



KARINA & BRIAN BARRY, PROPRIETORS OF PRETTY BEACH HOUSE SYDNEY SURROUNDS, NEW SOUTH WALES

As the operators of four-suite luxury lodge, Pretty Beach House, Brian and Karina Barry have created an intimate, private haven surrounded by the bushland of Bouddi National Park, 100 kilometres (62 miles) north of Sydney.

“It’s a very nurturing environment; it’s like being in someone’s luxury home,” says Karina, who trained as a chef at the Savoy in London and Sydney’s iconic Rockpool Restaurant before running a resort in the nearby Hunter Valley wine region. “There’s a private chef and they’ll do whatever you want; it’s just that other layer of luxury.”

Although trusting the chef to do what they do best is also a very safe call. “You see guests in the lounge making another guest a drink,” adds Brian, who spent most of his career in wine sales and marketing, “and you suddenly realise, we’ve done our job, because they’re treating the place as their home, and that’s what we want.” The couple also acknowledge the heritage of the region’s traditional landowners. “We became increasingly aware of the Aboriginal history of the land, and discovered this whole world we didn’t know about. We felt the need to create some communication there,” says Brian. So they approached Kevin ‘Gavi’ Duncan, a Darkinjung Elder, who identified a series of ancient rock carvings on the Pretty Beach House property as being culturally significant.

Now Gavi regularly performs a Welcome to Country smoking ceremony for guests, before taking them up to see the art. It’s a source of fascination, and opportunity for personal connection with the Traditional Owners of the land, for everyone who visits.

“The record for fascination with this connection is held by a German honeymooning couple, who went to see the art and came back three-and-a-half hours later,” says Brian. “We thought we lost them: the sun set and it got darker and darker, but they kept asking questions, and Gavi kept sharing stories.”

We sit up on a sandstone escarpment away from everybody else, so you very much feel at one with Bouddi National Park. That becomes the theme of your stay, because you can’t help but commune with nature.

pretty beach house
BOUDDI NATIONAL PARK

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