

Canberra Times

Independent. Always.

Best cabins for a cosy winter escape on the East Coast

Date June 6, 2015

By **Tim the Yowie Man**

Here's your chance to lap up warm fireplaces, great vistas, and cosy atmospheres with this diverse range of holiday cabins.



A fiery sunset seen from the deck of Woolshed Cabins, looking over the historic woolshed to the Kanimbla escarpment. *Photo: Marion Commens*

With the prospect of a long cold winter ahead, I set off on a road trip along Australia's East Coast in search of the ultimate "cosy cabin". After bunking down in a range of contenders from Mackay in Queensland to Merimbula at the South Coast, here is my favourite selection.

My no.1 pick: In A Hidden Valley

Woolshed Cabins, Kanimbla Valley, Blue Mountains,

NSW: Two architect-designed eco cabins nestled below dramatic sandstone cliffs. Fashioned from rough-hewn logs, offset by corrugated iron features and beaten copper accents, these snug two-bedroom fully self-contained cabins are decked out beautifully inside, and out.

Suitable for: A writer's hideaway, a romantic weekend or a family farm stay; you name it and this cabin will work for you. They've even thought of a stash of toys for the kids and in case you bring the extended family, the two cabins can be joined (by an otherwise locked hallway).

Winter warmth: In keeping with the cabin's environmental sustainability ethos, heating is from a log fire style-gas heater. Heat rises so if you want to be toasty warm, get first dibs on the loft bedroom, but just remember to turn the fire off before you go to sleep or you will cook.

Expect: From the moment you negotiate the last switchback on the tortuous mountain pass from Blackheath and catch first glimpse of the cabins on the floor of the Kanimbla Valley, you know you are in for something special. The spectacular sunset light show which transforms the long veins of sandstone on the surrounding escarpment into rich golds and bright oranges will wow – it's daily and it's free. The Kakadu escarpment is the only place in Australia where I've seen a more vivid sunset on rocks.

Local secret: The Kanimbla Valley. The natural wonders of the Megalong Valley are well known, but this valley is hidden beyond the prying eyes of most tourists. For guests only.

Tim's Tip: While away your time here in blissful isolation. Watch the moon rise and track the stars from your loft window. Don't forget to rug up – it is often colder in the Blue Mountains than Canberra and don't let the dry composting toilets put you off. Not only can they compost human waste, but they play a major role in the conservation of water, always a precious resource, but especially so on a farm.

Don't miss: Drop into Cabin & Co in Blackheath (8 Govetts Leap Road). This quaint little shop is crammed with all the wares you could want for your own little cabin, although the antlers are a bit garish. If you like the apples in your breakfast basket, then call in to Logan Brae Apple Orchard (only 10 minutes from Woolshed Cabins) where you'll find crisp varieties of apples to choose from during apple season.

What I'd change: I'd separate the two cabins. If you book one of the cabins for a weekend it's likely the other cabin will also be occupied. That said, both cabins are still very private and the careful positioning of the windows affords privacy while also providing uninterrupted view of the colourful cliffs.

Take me there: Woolshed Cabins are about 20 minutes drive from Blackheath. Allow about four hours of total drive time from Canberra. Mid-week rates from \$420 a couple for two nights. Ph: (02) 4787 8199 or see woolshedcabins.com.au

No.2 Pick: Rainforest Retreat

O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, Lamington National Park, Queensland

No.3 Pick: Simple pleasures

Mt Warning Retreat, Uki, northern NSW