



Mission accomplished

Luxurious mountain accommodation and drop-dead gorgeous views have struggling to get back down to earth

WHEN Grace Jones (from movie *A View to a Kill*) rolled into Mission Beach last year she knew she had found a view to die for. Tucked high in the peaceful seclusion of an ancient rainforest, the sweeping views of tangled forest and surrounding islands were overwhelmingly addictive. Every day she returned to extend her stay. Two nights ran into two weeks and by this time property owners Shane and Craig Hunter were getting rather nervous.

"I mean, how on Earth do you kick out Grace Jones?" quivers Shane. "She was the most beautiful woman but we had other bookings, other guests arriving."

It is late afternoon when I arrive through the same inspirational doors of Altitude ONE40, a four-bedroom, two-bathroom residence perched high on a mountain above Mission Beach. My jaw drops at the magnificent panorama before me through the floor-to-ceiling glass walls. An 18m pool

appears to fall off into infinity and join as one with the sapphire sea, decorated by islands such as Dunk, Bedarra and Hinchinbrook. There are sprawling water views from every room, wrapped in World Heritage Listed rainforest, frequented by butterflies and birds, including the elusive cassowary.

I jump on the back of Shane's quad bike and go for a scoot around the property to meet grazing horses, fields of wallabies and two white-bellied sea eagles that swoop in for a feed. As we follow a trail of fresh cassowary droppings, I get my first glance of this area's elusive and endangered bird, picking through the fruits on the rainforest floor.

Returning to my luxurious abode, the sun is setting as storm clouds begin to boil and build on the distant horizon.

Tonight, I witness a battle of the gods with front row seats set high in the heavens. A spectacular electrical storm unleashes its fury, sending lightning-bolt messages and incessant thunder claps through our toes and the village below.

Mission Beach goes without power

for most of the night but no one seems to mind. This sleepy village is a haven for locals and holiday-makers alike who revel in the laid-back style.

Made up of four communities — Bingil Bay, Mission Beach, Wongaling Beach and South Mission Beach — this area boasts 14km of unspoilt palm-fringed coastline overlooking more than 20 tropical offshore

islands and offering an array of adventurous activities.

Dunk Island is just 4km away and easily kayaked to with Coral Sea Kayaking Company, sighting dolphins and turtles along the way.

The delights of the Great Barrier Reef are just one hour away by boat or you can join in some charter fishing, bushwalking, horse riding, boat hire and jet skiing, or maybe just sail along the sand on a Blo Kart.

I'm afraid, with such luxurious accommodation and drop-dead gorgeous views, I bunker down on my patio and am happy to just listen to the shrilling screams of skydivers throwing themselves out of planes and landing on the beach below.

If you are seeking a place of harmony, respite and rejuvenation — mission accomplished — I've found



it. Unfortunately I, like Grace Jones, have other commitments and must soon move on, but it's a struggle. This is the platform to heaven. How do I go from here, back down to Earth?

To ease my fall I stop en-route near Innisfail at another place of solitude, strung 37m above the ground. The recently opened Mamu Canopy Walkway places me back into the sights and smells of the rainforest, with the mighty North Johnstone River gorge coiling through the valleys below.

Over the return 2.5km walk through the rainforest canopy, I enjoy the exhilaration of these ancient valleys and the rushing river below while learning about the area and the mountains' cultural significance to the Ma:Mu Aboriginal people.

But I still can't possibly face reality. I continue to dig deeper, delaying the inevitable, and finding that this area overflows with views to die for.



It's heaven: Views from the Mamu Canopy Walkway (above); the swimming pool on a mountain (top) and the elusive cassowary (left)

MISSION BEACH

Mission Beach is two hours' drive south of Cairns.

Altitude ONE40: Before dismissing this property as being elite and out of reach, divide the cost of sharing the experience with some mates, enjoying dinner on the deck and sipping wine around your private pool with movie star views. The property has its own helipad, quality fittings and furnishings, rainforest walks and unparalleled views. Prices start at \$600 per night for one bedroom (\$500 in low season) or \$800 per night for the use of all four bedrooms. Ph 4068 7777 www.altitudeone40.com.au.

Mamu Canopy Walkway. This walkway through the Wooroonooran National Park is on the Palmerston Highway, 30km northwest of Innisfail (80km south of Cairns) and opens from 9.30am-5.30pm daily. Innisfail Visitor Information Centre. Ph 4063 2655.

www.missionbeachtourism.com.

