



Sunday Escape
Mauritius – where true
colours shine through

Escape. | 03

STAY AT MY PLACE ...



MT RAE RETREAT HEALESVILLE

HIGH on a hill in Healesville is a little bit of heaven called Mt Rael. There, comfy rooms to rest your head after a busy week at work are a mere hop and skip away from its fine-dining restaurant. The valley views are pretty damn amazing and it's all an hour from the big smoke. It provides a mini-break that's stress-free and makes you think: "Life ain't that bad". Mt Rael was built as a private homestead in the late '60s and is named after original owners, Ray and Laurel (Ra-El) Kennedy. Current helmsmen Sean Lee and John Knoll have been putting their stamp on the place for the past nine years.

ACCOMMODATION

The pick of Mt Rael's five rooms is the adults-only Sharman Suite. It's rancho relaxo – king-size bed, fluffy bathrobes, a deep spa, a shower with huge shower head and a wall-mounted flat-screen telly with DVD player. Sliding doors open to a private wrap-around deck overlooking the grounds and valley. It's also a good spot to spy wedge-tail eagles, kookaburras and rosellas. The room is light and modern, and happily there's not a doily in sight.

FOOD

The Mt Rael Restaurant (formerly known as 3777 after Healesville's postcode) is second to none,

decked out in olive and white hues with a cosy fireplace, big windows and glass doors to an expansive balcony. For lunch or dinner, the boy and I can recommend the dukkah-crusted pork cutlet with a sweet potato cake, broccolini and apple and chilli relish (\$29.50) and the cauliflower and gruyere souffle with broad beans and walnut lavosh (\$27.50), and for sweets, the chocolate fondant and the goat's curd cheesecake. From noon 'til 6pm Friday to Sunday, a section of the dining room is replaced with lounge chairs and low tables where the new autumn grazing menu is served. There are olives, scallop spring rolls and gourmet pizza to enjoy with a drop of the region's finest. For breakfast, there's either your in-room hamper of organic bread, home-made muesli and preserves, or mosey up to the restaurant. In Healesville, Innocent Bystander does a decent trade, but worth the wait will be Palate, an art gallery and tapas bar that the Mt Rael team is opening in the town's main drag later in the year.

FUN

Lots of this to be had in the Yarra Valley in the form of wineries, of course. The hard part will be choosing. Our first stop is the impressive TarraWarra Estate. Its art gallery is gearing up to host the Archibald Prize next month. It's going to be huge. At the cellar door, pinot noir and chardonnay are the order of the day.



ABOVE: The views are just part of the attraction of Mt Rael, along with sumptuous accommodation and gourmet food.

Next was Medhurst Wines, a little gem of a spot. Look out for winemaker Matt Steele and his pride-and-joy, the new winery that's almost complete. Medhurst boasts a great new cafe where we shared one of the "paddles" (one of four tasting plates, \$28 each) loaded with goodies such as salmon mousse, pickled baby beets and French sausage. We can recommend Medhurst's Frances dessert wine, named after the winery owners' daughter. Last on the list was Punt Road Wines. Their pear and apple ciders are crisp and refreshing, as is their sparkling.

THE DEAL

The Sharman Suite at Mt Rael is \$360 a night a couple on Friday and Saturday, and \$225 a second night or Sunday to Thursday. Includes in-room breakfast hamper. 140 Healesville-Yarra Glen Rd, Healesville. Ph: 5962 1977.

MORE mtrael.com.au

BITEMARKS

PORT PHILLIP BAY

Snapper to 5kg, most fish 2kg-3kg, are taking silver whiting, couta, pilchard and squid in about 20m of water from Carrum to Mornington. Corio Bay also has a run of snapper with fish in the 5kg-7kg range. Patterson River is producing bream to about 1kg on scrubworms, yabbies and lures. Salmon to 1.5kg are being caught on metal lures. Garfish to 30cm are taking silverfish and maggots off Frankston and Seaford piers. King George whiting to 43cm are being caught off Rye and Corio Bay on mussel, squid and pipi. Calamari to 1.5kg are being caught from the rocks at Mt Martha, in 5m of water off Rye and off Clifton Springs.

WESTERN PORT

Calamari to 2kg are being caught from Flinders pier and nearby grass beds. Gummy sharks to 12kg are being caught along the channel off Pt Leo, while King George whiting to 45cm are taking pipi, mussel and squid along the Middle Spit, Tyabb and Quail Banks.

SURF

Salmon to 2.5kg are being caught from Bridgewater to Narrawong, with gummy sharks to 10kg at the mouth of the Surrey River. Gunnamatta, Kilcunda and Venus Bay beaches are producing salmon to about 2kg. Seaspray, Golden Beach and Lakes Entrance to Mallacoota are producing salmon to 3kg.

GIPPSLAND

Bream are being caught at Hollands Landing, Tambo Bay and Mitchell, Tambo and Nicholson rivers. King George whiting are being caught at Shaving Point and Paynesville on pips. At Lakes Entrance, salmon to 1kg are being caught on lures and pilchards, while bream are taking prawn and flathead are biting on pilchard at Lake Tyers.

The Snowy River estuary is producing luderick and bream. At Bemm River, tailor and bream are taking vibe lures. Mallacoota Inlet waterfront is producing luderick, trevally and flathead.

SOUTHWEST

Glenelg River has mulloway to 5kg and bream to 1kg being caught on spew worms. Portland's Lee Breakwall is producing King George whiting to 500g, pinkies to 1.5kg and gummy shark to 10kg. The Surrey and Fitzroy rivers are fishing well for bream, while the Gellibrand is producing bream to 38cm on spider crabs and yabbies.

FRESHWATER

Redfin to 5kg are being caught in Lake Eildon, though most reddies are from 300g to 1.4kg. Anglers trolling Tassie Devil lures between the dam wall and Jerusalem Creek are catching brown trout to 2.8kg. Lake Purrumbete has rainbow trout to 1.2kg and brown trout to 2.5kg taking trolled Loftys Lures in pink colours. Lake Bullen Merri has rainbow trout to 1kg. Lake Elingamite is producing brown trout to 1.5kg.

STEVE COOPER

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MEGAN MILLER