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Best Places to Travel in 2015

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Central Otago, New Zealand

It's hard to believe the South Island's rugged interior—with its undulating landscape, world-class wines, and gold-rush towns—only recently entered the international spotlight, thanks in part to a visit from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (Will and Kate) in 2014. Start near Queenstown at [Matakauri Lodge](#), where suites come with fireplaces and unobstructed views of Lake Wakatipu, then head 15 minutes east to [Amisfield Winery and Bistro](#) for a farm-to-table lunch of wild rabbit potato gnocchi, house-made charcuterie, and a standout Pinot Noir. A 10-minute drive down the road, the family-owned [Chard Farm](#), set on a bluff along the tree-lined Kawarau River, serves its Pinots, Chardonnays, and Rieslings in an intimate tasting room. From there, it's a scenic—and nail-biting—hour-long drive through the vertiginous Crown Range to Lake Wanaka. At the six-room [Whare Kea Lodge & Chalet](#), go for a lakeside hike, or venture up to the lodge's mountainside chalet for some heli-skiing. Just be back in time for the nightly multicourse menu dreamed up by U.K.-born chef James Stapley; dinner might include tender 72-hour beef short ribs with roasted shallots, or an umami-rich soup of mushrooms foraged by Stapley himself. Prefer exploring on two wheels? There's a growing number of [cycling trails](#) all over the Central Otago region, including the riverside Roxburgh Gorge. Other notable developments include the reopening of [Lake Resort Cromwell](#) and renovations of [Olivers Lodge](#), a onetime general store and homestead that will also debut a craft brewery and bakery.

—Jennifer Flowers



David Wall / Alamy

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