

Voyager

2021 MEDIA AWARDS

WEBSITE OF THE YEAR

APP OF THE YEAR

ADVERTISEMENT

Trade Forex CFDs With a Global Leader.

IC Markets

Trade Now

CFD Trading carries high risks to your capital. General advice only. Please read the PDS on our website: [icmarkets.com/au](#). International Capital Markets Pty Ltd. AFSL 335592

More from NZ Herald



5 ways to explore a South Island high-country station

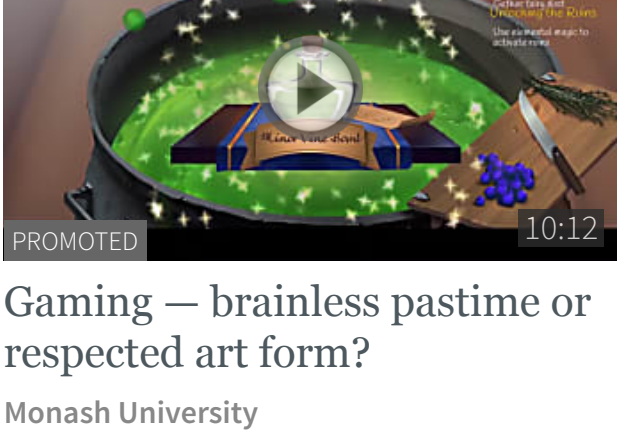


A guide to Wellington's literary highlights



Lebanese army offer helicopter joy rides, moonlighting as tour guides

Promoted Content



Gaming – brainless pastime or respected art form?

Monash University

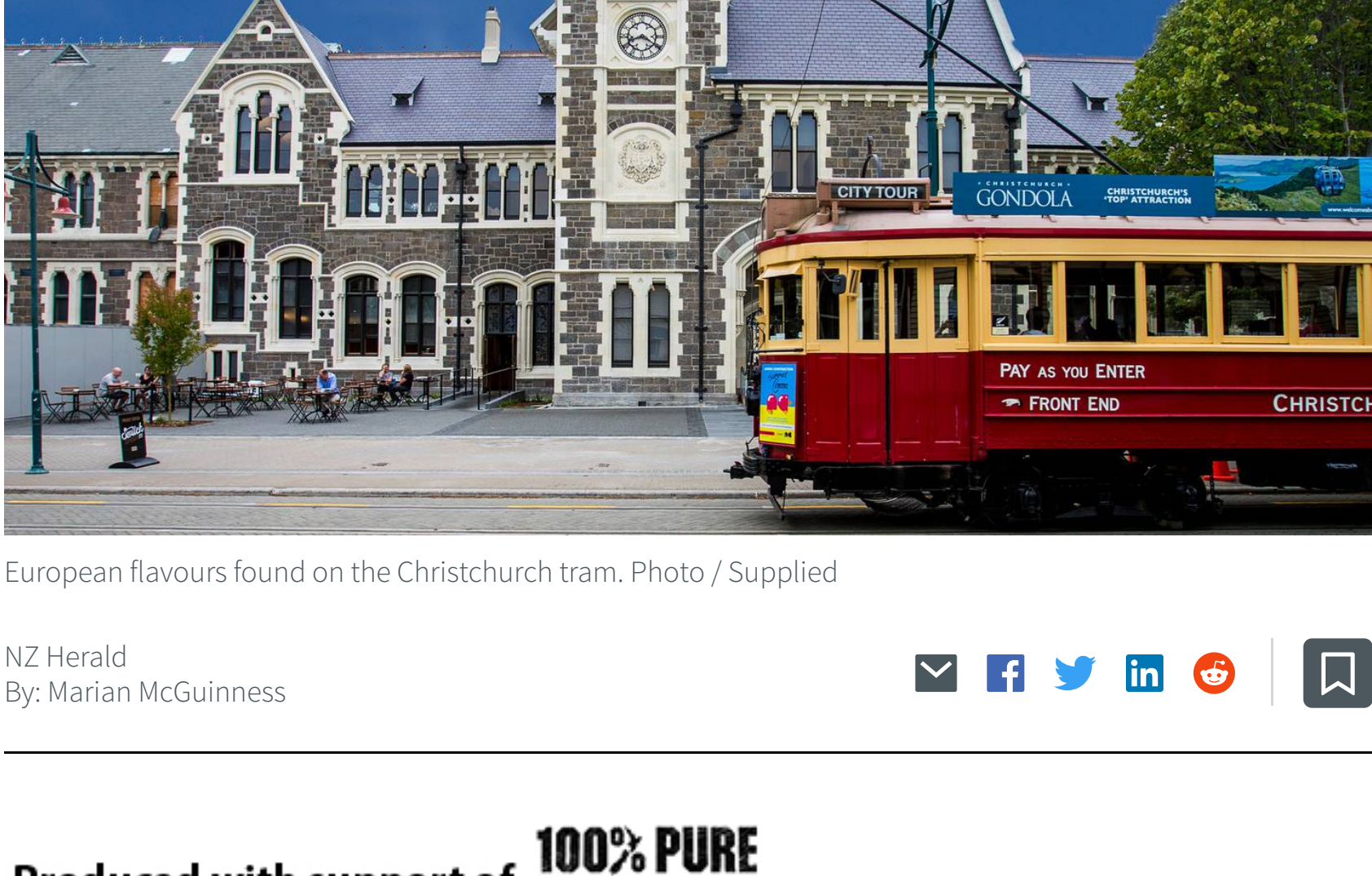
Recommended by Outbrain

TRAVEL

# Best European travel in New Zealand: Little Üropi in Te Waipounamu

26 Nov, 2020 04:13 AM

8 minutes to read



European flavours found on the Christchurch tram. Photo / Supplied

NZ Herald

By: Marian McGuinness



Produced with support of

100% PURE

NEW ZEALAND

newzealand.com

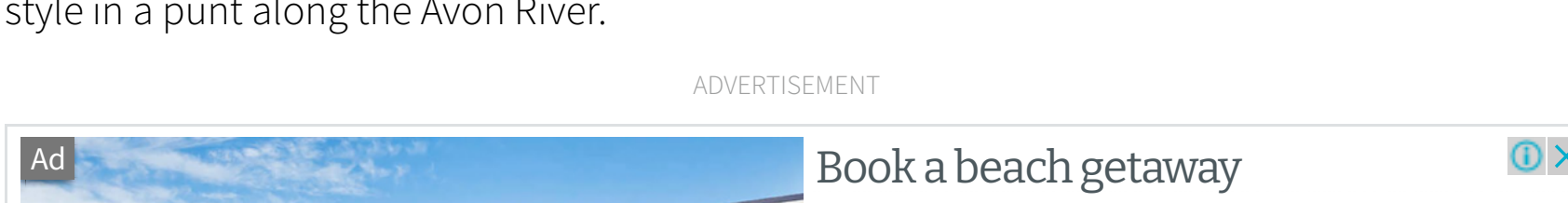
The best of Europe is naturally better in our own South Island, writes *Marian McGuinness*

Forget passports, currency exchanges and downloading foreign language apps. If Europe's splendours are beckoning, there's no need to leave the country. France's vineyards, Slovakia's thermal spas, Iceland's glaciers, Italy's lakes and Norway's fjords are a drive away. Add a sprinkle of Peter Jackson's Middle Earth magic and experience all the above in one South Island loop. It's Europe on a South Island plate.

My 12-day driving odyssey begins in Christchurch, a city that has been to the brink after the devastating events of 2011. Today, it's a city of resilience and artistic reinvention symbolised by the wood and glass Cardboard Cathedral.

## History and innovation in Christchurch

Christchurch celebrates its quintessential English origins with its heritage buildings and meandering beauty of the Botanic Gardens, where you can delight in reclining Edwardian-style in a punt along the Avon River.

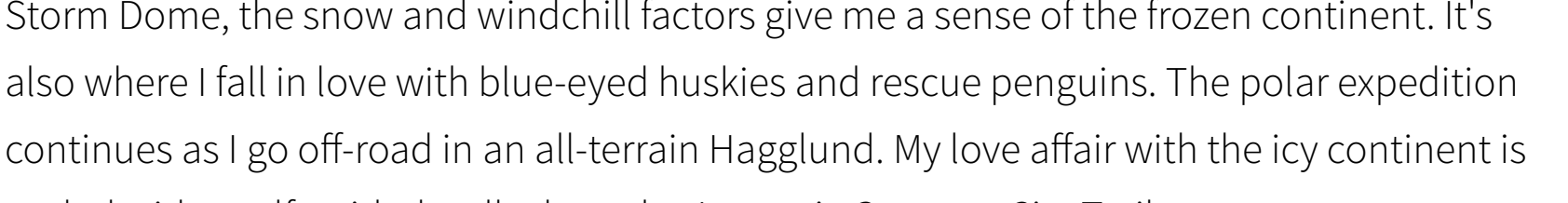


Book a beach getaway  
Summer is on its way. Book a beach house to get your family back to their happy place.

Search Homes

As Christchurch is a springboard city for the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration, my curiosity takes me to the International Antarctic Centre. After coating up and entering the sub-zero Storm Dome, the snow and windchill factors give me a sense of the frozen continent. It's also where I fall in love with blue-eyed huskies and rescue penguins. The polar expedition continues as I go off-road in an all-terrain Hagglund. My love affair with the icy continent is sealed with a self-guided walk along the Antarctic Gateway City Trail.

I finish my Christchurch stay wining and dining aboard the elegantly decked out vintage Tramway Restaurant. While trundling the city tram loop, I enjoy the intimate ambience of a four-course meal paired with some of New Zealand's finest wines.



Spa therapy: Visiting Hanmer Springs. Photo / Supplied

## The spa town of Hanmer Springs

Leaving Christchurch, I drive 90 minutes north to the alpine spa village of Hanmer Springs. It's time to indulge in the luxury of mineral baths. Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools is a village within a village, offering 15 open-air mineral pools. I relax in the warm, silky water that has taken centuries to filter into an aquifer and naturally heat. Breathing deeply the fresh, alpine air, I submit to the baths' therapeutic benefits of skin-softening sulphur, silica and sodium. There are pamper packages, steam rooms and a family zone with wet and wild waterslides.

Back on the road the next day, it's a four-hour drive beside the breathtaking beauty of the Pacific Ocean, to Blenheim. I stop halfway for a break at Kaikōura nestled on a coastal peninsula. Being New Zealand's whale-watching capital, as opposed to its earlier claim as a whaling area, there is great incentive to search the sea for wildlife. It's not hard to find as a fur seal swims ashore, climbs the rocks and preens itself. It poses with its oiled skin like a bodybuilder, then offers its paw as if busking.

## Food and wine in Marlborough

My next two-night stop is Blenheim and it's time for a change of scenery. This is Marlborough country, lauded as a premium wine region of the world, where more than 120 vineyards stretch their emerald rows across the Wairau Plain towards the fringe of the Wither Hills. With 36 cellar doors to choose from, I take a personally organised wine tour where I spend the day sipping, sighing and buying, not only the famous sauvignon blanc, but also the newer varietals.

### Classic Kiwi road trips

- [The classic Fiordland roadie: the Milford Road](#)
- [The classic Nelson roadie: Coastal Explorer](#)
- [The classic Coromandel roadie: Karangahake to Tauranga](#)
- [The classic Otago roadie: Central Touring Route](#)
- [The classic Ruapehu roadie: Forgotten World Highway](#)
- [The classic East Coast roadie: Pacific Coast Highway](#)
- [The classic Canterbury roadie: Alpine Pacific Touring Route](#)
- [The classic Wairarapa roadie: Twin Coast Discovery](#)
- [The classic wine route roadie: Hawke's Bay to Marlborough](#)

My car boot is chocked with artisan, organic and biodynamically crafted wines, and I leave Blenheim for the other Marlborough geography; the Sounds. Twisting along the scenic Queen Charlotte Drive, it's as if Mother Nature long ago pressed her fingers into the coastline indenting coves of peacock water in the steep-sided drowned river valleys.

## Related articles

TRAVEL

**Light on the water:** Marlborough's road least travelled

25 Nov, 2020 02:00 PM

Quick Read

TRAVEL

**No wheels? No worries:** How to be the perfect road-trip passenger

25 Nov, 2020 10:00 AM

Quick Read

TRAVEL

**My way, not the highway:** Herald writers' favourite roads

24 Nov, 2020 01:30 PM

Quick Read

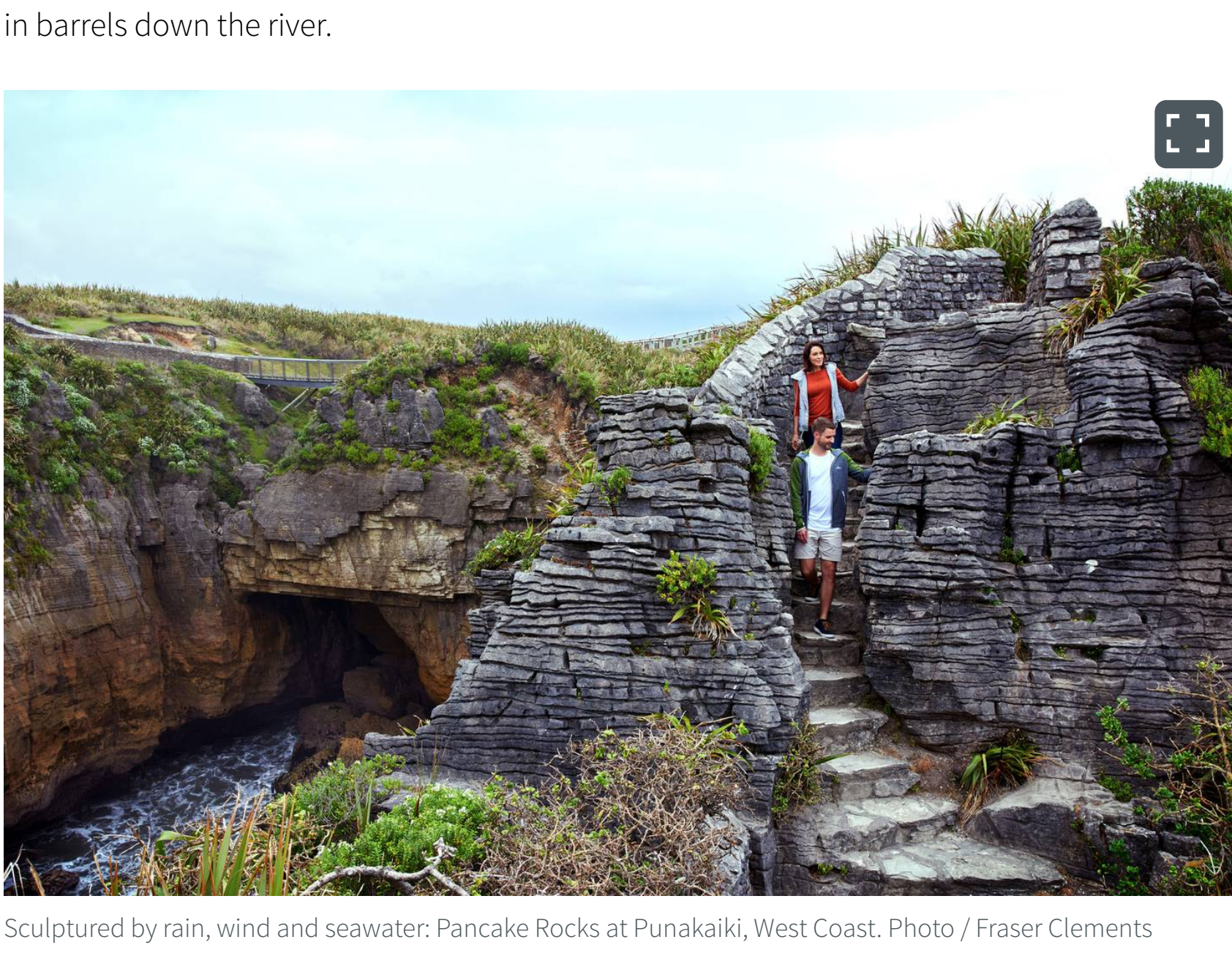
TRAVEL

**The classic Fiordland roadie:** the Milford Road

24 Nov, 2020 04:00 AM

Quick Read

Zippering through corn fields and cow pastures, I have a break at Havelock, the greenshell mussel capital of the world, where arty installations of green molluscs run across tin roofs and down the street. After a lunch stop it's a quick drive to Pelorus Bridge for some Middle Earth magic with a photo shoot of the location from The Hobbit, where the dwarves floated in barrels down the river.



Sculptured by rain, wind and seawater: Pancake Rocks at Punakaiki, West Coast. Photo / Fraser Clements

## Arts and crafts in Nelson

Spending the night in arty-crafty Nelson has whet my appetite to return. Robert Frost wrote in his famous poem The Road Not Taken, "way leads on to way", and I must be on my way as it's a long drive to my next overnight stop at Fox Glacier.

Ad

Huusk

JAPAN

★★★★★

Make Paper Thin Slices of Tomato, Cheese, Bread With No Effort at All

Open

The West Coast hits the senses with an overload of wild delights. At Punakaiki, the Pancake Rocks, sculptured by rain, wind and seawater, are a must-see. This unique headland looks like horizontal stacks of books waiting for their limestone pages to be turned revealing their 30 million-year-old stories. The flax-lined walking loop takes about 30 minutes and sea spray from the many blowholes keeps you refreshed.

## New Zealand's wild West Coast

Passing Franz Josef Glacier, my next two-night stopover is Fox Glacier. With more than 3000 glaciers in New Zealand, I'm going to trek to the terminal face of this world-unique living remnant of the Ice Age that ends near the coast in temperate rainforest.

Kitted out in walking boots and with a breeze fanning from the glacier, I follow the Fox River through glades of tree ferns and flax plants, past waterfalls and rushing streams carrying ice boulders. Hills of scree and sheer walls of striated schist funnel me forward. Fed by four alpine glaciers, Fox Glacier is now in retreat. Seeing the jagged aqua snout at the end of this giant's journey, takes my breath away.

After dark in the village of Fox, I take a night dalliance along the Minnehaha Walk, through a moss-draped podocarp forest. As I follow the loop path beside a stream, my eyes adjust to glow worms illuminating their grottos like miniature wonderlands.

## Epic landscapes of the South Island

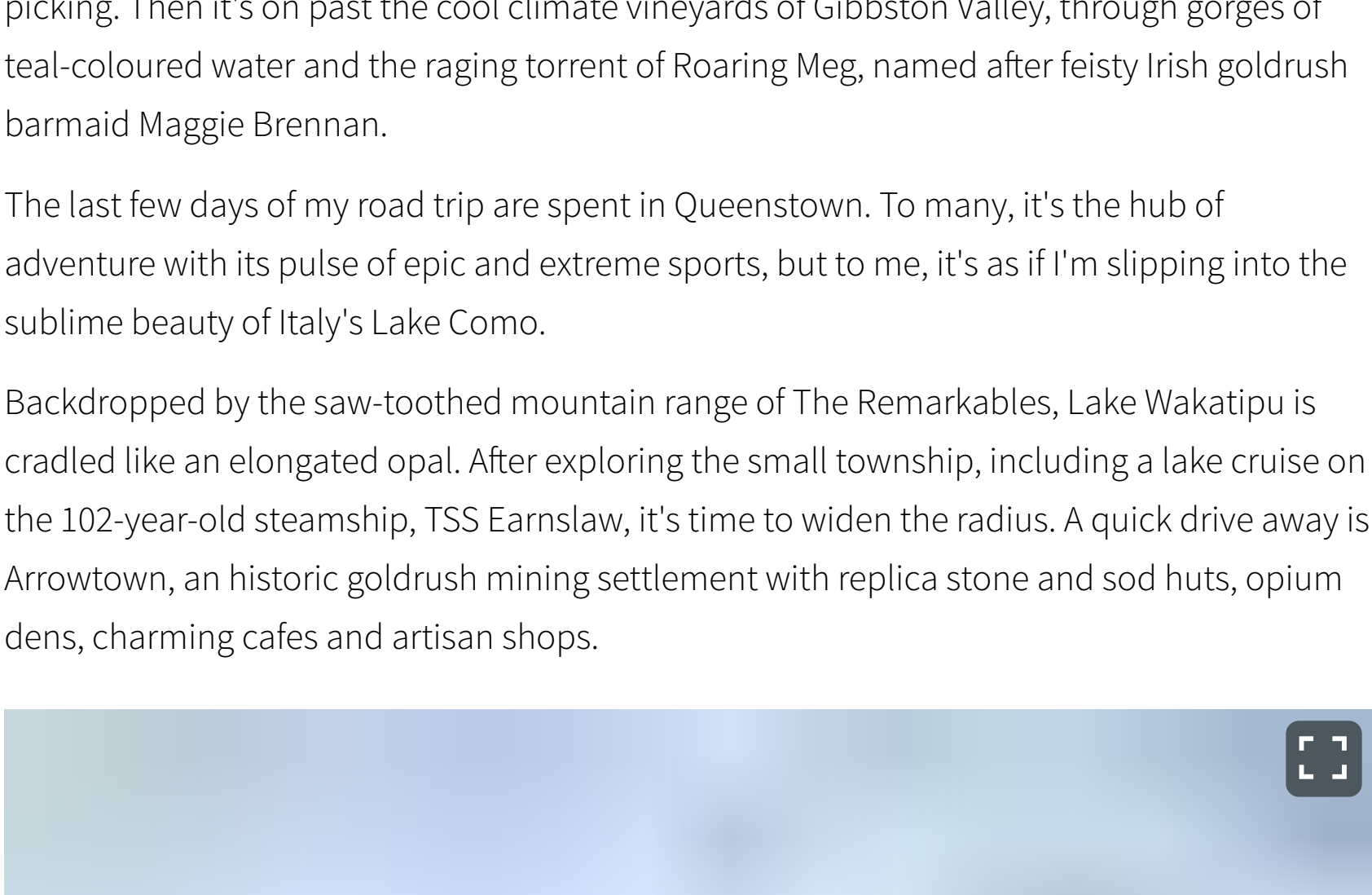
Leaving glacier country, I begin the visually spectacular route to Queenstown. Driving through lush forest I'm back on the coast at Haast and stop at The Hard Antler Hotel. Walls of stag heads and rafters racked with deer antlers, give me a different appreciation of this wild, west of coasts.

Emerging from the Haast Pass into the Southern Lakes region of Central Otago, Lake Wānaka is at my side.

The Southern Alps that flank me are so surreal I could be driving through a watercolour painting of pleated hills and lines of poplars beneath an inky, cloud-scudding sky. The stonefruit town of Cromwell punctuates my journey and I stop for a spot of decadent, cherry picking. Then it's on past the cool climate vineyards of Gibbston Valley, through gorges of teal-coloured water and the raging torrent of Roaring Meg, named after feisty Irish goldrush barmaid Maggie Brennan.

The last few days of my road trip are spent in Queenstown. To many, it's the hub of adventure with its pulse of epic and extreme sports, but to me, it's as if I'm slipping into the sublime beauty of Italy's Lake Como.

Backdropped by the saw-toothed mountain range of The Remarkables, Lake Wakatipu is cradled like an elongated opal. After exploring the small township, including a lake cruise on the 102-year-old steamship, TSS Earnslaw, it's time to widen the radius. A quick drive away is Arrowtown, an historic goldrush mining settlement with replica stone and sod huts, opium dens, charming cafes and artisan shops.



Monarch of the Glenorchy: Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown. Photo / TNZ

## Thrill-seeking and adrenaline in Queenstown

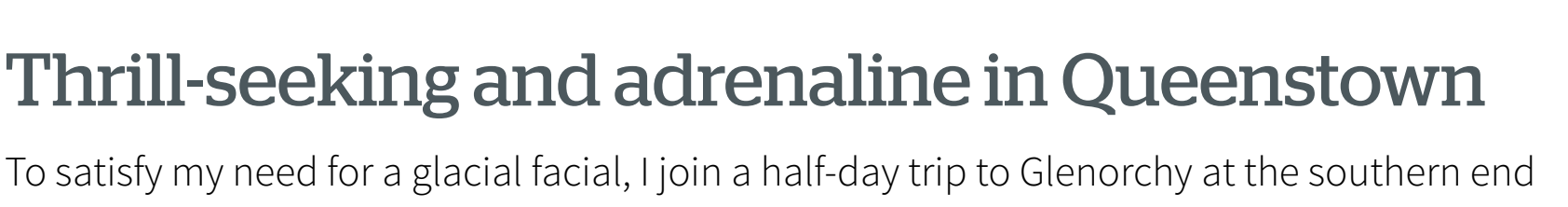
To satisfy my need for a glacial facial, I join a half-day trip to Glenorchy at the southern end of Lake Wakatipu for a jet boat ride deep into the majestic Mount Aspiring National Park along the glacier-fed Dart River. Joining my fellow thrill-seekers, it's white-knuckle wildness as we speed-skim shallow, braided streams, whoosh past rocks, slide and half-doughnut towards the shore and nail 360-degree spins. After anchoring our jetboat, we walk back to our minibus through an 80 million-year-old beech forest that inspired Peter Jackson's filming of Tolkien's, Middle Earth.

I take another long-day coach trip to Milford Sound in the Fiordland National Park. With more spectacular scenery of glacier-carved lakes, grassy vistas and the omnipresent rocky peaks, we stop for a walk along the Mirror Lakes. After boring through the Homer Tunnel, we switchback through valleys of fern trees and waterfalls into a tropical paradise.

Milford Sound is a misnomer. It's a fiord, not flooded by sea, but carved by glaciers. By sailing deep into its abyss of towering granite cliffs and cascading waterfalls you feel you are entering an ethereal world before time began.

All road trips begin with a sense of adventure and wonder. This odyssey, through the diverse and enchanting landscapes of the South Island, does not satisfy my wanderlust; it intensifies my desire to return.

For more New Zealand travel ideas and inspiration, go to [newzealand.com](#)



## Paid Promoted Content

PROMOTED

The Cost of Stair Lifts for Seniors in Sydney

Might Surprise You

Stair Lifts | Search Ads

PROMOTED

Wedding Photos Might Help Explain Why Meghan Left The Royals

Post Fun

PROMOTED

The 2021 hourly rates of lawyers in Sydney

might surprise you

Attorney | Search Ads

PROMOTED

3 Must-Have Dresses To Wear Anywhere & Everywhere

Just Jeans

PROMOTED

If Your Dog Kicks Up Dirt, This Is What It Means

The Delite

PROMOTED

Keep up to 5 devices safe for less than 2,50 £ per month!

Bitdefender Antivirus

Recommended by Outbrain