



Have you experienced the Blue Water Paradise?

by Tony, N

Shoal Bay, NSW

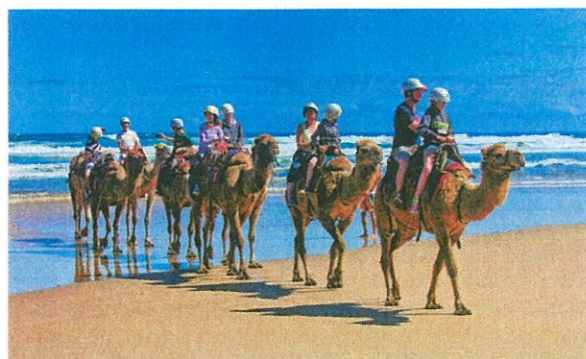
If you have travelled extensively, you will know that areas, such as **Port Stephens**, are truly world class. The beaches and vistas are amongst the best in the world. Add this natural beauty to the regular sight of pods of dolphins and passing whales, often visible from the shore, and it's easily understandable why the area, pre-COVID, was high on the list for inbound visitors to Australia.

If you have travelled overseas, you will have noticed the coffee is not a patch on what is served here, and the produce is well... unfortunately often a little disappointing compared to what is available in Australia.

Taking a glass-half-full approach, one of the best things that came about as a result of COVID has been Australians re-discovering how good holidaying in Australia, in our own backyard is.

Shoal Bay is the jewel-in-the-crown within the Port Stephens area. Local restaurants offering a wide range of good cuisines, and all within a 3-to-4-minute level-walk along the edge of the bay.

There are adventure activities available both within the bay and surrounds. Stand-up Paddle (SUP) boards can be hired right on the beach, as can small catamarans. Snorkelling is a perennial favourite as the area is famous for its soft corals. Keen anglers can be found on the jetty and at **Tomaree Point** every day of the year. Of course, there are also charters available and tinnies to hire from the Marina in **Nelson Bay** as well.



Camels on the Beach

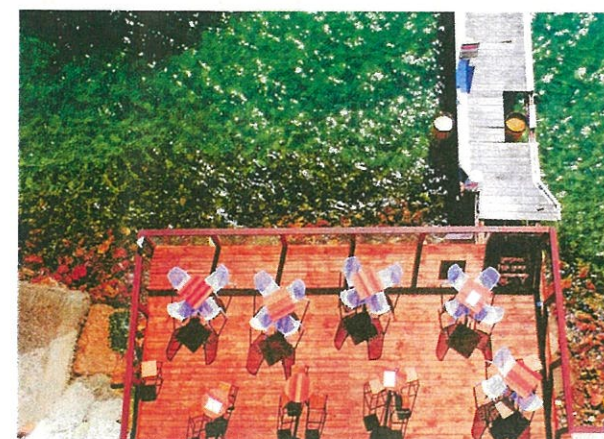
More energetic adventures include quad bike experiences, camel rides, sandboarding, paint ball skirmishes, paragliding etc. Then there are slightly less-taxing experiences at the Aviation Museum and the Shark & Ray feeding at the rescue centre which is aimed more at younger children.

“ We are so lucky to have beaches, townships and API Holiday Homes, like this in Australia. ”

The **Macadamia Nut Farm** is worth dropping into as it also has all sorts of interesting produce and serves coffees and cakes. Sitting in the shade of a Macadamia nut tree is a relaxing place to have a picnic.

There are wineries to visit and craft beer brewing sampling facilities. Be warned, the meal sizes at **Murray's Brewery** are substantial.

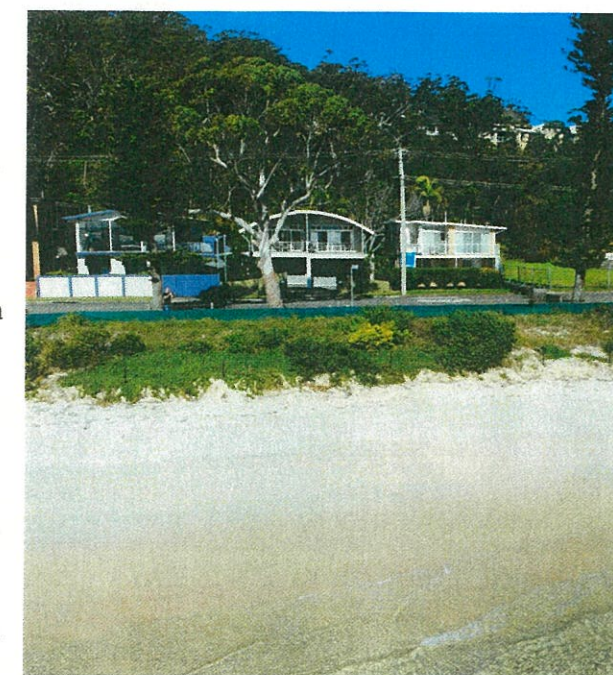
The number of places to eat is quite staggering. They include **Rick Stein at Bannisters Port Stephens** for a (very) special occasion, and the **Boat House** at Little Bay to a serving of **Aussie Bobs famous Fish & Chips** consumed on the large balcony at **API's own Tidemark**, with the best view over Shoal Bay. We eat out 2-3 times to give mum the break she deserves, but then she loves serving up meals at Tidemark because the location and views are unbeatable.



Little Beach Boat House Restaurant

The first time I arrived at Shoal Bay, I was struck by how appropriately the locals have named the bay. The **Blue Water Paradise** says it all. The second thing I was struck by was a question, 'Why had I not visited this gorgeous part of the world before?'

That was a long time ago. I have been back many times because it is so magical and offers so much for everyone. I have stayed in several different types of accommodation, starting from a small



Get the sand under your feet - at Tidemark

tent at the local camp site, but none have been in the league of **Tidemark**. It sleeps six people in comfort, has two bathrooms and you could not be closer to the beach. I feel I am so lucky I joined API years ago as, in my opinion, **Tidemark** is the best value accommodation in the bay. Not only is it great value, but the savings we make through our API membership pays for most of the stay.

I still get up quietly, before anyone else and sip a piping hot coffee on the balcony while scanning the water for the dolphins. It's a simple pleasure I will never tire of. **API**



Tidemark overlooking Shoal Bay

Book your stay at Tidemark online at www.apilifestyle.com.au or call 1300 653 322