

Tourist spot NZ's most affluent place to live

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Ian Stewart

Queenstown and the Lakes District, the South Island's internationally renowned tourist area, has been rated as New Zealand's most affluent place to live.

The Lakes District and tourist town just scraped home over the North Shore City, in Auckland, said Stephen Hart, the author of a report which examined a range of factors from more than 70 territorial authorities throughout New Zealand.

He said, after producing a list of 20 cities and districts based on house prices, they also looked at several other factors, including households earning more than \$100,000 a year, homes least likely to be in deprived areas, the percentage of residents with a degree, lowest unemployment rates, and residents who were chief executives, general managers or legislators.

In his report, commissioned by the ASB Bank, Mr Hart said Queenstown, where "more and more of our most successful city folk are choosing to call home", only just scraped home in first place ahead of North Shore City.

He said they were not searching for the domains of the super-rich or the hideaways of celebrities.

"What we want to discover is which of New Zealand's towns and cities could be best described as being the most 'sought after' and their residents' the most 'comfortable'."

He said, like it or not, the most fundamental indicator of a place's desirability was its house prices and if a lot of people wanted to live somewhere house prices rose as a result of that demand, and analysing house prices was a good place to start.

House prices and the other factors were allocated points to put the list of 20 places in order, starting with the most affluent.

Mr Hart said Queenstown Lakes was undoubtedly a highly desirable place to live. The population of 23,000 grew by 35 per cent between 2001 and 2006 – more than anywhere else in the country and more than four times the national average.

The average home in Queenstown Lakes was more than \$570,000. Only North Shore City had a higher price at \$573,000.

Queenstown Lakes also scored well against all other criteria, especially jobs. Its unemployment rate of 1.7 per cent was lower than any of the other contenders.



Queenstown and the Lakes district has topped a list of the most affluent places in New Zealand to live. Photo / Jim Eagles

Queenstown people were also "a well qualified bunch with 19 per cent possessing a bachelor's degree or higher, the fourth highest in the country".

Mr Hart said Queenstown was also fourth in its percentage of population in the top occupation category of chief executive, general managers and legislators, behind Rodney District, Auckland and North Shore cities.

North Shore City was unlucky not to come out first overall. It was in the top three for every measure, except for its unemployment rate which at 4.3 per cent was lower than the national average of 5.1 per cent but only ninth-best of the places surveyed.

Wellington City was the best qualified and highest paid place in New Zealand but, surprisingly, rated only ninth for the number of chief executive officers, general managers and legislators. More lived in the nearby Kapiti Coast District.

Porirua and Manukau Cities scored higher than many expected. They ranked fourth and fifth respectively for households earning more than \$100,000 a year – higher than Queenstown Lakes District.

Auckland City was second for high earners, graduates and senior managers, and third for house prices. Its unemployment rate of 5.7 per cent and ordinary low deprivation decile scores meant it would never be in the very top tier.

The top 20 most affluent places to live were:

1. Queenstown Lakes District
2. North Shore City
3. Wellington City
3. Auckland City
5. Rodney District
6. Selwyn District
7. Franklin District
8. Porirua District
9. Manukau District
10. Tauranga District
11. Tasman District
12. Central Otago District

13. Waitakere City
14. Kapiti Coast District
15. Thames Coromandel District
16. South Wairarapa District
17. Lower Hutt City
18. Taupo City
19. Christchurch City
20. Nelson City

Other snapshots from the report included:

House prices

Highest: North Shore City \$573,430.

Lowest: Tararua District \$145,742

Percentage of households earning over \$100,000 a year

Highest: Wellington City 35.2 per cent.

Lowest: Buller District 6.3 per cent.

Percentage of households in deprivation deciles 1 to 3

Best: Selwyn District 69.9 per cent.

Worst: Wairoa District 1.4 per cent.

Percentage of people with a bachelor's degree or higher

Highest: Wellington City 35.3 per cent.

Lowest: Kawerau District 3.7 per cent.

Unemployment rate

Best: Queenstown Lakes District 1.7 per cent.

Worst: Kawerau District 13.7 per cent.

Percentage of population of chief executives, general managers and legislators

Highest: Rodney District 5.3 per cent.

Lowest: South Taranaki 1.6 per cent.

– NZPA

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