

Travelling around



HAPPY FEET: Stomp those grapes – at Flame Hill Winery.



NAP TIME: Comfort guaranteed at the Narrows Escape.



AFRICAN BEAT: Grape stomping at Flame Hill winery.



SWING IT: Relax in a hammock on the veranda at Narrows Escape. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

A rainforest retreat

Bianca Clare experiences the zen-like calm of life away from pressures of the modern world

IS there any better way in the world to wake up than this? The smell of freshly baked croissants drifting in through the bedroom window. A babbling brook and the call of the native whipbird gently raising you from a deep refreshing slumber. The crisp mountain air giving way to tender rays of sunlight on a clear blue day. Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat is nestled among the lush Blackall Range of Montville. Only a 30-minute drive from Maroochydore, it feels a million miles away from anywhere.

It is perfect place to “rebalance your mind, body and soul”. My partner and I arrived feeling weary for a two-night “refresher” stay.

Too many long days in the office and late nights in front of the TV had taken their toll. We needed to switch-off from the modern world.

The moment we turned off the main road onto the steep descent of Western Avenue, we stopped the car in awe of the scene before us.

Mist was rising off Lake Baroon and the surrounding hills. It was peaceful, tranquil and serene – a sign of things to come.

There are six cottages at the multi-award winning Narrows but each blends into the natural surrounds spread over about 0.8ha, which gives you the feeling you are alone.

The cottages are self-contained with the romantic additions of a fireplace, double shower, DVD and CD players and large spa. Fluffy bathrobes, welcome chocolates and roses on the table add to the dreamy atmosphere.

A wooden veranda complete with a hammock and barbecue wraps around the exterior. Our stay coincides with the annual Grape Stomp at Flame Hill Winery, so after a nanna nap we venture out from our cocoon.

With a picnic blanket and a bottle of wine in hand we find a private spot in the vineyard, which is 420m above sea level. Views to the hinterland and across the Sunshine Coast are magical.

An afternoon of cheese and biscuits, chatting about anything but deadlines is just what the doctor ordered. When the crowd is suitably “tipsy” the nymphs arrive to the sounds of beating African drums.

Rolling up the jeans and putting your feet into a barrel of grapes is definitely a sensory experience. It is squishy, soggy and gooey with the occasional soft poke of a small stem.

Although the cottage has a kitchen, we decide to dine out at Wild Rocket at Misty’s. The old Queenslander has been converted into a charming restaurant that overlooks the main street.

Owner UK chef Peter Brettell and his wife Belinda opened the doors last December, after spending months sourcing the best local produce and free-range organic meats.

Everything is made onsite, from pork sausages, breads, stock, sauces and even the jams and chutneys that are served with scones.

After a peaceful awakening on Sunday morning, we set off on a 4km bushwalk to the Baroon lookout.

Despite the wild weather that devastated north and south Queensland, the Sunshine Coast landscape is relatively unscathed.

The only problem we encountered was the hungry leeches and some keen mountain runners who made us feel guilty about eating one too many cheese-filled croissants.

Back at the cottage, hours whirled by reading, sleeping, eating and swimming in the cottage pool. An afternoon massage by Angela from Touch of Power ensured we were well and truly “zen”.

Just as sunset the owners Mark and Jo Skinner deliver a mouth-watering gourmet barbecue hamper. By candlelight we dine on a feast of baked potatoes, rump steak and delicious fresh salad.

The baked cheesecake with ice-cream is mouth watering.

After 48 hours in paradise, we are ready to re-enter the world of mobile phones, computers and traffic lights.

Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat offers a variety of tailored packages.