

LEFT TO RIGHT Ulladulla is surrounded by ocean views; While away the days exploring rockpools and crowd-free beaches



AN UNDERRATED STAR

Brimming with small-town charm, Ulladulla is a South Coast NSW gem that perfectly balances indulgence and adventure

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Ulladulla in New South Wales is not a usual contender on most people's top holiday destinations list. It is mostly overlooked for the swankier internationally renowned surf-centred neighbour Mollymook or the nearby quaint little town of Milton. Maybe you've driven through Ulladulla's unimpressive looking main shopping strip and thought, "Ugh, keep driving!"

But Ulladulla should be everyone's go-to base to stay while exploring the under-hyped Shoalhaven area and its 100+ beaches. Behind first impressions is a small town with a big sense of community on the verge of change. The sea changers are here, bringing with them some innovative eating establishments.

But they are not yet here in droves, and the spectacular coastline, award-winning hospitality venues and varied bushwalks are topped only by the fact that there's only one set of traffic lights in Ulladulla – a fact that says so much about the pace and quality of life here.

A TRAVELLER'S DREAM

As caravan travellers know, we need more than nice restaurants and beaches to make a town our base. We need an elusive grail of camping travel: a conveniently located bush-feel caravan park, preferably with sea views. The little town of Ulladulla provides this, with Holiday Haven Ulladulla ticking all the boxes. The caravan park's location is only

a 10-minute walk from the main shopping strip with two supermarkets, restaurants, cafes, and Ulladulla harbour. There's even an inviting sea pool which is directly accessible by a (steep!) flight of steps from the campground itself. The size and layout of the park mean you can always find a relatively private powered or unpowered site with sea views, even during peak holiday periods.

Be sure not to miss Ulladulla Holiday Haven's biggest little-known drawcard, the secluded little cove Lobster Jack's, which is only accessible by a steep flight of steps at the far end of the park. Trust me, it's worth the exercise to relax alone on your own pristine beach in the middle of school holidays.

“[The Bogey Hole] is one of those magical places you’ll remember for years to come”



You’ll love Holiday Haven even more if you’ve got kids in tow. The park is decked out for fun, and you’ll find your family spending days here without leaving the place. There’s a splash pad, pool, two playgrounds, a jumping pillow, mini golf, and bowling. If you do decide to venture out with the family, the enormous shorefront adventure playground in Mollymook will keep the kids busy while mum and dad take turns going for a surf. Just south of Ulladulla, Burrill Lake and Dolphin Point are great spots for playing in the inlet, while Moonah Creek near Huskisson has the perfect perpetually bath-warm shallow water for the littlies.

Kids or no kids, the Bogey Hole is a must see when visiting the area. This large blue-green sheltered rockpool in Mollymook is easily accessible and one of those magical places you’ll remember for years to come. Bombie Beach in Ulladulla, another local secret,



is great for either a swim or surf and less crowded than other more popular beaches nearby. For your four-legged friends, Colliers Beach is pet friendly at all times of the day and year.

OTHER EXPLORATIONS

Need a break from the sun and sand? Only a seven minute drive inland you’ll find Milton, with enough boutiques and vintage fashion to break the budget. From the unique homewares, clothing, and gifts, it’s obvious that Clear Spaces is owned by an interior designer, while the sequins, sparkles, feathers, and fur drew me into Miss Moss from across the street. This is where you can buy your outfit for New Year’s Eve this year, next year, or for any other party that requires any type of dancing.

Just across the road, don’t miss Jipsi Cartel for well-priced boho fashion established through owner Rachel Legan’s passion for designing styles that instil a sense of confidence and freedom in women. Rachel’s roots stem from her family heritage of ethnic dressmaking and love of culture and vintage fabrics.

“I love vintage, bohemian, and retro – shuffling through endless racks at op shops is definitely a favourite pastime. It’s boho beach chic meets tribal gypsy with a touch of vintage charm, expressed through flowing designs with a practical edge,” she said.

It’s also ‘Spell and the Gypsy Collective’ without the price tag – a wonderful find!

Back in Ulladulla, Dwell is a great spot to grab some ethically sourced and locally made gifts for those back home.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Rock climb on the beach until your heart is content; Ulladulla has no shortage of unspoilt coastline (Image: Somethings Wild); The best kind of bath



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE You'll find peace and quiet here even in peak holiday periods; Ulladulla has plenty of higher; This bakery keeps things traditional yet modern; A delectable display of cakes; The almond and quinoa pancakes at Treehouse Cafe; Our verdict? Ulladulla's cafes are a force to be reckoned with



A BITE TO EAT

While visiting shops, restaurants, and cafes in Ulladulla you'll automatically become entwined in conversations with the locals, and the more we chatted, the more we noticed a trend – new small businesses run by families who'd made the move from Sydney and Melbourne. Dinner and cocktails at The Ruse overlooking Ulladulla Harbour was a highlight, and we chatted to owner Ben (originally from Sydney) who told us they were able to survive a challenging two years of bushfires and COVID-19, thanks to the unwavering support of the locals. The Central

American-inspired cuisine and authentic dessert and cocktail menu are spot on, but we love this place for being uber cool yet still inclusive. Yes, the staff are young and trendy, yes, the music is smooth and electronic, yes, the décor is oh so chic – but there is still an affordable kids menu and staff who are genuinely friendly and willing to tell you their life stories while the place is jumping around them.

For breakfast or lunch, the locals head to Treehouse Cafe, a cute old weatherboard cottage under some big old brushbox trees. Owner Kylie is passionate about sourcing produce locally and running an environmentally friendly business – no mean feat in a town like this. They don't stock plastic bags or plastic bottles in the drinks fridge and compost and recycle whenever possible. I loved the vegan focus of the food and the delectable selection of desserts. The vegan chocolate mud cake (\$7.50) was so rich it was finished off for brekkie the next day, and the almond and quinoa cinnamon spiced pancakes with seasonal fresh fruit, candied walnut crumb, maple, and a choice of either whipped coconut cream or yoghurt (\$18.50) demonstrate that a meal can be healthy, tasty, and animal friendly if you please.

If you absolutely must hop in the car during your stay, make sure it's at wine o'clock and aim





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Who could resist a spread like this?; Lunch with a serene view; For something a bit more fancy, head to Cupitt's Estate

fast
FACTS

POPULAR WITH THE LOCALS

- Brekkie at Native cafe in Ulladulla for great harbour views.
- Brunch at Milk Haus in Milton.
- A coffee at Hello Huey coffee van in Narrawalle.
- The butter chicken pie, then the apple and rhubarb pie at Hayden's pies in Ulladulla (they've even published their own cookbook!).
- Japanese at Tanoshi in Ulladulla.
- Dinner at Gwylo in Mollymook.

STAY

Holiday Haven
 • 14 Did-Dell St, Ulladulla
 • Ph: (02) 4429 8982
 • W: holidayhaven.com.au/ulladulla/ulladulla-headland

“If you absolutely must hop in the car during your stay, make sure it’s wine o’clock”



for Cupitt's Estate (a mere seven minutes away). The winery started out small in 2007 and is now a major tourist destination for the South Coast, encompassing a large-scale restaurant, cellar door, fromagerie, microbrewery, and a sustainable farm and kitchen garden. French and Italian educated award-winning winemaker Rosie formed the foundation of what the winery is today, and she is now the Head Cheesemaker! Sit out in the sun on the lawn overlooking the rolling green hills and let the lovely staff serve you something from their extensive drinks list to go with your cheese plate (\$23) and salt and pepper Lake's Entrance squid with pickled peppers and preserved lemon mayo (\$23). If you're after a less casual vibe they also offer a three-course menu in their award-winning restaurant with the same beautiful view.



“If any kind of physical activity is your thing, the Shoalhaven coast will be a mecca”

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN SUP, kayak, canoe, swim, or surf, the choice is yours; Bomble Beach is the locals' spot of choice

GETTING ACTIVE

After too much of the good things in life, it's about time to start moving and, if any kind of physical activity is your thing, the Shoalhaven coast will be your mecca. SUP, kayak, or canoe the rivers and lakes at Narrawalee Inlet that will take you through a peaceful lagoon of mangroves. Burrill Lakes is also a top stop for boating of all kinds through a beautiful estuary into the turquoise waters of the lake.

If land is more your thing, Florence Head bushwalk is a 6km return along the cliff's edge with loads of vegetation changes and rewarding views of Ulladulla and Pigeon House Mountain. Just a little longer, Mt Bushwalker is a 7km return walk through eucalypt bushland with epic views. For bird lovers, Little Forest Plateau is an easy 2.5km return and you'll likely see wattlebirds, parrots, rockwarblers, firetails, and flocks of honeyeaters.

If you're after something more challenging, Pigeon House Mountain walk (5km return) is an adventurous Grade 4 trail up to the summit. The mountain has a strong spiritual significance with the local Aboriginal people and is known as 'Didthul' or 'Didell', meaning 'mother's breast' in the local Aboriginal






“Another couple of days like this and we were starting to understand the sea changers”



language. The name is clear once you've seen the mountain! If you're into hiking, this is a bucket list walk with stunning panoramic views of the coast as far as Jervis Bay and Bermagui. Be warned, there's some ladder climbing – if you got a little too carried away at Cupitt's Estate yesterday and tried all of those craft brews, cheeses, and wines, take our word for it – this is not for you today. If you haven't over-indulged yet (what have you been doing?!) stop in Milton on the way to grab some sustenance for your walk in any manner of delectable baked goods from Flour Water Salt.

Another couple of days like this and we are starting to understand the sea changers. With gourmet delights at every turn and a plethora of options for outdoor activities to offset the area's indulgences, it'll be all too soon that the masses cotton on and this becomes the next Byron Bay. Get down here while it's still an unspoilt secret with that elusive small-town warmth and hospitality that make it so very hard to leave. 



ABOVE TO BELOW Holiday Haven is a wonderland for kids; A splash pad, pool, two playgrounds, a jumping pillow, mini golf, and bowling await



Life is your journey...
Travel it well!



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