

hot spots Kaimata Retreat, New Zealand

Where is it? Perched high on a cliff on the Otago Peninsula of New Zealand's South Island, Kaimata Retreat is a distant escape from the modern world. Nonetheless, the city of Dunedin is only 40 minutes' drive away.

Is it back to basics? Nature provides the setting with lush green hills, pristine waters and a plethora of wild life for the soundtrack. The retreat itself is far from basic, however. Made from locally milled macrocarpa, the three-bedroom shrine to eco design has been built from scratch. The caretakers and owners, Kyle and Rachel, live in a nearby cottage with their three children, a pet dog and a blind chicken.

Tell me more: the house is set on two hectares and floor-to-ceiling windows

ensure nature takes pride of place. A wraparound deck and landscaped courtyard provide plenty of outdoor space while an open stone fireplace inside keeps guests warm in winter. The interior features soothing muted tones enriched by the luxe textures of imported carpets, copper and exposed wood. Works by local artists line the walls and the well-stocked fridge is filled with regional produce such as central Otago wines and Bluff oysters. The dining area seats eight and the open-plan kitchen has all mod cons. Local chefs can be brought in for dinner parties or guests can cook for themselves.

Where do I sleep? The bedrooms are named after native birds that visit the property: Korimako, Kahu and Kotare. Each comes with underfloor heating, en-



Rachael Oakes-Ash

suite bathrooms stocked with bath products by New Zealand brand Living Nature and great views.

What is there to do? Everything and nothing. Grab a book and curl up by the fire, lounge on the deck in the sun, wander the hills, visit the nearby castle or take an adventure safari with Farmer Dave, who owns the neighbouring property – 400 hectares of prime farmland on the rugged coast. He also owns Papanui Beach, home

to the yellow-eyed penguin – the most endangered of the species – sea lions and fur and elephant seals.

What's the bottom line? Nightly rates for the entire retreat range from NZ\$550 (HK\$3,250) in winter to NZ\$750. Individual rooms start at NZ\$190.

Kaimata Retreat is at 297 Cape Saunders Road, Otago Peninsula, Dunedin, New Zealand, tel: 64 3 456 3443; www.kaimataz.com. Rachael Oakes-Ash

spree Naha, Okinawa

Laid-back Naha is the capital of Okinawa, the southernmost of Japan's prefectures. It's also the largest city on Okinawa island, though it only has 320,000 residents, and its position in the East China Sea means it's closer to Hong Kong than to Tokyo.

Tourist posters in Japan paint Okinawa as a domestic version of the Hawaiian islands, and Naha is a great place to shop for holiday gifts and clothing.

A stroll down the central strip, Kokusai-dori (below right), feels like being in an Elvis movie filmed with a Japanese cast, with crew-cropped United States marines from the local base as extras.

This is a great place to find "aloha shirts", or Hawaiian shirts as they're otherwise known. Though it seems strange to be shopping for the Japanese version, it's appropriate enough – the original aloha shirts were sewn out of kimono fabric by a Chinese merchant in 1930s Waikiki, Honolulu.

Paikaji (K2 Building, Kokusai-dori – next to the Mitsukoshi department store – tel: 81 098 863 5670; www.paikaji.co.jp) is one of Okinawa's top makers of the shirts. Traditional short-sleeved versions run from 10,290 yen (HK\$730) to 18,900 yen. But check through the sale items – if you're lucky, you could pick up a bargain.

Paikaji has an extensive range of shirts, from the conventional floral cotton Hawaiian number to rayon variants with cool Asian designs featuring carp, goldfish or bamboo. It also sells long-sleeve shirts, as well as dresses, blouses and fitted women's aloha shirts, and even versions for children.

It's also worth checking out **Mango House** (tel: 81 098 861 4932; www.mango-house.jp), which has two stores along Kokusai, as well as a third elsewhere in the city. The designs aren't as imaginative as at Paikaji but the prices are more down-to-earth. Cotton men's aloha shirts

start at 5,600 yen and range up to 8,400 yen. Women's shirts are even a little cheaper, starting at 5,200 yen.

Cosmic Co (headquarters next to Makishi monorail station, six shops on Kokusai, tel: 81 098 958 0902; www.cosmic-world.net) will rustle you up a shirt decorated with the Japanese characters of your choice.

While in Naha, it is worth picking up some awamori: Okinawan firewater. If sake is rice wine and sochu is rice whisky, then awamori is rice tequila, often making drinkers a little crazy.

A large bottle will cost about 1,500 yen. There's a store that specialises in awamori on Kokusai called **Tsuboya Saketen** (tel: 81 098 861 3431).

Okinawan lion statues (below left) are another popular souvenir. **Kubagasa-ya** (tel: 81 098 861 9853) sells small colourful versions for around 840 yen; 2,600 yen for a larger traditional pair. Alex Frew McMillan



Pictures: Alex Frew McMillan



review

Journeys of a Lifetime: 500 of the World's Greatest Trips
(National Geographic)

For those dreaming of faraway places this book is a good substitute for a pocketful of airline tickets.

Each chapter in *Journeys of a Lifetime* flags up a different kind of transport or trip. Some landmarks, such as the Great Wall of China, are predictable. Most, however, are unusual. For instance, Kerala waters and Pakistan's Grand Trunk Road enter the frame.

Amish country makes a refreshing change from five-star fodder. A photograph depicts a ginger-bearded man grinning into the camera. The picture shows members of the Philadelphia sect that shuns technology are not necessarily miserable puritans.

Dotted around the book, top-ten lists jazz up the formula. Think bridges to cross, shopping streets to explore, bus journeys, cycle rides and cable-car jaunts.

Rightly, Hong Kong's Peak Tram makes the cut in the last category. "The funicular railway rises briskly up Victoria Peak – at a gradient of 4 to 27 degrees – so that all the buildings seem to be leaning over as you pass by!"

This description embodies the book's factual yet breezy style, marred by the exclamation mark, normally the sign of the amateur straining for effect.

As you would expect of National Geographic, the photos are good. The most captivating shot depicts a female farmhand at the edge of a sea of chilli peppers – a key ingredient in Goan cuisine.

Overall, the effect of the book, which mirrors the spirit of *The Condé Nast Traveler Book of Unforgettable Journeys*, is hypnotic. David Wilson

