

# THE SOUTHERN WINTER



It's commonly-held belief that Queenstown is just a winter destination. Sure, we have a busy time here in July and August, and our annual Winter Festival puts us in the media spotlight in June. Thanks to the television weather programmes our ski fields get lots of publicity too.

But in actual fact, the busiest months of the year for Queenstown businesses are January, February and March (although the busiest night of the year falls on 31 December). Our summer months are when residents of the northern hemisphere get tired of the short, cold days and head down under for some southern sun.

So at this time of year, Queenstown tourism operators are having to work especially hard to keep busy and it takes that much more effort to keep those famous Queenstown grins going. But if there's one thing guaranteed to put a smile on every local's face is a Powder Day - when fresh snow falls overnight and the day breaks with clear sunny skies. Some employees even have a "powder clause" written into their employment agreements so they don't have to phone in sick on a powder day - they just head straight up the mountain.

Employers are pretty relaxed about this as long as the clause is only exercised once per winter. After all, in Queenstown we joke that every snowflake is worth a dollar so when the snow falls, the cash registers start ringing; unlike in some cities, we love the snow - there is actually a benefit to us in being cold, and the colder it is, the happier we all are.

So if you're a visitor to the Southern Lakes, you're probably wondering how to spend your time here.

Queenstown is built on the shores of Lake Wakatipu. We have a lake in the centre of Queenstown. In winter you'll want to avoid going *in* the lake, but you can still be *on* it and catch a fish. There are several fishing guides on the waterfront near Prime, our sister restaurant.

If you are lucky enough to catch a trout or salmon, bring it to us and our chefs will prepare it for your lunch or dinner. We charge \$25 per fish and the chefs will need to see your fishing licence when you hand it over.

Visitors to this region in winter will most likely be here for the snow sports. We have several areas dedicated to skiing and riding: Coronet Peak, The Remarkables, Cardrona, The Snowfarm and Treble Cone.

The nearest to town is Coronet Peak, a 25 minute drive on a sealed road. Coronet Peak has been operating for sixty years and recently opened a brand-new state of the art base lodge complete with outdoor heated deck.

Automated snowmaking ensures quality snow over a long season. Facilities include high speed chairlifts, 280 hectares of beginner, intermediate and advanced trails, gear rental, lessons and a crèche.

Slightly further afield is the Remarkables Ski Area, 45 minutes drive from Queenstown, with 220 hectares of beginner, intermediate and advanced terrain. Both mountains operate from 9am to 4pm although Coronet Peak offers night skiing on Fridays and Saturdays in July and August. Always check the road conditions before driving to a skifield and if the reports recommend carrying or fitting chains, do what they say.

Cardrona is another nearby field half-way between Queenstown and Wanaka on the Crown Range road. There are eight lifts throughout the 345 hectare terrain, which is largely intermediate with 25 per cent each beginner and expert.

The Cardrona Valley also hosts the Snow Farm where you can ski cross-country in 50kms of groomed trails. There is overnight accommodation or you could stay nearby at the highly recommended Wairau Homestead.

Apart from the Snow Farm, New Zealand ski fields are largely day destinations only - accommodation and nightlife are rarely found on-mountain, so by 5pm you'll be heading back down into Queenstown for your après ski activities.

## Nightlife in Queenstown

The nice thing about Queenstown nightlife is that town is so compact and it's easy to walk between venues. You don't need to get too dressed up since venues are well-

heated, many with open fires.

One such venue, overlooking Lake Wakatipu, is Tatler's sister restaurant Prime. With stunning lake views, open fire and stylish décor, Prime is the perfect location for evening drinks. Book for dinner and choose a steak from the char-grill menu or something special from the a la carte menu.

Like Tatler, Prime offers a special early menu; main courses are \$19.90 until 6.30pm. Early dining is a great option if you have other plans for the night, such as seeing a movie.

## Movies

Queenstown's local movie complex is Reading Cinema and it's located a couple of doors up The Mall from Tatler in an historic building, part of Queenstown's early heritage.

There are three cinemas at Reading's so you can choose between several films, and even buy a glass of wine to enjoy during the movie too.

## Shopping

Tatler is located in the main shopping district of Queenstown but the town has spread out over recent years with many great stores further afield. One highly-recommended shop for foodies is the Mediterranean Market.

This is where we locals stock up on gourmet items, wines, cheeses and deli essentials. It's also a popular destination for gift shopping as there is a great range of homeware and kitchen gadgets that any foodie would love.

An exciting development for fashionable Queenstown residents is the opening of MAHER Shoes right in the heart of town. Visitors from overseas will also appreciate the exclusive but affordable selection of Italian-influenced shoes and boots designed by former Queenstown resident Glen Maher.

Stylish men and women from all over the district will be thrilled they no longer have to leave town to satisfy their footwear cravings.

This is just the fourth MAHER shop to open in New Zealand so it's exciting that Queenstown was chosen ahead of larger centres in the South Island. Check out the winter range at MAHER Shoes in the O'Connell's Shopping Centre on Camp Street – it's the only undercover shopping mall in Queenstown.

## Arrowtown

Historic Arrowtown is a great destination and you can easily spend a few hours wandering through the two main streets. Many of the original 1860s buildings have been retained and restored and they house a variety of businesses including shops, cafes, art galleries and bars.

# MAHER

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## MOVIES IN QUEENSTOWN

Queenstown's Reading complex, located  
in the heart of town, has three cinemas  
screening a selection of blockbusters,  
local films and special events.



The complex features spacious stadium  
seating, wall-to-wall screens  
and surround digital sound.

Reading's licensed Candy Bar sells fresh  
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and alcoholic beverages.



Reading Cinemas Queenstown  
II-14 The Mall, 03 442 9994

It's a very photogenic village and you will see the historic cottages replicated on many souvenir items for sale in the district. Remember to bring your camera.

A visit to the Lakes District Museum on Arrowtown's Buckingham Street is highly recommended. It may be a small museum but it features high quality exhibits. The entry fee is minimal and you'll find it's well worth it for the in-depth look at the history of the Wakatipu and the gold mining heritage on which Arrowtown is built.

## Wine and Food in the Gibbston Valley

Carry on through Arrowtown and past the golf course for about 15kms and you'll find yourself in the Gibbston Valley, also known as the Valley of Vines. This area is where you'll find some of our favourite local wine and cheese suppliers.

Opposite the historic Kawarau Bridge is Chard Farm, an early Queenstown winery in spectacular surroundings. There are beautiful schist rocks, stunning views of the Kawarau River and an attractive tasting room. The road there is nearly as interesting as the wines. See more about Chard Farm on Page 25.

A couple of kilometres further and you're at Gibbston Valley Wines, one of the first, and best known, wineries of the Wakatipu. It's really worth booking in for their tour through a unique tunnel carved out of the schist cliff where you can see the wines maturing in the barrels. After you've tasted the wines in the cave, you'll probably want to visit the shop to buy some for yourself or as a gift for someone who appreciates fine wine.

For a great afternoon tea, head next door Gibbston Valley Cheese. They offer free tastings of their sheep, cow and goat milk cheeses so you can pick exactly what you want them to put on your platter. They also sell gift boxes and homewares so you'll be sure to find exactly the right gift to take home with you.

Gibbston Valley Cheese can also pack you a back-pack lunch to enjoy as you walk along the newly-launched Gibbston Trail. Or order a hamper and take it further afield to dine amongst the vines in Central Otago. Call them to pre-order your hamper on 441 1388.

To reach Central Otago you'll travel through the Kawarau Gorge - a scenic yet tricky road that follows the Kawarau River. Cromwell, Alexandra and Bannockburn are the main towns of interest here. Shops, wineries, cafes and beautiful landscapes will keep you occupied for several hours.

On your way back to Queenstown just before Lake Hayes, you'll see Amisfield Wines on your right. Make sure you also visit the tasting room because there are some stunning wines from Amisfield. Even if you're not interested in wine, do visit if only to experience the fabulous architecture, decor and art.

## Massage

By the time you get back to Queenstown, you'll probably be a bit weary. Maybe a massage would energise you for a night out clubbing, or a relaxing rub down could help you

sleep better.

The Mobile Massage Company offers therapeutic massage services in Queenstown and Arrowtown and you don't have to make any effort to find them because they'll come to you. Whether you are visiting or you live here long-term, they'll set up their massage table at the venue of your choice – all you need to do is answer the door. Call Chris and his team free on 0800 426 161 or on + 64 27 442 6161.

## Quad Biking

Nomad Safaris are best known for their Safari of the Rings Tour where passengers are taken on 4WD tours of secret filming locations of the Lord of the Rings trilogy.

They also offer guided quad bike safaris. There are two trips daily, one at 8.30am and the other at 1.30pm. Each lasts 3.5 hours and costs \$225 per person, which includes accommodation pickup, full training, protective gear and light refreshments.

With Nomad's exclusive access to Queenstown Hill, overlooking Queenstown, you'll definitely want to bring your camera to capture the iconic lake and mountain vistas.

## Milford Sound

No visit to the South Island would be complete without a tour of Milford Sound, New Zealand's own "Eighth Wonder of the World". Avoid the large, crowded trips and go with Cruise Milford's Eco Experience.

Their full-day tour from Queenstown includes a visit to rare native birds at the Te Anau Wildlife Park, plenty of photo stops and nature walks too. They link up with the 3.15pm Milford Adventurer cruise which is one of the smallest vessels operating on Milford Sound.

Cruising on a small vessel allows an even closer look at the natural landmarks and a more relaxing environment in which to absorb the magnificent views of the fiord while enjoying complimentary snacks.

On the return journey you can have dinner in Te Anau then sit back and enjoy a movie on the in-coach cinema, getting back to your accommodation around 9pm. Call to reserve your place on the coach - 0800 367 326.

If you don't have transport, give Alpine Taxis a call on 442 6666 - they offer a personal sightseeing service as well as the usual accommodation, restaurant and airport transfers.

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