

36 hours

taupo

Sunday, 10.30am: Six kilometres before Cambridge, my lovely boyfriend turns green. Turns out the rusty old Nissan can go from 100km/h to 0 in two seconds. He hurls himself out the door.

10.45am: Better. Minus last night's lamb vindaloo, we get back on the road. It is lined with bright pink rhododendrons. A calf rolls in daffodils.

12.45pm: Here we are, standing on the deck of Acacia Cliffs Lodge, a five-month-old boutique home with four beautiful guest suites, gawking at the lake. The air is so clear it makes everything look closer. Rick Whitlock dashes off to fetch our bags from the car while his wife, Linda, the woman for whom the phrase "gracious hostess" was coined, settles us in. Would we like a cup of tea? A muffin? A helicopter ride?

1.15pm: Helipro pilot Toby

Clark lands on the back lawn, hops out, shakes hands, and shoos us towards the chopper. Twenty seconds later we're pulling up into that clean, clear air. Did you know the best mudpools in Taupo are just over the hill from Craters of the Moon? No, probably not, as Hot Hill (as this secret spot is known), is accessible only by helicopter. We hover about five metres above a burping pool so big it could swallow us, before swooping away to wave royally at families fishing on the lake. Magic.

1.30pm: Toby drops us home and comes up for a cuppa on that deck with a view. He's got a long night of frost-fighting over Hawke's Bay vineyards ahead of him but he's happy as Larry. And who wouldn't be, with a day job like his?

2.15pm: Sunday papers in our room, which is stocked with chilled sauvignon blanc and mineral water. I pull a chair on to our private deck, look at the lake and start plotting how to buy this place.

8pm: Am no closer to a solution. We turn down Linda's offer of dinner, and head into Taupo for a meal at Milano. I have spaghetti with garlicky prawns; lovely boyfriend, still trying to make up for that lost curry, puts away beef cannelloni and tiramisu, and half of my "special coffee".

Monday, 9am: Reluctantly leave our bed, which is huge and swaddled in high-thread-count cotton. Sleeping in it is like being inside a cushion. Once up and about we are promptly sat at the breakfast table to gorge on muesli, fresh fruit and scrambled eggs.

Lake Taupo: A view worth gawking at.

Photo: Destination Lake Taupo

Taupo

FACTBOX

Where to stay: Acacia Cliffs Lodge, 133 Mapara Rd, Acacia Bay, Lake Taupo, ph (07) 378-1551, www.acaciycliffs.com

What to do: Helipro, scenic flights from \$75; ph (07) 377 8805. Honey Hive and Meadery, free entry and tastings; honey, cosmetics and honey-based booze for sale, 65 Karetoto Rd, Wairakei, ph (07) 374 8553
Where to eat: Milano, 34 Tuwharetoa St, ph (07) 378 3344.

spring rolls, followed by salmon, then lamb and a lemon tart to finish us off. Why did we go out last night? At midnight we totter off to the best bed in the world.

9am: Another fussed-over breakfast, and we're on the road, wishing this column was called 36 days, rather than hours.

- Catherine Woulfe

■ Acacia Cliffs Lodge is offering a special two-night Impulse Getaway package for Sunday Star-Times readers staying in November. Relax in luxury for \$600 a person, which includes two nights bed and breakfast, pre-dinner canapes and drinks, and a four-course candlelit dinner and bottle of New Zealand wine each night. Contact info@acaciycliffslodge.co.nz or (07) 378 1551 quoting Impulse Getaway. Subject to availability.

7pm: Pre-dinner wine and canapes with the lodge's other guests, a honeymooning American couple, and an Australian anaesthetist and his wife. Rick, a trained chef, is in his element: fresh

GIVEAWAY



Remember when the sounds of your summer holidays came a ghetto-blast that took up half the back seat or boot? Now you can get your holiday soundtrack, from a speaker the size of a golf ball. The cute and compact iTour portable speaker (\$49.95), available from Bond+Bond, is perfect to take on holiday or use when you're hanging out with friends. Complete with a built in re-chargeable battery it produces six hours continuous playing time.

■ We have two iTour speakers to give away. Email escape@star-times.co.nz with iTour in the subject line by Friday, October 31.

International Aromatic Wine Competition 2008

Congratulations to all 2008 International Aromatic Wine Competition medal winners. Winning wines will be on display in the Food & Wine NZ Pavilion at the Royal New Zealand Show in Christchurch held Wednesday 12 to Friday 14 November 2008.

SUPREME CHAMPION WINE IN SHOW TROPHY

Wither Hills Rarangi Sauvignon Blanc 2008

GOLD MEDAL

Brightwater Vineyards Nelson Riesling 2008, Konrad Sigrun Noble Two Riesling/Sauvignon Blanc 2007, Peregrine Rastaburn Riesling 2006, Saint Clair Pioneer Block 9 Big John Riesling 2007 **CHAMPION RIESLING TROPHY**, Huntaway Reserve Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Matua Paratai Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Saint Clair Pioneer Block 18 Snap Block Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Saint Clair Wairau Reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Spy Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Yealands Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Wither Hills Rarangi Sauvignon Blanc 2008 **CHAMPION SAUVIGNON BLANC TROPHY**, Coopers Creek Pinot Gris 2008, Lawson's Dry Hills Pinot Gris 2008, Lamont Pinot Gris 2008 **CHAMPION PINOT GRIS TROPHY**, Peregrine Pinot Gris 2008, Askerne Gewurztraminer 2007, Forrest The Valleys Gewurztraminer 2008, Lawson's Dry Hills Gewurztraminer 2008 **CHAMPION GEWURZTRAMINER TROPHY**, Waimea Gewurztraminer 2007, Willm Cuvee Emile Gewurztraminer 2006, Villa Maria Cellar Selection Viognier 2007 **CHAMPION VIOGNIER TROPHY**, Coopers Creek S.V Gisborne Arneis The Little Rascal 2008 **CHAMPION ARNEIS TROPHY**.

SILVER MEDAL

Awanui Marlborough Riesling 2007, Forrest Estate Botrytised Riesling 2007, Forrest Riesling 2008, Forrest The Doctor's Riesling 2008, Gibbston Valley Riesling 2006, Kim Crawford Small Parcels Reka Riesling 2007, Montana Reserve Waipara Riesling 2008, Orinoco Vineyards Riesling 2008, Spy

Valley Riesling 2008, Waimea Classic Riesling 2007, Waimea Dry Riesling 2006, Yealands Estate Riesling 2008, Yealands Riesling 2008, Auntsfield Long Cow Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Hunter's Flax Mill Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Lawson's Dry Hills Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Marlborough Vineyards Vigneron Selection Greer Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Montana Reserve Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Mount Riley Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Saint Clair Pioneer Block 7 Berry Block Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Saints Hawke's Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Sileni Cellar Selection Sauvignon Blanc Hawke's Bay 2008, The Sounds Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Turnstone Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Two Rivers Convergence Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Villa Maria Reserve Clifford Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Wither Hills Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Awanui Central Otago Pinot Gris 2008, Coopers Creek S.V Marlborough Pinot Gris 'The Pointer' 2008, Fernwood Marlborough Pinot Gris 2008, Gibson Bridge Reserve Pinot Gris 2007, Hunter's Pinot Gris 2008, Mount Riley Pinot Gris 2008, Sanctuary Limited Release Marlborough Pinot Gris 2008, Stoneleigh Marlborough Pinot Gris 2008, T.H.E Terrace Heights Estate Pinot Gris 2008, Te Mania Nelson Pinot Gris 2008, Villa Maria Private Bin Pinot Gris 2008, Forrest Estate Gewurztraminer 2007, Greystone Gewurztraminer 2008, Spy Valley Gewurztraminer 2008, Whitehaven Marlborough Gewurztraminer 2008, Vidal East Coast Viognier 2007, Bentwood Wines Pinot Blanc 2007, Esk Black Label Verdelho 2008, Gibbston Valley Blanc de Pinot Noir 2008.

BRONZE - 165 MEDALS

Full results available at www.theshow.co.nz

ROYAL
NEW ZEALAND
SHOW

2008

Wed 12 – Fri 14 November
Christchurch, New Zealand
www.theshow.co.nz