

FRIDAY ON MY MIND

By Michael Dickson



Flying to the East Coast of Australia after the recent floods might not have seemed like the smartest place to be heading for a sun-soaked break, but our final destination promised warm sunny weather, long white sandy beaches and a relaxing stay at a surf side resort.

Byron Bay is tucked away in the north eastern corner of New South Wales, and there was absolutely no sign of flooding or even a drop of rain on the short trip down from Brisbane airport.

The settlement of Byron Bay is home to about 9,000 permanent residents. Archaeological evidence suggests that people have been visiting or inhabiting this piece of the New South Wales coast for at least 22,000 years, and the shortest of visits will reveal what drew those first visitors and has continued to attract people from all walks of life to this small coastal community even to this day.

The bay is a collection of stunning beaches - a magnet to surfers seeking the crashing waves of the Pacific - but there is an equal attraction for swimmers, body-boarders, sea canoeists and paddlers. The beach is home to the local surf life saving club and is constantly

scattered with bathers and sun seekers of all ages. While the beaches remain the central focus of tourism in the area, there are many other attractions for adventurers and the physically active - and the blissfully inactive as well!

Snorkellers and scuba divers have just a short boat trip in order to reach Cape Byron Marine Park. The historic Cape Byron Light House, built in 1901, is a short walk from the town centre and given Byron Bay's location in Northern New South Wales there is an amazing variety of subtropical rainforest surrounding the Bay.

Once the surfing is mastered, when the historic sites have been visited, and the forests have been explored, there's a deep-seated need for a thoroughly relaxing place to retire to - somewhere to put your feet up, enjoy a glass of something cold and bask in the last rays of the warm evening sun. If that place is close to the beach and the water's edge, just a short stroll from the town centre cafe, restaurants and shops, all the better. If that place is slightly removed, distant from the maddening crowd, but still engaged in the local community, you have found paradise.

In Byron Bay there is such a place. Think of a day of the



week that promises an end to the gruelling work week, a day the workforce of the world's nations work towards, a day that hints at those sought after weekends ... the place is 'Friday on the Beach' a little touch of truly boutique relaxation.

Friday on the Beach is situated at the end of the main beach and is only a short gentle stroll to the heart of the Byron's township. The busiest areas of the beach and the quiet bustle of town are just to the north of Friday's, ensuring that guests feel connected, yet slightly removed, able to avoid the constant thrum that so often spoils the peace and quiet of such popular beach destinations.

The accommodation at Friday's comprises of 19 rooms in a low-slung double-storey block. There are strictly enforced limits regulating the height of buildings in the Bay in an effort to preserve the area's natural beauty. It is truly a boutique destination. Our first floor room, boasting a sizeable bed and air conditioning, was spacious, very well appointed and, dare I say it, stunningly simple in a contemporary way. Without any reservation, the most outstanding and oft-used feature of our beautiful abode was the balcony. Overlooking the grassed area, we were afforded perfect



views of the beach and the ocean, and managed to catch the setting sun's warmth each night of our stay. Such was the view and ambiance that we felt no need of the large LCD television at all, although we did make good use of the i-Pod docking station.

Friday's manager, Mary Alderman has developed something special. Relaxed – tick. Comfortable furnishings and surrounds – definitely. But there is a real philosophy here that's hard to find in most boutique accommodation – that fine balance between being present when needed, but discretely making yourself scarce when not! Nothing is too much trouble, including homemade treats on arrival and the promise of freshly baked carrot cake.

Mary is a fount of local knowledge, pointing guests towards local spots of interest and suggesting destinations for meals, drinks or places to just enjoy the many hours of sun, sand and surf. Seeking a hearty breakfast, she directed us to Cafe on Byron just a 2-3 minute walk from Friday's (seriously, so many things are!) and what a great suggestion it was. Located at the foot of the cliffs that rise to the Byron Bay Light House, the cafe overlooks the very southern reaches of the main beach. A very popular place for both breakfast and lunch, there was usually a short queue waiting to be seated - but it is a wait that's worthwhile. Byron Bay offers a good selection of dining options, from Asian and Middle Eastern to good old fish and chips, with quite a few awards under their collective belts.

In today's hurried madness, Friday is the day we all work towards – it's the day that signals and end to the busy work week, when we can begin contemplating those relaxed hours ahead to be spent with friends and loved ones. Take Friday and put it on the Beach, and you have yourself just two steps away from sheer bliss and relaxation. Good times start on Friday – especially on the Beach! ■■



FACTS:

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