



Places to Go: Glenorchy

AVID 'Places to Go' followers will have noted that I write about North Island and South Island airfields alternately. This time however I'll break that tradition. Wayne and I have recently reformed our 'Wanaka Alpine Pilots Group' which is open to all who are keen to fly and explore our wonderful South Island. Every 1st Saturday of each month we choose a fly-away place to go, enjoy a picnic, explore and just generally have some great conversations and flying fun. We started our group back in 2004 because we found that aviators are keen to mingle and also aircraft owners love an excuse for a day out flying.

We have flying machines ranging from fabric open cockpit aircraft through to the bigger steeds, such as the C-206. Size (in this case) does not matter as we plan beforehand how we are all going to get to our destination and with an arrival time pre-set, the slower aircraft set off earlier. In fact the larger craft often set out at the same time so they can do some tiki touring along the way. The advantage of the larger planes are that people who are not yet flyers, but are perhaps budding pilots, get to sit back and listen about flying and marvel at our NZ scenery as it slips by their passenger window.

Recently our group took to the skies and went to Glenorchy for lunch. For some, this was a major expedition. Not only because some small ones flew from as far away as Gore and Dunedin to join in, but also because of experiencing the awe of mountain flying on the way there.

Glenorchy airfield is owned by Queenstown Airport Corporation and at the time of print there is no landing fee and the airfield is available for general use with no need for prior permission to land. There is parachuting operating there, so common courtesy prevails when joining and make your attentions clear on 119.20. This is the common frequency for Fiordland. I'd like to mention the importance of having an up to date AIP4 and map of the area. It is simply not good practice to arrive at a busy airfield on the wrong frequency and think "She'll be right". The maps are available from www.aipshop.co.nz, along with the AIPs. All our time is precious, but putting aside 1/2 hour to update your AIP4 is simple and maps are still \$16.35 each.

The route to NZGY is one of extraordinary scenery and it

really helps to pick a nice anti-cyclone to fly into this area. The planes from Wanaka came up the Matukituki Valley and over the Cascade Saddle to the head of the Dart River and down the valley to the head of Lake Wakatipu. Think Glaciers and Hobbit country. The others came up the Von Valley from the south. However if you are familiar with Queenstown you can transit their airspace (if you have a transponder onboard).

The strip is what I call a 'table top' with a hump shape, elevated above the lake by around 250 feet. It is grass with a length of 675m. It looks straight forward but it is a good strip to do some circuits on to hone in your skills. This strip instantly shows up sloppy flying. On the ground, make sure you park out of the way of the parachute landing area and if staying the night, away from the parachute plane park (adjacent to the south of the parachute office).

Give the Glenorchy Hotel a call and they will come and pick you up. We had a large group so we booked ahead. www.glenorchynz.com Ph. 03 442 9902. This is superb spot for lunch - or stay the night. We had a fine meal and the owner was most hospitable. There is heaps to do in GY, from horse trekking, jet-boating to walks and relaxing. And the locality is really special from a flying point of view. From NZGY, flights to Fiordland (Manapouri), Milford (if you are up to speed) and West Coast (Haast) are a hop and a skip away. If you are new to flying in the Mountains, always seek advice - we are more than happy to help.

A crafty device we always use is a spidertrack. This unit plugs into the 12v system in the plane and then those at home can watch your progress on the internet. As I write I see one of my team has enjoyed a morning of flying around the alps and glaciers and stopped at Gorge River to have lunch with Beansprout (Robert Long) and perhaps a spot of fishing. The spidertrack is peace of mind for those that you trust to flight follow you. If you're unfamiliar with them, visit www.spidertracks.com to have a look and contact Richard for a demo. Email: richard.parkinson@spidertracks.co.nz

Any flying you do this month, remember to prepare well so you gain the maximum enjoyment for any place you are flying to.



Top left: The Wanaka Alpine Pilots Group briefing. Top right: The Dart Glacier. Above: At Cecil Peak Airstrip on the edge of Lake Wakatipu during a stop on the way back from Glenorchy.

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