



paradise found

WITH ITS SPECTACULAR SEASCAPES AND SOPHISTICATED TOWN, THERE'S NOWHERE QUITE LIKE NOOSA.

WORDS HANNAH JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY KARA ROSENLUND

It's blue as far as the eye can see in idyllic Noosa. **FACING PAGE** Walking trails offer glimpses of the inviting ocean.

NOOSA IS A GLOWING, golden kind of place. Its sands are soft and pale, its sunshine is bright and its air is warm and whispers of the tropics. But it has a Riviera flavour, too: where else can you hire cabanas, stroll a sophisticated shopping strip, cafe-hop all day and bar-hop all night?

Timothée Lepoutre can confirm this. The new owner of Noosaville's Gusto restaurant grew up in Lille in northern France, and worked as a sommelier in London, Sydney, Wellington and Brisbane before buying his new venture last year. "It's got that lovely cosmopolitan feel," he says of Noosa. "You've got two different aspects: you've got the Hastings Street area by Main Beach, which is busy, with lots of shops and beautiful restaurants – it's sensational. And then you've got Noosaville, where we are located, just by the river – and it's two different feels." But both areas share one characteristic, he says: "It's one of the most beautiful parts of Australia. It's just a paradise, basically."

Chef Nilla Tomkins agrees. "Being by the sea provides a sense of space, openness and fresh air," she says. "Walking on sand and watching the waves has an extremely calming effect on me."

Born in Denmark, Nilla is also a Noosa convert, albeit one of considerably longer standing: she's lived there since 2005. She was attracted by "the serenity and sunny lifestyle," she says. "You can wear sandals and summer clothes year-round, and also swim year-round. Noosa seemed like a good place to bring up my two children."

In 2014 Nilla launched her cafe, VanillaFood, in Belmondos Organic Market in Noosaville, and has since opened a second location in Noosa Junction. It's proof that locals and visitors alike love her food, which focuses

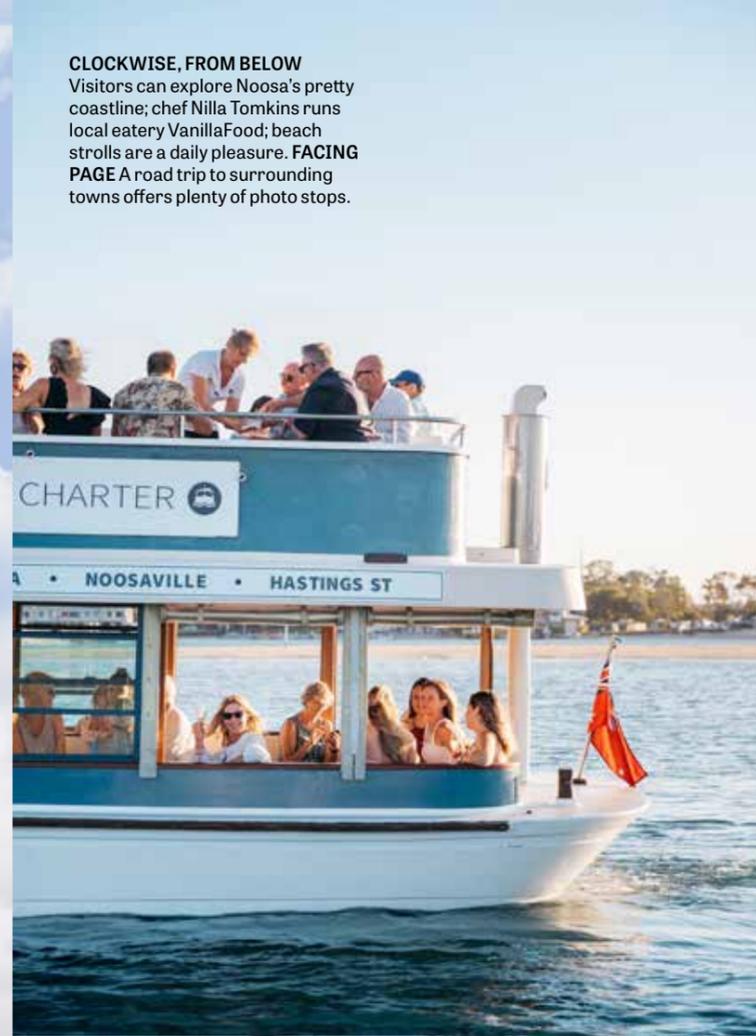
on healthy, sustainable produce. They love it so much, in fact, that she's written a book, *VanillaFood: The Cookbook*, so people can re-create her dishes at home. "Running organic cafes in Noosa is satisfying – it's easy to maintain a healthy lifestyle here," says Nilla.

That's great news for visitors, who can indulge without overdoing it. But once you've explored the beach and the restaurants, you're not short of adventures further afield. The hinterland is full of national parks and pretty villages, many of which retain a heritage feel. At the foot of Mount Coorooro, Pomona makes for an excellent day trip, with its distillery, Saturday markets and the Majestic Theatre, which dates from 1921 and is the oldest continuously running silent movie theatre in the world.

Tiny Kin Kin, a 40-minute drive from Noosa, is more proof that good things come in small packages. Jodie Williams's family has been in the area for an extraordinary six generations. "My grandparents' grandad moved to Brisbane from Scotland, but it was just when Brisbane had two floods back-to-back," she says. "They were told the only chance of survival was to get a group together, head north and settle somewhere. So they kept travelling north until they got to Black Mountain, which is near Cooroy. They settled there and began harvesting timber and building roads."

More than 100 years later, Jodie also harvests local produce and builds community, in her role as owner and head chef at Black Ant Gourmet Cafe. The cafe runs out of the historic Kin Kin General Store, which Jodie and her partner, Brett Gowley, rescued from demolition eight years ago. They restored it and operate it both as a general >

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CLOCKWISE, FROM BELOW
Visitors can explore Noosa's pretty coastline; chef Nilla Tomkins runs local eatery VanillaFood; beach strolls are a daily pleasure. **FACING PAGE** A road trip to surrounding towns offers plenty of photo stops.

PHOTOGRAPHY AMY HIGG, TOURISM AND EVENTS QUEENSLAND



THE FACTS

GETTING THERE

CAR It's a two-hour drive to Noosa from Brisbane.

FLY Qantas, Jetstar and Virgin Australia fly to Sunshine Coast Airport (Maroochydore) from all capital cities. The airport is half an hour's drive from Noosa itself.

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

BISTRO C and **SEASON** Noosa's iconic beachside restaurants both offer breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus all-day cocktails (you are on holiday, after all!). *Bistro C*, 49 Hastings St, Noosa, (07) 5447 2855; *bistroc.com.au*; *Season*, 25 Hastings St, Noosa, (07) 5447 3747; *seasonrestaurant.com.au*

LOCALE NOOSA

Set in lush gardens, Locale brings authentic Italian to Hastings Street. 62 Hastings St, Noosa Heads, (07) 5447 5111; *localenoosa.com.au*

BANG BANG

South-East Asian food served up in a glamorous setting with an old-world European feel. 6/32 Hastings St, Noosa Heads, (07) 3924 1757; *bangbangnoosa.com*

VANILLAFOOD

Delicious and healthy, VanillaFood has two cafe locations: one inside Noosaville's Belmondos Organic Market; and one in Noosa Junction, adjoining CLO Studios store. 2/10 Lanyana Way, Noosa Heads, 0448 600 889; 59 Rene St, Noosaville, 0490 016 232; *vanillafood.com.au*

GUSTO

This classic riverside restaurant had a revamp over winter and is ready to welcome hungry travellers. 257 Gympie Terrace, Noosaville, (07) 5449 7144; *gustonoosa.com.au*

NOOSA WATERFRONT RESTAURANT & BAR

Speed up to this fine-diner in a car or, perhaps, on a boat. Its riverfront setting and excellent Italian food, coupled with fine wine, mean a meal here is always a treat. 142 Gympie Terrace, Noosaville, (07) 5474 4444; *noosawaterfrontrestaurant.com.au*

HERBERT

Vegans and vegetarians will love it, and omnivores won't even notice the absence of meat at this pretty bistro. The cocktails are superb! 1 Arcadia St, Noosa Heads, 0460 858 060; *herbertrestaurant.com*

MILKBAR

This classic grocer's shop stocks local produce, superior ready-to-eat meals and pantry items, plus great coffee and patisserie. 18/18 Hastings St, Noosa Heads; *milkbargrocer.com.au*

BLACK ANT GOURMET

Sixth-generation locals Jodie Williams and Brett Gowley run this lovely cafe in the old Kin Kin General Store. 56 Main St, Kin Kin, (07) 5485 4177; *blackantgourmet.com.au*

FLYING WEST ROASTERS

Ben and Nina West roast fresh coffee on-site, serving up a superb morning brew and delicious food in an industrial-chic spot. 13/9 Fellowship Dr, Doonan, (07) 5471 1865; *flyingwest.com.au*

WHAT TO SEE AND DO POMONA DISTILLING CO.

Former chemist Robin Yates now makes magic with local botanicals to create refreshing gin and vodka infused with Queensland spirit. 18 Reserve St, Pomona, 1300 904 633; *pomonadistilling.com.au*

NOOSA HEADS DISTILLERY

Gins, vodkas, cane spirits and malts are all traditionally distilled, hand-bottled and hand-labelled. 19 Venture Dr, Noosaville, (07) 5455 6128; *noosaheadsdistillery.com*

TASTY TOURS

Visit local breweries, wineries and distilleries – and get exclusive glimpses behind the scenes – with a friendly, knowledgeable guide who will take care of all the driving. Cheers to that! 0490 366 118; *tastytours.com.au*

NOOSA BREWERY TOURS

Head out into the lush hinterland or stick close to Noosa and tour the best local breweries, distilleries and eateries. 0491 677 199; *noosabrewerytours.com.au*

NOOSA EAT & DRINK FESTIVAL

Usually held each May, this event-packed festival, which turns 20 in 2022, offers all the local chefs and produce you could wish for – plus the best of national and international cuisine talent, too. *noosaeatdrink.com.au*

WHERE TO STAY

DOMIC NOOSA

Spectacular architecture, glorious views and serious eco-credentials make the six-bedroom Domic

a truly memorable holiday home. *Sunshine Beach, Noosa; domicnoosa.com*

RACV NOOSA RESORT

Consistently scoring excellent ratings, RACV Noosa Resort offers one-bedroom suites, two or three-bedroom apartments or villas, and the sophisticated three-bedroom Enclave Luxury Villas. 94 Noosa Dr, Noosa Heads, (07) 5341 6300; *racv.com.au/travel-leisure/racv-resorts/our-destinations/noosa-resort*

VINTAGE GLAMPERVANS

Step back in time (but keep hold of modern comforts) with a stay in a chic retro campervan. 0417 507 817; *vintageglampervans.com*

WHERE TO SHOP

PAUL SMITH IMAGES GALLERY

Take Noosa home with a beautiful image of its oceans, beaches or bushland, shot by renowned local photographer Paul Smith. Shop 1/16 Sunshine Beach Rd, Noosa Heads, 0405 834 864; *paulsmithimages.com.au*

SIGNATURE ON HASTINGS

Get that Noosa look – relaxed, yet elevated – with buys from this gift and homewares store. 18 Hastings St, Noosa Heads, (07) 5474 9400; *signatureonhastings.com*

CLO STUDIOS

This interior design studio turned homewares store stocks stunning local and imported pieces with a touch of the unexpected. 10 Lanyana Way, Noosa Heads, (07) 5455 3310; *clostudios.com.au*

store, selling local produce and essentials, and as a licensed cafe and restaurant. Jodie also runs her catering business from the kitchen there, as well as hosting guests at Mayan Luxe Villas, a home away from home sustainably built from rammed earth and recycled timber.

“In Kin Kin we're in the middle of Gympie, Cooroy and Noosa – they're about half an hour in any direction,” Jodie says. “Kin Kin's very much a village with some great shops; Cooroy's more of a small town; and Noosa's a busy tourist town. So you get the best of all worlds.”

Jodie particularly loves Kin Kin's natural setting. “You come here if you appreciate the quietness of a village, and being so close to all the beaches and national parks,” she says. “We're in a little valley, so we're encircled by amazing hills, which is incredible for sunrises and sunsets. We're also linked to three of the Noosa Network Trails – they're for walking, cycling and horseriding. Everyone's got their own little garden, so it's a food bowl, and a lot of people have solar – it's a really good example of what a little village can be.”

The scenery is spectacular; the beach breathtaking; the restaurants excellent, but it's Noosa's people that make a holiday here truly memorable. “It's a hard industry to be in – it requires long hours,” says Timothée of the restaurant business. “But when you're a people person, when you've got it in your heart, it's just beautiful.” *CS*
For more information or to book your holiday, go to visitnoosa.com.au

PHOTOGRAPHY KARA ROSENBLUND, ANASTASIA KARIOFYLLIDIS



Lazy beach days are in order. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** Gusto restaurant owner Timothée Lepoutre (right) with head chef Michael Trask; the chic Alamode Apartments; furniture, art and homewares store CLO Studios.