



Queenstown & Wanaka

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Best Places to Eat

- Francesca's Italian Kitchen (p575)
- La Rumbra (p568)
- Bistro Gentil (p575)
- Botswana Butchery (p558)
- Fergbaker (p557)

Best Places to Stay

- Riversong (p574)
- The Dairy (p556)
- Altamont Lodge (p573)
- Arrowtown Lodge (p567)
- Wanaka Bakpaka (p573)

Why Go?

With a cinematic background of mountains and lakes, and a 'what can we think of next?' array of adventure activities, it's little wonder Queenstown tops the itineraries of many travellers.

Slow down slightly in Wanaka – Queenstown's less flashy cousin – which also has good restaurants, bars and outdoor adventures on tap. With Mt Aspiring National Park nearby, you're only a short drive from true New Zealand wilderness.

Slow down even more in Glenorchy, an improbably scenic reminder of what Queenstown and Wanaka were like before the adventure groupies moved in. Negotiate the Greenstone and Routeburn Tracks for extended outdoor thrills, or kayak the upper reaches of Lake Wakatipu.

Across in historic Arrowtown, consider the town's gold-mining past over a chilled wine or dinner in a cosy bistro. The following day there'll be plenty more opportunities to dive back into Queenstown's action-packed whirlwind.

When to Go

→ The fine and settled summer weather from January to March is the perfect backdrop to Queenstown's active menu of adventure sports and outdoor exploration. March also brings the Gibbston Wine & Food Festival to Queenstown Gardens.

→ Easter sees an inundation of mountain bikers for the Queenstown Bike Festival.

→ In late June the Queenstown Winter Festival celebrates the coming of the ski season. From June to August, the slopes surrounding Queenstown and Wanaka are flush with an international crew of ski and snowboard fans.

→ Spring thaws herald Wanaka Fest in October.

i Getting There & Around

Domestic flights head to Queenstown from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch; for international services, see the Transport chapter. Queenstown is also the main bus hub, with services radiating out to the West Coast (via Wanaka and Haast Pass), Christchurch, Dunedin (via Central Otago), Invercargill and Te Anau. Wanaka also has services to Christchurch and Dunedin.

QUEENSTOWN

POP 12,500

Surrounded by the soaring indigo heights of the Remarkables and framed by the meandering coves of Lake Wakatipu, it's little wonder that Queenstown is a show-off. No-one's ever visited and said, 'I'm bored'. Looking like a small town, but displaying the energy of a small city, Queenstown wears its 'Global Adventure Capital' badge proudly, and most visitors take the time to do crazy things they've never done before.

A new Queenstown is also emerging, with a cosmopolitan restaurant and arts scene, excellent vineyards and five international-standard golf courses. Go ahead and jump off a bridge or out of a plane, but take time to slow down and experience Queenstown without the adrenaline. At the very least, find a lakeside bench at dusk and immerse yourself in one of NZ's most beautiful views.

Queenstown is well used to visitors with international accents, so expect great tourist facilities but also big crowds, especially in summer and winter. Autumn (March to May) and spring (October to November) are slightly quieter, but Queenstown is a true year-round destination.

The town's restaurants and bars are regularly packed with a mainly young crowd that really know how to holiday. If you're a more private soul, drop in to see what all the fuss is about, but then get out and about by exploring the sublime wilderness further up the lake at Glenorchy.

History

The region was deserted when the first Pakeha (white person) arrived in the mid-1850s, although there is evidence of previous Maori settlement. Sheep farmers came first, but after two shearers discovered gold on the banks of the Shotover River in 1862, a deluge of prospectors followed.



Queenstown & Wanaka Highlights

- 1** Doing things you've only dreamed about in **Queenstown** (p545), the adrenaline-rush capital of NZ
- 2** Soaking up the sophisticated small-town vibe and sublime lake views of **Wanaka** (p569)
- 3** Relaxing and dining in **Arrowtown** (p565) after a day's mountain biking and gold panning
- 4** Walking the peaceful **Routeburn Track** (p562), arguably the best of NZ's Great Walks.
- 5** Exploring the upper reaches of Lake Wakatipu from sleepy **Glenorchy** (p561) by horseback, kayak or jetboat
- 6** Restraining the urge to yodel as you stroll through the sublime Matukituki Valley on the **Rob Roy Glacier Track** (p572)
- 7** Partying the night away among a multitude of accents on a **Queenstown bar-hop** (p559)