



Herald Sun (Melbourne)

Friday 11/01/2013

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STAY AT MY PLACE ...

ANNIE'S ESCAPE, WARBURTON

AS BLACK clouds moved in across Mt Donna Buang and lightning struck behind Mt Little Joe, my wife and I sipped on a chilled Yering Farm chardonnay and enjoyed nature's sound-and-light show.

The wine was refreshing after 54km in the saddle riding the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail. We had arrived back at Annie's Escape with much relief, before the rolling thunder and just in time to miss the heavy downpour.

ACCOMMODATION

Annie's Escape is a modern two-bedroom unit that could pass for a comfortable family home. It is 100m from Brisbane Bridge in the centre of Warburton in the Upper Yarra Ranges.

Guests can stroll along the river tracks or mountain walks, while the Rail Trail and cafés are minutes away.

The kitchen is fully equipped, or a barbecue is available on the back deck. The dining area has views of Mt Little Joe.

The master bedroom with queen-size bed is large and comfortable, while a second bedroom has two single beds.

The unit has a stylish lounge, while the laundry offers all the fundamentals for a longer stay.

A lock-up garage and off-street parking can cater for two cars.

THE FOOD

Warburton's main strip covers all the bases for dining: the Alpine Hotel for pub fare, the grungy Wild Thyme has live music, curries, pasta and risotto dishes. And after your meal you can play board games in the lounge area.

RiverView, which is more upmarket and has a modern Australian menu, is open all day.

If you fancy dining in, or a picnic by the river, the Warburton Pantry stocks Yarra Valley produce (and other goodies, too).

Leila Smith's store is intoxicating, and offers

quality groceries and local wines, ciders and ales.

Create a hamper of Piper Street Food Company's duck and mushroom parfait, pork pies, smoked Otway ham from Bill's in Belgrave, French fromager d'affinois and Tarago shadows of blue (Gippsland) cheeses and sourdough baguettes from Chocolate Sensations in Belgrave.

Leila's desserts are inspired by Israeli-born chef Yotam Ottolenghi.

We enjoyed rose water and pistachio meringues, Morocky rose (a must-try, Moroccan-inspired rocky road), macadamia and caramel cheesecake, raspberry and peach teacake.

THE FUN

The Rail Trail is the main artery for fun in Warburton, bringing riders, walkers and horseriders into town.

The 40km trail starts in Lilydale and allows you to park and ride to Warburton with the possibility of staying overnight.

We started in Warburton and rode as far as Seville (27km), returning via a stop for a bar meal at Launching Place's Home Hotel.

The Cog Bike Cafe in Warburton offers bike rentals (\$40 a day or \$25 for half a day), and prepares light lunches and an awesome breakfast with possibly the best view of Donna Buang in town. Nearby, Boinga Bob's house, which is inspired by a Tibetan monastery and made from recycled timber, stops trail travellers.

The O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail is a circular trek that takes in the forest behind Warburton.

For those less inclined to raise a sweat, fishing is a popular pursuit along the river.

THE DEAL

Minimum two-night stay \$185 for a couple, \$215 for three guests or \$245 for four. Midweek specials (Sun-Thurs) include a stay-five, pay-for-four deal.

Ph: 0409 063 543

AnniesEscapeWarburton.com.au

DARON JACKS



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So relaxing: Annie's Escape (above) and Warburton's town centre (below).

