



**FEBRUARY**

**DESTINATION: BYRON BAY, NSW**

# Cut and polished

Dreadlocks and soy lattes are equally at home in Byron Bay, writes **Kate Gibbs**.

A fat, scaly water dragon suns itself on the decking around a silver, retro Airstream trailer, its muddy wet footprints a mark of the downpour that has just, finally, ceased. This is Byron Bay, where polished and uber cool meets sun, surf and mud.

Lithe and freckled Sydneysiders drink carrot, beetroot and ginger juice from oversized cups, soy lattes to follow. Dreadlocked and sun-worn, not-so-young survivors of the '60s flower-power generation step barefooted past glossy children's stores that charge \$65 for a T-shirt. Bare-chested boys slouch against their utes and weigh up the waves, drinking and tanning.

So "happening" is the surf, anything else has traditionally been a mere distraction, but a rising number of non-surfer tourists are flying in to local Ballina airport for a new, discerning experience that belies Byron's reputation as a surfers' and backpackers' haven.

Explore Byron's food scene, starting at the markets at Butler Street Reserve which are open every Thursday. Locals sell Dunoon macadamias, Tweed Valley beef, Brunswick River whiting and prawns, pecans from the Nimbin Valley and Bangalow farm cheeses.

On a coffee trail between

Newrybar and Suffolk Park, a roadside stall at Broken Head Road Coffee Plantation sells organic coffee via an honesty box. Those short on time can take a half-day Foodscape tour of the hinterland and town, travelling on airconditioned mini coach to coffee-, macadamia-, cheese- and rainforest-food producers, via lunch (\$89 a person).

Or just sit still and order the chilli-prawn linguini, or fig, prosciutto and gorgonzola bruschetta at new Italian restaurant Targa, moving only to look up at the pixellated '50s car-wallpaper ceiling. Ben Musu, who runs Targa on Marvell Street, also owns the very chic St Elmo on Fletcher Street. Plates of salt cod and saffron croquettes with horseradish cream (\$15) or a duck, witlof, pistachio and pickled carrot salad, dressed in blood orange (\$16) are made to share.

For action-packed and hair-raising activities, Byron does not disappoint. Cape Byron Kayaks runs two three-hour kayaking sessions a day (\$65) with hotel pick-ups. Reassuringly, if no dolphins, whales or turtles appear, the return trip is free. On a clear day, take a powered glider over an extinct volcano, soaring past the legendary lighthouse, rocky headlands, beaches and thick hinterland (\$220 for 40 minutes).

Accommodation in Byron Bay is neither scarce nor cheap. The 60-room Byron at Byron resort nestles into a patch of coastal rainforest just outside Byron. Raised wooden walkways meander from the guest quarters, and the hotel offers daily beach yoga classes and an extensive spa menu.

Airconditioned and polished, silver and romantic, Atlantic Guesthouses' Airstream accommodation is high-end caravaning. Retro blue palm-tree blinds match the Airstream's logo, and though the shower is incy-wincy, this chic and booked-well-in-advance caravan is a quaint Byron nook for about \$300 a night – water dragons not included. ■

*The writer was a guest of Atlantic Guesthouses.*

*For more information, phone Foodscape Tours, 1300 502 100, see [foodscapetours.com.au](http://foodscapetours.com.au); Targa, (02) 6680 9960, [targarestaurant.com](http://targarestaurant.com), (02) 6680 9960; St Elmo, (02) 6680 7426; [stelmodining.com](http://stelmodining.com); Cape Byron Kayaks, (02) 6680 9555, [capebyronkayaks.com](http://capebyronkayaks.com); Byron Bay Gliding Club, (02) 6684 7942, [byrongliding.com](http://byrongliding.com); Byron at Byron, 1300 554 362, [thebyronatbyron.com.au](http://thebyronatbyron.com.au); Atlantic Guesthouses, (02) 6685 5118, [atlanticbyronbay.com.au](http://atlanticbyronbay.com.au).*



Chrome dome ... (top) an Airstream caravan at Atlantic Guesthouses in Byron Bay; beetroot, goat's cheese and orange salad with pistachio praline at St Elmo restaurant.

Photos: Scott Needham, Nigel Carboon

## WHAT'S ON

**Feb 11-13** National Multicultural Festival, Canberra. Travel the world through food, music and dance as Canberra's diverse communities showcase their cultures. See [multiculturalfestival.com.au](http://multiculturalfestival.com.au)

**Feb 11-14** Australian Wooden Boat Festival, Hobart. The biggest collection of wooden boats in the southern hemisphere along with music, food and hands-on activities for the kids. See [australianwoodenboatfestival.com.au](http://australianwoodenboatfestival.com.au)

**Feb 11-Mar 7** Perth International Arts Festival. More than 800 artists will perform some of the world's best in theatre, music, film, visual arts, literature and community events. See [perthfestival.com.au](http://perthfestival.com.au)

**Feb 18-Mar 13** Adelaide Fringe Festival. A mix of cabaret, circus, comedy, dance, film, puppetry, theatre, art and free

events will bring Adelaide city alive. See [adelaidefringe.com.au](http://adelaidefringe.com.au)

**Feb 19** National Penny Farthing Championships, Evandale, Tasmania. With a reputation as the most competitive penny farthing



racing in the world, events include the one-mile championship, novice race, sprint, relay and biathlon. See [evandalevillagefair.com](http://evandalevillagefair.com)

**Feb 19-Feb 5, 2012**

Megawatt Exhibition, Queensland Museum, Brisbane. With 40 interactive exhibits, kids can find answers to all things electric, send a message using Morse code and even become a human battery while learning about the importance of safety with electricity. See [sciencentre.qm.qld.gov.au/Events+and+Exhibitions/Exhibitions/2011/02/Megawatt](http://sciencentre.qm.qld.gov.au/Events+and+Exhibitions/Exhibitions/2011/02/Megawatt)

**Feb 25-27** Royal Canberra Show. Where animals, rides and showbags collide. Meet Dr Harry, watch fashion parades and see a 30-car demolition derby on closing night. See [rncas.org.au/showwebsite/site/index.php](http://rncas.org.au/showwebsite/site/index.php)

**Feb 27** Harvest Picnic at Hanging Rock, Victoria. More than 100 small food and wine producers offer their goods against the backdrop of Hanging Rock. See [harvestpicnic.com.au](http://harvestpicnic.com.au)