



## Sunday Herald Sun (Melbourne)

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# BALGOWNIE ESTATE VINEYARD

## Gemma Sutherland indulges in a blend of merlot and meditation

**S**ometimes, a wellness retreat doesn't need to be all about weight loss, raw food and regimented exercise. Sometimes, it's just about unplugging, escaping with your girlfriends, indulging and, yes, drinking a bit of wine.

That's what I found at Balgownie Estate in the Yarra Valley, which has launched three-day spa packages with a general theme of wellness but not a green smoothie in sight.

The food, which is included in the price and often multi-course, is delicious, so don't expect to drop kilos while you're here. Indulgence is the name of the game and the retreat kicks off with one of three treatments, which I choose before I arrive. The Classic facial is first up and it's 75 minutes of loveliness that ends with a soft fluffy robe, a cup of herbal tea and glowing skin.

An hour of meditation follows, led by the retreat's facilitator Michelle. A few glasses of the Estate wine and a sumptuous dinner later, we trundle off to our beds, which are delightfully soft.

After day two's buffet breakfast, it's time for the second spa treat and I've chosen the warm stone massage. While it's not the best I've had, it's a calming platform for me to slide back into the restaurant for a two-course lunch.

Following that (and a quick change into stretchy pants to accommodate all the food), there's a one-hour wellness coaching session followed by an hour of

Pilates. This session focuses on releasing the muscles that suffer in our desk-bound jobs.

What happens next is a first for me: We go from Pilates to a wine tasting in the cellar. The Lycra doesn't fit in with the business-suited patrons, but we're more comfortable. And then it's, wait for it, another two-course meal.

A one-hour yoga session kicks off our last day and the final spa treatment that follows is an algae wrap. It's divine and the most relaxing 90 minutes I've had in a while. My skin is baby-soft for days afterwards.

Before we check out, there's more delectable food and when I get ready for the trip home, I opt for a loose-fitting dress. Because while there's a gym, pool and walking trails on the Estate, I chose to ignore them all and instead completely indulge. Calories be damned, this has been a treat for the soul.



### THE RUNDOWN

**Cost:** The three-day wellness package is \$1195 per person, all inclusive.

**How to get there:** The vineyard is 60km from Melbourne Airport.

**Top tip:** Let go of any food guilt and enjoy indulging. You can go back to the kale and quinoa at home.

**More info:** [balgownieestate.com.au](http://balgownieestate.com.au)



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