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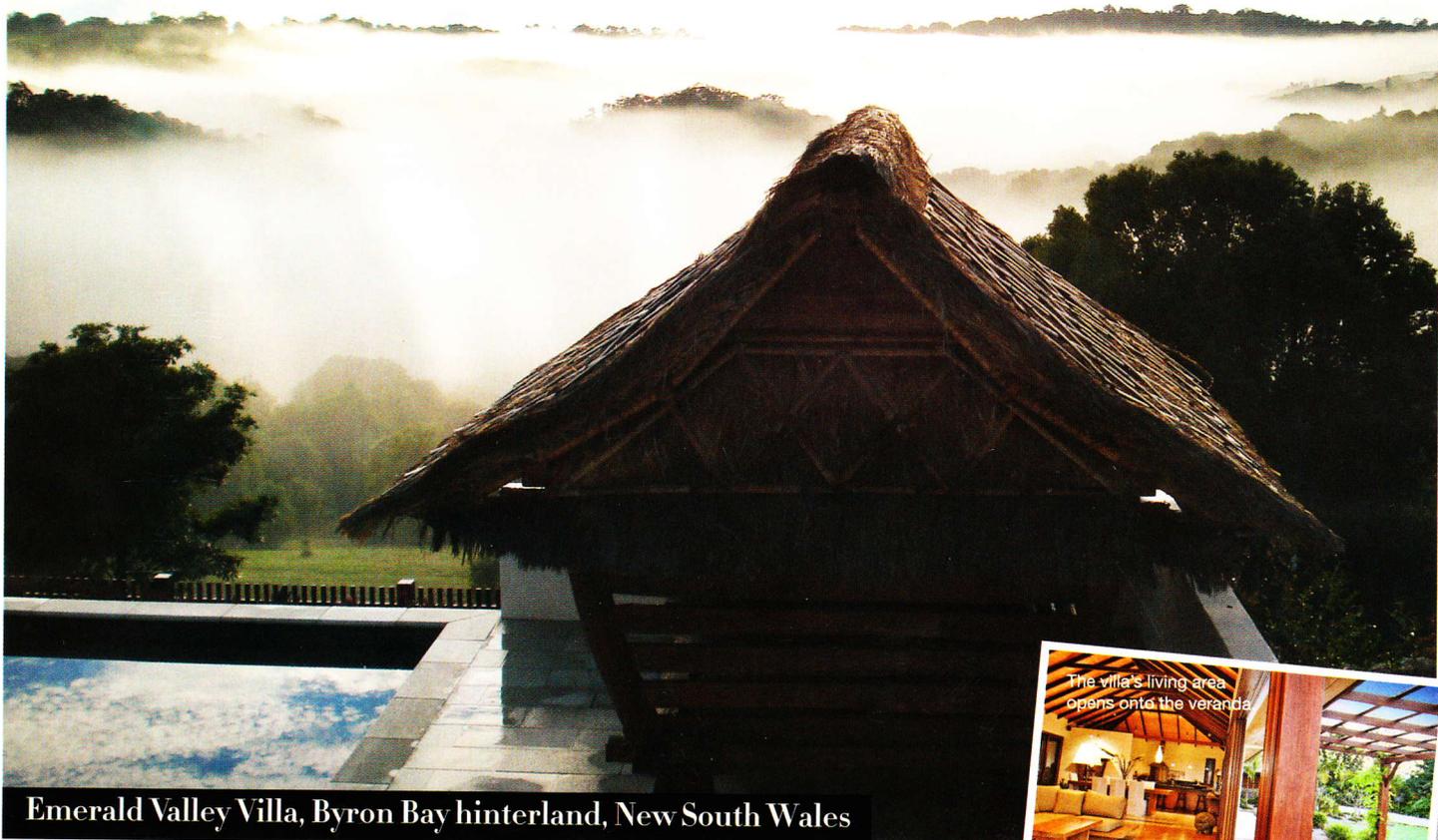
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Emerald Valley Villa, Byron Bay hinterland, New South Wales

Famous US movie stars have stayed and it's an in-the-know destination for fashion-industry insiders. Upon arriving at Emerald Valley Villa in Byron Bay's lush hinterland, it's easy to see why: it is five-star all the way and so cleverly designed that anyone, whether a movie siren or a fashion designer, can revel in complete privacy in the midst of what must be one of the most beautiful regions in the world.

The villa — or compound, such is its generous size — sits right on a ridge overlooking what is indeed an emerald valley, full of the brightest green trees you can imagine with views to the opposite hills. A lovely and somewhat romantic touch at night is that it's possible to see the rhythmic flashing of light from the Byron Bay lighthouse, which illuminates the horizon. During the day, the views from the villa can be, depending on the weather, cobalt-blue skies or rolling grey clouds.

Inside the villa it's all Balinese style, from the elegant central courtyard with its meditation pool filled with gold and red fish to the Balinese antiques found throughout. All the rooms open on to this internal space, including the massive lounge room, kitchen and dining area that blend together under a soaring roof of honey-coloured wood.

Relax on the enormous day bed-style couches (complete with cashmere throws) and watch a movie on the huge screen TV (there's an excellent selection of DVDs). A balcony overlooks the pool (ionised water, darling) and an extremely private day pavilion is perfect for a secret tryst.

Everything here is luxe, from the fresh flowers in every room to the huge walk-in closet in the master bedroom and the decadent marble bathroom with windows you can throw open to let in the pristine air.

But don't think the other guests (or the hired help, if you're a movie star) do too badly: each of the bedrooms (there are four) are equally well-appointed with views over the manicured, tropical gardens and artful garden beds (the designer used to do Kerry Packer's gardens). There's even a conference and business office if you really have to take



The villa's living area opens onto the veranda.



The ionised pool is chlorine and salt-free.

that meeting about your next film project or in case Harvey Weinstein calls.

Bored yet? I don't think so. Book a massage with Tracey Lee, a local masseuse who really knows how to work those kinks out of your body. After that, retire to the steam room or perhaps pop out and have a spa in the secret outdoor grotto with views of the valley. There's even a waterfall and swimming hole a pretty 20-minute meander from the villa with its own pavilion and day beds for contemplating the serenity.

The on-site concierge will organise a local chef to prepare meals for you if it's all too hard to cook and there's no need to worry about your eco-footprint as the whole place operates on 100 per cent green power. Perfect in every way.

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By Margaret Merten