

# Home away from home

Appin B&B takes the uncertainty out of your stay, writes

**Peter Sharp**

IT'S a leap of faith . . . the decision to switch holiday accommodation mode from the almost-guaranteed security and comfort of hotels to the somewhat mysterious world of the B&B.

This time last year, it was a full B&B tour of southern Ireland, Scotland and the Cotswolds of southwest England. Most of the trip was planned, booked and plotted. The balance involved a tentative knock on the door of a roadside cottage or purpose-built home seeking digs for a night. Each was an interesting, mostly enjoyable, experience in someone else's home.

This year, it was a 45-minute drive from Wollongong to Appin – just over an hour southwest of the Sydney CBD – to join Sue Fenton at her family home on 2ha of rural heaven for a weekend of B&B indulgence.

Through her travels, Sue, a third-generation hairdresser, refined dreams of her own B&B – once her three children had moved on to their adult lives and husband Kevin had retired from the Appin coalfields to provide an extra pair of hands in and around the kitchen.

A visit to her girlfriend's B&B in northeast England was the final element of inspiration for Sue to realise her ambition for a homestay project back home.

Kevin built the family home 20 years ago, so who better to do this renovation? The result is a stylish, comfortable wrought-iron double bedroom with separate private bathroom and a veranda that looks out on to paddocks of Kevin's horses and the property dam. Everything is meticulously planned for the comfort of guests.

There is a second, equally beautiful, bedroom of two single beds that would be perfect for a companion couple to enjoy the house, with its relaxing outdoor area, views and Sue's

spectacular culinary skills.

"I'll only rent the main bedroom in the short term because I'm not happy about guests sharing the bathroom," Sue says. "But we have had two couples travelling together and happy to share the bathroom . . . it actually worked out very well. Kevin is working on the second bathroom so we will have both rooms available next year."

If the pressed linen sheets, handmade chocolates and rural tranquility are not enough, then Sue's breakfasts and morning and afternoon teas, will deliver the coup de gras.

She is a food "tragic", having fallen in love with her dining experiences at European restaurants, and the entire fare – apart from the pastries but including the chocolate delicacies – is almost exclusively organic.

Kevin's chooks and impressive vegetable garden deliver the fresh daily resources to indulge Sue's passion for cooking that extends to gluten-free and vegetarian options.

Sue goes to remarkable lengths to ensure that dining is a special part of what makes the Appin Homestay experience memorable.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," Sue says as she delivers scrambled eggs with herbs on sourdough toast to the table.

"I loved the B&B experience, so I know what I want for my guests. I love being able to make them comfortable and treat them to a special experience away from their own homes.

"I'm proud of what we have done and I look forward to meeting many more people on their travels."

Sue and Kevin's venture, which opened in February, is the fourth B&B in the Macarthur area of Campbelltown, Camden, Menangle and Appin.

The area's main tourist attractions include the Mt Annan Botanic Garden

and many heritage attractions: Belgenny Farm, Gledswood Homestead and Winery, Wivenhoe Heritage House and Struggletown along with the Campbelltown Arts Centre, Cobbitty Winery, Sugarloaf Horse Centre and Ruane Winery.

Timing is everything when travelling. Camden Park House, the 19th-century Georgian house built for John and Elizabeth Macarthur, was open – as it is only on the third weekend in September each year.

Macarthur, whose image appeared on Australia's original \$2 note, settled and farmed the region. Camden Park House is believed to be Australia's oldest private residence still occupied by descendants of its founders.

Belgenny Cottage, which was Macarthur's original home, will be open as part of Farm Day at Belgenny Farm on Sunday, October 25.

Sue's cooking might spoil you for other dining opportunities in and around Campbelltown, but chef Felix's wild-caught barramundi or Kobe beef specials at Lexie's Restaurant in the Struggletown Fine Arts Complex at Harrington Park or the smoked salmon stack at historic Menangle House are delicious and great value.

As the time-poor work/life balance struggle continues, the option of an indulgent weekend in the country – at \$140 a night – just an hour from Australia's biggest and busiest city is a delicious option.

**For an online look at Sue's Appin Homestay B&B at 120 Macquariedale Rd, go to [www.appinhomestaybb.com.au](http://www.appinhomestaybb.com.au) or for bookings call 4631 1072. Info on the area's attractions and dining options is available at [www.visitmacarthur.com.au](http://www.visitmacarthur.com.au)**



**FLOATING ON COMFORT:** A balloon sails over Appin. The twin morning room at Appin Homestay B&B (below)

# Five things to do in Appin

## 1 History

SEE the Hume and Hovell Monument, paying tribute to the explorers who set out in 1824 under commission from NSW Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane to find grazing lands in the south of the colony. They made it as far as Port Phillip in Victoria.

The monument on Appin Rd was erected by the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1924, 100 years after Hume and Hovell's departure. It is thought that stone from the ruins of Hamilton Hume's house at the adjacent Brookdale Farm was used in the monument.

**[www.macarthurtourism.com.au/heritage/heritage-10.php](http://www.macarthurtourism.com.au/heritage/heritage-10.php)**

## 2 Hotel lunch

HAVE a leisurely lunch (noon to 2.30pm) or dinner (6pm-9pm) at the Appin Hotel. The classic bistro menu includes roast of the day (\$15), scotch fillet (\$21), chicken Kiev (\$17) and nachos (\$10.50).

There is a children's menu and an outdoor play area to keep the little tackers amused, while the pub has trivia, raffles, live music and poker tournaments.

**84 Appin Rd, Appin.**  
**Ph 4631 1203**

## 3 Old churches

EXPLORE old churches in the Wollondilly Shire, including St

Matthew's Anglican Church (Edward St, The Oaks) and St Aloysius Church (Merlin St North, The Oaks).

Appin is home to St Bede's Catholic Church (King St) and St Mark's Evangelist Anglican Church (Church St), both built in the 1840s.

**[www.visitwollondilly.com.au](http://www.visitwollondilly.com.au)**

## 4 Speed it up

UNLEASH your inner Allan Grice or Peter Brock at the nearby Picton Karting Track.

All drivers are given thorough instructions on safety and are monitored throughout the event. Prices range from \$36 for 15 minutes to \$120 for an hour, and drivers must be 14 or over.

**200 Picton Rd.**  
**Ph 4677 3330; [www.pkt.net.au](http://www.pkt.net.au)**

## 5 Pleasant picnic

PICNIC at Appin's Cataract Dam, which was completed in 1907 at a cost of \$1.3 million.

It is located on the Cataract River, a tributary of the Nepean River and holds 94,300 megalitres.

Facilities at the dam include electric barbecues, picnic shelters, toilets, a viewing area and playground for children.

It's located on Baden Powell Drive off Appin-Bulli Rd.

**Ph 4640 1200;**  
**[www.sca.nsw.gov.au/recreation/dam-locations](http://www.sca.nsw.gov.au/recreation/dam-locations)**