



RAINFOREST RETREAT

Lamington National Park Road, Via Canungra QLD 4211

Ph: 07 5502 4900 Fax: 07 5502 0988 E-mail: reservations@oreillys.com.au Visit: www.oreillys.com.au



Media Release

Total Pages: 3



Eco-Tourism Pioneer still the best

After pioneering eco-tourism in Australia 80 years ago, the O'Reilly family has combined old-fashioned experience with modern best practice to become one of the most highly regarded eco-tourism operators in Australia - winning the highest praise from industry experts.

Tourism Australia Chairman and former Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer has described a visit to O'Reilly's as a 'splendid experience', whilst Ecotourism Australia Chief Executive Stephen Pahl has praised the historic eco-resort as an 'Australian treasure'.

As they prepare to mark the 80th anniversary of the opening of their original guesthouse in the midst of World-Heritage listed Lamington National Park, the O'Reilly's commitment to caring for this precious piece of sub-tropical paradise couldn't be stronger, having completed a comprehensive new environmental management plan to ensure they remain at the forefront of eco-tourism.

And O'Reilly's new eco-friendly development, the 48-villa 'Mountain Bowers', due for completion next year, will ensure guests continue to enjoy the beauty of the environment, while treading lightly on the earth.

O'Reilly's enjoys Advanced Eco-Accreditation and last year achieved benchmarking by the international Green Globe organization for its environmental management practices.

Steven Pahl has heaped praise on the O'Reilly's for their contribution to the Australian eco-tourism industry and the family's vision for the future.

"O'Reilly's pioneered Ecotourism and sustainable tourism operations in Australia, through their continued dedication and commitment to the surrounding environment, building a globally recognised family guesthouse operation in harmony with, and complimentary to, the surrounding National Park," Mr Pahl said.

"Indeed O'Reilly's and nature had become known as one – through the innovative interpretive opportunities offered at O'Reilly's, and immersion of visiting guests into a complete 'sense of place' within the unique rainforest environment surrounding the O'Reilly's Guesthouse."

"This experience has been enjoyed by thousands of guests from around the world and become synonymous with unique Ecotourism experiences in Australia."

Tim Fischer, a regular guest to O'Reilly's, believes it offers a unique experience.

“It is the increasingly rare combination of a family clan successfully managing intergenerational transfer, matched with the rarefied atmosphere of the green mountains that creates the splendid experience of O’Reilly’s,” Mr Fischer said.

“It is a superb place to mend mind, body and soul, to have time out from the increasingly frenetic world, but if you must there is even mobile telephone coverage to keep in touch! See you in the great Lamington National Park soon!!”

O’Reilly’s participated in early trials under the internationally acclaimed Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP), and won accreditation in the very first round.

Indeed third generation O’Reilly, Peter, was National President of the Eco-tourism Association from 1997, in the critical years when the industry was starting to embrace certification, and now Manages the Environmental Tourism Unit of Tourism Queensland.

The NEAP accreditation logo identifies O’Reilly’s as having achieved best practice in vital areas including ecological sustainability, natural area focus, education and interpretation, contribution to conservation, working with local communities, cultural history, client satisfaction and responsible marketing.

In August 2005 O’Reilly’s was awarded a Benchmarked Certificate under the prestigious Green Globe program, which accredits environmentally friendly tourism businesses of the highest calibre, becoming one of only a dozen such companies in Australia to achieve such recognition.

Claire Hendrie, Customer Services Manager for Green Globe Asia Pacific, said O’Reilly’s had worked hard to ensure positive outcomes from its environmental management plans.

“In particular O’Reilly’s exceeded Best Practice results in the areas of Energy Consumption, Potable Water Consumption, Resource Conservation and Cleaning Chemicals Used, an achievement that has been highly commended. These measures will deliver ongoing reduction of non-renewable resources, extensive cost savings and secure a sustainable commercial and ecological future for O’Reilly’s.”

The original O’Reilly brothers started showing visitors around as early as 1914, even before Lamington National Park was officially proclaimed a year later. In 1919 they were made honorary rangers, with Mick O’Reilly appointed working overseer of the park - effectively Queensland’s first National Park Ranger.

Mick’s grandson and O’Reilly’s Managing Director Shane O’Reilly, describes the family’s experience as a classic case of a land-owner finding a sustainable alternative to farming, in an area of great environmental significance.

“They’re original motivation was dairy farming, but they appreciated the beauty around them and the potential for tourism – which also seemed like a good alternative to the hard work of dairying in such an isolated location,” Mr O’Reilly said.

“Not that building the guesthouse was easy – they had to use horses to drag an engine up the mountain track so they could mill their own timber for the buildings, with other materials carried up by packhorse.”

The original guesthouse opened in 1926 – in contrast the latest extensions to the guesthouse were largely built from timber recycled all the way from the old Port Adelaide Woolshed.

“We bought some 45,000 lineal metres of Jarrah tongue and groove flooring and 2,500 metres of Jarrah beams and stored it for four years until we commenced construction,” Mr O’Reilly said.

The same approach is being taken to the Mountain Bowers development.

Environmentally friendly construction, which also incorporates energy efficient heating and flow restrictors on taps among other measures, is just one way that O'Reilly's is demonstrating best practice in eco-tourism.

"Our land is only used for conservation and tourism purposes, and we are committed to ecological sustainability, through energy efficiency, construction, water efficiency and wastewater treatment," Shane O'Reilly said.

"Importantly we are furthering conservation through our education, culture and activity programs and through environmental research."

O'Reilly's daily 'Discovery Programs' feature guided walks, four wheel drive bus trips, a flying fox ride, wildlife spotlighting, glow worm walks, audio-visual presentations and nature documentaries and a fun and educational 'Scrub-Club' for the kids.

"We are famous for the quality of our interpretative discovery program, with ninety years of rainforest and mountain experience woven into the content," Mr O'Reilly said.

"Our special interest weeks, including our famous Bird Week, provide further opportunities for discovery and education."

"In the area of environmental research, we conduct annual surveys during our Bird, Mammal and Frog weeks and actively support research into the natural environment of Lamington National Park, including research and recovery programs for threatened and endangered species."

"We also worked with the Green Mountains Natural History Association to develop the internationally famous Tree Top Walkway, the first of its kind in Australia, and the wheel-chair accessible Python Rock Track & Lookout – all in the name of enhancing the visitor's environmental experience."

Special celebrations are planned to mark the 80th anniversary of the guesthouse, and the O'Reilly's will continue to serve up nature with the warm hospitality for which they are renown.

Ends.

For further information please contact:

Amanda Tidmarsh

Phone: 07 5502 4900

Fax: 07 5502 0988

E-mail: amanda@oreillys.com.au

Visit: www.oreillys.com.au

Or Kathy Bourke

Phone 07 5527 8511

0419 757 622

E-mail: Kathy@articulatecommunications.com.au