

# Explore beautiful **Byron Bay** ...but don't forget the clubs

**W**INE lovers know the joy of visiting a wine region and discovering the boutique producers of great wine. The small, normally family owned and run operations who sit in the shadows of the better known 'brands', fashion their product with loving care.

They are a joy to unearth and the hospitality and generosity of time you experience when visiting the smaller

wineries is second to none.

Finding golf courses which fit into this category are also a treat and more so when they are found in a location like Byron Bay, one of Australia's most desirable destinations.

And the Byron Bay Golf Club, much like a visit to smaller wineries, is a treat that will delight you with its quality, scenery and value for money.

By **Paul Prendergast**

**L**OCATED at Australia's most easterly point, the town of Byron Bay has been attracting visitors and celebrities to its gorgeous, eclectic beachside location for decades.

The rest of the world has joined in and the town is much loved for its beaches, shopping, casual outdoor lifestyle and as a cultural mecca for film, music and art lovers.

The annual Byron Bay Bluesfest music festival attracts thousands every Easter with many international artists on the bill, including Bob Dylan, ZZ Top, Elvis Costello, Ben Harper and BB King among the headliners for the 2011 event.

Likewise, the annual Byron Bay Film Festival is gaining an international reputation for showcasing local and, more recently, international filmmakers at the week-long event held each March.

Byron has not been as well known as a golf destination, but visitors making the trip will be pleasantly surprised.

Byron Bay Golf Club has embarked on some course enhancements in recent years and has recently attracted events such as the Australian PGA Seniors tournament, last won by Peter Senior in 2009, and the Australian Legends Tour Championship.

With so many great attractions nearby, it's not unusual for people to be at the beach in the morning, enjoying a picnic or leisurely lunch at one of the stylish cafes or restaurants in town, before unpacking the clubs for a round in the late afternoon after the heat of the day has subsided.

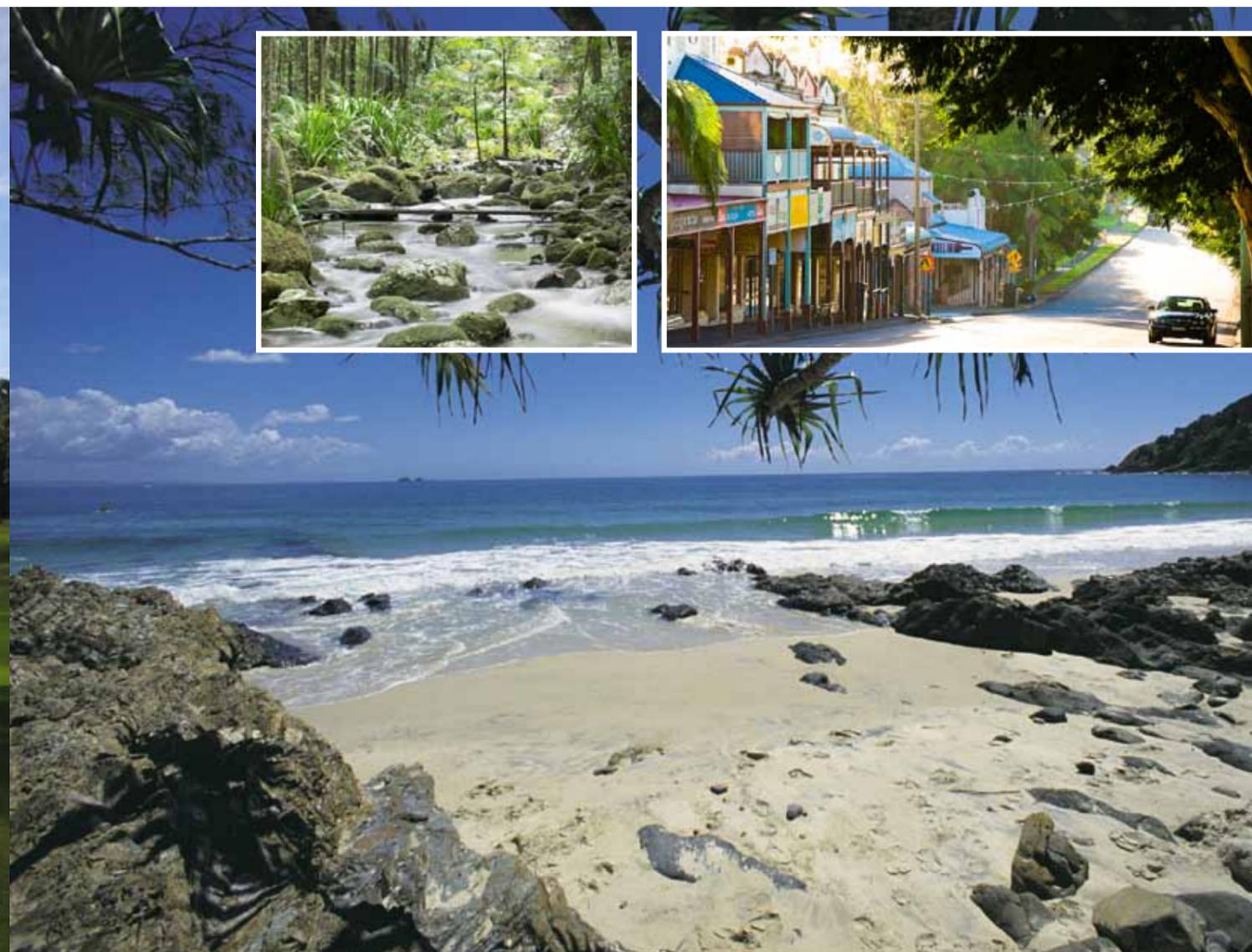
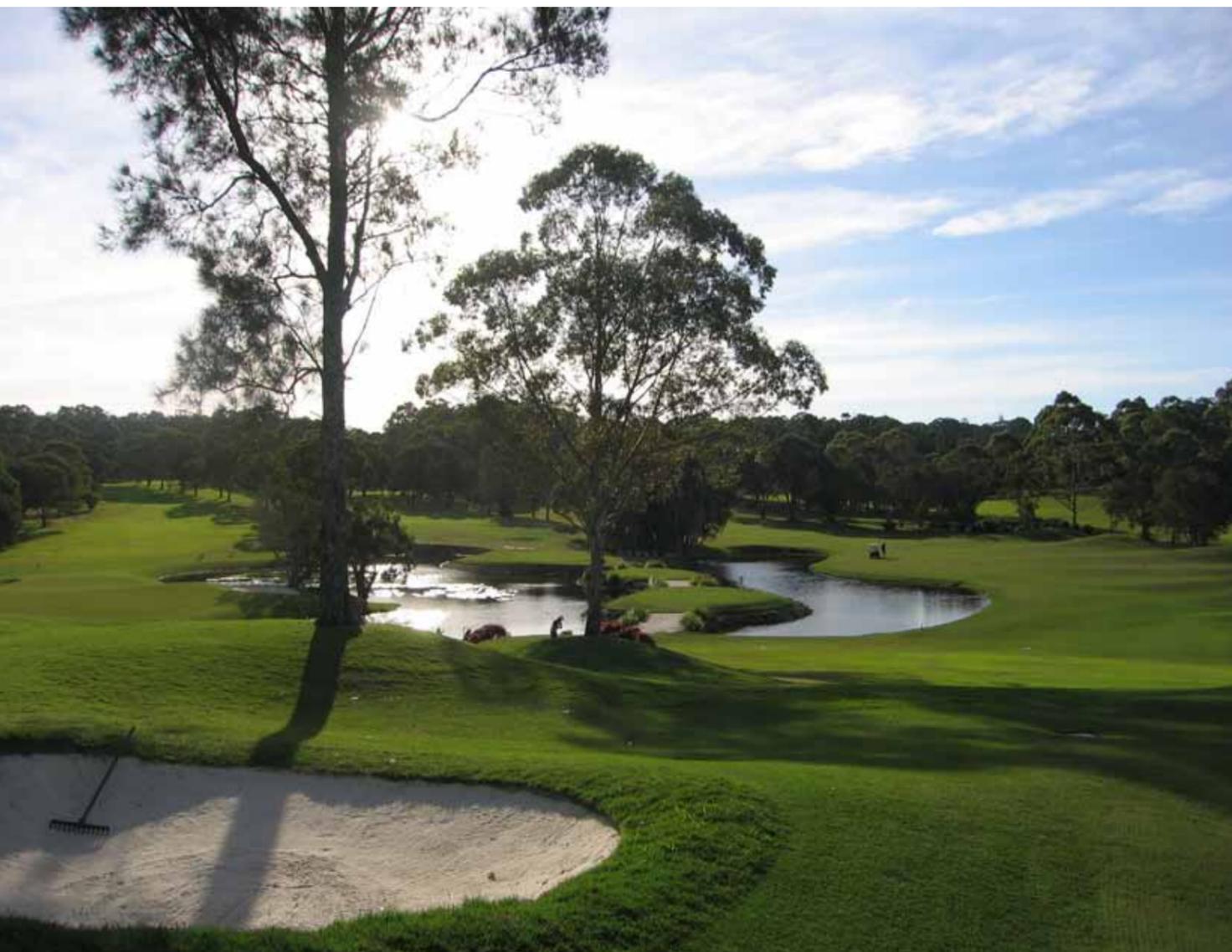
Byron Bay Golf Club offers great value and with green fees starting from as low as \$40, the chances of finding a better bargain for golf in the region are remote.

The course is located near the ocean and the sound and smell of the surf is never far away on any hole.

The layout offers some subtle and severe elevation changes, a great mix of medium to long par 3s and beautifully manicured Bermuda fairways and greens set among tall gum trees.

My favourite holes are some of the par 3s, starting with the short downhill 3rd with a green guarded by two pot bunkers, one with a set of stairs leading into it. I spotted a rare red wallaby grazing in bushland to the left of the hole.

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The 155m 14th hole is one of the recent redesigned greens and is a beauty. The green runs diagonally from left to right and is surrounded by swales, bunkers and dune grasses which make it both an attractive hole and a difficult target.

The 6th is a 318m par 4 with a severe, semi blind dogleg to the left, a sporty hole where tee shots need to be hit to the end of the fairway to get a clear view of the green past the hillside on the corner of the dogleg.

The view from the elevated tee on the next hole is exhilarating and entices you to take out the driver to get some 'hang time' to hit the snaking, wide fairway below.

The 18th hole is another of the redesigns, a par 5 up to 485m long with a wide fairway to start with before some decision making is required to set up the

best angle of attack.

A fairway bunker needs to be avoided 100m short of the green, with a layup down the left or a decision to attack and carry the bunker to get close to the putting surface.

The green is set against the side of a hill surrounded by grass and sand bunkers and swales and is a good finishing hole to the fun course.

If you're playing golf on a day trip to the region, drop into sleepy Bangalow in the Byron Bay hinterland on your way home for a coffee or leisurely stroll through the main streetscape of boutique shops.

The heritage listed village is set among rolling hills of apple orchards and macadamia nut plantations. Check out the Choux Choux Patisserie or Bamboo Noodle next door for some excellent,

fresh Asian cuisine for lunch.

The small one-street village of Newrybar, just off the Pacific Highway heading south, is home to the acclaimed and historic Harvest Café.

However, a stay in the region for more than a day is highly recommended if you are looking to fully appreciate a destination that provides you with a mixture of a tranquil hinterland vista or plenty of good food and entertainment options in the town by the beach.

You'll be staggered by the beauty of Wategos Beach in Byron Bay, with pearly white sand and aqua blue water and a gorgeous rainforest walk around the headland up to Byron's iconic lighthouse, built in 1901.

There are a host of other attractions to explore and uncover, on land or water,

including deep sea fishing charters or whale watching during the migration season.

For an unforgettable spot to base yourself for a day or more, you can't go past the luxurious rainforest setting of The Byron at Byron Resort & Spa.

Golfers will find the resort to be very convenient, with the entrance directly across from the golf club and a short distance from the centre of town. The resort runs a free shuttle into Byron three times a day.

The resort's facilities are extensive and opulently appointed with 92 one bedroom suites, including their Deluxe Spa Suites which offer a serenely private experience.

The Resort truly is inspired by nature. The pristine 45 acre rainforest setting instantly transforms you to a state of relaxation upon arrival.

Take in the stroll along the boardwalks

which twist through the rainforest, past waterlily ponds or down to Tallows Beach through a canopy of rainforest flora.

Guests can take advantage of daily yoga sessions and guided rainforest walks to the Chinese teahouses that are located on the grounds.

Foodies can also enjoy the company of head chef Gavin Hughes on his weekly trip to the Byron Farmers' Markets to select the gorgeous local seafood and produce he features in the mouth-watering dishes on his menu.

The resort has a range of accommodation packages to suit all tastes, including a Hole in One package in conjunction with Byron Bay Golf Club.

Visit <http://www.thebyronatbyron.com.au/byron-bay/packages/>

Byron Bay is a magnet for tourists,

artists, musicians and 'sea-changers' looking for a more peaceful lifestyle.

Some of the best rainforest areas in the world are minutes from coastal beaches and fishing villages and the region's most dominant landmark, a jagged outcrop of an extinct volcanic rim, Mt Warning, looms never far from view.

A short drive around the region will bring you to other intriguing towns and hamlets such as Brunswick Heads, Murwillumbah, Uki, Chillingham and Tyalgum.

Visiting some of the local outdoor markets in the villages of Bangalow, The Channon and Byron to name a few will allow you to mix with some of the colourful locals in a convivial and vibrant atmosphere.

All of this, of course, is within an hour's drive from the centre of the Gold Coast and two hours from Brisbane.