



COASTAL VIBES ITINERARY

The beauty of these coastal destinations is that they cater to the group looking for both **adventure and relaxation**. From stunning coastline to foodie delights, we'll share the local insights on the beautiful Barrington Coast, Port Stephens, Newcastle, and Lake Macquarie regions of the NSW coast.

Proudly led by Hunter Joint Organisation on behalf of the Councils of the Hunter Region

- Cessnock and Singleton (Hunter Valley)
- Dungog • Lake Macquarie • Maitland
- MidCoast (Barrington Coast)
- Muswellbrook • Newcastle • Port Stephens
- Upper Hunter

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BARRINGTON COAST • PORT STEPHENS
NEWCASTLE • LAKE MACQUARIE

The information contained in this document was accurate at the time of publishing (July 2023).
Images courtesy of Destination NSW, Hunter Councils and other fabulous photographers.

Here's a few of our top ideas to get the most out of these destinations. Some are short experiences, and some take a whole day. We'll leave it up to you to pick your own adventure.

Our ideas start in the north and work our way back down the coast, but you can start wherever you like. If you are planning on tackling a few of these ideas, you will need your own transport. Hiring from Newcastle or Newcastle Airport is your best option.

Ready? Pack your swimmers, let's go!



DAY 1



Let's hit the beach. If you're moving through the lower mid north coast of NSW, otherwise known as the Barrington Coast, you'll be passing through the twin towns of Forster-Tuncurry, through the picturesque Pacific Palms, the iconic Seal Rocks, and finally to the charming towns of Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens. It's time to spill the tea on the Barrington Coast.

1 GET SHUCKED

Chances are you've tasted a Sydney Rock Oyster from Wallis Lake – it's the largest producer of them in the country! There's plenty of restaurants in Forster-Tuncurry to sample these local delicacies. These picturesque twin towns are located a 2hr drive north of Newcastle and just about every restaurant has oysters on the menu! Our tip? Pick up a dozen or two freshly shucked from Barclays Oysters and head to the wharf in Forster. If you're there at sunset, get the phone ready for the Insta snap.

2 SURF THE PALMS

Gary from Gary Hughes Surf School has a rep down at Pacific Palms, located ten minutes south of Forster. Mention his name and you'll see a wide smile appear across any local's face. Those that have had a lesson with Gary will also attest to this larger-than-life character. Book a lesson and he'll take you to the best beach of the day in the Palms based on the conditions.

3 SEAL ROCKS

No phone reception. No worries. Seal Rocks is a one road in, one road out seaside village in Myall Lakes National Park. Blessed with three spectacular beaches, and that's about it! Oh, and a general store and caravan park. This exclusive village is becoming the go-to place for holiday makers in the know. A walk to Sugarloaf Point Lighthouse is a must and if you can time it for sunset, even better!

4 WALK ON COUNTRY

From Tuncurry to Hawks Nest is Worimi Country and the beautiful Myall Lakes National Park, adjacent to Hawks Nest. This place has special meaning to the Worimi people with cultural sites dotted along the coast. Fifteen minutes north of Hawks Nest lies Dark Point, a declared Aboriginal place of significance. Park your car and get the heart pumping as you traverse the impressive sand dunes all the way to Little Gibber Beach or visit protected sites with tours operated by the Karuah Aboriginal Land Council.

5 WHALE WATCHERS DELIGHT

If you're here any time from June to November, you must get to a vantage point to see the humpback highway in full swing. Our tips: Bennetts Head and Cape Hawk Lookout in Forster, Blueys Headland in Pacific Palms, and Sugarloaf Point Lighthouse in Seal Rocks.

6 A VIEW FROM THE TOP

Short, but steep, the Yacaaba Headland walk is the kind of walk where your efforts are rewarded. Located at the end of Bennetts Beach Hawks Nest, the views across to Nelson Bay are stunning. Your group will need to replace some fluids after that hike so pull into the Tea Gardens Hotel, home to the best beer garden on the mid north coast.

MORE IDEAS...

- Hydrofoil across the pristine Myall Lakes with Glide Time
- Ride the swell with Epic Surf Ocean Adventures, Forster
- Green Cathedral, Tiona. An outdoor cathedral like no other

DAY 2



Welcome to the stunning coastal region of Port Stephens. Choose from exploring the charming town of Nelson Bay, where you can enjoy a range of water-based activities, or take in beautiful bays with their crystal-clear waters and white sandy beaches. You might need more than one day!

1 DINE ON THE BAY

On a bright and sunny day, why not make your way down to Nelson Bay Wharf for a delightful lunch experience? There's a variety of cafes and restaurants that offer a range of culinary delights. With seafood being unloaded from the boats along the wharf, it would be rude not to taste the daily catch. Looking for a spot to unwind? Head to Shoal Bay Country Club. Live entertainment, water views, great food. It ticks a lot of boxes!

2 ISLAND SECRET

You know somewhere is good when the locals are trying to keep it a secret. Take a day cruise to Broughton Island, a small island located 14km off the coast. Tours allow visitors to spend a day exploring the island's natural beauty including secluded beaches, walks and great snorkelling. Cruises depart from Nelson Bay Wharf with Moonshadow TQC Cruises or for those looking to explore underwater, Salty Pilgrims have a day trip to the best snorkelling spots on the island. Gear hire available. Booking in advance is recommended.

3 WHITE SAND TURQUOISE WATERS

The Spit at Fingal Bay is a narrow strip of fine white sand and clear turquoise water that connects the mainland to Fingal Island. The island is accessible by boat and well worth taking a cruise which includes a fully guided visit to the isolated Point Stephens Lighthouse and swim in the secluded lagoon with Aquamarine Adventures.

4 SANDY ADVENTURES

Looking for some excitement and adventure? Look no further than the dunes of Birubi Beach at Anna Bay. The ultimate natural playground where you can indulge in a range of thrilling activities like camel rides, sandboarding and quad biking. These impressive dunes, which span an impressive 32km, are the longest moving sand dunes in the southern hemisphere. To ensure a hassle-free experience, it's recommended that you pre-book your sandy adventure at the Port Stephens Visitor Centre. Once you've finished your action-packed day (and dusted off the sand), be sure to head over to Crest restaurant, which offers breathtaking views of the beach that are nothing short of epic.

5 TASTE THE LOCAL BREW

Grab a tasting plate and pull up a seat in the beautiful beer garden of Murray's Craft Brewing Company in a place called Bob's Farm, how quaint is that! The outlook to the vineyards is divine with enough grassy spaces for games. Not just a brewery, they have a local produce focused restaurant on site. Our tip? Their slow cooked BBQ Plate paired with an Angry Man Pale Ale, or two.

6 MOUNT-MUST-DO

The views from Mt Tomaree are unparalleled. Wineglass Bay in Tassie comes close. You get the picture! The 30-minute steep walk is a must for anyone visiting the area that is happy to get their heart rate pumping. Time it for sunrise or sunset for some Insta shots that are worth a double tap. If you're still fresh after the climb, there's a 20km coastal walk from Mt Tomaree to Birubi Beach, past One Mile Beach which is the best beginner beach in the region for surfers. After a more accessible lookout? Gan Gan Hill Lookout is the pick.

- Oakfield Ranch Camel Rides at Birubi Beach
- Put the pedal down at Go Karts Go, Nelson Bay
- Get up close with native Australian animals at Oakvale Wildlife Park

DAY 3



Welcome to Newcastle and Lake Macquarie! With so many activities and attractions to choose from, it can be hard to decide where to start. But fear not - we've curated a list of exciting things to do that you may not have considered yet, or perhaps needed an extra nudge to try. Let this be your motivation to explore all that this vibrant part of the coast has to offer.

1 ANZAC MEMORIAL WALK

The Anzac Memorial Walk in Newcastle is not only a tribute to Australia's servicemen and women, but also a picturesque coastal stroll with stunning ocean views. The 450-meter long cliff-top walk takes you from Strzelecki Lookout to Bar Beach. Take a break to soak up the sun or have a refreshing swim at Bar Beach.

2 CATHERINE HILL

Take a guided tour of the historic mining village at Catherine Hill Bay, 40 minutes south of Newcastle. You'd know the beach from all those influencer pics online. The iconic coal-loading jetty that stretches out from the beach is a reminder of the area's historic past. You can't visit Catherine Hill without stop in at the 'Catho' for a classic Aussie pub feed. The locals don't mind a chat either, so be ready.

3 CRUISE THE LAKE

Lake Macquarie's motto is 'Love the Lake' and there's no better way to do that than with a cruise. Lake Macquarie Cruises depart from Booragul Public Wharf and offer lunch and dinner cruises. We recommend pre-booking these direct with Lake Macquarie Cruises.

4 WALKS AND WATERFALLS

Heading about an hour inland will bring you to Watagans National Park which is known for its tropical bushwalks and stunning waterfalls. A selection of hikes with varying degrees of difficulties dot the park, including Boarding House Dam walk and Circuit walk. If you only take on one of these, make sure it's the Gap Creek Falls walk which leads to the stunning Gap Creek Falls, a 40m waterfall that plunges deep into the rocky gorge. The cooling off spray of the falls is welcomed on a hot day!

5 FOR THE FOODIES

The foodie scene in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie has taken some massive leaps in recent years. The dining scene is thriving with an impressive range of culinary options, stunning venues, chic decor, and a wealth of talented chefs. In Newcastle, first port of call is Darby Street. Take your pick but our faves are Light Years Asian and warehouse style restaurant Meet. Heading to Lake Mac and seafood lovers must try Crusoe's on the Lake or The Boatshed Bar, Belmont.

6 WHALES AND DOLPHINS

Experience the breathtaking coastal scenery of Newcastle with pods of resident dolphins and other marine life, or encounter a whale from June to November with Coast XP departing from Newcastle Harbour.



- A night at the Civic Theatre
- Tunnel Tour of Fort Scratchley
- Speers Point Park Playground (for families and school groups)