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Gallivanter's Guide[©]



IDYLLIC PLACES FOR DEDICATED TRAVELLERS

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Gallivanter's Ratings.

- ✓✓✓✓✓ One in a million
- ✓✓✓✓ Extraordinary
- ✓✓✓ Highly recommended
- ✓✓✓ An acceptable choice
- ✓✓ Good in parts
- ✓ Go if you must

Healthy competition?

In my youth, I recall reading about the 'Ice Cream Wars', when various ice cream sellers in the UK sabotaged each other's vans, or stole their pitches to curtail competition.

In the 21st Century, a similar battle appears to be in progress, which I call Spa Wars. So great are the profits to be made by the manufacturers of spa products that disinformation is rife, and I pity the General Manager who is faced with this onslaught of dirty tricks, when all he/she wants to do is select a spa product that guests will appreciate, that is true to the spa's concept and that does not burden its staff with endless phone calls urging greater retail sales.

Ignorance is rife in the hotel industry about spa products, so it is easy for a ruthless manufacturer to persuade a GM that their products are the purest, the most effective, the most profitable. The big brands spend fortunes advertising and sponsoring spa supplements in glossy magazines that purport to be objective, but as we all know, there is a big difference between editorial and paid-for advertorial.

Over the years, I have talked with, and in some cases met, the owners of spa brands and have had many boisterous exchanges about the number of chemicals they use in their so-called detoxifying, health-giving unguents. One thing I have noticed is that those brands that eschew chemicals, rarely, if ever, criticise the big names, whereas the big names appear to delight in suggesting that the organic brands cannot be trusted or are not what they purport to be.

When a big brand cannot find anything bad to say about an ethical brand, they will

resort to criticising its packaging. Indeed, guests are so brainwashed into buying skincare that looks good in their bathrooms, that some would rather put up with the toxins than buy chemical-free.

Who should a General Manager turn to for impartial advice on spa products?

In my experience, many spa managers and hotel spa directors are male and come from a fitness, marketing or hotel background, which teaches them little about the hazards of chemically infused skincare. Nobody, it seems, ever asks the poor therapist what she or he thinks, which is why I always do.

Recent conversations with knowledgeable spa therapists, from Nevada, to France, England, Malaysia and Singapore, confirm what I have heard before, all over the world. They all whispered to me that they would love to use chemical-free; for who wants to spend every day immersed in toxins? And what about Health and Safety? Did anyone in hotel spa-land consider that?

Skincare that contains chemicals is akin to junk food that contains preservatives. It is not healthy. The best spas I have encountered offer treatments that not only do not harm their guests, but also take care of their therapists.

Organic produce is the fastest growing food sector. Futurists should realise that skincare is but a heartbeat behind.

Editor/Publisher

Tasting New Zealand's North Island.

This month, our friend, Denise Hummel, who hails from New York but has lived in Italy for these past three years, visited New Zealand on our behalf and checked out, with steely resolve and a sharp eye for detail, a list of hot properties that we thought would capture your imagination. Denise is an excellent and entertaining writer and I hope you enjoy her refreshing perspective in her role as Guest Editor.

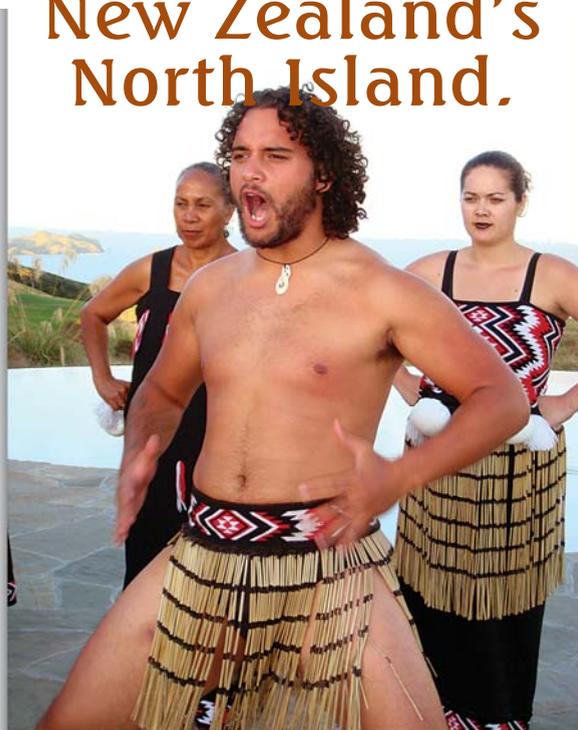
Mollies, Auckland.

Rarely does one enter a property and feel that fatigue or ill-humour evaporates immediately. Such was my first impression of Mollies; a feeling that turned from delight to profound appreciation as one day melted into the next.

I arrived after dusk; the entrance emblazoned with hydrangeas and palms. Hundreds of blue votive candles glowed in the dining room, on the terrace and in the elegant sitting room. Old met new; perspex Philippe Starck ghost chairs revealing the limestone and Oriental carpets below; period accents ranging from an 18th Century Swedish sofa, to a 17th Century farm clock and the occasional Tibetan and Chinese antique.

Owner, Frances Wilson, was poised at the Steinway baby grand; her husband, co-owner, Stephen Fitzgerald, offering a glass of Dom Perignon to a guest.

Andrea, who had greeted me moments before, put my bags down in the lobby



and moved gracefully to Frances' side, introducing "Ah, fors'è lui che l'anima" from La Traviata, the aria she was about to sing.

Frances is the owner of the finest hotel in Auckland, but she is also a world-class opera coach. Andrea, her receptionist, is also her pupil, and having just returned from performing in Paris, is back in Auckland, to the tutelage of her voice coach and her local Mollies' job, until she is called to another performance somewhere else in the world.

Jack pours me a class of Clos Henri, Sauvignon Blanc from the Marlborough region, then he takes Andrea's hand and they sing a duet from Puccini's La Bohème; and so my experience at Mollies began.

Guests mingled, nursing their drinks on the terrace or in the dining room, both bursting with white lisianthus in long sleek vases. A lovely couple from Colorado asked me to join them for dinner and we chatted incessantly until the dishes arrived; then fell silent as we savoured sweetcorn risotto with crab, lobster oil and basil, rack of New Zealand lamb, with taleggio, porcini, red cabbage and spinach, and a chocolate

marquise, with strawberry, raspberry, and molasses glazed wafer.

Later, I strolled through the classic English garden, the scents of rosemary and lavender mingling with delphiniums, roses and selvia; only the odd palm and the cadence and accent of the staff reminding me that I was in New Zealand, and not England.

My suite, #3, was exquisite. Other favourites included #1, #14, and #8. Mine was accessorised with one of the hotel's 6 baby grands and a terrace overlooking the garden. The windows and doors, which lined the suite from the living room to the bedroom, were draped in velvet, taffeta and raw silk, from the floor to the 12-foot ceiling. The living room had a frosted circular skylight, which cast natural light on

all the furnishings; 19th Century brass torches on the walls, a five foot candlestick in the corner, heated limestone flooring covered with Oriental rugs, a Victorian portrait on an antique easel, Tibetan cabinet, and white Italian sofas in front of a Victorian cast iron gas fireplace, contrasted by a signature glass and steel table with



Mollies' English garden.

ghost chairs. Fine bed linens were covered with a white mohair throw and velvet and cotton hand-quilted comforter. Each night, a unique pillow gift awaited me, à la Amanresorts.

The bathroom was Italian marble; the Jacuzzi with an adjacent open-style rain-shower. I found only two things lacking; somewhere to put my toiletries beside the elegant elongated hand basin, and a master light switch by the bed. Mollies is also a cab ride away from everything, so not ideally located if you want to walk.



Suite #3, replete with baby grand, at Mollies.

Hotel supplied photograph

All photography by Denise L. Hummel© except where indicated.



At Mollies, from left to right: Ghost chairs and votive candles set the scene for dinner. Opera with Dom Perignon. Mood lighting, Mollies style.

Breakfast comprised perfect farm-fresh poached eggs, alongside a buffet of homemade goodies, but there was also panfried brioche, soaked in cinnamon spiced eggs and cream, served with honey smoked bacon, grilled banana and maple syrup.

A warm embrace from Frances and Stephen and the sight of them waving from the driveway is the last thing I remember of one of my all-time favourite properties.

Gallivanter's Rating: ✓✓✓✓+

Kauri Cliffs, Kerikeri.

A long driveway is not always auspicious of great things to come, but when that driveway is the entrance to a 6,000 acre property of mandarin orange, kiwi, lemon and persimmon, and acres of rolling hills, disturbed only by cattle and grazing sheep, the anticipation is de-

cidedly rewarded. One is hardly prepared, however, for the sight of the Lodge at Kauri Cliffs. The vista of an emerald sea, with waves crashing onto the white sand, is the backdrop to one hundred shades of green rolling hills that comprise a world-acclaimed golf course and a gracious Manor House, with Georgian style wraparound porch. All this is just a 60 minute flight from Auckland to nearby Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands.

The Lodge is now run by Jay Robertson, the son of legendary New York financier, Julian Robertson. With significant shoes to fill, Jay, at age 28, is doing a fine job of looking after people, making each individual feel as if he or she were the only one that mattered.

Julian's initial concept was to turn the property into a golf course (and it is one of the most spectacular in the world, with water views from 15 of the holes on this par-72 course), but it was at his wife,

Josie's, insistence that he built a fully-fledged resort. She is the visionary behind the project and her design sense is stunning. It has been called a South Carolina plantation house and an East Hampton summer cottage, but Kauri Cliffs really defies traditional description because it is uniquely 'Josie'. She and New Zealand interior designer, Virginia Fisher, have either designed, discovered, or commissioned every piece of furniture. The floors are wide-plank pickled totara wood, alternated with narrow deckle-edged strips. The sitting room is enormous and flagged by fireplaces

that were rough-hewn from native kauri-wood. A central atrium opens up into further public spaces, each with its own hearth, and each accessed by walls of French doors. These lead to the wrap-around verandah that overlooks the golf course and the hills, that seem to plummet into the sea.

Throughout the public areas of the Lodge, there is a beautiful collection of eclectic treasures that meld seamlessly into the decorative style, including a Chinese zither table, a Balinese rain drum and a 19th Century French spire clock face.

The accommodations comprise 11 board and batten cottages surrounded by a subtropical-style glade created by Geoff Pickles. Their windows, french doors and verandas enjoy the same view as the main house, give or take a few silver ferns. Bedrooms are spacious Kings with hand-quilted bedding, his and hers dressing rooms, expansive bathrooms with porcelain tubs, separate rain showers, and separate loos. Opt for a Deluxe Suite, which at 900 sq ft, is rather more spacious than its 840 sq ft younger brother.

I particularly enjoyed the Owner's Cottage, an accommodation larger than my small villa in northern Italy (at 4,200 sq ft), with a private infinity pool and outdoor Jacuzzi, its own subtropical garden, separate office, master and guest suite, master and guest bathroom, butler's pantry, garage, and finally, my own golf cart to get me from place to place should laziness take hold (not an entirely rare occurrence).

Their spa was six weeks old at the time I visited, so I was honoured to be the first to review it. It is nestled on the edge of a Totara forest and overlooks a verdant fern glen and winding stream. Each treatment room is equipped with a shower and changing area and has floor to



Virginia Fisher's classic lodge design at Kauri Cliffs.



Hotel supplied photograph

Kauri Cliffs sits in 6,000 acres, overlooking an emerald sea.

ceiling views of the glen, opening out onto a private outdoor space, where you can, if you wish, enjoy your sessions al fresco.

The massage was wonderful; my therapist blessed with intuitive hands that make deep tissue massage a wonder rather than a worry. For couples, there is also a Spa Suite, with deep soaking tub, double shower and indoor/outdoor lounge



The Owner's Cottage at Kauri Cliffs.

ing areas with double chaise longue. Fitness facilities include sauna, Jacuzzi spa pool and a 100 ft heated indoor lap pool, as well as the full spectrum of exercise equipment.

There are also two artificial grass tennis courts, adult and children's mountain bikes, and a basketball hoop. Yes, unlike many New Zealand lodges, children are well catered for here.

Dinner is served in the main dining room or on the verandah, at any time you like (reservations are unnecessary), or in one of the two additional private dining rooms, upon request. Gentlemen are required to wear jackets for dinner. Julian, from one generation, and Jay, from another, have debated the dress code; Julian winning out, for now, to uphold the traditional formality of dinner. Personally, I felt it was a fitting homage

to the English chefs, Dale Gartland (ex Gidleigh Park, Devon) and Neil Brazier (ex Summer Lodge, Dorset), who manage to combine different ethnic traditions, such as Japanese, Moroccan and Indian, with local produce and native fruits like feijoa, tamarillo, orange and kiwi.

I ordered pan-seared Mahi Mahi with Baba Ghanoush, saffron pearl couscous and celery and watercress salad, and savoured every bite of what I previously proclaimed 'too beautiful to eat'. The Apple and Blueberry cobbler with butter-scotch ice cream was served on the verandah. The french doors were thrown open to the land of the long white cloud and I sat with a hand-woven mohair throw on my shoulders as I watched the sun leave the sky.

I am not a golfer, so I will not claim to understand anything about the course other than to say it is spectacularly beautiful and that I used my golf cart for sightseeing over the bluffs, rather than lugging my golf clubs. World-ranked golfer, Michael Campbell, says that the fourth hole is unquestionably the finest he has ever played (a 558-yard par 5, perched on a peninsula framed by the beautiful Takou beach).

There are so many other activities here, that you will have to force yourself to slow down. There is excellent hiking on the property. Jay will set you up with a radio, water, a picnic lunch and a map and point you towards spectacular waterfalls or one of their three beautiful private beaches. The Pink Beach, in particular, is so named because it is covered with minute pink shells and is surrounded by huge Pohutukawa trees, which flower

with incredible red blossoms around Christmas time.

There are innumerable day trips from the Lodge, including boat charters to the Bay of Islands, touring the local vineyards and villages, jet-boating, fishing, possum hunting, parasailing and horse trekking on the beach.

My favourite excursion was a scenic Lodge helicopter flight where I was treated to aerial views of Northland and the Bay of Islands; far more dramatic than anything I could have dreamed of. I saw hundreds of miles of emerald ocean spilling onto untouched beaches of white sand, thousands of acres of native bush, miles of sand dunes that looked like they had never been walked upon, wild horses running through the preserve, and natural harbours, bays and inlets that defied imagination.

We dropped down to take a trip to Tane Mahuta or 'lord of the forest' in the famous Waipoua forest. The giant kauri tree there has the largest girth of any tree in the world and my guide, Bim Hohepa, a Mauri guide with 'Footprints', gave me extraordinary insight into the Mauri culture, as well as the indigenous flora and fauna.

I have just scratched the surface of this exquisite property, but my motivations are not without purpose; I expect you to come and see for yourself and defy you to claim that I have exaggerated.

Gallivanter's Rating: ★★★★★

Huka Lodge, Taupo.

What Kauri Cliffs is to golf, Huka is to trout fishing. You enter this converted 1937 fishing lodge and, if you are not a fisherman, you want to be. Passing the huge timbered Great Room and the massive fireplace, aglow from morning to evening, you cannot fail to be entranced by the Waikato River; tree branches heavy with foliage dripping from the riverbank as if trying to drink from its waters.

The sun's rays burn through the morning mist, lifting the fog from the water's surface like slow motion steam from a kettle, the water swirling in odd currents as if trying to decide which way to go. Nearby Huka Falls beckons in the distance; a ten minute hike from the terrace.



One of Huka Lodge's airy bedrooms.

Dutchman, Alex Van Heeren bought the Lodge in 1984 from Irishman, Alan Pye, who had built four simple canvas-clad huts on a bend of the river that he recognised as an angler's paradise. Americans, Commander and Mrs Fitzhugh Green owned what is now the Owner's Cottage. Van Heeren raised the Lodge like a small child from its humble roots, to a five-star property. There is no need to discuss when the last refurbishment occurred as he, very wisely, closes the Lodge every June, and one could say that the property is in a constant state of upgrade. No loose-ends here.

There are 20 cottage-like lodge rooms nestled on the banks, with terraces abutting the lawn that slopes to the water's edge. Chaises longues dot the grass, and ducks come to visit you, so best keep your terrace doors shut, or you might find new companions when you return to your room.

Rooms are spacious, with white transparent bed drapes; wispy and romantic when they sway in the breeze from the french doors. Walls are local Tawa wood, bleached to give a light feel to the room. Ceilings are arched with white beams against taupe clapboard. There is a large dressing room and spacious ensuite bathroom with an oversized window framing

the glade; sky-lights, rain shower, separate soaking tub and separate loo. TV and telephones have been omitted to encourage total relaxation, but are available on request.

All the rooms are used to display works by some of New Zealand's foremost artists: Max Gimblet, Mervyn Taylor, Don Binney, Paul Dibble and Dick Frizell, to name but a few.

The Owner's Cottage, designed by New Zealander Virginia Fisher, is opulently furnished with unique pieces chosen for their comfort, beauty and history, such as the wonderful 1920s French oak chairs in the living room. Should guests choose to dine in the cottage, the table seats 8. However, if sociability beckons, they may



The epitome of residential charm at Huka Lodge.

take a concealed path through the grounds to the main Lodge. A well-equipped kitchen also allows for a Huka Lodge chef to cook for guests or self cater.

The den has a desk with computer and printer, and other diversions include a plasma screen TV and DVD player. A cosy fireplace and deep leather chairs complete the picture.

A large outdoor deck extends in a continuous line from the living room until it meets the amazing cantilevered infinity pool. The water line blends seamlessly into the Waikato River beyond. Yet another timbered deck at a lower level features a heated spa pool, and guests will find plenty of outdoor furniture suitable for

dining, sunbathing, reading or a quiet nap. Should you be travelling with staff, provision has been made for two escort rooms with ensuite bathrooms.

One of the delightful aspects of the Lodge is the number of unique dining areas. There is a formal dining room where guests can sit collectively and recount their activities of the day, but there are a number of private dining areas, too, for groups or families who might prefer to dine without distraction. There are also several tables à deux in the upper loft area, which are completely private and have their own balcony overlooking the river. Outdoor dining is also available, under huge ivory umbrellas with gas heaters and outdoor fireplaces.

The fare comprises a five course set menu, which can be geared to food intolerances or preferences. During my stay, dinner included a curried pumpkin soup, a delicate tuna Tataki with ratatouille, tapenade and basil pesto, a honeydew melon-shot interlude, hearty fillet of beef with potato gratin, braised beetroot, shallot and Cabernet jus, and a Valrhona chocolate tart with Manjari chocolate ice cream, which was lovely, if a touch heavy.

There is no spa, but in-room treatments are available, and activities are limitless, including helicopter flights (and transfers), four-wheel driving, horse riding, hiking, golfing, jet boating in the Huka Jet, kayaking and parasailing on Lake Taupo.

I enjoyed Huka's boat ride on the lake, navigated by Clark & Jolly. We trolled for trout and when I caught 'the big one'; a 24 inch rainbow, the Huka helicopter met us at the dock and whisked me and my catch back to the Lodge where it was cooked up for my lunch with potatoes, a salad, and a squeeze of lemon. Bliss.

Unlike some of the other lodges, there is no owner presence here or family management. Whether it is due to this, or something else, I found a certain inconsistency in staffing. Some staff members were knowledgeable, others not; some were responsive to guests' needs and requests, others not. Breakfast was weak; soggy French toast one morning and overcooked eggs the next.

General Manager, Willem Pentermann insists that guests' needs are his priority, and all in all, it is hard to find fault with the peace, tranquillity and understated



Overlooking the Waikato River at Huka Lodge.



Treetops exterior.

elegance of this pristine setting, but they will need to keep on top of their staffing to maintain the loyalty of Gallivanter's Guide guests.

Gallivanter's Rating: ✓✓✓✓

Treetops Lodge, Rotorua.

John Sax is an investor, businessman, entrepreneur and naturalist, and Treetops is his baby. The son of a fisherman, farmer, and hunter, John's exposure to the outdoors began early, and his love of nature was to remain with him always.

As an adult, he purchased the 2,500 acres, now known as Treetops, walking it with machete in hand and discovering its wonders.

When I took the walk to Bridal Veil Falls, one of the most spectacular waterfalls I have ever seen, I can only imagine the expression on his face as he followed the sound of the water forcing itself over the rocks, and ultimately happened upon the place. He has since built a small wooden platform at the base of the falls, which now has a table and four chairs, suitable for the Treetops picnic lunch. It is a slice of heaven.



Common room of 4-bedroom suite at Treetops.

Michael Helm was the American engineer charged with giving life to his client's dream of an eco-lodge, whilst insisting on an outcome of architectural pragmatism and integrity; not an easy feat and one fraught with compromise. Nevertheless, Sax's dream is alive in the sculpture of New Zealanders, Wayne Ross and Tom Muir; doors, beams, and sculpture carved from native Tawa, Rimu and Swamp Kauri that had fallen on the land. The natural spring above Bridal Veil Falls is the source for the waterfall crafted at the front entrance and also provides the pure drinking and shower water.

The property, which has over 70 km of nature hiking trails and mountain bike tracks, is a nature-lover's paradise; the delicate eco-system restored, as much as possible, to its natural state. Red deer, samba, sika, buffalo, pheasants, and native birds now thrive in their natural environment, and because New Zealand, unlike Australia, has no snakes or other poisonous or dangerous creatures, the land is a natural playground.

You can take a photography safari with local photographer, Craig Robertson, a 'Maori Indigenous Food Trail' experience with Maori, Charles Royal; hike multiple trails with or without a guide, go to the glow-worm caves, and do a spot of trout fishing or horseback riding with Diddy, an 80 year old Kiwi who looks like he is 57.

Ideally suited to couples, the property is also appropriate for families, reunions or corporate retreats. About the only reason to leave it would be to take a helicopter ride to Mount Tarawera or White Island.

Rooms have enormous potential, but currently, are somewhat challenged. Lodge rooms are suitable for families or groups travelling together, and consist of four bedrooms with an oversized living area and full kitchen; but unfortunately, the windows can be overlooked by other lodge guests. Villas offer either lake or forest views. For me, the forest views are cosier and are also closer to the lodge. Lake view rooms come with a golf cart, making the trip to the lodge less onerous. They also have a separate living area.

All villa rooms are spacious and rustic

in style, with a wood burning fireplace in each room. Bathrooms are huge, with double shower and separate Jacuzzi tub, and the mood lighting is wonderful, with a master switch by the door as well as via a bedside remote.

The rooms could, however, do with a major refurbishment. I found them dim and somewhat depressing. The TVs are old, and the remotes are almost impossible to use. The sofas are dingy and the refrigerator is on its last legs. The golf carts in the Lake View Rooms have seen better days, and the closets are small and poorly designed.

The cuisine, however, in this relaxed environment, is just as sophisticated as any of the more formal lodges, if not more so. Chef, Alan McGhee, who was trained in the UK, was gathering herbs from the garden when I met him. The display kitchen in the main lodge has a huge cooking island which opens onto the breakfast and lounge area. Chefs manage to make us guests feel that we are part of the action as we mingle for pre-dinner drinks.

Dinner was scrumptious, with cream of spinach and blue cheese soup with parmesan croutons; crisp snapper on roasted seasonal vegetables, finished with a saffron aioli, mango and passion fruit sorbet with a sticky red wine glaze; seared peppered venison medallion set upon Kumara mash, vichy baby carrots and blueberry jus, and finally, warm chocolate mud cake with saffron pears, vanilla berry salsa and crème chantilly. Guests can eat communally or privately, indoors or outdoors, as they wish.

Despite some intermittent problems with service, that consistent training could easily remedy, the staff is the highlight of this property. They are respectful yet approachable, friendly, and even, upon occasion, affectionate. There is clearly a trickle-down effect from John Sax to his superb General Manager, Heiko Kaiser, who combines the discipline of his native Germany with the warmth of his adopted New Zealand.

This property has some issues to contend with, but I ask you to keep Treetops on your radar over the next few years, as owner, John Sax is an inspiration. His per-



Treetops lounge.



View of sailboats from Maison de la Mer.

sonal mantra for Treetops is 'Gaze down at the stream that tumbles through the forest doing just what it has done for the last 10 millenniums. Be still and listen for the melodic chorus of the grey warbler or the chime of the tui. Be inspired by the activity and the creativity of the God of the Heavens, God of the Forest and the God of Humanity'.

Not a bad way to conduct your life and an even better way to vacation.

Gallivanter's Rating: ✓✓

Maison de la Mer, Akaroa.

The town of Akaroa is a treasure and worth a pause to appreciate its incredible water vistas. The village has about 500 inhabitants and they must all be quite busy, because there is a plethora of restaurants and shops.

Maison de la Mer is easily the most beautiful Heritage & Character Inn (www.heritageinns.co.nz) you will find in the southern hemisphere. Perched



Breakfast at Maison de la Mer.

on a hill overlooking the harbour and the rolling hills, it is framed by Carol and Bruce Hyland's English garden of roses, hydrangeas, rhododendrons, peonies, pansies and nasturtiums.

Their turn of the century home is laid open to three sets of lucky guests who may choose from the two rooms in the main house - the Fleur de Lys and Provence - or the separate Boathouse with its beamed cathedral ceiling, circular window overlooking the harbour, full kitchen and separate sitting area. I suggest the Provence room, because despite the spaciousness of the Boathouse, Provence is beautifully decorated and is closer to the intoxicating odours of the kitchen.

The decorative style of the Inn is French Country, with fine art, antiques, Persian carpets, crisp white Egyptian linens, and fresh flowers everywhere.

Full hotel-style amenities also include homemade chocolate chip or oatmeal cookies, coffee and tea, chocolates and a bottle of Port.

Pre-dinner drinks can be enjoyed in the main lounge or on the verandah overlooking the harbour. The light in the late afternoon is ethereal and the reflection of the water in the white sails of passing boats is dreamlike. More importantly, Carol and Bruce, apart from being the most attentive of hosts, are the kind of couple you wish lived next door. I loved their explanation of why they ultimately decided to get into the B&B business: 'It's like setting the stage for an opening night; every detail in place - a rosebud, a jar of homemade comfort food, a crisp bed sheet. The smile on a guest's face when he sees his room or takes his first bite of breakfast makes every second of it worthwhile'.

No wonder most guests keep in touch with this lovely family.

Accommodations include a gourmet breakfast, with homemade muesli and yogurt, blackberries the size of kumquats, strawberries as big as plums and twice as sweet, fresh orange juice and freshly ground coffees. Carol and Bruce come by to serve fresh croissants whilst they cook to order your breakfast of, say, Akaroa eggs scrambled with garden herbs and Akaroa salmon.

This B&B is elegance personified. Indeed, it is hard to believe that, at this price, such service, quality, and aesthetics would be possible. Throw in a view that is amongst the most beautiful in New Zealand, and you may be hard pressed to leave.

For dinner, opt for nearby restaurant, Ma Maison (Tel: +64 (03) 304 7668) for world-class cuisine by owners/chefs Rod and Natasha Parkinson.

Gallivanter's Rating: ✓✓✓

AT A GLANCE

MOLLIES.

Tel: + 64 9 376 3489. **Fax:** +64 9 378 6592. **Internet:** www.mollies.co.nz
Affiliation: Small Luxury Hotels of the World. **Rooms:** 13 suites. **Approx Rates:** *Junior Suites:* NZ\$557. *Villa Suites:* NZ\$776. *Premium Villa Suites:* NZ\$888, + 12.5% tax.

KAURI CLIFFS.

Tel: +64 9 407 0010. **Fax:** +64 9 407 0061. **Internet:** www.kauricliffs.com
Affiliation: Relais & Châteaux. **Rooms:** 22 Suites & 2-bed Owner's Cottage. **Approx Rates:** *Double Suites:* NZ\$550-880. *Double Deluxe Suites:* NZ\$650-1,040, per person per night. *2-bed Owner's Cottage:* NZ\$ 5,000-7,000. All rates inc. breakfast, pre-dinner drinks and canapés, à la carte dinner, complimentary mini-bar, ex wine & liquor, +12.5% tax.

HUKA LODGE.

Tel: +64 7 378 5791. **Fax:** +64 7 378 0427. **Internet:** www.hukalodge.com
Affiliation: The Leading Hotels of the World, Small Luxury Hotels of the World. **Rooms:** 20, inc. 4 suites. **Approx Rates:** *Lodge Rooms:* NZ\$695-1,190 per person per night. *The Owner's Cottage at Huka Lodge:* NZ\$2,780-6,995, depending upon number of occupants, + 12.5% tax, inc. breakfast, pre-dinner drinks, 5-course dinner and Taupo airport transfers, if required.

TREETOPS LODGE.

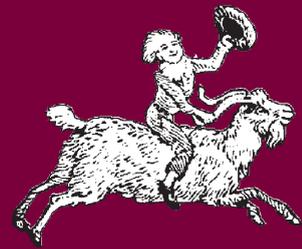
Tel: +64 7 333 2066. **Fax:** +64 7 333 2065. **Internet:** www.treetops.co.nz
Affiliation: Small Luxury Hotels of the World. **Rooms:** 8 rooms & 2 Villa Suites. **Approx Rates:** *Rooms:* NZ\$ 664-945. *Suites:* NZ\$776-1,918, per person per night, inc. 12.5% tax, breakfast, pre-dinner cocktails & dinner.

MAISON DE LA MER.

Tel: +64 3 304 8907. **Fax:** +64 3 304 8917. **Internet:** www.maisondelamer.co.nz
Affiliation: Heritage & Character Inns. **Rooms:** 3 Suites. **Approx Rates:** *Fleur de Lys & Provence:* NZ\$345. *The Boathouse:* NZ\$395, inc. tax & gourmet breakfast.

Do note that some lodges charge per person per night rather than per room.

Gallivanter's Gossip



THERE HAVE BEEN MORE BIG CHANGES at One & Only Resorts. General Manager of **One & Only Maldives at Reethi Rah**, Michael Luible, is now Regional Director for the Indian Ocean, based in Singapore. Reethi Rah Resort Manager, Michael Payne takes over there as GM. Watch out for a big shake up at One & Only **Le Saint Géran** in Mauritius. Luible has hired ex-Le Prince Maurice GM, Andrew Milton to spearhead a major refurbishment. Taking over from Andrew at **Le Prince Maurice** is Vincent Bergmann.

EXCITING NEWS from **Four Seasons Spas**. At long last, Four Seasons appear to be taking their spas super seriously. They just appointed four senior Regional Spa Directors, who will mentor, steer and lead the company to a more focussed approach, worldwide. Each regional director will have the power to choose their own direction, reflecting the specific needs of their area. The one to watch, though, is Asia Pacific, where the excellent Luisa Anderson is the holistic and chemical-free queen.

Horst Schulze, the ex-President of Ritz-Carlton, launches his first Capella Resort next month in Ireland. 30 minutes from Cork, **Capella Castlemartyr** has 85 suites, 11 Manor Suites and 1 Presidential, set in the Georgian Listed former estate of Sir Walter Raleigh, in 220 acres of park and woodland. Apart from an 18-hole links-style golf course, by Ron Kirby (opening this Autumn), the lure will be the serious spa (including indoor pool), created by Anna Bjursta of Raison d'Etre, using chemical-free Organic Pharmacy skincare. www.capellacastlemartyr.com

NOT SURPRISINGLY, there never was anywhere reasonable to stay on **Easter Island**, so when Explora announced the creation of the high-end 26-room, 4-suite **Posada de Mike**, scheduled for the end of this year, I worried about the architecture, as there is none on this volcanic wilderness. Rest assured that the look is almost as extraordinary as Easter Island's monolithic heads. Five hours from Santiago, this is one of the most isolated destinations imaginable, but intends, conversely, to be one of the most luxurious. It helps, of course, when there is no competition. www.explora.com

FOUR SEASONS HAVE MOVED THE EXCELLENT **Royal Rowe** from Langkawi to head up their Maldives operation, based currently at Landaa Giraavaru, so expect some serious improvements. **Greg Pirkle** has taken over at **Four Seasons Resort Langkawi**, which, by the way, has the best resort bar, best spa and best laundry anywhere, ever (see next month's review of Langkawi island options). In Barbados, meanwhile, Michael and Lynne Pemberton, who, over the years, have owned and run just about everything worth talking about on the island (Villa Nova being a recent example), are rumoured to be investing in a renovation of the former Sandals resort, set to become the **Four Seasons Resort Barbados**. Watch this space.

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