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Passing Beauty



On an end of season tour I was lucky enough to spend some time in the Marlborough Sounds with clients who were interested in exploring the area. Previous occasions on my part had always been rushed. We spent two nights in the Convent - currently being thoughtfully and beautifully renovated and extended by new owners Layonie and Denholm Seque This is definitely a property to watch.

But what gave me thought to write this piece was the time we spent with Pete and Takutai Beech on board classic eco-cruiser Tutanekai. Always highly rated by our clients, this experience may seem to traditionalists to be not typically mainstream luxury. This is a real New Zealand boat animated by a real New Zealand couple - both European and Maori - but with a real depth of understanding of Maori, nature and history. The vessel is by no means extravagant (actually quite modest) and there are no flunkies in sight. But clients love it. Why? It's real. It's set in a beautiful part of the country. The owners are experts in their fields. And it's an experience which gives people time to stop as well as the ability to gain insights. Time and experiences, real experiences, are increasingly what people in the luxury segment are looking for. Not jaded experiences. Not a basic bushwalk with upmarket lunch marketed as a luxury experience. Something truly interesting with interesting people which allows one to grow one's understanding.

That still wasn't the point of this piece. The point I wanted to make was that prior to being able to spend some time here, I had always passed through the Marlborough Sounds - and therefore all that I had ever experienced was "passing beauty". Something glimpsed from a distance and not really understood. Something wondered about and not experienced. I wonder how many of the visitors to New Zealand are also victims of "passing beauty"? Seeing landscapes without ever

experiencing or understanding them? Taking in a quick activity without ever getting at the truth of the place?

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