



18 CIRCA 1936

145 SANGER ST, COROWA, NSW
(02) 6033 5371; circahotels.com

The location Corowa, about 40 minutes' drive from Albury, sits snugly on the banks of the Murray River, which snakes along the NSW/Victorian border. It's a hit with golfers, who wear a track from both Melbourne and Sydney, and with fans of the grape – Rutherglen's wineries are on its doorstep. Known as the "birthplace of Federation", there's plenty to keep history buffs intrigued and foodies entertained.

The place The art deco Rural Bank of NSW has undergone an immaculate make-over and is now Circa 1936, with three sleek and chic upstairs suites boasting beautiful bathrooms – soak your cares away in the freestanding bath under the circular window. Downstairs there's a lounge/dining room with a white 1937 grand piano and elegant cocktail bar with bevelled mirrors. The cellar is where it should be – in the bank vault, of course. There's also an impressive spa that stocks house-made products that feel as good as they smell, with some treatments included in the tariff.

The experience Chances are you will want to remain cocooned in luxury in your black-and-white-themed boudoir, its king bed swathed in crisp linen, but venture downstairs and listen to the piano as you nibble on tapas and sip local drops. Morning and afternoon tea as well as a hearty breakfast are other drawcards, as are the nightly cocktails and the evening nightcap delivered to your suite. Take a morning stroll by the Murray to kick-start the day.

Don't miss Those with a sweet tooth can get a sugar hit, and lift their spirits, across the street at the Corowa Whisky and Chocolate Factory. And if you want to discover more about the town's history and the role it played in Australia's federation, collect a guide at the Corowa Visitor Information Centre and wander around.

SUE WALLACE

From \$700.



19 THE GREENS OF LEURA

24-26 GROSE ST, LEURA, NSW
(02) 4784 3241; thegreensleura.com.au

The location Leura, a two-hour train trip or drive west from central Sydney, has been a Blue Mountains holiday and weekending spot for city folk since its founding in the 19th century. The village's gardens, cottages, cafes and restaurants make it as comfortable and welcoming as a pot of warm tea on a brisk mountain night.

The place The Greens at Leura, a bed and breakfast, sits a short stroll from Leura's train station and main street, dubbed Leura Mall. But don't be put off by this – the feeling remains very much that of country cottage. Comprising two adjoining century-old houses, the Greens offers five large guest rooms named for writers – Shakespeare, Browning, Shelley, Bronte and Austen – who have influenced the setting despite never having set foot in the southern hemisphere. The furnishings are period and tasteful, and most comforts are provided for. The spacious common area offers sherry and chocolate cake as a treat after a day's ramble.

The experience The breakfast is superb and includes home-made jams, fresh fruit, clotted cream and made-to-order salmon omelettes. Nourished by such, the Mountains are yours to explore. One option is a stroll around the corner to the remarkable Everglades Historic House and Garden. The Everglades, the country property of the Belgian merchant and manufacturer Henri Van De Velde, is worth an hour or two to appreciate the juxtaposition of modern European garden design against an Australian mountain setting. Katoomba's Three Sisters are five minutes' drive away, with photo opportunities and a range of options for bushwalkers.

Don't miss High tea at the refurbished Hydro Majestic hotel, 10 minutes away at Medlow Bath, is a memorable experience, well worth extending over an afternoon. And a pleasant nearby oddity is the historic home, called Leuralla, once owned by former NSW minister and noted raconteur Clive Evatt. Leuralla now hosts a toy and railway museum, and a room dedicated to the remarkable career of Clive's brother, H.V. "Doc" Evatt.

JACOB SAULWICK

From \$180.



20 MELBA HOUSE BOUTIQUE BED & BREAKFAST

98 WARATAH ST, KATOOMBA, NSW
(02) 4782 4141; melbahouse.com.au

The location Katoomba is in the Blue Mountains, 120 kilometres west of Sydney and about two hours by car or comfy train ride.

The place If Katoomba conjures images of genteel timber houses and Edwardian-era mountain holidays, then Melba House fits the template perfectly. On buying the property, proprietor Sue Handley (ably assisted by her American cocker spaniel, Issy) expanded on the theme by naming the house's three accommodation areas after prominent Australian dames, thus creating the Dame Nellie, Dame Joan and Dame Edna suites. We possums took up residence in Edna's rather opulent room, which is decorated with plush fabrics, a chandelier, a fireplace and an ensuite with spa bath big enough for you and your Norm to share. Sue provides a cooked breakfast either in your room or on the open verandah with district views, and our two dinners were taken care of by two très Français local restaurants,

Rooster and Solitary, both of which are within a two-minute drive.

The experience Set within walking distance of Katoomba's main street, there's plenty to experience on foot, from the famous Paragon cafe to the plethora of antique shops which seem to be the mainstay of the local economy. Plus, of course, the many scenic destinations for which the place is famous.

Don't miss A little further afield is the Dryridge Estate winery at the southern end of the spectacular Megalong Valley. The 40-minute scenic drive takes in typical Australian bush, some rainforest, open grazing country and, once at the winery, sweeping views to the imposing sandstone escarpments which enclose the valley. A cheese plate and a bottle of their tempranillo-shiraz, followed by a hot apple pie at the Logan Brae Orchard, completed our outing.

PAT INGRAM

\$560 for two nights.



Enjoy a cooked breakfast either in your room or on the open verandah with district views.