



Clockwise from above With Daniel Tourancheau and pet at Peppers Calstock; The Georgian mansion, home of Peppers Calstock; Remi and Ginette Bancal at Glencoe Retreat; It is the Apple Isle after all!

which are more like cabins. The temporary accommodation is helicoptered into the bush in October, anchored to the ground with seawater filled containers, and then flown out again at the end of the summer season, so that no sign remains of the camp ever having been there. Everything that goes in comes out again.

This eco-resort offers a maximum of 10 visitors at a time, four days and three nights of walks, swimming, kayaking, boating or just relaxing – and eating and drinking really well. With no electricity, no mobile phones, no television, this kind of holidaying is out of this world (though actually in it). It's a peaceful affair with top catering by chef Gareth 'Gaz' Patterson-Were, a former pastry cook and baker, who knocks up platters of sheer heaven, which are served in the communal kitchen-dining-sitting tent. In a very short time, one gets a feeling of life in the early days of settlement.

Peppers Calstock also takes the visitor back in time, and it's my next stay. Calstock is a grand old house at Deloraine, a 45-minute drive from Launceston. Sitting in 200 acres of farmland and gardens, the Georgian mansion, built in 1837, retains its old-world style while providing highly sophisticated hospitality. Its slick operation is overseen by an energetic and passionate couple, Linda and Daniel Tourancheau.

Breakfasts and dinners are served here, with the morning repasts taken in the

French-flavoured blue room, and dinner in the more formal dining room. The dinner is a set menu of seasonal produce, providing the diner with a wide variety of Monsieur Tourancheau's French-inspired taste and texture sensations, such as his entrée of smoked salmon and creme fraîche roulade; oyster with lemongrass and shallots and a sherry vinaigrette; cucumber ribbon salad with pickled ginger; and lobster with mango and heart of palm salad. Tiny delights which could well be followed by kassler-style smoked lamb rack with Moroccan spiced carrots, then venison with caramelised onion and blue cheese tart, sweet potato fondant, fresh cooked figs and star anise jus. And then a trio of desserts: mango, strawberry and rum sorbet; an oh-so-français plum and almond tart; and a coffee and Frangelico white chocolate mousse.

With so many large spaces, bedrooms where you could happily hold a significant cocktail party, bathrooms big enough to hold a shower tea or two, and spacious sitting areas inside and out, this is somewhere to stay for several days and indulge in the many pleasures, which include wines from one of the state's finest cellars. And it's a good spot to take in nearby attractions, such as Cradle Mountain.

There has long been a French connection at Calstock. It made its name for fine dining when French couple Ginette and Remi Bancal established it in 1999. They spent

eight years there before moving on and opening Glencoe Rural Retreat just up the road (well, 44km up the road) in Barrington. This genial pair, Ginette from Reunion Island and Remi from Nîmes in Southern France, met in England in 1975 and came to Australia in 1987 after a long stint at the Paris Ritz, for "a bit of an adventure". And stayed. The Bancals seem to live and breathe the growing and preparing of food, with their herb and vegetable garden supplying much of Glencoe's produce.

As well as a tiny cafe for daytime visitors, where Remi's soups, salads and terrines are consumed with gusto, he prepares true French country dishes at night for guests of their four rooms, such as pork rillettes, Nîmoise chicken cooked in true provençal fashion with tomatoes, garlic, onions and olives, pears poached in red wine and 'bleeding heart' chocolate cake with a fondant centre. You get the picture, and it's a very pretty one.

With all the talk of climate change and Australia's agricultural areas moving southwards, there's much discussion about Tasmania becoming the nation's food bowl. Judging by my travels and seeing the drive and passion of the state's producers and chefs, I'd say it already is. If I were to sum up the experiences of its food and hospitality in one word, it would have to be 'bliss'! And I realise I've only just scratched the surface. I can't wait to return... ■