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# THE GUIDE

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SOAKING IT UP Tub time at the Sofitel Queenstown's Le Spa.

## ROYAL WELCOME

Queenstown may be renowned for its adrenalin-charged thrills—skiing, bungee jumping, whitewater rafting, jet-boating—but that’s just the start of its allure. BY JUDY CHAPMAN

### SURROUNDED BY THE SNOWCAPPED

Remarkables Range and set beside the shimmering waters of Lake Wakatipu, the picturesque resort town of Queenstown has long been New Zealand’s top tourist destination. Attracting a good mix of nature lovers, adrenalin junkies, and gourmands, the South Island community of only 23,000 residents saw well over three million visitors flock to its shores in 2007—and it’s easy to see why. With stylish hotels, great produce-driven restaurants, and plenty of après-ski diversions, Queenstown offers a heady mix of adventure and indulgence.

**WHERE TO STAY** Dating back to Queenstown’s gold rush in the mid-1800s, the historic lakefront **Eichardt’s Private Hotel** (Marine Parade; 64-3/441-0450; [eichardtshotel.co.nz](http://eichardtshotel.co.nz); doubles from US\$1,020) features five opulent suites with heated floors, ornate fireplaces, and comfy sofas. Take advantage of cocktail hour in the swish House Bar, well known for its tasty tapas and top-notch wine list.

The **Sofitel Queenstown Hotel & Spa** (8 Duke St.; 64-3/450-0045; [sofitel.com](http://sofitel.com); doubles from US\$297) is the only international five-star property in town; suites comes with double spa baths, private balconies, and spectacular mountain and lake views. Après-ski, relax at Le Spa or partake in a “wine flight”: tastings featuring labels from New Zealand’s finest vineyards.

The recently opened **Queenstown Park Hotel** (21 Robins Rd.; 64-3/441-8441; [queenstownparkhotel.co.nz](http://queenstownparkhotel.co.nz); doubles from US\$297) is a welcome addition to town.



COLD MOUNTAIN  
Clockwise from left: Views of Lake Wakatipu from Skyline Gondola Restaurant; getting cozy outside The Cow; casually clad staff serve hearty breakfasts at Joe’s Garage.



Spacious rooms feature Punga & Smith furniture, designer chandeliers, and huge beds facing floor-to-ceiling windows. Come dusk, guests congregate for complimentary canapés and local wines, or browse the hotel’s gourmet supermarket.

Another newcomer, **Commonage Villas** (15 Kerry Dr., Queenstown Hill; 63-3/442-8000; [commonagevillas.com](http://commonagevillas.com); doubles



from US\$713) is perched halfway up Queenstown Hill. Stylish villas outfitted with open-plan kitchens command sweeping panoramas of Lake Wakatipu.

**WHERE TO EAT** For classic decor and charming service, head to **The Bunker** (Cow Lane; 64-3/441-8030). The menu never fails to disappoint with its hearty winter favorites, including rabbit risotto and roasted lamb with garlic puree. The upstairs cocktail lounge is a great spot to get cozy with a vintage wine

around the open log fire.

**Wai Waterfront Restaurant** (Steamer Wharf; 64-3/442-5969) is the best place in town to indulge in fresh oysters. Slurp down a dozen with lemon and cracked pepper, or walk on the wild side with tempura oysters served with lemon caviar and a dollop of ginger-and-lime sorbet.

Fancy roasted scallops with crispy garlic and smoked wild venison with a vanilla-scented panna cotta as the finale? The intimate, 24-seat **Inspire Restaurant** (Church Lane; 64-3/441-0004) at the sleek Spire Hotel serves up some of the city’s most inventive food, with a 10-course degustation menu that celebrates the best of local ingredients.

Leave your snowboard in the corner at **Joe’s Garage** (104 Searle Lane; 64-3/442-5282), a casual diner hidden away in a back alley. Open early, Joe’s dishes up affordable, generously portioned breakfasts. Try one of the egg creations—they’re free range and full of flavor. Another spot with a loyal following is the **The Cow** (Cow Lane; 64-3/442-8588). Set in an old stone barn, the cozy eatery bustles in winter, when ravenous patrons gather around the open fire devouring pizzas topped with homemade Bolognese.

For a late-night carb hit, head to **Ferburger** (42 Shotover St.; 64-3/441-1232), although be prepared to wait for a seat at the communal tables. The beer-battered



GREEN WITH ENVY Clockwise from right: Patagonia Chocolates tempts with homemade sweets; alfresco dining in Queenstown Mall; a room at the Queenstown Park Hotel.

cod burger and the Bombay chicken burger should not be missed (gluten-free and vegetarian options are also available).

**AFTER DARK** Start the night at **Bardeaux** (Eureka Arcade; 64-3/442-8284), a sumptuous cocktail bar with plush leather sofas and a stone fireplace. The wine list offers a good selection of local Pinots; Gluhwein is a specialty in winter. For something a bit more sophisticated, head to the Manhattan-style Champagne and cocktail lounge at the Spire Hotel’s **Inspire Bar** (Church Lane; 64-3/441-0004).

Surrounding Queenstown are several award-winning wineries that are renowned for producing some of the best Pinots in the world. **Amisfield Winery & Bistro** (10 Lake Hayes Rd.; 64-3/442-0556) offers an unbeatable combination of fresh sparkling wines and organic cuisine. If you can’t make it to one of the wineries, get an overview of local Central Otago varietals at **Wine Tastes** (14 Beach St.; 64-3/409-2226), where a self-serve system allows you to dispense tastes, half, and full glasses. There are more than 80 wines on tap, and a host is on hand to explain the differences among them.

**WHERE TO SHOP** Bypass the big brand names and explore New Zealand’s homegrown creative talents. The clothing in **Untouched World** (1 Eichardt’s Building, The Mall; 64-3/442-4992) is made from organic cotton and denim, and the soaps are all homemade. Better still, the store donates a percentage of its



profits to local community projects.

Contemporary New Zealand and Maori artwork can be purchased or perused at **Toi O Tahuna** gallery (Church Lane; 64-3/409-0787). Aaron Kereopa’s wild collection of hand-painted surfboards is particularly impressive. And for a sweet ending to your shopping expedition, don’t miss **Patagonia Chocolates** (50 Beach St.; 64-3/442-9066), where the chocolates are made by hand on marble slabs. The hot chocolate infused with chili, ginger, and lavender is sinful.

**WHERE TO SPA** After a day of adventure, soothe your aching limbs with a rub down at the Sofitel’s **Le Spa** (8 Duke St.; 64-3/450-0048), where one can self-apply body muds inside a steamy hammam or soak away muscle tension in the wooden tub. The Mirimiri treatment should not be missed. Performed by therapist Moetahi Walker, the traditional Maori massage has an almost spiritual appeal.

For more water therapy, hide away inside a warm Epsom salt float tank at **Body Sanctum** (Level 1, 10 Athol St.; 64-3/442-4336), a day spa with well-trained masseuses and reasonably priced therapies. Alternatively, **Onsen Hot Pools** (Arthur’s Point; 64-3/442-5707), situated a few minutes out of town, offers open-air, spring-fed thermal pools in a lush alpine setting above the Shotover River. ©