



TOP 5 Craft beers

With the meteoric rise of microbreweries, it can be tough to settle on your new favourite brew. Matt Bennett scopes out the tastiest drops Down Under

1

MOUNTAIN GOAT ORGANIC STEAM ALE

A blend of Aussie and Kiwi new world hops, the Goat's steam ale is crisp and organic. Get it on tap at the Pinnacle Hotel. 251 St Georges Rd, Fitzroy, Melbourne, www.goatbeer.com.au

STONE AND WOOD PACIFIC ALE

This offering packs a big fruity nose along with a strong hoppy taste and a refreshing finish. Try it at the Beach Hotel. Jonson St, Byron Bay, www.stoneandwood.com.au

2

3

KWENCHER PREMIUM AUSTRALIAN PALE ALE

This pale ale boasts a passionfruit and honey-citrus aroma and a crisp, sharp finish. Try it at The Asian Beer Café. Level 3, 211 La Trobe St, North Melbourne, www.kwencher.com.au

LITTLE CREATURES PALE ALE

Cascade and Chinook hops from the US give this ale its distinctive taste. Try it at Little Creatures Brewery. 40 Mews Rd, Fremantle, Perth, www.littlecreatures.com.au

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5

MATILDA BAY'S ALPHA PALE ALE

There's an assertive bitterness to this ale, which has a big hop nose with citrus notes derived from the use of North American hops. Try it at Matilda Bay Brewery. 89 Bertie St, Port Melbourne, www.matildabay.com.au

OVERNIGHTER

Mission Beach, Queensland

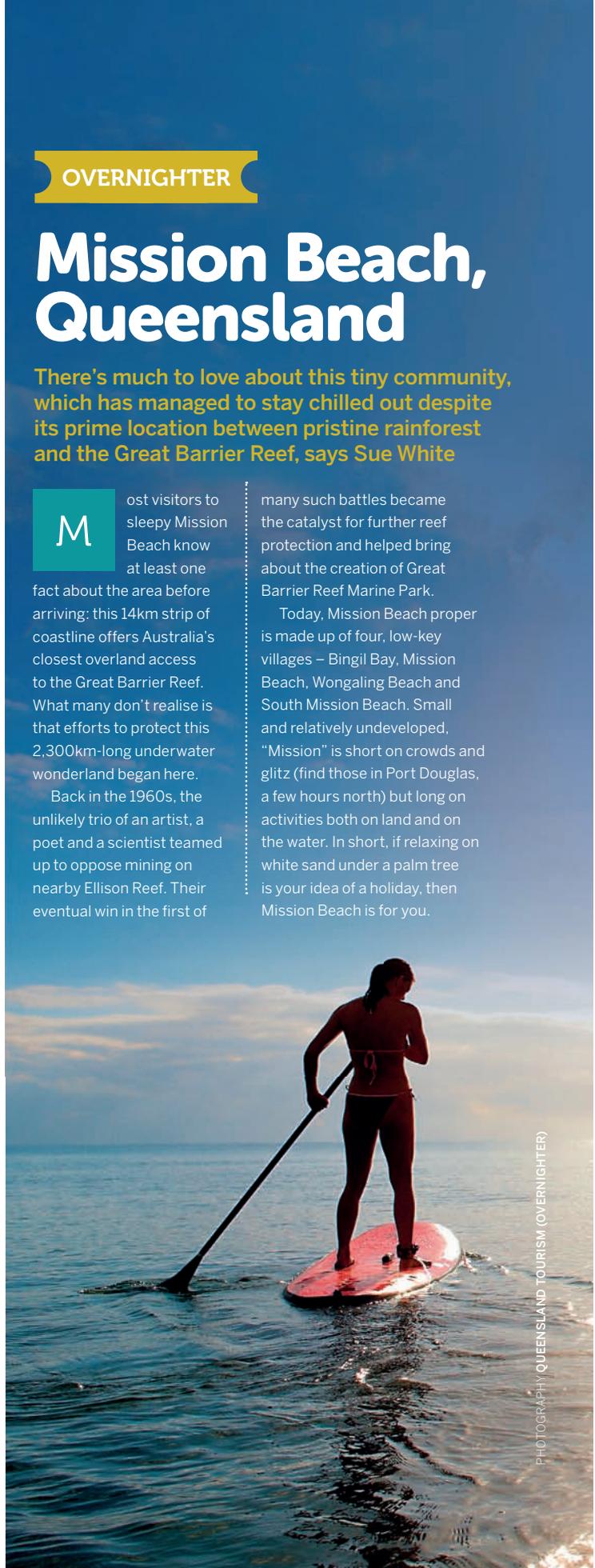
There's much to love about this tiny community, which has managed to stay chilled out despite its prime location between pristine rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef, says Sue White

Most visitors to sleepy Mission Beach know at least one fact about the area before arriving: this 14km strip of coastline offers Australia's closest overland access to the Great Barrier Reef. What many don't realise is that efforts to protect this 2,300km-long underwater wonderland began here.

Back in the 1960s, the unlikely trio of an artist, a poet and a scientist teamed up to oppose mining on nearby Ellison Reef. Their eventual win in the first of

many such battles became the catalyst for further reef protection and helped bring about the creation of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Today, Mission Beach proper is made up of four, low-key villages – Bingli Bay, Mission Beach, Wongaling Beach and South Mission Beach. Small and relatively undeveloped, "Mission" is short on crowds and glitz (find those in Port Douglas, a few hours north) but long on activities both on land and on the water. In short, if relaxing on white sand under a palm tree is your idea of a holiday, then Mission Beach is for you.



PHOTOGRAPHY QUEENSLAND TOURISM (OVERNIGHTER)

WHAT TO DO

Divide your time between reef and rainforest. Unless you've packed a water-going vessel in your hand luggage, you'll need to jump on an organised trip to access the reef. For the classic wind-in-your-hair experience, board Big Mama's 60ft yacht for a utopian day of snorkelling on the cusp of the outer reef.

If you can't spare a full day, Mission Beach Water Taxi's three-hour, three-island tour is recommended for both its ease and atmosphere (though for snorkelling, stick to the reef or rocks back on shore).

Active types will enjoy Coral Sea Kayaking's half-day trips along the shoreline. Alternatively, rent a stand-up paddleboard from the Mission Beach Adventure Centre.

Back on terra firma, landlubbers can take to the road. The Great Tropical Drive, which begins at the Great Barrier Reef and heads all the way to the outback via the area's tropical rainforests, features a side trails in the Mission Beach area. Try the Tully-to-Mission-Beach loop,

the Great Green Way or the Canecutter Way, all of which take in parts of Mission Beach.

WHERE TO EAT

The Fish Bar in Mission Beach has \$10 lunches and \$17 evening meals, both very popular, while The Bingil Bay Café has excellent pizza, juices and mezze plates, as well as a book exchange if you need some holiday reading. While you won't get a full meal, the tropical fruit-tasting run at the visitor's centre (Mondays and Tuesdays, 1-2pm) will fill you up on mangosteen, rambutan and other local, in-season fruits.

WHERE TO STAY

For beachfront and a resort-style environment, Castaways Resort & Spa offers enough seaside bliss that you may resist leaving, especially since the restaurant and day spa both rate well with visitors.

Slightly out of town, The Sanctuary Retreat can only be reached via a 600m walk along a rainforest track but for serenity, this place can't be beat. Cassowaries roam the

180,000m² property and the experience of sleeping in a rainforest hut (complete with net walls) is unforgettable.

For those on a tighter budget,

there's Mission Beach YHA, Bingil Bay's caravan park, or Dunk Island (accessible via water taxi), where you can pitch your own tent. 🏕️

FIND IT:

● **Mission Beach is 139km from Cairns; arrive by bus or rent a car.**

● **Castaways Resort, tel: (07) 4068 7444, www.castaways.com.au**

● **The Sanctuary Retreat, tel: (07) 4088 6064, www.sanctuaryretreat.com.au**

● **Drive North Queensland, www.drivenorthqueensland.com.au**

Tigerair flies to Cairns from Melbourne and Sydney. For more information, go to www.tigerair.com

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

1 MARGARET RIVER, WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Wineries, water views and a haven for foodies: this coastal region a few hours south of Perth deserves its world-famous reputation.

2 LENNOX HEAD, NEW SOUTH WALES
This small, beachside town, just a short hop from Byron Bay, offers the same laidback vibe as Mission Beach, albeit with a slightly cooler climate.

