

On this walk, you will explore historically significant and majestic sections on the tip of Sydney Harbour's South Head. Explore the confronting sea cliffs at The Gap, visit the first landing place for Europeans in Australia and climb through some of Sydney Harbour's military defense systems. You will also enjoy great views from Hornby Lighthouse and there are a few chances to grab a drink or a bite to eat along the way.

Length: 4.1 km
Time: 1 hr 45 mins
Climb: 144 m
Style: Circuit
Rating: Track: Hard
Where: 0.8 km N of Watsons Bay
Transport: ferry bus car



Sydney Harbour National Park

Visit www.wildwalks.com for more info



Side trips and Alternate routes mentioned in these notes are not included in the tracks overall rating, distance or time estimate. The notes only describe the side trips and Alternate routes in one direction. Allow extra time for resting and exploring areas of interest. Please ensure you and your group are well prepared and equipped for all possible hazards and delays. The authors, staff and owners of wildwalks take care in preparing these notes but will not accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained by using these notes or maps. Please take care and share your experience through the website. Please check park closures, weather information and Fire Danger Rating just before leaving for your walk. Walk maybe closed during Total Fire Ban. GPS for start and end of this walk: -33.8433,151.2818



Wildwalks



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Watsons Bay

Watsons Bay is a popular spot to enjoy the harbour, Robertson Park and some fish and chips. Doyles offers a formal dining restaurant and the more relaxed fish and chip shop on the ferry wharf. Robertson Park is a large open grassy park with some natural shade, a rotunda, toilets, children's play equipment, garbage bins and picnic tables. [More info](#)



Watsons Bay Wharf to The Gap 0.3km 5 mins

(From S) From Watsons Bay Wharf, this walk heads diagonally across the turning circle at the end of Military Rd and into 'Robertson Park'. The walk follows the path diagonally across the open park and tends a little left (straight ahead) at the four-way intersection beside the rotunda. Here the walk goes up the ramp and crosses Military Rd using the crossing, coming to the base of the steps (that lead to The Gap).

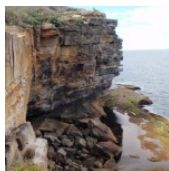


Continue straight: From the bottom of the Gap steps, this walk heads up the steps (or ramp). About halfway up the steps, there is an emergency phone for contacting the police or Lifeline, then at the top there is a fenced section of footpath (lookout) and ocean views from The Gap.



The Gap

The Gap is one of Sydney's most famous ocean cliff lookouts. The view from the track beside the stretch of cliff is simply stunning. The tall cliffs are enhanced by the rock platform and the pounding ocean far below. Sadly, this site is not only known for the natural wonder, but also for the many deaths that occur here each year. Security cameras and an emergency phone have been installed, to help assist people considering suicide. On the unlikely event that you see someone in distress, please call the police on 000 and lifeline on 131 114, or use the nearby emergency phone. [More info](#)



The Gap to The Gap Bluff Lookout 0.2km 5 mins

(From 0.25 km) Turn left: From The Gap, this walk heads up the hill along the path, keeping the fence and water views to your right. The path leads past the 'Sydney Harbour National Park - Gap Bluff' sign and more great views of The Gap. The path comes to a three-way intersection in a small clearing, marked with a few signs including 'The Gap timeline'.



Turn right: From the intersection, this walk heads up the path then steps, following the fence and keeping the water views to your right. The path leads past several information signs on local plant life and some lovely wildflowers. The walk continues up the many steps to a rocky clearing near the top. Here the walk tends left and takes the steps through the cleft in the rock to find another rocky clearing and lookout with great panoramic views at the top of Gap Bluff.

The Gap Bluff Lookout

The Gap Bluff Lookout sits high on the rocky hill overlooking the South Pacific Ocean. On the left is a view to North Head and to your right, looking south down the coast, there are great views over The Gap. There are also distant views over the harbour to the city. This site is significant to the traditional owners, the Birrabirragal people, who once occupied the area - although not at this site, there are some rock engraving still remaining. This is a great place to visit and well worth climbing the steps for the view.



The Gap Bluff Lookout to Old car park Int 0.1km 2 mins

(From 0.44 km) Turn left: From the Gap Bluff Lookout, this walk follows the footpath away from the gap and into the heath, keeping the ocean to your right. This path soon leads to a three-way intersection (at an old car park undergoing regeneration) marked with a 'Banksia integrifolia - coast banksia' information sign.



Old carpark Int to Gun Emplacement Lookout 0.1km 2 mins **Optional Side Trip:**

(From 0.54 km) Veer right: From the intersection, this walk heads uphill along the sealed footpath, away from the face of the 'Banksia integrifolia - coast banksia' information sign. Soon the path passes a lookout on your right and comes to a old gun emplacement marked with a 'The gunnery range' sign and a short track to a fenced lookout with another sign. (Retrace your steps back to the main track, then turn right to continue along this walk.)



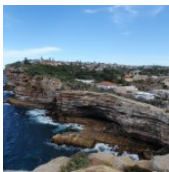
Gun Emplacement Lookout

Once home to several gun emplacements, this is now a peaceful, fenced lookout. There are information signs explaining some history, and also some remaining sections of the fortifications to explore.



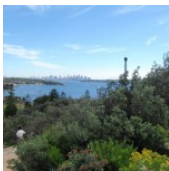
Old car park Int to The Armoury 0.2km 5 mins

(From 0.54 km) Veer left: From the intersection, this walk heads along the sealed footpath, directly away from the ocean (not in view) whilst keeping the 'Banksia integrifolia - coast banksia' information sign initially on your left. The path leads into the heath and after ~70m, passes a rock cutting then turns left onto a yellow-painted concrete path. After a while, this path leads down a series of steps, past the side of the 'The Armoury' and a 'Gunning for Australia' sign and comes to a large clearing and intersection with a road (driveway) in front of 'The Armoury'. The intersection is marked with a 'Access to South Head Heritage Trail' sign (pointing to the right).



The Armoury

The Armoury was a store building built in 1938, to keep defence supplier secure. Since then, it has undergone several changes and is now a popular function centre. The building is at the back of a large grassy clearing that hosts some great harbour views, popular for wedding parties. There is also a public toilet block and several other historic buildings in the area, including the larger Officer's Mess to the south-east.



The Armoury to HMAS Watson entrance 0.4km 5 mins

(From 0.76 km) Turn right: From the front of 'The Armoury', this walk follows the 'Access to South Head Heritage Trail' sign arrow, passing the palm trees and water views (to your left). This walk follows the driveway for ~270m and passes around the locked gates to find a 'Sydney Harbour National Park' sign and an intersection with a road in front of HMAS Watson security gates. Here the walk crosses the road using the pedestrian crossing, then turns left and follows the 'Access to Camp Cove Beach and South Head Heritage Trail' sign down the footpath. Just before the sandstone HMAS Watson gates, this walk follows the footpath to the right and down the steps to Cliff St and another 'Access to Camp Cove Beach and South Head Heritage Trail' sign.



HMAS Watson entrance to Camp Cove Beach 0.2km 4 mins

(From 1.19 km) Veer right: From the near the sandstone pillars at the HMAS Watson entrance, this walk follows the 'Access to Camp Cove Beach and South Head Heritage Trail' sign downhill along Cliff Street. The road soon leads to the signposted 'Camp Cove car park' at the intersection with Victoria St.



Continue straight: From the signposted 'Camp Cove Car Park', this walk follows the 'No Through Road' sign to the end of 'Cliff St'. The footpath leads past a 'Camp Cove timeline' information sign then, at the end of the road, turns left, coming to the front of the kiosk at the northern end of Camp Cove Beach.



Camp Cove

Camp Cove is home to a lovely, yellow sand, north-east facing beach. The cove is on the protected side of South Head and is a popular spot for swimming and relaxing on the beach. At the northern end of the beach is a kiosk, toilet block and an entrance to Sydney Harbour National Park.

The cove was an important location to the Cadigal (Gadigal) people who gathered fresh water, shellfish, launched their canoes and buried some of their people nearby.

This cove is also believed to be the first landing place for Europeans in 1788. The name Camp Cove was given during that landing and appears on the earliest maps of Sydney Harbour.

Camp Cove Beach to Cannon 0.1km 3 mins

(From 1.43 km) Veer right: From the front of Camp Cove Beach kiosk, this walk crosses the beach (keeping the water to your left) and climbs up the timber staircase. From the intersection at the top of the stairs, this walk continues straight, along the timber boardwalk that soon turns into a concrete path. The path soon comes to a wide, cobbled sandstone path that leads up a disused cannon, gun emplacement and great harbour views.



Cannon

This cannon was placed here prior to 1890, along with the rest of this gun emplacement and rifle walls. The emplacement was designed to protect a military jetty and boat shed from the threat of an invasion. The 'Cobblestone Road' beside the cannon was built during the late 1870s or early 1880s and extends from the jetty in Camp Cove up to Hornby Road above. The road was built to carry supplies and ordnance from Camp Cove to the various military installations on south head. [More info](#)



Cannon to Lady Bay Beach Int 0.3km 5 mins

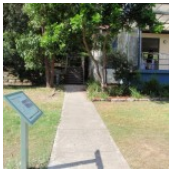
(From 1.56 km) Continue straight: From the cannon, this walk heads up the path and steps and soon turns left to follow the old road. The walk follows the old road, enjoying sweeping harbour views (to your left). About 170m along this road (as it bends right), it passes a toilet block then finds some garbage bins at the end of the road. Here, the walk heads along the narrower footpath for ~60m until coming to the signposted intersection above 'Lady Bay Beach'.



Lady Bay Beach Int to Lady Bay Beach 0km 1 mins **Optional Side Trip:**

(From 1.85 km) Turn left : From the intersection, the walk follows the 'Lady Bay Beach' sign down the steps as they wind to the sandy beach below.

(Retrace your steps back to the main track, then turn left to continue along this walk.)



Lady Bay Beach

Lady Bay Beach is an official nudist beach found on the inside of South Head. Facing west, this beach is surrounded by a long cliff and a rocky shoreline. There are great views across the water to Middle Head. Officially declared a nude bathing beach by Neville Wran in 1976, nudity is only permitted on the beach and water. The beach is also known as 'Lady Jane Beach'. You are welcome to use the beach clothed or unclad. [More info](#)



Lady Bay Beach Int to Lady Bay Lookout 0.1km 2 mins

(From 1.85 km) Continue straight: From the intersection, this walk heads gently downhill along the main path, keeping the large fence to your right. The path leads down a few steps and after ~80m, heads up a few steps then some more steps through a cleft in the rock to find the fenced timber lookout platform looking over Lady Bay.



Lady Bay Lookout

Some may find it strange having a lookout platform overlooking a nudist beach, but the harbour and city views are great. This fenced and timber-decked lookout platform is found on the main walking track at the northern end of the bay. The lookout's main view is south-west along the beach and harbour towards North Sydney. There are a few trees growing up over the view, which adds further interest to the outlook.



Lady Bay Lookout to Circuit intersection 0.1km 1 mins

(From 1.94 km) Continue straight: From Lady Bay Lookout, this walk heads up the steps and follows the timber boardwalk a short distance until coming to a four-way intersection next to the large 'South Head Heritage Trail' sign.



Circuit Intersection to Gun Emplacements 0.1km 3 mins

(From 2 km) Turn right: From the intersection, this walk heads uphill along the concrete path directly away from the water, initially keeping the large 'South Head Heritage Trail' sign on your left. The path leads up through the heath, soon crossing an old road. The path then bends left and passes a few old fortifications, coming to a large gun emplacement and a 'Fortifications 1854' sign.

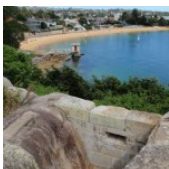
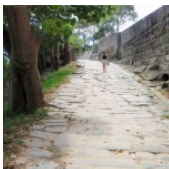
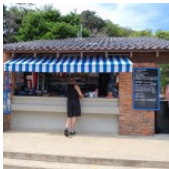


Gun Emplacements

Gun emplacements like these have been built up and down the coast, and around the shores of Sydney Harbour. The first emplacement, built in 1788, was designed as a signalling station to notify the arrival of a ship. Then in 1839, the undetected arrival of ships, from the fast developing USA, caused a great concern. This triggered the building of the well-known fortifications at Bradleys Head and Fort Denison, as well as these ones at South Head. Another enemy at the time, France, then joined a campaign against a newer enemy - the Russians - in 1853, which prompted the completion of these gun emplacements. Guns were installed in 1872. In WWII, it was a Japanese enemy who these guns were trying to keep out, then in 1944, when the threat of invasion was less of a concern, the emplacements were disarmed. [More info](#)

Gun Emplacements to Hornby Lighthouse 0.1km 2 mins

(From 2.13 km) Continue straight: From the Gun Emplacements and 'Fortifications 1854' sign, this walk heads downhill along the path to the large red and white striped lighthouse about ~80m down the hill.



Hornby Lighthouse

Opened by Sir William Denison (then Governor of New South Wales) in 1858, this distinct red and white vertical striped lighthouse was originally powered by a high-tech kerosene lantern. The lighthouse was built in response to two significant losses of life near South Head - firstly in 1857, the 'Dubar' (on its last leg from England), when 121 of the 122 people on board lost their lives, and soon after, the 'Catherine Adamson' when 21 lives were lost near North Head just two months later.

Since 1933, this lighthouse has been automated and is now powered with a 12 volt, 55 watt Quartz Halogen Lamp (similar to a down light in a kitchen). [More info](#)

Hornby Lighthouse to Lightkeepers Cottage 0.1km 2 mins

(From 2.21 km) Continue straight: From Hornby Lighthouse, this walk heads downhill along the footpath past the concrete gun emplacement, keeping the water views to your right. The path bends left and leads over a small bridge, soon coming to the front of the Lightkeeper's Cottage marked with a 'Lightkeeper's Cottages 1858' sign between the old house and a gun emplacement.

A list of paper topographical maps that cover this walk

[Sydney Heads](#) 1:25 000 Map Series

Sydney 1:100 000 Map Series

Nearby outdoor and camping stores

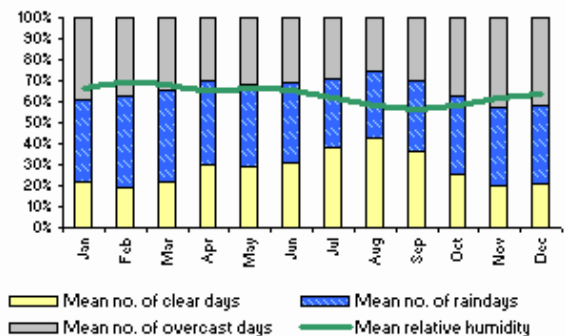
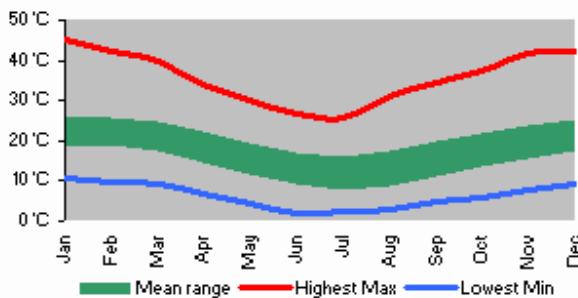
Outdoor Equipment 60 Spring St Bondi Junction (02) 9389 8122

Kellys Camping & Outdoors 826 Pittwater Rd Dee Why (02) 9972 0061

Inski 46 York St Sydney (02) 9233 3200

Mitchells Adventure 81 York St Sydney (02) 9299 6321

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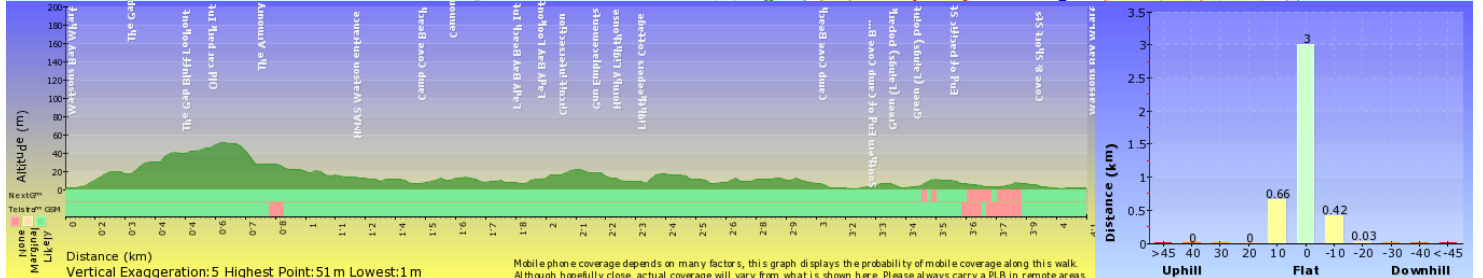
A walk for every body



Map Scale 1 km



Base map is used under licence and is (c) Department of lands Panorama Avenue, Balhurst 2795 www.lands.nsw.gov.au



Mobile phone coverage depends on many factors, this graph displays the probability of mobile coverage along this walk. Although hopefully close, actual coverage will vary from what is shown here. Please always carry a PLB in remote areas.