

LIVING > TRAVEL

The New Zealand Town Where Oprah Filmed *A Wrinkle in Time* Should Be Next on Your Travel Wish List



JANUARY 10, 2018 5:47 PM
by TODD PLUMMER



Photo: Courtesy of Lake Wanaka Tourism



There's a reason so many movies and shows film in the south part of New Zealand's South Island. Its beautiful scenery is unlike anywhere else on earth, making it the ideal backdrop for everything from *Lord of the Rings*, to *Avatar*,

The Piano, and—coming in March—*A Wrinkle in Time*, directed by Ava DuVernay and starring Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon, and Mindy Kaling. Adapted from Madeleine l’Engle’s beloved children’s novel, the story is a science-fantasy epic that traverses time and space and, you guessed it, some pretty epic scenery along the way. While most of the film was shot in Los Angeles, production did bring a couple of its boldface names to New Zealand for outdoor filming.

A Wrinkle in Time happened to set up shop in Wanaka, a small town that is coincidentally a travel hot spot and must-visit for anyone with their eye on New Zealand. So, if there wasn’t reason enough to visit Wanaka before, you should definitely add it to your bucket list now—the A-list cast of *A Wrinkle in Time* has already fallen in love with this town, so it’s a matter of time before word starts to spread.



Photo: Courtesy of Lake Wanaka Tourism




Most travelers' journeys to the South Island begin and end at Queenstown, the county's hub of adventure tourism. Hikes, boat excursions, bungee jumps, heli-tours, mountain climbs—you name it, there's an outfitter based in Queenstown that offers it. But the Queenstown of today is very different from the Queenstown of yesterday; what was once a sleepy little lakeside village has transformed into a tourist epicenter overflowing with bus tours and backpackers. While it's still an essential stop for any South Island visit, seasoned travelers might find the hustle and bustle of Queenstown a bit disappointing. Insiders know that the real heart of adventure tourism in New Zealand is, in fact, Wanaka. It's a little further out, just as scenic, and a whole lot more serene. Basically, it's everything that Queenstown should be. Plus, honestly—where Oprah, Reese, and Mindy go, don't you want to follow?

Getting There

Driving to Wanaka is half the fun. After landing at Queenstown airport, the drive west takes just about an hour. Take the Crown Range Road through the incredibly scenic Cardrona Valley, and you'll see what people mean when they call this the most beautiful place on earth. After passing the mountains, going down the valley and through the hills, the road brings you straight to the shores of Lake Wanaka, where its namesake town sits in the shadow of snow-capped crags and evergreen trees.



oprah 

Follow



 125k likes  2,054 comments

Around every corner yet another breath taking view. #ilovenewzealand

FEBRUARY 15, 2017



What to Do

It's all about the outdoors in Wanaka. Reese and Mindy kicked off filming with a helicopter tour of the region with [Alpine Helicopters](#). Local company [Wilkin River Jets](#) also offers a helicopter glacier hike experience that is superb. And if you've never tried your hand at via ferrata mountain climbing, this is the place to do it—[Wild Wire Wanaka](#) just completed the world's tallest waterfall-climbing course that includes a helicopter ride back to the base. (And, for J. R. R. Tolkien fans, the course is within sight of some mountain scenery from *The Hobbit*.)

If lower-key adventure is more your speed, there are plenty of hikes, kayak rides, and other excursions available from the town center. [Lake Wanaka's website](#) is filled with useful information.

Where to Eat and Drink

Make like Reese and start your morning with the almond milk cappuccinos at [Ritual Espresso Café](#)—then end your days with cocktails and dancing at [Gin & Raspberry](#).

Luckily for oenophiles, Wanaka sits in the middle of Central Otago, one of the country's better wine regions. The [Maude Wines Tasting Room](#) serves exceptional snacks and local wines. Its Pinot Noirs, rosés, and Pinot Gris are a delight. And just outside of town is the [Cardrona Distillery](#), a two-year-old endeavor creating serious buzz in the global spirits world for its totally sustainable gins, liqueurs, and whiskeys.

The food in Wanaka is no less exceptional than in the rest of New Zealand—regardless of where you eat, there is an emphasis on fresh, seasonal produce, and ethical, sustainable ingredients. You won't have a bad meal in Wanaka, and

apparently neither did the *AWIT* ladies. Specifically, they were spotted at Francesca's Italian Kitchen, Big Fig, and Kika.



Where to Stay

There are a couple of hotels in town, but to really experience Wanaka as Oprah, Reese, and Mindy did, rent out one of the homes operated by Release Wanaka, a luxury holiday home agency with dozens of exceptional properties. While the company is mum on which house they stayed in, it's not difficult to imagine Oprah booking this fabulous modern home with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the lake. Wanaka is the kind of place that puts the “fantasy” in fantastic—so you'll want to spend your wrinkle in time in accommodation as special as the setting.