

Leaving the city behind for a spot of brush solitude



Green outlook: The Garden Room at Woodbyne Boutique Hotel in Jaspers Brush

Carla Caruso and her husband headed down the coast for a newlyweds' break.

IT had become a little like the film *You, Me And Dupree*.

My new hubby and I were sharing our tiny, already cramped Sydney apartment with a friend who had arrived from interstate.

It was a temporary situation which had lasted four months — our families were noticing the photos we brought home were always of the three of us.

One Friday night, desperately needing some time together, we clicked on a few last-minute accommodation sites and hit on the perfect relationship remedy — Woodbyne Boutique Hotel at Jaspers Brush, about two hours drive south of Sydney.

To me, it sounded like something out of *The Wind In The Willows*. Perfect.

The next morning, we snuck out early, leaving behind a quick, guilt-laden note: *Off for the weekend! Back Sunday afternoon x*. The emancipation had begun.

After our pit stop for lunch at the generously proportioned Panorama House restaurant and function centre in Bulli, we crunched up the gravel driveway to Woodbyne, a few minutes'



drive from the historical town of Berry. Co-owner Annette Moore, who has been running the boutique hotel with her husband Jeff for 12 years, signed us in at the chic guest lounge room, complete with an open log fire and Home Beautiful-style decor.

We were slightly taken aback to discover we could take our pick from the cupboard of DVDs, books and board games — for free. It's the type of generous hospitality city slickers, like us, are unaccustomed to.

Our pick of the 11 plush rooms was decorated in cream, beige and white, furnished with a king-size bed, plump couch and Buddha-like statues. The large windows, with white-painted frames, opened onto the central garden, which featured hedge archways and a trickling water fountain.

After a bit of luxurious lazing about, hubby's stomach was growling, so we headed to a local watering hole, The Berry Hotel, in the main strip of Queen St.

The quaint red-brick pub had all the charm of the country. In the front bar, patrons sat nursing drinks at the open windows, watching the rain drizzle outside.

We swung through to the pub's Coach House and Courtyard Rest-



Order and tranquillity: The gardens at Woodbyne Boutique Hotel in Jaspers Brush

aurant, where a flamboyant waiter claimed he had been running around like "a blue-arsed fly".

We ordered an entrée of freshly caught oysters to share, followed by a delicious pasta dish, with a tomato, chilli and eggplant sauce, for me, and steak hollandaise for the fella.

Sated, we wandered a few doors down to the Justin Lill Wines bottle shop for a nightcap. The bottles came with witty, handwritten recommendations. A 1997

vintage Palmes d'Or champagne (\$275 a pop) was dubbed "Sex with bubbles in it".

A 2006 Mt Rosa Central Otago pinot noir (\$34) was described as being "in a very happy place at the moment".

We made our selection and headed back to our room, where our DVD selection — *Made Of Honour* and *The Castle* — awaited.

Next morning, we were awoken at 8am for our breakfast. We dodged raindrops on the way to

the old schoolhouse next to the main house — the Garden Room — for our brekkie and soon decided the early morning call was well worth it, after all.

The gourmet options included poached eggs with smoked salmon and ricotta hot cakes with fresh strawberries and cream.

Post-breakfast and after a bit of pottering around in Berry, we were back on the road again, enjoying our last few hours together as just "us".

DESTINATION >>



Jaspers Brush, NSW

Getting there: Jaspers Brush is about two hours drive south of Sydney by car on the Princes Highway.

Stay: Woodbyne Boutique Hotel, 4 O'Keefes Lane, Jaspers Brush via Berry. (02) 4448 6200, www.woodbyne.com.au

More: www.southcoast.com.au; www.visitnsw.com

