



Wollongong Gateway

SUNDAY DRIVE



photo courtesy of Tourism Wollongong

Wollongong Gateway

The fabulous new Illawarra Visitor Centre offers the most spectacular coastal views imaginable. A short drive from anywhere in Macarthur, this centre forms a literal new 'gateway' to the Illawarra district. You will find all the information and local knowledge you need to discover the secrets of the Illawarra.

You need to discover the centre first though. To any visitors bar those from Sydney, getting to the entrance is tricky. If you are coming from Campbelltown, take the second turn off to the left as you pass over the freeway at Bulli Tops. It is marked Princes Highway and Darkes Forest. You have to go about two kilometers before a turning bay allows you to enter Bulli Tops again on the Princes Highway. The rest is straight forward. From whichever way you are coming, getting on to the Princes Highway is vital.

This visitor information centre, with its striking exterior and innovative interior design, sets a new benchmark for this type of facility. Using state of the art technology via plasma screens and innovative displays, you are taken on a visual tour of the region. You can pre-purchase tickets and obtain big savings to local attractions including Jamberoo Action Park, SkyDive the Beach, the Illawarra Fly and Whale Watching at Jervis Bay.

The facility also includes the Jumbulla Aboriginal Discovery Centre which focuses on the social history and culture of Aboriginal people of Illawarra and the South Coast. The overall theme is 'come walk in our footprints' and there are four different theatres where a number of narrations are presented in a unique blend of cutting edge technology and

human interaction.

I grabbed a quality coffee at the kiosk in the centre but from my lounge chair I could see inside the beautiful Altitude 1148 restaurant. The menu seems a bit strange considering the opulence of the room. Modern standards like Salt & Pepper Squid are mixed with Indian standards like Butter Chicken. Throw in some serious seafood selections like Moreton Bay Bugs and you have quite a confused menu. Trying to please everyone rarely works. I will definitely be getting along to try Altitude 1148 though. Any menu well done is worth trying... and the views!

I walked out on to the massive viewing platform, half to take in the view, half to check if there was any surf left over from the previous day's fun, three of four feet of swell. "Holy @#&!" I may have said out aloud. The swell was now three or four metres and absolutely pristine conditions turned the view into one of the most amazing pictures imaginable, and not just for surfers. The swell was so big and so beautiful that normal punters were drawing breath as they stepped onto the decking which hangs out over the Bulli cliffs.

I finished my Sunday Drive there and then, well the work part of it anyway. I rang a friend and we met up at Sandon Point where a competition was being held in serious three metre-plus surf. We watched for a while before heading off down the coast to find somewhere to get out into the surf. There are not many options when the surf is that big.

Visit Wollongong's new Gateway Centre on your way down the coast, the view alone is worth stopping for. Everything else is a bonus.