



GWINGANNA



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GWINGANNA LIFESTYLE RETREAT.



IN GOOD HANDS

OFFERING EXTRAORDINARY RETREATS THAT SALVE THE BODY, AND ENRICH THE MIND, ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S LEADING SPA RESORTS DOESN'T DISAPPOINT, WRITES Kelly Allen.



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GWINGANNA LIFESTYLE
RETREAT
NEW SOUTH WALES

This page: Plenty of places to stop and take in the full guest experience. Opposite page: The perfect combination of healthy cuisine and wellness activities.

AT GWINGANNA, A “LIFESTYLE RETREAT” SET IN THE LUSH Tallebudgera Valley on the Gold Coast, we joined 60 guests for the booked out, five-day, Optimal wellness 50 plus package, where 42 of the guests were coming back for more. One guest told us he’d been coming back every year for the past eight years.

Awarded Australia’s Leading Spa Resort in the 2015 World Luxury Spa Awards, Gwinganna celebrates its 10-year anniversary this year, and they are obviously doing something very right. We were fortunate enough to stay in one of three new meditation suites—the first of their kind in Australia.

Our standalone cottage, set among the resorts’s organic orchard, exudes equal parts serenity and luxury, with its open plan design and understated colour scheme in greys and whites. Ideal for couples or singles, it has a huge freestanding tub, and several spots to practice meditation including oversized chairs, a thick comfy meditation cushion, and a daybed on the verandah with calming views out to the bush. An iPod is provided loaded with guided meditations, chanting, yoga music and meditation instruction – I used it every day and still didn’t get through it all. Yoga mats are provided as are books on yoga and meditation to help you refine your practice during your retreat.

At Gwinganna, the focus of our retreat package was health for over-50 year olds and included several lectures by respected health experts in the field of “integrative medicine”, which, according to the National Institute of Integrative Medicine “combines conventional medicine with evidence-based complementary medicine, therapies and lifestyle interventions for the treatment and prevention of disease.”

Dr. Ross Walker, an integrative cardiologist for 30 years and author of seven books spoke on heart health and had some interesting new views on cholesterol.

Dr. Karen Coates, an integrative doctor specialising in women’s health spoke on several topics including epigenetics—a very hot topic. In essence, scientists now believe we have much more control over how our genes express themselves depending on our lifestyle and the food choices we make.

As with all Gwinganna retreats, the first half of the day is Yang oriented, focusing on physical exercise, starting with Qigong on the mountain at 6am. The rest of the morning follows with a choice of walks. Go hardcore with the driveway walk or enjoy a lovely gentle stroll with Gwinganna’s resident botanist and social ecologist, John Palmer. There is also an opportunity to learn everything you have ever wanted to know about organic gardening, from head gardener, Shelley Prior, even how to make Aloe Vera juice. At 8am we are treated to a big beautiful breakfast of fresh fruit, porridge or granola, and a hot dish that might include a mushroom omelette wrapped in a buckwheat crepe. Next is stretch-



ing for 30 minutes followed by a 90-minute fitness, yoga or dance class. At 11am there is morning tea before heading into the morning lecture.

The lectures discuss the latest thinking in personal health, whether it be the importance of vitamin D (get your levels checked is the short advice!), or the role of gut and colon health in well-being. These talks are always a favorite and notebooks are provided to ensure you take home the knowledge you’ve gained.

At 1pm the energy shifts at Gwinganna and ‘the dreamtime’ begins. This starts with a healthy and filling lunch that might be Teriyaki mahi mahi served with a salad of a dozen type of greens fresh from the organic garden, and roasted vegetables. The meals are all sugar, gluten and dairy free and very hearty. We never heard anyone complain of being hungry. Chef Stacey has a great sense of humour, conveyed during her impromptu

cooking demos. Stacey, whose cookbook comes out in late 2016, replayed several of the dishes we had eaten that week, and supplied handouts that included recipes.

After lunch the pace slows right down with free time for nap, a quiet walk, an appointment with one of the practitioners or an indulgent spa treatment.

The Gwinganna spa is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere with 33 treatment rooms that form a circle around a forest of gum trees. My first treatment, The Aloha Lomi Lomi Ritual was nearly three hours—and like nothing I have ever experienced. My practitioner Paie comes from a family of intuitive healers and is also a registered nurse, massage therapist and holds several other diplomas in bodywork and counseling.

The treatment began with a Hawaiian ritual and intention ceremony followed by a card reading (similar to tarot cards), which brought up lots of emotion, and was followed by a long rhythmic massage incorporating several different techniques, along with crystal healing and Hawaiian chanting. It was one of those

experiences that leave you flabbergasted, but feeling light as a feather.

A more traditional but every bit as enjoyable treatment is the three hour Li’tya signature ritual, The Dreaming. This treatment pampers from head to toe with a facial, body wrap, full body massage, scalp massage and foot and hand treatment. The products used incorporate native plant essential oils and desert salts.

Five days of this blissful regimen delivers a revitalized body, a nurtured soul and an elevated mind. No wonder they keep coming back.

The five-night Optimum Wellbeing package starts at A\$2,430 per person and includes accommodation, all meals and snacks, one classic massage and one facial, wellness seminars, health and wellbeing analysis and courtesy transfers from Gold Coast Airport. gwinganna.com



See more images from this story at luxurytravelmag.com.au



At Gwinganna, the focus is body, soul and mind, and guests are in the capable hands of experts with deep knowledge and experience in their field.

This page: There is a range of spa treatments at the largest spa facility in the Southern Hemisphere. Opposite Page: Serene cottage accommodation.