



# Cruisy coast

The New Tweed Coast might neighbour the Gold Coast, but the two couldn't be more different, writes **Lee Umers.**

As a regular member of the Kiwi flock touching down at Coolangatta airport on sun, sand and surf migrations, so I usually hit autopilot and swing the hire car north on to the coastal highway, aimed at the skyscrapers of Surfers Paradise.

But on this stopover in the Land of Oz, I've been enticed just south of the Queensland border to the New Tweed Coast.

Our daughter married an Aussie country boy (right after the Kiwis won the World Cup – great fodder for my wedding speech) and honeymooned at Peppers Salt Resort & Spa at Kingscliff on the coastal New South Wales strip.

She was wowed by the beachside community and its five-star oceanside resort, so we decided to see whether her views were real or romantic.

The first thing that hits you about the Tweed Coast is the contrast to

the glitz and glamour of the Gold Coast, just a short drive away.

The skyline is dominated by just that – blue skies, not concrete high-rises.

The beaches are the same plush white sand and pounding surf as their northern neighbours but are more old-school holiday havens, with far less crowds and traffic.

We make a coffee and cake pitstop on Kingscliff esplanade and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere among surfies and culture-vultures – boutiques and galleries mingle with the beachfront surfwear shops and restaurants.

Then it's through the \$1 billion Salt Village beachfront residential and tourism development – reminiscent of Coromandel's upmarket Pauanui beach – and on to Peppers Salt Resort & Spa.

The 345-room resort is just 50m from the beautifully unspoilt South Kingscliff Ocean Beach, patrolled all year around by the village's surf

lifesaving club.

Peppers Salt also features two heated pools – a giant lagoon with its own sandy “shore” and a more secluded tropical pool. The former is proving family-friendly, so we grab a pina colada at the bar and head to the latter for a taste of the good life.

After a couple of hard hours sunbathing and dipping in the rock pool, it's time for dinner at the on-site gourmet Roughie's Restaurant and Bar.

A promotional blurb for Roughie's contains a quote from English novelist Virginia Woolf: “One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well”.

With those sentiments in mind, I sample the Black Angus beef tenderloin, washed down with a shiraz, followed by a caramel pannacotta and candied banana



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## GETTING THERE

- Jetstar and Air New Zealand operate flights from Christchurch, Hamilton and Auckland to Coolangatta airport. Pacific Blue also has flights from Auckland.
- Visitors to Peppers Salt Resort and Spa can enjoy an overnight stay, full buffet breakfast, unlimited access to internet services, new-release, in-room movies, and access to tennis courts and boogie boards for \$178 per room per night.  
[www.peppers.com.au/salt](http://www.peppers.com.au/salt) or call +61 2 6674 7777.

**‘The skyline is dominated by just that – blue skies, not concrete high-rises.’**



Poolside at Peppers Salt.



dessert. The fare was delicious, the service superb – and I certainly slept well.

Eager to exercise off any gluttony, we set off the next morning on a stretch of the 7km beachfront and walking track.

The calorie-shedding jaunt provided the chance for a spot of envy as we strolled past a row of mansions above the dunes.

Also on the horizon was Mount Warning – the World Heritage-listed volcano looming large above the Tweed Valley.

Named by Captain James Cook in 1770 to warn other seamen of treacherous reefs along the coast, its Aboriginal title is Wollumbin or “cloud catcher”. It is the first place in Australia to see the sun.

Returning to the resort, a treat of a different kind awaited – an aromatherapy massage at The Golden Door Spa.

With 21 treatment areas, the on-site relaxation and healing centre is Australia’s largest day spa.

My treatment promised balancing and energising as well as relaxation. But, as a novice, my comfort zone was stretched when the masseuse told me the treatment

was best experienced without clothes (a provided towel ensured modesty, I hasten to add).

Any embarrassment quickly evaporated, however, along with lingering aches and pains as expert hands worked their magic and relaxing rhythms of the Eastern-style background music lulled me into a semi-transcendental state.

Emerging 50 minutes later, I felt almost like floating on air – even with a build more like a brick outhouse than a ballet dancer.

Deciding to prolong the natural high, I popped into nearby Saltbar for a beer on its sweeping beachfront balcony. The barmaid laughs about it being “a tough life” – pulling pints in the ocean breeze and watching whales – the giants of the deep cruising past the coast from June to November.

Also on view is Salt Central Park, next to Peppers Salt, where families have broken up into impromptu touch football teams and teens are brushing up their skateboarding skills. The park hosts regular concerts and festivals, including Christmas carols under the stars.

While those park-goers are obviously content with their

spontaneous recreation, I’m reminded that just a short drive away, between 15 and 45 minutes, are theme parks that are such a magnet for Kiwi holidaymakers – Dreamworld & WhiteWater World, Sea World, Movie World, Wet ‘n’ Wild, and Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.

And little more than half-an-hour south is one of the world’s most beautiful beaches, Byron Bay – a mecca for alternative lifestylers (many of whom are now millionaires thanks to a property boom of epic proportions) and European backpackers.

Australia’s most easterly point, Byron Bay is also renowned as exuding a positive energy which the Bundjalung Aboriginal tribes used to both resolve disputes and celebrate.

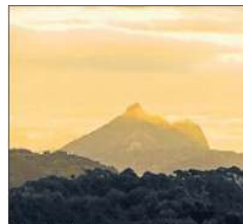
Sipping my beer on the Saltbar balcony and looking out to the ocean, I’m celebrating having discovered the secret of the New Tweed Coast.

I might head south next time I exit Coolangatta airport.

**Lee Umbers was hosted by Peppers Salt Resort & Spa**

## AT A GLANCE

- Kingscliff is a seaside town just south of Tweed Heads on the far north coast of New South Wales, Australia
- It is a 20-minute drive from Coolangatta Airport, 90 minutes from Brisbane International Airport, and 40 minutes from Byron Bay.
- Popular attractions in the area are Mount Warning, one of the largest shield volcanoes in the Southern Hemisphere and the World Heritage national parks.
- Other activities include: a treatment at The Golden Door Spa; whale watching in the winter months; beach, river and deep-sea fishing; beachfront walking and cycling tracks; local markets; surfing; Tweed River cruises.



▶ Mount Warning



▶ The stylish entrance at Peppers Salt.



▶ The path to sun and surf at Peppers.