

GLAMPING: WHERE CAMPING MEETS GLAMOUR

NATURE LOVERS CAN NOW GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH **ALL THINGS WILDERNESS**, BUT WITHOUT HAVING TO 'ROUGH IT'. IT'S ALL THANKS TO A NEW PHENOMENA KNOWN AS 'GLAMPING'. TONI KRASICKI EXPLAINS.

I AM ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE who loves sipping billy tea around a smoky campfire and sleeping under the stars with nothing more than a thin sheet of nylon to keep me warm. If, however, you are not in cahoots with my compulsion, always preferring five-star digs to a no-star patch of ground then glamping may be for you.

Glamping is the result of blending glamour with camping and has become popular in Australia over the last few years with properties popping up all over the country. Unlike traditional camping, where you bring and set up your own tent and gear, glamping means all the dirty work is done, and 'tent' takes on a whole new meaning.

Of course, glamping doesn't come cheap, with prices sometimes comparable to five-star hotel rates. However, there are options available

to suit most budgets. For example, the 'Glamping Package' offered on Sydney's Cockatoo Island, includes pre-erected Safari Bow tents with beds, mattresses and towels, as well as sun lounges and lanterns. These types of properties tend to place less emphasis on high-end products and more on their unique location.

At the other end of the spectrum luxury camping resorts, safari camps and eco-resorts pull out all the bells and whistles to make your glamping experience top-notch, basically reproducing a hotel room within the confines of a canvas tent; with some including an ensuite bathroom and even a kitchen or television.

The choice is yours as to how extravagant your glamping experience is. To get a closer look at the phenomena I headed a few hours southwest of Brisbane into Queensland's Scenic Rim and Granite Belt to sample three very different properties. Here is what I discovered:

KETCHUP'S BANK GLAMPING

Ketchup's Bank Glamping gets the glamping experience almost perfect. The two luxury eco-tents are precisely placed; just far enough from each other and well positioned from the owner's house so I have enough privacy but with magnificent views overlooking Knapp's Peak. The eco-tents have plush bedding and linens, a large ensuite bathroom with bathrobes and my own private outdoor BBQ kitchen and campfire, complete

with my beloved billy tea.

Designed as a couple's retreat, it's incredibly romantic. There's an option to either self-cater or purchase a breakfast and BBQ dinner hamper that you can prepare in the outdoor kitchen. The owners have thoughtfully stocked the



eco-tent with everything you need, including a fridge, wine glasses and cooking condiments. There's nothing better than waking up in the bush to a chorus of bird calls. It definitely beats having to duck out to the shared ablution block!

www.ketchupsbankglamping.com.au

SPICERS CANOPY

Part of the Spicers Retreats, Hotels & Lodges group, Spicers Canopy is a luxury campsite located on an 8,000-acre cattle station near Main Range National Park on Queensland's Scenic Rim. The arrival at the property is part of the whole experience. Leaving the car at a nearby farmhouse



NO MATTER WHAT YOUR BUDGET THERE IS A GLAMPING OPTION FOR YOU. CHECK OUT THESE OTHER AUSTRALIAN PROPERTIES:

- Wilderness Retreats, Wilsons Promontory (VIC)
wildernessretreats.com.au
- Wilson Island (QLD)
wilsonisland.com
- Bamurru Plains Accommodation Jabiru (NT) bamurruplains.com
- Longitude 131°, Uluru (NT)
longitude131.com.au
- Wildman Wilderness Lodge, near Darwin (NT)
wildmanwildernesslodge.com.au
- Silk Pavilions, Mount Burrell (NSW)
silkpavilions.com.au
- Paperbark Camp, Jervis Bay (NSW)
paperbarkcamp.com.au
- Cockatoo Island, Sydney (NSW)
cockatooisland.gov.au
- Tandara, Sydney (NSW)
lcrtp.com.au/tandara-sydney
- Ocean Beach Holiday Park, Urmina Beach (NSW)
oceanbeachholidaypark.com.au
- Sal Salis, Cape Range National Park (WA) salsalis.com.au
- Karijini Eco Retreat, Karijini National Park (WA) karijiniecoretreat.com.au
- Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary (WA)
australianwildlife.org
- Mitchell Falls Wilderness Lodge (WA)
kimberleywilderness.com.au
- Flour Cask Bay Sanctuary, Kangaroo Island (SA)
eco-sanctuaries.com/Eco_Camp.php

we join our guide Russell, who clearly has spent most of his life in a saddle, for the one and a half hour walk to our accommodation. After a leisurely amble through bush and several creek crossings later, we arrive at an open expanse to where the campsite sits on a grassy hill with spectacular sweeping views of the surrounding ranges and peaks.

The ten safari-style tents are basic and comfortable with wooden floors and the most heavenly king-size bed and plush linens. The tents are placed only metres from each other and although I didn't have any neighbours during my stay, it's not particularly private, making it more appealing to those with no privacy issues, or perhaps families or large groups who want to hire the whole venue for their own use.

Guests share bathrooms located behind the communal dining and lounge that are clean and well stocked with toiletries and no more than a few minutes walk from your tent. The hosts, a husband and wife team Chris

and Leasa, prepare all gourmet meals including afternoon tea, a three-course gourmet dinner and a hot breakfast from the tiny open kitchen in the communal area. All alcohol is included and it's all very relaxed and homely – like being at a very up market campsite. So, join your fellow campers around the fire pit and marvel at the starry skies.

www.spicersgroup.com.au/property/spicers-canopy-scenic-rim-qld

ALURE BOUTIQUE VILLAS

Located just outside of Stanthorpe, Alure Boutique Villas have one luxury self-contained five-star tent with all the trimmings. With a fully equipped kitchen, 50-inch plasma TV, and on the back deck a BBQ as big as my kitchen and a huge heated spa for stargazing, this property is pretty much as far from traditional camping as you can get!

The cosy four-poster bed, reverse cycle air conditioning and an ethanol-run eco-fireplace won't have you battling the elements. The owners have designed and positioned the property

to be environmentally friendly, using rainwater and recycling wastewater on the gardens.

The room tariff comes with a breakfast hamper and the homemade bread is baked to order. It's a great stepping off point for wine tasting in the Granite Belt with over 40 cellar doors close by.

www.alurestanthorpe.com.au



The writer travelled courtesy of Tourism Queensland (www.tq.com.au) and VroomVroomVroom car rentals (www.vroomvroomvroom.com.au)

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