



## travel feature

### **MOTHER NATURE'S HIGHRISE**

The Gold Coast's 21<sup>st</sup> century developers may be reaching to the sky with their luxury apartment buildings soaring to 70 and 80 storeys, but the region's ultimate highrise dates back millions of years and was proudly developed by Mother Nature Incorporated.

Just over the border in northern NSW, Mt Warning towers over the glitzy skyline, soaring to 1,157m above an ancient volcanic caldera lush with rainforests, farmland and rambling rivers.

A day trip from the Gold Coast will take you through the bustling heart of Tweed Heads with its popular Twin Towns entertainment facilities and shopping centres; out into the rolling green hills of the valley; via the rural hub of Murwillumbah and along the lazy river banks to Mt Warning National Park.

As the central plug of the Tweed shield volcano, the rich soils cushioning the base of the mountain nourish warm subtropical rainforests dominated by booyongs, palms, tangled vines and delicate ferns. Rare and endangered plant species offer a haven to equally vulnerable native animals such as the Albert's Lyrebird, the spotted-tail quoll and the wompoo fruit-dove whose mournful call serves as the musical backdrop in this Garden of Eden.

For the age-old Aboriginal tribes of the Bundjalung nation, this mystical environment has always been an important meeting place for initiations and spiritual education. As such, a politely worded sign at the base of the mountain asks bushwalkers to consider not climbing to the summit as a mark of respect for their traditional law and customs.

That being said, there is no official ban on climbing and a well-maintained trail, comprising over 1000 steps, rewards experienced and well-prepared hikers with spectacular 360 degree views.

Allocating the required four or five hours it takes for the 8.8km round trip, however, means you'll miss out on some of the unique attractions of the near neighbourhood.

Daytripping at a more relaxed pace allows you to stop at Murwillumbah and learn more about the valley environs at the World Heritage Rainforest Centre. Art-lovers will also enjoy visiting the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery with its fabulous portrait collection, and Escape Gallery which features the work of local artists.

Tootling out along the river banks to Mt Warning, you can stop and buy fresh produce at the roadside stalls for a lazy lunch at Korrumbyn Picnic Area at the entrance to the national park.

Leaving the summit walk to the die-hards, enjoy a stroll through the rainforest at the base along the 200m Lyrebird Track where you can watch out for shy and not-so-shy wildlife from an elevated platform overlooking Breakfast Creek.

You'll then have ample time to extend the drive home via the valley's rustic art and craft villages, following the winding picturesque by-ways to Uki, Stokers Siding, Mooball and back along the Tweed Coast Road.

Tweed Tourism can provide details on what's available and make all your reservations, as well as sending you a free copy of their Tweed Coolangatta Visitor Guide. Phone tollfree on 1800 674 414 or go to [www.tweedtourism.com.au](http://www.tweedtourism.com.au).

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Released by Verve Consulting on behalf of Tweed Tourism

**MORE INFORMATION:**

Karen Ransome  
Verve

Ph: 07-5538 7379  
Mob: 0431 958 726  
Email: [kransome@technet2000.com.au](mailto:kransome@technet2000.com.au)