



ON CLOUD WINE

IN AN ARCHITECTURAL AND SUSTAINABLY BUILT HOME DUBBED THE 'SHACK', GUESTS CAN STAY IN THE HEART OF ONE OF NEW ZEALAND'S MOST PIONEERING WINERIES AND INDULGE IN AN AUTHENTIC CULINARY EXPERIENCE.

Words by JACQUI GIBSON

The wait is over. The towering, angled exterior of Cloudy Bay's The Shack, on the site of what was once a modest barn house and occasional hunting lodge for local farmers and winemakers, is Marlborough's latest leading light. It's perfectly situated. Located a few minutes' walk from what is, arguably, New Zealand's best-known winery and cellar door, you'll find this newly refurbished guest

house hidden down a gravel driveway, set back from a stand of maturing akeake trees and oriented towards the very vines that put New Zealand's famous sauvignon blanc on the world map.

Settle on the private lawn under Marlborough's dazzling sunlight, as Cloudy Bay's Aussie founder David Hohnen often did, to sip a chilled glass of the vineyard's zesty and fruity white wine and rest your gaze on the creases of the Richmond Range. Meandering down the driveway and walking the property with a glass of wine in hand is all part of the breathless buzz leading to The Shack's bold entrance; a seductive portal to your very own Cloudy Bay experience.

AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

As someone who travels to experience food and wine, I seek out vineyard stays. So, when Cloudy Bay recently re-booted its multi-day, private experiences – centered around the stylishly revamped Shack – I couldn't wait to plonk my feet on Marlborough's soil and give one or two a try.

Cloudy Bay made a splash on the international stage in 1985 with the launch of its characteristically vibrant and aromatic sauvignon blanc. Seemingly overnight, Marlborough morphed from farmland to vineyards, quickly becoming a region associated with producing wine of world-renown. It's no surprise that this singular drop generously features in Cloudy Bay's activity range.

On the deck of Cloudy Bay's 54-foot yacht, on a half-day sailing adventure in the Marlborough Sounds, I sipped a glass of sauvignon blanc, snacking on grilled figs topped with goat cheese and Mānuka honey, as an ever-changing vista of dolphins, sailboats and languid brown seals unfolded. Cloudy Bay's experiences come any way you want them. Pass hours with a host tasting limited releases and back vintages in the comfort of The Shack's lounge.

There are tours of the vineyards by helicopter or car. You can spend the day sailing, returning to The Shack for a wine-paired dinner made by your own private chef, like I did. But why stop there? The aptly named 'ultimate Cloudy Bay experience' launches you into nature to forage, hunt or, depending on your preference, fish and dive for your supper. Simply take your just caught abalone (Pāua in New Zealand) home, and kick back with a glass of Te Wahi pinot noir by the fire as your chef cooks it to perfection.

DESIGN NOTES

The brainchild of designer Tim Greer, of Australia-based Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects, the award-winning Shack takes pride in its undeniable relationship with the environment. While its proximity to a working vineyard and its views over the valley call up Cloudy Bay's origin story, the Jackson Road site also allows for ultimate privacy and relaxation in nature. Four double bedrooms share an elevated outlook from the retreat's second floor, a sundeck and an emphasis on comfort and local design.

The River Room, for example, comes with plush, neutral linens, bedside lamps illustrated with New Zealand native birds (tui), a painting of the Central Otago wilderness by Kiwi painter Pauline Bellamy – and a window-facing tub ideally positioned to watch the sunset. The building's exterior, however, tells a different story. With modern, rust-clad walls and an inverted roofline that pitches upward into the Marlborough sky, it's an architectural rebuttal to the very idea of hiding away and, much like Cloudy Bay wine, a dramatic call to stand out from the crowd and be noticed.



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CLOUDY BAY

ABOVE The Shack is designed by Australia-based Tim Greer, of Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects.

LEFT The exterior features modern, rust-clad walls and an inverted roofline that pitches upward into the Marlborough sky.



SUSTAINABILITY

Increasingly at Cloudy Bay, there is an emphasis on sustainability. On a vineyard tour with guide Jimmy Rawdon, I'm told Cloudy Bay is a founding member of Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand, a holistic vineyard program set up in 1995 to illustrate best practice. It has achieved environmental management certification as part of a commitment to reducing its environmental impact through careful resource use.

In Marlborough, the team is fast eliminating herbicides from the vineyards (except the young establishing vines). Weeds are controlled by winter-grazing sheep and the race is on to achieve biodiversity across 10 per cent of the non-productive vineyard areas. In Central Otago, further south, the team is well down the track of organic farming.

"We see ourselves as custodians of the land," explains Jimmy. "As farmers, we want to pass the land to the next generation in a better state than we found it." At the retreat, recycling is the norm. Most fresh fruit, veggies and herbs served on site are foraged from The Shack's backyard garden to complement a menu, sourced wherever possible, from regional growers and artisans – and, on occasion, the guests themselves.



cloudybay.com

Jacqui Gibson was a guest of Cloudy Bay.



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ABOVE When staying here, you can sail through the Marlborough Sounds on Cloudy Bay's 54-foot yacht; or take a guided fishing trip and have your catch later cooked by professional chefs.

RIGHT Seafood delicacies sourced on a foraging trip of the surrounding Marlborough Sounds during the 'Ultimate Cloudy Bay' experience.

OPPOSITE PAGE Relax on the terrace of The Shack; sample cuisine during a wine-paired dinner by a private chef; or take a vineyard tour to learn about Cloudy Bay's sustainable winemaking practices.



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