



go green & gold

STORY BELINDA PETERS | PHOTOS BELINDA PETERS, THINKSTOCK + SUPPLIED

WHILE ITS NAME CONJURES UP IMAGES OF GOLDEN SANDS, A VISIT TO THE SUNSHINE COAST ALSO OFFERS FAMILY FUN AND CALMING COUPLES' ESCAPES.

HEARING THE HAPPY shrieks of children when you arrive at a resort is a pretty good sign of impending fun. And that was definitely the case at Oaks Oasis Resort in Caloundra.

We traced the shrieks to the resort's large children's water park, which includes a giant water bucket and multi-level slides surrounded by relaxing lounges for parents to keep a watchful eye in comfort.

It's also a great base to enjoy the Coast's seaside splendour. While

Caloundra's bustling CBD, centred around Bulcock Street, is home to the delightfully eclectic Caloundra Street Fair every Sunday from 8am to 1pm, it is its beaches, stretching from Moffat through to Golden Beach, that are the real attraction.

A good way to take them all in is along the Caloundra Coastal Walk, stretching 25km from Golden Beach in the south around Caloundra Headland heading north along the long, sandy beaches of Kawana to Mooloolaba.

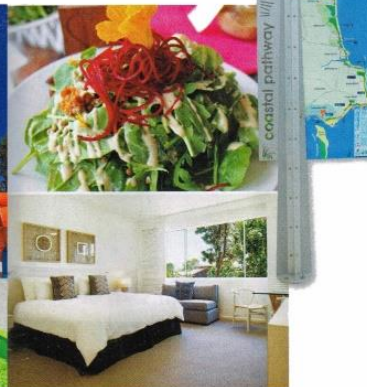
If the whole 25km is a bit of a stretch, it's perfect to explore in sections. Bulcock to Kings Beach is a popular stretch, where you can meander along the winding path and timber boardwalk that hugs the coastal dunes and the shore.

Bulcock Beach's distinctive white umbrellas sheltering picnic tables on the water's edge is a scenic spot for fish and chips or dangling a line, while the nearby Happy Valley is a shaded place for the kids to have a play on the pirate-themed equipment. Kings Beach is the perfect place to cool off, whether it's a dip at the popular beach, the free public pool overlooking it, or the free kids' water park with fountains to surprise unsuspecting frolickers. Golden Beach, on the calm waters of the Pumicestone Passage, is the ideal place to take to the water by boat, paddle board or kayak.

When you've had enough of the sun and the surf, it's time to head inland.

While it's only a 30-minute drive up a winding road, entering the town of Maleny feels like another world – one where the coastal scrub and glittering horizons give way to green rolling hills and sub-tropical rainforest. Maleny and neighbouring Montville are brimming with natural delights and celebrate their unique position as a hub for gourmet food, art and natural therapies.

To get in the spirit of the region,



Lift and the neighbouring Live Food Café are worth a visit. Lift specialises in energy art and sound therapy, while the café features vegan cuisine in its rawest form, including amazingly colourful salads and decadent desserts.

After refuelling, we stop in at Maleny Botanic Gardens and Birdworld. This unique attraction, offering stunning views across the Glass House Mountains, is the vision of owner Frank Schipp. He began transforming a sprawling patch of rugged farm land into a spectacular botanic garden in 2007. The aviary is one of the largest in Australia and is home to more than 400 native and

exotic birds.

The walk-through tours are an up-close and informative experience, complete with feathered friends who aren't afraid to make a nest of your hair or a perch of your shoulder.

If it's a couple's escape you're looking for, Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat in Montville fits the bill perfectly. Any residual stress just melts away as you walk into one of the six fully self-contained secluded pavilions nestled within the rainforest. While it's hard to leave these surrounds, more rainforest awaits within the neighbouring Kondalilla National Park.

Walking tracks traversing the Blackall Range are part of the 58 kilometre Great Walk, with a number of shorter walks available. Local company OffBeat Eco Tours offers a Luxe Trekking package from Lake Baroon to Kondalilla Falls, which takes five hours, including a healthy morning tea and lunch. Our expert guides shared their knowledge of the local flora and fauna while we relished the tranquility of the rainforest.

Narrows Escape is one of Queensland's finest dining establishments – The Long Apron at Spicers Clovelly Estate. Specialising in European-inspired menus using the finest local ingredients, the opulent surroundings belie the relaxed and friendly atmosphere that makes you feel you're dining in a beautiful home, rather than one of Australia's Top 100 restaurants.

Another must-visit for the foodies is Flame Hill Winery. Its cellar door offers a chance to taste a number of local wines, while its restaurant is open for lunch, served with spectacular views across the hills of Montville.

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IMAGES: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) OFFERINGS AT LIVE FOOD CAFE; COASTAL PATHWAY; ENJOYING THE SURROUNDS AT NARROWS ESCAPE RAINFOREST RETREAT; SPICERS CLOVELLY ESTATE: NARROW'S ESCAPE; MALENY BOTANIC GARDENS & BIRDWORLD; OAKS OASIS RESORT.

IMAGE: (ABOVE RIGHT) THE CHILDREN'S WATER PARK AT OAKS OASIS RESORT, CALOUNDRA.