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MAGAZINE



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Designed to be different



The four-storey façade

Scandinavian design

An extensive collection of mid-20th-century Scandinavian furniture amid comfortable boutique surroundings give Wellington's Ohtel an individual flair

Scandinavia meets New Zealand by the shores of Wellington Harbour at Ohtel, a new 10-suite, highly personalised hotel created by Alan Blundell. The architect/owner has been designing apartments and houses in the world's southernmost capital city for 22 years and Ohtel occupies a prime waterfront location opposite Waitangi Park. Blundell's luxurious 'home-away-from-home' is furnished with an abundance of mid-20th-century furniture with pieces by designers such as Arne Jacobsen, Charles Eames and Hans Wegner. For two years, while the four-storey hotel was under construction, Blundell sourced a huge collection of Scandinavian-designed furniture from the 1950s and 1960s to fill the rooms and lobby.

"Much of my collection is Australasian-made by Danish craftsmen who left Europe during the 1950s to settle in New Zealand and Australia," Blundell says. "Under licence from Scandinavian designers, these craftsmen made equivalent furniture sold with Australasian labels such as Parker or Fler. These items have become very valuable."

Blundell found many pieces locally, others in Melbourne. "One of my favourite items is a tall teak sideboard/cocktail cabinet I discovered on a British website and then imported," he notes. This cabinet takes pride of place against a wall of Ohtel's welcoming lobby, which feels more like the casual living room of a friend's house.

An intimate space with a curved banquette and fireplace, the lobby serves as a café, bar (with extensive list of top-notch local wines), dining area and general meeting place. Easy chairs are grouped around low teak tables, a long daybed stands by a window, and the eight-seater dining table can be booked for business meetings or private dinners. "We didn't want to have a full-blown restaurant," explains Blundell, "close by are a lot of fantastic restaurants, such as Martin Bosley's and Logan Brown."

Lending a distinctive Kiwi flavour to Ohtel's decor are contemporary and traditional New Zealand artworks including an exquisitely hand-crafted *Korowai* (a Maori ceremonial cloak) displayed in the lobby.

Each bathroom has a huge photographic image of a New Zealand landscape, the colours of which are reflected in decorative tones of the adjoining king-size bedroom. With a two-person tub, oversize shower and big bedroom, each Ohtel suite has an unusual generosity of space. Practical considerations include state-of-the-art sound systems, complimentary high-speed broadband and laptop-size safes.

"Comfort and personalised service are paramount here," says Blundell. "Ohtel is my idea of what people want in terms of ambience and great service from helpful staff with a can-do attitude and attention to detail."

Margie Blok