

NOT JUST NOOSA

There's more to the Sunshine Coast than Hastings Street, as **MEG LAW** and her family discovered on a recent trip



Sunshine Coast

Hastings St, Noosa – people flock from all over Australia to visit this hub on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast, famous for its luxury hotels, plunge pools, cosmopolitan dining, surf stores, art galleries, day spas and designer fashion boutiques. Known as the heart of Noosa’s cafe society and bordered by Noosa Main Beach, the Noosa River, Noosa National Park and the Noosa Spit parkland, the bustling, thriving, friendly, beachside street has both an international and local flavour that is hard to beat. But there is more to Noosa than this popular drag. We set out to uncover some of the family-friendly experiences and hidden secrets that Noosa and surrounds has to offer.

PEREGIAN BEACH

One of Noosa’s greatest attractions is its golden, sun-drenched beaches, which are among the finest in Australia. The three main beaches – Noosa Main Beach, Alexandria Bay and Sunshine Beach –

are fringed by many other picturesque bays and coves, and Peregian Beach is one definitely worth exploring. The seaside village town of Peregian Beach is just 15 minutes’ drive from Hastings St, and had long been on our list of places to visit, as we had heard a whisper over recent years that it was the quiet achiever. Boy, oh boy, these whispers were worth listening to!

There is something quite beautiful about the Peregian way of life. Laidback coastal vibes wash over this enclave, friendly locals swarm the streets sipping on good coffee, kicking back having a yarn and chasing the sun. It’s a healthy way of life for all who live here and the main beach can testify to this, with hundreds of locals walking or jogging along the sand each morning at sunrise.

It’s clear that this place is one of the best beachside suburbs on the Sunshine Coast, but it may not be a secret for long (shhh ... don’t tell anyone!).

Peregian Beach was
a family favourite

NOOSA NATIONAL PARK

It wouldn't be a real holiday for us without exploring the nature-based experiences on offer, and what better way to do this than to lace up the hiking boots and hit Noosa National Park? Prone to lengthy family hikes, we hired a toddler hiking carrier for our youngest and set off on the 15km stretch of trails that beckoned. Extending from Noosa Heads south to Coolumb, the Park is one of the Sunshine Coast's top natural treasures and covers nearly 4,000ha of paperbark forests, rainforest, coastal dunes, and heathlands, serving as a spectacular setting for a family outdoor adventure.

The coastal track leads you along the edge of the rugged sea cliffs via the rock pools at Tea Tree Bay and Granite Bay and Dolphin Point Lookout. Our kids loved looking for sleepy koalas in the trees and trying to spot dolphins and whales in the thrashing surf below. We ventured up and down the cliff paths and along the sandy beaches and rewarded ourselves with a cold drink at the famous Sunshine Beach Surf Life Saving Club.

To rest the weary limbs, we then jumped on the Noosa Ferry at the back of Hastings St, joining the masses of other families, and venturing to our favourite haunt, The Noosa Boathouse, for some live music, dancing, fish 'n' chips on the beach and good ol' fashioned family-friendly vibes.

MARY VALLEY RATTLER

"All aboard!" my youngest shouted as he ran along the platform, to the amusement of all the passengers. A first train ride for any kid is a "kinda big deal", and our four-year-old wasn't about to let anyone forget that! Of course, this kid doesn't do things in halves... why pick a normal metro train when you can ride on Australia's third biggest heritage railway and experience the magic of the Mary Valley Rattler?

After an early morning drive to Gympie, (less than an hour from Hastings St) we were all awaiting the historic steam train. The Classic Rattler Run departs from the historic Gympie Station, passing through the picturesque small town of Dagon ▶



Family walks along Peregian Beach



Jasper in his element on the Mary Valley Rattler



Matt and Daisy on the Mary Valley Rattler



Mum and Jasper walking the Noosa boardwalk

to the town of Amamoor. Once there, the train turns around on the restored turntable, and big kids and little kids alike can line up to watch this fascinating process take place.

As you step back in time and travel along on the steam train, listening to the meticulously restored carriages rattle against the rails and the distinctive bellow of the old word locomotive whistle, you are transported to another world. The lush green rolling hills pass by quickly, yet time seems to stand still while you relax and admire the scenery, crossing over historic bridges and farmland.

As I watched our son lean on the window ledge of the open-air carriage, his eyes wide open, with an infectious, happy grin, singing “Choo Choo, Chugga Chugga” while he excitedly jiggled up and down on the seat, I felt an immediate shift in the lens in which I viewed the world. When you look at the world through your child’s eyes, you discover an abundance of imagination, curiosity, and wonder about life. The Mary Valley Rattler brought all this magic to the forefront, making it an experience to remember.

Be sure to top off the train experience with lunch at the Rusty Rails Café, where

you can dine on the platform of the historic station, built in the early 1900s. Oh, and if you have young kids, take home a wooden train whistle as a memento... or if you have sensitive ears, like me, perhaps don’t!

EUMUNDI MARKETS

If you still have energy to burn and want to explore further afield, drive another thirty minutes out of Gympie to visit The Original Eumundi Markets, an ever-evolving collaboration of talented locals sharing their handcrafted works, homewares, clothing and fresh produce.

NOOSA RIVER AND BEYOND

So if you are planning a visit to Noosa, be sure to get out and explore the rest of the beautiful region as it has so much more to offer. Jump on a ferry, or hire a kayak, paddleboard, jet ski or even a barbecue pontoon, and venture up and down the waters of the Noosa River. Catch a fish, hike the National Park or explore the white sandy beaches and get some Vitamin Sea. Pack a picnic or drop in for a cheeky tippie at the many Life Saving Clubs dotted over the area, with prime views of the coast... or simply lie beneath a swaying palm tree and stop, breathe and relax. Noosa, Noosaville, Peregian Beach and the Sunshine Coast as a whole, is the perfect holiday destination – and we, seemingly, only just scratched the surface. *CA*

MORE INFORMATION:
visitnoosa.com.au

The writer was a guest of Visit Noosa



Ivory Palms Resort



Retreat Beach House

WHERE TO STAY

The Mantra French Quarter, Noosa Heads

If you want to stay in a convenient location to explore Hastings St, we stayed right above Hastings St at The Mantra French Quarter, which provided the perfect base to wine, dine, shop and explore.

mantrafrenchquarter.com.au

Ivory Palms Resort, Noosaville

If you decide to venture further afield, then Ivory Palms Resort is situated between Noosa and Tewantin and guarantees you a different perspective to the busy Hastings St area. Boasting three pools, an on-site café/restaurant and cocktail lounge, tennis court, games room, jumping pillow and a myriad of accommodation styles to choose from, is it any

wonder this place is so popular with families? But beware, it's a trap. Once you check in, it's difficult to actually leave the Resort

ivorypalmsresort.com.au

Retreat Beach Houses, Peregian Beach

We stayed at the Retreat Beach Houses — a two-storey beach house nestled in the sand dunes with 180-degree views of Peregian Beach and its neighbouring coastal beauties: Marcus, Castaways, Sunrise and Sunset beaches. With its plantation shutters welcoming the sea breeze each day, tropical garden oasis, lagoon pool and tangerine sunrises seen from the upper deck each morning, it's the perfect place to base yourself and even comes with its own private coastal track leading to the beach.

theretreat.com.au

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