

# Sex in the city

By CAMERON WILLIAMSON - The Dominion Post | Wednesday, 02 July 2008



Supplied

SEXING IT UP: The Ohtel boutique hotel in Wellington is made for lovers.



MAARTEN HOLL/Dominion Post

DO TELL: The Ohtel boutique rooms are designed to encourage togetherness.

**On the longest night of the year, romantic trysts are probably in motion in every Wellington hotel. But how many hotels are considerate enough to have condoms on the menu?**

Downstairs at Ohtel, the lobby- bar is strewn, salon-style, with mid- century scandi-chic furniture. A blue-flame fire offers relief from the solstice southerly that had arrived right on cue. There's only an apology though, from the designer- hotelier behind Ohtel, Wellingtonian Alan Blundell, whom we'd hoped to meet at the lobby bar.

With dark displacing the gloom about 4pm, we checked into our deluxe room, with balcony, sumptuous king size platform bed cushioned and blanketed in indigenous style, egg-chair, standard lamp and writing desk and ensuite bathroom separated only by an imaginary wall.

You get the feeling that no bodily function will be totally private, and the deep, double-ended bath and two-person shower encourage uninhibited togetherness. Perhaps after the champagne.

The suite was a warm minty green with sumptuous layers of curtains from gossamer to blackout, cute woodcut prints, a long sixties sideboard with suitably Kiwi carved kauri herons, a green pottery box and Crown Lynn vase.

Stepping up to the mini-bar, tucked into the bed-head wall box, and there on the menu âbelow the Grey Goose vodka (\$10), the Julicher sauvignon blanc (\$33) and the monogrammed towelling bathrobes (\$80), were the condoms (\$8). How thoughtful.

Attention to detail is what separates cleverly chic hotels from big businessy chain hotels. That and the price. But \$450 a night for a deluxe room at Ohtel buys a lot of detail, and only the most discreet amount of attention.

Blundell has refined the concept of the boutique hotels of New York and London to bring a more personal experience to the short inner-city hotel stay. It's a reaction to the globalisation of hotel rooms, where uniform practicality has given a McDonald's consistency to a night away from home.

Hotels that turn heads these days are more chic by far. Blundell wanted to fill the gap between 100-room corporate hotels, high-end resorts and B&Bs, which are "essentially just houses on a larger scale or in a rural location".

So he opened Ohtel on a tiny site between the Mt Victoria cliff and Oriental Parade.

"People looking for a personal space for a short stay told us they really had to drive to the Wairarapa to find the kind of luxury they wanted," says Blundell. Mood lighting, broadband, iTunes and smart drinks enhance an under-floor heated bathroom with enough oils and gels to lubricate a steam engine. The layers of curtaining cover double-glazed glass that turns the hubbub of the city into an animated tableau.

The kind of delicious night you only enjoy in a good hotel is interrupted only by bathing, drinks and music, and ends with a knock on the door. It's the concierge with breakfast — fresh fruit and yoghurt for her, creamy mushrooms and bacon for me, lashings of tea for both. We enjoy it with the curtains drawn as a phalanx of joggers head around the bays despite the rain, and follow it with a dreamy doze before a late-morning checkout.

Our longest night in luxury ends with a delicious little sigh of pleasure.

**What:** Ohtel boutique hotel

**Where:** 66 Oriental Parade, Wellington, 04 803 0600

**Basics:** Style-led 10-room hotel strong on design style and retro decor. Deluxe \$450; premier \$400; studio \$350; bar and cafe; gym and sauna.