



The surprises began right at the airport. We were met by our guide and brought to a neighbouring building, home to the most unexpected museum I would ever expect to find in Nelson. An accurate way of describing the establishment, which is called WOW! World of WearableArt (worldofwearableart.com), would be Fashion TV meets Cirque du Soleil. On display were garments of all shapes and styles, fabrics and materials, including items usually used for construction such as plastics, metal, wood and paint.

While on the topic of materials, we visited one particular place closely associated with Peter Jackson and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy,

which offered wearable pieces of a more precious nature - the tiny workshop and retail shop of the Hansen family (www.jenshansen.com), who created the actual One Ring used



in the movie. Halfdan Hansen informed me that his father Jens had initially declined to make the ring. Luckily for the Hansens (and cinematic history), he eventually agreed to craft the infamous accessory.

SPLIT APPLE RETREAT

Our first lodgings for the night are located right on the ocean, built high into a cliff-face, just minutes away from Abel Tasman National Park. The owner, Lee Nelson,



Clockwise from top: Split Apple Retreat overlooks Abel Tasman National Park; one of the original dishes served at the retreat; Halfdan is the director of the Jens Hansen store.

who was inspired by his travels to Japan, instructed his architect to maintain the Zen-like appeal of traditional Japanese home design and to build around his collection of antiques and objet d'art. Equipped with only three generously sized rooms, the exclusive nature of the property makes Split Apple Retreat (www.splitapple.com) the perfect hideaway for those who want to be left alone in luxurious tranquillity. I felt it was as far from conventional hotels as New Zealand is from the rest of the world.

Meals are catered by the retreat and Nelson's wife Pen is in charge of incorporating



Pen is in charge of incorporating the philosophies of holistic health into her gourmet cooking at Split Apple Retreat.



From above:
Reid Helicopters specialises in personalised tours of the Nelson and Marlborough regions; the owner's Japanese antiques and artworks can be found throughout Split Apple Retreat.

the philosophies of holistic health into her gourmet cooking, which we had the pleasure of tasting later that day.

The retreat's wholesome and original recipes make eating healthy less of a chore and more of a joy to look forward to.

For those who wish to take the recipes home, the Nelson's book, called *Thoughtful Food Cookbook*, can be purchased on the premises or online at the hotel's website.

The next day, we were picked up by Reid Helicopters (www.helicoptersnelson.co.nz) for a personal flight to Marlborough's idyllic vineyards,

where we sampled their exquisite bottlings. We continued on to gorgeous Marlborough Sounds along with a special guest on board, Michelin-trained chef Matt Boutery. We touched down on top of a huge rock to fish for fresh seafood, that was later turned into a sumptuous feast by Boutery at a remote beach nearby.

Should you find the gastronomical options too sinful after a few days, you could do what we did and explore Abel Tasman National Park on kayaks, with experienced guides from bespoke adventure company Simply Wild Journeys (simplywild.co.nz).

