



## SOUTHERN GOLD COAST

## MORE SHORE THINGS

Retro charm meets contemporary glam away from the Glitter Strip

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**1 Siblings Kirra**

The tail end of the Gold Coast, tucked in on the Sunshine State side of the NSW-Queensland border, offers a laid-back alternative to the bustling Glitter Strip further north. Compared with Surfers Paradise and Southport, southern suburbs such as Kirra and Coolangatta offer a more peaceful, contemplative pace, with abundant natural beauty, uncrowded beaches and relaxed al fresco dining. Perched on the sands overlooking Kirra Beach, Siblings Kirra channels this ambience to great effect. The 200-seat restaurant occupies the heritage-listed space left vacant when Pizza Hut closed its doors in 2019. So stylish is the new incarnation that locals who bemoaned the loss of the all-you-can-eat buffet have changed their tune. The light-filled space of Siblings features an ocean outlook, and fresh flavours. My companion and I savour coconut margaritas and small plates ranging from burrata with charred broccoli pesto to tempura oysters topped with smoked kewpie. [siblingskirra.com.au](http://siblingskirra.com.au)

**2 Native State**

Standing under beachside showers to slough off sand and salt used to be the closest that most Gold Coasters ever came to communal bathing. But the opening of Native State in 2023, the city's first dual gym and bathhouse, ushered in a new means to move and nurture the body beautiful. The dimly lit bathhouse is like a cave, and at its centre are two pools – one heated to a balmy 37C and the other a brisk 10C, for those who wish to follow the contrast-therapies protocol. (For newbies, recommendations are posted on the wall.) Native

State also features infra-red and traditional cedar saunas, a eucalyptus-scented steam room, a meditation room, and plenty of fluffy white towels, purified water and herbal tea on tap. Numbers are limited to 24 bathers at a time. Casual sessions from \$49 (45 minutes) to \$79 (90 minutes) a person.

[nativestate.com.au](http://nativestate.com.au)

Kirra Beach House, main; Billy Chow's tempura Moreton Bay bug bao, right; Pipi's by Gambaro, above; Siblings at Kirra, top right; Snapper Rocks, above right

**3 Kirra Surf Shop**

Right next door to Native State is the long-established Kirra Surf Shop, which lays claim to "the greatest range of surfing products under one roof". It's a bold call, but utterly believable once you step into this vast, warehouse-style space positioned opposite one of the nation's most famous point breaks. Whether you're in the market for a new surfboard, skateboard or wetsuit, or you just want to look the part with a fresh bikini or pair of boardshorts, you'll have plenty to choose from, with brands such as Billabong, Quiksilver, Havaianas and Roxy well-represented. The history of Kirra Surf is unclear; some suggest it first opened in 1964, making it one of the area's oldest institutions – albeit one that's almost five decades younger than the nearby Kirra Surf Life Saving Club, which was established in 1916.

[instagram.com/kirrasurfshop](https://www.instagram.com/kirrasurfshop)**4 Billy Chow**

Everything you need to know about Billy Chow is encapsulated in its tempura Moreton Bay bug bao with XO kewpie. This sublime little morsel combines a focus on local seafood, pan-Asian twists and the philosophy of the kitch-





en team, which sets out to make from scratch everything from pickles and kimchi to bao buns and dumplings. I settle in here on a rainy midweek evening, watching lightning crack through the Norfolk pines that frame the oceanfront as I work my way through a five-course banquet starting with sashimi of kingfish and ending with mango panna cotta. The tanned, tousle-haired waitstaff nail the carefree beach aesthetic and know the menu inside out. This streamlined space, featuring blond timber, delicate hues of peach and apricot, and lamps suspended like Chinese lanterns, offers the perfect foil for the food. Four-course banquets from \$64.

[billychow.com.au](http://billychow.com.au)

**5 Kirra Beach House**

When Kirra Beach Hotel opened in 1956, locals fell in love with its easygoing charm. But as the years wore on, down-to-earth turned into down-at-heel, with the Tweed Heads Historical Society declaring the hotel's appearance "shabby" by the turn of the century. In 2021, the 65-year-old watering hole was demolished as part of a \$380m redevelopment. Two years later, the Kirra Beach Hotel reopened. At street level, it still rocks the old-school pub vibe, complete with a tub of thongs behind the bar for those who turn up without footwear. But climb a flight of stairs and you'll enter Kirra Beach House, a vast indoor-outdoor space offering ocean views, briny breezes, a killer cocktail list and a share-style menu that moves well beyond pub classics.

[kirrabeachhouse.com](http://kirrabeachhouse.com)

**6 Pipi's by Gambaro**

Pipi's offers unparalleled panoramic views out over the Pacific Ocean from its prime position perched atop Point Danger. Launched in February 2024 by Brisbane's formidable Gambaro Group, Pipi's modern Mediterranean menu is a celebration of seafood, from caviar bumps and octopus carpaccio to seared scallops and swordfish skewers. I start with plump oysters accompanied by a refreshing apple and fennel granita, before moving on to tender chargrilled squid served with salsa verde and green salad. Lovers of a good steak are also well catered for. Curvaceous lines, blush tones, sheer curtains over full-length windows and subtle patterns combine to create an interior that brings to mind the sand-dwelling mollusc that lent the restaurant its name. Afterwards, cross the road to explore the Captain Cook Memorial and Lighthouse, which stands astride the NSW-Queensland border.

[pipsisrestaurant.au](http://pipsisrestaurant.au)

**7 Cooly Eco Adventures**

Cook Island Aquatic Reserve, which technically lies over the border, teems with marine life, making this a popular snorkelling and diving spot. Early one morning, I clamber aboard Cooly Eco Adventures' rigid inflatable boat for its Swim



with Turtles tour. This involves a journey out to the coral reefs surrounding uninhabited Cook Island, 600m offshore from Fingal Head. Formed by ancient volcanic lava flows and furiously circled by seabirds such as crested terns and wedge-tailed shearwaters, the isle has a Jurassic-looking appearance. Across an hour in the water off its shores, our group spots dozens of turtles, including critically endangered hawksbills. Cooly Eco Adventures also offers tours that enable guests to swim with whales, or spot whales, dolphins or turtles from the boat. Swim with Turtles tour from \$129 a person.

[coolyecoadventures.com.au](http://coolyecoadventures.com.au)

**8 Surf Safari with Reveling Australia**

Surf schools are dotted all up and down the Gold Coast, but new and experienced surfers who want to take their skills to the next level should consider Reveling Australia's new Surf Safari experience. Former professional surfer and current Olympic surf coach Bede Durbidge takes guests out to explore some of the top surf breaks on the southern Gold Coast, such as Currumbin Alley, Kirra and Snapper Rocks. In addition to receiving personalised pointers, the safari includes an oceanside meal and a private tour of Balter Brewery (of which Durbidge is one of the founders). There's the option to add a visit to Durbidge's longtime board shaper, Mt Woodgee Surfboards, to get your own board shaped. Reveling Australia also offers customised tours for other interests, including families, foodies and wine buffs. Surf Safari for up to five guests; price on request.

[reveling.co/australia](http://reveling.co/australia)

**9 Gold Coast Oceanway**

Not a swimmer, snorkeller, surfer or scuba-diver? One of the most exhilarating ways to explore this iconic coastline, without so much as dipping a toe in the water, is with an ebike adventure along the Gold Coast Oceanway. This 36km stretch of shared cycle and pedestrian pathways starts at Point Danger in the south and extends as far north as The Southport Spit. I hire an ebike from Coolangatta's Kool Bikes & Hire and ride up to Point Danger for breakfast at the Black Dingo Cafe. Sated, I ride north as far as my four-hour booking will allow, nipping into surf clubs along the way for coffee and cold drinks. (You'll need to dismount when you hit high foot-traffic areas or the zigzag board-

walk just past Froggies Beach, a small cove to the south of Snapper Rocks.) Half-day ebike hire from \$79.

[koolbikeshire.com.au](http://koolbikeshire.com.au)



**BEST BEDS**

**10 Villas by Bilinga Beach Abodes**

The southern Gold Coast hasn't entirely escaped the creep of high-rise apartments, but there are pockets of surf-shack nostalgia. The Villas by Bilinga Beach Abodes is built on the bones of a ramshackle 1960s dwelling. A two-year renovation created twin three-bedroom villas with raked ceilings that are filled with natural light and decorated in sorbet shades. While I love the sage-green kitchen and the pink freestanding tub in the main bedroom, the most dramatic feature of my upstairs villa is a helical staircase leading up to a loft bedroom and lounge area. Bilinga's sandy shores are only a short walk away, but each villa has an appealing private plunge pool. From \$650 a night (two-night minimum).

[bilingabeachabodes.com.au](http://bilingabeachabodes.com.au)

Denise Cullen was a guest of Experience Gold Coast. [experiencegoldcoast.com](http://experiencegoldcoast.com)



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Credits: Mackintosh-designed Willow Tea Rooms, Glasgow  
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Paul Cézanne, *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, c.1885 (detail)



**Morris to Mackintosh**

with Robert Reason | 16 – 27 September 2025 (12 days)

Delve into the Arts and Crafts Movement through the legacies of William Morris and Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

Highlights:

- Discover gardens and homes emblematic of the Arts and Crafts ideals
- Visit William Morris's Red House and Kelmscott
- Enjoy tea at Glasgow's Willow Tea Rooms, designed by Mackintosh



**Treasures of the National Capital**

with Helen Pitt | 31 August – 04 September 2025 (5 days)

Discover Canberra's leading national cultural and artistic institutions, including a major international art exhibition.

Highlights:

- Visit the blockbuster *Cézanne to Giacometti* exhibition at the NGA
- Discover famous personalities in history at the National Portrait Gallery
- Go behind the scenes at the Old Parliament House of Australia