

I'm Finja, 22 years old from Germany, and I had the incredible privilege of spending two unforgettable months at The Cottage in June and August 2024. My time there was amazing, thanks to Deb and Chris, who went above and beyond to make my experience one of a kind. From the moment I arrived, Chris warmly picked me up from the station and welcomed me into The Cottage, where I met the other girls. Exhausted and jetlagged, I was thankful for the cozy rooms and immediately felt right at home.

The Cottage itself is a charming, homely place with two houses side by side, each with two spacious, comfortable bedrooms.

A typical day at The Cottage started around 8 AM with a quick coffee and breakfast, after which we'd jump right into the daily tasks. Morning chores included feeding, prepping the next day's feed, and cleaning the two pony stables. Feeding time was a highlight—seeing how excited and happy the horses were when we arrived with their food was such a joy, especially for Tommy, who always greeted us VERY eagerly! After breakfast together, we'd get started on a variety of activities like maintenance, gardening, brushing the older horses, and, of course, plenty of riding. The evenings were just as fun, with the girls and I cooking dinner, watching movies, and playing games like Let's Dance. Days off were a chance to explore—whether it was a trip into Melbourne, visits to nearby beaches, or outings to the Wildlife Sanctuary. The Cottage's location made weekend trips easy, and I even went to Sydney with Sophia for a long weekend!

The horses at The Cottage are just wonderful, each with their own personality, but Pia was my absolute favorite. I loved sneaking in midday cuddles with her when I had a moment. She was an absolute joy to ride, and I miss her so much. Molly and Snoopy, the dogs, were also a constant delight—always around, always up for a cuddle, with Molly loving every bit of attention.

One of the best aspects of my stay was how much my riding improved. Deb and Chris have such a wealth of experience and love to share their knowledge. They gave lessons and tips with patience and encouragement, whether it was groundwork, riding bareback, jumping, or riding in the back paddock. It felt like every day brought a new skill or moment of learning.

Above all, I formed lasting friendships with Sophia, Aurora, Amelie, and Laurie. We shared so many laughs and memories and built bonds that we keep up. Deb and Chris felt like family too—they were always there, making sure we had everything we needed and filling each day with laughter (especially when Nova tried to avoid going back to her stable in favor of a snack!).

In every way, I couldn't recommend The Cottage more to anyone who loves horses, wants to improve their riding, and hopes to make beautiful, lifelong memories. Leaving was so hard, but I know I'll be back. Thank you, Deb and Chris, for the most incredible experience—I'll never forget it!

