



NSW Central Coast

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Pearls on the Beach (p145)
- ➔ Edwards (p150)
- ➔ Subo (p150)
- ➔ Muse Kitchen (p155)

Best Places to Stay

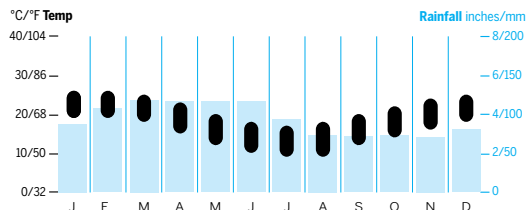
- ➔ Longhouse (p155)
- ➔ Thistle Hill (p154)
- ➔ Junction Hotel (p149)

Why Go?

After limping through the traffic of Sydney's northern suburbs it would be forgivable to make a break for the freeway as soon as it begins. Truth be told, much of the heavily populated Central Coast is a family-orientated suburbia-on-sea. But if you only have a couple of days to escape the big smoke, you will find some delightful diversions along this 100km stretch of coast. There are golden surf beaches, hidden hamlets and languid inland lakes, the largest of which, Lake Macquarie, covers four times the area of Sydney Harbour. And what it lacks in culture and gourmet goodies can be found in rollicking Newcastle and the hedonistic wine country of the Hunter Valley.

When to Go

Newcastle



Jan–Mar Late summer brings Surfest and craft beer to Newcastle and music to the Hunter Valley.

May–Jul Migrating whales and a whole month of wine and food celebrations in the Hunter.

Oct–Dec Wine and jazz, spectacular Christmas lights and one of Australia's biggest emerging arts festivals.



NSW Central Coast Highlights

- 1 Lingering over a coffee in one of Newcastle's fabulous **cafes** (p149).
- 2 Enjoying some old rockers, old wine and (smelly) old cheese at a big event in the **Hunter Valley** (p154).
- 3 Letting someone else drive you around the Hunter Valley's 150-plus **wineries** (p152).
- 4 Diving into the icy waters of the art deco **Newcastle Ocean Baths** (p147).
- 5 Watching migrating whales from your tent in the **Bouddi National Park** (p145).
- 6 Cruising the **Hunter Wetlands Centre** (p147) by canoe, bike or Segway.