

Bids open for top retreat

By Rachel Grunwell

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A world-class hideaway in the Bay of Islands is being touted for sale as "the most valuable property ever offered in New Zealand".

Eagles Nest, at the tip of Russell peninsula, is among a string of luxury lodges on the market.

It's where The Bachelor Jason Mesnick wooed his final two bachelorettes on the US reality show, and has been named among the world's top 100 hotels by Conde Nast Traveller and Tatler.

Nestled amid lush forest and perched on a sunny ridge, the 75ha estate boasts breathtaking views over more than 1km of private ocean and beachfront.

It has five private villas, all with outdoor spa, wireless internet access, original artworks, home theatre system and fully-equipped gourmet kitchen. All but one have a private heated infinity pool.

The multi-award winning retreat, available for the first time, is being marketed internationally by Browns Sotheby's.

In promotional material, general manager Peter Newbold described it as "the most valuable property ever offered in New Zealand" and said it may well be unequalled "anywhere in the world".

Sotheby's International Realty associate Mark Harris told the Herald on Sunday it was the "best luxury retreat in Australasia".

With an aerofoil roof floating above 3m sliding glass walls, the villa named Rahimoana is described as "the jewel in the crown". The cost of a night there peaked at \$42,000, but has since fallen to a recession-friendly \$20,000.

Sotheby's has put a secret price on the property and will only disclose it to interested parties who sign confidentiality agreements. Inquiries have come from America, Singapore, Switzerland and the UK since the property went on the market a week ago.

Harris said the buyer will probably be from overseas "however there are probably a few Kiwis who could afford it".

The sellers, Sandie and Daniel Biskind, will remain in Russell but are ready for a lifestyle change, said Harris.

Meanwhile a string of other luxury hotels and lodges are for sale including Hotel du Vin, a hotel, spa, and vineyard at Mangatawhiri, south of Auckland, that went into receivership earlier this year.

Bayleys agent Michael Bayley said tenders for the 15ha property, which has a quotable value of \$9.7 million, closed on Thursday night. "We are awaiting instructions from the receiver and the bank and unfortunately we can't comment further at this stage."

On Waiheke Island, the five-star boutique Te Whau Lodge, owned by Liz Eglinton and Gene O'Neill, is for tender on October 14.

The couple are in their 60s and ready for a lifestyle change, says Kellands' agent Barry Hastings, who said similar properties in the area had gone for \$4 million-\$6.5 million.

In Northland, Kingfish Lodge, on 11ha at Whangaroa Harbour, is for sale at \$4.5 million plus GST.



The Russell Peninsula retreat, Eagles Nest, featured on US TV reality show The Bachelor and has been named among the top 100 hotels in the world. Photo / Supplied

FLASH HOMES

* A four-level house in St Heliers, Auckland owned by Rich Lister and construction boss Ted Manson is on the market for \$10m-\$18m. * The home widely considered to be New Zealand's most expensive is the "Chrisco" house, a sprawling \$30m-plus mansion in Coatesville. * Rich Lister and billionaire businessman Graeme Hart lives in a sprawling \$20m clifftop house in Glendowie, Auckland.

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