



RETREAT & SURRENDER

Surrounded by national parkland, vineyards and unspoilt beaches, the new Injidup Spa Retreat offers a chic pampering experience in tranquil surrounds.

Words **Jane Cornes** Photography **Sharyn Cairns**

At Margaret River's newly opened Injidup Spa

Retreat, the luxury on offer is all about what guests *don't* get. No turn-down service, no fawning waiters, no enforced conviviality. The resort nestles into a rare piece of privately owned coastal bushland that's surrounded by 1200 hectares of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, providing an opulent seclusion that has nothing to do with pretension.

"These days the mature, experienced traveller is looking for a more independent travel experience," says Malcolm Tew who, with wife Pauline, owns the Myhotel group, operation managers for the retreat. "They like to be in control of their own travel arrangements, as long as assistance is on hand if they need it. That's what we're offering at Injidup."

Hidden well away from the beach – and pretty much everything else, really – by a two-metre-high blanket

of dense coastal scrub, the retreat sits at the northernmost tip of Margaret River in the winegrowing sub-region of Yallingup; a compact, scenic pocket of vineyard-covered earth and luxe accommodation bounded by outrageously beautiful beaches and a craggy limestone coastline.

During winter, humpback and southern right whales are regularly spotted off the coast. In spring, the state's much-heralded wildflowers give the place a festive look. Wander along the region's Cape To Cape Track at this time of year and it's like someone threw a wedding and God brought the confetti.

Injidup Spa Retreat – named after the bay it overlooks – opened at Easter and has 10 spacious villas, each with its own heated plunge pool. Nine of the villas have two bedrooms, each with its own ensuite bathroom. The tenth features one bedroom with

an oval-shaped natural stone bathtub that's been designed specifically with honeymooners in mind.

Each villa is equipped with quality stemware and other self-catering accoutrements for up to four people. State-of-the-art luxury comes via an ethanol-fuelled EcoSmart fire and heated floors in the living area for the cooler months. There's even a pint-sized dishwasher. Large bifold glass doors open onto a naturally weathered jarrah sun deck with spectacular views of the Indian Ocean and, just to remind you that you're still in Australia, a whopping great big barbecue. Opening the bifolds fully transforms the deck and dining area into one large, airy space, which is ideal for entertaining.

The developers of the resort have been careful to incorporate a strong local theme into each villa. Locally produced art, including works from Evelyn Kotai and Leaf Heath-Watson, adorns the walls and much of the striking blonde wood furniture was made by well-known Yallingup artisan Rob Malcolm.

Decorating the exterior of the villas are metal screens made from Corten, a steel alloy designed to rust in a most beautiful way. The metal has been

pressed and carved into an intricate design depicting the flora of the region. Guests leave their cars at the top of the property and access the villas via a covered walkway that winds through landscaped native gardens.

The day spa is a focal point of the retreat and its smorgasbord of mind-blowingly dreamy body treat-

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ments and massages is the reason many come to stay. Within the spa's cool, calm interior are two single therapy rooms and another designed just for couples. Rather than pre-booking a specific treatment, guests are allocated an hour or two and encouraged to decide on what they fancy once they get there. It's all about catering to individual needs, says spa owner Naomi Gregory, one of Australia's leading spa professionals with more than 15 years' experience in the industry, both here and in Asia.>



Natural surroundings
The striking floor-to-ceiling coral mosaic in the reception area (left and top). Reefwood artwork hangs from the bedroom walls of the villas (above).

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"It's sometimes difficult to know what you're going to feel like on a particular day, so we sit down with you and talk it through," says Gregory, who can also arrange private yoga sessions and guided meditation.

In line with the Tew's' desire to pamper from a respectful distance, Injidup's guests receive a complimentary gourmet hamper packed with first-night nibbles, a bottle of local wine and the makings of a wholesome breakfast.

The in-room menu lists elegant food reflecting executive chef Kees Timmer's preoccupation with texture and flavour. Medallions of vanilla-poached crayfish, perfectly cooked and moist, sit on a fig carpaccio drizzled with lime syrup. Scallops are served on the shell with a scattering of apple and dill salsa and prosciutto dust. A trio of delicate vegetarian bruschetta features buttery broccolini, young celery leaves and cherry tomatoes.

Timmer is based at nearby Smith's Beach Resort, also operated by the Tew's' Myhotel group. Opened in late December and, like Injidup, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World group, the resort has first-class facilities.

Pauline Tew says there's a strong synergy between her two properties. "Injidup guests go to Smith's Beach to dine out, drink at the wine bar and buy provisions at The Wine Deli, while those staying at Smith's Beach regularly book in at Injidup for spa treatments."

Injidup guests looking for a little more interaction can dine at Bathers Café or share tapas-style plates at Bouzy, the Champagne bar (named after the village in Champagne, not punters' drinking habits), a dark, classy little joint with Paul Bara non-vintage bubbles by the glass.

Next door, The Wine Deli has an impressive range of local, national and international wines, along with bread from the wonderful Yallingup Woodfired Bakery and a cold cabinet loaded with good things to eat.

"We're a one-stop-shop," says owner Conor Martin. "You can come in for a litre of milk and the weekend paper, or you can grab a bottle of Moët, a heat-at-home authentic Thai curry and some decent cheese."

Down the road at the Warden Aboriginal Centre, the region's rich Aboriginal history is finally getting a look-in. Housed in a series of rammed earth buildings and nestled into 15 hectares of she oak, peppermint, jarrah and banksia, the centre is a showcase for one of the most extensive collections of Noongar art in Australia. Malcolm Tew likes to encourage his guests to pay a visit. "This region's history goes way beyond wine and dairy farming," he explains. "And it's good for



people to remember that." The centre also offers bush-walking tours, storytelling, a tool-making session and instruction in Aboriginal dance and music.

By 9am on a Sunday morning at Bathers Café, resort guests are queueing for their daily fix of caffeine. By midday the place will be filled with sandy-footed locals who know a good thing when they see it.

Back at Injidup, the child-free peace is palpable. Guests relax on their sundeck or meander down to Injidup Bay for their daily constitutional.

Resort, retreat. Retreat, resort. It's all in the name, says Tew, who spends her working day zooming between the two beachside properties. "At Smith's Beach, there's an upbeat energy, a sense of vibrancy. Then I come up here to Injidup and it's all hushed voices and tranquility. I'm still getting used to it."*



THE FINE PRINT

Getting there

Injidup Spa Retreat is a three-and-a-half hour drive south of Perth, at the northern end of Margaret River's wine region. Qantas and Virgin Blue fly to Perth from capital cities. qantas.com.au, virginblue.com.au.

Stay

Injidup Spa Retreat From \$650 per night for two or \$900 per night for four, including gourmet hamper. Minimum two-night stay. **31 Cape Clairault Rd, Injidup, WA, (08) 9750 1300, injidupsparetreat.com.au.**

Do

The Warden Aboriginal Centre Open 10am-4pm daily except Tue. **Injidup Springs Rd, Yallingup, (08) 9756 6566.**

Food and friends
The Bathers Café's cappuccino panna cotta with coffee bean sugar bark (top); Bouzy, the Champagne bar (left).

