



DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES/COURTESY OF CAPE KIDNAPPERS

At Cape Kidnappers golf course in Hawke's Bay, the biggest distraction is the view. At many holes it is hard to resist the urge to sneak out a camera to capture the stunning landscape.

# Captain Cook's mystic islands

Scenic country offers cliff-top golfing, world-class wines and tranquil fishing

**SHERRI HAIGH**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

It's mystical, beautiful and little bit frustrating.

Tom Doak embraced Maori mythology when designing the Cape Kidnappers golf course in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. Its name is meant to immortalize the first visit by Captain Cook in 1770.

We can only wonder what Cook would think today if he saw the transformation of this land into one of the world's top golf courses.

He'd likely wish he brought his clubs.

The joke for many is the longest drive of their life took place here. Of course, we are talking about the long but scenic drive up to the course from the main gate.

NEW ZEALAND continued on T6





SHERRI HAIGH FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Guide Morris Hill isn't giving up on the monster brown trout in the Ruakituri River.

**NEW ZEALAND** from T1

Having looked at some of the stunning aerial photographs of the property I was worried about how challenging the game would be.

But perhaps the biggest distraction was the view. For many holes it is hard to resist the urge to sneak out the camera to capture the stunning landscape.

It truly did feel mystical as I stood near the edge of the cliff watching the ocean and feeling completely alone.

While not a true links terrain, the land leans toward the sea with ridges that jut out towards the edge of the cliffs. It's a long way down.

For the most experienced golfer, this course offers challenges and rewards. Watching golfers hit from the blue tee box, I shuddered at what would have happened to my ball.

Fortunately, for the average golfer, the tee options will allow you to keep your dignity while enjoying the game. On the back of the score card, they refer to the red and yellow pins as the "Ladies Rating."

I am more familiar with the term "forward" tees so it is less about your gender and more about your skill level, but for the sake of argument, I was happy to be a "lady" on this day.

The first hole aptly titled "First" lets you know right away that it's not

going to be easy. At 440 yards from the blue, this par-4 hides a deep gully. I manage a bogey (playing from reds — 370 yards).

I am worried about the second hole, which is a par-5 (540 for blue and 500 for red). But a nice drive and an equally great second shot off the fairway had me feeling confident. But, as we all know, confidence has a way of coming and going quickly in the game of golf. Once on the green, it all starts to fall apart. We won't discuss the score on this hole.

For someone who doesn't play as often as I would like, I usually find putting to be my strength. But on this course, it was the opposite.

After a par on the eighth hole, I was feeling pretty good. I kept my driver in the bag for the ninth hole and took dead aim for the centre of the green. A little short, it now became a tough play given the contours of the green. Welcome to double bogey.

A future in the LPGA may not be for me, but it was certainly one of the top golf experiences of my life.

The views alone are worth the greens fee.

If you are going to make the trip to Cape Kidnappers then it's an absolute must that you spend at least a night or two at the Farm at Cape

> **INSIDE**

- > World-class fly fishing awaits after a 45-minute helicopter ride over Hawke's Bay to the legendary Ruakituri River.
- > Hawke's Bay is also New Zealand's oldest wine region, home to more than 100 vineyards and 80 wineries.



SHERRI HAIGH FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Greenhill Lodge owner John Dick serves local wine to his guests in Hawke's Bay.

Kidnappers.

Sitting on 2,400 hectares of land, it offers stunning 180-degree views of the Pacific Ocean.

There are several accommodation options, including lodge suites within the building. My suite is a short walk from the main building. Enhanced with modern features, it still felt very much like a cabin: a luxury cabin.

I wanted to take a bath just so I could enjoy the view from the giant window looking out on the ocean.

There were pre-dinner cocktails in the lounge, which was a great way to meet other guests and hear about their travel experiences. It's wise to reserve a table in the front patio area to capture the best views while feasting on dining selections that include in-season produce from their vegetable garden, luscious lamb, beef and seafood.

Feeling relaxed after an incredible hot stone massage and my hearty meal, I fell asleep on my king-size bed dreaming about a little white ball that kept falling off a cliff.

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