



DITCH THE ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND RECONNECT WITH YOUR FAMILY AT CEDAR CREEK LODGES IN THE LUSH GOLD COAST HINTERLAND. **BRIAN CRISP** REPORTS

INTO THE NATURE ZONE



TOP: The TreeTop Challenge is a natural high. ABOVE, FROM LEFT: Cedar Creek Lodge's Rainforest Restaurant; crispy pork belly with peas and feta; warm up by the fire in the living room and veranda at Creek Lodge.

Pur away the iPads, smartphones and any other electronic devices (the reception is not great in this part of the world anyway), because this is the ideal holiday for the active family that needs a technology detox.

The choices of outdoor fun here seem almost endless.

There's horse riding through the lush greenery of the Tamborine Mountain hinterland, swimming in the deep black bush rock pools, mini golf, Laser Skirmish, bush walking, bird feeding and for those that love a challenge, there's the Canyon Flyer and the TreeTop Challenge.

There's also a new adventure ropes course (suitable for 3-7 year-olds) being built. It is expected to be open for the December school holidays.

A recent longitudinal study of Australian children found that 12-13 year olds are spending up to 30 per cent of their waking day using screens. That's way beyond healthy levels.

The decade long study tracked 4000 preschoolers through to their early teens and found 64 per cent of the group exceeded the daily limit of screen time recommended by the Australian Government.

Take the kids here and watch them emerge from their cyber coma and come to life as they rediscover the great outdoors.

Cedar Creek Lodges, which has lodges that can sleep up to nine guests

as well as spa rooms, some with two queen sized beds and others with king beds, is located about an hour's drive from Brisbane and about the same from the Gold Coast Airport.

It is tucked off the road on the corner of Cedar Creek Falls Rd and Tamborine Mountain Rd. The road leading to the resort has just been refurbished, as has the car park, making access really easy. And even though you are in the bush, you don't need a four-wheel drive.

The spa rooms have been stylishly renovated and have much more space than your average hotel room – and are exceptional value for money when it comes time to pay the bill. The in-room

spas are huge and a welcome attraction after a tough day of exploring the resort, especially if you have successfully navigated the physically-taxing TreeTop Challenge course.

The rooms are about a two-minute walk from the main restaurant, bar and function area which is set among the rainforest canopy.

Well-known Gold Coast chef Luke Turner from Providence at Marina Mirage has just revitalised the Rainforest Restaurant menu which now consists of mainly themed tapas plates (garden, sea, land and vegetarian) that were created to be shared.

I recently dined there with my wife

on a Sunday afternoon and shared four plates – which was more than enough for two people. The crispy pork belly, minted peas, feta, lemon juice, mint, coriander, and olive oil (\$14) was the highlight. You could taste the freshness of the mint and coriander.

People have been raving about Turner's food creations since his days at Spendlove on Ferry Rd, and this menu doesn't disappoint. It is simple, yet creative and mouth-watering, especially when paired with the local Tamborine Mountain wines.

Cedar Creek Lodges is not just for the kids though.

It is a great venue for weddings and

corporate who need a retreat, and privacy, for a dose of workmate bonding sessions.

The property has three large rooms that can host conference events; offers free high-speed Wi-Fi for conference guests; and can organise meals and entertainment. The fact that it is also remote from the Gold Coast nightlife means guests stay together during the conference.

FACT FILE

Cedar Creek Lodges is on the corner of Cedar Creek Falls Rd and Tamborine Mountain Rd, Tamborine Mountain.

Midweek specials start from \$179 twin share/per night. The package includes:

- 2 x nights' accommodation
- 2 x hearty country breakfasts both mornings (from 8am – 10am)
- 2 x lunches at the Terrace Kiosk – one day only
- 2 x Adventure Mini Golf games on the brand new Championship Course – one day only
- Bottle of red, white or sparkling wine on arrival
- Early check-in (12pm)
- Late check-out (11am)

Special is only available for online bookings. For more details phone 07 5545 1468, or see cedarcreeklodges.com.au

Additional reporting, Jane Scott

ULTIMATE CHALLENGE HIGH IN THE TREETOPS

Tucked behind Cedar Creek Lodge's Terrace Kiosk is the entrance to Thunderbird Park, where guests in the mood for some adventure in the rainforest can test themselves on the TreeTop Challenge.

Guides will fit you with a secure harness and helmet, and after a short induction you'll be wobbling (or striding, depending on your agility levels) across the first swing bridge and into the rainforest canopy.

Don't expect to spend much time taking in the picturesque surrounds – the course requires intense concentration as you clamber your way sideways, forwards and sometimes backwards through the tree tops.

The various challenges range from easy to extreme and include whizzing down flying foxes, edging sideways across taut wire bridges and pulling yourself backwards up a rope strung between two perilously small platforms.

Stepping off the platforms to traverse a series of precariously dangling horizontal poles, spaced just too far apart for comfort, takes a leap of faith but you are at all times connected to the safety wire with two hooks that can never be simultaneously released.

Suitable for guests aged seven years and up, the TreeTop Challenge will test your biceps, your balance and your resolve, but completing the course brings an undeniable sense of satisfaction.

Those looking for more of an adrenalin rush should head for the Canyon Flyer, a three-hour zip line canopy tour across beautiful Cedar Creek Gorge. Thunderbird Park also offers Laser Skirmish, Thunderegg Fossicking, horse trails, a mini golf course and walking trails.