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# Escape to the coast less travelled

Is this the 'Best kept secret' on Australia's east coast? Certainly on the most populous stretch of holiday playgrounds stretching up the Pacific Highway, the Clarence Coast is something of a hidden gem.

It's the place to come and explore the longest stretch of completely undeveloped coastline between Sydney and Brisbane. It's where the tall timbers of northern NSW meet the sparkling Pacific, with thousands of acres of national parks and beaches that can be enjoyed all year round.

The busy Pacific Highway passes through, but the Clarence coastal retreats are located well off the main road. Perhaps that's why they've maintained a special charm and largely stayed off the tourist radar - treasured by locals and the lucky few visitors who come back year after year.

## Best of the Best

If it's been a while since you spent time in the bush, you can't go past Yuraygir National Park. Deserted beaches, remote campgrounds, and stunning coastal lookouts, it's the park that lays claim to the longest stretch of pristine coastline in NSW. The four-day Yuraygir Coastal Walk allows you to fully experience the park.

For those with limited time there are shorter half and single day walks.

Enveloped by the national park, the seaside towns of Minnie Water and Wooli are renowned for their beautiful simplicity. The sort of places where you can throw a line in the river and let life's cares melt away.

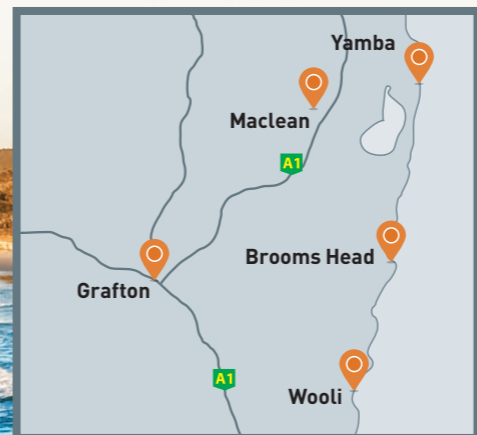
Forty minutes drive inland from Wooli is the Clarence "capital" of Grafton, a leafy city that was once a bustling river port. Famous for its towering Jacarandas planted in the 1870s, the Cathedral city is home to an interesting emerging arts and cultural scene.

Clarence



## Top 5 things to do in The Clarence

- 1 Explore the Yuraygir National Park
- 2 Surf the break at Angourie Point
- 3 Take the Old Glenn Innes Scenic Drive
- 4 Wine and dine along the Clarence
- 5 Dive the North Solitary Islands

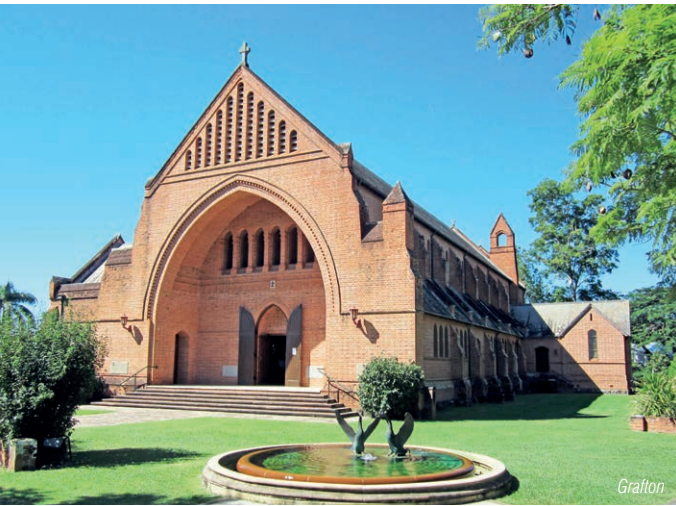


## Rich History

Cedar-getters were the first Europeans to make their way up what had previously been known as the Breimba or Berrinbah River. The local indigenous people were said to have lived in some of the most sophisticated settlements ever encountered by the early British explorers and colonists. The abundant rainfall and rich soils of the valley saw agriculture boom, the products easily shipped from bustling river ports. Grafton grew quickly to become one of NSW's first regional cities in 1885. Notable heritage buildings include the Old National Bank and Anglican Cathedral. The city is also famous for its double-decker road and rail bridge over the Clarence, designed by Sydney Harbour Bridge's creator JJ Bradfield in the 1930s. Schaeffer House, home of the Clarence

River Historical Society, is the place to learn more about this rich history. Volunteers are on hand to share local knowledge and show you through exhibits including beautiful displays of memorabilia, glassware, furniture and more than 150 pieces of Wedgewood china. If the aim of your holiday is to really just relax and get away from it all, there are plenty of options. Getting really back to basics, campgrounds at Lilydale, Copmanhurst and Buccarumbi are popular with campers. All three within an hours drive from Grafton and have basic facilities. The dirt road to Buccarumbi can also be a bit rough at times, however the scenery is worth the effort.

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Gralton



Iluka Bluff

### Top 5 national parks

- 1 Yuraygir National Park
- 2 Bundjalung National Park
- 3 World Heritage listed Iluka Nature Reserve
- 4 Nymboi-Binderay National Park
- 5 Washpool & Gibraltar National Parks

## New South Scotland

After spending time in the bush you can head back to the coast, follow the bonny banks of the Clarence River and find yourself within a wee bit of Scotland.

Macleon is known as “The Scottish town in Australia”. Proud of its Scottish roots, the picturesque river town hosts a highland gathering every Easter, bringing together clans from all over the country. Now in its 111th year, the event features hammer throwing, caber tossing, and bagpipes galore.

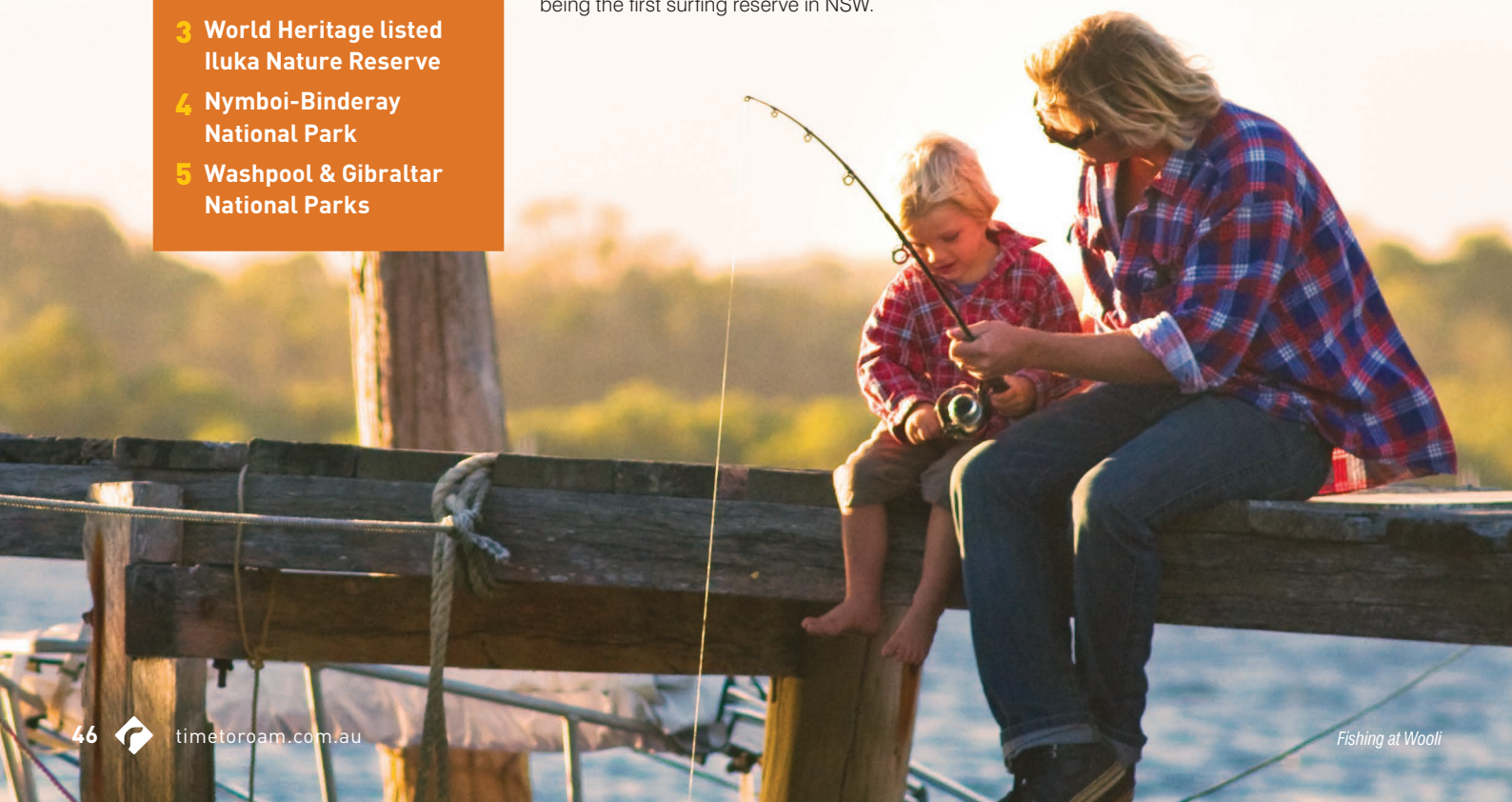
It’s an easy drive from Macleon to some of the best coastal hideaways. At Brooms Head you can snorkel in the tidal lagoon and view whales on their annual migration. The surf town of Angourie lays claim to being the first surfing reserve in NSW.

Yamba and Iluka, twin towns at either side of the Clarence River heads are the region’s best-known holiday resorts. There’s more great surf, friendly locals and a range of bars, cafes and restaurants. Take the ferry for a relaxing 45-minute cruise between the two.

Fishing has always been one of the main Clarence drawcards, with a choice of rock, beach, estuary and deep-sea spots. Boats are readily available for hire. If you want to explore at a relaxed pace, there’s no better way than by kayak. Iluka Bluff Lookout, Yamba Lighthouse, and Yamba Museum are all worth a sightseeing stop. 📍

### Clarence Tourism

02 6642 4677 | [clarencetourism.com](http://clarencetourism.com)



Fishing at Wooli

# Clarence's coming of age

The fertile Clarence Valley has always produced an abundance of great food, but it's only recently that local eateries have truly started embracing the 'gate to plate' food philosophy.



Pictured (left) inside and out of Botero Espresso, Maclean



Irons and Craig owners David Barnier and Anthony Perring

The community has been key to the change, with a dynamic group of people leading the charge to build a better food culture in the region. Annual "Gate to Plate" and "Feast in the Field" events, held in January and April respectively. Both highlight the benefits of choosing locally grown fresh produce in keeping with the seasons, and remind people about where our food really comes from.

Yamba prawns and Wooli oysters have long been celebrated, but there's more to the region than these delicacies alone. Simply head to the Yamba Farmers' Market on a Wednesday or the Grafton Growers and Farmers Market on a Thursday and you'll find a plethora of organic fruits, vegetables, meats, homemade sauces and more.

Local eateries such as the very trendy Irons and Craig in Yamba, the riverside Austin & Co. in Grafton, and the delightful Caperberry Café in Yamba are a few of the great eateries where you can experience the gate to plate philosophy in practice.

### Where to dine:

**Irons & Craig**  
29 Coldstream Street, Yamba  
[ironsandcraig.com](http://ironsandcraig.com)  
02 6646 1258

**Café Leche**  
27 Coldstream Street, Yamba  
[facebook.com/LecheCafe](https://facebook.com/LecheCafe)  
0423 263 503

**Austin & Co.**  
1 Duke Street, Grafton  
[austinandco.com.au](http://austinandco.com.au)  
02 6643 1010

**The Laneway Café**  
3/63 Charles Street, Iluka  
02 6645 7022

**Botero Espresso**  
275 River Street, Maclean  
[espressobotero.com.au](http://espressobotero.com.au)  
02 6645 5541



## Spicy Tequila Prawn Cocktail

Recipe provided by Irons and Craig Café – Yamba

This is a real prawn cocktail. Serve over ice in a snazzy cocktail glass for real dinner party impact. The prawns will 'cook' in the tequila and citrus juice mix. This recipe is a spin on the traditional Peruvian dish, ceviche where thinly sliced raw fish is cured in lime juice with other flavourings. Serve well chilled.

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 200g green prawns, peeled and deveined
- Thumb-sized piece of ginger
- 1 red chilli (optional)
- 1 spring onion
- 1 cup (250ml) good quality tequila
- Juice and zest of 2 limes
- Juice of 1 orange
- Pinch of salt

3. Combine tequila, lime juice and orange juice and add to the bowl.
4. Add the green prawns and a pinch of salt and toss gently in the marinade to coat well.
5. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and set aside in the fridge for at least 30 minutes until well chilled. (No longer than 60 minutes).

### Serving Suggestion:

Chill some cocktail glasses and half fill with ice to serve. Top with prawns and plenty of the tequila mix. If you're not a huge fan of tequila you can substitute with vodka, gin or a white rum such as Bacardi.

### Method

1. Peel and finely julienne the ginger and set aside in a bowl.
2. Chop chilli and spring onion and add to the ginger.

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# Camping Country Style

**With nine Golden Guitars and two ARIA Awards under their belts, The McClymonts are one of the most popular country music groups in Australia. Although life in the spotlight is fun, the sisters do like to escape from it all now and then. For Mollie, Sam and Brooke, camping has always been a part of their lives.**

The talented trio originally from Grafton has been on tour recently promoting their fourth album, "Here's To You and I".

We caught up with Mollie to chat about the McClymont's past and present camping habits and their favourite escapes.

**Where did you go for camping holidays when you were young?**

We used to always go to a beautiful little town called Iluka, 40 minutes north of our hometown of Grafton. It was always about family time, it's where mum and dad used to take us. I don't think we ever actually travelled with anyone else. Dad used to work a lot so it was a convenient spot to get away to. Iluka was, and still is, very tiny, so

there were no fancy restaurants - it was family barbecues every night. We used to go swimming at the beach, ghost crabbing with dad at night, and generally just hang out. Camping trips were a chance for our family to just spend time together.

**What was your favourite place to camp and why?**

Iluka was always a family favourite. It has the beach on one side and the river on the other. Up on Iluka Bluff the views are absolutely gorgeous. Nymboida was another amazing place to go, but we only went there once. The Nymboida River is stunning; we rented tubes and just floated down the rapids. It rained the whole time we were there, but there was so much to see and do, we didn't care about the weather.

**Did you camp in a caravan or a tent?**

We did both, with every holiday came a different adventure. When I was younger I used to love staying in a tent because it was an adventure, but the older I got the less attractive the tent became. I probably preferred the caravan later on, but my favourite memories were definitely staying in the tent. There was something really fun about having to do everything from scratch, like set up the kitchen.

**Tell us about some of your favourite camping memories.**

Every camping memory involves fishing with dad. I love that we would sit there for hours and just chat and on the odd occasion reel in a fish. He taught me how to bait up, cast



those luxuries. Boys can rough it, girls not so much. The camping trip was still a blast though; it's an incredibly beautiful spot.

**Do you have any camping tips? Must do's and don'ts?**

If you're tenting it, you need to always pack a fan. It can get so hot in a tent! Pack insect repellent too, that's essential. Swim lots, fish lots, relax and just enjoy the moment! Make sure you're not camping on a low-lying area near a creek or lake, don't camp in an area where you're likely to get flooded in. It seems to always happen when you're out camping, and there's nothing worse than a wet tent.

**Do you still like to get out and explore Australia? If so, where's on your camping hit list?**

Yes, but I now go camping with my fiancé. Lake Conjola (on the NSW South Coast) is a favourite of ours. It's right on the lake, there seems to always be a lot of fish. We throw out the rod and constantly catch. It's great because you cook up what you've caught on the barbie. It's really quiet, really peaceful. We have our own tent and a cool little set up, all the equipment we could possibly need, but we do take his parents caravan away sometimes. It's more like camping in style

these days, less roughing it. I would love to do the Great Ocean Road and even the Top End.

**Who's idea was it to feature the caravan on the artwork for your latest album Here's To You & I?**

We talked with our manager about what would be something different and cool for the cover, and he found a picture of a vintage Airstream Caravan. He showed it to us and we all thought, "That's the coolest thing we've ever seen". The one featured on our album cover was just a shell, but I went to the Berry Show recently and saw the interior of one, and I now want my own. They're amazing.

**What are the must sees in the Clarence Valley?**

Maclean, Yamba, and Wooli are some of my favourite places. They were where you would go for the weekend if you were from Grafton. The Clarence River is absolutely stunning, there's so much to do. Wooli is where we'd always go on fishing trips, and I was there a lot because I had a lot of friends who lived there. Maclean has really cute shops and cool heritage. The beaches in Yamba are stunning also. ♦

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