

## [Perched High In The Eagles Nest](#)

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This weekend I was fortunate to spend time at Eagles Nest, Russell, Bay of Islands. We took a steady drive from Auckland, an easy 3 ½ hours with a brief lunch stop. The best way to Russell from Auckland or Keri Keri airport is via the car ferry at Opuia. The ferry service runs regularly from 6:40am to around 10:00pm and takes only 5 minutes. The ferry costs \$11 per car and an additional \$1 per passenger which must be paid in cash on board. We were requested to call Kelly at Eagles Nest from the ferry so she could have our complimentary bottle of Louis Roederer champagne chilled for us on arrival. The drive from the ferry to Eagles Nest takes 10 minutes though the pretty historic village of Russell, you could perhaps stop here for food provisions to take to the villa as there are several stores and cafes, although each of the five villas are all stocked with complimentary breakfast provisions of bacon, salmon, eggs, cereal, milk juices and fresh fruit all of which are restocked daily. There is also an array of complimentary soft drinks, and beer, the wine is at an extra charge and a comprehensive wine list is available.

William the manager met us on the entrance to the villa and showed us around, explained how to work the media system, heating, pool & spa along with the codes

for complimentary Wi-Fi that is available to all guests at each of the five villas. He then left us to enjoy our time. The villas are all totally private, each with expansive views over the Pacific Ocean, large entertaining decks, and fully equipped kitchens and BBQ facilities for those who wish to cook. There is also the option of a private chef which can be arranged with Kelly and William or you can choose to dine out in Russell. There are a few restaurants and we chose the historic Duke of Marlborough, which boasts views over the harbour. I recommend making reservations as it's a popular place amongst locals and tourists.

Our first evening was spent relaxing in the sun on the deck, soaking up the fantastic views and making full use of the heated pool and spa, and of course the complimentary champagne. [Eagles Nest](#) is a beautiful relaxing place that takes no time at all to get into vacation mode!

During our stay we also joined the Explore NZ vessel on their 'Discover the Bays' cruise, which includes a trip to the famous hole in the rock and stop off at [Otehei Bay on Urupukapuka Island](#), one of 144 islands in the Bay of Islands. The weather could not have been more perfect, still waters and clear blue skies. We were picked up from the wharf at Russell which is a 5 minute drive from Eagles Nest or you could choose to walk in 20 minutes if you don't mind a steep hill to climb on the return journey! Once on board the crew Garry (Skipper), Gavin and Sarsha greeted all the guests and gave a run down of the day's events and a safety briefing. During the tour Garry gave a running commentary on the sights, history of the bay and local marine life; all the crew were friendly, helpful and very knowledgeable. During the summer months Explore NZ run a dolphin watch cruise, during the winter this is combined with the Discover the Bays cruise. There is also the opportunity on both cruises to swim with the dolphins, the cost for this is an additional \$30 paid on board the vessel, wet suits are provided but you'll need to take your own towels and swim wear.



[Explore NZ](#) have a high success rate on viewing dolphins and offer a free trip for those who do not get to see them, however a swim is dependent on a few things chiefly being your safety and the safety of the dolphins. On our cruise we were particularly fortunate in that a pod of orca had chosen to cruise the bay. Garry the skipper had been notified by a local fisherman of their whereabouts and we headed over. Seeing mammals like these in their natural habitat was a rare and beautiful treat, they put on a real show for us coming up close to the boat for fantastic photo opportunities. Whilst it was tempting to stay and watch these fascinating creatures all day, there was so much more to see. We made a stop at the

iconic 'Hole in the Rock', more photo opportunities and onto Otehehi Bay where the boat stops for around 1 hour, there is a café on the island for lunch or snacks. You also have time to take a 30 minute return walk on a clearly marked walking track for impressive 360 degree views of the Bay of Islands. After our stop we were returned to Russell. In the summer months guests on the morning sailing can choose to stay on the island and be picked up on the afternoon stop over.

Whilst it is tempting to spend the entire long weekend at Eagles Nest, we did choose to explore some of what the Bay of Islands and the Far North has to offer. Paihia is a nearby town with lots of souvenir shops, some cafes and an array of water based activities. You can reach Paihia either by passenger ferry which costs around \$7 return or by car ferry and a 10 minute drive. From Paihia you can take a 15 minute drive to Waitangi the historic home of the signing of the Waitangi Treaty. A special place steeped in Maori and New Zealand history. From here there are also walking tracks to the Haruru Falls. There are options of a 3 hour return walk to the falls through bush, mangroves and forest or you can park just 5 minutes from the falls to view. Either way its worth the drive. Closer to home; Russell is a pretty village 5 minutes from Eagles Nest with stores, bars on the waterfront, gift shops, and a great beach aptly named Long Beach which offers safe swimming.

There is plenty more on offer in the region from scenic flights to Cape Reinga, private sailing trips, deep sea fishing, to in house private massages. The team at Luxury adventures or the hosts at Eagles Nest will be more than happy to assist guests in arranging any of these.

If you decide to spend your time around the villas and who could blame you, the pool is heated all year round to 27 degrees celsius and the spa was a lovely warm 38c degrees. The villas have a great media system with Sky TV, music and a comprehensive selection of DVDs available from reception. Both winter and summer they are perfect places for a peaceful relaxing vacation, with large outdoor entertaining areas, and an indoor fireplace for the cooler nights. Eagles Nest has its own private beach which is a short 5 minute walk from your villa through a gate, remember to take the security number! The walk back up is steep but via a well defined track.

Eagles Nest surpassed my expectations and I can see why it's a firm favourite amongst returning guests and repeated award winner in the travel industry. Its perfect for honeymooners, and families alike, highly recommended! Thank you to Kelly and William for making our stay at Eagles Nest a welcome and relaxing break.

Kay Campbell is a luxury travel consultant for [Luxury Adventures](#).



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