

# Destinations

## Forest to the sea

### Weekender

Despite a fruitless search for great coffee, **Diana Clement** finds plenty to do and see in the warm and welcoming Bay of Islands

If you fancy dreaming of big fat wetas, then take a guided night walk with Adventure Puketi. We saw dozens of the infamous insects tucked up in sheltered spots on trees and rock walls in the Puketi Forest. The giant carnivorous snails (kauri snails) we encountered are also worthy of nightmares.

I've never considered taking a guided bush tour. But having an experienced guide like Ian Candy makes a lot of sense. I never realised, until Candy got his big spotlight out, that we had such large spiders in the New Zealand bush.

He spotted all manner of night-dwelling organisms, some – such as the sheetweb spider – that I wouldn't want to meet on my own. The idea for taking a guided night walk was unexpected. I'd been perusing GrabOne's Northland deals looking for cheap eating options in the Bay of Islands when up popped a great deal from Adventure Puketi.

The plan was to spend a couple of self-indulgent days in Paihia while my daughter was at a holiday camp nearby, and then to do "something new". That turned out to be the night walk, and overnighting in a DOC cabin in the Puketi Forest.

It's testament to the "Winterless North" that we could even consider going bush for the night in the late autumn. We took pleasant dips in the sea at both Paihia and Russell, without the need for wetsuits, and couldn't resist hiring a jet ski for a blat around the bay – all pastimes reserved for summer in most places.

In Paihia we usually stay at the Sublime Apartments because we like the owner. This time, however, we decided to go waterfront and found a good deal via Wotif.com at the delightful Sea Spray Suites, which belongs to the Heritage Boutique Collection of hotels.

Unless you're arriving on a holiday weekend, it's possible to rock up, take a look around and choose suitable accommodation on the spot. There's lots of it, with numerous specials advertised on sandwich boards outside properties.

Apart from enjoying the water, our time in Paihia was spent cycling along the waterfront on our bikes, taking a \$12 harbour cruise (aka the Russell ferry), and going on a quest for the best coffee and kids' food in town.

We had little success in finding the perfect latte, despite trying hard. But the mission led us inadvertently to the best fudge I've ever eaten in my life at Get Fudged on Williams Rd, Paihia. Had I not been in my first week of training for the Auckland Half Marathon, I would have gorged myself.

The other surprise on the coffee trail was the 35 Degrees South Aquarium Restaurant and Bar on the Paihia wharf.

The coffee was passable, but more importantly, the kids' menu excellent. The 60,000 litre salt water aquarium was a hit with the little fella, as was the soccer goal shaped urinal in the men's toilets, which he dragged me in to see.

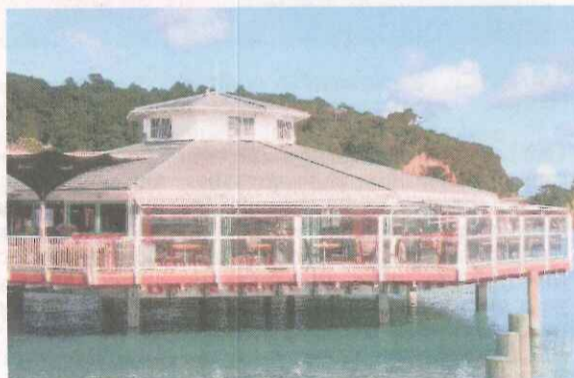
When it comes to dining, there are plenty of restaurants in Paihia. We finished our last night in the Northland town with a meat-fest at Jimmy Jack's Rib Shack.

Or do as the locals do, grab fish and chips, walk over to the beach and have a picnic.

Excellent coffee can be found at Cellini's Gelateria & Espresso kiosk on Williams Rd, where locals buy their takeaway coffee.



From top: Adventure Puketi takes walkers deep into the forest; the 35 Degrees Aquarium and Bar on the waterfront; views from the Sea Spray Suites at Paihia.



### Traveller's tips

- **Distance Auckland to Paihia:** 228km. [www.wises.co.nz/d/11/Auckland/Marsden+Road+Paihia/](http://www.wises.co.nz/d/11/Auckland/Marsden+Road+Paihia/)
- **Destination Northland** 22 Selwyn Rd. (09) 402 7683. [www.northlandnz.com/](http://www.northlandnz.com/)
- **Sea Spray Suites** 138 Marsden Rd. (09) 402 0013. [www.seaspray.co.nz](http://www.seaspray.co.nz)
- **La Spa Naturale** — Day Spa (half price treatments in the morning). 116 Marsden Rd. (09) 402 6026. [www.paihiabeach.co.nz](http://www.paihiabeach.co.nz)
- **Adventure Puketi** 476 Puketi Rd, Okaihau. (09) 401 9095. [www.adventurepuketi.co.nz](http://www.adventurepuketi.co.nz)
- **Get Fudged** Williams Rd. (09) 402 5629. [www.getfudged.co.nz](http://www.getfudged.co.nz)
- **Jimmy Jack's Rib Shack** 9 Williams Rd. (09) 402 5002. No website.
- **35 Degrees South Aquarium Restaurant and Bar** 69 Marsden Rd. (09) 402 6220. [www.35south.co.nz](http://www.35south.co.nz)

## 5

### of the best day spas in Auckland

Tired, rundown, worn out? A luxury treatment can have you feeling rejuvenated and back on your game in no time

**1 Chuan Spa at The Langham** 83 Symonds St. Ph (09) 300 2960, [www.chuanspa.co.nz](http://www.chuanspa.co.nz)

Chuan Spa at The Langham is a tranquil space designed using the principles of feng shui. Treatments include herbal steam rooms, saunas, jacuzzi, snail showers and an ice experience — you can replenish your soul, and later your stomach at The Langham's gorgeous dining rooms.

**2 The Sanctuary at Mollies Day Spa** 6 Tweed St, St Mary's Bay. Ph (09) 376 3489, [www.mollies.co.nz](http://www.mollies.co.nz)

Recently re-launched under new owners, The Sanctuary at Mollies has indulgent packages of massage, facials, body treatments and holistic Ayurvedic spa treatments. Try the signature three-hour indulgence facial, mani and pedi for \$290

**3 Spa Di Vine** 12 Taylor Rd, Waimauku. Ph (09)



411 5290, [www.spadivine.co.nz](http://www.spadivine.co.nz)

A day spa in the middle of wine country is a favourite for a couples' or friends' escape. The aptly named Napa Valley is a half-day of hot stone massage, customised facial, finishing

with tea by the fireplace (\$355). Replenish your soul at the gardens and terraces.

**4 East Day Spa** Ground Level Skycity Grand Hotel, 123 Albert St.

Ph (09) 363 7050, [www.eastdayspa.com](http://www.eastdayspa.com)

A soothing Winter Journey package to help you beat the winter blues with a foot treatment, hot towel cleanse, cocoa butter massage and a hot stone back treatment and a facial (\$165 for 75 minutes, until July 31). Or check out dine by Peter Gordon or Orbit high tea packages.

**5 Lucy & the Powder Room** 16 Morrow St, Newmarket, Auckland. Ph (09) 524 6702. The Department Store, 10 Northcroft St, Takapuna, ph (09) 488 0585, [www.stephenmarr.co.nz/powderroom](http://www.stephenmarr.co.nz/powderroom)

A stylish modern take on the beauty parlour haven of old, Lucy & the Powder Room is about serious skincare in fashion surroundings. The Autumn Package includes a Bio Actives skin treatment and Sans pH body wash for \$99.