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Places to Go: Wanaka

Contributed by Ruth Presland

IF YOU ARE thinking about dusting off your faithful plane for a South Island Summer holiday how about calling into Wanaka for a couple of nights? Wanaka is often thought about during the Easter period when the Warbirds airshow draw a huge crowd. It is also popular during the Summer when many kiwi pilots decide to take their family and friends to a good old fashioned aerodrome to experience airfields as they used to be.

NZWF is reachable in one day during the Summer from any part of NZ, as long as you set off early and plan your trip well. Weather is the all important and your arrival route will either be West coast or East coast depending on what the anti-cyclones are doing. If it is very settled then sometimes flying down the Southern Alps is the clearest path, which avoids the anti-cyclonic clag that builds up during settled periods on the west and east coasts. If in doubt pick up the phone and call us on 03 443 4005, as myself or Wayne can give you an actual weather update and an idea of conditions en-route.

Once you arrive there is free parking of your plane opposite the BP pumps. Hangarage is very limited so please bring your pickets and make sure you tie your plane securely (stake type pickets are best) and lock controls as strong winds can pick up quite suddenly. Be sure to call into the U-FLY office inside the main airport gates and say Giddyay.

If you have a party of people and would like to save a few dollars, a reasonably priced minivan will take you to and from the airport. For friendly service contact Mark on 0800 234 000 or look up Ridgeline Adventures when you arrive.

While you are waiting, be sure to check out the Wanaka airport cafe. For years there was no cafe here at Wanaka and Sue and her team have filled that gap tremendously. The food is an absolute treat and reasonably priced. Opening hours are from 8am to 4pm.

There are many places to stay at Wanaka and for the budget conscious there is a YHA backpacker called the Purple Cow, phone 03 443 1880. One street back there is a smaller backpacker called Holly's, owned by a young couple who will often have a bed available when other places are full.

If hotel accommodation is more your thing then Edgewater is highly recommend. This popular hotel is situated right on the western lake front looking out over Roy's Bay and has a stunning

restaurant and bar offering delicious meals. Visit www.edgewater.co.nz and to book phone 03 443 0011. There is so much to see and do in Wanaka. For those of you who are keen to explore you can hire a kayak or mountain bike from the downtown Lake Front. There are quite a few biking

and walking tracks and highly recommended is the one that joins Lake Hawea Township to Wanaka Township which can be done in just a couple of hours or perhaps three. For the keen fishermen there is a brand new track to Glendhu bay and one that follows the Clutha River on the Southern side past Albert Town. Take a rod and make sure you have at least a day fishing license. There are tasty salmon, brown and rainbow trout in lakes Wanaka and Hawea.

If you are keen to explore Mount Aspiring National Park I would suggest going on a jet boat trip with Wanaka River Journeys. They have a 10am and 1pm trip and it is something that everyone in your family will love. Have a look at www.wanakariverjourneys.co.nz and contact Sue on 03 443 4416. If you are relatively new to the mountains of the south and you want to go for an exploration flight into the Southern Alps area call Mountain Flying New Zealand on 03 443 4005.

Wanaka truly comes alive during the Summer months. The stunning scenery combined with the heat (late 20's to early 30's - bring sunscreen) sees Wanaka turn into a hive of activity with a number of fun-

filled events. From December 31st to January 31st Wanaka will be hosting 'Summerdaze' - a festival of recreational, sporting, arts and cultural events. The events reflect the region's diverse and vibrant community and offer something for everyone; including farmer's markets, kite-making workshops, a teddy bear's picnic, pool parties and an amazing New Years fireworks celebration. January 2nd will see the traditional Wanaka Rodeo in full swing at the Wanaka Rodeo Club grounds. No matter when you arrive at Wanaka there is bound to be something on. So come and visit our fantastic little airport, make yourself known to the locals and expect to leave totally relaxed and refreshed.

LASTLY, a correction to my previous article. There is NO landing fee payable for visiting light aircraft at Hastings Aerodrome. My apologies for any confusion this may have caused.



Clockwise from top: 1: Lake Wanaka and Township, 2: Airport entrance, 3: Picnic lunch at Edgewater Hotel, 4: On short finals, 5: Airport cafe.