

Summer Kayak Trips - Central Otago Reaches

By Nathan Fa'avae



Water water everywhere, that's one of the things I love the most about our country, no matter where you are, you're close to a lake, a river or the ocean. It is the paddle sport mecca as far as I've seen from my travels around the planet.

I have an embarrassing flotilla of kayaks in my shed, and behind the shed, and next to the shed, but they all serve a specific purpose and get plenty of use. With the kids also enjoying getting on the water, the inflatable kayaks have become exceptionally popular and the basis of some truly wonderful experiences for the whole family.

During the summer of 2012 and 2013, the summer sun drove us to the water like ducks as we explored some world class easy and enjoyable boating, Here are a few of the trips we can recommend for families and /or beginner to intermediate paddlers:

CLUTHA

One of the mighty flows in the country that provides a fair chunk of hydro electricity. There are some great sections from the source at Lake Wanaka to the Pacific Ocean. Over New Year we did a serene overnight trip from Millars Flat, through Beaumont and down to Allangrange Road Bridge. The section has some fun grade two rapids but is essentially a big slow but steady moving current. Some excellent riverside campsites below Beaumont.

HAWEA

A short fast and frantic run of about 10 km. The river is controlled by Contact Energy so it needs some water to be a fun trip. Get in below Lake Hawea and at 80-200 cumecs it is a hoot of a trip. The Hawea Wave is a few km into the trip (check this out before you start), under Camp Hill Road Bridge. Beware of the trees on the river banks and don't under estimate the speed; this river knows how to flow. Take out is at the camp ground river right, just before the Clutha confluence.



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White Water Paddling

Need some excitement? Take a kayak down a wicked Grade Two river run... this is a whole day of thrills and fantastic scenery down some of New Zealand's best rivers.

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Waitara River Tours

For those who are slightly more adventurous at heart, this is a scenic trip with the excitement of Grade Two rapids. Midway down, we paddle under the historic Betran Road Bridge where we will stop for a snack.

Allow 2 hours paddle only.
Priced at \$85.
Phone: 06 769 5506



KAWARAU

More known for its big volume big rapids, the turbulent Roaring Meg and big waded Dog Leg, the Kawarau is a stunning river and has a lovely section from Lake Wakitipu, Kawarau Falls. It's 15 km of scenic float boating to the Arrow River confluence take out, river right. Don't miss the take out, Smith Falls is just around the corner!

SHOTOVER

The upper Shotover has to be one of the classiest grade two river runs in the South Island. The scenery and quality rapids are H₂O heaven. Get in is just below Branches Station, or whenever you see a good spot to launch. Take out is at Deep Creek. The river is awesome, the drive in is breathtaking and the history is interesting, lots of gold mining remains and even a river diversion to paddle through. It rocks.



DART

Needs a Jet Boat drop off but a true wilderness day trip once at the drop off point; the Jet Boats can only take you so far. Huge mountains, lots of side trips and just a spectacular day out. About 20 km on river and take out at Paradise. Contact Dart River Safaris for a drop off.

Matariki

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MATUKITUKI WEST BRANCH

Flowing into Lake Wanaka this is another brilliant afternoon on the river. Put in at Raspberry Flat road end, the trail head to Mount Aspiring National Park. We hiked up 2 km and ran through the little Grade three gorge as a warm up. You can paddle all the way to the lake if you wish, making it a two day trip, but there is an obvious and enjoyable half day on the water taking out at East Branch confluence; good after rain or fresh snow melt.



LAKE WAKITIPU

This amazing body of water has a beauty of a paddle to Pigeon Island which has camping and hut options, good walks and is simply divine. Not suitable in high winds to cross to the Island though.

LAKE ONSLOW

There are also some unique paddle trips on the Central Otago lakes and reservoirs, something a little different shall we say.

There is a lifetime of trips out there folks, whatever your craft, get out there and relish them.



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