

12 Walks in the Southern Illawarra

Version: May 2023

Scan to find pdf version



1. Bass Point Reserve

Starting from either Shell Cove marina southern breakwater or at the stone gateway entrance to Bass Point Reserve, this walk combines a variety of beach, track and rocky terrain. From Shell Cove marina southern breakwater cross a grassy coastal section, up and past the disused ship loader to arrive at Bass Point Reserve. There is a coastal track starting from the boat ramp or alternatively the stone entrance gateway. Follow the track and rocky sections all the way around through the picnic area, around the point to Bushrangers Bay. As you arrive at the bay there is an awkward gap (gulch) in the rock platform that can only be negotiated at quite low tide and may prevent access to the stony beach at the bay, a good lunch spot. If the tide or swell is high, it is safest to access the bay via the road from the main picnic area and down the wooden stairway. Bushrangers Bay is a favoured area for divers and snorkelers as it has deep, clear water and abundant marine life in a sheltered environment. Good views can be had from lookouts at Bushrangers Bay and on the south side at Maloneys Bay (via the dirt road access).

Length: Just a stroll from the Bass Pt picnic area or up to 7 km

Time: Up to 3 hours

Grade: Easy to medium — some rock hopping

Access: Drive from Shell Cove on Harbour Blvd

2. Budderoo National Park—Minnamurra Rainforest

Minnamurra Rainforest (and waterfall) in Budderoo National Park is a beautiful and a popular attraction for locals and tourists showcasing the local rainforest. The rainforest walk is on an elevated well-constructed boardwalk with some paved sections. The walk along the creek and to the lower falls is an easy grade, then a steep path takes you to a view of the upper falls. It's worth a visit just to enjoy the ambience of the rainforest, do some lyrebird spotting. Check out the visitors’ centre and have a picnic or visit the kiosk. Park entry fees apply.

Length: Up to 4 km return

Time: Up to 2 hrs plus picnic time

Grade: Easy to medium

Access: Off Jamberoo Mtn Road, west from Kiama

3. Macquarie Pass National Park - Cascades

At the base of the Macquarie Pass and at the edge of the national park is a delightful family friendly walk to a cascading waterfall. The parking area is on the northern side of the Illawarra Highway where there is also an open grass area perfect for a picnic. There is a sign near a track head where the walk begins to follow the creek to the west. After climbing a few stairs the track becomes more gentle and offers a quality rainforest experience. There are plenty of photo opportunities along the way of the interesting vegetation and flowing creek. As you approach the cascades there is a raised boardwalk from where you can see down to a pool which is fed by the waterfall, then a stairway descends to the edge of the pool where swimming is possible.

Length: 3 km return

Time: 1 hour return

Grade: Easy

Access: Drive west on the Illawarra Hwy from Albion Park township to the base of Macquarie Pass

4. Macquarie Pass National Park - Clover Hill Rd to Rainbow Falls

Part way up the Macquarie Pass a disused logging trial, now closed to vehicles, provides an opportunity to walk through beautiful rainforest and past the site of an old grazing property to Macquarie Rivulet, where you will find Rainbow Falls. Take the left fork where the trail opens to a cleared area with many cabbage tree palms. After a few hundred metres, where the trail ends, there is a slightly hidden track on the right which takes you to the creek and Rainbow Falls, which drop into a small canyon. Caution must be exercised here as the rocks can be very slippery and there are drop offs. Keep a close watch on your children! The creek can be explored a little way upstream to find a large balancing rock and some more cascades.

Length: 6 km return

Time: 2 to 3 hours return

Grade: Easy, mostly fire trail

Access: Small car park on left part way up Macquarie Pass (car park is often full)

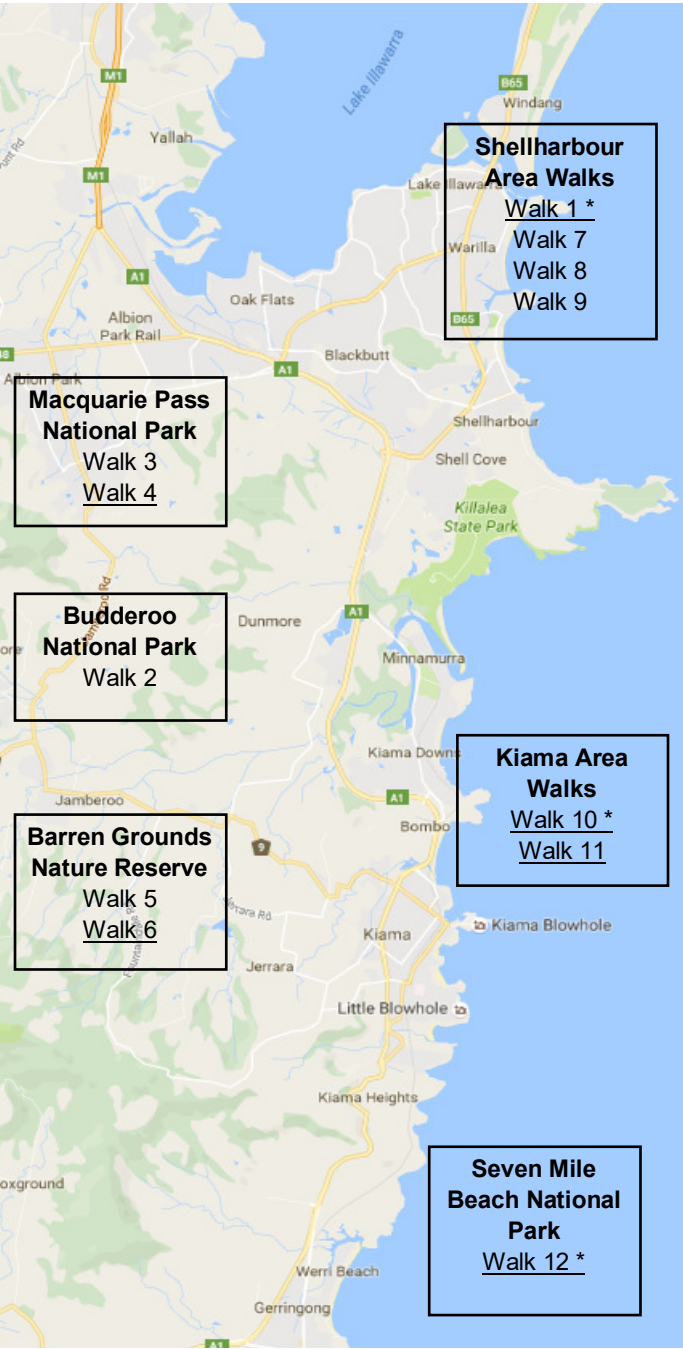
Special Nature of the Illawarra Bushland

The natural bushland areas to the west of Wollongong not only provide a wonderful backdrop to the city but also have special significance as a biodiversity hot spot. This section of the Great Dividing Range with its rainforest gullies and eucalypt forests is home to a diverse range of native flora and fauna. The Illawarra escarpment also forms a vital green corridor connecting the southern end of the Royal National Park south to Macquarie Pass National Park and beyond.

We would like to acknowledge the original custodians of this land we walk, the Dharawal people.

Walk Location Guide

(Short walks, Longer walks)
(* Can be shortened)



Courtesy of Google Maps

5 & 6. Barren Grounds Nature Reserve

Adjacent to Budderoo NP, Barren Grounds is one of the few large areas of heathland on the south coast and also has stands of rainforest along the escarpment edge. These varied habitats are home to rare or endangered plants and animals including the ground parrot, eastern bristlebird and tiger quoll. Barren Grounds offers short and long walks on well-formed tracks to great vantage points. The walks are stunning in spring when many of the heath flowers such as boronia, epacris and, if you’re lucky, waratah, are in full bloom.

Access for walks 5 & 6: Barren Grounds picnic area, 1km off Jamberoo Mountain Road (concealed entrance), turn south at the top of Jamberoo Mountain.

5. Illawarra Lookout

Follow Griffiths Trail from the eastern side of the main picnic area car park. After about 1 km walking through forest and heath take a short path on the left signed to Illawarra Lookout. The lookout offers expansive views along the coast to Lake Illawarra and beyond. Return to the car park by the same route.

Length: 2 km return

Time: 1 hour

Grade: Easy

6. Griffiths Trail Circuit

Follow Walk 5 to Illawarra Lookout and then continue on the undulating Griffiths Trail to the observation platform at Saddleback trig (elev. 666 m) which gives great views over the heathland. After another 700m ignore the Kangaroo Ridge track to the left and stay on Griffiths Trail to reach a natural stone bridge across Lamonds Creek. After heavy rain this can be impassable. This is a fine spot for a break and cool in summer. After a slight climb, bear right at the tee intersection to stay on Griffiths Trail and complete the circuit back to the car park. If you wish to extend the walk, turn left at the tee intersection to find the Cooks Nose track on the left. This broad trail leads to a magnificent rock platform overlooking Broughton Head and Brogers Creek. This extension adds 5 km (return) to the walk. A somewhat shorter alternative extension is to Flying Fox Pass where there are historic relics of a flying fox used to move timber up from the valley.

Length: 8 km circuit plus option to extend

Time: 3-4 hours plus extension

Grade: Medium

7. Windang & Picnic Islands and Lake Illawarra

This walk is an easy waterside stroll and is a popular beachside destination for families, fishermen and bird observers. In the parkland reserve to the southwest of Windang bridge cross the small timber foot bridge to Picnic Island and walk the sandy loop track through banksia woodland. Observe shorebirds on shoals in the estuary. On return from the island, follow the lake shore east and walk under the Windang bridge to the main area of Reddall Reserve which has amenities and a kiosk. The shallow arm of the lake here is safe for children to paddle and is a haven for many birds. Continue to the far eastern end of the pathway then go left and walk along the breakwater. Windang Island is ahead. Take care with access to the island on high tides and be aware of dangerous waves on rock platforms. Continue past sand embedded historical rusty wheels to explore intertidal rock pools. Finally climb the narrow track to the top of the island. Enjoy the views along the coastline and west to the Illawarra Escarpment while observing various birds around the island. Return via the same route.

Length: Up to 4 km return

Time: Up to 2 hours return

Grade: Easy

Access: Car parking in Reddall Pde, off Shellharbour Rd

Want to learn more about bushwalking?

Bushwalking101.org

Look, Learn, Explore!

For a beginner, going bush is a very daunting task. <http://www.bushwalking101.org/> is a website to help people better settle into bushwalking with the NPA. It's about sharing 'bite-sized' information and practical advice to new bushwalkers. Our hope is to encourage our new members to take up bushwalking as a lifelong passion and to continue to grow and improve their bushwalking skills.

8. Killalea Regional Park – Mystics Beach Track

From the southernmost car park in the reserve follow the signposted track for a stepped then rocky downhill track through the vegetation out onto the pristine beach. Enjoy the bird calls, the view towards Stack Island and the waves as you wander along the beach towards the mouth of the Minnamurra River. If the tide is very low go around the spit and return on the river side for a view of the mangroves then join one of the bush tracks back to the beach side or the service trail up and back via the camping area.

Length: Up to 3 km return

Time: 1 - 2 hours return

Grade: Easy to medium, one steep section with steps and rocks.

Access: Exit the Princess Hwy south of Albion Park Rail onto Shellharbour Rd, follow the brown tourist signs to Killalea State Park, then follow Killalea Dr to the very end of the road

9. Killalea Regional Park – Lagoon Circuit

Killalea Lagoon is a freshwater coastal lagoon and an important breeding habitat for many birds. A wander along the water’s edge will give you good views of Black Swan, Purple Swamphen, Eurasian Coot, Black Duck and many other species. After parking next to the Killalea kiosk there are several ways to access the lagoon: via the beach steps, or alternatively, head north from the kiosk towards the left of the rotunda and then follow a service trail down through the forest. Follow the lagoon circuit to your left, then all the way around till arriving out onto beautiful Killalea Beach (The Farm), famous for its surf. At the western end of the beach you will find the stairway up to the car park.

Length: 4 km

Time: 1—2 hours

Grade: Easy – family friendly, some steep steps

Access: Exit the Princess Hwy south of Albion Park Rail onto Shellharbour Rd and then follow the brown tourist signs to Killalea State Park, or take a 2 km walk from Shellharbour Junction train station

10. Saddleback Mountain lookouts and Hoddles Track

Just west of Kiama, Saddleback Mountain provides a wonderful opportunity to see views in all directions from high up on the fringe of the southern Illawarra escarpment. The series of three lookouts connected by walking tracks with a total distance of about 1 km views to the north/east, west and south. There are picnic tables at various places as well. For the more energetic, Hoddles Track, beginning as a fire trail near the western lookout, steeply descends to a saddle then rises again to the escarpment proper where you enter the rainforest. The track goes for quite a way in the rainforest but ends at a spot where there is usually a very dark tannin coloured pool of water. This is 10 mins or so beyond the oddly shaped so called “boob rock” which is high above the track. Further on there is a myriad of false tracks up to and on the plateau where it is easy to get lost so this should be avoided.

Length: 1 to 9 km

Time: 1/2 to 4 hours

Grade: Easy to hard. Lookouts are very family friendly; 2 lookouts are wheelchair friendly

Access: Saddleback Mt Road, west from Kiama

Safe Walking Tips

- *It’s best not to walk alone*
- *Take plenty of water and food for the walk*
- *Use sunscreen, wear a hat and suitable clothing*
- *Tell someone where you are going*

11. Kiama Coast Walk – Gerringong Station to Kiama Station section

This iconic coastal walk starts at Gerringong railway station, which has train services every two hours. The walk takes in vast coastal and ocean views plus you will see magnificent rock platforms and rock formations. Begin by walking the lowest lying streets and some short cut laneways toward the north-east from the station car park for a distance of 3 km until reaching the northern end of Werri Beach and lagoon. The lagoon ocean entrance is not always crossable on sand and not always safe to cross in water so it’s best to check with Kiama tourist office by phoning 1300 654262 for latest conditions. From here take the easy to follow coast track for 6 km (no facilities and little shade) until reaching Loves Bay at South Kiama where there is a toilet near the car park. Continue to mostly hug the coast for another 5 km all the way to Kiama proper. Blowhole signs and blue marker posts define much of the route. There are many points of interest along the way and plenty to explore in Kiama. Trains to Wollongong and Sydney depart Kiama hourly. Visit Kiama tourist office for a more detailed brochure.

Length: 14 km

Time: 4 –5 hours

Grade: Medium – undulating, some steep sections

Access: Gerringong railway station or car to Werri beach

12. Seven Mile Beach and National Park

South of the popular seaside village of Gerroa is Seven Mile Beach National Park. About halfway along the coast road to Shoalhaven Heads is the best access point to the park. There is a picnic area with beach access. Two bush and beach loop walks are available from here, one north from the picnic area and one south. Look for the slightly hidden track heads north and south of the toilet block. South is the shorter loop. From the northern loop you can also take the beach all the way back to Gerroa village if someone is willing to drop you at the start.

Length: Up to 6 km

Time: Up to 3 hours

Grade: Easy— all flat walking, some sand, low tide is best for the beach

Access: Drive south from Gerroa on Crooked River Rd and turn east into Beach Rd for Seven Mile Beach NP picnic area (no pets allowed).

The National Parks Association of NSW (NPA) is a non-government conservation group that seeks to protect, connect and restore the integrity and diversity of natural systems in NSW and beyond, through national parks, marine sanctuaries and other means.

NPA has been active for over 60 years and has helped establish many of NSW’s national parks and nature reserves.

NPA advocates for best practice management of our local parks and reserves and to preserve our natural heritage, wildlife and special places for future generations.

NPA runs one of Australia’s largest bushwalking clubs with dedicated volunteer leaders coordinating over 1000 bushwalks and other outdoor activities across NSW every year.

NPA encourages the inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds and abilities in its nature-based outdoor activities.

The NPA Bushwalking and Activities Program is available on-line and published quarterly along with our magazine **Nature NSW** which contains articles on all things nature.

As a registered charity, **NPA’s** important conservation work relies on donations and memberships.

NPA Illawarra is one of fifteen branches throughout NSW that provide bushwalking and other outdoor activities and campaign on key issues in their local area.

New members and supporters are always welcome.

Join NPA Illawarra today and be part of the community team working for our environment and enjoying friendly outdoor activities.

Contact us:

Ph: 0416 325266

E: illawarra@npansw.org.au

W: <https://npansw.org.au/what-we-do/our-branches/illawarra/>

F: Find us on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/NPAillawarra>

