

# your Holiday

Insider tips and the best places to go

## 24 hours of fun in

# Shellharbour

The locals say that summer never leaves this pretty coastal town

**Brittany Smith, 23, Sydney, NSW.**

**T**he shark glided closer and closer as I desperately kicked my flippered feet.

Floating back to the surface, I gasped for breath and turned back, expecting it to loom up under me.

"How great was that?" Mick from the Shellharbour Scuba Centre encouraged.

We'd gone snorkelling in Bushrangers Bay, an aquatic reserve home to coral,

tropical fish and the friendly but thrilling grey nurse sharks.

Clad in a snorkelling mask, I held my breath as Mick took my hand and guided me back towards the peaceful creatures.

I'd travelled to Shellharbour, a two-hour drive south from Sydney, for a relaxing and active overnight getaway.

I'd already gone out on Lake Illawarra with Bec and Justin from Stand Up Paddle Boarding Shellharbour. They'd been so enthusiastic and kind as I got used to balancing on the board. My legs wobbled and I nearly fell in the water a number of times but their

encouragement helped me along.

Mick patted my back as we walked on to dry land. "Never thought you'd swim with sharks, did you?" he said, grinning.

After a jam-packed day my muscles ached and I couldn't wait to get back to my room at Ravensthorpe.

The renovated federation bungalow was grand and luxurious. It was built in 1893 by Dr Arthur Bateman, a local physician who was desperate for a home big enough to squish his

11 children into. He also built a surgery on the property where he looked after patients from all over Shellharbour.

In 2000, Jim and Deborah McCallum meticulously

renovated the property, ripping away centuries of wallpaper and cracked wooden floorboards.

They've made Arthur's home and doctor's office available for guests to stay in, with prices starting at \$159 per night.

The antique decor is so charming and vibrant, with replicas of impressionist paintings and chandeliers.

Having trained as a chef, Deborah also opened a restaurant in Ravensthorpe.

That night, I gorged on pumpkin risotto, Sicilian prawns, cuttlefish pie and gluten-free chocolate cakes.

Yawning, I headed off to bed when Deborah stopped me.

"Are you staying in John's room?" she asked.

I stared at her in confusion before she explained that John was their resident ghost.



Ravensthorpe is a gorgeous place to stay



I swam with grey nurse sharks

Stand-up paddleboarding on Lake Illawarra





THERE'S  
LOTS TO TWEET  
ABOUT

Macquarie Pass  
National Park

A stunning waterfall  
on the Macquarie  
Pass bushwalk

"He's very friendly," she continued. "Lots of our guests have felt his presence during the night."

My heart thudded as my head hit the pillow. Every creak made me jump and, too scared to close my eyes, I left my bedside lamp on throughout the night.

Thankfully, John didn't visit.

After the hearty breakfast Deborah had prepared, I headed off to the Macquarie Pass National Park.

Filled with towering eucalypts, chatty lyrebirds and cascading waterfalls, it was peaceful and beautiful. Most of the track was fairly flat so it's an ideal bushwalk however fit you are.

Paul from Nature Engagement Tours guided me through the rainforest, pointing out marks in the dirt where birds had dug for food and hollow trees that were home to possums.

"That tree is over 200 years old," he explained as we passed a tall, thick eucalypt.

We finished off the walk with some hard-earned tucker. Paul's mum had baked delicious scones for us to



Me walking  
on the wing!



Shellharbour  
is home to  
lots of native  
wildlife

enjoy with jam and cream, a staple of his tours.

After the scones, I stopped at the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society's Aviation Museum. Run entirely by volunteers, it's home to over 40 aircraft from commercial planes to fighter jets used in the Vietnam War, and even a supersonic jet bomber.

The volunteers were experts on the planes and I got to hop in the pilot's seat of a fighter jet, which my guide had actually flown in Vietnam.

Climbing into the cockpit was fun but the most thrilling moment was when I got to walk along the wing of the

Qantas Boeing 747-428. The plane holds the record for the longest non-stop commercial flight, London to Sydney, as well as the shortest, from Sydney to Shellharbour. Walking along the wing, and getting a close look at the engine, made me realise how powerful these machines are.

I'd packed in so much during my short stay that I was exhausted on the drive home.

Even though I'd visited in winter, Shellharbour had blessed me with sunshine. And there was so much fun to be had, from the depths of the ocean floor to the wings of an aeroplane.

## Did you know?

\* Not everything that lies beneath the water in Shellharbour is natural. Over the years, there have been nine ships wrecked near the coast.



The Farm  
is a spectacular  
beach, perfect  
for surfers

\* Killalea Beach is a great spot for surfing. Locals call this stretch of coast 'The Farm' which helps to keep it a bit of a secret from tourists.

\* The Shellharbour City Festival of Sport is a two-day event in March where locals and tourists come together to compete in wacky activities like dragon boat racing, dodgeball, and bubble soccer.