



Come! Sit! Stay!

Getting Sand Up Your Cossie!

Mermaid

1. n. an imaginary female marine creature typically having the head and trunk of a woman and the tail of a fish.
2. Mermaid Shack pet friendly accommodation situated on the Central Coast, seaside destination of Copacabana.

A break over the summer holiday season is a great Australian tradition. What better way to beat the stress and heat of the festive season than to head for a beach location and enjoy some sun and surf with your pets for added fun.

Copacabana (or Copa as locals call it) is a town on the Central Coast under two hours drive north of Sydney. It's situated at the northern end of MacMasters Beach with the two beaches geographically divided by Cochrane Lagoon. Savvy real estate developers named this sleepy little town in the 50s after the more famous and swinging beach district of Rio de Janeiro. Residents in the 70s were probably humming the Barry Manilow song that tells the love triangle involving showgirl Lola. Sadly, on the one and a half hour drive there, I can't stop humming the tune also. The lyrics are annoying me but I can't seem to stop trying to remember them.

We've got the car packed up with all the necessary items for a weeklong getaway. With dogs and parrots happily and safely harnessed in, we leave the city fumes for some salty air. We've been given very clear instructions on how to get to our Copa accommodation, the Mermaid Shack, and make good time in getting up there.

The Mermaid Shack isn't so much of a shack—it's a neat little three-bedroom house that sits on a corner block. Although it's small, it could comfortably accommodate a family of five with or without pets. The main bedroom has a queen-sized bed, the middle room has a set of bunks and the third has a double bed. The main living room has a modular lounge suite a large screen digital TV with DVD and CD player. The proprietors have thoughtfully left a laminated 'how to operate' instruction manual for those of us confused by technology.

A dine-in kitchen has everything you'll need for a long or short stay. The electric stove has seen better days but it's still functional and easy to use. There's plenty of cutlery, crockery, serving platters, storage containers and kitchen utensils. The standard sized fridge also has a freezer. The separate laundry has a washing machine and drier for those who can't stand the idea of getting away without the chore of washing.



The Mermaid Shack is only two minutes drive from the beach or five minutes easy walk. On the way you can stop off at the local school grounds for an off leash romp with the dogs as this joins the main park. The park is also home to well-maintained tennis courts and these can be booked through the local newsagency. There are hilly and flat walks through the neighbourhood and we make a game of calling out the Spanish inspired street names: Pueblo, Chico, Del Mar, Oceano, Fiesta and Vista—very exotic.

The main foreshore, De Monte Place, is home to a small strip of shops including real estate agents, a liquor store, newsagency, two hair salons, a couple of takeaway shops and two cafes. The cutely named Copacinnno café opens early and has good coffee and I'm told, the best potato wedges. They also serve up a variety of breakfast and lunch options. It's dog friendly as you can sit outside with your four-legged mate.

There are no signs banning dogs from the beach and you'll see an abundance of locals jogging on the clean sand with their dogs. Remember to take your own dog poo bags with you as there are no dispensers, but general garbage bins are located directly in front of the surf life saving club.

At the northern end of the beach is a rock pool and this is an ideal place to wade out with paddling dogs. The water is only about chest high and medium dogs can wade out for some distance before they have to start paddling. Close by the other end of the beach is also a lake for some still water swimming.

About ten minutes drive from Copacabana is the larger town of Kincumber. It has a variety of shops including a large supermarket and chemist—so don't fret if you've forgotten anything, they'll have it.

If cooking every meal isn't part of your holiday plan, then we have some suggestions that include scenic drives and exceptional cuisine. The Yum Yum Eatery is situated about a 20-minute drive on the picturesque, waterfront spot of Hardy's Bay. Breakfast options include buttermilk pancakes with banana and fresh lime topped with a generous serve of mascapone. If you're more into a savoury start to your day, you can choose omelettes with a variety of clever fillings or more traditional eggs and bacon. For a more exotic start you can opt for an Indonesian Nasi Goreng.



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