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Lunch with a Legend to Support Omaka's Future

Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre is inviting the public to a special fundraising luncheon celebrating the remarkable Spirit of Douglas DC-3.

Lunch with a Legend: Building Omaka's Future will be held inside the museum's Dangerous Skies exhibition and will include a welcome drink and three-course lunch catered by Feast Merchants.

Guests will hear directly from the custodian of the internationally acclaimed Spirit of Douglas, New Zealand businessman Mark Stewart and see stunning footage of the aircraft in flight around the globe. "We are delighted to bring this iconic piece of aviation history to New Zealand as part of her World Cruiser Tour, to share the incredible story of this famous aircraft with Kiwis and pay tribute to the aviation genius that was Donald Douglas," says Mark Stewart.

Built in 1942 as a C-53 military transport, the aircraft served in the China-Burma-India theatre during the Second World War. This included flying "the Hump", the notoriously dangerous air supply route across the Himalayas between India and China.

After the war, the aircraft began a long civilian career, flying in a variety of commercial and corporate roles. Following an extensive restoration in the United States, it was named Spirit of Douglas in honour of Donald Douglas and the aircraft that helped transform passenger aviation.

The restored aircraft is now undertaking the World Cruiser Tour, an ambitious international journey following historic air routes across countries, continents and oceans. The tour celebrates the legacy of the DC-3 and the important role it played in connecting people around the world.

The realities of operating an aircraft more than 80 years old have also become part of the story. Following its arrival in New Zealand, the Spirit of Douglas required a major engine change in Christchurch. Engineers from JEM Aviation at Omaka were among those who helped return the aircraft to the air.

A highlight of the luncheon will be the opportunity to go onboard the aircraft. This will be the only opportunity for members of the public to step inside the Spirit of Douglas during its visit.

The afternoon will also feature historic memorabilia and the official Spirit of Douglas coffee table book, offering further insight into the aircraft, its restoration and the people behind its continuing journey.

All profits from the event will support the planned expansion of the Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre.

Tickets are NZ\$150 per person and places are strictly limited. **Bookings close on 31 July** so final numbers can be confirmed with the caterers.

Event details:

Date: Saturday, 8th of August 2026 at 12.30 pm

Venue: Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre, Blenheim

Tickets: NZ\$150 per person

Bookings: <https://www.omaka.org.nz/events/lunch-with-a-legend-building-omakas-future>

About Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre: Established to provide a world-class destination for the appreciation of historic aircraft, the Omaka AHC opened in 2006. To learn more, visit www.omaka.org.nz