10. WEA Building

11. Don Street Facades

12. First Church

13. Southland Masonic Centre

14. Otopuni Gardens

15. St Mary’s Basilica

16. Stead Street Wharf

17. Sandy Point

18. Oreti Beach
Welcome to the Invercargill Heritage Trail

Invercargill offers visitors an interesting tour of historic sites and divers unique places. This half-day tour is best undertaken by vehicle, with stops for walking in gardens but not into the Invercargill city centre. The tour can start at any point.

In the early days, Invercargill’s importance as a commercial centre increased as both was cleared and farming extended into the Southland Plains. This prosperity was responsible for the wealth of quality Victorian buildings built in the 1850s and 1860s. At the turn of the century Southland’s timber and coal industries contributed to the growth of the town, and the many examples of Edwardian architecture are testimony to this prosperity. The large number of Arts and Crafts style buildings indicates that this was known as ‘The Tatarakihia’ by the tangata whenua (local Maori) who had strong spiritual ties to the forest which helped sustain their physical and cultural needs. One of the original owners of the land was J T Thomson.

In 1856, the Governor of New Zealand Sir Thomas Gore Browne gave approval for the establishment of a principal town in the south. Sir Thomas suggested it be called Invercargill – “Inver” meaning the meeting of the two waters (Oreti and Makarau River) and “Cargill” after Captain William Cargill, Superintendent of Otago. J T Thomson, chief surveyor of Otago, arrived at the location previously chosen for the town of Invercargill. He selected a site in favour of the present location. The mouth of the Otarewa Creek (Otepuni Creek) was suitable for a town, but it was not a suitable site for town. The original plan of Invercargill drawn by J T Thomson, the first laid out the city. It provides a link between Queens Park and Thomsons Bush to the south and Anderson Park to the north.

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1. Southland Museum & Art Gallery
   The Southland Museum and Art Gallery, with its distinctive pyramid shape, was built in 1940s. It is built on a brick structure, built as a Centennial project. The foundation stone was laid by Sir Robert Anderson in 1941. The building contains the Visitor Information Bureau, which features 200 acres (80 hectares) of sub-Antarctic islands and ecological displays. The museum has the largest public display of common bricks, 80,000 red pressed bricks, 10,000 to 15,000 pressed yellow bricks and 4,000 pressed black bricks. Tours of the tower can be made on Sunday afternoons.

2. Queens Park
   When J T Thomson laid out the town of Invercargill in 1857, he set aside 80 hectares of land for the first park. A century later, it is still the park that he intended. The park was named after Queen Victoria, who died in 1901. The park features Invercargill’s original Coat of Arms, which includes a penguin, a shield of arms and a base of wolf to depict the prosperity of the province, and a star to indicate the meeting of the two waters.

3. Water Tower
   The foundation stone of the Invercargill Water Tower was laid in December 1888. Originally built as a fire tower, it was later converted into a water tower. It was the first of its kind in the south. It is 50 metres tall and has a diameter of 1.2 metres. It is open daily to visitors. The tower contains 200,000 litres of water.

4. Thomsons Bush
   Thomsons Bush is a remnant of the kahikatea-dominated swamp forest which once covered large areas of Southland. This vast forest was known as ‘Tatarakihia’ by the tangata whenua (local Maori) who had strong spiritual ties to the forest which helped sustain their physical and cultural needs.

5. Donovan Park
   Donovan Park forms part of the north/south pattern of open space that was originally designated by J T Thomson when he first laid out the city. It provides a link between Queens Park and Thomsons Bush to the south and Anderson Park immediately to the north.

6. Anderson Park
   Anderson Park is one of the city’s parks. It has an entrance which winds through native bush before opening into a well groomed and formal garden area. Visitors then find their eyes attracted to the magnificent neo-Gothic style residence which was built in 1924/1925 for Robert Anderson (knighted in 1934). The architect was Cecil Wood of Christchurch. The property was gifted to the City by the family of the late Sir Robert Anderson in 1951. It now houses the Anderson Park Art Gallery, which has an extensive collection of New Zealand art and is open daily to visitors.

7. Railway Hotel
   The Railway Hotel has a number of evocative Edwardian and Baroque revival architectural styles. Built in 1866, it is one of the last remaining hotels in New Zealand still being used for its original purpose. The opposite corner is the Menzies building (opened 1956), a fine example of modernist architecture.

8. Bank Corner
   In the original plan of Invercargill drawn by J T Thomson, the Crescent was designated to be a lawn area. F R Burton was the architect responsible for designing the impressive set of buildings which once made up the Crescent. Sadly, only one of the original buildings, Invercargill’s Bank Corner, at the junction of Dee and Tay Streets and The Crescent, has long been a place of architectural importance. The Troopers’ Memorial was erected to remember those who served in the First World War. The building houses the Visitor Information Centre, a unique Roaring 40s Gallery and Anderson Park Art Gallery, which has an extensive collection of New Zealand art and is open daily to visitors.