

## New Zealand mountain village for sale for £470,000

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By Paul Chapman in Wellington

A tiny and remote New Zealand village has been put up for sale for just NZ\$1 million (£470,000).

Included in the deal are the hotel, fire station, town hall and 18 houses.

Otira, population 44, perches at 3,445ft high in the Southern Alps of South Island. Among the town's attractions are spectacular snowcapped mountains and a pristine national park filled with native birds.



The TranzAlpine train hauling large numbers of international tourists from Christchurch to Greymouth passes through twice a day.

However, winters in the village are very cold and windy, and Otira can get cut off for days.

As for the fire station, it has no fire brigade but is rented out as a mechanic's workshop.

The Otira Hotel, which started life as a coaching stop on the alpine pass in the 1860s, is the only place for miles around to find a bed, beer or meal, and also doubles as the post office.

Almost all the buildings are made of wood, most pre-framed and assembled on site when the town was established as a base for railway and road construction in the 1920s. Many of the houses are now rented to tenants such as railway workers and retired people.

Bill and Christine Hennah, the current owners, have put Otira up for sale on New Zealand's Trade Me online auction website and with an estate agent.

Potential buyers have the option of taking the hotel only or the whole town.

The couple themselves bought Otira in 1998 after they had passed through while on holiday and "felt sorry for it". The town belonged at the time to a company that had purchased it from the former state railways corporation.

"We thought we were buying the hotel," said Mrs Hennah, whose parents emigrated to New Zealand from Hull, East Yorkshire, when she was six years old.

"Then we found out the rest of the village went with it."

The couple moved to Otira from Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, and have since worked tirelessly on restoring their properties.

Mrs Hennah said: "We had lots of energy when we came here, but I'm approaching retirement age and it's getting too much.

"The ideal buyers would be a reasonably young couple, perhaps 40-ish, with their children having moved on, or maybe a grown-up child left to help them out."

There is just one part of town that Mr and Mrs Hennah plan to hang on to. The old school closed in 1998 and they intend to turn it into their retirement home.

"There's nowhere else we'd rather be," Mrs Hennah said. "It's a totally different lifestyle here."