

I had never really watched a sunset to its very end

Down the unwinding road

Emma O'Neill finds a funky place to relax, isolated between Mount Warning and the ocean

I FELT guilty as I rattled my way along the dusty roads of Main Arm toward the Funkey Forest Retreat.

I have inherited my mother's incessant need to always be doing something, so the thought of attending a retreat dedicated entirely to rest felt quite hard to justify – until I realised that this place wasn't at all about soap, bubbles and fluffy white dressing gowns.

The low-lying wooden hut at the end of Funkey Forest's driveway is like an inviting warm bath snuggled into a ridgeline between the ocean and Mount Warning.

One of the retreat's caretakers, Sal, told me soon after my arrival that people 'often had personal transformations here' and it's easy to see why.

She then handed me, and the other two guests, an extract from a speech by Molly Vass which said rest 'isn't something of a lower order that we give ourselves daily in order to work more, it's something of a higher level order that we have lost in much of our lives'.

With that in mind I decided to make myself a cup of tea and sit among the many comfy chairs, cushions and ledges scattered throughout the hut and surrounding gardens to watch the sun set behind Mount Warning.

As the sun descended it threw each colour of the spectrum toward the impressive mountain. It was spectacular, and I realised its beauty wasn't a one off that I was simply lucky to catch – it was that I had

never really watched a sunset to its very end.

That's one of the beauties of Funkey Forest: You start to realise what it's like to *really* do things; to *really* listen to your own thoughts during mornings when all guests are asked to take complete silence; to *really* taste the delicious food they provide, a lot of which is grown on the property and all of which, even the bread, is lovingly and delicately prepared by hand on-site; to *really* rest and come to understand what resting *really* means.

Guests are encouraged to spend their days writing, reading, meditating, hanging out with the retreat dog Seal, or using the outdoor shower which boasts the best view – and water pressure – in the shire.

There are also add-ons available such as a massage, life coaching, yoga and naturopathic consultation.

There is time at night to chat with other guests and, on my retreat, the pile of cushions in front of an open fire was too good to resist for three women who had been silent most of the day.

I really didn't want to leave when it was time to wend my way home. I was getting used to the pace and beginning to appreciate what Molly Vass meant.

Contact details:
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Next retreat is yoga and relaxation, July 25-27, and there is a self-retreat from August 13-20.



ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE: Emma O'Neill (centre) and new friends enjoy some spontaneous hula dancing at Funkey Forest Retreat.