

WHARE KEA LODGE, WANAKA, NEW ZEALAND

THE DETAILS

\$975–\$1,380
Lodge rooms

\$3,600
Chalet

Contact
Book through Seasonz,
64-9-360-8461,
seasonz.co.nz

Whare Kea's main lodge (below) is perched on the shore of Lake Wanaka. Its Chalet (right) is high in the Southern Alps, reachable only by helicopter, and an ideal base for hiking, heli-skiing, or just reveling in the mountain air.

Whare Kea means “house of the kea” in Maori—the kea being the world’s only alpine parrot. This six-room lakeside lodge is itself a rare bird, a pitch-perfect combination of expansive views and small-scale intimacy, sophistication and informality.

Australian owners Martyn and Louise Myer fell in love with the mountains of New Zealand’s South Island on a ski trip nearly 20 years ago. They bought 70 acres and built a four-season lodge—a glammed-up shed, framed with glass and aluminum—to use as a vacation retreat. They opened it to paying guests in 1996, but it still feels like the home of the coolest people you know, especially when everyone gathers in the living room for cocktails and dinner at a communal table.

The food is remarkable: pure, elemental, and as clean-tasting as the water sparkling outside. Chef James Stapley was trained in London, won awards as the chef of a South Island winery, and has made simplicity his mantra. “I like to let the ingredients speak for themselves,” he says, and they do: Aoraki salmon from glacial waters, Cardrona Merino lamb, vegetables grown in his garden (“those beets were in the ground a few hours ago,” he told me), and eggs from his 21 chickens.



Whare Kea’s calling card, and what sets it definitively apart from the rest of New Zealand’s luxury lodges, is its Chalet. Set 5,700 feet high in New Zealand’s Southern Alps, the two-bedroom mountain cabin is accessible only by helicopter. Unlike the area’s typical hiker lodgings, it has solar electricity, hot water, comfy beds, and a staff—a mountain guide looks after guests’ safety, while a lodge host attends to their comfort, serving meals and handling cleanup duties. The Myers wanted nontrekking guests to be able to wake up surrounded by nothing but mountain peaks and sunshine. Some visitors use it as a base for hiking or heli-skiing (it’s open only for day trips in winter), while many do nothing more strenuous than taking photos or reading on the deck, rousing themselves only for another estimable lunch. —ANN ABEL

