



SET DESIGN

Visit the New Zealand Filming Locations of *Pete's Dragon*

New Zealand provides the spectacular backdrops for the new Disney movie

TEXT BY [ELIZABETH STAMP](#) · Posted August 10, 2016



Pete's Dragon, the beloved 1977 movie about an orphaned boy and his magical best friend, has been revived for a new generation. The remake, which opens in theaters Friday, was helmed by director David Lowery and stars Bryce Dallas Howard, [Robert Redford](#), and Oakes Fegley as Pete. While the original was set in New England and filmed in California, the 2016 version takes place in the fictional Pacific Northwest logging town of Millhaven, home of woodcarver Mr. Meacham (Redford), known for his tall tales about a dragon living in the nearby woods, and his daughter, Grace (Howard), a forest ranger who discovers Pete. When Pete describes his companion Elliot, a green dragon that sounds like the one from her father's stories, Grace becomes determined to find the truth.

Shooting took place in [New Zealand](#), where the redwood forests and mountains provided the perfect backdrop for Elliot's flights. Production designer Jade Healy turned the small town of Tapanui (population: 900) on the country's South Island into Millhaven. Many of the local businesses were transformed, and the crew also utilized the nearby Blue Mountain Lumber Mill.

For scenes in the forest, the production used several locations on the North Island. The Rotorua Redwood Forest became Pete and Elliot's home and provided an ideal match for the Pacific Northwest.



Photo: Disney Studios

Mount Victoria, near Wellington, was also used for forest scenes (and was previously seen in the Lord of the Rings films). The location is close to Wellington's Stone Street Studios, where production began, and Weta Digital, the visual effects company founded by filmmakers Peter Jackson and Richard Taylor that brought Elliot to life.



Photo: Rob Suisted

Queenstown's mountainous landscape was captured both on the ground and from above. Aerial footage taken by helicopter was used to depict Elliot's flight.



Photo: Disney Studios

The crew also filmed above Lake Wakatipu in Queenstown.

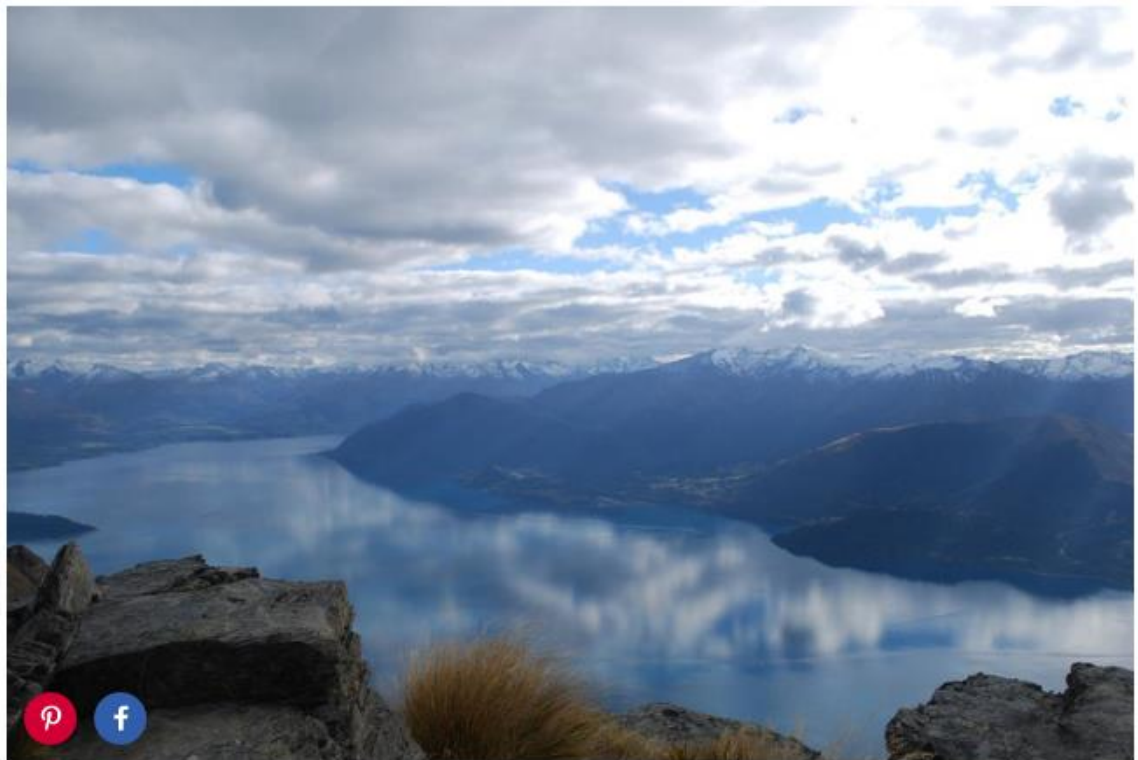


Photo: Tourism New Zealand