



1. The retreat with Lake Whakatipu and The Remarkables in the background. 2. Reconnect to the rhythms of nature.

Glenorchy

Aro Hā

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CLAIM TO FAME

Aro Hā Wellness Retreat has garnered a slew of international awards since it opened in 2014, most recently being named one of the world’s Top Destination Spas in the 2025 Conde Nast Traveller Readers’ Choice Awards. The trophy wall is discreetly located in the reception area; this is not a shouty, show-offy place. The landscape, the architecture that follows the contours of the honey-coloured foothills above Lake Whakatipu, the daily rhythms of a week-long Revive & Thrive programme – everything comes together here to calm that brain buzz, and reconnect you to nature, body and soul.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Devices are discouraged, but try to resist taking photos when you wake to an icing-sugar of snow on The Remarkables or low clouds scudding across the lake like friendly ghosts; when you sink into the spa pool during a perfect pink-streaked sunset or walk back to your room at night under a glittery

canopy of stars. The view from the yoga studio window is so absurdly beautiful, when you send friends your warrior pose in its toetoe-fringed lake and mountains frame, you’ll be asked by some if it’s a painting behind you. Aro Hā straddles 8.4 subalpine hectares above the Glenorchy road, 45 minutes’ drive from Queenstown. Pebble paths that link guest rooms and common areas weave through tussock and native trees; orchards and vegetable gardens supply the retreat’s restaurant. Daily walks explore a range of terrain in the Glenorchy area, including a stretch of the Routeburn Track.

WORK THE ROOM

Aro Hā proves elegance can be minimalist and eco-friendly. The retreat hosts up to 20 people at a time, most accommodated in private rooms that share a spacious bathroom/tea-making area in two-bedroom chalets. Inspired by Zen principles, rooms lean “monastic luxe” – warm wood walls and furniture, organic cotton linen, naturally dyed wool blankets, low-touch heating and cooling, thanks to the retreat’s Passivhaus system that keeps indoor spaces at just-right temperatures. The main dining and lounge



area has a wide lake-facing deck, bookshelves dominated by wellness themes, a huge schist fireplace and big comfortable sofas for group gatherings. The Obsidian Spa building encompasses massage rooms, infra-red and traditional saunas, showers, outdoor spa and plunge pool.

BILL OF FARE

The Aro Hā menu is all plant-based; it’s gluten-free, dairy-free – and challengingly, coffee-free. It is also delicious, a credit to the care and skill applied to every meal by head chef Jack Fleming and his team. Around 30 percent of the food served is grown on-site, so every salad bursts with freshness; fruit, vegetables, herbs and honey count their food miles in metres. A breakfast of saffron pear porridge might be followed by lunch of beetroot falafels with tzatziki and carrot hummus, with bean soup and seeded bread for dinner. Twice-daily tonic “shots” deliver botanicals such as apple cider vinegar and turmeric, valerian root and chamomile.

PHOTOGRAPHY C STODDART, TIM SHOULTZ



3. View from the hot tub. 4. Alpine hikes tailored for every fitness level. 5. Permaculture kitchen garden. 6. Yoga studio. 7. Plant-based nourishment.



WELLBEING

Aro Hā is all about holistic practices – evidence-based to support biological rejuvenation and promote lifestyle changes for those seeking them. Programmes mix morning yoga and hiking, with a changing afternoon schedule that might include mindfulness practice, “intuitive cooking” sessions, breath-work, contrast therapy and functional movement classes. Every guest enjoys a daily massage – bliss – but expect to be challenged at times, be it the 6am wake-up gong, an uphill switchback trek or a session on neuroplasticity that forces you to look within. You will, however, return to the real world fitter, calmer and more content. And you’ll smile when you open your Aro Hā last-day takeaway lunch in its little hessian pouch – for our group, a pumpkin bagel and a cacao-butter chocolate heart. aro-ha.com

