

Left: The Glasshouse after dark. Above: The glazed wall of the outdoor bathroom lowers for an open-air experience.

“There aren’t enough hours in the day.” It’s the modern lament shared by almost everyone I speak to. No strangers ourselves to the fatigue brought on by the daily grind, my travel companion and I are in need of an escape. But even when the pressure builds and a vacay could be just the restorative self-care you’re after, it can be hard to justify (or wrangle) seven to 10 days away from life’s responsibilities. The answer? Forty-eight hours of luxury, less than three hours drive from downtown Auckland.

4PM FRIDAY

We arrive at the breathtaking Kauri Mountain Point near Parua Bay, Whangarei Heads, to be checked in by our host. I’m glad my travel companion is taking in the instructions on how to use the iPad-controlled sound system and outdoor eco shower, as well as the location of the private rock pools, as I am 100 percent distracted by the spectacular panoramic views to the east.

4.45PM FRIDAY

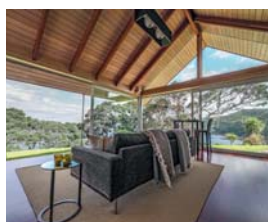
After a leisurely walk around the peninsula and property to get our bearings, we decide to crack into the welcome bottle of French plonk. It would be rude not to, *non?* The travel companion dials up a little Bob Seger, then we sit on the deck gazing out to the ocean and toast to a child and work-free weekend, enjoying the last of the sunlight.

7.30PM FRIDAY

A polite knock at the door. It’s chef Caitlin, and with her a three-course meal she has prepared and accompanied with simple heating and serving instructions. Our hosts had



The private retreat for two sits atop a 20-acre peninsula, complete with natural rock pools. Below: Inside and out merge under one roof.

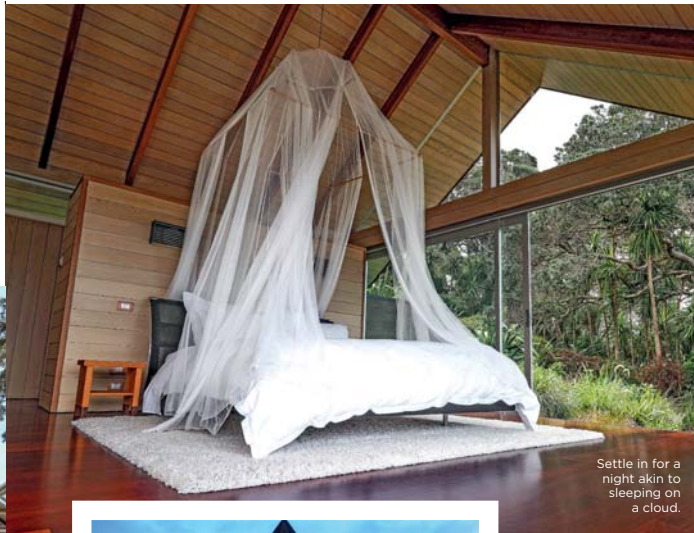


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Settle in for a night akin to sleeping on a cloud.

emailed ahead to ask our favourite foods, and Caitlin, a Parua Bay local, has created a menu around this. I get the feeling this is going to taste as good as it looks. I let my travel companion, a chef by trade, handle the plating while I sink back into a beanbag and finish my wine.

9.30PM FRIDAY

On the couch, in our robes, we look at the stars and moon reflecting on the water, as we listen to music and plot to move here.

7AM SATURDAY

We wake with the day. The bed is like a cloud – I don't think I've slept this well in years. It's a relaxed start with black coffee and breakfast in bed.

8AM SATURDAY

The detached outdoor bathroom is playfully labelled 'The long drop', but it's anything but. This is a luxurious outhouse on the water's edge, a short stroll down a stone path (there are head torches in the walk-in wardrobe should you need midnight relief). My favourite quirk is the remote-controlled, floor-to-ceiling glass of one wall, which opens to give the feeling of showering in the bush, looking out to the ocean in the distance. *Très* dreamy.



10AM SATURDAY

We've been warned about a huge storm, which is now rolling towards us, so we settle in to spend the day reading, talking, snacking and listening to music. Both dressed in our robes, of course. There is no phone signal at The Glasshouse, meaning there's no way for home or work to track us down. It's a strange feeling at first, but a sense of calm quickly follows in the radio silence. NB: There is unlimited Wi-Fi, so we still bombard Instagram with our plush-looking surroundings. #Robelife. If you didn't post it on Instagram, did it even happen?

7.30PM SATURDAY

My travel companion prepares dinner from the groceries we bought driving through Whangarei and the leftovers from last night's three-course meal. We continue to mooch and watch the rain on the windows, then turn in early.

8AM SUNDAY

Coffee and breakfast in bed. It's day two, but we feel like we've established our routine, completely in denial about returning home this afternoon.

9AM SUNDAY

The weather clears so we swap our robes for active wear and trek down to the private rock pools for a swim. Brave, considering it's autumn and it's also 9am. It's cold but magical. I'm trying to channel Brooke Shields in *Blue Lagoon*.

10AM SUNDAY

After one last shower in the outhouse (sob, sob), we pack up and take a final stroll around the property, admiring the view. Then we each upload a brag-worthy shot to our feeds.

11AM SUNDAY

Car packed, robes hung up, we head back to Auckland to resume our lives as mere mortals. We both feel revived and refreshed. An express mini-break is just the ticket for those who need to relax but can't get away completely. At \$950 per night, it's no bargain, but worth every penny. ■



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