

MARKETING COLLABORATION

Case Study: The Otago Trails Marketing Group

Collaboration...

/kəˌlæb.ə'reɪ.fən/

Noun: the situation of two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing



New Zealand has a truly WORLD CLASS network of cycle trails. We need to collaborate more closely to tell our story, to own it, and genuinely believe it!

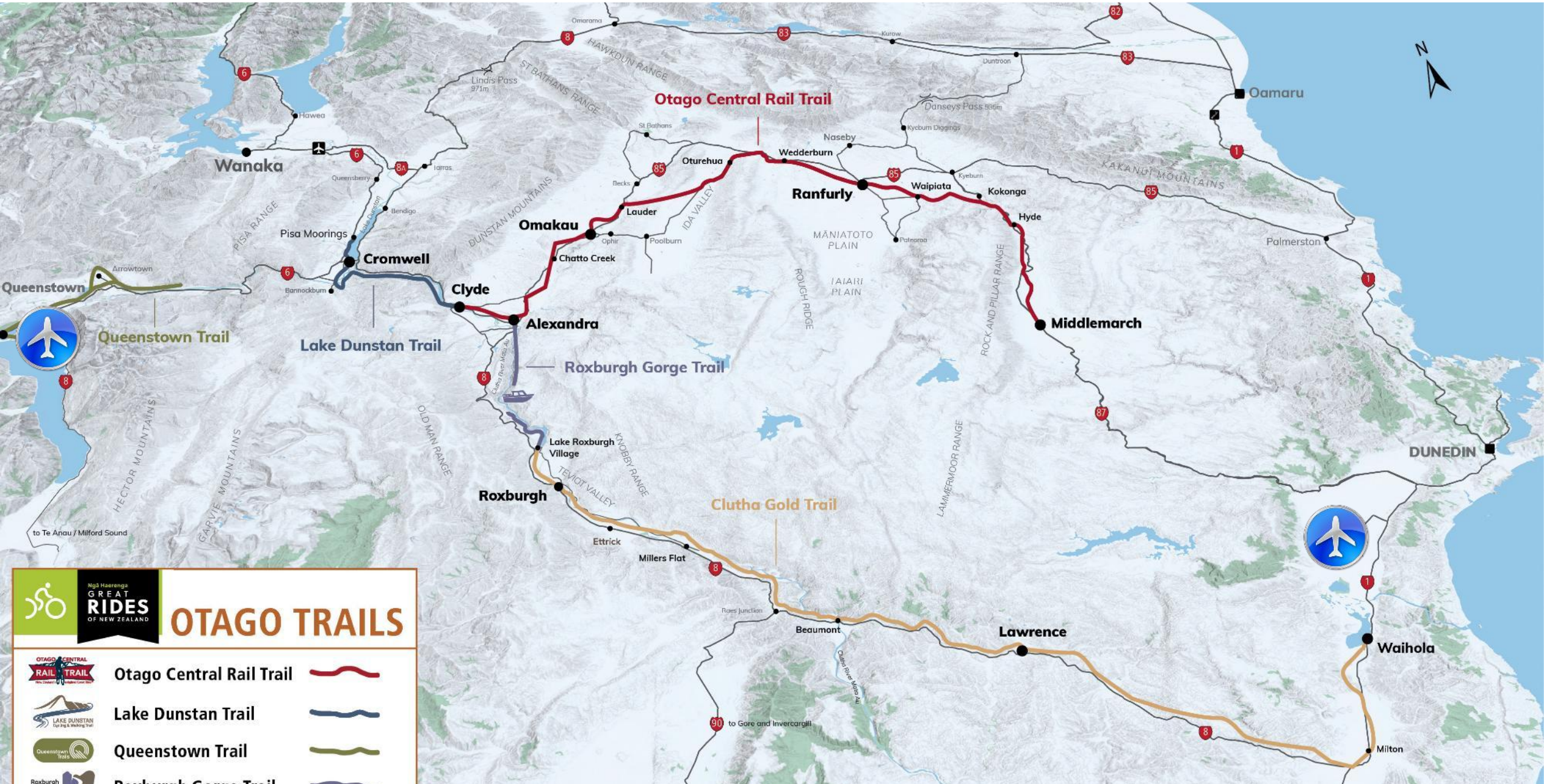
Why, when and how?

History & context of the Otago Trails Marketing Group

- **2018:** Tourism Central Otago's 10-year plan identified the opportunity for a customer-centric, collaborative approach to trails marketing
- **2020:** COVID Recovery Fund enabled a trial project
- **2021:** A proven success, the marketing collaboration was formalised with funding from 3 x RTOs and the Rail Trail Business Network, and 4 x Otago Great Rides as additional key stakeholders.
- **2022:** Destination Queenstown and Queenstown Trails Trust join the group
- **2025:** Project extended to July 2026

Today, funding from 4 x RTOs and the Rail Trail Business Network supports the role of the Trails Marketing Executive (30hrs per week) plus a small budget for marketing activations.





Connectivity is key: 2 x international airports and 2 x touring routes (Central Otago Touring Route and the Southern Way marketing alliance)

What are our common goals?

- Encourage length of stay and increased spend with compelling reasons to visit year-round.
- Promote inter-regional travel via multi-day rides, itinerary ideas, and touring routes.
- Provide inspiration for repeat visitation and encourage customer advocacy for the trails.
- Promote safe trail experiences with timely education, guides, and trail information.
- Where appropriate, incorporate regional destination management messaging and goals.
- Attract highly valued customers vs. high value customers....

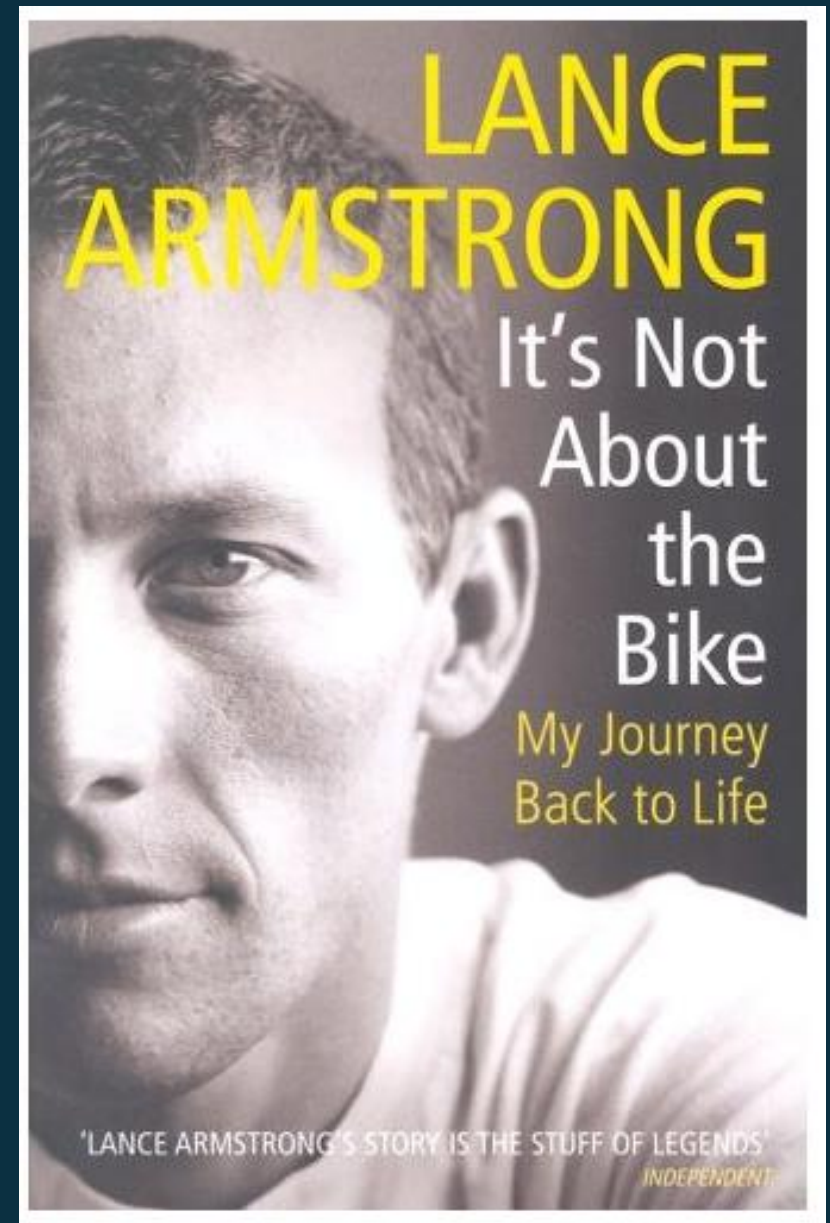


Who's our target audience?

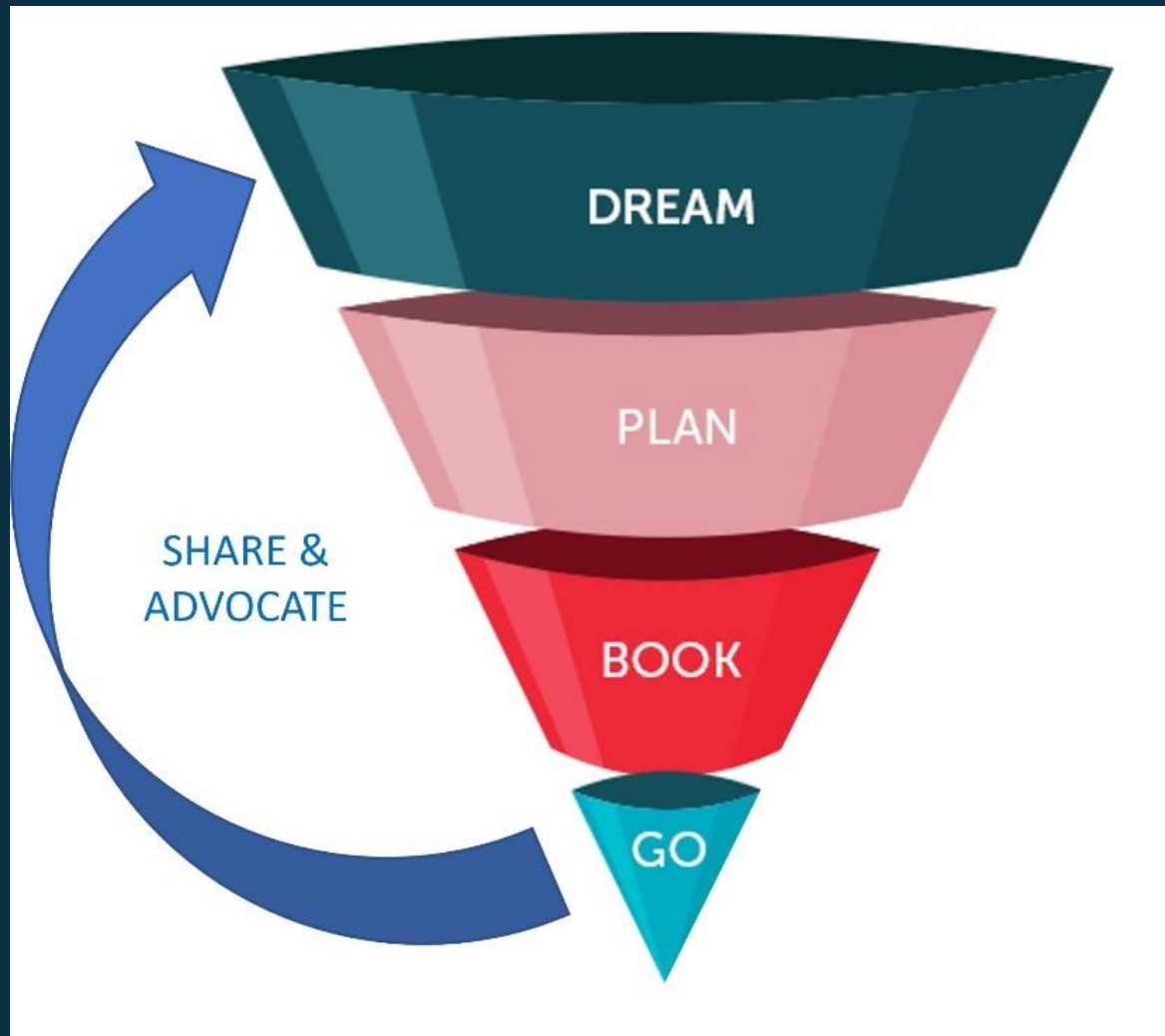




TOP TIP:
**It's Not
About
the
Bike!**



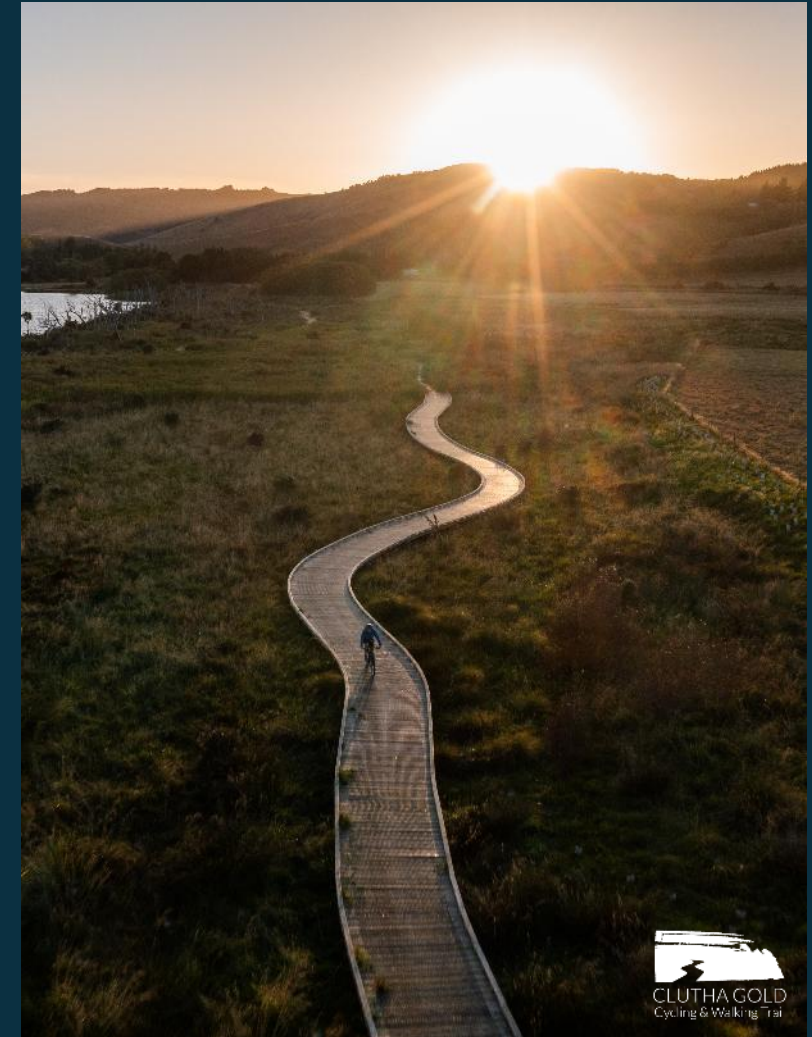
Where do we fit in the customer journey?



- ✓ Tourism New Zealand
 - ✓ Ngā Haerenga NZ Cycle Trails
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- ✓ Regional Tourism Organisations
 - ✓ Ngā Haerenga NZ Cycle Trails
 - ✓ Otago Trails Marketing Group
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- ✓ Regional Tourism Organisations
 - ✓ Trail Trusts
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- ✓ Tour Operators / Travel Agents
 - ✓ Tourism & Hospitality Operators
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- ✓ Tourism & Hospitality Operators

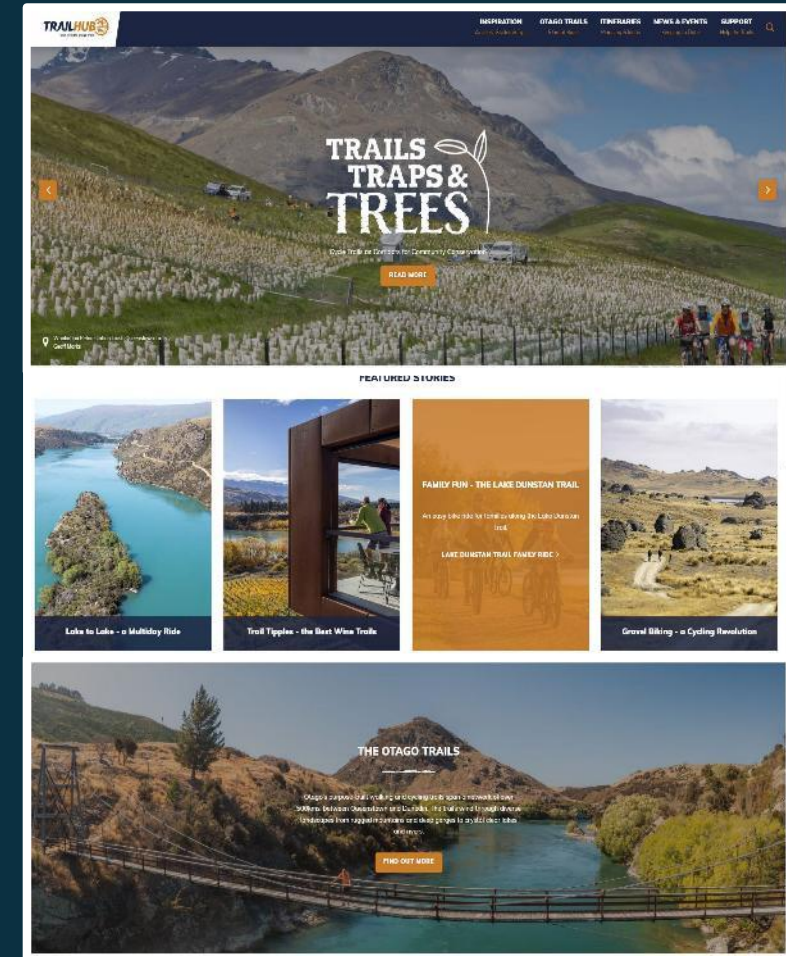
What's our approach to marketing?

- Limited budget for marketing campaigns – need to be smart!
- Leverage and amplify the work of the RTOs and Trail Trusts
- A changing paradigm – engagement not just content
- Trail Hub – launched in Feb 2023, shared content and media platform
- Highly targeted media plan – collaboration and communication with partners to extend reach of all opportunities
- Operator capability development e.g. Rail Trail Business Network
- Domestic and Australia only (approx. 90% domestic visitation across wider Otago, Queenstown skewed more to internationals)



What is Trail Hub? www.trailhub.co.nz

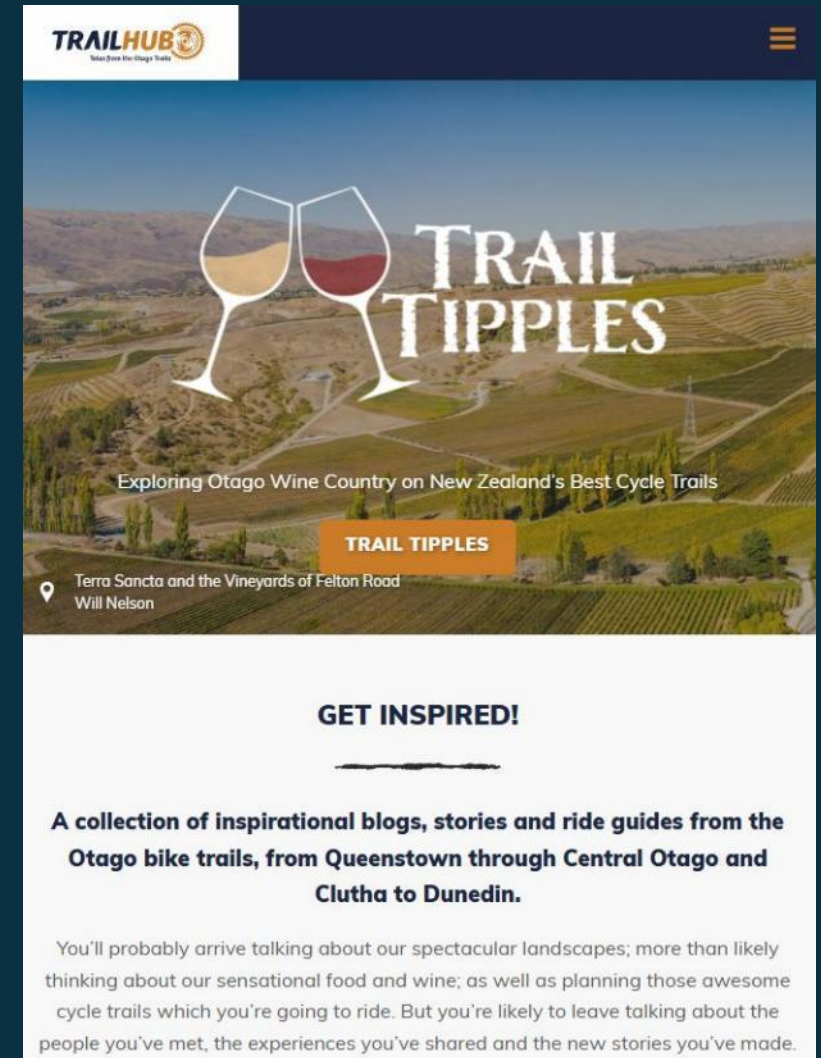
- Our collective content sharing and story telling platform
- Leverages Tourism Central Otago website platform (economies of scale)
- Content designed specifically to be shared by stakeholders and operators
- **No** business listings - designed to **compliment** and **NOT compete** with partner websites
- **No** dedicated social media (RTOs and Trails already have socials)
- **No** Search Engine Marketing (SEM) – all organic and via partner's sharing Trail Hub stories, itineraries and news...
- Designed to drive traffic (referrals) to partner websites, i.e. inspire customers to progress through the customer journey and to book a trip!



How's Trail Hub performing?

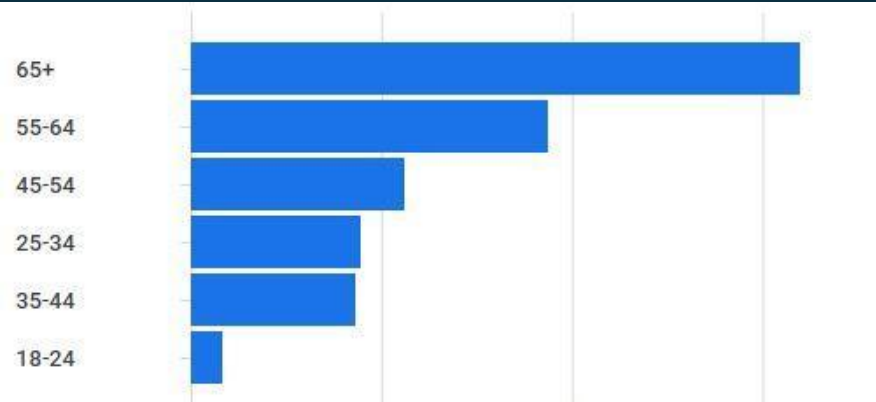
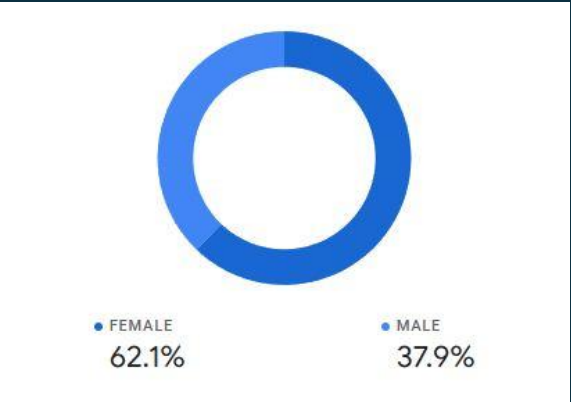
12 months to 1st May 2025

- **1min 13sec** average engagement time (*industry benchmark 50secs*)
- **12,840 referrals** to partner websites (*outbound clicks*)
As a comparison TNZ's recent "Everyone Must Go" campaign cost \$500K+ and generated ~7,000 referrals...
- New weekly content, over 50 new feature stories, articles, and itineraries
- Ongoing visual asset development – fresh video and photo content
- Stories widely shared across a variety of stakeholder networks, from local operators and RTOs to NZCT and mainstream media...



Trail Hub Demographics

12 months to 1st May 2025



2024 / 2025 Trail Performance

All our stakeholders and partners contribute to the customer experience. The 5 Otago Great Rides are tracking above the national average for all trails, and have collectively improved their scores from last year.

All Otago Trails improved their individual NPS score over the last 12 months!

- ✓ Otago Trails Average NPS86.2(May 2024: 83.7)
- ✓ Otago Trails Average Customer Satisfaction9.2(May 2024: 9.1)

	QTT	LDT	OCRT	RGT	CGT	All Trails
NPS	81.1	91	86.9	86.9	85.1	78.3
Cust. Sat.	8.9	9.3	9.4	9.4	9.1	9.0

12 months to May 2025 | Source: Get Smart Global, Monthly Trail Surveys



What's working?

✓ Engaged and committed RTOs

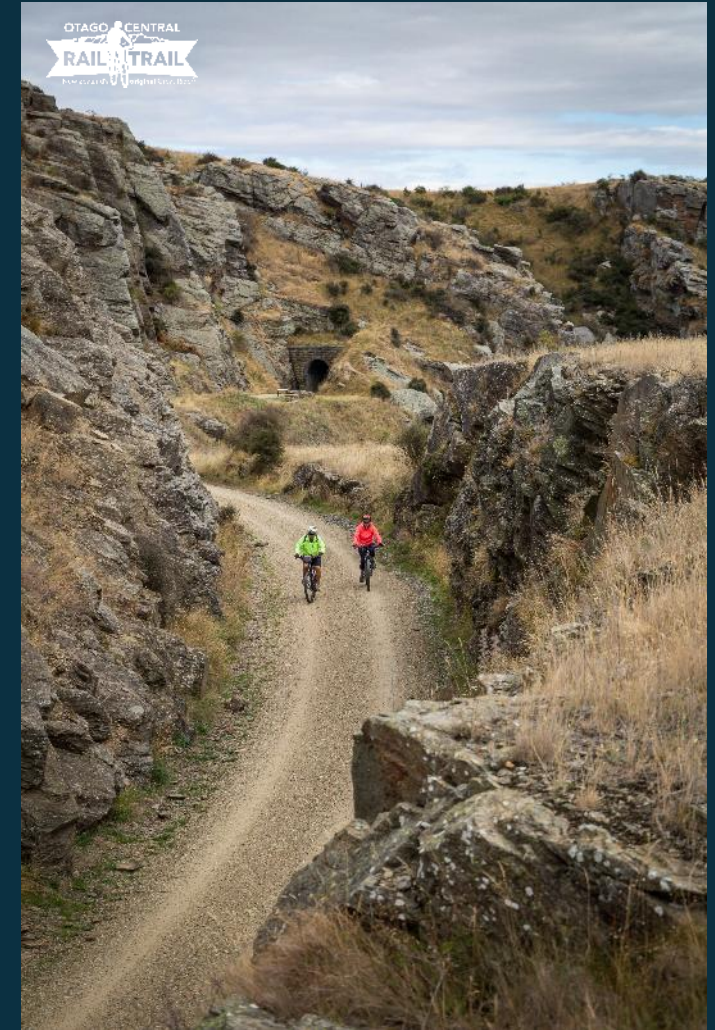
- ✓ Stakeholder alignment... but it took a while!
- ✓ Dedicated, passionate (and multi talented!) Trails Marketing Executive who's connected to the industry
- ✓ Our highly collaborative approach e.g. SLT, QTT, DQ, TCO, QLDC, CODC, NZTA and in due course Police and LandSAR all working on the Kawarau Gorge Trail project.
- ✓ Excellent operator engagement
- ✓ Trails are bringing year round opportunities which supports new product development e.g. *value of cycling in Queenstown is now ~\$200M per annum (50% value of ski market)*



Twice a finalist at the TIA Tourism Awards – Industry Collaboration

What are our challenges?

- Data and insights, inc. trail counters and trail surveys to support business / resource planning and new product development
- Stakeholder management - differing skills / maturity
- Managing “social licence”
- User pays and funding support models
- Consistency of service offering on some trails – reputational risk
- Operator capability e.g. online presence, how we “show up” collectively is vital e.g. Google business listings, imagery...
- Trail etiquette and rider competence
- Demand for ongoing content development



What's next?...

Kawarau Gorge Trail (*opening Jan/Feb 2026*)

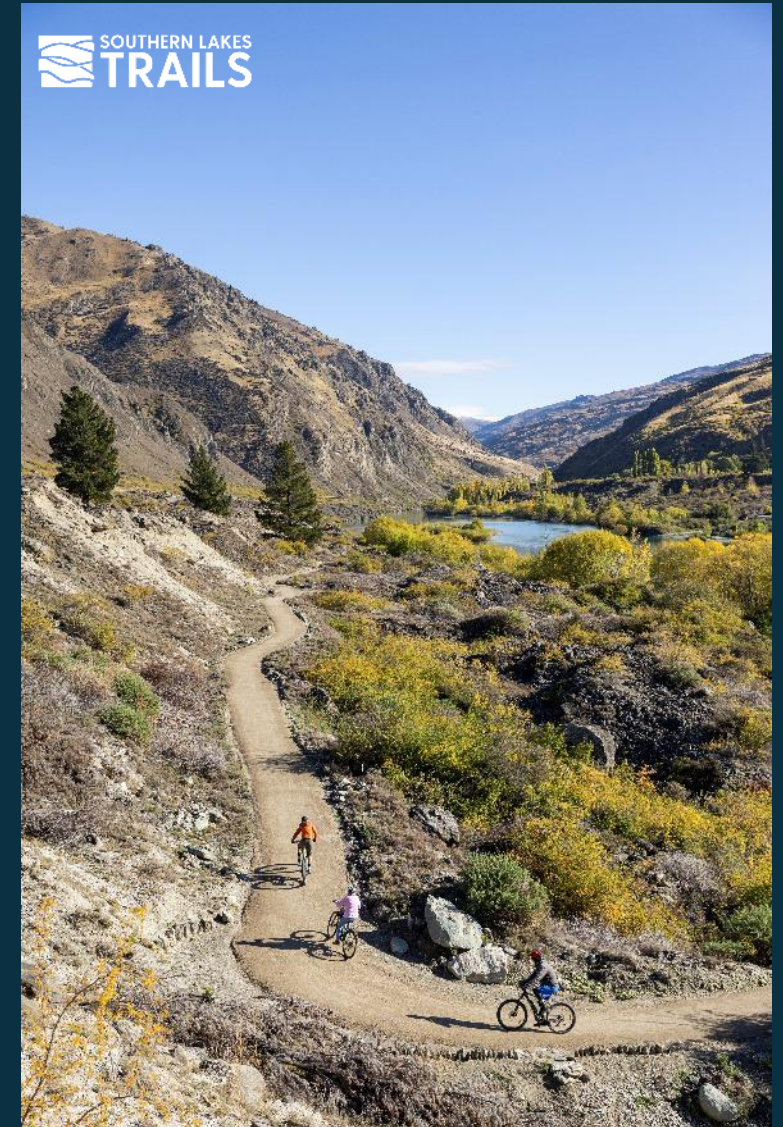
- Managing the narrative
- Rider wellbeing – grade 2-3, remote and limited rescue access
- Managing social licence – demand forecast 100k users

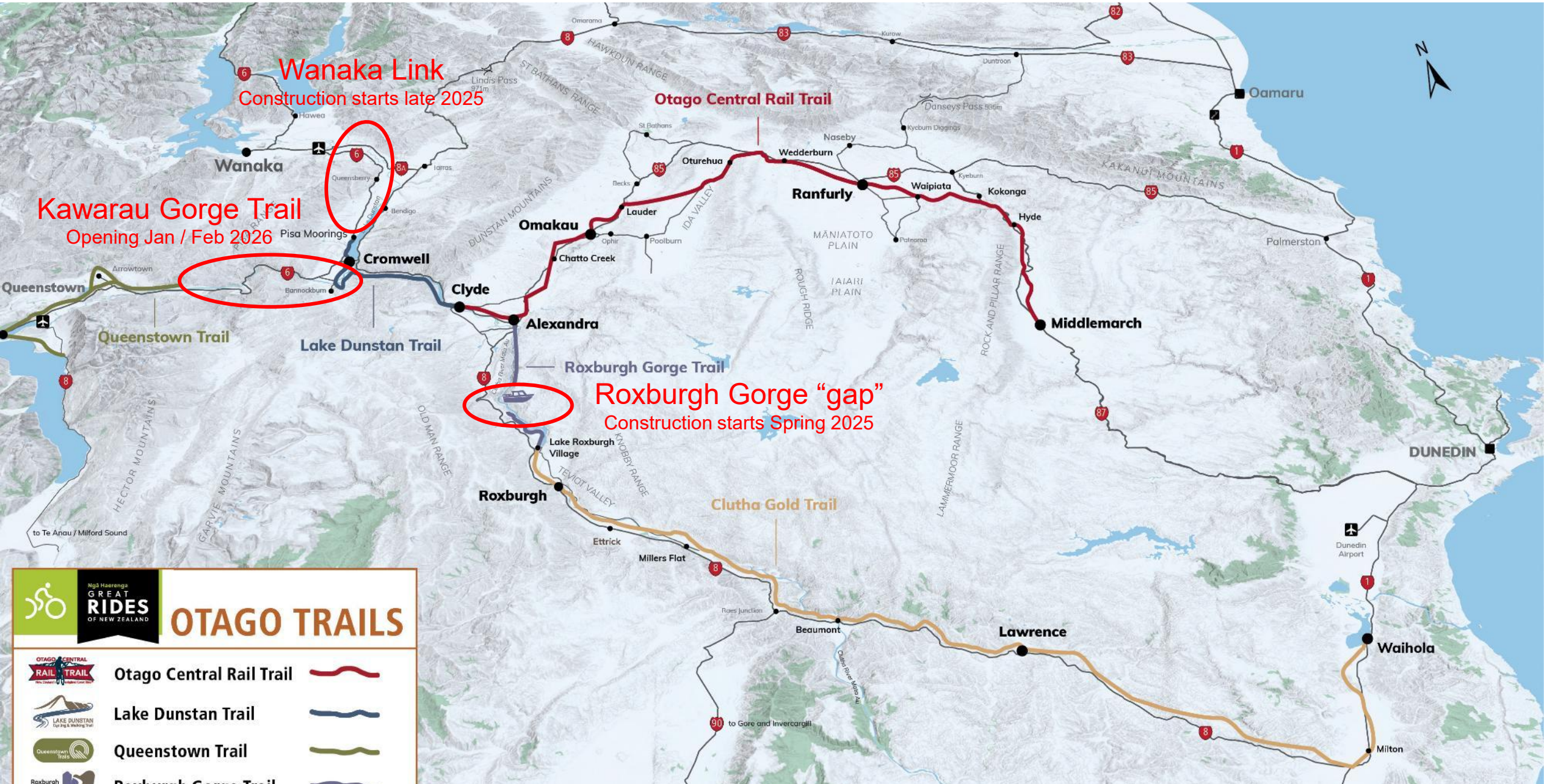
Roxburgh Gorge Trail “Gap” (*construction starts spring 2025*)

Wanaka Link Track (*construction starts late 2025*)

- Lake Wanaka Tourism to join the marketing group

New trails are great for PR, media, and building awareness, but the narrative is about connecting the wider network and realising benefits for all our communities and stakeholders...





Wanaka Link
Construction starts late 2025

Kawarau Gorge Trail
Opening Jan / Feb 2026

Otago Central Rail Trail

Roxburgh Gorge "gap"
Construction starts Spring 2025



Ngā Haeonga
GREAT RIDES
OF NEW ZEALAND

OTAGO TRAILS



OTAGO CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL



LAKE DUNSTAN
Cycling & Walking Trail



Queenstown Trail



Roxburgh Gorge



Clutha Gold Trail











A compelling story: 530km+ continuous network of WORLD CLASS, purpose-built, off-road walking and cycling trails!

Get in touch...




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