

Australia

A horizontal bar with segments of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.

NSW Central Coast

(PDF Chapter)

Edition 18th Edition, Nov 2015

Pages 16

Page Range 143–156

Useful Links

Want more guides?

[Head to our shop](#)

Trouble with your PDF?

[Trouble shoot here](#)

Need more help?

[Head to our FAQs](#)

Stay in touch

[Contact us here](#)

COVERAGE INCLUDES:

- Central Coast
- Australian Reptile Park
- Brisbane Water National Park
- Newcastle
- Hunter Valley



NSW Central Coast

Includes ➔

Central Coast	145
Newcastle	146
Hunter Valley	151

Best Places to Eat

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

Best Places to Stay

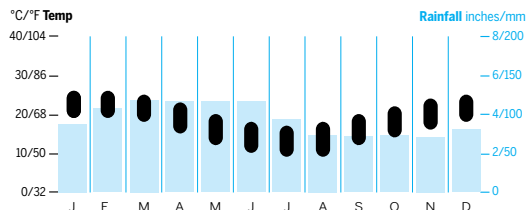
- ➔ Longhouse (p155)
- ➔ Thistle Hill (p154)
- ➔ Junction Hotel (p149)

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.


CENTRAL COAST


You can choose to head straight up the M1 Pacific Motorway freeway to Newcastle (via various Central Coast exits) or meander along the coast. The largest town in the area is the transport and services hub of **Gosford**. Relaxed **Avoca** has a lovely beach and an old cinema, while **Terrigal** has a beautiful crescent-shaped beach with good surf, a bustling town centre and a variety of top spots to refuel. A series of saltwater 'lakes' spreads north up the coast between Bateau Bay and Newcastle, including the deep, placid waters of **Lake Macquarie**.

Sights

Australian Reptile Park ZOO
( 02-4340 1022; www.reptilepark.com.au; Pacific Hwy, Somersby; adult/child \$33/17; ☀9am-5pm) Get up close to koalas and pythons, watch funnel-web spiders being milked (for the production of antivenin) and a Galapagos tortoise being fed. There are wonderful tours for kids.

Brisbane Water National Park NATIONAL PARK
( 02-4320 4200; www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/brisbane-water-national-park; Woy Woy Rd, Kariong; vehicle access at Girrakool & Somersby Falls picnic areas \$7) Bordering the Hawkesbury River southwest of Gosford, this park is known for its spring wild flowers and rambling cycling and walking trails. The Bulgandry Aboriginal Engraving Site is situated 3km south of the Central Coast Hwy on Woy Woy Rd. A favourite retreat for Sydneysiders is the pretty village of **Pearl Beach**, on the southeastern edge of the park.

Bouddi National Park NATIONAL PARK
( 02-4320 4200; www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/bouddi-national-park; vehicle access \$7) A spectacular park where short walking trails lead to isolated beaches and dramatic lookouts from where you can experience the annual whale migration between June and November. There are camp sites (per two people \$20 to \$28) at Little Beach, Putty Beach and Tallow Beach; book ahead. Only the Putty Beach site has drinkable water and flush toilets.


TreeTop Adventure Park AMUSEMENT PARK
( 02-4025 1008; www.treetopadventurepark.com.au; 1 Red Hill Rd, Wyong Creek; adult/child from \$45/35; ☀9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 4.30pm Sat & Sun Sep-Apr, 9am-6pm Oct-Mar) Zip fast and furious through the canopy of the Ourimbah State

Forest at this high-thrills adventure park which features over 100 challenging courses including the world's longest roller-coaster zip line.

Sleeping & Eating


Tiarri MOTEL \$\$\$
( 02-4384 1423; www.tiarriterrigal.com.au; 16 Tiarri Cres, Terrigal; r/ste \$145/190; ☀☎☎) This boutique motel in a quiet street on the slopes above Terrigal has clean, modern and comfortable rooms; the upstairs ones open onto a little bush-shaded terrace. Adults only.


Crowne Plaza Terrigal HOTEL \$\$\$
( 02-4384 9111, 1800 007 697; www.crowneplaza.com.au; Pine Tree Lane; d from \$180) The hub of Terrigal's tourist trade, this monolith has some plush rooms with great views over the beach. There are a couple of restaurants, a gym, a spa and a sauna, too. Rates fluctuate radically with season and availability.


Woy Woy Fishermen's Wharf SEAFOOD \$\$\$
( 02-4341 1171; www.woywoyfishermenswharf.com.au; The Boulevard, Woy Woy; mains \$27; ☀takeaway 11am-4pm Sun-Wed, to 7pm Thu-Sat, restaurant noon-3pm Sun-Wed, to late Thu-Sat) The Cregan family have been serving their outstanding fish and chips since 1974. Munch in the park (like the pelicans who are fed daily at 3pm), or take a table at their smart restaurant which dangles out over the water.

Pearls on the Beach MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$
( 02-4342 4400; www.pearlsonthebeach.com.au; 1 Tourmaline Ave, Pearl Beach; mains \$39; ☀noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm Thu-Sun) The comfortable whitewashed cottage right on the sand at Pearl Beach is an idyllic place to share simple, flavourful dishes at this highly rated restaurant. Save room for the very tempting dessert menu.

Information

Central Coast Visitor Centre ( 02-4343 4444; www.visitcentralcoast.com.au; 52 The Avenue, Kariong; ☀9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3.30pm Sat & Sun)

Gosford Visitor Centre ( 02-4343 4444; 200 Mann St; ☀9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 1.30pm Sat)

Lake Macquarie Visitor Centre ( 02-4921 0740; www.visitlakemac.com.au; 228 Pacific Hwy, Swansea; ☀9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun)

The Entrance Visitor Centre ( 02-4333 1966; Marine Pde; ☀9am-5pm)

Getting There & Around

- Gosford is a stop on the Newcastle & Central Coast line, with frequent trains from Sydney and Newcastle (both adults \$8.10, children \$4.05, 1½ hours). Trains also stop at Wondabyne within Brisbane Water National Park upon request (rear carriage only).
- Local buses connecting the various towns and beaches are operated by **Busways** (☎ 02-4368 2277; www.busways.com.au) and **Redbus** (☎ 02-4332 8655; www.redbus.com.au).

Newcastle

POP 546,788

For many years the port city of Newcastle has been on the brink of big things. Coal, steel and timber were its lifeblood but the cultural, the gastronomical and the creatively entrepreneurial have been on the rise for a long while, and now Newcastle's time has finally come.

Newcastle may be one-tenth the size of Sydney, but Australia's second-oldest city is punching well above its weight. Superb surf beaches, historical architecture and a sun-drenched climate are only part of the city's charms. There is fine dining, hip bars, quirky boutiques, and a diverse arts scene. And did we mention the laid-back attitude? Yes, Newcastle is definitely worth a day or two of your time.

Sights

City Centre

Christ Church Cathedral

CHURCH

(☎ 02-4929 2052; www.newcastlecathedral.org.au; 52 Church St; ☉ 7am-6pm) Dominating the city skyline, Newcastle's Anglican cathedral (built 1892) is filled with treasures like a gold chalice and remembrance book set with precious stones, made from jewellery donated by locals who lost loved ones in WWI. The self-guided tour brochure offers an insight into special features such as the stained-glass window by Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris.

Lock Up

ARTS CENTRE

(☎ 02-4925 2265; www.thelockup.org.au; 90 Hunter St; ☉ 10am-4pm Wed-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) **FREE** These days artists in residence, rather than prisoners, are incarcerated in this former police station (1861). There's a dynamic contemporary art program, artists studios and creepy jail-house relics like the well-

preserved padded cell, where the leather walls are stuffed with horsehair.

Newcastle Art Gallery

GALLERY

(☎ 02-4974 5100; www.nag.org.au; 1 Laman St; ☉ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** Ignore the brutalist exterior as inside this remarkable regional gallery are more than 5000 wonderful works; highlights include art by Newcastle-born William Dobell and John Olsen as well as Brett Whiteley and modernist Grace Cossington Smith.

Newcastle East

★ Fort Scratchley

HISTORIC SITE

(☎ 02-4974 5033; www.fortscratchley.com.au; Nobbys Rd; tours adult/child \$15/7.50; ☉ 10am-4pm Wed-Mon, last tour 2.30pm) **FREE** Perched above Newcastle Harbour, this fascinating military site was constructed during the Crimean War to protect the city against a feared Russian invasion. During WWII the fort returned fire on a Japanese submarine, making it the only Australian fort to have engaged in a maritime attack. Learn all about it on a guided tour of the fort and its labyrinth of underground tunnels.

Nobby's Head

WATERFRONT

Originally an island, this headland at the entrance to Newcastle's harbour was joined to the mainland by a stone breakwater built by convicts between 1818 and 1846; many of those poor souls were lost to the wild seas during its construction. The walk along the spit towards the lighthouse and meteorological station is exhilarating.

Bathers Way

WATERFRONT

(www.visitnewcastle.com.au/pages/bathers-way) This scenic coastal path from Nobby's Beach to Glenrock Reserve winds past swathes of beach and fascinating historical sites including Fort Scratchley and the Convict Lumber Yard. Interpretative signs describing Indigenous, convict and natural history dot the 5km trail. Look out for the **Merewether 'Aquarium'**, a pedestrian tunnel which has been transformed into a pop art underwater world by local artist Trevor Dixon.

Honeysuckle Precinct

Newcastle Museum

MUSEUM

(☎ 02-4974 1400; www.newcastlemuseum.com.au; 6 Workshop Way; ☉ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** This attractive museum in the restored Honeysuckle rail workshops tells a tale of

NEWCASTLE NATURE RESERVES

Hunter Wetlands Centre (📞 02-4951 6466; www.wetlands.org.au; 412 Sandgate Rd, Shortland; adult/child \$5/2; ☀️ 9am-4pm) Transformed from a dump and abandoned sporting fields into a magnificent conservation sanctuary, this swampy centre is home to over 200 species of birds, including magpie geese, freckled ducks and egrets, and a huge diversity of animal residents. To get here, take the Pacific Hwy towards Maitland and turn left at the cemetery, or catch the train to Sandgate and walk (10 minutes).

Extensive walking and bike trails criss-cross the site, or you can hire a canoe (\$10 for two hours) and paddle along picturesque Ironbank Creek. The popular Segway tours are also a fun way to quietly view the animals.

Blackbutt Reserve (📞 02-4904 3344; www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/recreation/blackbutt_reserve; Carnley Ave, Kotara; ☀️ park 7am-7pm, wildlife exhibits 10am-5pm) Sitting in a tract of bushland with plenty of walking trails and picnic areas, this council-run reserve has enclosures of native critters: koalas, wallabies, wombats and a cacophonous chorus of native birds. It's a short walk from Kotara train station.

the city from its Indigenous Awabakal origins to its rough-and-tumble social history, shaped by a cast of convicts, coal miners and steelworkers. Exhibitions are interactive and engaging. If you're travelling with kids check out Supernova, the hands-on science centre.

Maritime Centre

MUSEUM

(📞 02-4929 2588; www.maritimecentrenewcastle.org.au; Lee Wharf, 3 Honeysuckle Dr; adult/child \$10/5; ☀️ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) Newcastle's nautical heritage is on show at the visitor centre.



Activities

Swimming & Surfing

At the east end of town, surfers and swimmers adore **Newcastle Beach**, but if you're irrationally paranoid about sharks, the **ocean baths** (Shortland Esplanade; ☀️ 6am-9pm summer, 6am-4.30pm winter) **FREE** are a mellow alternative, encased in wonderful multicoloured art deco architecture. There's a shallow pool for toddlers and a backdrop of heaving ocean and chugging cargo ships. Surfers should goofy-foot it to **Nobby's Beach**, just north of the baths – the fast left-hander known as the Wedge is at its northern end.

South of Newcastle Beach, below King Edward Park, is Australia's oldest ocean bath, the convict-carved **Bogey Hole**. It's an atmospheric place to splash about when the surf's crashing over its edge. The most popular surfing breaks are at **Bar Beach** and **Merewether Beach**, further south.

The city's famous surfing festival, **Surfest** (www.surfest.com; Merewether Beach), takes place in February each year.

Walking & Cycling

The visitor centre has plenty of brochures outlining self-guided themed tours of the city. These include the *Bather's Way*, and the *Newcastle East Heritage Walk*, which heads past colonial highlights in the city centre. The *Newcastle by Design* brochure outlines a short stroll down and around Hunter St, covering some of the inner city's interesting architecture.



Festivals & Events

Craft Beer Week

FOOD

(www.newcastlecraftbeerweek.com; ☀️ Mar) There's an active local brewing scene in Newcastle and this annual celebration of all things craft beer features events in venues around Newcastle, Maitland and Lake Macquarie.

This is Not Art Festival

ART

(TiNA; 📞 02-4927 0675; octapod.org/tina; ☀️ early Oct) In early October, an independent arts and new media festival for emerging and established writers, artists and music makers.



Sleeping

Newcastle Beach YHA

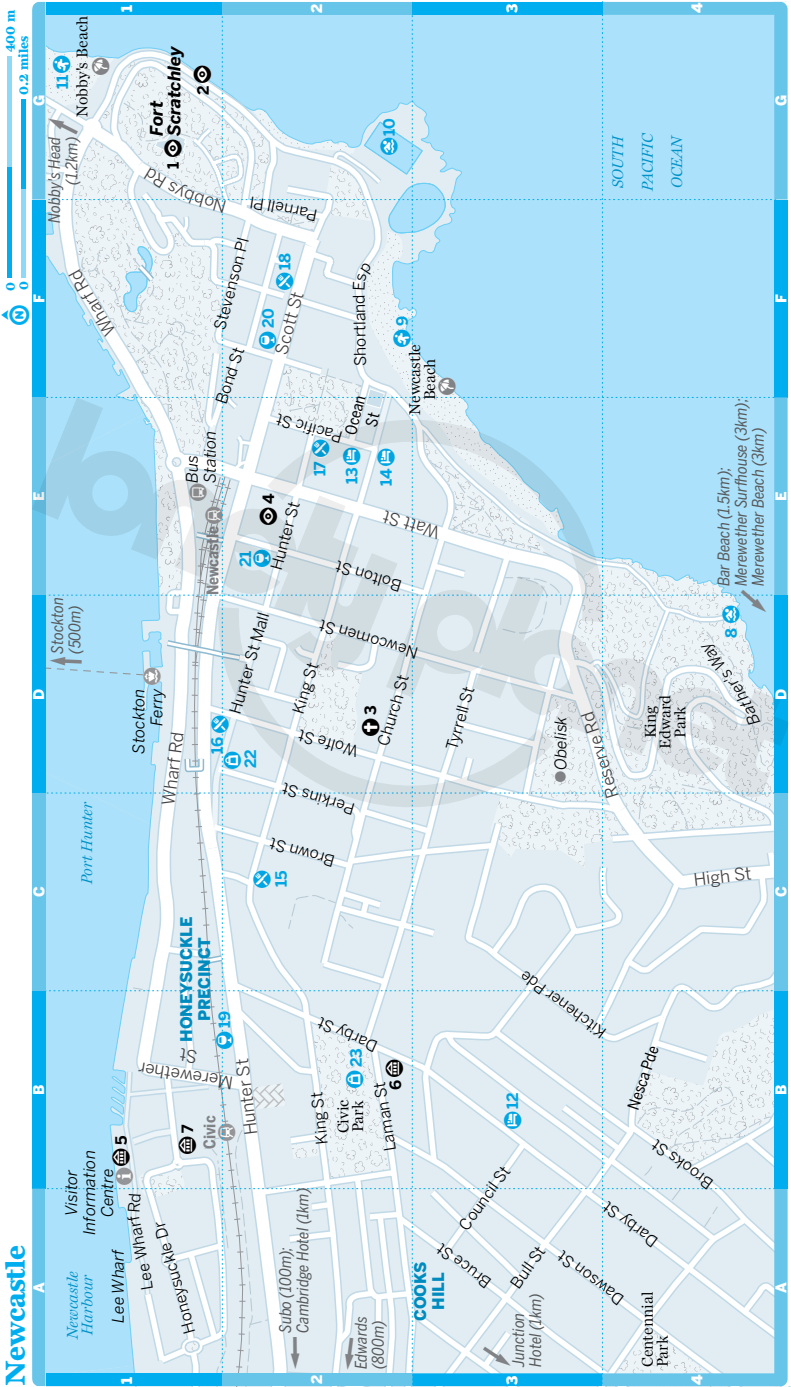
HOSTEL \$

(📞 02-4925 3544; www.yha.com.au; 30 Pacific St; dm/s/d \$33/55/80; ☀️ 📶 🚰 🚿) It may have the look of a grand English mansion but this heritage-listed YHA has the ambience of a laid-back beach bungalow. Just a bikini strap away from the surf, there's complimentary bodyboard use, surfboard hire, plus several free pub meals each week.

Stockton Beach Holiday Park

CAMPGROUND \$

(📞 02-4928 1393; www.stocktonbeach.com; 3 Pitt St; sites/cabins from \$55/174; ☀️ 📶 🚰 🚿 🛏️ 🍷 🍺 🍻 🍾 🍷 🍺 🍻 🍾)



Newcastle

📍 Top Sights

- 1 Fort ScratchleyG1

📍 Sights

- 2 Bathers WayG1
3 Christ Church CathedralD2
4 Lock UpE2
5 Maritime CentreB1
6 Newcastle Art GalleryB2
7 Newcastle MuseumB1

📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 8 Bogey HoleD4
9 Newcastle BeachF2
10 Newcastle Ocean BathsG2
11 Nobby's BeachG1

📍 Sleeping

- 12 Crown on DarbyB3

- 13 Newcastle Beach YHAE2

- 14 Novotel Newcastle BeachE2

🍴 Eating

- 15 Napoli Centrale Pizza BarC2
16 One Penny Black EspressoD1
17 Restaurant MasonE2
18 Scottie's Fish CafeF2

🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 19 Coal & CedarB2
20 Grain StoreF2
21 Reserve Wine BarE2

🛒 Shopping

- 22 EmporiumD2
23 Olive Tree MarketsB2

The beach is at your doorstep (or should that be tent flap?) at this tourist park behind the dunes in Stockton, a short ferry ride across from Newcastle. With large, grassy camp sites, en suites for vans and smart, newly built two- and three-bed villas, it's a flash place to park yourself for a couple of days.

Junction Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(☎ 02-4962 8888; www.junctionhotel.com.au; 204 Corlette St; r from \$129; 🍷 🍷 🍷) The upstairs of this suburban pub has been transformed with nine flamboyantly appointed rooms featuring African animal themes and wacky colours. All have generous-sized beds and flashy bathrooms with disco lights and little privacy. Well located among the Junction's boutiques and cafes, it's just a 10-minute walk to the beach.

Crown on Darby

APARTMENTS \$\$

(☎ 02-4941 6777; www.crownondarby.com.au; 101 Darby St; apt from \$140; 🍷 🍷 🍷) If giant TV screens, comfy beds and proximity to good coffee are your accommodation yardstick, consider this modern complex of 38 apartments on Newcastle's coolest street. The studios are bigger than your average hotel room and have kitchenettes, while the one- to four-bedroom apartments have full kitchens and generous living rooms.

Novotel Newcastle Beach

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 02-4032 3700; novotelnewcastlebeach.com.au; 5 King St; r from \$287; 🍷 🍷 🍷) What the Novotel's studio rooms lack in size they make up for in style. There's no pool, but the beach is just across the road, and there is

a small gym. Accommodation and breakfast are free for kids under 16.

🍴 Eating

Darby and Beaumont are the main eat streets and there are also plenty of restaurants along the waterfront. The **Newcastle City Farmers Market** (www.newcastlecityfarmersmarket.com.au; Newcastle Showground, Griffiths Rd; ☎ 8am-1pm Sun, 2.30-9pm Wed) is held twice a week.

One Penny Black Espresso

CAFE \$

(☎ 02-4929 3169; www.onepennyblack.com.au; 196 Hunter St; mains \$12; ☎ 7am-4.30pm) Perpetually popular for a reason, you'll probably have to queue for an excellent espresso or filter coffee served by staff who know their stuff. Devotees also rave about the toasties and fabulous breakfast platters.

Napoli Centrale Pizza Bar

PIZZA \$\$

(☎ 02-4023 2339; www.napolicentrale.com.au; 173 King St; mains \$20; ☎ 11am-10pm Tue-Sat) This understated pizza and pasta joint is the new hotspot for locals craving wood-fired pizza. The sparsely topped, crisply based pies are so authentic they feature imported Neapolitan flour and San Marzano tomatoes. Bookings are essential, or you can grab a takeaway from the window and eat on the beach.

Scottie's Fish Cafe

SEAFOOD \$\$

(☎ 02-4926 3780; www.scottiescafe.com.au; 36 Scott St; mains \$28; ☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-9pm Sat & Sun) Pull up a seat under palm trees laced with colourful festoon lighting and settle in for a classy take on the classic fish and chippery.

Merewether Surfhouse CAFE, RESTAURANT \$\$\$
(☎ 02-4918 0000; www.surfhouse.com.au; Henderson Pde; mains cafe \$15-20, bar \$19, restaurant \$35; ☼ cafe & pizza shop 7am-late, restaurant 11.30am-late Wed-Sat, to 4pm Sun) Watch the action on Merewether Beach from one of the many spaces in this architecturally notable complex. The swanky promenade cafe offers coffee and lazy breakfasts. Later in the day there's \$10 pizza and gelato, or head to the top floor where the restaurant, with its floor-to-ceiling windows, nails surf and turf at fine dining prices.

★ **Edwards** MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$
(☎ 02-4965 3845; www.theedwards.com.au; 148 Parry St; mains \$35; ☼ 10am-midnight Tue-Sat, to 10pm Sun) If new Newcastle had a beating heart, it would be found at this happening bar-cafe-diner. It's the place to be at all hours for delicious egg breakfasts, share plates from the wood-fired oven and late-night bar snacks.

Co-owned by Silverchair bass player Chris Joannou, this fabulous industrial space used to be a drive-through dry cleaners (you can still throw your dirty clothes in the coin laundry).

★ **Subo** MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$
(☎ 02-4023 4048; www.subo.com.au; 551d Hunter St; 5 courses \$85; ☼ 6-10pm Wed-Sun) Book in advance for a table at tiny Subo, an innovative, highly lauded restaurant serving light, exquisite food with a contemporary French influence. The restaurant exclusively serves a five-course menu that changes seasonally.

Restaurant Mason FRENCH \$\$\$
(☎ 02-4926 1014; www.restaurantmason.com; 3/35 Hunter St; mains breakfast \$18-21, lunch \$20-36, dinner \$35-42; ☼ noon-3.30pm & 6pm-late Tue-Fri, 8am-3pm & 6pm-late Sat; ☎) There's a summery feel to this modern French fine-dining restaurant, with tables placed under the plane trees outside and a main dining space that opens to the elements. Dishes make the most of fresh local produce.



Drinking & Entertainment

★ **Coal & Cedar** BAR
(coalandcedar.com; 380-382 Hunter St; ☼ 4pm-late Tue-Sun) Pull up a stool at the long wooden bar in this Prohibition-era styled speakeasy; in the early days it was so underground they didn't even publish the address. Now the secret is out, you'll find Newcastle's finest drinking potent whiskies to a blues soundtrack.

Reserve Wine Bar WINE BAR
(☎ 02-4929 3393; reservewinebar.com.au; 102 Hunter St; ☼ noon-8pm Tue, to late Wed-Fri, 3pm-late Sat) Calling itself a 'grape emporium', this bar in a former bank has over 350 different wines in the vault, with many a drop from Newcastle's Hunter Valley backyard. Enjoy your tipple with a bite from the decadent grazing menu.

Grain Store BREWERY
(☎ 02-4023 2707; www.grainstorenewcastle.com.au; 64 Scott St; ☼ 11.30am-11pm Tue-Sat, to 9pm Sun) Once the grain and keg store for the old Tooheys beer factory, this rustic brewery cafe is an atmospheric place to refresh with one of the 21 eclectic Australian brewed craft beers on tap.

Cambridge Hotel LIVE MUSIC
(www.yourcambridge.com; 789 Hunter St) A backpacker favourite that launched Silverchair, Newcastle's most famous cultural export, and continues to showcase touring bands and local acts.



Shopping

The city's cultural renaissance has been fuelled in part by the **Renew Newcastle** initiative that lends vacant spaces to artists. Wander down **Hunter Street Mall** to check out some of the boutiques and studios revitalising Newcastle.

Emporium ARTS, FASHION
(renewnewcastle.org/projects/project/the-emporium/; 185 Hunter St Mall; ☼ 10am-4pm Wed & Sat, to 5pm Thu-Fri) On the ground floor of the former David Jones department store are boutiques and galleries filled with a treasure trove of locally made art, fashion, furniture and design.

Olive Tree Markets MARKET
(www.theolivetreemarket.com.au; Civic Park; ☼ 9am-3pm 1st Sat of the month) **FREE** A contemporary handmade market with over 120 stalls run by an eclectic mix of local artists and designers.



Information

As well as at the public libraries, you can access free wi-fi in Hunter Street Mall, the Honeysuckle Precinct, Hamilton's Beaumont St and Newcastle Airport.

John Hunter Hospital (☎ 02-4921 3000; www.health.nsw.gov.au; Lookout Rd, New Lambton Heights) Has 24-hour emergency care.

Visitor Information Centre (☎ 02-4929 2588; www.visitnewcastle.com.au; Lee Wharf, 3 Honeysuckle Dr; ☼ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun)

i Getting There & Away

AIR

Newcastle Airport (☎ 02-4928 9800; www.newcastleairport.com.au) At Williamtown, 23km north of the city.

Jetstar (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) Flies to/from Melbourne, the Gold Coast and Brisbane.

QantasLink (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Flies to/from Brisbane.

Regional Express (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13; www.rex.com.au) Flies to/from Sydney and Ballina.

Virgin (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginaustralia.com) Flies to/from Brisbane and Melbourne.

BUS

Nearly all long-distance buses stop behind Newcastle train station.

Busways (☎ 02-4983 1560; www.busways.com.au) At least two buses daily to Tea Gardens (\$20.10, 1½ hours), Hawks Nest (\$20.50, 1¾ hours), Bluey's Beach (\$28, two hours), Forster (\$32, 3¼ hours) and Taree (\$35, four hours).

Greyhound (☎ 1300 473 946; www.greyhound.com.au) Two daily coaches to/from Sydney (\$31, 2¾ hours), Port Macquarie (\$56, 4¾ hours), Coffs Harbour (\$78, seven hours), Byron Bay (\$127, 11½ hours) and Brisbane (\$157, 14½ hours).

Port Stephens Coaches (☎ 02-4982 2940; www.pascoaches.com.au; adult/child \$4.60/2.30) Regular buses to Anna Bay (1¼ hours), Nelson Bay (1½ hours), Shoal Bay (1½ hours) and Fingal Bay (two hours).

Premier Motor Service (☎ 13 34 10; www.premierms.com.au) Daily coaches to/from Sydney (\$34, three hours), Port Macquarie (\$47, 3¾ hours), Coffs Harbour (\$58, six hours), Byron Bay (\$71, 11 hours) and Brisbane (\$76, 14½ hours).

Rover Coaches (☎ 02-4990 1699; www.rovercoaches.com.au) Four buses to/from Cessnock (\$4.70, 1¼ hours) on weekdays and two on Saturday; no Sunday service.

TRAIN

Sydney Trains (☎ 13 15 00; www.sydneytrains.info) has regular services to Gosford (\$8.10, 1½ hours) and Sydney (\$8.10, three hours). A line also heads to the Hunter Valley; Branxton (\$6.30, 50 minutes) is the closest stop to wine country.

i Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

➔ Port Stephens Coaches has frequent buses stopping at the airport en route between Newcastle (\$4.60, 40 minutes) and Nelson Bay (\$4.60, one hour).

➔ A taxi to Newcastle city centre costs about \$60.

Hunter Valley Day Tours (☎ 02-4951 4574; www.huntervalleydaytours.com.au) Provides shuttles to Newcastle (\$35 for one person, \$45 for two), the Hunter Valley (\$125 for one or two people), Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens.

BUS

Newcastle has an extensive network of **local buses** (☎ 13 15 00; www.newcastlebuses.info). There's a fare-free bus zone in the inner city between 7.30am and 6pm. Otherwise you need to purchase a one-hour fare (\$3.70) from the driver. The main depot is next to Newcastle train station.

FERRY

Stockton Ferry (adult/child \$2.60/1.30) Leaves every half-hour from Queens Wharf from 5.15am to about 11pm.

TRAIN

Services leaving Newcastle station stop at Hamilton, Wickham and Civic before branching out to either Sydney or the Hunter Valley. Travel between these stations costs \$3.30.

Hunter Valley

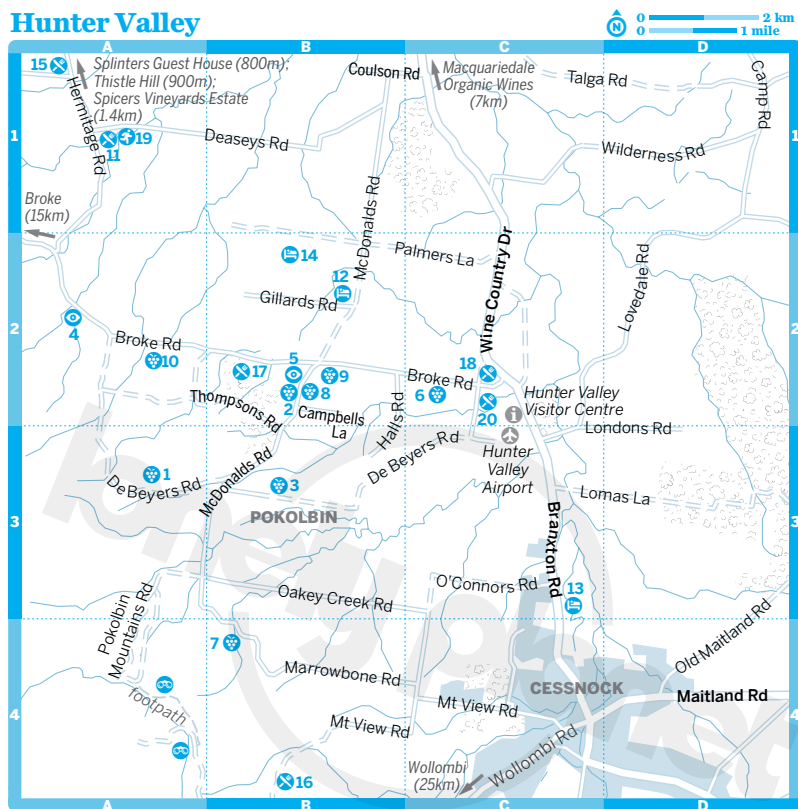
A filigree of narrow lanes criss-crosses this verdant valley, but a pleasant country drive isn't the main motivator for visitors – sheer decadence is. The Hunter is one big gorge fest: fine wine, boutique beer, chocolate, cheese, olives, you name it. Bacchus would surely approve.

Home to some of the oldest vines (1860s) and biggest names in Australian wine, the Hunter is known for its semillon, shiraz and, increasingly, chardonnay. If it's no longer the crowning jewel of the Australian wine industry, it still turns in some excellent vintages.

There is a new generation of winemakers exerting greater influence over the local styles and doing much to reinvigorate the local scene. These wineries are refreshingly attitude free and welcoming of novices. Staff will rarely give you the evil eye if you swirl your glass once too often, or don't conspicuously savour the bouquet.

While some vigneron deride the Disneyland aspect of the Hunter Valley, the region also offers everything from hot-air balloons and horse riding to open-air concerts. Accordingly, it is a hugely popular weekend for Sydney couples, wedding parties and groups of mates wanting to drink hard while someone else drives. Every Friday they descend and prices leap up accordingly.

Hunter Valley



The Hunter Valley is exceedingly hot during summer so, like its shiraz, it's best enjoyed in the cooler months.

Sights & Activities

Most attractions lie in an area bordered to the north by the New England Hwy and to the south by Wollombi/Maitland Rd, with the main cluster of wineries and restaurants in Pokolbin (population 694). For spectacular views and a more chilled-out pace head to the vineyards northwest around Broke and Singleton.

The valley's 150-plus wineries range from small-scale, family-run affairs to massive commercial operations. Most offer free tastings, although some charge a small fee.

Grab a copy of the free *Hunter Valley Official Guide* from the visitor centre at Pokolbin and use its handy map to plot your course, or just follow your nose, hunting out the tucked-away small producers.

Tyrrell's Wines

WINERY

(☎ 02-4993 7000; www.tyrrells.com.au; 1838 Broke Rd, Pokolbin; tours \$5; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun, winery tours 10.30am) Check out the Tyrrell's winemakers wall and it reads like a who's who of Australian viticulture. Having pioneered chardonnay growing in the valley, Tyrrell's is a fiercely independent, old-school vineyard (since 1858) with engaging wine tours.

James Estate

WINERY

(☎ 02-6547 5168; www.jamesestatewines.com.au; 951 Bylong Valley Way, Baerami; ☀ 10am-4.30pm) Bordered by the Wollemi National Park and with sweeping panoramas of the Goulburn River, James Estate has a 4km ridge walk and purpose-built mountain bike tracks to enjoy before a tasting. The winery is at the very top of the Hunter Valley, a one hour drive northwest of Pokolbin.

Hunter Valley

📍 Sights

- 1 Audrey Wilkinson Vineyard..... A3
- 2 Brokenwood..... B2
- 3 Cockfighter's Ghost..... B3
- 4 Hunter Distillery A2
- 5 Hunter Valley Gardens B2
- 6 Lake's Folly..... C2
- 7 Mount Pleasant..... B4
- 8 Small Winemakers Centre B2
- 9 Tempus Two B2
- 10 Tyrrell's Wines A2

🍷 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 11 Keith Tulloch Winery A1

🏠 Sleeping

- 12 Hermitage Lodge..... B2
- 13 Hunter Valley YHA C3
- 14 Longhouse B2

🍴 Eating

- 15 Binnorie Dairy A1
- 16 Bistro Molines..... B4
- 17 Enzo..... B2
- Hunter Valley Cheese Company..... (see 5)
- 18 Hunter Valley Chocolate Company..... C2
- Hunter Valley Smelly Cheese Shop..... (see 9)
- 19 Muse Kitchen..... A1
- 20 Muse Restaurant..... C2

🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- Goldfish Bar & Kitchen (see 9)

Audrey Wilkinson Vineyard

WINERY

(☎02-4998 7411; www.audreywilkinson.com.au; 750 DeBeyers Rd, Pokolbin; ☀10am-5pm) Enjoy the expansive views with a picnic at this hilltop cellar door. It's a sublime setting for one of the oldest vineyards (first planted in 1866) and there's an interesting historic display.

Brokenwood

WINERY

(☎02-4998 7559; www.brokenwood.com.au; 401-427 McDonalds Rd, Pokolbin; tours \$30; ☀9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) Known for its single-vineyard semillon and shiraz, this acclaimed winery offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes tour where you can try wines in various stages of development.

Macquariedale Organic Wines

WINERY

(☎02-6574 7012; www.macquariedale.com.au; 170 Sweetwater Rd, Belford; ☀10am-5pm) A boutique winemaker that's certified organic and biodynamic. The estate also grows garlic and olives.

Mount Pleasant

WINERY

(☎02-4998 7505; www.mountpleasantwines.com.au; 401 Marrowbone Rd, Pokolbin; ☀10am-5pm, winery tour 11am) There is plenty to taste at one of the great historic estates of the Hunter. If you are looking to buy, Mt Pleasant offers well-priced introductions to the local styles.

Lake's Folly

WINERY

(☎02-4998 7507; www.lakesfolly.com.au; 2416 Broke Rd, Pokolbin; ☀10am-4pm) Try the highly acclaimed cabernet blend and chardonnay which are both grown, vintaged and bottled on the estate. These small production wines tend to sell out so the cellar door is closed for around four months of the year. Call ahead.

Cockfighter's Ghost

WINERY

(☎02-4993 3688; www.cockfightersghost.com.au; DeBeyers Rd, Pokolbin; ☀10am-5pm) A big player, producing the midpriced Cockfighter's Ghost range which you can taste at their contemporary cellar door.

Small Winemakers Centre

WINERY

(☎02-4998 7668; www.smallwinemakerscentre.com.au; 426 McDonalds Rd, Pokolbin; ☀10am-5pm) Showcases more than 30 varieties of wines from great little estates which don't have their own cellar doors.

Tempus Two

WINERY

(☎02-4993 3999; www.tempustwo.com.au; 2144 Broke Rd, Pokolbin; ☀10am-5pm) This sprawling complex is a favourite with tour buses which descend upon the cellar door, Japanese restaurant and Smelly Cheese Shop (p155). Meerea Park has a tasting room here, which is worth seeking out.

Hunter Distillery

DISTILLERY

(☎02-4998 6737; www.hunterdistillery.com.au; 1686 Broke Rd, Pokolbin; tastings \$5; ☀10am-5pm) Like wandering into a science lab; this

distillery offers flavoured vodka tastings in test tube shots.

Hunter Valley Gardens

GARDENS

(www.hvg.com.au; Broke Rd, Pokolbin; adult/child \$2/15; ☀ 9am-5pm) A fairy tale of mazes and floral displays. Popular annual events include Snow Time in July and the Christmas Lights Spectacular.

Balloon Aloft

BALLOONING

(☎ 02-4991 1955; www.balloonaloft.com; \$279) Take to the skies for a sunrise hot-air balloon ride over the vineyards. Follow up with bubbles and breakfast at Peterson House Winery.

👉 Tours

If no one's volunteering to stay sober enough to drive, don't worry; there are plenty of winery tours available. Some operators will collect you in Sydney or Newcastle for a lengthy day trip.

Hunter Valley Boutique

Wine Tours

WINERY TOUR

(☎ 0419 419 931; www.huntervalleytours.com.au) Small-group tours from \$65 per person for a half-day (three cellars) and from \$99 for a full day including lunch.

Aussie Wine Tours

WINERY TOUR

(☎ 0402 909 090; www.aussiewinetours.com.au) Determine your own itinerary on one of these private, chauffeur-driven tours.

Kangarrific Tours

WINERY TOUR

(☎ 0431 894 471; www.kangarriftours.com; \$115) This small-group tour departs from Sydney and promises the Hunter's most diverse itinerary. Taste everything from wine to gelato and have morning tea with the eponymous roos.



SENSIBLE SUPPING

DrinkWise Australia recommends that in order to comply with the breath-alcohol limit of 0.05, men who are driving should drink no more than two standard drinks in the first hour and then no more than one per hour after that (women, who tend to reach a higher blood-alcohol concentration faster than men, should drink only one standard drink in the first hour). Wineries usually offer 20mL tastes of wine – five of these equal one standard drink.



Festivals & Events

Superstars regularly drop by for weekend concerts at the bigger vineyards. If there's something special on, accommodation books up well in advance. Check what's on at www.winecountry.com.au.

A Day on the Green

MUSIC

(www.adayonthegreen.com.au) Concert series at Bimbabden Estate during summer.

Lovedale Long Lunch

FOOD

(www.lovedalelonglunch.com.au) Seven wineries and chefs team up to serve huge lunches accompanied by music and art; third weekend of May.

Hunter Valley Wine & Food Month

WINE, FOOD

(www.winecountry.com.au) In June.

Jazz in the Vines

MUSIC

(www.jazzinthevines.com.au) Party in a paddock at Tyrrell's vineyard each October.



Sleeping

Prices shoot up savagely on Friday and Saturday nights and two-night minimum stays are common. Many places don't accept children.

Hunter Valley YHA

HOSTEL \$

(☎ 02-4991 3278; www.yha.com.au; 100 Wine Country Dr, Nulkaba; dm \$32, r with/without bathroom \$88/77; @ ☎ ☎) At the end of a long day of wine tasting or grape picking (it's often busy during February with workers) there's plenty of bonhomie around the barbecue and pool at this recently refurbished hostel. There are bikes for hire and a brewery pub within walking distance. The rooms can get stiflingly hot, though.

Thistle Hill

B&B \$\$

(☎ 02-6574 7217; www.thill.com.au; 591 Hermitage Rd, Pokolbin; r/cottages from \$200/350; ☎ ☎ ☎) This idyllic 10-hectare property features rose gardens, a lime orchard, a vineyard, a self-contained cottage sleeping up to five and a luxurious guesthouse with six double rooms. Rooms and common areas have an elegant French provincial sensibility.

Hermitage Lodge

CABINS \$\$

(☎ 02-4998 7639; www.hermitagelodge.com.au; 609 McDonalds Rd, Pokolbin; r from \$160; ☎ ☎ ☎) Ideally located within walking distance of a variety of cellar doors, these bright, spacious studios and suites have

sunny decks overlooking a shiraz vineyard. There's a good northern Italian restaurant on-site. The entry level rooms are only a small step up from motel accommodation, but offer good value.

Splinters Guest House

B&B \$\$\$

(☎ 02-6574 7118; www.splinters.com.au; 617 Hermitage Rd, Pokolbin; r/cottages from \$200/240; 🍷🍷🍷) Gregarious owner Bobby Jory runs this tranquil B&B with great elan, spoiling guests with treats such as gourmet breakfasts, port and chocolates in rooms, and wine and cheese on the terrace. There are three smart doubles with comfortable beds, and two rustic self-catering cottages.

★ Longhouse

APARTMENTS \$\$\$

(☎ 0402 101 551; www.thelonghouse.net.au; 385 Palmers Lane, Pokolbin; apt from \$299; 🍷🍷🍷) More than 50 architecture students designed this stylish pad, based on a traditional Australian wool shed. Made from concrete, corrugated iron and reclaimed timber, it is divided into three two-bed apartments with an incredible 48m deck. Feel good about your outlay knowing that 100% of the profits go towards architectural community aid projects.

Spicers Vineyards Estate

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎ 02-6574 7229; www.spicersgroup.com.au; 555 Hermitage Rd, Pokolbin; ste \$395-495; 🍷🍷🍷) 🍃 Surrounded by bushland these 12 luxury spa suites have king-size beds, complimentary minibar, and cosy lounge areas with open fireplace; a perfect spot for sipping shiraz in the winter. Unwind at the day spa or in the pool before a meal at the top-notch **Restaurant Botanica** (☎ 02-6574 7229; spicers retreats.com; 555 Hermitage Rd, Pokolbin; 2 courses \$65, 3 courses \$79; ☎ 6-10pm daily, 11am-3pm Sat & Sun).



Eating

Many Hunter restaurants don't open mid-week, so it's worth planning a weekend visit. Bookings are essential. Many wineries have on-site restaurants.

★ Muse Kitchen

EUROPEAN \$\$

(☎ 02-4998 7899; www.musedining.com.au; Keith Tulloch Winery, cnr Hermitage & Deasys Rds, Pokolbin; mains \$30-36; ☎ noon-3pm Wed-Sun, 6-9pm Sat) For a fabulous lunch, head to this relaxed incarnation of the Hunter's top restaurant, Muse. Dine outside on a seasonal menu of European bistro food inspired by the vegetables, fruits and herbs grown up

the road. Save room for the exquisite desert selection and wine tasting at the **Keith Tulloch** (☎ 02-4998 7500; keithtullochwine.com.au; cnr Hermitage & Deasys Rds, Pokolbin; tastings \$5; ☎ 10am-5pm) cellar door.

Enzo

CAFE \$\$

(www.enzohuntervalley.com.au; cnr Broke & Ekerts Rds, Pokolbin; mains breakfast \$15-29, lunch \$22-30; ☎ 9am-4pm) Claim a table by the fireside in winter or in the garden in summer to enjoy the rustic dishes served at this popular Italian-inflected cafe. Combine your visit with a tasting at neighbouring David Hook Wines.

Muse Restaurant

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 02-4998 6777; www.musedining.com.au; 1 Broke Rd, Pokolbin; 2-/3-course meals \$75/95; ☎ 6.30-10pm Wed-Fri, noon-3pm & 6.30-10pm Sat, noon-3pm Sun; 🍷) Inside the dramatic Hungerford Hill winery complex is the area's highest rated restaurant, offering sensational contemporary fare and stellar service. Vegetarians get their own menu (two courses \$60, three for \$80).

Bistro Molines

FRENCH \$\$\$

(☎ 02-4990 9553; www.bistromolines.com.au; 749 Mt View Rd, Mt View; mains \$38-42; ☎ noon-3pm Thu-Mon, 7-9pm Fri & Sat) Set in the Tallavera Grove winery, this French restaurant has a carefully crafted, seasonally driven menu that is nearly as impressive as the vineyard views.

Margan

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 02-6579 1102; www.margan.com.au; 1238 Milbrodale Rd, Broke; mains breakfast \$18, lunch \$38, 3-/4-/5-course tasting menus \$65/80/100; ☎ noon-3pm & 6-9.30pm Fri & Sat, 9-10.30am & noon-3pm Sun) 🍃 There's a tempting array of dishes at this rammed-earth restaurant where much of the produce is sourced from the kitchen garden; the rest comes from local providores whenever possible. Views stretch across the vines to the Brokenback Range.

Providores

Binnorie Dairy

CHEESE SHOP \$

(☎ 02-4998 6660; www.binnorie.com.au; 1 Mistletoe Lane, Pokolbin; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, to 4pm Sun) Offers an exceptional range of hand-crafted creamy soft cheeses from a stylish shopfront. The goat's cheese log, labne and marinated feta are particularly moreish.

Hunter Valley Smelly Cheese Shop

DELI \$

(www.smellycheese.net.au; Tempus Two Winery, 2144 Broke Rd, Pokolbin; mains \$9-16;

☺10am-5pm) Along with the stinky desirables filling the cheese room, there are deli platters, pizzas, burgers and baguettes to go, as well as a freezer of superb gelati. There's another branch at Pokolbin Village.

Hunter Valley Cheese

Company

CHEESE SHOP \$

(www.huntervalleycheese.com.au; McGuigans Winery, 447 McDonalds Rd, Pokolbin; ☺9am-5.30pm) Staff will chew your ear about cheesy comestibles all day long, especially during the daily 11am and 3pm cheese talk. There's a bewildering variety of styles available for purchase.

Hunter Valley Chocolate

Company

CHOCOLATE SHOP \$

(www.hvchocolate.com.au; Peterson House, Broke Rd, Pokolbin; ☺9am-5pm) Sells a tempting array of locally made chocolate, truffles, fudge and other treats. Next door is Peterson House – the only producer of sparkling wine in the Hunter.



Drinking & Nightlife

Goldfish Bar & Kitchen

BAR

(www.thegoldfish.com.au; Tempus Two Winery, cnr Broke & McDonalds Rds, Pokolbin; ☺noon-late) All wined out? Try a classic cocktail on the balcony or in the lounge of this popular bar. A courtesy bus can run you home on a Saturday night.

Wollombi Tavern

PUB

(www.wollombitavern.com.au; Great North Rd, Wollombi; ☺10am-late) This fabulous little pub is the home of Dr Jurd's Jungle Juice, a dangerous brew of port, brandy and wine. On weekends, the tavern is a favourite pit stop for motorbike clubs (the nonscary sort).

i Information

Hunter Valley Visitor Centre (☎02-4993 6700; www.huntervalleyvisitorcentre.com.au; 455 Wine Country Dr, Pokolbin; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun) Has a huge stock of leaflets and info on valley accommodation, attractions and dining.

i Getting There & Away

BUS

Rover Coaches (☎02-4990 1699; www.rovercoaches.com.au) Has four buses heading between Newcastle and Cessnock (\$4.70, 1¼ hours) on weekdays and two on Saturday; no Sunday service. Other buses head to Cessnock from the train stations at Morisset (\$4.70, one hour, two daily) and Maitland (\$4.70, 50 minutes, frequent).

TRAIN

Sydney Trains has a line heading through the Hunter Valley from Newcastle (\$6.30, 50 minutes). Branxton is the closest station to the vineyards, although only Maitland has bus services to Cessnock.

i Getting Around

Exploring without a car can be challenging. The YHA hostel (p154) hires bikes, as do **Grape-mobile** (☎02-4998 7660; www.grapemobile.com.au; 307 Palmers Lane, Pokolbin; hire per 8hr \$35; ☺10am-6pm) and **Hunter Valley Cycling** (☎0418 281 480; www.huntervalleycycling.com.au; 266 DeBeyers Rd, Pokolbin; hire per 1/2 days \$35/45).

Vineyard Shuttle (☎02-4991 3655; www.vineyardshuttle.com.au; per person \$15; ☺6pm-midnight Tue-Sat) Offers a door-to-door service between Pokolbin accommodation and restaurants.



© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'