

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

The Gold Coast isn't the only place to have some end of year Schoolies fun. There are more alternatives available than you may think.

CAMPING

Camping is great—it's cheap. Rough it in a National Park or enjoy some home comforts in a serviced camping area—the choices are all yours.

Where: The Caravan and Camping Industry Association of NSW provides plenty of information on parks and services right across the State. Visit www.caravan-camping.com.au for maps, camping tips and driving directions.

For a list of National Park camp areas and details of regulatory requirements for camping in a national park, go to www.environment.nsw.gov.au.

How much: Some National Park sites in Australia will let you camp for free (these usually have no facilities), while other sites will usually be around \$10 per person. Private parks charge from \$20 through to \$60 per site—some with ensuite toilets and power to connect to.

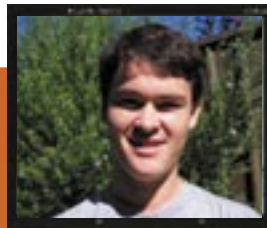
What to take: A tent, sleeping bag, first-aid kit, insect repellent, cooking utensils, water, food and beverages, money for site fees.

Top three camping spots in NSW

- Soldiers Point, Port Stephens, on the mid-north coast has unbelievable water views from all tent sites. You are practically camping on the beach. Check out www.beachholidays.com.au

- Murramarang Resort, about 20 kilometres north of Batemans Bay on the south coast, is an eco-friendly campground with kitchens, toilets, showers and even a kiosk. Check out www.murramarangresort.com.au

- Warrumbungle National Park in central NSW is one of the most peaceful places you'll find, with amazing bushwalking and stargazing, as well as nearby Siding Springs Observatory. Go to www.environment.nsw.gov.au for more information on national parks, camping permits, costs per camping area and so on.



Holiday house
JARED

What was the first thing you did when you finished your HSC?

I think I just came and stared at the TV—just chilled out.

Did you do anything to celebrate the end of school?

A group of us went up to Port Macquarie. We didn't go to any of the officially organised schoolies' parties, because they were too expensive. We chose Port Macquarie because one of my mate's parents has a time-share house up there.

How many people went?

Four of us went up there. There was another five people from our school up there, so we met up with them.

How much did it all cost?

Accommodation was about \$100 per person for the week, which was pretty cheap. I know other people that went to places like the Gold Coast and Byron Bay spent a lot more. We went out to dinner a few nights. I think I spent around \$400 all up.

How did you pay for it?

I had saved up for most of it.

What was the highlight?

We went on this dolphin cruise, and there were heaps of dolphins not far off shore—so that was fantastic.

Were there any bad parts?

When we were driving up there it wouldn't stop raining.

What are your plans this year?

I'm at the University of Western Sydney studying industrial design.

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BUSH PARTY

Just because you live in a rural area doesn't mean all is quiet on the social front. Often your local council will list upcoming events, so check out your council's website for details.



A bracing bush walk or a day of horse riding is a fun, cheap alternative to traditional schoolies activities on the Gold Coast.

GET ACTIVE!

Indulge one of your passions to celebrate the end of school life. There's a camp to suit everyone.

Get Creative: Stimulate your mind at Camp Creative in Bellingen, with courses in jewellery making, photography, painting, writing, dance and drama. Courses run through January, so get a group together and visit www.campcreative.com.au. Camp costs start at \$260, not including accommodation or meals. Call (02) 6655 9326 for room options.

Surfing Safari: Surfies will find their perfect summer at Surftrek Surfcamp on North Stradbroke Island. Daily surf lessons, meals, equipment, accommodation and

transfers will set you back \$650. For camp dates and more info, visit www.bribiesurfschool.com.au.

Get Sporty: Australian Sports Camps offer professional coaching in cricket, netball, tennis or football. Visit www.australiansportscamps.com.au or call 1800671808. Or sign up for your chance to meet Lleyton Hewitt, Cathy Freeman or Trish Fallon at Camp Australia, with courses held in Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle and Brisbane. For more, go to www.campaustralia.com.au.

Youth Group: Faith based camps aren't just for religious people, but there will be faith based talks and prayers there. There'll also be lots of fun

activities, plenty of new people and the chance to discover lots about yourself. Contact your local church or community youth group for more info.

Beat Around the Bush: Go horseriding or bushwalking at an outback adventure camp like Tamworth's Mountain Cattle Drive, where \$850 will have you mustering, sheep shearing or bush camping for a week. Visit www.mountaincattle.com.au.

Overseas Leader: Summer camps like Camp America and Camp USA offer travel opportunities for up to two months. See www.campamerica.com.au for more details and application info.