



Lake Tekapo makes a first impression that stays with visitors for years to come. The vivid blue of the lake set against a skyline of chiselled snow capped mountains is a memorable sight.

Reputed to have the clearest, darkest and most spectacular night skies in the country, Tekapo's name is thought to have been derived from the Maori word "takapo" which means "to leave at night with haste".

Set in the heart of the Mackenzie Country, an area of over 400,000 hectares famous for its dramatic landscapes and high country sheep stations, the township is a small yet diverse tourist destination at the southern end of Lake Tekapo.

In 1855 James Mackenzie, shepherd turned sheep stealer, is credited with finding a way through to the area which now bears his name. Mackenzie, with the help of his dog Friday, drove flocks of stolen sheep inland to avoid being discovered. An iconic statue of a sheepdog stands near the shores of the lake in tribute to all the hardy dogs which contributed to the area's farming history.

Formed behind the debris deposited by glaciers that extended out from the Southern Alps thousands of years ago, the waters of Lake Tekapo provide an exquisite backdrop for the township. The striking turquoise lake is offset by the golden tussocks of the Mackenzie Country and the dramatic Southern Alps.

The area boasts New Zealand's highest peaks and longest glaciers in a landscape of contrasts. It is an appealing foreground to New Zealand's highest peak, Aoraki Mt Cook.

## DISCOVERY on line

Tekapo Tourism was formed to keep up with the region's tourism ventures. It promotes a vast website of with more than 100 pages describing natural assets, history and scenic significance, plus a mountaintop webcam offering still shots and live video.

Tekapo Tourism managing director and website founder Greg Knowles says the decision to feature Tekapo was the easiest and best decision they could have made. "The area is one of New Zealand's most scenic, particularly from an alpine or lakeside perspective and visitors only have to view a selection of images on our website to be attracted to the area.

"The beauty and enjoyment revolves around its natural, scenic attributes — it's where adventure comes naturally."

Today Lake Tekapo and the resulting township is flourishing under the effects of tourism and continues to grow as more people discover the magic and undisturbed beauty of the Mackenzie Country.

[www.tekapotourism.co.nz](http://www.tekapotourism.co.nz)

The halfway point between Christchurch and Queenstown, Tekapo offers more than a convenient stopover. Less than three hours drive either way from Christchurch or Wanaka, Tekapo has a diverse range of accommodation from resort hotels to backpackers.

The summer months are hot and dry, while the extremes of the winter climate has made Tekapo a destination for thrillseekers. Activities range from mountain biking to glacier skiing, hot springs indulgence to star gazing.

**The Run 79 Lake Tekapo Mountain Bike Pursuit**  
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 (entries close 25th May 2009)  
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