



## EXPERIENCE

FLY FISHING | NEW ZEALAND

**I**t's the roar of water that you notice first at the Safari Camp at Poronui. New Zealand's Mohaka River bends here, crashing and tumbling over boulders and rocks before continuing downstream.

This crook of wilderness, a solitary glamping outpost surrounded by Manuka trees and indigenous virgin beech forest near Lake Taupo, in the central North Island, is home for the night. It's luxurious, with hot showers, solar lighting and a private chef. At night, the sky is bright with stars and the sound of the river lulls me to sleep.

When the river is low, you can fly-fish here. Instead, we'll be heli-fishing in what fishing guide Sean Andrews calls 'the Olympics of fly-fishing'; gin-clear waters in remote backcountry where we get only a couple of chances to hook the trout before they're spooked. After that, says Sean, "they won't eat and we'll have to go upstream".

From October to June, angling enthusiasts from around the world come to Poronui, a premier sporting lodge, to fish these exclusive backwaters, considered a world-class fly-fishing spot. It's catch-and-release only, a conservation effort to protect the small numbers.

We're up and away early the next morning. Our helicopter rises swiftly above a bank of low-lying clouds and veers west towards the Kaimanawa Ranges and private Maori land. This vast wilderness of forested mountains, valleys and plains is criss-crossed with pristine rivers, lakes and streams. Rainbow trout spawn in the waters and wild deer roam free.

It's also where we'll be fishing. We arrive in the Maori Owhaoko A and B lands at the start of the beat (the river stretch we'll be fishing), in a valley thick with golden tussocks and bounded by low-rise hills. Sunshine sparkles on the water and the ground underfoot is springy with moss.

Crossing the river shallows, we clamber up the bank to 'Flat Rock', a rocky outcrop overlooking an elbow of deep water that's crystal clear and teeming with trout. From this vantage point, it's easy to spot the fish lurking beneath the surface.

Sean fixes a fly to my rod and runs through the howtos. With a flick of the wrist, I cast off. The line whips around and lands lightly on the water near some trout, but drifts by without so much as a bite. I cast twice more without success and then gingerly edge along to a new spot and try again.

What seems like many casts (and a few hooked tussocks) later, success! The fly dips. Sean calls "strike" and I hastily pull up the rod, eventually snaring a respectable

# Come fly with me

*Belinda Luksic* tries her hand at fly fishing and finds New Zealand's striking wilderness to be the perfect spot to make her debut.

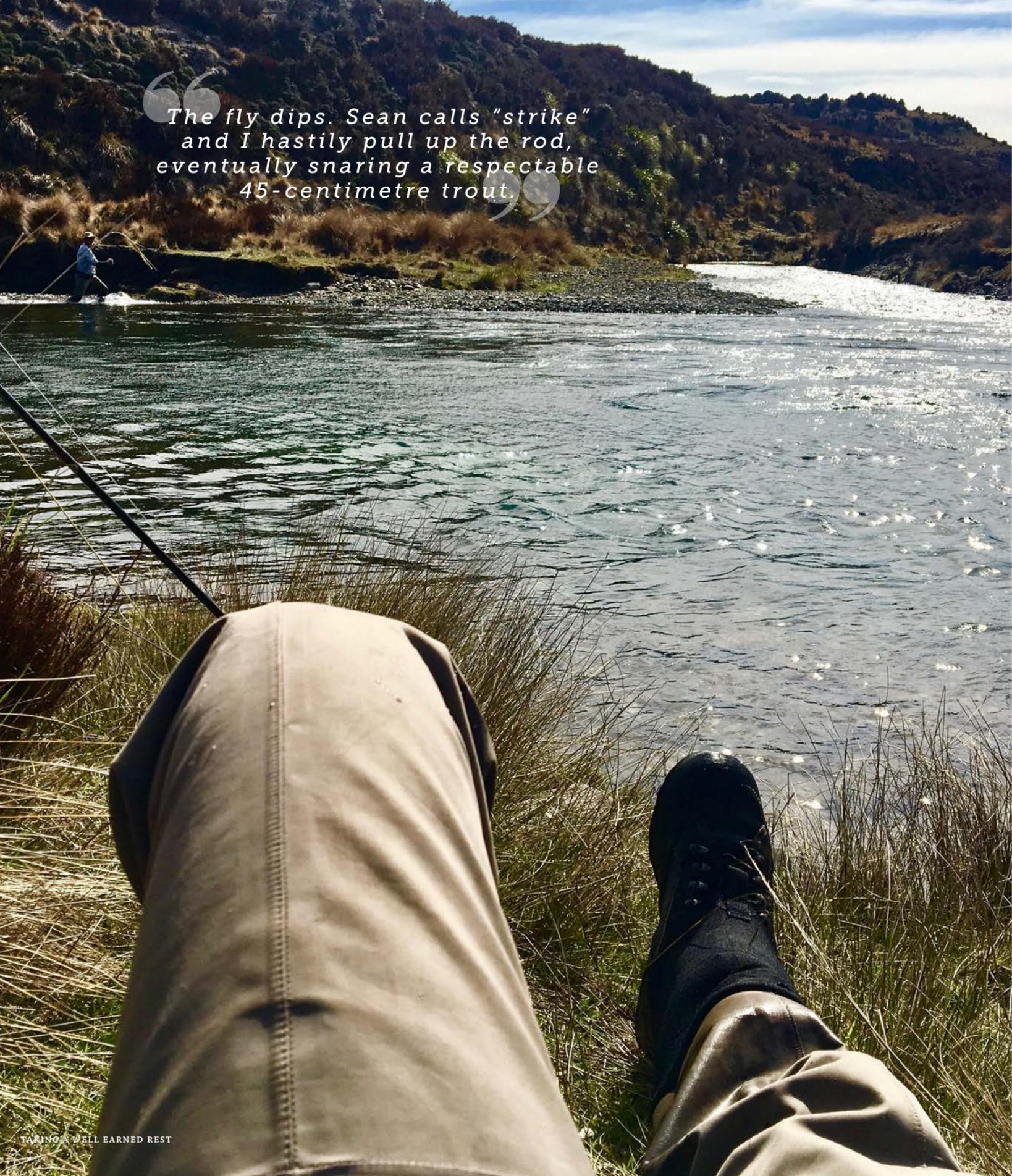
Images by **Belinda Luksic**

AUCKLAND

NEW ZEALAND

PORONUI LODGE

NAPIER



“The fly dips. Sean calls “strike” and I hastily pull up the rod, eventually snaring a respectable 45-centimetre trout.”

SAFARI CAMP AT PORONU



CHOOSING THE RIGHT FLY



THE WRITER AT WORK



DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE



45-centimetre trout. After a few ‘trophy’ photographs, we release the gleaming catch back into the river and watch it dart away upstream.

Our day continues in much the same way. We wade and stalk, stopping to fish when we spot trout. Even for an amateur like myself, it’s a lot of fun. Along the way, we pass spectacular unsullied scenery. Tussocks and moss give way to pebbly banks and ridges plush with clumps of bright green hanging ferns. The hoof prints of deer mark the riverbank at times and startled geese take to the skies, honking indignantly as they disappear from sight.

It’s late in the afternoon when we hear our helicopter approaching. Exhausted in a good way, we flag it down and head back to Poronui for dinner at the communal dining table in the Main Lodge. There’s no trout available commercially in New Zealand so we ‘make do’ with salmon. There are no complaints.

See more images from this story at [luxurytravelmedia.com.au](http://luxurytravelmedia.com.au)

The writer was a guest of Poronui and travelled courtesy of Destination Great Lake Taupo and Tourism New Zealand. [destinationgreatlaketaupo.com](http://destinationgreatlaketaupo.com)

### Stay

Poronui is a luxury wilderness lodge on the doorstep of world-class backcountry adventures. Bounded by the mountainous Tūwharetoa region and Kaimanawa State Forest, it’s a short helicopter ride to remote hiking trails, world-class fly-fishing and hunting. Set on over 16,000 acres of forest and grazing land, the main lodge caters to 14 guests with cabins overlooking the Taharua River. There is an Olympic shooting range with archery and clay pigeon shooting, and an equestrian school for showjumping and dressage. Horse-riding treks of the property are a chance to spot wild sheep, Red and Sika deer, and abundant birdlife. During low season, double rooms at the lodge start from NZ\$630 (about A\$575) per person per night and include all meals and beverages (except Cellar Reserve List). During peak season (20 December to 14 March), double rooms start from NZ\$900 (about A\$816) per person twin share. [poronui.com](http://poronui.com)

The Safari Camp at Poronui is available from October to April. Prices start from NZ\$630 (about A\$575) per person per night and include a private chef.

### Experience

A guided heli-fishing day trip with Poronui starts at NZ\$2,000 (about A\$1,815) per person for a maximum of two people.