

# A (SPLIT) APPLE A DAY

WHEN A MEDICAL DOCTOR AND TRAINED CHEF PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER THEY CAME UP WITH SPLIT APPLE, A WELLNESS RETREAT ON NEW ZEALAND'S SOUTH ISLAND THAT COMBINES LONGEVITY SCIENCE WITH FINE FOOD THAT'S ALSO GOOD FOR YOU. **CARRIE MILLER** WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO VISIT.



## HEALTH AND WELLBEING NEW ZEALAND

The writer Henry Miller's observation about travel that "one's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things" could stand as a mission statement for the Split Apple Retreat. Walk through the 300 year old gates, salvaged from a Japanese temple that was due to be demolished, and you step into not just beautifully designed accommodation but you become immersed in a whole new worldview – one passionately lived and promoted by the owners.

Lee Nelson, a retired doctor with an interest in wellness-oriented medicine and longevity, and his wife Pen, a trained chef specialising in the 'functional' food that fits with Lee's wellness philosophy, are the living embodiment of the lifestyle on offer at Split Apple.

In fact the entire retreat - surrounded by lovely grounds set in a bushy cliff overlooking the ocean - is imbued with the sense of balance that Lee believes can be achieved by a healthier approach to living. The restrained Japanese aesthetic is tempered with the luxuries of Western comfort, the setting intimate yet spacious, the man-made seamlessly integrated with the natural. And this balance is also reflected in what the retreat has to offer. It's not your typical detox boot-camp - indeed, this is what sets Split Apple apart from many wellness retreats. While it offers a comprehensive range of services for those looking to develop the tools to make long-lasting lifestyle changes, there's complete flexibility in how you choose to avail yourself of the experiences on offer. While visitors can participate in the comprehensive program which includes everything from taking blood tests prior to arrival that Lee analyses and uses as a basis for developing a wellness plan, nutritional classes, and meditation, the accommodation also functions just as successfully as a straightforward luxury getaway. It includes high-end spa treatments such as facials and massages, good both for those wanting to improve their well-being or just to be pampered, as well as a sauna, steam room and the spectacular outdoor *onsen* (Japanese spa) and infinity pool with breathtaking ocean views.

The only thing that all guests partake in is the spectacular food. It's hard to imagine health food as delicious and satisfying – tasting it is one of those rare occasions when employing the cliché sublime is actually warranted. Pen's cooking manages to meet the standard of quality restaurant fare while remaining true to the principles of "functional food" that Lee has developed – the idea that all elements of a dish should serve a purpose in maintaining and improving health and longevity.

For a different, but equally exclusive getaway, the Retreat's sister property Split Apple Hideaway is the



Opening Page: Split Apple Rock, Tasman Bay

1 The backyard of Split Apple Hideaway

2 Abel Tasman National Park

3 Ocean views from Split Apple Retreat

4 Split Apple Retreat lounge, complete with wood fireplace

5 The spacious kitchen in Split Apple Hideaway

6 Abel Tasman National Park

7 Little blue penguins can be found in the national park

8 Go antique shopping in nearby Nelson





ultimate holiday home. Set on a secluded beachfront, this property offers contemporary luxury open-plan living, with floor-to-ceiling glass doors opening out to decks with uninterrupted views of the ocean and an enchanting secluded beach. You have a choice of your own fabulous private chef, or if you're looking for complete privacy, a well-stocked kitchen with top line facilities for self-catering. The Hideaway is accessible by car or, for those who place a premium on their privacy, a helicopter can land you on the beach directly below – ideal for the celebrity clientele this hideaway is likely to attract. But it also offers an ideal getaway for the non-famous – its four double bedrooms are on separate levels, making it the perfect place to go with friends while still maintaining a sense of space. The various decks allow you to enjoy

## “AND IF YOU'RE LUCKY, YOU MAY EVEN CATCH THE SIGHT OF SOME PENGUINS AMBLING UP THE BEACH”

a glass of one of the local wines while admiring the luminosity of light particular to this part of the world. And if you're lucky, you may even catch sight of some penguins ambling up the beach.

While the Retreat and Hideaway are the sort of places you never want to leave, nevertheless, when you're located at the edge of the spectacular Abel Tasman National Park and in the beautiful district of Nelson, taking advantage of one of the many organised tours is a must.

Led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide, Wine, Art and Wilderness offers an educational day trip around the Nelson region – one that gives you an up close and personal experience of the many wineries as well as the thriving arts community. Against the backdrop of the majestic mountains that border the region, visitors get a feel for the Nelson

lifestyle while driving through picturesque villages, both coastal and inland, including a visit to the charming city of Nelson itself. Along the way the tour includes a trip to an artist's studio, winetasting and lunch at a winery, all the while the tour operator providing historical commentary and regional context, something which elevates this trip beyond the usual sightseeing tour.

Another stand-out day tour is conducted by Simply Wild, an operator of luxury trips, whether by boat, yacht, or helicopter, around the magnificent National Parks. If you're looking for a comfortable way to discover the beauty of the Abel Tasman National Park, try one of Simply Wild's day trips by cruiser hosted by one of their expert adventure guides. Visitors get a chance to explore at leisure the coastline of the park – a combination of majestic granite headlands and golden sand beaches. The tour includes the occasional stop at one of these beaches for a gourmet picnic lunch, and short walks into the park itself where you'll be surrounded by the 400 year-old

trees that populate the lush landscape. The highlight for most sightseers is cruising into one of the sheltered lagoons where seals frolic just metres from the boat.

On your way back to the Retreat you'll pass Split Apple, the famous rock formation shaped just as its name suggests, for which the Retreat is named. Its singular beauty, enhanced by the uniquely incandescent light of Nelson – a light that attracted New Zealand's greatest artist, Colin McCahon to the region – embodies the unrivalled loveliness of this part of the world. While it's common knowledge New Zealand is a place of unparalleled natural beauty, the area of Nelson and specifically the precinct of Split Apple is relatively under-discovered by travellers. Split Apple Retreat and Hideaway provide the most exclusive way to discover the sunshine capital of New Zealand and all it has to offer. ■



## GETTING THERE

### AIR NEW ZEALAND

Air New Zealand has daily flights to Nelson via Auckland or Wellington, from Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney, starting from A\$393 ex Melbourne. Air New Zealand Link also operates direct daily flights to Nelson from Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington from A\$146 ex Wellington. [airnewzealand.com.au](http://airnewzealand.com.au)





## STAY

### SPLIT APPLE RETREAT

Rates for the Split Apple Retreat start from NZ\$920 (about A\$702) per person, per night for double occupancy, and NZ\$1495 (about A\$1,141) per person, per night for single occupancy. All rates include three gourmet functional food meals daily.  
[splitappleretreat.com](http://splitappleretreat.com)

### SPLIT APPLE HIDEAWAY

Split Apple Hideaway offers a full-service package for up to six people including a private chef preparing breakfast and dinner daily and the complimentary use of a BMW. Rates are NZ\$10,000 (about A\$7,634) per night (minimum three nights). For those looking for a bit more privacy, you can forego the private chef and opt for the fully stocked fridge instead. Rates for the privacy package are NZ\$7,500 (about A\$5,725) per night (minimum three nights).

## TOURS

Simply Wild runs private boating charter tours, including a picnic lunch from NZ\$2,087 (about A\$1,593). Other touring options including yachting and helicopter tours can be found at [simplywild.co.nz](http://simplywild.co.nz)

Wine, Art and Wilderness runs private tours through Nelson's wine region. Tours start from NZ\$149 (about A\$113) per person. More tours and details are available at [wineartandwilderness.co.nz](http://wineartandwilderness.co.nz)

