

More than just a place to stay

by **FELICITY GOLDSMITH** New Zealand Regional Manager

THE UNANIMOUS view amongst the New Zealand team at Audley is that our favourite properties are those with outstanding hosts. A property can have the most spectacular location with incredible views and luxurious rooms, but if the hosting and ambiance don't match, then there is a real sense of something lacking.

All our favourite hosts bring something special to their property, be it their own life experiences, their local knowledge, their culinary skills or simply their enthusiasm, but occasionally we meet people who have a very specific interest which has driven their desire to welcome people into their homes. Here we meet a variety of hosts with a diverse range of backgrounds who run some of our favourite unique places to stay.



Malcolm, Breckenridge Lodge



Breckenridge Lodge, Napier

MALCOLM REDMOND

Breckenridge Lodge, Napier

Malcolm is a superb chef with over 25 years experience at some of New Zealand's most prestigious lodges and restaurants. His beautiful, purpose-built lodge is nestled in the heart of the Hawkes Bay wine region, looking out directly over the vines. This area is abundant in high quality local produce and superb wines, giving Malcolm access to the very best of ingredients.

Breakfast is a delight, but it is the carefully crafted four-course dinners where Malcolm's real talent shines through, giving guests the opportunity to sample a variety of his distinctive creations. Each course is also matched with bottles from Malcolm's excellent cellar, utilising local Hawkes Bay wines wherever possible.

ROD & CHRISTINE BROWN

The Summer House, Kerikeri

Long before 'sustainable tourism' became buzzwords, Rod and Christine had designed their attractive B&B with energy conservation firmly in mind, and in 2001 became the first B&B in the world to be Green Globe benchmarked. Alongside the house, Rod and Christine have nurtured citrus orchards, sub-tropical gardens and native bush, incorporating 70 indigenous plants and attracting at least 27 species of bird. The Summer House is better than carbon neutral, yet guest comfort is never compromised.

Rod's main passions are conservation, bio-geography and local history, and he is heavily involved in a number of community-based environmental projects. He is also an eco-guide

during the shoulder seasons, and is always more than happy to take guests on a tour through his beautiful grounds. Christine is the brains behind the gardens and the house, and her excellent breakfasts of fresh local produce are always superbly received by our clients.

KAY & KEES WEYTMANS

Knapdale Ecolodge, Gisborne

Kees, a forestry graduate from the Netherlands, met Kay in Nepal, and the couple returned to Kay's native Gisborne in 1987. Their mission is to develop their 3.2 hectare farm into a sustainable, outstanding eco-tourism experience; an aim which has acquired them several awards along the way, including 'North Island Farm Forester of the Year' in 2006.

The main lodge building is cosy, comfortable and extremely welcoming, but it is the surrounding farm where guests can get really involved. Much work has been put into planting native trees and a deer unit and highland cattle stud have been established. Emus and sheep keep the pasture in trim whilst a large dam and natural springs encourage wildlife. Honey, venison, fruit and vegetables are all harvested for the lodge with the surplus going to their local Gisborne Farmers' Market. Guests are invited to get as 'hands-on' as they like; Kees likes nothing better than to show his guests around the property and pass on his passion for sustainability and responsible development.

KIRI ATKINSON & NIGEL CREAN

A-Kahu, Rotorua

A-Kahu, perched on the shores of Lake Rotorua, is a delightful haven away from the busy town of Rotorua itself, but a stay here is as much an encounter with the local Te Arawa Maori people as it is an intimate homestay. Nigel's family stretches back for centuries in this area, and his knowledge of the people and their stories is immense.

Kiri is not only a wonderful hostess but also works tirelessly with a number of local Maori tourism operators, ensuring that the heritage and culture of the local Te Arawa people are maintained and shared with visitors. Together with their two sons, they welcome you to share their home, admire the views, and learn their story.



Christine and Rod, The Summer House



The jetty at A-Kahu, Rotorua



The Summer House, Kerikeri

WILLEM & CARLA VAN DE VEEN
Manawa Ridge, Coromandel Peninsula

With very little in terms of formal building experience, but a large amount of artistic flair and enthusiasm, Willem and Carla have succeeded in creating an inspiring and impressive lodge, designed and built from scratch almost entirely by their own hands. Spending years gathering and manufacturing the necessary materials such as railway sleepers, mud bricks and straw bales, the couple patiently and lovingly pieced their lodge together.

The entire property has been built with the philosophy of creating as little waste as possible, and it has a solid, reassuring atmosphere. But what makes this property really special are the added touches: Carla is an immensely talented artist and sculptor, and every part of the lodge is enhanced by her creative expertise. Not only this but they are both extremely warm and generous hosts, and their delight in sharing their dream with their guests is evident from the moment you arrive.

FACT file



Fishing with Kiri and Nigel

A three-week self-drive tour of New Zealand, staying in delightful, hosted B&Bs on both the North and South Islands costs from **£3,900 per person**. For a more varied experience, your B&B stays can easily be combined with small hotels, motels or lodges as our specialists have visited a wide variety of properties throughout the country. For further information call us on **01993 838 820**.

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Manawa Ridge, Coromandel Peninsula



Willem and Carla, Manawa Ridge

WEB plus

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