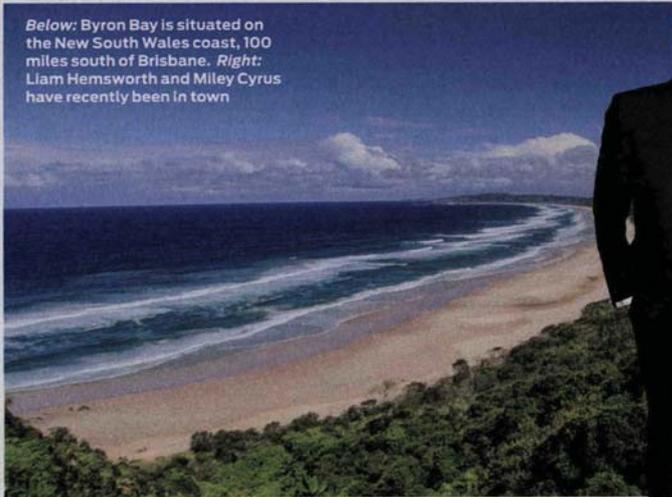


OK! TRAVEL

SAY G'DAY TO BYRON BAY

HEAD DOWN UNDER TO AUSTRALIA'S CHIC HIPPIY TOWN THAT'S BELOVED BY THE STARS

Below: Byron Bay is situated on the New South Wales coast, 100 miles south of Brisbane. Right: Liam Hemsworth and Miley Cyrus have recently been in town



Once the preserve of hippies, surfers and spiritualists, Byron Bay has now added eco-tourists, yoga aficionados, city slickers and celebrities to its eclectic mix of holidaymakers. You'll still find crystal healers and holistic medicine practitioners in the laid-back Aussie seaside town, 100 miles south of Brisbane, but you'll also find the streets lined with vintage boutiques, lifestyle stores, art galleries, yoga studios and cool restaurants. Byron Bay and its surrounds, as OK!'s Josie Copson discovers, offer the perfect mix of barefoot luxury, shopping, surfing and stunning scenery...

WHERE CAN I STAY?

Like Byron Bay itself, the recently opened Elements Of Byron – set on the beautiful Belongil Beach, just a 3km coastal walk from the main town – appeals to a wide range of visitors. Located in more than 50 acres of natural bushland, tropical rainforest, creeks and sand

Below: Relax by the pool at Elements Of Byron. Right: Dine at The Balcony. Above right: Go up, up and away on a hot air balloon ride



dunes, the 203 studios and one and two-bedroom villas are dotted around the resort. Adventurers will adore the chirping of exotic birds and the guided nature tours around the site, while chic urbanites will enjoy chilling by the infinity pool, with its circular day beds suspended above water, having sundowners by the fire pit and dining at Graze, with its modern artwork and funky copper light fixtures.

OK!'s villa had all the mod cons, with two plasma-screen TVs and a lounge with stairs that led up to a double room with a free-standing bath. Our first port of call after our long journey was a relaxing treatment in one of the spa suites that open out onto private courtyards. OK! recommends the Flower Sanctuary Ritual, which uses local health-boosting botanicals.

WHICH STARS WILL I SEE?

When he's not busy in Hollywood, Aussie actor Chris Hemsworth lives in an ocean-front mansion near Byron Bay with his actress wife Elsa Pataky and their kids. Chris's brother Liam is also a Byron regular and was in town last month with his fiancée

Miley Cyrus. They were spotted swimming in the surf and in a restaurant celebrating Chris's birthday. Aussie actress Margot Robbie and her husband Tom Ackerley came back to Byron Bay to celebrate their first wedding anniversary after their low-key ceremony in December 2016. Byron Bay also plays host to the annual Splendour In The Grass festival, which Stormzy and Rag'n'Bone Man headlined last year.

WHAT MUST I DO?

Waking up at 4am is totally worth it to spend the morning riding high in a hot air balloon. Every moment is a perfect picture opportunity and OK! loved spotting kangaroos, admiring the coastline and seeing Mount Warning's volcanic caldera from above – and the champagne breakfast at the end of the trip!

OK! had another early start when we signed up for the Toast The Sun experience. We were driven to the nearby Cape Byron Lighthouse, the iconic cliff-top landmark on Australia's most easterly point, to watch the sun rise majestically over the horizon. Afterwards, we were rewarded with a fantastic three-course picnic with fresh fruit and Greek yoghurt and homemade buttermilk waffles with ice cream. Keep your eyes peeled as we were lucky enough to spot a whale in the ocean below.

For those into alternative healing, a visit to the Crystal Castle & Shambhala Gardens, a 20-minute drive from Byron, is a must. Wander through the enchanted gardens dotted with Buddha statues, healing crystals and the world's largest amethyst cave. You can hang a note on the wishing tree and enjoy an aura reading, too.

WHERE CAN I EAT?

Follow in the footsteps of Ed Sheeran, Delta Goodrem and Chris Hemsworth and dine at The Balcony Bar & Oyster

Co, just metres from Byron's main beach. They're famous for their oysters, so we thought it'd be rude not to try them! We then tucked into a tasty array of tapas, with the salt



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and pepper prawns, chicken lollipops and southern fried fish wings our favourites. It's a hugely-popular haunt for post-beach cocktails.

If you want to eat the best organic food in town, dine at the Three Blue Ducks café, which uses ingredients including macadamia and pecan nuts and produce from The Farm Byron Bay, its adjacent community farm. You'll also find a bakery and florist on the farm and get to meet Braveheart the rescue cow.

Located in the sleepy hamlet of Newrybar, a 20-minute drive from



Byron, is the Harvest Café, Bakery & Deli that's set across three restored heritage buildings.

Many ingredients come straight from the kitchen garden and OK! loved our Byron Creek farm chicken served with corn, wattle seeds and macadamia nuts, washed down with a Brookie's gin and tonic from the Cape Byron Distillery.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Qantas (www.qantas.com) offer return economy flights from London Heathrow to Sydney from £715.

A Botanica studio at Elements Of Byron Bay (www.elementsofbyron.com.au) starts from £187. Price includes daily yoga class. **OK!**

FOR TOURIST INFORMATION, SEE WWW.VISITNSW.COM. FOR MORE ON THE BALLOONING TRIP, VISIT WWW.BYRONBAYBALLOONING.COM.AU; AND FOR THE SUNRISE EXPERIENCE AT THE CAPE BYRON LIGHTHOUSE, VISIT WILDGOATEVENTS.CO.

REPORT BY JOSIE COPSON EDITED BY ANNABEL MACKIE, OK! TRAVEL EDITOR 5 OF THE BEST AND TRAVELLER'S TALES BY NANCY BROWN PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAMY, [DESTINATION NEW SOUTH WALES](#), GETTY IMAGES

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The Cape Byron Lighthouse sits on Australia's most easterly point, and we saw a whale swimming in the ocean below during our visit

