

Lake Wanaka

A Cruising Guide

Lake Wanaka is a lovely stretch of water and, as New Zealand's fourth largest lake, should be treated with respect. We have drawn on fifteen years of experience on the lake in writing this guide.

In general three types of yachties use the lake; day sailers, weekenders, and cruising enthusiasts who may stay out for ten days or more at a time. Normally the lake is not cruised on between May and September because of the cold weather. The geography of the southern end of the lake, with its many bays and beaches, satisfies most yachties. Only a few sail north of Pigeon Island where the shoreline, particularly on the eastern side, is exposed and rocky, safe anchorages are few and far between, and a strong northwester can whip up two metre waves.

For its size, Lake Wanaka has a scarcity of good overnight anchorages, and virtually no all weather ones, but with good planning and an eye on the weather this should not be a problem. Keep your options open and be prepared to stay put if the weather is bad. Safe anchorages depend a lot on the lake level that can vary three metres (more in extreme floods) from low in autumn and winter, to high in spring and summer. The anchorages mentioned on the map are best at middle to high lake levels because the vegetation is closer to tie up to and you're not trying to anchor over a lake floor that drops away steeply into a dark abyss. The prevailing wind is from the northwest and it can spring up any time of the night or day, so anchorages exposed to the north are subject to this and the rolling swell it brings. The best overnight lake anchorages generally face south and these are the ones we favour unless a southerly or southeasterly is blowing.

Although the ramps at the marina are good for any vehicle, a 4WD vehicle is strongly recommended when launching at any of the other ramps around the lake. Gravel on the ramps and bad drop-offs at low lake levels can be a problem, as well as steep gravel access roads.

Some hazards on the lake need mentioning. Rocks (except in two instances) are not marked and several areas deserve attention.

- * Beacon Point — keep outside the beacon, there are lots of rocks from there to the shore.
- * Eely Point — there is a rock at the beacon.
- * Edgewater Hotel to near Waterfall Creek — there are rocks off shore here.
- * North End of Ruby Island — there are some rocks here particularly at low lake level.
- * Western side of Stevensons Island — one big rock; we've hit it!
- * North end of Pigeon Island and reef in open water to the east — dangerous rocks here.
- * Eastern end of Roys Peninsula — there are some dangerous rocks here.

Wind gusts in a northwest gale are particularly bad in the area of water between Crescent Island, Roys Peninsula, and Stevensons Peninsula. It should also be noted that the south end of Stevensons Peninsula provides no shelter in these winds as gusts come from both sides and as they meet all hell breaks loose. Unlike the northwesterly that can blow for days the southerly is generally shortlived, not so gusty, and is often followed by complete calm or a return to westerlies. The summer southeasterly is Wanaka's equivalent of a coastal sea breeze and can reach twenty knots in the evening, dying out to nothing by the morning. Remember that the lake stretches forty five kilometres through mountainous country so wind directions and velocities can vary enormously. Be on the lookout for a dark line on a calm lake; this usually indicates approaching wind which has been known to arrive already blowing at twenty knots and very quickly build up from that.

Isolation can be a problem further up the lake. There is no boat running daily on the lake past Pigeon Island and, apart from traffic on the highway between The Neck and Makarora, you may not see anybody. If you are in trouble flares could go unnoticed as there are no houses after Crescent Island. Abandoning ship means a swim in water that ranges between 8.9°C and 10°C all year round and at those temperatures you don't live long.



LAKE WANAKA YACHT CHARTERS

Power lines cross the lake at the Glendhu Bluff end of Parkins Bay. At mean lake level the top of your mast should not be more than 11.47m above the water. We can get under at the bluff end where the wires are higher than the measurements given by ECNZ. At high flood the distance to the top of the mast is reduced to 7.15m which rules out most cruising trailer yachts.

Floating logs can be a minor problem at any time but become a major one at high lake levels especially in the areas around the Matukituki and Makarora River mouths. In flood conditions you can find logs over the entire lake area.

Waves People who usually do their sailing in salt water should be aware that fresh water waves are much shorter and steeper than salt water ones for the same wind strength. Waves on the lake can be up to at least two metres in height and very steep.

Conclusion We haven't said all this to scare you off but to make sure you come prepared and so enjoy your holiday on Lake Wanaka in safety. It is one of our favourite yachting spots and we will be out there again for five days this Easter. In summer the temperature can reach over 30°C and we are very glad of a swim close to shore where the temperature is warmer. If you are coming this way please make yourselves known and we will try to be of assistance to you.

Happy cruising,

Lenore and David Strang
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Topographic Information

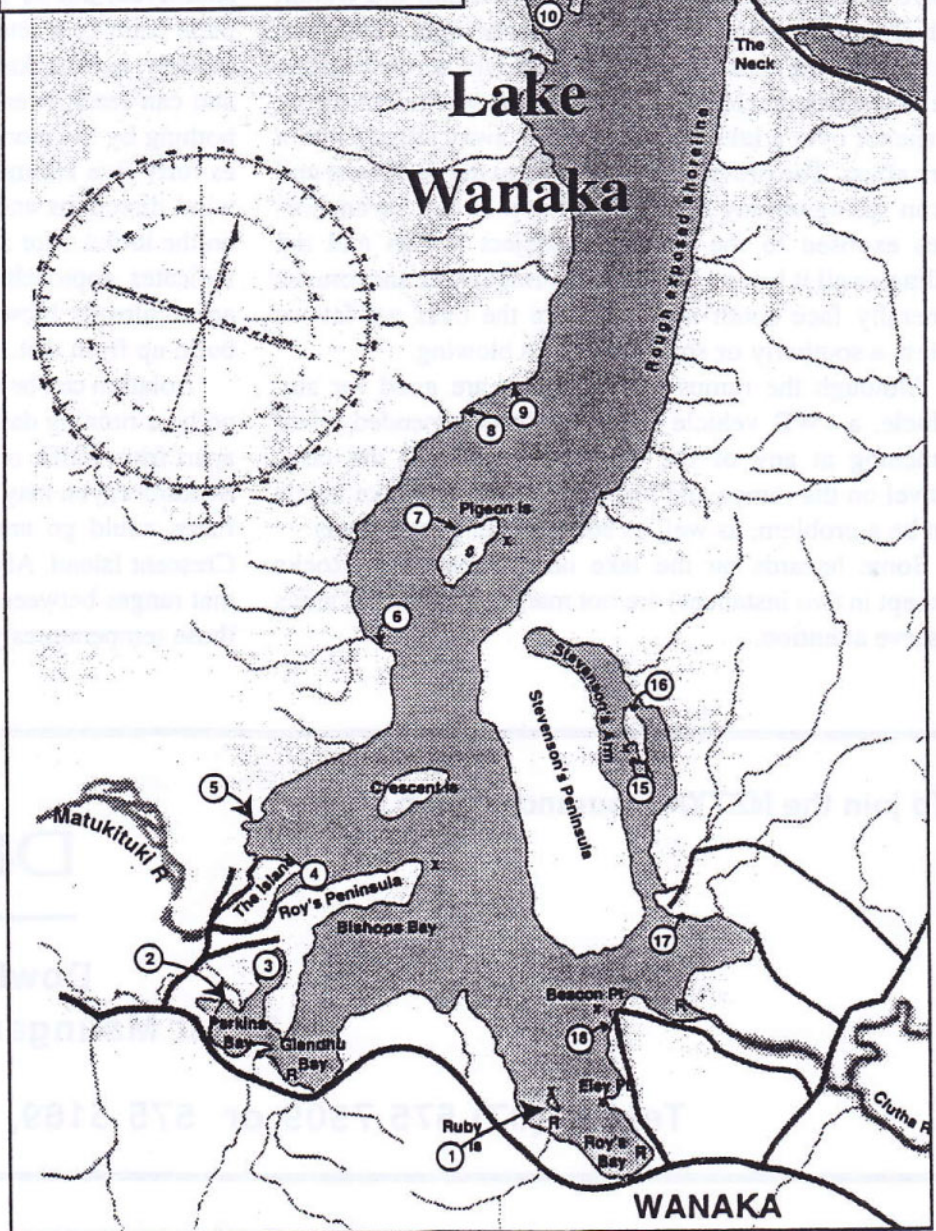
1. Lake Wanaka Bathymetric Chart — NZ Oceanographic Institute
2. Lakes Wanaka & Hawea Boating Guide — Queenstown Lakes District Council
3. Mile to the Inch
 NZMS 1 Wanaka S115
 NZMS 1 Makarora S107
4. Topographic Series
 1:50,000 Wanaka F40
 1:50,000 Makarora F39 (not available at time of writing)

Overnight Anchorages

No	Name	Description	Shelter From
1	Ruby Island	Bay W side	NW, E
*2	Parkins Bay	NW corner	S, W, N
3	Paddock Bay	S side	S
*4	Matukituki	SW corner	S, E
5	West Wanaka	N bay	W
6	Calquhoun	S bay	S
*7	Pigeon Island	Hidden bay W side	S, E
8	Minaret Burn	N side of delta	S
9	Emergency	1km N of No8	NW
*10	Minaret Bay	Outer Bay	S, E, NW
11	Snag Bay	N side	NW
12	Last Resort	Opp No14	NW
13	Nottingly Delta	S side	W
14	Boundary Creek	N side delta	S
*15	Stevensons Island	S bay	NW
16	Stevensons Island	N end	S
*17	Mt Burke Station	S side	NW
18	Penrith Park	Penrith Beach	E

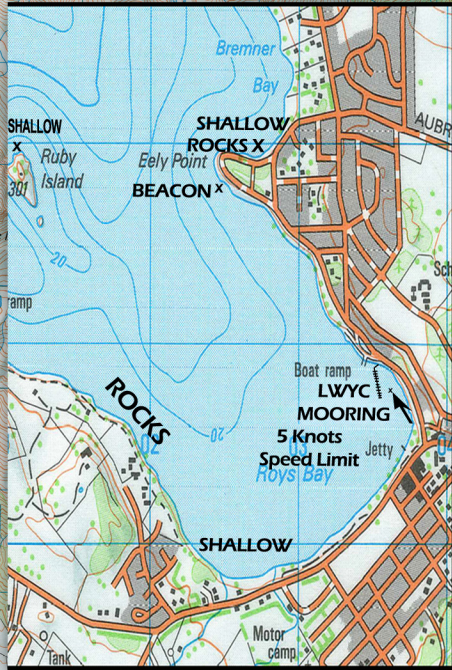
* Our preferred anchorages based on degree of shelter, smoothness of beach, privacy, ease of anchoring, and amount of firewood. In settled weather numerous other anchorages are possible in most areas of the lake.

X = Rock or Reef R = Ramp



Lake Wanaka

Local Knowledge



LAKE WANAKA YACHT CHARTERS