



Dining room table



Bedroom wing leading to garden



Produce from the vegetable garden



Front terrace



A meal on the front veranda



Sitting room



Four-bedroom suite



Across the garden to the house



Cottage bedroom

A Veritable EDEN

When Peter and Bobbie Martin swapped London for New Zealand, they did not plan on their dream home becoming one of New Zealand's best lodges

There's no need to dress for dinner at Edenhouse. Although the meal is served with full trimmings in the spacious dining room – linen napkins, exquisite cutlery and glasses – the meal itself is home cooking rather than haute cuisine. Mind you, few people could whip up meals as delicious as this – think super-fresh whitebait fritters and the most succulent roast chicken you've ever eaten – but the atmosphere is delightfully informal, with Golden Labrador Annie occasionally managing to skulk around in search of leftovers.

And that's the secret of Edenhouse, an entrancing hideaway perched at the top of the south island, close to Nelson. Although it's set in 48 acres of grounds, and the huge bedrooms are as indulgent as any five-star retreat, this is essentially a home. When ex-pat Kiwi Bobbie Martin and her Australian husband, Peter, decided to move back to New Zealand from London and create their dream home in the Orinoco Valley, they had no intention of hosting paying guests. Over time, however, they became convinced to rent out their three guest bedrooms, two in the house, one in a separate cottage. The result is one of New Zealand's most enchanting lodgings.

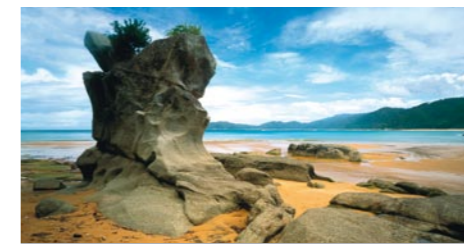
Feel like relaxing with the weekend papers? There are no end of places to lounge, from the sunny breakfast room to the living room where the sink-into sofas are padded with Hungarian geosedown, to the tranquil study. Each room is furnished in a sophisticated country-house style, with muted chintzes, wall lights and lamps from Lucy Vaughan. Almost every item is something that Peter and Bobbie, who ran her own design company for 15 years, couldn't bear to leave behind when they left London. Each piece has a story behind it, right down to the window finishings.

"We had to bring these wonderful curtains with us," says Bobbie, fingering window hangings made of woollen check

decorated with big horn buttons. "They're handmade, lined, interlined, exquisitely trimmed. We had them made for our flat in Cadogan Square."

Florals are a recurring motif. "I've always been passionate about flowers and fabric – seamless integration of indoors with outdoor planting schemes to enhance the interior decoration," says Bobbie.

In fact, the opportunity to plant a large-scale garden was one of the things that appealed most to Bobbie about the property, where the setting – nestled in a valley encircled by rolling hills – provides the perfect framework. Peek through any door or window and there's a beautiful vista, with a lounge chair or bench perfectly placed to allow you to soak up the view.



IN THE AREA

- Abel Tasman National Park:** go hiking through the verdant bush or kayaking past sheltered turquoise bays and the resident seal colony
- Neudorf Vineyard:** the pick of the Nelson wineries hosts multiple concerts in the summer months
- Trout fishing:** crystal clear streams and abundant brown trout offer a great day's angling
- Bouterey's Restaurant:** one of New Zealand's most acclaimed restaurants is in the nearby country village of Richmond
- Scenic flights:** get a bird's eye view of the area's beauty, learn how to fly a biplane, or experience the thrills of stunt flying
- Nelson Art Trail:** visit some of the more than 350 artists in the area, such as furniture maker David Haig or potter Sue Dasler
- Te Waikoropupu (Pupu) Springs:** these sacred Maori cold springs are close to Farewell Spit, which at 35km is the world's longest natural sandbar

Sitting around soaking up the view is the sort of activity that's encouraged at Edenhouse, where the emphasis is on relaxation. Bobbie and Peter regularly invite interesting locals to give pre-dinner talks over drinks in the study, such as the local weaver who talks on Maori techniques. In fact, getting to know the extended Edenhouse family is part of the experience.

"We have a wonderful team of helpers who all reside permanently in our Valley," says Bobbie, including among them the farmers who provide many of the ingredients for dinner. "We are blessed with wonderful vineyards and orchards nearby, which supply us with locally grown saffron, macadamia nuts ... Figs, black boy peaches and feijoas are all treats from our orchard."

Ultimately, says Bobbie, they know they've done their job when guests who arrive as strangers leave as friends. "Guests tell us it's like staying with friends in the country only better, because they don't have to do anything." *Ute Junker*

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