

BEACHES

While Bondi is by far the most well known and definitely the most popular beach in Sydney, there's a vast coastline of beaches worth a visit if you are here for a longer stay.

EASTERN SUBURBS

The following 5 beaches dot the coastline from Bondi to Coogee. Each one can be reached by foot along the famous *coastal walk*, starting near the Icebergs building at South Bondi. To walk from Bondi to Coogee (at medium pace) would take about an hour. But if you took your time- had a swim at the different beaches, stopped for a picnic, or treated yourself to a couple of cold drinks at a local watering hole, you could make a day of it.

In order of appearance.....

BONDI

Patrolled on weekends and public holidays in off-peak season and everyday during peak season

Bondi is one of the safest beaches in the Eastern Suburbs.

South Bondi: generally no swimming flags at South Bondi, usually bigger swell- mainly local surfers.

Middle Bank: patrolled, safe, good section of beach for visitors (always swim between the flags). Also good for beginner surfers- a hint: there are always surf lesson in progress at Bondi, take note of where these lessons are going on and use it as a guide. Their location has been chosen by the trained instructor and is probably the most beginner-friendly section of the beach on that particular day.

North Bondi: only partly patrolled but generally safe for swimming, locals tend to swim/sunbathe at North Bondi, there's a grassed area at the end of the promenade with some shade, there's also a kiddie pool. North Bondi is generally smaller surf and usually too populated for anything other than foam boards- but foamies are often more fun on busy days anyway!

TAMARAMA

Patrolled on weekends and public holidays

Affectionately known as 'Glamourama', this small beach is known for the beautiful, bronzed bodies that grace its golden sands. Swimming conditions are inconsistent and although it's patrolled on weekends, the area between the flags is often small, making it hard to relax and enjoy the water. This is mainly due to a consistent under-current commonly known as the 'Bronte Express'- meaning if you happen to get caught in it, you'll quickly find yourself at the next beach (Bronte). Having said this, the rocks underneath the surf club are a popular hang out for locals and you can often find a rock-pool to cool off in. There's also a heavily localised surfing scene.

BRONTE

Patrolled on weekends and public holidays

Bronte beach is great because it has bbq facilities and a large park (including a children's playground), as well as a strip of cafes running alongside it. However it can be rippy (strong currents) and at times rough, so you must swim between the flags at all times. If the beach is closed, do not go swimming. Instead stick to the kids bogie-hole (a naturally occurring bay-area surrounded by low-lying rocks) which is a popular spot for families, or the ocean pool (a 20 m swimming pool cut into the cliffs) popular with the local oldies and kids. When the swell is really big, both areas are engulfed by waves- it's amazing to watch the huge waves pound their way into the pool and reach right up the cliffs. Sometimes, a few brave locals will go out surfing in these monster swells (which is a viewing spectacular) or participate in a dangerous activity they call the 'Rope Hang'- they stand on the pool's edge facing the ocean holding onto the rope which divides the pool from the sea. They wait for huge waves to come crashing in, lift them up, so that they're totally horizontal and hanging on for dear life. Most of the time, the wave is too powerful and they end up getting pummelled into the pool or washed up on the rocks. It's nail-biting to watch.

CLOVELLY

Patrolled on weekends and public holidays

Clovelly is a man-made bay, as opposed to a surf beach, with paved areas alongside a long channel which eventually comes ashore on a small section of sand. You can dive in at any point along the channel and swim, float or snorkel at your leisure. The water is calm but also stays fresh- gentle currents are constantly flowing in and out of the mouth of the bay. There is also a plethora of marine life under the surface- colourful fish, coral and the famous Blue Groper; a protected species of which there's a family living in Clovelly Bay. These huge, blue fish are considered genuine Clovelly locals and much sought after by snorkellers.

There is a kiosk and café right on the bay but if you want a real aussie experience, visit the Clovelly Hotel, just beyond the south side of Clovelly. Here you can get a good pub-meal, enjoy a few cold beverages in the beer garden and soak up the buzzing local atmosphere.

Gordons Bay (unpatrolled) is a small inlet next door to Clovelly. Locals swim off the rocks here but if you're not a seasoned swimmer, I'd probably stick to Clovelly (above). It's also a popular place for Scuba Diving with a large rock platform hiding a unique marine sanctuary underneath. Protected by an offshore reef, the bay is a safe location to explore the beauty of this unique underwater world.

Pro Dive offer snorkelling and diving packages and can help with all diving needs.

Alfreda Street Coogee

Tel. (02) 9665 6333

The reef that protects this bay also provides it with some excellent surfing. Known as the Bombie, the reef produces both left and right hand waves, recommended for experienced surfers only.

COOGEE

Patrolled on weekends and public holidays in off-peak season and everyday during peak season

Coogee is similar to Bondi in that the main shopping and restaurant strip joins up with the beach promenade. There's plenty of grassed areas for picnic-ing and people-watching and often games of soccer, cricket, frisbee and volleyball. The beach is generally very safe for swimming and a popular tourist attraction. There are some beautiful naturally occurring rock pools around the rocks at the north end of the beach.

HARBOUR BEACHES

WATSON'S BAY

Watsons Bay is a small harbour-side suburb about 10km from Bondi. There's plenty of reason to visit Watto Bay, the main ones being ; to take a picnic, sit in the park and enjoy watching the boats go by, to dine on seafood (takeaway, casual or fine dining), to sight-see at the famous section of cliffs called 'The Gap' or to swim at Camp Cove- a small beach popular amongst the locals for its private setting and calm water. If you take a stroll along the bush track starting at Camp Cove and heading toward the headland, you'll come across a couple of very private, rocky nudist beaches and some old, abandoned war bunkers and maybe even a canon. It's a very pretty area and has great views of the harbour from an unusual perspective. There is also a garden café on the south side of the wharf which has quite good food.

NEILSON PARK

Another of the nearby harbour bays, Neilson Park is a great place to visit if you prefer swimming in calmer waters. It is well known for its shady grounds and scenic harbour side beach protected by a shark net during the summer months. The park has a long tradition as a favourite family beach and picnic area in the Eastern Suburbs. It also offers a great walk along the Hermitage Foreshore, a 1.5-km strip of bushland that winds along the western edge of Vaucluse between Nielsen Park and Bayview Hill Road.

PARSLEY BAY

Parsley Bay is a popular family park that includes an enclosed swimming area, picnic facilities and children's playground. There is also a short bushland circuit (15-20 minutes return), that takes you to a waterfall at the head of the gully. It has excellent macro life as well as some larger fish making it a popular place for scuba divers.

Parsley Bay is accessed by following New South Head Road through Rose Bay until you meet Hopetoun Avenue. Drive past Parsley Bay Reserve and turn left into The Crescent until you see the reserve again. Park at the far end of the reserve next to the green electricity sub-station.

NORTHERN BEACHES

MANLY

Sydney's second most famous beach, Manly, like Bondi is a very popular destination for tourists. It is a great place to body surf as more often than not it has decent sized surf that breaks a good distance from the shoreline. The beach is divided into sections starting at South Steyne, Manly, North Steyne and Queenscliffe. Each section is heavily patrolled all throughout the summer months and on the weekends for the rest of the year. The strip leading away from the beach towards Manly Wharf is known as The Corso and is home to a full range of Surf and Souvenir shops as well as some great places to eat and drink.

Getting There: Going to Manly is a great excuse to take a ferry across Sydney Harbour. Take the L82 or 180 bus from the beach side of Campbell Pde to Circular Quay (approx. 30 mins). From here take the Manly Ferry (approx 30 mins) and walk up the Corso to the beach.

FRESHWATER

Freshwater or 'Freshy' Beach is a beautiful little beach north of Manly. If you are feeling adventurous you can climb around the rocks from the north end of Manly. This takes a while and is nowhere near as people friendly as the Bondi- Bronte coastal walk but a tunnel has been dug out through the rocks and there are some pretty spectacular views to take in on the way. Alternatively you can take the 139 Bus from Manly Wharf.

FURTHER NORTH

As you go further north up the Beaches you will find them increasingly less populated and therefore less patrolled. If you have a car and the time however, we definitely recommend you check them out. They are very beautiful and in comparison to the eastern beaches, much less developed. Along from Freshwater you will find Curl Curl, Dee Why, Long Reef, Collaroy, Narabeen, Mona Vale, Warriwood, Bungan, Newport, Bilgola, Avalon, Whale, and Palm Beaches.

Hints:

Curl Curl: Similar to Bronte as it can be a bit rippy and rough. It has a number of sand banks that have been known to collapse- this can be a little scary, but if you just swim away from the sand bank when it happens you'll be fine.

Dee Why: A popular beach for families as it has a play area and a great strip of cafes.

Long Reef: A long beautiful stretch of beach with a large rocky platform which is home to a diverse range of marine invertebrates. Hours can be spent exploring the rock pools.

Narabeen: Very well known for its great surf. Was host to the Coca Cola Surf Classic for many years before it moved to Manly. Narabeen also has a lagoon that is great for families and fishing.

Palm Beach: A popular holiday destination for Sydney's more affluent families, Palm Beach has a great holiday feel to it. Also home to the TV soap *Home & Away*.

BEACH SAFETY

Our main tips for going to the beach are to swim between the flags and wear sunscreen. The flags mark the area patrolled by life guards and are thus the safest place to swim. Lifeguards decide where to put the flags daily based on where the rips (strong currents) are, so use these as your vital guide. As for sunscreen, it is an absolute must. The Australian sun is very strong, as a result of being close to large holes in the ozone layer. We therefore have a very high U.V. index so wear water resistant 30+ sunscreen and reapply- many a holiday has been ruined by sun blisters. Most skin types tend to tan in Australian summers even with sun screen, so don't worry about going home white!

How to Spot a Rip

Rip currents are identified by the following:

- Discoloured brown water caused by sand stirred up from the bottom
- Foam on the surface extending beyond the break
- A rippled appearance, with waves breaking on both sides of the rip, but not inside the rip
- Items on the water's surface, floating seaward on the surface of the rip

If You Are Caught in a Rip

- Do not panic. Tread water or float and let the current take you
- Never try and swim against a rip. Float out with the current and when past the breakers, swim across the rip, parallel to shore. When out of the rip, swim back to shore. If you are too tired- don't panic: raise one arm to signal for help from a lifesaver.