

# A Lodge affair

Envied for their premium cachet and set amid dramatic, blockbuster locations, New Zealand's ultra exclusive 'Super Lodges' continue to earn the praise of luxury travellers and hard-nosed critics alike. In this special report, *HM* highlights some of the stand-out performers under 'the brand of the long white cloud'.

BY RODERICK EIME

## **BLANKET BAY**

### *Glenorchy*

Close your eyes and recall the jaw-dropping mountain scapes chosen by acclaimed filmmaker Peter Jackson for his "Lord of the Rings" Trilogy and you're transported to Lake Wakatipu near NZ's adventure capital, Queenstown. At the northern end of the lake is picture-perfect Blanket Bay.

A two-time HM Award winner, Blanket Bay is managed by NZ tourism identity, Philip Jenkins, and is a far cry from the rough shearer settlement that spawned the name.

Guest accommodation is in five intimate Lodge Rooms, three generous Lodge Suites in the main lodge, and four superb Chalet Suites. Furnishings retain a rustic elegance showcasing predominantly natural materials.

Rates for Lodge Rooms are NZ\$1290 per room, double occupancy with use of sports equipment and facilities as well as breakfast, pre-dinner cocktails and dinner. The self-service bar in the game room is open at any time at no extra charge.

*Blanket Bay is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Visit [www.slh.com/blanketbay/](http://www.slh.com/blanketbay/)*



Grasmere Lodge has all the hallmarks of a Hollywood blockbuster

## **GRASMERE LODGE**

### *Arthur's Pass*

Playing heavily on their dramatic location near Arthur's Pass, Grasmere Lodge will always command the attention of those looking for quiet and comfort in nostalgic colonial style. Set amidst the spectacular Southern Alps, you'll be wondering which Hollywood epic you're in.

The original homestead harks back to 1858 and, with gradual and tasteful modernisation, now presents the perfect complement to the natural grandeur of its surroundings.

Every guest room at Grasmere Lodge has one king or two single beds, two armchairs and a coffee table, CD player, mini bar, a work desk with a modern plug and chair. Each private patio or deck has two outdoor chairs for enjoying the views and fresh mountain air.

A Lake View Deluxe Room is \$NZ622 per person and includes pre-dinner cocktail hour, a five-course table d'hôte gourmet dinner, and full cooked or continental breakfast.

*Grasmere Lodge is a member of Select Hotels & Resorts, and Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Visit [www.grasmere.co.nz](http://www.grasmere.co.nz)*



Heritage and grandeur at Greenhill The Lodge

## **GREENHILL THE LODGE**

### *Hawkes Bay*

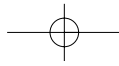
Once a stately family home, and part of the sprawling Maraekakaho Station, current owners Neil Barber and Craig Hay converted this manor into a luxury lodge in 2001.

Located in the world famous wine making region of Hawkes Bay on NZ's North Island, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother once chose the property for a two day rest stop during her Royal Tour of 1958. Greenhill The Lodge is a perfect location to showcase the renowned natural produce of New Zealand.

Guests can choose either of two King suites with a private sitting room, open fires and twin bathrooms or one of the three King rooms each with private ensuite.

Rates are NZ\$620 per person per night basis, double/twin or single occupancy and includes pre dinner drinks and canapés, a choice of continental, cooked or combined breakfast and complimentary Hastings Golf Club green fees.

*Greenhill The Lodge is a member of Select Hotels & Resorts. Visit [www.selecthotels.com/greenhill](http://www.selecthotels.com/greenhill)*



## HM IN FOCUS

Lodge Manager, Willem Penternann welcomes you to Huka



### **HUKA LODGE**

#### *Taupo*

Widely considered the top lodge in New Zealand despite fierce competition, Huka continues to garner awards from the most prestigious judges including Travel+Leisure, Condé Nast, Andrew Harper and the Robb Report.

Ideally positioned in a private hideaway adjacent the sublime Waikato River and surrounded by virtual botanic gardens, Huka Lodge was originally a private fishing lodge in the 1920s, but its reputation for fine food and natural serenity spread far and wide.

Executive chef, John Allred, enjoys a substantial reputation thanks to his international schooling courtesy of lodge owner and multimillionaire banker and investor Alex van Heeren.

Instead of grandeur and opulence, the lodge is compact and snug and gives the impression of embracing its guests. Apart from the famed Owners Cottage, Huka Lodge provides 20 guest suites, all decorated in keeping with the main lodge.

Tariffs begin at NZ\$695 per person, and includes pre-dinner drinks, five course dinner, full breakfast and full use of lodge facilities.

*Huka Lodge is a member of The Leading Hotels of the World, Select Hotels & Resorts, and Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Visit [www.hukalodge.com](http://www.hukalodge.com)*

A golfer's nirvana; Kauri Cliffs



### **KAURI CLIFFS**

#### *Matauri Bay, Bay of Islands*

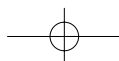
Wallowing in splendid isolation on the rim of the magnificent Bay of Islands, Kauri Cliffs has been described as a golfer's nirvana. But even if you forget your Calloways, you can still find plenty to enjoy at this premier lodge in Northland's Matauri Bay.

Something of a hidden gem the lodge is majestically set on 6,000 acres adjacent native forest and is gift-wrapped with a Michael Harman-designed par 72 championship golf course. The eleven outlying cottages are comprised of 22 units and suites and also include separate rooms for minders and/or children.

Dining is overseen by chefs Neil Brazier and Dale Gartland and highlights the best of New Zealand beef and lamb.

Rates begin at NZ\$790 per person, per night and includes pre-dinner drinks with hors d'oeuvres, a la carte dinner, full breakfast, complimentary mini-bar including domestic beers (excludes liquor and wine) and use of all lodge facilities excluding golf.

*Visit [www.kauricliffs.com](http://www.kauricliffs.com)*





Seclusion and privacy doesn't spoil the view Kawaha Point Lodge

## LAKE TAUPO LODGE

### Taupo

Even with the bounty of premium lodges throughout New Zealand it is difficult to imagine a more perfect setting for an exclusive retreat; right on the shores of beautiful Lake Taupo on the Central Plateau of New Zealand.

In 1996, Gary and Shirley Akers turned their already substantial home into a Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired architectural masterpiece and a base for nature lovers to enjoy both the serenity and excitement of local attractions including the many geothermal wonders and great trout fishing. Situated amid lush native bush and immaculately landscaped gardens the lodge has been appreciated by such luminaries as Peter Jackson and Burt Reynolds, both of whom extolled the twin virtues of impeccable hospitality and quality relaxation.

Rates for Deluxe Garden suites are NZ\$595 per person double occupancy per night and include a four course dinner, full chef breakfast and Taupo Airport transfers if required.

*Lake Taupo Lodge is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Visit [www.slh.com/taupo/](http://www.slh.com/taupo/)*



Inspirational architectural design forms the basis for Lake Taupo Lodge

## KAWAHA POINT LODGE

### Rotorua

Despite its secluded, private location, Kawaha Point Lodge commands panoramic views of Lake Rotorua that extend from the township to glorious Mount Tarawera. Hosts Tony and Margaret Seavill have transformed this grand family home into the perfect convivial retreat, offering guests the choice of eight tastefully appointed suites. Each room is tastefully appointed and boasts king size beds, air conditioning and en suite bathrooms. One of the key features of Kawaha Point Lodge is the superb dining experience made possible by Michelin-trained master chef, Silvio Sakrzewski. Their recent triumph at the New Zealand Tourism Industry Awards [Boutique Accommodation category] reinforces their claim to fame and sits perfectly with their Qualmark 5 Star rating.

Outside in the superb English-style rose gardens, guests can indulge themselves with a swim, sauna or even a game of petanque or croquet.

A Lake Front Suite inclusive of dinner, bed and breakfast is NZ\$606 per person (twin share).

*Kawaha Point Lodge is a member of Select Hotels & Resorts. Visit*

*[www.selecthotels.com/kawaha](http://www.selecthotels.com/kawaha)*

**MARUIA RIVER LODGE**

**Murchison**

Glorious streams, rivers and beech forest typify this exclusive lodge, making it a perfect choice for nature lovers, walkers and those in search of authentic New Zealand cuisine thanks to master chef, Ruth Thompson. Your hosts, Steve and Penny Bicknell, bought Maruia River Lodge in 2001. Steve's professional background is in advertising photography and his superb creations adorn the walls of the sitting room.

Accommodation is in seven luxurious detached cottages each with a super king bed, quality teak furniture, marble bathrooms with underfloor heating and covered verandah. Relax with a glass of wine as you overlook the banks of the serene Maruia River.

Rates for a one bedroom Deluxe Cottage is NZ\$520 per person per night and includes pre-dinner aperitifs, a five course dinner, a full English breakfast and use of all facilities.

*Maruia River Lodge is a member of Select Hotels & Resorts. Visit [www.selecthotels.com/maruiariver](http://www.selecthotels.com/maruiariver)*



Relax in the Sitting Room at Maruia River Lodge and admire the photography

Organic produce and natural preservation feature at Maungatautari



**MAUNGATAUTARI LODGE**

**Lake Karapiro, Cambridge**

Unlike many of its contemporaries throughout the country, Maungatautari Lodge is a relatively recent construction, built by its owner-hosts, Peter and Christine Scoular, to their own personal design. This same personal touch extends to their exemplary hospitality, which makes guests feel like old friends visiting for an extended dinner.

Set on 30ha of park-like gardens, there are stud horses and sheep just beyond the colourful expanses of lavender, organic vegetable gardens and citrus orchards. The property is also part of an ambitious wildlife conservation program that aims to preserve and protect the many threatened NZ species such as kiwi, kereru, tui, korimako (bellbirds), kokako, kaka, kakariki, hihi (stitchbirds), toutouwai (robins), skinks, geckos, giant weta and tuatara.

The lodge itself is roomy, bright and airy assisted by broad picture windows with views all the way to Lake Karapiro. Christine does most of the cooking and even occasionally invites guests into the kitchen to share in the culinary experience.

A double occupancy suite is NZ\$970 and includes dinner, bed and breakfast.

*Maungatautari Lodge is a member of Select Hotels & Resorts. Visit [www.selecthotels.com/maungatautari](http://www.selecthotels.com/maungatautari)*



Main Suite, On The Point's premier suite

**PEPPERS ON THE POINT**

**Rotorua**

Location, Location, Location. Thrusting imperiously out on the tip of Kawaha Point and into the grand expanse of Lake Rotorua, Peppers on the Point commands unparalleled views all the way to Mokoia Island. Built during the age of Jazz, this classic 1930s manor has just seven spacious suites and the ultra-exclusive Lake Villa.

A short ten minute drive from downtown, Peppers on the Point offers a convenient mix of verdant seclusion and handy proximity to local attractions.

Dining, overseen by executive chef, Reg Hawthorne, is available in small, intimate groups, in your own suite or private, romantic tables for two in the ornate dining and reception rooms downstairs.

Suites are NZ\$595 per person per night double occupancy and includes Accommodation, pre-dinner drinks with canapés, four course table d'hote dinner and full breakfast.

Visit [www.peppers.com.au/On-The-Point](http://www.peppers.com.au/On-The-Point)

**SOLITAIRE LODGE**

**Rotorua**

New Zealand's plethora of dramatic, eye-popping scenery gives lodge builders a great deal of scope and Solitaire Lodge is another ultra-premium property that takes full advantage of the stunning natural environment.

Separating the unique selling features of these lodges in such a rarefied atmosphere can be a challenge, but when one of America's top travel publishers, Fodor's, bestows their ultimate food award, you know you onto something special.

Set splendidly on the shores of gorgeous Lake Tarawera, just 25 minutes by road from Rotorua, Solitaire Lodge has all the elements of a very special retreat. The nine luxury suites, all with distinct character, are light, airy and afford magnificent views.

Rates begin at NZ\$1280 per room, per night, double occupancy and includes evening cocktail hour, four course gourmet dinner, full breakfast, use of lodge fishing dinghies and kayaks plus all trout fishing gear and tackle.

*Solitaire Lodge is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Visit [www.slh.com/solitaire/](http://www.slh.com/solitaire/)*

Solitaire Lodge overlooks gorgeous Lake Tarawera



Treetops Luxury Lodge is John Sax's vision of natural harmony

### **TREETOPS LUXURY LODGE AND ESTATE**

#### **Rotorua**

Described by the esteemed Robb Report as “an antidote to the industrial age”, Treetops Luxury Lodge and Estate is another property extracting full benefit from the abundant natural possibilities on New Zealand’s Central Plateau.

The structure itself plays strongly on a symbiosis with nature and is based on simplicity and harmony with its bush and forest surroundings. The two villas and four suites are integrated delicately with the spring-fed creek that adorns the grounds.

Treetops is a product of years of toil and the vision of New Zealand businessman John Sax. He sums up thus; “It is my hope when you leave this place in the hills and return to the valleys below, that life’s journey may be a little brighter from your experience.”

Rates begin at NZ \$815 on a per person per night basis, double/twin or single occupancy and includes breakfast, pre dinner cocktails, dinner and selected lodge activities.

*Treetops Lodge is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Visit [www.slh.com/treetops/](http://www.slh.com/treetops/)*

### **WHAREKAUHAU**

#### **Featherston**

Dig deep into your bag of superlatives and ladle generously. This 5000 acre rural retreat is actually part of a working sheep station just south of Wellington. But the smell of lanoline and organic compost clearly didn't dissuade the famously impartial Andrew Harper when he awarded Wharekauhau his Grand Award in 1998. So enamoured was he with this Edwardian-style country mansion that he awarded it again in 2004.

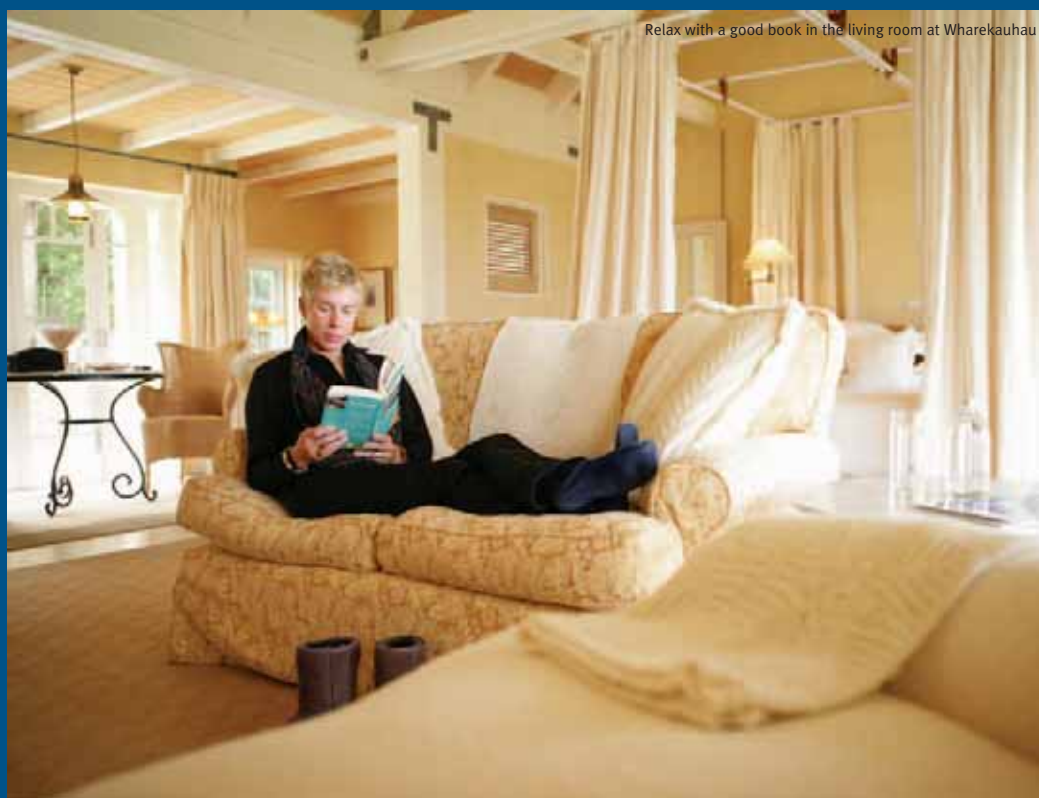
Founded in 1840, the Wharekauhau property takes 'farmstay' to an entirely new level of indulgence with many guests arriving by helicopter after a 10-minute hop from the capital.

As distinct from many other properties featured, the

Wharekauhau Country Estate makes no bones about its opulent, gentrified personality. Guests are welcomed into the Grand Hall, characterised by unusual mullioned windows that recall ancient Norman or Saxon architecture.

Rates start at NZ\$865.00 per person, double occupancy and include full breakfast, pre-dinner drinks, canapés and a gourmet dinner

*Wharekauhau is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Visit [www.slh.com/wharekauhau/](http://www.slh.com/wharekauhau/)*



Relax with a good book in the living room at Wharekauhau