

# COUNTRY

LEAVE CITIES BEHIND FOR THE PEACE AND CHARM OF A RURAL SETTING.



## BLUEGUM RIDGE COTTAGES

434 BUTTERCUP ROAD, MERRIJIG, VIC  
PHONE: (03) 5777 5761  
WEB: BLUEGUMRIDGE.COM.AU

**THE LOCATION** Merrijig, a three-hour drive from Melbourne, sits at the foot of Mount Buller in Victoria's high country. The hamlet's charm is its peace and quiet, and its easy access to the bush for outdoor activities, including horse-riding, mountain biking, river fishing or four-wheel driving. For the culinary-

conscious, there are plenty of dining options in nearby Mansfield.

**THE PLACE** Bluegum Ridge Cottages are located on an eight-hectare rural property surrounded by gardens and large gum trees. The two cottages, both of which feature wide verandahs and two bedrooms (one queen, one double), offer views of horses grazing in paddocks and the mountain ranges beyond. Floor-to-ceiling windows also take full advantage of the bucolic setting. Accommodation is cosy, with well-equipped kitchens and lounge rooms stocked with books, magazines and DVDs.

**THE EXPERIENCE** After a warm welcome from owners Megan Dunn and Cameron Dobson, we made our way down the driveway to the cottage and soon popped the cork on a bottle of champers found in the fridge. Morning brought much delight, with a breakfast hamper full of home-made bread, farm eggs, bacon and freshly squeezed orange juice. Curling up on a chair on the verandah to soak up some sun made for a lazy start to the day before we headed out to explore the bush on horseback, returning later to soothe sore muscles in the outdoor spa.

**DON'T MISS** A trail ride through *The Man from Snowy River* country with Bruce and Deb McCormack, both of whom have family connections to Merrijig that date back to 1886. Bush trails below the mountain ranges are populated with kangaroos and deer and there are spectacular views around every corner. The horses (courtesy of McCormack's Mountain Valley Trail Rides) deftly negotiate rocky river beds and there are opportunities for the adventurous to step up from a walk to a canter or gallop. **KATE HAGAN**

## NEED TO KNOW

**COST:** From \$165 to \$190 a night (two-night minimum stay).

**DISTANCE:** Three hours' drive (213km) north-east of Melbourne.

**CHILDREN:** Yes.

**THE LOCATION** Berrima is an historic village on what was once the main Sydney-Melbourne highway, but which is now a much quieter thoroughfare. The settlement is full of wee shops, cafes and galleries, while its gardens entice those who feel up for a stroll.

**THE PLACE** Three kilometres north of Berrima, Book Barn Cottage sits opposite a vineyard and adjacent to the Berkelouw Book Barn & Antiquariat. Formerly the gatekeeper's house of a historic homestead, Book Barn is

at the Book Barn, the cottage's lounge also features a large shelf crammed with interesting tomes. There's a small wooden deck that captures the northern sun and is the perfect spot for a cup of tea and hours of uninterrupted reading.

**DON'T MISS** Wine tasting at any of the more than 60 vineyards in the southern highlands, shopping for antiques, crafts and local produce in Berrima, or a beer at the Surveyor General Inn, which dates back to 1854 and is the oldest continually licensed pub in Australia.

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