

# BEST AUSTRALIAN BEACHES 2022

# HOLIDAY *here* THIS YEAR

BRAD FARMER AM



MISERY BEACH  
Western Australia

1



@merrwatson

The winner of the Best Australian Beach for 2022 comes straight from the pages of a beachscape artist's sketchbook. Here lies a dramatic feast for the senses with the look and feel of a perfectly framed filmset. Crystal clear, turquoise water, virgin white sand, bounded by spectacular granite outcrops, Misery Beach belies its grim name. Australia's last active whaling station nearby closed in 1978 and its historical past of slaughtering the giant Sperm Whale now seems a distant memory. For decades, this shoreline was often awash with whale offal, staining the beach blood red. These days, you'll find only a handful of beachcombers, swimmers or kayakers availing themselves of its sublime surrounds. Home of the Menang Noongar First Nations peoples, this is a pristine beach deserving of cultural reverence. Five hours south-east from Perth, yet only 15 minutes from WA's historic first European settlement, Albany, this 200-metre-wide bay welcomes seals, dolphins and returning migratory whales, seeking its calm shelter. Neighbouring Isthmus Hill, a former whale lookout point, provides spectacular views of the surrounding coast, which is well worth exploring for other glistening treasures in this truly special region.

FLAHERTY'S BEACH  
South Australia

4



@\_roamingaus\_

South Australia's many fine beaches have often been under-valued and overlooked, but the locals don't seem to mind a bit. Flaherty's Beach, three hours' drive from Adelaide on the west coast of the Yorke Peninsula, is a striking case in point. Featuring dazzling turquoise waters and white sand reminiscent of the Maldives, it can be reached by four-wheel drive or a short walk from a handy car park. Its myriad shallow tidal sandbars are ideal for lolling in the crystal waters on long summer days, and the generously wide beach is beloved by beachcombers and four-wheel drivers alike. The safe undulating shallows can stretch some 800m into clear waist-deep waters, and the beach is dog-friendly. Nearby Point Turton offers cabins and shacks for rent along with a tavern and general store. Here you can buy bait and that's as much of a hint as the locals will provide to what bounty these marine rich waters offer.

HORSESHOE BAY  
New South Wales

2



@christophermederphotography

Dhanggati Country. This fine specimen is horseshoe-shaped and a course favourite on the mid-north of NSW. Surrounded by towering Norfolk Pines, with idyllic picnic spots and holiday cabins, it's just a casual stroll from the quaint coastal village of South-West Rocks. North-facing Horseshoe Bay is only 150m in length, patrolled during peak seasons and is the popular village beach of this holiday and fishing hub of 3500 salty locals. 'SWR' juts out into the Pacific Ocean between two beautiful, walk-bridged tidal estuaries. Midway between Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie, the region was better known in history for its gaol built in 1886 at nearby Trial Bay, neighbouring the amazing Arakoon National Park. There are rainforest walks, mountains to climb and many more great beaches here within a short drive. Surfboards, SUP's and fishing gear are essentials to pack, or golfclubs for the 4-star SWR Country Club. Horseshoe Bay features a grassy, naturally sloping amphitheatre to enjoy. You could not find a finer place to relish a quintessential Aussie beach experience from sunrise to sundown.

LOCH ARD GORGE  
Victoria

5



@sharyn.coffee

Laying on the golden sands of this secluded beach, hemmed in by towering limestone cliffs, you could be forgiven for imagining you were on a film set, or shipwrecked on some distant shore. And for good reason. This beach of otherworldly feel has been the scene of both, and is one of the great tourism drawcards along the iconic Great Ocean Road. Loch Ard Gorge is a tear-shaped inlet encircled by ancient 30m high cliffs carved out over millennia by the mighty energy of the Southern Ocean. This 100m lay of fine southern sand is reached by seven flights of around 100 stairs and is one of the few patches of beach on this stretch of the Great Ocean Road able to be reached from the carparks above. Tucked deep beneath the towering coast within the Port Campbell National Park, this is one of Australia's most spectacular and alluring beaches, an enchanting sandy chasm enclosed in a natural amphitheatre of ochre-hued cliffs and blue-jewelled water. The raging sea bursting through the narrow opening is a sight to behold, but its wild waves, steep drop off and cold water make it unsafe for swimming. Nearby Port Campbell, under three hours drive from Melbourne, offers a great patrolled beach.

THE SPIT  
Queensland

3



Gold Coast Waterways Authority

Every major city has one, a breathing space and escape destination amid the hustle and bustle of life in a hectic metropolis. From New York's Central Park to The Spit at the northern end of the Gold Coast, every city needs its green lungs and recreational open space to seek peace within nature. Away from the intensely developed concreted city spine, here soft walking trails through low vegetation lead to a frequently uncrowded, four km stretch of beach, backing onto the tranquil Broadwater, on its immediate western shoreline. The Spit is reserved for quiet bushwalks or surfside reflections - with less crowded surfing conditions than the more iconic National Surfing Reserve pointbreaks to the south. The Seaway Promenade at the Top of The Spit provides a wide, 670 m long accessible pathway, enabling visitors to reach the eastern end of the southern Seaway wall with its spectacular views of the Gold Coast skyline. Whether it's walking your dog, getting wet or launching your boat in the Broadwater, The Spit really has something for everyone. There are a few rips so be cautious, but it's relatively safe to swim and patrolled from November to April. For the more adventurous there's snorkelling, scuba diving or higher-level surfing, across at TOS (The Other Side) on South Stradbroke Island (South Straddie). The Southport Spit is a national treasure to be preserved for future generations.



**THE NECK**  
Tasmania

6

@jeon\_landscapes

Bruny Island keeps popping up on the Best Australian Beaches radar, for good reason. Of our 8,222 islands, this island off an island off an island, is a Tassie treasure offering beautiful beach escapes and compelling insight into Indigenous and early European convict history. The size of Singapore with a population of around 1,000, Bruny Island has in fact 94 varied beaches. Only 40 km from Hobart, the passenger and vehicle ferry from Kettering quickly transports you to another world of timeless natural beauty. The Neck is an 7km isthmus, a stretch of sand that connects North and South Bruny Islands, and the stunning view it provides is a social media favourite. To embrace the full beauty of the island it's best to climb the 238 timber steps from the dunal carpark up to Truganini lookout for a 360-degree vista. Signage tells the sobering story of the Nuenonne people, and Indigenous woman, Truganini, who inhabited Lunnawannalonna (Bruny Island) before European settlement. The Neck provides habitat for fairy penguins, who can be seen returning to their burrows on dusk, and shearwaters (mutton birds). A foodie's paradise, bountiful natural wildlife on land and water, spectacular coastal features, cosy fireside cabins and affordable camping make Bruny a multi-layered delight.



**BLUE PEARL BAY**  
Queensland

7

@saltywings

Blend Caribbean and Mediterranean vibes and you'll get a sense of this pearler tucked away in the Whitsundays sure to quench any salty explorer's aquatic thirst. Blue Pearl Bay is one of only four or maybe five beaches on Hayman Island's 8.5 km coast. Nearby Honeymoon Beach is the tiny enclave pictured. Privately owned, but publicly accessible, Hayman is the northernmost island in the cluster of 74 islands in the Whitsunday group dotted off the central Queensland coast. The coral and marine life in this pristine marine park is dazzling, with day tours and overnight boats visiting Blue Pearl Bay for snorkelling and scuba diving. Visitors typically swim directly off their vessel, or tender into the southern beach and enter the water from the coral beach. Diving depth is from three to 18 metres with often excellent seasonal visibility. There is a bush walk located on the south bay that takes you up the hill for enchanting coastal views. While it is possible to walk to these beaches, they are easiest to access by boat at high tide, or there is a nearby, sole luxury international resort for rest, refreshments and recluse.

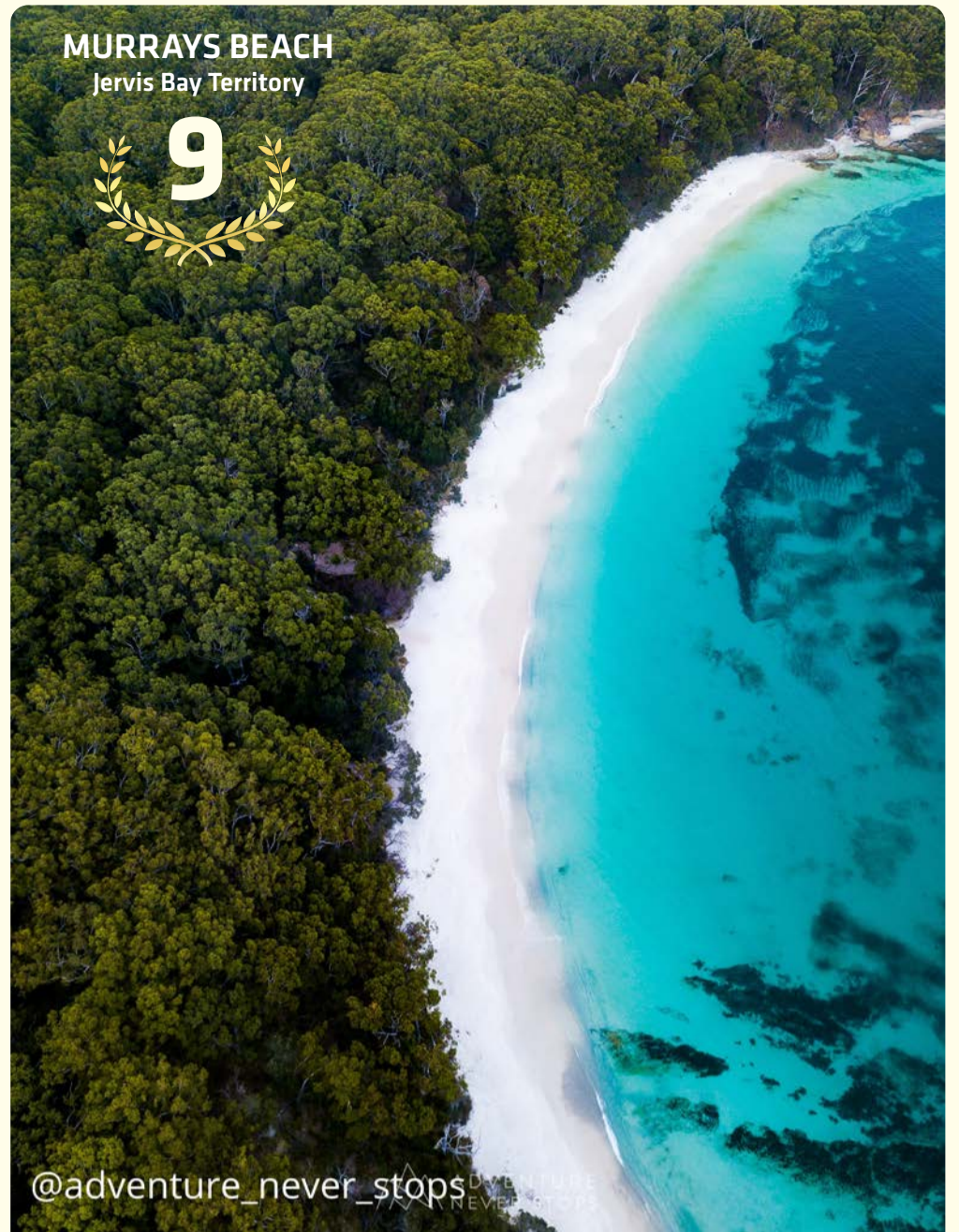


**DEPOT BEACH**  
New South Wales

8

@josh\_burkinshaw

Many holiday makers head north out of Sydney in search of the ideal beach haven. But the stunning and less crowded South Coast boasts beaches are every bit as good, if not better than many of their highly promoted north coast counterparts. Whether it be for waves or wilderness, there is a seemingly endless selection of quiet beaches, deeply immersed in natural environments, all the way down the NSW coast to the Victorian border. Take Depot Beach, in the deeper south some 270kms from Sydney, enroute to Batemans Bay. This leisurely journey south is characterised by exits off the Princes Highway to hidden hamlets, charming coastal villages and a smorgasbord of little bays, clear estuaries and rivers, wooded headlands and secluded coves. Choosing the best is really a matter of personal taste, but if you like your beaches pristine and uncrowded, then this treasure within Murrumbidgee National Park must be listed right up there. Depot Beach's many charms include a quaint two street village, simple cabins and beachside camping, a coastal rainforest walk and a sublime stretch of beach for swimming, fishing and great snorkelling amid the rocks



**MURRAYS BEACH**  
Jervis Bay Territory

9

@adventure\_never\_stops

Jervis Bay is considered one of the most beautiful, large natural bays anywhere on the Australian coast. Officially maintained by the Australian Capital Territory, but many hours from Canberra, the expansive bay is lined with arguably Australia's whitest sand and offers dependably safe swimming waters. Remarkably, in the late '60s, this pristine coast was slated by suited Canberra boffins to become a major industrial hub complete with steel works and our first nuclear power plant to generate weapons grade plutonium, under a directive from the Commonwealth. Fortunately, it's great natural beauty was spared. Like many of our beaches, this region is held sacred by First Nations peoples and many still live and work within the area, and Booderee National Park and is now under the management of its traditional custodians. Murrays Beach has much to recommend it over its Instagram famous and crowded neighbour of Hyams Beach. There is a modest daily fee to enter this part of the National Park but the visual reward at the end of the 300-metre walk in is priceless. The water is usually calm here and family friendly. Murrays is also protected by Bowen Island, which the beach looks out upon over the wide J-Bay entrance channel. Nearby, you'll find sea caves, a boat ramp and peaceful bush walking tracks.



**DUNDEE BEACH**  
Northern Territory

10

@the\_roman\_popes

It's called Dundee, and yes, it's home to crocs, quite large ones, and yes, its name is derived from the popular film. While its red dirt and vast open spaces feels remote, Dundee Beach is ideal for a day trip or overnight camp up, as it's only around an hour south-west of Darwin. A nesting site for turtles means 4WD'ers must take extra care to drive well below the high tide mark. If your groove is a palm-fringed wild escape with fresh sea breezes and gorgeous sunsets over a coldie, then this may well suit your salted-travel diary. The small coastal hamlet boasts, exceptional fishing, crabbing, birdwatching, a public boat ramp, organised fishing charters, a popular but low-key lodge and regular beachfront markets. The surrounding area includes a diverse range of wildlife and habitats, from monsoon forests and savannah woodlands to mangroves, wetlands and estuaries. You can explore the area via easy beach walks, rocky cliff climbs and walking trails, but be sure to pack adequate water, hat, and sunscreen.

**DUDLEY BEACH**  
New South Wales

11



Lake Macquarie City

Only a few seasoned coastal insiders know of Dudley Beach, one of Newcastle's best kept secrets. But with its wide-open spaces, long golden beach and verdant green foreshore, there's plenty here to share. Tucked away between its better-known neighbours, Merewether and Redhead Beaches, here you can imagine you are miles from civilisation while only 15 minutes from central Newcastle. Dudley Beach provides a fantastic escape for walking, beachcombing, surfing, fishing or simply exploring. Surrounded by the Glenrock and Awabakal Conservation Areas, it is buffered from development. Its peaceful walking tracks wind through some of the last protected remnants of coastal rainforest in the region. It's also unpatrolled by lifeguards so take care. The area has just enjoyed a facelift with a new carpark and picnic areas to take advantage of the glorious surrounds

**MOTS BEACH**  
Victoria

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Travis Godfredson

Mots Beach is where the legendary Snowy River meets the Great Southern Ocean, where the spring thaw sees molten snow from the Victorian Alps mix with salty ocean in the heart of East Gippsland. The nearby village of Marlo provides a comfortable base for a weekend of exploring one of the most secluded and sublime beach escapes in Australia. The little seaside township swells from 300 locals to 3000 visitors during peak season, attracting young families and fisherfolk, chasing silver bream from the bountiful estuary. While swimming in the estuary is popular, the beach proper can be reached on low tide in knee deep water. But time your journey well according to tides and take note of local tips. Nearby Cape Conran is safer for an ocean swim. The historic Marlo Hotel perched on a hill overlooking the stunning coastal vista has been the place to yarn over a cold drink for over 120 years, while two caravan parks with cabins welcome overnight visitors. This is the traditional lands of the Gunai Kurnai people, requiring respect for flora and fauna, particularly in the adjoining National Park.

Moira Shire

**THOMPSONS BEACH**  
Victoria

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Until recently, Australia's beaches were always considered coastal. That all changed in 2020 when Wagga Wagga Beach made the Best Australian Beaches list first as a river 'beach' much to the surprise of salty purists. But the inclusion of inland beaches was met with a rapturous welcome from the many communities who cherish their watery relief in the often-parched, Australian interior. First Nations peoples have gathered at waterholes and rivers for over 60,000 years for recreation, respite from the heat, seeking fish, shoreline resources and relaxed refreshment. Thompson's Beach has been chosen from the 100 or so beaches on the banks of the mighty Murray River for 2022. Here you can swim from the charming town of Cobram in northern Victoria, across some 50 metres at the river's bend and enter NSW. Claimed by locals to be Australia's largest inland beach, it's a tranquil setting amid towering red river gums, where koalas are often spotted along with the ambient sound of around 90 native bird species. It's a paradise for swimming, fishing, walking, boating, canoeing, volleyball, beach cricket and picture perfect for riverside picnics.

**ALEXANDRIA BAY**  
Queensland

15



@itsjaclee

One of 20 or so 'free' beaches in Australia, Alexandria Bay must rate among the finest 'clothing optional' beaches in the world. 150 km north of Brisbane, completely surrounded by national park, Alexandria Bay is nestled between the famous surfing pointbreaks of Noosa Heads and its bustling holiday town to the north, and the popular Sunshine Beach to the south. Access is via a series of walking trails through the Noosa National Park and spectators of its nude bathing scene are discouraged. While this is not officially designated as a clothing optional beach, authorities have turned a blind eye for decades, and A-Bay has an especially large LGBTQIA+ following. Noosa, a World Surfing Reserve, offers five square kms of superb coastal and forest walking trails through the National Park. There are no amenities on the beach, and signs in the park advise swimmers to be cautious of the strong surf and rips.

**COOGEE BEACH**  
Western Australia

13



City of Cockburn

Just a few minutes' drive south from the fashionable café strip of historic Fremantle lies the ever-popular favourite, Coogee Beach. While its Sydney sister beach of the same name is found 4000 km to the east on the edge of our largest city, Freo's Coogee Beach faces west over the gleaming Indian Ocean, where the sun sets into the sea, rather than rising over it. A 300 metre eco shark barrier is just one of the numerous reasons this west coast gem attracts swimmers and beachgoers year-round. With Rottneest and Garden Islands hovering on the horizon, its iconic jetty, fun summer pontoons, grassy parklands, BBQs and handy parking, Coogee attracts weekend crowds to its alluring swimming waters. There's even a half-sunken shipwreck to explore, the Omeo, just 25 metres offshore, which came adrift from Fremantle port in 1905. Now part of the Coogee Maritime Trail, showcasing the rich seafaring history of the area, you are welcome to snorkel the wreck, but care and awareness of ocean conditions is required. And after a day at the beach, you won't have to go far for good coffee, great food and Freo's many multi-cultural charms

**EMU BAY**  
South Australia

16



@fudgin\_around

Australia's third largest island is blessed with pristine wilderness and wildlife, but it's her 50 unique beaches that have modern day explorers in raptures. KI's hilly interior is surrounded by 540kms of varied coastline, from the wildly rugged and swell-battered south coast to the protected bays and coves of the north-east. Emu Bay, on the north coast, is the only beach with direct 4WD beach access and it's only 13 km from the main township of Kingscote. It's the locals' favourite, beloved for its towering dunes, four km sweep of fine white beach, safe swimming waters and quaint jetty, built in 1918. You'll need at least a few days to explore KI, or Karta Pintingga to its original inhabitants, which can be reached by a car and passenger ferry at Cape Jervis, around 90 minutes south-west of Adelaide. It's also worth visiting the colonial haunts of early sealers and pirates and learn about KI's fascinating history.

LAKE WABBY, K'GARI  
Queensland

17

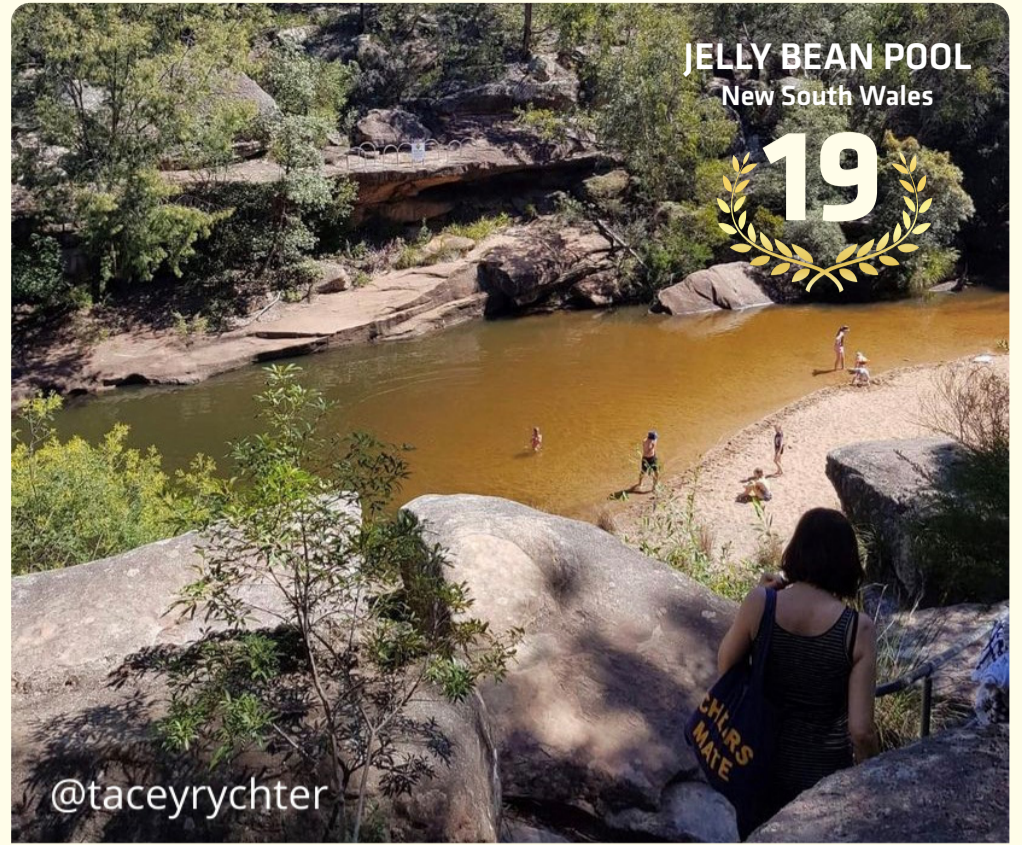


@placesweswim

Fraser Island was recently rechristened K'gari (pronounced 'Gari') meaning 'Paradise' in First Nations' Butchulla language. It is also a UN World Heritage site, as the world's highest and largest sand island. While a wide variety of amazing beaches ring the entire 200km shoreline, it's the unique rain and spring fed lakes amid lush forest that have provided much respite from the wave-lashed coast for millennia. The backbone of K'gari supports more than 40 freshwater perched lakes, the most visited and easiest to access being the legendary Lake McKenzie. But crescent-shaped Lake Wabby is a close runner-up and the deepest at 11 metres. Its emerald green waters hover at around 24 degrees Celsius year-round, an alluring oasis amid the sand dunes. These ephemeral lakes are gradually disappearing year by year, consumed by sand drift from the prevailing easterly winds. There are no amenities, so take out what you take in. K'gari can be reached by vehicle ferry from either Inskip Point or Hervey Bay. The island has been a magnet for anglers, campers, birdwatchers and 4WD'ers for decades. Among the unique wildlife are the ever-present, pure and protected Australian dingo, which must be observed from a distance and not approached.

JELLY BEAN POOL  
New South Wales

19



@taceyrychter

As much fun for kids, old and young, as a bag of jellybeans and shaped like one, this waterhole is known as one of the top swimming spots in the wildness of the Blue Mountains National Park. No longer a well-guarded secret, at the peak of summer its wide sandy beach can feel more like the Bondi, with throngs of day trippers and locals, or more seclusion can be found at nearby Blue Pool or Glenbrook Gorge. Early mornings and late afternoons, or the cooler months outside of Summer, are the best times to enjoy this pristine location in greater serenity. Opening hours are 8:30 am to 7 pm during Daylight Savings and 8:30 to 6 pm for the rest of the year. Jelly Bean Pool is accessed by a short but steep 200 metre path from the car park and it costs \$8 per car to enter. The many delights of the Blue Mountains, walking trails and scenic lookouts make it a beach excursion with a difference.

CONGWONG BEACH  
New South Wales

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@the\_wyld\_traveller

It looks inviting from the air, but even more so if you've found yourself at Sydney airport with a few hours to spare and in need of a brief refreshing dip or a dose of nature. Welcome to Congwong Beach, less than 15 minutes by car from the airport, and 25 minutes from the CBD. While there is a selection of other beaches in the southern Sydney urban vicinity, this south-facing gem is the cleanest, most family friendly and least crowded, especially during the week. Situated within the beautiful Kamay Botany Bay National Park, it is easy to reach from Cann Park in La Perouse via a 100-metre stepped pathway to its calm shoreline. It's an ideal place to lounge away from the frenzy of its urban setting at the entrance of Botany Bay. There are delightful bush tracks to explore, one which leads east to the adjoining Little Congwong Beach, the much visited and unofficial 'clothing optional' beach of sublime beauty. There are spectacular views and short walk brings you to Bare Island Fort, the location for Hollywood film Mission Impossible. If you have more time, bring snorkelling gear or a fishing rod. Over 30 Aboriginal sites have been recorded in this National Park, including rock art and engravings

ETHEL BEACH  
Christmas Island

20



@go\_on\_get\_out\_there

Straight from the pages of Robinson Crusoe, Ethel Beach is a beach goers' delight set deep in the Indian Ocean, closer to Indonesia than Australia. This far-flung Australian Indian Ocean Territory is dominated by unspoilt National Park and famous for its migrating red crabs. With 11 beaches, it's an oasis of dense green jungles amid the great blue depths, brimming with marine life. While many associate Christmas Island with its Detention Centre, its natural assets are perhaps less well-known. Ethel Beach is fringed by dense, over-hanging, tropical foliage and strewn with coral, its clear tropical waters ideal for snorkelling or swimming. A boat ramp leads from the car park down to the beach and a freshwater shower allows you to rinse off after a dip. Bring a snorkel and mask or a picnic lunch and be prepared to share the beach with curious crabs, not crowds. On the same triangular flight route from Perth are the superb Cocos-Keeling Islands, where you'll find tropical Cossies Beach, named Best Australian Beach in 2018

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