

CAIRNS

Silky Oaks redevelopment will be worth the wait: James Baillie

Luxury Far North Queensland destination Silky Oaks Lodge on the edge of Mossman Gorge won't open until October next year after the COVID pandemic threw plans for a \$10 million redesign into disarray.

Bronwyn Farr, The Cairns Post

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 Silky Oaks Lodge. Picture: Luxury Lodges of Australia

LUXURY Far North Queensland destination Silky Oaks Lodge on the edge of Mossman Gorge won't open until October next year after the COVID pandemic threw plans for a \$10m-plus redesign into disarray.

The exclusive resort [closed in April and was initially due to reopen this September](#).

Baillie Lodges founder James Baillie said that while the delay was disappointing, the full version of the new-look lodge would go ahead.

“When we first planned the significant redesign for Silky Oaks Lodge, there was no hint of the impending coronavirus and the havoc it would play on the tourism industry,” Mr Baillie said.

“Embarking on such a project during COVID-19 was a logistical nightmare.

“We feel well-placed to plan for the full-scale works to go ahead early next year, in time for a spring reopening.

“And given there were so many forced compromises made during the coronavirus – in our industry and others – we're pleased that our plans for a reimagined Silky Oaks Lodge won't be among them.”



 Silky Oaks Lodge. Picture: Luxury Lodges of Australia

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Mr Baillie said the pandemic resulted in a raft of restrictions and logistical challenges impacting refurbishment work this year.

He said plans for the high-end property would align Silky Oaks Lodge's features with Baillie Lodges' portfolio of luxury lodges.

The redesign will include a new ultra-premium suite called the Rainforest Pavilion, featuring floor-to-ceiling glass and skillion ceilings, along with extensive outdoor decks and an infinity pool extending into the rainforest.

Three enhanced Billabong suites will include an open-air bath tub and private outdoor plunge pools overlooking the river.

Baillie Lodges [bought Silky Oaks Lodge last April](#).

Mr Baillie said sister properties Capella Lodge on Lord Howe Island and Longitude 131 at Uluru had recently reopened after six months closed due to the pandemic.

This brought relief from an extended pause in revenue earnings, and as travel fired up again, bringing with it more positive cashflows, the company was in a position to restart the Silky Oaks redevelopment.

Baillie Lodges project manager Joel Walker has begun contacting local contractors to put together a team ready to kick off straight after the wet season.

Founded 17 years ago by Sydney-based James and Hayley Baillie, recent acquisitions include Vancouver Island's Clayoquot Wilderness Resort and New Zealand's Huka Lodge.

Southern Ocean Lodge, a 21-suite resort opened in 2008, was completely destroyed by a catastrophic bushfire at South Australia's Kangaroo Island in January this year; but will be rebuilt and open by early 2023.

Capella Lodge on Lord Howe Island was the company's first property.

The resort, which had 41 treehouse-style suites and is undergoing its first major refurbishment in 15 years, was described as the [ultimate luxury rainforest experience](#) in 2018 by Australia's Best Nature Escapes.

Originally published as [Why luxury lodge's \\$10m new look is delayed](#)