

Narooma, NSW

- Jewel of the Far South Coast -

Few sportfishermen are not aware of the pretty NSW South Coast town of Narooma.

Located a few miles west of Montague Island, and just 18-20 miles from the edge of the Continental Shelf, Narooma remains one of the most challenging and enduring sportfishing grounds in Australia.

There are many reasons for this but principally, the deep blue waters just a few miles offshore contain a near perfect habitat for most of the popular sportfish. Deep canyons, some the size of small valleys, cut into the Continental Shelf along here, the waters plummeting to as much as a thousand fathoms (and beyond) just 25 miles offshore. But for most fishermen (trailerboat fishermen at that) the centrepiece of all activity is Montague Island itself. It's like a big magnet – drawing both the fish and the fishermen as the currents swirl and sway around this massive rock structure just a few miles inside the Shelf.

These waters are blended with the seasonally 'hot' waters sweeping down from the tropical north before being turned away off Tathra, by the colder waters sweeping up from the



L-R: William Dudley, Mark Dudley and Brad Dudley with Brad's winning capture in the recent 2002 National ANSA Convention - a 90 kg striped marlin.

Bass Strait. It is an amazing place, and one of the most consistent fishing grounds in Australia.

Freelance writer Vesna Andric has done a fine job on this report. It has brought back many memories for the writer. Memories of the South Coast's deep blue, clear ocean; the brooding dominance of Mount Dromedary, shrouded in clouds around its peak. Memories of crisp, clear winter mornings; smelly baitfish fingers clasp early morning mugs of steaming coffee; nostrils suffused with oily outboard fumes as the outboard engines clattered into life; and the warmth of the sun flooding across the boat as it comes out from hiding behind Montague Island.

It's an addictive place. Once you've been there you'll not only remember it forever, you'll keep going back.

If you've never been to Narooma NSW enjoy this excellent report. It contains everything you need to get started. If you haven't been there for quite some time – take this report onboard as a reminder of what makes Narooma so special. And if you are an Island regular, bask in the contentment of knowing you are indeed, one of the lucky ones.

- Peter Webster



Narooma NSW...

Fishing is a way of life in Narooma, and has been a part of the town's livelihood for over 80 years. Much of the town's industry is based on fishing and the people it brings to the area.

Local businesses offer a wide variety of goods and services and the local council has set up a number of amenities to cater for fishermen and boat owners. There's not much a fisherman needs that can't be found in Narooma.

Another bonus is there's a lot going on for families too, so it's possible to balance a well deserved fishing holiday with an enjoyable family holiday.

Narooma is located about 300 km south of Sydney, 220 km from Canberra and 600 km north of Melbourne.

The residential population is around 8,000.

Back in the 40's, through to the 70's the fishing in Narooma was awesome, there are accounts of salmon in the inlet so thick you'd think the boat had run aground. Unfortunately, once this bounty became known, it quickly led to an over-fishing frenzy. Nowadays the action is still good, but the salmon have wised up, and their numbers in the inlet are not as abundant.

Today local businesses and council work together to protect, preserve and regenerate the waters around Narooma.

The Wagonga Inlet is closed to all netting and trapping with the exception of hand held prawn scoops and bait traps for poddy mullet. Spear-fishing is

banned from the entrance to the road bridge.

For more information about local fishing rules concerning marine parks, size and bag limits, protected species, licensing and any other queries, contact the crew at the Narooma Fisheries Office. The office is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m., to 12:30 noon and then from 1:30 p.m., to 4:30 p.m.

The Fisheries Office is based on Riverside Drive, Narooma, Phone (02) 4476 2072, Fax (02) 4476 1517.

Narooma is a beautiful place where you can reconnect with the natural world. The water in the Wagonga Inlet is clean and brilliantly blue. The beaches are wide and layered with soft fine sands, and the countryside is lush and green.

One feature of the town's landscape which boat-owners need to work around are the hills. When making accommodation bookings it's a good idea to ask about drive ways and parking areas.

Fishing Action Fishing options range from: bay, blue-water, rock, beach, estuary, lake and wharf.

The Wagonga Inlet is renowned for its good water quality and variety of fish species. There's flathead, whiting, luderick, tailor, bream and mulloway.

Along the beaches there's Australian salmon, yellow-eye mullet, whiting, tailor, flathead and bream.

Good shot of Nitro, a local 38' Cougar Cat, coming in through a quiet bar - check out the big 'lump' forming in the foreground.

The main targets around the rocks are tailor, bream, luderick and black and silver drummer.

Montague Island, which is 6 km east of Narooma, is a popular spot for both big game sport fishing and trailer-boat fishermen as you can find a wide range of species fairly close to shore.

Off the northern end, there's yellowfin tuna, yellowtail kingfish, snapper, marlin, wahoo, dolphin fish and kingfish. Kingfish schools also mass in the south. On the eastern side small boats can get close to the drop-off to find big kingfish, sharks and yellowfin tuna.

Black, blue and striped marlin can also be found off Montague Island. Albacore, marlin, sharks, big tuna and the occasional broadbill can be tracked around the Kink, south-east of Montague Island, where the 100 fathom line runs close offshore.

Snapper can also be found at Aughinish Rocks, which are 3m under water and just south of Montague. Caution should be exercised when fishing Aughinish in heavy weather as waves can break over the reef.

Bait Supply Bait fish and like creatures (squid, cuttlefish, pippies etc) are an important part of the water's eco system. They keep it alive and healthy in a number of ways, one of those

This is it - the infamous Narooma bar. The scene of many awful and sometimes tragic accidents. The problem with Narooma has always been the same - it's far too narrow to 'run away' or run along the break inside the walls, and the volume of water rushing out to sea through this narrow 'neck' on a run-out tide is fearsome. If there is any sort of a breeze pushing in over the water rushing out (and the normal summer afternoon wind is the prevailing 15-20 knot nor'easter) - then it's not uncommon to find yourself eyeballing a 2.0 - 3.0 m breaking wave as you go out, or have to follow a set back in, during the day. And if the sou-easterly is blowing in the morning, over an out-going tide, it can be very scary stuff, either way. If you do venture out, REMEMBER you must be able to cop whatever stands up in front of you, because there's nowhere to go, and no way in the world can you turn around. *Don't even think about it!* Keep your head; push the boat up against the wave, absorbing its energy, not fighting it; keep the boat on station as the wave passes under and over. DON'T accelerate - just hold the boat on station, and be ready to push forward against another wave (because they usually come in sets of three) before you can get weaving again.

The moral is simple - if you are in any doubt whatsoever, **DON'T go out.** ALWAYS go out on the incoming tide - and only after you've stood off in the corner, and had a damn good look at the break. If the sou'easterly is blowing in the morning, forget it, fish the inlet. It's only going to get worse, and be as lumpy as hell over at the island. Finally, don't be conned by 'peer group' pressure of the "Ah, yer as weak as . . ." kind. Watch them do it from the safety of the Hill. (- Peter Webster, Ed)

important ways is feeding the bigger fish, the fish we are so keen to catch.

Without these baits the fish will either move on or die. This is why all of us who enjoy fishing today and want to enjoy fishing tomorrow, should collect just enough live bait for the day's needs.

Prawns and poddy mullet can be found in any of the little lakes and estuaries. When berleying for poddy, use wet bread and release it under the water to avoid sea gulls taking the

bread and scaring the mullet away.

The sand flats behind the fisheries office on Riverside Drive are a good spot to pump for nippers.

Beach worms and pipis can be found on most beaches around Narooma and crabs, cunjevoi and muscles can be collected from the rocks. Remember, regulations for pipis prevent taking them 50 metres from high tide mark.

There's a good selection of frozen baits available from tackle shops and service stations.

The Narooma Sport & Gamefishing Club is a good place to meet local fishos. The club is open every Friday night from 4:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m., the club is base on Riverside Drive, next to the Taylor's launch ramp.

The crew at the club will gladly help visitors with any questions about fishing Narooma and are a good bunch to just kick back and have a few drinks and laughs with - and the kids are welcome, too.

Guides, Charters & Tinnie Rental

The hardest part about finding a fishing guide or charter service is choosing one.

I'd heard good comment about Jack Dart from Sunset Fishing Adventures, so opted to give him a call. We talked and agreed to meet up for a 5:30 a.m.

Local jewfish guru Barry Wells, with a 6.68 kg jewie taken during a recent comp. Wagonga Inlet has always been a good producer of jew and flathead - and there's still plenty left.

Guided Charter CONTACTS



Jack Dart
Sunset Fishing Adventures
 P.O Box 33
 Bodalla NSW 2545
 Ph: 0413 039 800



Ben Boulton's
Top Shelf Tours
 Ph: 0438 981 861

Taylor Bros.
 Riverside Dve
 Forsters Bay
 Narooma 2546
 Ph:(02) 4476 2127

Quarterdeck Marina
 13 Riverside Dve
 Forsters Bay
 Narooma 2546
 Ph: (02) 4476 2723

morning fish at Handkerchief Beach.

To get there you head south out of Narooma along the Princes Hwy and drive just past the Island View Beach Resort caravan park and take a left onto a dirt road, there's a sign a few metres in. Jack brought the light beach rods and some beach worms he'd caught the day before. The morning was fresh, with clear skies and a magic sunrise. We watched the mullet jumping around in the surf, landed



Narooma NSW . .



Over the years, the facilities at Narooma have slowly improved - as much by the locals as from any government initiative.

some Australian salmon and threw back undersized whiting.

One of Jack's favorite fishing adventures is beach fly fishing. According to Jack, it's just a matter of reading the beach. Finding a sand bank with a good channel running by, looking at the water's surface for signs of feeding and then casting. So far, mullet have proved to be good fun when beach fly fishing.

Jack's fishing adventures cater for pros as well as novices. Bookings are generally made for 2-3 people. All types of fishing options can be arranged, from beach, blue-water, rock, river, estuary and lake, day or night. The tackle and bait are supplied. The only thing Jack doesn't cover are the fishing licenses.

Rates vary according to the type of fishing, gear needed and length of time.

Offshore Charters For a top blue-water charter, Top Shelf Tours are one of the best in Narooma.

The tours are run by Benn Boulton, aboard *Nitro*. Benn's been fishing

Narooma for around 13 years and running a professional charter service for 3 years.

The tours operate in the waters off the coast of Narooma and around Montague Island. Some of the fish targeted on the sport fishing trips include yellow-fin tuna, marlin, albacore, kingfish, mako sharks, blue-fin tuna and broad bill.

Nitro is a well maintained, purpose built 11.0 metre Cougar Cat, powered by twin 318 HP Volvos. Tracking fish is made easier with top of the line electronics gear, like the colour fish cam and landing fish is made easier with custom built game rods, made with Sabre blanks and Penn reels.

Diving expeditions, whale watching, island and wildlife tours are also run by Top Shelf Tours.

For fishing charters *Nitro* takes on a maximum of 8 people at \$125.00 per person for a full day.

Six seater, 14 ft tinnies, with 6 HP outboards, fuel included, can be rented from either Taylor Bros or Quarterdeck. Prices start at a minimum of \$25.00 for the 1st hour and \$90.00

for a full day, although each have different in between rates.

As well as tinnie rentals both Taylor Bros. and the Quarterdeck cook up great local seafood meals.

Accommodation Accommodation choices range from any of the four caravan parks in town and the one just out of town, each offer a variety of services and amenities from powered or non powered camp sites, caravans, self contained cabins, swimming pools, spas, and tennis courts. And in town there's a good variety of furnished flats, units, houses, hotels and motels.

To make life easier the Narooma Visitors Centre (which is also the light house museum) specializes in providing accommodation information and bookings. To find the perfect accommodation to suit your needs contact the centre and let them know what you require i.e. price range, parking for a trailer boat, quick access to a ramp or shopping facilities, ocean views, or lots of room for a big family.

Also worth noting is most places offer a discount rate during the off

Narooma NSW . .



Narooma is a terrific destination for tourists, fishermen and boatowners.

season.

Narooma's population swells during the major holidays so it's a good idea to book early.

Accommodation Contact(s)
The Narooma Visitors Centre,
Princes Highway,
Narooma 2546.
Ph (02) 4476 2881
Fax: (02) 4476 1690.

Boat Ramps There are 5 boat ramps in Narooma.

Apex Park is the biggest and most popular. Located north east of the bridge, Apex has a concrete double ramp suitable for large and small boats, and can be accessed by 2WD and 4WD. There's one timber and one pontoon jetty, lots of lighting, a large cleaning table with running water, taps for boat wash-down, but you have to supply your own hose. Plenty of parking. Seats, tables, bins, a BBQ area and toilets.

To get to Apex most people take the tight turn close to the bridge, for trailer-boat owners this turn can be

unnerving. Life can be made easier by driving towards the Dalmeny & Kianga tourist drive 5 and then taking the 1st right on Williamson Dve, from here you just follow the road.

The Mill Bay ramp which is north east off the bridge, is a cement ramp, suitable for 2WD or 4WD. There is no lighting or facilities and care should be taken when walking in the water as there are oysters.

On the south west side of the bridge there is a sand ramp, ideal for small boats. There are no lights or facilities and high tides can encroach on the parking area.

Another popular ramp is Taylors, alongside the NSGF. This is a sand and gravel ramp, suited to launching trailer-boats up to 6.0 metres. This ramp can be used with both 2WDs and 4WDs. There's parking close by, plenty of lighting, a cleaning table with running water, table and chairs, toilets and a BBQ and park for the kids across from the parking area.

The loop which is opposite the ramp at Taylor's is best used at high tide as there is a steep drop off the end of this

ramp. Better to approach this ramp with a 4WD. There is a cleaning table but no lighting.

Tackle Shops There are 2 main tackle shops:

Ocean Hut Fishing & Dive Centre,
123 Princess Hwy
Narooma, 2546
Ph: (02) 4476 2278
Fax: (02) 4476 3589

Managed by Daryl and Lyn Bond. The Hut has been in operation since 1978. There's a good selection of tackle, and diving gear. Professional diving charters can be booked through the Hut. Fishing licences, maps, bait and ice also available. And provided they can find the parts any reel can be repaired.

Open 7 days from 7 a.m. till late in summer and 9:0 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in winter.

Daryl's Tackle & Dive

Down on the flat - find them at
66 Princes Hwy
Ph: (02) 4476 2111
Run by Peter & Rhonda Ogalvie.
Daryl's Tackle & Dive sell fishing



"Now listen up mister Damon Olsen - you guys might t'ink you're doin' okay up dere with F&B - but I'm comin' after your job !" And 3 yr old Caleb Verdon knows what he's talking about, having just won the Sub-junior section in the recent ANSA comp !



Above: Charismatic old timer, the fan-tailed wooden ferry Wagonga Princess is now a popular tourist attraction - and a very sneaky way of getting the low-down on this surprisingly fishy estuary.



Left: Every town has one - this is, um, Mad Mulloway head Billy Bueters with his very own mulloway (jewfish) totem pole. If nothing else, it certainly highlights the size of the jewfish available in this pristine estuary.

licences, maps, bait, ice, tackle, camping and diving gear as well as repair rods. Bookings for Narooma Charters can also be made at Daryl's. They're open 7 days a week, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. in summer and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during winter.

Maps For maps of the Wagonga Inlet or the coast line off Narooma contact any of the following places:

Narooma Waterways

Open Fridays only
95 Campbell St
Narooma 2546
Ph: (02) 4476 2006
or

Narooma Visitors Centre
or the Tackle shops.

Fueling Up For fueling up there are 3 petrol stations. The Ampol, which is open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. during summer and 6:30 am to 6:30 p.m. in winter. The Mobil which is also an NRMA office, opens from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. during the winter months and 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. during the summer. Value Plus, which is the cheapest place for fuel, operates from 6 a.m. to 6:30

p.m. in summer and winter.

All the servos stock ice, bait and a variety of other bits and pieces useful to fishos.

Weather During spring and summer the weather is fairly temperate.

The best time for fishing is from day break through to about 10:30 a.m., before the wind comes up.

North easterlys can be dangerous for small craft if winds are over 15 knots and south west changes can come in very quickly.

In autumn, take note of sneaky westerlys and in winter, watch for quick southerly and westerly changes.

Changes can come in quickly so keep an eye and ear out for reports.

The Narooma Coastal Patrol broadcast the weather on 27 MHz 86/91 and Sydney Radio gives reports on VHF 16/73.

Any weather warnings are broadcast immediately.

Coastal Patrol The Narooma branch of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol is based at Old Pilot House, Bar Rock Road, Narooma.

A listening watch is maintained 24

hours a day on 27 Mhz.-86 &VHF-16.
Ph/Fax: (02) 4476 1443

Coastal Patrol also print a very good information sheet on the do's and don'ts of crossing the bar, available at the Patrol base, and the tackle shops.

Radio For 27 meg, channels 94 and 96 are for chatting, 86 for calling in and 91 for emergencies and logging on and off with the RVCP.

On VHF, Channel 72 is for general chat, and CH 16 is for emergencies or Coastal Patrol.

Food When it comes to good food you'll have no trouble putting on a few kilos in Narooma. There's a good variety of places and types of food from great fish n' chip shops, gourmet cafes, casual bistros, formal restaurants and bakeries.

To get you started I can recommend a feed from Taylor Bros. down on Riverside Drive. Taylor's is a casual BYO, fish n' chip shop with a top selection of local sea foods. One of my fave dishes is the squid with herbs and sweet chilli sauce, *Yumm!* Taylor's also puts together a nice seafood platter.

The Raw Prawn bistro at O'Briens Hotel on the Princes Hwy, also delivers a decent feed at a digestible price. The Raw Prawn does local sea food dishes as well as more traditional steak and veg bistro meals.

For fresh seafood, look no further than Narooma Bridge Seafoods. Here you pay fair prices on fresh seafood, 90% of which is harvested from the waters surrounding Narooma. Bridge Seafoods is on the northern end of the bridge.

For The Family For the family there are heaps of fun things to do in Narooma.

Like checking out the new Narooma boardwalk, about 400 metres long, and built along the Wagonga inlet, starting at the Mill Bay ramp and leading to the Apex ramp. The walk's a great place to see fish like whiting, luderick, leather jacket, squid as well as rays and starfish all thriving in the inlet.

Another great bonus are the 3 fishing stations, each with running water, cleaning tables, 4 rod holders, lighting

and a bench to sit and relax on.

For big and little kids, grab a snorkel and get up close and personal with the local marine life. There are heaps of clear, safe spots to enjoy a snorkel. Or go for a swim at one of the many safe swimming beaches, like the netted bar beach or the Narooma surf beach opposite the surf club, which is patrolled on weekends and during school holidays.

For the more adventurous there are professional scuba tours.

Local surfer Matt operates Surf's Cool Australia, which is a good fun surf school. Open to students from eight years to 108, so if mum or dad want to learn it can be done.

Matt provides wet suits (all sizes), big soft foam malibu boards and coaching, all for very reasonable fees. Contact Matt and book through ETC on (02) 6493 3456. Family and group discounts.

There are a few National parks like the Eurobodalla National Park and the Mimoso Rocks National Park, both of which cater for campers.



Vesna Andric is a 25 yr old freelance writer based in Bermagui NSW. A mother of two, she grew up fishing lakes and estuaries with her Dad - a tradition she and husband Dan are keen to follow.

For directions, maps and information on road conditions and any other queries contact the Narooma National Parks and Wildlife Service, Cnr of Field St and the Princes Hwy, on the flat Narooma, Ph: (02) 4476 2888.

(This is just a short list of what's on offer for visiting families, for more information contact the Narooma Visitors Centre on Ph: (02) 4476 2881 and Fax: (02) 4476 1690)

F&B



Above: Looking west, towards Narooma township. Below: Looking nor'east, towards the bar.



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