

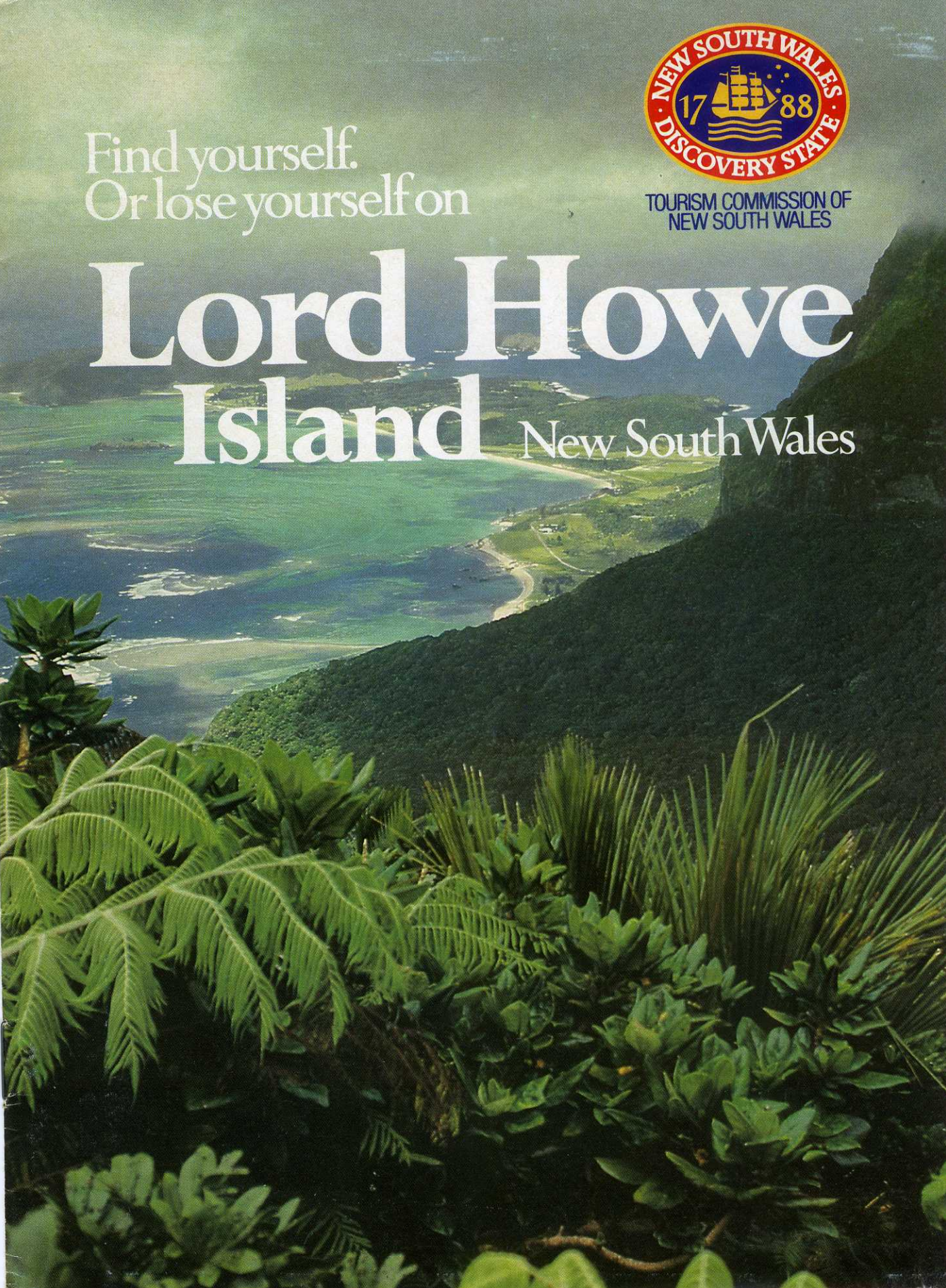
Find yourself.  
Or lose yourself on



TOURISM COMMISSION OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES

# Lord Howe Island

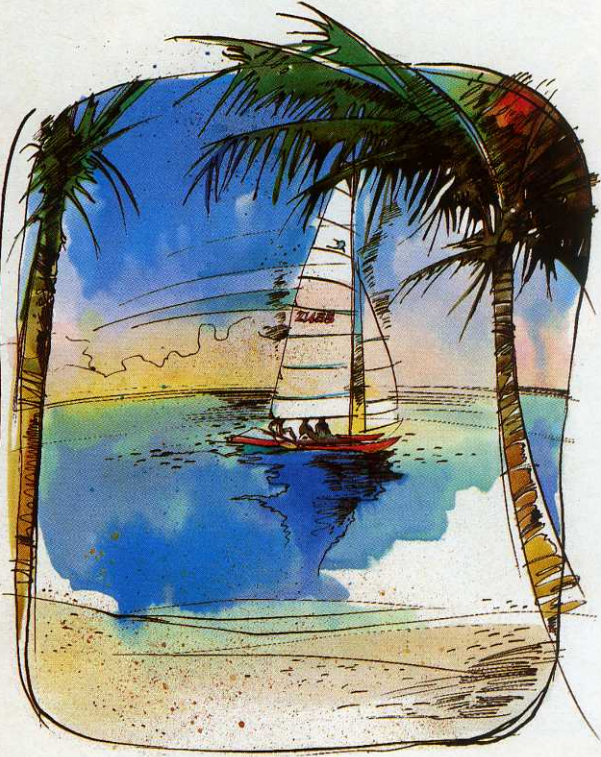
New South Wales





**L**et's be honest for a moment. How many places have you been to on holiday which really lived up to your expectations?

How often have you arrived to find that the colour and translucency of the water somehow seemed so much more attractive on the travel brochure?



That the corai indeed looks beautiful, but watch out for the stone fish; sorry, it's the stinger season, there are mangroves, and it might be better to stay in the pool; yes, it is a great place for fishing normally, but they're not biting right now; or, it would be nice to have an evening barbecue, but the sandflies are terrible right now; or, it is normally

a quiet place to stay, but we can't help the kids turning the TV right up. Or the telephone keeps ringing to remind you the real world isn't so far away just when you're sunk deep into a deck chair with a Raymond Chandler anthology.

Count up the disasters. How often has the realisation matched the anticipation? How often did you have to tear yourself away because you had found the perfect holiday?

You may well reply that there is no perfect holiday destination, that the fault lies in the mind, not in the reality.

But I believe I've found a place where holiday dreams can come true, where everyone but the ingrained pessimist can flesh out the fantasy, where departure only sparks a firm determination to return, where you can find a true rejuvenation of the jaded spirit.

# Is it a mirage?

Those in the know probably realise by now that I'm talking about Lord Howe Island, the best kept holiday secret in New South Wales, if not Australia – a tropical island so comprehensively beautiful, so representative of all the attractions common to remote South Pacific Islands, that I'm bewildered why its charms aren't being trampled underfoot by thousands upon thousands of tourists.

There are many informed travellers who state without hesitation: Lord Howe Island is the most beautiful tropical island in the world. Its tiny group is the only one in the Pacific Ocean listed by the United Nations World Heritage Committee as "outstanding universal value."





**L**ord Howe has everything we've ever been conditioned to think of as typical of a South Pacific island paradise.

A Robinson Crusoe kind of a place, with a turquoise blue coral lagoon, the surf ceaselessly crashing on the reef; palm trees, the unique Kentia palm so popular with indoor decorators, and the Pandanus, ideal for weaving into baskets, all growing under giant Banyan trees forming a verdant ceiling over the ferns and the orchids.

There are secluded white sandy beaches along the lagoon, while the other side of the island has teal blue surf creaming onto more white-as-white beaches.

The water, supreme in its crystal clarity, exquisite in its ever-changing translucent colours from ultramarine to light blue topaz, is a dominant feature of the island's unspoilt, unpolluted environment.

Wandering through soft trails under the palms, you glimpse the lagoon, transparently blue as Nordic eyes, deepening in colour in the passage through the reef; or climb to the top of Mt Eliza - at 500 feet, one of the easier climbs, for the twin peaks, Mt Gower and Mt Lidgbird, at the opposite south end of the island, are almost 165 metres high - and discern how the varying greens of the palms and other vegetation merge into the blues and whites of the



# Escape the hum-

surf beaches on the eastern side of the island, facing the vast distances of the Pacific.

Lord Howe, a tiny but extraordinary fragment of NSW, is only 700kms north east of Sydney - about two hours' flight - on the same latitude as Port Macquarie, so it has a sub tropical climate similar to the NSW mid North Coast, with summer temperatures rarely over 26C, and winter not often below 16C.

The island is only 11kms long and ranges from two kms wide to a narrow portion only three quarters of a kilometre.

It only has 120 hectares of rich low land, with the rest of the total 1300 hectares taken up by romantically beautiful mountains.

There are no snakes, no poisonous spiders, no stone fish even though it has the world's most southerly coral reef - no stingrays, no sharks during daytime, no sandflies.

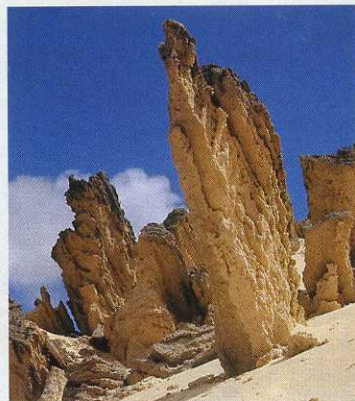
It's the kind of place where all the natural beauty is accessible, where you can enjoy the tropical paths or the lovely waters without fear of being bitten or stung or even mildly irritated.

There are other laudable aspects of island life. There is no TV - although the Aussat satellite will change that in a year or so - very few telephones, only about 16km of roads, with a limited number of cars, and a speed limit of 25kph.

So you can ride your hire bike or drive your small hired car or use your feet in a place far away from the killing







# drum

grounds of the Australian roads, a place where kids are safe to run or ride on the roads, where you can stroll at twilight or night in the middle of the road in safety.

Even better, there are not too many people, so all the traditional delights of your own tropical island aren't spoiled by crowds, by loud-mouth holidaymakers you'd rather leave behind at the mainland Airport.

There is only the sight of the palm trees, the murmur of the surf, the cries of the 120 varieties of birds, from large Gannets to Sooty Terns.

Mostly, especially in the velvet black tropical night, with the moon silver-tracked across the lagoon, there is silence, blessed quiet.

There are no pubs, just some excellent bars and restaurants, most of them attached to the luxury guesthouses.

It's the kind of place where everybody says "hello", and smiles, and the Bowling Club doubles as the friendly local pub, a place where there are only about 270 inhabitants, known as Islanders, and a limit of 400 visitors, most of them tourists who don't behave like some tourists.

Everyone soon seems to be on a first name basis, often to a fairly bewildering extent.

Some of the better-heeled visitors stay at the guesthouses such as "Pinetrees", an up-market resort with gourmet food, a tennis court, imaginative owners, a prime location right near the lagoon, luxury accommodation, and a friendly bar.



Pinetrees has achieved fame as a hideaway for famous community leaders from the pressures of business, but there are other top class places such as Ocean View, Beachcomber, Lorhiti, Seabreeze, Coral Court and Blue Lagoon, offering full board. Other self-contained apartments with all amenities include Mary Challis, Broken Banyan, Polynesian, Trader Nick's, Somerset, Milky Way, Hideaway, Ebb Tide, Waimarie and Leanda Lei.

Time and history have dealt kindly with Lord Howe, being far out in the Pacific with air so clear that sunburn is something especially to protect yourself against.

But a little bit of the Island romance died in 1974 when the last of the great Sandringham flying boats took off from the lagoon and the air strip accepted the more economically viable modern planes.



# Find yourself or lo

**P**art of the fun of discovering Lord Howe Island and its multitude of delights is in getting to the Island in the first place and in making – or renewing – acquaintances around this South Pacific jewel. The following information is designed to set you on your way. There is an information service on the Island at Thompson's Store where you will be most welcome to obtain more information and advice.

Lord Howe Island has produced a detailed guide to facilities and tours which is available from Information Centres throughout the State and from the Travel Centre of New South Wales.

## Where it is

702km north-east of Sydney – almost the same distance from Brisbane and approximately due east of Port Macquarie. It is the closest South Pacific Island to Sydney and is part of N.S.W.

## How to get there

Norfolk Island Airlines from Sydney, Brisbane and Coolangatta. Oxley Airlines from Port Macquarie.

## When you should go

Anytime. The Island has a sub-tropical climate, therefore rarely gets hotter than 26°C and frosts are unknown. The months of June, July and August are the coolest months and this period is excellent for some of the more vigorous activities such as hiking, bushwalking, mountain climbing etc.

## Special features

Lord Howe Island has the southern most coral reef in the world and boasts some of the rarest flora, bird and marine life to be found. Whilst the climate is sub-tropical its foliage is that of a tropical climate. The Kentia Palm, indigenous to Lord Howe, provides the Island's only income, apart from tourism, through the sale of its seeds which are sold throughout the world. The Island has a special Act of Parliament that protects its people and environment from commercialisation and any major development. Lord Howe Island has recently been included in the World Heritage List, making it one of only three Islands in the world to be included in this prestigious listing.

## What to bring

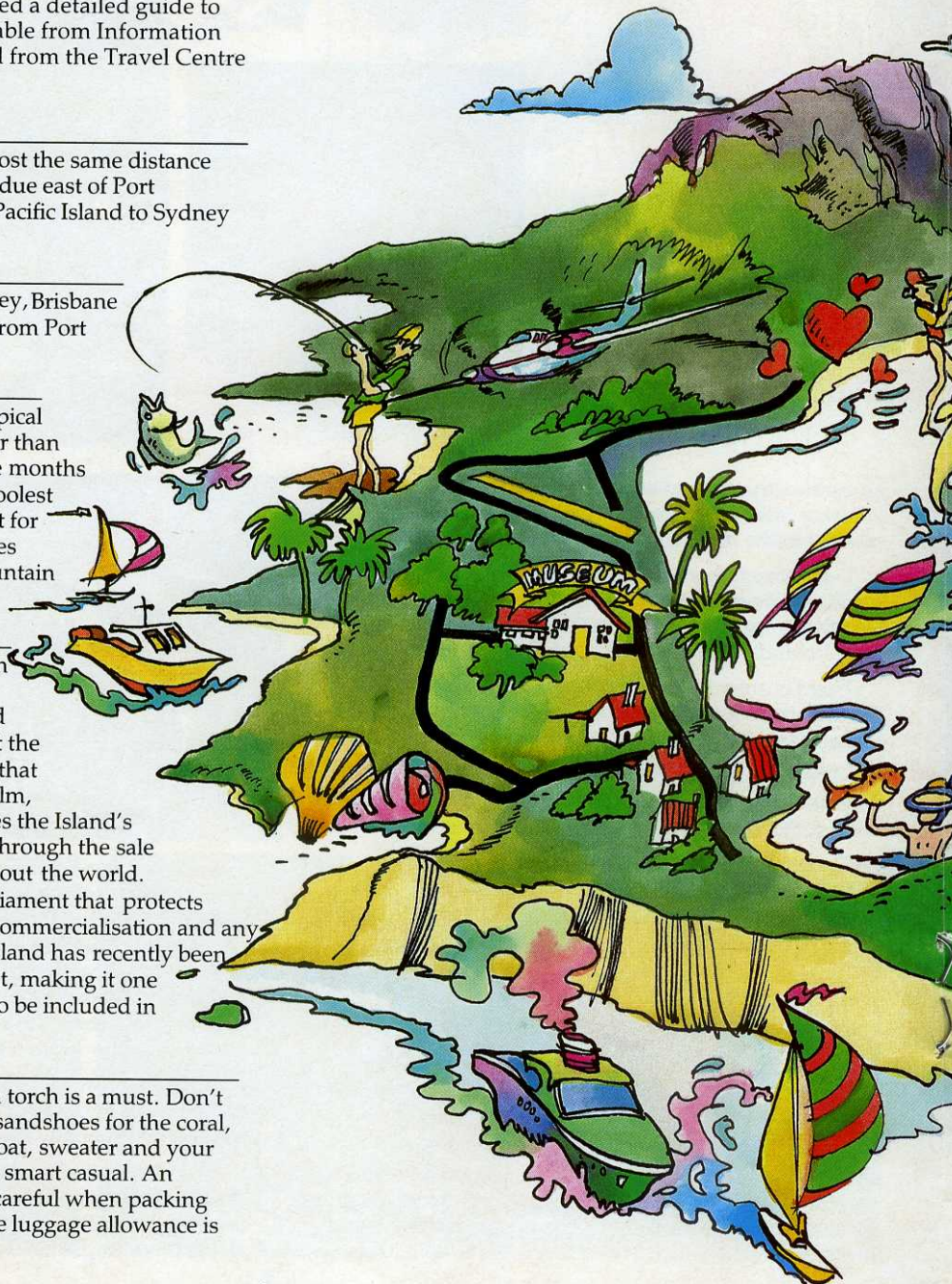
There are very few street lights so a torch is a must. Don't forget comfortable walking shoes, sandals for the coral, spray jacket, hat, sunglasses, raincoat, sweater and your camera. Dress, when dining out, is smart casual. An important thing to remember – be careful when packing and try not to bring too much as the luggage allowance is only 13kg. per person.

## Airport

Upon arrival your ticket will be checked by your Airline Agent and your departure details confirmed. Transport to and from the Airport will be provided by your host.

## Bankcard

Accepted at all stores for most goods purchased.



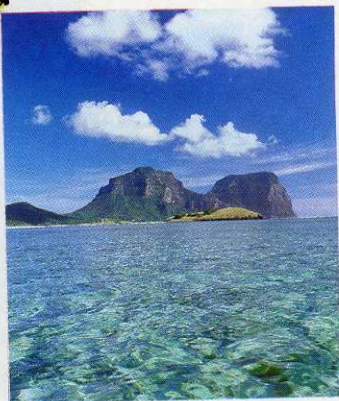
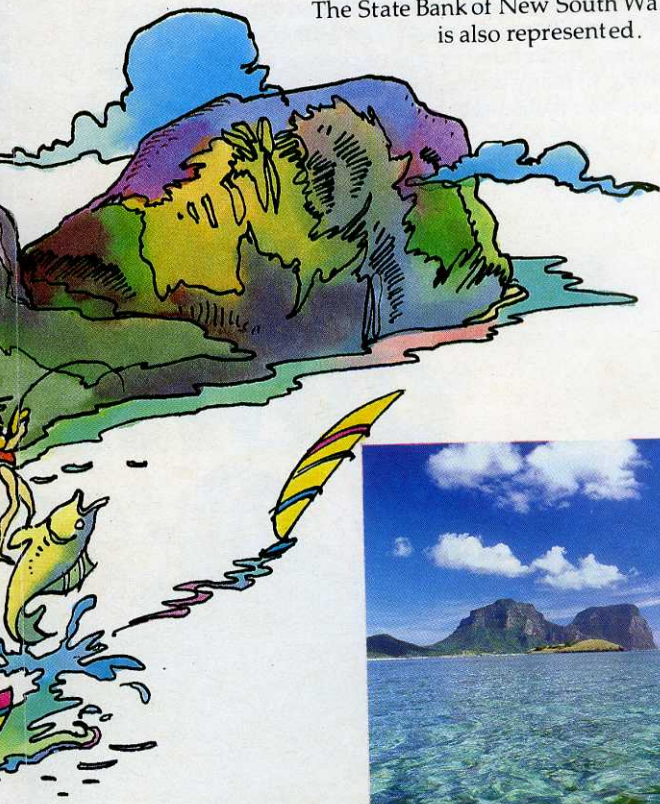


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## Banks

Westpac Trading/Savings Bank at Thompson's Store and Commonwealth Bank Agencies at Lagoon Store and Post Office.

The State Bank of New South Wales is also represented.



## Bicycles

Your main means of transport. Child and adult sizes available and bikes with toddler's seats. Advance booking accepted and essential for Christmas and school holidays. Some lodges maintain their own bikes otherwise book through Clive Wilson - phone 2045 or write C/-Post Office

## Boating

Cruises, fishing trips, charter and glass bottom boat trips all depend on the weather. Representatives will call at your accommodation house or ask your host. Tip: Don't think about boating - do it at the first opportunity in case the weather changes.

## Bowls

Social bowls are played Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday afternoons. White or cream shorts permissible for men otherwise regulation dress. Bowls are available at the Club. Bar hours are from 4.30pm to 7.30pm. Monday to Thursday & 1.30pm to 7.30pm Saturday & Sunday.

## Bus Tours

See your host.

## Canoes

Available for hire - also windsurfers.

## Churches

Church of England & Seventh Day Adventist Church.

## Credit

Bankcard or Handicard from Westpac Bank.

The Tourism Commission of New South Wales produces several publications which provide a variety of information on all aspects of travel in New South Wales.

These publications are available from -



TOURISM COMMISSION OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES

## The Travel Centres of New South Wales:

**SYDNEY** - Corner Pitt & Spring Streets, Sydney 2000. Telephone: (02) 231 4444.

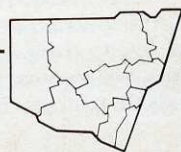
**BRISBANE** - Corner Queen & Edward Streets, Brisbane 4000. Telephone: (07) 31 1838.

**MELBOURNE** - 353 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000. Telephone: (03) 67 7461.

**ADELAIDE** - 7th Floor, T.A.A Building 144 North Terrace, Adelaide 5000. Telephone: (08) 51 3167.

**ALBURY** - Wodonga Place, Hume Highway, Albury 2640. Telephone: (060) 21 2655.

**TWEED HEADS** - Pacific Highway, Tweed Heads 2485. Telephone: (075) 36 2634.



Lord  
Howe  
Island



**L**ord Howe, discovered by the British in February 1788, only a month after they sailed into Port Jackson, eventually became home for a handful of settlers in 1834. Many of the ultra-friendly Islanders who now play such a major part in making the Island so hospitable, are direct descendants of the early pioneers.

Lord Howe became a frequent port of call for whaling vessels and other ships sailing between Sydney and Norfolk Island, but fortunately for today's tranquility, early plans for a penal settlement and a whaling station came to nothing.

There is no bloody odour of brutal penal history about the island, no ruins of early jails; in fact today's single policeman rarely uses his tiny lockup, and law and order problems seem almost non-existent.

The Island's economy became precarious when its famous onion crops suffered from disease, but a kind of Pacific miracle in the late 1800's gave the island a reprieve.

Fashion, in the shape of the "Kentia" or "Howea Fosteriana" Palm, came to the rescue.

The parlours and ballrooms of Europe found that Lord Howe, that speck in the Pacific, was the sole producer of the indigenous parlour palm which thrived in the cooler climate of Northern Europe.

With this heaven-sent monopoly, the islanders began climbing the tall Kentia palms and collecting the seeds for export, an industry which has evolved until even today it is still second only to the booming visitor industry.



You can buy lovely small palms to take home for bargain prices.

Now, with many large export-oriented greenhouses on the island, it's a far cry from the time when bags of seeds travelled out to the world on sailing ships.

When you arrive at the Island, even the tarmac seems to say welcome.

Probably, Daphne, one of the descendants of the first settlers, or Roy, who owns Leanda Lei, or Paulette from one of the inbound airlines, or Eddie, one of the owners of Pinetrees, or one of the representatives of other lodges or apartments, will be there to greet you, take you "home" and proceed to treat you like a long lost family member.

The most enjoyable thing about Lord Howe, apart from its startling beauty and easy accessibility from Sydney (or Brisbane or Port Macquarie) is the fact that you can do exactly as you like; sit in a deck chair in the tropical gardens at a comfortable lodge, wander lazily into the bar for pre-lunch drinks, have a snooze after lunch, totter off to the Bowling Club at four o'clock, go for a walk along the lagoon before dinner, then settle in for some good conversation – minus TV – after dinner, or go for a stroll in the moonlight.

But, depending on your age, temperament, inclination, you can be as active as Jeff Fenech in a title defence; up early for a pre-breakfast bike ride, rejoicing in the birds' early greeting; taking a sailboard out onto the lagoon, donning a snorkel and face mask for a watery journey out over the coral, marvelling at the purples and the blues and the giant clusters of multi-hued corals, or peering at the parrot fish, sporting so many impossible colours they're like underwater hallucinations.

# Down down

You may feel like strolling over to Ned's Beach with a handful of bread to feed the tame fish from your fingertips, or bushwalking to Mt Eliza or Malabar Hill, or Transit Hill.

Incidentally, Lord Howe is the only place in NSW where the sun sets over the ocean. And, if the wind's blowing the wrong way for beach comfort, you can take a short stroll to the other side of the island.

It's also the kind of place where word of mouth has proved the best advertising, where visitors return year after year, indeed where some fortunates retire to every four months for a week-long spell out of the rat race. This is entirely understandable for Lord Howe is the closest tropical island to the most populous seaboard in Australia.

It's also so clean the locals boast how the seagulls can't stay long because there's nothing for them to scavenge.

Only one building on the Island, the newly-built Customs House, is higher than one storey, and all the big old homes and the guest lodges are discreetly hidden away behind the palms, with all the dramatically beautiful shoreline left untouched for public enjoyment.

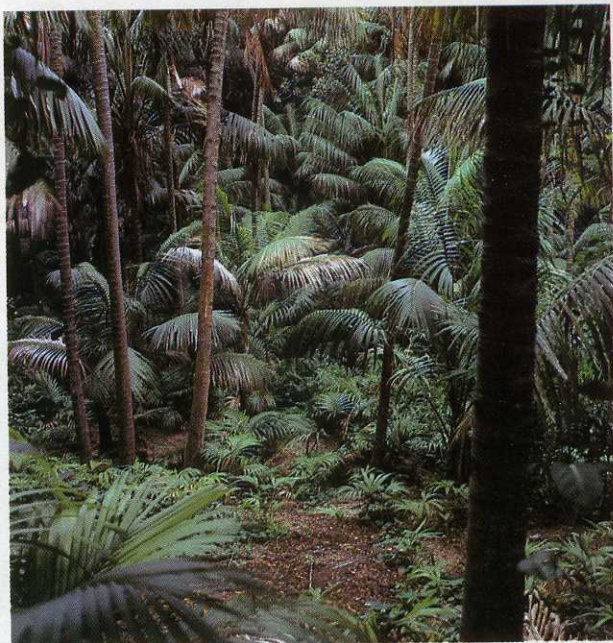




Another little thing; everybody leaves the key in their cars and doors; it seems light fingered mainland habits haven't taken hold on this island paradise.

We decided to get an instant feel for the crescent-shaped island by taking a scenic flight with local pilot John Green. This not only takes you swiftly to the top of Mt Lidgbird and Mt Gower, the two peaks radiating tremendous inanimate power from their massive bulk and high cliffs falling more than 330 metres sheer to the water, but allows a bird's-eye view of the whole island, from the wind-worn rocky buttresses at the North, over the lower mid-section, around the lagoon and surf foreshores with ever-changing shades of blue in the shallowing water, to ascending peaks of the twin mountains and the bare stern, ghostly rock wall on Mt Lidgbird known as "Greyface".

We also flew over famous Ball's Pyramid, the 600 metre high peak rising straight out of the Pacific 18kms to the



# under... under



South of Lord Howe, a frightening, jagged pinnacle, which, has incredibly, been climbed by daring or foolhardy rockclimbers who have to swim to it to start the forbidding ascent.

We dropped lightly back onto the Lord Howe airstrip and drove flat out at 30kph back to Beachcomber for a delightful tropical lunch.

Despite the charms of a deck chair in the lush garden, we were picked up by Clive for a glass-bottomed boat ride out to the very edge of the reef,

the flashing colours of the reef fish darting through water so clear it seemed we were floating on air.

With more than 400 different fish species and more than 60 different varieties of coral, the glass-bottomed boat reveals all the soft coral, the huge branches of Gorgonian coral, all the variety of the enchanting coral garden, with deep holes alive with dozens of different fish.

Clive proudly pointed out "Albert" a languorous 7.5kg giant of a fish who knew the arrival of the boat meant he'd be fed by sea urchins which Clive's schoolboy son plucks from the lagoon floor and breaks open for "Albert's" gourmet meal.

The underwater view is so irresistible that many people don flippers and face masks and dive overboard to join the friendly fish.



**T**hen back to the shore, for Clive, a repository of Island lore and history, wanted us to meet Ray Shick, a quiet, self-effacing man who had made mighty efforts, with Clive and many others, to ensure that the Island Woodhen, a ground-running brown bird about the size of a large pigeon, and unique to Lord Howe, didn't become extinct from the depredations of "progress", people, and feral animals upon its habitat.

The battle was a close one. It's estimated there may have been only a few score of woodhens left when the conservationists turned the tide in their favour.

We could only applaud the obvious bond between the birds and the two men when Clive extracted some Witchetty Grubs from a palm trunk, hammered on the wood with his axe, and the woodhens at his signal emerged from the undergrowth to take the food.

This is just one small example of the vigilance of the Islanders to ensure that the Island's rare flora and fauna, protected by isolation for thousands of years, do not succumb to introduced hazards.

After some relaxed drinks at the Bowls Club, we enjoyed a gourmet meal at Pinetrees' classy restaurant, downed a restful port or two, and found out the easy way the truth of what the Islanders say about sleeping well after a hectic day of outdoor pursuits.

# Go a few rounds

Up early, we found Eddie and Pixie, our dinner hosts of the previous night, perky as sparrows, lugging large hampers and coolers, ready to escort us to a waiting boat at the Old Jetty – where the flying boats used to land their passengers after the romantic three-hour flight from Sydney's Rose Bay – for a champagne breakfast at North Bay.

Through the ankle-deep water we waded, laden with the morning's repast, over the crunchy coral sand and into a natural amphitheatre of giant palm trees, filtering the morning sun onto our chosen breakfast spot.



While Eddie used the public barbecue facilities to cook our bacon and eggs we moved single-file along the track up to Mt Eliza.

Right to the top, increasingly nagged by the residential noisy Sooty Terns, then the panoramic view from the peak, the water impossibly clear and still, the morning sun rising over the Pacific rim, the black-winged Shearwaters soaring over the cliff tops, in the distance the occasional early bikerider wobbling down to the lagoon through the palm trees.

Then, back for fresh orange juice and champagne, crisp bacon and sun-yellow eggs, the tallest Kentia palms' fronds almost touching high over the centre of the clearing, a tropical cathedral, the gentle sighing of the sea-wind rustling through the palm leaves.

Bliss, perfect, unimaginable bliss, the only permissible thought the need for a vague decision taken on whether to go for a swim on the surf side, or walk, very slowly, down to the lagoon's edge and slide easily into the warm transparent water.

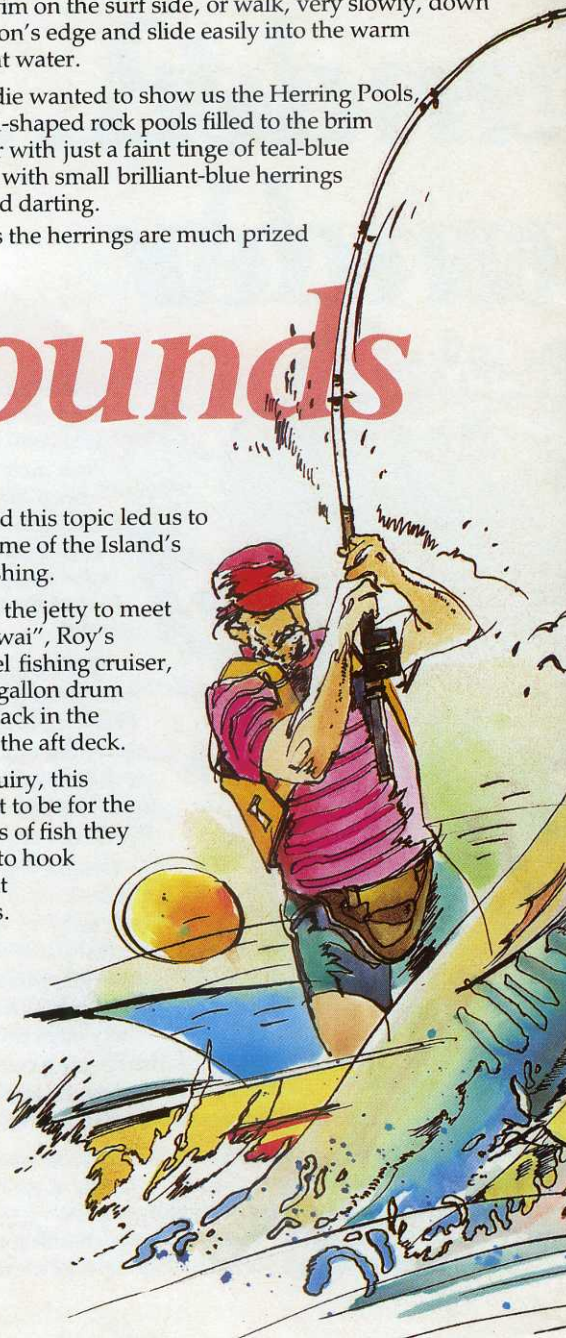
But Eddie wanted to show us the Herring Pools, great bowl-shaped rock pools filled to the brim with water with just a faint tinge of teal-blue to it, filled with small brilliant-blue herrings circling and darting.

It seems the herrings are much prized

as bait, and this topic led us to sample some of the Island's famous fishing.

Back to the jetty to meet the "Lulawai", Roy's twin-diesel fishing cruiser, with a 44-gallon drum placed smack in the middle of the aft deck.

On inquiry, this turned out to be for the mountains of fish they expected to hook in the next few hours.







After the tame fishing of the mainland, this was a revelation almost like shooting fish in a barrel, so eager were the 10kg kingfish to leap aboard our hooks. Trolling just outside the reef, in the deepest blue water, hundreds of kingies flying around just under the surface and the boat deck a welter of confusion as close-cropped, blonde, Sam, one of the crew tried her best to unhook struggling fish into the huge drum and hand lines back to the excited visitors.

Out to the Admiralty islets just off Lord Howe, as great drummer and bluefish joined the rush to be hooked. The fish won, for after a few hours of this exhausting sport, with powerful kingfish fighting every inch of the way into the boat, we had to surrender and return through the reef passage to the Old Jetty, with the 44-gallon drum nearly full of succulent, fresh, mirror-eyed fish.

One radio call on the way in and friends turned up at the wharf to pick up their share, a good example of the "share the Island's bounty and beauty" attitude which does so much to make a stay on Lord Howe a refreshing opportunity to see how a small caring community operates to mutual advantage.

That evening, at the regular fish-fry at Milky Way, we enjoyed some of the fish we'd caught.

After a rugged bushwalk to the cave named the "Goat House", high on the face of Mt Lidgbird the next day, just as we began to discuss whether there was any real need to return to the Mainland, our schedule dictated a return.

"Ten days at least you'll need to even get some idea of the place" Daphne has warned us on our arrival.

She was kidding. Ten months perhaps, just perhaps, and you'd just about have gained a glimmer of what this glorious tropical Island in NSW is really all about. It would be a mortal sin not to return.

