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A Glamorous Getaway

For a relaxing weekend away, Lavender Majestic in the Blue Mountains delivers decadent indulgence in the stunning surrounds of a private country home.

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The dappled sunshine plays across your face as you recline in a deck chair beneath the wide arms of a large oak tree. As you sip champagne and leisurely read your book, friends relax around you, quietly chatting and sampling delicious chocolates.

The back façade of the property is modern and simple, a 2004 addition to the antique bones of the original property.

Nicky Vaux is your host and personal butler for the weekend. Nicky has worked in such venues as the London Ritz, Grosvenor House, and the Sydney Hilton before she decided to move to this unique property to raise a family. On the weekends, this private home is transformed into a luxurious retreat of relaxation and indulgence.

You are greeted in the driveway by Nicky, your bags are quickly taken into the house, and your first glass of champagne is poured. As you venture further into the house, the beauty and simplicity of Lavender Majestic's design is slowly uncovered.

The modern additions to the house—including a garage, bedrooms, an ensuite bathroom, and an observatory—do not attempt to replicate the older structure of the house, but instead carefully complement it. The property was originally built as a holiday home for the wealthy Foy family in the 1890s. Nicky knew that the antique features of the property such as three-metre high ceilings and original metal Wunderlich designs and stunning cornices could not be imitated in the additions.

Quality and individuality were essential components of the additions. As you walk through the back entrance of the property, beautiful cedar windows allow views of the wooden deck and garden. Gleaming jarrah

wide floorboards cover the hallway and the sweeping, curving staircase. Large windows seem to invite the natural beauty of the garden and the surrounding trees into the home. Delicate floral scents perfume the air thanks to strategically placed candles.

At the top of the stairs lie the two bedrooms and ensuite bathroom that were added in the 2004 renovations. The three-bedroom property can sleep up to 10 guests, with one king bedroom, one queen bedroom, and a third bedroom that plays host to four single beds.

The queen bedroom is a comfortable retreat with a bookcase full of good reads lining one wall and a cleverly designed wardrobe hidden behind the impressive headboard. The ensuite bathroom boasts heated marble floors, white fluffy towels, and impossibly comfortable robes. An ornate stand-alone mirror adds an antique feel to the elegant modern bathroom.

The other large bedroom is an intriguing mix of modern and antique. The ceiling is a curving, corrugated-steel structure that seems reminiscent of an airplane hangar. Conversely, the room is luxuriously furnished with antique wooden cabinets, a stand-alone mirror with floral scrollwork, and a dresser.

The four single beds are covered in beige floral doonas with black and white throws. A wooden chalkboard rests on each bed's pillows with the simple greeting 'welcome' lovingly scrawled on it. Two large wicker



The master bedroom looks out onto the front garden of the Lavender Majestic, which, as its name suggests, is home to a dizzying assortment of flowers. In the calm midday sun of the Blue Mountains, the garden is resplendent—flowers in cool pastel shades of pink, purple, green, and blue emit a heavenly and heady aroma.

A veranda stretches across the front of the house, providing a shaded refuge from the overwhelming sensory experience of the garden. An ornate, white metal gate opens to allow guests to walk down the stairs and onto the central path, finally leading to a suitably picturesque white, wooden picket fence.

As you venture back into the house and its sleek kitchen, you marvel at the Lavender Majestic's stunning observatory. A retreat of beautiful, old sash windows, a modern glass roof, and graceful white fabrics, the observatory flows off the kitchen and provides the perfect spot for relaxation. Comfortable white couches line the circular room and sunshine beams through the wide windows. In winter, this allows guests to enjoy the sunshine and gorgeous views of the garden without being exposed to the cold conditions of the mountains.

Double doors lead out onto the wide wooden deck where calico deckchairs are perfectly positioned to soak in the late afternoon sun. As your friends relax on the deck and sip champagne, Nicky introduces you to Kat, one of a few local freelance spa therapists who perform luxurious spa treatments in the exclusive comfort of the Lavender Majestic's private treatment room.

Located next to the kitchen, the custom-designed treatment room is an oasis of tranquillity. Enticing floral aromas drift through the cosy room while candles add points of soft illumination. Under the capable hands of Kat, you slowly relax into the table,

cushioned by a multitude of feathery, white towels. Knots built up by stress and worry slowly ease through a varying mix of pressures and movements. Warm towels cocoon you as soft music lulls you to sleep.

After the gentle relaxation of the massage, walking out onto the deck still feels like part of a dream. Everything seems to be awash in a golden light and a languid peace still envelops you. As the afternoon continues, each girl gets to experience a massage or facial. When not being pampered in the treatment room, you doze in deckchairs, flip through magazines, read books, and devour chocolate from Leura's iconic lolly shop.

Once the treatments have come to a reluctant conclusion, the girls change into swimsuits and try out the six-person spa that is perched on the Lavender Majestic's wide deck. After the massage, with your muscles completely relaxed and at ease, the hot, bubbling water of the spa is a decadent treat.

Nicky moves through the house and deck with a friendly professionalism, consistently delivering an exceptionally high level of service throughout your stay. As you soak among the spa's bubbles, Nicky continually tops up the bubbles in your glass.

Sipping champagne and eating chocolate in the steaming spa as the sun slowly lowers into the canopies of the surrounding trees and your friends excitedly chatter around you is a truly unforgettable experience.

As you step out of the spa, Nicky is ready to wrap you in the cosy confines of a white fluffy robe and collect your now-empty champagne glass. With relaxed limbs and a giddy enthusiasm, the group retreats to their rooms before getting dressed for dinner. As Katoomba is only a short walk away, a local restaurant in town is the perfect option for a hassle-free dinner.



Following a filling dinner, the group heads back to the Lavender Majestic for a cup of tea and some after-dinner chocolates. The lounge is an inviting prospect with soft classical music and a heater giving the room a cosy feel.

Couches provide ample room for relaxing while delicate décor touches around the lounge demonstrate the natural, casual elegance of this beautiful home. A large fireplace sits beneath a wide flat-screen television while wooden cabinets play host to a DVD player and a range of films, including the mandatory classic chick flicks.

As your friends recline on the comfortable couches and watch Hugh Grant's now-familiar attempts to woo Julia Roberts, Nicky unobtrusively moves around the room, serving tea and hot chocolate and clearing plates and cups.

After a deep sleep and an invigorating shower in the elegant ensuite you head to the dining room for breakfast. What greets you in the dining room, which, as with the rest of the house, is a subtle mix of modern and antique touches, is a large wooden table laden with food and cutlery.

Colourful glass jugs house apple juice and water while quaint china teapots offer an assortment of teas. Muesli and fruit are available and a metal stand offers croissants, danishes, and toast.

A menu is placed before you with a range of cooked breakfast options. After ordering, you sample the danishes and fruit, and sip your tea. In no time at all, Nicky is placing a mouth-watering plate of poached eggs, sourdough bread, and mushrooms before you.

To continue this culinary experience, Nicky drives you to the Blue Mountains Cooking School in Wentworth Falls for a Mediterranean cooking class. Your hosts are Cath and Diana,

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armchairs play host to thick white pillows and stylish black throw pillows. Cedar doors with wide glass panels provide relaxing views of the oak trees that surround the house.

After settling in and unpacking your things you descend the staircase to explore the rest of the house. When renovating the house, Nicky and her husband cut through the old sandstone walls with great ceremony. To mark where the old meets the new, an arch of sandstone is built into the hallway of the house.

Beyond this arch and the hallway, the kitchen provides the central hub for the house. A homey paradise of blue tiles, gleaming appliances, and wooden touches, the kitchen and its large fridge are stocked with treats for hungry ladies.

Beyond the kitchen lie the lounge and dining rooms and the master bedroom. With tones of blue and cream delicately interwoven throughout the décor, the king bedroom beautifully complements the 1890s aesthetic of the original structure.



two sisters who have been running cooking classes and workshops in Sydney for 10 years. After moving to the Blue Mountains, Cath and Diana decided to open their own cooking school and will release their own cookbook, *The Solo Chef*, in February 2014.

Their regular schedule of cooking classes will soon become a regular feature of the Lavender Majestic experience, as part of a gourmet getaway package. This package may also include a degustation meal at a local Katoomba fine-dining restaurant and a visit to the monthly Blackheath Growers' Market.

Cath and Diana are expert hands at both teaching and cooking, inviting participants to get involved, chopping vegetables, cooking meat, and serving food. After preparing a few courses and putting dishes in the oven, class participants enjoy cooked pita bread with hummus and an innovative

tapenade, notably made with tuna, anchovy fillets, and capers.

As the three and a half hours of the class passes, participants enjoy cooking and eating a dizzying array of Mediterranean dishes, including soupe au pistou, char-grilled eggplant with coriander and tahini, beef tagine with apples and honey, baked fish, ratatouille, fragrant couscous, green harissa, baked ricotta and figs, and lemon cream pots.

As you reluctantly leave the Blue Mountains Cooking School and begin the drive back to Sydney, a tranquil feeling of contentment envelops you in a warm embrace. The complete indulgence of the Lavender Majestic—from its massages and facials to its bubbling spa, wide sun-dappled deck, and luxuriously comfortable beds—is one fond memory that you will linger over for years to come. ♦