environment for visitors of all ages.

Running 15 February – 3 March 2026, the **Dunedin Chinese Cultural Festival** 中国年 returns as a key late-summer activation supporting central city vibrancy and visitor engagement.

The 2026 programme expands on previous years with enhanced lantern installations, increased collaboration with local cultural practitioners, and a stronger focus on immersive storytelling. Together, these elements encourage longer dwell time, repeat visitation, and increased engagement with nearby hospitality and retail.

[Click here for the full Chinese Cultural Festival details.](#)

### Upcoming Events:

**Dunedin Chinese Cultural Festival** 15 February - 03 March

**Highlanders Super Rugby** February - May

**Sunday Sounds** 01 - 22 March

**White Ferns vs Zimbabwe** 05 - 11 March

**Dunedin Fringe Festival** 12 - 22 March

**3 Peaks Mountain Race** 15 March

**Baseline 2026** 28 March

**Wild Dunedin Festival** 10 - 19 April

**Otago Rally** 10 - 12 April

[Click here for the downloadable 2026 Dunedin Events Calendar.](#)

### Destination, Trade and Business Events

We are deep in planning for a busy schedule of trade events over the next quarter. The team will be out in force selling Dunedin's fantastic businesses and experiences at the Regional Tourism ITO day, TECNZ Trade Days, the Regional Tourism Showcase in Australia, and of course at TRENZ and MEETINGS. We are delighted to have local businesses join us at some of these - strong representation helps us put our best foot forward when showcasing Dunedin as a significant contender for FIT, group and business event travel. If you are not attending this year you won't miss out. We talk about all Dunedin experiences and can share your details with interested buyers, please send us your trade rates and product packs to ensure we have the most up-to-date information on hand.

Interest has been strong in our pre and post TRENZ famils and are finalising details for two business events famils. We are also planning mid-year trade sales trips to Auckland and the Gold Coast. As always, we are interested in getting your thoughts and involvement in these activities, reach out if you would like to be involved.

### Business Events Strategy

We have launched our Business Events Strategy 2025–2028, developed in conjunction with sector representatives. It aims to deliver economic, social, and environmental benefit for our people, businesses and place, positioning Dunedin as a standout destination for business events that align with our city's strengths. This important document sets out how we can work together as a city to drive year-round economic growth in a way that aligns with the city's strengths, opportunities and aspirations.

[Please click here for a copy of the Business Events Strategy 2025–2028.](#)

### Staff Updates

Now that Sian Sutton has taken on the Manager of Enterprise Dunedin Teresa Fogarty has stepped into the Destination Manager position. We are delighted to welcome Vicki Kestila into the team in the Tourism Trade and Business Events position now that she has successfully delivered Masters Games for 2026.