

For over thirty years, I have been making regular pilgrimages to the south coast with my family and friends. In the early days we headed out to sea from Narooma and Mystery Bay in boats that are considered small for fishing the freshwater lakes these days. We didn't venture far from shore and dashed back home at the first hint of a breeze, but that didn't stop us from catching plenty of flathead, snapper, morwong and kingfish.

With my friends and I all having young families, our coastal trips are less prevalent, but as we found out last weekend, the south coast in winter is a great location.

With very few people around in the small coastal communities as compared to summer holiday periods, the people are very relaxed and have plenty of time to help you enjoy your holiday. The weather in winter is generally mild through the day with slight seas and less wind than summer. In short, it's the ideal time to go fishing and target the cool water species such as snapper, morwong, flathead and tuna.

Last weekend John & Troy Ashcroft, Dave Mitchell and myself fished Bermagui for three days. We spent the first two days chasing yellowfin tuna and apart from one fish which escaped boatside, we were unable to land one. Reports from other boats indicated that big tuna were sparse and that three or four days of trolling you may get one or two hookups (but the fish were up to 88kg!). Striped Tuna to 4kg and big schools of Frigate Mackerel kept us busy whilst we waited for the big strike which on this trip didn't come.

With limited time on our last day and a strengthening wind on the continental shelf, we chose to spend the morning bottom fishing. The plague of small leatherjackets that usually steal baits & bite hooks off were less prevalent allowing plenty of snapper, morwong and flathead to find our baits. The fishing was excellent with most of the action in 30-40 metres of water on the 'Three Brother's Reef' south of Bermagui. The fish were still biting when we left at 2.00pm to drive back to Wagga.

On the local front, the lack of water going down the river is keeping the lobsters quiet. A big flush through the system is needed to really get them moving. It's hard to ascertain what the fishing is like at the moment, as very few people are fishing the river. Steve from Ace's Fibreglass fished Lake Mulwala last weekend and they got a couple of cod amongst his group, but in general the fishing was tough as were the conditions with pea-soup fog and rain. They did well to get a fish at all.

For an enjoyable weekend away and the best chance of getting a good feed of fish, the south coast is an excellent winter option.

**Jamin Forbes**