

Hey, it's Tamborine, man

Kylie Davis gets a taste of the high life in the Gold Coast hinterland.

KOOKABURRAS are eyeing up my lunch. Four fly in and perch in the branches that shade the beautiful Songbirds restaurant in Mt Tamborine on the Gold Coast.

The last time I saw a kookaburra with that look, the day ended badly with a bold bird swooping down and stealing a string of sausages from our barbecue.

He slapped them against a tree to make sure they were dead, before gobbling them, wrecking our picnic.

If these four think they're getting my pan-roasted Hervey Bay scallops with caramelised pork belly, pickled walnuts, apple, sage and Dijon mustard, they've got another thing coming. But Mt Tamborine creates an atmosphere for lovers, not fighters. Stone buddhas dot the lushly landscaped gardens and the tables are set on a large expanse covered by sails.

The restaurant is packed for lunch. Groups of retirees are taking time out from exploring the hinter-

land and there are couples staying in the onsite villas. American tourists exclaim loudly how only 40 minutes ago they were walking on Mermaid Beach. Everyone surveys the menu of dishes of locally grown ingredients and organic produce. The wine list too has organic options.

We flew in by helicopter, landing near the veggie patch and whipping the lemon tree into a frenzy. The trip took just 15 minutes and is clearly the only way to go to lunch.

The flight left from Broadbeach, following the golden line of coast with its white topped breakers. It is a perfect flying day, sunny and clear. Below the surface of the water we can see the fish and the shipwreck of the Scottish Prince which sank in 1887.

Then we arch and head into the pointy headed mountains of green. Chief pilot, Scott Menzies, points to a mountain peak and tells me he's getting married there on the week-

end. I wonder what it's like to go to work each day in the sky, with the place where you exchanged vows constantly on the horizon. It seems impossibly romantic.

Back at the restaurant, our exquisitely presented mains have arrived. I've chosen Moreton Bay bugs, king prawns and asparagus with tarragon bouillon. My friend is dining on roast breast of organic chicken with pumpkin puree, mushroom and almond fricassee and lemon emulsion. We finish with a sugar hit. My dessert is a peanut butter sandwich of crunchy ice cream with pillows of raspberry cloud. The kookaburras find this hysterically funny and their combined calls echo through the forest. But as we're the ones who were well-fed and full of good cheer, the last laugh is on them.

Kylie Davis was the guest of Gold Coast Tourism Corporation

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► Songbirds restaurant where the location and the food are divine.