



visual
feasts that heal

Blessed with rugged beauty and sweeping vistas painted on a canvas of Nature, New Zealand has so much to offer to those looking for the healing touch of Nature.

TEXT RACHAEL OAKES-ASH

For those seeking replenishing solace the springs of the Rotorua Region with their volcanic history are best for soaking. Waters range from acidic to alkaline treat arthritis, aches and pains and jet-lagged, weary bones.

Nature can be both kind and cruel at the same time. Thankfully, some landscapes are born for healing. Majestic vistas all-powerful in their raw beauty, jaw-dropping mountains thrust from the Earth's core and glass lakes, made more mysterious by indigenous legends have all contributed to make New Zealand one of the most beautiful places on Earth.

Blessed with such a landscape, New Zealand is truly a nation of micro-climates that range from thermal to alpine to glacial; and has landscapes that range from rainforest and rugged uninhabitable seas to beckoning crystal clear waters. Maori legends tell of warrior fighters, princess' tears creating fjords and lakes forged by sleeping giants whose hearts still beat. It is impossible for the soul not to be stirred and replenished by the splendour that is New Zealand's.

The Earth has endowed New Zealand with its own wellness agents in the form of volcanic thermal springs and mineral mud-baths combined with the healing properties of Manuka Honey, native Fijoa and Kiwi fruit.

For those seeking replenishing solace the springs of the Rotorua Region with their volcanic history are best for soaking. Waters range from acidic to alkaline treat arthritis, aches and pains and jet-lagged, weary bones. For hundreds of years, long before the white men landed, the mud from these springs has been used to detoxify.

Further south alpine terrain provides jaw-dropping views to heal the mind, and from down below, sounds of deep, green water pleading with the cliffs that stand on either side to move aside. Just being at this divine spot on Earth would surely brush away all stressful thoughts that linger.

Time spent in Middle Earth is time spent on self.

SPA DU VIN, NEW ZEALAND

www.spadivin.co.nz

The people of the ancient Roman Empire understood the value of wine as a tonic and New Zealanders have taken note of this. Hail Spa du Vin, a day spa found on the working

vineyard of Hotel du Vin in the lush fields of the Magatawhiri Valley. Five minutes south of Auckland on the North Island it has forty acres of grape vines.

Here, it's all about the journey. The destination? Bliss, though you would be forgiven for thinking Indonesia when you first enter the renovated winery and cellar. The interior of the spa building takes its design inspiration from the Balinese, with day beds, a giant hanging iron bell, and a carved Buddha that oversees the light-filled main atrium known as 'main street'.

The mezzanine provides a private yoga space for one-on-one tuition. But if love through healing is more your thing, then grab a partner and head straight for the couples treatment room for day-beds in which to lose yourselves. Double petal-filled baths and massage tables with vineyard views complete the scene.

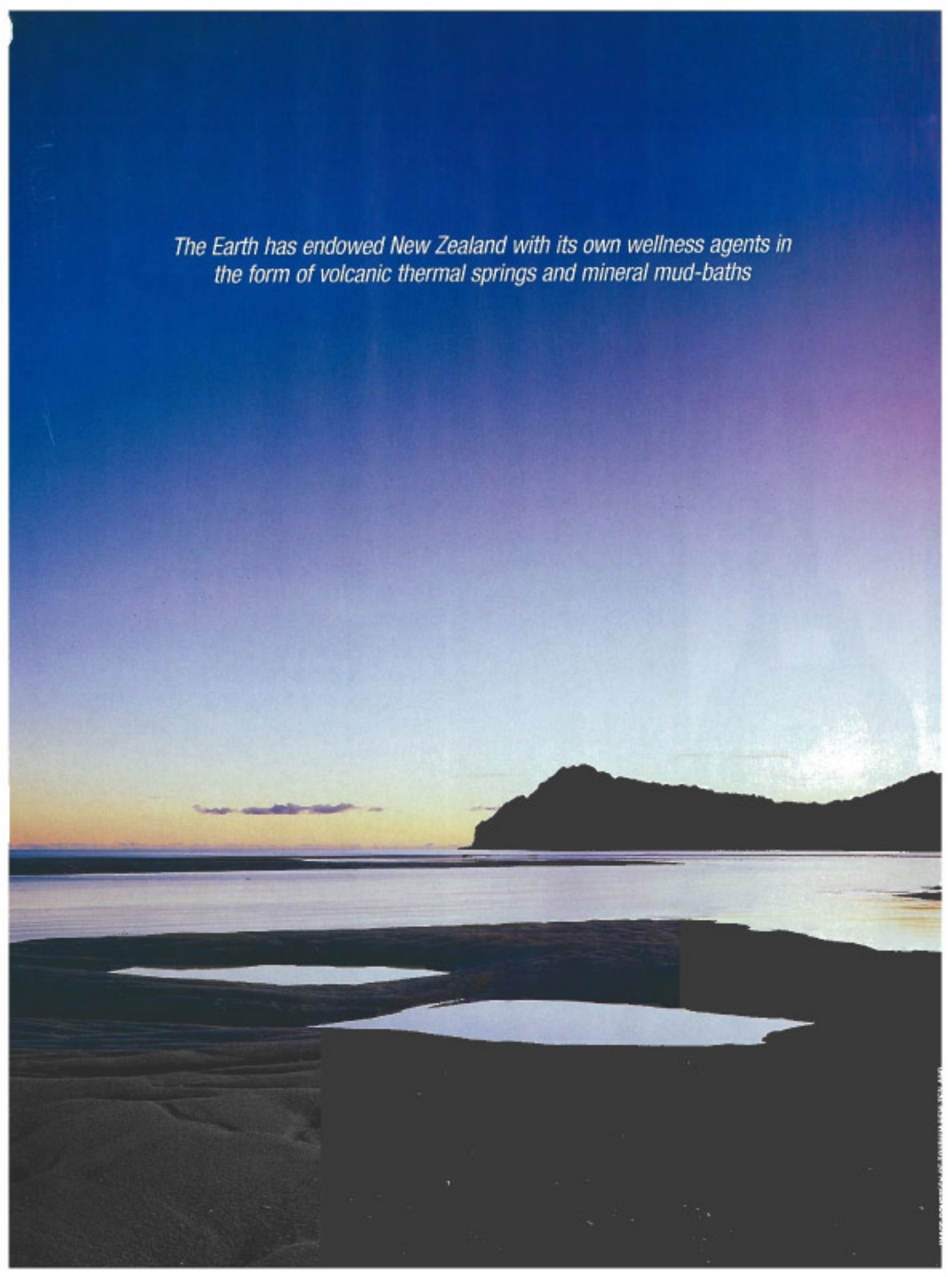
Nine treatment rooms offer NeoQi Cocoon Therapy where you can have a choice of treatments: hydrotherapy vibromassage and body sculpting, hot-stone massage and Thermal Regenerative Facials. Treatments begin with the chime of an Indian bell. When they chime a second time the treatment is over and the relaxation room beckons for *chai* tea and another good lie-down.

Specialised treatments for pregnancy, honeymoon, males and executives have been created in keeping with the urban lifestyle forty five minutes away in the country's largest city, Auckland. City folk find sanctuary in the acres of flora and fauna set on the banks of a gurgling brook.

In keeping with Spa du Vin's organic theme, facial and body products are plant-based. Sodashi, a New Zealand-founded, Australian-based, treatment product blends plant oils and plant extracts to nourish the skin. Rosehip oil for premature ageing, Bilberry Plant extract for capillary repair and Kelp Plant to cleanse the blood.

And when the spa is done there's always the *vis*. Just tell yourself it's an antioxidant, and you will surely not feel guilty for that little indulgence. ▶

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SERENITY AT MILBROOK SPA



REPAIRS AND POOLS

SPA DU VIN'S BELL ATRIUM

MILLBROOK SPA

www.millbrook.co.nz

The Southern Alps of New Zealand on the South Island are considered young by Alp standards. A mere fifteen thousand years old these snow-capped peaks rise from Lake Wakatipu like sentinels guarding the country club known as Millbrook.

Situated between the glamour of Queenstown and the harsh gold mines of Arrowtown, Millbrook was previously reserved for Tiger Wood wannabes dressed in brogues and swinging golf clubs on the eighteen-hole Sir Bob Charles course.

Golf widows need lament no more for New Zealand's largest resort spa has opened on these grounds. Steam-rooms, Turkish baths and Hydra Swiss showers all set in the backdrop of The Remarkables mountain ranges are a welcome distraction from the endless "when are they going to stop chasing that little white ball" type of questions.

The *pièce de résistance* of Millbrook Spa is the mangrove leaf shaped Vichy shower bed. Carved from one piece of Australian Arcadia Cedar and worth almost NZD20,000 a piece, this is one treatment bed not to be scratched. It forms the base for hydro-massage and exfoliation treatments and is surprisingly comfortable under water-wearied bones.

Dry rooms filled with fluffy towels, cushions and dim lights create a dry cocoon for post-wet treatments. Facials feature the velour texture of Yon-Ka, a French botanical skincare range that is made of plant and marine extracts with aromatherapy essence.

For the nail-obsessed, there's the manicure room with its reclining leather lounge chairs and foot-rests for pedi-massage. Floor to ceiling glass gives de-stressed guests a view of the golfers on course.

Winter Millbrook means open fires in the private courtyards attached to the treatment room. Summer Millbrook means cooling foot dips in the nearby brook. ●

FACT FILE

SPA DE SERVILLE

For stressed out urbanites looking for sanctuary, there's Spa de Serville. All day treatments are the feature item on the spa menu with Vichy Botanics, H2O facials, four-hand massages, herbal wraps and complimentary gourmet lunch. Float home.

Walking on Water is a unique facial with mud mask and warm paraffin for the lower leg and feet so you can float home.

Where: Auckland, New Zealand

Web: www.servillesspa.co.nz

WHAREKAUHAU LODGE

Wake up to the sounds of the Tasman making a not-so-secret rendezvous with the Pacific Ocean on Paliser Bay and experience the healing powers of third generation massage, Anna Rotman.

Wharekauhau is a place where young tribal warriors learnt about Maori spirits in times of old. There's no television or mobile phone coverage but there are comfy designer chairs on the private patio; and home-baked shortbread. Dig in.

Housed inside the Hollywood-styled private indoor swimming pool complex, Anna's spa room is reminiscent of the glamour in the era of Greta Garbo. Lie back on the world's most comfortable massage table and watch the raindrops knock playfully on the glass ceiling window above crying to be let in.

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Where: Two hours from Wellington on NZ's North Island

Web: www.wharekauhau.com.au

PARATIHO LODGE

Art plays a major role at Paratiho with sculptures and paintings from every period, school and country. The spa is intimate and appealing with Phytomer sea-plant products from France and hot-stone therapy from the gods.

Paratiho prides itself on its Balneotherapy. Sixty jets of water combine with marine products to wash away woes. Follow up with a scalp and foot massage. Before an après spa, relax in the library. For those who prefer an all-over treatment, choose from detoxifying, firming or re-mineralising body masques.

Dinner is served in the salon with fellow pampered guests so you can compare 'glows'.

Where: An hour from Nelson on NZ's South Island

Web: www.paratiho.co.nz