

WANAKA - SIGHTSEEING - ECOTOUR

The approach to Wanaka from the east is awe-inspiring. You drive along golden river terraces, cross the blue-green and deceptively calm-looking Clutha River (it has the largest water flow of all NZ rivers) and approach stately mountains that rise directly out of the lake or surrounding flat land.

Maori legend recounts that chief Te Rakaihaitu dug out the beds of lakes Wanaka and Hawea, Where he threw the earth, the mountains grew. The geological explanation attributes the features of the land to glaciation. About 20,00 years ago, sheets of ice covered all except the highest mountains in the Southern Alps, and huge glaciers flowed east and west of the mountains. Fed by ice rivers from Makarora, Hawea and the Matukituki, the Wanaka Glacier pushed down into the Upper Clutha towards Cromwell, scooping out the bed of Lake Wanaka. The rocks embedded in the ice acted like rasps scraping and smoothing the rock underneath.

Roches Moutonnées - Sheeplike Rocks

Hills and large rock outcrops caught in the path of glaciers were carved into shapes of crouching sheep: their gentler, upstream slopes were rounded under the sliding, grinding impact; their steep, downstream sides were plucked away by the ice freezing to them and tearing away with the momentum of the glacier. The U-shaped valleys and steeply carved, lower portions of mountains are also the results of glaciers grinding away spurs and foot hills.

As you enter Wanaka, Mt Iron is a good example of a roche moutonnée and, if you do the Mt Iron Walk and the Diamond Lake Walk, you will be climbing over two of them.

Mt Aspiring National Park

In 1990, Mt Aspiring National Park became part of the 2.6 million hectare Te Wahipounamu, 'The Place of Greenstone', World Heritage Park. Wanaka is one of the gateways to the Park, which straddles the southern end of the Southern Alps. It is 140 km long and 40 km wide at its widest point.

Ancient glaciers carved a 4-sided pyramid to form Mt Aspiring, at 3,027m, the highest mountain outside the Mt Cook region. The Park has 13 peaks over 2000m and about 100 glaciers. The West and East Matukituki Valleys, which dissect high mountain ranges, were also carved out by glaciers.

Birds

Rifleman, fantail, tomtit and bellbird live in the forest and, among the red beech, parakeets are common. On the river flats you will hear the raucous cries of paradise ducks and see the distinctive pair of birds - the female with a white head, the male with a black one. Spur wing plovers, an Australian species, are also common in the river beds.

Hunting

Towards the west, where the rainfall is high, beech forests climb from the valleys and snow tussock grasslands flourish above the bushline. Deer are still found on the lower slopes of the mountains and in the bush; chamois and thar are in such plentiful numbers on the upper slopes that they're considered a pest and hunters are encouraged to reduce their numbers because of the damage they do to endangered plants. They also add to the risk of erosion by eating the vegetation that holds the thin soils together.

- **Flightseeing**

The scenic wonders of Mount Aspiring National Park, Milford Sound and Mount Cook can be viewed from a plane or a helicopter. There's a choice of companies operating from Wanaka:

Aspiring Air – www.nz-flights.com

Wanaka Flightseeing – www.flightseeing.co.nz

Wanaka Helicopters – Email: wanacopter@xtra.co.nz

Wanaka Heliadventures – Email: wanakaheli@xtra.co.nz

- **Warbirds Over Wanaka**

At the airport, SH6 10 km from Wanaka.

At Easter time in even-numbered years, Wanaka hosts a hugely popular International Airshow. Begun by aviation entrepreneur, Sir Tim Wallis, the show gives you the chance to see some of the most famous warbirds from four world conflicts. World War 1 biplanes, Spitfires, Hurricanes, Mustangs and many more recreate history, but with a backdrop of stunning scenery.

www.warbirdsoverwanaka.com

WANAKA - EXCURSIONS

- **Cardrona Hotel**

A short drive through the Cardrona Valley brings you to the historic Cardrona Hotel, established in 1863 in the days of the gold rush. The restored hotel with restaurant, bar and outdoor area is a pleasant spot for lunch in summer and an après-ski drink in winter for skiers coming off the Cardrona, Treble Cone, Remarkables and Coronet Peak ski areas. Just across the road from the hotel is the entrance to the Waiorau Snow Farm, the cross country skiing area.

- **Stuart Landsborough's Puzzling World**

You can't miss the eccentric, brightly coloured buildings, including the Leaning Tower of Wanaka, 2 km from Wanaka on the main road into the town.



In 1973, Stuart Landsborough created his unique wooden maze and, since then, he has been adding to the complex. There's a Puzzle Centre with

puzzles to try and plenty you can buy, a Hologram Hall, an Illusions House, a Hall of Following Faces, a Puzzling Cafe, and amazing toilets to fit the theme. This complex is not just for children. Adults will find plenty to occupy and amuse them, and have been known to give in and use the emergency gates to get out of the Great Maze.

Email: slandsborough@xtra.co.nz

www.puzzlingworld.com

- **Photographic Tours**

Aspiring Images. George Russell, who has an extensive knowledge of the geography of the area and the best sites for photographs, offers half and full day tours in his 4WD vehicle. Professional camera equipment provided if needed.

Fax: 03 4438 327

Phone: 03 4438 358

WANAKA – PICNICS

There are numerous picnic sites around the lake:

- **Eely Point** and the western end of **Roys Bay** are the most sheltered areas when the wind is blowing down the lake towards the town.
- Almost anywhere else is good, too. If you want to swim, avoid the special areas for water skiers. In some parts of the lake you can suffer from ‘duck itch’. Children who play in the warmer water on the edge of the lake may be affected. If they are dried as soon as they come out of the water, it is not likely to be a problem. A salve can be bought from the pharmacy.
- **Dublin Bay** (turn off the highway to the West Coast about 2 km from the Clutha River bridge) is a good swimming place for small children as it is very shallow.

There are also great picnic spots on local rivers:

- The **Hawea River**, on the right just past the Clutha River Bridge, has good swimming holes.
- The **Motutapu River Gorge**, signposted on the Mt Aspiring Road at Glenhu Bay, and the **Motutapu River** below the bridge on the Mt Aspiring Road a few kilometres further on from Glendhu Bay, are delightful swimming and picnicking spot.

WANAKA - MUSEUM

New Zealand Fighter Pilots Museum

- Located at Wanaka Airport, SH6
- Houses one of the Southern Hemisphere’s largest collection of air worthy fighter planes from two World Wars
- Special exhibitions and real life stories of famous fighter pilots
- Photographic displays
- Compaq Computer Flightzone - you take the controls in the fighter pilot’s seat!

www.nzfpm.co.nz

Transport and Toy Museum

SH 6 beside the Wanaka Airport

Something of interest for everyone in this private museum. From porcelain dolls, rocking horses and pedal cars to military tanks, tractors, fire engines, antique cars and motorcycles.

WANAKA – VINEYARD

Rippon Vineyard

Mt Aspiring Road, a few km from Wanaka, on the right.

Wine tasting. Cellar door sales.

One of the first Central Otago vineyards, Rippon first developed a reputation for its pinot noir, in particular. It produces Gewurztraminer, Rosé, Merlot/Syrah, Osteiner, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay. In recent years its Riesling has proved this is a variety to watch out for from Central Otago.