

SUN SPOT

Wonderful Wanaka

A winter playground, this town has plenty to offer in summer, too, observes **Kerri Jackson**.

WANAKA HAS a reputation as one of the world's best winter playgrounds, surrounded by ski fields, sky-scraping mountains and the kind of spectacular scenery that makes your eyes water. But like its brassier sister Queenstown, Wanaka is as much fun in the sun-drenched, big-sky, dry, central Otago summers as it is in the snow-capped winters. Here's a guide to how to amuse yourself in Wanaka without snow:

The great outdoors

Located at the edge of Mt Aspiring National Park, Wanaka is an excellent place for trampers to base themselves ahead of long or short tramps. The most famous is probably the Routeburn Track, but there are any number of other walks, from multi-day, to part-day, or just a few minutes, catering for all fitness levels and ages.

Choose between lakeside, forest, farmland or mountains. A great one-hour return walk for all ages is the Blue Pools walk, which begins near Makarora on SH6. The easy track takes you through beech forest and across a swing bridge to pools of the Blue River.

For the more advanced, the Rob Roy Valley Track includes glaciers and waterfalls. If walking is top of your itinerary it's also a good idea to pick up a copy of DoC's *Wanaka Walks and Trails*. Alternatively, there are a number of companies in town offering guided walks.

On a clear day, it's worth also making the two-hour drive through Haast Pass. There are plenty of places to stop along the way for short walks through forest to waterfalls, but the drive itself is stunning, with mountains looming over the rugged river valley.

If walking isn't your thing, there are other outdoor activities on offer in Wanaka, from mountain biking and kayaking, to canyoning, jetboating and rafting. For something different, try Frogz whitewater sledging down the Kawarau River.

For something more sedate, Lake-land Adventures offers sightseeing cruises and fishing trips on the lake.

Try the Basecamp climbing wall, Cardrona Adventure park for quad bikes or even monster truck rides for other family fun.

The great indoors

One of Wanaka's unique attractions is

IF YOU GO



Where to stay

The four-star Te Wanaka Lodge in Brownston St, and just a couple of blocks back from the water's edge, is an excellent mix of comfort and luxury. In winter, it's a classic ski-lodge where you can mix and mingle with other guests over a mulled wine or warming soup, swapping stories of the slopes. Come summer, the place is more of a classic B&B, where you can soak your hike-aching limbs in the spa, pictured above.

Hosts Wayne and Mandy Enoka are happy to help organise your Wanaka itineraries and have tips on the best spots to eat, drink and sightsee. Breakfast comes as part of your package and at least once a week the Enokas host a group dinner for guests, which is another great chance to catch up on how other people — often from all over the world — are spending their time in this cool little town.

The rooms are comfortable and modern, with private balconies, and there are two lounges and a bar for when you want to be a little more social. For booking and pricing details visit www.tewanaka.co.nz

Getting there

Air New Zealand flies daily to Queenstown from Auckland and Christchurch. Ph 0800 737 000 or visit www.airnz.co.nz

its decidedly boutique movie theatre. Rapidly becoming world famous for its sofas and the refurbished Morris Minor seating, Cinema Paradiso is a must-do for evenings or wet



Slow down with a sightseeing cruise or fishing trip on Lake Wanaka.



Unwind in comfort and luxury at Te Wanaka Lodge.



Soak up wine and breathtaking views at Rippon vineyard.

afternoons. It screens all the latest movies, there's a fantastic cafe and bar attached and, come intermission, giant, home-made cookies can be bought fresh from the oven. www.paradiso.net.nz

Puzzling World, a couple of kilometres out of town on the road to Cromwell, is another good place to keep the kids amused for hours with an outdoor 3D maze and a selection of other indoor, mind-bending visual puzzles. www.puzzlingworld.com

The New Zealand Fighter Pilots Museum and the Toy and Transport Museum are also worth a look.

Quench the thirst

Wanaka is, of course, also set in the heart of central Otago wine country. For breathtaking lake views as you sip

delicious pinot noir or riesling it's hard to beat Rippon vineyard, about a five-minute drive out of town along the lake edge.

Buy a bottle, sit on one of the outdoor tables and soak up the panorama of green vines, blue water and rugged peaks. The vineyard also hosts a music festival every second February. The next one is down for 2012, but keep an eye on www.ripponfestival.co.nz, as tickets sell fast.

For a unique way of touring several of the region's wineries pack yourself into a classic Citroen operated by Funny French Tours.

Tours take in cellar doors, local landmarks, artist haunts and cafes. www.funnyfrenchcars.co.nz

If beer is more your thing try Wanaka Beerworks at the Transport

Museum. Here you'll find tasty and refreshing boutique beers. www.wanakabeerworks.co.nz

Stave off your hunger

Ardmore St along the lakefront and the surrounding side streets are home to a full compliment of bars and restaurants. For casual dining and great brunches with excellent coffee, try Kai Whakapai. For a lakeside lunch in the sun with unique cafe food try Relishes cafe. For *really* tasty Indian in stylish but comfy surrounds try The Spice Room, and for sophisticated dining in a relaxed atmosphere try the Wanaka branch of Botswana Butchery, where a spot on the sunny deck with a steak is highly recommended.

— Kerri Jackson travelled to Wanaka with assistance from Air New Zealand.



Embrace the quirky comforts of Cinema Paradiso.

BACH WATCH: MAGIC COTTAGE

The country's coolest baches.

Where: Takou Bay, Northland

What: Magic Cottage is a two-bedroom self-catering hideaway set amid 2ha of sub-tropical gardens on the banks of the Takou River, not far from Takou Bay. It comes with an antique claw-foot bath outside on the secluded deck overlooking the river — making it the perfect romantic hidey hole.

Price: \$220-\$280 a night

Getting there: Takou Bay is about 20km north of

Kerikeri, before Matauri Bay and Whangaroa Harbour.

While you're there: If you can drag yourself out of that outdoor bath take a stroll through the cottage's surrounding gardens or meander along one of the riverside walks. Kerikeri is a short drive away if you want more formal attractions — and there's a great farmers' market on Sundays if you want to stock up for the cottage kitchen. Takou Bay is also a good fishing and surfing spot, too.

Bach link: Visit www.bookabach.co.nz and search for "3156" without the quotation marks.

