

ESCAPE  
ROUTESALL YOU HAVE TO DO  
IS ADMIRE THE VIEWSPLIT APPLE LODGE, GET  
A FRONT ROW SEAT  
ON NATURAL BEAUTYRECHARGE IN A LUXURY  
NEW ZEALAND LODGE

**Stylist contributor Anna Hart travels to Split Apple Lodge in New Zealand**

Abel Tasman National Park to see how the famous and fortunate get their R&R. As a general rule, I believe it would be terrible to be famous. No lucrative L'Oréal

contract is worth sacrificing the basic human right to nip out for the Sunday papers with no make-up on. But, every now and then, I do feel a flash of envy towards the celebrity breed, and this is exactly what happened when I arrived at Split Apple Lodge in New Zealand. If I had that L'Oréal contract, you see, I'd be able to come here for a six-week body/mind/soul

makeover. I have just one night, however, so let's see what they can do for me.

Given the beautiful scenery surrounding Nelson, the northernmost tip of New Zealand's South Island, the journey here has already done me good. It turns out that bright blue skies, sea air and a twisty road trip are a fail-safe cure for jet lag. Split Apple is perched atop

a cliff on the edge of the spectacular Abel Tasman National Park, a stunning slice of New Zealand coastline set to be showcased in Peter Jackson's much-hyped film *The Hobbit*.

As well as gorgeous (and wildly varied) national parks, New Zealand has long been a by-word in A-list circles for luxury accommodation. A smattering of isolated

high-end lodges offers weary sophisticates tranquility and – something truly priceless – privacy: Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston honeymooned at Blanket Bay Lodge near Queenstown, Tom Cruise has booked out Whare Kea Lodge on Lake Wanaka, and more recently Miranda Kerr and Orlando Bloom booked into Huka Lodge at Lake Taupo. With its



film industry going from strength to strength, New Zealand has recently played host to a string of big-budget film crews, introducing more A-listers to the country's undeniable appeal as a place to let up and unwind.

Split Apple is a relative newcomer to the luxury lodge scene, but it has fast become a word-of-mouth sensation. I've certainly never seen a place quite like this. The owners are Lee Nelson, a retired American doctor with a passionate interest in (and encyclopedic knowledge of) wellness-based medicine; and his wife Pen, a chef specialising in "functional" (low-GI, organic and protein-rich) food with an Asian twist. Don't think that their interest in wellness overrides their interest in pleasure, however: I later learn that the couple met playing top-level poker on the international circuit, and Lee is as enthusiastic about wine as he is about pomegranate juice.

The couple greet me at the door and show me around the four-level, three-suite lodge, which is a study in taste and opulence. This is Asian-influenced, open-plan living designed to make the most of the cliff-top location. And, the small-but-perfectly-formed luxury lodge has everything a jaded soul searching for Zen requires: a gym, a cinema in which Lee holds high-tech meditation sessions, steam and massage rooms, an infra-red sauna and an infinity pool overlooking the Tasman sea.

Each room has two private decks, but I immediately spot the very best place from where to enjoy the view: the Japanese onsen spa adjoining my suite; essentially, my very own infinity pool.

However, the sun is setting over Abel Tasman

National Park when I arrive, so I postpone my bath and take a seat at the dinner table. Over a four-course dinner cooked by Pen, starring a Japanese mushroom soup, the freshest sashimi, steamed lobster and an organic, sugar-free chocolate soufflé. Lee talks to me about his philosophy of health. Which, from where I sit with a glass of organic New Zealand pinot noir, is looking pretty inviting. He explains that some guests come here for the "works", and Lee will take blood tests and give a medical consultation before recommending treatments (he's a firm believer in the

my time than sitting and thinking. But the Zen-like calm exuding from every corner of Split Apple makes me think that any personal transformation is possible.

So, after a predictably good night's sleep, I find myself in the cinema, with a headset on, listening to music that Lee insists is "high-tech brain-entrainment". And it works. For the next hour, my busy mind gets a holiday, and I arrive at the breakfast table flushed with success. My morning gets even better with a breakfast of manuka-honey-smoked salmon with egg-white omelette, washed down with green tea.

Before I leave, Lee passes

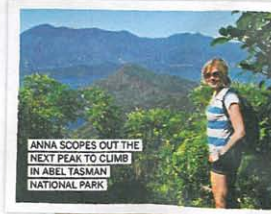
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benefits of bee-venom acupuncture), dietary tweaks and an exercise regime (advocating Pilates). He's so knowledgeable, I consider nipping back to my room for a pen so I can take notes.

Before I go to bed, I'm asked if I want to give high-tech meditation a try before breakfast tomorrow. Hands up: I'm the world's worst meditator. I just sit and think about all the better things I could be doing with

me a note listing all the health advice we'd discussed the night before; a Chinese herb that nips winter colds in the bud, the best natural sources for calcium and the name of the meditation CD that finally turned me into a mindful goddess. I only gave Split Apple one night, and I feel like a brand new person. Best of all, I didn't have to become famous.

Prices start at £520 per person per night (two-night minimum stay), including three gourmet "functional" meals per day; [splitapple.com](http://splitapple.com). Flights with Singapore Airlines from London to Auckland start at £888; [singaporeair.com](http://singaporeair.com). To find out more about New Zealand, visit [newzealand.com](http://newzealand.com)

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