

ld.

LIZZIE  
DAVID  
SON

CONVERSION COPY  
AND COACHING

# Queenstown Weddings

Report on research & interviews

May 2020

## Contents

Queenstown Weddings.....	1
Report on research & interviews.....	1
May 2020 .....	1
Insights from interviews .....	3
The wedding market in Queenstown .....	3
Lead time (pre-Covid) .....	3
Target markets.....	4
General observations.....	4
International couples   Aged 25-35.....	4
Domestic couples   Aged 25-35.....	4
Parents of domestic couples   Aged 50-60.....	4
Why Queenstown? .....	5
Questions from couples .....	6
General queries .....	6
More specific queries for venues and suppliers .....	6
Barriers to marrying in Queenstown.....	7
Couples are nervous about .....	7
Couples are excited about .....	7
Feedback from couples .....	8
Where the Convention Bureau can add most value .....	8
Marketing recommendations from local wedding experts .....	9
SEO .....	9
Expand social strategy to include Instagram .....	9
Wedding giveaways.....	9
Wedding fairs .....	9
Queenstown wedding expo .....	9
Research into destination wedding competitors .....	10
Domestic destination wedding competitors.....	10
International destination wedding competitors .....	10
Best websites / landing pages.....	10
Best ideas from other sites .....	11

## Insights from interviews

### The wedding market in Queenstown

Wedding parties and their guests are high-value spenders. A wedding is a one in a lifetime experience. They don't just spend on the wedding, but on accommodation, activities, restaurants, pre- and post-wedding events. They tend to stay for between three days to a week.

Weddings also create repeat visits:

- Planning trips
- Anniversary trips

And they serve to introduce new visitors to Queenstown, who may then return.

When the wedding market bounces back it will help Queenstown as a destination.

In 2019 there were 14,000 weddings in Queenstown. That's the Association's best guess based on their members' records. They've struggled to get decent data from Births deaths and marriages. Perhaps this is something DQ could help with?

Weddings in Queenstown are predominantly international visitors:

- 3-5% local couples (within 1 hours drive)
- 15-20% domestic couples
- 75-80% international couples (70-80% Australia, so if Trans-Tasman bubble opens, we're booming back real quick.)

For at least the next year Queenstown will probably see smaller weddings as people are more budget conscious. However, people will always want to get married, they'll always want their wedding to be special, and they'll always be willing to spend money. This works in Queenstown's favour.

Sarah predicts, 2021 will be the busiest wedding year Queenstown has ever seen. 200 + weddings have been postponed over the last two months. These are people invested in coming here for an experience. It's more than a holiday. They're not going to cancel. That's money in the bank, so let's build on that.

### Lead time (pre-Covid)

12-24-month lead time for weddings for 20 + people.

3-6-months for more intimate elopement style weddings.

Sarah predicts a post-Covid flurry of smaller weddings, followed by larger weddings starting again in 2021.

## Target markets

### General observations

People planning a destination wedding are more adventurous and individualistic. They're also more laid back (trusting) and tend to go with the flow.

People often chose destination weddings to limit numbers.

### International couples | Aged 25-35

Predominantly from Australia, from the main East Coast cities.

They're more likely to use a local wedding planner because they need support on the ground. They're planning from afar and they're trusting in the wedding professionals in Queenstown to help make decisions.

International couples usually come for a week.

Instagram is a powerful channel for reaching this market.

### Domestic couples | Aged 25-35

Kiwis are more DIY. Very few use wedding planners, and if they do, the planner is probably a friend of the couple. They're also more budget orientated.

Many domestic couples choose Queenstown because of a sentimental connection.

They've usually been here before, so they know the place, and most (90%) come down for a planning visit.

Queenstown also gets quite a few big domestic weddings, 80 + guests. These tend to be wealthy farmers or people from Auckland who want that real wow factor experience for their guests.

Domestic couples are more likely to come for a long weekend, 3-4 days.

### Parents of domestic couples | Aged 50-60

Domestic couples are influenced by their parents if they are funding the wedding.

Parents may oppose a destination wedding because of cost and because not all family members can attend.

Parents like destination weddings because they get the family together for longer. People tend to make a holiday of it and stick around for three days to a week.

Parents are looking for ease and the assurance they'll get exactly what they see in the pictures on social media.

## Why Queenstown?

- Often people have fond memory surrounding Queenstown. They may have taken their first holiday here as a couple. Or they got engaged here. Or they had family holidays here as a child. There's often a bit of nostalgia in their choice. They want to share their attachment and show their family and friends the place.
- The landscape. There's nowhere else like it. It exceeds expectations, and there's that real wow factor for guests from the moment they step off the plane.
- The seasonality of Queenstown. It's a year-round wedding destination. Some people like the winter wedding vibe. You can have summer weddings anywhere, but you can't get that snowy Alpine feeling anywhere. Others are into the colours of autumn or the feelings of spring.
- Queenstown's a great place for a destination wedding. There's so much to do pre and post the wedding. Couples can make a real family holiday out of it. It works for relaxers and adventurers. You can chill and stroll by the lake, head off for adventures, or go on a wine tour. Plus, it's the jumping off point to access lots of other areas like Milford Sound.
- Your wedding photos will be incredible. Breath-taking scenery, amazing backdrops, views of lake and mountains.
- The professionalism and the passion of the suppliers here. There's an amazing array of wedding vendors, venues, photographers, celebrants, and bands. You're in really good hands here.
- It's about what the couple want. It feels like them and it suits their personality. Perfect for adventurous people, who embark on life's biggest adventure together in the home of adventure. People come to Queenstown because they're nature lovers, It's nature's cathedral.
- International airport for international guests. Proximity of airport to town.
- We're accepting and open. We see a lot of same-sex weddings and signed the pride pledge.

## Questions from couples

Questions vary depending on a person's stage of awareness. You never know what stage of awareness someone is at when they contact you first.

- Some may be shopping for the right destination.
- Some may have decided on Queenstown but need everything else.
- Some may have already done some research.
- Some might be using a wedding planner.
- Some may have already booked a celebrant or have chosen a photographer they love.

The universal factor is that everyone is shopping around.

## General queries

1. When is the best time of year to get married in Queenstown? We say it's always a good time to get married here, as every season is beautiful.
2. What are the best venues? This is a real issue on the DQ site as the first venue listed is an Arrowtown garage that we'd never use for a wedding. The fact that the site's focus has been more on corporate events, comes through in the venues listed. So DQ either need to send people to the association site for better quality content or become more inclusive of smaller businesses / try to beef up their wedding listings.
3. How much does it cost? We say options range from \$1,000 to stand by the lake with a celebrant, up to half a million. The international market tends to find Queenstown more affordable, because they may be comparing our prices to Australian prices (or further afield). It isn't so affordable for the domestic market as our overheads here are higher, so need to focus on the value of the experience.
4. Where should we stay? Where can our guests stay? Is there accommodation nearby? Group accommodation is a pain point.
5. Pre and post event locations.
6. Activities. What can we do with our guests while we're here?
7. Transport options.
8. How do we get married here? The legalities. The administrative side of things.

## More specific queries for venues and suppliers

1. Availability.
2. How long can we spend at the venue?
3. Price related queries about specifics like catering or BYO.

"I get asked, is that OK? Is that normal. It's funny what people want reassurance about. I always say there's no right and wrong to planning weddings, we'll do whatever you want. It's your day."

## Barriers to marrying in Queenstown

- The biggest barrier is pressure from friends and family to have a big wedding at home. Sometimes family members can't travel because of age or health.
- Budget. Travel and accommodation all add up. But we can overcome this barrier for most people given the value of the experience they get.
- Weather. Especially in Auckland, there's a perception that it's always freezing in Queenstown. It's been well marketed domestically as a ski destination, so that affects perception. International couples are sometimes concerned that weather will stop flights getting in.
- Travel restrictions and uncertainty around Covid. Do content to address this. How to plan a wedding during a pandemic. How to organise a wedding in Queenstown in level 2. Educate people to grow their confidence.

## Couples are nervous about

- The weather. Will it be sunny? What's Plan B. There's always a Plan B in Queenstown, and we've got great Plan B options. We don't know what the weather will be like because it's an island and a mountainous region. Also help people to be prepared for four seasons in one day. Explain to people what a mountain environment is like. Be prepared for hot sun during the day and cooler temperatures at night.
- Things not being done properly. Planning from afar you don't feel like you have full control. It can be nerve wracking, it takes a lot of trust. But that's where Queenstown has a great reputation and great testimonials. That's what people get when they come here, an amazing wedding.
- Everyone has butterflies about getting married. Having faith that things will go well helps.

## Couples are excited about

When you get married in Queenstown you get double the excitement and anticipation. They're about to marry someone they love; visit somewhere they're excited about and have a holiday in a cool place.

- Getting family and friends together and having a holiday together. That's where the pre and post events come in.
- Sharing Queenstown with friends and family if there's a personal connection.
- We can do so much here.
- Everyone is in a good mood because we're here.
- We know our guests will have fun. Everything is looked after.
- Excited about the photos and the video because it's such a glamorous photogenic destination.

## Feedback from couples

- Their guests loved it. Every single guest said it was the best wedding they've ever been to. Blown away by Queenstown as a destination.
- Rewarding to introduce people to this amazing place. It's a place that lots of people will return to. Couples come back for their anniversary trips. It creates a special place for them. We always say that the best thing about getting married in Queenstown is that you can come back every anniversary.
- Queenstown is a star. It's a destination you see in lots of photos and marketing, but then you get there it exceeds expectations. People get to Queenstown and go woah! Nothing compares to standing on the top of the Remarkables and looking down on the lake. Video can help with this, but there's no substitute for seeing it for yourself.
- Confident in suppliers and venues. World class wedding experience. Limited in a few areas but when it comes to wedding, hard to match anywhere in the world. It was easier than we thought. We got the wedding we were wanting without the stress. The food and service were fantastic. All the vendors worked together so well.
- Photos are hard to beat, they're incredible. People want bragging rights. Social media is driving growth of weddings in Queenstown. People influence their friends.

## Where the Convention Bureau can add most value

Everyone interviewed would like to see the wedding section of the DQ site laid out in a more useful, readable way. They're keen to leverage DQ's reach and reputation and use DQ site as a funnel to feed leads to local wedding businesses.

Makes no sense for the two sites to double up and compete. They should complement each other. The Association website is good for planning the wedding day as it's a comprehensive directory. DQ site can really help with the more general questions and with planning pre and post wedding activities.

- Why Queenstown's such an epic wedding destination
- The seasons and what they offer
- Accommodation (especially group)
- Activities
- Transport
- Places to hold pre- and post-wedding events
- Places to eat and drink
- How you get married here (legalities and logistics)
- Different types of weddings:
  - Elopements
  - Same sex weddings (pride pledge).
  - Larger weddings
  - Non-traditional weddings
  - Sustainable weddings
- Introduce the experts

## Marketing recommendations from local wedding experts

### SEO

Have an SEO strategy and use the DQ wedding blog to attract organic search for weddings in Queenstown.

### Expand social strategy to include Instagram

Instagram sells the dream. Since Andy upped Insta presence he gets more international enquiries. The more he puts on Insta the more international enquiries he gets. Every time he puts on Insta, he gets about 10 enquiries. They have about 60 enquiries a month and an 18% conversion rate.

Kylie says Insta is her biggest source of leads. It's down to great imagery. It's the biggest, cheapest, and easiest thing to do.

### Wedding giveaways

Association has done giveaways. These get good reach, engagement, and PR.

- Doing NZ wedding giveaway for Kiwis now. Launched Tuesday 12 May. Have had 20 entries already, couples saying why they want to get married in Queenstown.
- Did same sex wedding giveaway for Pride two years back to celebrate same sex weddings. Same sex market is a bit tricky now. Lots of same sex couples came from overseas as NZ was one of the first places you could get married, but now that's changing. But our same sex wedding offering is a strong message to get out through DQ.

The Association has done sponsored blogs and sponsored social content with channels like Hello May and Green Wedding Shoes. This is something Sarah would love to see DQ do more of.

### Wedding fairs

Andy has done some wedding fairs. But people at wedding fairs tend to have already chosen venue and are there looking for other things. But sometimes we get business from the friends of the brides. He did some research around wedding fairs and thinks doing the fairs in bigger cities as a destination could be a winner.

### Queenstown wedding expo

The association hasn't done an expo in Queenstown. Maybe a long weekend would work for this, as people are more likely to come to Queenstown for these. Maybe a fair on an Australian public holiday to target Aussies.

## Research into destination wedding competitors

I've reviewed the digital presence of several national and international wedding destinations. I've considered the wedding section of the official Destination Marketing Organisation's site and looked for a site established by a local wedding association.

### Domestic destination wedding locations

Based on the recommendations of your local wedding experts, I reviewed:

- Waiheke
- Bay of Islands
- Coromandel
- Ohakune
- Raglan
- Taupo
- Marlborough Sounds

No one is killing it with their digital wedding presence. [Taupo do a solid job](#). The [Waiheke](#) and [Raglan](#) wedding associations have appealing sites, but they're little more than directories, although Waiheke have an attractive Real Weddings section, which gives detailed inspiration.

### International destination wedding locations

As most of your international weddings come from Australia, I've focused on Australian wedding destinations. Your other major competitors for the Australian and New Zealand destination wedding market is probably the Pacific Islands. I've also reviewed a few US wedding destination sites.

No one destination is doing an exemplary job of promoting their wedding offering to couples. Aspen is the most innovative. Hawaii, Fiji and the Cook islands all offer useful information in a digestible, visually inspiring way. The wedding association sites tend to be more visually inspiring and offer more comprehensive directories however they don't provide big picture information.

### Best websites / landing pages

<https://www.peninsulaweddings.com.au/>

<https://www.weddingswhitsundays.com/>

<https://www.fiji.travel/en-nz/experience/weddings>

<https://cookislands.travel/experiences/weddings>

<https://www.aspenchamber.org/groups/weddings>

<https://www.visitjamaica.com/weddings-and-honeymoons/>

## Best ideas from other sites

- Dividing information into wedding resources and destination experience. Fiji and Jamaica do a good job on this.
- 360-degree tours of scenic locales. Aspen do this. Brilliant idea for Queenstown.
- Real wedding blog posts featuring local suppliers. (wedding day team)
- Expert guide blog posts answering couples' questions and showcasing local suppliers.
- Lead magnet. Download and post. Mornington Peninsula directory a great idea.
- Promoting place as honeymoon destination as well as wedding locale.
- Introducing couples to their local wedding planner, Aspen do this. Probably wouldn't work for Queenstown, but great way to introduce personal service from the start.
- Incentive to take a planning visit. Aspen do this with flight reimbursement.
- Queenstown wedding expo as an off-season draw to visit. Mornington Peninsula Wedding expo, and Whitsundays wedding and honeymoon expo both examples of this.