

Sometimes, you need to talk to a local to find the hidden gems of country towns. Lucky for you, you have us to show you the path.

It's time to venture to the hills.

The mountain ranges rise from the valleys, making way for lush rainforests and cascading waterfalls. They provide the perfect backdrop to small towns bursting with country hospitality.

The wonders of nature reveal themselves at every turn on this route through Wingham, Gloucester, over the mighty Barrington Tops to Scone and Murrurundi.

The beauty of our ideas is that you can do as much or as little as you please and start and end where it suits.

Giddy-up, let's go!

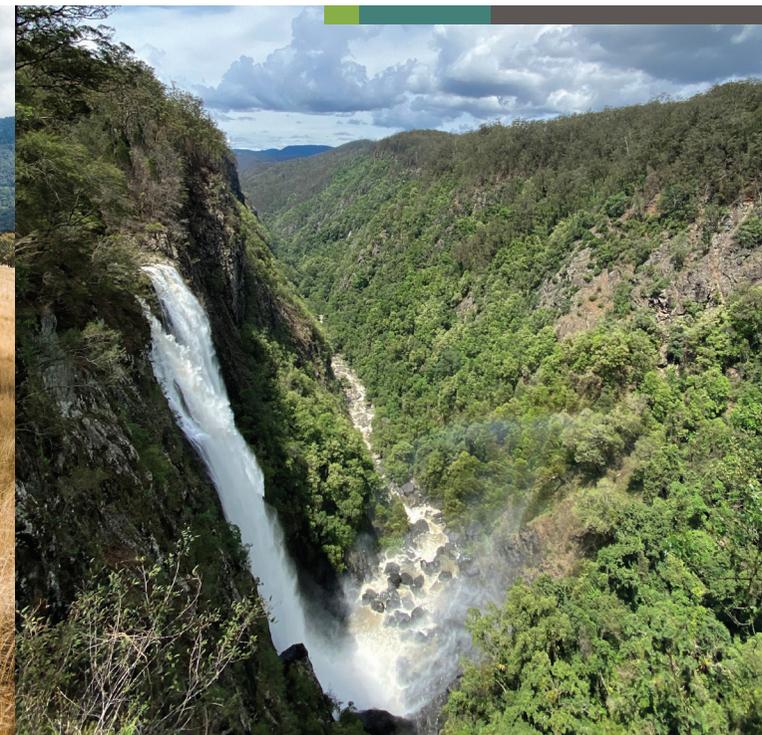
Proudly led by Hunter Joint Organisation on behalf of the Councils of the Hunter Region

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

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.

MOUNTAIN HIGHS ITINERARY

DUNGOG • BARRINGTON TOPS • UPPER HUNTER





DAY 1

Let's start at the foothills of Barrington Tops and slowly make our way up. The Barrington Coast, 2 hours north of Newcastle is home to some beautiful countryside. Couple this with some impressive natural elements and you have a place worth getting some dirt on the car for.

1 COUNTRY CAFES

Who would have thought the little heritage town of Wingham, a 20 minute drive inland from Taree, would be home to an emerging café culture? Bent on Food and The Garden Grub Café on Isabella Street in Wingham have upped the game with their focus on quality local food. The food on your plate has probably been grown by the person sitting next to you.

2 NATURE RESERVE

Wind through the boardwalk of the spectacular Wingham Nature Reserve on the banks of the Manning River. The towering Moreton Bay fig trees are a sight to behold. This walk is a beauty and is also wheelchair accessible.

3 MEET THE FARMER'S WIFE

You've had a walk. Now let's get a drink. The Farmer's Wife Distillery in Allworth opened its Distillery Door in March 2023 and oh boy is it impressive. Kylie (The Farmer's Wife) wanted somewhere for guests to not just experience her award-winning gin but also the beautiful region she calls home. You can book a feast for all the senses with gin tasting, teamed with a cheese platter, whilst experiencing the smell and texture of the botanicals as you learn about the gin distillery process. Cheers to that.

4 COUNTRY PUBS

If it's something this part of the country does well, it's pubs. The Akubras worn in these pubs aren't for fashion. The Australian Hotel in Wingham, Krumbach Hotel, Central Hotel Stroud, and The Nabiac Hotel all offer that quintessential country pub vibe with meals so big they'd feed a family of five. Mixed grill anyone?

5 WATERFALLS

The hills around the Manning Valley are home to some seriously impressive waterfalls. Ellenborough Falls is one of them. Standing 200m tall, it's the tallest single drop waterfall in NSW. There are 4 waterfall viewing areas all of varying difficulty and accessibility. The most accessible is right next to the carpark. The view from the bottom of the falls is spectacular, but the climb back up the 641 stairs isn't! Once you've tackled the walks to view the falls, visit the Falls Kiosk. Barb and her team cook everything from scratch in the small, powerless kiosk. Her scones are the first to sell out every day. Get them if you can.

MORE IDEAS...

- Discover Worimi tree carvings on a climb of Bulahdelah Mountain
- Drive the Coorabakh National Park loop
- Spot a koala in Tinonee

DAY 2

Get ready to embark on an epic journey to a World Heritage Listed destination. Barrington Tops is known for its pristine wilderness, Gondwana rainforests, and jaw-dropping vistas. Before we climb to the tallest peak on the map, let's first discover the gateway town. Gloucester, a 90 minute drive north of Newcastle, is forging a name for itself as a country escape for city folk, with its rolling green hills and boutique farm stays.

1 MOUNTAIN BIKING

You would be forgiven for thinking you've arrived in Derby Tasmania with all the bikes loaded on car roofs. The reason? The newly constructed Barrington Bike Park. But don't worry, you won't need your own bike. Owner Brian has just the bike for you. He'll even run you to the top of the hill for your 370m gravity fuelled run to the bottom. Located nearby, the Dungog Common Reserve boasts a variety of trails suitable for riders of all levels. With its smooth and flowing tracks, the park has gained a loyal following among mountain bike enthusiasts. However, it's worth noting that you'll need to bring your own bike or rent one to enjoy the park's many offerings.

2 THE STEPS

There is some serious fun to be had in the rivers around Gloucester. The Steps Campground offer groups the chance to river sled down the Barrington River on purpose-built inflatables available for use at the campsite. White water action at its best.

3 GOLD AND GHOSTS AT COPELAND

Copeland Tops is a 15 minute drive west of Gloucester. While the gold rush may be over, you can take a tour to one of the mines that thousands of gold-hungry miners toiled at for the chance of riches. Some say the ghosts of those that didn't come out of the mine are still there today. Meet one of them on a Mountain Maid Mine Ghost Tour which are run most weekends. Pre-booking is essential. There's no such thing as ghosts. Right?

4 GUIDED BUSH WALKS

Mt Royal (an easy 40 minute drive from Singleton) is best explored on foot. Discover the hidden treasures of Mount Royal National Park on a guided bushwalk with expert, eco certified guides leading the way. You'll explore stunning natural landscapes, spot local wildlife, and learn about the unique ecology of this beautiful region. When it's time to rest those weary legs, Callicoma Hill Eco Cabins at the base of Mt Royal should do the trick.

5 BARRINGTON IS TOPS

It's time to head up the mountain. What mountain? Barrington Tops. With over 150km of thrilling trails, camping spots, and cascading waterfalls, there's no wonder they call it a wilderness wonderland. Our tip? Gloucester Tops precinct is the perfect blend of all Barrington Tops has to offer – waterfalls, mossy Gondwana tropical rainforest, wildlife, and it even snows in winter.

- Bike Tour of Barrington Tops and Gloucester with Aussie Bike or Hike
- Riverfront luxury eco glamping at Amaroo Escape
- Farm tour with Hillview Herb Farm

DAY 3

We've reached the other side of the mountain. Welcome to the Horse Capital of Australia - Scone, and its neighbouring gem - Murrurundi! So, saddle up and get ready to explore the breathtaking landscapes, experience the warmth of small country towns, and indulge in the local delights.

1 ROMA ORCHARD

At the western foothills of the Barrington Tops sits Roma Orchard. They have been supplying apples to the Upper Hunter for over 100 years. Open days are scheduled throughout the year where you can have a farm tour and pick your own apples. They also have boutique and group accommodation on the property in case you drink too much of their delicious Apple Truck Cider.

2 HORSES

This is horse country and home to future and past champions of the turf. Upper Hunter Valley Tours offers thoroughbred stud tours where you can get a behind the scenes look at some of the world's best horse studs. Or travel to Scone in May for the annual Horse Festival featuring the Scone Cup, one of the biggest country race meets in NSW.

3 WINERIES

Jerrys Plains, Denman and Merriwa are the wine growing regions of the Upper Hunter. Hollydene Estate cellar doors are open daily with Vines Restaurant offering delicious food paired with gorgeous views of the vineyard. At Denman try Two Rivers Wines. If you're seeking a more personal and intimate wine tasting experience, look no further than these small, family-run vineyards.

4 BURNING MOUNTAIN

No ordinary mountain walk. Burning Mountain sits just north of Scone, a two hour drive north-west of Newcastle. First thought to be an active volcano, the billowing smoke and ash that escapes at the summit is actually a combusting coal seam. Get your walking shoes on for the 2km up the mountain and feel the warmth beneath your feet. If you're feeling hungry after, head to the Durham Hotel, Wingen.

5 MURRURUNDI

Discover the preserved heritage buildings and immerse yourself in the country charm of Murrurundi. It's also home to a vibrant arts community. Swing into Darcy and the Fox gallery where stunning portraits of local characters adorn the walls.

- Guided gin tasting experience Magpie Distilling, Murrurundi
- Swim in the washpools at Towarri National Park
- Spend a day on the lake at Lake Glenbawn