



Sunlight streams into Scrubby Bay's living room. Photos: SCRUBBY BAY



The striking cedar-clad house sits on a 4000-acre working farm.



Scrubby Bay boasts a heated pool and three ocean-front suites.

A tale of two seaside escapes

Sheriden Rhodes discovers two coastal farms that offer all the trappings of eminent lodges, but still offer complete privacy.

As I step outside, the deck warm beneath my bare feet after a long, lingering twilight, the inky sky is littered with stars. There's not a breath of wind and in the faint light cast by a fingernail moon, the sweep of Scrubby Bay is visible, small waves lapping the rocky shore.

I don't think I've ever felt so contentedly alone, so completely isolated out here practically hugged by the surrounding hills and blanketed by a glittering night sky. In the still night air, a procession of cattle, slowly and methodically plod along the ridge, faintly silhouetted against the darkening night.

Gaggles of honking Canadian geese, which eat practically as much grass as sheep, wake us early the next morning. Drawing back the blinds, it feels like we've been dropped in a magical setting somewhere at the end of the world. My 6-year-old daughter, Ella, pretends she is the conductor of the noisy goose orchestra; theatrically waving a stick in the air. We take a dip in the heated pool before breakfast, breaking the mirror-like surface, which reflects the sun-drenched hills, with a boisterous splash.

We're staying at Scrubby Bay, a striking new cedar gabled bach designed by renowned architect Mark Patterson on a 4000-acre working farm, Annandale, on Canterbury's Banks Peninsula.

We had our first glimpse of Scrubby Bay the day before, as we made our way down the hairpin track in a 4WD. The 40-minute cliff-top drive from the main homestead, hugs the farm's 10-kilometre coastline affording endless views across the Pacific Ocean to the horizon.

The journey passes through more than a dozen gates (six of which we need to open) and by the time we reach our incredible home for the next few nights, we're practically farm hands.

Owner Mark Palmer, a Kiwi who has lived overseas for more than three decades, is clearly besotted with his remarkable coastal farm that previously had been in the Hay family for five generations.

But it wasn't love at first sight. Palmer first saw Annandale in the

middle of a howling nor'easter, and the gale force conditions left him with little interest in the starkly beautiful farm. A year later however, he returned by helicopter on a radiant blue sky day, and fell for the desolate appeal of the historic seaside property.

The Palmers first set about carefully restoring the historic homestead and reviving the incredible gardens, while also rebuilding the charming one-bedroomed Shepherd's Cottage on the remote northern reaches of the farm. They then turned their attention to construction of both the romantic and wonderful Seascape, and the striking Scrubby Bay.

Inside, the luxurious cedar-clad beach house has three ocean-front suites with deep baths, a bunkroom that sleeps eight, a fireplace and chimney made of stone from the farm's own quarry, and luxuriant rugs made from the wool of Annandale's sheep with a swirled pattern resembling kelp floating in the surrounding bays.

"I thought it would be great for others to experience this," Mark tells us as we head out of Pigeon Bay on the farm's latest acquisition, a luxury cruiser named Shearwater, skippered by Craig Rhodes who is a descendant from one of Akaroa's pioneering whaling families.

It's the boat's first expedition and even Craig, who has been running dolphin cruises in nearby Akaroa for many years, can't quite believe the day's rich encounters with wildlife. Not only do we spot a penguin, and two colonies of gannets and seals, but also at least 15 rare Hector's dolphins swim towards us. Excitedly Ella rushes to the back of the boat, plunging her small feet into the cold water. We watch gobsmacked as the tiny dolphins practically tickle her toes, inquisitively returning again and again for a closer look.

Over the next few days we play at being shepherd, Ella running like a mad woman after the poor perplexed sheep, have a private dinner prepared for us by Annandale chef Paul Jobin, and soak in the outdoor spa, revelling in the beauty and isolation of this extraordinary farm.

Heading north, our next destination is another exclusive property new to the rental market, set on a 600-acre working farm, bordered by 4 kilometres of coastal frontage.

While Parihoa, meaning "friendly cliffs" in Maori, also exudes isolation and complete

Fact file

More information:
newzealand.com

Staying there:

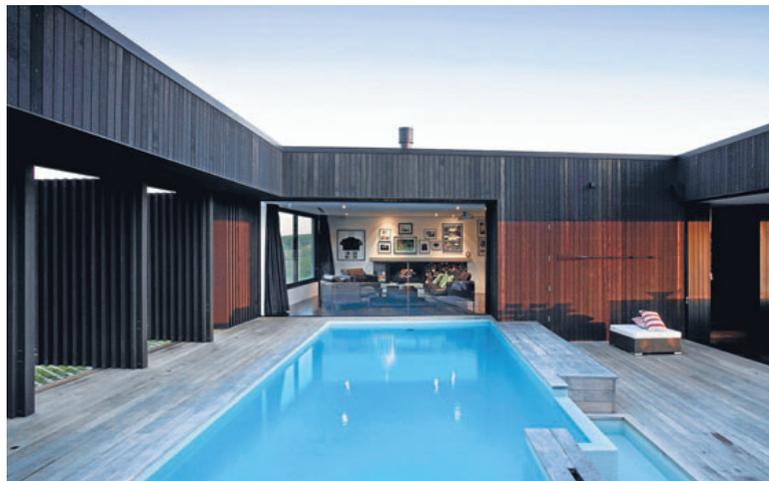
Scrubby Bay is priced from \$3495 per night for the use of two bedrooms (minimum two-night stay), including a welcome basket; full villa rate is \$4995 for up to 10 people (minimum two-night stay), including a welcome basket. Annandale's dining options, headed by executive chef Paul Jobin (former executive chef at the Lodge, Kauri Cliffs) can deliver three meals daily, from \$500 per couple. Farm-to-table pre-prepared meals are its specialty, along with bespoke activities from dolphin watching through to guided 4WD farm tours (additional cost); see annandale.com. Exclusive use of Parihoa Farm starts at \$2930 per night (weekly rates available), including on-site house manager/chef. Touch of Spice, a luxury accommodation booking and concierge service, can arrange optional activities including yoga, biking, massages, horse riding and more; see touchofspice.co.nz and parihoa.co.nz.

Getting there:

Annandale is on the Banks Peninsula, south of Christchurch, and can be reached by road or helicopter. Parihoa is at Muriwai, 35 minutes from Auckland and reached by road or helicopter.



Parihoa is perched high on a cliff overlooking the stunning black sand beaches of Auckland's west coast. Photos: PARIHOA.CO.NZ



The bach's internal courtyard has a swimming pool, hot tub and fireplace.

privacy, it's in fact a little over half an hour from Auckland. Owner Matt Chapman, an Australian based in Singapore, searched the globe for something as special as

Parihoa and now divides his time between the Lion City and this extraordinary working farm.

Unbeknown to us until we arrive, the property's incredible

high-end bach was also designed by architect Mark Patterson. Sure enough the uber-modern 641-square-metre building, positioned near the edge of a cliff overlooking the ocean, has notable similarities to Scrubby Bay. Looking out to the Tasman Sea, the fort-like structure defends itself from raging southwesterly winds creating a haven within. It stands alone enigmatically in a paddock. Aside from the gravel road, Patterson left the surrounding land untouched, just as he did with Scrubby Bay. Grass grows right up to the house, and cattle literally rub up against the weatherboards, while at Scrubby Bay sheep were our neighbours.

The westerly orientation of the house ensures it captures the exquisite coastal sunsets, which Chapman – a global human resources recruitment specialist – is particularly enamoured with. Three of the guest bedrooms are contained in their own corridor, while the master bedroom suite sits in the northwestern corner of the house.

This is a house designed for entertaining, the perfect pad for a group of friends or extended family to celebrate a milestone. The expansive living area with fireplace offers floor-to-ceiling glass slide doors, bringing the outside in and offering gobsmacking views of the Tasman. Our favourite spot was the internal courtyard complete with a heated swimming pool, six-person hot tub, and outdoor fireplace. Exterior wall panels pivot open to reveal rolling green farmland.

Unlike Scrubby Bay, which in many ways is the destination itself, Parihoa's location makes it easy for exploring the surrounding area, which we do. We take a swim with half of Auckland at Muriwai Beach with its black sand and gannet colony, tuck into breakfast at the fantastic Provenance cafe and enjoy dinner at the Tasting Shed in Kumeu, an iconic Kiwi restaurant and wine bar converted from a 1945 pear cider shed.

Returning to the farm, we are rewarded with yet another show-stopping sunset as a molten sun slips dramatically into the ocean.

We spot a lone hiker on the bordering reserve making his way along the Hilary Nature Trail, smug in the knowledge we have Parihoa's glorious seclusion all to ourselves.

Traveller

■ The writer was a guest of Annandale, Parihoa, Air New Zealand and Tourism New Zealand.