



## Treetops

A family link led Melanie Barbour and James Sax to say their vows surrounded by lush Bay of Plenty forest on April 18, 2009

James and I always thought it would be special to get married at Treetops, just out of Rotorua, because of the family ties – James spent a lot of time on the property growing up and my family are dairy farmers in nearby Matamata. Plus, James proposed at the property's Bridal Veil Falls.

The lodge's natural setting is unique and tranquil. It gently makes you relax and feel as if you've escaped – which is exactly what we wanted our 160 guests to experience. And it isn't usually as busy in April, which meant we could have it to ourselves for the weekend, starting with a pre-wedding dinner on the Friday night.

We chose to marry in autumn because we love the season's vibrant leaves, yet it's still nice and warm outside. We incorporated colours that worked with the native bush – the white, lemon and hints of gold looked sensational. On the day, James and I used his white 1971 Mercedes-Benz as our wedding car, while our guests were transported from Rotorua by bus. We were married on the front lawn by our pastor Craig Clarke.

Our florist, Nina Healey from Rotorua's Living Colour, did a great job. She made me an elegant bouquet of gypsophila, dotted with crystals that glittered in the light. My bridesmaids' bouquets tied in nicely, with lemon, white and peach roses, lisianthus, gypsophila loosely placed over the top and foliage underneath. A stunning arrangement with trailing ivy was displayed on the bridal table, and the rest of the tables were decorated with gypsophila and hydrangeas in gold vases painted by family and friends.

Kate Dowman created my dream dress, incorporating parts of Mum's wedding dress and my great grandma's lace, which made it extremely sentimental and special. My favourite accessory was the gorgeous diamond and yellow-stone earrings James gave me to wear on the day. They matched my wedding ring, so they really were the cherry on top.

Our five-layer cake was made by the very talented Deb Gregorash from Sweet Art Cake Design. It was 73cm tall, with chocolate mud, white chocolate, and fruit layers, plus two layers of chocolate cake. It was covered with ivory icing and had icing roses on the very top.

Our day at Treetops was absolutely perfect in every way, and I wouldn't have changed a single thing.