

Noosa's hidden appeal



THERE'S a lot more to the Noosa district than Hastings St. In fact, some people might argue that Hastings St is the least interesting part of Noosa, although God forbid that I should be one of them.

Where else can you find over-priced children's clothes, impossible parking, daggy beach hats, over-exposed leathery bodies...?

Much more to our present taste is the family-friendly but still sophisticated suburb of Noosaville, which hugs the Noosa River and has much quieter holiday units and boutiques at lower prices than you'll find at Noosa Heads.

This time we chose the Montpellier Boutique Resort in James St, five minutes' walk from the river and the very superior restaurants and cafes that have made this area the district's best eat street.

There's nothing better than having breakfast on the waterfront, watching the kids with their reels trying their luck in the river, while all sorts and conditions of small boats and even the odd jet ski (curses be upon them!) make their way up and down.

Boatie types can hire a tinny or a yacht and get themselves into all kinds of trouble, and there are plenty of sand banks and swimming areas along the river bank to keep small children occupied for hours.

But not being in the mood for such extreme activity, we decided on our old favourite, the Noosa Ferry, where we bought

SHORT BREAKS

ALISON CÔTES



an all-day ticket and hopped on and off at various spots, as usual taking a half-hour break at

the Noosa Harbour Marine Village where we drank local wine, ate reasonably well, and wondered afresh at the things people think they need to buy in the new "homemaker" store.

But it's the trip itself that provides the enchantment, as little kids paddling in the shallows wave at you with their plastic spades, and pelicans perch on poles pretending to be sculptures.

There are the houses of the rich and famous on one side of the river, and the peace of Cooloola National Park on the other, while the variety of craft on the water bring thoughts of houseboat holidays to mind, where you sit on the deck, throw a line over the side and sit back with a stubby or two.

We did go to Hastings St after we were ferried out, because we wanted a walk on the beach, and there's plenty of sand at the moment, which you don't even have to get between your toes if you're happy to stick to the board walk, but the only shopping we did was for an ice cream, so we managed to avoid the Beautiful People - much to their relief, I'm sure - and the fractious family groups strutting their stuff.

But most of the time we were happy to laze about in our two-bedroom apartment at Montpellier, where the view

was less natural but just as spectacular.

Our first-floor unit looked out over the second-finest swimming pool in Queensland (I think the finest is still the Hyatt Regency at Sanctuary Cove), which takes up most of the courtyard.

It has a separate hot spa pool, a paddling pool and a constantly running fountain, as well as a huge heated swimming area.

Surrounded by garden beds of crotons and other tropical plants, it glimmered with irresistible temptation, especially at night when the moon is full.

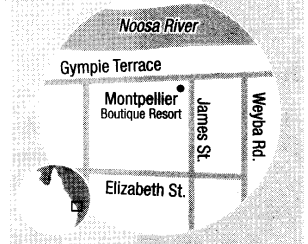
It's a toss-up, though, whether the moon is better seen from the river bank or the pool, and although we tried both, we still can't decide.

The apartments themselves are as good as you can get without going overboard into millionaire territory.

The bedrooms are big enough for what they're meant for, with a bathroom for each, and the main bedroom has more wardrobe space than many modern houses.

It's the living areas that really put them in the four-star class, though. They are huge and comfortably furnished, and merge subtly on to an equally large deck which overlooks the pool.

You could self-cater here very happily for a week or more, because as well as a fully equipped laundry, there's a real kitchen, and ceiling fans if you don't like



GETTING THERE: There are two ways to drive the 140km from Brisbane to Noosaville - either up the Sunshine Coast Motorway and through at least 15 roundabouts in the industrial area, or along the more picturesque coastal route of the Bruce Highway and the David Lowe Way. Allow at least two hours.

CONTACT: Montpellier Boutique Resort, 7-11 James St, Noosaville. Phone 5455 5033, website:

www.montpelliernoosa.com.au, email:

holiday@montpelliernoosa.com.au.

TARIFF: For 1 - 4 adults, units \$215 (one night) to \$910 low season; \$250 (one night) to \$1505 (one week) high season. Check the website for specials and packages.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO: Noosa Ferry Cruises, from the Sheraton Resort Jetty to Noosa Harbour Marine Village at Tewantin - multi-trip passes \$14.50 adults, \$13.50 concession, \$5 children, \$35 family. Phone 5449 8442, website www.noosaferry.com



the airconditioning disturbing your slumbers.

Gympie Tce, along the river, has food stores as well as restaurants, so you can live cheaply if you need to, dining out just on fish and chips or Chinese takeaway, like a proper Aussie holiday.

Best of all, being off the main drag, Montpellier is very quiet, so you really can escape from the hustle and bustle of holiday activities, and just veg out by the side of that Reckitts Blue swimming pool.

With a few good books, someone to whip up a barbecue, and a glass or three of my favourite tippie, it offers my kind of holiday.