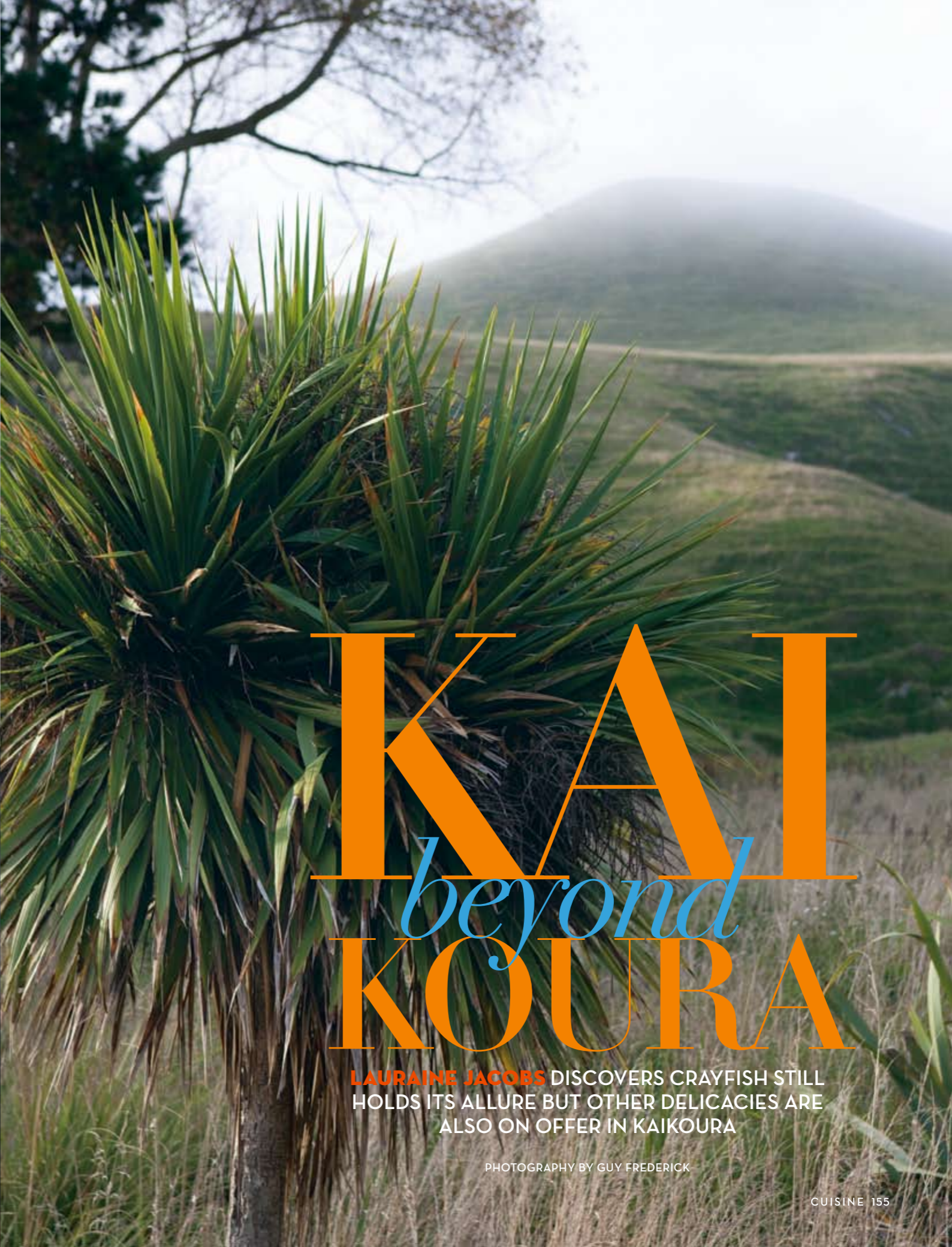


Crayfish from Kaikoura Seafood BBQ



We drew up to Hapuku Lodge, set on a coastal deer farm and olive grove, just as dusk settled over the velvety green pastures. The lodge, with its innovative “tree houses”, is 12 kilometres north of Kaikoura township, at the margin of this flat peninsula that defies the Kaikoura Ranges. Towering above us, to the north, the snow-capped ranges closed in on the coast, falling almost directly into a deep ocean trench that is home to a rich coastal upswelling of marine life. Deep-diving sperm whales feast just offshore year-round. Hapuku is owned by the Wilson family, Kiwi builders and architects who now live in California, and this is their small piece of paradise in Paradise.



# KAI *beyond* KOURA

**LAURINE JACOBS** DISCOVERS CRAYFISH STILL  
HOLDS ITS ALLURE BUT OTHER DELICACIES ARE  
ALSO ON OFFER IN KAIKOURA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GUY FREDERICK

The “tree houses” (they have reassuringly solid steel frames) are tiny havens of luxury 10 metres up in a canopy of manuka trees, and filled with hand-crafted furniture.

The main Hapuku Lodge building offers more conventional accommodation and a large, welcoming dining room where we relished a dinner prepared by lodge chef Rich Huber.

A former chef at Google’s Café 150, where all produce is sourced from within 150 miles (241 kilometres), Rich brought the local food philosophy with him from California. Naturally, the menu changes daily. After a fresh salad with blue cheese, and a wild pork terrine with Chioggia beets for starters, we savoured the most perfect dry-aged rib-eye beef for two sourced from Harnett’s, the local butcher.

Over dinner we chatted with Stanley Morris, Hapuku’s manager, who helped map out our plans for the next day or two. In deference to the town’s name (in Maori kai means food and koura means crayfish), we made our first stop at Cods & Crayfish, a small family fishery.

**D**erek Jones and his son Kane operate the 12-metre fishing boat *Nemesis* from the town’s “new wharf” and their sparkling-clean retail store is on the main road to the north of the township. The Joneses specialise in live fish, transferring their catch into seawater tanks aboard their boat and then into large, illuminated tanks at the rear of their shop.

Tourists, chefs and locals come in to select what must be the freshest fish in New Zealand. Along with the blue cod and crays, the catch includes gurnard, tarakihi, groper (hapuku), flounder, blue warehou, paua, mussels and kina. One entrepreneurial Auckland regular drives his truck, complete with seawater tank, almost 800 kilometres, ferrying across Cook Strait, to bring live fish from the Joneses back to his city’s numerous Asian restaurants.

I asked if there was any danger of this coastline being fished out and Derek replied, “It’s the fishermen around here who are in danger of extinction, not the fish. The quota system manages the catch, but not enough people see fishing as a career these days.” (The Jones family has been doing this for five generations and Kane is happy to take visitors on fishing charters.)

Just as tourists stop by for the Joneses’ seafood, main-street travellers call in at Harnett’s Kaikoura Butchery to stock up on sausages. This is a proper, old-fashioned family business that has supplied the region with meat from the family farm since the 19th century. The senior figure, Denis Harnett, has been working here for 63 years and still comes in every day. Son Mark oversees the butchery, where they take pride in dry-ageing meat to order for local chefs.

Kaikoura’s main street shelters behind a sea wall, and a range of cafés, touristy shops and service stores line both sides. Visitors make a beeline for the well-staffed information centre at the far end to book adventures and accommodation.

Swimming with the seals and whale-watching from boats or from helicopters are the most popular activities. But there are also four-wheel-drive adventures, night sky tours (the air is particularly clear and bright here), tours to explore the Maori heritage, sea-kayaking, bird-spotting tours, serious tramping and more leisurely coastal walks, scenic flights and more.

We headed north to Kaikoura Winery, set on a limestone bluff. Here you can enjoy a café-style meal and taste wines from what is



Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses (and above)

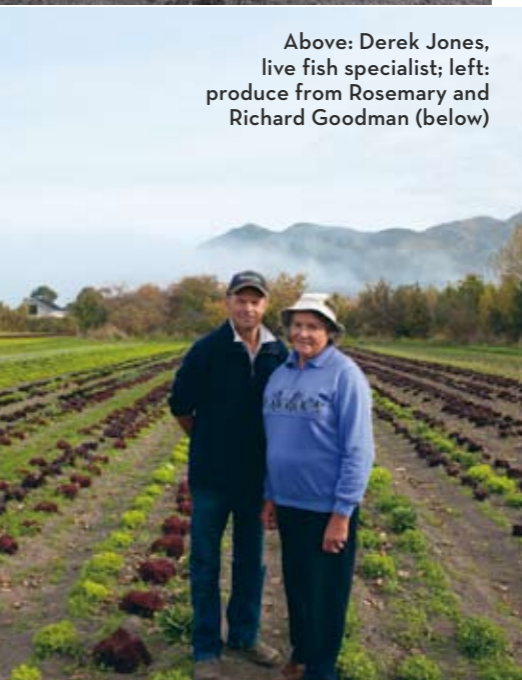


The Store at Kekerengu; left: kina from Cods & Crayfish

Derek Jones and son Kane specialise in live fish. Tourists, chefs and locals come in to select what must be the freshest fish in New Zealand



Above: Derek Jones, live fish specialist; left: produce from Rosemary and Richard Goodman (below)



surely the closest vineyard to the ocean in New Zealand, all the while spotting dolphins and whales from the deck, with its glorious views.

Back towards Kaikoura, we followed the Mountainhoney sign to buy, from a quaint shed just off the main highway, some of the best honey I’ve ever tasted.

Nick Parkinson and Jim Godfrey of Mountainhoney may be the most adventurous beekeepers in the world. Their hives are placed in the foothills of the Kaikoura Ranges and through the Clarence Valley behind. Driving their truck (with the lifting gear) and Land Cruiser along river beds and rough tracks, they head off to collect their blue borage and manuka honeys on excursions involving camping and adventure for up to three days at a time.

The honeys they collect are fragrant and truly organic. Much is exported but you can seek out the label in the township and in New World supermarkets. Mountainhoney founder Ivan Hislop now also gathers his Hislops manuka honey in the foothills and sells it through the family’s Hislops Wholefoods Café.

On land adjacent to the honey shed, Rosemary Goodman and her husband, Richard, tend one of their three blocks of land growing exceptional lettuces, herbs and seasonal vegetables. The Goodmans came to Kaikoura from West Auckland in the early 90s and immediately found a niche for their green fingers.

Because the region features several micro-climates, Rosemary is able to supply restaurants and wholesalers in the Canterbury region year-round. Summertime finds her on her silty home block under the shelter of the Kaikoura Ranges, while in winter she grows on a more coastal garden “that would be far too hot in summer”. Some 150,000 lettuces are grown each year and the Goodmans work with local chefs to provide for their individual needs.

The Lavendyl garden lies north of the town on Postmans Rd. Corry Zeestraten’s son found the established lavender property for sale on the internet, and the family took little convincing to move from Christchurch once they had walked through the



Kaikoura Seafood BBQ

well-tended gardens, complete with a one-hectare vineyard of Sauvignon Blanc. The small gift shop contains every imaginable lavender product and gift, cooking demonstrations and high teas in the garden can be arranged, and two small cottages with romantic outdoor tubs are offered for accommodation.

Diners in this area are spoilt for choice. Just north of the town are the two iconic, and much-photographed, crayfish “caravans”. Further north towards Marlborough, the very good Store at Kekerengu commands a prime position overlooking a majestic sweep of coast. This is a place everyone should visit at least once in their lifetime for the view, food and sheer experience.

Another place that won my heart was a very rustic mobile kitchen, the Kaikoura Seafood BBQ, where the enterprising Kathryn Claridge and her son, Lewis, operate daily, weather permitting. Six wonky little outdoor tables are sheltered from the beach, not far from the seal colony, and for \$4 you can enjoy a small cup of seafood chowder chock-full of mussels and fish, or a grilled fish sandwich for \$7 complete with basic salad. Paua patties, crayfish fritters and fresh crayfish (market price) are served with tea, coffee or soft drinks.

Husband Adrian preps all the food in a nearby commercial kitchen, making this a true Kiwi family business.

For a little more sophisticated eating, check out the area close to the wharf. The popular Pier Hotel, with its pub atmosphere, serves up hearty food with good flavours and you can take your fish and chips across the street to outdoor tables at the water’s edge. The accommodation upstairs is reminiscent of a bygone era: clean, tidy and functional but with shared bathrooms.

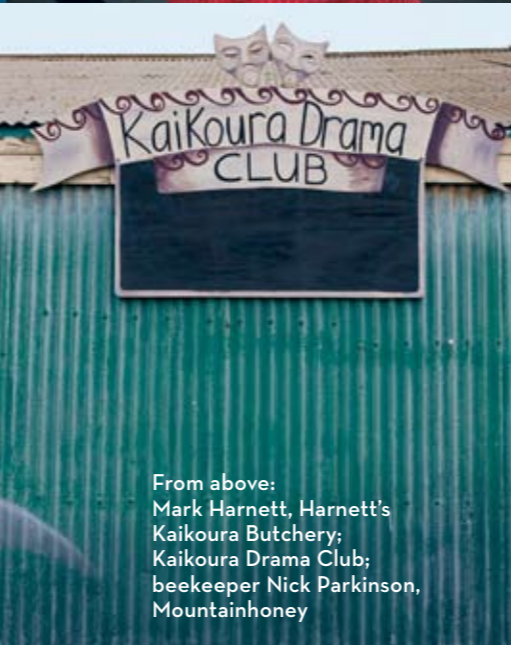
Across the street, chef Matt Marshall and his partner, Louise Fisher (front of house), serve a fine dinner at their Green Dolphin Restaurant, with its shady deck overlooking the ocean.

Another place to check out is Hislops Wholefoods Café. Honey pioneer Ivan Hislop’s son, Paul, and his wife, Elizabeth, are ardent supporters of naturally produced and prepared healthy food. In an attractive bungalow on the main road heading north through the town, they offer hearty, tasty food throughout the day with a lunch and dinner menu. Bread is baked daily from organic flour milled at the family’s neighbouring stoneground flour mill.

The sun shone during our visit on perfect still days, and when we awoke to head north, fresh snow had dusted the Kaikoura Ranges, adding what could only be called the icing on the cake. ●



Whale murals abound in Kaikoura township; below: Cods & Crayfish



From above: Mark Harnett, Harnett's Kaikoura Butchery; Kaikoura Drama Club; beekeeper Nick Parkinson, Mountainhoney



From top: Grilled fish sandwich and crayfish from Kaikoura Seafood BBQ; Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses chef Rich Huber; the boat comes in at South Bay



## Fact file

### LOCAL PRODUCE

- Cods & Crayfish**  
81 Beach Rd, ph: 03-319 7899
- Harnett's Kaikoura Butchery**  
45 West End (main road), ph: 03-319 5185
- Kaikoura Winery**  
140 SH1 (2km south of Hapuku), ph: 03-319 7966, kaikourawinery.co.nz
- Lavendyl**  
268 Postmans Rd, Kaikoura, ph: 03-319 5473, lavenderfarm.co.nz
- Mountainhoney**  
670 Main South Rd, Peketa, ph: 03-319 6860, mountainhoney.com
- Rosemary & Richard Goodman**  
ph: 03-319 7307

### STAY AT

- Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses**  
SH1 (12km north of Kaikoura), ph 03-319 6559, hapukulodge.co.nz
- Lavendyl**  
268 Postmans Rd, ph: 03-319 5473, dylanscottages.co.nz  
Two small private cottages.
- The Pier Hotel**  
1 Avoca St, Kaikoura, ph: 03-319 5037, thepierhotel.co.nz

### EAT AT

- Green Dolphin Restaurant**  
12 Avoca St, Kaikoura, ph: 03-319 6666
- Hislops Wholefoods Café**  
33 Beach Rd, ph: 03-319 6971, hislops-wholefoods.co.nz
- Kaikoura Seafood BBQ**  
Past the old wharf, near the seal colony. Contact Kathryn Claridge, ph: 0274-339 691
- The Pier Hotel**  
1 Avoca St, Kaikoura, ph: 03-319 5037, thepierhotel.co.nz
- The Store at Kekerengu**  
SH1 (about 30 minutes north of Kaikoura), ph: 03-575 8600

### OTHER

- Alpine Pacific Triangle**  
Driving north from Christchurch, you join the coastal leg of this tourist route that links the mountain resort of Hanmer, the Waipara wine region (Pegasus Bay winery is a must-visit for lunch) and Kaikoura. [hurunui.com](http://hurunui.com)
- Information**  
Kaikoura i-Site  
West End, ph: 03-319 5641, kaikoura.co.nz