



Tussock Country

New Zealand's

Country Music
Festival

Official

EVENT GUIDE 2026

22 - 31 MAY | GORE, NZ

www.tussockcountry.nz  

Thank you TO OUR 2026 EVENT PARTNERS



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Calendar of Festival Events

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**We also cover the
Capital of Country Music
when the music stops.**

Subscribe to the South.

Otago Daily Times

Gore Street Map



Event Locations

1. **Gore Town & Country Club + Stadium**, 9 Bury Street, Gore
2. **St James Theatre**, 61 Irk Street, Gore
3. **Gore Baptist Church**, 23 Ardwick Street, Gore
4. **Gore District Memorial RSA**, 12 Bowler Avenue, Gore
5. **Croydon Lodge**, 100 Waimea Street, Gore
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20. **Pioneer Rugby Club**, 28 Robertson Street, Gore
21. **The Roadhouse Shed**, 106 Liverpool Street, Riversdale
22. **James Cumming Community Centre**, Ardwick Street, Gore
23. **Gore District Library**, Ardwick Street, Gore
24. **Amigos Mexican Restaurant**, 35 Medway Street, Gore

 **Gore Visitor Centre**, 16 Hokonui Drive, Gore

 **Gore iTICKET Outlet**, St James Theatre, 61 Irk Street, Gore

Disclaimer: The contents of the publication are intended as a guide and for information only. Neither New Zealand Country Music Festival Trust or the associated organisers will be liable on any ground for errors in, or omissions from, that content, nor be responsible for any loss, damage or liability, changes, cancellations or additions with any associated events incurred in this publication.

COUNTRY MUSIC HONOURS

Country Music Honours With Guest Performers The Warratahs

The Country Music Honours celebrate and elevate the very best in original country music. The Honours include award presentations and finalist performances of the top 10 unreleased songs in the 2025 MLT Songwriting Award, the year's top recorded songs vying for the coveted award of APRA AMCOS Best Country Music Song, and the Contribution to Country Music Honour which goes to someone who has not only achieved great heights of their own but uplifted others, inspired change and contributed to the past, present and future of country music in Aotearoa. The 2026 Honours will also feature a special guest appearance from household name and Kiwi country music icons, **The Warratahs**.

A glamorous night starting with complimentary drinks and nibbles in the theatre foyer, audience members will get the chance to watch the award finalists walk the red carpet before the entertainment begins. Join us to celebrate Aotearoa New Zealand's brightest country music stars with a feast of performances and unforgettable award moments.

Friday 22 May

Doors & Red Carpet **7pm** | Show **8pm**

St James Theatre, Gore



Admission:

General Admission \$60+BF
www.iticket.co.nz

For more information visit: www.countrymusichonours.co.nz



Gore Kids Hub Country Disco

Yeehaw! Get into the spirit of Tussock Country and join us for a fun-filled Country Disco at the Gore Kids Hub! Pull on your boots, throw on some cowhide, and come ready to dance the afternoon away with friends.

Dress up in your best country gear and enjoy a lively disco atmosphere packed with music, fun, and plenty of country-style energy.

Bring your own refreshments, and don't forget to bring some cash if you'd like to grab a glowstick to light up the dance floor!

Friday 22 May | 5:30pm

Gore Kids Hub

Admission: Gold coin



Whitestone Cheese Cheese Roll Workshop

Discover the secrets behind one of the South's most beloved delicacies - the iconic cheese roll! In this hands-on workshop, you'll learn how to make these tasty treats from scratch, guided by the experts from Whitestone Cheese.

All ingredients and step-by-step instructions are provided, and your ticket includes a delicious cheese roll tasting so you can enjoy the results of your efforts.

Hosted by Whitestone Cheese.

Saturday 23 May | 10am

Mackay Room - Gore Town & Country Club



Admission: \$20+BF
www.iticket.co.nz

Songwriter's RETREAT

Songwriter's Retreat

The NZ Songwriters Trust and APRA AMCOS are proud to present a day-long Songwriter's Retreat at the Hokonui Rūnanga. The retreat will be curated by an experienced songwriter Kim Bonnington who will support selected applicants to co-write in small groups in a fun and low-pressure environment. To ensure a tailored experience, attendees will be grouped based on experience level, with separate sessions for beginners and more experienced writers.

Lunch will be provided, and attendees will have a chance to connect and network with each other while learning more about APRA AMCOS. This retreat will also feature a free "Going Local" panel hosted by Independent Music NZ which is open to the public. This is a one-hour session free to the public with a Q&A session featuring industry members from APRA, Recorded Music NZ, NZ on Air, NZ Music Commission, Concord Publishing, and iHeartCountry.

The retreat is free to attend, and applications close on May 8th. All songwriters are welcome!

Saturday 23 May | 9am - 4pm

Hokonui Rūnanga, Gore

Admission: Free for successful applicants

For more information contact nzsongwriterstrust@gmail.com

Capital of Country Music Documentary Screening

Directed by Gore's own Jenny Mitchell and Dunedin filmmakers Wade McClelland and Bradon McCaughey, the doco tells an emotive musical story about the power of volunteering and community spirit.

Multiple festival showings:

**Sat 23, Mon 25, Wed 27, Fri 29, and
Sun 31 May | 10am**

St James Theatre, Gore

Admission: Theatre fees apply

Going Local Networking Event

Ever wanted to know more about the music industry – how it works, who to talk to, what you need, why things happen and where you should look for help? Come along to learn!

Saturday 23 May | 12pm

Hokonui Rūnanga, Gore



Admission: Free, register online

Hokonui Line Dance Social

Do you love to line dance? Bring your boots along and join the club for this social afternoon. Some previous experience required. Enjoy a shared afternoon tea after.

Saturday 23 May | 1:30pm

Esplin Room - Gore Town & Country Club

Admission: \$5 + a small plate to share



iTICKET St James Sessions: Skin & Bone

Join us in a cosy festival venue for a session of heartwarming original sounds. Popcorn, snacks and beverages available for purchase.

Skin & Bone are a five piece acoustic swing band from Ōtepoti, Dunedin. Difficult to pigeon-hole, a substantial portion of their repertoire is 1930's style swing, and they are popular in their hometown as an energetic dance band who will always pack the dance floor. In addition, they have a sizeable number of original tunes, that tend toward acoustic rock, and contemporary folk music from Aotearoa. Skin & Bone is a band you won't want to miss.

Saturday 23 May

Doors 12:30pm | Show 1pm

St James Theatre, Gore



Admission: \$29+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



Kelly Smith
MLT NZ Gold Guitar Senior Winner 2025



Ron Mitchell & Friends

Join Ron Mitchell and special guests for a great afternoon of country music! Enjoy a show filled with classic country hits alongside original songs from Ron's acclaimed albums *Low Down Country* and his latest release, *Dead on Country*.

With his rich storytelling, engaging stage presence, and authentic sound, this is a show no country music fan will want to miss. Come along for great music, good company, and a true celebration of country at its finest.

Saturday 23 May

Cuppa 2:30pm | Show 3pm

**The Woolshed, Southern Field Days Site,
Waimumu**



Admission: \$28+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



iTiCKET St James Sessions: Midnight Caravan

Join us in a cosy festival venue for a session of heartwarming original sounds. Popcorn, snacks and beverages available for purchase.

Meet Midnight Caravan, serving up pure groove and wanderlust! Their sound is a soulful blend of heartfelt storytelling and intimate, irresistible rhythms, inspired by life on the road.

A powerhouse band, igniting the stage and taking you on an unforgettable journey. Don't just listen, feel the freedom!

Saturday 23 May

Doors 4:30pm | Show 5pm

St James Theatre, Gore



Admission: \$29+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



Tussock Country Late Night

Get ready to get rowdy, Gore! Tussock Country is bringing you a night of high-energy country music, turned up loud and proud.

Some of the South's finest musicians will take the stage, performing their foot-stomping original songs alongside the classic and current chart-topping country hits you know and love. From singalong favourites to dancefloor anthems, it's all set to be a night packed with great music and good times. So gather your mates, pull on your boots, and get ready for a rollicking night to remember.

2026's line up: Kelly Smith, Southern Rust, and Jaydin Shingleton

Saturday 23 May

Doors 7:30pm | Show 8pm - 1am

Croydon Lodge, Gore



Admission:

Earlybird \$45+BF

General Admission \$55+BF

Reserved Table Seating \$69+BF

www.iticket.co.nz



Whole Person Health Workshop

Don't miss this insightful, interactive session which considers how health comes into every part of your life, and how that knowledge and understanding can enable you to face the challenge of life. This is particularly relevant for artists, and the extreme highs and lows that is inherent in their work.

In this workshop/seminar Dr David Beaumont will introduce the Positive Medicine method, give you insights and realisations as to steps you can do right now, not only to find better health, but to really start to understand your own identity and fulfil the inherent potential within you.

Sunday 24 May | 10am

Thomas Green, Gore



Admission: Free, RSVP by 23 May



Kids Gone Country

The Gore Town & Country Club and local musician Kayla Martin are hosting Kids Gone Country. Young performers 4-17 years of age are gearing up for the MLT New Zealand Gold Guitar Awards. Enjoy an afternoon of music and watch these talented youngsters shine on stage.

The Gore Town & Country Club offers a relaxed setting, with snacks and drinks available for purchase. Sit back and soak up the young talent, it's the perfect way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

Sunday 24 May | 11am

Lounge Bar - Gore Town & Country Club



Admission: Free



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Tussock Country UTE MUSTER GORE NZ

Tussock Country Ute Muster

Grab your mates, your ute and your dog to join the 2026 Tussock Country Ute Muster. Enter your ute, your dog, or even your mullet (or a mate's mullet!) and be in to win \$500 for People's Choice Ute, plus prizes for all categories including a new \$250 first prize for the Real Country Bark-Up. Road legal utes of all makes, models, ages, and stages are encouraged to enter. Join in and catch up for a laugh, a yarn, and quality entertainment. Families and dogs of all sizes welcome. Lego "Ute" comp for the kids. Food and coffee trucks onsite.

Sunday 24 May | 11:30am - 3pm

11:30am Register at **Southern Field Days Shed, Waimumu**

12:30pm Ute Judging, Mullet Competition, and Real Country Bark-Up

1:45pm Beaut Ute Toot Convoy through Gore to Croydon Lodge

2pm Ute Muster After Party at Croydon Lodge (**Rusty Pickups**)

2:45pm Prizegiving at Croydon Lodge

Admission:

Spectator Entry: Gold coin

Online Vehicle Registration Entry Fee: \$15 per category

On-the-Day Vehicle Registration Entry Fee: \$20 per category (Cash or EFTPOS)

Show proof-of-registration ticket on arrival (or register and pay), complete your windscreen entry form, then park up in your relevant category and be in to win some great prizes. Register at www.tussockcountry.nz



Ute Muster After Party: Rusty Pickups

Following the 2026 Ute Muster at the Southern Field Days Shed, the convoy will make its way to the Croydon Lodge for the prizegiving and afterparty, featuring live music by Queensland band Rusty Pickups!

If you look past the 'all hat no cattle' of it, and push down that "they're not country...they're not really folk either though..." feeling in the pit of your stomach, then good news! Rusty Pickups are coming to a stage near you.

Sunday 24 May | 2pm

Croydon Lodge, Gore



Admission: Free



The Celtic Unleashed Pipeband Fundraiser

Pipes and drums, rock 'n roll and country music are a special mix at the Celtic Unleashed Variety Concert. This event is a variety concert fundraiser for the Hokonui Celtic Pipe Band. It's always a sell-out show, so be in quick to get your tickets.

Attending the concert is an opportunity for visitors and locals to support the band and their community contribution in a lively afternoon of variety entertainment.

Sunday 24 May

MATINEE SHOW: 2pm

EVENING SHOW: 7pm

St James Theatre, Gore

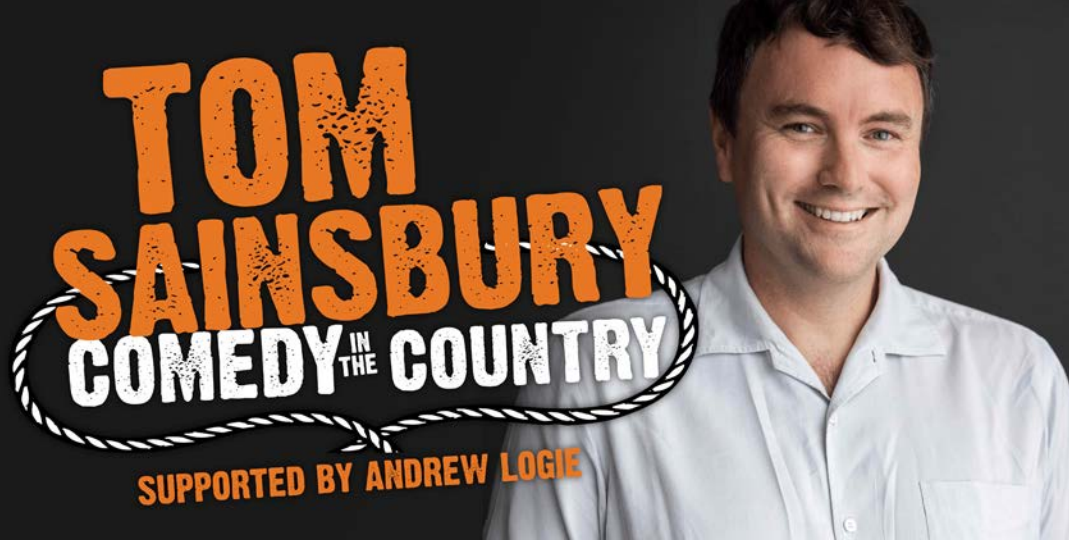


Admission:

General Admission \$50+BF

U12 \$15+BF

www.iticket.co.nz



Tom Sainsbury - Comedy in the Country Supported by Andrew Logie

Tom Sainsbury is one of New Zealand's most recognisable comedians, known for his sharp character work and uniquely Kiwi observations. From Gingerbread the cat to Fiona the wine reviewer, his characters have become fan favourites across the country. A writer, actor and filmmaker, Tom has also starred in Wellington Paranormal, Shortland Street and Educators. Blending warmth, wit and the wonderfully absurd, he remains a beloved voice in New Zealand comedy.

Comedian Tom Sainsbury is thrilled to be heading to Gore for the iconic Tussock Country Music Festival. Tom has performed all around the South, and he's always noticed something special - wherever he goes, people from Gore travel far and wide to see him. So this year, he's returning the favour.

Tom couldn't be more excited to take the stage at Tussock Country - to experience the warmth of the community firsthand, to share plenty of laughs, and to finally bring his comedy straight to the good people of Gore.

Sunday 24 May | 5pm
Pioneer Rugby Club, Gore



Admission: \$42+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



Bowmar Road House Concert: Barry Saunders

Join us for an intimate evening at the Bowmar Road House Concert, where iconic New Zealand singer-songwriter Barry Saunders will be our special guest.

With only 40 seats available, this is a rare chance to experience Barry's storytelling and music up close in a warm, cosy setting. Light refreshments will be provided. A memorable night of music, conversation, and true kiwi magic awaits. Reserve your seat early - this one will fill fast.

Sunday 24 May

Doors 7pm | Show 7:30pm

61 Bowmar Road, Gore



Admission: \$40+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



Melodies & Memories: Keily Smith

After creating a buzz at last year's Tussock Country Music Festival, MLT NZ Gold Guitars 2025 winner Keily Smith is set to entertain the Ribbonwood Home residents.

Singing and entertaining are where Keily Smith feels most at home. She loves bringing her unique sound and fresh spin on songs to every room she performs in. With original music shaping her songwriting journey and a wide repertoire of covers across multiple genres, Keily offers something for everyone.

Monday 25 May | 10am

Ribbonwood Country Home, Tapanui



Admission: Free for residents, and friends and family only

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YOUR FESTIVAL REFUEL: STOP FOR COFFEE, STAY FOR THE CHEESE
Whitestone Cheese Diner & Deli | 469 Thames Highway (SH1), Oamaru | whitestonecheese.com

Golden Oldies

This is a wonderful concert featuring talented entertainers, every year it's packed out by our senior community. Come early to secure your spot, drinks available.

Guest artists in 2026 include Dennis August, Heather Thacker, Margaret Bates and more.

Hosted by the Gore Country Music Club.

Monday 25 May | 1:30pm

Gore RSA

Admission: \$10 (door sales only)

Walkup Concerts

Want to warm up your vocal cords? Join in the Gore Country Music Club's Evening Walk Up Concert. It's simple - put your name up on the white board and perform. Full band available, please bring four chord chart copies.

Bar snacks and drinks available, and you can dabble in a raffle or two. In true Southland style, everyone is welcome. Hosted by the Gore Country Music Club.

Monday 25 May | 7:30pm, and

Tuesday 26 May | 1:30pm

Gore RSA



Admission: Free



Old Hokonui Whiskey & Food Match

'Hokonui' is a legendary southern spirit first distilled in the bush-clad Hokonui Hills of Southland. During more than 50 years of localised prohibition, it gave rise to a unique cottage industry - and plenty of colourful clandestine activity in the hills, gullies, and farm sheds around Gore.

In celebration of this tradition, enjoy spirits from southern New Zealand producers paired with tapas-style food inspired by inland and coastal Southland. As part of the Tussock Country Music Festival, the evening will also feature themed live country music from special guests - a complete "Moonshine" experience.

Tuesday 26 May | 6pm

Hokonui Moonshine Museum Arts & Heritage Precinct, Gore



Admission: \$60+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



trad session tuesday

Trad Session Tuesday

New in 2026! Settle in for an evening of real-deal acoustic magic at Trad Session Tuesday. This relaxed traditional music session brings the sounds of fiddles, flutes, guitars, bodhráns and more into the bar area of the Gore RSA, creating an informal, welcoming space where the music flows and everyone feels part of the moment.

Led by local legend musician Brendon Fairbairn and friends, the session celebrates the spirit of traditional music – spontaneous, lively, and shared. Musicians are encouraged to bring along their instruments and join in, while locals, visitors, and curious first-timers can simply sit back, soak up the atmosphere, and enjoy the tunes.

Expect toe-tapping rhythms, familiar melodies, the buzz of great company, and the warm hospitality of a classic pub setting. Whether you come to play, listen, or just enjoy the vibe, Trad Session Tuesday is all about community, music, and a good dose of fun. Meals and drinks available for purchase

Come for a tune, stay for the craic – this is one night you won't want to miss.

Tuesday 26 May | 7pm

Gore RSA



Admission: Free

Country Variety Dance

Join us for a lively evening of old time dancing, line dancing, sequence dancing, and rock 'n roll, with live music and vocals by Margaret Bates at the Country Variety Dance!

Tuesday 26 May | 7pm

Esplin Room - Gore Town & Country Club

Admission: \$10 (door sales only)

Performance Workshops: Peter Cairns

Entertainer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and recording artist Peter Cairns is offering 1-on-1 workshops for people who want to add the extra pizzazz to their performance.

Peter has coached 11 overall Gold Guitar winners from junior through to senior categories. Some of his past students have gone on to establish successful performing careers internationally.

Contact Peter to book a spot!

027 201 4059 | cairnpeter116@gmail.com

**Wednesday 27 May, and
Thursday 28 May | Book a time**

Location upon booking

Admission: \$35 per session, pay direct

Yodelling Workshop

A fun 45 minutes where performers of all abilities can learn a new skill. Hosted by Peter Cairns. Give it a go, laughter guaranteed.

Wednesday 27 May | 9am

Mackay Room - Gore Town & Country Club



Admission: \$15+BF
www.iticket.co.nz

Ukulele Workshop

Join this fun workshop for ukulele beginners. Come away being able to strum a few chords, play some songs and have a heap of fun while doing it. BYO ukulele!

Wednesday 27 May | 10am

Mackay Room - Gore Town & Country Club



Admission: \$20+BF
www.iticket.co.nz

Beginners Line Dancing Workshop

No experience or partner required, wear your comfy shoes and come along! Hosted by the warm and welcoming Diane Perkins.

Wednesday 27 May | 11am

Esplin Room - Gore Town & Country Club



Admission: \$15+BF
www.iticket.co.nz

2026 FULL FESTIVAL CALENDAR

22 - 31 MAY

FRI 22 MAY	SAT 23 MAY	SUN 24 MAY	MON 25 MAY	TUE 26 MAY	WED 27 MAY	THU 28 MAY	FRI 29 MAY	SAT 30 MAY	SUN 31 MAY
<p>Gore Kids Hub Country Disco 5:30pm Gore Kids Hub</p> <p>Country Music Honours 7pm St James Theatre</p>	<p>Songwriter's Retreat 9am Hokonui Rūnanga</p> <p>Whitestone Cheese Cheese Roll Workshop 10am Mackay Room, Gore T&C</p> <p>Capital of Country Music Doco 10am St James Theatre</p> <p>Going Local Networking Session 12pm Hokonui Rūnanga</p> <p>iTICKET St James Sessions Skin & Bone 1pm St James Theatre</p> <p>Hokonui Line Dance Social 1:30pm Esplan Room, Gore T&C</p> <p>Ron Mitchell & Friends 3pm Field Days Woolshed, Waimumu</p> <p>iTICKET St James Sessions Midnight Caravan 5pm St James Theatre</p> <p>Tussock Country Late Night 8pm Croydon Lodge</p>	<p>Health Workshop 10am Thomas Green</p> <p>Kids Gone Country 11am Lounge Bar, Gore T&C</p> <p>Tussock Country Ute Muster 11am Field Days Site, Waimumu</p> <p>Ute Muster After Party 2pm Croydon Lodge</p> <p>The Celtic Unleashed Matinee Show 2pm St James Theatre</p> <p>Tom Sainsbury Comedy in the Country 5pm Pioneer Rugby Club Rooms</p> <p>The Celtic Unleashed Evening Show 7pm St James Theatre</p> <p>Bowmar Road House Concert Barry Saunders 7:30pm 61 Bowmar Road</p>	<p>Capital of Country Music Doco 10am St James Theatre</p> <p>Melodies & Memories 10am Ribbonwood, Tapanui</p> <p>Golden Oldies 1:30pm Gore RSA</p> <p>Evening Walk-Up Concert 7:30pm Gore RSA</p>	<p>Afternoon Walk-Up Concert 1:30pm Gore RSA</p> <p>Old Hokonui 6pm Arts & Heritage Precinct</p> <p>Trad Session Tuesday 7pm Gore RSA</p> <p>Country Variety Dance 7pm Esplan Room, Gore T&C</p>	<p>Performance Workshops With Peter Cairns Book a time Venue TBA</p> <p>Yodelling Workshop 9am Mackay Room, Gore T&C</p> <p>Ukulele Workshop 10am Mackay Room, Gore T&C</p> <p>Capital of Country Music Doco 10am St James Theatre</p> <p>Line Dancing For Beginners 11am Esplan Room, Gore T&C</p> <p>Jammin' At The Razza 2pm Gore RSA</p> <p>Greenbird Dining The Commoners 5pm Thomas Green</p> <p>The Sparks With Halton Hart 6:30pm Roadhouse Shed, Riversdale</p> <p>iTICKET St James Sessions Jaydin Shingleton 7pm St James Theatre</p> <p>Jingo - Musical Bingo 7pm Gore RSA</p>	<p>Performance Workshops With Peter Cairns Book a time Venue TBA</p> <p>Artist Development Mentoring Sessions With Katie Thompson Book a time Thomas Green</p> <p>FYBO Busking Competition School Comp 11am Main Street, Gore</p> <p>iTICKET St James Sessions Phil Doublet 1pm St James Theatre</p> <p>Jammin' At The Razza 2pm Gore RSA</p> <p>Singers Toolkit With Hollie Longman 3pm Mackay Room, Gore T&C</p> <p>Greenbird Dining Molly Harrison 5pm Thomas Green</p> <p>Blazing Copper Dining Maddison Connor 5pm Croydon Lodge</p> <p>Pete & Andy 7pm Lounde Bar Gore T&C</p> <p>iTICKET St James Sessions Humbuckin' Pickups 7pm St James Theatre</p>	<p>MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards Auditions Day 1 All Sections 8am - 5pm Various Gore venues</p> <p>GoreGeous Country Breakfast 8am Table Talk Café</p> <p>FYBO Busking Competition 10am Main Street, Gore</p> <p>Capital of Country Music Doco 10am St James Theatre</p> <p>Tussock Stage Just Janie & Sig Wilder and Friends 1:30pm St James Theatre</p> <p>Songwriting for Teens 1pm James Cumming Community Centre</p> <p>MLT Music Roundup 5pm - Late Various MLT venues</p> <p>The Gallery Session 6pm Eastern Southland Gallery</p> <p>Craig Adams & The Rustlers 7:30pm Gore RSA</p>	<p>MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards Auditions Day 2 All Sections 8am - 5pm Various Gore venues</p> <p>Gore Truck Show Judging 9am Transport Repairs Yard</p> <p>FYBO Busking Competition 10am Main Street, Gore</p> <p>Inside Aussie Country With Linc Phelps 10am Thomas Green</p> <p>Sing Like a Unicorn 11:30am Gore Library</p> <p>Singalongercise Jeremy Redmore 12:30pm James Cumming Community Centre</p> <p>Tussock Stage Linc Phelps & Brenny and the Bushwhackers 1:30pm St James Theatre</p> <p>Gore Truck Show Truck Parade 2pm Main Street, Gore Prizegiving 4:30pm Croydon Lodge</p> <p>Cooper's Run Dinner 6pm Show 7:30pm Gore RSA</p> <p>Midnight Chicken 6pm Amigos, Gore</p> <p>MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards Jnr & Intermediate Finals 6:30pm Gore T&C</p>	<p>MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards Auditions Day 3 All Sections 8am - 5pm Various Gore venues</p> <p>Country Gospel Church Service 9:40am St Andrews Presbyterian</p> <p>Capital of Country Music Doco 10am St James Theatre</p> <p>MLT Gold Guitars Classic Finals 1:30pm Gore T&C</p> <p>MLT Showcase 3pm Gore T&C</p> <p>Hands of Fame 3pm Gore T&C</p> <p>FYBO Busking Finals 4:30pm St James Theatre</p> <p>MLT Gold Guitars Senior Finals 7pm Gore T&C</p>

Jammin' at the Razza

This laid-back event held always attracts a crowd. The show's line-up features lots of your favourite performers.

**Wednesday 27 May, and
Thursday 28 May | 2pm**

Gore RSA



Admission: Free

Musical Jingo

A fun musical bingo game that'll test your music knowledge. Four jingo cards cost \$20 with a top prize of \$500. Refreshments and snacks available. **Book:** 03 208 6218 ext 3

Wednesday 27 May | 7pm

Gore RSA

Admission: \$20 for 4 Jingo cards

The Sparks with Halton Hart

Expect a fun night of young performers taking the stage to shine, joined by other promising rising stars. A memorable evening this festival.

Wednesday 27 May | 7pm

The Roadhouse Shed, Riversdale



Admission:
Adult \$20+BF
U17 \$10+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



iTICKET St James Sessions: Jaydin Shingleton

Join us in a cosy festival venue for a session of heartwarming original sounds. Popcorn, snacks and beverages available for purchase.

Jaydin Shingleton is a rising country artist based on the Gold Coast, known for his soulful voice, raw authenticity, and heartfelt songwriting.

Blending modern country with rock and blues, Jaydin's music is shaped by family, resilience, and home. His latest single Home is his most personal yet, resonating with anyone chasing dreams while staying grounded in where they come from.

Wednesday 27 May

Doors **6:30pm** | Show **7pm**

St James Theatre, Gore



Admission: \$29+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



Greenbird Dining

In Nashville they have the Bluebird, in Gore we have the Greenbird. As the talent and musicians keep rolling into town, Greenbird Dining is the place to be! Intimate piano, elegant song and exquisite fare, reserve your table today. 2026 brings three Greenbird Dining experiences across two venues.

The Commoners

Wednesday 27 May | 5pm

Thomas Green, Gore

Molly Harrison

Thursday 28 May | 5pm

Thomas Green, Gore

Maddison Connor

Thursday 28 May | 5pm

Blazing Copper, Croydon Lodge, Gore



Admission: Free, reservations recommended



Artist Development Mentoring Sessions: Katie Thompson

Want to learn from someone who's walked the path? Alt-country artist Katie Thompson has built a 15-year career as a self-managed musician. Her 1-on-1 sessions are designed to help emerging artists get clarity and confidence in their next steps. **Areas Katie can help with:**

- Release strategies (singles, albums, or EPs)
- Social media and audience growth
- Building your brand and identity as an artist
- Practical steps for balancing creativity with the business side of music
- Mapping out your "next moves"

Email katie@quirkymusic.co.nz to book.

Thursday 28 May | Book a time

Thomas Green, Gore

Admission: \$40 per 30-minute session



iTICKET St James Sessions: Phil Doublet

Join us in a cosy festival venue for a session of heartwarming original sounds. Popcorn, snacks and beverages available for purchase.

Phil Doublet is a multi award-winning artist, musician, singer-songwriter and producer, as well as an international session musician who has worked with numerous artists around the globe. With more than four decades in the music industry, he is no stranger to the stage or the studio.

In 2019, he was inducted into the Entertainment Honour Roll by the Australian Southern Cross Music Association, recognising his role as a New Zealand music ambassador in Australia.

Thursday 28 May

Doors 12:30pm | Show 1pm

St James Theatre, Gore



Admission: \$29+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



Visit the Festival Merch Store

St James Theatre Irk Street Gore

Open everyday during the Tussock Country Music Festival 22 - 31 May

Merch is the best way to support musicians, buy their vinyl, CD, or tee today!



Freeze Ya' Bits Off Busking

Every year at King's Birthday weekend, buskers take to the streets of Gore for literally the coolest busking competition in New Zealand. Freeze Ya Bits Off is one of the key events of Tussock Country Music Festival.

Held over four days, the event begins on Thursday lunchtime as local schools take to the streets to showcase their singing talent. Friday and Saturday feature auditions from local and national performers, creating an electric atmosphere. The grand final takes place on Sunday, where finalists compete for major cash prizes. Finals entry is free, so come along to the cosy St James Theatre and support your favourite artists.

School Competitions

High Schools: Main Street, Gore | Thursday 28 May | 11am - 12pm

Primary Schools: Main Street, Gore | Thursday 28 May | 12pm - 1pm

Auditions (all other categories)

Main Street, Gore | Friday 29 May & Saturday 30 May | 10am - 2pm

Finals

St James Theatre, Gore | Sunday 31 May | 4:30pm

FREE
ENTRY

Admission: Free

Entries and
information
www.gorenz.com

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	QUEENSTOWN	52 Lucas Place	(03) 442 4095		
	ALEXANDRA	74 Centennial Ave	(03) 448 6989		

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The Singers Toolkit: Hollie Longman

Hollie Longman is a renowned voice and performance coach who works with singers, speakers, and creatives to help them perform with greater confidence, skill, and authenticity.

The Singer's Toolkit covers the foundations of healthy singing, including breath, posture, and body awareness, along with simple techniques for vocal care and stamina.

Through guided exercises and group participation, you'll also explore mic use, performance habits, and movement that will enhance your sound and protect your voice. A hands-on session where making noise is encouraged!

Thursday 28 May | 3pm

Mackay Room - Gore Town & Country Club



Admission: \$20+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



iTICKET St James Sessions: Humbuckin' Pickups

Join us in a cosy festival venue for a session of heartwarming original sounds. Popcorn, snacks and beverages available for purchase.

The Humbuckin' Pickups are excited to bring their energetic "Folk Drenched Roots" across the ditch! Renowned for their authentic sound and strong song writing, they create a joyous uplifting experience blending humour, warmth, three-part harmonies and impeccable musicianship.

Thursday 28 May

Doors 6:30pm | Show 7pm

St James Theatre, Gore



Admission: \$29+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



Peter Cairns & Andy Gilmour

Settle in for a night of great tunes from a lineup of talented blokes, bringing live music, good company, and a relaxed atmosphere. Enjoy an easy night out with meals available, so you can grab a bite while you listen. All are welcome, including non-club members.

Thursday 28 May | 7pm

Lounge Bar - Gore Town & Country Club



Admission: Free

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NEW ZEALAND 2026 GOLD GUITAR AWARDS

MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards

Join in and celebrate raw country music talent at New Zealand's greatest country music event, the MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards. For almost half a century, hundreds of country musicians of all ages have travelled to Gore, Southland, to compete for the coveted Gold Guitar Award.

Three days of auditions and spectacular finals night events showcase the best in junior/intermediate and senior categories. There is a country music showcase concert that's part of the Classic Finals where a stand-out country music contributor is inducted into the Country Music Hands of Fame. This year's inductees are **Glen Moffatt and Kaylee Bell**.

The Gold Guitar winner receives a comprehensive prize package to set them on the road to country music stardom. This prestigious event - the longest running and largest country music club competition in New Zealand - is why Gore is known as the NZ Capital of Country Music.

Auditions are held consecutively at three Gore locations: Gore District Memorial RSA, Gore Town & Country Club and the Gore Baptist Church. For more times and categories visit www.goldguitars.co.nz

3-Day Audition Pass available for all sections (Friday - Sunday):

Door sales only. Ticket allows entry at all audition venues from Friday to Sunday, plus entry into the Classic Finals, MLT Showcase and Hands Of Fame induction.

Adults \$80, Senior Citizens \$60, Children \$25

Auditions - All Sections

Friday 29 & Saturday 30 May | 8am - 5pm

Gore Town & Country Club Stadium, Gore Baptist Church, Gore RSA

Admission: Door sales only. *Ticket allows entry at all venues.*

Adults \$28 | Senior Citizens \$22 | U17 \$5

Junior and Intermediate Finals

All the intermediate and junior finalists followed by the awards presentation. Featuring guest artists, 2025 Intermediate winner Maddison Connor and 2025 Junior winner Cleo Fitzgerald.

Saturday 30 May | 6:30pm | Gore Town & Country Club Stadium



Admission: Adult \$55+BF | U17 \$20+BF

www.iticket.co.nz

Auditions - Senior Sections only

Sunday 31 May | 8am - 12pm | Gore Town & Country Club Stadium

Admission: Door sales only. Adults \$35 | Senior Citizens \$28 | U17 \$15

Ticket allows entry to Sunday auditions and the Classic Finals, MLT Showcase and Hands of Fame Induction on Sunday 31 May - see page 41 for information on these events.

Classic Finals

Featuring all the Classic group finalists followed by the awards presentation. The MLT Showcase will follow and **Glen Moffatt and Kaylee Bell** will be inducted into the Hands of Fame at this event.

Sunday 31 May | 1:30pm | Gore Town & Country Club Stadium

Admission: Door sales only. Adults \$35 | Senior Citizens \$28 | U17 \$15

Senior Finals

Featuring all the Senior group finalists followed by the awards presentation. Featuring guest artist, 2025 Senior winner Keily Smith.

Sunday 31 May | 7pm | Gore Town & Country Club Stadium



Admission: Adult \$60+BF | U17 \$20+BF

www.iticket.co.nz



Gore-Geous Country Breakfast

Enjoy a hearty cooked breakfast and hear all about the rich history of country music in Gore.

Ticket includes a full cooked breakfast, tea and coffee plus entertainment from guest speakers and performers.

2026's guest performers are Keily Smith - Overall Winner, MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards 2025 and Vinny Russell from Rufous Whistler (AU - solo).

Friday 29 May | 8am

Table Talk Café, Gore



Admission: \$45+BF
www.iticket.co.nz



Songwriting for Teens

Join Jeremy Redmore for a Songwriting For Teens workshop - a laid-back, inspiring opportunity for teenagers of any musical ability to try their hand at writing songs from scratch.

Open to all levels (you don't need prior songwriting or instrument experience), the workshop invites teens to explore ideas, lyrics and melody in a supportive, creative space. Whether you've never written a song or already dabble in music, Jeremy will guide you through techniques to express yourself, find your voice and start turning thoughts into songs. It's a chance to collaborate, experiment and grow as a young songwriter - and maybe even discover the beginnings of your first big tune.

Friday 29 May | 1pm

James Cumming Community Centre, Gore



Admission: Free. *Registration required.*



Tussock Stage

You're invited to join us for a cosy afternoon at Gore's ST James Theatre, with entertainment by some of heartland NZ and Australia's best. Hosted by Keily Smith.

Just Janie & Sig Wilder and Friends

Just Janie is emerging as a compelling new voice in Aotearoa folk and Americana, blending modern experiences with a nostalgic '60s-'70s warmth. Sig Wilder & Friends have become a fixture in Wellington's music scene with their alt-country storytelling sound.

Friday 29 May | Doors 1pm | Show 1:30pm

St James Theatre, Gore

Linc Phelps & Brenny and the Bushwhackers

Born and bred in Gympie, Australia, Linc Phelps is known as a salt-of-the-earth performer who wears his heart on his sleeve in both life and song. Brenny & The Bushwhackers bring stories of southern NZ battlers to life with their distinctive, history-inspired sound.

Saturday 30 May | Doors 1pm | Show 1:30pm

St James Theatre, Gore



Admission: \$29+BF
www.iticket.co.nz

Hosted by
Keily Smith

MLT Music Roundup

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MLT Music Roundup

Pick your favourite band and settle in for the night, or venue-hop and catch them all. **You choose!**

Friday 29 May | 6 MLT Venues | All Free Entry!

Piano at the Moon - Trevor Dawe

Howl at the Moon, Gore | 5pm

Acoustic Dining at Blazing Copper - Kelly Smith

The Blazing Copper Restaurant, Gore | 5pm

Thomas Green Friday Dining - Aroha Williams

The Thomas Green, Gore | 5pm

Live Country - Turkey the Bird & Kayson Road

Croydon Lodge, Gore | 7pm

The Falls Night - Friends Of The Possum Pickers

The Falls Hotel & Bistro, Matura | 8pm

Rock the Bar - Sean Tinker & Josh Keating

Traffers Bar, Gore | 9pm



Admission: Free



The Gallery Session

An exhibition of song - an evening where some of New Zealand's finest songwriters share their music in the breathtaking Eastern Southland Gallery in the heart of Gore.

The New Zealand Songwriters' Trust Gallery Session is one of the festival's most intimate events, offering audiences a rare opportunity to hear the inspiration and experiences that shaped each song. Stripped back and authentic, this evening focuses on the craft of songwriting and the connection between artist and audience.

Set within the beautiful surroundings of the gallery, this unique session creates a warm and reflective atmosphere where every lyric and melody can truly be appreciated. Pure, simple, real life in song, not to be missed.

Friday 29 May | 6pm

Eastern Southland Gallery, Gore

Admission: Gold coin

Craig Adams & The Rustlers

Enjoy a casual evening of entertainment with some of the regions best musicians on stage.

Friday 29 May | 7:30pm

Gore RSA



Admission: Free



McDonough Contracting Gore Truck Show

For over 45 years, Truck lovers have brought their gleaming rigs to the Gore Truck Show. See them up close at the Transport Repairs Yard, enjoy the parade along Gore's Main Street, then head to Croydon Lodge for the awards presentation.

Saturday 30 May

Truck Viewing & Judging | 9am

Transport Repairs Yard, Gore

Truck Parade | 2pm

Main Street, Gore

Prizegiving | 4:30pm

Croydon Lodge, Gore

Followed by a buffet dinner and band.

Driver Entry: \$10 - on the day

Spectator Admission: Free



Inside Aussie Country: Linc Phelps

Thinking about taking your music to Australia? Inside Aussie Country is a free, practical workshop giving Kiwi artists insights into the Australian country music scene. Hosted by Australian artist Linc Phelps, you'll get real, experience-based advice plus time for Q&A. You'll learn:

- How the Aussie country industry and festival circuit operates
- Opportunities for NZ artists
- Touring tips and expectations
- How to stand out authentically

Register by emailing team@tussockcountry.nz with "Aussie Workshop" in the subject line.

Saturday 30 May | 10am
The Thomas Green, Gore

FREE
ENTRY

Admission: Free

Sing like a Unicorn Book Reading & Singalong

Jeremy Redmore brings his joyful children's book *Sing Like A Unicorn* to life at a special reading and singalong at the Gore District Library.

Families are invited to join Jeremy for a fun, imagination-filled session where storytelling meets music, encouraging kids to celebrate their unique, magical voices. With warmth, humour and plenty of audience participation, this interactive event promises big smiles, catchy tunes and a chance for young unicorns-in-training to unleash their sparkle.

Saturday 30 May | 11:30am

Gore District Library

Admission: Koha. Books and merch available.

Singalongercise: Jeremy Redmore

Singalongercise with Jeremy Redmore is a lively mix of singing, simple movement and feel-good fun. Kids and their grown-ups can jump in, follow along and enjoy upbeat pop songs, playful actions and bilingual moments in English and te reo Māori.

No experience needed - just bring your energy and get ready to sing, move and smile together.

Saturday 30 May | 12:30pm

James Cumming Community Centre, Gore

FREE
ENTRY

Admission: Free. Registration required.



Cooper's Run - Dinner & Show

Cooper's Run is a modern country duo from Cambridge, NZ, featuring Michael Tipping and Ashley Cooper (a New Zealand Idol finalist) along with a full band including Phil Doublet, Bevan Gardiner and James Davy.

Avid songwriters, they've received multiple New Zealand Country Music Songwriter of the Year awards and continue blending traditional and contemporary country sounds.

Select from Dinner & Show tickets which includes a two course buffet and reserved seating from 6pm, or Show Only tickets from 7:30pm.

All welcome, including non RSA members.

Saturday 30 May

Dinner **6pm** | Show **7:30pm**

Gore RSA

iTICKET

Admission:

Dinner & Show \$70+BF
Includes a two-course buffet

Show Only \$30+BF

www.iticket.co.nz

SPICY FREE-RANGE BLUEGRASS SUPPER

WITH MIDNIGHT [AU] CHICKEN

Midnight Chicken at Amigos

Hatched and hand-raised in Newcastle, NSW, Midnight Chicken are making waves in Australia's bluegrass and country scenes. Known for their bizarre and refreshing take on bluegrass, they deliver standout renditions of traditional tunes alongside captivating originals.

Since forming, they've toured nationally with Brad Cox, performed at major festivals like Woodford and the National Folk Festival, and graced some of Australia's biggest regional theatres. Individually, members have worked with icons such as Kasey Chambers, Greg Sheehan, Phil Emmanuel, and Gina Jeffries. Their debut self-titled album, released in early 2025, was featured on ABC Country radio.

This spicy free-range bluegrass supper is a must-do at Tussock Country 2026!

Saturday 30 May | 6pm

Amigos Restaurant, Gore



Admission: \$75+BF
www.iticket.co.nz

Ticket price includes welcome drink, three course dinner and entertainment. Allocated seating, meals to be pre-ordered when purchasing tickets.

Country Gospel Church Service

Various artists performing music beginning 9:40am, gospel service from 10am. All welcome, cup of tea to follow.

Sunday 31 May | 9:40am

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Gore

Admission: Gold coin

MLT Showcase

This event is a variety concert featuring a range of artists that have travelled to Gore to participate in the festival. During the event an invited country artist will be inducted into the Hands of Fame.

Sunday 31 May | 3pm

Gore Town & Country Club Stadium

Admission: MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards Classic Finals ticket covers entry. (See page 33)

Hands of Fame Induction

Established in 1992 by the Gore Country Music Club, the Hands of Fame honours those who've made a significant contribution to New Zealand country music, with handprints in concrete from artists including Kenny Rogers, Slim Dusty, Patsy Riggir, and Suzanne Prentice. This year **Glen Moffatt & Kaylee Bell** will be inducted.

Sunday 31 May | 3pm

Gore Town & Country Club Stadium

Admission: MLT NZ Gold Guitar Awards Classic Finals ticket covers entry. (See page 33)



Freeze Ya Bits Off Busking Finals

Every year at King's Birthday weekend, buskers take to the streets of Gore for literally the coolest busking competition in New Zealand.

Freeze Ya Bits Off is one of the key events of the Tussock Country Music Festival and is set to grow even more.

After three days of auditions, busking finalists go head to head for major cash prizes. Entry to the finals is free, so come along to support your favourite artists (and thaw your bits out!) at the cosy and warm St James Theatre.

Sunday 31 May | 4:30pm

St James Theatre, Gore



Admission: Free

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