

NEW ZEALAND TOUR - ANNE AND ANDY BAXTER

Dear Don

First off, I don't think I have ever taken a trip that was organized for me, that was as exactly what it was billed as, as this one. Pretty much every detail was right on the money. And the fishing was not only great, it was exactly as you said it would be.

We had a ball with Frank & Pam. Turned out that the one couple there with us, on their 8th visit, were originally from Cleveland, where Anne & I grew up, and we knew each other. A highlight was the very first (half) day - Anne caught a huge brown sight fishing with a nymph & no indicator. I caught some fish, so we thought, well, we can do this. Then 3 great days with Tony, lots of fish, conditions not too great, but we had a ball. Mainly, lots of laughs with Frank.

Poronui Ranch is Poronui. Eve has the drill down about as well as it could be, and is as nice as they make them. Couldn't fly out as I had a congestion problem. Saw some beautiful water, fishing less productive than Murphy's, but we had a great time. Hooked up with the French's and that was great.

Incidentally, Greenhill was extremely nice. Very high end, probably more than we needed, but it was excellent. Very attentive, and we could easily have stayed there longer.

We waved off the flight to Christ Church as I still couldn't fly, drove to Wellington, took the ferry, and drove down the northeast coast of South Island which was magnificent. I would recommend that to anybody.

Then to Four Peaks and fishing with Paul. Four Peaks was very nice, not busy while we were there, and they took very good care of us. The place is a bit "precious", again, we could easily have downscaled a bit, but it was excellent. The big event was Paul. Don, this young man has to be on my very short list as the best guide I have ever had, and I've had a bunch. Now, at the end of the day, it's all about the fish, and I know that. And we had as good a 4 days as one can have. But this guy is the best. Every category. Personality, knowledge, access to water, hard-working, great coach, high energy, and flexible. Just sensational. Incidentally, he was clear about the fact that he would not show you some of the water that he took us to because of your role as an outfitter and that the word would spread. Why he elected to take us where he did is beyond me. We did have a good first day, and we delivered the goods, but still, it seemed like he gave us the best he had in his arsenal. The rainbow attached was 10-11 pounds and took about 20 minutes and 300-400 yards of downstream racing. Paul gave us textbook NZ fishing and we will never forget it. It was the centerpiece of the whole trip.

Had a nice drive to Grasmere and a fine night there where we hooked up again with the French's. Fabulous lodge, could easily be a place to stay for a few nights. Then on to Rotoroa Lodge. We had an excellent stay here, worked our butts off boulder hopping and doing the streams. Now my ears were fine and we flew each of the 3 days. The last day particularly was sensational. Largely because the weather cooperated, good visibility and the fish were up. Caught some beauties. It was fine for us, but very hard work. All worthwhile for the last day, which was super. My skills had faded a bit, so my performance was below par, but Annie shot the lights out. Did very little wrong, caught loads of nice fish, caught the last fish, as the chopper was coming in -- he dropped in behind the guide & hovered, giving us a Rotoroa marketing pic of guide, fish, and hovering chopper behind.

You could not have done more for us, and we were thrilled. Your name will be passed around and you could get a call using my name. One little bit I loved -- very few people will ferret out Frankie -- I have one friend who will choke when I tell him that we started off with the President of the NZ Guides Association.....

Andy Baxter

TRIP REPORT

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