

Lake Wakatipu



Otago Region

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History

One of New Zealand's largest and most famous lakes, Lake Wakatipu, is 80km long and has a maximum depth over 300m. It is one of a trio of big glacial lakes in the headwaters of the Clutha catchment, the others being Lakes Wanaka and Hawea. The first attempt to introduce sport fishing occurred in 1869 when 55 brown trout failed to survive 208 miles of rough bush roads between Dunedin and Queenstown. However, by 1874, Mr. Worthington of the Wakatipu Acclimatisation Society had successfully released brown trout around the lake. Several other species of sport fish were introduced, but only Chinook salmon (1876) and Rainbow trout (1894) were successful. These three species make up the angler's catch today.



Getting There

Queenstown on Lake Wakatipu is an international tourist resort. The town and its surrounding lake and mountain environment provide a year around playground, with accommodation and related services to suit all styles and budgets. Lake Wakatipu is S shaped with Queenstown located in the middle. From Central Otago follow State Highway 6 through to Kawarau Gorge to Queenstown. From Southland follow State Highway 6 to Queenstown along the Southern arm of the lake. There is good sealed road access along the northern arm from Queenstown to Glenorchy. The head of the lake can be navigated by unsealed road from Glenorchy to Kinloch. For the more adventurous access along the northwestern shoreline can be obtained via the Kinloch/Greenstone Station Road which involves three dry weather-crossing fords.

Access

Good road access is available to the lake edge from Kingston to Glenorchy. Most of the Southwest and Northwest shoreline can only be accessed by boat. Good boat launching facilities (see map) are available at Kingston, Frankton Marina, Kelvin heights, Queenstown (parking can be difficult at peak periods), Sunshine Bay and Glenorchy. Small boats can also be launched at Kinloch. Boaties should be aware that surface lake water temperatures reach a maximum of about ten



Methods

It takes the average angler approximately two hours to catch a fish in the lake. These fish will average 380mm in length and 600gms in weight. Large 'double-figured' trout are caught annually. Brown trout comprise 43% of the catch followed by landlocked Chinook salmon and rainbow trout. It is estimated that over 5000 fish are caught each season. Fishing method is a complex issue as all three target species react differently throughout the year.

Trolling is the method employed by over three-quarters of the lake anglers. It is also the most successful method for catching salmon. Many anglers prefer rapalas although black toby's, silver hexagon wobblers and tasmanian devils especially in traffic light patterns are also favoured. Salmon travel in large schools and are located close to shore when in pursuit of small native fish in spring. During the summer months salmon are often caught in deep water but return to the large river mouths in Autumn for the annual spawning run. Local experts often use a feathered lure 40-50cm in front of their main lure when fishing salmon. The grey ghost is the best imitation of the salmon's natural prey. Anglers using leadlines generally fish with 3-4 colours out but go deeper in flat calm conditions. Harling with a feathered lure or down rigging provides excellent results on trout and salmon.

Trolling tips

- Use at least 20 metres of monofilament line from the leadline tip.
- Gradually vary the boat speed and direction of travel. If results are slow try different lures and depths.
- You must stay at least 100 metres offshore when in the vicinity of shoreline based anglers.

Spinning is the least successful method because most anglers do not use this technique effectively. Toby's, Rapalas and King cobra's are all commonly used lures though often in sizes too large. Small and bright Mepps spinners work well in shallow areas and in the large river mouth. Even the small creeks that enter the lake are worth investigating. For fun sport in the summer months fish the blue clad shorelines using a small plastic float filled with water (to facilitate your cast) and a large brown or green cicada dry fly imitation. When fishing from a boat never bypass bottom structures along the lake edge such as large sunken logs and always be observant for wind lines that trap vegetation and other debris even in the middle of the lake!

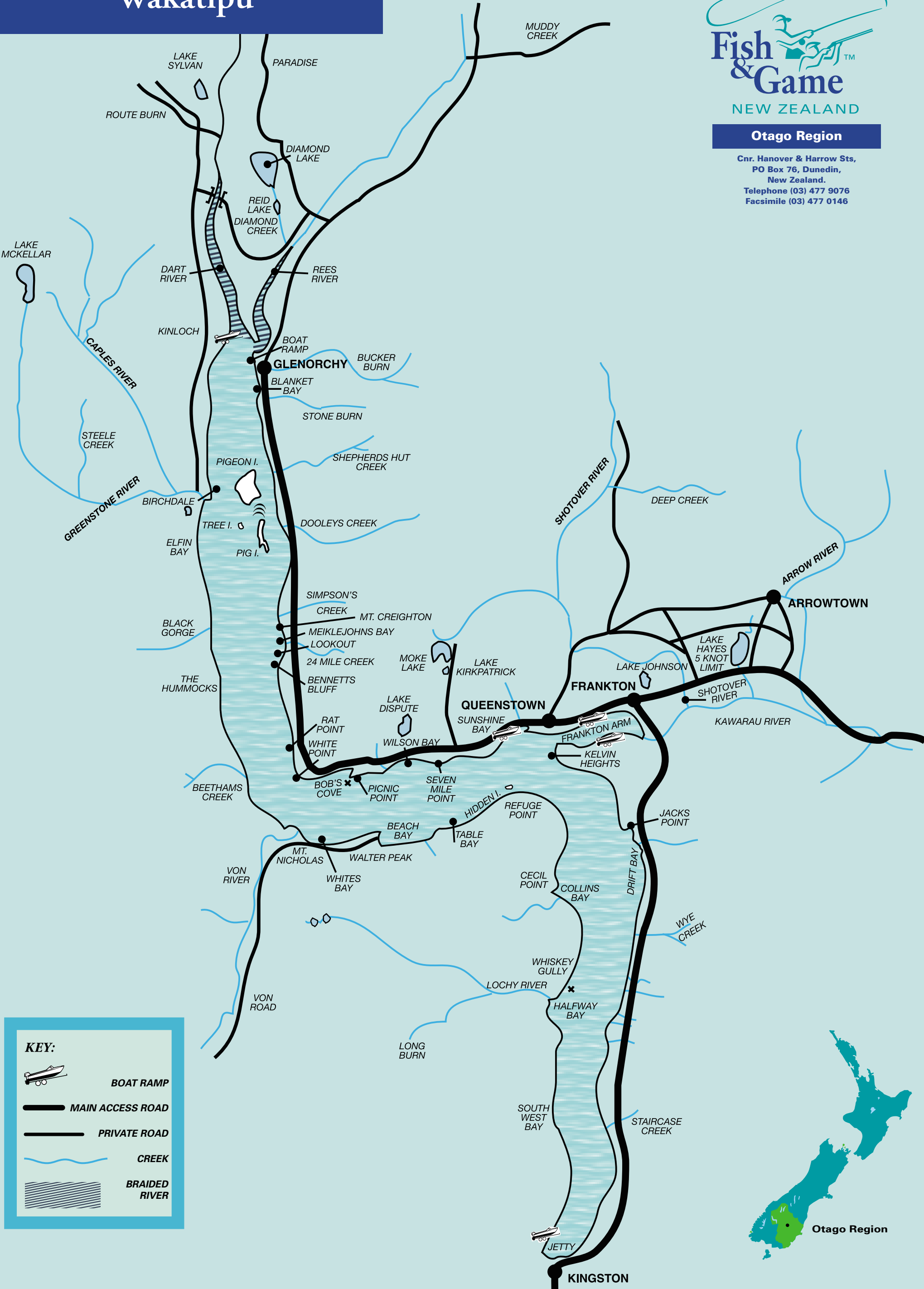
Fly-fishing is the most successful method for catching trout yet less than 10% of all lake anglers utilise this technique. Fly anglers can expect to catch three times the number of rainbow trout over their spinning and trolling counterparts! Most anglers target the river and small creek mouths throughout the year preferring floating lines on six weight nine-foot rods. Sinking lines or fast sinking tips are sometimes used with streamer patterns when salmon are close to shore. Nymph fishing anglers prefer beaded hare and copper patterns though large number 12 green stonefly patterns work well in the spring. Shoreline fishing and boat drifting in the summer months in areas with overhanging vegetation provide the best results with green cicada or yellow and/or green humpy patterns. Try fishing along the Frankton/Queenstown walkway if your time is limited.

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KEY:

- BOAT RAMP
- MAIN ACCESS ROAD
- PRIVATE ROAD
- CREEK
- BRAIDED RIVER





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