

**CONTRASTING NZ LODGES &
A 10 # BROWN
- RUSSELL SCHRECK**

Don;

I had an amazing trip to New Zealand in January. I started fishing Rotoroa Lodge on the north tip of the South Island. The first fish I caught was a 26 inch 7 1/4 pound brown that took about 20 minutes to land as he was trying to break me off on the rocks. I caught him on a dry fly size 12 Parachute Adams. The cast was about 30 feet up along a series of rocks. I dropped the fly about 6 feet above the trout had to mend upstream and he picked the fly coming about three feet to inhale the fly. He came downstream like a locomotive, saw me and headed back up the river to the rocky area where I caught him. Three times, the fish tried to run around a rock formation and I lucky keep him out. I ended up catching ten fish the first day and having three spit the hook out. I fished the whole day with dries using an Adams, a Light Cahill and a Elk Hair Caddis. The second day was a lot like the first picked up about ten ranging from four pounds to seven and a half pounds. All on dry flies using the same patterns as the first day.

The third day we took a helicopter trip in to the Crow River. Checking at the local sleeping shed that New Zealand puts up for fisherman and hikers, I found that no one had fished the Crow for almost a month. It was the most beautiful river I have ever seen. I told my guide if I only had one day left to fish in my life it would be the Crow. I would change that perspective after I moved to the North Island. The river was about forty feet across with extremely clear flow with unbelievable pools and fast but deep rapids. The helicopter ride was about fifty minutes from the lodge and skirted the area where "Lord of the Rings" was filmed. Helicopter flights are very expensive, but for a once in life experience it was sensational and worth the expense. I ended up with about twelve that hit the net and lost four as I wasn't quite quick enough on the strike in five cases.

Rotoroa is a superb facility in the old English tradition of wood paneling, high ceilings, woven fabrics on the walls, numerous sitting rooms with copious pictures of large browns. Having made a previous two week fishing trip on the South Island I was acclimated to the British influence in New Zealand. The food is great with choice of numerous breakfast items and an evening meal of choice quality. The guides were good, (but young bucks who hadn't learned to smell the roses) and were well equipped with every fishing suggestion and with the energy of a mountain goat. The sand fly attacks can be frustrating and irritating but that is the South Island.

I moved on to the North Island on my fifth day in New Zealand where two thirds of the New Zealand people live. But the great majority live near Auckland in the northwest. The east side of the island has many small towns and reminds me of the United States fifty years ago. No chains except Starbucks and a very occasional McDonalds. Cell phones are difficult to find although service is good, no Wall Marts or Costco ---- just small stores and restaurants where people are friendly and service is unhurried, one or two television stations and courtesy on the road. After driving north to Gisbourne, we located Murphy's in a small village with a population of about seven. The staff was Frank, Pam and a cook. The three guest rooms ranged in the rustic category, but the comfort and service was good and the food was excellent.

Frank has a secret fishing river which turned out to be the best fishing river I experienced in New Zealand. There are two large farmers who control the entire valley with one river flowing through it. Frank Murphy is a rascal but is the top "sighted trout" guide in the Country. Frank is funny, easy to fish with, but miss a strike and he is full of instructions.

We fished this river for two days. One look at the river and there was the ubiquitous knowledge that this river had many large trout who were willing to attack a dry fly. I started with size 12 Royal Wulff and had risers and catches on almost all casts. I tied on a 14, a 10 and an eight and the big browns were anxious for any size. The fishing was unbelievable - but I was running short on Royal Wulffs so I tried on a successful late summer dry - the Green Drake. Frank thought I was looney. After five straight fish in the net, all from seven to eight and 3/4 pounds. Frank said with a twinkle in his eye "Give me a couple of those drakes. I now have a secret fly for my future guests." I saw fish in the river that looked to be 12 pounds. Huge lunkers.

I later went back to the Royal Wulff pattern and Frank spotted a nice fish. I climbed down the hillside and waded into the river and came up to twenty-five feet below a trout that was feeding actively. I knew from experience that I would only get one cast or spook him. I placed the dry fly about six inches above him and four inches to the right of the trouts feeding slot. As the fly floated down the fish turned slightly and attacked the fly. I set the hook and the fish went wild. Under a bank, towards a sunken log, up the stream and about a half an hour later, a fish in net bigger than the net. A TEN POUND THREE OUNCE -- 30 INCH BROWN. This is what makes dreams and I play that strike in my mind eye ten times a day. We fished the rest of the day with good success.

We went American and asked to do some Rainbow fishing. So we motored to another river the next day, a beautiful river with a strong concentration of large Rainbows. We were fishing nymphs and dries. The fishing started very slow as we fished beautiful runs and pools with no strikes. Within five minutes we were catching many flying Rainbow acrobats and caught numerous trout ranging from three pounds to seven pounds. Each of the rainbows were feisty and fought more than the browns. One fish came out of the water six times and took out all the fly line and some of the backing,,,,,a seven and 1/2 pound very colorful Rainbow.

The fishing in New Zealand is awesome and well worth the effort and time to take the trip. It presents many memories and is consistently the trophy trout haven in the world.

Russell Schreck

(Note: Russell hit it about as "right" as you can, given the limited number of days he fished. When conditions are right in New Zealand, it is truly an amazing experience. Wish we could guarantee that everyone "hit it this right." Our hope is that every NZ traveler has one or two of those unforgettable days during their trip. FFA)

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