

# Live the high life: holiday in



A trip to the magnificent Hawkesbury Highlands offers the perfect short getaway.

There is still plenty of holiday time left so if you are wondering what to do, why not stay in the Hills and enjoy your own backyard. **Tania Di Stefano** from Hills Hawkesbury and Riverlands Tourism shares her trip.

IT was a beautiful, sunny warm morning as my partner and I started our trip up Windsor Rd from Rouse Hill.

First stop Enniskillen Orchard, at Grose Vale, a well established fruit orchard that has taken the humble roadside stall to the next level.

We enjoyed a delicious coffee and a snack while gazing at the gorgeous view of Grose Valley and bought some fruit and vegetables grown right on the orchard as well as honey.

A variety of sauces, jams, juice and health food supplies were also available.

The owner John McGuire was happy to have a chat about his orchard as well as tell us about the importance of the Hawkesbury Harvest Farm Gate Trail – a brochure map that leads you through different areas showing you where you can buy produce direct from the farmer and their seasonality.

We travelled on the historic Bells Line of Road further into the Hawkesbury Highlands through to a little town called Bilpin.

Yes, this is where the Bilpin apple comes from.



## GETTING THERE

■ **WHERE:** Hawkesbury Highlands includes towns such as Kurmond, Kurrajong Village, Kurrajong Heights, Bilpin and Mount Tomah.

■ **WHAT:** It is one of the five sub-regions that make up the Hills Hawkesbury and Riverlands region.

We stopped at another orchard which is part of the Farm Gate Trail called Shields Orchard. Here you can pick your own apples at certain times throughout the year.

Next we headed back down the mountain into Kurrajong Village. If you haven't already visited this quaint township then make this your next weekend outing.

This place truly brings meaning to the word "village".

We enjoyed a scrumptious meal at Sassafras Creek - one of the most famed restaurants in the village. Creatively styled and delicious food among a gallery and a gift store.

The stunning view of the Hawkesbury Basin out to the Sydney skyline kept taking my attention.

We had heard of a charming "shed" called the Turpentine Tree.

Once there, we discovered it is mainly a wedding venue set among the fringes of the Blue Mountains National Park.

Just up the road we checked in to what we would be calling "home" for the night, Madison's Mountain Retreat.

A friendly family retreat featuring huge log cabins and two converted train carriages for accommodation; the train carriages are most popular with children, so we were told.

Here we got to meet the lovely managers Neil and Julie as well as the assistant managers, the alpacas and their newborn babies, goats, chickens, ducks and a llama - yes only one llama.

Set among a bushland backdrop, Madison's offered a quiet refuge, completely relaxing after my shopping success.

Our dinner was at a charming restaurant aptly named Kravings, as by this time we were both starving and ready to eat.

# in Hawkesbury

### STAYING THERE

■ **Madison's Mountain Retreat, 1880 Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong Heights. Inquiries: 4567 7398, [www.madisonretreat.com.au](http://www.madisonretreat.com.au)**

■ **Ghost Hill Road B&B, 73 Ghost Hill Rd (off Bells Line of Road), Bilpin. Inquiries: 0410 484 120 [www.ghosthillroad.com.au](http://www.ghosthillroad.com.au)**

The experience was simply more than filling our stomachs with the perfect dinner.

Shane, our host, told us that all food was bought locally wherever possible.

The property has a view to their landscaped garden below.

You can spy the collection of vegetables and herbs being grown on site as well as a pond, the middle of which is equipped with two fake crocodile heads.

Why crocodile heads?

They are there to scare away any ducks that may want to land there, however we witnessed two ducks that have taken up

residency as they weren't deterred at all.

Back to our retreat and as soon as we pull into the driveway of Madison's we hear the local orchestra playing.

The sound is so loud we have to raise our voices in order to hear each other. What we were hearing was the hundreds of frogs conducting their nightly calls.

After a scrumptious breakfast we left Madison's. Just off Bells Line of Road we headed into Ghost Hill Road Bed and Breakfast which offered an early morning yoga class. It is a unique B&B with its very own welcoming committee, Porcha, the resident dog.

We were now ready for our bush walk at Mount Banks. We met our guide Wayne from National Parks and Wildlife Service and began our ascent on Mount Banks, a bush walk with many steps.

Then we're off to Mount Tomah Botanic Garden for a tour.

We then ventured onto the Lady (Nancy) Fairfax Walk in the newly procured Jungle. After our tour we sat down to a fantastic lunch at Restaurant Tomah which is in the Botanic Garden.

It is the perfect end to a perfect trip.



Nature and food combine in a wonderful tour of the Hawkesbury region.