

Pioneering history, walking trails, wineries and gourmet events complete the picture of the quiet Clare Valley as a place in which to relax and linger for a few days, writes DIANNE MATTSSON.

Mintaro Maze is a nice spot for coffee, cake and adventure, particularly with children in tow. Or you could pack a little picnic and settle on a bench at Timandra's water-wise garden. This eco-garden was designed to minimise the effects of climate change and use deep, infrequent watering. Tours, with Devonshire tea, are available. A must for green thumbs. But the must for everyone is the very new, rural-chic Swans at Mintaro. Marjorie Gosse has rebuilt and extended a settler's cottage and created a delightful restaurant open for breakfast, lunch and tea Friday to Monday, and now, on Friday and Saturday nights, for dinner. Shelves brim with edible souvenirs from the district, and Swans' delicacies.

In summer, a table on the deck with views of the surrounding fields makes it almost mandatory to order one more wine and linger.

In winter, large fireplaces, chic furniture next to rough mud plaster and stone walls have the same leisurely effect.

