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# A jazz-age affair

**Elicia Murray** steps into the pages of a 1920s literary classic at The Gatsby.

y fondest memories of *The Great Gatsby* are the mint juleps. Not that I've tried one, mind you, but there was something impossibly elegant about how author F. Scott Fitzgerald described the cocktails that made me want to slip into tennis whites and attend the nearest garden party.

So it is with a mix of horror and disappointment on the way to The Gatsby guesthouse that I hear my husband say, "Can you just pop in to Liquorland for a longneck of VB?" Daisy Buchanan would not be caught dead with a longneck. I am also seven months' pregnant. Alcoholic mountain-mother-to-be is not the look I'm hoping to cultivate. For the sake of marital harmony, however, I jump out of the car and avoid eye contact with everyone as I complete the shameful mission.

It's a low point on an otherwise classy weekend. The Gatsby is on Katoomba's main street but far enough away from the town centre to be unaffected by noise. Lights from inside the single-storey black-and-white weatherboard cottage cast an inviting glow when we arrive. A row of stately pines, a tiered fountain and carefully clipped garden beds lend an air of sophistication.

The decor doesn't just dip its toe into the art deco waters – it plunges in head-first. Statues of Isadora Duncan-style dancers strike poses in rooms and matinee idols gaze smoulderingly from the hallway walls as ornate mirrors reflect the grandeur.

Among the nods to Fitzgerald's jazz-age masterpiece are a DVD and original film poster of the 1974 film starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow. No signs of Baz Luhrmann's forthcoming remake. Yet.

We take the front bedroom, a big space with matte-gold walls, black-and-gold striped bedhead and matching bedding. On the wall is a painting of an elegant dame flanked by two Afghan hounds. She's wearing a leopard-skin coat and carrying a sleek cigarette holder. I want to be her.

A second bedroom, also with queen bed and TV, is smaller but stylishly decorated in shades of silver. For large groups, there's also a separate, self-contained cottage with queen bed and sofa. This can't be booked unless you book the main house, so there's no risk of running into strangers as you lounge about in the garden.

We drape ourselves on the leather sofa in the lounge-dining area, grateful for such mod-cons as pay TV, wickedly good central heating and a gas



Golden age  $\dots$  The Gatsby's decor pays homage to its literary namesake.

fireplace. There's a small but excellent selection of DVDs, as well as books and magazines.

**And then we ate** My beer-swilling husband is gagging to be unleashed on the barbecue to cook bacon and eggs from a supplied hamper but has second thoughts when he realises this would involve cleaning afterwards. He contents himself with the gas stove in the small but well-stocked kitchen and serves breakfast on the deck. Also supplied are condiments, juice, teas, instant coffee and – my favourite – hot chocolate powder with a jar of pink and white marshmallows.

**The deal maker** What's a romantic getaway without a soak in a tub? At The Gatsby, it's a double spa bath. Heated floors, candles, plush robes and speakers in the ceiling boost the bliss factor. All that's missing is a butler with a tray of mint juleps.

**Stepping out** Echo Point is about 350 metres from the cottage. There are less touristy spots for bushwalks nearby. We head to Blackheath, about 10 kilometres away, for dinner at Escarpment and – my Blue Mountains favourite – Ashcrofts. Also, the Carrington Cellars and Deli in Katoomba has a fabulous selection of wines and cheeses.

Weekends Away are reviewed anonymously and paid for by Traveller.

# VISITORS' BOOK

# The Gatsby

**Address** 314A Katoomba Street, Katoomba.

**The verdict** A luxe cottage with true razzle-dazzle.

**Price** \$360 a couple a night on weekends; \$75 a person a night for guests in the second bedroom; \$110 a person a night for guests in the garden cottage bedroom. Minimum two-night stays. Tariff includes breakfast hamper, port and a bottle of wine.

**Bookings** Phone 0430 496 755, see mountainwhispers.com.au.

**Getting there** Katoomba is about a twohour drive from central Sydney on the Great Western Highway. Follow the signs to Katoomba, turn left into Park Street, left into Waratah Street, then right into Katoomba Street.

**Perfect for** A stylish mountain getaway. **Wheelchair access** No.

**While you're there** Grab a meal at the funky Leura Garage in Railway Parade.



# **BLUE MOUNTAINS**



#### **HAYVIEW**

Contemporary and stylish, this holiday house offers stunning views of the Grose Valley. Linked by a covered walkway, the private retreat has three bedrooms, two bathrooms and an intimate lounge room. The property is a short walk from Leura's shops. From \$305 a night; sleeps eight. See stayz.com.au/20109.



#### **THREE BRIDGES**

This 19th-century cottage in Leura has been turned into a chic holiday house. It is set on secluded grounds studded with gum, pine, wisteria, cherry blossom, crab apple, maple and native flora. Entertain on the terrace, which features dining and lounge settings and a barbecue. From \$400 a night; sleeps 10. See stayz.com.au/87340.



### ALANDALE

Architect-designed on a garden block, Alandale is in nearby Wentworth Falls. Blue Mountains sights, waterfalls and bush walks are an easy stroll away. Alandale offers a getaway for groups, with five bedrooms, an outdoor entertainment area with a barbecue, large dining table and a cosy lounge room with an open fireplace. From \$320 a night; sleeps 12.

See stayz.com.au/108114.

For more information, see stayz.com.au, a division of Fairfax Media.



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