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goodweekend

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD MAGAZINE

52 weekends away

Your annual independent guide
to the best short breaks



New South Wales

The Loft

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■ Our host, Gina, kindly greeted us with an ice-bucket of treats – sparkling shiraz, chocolates and strawberries – and a brief rundown of the idiosyncrasies of the place.

Although next door to the host's house, The Loft feels completely private. The website reflects the accommodation well – even down to the sound effects of Lake Macquarie lapping on the shore. It's situated on top of a boatshed with a spectacular view which reduced us to little excited jumps on the balcony. There is a tasteful and restrained boat theme throughout. And we loved the fruit bowl, especially the generous inclusion of a banana, a modern luxury.

Hungry after the Friday-night drive from



Sydney, we ventured to the Station Masters Cafe in nearby Toronto. Great food in a homey cottage – we could have stayed longer but we were keen to experience the hot tub under the trees and stars back at The Loft.

After a refreshing morning dip at the end of the jetty, we cooked breakfast on the barbecue. We found bacon, mushrooms,

eggs and tomatoes provided for us (among other necessities).

The nearby Wangi Peninsula track (1½ hours) is a great way to get a feel for the lake. There were many pockets of freesias and a mother duck with her clutch of ducklings. A word of warning: don't get too close because she'll chase after you. And rightly so.

On the return trip to Sydney, we stretched our legs on a rainforest walk at the Forest of Tranquillity

in Ourimbah. A perfect way to end a thoroughly enjoyable weekend.

CATH CLEGG ■

Cost: \$175 a night; minimum two-night stay.

Distance: 140 kilometres (about 1¾ hours' drive) north of Sydney.

Accommodation: one-bedroom self-contained apartment (maximum two people).



Features: tennis court, barbecue, hot tub, white bathrobes, well-equipped granite kitchen, TV, video and CD players, air-conditioning, wood fire, private balcony.

Nearby: walking tracks including nocturnal guided walks, fishing, yacht hire, horse riding, Toronto Golf Course, Dobell House (home and studio of artist Sir William Dobell) and within reach of the Hunter Valley, Watagan Mountains and Newcastle beaches.

Bookings: a month in advance.

Children: no.

Wheelchair access: no.