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In Transit

TRAVEL NEWS, DEALS AND TIPS

Q&A

JULIAN ROBERTSON on lodge hospitality and savoring views.

As the co-founder, chairman and chief executive of the \$30 billion investment firm Tiger Management L.L.C., Julian Robertson, 82, has achieved a high profile in the world of finance. His role as a luxury hotel proprietor, however, has been more under-the-radar.

Mr. Robertson, based in New York City, owns three upscale properties in New Zealand: Kauri Cliffs Lodge on the North Island; the Farm at Cape Kidnappers; and Matakauri Lodge near the city of Queenstown on the South Island. His love for the country began just before he started Tiger in 1980 when he spent six months in Auckland with his wife, Josephine, and their two children (a third son was born later) to write a novel. The book was never published, but his attraction to the region stayed with him when he was back in the United States. He made his imprint there permanent more than a decade ago when he bought the farmland where he built Kauri Cliffs.

While Mr. Robertson still works full time running his investment company, he also has a hand in overseeing his venture in travel. His son Jay, 37, divides his time among the lodges managing the day-to-day operations, and the older Mr. Robertson gives his input during his annual stay from December to March. Following are edited excerpts from a conversation with Mr. Robertson. SHIVANI VORA



VAUGHAN LEIGHTON BROOKFIELD FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Julian Robertson last year at one of his New Zealand properties, the Farm at Cape Kidnappers, Hawkes Bay.

A. I was always very interested in geography, and since the country has some of the most diverse geography in the world including mountains, sea and farmland, I was drawn to it.

Was getting into hospitality part of your plans?

Not really. On one of my trips to New Zealand, I saw the farmland, which would be Kauri Cliffs and learned it was for sale at a good price. I thought it was such a gorgeous piece of land and decided to buy it and build a hotel.

What would you say distinguishes the properties?

Matakauri Lodge is in the mountains on a lake while the others are both working sheep and cattle farms on the

ocean, where the golf course on each is one of the many highlights.

What is the ideal New Zealand itinerary?

You need two weeks. If you're coming from the States, it takes 24 hours just to get here, so you spend two days in travel alone. When you're here, I would say to stick to the coastline and the countryside, including the mountains like Mount Cook, which is the highest mountain here. They are spectacular and really what make the country special.

Besides spending time at your own lodges, you frequently travel around the world and experience other hotels. What, for you, makes a property

exceptional?

It's not just about fancy food and sheets. The staff is extremely important. You want an obliging staff that's ready to serve but not in a stuffy way. They should be genuinely friendly.

I think the setting of a hotel is also very important — you want a place with great views whether it's the mountains or the beach.

Any advice on vacation planning in general?

Wherever you go, you don't want to overdo the traveling around and jump from plane to plane. It's not fun, and you don't see much. If you have a limited amount of time, see fewer things but see them well.

Q. What compelled you to go to New Zealand to write your novel?