Discover the history and heritage of Coolangatta on the self-guided Coolangatta Heritage Walk.

The walk is a celebration of the rich history of the town and recognises those places of special heritage significance to the Gold Coast that have been listed on the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register. Dating back to 1883, Coolangatta is one of the earliest settlements on the Gold Coast. It was named after the brigantine, Coolangatta, which was wrecked off the beach at Kirra in 1846. By the early 1900s it was officially the place to holiday with camping grounds to accommodate holiday makers and newly formed surf life saving clubs to ensure their safety on the beaches.

“When surf bathing becomes as popular in Queensland as it is at Manly...it is probably that Coolangatta will receive the purple ribbon of superiority over its rivals in attractiveness...for the locality is favoured by many people as a delightful holiday resort”

The Queenslander, April 1912.

As the popularity of Coolangatta grew, legendary guest houses like Greenmount, The Beach House and Stella Maris were established along Marine Parade. Later, as the beach culture continued to thrive at Coolangatta, motels began to replace guesthouses and tourist attractions developed to meet the changing needs of the holiday maker. Today, Coolangatta is the quintessential holiday resort.

Along the walk you will not only discover significant heritage listed places, you will also find other places that are important in the history of Coolangatta. Plaques, monuments, shelters, laneways, motels, churches, club houses and pubs all combine in Coolangatta to tell the story of the town named after the ship, bolstered by the arrival of rail and known for its pristine beaches.

Find the full story of the Coolangatta Heritage Walk
1. Site of the wreck of the Coolangatta
2. Kirra Beach Pavilion
3. Kirra Shelter Shed
4. Coolangatta ANZAC Memorial
5. Wreck of the Coolangatta Memorial
6. Tweed Heads & Coolangatta Surf Life Saving Club
7. Coolangatta Norfolk pines
8. Remains of Jack Evans Porpoise Pool
9. Captain Cook Memorial and Lighthouse
10. Francis Edward Roberts Commemorative Plaque
11. St Augustine’s Church
12. Jazzland Dance Hall (former)
13. Powell Brothers Commemorative Trees
14. Coolangatta State & Special School (former)
Jack Evans and his wife arrived in Coolangatta in the late 1940s. By 1956 Jack had established the Gold Coast’s first tourist attraction, the famous Jack Evans Pet Porpoise Show. He became the first keeper and trainer of dolphins in Australia. In 1961, Jack moved the porpoise pool operations to the mouth of the Tweed River and the pools remained in use as swimming baths until the late 1970s.

The Captain Cook Memorial and Lighthouse was built in 1970 - the result of a joint venture of the Gold Coast City Council and the Tweed Shire Council. Based on a design by Gold Coast City Council architect Mr Les Nyerges, the memorial included provisions for the world’s first laser-beam lighthouse. Unfortunately, the laser-beam technology proved unsuccessful and was replaced with a conventional lamp in 1972.

The Catholic Parish of St Augustine’s began in 1924 with the appointment of Father Leo Carlton as Parish Priest. The building was designed by JP Donoghue in the Italian Romanesque style with a nave, 110 foot campanile, and seating for 800 people. The foundation stone was laid on Easter Monday 1925 and the blessing and opening was celebrated on Sunday 26 December 1926. The church was extensively restored in 2007 to conserve the building.

The Jazzland ballroom opened in 1933. The building was described as one of the most modern dance halls in Queensland. With Billo Smiths famous Trocadero Jazz Band frequently playing, and US Army personnel in Coolangatta on leave during WWII, dancing at Jazzland became a popular pastime reputedly known to thousands of young people throughout the Commonwealth. The hall closed in 1951 and the building was converted for use as a Penney’s chain store.