

DESIGN DESTINATION

ORANGE

Two days at Basalt, a luxurious escape among cherry trees, is just the break this writer needed

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HIGH ON A HILL Three sublime studios are a recent addition to this property, owned by the fruit-growing Rollin family for 45 years. The accommodation's name is a nod to the land. "Essentially, Basalt comes from the soil that the studios are built on, and from which we, as a family, have prospered from over so many years," says Simon Rollin. He moved to Orange with his parents, Sue and Graham, when he was four, and he and his wife, Kay, co-own Basalt.



DRONE IMAGE SIMON ROLLIN

With the kids happily settled in for a sleepover at their grandparents' place, my husband and I set off on a three-hour drive from our home at the foot of the Blue Mountains towards our destination, Basalt in Orange, NSW. We visited the town years ago, but I was on bridesmaid duties then, and we didn't see much beyond the wedding venue. This time, I want to explore.

It's mid-afternoon when we drive through the front gates and pull up alongside 'Yonder', the studio we'll be staying in for the next two nights. It's a handsome building – all dark lines, earthy hues and warm wood – but the setting in a peaceful ridge is something else altogether. "The views are incredible and were really going to waste, enjoyed only by the kangaroos, prior to building Basalt," co-owner Simon Rollin explains to me later.

I stand on the deck and take in the sights – a grassy slope gives way to a sea of cherry trees and, beyond that, the Central Tablelands, undulating towards the horizon. It's easy to see why the luxury accommodation has been added to the property, which Simon's parents, Sue and Graham, have grown fruit on since 1979. "It gives them a chance to showcase this land, which they've spent the majority of their lives nurturing and caring for."

You won't spot another soul during your stay; well, we didn't. There are just three villas on the vast estate and they're set a generous distance apart. Each appears to be an

"BEING ABLE TO MIX SOME OF OUR BASALT SOILS INTO THE WALLS HAS MADE THIS PLACE FEEL CONNECTED TO THE LAND"

SIMON ROLLIN, CO-OWNER

extension of the land, by design. "The orcharding practice of grafting inspired our architect," says Simon. "He envisioned them 'grafted' into the hillside, kind of bunkered into it rather than protruding from it."

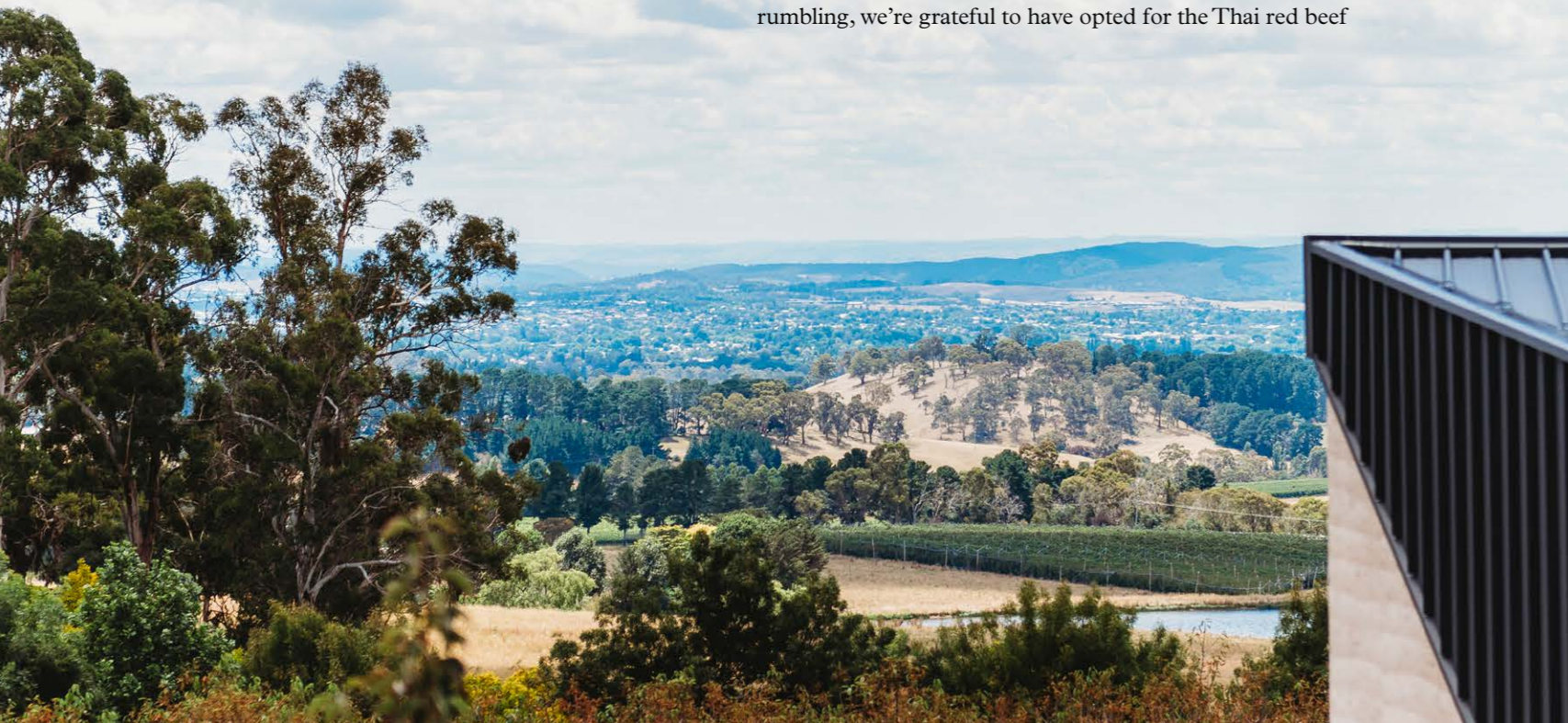
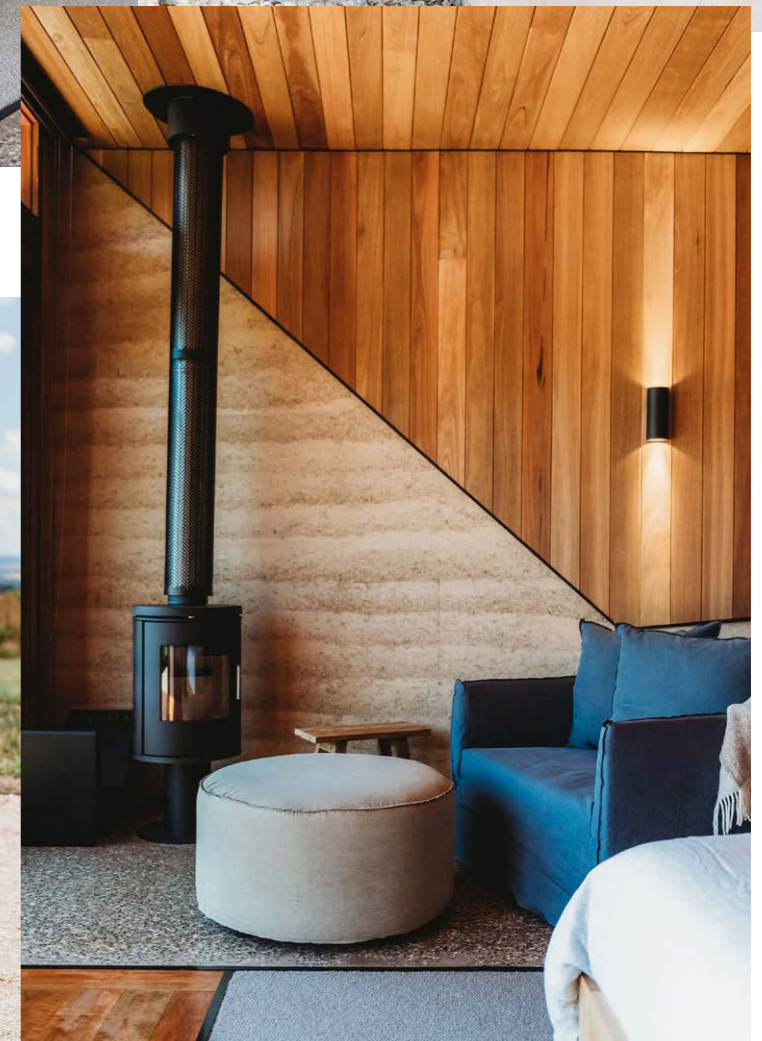
As I slide open the timber-framed glass front door, I appreciate its weight before stepping inside. Here, we can really enjoy the combined efforts of Cameron Anderson Architects and Lisa Johnson Design Studio. The interiors feel like an embrace, with a timber-wrapped ceiling, polished concrete floors and rammed-earth walls. An inviting king-sized bed with Carlotta+Gee linen bedding holds court in the centre of the space, with a Joe loveseat and round ottoman from MCM House alongside it.

Tucked behind a pony wall is a compact kitchen, complete with pint-sized dishwasher. We're delighted to find a bevy of complimentary treats, from a block of boujee dark chocolate to marshmallows for roasting. "We do get a lot of comments about all the extra inclusions and the level of detail in everything," says Simon.

While the deep tub looks tempting, we wander out to the fire pit, where the wood is already chopped. We get it roaring just as the sun is setting and the chill is creeping in, and enjoy the heat with a glass of wine. As our tummies start rumbling, we're grateful to have opted for the Thai red beef



HOT PROPERTY The brief for Lisa Johnson Design Studio was to create a cosy, comfortable and rejuvenating feeling in the villas, while having distinct zones. The fabric-covered pony wall acts as a bedhead and doubles as a room divider that separates the kitchenette. Terracotta linen bedding reflects the tones of the spotted-gum ceiling. A wood-burning fire keeps the interiors toasty, while an outdoor fire pit is in prime position to appreciate the view.





WHAT TO SEE AND DO

+ **Pick fruit** at Hillside Harvest. Plums, peaches, apples and boysenberries are just some of the many fruits grown there. Check the website for what will be in season and ripe for the picking when you're in town.

hillsideharvest.com.au

+ **Browse art** at Corner Store Gallery. Stop in to see works by a high calibre of creators from around Australia. The collection changes often and is curated by local artist Madeline Young.

cornerstoregallery.com

+ **Grab lunch** at Anything Grows. You might go for the wholesome food, but you'll linger longer for the setting, which feels like a secret garden. Fitting, given it's also a nursery.

anythinggrows.com.au

+ **Try wine** at Swinging Bridge. We did the Savour tasting, where we tried seven different wines, each paired with a canapé. It's an excellent way to try some of the local drops.

swingingbridge.com.au

+ **Dine out** at The Peacock Room. You'd never expect to find this kind of restaurant in a country town. The menu is full of European-style dishes, with fine wines and impeccable service.

orianaorange.com



RELAX MODE The deep concrete bathtub is an inviting inclusion. It stands beside bifold windows that frame a tranquil outlook. No detail has been overlooked, with Salus Body products placed at opportune spots throughout the suite, such as on a stool within easy reach of the tub and on the wall in the separate shower. It can be hard to leave the property and its opportunities for exploring, but when you do, the extent of the bounty beyond becomes apparent.



curry from Sweet Sour Salt waiting for us in the fridge. "It's there for guests who want to arrive and not worry about cooking or going back out for dinner," says Simon.

The next morning begins with chunky slices of sourdough toast slathered with cultured butter and strawberry jam, all conveniently complimentary. After breakfast, we take a 10-minute drive into town and grab coffees at Academy before a big day filled with apple picking, wine tasting and art gallery visits. We're lucky Simon has given us the local know-how for where to go and what to do – Racine Bakery is a hidden gem.

That night, we enjoy a glorious evening in The Peacock Room at The Oriana. It's very old-Hollywood glam with velvet chairs, jewel tones and a moody glow. The dining room and adjoining Bela Vista Bar is surprisingly buzzy for a weeknight. Originally from Norway, owner Espen Harbitz worked in hospitality across the globe before settling in Orange. It's clear he's brought with him a European flair that's left quite the impression on this town.

The next morning, we head home feeling honestly altered by our two days in Orange. We've had all the quiet and solitude you could wish for in a country sojourn while being treated to life's little (and some large!) luxuries. [Discover more at basaltorange.com.au](http://basaltorange.com.au) and [@basaltorange](https://www.instagram.com/basaltorange)

DRONE IMAGE: SIMON ROLLIN

