



Make it a date, 1770 is a great experience

SALLY MACMILLAN has a "Captain Cook" at a famous Queensland town and its surrounds

IF you wipe out, don't panic," we're told as we bob in the sea, awaiting the next booming wave with trepidation. We're surf kayaking out in the ocean off the quaint town of 1770 on Queensland's Discovery Coast, midway between Bundaberg and Gladstone.

Around Monument Point is 1770's sister hamlet and surfing mecca, Agnes Water.

These are hideaway gems gradually becoming more popular as developers move in to build small luxury boutique resorts in what were previously quiet fishing villages.

Locals, of course, had hoped to keep the jewels hidden a good while longer. Sorry, folks, but your natural assets are just too seductive.

It's aptly named, 1770, for it was on May 24 in that year that Lieutenant James Cook (he hadn't been promoted at that time) plied these waters, anchoring *Endeavour* in what was to become Bustard Bay.

These days, 1770 is a mecca for surfers, backpackers, adventure seekers and lifestyleers who are drawn to the rugged wilderness, national parks, sand dunes, beaches, tropical rainforest, coastal mangroves – and surfing 50km out to sea on the Great Barrier Reef.

Luke Wuiske is a seachanger – an oyster diver, surfer, fisherman and kayaker – who swapped the NSW South Coast for Queensland's north a few years back and keeps

discovering new adventures every day. "I paddle around a headland or take a bushwalk and there's something stunning and new every time," he grins as he corrals our group to the kayaks at the start of our 3½-hour ocean adventure.

"Out here there's manta rays, turtles, dolphins, whales, ospreys, sea eagles . . . all sorts of wildlife."

As we weave around headlands and head out into the swells, there's a wheeling sea eagle and scores of other birdlife.

After an hour through the chop along the coast and a brief stretch of our legs on a deserted beach, it's off to kayak the surf.

All bar yours truly are in tandem craft, with Luke demonstrating the rudiments of riding the waves.

The initial "lift-off" is scary and there are a couple of wipeouts but the ensuing ride is so exhilarating that everyone immediately heads back out again . . . and again. Finally we decide to call it a day and head back to 1770 and then whiz up the road, swing left past Agnes Water and enter our ritzy accommodation in a gated community of just a handful of homes, one owner-occupied and the others holiday rentals.

Coral View is a luxury retreat that hangs above treed slopes, overlooking Honeymoon Bay beach, and includes a 30m swimming pool, tennis court, cabana, barbecues,

dining deck and lawns with little nooks with picnic tables and chairs.

Our home boasts four bedrooms – all with ensuites – a gourmet's delight of a kitchen, a huge laundry and a games room. The master suite not only has a separate spa bath and shower, king-size bed and robes but also floor-to-ceiling slideaway glass doors that open to a sundeck offering sweeping ocean views.

We can't view the raved-about sunset here so, after some refreshments, it's back to 1770 to board one of Neil Mergard's big pink LARCS (Lighter Amphibious Resupply Cargo) that travel on land and water.

This is the one-hour cruise that takes in the flanking Eurimbula National Park before heading out on to the water to watch a scudding dappled pink and red sunset.

We don't have time for the day LARC's Paradise Tour that takes in Bustard Head lighthouse, the picnic lunch and sand-boarding down the towering dunes of Middle Island.

Nor can we fit in fishing, scuba diving or surfing 50km out to sea on the continental shelfboard charter vessel, the *MV James Cook*. They will have to wait another day.

The writer travelled courtesy of Tourism Queensland.



DESTINATION



DISCOVERY COAST

GETTING THERE: Fly to Brisbane and on to Gladstone; all hire car companies at airport. Drive time to 1770-Agnes Water is one hour.

STAY: Beach camping and backpacker hostels. For luxury – Coral View and other properties at www.1770beachaccommodation.com.au

TO DO: Two-hour sunset tours from \$30 a person, www.1770liquidadventures.com; amphibious vehicle tours, www.1770arctours.com.au; reef surfing, snorkelling, www.1770jamescook.com.au

DON'T MISS: Annual re-enactment of Cook's landing, May 24



Amphibious vehicles at 1770



SWELL TIMES: Surf kayaking near the historic hamlet of 1770 on Queensland's Discovery Coast



SWEEPING VISTA: Hiking up Bustard Hill, which provides stunning views of 1770, north of Bundaberg, where Lieutenant James Cook anchored the *Endeavour* on his trip along the east coast. The town and nearby Agnes Water are popular among tourists and, more recently, developers who recognise the area's potential