


ESCAPE Nirvana at Montville, Cynthia Hunt Drive, Montville | **Matthew Condon**

As we wandered on foot through hilly Montville, perched on the Blackall Range overlooking the Sunshine Coast, it occurred to me more than once that the place might be worthy of a doctoral thesis or two on the psychology of small towns.

Half an hour before, and just a dozen kilometres to the south, we had enjoyed the rustic, alternative charms of Maleny. But in Montville we were suddenly enmeshed in a world of waterwheels and cuckoo clocks, objects decorated with seashells, oddly shaped soaps, novelty wind-chimes and loads of nicky-nacky-noos. I suggested the place be renamed Nicky-Nacky-Noosville but was howled down by my wife and children, who were revelling in it.

Thank heaven for Nirvana at Montville. Not far from the famous Kondalilla Falls and a short drive outside Montville village, Nirvana proved an instant balm to nick-nack numbness. We were greeted by our hosts, Rekha and Shekhar Sharma, whose warmth and friendliness seemed a natural extension of their guesthouse. They insisted we relax and treat Nirvana as our home away from home, which was probably the most precise description of this huge retreat. Nirvana has

five bedrooms (four with queen-sized beds), two bathrooms, a commercial stove, dining room, lounge, a "Buddha bar" entertaining area replete with log fire, endless decks and an outdoor relaxation area as big as most city houses. Then there was the pool, more than a hectare of gardens, and fruit and macadamia nut trees that Rekha and Shekhar invited us to pillage. "What's that smell?" my small son asked me as we put him to bed on our first night. "Fresh air," I told him.

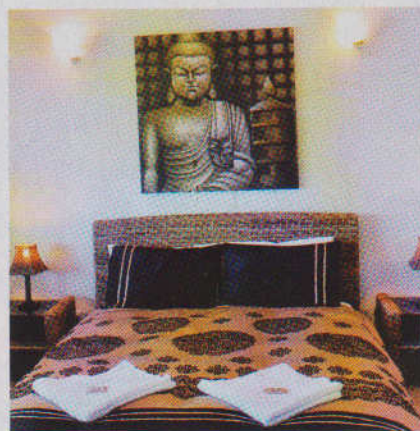
The next morning we drove down the range through Mapleton to Noosa, enjoyed breakfast on Hastings Street and spent the rest of the morning on the beach. Later that afternoon we explored Nirvana's sprawling

gardens, all perfectly kept, and wandered about the macadamias, citrus trees and the small pineapple patch. We did some birdwatching. We hunted for bugs. We dipped our toes in the pool.

That night I perused the Nirvana guestbook and a common theme emerged in the little narratives. Family after family recorded the "reunions" they had enjoyed at Nirvana. The wedding anniversaries with family and friends. Actual weddings, too. This was a place where people came together. Celebrated. Rejoiced in each other's company. This was a place – so big and generous and spacious – that was all about family.

As we headed home I felt pleased I had not been seduced by Nicky-Nacky-Noosville's clamouring temptations. Then, in the back seat of the car, my son suddenly produced a small wooden box that, when the lid was pulled back, revealed an attacking black snake. And my daughter started waving about a wooden butterfly net painted with gaudy lady beetles. And a clutch of shell-shaped soaps spilled accidentally from my wife's handbag.

Now, I wonder where all that booty came from?


the deal

PH (07) 5478 5478
WEBLINK www.nirvanamontville.com
RATES From \$40 per person per night (based on six guests staying seven nights), or \$60 pp/pn (six guests staying two nights).

THE VERDICT
 All in the family.