



NO CATS HERE

# At the Pen-Y-Bryn Lodge, Beds and Breakfasts Done Better

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REVIEWS

By NICK MILANES

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The **BnB**, when the word “Air” doesn’t precede it, gets a bad rap stateside. As well it should: Why are bed and breakfasts in the US stuffed full of frilly linen, lace and ceramic cats? Because the proprietors are trying as hard as they can to distract you from the fact that all that lies outside is a worn-down road.

Unlike the common roadside BnB we know and loathe, New Zealand's [Pen-y-Bryn Lodge](#) wasn't built to distract from a freeway exit. It's planted right on the border of the Holmes Hill and South Hill neighborhoods in the South Island town of [Oamaru](#), overlooking grassy Awamoa Park, which efficiently characterizes the area: in last year's Oamaru Victorian Heritage Celebration, the park was used for a hot air balloon competition. The Victorian aesthetics of Oamaru's 19th-century settlers loom large in the handful of Victorian-style homes that make up the quaint and quiet Hill 'hoods, and in the more urban districts of Oamaru as well — for proof, just visit Steampunk HQ just a few minutes from Pen-Y-Bryn. Outside of the urban center, however, the lodge is the heritage crown jewel.

Designed by a famed New Zealand design firm (Forrester & Lemon) and constructed in 1889, the Pen-Y-Bryn Lodge is a Heritage New Zealand Category One Historical Place, a title that designates a place of "special or outstanding historical or cultural heritage significance or value". It's a functioning preservation of the late Victorian architectural style that preceded Oamaru's abundant limestone construction, inside and out: the lodge's interior boasts brick-foundation walls and chimneys, oak interiors and ceilings lined with plaster, pressed zinc and timber, and the exterior is made up of native rimu wood. It's also the largest single-storey timber dwelling in Australasia, with five guest rooms (two of which are being expanded), a large dining room, billiards room and a drawing room, among other public spaces — so if you're not inclined, you won't have to rub elbows too often with fellow guests and cloying hosts.

## If You Go

**Eat:** For Kiwi fare, visit [Portside](#) on Waterfront Road and enjoy the view; alternatively, to see how the Kiwis do Italian, visit [Cucina 1871](#). For more casual midday eats and coffee, try [Teas St.](#) or the [Steam Cafe](#). And if you're one your way out of Oamaru, don't miss [Riverstone Kitchen](#), voted New Zealand's best restaurant, and [Fleur's Place](#) for some locally caught seafood.

**See:** Penguins. [Little Blue](#) penguins, the world's smallest, and [yellow-eyed](#) penguins, the world's rarest, frolic in their colonies on Oamaru Harbor and Bushy Beach and the Moereki lighthouse, respectively. Admire them for as long as you need to, then proceed to the [Penguin Club](#), a live music venue (that has nothing to do with Batman) or the [Oamaru Opera House](#), one of just seven opera houses in New Zealand. For a quieter evening, visit the [Forrester Gallery](#), a former bank building-turned-art gallery.

**Do:** [Trotters Gorge](#) and the [Waitaki River](#) are favorites among hiking enthusiasts staying at the lodge, while the [Skyline Walk](#) in Oamaru is a favorite for city sightseeing, as are the various public gardens and, further out, the [Elephant Rocks](#).



