

# DEPARTURES

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2015



**The  
Enlightened  
Traveler**

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SWITZERLAND

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People, Places and  
Things for 2015





some of the country's most remote – and beautiful – sights. "We're not just a helicopter company; we're there to entertain guests," she says. "The chopper is simply a way to get them around safely and fast." It's all about the experience: engines are shut down on landing, for instance, so clients can hear the soothing sounds of nature without the whirring of rotor blades.

Thanks to a long-standing relationship with the country's Department of Conservation, Over The Top pilots have access to glaciers and fiords, rainforests and mountain tops. But they

also drop in on high-country "stations" (ranches) to help with the weaning of calves, or head down to the West Coast, where clients can help hardy local fishermen pull in their nets before adjourning to their "cribs" (beach shacks) for a strong cup of tea.

Louisa is as enthusiastic about the experiences as her clients: a keen golfer, she often joins them in a round of "extreme golf" in the mountains using eco-friendly balls. "It's just a passion for showcasing our country," she says, "and having our guests see a unique New Zealand."

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

## The Hiking Guide Adam Chalmers

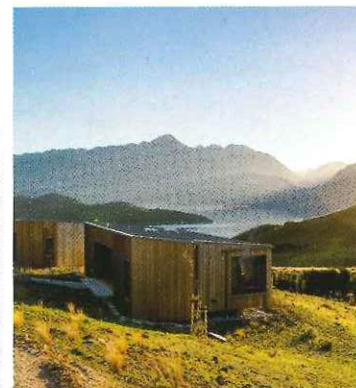
The timber-clad buildings of Aro Hā wellness retreat sit high up in the Southern Alps, looking out over Lake Wakatipu. Set in particularly beautiful surrounds, the dwellings are modern, Zen-like, and clad in cedar. The retreat produces much of its power from solar panels, while the food is vegetarian and

completely organic.

The sound of a Tibetan "singing bowl" bell heralds the start of each day, but every one is slightly different. You might take in a yoga session one afternoon and a cooking class the next. One thing always stays the same, however: you'll be looked after by one of two retreat leaders who will take

you on a mountain hike through alpine lakes, forests and some of New Zealand's most iconic walks, including the Routeburn Track.

"We're the first person our guests see and the last person they see," explains Adam Chalmers, who says he's part porter, part trainer, part chauffeur. Adam grew up in nearby Queenstown, and moved back eight months ago in time for his wife to give birth to their first child. Prior to that he



**"The most rewarding part is when [visitors] disconnect and switch off."**

was a private trainer in Sydney, Australia: "I knew where I wanted to go, but I didn't know how to get there – I didn't even know the job of retreat leader existed."

Aro Hā is a healing place. Guests are encouraged to turn off their phones and remove their watches on arrival. "They particularly struggle with that," says Adam. "The most rewarding part is when they disconnect and switch off." After five days, most clients find they lose quite a few pounds. "They leave here with clear eyes and smile on their face, but it's the mental changes that are the most important."

[www.aro-ha.com](http://www.aro-ha.com)

