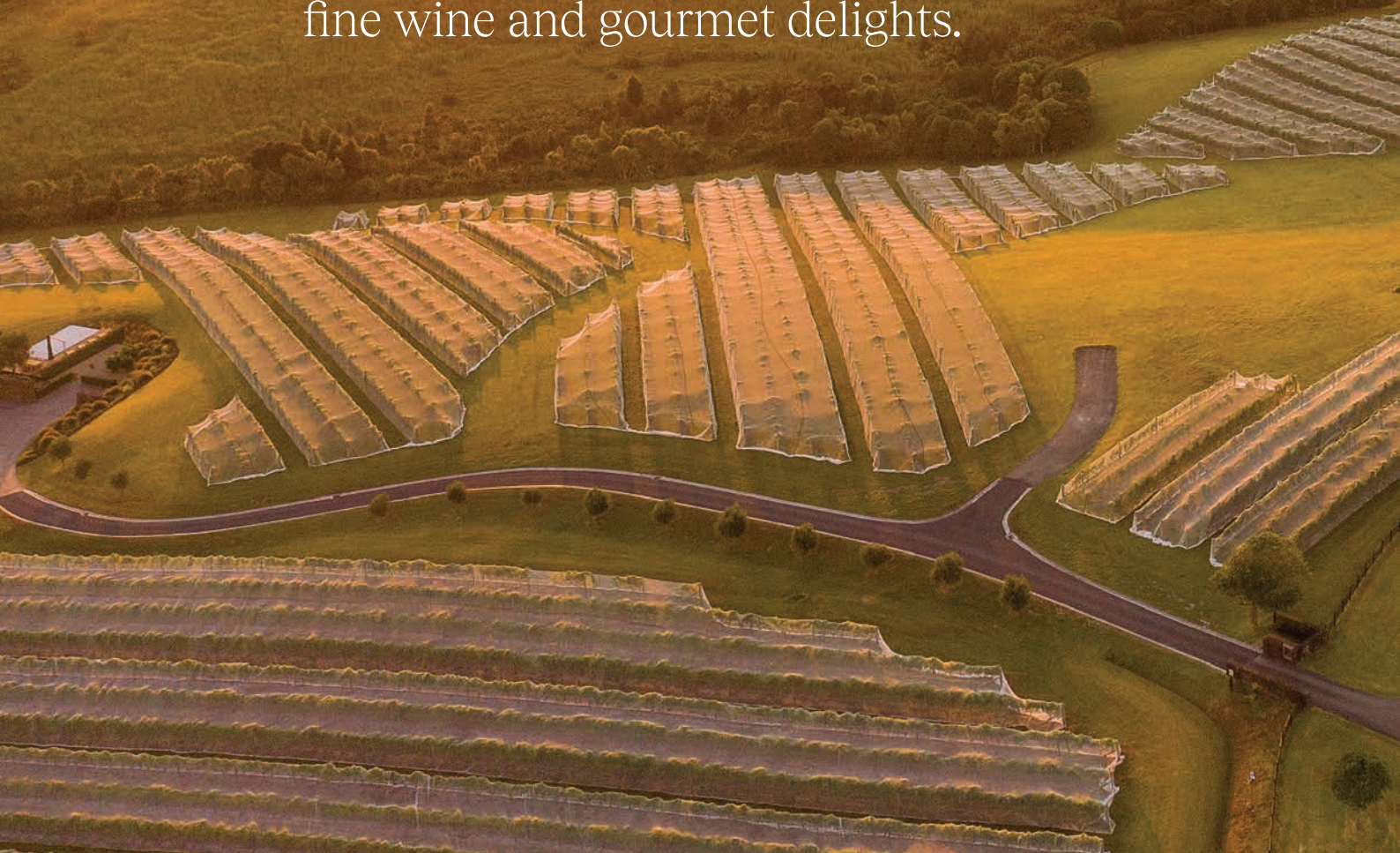


Landing Amongst the Vines

Amid the splendour of the Far North,
Dennis and Rosamund Knill visit
The Landing - a winery of grand
proportions with luxurious
accommodation and a bounty of
fine wine and gourmet delights.





The Boathouse

There is something impossibly romantic about a place that changes with the wind, or the hour of the day.

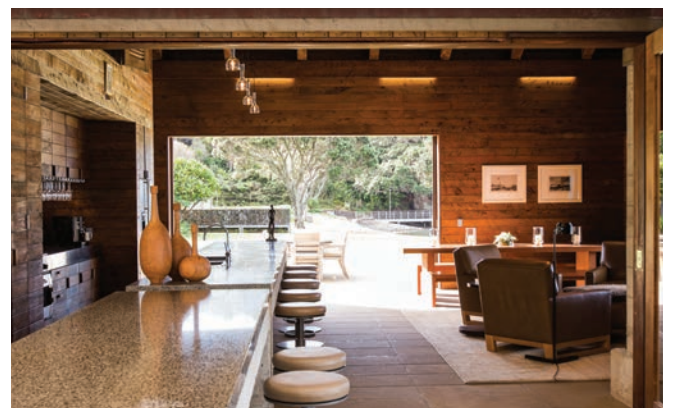
Don't worry about packing an alarm clock. You only need listen for the kiwi that routinely punctuate the morning. And if you sleep through dawn then there's the chorus of native birds as they warm up for the day ahead. Nature and eco-themes imbue all The Landings' features. You'll feel a million miles from the nearest town with only four luxury villas delicately located around the property, the character-rich heritage architecture built around Mother Nature. The feel here is eco-cool, with enough mod cons to put it in the luxury class. Fringed by six beaches, The Landing is a sanctuary of peace and tranquillity combined with privacy and discretion.

In a land not short of competition in terms of sumptuous multi-million-dollar winery developments, this elegant 1,000-acre span - with breathtaking coastal views over - has an immediate impact the moment you drive through the grand gates. Upon entering, you're right in the middle of Northland's most coveted stretch of beachside real estate, at one of the world's most top-ranking wineries.

The anticipation grows as you pass vast fields of grapevines overlooked by manicured rolling hills as far as the eye can see. Surrounding forests of native trees host endless bushwalks of sheer beauty that will give you muscles that you never knew you had.

It's not often that we're speechless but as we drop our bags in the living room of The Boathouse, we don't know whether to turn left or right or stare straight ahead at the spectacular coastline.

There is something impossibly romantic about a place that changes with the wind, or the hour of the day. During a sudden storm one afternoon the sun fled, and the trees shook before a gusting wind sent waves crashing over the coastal wall, and soon a torrent of rain enveloped the property. Then, just as abruptly the storm ended and the sun reappeared, the turquoise restored to the sea and the terraced lawns greener than ever.





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The food is prepared courtesy of a head chef who pursues a modern-yet-classic French menu whose combinations of tastes and textures are supplemented by the outstanding on-site garden. From fresh fruit and vegetables to free-range eggs and locally caught fish and farmed meats, the daily menu offers a taste of magic that lingers.

Then there's the wine. As winemaking gets more sophisticated, it's never been more important for a new winery to be able to stand out from the crowd. Northland is one of our newest wine-growing regions and has come a long way since wines were first nurtured back in the '80s.

The diversity of Northland's climate and coastal soils allows for a wide range of grapes, with chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, syrah, pinot gris, viognier, rose, and chambourcin all present. Whilst New Zealand's traditional wine trail has a wealth of riches, there has been a dramatic expansion of Northland vineyards that are pushing the boundaries to steal the march on their southern competitors.

Peter Cooper, born and bred in Kaitaia and a lover of wine, is the latest entrant to join Northland's growing wine trail. Peter's enthusiasm for fine wine resulted in the initial planting of pinot

gris, chardonnay, and syrah. With the assistance of Rod McIvor of Marsden Estate-fame, and Ben Byrne and Warren Gibson winemakers extraordinaire, the winery today is producing some of the country's finest.

But what makes The Landing's wines really different is Ben's combinations of grape varieties - the most notable being Vino Rosso, a common wine throughout Italy. Dominated with sangiovese and montepulciano grapes, this adventurous wine is blended with cabinet franc and merlot that makes it so very food friendly.

We meet with Keith Barker at the cellar door to taste our way through barrels of chardonnay. The savoury style of Ben's wines is evident. The new oak is kept from a minimum to the underlying - fresh, vibrant, and finely balanced showing great richness with instant appeal. Making our way into the rammed earth tasting room we sample the syrah, pinot gris, and rose, and get into lively discussion about various wines styles.

Upon saying our goodbyes, we board *Iti Rangi* for the 20-minute journey back to Waitangi. The Landing has reached the highest levels, with great food and wine while imbuing a deep a sense of relaxation.