

# Hogan's Alley

Golf & Travel Opinions by Bill Hogan (President of Wide World of Golf)

**CAPE KIDNAPPERS GC – Hawkes Bay, New Zealand**

**GRADE: A+**



When Cape Kidnappers GC opened in 2004 I was invited to travel down to New Zealand to play in Tom Doak's Renaissance Cup Tournament. I had been to New Zealand several times before, but never to the Hawkes Bay region and obviously never to Cape Kidnappers. Given the courses that Doak had produced in the past, such as Pacific Dunes in Oregon, I knew I was in for a real treat.

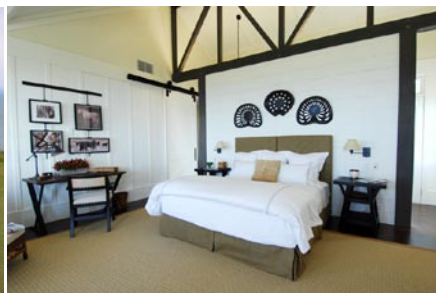
Doak designed Cape Kidnappers along with Mike Clayton (former PGA Tour player from Australia), and I can only imagine their initial impression when owner Julian Robertson first showed them the site. "Oh my God" they must have said, while looking out over the rugged farmland with cliffs over 400 feet down to the Pacific Ocean, "this is unbelievable!" I remember telling people that it reminded me of "Big Sur on steroids". Of course, you could never build a course in Big Sur, and Robertson had many difficulties developing this property too. But his tenacity paid off, and now New Zealand has a real treasure known around the world of golf.

The course starts off inland, up and down the rolling hills with peeks of the ocean from many vantage points. Then at the turn, you head out toward the cliffs, where the holes are positioned lengthwise on fingers of land jutting toward the sea, with greens and tees delicately placed right at the edge of the cliffs. This is one of those courses, like Cypress Point or Old Head of Kinsale, where you need an extra battery for the camera because you'll be a shutterbug all day long!

I played with both Doak and Clayton that week, and even Mr Robertson, our gracious host. As we would walk around the 7100+ yards golf course, I gained some of the insight to what went into strategic development and artful design of this great layout, in my opinion the best course in New Zealand. Like many world-class courses where on tee boxes you can see the challenge ahead of you, Doak compliments his design with his signature scruffy bunkers and minimalist earth moving tendencies to make it so visually appealing. It passes the ultimate test: do you want to play it again right after you finish? Yes! It was easy for me to vote it into the Golf Magazine World Top 100, and I was not alone, as collectively the Panelists voted it #27 in the world during its first year of eligibility!



L: Doak in a Cliffside bunker ... don't fall backwards!



M: "The Farm" king room".



R: Buddy Sklar, Robertson, Clayton, Hogan.

Now there is a fantastic 5-star boutique hotel, similar to sister property Kauri Cliffs (also owned by Robertson) where breakfast, pre-dinner drinks and a sumptuous dinner menu is all part of the fare. Although not inexpensive, the value is very fair because the quality is fantastic, the accommodations are superb, and the service top notch. If "The Farm" is too pricey for your budget, then nearby in Napier and Hastings are many wine country accommodations and you can still access Cape Kidnappers GC from them. Maybe it's a once-in-a-lifetime trip, but by all means get down to Cape Kidnappers and enjoy this world class destination!

*Bill Hogan is President of Wide World of Golf and is a Golf Magazine Panelist to rank the World Top 100 Golf Courses. He has played golf in over 50 countries since he began traveling the world in 1981. He prefers luxury travel experiences but likes to feature "high quality destinations that deliver excellent value for money".*

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