



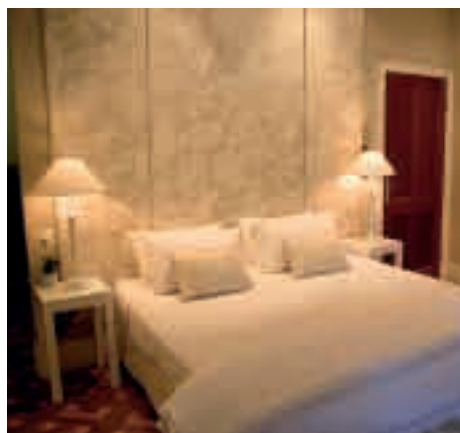
ESCAP E The Plantation, 142 Mary River Rd, Cooroy | Karen Milliner

Crossing the parquet-floored threshold into the genteel surrounds of The Plantation's main residence, I had a brief moment of déjà vu. It wasn't just the groovy pineapple motif table lamps (a friend in Sydney has similar ones) that triggered it, nor was it the elegant country decor (reminiscent of the luxury lodges we stayed in during a sojourn to New Zealand's North Island). It was the couple who were also overnighing at this Sunshine Coast hinterland retreat. Their faces were familiar. Had I met them before? A cheery hello and exchange of first names didn't help jog the memory and attention was diverted as we settled in to our white-on-white suite with king bed and period-style bathroom, then acquainted ourselves with the rest of the sandstone residence, its chequerboard verandahs, courtyard with fountain and pool, and the 8.5 hectares of landscaped grounds.

The property, a few minutes' drive from Cooroy, borders state forest and takes its name from the Paulownia plantation established more than a decade ago (a few groves of these pretty "Japanese princess" trees remain). The sprawling residence, with five bedrooms, a massive kitchen and two lounge areas furnished with plump sofas you want to sink into on sight, was built as a private home in 2003. The owners also constructed a separate wing of three ensuited bedrooms and a lounge/dining room to accommodate B&B stays.

Last year, new owners decided to turn the whole place over to guests after a refurbishment. Two bedrooms in the main house have their own bathrooms, while the remaining three share one with a clawfoot bath and standalone shower. Families, groups of friends and wedding parties who aren't too particular about private facilities are happy to book out the whole house, and often the guest wing as well.

Breakfast, and a veritable feast it is, is laid out each morning and guests are treated to complimentary canapés and pre-dinner drinks on the first night of a stay. For the rest of your meals, the well-equipped and stocked kitchen



and courtyard barbecue are at your disposal. If you'd rather an evening off from culinary duty, there are restaurants galore around the region, or Noosa Catering chef Matt Bolla can put together a dinner package (prices start at \$75 per person). We certainly felt like spoilt landed gentry enjoying Matt's food (all we had to do was throw the steaks on the barbie) and sharing such a stylish abode with only two other people. Mind you, had more bedrooms been occupied, The Plantation still has plenty of nooks for some private "me" time.

As to where I'd previously met our fellow guests, the penny finally dropped: we'd wokked a chu chee prawn curry together in a class at nearby Yandina's Spirit House cooking school about a year ago. They were indulging in a rare night away from their two youngsters to celebrate his birthday (the little ones' grandparents were babysitting). I wondered why they hadn't chosen something a little bit romantic and secluded somewhere, such as a self-contained cabin. Simple, they said. They'd trawled websites and liked the look of The Plantation, and they weren't disappointed in their choice.

Neither should they be. If you're not averse to company, this is a delightful place to breathe in crisp, country air and unwind. Another plus: several hours of bliss at the Ikatan day spa can be had only 15 minutes' drive away.

### the deal

PH (07) 5447 6177  
WEBLINK [www.theplantation.com.au](http://www.theplantation.com.au)  
RATES Main residence from \$235 per night for a room with shared bathroom; \$385 for an ensuited room; \$265 for an ensuited room in guest wing. See website for details of mid-week Ikatan Escape package.

THE VERDICT  
A taste of gracious country living.

QWEEKEND WAS A GUEST OF THE OPERATOR. PHOTOGRAPHY: IAN THURECT