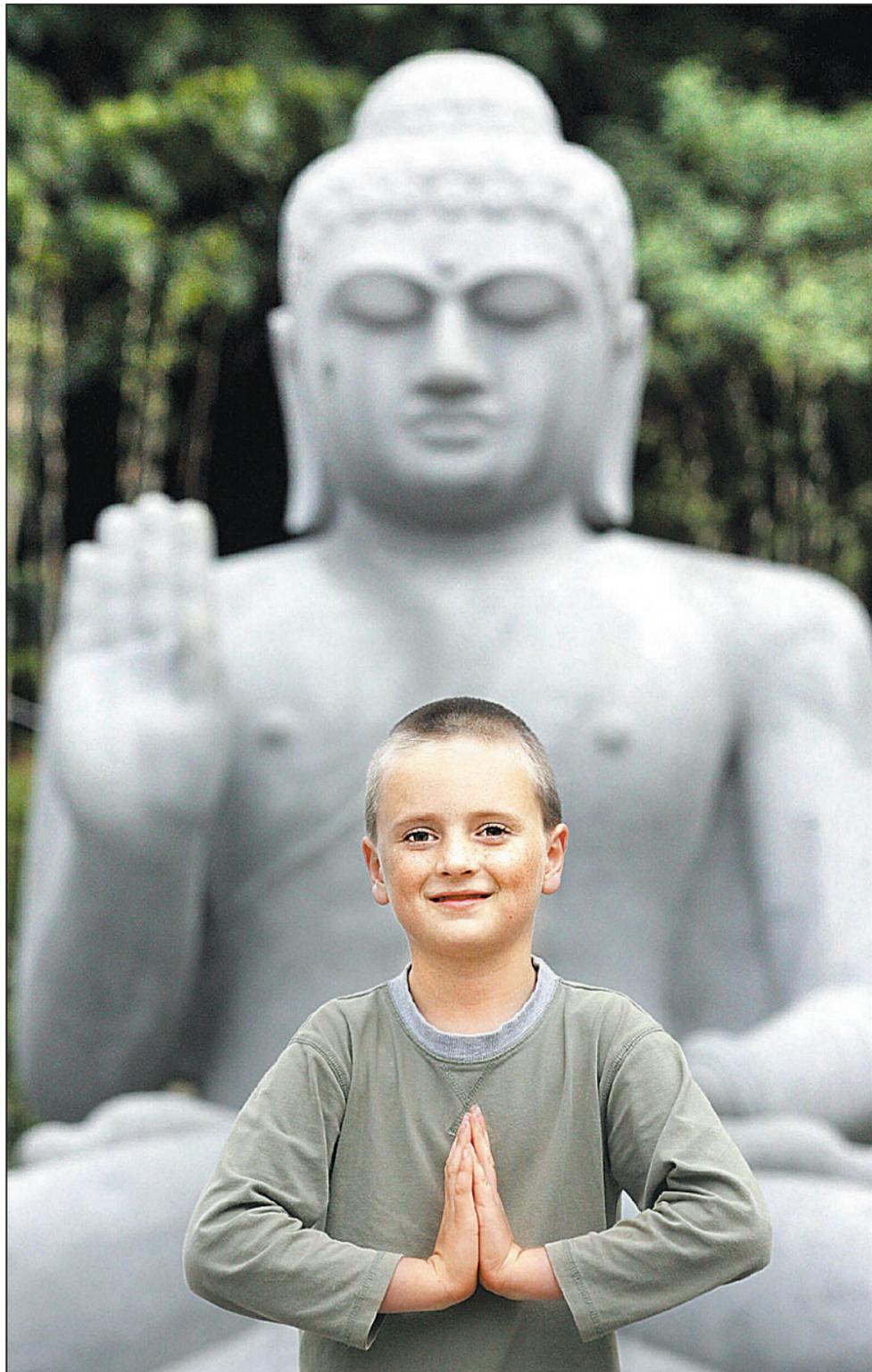


## Giant Buddha finds peace in the tranquillity of Byron Bay



Toby King, 7, is dwarfed by the new giant Buddha

by Hayley Campbell  
Tweed bureau

VISITORS are flocking to Byron Bay to see a Buddha that weighs 14 tonnes and stands 4m tall.

The new tourist attraction was hand crafted in Java, Indonesia, and shipped to northern NSW in an operation using 30 men, car-jacks and cranes.

The new landmark has prompted a doubling of visitor numbers at the Crystal Castle tourist attraction, a 15-minute drive north of Byron Bay.

The five-time best significant tourist attraction winner in northern NSW had waited more than a year for the Buddha.

"I think more and more people are becoming interested in

Eastern traditions and beliefs and alternatives like yoga, although we're not affiliated with any religion," said owner Naren King.

"This Buddha was one of two being made for a Chinese temple in Sumatra, but this one has a slight blemish on his cheek, so the temple wanted the other one."

He said visitor numbers had doubled this year and expected 50,000 people to visit the castle in 2006.

"We've had three different visits from Tibetan monks in the last four weeks, coming because they'd heard about the statue and wanted to bless it," he said.

"This is the biggest stone-

● **Picture: Sarah Marshall**

carved Buddha ever brought into Australia."

Mr King spent the past two years creating a Buddha walk and playground for visitors.

Mr King has transformed the Crystal Castle into a place of beauty, tranquillity and serenity over 20 years.

"This has capped off the whole 20 years for me," he said about importing the Buddha.

"At first we laughed at the thought of buying one and though it was inconceivable."

He also imported two, two-tonne rose quartz rocks from Brazil and created a water course around the Buddha to further create a tranquil setting.

# Tweed turns its green to tourism gold

by Geoff Chambers  
Tweed bureau

THE Tweed coast's eco-appeal could be set to attract thousands of environmentally minded European tourists.

Backed by the appeal of eco-friendly communities on the northern NSW coast, Tweed coast tourism operators are expected to turn their attention to the lucrative, new market.

A contingent of Australian Tourism Export Council directors, including managing director Matt Hingerty, general manager Gary O'Riordan and south Queensland chairwoman Narelle Eichorn, made a scouting trip earlier this month for the annual ATEC convention, which will be staged on the Tweed next April.

Ms Eichorn said ATEC was seeking emerging destinations with plans to expose them to the wider international market including western Europeans.

"New Tweed Coast has already appeared on the self-drive itineraries in Germany. The European market is very interested in eco-tourism so the unspoilt environment is a major draw-card," she said.

The New Tweed Coast project was

established earlier this year as a joint venture operation by some of the area's biggest developers to promote the region from Kingscliff to Casuarina.

Ms Eichorn said the benefits would flow to Gold Coast tourism.

"For example, Asian operators are now recognising how quick it will be to reach the theme parks and Surfers Paradise from the New Tweed coast via the highway and Tugun bypass," she said.

"This high-profile international trade show is exactly what the area needed to place it on the world stage."

International travellers Darren and Nicky Bosch, who are in Australia for five weeks, said they were impressed by the environmentally friendly surrounds.

"It is very green and there is plenty to see. We are going to hire a car and drive south through northern NSW and take in Byron Bay," she said.

"We really enjoy the coastal areas and Darren surfs, so it is a great place to visit."

Mr Hingerty said he was buoyed by the facilities on the Tweed after visiting Twin Towns, Twin Towns Services Golf Club and The Outrigger Resort at Salt Village.

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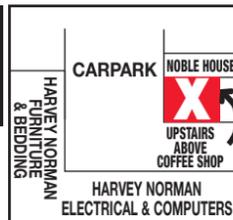
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### Mouth cancer in Quit ad

A GRAPHIC commercial showing a woman with rotten gums and lip ulcers has hit television nationwide in the latest effort to coerce smokers to quit.

The campaign, produced by Quit, was launched yesterday to coincide with the release of statistics indicating that about 20 Australians are diagnosed each week with mouth cancers.

This includes cases of the mouth, tongue, cheek and palate cancers – about half of which would have been prevented if the person had not smoked.

### Actress Madison dies at 21

MADISON Wright Morris, aged 21, a former child actress and model, died at University of Kentucky Hospital, it was announced last night.

She died of a heart attack a day after returning from her honeymoon with husband Brent Joseph Morris. They were married on July 8.

Morris had appeared in television shows including *Grace Under Fire*, *The Nanny*, *Earth 2* and *ER*.

Morris had a heart transplant in 2000 after an X-ray revealed she had an enlarged heart, and she was diagnosed with restrictive cardiomyopathy.

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