



This page: The view at dusk from The Boatshed. Opposite page (from left): Solitaire Lodge seated on the peninsula that juts into the lake, and the warm living area at Edenhouse.

# Postcards of PERFECTION

THREE NEW ZEALAND LODGES QUESTION “SHOW-LUXURY” AND SET THE RULES FOR HOSPITALITY OF THE FUTURE.

BY SCOTT DANIELS

**WHAT IS INTRUSIVE** to one could be a luxurious convenience for another. On one hand, there are those who prefer indulgent private butlers and a concierge attending to every need. On the other are those who find the evening turn down service intrusive; their getaways need to be an escape from it all—service staff included!

Thankfully, at these top luxury lodges in New Zealand, you would rarely be faced with this conundrum. Most of these two to 12-room properties are owner-run and are driven with the spirit of independence that the Kiwis are so proud of. For instance, you may find yourself being picked up from the airport by the owner himself, or by a member of his family. You'll be shown around the lodge by his wife, while he places your bags in the room. In case the chef is away, don't be surprised if the husband-and-wife duo cook your meals and offer room service themselves.

You'll probably ask— isn't this more like a homestay? Take a look around and you'll find every evidence that it is. Sink-in

sofas that you'd want back in your own living room, quaint bookshelves and coffee table editions you'd want to flip through at leisure, and a lived-in, carefully cluttered feel that will make the sanitised luxury hotel seem so impersonal the next time you visit; you'll want to come right back here again.

Make no mistake: The service is top class. It's just everything you wouldn't get at an ostentatious resort in Dubai. Luxury hospitality in New Zealand comes with educated, owner-driven touches. No unnecessary knocking on the door—your room will be subtly serviced in your absence, your choice of snack and drink will be observed and replenished without request, and the frugal but efficient staff will make visible attempts to adapt to your way of living, instead of it being vice versa.

In 2014, as New Zealand finds its way to the top of the luxury travel destinations of the world, we showcase three exclusive lodges from the northern half of the country that offer a uniqueness of experience and subtlety of service that even the best across the world should emulate. ►







Clockwise from top left: The living area in the main building; a view of the bedroom in the cottage; a sink-in homely couch, and one of the multiple dining areas at Edenhouse.

## EDENHOUSE Home Sweet Home

**OF THE THREE** properties featured, this one is probably the most homelike, mainly because it was originally built as a home, not a hotel at all. New Zealand native Bobbie and her Australian husband, Peter Martin lived in England for years, and when they decided to move back closer home, they picked the Nelson area. The northernmost part of the southern island of New Zealand is believed to have the best weather; not as cold as down south, without the inconsistencies of the north. The Martins had intended to have friends over regularly who would use the additional rooms, but as luck would have it, they turned their property into a luxury lodge, which is one of the most recognised and awarded in New Zealand today.

Welcome to Edenhouse. You'll mostly arrive via helicopter from Nelson airport and get a birds-eye view of the acres of well-manicured gardens and greens. Bobbie Martin, a design enthusiast and painter, will show you around her intimately done up "home", or to your two-bedroom cottage about 100 metres away from the main building.

Edenhouse is one of those super exclusive three to four room properties that doesn't provide boarding, it helps curate experiences. Hollywood stars like Kate Winslet are known to be repeat guests, but you'll never hear this from the hosts or the service staff.

Activities around the area include a boat trip to the Abel Tasman National Park, where swimming with baby seals is just another activity. For a really special treat, pick the helicopter experience that involves a flight to a secluded mountain-top, taking along a Michelin-starred chef, who then creates a fine-dining experience for you in the middle of the picture-perfect, breathtaking setting. You won't want to return home, we promise. Bobbie and Peter's will be the only exception. [R]

*Edenhouse, +64.3.5268.174, [www.edenhouse.co.nz](http://www.edenhouse.co.nz)*