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Best of all, we have this magnificent scene largely to ourselves.

Having settled right in at Corner Cottage, Onyx rebukes passers-by as we rustle up a lasagne and lunch lazily, blissfully losing ourselves in several hours of reading and daydreaming.

But it's Sunday and Leura village will be abuzz. We're hoping Onyx will curb his tendency to herd those slower than himself. Weaving through back streets, along grassy verges, we admire miner's cottages, imposing Federation piles, jaunty art-deco treasures and bungalows with dance-hall sized verandas. The gardens, with their dry stone walls, saucy sculptures and vast outdoor lounging zones, evoke European images.

Avant-garde but relaxed, Leura village is crammed with cafes and tempting

eateries, bookshops and artisan galleries. Framed by cherry trees, people sun themselves on the grass island in the centre of the road. The suave atmosphere rubs off on Onyx – he's pure finesse as he air – kisses two chocolate Labradors and a glammed-up Doberman.

Our day has been crammed with fresh sights and sensations and we're all the more relaxed for having walked everywhere.

The Blue Mountains, especially the area around Katoomba and fringing villages like Leura and Wentworth Falls, were formerly a hill-station retreat for lovers of the good life. In the 1920s and 30s the buzz was all about the therapeutic effects of mountain air and the glitterati of the day—at a time when status was gauged by how you spent your time rather than by possessions—flocked to be seen at the mountains. Their party palaces still ooze attitude.

Reminders of both the bohemian and the bourgeois past linger at Katoomba, just a short drive from Leura but pulsing to a grungier vibe. Home to an alternative, arty community, Katoomba boasts a dazzling collection of art-deco buildings and grand old guesthouses. As we revel in an antique warren laden with curvaceous 30s glassware and fine china, Onyx is transfixed by the people parade outside.

Sunset at Echo Point lookout deservedly draws a crowd, but Onyx won't be deterred from flirting with Bella, a slinky Golden Retriever.

We were hoping to explore scenic nooks such as the Megalong and Capertee Valleys and heritage hot-spots Portland and Lithgow, beyond the Great Dividing Range. But winter is about going slow—we manage to dawdle as far as historic Mt Victoria.

However, our cheeks are flushed, our spirits are high and Onyx, in true Bohemian style, has just spotted a new love interest, Banjo the spoodle.



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