

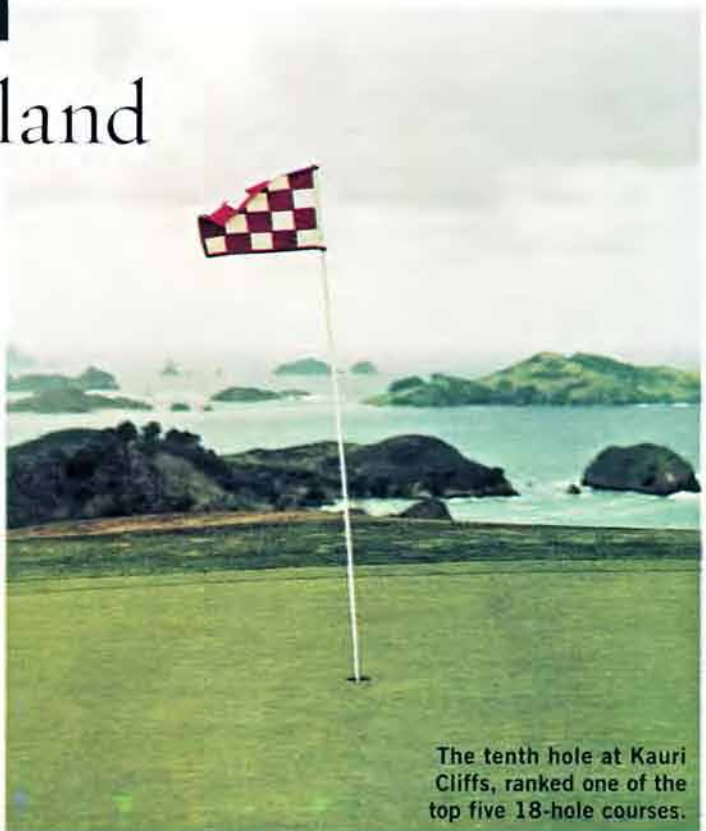
The main house of the Lodge at Kauri Cliffs. Right: A guest room in one of the eight cottages.



Betting on New Zealand

What do a titan of Wall Street and the former head of Levi Strauss know about running first-class hotels? A lot, you'll see—if you check into their lodges. By Melissa Biggs Bradley

Before he became known as “the wizard of Wall Street” for his prowess at picking stocks, Julian H. Robertson, Jr., picked New Zealand for an extended vacation. It was 1978, just after he'd ended a successful twenty-one-year career at Kidder Peabody and before he started Tiger—the hedge fund that would earn him fame and a spot on the *Forbes* 400 list—when Robertson and his wife, Josie, moved with their young sons to Auckland for a much-needed sabbatical. They got the rest they wanted—and a revelation: they fell in love with New Zealand, its majestic landscapes of fjords, glaciers, mountains, rain forests and beaches. Robertson returned five



The tenth hole at Kauri Cliffs, ranked one of the top five 18-hole courses.

TRAVELER'S NOTEBOOK

years ago to buy a 4,000-acre farm 150 miles north of Auckland. Ever the financier, he planned to buy it as an investment, but then he landed in a helicopter on one of the property's three beaches. "As soon as I saw it, I saw the golf course," explains the sixty-eight-year-old Robertson about the site that he's developed into the Kauri Cliffs course, which has already been dubbed one of the five best in the world by David Seanor of *Golfweek*. Designed by David Harman, who has worked with Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus on some of their signature courses, the par-72 Kauri Cliffs course has six oceanside holes, and all but three of its eighteen holes have sea views. "It was like buying Pebble Beach for the price of a modest New York apartment," says Robertson.

Though the setting is as beautiful as that mecca of golf, the course is a much longer trip from L.A. or New York; and when it opened in February 2000, the closest place to stay was not a four-star hotel, like the Lodge at Pebble Beach, but a sheep station down the road. Josie told her husband he had to build a hotel for the people who came to play, "but he didn't want to become Conrad Hilton," she says. In the three years that it took to finish the course, Robertson changed his mind. Staying regularly at the aforementioned sheep station, the Robertsons worked with architects from the States and New Zealand and interior designer Virginia Fisher (she had decorated the country's top hotel, Huka Lodge) to complete the Lodge at Kauri Cliffs in just ten months. Today the plantation-inspired main house, which opened in January, overlooks the golf course and Pacific views more dramatic than Pebble Beach's because of the dozens of small Cavalli Islands just off the coast.

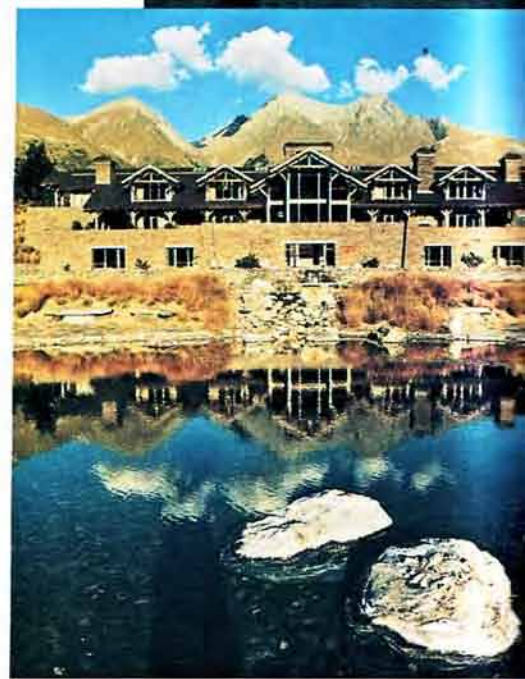
As grand as the scenery is, the minute you pass through the front door, you feel at home. And the lodge *was* home to the Robertsons and their three sons for six weeks when it opened, so they had the chance to add their final personal touches. You're greeted by a cluster of

kiwi bird sculptures on the front-hall table; they perch next to a pot of fresh daisies. To the left is the Tiger Room, where an enormous Iranian tiger carpet presides; well-chosen books, games and an entertainment center line the walls. At the end of the main hall, sun streams into a living room flanked on two sides by fireplaces. On the wooden mantels are enormous Mexican silver candlesticks and blue-and-white china urns holding hollyhock sprays. The pale, wide totara-wood planks on the floor are set between strips of concrete, a rustic look that the Robertsons copied from their house in Sun Valley. A blue-and-white theme—picked up in the dhurries, checked chairs, striped pillows and quilts—had brightened their recently redone New York apartment, so they imported that too, along with the antique armoires on which blue-and-white china is displayed in the adjacent dining room.

The luxurious feeling the main house conjures—that of staying in a super-chic person's beach house—continues in the sixteen suites, located in eight cottages nestled in "the bush," as Josie refers to a thicket of trees down a hill from the lodge. In each of them, beige and white fabrics blend with blond



Clockwise from left: Tom and Paul Tusher, owners of Blanket Bay Lodge. The pool and the sixteen guest rooms, eight of which are in the main house (bottom), overlook Lake Wakatipu.



wood floors, pale walls and rattan furniture. There's a gas fireplace that roars with the flip of a switch, a huge white pitcher filled with daisies in one corner and a balcony with a chaise facing the sea. And while each suite feels like a perfect mini beach house, the bathrooms are major productions, with gigantic porcelain tubs.

The golf course will be the biggest draw. New Zealand's golfing elite, from industrialists to rugby stars, already arrive

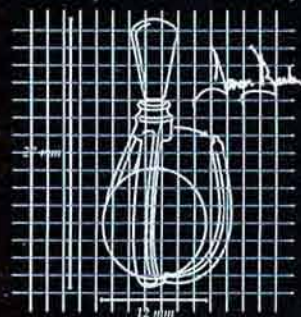
PRANA GIOIA

18kt Gold



L A M O N D O

Quartz for spirituality
Topaz for romance
Amethyst for sensuality



Neiman Marcus, Palo Alto, CA (650) 329-3300 ext # 2124
Brandeis, Caesars Place, Atlantic City, NJ (609) 340-1335
Burkett's Emporium, Nederland, TX (409) 722-5111
Cadore, Venetian Shops Las Vegas, NV (702) 696-0080
Fords Jewelers Fords, NJ Tel: (732) 738-7322
Kravit, Oceanside, NY (516) 766-3855
Martinique Inc, New York, NY (212) 869-5766
Morays Jewelers, Miami, FL (305) 374-0739
Thalheimer's, Naples, FL (941) 261-8422
William Barthman, Brooklyn NY (718) 375-1818
Govberg J. Roberts, Bala Cynwyd Philadelphia, PA (610) 664-1715
Westime, Los Angeles, CA (310) 470-1388
Dejaun, Sherman Oaks, CA (818) 783-3960

www.pranagioia.com

Toll Free (877) 772-6244

©PRANA GIOIA® 2000 All rights Reserved Patent Pending

TRAVELER'S NOTEBOOK

in their helicopters daily. As one journalist wrote of the course: "It's what the sport is all about, a battle of wits and skill, in the most perfect surroundings." But in addition to the golf, there is great deep-sea fishing, hiking (the property has a forest of New Zealand's famous sequoia-like kauri trees and a hidden waterfall), tennis, sailing, sightseeing and scuba diving. Even the swimming has options: with dolphins in Cape Brett, at one of the private beaches or in the infinity-edge pool. "For so long, New Zealand catered to the backpacker and fly-fisherman, so the lodges were spartan," says Robertson, who visited many of the best before building his own. The scouting trips also served as headhunting missions. Robertson lured away Huka Lodge's general manager; and Kauri Cliffs's superb chef, Paul Jobin, once worked at Huka. He serves Pacific Rim-influenced dishes, such as scallops with mango, bok choy, shaved coconut salad and Malay lemon-grass sauce. Whether people come for the golf or to experience New Zealand's new comfort level, Robertson believes the country's beauty will captivate them—as it did him twenty-three years ago.

Rooms at the Lodge at Kauri Cliffs range from \$210 to \$360 per person, double occupancy, depending on the season. Rates include breakfast, cocktails and dinner. 011-64-9-405-1900; fax: 405-1901; www.kauricliffs.com.

When Tom Tusher, former president and COO of Levi Strauss, was just starting out with the company, he made a frontier bet. As the twenty-nine-year-old head of the Australia/New Zealand region for Levi Strauss, he was charged with introducing America's famous blue jeans to the area. On one of his trips to Queenstown, Tusher was shown a piece of property for sale. "This is one of the most spectacular places on the planet," he recalls saying when he laid eyes on fifty-five acres at the foot of the Southern Alps and overlooking the country's third-largest freshwater lake. "It was paradise." His wife, Pauline, admitted that

he had found one of the last great frontiers, but she wasn't certain that they should buy it. "We were young, and I knew we would eventually go back to America," she recalls twenty-eight years later, sitting in a club chair in the bar of Blanket Bay Lodge, the spectacular hotel that opened on the couple's property eighteen months ago. "It took us five years to pay off the loan," she says. "And at the time, we just imagined that one day we would build a little hut, so we could come here to fly-fish."

Tom rose to become the head of Levi Strauss worldwide. The hut they dreamed of grew to a thirteen-room hotel, and the property expanded to include a 65,000-acre sheep station on crown (government-protected) land. The dirt road from Queenstown that once took more than three hours to cover has been paved over, shortening the journey to forty-five minutes. The 6,500 sheep that dot the hillsides—just as they did years ago, when the area was given its name, Blanket Bay, for the blanketed sheds under which sheep were shorn—graze in view of guests like Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston, who honeymooned at this hideaway last year. But the frontier feeling that Tom experienced when he first set foot here remains. As he said, it's paradise; only now there are amenities like a spa and a wine cellar.

"When we started thinking about building a house," explains Pauline, "we felt that the place was too special not to share." First, they considered a small fishing lodge, but the area offers so many great opportunities for kayaking, hiking, riding and heli-skiing that they didn't want to limit guests—or themselves. In fact, an entire map room is devoted to planning outdoor activities. "We had stayed in great hotels all over the world," says Tom, "so we knew what we wanted: something that felt as if it had been here for a hundred years, but with modern facilities." They envisioned a cross between a family-run Alpine lodge in Switzerland and their friends' lodgepole-pine houses in Wyoming.

WHAT'S KEEPING YOU
FROM OWNING A HOME
WITH A 26,000 SQUARE FOOT
STATE-OF-THE-ART SPA
AND TENNIS CENTER JUST
OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR?

Certainly not us.



For more information on our unique Santa Fe community - from our home sites, starting at \$250,000, to our golf courses, spa and tennis center and our equestrian center, please send in this coupon. Or you can reach us at lascampanas.com or 800-992-4250, deptTC01.


LAS CAMPANAS
SANTA FE
PERFECTION BY DESIGN

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Complete and mail to:
Las Campanas Santa Fe, 218 Camino La Tierra, Santa Fe, NM 87501
or fax to: 505-983-3610

Dept TC01

TRAVELER'S NOTEBOOK

The great room, where mammoth picture windows frame views of the Humboldt Mountains, has a fireplace made of local schist, an enormous antler chandelier and deep leather couches. The wide-plank floors were salvaged from a century-old wool-storage shed, and many of the exposed ceiling beams are 120-year-old timbers from bridges and railroads. Antique maps, tables and armoires mix with oversize upholstered furniture—one fabric is printed with fly-fishing ties, another with duck decoys. The guest rooms are beautiful, with stone fireplaces, wide wooden balconies, linens as fine as the views and enormous bathrooms with such charming touches as soap dishes with frog gondoliers. The result: exceedingly comfortable interiors that pay homage to the spectacular scenery, with a nod to history and a bit of wit.

"We figured if it doesn't work, we've got a big house," says Pauline. But it did work. Blanket Bay has already hit the lists of best new hotels in many international magazines, and it's been anointed one of the resorts of the year by Andrew Harper's *Hideaway Report*. So, like the Robertsons, the Tushers had to build another house on the property, where they stay four months of the year and where their children make occasional visits. Pauline rides horses almost daily. Tom grabs his reel and heads out on foot or by helicopter to fly-fish. "Today I caught nothing," he says, as the sun casts a glow on the mountains above us. "But I still love being out there." And from the grins of the guests heading into the bar, he's not alone in loving his frontier.

Rooms at Blanket Bay cost \$460; suites are \$710 and \$1,010. Rates include accommodations for two, breakfast, cocktails and dinner. 011-64-3-442-9442; fax: 442-9441; www.blanketbay.com. ❖

Correction: On page 163 of "Mallorca" (April), we cited incorrect rates for the Gran Hotel Son Net. Double rooms range from \$211 to \$320; suites from \$680 to \$810.