

Sunday Star★Times August 10, 2008

about town



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All the Christchurch party pics

escape



A whole lotta luxe

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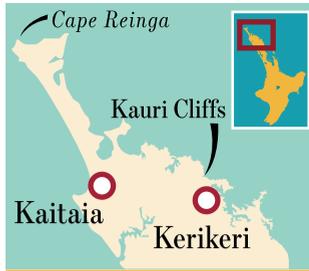
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Rich pickings



Fact file

Kauri Cliffs and Cape Kidnappers winter special

■ Sunday-Thursday, \$625 per person per night; Friday-Saturday \$675.

■ Includes a day of unlimited golf or a 50-minute massage for every night you stay, accommodation, cocktail hour, a gourmet dinner, breakfast and the use of all facilities.

■ Valid until September 30. Rate is based on double or twin share (single rooms add \$175 a night).

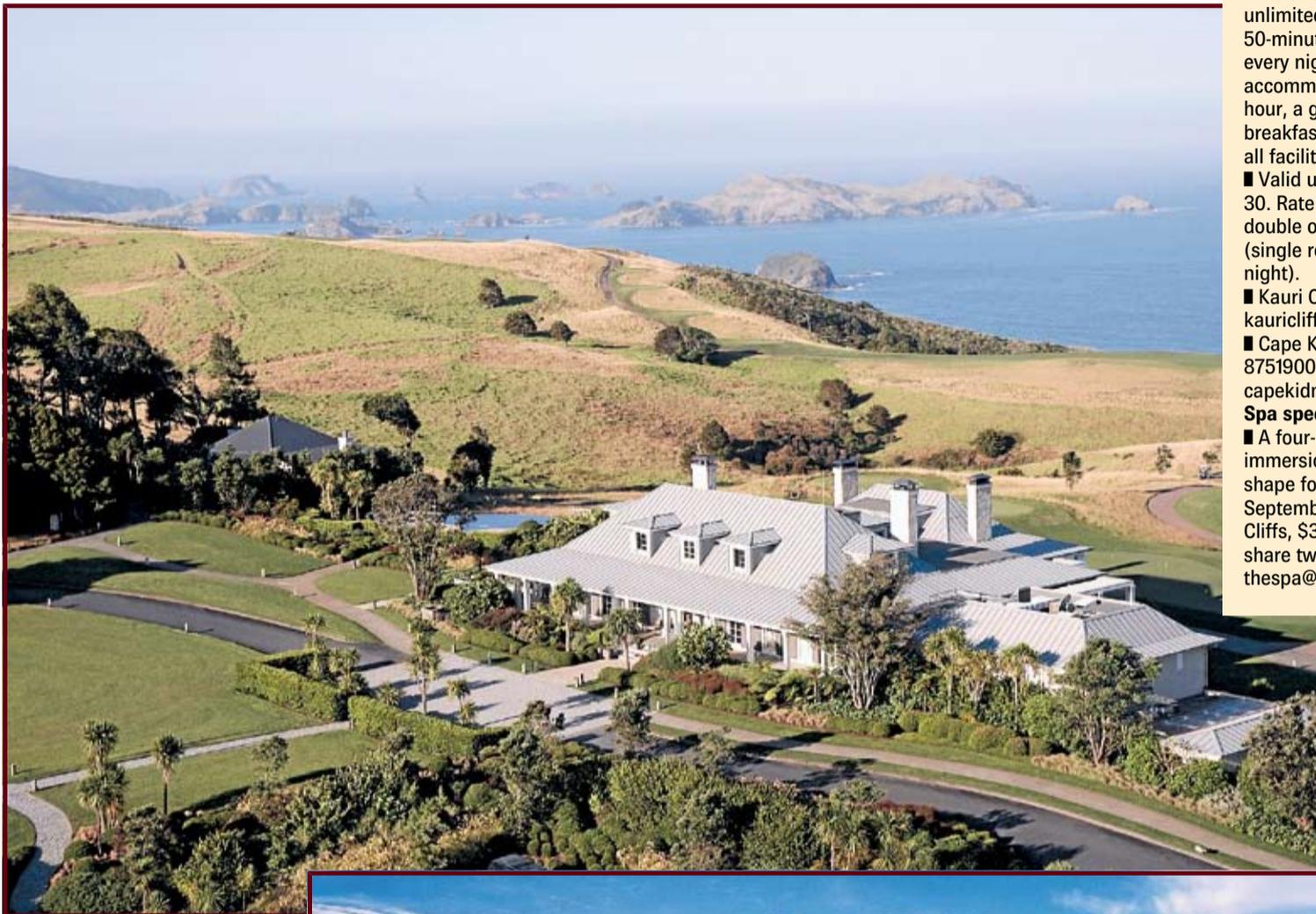
■ Kauri Cliffs: 09 4070010, kauricliffs.com

■ Cape Kidnappers: 06 8751900, capekidnappers.com

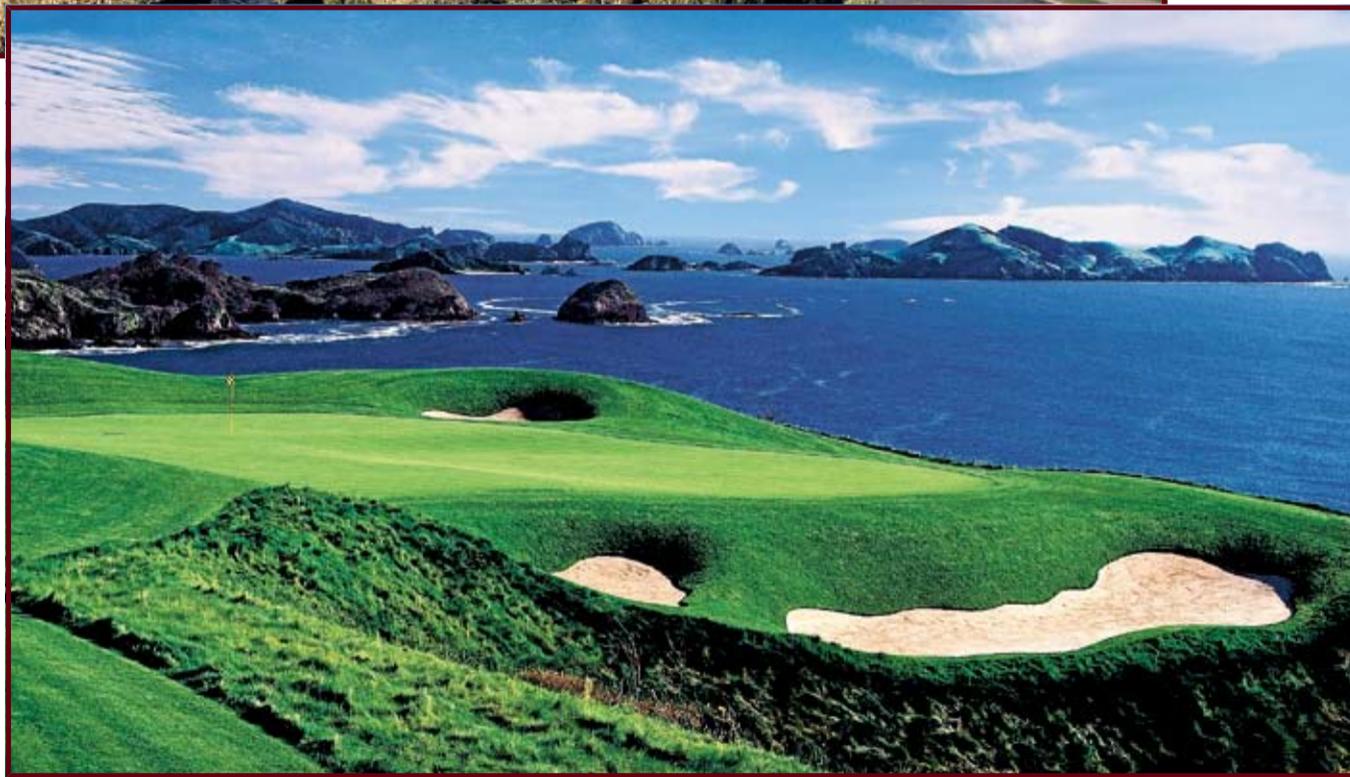
Spa special

■ A four-night spa immersion to get you into shape for summer, September 10-14 at Kauri Cliffs, \$3995 per person, share twin. Email thespa@kauricliffs.com

Kauri Cliffs has a range of ways to make up for any disappointment on the golf course.



Wondering how to celebrate that big birthday or important wedding anniversary? Do it in style at Bay of Islands luxury lodge Kauri Cliffs, says Miriyana Alexander.



MY HUSBAND worries that I set the bar ridiculously high when I took a dozen friends to a luxury lodge to celebrate my 30th. He had a point: I'm a girl who likes a treat and he probably saw a lifetime of expensive parties ahead.

Lucky he's got a few years to save for my 40th. He's going to need it: after a visit to Kauri Cliffs, 2500ha of fabulousness in the Bay of Islands, I want to go back. Soon.

Ever wondered how the other half live? Put your feet up and I'll fill you in.

They lay their heads on Italian linen in a cottage with spectacular Pacific Ocean views and a walk-in-wardrobe bigger than many Auckland apartments.

They drink martinis in front of the fire and eat

gourmet dinners (a five-course tasting menu, anyone?).

They have the run of three private beaches, including the beautiful Pink Beach, where the roaring sea has crushed shells into a bed of pink sand, and where, every Friday in summer, dinner is a barbecue on the beach.

They play golf on a course frequently deemed one of the world's best, and recover in one of two jacuzzis (indoor and out). They are massaged

and facial-ed in the spa, and they wander among quail and pheasants in a totara glen. They play tennis, ride mountainbikes, picnic at a stunning waterfall, swim in the infinity pool . . . and dream of never going home. Hang on, that was us.

Kauri Cliffs was built in majestic Matauri Bay by New York hedge-fund billionaire Julian Robertson and his wife Josie. The golf course opened in 2000, the lodge a year later. All manner of the world's rich

and famous have jetted in – Microsoft founder Bill Gates was rumoured to have stayed on his recent New Zealand visit and pop singer Justin Timberlake has played golf there.

The American plantation-style lodge is stuffed with antiques and art collected during the Robertsons' globetrotting. It has several private rooms where you can enjoy a quiet read or simply stare out to sea, and a dining room where your stomach is

All manner of the world's rich and famous have jetted in.

My husband made par on two holes, and considered that a victory of US Open-type proportions.



Discover how the other half live at Kauri Cliffs.

stretched by fabulous feasts (quail, john dory, crab, pork belly, beef, lamb and prawns were on the menu when we visited – but the highlight was a chocolate tasting plate of four fabulous creations).

Accommodation is in one of 22 luxury suites, a short golf cart ride away. Robertson opened sister property Cape Kidnappers – another luxury lodge, another world-class golf course – in the Hawke's Bay last year.

People reportedly dream of playing such courses. I'm usually in the golf-spoils-a-good-walk camp, but that's an impossible argument at Kauri Cliffs, where the view makes it easy to forget you're two balls down after just two holes (and you skip the third because the kauri swamp looks as if it goes on forever and you might easily lose the rest).

For you golf nuts, the course is a par 72 spread over 200ha. Six holes are suspended at the edge of a 150m cliff, with the Pacific Ocean and Cavalli Islands as distracting wallpaper. Friends warned my husband he shouldn't spoil his weekend by playing golf, and he will attest it is an exceptionally hard course. He made par on two holes, and considered that a victory of US Open-type proportions.

And if you don't believe him,

take a look at the Kauri Cliffs honours board. In eight years just 19 people have scored a hole-in-one, and 10 of those were on the obviously easy par three fifth. The staff do their bit – they have 130 machines to keep the course manicured.

Undoubtedly, you need deep pockets to stay and play. It costs up to \$1280 per person per night to share twin in the high season (which includes breakfast, cocktail hour and gourmet dinner) and up to \$400 for a round of golf (discounted for those staying at the lodge). Then there are the optional extras: around \$4000 for a helicopter transfer between Auckland and Kauri Cliffs (this is relatively common: in summer the helipad is often chocka, with others hovering waiting to land); \$850 for a six-hour ultimate revival in the spa (facial, massage, manicure, pedicure, morning tea, lunch, shampoo and blow dry); \$350 for a two-hour guided bird-watching tour; and \$180 for two hours' boar hunting.

But there are bargains to be had in winter (see sidebar) with the additional upside that no-one sees you duff a shot and you're not forced to share the jacuzzi.

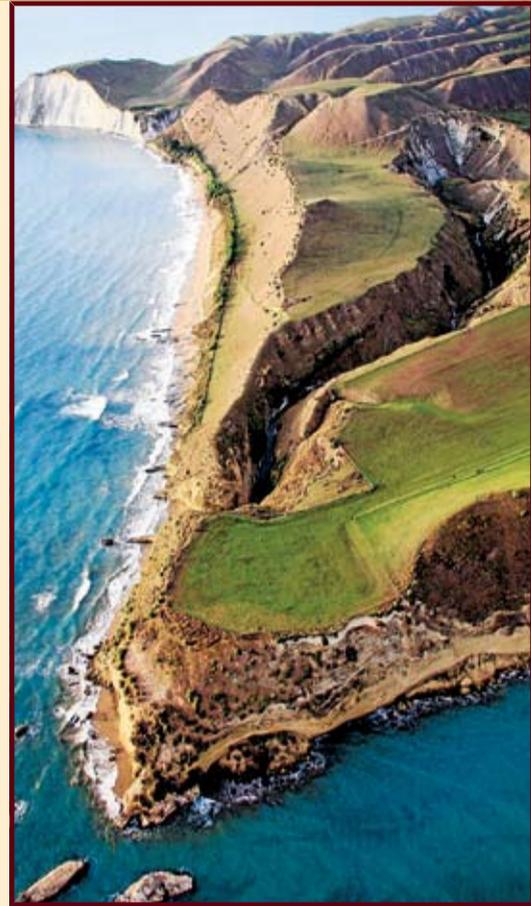
Lucky my birthday's in June. Though I am eyeing one of those spa sessions.

GIVEAWAY

WIN!

The *Sunday Star-Times* has two luxury weekends to give away – one each at Kauri Cliffs and Cape Kidnappers.

Each is worth \$5000 and includes two nights' accommodation and breakfast, two 50-minute massages, two rounds of golf, cocktail hour and dinner each night, plus breakfast. It also includes flights to Kerikeri (for Kauri Cliffs) and Napier (Cape Kidnappers). To be in to win, email escape@star-times.co.nz with "luxury weekend" in the subject line by Friday August 15. Prizes to be taken by December 14, 2008, subject to availability.



Cape Kidnappers, above, Kauri Cliffs, below.



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