Lake Taupo
New Zealand Jewel

During the first few days of my recent trip to visit our properties in Oceania, I had the opportunity to spend some time at Lake Taupo, New Zealand, the future home of the Outrigger Terraces Resort, Lake Taupo. The Taupo area is a fascinating place, offering a wide range of choices for both relaxation and adventure, depending on one's interests.

Located in the middle of New Zealand’s North Island, Taupo has a volcanic history, not unlike that of the Big Island of Hawaii. In 181 A.D., there was a series of violent eruptions in the area, culminating in a huge excavating blast – thought to be the world’s most violent eruption in the past 5,000 years – which spewed ash high into the air and darkened the skies over much of the world, the event being recorded in both China and the Roman Empire. Over time, the crater filled with water, creating what we now know as Lake Taupo. There have been no recent eruptions, but the area remains volcanically active, with many thermal hot springs and even pockets of warm water in the lake.

The Maori people began settling the area during the 13th century. The first Europeans arrived in the 19th century, and Taupo entered the tourism trade in 1845, when travelers passed through on their way to Wellington, according to the area’s official Web site (www.laketauponz.com). In 1883, a batch of rainbow trout eggs was brought in from Sonoma Creek, California. The hatchlings thrived in Taupo’s waters and fantastic sport fishing was added to the area's many recreational opportunities.

In 1889, a small hotel, the Terraces, was completed next to a series of hot springs. The Terraces Hotel still stands today, and recently, a group of local owners tastefully refurbished and restored the building. They selected Outrigger Hotels & Resorts as the manager because of our company's “long-established reputation for cultural sensitivity in providing quality accommodations and proactive approach to growing market share,” according to Terraces Hotel co-owner and director Johnathan Irvine.

Next year, the owners will begin construction of a deluxe new wing that will add 80 rooms, two restaurants, two bars, an underground wine cellar, and conference and meeting facilities to the property. When finished, the complex will be re-branded as Outrigger Terraces Resort, Lake Taupo.

In the meantime, General Manager Brendan Cadigan and Front Office Manager Megan Rooney are more than busy operating the 20 rooms, bar, and restaurant in the Terraces Hotel’s heritage building.

Their guests can enjoy a wide range of activities, from exploring the active geothermal areas, fishing for trophies in streams and Lake Taupo, experiencing the pristine natural rainforests, discovering Maori culture, and “taking the waters” in a hot-spring spa. The more adventuresome can bungee jump off a platform over the Waikato River, tandem skydive, jet boat, windsurf, drive ATVs (quad bikes) over steep, rugged trails, etc. The list of activities and adventures goes on and on.

The Terraces Hotel at Lake Taupo is a wonderful addition to the Outrigger portfolio. Thanks to Brendan Cadigan, Megan Rooney, and all of the staff for making my visit so enjoyable and informative.