

HERE'S HOW IT HAPPENS: The helicopter pulls away from the ridge, wrapping you in an envelope of swirling crystal. As the cloud dissipates and sound drifts off into the atmosphere like a wind dying in the tree-tops, a weight is lifted from your life. Maybe you don't feel it at first because the void is instantly filled by what you see: Mountains on every horizon; nothing and no one in sight. But you feel it after that first run. The one where you ski 1 000 metres in snow so deep it pours up

and over your shoulders like water. It's the best skiing you've done in a lifetime of great skiing. You feel it and you know this: It's worth it. Worth it. That's the first, last and middle thing you find out about heli-skiing. After any hand-wringing over affordability or how good it might be or what the people will be like or whether you'll be able to handle it well enough that the guides won't just leave you in a crevasse somewhere, your preconceptions will be dashed on the rocks of reality. With

heli-skiing, expectations are so often empty they're almost irrelevant. You're left with legs and a warm glow. A glow that can holiday you've looked forward to forever. really want it any other way?

Would you hike for five days just to get to a beach and go for a swim? I don't think so. Besides, touring makes you smelly, cold, wet, miserable, hungry and forced to sleep in a tent like some military patrol on manoeuvre.



The higher

SOMEONE ONCE ASKED ME if I thought

skiing was expensive. I asked them how

they paid for the car they sat in for hours

every day in mind-numbing traffic and

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