

FEEL THE *force* OF NATURE

Briar Jensen reconnects with nature at *Poronui Lodge's* luxe Blake House, a secluded retreat on the Central Plateau of New Zealand's North Island.

Relax and isolate like landed gentry at sumptuous Blake House, surrounded by 6,500 hectares of lush forest and farmland. Secluded in the Central Plateau of New Zealand's North Island, the exclusive backcountry property feels wildly remote, yet is only a 45-minute drive from Taupo... or 90 minutes by helicopter from Auckland.

Part of the luxurious Poronui Lodge estate, Blake House was designed as a family home by applauded Kiwi architect John Blair. The terracotta-toned villa perches on a plateau framed by eucalypts and overlooks waving tussock and manuka to the Taharua River and Kaimanawa Range.

Natural materials feature in the design, with heated slate floors, silver beech ceiling, and local river stones adorning the huge fireplaces bookending the twin living rooms. Well-loved leather lounges, sumptuous velvet sofas and miss-matched vintage timber chairs

around the dining table imbue an unpretentious, but homely, ambience. A quartet of spacious ensuite bedrooms with bay-window sitting areas suit four couples, but additional bunk rooms accommodate extended families of up to 16. You can self-cater in the well-equipped kitchen, or opt for the genuine hospitality of the private chef and butler.

Whatever the season, nature steals the show here, the wilderness beckoning with flora and fauna as varied as the terrain.

Deftly balancing the gamut of New Zealand outdoor pursuits, Poronui offers trout fishing, horse riding, mountain biking, beech-forest hiking and wildlife photography.

Throw bee-keeping workshops, cooking classes, Maori cultural experiences and helicopter rides into the mix and you have bespoke experiences ranging from heli-fishing to Maori equestrian adventures. This is a place you'll want to linger. ♦

01 Poronui Lodge's architect-designed Blake House © Poronui Lodge

