



**ESSENTIAL RELAXATION:** Our oil bath awaited us, in the outdoor tub next to our private lily pond

# Here's mud on your thigh!

From mud baths to organic scrubs, it's non-stop relaxation at Julatten Mountain Retreat, writes **Bridget Martin**

North Queensland

**O**N A sultry summer day – and summer in north Queensland lasts for most of the year – there is really nothing quite as refreshing as slipping, literally, into a bath of cool mud.

It oozes between the toes and behind the ears. When we emerged, my husband and I were covered with a thick, brown coating.

"You must let it dry on your skin," Anita McGoldrick had instructed us. "As it dries, it draws all the toxins out of your body."

The medicinal properties of the mud were discovered almost by accident after guests taking a dip in the lily pond at Julatten Mountain Retreat started covering themselves with it. Anita and husband Mike had it tested and discovered it had almost exactly the same properties as commercial mud packs.

She set up a bath tub in the garden, screened it with tropical

plants and filled it with mud. It now resembles a gothic castle, accretions of dried mud forming solid flows and pinnacles with a soft, cooling centre.

We ambled slowly through the forest to nearby Euluma Creek where we basked, like a couple of mud-caked reptiles, on flat rocks beside the river. Arching river box trees formed a leafy vault across the creek and, as we watched a honeyeater build its nest, we slipped into a trance of well-being which was to last for the next three days.

With the mud now dry and cracking, we plunged into the creek to rinse it – and our unwanted toxins – away.

Reluctantly we wandered back to the world of humans; we had a busy schedule of relaxation ahead of us.

The scent of warmed oils greeted us at the door of the massage hut. Surrounded by tropical plants, just a screen separating us from the elements, we put ourselves at the mercy of our masseuses.



More than an hour later, our knotted muscles kneaded and our desk-derived aches loosened, we tottered out so relaxed we had difficulty walking.

Back at our cabin, a warm essential-oils bath awaited us in the outdoor tub next to a lily pond. Two glasses of wine had been placed next to our folded towels.

After wallowing in the scented, oily water, we responded slowly but enthusiastically when the bell sounded from the house to call us to dinner.



Meals at the Julatten Mountain Resort are legendary.

"Tomorrow you will have your organic scrub," announced Anita.

But first it was back to the carved wooden Balinese wedding bed in our cabin.

Mike and Anita bought it many years before – one of numerous treasures collected during their years of travel. Their house is filled with carvings, paintings and textiles, each with a story.

Anita, Danish by birth, met American Mike in Greece in the

1960s. Together they travelled the world until, 19 years ago, they fetched up in Julatten.

Built high on the hill which slopes down across the paddock and through the forest to Euluma Creek, the couple's house is a spacious wooden pole home.

Meals are served on the enormous veranda with magnificent views of cone-shaped Black Mountain, and the rock-fringed swimming pool below. Elsewhere on the 17ha property are hidden four guest cabins.

Next morning, we awoke to the sound of birdsong.

From our Balinese wedding bed, we could look straight through the insect screen which made up most of the main wall, to the lily pond beyond.

Honeyeaters were busy among the flowering shrubs. A tiny yellow sunbird darted about.

Although lunch was over, Anita was busy in the kitchen preparing our organic scrub. She presented us with two bowls of the mixture – and a paintbrush – and led us to a

discreet corner below the house. "Paint this all over each other," she instructed, "and sit in the sauna for at least 15 minutes."

We then took turns to lie under the shower and scrub the mixture off, using a pair of special, scratchy mitts.

It left our skins soft and glowing.

Driving off – at a very leisurely pace – I glanced down and noticed some mud still clinging to my toe nails. Mud does indeed stick, but in this case I didn't mind at all.

**SPA WITH A VIEW:** A dip overlooking the forest and Black Mountain (far left); and guests exfoliate in Euluma Creek (left)

● Julatten Mountain Retreat is a 30-minute drive inland from Port Douglas and 75 minutes from Cairns. Pick-ups available from Port Douglas or Mossman.

● A three-day, two-night Pampering Package costs \$410 per person for double or twin share.

● Full-day spa experience costs \$158 per person.

● Details and bookings: Julatten Mountain Retreat, phone 4094 1282, fax 4094 1582, website [www.julattenretreat.com](http://www.julattenretreat.com), e-mail [julattenretreat@ledanet.com.au](mailto:julattenretreat@ledanet.com.au)

