

Destination Queenstown & Lake Wānaka Tourism

TNZ Regional Showcase 2026

Feb 2026

1. Overview

In February 2026, Stu Cordelle - Head of Business Development, and Charlotte Green - Account Manager Australia, represented Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism across Sydney, Brisbane, and the Gold Coast, meeting with key trade partners, ski travel sellers and wholesalers in conjunction with Cam Mitchell from RealNZ, representing Cardrona and Treble Cone.

Throughout the week, we participated in 15 meetings and training sessions, showcasing key updates, seasonal developments, and selling points. These sessions also offered valuable opportunities to hear directly from trade partners about the trends, insights, and challenges they are currently experiencing. This feedback is helping inform how we can best support our partners in continuing to successfully promote the Queenstown and Lake Wānaka region, particularly in the winter season.

2. Market Background

Australia remains New Zealand's largest international market. In 2024, New Zealand welcomed 1,385,310 visitors from Australia, accounting for 42% of total international arrivals. Insights from 2025 showed Australia recorded to be the top country of origin for holiday visitors who participated in ski or snow activities, highlighting the market's strong affinity with winter experiences.

Australia's proximity, strong bilateral relationship, and increasing air connectivity continue to drive sustained growth, particularly for winter and ski holidays. New Zealand's winter season also presents a competitive advantage with its unique winter timeframe. Overall, a consistent theme across trade partners was strong growth in bookings leading into the upcoming winter season, accelerated by Australia's current strong dollar.

3. Event Objectives & Benefits

Objectives:

- Promote Queenstown and Wānaka as a premium four-season destination
- Introduce ourselves in our new roles, providing resources and contacts for future reference
- Strengthen existing and new trade relationships in Australia
- Encouraging longer itineraries across both Queenstown and Wānaka allowing visitors to dive deeper and enjoy nature
- Educate and update trade sellers about what is happening in our region

- Gathering market trends and insights to help inform the region
- Seeking feedback to support continuous improvement

Benefits:

- Establishing both of our roles by introducing ourselves and the re structure including the combining of Queenstown and Wānaka under the same RTO
- We were able to offer education opportunities as well as resources for future to ensure sellers continue having all the tools and support necessary to sell the region.
- Connecting suppliers and sellers
- Discuss possible opportunities for collaboration.
- Gaining clearer insights into the current market

4. Attendance/Attendees

Sydney:

7 meetings with updates.

- Air New Zealand
- Skimax
- Tourism New Zealand
- OZ Snow
- Get Your Guide
- Travel Plan Co

Gold Coast:

1 Dinner, 2 Meetings and 2 Trainings.

- ANZCRO
- Fusion Travel

Brisbane:

1 Dinner, 3 Meetings and 2 Trainings.

- Flight Centre
- Snowscene
- Snow n Ski

5. Market Insights

A consistent trend across all trade partners was growth in winter bookings comparatively to this time last year, with positive forward demand already evident. This indicates strong consumer confidence in winter travel to New Zealand and reinforces the importance of maintaining visibility and trade engagement early in the year. January saw a high level of bookings across most sellers, which is expected to decrease the closer we get to the winter season with June and July being the quietest months for ski trade bookings.

These insights came with an emphasis on the importance of consistent rates, availability and generally trade ready products to travel sellers as demand is coming earlier each year.

Additionally, trade partners clearly recognise New Zealand's winter season as complementary rather than competitive to Japan's. Although Japan is still extremely popular with winter travellers, they are seeing a slight plateau in demand partially due to increasing accommodation rates and airfares. However, as winter sports continue to grow in popularity, there is less concern on New Zealand losing business to Japan.

Our connectivity allows us to stay competitive against domestic ski travel also, particularly within Eastern Australia. Many sellers we meet with do not sell domestically and find the consumers who must take a flight anyway are leaning towards New Zealand over domestic trips, particularly now as the Australian dollar is strong. All these factors continue to position Queenstown and Lake Wānaka as the preferred Southern Hemisphere ski option for Australians.

Additionally, aligning with the destination management plan we were able to enquire about average length of stay and the split across Queenstown and Wānaka. The average night stay reported for ski travel booked via the trade channel was around 7 days, with a strong appetite to split the trip across the region.

Barriers discussed with sellers included a lack of accommodation options in Wānaka and traffic infrastructure issues in Queenstown. Concerns about slow starts to the winter seasons regarding snow fall are being addressed by all ski fields with investments into snow making. This discussion point was also a great opportunity to encourage travel during early spring.

6. Summary

Across all discussions a clear trend emerged, winter 2026 bookings are tracking strongly. With majority of travel sellers reporting increased consumer interest and early booking behaviour compared to previous seasons.

This trip was a great opportunity to establish both of us in our new roles and build connections with these sellers who now have key contacts, if they need training, resources or are wishing to connect with new suppliers, making selling our region as accessible as possible.

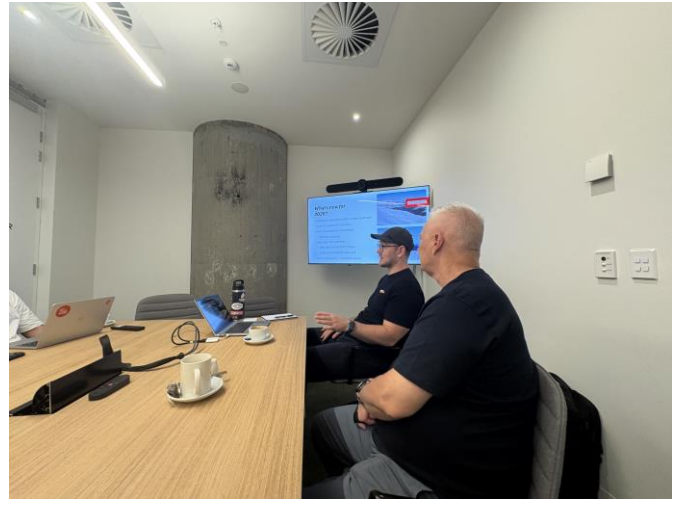
New Zealand's winter season continues to offer a competitive advantage over domestic travel for Australian travellers. An addition advantage on the world stage is it's seasonal timing, which differs from other popular ski destinations such as Japan. Combined with proximity, frequent flight connections, and a long-standing relationship between Australia and New Zealand, this positions Queenstown and Lake Wānaka as an accessible and compelling winter holiday choice.

Overall, this trip was a great opportunity for us to establish connections with key Australian ski sellers and partners and the insights from the trip indicate a positive outlook for the Australian consumer market, with strong intent to travel, growing winter demand, and sustained interest in ski and snow experiences across the Queenstown and Lake Wānaka region.

8. Related Event Photos



Training and meeting with Oz Snow in Sydney.



Update training with Get Your Guide.



Training with ANZCRO on the Gold Coast



Dinner and training with Sno n Ski in Brisbane