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A WINTER LOVER'S PARADISE

Queenstown is the place to be this snow season, both on and off the slopes

If the idea of swooshing your way down a snowy mountain, then catching a ride back up to the top again is your idea of paradise, then the fact that the Queenstown region's four ski fields have already had several good dumps of lovely powdery snow this season will have you itching to get in amongst the action.

With Coronet Peak, The Remarkables, Cardrona and Treble

Cone all now open for business until early October, there is plenty of time for snow bunnies to get their fix during the area's typically crisp, blue sky days over the next few months.

The great thing about this part of New Zealand is all the fun you can have off-mountain too, once you've hung up your skis or snowboard for the day. Here are a few après ski activities to enjoy back at ground level.

FEAST ON WORLD-CLASS FOOD & WINE

The craft beer revolution has well and truly arrived in Queenstown, with new breweries and taprooms popping up throughout the region. There are several excellent beer tours available where you can learn how the magic happens, or head into Queenstown's CBD where you'll find bars and restaurants serving up a rotating selection of their favourite brews.

Central Otago, of course, is known around the world for its sensational cool climate wines. For a change in pace, head out to the rugged landscapes of Gibbston and savour world-class pinot noir and luscious aromatic wines. Self-drive, join a guided tour, or cycle around the vineyards to get a taste of the terroir. Many of the cellar doors have excellent restaurants attached too, so you can sit back in front of an open fire and indulge in seasonal local produce.



Photo/Gibbston Valley Wine Cave

GET OUT OF TOWN

One of the best ways to really explore an area is with the help of a passionate local guide, and a thrilling way to see more of Queenstown's cinematic Middle-earth landscapes is on a 4WD tour, with various trips available to explore everything from Paradise and Glenorchy to Skippers Canyon. The famously precipitous Skippers Canyon Rd was hewn by hand and juts out from the sheer cliff sides of the Shotover River valley — this scenic drive is best undertaken with someone experienced at the wheel. As well as being safer, it will give you more time to appreciate the beauty out the window. Finish your tour with a nail-biting jet boat ride on the famous Shotover River and don't forget to ask your guide for their local secrets — they love to share their knowledge of the region.



GIVE YOUR BUCKET LIST A WORKOUT

It's worth saving up some of your bucket list experiences to tick off in Queenstown because the alpine town really offers the full spectrum of activities, from hot air ballooning and heli-skiing to ziplining and rock climbing. You can't help but get caught up in the town's adventurous spirit once you're there and you might even surprise yourself over what you end up achieving.



WATER

The famous lake the town sits alongside is a hive of activity, no matter the season — expect to see lots of boats cruising about — and even a "shark" (a semi-submersible watercraft shaped like a shark that leaps out of the water before diving below the lake's surface). The most famous boat on Lake Wakatipu, however, is the charming TSS Earnslaw, an Edwardian steamship built in 1912, which makes regular journeys across to Walter Peak High Country Farm and back. This is a Queenstown must-do.

STOP AND BREATHE IN THAT ALPINE AIR

It's hard to think of a better place to rejuvenate your mind, body and soul — beauty is everywhere you look in this part of the world and the air is pure and fresh. Chill out for the day and indulge in a range of treatments at a luxury spa, or join a yoga class at a local studio. There are also a range of health retreats available so you can really unwind and reset.



DISCOVER THE REGION'S GOLD-MINING PAST

One of the most picturesque parts of New Zealand, Arrowtown has a fascinating history. Settled in the 1860s when gold was first discovered in the Arrow River, the charming township features many of the original buildings which have been restored to their former glory. History buffs should visit the heritage-listed Chinese village and the Lakes District Museum; if you get inspired you can have a go at panning for gold yourself.