

# Media Release



March 3, 2025

## **Huka Lodge Reopens in Taupō, New Zealand, Ready for a Next Century of World Class Luxury Travel**

New Zealand's world-renowned, century-young Huka Lodge in Taupō has reopened on the verdant banks of the Waikato River following a considered, NZ\$25million refurbishment led by owners Baillie Lodges.

Affectionately known by Kiwis as 'the grande dame of luxury lodges' and as the preferred holiday lodgings for the world's rockstars and royalty, Huka Lodge's significant enhancement is designed to preserve the iconic lodge's remarkable hundred-year heritage and rich history dearly loved by locals and guests alike.

A series of carefully planned, contemporary features have been added as part of the works to time with Huka Lodge's successive century, designed to welcome a next generation of traveller to the majestic luxury lodge, from right on the doorstep in New Zealand and from around the world.

Guests arriving at Huka Lodge from March 2025 onwards will feel a sense of a special occasion from the moment they reach the hedge-lined drive and make their way to the grand front door. On entering, guests will catch a first glimpse of the emerald-blue Waikato River as it flows towards Huka Falls via the floor-to-ceiling windows in the new River Room. It's a signature Baillie Lodges design theme, where clever architecture welcomes the outside in, connecting guests with beautiful natural surrounds and making for a breathtaking moment of arrival.

New to the main lodge are an expanded Dining Room and bar which overlook the river and established, parklike gardens, while upstairs private lounging areas include The Loft and Piper Room, ideal for intimate dinners, special celebrations or an exclusive meeting. Guests may step from the River Room onto the outdoor terrace via large French doors, where a double-sided open fire warms lounging areas and tables for al fresco dining and drinks, with mesmerising views of the Waikato River and its chequered lawn banks.

Set amongst a peaceful, secret garden and accessed via a pathway of paradise stepping stones sourced from the North Island, the new wellness grounds feature a series of huts taking design inspiration from the traditional Kiwi 'bach' or holiday house, that together house a gym along with two spa treatment rooms, a sauna, surprise ice contrast shower and a steaming plunge pool.

Three new 'rare and remarkable' bespoke experiences have been introduced to time with Huka Lodge's grand reopening: The [Craggy Range Culinary Escape](#) with food, wine and scenic heli flights, the [Epic Rotorua](#) culture and adventure day, and the [Ultimate Huka Experience](#) with heli lift-off in a northerly or southerly direction, taking guests' experience of Taupō to spectacular new heights.

Guests planning their stay or making the drive to Huka Lodge can tune in to the newly recorded episode of the [Baillie Lodges Luxury Redefined podcast](#) for a virtually guided journey and introduction to the people who have made the property such a special place to visit and return to over the past century.

Baillie Lodges founder James Baillie has led the refurbishment, working with Auckland-based Christian Anderson Architects for the building design and partnering with esteemed New Zealand-born interior designer Virginia Fisher and landscape designer Suzanne Turley, each first appointed by Huka Lodge's previous, long-term owner Alex van Heeren to direct the luxury lodge's new product, and look and feel.

Since then, Virginia has led the distinctively grand style of Huka Lodge with its traditional lodging spirit and interior spaces with signature tartan finishes, while Suzanne has created the beautiful cool climate gardens spanning some 17-acres, where high hedges, ferned grottos and layered gardens create private outdoor spaces and a pleasing, peaceful seasonally changing profile of plants and flowers.

James Baillie said it had been a privilege to have been trusted with the guardianship of Huka Lodge's heritage and legacy, whilst readying the hundred-year-old lodge for a next century of world-class travel.

"My wife and business partner Hayley and I first stayed at Huka Lodge in the early 2000s when we were considering plans for Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island, and which would become the Baillie Lodges flagship property," Mr Baillie said.

"Huka Lodge, its magnificent natural surrounds, the luxury of its design and the impeccable attention to detail in both amenity and service became a benchmark and central point of reference for us both as we actioned plans for Southern Ocean Lodge," he said.

"It's a great personal and professional honour to have completed this important redesign project for such an iconic property, and I feel it's a 'full circle' moment to have had the opportunity to be involved."

Huka Lodge General Manager Kerry Molloy said he was thrilled to see the new designs come to life.

"What strikes me the most, having had the privilege to lead Huka Lodge for some 11 years, is that the new designs offer more reason for guests to spend time enjoying these beautiful spaces; dining, drinking or relaxing with a book and the view," Mr Molloy said.

Designer Virginia Fisher said she was delighted to reflect on a happy collaboration with James and the Baillie Lodges team, and to present a new-look Huka Lodge to the world.

"Looking back to when I was first commissioned to work on Huka Lodge, it struck me as being small and intimate. It was very simple. And its scale was quite charming. It felt like a home," Ms Fisher said.

"Now, I see Huka Lodge becoming almost truer to its original self. We're much closer to the water. We've still got some strong, intense colours. Again, it still feels very homely," she said.

Landscape designer Suzanne Turley said she felt fortunate to continue to work on planning the Huka Lodge gardens after some twenty-five years, and that new wellness grounds were a natural addition.

"Huka Lodge is a beautiful, spiritual place, with the Waikato River creating a real energy and lifeforce on the property. For the wellness grounds we've created a space that is lush and tranquil and inspires peace; we've used tree ferns and white-flowered Amelanchier trees for soft, dappled light," Ms Turley said.

Huka Lodge legacy owner Alex van Heeren said he was pleased to see the care given to the refurbishment, and clever design that made the most of the beautiful Waikato River and superb gardens.

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

**Please see a link to a selection of 10 new images [here](#).**

For bookings, please email [reserve@hukalodge.com](mailto: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. Founded in 2003 by James and Hayley Baillie, the boutique properties are set in exclusive locations of unique natural or cultural significance and appeal to the discerning global traveller seeking a remarkable experience. The Australia-based collection includes Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island, 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. In 2019, an affiliate of KSL Capital Partners acquired Baillie Lodges with the aim to further expand the unique collection of luxury lodges. The partnership enabled the collection's foray into international waters, adding Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge on Canada's Vancouver Island and New Zealand's Huka Lodge. In Chile, Tierra Atacama and Tierra Patagonia offer extraordinary experiences of South America. Baillie Lodges' Australian properties are honoured as members of [Luxury Lodges of Australia](#). For more information, please visit [baillielodges.com.au](http://baillielodges.com.au).