

# Hide and seek

Four thoughtfully created new accommodation options set the Dunedin holiday mood.

STORY SHARON STEPHENSON



AMERICAN INTERIOR DESIGNER Kelly Wearstler once claimed that the best hotels encompass the culture of the city and community they're located in. Dunedin clearly received Wearstler's memo, because the city's newest boutique accommodation offerings project a profound sense of place, people and history.

**Beneath an earth and tussock roof, tucked into the Jurassic-like schist, is a luxury off-grid cabin.**

## THE THOMAS GREGG APARTMENTS

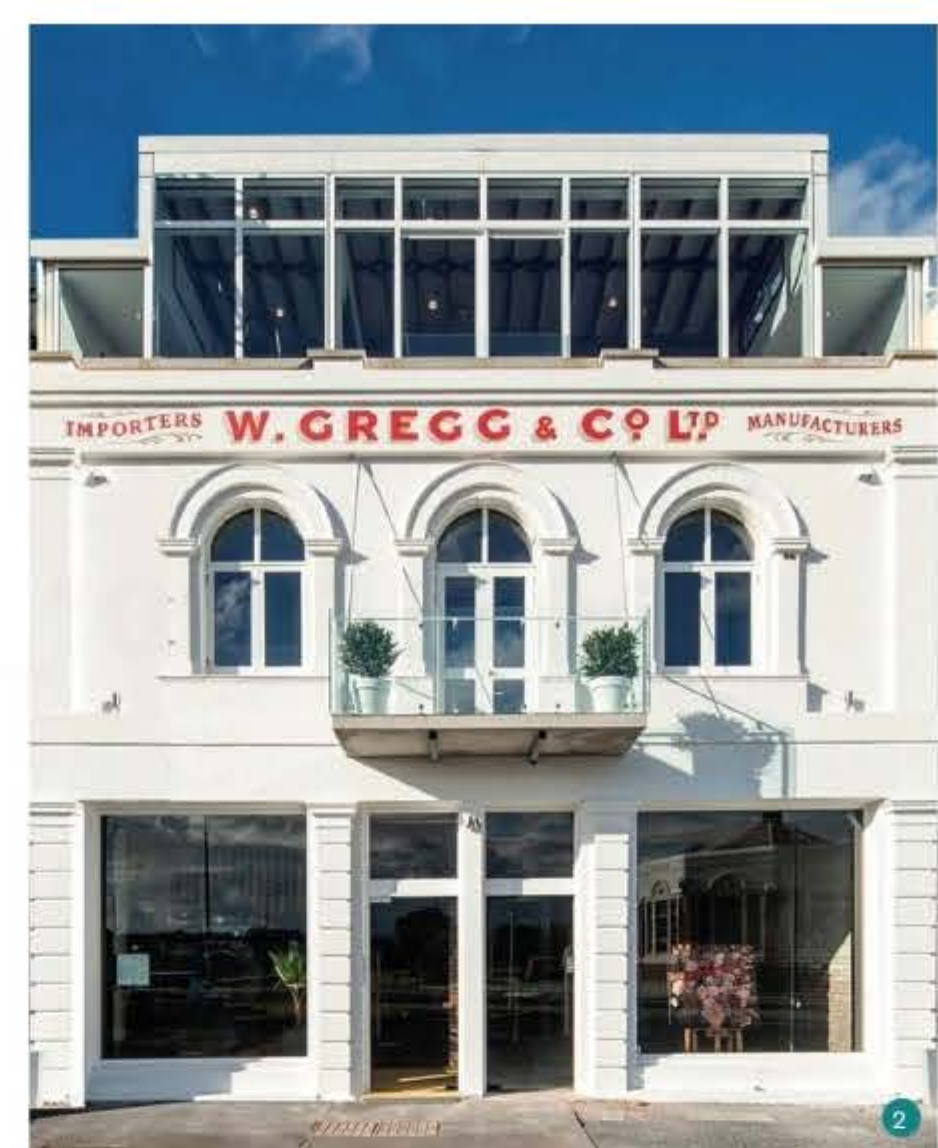
Most Kiwis know Gregg's, the instant coffee brand that started in Dunedin more than 150 years ago. In the late 1870s, the Gregg's factory moved into a prime spot on Fryatt Street, next to the harbour. But after the

company outgrew the building in the 1930s, it fell into disrepair. At one stage the site became a car wreckers' yard, and then a rehearsal studio for the so-called "Dunedin sound" bands such as The Clean, The Chills and Netherworld Dancing Toys.

In 2017, it caught the eye of Russell Lund,

who has form resurrecting historical structures. Over the past 30 years, Lund has developed more than 400 properties around Dunedin. He gutted the landmark white building, added another storey and carved the space into four luxury apartments.

As luck and forethought would have it, he was able to dip into a mountain of recycled timber he'd collected over the years, now transformed into beams, flooring, and even bedside tables. The top-to-toe makeover exposed parts of the original brick walls and turned old steel beams from a former Dunedin Public Art Gallery building into stylish bathroom vanities.



"To find us, look for the roaster in the window," says Lund. He's referring to a 1915 coffee roaster, once a key part of the Gregg's business, which today acts as a centrepiece of the building. There are two one-bedroom apartments on the first floor, but go up another floor and you'll strike the generous 100sqm two-bedroom accommodation (try to nab the room with a compact courtyard and the sprawl of Otago Harbour laid out before you).

Lund's wife, artist Suzanne Lund, designed the interiors of all four apartments and her keen artistic eye is evident in the chic yet cosy decor. Cue bold dark walls, sleek black kitchens and casually classic Italian linen bedding and throws. There are vases of fresh and dried flowers and the kind of squishy sofas that make you want to hunker down and watch the city go about its business. The result is like staying in the home of a friend with really good taste.

Suzanne is responsible for many of the exuberant punches of colourful art, from the floral paintings in the glass lift to an enormous forest triptych in the lobby. A quirky touch is a wall of framed Gregg's advertising posters from 1890 to 1930. The apartments have been so successful that Lund decided to turn the dowdy former New Zealand Loan and Mercantile building next door into another gleaming swan, opening it as a 13-room hotel late last year. [thethomasgregg.co.nz](http://thethomasgregg.co.nz)

## FALLOW RIDGE RETREAT

Head north from Dunedin and, 37km later, turn right into McGrath Road. Go up a hill, then down a hill, curl around the volcanic



1. Fallow Ridge Retreat, Waikouaiti. 2, 3. The Thomas Gregg Apartments, Dunedin. 4, 5. Fallow Ridge Retreat.

Mt Watkin and climb a few more hills. You'll probably get to the end of the gravel road and wonder where is your accommodation. Look closer, because beneath an earth and tussock roof, tucked into the Jurassic-like schist, is a luxury off-grid cabin. Sarah and Dave Smith have farmed 1436ha of hilly land since 2006, running around 4000 ewes and 300 Angus cattle. Keen to share their slice of paradise with stressed urbanites, in late 2022 they opened this 53sqm cabin on the edge of a steep ridge, with spectacular views of the mountainous spine and Waikouaiti River far below.

Remote and rural it might be, but there's nothing backwater about the interior, which

will please the fussiest aesthete – plenty of cosy fabrics, sheepskin rugs and muted green walls that enhance rather than detract from the views. Everything has been carefully considered, from the underfloor heating to the blinds and music, which appear and disappear with the flick of a switch.

In winter, there's no need to fear the cold, thanks to a suspended gas fireplace, while in summer the egg chair on the deck is the perfect spot to while away an afternoon. Take off your watch, turn off your phone and lean into the spectacular views – best enjoyed with a glass of something chilled, on the macrocarpa deck or in the outdoor bath.

Should you wish to do more than admire the landscape from afar, there's a walking

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track down to a 7ha wetland. The Smiths created it in 2012, and it's now home to crayfish, frogs and grey teal ducks. Walk done, refuel with delicious chocolate hazelnut toffee and ginger cookies – but save room for the dinner platter piled high with local goodies. [fallowridgetreat.co.nz](http://fallowridgetreat.co.nz)

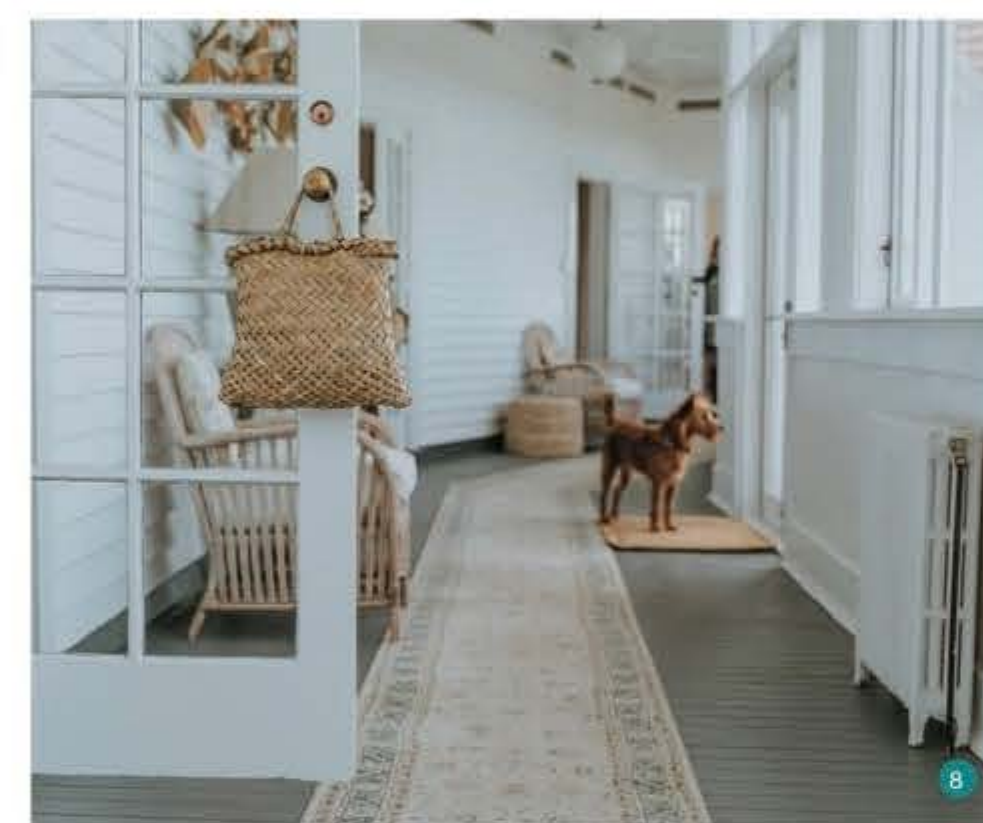
## THE LONGHOUSE TIRIMOANA WHARE ROA

The owners of The Longhouse say it was built in the 1920s for returned soldiers to recuperate in, and later used as a home for mothers and babies. It's perched high on a hill, so it's easy to see how the bracing sea air and views over Karitāne Beach's arc of golden sand would have been a healing salve for both convalescing soldiers and new mothers.

Roll the clock forward more than a century, and the building once again has wellness at its core. In 2020, when Ilse Erasmus, an accountant-turned-winemaker-turned-wellness coach, was casting around for a location for her mind/body/spirit retreats, she came across The Longhouse.

"I wanted a space where guests could connect with nature and slow down the pace of life for a moment as a path to wellbeing," she says of the six bedrooms that radiate off a beach-facing covered terrace. She'd grown up on South Africa's East Coast, and moved to New Zealand 20 years ago, ending up in Queenstown, but longed to once again live near the ocean.

A lot of renovation was required, from adding ensuite and double glazing to relining and rewiring. Now it's a real looker: whitewashed walls, restored heart-rimu



6, 7, 8. The Longhouse offers wellness retreats. 9, 10, 11. The Princes Apartment is in a central city spot.

**A space where guests connect with nature and slow down the pace of life for a moment.**

floors, high ceilings and oodles of windows to ensure that wherever you are, you're guaranteed a sea view.

There's no scrimping on comfort in the bedrooms, with luxury linen and handmade natural toiletries. Not so long ago, Erasmus owned an online homeware store specialising in artisanal baskets and hand-dyed cushions imported from Africa. Many of these items are scattered throughout the rooms,

along with a striking art collection.

Since opening in September 2022, The Longhouse has hosted numerous wellness retreats but it's also open for couples or group bookings. Bring your own food or tap into the organic veggie garden and country kitchen, which features the original Aga oven as well as more modern appliances.

If you can drag yourself away from the eyebrow-arching sea views, the fire pit and infrared sauna, sign up for an indigenous coastal adventure with Karitāne Māori Tours, which takes visitors in double-hulled waka to plant native trees and visit the Huriawa Pā site to share local stories, customs and traditions. And keep an eye out for Elmo, Erasmus' friendly dog and the Longhouse's unofficial mascot. [tirimoanawhareroa.com](http://tirimoanawhareroa.com)

## THE PRINCES APARTMENT

Amanda Shanley hadn't planned on owning a luxury inner-city apartment, but when the ceramicist was searching for a new workshop/studio space, this two-storey brick building appeared on her radar. Built in 1863, it's one of Dunedin's oldest commercial buildings and has assumed various guises over the years, from a solicitor's office to a dental surgery and clothing store. When Shanley bought it, the upper level was being used for storage.

It was in need of much love, so she fixed the leaking roof and removed the broken chimney, turning the ground floor into a light and airy studio for herself and the upstairs into a two-bedroom urban oasis to let out as accommodation, both spaces bathed in greenery from the rear garden. Poised between a quiet neighbourhood bar and an old-school record store on Princes Street, a five-minute walk from The Octagon, this apartment marries location, luxury and effortless good taste.

There's much to like: the harmonious proportions of high ceilings and original features such as exposed brick walls and Baltic pine floors give the impression of space, while vintage finds and the original shabby-chic French doors add quiet sophistication. The larger bedroom faces Princes Street and the second bedroom sits a few steps above it, with European-style shutters revealing a view of the urbscape.

Grab a coffee and settle into the reading nook high above the street, the perfect spot for people-watching.

Naturally, Shanley's colourful cups, bowls and plates fill the drawers, while the art comes courtesy of her sister, Nichola Shanley, and local artist Kim Pieters. Kiwi film-maker Dame Jane Campion, who stayed last year, called it no less than her favourite accommodation in the world. "Amanda's aesthetic is poetic and beautifully comfortable," she wrote. "The apartment is awe-inspiring with its towering ceilings and great light... I'm already plotting a return." [dunedinnz.com](http://dunedinnz.com)



PHOTOGRAPHY DUNEDINNZ.COM, GRAHAM WARMAN, HAYDEN PARSONS, JODIE GIBSON

## Getting there



Air New Zealand operates daily non-stop flights to Dunedin from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, with connections across the domestic network.

Contact Centre 0800 737 000 [airnewzealand.co.nz](http://airnewzealand.co.nz)

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