EXPLORE SYDNEY’S WATERSIDE WONDERS

Endowed with golden beaches, sublime parks and harbour islands, Sydney is one of the world’s most beautiful and accessible waterfront locations. Yet there is more to Sydney’s waterside treasure chest than just Sydney Harbour and its ocean beaches.

For starters, Sydney has no less than six waterways – Pittwater, Middle and North Harbours, Port Jackson, Botany Bay and Port Hacking – each with its own distinct topography, surroundings and personality. For anyone who wants to sample the full range of Sydney’s coastal riches, this summer is the perfect time to explore further afield, and discover a new world of waterside wonders.

Around Sydney’s Heavenly Harbour

Sydney Harbour is packed with surprises, and one of the best ways to discover them is on the 59 km Harbour Circle Walk (www.walkingcoastalsydney.com.au). A rambling exploration of the bays and inlets that lie to the west of Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Harbour Circle Walk includes rainforest and quiet bushland, islands, engineering works, historic wharves and suburbs. Many points along the Harbour Circle Walk are accessible by public transport, which makes it easy to break the walk down into a series of day or half-day strolls.

The latest addition to Sydney’s coastal walking trails – the Parramatta River Walk, follows the shore line past reserves, bays, wetlands, bushlands and areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage. www.walkingcoastalsydney.com.au/brochures/documents/ParramattaRydeBridge-Final.pdf

Pack your best straw hat and cast off for Cockatoo Island this summer and enjoy the magic and music of the Island Bar (www.theislandbar.com.au), set against the backdrop of some of Sydney’s most amazing views. Constructed from recycled shipping containers, the Island Bar dishes out cool cocktails, wine and beer as well as delicious Italian-style pizzas. Getting to the island is easy via ferry services from Circular Quay, Woolwich and Balmain. Why not book into the island’s accommodation (www.cockatooisland.gov.au) and make it an island escape – either in a tent or a heritage house.

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Test your head for heights and grab a bird’s eye view of Sydney Harbour as you scale the 15 metre mast of a tall ship under full sail with Sydney Tall Ships this Summer. www.sydneytallships.com.au/mast-climb.html

Around Pittwater - Sydney’s Serene Sanctuary

Ringed by pristine bushland and beaches, Pittwater is a yawning expanse of open water and the ideal nautical escape for anyone in search of tranquillity.

Club Sail (www.clubsail.com.au) can put you in the skipper’s seat for a yachting adventure on Pittwater. Based at Newport Anchorage Marina, Club Sail has a choice of Bavaria and Beneteau yachts for hire to experienced sailors. Club Sail also offers a rent-a-skipper service, with hostesses plus a choice of gourmet menus to create an extra special occasion.

The ferry from Palm Beach to The Basin (www.palmbeachferry.com.au) is a wonderful journey travelling past Pittwater’s secluded beaches. One of these stops is at The Basin campground, an isolated haven with plenty of spaces for a picnic and barbecues. Other stops include Mackerel Beach which is perfect for children. If you’re feeling energetic take one of the walking trails that lead to The Basin or West Head Lookout (maps available from NSW National Parks).

Stand Up Paddle Board Yoga (SUP www.facebook.com/pages/SUP-Yoga-Sydney/218984084820234) is a unique way to develop balance and core strength on the placid waters of Narrabeen Lake, south of Pittwater. Each session begins with a yoga warm-up at Jamieson Park, followed by a SUP lesson and paddle on the lake.

The Pittwater peninsula has a range of five star beach houses, luxury villas and apartments for holiday rentals including:

- Contemporary Hotels (www.contemporaryhotels.com.au) properties Snapper Lodge at Clareville, a romantic private hideaway on the water’s edge with its own jetty and Pacific Road House, a serene and magical house set high up on a hill with views over Palm Beach Lighthouse and Clareville Boat House, a waterside pleasure dome with its own jetty and Pittwater views to sigh for.

- Situated opposite Palm Beach wharf, with wide-angle views across Pittwater, Blue Swimmer brings style to the traditional beach house with sumptuous, self-contained accommodation in a sublime location. www.blueswimmerpalmbeach.com
The Northern Stars – Middle Harbour and North Harbour

Incorporating Manly, Clontarf, Balgowlah and Fairlight, Sydney’s North Harbour is home to Australia’s only mainland breeding colony of little penguins.

Explore the calm clear waters of nearby Shelley Beach with an Eco Treasures guided snorkelling tour. The tour introduces the diverse marine wildlife of the area including the protected sea grass meadows and rocky reefs at Cabbage Tree Bay Aquatic Reserve. You may even spy the elusive weedy sea dragon or the elegant wrasse that find sanctuary in the reserve. http://ecotreasures.com.au/coastal-tours/manly-snorkel/

Located on the southern side of Middle Harbour is Chowder Bay and Headland Park. Named by visiting whalers for its abundant seafood, Chowder Bay is home to historic buildings, disused military barracks, parklands and walkways. The area is now a creative hub housing a sculpture park, specialist timber boat builders and an Artists’ Precinct. http://www.harbourtrust.gov.au/visit-our-sites/headland-park/index.html

Join After Dark Nature Tours for a guided sunset walk around North Head. Starting on Shelley Beach, meet the nocturnal bush residents while the guides share the natural, Aboriginal and European histories of the area, all against the stunning twin vistas of Manly Beach and Sydney Harbour. www.afterdarknaturetours.com.au

One of Sydney’s classic bush walks is the 9.1 km Manly to Spit Scenic Walkway which incorporates North and Middle harbours.

The Bounty of Botany Bay

One of the busiest of Sydney’s waterways Botany Bay also has quiet beaches ringed by bushland and some great snorkelling and diving sites, wetlands with migratory birds and sandstone headlands where you can see whales pass by.

Tucked inside Cape Banks, the northern headland at the entrance to Botany Bay, Cruwee Cove has superb snorkelling where you will see colourful sponges and kelp gardens, groper, moray eel, cuttlefish, red morwong, wobbegong and maori wrasse. Access is by foot only, via the Henry Head walking trail that begins off Anzac Parade.
**MEDIA INFORMATION**

**Bare Island,** which sits just off the northern shores of Botany Bay at La Perouse, has some of Sydney’s finest dive sites. Sea dragons, sea horses, sponges, nudibranches, wobbegongs, cuttlefish, maori wrasse, blue groper, crayfish, abalone, octopus, Port Jackson shark and sand huge bullrays are among the species found here, at depths of between 12 to 20 metres. **Snorkel Safari at Malabar** ([www.snorkelsafari.com.au](http://www.snorkelsafari.com.au)) operates Scooter Safaris at Bare Island.

Heading south around Botany Bay is **Dolls Point,** one of the most popular spots for kitesurfing in the Sydney area. This is an ideal launch pad for kitesurfers heading out into Botany Bay. Local operator **KBL** ([www.kiteboardinglessons.com.au](http://www.kiteboardinglessons.com.au)) offers kitesurfing lessons and gear sales from its shop on the Grand Parade at Sans Souci, plus standup paddle board lessons.

Nearby you can brush up your swimming skills this summer and join the **Open Water Swim School** at Lady Robinson Beach. For adults and children alike, the school teaches open water safety and survival within reach of Botany Bay’s calm shoreline. [http://www.openwaterswimschool.com.au/](http://www.openwaterswimschool.com.au/)

At the mouth of the **Georges River** in Botany Bay, **Towra Point Nature Reserve** has important vegetation and wildlife habitats. Together with the neighbouring **Towra Point Aquatic Reserve,** this is the largest and most diverse estuarine wetland remaining in the Sydney region, a habitat for many species of migratory wading birds. Join a guided tour with the NPWS Discovery Program ([www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/tours.aspx](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/tours.aspx)) or obtain an entry permit from the Kamay Botany Bay National Park Discovery Centre ([www.environment.nsw.gov.au/contact/KurnellBotanyBayNationalPark.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/contact/KurnellBotanyBayNationalPark.htm)) in Solander Drive, Kurnell.

Hire a boat from Como Marina and explore the upper reaches of the **Georges River National Park.** Boat licences are not required and with a range of boats available - from a basic runabout through to a ‘luxury pontoon’- there’s an option to suit any occasion. [http://www.comomarina.com/](http://www.comomarina.com/)

Up for a 4WD beach adventure? Head off road and straight onto the sand at **Boat Harbour 4WD Park** on the southern headland approach to Botany Bay.

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Looking for a two-footed adventure on Botany Bay’s southern headland? The Cape Bailey Track is a captivating 5.7 kilometre stroll through a secluded part of Sydney’s coastland starting at the Kamay Botany Bay National Park Visitor Centre. The trail ends at Boat Harbour Reserve, where the rock platform is an important feeding and roosting site for migratory shorebirds. The side trip up to the Cape Bailey lighthouse is well worth the effort.

Alternatively, take the Botany Bay Coastal Walk which follows the coastline from the cliff tops near Kurnell south to the Boat Harbour Aquatic Reserve and around the coast to Cronulla Station.

Port Hacking, Sydney’s Southern Belle

Bordering Sydney to the south, the expanse of the Port Hacking River is a study in contrasts. The north side of this branching waterway is groomed by the neat suburbs of the Sutherland Shire. To the south, it is encircled by the wild shores of Royal National Park and the seaside village of Bundeena – another world of nautical treasures.

Sylvania’s Snorkel Inn (www.snorkelinn.com.au) is the local underwater adventure specialist, dedicated to showing you the amazing marine life of the area. As well as everything you need for scuba diving in the area, including courses, Snorkel Inn offers a Snorkel Scooter Safari - a guided undersea adventure at Bundeena; no experience is necessary.

The Cronulla Surf Gallery pays tribute to Australia’s long-standing love affair with the ocean with two 30-metre photo montages that capture memorable moments in the suburb’s beach culture, including the arrival of the first Malibu surfboards and the naming of the first Miss Surf Queen Cronulla in 1927. (www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/Recreation/Beaches/Cronulla_Surf_Gallery)

Cronulla’s Oak Park Pool, also known as Glaisher Point Baths, is one of five ocean pools on the Cronulla peninsula and is a gorgeous spot for a dip providing safe, sheltered swimming in all conditions.

Overlooking the placid waters of Gunnamatta Bay, Cronulla’s Darook Park is a southside beauty with plenty of shady spots on lawns that slope down to the protected waters of the Bay.
Want to make a big splash this summer? Cronulla Standup Paddle Board School (www.cronullasup.com.au) can put you right in the frame, departing from the nearby Gunnamatta Park. Licensed and accredited by Surfing Australia, the paddle board school is the fast track to a summer of fun, with daily lessons.

Located on the south side of the Port Hacking River, the Royal National Park has an incredible wealth of bird life, including seabirds such as the wandering albatross as well as shorebirds. Acclaimed birdwatching author, Steve Anyon-Smith, has teamed up with Royal Coast Walks (www.royalcoastwalks.com.au) to offer a one-day tour that puts the park’s birds under the spotlight.

The second oldest national park in the world, Royal National Park has rainforest, creeks, wildflower meadows, sea-sculpted sandstone headlands, wild and majestic stretches of coastal heath and marvellous walking trails. Of the park’s three camping areas, Bonnie Vale is the most accessible, with car parking, hot showers and wood-fired barbecues. Bonnie Vale is located near Bundeena on Port Hacking, close to a large sand spit that offers good swimming. Bush camping is permitted at Uloola Falls, five kilometres south of Audley, and on the coast at North Era, both accessible only by foot.

Based on the pristine Port Hacking waterfront, Bundeena Kayak & Paddle Boards (www.bundeenakayaks.com.au) are right at the heart of one of Sydney’s finest paddling locations. They also offer guided kayak eco tours and paddle board lessons.

For the more adventurous, the Port Hacking River’s South West Arm offers a challenging paddle from Bundeena with stunning rewards. After heavy rains and in the far reaches of the arm, explorers will be treated to spectacular waterfalls cascading down the steep sandstone walls into crystal clear waters.

For more information go to sydney.com

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