



Home among the gums

Guests stay snug and sound at this Mudgee glamping escape

SUSAN KUROSAWA



From top: one of Evamor Valley's glamping tents; al fresco tub; interiors are comfortable and cosy

My late father loved the saying “as snug as a bug in a rug” on the (exactly) 13 occasions our family went camping in deepest, dampest England. There would be Beatrix Potter stories read aloud to me by torchlight as we curled up in our sleeping bags. I would lie awake for hours, anticipating the exciting likelihood of badgers in the hedgerows. If I did ever spy one, I hoped fervently that it would be wearing a waistcoat. More likely, we’d be greeted at first light by a farmer whose field we had invaded. He’d promptly turf us out and we’d skulk away like foxes. As camping adventure No. 14 was mooted, my mother made Dad choose between proper hotels by the seaside or a divorce.

To say these childhood experiences scarred me is hardly an overstatement. I’ve never grown to love the kind of tents that leak and sway and require hours to erect and dismantle. So just as well the era of glamping has arrived and, with it, all manner of creature comforts. I’m remembering those mishaps of my junior years as I lie in a groovy glamer of an eco-tent at Evamor Valley, just 15 minutes outside the thriving settlement of Mudgee in the NSW central west. Hands-on owners and district locals Charmaine and Chad Hurrell purchased the picturesque 34ha property in 2016, naming it for daughters Eva and Morgan, and it’s a neat portmanteau of a word, suggesting permanence and infinity. The backstory here is one of family, too. The Cox clan ran cattle in this neck of the hills from the 1820s and remnants of their tenure remain at Evamor Valley, including the original tin shedding and watermill. It’s hardly surprising the property has been used as a filming location for Channel 7’s *Farmer Wants a Wife* (David chose Emily, apparently).

Guests arrive up a long driveway flanked by symmetrical poplars and cherry trees (in party-pink blossom this early spring) and then head on to gravel tracks to their pre-booked tents of steel and stretched khaki canvas. Charmaine has everything spick and span, with the bonus of polished floors, power and even reverse-cycle airconditioning. Her love of design shines through in the details, from the super-sized king bed and quality linen in earthy tones to a chic dining table for two and comfy sofa. The curtained ensuite is compact but very functional; tiling and gold-coloured tapware are on trend, the shower is hot and strong and there are plenty of towels and pump packs of Leif botanical amenities, plus snuggly dressing gowns. The kitchenette features a big espresso machine, kettle, range of Twinings teas, toaster, mini-fridge, crockery and cutlery. If you pre-book a continental breakfast box, expect pastries, loaf of bread, yoghurt, cereal, fruit, preserves and a tub of Mudgee honey. Oh, and there’s a big basket containing fire-

lighters, insect spray, battery lantern, long matches, tealights and durable rug.

There’s no wi-fi but 4G signal is strong and what better place to ignore emails and just contemplate a golden pastoral view. Aside from the prospect of reading, it is nothing like my junior camping days on the lam in Surrey and Sussex, swaddled in flannelette and “borrowing” apples from orchards.

The property began taking guests in 2021 and three tents have recently been added to the now six-strong inventory. They’re spread apart in an arc, ensuring privacy but allowing all to have views of the dam (with jetty, rowboat and haughty ducks), stands of yellow box gums and undulating green slopes, including vineyard-laced Federation Hill, its name harking back to the birth of the commonwealth. Ours is Marlee, meaning elder tree in local Indigenous language, and all have decks and outdoor furniture. A walking trail leads down to a billabong and then to the Cudgegong River. The big Lowe Wines estate is just to the north. Farm dog Jackie, a gorgeous golden kelpie, bounds in all directions. There are black cows mooing over yonder and eastern rosellas flitting past in blurs of flashy colours. At dusk at certain times of year, a formation of swallows might head off to wherever birds sleep, swooping and regrouping like a convoy of fighter planes. Enough description says the husband. Time to charge up the fire pit with pre-cut logs neatly stacked under a mini-Weber and get cosy.

In our younger years, we might have heated up the alfresco cement tub and celebrated day’s end soaking with a glass of wine. But now the sunset suffices as the ideal tonic. It’s a lingering departure of intense reds and golds and then darkness swiftly gathers. Time to head out to dinner. Perhaps later we’ll toast marshmallows over the flames and tell tall stories deep into the night. Some rituals from camping in the ’60s are worth preserving, after all.

Susan Kurosawa was a guest of Evamor Valley.

IN THE KNOW

Seasonal rates at Evamor Valley average \$490 a night for two. Book online using code SPRING2023 for 20 per cent discounts until November 1.

Best coffee (and waffles) in Mudgee at

Alby + Esthers, which also functions as a wine bar.

The convivial Cade Kitchen & Bar serves excellent flatbread pizzas, including dessert styles such as a lemon curd, creme fraiche and basil combo.

Both venues are in Market St.

evamorvalley.com.au

albyandesthers.com.au

cadekitchenandbar.com.au