

**Aachen House**

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The City of Sails has a strong line in boutique hotels, of which this meticulously restored timber period house in Auckland's best-heeled suburb is a leading example. A visit begins with coffee and biscuits in a well-upholstered drawing room with display cabinets full of antique plates and Dresden shepherdesses and a chat with the hotel's chatelaine, Joan McKirdy. Rooms are luxuriously appointed, with huge bathrooms boasting plenty of fine potions, fat towels and cosy dressing-gowns ready for snuggling. They are also very well attended: a glass of wine comes on a tray in the evening, when the bed is turned down and the electric blanket turned on – in season, obviously. Several rooms have balconies overlooking lovely gardens, but none has a TV: for those who can't cut the umbilical, there is a set down in the lounge room that receives Sky movies along with the usual channels.

A cooked breakfast, taken at a communal table in the conservatory, is of impeccably gourmet standards (although those who like their coffee strong should definitely say so). There is at least one very good – and correspondingly pricey – restaurant within walking distance of the house: Banque, where chef Matt Cook serves French-inflected dishes using luscious local seafood and meat with intriguing salad combinations. For those who wish to go further afield, regular buses and trains run into the city centre; taxis, be forewarned, are expensive in Auckland. The airport is about 20 minutes' drive away. **Stephanie Bunbury**



**Auckland**



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**Cost:** \$NZ350 to \$NZ665 a room a night (including breakfast and pre-dinner drinks).  
**Distance:** 18km (20 to 30 minutes' drive) from Auckland airport.  
**Accommodation:** eight guest rooms (six king doubles; two king twins), all with ensuites.

**Features:** historic home, full of the owners' formidable collection of antiques and reproduction furniture; wireless internet throughout.  
**Nearby:** Remuera shopping centre (1km away) has excellent cafes, clothing and homewares shops, as well as Banque restaurant. Great South Road (500m in the other direction) has a cluster of antique

shops. The city (4km away; easy local train and bus connections) has the full range of entertainments, with boating a specialty.  
**Bookings:** two months ahead, but walk-ups often possible.  
**Children:** over-12s only.  
**Wheelchair access:** yes; ramp entry and one room completely fitted out for wheelchair users.



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