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CLUB

January - March 2020
ISSUE 01



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Photo Credits: Sonja Piontek and The Lindis

Whenever I'm in New Zealand I have the feeling that my soul flies free. Is it the sheer beauty of the country, the overwhelming spirit of the New Zealanders or the amazing experiences you can have in this remote piece of paradise? I reckon it's a mix of all.

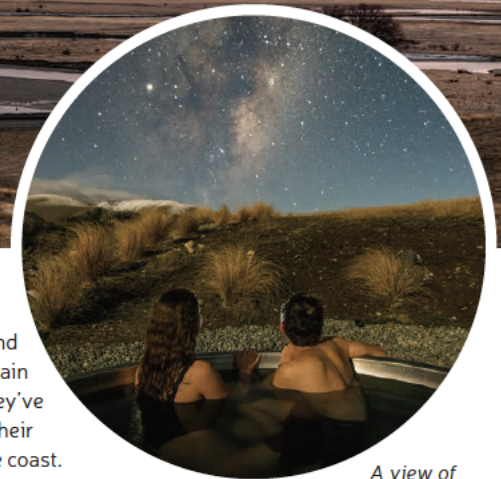


The Lindis

Our helicopter is ready to take us on what will not only be an amazing flight across the Southern Alps but more so an absolutely unforgettable experience. Dan, our pilot is a true southern man and has been with Alpine Helicopters for half of his life. I like him instantly and feel totally at ease as we soar above the snow-capped peaks, dive deep down into remote valleys, fly low over the vast native forest, rise high above the clouds and eventually land on a totally secluded West Coast beach. Well, actually it is not totally secluded - rather totally packed as Dan has landed in the middle of a huge seal colony! Our cameras ready we carefully step out and watch in awe as hundreds (!) of these beautiful creatures assess us with just the same amount of curiosity. They might not smell great but the opportunity of being so close to them, hearing their deep roars, watching the little ones play and taking some great shots up close is pretty

amazing I must say. We're kind of sad as we have to leave again but our guide Dough says they've got yet another surprise up their sleeve, so on we fly along the coast.

New Zealand's West coast is wild. Loud. Misty. Rough. Barren. Secluded. But equally captivating, thrilling and unique. A few kilometres down we land on a black sand beach and Doug asks us to get out. He then takes off the helicopter's door and attaches a rescue hook and a long metal wire. Hmmm...no idea what kind of 'surprise' the boys have prepared but let the show begin! And what a show it is! With James Bond like precision they fly the heli out to the open sea, aim the rescue hook over a little red buoy that wildly bounces in the roaring waves and soon pull out a huge metal crate. A chopper, a hook and a crate in the sea? That's what I call helicopter crayfish catching at it's very best!



A view of the milky way from The Lindis

Once we have picked a crayfish each, the rest are released, the crate put back into place and we take off again. But wait, there's another highlight soon awaiting us - a landing on top of a spectacular glacier for some stunning poser shots, more ohs and ahs and a fun little snowball fight. Can this day get any better? It actually can as our crayfish are yet to be had! As this is not your normal helicopter flight but a helicopter excursion of unparalleled superlatives we obviously don't just have our pray cooked in a fine restaurant. Alpine kitchen and luxury picnic is the way to go – so we soon sit down at the glamping table on a tussock framed plateau high in up in the mountains, enjoy a glass of chilled champagne while Dan and Dough cook our crayfish to perfection on a little gas stove they brought along. This is quite the way to enjoy a luxurious meal and my friend Tina swears she had never had better crayfish before.

After lunch the adventure continues as we fly through the magnificent Milford Sound – NZ's most famous fjord. It is yet another of those moments in life where I feel nothing but gratitude - to be able to experience such breath-taking beauty as well as money-can't-buy-experiences.

Rather than going back to Queenstown Dan takes us to yet another very special place – the newly opened superlodge The Lindis – an iconic and architecturally distinct luxury lodge located in the pristine Ahuriri Valley. It is hard to describe what makes The Lindis so special as it is appealing



Arrival at Lindis via Heli



A unique lunch experience via heli

in so many ways. Is it the unique setting away from civilisation in the most beautiful scenery? Is it the five designer suites and the stunning mirror pods that invite you to forget any stress you ever had? Is it the unparalleled wine cellar? The high country New Zealand hospitality? Or the impressive stargazing you can do whilst relaxing in your hot bubble bath once the sun has set over the surrounding mountain peaks? The Lindis clearly is a place where the quiet of nature becomes amplified and where connecting to the land seems to happen simply by default. I feel totally at home and at ease in this unique place and can see why the distinct travellers from around the world have fallen in love with this new designer luxury lodge.

If you want to find out more about the unforgettable experiences to be had in New Zealand do get in touch with Singapore based luxury agency Sonnenkind, who is happy to curate a dream trip just for you.



Crayfish for lunch



Seals spotted



An interior of the Lindis



A suite at The Lindis