



Travellers to NSW's mid-North Coast can find a wonderful haven in the Bellingher Valley, writes Rob Ingram.

Buddhism has Nirvana, Christianity has the Garden of Eden, and Hinduism has Moksha. Even Disney has Narnia. But in the beautiful Bellingher Valley in the mid-North Coast region of NSW, the utopian garden of delight is called 'Promised Land'.

On a scenic loop 15 minutes north of Bellingen, the privileged parish of Promised Land is as green and irresistible as a baby rocket salad, and as glossy as watercress vinaigrette. The name might be Old Testament but the lifestyle is New Age and, while the resident population of sybarites and celebrities is smugly protective of their destiny and destination, it's possible to share their beatitude.

Promised Land Cottages is a stylish retreat on a 40-hectare property with frontage to the Never Never River and

views to the dramatic Dorrigo rainforest. Greg and Sophie Warburton have created an escape here which they accurately describe as "simple elegant luxury". Translate that as sophistication without excess... landscaped gardens that don't detract from the natural environment... chic accommodation that allows the guest experience to be focused on the serenity and beauty of the setting.

There are three chalet-style, self-contained cottages, crafted rather than constructed from timbers that create a connection with the surrounding bushland. The one- and two-bedroom cottages enjoy a sense of privacy that matches the seclusion of the setting. All are stylishly decorated, their light, airy interior spaces furnished with contemporary elegance,

while generous balconies keep guests in touch with the stunning environment.

There are full kitchen facilities and mod cons such as DVD players. The relaxed atmosphere also benefits from a shared games room with movie and book library, quality artificial-surface tennis court, mountain bikes and great swimming holes in the river that leave pool bathing for dead. There's even something new in BYO... stabling facilities for guests who wish to bring their own horses for a trek along Promised Land's beautiful trails.

Around 540 kilometres north of Sydney, Bellingen is an attractive, free-spirited town blessed with a lively café and restaurant scene, a sensory overload of art and craft galleries, and a busy festival and entertainment calendar. Recommended dining experiences include No 2 Oak Street — consistently named among Australia's top regional restaurants — and Mouza, a trendy little kasbah featuring exotic Middle Eastern flavours. The World Heritage-listed Dorrigo rainforest is 30 minutes to the west and a chain of excellent beaches is 30 minutes to the east. **ACS**

Promised Land Cottages are at 934 Promised Land Road, Promised Land, via Bellingen NSW 2454. Telephone (02) 6655 9578; promisedlandcottages.com.au

