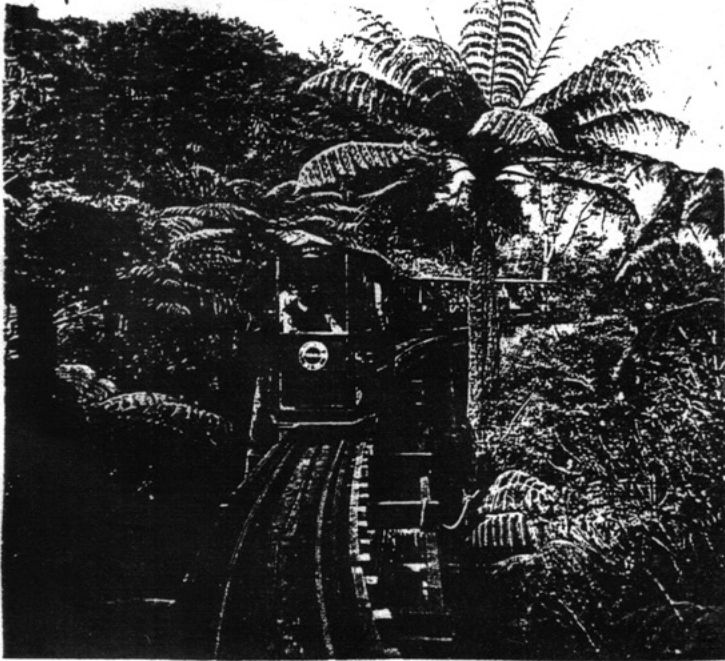


North & South Recommends

Driving Creek Railway



Attractions

One of the Coromandel Peninsula's most unusual attractions, **Driving Creek Railway** is the brainchild of renowned potter Barry Brickell, who started laying the track in 1975 in order to supply his pottery with wood and clay. People have taken precedence since the railway was licensed to carry passengers in 1990. And what a journey it is. The driver's commentary keeps passengers amused as the tiny, narrow-gauge train spirals up the 1:26, 2.5 km track, set among 22 hectares of regenerating bush and pines. Two tunnels, four viaducts and three reverse stretches are negotiated before the top terminus, with its spectacular views of the Hauraki Gulf and Coromandel township, is reached. Driving Creek is one km north of Coromandel township, turn right at the signpost onto Driving Creek Road. Fares: \$12 adult, \$6 child, \$30 family. It pays to book, ph (07) 866-8703.

Services

Shards of Lladró, chipped Dresden, Murano glass in hundreds of pieces – all are a

challenge for the “menders of broken arts” at Auckland's **Wrightway Studios**. Four years ago Ross Stewart, a policeman due for retirement, took a broken plate into Wrightway Studios to be repaired and bought the business. Today Wrightway is the largest restoration studio in the Southern Hemisphere, employing around a dozen artists with the patience and skills to painstakingly piece together broken treasures. From porcelain to ceramics, wood, bronze and marble – given enough time, almost any object can be restored to its former state. This is a fascinating studio where visitors are welcomed with a guided tour. Clients outside Auckland can mail their broken pieces to 175 Morrin Rd, Mount Wellington, Auckland, ph (09) 570-5741. www.restoration-artists.co.nz.

Accommodation

★ Cosy, home-style **Top House** has stood on the hillside near St Arnaud, in the beautiful Nelson Lakes District, since 1888 and thousands of travellers passing through the surrounding mountains have rested up in this

low-slung, white-washed cob building. Current owners Melody and Mike Nicholls bought and restored the crumbling building 12 years ago and have recently added several outlying self-contained chalets. But for the best historic slumber, stay in the old hotel and have dinner and breakfast at the heavy wooden table in the dining room, in front of a huge log fire which the Nicholls say hasn't been extinguished for 12 years. The place is not flash but it's got atmosphere by the ton. The bullet marks in the verandah ceiling date back to last century, when one of two men who yearned after the governess living in Top House shot the other, the post master and then himself. Rates: \$55 per person, including breakfast and dinner. Chalets: \$80 double, \$10 for each additional person. For more information ph 0800 867-468.

★ Much admired from the street, the interior of Martinborough's historic bed and breakfast **The Martinborough Connection** does not disappoint. To be installed in the handsome living room with its heart-rimu walls, open fireplace and plump couches, a glass of world-class pinot noir at hand, is bliss indeed. With four small but bright guest rooms, a warm but unobtrusive proprietor and the Town Square only a short walk away, this is an ideal spot from which to explore Martinborough's shops, cafes and vineyards or to roam further afield in the Wairarapa. Dinner available on request. Rates: \$120 per room per night. 80 Jellicoe St, Martinborough, ph (06) 306-9708.



Guide

It takes a book like *Off The Eaten Track* — ostensibly a guide to picnic spots in Wellington — to remind us of the many pockets of diversity that make up the capital. Written by both ordinary and famous Wellingtonians, this is a charming collection of anecdotes about the writers' favourite places to eat al fresco. Locations range from the obvious — Makara Beach, Butterfly Point — to the slightly bizarre — Moa Point, Bolton Street Cemetery, Cuba Street — with some overlooked and under-appreciated gems in between. The authors also supply recipes. A not-for-profit publishing exercise, the book is unglossy and spiral-bound but well designed, with some innovative photography. Our favourite piece: a poem about fairies at the Sound Shell by dancer and choreographer Paul Jenden, complete with a recipe for fairy cakes. Published by Siren, \$24.95, proceeds to Wellington forest regeneration. Available at bookshops throughout the city.

