

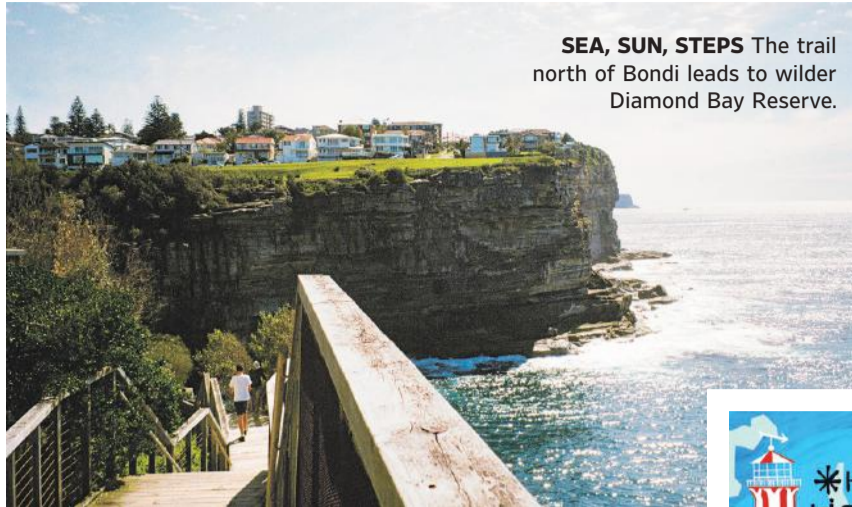
# ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

## A Sydney Walkabout

Australia's beach-obsessed city now has a 62-mile coastal trail. Time to get your steps in.

By TONY PERROTTET

**A**S AN AUSTRALIAN who lives in New York and flies frequently to Sydney, I am always being asked for advice on how to cope with jet lag. My answer is simple: Take a hike. These days, in Sydney, that advice is even easier to follow. Just before the pandemic shut off Australia to travelers, a hiking route opened from the northern end of Bondi Beach to Manly Beach on the other side of Sydney Harbour. It was the central link in the Great Coastal Walk, a continuous trail that covers 62 miles from the city's south to its northern promontory, connecting a string of urban beaches, bush parks and swaths of historic waterfront. It would take about eight days to follow the entire trail, so, for a more relaxed ramble, I designed three day hikes that cover alluring sections, with strategic stopovers for refueling.



**SEA, SUN, STEPS** The trail north of Bondi leads to wilder Diamond Bay Reserve.

### Into the Wild

The roughly 4-mile section of hiking trail just north of famed Bondi Beach (to Hornby Lighthouse) is one of Sydney's most accessible and spectacular, running along raw Pacific oceanfront, and marked with helpful signs pointing the way to "B" and "M" (Bondi and Manly).

**THE DROP-OFF** Get a cab to Speedos, which bills itself as "the world's most Instagrammable cafe" in the heart of chic North Bondi, home to Aussie movie stars and screenwriters.

**THE HIGHLIGHT** Although the first half-hour is semisuburban, the trail passes millionaires' mansions and a golf course where a fine set of Aboriginal carvings of sharks, fish, men and women lies near the last hole, above sandstone cliffs with the Pacific crashing in below.



The trail becomes far wilder and more windswept in Diamond Bay Reserve, plunging for an hour through classic Aussie bushland to the spectacular bluff called South Head, the southern lip of the harbor's mouth. Hornby Lighthouse has stood there since 1858 alongside the lonely keepers' cottages; nearby are the remains of gun emplacements built by the British to repel a feared Russian invasion during the Crimean War, and back in service when Japanese attack was feared during World War II.

**THE REWARD** Nestled above the sands on the sheltered harborside of South Head is the raucous Watsons Bay pub (as Sydney-siders still call the superbly located bar/restaurant, although it has gone upmarket and is now officially called the Watsons Bay Boutique Hotel, with waterfront rooms). It's an excellent spot for enjoying Sydney rock oysters, gourmet fish and chips, and Tasmanian bubbly, served with views across a flotilla of moored yachts to the distant Harbour Bridge and opera house.

### Hike Through History

Having likely glimpsed Sydney's most illustrious architectural icons, it's time to see them up close on a 5-mile hike that runs through the city's historic heart.

**THE DROP-OFF** Have breakfast in the harborfront Ovolo hotel. It's located within the Finger Wharf (named for its long, thin shape), used in the 1920s to store wool shipments when Sydney was a thriving southern port of the British Empire. The historic dock area has the resonant Aboriginal name of Woolloomooloo.

**THE HIGHLIGHTS** Follow the waterfront into the Royal Botanic Garden, where fruit bats, possums and multicolored rozella birds ca-



rouse in the branches of sinewy native trees. Take a rest on Mrs. Macquarie's Chair, a carved sandstone bench where Elizabeth, the wife of British governor Lachlan Macquarie during the convict era of the early 1800s, would sit to admire the harbor. The exit from the gardens is Bennelong Point, home to the pearly sails of the Sydney Opera House. Continue to Circular Quay, now a ferry dock, once the site where the first British convicts and their redcoat guards planted the Union Jack in 1788. Detour under the monolithic pylons of the Harbour Bridge while trains rattle overhead, past a new art center on the recently renovated Wharf 4/5, to Miller's Point. Its once-derelict industrial shore has been reinvented as a verdant park called Barangaroo Reserve, flanked by futuristic glass skyscrapers.

**THE REWARD** Head to the Hotel Palisade, a five-story art deco pub with accommodation that housed the engineers who built the Harbour Bridge. Refurbished a few years ago, it now has a split-level cocktail lounge and restaurant called Henry Deane that offers 360-degree views.

Henry Deane Bar, on the top floor of the Palisade Hotel.



Forty Baskets Beach, on the route from Spit to Manly.



### Urban Arcadia

When it was completed in 1932, the Harbour Bridge (nicknamed "the coat-hanger") transformed Sydney as radically as the Brooklyn Bridge did New York, opening up access to the North Shore, where the solid 6-mile "Spit to Manly" stretch runs through pristine wilderness.

**THE DROP-OFF** Take a taxi from the CBD (Central Business District) to the northern end of oddly named Spit Bridge; the trail descends directly into bushland.

**THE HIGHLIGHT** In the enormous waterfront Sydney Harbour National Park, the route weaves past sandy coves framed by



The seafood tasting plate at Hugos.



eucalyptus trees while the native kookaburra birds let out manic laughs. It's the full Sydney nature package. Scramble down a slippery trail to Washaway Beach, and jump into the gently lapping waves with only a few yachts for company.

**THE REWARD** After three hours, hikers emerge from the forest at Manly Beach, an arc of golden sand that serves as a northern counterpart to Bondi. Conveniently located on the ferry dock is Hugos Manly, a restaurant whose interior is entirely open to the fresh harbor breezes; order the grilled Balmain Bugs (crayfish-like crustaceans) and a Hunger Valley Sauvignon Blanc.

VERONICA GRECH (MAPS); ANNA PHIAN FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (PHOTOS)

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