

# The Catholic Weekly

2023  
EDITION

# retreats

'May we try to listen and be silent in order to make space for the beauty of God' - *Pope Francis*

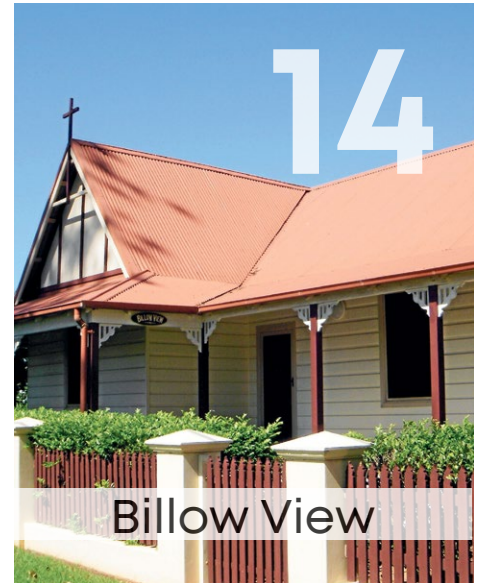




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## RETREATS 2023

Publisher: *The Catholic Weekly*, 3 September 2023  
 Editorial contributors: Simcha Fisher  
 Design: *The Catholic Weekly*  
 Sales and Marketing: Steve Richards (02) 9390 5404  
[www.catholicweekly.com.au](http://www.catholicweekly.com.au)



# From meeting friends to meeting God, you never know what might happen on retreat

## SIMCHA FISHER

is the author of 'The Sinner's Guide to Natural Family Planning' with a global reputation for talking about faith

I have never been on a silent retreat. The idea intrigues me, but I can't stop thinking about the time my parents went on one. The custom at this retreat house was to play some edifying audio book during breakfast, while serving a humble meal of cold cereal to the retreatants.

The inevitable result was that the story of *The Little Flower* or whatever was almost drowned out by the deafening CRONCH-CRONCH-CRONCH of forty jaws busily working away at their bowls of bran flakes. Maybe the acoustics were especially good, or maybe the heightened spiritual atmosphere amplified the situation, but my parents found this so hilarious that they had to leave the room. And it was there, out in the hallway, that they met another woman who had also gone absolutely boneless with silent laughter. She was the only other person who also thought the spiritual crunching was funny, and the three of them stayed in the hallway and laughed until they cried.

And they stayed close friends for the next 35 years or so, until my parents died. I don't know if they got anything else out of that retreat, but I don't think my mother ever had a closer friend. They helped each other through so many trials and shared so many joys. Their friendship was a true gift from God.

This is a long way around to illustrating how retreats can come with unexpected gifts, and not necessarily the ones you thought you needed. I have been on several retreats in my life, and none of them have delivered what they promised, but I haven't regretted any of them.

"This is what a retreat ought to be, perhaps: Not necessarily an experience in itself, but a setting, a stage, an opportunity for an experience. An upper room with an invitation for the Holy Spirit to descend."

Once, I went with the intention of just taking advantage of the peace and quiet of some time away from my normal routine, and ended up



PHOTOS: GIOVANNI PORTELLI

“ This is what a retreat ought to be, perhaps: Not necessarily an experience in itself, but a setting, a stage, an opportunity for an experience. An upper room with an invitation for the Holy Spirit to descend.”

re-awakening my prayer life after a very long dormant spell. Once I zoned out through all the talks and services all weekend long, but then I wasn't able to sleep; so I took a walk in the dark, found an unlocked chapel, and had an unforgettable experience there, undirected, unstructured, just me and Him in the moonlight.

This is why I always urge people to jump at the opportunity to go on retreat, or to send their kids, or their spouse, if it's ever possible (once you've done your due diligence that they're not run by absolute lunatics, of course!). Even if it doesn't look

like your style, even if it's not quite what you were hoping for, even if it doesn't look likely to provide all the missing pieces. You never know what God might have planned.

I have read that one of the major predictive factors for whether or not a child will remain Catholic when he becomes an adult is if he has some profound religious experience when he is an adolescent; and many people report having these experiences on retreats. And I've interviewed a good many priests and seminarians who say that a retreat was a turning point for them. They can pinpoint it as the moment when they first began to take God seriously — when they first felt the questions of the Holy Spirit as an urgent thing, demanding answers. Something happens, something hits you, someone speaks to you in a way that never got through to you in the same way before, and you can't forget it, deny it, or shake it for the rest of your life. This explains why so many religious education classes, especially for teens, include some form of retreat.

Which is not to say we can order up a life-changing experience for people in our spiritual care. I'm heartily opposed to shoving still-developing kids into emotionally charged hurricanes and telling them that this is what their spiritual lives are supposed to look like all the time. But it probably can't hurt to offer kids an experience that is unlike what their normal lives look like, to startle



PHOTO: GREGORY A. SHERITZ

them out of the endless clamoring distraction and make them wonder if there isn't something else out there. It can't hurt any of us. This is what a retreat ought to be, perhaps: Not necessarily an experience in itself, but a setting, a stage, an opportunity for an experience. An upper room with an invitation for the Holy Spirit to descend.

Maybe it will happen, maybe it won't. Retreats don't always bring about dramatic life-changing experiences. In fact, they usually don't. And just like anything else put together by humans, they can be dull or inconsequential or even harmful. That's always a possibility. And even if they are life-changing, what reaches people is not always something we can engineer. That's why I started this essay with the story of the crunch-crunch-crunch. I have no doubt that God put my parents

together with their friend. Innumerable goods came from their long friendship, and they never would have met if they hadn't both gone on retreat at that particular place. It was a silly, inconsequential thing that actually brought them together, but it wouldn't have happened if they didn't take the trouble to put themselves there. You never know what might happen on a retreat.

Retreats are a chance for people to step away from their ordinary lives so they might encounter Jesus, one way or another. They aren't magic, and there's no guarantee that they will supply some missing piece in your spiritual life, or place a necessary anchor for a child's religious identity. They're just another way of showing up and presenting yourself to the Lord, in case this is a time and a place He particularly wants to make himself known to you.





At Marian Valley Jesus is the most important person. The source of grace and prayer.



**Marian Valley** is a sacred place. It has been established to honour the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. It is a Shrine to which pilgrims come for Holy Mass, for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, to be a part of Eucharistic Adoration, to join in Eucharistic Processions, the Rosary, Devotions, Reflection, Retreats - indeed everything that leads to Spiritual Renewal and conversion.

Each year thousands of pilgrims visit the Shrine. Our Lady invites all to pray and helps us to bring Christ to our world as she did.

The shrine was opened and blessed on 10th December 1995 and is now the Brisbane Archdiocesan Shrine of Our Lady Help of Christians. It is under the care of the monks of St. Paul the First Hermit (the Pauline Fathers).

At Marian Valley we observe many Feast days in honour of Our Lord and the Blessed Mother. Various ethnic communities celebrate their annual pilgrimage days with their religious and cultural traditions.

**Enquiries call (07) 55 333 378 or [www.marianvalley.org.au](http://www.marianvalley.org.au)**

# marian valley

## *Our Lady Help of Christians*

### Retreat Centre with Adoration Chapel

A place to experience solitude, prayer and spiritual renewal. Accommodation (self-contained) available for small groups, couples, families and individuals. We pray here especially for peace in the world, our beloved country Australia, the Church, Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious life, our Archdiocese, the Pauline Fathers' ministry at the Shrine, and for the intentions of every pilgrim.



Adoration Chapel



Retreat cabins

Retreat cabins for hire. Each cabin has two separate rooms.

**\$50**  
per night  
Single

**\$80**  
per night  
Twin

P 07 55 333 378 | E [marianretreat@bigpond.com](mailto:marianretreat@bigpond.com)

[www.marianvalley.org.au](http://www.marianvalley.org.au)

## Billow View Gerringong

### THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

The Retreat and Conference Centre is located in Gerringong, less than two hours south of the Sydney CBD. It provides excellent facilities and accommodation for about twenty-five people. It has ten modern bedrooms and six older, smaller bedrooms. There is a large meeting area with a large kitchen in one house, and a smaller meeting area and kitchen in the other house. Catering is NOT provided as most groups prefer to share in the preparation of meals.



### THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND "BILLOW VIEW"

The Christian Brothers acquired "Billow View" from the Cooke family in 1959, to be used as a holiday house and retreat centre. In more recent times the Brothers have also used the centre for holiday camps for disadvantaged children and disabled adults, as a conference centre for various activities, particularly those associated with the Brothers' various ministries.



**Contact details:** 159 Belinda Street, GERRINGONG  
M: 0481 912 059 | P: 02 4234 1564  
E: [manager.billowview@edmundrice.org](mailto:manager.billowview@edmundrice.org)

## St Benedict's Monastery Arcadia

Located on a 36-hectare property in a semi-rural area on the north west outskirts of Sydney, ideal for prayer and reflection. Guests are welcome to enter the rhythm of the monastic day by joining the community for the Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharist and Lectio Divina.



### St Benedict's Monastery

121 Arcadia Road, Arcadia NSW 2159

Phone: (02) 9653 1159

Email: **Guest Cottage:** [guest@benedictine.org.au](mailto:guest@benedictine.org.au)

Email: **Monastery guest rooms:** [monks@benedictine.org.au](mailto:monks@benedictine.org.au)



# Winbourne offers a grand entrance for any event with peace and tranquillity

Many people comment they feel a sense of peace and tranquillity when they visit historical 'Winbourne'. Perhaps it's the leafy, tree-lined driveway, the beautifully maintained gardens and comfortable accommodation, the country style meals, or simply the old world charm of yesteryear.

Situated at the foothills of the Blue Mountains, less than an hour from Sydney, the 100 hectare heritage estate of 'Winbourne' has a purpose-built retreat and conference centre with professional facilities and attentive service.

Winbourne offers two styles of accommodation - the Cottages and the Bunya Lodge. Each Cottage contains eight twin-share rooms (maximum of 48 guests within the 3 cottages), all rooms with ensuite, television, heating and fans. Quality linen is supplied throughout and there is one room per Cottage with disabled access.

The Bunya Lodge is two storeys with a total of 22 bedrooms. Four rooms are twin-share with ensuite and the remaining multi-share rooms are serviced by modern bathroom facilities, located conveniently throughout the two levels.

Bed configurations range from two to six beds per room, with a combination of bunks and single beds. The total capacity within this building is 94 guests and is well suited for school groups, sporting teams and youth retreats. In addition, the



Centre provides a choice of seven various sized function rooms offering modern facilities within magnificent sandstone buildings. Audio/visual equipment, internet access/wifi, on-site parking and wheelchair access are all available. Guests may also utilise the air-conditioned Recreation Room with table-tennis, lounge area and kitchenette. There is also a tennis court, basketball court, handball courts and a huge playing

field with BBQ and picnic facilities.

Guests of Winbourne are delighted by the sumptuous dining experiences created onsite by Gourmet Fare Catering, providing delicious and nutritious country cooking. Special function menus for Weddings, Birthdays, Funerals, Baptisms and other private events can be arranged to suit your needs, and special dietary options are available upon request. Your next event de-

serves the best of everything... the peaceful country setting, touch of Australian history, comfortable accommodation and delicious food.

Dating back to 1824, Winbourne was originally owned by William Cox who was in charge of constructing the first road over the Blue Mountains. Activities on the estate varied through the years from the Cox sheep industry, vineyards and wine production, cultivation of

wheat and other cereal crops, fruit growing and dairying. In 1901 the property passed from the Coxes and became renowned throughout the land as a superior Guest House for the next fifty years. There is still much evidence of days gone by, including a large stone building originally comprising stables and coach-house (c1822).

The Christian Brothers purchased the property in 1958 as a House of Studies for the young Brothers undertaking their teacher-training and in 1974, Winbourne began to be used as a Retreat Centre for students and adults who were looking for a place where they might relax, reflect and pray.

Some sixty years later, the Centre continues to welcome groups and individuals from all walks of life including School Retreats (both students and teachers) Prayer & Parish Retreats, Meditation & Yoga Groups, Sporting Teams, Craft/Hobby Groups, Corporate Seminars, Funerals & Wakes, Weddings & Engagements. We can tell you why Winbourne is the place for your next event, but we would rather let you see for yourself.

**Our Events Team is available Monday to Friday during business hours to help you plan your next event and guided site-tours are available upon request. Please phone our friendly staff on (02) 4773 5555 to discuss your booking requirements.**



## Winbourne Retreat and Conference Centre



Historical Winbourne is a place of quiet reflection, peace and tranquillity, set on 100 acres in the picturesque Mulgoa Valley at the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Winbourne offers various sized conference rooms with modern AV equipment, two styles of accommodation for up to 150 guests and home-style catering.

- School retreats
- Spirituality days
- Church groups
- Professional groups
- Sporting groups
- Craft and Hobby groups
- Weddings, Funerals, Wakes and Special occasions

02 4773 5555

info@winbourne.org

www.winbourne.org

1315 Mulgoa Road, Mulgoa, NSW 2745



# Ways to pray

## PRAYING PERSONALLY

### Preparation

- 1** Create a focus: e.g. a lighted candle, crucifix, a flower, an open bible... on a small table.
- 2** Decide what length of time that you would like to devote to the prayer. An hour is a good period but the ability to spend such a period in prayer might need practising with shorter periods. Begin with what you feel comfortable with but you will need at least 20 minutes to a half an hour to pray as outlined here.
- 3** Use a chair which will enable you to keep your back straight, your two feet flat on the floor and if possible your knees at a slightly lower level than your torso.
- 4** If you are going to meditate on the written word have the bible or the sheet of paper available on a table or a chair at your side with the passage that you are going to meditate on. This enables you to read the passage while at the same time having the opportunity to put it aside leaving your hands free to adopt a position suitable for prayer.

### Prayer

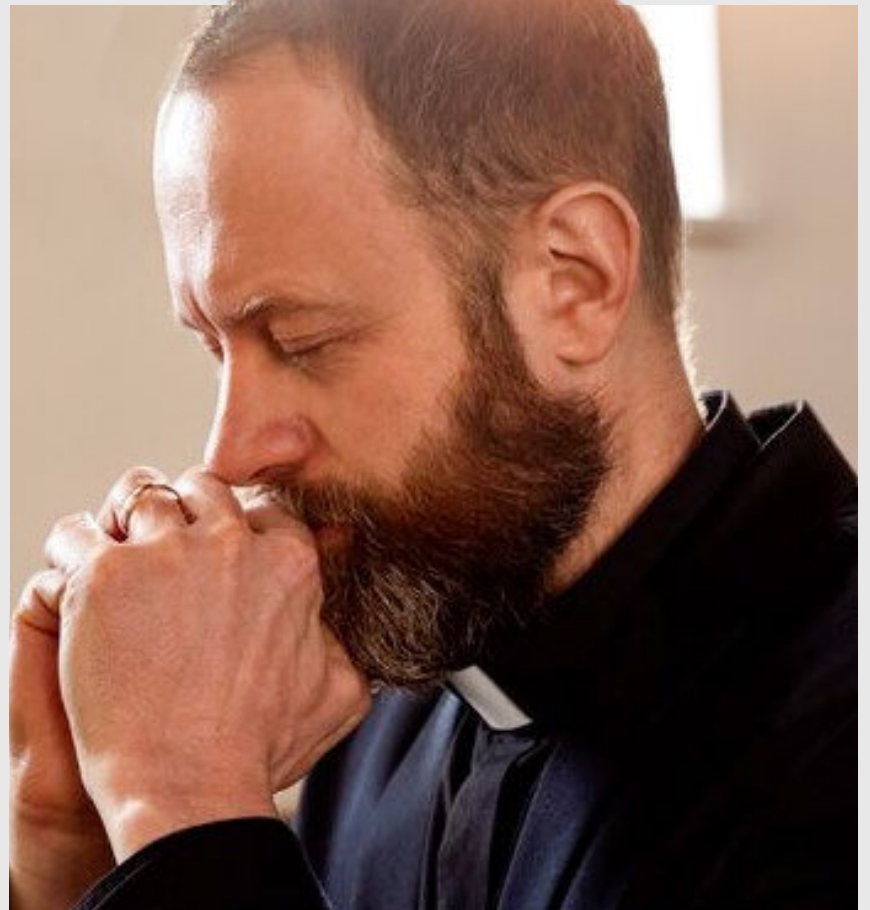
- 5** **The time of Prayer:**
  - Begin with the sign of the Cross, placing yourself in the presence of the Trinity.
  - Read the passage as a whole in a slow and leisurely way. Then read it again at a more leisurely pace. The passage can be read as many times as you choose.
  - During the reading the Spirit may cause you to pause on a phrase or a word or bring your mind to another passage from the Scripture or elsewhere.
  - The Spirit may cause you to make a prayer of petition, intercession, praise...
  - The Spirit may cause you to cease meditating and be silent...
  - Go with the Spirit!

### Conclude

- 6** Coming towards the end of the prayer period you may find yourself in a deep state of consciousness, in a meditative or contemplative state. It is good to ease yourself back into your material surroundings by becoming aware of them through a gentle exercise like listening intently to your surrounds, becoming aware of your breathing... You might then say some of the great prayers slowly to finish: the Our Father, the Glory Be to the Father, the Hail Mary or some other prayer which you like. You might conclude as you begun with the Sign of the Cross.

DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO BE AN EXPERT: JUST BEGIN! GOD IS WAITING PATIENTLY TO SPEAK WITH YOU; TO BE WITH YOU! HE IS YOUR BEST FRIEND.

\* This article is used with permission from "The Way of Prayer" a work of the Discalced Carmelite Order of the Australia-Oceania region. [carmelite.com/the-way-of-prayer](http://carmelite.com/the-way-of-prayer)



## LECTIO DIVINA

*Lectio Divina* literally means "divine reading". It is a way of praying which is very old and very simple. The Christian Monks gave it the name "*Lectio Divina*". The "Four Parts" follow the natural way in which the human being prays and can be simply practiced by every Christian.

### A Brief Explanation

#### LECTIO - Reading

Here the person takes up the "Word of God" and reads it. Traditionally the "Word of God" was taken from the Bible. It could also be a "Word of God" from the beauty of nature, from an event in our life, from a symbol, a poem etc.

#### MEDITATIO - Meditation

Here the person reflects on the "Word" which God has given them. They meditate on it, savour it... so that they can understand it in relation to their lives and their relationship with God, with others and with the world. The monks from the middle ages had a good image for this stage: the cow chewing the grass it had eaten. The cow chews the grass and it goes down into her stomach then it is regurgitated and she chews it again and again until all the goodness has been gained from the food. We "chew" on the "Word of God" and find its meaning; we find out what it is saying to us of God, of ourselves and of our relationships to others and to creation.

#### ORATIO - Prayer

Here thinking and reflecting gives way to talking. Having listened to what God is saying to us we speak to God. We enter into "conversation with one whom we know loves us". The conversation can be as wide and as varied as we would have with our best friend. However in this case, the best friend being God, we are moved to ask him for our needs or those of others, to thank him for his goodness to us and to praise and adore him.

#### CONTEMPLATIO - Contemplation

We may reach a stage in our speaking with God when words fail us and we want simply to be with him, to be simply in his presence and to enjoy his company silently. God as it were quietens us and we rest in him. The psalmist paints this stage beautifully: Truly I have set my soul in silence and peace, as a weaned child on its mother's breast, even so my soul. Ps 130 (131), 2

With these four steps any Christian can begin to pray. It is like a child walking, at first all the steps are studied and they are often accomplished with difficulty. Once the habit has been acquired it becomes second nature.



# Benedict XVI Retreat Centre



Sometimes in order to hear the still, small voice of God in our lives, we need to do as Christ did in the Gospels - remove ourselves from the crowds and withdraw to a quiet place.

The Benedict XVI Retreat Centre in Grose Vale is a place designed to allow the gentle voice of God to fill our hearts and minds. In a semi-rural bushland setting - about an hour's drive north-west of Sydney's CBD - the Retreat Centre permeates with a quietness that is accompanied by the chiming of bellbirds in the surrounding treetops.

While at the Retreat Centre you can spend time strolling around the beautiful 16-hectare property or sitting in the magnificent chapel, engaging in quiet conversation with the Lord.

There are lovely quiet places where you can reflect. Open to all age groups, the Retreat Centre was

designed with young people in mind. Named after the pope at the time, the Centre was envisaged as a place to allow young people who attended World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney to continue their spiritual journey - a place to renew and deepen their faith in fellowship with one another.

With accommodation for up to 150 people at a time, the Centre ca-

ters especially for school and parish groups, youth groups, university groups, and families. Sporting facilities on offer include tennis, volleyball and basketball courts, and a swimming pool.

Your group may book for the day, or stay for a series of nights. The Centre is fully catered, with a resident chef.

The jewel in the crown of Bene-

dict XVI Retreat Centre is the chapel. Many influences are evident in its design Romanesque, Gothic and a little bit of Australiana.

As you enter the chapel, the inscription over the doorway states, "House of God, Gate of Heaven." Once inside the eyes are drawn upwards to the domed area above the sanctuary where a beautiful Romanesque crucifix is suspended.

Beyond the crucifix, the blue of the ceiling evokes the blueness of the vault of heaven and of Our Lady's mantle. There are several cut-outs in the blue ceiling in the shape of the fleur-de-lis, representing the Trinity. The floor is paved in earthy tones so that there is a sense of a meeting between heaven and earth.

Behind the altar a series of gilded frescoes are displayed depicting the life of Christ, copies of icons by Neocatechumenal Way co-founder Kiko Arguello.

Whilst the chapel is the focal point, the whole Centre has a spiritual atmosphere. There's a beautiful sense of peace and calm. Groups who have stayed often remark that they feel at home. The best testimony is the people who return to the Centre time and time again. While the Retreat Centre has a distinctly Catholic spirituality, it is open to all.



Located in a beautiful bushland setting at Grose Vale, near North Richmond, the Centre is approximately 70 minutes by car from Sydney's CBD.

**Centre Location**  
347 Grose Wold Road, Grose Vale NSW 2753  
**Bookings and Enquiries**  
bxvi@sydneycatholic.org  
Tel: 02 4572 2899 (business hours)  
[www.benedictxvicentre.org.au](http://www.benedictxvicentre.org.au)



# Award-winning accommodation, best kept secret on the Capricorn coast



The Haven Emu Park is an award-winning accommodation and event venue situated on a gentle sloping hillside with over four hectares of manicured grounds and private access to the beautiful Haven Beach.

With its magnificent views over the Kepple Bay Islands in the Capricorn Coast this venue is exquisite, unique, and seriously the best kept secret on the Capricorn coast. Once you arrive you will regret not having booked longer and while arriving is easy it's the leaving that's hard.

To complement our accommodation, we have two fantastic event halls perfect for small to larger sized groups.

Our **MacKillop Event Hall** is a large air-conditioned hall where guests can enjoy the wrap around veranda with its stunning panoramic views.

The **Penola Dining room** has the most exquisite views from its large picture window capturing the gorgeous sapphire seas and the Kepple Islands.

Complementing our event halls, is a large undercover BBQ area and two function lawns to enjoy an outdoor dinner or cocktail evening.

At *The Haven* we are experienced in hosting many events customising our event packages to suit your budget and requirements.

We are pleased to say that we won First and second place awards in the 2023 Capricorn Wedding Awards for our accommodation options and the uniqueness of our stunning beachfront location.

Our function rooms are available for day use and can be packaged with our accommodation options.

*The Haven* is multipurposed and the perfect location for beach front holidays, events, and functions like, leadership team building, intensive training getaways, school groups, yoga, wellness retreats, gourmet food gatherings, crafting getaways and so much more. We have the facilities to make your event and holiday a memorable and successful one.

Our fully equipped houses are so popular for beach holidays and getaways and are often used for small retreats, workshops, wedding accommodation and family get togethers.

There is so much to do at *The Ha-*



“

An award-winning venue, exquisite and unique with magnificent views over the Kepple Bay Islands on the Capricorn coast.”

*ven*, we are wonderfully located right on the beachfront where you can walk for a few hours enjoying the sea breezes and the best views. The beach is often calm as it is a bit of a cove at one end and shallow enough for young children to enjoy and further down the beach is great for some fishing.

As the waters are quite calm most of the time it is great for kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding. Just five minutes down the road is our causeway lake where you can hire kayaks sit on water paddle bikes and fish to your hearts content.

Up the coast 20 minutes away is the amazing Yeppoon Lagoon and water parks and for those who love golf the golf course is just five minutes away from us. We have the best little coastal village just five minutes down the road which is a picture-perfect little paradise offering little shops and café's all nestled between the ocean each side. You may find that you are going home for a holiday from your holiday due to the many options you have to enjoy on the Capricorn Coast. When staying at *The Haven* you have a choice of houses to pick from.



#### Fitzroy House and Copperfield House

Two modern, well-appointed double-level houses, each self-contained with five bedrooms and three bathrooms sleeping up to 10 people each.

Both houses have a fully equipped kitchen, laundry, living room, balcony, and veranda with outdoor setting and BBQ with expansive views out to Keppel Bay.

#### Joseph Place

This is a delightful single level family home perfect for young children and features a fully equipped kitchen, full laundry, Large living room and courtyard with expansive views out to Keppel Bay. With five bedrooms this lovely family home can sleep up to ten people and has two bathrooms

one with a bath tub and shower.

#### Alexander Villa

Perfect for couples or singles looking for self-catered options, Alexander Villa is a rustic beach-house.

This delightful villa features a self-contained one-bedroom house with a shower, kitchen, living room and outdoor veranda with views of Keppel Bay.

#### McDonald Cottage

McDonald Cottage is a delightful cozy self-contained one-bedroom cottage with a Queen bed, kitchen, living area and bathroom and small porch area.

#### LOCATION

The Haven is situated a 45 minute drive from Rockhampton Airport,



which has direct 1 hour flights from Brisbane, 20 kms south of Yeppoon, and 3 minute drive to Emu Park, which is an idyllic coastal town with restaurants and convenience stores.

#### CLIMATE & DESTINATION

The sub-tropical climate in coastal central Queensland is ideal year round. With its proximity to the Keppel Islands and the Southern Great Barrier reef, the Capricorn Coast is the perfect place to escape the cold southern winter.

#### Julian Lodge

Boasting breathtaking views out to Great Keppel Island, Julian Lodge is a 17 bedroom lodge which sleeps up to 38 people.

#### Accommodation includes:

- 9x twin rooms with en-suite (can be up-graded to a King room)
- 3x family rooms (queen and two singles) with en-suite
- 5x ocean view Queen rooms with shared bathroom

Spaciously set over four levels, Julian Lodge is perfect for small and large groups. Guests can enjoy breathtaking views from the full length balcony or relax on the manicured lawn overlooking the sapphire seas of the Keppel Islands.

Equipped with a large kitchenette, 2 spacious entertainment/sitting areas with a large entertainment TV for games and movie nights, and with enough space to sleep up to 38 guests comfortably, Julian Lodge is ideal for holidays for larger family groups, retreats, workshops, training days and corporate off-sites.

Julian Lodge compliments our well-appointed functions spaces (The MacKillop & The Penola rooms and the reception lawn) and commercial kitchen. The Lodge can be booked for overnight accommodation for individual rooms, terms and conditions apply.

Beach front accommodation Event Venue