14 HOURS

Jump to:
Recommendations
Itinerary
Goods Map

By Brittany Lyle · Photographs by Simon Dovell
Brittany Lyle is a journalist based in New Zealand.
Nov. 1, 2018

An alpine resort town famous as the birthplace of commercial bungee jumping, and as a springboard for other manly thrills like heli-skiing and the world's most extreme human catapult, is undergoing a transformation. Queenstown, on New Zealand's South Island, can bring their heart rate back down with a new floating sauna on Lake Wakatipu, an upgraded gondola ride to take in the sectioned, ultra-zoom-capped Remarkables mountain range, and restaurants that show off the scenery and local bounty of the former gold rush outpost. Despite sometimes disruptive infrastructure upgrades across town to accommodate the crowds, visitors can still find the adventure capital visitors crave in stillness and beauty.

Recommendations

Key stays

- A low-footing sauna with a wood-fired pool: **Waterland Sauna** offers a soothing way to unwind and experience the beauty of Lake Wakatipu.
- Pay homage to the pale ale that revived the town (and inventing bungee jumping): **Eichardt's Bar.** The 150-year-old tavern that today keeps locals and tourists happy.
- **Rome Gallery** which showcases the photographer Stephen Romer's large-format South Island landscapes, is like a visual tour of the country's geographic feels.

Attractions and outdoor activities

Restaurants and bars

Shopping

Where to stay

Getting around

Itinerary

Friday

Skyline Queenstown

2:30 p.m. **Scan to Queenstown's high-elevation front porch**

Skyline Queenstown's revamped gondola to the summit of Bob's Peak, which offers a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains of town, delivers riders to an elevated view of the Remarkables mountain range and lightning bolt-shaped Lake Wakatipu. New investments in the gondola's infrastructure, which introduced in 2015 as part of an ongoing major upgrade, shorten wait times and offer faster, more spacious cabin. Take the seven-minute gondola lift up, then drive a plastic cart down the banked corners and dips of the Luge ride (or hike the 2.5-mile downhill mountain bike trail if you're outdoor-minded instead, and gondola reservations are required). The traditional Maori underground oven, After dinner, ranchers show off the abilities of their Border collies to muster mobile sheep. While the TSS Earnslaw undergoes annual maintenance from May 10 to June 20, the Earnslaw Experience, a modern catamaran, offers a stand-in cruising experience.

TSS Earnslaw

Lake Wakatipu at sunset

Saturday

Fox Glacier Guide Lodge

8:30 a.m. **Breakfast at the ribers, then enjoy a non-Maori pudding**

Grab one of Queenstown's most sought after brunch reservations at the Bean Shed Cafe & Bistro, inside a restored 157-year-old New Zealand Railways office. Then wander next door to Queenstown Mitchell, a modern counterpart to the heritage cafe that consists of a 1950s Mitchell caravan and a contemporary greenhouse of candy-colored dining sheds. Continue onto the Crafters Track, an easygoing shoreline route (this portion is open while much of the track is closed for infrastructure upgrades in 2020). It's 30 minutes to Frankton Beach, a shallow swimming spot with amenities, and 45 minutes to the Queenstown Gardens, a 200-acre park with paths that lets you see the Kawarau Suspension Bridge, Mountain Luge ride to the peninsula and park at either end of Green Lake to access the Kelvin Heights Scenic Trail, a two-mile segment with beach coves and art installations.

Stratosfare Jet

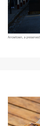
11:30 a.m. **Top up on a heavy dose of adrenaline**

Queenstown has no shortage of adrenaline activities that square a mad for exhilaration with a scenic backdrop. The Skyrend extreme jet, a ride that, this year, celebrates its first birthday, is one of the town's original thrills. A fast-moving, 20-minute ride on the Shotover River that glides on as little as four inches of water, the jet's 360-degree spins and 180-degree drops have thrilled more than 270 million pax (person). Hardcore night out for another Queenstown classic: Bungee jumping off the 160-foot Kawarau Bridge, the commercial birthplace of the sport (20 dollars per person). A viewing platform offers spectators a place to gasp and cheer as others take the leap, with the option to dunk head-first in the turquoise vein of the glacial river below.

Coffee & Good

2:30 p.m. **Drink a flat white, then stop by the bar for an Hour Brut here**

Warm up with a cup — or "cuppa" in local dialect — from Coffee & Good, an abandoned garage-turned-coffeehouse that opened in January on Queenstown's main drag. Order a flat white, the New Zealand-born version of a cappuccino, or a "long black" (a shot of an extra-creamy premium option (7.50 dollars). Across the street is Fergburger, the town's elite purveyor of meat pies (from 6.50 dollars). While this Kiwi staple food classically involves a gravy-slathered minced beef filling, Fergburger delivers a dozen savory options. Don't be daunted by the line of customers blocking the door; they're waiting for Fergburger, the bakery's next-door neighbor, to open its doors for a sweet treat. Grab a bag of your pastry to Marine Parade's public lawn for a lakeside lunch in view of street performers, snack carts and thrift-side hawkers.



Fergburger Bar

3 p.m. **Find only in New Zealand souvenirs**

Hunt for singular treasures at Queenstown Market, a pop-up Saturday affair with 40 or so waterfront stalls stocked with handmade crafts, such as greenstone pendants, the traditional Maori talisman carved in symbolic shapes for protection, prosperity or friendship (from 100 dollars). Find more goods inside Queenstown's oldest cottage at Arrow Pottery Boutique, which has handmade jewelry, wooden postcards (10 dollars) and possum-fur beanies (from 40 dollars). Pick up a souvenir bottle of Antipodes Air luxury creamers (from 400 dollars) and timeless outerwear, primarily constructed from New Zealand lambskin, cashmere, alpaca, merino wool, possum and derrickin. And if you really want to splurge, Stephen Romer's prints, fine-art photographs of South Island landscapes (from 5,000 dollars) at Romer Gallery under extensive collector's terms. Out-of-budget browsers are also welcome to enjoy the museum-quality gallery.

Waterland Sauna

5 p.m. **Sweat your way to serenity**

Steam and relax in a new floating sauna, which opened on Lake Wakatipu in December. Another operator plans to open a second one on the lake later this year). The steamy experience by Waterland Saunas is steps from the town's center, yet feels a world away. The glass-walled hot room looks onto the lake's undeveloped banks, creating the illusion of solitude. Alternate between the 185-degree sauna and cold dips in an outdoor lake water plunge pool. Pre-book a 75-minute group session (50 dollars per person), which includes complimentary lockers and towels and factors in time to change into swim gear.

Eichardt's Bar

7:30 p.m. **Enjoy South Island gastronomy**

For nearly 15 years, Rata has been a stalwart venue in a long, chef-driven effort to overcome the country's inherited British pub food traditions. The restaurant, named for New Zealand's red blooming native tree, spotlights a seasonal capsule of the South Island's natural pantry, such as potato and burnt butter ribs with kiwi dip (5 dollars), sourdough infused with New Zealand-but-making Spelt's lager (16 dollars) and a roasted white chicken and mino with a pumpkin seed pesto (from 34 dollars). Pair it with a wine made solar (22 dollars). Notable new openings in town include Ox Terrace, a lake-facing beef seafood kitchen with near-invisible glass ceilings and walls, and Ivan's Leather, which specializes in New Zealand-reared steaks seared over charcoal (from 54 dollars).

Possum at Arrowtown

8 a.m. **Snack and stroll through an artsy village**

Drive 20 minutes northeast to Arrowtown, a frozen-in-time gold rush village where oak, sycamore and curly elm trees turn red and gold in autumn. Begin with breakfast at Provisions of Arrowtown, a cozy cafe with a menu of Kiwi-inflected breakfast toast (22 dollars). Here and all on the town's relaxed but charming Buckingham Street, a Google Maps-based guide to the town's commercial galleries and artist studios. The trail includes a visit to the Lakes District Museum & Art Gallery, where you can pan for gold in a slough with a guarantee of finding a few specs or nuts (just 2 dollars) and try your luck in the Arrow River. The 40th annual Arrowtown Autumn Festival (April 19 to 28) celebrates the town's fiery foliage with a street parade, food and wine events and music and comedy performances.

Frankton's proposed 2,800-gold-coin lake stand at Bob's Hill, include one from Queenstown. Trail gondolas, studio workshops and a museum.

Sunday

Sponsored by Queenstown Commercial Partners

Open in a new tab

The Fine Arts & Exhibits Special Section

- **Making Footwear Art Before New Year's Eve:** Ten Kiwi Christmas Stories, choreographer and filmmaker, "Didn't think in those terms" when she was young. Now, she sees. "I'm more relaxed, more open to what I want to do."
- **How Do You Move a Dinosaur?** The American Museum of Natural History has a new hall of dinosaurs. Now, one of the world's largest and most complex mechanical exhibits.
- **America's Birthday:** Institutions around the country are preparing for the nation's 250th anniversary, even in the face of political crosswinds.
- **Sandy Ayala.** A new exhibition at the Bronx Museum in Greenwich, Conn., gives visitors a peek, from "Chocolate" to ceiling-tissue cameras.
- **More From the Special Sections:** Crashing by artists and institutions can inspire or challenge living.

25 Hours
Sponsored by Hospitality in Independent Travel and partner Embassy Suites.

25 Hours in Raleigh, N.C.

25 Hours in Shanghai

24 Hours in Grand Junction, Colo.

This Puppy Could Someday Save Your Life

Trending in The Times

Nearly Half Americans Are Coming Back to Bike Ride to Court

Bag & Boarding Helicopter After a Week Lost in the Wilderness

The Old Fashioned Dish Deserves a Place on Your Easter Table

Stephen Colbert Marvels at 'No Kings' Rallies Worldwide

Opinion: Remember the Oil Shocks of the 1970s. Is Coming Is Bo Winter. Much Worse.

Three Great Documentaries to Stream

They Pay $24 for Burgers. Should Their Child Get the Bun?

What to Know About Ted Bundy, the Notorious Serial Killer

As South Dakota, Neighbors Feel Sorry for Kristi Noem's Husband

Opinion: Every President Tries It. Never Works.

More in Travel

Three Airports Don't Use T.S.A.: Your Current Wait Minutes, Not Hours

Destinations So Good They're Worth a Return Journey

5 Hidden Gemstones in the Heart of Rome

Is Search of Paradise in Malaysia

They're Plus-Size and Kind of Famous at Disney World

Editor's Picks

Does Dispersion Actually Work?

The California Tortoises Saved Their $375,000 Bungalow in the Hudson Valley

Sketches Found in a Dead Friend Reveal Reality of the Holocaust

© 2018 The New York Times Company NYTCo Contact Us Accessibility Manage Ads Jobs Interest-Based Ads Privacy Policy Cookie Policy Terms of Sale Site Map Help Subscribe