



The Grand Pacific Drive

This 140-km drive takes you south from Sydney along a sensational coastline, through rainforests and seaside villages.



The new Grand Pacific Drive has quickly gained a reputation as one of the State's most spectacular touring routes – a road that combines innovation, driving pleasure and scenic beauty.

The visual spectacle hits top gear on the dramatic 665-m Sea Cliff Bridge, a cantilevered marvel perched 41 m above sea level. The bridge and the Grand Pacific Drive give you your green light to even larger sea-sculpted dreams – the greater South Coast.

Royal National Park

Heading south from Sydney, via the Princes Highway, turn off at Loftus and follow the signs that take you into the Royal National Park. The second oldest national park in the world, the Royal boasts rainforest, creeks, wildflower meadows, sandstone headlands, wild stretches of coastal heath and marvellous walking trails.

Put on your walking shoes and discover the wilderness or, in season (June to November), watch whales cruising past the headlands.

As you spiral down from the heights of the park along Lady Wakehurst Drive, stop off at Bald Hill Lookout for an inspiring panorama across the beach at Stanwell Park as well as the coast south to Wollongong and beyond.

Coastal marvel

From Bald Hill, follow Lawrence Hargrave Drive and get set for the drive of a lifetime. Between Coalcliff and Clifton, Lawrence Hargrave Drive swerves out dramatically from the



Photographs
above left to right: Dramatic Sea Cliff Bridge, Grand Pacific Drive; Farm Beach, Shellharbour (Paul Blackmore); Bald Hill, Wollongong
below: Wollongong Harbour

cliffs at Sea Cliff Bridge. This graceful span is best appreciated on foot. Stop at the parking zone and take your camera to the pedestrian walkway. During the migration season, you might even spot a whale off-shore.

For the ultimate thrill, hop on the pillion seat of a Harley-Davidson and roar along Lawrence Hargrave Drive. Continue through the Northern Wollongong coastal villages, stopping for a homemade gelato at Austinmer Beach or a snack at one of the local cafés, or take a dip in the sea at Thirroul.

Wonders of Wollongong

Continue along the Grand Pacific Drive south to Wollongong Harbour. With its array of fishing boats and lighthouses, the harbour is a fine backdrop for a stroll. Follow Marine Drive south as it curves away from the sea, and stop at the Five Islands Brewery to sample some of their product and enjoy a meal on the terrace overlooking the beach.

Turn left into Corrimal Street, then right onto Masters Road, and follow the signs to Unanderra. Take the Five Islands Road exit, turn left into Glastonbury Road and head for the landmark Nan Tien Temple with its giant pagoda, the largest Buddhist temple in the southern hemisphere.

Nan Tien means 'Paradise of the South'. Here you'll find extensive gardens and a dining hall that serves delicious vegetarian food. Tours, meditation or cooking classes and short-break stays are available.

Grand adventures

Follow the signs to Shellharbour, past Lake Illawarra, and continue to Shellharbour Village.

Shellharbour

Shellharbour's oceanfront café strip, with a great mix of award-winning restaurants and an eclectic range of specialty stores, is fast becoming an attraction in itself.

South of the village at Bass Point, Bushrangers Bay is a Marine Aquatic Reserve with some of the finest shore diving and snorkelling on the South Coast. Its most prominent feature is an underwater cliff face with hundreds of small cavities that shelter sea urchins and tropical fish.

Kiama

Head back to Shellharbour Road and follow the Princes Highway south to Kiama, where there is much to discover, including the town's famous Blowhole and the local beaches.

Continue along the Princes Highway. Just south of the turn-off to Gerringong, follow the signs to Crooked River Winery, which produces a premium range of wines on a former dairy farm.

Drive past Gerringong to Seven Mile Beach, where you can make the most of this wild and inspiring stretch of coast by going for a walk along the water's edge.

From Shoalhaven Heads, you'll find the unspoilt beaches, hinterland, wilderness and dairy-farming areas of the Eurobodalla before continuing south to explore the Sapphire

Coast. Or you can turn inland on Kangaroo Valley Road to Berry and the Kangaroo Valley, taking Cambewarra Road to the top of the escarpment to explore the Southern Highlands. Here a range of cultural, artistic and historical features – along with boutique wineries, farmhouse cheeses, berry farms, specialty honey and jams – are yours to discover.

 For more information, contact the Illawarra Visitor Information Centre, telephone: (02) 4229 5802, or visit our website: www.illawarratourism.com.au





The Illawarra

Within an hour of southern Sydney, the Illawarra has the forests and peaks of the coastal escarpment on one side, and a ribbon of beautiful beaches on the other.



Panoramic views

The gateway to the South Coast, the Illawarra is one of the few points along the coast where the richly coloured escarpment meets the sea. Blessed with a combination of natural scenic beauty and refined city chic, the towns and villages of the Illawarra – framed by Stanwell Park and Wollongong in the north, south to Shellharbour, Kiama and Gerringong on the coast, with the hidden hinterland delight of Jamberoo, and extending to Gerroa – are packed with a full spectrum of delights to captivate any visitor.

Travel to the Illawarra via the F6 Southern Freeway, and pause to admire the amazing view at Bulli Pass Scenic Reserve. Perched on the very brink of the 340-m escarpment, the reserve commands a spectacular panorama of Wollongong, its beautiful harbour and the jewel-coloured expanse of the Greater Illawarra.

Wollongong

Wollongong is the State's third largest city, a vibrant, cosmopolitan city set on a narrow strip of land where the green hills of the coastal escarpment fall into the sea. In a glorious natural setting, Wollongong also has superb beaches and a growing reputation as a city that appreciates fine food and wine. Its range of accommodation options also makes this a perfect base for exploring the Illawarra region.

Towering 468 m above sea level and just a few kilometres from the coast, Mt Keira Lookout offers a sublime view over Wollongong and

its coastline. If you're feeling energetic, tackle the Mt Keira Ring Track, a 5.5-km walking trail that encircles the mountain, passing through rainforest and eucalypt forest.

Visitors to the Illawarra will also find Wollongong's Nan Tien Temple, the largest Buddhist temple in the southern hemisphere. With its towering orange-roofed pagoda, the temple offers extensive gardens and short-stay accommodation. Here you can enjoy a variety of classes – on meditation, calligraphy, tea ceremonies and cooking.

See more than sea shells at Shellharbour Shellharbour, located in the heart of the Illawarra's holiday playground, boasts dazzling beaches that make it ideal for a relaxing escape by the sea, an adventure getaway or a simple nature holiday. Beachfront accommodation and waterside restaurants and cafés make it a firm favourite with visitors, while Shellharbour's cycleways, golf courses and forest reserves add to the city's short-break appeal.

A walk through Blackbutt Forest Reserve or Macquarie Pass National Park reveals some of the area's natural beauty. For an extra buzz, hop on the back of a Harley-Davidson and cruise the roads that hug the coastline and link lovely seaside towns.

Take a scenic flight to see the spectacular Illawarra from the skies, or book with one of the several dive and fishing operators who can take you to where the action is. Wander through

MUST SEE AND DO

Experience the Grand Pacific Drive and walk along the 665-m Sea Cliff Bridge.

Soar like a bird with a tandem paragliding or hang-gliding experience, or try NSW's only beach skydive.

Snorkel for a fish-eye view of Bushrangers Bay, a Marine Aquatic Reserve at Bass Point, Shellharbour.

Take a journey of a different kind at the Nan Tien Temple, the largest Buddhist temple in the southern hemisphere.

Meander through Minnamurra Rainforest – the boardwalks and walking tracks provide spectacular views of the canyon carved by the Minnamurra River.

Photographs

above left to right: Wollongong's coastline; There she blows! The Kiama Blowhole (Simon Bayliss); Werri Beach near Kiama (Anson Smart); Minnamurra Rainforest



shopping precincts in search of retail thrills or check out the entertainment to be found in clubs, pubs and city venues, including the Roo Theatre and a cinema complex.

Playtime at Kiama

Famous for its Blowhole, Kiama sits on a peninsula that rises from the sweeping curve of Bombo Beach. On the cliffs at Blowhole Point, waves surging into an underground cavity are compressed and forced upwards, then explode high into the air, accompanied by a loud 'oomph'. The strength varies according to wind, waves and tides, but when it's pumping, the Blowhole always draws a crowd.

Next to the visitor centre at Blowhole Point, the Pilot's Cottage Museum tells the story of Kiama's colourful past, from the time when cedar cutting, basalt quarries and dairy farming were the town's mainstays.

Follow the Princes Highway and you'll see Saddleback Mountain Road rise 600 m from the coast to a magnificent lookout. On a clear day, you'll be able to see more than 100 km – from Cronulla to Pigeon House Mountain near Milton. Walk along Hoddle's Trail, a 60-minute ramble along the edge of the escarpment.

Inland jewels

Minnamurra Rainforest looks like something out of the Amazon jungle. In the shadow of the Great Dividing Range, just inland from Kiama, giant roots creep across the forest floor, thick strangler figs lasso trees, and raucous bird calls erupt from the canopy high overhead.

From the Minnamurra Rainforest Centre, a 1.6-km elevated boardwalk winds towards the escarpment and across Minnamurra Creek, giving easy access to the 400-hectare rainforest. If you feel like a more substantial hike, there's a two-hour return walk to Minnamurra Falls.

Any visit to Minnamurra Rainforest demands a stop at Jamberoo, a delightful little village surrounded by emerald green farms with the escarpment in the background. Jamberoo was established as early as 1820, originally to harvest the rich cedar forests that built much of colonial Sydney. Take a short stroll around town to explore its historic churches, and poke around in Fredericks General Store. On Sunday afternoons enjoy music and entertainment at the Jamberoo Pub.

If there are children on board, take them to Jamberoo Action Park, where Billabong Beach, Rapid River, Outback Bay and Surf Hill are the raw ingredients for an action-packed adventure playground. You can easily spend a day there, and count on tired and content children at the end of it.

Stories to tell

If the shriek of a steam whistle sends a tingle down your spine, the Illawarra Light Railway Museum at Albion Park, near Shellharbour, is the place for you. Dedicated to the small steam- and diesel-powered locomotives that served in the mining and agricultural industries, performing tasks such as hauling sugar cane to

refineries in the north Queensland cane fields, this museum is packed with attractions. There's also a display of passenger cars and rolling stock, most of them beautifully restored.

Albion Park's Tongarra Museum showcases the history of the Illawarra with artefacts, photographs, historical documents and sketches. The displays relate to Aboriginal history, the era of the timber cutters and the development of the dairy and mining industries. The focal point of the museum is a bronze bust of Caroline Chisholm, 'The Emigrant's Friend', who settled more than 20 families in Shellharbour in 1843.

Step back in time with a visit to the HARS (Historical Aviation Restoration Society) Aviation Museum at the Illawarra Regional Airport, Shellharbour. Dedicated to the preservation of aviation history, here you can view fully restored operational aircraft such as the De Havilland Tiger Moth, a Cessna C-180, a Consolidated PBV Catalina and, the pride of the fleet, 'Connie' – a Lockheed Super Constellation, the giant of the skies.

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Adventures unlimited

The Illawarra is made for outdoor adventures. The region has a premium array of beaches, lakes, mountains and wilderness, and you only have to watch those hang-gliders spiralling down from the heights above Stanwell Park to know that this is a great place to spread your wings. Don't miss a scenic flight.

A number of designated coastal cycleways make the Illawarra ideal for cycling, whether you're solo and athletic or part of a family group. Except for a few road crossings, the Bulli to Wollongong cycleway is a fully off-road, purpose-built track that runs parallel to the ocean and is easily accessible by public transport at both ends.

Located between Wollongong and Shellharbour, Lake Illawarra is an aquatic paradise, offering a choice of canoeing, waterskiing, sailing, prawning and fishing.

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Photographs

above left to right: Hang-gliding from Bald Hill, Wollongong; Local produce inspires talented chefs (Jane Dempster) over, page 13: Touring delightful Gerringong



Food to drive for

When talented chefs create dishes using the best local produce in an inspiring location, the result is well worth a drive.

Fine food and wine

The Illawarra is shaping up as a fine food destination. A number of the region's skilled chefs are making a name for themselves with fresh and innovative recipes based on the exceptional regional produce.

In Wollongong, restaurants such as Lorenzo's Diner, Michael's, The Lagoon Seafood Restaurant and Beachouse bring the fine-dining experience to some brilliant locations. At Addison's Seafood Grill & Bar, the Ocean Beach Hotel and Relish on Addison in Shellharbour Village, you can enjoy award-winning cuisine and great views.

Travelling around the Illawarra, you might also notice that it's increasingly a wine-growing region. The area now boasts numerous wineries and cellar doors offering many grape varieties and blends.

In Gerringong, the Crooked River Winery produces a premium range of wines – including chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, merlot, sangiovese and a port made from chardonnay grapes – on a former dairy farm. Its café serves modern Australian food with a Mediterranean influence to complement the sunny views.

Five Islands Brewery

The first brewery in the Illawarra, Five Islands Brewery is also Australia's largest microbrewery. Built as a showcase as well as a production facility, the brewery produces a range of chemical- and preservative-free beers that contain no added sugar.

The Five Islands Brewery's extensive tasting list includes: Dapto Draught, the brewery's standard lager; a dark ale known as Bulli Black; the Belgian-style Longboard; and Parkyns Shark Oil – a traditional Indian pale ale named after the only inhabitant of the Five Islands, who caught sharks to produce oil.

You can also enjoy a meal at the Sixth Island Bar, a terrace just 50 m from the beach, a great spot to enjoy a selection of bar food.

International Cooking School

Prominent Sydney food identity and chef Elise Pascoe has established her highly acclaimed International Cooking School high on the slopes of Saddleback Mountain, overlooking the green valleys between Kiama and Jamberoo and just 10 minutes' drive from Kiama.

The founding editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald's* 'Good Living' section, Elise has honed her skills teaching at famous cooking schools and hotels in Europe, and now brings her extensive knowledge to cooking classes in this brilliant, purpose-built facility.

Follow Elise's easy teaching style and professional short cuts and in a single day you'll learn how to put together a perfect southern Italian lunch or a dazzling Thai banquet filled with flavour.

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