

ESCAPES

An epicurean adventure

LAZING in the soft autumn sun that bathes Mt Tabletop we watch spellbound as our host prepares a feast on an alpine altar fit for an offering to the gods.

We tingle with anticipation as Graeme Clarke prepares mouth-watering cuisine on a silver platter — delicately flavored quail eggs, marinated artichokes, olives, salami, sardines, prosciutto, cantaloupe and dolmades.

We have found the health-conscious gourmets paradise!

The panoramic views take the breath away. The snow-patched peak of Mt Hotham sparkles, scarlet and emerald king parrots flash through the forest canopy and currawongs call across the fathomless valleys, their haunting song in perfect harmony with the alpine wilderness.

Graeme and Gabriela Clarke's Walkabout Gourmet Adventures are a delight. Anticipating each delicious course is an adventure in itself. Their lodge headquarters in the quaint Dinner Plain village near Mt Hotham is the hub of a multitude of activities.

Guests may take wildflower walks on the high plains, cycle, swim, play tennis, fish, go horse riding or pursue gentler passions such as painting, birdwatching or photography. Or just curl up on the couch with a book and soak up the warmth from the massive log fire.

One of the favorite walks on this five-day adventure is along the razorback trail to Mt Feathertop, the second tallest and queen of Victoria's mountains.



● Dining high on gourmet delights on Mt Tabletop.

The trail is one of the finest walks in the State, with mountain range after mountain range rolling to the horizon in all directions and fading to a blue vignette as moisture rises from the eucalypt forests.

On a clear night the stars hang low like huge chandeliers in a milky way as brilliant as anywhere in Australia. Awesome.

Graeme and Gabriela's trips are for healthy, active people of all ages who want a professionally organised holiday, enjoying gourmet foods with comfortable accommodation.

Sonographer Anne Delon said she would not hesitate to recommend this trip to her friends.

"I can't find enough superlatives to describe the food," she said. "It is excellent. Truly gourmet."

"Getting away from work and

meeting new friends in a fun alpine environment blew away the pressures of work and city."

Retired bank manager Ross Delon said he was impressed by many features of the holiday.

"The walks were well organised and not too strenuous," he said.

"I find the holiday good exercise and relaxing, especially after a bush-walk."

"And the huge log fires and candle-lit dinners are magnificent."

Walkabout Gourmet Adventures offer a wide range of tours in Australia and Europe. For details phone (03) 598 4904 or write to P.O. Box 2179 North Brighton, Vic 3186.

The cost of the Dinner Plain walkabout is \$545 a person, all inclusive with return transport from Melbourne.

— DARRELL ROLFE

