

MEDIA RELEASE

It's official. The Central Coast is now an ECO Destination.

Ahead of World Environment Day this Sunday, the Central Coast celebrates as one of the first Australian destinations to achieve ECO Certification through Ecotourism Australia.

Travellers needn't wander too far to enjoy environmentally and socially responsible travel, with the Central Coast – just over an hour's drive from Sydney – now celebrating their status as an official ECO Destination.

The Central Coast has recently achieved their ECO Destination certification through an Ecotourism Australia and WWF-Australia funded partnership, as part of WWF-Australia's Wildlife & Nature Recovery Fund.

The definition of ecotourism adopted by Ecotourism Australia is "ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation", and the Central Coast is a destination where this responsibility is taken to heart. The region has now six ECO-certified operators and nine ECO Certification applicants through Ecotourism Australia.

With more than half of the Central Coast made up of natural areas, it is a true nature lovers' playground. With its superb natural beauty alongside a great sense of freedom, space and connection to the land, the Central Coast is a destination with sustainability front of mind.

The region boasts 42-plus beaches with uncrowded stretches of sand and renowned surf breaks. It's also home to several national parks and state forests, rolling green hinterland, pockets of rainforest and rugged bushland, where exploring by foot is a feast for the eyes and soul.

Achieving ECO Destination Certification recognises the Central Coast as a world-class location for sustainable and nature-based tourism. The announcement comes just before World Environment Day's 50th anniversary year, which encourages countries around the globe to celebrate #OnlyOneEarth through collective environmental action.

To learn more about the Central Coast's Eco Destination Certification: [**www.lovecentralcoast.com/nsw-eco-destination**](http://www.lovecentralcoast.com/nsw-eco-destination)

Central Coast experiences for the conscious traveller:

Whale watching season is here

[Terrigal Ocean Tours](#) offer small group water tours with a marine biologist, including whale and dolphin watching tours in season, and sunset and seal tours year-round. Tours are run from a high-performance Eco Tour RIB vessel taking in the region's spectacular coastline and rich marine life along the way.

Don waders and shuck oysters

[Sydney Oyster Farm Tours](#) at Mooney is one for the bivalve lovers, with a unique experience that will literally immerse visitors in the waters where the oysters grow. Visitors will don waders and walk among the oyster leases in the beautiful Hawkesbury River, learning about the evolution of oyster farming, before shucking and tasting them straight from the water.

An Australiana wilderness experience

[Glenworth Valley Outdoor Adventures](#) offer a host of activities for nature lovers with its 3,000 acres of spectacular natural wilderness beauty, attracting the likes of David Beckham, Cate Blanchett, Kanye and Bill Gates over the years. The best way to explore the property is via horseback for a guided tour riding through

rainforests, rock pools and native bushland. It is now the largest horse-riding centre in the southern hemisphere with over 200 horses to choose from.

To make a weekend of it, book a stay in one of their eco villas, glamping tents or camping spots to explore the property's peaceful creeks, cool watering holes and acres of open space.

Discover important Aboriginal sites

Walk in the footsteps of the Darkinjung people with local elder Gavi Duncan of [Darkinjung Cultural Tours](#) and discover some of the Central Coast's thousands of aboriginal sites. Choose from the Waraba (ocean) tour in Pearl Beach, where you can discover Aboriginal middens along the coast, Mundoe (footprint) tour in Bulgandry Aboriginal Art Site in Kariong, to see thousand-year-old rock art, or Warre Warren Aboriginal Place in Upper Mangrove, which is home to an incredible 200-plus art sites. All tours include a bush food-inspired morning tea and Welcome to Country smoking ceremony.

Nature tours with a touch of luxury, hosted by Elixir Journeys

Luxury travellers will love [Elixir Journeys](#) for their curated selection of tailor-made and small-group tours crafted to show you the best of nature and food experiences on the Central Coast. Highlights include a 'Paddle and Pearls' kayak tour to a pearling shed, a 'Sailing Safari with Seafood Lunch', a 'Sundowner Stroll Nature Tour' with sunset picnic in the Bouddi National Park, and more.

Paddle-power on the water

There is a diverse offering of water-based sports on the Central Coast, to take in the region's plentiful waterways, including lakes, lagoons and stretch of coastline. For an SUP experience, [Canton Beach Paddleshack](#) and [Bombora Ettalong Beach SUP](#) offer SUP hire and classes to become a master of the board. [AquaFun Avoca Lake](#) is another signature water experience providing fun for all ages, with its fleet of single and double kayaks, pedalboats and SUPs.

Explore the watery grave of the *HMAS Adelaide*

Scuttled in April 2011, the *HMAS Adelaide* is the largest and most accessible former naval dive wreck in the Southern Hemisphere. Located 1.5 kilometres off the coast of Terrigal, this 138-metre-long and 15-metre-wide wreck is a diverse and complex dive site complete with operations room, missile launcher, torpedo magazine, bridge and more to explore. It quickly became an artificial reef thriving with marine life, and is home to prawns, crabs, octopus, sponges, barnacles, large grouper, and even turtles, dolphins, seals and whales visit. Dives can be booked through [Pro Dive Central Coast](#), located at Terrigal.

A marine discovery in Terrigal

The [Central Coast Marine Discovery Centre](#) aims to teach the wonder of the oceans through their displays and interactive activities, including a display of the sinking of the *HMAS Adelaide*, revealing the beautiful corals and fish proliferating on the artificial reef. Kids love the artificial touch pool and regular fish feeding, along with the whale and shark exhibits.

Visit NSW's only pearl farm

Sustainably growing Akoya pearls, which are far rarer than diamonds, [Broken Bay Pearl Farm](#) is the only pearl farm in New South Wales located on the sparkling Lower Hawkesbury River. Visitors can join a tour of the farm to learn about the lifecycle of a pearl, browse the jewellery at the 'shellar door', and enjoy some fresh local oysters. Skipper Chris Heywood, from the iconic film *The Man From Snowy River*, is just one of the many faces you will meet when you join this tour.

Central Coast bushcraft tours

[Jake Cassar](#) is a Central Coast Bushcraft teacher, tour guide and youth mentor specialising in edible, introduced and medicinal wild plants. He has spent over 20 years doing annual survival missions where he lives off only what he can hunt, catch or gather for weeks at a time. Jake runs a variety of walking tours, and an overnight bushcraft camp course for those that want to learn a little more about living off the land.

Walkabout Park Wildlife Sanctuary

Get up and close to Australian fauna with the free-roaming kangaroos, wallabies and emus that have made a home at [Walkabout Wildlife Park](#) in Calga, with its 180-acres of natural bushland. This wildlife sanctuary believes in conservation through education, as they care for and protect hundreds of rescued, orphaned, unreleasable, disabled and retired animals every year. Located on heritage-listed Aboriginal cultural land, take part in a guided bushwalks to see the important, protected sites for our local communities. Or, make a night of it and book one of the park's onsite cabins or safari tents, plus an evening Spotlight Tour. Other highlight bookable experiences include the '[Be a Ranger for the Day](#)' for both kids and adults.

Treetop adventures

Experience the Australian bush like never before, on a [Treetop Adventure Park](#) course. Get up-close and personal with native Australian wildlife as you climb, weave and fly through the tree tops on self-guided rope courses. There are over 100 elevated obstacles with rope ladders, wobbly bridges, tunnels, cargo-nets and zip lines. Each course is customised to a particular age group and designed with graded difficulty catering to adventurers of all ages.

Breakfast with alpacas

If you're an avid traveller, you've likely heard of breakfast with orangutans and giraffe, but what about with alpacas? This fun, family-friendly experience takes place every weekend (and every day during school holidays) at [Iris Lodge Alpacas](#), a working farm in Jilliby in the Central Coast hinterland. Expect to be greeted by a hungry alpaca, and meet and feed other animals before enjoying your own breakfast while watching the alpacas. They also offer an afternoon alpaca experience, for the non-early risers.

Stay the night in the bush

[Noonaweenah](#) is an accommodation venue offering a breathtaking blend of luxury and nature in the Central Coast hinterland, overlooking Yengo National Park. With four elegant lodges that fuse seamlessly into the natural surrounds, this exclusive 100-acre property is the perfect accommodation for executive retreats, small group retreats, family getaways and romantic couple stays.

A country experience at Karinya Farmstay

Wake up to the mist rising through the valley and up over the mountains from [Karinya Farmstay](#), a four-bedroom holiday property in Dooralong in the Central Coast hinterland. Spend the days lazing by the pool or try your hand at farming and enjoy grooming the horses or feeding the sheep and cows. A stay where you can do as little, or as much as you'd like.

Immerse in nature from Unyoked's Central Coast tiny home locations

Unyoked offer off-the-grid tiny home experiences to provide guests with the temporary liberation from urban life. They have two Central Coast locations, including '[Fern](#)', located in a classic Australiana bush setting with its secluded clearing leading into nature trails that run into the neighbouring national park. While '[Yen](#)' is surrounded by the region's hard woods and gum trees, offering the ultimate nature escape where you can breathe it all in.

For more information, images or to arrange a Central Coast famil:

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