

the spa at kauri cliffs

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A place to go if you want spectacular views of a majestic coastline, sumptuous food and total heavenly bliss.

I first heard about how wonderful the Kauri Cliffs Resort and Spa is from a friend who worked for three years on the Lord of the Rings movie trilogy, so it was with great anticipation that I headed off from Fox Studios in Sydney after finishing the Whaledreamers movie for a much-needed break.

Kauri Cliffs is situated in one of the world's most spectacular locations. A quick 40-minute flight from Auckland, it overlooks Matakauri Bay, just north of the famous Bay of Islands.

This 6,000-acre working farm is all about its dramatic location. The lodge emerges at the end of a long driveway overlooking four spectacular beaches and the islands below. I spent glorious days exploring the property, eating exquisite food and receiving plenty of serious, A-grade pampering.

The staff at the lodge were exemplary and the service equalled the highest standard I have experienced anywhere in the world, including the London Ritz! I have visited New Zealand regularly over the last 20 years and the delicious tasting menu at Kauri

Cliffs is definitely the best food I have ever eaten in this country - local crayfish risotto, scallops, duck, quail, crab soufflé, lamb - it just goes on and on. I discovered that the American owner of Kauri Cliffs also owns a vineyard called Dry River and I was lucky enough to share a bottle of his signature pinot noir with some other American guests who were celebrating a birthday. It was absolutely superb and I thoroughly recommend it to finish off a sublime culinary gastronomic experience!

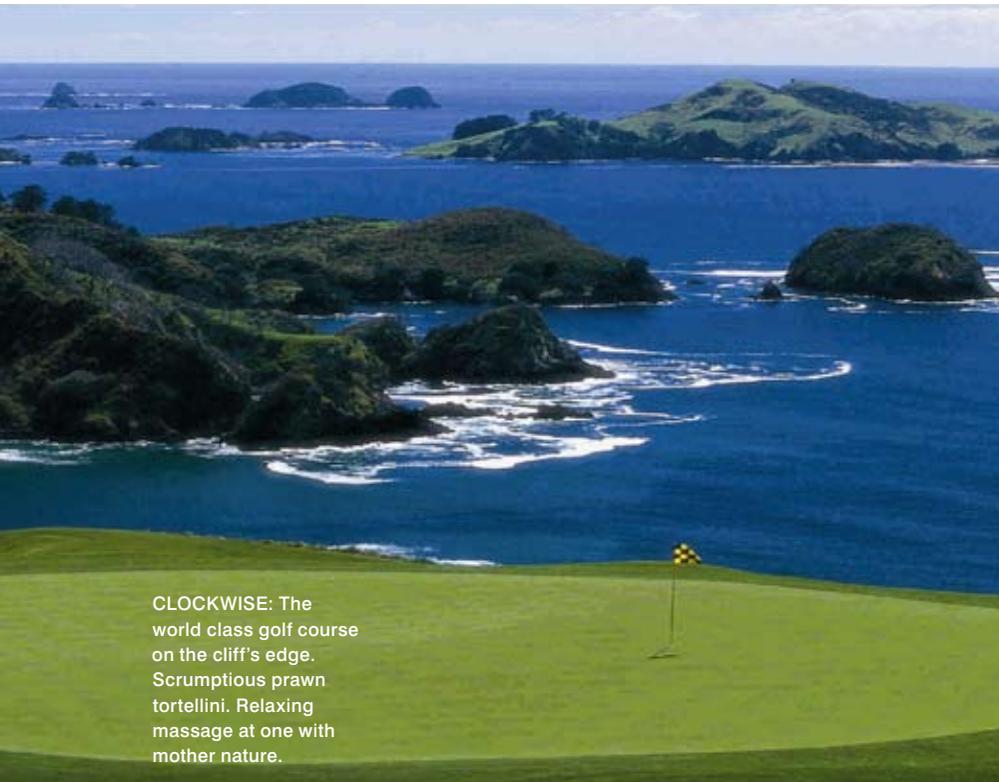
It is always a bit of a challenge to stay in a great Spa destination and hope to get some quality detox time when you're within walking distance of a 5-star out-of-this-world restaurant. However, the setting of Kauri Cliffs is so spectacular that it just demands to be explored, making it a truly inspirational place to exercise. I visited spectacular beaches (accessible by nature trails), ancient forests (where a lone majestic Kauri tree still stands) and awe-inspiring local waterfalls. There is also an amazing, world-renowned golf course, which I didn't have time to experience this visit, but I will when I next visit - for a few weeks, instead of days! Apparently many regulars fly in by helicopter just to play a few rounds and enjoy the stunning views as they walk the course.

The Spa itself nestles at the edge of a Totara Forest, overlooking a verdant fern glen and winding stream. The experience really starts while walking through the forest to the Spa from your room. The air is filled with the sound of New Zealand's native bird song. I was greeted at the Spa by Elke Liebe, who had designed two days of treatments for me. I started off with an Earth Stone Massage >



Kauri Cliffs Resort and Spa is aptly named as the beautiful lodge sits perched above the spectacular cliffs of Matakauri Bay.

escape



CLOCKWISE: The world class golf course on the cliff's edge. Scrumptious prawn tortellini. Relaxing massage at one with mother nature.



to ground me after so much 'head-space'. The therapy rooms are open to the elements, so you feel the full effect of being massaged in the forest by a stream, significantly enhancing the experience. In other Spas you hear the

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piped sounds of nature, but at Kauri Cliffs it's the real deal! The therapist first covered various points on my body with heated flat stones, then gently massaged my stress away. I drifted off into a dream space, at one with the natural world. My awakening involved a doze in the jacuzzi and a swim in the pool, which is built right into the native forest – just wonderful!

The next day, after a very active morning walk and exploration of the farm, I was back in the spa for a Kiwi Mud Wrap. There is something about being wrapped up in mud that really works for me - a sort of reconnection with the primordial swamp! This was followed by my first vichy shower and massage. It was great to continually feel the fine jets of water on my body, but I must admit I felt a bit sorry for the therapist, who had to administer a deep massage while being pelted with hot water!

On the final morning, one last massage to ready me for reality - the basic in-house deep tissue, which I think is the litmus test of a great Spa. And yes, it was strong and just as deep as it should be, but even better than ever because again it was performed in a treatment room exposed to nature, making the experience so much more relaxing in an all-embracing way. Interestingly, the treatments are still performed alfresco in the colder months, but with a fire lit beside the table!

Kauri Cliffs is without doubt one of the best Spas, in the best location, with the best food, that I have ever been to in the world. I definitely have to visit for longer next time, but that will be after I sample the other wines produced by the owner, and detox from that by riding around the entire property on horseback and trying all the other signature treatments, such as the exotic Jade and Crystal Essence Massage, which is designed to connect you to the energy of New Zealand and then... sigh... the beds are pretty good too!

The Spa at Kauri Cliffs is located in the Bay of Islands, 300km north of Auckland. In operation for less than two years, it has already made its mark on the international map of spas! ✨

For more information about Kauri Cliffs and their forthcoming retreat programs call the lodge on +64 9 407 0010 or visit www.kauricliffs.com.

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