


Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report

New Zealand Fly-Fishing Odyssey

Edenhouse  97

LIKE The sense of seclusion; excellent food; charming local staff; utterly delightful owners. **DISLIKE** Having to leave. **GOOD TO KNOW** If you want to fish, be sure to ask Peter Martin to arrange for a guide (and helicopter) well before you arrive in New Zealand. *Lodge Room, \$1,080; Garden Cottage, \$1,220 (breakfast and three-course dinner included). 213 Thorpe-Orinoco Road, R.D.1, Motueka, Nelson. Tel. (64) 3-526-8174. edenhouse.co.nz*

We were greeted at the airport by Peter Martin, the immensely affable owner of **Edenhouse**, a small secluded hotel that lies around 45 minutes' drive to the west. A native Australian, Martin spent many years in London's financial world before acceding to his wife Bobbie's desire to return to her homeland.

Set amid 50 acres of grounds, Edenhouse looks like a desirable country residence that has been standing for at least a couple of centuries. But in fact, the Martins designed it themselves, relying on skills that Bobbie Martin had acquired at London's Inchbald School of Design and The English Gardening School. The property comprises just two spacious suites in the main house and a separate two-bedroom garden cottage, so you feel as though you have been the fortunate beneficiary of a private invitation. We had been allocated to the cottage. There, we found a peaceful living room with a sofa, a writing desk and an outdoor deck. The large master bedroom came with a walk-in closet and an adjoining bath. A flight of stairs led up to the second bedroom. The décor evoked that of an English country house, with mostly neutral colors, floral cushions and framed prints.

Having unpacked, we joined the Martins and four other guests — a prominent lawyer from Washington, D.C., an English financier and their respective wives — for canapés and drinks, followed by dinner. The interior of the main house is also decorated in a traditional and patrician style. All of the staff at Edenhouse live in the local valley and are clearly considered by the Martins to be part of an extended family. As a result, the atmosphere is unusually relaxed and welcoming. The talented cook uses local ingredients whenever possible,

and the food was delicious throughout our stay, while Peter Martin was clearly a man offended by the sight of an empty wine glass.

For many guests, I suspect, the principal activity at Edenhouse is sitting amid the flowerbeds with a book. However, wine tasting is another undemanding local pursuit. The Nelson Tasman region contains 37 boutique wineries — chiefly renowned for aromatic whites and Pinot Noirs — among which Neudorf is widely considered to be one of the country's leading producers. Those who are feeling more energetic may go on guided hikes or kayak excursions in the Abel Tasman National Park. Alternatively, it is possible to take helicopter tours into the mountainous Kahurangi National Park, where the heroic landscape became familiar to a wide audience as “south of Rivendell” in the movie adaptation of the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy. A helicopter will also take fishermen into Kahurangi to fish the remote Karamea River, which is renowned for its trophy brown trout. On this occasion, however, I contented myself with fishing the Motueka, one of New Zealand's leading trout steams. A stretch of the river is within five-minutes' drive of Edenhouse.

It is always a delight to discover a hideaway that I can unequivocally endorse. Edenhouse is a true gem. And Peter and Bobbie Martin are superlative hosts, in part, I suspect, because they are naturally gregarious people who love entertaining an endless procession of house guests. Hospitality just doesn't get any better than this.