

# Warbirds over Wanaka

## Stat attack

The outstanding success of Warbirds over Wanaka is reflected in its continually growing spectator numbers. These have steadily risen from 14,000 back in 1988 to 111,000 in 2006.

## ?! What the...?!

One of the most incredible performances of any Warbirds over Wanaka airshow was when a Royal Australian Air Force F-111 fighter-bomber awed crowds in 2006 with its 'dump and burn' routine. This involved raw fuel being ejected out of the exhaust and then lit on fire, creating a trail of flame behind the aircraft.

## Top of the class

The first Wanaka airshow in 1988 was called 'Warbirds on Parade'. Initially planned as a one-off display for a small collection of vintage aircraft, it proved to be such an overwhelming success that organisers decided to make it a biennial Easter event. The airshow was subsequently renamed 'Warbirds over Wanaka'.

Getting up before the sun on a cold and frosty morning... Jumping into the car to join a queue that is already stretching for miles either side of the airport... Grabbing the ideal spot along the fenceline from which, armed with cameras and binoculars, you do not budge for the rest of the day... For thousands of Otago residents this is all part of the biennial Warbirds over Wanaka experience.

The brainchild of live deer recovery pioneer and vintage aircraft enthusiast Sir Tim Wallis, Warbirds has grown from humble beginnings in the late 1980s to become an airshow of international repute. Every second Easter, thousands of people flock to Wanaka from all over New Zealand and the world to enjoy world-class aerial displays set against stunning mountain scenery.

While this airshow showcases many different aircraft, both civilian and military, the true stars are the 'warbirds' themselves – the collection of World War Two fighter aircraft owned by Sir Tim and others. Over the years, the public have had the opportunity to see such famous aeroplanes as the Mustang, Spitfire, Corsair, Kittyhawk, Messerschmitt 109, Polikarpov I-16 and Hawker Hurricane soaring through Southern skies.

You don't have to be a plane spotter to enjoy Warbirds, though. An impressive collection of 'warhorses' (classic military vehicles) now take their place alongside vintage farm machinery and fire engines. Special guest appearances by history-makers such as Chuck Yeager (first to break the sound barrier) and 'Buzz' Aldrin (second man on the moon) have also delighted crowds over the years. Combine all this with military re-enactors who provide lively recreations of mock battles, and the large assortment of trade and food stalls, and you can be certain that there is something for everyone at this uniquely Otago event.



A military re-enactor at Warbirds over Wanaka, 2006



A P-40 Kittyhawk takes off as a mock fireball explodes behind

