

The Best Aussie Beach Holidays! - LifeStyle Channel

by *Fiona Harper*

With winter a distant memory and summer a tantalising prospect it's time to start thinking about summer holidays.

Travel writer Fiona Harper digs her toes into the sand at some of her favourite Aussie beaches.

80 Mile Beach (WA)

It's hard to imagine that a beach 80 miles (128 km) long would go largely unnoticed. Slipping quietly under the radar, Eighty Mile Beach on West Australia's Pilbara coast is one of the best beaches in Australia you've probably ever heard of. Mostly because there's nothing much there beyond an unbroken strip of sand that stretches for, well, 80 odd miles. There's not a café, hotel or high rise within cooee. Almost 2,000 km north of the world's most isolated city (Perth), it's one of those unspoilt beaches that intrepid beachcombers dream of. Fortunately there is a low-key caravan park tucked away in the dunes midway between Port Hedland and Broome for those who can't bear to leave. eightymilebeach.com.au

Port Douglas (QLD)

Four Mile Beach. Sure it's 76 miles short of its West Aussie rival, but Port Douglas version comes with the sort of sophistication that WA's Pilbara can only dream about. World class restaurants, boutiques stocking gorgeous summer frocks and slinky sandals, pubs where patrons spill out past the whitewashed plantation shutters and on to the pavement.

When it's time to wash the beach sand from your toes and slip into a cool swimming pool (and let's face it, avoid dangerous oceangoing nasties), Port Douglas hotels deliver in spades. Pullman Sea Temple Resort is home to possibly Australia's biggest lagoon pool while Thala Beach Nature Reserve (formerly Thala Beach Lodge) on Oak Beach thalabeach.com.au has two rock pool style swimming pools concealed within shady native forest and waterfalls.

Johanna Beach (VIC)

Bordering Bass Strait, Johanna Beach in the Otway National Park on Victoria's south coast is no shrinking violet. A rugged dramatic coastline that also goes by the moniker of the Shipwreck Coast, this is the kind of shoreline that would not look out of place on a film set for *The Piano* (set on Auckland's magical west coast). Rolling farmland and the Otway Ranges tumble down into Bass Strait like a house of cards in a gale. This is a wild and woolly type of beach getaway. Sure, it does get warm in summer, but pullovers and parkas are just as popular as bikinis and board shorts. Check out Johanna Seaside Cottages for a cute cottage 600 m from the shore johannaseaside.com.au or pitch a tent at Parks Victoria's Johanna Beach campsite parkweb.vic.gov.au

Coffin Bay (SA)

Despite the gloomy name, Coffin Bay on the west coast of South Australia's Eyre Peninsula is teeming with life, particular during summer. Locals must feel a little overwhelmed when their tiny population swells from around 600 to around 5,000 people. Still, there's plenty of room to spread out around the National Park lined bay so it makes little difference.

Oyster lovers contain yourself please – Coffin Bay Oysters are rated worlds best by some of the planets' most highly acclaimed Chefs. The abundance of marine life is undoubtedly a drawcard for wild dolphins that inhabit the bay – tour operators offer the rare opportunity to swim with natures' funsters. coffinbay.net

Angourie Beach (NSW)

On the northern NSW coast a few kilometres south of Yamba, Angourie Beach has been a popular surfer's hangout (it was declared a National Surfing Reserve in 2007) for eons. It's little surprise that Aussie surfing royalty Nat Young calls Angourie home thanks to its legendary point break. But surfers don't have this dreamy little cove to themselves. Hikers on the Yuraygir Coastal Walk tread the sweeping beach midway through a four day 65 km camping trek. Fishermen, snorkelers and divers too will find enticing distractions. As will those whose idea of holiday perfection involves little more than a beach towel, a book and warm sun kissed skin. clarencetourism.com

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