

Media Release



August 15, 2023

New Zealand Set for New Era of Luxury Travel as Plans for Huka Lodge Revealed

On the eve of her 2024 centenary milestone, New Zealand's iconic Huka Lodge at Taupō is set to lead a new era of luxury travel in the nation renowned as the home of luxury lodging, as plans for a significant and considered renovation by new owners Baillie Lodges are revealed.

Affectionately known by Kiwis as 'the grand dame of luxury lodges' and as the preferred holiday lodgings for the world's rich, famous and royal over the decades, Huka Lodge is one of the newest properties in the esteemed Baillie Lodges collection.

To accommodate the substantial redesign and build, Huka Lodge will farewell its last guests on April 30 next year and will reopen on December 1, 2024.

Baillie Lodges founder James Baillie will lead the project, partnering with esteemed New Zealand-born interior designer Virginia Fisher, first appointed by Huka Lodge's previous, long-term owner Alex van Heeren in 1984 to direct the lodge's look and feel. Since then, Virginia has led the distinctively grand style of Huka Lodge with its traditional lodging spirit, intimate interior spaces, private nooks for lounging and dining and furnishings with signature tartan finishes.

Another key member of the team is Auckland-based architect Christian Anderson who has previously worked with Virginia on the design of the Alan Pye Cottage, one of the two ultra-premium owner's style residences at Huka Lodge. The Cottage is named after Alan Pye who established the original fishermen's camp on the banks of the Waikato River in 1924, allowing visitors to make the most of the river's prized trout and thereby setting in place a reputation for world-class flyfishing in the Taupō region.

Guests arriving at the new look Huka Lodge will notice some considered enhancements to the property from the moment they drive into the garden-lined port cochere to check in. A new entrance with reception and adjoining boutique welcomes guests with a fitting sense of a grand arrival.

Inside, the main lodge will undergo a transformation to open its interior spaces while floor-to-ceiling windows and wide doors will make the most of the lodge's riverside setting. The newly spacious River Room features a double-sided fireplace and traditional luxury furnishings in a warm space for guests to meet for convivial drinks and conversations on the hearth of the riverfront. A 'feel at home' bar is a welcome addition to the lodge and will be stocked with all the premium essentials.

The Dining Room will be extended to offer more amenity, with a step down along the slope of the lawns creating a new light-filled dining area with high ceilings and windows welcoming in delightful views of the river and gardens. Designs for the dining space combine a more contemporary feel while retaining its original heritage elements.

Upstairs, private areas include The Loft and Piper Room, suitable for private dinners, special celebrations or an intimate meeting.

Upgrades to the outdoor areas are integral to the plans for the new-era Huka Lodge. The idyllic north facing outdoor terrace will be substantially expanded in a stylish integration between the indoors and out. The addition of a feature outdoor fireplace and contemporary glass roofed pergolas will create more outdoor lounging and dining space for guests and a seamless connection with the chequered green lawns which run to the banks of the Waikato River.

Huka Lodge's 20 generously proportioned luxury guest suites and two owners' residences - the Alex van Heeren and Alan Pye Cottages - will also undergo a stylish refurbishment.

The Huka Spa Huts are another addition to the guest offering, taking design inspiration from the traditional Kiwi *bach* or holiday shack. The new wellness grounds will include a series of rustically cool and contemporary huts that house the gym along with two spa treatment rooms, plus a sauna, iced dump shower and a steaming plunge pool tucked into an intimate forest locale.

Baillie Lodges founder James said it was a real honour in his career in luxury lodging to lead the rarefied and considered evolution of Huka Lodge.

"We're very pleased to have worked on plans in such a way to embrace the heritage of the iconic luxury lodge while taking her carefully into the future," Mr Baillie said.

Designer Virginia Fisher said she was delighted to be continuing her close association with Huka Lodge.

"This is a real opportunity for us all to act as custodians of the Huka legacy while taking the opportunity to enhance the intimate luxury and further embrace the riverside setting," Ms Fisher said.

Huka Lodge legacy owner Alex van Heeren said he was pleased to know the foundations of the world class luxury lodge he'd worked to create would be upheld and enhanced as part of the planned Baillie Lodges redesign in 2024.

"As Huka Lodge enters her centenary year, it's timely to have our much-loved grand dame readied for a next generation of global luxury traveller," Mr Van Heeren said.

Please see a link to new render images [here](#).

For bookings, please email reserve@hukalodge.com call +64 7 378 5791 or book [online](#).

Editors' Notes: Baillie Lodges is a growing portfolio of luxury lodges renowned for setting benchmarks in premium experiential travel. Set in exclusive locations of unique natural or cultural significance, the boutique properties appeal to the discerning global traveller seeking a remarkable experience. The Australia-based collection was founded in 2003 by James and Hayley Baillie and includes Longitude 131° at Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Capella Lodge on Lord Howe Island, Silky Oaks Lodge at the Daintree Rainforest, and The Louise in the Barossa Valley. Flagship property Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island was razed in the 2020 bushfires and its rebuild is in progress, with reopening set for December 2023. In 2019, an affiliate of KSL Capital Partners acquired Baillie Lodges with the aim to further expand the unique collection of luxury lodges. The 2022 addition of Chile's esteemed Tierra Hotels group marks a continuation of the collection's foray into international waters, joining the Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge on Canada's Vancouver Island and New Zealand's Huka Lodge. Baillie Lodges' Australian properties are honoured as members of [Luxury Lodges of Australia](#). For more information, please visit baillielodges.com.au.