



36 hours in Queenstown

Katie Newton is soothed and revived in the home of extreme sports and unmatched beauty

2pm When you're not from these parts it's difficult to stop yourself endlessly rhapsodising about scenery, but even during the flight from Auckland I've got my nose pressed against the window. Cruising past the snowy tips of Mt Cook and Mt Aspiring, I almost don't want to land.

3pm The speed limit into town from the airport is 70km/hr but I'm tootling along like a nana in my red Toyota rental car. I can't stop staring at the Remarkables reaching up from Lake Wakatipu. Queenstown's pedestrian mall is filled with happy holidaymakers making the most of the late afternoon sun and the long shopping hours. Most stores stay open until 9pm, every day.

6pm It's a 20-minute drive out to the genteel greens of Millbrook resort. Once checked in, a porter in a golf cart directs me to my suite in a little villa – right beside the 15th tee. Lying on the ridiculously puffy duvet on the king-sized bed I hear the metallic thwack of a perfect drive.

7pm All the fresh air must be getting to me, because instead of breaking open the mini bar I lace up my sneakers and head out for a long evening walk. Being autumn, most of

the guests are here for the golf, and even I can see that the Bob Charles-designed course is pretty special. A path meanders around it, past geese-filled ponds and tasteful buildings that house the excellent facilities, which include a great little gym, spa and three different restaurants. Not being properly attired for fine dining, I stop in at the Millhouse Café for a platter and a glass of wine.

8am I'm up with the birds (and some golfers) and head into Queenstown for a coffee and a muffin on the lakeside. Down at the jetty where the Kawarau Jet departs I join the dozens of people getting their life jackets on. Jet boats were invented in the South Island and the Kawarau Jet was the world's first commercial operation, so we're in experienced hands as we hurtle across Wakatipu past the palatial homes of Kelvin Heights. We veer way too close to rocks and spin madly through a couple of 360-degree turns. The Shotover is so shallow it's good to know these powerful boats need only 10cm of water to operate in. After an hour, we unfurl our grips from the metal handrail and clamber back on to dry land.

1pm Heading back out towards the airport along State Highway 6 is the Gibbston Valley, which, for some pinot noir fans is like Mecca. First stop is the established Gibbston Valley vineyard to visit the famous wine cave, buried deep into the hillside. Kept at a cool 14 degrees and lined with oak barrels, it has a slightly austere atmosphere. Further down the road I stop in at the newest vineyard in the area, Mt Rosa. Jeremy Railton (who used to farm merino but has now turned his hand to winemaking) pours me a glass of unusually pineapple-y but delicious 2003 pinot gris before we hop into his Holden and traverse the paddocks for his version of a vineyard tour.

"We've banged a few different types of grapes in here and there," he says gesturing around. "It's just a load of bloody good fun really." I agree.

5pm Back in Arrowtown, the visitors on the main street are thinning out. I spend a good half an hour browsing at the Remarkable Sweet Shop. The wooden shelves are stacked to the ceiling with jewel-like lollies in enormous glass jars. I go crazy and buy gumballs, sour feijoas, mixed honey melts, candied nuts and a slab of homemade lemon meringue fudge. Yum-ola.

8pm After some tasty Thai food, there's time to catch the last flick at Dorothy Browns. Bookshop by day and 42-seater movie theatre by night, guests often arrive well before the movie starts to sit on the comfortable couches and chat over a glass of the local pinot noir.

10am Sadly, it's time to check out of Millbrook, but not before a couple of treats. I do a few lazy lengths in the lap pool, then check in to the newly refurbished spa. I'm in for a glommage marin body treatment, which sees me lying on curved wooden table in a beautifully perfumed wet room being scrubbed with a mixture of sea salt and essential oils. Next, the curved arm of the shower is lowered over to warmly bubble over my skin. To be honest, I'm usually a little on edge when I'm massaged but I've practically nodded off when I'm gently asked to turn over by Liz the therapist. Donning a robe and slippers and gulping back a glass of iced water (thirsty work, this), I'm led to a buttery-soft leather armchair for a wax velvet pedicure. After the usual trimming, buffing and cuticle attendance, Liz lowers both of my feet into a bag of hot paraffin wax. The initial sting subsides into a lovely, soft warmth as the wax sets around my feet. Peeling it off, it's amazing how velvety they feel. It's going to be a very relaxing flight home.

NEED TO KNOW

Millbrook Resort, Malaghans Rd, Arrowtown, ph (03) 441 7000.

Rooms from \$390 per night.

K-Jet leaves from the main town pier. A one-hour ride costs \$85 for adults and \$45 for children. Visit www.kjet.co.nz or ph (03) 409 0000.

Remarkable Sweet Shop, 27 Buckingham St, Arrowtown, ph (09) 442 1374

Dorothy Browns, Buckingham St, Arrowtown. Visit www.dorothybrowns.com or ph (03) 442 1968.

Gibbston Valley vineyard, State Highway 6, Queenstown. Visit www.gwines.co.nz or ph (03) 442 6910.

Mt Rosa vineyard, State Highway 6, Queenstown. Visit www.mtrosa.co.nz or ph (03) 441 2493.