



Want to spoil yourself? Julie Hosking finds a piece of paradise where the residents are also rather special.

“MINE IS THE GLORY,” cries my daughter as she runs through the massive front door, towards a cathedral window bathing the entrance in natural light.

If only, love, if only.

The excitement has been building since we turned off Cape Naturaliste Road and drove through the farm gate to meet our welcoming party. They stare at us for a while – I swear one even waved – before hopping off to greener pastures. We might find them endlessly fascinating but the kangaroo family has better things to do than hang with humans.

Never mind. There’s plenty more to see on the drive up to the property. The rain has been falling off and on during the trip down from Perth, but the sun is shining on us now, the ocean beckoning in the distance, Cape Naturaliste lighthouse off to the left. The adults are getting quite excited, too. This is one spectacular setting.

After winding our way up a well-graded dirt track, signs helpfully pointing us in the right direction, we arrive at our home for the next three nights. Farm Break West is one of two adjoining villas nestled on 72 heavenly hectares on the edge of Bunker Bay. As Darryl Kerrigan so aptly put it, “you can smell the serenity”.

We follow the 11-year-old inside, and instantly wish we were staying longer. Our girl bounds off to place dibs on the “best” bedroom, but no one is going

to be short-changed; there are lovely views of bush or ocean – or both – from every part of the villa, including the laundry. With high cedar ceilings and natural limestone walls, the three-bedroom, two-bathroom home is enveloped in glass to make the most of its majestic outlook.

As we stand on the generous balcony, looking out to sea, I already feel lighter. Surrounded by nature, it’s hard to remember the stresses of the city we left only three hours earlier. “I bet we see whales,” Norm says. I’m not convinced but no sooner have we settled in, bottle of wine open to toast our good fortune, he spots the unmistakable signs of spouting. Even the 17-year-old emerges from his teenage coma to watch. It’s almost as if they were pre-ordered.

We’re still marvelling at the display when another unexpected visitor drops by. He’s a pretty cheeky chap, the young kookaburra clearly accustomed to calling on guests without notice, undoubtedly hoping to be fed by another group of holidaying suckers. Instantly smitten, we christen him (rather unimaginatively) Kooky and welcome the intruder into the fold (if not inside the doors) and look forward to his regular visits.

Crows – or are they ravens? – swing by every now and then, miffed that we don’t afford them the same respect. Between Kooky, the kangaroos we’d encounter every time we went for a walk, and the passage of whales (we lost count of the number we saw over three days), the cawing black birds are reduced to noisy bit characters in our cinematic surrounds.

Is there anything better for the soul than sitting above the tree tops looking out at sparkling blue waters, fantasising that this place we are calling home

is actually home? With an open-plan kitchen-living area built for entertaining, on more than one occasion we contemplate a return (look away, kids) without children. Farm Break is not cheap even in the low season but if you came with another two couples, it’s a steal at just over \$1000 a week per couple. Or round up another three couples and book out both villas for a special birthday or celebration.

While there’s a wealth of fabulous eating and drinking to be had back out those farm gates and just up the road to Dunsborough, or further afield to Yallingup and Margs, we find ourselves disinclined to wander. This is not a place you want to leave once you’ve settled in, particularly if it’s only home for a short time.

We brought enough supplies to last us for a few days, and make use of the well-equipped kitchen. A simple meal (and a nice glass of wine) is all you need when you’re already enjoying a slice of heaven. And with the nights still cold, the huge fireplace is an open invitation to stay put. We play Scattergories – body of water starting with T? Tonic water, apparently – and Yahtzee, with the obligatory familial arguments laced with loads of laughter.

If you do get cabin fever, however, you don’t have to wander far to reboot. Farm Break boasts private access to beautiful Bunker Bay. Down a winding track, through bush blooming with wildflowers and more than a few of the trumpet-like arum lilies, across the lake on the floating bridge, to a gate. Once we figure out the lock, we’re over the dunes and on to one of WA’s most idyllic beachfronts. Best of all, we almost have it to ourselves, the girl cartwheeling her way along the water’s edge.

It’s heaving in summer but one of the beauties of



High points
Farm Break, set on a hill overlooking Bunker Bay, offers stunning views in a beautiful home away from home.



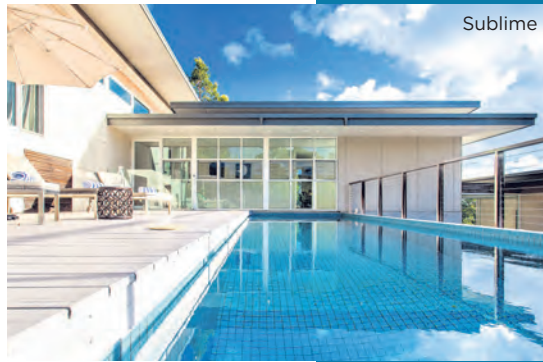
coming down south in the cooler months is you can run, walk – and swim, if you're not afraid to freeze your bits off – at your leisure and you'd be lucky to bump into more than a handful of others.

For those who need a real coffee fix (guilty as charged), turn left as you hit the beach and keep walking. Before long you'll hit Bunkers Beach Cafe, where they also serve breakfast and lunch. Turn right as you emerge from the dunes and you're heading towards Pullman Bunker Bay Resort, where you can also get well fed and watered. Back on Farm Break, there's also a nine-hole golf course and a tennis court, for those so inclined. Me, I'd rather sit on that balcony watching nature at its finest, or lie on the couch with a book in front of the fire, rediscovering the joys of relaxation.

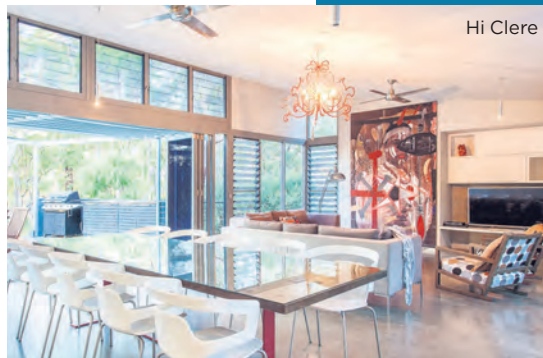
We contemplate how overseas visitors must feel as they rock up to this sensational spot. If those of us not unfamiliar with kangaroos and kookaburras, or ocean vistas (even if they're usually from a bench overlooking Trigg) and beautiful bush walks, are mesmerised, one wonders how they ever find the will to leave. Especially once the whales show up.

I've been fortunate to stay in some beautiful places in some stunning corners of the world over the years, but I'm struggling to think of a place that matches Farm Break West for creature comforts and nature's gifts. As I write this, I find myself scrolling wistfully through the images of our home away from home. And wishing even harder for those magic lotto numbers to come up. **WW**

The author was a guest of Private Properties.



Sublime



Hi Clere



Ithaca

Private retreats

Love the look of this Bunker Bay beauty but want to stay a bit closer to Margaret River or perhaps head to Albany?

You're spoilt for choice. Farm Break is one of more than 100 gorgeous homes in the loveliest of locations on the books of Private Properties, which has been taking care of holiday makers for almost 25 years.

Owned and operated by David and Jody Moyes, Private Properties boasts the kind of portfolio that makes you wish you had been born with the proverbial silver spoon. David showed me around a few of the other homes on their enviable list, each with its own charms and talking points.

Ithaca takes its name from Greek mythology but it's a thoroughly modern beauty. Designed by an architect, this two-storey home is set high on a hill, floor-to-ceiling windows making the most of the views of Gunyulgup Valley and Smiths Beach in the distance. Entertain at the massive kitchen bench, or retreat to the alfresco area, where a double-sided fireplace keeps guests warm in winter. The four bedrooms (two master suites with beautiful bathrooms) are tucked away downstairs, each with a lovely vista. There's even a plunge pool overlooking the bush.

Just up the road, overlooking the same pretty valley, Sublime lives up to its name. This five-bedroom home wraps around a pool that makes it the perfect summer holiday haven. Laze on the deck with a good book or fire up the barbie for lunch around the huge outdoor dining table. If the weather doesn't allow, there's plenty of reasons to stay inside, not the least of which is a dedicated wine fridge. Not surprisingly, Sublime is popular with families, but it's a great grown-up retreat, too.

Hi Clere, nestled in rural Yallingup, is definitely for grown-ups. Designed by leading architectural firm Troppo, the open-plan masterpiece also includes a collection of

contemporary and Aboriginal art that will appeal to holiday makers looking for a cultural getaway. It's also the perfect location for exploring nearby galleries and getting a taste of the South West's ample wining and dining options.

If you need a little help, David and his team are only too happy to provide recommendations – be it for a gourmet meal, winery experience or a walk through the forest. The team also provides those personal touches, like going in ahead of your arrival to make sure you walk into a warm or cool home, depending on the time of year, or providing a little welcoming pack of goodies.

But first things first: choose a property that fits your holiday dreams. From the beach to the forest, farms to wineries, there's a luxury escape waiting for you to make the kind of memories you'll treasure for a life time.

See privateproperties.com.au.