

OTAGO CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL TRAINING PROGRAMME



This programme has been designed for the recreational rider with the goal of cycling the Otago Central Rail Trail over four days at a social pace. If you haven't ridden a bike much recently, don't worry, as by the end of the programme you will have increased bike fitness and the confidence to tackle your cycling adventure.

BEFORE YOU START

Bike & helmet checks

A good working bike and a well-fitting helmet will make all the difference to your riding.

Is your bike comfortable to ride? You will be on the Rail Trail for several hours each day. Being comfortable will help make your experience a great one. Over the next few weeks you will have the chance to adjust your bike if issues arise. Your local bike shop may offer a bike-fit check, or you could contact a local coach who offers this service.

Complete a bike check (see link below for guidance).

<https://www.bikeready.govt.nz/adults/tips-for-everyday-bike-riding-beginners-to-advanced/how-to-check-your-bike/>

Does your helmet fit you correctly? Check it for cracks and frayed straps.

Health check

If you have not participated in a training plan or regular exercise recently, it is recommended you visit your doctor for a health check.

Recording your rides

Download a cycling App onto your phone (e.g. Strava, Relive, MapMyRide) to record all your rides. It keeps you honest with your training and is a great way to see how far you have come, and to record your Otago Central Rail Trail experience.

This article rates the best cycling apps:

<https://www.bikeradar.com/advice/buyers-guides/best-cycling-apps/>

Bike skills

This programme presumes you can balance on a bike, ride forwards, around corners, up and down a hill, and brake with control. You're ahead of the game if you have experience riding on gravel pathways and roads.

Are you hiring a bike?

Hiring a bike is a popular option on the Otago Central Rail Trail, offering hassle-free travelling to and from the trail. If you're hiring a bike, why not see if you can hire the same or similar bike in your hometown for a day or two? This will give you a head start on understanding how the bike feels and works. This is highly recommended if you have little experience riding different bikes, are not a regular cyclist or are trying out an e-bike for the first time.

Getting the most out of your training plan

Make this plan work for you by adjusting the training days to suit your weekly routine. The last thing you want to do is schedule your training rides on days you are getting home late or are rushing about. Consider when you will be riding the trail and count back five weeks. This way you know when to kick-start your training using this programme.

If you have more than five weeks why not start increasing your riding now and get a head start on fitness and skills.

Your adventure on the Otago Central Rail Trail is as much about absorbing the local culture and sights along the way as it is about cycling. This programme assumes you are going to be stopping and starting – photo stops are allowed!

Booking your trip

If you haven't already, get online and book your Otago Central Rail Trail trip. Consider riding when operators are less busy – I would hate for you to miss out!

The Rail Trail's *Plan Your Trip* section on the New Zealand Cycle Trail website will help you organise your adventure: <https://nzcycletrail.com/find-your-ride/22-great-rides/otago-central-rail-trail/>

Check out this link for a list of Rail Trail services too:

<https://nzcycletrail.com/partner-directory/filter/?Ride=otago-central-rail-trail&Category=all>

Disclaimer & safety

This is a self-directed programme. Should injury occur as a direct result, you are to seek medical assistance immediately. You are 100% responsible for your own health and wellbeing.

Obey all road rules and make sure you can be seen by other road and trail users. Here's a short blog on *Biking Etiquette*: <https://nzcycletrail.com/need-to-know/biking-etiquette/>

And one on *Riding Safely*: <https://nzcycletrail.com/need-to-know/riding-safely/>

This is also a useful short clip on being visible on your bike: <https://youtu.be/6Z-CDydNHh0>

Most importantly don't forget to SMILE and enjoy yourself, this is meant to be FUN!

This programme has been created by Cycle Coach Janet Stark www.cyclecoach.co.nz. If you require extra assistance with coaching or have a question please contact me directly.

BIKE GEAR

Bike gloves

Gloves protect your hands from sun, cold and branches/bushes. It is highly recommended you have a pair for the Otago Central Rail Trail. On a cold day your hands will cool down quickly especially when riding downhill. In the summer months your hands can get sweaty causing them to slip on the grips. Full-finger, fingerless and waterproof gloves are all acceptable.

Padded cycle pants

These come in three different styles – Lycra with padding (body hugging), shorts with attached padding, or shorts with a separate padded liner. Find the style that works for you. I find shorts with attached padding can move forward while riding and aren't as cushioning.

Raincoat

A waterproof jacket that fits well is highly recommended for Otago Central Rail Trail, as you may encounter cold winds and rain, and even snow in winter. If too long the jacket can get caught up on your bike seat when getting on or off the bike or catch on your back wheel.

Layered clothing

Weather on the Rail Trail can vary from super hot to freezing cold depending on the season, and it's important to have the right clothing. Layering works well under your raincoat especially if there is a cold wind. Bulky clothes are harder to carry and less likely to fit well under a jacket. In summer, a long-sleeve UV-resistant shirt will keep the sun off your arms.

Day bag

If you are using a day bag to carry items for your trip make sure you try it on your last ride before heading away. Adjust the bag if it's uncomfortable i.e. if straps are digging in or the bag is shifting around. Hire bikes often have bike bags attached to the frame or back carrier; this makes for a very pleasant riding experience with no extra weight on your back.

Water

Take sufficient water on your ride. Practise taking your drink bottle out of the holder while biking, having a drink and then putting it back in the bottle cage without stopping. If you have a hydration backpack, consider putting less water in your bladder and using it in conjunction with a bottle on the bike. This will make your bag lighter and more comfortable.

Check out the *What to pack* blog on the NZCT website for some useful tips:

<https://nzcycletrail.com/need-to-know/what-to-pack/>.

WEEK ONE

Book your training rides into your calendar in advance so you don't get side-tracked and run out of time during the week. Missing the odd day is okay but the idea of this programme is to ride regularly. Bum on seat is an expression often used – in other words the only way you are going to get used to biking more is if you get on your bike and ride.

Coaching Tip #1 – Stretching

Look after your body by setting aside time to stretch, especially if you spend a lot of time sitting at a desk or in front of a computer. This will add value to your training, increasing your comfort and performance on the bike. You can achieve this at yoga, pilates or a stretching class, with many free options available online that can be done at home.

This week's training

Get to know your neighbourhood by bike, finding places where you feel comfortable riding. If you haven't ridden a bike much recently, head down to your local park where there are wide-open spaces to gain confidence before riding on pathways and quiet roads.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	<i>Ride 30 mins</i> Getting started Have a play with your gears and see how the easier and harder ones feel while riding along		<i>Ride 30 mins</i> Ride to a hill that is achievable Find a different pathway or quiet street for this ride		<i>Ride 45 mins</i> Find a gravel pathway or quiet road and ride at a comfortable pace	<i>Ride 15 mins</i> Easy spin

Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride.

WEEK TWO

Routine is the key to being ‘body bike fit’, i.e. getting used to riding and improving your fitness. You will find some days harder than others depending on if you have eaten enough, have had a good sleep, and how busy you’ve been.

Coaching Tip #2 – Confidence

Spending time on the bike and gaining experience will help you with trusting your decisions while riding. Here are some tips: ride with people you feel comfortable with; ride behind someone who is more skilled than you following their lines; ride new places and try riding on different surfaces (especially gravel). To take it to the next level, have a coaching session.

This week’s training

Find a gravel road or off-road pathway as part of your weekend ride, and continue to use the local roads and paths close to home for your weekday rides.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	<i>Ride 30 mins Tempo Workout</i>		<i>Ride 30 mins Gradual climbs</i>		<i>Ride 60 mins Endurance Ride</i>	<i>Ride 20 mins Recovery ride</i>
	5 mins warmup		5 mins warmup		5 mins warmup	Getting your body used to riding two days in a row
	Easy gear Spin the legs 3 mins		Find a gradual hill/ climb. Ride up & down the hill		Include a gravel road or pathway and a hill	
	Harder gear Push the legs 2 mins Repeat x 4		Continue ride at a comfortable pace		5 mins warm-down	
	5 mins warm-down		5 mins warm-down			

I just need to ride my bike.

WEEK THREE

Putting in the effort now will allow you to enjoy your cycling holiday more. Arrive at the start of the Otago Central Rail Trail with the confidence of knowing that you can accomplish this ride with a bit of grit and determination. Remember to smile if you are finding it a bit tough, it does wonders for your overall mood.

Coaching Tip #3 – Looking

When riding your bike look where you want to go, not where you shouldn't go, i.e. off the edge of the path. Your bike will follow your eyes. Glancing at features along the way is okay, but don't let those eyes linger: bring your focus back to the direction you are heading.

This week's training

For your endurance ride, pick somewhere you have never biked before. This helps with giving you new experiences and adds to your cycling skill base.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	30 mins <i>Tempo Ride</i>		Ride 30 mins <i>Gradual climbs</i>		Ride 75 mins <i>Endurance Ride</i>	Ride 30 mins <i>Recovery</i>
	5 mins warmup		5 mins warmup		Include a gravel road or off-road pathway	Flat and easy gearing spinning your legs
	Easy gear Spin the legs 2.5 mins		Ride to climb at a steady pace		Add a gradual climb	
	Harder gear Push the legs 2.5 mins Repeat x 4		Up & down the same gradual climb x 2		Ride it at an achievable 'I can ride like this all day with short rests' pace	
	5 mins warm-down		Continue to ride at a steady pace			
			5 mins warm-down			

To bike, or not to bike: that is not a question.

WEEK FOUR

You should be starting to notice a difference in your riding ability, confidence and fitness. I am proud of you, pat yourself on the back for doing so well.

Coaching Tip #4 – Braking

Practise braking in different situations. Try squeezing both brakes gently and consistently to stop, instead of jamming them on or only using one brake. When riding down a gradual slope use your body to help you stop more effectively by shifting your weight back and pushing your feet into the pedals. Avoid any Superman braking where you could end up flying over the handlebars!

This week's training

Stay close to home this week, making everything easy and therefore fitting in around your schedule.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
<i>Bike check & clean</i>	<i>30 mins Tempo ride</i> <i>5 mins warmup</i> <i>5 mins fast pace</i> <i>5 mins easy pace</i> <i>Repeat x 2</i>		<i>30 mins Recovery</i> <i>Spin those legs but no bouncing on the seat (this can happen if you're in too easy a gear)</i>		<i>45 mins Active Recovery</i> <i>Just enjoy one of your favourite places to ride</i>	

I'm doing this for me.

WEEK FIVE

Yay, it's time to pack! Have you got all the right gear? It's not too late for a quick trip to the shops or to borrow something from a friend before heading away. Don't forget to pack a torch or bike light for riding the tunnels. And remember, if you encounter headwinds think of other things – sing, count, chat to those around you or take in the beautiful scenery.

Coaching Tip #5 – Getting off your seat

Staying seated for the whole trip and in the same position will tire your body and become uncomfortable. Make a conscious effort to change your position throughout your ride on the Rail Trail. On slight downward slopes give your body a rest by standing on the pedals in a level position and wiggling your body to ease any stiffness.

This week's training

Your training for the Otago Central Rail Trail is almost complete. One more ride before you head away. If your ride starts in the weekend, make sure you add in another 30 minutes easy spin on the Wednesday. We want those legs to keep moving. I'm super excited for you – ENJOY!

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
30 mins Recovery Undulating Easy Ride			Rail Trail Day 1	Rail Trail Day 2	Rail Trail Day 3	Rail Trail Day 4

Life is like riding a bicycle, to stay balanced you must keep moving.

May you have a totally awesome trip soaking up the Otago Central Rail Trail scenery and hospitality. You can share your trail stories, photos and tips here at <https://nzcycletrail.com/your-stories/>.

Why not head back to <https://nzcycletrail.com/> and start planning your next cycling holiday? For a slightly more challenging adventure, why not ride the West Coast Wilderness Trail (Grade 2–3, easy–intermediate; 136km; 4–5 days).

Cycle Coach & Educator Janet Stark

WEEK-BY-WEEK TRAINING SUMMARY

Week 1

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	<p><i>Ride 30 mins</i></p> <p>Getting started</p> <p>Have a play with your gears and see how the easier and harder ones feel while riding along</p>		<p><i>Ride 30 mins</i></p> <p>Ride to a hill that is achievable</p> <p>Find a different pathway or quiet street for this ride</p>		<p><i>Ride 45 mins</i></p> <p>Find a gravel pathway or quiet road and ride at a comfortable pace</p>	<p><i>Ride 15 mins</i></p> <p>Easy spin</p>

Week 2

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	<p><i>Ride 30 mins</i> <i>Tempo Workout</i></p> <p>5 mins warmup</p> <p>Easy gear Spin the legs 3 mins</p> <p>Harder gear Push the legs 2 mins Repeat x 4</p> <p>5 mins warm-down</p>		<p><i>Ride 30 mins</i> <i>Gradual climbs</i></p> <p>5 mins warmup</p> <p>Find a gradual hill/ climb. Ride up & down the hill</p> <p>Continue ride at a comfortable pace</p> <p>5 mins warm-down</p>		<p><i>Ride 60 mins</i> <i>Endurance Ride</i></p> <p>5 mins warmup</p> <p>Include a gravel road or pathway and a hill</p> <p>5 mins warm-down</p>	<p><i>Ride 20 mins</i> <i>Recovery ride</i></p> <p>Getting your body used to riding two days in a row</p>

Week 3

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	<p>30 mins Tempo Ride</p> <p>5 mins warmup</p> <p>Easy gear Spin the legs 2.5 mins</p> <p>Harder gear Push the legs 2.5 mins Repeat x 4</p> <p>5 mins warm-down</p>		<p>Ride 30 mins Gradual climbs</p> <p>5 mins warmup</p> <p>Ride to climb at a steady pace</p> <p>Up & down the same gradual climb x 2</p> <p>Continue to ride at a steady pace</p> <p>5 mins warm-down</p>		<p>Ride 75 mins Endurance Ride</p> <p>Include a gravel road or off-road pathway</p> <p>Add a gradual climb</p> <p>Ride it at an achievable 'I can ride like this all day with short rests' pace</p>	<p>Ride 30 mins Recovery</p> <p>Flat and easy gearing spinning your legs</p>

Week 4

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
<p>Bike check & clean</p>	<p>30 mins Tempo ride</p> <p>5 mins warmup</p> <p>5 mins fast pace 5 mins easy pace Repeat x 2</p>		<p>30 mins Recovery</p> <p>Spin those legs but no bouncing on the seat (this can happen if you're in too easy a gear)</p>		<p>45 mins Active Recovery</p> <p>Just enjoy one of your favourite places to ride</p>	

Week 5

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
<i>30 mins Recovery Undulating Easy Ride</i>			<i>Rail Trail Day 1</i>	<i>Rail Trail Day 2</i>	<i>Rail Trail Day 3</i>	<i>Rail Trail Day 4</i>

WAHOO!