

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Guests can enjoy a massage in the privacy of the cottage; this old abacus belonged to owner Trisha Joe's grandfather; vegetables from the potager garden are used to create meals by a personal chef; fresh flowers are one of life's little luxuries; artifacts from India add to the decorative mix.

FACING PAGE FROM LEFT:

A selection of inspirational books personalise the cottage; the spa pool is enveloped by native bush and overlooks Rocky Bay; Trisha and Sammy soak up some negative ions on the beach directly in front of the property.





A visit to Heartsong Lodge on Waiheke Island promises to rejuvenate the world-weary with alternative therapies and the unique sense of tranquillity found in a retreat to nature

HEARTS &

mind

American novelist Paul Theroux once declared that fiction gives us the second chance that life denies us. Trisha Joe believes differently.

She knows life presents us with many second chances – and she’s not one to bypass a fortuitous opportunity. This pharmacist-cum-alternative therapist was so heartsore at relinquishing her beloved property on Waiheke Island that, a decade after she first bought it, she snapped it up again with no hesitation. “I mourned selling it. It was my only regret in life. Being here I become my true self,” she explains.

Her return to the shores of Rocky Bay has been a homecoming in the truest sense of the word. Here, in the renovated 60s beach house

she shares with her husband Robin Mangos, she has found magic – a solitude and expansiveness she feels blessed to have discovered and loves to share with others.

Amidst the bush where nikau palms puncture the sky and wood pigeons whirr in a corpulent swoop, the couple has built guest accommodation. With its rusticated weatherboards, wide return verandah, sash windows and corrugated roof, you could believe the house hails from colonial days. Designed by architect Mike Brewerton, known for his sympathetic villa renovations, Heartsong Cottage is a romantic escape from the everyday.

“It looks like it has been here forever,” says Trisha. “We used recycled kauri for the

floorboards and scoured secondhand shops for the door handles and light fittings.”

Twice-loved furniture lends the one-bedroom escape authenticity, augmented by objects and artifacts brought back from the couple’s travels in India.

An Irish pine dresser in the open-plan kitchen is in keeping with the scrubbed timber dining table and country-style chairs. A wrought-iron table and bench with distressed paintwork on the verandah are the perfect place to read when at repose. Personal touches, too, add something special. Original artwork abounds, an old abacus once belonged to Trisha’s grandfather, and a Chinese chest in the bedroom came to New Zealand with her family in the early 1900s.

THIS PHOTO AND RIGHT:

The cottage décor is simple and comfortable, so guests can concentrate on rejuvenating body and mind.

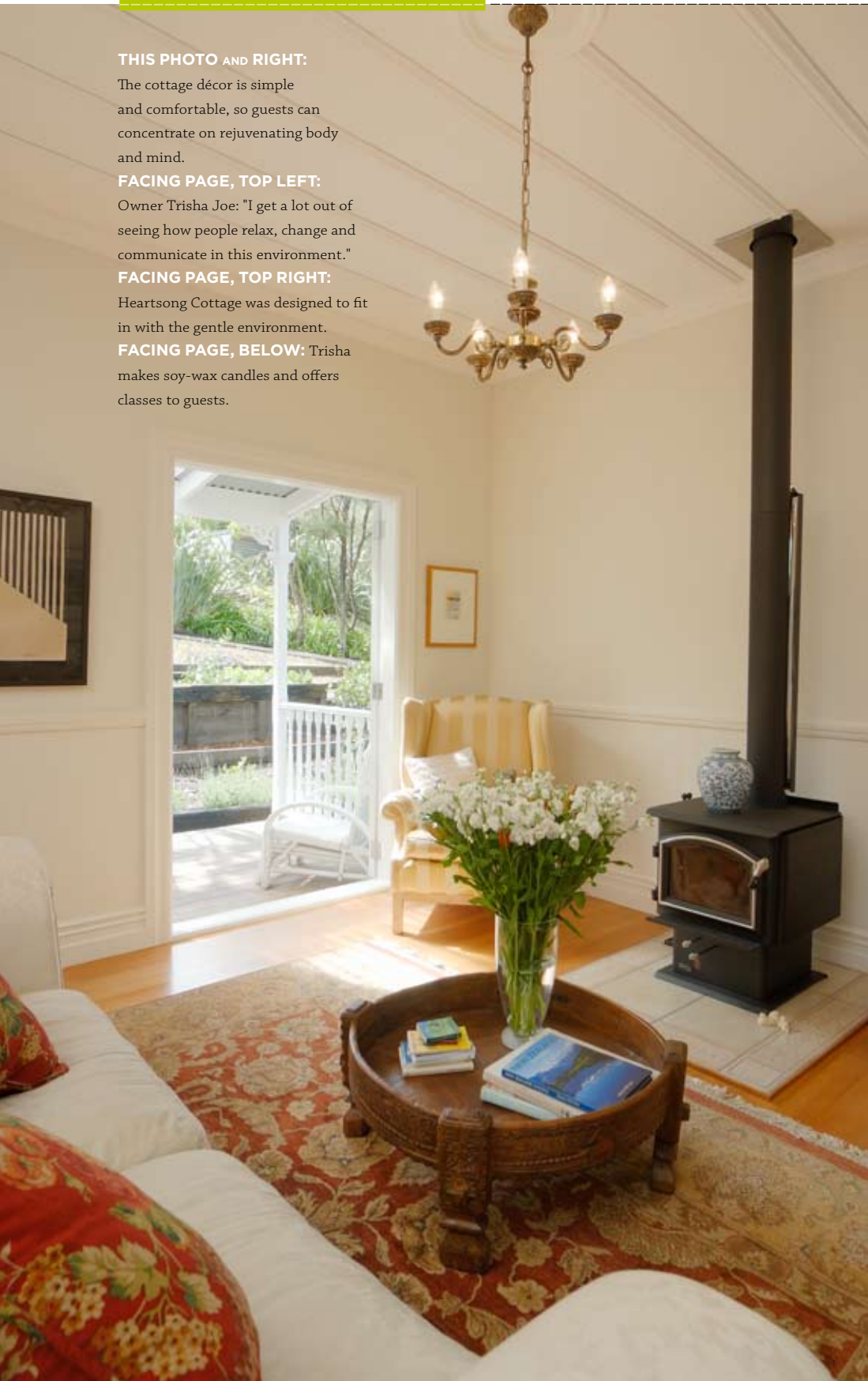
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Owner Trisha Joe: "I get a lot out of seeing how people relax, change and communicate in this environment."

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Heartsong Cottage was designed to fit in with the gentle environment.

FACING PAGE, BELOW: Trisha makes soy-wax candles and offers classes to guests.



While the homely surroundings encourage comfort and creativity, it's the lure of the great outdoors that turns this getaway into a real retreat. "People come here for the bush," says Trisha simply. "It generates negative ions which are very therapeutic."

According to Trisha, the electrical smog that many of us live in (a constant exposure to visual display units, air conditioning, TV screens) can cause a build-up of positive ions in our system. Negative ions, the natural counterbalance, are produced when there is a transfer of energy. "That's why, if you walk alongside rolling surf or watch a flickering candle flame, it's so restorative."

Thus the very act of checking out of the concrete jungle and immersing yourself in Mother Nature's embrace has the ability to lift the spirits and pep up your physicality. But for those who require a little more, Trisha is happy to offer her well-considered advice. "We only interact with guests as much as they want us to," she explains.

Trisha draws on her years in private practice and as owner of K'Road's Uptown Pharmacy, plus a deep understanding of alternative therapies, to guide guests to a service that will suit.

Apart from the delicious indulgence of Swedish massage enjoyed in the privacy of the cottage, there's the opportunity to consult an energy healer. Practitioners of this ancient form of healthcare, used by yogis and in the art of



acupuncture, believe that optimum health comes from being balanced in all seven chakras of the body. "Chakras can be disrupted by emotional or environmental stress and often you don't know you're out, until you're in," says Trisha.

For those who prefer to let an inner spirituality soothe away their cares, a visit to the retreat's spa pool, set into the bush with a backdrop of yachts bobbing on the bay, is the perfect recipe for wellbeing: that and a glass or two of bubbly.

In preparation for settling into a quiet evening in, Trisha offers an unusual aside: on-site classes in crafting soy candles. Made from soy wax, a byproduct of the soy bean, the candles burn cleanly and are from a renewable resource. "Normal candles, unless they are beeswax, contain paraffin from the petroleum industry. That's why you see the black soot."

Guests can choose from a range of shapes and sizes, from tealights to candles poured in refillable glass containers – and they can

customise their candles with fragrance and colours.

"The candles burn at a lower temperature so they last longer and are safer for children. They are also water soluble, so any spilt wax washes off in hot soapy water."

If guests are not drawn to explore the local restaurant scene, they may request their own personal chef who will prepare an organic meal with herbs and vegetables gathered straight from the potager garden that flourishes in front of the

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cottage. "It must be the Chinese in me, because I love to grow veggies," Trisha jokes.

Thus sated, it's not unusual for couples especially to find a growing wellspring of joy and connectedness. With chocolates for afters and the promise of home-made muesli in the morning, there's little to do but revel in the mind and body space.

"I get a lot out of seeing how people relax, change and communicate in this environment," says Trisha. "They discover another aspect of themselves, their lives and their relationships."

The one-bedroom cottage is available to rent from \$400 per night. A smaller cabana on the property costs from \$190 per night. Visit www.heartsongetreat.co.nz for more information.