Surfing Sydney

Few cities as big and cosmopolitan as Sydney could be said to have a true surfing culture: world surfing champions male and female, regular pro tour events, dozens of learn-to-surf schools and even the country’s most notorious surfing tribe are all features of Australia’s greatest metropolis.

The key to the fantastic surf here is coastal topography: rather than uninterrupted miles of sand, the Sydney coastline is punctuated by headlands, cliffs, bays, coves, reefs and bomboras. There are beaches that face north, south, east and even west, so no matter the wind and swell direction, there’s always a perfect spot in Sydney to paddle onto a wave. Culturally and geographically, the Sydney surf scene is divided into three distinct locales: the City Beaches, Cronulla Shire and the Northern Peninsula.

Inner city beaches: Bondi, Bronte, Tamarama & Maroubra

**Bondi Beach** could well be described as Australia’s most iconic beach destination, and lives up to its reputation as the sexiest mile of sand in Sydney. On a summer weekend you’d be hard pressed to find a larger collection of gorgeous bodies, while along the esplanade and in the cafes you’ve got a good chance of spotting a movie star or two as well as sporting heroes, television personalities and supermodels.

**South Bondi** is the business end of the beach for board-riders, where waves unfurl across a rock platform then smash up against the Bondi Icebergs – the most stunningly situated, Olympic-size saltwater public swimming pool on the planet. Less than one hundred metres from the Icebergs is a half-pipe that gets plenty of use from local and visiting skate-board hot-shots. Small waves at the sheltered north end are ideal for kids and learn-to-surfers, and just up the hill here is Speedo’s Café, favourite breakfast venue of Aussie actor Hugh Jackman.

Nearest neighbour to Bondi and equally glamorous is **Tamarama** or “Glamarama” as it is affectionately known by the locals. On a few occasions every year, a rock shelf below the northern cliff shapes a stunning three or four metre wave that draws committed board-riders, surf photographers and cliff-top onlookers to a true Sydney spectacle. Tamarama is backed by a narrow tree-lined gully so there’s no shopping strip, but the innocuous-looking Tamarama Beach Café does great coffee, breakfast and lunch and is packed when the Bondi-to-Coogee cliff path walkers pile in for Sunday brunch.
Just south of Tamarama, Bronte appears genteel in comparison with its brasher neighbours, with a huge grassed play and barbecue area, several stylish-yet-casual cafes and the loveliest free ocean swimming pool of all the city beaches. The south end is where Bronte’s brigade of teenage board-riding whizzes can be found making light work of the tricky reef break.

Maroubra Beach (affectionately known as “the 'bra”), is one of Sydney’s must-do surf breaks. The reef at the south end creates Maroubra’s premium wave, which on a good swell breaks as a barrelling right-hander. Maroubra’s infamous surfing tribe, the Bra Boys, can usually be found closer to the north end where a sweet left-hand wave breaks out front of a concrete stormwater drain (poetically labelled “the dunny bowl”). Identifiable by tattoos that read “My Brother’s Keeper”, their story is told in the 2007 documentary “Bra Boys”. The best skate-park among the city beaches is here at the bra too; just twenty metres from the sand, it has ramps, rails and a steep concrete bowl.

Cronulla

The four kilometres of coastline known as Cronulla is actually four beaches – Wanda, Elouera, Cronulla and North Cronulla. Here you can find challenging barrels at Shark Island, Cape Solander and Voodoo, and mellow beach breaks at south Cronulla and Boat Harbour. Wanda Beach is the strong-hold of the city’s best kite-surfers and windsurfers too, due to its unobstructed exposure to the northeast sea-breeze, uncrowded waves (and the fact kite-surfing is not, for safety reasons, permitted on any other surf beach this side of the harbour bridge). Being something of an urban hub, Cronulla has plenty of places to eat, from flash restaurants to burger joints; it’s also a great place to shop for anything surf-related, with major labels well represented just a short stroll from the ocean. And as the only city beach directly accessible via the CityRail network, Cronulla is a cultural melting pot comprised of beach-goers from Sydney’s west and southern fringes, local surfing tribes, and the hundreds of members of four prominent surf lifesaving clubs.
Northern Peninsula

For 25km from Manly to Palm Beach, Sydney's Northern Peninsula feels a world away from city life: ask a local living at Newport, Whale Beach, Avalon or Palm Beach and they’ll tell you they live in a seaside village and not in a city at all. Just north of Manly is Freshwater Beach, where the art of surfboard-riding was introduced to Australia by Hawaiian surfer Duke Kahanamoku in 1915. Duke demonstrated Hawaiian surfing for a rapt crowd, inviting local girl Isabel Letham to join him on his giant timber board, thus making her the very first Australian board-rider.

Driving north from Freshwater along Pittwater Road and then onto Barrenjoey Road, there’s no reason not to take a detour down to any beach you like the sound of – Curl Curl, Dee Why, Warriewood, Mona Vale, Bungan, Bilgola. Generally acknowledged as having the best of the surf breaks, Long Reef and North Narrabeen regularly play host to major surfing events. The Long Reef Bombora (known locally as “Butterbox”) starts to break at three feet and in a big swell can produce a beautiful wave up to fifteen feet. Long Reef is also where most of the northern peninsula’s kite-surfers and windsurfers congregate. At the base of the northern headland, the Long Reef Aquatic Reserve rock pools teem with starfish, anemones, sea-snails, crabs and even juvenile moray eels.

At “North Narra”, the run-off from Narrabeen Lake helps form the sandbank that shapes the waves here into classic sets, while the deep water offshore allows the swells to break with more power than at neighbouring beaches. Barrenjoey Headland marks the end of both the peninsula and three-kilometre Palm Beach. Waves around the middle of the beach and by the headland break hard when the swell is up, and anything over four feet can produce fast-barrelling tube rides. Uber-wealthy and celebrity residents have colonised Palm Beach to the point where billionaires are pushing out the millionaires, and the beach is further distinguished as the “Summer Bay” filming location for Australia’s long-running TV soap series Home & Away.

Seven-day wind, wave, tide and weather forecast for Sydney (updated every 6 hours), see www.seabreeze.com.au/graphs/nsw.asp
Accommodation

- **Ravesi’s, Bondi Beach** Located right on the beach, experience the quintessential Bondi lifestyle in this stylish beachside accommodation. [www.ravesis.com.au](http://www.ravesis.com.au)
- **Bondi Beach House** Contemporary beach house only 100m from Bondi Beach. Relax on the sun-drenched deck which has a BBQ and deck chairs. Bliss. [www.bondibeachhouse.com.au](http://www.bondibeachhouse.com.au)
- **Rydges Hotel Cronulla Beach** Enjoy this perfect seaside location with panoramic views of Cronulla Beach and Gunnamatta Bay. [www.rydges.com](http://www.rydges.com)
- **Quest Serviced Apartments, Cronulla Beach** Centrally located, the Quest Apartments offer easy access to all of Cronulla’s sights. [www.questservicedapartments.com.au](http://www.questservicedapartments.com.au)
- **Ocean’s 28 Beachhouse, Narrabeen** Delightful beach-house located at Turimetta, "Little Narrabeen" Beach - the northern beaches’ most private beach.
- **Iluka Resort Apartments, Palm Beach** Luxury 4 star apartments backing onto Pittwater’s Snapperman Beach. [www.ilukapalmbeach.com.au](http://www.ilukapalmbeach.com.au)

Eat

- **Speedo’s Café** where Bondi goes for breakfast or a coffee [www.speedoscafe.com.au](http://www.speedoscafe.com.au)
- **Beach Burrito Company** fantastic burritos, beers & tequila, right opposite the beach at North Bondi [www.beachburrito.com](http://www.beachburrito.com)
- **Icebergs Dining Room & Bar** dine above the waves on Robert Marcetti’s much-lauded menu and the best view in Bondi [www.idrb.com](http://www.idrb.com)
- **Grind** in Cronulla is the place to go for early morning coffee after a surf [www.grindespresso.com](http://www.grindespresso.com)
- **The Nuns Pool** seasonal menus for breakfast lunch and dinner with panoramic views over Cronulla beach [www.thenunspool.com](http://www.thenunspool.com)
- **Newport Arms Hotel, Newport** beer garden on the sheltered Pittwater side of the peninsula, a must-visit for fish’n’chips with the northern beaches locals [www.newportarms.com.au](http://www.newportarms.com.au)
- **The Boathouse Palm Beach** sit at a picnic table on the wharf and enjoy everything from burgers to oysters [www.theboathousepb.com.au](http://www.theboathousepb.com.au)
Surf culture

- **Aquabumps** surf photo gallery, daily surf updates and what’s happening around Bondi [www.aquabumps.com](http://www.aquabumps.com)
- **Saltmotion** surf photo gallery, daily surf updates and what’s happening around Manly and the Northern Beaches [www.saltmotion.com](http://www.saltmotion.com)

Gear

- **Dripping Wet Surf Co (Bondi)** [www.drippingwetsurf.com](http://www.drippingwetsurf.com)

Accredited surf schools

- **Manly Surf School (Manly & the northern beaches)** [www.manlysurfschool.com](http://www.manlysurfschool.com)
- **Sydney North Surf School Surf** (Manly & the northern beaches) [http://sydneynorthsurfschool.wordpress.com](http://sydneynorthsurfschool.wordpress.com)
- **Cronulla Surfing Academy** [www.cronullasurfingacademy.com](http://www.cronullasurfingacademy.com)

For more information go to [www.sydney.com](http://www.sydney.com)


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