



# Family holidays

## at their best

*Could you be any closer to the beach  
and the action?*

**D**olphins! Another day and another small pod of dolphins is cruising past. Why do I get so elated just seeing these beautiful mammals swimming freely in the bay? I don't really know the answer, but it is not just me. There are heads turning on the people strolling along, next to the beach.

Although he does not say it, I know my husband is always a little disappointed if he goes a day without seeing them.

Our two grand children are equally as absorbed. They insist the family eats breakfast, lunch and dinner on the large balcony so they can gaze at the sea and the passing parade.

My son and his wife are on the verge of a nap, having moved from the table to the irresistible Adirondack chairs. The paper-back in my son's hands has slumped, so I am pretty sure he has nodded off or is just about to.

For the six of us, **Tidemark, Shoal Bay** and the whole of **Port Stephens** is a wonderful opportunity for us to spend time together. Grandparent duties are a blessing in a place like this. What a great excuse to swim with the kids, watch them build sandcastles and enjoy a wickedly delicious ice-cream. Three generations get along so well that wonderful memories and familial bonds just happen.



*The 'short one' enjoying the beach beside  
Tilligerry Board Walk*

With three generous sized bedrooms, fully equipped kitchen, large dining table and lounge - not to mention all the additional seats on the balcony with the best sea views, we are never tripping over ourselves.

Yesterday, the three men, round one, tall one and the short one, talked excitedly and non-stop about the aircraft they saw, touched and sat-in, at the not-for-profit **Fighter World Museum - the RAAF Williamstown Aviation Heritage Centre**. I suspect the food at the café was also rather welcome, while they watched aircraft taking off. The museum rates 4.7 out of 5, so it is a clear winner.

Yesterday, not to be left out, us three ladies, cuddly, gorgeous and she who can talk under water with a mouth full of marbles, enjoyed an unforgettable time at the **Irukandji Shark & Ray Encounters**. Miss Marbles was a little timid initially, so we fed and patted them from the edges on this occasion. By the end of the tour, Miss Marbles was trying hard to persuade us to organise a personalised snorkelling experience with them. I guess that is what Grandparents are for! It was so good that I know we will return with the whole family to experience the wetsuit wading experience. I think I will need a bit more persuasion before I go as far as the snorkelling experience.

The **Koala Sanctuary** presents an amazing experience to see these cute animals close-up. Sadly, they are there to recover from injuries and hopefully will be released back into the wild one day. It's good to know our entry fees are going towards helping the Sanctuary look after koalas that needed our help to be rescued.



*You are in koala country*



*Tawny Frogmouths 2 metres from the Mt Tomaree track*

Did you know there are a lot of koalas in the Port Stephens area? Take a drive over to have lunch at the **Cheeky Dog** (right next to **Bannisters**) at **Soldiers Point**. It's a timely excuse for a very enjoyable meal and a reason to go koala hunting. Painted on the roads are signs advertising koalas in the area. It is a warning to motorists to keep an eye out for them. With kids in tow, stop the car and get out to look up into the trees. You will see them more often than you might think.

On our most recent stay, while walking up **Mt Tomaree**, we saw a whale and her calf who had been resting overnight in the bay. We also saw some tawny frogmouths sitting on a branch just a couple of metres from the path. Once before, we saw a koala at the top of Mt Tomaree - so, keep an eye out for the real locals while you stay at API's Tidemark. [API](#)

**Check out the facilities and book your stay at API's Tidemark at [www.apilifestyle.com.au](http://www.apilifestyle.com.au) or call us on 1300 653 322**