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Rest, play and work

Getaway spots have adapted for a bit of work among the relaxation. *Brad Howarth* checks in for a look.

Break: Calabash Bay Lodge (below) and Emerald Hill Villa (above) offer work amenities for busy bodies.

WHITSUNDAYS WORK-AWAY

The luxury five-star Whisper Bay resort (whisperbay.com.au) at Queensland's Airlie Beach has workaholics in its sites. Each of the resort's apartments, villas and penthouses comes with a study equipped with phone, fax and broadband connection, and the entire resort is connected to the internet via WiFi. "Our buyers tend to own their own business or are very high-level directors and have a lot of responsibility, so these people need to have contact with their office. Hence that need for connectivity," says development manager Angus MacInnes. A stay at the Whitsundays usually includes plenty of activities and the resort has been designed so guests can work part of the day then hit the water in the afternoon.

The commute to this office is a bit tricky. Even after you've driven 45 minutes north of Sydney you still face a 10-minute boat ride before you can get to work. And at $500 a day the rent is kind of pricey. But then take a look at that view…

Calabash Bay Lodge at Berowra Waters (calabashbaylodge.com.au) is one of a growing number of smaller five-star getaways and resorts that have realised for many entrepreneurs and executives the thought of taking a mid-week break from the office is just too painful to contemplate. So rather than miss out on this wealthy market why not let them bring the office with them?

While the mobile phone reception at Calabash Bay is patchy, the small inconvenience is made up for by the luxury fittings and tranquility. WiFi has been installed throughout the lodge, so you can check email or use the internet while enjoying the spectacular view from the deck, looking out from the water's edge towards the unspoiled Berowra Valley Bushland Park. The broadband connection is fast enough to take calls using Skype or other online services – which can be handy if you want to make a dinner reservation at the five-star Berowra Waters Inn, just a five-minute boat ride away.

Calabash Bay owners Kim Mathes and Derek Ellis created the lodge as a place to escape from the city where one could stay connected to it and the outside world. Mathes says since the lodge opened in January clients have been quick to take advantage of it. "It's just great to be able to escape up here, 45 minutes out of the city, and still feel like you are a world away without being totally isolated," Mathes says.

Calabash Bay Lodge isn't the only getaway to have caught on to the trend of workaholics wanting to step away from the bustle of city life for a few days; an increasing number around the country offer free broadband and WiFi, or even fully equipped offices.

The five-star Emerald Hill Villa in the Byron hinterland in Northern New South Wales (emeraldvalleyvilla.com) offers broadband internet and phone facilities in all bedrooms and living areas. New South Wales Tourism Minister Matt Brown says hoteliers and accommodation owners are adapting to the changing needs of luxury travellers. "With the changing nature of business and technology, tourism providers may need to offer the opportunity to stay in contact with the outside world – be it with the office or with friends and relatives," Brown says.

A holiday with all the convenience of a modern office may not be everyone's idea of a getaway but for those who really can't leave the office behind then a change really might be as good as a holiday. And if you can't face the commute to Calabash Bay Lodge you can always take the seaplane back to Sydney. ✦