



Simply relax: If a dip in the tropical lagoon-style pool (above) doesn't melt away your stresses, the range of luxurious spa options (top) available at the resort certainly will.

out with the old, in with the new

The facelift that's happened at Kuranda Resort and Spa has turned a run-down resort into one the best in the Far North, writes REBECCA WALLIS

Do a quick internet search of Kuranda Resort and Spa and you'll almost certainly be put off by the reviews. Comments like "disappointing" and "run-down" crop up – but thanks to new management, that's all set to change.

The rainforest getaway has just undergone a major facelift that could put it on the map as one of Cairns' ultimate retreats.

The 4.45ha, 50-room complex has always had the wow factor – stone floors and wooden buildings that melt into the leafy surroundings, an atmospheric open restaurant and bar sitting on the edge of a tropical lagoon-style pool and more greenery than you could shake a stick at – but it was the little things that were letting the place down.

"It was things like the roofs of the villas and rooms that needed lining to keep the bugs out and the heat in when it was cold," general manager Doug Stephens told me during a recent stay.

"We also decided to add some mod cons like flat-screen TVs and top-of-the-range CD players and generally improve standards all over."

The resort was also suffering problems with its reputation. Just a few years ago it was a place for gay holidaymakers and ever since has had trouble shaking off the association.

Doug was faced with the huge task of not only renovating the complex and improving standards, but also convincing locals and past visitors that this isn't the same place it was.

One year and more than a million dollars later, the Kuranda Resort and Spa is now a top class venue, not just for holidaymakers, but also for honeymooners, diners, spa lovers and even those looking for a tropical rainforest wedding.

Billed as a place to relax and rejuvenate, it doesn't disappoint. The natural materials used in its construction help to get you back to nature and away from the stresses of city life.

Simple things like the rustic stone floor, the glowing log fire and friendly staff make you feel like you're staying with friends, not in a hotel.

But how many friends do you know with a tennis court, 30-seat movie theatre, walking



Natural elegance: The stylish villas (top) and pool-side eating area (above) are as inviting as each other.

and running tracks, a gym and broadband internet cafe?

Then there are the four swimming pools connected by cascading waterfalls that even in the chill of winter are inviting. For the aqua experience without the frostbite, however, there's a huge hot tub just a stone's throw from the bar.

Pick a villa with a spa bath inside though, and you'll have little reason to actually leave your cabin – except for the food, of course.

But you don't have to stay the night at the Kuranda Resort and Spa to appreciate the menu.

The Forest Fusion Restaurant and Bar is open to the public seven days a week. And with live bands every Friday night and a fabulous selection of breakfast, lunch and dinner options, it's well worth the journey.

During my stay, I tucked into one of the best steaks I've ever had, although I could have opted for kangaroo, oysters, or tempting vegetarian options among others. I also sampled the extensive cocktail and wine list, which took a little longer to get through.

Ideal for a hangover is a day at the spa and after floating in the clouds for my 90-minute Dreamtime massage and relaxation treatment, I can definitely recommend it.

There are also plans to add steam rooms and saunas, which could easily make this one of the best health retreats on the city's doorstep.

So whether you go for lunch, for a week, to get married or have a manicure, it's worth checking out the improvements that have been made to the Kuranda Resort and Spa.

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IF YOU GO

- **Kuranda Resort and Spa.** Corner Kennedy Highway and Greenhills Rd, Kuranda. www.kurandaresort.com – 1800 737 542
- Prices start at \$129 for a one-bedroom loft villa for one night, room only. You can also choose from multi-apartments, a two-bedroom villa with optional spa bath or a one-bedroom villa studio. The resort has a non-denominational chapel on its grounds for weddings.