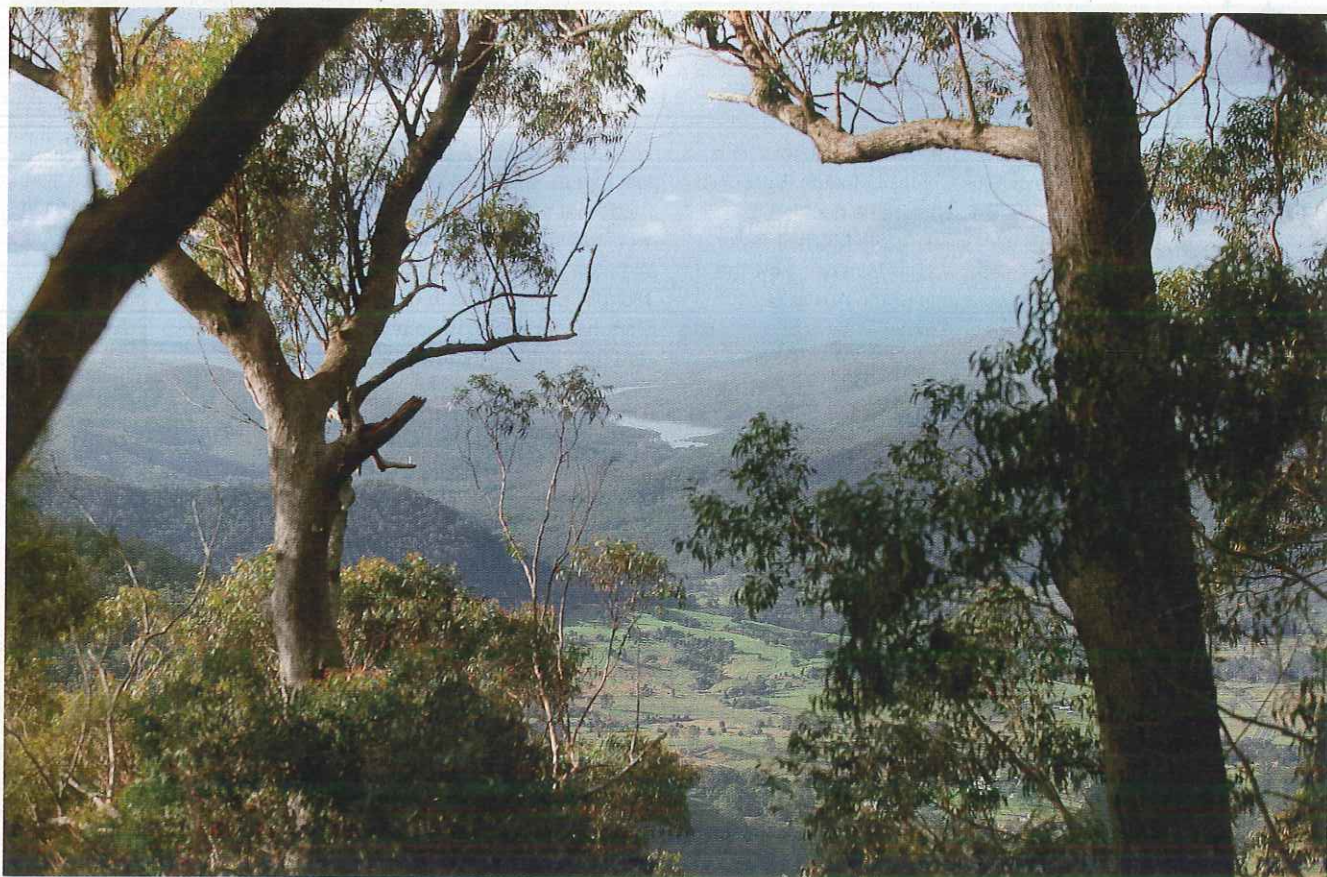


ESCAPE Binna Burra Mountain Lodge, Binna Burra Rd, Beechmont | **Amanda Watt**



thedeal

PH 1300 246 622

WEBLINK
www.binnaburra
lodge.com.au

RATES

Studio apartments
\$290/night, \$340/n
for one-bedroom
apartment, 2br
\$485/n, 3br \$630/n.

THE VERDICT

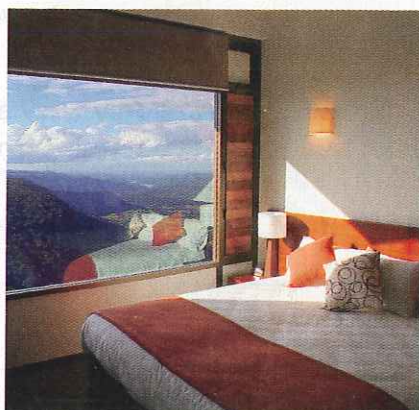
A very special place.

Fresh mountain air. Jaw-dropping views. Hearty, home-style meals. When pioneering conservationists Arthur Groom and Romeo Lahey purchased the last freehold title on the boundary of Lamington National Park in the 1930s, their goal was simple: to create a comfortable base from which visitors could explore the beauty of the 20,600ha of rugged rainforest nestled in the Gold Coast hinterland. Eighty years on, that vision has been taken to a new, indulgent level with 20 "Sky Lodges" added to the existing campsites and log cabins at the iconic Binna Burra Mountain Lodge estate.

The Sky Lodges are clustered in four stand-alone buildings perched on the side of a steep ridge 100m or so from the main accommodation and restaurant precinct, offering north-facing views out across the Coomera and Numinbah valleys. We were in a two-bedroom apartment on the top floor of the Lahey building and were captivated the moment we swiped our key and pushed back the heavy timber front door. The main living area is open-plan, the kitchen/dining

room at the rear (with dishwasher, fridge, stovetop, microwave and dining table for six) flowing into a cosy lounge room with gas fireplace and flatscreen TV and continuing out through a large timber and glass sliding door to a private balcony. A huge picture window in the main bedroom (*below*) and a floor-to-ceiling window panel above the spa bath in the ensuite ensure guests don't miss out on the rugged mountain views.

It's the kind of stylish, snug base you don't want or need to leave but on the first night, weary from our harried peak-hour drive from Brisbane which saw the normal 90-minute



journey blow out to two hours plus, we were pleased to slide into a chair at the resort's restaurant for a three-course meal (\$40 for adults and \$20 for children). A hot and cold breakfast buffet and light lunches are also available to guests.

Scheduled group activities – a 5km guided walk, a 165m flying fox ride and a night-time bush dance – were on offer on the Saturday of our stay, but instead we set out on an 18km hike through Lamington which took us to a couple of spectacular outlooks and down through fern-filled valleys to the base of a gently tumbling waterfall.

Later, I booked in for a one-hour organic facial with onsite massage/beauty therapist Luna, who has set herself up in a cute-as-pie cabin near the main buildings. It was one of the most unusual treatments I've had, courtesy of a blessing ritual performed by Luna before and after it. At one point, as incense was being wafted around the bed and wishes made for my future beauty and happiness, I wondered what Groom and Lahey would have made of it all. Perhaps they'd have just been happy I was relaxed.