

# AUSTRALIA'S GREEN CAULDRON

*An ancient volcanic landscape, now a living Gondwanan rainforest*

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

**W**hen the warm rays of the morning sun rise over Australia, the first place they light up is Mount Warning in northern New South Wales.

Known by the local Aboriginal people as Wollumbin, which means cloud catcher, Mount Warning and its caldera were formed more than 20 million years ago after a massive eruption caused the walls of this now extinct volcano to collapse,

The towering, cone-shaped peak of the mountain dominates Australia's Green Cauldron, which stretches from Byron Bay to Queensland's Gold Coast, and west towards the Great Dividing Range.

Captain James Cook gave the mountain its ominous name after his ship almost ran aground on the nearby reefs. He wanted to warn other 18th century mariners against sailing too close to this uncharted coast.

But for the people of the Bundjalung nation, who have long lived and hunted within its shadow, Wollumbin holds great cultural significance. Its forests have provided a plentiful supply of food, medicines and materials for generations of Bundjalung people. To this day, Wollumbin remains a sacred place of clan lore, initiation and spiritual education.

In Aboriginal legend, Wollumbin was a giant bird, speared by a warrior. That fatal spear is still visible as a point on the summit. Other legends say fighting warriors cause the lightning and thunder often observed on the mountain.

The traditional laws of the Bundjalung people state that only certain people can ascend Mount Warning. In respect of these laws, visitors are not encouraged to climb. But those who do want to ascend Mount Warning face a steep nine kilometre return journey that takes up to five hours to complete.

Botanists, geologists and ecologists praise this mountain and its national parks for their biodiversity. The area provides a habitat for more than 200 rare and endangered plant and animal species. Listen carefully and you'll hear the high-pitched wail of the green catbird, the amazing mimicry of Albert's Lyrebird and the call of the whip-birds, which reverberates like a whip crack through the rainforest.

In 1986 the Mount Warning National Park achieved World Heritage status for its outstanding natural values. The listing ensures the park is protected for future generations.

The best way to get to the Mount Warning National Park is by driving the stunning Rainforest Way, which links the region's national parks with a network of walking trails.

The touring route begins at the friendly art-deco town of Murwillumbah, and then meanders around the base of the mountain. Along the way you drive through many charming towns and pass roadside stalls offering fresh local produce and bush tucker grown in the valley's fertile volcanic soils.

The Border Ranges National Park sits on Mount Warning's western edge and is home to the highest concentration of marsupial species in Australia.

At the park's Antarctic Beech picnic area the views over the wilderness are like views of a lost world. A highlight is the view from the Pinnacle Lookout on the rim of the Wollumbin Caldera. To stand on the rim of this caldera is to experience one of Australia's most breathtaking natural wonders.

On the southern rim of the caldera lies the Nightcap National Park. In the late 1970s, conservationists fought vigorously to save the area's natural treasures from timber loggers. The waterfall in the park is named in honour of those dedicated environmentalists.

The Green Cauldron is a distinctive Australian landscape of natural and cultural significance. Its vast expanse of subtropical rainforest offers a window onto Australia's prehistoric past. Its plants and animals have a genetic history that stretches back to the super continent known as Gondwana. To experience this special place is to be immersed in nature's mystery.

***A highlight is the view from the Pinnacle Lookout.  
To stand here is to experience one of Australia's  
most breathtaking natural wonders.***





## Key facts

- The 2,455 hectare Mount Warning National Park is in the heart of the Tweed Valley, 12 kilometres south-west of Murwillumbah. The park's environmental significance comes from its large stands of sub-tropical rainforest and its biodiversity.
- Mount Warning is an extinct volcano, 1,156 metres high. Its caldera was formed after a major eruption which caused the collapse of the walls that formed the volcano's cone.
- The World Heritage register listed Mount Warning National Park in 1986 as part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia. These rainforest reserves cover more than 40 national parks and wilderness areas.
- The Border Ranges are also World Heritage listed. They encompass more than 30,000 hectares of scenic rainforest, gorges, and waterfalls. The area has an extraordinary concentration of frog, snake, bird and marsupial species.

## Things to see and do

- Drop into the World Heritage Rainforest and Visitor Centre in Murwillumbah. It's at the start of the Rainforest Way, and provides excellent interpretive information on the rainforest and the region.
- Drive the Rainforest Way. It links the region's national parks with a network of walking trails.
- Enjoy a picnic in the peaceful surrounds of the Korrumbyn Creek picnic area. Keep an eye out for the resident wildlife, including Albert's Lyrebird, the Powerful Owl, Marbled Frogmouth, and Sooty Owl as well as koalas, spotted-tail quolls and squirrel gliders.
- Bushwalk through the lush sub-tropical rainforest of the Lyrebird Track at the base of Mount Warning. The Amaroo Track in the nearby Wollumbin National Park is another bushwalking highlight.
- Follow the Mount Warning View Circuit through historic villages such as Uki and Tyalgum. Mount Warning's omnipresent peak is rarely out of sight.
- Take the Tweed Range Drive which loops from Murwillumbah to Kyogle and Lismore. The views of Mount Warning and the caldera are unforgettable.
- Visit the hinterland towns and villages of Casino, Kyogle, Lismore and Nimbin. The area is affectionately known as the Rainbow Region because it is home for many alternative lifestylers including artists, writers and musicians. Their colourful festivals brim with arts and crafts, kites, crystals and local produce.
- Sample the local produce. The region's macadamia nuts, exotic fruits, aromatic coffee and excellent wine are all excellent.
- Relax in a health spa in the hinterland at Ballina. Experience the classic Aussie surf culture at the coastal retreats of Kingscliff or Byron Bay.
- Join a whale-watching tour and witness the annual migration of humpback whales. Enjoy the antics of the dolphins that frolic near the coast.
- Go river cruising or deep sea fishing along the caldera coastline.

## Suggested itinerary

The Rainforest Way is a series of seven loops and trails providing access to the national parks. The main drive of the Rainforest Way links the towns of Casino, Kyogle, Beaudesert, Nerang, Murwillumbah, Nimbin and Lismore.

The Mallangane and Richmond Range drive crosses the foothills of the Great Dividing Range. Stop at the lookout at Richmond Range for a spectacular view of the distant volcanic plugs that form the mountains of the region.

The town of Boonah, in the foothills west of Beaudesert, is worth visiting for its distinctive heritage architecture, while Carrs Lookout offers views of the origin of Australia's longest river, the Murray.

The Mount Warning View Circuit follows the base of Mount Warning, with striking views of the valley and rim of the caldera. The route travels through the township of Nimbin, known for its alternative lifestyles.

The Tweed Range Scenic Drive features vistas of Mt Warning and the caldera. Stop at the Antarctic Beech picnic area for views over the Lost World Wilderness.

Another highlight is the view from the Pinnacle Lookout on the rim of the caldera, more than 900 metres above sea level.



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