

Qweekend



**HOUSEHOLD
PLASTICS
CONTAIN
A CHEMICAL
THAT CAN HARM
BABIES. IT'S
BEEN BANNED
IN CHILDREN'S
PRODUCTS
OVERSEAS,
BUT OUR
AUTHORITIES
SAY IT'S SAFE.**

**WHAT IF THEY'VE
GOT IT WRONG?**

By Amanda Watt



ESCAPE Byron at Byron, 77-97 Broken Head Rd, Byron Bay, NSW | **Amanda Watt**

There's so much to cram into a Byron Bay mini-break that sometimes it feels like a race to get it all done.

High-crunching walk up to the Cape Byron lighthouse, a dip at Wategos Beach, obligatory coldie at the Beach Hotel, an elbowed bustle through the boutiques and galleries of Johnson Street ...

How about trading the intensity for a touch of tranquility and top-notch R & R? On the southern outskirts of town, tucked away in a private 18ha patch of rainforest beside Tallows Beach, is Byron at Byron, the upmarket spa resort owned by retail baron Gerry Harvey. The five-star centre has been wooing stressed-out execs and celebrities since 2004, but a spruce-up completed in June has upped the wow factor.

The resort's centrepiece is its reception building (*above*) with restaurant at one end and day spa at the other. Timber French doors open onto a 6m-wide verandah that runs the length of the building and is dotted with lounges and stools, an ideal spot for drinking in the rainforest vista beyond. In between is a 25m infinity pool surrounded by plush cabanas, deckchairs and crisp white umbrellas. The serenity continues as you weave your way through trees down a gravel

road and onto a series of elevated boardwalks branching off to the 90 one-bedroom villas scattered across the property.

Accommodation is divided into superior suites (60 in a cluster near reception) and deluxe spa suites. We were pleased to be bedded down in one of the latter on the property's southern edge, a short stroll from the open surf at Tallows. All rooms share modern furnishings and appliances: galley kitchen with hotplates, fridge with minibar, microwave and washer/dryer, king bed, lounge with plasma TV, freestanding soak tub in the bathroom, and front and back balconies. The spa suites elevate the luxury level with spa jets in the bath, a second TV in the bedroom and original indigenous artwork.



The property previously served as an animal and amusement park and was overgrown with introduced species, so much work has gone in to regenerating native vegetation. A new addition is a "meditation walk" – a series of interconnecting boardwalks to pagodas, creeks and ponds with places to sit and reflect on the way to Tallow Creek, an expanse of water that forms part of the Cape Byron Marine Park.

The 90-minute yoga class beside the pool every morning is a must, as is a visit to the day spa where treatment rooms are luxurious and my massage was one of the best I've had. All up, there's no reason to leave the property, though a shuttle bus makes the five-minute trip into town three times daily or there are bikes for the energetic. Golf clubs can also be hired for a round on the pretty 18-hole Byron golf course across the road.

It's tough to select a favourite spot amid such luxury but my pick was the fully screened balcony at the rear of our second-storey suite that jutted out into the trees. As night fell there was much rustling on the rainforest floor, just audible over the cicadas, frogs and settling birds, but getting up to investigate seemed like just too much effort.

the deal

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WEBLINK www.thebyronatbyron.com.au
RATES \$385 per room/per night in a Superior Suite, \$425 to upgrade to a Deluxe Spa Suite. See website for discounts and packages.

THE VERDICT
Luxury and tranquility.