A SIA in rural New Zealand, combining an analysis of interview, census and community survey data, finds that domestic tourism provides more than economic benefits. Tourist involvement in community activities keeps a small town alive and the wider rural area connected.

**THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF DOMESTIC TOURISM ON OTEMATATA (NEW ZEALAND)**

Mike Mackay¹ (michael.mackay@lincoln.ac.nz), Jude Wilson¹ and Nick Taylor²

¹Lincoln University, Faculty of Environment, Society and Design, Christchurch, New Zealand
²Taylor Baines and Associates, Christchurch, New Zealand

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Permanent</th>
<th>Holiday Home</th>
<th>Total</th>
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Otematata Usually Resident Population (Census Years)

**TOURISM**

**Visitor Types**
- Summer campers (often repeat visitors), holiday home owners/users, youth groups, business groups (for team retreats), predominantly regional visitors from Otago or neighbouring Canterbury

**Key Attractions**
- Hydro lakes, scenic amenity, climate, rurality, affordability (not a “premier” destination), Otematata “village” — nostalgic link to a previous era, but not hydro history

**Activities**
- Rest and relaxation, outdoor recreation (aquatic/terrestrial), sightseeing, local events, cycling

**IMPACTS**

**Rates take, fees & investment in town**
75% of dwellings in Otematata are holiday homes and their owners pay full rates (property tax). This provides Council with a full rates/tax take for (re)investing in the town. Fees are also collected from tourists for the use and maintenance of the local boat ramps and camping sites.

**Small business support and job creation**
Holiday home owners are keen supporters of local small businesses. Domestic visitors are often self-contained (e.g., bring own groceries) and, therefore, are not fully reliant on local businesses. Holiday homes directly create jobs for residents (e.g., cleaning, maintenance, security and booking services) but seasonality is a big issue. The new A30 cycle trail seen as a platform for launching new businesses and will potentially attract more domestic and international visitors.

**Social vibrancy created and maintained**
Town population greatly increases in peak summer periods. When campgrounds are full and holiday homes fully occupied, Otematata’s streets/public areas are filled with social activity (they are otherwise deserted). Locals appreciate having new people around to interact/connect with.

**Strong(er) town advocacy**
A high level of place attachment reported among visitors. This affinity with the village translates into a strong commitment to the town. Many visitors belong to the Residents Association. They also support local fundraising initiatives and advocate for the town in local planning debates.

**Sustainability of local clubs and committees**
Additional members (i.e., visitors) boost local club numbers and generate membership revenue (fines and subscriptions). Holiday home owners support local organisations through involvement on committees and Residents Association. They also keen to participate in local events.

**Village enhancement**
Holiday home owners are often centrally involved (hands on) in community enhancement projects including facilities and public space upgrades (e.g., Wetland Walkway, playground and golf course upgrade). They also keep the aging housing stock in relatively good condition.

**Tourist behaviour**
Some visitor cohorts unruly (e.g., youth parties over Labour Weekend). This creates a need for mitigations during tourist season e.g., liquor rules and extra police.

Visitors keep the town alive, but the seasonal nature of tourism in Otematata creates limits to growth, vulnerabilities and local challenges.

**Otematata Today**
The permanent resident population has declined to just 186. The town remains in its original form, but it shows signs of degradation. Some newcomers have started small tourism businesses, but visitors are scarce in winter. The arrival of ex-maintenance teams occasionally boosts the town’s population. In March 2015, 400 ex-maintenance workers and tourists celebrated the town’s 50th anniversary. A new cycle trail (Alps 2 Ocean) passes through Otematata and will (potentially) raise its profile, increase visitor numbers and present new tourism business opportunities.