

South Coast New South Wales



Green, luscious and temperate, the New South Wales (NSW) south coast is as pretty a region as you'll find on the island continent. Now that they've stopped harpooning whales, heavy industry doesn't really get a look-in south of Wollongong, leaving the waters unpolluted and spectacularly clear. Dolphins, sensible creatures that they are, have set up shop in the bays, while whales once again visit in numbers on their annual vacations, now that they're less likely to end up with an unfortunate body piercing.

On the drier side of the shoreline vast tracts of national park have been established, ensuring that the remaining virgin coastline continues to look much as it did when Captain Cook cleared customs in 1770. The beachside living is so good in some places that even the kangaroos wander down to the shore for an evening stroll.

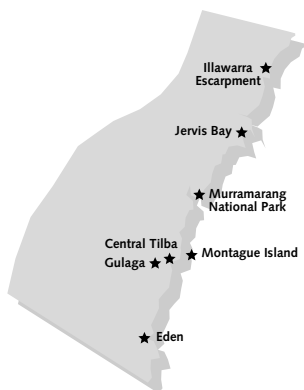
Nature doesn't hold all the trumps. Picturesque historic villages dot the hinterlands while Canberra is a textbook of 20th-century architecture and town planning writ life-size. The nation's capital isn't actually on the coast at all, so to compensate, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has nabbed arguably the best part of it, Jervis Bay, from NSW.

Part of the south coast's charm is simply a matter of access; where the north coast is on the main highway linking Queensland, NSW and Victoria, the south coast is served by the meandering Princes Hwy, the secondary road from Sydney to Melbourne. For people unwilling to share their coastal wanderings with battalions of trucks, this is a very good thing.

SOUTH COAST
NEW SOUTH WALES

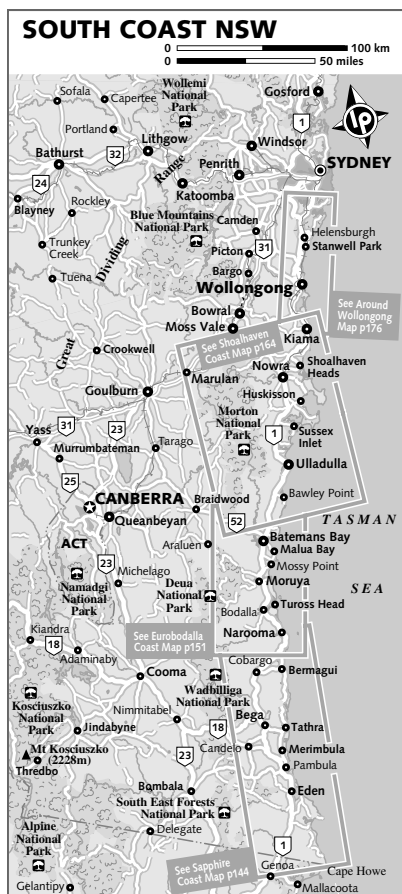
HIGHLIGHTS

- Having kangaroos calling in at your camp site in **Murrararang National Park** (p163)
- Leaving snowy white footprints on the brilliant sands of **Jervis Bay** (p166)
- Marvelling at the dramatic geology of the **Illawarra Escarpment** (p176)
- Watching **Eden's** whale-human reconciliation play itself out (p146)
- Experiencing village life with the 'quaint' quotient at max in **Central Tilba** (p150)
- Paying respect to the Mother of the Yuin people at sacred **Gulaga** (p152)
- Hanging out with the seals and penguins at **Montague Island** (p152)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 02

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SAPPHIRE COAST

Not to be outdone by Queensland's Gold Coast, the southernmost part of NSW considers itself precious too. The moniker is apt, with the coast's pristine water revelling in every shade of blue. You won't see a lot of it from the Princes Hwy, but you can feel confident that taking just about any road east will yield a bit of mostly unblemished coast set in rugged surrounds. This is the start of the traditional lands of the Yuin people.

NADGEE NATURE RESERVE

Continuing over the state border the **Nadgee Howe Wilderness** continues, but its name

changes from Croajingolong National Park (p139) to Nadgee Nature Reserve. Vehicle access is only allowed as far as the ranger station near the Merrica River in the reserve's northern section.

This is the NSW starting point for the 50km **Nadgee Howe Wilderness Walk**, a route suited to experienced hikers. Basic **camp sites** (per adult/child \$5/2) – without toilets or drinkable water – are spread along the track. Permits are required before commencing the walk; apply to the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) in Merimbula (p146).

At the north end of the reserve, the small settlement **Wonboyn**, on the lake, has a store selling petrol and basic supplies.

Wonboyn Cabins & Caravan Park (☎ 6496 9131; www.wonboyncabins.com.au; Wonboyn Rd; camp sites per 2 people \$25, cabins \$65-112; 🚽) is spacious and resonates with bellbird song.

BEN BOYD NATIONAL PARK

The wilderness barely pauses for breath before starting again at 10,709-hectare **Ben Boyd National Park**. Boyd was an entrepreneur who failed spectacularly in his efforts to build an empire around Eden in 1850. This park protects some of his follies, along with a dramatic coastline peppered with isolated beaches. It's split into two sections, with Eden squeezed in between.

The southern section is accessed by mainly gravel roads (per vehicle \$7) leading off sealed Edrom Rd, which leaves the Princes Hwy 18km south of Eden. At its southern tip, the elegant 1883 **Green Cape Lightstation** (☎ 6495 5000; www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au; Green Cape Rd; cottage mid-week/weekend \$215/292) copes with its isolation by gazing out at awesome views. There are **toilets** (adult/child \$7/5; 🚽 1pm & 3pm Thu-Mon) or if you want to share the seclusion, you can spend the night in a lavishly restored keepers' cottage (sleeps six).

Eleven kilometres along Edrom Rd there's a turn-off to the historic **Davidson Whaling Station** on Twofold Bay where you can have a picnic in the rustic gardens of **Loch Gairra Cottage** (1896). Not much whaling paraphernalia remains, but interpretive signs tell the story. It's hard to imagine that until 1929 the peace of this place was rent by the agonised groans of dying whales and the stench of boiling blubber.

Further along is the turn-off for **Boyd's Tower**, an impressive structure indolently built in the late 1840s with sandstone shipped