

MONTAGUE ISLAND

and whale watching

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EUROBODALLA
all kinds of natural

Montague Island Nature Reserve is a stunning natural wonder. Just 9Km from Narooma, the island is a perfect spot to observe an abundance of local wildlife and uncover some of the region's history.

A day at Montague Island gives you a different perspective on Eurobodalla's coast and also a sense of being somewhere special, a place outside of your life experiences. Montague draws nature to it in a remarkable way which you can see up close on a guided tour from Narooma.

Experience Montague Island's breathtaking natural beauty; immerse yourself in the Islands natural heritage while in luxury on a self-guided overnight stay. Visit Montague Island for a day trip on an exhilarating boat ride out to the island where you will meet the curious resident seals before exploring the island on a guided walking tour. Adventurous travellers can jump in the water and snorkel or dive for an up-close and personal seal encounter. Divers and snorkellers will delight in their playfulness and leave with video and photos to impress friends and family.

Montague Island is recognised as one of the top ten dive spots in Australia. With so much to see, diving around Montague Island is a world-class must-do.

The history of Montague adds to its lure, a mix of Aboriginal and European cultures. Known as 'Baranguba' in Yuin language, the island and its place off the coast is part of a storyline that connects to Gulaga (Mount Dromedary) on the mainland. European history is evident in the restored lighthouse and light-keeper cottages, which you can book for stays of 2 nights or more.

WILDLIFE HOT SPOT

Arguably the jewel in Eurobodalla's crown, Montague Island is a sanctuary for wildlife, home to NSW's largest colony of Australian and New Zealand fur seals and one of the largest little penguin breeding sites in Australia. The rounded grey and orange granite of Montague is home to thousands of pairs of nesting birds such as little penguins, crested terns, silver gulls and shearwaters while peregrine falcons patrol the skies. Migrating whales favour its waters for the abundance of krill. Spotting them is just about guaranteed during the spring migration season.

Montague Island is a mecca for whale watching, seal viewing, penguin tours, scuba diving, snorkelling, grey nurse shark dives, wildlife cruises and bird watching trips.

A large colony of mostly male fur seals will be the first to greet your boat as the captain steers you into the small harbour. The only way to land on the island is via the National Parks & Wildlife Service, who help maintain the island's extraordinary natural features and rich Aboriginal and European history.

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Looking back towards the Tilba region on the mainland from Montague Island, you can't help but feel watched by the imposing Gulaga (Mount Dromedary). There's a local Indigenous tale of a mother (Gulaga) and her two sons that adds to the mystery. In this story, Gulaga's youngest son Najanuga (Little Dromedary), stayed behind with his mother while his brother Baranguba (Montague Island) went out to sea on an adventure and never came home.

According to local Indigenous dreaming, Baranguba (Montague Island) was a generous provider for the Yuin people, as both a fertile hunting ground and spiritual meeting place. Sea creatures, birds and humans alike gathered here in great numbers for centuries before the arrival of Europeans. A highlight of any visit to Montague Island is a guided walking tour to discover the islands Aboriginal and European history.

The lighthouse on Montague Island was first lit in 1881 and converted to a fully automated system in 1986. It remains a part of Australia's coastal navigation system and nautical history. Since 1881, visitors have landed here to inspect the island's renowned lighthouse and enjoy a tour of this incredible site. Staying on Montague Island in the lighthouse keeper's cottages is an experience for those wanting to get away to this unique place, learn about its environment and its history, and enjoy it all at their own leisure.

For information on guided tours visit eurobodalla.com.au and accommodation options visit nationalparks.nsw.gov.au





MONTAGUE ISLAND NATURE RESERVE TOURS

When do tours operate?

Daily—depending on minimum numbers and sea conditions.

What should we take? Warm clothing, sensible shoes, a camera, sun protection, drinks and a snack.

Fitness required? Access to the island involves a ladder and stairs at the jetty. The moderate walk on the island is paved.

What can we expect to see? All tours are accompanied by a National Parks & Wildlife Service trained guide. Expect to see a variety of wildlife. Explore the historic and natural features of Baranguba (Montague Island) including the Montague Island Lighthouse precinct (subject to access).

** Tours may be combined with snorkelling and whale watching at an additional cost.*

Morning Tour

Departs: 8am or 8.30am

Duration: Approx. 3.5 – 4 hours. 2.5 hours on Montague Island and visiting the seal colonies.

Afternoon Tour

Departs: 12:30pm or 1pm

Duration: Approx. 2.5 – 3 hours. 1 hour on Montague Island and visiting the seal colonies.

Evening Tour

Operates from September to late January

Departs: Time subject to change, dependent on sunset

Duration: Approx. 3 – 3.5 hours. 1.5 hours on Montague Island. Visit the seal colonies and watch the sunset while the little penguins come ashore.

Find a tour operator at

eurobodalla.com.au/things-to-do/montague-island

Whales

Eurobodalla's whale watching season runs from September to November. The waters off Eurobodalla's coastline become a thoroughfare for migrating whales, providing some excellent whale watching opportunities. Humpbacks, southern rights and orcas can all be spotted while aboard a professional whale watching tour.

When do tours operate?

Daily – depending on minimum numbers and sea conditions.

Chasing islands that move – the largest living creatures in the world

Each year in late winter and spring, the waters off Eurobodalla's coast become a busy thoroughfare for humpback, southern rights and orcas heading south from their northern breeding grounds to enjoy a summer of intense feeding in the Antarctic Ocean.

An age-old journey

This migration has been happening for millennia with coastal Aboriginal people witnessing their passing and perhaps occasionally feasting on a beached whale. With colonisation came the whaling industry, ever more efficient, and by the 1960's operations along our east coast and in Antarctic waters decimated the whale population to the brink of extinction. Worldwide protection agreements in place for over 40 years have allowed humpback whales to make a slow but steady population recovery, now returning in noticeably increasing numbers every year.



Close encounters in Eurobodalla

Riding south using the East Australian Current to conserve energy, the whales will travel over 5000km to their summer feeding grounds at the edge of the Antarctic ice pack. In late winter the current flows towards the coast and the travelling pods are funnelled in close to Eurobodalla's shores with plenty of opportunities for land-based whale watching.

Giant acrobats of the sea

Of all the whale species, it is ultimately the famous yet little understood acrobatics of the humpbacks that lure whale watchers. Seeing a "breach" as the whale leaps from the water and returns with a mighty splash, or perhaps the awesome slapping of their giant fins and tail flukes on the water.

Doubly rewarding

Later in the season, female whales nursing their calves may be cruising just beyond the breakers, so close you can sometimes hear their breath as they exhale. The pair of them travelling all that distance – one a giant of around 15m and possibly over 50 years old and the other a tiny 4m and just a few weeks old—is a symbol of hope and reassurance for the future.

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Whale Watching

There is nothing like being up close to the action aboard a professional whale watching boat or on an adventurous kayak tour.

Your experienced skipper or guide will usually know where to find a pod of whales, quite often only minutes from the port's entrance to the ocean. You could encounter acrobatic whales or perhaps a pod steadily steaming south, or maybe there's a mother and calf to observe.

Whale watching regulations require boats to approach no closer than 100m. Still, often curious whales swim to the stationary vessel for a bit of "boat watching" or perhaps even "people watching" and you may be blessed with their spout and its unusual odour showering over you.

There is also the dramatic tension that develops when a whale dives. The minutes tick by, and cameras are poised... eyes are scanning... suddenly there's a massive roar of air as it exhales just metres from the boat or it explodes into the air in a spectacular spiralling breach.

From the deck, it is possible to notice the small things about these giant creatures – the bumps, marks and scars on their skin or the stare of their comparatively small eyes. Many of our humpbacks have patches of white or light skin that glow luminously in the clear blue waters off our coast, and you can peer down into the depths and see their outline swimming below.

From late winter through spring, daily whale-watching boat or kayak tours are available from Narooma and Batemans Bay at eurobodalla.com.au

Land based whale watching

There are plenty of places to see whales from land. Scan the waters when you are near the ocean, and you are likely to be rewarded with a sighting.

It is not always the spout that signals a whale surfacing, as changing light and wind conditions can make it hard to see. Watch for an unusual splash or a shiny reflection from a dorsal fin. A breaching whale will be obvious as it crashes back into the water, but a steadily cruising pod may be a little harder to locate initially. Binoculars or a telescope can make the experience more exciting.

Land based whale watching spots

Narooma Golf Club, Narooma: There are great views from the club greens, windows, balcony and top end of the carpark. The golf course is open to the public, at your own risk. Walk around the golf course heading north towards the coastal patrol cottage, or south along the clifftop overlooking Narooma's main surf beach. The club is at the top of Bluewater Drive.

Bar Rock Road Lookout, Narooma: An excellent vantage point, 2 minutes from Narooma's Town Wharf, below the coastal patrol station (old harbourmaster's residence) overlooking Narooma Bar. Turn onto Bluewater Drive and then left into Bar Rock Road.

Headlands between Dalmeny and Kianga, Narooma:

Dalmeny Drive hugs the coast from Dalmeny to North Narooma, and the road runs adjacent to a cycleway. It is possible to drive or cycle along while following a pod of whales or a mother and calf. Several headlands offer excellent vantage points—Dalmeny, Duesburys, Kianga and Carters Headlands are all a short turn off the main road or cycleway. When travelling south, turn onto Dalmeny Drive 5 km north of Narooma and follow around to the beach.

Toragy Point, Moruya Heads: This lookout offers whale watching views north along the coast, interpretive signage and some seating. Turn off the Princes Highway just south of Moruya, into South Head Road and up onto the headland.

Broulee Island, Broulee: Broulee Island is joined to the mainland by a sandbar so is always accessible. Whales in season and dolphins all year round may be sighted from any side of the island which takes about an hour to walk around. Parking at carpark on Harbour Drive; toilets nearby at Broulee Surf Club on Heath Street.

Burrewarra Point Lookout, Guerilla Bay: This beacon lookout is a 15 to 20 minute easy walk from the carpark at the end of Burri Point Road, Guerilla Bay; off George Bass Drive, south of Batemans Bay. Breathtaking views up and down the coast make the most of potential whale sightings.

South Head, Malua Bay: A secluded headland with two small clearings, one north and one to the south. Both clearings are accessible via a short walk along paths at the end of Tallawang Avenue, Malua Bay. Whales can be sighted as close as 150 metres from the lookout.



SNORKELLING

One of the most extraordinary snorkelling adventures in the Eurobodalla is a trip out to Montague Island to snorkel with the seals. Depending on the season, between 400 to 3,500 New Zealand and Australian fur seals adorn the majestic granite rocks that distinguish this unique wildlife sanctuary.

When do tours operate?

Daily—depending on minimum numbers and sea conditions.

What's included?

Snorkel, mask, fins. Wetsuits not provided on all tours. Please enquire about hiring options.

Morning Tours

Depart: 7.30am, 8am, 10.30am

Duration: Approximately 2 – 4 hours

Afternoon Tours

Departs: 12.30pm, 1pm, 3.30pm

Duration: Approx 2.5 – 3.5 hours

Combination Tours Montague Island Tour & Snorkelling

All tours include guided tour on Montague Island and snorkelling with the seals

Depart: 8am / 2.5 hour guided tour

Depart: 12.30pm / 1 hour guided tour

Duration: 3.5 – 4.5 hours