

The New Zealand Retreat That Has Quietly Earned the World's Attention - for the Second Year Running

Pīhopa Retreat - a six-suite sanctuary set on a historic estate above the city of Nelson - has been named #1 Hotel in New Zealand by Condé Nast Traveller UK for the second year running, holds a perfect 10/10 on Booking.com sustained across three consecutive years, and has swept every major travel accolade in the industry. For European travellers making the journey to the other side of the world, the answer to where to stay in New Zealand has never been clearer.

NELSON, NEW ZEALAND - Pīhopa Retreat, a luxury boutique hotel tucked away in the hills just minutes from Nelson's city centre on New Zealand's South Island, has been voted #1 Hotel in New Zealand by Condé Nast Traveller UK's Readers' Choice Awards 2026 - the most prestigious reader-voted travel accolade in the European market, and one of the most coveted in the world.

Pīhopa ranked #9 in Australasia and was the highest-placed New Zealand property - the second consecutive year it has claimed the top position.

In a remarkable double recognition, the US edition of Condé Nast Traveler also named Pīhopa #2 Hotel in New Zealand for the second year running, ranking #6 in Australia & New Zealand, with more than 900,000 votes cast across both editions.

The accolades place Pīhopa firmly on the global stage, alongside the world's great intimate luxury hotels and lodges. An independently owned six-suite retreat, Pīhopa ranks alongside international names including Ritz-Carlton, Capella, The Fullerton and The Langham.

The recognition does not stand alone. Pīhopa Retreat holds a perfect 10/10 on Booking.com - a flawless score sustained across every verified guest review over three consecutive years - TripAdvisor's Best of the Best (top 1% of hotels worldwide), and New Zealand's Qualmark 5-Star and Gold Tier Sustainable Tourism rating. For a small, privately owned retreat of six suites, it is an extraordinary sweep.

"This wasn't just a stay. It was a reminder that true luxury doesn't shout. It whispers through craftsmanship, through intuition, and through a commitment to excellence most will never see - but the discerning will never forget."

- Guest, Pīhopa Retreat

The Journey European Travellers Have Been Waiting For

New Zealand has long occupied a particular place in the European travel imagination - a destination so remote, so unspoiled, and so unlike anywhere closer to home that those who make the journey tend to return having fundamentally reconsidered what travel can be. For those arriving from Europe, the question of where to stay carries real weight: when you have committed to a journey of this distance, only the exceptional will do.

Pīhopa Retreat is that place. Set on a historic estate dating back to 1859 in the hills above Nelson - New Zealand's sunniest city - the retreat comprises just six private suites within 5.5 acres of heritage gardens, including 100-year-old protected landscape trees, neighbouring a 2.4-hectare reserve. It is a setting that rewards the traveller who has seen much of the world and still finds themselves quietly astonished.

An Experience of the Finest Order

Hosted by Sarah Mellor and her team, every detail of a guest's stay is considered and deeply personalised - in a way that only a six-suite retreat can achieve. Restaurant reservations are arranged in advance with complimentary taxis to and from Nelson's city centre. Evenings begin with complimentary drinks and canapés served poolside. A curated selection of wines and cocktails, freshly baked afternoon treats, and a sumptuous chef-prepared breakfast served in the historic 1877 chapel complete the picture. Between it all, guests wander at their own pace - pathways weaving through heritage plantings, native birds overhead, the stillness of a place that feels entirely, gloriously private.

European guests who have stayed in the great châteaux, relais, and grand hotels of the continent will recognise in Pīhopa something they did not expect to find at the far end of the world: genuine, old-world hospitality, updated for the modern traveller, and entirely without pretence.

"They've created an environment of understated elegance and calm, with amenities that are beyond generous. Having travelled extensively, we've stayed at many luxury boutique hotels and châteaux. Pīhopa Retreat stands out as an oasis of comfort and grace."

- Guest, Pīhopa Retreat

A Gateway to One of the World's Great Wilderness Regions

Pīhopa Retreat sits at the threshold of three of New Zealand's most spectacular National Parks - Abel Tasman, Kahurangi, and Nelson Lakes - placing guests at the heart of some of the most breathtaking and accessible wilderness on earth. Ancient beech forests, golden beaches, mountain trails, and the region's celebrated food, wine, and arts scene are all within easy reach. For European travellers building a wider New Zealand itinerary, Nelson Tasman offers a depth and variety of experience that rivals any region in the country.

Sustainability - Luxury with a Purpose

For European travellers who care deeply about how they travel, Pīhopa Retreat offers something increasingly rare: luxury that is independently verified as sustainable. The retreat is carbon positive certified, a Kaitiaki member of the Brook

Waimārama Sanctuary, and a signatory of the Tiaki Promise - New Zealand's commitment to care for the land, sea, and community. It holds Qualmark 5-Star and Gold Tier Sustainable Tourism accreditation, independently benchmarked against Global Sustainable Tourism Council standards - the same international body that underpins sustainability certification across Europe and the world. For guests who care as much about how they travel as where they go, Pihopa offers luxury with a light footprint.

New This Season

Pihopa Retreat's new Wellness Centre - incorporating a massage studio, reformer Pilates, sauna and ice bath - opened in Winter 2026, further strengthening the retreat's offering for guests seeking restoration alongside exploration. The team has also planted 3,000 native trees on the property this winter, with a new walking trail and curated journeys through the emerging forest landscape - both reflecting the constant desire to refine and elevate the guest experience, and to deepen the sense of sanctuary that defines every stay. The suites have also been refreshed for the new season, with new paint, curtains and furnishings.

Practical Information for European Travellers

Pihopa Retreat is bookable direct at www.pihoparetreat.nz. Nelson is reached via a short domestic connection through Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch, with major European carriers operating long-haul services into Auckland via Singapore, Dubai, Doha and Hong Kong. Given near-full occupancy through the peak summer season (November–April), early booking is strongly recommended. The shoulder seasons of October and April–May offer excellent conditions and more flexibility.

About Pihopa Retreat

Tucked away in a tranquil pocket just minutes from Nelson's city centre on New Zealand's South Island, Pihopa Retreat is New Zealand's most acclaimed small luxury hotel. Six private suites set amid 5.5 acres of heritage gardens on a historic estate dating to 1859. Highest-ranked New Zealand hotel in Condé Nast Traveller UK's Readers' Choice Awards 2026 (#9 in Australasia) and second-highest in the US edition (#6 in Australia & New Zealand) - for the second consecutive year. Perfect 10/10 on Booking.com (three-year verified score). TripAdvisor Best of the Best (top 1% globally). Qualmark 5-Star and Gold Tier Sustainable Tourism accreditation, verified against Global Sustainable Tourism Council standards. Carbon positive certified and signatory of the Tiaki Promise.

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