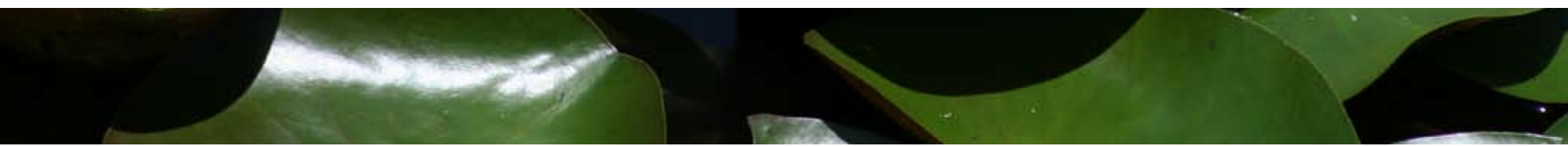


UNDERSTATED BEAUTY

lake weyba cottages

— one of the sunshine coast's most exquisite secrets, says an impressed CHANTAL DUNBAR



Queensland's Sunshine Coast is most often associated with glistening beaches, hinterland wineries and a river that bustles with activity. But what of the land in between – that untamed expanse of native bushland, blessed with secluded lakes, rivers and dams?

Tucked away on Lake Weyba's southern shores lies a secret I'm reluctant to share. It's a place of such perfect tranquil beauty that I'd hate for it to become better known.

And really, it's little wonder that so few people outside of Brisbane have heard of Lake Weyba Cottages. The sign marking the property's entrance lies half-hidden by untamed gardens, and it's a low-key kind of place.

I didn't know what to expect as the word "cottages" conjured up images of small white bungalows with lavender drying on verandas. So I admit to being a little taken aback when I saw eight discreetly placed, elevated, timber cabins, one of which was close to the size of my house.

Each cottage was nestled within tropical surrounds and overlooked a series of lily-encrusted ponds. Central to these was a white-

sand-lined dam, fringed with agapanthus and tiger lillies, with a jasmine-clad rotunda sitting atop a small island. All this, however, played second fiddle to the vast expanse of Lake Weyba.

It was clear that a great deal of hard work had gone into creating this oasis since its opening in 2000, and its beauty was fully appreciated by the locals. A mob of kangaroos grazed on the lawns and lazed in the shade of towering gum trees. From more than one pouch protruded the ungainly legs of a joey. Between the trees, brightly coloured lorikeets danced, and high above a sea eagle guarded its immense nest.

On entering our cabin – the two-bedroom Pavilion – my jaw dropped. One full side of the building was open to the view, allowing guests to fully appreciate their surrounds, while also extending the cottage's generous proportions to almost double. The interior was decorated throughout in muted chocolate tones and, while modest in appearance from the outside, the Pavilion was anything but within. No expense had been spared in

creating a retreat that resembled a show home, with every small detail carefully coordinated and every possible need anticipated.

The spacious kitchen was fully equipped with wine fridge and espresso machine; accompanied by freshly ground coffee and a complimentary bottle of vino. Within the fridge-proper was an Aladdin's treasure trove of goodies; an antipasto plate of local gourmet delicacies, a selection of handmade chocolate truffles, organic orange juices and what the operators humorously termed a "Traditional Breakfast Platter".

While traditional in my life is half a slice of wilting toast smeared with Vegemite, in this part of the world only the best will suffice: Bangalow pork sausages, free range eggs, smoked bacon, vine-ripened tomatoes, field mushrooms, ciabatta and raison toast, rock melon, grapes, Danish salami, leg ham, Swiss cheese and tomato relish...

Vaulted raked ceilings, bi-fold doors, timber floors, ceiling fans and air conditioning kept the interior comfortable.

A leather lounge was situated next to a log fireplace, with a wide-screen TV and home theatre system for rainy days and cool winter nights. Two large, cream couches were positioned in the centre of the room for those interested in enjoying the view. A dining setting was complemented by original works of art, teak furnishings and elegant home wares.

The cottage contained not one, but two master bedrooms, each with a king-sized bed, double spa bath and a bathroom containing twin monsoon showers. The balcony contained yet another seating arrangement, as well as an outdoor dining setting and gas BBQ.

It's easy to see why Lake Weyba Cottages is so popular for weddings and small conferences of up to 20 delegates. There is sufficient space in The Pavilion to seat up to 80 guests at wedding receptions, and it's possible to reserve all eight cabins for sole use by up to 22 people.

Located just 10-15 minutes drive from Noosa, Lake Weyba Cottages feels a world away. While dining-in is an option, the

surrounding area is home to some of Queensland's best eateries and well worth exploring in its own right. A word of warning though; Noosa's multitude of traffic roundabouts all look the same at night. Best leave a trail of breadcrumbs behind when you venture out, as that 15-minute drive easily becomes an hour's circular amble when attempting to find the return route.

Each new day at Lake Weyba is heralded in by the maniacal laugh of a kookaburra and, having barbecued and feasted upon the Traditional Breakfast, it was time to head to the swimming hole and enjoy a dip. Floating in the rainwater dam with schools of tiny fish darting across the shallows and lazy roos grazing on the lawns a few feet away, one can literally be immersed in nature.

For those keen to explore the wider area, mountain bikes and Canadian canoes are available free of charge. A short drive away, Clip-clop Horse Treks offer rides through the lake waters and bushland. Eco tours and Aboriginal cultural expeditions can also be

arranged and fishing tackle is available from reception.

For those who prefer to simply relax, professional massage therapists offer acupuncture, therapeutic, relaxation and hot stone therapy.

Everything about the intimate Lake Weyba Cottages exceeds expectation; from the discreet personalised service, to the attention to detail in creating a dream home away from home. Three different types of luxury accommodation are offered, ranging from 4.5-star to 5-star.

It would be nice to think that now discovered, I could selfishly keep the Sunshine Coast's best secret all to myself. There's no doubting though that no matter how popular the retreat becomes in future, it will remain an undisturbed paradise, set in an area of exceptional natural beauty.

