



# An invitation to New Zealand

A long flight took Karen Griffiths and Peter Armstrong of Stokesay Ware, to the other side of the world for an incredible Convention they are so pleased they did not miss

If you have ever considered spending four days immersed in miniatures, learning new skills, browsing sales tables and talking miniatures over dinner in a country of breathtaking beauty, then be sure to put October 24th to 27th 2008 in your diary.

Tack a few days on either side and you could find yourself in a turquoise

ice cave high up a glacier, in a temperate rainforest of prehistoric ferns, on an endless beach of golden sand or swimming in the open sea amongst dolphins.

I am talking of course about the NZAME (New Zealand Association of Miniature Enthusiasts) Convention for which preparations are well under way. Held every two years, the Convention moves

from city to city, and 2008 will find it in Wellington at the southern end of North Island with the theme 'A Grand Tour'.

**Above:** Central Park Hotel – structure by Mike Borager.  
**Right:** Bagatelle by Carole Perry.





Whether you are a maker of miniatures or a collector, this is a rare opportunity to touch base in a country where the excitement surrounding all things miniature is palpable and have the time of your life.

In 2006 Peter and I took the opportunity to attend the Convention which was held in Hamilton, North Island. We had discussed it at length with our friend and fellow miniaturist David Edwards, who as a native of

New Zealand was a wealth of information. October is a fabulous time to visit as it is just before the season proper starts so the attractions are quiet and the weather is mild. We timed it so the Convention fell in the middle of our trip to arrive fully acclimatised.

It was themed 'Slumber Through the Ages' and organised by a tireless committee headed by Debbie Hoy. The flight to New Zealand was a gruelling 20 odd hours, and it seems incredible to think that for Debbie's Mum emigrating with Debbie and her

brother as tiny children it was a five week sea voyage. This geographic isolation has led the New Zealanders to be creative and resourceful miniaturists and there is a tremendous emphasis on workshops, teaching and skill sharing.

The Convention is modelled along similar lines to the American NAME conventions, where the workshops, round tables, exhibition, sales room and socialising are carried out under one roof and go on for several days. The first New Zealand Dollhouse Convention was held in Auckland on Labour Weekend in 1980. Organised by Carole Perry with the support of Merlin Sampson and Pat Case, it was a tremendous success.

"For the 50 people attending it was a unique experience, meeting, some for the first time, for a long weekend devoted to talking miniatures, workshops, displays and sales. It fully lived up to the hopes and expectations of those involved."

On the crest of this tide of enthusiasm the Association was established with the aim of encouraging the formation of clubs throughout the country and was closely followed by a magazine to be published twice a year. There are now 20 clubs flourishing in New Zealand, and the members are enthusiastic contributors to the Convention.

Everyone attending the Convention, whether stall holders or collectors, become 'delegates' and take a full part in activities. Each delegate receives a goody bag, full of themed miniatures carefully made in the preceding months by the clubs, traders and individuals. Opening it made me feel like a child again on Christmas morning, it was so exciting, and fully demonstrated to me the ingenuity of the miniaturists of New Zealand.

The three days of workshops were fully subscribed, covering diverse subjects including dolls house building, wicker work, furniture, plant and chandelier making and the pace of work was really intense. The social activities culminated with the Convention Dinner with fabulous food and a fantastic atmosphere.

However, the absolute focus of the event had to be the exhibition area, with so much to see and be inspired by. It included structures and settings by individuals and clubs showcasing the talents of the members of NZAME. Many of these had been created especially for the Convention and there was a genuine air of excitement as they were

**Above, left:** Barry Allen.  
**Below, left:** Watermill by Dorothee Cabot.  
**Below:** Dining room by Anne Eustace.





unveiled. An interesting and important factor is that the exhibition is organised on an entirely non-judgemental basis, the creations of newcomers received as enthusiastically as those of the seasoned miniaturists.

Geographically isolated New Zealand may be, but uninformed they are certainly not. Of course the internet has made a huge difference making information widely available and everyone I talked to had a keen interest in the miniature world at large. The sales tables also attract vendors from Australia and further afield, and our own David Edwards and David Hurley have both attended. Business was buoyant and I was pleased to add some miniatures to my own collection. The welcome we received was very warm and it was such a pleasure to be there. For Peter and me it really was the holiday of a lifetime.

You can find out more information about the Association and the 2008 Convention by logging on to the NZAME website at [www.nzame.org](http://www.nzame.org) I know they will be pleased to see you!

**Above, left:** Convention 2008.

**Above, right:** Debbie Hoy addressing the Convention Dinner.

**Right:** Bucket House by Sandra Campbell.

