

Coffs Coasting

Beaches, butterflies and (mutton)birds, oh my! **CHRISTINE KNIGHT** and family explore Coffs Harbour.



We are a family of beach-lovers, who love to stay close to the shore and spend lazy days in the sand. On our recent visit to Coffs Harbour, on the NSW North Coast, we found the perfect place to set up camp at **BIG4 Park Beach Holiday Park**.

Located right on Park Beach, Coffs Harbour's main surfing spot, the holiday park's gorgeous location means the soft, sandy beach is only across the road from your cabin or camping site.

During this, our first visit to a holiday park, we stayed in a cosy Surf Villa with a water view. The villas include a verandah and dining area, separate living room, two bedrooms, full kitchen and a designated parking spot outside. We loved how modern and bright the villa was, with a well-lit and contemporary bathroom and two excellent-sized bedrooms that could easily fit a family of five. Our daughter was keen to claim the bunk bed as hers, and we were happy to have our own bedroom and a bit of space.

Something for every family

Park Beach Holiday Park provides a variety of accommodation options, from villas like the one we stayed in to more than 250 sites to suit any type of set-up, from camping to caravans. A large camp kitchen and free barbecues make cooking for the family super easy (and cheap).

We're trying to stick to a tight travel budget these days, so having cooking facilities on hand is a major cost-saver. Before checking into the park we ducked into the big Coles in the centre of Coffs Harbour and bought groceries to last us for our entire stay. The park itself also has a convenience store located at reception with plenty of basic supplies, too.

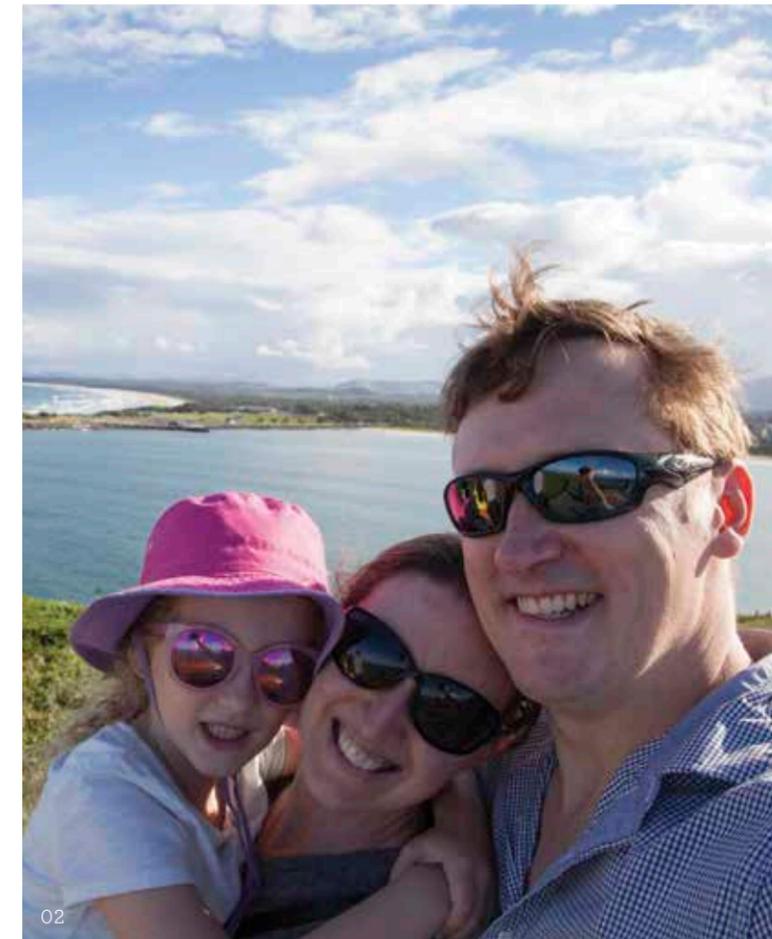
There's also lots on offer to entertain the most important member of the family, aka The Kid.

The number-one favourite activity for us, and I think every other family there, was the giant jumping pillow. It's basically like a huge trampoline that tapers down at the sides to a nice sandy base. My six-year-old could have bounced all day, burning off steam (excellent!) and making new friends. This is one of the best things about staying at a holiday park: all the great people you meet and the experiences you share together.

When we could persuade Miss Bounce-a-lot to leave the jumping pillow, we checked out the two excellent children's playgrounds – one for littlies and one for older kids that included a giant chessboard, rope web and basketball half-court – and then visited the games room, TV room and, the *pièce de résistance*, the resort-style swimming pool. This pool features three slides, shallow splash areas and water features. Again, it was impossible to drag the kid away!



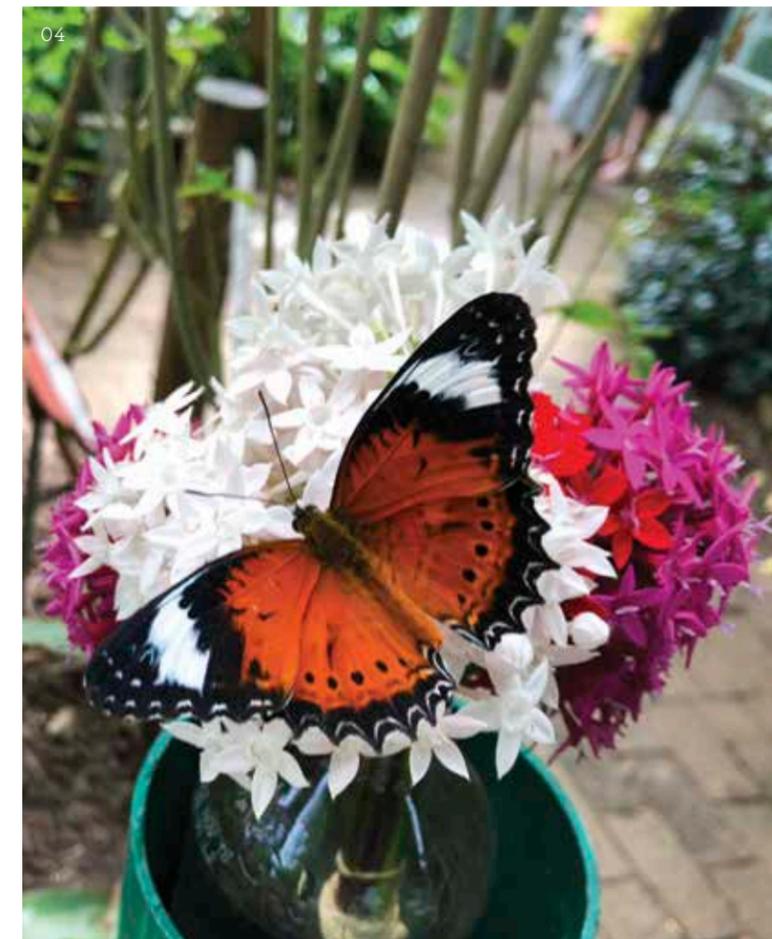
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Coasting Coffs

We could have spent our entire stay enjoying the facilities of the holiday park and making new mates, but we also wanted to see what else Coffs Harbour has to offer.

Back in the main part of town, we strolled down to the marina where there are great scooting paths, a flat beach for swimming, a long jetty and a beautiful walk to Muttonbird Island. The view from the top was worth the sore calves.

A visit to Coffs Harbour isn't complete without torturing your kids into a photo op at the **Big Banana**. It's a pretty easy bribe though, as there is now a Candy Kitchen on site where kids can watch lollies being made by hand, as well as a fun park featuring a water park, laser tag, mini-golf course and ice-skating rink.

When the weather got a little wet, we headed to the **Coffs Harbour Butterfly House** to experience the fluttering wings of hundreds of butterflies. We were lucky enough to see eggs being laid, butterflies hatching and, best of all, had a few land on us for a few brief moments before zooming off.

Forest foray

We are always eager to explore nature, so we drove an hour out of Coffs to **Dorrigo National Park**, part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area. An elevated Skywalk offers a stunning view over the forest, and a journey down into the rainforest leads to waterfalls and native bird watching.



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01 Dorrigo National Park 02 Family time in Coffs 03 BIG4 Park Beach Holiday Park 04 Coffs Harbour Butterfly House 05 Beach sunset 06 Monkeying around at the Big Banana 07 Amazed by butterflies at Coffs Harbour Butterfly House. All images © Christine Knight

Since our daughter isn't a strong bushwalker, we also drove to the nearby Danger Falls to chase waterfalls that are easy to access. Here it's possible to drive right up to the viewing platform, and there's even a handy playground there for kids to monkey around before the drive back home.

Beached as

One of the best things about staying right on the beach is spending a lazy evening mucking around in the waves. Our last evening in Coffs was enjoyed patting the local dogs taking a dip in the sea, and jumping through the waves against a magnificent pink sunset.

The following morning we said a sad goodbye to the holiday park and our new friends, and started the drive back home via the cute little beach town of Sawtell. Well worth a day trip on its own for a paddle in the waves, we also enjoyed a hearty brekkie at local cafe **Treoo**, with some delicious pancakes and eggs fortifying us for the drive back to Sydney. ■

Coffs Coast Report Card

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