



RAINFOREST RETREAT, VILLAS
& LOST WORLD SPA
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PIONEERING ECOTOURISM FAMILY CELEBRATE A CENTURY MILESTONE

2011 marks 100 years since legendary pioneering ecotourism family, the O'Reilly's, first arrived in the rugged mountain wilderness of the Gold Coast Hinterland with a dream. The rest, they say, is history...

In 1911, the O'Reilly boys, made up of five brothers and three cousins, headed north from the Blue Mountains to carve a home for themselves on the rainforest covered spurs of the McPherson Range in the Gold Coast Hinterland. They paid 35 shillings an acre for approximately 100 acres of land each, as the first and only selectors to settle in the area and take up dairy farming.

That should have been the first sign.

Dairying was a difficult living and carting cans of cream by packhorse to the dairy down the rugged 15km Cainbale Creek track was hard going – and with typical Irish luck, sometimes the cream had churned to butter by the time they had got there.

In comparison, tourism seemed a much easier option.

Hardy souls started visiting the area, known then as Green Mountains, as early as 1914. Originally, guests faced a two day expedition via train, coach and horseback to reach O'Reilly's from Brisbane.

"By the time they got here, they were already part of the family," said second generation family member, Peter O'Reilly.

When they finally arrived by packhorse under O'Reilly family escort, the accommodation was a mere slab hut complete with air-conditioning – through the cracks in the walls.

In 1915, the area was declared World Heritage listed Lamington National Park, effectively surrounding the O'Reilly's piece of paradise.

Guests loved to explore this newly opened wilderness and the O'Reilly family were happy to share it (and for the company). The family guided them to scenic spots on trails especially cut for the purpose, where they enjoyed a meal of damper and billy tea. This traditional morning tea is still served on guided walks today.

After the hassle of getting there, it's amazing that any guests returned at all, but the warmth of the family hospitality was enough to make up for a lack of creature comforts for early intrepid visitors. It was the positive feedback of those early guests that sowed the seed for the ecotourism success story that O'Reilly's has become.

In 1926 the first generation O'Reilly's decided to officially open a guesthouse. It was a brave move into a new frontier – they were dairy farmers and ecotourism was virtually unheard of.

Setting up the guesthouse was also no simple prospect – building materials and supplies had to be transported 25km up the Stockyard Creek track by packhorse. Even a piano made the journey up the steep mountain track.

"I am full of admiration for the first generation who really did it tough, especially given the isolation," said Shane O'Reilly, Peter's eldest son and O'Reilly's Managing Director.

The guesthouse came in to prominence with Bernard O'Reilly's discovery of the ill-fated Stinson aircraft, which crashed in 1937 in the mountains to the south. His two-day trek through thick and uncharted jungle to rescue the two remaining survivors was a remarkable feat of human endurance and determination; qualities that run strongly through the O'Reilly family's blood today.

Both the journey and accommodation have changed over the past 100 years, but the dedication and passion of the family remain the same. Indeed, O'Reilly's and nature have become known as one.

Today, O'Reilly's remains the oldest continuously family owned and operated guesthouse in Australia. One thing that won't change is their philosophy of treating our guests as friends, friends as family, and family as gold.

The O'Reilly family promises its guests, many of whom return year after year, an unforgettable experience filled with the simple pleasures of life – laughing, appreciating nature, and making new friends.

"Our family continues to grow and so does our story, of which we are proud and happy to share with our guests and our friends," Peter O'Reilly said.

O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat is celebrating its century milestone with traditional Irish cheer. A 'centurion celebration' weekend is planned for 16 – 18 September hosted by three generations of the O'Reilly family. O'Reilly's 'extended' family of past guests and new friends are invited to join in the celebrations including historical walks hosted by family members, sunset drinks at a cliff-top lookout and dinner with the O'Reilly family.

O'Reilly's is in the Gold Coast Hinterland, only 2 hours drive from Brisbane or 1 ½ hours from the Gold Coast.

For further information, contact O'Reilly's on 1800 688 722 or visit www.oreillys.com.au.

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INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

Peter O'Reilly, second generation family member, and Shane O'Reilly, third generation family member and Managing Director, are available for interview on request.

For further information please contact:

O'Reilly's Communications

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HI-RES IMAGES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST:



Bark Humpy



Guests travelling to O'Reilly's



O'Reilly's Guesthouse 1926



O'Reilly's today



Moonlight Crag



O'Reilly's Villas