Choc full of lazy options

Natascha Mirosch

IT CERTAINLY didn't take much to persuade me. In fact, they had me at the mention of chocolate.

Friday afternoon, the end of a big week and my already elevated stress levels were rocketing further thanks to the testosterone-charged Friday afternoon speedsters.

Thankfully we parted company at the Tamborine turn-off where the serpentine road leads to the plateau of an ancient volcano. From here, views stretch all the way from the Great Dividing Range to the skyscrapers of Surfers. But as impressive as the view was, it wasn't why I was here.

I was in Mt Tamborine for indulgence. Chocolate indulgence to be precise. David and Daniela Kennedy, owners of Witches Falls Cottages, have come up with the ultimate sweet tooth's package – a chocolate indulgence weekend with accommodation, a chocolate massage and all kinds of chocolate goodies.

Witches Falls Cottages were named after a section of national park, Queensland's first, and the world's third, declared in 1908.

The accommodation is in pretty, gabled cottages tucked away in Asian-inspired gardens and each feels pleasantly secluded.

I'd barely parked myself in my toasty-warm cottage where a fire was already crackling away and sampled a few of the locally made chocolates, than there was a knock on the door.

Rather than having to dress and drive home after a massage, Ripple Massage offer the far more sensible and definitely more indulgent alternative and come to you. They offer a range of different massages from hot stone to Himalayan but mine, in keeping with the theme of the weekend, was to be in warm chocolate oil.

First, my masseuse, the aptly named Rose, set up her table in front of the fireplace and soaked my feet in warm lime- and mint-scented water, following it up with a foot scrub. Next, I was rubbed from head to toe with a walnut, tangerine and lime scrub and had an anti-ageing face mask.

Two hours later, fragrant and wrapped in my bathrobe I ambled out to my private courtyard to cook dinner. Most of the hard work had been done for me; while I'd been blissed out on the massage table, a basket with a fillet steak, roast potato, foil-wrapped corn and a salad as well as a bottle of local wine had magically appeared.

Dessert was an apple crumble with clotted cream and a small tot of chocolate liqueur from the Mt Tamborine Brewery.

Breakfasts are also provided with the indulgence package. Either a DIY barbecue with fresh eggs from David and Daniela's chooks or a continental breakfast.

They try to keep it local, and coffee comes from a small plantation just down the road.

Indulgence, of course, is a broad term. As well as physical indulgence – good food, wine (and chocolate), there's spiritual indulgence, when you get to do something you enjoy in peace.

Having time to spend a morning pottering around book stores, antique shops and art galleries is for me truly indulgent. There is a handful of each on the mountain, including the Marks & Gardner Gallery where they also serve tea and cake overlooking a tree-fringed green.

Gallery Walk, however, despite its nickname, is more tourist trap than art lovers' destination, but fudge aficionados should make a stop at the famous Granny Mac fudge shop here.

More tastings, albeit of a more savoury kind, are available down the quieter end of Gallery Walk at the newly built Mt Tamborine Brewery.

It's also home to Witches Chase Cheese so you can while away a good few hours here, tasting their award-winning triple brie or Tamembert; a mix of goat and cow milk, yoghurt or rich, creamy ice cream. They have coolers so you can take your goodies home safely.

The brewery produces a range of beers like the chocolaty Katya stout, reputedly great with puddings and sweets. All are made here by one of Australia's most respected brewers (and one of its first beer sommeliers), Ian Watson.

There are also a couple of wineries on Mt Tamborine, including Witches Fall and Cedar Creek. The former grow all their grapes at the Granite Belt, operating as a cellar door for their wines.

Cedar Creek grow their own chambourcin for use in a lovely summery rose and verdelho as well as buying in grapes to make semillon sauvignon blanc, chardonnay and shiraz among others. It's a popular stop for lunch or a snack overlooking the lovely little Wild Duck Lake.

If all this indulgence makes you feel the need to move, there are kilometres of walking tracks of all levels through the beautiful national park, as well as the recently constructed Skywalk with its suspension bridge over the treetop canopy.

Of course, like me, you can choose to stay in your cottage and eat chocolate in the spa.

INDULGE YOURSELF: Witches Falls cottages and (below) a warm chocolate-oil massage.

ESSENTIALS

Getting There
Witches Falls Cottages are on the corner of Hartley and Mt Western roads at Mt Tamborine, about an hour's drive from Brisbane or 40 minutes from the Gold Coast.

Staying There
The three-night Chocolate Indulgence Packages cost $1030 and include accommodation on a weekend, a selection of local chocolates from the Chocolate Kingdom, a bottle of chocolate liqueur from Tamborine Mountain distillery, choice of barbecue or gourmet breakfast hamper each morning, and a two-hour chocolate massage including aromatherapy massage with warm chocolate, foot reflexology, foot scrub, face mask, take-home chocolate lotion and chocolates.
A two-night midweek chocolate indulgence break is $685.
Tel: Witches Falls Cottages 5545 4411
witchesfallscottages.com.au

Seeing there
For more info contact the Mt Tamborine Tourist Office:
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