



travel feature

TASTE THE TWEED

With its combination of unique fruits, fresh traditional produce, gourmet providores and internationally renowned chefs, the Tweed region has emerged as one of Australia's newest 'foodie' destinations.

The lush volcanic soils of the Valley, coupled with a sub-tropical climate, provide the perfect growing conditions for tea, coffee, bananas, sugarcane and the freshest of fruit and vegetables, with an increasing number of farmers now specialising in organic produce.

Other growers have successfully transformed local specialties, such as native fingerlimes, lemon myrtle, macadamia nuts and Davidson plums into commercial crops that they supply to leading city restaurants and the export market; while a number of farmers are experimenting with exotic fruits and flavours, including the alien-looking Buddha's hands fruit which hails from the foothills of the Himalayas, Japanese yuzu citrus and Kaffir lime leaves.

Through their Taste the Tweed project, Tweed Tourism is developing a series of food trails that combine farm visits with dining experiences.

Heading west of Tweed Heads along Kennedy Drive, you can sample freshly shucked oysters and see how they are grown at Bird's Bay Oyster Farm. Continuing up to Carool, you can call into a working macadamia farm, sample local coffee and visit the Tweed's only winery at Ilnam Wine Estate.

Further out into the Tweed Valley, you can combine your tastings with a little food for the soul. Starting at Murwillumbah, admire the work of local and national artists at the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery and Escape Fine Art Gallery; then head out to Chillingham to try native fingerlimes, Buddha's hands fruit, and other weird and wonderful citrus at Buck Buchanan's Banana Cabana.

Your next stop – Tyalgum – offers a welcome coffee stop at Flutterbies Café where you can also sample locally made Soulfire Chocolates from the special chocolate menu offered on Sundays.

Heading back towards Mt Warning, there are more art and craft galleries to admire at Uki before you call into the Uki Café or, on the Mt Warning Road, Mavis' Kitchen or Buddha's Belly for lunch. On the way home, stock up on some supplies to take with you at the Guinea Farm roadside stall not far from Uki or the Modern Grocer for gourmet goodies just before the bridge in Murwillumbah.

Of course, when it comes to fresh produce, we can't forget the *fruits de mer*. The oceans and rivers of northern NSW serve up a daily feast of deep-sea fish, prawns, mudcrabs, spanner crabs and oysters – all of which can be purchased straight from the trawlers and co-ops along the river banks or at one of the many outstanding seafood restaurants.

Tweed Tourism can help you map out a number of food trails. Call them on 1800 674 414 or search for great foodie stops online at www.tweedtourism.com.au.

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