

Luxury NEW ZEALAND

Exclusively yours



Two high-end coastal farms offer all the trappings of New Zealand's eminent lodges, but you're the only guests, discovers **Sheriden Rhodes**.

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 isolated out here almost hugged by the surrounding hills and blanketed by a glittering night sky. In the still night air, a procession of cattle, slow and methodically plod along the ridge, faintly silhouetted against the darkening night.

Gaggles of honking Canadian geese, which eat almost as much grass as sheep, wake us early the next morning. Drawing back the blinds, it feels as if we've been dropped in a magical setting somewhere at the end of the world.

My six-year-old daughter pretends she is the conductor of the unique 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 New Zealand architect Mark Patterson on a 1600-hectare working farm, Annandale, on the South Island's Banks Peninsula. We got our first glimpse of Scrubby Bay the day before, as we made our way down the hairpin track in a four-wheel-drive. 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



Magical setting: (Clockwise from main) Parihoa, perched for its sea view; the heated pool at Parihoa; Scrubby Bay at Annandale Farm and its cedar-clad beach house; Scrubby Bay's striking interior.

a dozen gates, six of which we need to open, and by the time we reach our home for the next few nights, we're almost 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 was previously in the Hay family for five generations, but it wasn't love at first sight. He first saw Annandale in the middle of a howling north-easterly, which 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 restored the historic homestead and revived the gardens, while also rebuilding the one-bedroom Shepherd's Cottage on the remote northern reaches of the farm. They then constructed the romantic Seascape and the striking Scrubby Bay.

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 quarry, and 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 says as we head out of Pigeon Bay on a cruiser called Shearwater, skippered by Craig Rhodes, a descendant of 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 see 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.

During the next few days, we play at being shepherd, Ella running after the sheep, have a private dinner prepared for us by Annandale chef Paul Jobin, and take long soaks in the outdoor spa,



revelling in the beauty and isolation of this farm.

Heading north, our next destination is another exclusive property new to the rental market, set on a 240-hectare working farm, with four kilometres of coastal frontage.

Although Parihoa, meaning "friendly cliffs" in Maori, also exudes isolation and privacy, it's 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 working farm.

The property's high-end bach was also designed by Patterson,

and the uber-modern 641-square-metre building 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 south-westerlies, 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.

The westerly orientation of the house ensures it captures the coastal sunsets that Chapman is enamoured with. Three of the guest bedrooms are contained in their own corridor, while the master bedroom suite sits in the north-western 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 sliding doors, bringing the outside in and offering beautiful views of the Tasman Sea. 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 ideal 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 a show-stopping sunset as a molten sun slips into the ocean. We spot a lone hiker on the bordering reserve making his way along the Hilary Nature Trail, smug in the knowledge that we have Parihoa's glorious seclusion all to ourselves. **T**

TRIP NOTES

MORE INFORMATION
newzealand.com

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 access is also by road or helicopter. Air New Zealand flies from Sydney and Melbourne to both Christchurch

and Auckland; see airnewzealand.com.au.

STAYING THERE

Scrubby Bay costs from \$2650 per night for the use of two bedrooms (minimum two-night stay), including a welcome basket; full villa rate is \$4000 for up to six people (minimum two nights),

including a welcome basket. A chef can deliver three-course meals from \$400. Farm-to-table prepared meals are available, along with activities from dolphin watching to 4WD farm tours (extra cost); see annandale.com. Exclusive use of Parihoa Farm starts at \$2660 per night (weekly rates available), including a house

manager/chef. Booking and concierge service Touch of Spice can arrange optional activities; see parihoa.co.nz and touchofspice.co.nz.

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