


This town is the south coast's best kept secret

Nestled between Bateman's Bay and Narooma, this small NSW town is fast becoming a must visit.

By CELESTE MITCHELL

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It would be easy to miss Mossy Point on the NSW south coast. Blink and you could zip right by the sliver of a town as you cruise George Bass Drive on the way south from Batemans Bay. Cradled by the Tomaga River to the north and Candlagan Creek to the south, the hamlet sits along a coastline that has remained largely under the radar – unless you're from Canberra.

Its secret status might also be due to Google Maps' failure to register some of its newer roads, as I realise on my drive to The Oaks Ranch. I end up on a gravel route, which quickly turns to dirt and ends with a locked gate. Mercifully, all is well after a call to reception and a shared moment with a kangaroo, watching as I lock the gate behind me.

I've come in on the old road, I'm told. "Wait until you see the main entrance," the bubbly Jess tells me over the phone. I roll down the grand, tree-lined driveway,

donkeys in a paddock to my right and golfers returning to their buggies on my left, as the Spanish Mission-style guesthouse comes into view.

“My boyfriend grew up in Moruya and used to come here for class trips and horse riding,” Jess tells me, pressing a welcome drink tinged with rosemary and lime into my hand. “It used to have purple walls and colourful bed sheets.”

Owners Lisa and Martin Cork saw the potential through the purple haze and worked with interior architects Partridge Daniels during the contemporary upgrade of 14 existing suites, reopening in September 2022. With its white stucco exterior, archways and cactuses-filled gardens, there’s more than a hint of Palm Springs retro. Zellige handmade tiles, relaxed furnishings and Cultiver linen and robes set a luxurious tone in the guestrooms, but it’s the warmth of the place that has me from the turn of my heavy room key.

My pre-dinner coffee negroni, sipped by the magnesium pool, also helps to cinch the deal. I can see why general manager Josh Tyler, who grew up in nearby Malua Bay, is happy to be home. A Sliding Doors moment during Covid lockdowns saw him fly back from Bali, where he’d been executive chef at The Ungasan in Uluwatu. These days, he slips between the kitchen and tables of guests and locals at the onsite restaurant, Arlo.

“There’s been such a great response from locals. I think there was room for something different,” he says, before recommending the Clyde River oysters, from just up the road. They are the highlight of a meal that stars tempura prawns atop nasturtium leaves from the kitchen garden, and soul-warming pumpkin agnolotti loaded with native pepper and chilli.

With a masterplan that Tyler says is only about 10 per cent realised, the Corks are hoping to draw even more visitors to their Eurobodalla passion project. There’s an upgrade to the Greg Norman-designed golf course on the way, along with more guestrooms and self-contained villas. But Mossy Point’s future is blossoming beyond the boundary of the 120ha property.

“It’s a black hole after Ulladulla – it’s like uncharted waters,” says staffer Meg the next morning in between making my coffee with local Guerrilla Roasters beans and drawing me a mud map of her favourite beaches. Having never been further south than Gerringong, I’m venturing into the great unknown.

A drizzly day stretches ahead as I pull up at the Mossy Point boat ramp, watching two kayakers paddle peacefully through the grey. A cute little boatshed sits on the water's edge where Region X keeps locals caffeinated and loans kayaks to visitors keen to spot stingrays in the shallows.

A few hundred metres away, in the heritage-listed Old Mossy Point Shop, is something of an institution. Mossy On Pacific, known affectionately as “the Mossy”, is part cafe, part social hub. It's slightly ramshackle and overwhelmingly homely, filled with books, magazines and works by local female artists. As Mossy Point has made it on to the map, owner Belinda Dorsett has embraced the attention, expanding with two sister venues in recent years; one in Broulee, the other within the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden in nearby Mogo.

I slowly loop the town's handful of streets and cross the Candlagan Creek bridge. Staff at Broulee Brewhouse are setting up for the afternoon. The boutique brewery opened last year but already feels an integral part of the town's fabric. I start to get the sense that although nature is the headliner here, these up-and-coming support acts are nipping at its heels, creating an irresistible show.

“This area is very much up and coming,” says Yanna Dascarolis, when I pop in to check out The Isla, a motel she and a group of friends have revived 15 minutes north in Batehaven. “There's a lot of action happening down south in Narooma with (Merivale boss) Justin Hemmes buying up everything, and being in between the Mollymook-Ulladulla vibe and Narooma, it's fun to be part of it.”

On my return, I spy an impressive structure taking shape on a property in Mogo. When it opens in October, Foxdog Distillery will not only offer its own gin and whisky in a purpose-built shed, but a cafe, tours and blend-your-own-gin classes. It's a family venture that's been in the works for the past four years, born out of brainstorming sessions about what the region was missing.

“There was just such a shortage of options for tourists to do. We wanted an experience for them that wasn't just going to the beach and the wildlife park,” co-owner Kellie Plenty tells me.

It's not just about bringing people in, but keeping more of their own around. Having moved away for boarding school and work opportunities as a youngster, Kellie is excited about the growth in the region, which includes 155km of mountain bike trails being built in Mogo State Forest this year.

“The more amazing businesses and growth we get in this town, hopefully it means we can keep our youth here,” the mother-of-three says. “It’s such a beautiful, beautiful place. We’re so lucky.”

Back at The Oaks Ranch, sitting beside one of the fire pits while kangaroos nibble the grass nearby, I couldn’t agree more.

Celeste Mitchell was a guest of The Oaks Ranch.

IN THE KNOW

[Mossy Point](#) is just over four hours’ drive south of Sydney or 2½ hours from Canberra. The closest airport is Moruya, serviced by REX.

[The Oaks Ranch](#) is on Old Mossy Point Rd; from \$275 a night in a premium bungalow with complimentary minibar.

[The Isla](#) has accommodation from \$200 a night.

[Region X](#) offers kayak hire on the Tomaga River at Mossy Point.

[Mossy on Pacific](#) is open seven days for breakfast and lunch.

[Broulee Beerhouse](#) is child friendly (until 9pm) and pet friendly.

Foxdog Distillery is set to open in October 2023. Stay onsite at one of [Jaguar Stay’s](#) six adults-only villas.

CELESTE MITCHELL, TRAVEL WRITER



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