

PIGEON BAY'S *luxury escape*

OUT&ABOUT

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While first impressions of The Homestead at Annandale in picturesque Pigeon Bay are striking, it's not 'one thing' that shouts luxury five-star. Rather it's a gentle layering of quality surrounds, attention to detail, a serene ambience and the gradual awareness that nothing is left to chance...

You quickly discover the enjoyment of your stay has been thought through so thoroughly that you cannot have anything but a pleasurable, relaxed stay in an ageless bucolic setting.

But, I'm getting ahead of myself. I experienced a stay with a small group (3 couples) recently after my husband won a bid at a charity auction. What was a whimsy at the time became a gem of a weekend in a muddle of mundane wintry weeks.

Annandale is a working farm of around 4000 acres which happens to have over ten kilometres of breath-taking views along a coastline that looks across the deep blue Pacific towards Christchurch and up to The Kaikouras. The owners, Mark and Jacqui Palmer are fulfilling a dream to provide the opportunity to

show visitors a slice of real New Zealand - a luxury experience on a world-class farm with all the seclusion, peace and gourmet food expected in a luxury lodge style experience.

Carefully located on the property are four very different styles of accommodation The Homestead, and Scrubby Bay which accommodate small groups; Shepherd's Cottage and Seascape which are idyllic and wildly romantic for couples.

The Homestead, which is located across a private bridge in an extensive wooded area and surrounded by gardens, is near the Pigeon Bay Boating Club. It was built in the 1880s and has been immaculately restored in keeping with its historic pedigree. A plethora of rooms, high-ceilinged hallways, a sweeping staircase, gorgeous

wallpaper, drapes and antique mirrors surround you, with the comfort of all the mod cons that are strategically 'invisible'.

The hosts Lyndsay Jobin, general manager; and Paul Jobin, private chef, encourage you to embrace the feeling of The Homestead being your own. To make use of the elegant rooms, lounging furniture, candle-ware, beautiful glassware and silver; to pick some salad leaves or lemons from the garden and live like it's 1884 and all of your needs are taken care of. Indeed you could easily let your imagination wander to an historic murder-mystery fantasy. Could a mysterious history have been formed at one point? And would the assailant have been Colonel Mustard with the candlestick in the dining room, Professor Plum in the butler's pantry or perhaps Mrs White in the swimming pool and spa area by one of the two outdoor fire settings?

Each of the people in the group I was with experienced The Homestead in their own various ways: choosing to have an energetic game of tennis, a meander in the vegetable garden, a stroll along overhung paths or simply some rest and respite from a busy week.

Our dinner was Annandale's "We create, you serve" option and chef Paul Jobin had created a delicious three course dinner which was left in our fridge with detailed instructions on heating and plating. The wine list at Annandale is extensive and won't disappoint, or you can take your own favourites if you prefer.

After banqueting at the enormous dining table with silver candelabra flickering and fires roaring we retired to the library where festivities continued long into the night. There was something about having the Homestead to ourselves which allowed us to relax entirely and enjoy the company of friends.

Next morning Lyndsay and Paul picked us up in their four-wheel drive vehicles to take us on an expedition on the farm. Winding roads, steep drops and stunning views made it an invigorating morning, before returning to cook our gourmet breakfast.

A turn of croquet, a final stroll around the gardens and all too soon it was time to tear ourselves from a weekend that will linger long in our memories as a refreshing fix of luxurious country life, all just an hour from the city.