

 **Wānaka**

Queenstown
NEW ZEALAND



STARGAZING / ASTROTOURISM

Segment Insights Guides



AuthenticAs

**EXPLORE BEHAVIOURS,
MOTIVATIONS, AND TRENDS THAT
DRIVE VISITORS TO TAKE PART IN
EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE DISTRICT
AND ACROSS NEW ZEALAND.**

The Segment Insight Guides provide members with an understanding of how visitors engage with activities and experiences in Queenstown and Wānaka. They align with the RTOs' activity segment strategy, targeting high-intent audiences who share the region's values and seasonal interests, supporting sustainable year-round demand and local businesses.

Insights are drawn from reputable regional and national sources, such as the Queenstown Lakes Visitor Experience Survey and New Zealand International Visitor Survey. Variations may occur where data is limited, and some generalisations are based on survey findings.

Note: due to survey design Queenstown Lakes district insights are not available, only national insights.



NEW ZEALAND INSIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL VISITOR SURVEY INSIGHTS

The following insights are drawn from International Visitor Survey* holiday respondents who participated in stargazing activities* while visiting New Zealand. It was not necessarily their main reason / motivation for travel to NZ. These findings should be interpreted as “holiday visitors to New Zealand who participated in participated stargazing activities tend to show the following characteristics and behaviours”.

Participation



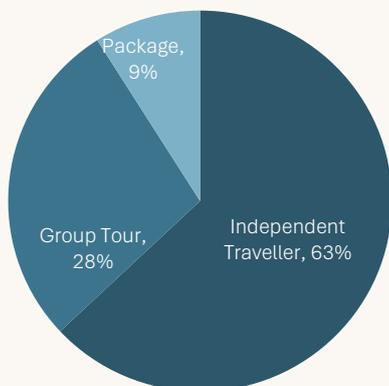
Top countries of origin

- China
- Australia
- USA
- Taiwan
- Singapore

Average length of stay



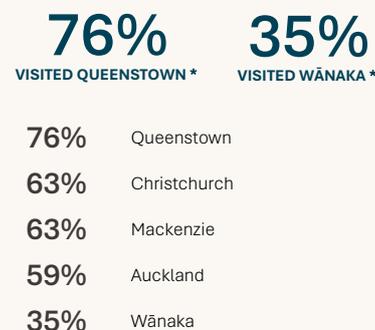
Travel style



Regions visited

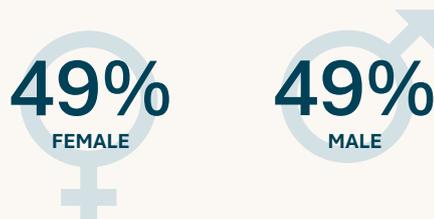


Top regions visited



Share of respondents that stayed at least one night in respective regions. Not additive to 100% as visitors stay in different locations during their trip.

Gender#



Average spend per trip



Inclusive of all on the ground costs and international flights

*The International Visitor Survey is designed for national use and has an unknown margin of error when segmented to regional or activity specific analysis. Users are advised to consider values as indicative and not rely on them for important decisions.
* IVS category is stargazing
If the gender categories do not add to 100%, this reflects respondents who chose not to disclose their gender or who identify with another gender
Source: International Visitor Survey data (year ended June 2025), accessed on 23 September 2025. Time period: 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025. Sample size: 765.



TRENDS AND INSIGHTS

Queenstown and Wānaka offer some of New Zealand's most striking stargazing opportunities, where clear alpine air and low light pollution reveal vivid views of the Milky Way and southern constellations. The region is home to two certified dark-sky sites recognised by DarkSky International - the Kawarau Gibbston Dark Sky Park and the Tāhuna Glenorchy Dark Sky Sanctuary - reflecting strong community commitment to preserving natural night skies, protecting nocturnal wildlife, and celebrating the biodiversity that thrives under them.

Visitors can experience expert-led stargazing that blends science with Māori astronomy and stories of Matariki, deepening cultural connection to the night sky. With increasing awareness of upcoming celestial events such as the 2028 and 2030 solar eclipses visible in parts of Aotearoa, the region is well placed to attract travellers seeking meaningful, once-in-a-lifetime astronomical experiences.

TRENDS

GROWTH OF A NICHE YET RAPIDLY EXPANDING GLOBAL MARKET

Astrotourism is evolving from a niche into a substantive tourism segment. The global astrotourism market is projected to grow at an annual rate of around 10% through to 2030. The increasing number of travellers looking for "dark skies" experiences, combined with destination investment in night-time tourism products, is driving this growth. For travel and tourism operators, this means a rising opportunity to develop specialised packages and experiences around stargazing, astronomy-related activity and dark-sky preservation.

DARK-SKY CERTIFICATION SUPPORTING DESTINATION APPEAL

The designation of places as certified "dark-sky" reserves, parks or sanctuaries is playing a pivotal role in promoting astrotourism. Travellers seeking clear, unobstructed views of the night sky are basing their choices on destinations that have limited light-pollution, protected night-time environments and formal recognition through organisations such as the DarkSky International. Verification helps differentiate regions, supports immersive stargazing, and attracts visitors whose expectations align with quality night-sky viewing rather than standard sightseeing.

EVENT-DRIVEN DEMAND: ECLIPSES, METEOR SHOWERS, AURORA PEAKS

Major celestial events - such as solar eclipses- are creating notable spikes in astrotourism demand. Travellers increasingly plan trips around these rare opportunities to witness spectacular night-sky phenomena, often booking well in advance and paying premium rates for guided experiences and accommodation in prime viewing locations. In New Zealand, anticipation is already building for the July 2028 partial solar eclipse and the November 2030 total solar eclipse, both of which will be visible across parts of the South Island, including Central Otago and the Queenstown Lakes region. These events present significant opportunities for destinations to create eclipse-themed experiences, attract global visitors, and showcase their dark-sky credentials.

SUSTAINABILITY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

Astrotourism aligns with sustainable, community-led tourism. Dark-sky destinations often sit in rural areas where infrastructure needs are modest, and environmental impacts can be managed. Certification of dark-sky areas has been shown to boost local economies through visitor spend and jobs, while protecting night-time ecology. Responsible astrotourism now emphasises local participation, limits on visitor numbers, and safeguarding natural night skies, ensuring both environmental integrity and long-term appeal.

INTEGRATION INTO BROADER TOURISM PRODUCTS AND OFF-PEAK STRATEGIES

Astrotourism is increasingly being embedded into broader travel-products rather than considered in isolation. For example, dark-sky experiences may be paired with regional food and drink, luxury accommodation, wilderness packages, wildlife night-safaris or cultural storytelling. Importantly for destinations with traditional seasonal peaks, stargazing can be part of off-peak or shoulder-season strategy: nights are long, skies often clearer, and competition fewer. This helps spread visitation across the year and supports rural/regional economies seeking ways to boost tourism beyond the usual daylight attractions.

Why stargazing is the trend number one in the Booking.com travel predictions for 2025*, Visit Dark Skies. <https://www.visitdarks skies.com/blog/2025/2/19/why-do-62-of-travelers-say-they-plan-to-travel-for-stargazing-making-it-trend-no1-in-the-2025-booking-com-travel-predictions>

What is astrotourism and why it's trending", National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/what-is-astrotourism-and-why-is-it-trending>
Principles of Responsible Astrotourism", Dark Sky International. <https://darks ky.org/news/darks ky-internationals-principles-of-responsible-astrotourism/>

ABOUT

ABOUT THE RTOS

Destination Queenstown (DQ) and Lake Wānaka Tourism (LWT) are the Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOS) responsible for destination marketing, both domestically and internationally, and destination management, delivering selected initiatives from the Queenstown Lakes' destination management plan.

The RTOs' role is to market Queenstown and Wānaka as leading tourism destinations. This focuses on attracting high contributing visitors and supporting the delivery of the destination management plan to ensure we have a resilient and future focused industry, within a thriving community and environment. DQ and LWT communicate and connect with visitors to generate preference for our region and to create understanding of our place and our values. We help businesses to be resilient and prepared for the future through capability building and we engage with our community and show leadership in caring for our place.

The RTO strategy has evolved to support the goals of Travel to a Thriving Future, as well as continuing to support the visitor economy with values aligned marketing, product development and capability building in line with a regenerative tourism future.

ABOUT THE SEGMENTS

The RTOs use a segment-led approach to connect with visitors who are drawn to the region's key activities and experiences and who share similar interests and values. Marketing efforts focus on influencing high-intent audiences, encouraging them to experience Queenstown and Wānaka responsibly, and attracting values-aligned, high-contributing visitors. This approach supports sustainable, year-round demand and benefits a broad range of local businesses.

The segment-led strategy is especially important in the New Zealand and Australian markets, where segments help position and strengthen the destination brands, driving sustainable demand and attracting the right visitors.

SEGMENTS

- Adrenaline
- Biking
- Hiking / walking
- Skiing
- Golf
- Food and drink
- Arts, culture and heritage
- Stargazing