

Aqua Villa Itinerary

To help you plan your stay, we have put together some ideas of things you may like to do and places to visit while visiting Coffs Harbour. The places and people in this list are what we like to do, so if you find other interesting places let us know so we can include and share them with other visitors.

Saturday

Fancy a walk through a World Heritage rainforest? Or are you looking for some creative inspiration? This day trip delivers the arts and festive feel of Bellingen, plus the dripping enchantment of the Dorrigo Rainforest.

Take the Pacific Highway south as far as Raleigh, and then turn right on Raleigh Road towards Bellingen. Raleigh Road becomes the scenic Waterfall Way with breathtaking views and some magnificent waterfalls, especially after a good rain fall. Best still it only takes about 30 minutes to get from Coffs to Bellingen – perfect timing for breakfast, bunch or lunch.

Make your way to the Old Butter Factory which houses plenty of arts and crafts, as well a café that operates from the old loading dock which serves the most delightful breakfasts, Devonshire teas, lunches and more, while you enjoy the pleasant views over the golf course.

Bellingen may be small but it's big on entertainment, playing host to the **Global Carnival** in spring, the **Bellingen Jazz & Blues Festival** in August, **Camp Creative** in January and the mid-winter colour in motion at **Flamenco Festival**. There are so many quaint shops and galleries to visit, as well as eateries that you may need to return for a second visit! If you are lucky enough to be around on the third Saturday of the month, you will experience one of Australia's largest and most diverse community markets with an array of food stalls to cater for all tastes and budgets, plus live bands and entertainment for all the family.

Back on the Waterfall Way and next you arrive at the lovely country town of Dorrigo only 30 minutes on from Bellingen. At Dorrigo you will enjoy the potters, painters, ceramic artists, wood workers and carvers as well as having another cup of tea or coffee and/or some lunch.

The award-winning Dorrigo Rainforest Centre in Dome Road is well worth a visit. It has great displays and maps of walks to do in the area. This World Heritage area is one of the most accessible as it is furnished with board walks through the rainforest along the edge of the escarpment. Well worth a visit there are numerous walking tracks to waterfalls and picnic areas.

Leave town on Vine Street which becomes Coramba Road, this Road will take you through some amazing scenery and lush forest canopies as it winds you back home to Coffs via Coramba. Before you set off, make sure you have left a beer and some wine in the fridge so you can sit and relax while the kids refresh themselves in the pool.

Sunday

Fancy a morning at the beach, some bacon and eggs and a bit of island hopping? Well grab your camera and stroll down the road and onto Park Beach, Coffs Harbour's most famous beach.

The best time is early in the morning before the sun is too hot. Park Beach is a good surfing beach and there are patrolled swimming areas in summer. After a dip in the Pacific Ocean, walk north along the beach and climb the headland. It affords some amazing views up and down the coast.

Continue north and build-up your appetite by having another dip in the ocean at Diggers Beach. Now that you deserve the bacon and eggs for breakfast, turn around and walk back either along Park Beach (if you like the feel of sand between your toes), or if you're really hungry take Ocean Parade which runs parallel with the beach. Just past the turn to Park Beach Road you will find 'OPs' (which stands for Ocean parade – not Over Proof!), here they serve good espresso and a well-deserved breakfast or lunch.

If you have young children or enjoy more tranquil waters, the Jetty Beach just south of the marina offers a delightful area for picnics with some shaded areas. A good book, the newspaper and a takeaway espresso are all you need to chill out.

When you've completely exhausted yourself from lying on the beach or swimming in the ocean, come back to Aqua Villa and pick up your car. Drive around to the jetty area and park at the Marina. Walk to the end of the jetty and along the northern break-wall to Muttonbird Island. Here you will find the paved walkway which runs for about 500m across to the island. The walk is quite steep in places but it should only take 30 minutes to walk around and back and with 360 degree views it's worth every step!

The island is famous for its Mutton Bird colony which nests in borrows in the ground. The Mutton Bird or wedge-tailed Shearwater returns to the nest each evening to look after the single egg/chick. You may be lucky enough to observe the birds cutting (shearing) the water with their wings as they return. In April the birds migrate to Asia for the winter.

Muttonbird Island is also one of the best areas to view the migrating hump back whales as they pass between June and November. No visit to Coffs Harbour is complete without a trip to the island and the experience will fascinate kids and adults alike.

On your way back buy one a melt-in-your-mouth ice cream and sit on the break-water to enjoy watching the coming and goings of a fishing/boating harbour. It's also a good place to return at dusk to pick up a hamburger or fish and chips to eat an early dinner while dangling your legs on the dock of the bay.

Monday

For a different outdoor experience why not dive or snorkel, jump out of a plane or just dangle a line. There are plenty of adrenalin packages available for every type of person.

Coffs Harbour is the southern gateway to the Solitary Islands Marine Park, which teems with a very unique mix of tropical and temperate marine life. The waters of the Solitary Islands are clean and warm all year with eastern Australian tropical currents, just like the southern Great Barrier Reef. Visit the **Jetty Dive Centre**, (an accredited PADI 5 Star IDC Centre) at 398 Harbour Drive, Coffs Harbour. Jetty Dive has daily dive charters for snorkelers and/or SCUBA divers on large, comfortable dive boats which will take you to the best diving / snorkelling available.

If you want more of a birds' eye-view of Coffs Harbour why not book a Tandem Jump with **Coffs City Skydivers** (64 Aviation Drive, CH). Coffs City Skydivers is the largest and longest established skydiving centre on the mid north coast, with over 25,000 jumps logged. Check out 250km of coast line as you climb to height, with the Great Dividing Range as a scenic backdrop. Friendly, professional and highly experienced, their fly diving team will take your day to the next level.

Or perhaps you're happy just being a human, safely on a boat, experiencing a great day out deep sea fishing. **Adriatic Fishing Charters** (6 Bonnie Street CH), has over 20 years experience and specialise in guided fishing charter tours from Coffs Harbour Marina. Beginning at Coffs Harbour International Marina, you travel approximately 20km's north or south, and up to 8km's east of the harbour to one of the many reefs. Troll lines are set up on

the way out to the reefs to ensure you get the most fishing possible out of your trip. Snapper, Morwong, Teraglin, Samson & Cobia are just a handful of the species targeted. Bait, gear, snacks and cold drinks are all included and best of all... You keep your catch!

Tuesday

With some much entertainment cramped into one fabulous day, there is only word to describe the joy of this itinerary: serendipity.

The Clog Barn presents a little piece of Holland in Coffs Harbour. It's less than 5 minutes drive from Aqua Villa and so you can fit in a visit at your leisure. Clog making is a unique experience and the demonstrations are most interesting. The model village is small but heaps of fun and afterwards you can experience Dutch coffee and sumptuous European-style morning teas.

Drive 9 km south on the Pacific Highway and take the Lyons Road exit to Sawtell and Bonville. Then follow the directions to the Butterfly House, (please note this venue is closed on Mondays). Share the mysterious world of the butterfly as they fly, court, mate, sip nectar or rest in the light showing off their fascinating colours and patterns and if you're really still they'll land on you! The outdoor maze is also a great way for the kids to burn off some energy while you catch up on a cappuccino in the tea rooms.

Head into Sawtell and over to the gorgeous art-deco movie theatre and experience cinema going from another era while watching a latest release movie. This is also a great wet weather option.

Follow the movies with a trip into 'Fishtails' restaurant at the Sawtel Hotel, for lunch or dinner. This restaurant is famous for its whole cooked fish meals, as well as steaks and has a wide variety of fresh locally caught fish (in all different sizes) to choose from. For a real country dining experience this is the place. Perfect for families as there is a play area for children and adults will enjoy the laid back atmosphere and entertainment from the bands, as well as the tasty, fresh meals.

Wednesday

Interested in a little wine tasting with a difference or do you just want to paddle your canoe?

Then head south on the Pacific Highway to Raleigh, it's an easy 15 minutes drive. Take the Waterfall Way towards Bellingen and follow the signs. This winery gives you the perfect opportunity to try some different wines, ports and creamed brandies in several flavour styles (even better than Baileys), plus they make great gifts. There are award winning wines at affordable prices, as well as both red and white ports which can be served chilled in summer and are delicious and warming in winter.

Now that you have armed yourself with a bottle or two either for a pleasant evening at one of Coffs BYO restaurants, or your own delicious cooking on the BBQ at Aqua Villa, its time to get going with the next stage of your day out.

Next head back along the Pacific Highway to the Anchors Fishermans Warf at Urunga. Take the turning just past the tourist information centre and follow the road around. You can pick up a tinny complete with all the fishing gear to try your luck with the many fish in the clear waters of the Kalang river. There are also canoes if you want a different type of adventure.

The Anchors Wharf Café is an award winning restaurant (fully licensed) serving delicious fresh seafood all day. Please note it is restaurant prices you will be paying, so you will want to factor in some time to savour this culinary experience.

Thursday

Everyone loves the King of the Sea and the Pet Porpoise pool is just a few minutes drive from Aqua Villa. This will be one of the best experiences of your life.

Be touched by magic – have fun in the water with the dolphins and the seals. It is an amazing experience you will talk about for months. Book well in advance, preferably well before you arrive in Coffs Harbour as the experiences are limited to 4 people at any one time. You get to touch, hold, play with and have your picture taken with the dolphins in the most interactive experience anywhere. You will be smiling for the rest of the day.

A drive up the Pacific Highway to Woolgoolga is a good way to balance the day. The beaches are beautiful and are great for surfing and sun baking and the shops provide light relief from relentless relaxation.

Friday

Lucky last or just the beginning as there is so much to do in this part of the world. Golf, an Aussie icon, whale watching, or perhaps a water park, today's itinerary is a make-your-own suggestion list. Good luck and enjoy.

Golf – for the more accomplished golfer we highly recommend the famous Bonville Golf Club, a course that will definitely test your skill and your patience. Not quite as challenging but still an enjoyable round of golf, the Coffs Harbour course is excellent. Offering 27 holes and beautiful scenery it's a lovely way to spend the day and a much cheaper alternative to Bonville.

The Big Banana (an Aussie icon) is always lot of fun and now it has the additional benefits of a Waterslide and Fun Park. Open seven days, the attractions include seven inflatable watersides including – The Hippo – the worlds' largest inflatable waterslide. If you love getting wet this is a must-visit option.

Whale Watching.

The best months for whale watching are from early May till around late November. Humpback whales cruise past Coffs Coast every year on their way north (early winter) and, back again heading south (spring) after giving birth to their calves.

The best places to catch a glimpse or two or three are: Woolgoolga Whale Watch Headland - one of the best vantage points on the coast, Muttonbird Island (see Sunday for directions), Look at Me Now Headland at Emerald Beach also famous for its kangaroos and Sawtell Headlands, a wonderful spot for a picnic while watching the whales.