

Nimbo Fork Lodge

You can't please everyone. An old saying and one with particular relevance to mixing family breaks with fly fishing. Thanks to the vision of fellow member Chris Fehon and his wife Maureen, it is now possible to enjoy five star accommodation within 150 metres of flowing water containing very large trout.

Nimbo Fork Lodge is bounded by the Tumut River and its anabranch, the Nimbo Fork Creek. Curiously, the creek flows out of the river and rejoins it a few kilometres downstream. The property is close to Tumut and took us about four hours of easy driving from Sydney. Australia Day was the official opening and Lyn and I were very pleased to accept the Fehons' kind invitation to sample the delights of their new venture. And what a venture it proved to be.

While they were living in Manhattan, Chris and Maureen realized that there was a good opportunity to fill a need in the Australian market. There was no top notch accommodation available for fly fishers. Auckland and Wellington can choose between the Huka and Tongariro Lodges, both of which provide international standards of accommodation and food, but Australia had no such place.

Inspired by the architecture of New England, the main lodge is nestled into the side of a hill overlooking both creek and river. Below this there are six cabins each able to accommodate four people. Every detail has been considered right down to the branded bathrobes and toiletries. They have retained the services of a cordon bleu chef whose food is nothing short of superb.

The lodge has a McKenzie drift boat ably skippered by Tony Edwards, a member of the Australian Fly Fishing Team and Tumut local. We spent six happy hours drifting down the Tumut River with Tony who seemed to know every reach and lie of the 15 kilometre stretch. He is a mine of information about flies and techniques learned

from international competition and all imparted in a modest and unassuming style. The fish in the Tumut can be put down for a day or two when they release water from the dam so the backup comes in two forms. Either a walk down the Nimbo Fork Creek or the fishing ponds.

On the Saturday evening, we wandered down the hill to the Nimbo Fork Creek for the evening rise. Chris spotted a beautiful two pound Brownie sitting in faster water next to a submerged log on the margins of a large pool. The near bank was two metres vertical so I was instructed to cross the stream and cast across the slack water and over the top of the log while Chris spotted for me from the steep bank. The two different currents meant that a drift of only a metre or so was possible without drag. Several casts and at least two changes of fly occurred before the fish was eventually put down. Nevertheless, it was great fun trying. A few weeks later Chris emailed to say that it had fallen to a hopper from the same lie. As all fish at Nimbo Fork are released, I suppose it will still be there waiting for our next visit.

The three fishing ponds are connected by small raceways down the side of a hill about two hundred metres from the lodge. They are each about 20 x 10 metres in surface area and about 3 metres at the deepest point and each has been landscaped in a different style with a total of 35,000 planting involved in the project. The bottom pool contains a bio-filter and the water flow is maintained by a pumping system the size of the municipal swimming pool. Growth rates of the stocked fish have been spectacular and all done by a natural supply of insects attracted to the system. Water temperature has been a problem over this past Summer and Chris is looking at various solutions to cool the water to sustainable levels.

This place has got to be seen to be believed. I'll say one thing about the Fehons. When they have a vision, nothing is left out in its making.

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(Left) The view from the rooms over the river or creek make a pretty picture. (Right) Drift boat fishing from a traditional McKenzie style boat on the Tumut River is a very pleasant way to pass time and catch a few good fish

