



Shake off the daily grind and get back to nature on the NSW North Coast.

HIT REFRESH & RECONNECT

There's nowhere like New South Wales to renew your world view and rediscover what matters most. Here, locals and visitors alike tell how their favourite travel memories have been a turning point – and refreshed their zest for life.

HIT REFRESH ON... THE NORTH COAST



EUGENE TAN
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Founder and photographer of Aquabumps

Turning point: MID NORTH COAST
AND BEYOND

There's something classically Australian about a NSW North Coast family holiday – it's all about going outside to play. You can swim, surf, cycle and snorkel from sun-up to sunset, and the feeling of sand under foot is instantly calming.

My wife grew up on the North Coast and on my first visit, I was blown away by its sunsets – it was like seeing a whole new spectrum of colour. Now, we holiday along the coast with our boys as often as we can, and whichever town we're in, we make sure we go to the beach for sunset every day. There's a magic to it that brings us closer.

Newcastle is a favourite stop on our road trips. We love how it has a laidback surf-town vibe, yet all the highlights of a world-class city – lively art and music scenes, a buzzing entertainment precinct, excellent local produce and family-friendly attractions like the Newcastle Museum and TreeTops Adventure Park. Our boys also love its skateparks, including those at Bar Beach and Charlestown, and on the drive north we like to stop in at Bulahdelah's new skatepark, too.

We always pack our surfboards and make the most of the clean breaks at Merewether and Newcastle beaches, and, in between surfs, a dip at Newcastle Ocean Baths or the Bogey Hole is a great way to relax.

We're always finding new favourites, but keep coming back to Myall Lakes National Park. There's more than 40 kilometres of beaches, so you'll usually have one to yourself, and you can hire kayaks to explore the lakes. And we always return to Blueys Beach, near Forster, because the surf is unbeatable!

As you continue north you'll keep finding wild places to explore. Get up close to whales and koalas around Port Macquarie, enjoy fantastic scuba diving at Seal Rocks, or detour inland and hike the ancient rainforests at Barrington Tops. And all along the way, whether you're visiting beachside villages or driving inland via Taree, the locals are super friendly – that's the effect of this area's nature. Being between the bush and sea brings out the best in all of us.

HIT REFRESH IN...
THE OUTBACK



AMY SHARK
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Singer-songwriter
Turning point:
THE DARLING RIVER RUN

A Darling River Run road trip only takes about four days, but the inspiration you collect along the way stays with you long afterwards. The 940-kilometre route follows the Darling River through the heart of outback NSW, from Walgett to Wentworth via Tilpa and Wilcannia. Add a detour to Broken Hill (an hour's drive west of Menindee). Here, at the Living Desert and Sculptures outdoor museum, 12 sandstone artworks are surrounded by bright red dirt plains and big blue skies. As my friend Ash London and I took it all in, we found ourselves holding our breath as the desert's silence washed over us.

In Kinchega National Park, nature's vibrant palette comes to life on a Discovery bush tucker walk with Barkindji Aboriginal elders, whose stories share how the land has been an inspiration and life source for thousands of years.

Big sky country fires up the creativity of local artists, too. At Silvertown's many galleries, characters like Helen Murray and John Dynon are as colourful as the landscapes that inspire their artwork, while other locals let their imaginations run wild while



Keep an eye out for local wildlife in outback NSW near Broken Hill.

spinning yarns in iconic outback pubs like the Tilpa Hotel.

And, exploring the outback's vast spaces on a camel tour gives you an energising new perspective – you feel a deeper sense of connection to the land and to the people you share it with.

HIT REFRESH IN...
THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS



SAM BLOOM
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Author, keynote speaker and World Para Surfing Champion
Turning point: MOUNT KOSCIUSZKO

Growing up, I was always outside, exploring the bush. Now I have three boys of my own, I love sharing my passion for nature and travel with them, and can't wait to take them to the Snowy Mountains.

My first visit was in 2018, when I summited Mount Kosciuszko with my friends from SpinalCure Australia. As I pushed my wheelchair along the 18.6km return trail from Charlotte Pass to the top, the scenery was constantly changing with alpine lakes, historic huts and idyllic riverside picnic spots – the beautiful anticipation of what might pop up next really kept me going.

Resting at the top of Rawson Pass, my muscles tingling, I felt awe and gratitude as I breathed in the view of rocky crags and rolling hills stretching as far as I could see. There's a feeling of space in the Snowies that centres you; the vastness is invigorating. And while Mount Kosciuszko is Australia's highest mountain at 2228m tall, its wide trails and groomed mountain-bike tracks make it accessible to everyone – and conquering it is something I'll never forget.

Wherever you go in the high country, you can have an outdoor adventure all year round (think: horse-riding, abseiling, fishing and snow sports), and when you've worked up a thirst there's a watering hole for every taste. Head to the Tumbarumba region for award-winning sparkling wines, pinot noir and chardonnay; sip craft beers in Jindabyne at Kosciuszko Brewing Company, or pop over to Crackenback's Wildbrumby Distillery for gin, vodka and schnapps made from local fruit. Or, for a family-friendly feast between adventure activities, grab a bite in Thredbo, where more than 30 eateries offer everything from casual pub grub to fine dining – and all things delicious in between.

HIT REFRESH IN...
THE HUNTER REGION



RICK STEIN
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Chef, restaurateur and TV presenter
Turning point: PORT STEPHENS

Whether you're floating on your back in crystal-clear water, tasting the local produce or hitting the winery trail, the Hunter region is made for making memories with family and friends. Especially at Port Stephens, where nature takes centre stage.

Shoal Bay is one of my favourite spots to cool off, with Tomaree Head perched on the eastern end of its white sandy beach. Take the 2.2 kilometre return trail to the summit for stunning

views over the Port Stephens area, including dunes of the Worimi Conservation Lands, rainforests and the many islands off the coast. Don't forget to look out for whales between May and November. For a closer encounter with local wildlife, take a tour with Dolphin Swim Australia or visit the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary.

Soldiers Point has a special kind of magnetism – it's both soothing and rejuvenating thanks to its beautiful outlook, calm waters and laidback marina. Watching the sun go down from either Sunset Beach, or while sharing a plate of Bannisters' Nelson Bay king prawns, is the perfect way to reflect on a day well spent on this picturesque peninsula.

When you can tear yourself away from the ocean, head to Nelson Bay for takeaway bites at Two Bobs Bakery or the Homegrown Markets, then drive out to the Hunter Valley, where there's more than 150 cellar doors to explore, and the shiraz and semillon are as memorable as their makers.



This sea cave at Murrays Beach is one of the hidden treasures of the Shoalhaven.

HIT REFRESH IN...
THE SOUTH COAST



COLLETTE DINNIGAN
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Fashion and interiors designer
Turning point: THE SHOALHAVEN AND BEYOND

From the Shoalhaven to Eurobodalla and beyond, the South Coast is a wonderful place to rejuvenate. It's where the native bush and farmlands meet the sea, and these diverse landscapes are so inspiring. It's why I moved to the Shoalhaven 15 years ago, and I'm still finding great places to share with friends and family.

The waters here are made for adventure – around Ulladulla and Mollymook, surfers love Rennies, Golf Course Reef and Conjola beaches for their clean breaks, while beginners learn from the best at Pam Burridge Surf Schools. Families enjoy spending a day at Narrawallee Beach because there's also a calm tidal estuary to

explore, so you can take out kayaks or stand-up paddle boards.

As the coastline meanders south for hundreds of kilometres to the Victorian border, there's also lakes like Tabourie, Wallaga and Merimbula to experience on a family road trip. Plus, there's idyllic coastal campgrounds to call home, especially at Mystery Bay, Mimosa Rocks and Ben Boyd. Along the way, nature's colours fill you with inspiration, from the green eucalyptus forests to the white sandy beaches, turquoise seas and peachy gold sunsets.

This wild playground stretches beyond the beach too, and you can learn about Aboriginal culture on sacred summit hikes of Didthul (Pigeon House Mountain) and Gulaga (Mount Dromedary), or see wild dolphins, whales, sea lions and penguins on ocean tours in Narooma, Montague Island and Bermagui.

The South Coast is oyster country and it's always memorable to visit a local farm, or eat your fill at the Narooma Oyster Festival. And you'll feast on excellent organic, ethically farmed local produce all across the region, particularly in the innovative eateries across Milton and Moruya. It's just another way the South Coast nourishes your soul and helps you reclaim your sense of freedom.



Experience unmatched whale watching at Port Stephens.



Drink in the sweeping scenic views across Kosciuszko National Park.

HIT REFRESH IN... COUNTRY NSW



BROOKE BONEY
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Entertainment reporter, *Today*

Turning point: MUSWELLBROOK
TO BREWARRINA ROAD TRIP

Last summer I had one of the most satisfying journeys ever – a solo road trip from Sydney, through Country NSW, to see a friend in Brewarrina. It gave me a deep connection to the bush and its people – a feeling that's stayed with me.

I'm a Gamilaroi woman and I grew up on Wanaruah Country, in Muswellbrook – so I made an overnight detour there to see family before continuing along the New England Highway.

There's so much to see as you pass through quaint villages like Scone, Aberdeen, Willow Tree and Quirindi, before you jump onto the Kamilaroi Highway near Gunnedah. Driving west towards Brewarrina, rolling hills give way

to wide open plains, the soil becomes a deep red and the air feels drier. As you take it all in, a sense of peace and contemplation comes over you.

In summer the heat is searing and it's something everyone should experience – because there's nothing more Australian than jumping into a beautiful waterhole to cool off, and Brewarrina's Barwon River is a special place to do just that. Weaving through the heart of Ngemba Country, these waters are home to an ancient wonder: the Brewarrina Fish Traps, which were designed to catch fish sustainably more than 40,000 years ago. It's also where the Ngemba and Gamilaroi people came together to trade, share ceremonies and build relationships. As my Ngemba friend and I sat side-by-side at the river's edge, we reflected on how our ancestors did the same thing – and it made my connection to my Gamilaroi culture, and this land, feel almost spiritual.

I can't wait to get back out there, exploring big landscapes and sacred places, to feel that awe. Next on my road-trip list: Mungo National Park, where the Paakantji, Ngyiampaa and Mutthi Mutthi people have lived and loved for more than 50,000 years.



Look out over the the Table Top Range at the Eastern Hill Rotary Lookout, Albury.



Hit the open road in country NSW.

HIT REFRESH IN... THE MURRAY RIVER



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Captain of *The Society Inc* and designer

Turning point: ALBURY WODONGA

The mighty Murray River shapes both the landscape and its people. Along its 2500-kilometre course there are so many stunning contrasts to discover – from natural beauty that's both understated and extravagant, to the quaint charm of 19th-century architecture, the living history of the Wiradjuri people, and the effortless creativity of local art and cuisine. It all evokes a sense of calm possibility – a complex feeling that has me daydreaming about my next visit.

Walking in nature is always energising and the twin towns' beauty

surprises at every turn. On the riverside Yindyamarra Sculpture Walk you'll see 11 contemporary sculptures created by local First Nations artists, as well as the prolific birdlife of the Wonga Wetlands. Take a sunrise stroll to the Eastern Hill Rotary Lookout for misty views of the Table Top Range and the Murray River floodplains – as the sky glows every shade of pink, you feel like nature's putting on a private show just for you.

Though the combination of riverside scenery and colonial buildings creates a relaxed vibe, Albury's eateries are pulsing. Book a table at Hapi for pared-back Asian street food, Norma for local wine and Italian bites, or feast on classic cafe fare at The Proprietor.

You can see how the Murray has influenced creativity in the local arts and crafts at the Kiewa Street Market and in various galleries, including the Murray Art Museum Albury – one of the most visited art venues outside of Sydney thanks to its innovative exhibitions and acclaimed First Nations collection. The museum's store is a treasure trove for art lovers, but the ultimate Murray River souvenir is the feeling of inspiration it gives you.

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