

Itinerary – Queenstown to Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

Located on the shores of the South Island's Lake Wakatipu and set against the dramatic Southern Alps, Queenstown is recognised as an adventure capital of New Zealand. This four-day itinerary will guide you through an unforgettable journey filled with local flavours, outdoor activities, legendary high-country hospitality, and epic scenery.

Day 1 – Queenstown to Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

Driving to the Mackenzie District in New Zealand offers stunning landscapes, adrenaline filled experiences, historical places and great cuisine.

Morning: Queenstown to Arrowtown to Gibbston Valley

Starting in Queenstown, head North on State Highway 6, at Lake Hayes Estate (approximately 15 minutes) turn Left onto Arrowtown Lake Hayes Road and proceed on to Arrowtown where you can visit one of New Zealand's best [small museums](#) and see what it would have been like during the early settlers' days.

Leaving Arrowtown, return to State Highway 6 and continue onto Gibbston Valley. [Oxbow Adventure Co.](#) is located at the end of the valley and you can get an adrenaline rush by jet sprint boating, clay target shooting or off-roading.

Midday: Gibbston Valley to Cromwell or Scapegrace Distillery

Follow State Highway 6 towards the historical gold rush town of Cromwell, you can have a couple of options for lunch, the first option is to explore Cromwell town and enjoy the local restaurants and the second option is to proceed, a small distance beyond Cromwell, on State Highway 8b East and then State Highway 8 North to Bendigo Downs and the [Scapegrace Distillery](#) for finer dining (pre-booking is advised).

Afternoon: Cromwell/Scapegrace to Wanaka

Continue North on State Highway 8 until the State Highway 8a intersection and turn left to Wanaka, you can enjoy views of Lake Wanaka, visit [Puzzling World](#) or [The National Transport and Toy Museum](#).

Late Afternoon: Wanaka to Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

Head back out of Wanaka East along State Highway 6 and take the left turn onto State Highway 8a just past the airport, at the end of State Highway 8a turn left (North) onto State Highway 8 and proceed through the Lindis Pass to Omarama, the host town of the 1995 World Gliding Championships.

Continue along State Highway 8, as you pass Twizel and its airport, take the next major turn left onto Mount Cook Road (State Highway 80). Make your way to Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat.

Explore the 66-hectare property or relax in your own private hot tub.

Evening: Dinner at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

Enjoy a delicious dinner at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat, either in The Moraine restaurant or in the privacy of your own villa. Experience fresh seasonal cuisine using our garden to plate philosophy.

Day 2 – Lake Tekapo

Morning: Breakfast at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

Start the day with a gourmet breakfast. This will be delivered to your villa at your preferred time.

Morning: Fish Tekapo

Enjoy a peaceful morning fishing with [Fish Tekapo](#). Whether you're a seasoned angler or a novice, the clear waters and stunning backdrop make for a perfect start to the day.

Midday: Whisky Hut Experience

After your fishing expedition, take to the skies with [Mackenzie Helicopters](#) or [Air Safaris](#) and visit the Whisky Hut. Perched at 2,000 metres above sea level on top of a mountain this humble hut sits on the more than 100-year-old [Glenmore Station](#), a 19,000-hectare merino, deer and cattle station bordering Lake Tekapo and Aoraki / Mount Cook National Park. This unique experience combines stunning aerial views with a carefully curated selection of fine whiskies – perfect for a midday treat.

Afternoon: Relax at Tekapo Springs

If you fancy relaxing, Tekapo Hot Pools is the perfect place to do so. [Tekapo Springs - Hot Pools in Lake Tekapo](#). The hot pools here offer breathtaking views of the lake and mountains, making it the ideal spot to relax and recharge.

OR

Morning: 4WD Adventure in Lake Tekapo

Get ready for some off-road excitement with [Tekapo Adventures](#) or [4WD Tekapo](#). A 4WD tour will take you deep into the rugged mountain valleys surrounding the lake, offering stunning views and a taste of adventure in the high country.

Afternoon: Relax at Tekapo Springs

If you fancy relaxing, Tekapo Hot Pools is the perfect place to do so. [Tekapo Springs - Hot Pools in Lake Tekapo](#). The hot pools here offer breathtaking views of the lake and mountains, making it the ideal spot to relax and recharge.

Evening: Dinner at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

Enjoy a delicious dinner at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat, either in The Moraine restaurant or in the privacy of your own villa. Experience fresh seasonal cuisine using our garden to plate philosophy.

Evening: Stargazing Tour

As night falls, prepare for an unforgettable stargazing experience at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat's Pukaki Cellar Observatory. Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat is part of the [Aoraki Mackenzie International Dark Sky Reserve](#), making it one of the best places in the world to view the night sky. Your experienced astronomer will guide you through the constellations and the wonders of the universe.

Day 3 – Aoraki / Mount Cook

Morning: Breakfast at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

Start the day with a gourmet breakfast. This will be delivered to your villa at your preferred time.

Morning: Drive to Aoraki / Mount Cook

Set off early for a scenic drive to [Aoraki / Mount Cook](#), New Zealand's highest peak. Along the way, stop at lookout points to capture the breathtaking views of the Southern Alps and the vibrant, turquoise-coloured waters of Lake Pukaki. This is a 40-minute drive from Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat.

Just 5 minutes from the Retreat, stop at [New Zealand Alpine Lavender](#) (only open from December to March). Explore the largest certified organic lavender farm in the Southern Hemisphere. Walk through the vibrant lavender fields, take photos, and visit their on-site shop.

Midday: Glacier Explorers

Once at Aoraki / Mount Cook, embark on a [Glacier Explorers](#) tour, New Zealand's only glacial boat tour. This unique experience takes you out onto the glacial lake, where you'll witness towering icebergs and the majestic [Haupapa/Tasman Glacier](#) up close. This is a relaxing boat ride filled with discovery.

Afternoon: Hooker Valley Nature Walk and DOC Visitor Centre

After your glacier adventure, explore the [Hooker Valley Track](#), a stunning walk that offers panoramic views of Aoraki / Mount Cook and its surrounding glaciers. Don't miss a visit to the [DOC Visitor Centre](#), where you can learn more about the area's natural history, mountaineering stories and conservation efforts.

OR, if you prefer a little more adventure:

Morning: Glentanner Heli-Hike

Fly up and hike down! This tour begins with an exhilarating helicopter flight to a high point on [Glentanner Station](#). Take in dramatic views of Lake Pūkaki, the Tasman River Valley and Aoraki / Mount Cook. After leaving the helicopter the tour continues on foot with an easy walk down a picturesque farm track. Your guide will share stories of the station's history, geological features, flora, fauna and present-day operations.

Afternoon: Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail

Enjoy a cycling adventure on the [Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail](#) with [Cycle Journeys](#) or [Lakeland Explorer](#). The route offers some of the most spectacular views in the region.

Evening: Dinner at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

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[Day 4 – Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat to Queenstown](#)

Morning: Breakfast at Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat

Start the day with a gourmet breakfast. This will be delivered to your villa at your preferred time.

Morning: High Country Salmon

As you make your way to Queenstown, stop at [High Country Salmon](#) to pick up some delicious salmon for the road. It's the perfect way to end your Mackenzie Region adventure on a high note.

Morning: Mt Cook Lakeside Retreat to Twizel or Omarama

Complete your adrenaline pumping appetite by heading South on State Highway 8 and booking either a [bi-plane tour](#), [skydiving](#) or a [gliding experience](#) in Omarama.

Late Morning / Midday: Twizel / Omarama to Cromwell

Follow State Highway 8 South through the Lindis Pass to the historical gold rush town of Cromwell, you can explore the town and enjoy the local restaurants for lunch, visit the [Cromwell Museum](#) or the [Heritage Precinct](#).

Afternoon: Cromwell to Gibbston Valley Winery or Ayrburn

Proceed out of Cromwell on State Highway 6 towards Queenstown, you can choose to spend your afternoon at either the [Gibbston Valley Winery](#) for a tour and tasting or head a little further on to Arrowtown and visit the [Ayrburn](#) for wine tasting and good food that the whole family can enjoy.

Late Afternoon: Gibbston Valley / Ayrburn to Queenstown

Continue South on State Highway 6 to Queenstown.

Other activities that can be added to your itinerary:

- Heli-tours / heli-hike / Picnic on the Peaks
- Scenic flights
- Gliding
- Yoga and massages

- Ride the best of the A20 (Alps 2 Ocean) – bespoke tour and / or cycle hire
- Guided local fishing tours
- Clay cliffs