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Tranquillity itself: The generous deck area of the Long Weekend Retreat

## Wildlife, luxury and solitude in the surprising south

- *ROOM AT THE INN*  
Michael Gebicki
- February 03, 2007

**HERE'S a surprise: a stylish, self-contained hideaway near Lake Conjola on the NSW south coast, a region where concepts such as luxury and thoughtful design seem not to have taken root.**

"Luxurious creative retro-styled accommodation" promises the Long Weekend Retreat website, and that's about it. It feels like a traditional south coast holiday house with a makeover.

There's a stainless-steel kitchen with a gas cooktop and fan-forced oven, an espresso machine, a spunky bathroom, a bedroom with a queen-size bed, a plasma television and DVD player with a library of disks, splashy colours on the walls and underfloor heating.

Separated from the main house by the huge deck is another pavilion with a bigger bedroom and a king-size bed and ensuite bathroom: plenty of room for two couples.

There is also, courtesy of the miraculous Leo's Kitchen in Milton and pre-ordered from the retreat's eat-in menu, a fridge full of good treats.

The beef lasagne comes out of the oven with a satisfyingly toasty crust, the sauce inside lustily driven by the rich flavours of meat and tomatoes. The curries we order for the next night sing a raga on the palate although the naan (from another supplier) is doughy and as flat as pitta bread. The chocolate mousse makes up for the lapse; I forsake my table manners and not-so-surreptitiously lick the bowl.

Breakfast supplies are included: eggs from the chooks in the coop at the end of the driveway, fruit, a grainy loaf and a selection of teas and coffee beans.

There's also a bottle of red from Bawley Vale Estate, which lies to the south.

There's an intriguing option here, too: personal yoga lessons, at a time to suit you, from an instructor who will probably roll you up, stretch you out and leave you feeling like a whole new person.

The location is tranquillity itself. Surrounded by a few hectares of cleared pastures and the forests of Lake Conjola National Park, the retreat sits off a dirt road that ends at a cul-de-sac just up the hill.

There's a double-storey fibro house about 50m away, The Treehouse, which provides spillover accommodation for special events, such as women's surf yoga, which the owners organise, but it's never occupied when guests are in-house.

The retreat is surrounded by Lake Conjola National Park, a small slice of coastal wilderness at the northern end of the Milton-Mollymook-Ulladulla conurbation. When we strike out along the fire trails that wind through the forest toward the beach, we have two echidna sightings, one of which is of the creature tumbling down the hillock where it has been browsing to land in a bristly ball at our feet. Wallabies by the dozen look up in surprise and bound off into the thick bush as we approach.

It is a cool day but when we arrive at Buckleys Point there are only a couple of other figures far off in the distance: four people on three pristine kilometres of beach. Where else could this happen?

*Michael Gebicki was a guest of the Long Weekend Retreat.*

### **Checklist**

Long Weekend Retreat, Lake Conjola, NSW, 2539. More: (02) 4456 1501;

[www.thelongweekend.com.au](http://www.thelongweekend.com.au).

**Tariff:** \$325 a night on weekends for one couple, or \$695 for Friday-to-Sunday nights; \$250 a night on weekdays.

**Getting there:** About three hours by road from Sydney's CBD.

**Checking in:** Couples; summer weekends are busy.

**Stepping out:** Take a drive to the marvellous little beach at Bendalong, hike among wildflower heaths on the high plateaus of Morton National Park and admire the beautiful and functional pieces

at the Timber Gallery in Milton.

**Brickbats:** The Balinese-style soak tub is an alfresco bath, and while it's done with dash, there's not room for two.

**Bouquets:** Quality and style, from the thread count on the linen to the little chocolate surprise pack.

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