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Unique Auckland hotel selected for latest world “Top 25”

Mollies boutique hotel in Auckland’s St Mary’s Bay has been admitted to one of the world’s most prestigious hotel collections. Following a worldwide search through 2008, the Paris-based association Relais & Chateaux announced in January 2009 that they had been assessing 100 possible new candidates. From these, only 25 new members have now been confirmed.

Existing members include some of the finest castles, palaces and fortresses of France and the rest of Europe, with histories of royal visits, celebrity accolades and some of the world’s finest haute cuisine. Across the Americas, Asia the Orient and Oceania, the membership map with its own Google Earth layer is itself a table of the world’s most respected and even revered establishments – many of which have been members through several generations of their renowned hosts and chef families.

Jaume Tàpies, International President of Relais & Châteaux, is glowing in his appreciation of the new ambassadors of the art of fine living. "Twenty-five new members signify 25 additional, unique and unforgettable experiences for lovers of art de vivre around the world," he says.

Mollies owners, Frances Wilson and Stephen Fitzgerald, who have lived overseas and travelled extensively, say that selection for membership fulfils a lifelong ambition. “We have so often admired the commitment to excellence and the sheer class and style of many of the Relais & Chateaux hotels in Europe and America especially,” says Frances. “Now to be acknowledged in their number is a very great honour indeed.”

The association of Relais & Chateaux has a code of *the five c’s* - courtesy, charm, character, calm and cuisine. Mollies already hits the high “c’s” with their unique operatic and live musical soirées that form the aperitif to each evening’s fine dining in Mollies restaurant. The newly published international on-line guide quotes Mollies as “unique in the world” for these pre-dinner offerings of live music and especially opera, springing from Frances’ international reputation and her continuing career as a teacher of voice.

Stephane Junca, Relais & Chateaux regional director of development, says this is just one of the unique attributes that elevates Mollies above other city hotels worldwide.





“I recently came for the very first time in my life to New Zealand. I only stayed in Auckland and discovered with a great pleasure Mollies. It is very much matching with Relais & Chateaux spirit: small and refined, with a very strong involvement of Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald, a home feeling, a very good and personalized service, great cuisine... and a unique "aperopera", aperitif with opera.”

The elegance of Mollies, her décor and table settings and the European ambiance of the Venetian-plastered walls is a perfect fit for the style epitomised by Relais & Chateaux. Mollies is a rare oasis of calm in the middle of a city, says M. Junca. “Mollies has a very quiet location in a residential area, which is very hard to find in big cities... if you look at the Relais & Chateaux locations, very few RC hotels are located in cities.” Mollies is also uniquely “New Zealand”, having passed down to Frances Wilson through her mother, after whom the hotel is named.

International devotees of the association are very loyal, says Mollies general manager Joanna Bourke, and they often plan their route entirely following The Guide, of which 800,000 copies are in circulation. “Offering Relais & Chateau comfort and style in Auckland will ensure the city attracts overnight stays, as travellers go further to visit the five other members of the association spread throughout the country. We are already enjoying mutual guest recommendations from Kauri Cliffs and Cape Kidnappers, both owned by the American Robertson family.”

Relais & Chateaux is considered the pinnacle of the gourmet and hospitality arts, with hotel and restaurant members in 56 countries. Selection may entail years of evaluation and anonymous inspections, and very few New Zealand properties have even been considered for membership. Now, into this extraordinary collection comes perhaps New Zealand’s most extraordinary hotel – Mollies.

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