



# Room at the Avo Inn

*Added value has been unlocked from this Bay of Plenty lifestyle property which offers respite from the daily grind.*

Back in 2016 when Dion and Gina Tapper decided to make a lifestyle change, a 2ha block in Te Puna, in the Western Bay of Plenty, stole their hearts. It was to be their escape from suburbia, and a chance to connect more with nature.

Little did they know then, but their tranquil orchard property would also capture the imagination of holidaying guests keen to sample a taste of the good life and provide the couple with another income stream to supplement

their roadside stall takings and off-property work.

Dion says it took a global pandemic for the true value of their lifestyle block to be realised.

"I'm a facilitator in the construction industry and had been busy travelling around the country presenting workshops to tradies and among other things, talking to them about resilience and well-being.

"As the pandemic unfolded and face-to-face business was disrupted,

I needed a project to occupy myself and to ultimately bring some money in during those uncertain times.

"I had cut down a gnarly big avocado tree on a far corner of our property and when I later went to admire my handiwork with a cold beer in hand, I realised it would be the perfect spot for a unique accommodation option.

"It was private, surrounded by mature plantings, located away from our own home with a completely separate entrance, and the birds were singing. I thought others would love to experience this and reckoned we could make it work."

With nearly 100 productive avocado trees, plus lemon, lime, orange, mandarin, persimmon, plum, nectarine and walnut trees on the property, the setting couldn't be sweeter for an away-from-it-all haven.

Dion and Gina repurposed the family's 6.3m long English-made high-spec caravan – a 2011 Elddis – and created a bespoke guest accommodation pod complete with a newly built 36sqm deck, kitchenette, a separate bathroom annex with high-pressure shower, barbeque area and landscaping – plus an outdoor bath for a romantic touch.

"We put in a top-of-the-line orthopaedic mattress with quality bed linen for a permanent queen-size bed, with the option to convert the small lounge and dining area at the opposite end into another sleeping zone with two single beds.

"We raised the caravan 1.2 metres off the ground so there's seamless flow to the deck and named it 'The Avo Inn'. Since opening it up for bookings on various online portals in September 2022, people have loved coming here to slow down and kick back."

Dion says making The Avo Inn pet-friendly on the advice of his barber, who saw this as a real point of difference, has paid off.

"We encourage people to bring their pets, as finding a boarding facility is often a barrier to getting away for a spontaneous or forward-planned break.

"It's a secure, fully fenced environment, and once guests arrive they can close the gate and they and their pets are safe."

The Avo Inn is close to an estuary and the Ōmokoroa to Tauranga cycleway, so there's a couple of kayaks and bikes for guests to use if they want to get out and explore. However, most opt to just settle in and enjoy the peace, even though popular Mount Maunganui is only around 20 minutes' drive away, and there are cafes and wineries nearby.

"Guests often say, 'the photos look great, but it's even better in reality' and we now have a 4.92 out of 5-star guest rating on Airbnb, giving us Superhost status.

"Around 90 percent of guests are Aucklanders. Our first-ever Auckland guest came to the Bay of Plenty intending to go out and catch up with friends but once here, she told her mates they'd have to come to her as she was staying put!

"We now have lots of repeat and referral business, and we've even had people get engaged during a stay here."

Since buying the property, Dion confesses he's become a tree-hugging freak, and will show guests around the property if they show interest.

"We generally never need to see our guests – unless they want to see

us. They can make themselves right at home and access the key via a lockbox, knowing we're available if they do need anything."

Having land has given the Tappers options and Dion says that's the beauty of owning a few hectares.

"Our block rewards us with fruit all year round, and fresh pickings are left in the caravan for guests to enjoy. Gina sells cut flowers to a local florist and pops some out at the honesty box at the gate when she can.

"The Avo Inn is really gratifying both on a personal level and as a good little earner, plus we recently built a secondary dwelling on the property which will be used by family, but could give us other accommodation opportunities in the future."

Dion says those looking to run an accommodation business in conjunction with a lifestyle block need to be clear about what they're getting into.

"Communication is key and any request for information or help before or during a stay should be dealt with promptly and that's been a big contributor to our great guest rating.

"We think we have a quality offering which is why we attract quality guests, and people respect the fact that they're sharing our property.

"People are genuinely keen to stay at a well-maintained and quirky property that has all the comforts of home yet transports them somewhere completely different.

"They can just shut the gate and exhale here."

**Check out the Avo Inn here:**  
[airbnb.co.nz/rooms/681276674519852053](https://airbnb.co.nz/rooms/681276674519852053)