

Sunrise at
Bondi Beach

SHORE THING

WORDS JASON MOUNTNEY PHOTOGRAPHY CAROLINE WEST

Sydney's beautiful coastal beaches are an enormous part of the city's culture and identity.

OF ALL THE GREAT CITIES OF THE WORLD, perhaps only Rio is as closely associated with the beach as Sydney. Summer weekends for tens of thousands of visitors and locals entail swimming and sunbathing at a favourite seaside suburb, while at night local pubs and restaurants fill with patrons glowing red from their day's dose of Vitamin D.

Beaches are so integral to life in Sydney that they host dozens of activities unconnected with swimming. In the mornings, surfers are joined by walkers and "boot camp" participants running and sweating under the command of their personal trainers. Beachside barbecues can be so popular that queues form at the hotplates.

Protecting crowds of beachgoers is largely left to one of the world's best-organised groups of volunteers, Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA). Between red and yellow flags, swimmers can be confident they are being watched by unpaid lifesavers, as well as lifeguards employed by local councils. Australia's first surf lifesaving club was formed in Bondi in 1907. Another 303 clubs have opened since, rescuing more than half a million people. To celebrate the movement's centenary, 2007 is the Year of the Lifesaver.

Involved in the lifesaving movement since she joined Nippers (SLSA's junior wing) as an eight-year-old, Michelle Troy, now 21, spends four hours a month patrolling for Freshwater Surf Lifesaving Club at Harbord on Sydney's

northern beaches. Admitted to the movement as full members less than 30 years ago, women now make up more than 40 per cent of lifesavers. "At Freshwater, membership is about 50-50," Troy says. "There's usually a guy and a girl on patrol for each shift."

Troy competes in about 10 surf carnivals a year, as far afield as the Gold Coast, Geelong and Perth. A must-see for any overseas visitor, surf carnivals include surfboat races, running, swimming and Troy's favourite event, mock rescues.

A day by the sea is considered the birthright of all Australians, who are usually surprised to learn people can be charged for beach access overseas. For many, Australia's egalitarianism is best expressed on the sand. Without clothing to mark social hierarchies, the person in board shorts or bikini could be an entrepreneur or a labourer. Social class takes a back seat to whoever looks best in their costume.

But it would be a lie to say Sydney's beaches are a classless nirvana where all comers are welcomed with sunscreen-

slathered open arms. The closer people live to the beach, the less inclined they are to believe the shore belongs to all. Some councils charge locals far less than visitors for the right to park near the sea. Bondi residents thwarted the extension of a rail line to the beach that would have made it easier for "outsiders" to visit. And some surfers at Maroubra are so determined to stake a claim on "their" waves, they tattoo the local postcode on their bodies.

Nevertheless, by the beach is where most Sydneysiders desire to live. Whether for holiday home or city residence, competition for primo seaside is fierce. Tour boats cruise by the palatial waterfront homes of the rich and/or famous;

"A day by the sea is considered the birthright of all Australians"

joy flights point out the fortunate few. Just check out the real estate pages of any Sydney newspaper and you'll get an idea what a piece of beachfront means in this town. When you're sitting on your Bondi Beach balcony, you'll know you've arrived. A feeling that can only grow stronger when the sun is shining and the city has slipped into its "cossie" (swimming costume) and dived into the sea that has played such a huge role in shaping modern Sydney. ▶



North Bondi



Icebergs pool, South Bondi



Skating at Bondi Beach



Bondi Beach from North Bondi ocean pool

BONDI BEACH

BONDI BEACH JOINS the Opera House and Harbour Bridge as Sydney essentials. Surfers and swimmers from all corners of the globe are joined by a diverse range of Sydneysiders, from inner-city fitness fanatics and Jewish socialites meeting for lunch to British backpackers assuaging hangovers. While some dislike Bondi's crowds, the tatty shops and fast-food joints, others love how it combines seaside culture with a lively inner-city vibe.

South of Bondi sits Tamarama, a small beach that is often closed to swimmers because of its heavy surf. Not that the near-naked sunbathers are likely to waste time getting wet. The next beach is Bronte, backed by an enormous park and one of Sydney's best ocean pools.

On the other side of Waverley Cemetery, Clovelly is popular with inexperienced swimmers and snorkellers looking for the famous blue gropers – gentle, inquisitive fish that can grow to 1.4m. Further south, Coogee is known for calm waters and busy shopping, then Maroubra, where weaker swimmers should stick close to the lifesavers.

DRINK
RAVESI'S
Campbell Parade & Hall Street.
(02) 9365 4422.

Gaze at the ocean from the terrace, or join the well-dressed weekend throngs in the glass-walled bar at street level. The bar menu includes freshly shucked oysters as well as barramundi and chips.

BUNGABAR
77 Hall Street.
(02) 9300 6766.

Forget Bondi's soulless beer barns – the suburb's drinking scene has been given a long-overdue boost with smaller venues like this. It may not be by the beach, but the bamboo

furnishings and surfing videos leave little doubt that you are hanging out in Bondi.

ICEBERGS DINING ROOM & BAR
1 Notts Avenue.
(02) 9365 9000.

www.idrb.com
Whether the sun is shining or a storm is rolling in from the sea, the view from Icebergs is guaranteed to impress. The bar menu features crab sandwiches and plates to share. If you want more than drinks, the attached restaurant is worthy of a splurge.

SHOP
SIX OUNCE BOARD STORE
2/144-148 Glenayr Avenue.
(02) 9300 8339.

If Bondi has released the

surfer within, this small shop specialises in top-end Australian-made boards. It also has a sideline in bright board shorts that will ensure lifesavers spot you if you get caught in a rip.

TUCHUZY
90 Gould Street.
(02) 9365 4771. tuchuzy.com

Forget Campbell Parade's chain shops; narrow Gould Street is emerging as Bondi's fashion quarter. The cosy Tuchuzy sells clothing, jewellery and shoes from brands such as Missy, Museum and Salvio's.

BONDI BEACH MARKETS
Bondi Beach Public School,

Warners Avenue & Campbell Parade. **(02) 9315 8988.**

Surf-inspired artworks, handmade jewellery, atmospheric photography, fashion designers on the ascendant and occasional guitar strummers are five good reasons to browse around Bondi Markets on a Sunday.

STAY
RAVESI'S
Campbell Parade & Hall Street. **(02) 9365 4422.**

www.ravesis.com.au
Rooms start at \$125 at this sleekly renovated hotel – considering the location, that's a bargain. Some rooms have

ocean views and one of the area's most popular bars (see Drink) is located on the ground level.

SWISS-GRAND RESORT & SPA
Campbell Parade & Beach Road. **(02) 9365 5666.**

The renovated Swiss-Grand provides plush accommodation seconds from the water (if you're lucky with the traffic lights). Even if you don't stay, a drink on the terrace Deck Bar is recommended. Rooms from \$220.

EAT
SEAN'S PANAROMA
270 Campbell Parade. **(02) 9365 4924.**
Sitting amid Bondi's art deco

blocks of flats, Sean's Panaroma is a scruffy place where the emphasis is on food rather than the latest sleek interiors. Where possible, chef Sean Moran uses ethically sourced, environmentally friendly ingredients for his excellent Anglo-Italian menu. The Parade's passing parade never fails to entertain and the beach is just across the road.

SABBABA
82 Hall Street. **(02) 9365 7500.**

Bondi's beachfront is packed with second-rate kebab joints, yet for an extra five minutes' walk, you can pick up some of the finest Middle Eastern food in the city. Options include the offal lovers' delight, the jerusalem mixed pita, and 14 varieties of wonderful felafel. >

SYDNEY BEACHES



Early morning jog between Manly and Shelly Beach



Surfers near Shelly Beach



MANLY BEACH

NORTHERN BEACHES LOCALS will often tell you how glad they are they don't live in Sydney. The southern end of the "insular peninsula", Manly is as close as a 15-minute Jetcat ride to the city, yet the suburb retains the feeling of a Victorian-era seaside resort far from the big end of town.

If you find Manly relaxing, you may lapse into unconsciousness as you head north, where laid-back beaches such as Curl Curl, Dee Why and Collaroy experience life in the very slow lane. Closer to Manly, are excellent walks around North Head, with spectacular views of Port Jackson and the Pacific.

SHOP

SABBIA

1/7-9 Marine Parade, Fairy Bower, Manly. (02) 9976 3619.

Every visitor to Manly should take the walk to Shelly Beach. On the way, stop at Sabbia for jewellery from inner-city artist Lesley Lee, funky models of Kombi vans and imported Asian and African homewares. Photographs of Sydney are also popular.

EAT

WHITEWATER

35 South Steyne, Manly. (02) 9977 0322.

Saffron linguine with tiger prawns and chorizo is a highlight of this seafood restaurant by the beach.

BARKING FROG

48 North Steyne, Manly. (02) 9977 6307.

Beachfront dining, good coffee and one of the area's most

imaginative breakfast menus – try their signature poached eggs. The cafe is licensed and a good alternative to those Northern Beaches beer barns.

JELLYFISH

5/93-95 North Steyne, Manly. (02) 9977 4555.

Seafood and steak are good value at Jellyfish, overlooking the beach. Inside it's wood panelling and surfboards decorating the walls.

DRINK

MANLY WHARF HOTEL

Shop 21, East Esplanade, Manly Wharf. (02) 9977 1266. www.

manlywharfhotel.com.au

With its harbour views, polished interior, diverse menu and great cocktail lounge, the Manly Wharf has revitalised the suburb's stale drinking

scene. The esplanade position makes it easy to catch the next ferry back, so maybe you could stay for one more.

SURF ROCK HOTEL

1064 Pittwater Road, Collaroy Beach. (02) 9982 3924.

www.surfrockhotel.com.au

The only pub in Sydney where you can drink right on the sand. The range of beers is good, the food filling. A new rooftop garden bar is due to open this month.

STAY

THE SEBEL MANLY BEACH 8-13 South Steyne, Manly. (02) 9977 8866.

www.mirvachotels.com.au

This smartly renovated property sits across the road from Manly Surf Club, close to the beach and some of the suburb's better dining options, yet far enough from The Corso to provide guests with a quiet setting. Rooms from \$269. ➤

Palm Beach
and Barrenjoey
headland



PALM BEACH

LIKE A FINGER POINTING to the urban sprawl of the Central Coast, Palm Beach marks Sydney's northern extremity. A playground of the moneyed elite and a celebrity spotter's dream, its distance from Sydney, high living costs and development-unfriendly landscape guarantee this long stretch of beach with slightly reddish sands is never overrun.

Split by a high ridge, Palm Beach is flanked by the Pacific and Pittwater. The two can be bridged by a strenuous 20-minute walk through bush and residential areas, or a stroll around the suburb's flatter north. Barrenjoey Lighthouse also attracts walkers, while to the south Whale, Avalon, Bilgola, Newport and Bungan beaches provide uncrowded sands.

EAT & STAY

JONAH'S

69 Bynya Road, Whale Beach.
(02) 9974 5599.

www.jonahs.com.au

Overlooking the beach, Jonah's offers Sydneysiders a weekend away without leaving the city. The suites are large, each has an ocean view and chef George Francisco's hatted

restaurant adheres to the ethos of Italy's Slow Food movement. B&B package from \$449.

BARRENJOEY HOUSE

1108 Barrenjoey Road, Palm Beach. (02) 9974 4001. www.barrenjoeyhouse.com.au

The Havana-style restaurant and bar, with its open frontage,

view of Pittwater and tropical decor, is tailor-made for sipping mojitos. Upstairs are seven beachhouse-style white rooms, some with ensuites. Rooms from \$155.

ANCORA

1112 Barrenjoey Road, Palm Beach. (02) 9974 5969.

Perhaps the only place in Sydney where you can order takeaway fish and chips while a DJ spins dance records in the courtyard. Diners can take in the sun setting over Pittwater.

PLAY

PALM BEACH GOLF CLUB

2 Beach Road, Palm Beach.
(02) 9974 4079.

www.palmbeachgolf.com.au Property developers must cry themselves to sleep over this sliver of pricey real estate left

to golfers. The course is open to non-members most weekend afternoons after 4pm, and green fees are insanely low given the setting: \$17 for nine holes.

SHOP

SALT

4/1105 Barrenjoey Road, Palm Beach. (02) 9974 3199.

Salt is a fun mix of nautical gadgets, travel-friendly clothing, miniature deckchairs, Aboriginal works by the Utopia artists and photos by local snapper Bruce Usher.

BOW WOW

1093 Barrenjoey Road, Palm Beach. (02) 9974 1762.

Homemakers will like the prints and furnishings, including limited-edition linocuts and fabrics by Bruce Gould. There are plenty of designer labels on the racks. >

SYDNEY BEACHES

Cronulla Beach

CRONULLA BEACH

TUCKED ON ONE SIDE OF KURNELL PENINSULA, Cronulla is Sydney's most southern beach suburb. The only Sydney beach accessible by train, it is very popular with western suburbs beachgoers. The old "village" atmosphere is fading – businesses are booming and cafes bustling – but on weekdays you could still possibly have its beaches all to yourself. The wilds of the Royal National Park are but a short ferry ride south and, heading the other way, north to Kurnell, you'll come to the site of James Cook's landing, the first recorded instance of a European touching the east coast of Australia.

EAT
THE NAKED GRAPE
59-65 Gerrale Street.
(02) 9527 7729.

Locals return to the Naked Grape for its friendly staff and excellent modern Australian menu. Try the barramundi fillets or the lamb pie.

SOUTH BEACH SEAFOODS
1/20 Gerrale Street.
(02) 9544 0800.
No table in town can compare

to the sweeping park leading down to Cronulla's South Beach, with the bright blue surf club and pavilion next door. The seafood here is always cooked to order, so grab some fish and chips and enjoy the view.

CAFÉ MONZ
4/1 McDonald Street.
(02) 9544 4159.

Big portions and excellent coffee would be enough to

attract you to this cafe. The view along the beach is just a bonus (try to ignore the oil refinery). Competition among joggers, bike riders, young mums and beachfront-dwelling empty nesters makes the outside tables hot property.

STAY
QUEST APARTMENTS
1 Kingsway. (02) 8536 3600.
www.questcronullabeach.com.au

Across the road from the beach and minutes from restaurants and pubs, this complex is ideal for longer stays. Use the self-contained kitchen facilities or take advantage of the chargeback option at selected restaurants to add the cost of meals to your accommodation bill. Studio apartments from \$225.

DRINK
NORTHIES
Kingsway & Elouera Road.
(02) 9523 6866.

This site has been home to a hotel since Captain Jake Springhall opened a pub here in 1888. The former beer barn has been rebuilt and a cocktail lounge and a decent menu provide contrast to the public bars and betting facilities.

SHOP
CRONULLA SURF DESIGN
8a Cronulla Street.
(02) 9544 0433. www.cronullasurfschool.com

Uncrowded North Cronulla Beach is a better place to learn to surf than the eastern suburbs. Cronulla Surf School operates out of this shop, which also rents boards and sells surfwear.

