



Treetops Lodge manager Nico de Lange takes a break in the award-winning 1000ha bush sanctuary.
Picture / Alan Gibson

North Island resorts rated among world's best by American publication

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By JO-MARIE BROWN

Two North Island lodges have been named among the world's best hideaways for 2004 by a top American travel publication.

Treetops Lodge near Rotorua, and Wharekauhau Country Estate at Palliser Bay, Wairarapa, have been chosen alongside 22 other hotels and resorts around the world by Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report as being the most captivating spots to visit this year.

The author has spent over two decades travelling incognito to luxury retreats and the exclusive Hideaway Report is considered by many to be the ultimate travel guide: unbiased and reliable. Tourism New Zealand chief executive George Hickton said the accolades were a positive reflection on New Zealand's tourism industry.

"New Zealand luxury accommodation has won many international awards over the last few years.

"It is all proof that the quality of what we have to offer matches the best in the world," Mr Hickton said.

Treetops' owner and Auckland-based property developer, John Sax, spent 13 years developing the 1000ha bush sanctuary beneath the Horohoro Bluffs, 15km southwest of Rotorua, before opening the lodge in late 2001.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine we'd achieve such recognition so early on," he said yesterday.

Floor-to-ceiling windows provide stunning views of the native bush which surrounds the 12-room lodge.

Prices range up to \$1680 a night.

"It [the lodge] is uniquely New Zealand and I think that's what's so appealing," Mr Sax said.

"This Andrew Harper award would be the best there is and it'll be a significant boost to business."

Wharekauhau Country Estate general manager Bruce Garrett said the Hideaway Report was the most respected publication of its type and wealthy travellers "treat it like a bible".

"Despite increasing competition and the bar being constantly raised, Wharekauhau is maintaining its spot as one of the world's best small retreats."

Wharekauhau charges daily single rates of \$995 and \$765 per person for a double room.

Other New Zealand lodges have won favour with the report's readers. Last year a poll ranked Glenorchy's Blanket Bay, Taupo's Huka Lodge, Kauri Cliffs in the Bay of Islands - and Wharekauhau - among the world's top 10 resort hideaways .