

TO THE MANOR DRAWN

AT STUMBLES ON A HIGH CLASS TREASURE IN THE SUNSHINE COAST HINTERLAND AND IS COMPELLED TO RETURN. AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN . . . WORDS AND IMAGES BY SARA MOSS

My discovery of Middleton Manor was purely serendipitous. It came late one afternoon upon leaving Witta, a tiny town near Maleny on a verdant swathe of mountainside at the southern end of the Blackall Range in Queensland's Sunshine Coast hinterland.

I was heading 105km southeast back to Brisbane with my partner, and only minutes into the journey, there it was: an immaculate, Colonial-style home painted lemon-yellow with white iron lace-edged verandahs, appearing almost iridescent in the afternoon sun. Trimming the acre of weedless lawn and well-tended garden was a picket fence. This was too much. Within moments we were walking across the pebble drive, along a terracotta pathway to a neat decking, bathing the entry in shade. I'd been seduced by the fairy-tale exterior, then impressed by the homely entry-cum-guest lounge with fireplace and old-world decor. When my other half spotted the excitable resident Dalmatian at the back door, it was a done deal – we were coming back to stay. And so we have, twice.

Middleton Manor is owned and attentively run by former vet Viki Perry, who bought and extended the house in 2004, prior to officially opening her home

as a B&B in 2005. Viki gained firsthand experience of the B&B industry from a guest's perspective, while working as a vet throughout Britain in 2002, and a glance through Middleton's guest book shows her career change has been a highly successful one.

The property has three ensuite guest rooms, so its charm isn't spoiled by overcrowding. Even when completely occupied the relaxed atmosphere remains, since none of the rooms have adjoining walls or entryways. The ground-floor Blue room is a king/twin with twin shower and fine views from its own balcony, and the smaller queen Green room is also downstairs, adjoining the house entry/guest lounge. Albeit a cosy area, the guest lounge has its own appeal – a well-stocked bookcase provides travel, mystery, biography, classics, magazines and board games for lazy rainy days, and on winter evenings the fireplace keeps the brisk hinterland air outdoors, creating a very pleasant spot for reading and sipping complimentary port after dinner.

For both summer and winter getaways at Middleton Manor, I've chosen the Burgundy room on the upper floor, with queen bed, comfortable sitting area, and its own balcony. From this vantage point

sunsets are visible, and basking in the sun or relaxing in the shade are equally viable options. But the Burgundy room clincher is the claw-foot bath.

Small touches, like chocolates on the pillow of a turned-down bed, fine linen and free in-house movies make pleasant additions to a break away, as does the option of an in-room massage by a local practitioner. Breakfast on the terrace is also a delight, with an enticing seasonal menu. Viki also caters for guests wanting to dine in-house in the evenings, turning her hand to gourmet two- and three-course meals at reasonable prices, with the only proviso being that she has at least six hours' notice.

Tucked in the heart of the hinterland, plentiful art, boutique, gastronomic and natural attractions lie within ten to 30 minutes' drive of Witta, so guests using Middleton Manor as a retreat or exploration base for the region are unlikely to be disappointed by their time indoors or out. ■

DETAILS // MIDDLETON MANOR

- ▶ WHERE // 3 Middleton Road, Witta, QLD, 1.5hr from Brisbane
- ▶ PHONE // (07) 5435 8090
- ▶ EMAIL // enquiries@middletonmanor.com.au
- ▶ WEBSITE // www.middletonmanor.com.au
- ▶ COSTS // From \$150/night low season

* HOTELS AND RESORTS REVIEWED BY AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLER ARE VISITED ANONYMOUSLY BY OUR WRITERS, WHO PAY THEIR OWN WAY.



ABOVE // The view to the Glass House Mountains from the nearby Mary Cairncross lookout. RIGHT // Middleton Manor, its splendid gardens, and plush Burgundy room.