

# South Coast



If it's off-road rugged beauty you're after, the compass should be pointed squarely in this direction. The spectacular south coast, stretching 400km by road to the Victorian border, retains its remarkable undiscovered air. By detouring, often only slightly, off the main roads into national parks, it's possible to find secluded beaches, remote mountaintops and rugged bushland where isolation reigns supreme. Have a sense of adventure in tow!

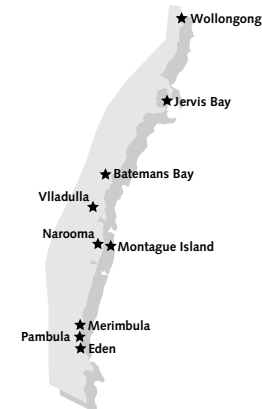
In between these spots of solitude, small towns and historic villages hug the coastline and the hinterland. In some cases urban sprawl is an eyesore, but in most, there's a surprising mix of coastal hamlet hip and cosmopolitan cool. A decent coffee can be found in small, blink-and-you'll-miss-it towns, wineries have spread their green leaves over the countryside and sea-changing city chefs have transported their culinary expertise here.

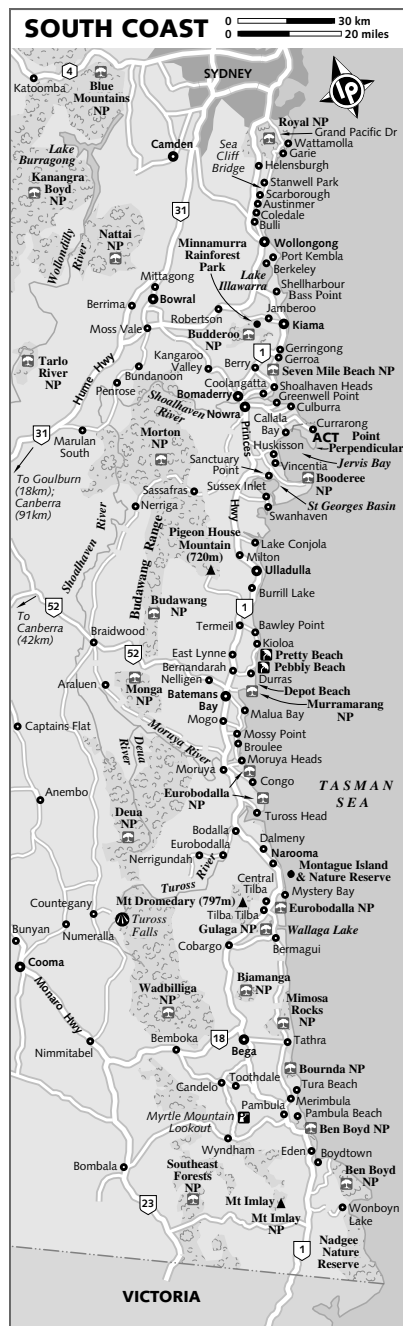
If the latte set is exactly what you're trying to escape, there are ways and means. Cheap, fresh oysters and seafood are as common as vegemite sandwiches, and campervanners and campers can purchase them roadside to eat in nature's very own dining room – on the picnic tables and barbecue areas that dot the beaches, headlands and lookouts. Some of the best camping spots are at basic bush camps run by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Despite these places being busy during school holidays and at Christmas time, especially around Batemans Bay and Kiama, at other times you're likely to have the wildlife and the beach all to yourself. And when you're not eating or sleeping it's all about getting off your behind. Eco-tourism is definitely in and there's a myriad of swimming, surfing, whale-watching and diving opportunities, particularly in the crystal waters around Merimbula and Jervis Bay. And, of course, the staggeringly beautiful national parks are out there, waiting to be explored.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a boat tour to see the wildlife near Narooma on **Montague Island** (p335)
- Walk or drive across the new Sea Cliff Bridge at **Wollongong** (p323)
- Dive or snorkel in the coastal waters of **Merimbula** (p339)
- Flash-camp in a luxury bush tent at **Jervis Bay** (p329)
- Munch fresh oysters at **Pambula** (p341)
- Potter around in a houseboat from **Batemans Bay** (p333)
- Whale-watch at Twofold Bay in **Eden** (p341) during October and November
- Climb to the top of Pigeon House Mountain near **Ulladulla** (p331)





## Getting There & Around BUS

Nowra-based **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) has a jump-on jump-off service from Sydney to Eden (\$66) and on to Melbourne (\$79). Two buses a day go as far as Eden.

**Sapphire Coast Express** (☎ 1800 812 135) runs from Batemans Bay through to Melbourne on Tuesday and Friday only; and **Murrays** (☎ 13 22 51) has daily services between Batemans Bay and Narooma (\$23), Batemans Bay and Canberra (\$24), and Canberra and Narooma (\$37).

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

There is no doubt, the south coast is best explored with your own transport. Princes Hwy starts at Sydney's George St and continues all the way to Adelaide via Melbourne. It's known as the coastal route, but in fact the highway runs a little way inland. Hence, along the length of this route there are turn-offs and scenic routes to interesting places, both on the coast and in the Great Dividing Range, where there's an almost unbroken chain of superb national parks and state forests. It's a longer, slower route between Sydney and Melbourne than the Hume Hwy, but it's infinitely more interesting.

# WOLLONGONG & AROUND

☎ 02 / pop 257,000

Wollongong, 80km south of Sydney, has the best of both worlds. The population (it's the state's third-largest city) is big enough to support a host of restaurants and bars, arts, culture and entertainment while its position, sitting pretty on the Illawarra coast, means residents still enjoy the laidback beachside lifestyle that cities such as Sydney can't compete with.

In recent years, the city's reputation as being home of the biggest steel industry in Australia has thankfully lost its sheen. Instead the stunning natural beauty of the area is attracting attention. There are 17 patrolled beaches, all unique, and a spectacular sandstone escarpment that runs from Royal National Park south past Wollongong and Port Kembla. The combination makes for a host of outdoor activities: excellent surf, safe beaches,

bushwalks and sky-high activities to name a few. The opening of the impressive Grand Pacific Drive (see the boxed text, p323) is also attracting deserved attention.

## Orientation & Information

Crown St is the main street. Between Kembla and Keira Sts is a two-block pedestrian mall. Keira St is part of the Princes Hwy. Through-traffic bypasses the city on the Southern Fwy.

The **Wollongong visitors centre** (☎ 4227 5545/1800 240 737; www.tourismwollongong.com; 93 Crown St) can book accommodation. There's a **NPWS office** (☎ 4225 1455; 4/55 Kembla St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) and you can jump online at **Network Café** (☎ 4228 8686; upstairs, 157 Crown St; per hr \$4; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Wed, to 9pm Thu, to 4pm Sun).

## Sights & Activities

Wollongong's fishing fleet is based at the southern end of the harbour, **Belmore Basin**. There's a fishing cooperative here (with a fish market and a couple of cafés) and an 1872 lighthouse on the point. Nearby, on the headland, is the newer **Breakwater Lighthouse**.

A bird's eye view of the coastline is perhaps the best. **Sydney Hang Gliding Centre** (☎ 4294 4294; www.hanggliding.com.au; ☎ 8am-8pm) has tandem flights (\$165) from breathtaking Bald Hill at Stanwell Park. If the adrenaline still hasn't kicked in, skydive from 14,000ft and land in the sand. **Skydive the Beach** (☎ 4225 8444; www.skydivethebeach.com; Stuart Park) has awesome tandem jumps from \$275. For something different **Sydney Microlight Centre** (☎ 4294 1031; www.sydmicro.com; ☎ 8am-5pm) has open cockpit microlight flights from \$150.

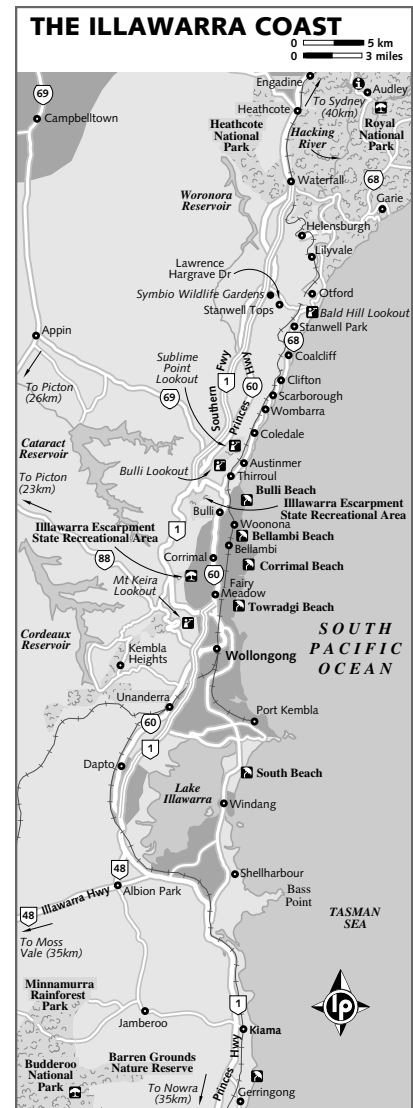
**Just Cruisin'** (☎ 4294 2598; www.justcruisintours.com.au) has solo and sidecar Harley tours from \$30, a fantastic option if you want to tour the new Grand Pacific Drive (p323).

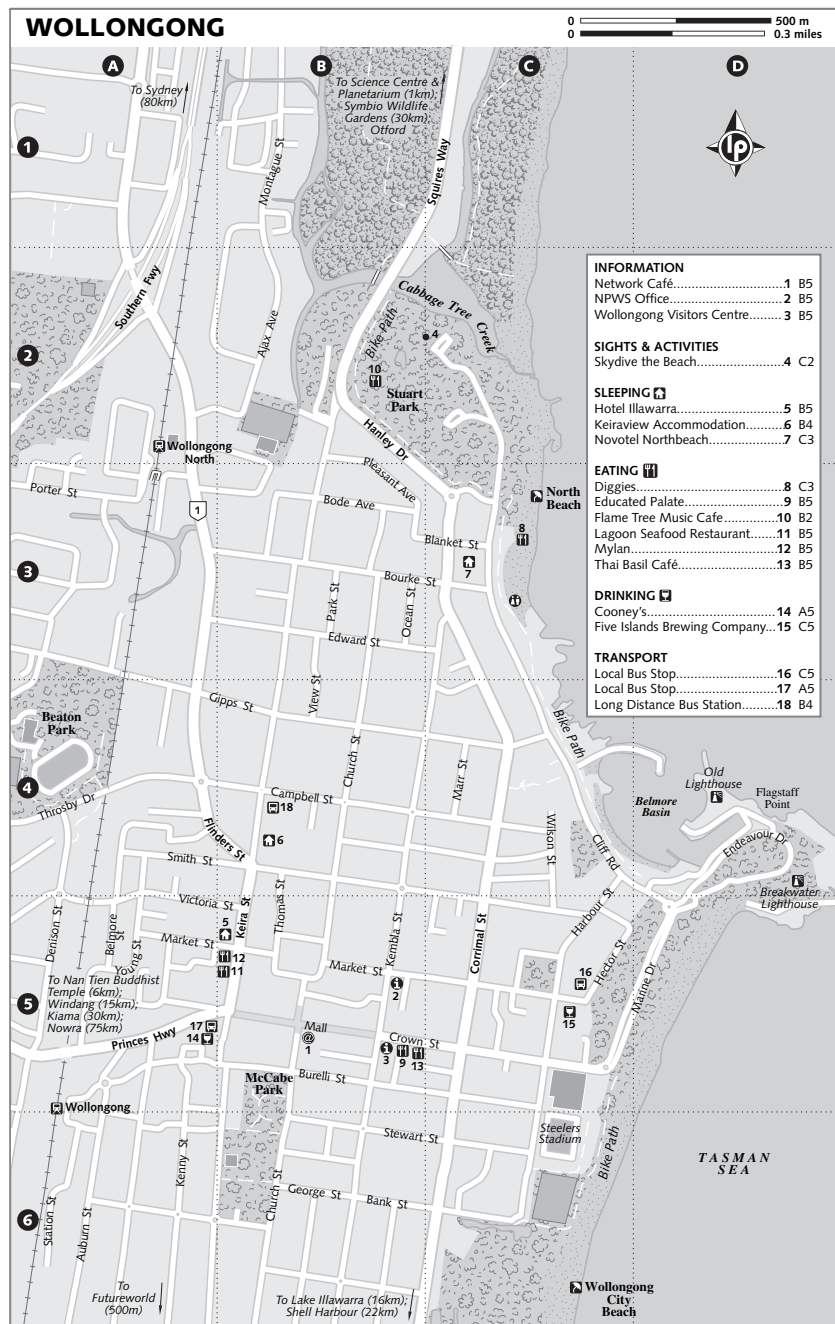
The **Cockatoo Run** (☎ 1300 653 801; www.3801limited.com.au; adult/child/family \$40/30/110; ☎ Wed & Sun) is a heritage train that travels inland across the Southern Highlands. Along the Hwy, **Nan Tien Buddhist Temple** (☎ 4272 0600; www.nantien.org.au; Berkeley Rd, Berkeley; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) has relaxation of a different kind with weekend retreats, vegetarian cooking classes, meditation and t'ai chi.

## FOR CHILDREN

Quizzical kids can indulge their senses at the **Science Centre & Planetarium** (☎ 4283 6665;

www.sciencecentre.uow.edu.au; Squires Way, Fairy Meadow; adult/child \$10/7; ☎ 10am-4pm daily) or meet and greet a Tassie Tiger at **Symbio Wildlife Gardens** (☎ 4294 1244; 7-11 Lawrence Hargrave Dr, Stanwell Tops; adult/child \$18/9; ☎ 9.30am-5pm). **Futureworld** (☎ 4426 9147; www.futureworld.org.au; Mill St, Coniston; ☎ 10am-4pm) has a fantastic interactive eco-technology exhibition.



**SURFING**

**North Beach** and **Wollongong City Beach** have beach breaks suitable for all visitors and are walking distance from the city centre. Look for the Acids Reef break on North Beach for more of a challenge. Up the coast, the options are varied and less crowded with fun beach breaks at **Coledale** and **Bulli** beaches and reef breaks at **Sharkies** (also at Coledale) and Headlands. While **Sharkies** is something of a misnomer in light of the minimal risk of meeting a finned friend here, surfers have occasionally come face to face with the odd humpback whale close to shore. Check out [www.wannasurf.com](http://www.wannasurf.com) for a full run-down on local waves and [www.swellnet.com](http://www.swellnet.com) for a five-day forecast. **Taupu Surf School** (☎ 4268 0088; ☹ Mon-Sat) runs courses at Thirroul and North Wollongong starting at \$125 for three lessons. Further south, Seven Mile Beach has surf camps (p328).

**SOUTH OF THE CITY**

Southwest of Wollongong, the **Illawarra Escarpment** is a state recreation area. There is no vehicle access but the spot is good for bushwalking. The park is a number of separate sections from Bulli Pass to Bong Bong; it isn't very large but the country is spectacular. Contact the Wollongong NPWS office (p321) for information on bush camping.

Just south of Wollongong, **Lake Illawarra** is popular for water sports including windsurfing. Further south is **Shellharbour**, a popular holiday resort, now overrun with tacky housing.

**Sleeping**

There is plenty of accommodation available in and around Wollongong from beachside

camping resorts and B&Bs to self-contained apartments. The visitors centre can make reservations. Also try [www.tourismshellharbour.com.au](http://www.tourismshellharbour.com.au).

**Hotel Illawarra** (☎ 4229 5411; cnr Market & Keira Sts; s/d \$50/70) The pub rooms and downstairs bar have recently been revamped and this funky place is experiencing a rebirth of cool. Best suited to the middy-drinking mindset.

**Keiraview Accommodation** (☎ 4229 9700; [www.keiraviewaccommodation.com.au](http://www.keiraviewaccommodation.com.au); 75-9 Keira St; dm/tw/d/f \$29/40/100/110; (P) (Q)) Slightly military in its rules, this complex contains the YHA hostel, which caters to students and backpackers in tidy four-bed dorms. The double and family rooms are pricier because they have verandas and kitchenettes.

**Novotel Northbeach** (☎ 4226 3555; [www.novotel.com.au](http://www.novotel.com.au); 2-14 Cliff Rd; r incl breakfast \$220-348; (P) (Q) (R)) Wollongong's flashiest joint is all class. The spacious and comfortable rooms have views of the ocean on one side or the escarpment on the other, as well as balconies to soak up the sunshine.

**CAMPING**

**Coledale Beach Camping Reserve** (☎ 4267 4302; Beach Rd, Coledale; two-person unpowered/powerd \$20/\$25) Wake up and smell the surf, this is one of the best basic camping spots on the coast.

**Corrimal Beach Tourist Park** (☎ 4285 5688; [corrimaltp@wollongong.nsw.gov.au](mailto:corrimaltp@wollongong.nsw.gov.au); Lake Pde, Corrimal; cabins \$66-164)

**Eating**

**Thai Basil Café** (☎ 4228 8940; 5/166 Keira St; entrees \$6, mains \$11; ☹ lunch & dinner) Recommended as one of the highlights of the Asian precinct on

**DETOUR: GRAND PACIFIC DRIVE**

Is the big smoke doing your head in? If so, ditch the traffic just out of Sydney for a cliff-hugging coastal drive to Wollongong. At Loftus, take a left off the Princess Hwy into Farnell Ave towards the **Royal National Park** (the world's second oldest) where you can visit tranquil **Wattamolla** and **Garie beaches**, picnic at **Bundeena** or stretch the legs on one of the many walking tracks.

Continue on to Otford and **Bald Hill** for eye-catching coastal views, then follow Lawrence Hargrave Dr to the spectacular new **Sea Cliff Bridge**, a ribbon of road that swings out from the cliff over the water. It has a pedestrian footpath perfect for dolphin and whale watching.

Further on, the small seaside towns dotted along the coast from Coalcliff to Bulli have superb beaches for swimming, surfing and soaking up the atmosphere. Pop into the pub at Scarborough, surely one of the best in Australia with beer, barbecues and brilliant views or, for something a little more sobering, a gelato at the Fireworks Café on the beach road at Austinmer.

Coledale, Bulli and Corrimal have camping sites slap bang on the beach (above) or you can continue on to Wollongong for the night. From here you can rejoin the Princes Hwy.



Keira St, between Smith and Crown, you'll find it among Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese restaurants jam-packed with curry-lovers and noodle-tragics. This area is definitely the cheapest eats in town. Try the creamy green curry.

**Mylan** (☎ 4228 1588; 198 Keira St; mains \$10-20; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This is another great choice in the same precinct, especially for its excellent Vietnamese seafood.

**Diggies** (☎ 4226 2688; 1 Cliff Rd, North Beach; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) Right on the beach, this is the perfect spot for excellent coffee and a 'sunrise breakfast' of banana bread, low-fat yoghurt and fresh fruit (\$10).

**Educated Palate** (☎ 4225 0100; 87 Crown St; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) This culinary kitchen also has a coffee bar out the back with *baristas* on hand to make lattes par excellence. The bacon-and-egg Turkish bread breakfast is a bargain (\$7).

**Lagoon Seafood Restaurant** (☎ 4226 1677; Sturt Park; entrees \$16, mains \$28; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) In a tranquil setting, this is one of four top-quality seafood restaurants in Wollongong. It has delectable dishes worthy of fine dining and it's a stone's throw (with a good arm) from the water.

Further recommendations include these ones:

**Flame Tree Music Café** (☎ 4225 7409; 89 Crown St; mains \$9; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) A hippy-cum-bohemian-cum-affable café.

**R&R Catering** (☎ 4294 1410; 1/114 Parkes St, Helensburgh; 🍴 breakfast & lunch Wed-Mon) This is a cute café in a sunny spot near Royal National Park.

## Drinking

**Five Islands Brewing Company** (☎ 4220 2854; WIN Entertainment Centre, cnr Crown & Harbour Sts) This feels more like a bar than a brewery but there are nine fine draught beers. The Pig Dog Pilsner is named after the owner (an ex-St George rugby player) who has an anecdote for each beer. It has plenty of outdoor seating and a good menu but the focus should remain on drinking.

**North Wollongong Hotel** (☎ 4229 4177; Princes Hwy) This has the biggest beer garden known to man, and the interior is as cool as some of the students who hang out here. It heaves on weekends.

**Cooney's** (☎ 4229 1911; 234 Keira St) This dark and nooky bar has dim lighting, booth seating, five pool tables and constant tunes. There's a

beer garden out the back and Saturday night is jazz night.

## Getting There & Away

All long-distance buses leave from the **bus station** (☎ 4226 1022; cnr Keira & Campbell Sts). **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) operates daily buses to and from Sydney (\$15) and south to Eden (\$66). **Murray's** (☎ 13 22 51) travel to Canberra (\$31). **CountryLink** runs buses to Moss Vale from outside the train station and **CityRail** runs frequently to Sydney's Central station (\$9) and south to Kiama (\$6), Gerringong (\$7) and Bomaderry/Nowra (\$9).

**Wollongong Illawarra Regional Airport** has QantasLink (☎ 13 17 13) flights to Sydney and Melbourne.

## Getting Around

Two local bus companies, **Pioneer Motor Services** (☎ 13 34 10) and **Dions** (☎ 4228 9855), service the local area. The main stops are on Marine Dr, and the corner of Crown and Keira Sts. You can reach most beaches by rail and trains are fairly frequent. Bringing a bike on the train from Sydney is a great way to get around; a **cycle path** runs from the city centre north to Bulli and south to Port Kembla.

# KIAMA TO ULLADULLA

Shoalhaven is a large municipality stretching from north of Nowra almost as far south as Batemans Bay. It takes in some great beaches, state forests and, in the ranges to the west, the big Morton National Park (p134).

This area is a popular family-holiday destination, but it isn't yet as crowded as parts of the north coast and much of the tourism is confined to weekenders from Sydney.

There are regional visitors centres in Kiama, Nowra and Ulladulla, and you'll also find information at [www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au](http://www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au).

## KIAMA & AROUND

☎ 02 / pop 22,000

Kiama is a pretty town at the epicentre of some good beaches and quaint villages – both rural and seaside. The **Kiama Area visitors centre** (☎ 4232 3322/1300 654 262; [www.southcoast.com.au/kiama](http://www.southcoast.com.au/kiama); 🍴 9am-5pm) is on Blowhole Point, so-called because of a **blowhole** that can spurt water up to 60m. A self-guided **heritage-tour** booklet is available from the visitors centre (free).

The **Terrace** (Collins St) is a neat strip of restored houses that date back to 1886 and are now mostly occupied by browsing shops and restaurants.

There's a good **lookout** from the top of Saddleback Mountain, just behind the town, and a wave at **Surf** and **Bombo beaches**, and at **Werri Beach**, 10km south in Gerringong.

**Minnamurra Rainforest Centre** and an **NPWS visitors centre** (☎ 4236 0469) are in beautiful **Budderoo National Park** (☎ 4236 0469; car/motorcycle \$10/4), about 14km inland from Kiama. On the way to Minnamurra you'll pass through the old village of **Jamberoo**, which has a nice pub. South along the coast, **Gerringong** and **Gerroa** have their fair share of picture-postcard scenery and restaurants to write home about.

## Sleeping

**Gerringong Real Estate** (☎ 4234 1177; [www.gerringongrealestate.com.au](http://www.gerringongrealestate.com.au); 135 Fern St) Has a holiday brochure for accommodation in Gerringong and Gerroa.

**Kiama Backpackers** (☎ 4233 1881; 31 Bong Bong St; dm/d \$20/49; 📶) Just up from the Grand Hotel, this decidedly drab building has clean male and female rooms and internet access (\$5 per hr).

**Grand Hotel** (☎ 4232 1037; 49 Manning St; r per person \$30) This is another option for backpackers. It's on the corner of Bong Bong St and has basic rooms. Bands crank up the volume on Saturday nights.

**Kiama Harbour Cabins** (☎ 1800 823 824; Blowhole Point; 1-bedroom cabins from \$190) These are fairly new and in the best position in town. The front verandas have barbecues so you can cook fish fresh from the co-op over yonder and enjoy dinner with a view.

## CAMPING

**Surf Beach Holiday Park** (☎ 4232 1791; Bourrool St; 2-person camp sites from \$24, cabins from \$42) This caravan park is a haven for anyone wanting to catch a wave. It also has cabins, some with water views and a spa (from \$135 for two people).

## Eating

Stroll along Terralong St (the main street) and nearby Collins St for more restaurants.

**Ritzzy Gritz** (☎ 4232 1853; 40 Collins St; mains \$24; 🍴 lunch Fri-Sun, dinner daily) A few interesting variations on the Mexican theme can be sampled here and the margaritas are pretty good too.

**Seahaven Café** (☎ 4234 3796; 19 Riverleigh Ave, Gerroa; 🍴 breakfast & lunch Wed-Mon, dinner Fri & Sat) Pull

up a pew and take in the view; this is one of the south coast's best café-cum-restaurants. The gourmet food, tasteful maritime décor and seaside setting are all worth the detour. Try the eye fillet with sweet potato and coriander salad.

**Cargo's Wharf** (☎ 4233 2771; 2 Kiama Wharf; 🍴 lunch & dinner) This old cargo shed, built in 1868, is now home to a fine seafood restaurant right on the water. Ask for a table upstairs for added seaside ambience.

**Gerringong Gourmet Deli/Café** (☎ 4234 1035; 133 Fern St, Gerringong; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) A café that roasts its own coffee beans and serves up local produce in a down-to-earth style has mastered the art of success. It has tables and chairs on the footpath.

## Getting There & Away

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) stops in Kiama (but only if there's a booking) outside the Leagues Club on Terralong St. **Kiama Coachlines** (☎ 4232 3466) runs to Gerringong and Minnamurra (via Jamberoo).

Frequent **CityRail** (☎ 13 15 00) trains run north to Wollongong (\$6) and Sydney (\$13) and south to Gerringong (\$3) and Bomaderry/Nowra (\$5).

If you're driving take the beach detour via Gerringong and Gerroa and rejoin the highway just north of Nowra.

## BERRY

☎ 02 / pop 2670

Inland and about 20km north of Nowra is the pretty little town of Berry, a worthy place for a stopover despite not being on the coast. It has a plethora of great eating venues and two pubs fit for shouting a round or two. **Queen St**, Berry's short main street, is worth a stroll for its National Trust-classified buildings, museum and antique shops.

**Pottering Around** (☎ 4464 2177; 97-99 Queen St), opposite the Great Southern Hotel, has some tourist information; otherwise try [www.berry.net.au](http://www.berry.net.au).

**Mild to Wild** (☎ 4464 2211; [www.m2w.com.au](http://www.m2w.com.au); 84 Queen St) organises adventure tours such as half-day self-guided mountain bike rides (\$40) and kayaking trips (\$20).

## Sights & Activities

### WINERIES

There are several **wineries** in the area and the **Hotel Berry** (☎ 4464 1011; 120 Queen St; 🍴 11am Sat)

runs a short, sweet and cheap wine tour (\$15). Choose four wineries from the seven in the area. Two close to town are the **Silos** (☎ 4448 6082; 8640 Princes Hwy, Jaspers Brush; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sun), where the original cow barn now houses the cellar door, and **Bundewallah Estate** (☎ 4464 3600; 204A Bundewallah Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Sun). Some wineries have a restaurant and accommodation. The **Shoalhaven Jazz & Blues Festival** is held mid-October at **Cambewarra Estate Winery** (☎ 4446 0170; www.shoalhavenjazz.com.au; Illaroo Rd, Cambewarra; from \$35) northwest of Nowra. Also see activities listed on p328.

## Sleeping

There is accommodation aplenty in Berry but beware prices rise on the weekends. Holiday apartments can be booked through **Elders Real Estate** (☎ 4464 1600; 121 Queen St).

**our pick** **Hotel Berry** (☎ 4464 1011; 120 Queen St; s/d \$35/70) This country pub is a rarity – it caters to weekend city slickers without totally losing its status as a local watering hole. The rooms are standard pub bedrooms with shared bathroom facilities, but are large and well presented. It has seven beers on tap!

**Great Southern Hotel** (☎ 4464 1009; s/d/tr \$44/80/105) This is a boozier worth having a beer in if only to feast your eyes on the hub-cap collection, bullet-sprayed road signs and miscellaneous Aussie paraphernalia. The motel-style rooms have character albeit they're a tad overpriced.

**Village Boutique Motel** (☎ 4464 3570; www.berry.motel.com.au; 72-76 Queen St; d \$125; ☎ ☎) This good-looking place has stylish rooms (some with a spa) and a Roman bath-style swimming pool. Locals rave about the adjoining restaurant known as The Pavillion at Twenty Three at Berry (see below).

## Eating

**Cuttlefish Pizza Bar** (☎ 4464 3065; 98 Queen St; ☎ dinner Thu-Mon, lunch Sun) This modern Italian restaurant, with al fresco dining, has a good position overlooking Queen St. It also does take-away pizzas (\$9 to \$20), lasagne (\$13), and the best bit, rosemary roast potatoes (\$9).

**Delicious – Food By Lisa** (☎ 4464 3650; 62 Albert St; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Off the main drag, this place uses local produce to whip-up homemade tarts, gourmet salads, pies and a tasty spinach and feta pastry (\$9).

**Twenty Three at Berry** (☎ 4464 2323; 85 Queen St; ☎ dinner Wed-Sun) This upmarket place, part

of the Village Boutique Hotel, is a hit with the locals. It has a log fire in winter and a courtyard in summer. The kangaroo fillet with garlic mash (\$27) is a skip favourite.

## Getting There & Away

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) buses between Kiama and Nowra (\$30) stop here on request. Scenic routes to **Kangaroo Valley** and **Mittagong** leave the Princes Hwy south of Berry on Kangaroo Valley Rd and north via Woodhill and Wattamolla.

## NOWRA

☎ 02 / pop 25,000

Nowra is the largest town in the Shoalhaven area and therefore the central business district and transport hub. It's not, as many people expect, on the coast (the nearest beach is at Shoalhaven Heads, about 17km east) so it's not top of the pops in terms of beach holidays. It is, however, a handy base for excursions to beaches and villages around the region.

## Information

The **Shoalhaven visitors centre** (☎ 1300 662 808; www.shoalhavenholidays.com.au; Princes Hwy) is just south of the bridge near the naval helicopter. It has internet access for \$5 per half hour. There's also an **NPWS office** (☎ 4423 2170; 55 Graham St).

## Sights & Activities

The 6.5-hectare **Nowra Wildlife Park** (☎ 4421 3949; www.nowrawildlifepark.com.au; Rock Hill Rd, North Nowra; adult/child \$14/8; ☎ 9am-5pm), on the north bank of the Shoalhaven River, is a native-animal hangout the kids will enjoy.

Both **Nowra Museum** (☎ 4421 2021; cnr Kinghorne & Plunkett Sts; admission \$1; ☎ 1-4pm Sat & Sun) and **Meroogal** (☎ 4421 8150; cnr West & Worrigeer Sts; adult/child \$8/4; ☎ 1-5pm Sat & 10am-5pm Sun, 10am-5pm Thu-Sun Jan) have the lowdown on local history.

Love planes? Visit **Fleet Air Arm Museum** (☎ 4421 1920; www.museum-of-flight.org.au; 489A Albatross Rd; adults/children \$13/5; ☎ 10am-4pm), 10km south of Nowra. Prefer to jump out of one? Nearby **Nowra Skydive** (☎ 0419 446 904; www.skydivenowra.com.au; Braidwood Rd), has tandem jumps from 10,000ft for \$380.

The visitors centre produces a handy compilation of walks in the area. To see the river, **Shoalhaven River Cruises** (☎ 0429 981 007; www.shoalhavenrivercruise.com.au; Braidwood Rd), has tours that leave from the wharf just east of the bridge near the visitors centre.

## Sleeping

**Empire Hotel** (☎ 4421 2433; cnr Kinghorne & North Sts; s/d \$25/50) These basic pub rooms overlook the beer garden of Carlucci's Italian restaurant. The bedrooms have sinks and shared bathrooms.

**Hub** (☎ 4422 8006; www.nowrabackpackers.com; Scenic Dr; dm \$30, d \$60) A self-contained house, aimed at backpackers, in a good location by the river. There's an enclosed patio for bikes.

**Riverhaven Motel** (☎ 4422 8006; www.nowrabackpackers.com; Scenic Dr; s/d \$65/75) Next to the Hub, this 22-room hotel is well run with the usual motel facilities.

**Whitehouse** (☎ 4421 2084; www.whitehouseguesthouse.com; 30 Junction St; d/tr \$100/115) A friendly family operates this homely guesthouse with views of the Cambewarra mountains.

## CAMPING

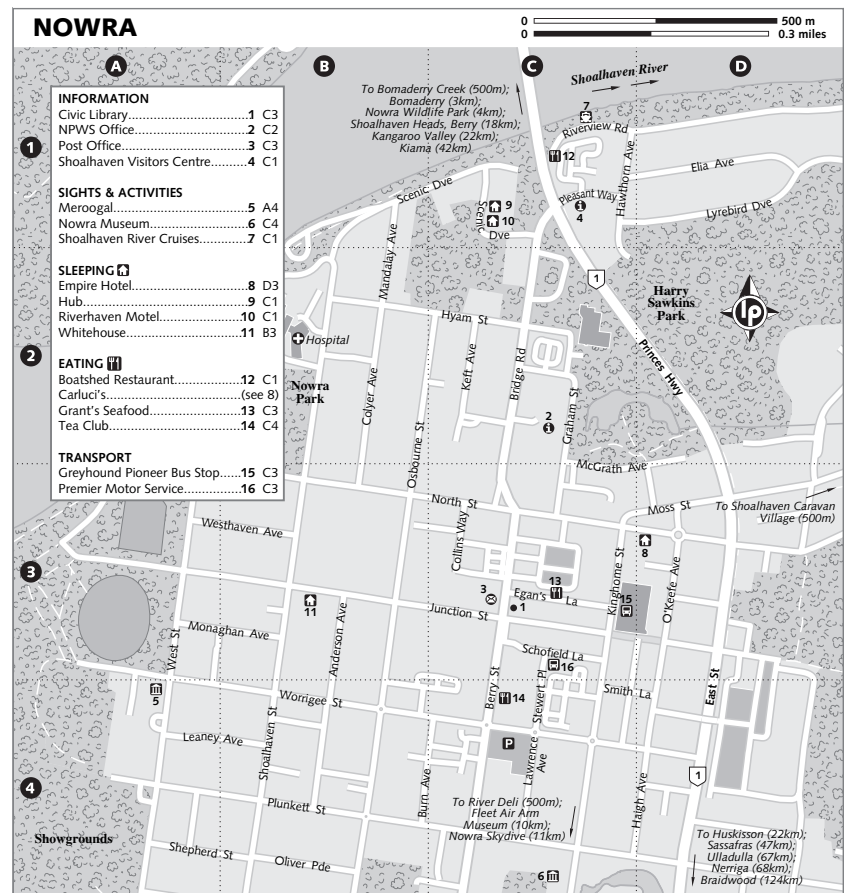
**Nowra Wildlife Park** (☎ 4421 3949; camp sites per adult/child \$7/5) This animal park has camp sites in riverside bushland. Electricity is \$2 a night.

**Shoalhaven Caravan Village** (☎ 4423 0770; 17 Terara Rd; camp sites per adult \$16) This is a ship-shape place that backs onto the river.

## Eating

**River Deli** (☎ 4423 1344; Kinghorne St; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Take a sunny seat outdoors for a latte, great snack food and fresh sandwiches. The Moroccan chicken wrap (\$10) will fill that bottomless pit.

**Carlucci's** (☎ 4421 4711; cnr Kinghorne & North Sts; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Wed-Sat) A local hangout that is known as Nowra's best Italian restaurant.



The prices are reasonable: Wednesdays you can get steaks for \$8 and pasta for \$6.

**Boatshed Restaurant** (☎ 4421 2419; 10 Wharf Rd; mains \$28-30; ☎ lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Tue-Sun) This is the place to go for an upmarket meal with a view – it overlooks the river just next to the bridge. The seafood is the freshest around.

Further recommendations:

**Grant's Seafood** (☎ 4421 2742; 9 Egan's Lane; mains \$15; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Thu-Sun) Good-value fish and chips and juicy ribs.

**Tea Club** (☎ 4422 0900; 46 Berry St; mains \$12; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Nowra's Bohemian set hangs out at this comfortable little café.

## Getting There & Away

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) runs bus services north to Sydney (\$31, three hours) and goes down south to Melbourne (\$55).

The **train station** (☎ 4423 0141) is at Bomaderry. Frequent **CityRail** (☎ 13 15 00) trains go to Sydney (\$16; about three hours). Coaches to outlying coastal areas depart from here and from the bus terminal in Stewart Place.

The Princes Hwy runs north to Kiama (42km) and south to Ulladulla (67km), with several turn-offs to Jervis Bay.

An interesting and mainly unsealed road runs from Nowra to Braidwood, through Morton National Park and the hamlets of Sassafras and Nerriga. At the south end of Kinglehorne St take Albatross Rd, which veers off to the right.

## AROUND NOWRA

East of Nowra, the Shoalhaven River meanders through dairy country in a system of estuaries and wetlands, finally reaching the sea at Crookhaven Heads.

**Greenwell Point**, on the estuary about 15km east of Nowra, is a quiet, pretty fishing village specialising in fresh oysters. On the way there from Nowra you'll pass the **Jindyandy Mill** (719 Greenwell Point Rd; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Thu-Mon) a convict-built flour mill that is now a craft village. For the famished, the **Butterfactory** (☎ 4447 1400; 739 Greenwell Point Rd; ☎ lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Thu-Sat) is a gourmet restaurant set in rolling green paddocks at Pyree.

Further around the inlet there's great **surf** at **Culburra Beach** and **Crookhaven Heads** (Crooky). Also try **Warrain Beach**, which is protected from wind by the headland. There are camping grounds and, for landlubbers, walking tracks to the lighthouse.

On the north side of the estuary, just before Shoalhaven Heads, is **Coolangatta Estate** (☎ 4448 7131; www.coolangattaeate.com.au; 1335 Bolong Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu), a slick winery with a golf course, a good restaurant and accommodation (s/d \$100/120) in convict-built buildings. The 2003 semillon is too good to stay bottled for long. Also try nearby **Seven Mile Vineyard** (☎ 4448 5466; 84 Coolangatta Rd; www.sevenmilevineyard.com.au; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Sun & public holidays).

At **Shoalhaven Heads**, sandbars form a bridge between the river and the sea. There's a motel, caravan park and an excellent **surf** beach here but for a picnic or a swim, keep on trucking north to the **Seven Mile Beach National Park** (admission free), one of the largest stretches of natural coastal dune vegetation. Just off the Sand Track there's a picnic spot with a boardwalk to the beach that stretches all the way to Gerroa. **Surf Camp Australia** (☎ 1800 888 732; www.surfcamp.com.au) has overnight and weekend learn-to-surf camps here from \$175.

There are camping parks on both sides of the Crooked River at Gerroa, a sleepy little town overlooking the white sand dunes of Seven Mile Beach. If you stop here, don't miss **Seahaven Café** (p325). This road continues to Kiama.

## JERVIS BAY

Despite extensive housing around Huskisson and Vincentia, this spectacular bay retains its clean, white beaches and crystal-clear water (no large rivers flow into it). Dolphins are regularly seen, and whales sometimes drop in on their annual migrations from June to October.

**Beecroft Peninsula** forms the northeastern side of Jervis Bay. Most of the peninsula is navy land, which is off-limits to civilians, but **Currorang**, near Beecroft Head, is a small town with camping and a spectacular walk to **Point Perpendicular Lighthouse**. Contact **Beecroft Ranger Station** (☎ 4448 3411) for more info.

## Huskisson

☎ 02 / pop 1600

Huskisson, the oldest town on Jervis Bay, does not get the attention it deserves. It has a handful of excellent eating venues, plenty of adventure-based activity and delightful surrounds that make it a great place to spend a night or two. The main street overlooks a picturesque central boat wharf that juts out over the transparent blue estuary. When the beach is windy, this is the perfect swimming spot. For this reason alone, it's worth stopping by.

## PARADISE ALMOST LOST

While you're sitting there squelching your toes in the white sands of Jervis Bay, consider that this pristine scene might have been very different if greed and avarice had had its way. The deep protected waters of the bay were once considered ideal for large ships and, not once but twice in the past 200 years, plans have been hatched to turn Jervis Bay into a bustling port, skirted by a railway line and inundated with docklands and industry. In 1969 the federal government had secret plans for a nuclear power station just a few hundred metres from stunning Murrays Beach (now the car park), while at the same time the NSW government negotiated building a steelworks at Currumbene Creek. As recently as 1993 a scheme was devised to relocate an armaments depot to a site on the bay with Sydney naval facilities to follow. While the public outcry has saved the area from such tragedy and the conservation of Jervis Bay has since been recognised with national and marine parks instated, plans are still afoot for a new commercial centre on the wildlife corridor between the Booderee National Park peninsula and the mainland. If you too love this area, ask locally about ways to throw your weight behind its protection.

At the end of February, Huskisson hosts the **Shoalhaven Food and Wine Spectacular** (www.shoalhavenfoodandwine.com.au).

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Lady Denman Heritage Complex** (☎ 4441 5675; Dent St; www.ladydenman.asn.au; adult/child \$8/4; ☎ 10am-4pm) has interesting history on Jervis Bay (see above) and a maritime museum. On the first Saturday of each month it hosts a **growers market**.

South of Huskisson, **Hyams Beach** is a spectacularly white stretch of sand in residential area just off the main road.

For seagoers, **Dolphin Watch Cruises** (☎ 1800 246 010; 50 Owen St) has the best reputation for whale- (three hours adult/child \$43/28) and dolphin-watching trips (two hours adult/child \$20/15). June to November is prime whale time.

**Jervis Bay Kayak Co** (☎ 4441 7157; www.jervisbaykayaks.com; Shop 7B, Campbell Court, Vincentia) conducts tours and rents out sea kayaks, starting at \$33 for two hours.

## Diving

Jervis Bay is popular with divers, and at least two places in Huskisson offer diving and courses. **Deep 6 Diving** (☎ 1300 139 850; www.deep6divingjervisbay.com.au; 64 Owen St) charges \$90 for two boat dives, plus equipment hire (about \$35 for a full set). You can do a Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) open-water dive course for about \$430. **Sea Sports** (☎ 4441 5012; www.jbseasports.com.au; 47 Owen St) has similar rates and also runs cruises.

There are some good dives in the bay including the wrecks of TSS *Merimbula* (4m to 13m) and TSS *Wandra* (24m to 26m). The

Arch (10m to 40m) also gets a good rap for its swim-throughs and marine life.

## SLEEPING & EATING

There's quite a lot of guesthouse and motel accommodation in Huskisson and Vincentia (which more or less merge into one), but book ahead on weekends when prices tend to rocket.

**Husky Pub** (☎ 4441 5001; Owen St; s/d \$50/70) This place has new owners who have maintained the excellent beer-drinking vibe. It has six double pub rooms with shared bathroom facilities, some with fantastic bay views.

**Jervis Bay Guesthouse** (☎ 4441 7658; www.jervisbayguesthouse.com.au; 1 Beach St, Huskisson; r with breakfast \$145-440; ☎) This two-storey wooden guesthouse has pretty bedrooms with French doors opening onto a wide veranda. Most rooms have beach views and one has a spa.

**Paperbark Camp** (☎ 1300 668 167; www.paperbark.com.au; 571 Woollamia Rd; d from \$270; ☎ Sep-Jun) Ecotourism at its luxury best. This boutique establishment has five-star accommodation in 12 safari-style tents, pitched amid the flora and fauna. Indulge in an outdoor shower, sleep in a cosy queen-sized bed and wake to the sounds of the bush. The starry nights are free.

**Seagrass Brasserie** (☎ 4441 6124; www.seagrass.net.au; 13 Currumbene St; entrees \$17, mains \$27; ☎ lunch Fri-Sun, dinner Tue-Sun) Special occasions go down well at a place like Seagrass. It has contemporary class (without being too artsy) and a mouth-watering menu that can easily match anything served up in the city. Best to book.

**Jervis Bay Kiosk** (☎ 4441 5464; 2/66 Owen St; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This place has a tranquil view of the water and a breakfast menu less



## VIEW, PEWS AND THE KITCHEN SINK

Caravans and campervans might be slightly more cumbersome than your average tent but devotees of a home on wheels will not be disappointed by the facilities along the south coast – nor the scenic sites available. Whether you're looking for a secluded spot in a national park or a camping ground with all the mod cons, there are plenty of options for parking by the beach, kicking back and watching the waves roll in. Two of the best basic waterside spots include **Coledale Beach Camping Reserve** (☎ 02-4267 4302; Beach Rd, Coledale; 2 person unpowered/powerd sites \$20/25) and **Pretty Beach** (☎ 02-4457 2019, Murramarang National Park, NPWS entry fee \$7 per car plus adult/child \$5/\$3) or, for a little more luxury, check out **Conjola Lakeside Van Park** (☎ 02-4456 1407; 1 Norman St, Lake Conjola; 2 person powered sites \$25-35); **Tathra Beach Tourist Park** (☎ 02-6494 1302; Andy Poole Dr, sites from \$22); and **Eden Tourist Park** (☎ 02-6496 1139; Aslings Beach Rd; www.edentouristpark.com.au; unpowered/powerd sites from \$18/21). Keep an eye out for the signs indicating well-placed barbecues and picnic areas dotted along the beaches and headlands. Here, anyone with a home in tow can set the table to dine al fresco on hot, steamy fish and chips or seafood fresh from the local co-op. The views and the best seats in the house are free!

ordinary. Where else could you get a soft-boiled egg served with toast soldiers and chilli jam (\$8)? The staff are lots of fun too.

## Booderee National Park

This remarkable national park with a name meaning 'plenty of fish' occupies Jervis Bay's southeastern spit, a stunning area combining heathland, small rainforest pockets, sparkling water, and white sandy beaches plus a Botanic Garden. In 1995 the Aboriginal community won a land claim in the Wreck Bay area so now the federal government and the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community jointly administer the park. (The ACT originally acquired the land from the NSW government so that the nation's capital had its own port). NPWS passes are not valid. Entry costs \$10 per car/motorcycle for 48 hours).

Off Jervis Bay Rd, **Scottish Rocks** and **Murrays Beach** are exceptionally beautiful secluded spots. Further around the point, Caves Beach, Bherwerre and Steamers Head are open ocean beaches with good surf.

The **Booderee visitors centre** (☎ 02-4443 0977; www.booderee.np.gov.au; Jervis Bay Rd), at the park entrance, has walking-track maps and information on camping at **Green Patch** and **Bristol Point** (camp sites \$14-17), and at more basic **Caves Beach** (camp sites \$8-10).

## JERVIS BAY TO ULLADULLA

The southern peninsula of Jervis Bay encircles **St Georges Basin**, a large body of water that has access to the sea through narrow Sussex Inlet. The north shore of the basin has succumbed to housing developments

reminiscent of the suburban sprawl on the Central Coast.

Further south is pretty **Lake Conjola**, with a quiet town of holiday shacks and a couple of caravan parks that side up to the inlet and a fantastic beach. This is a top spot for campervans.

**Milton**, on the highway 6km north of Ulladulla, is this area's original town and it's a pretty place to stop. There are several cafés and a few antique shops on the main street (the Princes Hwy) and it gets pretty busy here on weekends.

## ULLADULLA

☎ 02 / pop 10,500

Situated on the harbour near rocky Warden Head, Ulladulla is neither here nor there. It has excellent beaches and is close to Pigeon House Mountain and Budawang National Park but the town itself doesn't have much to offer. It is, however, the largest town on the highway between Nowra and Batemans Bay and **Mollymook**, a suburb on a lovely surf beach, is a short walk north of the harbour.

Ulladulla's **visitors centre** (☎ 4455 1269; www.ulladulla.info; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) is in the Civic Centre opposite the harbour. The **library** (☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat), in the same building, has internet access for \$3 per hour.

## Sights & Activities

**One Track For All** is a 2km figure-eight culture track with a series of relief carvings and paintings that tell the story of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history in the Shoalhaven

area. On the way you'll pass four magnificent lookouts with well-placed resting seats. The track, at the end of Dolphin St, east of the Princes Hwy, is sealed for wheelchairs and prams.

There's a fantastic walk up **Pigeon House Mountain** (below) and worthwhile surf at Narawallee, Mollymook and Collers beaches.

## Sleeping

Standard motels are easy to find in Ulladulla and neighbouring Mollymook.

**Hotel Marlin** (☎ 4455 1999; cnr Princes Hwy & Wason St; s/d \$30/\$50) A central place with standard pub rooms and shared bathrooms; handy to the bus stop.

**our pick** **Ulladulla Guest House** (☎ 4455 1796; www.guesthouse.com.au; 39 Burrill St; r from \$99; (P) (♿) (♿)) Don't let the palm trees put you off, this out-of-the-ordinary guesthouse with a prestigious guest list is one of the most welcoming on the coast. It has local and international art lining the walls, a fantastic French restaurant (see right) and hosts that will make you want to stay forever.

## CAMPING

**Ulladulla Tourist Park** (☎ 4455 2457; South St; camp sites from \$20, cabins from \$45) This park is on the headland a few blocks from the town centre (at the end of South St), but it's a bit of a walk to the beach.

## PIGEON HOUSE MOUNTAIN

'Everyone must do it,' said the amiable owner of Ulladulla Guesthouse in his hard-to-pick accent, 'but unfortunately, some people, they drive right past'. It was a small lament, maybe even a throwaway line, but it worked a treat. Climbing **Pigeon House Mountain** (720m) in the far south of Morton National Park might be the kind of upper-thigh workout that isn't called for on holiday but the rewards make any huffing and puffing worthwhile.

The main access road leaves the highway about 8km south of Ulladulla, then it's a rough and rocky 26km drive to the picnic area at the start of the track. The return walk takes three to four hours but plan for longer; the summit is barbaric-yawp territory where the rest of the world rolls out from under your feet in all directions. You could be up there for hours.

The first hour's walk from the car park is a steady climb through wildflowers and black-ash eucalypts. The track then levels out for 1km before another short and steep climb to the rock cliff-face. From here a series of steel ladders lead to the rock platform at the top, dotted with tea tree and Pigeon House ash eucalypts.

On a clear day, Gulaga (Mt Dromedary) sticks its head towards the south and to the northwest is Point Perpendicular. In between, a canopy of stunning national park vegetation spreads out like a blanket, occasionally making creases in the steep gorges carved by the Clyde River and flattening out over the elongated plateaux of Byangee Walls and the Castle.

People with a fear of heights should avoid the final section; and be sure to take water as there is none available.

## Eating

There are plenty of coffee shops and pasta places on Ulladulla's main street and in the arcades running off it.

**Dao's Thai Kitchen** (☎ 4455 1855; 130 Princes Highway; entrees \$9; mains \$16; ☎ lunch & dinner) Despite the décor, the food here is excellent. The northern Thai chef specialises in dishes from her hometown. Ask for a little extra heat for an authentic chilli fix.

**Ulladulla Guest House** (☎ 4455 1796; www.guesthouse.com.au; 39 Burrill St; mains \$30; ☎ breakfast daily, dinner Mon & Thu-Sat) The fully licensed restaurant at this guesthouse (see left) serves fine French food and has a classy ambience. On chilly nights you can warm your bones next to the open fire as classical music tinkles in the background.

## Getting There & Away

Bus stops on the highway outside the Marlin Hotel (northbound) or Travelscene (southbound). Ticket agents are **Travelscene** (☎ 4455 1588; Shop 3, Ulladulla Plaza, 107 Princes Hwy) and **Harvey World Travel** (☎ 4455 5122; Shop 3, Rowen's Arcade).

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) runs south to Eden (\$42) and north to Sydney (\$31) twice a day. **Priors Scenic Express** (☎ 1800 816 234) is a good bus to catch if you want to get off at the smaller places such as Milton, Burrill Lake, Tabourie Lake or Termeil. It continues on to Narooma.

## FAR SOUTH COAST

The Far South Coast is the least-developed stretch of coast in the state and it has some of the best beaches and forests. The population triples during holiday times, especially in the Eurobodalla area (from Batemans Bay to Narooma), and prices rise accordingly. As well as the beaches and inlets, with swimming, surfing and fishing, there are good walks in the national parks and whale-watching during the migration season (June and July, and September to November). The Sapphire Coast, stretching from Bermagui to Eden, is a popular holiday area centred on Merimbula.

For more information, see the visitors centres in Batemans Bay and Narooma and **NPWS offices** Narooma (☎ 02-4476 2888); Merimbula (☎ 02-6495 5000).

### MURRAMARANG NATIONAL PARK

This beautiful coastal park covering 12,000 hectares begins about 20km south of Ulladulla and extends almost all the way south to Batemans Bay. It's a haven for surfers and bushwalkers and has three of the best **beachside camping** spots on the south coast. There are numerous walking tracks snaking off from these beach areas and a steep but enjoyable walk up **Durras Mountain** (283m). At the northern end of the park the **Murramarang Aboriginal Area** has a self-guided walking track and interpretative signs explaining the area's exposed middens.

Stunning **Pretty** (☎ 02-4457 2019), **Pebbly** (☎ 02-4478 6023) and **Depot Beach** (☎ 02-4478 6582) camping grounds are idyllic locations close to the surf (Pebbly is the most popular for surfing) and within the grazing territory of kangaroos. It's perfect for a snap-happy moment.

There's a NPWS entry fee of \$7 per car plus camping fees if you stay overnight (adult/children \$5/\$3). The sites, on dirt roads off the Princes Hwy, are well signposted, Pretty Beach being the most accessible. No caravans are allowed at Pebbly Beach.

### Getting There & Away

The Princes Hwy runs parallel to Murramarang, but it's about 10km from the highway to the beaches or the small settlements in and near the park. There's no public transport into the park but **Priors Scenic Express** (☎ 1800 816 234)

buses stop on the highway at Termeil, East Lynne and Benandarah.

### BATEMANS BAY

☎ 02 / pop 13,000

Don't expect much out of Batemans Bay and you won't be disappointed. This fishing port, which boomed to become one of the South Coast's largest holiday centres, has a lovely estuary and beautiful beaches but the town itself lacks lustre. During summer, it is overrun with holidaying Canberrans who flock here from the landlocked capital to soak up the sun then leave it for dead once the fun's over. Even the locals concede Batemans is best used as a base for exploring the surrounding natural environment.

### Information

The large **visitors centre** (☎ 1800 802 528; Princes Hwy; ☎ 9am-5pm) has local art for sale and an internet kiosk. **Total Computer Care** (☎ 4472 2745; 10 Citi Centre Arcade, Orient St) has internet access for \$3/5 per half/full hour.

### Sights & Activities

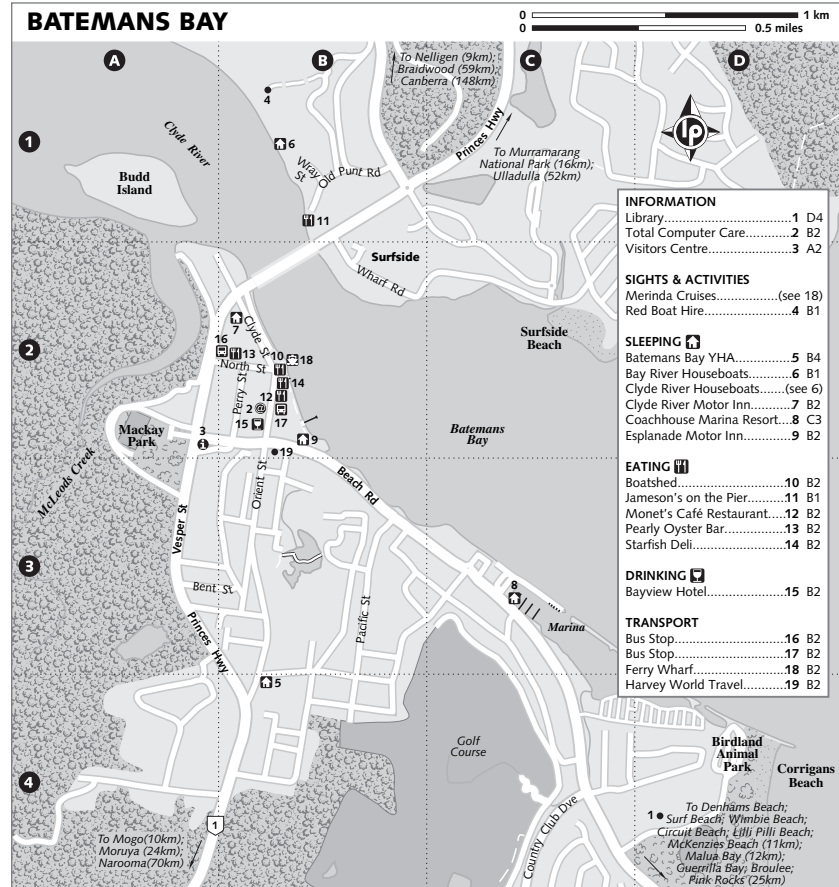
On the north side of the Clyde River estuary just across the bridge there are a couple of boat-hire places. **Red Boat Hire** (☎ 4472 5649; Wray St; ☎ 7am-7pm) hires out runabouts from \$50 for two hours.

Several boats offer **cruises** up the estuary from the ferry wharf just east of the bridge. **Merinda Cruises** (☎ 4473 4052) has a three-hour cruise to Nelligen (adult/child \$25/12) and you can have lunch on board (fish, chips and salad). There are also sea cruises, during which you might see penguins at the Tollgate Islands Nature Reserve in the bay.

### BEACHES & SURF

Corrigans Beach is the closest beach to the town centre. South of here is a series of small beaches nibbled into the rocky shore. There are longer beaches along the coast north of the bridge, leading into Murramarang National Park.

Surfers flock to Surf Beach, Malua Bay, the small McKenzies Beach (just south of Malua Bay) and Broulee, which has a small wave when everywhere else is flat. For the experienced, the best surfing in the area is at Pink Rocks (near Broulee) when a north swell is running. Broulee itself has a wide crescent of sand, but there's a strong rip at the northern end.



### Sleeping

There are many holiday apartments. Letting agents are the **Professionals** (☎ 1800 808 054) and **Ray White Real Estate** (☎ 4472 4799).

**Batemans Bay YHA** (☎ 4472 4972; Old Princes Hwy; dm \$25, d \$55) The youth hostel is in the Shady Willows Holiday Park just south of the centre. It is clean and tidy with male and female dorms, a TV room and kitchen. Outside there's barbecue action.

**Clyde River Motor Inn** (☎ 4472 6444; www.clydemo.tel.com.au; 3 Clyde St; s/d \$75/79) This central motel close to the river is the best value in town. It's worth paying a tad more for the river rooms. Townhouses are also available.

**Esplanade Motor Inn** (☎ 4472 0200; www.esplanade.com; 23 Beach Rd; d from \$118) If you're cashed up,

stay here. It's central and the river views kick butt. Seagulls Restaurant has a good reputation for seafood.

### CAMPING

**Coachhouse Marina Resort** (☎ 4472 4392; www.coachhouse.com.au; 49 Beach Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/25, cabins from \$40; ♿) A well-equipped family-friendly park at the start of Corrigans Beach.

### HOUSEBOATS

Eight- and 10-berth houseboats are an inspired way to escape the summer crowds and find your own way around the waterways with your mates. On the north side of the river **Bay River Houseboats** (☎ 4471 2253; www.bayriverhouseboats.com.au; Wray St) and **Clyde River Houseboats**



(☎ 4472 6369; www.dlyderiverhouseboats) lease eight-berth boats from \$550 for four nights (Monday to Friday), more for weekends.

### Eating & Drinking

The main shopping area around Orient St and the riverfront has some decent cafés and restaurants.

**Pearly Oyster Bar** (☎ 4472 4233; 6 North St, Bateman's Bay; ☞ Fri-Tue) A sparkingly clean and modern bar run by the Paschalidis family who have been growing oysters in the Clyde River since 1970. Forty unshucked oysters cost \$12.

**Starfish Deli** (☎ 4472 4880; Promenade Plaza, Clyde St; mains \$15-20; ☞ lunch & dinner) In winter, this is the only place still serving after 8pm. It is on the water and serves gourmet wood-fired pizzas and pasta. The Kilpatrick pizza is particularly good.

**Monet's Café Restaurant** (☎ 4472 5717; 3/1 Orient St; entrees \$10, mains \$18; ☞ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Sat) Run by a well-travelled local couple, this little restaurant is the town's best-kept secret. Despite the name, it's not French. The à-la-carte menu has a selection of worldly delights such as the Moroccan lamb chermoula (\$20) and Italian mascarpone chicken (\$17).

Further recommendations:

**Bayview Hotel** (☎ 4472 4522; 20 Orient St) The only real pub in town.

**Boatshed** (☎ 4421 2419; Clyde St fishing wharf) Straight off the local trawler: grenadier, chips and salad costs \$11.

**Jameson's on the Pier** (☎ 4472 6405; Old Punt Rd; ☞ lunch & dinner) Batemans Bay's finest seafood restaurant.

### Getting There & Away

**Harvey World Travel** (☎ 6495 3455; 6 Merimbula Dr) handles bus bookings and has timetables in the window. The bus stop is outside the newsagent on Clyde St.

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) runs south to Eden (\$35) and north to Sydney (\$41) twice a day. **Murrays** (☎ 13 22 51) and **Rixon** (☎ 4474 4243) bus services stop here on their daily run between Narooma (\$23) and Canberra (\$24). **Sapphire Coast Express** (☎ 1800 812 135) runs from Batemans Bay through to Melbourne twice a week.

### BATEMANS BAY TO NAROOMA

This stretch of coast features the **Eurobodalla National Park** (admission free), an area of many lakes, bays and inlets backed by spotted-gum forests that can be accessed from various roads off the

Princes Hwy. Eurobodalla is an Aboriginal word meaning 'place of many waters' and there are Aboriginal middens here, as well as native wildlife. Don't miss the incredible rock formations at **Bingie Bingie Point**.

Inland from Moruya, **Deua National Park** is a mountainous wilderness area (122,033 hectares) with gentle and swift-running rivers (good for **canoeing or floating** on a lilo), some challenging walks and a network of limestone caves. There are simple camping areas off the scenic road between Araluen and Moruya and off the road between Braidwood and Numeralla, plus a couple more within the park. Contact the **Narooma NPWS office** (☎ 4476 2888) for more information.

### Mogo

Mogo is a quaint strip of old wooden shops and houses almost entirely devoted to Devonshire teas, crafts and antiques. Just off the highway is **Old Mogo Town** (☎ 02-474 2123; www.oldmogotown.com.au; James St; adult/child \$14/6; ☞ 10am-5pm), a rambling re-creation of a pioneer village. You can stay in cabins inside the complex (\$22 to \$105 per person).

### Moruya

Moruya, 25km south of Batemans Bay and about 5km inland, is on the estuary of the Deua (Moruya) River. The river's banks turn into wetlands as it sprawls down to the sea at **Moruya Heads**, the hamlet on the south head, where there's a good **surf beach** and views from Taragy Point. There's a popular country **market** every Saturday, on the south side of Moruya Bridge.

The best place to stay is the **Post & Telegraph B&B** (☎ 02-4474 5475; cnr Page & Campbell Sts; r from \$90) and at **River** (☎ 02-4474 5505; 16b Church St; ☞ lunch & dinner) you can feast your eyes on the Moruya River, not to mention the seafood.

**Rixon** (☎ 02-4474 4243) bus service stop here and at Mogo on its daily run between Narooma and Canberra.

### NAROOMA

☎ 02 / pop 6000

Narooma is a seaside holiday town that isn't as developed as Batemans Bay to the north or Merimbula to the south, yet it's one of the more attractive spots on the South Coast. When you're sitting by the water on Riverside Dr, it's hard to imagine why this place is not busier.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 1800 240 003/4476 2881; www.naturecoast-tourism.com.au; Princes Hwy; ☞ 9am-5pm), incorporating the Lighthouse Museum, is just south of the bridge. All boat charters and tours can be booked here.

Narooma is an access point for Deua, Gulaga and Wadbilliga National Parks, and there's a **NPWS office** (☎ 4476 2888; www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au; 36 Princes Hwy). There's free internet access at the **library** (☎ 4476 1164; Field St; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat).

### Sights & Activities

Cruise inland up the Wagonga River on the **Wagonga Princess** (☎ 4476 2665). A three-hour cruise, including a stop for a bushwalk and billy tea, costs \$30/20 for adults/children. **Calm Water Charters** (☎ 4476 2483) has a two-hour cruise (\$25) that includes coffee and cake at Quarterdeck Marina (see right). There are several **boat hire** places along Riverside Dr, so you can go boating on Wagonga Inlet under your own steam. **Fishing charters** cost about \$100 for four hours including all equipment.

Heading north over the bridge, take the first two right turns to **Mills Bay Boardwalk**, part of a 5km wheelchair and pram-friendly walking track where you can spot large schools of fish and stingrays. It follows the water's edge around the inlet to **Bar Beach** where nervous swimmers will appreciate a netted-off area.

A good rainy-day weekend activity is to see a film at the **Narooma Cinema** (☎ 4476 2352; 94 Campbell St), an Art Deco picture palace that began showing flicks in 1928.

For **surfing**, Mystery Bay, between Cape Dromedary and Corunna Point, is rocky but good, as is Handkerchief Beach, especially at the north end. Narooma's Bar Beach is best when a southeasterly is blowing. Potato Point is another popular hangout for surfers.

### Montague Island

About 10km offshore from Narooma, this small island was once an important source of food and a cultural site for local Aborigines (who called it Barunguba) and is now a nature reserve. **Little penguins** nest here and the best time to see them is spring. Many other seabirds and hundreds of fur seals make their homes on the island. There's also a historic **lighthouse**. **Narooma Charters** (☎ 0407 909 111; adults/children \$100/77) operates a daily 30-minute **boat trip** to Montague Island including a NPWS tour. Take the afternoon trip if you want to see

the little penguins. Trips should leave daily in summer but are dependent on numbers and weather conditions so book ahead.

The clear waters around the island are good for **diving**, especially from February to June when you can snorkel with the fur seals. **Island Charters Narooma** (☎ 4476 1047; www.islandchartersnarooma.com) offers diving (from \$70), snorkelling (from \$60) and whale watching (from \$55). Attractions in the area include grey nurse sharks, fur seals and the wreck of the *SS Lady Darling*.

### Sleeping

**Narooma Real Estate** (☎ 4476 2169), across the road from the visitors centre, deals in holiday accommodation.

**Narooma YHA** (☎ 4476 4440; www.yha.com.au; 243 Princes Hwy; dm/s/d \$25/40/50; ☑) The comfortable, clean motel-style rooms here get a high-five. The owners are good fun and have a courtesy bus for taking guests to and from the pub, winery, wherever.

**Lynch's Hotel** (☎ 4476 2001; 135 Wagonga St; s/d \$40/70) This old-school place in the heart of town is perfect if you're jumping off the late-night bus. It has lovely rooms and shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. Ask for a balcony room with water views.

**Whale Motor Inn** (☎ 4476 2411; www.whalemotorinn.com; 104 Wagonga St; d \$115; ☞) This motel, just off the main drag, still offers the best all-round views of Narooma from the ocean to the inlet. It has large, clean rooms with balconies, and a nice restaurant.

### CAMPING

**Surf Beach Holiday Park** (☎ 4476 2275; camp sites unpowered/powerd from \$22/18, d cabins from \$50). This small, peaceful place has a prime spot on a beautiful beach. It also caters to golfers who tee-off next door.

### Eating

**Pelicans** (☎ 4476 2403; 31 Riverside Dr; ☞ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Fri & Sat Sep-Apr only) Even in winter the sun can settle on this waterside venue that serves a mouth-watering big breakfast (\$12) and excellent coffee.

**Quarterdeck Marina** (☎ 4476 2723; 13 Riverside Dr; mains \$22; ☞ breakfast & lunch, dinner Sat & Sun) Pull up a chair on the great deck overlooking the river and tuck into the good portions of fresh seafood served here. There's usually live music in the evening on weekends.

**Taylor's Boatshed** (☎ 4476 2127; Riverside Dr; ☎ lunch & dinner) This fresh fish joint has take-away out front or join the locals on the rear deck for sit-down fancy fish and chips (\$12). Don't forget to BYO bottle.

Other recommendations:

**Narooma Bridge Oysters** (☎ 4476 1586; Princes Hwy) Sells fresh seafood straight off the boat. Shucked oysters cost \$8 a dozen. Eat them at any of the picnic tables around the water's edge.

**Raw Prawn** (☎ 4476 3691; breakfast \$9-12, mains \$18; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This bistro, inside O'Brien's Hotel, has solid steaks and an awesome deck.

### Getting There & Away

Bus bookings are handled by **Trax Travel** (☎ 4476 2688; 139 Princes Hwy).

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) buses stop in Narooma, outside Lynch's Hotel, on the run between Sydney (\$53) and Melbourne (\$62). **Murrays** (☎ 13 22 51) stops here on its daily run to Canberra (\$37) via Batemans Bay (\$23).

### AROUND NAROOMA

#### Mystery Bay

Near Cape Dromedary, about 12km south of Narooma, this little settlement of new houses has a fine rocky beach (there are sandy beaches nearby) and a big but basic **camping area** (☎ 4473 7053; unpowered sites \$13-20) in a forest of spotted gums.

#### Central Tilba & Around

This is a tiny 19th-century town that has been painted and preened to attract visitors, especially on summer weekends. If it weren't so quaint, it would be labelled a tourist trap. You'll find information and a town guide at **Bates Emporium** at the start of the main street (Bates St). Further along are several craft, antique and gift shops, galleries and food venues including the **ABC Cheese Factory** (☎ 4473 7387; ☎ 10am-4.30pm), where you can chow down on cheddar.

For a sleepover, **Green Gables B&B** (☎ 4473 7435; 269 Corkhill Dr, Tilba Tilba; d incl breakfast \$140), across from Foxglove Spire, is beautifully decorated and has oodles of charm. Relax by the log fire, stroll around the garden and indulge in a gourmet dinner. Also, **Dromedary Hotel** (☎ 4473 7223; Bates St, Central Tilba; d with breakfast \$30) has a lot of character with corny Aussie jokes posted on the walls and cosy wood heater. The rooms are basic but nice.

Not far from Central Tilba towards Batemans Bay is **Tilba Valley Wines** (☎ 4473 7308; www.tilbavalleywines.com; ☎ 10am-5pm Sep-Jul) where Sunday sessions are the go.

The **Tilba Festival**, with lots of music and entertainment, is held at Easter.

From Tilba Tilba the highway swings inland to **Cobargo**, another small town that has changed little since it was built, and where there are craft shops, a pub and motels.

### Getting There & Away

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) buses come through Tilba Tilba on their daily run to Sydney (\$54) but not to Melbourne. If you're heading for Melbourne, jump on a bus in Narooma (\$62).

If you just want an interesting drive, leave the highway at Tilba Tilba and take the sealed coastal road to Bermagui.

### WADBILLIGA NATIONAL PARK

A rugged, sub-alpine wilderness area that covers around 95,500 hectares, Wadbilliga National Park offers good walking for experienced bushwalkers. One popular track is the Cascades Walk along the 5km **Tuross River Gorge** to the **Tuross Falls**. You can find a camping area on the northwestern side of the park, close to the walk to the falls. Access to the Cascades camping area and the centre of the park can be gained by 4WD only. For more information, contact the **Narooma NPWS office** (☎ 02-4476 2888).

**Brogo Wilderness Canoes** (☎ 02-6492 7328; www.brogocanoes.com.au) offers canoe and overnight camping packages. The hire office is at the boat ramp, but call ahead so someone can meet you.

### GULAGA NATIONAL PARK

Gulaga National Park, which includes the Gulaga Flora Reserve, a large portion of Gulaga (Mt Dromedary) and the former Wallaga Lake National Park, was recently transferred to the local Aboriginal people. Trees have blocked the views from the summit of Gulaga but there are many sites of Aboriginal significance worth experiencing. For an expert tour visit **Umbarra Cultural Centre** (☎ 02-4473 7232; www.umbarra.com.au; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun), which is run by the Yuin people from Wallaga Lake Koori community. It is located 3km from the highway on the road to Wallaga Lake.

### BERMAGUI

☎ 02 / pop 1300

Bermagui is a small fishing community centred on pretty Horseshoe Bay. Holidaymakers come here, mainly to fish (there are a handful big-game tournaments from March to May each year), and visitors from neighbouring towns don't mind popping in for fish and chips. It's also a handy base for visits to Wallaga Lake, Mimosa Rocks and Wadbilliga National Parks. The **information centre** (☎ 1800 645 808; www.bermagui.net; Lamont St; ☎ 10am-4pm) is on the main street.

There are several **walks** around Bermagui. You can wander 6km along the coast north to **Camel Rock Beach** and a further 2km around to Wallaga Lake along **Haywards Beach**. The 9km walk from Cuttagee Beach to Bermagui is less enticing as much of the track is along the road.

For a swim, head down the main street, turn right into Scenic Drive and left at **Blue Pool**. This natural rock seawater swimming pool jutting out into the big blue is a local favourite.

Camel Rock and Cuttagee are considered the best **surfing beaches**.

### Sleeping & Eating

There are many holiday houses and apartments. Letting agents include **Fisk & Nagle** (☎ 6493 4255; 14 Lamont St).

**Bermagui Beach Hotel** (☎ 6493 4206; 10 Lamont St; dm/d from \$20/110) This place has been given a jolly good facelift. The double rooms are especially good with balconies and, for a little extra, spa baths. It's also the best place in town for a beer with 10 on tap.

**Bimbibi House** (☎ 6493 4456; www.bimbibihouse.com.au; 62 Nutleys Creek Rd; r incl breakfast \$100-70) This is a gorgeous homestead set in tranquil gardens a 2km stroll from town. The 3-hectare property slopes down to the Bermagui River.

**Morrison's Lamont** (☎ 6493 3165; Lamont St; ☎ dinner Fri-Tue) A snazzy restaurant on the laid-back main street with seafood delights such as mussels with leak-and-saffron cream sauce (\$14) and Wapengo Lake oysters (\$10 to \$16).

**Mimosa Cottages & Wines** (☎ 6494 0163; www.mimosawines.com.au; 2845 Bermagui-Tathra Rd, Bunga; ☎ 11am-5pm Fri-Mon) This glorious winery is set on a hilltop with views of Gulaga; it's a great place to taste-test a few wines. Accommodation is also available (double rooms \$120)

and a restaurant, with a Spanish influence, is in the making.

**Fish co-op** (☎ 6493 4239; Lamont St) Aka the butcher shop, this place has fresh seafood for camp cooking.

### CAMPING

**Zane Grey Park** (☎ 6493 4382; Lamont St; camp sites per adult from \$17, cabins from \$60) This park has a prime position on Dickson's Point overlooking Horseshoe Bay, close to the pub. Prices rise considerably at peak times.

### Getting There & Away

Bermagui is off the highway, so not all buses call in here. **Bega Valley Coaches** (☎ 6492 5188) has a weekday 'hail & ride' service between Bermagui and Bega, and **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) stops here once a day on its way to Sydney (\$55). For trips to Melbourne, catch the bus from Narooma (\$62).

Driving north, the quickest way back to the highway is to go past Wallaga Lake; this is a pretty drive. If you have time, take the picturesque **Tathra-Bermagui Rd** south alongside Mimosa Rocks National Park (see below) to Tathra. It's sealed and accesses all the beaches and coastline camp sites.

### MIMOSA ROCKS NATIONAL PARK

Running along 20km of beautiful coastline, Mimosa Rocks (5802 hectares) is an earthly paradise with dense and varied bush, caves, headlands and crystal-clear beaches. Admission is free and there are basic **camp sites** (per adult \$7) at **Aragunna Beach, Picnic Point, Middle and Gillards Beaches**. For a swim or sunbake, turn off Tathra-Bermagui Rd onto Nelson Lake Rd, drive 2km to Moon Beach car park, then walk 250m to the beach; white sands await. Contact the **NPWS office** (Narooma ☎ 02-6476 2888; Merimbula ☎ 02-6495 5000) for more information.

**Sapphire Coast Ecotours** (☎ 02-6494 0283; www.sapphirecoastecotours.com.au) has fantastic half-day (\$60) and overnight walking tours along the northern coast and headlands.

### BEGA

☎ 02 / pop 4400

Bega is the business and commercial hub of the Sapphire Coast and the centre for the rich dairy and cattle country of the southern Monaro Tableland. After the tourist bustle of the coastal or mountain resorts, you'll find Bega very much a laid-back country town.

## Information

The **visitors centre** (☎ 6491 7645; Lagoon St; ☎ 9am-5pm) is in the Bega Cheese Factory & Heritage Centre (see below). The **library** (☎ 6499 2127; Zingel Pl) has internet access for \$4 per half hour.

## Sights & Activities

There are a number of mildly interesting old buildings and a **Pioneer Museum**; the visitors centre has a walking-tour map.

At the **Bega Cheese Factory & Heritage Centre** (☎ 6492 1714; Lagoon St; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm), north across the river, you can watch the cheese-making process, check out the dairy museum and, best of all, taste the cheese. **Greenville Estate Winery** (☎ 6492 3006; Buckajo Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) is also open for tasting and sales. It's about 2km from the town centre.

## Sleeping

**Bega Valley Backpackers** (☎ 6492 3103; Kirkland Cres; dm \$20) This place is run down but the linen is clean and the owners couldn't be friendlier. It's north of the centre just over the bridge.

**Central Hotel** (☎ 6492 1263; 90 Gipps St; pub s/d \$40/50, motel s/d \$50/60) This big, converted pub has a bit of character and some permanent residents. The large pub rooms are clean and light, and the motel rooms are set in a leafy garden out back.

**Pickled Pear** (☎ 6492 1393; 60 Carp St; s/d incl breakfast from \$100) This lovely 1870s house is still the pick of Bega's accommodation. It's near the centre of town and has beautiful rooms with bathrooms. Dinner is available and the owners will pack a picnic hamper on request.

## Eating

**Niagara Café** (☎ 6492 1091; 210 Carp St; ☎ breakfast & lunch) On the main street, this no-nonsense café with a comfy couch and TV opens from 7am. It does a great cappuccino and has a blackboard menu to suit most palates.

**Mr Pizza** (☎ 6492 2807; cr Carp & Peden Sts; ☎ from 5pm Tue-Sat) The gourmet pizzas in this quick stop shop are a good fallback position. The Taj Mahal (\$16) with tandoori chicken is scrumptious – it even tastes good the next day.

## Getting There & Away

**CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32) has a service from Bega inland to Canberra (\$39). **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) buses between Sydney (\$58) and Melbourne (\$53) stop here. Buses leave from Gipps St.

A local service, **Deane's** (☎ 6495 6452), runs daily between Bega and Merimbula (\$10), and Merimbula and Eden (\$9). **Bega Valley Coaches** (☎ 6492 5188) has a weekday 'hail & ride' service between Bermagui and Bega. On weekdays, **Tathra Bus Service** (☎ 6492 1991) leaves for Tathra from the post office at 9.30am (7.45am during school holidays), and from Church St at 2pm and 3.30pm.

## AROUND BEGA

The **Bega Lookout** is approximately 4km north of town on the Princes Hwy. Nearby, **Mumballa Falls** has a picnic area.

**Candelo** is a pleasant old village 26km southwest of Bega. It straggles along both sides of a steep valley and is split by the large, sandy Candelo Creek. The nearby country is cleared but pretty. There are several **craft galleries** and a great **craft market** on the first Sunday of each month. From Candelo it's 20km along a gorgeous road to **Bemboka**, a town perched on the crest in a valley and famed for its pie shop.

From Candelo you can return to the Princes Hwy via **Toothdale**, or continue south to Bombala road. This route takes you over **Myrtle Mountain**, where there's a picnic area with good views, and through the state forest. The Bombala road leads west to **Wyndham**, a small village just after the intersection with the Candelo road, or east to Pambula and Merimbula.

## TATHRA

☎ 02 / pop 1700

This small town is popular with people from the Bega area in summer. It starts on a headland, where you'll find the post office and the pub as well as access to the historic wharf. Down a steep road and to the north, Tathra follows a long beach towards Mimosas Rocks National Park. There's internet access at Auckland Store (☎ 6494 1327; Francis Hollis Dr; per 15 min \$3).

Formerly used for steamships, **Tathra wharf** (☎ 6494 4062) is a popular place for fishing and whale watching (August to November). The wharf storehouse now houses a small **Maritime Museum** (adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 10am-5pm) and rustic café with a flawless view across the water to the beach.

For great views, head for **Cliff Place**. Follow the path that begins near the surf club.

Just south of town on the Bega River, **Hancock's Bridge** picnic spot is set amid stunning white dunes and crystal-clear water; a good place for a picnic.

## Sleeping & Eating

Prices for accommodation in Tathra rise considerably in summer. **Tathra Beach Accommodation Service** (☎ 6494 1306) is one of the agents handling holiday letting.

**Tathra Hotel-Motel** (☎ 6494 1101; s/d \$65/80) This is Tathra's drinking, eating and dancing epicentre (in that order). Some of the decent motel-style rooms have excellent sea views and balconies on which to enjoy them. The pub has entertainment on weekends.

**Wharf Café** (☎ 6494 4062; ☎ lunch) In the rustic wooden wharf building, this café does a tasty grilled snapper, chips and salad (\$15) and you can't get a table much closer to the big blue.

**our pick** **Pickle Factory** (☎ 6494 4132; 35 Andy Poole Dr; ☎ breakfast & lunch) An excellent foodie shop, the kind you'd expect in the big smoke, with damn good coffee, simple but succulent snacks and gourmet produce fit for the fridge back home (or the camp fire). Try the beef and mushy pie with chunky homemade chutney.

**Harbourmaster Restaurant** (☎ 6494 1344; 15 Bega St; mains \$20; ☎ lunch & dinner Fri-Tue) This pleasant place is on the headland next to the road going down to the beach, in an old house. It has a healthy cocktail list and specialises in seafood.

## CAMPING

**Tathra Beach Tourist Park** (☎ 6494 1302; Andy Poole Dr; camp sites per adult from \$22). This caravan park is clean and tidy and has a prime position with sites all the way down the beach.

## Getting There & Away

Buses to Bega depart daily; see opposite. Tathra is 18km from the Princes Hwy at Bega. If you're heading north, consider the excellent Tathra-Bermagui Rd, it runs through forest and alongside Mimosas Rocks National Park (see p337). South to Merimbula, you can turn off the Bega road 5km out of Tathra onto Sapphire Coast Dr, which runs past Bournda National Park.

## MERIMBULA

☎ 02 / pop 4560

Merimbula's impressive inlet (or lake) is its central focus and somehow, by focusing on the rocking boat masts and sky-blue water, it's easy to forgive the glaringly new holiday apartments dotting the hillsides.

## Information

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 6495 1129; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun) is on the water-

front at the bottom of Market St, the main shopping street. It has info on accommodation and can book tours and activities. **Dragnet Internet Café** (☎ 6495 2666; 3/11 Merimbula Dr; ☎ Mon-Sat; per hr \$5) has internet access.

There's a useful **NPWS office** (☎ 6495 5000; cr Merimbula & Sapphire Coast Drs; ☎ 9am-5pm) with the low-down on bushwalking in the area.

## Sights & Activities

At the wharf on the eastern point is the small **Merimbula Aquarium** (☎ 6495 4446; adult/child \$9/5; ☎ 10am-5pm). There are good views across the lake from near here and the jetty is a popular little fishing spot.

**Merimbula Divers Lodge** (☎ 1800 651 861; www.merimbuladiverslodge.com.au; 15 Park St) has one shallow dive (\$40), PADI-certificate courses (\$400) and snorkelling trips (\$30). The more adventurous can descend into the depths and explore the 1950 wreck of the SS *Empire Gladstone*, which lies intact and upright only 10m down (\$99).

There are cruises from the Merimbula marina, opposite the Merimbula Lakeview Hotel (see below), including a dolphin cruise run by **Sapphire Coast Fishing Charters** (☎ 6495 1686; adult/child \$30/20).

There's a **boat-hire** place at the Merimbula Marina jetty. **Cycle 'n' Surf** (☎ 6495 2171; 1B Marine Pde), south of the lake, hires out bikes, boogie boards, surf-skis and fishing tackle.

North of the bridge, just off the causeway, a magnificent 1.75km **boardwalk** takes nature lovers and morning people hopping and skipping around mangroves, oyster farms and melaleucas.

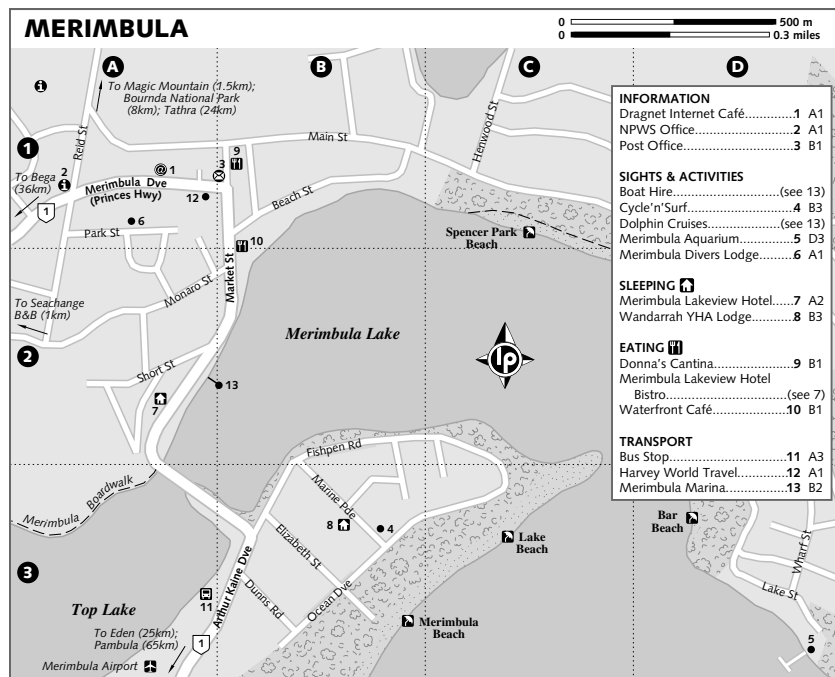
## Sleeping

There are hundreds of motels and holiday apartments, and plenty of campsites. Letting agents for the area include **LJ Hooker** (☎ 6495 3300; shop 1 Centrepnt, Market St).

**Wandarrah YHA Lodge** (☎ 6495 3503; wanlodge@asitis.com.au; 8 Marine Pde; dm \$24-31, d \$55-70) This clean place with a good kitchen and hanging out areas is near the surf beach and the bus stop. Late arrivals are catered for if your let the staff know you're coming.

**our pick** **Merimbula Lakeview Hotel** (☎ 6495 1202; Market St; s/d \$69/79) This waterfront establishment has stylish rooms with all the motel-style trimmings such as tea and coffee. A handful of rooms have good views. Come summertime, they're close to the beer garden, which could be good or bad.





**Seachange B&B** (☎ 6495 3133; www.sapphirecoast.com.au/seachange; 49 Imlay St; r with breakfast from \$110/135) This comfortable and modern B&B is 2km out of town. It has fantastic water views.

## Eating

Merimbula offers quite a wide range of eateries, most of them concentrated in the busy shopping area.

**Waterfront Café** (☎ 6495 2211; cnr Beach & Market Sts; mains \$15-19; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) With excellent coffee, a mean eggs Florentine (\$14) and a sunny spot by the water, you can't go wrong with this place. It's next to the information centre.

**Donna's Cantina** (☎ 6495 1085; 56 Market St; mains \$18; ☺ lunch & dinner) Donna's is one of the town's popular haunts. The menu features imaginative seafood dishes and Spanish-styled entrées.

**Merimbula Lakeview Hotel Bistro** (☎ 6495 1202; Market St; entrees \$15, mains \$24; (P)) This place has an upmarket bistro menu with a chilli-mussel dish worth writing home about. There's an open fire in winter and the views are pretty good too.

## Getting There & Away

Travel bookings can be made at **Harvey World Travel** (☎ 6495 3455; 6 Merimbula Dr). Also try **Sapphire Cost Tourism Booking Service** (☎ 1800 150 457; www.sapphirecoast.com.au).

There are daily flights to Melbourne and to Sydney with **Regional Express Airlines** (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13). The airport is 1km out of town on the road to Pambula.

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) buses stop near the lakeside BP in Merimbula on their way to Sydney (\$64) and Melbourne (\$53). **Countrylink** (☎ 13 22 32) runs a service from Merimbula to Canberra (\$46). A local service, **Deane's** (☎ 6495 6452), runs between Bega and Merimbula (\$10), and Merimbula and Eden (\$9).

## AROUND MERIMBULA

### Bournda National Park

Taking in most of the coast from Merimbula north to Tathra, **Bournda National Park** (\$6 per car) is a 2378-hectare park with some good beaches, freshwater lagoons and several walking tracks. **Camping** (site per adult \$8) is permitted at Hobart Beach, on the southern shore of the big **Wallagoot Lagoon**. During the Christmas

and Easter holidays, sites are usually booked out. Contact the **Merimbula NPWS office** (☎ 02-6495 5000) for more information.

## Pambula

☎ 02 / pop 1100

Just south of Merimbula, Pambula is a small town that has largely avoided the holidaying hordes of its neighbour. The town itself is not overly interesting but Pambula Beach, 4km east, is great. This tranquil little place is home to hundreds of **kangaroos** that languidly feed in the beachside reserve and hop nonchalantly across the road.

The **Holiday Hub Beach Resort** (☎ 1800 677 808; Pambula Beach Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$27/32, cabins from \$70) is a pristine family-friendly park that plays host to the friendly marsupials. Keep your food hidden. Between Pambula and Merimbula, **Wheeler's Restaurant & Oyster Farm** (☎ 6495 6089; Arthur Kaine Dr; adult/child \$7/3; ☺ tours 11am Mon-Sat) has informative tours and tastings. For an oyster fix without fuss, **Brown's Oysters** (☎ 6495 6091; Lot 371, Arthur Kaine Dr), just up the road, is a private house with a cool room at the rear where they shuck fresh local oysters on the spot for \$9 a dozen.

**Deane's** (☎ 6495 6452) buses run between Bega and Eden (via Pambula and Merimbula) daily.

## EDEN

☎ 02 / pop 5000

Eden's tide is turning. The seaside town, once a haven for fishermen and woodchippers, is now making the most of its authentic port setting by jumping on the tourism bandwagon. A stubbie holder and deckchair is about all visitors will need to complement Eden's 1.5km beach and ocean vistas but those keen on exerting more energy will find the surrounding national parks and wilderness areas quite breathtaking.

The **Eden visitors centre** (☎ 6496 1953; Mitchell St; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun) is well-stocked with brochures about the area. The **library** (☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) and the access centre, both in the same building, have internet access for \$4 per half-hour.

Eden comes alive at the start of November with the **Whale Festival** (www.edenwhalefestival.com). It features a **mock whale rescue** competition on Asling's Beach.

## Sights & Activities

The **Killer Whale Museum** (☎ 6496 2094; 94 Imlay St; adult/child \$6/2; ☺ 9.15am-3.45pm Mon-Sat, 11.15am-

3.45pm Sun) is often derided as a little old-hat. You decide. The skeleton of Old Tom, a killer whale and local legend is housed there. On the same theme there's a **maritime heritage walk** brochure available at the visitors centre.

In October and November, **Cat Balou Cruises** (☎ 0427 962027; www.catbalou.com.au; Main Wharf) has whale-spotting cruises (adult/child \$65/\$55). At other times of the year, dolphins, fur seals and seabirds can usually be seen during the shorter bay cruise (\$30/17).

For a spot of sea-kayaking, try **Ocean Wilderness** (☎ 6496 9066; www.oceanwilderness.com.au), which has sea kayaking day- and half-day trips (\$125/80) exploring the local area and two-hour whale-watching tours during whale season (\$40). Trips depart Cocora Beach.

**Boydton**, off the highway 10km south of Eden, has relics of Ben Boyd's stillborn empire. The ruins of a church can be seen and the impressive Seahorse Inn still operates (see below).

Plans to open Eden's **Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre** are rolling along. Check its progress at www.edenmarinediscovery.org.au.

## Sleeping

**Great Southern Hotel** (☎ 6496 1515; 121 Imlay St; dm \$10-65) This is good-value shared pub rooms. By mid-2007 this place plans to offer fully fledged dorm-style backpacker accommodation with similar rates. When it does, BYO linen or pay a bit extra.

**Crown & Anchor Inn** (☎ 6496 1017; www.crownandanchoreden.com.au; 239 Imlay St; r incl breakfast from \$130) Put your feet up; this historic house (1845) has been beautifully restored and has a whale-watching view from the back patio. Each room is different but all have stylish period furniture (such as four-post beds and claw-foot baths).

**Seahorse Inn** (☎ 6496 1361; d from \$180) Down at Boydton, this place overlooks Twofold Bay and is a solid old building, built by Ben Boyd as a guesthouse in 1843. It has been converted into a luxury boutique hotel but it's worth just having a look around. There's also a camping ground.

## CAMPING

**Eden Tourist Park** (☎ 6496 1139; Aslings Beach Rd; www.edentouristpark.com.au; unpowered/powerd sites from \$18/21, cabins from \$55) This neat and trim park is in prime position on a spit separating Aslings Beach from Lake Curralo.

**LIGHT TO LIGHT WALKING TRACK**

OK, so Boyd's Tower was never an official lighthouse but you get the point. The Light to Light track, stretching 31km between Boyd's Tower and Green Cape Lighthouse, has some of the area's most dramatic coastal landscape. While traversing the full distance can take three days, the sealed roads into **Saltwater Creek** and **Bittangabee** (via Edrom and Green Cape Rds) and the 4WD road (via Edrom Rd) into Leatherjacket Bay make it possible to walk shorter sections. Just follow the track markers with the lighthouse icon in either direction.

Expect to see diverse landscapes and habitats, from folding red rock cliffs, sheltered coves and rugged shorelines to waist-high shrubby heath and imposing native forests. Goannas, eastern grey kangaroos and brushtail possums are plentiful and during autumn and spring you're a chance to see whales and seals.

There are camping spots at Saltwater Creek and Bittangabee Bay and bush camping sites (without facilities) at Mowarry Point, Leatherjacket Bay and Hegarty's Bay. If the maritime feel of the historic **Green Cape Lighthouse cottage** (overnight for 4 to 6 people \$175) sounds more comfortable, overnight accommodation is available. Tours also run. **Merimbula NPWS office** (☎ 6495 5000) and **Eden visitors centre** (☎ 02-6496 1953) have all the info.

**Eating**

**Disaster Bay Chillies** (☎ 6496 4145; www.disasterbaychillies.com) This family-run company has got the business of chillies down pat. The flagship Hot Chilli Wine is made from nine different chillies and is ideal served iced cold with fresh local oysters. It is sold in outlets up the coast.

**Fare n Square Café** (☎ 6496 3007; 126 Imlay St; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Come here for decent breakfasts and excellent coffee. The outdoor terrace area is a fine place to watch the world go by.

**Taste of Eden** (☎ 6496 1304; Main Wharf; mains \$17; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) An atmospheric, tiny café with seafood and an à-la-carte menu.

**Great Southern Hotel** (☎ 6496 1515; 121 Imlay St; mains \$17; ☺ lunch & dinner) Catch some rays on the huge rear deck and enjoy upmarket bistro food like a steak or chicken parmigiana (mains \$17).

**Getting There & Away**

**Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) buses between Melbourne and Sydney (\$79) stop opposite the Caltex Service Station. Bus bookings can be made at the visitors centre.

**BEN BOYD NATIONAL PARK**

Protecting some relics of Ben Boyd's operations, this national park (9450 hectares), stretching north and south along the coast on either side of Eden, has dramatic coastline, bush and walking territory (see above). The southern access road is the sealed Edrom Rd, off the Princes Hwy 19km south of Eden. Follow this to the turn-offs to historic **Davidson Whaling Station** on Twofold Bay, and **Boyd's Tower**, an impressive structure built with Sydney sandstone.

The northern section of Ben Boyd National Park runs up the coast from Eden; access is from Haycocks Rd off the Princes Hwy 8km north of the town. When a southerly is blowing, sheltered **Barmouth** beach is great for swimming. From **Haycock Point** a walking track leads to a headland overlooking the Pambula River. Another good walk is to the **Pinnades**, an eroded formation of layered rock; access is from the car park not too far in from the Princes Hwy. Between the two, Quondolo Point has good surf.

**NADGEE NATURE RESERVE**

Nadgee Nature Reserve is one of Australia's spectacularly wild and remote wilderness areas. Such is the importance of this pristine reserve, general access is only allowed as far as the ranger station near Merrica River, 7km from Newton's Beach. To get a feel for the breathtaking scenery a limited number of visitors can apply for a permit. Most do so to see the **Nadgee Howe Wilderness Walk**, 50km of remote heathlands, windswept beaches and coastal lagoons. The **Merimbula NPWS office** (☎ 6495 5000) has all the info.

On Wonboyn Lake at the north end of the reserve, the small settlement of **Wonboyn** has a store selling petrol, a caravanpark and basic supplies. Wonboyn is near access roads into Nadgee, including one down to Wonboyn Beach, a hub for fishermen who come to hook huge flathead and enjoy some of the state's most remote offshore fishing.

**Nadgee by Nature Cottages** (☎ 0410 511 458; www.nadgeebynature.com.au; d \$165) has three lovely cottages set in serene bushland. It's a good place to get information on walks in the area.

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