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JANUARY 2013

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*Have a Go News' travel float
...for the mature traveller*

*A cottage garden setting at Varena, one of Mountain Whispers' luxury accommodation venues located in the Blue Mountains.
See Editor Judith Treby's story of her stay in Leura on page 26.*

2013 TOUR PROGRAM

FLIGHTS, ACCOMMODATION AND MOST MEALS INCLUDED. ALL PRICES AT SENIOR RATE LIC 97A937, 97A938

CAMPING TOURS

16 Day Central Australia, Lake Eyre 30 March	\$2790
14 Day Mt Augustus, Karijini, Pilbara 27 April	\$2390
15 Day Birdsville Track, Outback Queensland (6 days camping) 7 May	\$3990
13 Day Cape York & Thursday Island 21 May	\$3990
14 Day Gibb River, Kimberley, Bungles 9 & 27 June	\$3990



Cockburn Ranges, Gibb River Road

MOTEL TOURS

5 Day Kimberley During "THE WET" 18 February	\$2850
20 Day Western Half 5 July	\$4590
8 Day Karijini, Exmouth, Coral Coast 14 May	\$2990
8 Day Mt Augustus, Exmouth 24 May	\$1890
3 Day Boyup Brook Country Music 15 February	\$790
5 Day Albany Esperance 18 March	\$1190
5 Day Historic Goldfields 15 April	\$1190
4 Day Easter South West 30 March	\$890

ONE DAY TOURS

Leeuwin Concert Carole King 9 February	\$310
Mystery Tour 3 February, 21 April	\$75
Busselton Jetty & Underwater Observatory 24 February	\$89
Alpaca, Wood Fired Pizza, Jalbrook Estate 10 March	\$89
St Patrick's Day Mystery Tour 17 March	\$89



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ADVERTISING FEATURE



Indulgent weekend in the Blue Mountains



Mountain Whisper's Lorraine Allanson and Quentin enjoy a coffee at the Waygoose Cafe, Leura. The Strawberry Patch Cottage dining room replete with a welcoming bottle of red. The spectacular Three Sisters at Katoomba.

by Judith Treby

DURING NOVEMBER, I attend an annual three day conference which is held at a different capital city each year. After the conference I usually stay on for several days to take in the beauty and attractions of the host city and surrounding areas.

Last year, the conference was held in Sydney, so two of us took the opportunity to extend our stay over the weekend and visit the town of Leura located in the magnificent Blue Mountains.

On Friday afternoon, we checked out of the hotel at Darling Harbour and took a taxi to Sydney Central station from where we caught the train to Leura.

Now for two people who seldom, if ever, use public

transport and are daunted by the mere thought of catching a train, we were a bit apprehensive to say the least.

But our worries were unfounded: the whole process of buying the tickets and boarding the train was just so cost effective and easy.

CityRail, Sydney's rail system, is well organised, efficient and uncomplicated, especially for the visitor. Moreover, taxis were plentiful and offered prompt and courteous service... with no \$9 fee charged for being on time.

The journey to Leura was relaxing and enjoyable. The train travelled west through the outer Sydney suburbs and then meandered its way up through the beautiful countryside to the mountains, stopping here and there at the

little townships and hamlets dotted along the way.

Beautiful Leura, so named with the Aboriginal word meaning 'lava' because of the many volcanic stones found in and around the area, did not disappoint.

Our accommodation was superb. We had booked a three night stay at Strawberry Patch Cottage, a 100 year old beautifully restored 'olde world' house just a stone throw from the Leura Mall and Village.

Strawberry Patch Cottage is just one of Mountain Whispers' superb four luxury accommodation cottages, three of which are located close to the village and mall in Leura with the other art deco masterpiece, The Gatsby located in Katoomba. Immaculately presented,

and more chocolates. Strawberry Patch Cottage provided every facility the visitor could expect.

These ranged from the tasteful, plush decor in the lounge and bedrooms through to the superbly appointed, fully equipped kitchen and magnificent bathroom which boasted a luxurious double spa bath set beside a picture window overlooking the lush garden.

The lounge room also has a television, DVD player and a selection of DVDs and books and games. Music from the hi-fi can also be piped to the spa bathroom.

The warm and comfy cottage was equipped with a log fire and heater. It also included a heated floor in the bathroom and air-conditioning, if needed, in the bedrooms and lounge.

As it was unseasonably warm in Leura the weekend of our visit, we did use the air-con in the bedroom several times during our stay.

We just loved the thoughtful extras which greeted us on arrival.

Elegantly presented on the coffee table in the lounge was a carafe of sherry, glasses and chocolates and on the dining room table was a welcome bottle of red, two wine glasses

and more chocolates. We'd forgotten how nice it can be to sip a good sherry either before or after dinner and I made a note to myself to revisit this very enjoyable custom during the winter months...

The kitchen was stocked with all the ingredients needed to make a delicious breakfast including fresh bread, cereal, bacon, eggs, tomatoes, butter, several homemade jams for toast and more...

There is just so much for the visitor to see in Leura.

While it abounds with restaurants, coffee shops, little eateries, gift shops and galleries it also has a wealth of attractions including one of Australia's best equipped toy and railway museums, spectacular lookouts and several waterfalls.

We had some very enjoyable meals, snacks and quick coffees in Leura, and would recommend several of the eateries including Cafe Bon Ton where we ate on the first night, The Lily Pad and Waygoose Cafe where among other foodie delights, they serve huge scones cooked in a small clay pot and served with strawberry jam and cream.

Lack of time prevented us from trying more of the invitingly good and delicious food presented at the various eateries and also from further exploring the many interesting and for West Australians, quite different tourist attractions set in terrain so unlike that found in WA.

Hoping to see as much as possible of this beautiful region in the three day window, we decided to take the Blue Mountains Explorer bus to Katoomba which is a short distance from Leura and take in the attractions in the town and surrounding areas and in particular, visit the famous and iconic Three Sisters at Echo Point, which we did.

The bus service, for which you buy tickets which come as a booklet with maps, timetables and interesting information on locations of interest to visit, enables you to choose where you wish to go and then simply hop on at a designated stop and then hop off at your chosen destination.

The Blue Mountains Explorer is a brilliant service, which made it easier for us to see more attractions than otherwise would have been

possible and learn from the driver's running commentary, a wealth of interesting information about Katoomba and surrounding areas.

Travellers to the region would need to allow at least a week staying in either Leura or Katoomba to enable them to see more of the beautiful and spectacular scenery the region has to offer.

The Blue Mountains and Mountain Whispers Luxury Accommodation are certainly on our 'wish list' for future travel in New South Wales.

FAST FACTS:

- The colour of the Blue Mountains comes from the oil of the plethora of Eucalyptus trees found there. Droplets of Eucalyptus oil in the atmosphere combine with dust particles and water vapour to scatter rays of light which are predominantly blue.

- The Three Sisters is essentially an unusual rock formation representing three sisters who according to Aboriginal legend were tamed to stone. The character of the Three Sisters changes throughout the day and throughout the seasons as the sunlight brings out the magnificent colours. The Three Sisters is also floodlit until around 11pm each evening looking simply spectacular set against the black background of the night sky. Each of the Three Sisters stand at 922, 918 & 906 metres tall, respectively.

Information sourced from the Blue Mountains website.

For more information on Mountain Whispers Luxury Accommodation visit www.mountainwhispers.com.au or about the Blue Mountains, visit www.bluemountains.com.au and the Blue Mountains Explorer Bus visit www.explorerbus.com.au

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This fertile area is home to some of our most picturesque towns including Donybrook, Mullalyup, Bridgetown, Balingup, Boyup Brook and Nannup all of which offer plenty of history and a range of charming accommodation.

There are many events happening in 2013 in the Southern Forest Region with some of the Blackwood River Valley Events commencing in February with the Gourmet Wine and Food Festival and the Truck Muster on 18 February.

The Taste of the Great Southern runs from 13 February to 31 March, the Small Field Farm Day runs in late April, Autumn Delights in May, *Telling Tales* - a new event to Balingup will be held from 13-14 of July and the popular Festival of Country Gardens runs from 1-4 November.

The Nannup Flower & Garden Festival is on from 16 - 19 August and the Nannup Music Festival is on from 1 to 4 March.

Look out for their popular events including the Karri Cup on Labour Day and Harvey Dickson's Rodeo September 26 - 27 and the Blues at Bridgetown in November.

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