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> NEW ZEALAND



At Cape Kidnappers golf course in Hawke's Bay, the biggest distraction is the view. At many holes it is hard to resist the urge to sneak out a camera to capture the stunning landscape.

DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES/COURTESY OF CAPE KIDNAPPERS

Captain Cook's mystic islands

Scenic country offers cliff-top golfing, world-class wines and tranquil fishing

SHERRI HAIGH
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

It's mystical, beautiful and little bit frustrating.

Tom Doak embraced Maori mythology when designing the Cape Kidnappers golf course in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. Its name is meant to immortalize the first visit by Captain Cook in 1770.

We can only wonder what Cook would think today if he saw the transformation of this land into one of the world's top golf courses.

He'd likely wish he brought his clubs.

The joke for many is the longest drive of their life took place here. Of course, we are talking about the long but scenic drive up to the course from the main gate.

NEW ZEALAND continued on T6



SHERRI HAIGH FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Guide Morris Hill isn't giving up on the monster brown trout in the Ruakituri River.

> INSIDE

> World-class fly fishing awaits after a 45-minute helicopter ride over Hawke's Bay to the legendary Ruakituri River.
> Hawke's Bay is also New Zealand's oldest wine region, home to more than 100 vineyards and 80 wineries.



SHERRI HAIGH FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Greenhill Lodge owner John Dick serves local wine to his guests in Hawke's Bay.

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Round one goes to the elusive Mr. Brown

Fly fishing for brown trout takes both patience and luck

SHERRI HAIGH
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

As we cut through the clouds in the small Bay Heliwork chopper, the sky opens to a stunning view of Hawkes Bay and the legendary Ruakituri River, where the elusive “Mr. Brown” awaits with his own ideas of how the day will unfold.

This fly-fishing trip was arranged by John Dick, who, along with his wife, Christine, operates the magnificent Greenhill Lodge, a boutique luxury property that sits on 30 lush hectares of farmland on the North Island of New Zealand.

The lack of rain has made the rivers low, so the Dicks want to get me to an area where my odds will be better.

Known for its trophy trout, the best bet seems to be a 45-minute chopper ride to this world-class fishing destination, which is pronounced “Rooahkitoory.”

Pilot Matt Wilson negotiates a smooth landing on a small patch of grass next to a remote area of the river. There are a few sheep that scatter but no other sign of life.

Once on the ground, I put on waist-high waders that turn out to be both a curse and a blessing.

“Do you mind crossing the river here?” asks my guide Morris Hill.

I don’t like the odds of making it across without avoiding an unplanned swim, but I nod in agreement.

After several hours of teetering on slippery rocks, and some near falls, I feel my legs start to tire from the weight of these waders.

“On our way back, we will try casting from here as well,” he keeps saying every few minutes, pointing to certain vantage points in the stream.

“And when will that be?” I finally ask a bit testily. Picking up that I am ready to go from hiking in this rushing stream to actual fishing, he quickly finds a place to stop.

I figure this is a good time to remind him that I haven’t been fly fishing in years. I can cast a hula popper into a



The helicopter ride to fishing spots along the Ruakituri River offers a stunning view of the Hawke’s Bay region of New Zealand.

SHERRI HAIGH PHOTOS FOR THE TORONTO STAR

> WHERE TO STAY

Perhaps because the Queen Mother visited this property back in 1958, Greenhill Lodge owners John and Christine Dick feel all their guests should also be treated like royalty. Whether it’s Christine’s homemade lemonade served poolside or John’s impressive collection of New Zealand wine, no part of the visit is less than first-class.

Located in the Hawke’s Bay region, Greenhill has a rich history that began with Archibald Maclean, manager of the Maraekakaho Station. He sought the help of local architect George Sollitt to execute

his vision back in 1898. In two years, his dream was realized. Both the building, which included such features as ornate pressed-zinc ceilings and delicate hand-painted stained glass, and the landscape were designed in impeccable detail. Six of the trees originally planted in the extensive gardens are registered with the Notable Trees Register.

There are only five bedrooms and elegant carved archways, wood panelling and high ceilings create a grand feel while still maintaining a sense of warmth and home. greenhill.co.nz

northern Ontario lake, but catching bass is an entirely different kettle of fish than using a fly rod to land a trout, especially while balancing on mossy rocks in a rushing river.

Just the method of casting is an art — well, perhaps not in my case. I manage to clear a few branches from nearby trees with my first few casts. Despite my less-than-graceful style, I still manage to hook a fish. But it isn’t going to be that easy and, after a few minutes, the line goes slack and the fish is gone.

A short while later, I am back in the game. I scream at Morris and he yells back at me.

“Keep the rod bent, give it line, don’t do this, don’t do that,” he shouts, peppering me with instructions. Not known for my patience, I quickly learn that the art of fly fishing requires an abundance of this attribute.

The fish must tire, the line could easily break and the small fly can easily be spit out.

But I finally reel it in and Morris



Pilot Matt Wilson is used to navigating his chopper onto small patches of land in order to reach ideal riverbanks for fishing.

nets the fish. It’s a beautiful rainbow trout weighing about two and a half pounds. Not huge but a victory nonetheless. Morris makes sure the fish is slowly and gently released back into the water. We both agree that catch and release is the best policy.

We make our way back to the chopper to take a break and enjoy the delicious picnic lunch that Christine had packed.

I decide to see what may be lurking in the waters next to our resting area. The first cast is made and I am adjusting my footing while Morris is

looking at me to make sure I am OK. We both look up just a little too late. A gigantic brown trout emerges. We open our mouths in awe and even the helicopter pilot who was watching from the shore is now on his feet.

But “Mr. Brown,” as I will call him, spits out the fly before I can set the hook.

Morris is frantic. He thinks it must be at least eight pounds. This fish must be caught. He uses his own rod and starts casting.

I turn away heartsick at what I had lost. The fish must be long gone by now. Then Morris shouts “I’ve got him!” The battle begins.

But this fishing tale becomes just that. The guide loses him, too. Brown trout have a way of making you work and this one was clearly a pro.

Back at Greenhill, I regale other guests with the day’s adventure over some fabulous lamb and local wine. While I feel great about the trout I did catch, I have convinced myself that Mr. Brown had a purpose. He rose above the water to show me what I was missing. He was daring me to come back and try again.

And so I shall, Mr. Brown. Follow Sherri Haigh @fishgal30 or email her at sherrihaigh2@gmail.com. Accommodation and meals provided by Greenhill Lodge, travel supported by Hawkes Bay Tourism.