



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD WHITFIELD

Top row: Deck out your home in quirky pieces from StrangeTrader. Middle row, from left: Embrace your inner seamstress at The New Collector; Heath's Old Wares stocks an eclectic mix of collectables; Don vintage clothing from Belle Byron Bay. Bottom row, from left: Revisit the mid 20th century at Re Sould; Appreciate traditional craftsmanship at Lazybones Emporium.

EAST COAST VINTAGE

There's much more to Byron Bay than its famous beaches. Vintage enthusiast and self-confessed shopaholic Alix Clark delves into some of the area's most intriguing stores.

Sunlight dances across the blue waters of the bay, a gentle breeze ruffles my hair and a pod of dolphins issue a leaping invitation to dive into the ocean. Byron Bay is renowned for seducing travellers with its beautiful beaches, but now there's a plethora of stores, offering everything from mid-20th-century furniture to vintage curios and retro clothing, attracting visitors. You can fossick for hours on this thriving vintage and antique trail.

A feeling of anticipation takes over as soon as I touch down at Ballina/Byron airport and drive along the scenic route to Byron Bay on the north coast of New South Wales. Some may come here to relax, but I'm here to shop.

I check into my suite at The Byron at Byron Resort and Spa, the perfect base for a much-needed escape. The luxurious surroundings, helpful staff, relaxing spa and salon and top-quality restaurant make it tempting to stay put, but I can't ignore the siren song of the local retailers.

Starting out on my shopping quest, I quickly discover there are enough vintage and antique stores to keep even the most ardent treasure hunter happy. Here's just a small selection of my finds.

FIRST PORT OF CALL

Heath's Old Wares and Collectables is the store that started my vintage-themed

journey to Byron, though calling it a store is an understatement. This place is literally a huge shed filled with a vast array of collectable items – everything from dining chairs, galvanised tubs, vinyl records and factory lights to dance cards from 1906. Though there's lots to choose from, the well-worn ladders strewn around the store are currently the most popular item. Heath's maintains a comprehensive list of all the vintage and antique stores in the area on its website, which is a must-click for serious fossickers.

12 Station Street, Bangalow, +61 2 6687 2222, www.heathsoldwares.com.au.

PERFECT STRANGERS

The next stop is a happy accident. While looking for another store entirely, I notice a red painted horse's head protruding from a shopfront. The cushions fashioned from vintage Union Jacks by the front door make me even more inquisitive and, without hesitation, I enter StrangeTrader. This intriguing store owned by a former lifestyle magazine stylist, Andrea Duff, contains an eclectic mix of vintage and newly crafted items sourced from around the world, including stationery, jewellery, fragrances and homewares. Two statuettes of baby deer that have been covered in vintage tapestries from France catch my eye. They are utterly unique and I love the way they combine



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WHERE TO STAY

Looking for somewhere luscious to rest your weary head after a day of shopping (or swimming, cycling, surfing...)? The Byron at Byron Resort and Spa is the perfect headquarters. Located within 18 hectares of subtropical rainforest adjoining Tallow Beach, the resort has 92 luxurious one-bedroom suites, a 25-metre infinity-edge pool, five-star dining and a spa that promises to soothe away the cares of city living. The resort opened five years ago and has recently been refreshed with new interpretative walks through the rainforest, signature spa treatments and a seasonal dining menu featuring many ingredients sourced from local producers and growers. Call 1300 554 362 (in Australia) or visit www.byronatbyron.com.au.

a sense of history with their contemporary form. Also noteworthy are several large cushions made from men's Italian suiting, a 1940s gentleman's travel case and paper lanterns commemorating a royal visit in the early 20th century.

Shop 4 Byron Arcade, 13 Lawson Street, Byron Bay, +61 2 6685 5888, www.strangetrader.com.

NORTHERN BELLE

If you like clothing with history, you can't afford to miss Shelley and Des Eacott's warehouse, Belle Byron Bay, packed with vintage clothing treasures. Shelley has spent 17 years collecting clothing from Europe and the UK. The clothes are displayed by colour and span the 1930s to the 1970s. The gorgeous 1940s evening tops, fabulous 1950s coats and 1960s bed jackets make me want to start my own collection. In fact, a beaded 1950s wiggle dress is now in my wardrobe. Shelley recently started refashioning some items into her own designs – think light, flowing caftans and cover-ups made from vintage fabrics that are perfect for the Byron Bay lifestyle. In addition to the clothes, there is a collection of voluminous handbags

made from leather and antique fabrics.

Unit 2, 3 Brigantine Street, Byron Bay, +61 2 6685 7735.

HUNTERS AND COLLECTORS

Up the hill, 20 minutes' drive from Byron Bay, is Bangalow, a town of 1,200 people that oozes vintage style. I pull up at The New Collector and am instantly smitten with its collection of European, American and Australian urban- and industrial-themed antiques. As well as furniture such as metal cabinets and desks, there are old movie projectors and a big selection of industrial sewing machines. Opened by French couple Jean-Marc and Morgane Furio, The New Collector brings industrial style to this country town.

64A Byron Street, Bangalow, +61 2 6687 1191.

THE BIG SLEEP

Housed in a masonic temple dating back to 1922 with the original front gate intact, ▷

Above, from left: Make a doe-eyed purchase at StrangeTrader; The owners of Heath's Old Wares are accustomed to visitors browsing their large store at leisure; Base yourself at The Byron at Byron Resort and Spa.

byron bay

Below, from left: The well-worn ladders at Heath's are the most popular item; Valerie Hardy blends the old with the new at Secondhand Rose; Re Sould caters for every kind of mid-century enthusiast.

Lazybones Emporium is heaven for women who love all things vintage. Loads of old beds are topped with vintage-inspired quilts and bed linen and the urge to lie down and snuggle up is almost overwhelming. Looking around, I find a lovely collection of chandeliers, age-spotted mirrors, paintings of flowers and a very au courant mirrored table. Among all this girlishness there are some great masculine-looking vintage picnic cups and an original Snelling chair – very mid-century modern. All of the old wares are complemented by a range of retro-style clothing and nightwear. Rather than lying down and making myself comfortable, I hold it together for an hour and then submit to the ministrations of the salon staff at The Byron at Byron Resort and Spa. I'm exfoliated and massaged with iKOU products, which smell almost good

enough to eat, and I emerge relaxed and ready to enjoy dinner under the stars. *16 Station Street, Bangalow, +61 2 6687 2927.*

VINTAGE MUSCLE

Cruising into Brunswick Heads on a sunny afternoon, I'm struck by the number of gleaming vintage cars that pass by. It's not until I start chatting with Louise Ralph, the owner of Re Sould, surrounded by the store's mid-20th-century furnishings and homewares, that I discover there's a hot rod run in town this weekend, so Louise's stack of collectable 1960s hot rod magazines will be in high demand. Re Sould, which opened at the end of last year, is aptly housed in a 1950s petrol station and its stock ranges from an original Parker bookcase and cabinet to barkcloth cushions, lamps and vintage cake tins. Louise lovingly restores many of the pieces herself. *48 Tweed Street, Brunswick Heads, +61 2 6685 1540.*

LOVE ME TWO TIMES

Within seconds of arriving at Secondhand Rose Emporium, housed in a new building that looks like it's been there for years thanks to reclaimed doors and windows on the verandah upstairs, I snap up a gorgeous 1950s tablecloth. I'm distracted by the racks of vintage and refashioned clothes and, after sifting through them and choosing a few garments, I can't help but lust after some blue enamel ladles, of which there's a bucketful. Most of the items here are sourced locally and it's not difficult to imagine the farmhouse kitchen that the stunning antique dresser with leadlight doors once graced. Secondhand Rose has a mix of old and new wares that have been carefully curated to blend together seamlessly. *8 Park Street, Brunswick Heads, +61 2 6685 0120.*

Getting there • To book your Virgin Blue flight to Ballina/Byron visit www.virginblue.com.au or call 13 67 89 (in Aus).

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