

Southeast



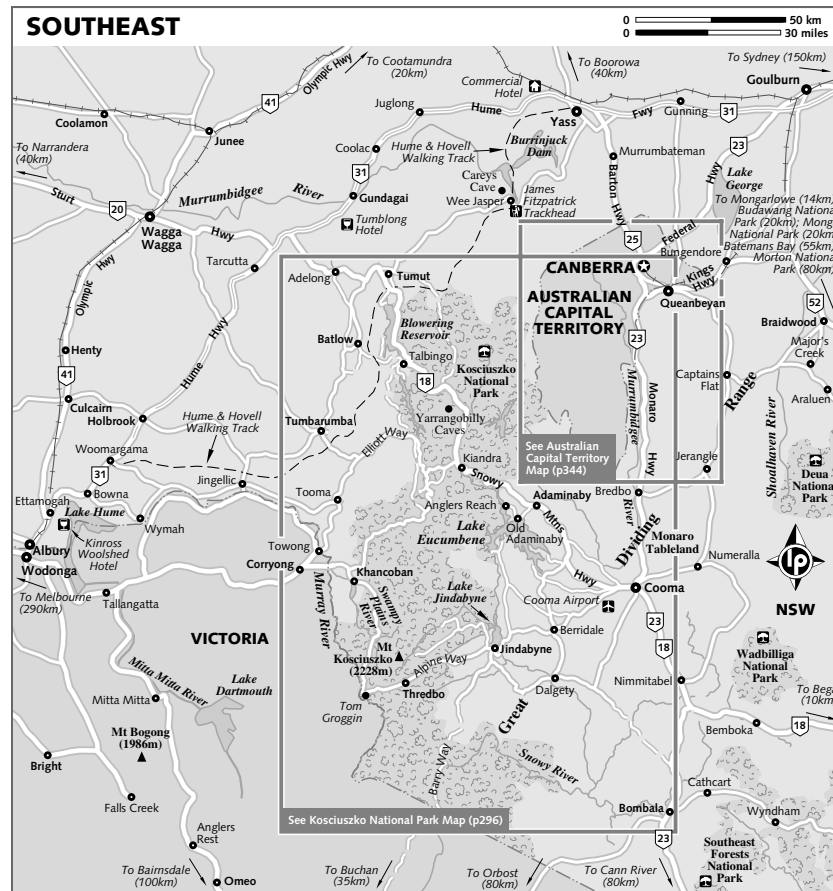
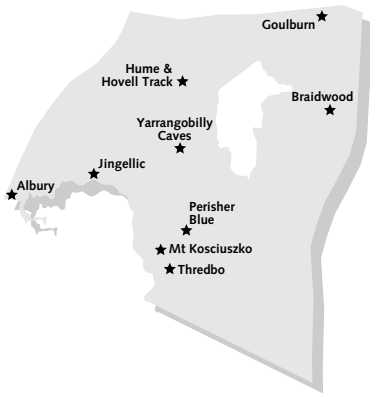
Kosciusko National Park dominates this inland area of New South Wales (NSW) and with it comes a mixture of winding mountain roads, spectacular scenery and, perhaps unexpectedly in Australia, snow. Small towns that hardly rate a mention in summer become hives of activity in winter, when day-trippers and holidaymakers pass through on their way to live it up in Thredbo and Perisher Blue.

When the white powder isn't falling (or being made artificially), the dense bushland, native wildlife, cascading waters and limestone caves attract just as many outdoor and adventure types as it does the kind of folk who just want to get away from it all. And there's plenty of room for both!

For most visitors it's necessary to access the park via the flat expanse of the arid Monaro Tableland to the northeast or the sloping autumnal orchard and timber country to the west. Whichever way you approach, the contrasting natural environments are worthy touring country and provide – much like the Hume Highway on the western border – an ideal opportunity for side-trips to smaller remote towns, where smiles are served up as readily as cold beer.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Admire the pointed peak views from **Mt Kosciusko** (p298), Australia's resplendent rooftop
- Dodge stalactites at **Yarrangobilly Caves** (p302) before slipping into the nearby thermal pool
- Spend a night in the rustic charm of a brewery worker's cottage in **Goulburn** (p312)
- Float peacefully with the current around the Murray River 'loop' at **Albury** (p316)
- Carve up the snow-coated slopes at **Thredbo** (p298) or **Perisher Blue** (p301)
- Take a reviving dip in the natural rock swimming holes near **Braidwood** (p303)
- Swing off a rope into the fast-flowing Murray River at **Jingellic** (p318)
- Follow (at least some of) the footsteps of early European trailblazers on the **Hume & Hovell Track** (p309)



KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

NSW's largest and most spectacular national park covers 690,000 hectares and provides year-round activity, from skiing and snowboarding in winter to bushwalking and camping in summer. What's more it's home to Australia's highest mountain, **Mt Kosciusko** (koz-zy-os-ko), where a drive to within 8km of the summit (2228m) can make you feel on top of the world.

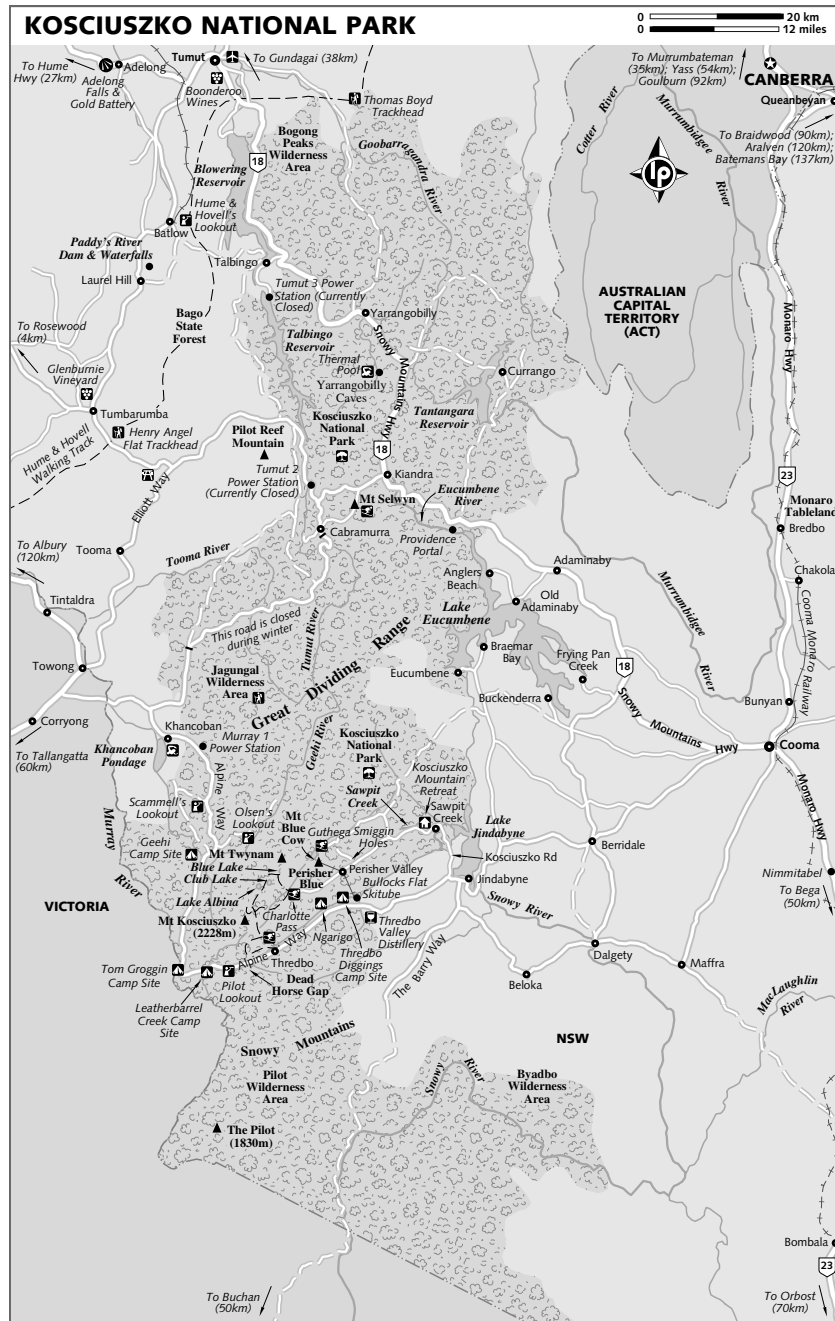
Orientation & Information

Mt Kosciusko and the main ski resorts are in the south-central area of the park. From

Jindabyne, Kosciusko Rd leads to the resorts of Smiggin Holes (30km), Perisher Valley (33km) and Charlotte Pass (40km), with a turn-off before Perisher Valley to Guthega and Mt Blue Cow. From Jindabyne, the Alpine Way leads to Thredbo (33km) and to Khancoban (103km).

The main visitors centre for the park, run by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), is at Jindabyne (p307). There's an **education centre** (☎ 02-6450 5666) at Sawpit Creek (15km from Jindabyne), which runs programmes during school holidays (but is otherwise closed), and visitors centres at Yarrangobilly Caves (p302) and Tumut (p309) in the north of the park.

Entry to the national park costs \$27 a day per car in summer and \$16 at other times. If



you intend to stay a while, buy the \$190 annual parks permit, which gives you unlimited access to every national park in NSW.

Bushwalking

Contact the NPWS visitors centres in Jindabyne (see p307) or Khancoban (p311) for information on the many walks in the park.

From Charlotte Pass you can walk to the Mt Kosciuszko summit (18km return), or take the easier walk to the summit from Thredbo (13km return). Other walking tracks from Charlotte Pass include the 21km glacial lakes walk.

Bush camping (without car access) is permitted in most of the national park, but not in ecologically fragile areas (such as near the glacial lakes or other water catchment areas). Some car-based camp sites have riverside picnic areas, fireplaces and pit toilets.

Cattlemen's huts, scattered throughout the park, are available for emergency shelter and shouldn't be used for accommodation – but they do make great bushwalking destinations.

The only formal camping area is the **Kosciuszko Mountain Retreat** (☎ 02-6456 2224; www.kositreat.com.au; powered/unpowered sites from \$32/\$23, cabins from \$66), a tranquil place amid the gums at Sawpit Creek along the road to Perisher Valley. These guys know about bushwalks.

Sleeping

There's no longer a problem finding accommodation in summer, especially at the year-round resort of Thredbo (p298). In all cases the prices will be considerably lower, some less than half the peak-season prices.

In winter, a two-bedroom apartment in Thredbo costs from about \$3000 for a week during peak ski season (roughly mid-July to early September) and a double room in a lodge costs around \$1000, including some meals.

Travel agents in most regions book accommodation and ski packages.

Perisher Blue Snow Holidays (☎ 1300 655 811)

Snowy Mountains Holiday Centre (☎ 1800 641 064)

Snowy Mountains Reservation Centre (☎ 1800 020 622)

Thredbo Accommodation Service (☎ 1800 801 982)

Thredbo Resort Centre (☎ 1300 020 589)

SKIING & SKI RESORTS

Skiing or snowboarding in Australia is off-derided for its short season and unpredictable snowfalls. But don't be put off. Thredbo has recently forked out a fortune to automate its

snowmaking machines (ensuring 25% of rideable terrain is covered), and Perisher Blue has upgraded its facilities to enable more reliable connections between major chairlifts. If the outcome is not exactly 100% guaranteed snow, it's a pretty good start.

When there is snow on the ground there's plenty of fun to be had, with long meandering runs to keep beginner and intermediate skiers happy and enough short sharp black runs for the more experienced. The scenery is also worth getting excited about, making Nordic (cross-country or *langlauf*) skiing popular too. Some of the best trails run along old cattleherders' huts.

Off the slopes there are excellent restaurants, lively nightlife and enough to keep you occupied if you've had enough snowploughing (or face-planting). There's also a plethora of facilities and activities catering for families. Thredbo and Perisher Blue have designated kids' ski programmes, lessons, crèches and daycare.

On the downside, the resorts tend to be particularly crowded on weekends and the short seasons mean operators have to get their returns quickly, so costs are high.

Information

For snow and road reports contact the visitors centres at **Thredbo** (☎ 1900 934 320) and **Perisher Blue** (☎ 1900 926 664) or try www.ski.com.au. Also tune into 97.7 Snow FM locally. Snow chains must be carried during winter even if there's no snow – heavy penalties apply (try \$300) if you're caught without them.

Costs

THREDBO

During the peak season an adult two-/five-day lift ticket costs \$178/388. Children's tickets cost \$96/221. A combined two-hour adult lesson and lift pass costs \$178/388 (for beginners) or \$238/488 (for experienced skiers). A child's combined lesson and lift pass costs \$128/254 (for beginners) or \$159/322 (for more experienced skiers). Private lessons are also available. Friday Flat is a purpose-built beginners' area with its own slow-speed quad chairlift (\$43).

Boots, skis and stocks can be hired for adults/children \$58/31 per day and snowboards and boots for adults/children for \$74/42.

PERISHER BLUE

During the peak season at Perisher Blue an adult one-/five-day lift ticket costs \$91/393

or \$112/479 including return Skitube tickets. Children's tickets cost \$50/228 or \$61/271. Noon start, quad chair and night ski passes are also available. A combined two-hour lesson and lift pass costs \$98/440 (or \$119/526 including Skitube pass) for beginners and \$122/497 (or \$143/583 with Skitube pass) for experienced skiers. Private lessons are also available.

Boots, skis and stocks can be hired for adults/children \$65/44 per day and Snowboards and boots for adults/children for \$73/56.

At both resorts, equipment will cost less for longer periods; less, too, if you hire it away from the mountain, but if you have a problem with the fit you may be stuck. There are hire places in towns close to the resorts and many garages hire out ski equipment and chains.

Thredbo

☎ 02 / pop 3000

At 1370m, **Thredbo** (☎ 1300 020 589; www.thredbo.com.au) has the longest runs and some of the best skiing to be had in this big of sunburnt country. The village itself is eye-candy compared with other Australian ski villages, with blue, green and grey tones ensuring chalets and lodges blend with the surrounding snow gums and alpine flora. It sleeps approximately 4300 people and most of the infrastructure has been built on one side of the valley so that visitors holed up in their lodges on the other can kickback and watch the ski action. And of course Thredbo is an all-season resort, so if you can't afford it in winter, summer has got a lot to offer too.

INFORMATION

The **Thredbo visitors centre** (☎ 6459 4294; Friday Dr) is good for bookings, but quality information is best obtained from the Jindabyne (p307) and Cooma (p305) visitors centres.

There is internet at **Hot Shots** (☎ 6457 6422; level 1, Upper Concourse, Alpine Hotel; per hr \$25) and an internet kiosk at **Snowflakes Bakery** (☎ 6457 7157; Village Square; per 10 min \$2).

SEASONAL WORK

Thredbo employs about 200 year-round full-time staff and close to 750 in winter. For job vacancies and info, check out the recruitment page at www.thredbo.com.au. The length of the season lends itself well to overseas travellers with a working holiday visa, who are

limited to working for three months. It's also worth checking the noticeboard at the supermarket in the village centre for jobs and accommodation.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Winter

Thredbo's **skiing** terrain is roughly 16% beginner, 67% intermediate and 17% advanced and no matter what category you fit into you should try to have a crack at a long run. The Supertrail (3.7km) begins at Australia's highest lifted point then drops 670m through some pretty awesome scenery. From up here you can also take the 5km easy Village trail to Friday Flats, or black-run junkies can crank it up a notch on the 5.9km hair-raiser from Karels T-Bar right down to Friday Flats. These back valley slopes are best in the morning; head to the front valley in the afternoon for more freestyle action.

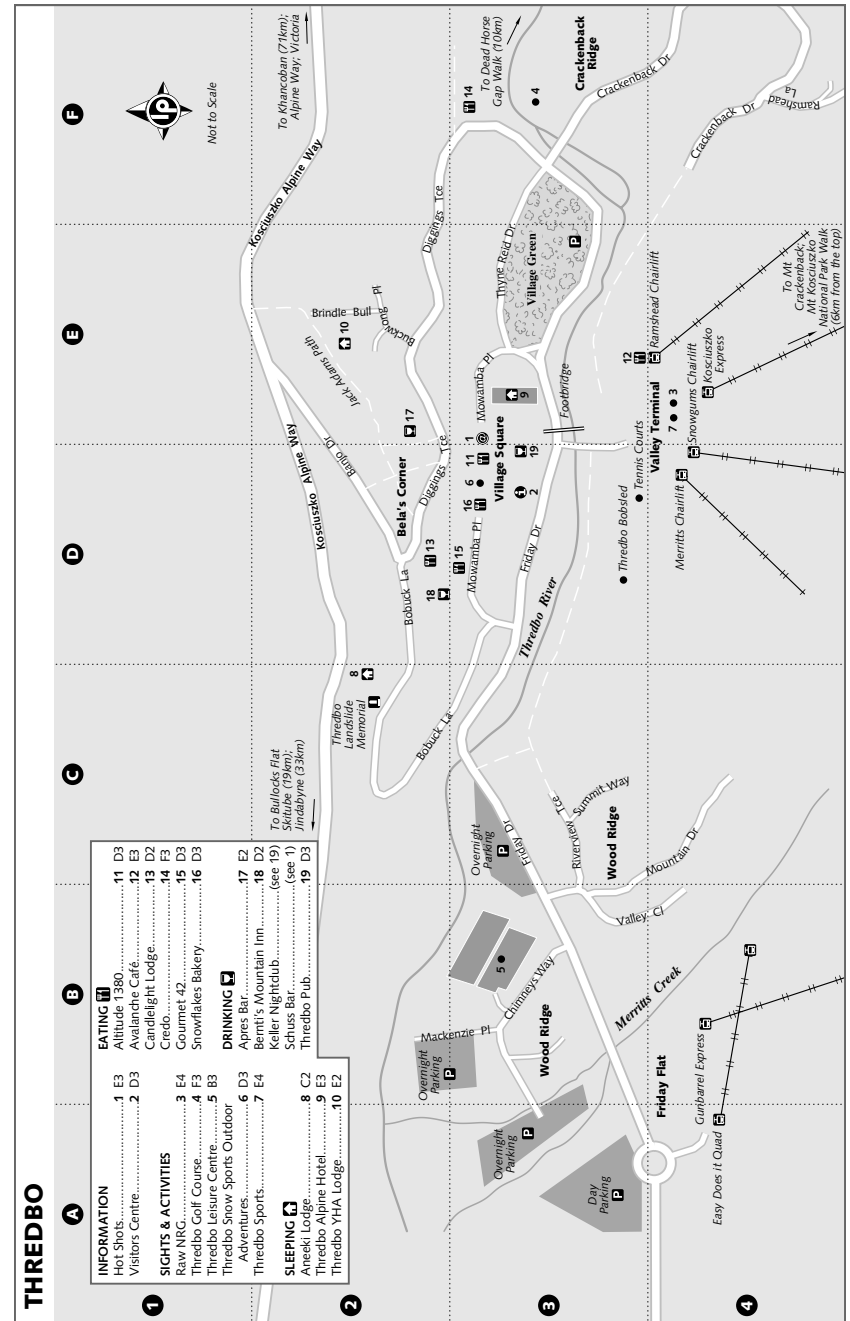
The **Thredbo Leisure Centre** (☎ 6459 4100/51; Friday Dr) organises all sorts of activities, summer and winter, including hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, white-water rafting, abseiling and horse riding. **Thredbo Snow Sports Outdoor Adventures** (☎ 6459 4044; www.thredbo.com.au) has a diverse range of high-energy activities including snowshoeing, snow climbing, telemark and back-country alpine touring. It also hosts a cool five-star **snow camping expedition** (per person \$275) where you snowshoe to a secret camp site, feast on gourmet cuisine and test your snow survival skills overnight.

Get out of the lodge with a self-guided walk – there is a map available from the information centre.

Spring, Summer & Autumn

Thredbo is generally cool in summer with average temperatures of between 14 and 21°C. But locals have seen both the mercury soar to 30°C and snow on the ground, so be prepared.

First and foremost it's an excellent area for **bushwalking**, with 10 or so tracks snaking out into the national park from the village centre. The Kosciuszko Express chairlift to the top of Mt Crackenback runs through summer (adult/child return \$26/13) and it's the easiest way to explore Australia's rooftop. From here it's a pleasant 2km walk or cross-country ski to a good view of **Mt Kosciuszko** (which, from here, looks more like a small hill) or 6km to the top of the mountain itself.



THREDBO TRAGEDY

On a winter's night in July 1997, when most of Thredbo's residents were sleeping soundly, the Kosciuszko Alpine Way embankment, running across the upper edge of the village, collapsed, taking with it two snow lodges and 2000 cu metres of liquefied soil. Courtesy of a media throng that engulfed the ski village, Australians sat around the breakfast table the next morning and watched as rescue teams, working around the clock, removed victims from the debris. The only survivor, Stuart Diver, lay trapped under the rubble next to his dead wife for hours before being miraculously rescued. His courageous story became the subject of endless tabloid coverage and somewhat inevitably, a TV movie. He remains the name and face of the first disaster of its kind in Australia.

For Thredbo folk, memories of that terrible night and the people who lost their lives remain in the tapestry of the landscape. The Thredbo Landslide Memorial can be seen along Bobuck Lane where the two lodges, Carinya and Bimbadeen, once stood. The 18 posts used in the construction of the platform signify the 18 lives lost.

If you don't want to take the lift, **Dead Horse Gap Walk** is a moderate 10km, four-hour trip that starts along the river in Thredbo Village. The views, flora and fauna at the top are spectacular. Maps for all walks are available at the visitors centre.

Thredbo also operates **guided walks** (adult/child \$34/20), including one to the summit of Mt Kosciuszko, four times a week. If you've got a bit more cash, the **sunrise tour** (per person \$138), including a champagne breakfast, tour guide, lift and 4WD rides, is a nice way to start the day. **Thredbo Sports** (☎ 6459 4119), at the bottom of Kosciuszko Express chairlift, has maps and information. It has also got the low-down on **tennis**, **bobsledding** and the local nine-hole **Thredbo golf course** with a sloping green that will make even the smallest tee-off seem long and powerful.

There are two lengthy **mountain-bike tracks** around the village, or you could brace yourself for the Cannonball Run, a 4.2km downhill mountain-bike track from the top of the Kosciuszko Express chairlift. **Raw NRG** (☎ 6457 6990; www.rawnrg.com.au), located in the Valley Terminal, specialises in mountain-bike rides.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The hills come alive in summer. Take in the **Blues Festival** in mid-January, the **Thredbo World Music Festival** in mid-March and the **Jazz Festival** in late April/early May.

SLEEPING

Prices at the following accommodation options drop by at least a third in the low season.

Thredbo YHA Lodge (☎ 6457 6376; thredbo@yhansw.org.au; 8 Jack Adams Path; dm/d/r with bathroom

\$145/163/179; 📍) The YHA is well appointed, with great common areas, a good kitchen and a balcony. Peak season adults must be full YHA members. First-come-first-served bookings from 1 March. Contact Sydney's **YHA Travel Centre** (☎ 02-9261 1111; www.yha.com.au) for more information.

Aneeki Lodge (☎ 0417 479 581; www.aneeki.com.au; 9 Bobuck Lane, d per person for two nights \$170-340) There are only six bedrooms in this lodge but it is one of the cheapest on the mountain. It has a homely communal lounge with a big fireplace ideal for sipping mulled wine. It's next to Thredbo's landslide memorial (see boxed text, above).

Thredbo Alpine Hotel (☎ 1800 026 333; Friday Dr; s/d with breakfast from \$190/270; 📍 📍) This is the only hotel on the mountain and its proximity to the Valley Terminal makes getting to and from the slopes a breeze. The rooms are flash and the rates include a full buffet breakfast. It has a pool in summer.

EATING

Avalanche Café (☎ 6457 6131; Shop 7, Valley Terminal; ☺ breakfast & lunch) At the bottom of Ramshead chairlift, this place has an open-air grill. The whiff of fried onions is enough to tempt anyone off the slopes for a steak sandwich (about \$10).

Gourmet 42 (☎ 6457 7500; 100 Mowamba Pl, Village Square; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Hung-over boarders and sleepy bar staff rock up to this small but busy café with excellent coffee. Soup and pasta is also on the menu for about \$10. Coffee and dessert are available Thursday to Saturday evening.

Candlelight Lodge (☎ 1800 020 900; www.candlelightlodge.com.au; 32 Diggings Tce, ☺ dinner) For a true

Alpine experience – the fondue – try this lodge's Swiss Gruyere and Emmental with white wine and schnapps (\$30 for two people) or eye fillet fondue (\$64). It also has accommodation (see the website).

Altitude 1380 (☎ 6457 6190; Shop 5, Upper Concourse, Alpine Hotel; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Grab a BYO bottle from the boozer two doors down and kick back here for great food at prices that don't bite. Dinner is available Wednesday to Saturday night. Cash only.

Credo (☎ 5457 6844; 2 Diggings Tce; ☺ dinner) For a Mediterranean feast in a groovy establishment, this gets a good rap. It's a five-minute walk from the village centre.

DRINKING

Après Bar (☎ 6457 6222; Diggings Tce) Cosy couches and crimson leather poufs are crammed together in this cosy over-25s atmosphere. The tunes are spot on and vino by the glass is affordable. It's downstairs at the Denman Hotel.

Schuss Bar (☎ 6459 4200; Upper Concourse, Alpine Hotel) Live bands give this place a bit of energy as do the young folk fresh from the slopes. Beers are on tap and schnapps costs \$6. Monday is comedy night (\$10 entry from 8.30pm).

Other recommendations:

Bernti's Mountain Inn (☎ 6457 6332; 4 Mowamba Pl) Not shy of putting on the TV for some live sporting action.

Thredbo Pub & Keller Night Club (☎ 6459 4200; Friday Dr; ☺ from 4pm Thu-Sat) Has a huge balcony overlooking Thredbo River to the slopes. Skip the food.

Perisher Blue

☎ 02 / elevation 1680m

Perisher Valley, Smiggin Holes, Mt Blue Cow and Guthega make up the massive resort of **Perisher Blue** (☎ 6459 4495, 1300 655 811; www.perisherblue.com.au). The terrain is roughly 22% beginners, 60% intermediate and 18% advanced with most of the action in Perisher Valley. Guthega (1640m) and Mt Blue Cow (1640m) are mainly day resorts so they're smaller and less crowded. From Guthega, cross-country skiers head to the Main Range or Rolling Ground. Mt Blue Cow is accessible via the **Skitube** (☎ 1300 655 822; adult/child same-day return \$38/21). Because of Perisher Blue's sporadic layout, it doesn't have the village ambience of Thredbo, but it's widely held (though still debated) that the skiing is superior. Boarders should head for the half-pipe park where there are rails, boxes, kickers etc

and good skiers shouldn't leave without giving the knees a workout on Toppers Dream, the freestyle mogul course groomed for Winter Olympics training.

SEASONAL WORK

Perisher Blue jobs are seasonal and vary depending on snow conditions and business demands. For job vacancies and information check out the employment page at www.perisherblue.com.au. For the majority of positions, applicants need a working visa; however, Perisher Blue can apply for sponsored work visas on behalf of instructors, snow groomers and ski patrollers with two to three seasons under their belt. Staff housing isn't guaranteed but local real estate agencies should be able to help.

SLEEPING

Most accommodation is in Perisher Valley and Smiggin Holes. The following rates include either breakfast and lunch or breakfast and dinner.

Sundeck Hotel (☎ 6457 5222; sundeck@acr.net.au; Kosciuszko Rd; d/tw from \$165) One of the oldest lodges in Perisher, Sundeck has a comfy bar and great views from the guest lounge over the Quad 8 Express.

Perisher Valley Hotel (☎ 6459 4455; pvh@perisher.com.au; Perisher Valley; d/tw from \$231) This hotel is in a prime locale, two minutes from the Skitube terminal at the bottom of the Quad 8 Express. Rooms are spacious and have views. You can make use of the indoor spa that overlooks the on-snow action.

Heidi's Chalet (☎ 1800 252 668; www.heidis.com.au; Munyang Rd, Smiggin Holes; two night packages tw/tr/dm from \$260/236/236) This is one of the cheaper options in Smiggin Holes and it's just a short snowplough to the ski lifts. Closed in summer.

Other recommendations:

Aurora Ski Club (☎ 0412 363 206; auroraperisher@yahoo.com.au; Perisher Valley; dm from \$95) A budget hotel – it pays to book early.

Chalet Sonnenhof (☎ 6457 5256; www.sonnenhof.com.au; Perisher Valley; tw/dm from \$145/130) Has a restaurant, lounge bar, open fire and large spa.

EATING & DRINKING

The Perisher Centre (Perisher Valley) and Skitube terminals at Blue Cow and Perisher Valley have plenty of fast food.

Snow Gums Restaurant (☎ 6459 4443; Perisher Valley; ☺ lunch & dinner) In the Perisher Valley Hotel,

this is a fine dining option in a cosy room with a fireplace and an atmospheric bar. The à la carte menu has something for everyone but the gnocchi (\$18) is especially good.

Ruffles Restaurant (☎ 6457 5291; Perisher Valley; ☺ lunch & dinner) Does a gourmet take on lunch-time favourites such as steak sandwiches, fish and chips and Caesar salads (around \$18). It has a piano bar for cocktails – just turn a blind eye to the dated décor.

Smiggin's Chargrill (☎ 6457 5375; Smiggin Holes; ☺ lunch & dinner) Has good pizzas (\$17) and a bistro menu the kids will love. It's reasonably priced with a late-night bar and live band on Wednesday nights.

Jax Bar & Grill (☎ 6459 4437; Perisher Centre; ☺ lunch & dinner) Check out the ski bunnies from this big glassed-in bar at the bottom of Mitchell T-bar. There are a couple of pool tables, beers are on tap and you can cook your own steak (around \$20).

Charlotte Pass

☎ 02 / elevation 1780m

There are just over 600 beds in the village, which doesn't represent many skiers on the slopes. At the base of Mt Kosciuszko, this is one of the highest, oldest and most isolated resorts in Australia and in winter you have to 'snowcat' (use oversnow transport) the last 8km from Perisher Valley (\$30 each way, book ahead). Five lifts service rather short, but uncrowded, runs and this is good ski-touring country. In summer, it's the start of a number of walks including to the summit of Mt Kosciuszko (18km return), the Main Range (25km return) and the Blue Lake Lookout (10km return).

Kosciuszko Chalet (☎ 1800 026 369; www.charlottepass.com.au; Fri & Sat with 2 meals & lift pass per person \$693) is a grand old place dating from the 1930s. **Alitji Alpine Lodge** (☎ 6457 5223; enquiry@alitji.com.au; r with 3 meals from \$85) is a cheaper option. **Stillwell Lodge** (☎ 6457 5073; www.stillwell-lodge.com.au; d from \$135) is good for students.

Bullocks Flat & Around

☎ 02

Bullocks Flat, on the Alpine Way between Jindabyne and Thredbo, is the site of the Skitube terminal, one of Perisher Blue's most underrated drawcards. Simply park the car, buy a ticket, board the train and within 15 minutes you're on the slopes. The **Skitube train** (☎ 1300 655 822; adult/child same-day return \$38/21) runs

from here mostly underground to Perisher Valley and Mt Blue Cow. In summer it runs to a reduced timetable but operates daily during school holidays. Parking and national park entry fees are included in the ticket price. Combine a mountain pass with the Skitube pass to save money (see p297).

The **Novotel Lake Crackenback Resort** (☎ 1800 020 524; www.novotellakecrackenback.com.au; 1650 Alpine Way; d summer/winter from \$180/200) is a village resort close to the Skitube terminal. **Crackenback Cottage** (☎ 6456 2198; www.crackenback.com.au; adult/child summer \$75/\$35, adult/child winter \$150/75; ☎), on the road towards Jindabyne, has a sensational guesthouse, gorgeous restaurant and a maze to keep the kids entertained.

Across the road the **Thredbo Valley Distillery** (☎ 6457 1447; www.wildbrumby.com; Alpine Way; ☺ 11am-5pm) makes Wildbrumby schnapps. Sit down for a bowl of schnapps and a shot of soup!

Cabramurra

☎ 02 / pop 130

Australia's highest town, Cabramurra (1488m), has great views when the weather allows and is worth diverting 4km from the main route. The general store has snacks, a clean toilet and petrol but no gas. **Tumut 2 Power Station** was once the main reason for visiting Cabramurra but it is currently closed.

Yarrangobilly Caves

Perhaps the most underrated caves in Australia, the **Yarrangobilly Caves** (☎ 6454 9597; car entry \$3, tour adult/child \$13/9 at 11am, 1pm & 3pm or self-guided \$7; ☺ 9am-4pm) were formed in a belt of limestone around 440 million years ago. There's also a thermal pool, which retains a constant 27°C: if it's snowing, even better. There's a **NPWS visitors centre** (☎ 6454 9597) but not much in the way of food or petrol so come prepared.

Getting There & Around

Greyhound Ski Express (☎ 13 14 99) buses run from Sydney and Canberra to Thredbo via Jindabyne and Bullocks Flat daily, June to October.

Transborder (☎ 6421 0033) runs a service from Canberra (\$64) to Thredbo and back daily, which also stops at Jindabyne (\$45) and Bullocks Flat (\$60). All year round.

Wayward Bus (☎ 1300 653 310) runs a summer-only service to Melbourne (\$120) four times weekly.

In winter you can normally drive as far as Perisher Valley, but snow chains must be carried and fitted where directed. The simplest and safest way to get to Perisher Valley and Smiggin Holes during the winter is to take the Skitube train (p301). See the Alpine Way (below) for western routes into the national park.

THE ALPINE WAY

From Khancoban, this spectacular route runs through dense forest, around the southern end of Kosciuszko National Park to Thredbo and on to Jindabyne. All vehicles have to carry chains, which can be hired at **Khancoban Lakeside Caravan Resort** (☎ 6076 9488; www.klcr.com.au; Alpine Way) and dropped off at **Margaretta Hire** (☎ 6456 1959; 8 Kosciuszko Rd, Jindabyne) or vice versa. The fine for not carrying chains is steep (about \$300). Motorbikes are not permitted along the Alpine Way from June to October.

In winter, check conditions at Khancoban or Jindabyne. There's no fuel available between Khancoban and Thredbo (71km). If you're driving between Khancoban and Jindabyne, you can get a free transit pass, but if you stop en route you must have a day pass (\$27).

Murray 1 Power Station (☎ 6076 5115; admission free; ☺ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun), south of Khancoban, has an informative visitors centre explaining the Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme and a pleasant café on the pondage.

Further south is **Scammels Lookout** then **Geehi**, a beautiful grassy camping area with lots of kangaroos, on the Swampy Plains River. At **Tom Groggin** the road skirts the upper Murray River – a clear, cool stretch that's good for a swim on a hot day. There's a good camping and picnic site here and a smaller site at **Leatherbarrel Creek**, about 7km further on. After Tom Groggin the road climbs 800m to the **Pilot Lookout** (1300m), with views across a wilderness area to The Pilot (1830m), the source of the Murray River. There's another climb to **Dead Horse Gap** (1580m), named after some brumbies that froze here, then a descent to Thredbo (1400m), the Skitube terminal at Bullocks Flat, and Jindabyne. **Thredbo Diggings** and **Ngarigo** are two more picnic and camping areas on the banks of the Thredbo River near Bullock's Flat.

MONARO TABLELAND

The legacy of the Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme yields unexpected scenery in this elevated expanse of land northeast of Kosciuszko National Park. The rugged grey countryside, known for its unforgiving soil, is also home to massive fishing lakes formed when the Snowy scheme flooded part of the tablelands more than 50 years ago. The Snowy scheme provides electricity to Canberra, NSW and Victoria and is hailed as one of Australia's greatest engineering feats. Its historical importance was enhanced by workers from 30 countries immigrating to work on a project that was a source of immense national pride – attitudes to new immigrants changed and Australia's multiculturalism began. From an environmental point of view, however, it has been viewed as a national catastrophe, contributing to fishery depletion and the salination crisis.

Cooma and Jindabyne are the major town centres and while they're pretty laidback in summer, they pick up the pace in the winter when the state's snow bunnies stop through on their way to Thredbo and Perisher Blue. In the smaller towns you'll be surprised to find decent coffee, cute pubs and locals who can point you in the direction of a good feed.

Getting There & Away

Regional Express (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13) flies from Cooma to Sydney and back daily.

Cooma is the main transport hub in winter, with crowds coming to the ski-fields from Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney.

If driving from Canberra, the Monaro Hwy runs down to Cooma (1½ hours). The quickest route from Sydney is to take the Hume Hwy to Goulburn, then the Federal Hwy to Canberra. From Cooma, the Monaro Hwy heads south to Bombala and the Victorian border.

The Barry Way is a largely unsealed, narrow and winding mountain road running from near Jindabyne to Buchan in Victoria. It's a spectacular route through national parks, but it can be difficult when wet. Fuel isn't available anywhere along this road.

BRAIDWOOD

☎ 02 / pop 1100

Braidwood has long been on the radar of visiting Canberrans because of its well-preserved historic buildings. But more recently it's the

food scene that makes passers-by pull up to the kerb. On any given weekend the small town buzzes with the sound of chatting latte drinkers and foodie folk fond of perching streetside under big umbrellas for the best food just outside the capital. When you've had your fill, Braidwood is also a great base for bushwalking in the national parks.

Information

Braidwood visitors centre (☎ 4842 1144; www.braidwood-tourism.com; 92 Wallace St; ☹ 10am-4pm) has a walking-tour map of the town (free), books and topographical maps of scenic drives and bushwalks in the nearby national parks.

Sights & Activities

A stroll along **Wallace St**, with its restored Victorian buildings and wrought-iron lacework, is rather pleasant. Pop into the Italianate **Studio Altenburg** (☎ 4842 2384; 104 Wallace St; ☹ 1-5pm) in the impressive old bank (1888); it displays work by local artists and craftspeople. **Carriages by Cupid** (☎ 0417 456 093) is the town's horse-drawn taxi alternative and local history tour guide. Flag it down for a ride (\$10 per person for an hour).

Just out of town there are two pristine bush **swimming holes**. One of them 'starred' in the classic Australian movie *The Year My Voice Broke*. The visitors centre can give directions.

Festivals & Events

On the first or second Saturday in February, the **Braidwood Cup** is one of those great country race meetings (see the boxed text, p314). The **Braidwood Show** is held in mid-March.

Sleeping

Royal Mail Hotel (☎ 4842 2488; 147 Wallace St; r \$30) Spic-and-span pub rooms with shared bathrooms. Downstairs, The Coach House bistro has \$7 lunchtime 'hunger-busters' and a beer garden.

Country Style B&B (☎ 4842 2577; Wallace Street; r \$75) Behind Eureka Pizza on the main street, this cute 1870s B&B is self-contained and sleeps 12 people. It has a cosy lounge for colder months and a front veranda ideal for sipping cool ale in summer.

Mona B&B (☎ 4842 1288; Kings Hwy; r from \$300) This is one for high-rollers or honeymooners with no expense spared. The owner's immaculate taste makes for a lavish weekender on a country estate with all the trimmings.

Eating

Café Altenburg (☎ 4842 2077; 104 Wallace St; mains \$8-13; ☹ 10am-5pm) This pleasant and relaxing café in the courtyard of Studio Altenburg (left) has homemade soups, pies, pastries, savoury tarts, cakes, tempting pastas and salads, all at reasonable prices.

Braidwood Natural Foods & Dojo Bread (91 Wallace St; ☹ 9am-3pm Tue & Thu, 11am-6pm Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Two scrumptious organic shops in one of Braidwood's oldest buildings, behind Eureka Pizza.

Serrated Tussock Café (☎ 4842 2346, 118 Wallace St; mains \$9; ☹ breakfast & lunch) This place is gorgeous; it's a bookshop-cum-café with a rear courtyard, couches, cake and spot-on coffee.

Other recommendations:

Eureka Pizza (☎ 4842 1019; 91 Wallace St; mains \$13-26; ☹ dinner) Tasty wood-fired pizzas and cheaper traditional Italian-style fare. Tuck in on the veranda.

Somewhere Special on Wallace (☎ 4842 1999; 123 Wallace St; entrees \$18, mains \$24; ☹ dinner) Braidwood's newest upmarket restaurant.

Getting There & Away

Murrays (☎ 13 22 51) has a bus that stops outside the post office on Wallace St daily on its run between Canberra (\$20) and Batemans Bay (\$17).

Rixons (☎ 4474 4243) has a bus that stops Monday, Wednesday and Friday in each direction between Woden and Narooma at the Ampol service station, where you can buy tickets and get info on other bus lines.

Braidwood is on the Kings Hwy between Canberra (89km) and Batemans Bay (59km). An alternative route to the south coast at Moruya runs through Araluen and some beautiful country on the northern edge of Deua National Park. The road is sealed as far as Araluen, but after that it's not suitable for caravans.

If you're heading to Cooma, consider taking the scenic, partly sealed road via Numeralla. Floods can sometimes cut the road, so if it has been raining, change your plans.

AROUND BRAIDWOOD

The **Budawang** and **Morton National Parks** and the new **Mongo National Park** are accessible from Braidwood. Monga has a beautiful **2WD scenic loop** accessing walking tracks, picnic areas and Penance Grove, where an interpretative boardwalk winds through ancient cool temperate rainforest, a legacy of the Gondwanan Age.

Major's Creek, an old gold-mining town 16km south of Braidwood, has a number of historic buildings and a good country pub with comfortable rooms – the **Erlington Hotel** (☎ 02-4846 1145; 1 George St, s/d \$30/40).

SEASONAL WORK

From November to February, there is peach-picking work in the peaceful little town of Araluen, 26km south of Braidwood on the road to Moruya. **Araluen Valley Hotel** (☎ 02-4846 4023; Main Rd; s \$45) has all the info and great pub rooms.

Adaminaby

☎ 02 / pop 400 / elev 1017m

Adaminaby, on the Snowy Mountain Hwy, is so small-town it could be accused of going backwards. Fortunately, it remains the biggest place between Cooma and Tumut and the closest town to **Mt Selwyn ski-fields**, so it still pulls a crowd. Fishing in nearby **Lake Eucumbene** is also a big attraction and one that accounts for the giant rainbow trout greeting visitors in the town park.

Snowy Mountains Holiday Centre (☎ 1800 641 064; www.smhc.com.au; 9 Denison St) on the main street has plenty of info and books tickets for the **Adaminaby Bus Service** (☎ 1800 641 064) to Mt Selwyn, which leaves from the giant trout daily at 9am (return adult/child \$30/25). It also offers a charter transport service for bushwalkers in summer. You can hire ski gear from several shops in town.

Tanderra Lodge (☎ 6454 2470; www.tanderra.com; 21 Denison St; d/tr/q/f \$100/110/120/150) has basic rooms and plenty of '70s fishing and skiing ambience here. Adjacent, **Snow Goose Hotel/Motel** (☎ 6454 2202; cnr Denison & Baker Sts; motel s/d with breakfast \$85/130) has pub and motel rooms and counter meals. It's one of the few places open in the evening (until 9pm) year-round.

The **Cooma visitors centre** (☎ 1800 636 525) can point you towards **farmstays** in the region.

COOMA

☎ 02 / pop 8000

Proximity to the snowfields keeps this little town punching above its own weight during winter but it slows down considerably during summer. On the main street there are petrol stations aplenty, pubs for a different kind of refuelling and all the cafés and fast food necessary for a road trip.

Orientation & Information

Sharp St, the main street, becomes the Snowy Mountains Hwy to the west and the Monaro Hwy to the east.

The **Cooma visitors centre** (☎ 1800 636 525; www.visitcooma.com.au; 119 Sharp St; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) is next to Centennial Park. It makes accommodation bookings and may know of special deals being offered. It has internet access (\$6 per hour) as does the **library** (Vale St; per hr \$6). Nearby, **Public Internet Access** (67 Sharp St; per hr \$15) has coin-operated internet access.

Sights & Activities

Off the Monaro Hwy, 2km north of the town centre, the **Snowy Mountains Scheme Information Centre** (☎ 1800 623 776; www.snowyhydro.com.au; admission free; ☹ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat & Sun) has the best info on this feat of engineering. The **Cooma Monaro Railway** (☎ 6452 7791; ☹ 11am, 1pm & 2pm Sat & Sun, public holidays & summer school holidays; ☹ 1pm & 2pm Sun during winter) runs 45-minute train rides (\$12) aboard restored 1923 CPH rail motors. There's also a signposted **rail history walk**.

Out of town, 3km west, **Mt Gladstone lookout** has picnic tables.

Festivals & Events

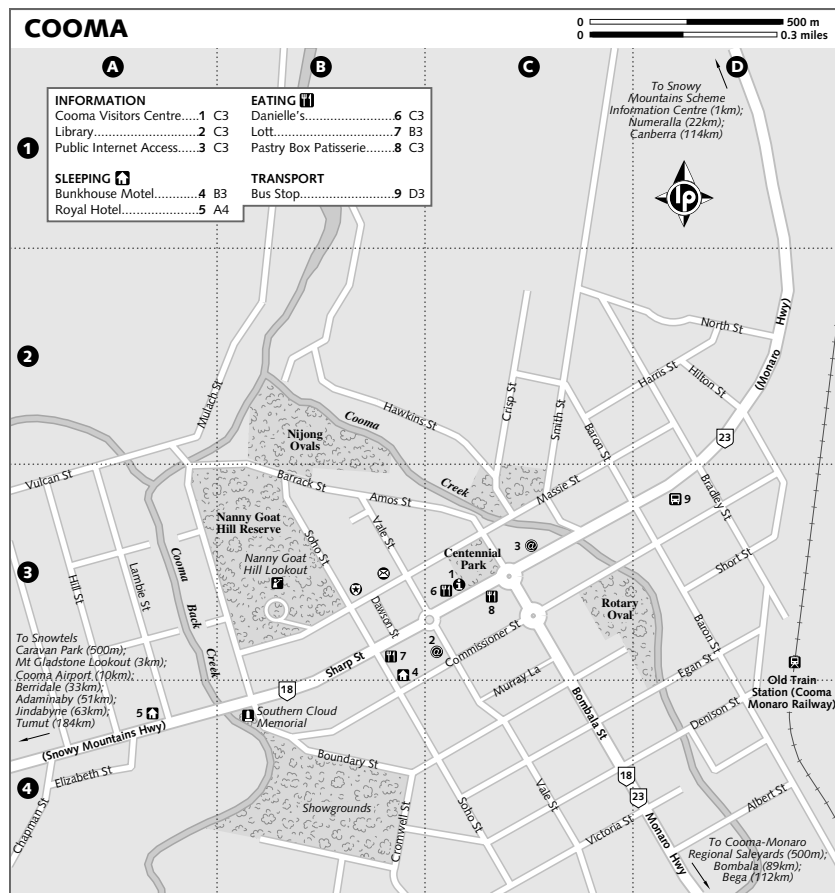
The **Cooma Street Fair** and **Snowy Ride** are held in early November and **Cooma Race Day** is on the first Saturday in December (see the boxed text, p314). Punters can catch the train to and from the racetrack. Cooma is a major centre for **cattle sales** and a big sale is worth seeing. The saleyards are just southeast of town on the Monaro Hwy.

Sleeping & Eating

Royal Hotel (☎ 6452 2132; 59 Sharp St; s/d \$30/50) The oldest licensed hotel in Cooma is a beautiful old sandstone place with decent pub rooms, shared bathrooms and a great veranda.

Bunkhouse Motel (☎ 6452 2983; www.bunkhousemotel.com.au; 28 Soho St; s/d winter \$45/60, dm/s/d summer \$25/35/60) This is the best value for money in Cooma – a neat, friendly place with a slightly cramped and rustic feel. Some rooms have cooking facilities.

Lott (☎ 6452 1414; 178-180 Sharp St; ☹ breakfast & lunch) A great place, as cosy as mumma's kitchen. The colourful cushions, produce piled high on the counter and the smell of fresh brewed coffee wafting around the room will make you feel right at home.



Pastry Box Patisserie (☎ 6452 5159; 100 Sharp St; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Opens at about 6am (knock and the pastry chef will let you in) with a selection of French patisseries, chunky beef pies, wraps, flans and sandwiches.

Danielle's (☎ 6452 4488; 121 Sharp St; mains \$16-25; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun, breakfast Sat & Sun) Next door to the visitors centre, Danielle's is probably Cooma's best restaurant. It's licensed, and has a menu of Italian-influenced dishes and a second-storey view over the main street.

CAMPING

Snowtels Caravan Park (☎ 6452 1828; info@snowtels.com.au; 286 Sharp St; powered/unpowered sites \$22/18, cabins from \$45) On the highway, 1.5km west of town,

this is a big, well-equipped place with rates that don't seem to fluctuate.

Getting There & Away

The airport is about 10km southwest of Cooma on the Snowy Mountains Hwy. **Rex** (☎ 13 17 13) flies from Cooma to Sydney and back daily.

Greyhound Ski Express (☎ 13 14 99) buses run from Sydney and Canberra to Thredbo, Bullocks Flat Skitube and Jindabyne daily.

SkiBus (☎ 6456 2957) buses run daily from Thredbo and Perisher via the Skitube, Jindabyne and Cooma (on request) to Canberra.

The **Snowy Mountains Express Shuttle** (☎ 1800 679 754) meets every Rex flight and runs between the airport and Jindabyne, Alpine Way, Perisher Blue and Thredbo.

Transborder (☎ 6241 0033) buses run daily from Thredbo via the Skitube (\$21), Jindabyne (\$25) and Cooma (\$35) to Canberra (\$64).

Victoria's **V/Line** (☎ 13 61 96) has an interesting twice-weekly run from Melbourne to Canberra via Cooma (\$63). The nine-hour trip from Melbourne takes you by train to Bairnsdale, then by bus.

Heading to Batemans Bay, you can travel via Numeralla to Braidwood on a partly sealed road skirting Deua National Park. If you're heading to Bega, be warned there's no petrol until Bemboka.

There are two car-hire companies available in Cooma. **Europcar** (☎ 13 13 90) is located at the airport, but if you're not coming by plane a taxi to the airport costs \$50 to \$60. **Thrifty** (☎ 13 12 86) is central but has more restrictions for travelling above the snowline.

NIMMITABEL

☎ 02 / pop 300

Pretty Nimmitabel, on the Monaro Hwy 35km south of Cooma, is a good spot for a coffee fix but you'll have to look elsewhere for petrol.

The **Royal Arms** (☎ 6454 6422; www.royalarms.com.au; Snowy Mountain Hwy; d from \$100), a restored hotel, is the main source of tourist info. **CJ Harvey's Coffee Bar** (☎ 6454 6464; 43 Bombala St; ☺ breakfast & lunch) is an unexpected surprise in such a small place. It is ultra modern with 'out-there' sculptures and good coffee.

The **CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32) bus between Canberra and Eden passes through daily in both

directions. It stops outside the elephant statue (shipped over from Bali by the local baker).

JINDABYNE

☎ 02 / pop 4420

Jindabyne has a split personality. As the closest town to Kosciuszko National Park's major ski resorts, it sleeps more than 20,000 visitors in winter. But in summer the crowds go elsewhere and the town reverts to its relatively peaceful small-town self where fishing is the mainstay activity.

Orientation & Information

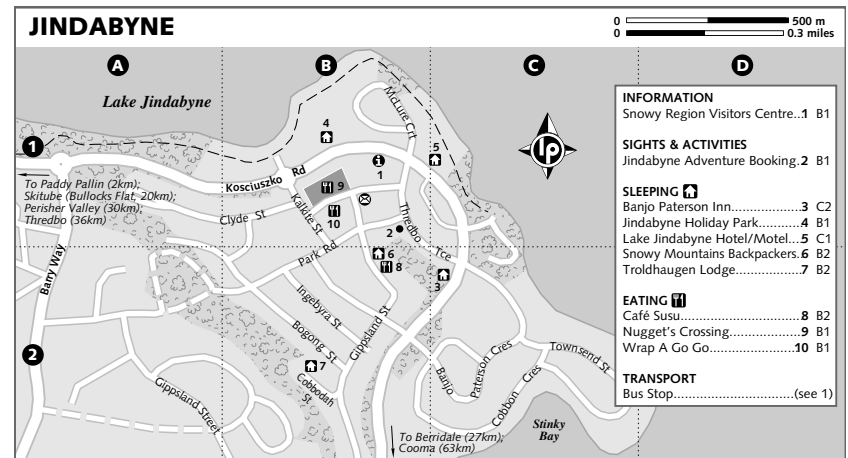
As with many other towns on the Monaro Tableland, today's Jindabyne is a modern incarnation of an original settlement that is now submerged in Lake Jindabyne.

The impressive **Snowy Region visitors centre** (☎ 6450 5600; fax 6456 1249; www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au; Kosciuszko Rd; ☺ 8am-5pm), on the main road, is operated by the NPWS. There are display areas, a cinema and a good café.

Nearby is **Nugget's Crossing** (Kosciuszko Rd), the town's main shopping centre, with three banks, cafés and shops. The post office is located behind the centre.

Summer Activities

Jindabyne Adventure Booking (☎ 1800 815 588; 2 Thredbo Tce) offers a variety of tours and packages including mountain biking, white-water rafting, kite boarding, wake boarding, abseiling and guided walks up to the top of Mt Kosciuszko.



Paddy Pallin (☎ 1800 623 459; www.paddypallin.com.au; cnr Kosciuszko & Thredbo Rds) is a kitted-out adventure centre 2.5km out of Jindabyne, just past the Thredbo Rd turnoff. It has tents, skiing and walking equipment for hire, and national park bushwalks.

Sleeping

The influx of snow bunnies in winter sends prices through the roof, but it's still generally cheaper than at the resorts. Plan well ahead.

Snowy Mountains Backpackers (☎ 1800 333 468; www.snowybackpackers.com.au; 7-8 Gippsland St; Jun-Oct Sun-Thu dm \$30-42, d \$90-120, Fri & Sat dm \$35-44, d \$90-130) A well-oiled machine with clean rooms, internet (20 minutes for \$3) and service with a smile. The way a backpackers should be.

Lake Jindabyne Hotel/Motel (☎ 1800 646 818; Kosciuszko Rd; d five night with breakfast Sun-Thu \$600-675, d two nights with breakfast Fri & Sat \$380-495; 🍷) A big place by the lake in the centre of town, with a heated pool, spa and sauna. Expect rate decrease in summer.

Other recommendations:

Banjo Paterson Inn (☎ 1800 046 275; www.banjo-patersoninn.com.au; 1 Kosciuszko Rd; d \$70-250)

Jindabyne Holiday Park (☎ 6456 2249; www.jindabyne-holidaypark.com.au; Kosciuszko Rd; powered/unpowered sites from \$35/\$22, add \$10 on weekends)

Troldhaugen Lodge (☎ 6456 2718; 13 Cobbodah St; s/d with breakfast from \$50/70)

There are many places offering cheap accommodation in flats, apartments and lodges, but they can fill up quickly. Agents in Jindabyne:

Alpine Resorts & Travel Centre (☎ 1800 802 315)

Jindy Real Estate (☎ 1800 020 657)

Kosciuszko Accommodation Centre (☎ 1800 026 354)

Snowy Mountains Holiday Centre (☎ 1800 641 064)

Snowy Mountains Reservations Centre (☎ 1800 020 622)

Drinking & Eating

Nugget's Crossing on Kosciuszko Rd is a well-stocked shopping centre with a supermarket and numerous places to eat.

Wrap A Go Go (☎ 6457 1887; Shop 1 Lakeview Plaza, Snowy River Ave; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Up behind Nugget's Crossing, this place does a damn good chilli prawn quesadilla (\$17) and similar well-priced fare.

Banjo Paterson Inn (☎ 1800 046 275; www.banjo-patersoninn.com.au; 1 Kosciuszko Rd) This is a flash establishment where locals flock for a piss-up

in the main bar or a quiet glass of wine next door at Clancy's bar. It has lake views, accommodation and a restaurant.

Café Susu (☎ 6456 1503; 8 Gippsland St; mains \$12; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This is handy to Snowy Mountains Backpackers with reasonably priced curries, stir-fries and pasta. Friday night is sushi night!

Getting There & Away

Alpine Express (☎ 6456 7340) has a three-hour bus from Canberra to Jindabyne, which continues on to Thredbo. This bus connects with the Sydney-Canberra bus. The bus stop is outside the visitors centre.

Greyhound Ski Express (☎ 13 14 99) buses run from Sydney and Canberra to Thredbo, Bullocks Flat Skitube and Jindabyne daily.

Jindabyne Coaches (☎ 6457 2117) runs buses to Bullocks Flat in winter, and may go as far as Thredbo depending on demand.

Transborder (☎ 6241 0033) is the main service between Canberra and Jindabyne (\$45).

WEST OF THE SNOWIES

The western slopes of the Snowy Mountains are steeper than on the east, and the area is more intensively farmed, although there's still plenty of bush. The farms and small towns in the area blaze with colour in the autumn when poplars and fruit trees prepare to shed their leaves. It's good touring country with some great little towns.

Getting There & Around

CountryLink (☎ 13 22 32) runs a bus from Cootamundra to Gundagai, Tumut, Adelong, Batlow and Tumbarumba daily except Saturdays. At Cootamundra it connects with the Sydney to Melbourne XPT (express) train.

If driving or riding a motorcycle, there are several approaches from the Hume Hwy. The main route, the Snowy Mountains Hwy (18), leaves the Hume about 30km south of Gundagai and takes you to Tumut, Kiandra, Adaminaby and Cooma. Or try the **Snowy Valleys Way** (www.snowyvalleysway.com.au), an alternate tourist route to the Hwy through Gundagai, Tumut and Tumbarumba, then onto Corryong and Beechworth in Victoria, joining the highway again near Wangaratta.

From Albury you can travel on Victoria's Murray Valley Hwy to Corryong, then head

across the river to Khancoban for the Alpine Way. From Holbrook on the Hume Hwy, a sealed road runs through to Jingellic and along the river to Corryong. Another sealed road runs from the Hume to Tumbarumba where you can join the winding Elliott Way to get to Mt Selwyn and the Snowy Mountains Hwy at Kiandra.

TUMUT & AROUND

☎ 02 / pop 6000

Is Tumut a small big town or a big small town? It's hard to say. But it is certainly set in a picturesque valley where, if you've got a car, you can quite happily base yourself for a day or two. It's the closest centre to the northern end of Kosciuszko National Park and home to many pine plantations, orchards and rolling countryside. The **Festival of the Falling Leaf** kicks off on the last weekend in April.

Information

The **Tumut visitors centre** and **NPWS office** (☎ 6947 7025; www.tumut.nsw.gov.au; 5 Adelong Rd; 🕒 9am-5pm) are in the refurbished Old Butter Factory north of the town centre. The **library** (☎ 6947 1969; 169 Wynyard St; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) has internet access (\$7 per hour).

Sights & Activities

Tumut is a popular spot for powered hang-gliding and half-hour microlight 'trike' flights; contact **Air Escape** (☎ 6947 1159; 8 Twomeys La). **Selwyn Snow & Water** (☎ 6947 6225), near the swimming pool on Fitzroy St, hires bikes as well as ski and water-sports gear.

For a tippie, **Boonderoo Wines** (☎ 6947 2279; Boonderoo Rd) is a family-run boutique vineyard on the road to Blowering Reservoir. It is open most weekends.

HUME & HOVELL WALKING TRACK

You're bound to see many references to this 440km walking track between Yass and Albury. It follows the historic route taken by explorers Hamilton Hume and William Hovell in their 1824 expedition to Port Phillip Bay (present-day Melbourne).

The six-man outfit took only four months to complete the return journey to Port Phillip, passing to the west of the Snowy Mountains and through the relatively flat plains of Victoria.

The Yass-Albury walk takes about 24 days, winding through numerous state forests along the shores of Lake Burrinjuck and Blowering Reservoir, and close to Wee Jasper, Tumut, Tumbarumba, Lankeys Creek and Woomargama. It's divided into 12 stages with six major trackheads, and there are various side trips and day walks off the main track.

The route is well signposted and there are 16 camp sites along the way. A good resource is *The Hume & Hovell Walking Track Guidebook* (1993), by H Hill.

There's a 3km paved **river walk** along the shady bank of the Tumut River (also good for bikes) or stretch your legs strolling to the scenic lookout from the main street (Wynyard St).

Mountain biking in Tumut State Forest is becoming popular with more than 7km of constructed single track covering three connected loops. Mundowie Loop (3.3km) and Womboyne Trail (2.3km) are intermediate rides while the steep and rocky GC Mile (1.6km) is for advanced riders. Maps and info are available from the NPWS office. To get to the trailhead car park, head to the western end of Herbert St, and turn off just before the golf course.

The Thomas Boyd Trackhead, part of the **Hume & Hovell Walking Track** (see boxed text, below), is 25km southeast of Tumut on the beautiful Goobarrandra River. It has camping facilities (\$5) and is perfect for kayaking, fishing, liloing and wildlife watching.

Blowering Reservoir, nearly 20km long, has numerous picnic and camping areas, and the lake is popular for water sports. You can drive or walk up to the top of the 112m-high dam for a good view; gates close at 4pm.

At the southern end of the reservoir is the small town of **Talbingo**, the birthplace of famous author Miles Franklin (*My Brilliant Career*). The surrounding high country is ideal for walks and picnics. West of Tumut, the gorgeous little town of **Adelong**, with its old-fashioned main street, is worth visiting. Stop at **Adelong Falls & Gold Battery** (Tumblong Rd) for a picnic.

Sleeping & Eating

There are plenty of hotels and just as many holiday parks and camping areas around Tumut. Wynyard St is the place to get for takeaway shops and pub food.

Oriental Hotel (☎ 6947 1174; cnr Fitzroy & Wynyard Sts; s \$25) Known as The Ourie, this is a good-looking old pub with standard rooms leading onto the big balcony. The owners are friendly too.

Royal Hotel (☎ 6947 1129; 88 Wynyard St; s/d from \$42/55) If you can forgive the pink décor in the main bar, this has good motel-style units and hotel rooms.

Old Butter Factory Café (☎ 6947 4150; 5 Adelong Rd) Next to the visitors centre, this is a community based café that does good coffee and a classic Aussie hamburger complete with bacon and egg, beetroot and pineapple (\$7).

Coach House Gourmet Eatery (Russell St; mains \$8-10; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Is the pick of the cafés, with excellent coffee, gourmet sandwiches and a couple of tasty hot dishes that change daily.

Brandy's (☎ 124 Wynyard St; mains \$20-25; ☎ dinner) The building is not very special, but this is Tumut's best restaurant, serving mostly steaks and seafood.

Getting There & Away

CountryLink (☎ 13 22 32) buses, which run to Cootamundra, Adelong, Gundagai, Batlow and Tumbarumba, stop daily (except Saturday) outside the National Australia Bank on the corner of Russell and Wynyard Sts. **Harvey World Travel** (☎ 6947 3055), in the Hub centre on Wynyard St, sells tickets.

There's a mostly unsealed road from Tumut north to Wee Jasper (69km), from where you can get to Yass, and another running east through the Brindabella Range to Canberra (125km).

BATLOW

☎ 02 / pop 1500

Batlow, on one side of a bowl-shaped valley, is an apple-orchard town. Tourist information for the area can be found at **Springfield Orchard**

(☎ 6949 1021), just north of town and at **Tumut visitors centre** (☎ 6947 7025; www.tumut.nsw.gov.au; 5 Adelong Rd, Tumut; ☎ 9am-5pm).

The trees blossom in October (when there's an Apple Blossom Festival) and the apple harvest starts around mid-March, but there are also stone fruits and cherries, so picking work is usually available from December to May. The best way to find work is to contact **Riverina Community College** (☎ 6947 3886; Wynyard Centre, Wynyard St, Tumut; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri).

Fruit can be savoured at a number of roadside stalls. If you've never seen the inside of an apple-packing factory, **Joyson** (☎ 6949 1835; 1 Cottams Rd; tour \$3; ☎ Mon-Fri), 6km south of town, is the place for a short, guided tour. Otherwise stop at **Batlow Hotel** (☎ 6949 1001; 12 Pioneer St; s/d \$25/35) for a beer. It has good honest pub rooms and toast- and coffee-making facilities.

TUMBARUMBA

☎ 02 / pop 3940

There's a classic Australian bush poem by John O'Brien called *Tumba Bloody Rumba* about a bloke who goes 'shootin' kanga-bloody-roos' here. Once you've read the poem, it's hard to refer to this pretty little town by any other name. Set in a valley, Tumba was first settled by graziers, who wintered their cattle here when the snows came to the high plains. Today, forestry and cold-climate fruit orchards are the major industries but tourism and wine have also made their mark.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 6948 3333; 10 Bridge St; ☎ 10am-5pm) is at the southern end of The Parade, the main street. It has details of the area's walks and a small pioneer museum. There's internet access at the **library** (☎ 6948 2725; ☎ 1-5pm Tue, 2-5pm Wed-Fri, 10am-noon Sat; per hr \$4) in the Bicentennial Gardens on Prince St, and at **Bridson Internet Cafe** (☎ 6948 3322; 16 Bridge St; per hr \$4).

Anyone looking for **fruit picking work** should check out the noticeboard at Tumbarumba Creek Caravan Park (see below).

Tumbarumba Rodeo is held on New Year's Day and **Tumbafest**, a weekend of food, wine and entertainment, is celebrated in early February.

Sights & Activities

The **Pioneer Women's Hut** (☎ 6948 2635; Wagga Rd; 10am-4pm Sat & Sun, from 11am Wed) might sound dire but in fact, it's lauded as one of the most interesting small museums in the country. **Glenburnie Vineyard** (☎ 6948 2570; Black Range Rd; ☎ 10am-6pm) is 4km north of town. The cellar is in a renovated shearing shed. On a cold day (Tumba boasts a few), **Old Mason's Cinema** (☎ 6948 2950; Winton St; \$10), with its modern façade and big comfy seats, brings new and old films to the bush. Out of town, just before the turnoff to Elliott Way, **Paddy's River Flats** is a picture-perfect spot for a picnic and a paddle.

Sleeping & Eating

Café Red B&B (☎ 6948 3228; 34 The Parade; s/d \$75/90) This place is great value, with cosy timber motel-style rooms and a lavish cooked breakfast included. The café is definitely the hippest in the region, serving imaginative food and great coffee.

Tumbarumba Motel (☎ 6948 2494; tumbarumbamotel@bigpond.com; cnr Albury Close & Mate St; s/d \$88/92) Modern and spacious, this friendly motel is ideal for families. It has a good restaurant (entrees \$10, mains \$25) with a pretty view of town.

Glenburnie Cottage (☎ 6948 2570; Black Range Rd; s \$85, d \$95-120) Set amid the vineyard this cute weatherboard house is perfect for a family or group. It has two queen-sized rooms and is equipped with all the essentials.

Old Mason Cinema Café (☎ 6948 3300; Winton St; snacks \$12, mains \$24; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) Whether or not you're catching a film, this groovy café with an enticing menu and a long list of wines by the glass is the ticket.

CAMPING

Tumbarumba Creek Caravan Park (☎ 6948 3330; www.tumbarumbacreek.com.au; Lauder St; camp sites \$12, bunkhouse \$14, d cabins from \$40) This tidy little park among the trees is backpacker central with a handy noticeboard for fruit-picking jobs and a community atmosphere. The public pool is across the road.

Getting There & Away

CountryLink (☎ 13 22 32) buses stop in town. Bookings can be made at the newsagency on The Parade. From Tumbarumba, roads run west to the Hume Hwy, north to Tumut, east to the Snowy Mountains Hwy, and south to Khancoban, the Alpine Way and Corryong (in Victoria). The ski slopes at Mt Selwyn are about an hour away on the Elliott Way. You'll need chains to drive there in winter.

KHANCOBAN

☎ 02 / pop 310

Originally constructed by the Snowy Mountains Authority to house 7000 construction workers, Khancoban is now a sleepy hollow with good facilities (ie a public pool) considering the decreasing population.

There's a **NPSW office** (☎ 6076 9373; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-4pm) where you can buy park entry permit and get information.

Khancoban Pondage and the Swampy Plains River that runs through it provide top-notch swimming spots. In summer, head to 'the beach' - Khancoban's very own sandy **swimming spot**. It's near the pondage boat ramp.

Live Adrenalin (☎ 1300 791 793; www.adrenalin.com.au) organises adventure activities around Khancoban. A one-day white-water rafting trip costs \$220 and a two-day camping trip costs \$440. **Rapid Descents** (☎ 1800 637 486; www.rapiddescents.com.au) has caving, abseiling and rafting trips at similar prices.

Lakeside Caravan Resort (☎ 6076 9488; www.klcr.com.au; powered/unpowered sites \$15/20, vans \$28, cabins \$44), by the Khancoban Dam, is a well-equipped place with ski equipment, snow chains and boats for hire. On the hill, **Queens Cottage B&B** (☎ 6076 9033; Pendergast St; s/d with bathroom \$95/110) has modern and tasteful hillside cabins with clean bathrooms and views across the beautiful valley.

Alpine Inn Hotel/Motel (☎ 6076 9471; trout@alpineinn.com.au; Alpine Way; s/d from \$55/65; 🚗) has good basic accommodation and counter meals and the adjoining **Pickled Parrot Restaurant** (☎ 6076 9471; Alpine Way; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) has retro décor and bistro food.

The **General Store** (☎ 6076 9559; Mitchell Ave) has good-value takeaway food including a monstrous chicken schnitzel (\$5).

Getting There & Away

There are no regular bus services to Khancoban. If you're heading towards Albury, you

DETOUR: THE ELLIOTT WAY

Ignoring the superstar Alpine Way for a minute, one of the best drives in the Snowy Mountains region is the back road from Tumbarumba to Adaminaby. Take Tooma Rd south out of Tumba for about 18km until you reach a T-junction. Turn left onto the Elliott Way, which will take you through rolling farmland, with Pilot Reef Mountain on your right. You'll know you're in the Kosciuszko National Park when the landscape changes from grassy paddocks to soaring eucalypt forest. The road cuts around and follows the Tumut River, which it crosses at the site of the Tumut 2 power station. From there you climb up and out of the forest. Take a left and you're onto the eerily vacant highlands, a unique and rugged landscape. The road joins the Snowy Mountains Hwy at Kiandra, and from here it's another 40km to Adaminaby.

can grab a ride in the mail truck, which leaves the post office at 12.30pm weekdays.

THE HUME HIGHWAY

Like all big swathes of four-lane bitumen, the Hume Hwy, running nearly 900km from Sydney to Melbourne, is somewhat lacking in aesthetic. Sure visitors will spot some of Australia's most beloved animals – kangaroos, wombats and koala – but they're likely to be roadkill. Despite this, the highway is easily navigable, and an effortless way to traverse the country by car. It also provides an opportunity to visit small towns where a true picture of Australia, outside the big cities, can be seen.

Much of the highway is speed limited to 110km/h. Due to increasing death tolls on Australian roads, this speed limit is rigorously implemented with speed cameras and roadside police cars. Drivers will do well to take heed for safety reasons but also for the back pocket. Speeding fines are hefty.

GOULBURN & AROUND

☎ 02 / pop 27,200

Goulburn lays claim to the title of Australia's first inland city and it has the history and architecture to prove it. While the old town centre is relatively peaceful and worth a stroll, the city's food scene has picked up a notch and alfresco dining and lattes are becoming the norm.

Backpackers looking for canning work should know that this is not the Goulburn of Goulburn Valley canned fruit fame.

Orientation & Information

The main shopping street in Goulburn is Auburn St.

The **Goulburn visitors centre** (☎ 4823 4492/1800 353 646; www.igoulburn.com; 201 Sloane St; ☎ 9am-5pm), opposite Belmore Park, has regional information, free internet access and local produce.

Sights

First stop should be the **Old Goulburn Brewery** (☎ 4821 6071; 23 Bungonia Rd; adult/child/concession \$6/3/4; ☎ tours 11am & 3pm) where you can see the workings of a brewery but, more importantly, sip on a beer. Accommodation is also available (see right).

The heritage bicycle-tour map takes riders (or drivers on a wet day) to a stack of places

including the **Goulburn War Memorial lookout**, and past the ominous **Goulburn Correctional Centre**, which holds some of the most notorious criminals in NSW (including serial backpacker murderer Ivan Milat).

The three-storey-high **Big Merino** (Cowper St; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm) should be put out to pasture. It is soon to be relocated next to the Hume Hwy where all things 'big' belong.

About 40km southeast of Goulburn and abutting Morton National Park, **Bungonia State Conservation Area** (☎ 4844 4277; Lookdown Rd) has a dramatic forested gorge and some deep caves ideal for abseiling. Contact **Abseiling Adventures Goulburn** (☎ 0409 438 503; www.abseilingadventures.com.au; 11 Mannifera Place). (If Goulburn's five-year drought breaks, canoeing also gets a thumbs-up). **Wombeyan Caves** (☎ 4843 5976; www.jenolancaves.org.au) are part of the Jenolan Caves limestone system but are cheaper than tours of the main caves, with smaller group tours. Follow the Tourist Drive 13 signs via Taralga.

Festivals & Events

The **Australian Blues Music Festival** (www.austrianbluesfestival.com.au) kicks off in the second week of February, the **Irish Music Festival** is in the second week of June and **Taralga Annual Australia Day Rodeo** (www.argylecountry.com.au/taralgarodeo) is on the last weekend of January.

Sleeping

Tattersall's Hotel (☎ 4821 3088; 76 Auburn St; dm \$20) This is as close as you'll get to a backpackers. The rooms upstairs are basic – there are four bunks to a room, but most likely you'll have a room to yourself.

Goulburn Brewery (☎ 4821 6071; 23 Bungonia Rd; per person \$44) This is the real deal with lumpy mattresses and ageing furniture in a terrace of old brick houses once used to accommodate brewery workers. It has seven guest rooms with a mix-match of beds.

Mike's Manor (☎ 4822 8414/0417 462 664; www.mikesmanor.com; 197 Braidwood Rd; s/d/f \$70/80/120) Owned by a Formula 3 racing driver, this is the place to get the lowdown on the local motorsport (Wakefield Park is the nearby racing circuit). It's well kept with clean, tidy motel-style rooms and a sociable lounge, suited to backpackers, couples and families alike.

Mandelson's (☎ 4821 0707; www.mandelsons.com.au; 160 Sloane St; s/d with breakfast from \$120/130) A charming and luxurious B&B in a restored heritage building.

Eating & Drinking

Greengrocer Café (☎ 4821 0033; 37 Clifford St; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This innovative café with an eclectic mix of stools, couches and comfy chairs has ground coffee, local produce and a tasty chalked-up menu. Breakfast starts at 6am and dinner is available Thursday and Friday evening.

Paragon Café (☎ 4821 3566; 174 Auburn St; mains from \$9; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) When every other café on Auburn St is closed, the Paragon's lights still shine. It is licensed and has reasonable pasta dishes (\$11).

Sasso Pizza & Bar (☎ 4822 8564; 173 Bourke St; mains \$18; ☎ lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Wed-Sun) This is Goulburn's best-kept secret. It's a funky little place with an edgy cosmopolitan ambience. Traditional Italian pizzas and organic wood-fired bread are just the start.

Goulburn Club (☎ 4821 2043; 19 Market St) If you're over 25 and enjoy live music and boutique beer, this place is staffed by volunteers, has art on the walls and is a well-known local hangout. Thursdays is blues night.

Getting There & Away

Greyhound (☎ 13 1499) buses between Goulburn and Adelaide (from \$138), via Canberra (\$15) and Melbourne (from \$81), stop at the service station at the southern entrance to the city. **Murrays** (☎ 13 22 51) also run buses three times a week to Canberra (\$21) and Wollongong (\$28), and **Fearnies** (☎ 1800 029 918) has daily services to Wagga Wagga (\$41) and Sydney (\$53, stopping outside the courthouse).

Trains to Sydney (\$30) and Melbourne (\$104) stop here daily. The **CountryLink Travel Centre** (☎ 02-4827 1485; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Fri) is at the train station. It also serves as the booking office for buses to Canberra and to Sydney.

YASS

☎ 02 / pop 12,940

Yass is a pretty place. It's quiet (thanks to the highway bypass) but atmospheric with a wide main street (Comur St), shops and pubs of the wide-veranda variety, and heritage buildings. You'll see alfresco dining on the footpaths at lunchtime and big sun umbrellas promoting good coffee.

Orientation & Information

The Yass Valley Way (the old highway) becomes Comur St, then Laidlaw St as it passes through town. **Yass visitors centre** (☎ 6226 2557;

tourism@yass.nsw.gov.au; Comur St; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun) is in Coronation Park on the Sydney side of town.

Yass Library (Banjo Paterson Park, Meehan St; 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9.30am-7pm Thu, 10am-1pm Sat) has free internet access and Yass visitors centre is planning to have access also.

Sights

Next to the visitors centre, the **Hamilton Hume Museum** (☎ 6226 2700; adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue, Wed, Sat & Sun summer) has a model reconstruction of the town in the 1890s. Hume's house (1835), **Cooma Cottage** (☎ 6226 1470; adult/child \$4/2; 10am-4pm Wed-Mon), is on the Yass Valley Way on the Sydney side of town. **Riverbank Park** is a great place for a picnic or a quiet sit by the river. Check out the **Aboriginal murals** on the toilet blocks and underneath the bridge.

Festivals & Events

Yass Valley Festival (www.yassvalley.nsw.gov.au) is held at Riverbank Park on the third weekend in November each year; **Yass Picnic Race Day** is held on the first Saturday in March (see the boxed text, p314); and the **Yass Rodeo and Ute show** is held in mid-November. Details for all events can be found at the visitors centre.

Sleeping & Eating

There is a broad range of accommodation available in and around Yass, from fine old B&Bs and guesthouses to hotels, motels and caravan parks. **Yass visitors centre** can provide a complete list of accommodation and prices.

Globe B&B (☎ 6226 3680; www.globe.com.au; 70 Rossi St; s/d/f \$90/120/150) A lovely old National Trust-classified guesthouse in a restored Victorian hotel in the middle of town. The owner has immaculate taste.

Kerrowgair (☎ 6226 4932; www.kerrowgair.com.au; 24 Grampian St; d with breakfast from \$130) Another National Trust-listed building set in ample gardens on a hill overlooking the town.

Galutzi (☎ 6226 5261; Meehan St; sandwiches \$5-8; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Probably Yass' hippest café – there's a plethora of gourmet sandwich ingredients to choose from and the coffee is excellent.

Café Dolcetto (☎ 6226 1277; Comur St; sandwiches \$4-7, mains \$15; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) A cosy café with outdoor tables for summer and a log fire in winter. The food is fresh without being too fancy.

PICNIC RACES

Care for a bet on the nags? Here's a tip: get along to a picnic race day. Held annually in a large number of country towns, these community race meets are the lifeblood of the rural social calendar and a bloody good bash for everyone else. They are traditionally held on a Friday and are the only day of the year when farmers and graziers feel at liberty to swap their work attire for a pair of polished RM Williams boots and a chambray shirt. Today, town and city folk are cottoning on to the fun and some picnic race days are held on a Saturday.

Expect to see a fraternity of frocked-up women gathered around gourmet picnic hampers, Akubra-donned men downing cold beer at the outdoor bar and a bustling betting ring. Some tracks are better than others (Yass' Marchmont track has a back straight hidden from public view, prompting endless rumours of jockey-swapping), but all of them kick up enough dust to raise a whoop or whimper from the barracking-mad punters in the (often) not-so-grand stands. Pluck that little dress out of the backpack and try your luck with Fashions on the Field.

Race days that coincide with Melbourne's November Spring Carnival are particularly good fun. See the racing diary at www.racingsw.com.au or contact visitors centres.

Getting There & Away

V/Line (☎ 13 61 96) buses heading to Melbourne stop at the visitors centre; heading to Sydney they stop at the NRMA garage across the road. **Firefly** (☎ 1800 631 164) and **Greyhound** (☎ 13 1499) daily services to Sydney (from \$42) and Melbourne (from \$73) stop at the Caltex petrol station at the southern entrance into town. **Transborder** (☎ 6241 0033) and **Feames** (☎ 1800 029 918) have daily services between Yass and Canberra (\$16). They leave from Rossi St. **CountryLink Trains** (☎ 13 22 32) between Sydney and Melbourne stop daily at Yass Junction, 2km north of town. Some bus services can be booked at the NRMA garage.

WEE JASPER

☎ 02 / pop 80
About 55km southwest of Yass following Tourist Drive No 7, Wee Jasper (www.weejasper.org) is a small village in a beautiful valley near the southern end of Burrinjuck Dam. It's a favourite getaway for the Canberra weekenders set, but during the week you may have the valley to yourself (and the 80 or so locals).

You can join the **Hume & Hovell Walking Track** here, and visit the limestone **Careys Cave** (☎ 6227 9622; www.weejaspercaves.com; adult/child \$11/7), open Friday to Monday in the afternoon and Wednesday on school holidays, but call first to confirm. There is a store and a pub, and fuel is available.

The **Stables** (☎ 6227 9619; Yass-Wee Jasper Rd; cabins \$50) has good-sized cabins, some with open fireplace and kitchens. Ask at the **General Store**

(☎ 6227 9640) for more accommodation options or contact the **ranger** (☎ 6227 9626) for camping details.

The road from Yass has an 8km unsealed section but it's usually pretty good. Continuing southwest to Tumut, the road deteriorates for the climb out of the valley and is not recommended for campervans or hire cars. Another unsealed road cuts across to Canberra. Both these roads are OK when dry.

MURRUMBATAMAN

☎ 02 / pop 500
On the Barton Hwy southeast toward Canberra, Murrumbateman is a small town that has recently been hit with the gastronomy stick. Locals say the name hails from colonial days when punters would ask Bateman, a local publican, for 'more rum' but today they're likely to be asking for more wine. The area has a number of cool-climate wineries open for sales and tastings – and with good wine comes great food. The **Murrumbateman Moving Feast**, at the end of September, celebrates the region's top-notch wine and cuisine.

Schonegg Country Guesthouse and Café (☎ 6227 0344; www.schonegg.com.au; 381 Hillview Dr; s/d \$140/160; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) is the pick of this wine region with six sleek contemporary bedrooms. Up the road, **Helm Winery** (☎ 6227 5953; www.helmwines.com.au; Butts Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Thu-Mon) is the granddaddy of the region's wineries and has a cute weatherboard tasting room. **Clonakilla Winery** (☎ 6227 5877; Crisps Lane; ☎ 10am-5pm) specialises in Shiraz Viognier with access via the Murrumbateman Rd turnoff in the centre of town.

GUNDAGAI

☎ 02 / pop 2500
Gundagai, on the Murrumbidgee River 398km from Sydney, is very small-town in a relaxed easy-going kind of way. It is one of the more interesting small towns along (or bypassed by) the Hume Hwy.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 6944 0250; www.gundagai.nsw.gov.au; 249 Sheridan St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun) is on the grand main street and has plenty of info on B&Bs and farmstays in the area.

Sights

The **Prince Alfred Bridge** (closed to traffic, but you can walk it) is the star of Gundagai's sights. It crosses the flood plain of the Murrumbidgee River and provides a perfect spot for breathing in the country air.

At the visitors centre, take a peek at **Rusconi's Marble Masterpiece**, a cathedral model, and grab a walking map of the local **heritage**.

In town, **Green Dog Gallery** (☎ 6944 1479; Sheridan St; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm Thu-Sat) and **Lannigan Abbey Art Gallery** (☎ 6944 2852; www.laniganabbey.com.au; 72 First Ave; ☎ 9am-5pm) are worth a bo peep. Lannigan is also a B&B (double rooms are \$175).

The **Mt Parnassus lookout** has picnic facilities and good views over the town; take the steep walk (or drive) up Hanley St.

About 8km east of town, the **Dog on the Tuckerbox** is Gundagai's most famous monument. A sculpture of a dog from a 19th-century bush ballad, it's well-known along the Hume Highway, but most people will be disappointed to find the only thing worth stopping for is petrol.

Festivals & Events

Held in mid-November, the **Snake Gully Cup** is Gundagai's famed annual race day (see the

boxed text, opposite). It coincides with the **Dog on the Tuckerbox** festival. The **Festival of the Turning Wave** (www.turningwave.org.au) is a four-day Irish festival in mid-September.

Sleeping & Eating

Star Hotel (☎ 6944 1030; Mount St; s/d \$25/45) This typical country town pub is slightly cheaper than the Criterion, and a continental breakfast is included in the rate. It's in the heart of town on the main street.

Criterion Hotel (☎ 6944 1048; 172 Sheridan St; s/d with breakfast \$35/55) The closest visitors will get to backpacker-style accommodation. It has reasonable pub rooms, a lively public bar and a rear beer garden.

Poet's Recall (☎ 6944 1777; poets.recall@bigpond.com; cnr West & Punch Sts; s/d \$75/95; ☎) Touches like slate bathrooms and comfy furniture make this the best motel in town. Locals also rate the restaurant, which has an Irish chef.

Old Bridge Inn (☎ 6944 4250; 1 Tumut St) On the south of town, the Inn is a lovely old building with B&B accommodation. Ring ahead for availability and room prices. The excellent restaurant has menu favourites such as filet mignon (\$25), salt and pepper calamari (\$7) and chicken schnitzel (\$13).

Gundagai Tourist Park (☎ 6944 1620; Junee Rd; camp sites unpowered/powerd \$19/22, cabins \$44) Near the swimming pool, this place has well-presented vans and cabins.

Other recommendations:
Coach Lamp Café (☎ 6944 4295; Sheridan St; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Near the Arts & Craft Emporium, it's a tad twee but has surprisingly good coffee.

Niagara Café (☎ 6944 1109; 124 Sheridan St; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Steak meals cost \$14 and it's licensed.

ALTERNATIVE STOPS

The Hume Highway is notoriously long and boring, but for an enjoyable snapshot of country Australia, traditional old pubs can give travellers an insight into local life. The **Commercial Hotel** (Map p295; ☎ 6227 6008; Leake St), just south of the Yass turnoff at Bowning, has B&B rooms (\$70) that open onto the rickety old veranda, cook-your-own barbies out the back and, of course, a classic old bar complete with a 'beer and bullshit' corner. South past the Gundagai turnoff, 100km away, you'll recognise the **Tumblong Hotel** (Map p295; ☎ 6944 9202; Hume Hwy) by the Toohey's beer truck that sits atop the corrugated iron roof. Pop in here for a cold beer in a public bar cluttered with Australiana or stretch your legs by the open fire in the lounge. Near Albury, the **Kinross Woolshed Hotel** (Map p295; ☎ 6043 1155; 47 Old Sydney Rd, Thurgoona; ☎ 10am-late) was once a working woolshed and it still retains the original round timber supports and corrugated iron walls. But for the pool table and icy cold beer you'd think you were about to give the shears a whirl.

Getting There & Away

The tourist office sells bus tickets for the services that depart from outside. **Greyhound** (☎ 13 14 99) buses go to Melbourne and Sydney (from \$42) via Canberra (from \$67), and **V/Line** (☎ 13 61 96) buses also stop here between Melbourne and Canberra. **CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32) runs buses north to Cootamundra (\$9) and south to Tumut (\$7) and Tumbaramba (\$21). **Fearnies** (☎ 1800 029 918) has buses from Wagga to Sydney (\$53) via Gundagai (\$25).

ALBURY

☎ 02 / pop 42,000

Albury is a major regional centre on the Murray River, just below the big Hume Weir. Outsiders often refer to it as Albury-Wodonga

because its Victorian neighbour is just across the river, but a certain amount of cross-border snobbery will have New South Wales locals putting you straight: 'the former is all that's required'.

After years of lobbying, the locals have finally lost their battle for a bypass and the city is about to be bisected by a fully fledged Hume Highway (as opposed to a main road). For travellers, this means Albury is the most convenient stopover between Melbourne and Sydney with all the necessary amenities (including good coffee).

It's also a good base for trips to the Riverina, Snowy Mountains and Victorian wineries and high country, but that's not to say it's the hole in the doughnut – the river, among

other attractions, provides a handy diversion on a long car trip.

Orientation & Information

The long Lincoln Causeway over the Murray River's flood plain links Albury with Wodonga. Central Albury is a reasonably compact grid, but the city sprawls northwards into the residential suburb of Lavington. Dean St is the main shopping strip.

The **Gateway visitors centre** (☎ 1300 796 222; www.destinationalbury/wodonga.com.au; ☎ 9am-5pm) is part of a large 'island' complex on the Lincoln Causeway on the Victorian side of the river.

Cyber Heaven (☎ 6023 4320; 505 Kiewa St; per hr \$9; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) has internet access.

Sights & Activities

The paddle steamer **PS Cumberoona** (☎ 6021 1113; adult/child \$16/8), moored on the river behind Noreuil Park, has one-hour weekend trips between October and April.

For a cleansing river swim, turn right into Noreuil Park just before the Lincoln Causeway where there's a swimming **pool** in the river or try the **loop**, a magical 20-minute float (on your back) around a big bend that ends close to where you began. Start below the Lincoln Causeway's Union Bridge or anywhere near there. Finish just before you reach the Cumberoona paddle steamer or its concrete mooring ramp.

Just out of Albury, towards the airport, turn right to **Mungabareena Reserve** or continue 1km to the **Waterworks** for two more picturesque swimming options.

Near the visitors centre, a paved **bike & walk-track** starts at Union Bridge and follows the winding river to Wodonga. For more river action, go **canoeing**. Popular day- and half-day trips begin at Mungabareena Reserve and end at Noreuil Park. The visitors centre has information on hiring canoes.

If the wineries and food producers of Victoria aren't on your itinerary, the **Farmers Market**, held every second Saturday near the visitors centre, is an excellent means of scoping the local food scene. On Sunday mornings, the **Rotary Market**, in the tax office car park on Smollett St, is also worth browsing.

The **Botanic Gardens** (4 hectares), at the northern end of Wodonga Place, are old, formal and beautiful; somewhere the kids can run wild while mums and dads sink a tinnie. The **Nail Can Hill Walking Track** rambles over the

steep, bush-covered ridges on the western side of town or head up Dean St to the **war memorial** (with a good view) and pick up the trail there. The visitors centre has a map.

The **Wiradjuri Walkabout trail** is an easy interpretive trail around Gateway Island starting from the visitors centre.

Festivals & Events

The **Albury-Wodonga Food & Wine Festival** (www.hmf.org) is on in late September/early October, the Aboriginal **Ngan Girra (Bogong Moth) Festival** is held at the Mungabareena Reserve in late November and the **Albury Gold Cup** (☎ 6025 1333) is a big social event at the end of March (see the boxed text, p314).

Sleeping

Albury Motor Village YHA (☎ 6040 2999; www.yha.com.au; 372 Wagga Rd; powered sites \$20, dm/d \$22/\$50, d cabins \$62; r ☎) About 4.5km north of the centre, this is a tidy park with a range of cabins, vans and backpacker beds in clean dorms.

Sodens Hotel Motel (☎ 6021 2400; cnr David & Wilson Sts; r \$45-60) Two blocks from the main street, this is an old-style pub with a grandiose veranda. It has 50 rooms within stumbling distance of the beer garden.

Quality Resort Siesta (☎ 6025 4555; www.siesta.com.au; 416 Wagga Rd; r from \$70-270; P ☎) Possibly the most garish-cum-luxurious option. This is a vaguely Mexican-themed 4½-star resort with a bewildering array of options – spa, sauna, steam room, solarium, gym, a couple of decent restaurants and the Cantina Bar.

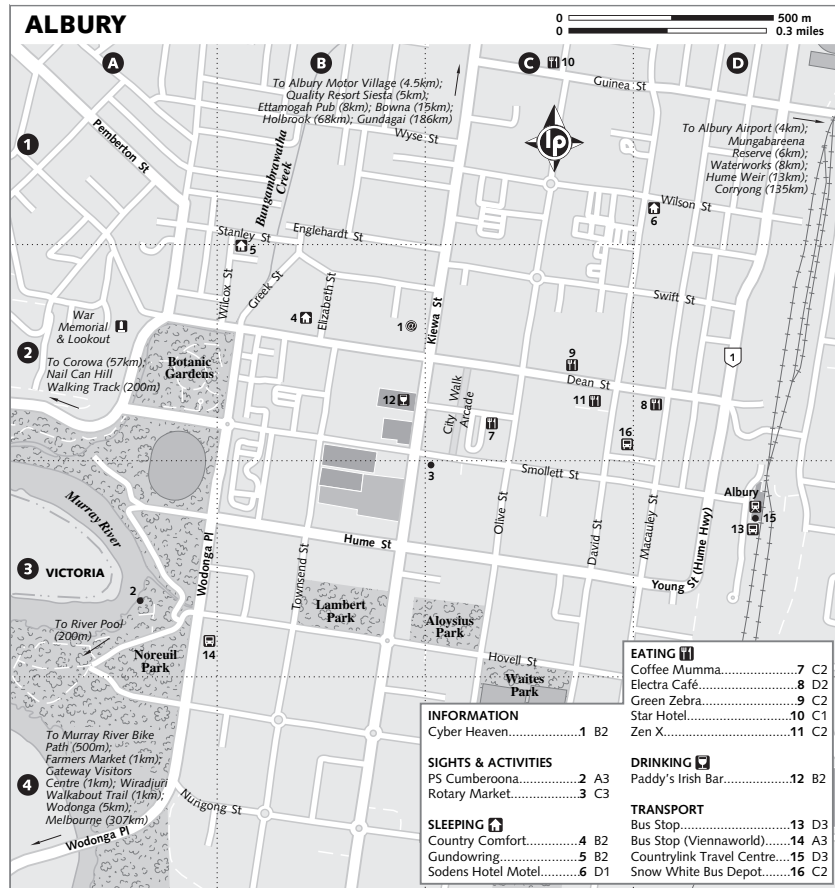
Country Comfort (☎ 6021 5366; www.countrycomfort.com.au; cnr Dean & Elizabeth Sts; \$99-200; P ☎) Travelling salespeople head straight for this tall semicircular landmark at the western end of Dean St. There's a decent cocktail bar here and live music on weekends.

Gundworing (☎ 6041 4437; thudson@albury.net.au; 621 Stanley St; s/d with breakfast \$110/130; P) The best B&B near the centre. It's in a gorgeous Federation house a short walk from the botanical gardens.

Eating

The Albury eating scene has really picked up recently – Dean St is a long strip of takeaways, cafés, restaurants and plenty of nightlife.

Electra Café (☎ 6021 7200; 3/441 Dean St; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) This place has excellent coffee and a sunny footpath eating area. The poached eggs and grilled country mushrooms



is a breakfast worth pulling off the highway for (\$13).

Green Zebra (☎ 6023 1100; 484 Dean St; 🕒 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri; 8am-4pm Sat) The homemade pasta is always a winner. This modern café with a gourmet approach to food makes fresh fettuccini and tasty tagliatelle on site.

Coffee Mumma (☎ 6041 2600; 5/501 Olive St; 🕒 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat) This relatively new café does the best coffee in town and has a handy footpath takeaway service area for travellers who don't want to stop for long.

Star Hotel (☎ 6021 2745; 502 Guinea St) This local favourite has a huge beer garden out the back and a front bar with pool tables where the gregarious owners will keep you entertained. It's a little off the main drag but worth the walk down Olive St.

Other recommendations:

Paddy's Irish Bar (☎ 6021 3599; 491 Kiewa St) Your typical Irish theme-bar.

Zen X (☎ 6023 6455; 467 Dean St; mains from \$15;

🕒 lunch & dinner) Does excellent sushi and *teppanyaki*.

Getting There & Away

The airport is 10 minutes out of town on Borella Rd. **Rex** (☎ 13 17 13) flies to Sydney and Melbourne. **Brindabella** (☎ 1300 668 824) flies to Canberra.

Long-distance buses running on the Hume Hwy between Sydney and Melbourne stop at the train station. Most also stop at Viennaworld (a petrol station/diner) across from Noreuil Park. You can book buses at the **CountryLink Travel Centre** (☎ 6041 9555; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) at the train station.

Greyhound (☎ 13 14 99) has coaches to Melbourne (from \$43, four hours), Wagga Wagga (from \$33, two hours) and Sydney (from \$65, nine hours). **CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32) runs to Echuca (\$85) in Victoria via several towns in the southern Riverina three times a week. CountryLink buses leave from the train sta-

tion bus stop. **V/Line** (☎ 13 61 96) coaches run to Mildura.

XPTs (express trains) running between Sydney (\$98) and Melbourne (\$64) stop here. If you're travelling between the two capital cities (\$125), it's much cheaper to stop over in Albury on a through ticket than to buy two separate tickets (it's sometimes even cheaper to fly). **V/Line** runs a cheaper, daily train to Melbourne (from \$50).

Getting Around

If you need a lift to some of the outlying areas, **Snow White Bus Depot** (☎ 6021 4368; 474 David St) is the pick-up point for mail, freight and passenger buses that run just about everywhere (eventually).

AROUND ALBURY

About 8km north, the lopsided **Ettamogah Pub** (☎ 6026 2366; www.ettamogah.com; Burma Rd, Tabletop), off the Hume Hwy towards Sydney, is a real-life re-creation of a famous Aussie cartoon pub by Albury-born Ken Maynard.

Follow Borella Rd past the airport north-east to the **Hume Weir** for water sports and swimming.

About 15km further north at **Bowna** there's a turn-off to **Wymah** (22km on) where you can cross by vehicle ferry to the Murray Valley Hwy on the other side of the river. Alternatively wind your way around the unsealed river road to **Jingellic**, a picturesque little place on the Murray River. It has a great pub and a basic but bloody good camping spot. Give the rope swing a go.

Further up the highway **Holbrook Farm Hosts** (☎ 0407 303 138; \$110 per person) is a collective of local property owners who offer bed and breakfast on a farm. Be welcomed into local homesteads as part of the family, enjoy gourmet cuisine and help round up the cattle (or at least watch the professionals do it). You'll recognise Holbrook by the huge submarine in the main street. Ahoy!

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