

Acacia Cliffs Lodge

TAUPO



Acacia Cliffs Lodge sits high above Acacia Bay, with breathtaking views across Lake Taupo to the Kaimanawa Ranges.



Acacia Cliffs Lodge might be stunning, but its charming hosts make it truly special. BY JENNY FARRELL

IT'S DIFFICULT TO put your finger on which feature of Acacia Cliffs Lodge is its most appealing. Certainly its location – high on the cliffs above Lake Taupo and surrounded by verdant native bush – is an immediate talking point. We arrived on a clear, sunny day, and the wide-angle views over New Zealand's biggest lake were, quite simply, breathtaking. So blue. So beautiful.

But then so too is the lodge itself. It's the realisation of a long-held dream for owners Rick and Linda Whitlock. Seasoned travellers themselves, with a love of beautiful accommodation in beautiful environments, the Whitlocks returned to New Zealand from Australia five years ago with the idea of opening a luxury lodge in their home town of Taupo.

The search for the perfect location was painstaking: they looked for peace, privacy and position, and after a long search, they discovered a 1980s five-storey pole house in Acacia Bay. They rebuilt the house from the ground up, transforming it into a luxury four-suite boutique lodge, which opened in April 2008.

We gleaned all this information within an hour of arriving, which takes me back to the beginning of this story: while the bricks and mortar are always the obvious starters in the what's-the-best-feature stakes – and Acacia Cliffs is undoubtedly a lovely property – it's the people who make the lodge experience truly special and Rick and Linda are possibly the most personable hosts in New Zealand.

With a glass of New Zealand wine in hand, we relaxed in the lodge's stylish open-plan living room and whiled away a pleasant hour indulging in the casual, friendly chat that Kiwis are famous for the world over.



Dinner an hour or so later was in the recognised New Zealand lodge style: drinks at 7pm, followed by a four-course feast at the big dining room table that seats 10. We were the only guests in for dinner that night, so our genial hosts entertained us as if we were friends over for the evening. Rick is the chef in the family and the meal was outstanding.

But the clincher surely came the next morning. After a lazy sleep-in, we pulled the curtains open and literally gasped at the view: our suite's floor-to-ceiling picture window framed a fabulous outlook over the lake, Mt Tauhara and the Kaimanawa Ranges. A room with a view indeed. 

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