

# RATE YOUR HOLIDAY

By John Dybvig



**W**e live in an age where computers control everything, even our holiday destinations. Pick a spot, any spot in the world, then Google it and viola you've become an instant expert on that hotel, motel, resort, campground, public toilet...nothing it seems can escape the net.

Today we want instant up to date results so we go to 'Expedia', 'Hotel Club', 'Rates to Go', 'Wotif' and many others to book instantly at the click of the mouse, but how do we know what the place is really like?

We don't, that is unless you go to 'Trip Advisor'. We normally check this site religiously but in the pre-Christmas rush that started off like an air-raid drill and never seemed to cease we booked without checking it out.

Oh the horrors, especially when the reviews for our booking were some of the worst that we've seen. We couldn't change the booking so we headed off on our five hour journey up through the back blocks to Doubtless Bay with a niggling nervousness.

We ended up in Taipa at the Taipa Bay Resort and tentatively crept into their lobby. Well wouldn't you know it...those reviews were all a load of codswallop, written by a posse of cranky travellers. The resort was stunning - absolutely beachfront as advertised, clean as a whistle and sitting on a piece of New Zealand coastline that cannot be beaten.

A maximum of about fifty people on this huge expanse of

perfect beach each day...with the resort just far enough out of the civilization code that you'll find no shops, no malls and no must see monuments, just plenty of serenity with a healthy dose of steaming hot sunshine - pure bliss.

Every morning I rolled out of bed (late) made a pot of freshly ground coffee flung, open the patio doors to a brilliant blue cloudless sky and just managed to plonk myself down as the kids rushed by with their boogie boards to hit the surf not twenty feet away.

Our apartment had all the usual mod cons including a full functioning kitchen...this was my kind of holiday. I don't do camping. The only place you'll see me camping is in a hotel or resort lobby with a cocktail in hand. The most strenuous thing I did was to play a round of family tennis every evening before hitting the pool for a cool dip on my way back to our patio for another refreshing beverage as we watched the setting sun.

On the way home we stopped off in Opononi sat outside the pub and listened to Dave Dobbyn live on his summer concert tour, then we meandered down to Omapere where we had one of the best bowls of seafood chowder that I've ever eaten. A classic New Zealand holiday.

Had we gone with our gut impressions from those negative reviews we would have stayed home in the rain! Thank goodness on this occasion we used our heads instead of Google. To 'Trip Advisor' or not to 'Trip Advisor' that is the question? ❏