



Your room is ready

As visitor arrival numbers ramp up and tourism gets a second wind, new hotels in Auckland are welcoming discerning guests.

Being the first port of entry for the majority of visitors to New Zealand, host to large sporting and musical events, and with corporate life and conferences back on track, Auckland's hotel sector is enjoying strong occupancy. Around 800 new hotel rooms were added to the city's inventory last year and several high-profile openings to date this year have boosted those numbers even further. With bookings open online from July, Horizon SkyCity will see another 303 rooms available for guests, making SkyCity the largest single-site accommodation provider in New Zealand, with 938 rooms across three hotels in its inner city precinct. Bayleys' *Hotels, Tourism and Leisure*

The opening of InterContinental Auckland marks the premium brand's long-awaited return to New Zealand's largest city and the completion of the Commercial Bay precinct.



looks at two other recent additions to Auckland's hotel sector - one under the auspices of a pioneering global luxury brand, and the other independently owned and operated by New Zealand-headquartered entities.

INTERCONTINENTAL AUCKLAND OPENS

Commercial Bay is a substantial world-class urban mixed-use development by NZX-listed Precinct Properties located on Auckland's waterfront near the historic Ferry Building and the heritage Britomart precinct.

The almost two-hectare site is bounded by Quay, Lower Queen, Customs and Albert streets and supports premium corporate office space, a multi-level retail and hospitality centre - and now, the freshly-minted luxury InterContinental Auckland with 139 thoughtfully-curated rooms and suites across levels 6 to 11 at One Queen Street.

The long-awaited and much-anticipated return of the InterContinental brand to the city was celebrated at the hotel's recent opening - adding to IHG Hotels & Resorts' luxury and lifestyle collection and extensive portfolio in New Zealand, while also marking the completion of the Commercial Bay precinct.

IHG Hotels & Resorts already has 11 hotels welcoming guests across the country with world-class hotels elsewhere in Auckland, Queenstown, Wellington and Christchurch and spanning the InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, voco, Hotel Indigo, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express brands. IHG is set to open Hotel Indigo Auckland later this year.

IHG Hotels & Resorts managing director Australasia & Pacific, Matt Tripolone, says one of the drivers behind InterContinental Auckland's

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MANAGING DIRECTOR,
IHG HOTELS & RESORTS
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opening was the demand for luxury accommodation in the growing Auckland city landscape that attracts both local and international travellers.

“We seized this opportunity to grow IHG's presence within the vibrant city, and the opening of InterContinental Auckland has been met with enthusiasm and excitement from guests and the industry. “There is a strong demand in Auckland for accommodation all year round and looking ahead to next summer, forward bookings are looking positive.”

InterContinental Auckland was designed by Warren and Mahoney with five key elements in mind: a focus on New Zealand food and wine; international appeal; ethical and locally sourced materials; seamless transitions from day to night; and acknowledgement of the site and its surroundings.

Location is crucial for a luxury hotel, and being part of the fully-integrated Commercial Bay precinct is a bonus. The carefully-designed and fully-integrated development created an open laneway environment around the hotel facilitating greater connectivity with both the waterfront

and the city itself. With views across the Waitematā Harbour, InterContinental Auckland is billed as a luxury haven where guests can be immersed in New Zealand's rich history, and connect with the tapestry of local culture, art, and cuisine, says Tripolone.

“We have seen an uplift in global travellers looking for sustainability and wellness when deciding on accommodation post-pandemic. “They're particularly seeking authentic experiences and connection to the country they are visiting and InterContinental Auckland does this really well through the hotel's comprehensive art collection prioritising local and Iwi artists, with a heavy influence on Māori culture.

“We have works on display by artists such as Fiona Pardington, Beronia Scott and Te Pūawai Ōrākei Marae - the Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei weaving collective which has supplied an extraordinary Whāriki, (woven panel) for each room.

“These works, and others, offer guests an authentic experience and connection to the country.”

Guest rooms and suites are well

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appointed with premium bedding, a smart television with casting technology and a Bluetooth soundbar. Ensuite bathrooms feature a rain shower and luxurious Byredo products.

Headed by seasoned and internationally-acclaimed chef Gareth Stewart, InterContinental Auckland's signature restaurant Advieh has been described by an industry reviewer as an early candidate for restaurant opening of the year and "insanely good".

"Under Gareth's direction, Advieh puts a contemporary twist on Middle Eastern-inspired cuisine while championing New Zealand's finest produce," says Tripolone.

While InterContinental Auckland enjoys its fresh arrival in the City of Sails, work is progressing on IHG's 225-room Hotel Indigo at 51 Albert Street, due to open at the end of this year.

"IHG is set to triple our presence in Auckland with the opening of Hotel Indigo which draws inspiration from local artists for its design, service, amenities and food and beverage offering," explains Tripolone.

"It will be an intriguing boutique hotel that takes guests on a treasure hunt, discovering Auckland's past, present, and future from century-old pubs to hip, gentrified alleyways."

BRINGING AN ABSTRACT IDEA TO LIFE

In Auckland's Upper Queen Street, near its junction with eclectic Karangahape Road, stands Abstract, an innovative new hotel with overtones of cosmopolitan New York – a far cry from the former electrical store and vintage t-shirt shop that originally stood on the site.

Intensive rezoning under the Auckland Unitary Plan meant that a multi-storey new-build hotel was possible for the area and seasoned developer Nigel McKenna who heads up one of New Zealand's largest development companies, Templeton Group, purchased the site in late 2018.

Templeton identified the market opportunity for an affordable, mid-sized, multi-storey hotel in the heart of Auckland's most exciting and vibrant inner-city community, and adjacent to one of the city's major transport hubs – the soon-to-open Karanga-a-Hape Station in Mercury Lane, which is part of the new City Rail Link project.

"To match those fundamentals, we envisaged a Brooklyn-style of building, delivering far more than would normally be expected from a traditional affordable hotel.

"Extensive external brickwork cladding visually connects Abstract's design to the Victorian and Edwardian buildings that typify nearby K' Road's architectural heritage, while exterior



Auckland's newest boutique hotel, Abstract, is full of personality and honours New Zealand art in unique ways.

engaging personality and outstanding shared amenities.

"While compact, the rooms are extremely well appointed, each with a microwave, hob, espresso coffee maker and Chromecast-enabled screens and from décor, colour and comfort to water pressure and bag storage, real attention to detail marks every aspect of the accommodation.

"The fit-out, bedding and linen, in-room facilities and equipment, are comparable to those of a five-star hotel, with warm, friendly service and not a trace of hauteure and because it is independently owned and operated, there's an individuality and intimacy that global chains cannot match."

According to McKenna, Abstract

appeals to international free independent travellers, business people working in the CBD, visitors attending concerts, conferences and sports events in Auckland, and people transitioning to New Zealand who may like to take up residence at Abstract for an extended stay.

Abstract also hosts an outstanding standalone luxury spa facility for in-house guests and visitors. Sa-Ni Spa and Wellness Centre sees co-founder and director Sarisa Nasinprom guiding a team of master therapists, adept at treating body and mind through the ancient art of Thai massage and other signature beauty and therapeutic packages.

With K' Road attracting the artistic and creative communities, Abstract Hotel honours New Zealand art in unique ways, starting in the arrival lobby where dramatic bronze drapes sit theatrically behind Fraser Clements' iconic portrait of Graeme Maunsel.

The integration of art and architecture is repeated in the restaurant, with two large Hayley Brown abstract pieces -- Flight 1 and 2 – echoing the soft furnishings, while Auckland-based urban artist, Ross Liew's work, "The Name Itself" hangs near the elevators.

Beside this, and repeated on each floor above, is a set of four black and white photographs in an ascending linear series, with each set retelling a scene from one night in K' Road, starting and ending in Abstract.

Works by other Auckland artists including Daniel Blanshard, Judi Bagust, Simon Lewis Wards, and Marcus Capes are also in pride of place – along with underwater photographs by Spanish-born, Nelson-based Jose Canos, and abstract paintings by Wellington's Amanda Wilkinson.

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FOUNDER,
TEMPLETON GROUP



foliage aligns the building with green spaces to the east.

"From the moment you arrive in the cobbled laneway of the hotel's porte cochère, you will recognise it as a chic urban space, designed for modern living and cleverly tailored to combine stylish, intimate interiors with carefully considered utility."

The K' Road precinct is effectively a commercial extension of neighbouring Ponsonby Road and has always marched to the beat of its own drum. Likewise, Abstract offers spaces that are full of personality with welcoming communal amenities that are well-considered, generous and each with its own character.

There's the Wintergarden

outdoor garden bar with fireplace, sophisticated Terrace Bar, Library Lounge, Collage restaurant, gallery and workspace, gym and a studio which serves as a boardroom or private dining room – described by McKenna as "deeply charming".

There are four types of hotel rooms: studios, family rooms, plus one- and two-bedroom units. McKenna says describing Abstract Hotel as "boutique" doesn't fully reflect the quality and range of the amenities available to guests or the design flair evident at every turn.

"There's nothing ordinary about Abstract. It's positioned as an affordable inner-city hotel with compact rooms, a distinctive and

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