



Up, up and away from the rest

IT MAY, of course, have been the effect of the Moët, provided for me (and all paying guests) upon my mid-morning arrival, but somehow the strawberries in the complimentary fruit bowl — along with the mangos, rockmelons, apples, grapes, mandarins and pears — tasted better than any I've had in recent memory.

But that's not the first thing I remember about Villa Empat Puluh Dua (yes it is a mouthful). Rather, I recall how the driver had difficulty finding it on the hillside above Port Douglas, North Queensland's holiday resort town. That, though, is indicative of the main reason one would stay at the villa — you require

absolute privacy, you don't want to worry about who else you'll be sharing the swimming pool with or whether there is a spare sun lounger and, at a minimum charge of A\$1500 (\$1676) a night, you're willing to pay for it.

The villa is essentially a holiday home built, Indonesian-style, by Melbourne-based investor Joseph Mahon. It is run like a hotel in that a manager and housekeeper show up each day; otherwise it's like a home, with seven double bedrooms, ensembles attached and supplied with L'Occitane toiletries.

There's a book, CD and DVD library and a fully equipped kitchen, two barbecue

areas and the services of a chef from the town should you require one. A masseuse can be ordered up as well.

There is an infinity swimming pool, and the spectacular, palm-tree dotted view over Port Douglas — a favourite holiday spot of former President Clinton — and the Coral Sea that can be enjoyed even from the shower in the master bedroom.

The clientele for such secluded luxury are either families, or couples who like to holiday together.

Four Mile Beach is a five-minute walk from the villa — down steep concrete steps that cling to the cliff. It's a beautiful sweeping beach with gentle surf and sand

that doesn't whip up in the wind. My scientist friend tells me that's something do with it being coral sand.

The township is at the bottom of the hill also — enough shops, restaurants and bars to keep the holiday-maker satiated.

I came to Port Douglas with all sorts of plans to take trips out to the famed Great Barrier and up into the Daintree rainforest but — perhaps the effect of the Moët again — I quickly settled in and thought "Why leave the villa?" I'm told it is a common reaction. □

Jan Corbett was a guest of Villa Empat Puluh Dua.

SOLITUDE: The hordes don't make it to the lofty bliss of Villa Empat Puluh Dua.