

freshair

What begins as a trip to the Fassifern Valley for some quiet time at a classic country B&B takes off into another realm entirely.

Words **Karen Milliner**

Think of a well-constructed paper plane, said Julie Maddocks, an instructor at the Boonah Gliding Centre: that's how a glider works.

Really? It was an analogy a little lost on me, because my own past attempts at aerodynamic origami had never yielded a plane which glided effortlessly and gracefully to terra firma. Mine had always nosedived into a mangled heap.

Still, I had no such visions of the glider I was about to climb into – a sleek, German-built, two-seater fibreglass ASK-21 with a 17-metre wingspan – going the way of my haplessly folded paper planes. Especially when the bloke in control was Julie's son, Andrew. He may be only 18, but he's been hitching a ride on the thermals since he was a toddler. His mates at the Boonah Gliding Club also tip him as a future world gliding champion. High praise indeed.

Club members volunteer on weekends and public holidays to offer both joyflights and training flights. There's the basic Air Experience, or the Aerobatic Flight if you want the added thrills of loops, barrel rolls and inverted flying.

It's an awesome experience, strapping yourself into the seat at the nose of the glider, bumping across Boonah's dusty airstrip (about an hour's drive south-west of Brisbane), then being towed aloft by a small plane. At 4000 feet the tow rope is released with a small jolt, and you're on your own, to do as the birds do and soar over the fields of the Fassifern Valley.

My only moment of minor panic came after Andrew asked me to take hold of the dual control stick to get a feel for the craft as he explained the basic manoeuvres. "You're still flying us, right?" I asked a few minutes later. "No," he replied cheerily, "you are. I haven't touched the control for the past five minutes." Yikes!

Safely back on the ground, my tummy started gurgling – but not from the air adventure. My partner and I had taken the cautious approach and skipped breakfast before our flights. Twenty minutes' drive saw us back at our cosy lodgings at the Zengarra Country House and Pavilions, and ready to devour brunch.

Zengarra is an architect-designed B&B on a 30ha property on the slopes of Mount Greville, opened in 2000 but bought last year by well-travelled couple Mike and Christine Leah. Guests have the run of the house's spacious open plan living areas – the Leahs have a private pavilion at the rear. Christine is a great cook and loves baking. She'll prepare three-course evening meals as well as breakfast, and they're served on a beautifully laid 200-year-old French maple



dining table. After dinner, curl up on one of the Chesterfields around the enormous wood stove, or watch a DVD on a large pull-down screen.

There are only three ensuite bedrooms, all at the east end of the house. The Red Suite is larger than the others, with a small table and chairs and a couch, plus its own separate entrance.

Christine's flair for decorating is obvious, and there are thoughtful touches in each room: a crystal decanter of port, a bowl of sweets, some soothing hand cream. Christine also is an

MUSTDO.

TAKE a picnic up to the Governor's Chair lookout and soak up the view. It's a 6km steep gravel road, but you don't need a 4WD. Park and hike up the final 2km if you're feeling energetic.

CHECK OUT the arts and crafts in nearby Boonah, and the heavenly scents of Arvensis (2 Railway St, ph 5463 4776). Madonna Gott makes all her own organic body lotions, scrubs, lip balms, bath oils and sprays.

accomplished, classically trained pianist, and the Leahs have built an adjoining pavilion for her grand piano and their collection of Chinese art and instruments. On Tuesdays and Thursdays she hosts afternoon teas (\$25 per person), serving the cakes and biscuits she's baked, then entertaining on the ivories.

B&Bs are not everyone's cup of tea, but if you enjoy socialising, it would be difficult to find a more delightful operation than Zengarra.

A warm welcome awaits not only from Mike and Christine, but their two pooches, Sarah and Sumo. Be warned: you won't escape without having to administer a few belly rubs.

THE PLACE

Zengarra Country House and Pavilions, 2225 Lake Moogerah Rd, Moogerah, near Boonah.
TEL (07) 5463 5600

EMAIL mail@zengarra.com

WEBLINK www.zengarra.com

THE DEAL Accommodation, breakfast and a glass of bubbles for \$170 per couple per night (Blue/Green Suites), \$210 (Red Suite). Three-course dinner, \$48 per person. Weekend package of two nights' accommodation, breakfasts, 2 dinners with wine, \$450 per couple (Blue/Green), \$495 (Red). Boonah Gliding Centre flights: \$140 for 30-minute Air Experience; \$180 for a 30-minute Aerobatic Flight. Ph 0408 016164 or (07) 5463 2630 or visit www.boonahgliding.com.au