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Totally Bewitching

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Damian Bathersby breathes in the mountain air and indulges himself in the Gold Coast Hinterland....

LET ME paint you a picture.

We're lazing in a giant spa, glasses of wine in hand, gazing through the bathroom's glass ceiling as the first stars of the night poke their way through the twilight.

Outside the glass wall that makes up one entire side of the room, a garden of ferns adds a tropical touch, but the sight of the log fire raging in the lounge room reminds me we're in the mountains and there's a definite chill in the air outside.

The only sound, apart from the small stereo playing something soft in the background, is the wind stirring the leaves on the giant gum trees and tropical plants outside.

There's a gentle tap at the front door and my wife breaks the magic with the words I've been waiting to hear: "That'll be dinner."

That's how it is at Witches Falls Cottages, perched high on Tamborine Mountain in the Gold Coast Hinterland.

Our hosts, David and Daniela, greeted us with the promise that we would only see them again during our stay if we chose to. As there are only a handful of small stone cottages on the property, we'd also have to be unlucky to bump into any other guests.

And that's exactly how it turned out.

When I was finally coaxed out of the spa to collect dinner, there was no sign of our visitor – just two hampers left on the doorstep containing everything we needed to cook our own dinner on the courtyard barbie: steaks, sausages, potatoes and corn wrapped in alfoil, a bowl of fresh salad, a loaf of freshly baked bread, a bottle of red wine and a couple of homemade deserts... I could have cried with happiness.

The next day's gourmet breakfast consisted of smoked salmon, caviar, wine and more freshly baked bread.

I don't want to give the impression that we never left our cosy cottage for the entire stay. We did drag ourselves away from the fireside long enough to explore the area, including a lovely walk through the Witches Falls National Park, after which the cottages are named. It sits directly across the road and we took our host's advice to time our return from the walk with sunset, so we could head for the lookout and enjoy the panorama across the plains to the mountains near Toowoomba.

So there was some exercise involved in our stay (we also walked down to the local Irish Pub one night) but we knew any aching muscles would vanish once we had our massage.

That's right – a massage. In our cottage, in front of the fire.

The girls from Ripple Massage carted their tables through the rainforest gardens just so we could enjoy a unique sensation involving a mix of reef shells and scented oils.

Some of the shells, like the large cowries, were heated and filled with the oils before being rubbed on our bodies to relax and unlock muscles. Others were heated and placed strategically on our bodies to provide relief. We were also treated to a scented Australian washed salt foot bath and an organic green clay and cucumber face mask. Basically two hours of pure bliss.

Afterwards, we simply had to stoke the fire and top up our wines to stay a million miles away from the real world.

The Sea Shell Massage is one of several packages offered at Witches Falls Cottages. Another is a wonderful photography course with local company Bluedog Photography. We were able to spend just two hours with award-winning photographer Danielle Lancaster but, in that short time, she managed to turn two bumbling “set the camera on automatic and shoot” amateurs into people who have started talking about strange concepts such as aperture settings and shutter speeds. Our album now boasts pleasingly professional-looking snaps of Mount Tamborine scenery.

So we left Witches Falls Cottages a little smarter, a lot more relaxed and a couple of kilograms heavier (we only just managed to squeeze in the barbecue breakfast pack delivered to our door on our final day).

Did I mention we're heading back soon?

My wife's keen to do one of Bluedog's weekend photography courses, we both want to experience that sea shell massage again, and I'm sure there was something on the menu at Witches Falls Cottages I didn't try.