

Boat: 'Nirvana' from Inflight Charters  
Dress: Modes on Broadway

# Add a Touch of Spice

*to* YOUR LIFE

**A**s curators of New Zealand's finest experiences, Touch of Spice are regarded as one of the world's best luxury tourism operators. Their expertise in satisfying even the most discerning of customers is second to none. Eye Magazine caught up with the lead curator of Touch of Spice, Jacqui Spice, who also graces our cover, to find out a bit more about the world of luxury tourism...

Jacqui Spice



**Tell us a bit about your background Jacqui?**

After working many years across hospitality and travel in various sectors, my career took off when I worked as a Chief Stewardess and Purser on super yachts around the world. This gave me a real insight into the kind of experiences sought by high-end travelers. When I visited New Zealand in my down time I couldn't find anyone providing that kind of luxury service. So, noticing this gap in the market and choosing Queenstown as the 'affluent playground of New Zealand' I started my own company, Touch of Spice. Touch of Spice started as a personal concierge service and my business plan was to have a handful of clients who came in and out of Queenstown on a regular basis that I would look after. It didn't take long before that all changed!

**How has your business plan grown over the last 10 years?**

Well, the business plan has definitely had to be re-written! Nearly 10 years on, we have grown from providing a personal concierge service to private clients to now being a leading luxury tourism operator. We have two divisions in the business, we have the Private Villa Collection which is a portfolio of exclusive luxury holiday homes available for short term let throughout New Zealand – and we are also a DMC (Destination Management Company) arranging everything from New Zealand wide holidays, special events and corporate functions, incentive programmes, concierge services and curating once in a life time experiences. I am excited at the direction the company has taken and feel we are able to offer something unique; we are still small enough to be a boutique operator and adapt quickly to the market needs, yet can cope with large groups and high level clients when they come our way.

My team and I work with a large number of clients from around the world every week and I am grateful to still have the support of many of my clients from when I first began.

**With the rise in popularity of the 'staycation', what's your domestic 'must visit' for a spot of luxury?**

My must visit spot has to be Queenstown. It has something for everyone and so much choice. You can stay in a luxury 3 bedroom villa for \$500 a night (or \$20,000 a night!) and you will get space, views and quality. It's beautiful and breathtaking in any weather and has an abundance of things to do and places to go and eat. My second favourite spot would be the beautiful Bay of Islands – I love it up there!

**What are your travel must haves?**

I try hard to travel light but I never do and because I travel to so many fun places I always put a soft duffel bag in my suitcase just in case I get a chance to do a little shopping on the way through – needless to say my wardrobe is overflowing! My most important must have is Josh, my fiancé – we try hard to travel together wherever we go as its more fun that way. Next would have to be my phone which I need to take with me, everywhere, to stay connected and keep on top of the endless stream of emails.

**What do you think is New Zealand's best kept secret?**

I think our best-kept secret is finally out ... we are a beautiful destination with so much to offer the discerning traveler of today. New Zealand is on the hot lists around the world now. We have high quality luxury accommodation, we have owner/operator providers who provide the personal touch, we have so much beauty and landscape to visit but we have so much more as well. New Zealand is already well known for its lush scenery, river, mountains, activities and its adventure tourism but people are discovering we also have world class fashion, architecture, real estate, entertainment, food and wine and we have a great selection of luxury accommodation – we work with some of the best accommodation providers in the world right here in New Zealand.

### What are your luxury 'go to' places when you're in Auckland?

Britomart would be my favourite place to go when I'm in Auckland for shopping. I spend quite a bit of my time at the new Seafarers Club as well working from the member lounge or dining on the top deck. There is an abundance of fantastic restaurants in Auckland now including Clooney, Botswana Butchery, Harbourside, Euro, Ebisu and more. New ones seem to be popping up every day! I go to Kurtis at Dry and Tea in City Works Depot to get my hair done and I love to go to Bliss Reflexology for my massages. To stay, I would choose St Marys Residence in Herne Bay for that inner city fix or head over to Waiheke and relax at Hei Matau. Auckland has come leaps and bounds with what it has to offer the luxury traveler – what used to be a part of town you would avoid, you now go to eat, drink and shop.

### What is a luxury holiday to you?

I have a very busy life juggling my business and my family, so for me a 'luxury holiday' is one where I don't have to do anything or be anywhere at any given time – one without an agenda. I want to be with my family, have room service, beautiful food, warmth, beautiful scenery and great wine.

### Organising travel can be so stressful and time consuming, how do you ease this for your clients?

We do the work for them. We do the planning and research, the ringing around and the negotiating. We take care of every little detail, every step of the way. From organising car seats in hire cars and high chairs in restaurants, to booking all of their activities, planning a surprise lunch with a private chef and arranging special functions.

### Why would you recommend staying at one of the Touch of Spice villas?

Our villas are at a world class standard. We hand select them and choose only the best in the various regions. The owners we work with understand our strive for excellence and quality and each villa must meet a certain standard - staying in one of our villas should be a very luxurious experience. My team work with you from the moment of enquiry, right through your stay helping you to arrange every little detail. We are not a "key under the mat" company. All our villas all have fantastic views, are in great locations, are beautifully appointed and come with 24/7 on-call concierge services. Whether you are paying \$500 a night or \$20,000 per night, everyone is a VIP in our world.

### What do you love most about your job?

It's so varied – no day is ever the same and we get to work on amazing jobs and meet some amazing people. My job is to be on the road a lot, selling, being the brand, bringing in the big leads and securing the big deals...and I love it! I get to travel a lot and get to meet some fascinating people. It's stressful and busy, it's a 7 day a week business, 365 days a year so it can be draining at times, but you wake up the next day, check your inbox and something new, exciting and challenging is there for you to get out of bed and tend to.

### What makes Touch of Spice different?

We are a boutique operator but we have a large reach! We can offer a very personal service to all of our clients so they feel looked after and important, not just one of many. We think outside the square, we cover all bases and we exceed expectations each and every time; these are three of our core values. We walk ourselves

through every aspect to make sure we have ticked all the boxes before it happens.

### What are your top 5 tips for making a corporate event special?

1. The devil is in the details. From what you place in the bathrooms to the length of the table cloths (floor length every time!) it's the little things that people will notice or let you down.
2. Always make sure you have good food and good wine. Don't scrimp on the parts that people will actually remember – they will always remember the food, the wine and the entertainment.
3. Always make sure a venue is adequately heated or has air conditioning. Don't overlook this step as people will also remember if they were freezing cold!
4. Walk through every aspect of the event from start to finish and make sure you have thought of everything.
5. Make it inspirational – if it's an event for your team then make it memorable. ●

[touchofspice.co.nz](http://touchofspice.co.nz)



# Jacqui's Picks

## TOP VILLAS *across the* COUNTRY

### NORTH ISLAND

#### Otaha Beachfront Lodge, Bay of Islands

Only a two minute walk to a secluded beach, this villa provides you with your very own private piece of the Bay of Islands. Built in 2013, Otaha Beachfront Lodge has been designed to make the most out of its stunning location. The golden wooden floors are made from the timber of neighboring trees and the floor to ceiling windows maximize the breathtaking views through-out the property. It's incredibly spacious, with a modern, crisp feel— it's definitely beachside living with a luxurious twist! It's a great villa for entertaining with a large open plan living area and plenty of outdoor space, complete with decking, dining area and barbecue.

With five bedrooms, all with en-suite bathrooms, its ideal for that beach getaway with a group of friends. If you're after a holiday where you can sit back, unwind and enjoy the uninterrupted oceans views in your own private paradise, then this is the place for you.



### SOUTH ISLAND

#### The Copper House, Queenstown

The Copper House is a masterpiece inside and out. Arguably one of the largest and most prominent rental properties in Queenstown, it doesn't fail to dazzle anyone staying there. Its impressive design starts from the moment you arrive, with the exterior lined in copper sheeting (giving the property its namesake). The interior of the villa is breathtakingly large and immaculately furnished; every nook reveals another great piece of artwork. It's the dream villa rental for hosting and impressing with numerous spaces to entertain, including a spacious open plan living area, private decking and large balcony providing some of the best views in Queenstown.

Each of the six bedrooms are immaculately decorated with luxurious bedding and all possess modern en-suite bathrooms. Additional features of the property include a large office space, full gym facilities, wine cellar, cinema room and outdoor pool. The nightly rental doesn't come cheap but you can be rest assured that a stay here will be hard to beat.

