

PRETTY BEACH HOUSE

Business with purpose

Honouring the Indigenous heritage of the Bouddi area

Pretty Beach House is set in the heart of Bouddi National Park, among ancient native angophoras and eucalypts, atop a Hawkesbury sandstone bluff. Almost completely surrounded by water, with views to the bay over the lands of the Traditional Owners, the Darkinjung.

The site was and is significant to the Darkinjung, with evidence of 2,000-year-old rock carvings of a fish, a dolphin and a whale, at the lodge's doorstep.

For Pretty Beach House proprietors, Brian and Karina Barry, honouring the Aboriginal cultural heritage of the site and its original inhabitants is a priority.

"Aboriginal people have lived and gathered in the Bouddi area for at least 10,000 years. We show our respect for the Traditional Custodians of this land by inviting them to share their knowledge and customs with our guests," explained Brian Barry.

"At the same time, our guests gain an insight into the richness and significance of local Indigenous culture and reflect on the spiritual heritage of our country."



Insight into Indigenous culture

Guests' introduction to Indigenous culture usually comes at sunset on their first evening in the lodge, with the option of partaking in a smoking ceremony - a traditional welcome - performed by an Indigenous Elder. The ceremony is accompanied by didgeridoo and clapping sticks, while guests listen to Dreamtime stories shared by Aboriginal Elders from the Darkinjung. For many, it's a deeply moving experience, and a chance to ask questions and to engage with culture and country.

"The smoking ceremony is an intimate gathering in a private setting at Pretty Beach House. Guests can also take tailored, guided adventures in the adjoining National Park with a Traditional Owner," said Brian Barry.

There are more than 100 significant Aboriginal sites in Bouddi National Park. They include shelters, grinding grooves and middens, while exposed areas of Hawkesbury sandstone provided the ideal canvas for numerous rock engravings, drawings and paintings.

Pretty Beach House guests have the opportunity to accompany an Indigenous guide on walks on the property and in the Bouddi National Park. They can see, taste and learn about traditional bush tucker and medicinal plants, and listen to Dreamtime stories, while visiting rock art sites and spotting native flora and fauna. The walks give an insight into the Darkinjung people's kinship with the ocean and the lands encompassed by Bouddi.

"Through all facets of the business, we want to show how luxury travel can authentically honour the Aboriginal significance of the site."





Collaborating for conservation

Pretty Beach House is located in the Central Coast Region of Australia, one of the first Australian Eco-Destinations certified by Eco-Tourism Australia and supported by WWF – Australia’s wildlife and nature recovery fund. Pretty Beach House is in the process of gaining certification with Eco-Tourism Australia.

“We work in partnership with government, NSW National Parks and conservation organisations to assist with track management and conservation programs. We also support Walkabout Wildlife Park and their efforts to co-ordinate injured wildlife rescue,” said Brian Barry.

Design for low-impact

The defining features of the landscape have been incorporated into the design of the lodge itself, with huge slabs of locally-hewn Hawkesbury sandstone and an enormous, ancient angophora emerging through the patio by the pool. The walls of the main house are built with hand-made mud bricks, while repurposed timbers from a decommissioned bridge buttress the ceilings.

Food for thought – or thoughtful food

The menu features Australian native ingredients such as pepper berries, finger limes, lemon myrtle, wattle seed and Davidson plum, as well as local bush tucker growing naturally on and around the property.

The seasonal menus at Pretty Beach House are designed featuring majority house-made, home-grown, organic and local ingredients and produce from local suppliers. Nearby sister property, Bells at Killcare, has a huge lush vegetable garden, from which the daily harvest provides the basis of the menu at Pretty Beach House.

Kitchen waste for both properties is recycled via an organic closed loop composting system which uses natural microbes and heat to transform food waste into nutrient-rich compost in just 24 hours. Roughly 260 kg of food waste is processed each week (and saved from landfill), producing a highly concentrated compost that is mixed with soil and used in the kitchen gardens.

Other sustainability initiatives (Our mandates):

- Pretty Beach House’s purchasing policy is ‘buy local, buy sustainable’. There is abundant sustainable seafood available from responsible farmers within the local coastal region. Local producers provide fresh vegetables and farm gate treats such as home-made jams, and the lodge chefs follow the ‘nose to tail’ principle to minimise wastage.
- The lodge stocks organic and preservative free wines and purchases from a number of international and local organic and bio-dynamic wine suppliers.
- Cleaning chemicals used are fully biodegradable and toilet paper is made from bamboo, delivered plastic-free.
- All water is filtered (no plastic bottles) and rainwater (captured and stored in tanks) is used for the garden.
- The lodge showcases Aboriginal artworks available for guests to purchase, and proceeds go back to Indigenous artists via the local Bouddi Gallery.