

Dunedin – a UNESCO City of Literature

New Zealand is remote and mountainous and beautiful. Situated in the southern Pacific, the islands were settled by its first people, the Māori, over 800 years ago. Dunedin is the ancestral home of the Kāi Tahu people and the second-largest city in the South Island of New Zealand, the principal city of the Otago Region with a population approximately 125,000.

Here are some things to know about Dunedin as a UNESCO City of Literature:

Multicultural Heritage

Dunedin is the ancestral home of the Kāi Tahu people whose legends and stories have been woven over centuries by the oral histories and traditions passed down by the ancestors. Today, Kāi Tahu continue to have a strong and proud presence in Dunedin.

In 1848, a new wave of Scottish migration brought the literature of Burns and the Bible to Dunedin. Today, many published and talented writers, poets, illustrators, lyricists, book designers and playwrights draw their inspiration from European traditions and work alongside other writers from Maori, Pacific and Asian backgrounds.

A Great City for Writers

Dunedin has been home to many of New Zealand's most celebrated writers and poets since the 19th century including: poet Thomas Bracken, author of New Zealand's national anthem; Charles Brasch, founder of *Landfall*, the country's foremost literary journal; Janet Frame, internationally respected for her fiction and poetry; and Hone Tuwhare poet laureate from 1999 to 2001.

Dunedin boasts a thriving branch of the New Zealand Society of Authors and is home to many members of the New Zealand Writers' Guild. A statue of Robert Burns occupies a prominent place in the Octagon at the city's centre and significant writers of the past and present are honoured in a Writers' Walk in the Octagon.

Impressive Publishing Heritage

In the 19th century Dunedin companies were New Zealand's leading printing, papermaking and publishing innovators. Historically, firms such as Coulls Somerville Wilkie, A.H. & A.W. Reed and John McIndoe have been of national importance. The University of Otago Press releases about 20 titles annually, and numerous small presses specialise in poetry, hand-printed books and historical reprints.

The Otago Daily Times is New Zealand's last independent daily newspaper and this year celebrated its 150th anniversary, and the city also supports a number of community newspapers.

Libraries

Dunedin is home to many nationally significant libraries and library collections and Dunedin Public Library, established in 1908, was New Zealand's first free public library. Today, per capita use of the library is impressive, with more than a million people through the doors annually and on average a third of the city's individuals participating in events and outreach programmes.

Libraries of national and international significance include the University of Otago Library, the Hocken Library and the Hewitson Library at Knox College. Others are of special significance to southern New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and Antarctica. The Dunedin Public Library houses the Reed Collection, an internationally recognised collection of rare and precious books including many of European origin.

Centre for the Book

In 2011, the University of Otago established a Centre for the Book with the purpose of providing a unique centre of excellence in book history, print culture, and investigations into new platforms and models of book publication and distribution. As well as a programme of public and specialist events, their research work has seen the formation of a team led by University of Otago staff to write the definitive *History of the Book in New Zealand*.

Books for Children

Many award-winning writers and illustrators of children's book live and work in Dunedin including David Elliot and Tania Roxborough.

Dunedin Public Libraries pioneered library services to children, instituting a lending service in 1910 and commencing bulk loans to schools in 1918. Today the role of the library has expanded. It now coordinates the Books for Babies scheme which introduces reading, from soon after birth, to around 2,000 of Dunedin's newest citizens every year. During preschool years, a professional creative story telling programme, Storytelling Adventures, is delivered and as children grow and learn to read, a popular summer reading programme is offered to encourage a lifetime love of reading and learning.

Theatres & Playwrights

Dunedin's Fortune Theatre is the world's southern-most professional theatre company. It has a close association with leading New Zealand playwright Roger Hall and almost all of his plays have been performed there. The Globe Theatre occupies an important place in New Zealand's theatre history and has a particular commitment to New Zealand and local dramatists. The works of one of New Zealand's best known poets, James K. Baxter, first premiered there. Allen Hall at the University of Otago provides a venue for student productions, including lunch time theatre. The Department of Theatre Studies maintains Theatre Aotearoa, an archive of information about New Zealand stage productions from the nineteenth century to the present day. The University's German Department regularly produces plays in German and the Classics Department annually produces classical tragedies and comedies translated into English by award-winning playwright Harry Love.

Other theatres include the Mayfair in South Dunedin, the Regent in the Octagon which runs the famous 24 hour book sale and the Playhouse theatre which produces three children's theatre productions per year, as well as popular and intriguing adult productions.

Musical Lyricists

In the late-nineteenth century, Dunedinite Thomas Bracken was New Zealand's most famous and well-loved poet. He wrote New Zealand's national anthem 'God Defend New Zealand' here in 1876.

Today, Dunedin boasts a flourishing popular music culture with the world renowned 'Dunedin Sound'. Songwriters including Graeme Downes (The Verlaines), Martin Phillipps (The Chills) and David Kilgour (The Clean) are the poets at the heart of the city's musical soundscape. For over three decades they have inspired a cultural legacy through poetry and song that has indelibly marked Dunedin as an ongoing vibrant and creative musical community.

Literary Patronage

The Robert Burns Fellowship, New Zealand's oldest and most prestigious literary fellowship, is based at the University of Otago. In collaboration with Creative New Zealand, the university is also the only tertiary institution to offer a residency for writers of children's books; the University of Otago College of Education Writer in Residence programme. The university also houses the Otakou Press room which offers the opportunity to experiment with traditional letter-press printing through a Printer in Residence programme. Since the programme's inception in 2003, limited editions of works by such highly respected poets as Ruth Dallas, Hone Tuwhare and Brian Turner have been produced using this method of printing.

At Broad Bay on the Otago Peninsula, the Caselberg Trust has turned the former home of writer John Caselberg and his wife, artist Anna Caselberg, into a residence for visiting writers and artists. In 2010, the Caselberg Trust inaugurated the annual Caselberg International Poetry prize, the winning entries of which are published in the Landfall literary magazine.

The Janet Frame Literary Trust, based in Dunedin, makes annual awards to a New Zealand poet or fiction writer, or a literary organisation which directly benefits New Zealand writers.

Literary Events

Dunedin has a wonderfully vibrant and active literary events calendar and is legendary for its long-standing tradition of public readings and poetry. The City generously presents a wide variety of bookish related programmes; from walking tours, writing workshops and educational seminars, through to preschool storytime sessions, reading programmes, author talks, exhibitions and play readings.

With a well-earned reputation for delivering quality literary programmes and speakers to a wide range of audiences, Dunedin brings to life and honours annual national literary

celebrations, such as New Zealand Poetry Day, New Zealand Book Month, as well as the New Zealand Post Book Awards.

Special annual literary events include the 24-hour Regent book sale, National Poetry Day celebrations, New Zealand Book Month, the Children's Storylines Festival, readings in Dunedin's unique Chinese scholar's garden at Chinese New Year and the Robert Burns Poetry Competition.

VISIT: www.cityofliterature.co.nz