

Photo Itinerary...

Queenstown, New Zealand

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Queenstown, the adventure capitol of the world, is the main town in the Southern Lakes region of New Zealand. It is the home of bungy jumping, the Shotover river jetboats and 120 other adrenaline pumping activities.

Queenstown is also the home of some of the world's finest scenery. The mountainous terrain has many lakes and the valleys are high altitude desert country. The terrain is dissected by snow fed rivers and canyons. It has easy accessible bush and fiords equal in grandeur to Norway's.

A nature photographer could spend a lifetime photographing this area and never run out of original material. The region is full of history and home of the world's richest gold country in the Arrow river area. The remains of the houses where the miners lived in this harsh climate have to be seen to be believed. They are nothing more than a room made of stacked schist with a tin roof.



What makes this place more special than most is its southern latitude. It is fast becoming a favourite destination for film makers because of the special light which is not found further north. There is a wonderful warm quality to the morning and evening light. In summer photographers are spoiled by warm golden light and a long twilight, with it not getting dark until 10p.m. In the winter, its purples and mauves which paint the landscape in the early mornings and evenings are magnificent.

The district has photo opportunities everywhere and many can be accessed from the car. Even the back country is easily accessible for the more adventurous.



Spring is dominated by wildflowers in the valleys. Colourful introduced lupins abound along roadsides putting on a spectacular display that no photographer can pass without shooting a frame or two. Around the many lake edges and forest floors, the native plants put on a terrific display. Many of the native plants are tiny and the area is treasured by macro photographers.

Summers are warm and offer wonderful opportunities to the photographer. The grasses of the valleys become dry and turn all shades of yellow and gold giving a warmth all on their own to the scene. The mountain lakes are at their best for photographing through this season. Mornings and evenings are still and the lakes show off the Swiss-like mountains with mirror reflections.

The New Zealand bush is mainly evergreen but many introduced trees have been planted by the early settlers, which put on a grand display of autumn colours. Many of these deciduous trees are along the lakes edges and road sides. Again there are great opportunities for photos with the lakes reflecting back the glorious reds and golds.

Winters are picturesque with snow capped mountains accompanied by clear days. The area is dry and has very few rainy days, but

temperatures can be cool. The winter days stay clear allowing the photographer to work through much more of the middle of the day as long as care is taken controlling the shadows.

No where else is there so many opportunities for the outdoor photographer in such a confined area. There is no one season better than others. It truly is a photographer's paradise and well worth a visit.

As it is a tourist town, there is accommodation to suit all budgets and facilities to ensure you have a wonderful stay. Driving is done on the left hand side of the road but traffic is light and drivers should have no trouble adjusting. The New Zealand dollar is valued at about half the American dollar making it a very inexpensive place to visit.

Editor's Note - Alan Kerr runs photography tours in the region. He can be contacted at southernlightsphotography@xtra.co.nz.

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