

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO

# The Macleay Valley Coast

[macleayvalleycoast.com.au](http://macleayvalleycoast.com.au)





A FRIENDLY LOCAL AT LITTLE BAY, SOUTH WEST ROCKS



# Relax, you've come to the right place.

Remember the kind of easy, relaxed, and happy family holidays you took as a kid? How it was just swim-eat-swim, campfires, bare sandy feet, exploring with friends (old and new), corner stores, icy poles, sunscreen and mozzie spray, and not a care in the world? Where there were no traffic lights or long commutes, and the sounds of suburbia were replaced with the ocean and cicadas in equal measure?

**Welcome to the Macleay Valley Coast**, one of the few unspoilt, authentic coastal meets country regions in Australia. Down to earth and friendly, it's a collection of small towns with heart, and tiny villages with charm. And the setting? Sublime. This nature-lovers' haven has miles of pristine coastline, world-class surf breaks, majestic rivers, fertile farmland and ancient rainforest.

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

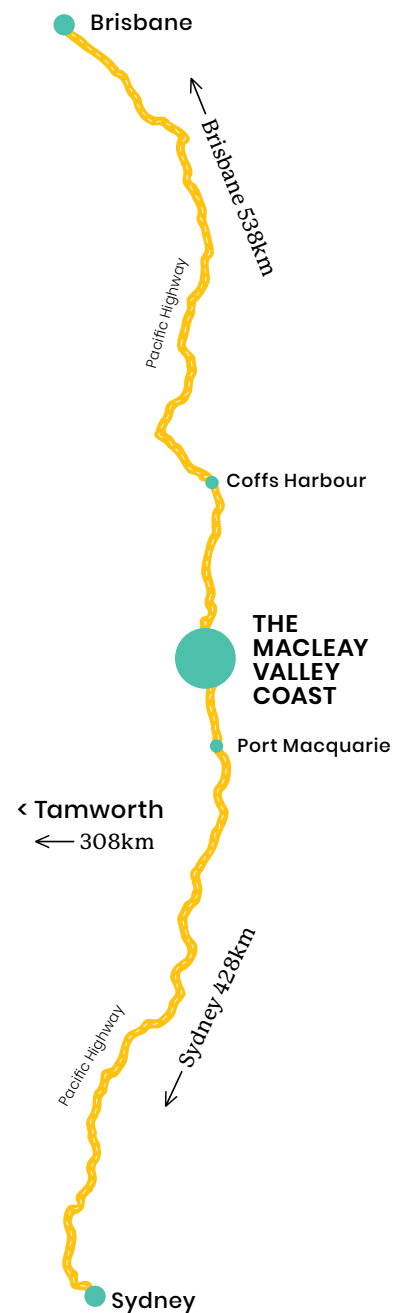
With lots of 'inside info' from the locals, we hope this guide inspires and helps you make the most of your stay here. It's not a business directory or an exhaustive list of everything you can eat, see and do in our region. For more detailed info, we direct you to various online resources using QR codes\*. We know not everyone loves them, but they can be very helpful! As things are subject to change, especially in the small villages we are known and loved for, we encourage you to check opening hours and other details online before setting off on your adventures.

Grab a cuppa, put your feet up, and have a browse through our guide. We think you're going to love it here! You'd best plan to stay a while so you can really get to know this special place.

\*QR Codes direct to various pages of our official visitor website, [macleayvalleycoast.com.au](http://macleayvalleycoast.com.au) (and you can go straight to the website for more info if you don't like using QRs)!

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that the following booklet may contain images and artworks of people who have passed away.

## Getting here



## Acknowledgement of Country

Kempsey Shire Council acknowledges the land of the Thunggutti/Dunghutti Nation. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the role of emerging leaders to continue to guide us in the future. We acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the need to change practices to be inclusive. This land always was and always will be Thunggutti/Dunghutti land.



FREDERICKTON ON THE MACLEAY RIVER

# Contents



KOROGORO CREEK - HAT HEAD

6-25

## Experiences

- » Our Top 10 'Must do's'
- » Beaches & Surfing
- » Dive & Paddle
- » Walk, Bike & Golf
- » Boat, Fish & 4WD
- » Creative Communities
- » Dunghutti & Thungutti Culture
- » Shop Local

26-37

## Drives & Itineraries

- » Tourist Drives 12 & 14
- » Itineraries:
  - 3 days in the Macleay for...
  - Family Fun
  - Back to Nature
  - Adventure
  - Indulge & Relax

38-39

## What's On

- » Annual Whale Migration
- » Markets

40-44

## Eat & Drink

- » Home Grown Heroes
- » Hidden Gems & Local Faves

45-48

## Stay

- » Coast
- » Hinterland

49

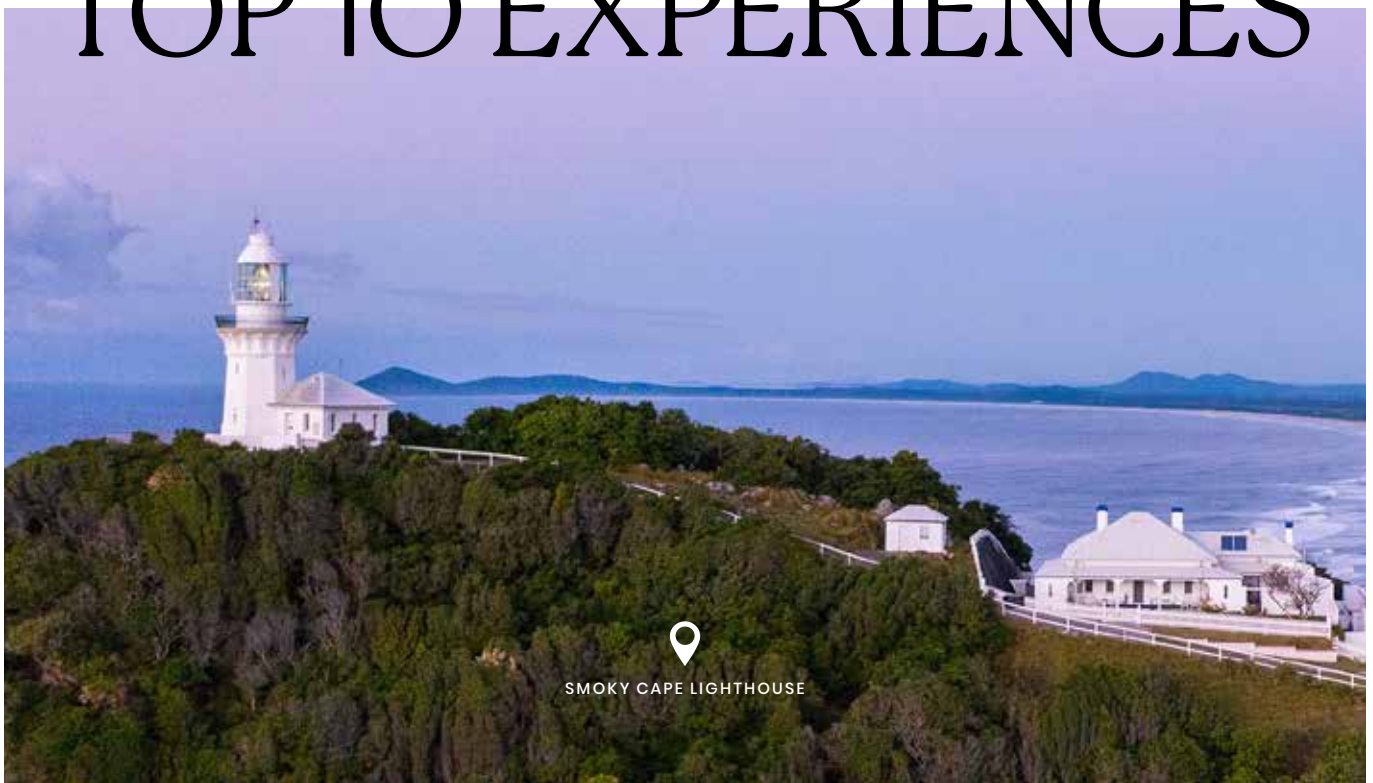
## Visitor Info

50-51

## Map

Cover image: Killick Creek, Crescent Head, by Piers Haskard

# TOP 10 EXPERIENCES



SMOKY CAPE LIGHTHOUSE

The votes are in! We've rounded up what visitors and locals alike consider 'unmissable experiences'. *\*Drumroll please\**... In no particular order:

1

## **Trial Bay Gaol**

Built in the 19th century to house prison labourers, today the Gaol is a picturesque, atmospheric ruin and a fascinating place to explore. It's one of the North Coasts' most popular attractions, with both guided and self-guided tours available. Located in Arakoon National Park, it overlooks the ocean with a campground below and restaurant behind it.

2

## **Surf & Swim at Crescent Head**

Soak up the sun, laid-back surf culture and pandanus-fringed vistas at much-loved 'Creso'. Learn to surf at one of several surf schools in town; this is a very popular surfing area. While many surfers wander over the rocks to venture into the surf, most people access the beach by crossing over the iconic footbridge bridge at Killick Creek. Swim at the patrolled beach or join the happy families floating down the creek with the tide (see cover image).

3

## **Learn about Local Aboriginal Culture**

The Dunghutti/Thunggutti and Ngambaa (pronounced 'num-bar'), means 'tribe that lived between nations', and is located on the boundary between the Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti language groups. These people have lived here for millenia, and their stories and history come alive through their art, and the language and traditions the Elders keep. You can view authentic local Aboriginal Art in a number of locations, including the must-visit Dunghutti-Ngaku Art Gallery (see pages 21-23).

4

## **Eat, Swim, & SUP at South West Rocks**

Spend the day at the beloved Horseshoe Bay. This small crescent of sandy goodness is the perfect family beach, being reasonably protected with plenty of grassy picnic spots and shady trees overlooking the water. You'll find plenty of eateries (and gelato) just a short walk away. Follow the boardwalk from the north end of Horseshoe Bay for a scenic two-kilometre walk over the Back Creek Bridge to the Mangrove Forest, and take a Stand Up Paddle (SUP) or kayak tour.

5

### Diving at Fish Rock

Located just off the coast from Smoky Cape Lighthouse, Fish Rock features one of the only dive-through caves in Australia and, at 120 metres long, is one of the largest ocean caverns in the southern hemisphere. There are Dive Shops and specialist charters available in South West Rocks.



MACLEAY VALLEY COAST • TOP 10 EXPERIENCES



SLIM DUSTY CENTRE

6

### Iconic Australian Nostalgia at the Slim Dusty Centre

This region is the birthplace of Australian Country Music legend, the late Slim Dusty, and this expansive Centre is a fitting tribute. Enjoy the museum of Slim's life, the gift shop, tasty treats at the Cafe, and the latest travelling art exhibition in the Nulla Nulla Gallery. There is plenty of parking for caravans and an EV charger on site. Staff can also give you more information for exploring the Macleay including directions for the beautiful 1 hour drive through the hinterland, out to view Slim Dusty's 'Homewood' at Nulla Nulla.

7

### Walk up to Smoky Cape Lighthouse

Built in 1891, Smoky Cape Lighthouse is well worth the relatively steep walk. The Lighthouse's huge 300-prism lens can project a beam 50 kilometres out to sea. This is also your best chance of spotting whales between May and September. You may also be joined by some curious kangaroos!

8

### Shop, Eat & Browse at Gladstone

This little riverside village has storybook charm. With many beautiful historic buildings along

Kinchela St, Gladstone also offers a heritage pub, galleries, cafes, and boutiques. Every third Sunday there's a popular market by the river, with live music.

9

### Walk, Float, Snorkel and Fish at Hat Head National Park

The crystal turquoise waters of the Korogoro Creek provide an opportunity for the whole family to enjoy a snorkelling and swimming adventure (or you can just lay back on a floatie and enjoy the view). At high tide you can spot lots of colourful fish.

10

### Head for the Hinterland

Enjoy a pub meal and the olde-world atmosphere at the perfectly restored Bellbrook Hotel, then head to Blackbird Flat on the reaches of the Macleay River for an afternoon of swimming, kayaking and fishing for bass. You can even pitch a tent beside the river, and in many spots, campfires and pets are allowed.



For heaps more stuff to see & do in the region, scan the QR.

# BEACHES & SURFING

We've got miles of pristine coastline to choose from, but where to start? We've rounded up the most popular spots here...





## The main break at Crescent Head is a designated National Surfing Reserve.

These Reserves are considered 'iconic places of intrinsic environmental, heritage, sporting and cultural value to a nation'. The world-famous point break boasts one of the longest rides in Australia. So, keen surfers - grab your board (or hire one locally) and try your luck at the Point. If you're a beginner, pick up some lessons with one of the friendly local surf schools.

## Head to the Map at the back of this Guide for beach locations.

**Locals tip:** *Our coastline is great for surfing year-round, especially in Winter! The water temperatures are mild and even the most popular breaks are uncrowded.*



### Patrolled Beaches

Scan the QR to check which beaches are patrolled by surf life saving patrols, and when.



## Point Plomer & Surrounds

Head down the 20 km stretch of coastline on Point Plomer Road south of Crescent Head Village and you'll find popular surfing, swimming and fishing beaches, offering numerous campground and cabin options along the way. Starting with the long sweep of Goolawah Beach. The corner of Goolawah Back Beach is one of the few protected spots in a north-east wind and is worth the walk from the car park if you want to enjoy a fun left hander.

Next up is the long stretch of Racecourse Beach. Quiet, expansive, beautiful and often wind swept, you can camp nearby and escape the crowds. You'll likely have the waves all to yourself (or at least shared with only a handful of surfers).

A little further along the road are Delicate Nobby and Delicate Campground. You'll find fewer people and your own rock pools for play and snorkelling. Take your doggo - it's one of the few beaches where dogs are allowed. Catch it on the right swell direction and you'll find waves peeling off each side of the large central rock formation.

Continue down Point Plomer Road and you'll reach Big Hill Beach, home to beginner-friendly right-handers and a picturesque location beside a coastal rainforest.

Then, on to Point Plomer. For surfers, the beach offers a fantastic right-hand point break and for families clean, calm swimming conditions. From the top of the headland look for Plomer's resident pod of surfing dolphins. Overlooking the beach is a popular campground, and advanced surfers can find great waves at Back Plomer (also known as Queens).

## The Point & Killick Creek

Spend lazy days floating in the crystal clear waters of Killick Creek. The nearby Crescent Head Surfing Reserve is a world-famous location with the phenomenal right-hander that is home to the Crescent Head Malibu Classic. The Point is famous for a long, slow right hand wave that lines up in almost any size swell. Across the footbridge is Killick Beach. This is Crescent Head's most popular family beach as it provides easy access to the centre of town, plenty of parking, barbecue facilities and a playground for the children.

To the north of Crescent Head:

## Hungry Gate

Located on the southern side of Hat Head, Hungry Gate juts out to the east, catching a lot of swell and making for excellent waves for advanced surfers.



## National Surfing Reserve

### **Korogoro Creek & Connors Beach, Hat Head**

A hot spot for families and fishermen, the sparkling turquoise waters of Korogoro Creek are a sight to behold at high tide. Pack your snorkels and fishing gear and set up on the sand beside the creek for a day in the great outdoors. The creek is connected to family-friendly stretch of beach.

### **Horseshoe Bay, South West Rocks**

This protected and pretty little cove is in the heart of South West Rocks, with facilities and eateries just moments away. Wander over the northern headland and you'll find beautiful Back Creek, another family-friendly delight and perfect for Stand Up Paddleboarding. Located just below the surf club on the southern side of the Bay, is Saltwater Creek. This spot provides clear shallow waters, which the kids will love.

### **Main Beach, South West Rocks**

Main Beach is a gloriously long stretch of the coast that runs for 3.5 kilometres to Trial Bay, allowing you to find your own patch of perfectly white sand.

### **Trial Bay, South West Rocks**

Trial Bay is protected from swell by a purpose-built breakwall, making it almost always calm and great for kids. This beach is also one of the few places on the east coast where it's possible to watch the sun set over the water.

### **Little Bay Beach, South West Rocks**

A stunning, secluded beach southeast of Trial Bay Gaol. This hidden treasure is tucked between striking granite cliffs with unique formations (much-loved by rock climbers). There's also a picnic area overlooking the ocean which can't be beat!



SOUTH WEST ROCKS

### **Gap Beach, South West Rocks**

An adventurer's paradise, Gap Beach can only be accessed by 4WD or by hiking the Smoky Cape Trail. Go rock-hopping at the northern end and you'll find hidden rock pool perfection.

### **Smoky And Little Smoky Beaches**

South Smoky Beach stretches 15 kilometres south from Smoky Cape Lighthouse and has 4WD access for those with a beach driving permit. You can pull up a million miles from anyone and have the beach to yourself. Depending on swell direction and the location of sand bars, several beach breaks can produce a mixture of left

and right hand waves for the experienced surfer. North Smoky Beach is located on the north side of Smoky Cape Lighthouse. Take the Jack Perkins walking track to access this beach. Parking, toilets and barbecues are available at the lookout.

### **Grassy Head**

This hidden treasure has a small and loyal fan base of holiday-makers who spend relaxed down-time in the Grassy Head Holiday Park playing cricket and swimming at the beautiful beach just over the dunes. Walk around the headland to find your own rock pools or enjoy an uncrowded surf on the southern side of Grassy Head. For surfers, it's got a great right hander peeling off the point and a beach break further up that shifts as the sand bar forms and reforms.



GRASSY HEAD



#### **Patrolled Beaches**

Scan the QR to check which beaches are patrolled by surf life saving patrols, and when.

# DIVE & PADDLE

ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST DIVING LOCATIONS



LIONS MANE JELLYFISH - FISH ROCK



SHARK DIVE AT FISH ROCK WITH SOUTH WEST ROCKS DIVE CENTRE

CAVE DIVING MECCA

## Dive

South West Rocks is a mecca for divers and

snorkelers. In fact, **Fish Rock is rated as a Top 3 diving spot in Australia, and one of the world's best diving spots!**

To explore any of the reef systems or famous underwater caves, at this pristine designated 'Hope Spot', we recommend joining a scuba charter with one of the highly regarded local operators. You can also do a shark dive. This is bucket-list worthy!

Other popular dive sites include Green Island, and Black Rock. There are two accessible shore dives: Ladies Reef and Gaol Reef. Ladies Reef is a small reef only a short distance off the Horseshoe Bay headland. Gaol Reef is a shallow, rocky reef which can be accessed from shore below Trial Bay Gaol in the right conditions.

## Kayaking, Canoeing & Paddle Boarding

### THE MACLEAY RIVER

The 'Mighty Macleay' is hugely popular for boating, paddling and fishing. Check out the pristine upper reaches around Willawarrin and Bellbrook for great bass fishing, kayaking, camping and 4WD spots. See more fishing and boating info on page 18.

### ESTUARIES

The Macleay River feeds into numerous creeks like Spencer Creek, Macleay Arm, & Back Creek. It's one big inland water playground!

Kayaks can be hired from Stuarts Point Holiday Park or the Big 4 NRMA in South West Rocks.

You can also hire Stand Up Paddle (SUP) Boards in Crescent Head or South West Rocks. Beautiful Back Creek in South West Rocks is a SUP favourite.



SUP IN KILLICK CREEK BY @\_WILDTRIBE\_

## Snorkel

The Macleay Valley Coast is full of calm waterways and protected beaches that offer perfect conditions for snorkelling. Top snorkelling spots include Korogoro Creek at Hat Head, Back Creek in South West Rocks, Grassy Head Beach and Point Plomer.



MACLEAY RIVER

# WALK.BIKE.GOLF.



MONUMENT HILL WALK  
OVERLOOKING TRAIL BAY GAOL  
IMAGE COURTESY OF SALT AT  
SOUTH WEST ROCKS

## TOP WALKS IN THE MACLEAY

Did you know that immersing yourself in a forest walk is one of the best things you can do for your mental and physical health? In Japan they even have a name for it - 'Forest Bathing', or 'Shinrin-Yoku'. Lucky for you, the whole region is covered in great walks (the list here is just a small sample). **For more info, download the Macleay Walking Trails booklet from our website** (scan the QR opposite). Before doing any serious hiking, we recommend being prepared by downloading the NSW National Parks app.

Rated from **GRADE 1** (a gentler stroll), through to a **GRADE 5** (steep and rough) hike, here are our top picks to soak up the Nature Trails of the Macleay:

### South West Rocks to Trial Bay

**GRADE 1**

3.6 km one-way

One of South West Rocks most popular walks is along the 'front beach' to Trial Bay Gaol.

### Yarriabini Rainforest Walk

**GRADE 1**

300 m loop Yarriabini National Park

In Yarriabini National Park, the Pines Picnic Area mosaic sculpture showcases totems and dreaming stories relating to the creation of Mount Yarrahappini, a deeply significant place for the local Ngambaa, Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti people.

### Bridle Trail

**GRADE 1**

1.2 km loop Arakoon National Park

The Bridle Trail is an easy stroll offering a glimpse into the historic heritage of Trial Bay Gaol. The trail begins at Little Bay, taking you through regenerated coastal headlands and patches of rainforest.

### Monument Hill Track

**GRADE 3**

2.8 km loop Arakoon National Park

Beginning at Trial Bay, the easy walk takes in the historic monument - built by German internees of Trial Bay Gaol towards the end of WW1 - before finishing at Little Bay picnic area. End with a picnic among the many kangaroos that call Little Bay home.

## Korogoro Walking Track

### GRADE 4

3.4 km loop

Hat Head National Park

A must-do on any visit to Hat Head, the Korogoro Walking Track encircles a headland of stunning beaches, pockets of rare littoral rainforest and heathlands full of wildflowers.

## Little Bay - Smoky Cape

### GRADE 4

10 km return

Hat Head National Park

Not for the faint-hearted, this 10-kilometre trail begins near the Little Bay picnic area in Arakoon National Park, passing secluded beaches, and finishes at Smoky Cape Lighthouse, where the views will be your reward!

## Rainforest Walking Track

### GRADE 5

2 km return

Hat Head National Park

The family will love this 1-1.5 hour walk in Hat Head National Park. A delightful stroll through rare coastal rainforest, it's a great way to experience the joys of wildlife-spotting and birdwatching.



PINES PICNIC AREA ABORIGINAL MOSAIC SCULPTURE, YARRIABINI



## Jack Perkins Walking Track

### GRADE 4

2 km return

Hat Head National Park

Traverse the Jack Perkins track to get up close and personal with the beautiful North Smoky Beach.

## Green Island Walking Track

### GRADE 4

4.3 km return

Hat Head National Park

Winds through Hat Head National Park, ending with fabulous views across to Green Island and Smoky Cape Lighthouse. Keep a lookout for birds and wildflowers along the way.

## Big Hill Rainforest Walk

### GRADE 4

1.4 km loop

Limeburners Creek National Park

Starts at the picnic area beside Big Hill Beach near Crescent Head and winds around the top of the headland through lush littoral rainforest, pandanus palms and low heath vegetation. Take your time and spot eagles flying overhead, dolphins swimming in pods near the shore and, if you're lucky, whales migrating during winter and spring.

## Gap Beach Walking Track

### GRADE 4

6 km return

Hat Head National Park

One for more experienced bushwalkers, Gap Beach walking trail begins at Little Bay Picnic Area and winds steeply through heathland up Little Smoky Mountain before descending through beautiful coastal rainforest to North Gap Beach.

## Connors Walking Track

### GRADE 4

6.6 km return

Hat Head National Park

Connors is a beautiful walk through coastal rainforest and headlands offering whale watching, wildflowers, scenic views, and even a blowhole on the way to secluded beaches.



For more information on walks in the region, scan the QR



## BIKE TRAILS

BYO or hire a Mountain Bike and head for the **Kalateenee Mountain Bike Trails** – Approximately 30 kilometres of tracks that loop through stunning bush scenery of towering eucalypts, ironbark and brushbox trees, including a new ‘Flow’ trail. The trails are graded and well-maintained, featuring plenty of fun obstacles and challenges, though most are suitable for young enthusiasts and beginners.

The trails are located behind the Kempsey Golf Club, and **bike hire is available** from Montem Bike Hire at ‘The Hub’ in the Golf Club.

The crew at Montem Bike Hire can also organise guided bike tours or suggest some great rides around the region, from cruisy sightseeing to something a little more adventurous. Regular bikes can also be hired from Wave Wear in South West Rocks, and a number of holiday parks and resorts offer bikes also.





# GOLF WITH GLORIOUS VIEWS

Watch the waves roll in while you tee off on the only accredited 6-hole course in Australia.



## GET INTO THE SWING OF THINGS

If you're looking for a hit of golf with spectacular coastal views, you won't want to miss playing a round at the **Crescent Head Country Club**. Watch the waves roll in while you tee off on the only Golf Australia (formerly AGU) accredited 6 hole course in Australia, with club and cart hire available from the club house. This course backs onto Crescent Head Holiday Park and if you're in search of the 19th hole at the end of your round, the Country Club has cold beer, two restaurants and some great views back onto the golf course and coast.

If you've got the family in tow, bring the kids along to the new mini golf experience at the Crescent Head Country Club. The course has a variety of obstacles to

putt your way through and is designed to be inclusive for people of all abilities.

Golfers will love the fun, yet challenging manicured 18-hole course at the **South West Rocks Country Club**. The club has great, family-friendly facilities including ten-pin bowling and dining. You can book online and arrange equipment hire at the club.

The friendly **Frederickton Golf Club** is a beautifully manicured 9 holes, and **Kempsey Golf Club** has a par 72 golf course in a natural bushland setting with a creek and dam which makes the course interesting for golfers of all standards. You'll often see kangaroos on course as well!



HAT HEAD



WILD SIDE SPORTS FISHING

# BOAT & FISH

How big? This big! Whether you're throwing a line in with the kids, trawling along the miles of estuaries, or going deep sea for some serious sports fishing, the Macleay Valley Coast is loved by anglers and home to a huge variety of fish species. **The Macleay River runs for 298 km** and flows down from the Hinterland and through Kempsey on its way to the ocean at South West Rocks. Upriver at **Smithtown and Jerseyville** you can watch the trawlers come in with their bounty. It's the hub of Macleay River life. Get out on the water, then settle back

over a cold beer and bite to eat at **Smithtown's awarded Riverview Hotel** to watch the boats glide by.

**Stuarts Point** is a riverside hamlet of calm waters, which are breeding grounds for fish and crabs. There is a boat ramp and mooring available, and an almost unlimited choice of beach, river or blue water fishing spots. Throw out a bait from one of the riverside campsites and catch some of the flathead, bream and whiting which move up and down the Macleay Arm. Cross the footbridge for endless surf gutters where you'll find tailor, bream and the odd jewfish.

Up in the Hinterland, the **Macleay River** is known for its bass fishing, and an abundance of prime riverside camping spots, along with a number of holiday cabins and campgrounds. With a couple

## Taking care of Country

Please tread lightly and consider using sustainable fishing methods in this special place (such as swapping plastic lures for bait, and correctly disposing of fishing line).

of historic pubs along the way, it's a beautiful countryside and well worth the drive.

**South West Rocks and Trial Bay** are home to several fishing charter operators (ocean & estuarine), and there are a number of shops that sell bait and fishing gear. You can **hire kayaks** at the Macleay Valley Holiday Park in Stuarts Point, and South West Rocks Estuary Charters also offer boat hire. If you've got kids in tow who are new to fishing, they'll love throwing a line in from the bridge at Back Creek, or next to the boat ramp at South West Rocks.

**Local's Tip:** *Speak to staff at one of the local fishing / camping /outdoor stores for up to date info on where the fish are biting!*



Scan the QR for more info including boat ramp locations



CRESCENT HEAD



OFFROAD IN THE HINTERLAND

# OFFROAD & BEACH DRIVES

## Beach Driving

Pack your boards, fishing gear, and mates! There are large stretches of beach which can be explored by 4WD. Before you set off, know where the allowable areas are and get a Beach Driving Permit. Scan the QR below for info.

## Sand Dunes

**Our sand dunes are off-limits for vehicles**, as their delicate ecosystems are easily damaged. However, they are heaps of fun to explore on foot!



Scan the QR for info on permit applications as well as a map showing where you can drive.

## Inland 4WDing

Time to get off-grid and go bush? There's plenty of off-road territory to cover for 4WD enthusiasts, or those wanting to really get away from it all!

### OUR TOP PICKS:

Head northwest of Kempsey on the Armidale Road to Bellbrook in the Hinterland. The road is sealed as far as Bellbrook and unsealed to Georges Creek. Surrounded by National Park it provides the gateway to a wide range of activities – kayaking, fishing, swimming & 4WDing (including the popular **Georges Junction**). A great adventure for those wanting to hit the road less travelled and escape the crowds.

**Note:** West of Bellbrook, the Armidale-Kempsey road is currently under repair and subject to closures, so **check the NSW Live Traffic**

**website or app before you set off.**

Inland from Kempsey, **Carrai National Park** protects vast tracts of eucalypt groves and subtropical rainforest on Carrai plateau, a huge granite area with steep escarpments that drop dramatically to Kunderang Brook and the Macleay River. For those with a sense of adventure, a 4WD, and some good camping gear, this is your true off-grid opportunity.

**Collombatti Lookout** offers 360 degrees views of the Macleay Valley Coast. On a clear day, see from Mt Yarrahapinni to Crescent Head along the coast with views of Kempsey to the south and Bellbrook's Andersons Sugarloaf Mountain to the west. The Dunghutti name for the mountain is Barralbarayi, where the men would take the boys for initiation. Cedar Park Picnic Area is nearby on the Cedar Park Scenic Drive.



Follow the Macleay Valley Arts Trail and you'll uncover a rich seam of artistic talent, inspired by the lush and diverse landscapes and culture. From outdoor sculptures and street art, to galleries and maker spaces, there are creative delights at every turn, just follow the bouncy ball!

# CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

Popular stops include...

## **DUNGHUTTI-NGAKU ABORIGINAL ART GALLERY, SOUTH KEMPSEY**

Housed in a striking building designed by renowned architect Glen Murcutt, the gallery exhibits works by established and emerging Aboriginal artists of the Dunghutti region and Mid North Coast area. At the shop you can browse handmade Aboriginal art and giftware including scarves, homewares, upholstery, jewellery and stationery.

## **SAVAGES LANE & ELRINGTONS LANE, KEMPSEY**

Resulting from a collaborative project between local, regional and metro artists, these laneways come alive with colour and creativity.

## **MILTON BUDGE MURAL WATER TOWERS**

The massive water tower mural with mosaics by Kempsey Aboriginal artist the late Milton Budge overlooks the ocean at Crescent Head (Skyline Crescent).

## **BELLBROOK PARK WUPU MANHATINUM (TRAVELLING STAR) MOSAIC**

Take a Sunday to drive out to Bellbrook to witness this sculpture created in memory of beloved local elder and artist Aunty Esther Quinn. Situated at the Bellbrook CWA park, Wupu Manhatinum illustrates a story told by Aunty Esther and forms part of the Dhanggati Wiriiyn Yapang (Dunghutti Story Trail).

## **MARITIME PRECINCT HUB, SOUTH WEST ROCKS**

This precinct is home to the heritage-listed and restored Boatman's Cottage, featuring a fascinating time capsule of displays on shipwrecks and other local maritime history.

## **SOUTH WEST ROCKS COMMUNITY ART GALLERY**

Located in the heritage-listed Pilot's Residence at South West Rocks is this popular and vibrant gallery. Just across the road you'll also find the delightful Arts & Craft shop.



**Above:** Dunghutti-Ngaku Aboriginal Art Gallery, Kempsey

**Opposite:** Clockwise from top left - Macleay Valley Community Gallery, Gladstone, Laneway Art in Kempsey, The Hub, Gladstone- out the back & crafts, Wupu Manhatinum Mosaic, South West Rocks Community Gallery (Sarah Hill exhibition)

For more info on local art and galleries, scan the QR here



## **NULLA NULLA GALLERY, SLIM DUSTY CENTRE, SOUTH KEMPSEY.**

Features a vibrant range of local and touring exhibitions, aiming to create an engaging and thought-provoking experience.

## **KEMPSEY MUSEUM**

This space showcases the history of the Macleay Valley and includes a pioneer cottage furnished with historical artefacts as well as Aboriginal displays.

## **THE GLADSTONE HUB**

This colourful precinct hosts a range of businesses focusing on hand-sourced items from local artists, clothing and homewares with a focus on fair trade, wellness services and whole foods.

## **MACLEAY VALLEY COMMUNITY ART GALLERY**

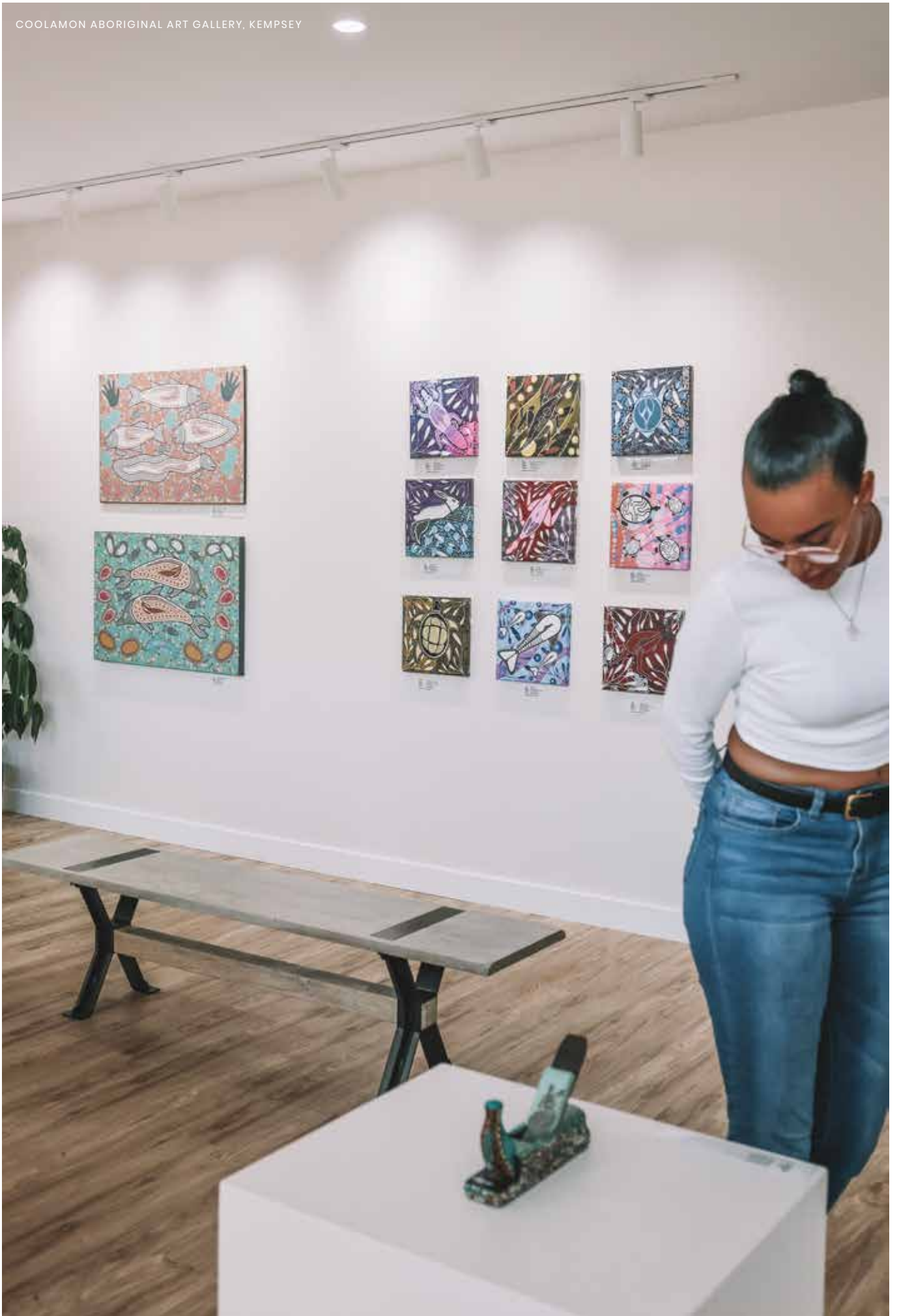
Situated in Gladstone, showcasing local watercolour, oil, silk, fibre, digital, print and sculpture.

## **COOLAMON ABORIGINAL ARTS GALLERY**

The Coolamon Arts Hub at Annecto on Smith Street in Kempsey features local Indigenous artists, many of whom are displaying their work for the first time. The display was spearheaded by Dunghutti and Thunggutti Elders with the aim of strengthening community bonds between Elders and young people.

## **YARRAHAPINNI STUDIO GALLERY**

The Gallery, owned by Dave & Pamela Jones, is open by appointment and features custom furniture, timber giftware, textile art panels, lino prints and works on paper.



# Learn more about DUNGHUTTI & THUNGGUTTI CULTURE

The Macleay Valley is home to a timeless, diverse, and vibrant culture that is maintained by strong local Indigenous groups, art galleries and events. The Thunggutti/Dunghutti (also known as Dhanggati or Dainggatti) people have lived in the Macleay region for millennia, from the saltwater coastal areas to the freshwater country upstream and the mountain country to the west.

Local Aboriginal culture remains strong and dynamic across the landscapes, in towns and villages, in the homes and settlements of our community, in the language and traditions the Elders keep, and use of sacred and ceremonial sites. Ancient sites are found across the region, from camp sites and boras through to landscape-scale sites such as the Stuarts Point-Clybucca Midden.

There are a number of Aboriginal organisations in the region, including The Ngabu Bingayi Aboriginal Corporation - a group of Dhanggati Elders and younger people dedicated to the wellbeing (including the revival of language and culture) of the Dunghutti people in the Macleay Valley. Ngabu means 'Elder Sister' and Bingayi means 'Elder Brother' thus: Sisters and Brothers. There are two land councils in the area. The Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council covers the saltwater coastal areas and parts of the freshwater country upstream. The Thunggutti Local Aboriginal Land Council covers the mountain country to the west.



SAVAGES LANE, KEMPSEY



DUNGHUTTI-NGAKU  
ABORIGINAL ART  
GALLERY, KEMPSEY

The Dunghutti Elders Council (Aboriginal Corporation) RNTBC is the first Prescribed Body Corporate in Australia. The National Native Title Tribunal President Justice Robert French of the Federal Court congratulated the Dunghutti people on gaining a place in Australian history as the first determined holders of native title on the Australian mainland on the 7th April 1997. A registered native title body corporate that manages native title claims and holds compensation funds from native title claims on behalf of the Dunghutti people in the Kempsey region of New South Wales.

Contemporary places that document the impacts of colonisation on the Aboriginal community include the Kinchela Boys Home and the Mission sites at Burnt Bridge and Greenhill.

Aboriginal cultural heritage is also recorded in the works of Aboriginal artists – including the late Robert Campbell Junior, whose paintings are held by the National Gallery of Australia – and on the mural wall of Services Park in Kempsey, where younger Thunggutti/Dunghutti artists keep a visual record of their community. **Public artworks by Dunghutti/Thunggutti artists, and local Aboriginal art galleries (see page 21) are good places to learn more about the traditional owners of this land.**

For more information on local Aboriginal tourism visit [macleayvalleycoast.com.au](http://macleayvalleycoast.com.au)



MOKEA DESIGNS, GLADSTONE



MACLEAY VALLEY FARM STORE, FREDERICKTON



WHOLE & HAPPY, GLADSTONE



NAJASI, FREDERICKTON



# SHOP LOCAL

WILLAWARRIN GENERAL STORE



Take a piece of the Macleay Valley Coast home with you! We've got an eclectic community of artists, designers, collectors and craftspeople, and the region abounds with quaint boutiques brimming with one-of-a-kind finds. So ditch the chain stores and seek out unique treasures! Check out our top picks below:

**LOCAL'S TIP:** *Bag a Bargain at the local op shops! Grab your besties for a fun day out. As well as helping those in need, it's easy on the wallet and our environment. A win-win-win!*

**To Market:** See page 39 for all of our regular markets in the region.

**Locavores:** Find the best local produce on page 41.



Scan the QR to strike op shop gold

## **Crescent Head for boho/surfer-chic.**

Kahana and Moku has Australian-designed, coastal-boho clothing and accessories, with a range of other labels as well. Locally designed in Crescent Head, Cheetah Five has surfwear, clothing, swimwear, and a cafe and Crescent Head Surf Co has a large range of surf gear, and beach apparel, including boards and hire.

## **Gladstone for creative flair and sustainability.**

The colourful and unmissable Gladstone Hub is a collection of businesses with creative flair, and other fabulous finds in boutiques just a short wander away at Unforgettable 4 Evermore, Llewelin's Creative Collective, Feather Lane and Mokea Designs.

## **South West Rocks for coastal cool.**

On popular Livingstone Street, Raw Spice Boutique stock a large range of quality brands and accessories. Next door you'll find lovely linen wear and more at Dallas Boutique. Around the corner, Somewhere carries the latest in street, skate, swim, surf wear & fashion brands. A block back from the main street, Good Vibes sells homewares and fashion, and you'll also find an awesome surf shop along the way. Wave Wear (The Surf Shop) sells beach clothing, and also does SUP, bike and board hire. For little ones, Curious Jo has the most divine collection of colourful clothing and accessories.

## **Kempsey for gifts, antiques, clothing and homewares.**

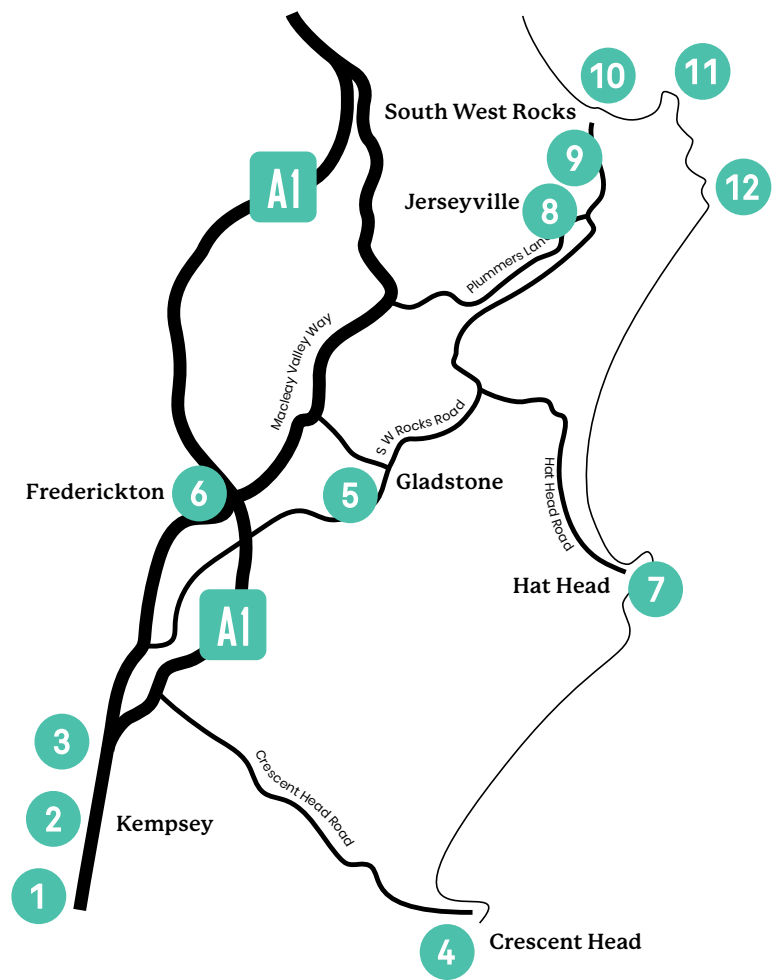
The very popular Folk Road store is well stocked with quality brand men's, women's and children's wear, homewares and footwear. Next door, the lovely Mahalo Interiors includes homewares, accessories and clothing. Kempsey Antiques & Collectibles is a great place for treasure hunting, and if you're after a bargain be sure to stop in at Macleay Options to salvage some vintage treasures. The shop at the Dunghutti-Ngaku Art Gallery has handmade Aboriginal art and giftware including scarves, homewares, upholstery, jewellery and stationery. The Slim Dusty Centre has a popular gift shop. Kempsey Central is the main shopping centre for the region, and includes a Coles supermarket and other specialty shops.

# DRIVE & DISCOVER



## Kempsey to South West Rocks

Yes you can drive it in a day, but we think you'll find a bunch of reasons to linger a little longer...



**01 CHECK OUT THE SLIM DUSTY CENTRE:** Wander around the Museum, Gift Shop or Art Gallery.

**02 LEARN ABOUT LOCAL ABORIGINAL CULTURE:** Connect with Aboriginal Artists and their work at the **Dunghutti Ngaku Gallery**.

**03 GET YOUR CAFFEINE HIT IN KEMPSEY:** Stop off at **South Kempsey Corner Store**, for your morning cuppa, then head to the nearby Kempsey Museum to learn about the region's fascinating history.

**04 SOAK UP THE BEACH VIBE AT CRESCENT HEAD:** Head to Crescent Head, one of the few official surfing reserves in Australia. Grab a cuppa and some brekkie, and watch the waves peel off the point or climb Little Nobby to look out for whales between May and November.

**05 GET YOUR ART ON IN GLADSTONE:** Listed as a Creative Community on the Arts Mid North Coast Trail, Gladstone is a little

village with a fabulous vibe! Wander riverside Kinchela Street which is dotted with galleries, boutiques, eateries and charming heritage buildings.

**06 TAKE A PIE STOP! Fredo Pies & Cafe** is the perfect place to stop – Home of the famous Crocodile Pie for over 20 years!

**07 WALK THE SHORT KOROGORO TRACK AT HAT HEAD:** At Kinchela, turn off to Hat Head to walk the short, yet challenging, Korogoro Track (the views are worth it) on the headland. Afterwards, cool off with a refreshing dip in the crystal-clear waters of Korogoro Creek.

**08 PICK UP SOME FRESH SEAFOOD:** Follow the road along the Macleay towards South West Rocks, stopping in for fresh, locally caught seafood at the **Macleay River District Fishermen's Co-operative** outlet in Jerseyville. You can also purchase top quality Sydney Rock Oysters pulled fresh from nearby river oyster farms.

**09 BIRD WATCHING:** Take in the wealth of bird life at the **Boyers Lane Bird Hide** on the way into South West Rocks. Stroll along the recently built walkway, read the information board and be sure to bring your binoculars!

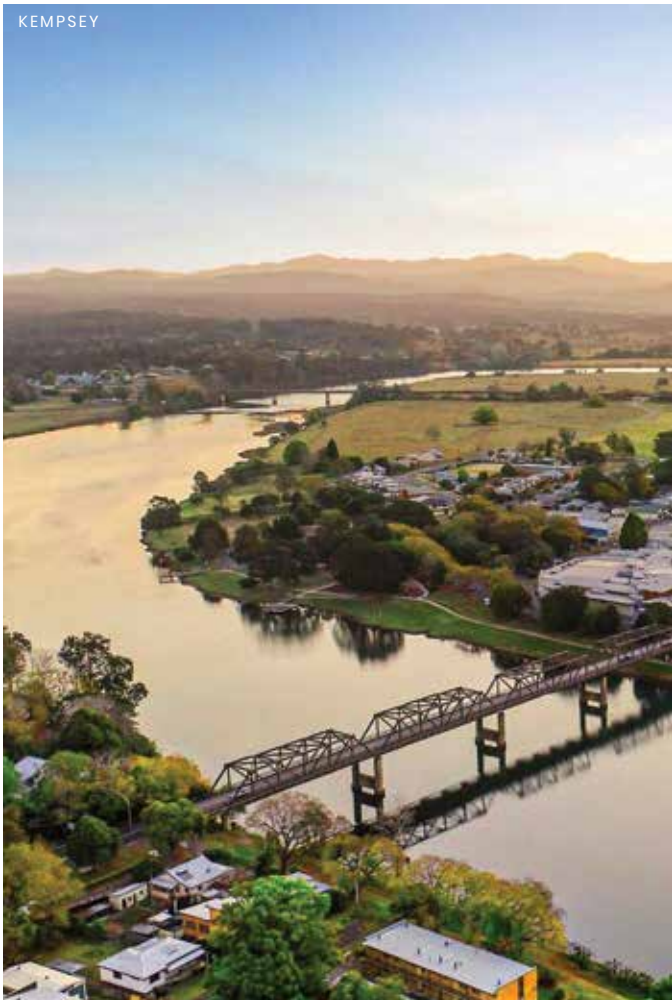
**10 GET OUT ON THE WATER:** SUP, dive, fish and swim at one of the many South West Rocks beaches and waterways. Drop in to one of the Dive/Fish/Charter/Adventure shops for good local advice (including gear hire and charter options) before heading off.

**11 EXPERIENCE TRIAL BAY GAOL:** Ramble among the ruins of **Trial Bay Gaol** located within beautiful Arakoon National Park at South West Rocks. Keep an eye out for the site's ubiquitous kangaroos!

**12 TAKE IN THE VIEWS FROM SMOKY CAPE LIGHTHOUSE:** Climb the steep steps to heritage-listed Smoky Cape Lighthouse in Hat Head National Park. You'll see magnificent 360 degree views of the surrounding coastline.



TRIAL BAY GAOL

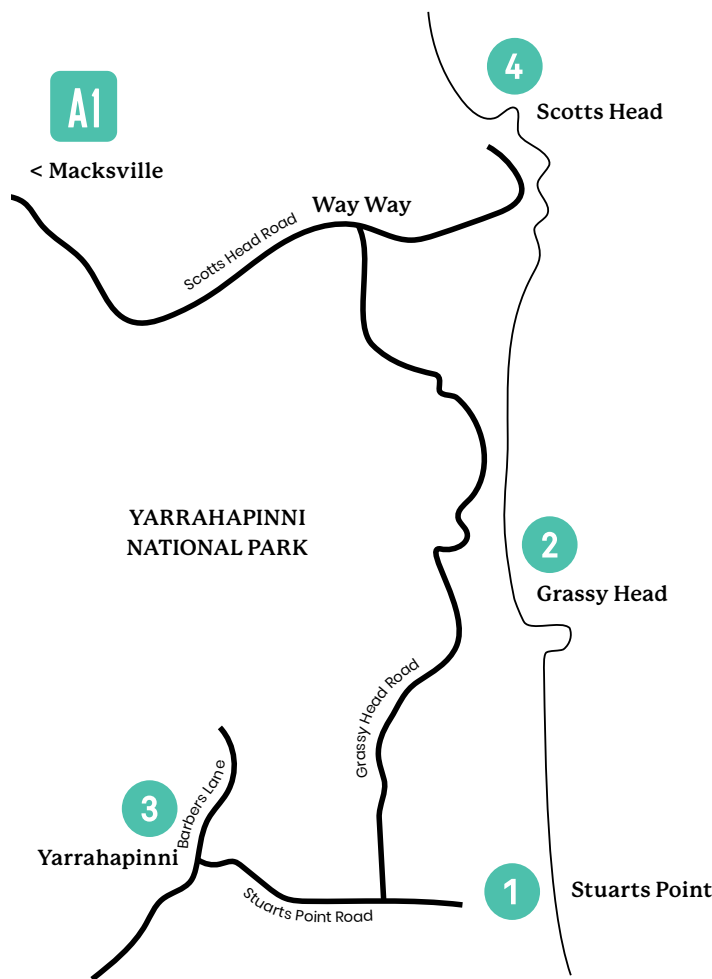


KEMPSEY



KINGFISHER AT BOYTERS LANE BIRD HIDE

# DRIVE & DISCOVER



## Stuarts Point to Scotts Head

Take the road less travelled and be rewarded with magnificent landscapes, tiny villages, pristine beaches and tranquil forests. It's not a long drive (only 28 kms), but allow extra time and let the beauty and serenity of the place wash over you.

Turn off at Stuarts Point Road and you'll feel the pace slow down. The road skirts Mt Yarrahapinni through rainforest, macadamia and avocado farms. Stop at Yarrahapinni Studio Gallery for a browse and a chance to bring a little piece of the Macleay Valley Coast home with you.

### 01 STUARTS POINT:

This small, relaxed village sits on the banks of the Macleay River. Take the River Walk through stands of paperbark and mangroves, stopping for a swim or a fish. Grab some fish 'n chips and other tasty treats from one of the cafes in the village. Go say hi to the Pelicans that congregate by the riverfront or throw in a line.

### 02 GRASSY HEAD:

This spot will have you feeling nostalgic about laid-back Aussie beach holidays from back in the day! There's a good chance you'll get a picture-perfect white-sand beach pretty much to yourself, with rock pools, swimming and snorkelling.

### 03 LOOKOUT AT MOUNT YARRAHAPINNI (YARRIABINI):

Not just a spectacular lookout, but a significant place to the Dunghutti and Gumbaynggirr people. On your way back down, stop in at The Pines Picnic Area in Yarriabini National Park and walk the short rainforest track, keeping an eye out for goannas and fruit doves hidden amongst palms and flooded gums.

### 04 SCOTTS HEAD:

Wander down to the calm waters of Scotts Head Beach for a swim or grab your longboard and head over to Little Beach to enjoy gentle and generally uncrowded waves.



GRASSY HEAD



MOUNT YARRAHAPINNI



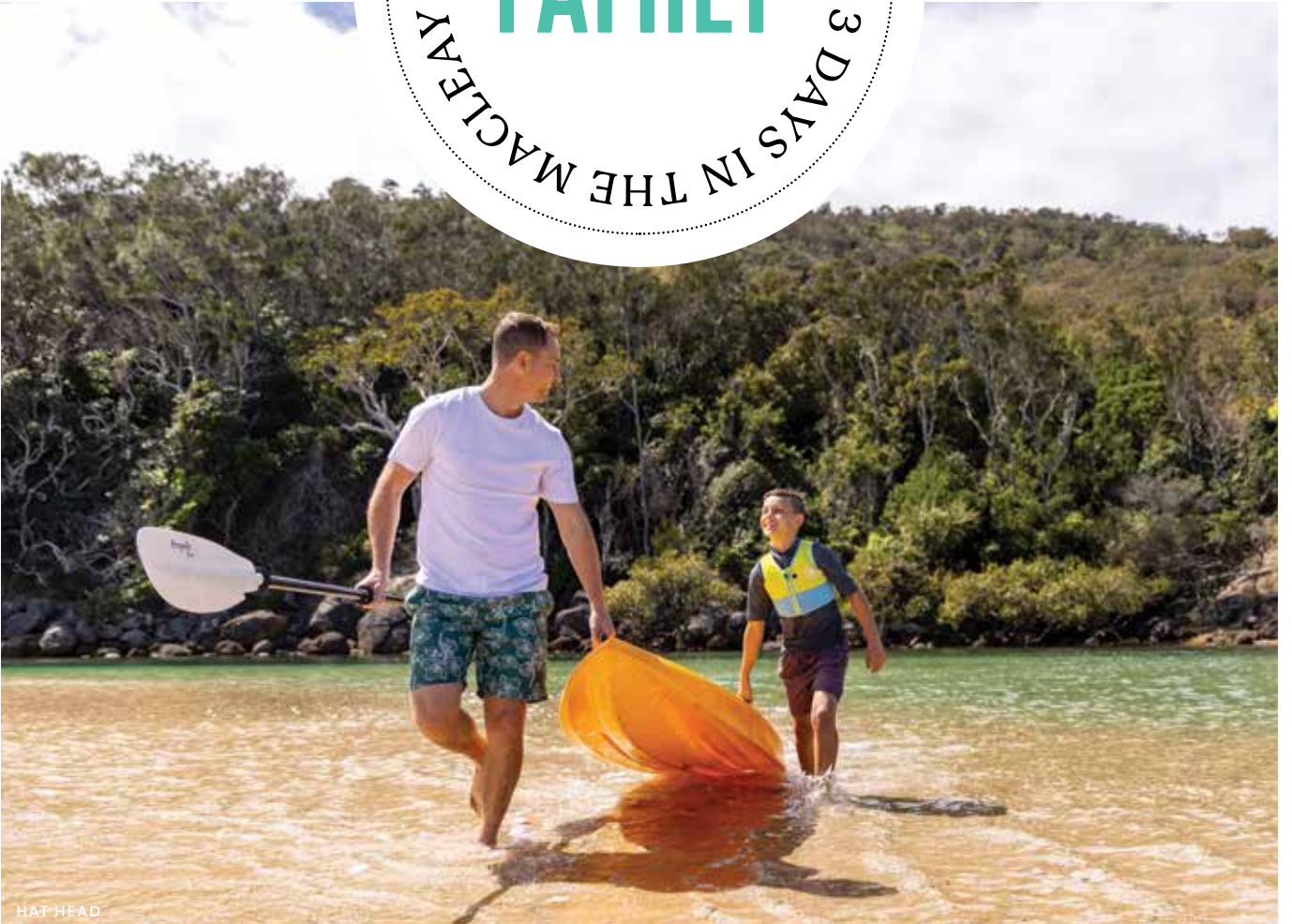
STUARTS POINT



SHIPWRECK ISLAND  
NRMA HOLIDAY PARK  
SOUTH WEST ROCKS

3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY

# FAMILY



HAT HEAD

# Itineraries

## FAMILY FUN

### DAY ONE

#### CRESCENT HEAD

**AM:** Explore the village of **Crescent Head** on foot. Stop in at the super-popular **Barnett's Bakery** for brekkie and a coffee to go, and wander over to the surf to watch the waves. For bonus points, BYO Keep Cup!

If you're feeling active, **grab your board and tackle the waves** (beginners can book lessons and hire boards from On Point Surf School or Crescent Head Learn to Surf). If surfing's not your thing, **join the locals and float along Killick Creek**.

If you'd prefer to stay dry, **Crescent Head Country Club** has tennis, barefoot bowls and a new accessible mini golf course.

**LUNCH:** **Point Break café** at the Surf Club has delicious, light meals and drinks, with plenty of room for the kids to run around.

**PM:** Head south of Crescent Head Village to **explore the back roads**. Stop for a surf or swim at the gorgeous Big Hill Beach and wander along the 300m rainforest trail around the headland. Drive on to **Point Plomer** and meander through the campground to park beside the beach, keeping a look out for the area's resident pod of dolphins.

**DINNER:** On your way back, stop in at the **Bush Kitchen** near Big Hill for wood-fired pizza. They make their own healthy bases and use fresh herbs and veggies from their garden. There's plenty of room for kids to play and an outdoor fire in the cooler season. You'll also find family-friendly menus at the **Crescent Head Tavern** or **Crescent Head Country Club**.

### DAY TWO

#### SOUTH WEST ROCKS

**AM:** Send the kids to Gaol! Built in 1886, the atmospheric ruins of **Trial Bay Gaol** is a fascinating experience. National Parks & Wildlife runs qualified Discovery programs throughout the year and guided tours during the day and evening in the NSW school holidays (except in winter). Self-guided tours of the gaol are also available between 9am - 4pm daily.

There'll be no 'I'm bored' complaints, or screen-time arguments here! And as for bed-time...they'll be too worn out, in a good way, to argue. We asked locals and loyal visitors what they would do if they had three days in the Macleay. So, whether you're travelling with kids, or with mates looking for adventure, wanting to reconnect with nature or seeking a weekend getaway, there's an itinerary here to suit you.

**LUNCH:** Grab some local fish n chips or sushi and have a picnic on the grass overlooking Horseshoe Bay, with an all-important Gelato from **Chillati** afterwards.

**PM:** Head to **Shipwreck Island WaterPark**. Visit for the day\*, or stay! Located within the **Big4 NRMA South West Rocks Holiday Resort**, this popular waterpark will keep the kids entertained for hours. It's solar heated and includes three waterslides. There's a cafe and BBQ facilities on site. **\*Note:** *Day visitors need to call the Park to book (fees apply), and numbers fill up quickly during School Holidays.*

**DINNER:** Try the **South West Rocks Country Club**, and head to kid-friendly **Social Alley** for Ten-pin bowling and dinner at their fun retro-style diner. Or, if the kids are getting weary after a big day, **Pilot Station Pizza** is a local fave for good reason (takeout only!)

### DAY THREE

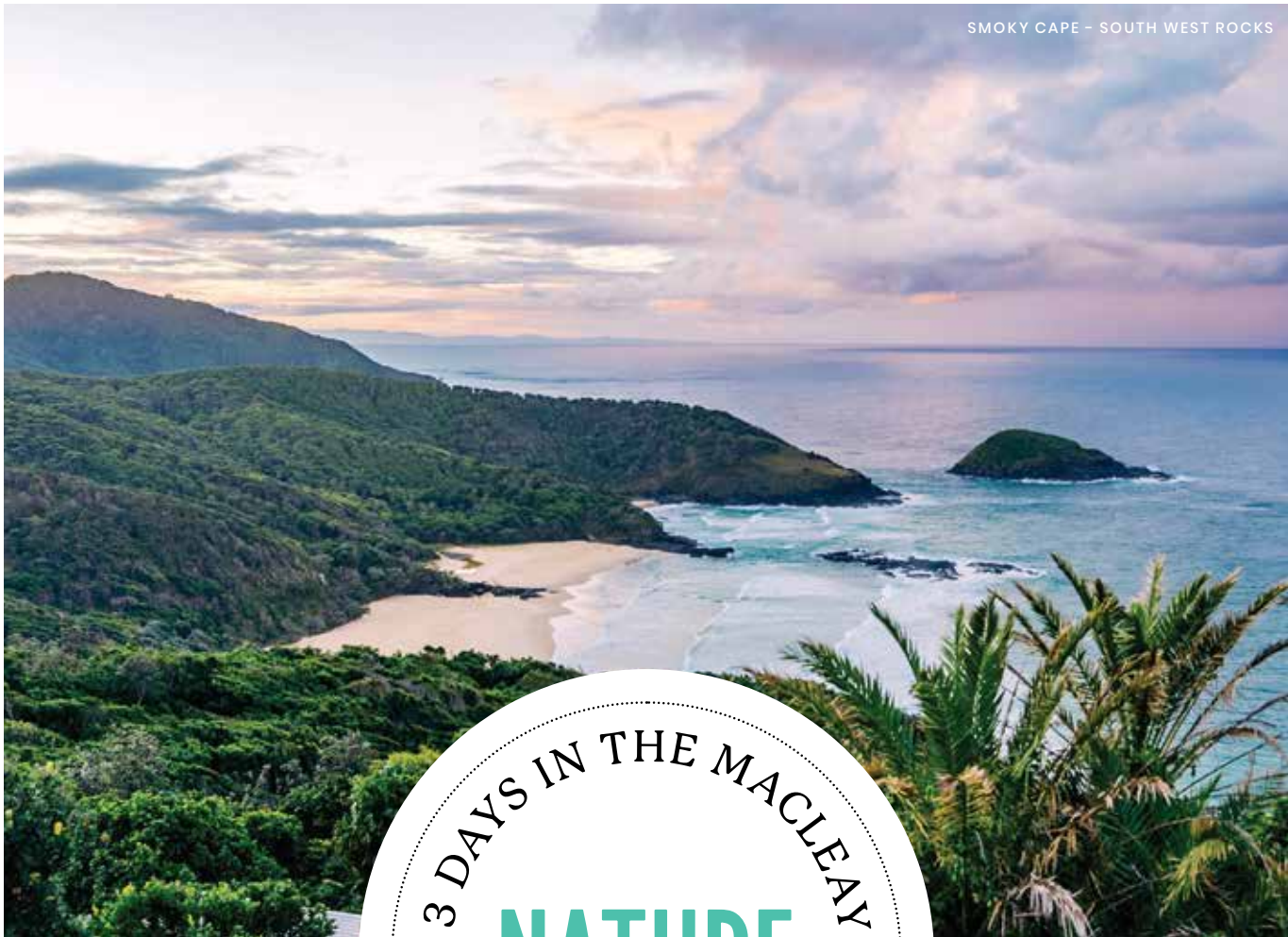
#### HAT HEAD

**AM:** Head to the heritage riverside village of Gladstone to **Steam & Cedar at 'the Hub'** for a light brekkie, then make a beeline for Hat Head.

Sitting between South West Rocks and Crescent Head is Hat Head, an under-the-radar gem, popular with campers and families. Swim or snorkel in the stunning waters of Korogoro Creek. Make sure to time your visit just before high tide when the creek is full and brimming with marine life. Head to the eastern end of Straight Street for best access.

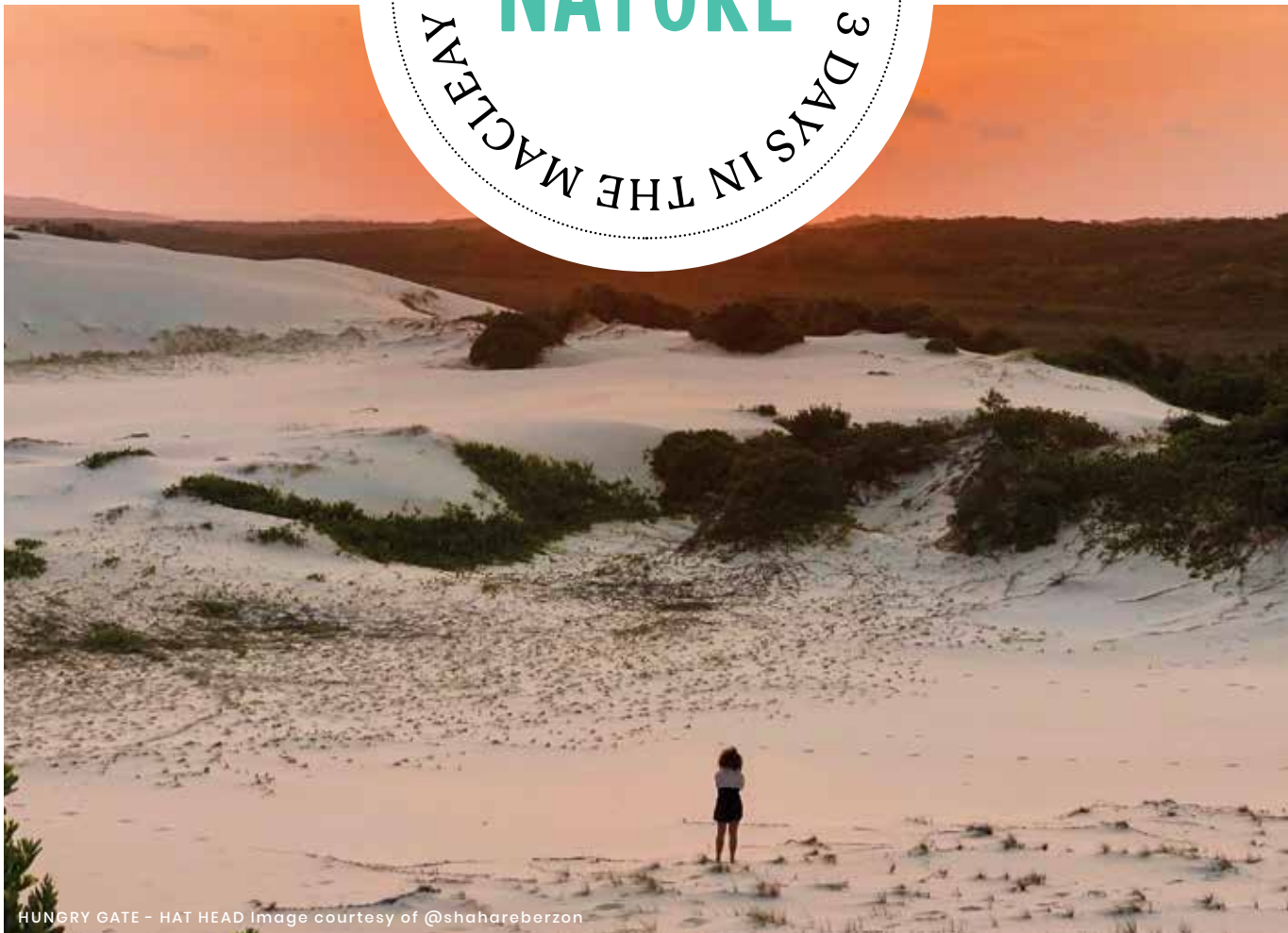
**LUNCH:** You can pop into the **Hat Head Bowlo** for some lunch.

**DINNER:** It's easy to spend a whole day (or several days) at Hat Head, but you'll be needing dinner at some point. If you can tear yourselves away, the **Kempsey Macleay RSL's Freshwater Bar & Grill** has locally sourced steaks and seafood, as well as the option to drop the kids at their play centre, **Tabatinga**, while you dine in peace!



3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY

# NATURE



HUNGRY GATE - HAT HEAD Image courtesy of @shahareberzon



# Itineraries

## CONNECTING WITH NATURE

The ultimate antidote for our hectic digital lives can be found here...

### DAY ONE

**AM:** Fuel up with a nourishing brekkie at **Sixty Degrees** in South West Rocks, then tackle the walk to heritage-listed **Smoky Cape Lighthouse** through Arakoon National Park. The walk will take you between 45 and 90 minutes, depending on your fitness. You'll likely spot kangaroos and whales (during the migration season).

**LUNCH:** Lunch at **Trial Bay Kiosk** followed by a refreshing dip in the bay.

**PM:** Visit **Boyers Lane Bird Hide**: Stroll along the recently built 2 kms of walkway, read the information board and be sure to bring your binoculars. You're almost guaranteed to spot a huge range of birds, from raptors and waterbirds to the feathered natives of the Australian bush. Free to enter, and parking and information on site.

### OR

Have an afternoon at **Grassy Head** and you'll discover one of the Macleay Valley Coast's unspoiled gems. It's a great holiday spot for families, thanks to its abundance of fish and birdlife, kilometres of white sandy beaches and dense, natural bushland. The rainforests of the Way Way State Forest and **Pines Picnic Area** are just behind Grassy Head.

**DINNER:** Try dinner nearby at the highly rated **Hot Myrtle Kitchen, Grassy Head**. Bookings essential.

### DAY TWO

**AM:** Do the **Korogoro Walking Track** (see page 15). Hat Head National Park is lined by expansive stretches of beach, dunes, creeks and skyscraping headlands. It contains an astounding variety of habitats, from coastal heath to wetlands, rainforest and heathland, navigated by walking tracks. This is a birdwatcher's heaven, teeming with fantails, black swans, egrets, honeyeaters, herons, kookaburras, white-tailed sea eagles and more. The park is on traditional Dunghutti land, and shell middens, campsites, burial sites and ceremonial grounds can be spotted throughout.

**PM: Snorkelling at Hat Head.** The deep, clear waters of Korogoro Creek at high tide offer the perfect opportunity for the whole family to enjoy a snorkelling expedition. Keep your eyes peeled for the reclusive octopus and marvel at the many varieties of tropical fish that abound. Experienced snorkelers can venture out of the creek and around the headland to spot wobbegong sharks.

**EAT:** Lunch at **Smithtown** - a sleepy village on the river opposite Gladstone, try the charming **Old Schoolhouse Cafe**. Nearby, **Gladstone Heritage Pub** has a great beer garden for lunch or dinner.

### DAY THREE

**AM:** Hire a single or double **kayak and explore the Macleay River**. Pick up your kayak at **Stuarts Point Holiday Park** and glide down the river, taking in the tranquil scenery and range of wildlife. Wildlife along the river is abundant, so keep your eye out for azure kingfishers, different species of waterfowl, turtles and carpet snakes.

Pack the camping gear then pop in to grab provisions from **Whole & Happy at Gladstone** or the **Macleay Valley Farm Store** at Frederickton, supporters of local artisans and producers.

**PM:** It's time to head west! The Macleay Valley hinterland provides an opportunity to get off-grid and immerse yourself in the wilderness. See page 35 for more information.

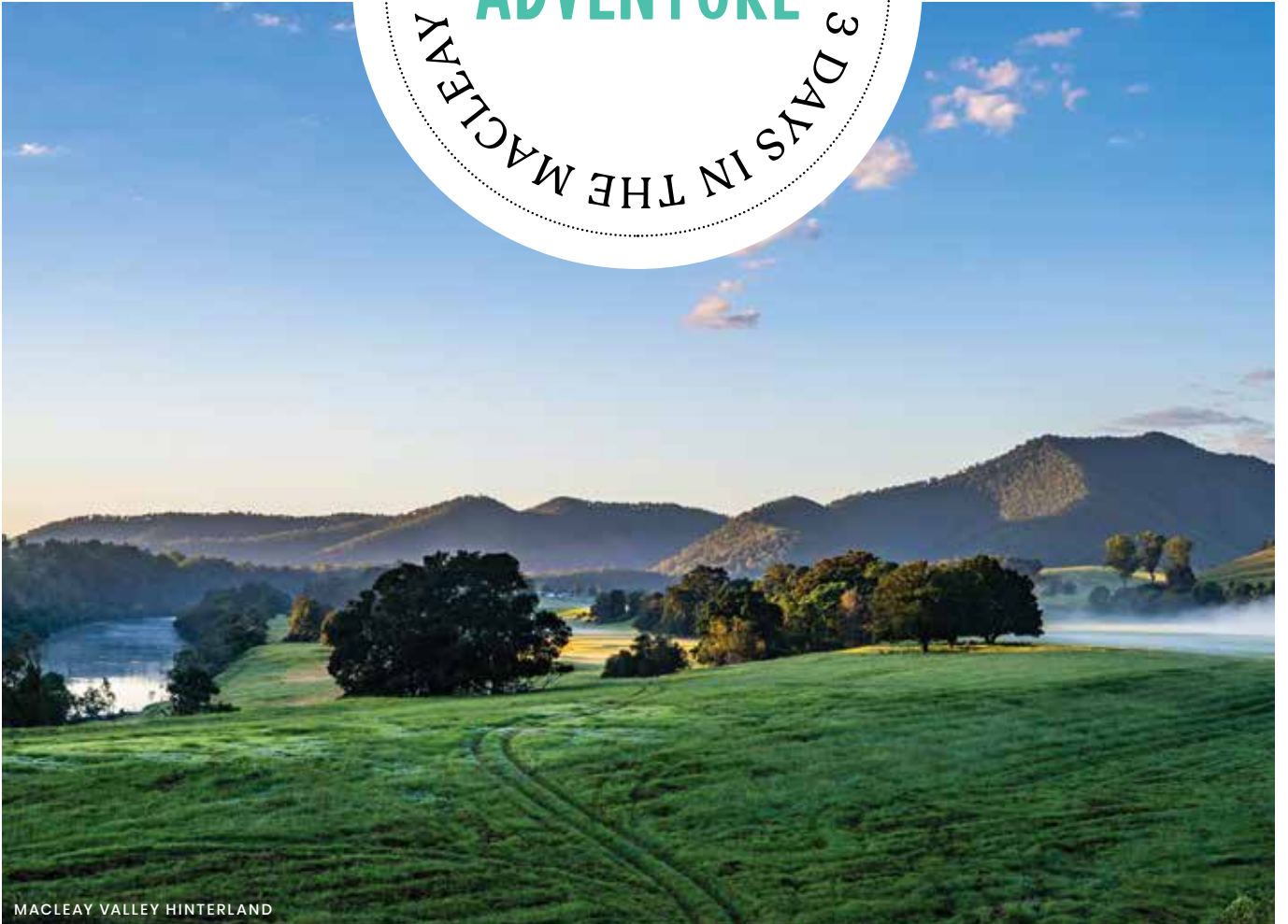
**LOCAL'S TIP:** *Hat Head has a fantastic holiday park right beside Korogoro Creek, however, if you're after a bush-style campground there's also Hungry Gate Campground nearby. You can have campfires and kids love playing in the steep sand dunes nearby.*



CRESCENT HEAD

3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY

**ADVENTURE**



MACLEAY VALLEY HINTERLAND

# Itineraries

## ADVENTURE

We can't decide on just 3 days, so we've split this itinerary into two options- Water based, and land-based. Choose your own adventure!

### COASTAL

#### SURF/DIVE/FISH/CAMP/4WD

##### DAY ONE Grassy Head & Stuarts Point

**AM:** Forage for sustenance at **Stuarts Point**. Choose between a café, take-away store or tavern for lunch, or pick up picnic supplies at the local supermarket. If you'd prefer to catch your own dinner, wander across the footbridge over the river to the beach, and throw in a line at any number of beach or river spots!

Drive up Stuarts Point beach to find a perfect spot of your own. It's 8 km long and suitable for 4WDing. Entry is via Reserve Road and you'll need a beach driving permit.

**PM:** In **Grassy Head** you'll find one of the most unspoilt gems on the coast. Secluded surf beaches and pandanus palms combine with hidden rock pools and nature walks to make this area the ideal place to get away from it all.

Finish your day by watching the sunset from the high vantage point of Grassy Head's magnificent headland.

Pitch a tent or book a cabin at beachside **Grassy Head Holiday Park** and fall asleep to the sound of the waves.

**LOCAL'S TIP:** *The rainforests of the Way Way State Forest and Pines Picnic Area are just behind Grassy Head, and there are 4WD tracks a plenty.*

##### DAY TWO South West Rocks

**AM:** Book in for a dive at world-renowned Fish Rock - South West Rocks has a couple of Dive Centres that can get you out there. More info on page 13. OR Take a Deep Sea Fishing Charter and come back with a great story to tell!

**LUNCH:** Enjoy the **Riverside Tavern** in South West Rocks.

**PM:** Ditch the crowds and hike or 4WD to beautiful **Gap Beach** for some rockpool exploring!

**DINNER:** Head back to civilisation for dinner & live music at the buzzing **Seabreeze Hotel**.

##### DAY THREE Crescent Head to Point Plomer

**AM:** Grab some tasty brekkie and coffee from **Blackfish at Crescent Head**, then head down to the beach and watch the waves. We may have already mentioned that Crescent Head is home to a legendary surf break! The village is super popular in the Summer holidays, so if you're planning on staying you'll need to book early!

**LUNCH:** Head south down Point Plomer Road, and grab something delish from the cafe at **Waves Campground**.

**PM:** Nearby **Delicate Nobby**, and **Point Plomer** are perfect spots to surf, swim and set up camp for the night.

**LOCAL'S TIP:** *Surfaris is a cool venue just south of Crescent Head, where you can sign up for one of their all-inclusive Learn to Surf, Intermediate and Advanced surf camps. You can also hire the entire camp for private group getaways, functions and weddings!*

### HINTERLAND

#### MTB/4WD/CAMP/FISH/HIKE/KAYAK

We're not even going to attempt to structure your time here. Go on, get lost! In the best possible way...

Mountain Biking - BYO Bike or hire one. The **Kalateenee Mountain Bike Park** includes approximately 30 kms of well-maintained trails. See page 16 for more details.

**CAMP & 4WD:** Take the Armidale/Kempsey Road and discover the Macleay Valley Hinterland to the northwest of Kempsey. You'll pass through the tiny hamlets of **Willawarrin & Bellbrook** along the way, both with friendly heritage pubs and great food. The road is sealed until this point, then it starts to get interesting! Hit the dirt road to get to Georges Junction, located on the **Macleay River** and surrounded by National Park, it's the gateway to a wide range of activities – kayaking, fishing, swimming & 4WDing. It can be a hairy drive and isn't suitable for towing (on a narrow, winding road) but a great adventure for those wanting to hit the road less travelled and escape the crowds. **Road is subject to repairs and periodic closures, so please check the Live Traffic NSW website/app for road conditions before your trip.**

**LOCAL'S TIP:** *The camping areas at Georges Junction are on a NSW Travelling Stock Route (NSW TSR), meaning cattle or horses pass through at any time. As well, camping is free, dogs are permitted and fires are allowed (BYO firewood as collecting it onsite is not allowed). There are kid-friendly swimming holes, and the area intersects with the Bicentennial National Trail, enjoyed by hikers and horse riders. There's no standard mobile service and only pit toilets.*

Between Bellbrook & Georges Junction you'll find a couple of cabin-stay options, as well as two other fabulous riverside camping spots - **Blackbird Flat** and **Cracknback** - and both are pet and fire-pit friendly.

**EAT & DRINK:** Pick up some supplies from **Chaddies Store** in East Kempsey, which has fresh produce, salads, meals, coffee and more or for a great afternoon head to Kempsey and check out **Bucket Brewery**. There's also a bunch of hotels that do great pub meals, including **The Great Northern Hotel** and **West Kempsey Hotel**.

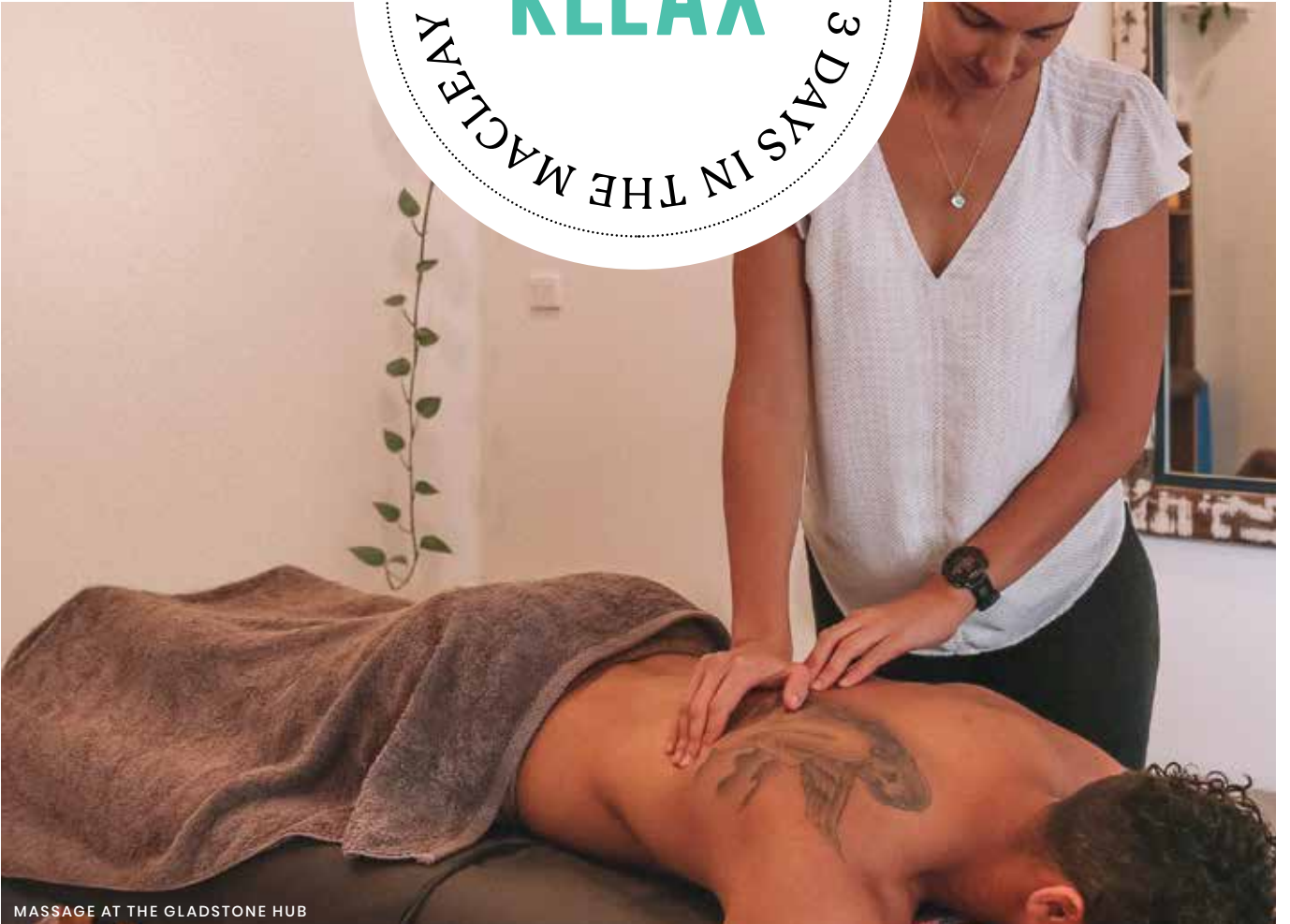
**LOCAL'S TIP:** *Is too much adventure never enough? Consider a flying lesson with Sportsfly Aviation, operating out of Kempsey Airport!*



CRESCENT HEAD  
@\_aswewander

3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY • 3 DAYS IN THE MACLEAY

**RELAX**



MASSAGE AT THE GLADSTONE HUB

# Itineraries

## INDULGE & RELAX

The long lunch, the gentle stroll, beach reads, a spot of shopping, a massage, cocktails at sunset and some sightseeing thrown in. You'll be as good as new in no time.

### DAY ONE

**AM:** Start the day right with breakfast at one of the cafes along the riverfront at **Gladstone** (booking recommended). Then allow plenty of time to wander up and down Kinchela Street for boutique shopping and galleries. Why not book in a **massage** or sign-up for a **creative workshop** through **The Hub**? You deserve it!

Head for **Hat Head** for a float in the tidal creek or swim at the beach. During whale season (May to November), stroll the lovely **Korogoro Walking Track** for some primo whale spotting points along the headland section.

**LUNCH:** Treat yourself to a luxuriously long lunch at the **Garden Bar & Kitchen in Frederickton**. In the beautifully renovated Old Butter Factory building, the seasonal menu and setting bring folks from near and far. Relax with a drink in hand on the expansive deck, overlooking the river.

**PM:** End the afternoon with **barefoot bowls** or a 'hit and giggle' around the six-hole **ocean-side golf course** or the **mini-golf course** at **Crescent Head Country Club**.

**DINNER:** Head to **Lloydies at Gladstone**. Located on the banks of the Macleay River, Lloydies is a special experience. You don't want to skip this place, so make sure you book in! Or head to **La Costa Cantina** for margaritas and Mexican!

### DAY TWO

**AM: Breakfast at Malt & Honey** in South West Rocks then wander the shops.

**LUNCH:** Visit the **Trial Bay Gaol**. Book a tour! There are some great walks nearby (try the Bridle Trail), and the **Trial Bay Kiosk** is a lovely spot for lunch.

**PM: Take a refreshing dip at Horseshoe Bay**, or head around to Back Creek for a SUP Tour. If you'd prefer to stay dry, take a wander around the heritage martime precinct above Horseshoe Bay and browse the Community **Art Gallery** and **Craft Shops**. Or, head into Kempsey and visit the **Dhunghutti-Ngaku Aboriginal Gallery**.

**DINNER: Dinner and Drinks at Chop n Chill** in South West Rocks.

### DAY THREE

**AM:** Breakfast at **The Green Room**, Crescent Head, followed by a beach session and a float down Killick Creek.

Take a wander up to the top of the headland (great for **whale watching** between May and November), then the village. It may be tiny, but has a couple of unique boutiques, galleries and cafes well worth checking out.

**LUNCH:** Head over to South West Rocks and pick up your gourmet grazing box from **Fuller Food Co.** (pre-order required), then head to gorgeous **Little Bay for a picnic** overlooking the water (with a possible kangaroo or two)! BYO picnic blanket.

**PM:** Walk-off lunch, with the scenic **Monument Hill Walking Track** from Little Bay (a 2.8km loop).

**DINNER:** The **Seabreeze Beach Hotel** in South West Rocks champions local produce, promoting home-grown oysters, seafood, beer and more in its hearty and extensive menu.

### HIDDEN GEMS TO CONSIDER

**Maria River Distillery**, is around 20 minutes southwest of Crescent Head, and is making waves with its small batch, locally farmed, responsibly sourced, and sustainably distilled gins and liqueurs. Book a tour of the distillery and a tasting (you can also order a charcuterie platter). Prepare to fall in love with their popular Limoncello! Bookings are essential.

**Take to the air!** Book a joy flight with **City & Country Air Charters** (operating out of Kempsey Airport). You can spot whales, admire the coastline from a spectacular viewpoint, head to the Macleay Valley or take an overnight trip in style.



# WHAT'S ON

There's something special about events, markets and festivals put on by tight-knit regional communities. It brings out the heart and soul of a place, with a diverse collection of local volunteers working together. Add to that the kind of creativity that our region attracts, along with the unique settings, and you'll find one-of-a-kind experiences that are worth travelling for.



## LIVE MUSIC VENUES

The Macleay Valley has an abundance of home-grown talent, supported wholeheartedly by local pubs, hotels and venues throughout the region. Many of these venues can also be hired for private functions and weddings.

### Venues which host regular live music include:

- The Garden Bar & Restaurant in Frederickton
- The Seabreeze Hotel in South West Rocks
- Bucket Brewery in Kempsey
- The Gladstone Heritage Hotel
- Great Northern Hotel in Kempsey
- The Bellbrook Hotel, Bellbrook
- Chop n Chill, South West Rocks
- The Crescent Head Tavern
- South West Rocks Country Club
- Riverside Tavern, South West Rocks

## EXHIBITION & PERFORMANCE SPACES

The Nulla Nulla Gallery at the Slim Dusty Centre, and most local Galleries (see page 21) host regular art exhibitions.

The Band Box Theatre in Kempsey hosts plays and performances, via the Macleay Valley Theatre Company.

## FILM

For current screenings, try Majestic Cinemas in Kempsey.



### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

For other Festivals & Events, including one of the North Coast's favourites – Sculpture in the Gaol – Scan the QR



# MARKETS

GLADSTONE MARKETS

Markets are a great way to get to know a place. You can meet locals, farmers and makers, enjoy a bite to eat and listen to live and local music while you shop!

**KEMPSEY RIVERSIDE MARKETS** on the first Saturday of every month. Includes a farmers' market that sells premium quality Macleay Valley produce and gourmet foods. Over 100 stalls, a jumping castle and live music. A great family day out.

**GLADSTONE QUALITY MARKETS** on the third Sunday of every month from 9am to 2pm. Local food and great coffee attracts a big crowd to this usually quiet riverside village. Green thumbs will love the selection of native plants and there is live entertainment by local musicians and plenty of seating beside the river.

**HORSESHOE BAY MARKETS** at South West Rocks on the second Saturday of the month feature local producers and artisans in a picturesque setting.

**CRESCENT HEAD MARKETS** on the third Saturday of every month right beside one of Australia's most beloved surf breaks. You can't beat that for a prize location.

**MADE & GROWN MARKETS** are on every fourth Friday at Kempsey Showground and has goodies grown, made and crafted in the region.

## The Annual Whale Migration

### MAY TO NOVEMBER

We consider the yearly migration of these majestic creatures to be quite the event, and worthy of marking in the calendar! During May to November, more than 16,000 humpback whales will migrate north, passing by the Mid North Coast, to warmer waters to breed, before making their trip south (often with calves in tow).

During the season, if you're taking a fishing or diving charter you'll likely get a front row view, however if you'd prefer to stay on land, not a problem! Sometimes there are so many whales passing by, just about any coastal viewpoint will do. However, some of the best options include Korogoro and Connors Walking Tracks at Hat Head, Smoky Cape Lighthouse at South West Rocks, Reservoir Lookout on the south eastern side of Crescent Head, and Green Island Walking Track in Arakoon National Park.



HUMPBACK BREACH

# Eat & Drink



GARDEN BAR + RESTAURANT  
- FREDERICTON



# Homegrown Heroes

## GROWERS, BREWERS, BAKERS & MAKERS

The Macleay Valley Coast has a large number of local farmers committed to producing a top-quality bounty from the region's nutrient-rich, alluvial soil. Fruits, vegetables, nuts and avocados, dairy, meat, poultry and more. We've rounded up a bunch of ways you can get your hands on this goodness, direct from the farmer (or close to it)!

**Kempsey Riverside Markets** on the first Saturday of every month at Kempsey Riverside Park includes a popular organic farmers' market. Any of the region's markets are great places to pick up locally produced goodies- check them out on page 39.

**Bucket Brewery** at Kempsey - Get up close to the brewing process and enjoy a beer amongst the tanks or outside overlooking the Macleay River. The brewery regularly hosts live music and food trucks.

**Maria River Distillery** (near Crescent Head) - is a unique Australian Small Batch Distillery. Locally farmed, responsibly sourced, sustainably distilled. Book a tour and tasting, and pair with one of their antipasto plates!

**The Macleay River District Fisherman's Co-Op** in Jerseyville (on the way into South West Rocks) is supplied by around 40 local fishermen who catch top notch quality seafood that is as fresh as it gets.

**Gladstone Fruit and Vegetables** is where you'll find the freshest local seasonal fruits and veggies, homemade jams, pickles, relish and chutney as well as local milk, cheese and yoghurt.

**Ball's Butchery and Providore**, established in South West Rocks since 1951, provides premium beef from its Clybucca farm, along with other meats, fresh oysters, and a variety of culinary delights.

**L-Bow Butchery** in Kempsey is the top procurer of high quality local beef, pork, lamb and chicken.

**Milly Hill Meats** in Kempsey are friendly and passionate about what they do and provide great advice.

**Kempsey Bulk Health Foods** serve luscious lunches (the vegetarian quiches are not to be missed), as well as stocking a healthy range of locally grown and organic seasonal produce.

**Macleay Valley Farm Store** in Frederickton is overflowing with fresh local bread, deli meats, cheese & flowers. It's hub and commercial outlet for local artisans and producers.

**Barnett's Bakery** at Crescent Head - a local icon, and you'll find it easily as there's often a happy queue waiting in anticipation!

**The Duck's Nuts Gourmet Foods** in South West Rocks stocks a huge range of locally made condiments, and offer 30 different milkshakes, smoothies, teas and delicious fresh meals.

**Fredo Pies** at Frederickton - an iconic road-trip stop, this popular destination pie shop (situated in a heritage building with indoor/outdoor seating) has 25+ types of pies, including Crocodile & Kangaroo!

**The Crescent Head Collection** is a new local wine business with wines crafted by local winemakers. These wines and more can be purchased online at [thecrescentheadcollection.com.au](http://thecrescentheadcollection.com.au)





# A Feast for the Senses

Pack the stretchy pants! You're in for a treat...Dotted around our villages and towns, from the coast to the country, you'll find that our creativity extends to our eateries. Sourcing from the legendary local resources of the Macleay, there's Paddock to Plate (and Sea to Table) freshness at every turn.

## Hidden gems worth writing home about

Tucked away from the main streets you'll find everything from camp-side woodfired pizza to margaritas and Tex-Mex in a whitewashed Mediterranean-style courtyard, or a bushland eatery utilising local, native ingredients. Try an authentically retro diner with vinyl booths and iced chocolates to die for, or head for a high tea served in a heritage riverside cafe. Eat, drink and be merry overlooking the river, the ocean, the hills, or historic ruins. This is just a sample of what's on offer, so go forth and enjoy!

For info on our eateries, scan the QR on page 44.



**CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE:** La Costa Cantina - Crescent Head, Chop 'n Chill - South West Rocks, Riverview Hotel - Smithtown, Freshwater Grill - Kempsey

## Country hospitality

Often, it's the people you meet that really make a trip memorable, and our heritage-listed, character-filled country pubs are known for their friendly and down-to-earth vibe. Oh, and the food? Expect mouthwatering local steaks and plate-sized schnitties, served with ice-cold beers and warm smiles.

## Take it to the river

Seek out a riverfront position and settle in for an afternoon of relaxed indulgence. Watch the trawlers glide by from a riverside bistro with a beer in hand or enjoy crafted cocktails and live music in a renovated heritage cheese factory. With a number of unique destination diners along the Macleay Riverfront, from Gladstone to Frederickton, Kempsey to Bellbrook, nothing says 'holidays' quite like this!

## Club dining gets creative

Our local club and hotel bistros are known for their great value and generous servings. Some have really upped the ante offering a more elevated dining experience, and/or making it truly family friendly (think indoor bowling, or a supervised playcentre where you can drop the kids off while you dine in peace). Most have sublime views overlooking the river or ocean, and live music. What's not to love?

## Seafood (& eat it)

Expect top-notch seafood from a region known for its exceptional fishing. Local seafood vendors provide a bounty of local, freshly caught fish, mud crabs, prawns, oysters, octopus and shellfish. Ready to throw on the barbie, enjoy freshly shucked, or have it beautifully prepped by one of our local chefs.

# Eat & Drink



## Takeaway with a twist

We love a good corner store in this part of the world, and while you can still turn up in bare feet and grab an ice cream out of the freezer, we've taken it to the next level with espresso coffee and gourmet takeaway treats. Fresh gelato and sushi are also on offer. If you're craving an old-school Aussie feast, we've got you. Grab a burger piled high with the good stuff (best enjoyed overlooking the waves). We've got legend-status pie shops and bakeries worth travelling for, and you'll be spoilt for choice on the fish n chips and pizza front. You won't go hungry here!

## And just because you've escaped the big smoke doesn't mean you have to go without the perfect cuppa...

While we may be known for our laid-back casual vibe, we're not so relaxed about our coffee! A decent barista and a great cuppa are non-negotiable in our books, and we can happily confirm that there are plenty of spots to get your fix.



Scan the QR to find local eateries  
[macleayvalleycoast.com.au](http://macleayvalleycoast.com.au)

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Great Northern Hotel - Kempsey, Social Alley - South West Rocks, Fredo Pies - Frederickton, Steam & Cedar - Gladstone, Mezzaluna 2440 - Crescent Head, The Old Bank - Gladstone, The Garden Bar & Kitchen - Frederickton



NULLA NULLA BLACKSMITHS RETREAT

# STAY

THE MED CRESCENT HEAD  
BY ROCHELLE NAYLOR  
@justanothermannequin



# Coast or Hinterland



Scan the QR for places to stay

What does your ideal stay look like? For some it's an ocean-front campsite with plenty to entertain the kids, or completely off-grid in a cozy country cabin. For others it's about high thread count luxury and cocktails by the pool. Whatever the style, you can pretty much guarantee it's going to be low-rise, low-fi and laid back. This ain't no Gold Coast, and that's a big plus in our books!

There's a bunch of different places to stay, including dozens of campgrounds and holiday parks (too many to mention here). So, we thought we'd simply add some pretty pictures for a bit of inspo. If you'd like more info, you guessed it, scan the QR!

# Coastal Stays



**Above properties are just a small sample! Scan the QR on page 46 for more.**

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** NRMA Holiday Park South West Rocks, Beranghi Homestead Crescent Head, Crescent Head Holiday Park, Salt at South West Rocks, The Old Bank at Gladstone, Stuarts Point Riverside Campsite, Horseshoe Bay Holiday Park South West Rocks, Smoky Cape Lighthouse Cottages.

# Hinterland Stays



Above properties are just a small sample! Scan the QR on page 46 for more.  
**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Bemurrah Homestead at Pee Dee, Hinterland Camping in Bellbrook, Bellbrook Hotel, Great Northern Hotel Kempsey, Nulla Nulla Blacksmiths Retreat.



# VISITOR INFO

## CONNECT WITH US

For more travel inspiration and info on what you can eat, see and do here, visit our official website [www.macleayvalleycoast.com.au](http://www.macleayvalleycoast.com.au) or follow us on:

**Facebook/macleayvalleycoast**

**Instagram/macleayvalleycoast**

## ESSENTIAL NUMBERS

Emergencies

(Ambulance, Police, Fire - Emergencies ONLY):

Dial 000

Kempsey District Hospital: 6562 6155

Kempsey Police Station: 6561 6199



Our official website has a huge range of information on things you can eat, see and do in our region.

**Visit [www.macleayvalleycoast.com.au](http://www.macleayvalleycoast.com.au)**

## PET-FRIENDLY BEACH AREAS

Bring your best mate with you! The region has a large number of dog-friendly beach and river areas and walks. Parts of Crescent Head's Killick Creek and Back Beach, Delicate Nobby Beach, Big Hill Beach, plus parts of Stuarts Point, Grassy Head and Hat Head have all been declared dog friendly areas. Keep an eye out for signage to ensure your visit follows local laws.



IMAGE CREDIT: @thefluffy\_moose

## CARING FOR COUNTRY

Please tread gently and help us protect our beautiful home.




The Macleay Valley Coast includes many sacred sites, delicate ecosystems and vulnerable species. Please stick to designated areas and trails and take your rubbish with you. Take note of fire regulations and warnings. Another simple way to lower your environmental footprint is to use fewer resources at every stage of your holiday. Bringing a keep cup, reusing towels, flushing the toilet less and shortening your shower time can all help. During peak times such as Summer school holidays, our more popular coastal areas can be put under stress due to the influx of holiday makers. We'd encourage you to explore other parts of the region that are less populated, and be particularly mindful of locals, litter and resource usage. Thank you.



HINTERLAND PADDLING

# The Macleay Valley Coast

**LEGEND**

-  Tourist Drives
-  Railway
-  EV Charging Station



\*Map is current as of March 2024 and indicative only.





Disclaimer: While Kempsey Shire Council has made every endeavour to ensure the information supplied in this publication is suitable, accurate and complete, no warranty is given that the material contained within is free from error or omission. The material is intended for general use and information only. Kempsey Shire Council does not accept any responsibility for any change or withdrawal of details or services shown which are subject to alteration without notice. Kempsey Shire Council, its officers, employees and agents expressly disclaim all liability for any act done, or admission made in reliance on such material, and any consequences of such act or omission. Information or images may not be reproduced without the written consent of the image owner and/or Kempsey Shire Council. Printed April 2024.

[macleayvalleycoast.com.au](http://macleayvalleycoast.com.au)

**macleay**  
**valley coast**

