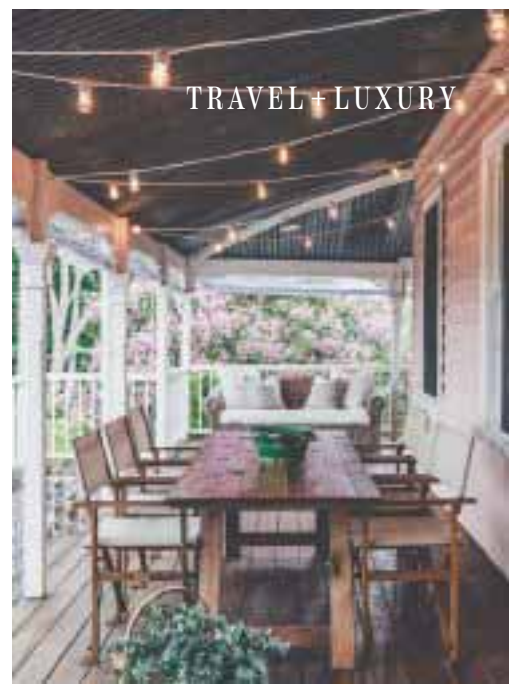




Hannah Puechmarin



TRAVEL + LUXURY

TO DO LIST

DINE

Little May Espresso offers great coffee and a rip-roaring breakfast menu with everything from pork belly omurice (omelette) to scrambled eggs with caviar and chilli oil. Mapleton Public House has an ever-changing menu featuring fresh produce from The Falls Farm nearby.

littlemayesspresso.com
mapleton.pub

DRINK

Down-to-earth Brouhaha turns out high-quality craft beer, from ale and lager to stout and strawberry rhubarb sour. You can grab a meal on the covered deck too. Spill Wine favours tipples from small, independent producers, with a tilt towards natural, organic and biodynamic wines. Wednesday Wine-Down nights serve a single dinner option (duck à l'orange the night I am there).

brouhahabrewery.com.au
spillwine.com.au

EXPLORE

These misty mountains were made for hiking. The Kondalilla Falls Circuit offers considerable reward for minimal effort. Multiple access points allow visitors to tackle smaller sections of the 58km Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk. Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve in neighbouring Maleny overlooks the Glass House Mountains and provides interpretative information on the area's geology, history and botany.

parks.desi.qld.gov.au
mary-cairncross.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

ESSENTIALS

Montville Estate is at 15 Western Avenue, Montville, about 1 1/2 hours by road from Brisbane. The Postman's Cottage sleeps two, from \$299 a night; Eastnor House "Petite" sleeps four, from \$499 a night; the whole house sleeps eight, from \$649 a night; entire Montville Estate for 10 guests from \$949 a night. All accommodation options have a two-night minimum (four-night minimum over holiday periods). Children welcome at Eastnor House except when The Postman's Cottage is booked separately. Dogs welcome if whole estate is rented.

montvilleestate.com.au

The full 'Monty'

This Sunshine Coast escape honours its past without skimping on modern comforts

DENISE CULLEN

Swaddled in soft linens that are layered like mille-feuille, I wake to dreamy, luminous light and the calls of fruit doves. I've slept so soundly that it takes a moment to remember I'm not at home, but ensconced in the cosy confines of The Postman's Cottage at Montville.

Believed to be an old railway house that was relocated from the nearby town of Palmwoods in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, The Postman's Cottage is one of two buildings that grace the manicured grounds of Montville Estate. The other is the equally charming Eastnor House, a rambling Queensland homestead built in 1895 to accommodate settlers Jane and Henry Smith and their brood of 12 children. Both have been lovingly restored by Nichola Spain and her partner, Jordan Potts, over four years.

In less determined hands, Montville Estate might have been bulldozed, rather than revived.

"I had two or three builders come out and say, 'Don't buy it. It's an absolute lemon. You're going to spend so much money doing things to it, and no one's even going to realise what you've done'," Spain confesses. But she couldn't get her vision for this heritage gem out of her head.

Spain's parents were also keen renovators. Eddie and Dot Spain had bought and renovated the former Cashel National Bank in historic Dookie, Victoria; and Eddie later featured in season eight of Grand Designs Australia when he built a stunning new home in the Strathbogie Ranges.

Having grown up in such a household, dodging various power tools, works-in-progress, and assorted holes in the floor, Nichola felt completely confident to disregard the advice of the builders she initially signed up for the job. She felt they were intimidated by the



Eastnor House and its spotted gum deck, top; the bedroom and bathroom in The Postman's Cottage, above; and, below, its original marble fireplace and mirror

project and realised she needed to look further afield for expertise.

A former yoga teacher, Spain remembered that one of her students, Simon Windsor, shared her passion for renovating older properties, so she got in touch.

"He totally got it," she explains. "He said, 'This home is amazing, considering how old it is. It's withstood so much (and) it's actually in incredible condition.'"

This simpatico never faded, despite the many challenges the old buildings threw their way during the renovation work.

"(Simon) never said 'no' to me. He'd say, 'It's all possible. We just have to figure out a way to do it,'" she adds.

Spain and Potts lived in Eastnor House while they first set to work on The Postman's Cottage.

The original owners of the Montville Estate site, the Smiths, ran the area's first Receiving (or post) Office from between 1897-1910, hence the name. They cleaned it up, scrubbing and painting the walls, hand-sanding the dark timber floors, and removing walls and cupboards that would have otherwise induced a sense of claustrophobia.

The result is a combined sleeping and living space with kingsize bed, a sleek but simple kitchen, and furniture for both lounging and dining, with a welcome fireplace for the colder months. There's no wi-fi or television, though, as Spain believes this would ruin the mood.

Running the full length of the cottage, but separated from the sleeping and living space by white wooden doors, is a spacious bath-

room. I while away an entire afternoon in the clawfoot tub here. Stocked with Salus products, the light-drenched bathroom also contains a rain shower, basin, toilet, and dressing area, all anchored by a geometric rug that's super-soft underfoot and provides a subtle counterpoint to the timber floor.

Next, the couple turned their attention to the three-bedroom, two-bathroom Eastnor House, first peeling back layers of lead paint on the pressed metal ceilings, all of which have their own designs.

Other big tasks included stabilising the foundations, installing a wraparound entertainer's deck made from spotted gum, and repainting the exterior – a shade of pink that almost matches the camellias flowering on the surrounding shrubs.

Previous owners had added to the original homestead and grounds, putting in a pool in the 1970s and a French provincial-style kitchen in the 2010s. Spain has embraced the mix of old and "new", indulging her love of upcycling and assembling a collection of items that please her designer's eye – an antique sideboard sourced from a Maleny artist here; an old meat safe from Kingaroy there.

Yet one of her favourite features remains the homestead's original marble fireplace and the patinaed mirror that hangs above.

"It's obviously ageing, but it's kind of beautiful, and it haunts you a little bit," Spain says.

"I always think about all the different things it's seen over its lifetime."

Denise Cullen was a guest of Montville Estate.

