



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 Copacino 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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Lunch is an Asian-fusion, inspired menu with a fresh selection of entrees and mains. Fresh Sydney Rock Oysters can be ordered with a variety of delicious toppings that snub the more traditional preparations. Mains include large salads, Asian style baked snapper curry, risotto of the day, and soba noodle broth with Atlantic Salmon. Vegetarians and children are not overlooked either. We kid-tested the menu and it got the mini one's thumbs up for eatability—she was only little but she packed in every mouthful.

The Yum Yum Eatery is not only kid friendly but it's dog friendly as well. You can dine outside and a fresh bowl of water will be served up in minutes, in most cases, before your drinks order is taken. Nibbles average \$5.50; entrees start at \$14.00 and



run to \$19.00; mains come in around \$26.00 plus the Yum Yum's wine list is not extensive but has some carefully selected bottles. They also serve wine by the glass, local and imported beer and cocktails—house speciality being 'The Lychee Number'—a delicious concoction of gin, mint, lime lychee and lemon myrtle. Yum Yum indeed.

Hardy's Bay also has picnic tables on the grassy strip that sits on the waterfront. We're not sure if it's designated an off leash area but we did see a number of locals leash free. Perhaps like Copacabana, the locals are more laid back about leash laws.

Another dog and kid friendly restaurant is Lizottes in Kincumber which is the sister restaurant to the Yum Yum. Run by restaurateur and music fan, Brian Lizotte, it's a good choice for those wanting a quiet lunch or a music filled dinner.

The main dining room is all comfy, high backed chairs with a view into classic Australian bush. By prior arrangement you can book a table where you can keep an eye on tethered dogs on the covered and shady veranda. There's also a more secluded garden table, outside, if you prefer. Again the service for dogs is swift and smart, delivering bowls of fresh water.

The menu combines Mediterranean with Asian influences and stays on the lighter side of flavours and healthy options. The choices from the menu are many and made harder with the daily specials. There's a wide variety of mains including pasta dishes that can be served large or small. Imaginative side dishes to complement your meal choices are also available. The meal sizes are generous so we suggest that you either pace yourself or go a little lighter if you're a dessert fan. Lizottes have over ten different desserts to choose from and all are made on the premises.

If you're planning a big, long lunch or dinner and don't intend to drive, Lizottes have a shuttle bus service that can collect and despatch you. Arrangements for this service can be made direct through the restaurant.

Our time at the Mermaid Shack ends up being a very social and enjoyable one. Some city-based friends come up for the day to enjoy the beach and fish and chips. Other friends who live locally also come on down to the beach for sun-down swims and blizzardly cold drinks.

The dogs have enjoyed their romps on the beach and paddles in the surf. The parrots have enjoyed communing and communicating with their wild mates. We've enjoyed the relaxed time away and opportunity to relive the summer holiday feeling of sun kissed skin and sand in our cossies. The Mermaid Shack has been a comfortable spot to just sit back, lounge around and unwind.

Paw Wheel Drive

Tailor made day trips and overnight camping adventures for you and your canine friend. Friendly groups, campfire cooking, fully catered, 4WD not necessary. For more info or to book please contact **Johnno** on details below or check out our website for upcoming dates...

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House rules:

- Although this is pet friendly accommodation, let the booker know what pets you have at time of booking
- No pets on furniture
- Wipe sandy paws and fur down before entering inside
- Supervise pets outside at all times: the grounds are not fully fenced and there is traffic plus freelancing, neighbourhood dogs
- Pick up droppings
- A vacuum cleaner is provided so why not give the place a quick once over to pick up any left pet hair

What to bring:

- Pet bedding
- Towels for you and your pets, especially if dogs are likely to take a salty or lake plunge
- Water and food bowls for pets
- There is a \$40 charge for hire of linen so let them know at time of booking whether you'll be needing this service.

The Mermaid Shack

Copacabana
 Email: sandrawty@smartchat.net.au
 Web: www.stayz.com.au; www.takeabreak.com.au
 Tarrif: \$350 for a weekend; \$1600 for a week

Yum Yum Eatery

60 Araluen Drive
 Hardys Bay NSW 2257
 Phone: 4360 2999
 Fax: 4360 2399
 Breakfast and lunch 7 days
 9am Monday to Friday
 8am Saturday & Sunday
 Dinner 6pm Wednesday to Sunday

Lizottes Restaurant

Lot 3 Avoca Drive
 Kincumber NSW 2251
 Phone: 4368 2017 for restaurant and shuttle bus bookings
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