

ESCAPE Diamondvale Lodge, 66 Kingston Rd, Stanthorpe | Jason Davis

Who was it said “getting there is half the fun”? Clearly they weren’t anywhere near our car on the spring evening the family attempted to flee the city for the restful Stanthorpe countryside. Ten minutes into the journey, the wailing from the back seat had already forced us off the road and into the nearest purveyor of fast foodstuffs to plug the offending oesophagi. Then there was the Friday Ipswich Motorway logjam to negotiate, and several apologetic calls to our hosts at Diamondvale Lodge to make.

We hoped to be there about 8pm. Then, maybe closer to nine? By 9.30, when we arrived on the edge of Stanthorpe, we were hardly a carload of holiday cheer.

Luckily someone had popped a mansion where Diamondvale Lodge was supposed to be. We expected a weatherboard cottage but got a spanking new four-bedroom contemporary homestead set among massive Granite Belt boulders.

Inside, leather couches and a roaring fire dominated a central living area the size of a ballroom. Add tasteful furnishings, all the mod cons, a wraparound verandah and flatscreens in every room and you have a perfect short-stop destination for four cashed-up couples or a dual-family getaway. The groaning wine rack and nibbles that owners Kerrin and Tony Cridland had laid on hardly hurt, either.

The Lodge is one of Diamondvale’s five self-contained B&B options – the four cottages and the Cridlands’ house are a short walk away, hidden by bush and accessed from a different road. Our immediate neighbours were cows and wallabies, and yet Stanthorpe was only a half-hour walk along the heritage track that followed the creek below the house.

Aside from the delivery of a cooked breakfast (local fresh produce, anyone?) there’s little reason to bump into the owners, should you so wish. But that would be missing out. The Cridlands are lovely, relaxed people, eager to do anything to enhance your stay, but never to the point of intrusion. Example: on Saturday morning after breakfast we found Kerrin feeding two docile white horses in a nearby paddock, and a few shy smiles and nods later she had both our children astride Ariel (who was a unicorn that had lost her horn, my older girl



assured me). You can’t plan memories like that and it was because Kerrin took the time to remember we had two young daughters.

The rest of the weekend was spent launching guerilla-style attacks on food and wine outlets between nap times and meals. On one foray we were sipping verdelho at Robert Channon Wines, an hour later we hit Sutton’s Juice Factory and Cidery in nearby Thulimbah. On Sunday we sampled the Stanthorpe markets, then dropped in to cafe and providore Olga & Agnes on the main drag for better food and coffee than a small country town has any right to expect. On the way home we even sniffed out Granite Belt Dairy Farmhouse Cheese.

Foodie heaven, but how can it compete with a ride on a unicorn?

the deal

PH (07) 4681 3367
WEBLINK
www.diamondvalecottages.com.au
RATES Lodge \$340 per couple per two-night stay for four couples (breakfast \$10pp per day). Phone for weekly rates and other group sizes. See website for rates on cottages.

THE VERDICT
 A Granite Belter.

OWEEKEND WAS A GUEST OF THE OPERATORS
 PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID KELLY