



High country

Mountain realm where
peace reigns P2

Picture perfect retreat

Hop in the car and make tracks to the mountain for a weekend of fine food, wines and surrounds you'll want to bring home, writes [Cathy Finch](#)

I AM drowning in a double spa bath oozing bubbles. All around me I feel nature at my door. My bathroom is a glassed oasis that draws the outdoors in. Even the ceiling is glass, allowing me to gaze up at the towering rose gums roaring in the wind that rocks their branches.

My bed rests in a cosy stone gable cottage where an indoor fireplace crackles, port and chocolate is set out on the table and the smell of freshly baked bread seeps from a cloth-draped basket. Across the road is an ancient, twisted rainforest where water tumbles and glow-worms shine.

Witches Falls Cottages are perched high above city worries near the edge of Mt Tamborine escarpment, 50 minutes' drive south of Brisbane. It was recently reopened as an enhanced escape for couples, and I get the feeling owners David and Daniela enjoy nothing more than extending the finer elements of eating and relaxing.

In the morning as the smell of chimney smoke wafts through the mountain air, the

forest fairies deliver breakfast outside my door. A hamper overflows with fresh fruit, yoghurt, cereal, smoked ham and cheeses, juices and the most amazing-smelling loaf of freshly baked bread. The following morning we opt for German sausages, eggs, bacon, tomatoes and mushroom to barbecue in our private courtyard amid flowering camellias, with kookaburras and lorikeets overhead.

Outside there is much to explore in Queensland's oldest national park, spread over the Tamborine plateau and surrounding foothills.

We start across the road with the 3.1km Witches Falls Circuit, passing over Fenwick

Creek that falls from cliffs of basalt columns into lush palm groves below. The walk to Curtis Falls and back is only 1.5km through some of the prettiest rainforest you are likely to encounter and there are many more trails to choose from that will journey you into the heart of nature.

When the green in me is saturated I turn to shopping and short blacks at Gallery

Walk, the hub of al fresco cafes, antique, craft, art and trinket shops. There are also several wineries not to be missed.

At Cedar Creek Estate Vineyard and Winery we lunch on duckling tangelo — roast breast of duck with ginger, glazed with tangelo syrup and served with Asian

vegetables. Out on a wooden deck we sip wine to the light strums of a guitar and look out over a quiet lake (dug by owner John, himself — said to be his penance for shooting ducks when he was younger).

Far more than just a cellar door and popular wedding venue, this charming winery also provides an opportunity

to see thousands of glow-worms in purpose-built underground caves.

Back in town, Witches Falls Winery also shines when I find part-owner Richard thigh-high in an open fermenter, ensuring his "hand made" wines are correctly trod. I fall for the Granite Belt Shiraz that shows inky blackcurrant and

cinnamon aromas on the nose, but admit I still do think about Richard's toes.

Perhaps the newest and most exciting addition to the mountain is the opportunity to capture its beauty more professionally on a Bluedog Photography workshop and retreat.

Photographers Danielle and Nick Lancaster, together with visiting tutors, will help you transform your impossible rainforest flops into dramatic images with flair.

Offering workshops from beginner to advanced, Bluedog work on small class sizes or one-on-one tutoring, utilising the stunning surroundings of Mt Tamborine.

After all, once the smell of the rainforest and log fires are distant memories, what lingers?

Our photographs. Permanent records of our travels, emotions and experiences.

We all want to take home the perfect holiday shot. And on Mt Tamborine the opportunities are endless.



Time out: There's heaps to see and do up on the mountain but the North Tamborine lookout takes the cake with this outstanding view



NORTH TAMBORINE

GO North Tamborine is about 50 minutes' drive south of Brisbane.

STAY Witches Falls Cottages are near the edge of the escarpment, across the road from the entrance to the Witches Falls section of Tamborine Mountain National Park.

Accommodation is for couples and mid-week prices start from \$195 per cottage for two, including a gourmet breakfast hamper. Visit www.witchesfallscottages.com.au, call 5545 4411.

DO Bluedog Photography workshop and retreats run throughout the year, offering everything from beginner workshops to portraiture. Visit www.bluedog.com.au, call 5545 4777.

WALK Explore Tamborine National Park on a large number of walks on offer.



Weekend spell: Witches Falls cottages enhance the nature experience