

Bermagui

Bermagui hugs the edges of its harbour, and nestles under the shadow of Gulaga (Mt Dromedary), once an active volcano 60 million years ago.

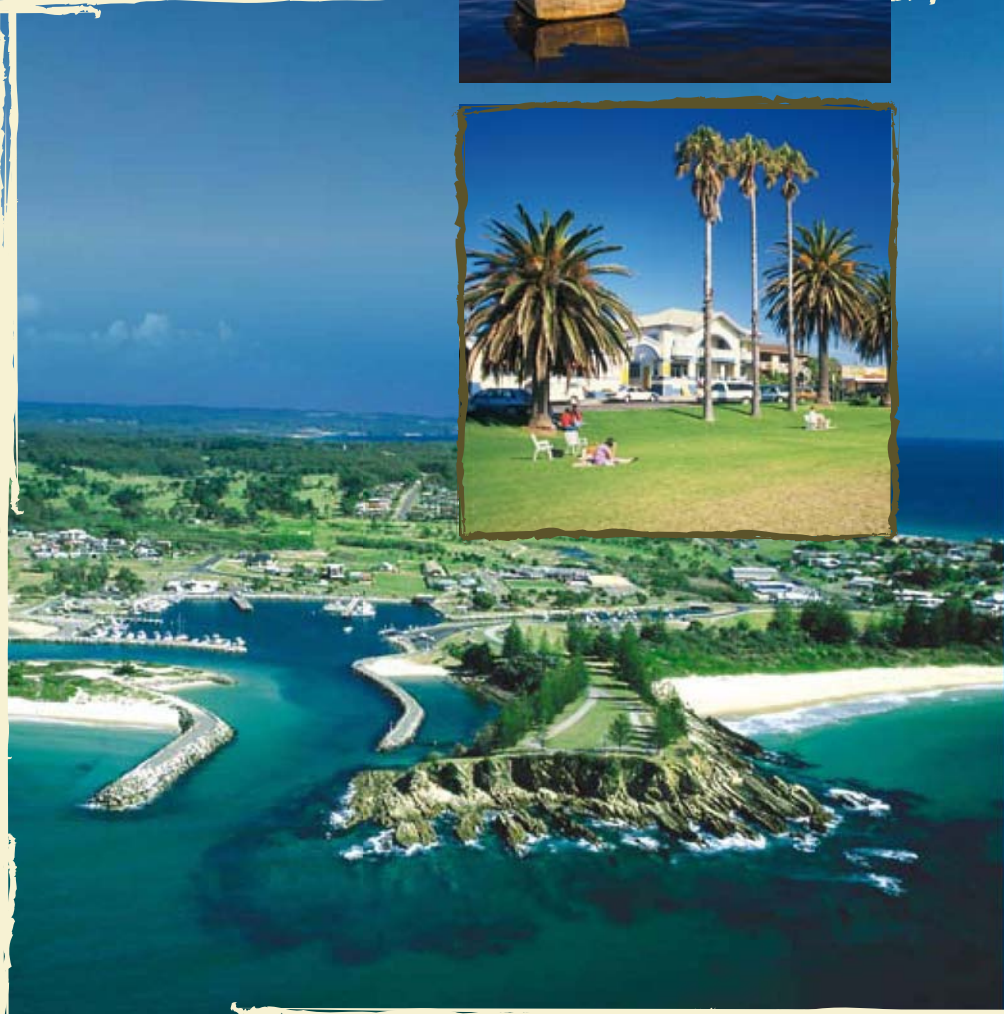
Famous for its deep-sea fishing – including yellowfin tuna and marlin – it seems ironic that the town's name is believed to have stemmed from the Aboriginal word 'Bermagueue' meaning 'boat with no paddle'.

The port was established in the 1830s and the continental shelf is just 20 km away – its closest point to the Australian mainland. Charter a boat to chase the fish yourself, or take the easier option – drop by the co-op to buy some locally raised oysters or prawns or some of the fishing fleet's catch of the day. It doesn't get much fresher or tastier than this.

One of the town's most famous visiting fishermen was American actor Lee Marvin. Another was American author and fishing enthusiast, Zane Grey. He made Bermagui famous with his book 'An American Angler in Australia' as well as a series of radio interviews and magazine articles. He first visited in 1935, camping on the headland that became known as Zane Grey Park but is now called Dickinson Park.

His great friend Michael Lerner is reported to be the only person to have hooked and landed two Blue Marlin simultaneously, but there are plenty who want to follow in his footsteps, chasing the big fish at the annual Blue Water Classic Game Fishing Tournament.

Another 'big fish' has visited Bermagui: Scottish comedian and actor Billy Connolly came to Bermagui to film 'The Man Who Sued God' (2001).



The main street of Bermagui is much as these visitors would remember it, with the towering date palms and Norfolk Island pines standing sentinel over the town's beaches.

There are several places to swim at Bermagui, including the famous Blue Pool. Once called the Blue Hole, it's a tidal pool and was once only half its present size. Then the locals did some 'renovations' back in the 1940s and what you see is the result of that work.

Just south of Bermagui is Cuttagee Beach. At the northern end of the beach Cuttagee Lake offers a safe, shallow swimming site. The southern end of the beach used to house a sawmill that produced pick handles from the local spotted gum during World War I. The troops at Gallipoli used these for digging their trenches.

Close to Bermagui is Wallaga Lake, another of the beautiful lakes that are scattered along this coastline. It is home to more than 200 bird species including lyrebirds and was formed when two river valleys were drowned some 6,000-10,000 years ago. Merriman Island, within the boundaries of the lake, is so significant to the local Aboriginal people that the general public are not allowed to land there.

Gold fever hit the area in the 1880s. Don't miss the daily tour of Montreal Goldfield, Australia's only coastal goldfield. Not only will you learn about the gold rush, but if you're a fan of murder mysteries you will find yourself slap-bang in the middle of a real one – with the added bonus of discovering how nearby Mystery Bay got its name.

