



River queen

A luxury retreat with all the trimmings by the tranquil shores of the Hawkesbury hits the spot, writes **Briar Jensen**.

KAWESBURY

We've wanted to visit this part of the Hawkesbury River for years, but the "stick" on our boat means we can't get under the Brooklyn rail bridge. So we've driven to Kangaroo Point and jumped aboard a water taxi to reach this river-access-only weekender.

Balinese-style coffee table with bowl of floating frangipani and perfumed candles, I sense this place is something special.

Upstairs, sliding glass doors reveal an interior of vanilla and white accented with polished timber floors. Beige leather sofas bulge with animal print cushions and luxurious throws. Huge

Margaret's taste and attention to detail are impressive. She believes guests shouldn't have to suffer inferior furnishings just because they're in a holiday house.

As we sink into comfy deckchairs, complimentary champagne in hand, nibbles on the table, I thoroughly agree. But my husband's worried.

"I don't think we've brought enough food," he says. This is the man who always complains I bring too much – and is usually more concerned about running out of beer than food. Maybe it's the river air, or the fact we can't drive to the shops. Anyway, if I've miscalculated (which I haven't) this is the place to do it.

Next to the bottle of merlot on the bench are Pringles, nuts and lollies. In the cupboards, beside myriad utensils and a selection of crockery, is an



Sunny Corner Cottage
Sunny Corner, Peats Bight,
Hawkesbury River, NSW

BOOKINGS

Phone 9481 9981 (Mon-Fri); 9985 1212 (Sat & Sun)
www.stayz.com.au/18644
Water taxi, 0400 600 111 or see
www.hawkesburycruises.com.au.

PRICES

Weekends \$400 a night, midweek \$350 a night. Two-night minimum. Water taxi is \$60 each way (based on four people). A weekend package of return taxi trip and runabout hire is \$250.

HOW FAR IS IT

About an hour by car to Brooklyn, depending on traffic, then 15 minutes by water taxi.

AVAILABLE NEXT WEEKEND

Yes.

CHILDREN

Not suitable for young children due to high decks and river frontage. No single beds.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

No.

SMOKING

Outside only.

VISITORS' BOOK

Tucked into aptly named Sunny Corner, Peats Bight, at the entrance to Berowra Creek, the cottage is a short stroll from Peats Bite restaurant, famous for its long, lazy lunches.

We're met at the private jetty by owners Margaret and Tom, who trolley our bags past their weekender to our place – a two-storey cottage occupying prime position in this tiny bay backing onto Muogamarra Nature Reserve.

Passing the downstairs pavilion-style entertaining area with its luxurious furniture, expansive day bed and

mirrors facing the river reflect light and water into the rooms. A vase of fragrant lilies, more candles and a guestbook adorn the sideboard. The glass dining table is set for dinner with tea-lights and Singapore orchids; on the coffee table next to the TV and DVD remotes is a box of chocolates.

"How pretty is everything?" exclaims our 14-year-old, emerging from the two bedrooms with their canopied double beds, draped with diaphanous netting and baskets of plush towels topped with hibiscus blooms.



array of condiments and tinned food, and there are litres of fresh milk in the fridge. All of this is included in the price.

The river comes right up to our walled front garden, but the tide is out, so from our vantage point on the deck we watch soldier crabs scurry across the sand-flats, ducks search for morsels in the puddles and a pelican plopping in for a visit. Behind the house a bush turkey scuttles through the undergrowth and I hear bird calls I don't recognise.

After playing quoits, our 10-year-old challenges his father to a game of darts while our daughter reads from a book of Caustic Quotes she's found in the cottage's varied collection. "I may not always be right, but I am never wrong." Sounds like a teenager I know.

We watch the ochre sandstone cliffs protruding from the grey-green eucalypts across the river glow in the setting sun. As tufts of cloud turn pink, then mauve, we light the mozzie candles and discuss which movie we'll watch. I've always wanted to see *The Oyster Farmer*, set on the Hawkesbury, but our daughter wins with *The Devil Wears Prada*.

After a sleep-in and breakfast by the water's edge we hop in the runabout we hired and putter around, past vacant oyster leases and crab pots.

At noon we walk to Peats Bite. Run by the Miljoen family for 25 years, the place is renowned for its five-course weekend lunches during which matri-

arch Tammy, a professional singer, entertains guests.

We choose a shady outdoor table facing the river and watch diners arrive by water taxi, houseboat, tinnies and cruisers. One chap, celebrating his 90th birthday, arrives by sea-plane. There are locals in shorts and thongs and ladies in skirts and heels.

Our son finds a mate to play chess with on the giant outdoor board, but doesn't take advantage of the swimming pool. Between courses we chat with Rod Miljoen about life on the river and I dance with the manager of a local houseboat company.

Lunch lasts all afternoon and into early evening – we're chased off only by an approaching storm.

Cocooned back on our deck we watch, mesmerised, as the river is strobed by lightning and lashed by rain. Nature's fitting finale to a fabulous day.

PLUSES

Tranquil location and river views. Beautiful decor. Extras range from kayak and fishing rods to games, books, CDs, DVDs and nibbles. Wonderful hosts.

MINUSES

Kitchen could do with a revamp, but that's already planned for winter. Not enough rails for wet towels.

Rating 18/20

NEXT WEEK

Luxury-camping style.

As life flows by ... Sunny Corner Cottage stands on the riverbank (above); stylish interiors reveal the owners attention to detail with luxurious touches.

Photos: Briar Jensen