

Reviews

NIMBO FORK LODGE

Brad Harris finds a welcome retreat on the banks of the Tumut River

I grew up in Cooma, in the Snowy Mountains of NSW, and moved to Tasmania three years ago. I visited my family 'back home' last Christmas, and was greatly saddened by the state of the country around the Monaro and Snowys. The drought has certainly hit it hard, and many of my favourite streams and creeks were either not flowing, or had dried up entirely. At least the lakes were still fishing well. My route home took me over the mountains (where even some alpine creeks had stopped) to Tumut, where I had the opportunity to check out a new fly fishing lodge, just weeks before its completion.

The place is Nimbo Fork Lodge, situated on the Tumut River about 10 kilometres downstream from the town of the same name. Let me just say that it was like an oasis in the desert!

Driving into the property, on the day the fires started that later threatened the town, we rolled through barren round hills, picked bare to the earth's brown bones by the scrawny sheep limping their way around the paddocks. It was mid-thirties and deathly-still, and an unnaturally red glow accompanied the setting sun.

Turning off the dirt public road, where a subtle sign directs you towards Nimbo, we entered through a magnificent stone gateway and were at once transfixed by a series of man-made pools stepping down the hill—just a sample of the commitment to the project seen throughout the lodge development. The ponds flow with recirculated water, supplemented from the river, and there are plans to add a cooling system to maintain a stable temperature. Now that's attention to detail, and commitment to your fish! There are already regular hatches of mayflies and caddis. The ponds are primarily a winter resource, and for teaching beginners to cast.

After crossing the ponds, we rounded the side of the hill to be presented with a panoramic vista of hills and the river to the west, fronted by an impressive two-storey lodge, and a neat row of cabins.

Chris Fehon, the owner and developer, was there to greet us, and was happy to show us around the various types of accommodation.

Simply put, the cabins are stunning: beautifully designed, tastefully decorated



(enough 'fish stuff', but not over the top), and all offer tempting views over the Tumut River, even while sitting in the bath. Overlooking these is the main lodge, offering full bar and restaurant facilities and a luxurious lounge room featuring a huge stone fireplace and extensive library. Several different-sized accommodation rooms are upstairs, all decorated in a similar vein to the cabins. A nice touch was the row of river-stones as a trim in the bathroom tiling.

The whole place was still a work-site when I was there, with plastic draped everywhere in several unfinished parts, and yet still I was impressed and wanted to stay! The whole operation just oozes class and quality.

As for the fishing, the Tumut River murmurs not more than 100 metres from your door, and the lodge has access to a Tumut River anabranch named Nimbo Creek. The Nimbo itself fishes well, and is

smaller and less boisterous than the usually strong-running main river.

Nimbo Lodge offers the only drift-boating service in New South Wales, and they have a beautiful wooden boat for the job, as well as several renowned guides. The flow in the Tumut is controlled 40 kilometres upstream by a gate at the bottom of Blowering Dam, the last impoundment in a series starting high in the Snowy Mountains and running west. Water running from the lake is cool and clear, rarely more than 18 degrees, even in summer. It was also one of only three healthily-running rivers out of the dozens that I crossed between the Snowys and Melbourne. Tempted?

Nimbo Fork Lodge offers full accommodation, and is available for wading, boating and guiding for full or half days and lessons by the hour.

Call 02 6944 9099, or check out the website. www.nimboforklodge.com.au ■

