

Explore North Head Sanctuary, Manly

Discover a different side to Sydney Harbour. Visit North Head Sanctuary for epic views, scenic walks and historical landmarks.

Welcome to North Head Sanctuary

A nature refuge, bordered by dramatic cliffs, North Head Sanctuary is located on the Manly peninsula at the northern entrance to Sydney Harbour.

Defined by coastal bushland, the area holds significance for its Traditional Owners and Custodians, the Gayamagal people.

A series of dedicated walking and bike tracks are an opportunity to discover popular landmarks including the Third Quarantine Cemetery, Australia's Memorial Walk, the art deco Barracks Precinct, the Hanging Swamp and the remnant military complex, North Fort.

Were it not for the unspoiled harbour views, it would be hard to believe you are only 11 km from Sydney's CBD.

Upon arriving, head to our Visitor Centre, located in the North Fort Precinct. One of our friendly visitor service volunteers will be there to greet you and share tips for a great day out.



Visitor highlights

Plan your trip

Ferry

Catch the Manly Ferry from Circular Quay. Upon arriving at Manly Wharf, make your way to North Head Sanctuary by following the directions below. (see: 'Bus' and 'Walking').

Bus

Bus services run from Manly Wharf to North Head Sanctuary. For public transport information, including timetables, visit the Transport NSW website.

Walking

The walk from Manly Wharf to North Head Sanctuary takes approximately 45 minutes. Walking tracks link to North Head Sanctuary from Shelly Beach and Collins Flat Beach.

Car and bike

From Manly, follow Darley Road up the hill (note: steep incline) to North Head Scenic Drive, bear right at the fork of the road and go through the sandstone archway. Continue along this road and keep left at the Q Station roundabout to reach North Fort.

Epic views

As you explore North Head Sanctuary, you'll discover lookouts that offer incredible vantage points encompassing the Pacific Ocean, Sydney Harbour and the city skyline. Highlights include:

Harbour Lookout

(Map ref 4E)

Northern Lookout

(Map ref 4E)

Fairfax Walk and Lookouts

• Yiningma Lookout

(Map ref 7G)

• Burrugula Lookout

(Map ref 6H)

Third Quarantine Cemetery

(Map ref 5F)

Sanctuary Lawn / Defence of Sydney Monument

(Map ref 6F)



Echidna

Featured walks

The Sanctuary Loop

The Sanctuary Loop is a circuit trail that weaves through native bushland. Visitors can complete it in under an hour.

Australia's Memorial Walk

(Map ref 6F)

Enjoy a walk along the paved pathway and discover monuments to the major conflict periods in Australia's history.

The Hanging Swamp

(Map ref 7D)

Engage with nature, including a chorus of frogs, at the Hanging Swamp – a scenic landmark, with a walking trail, on the eastern side of North Head Sanctuary.

Avenue of Honour

(Map ref 6D)

The Avenue of Honour was constructed to memorialise local soldiers killed in the First World War. When it opened in 1933, this scenic, cobblestone road was lined with plaques as well as Norfolk Island Pines – a plaque and a pine for each soul lost.

Fairfax Walk

Located on the tip of North Head, within Sydney Harbour National Park, this gentle circuit walk has 2 lookouts. Both offer superb ocean views.

Eat and drink

Bella Vista Cafe

(Map ref 5F)

Located near the Visitor Centre at North Fort, Bella Vista Cafe marries traditional and modern Italian cuisine with sweeping views of Sydney Harbour.

Yorky Coffee Caravan

(Map ref 5C)

Located in the Barracks Precinct next to WOTSO, Yorky Coffee serves takeaway coffee, beverages and snacks out of a charming 1976 retro caravan.



Bella Vista Cafe.

Guided tours

Book a volunteer-led tour to walk in the footsteps of soldiers (above and below ground) or learn about the nation's early quarantine practices.

Defence of Sydney Tour

Explore North Fort and discover the role this former Army base played in the defence of Sydney during the Second World War. You'll discover gun emplacements and descend into underground facilities; namely, the mysterious Plotting Room and a 200-metre-long tunnel complex.

Duration:
1 hour 45 mins

When:
Sundays (10:30am, 11:30am, 1pm and 2pm)

Third Quarantine Cemetery Tour

Discover a heritage-listed landmark that reveals Australia's early quarantine practices. As you hear stories of the poor souls buried here between 1881 and 1925, you'll marvel at the serenity of their final resting place.

Duration:
60 mins

When:
Select dates and times.

Book a tour

Visit harbourtrust.gov.au/north-head-tours to book tickets or purchase them from our Visitor Centre on the day. Payments are cash free / card only and tickets are subject to availability.

Private group bookings for the Defence of Sydney and Third Quarantine Cemetery Tours – as well as our Australia's Memorial Walk Tour – are available by request.

Details: harbourtrust.gov.au/private-tour-form

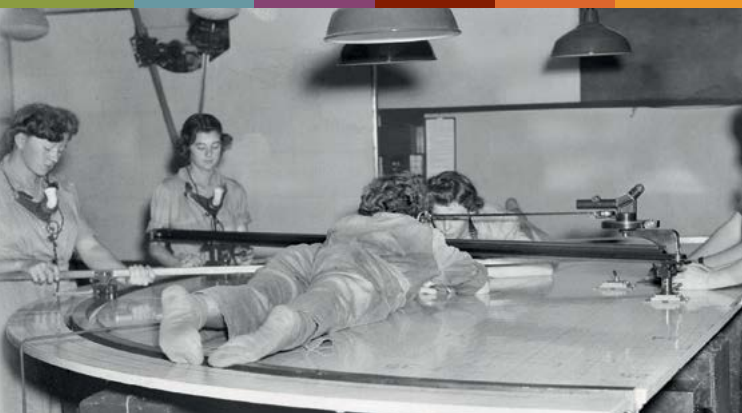
Please note: Tours include bush tracks, steps and uneven ground. A moderate level of fitness and good mobility is required. Visitors must wear enclosed footwear (and wet weather gear if required). Minimum and maximum participant numbers per tour apply. Please allow time to book in prior to the tour start time.



North Head Sanctuary Discovery Day, 2018, First Nations Smoking Ceremony.



Hanging Swamp (Map ref 7D).



Members of the Australian Women's Army Service performing Plotting Room duties (1944).



Sanctuary Lawn (Map ref 6F).



No 2 Gun Emplacement (Map ref 6E).



Traditional Owners

North Head has enduring significance for its Traditional Owners, the Gayamagal people. It was a special place for their Koradgee (medicine men and women healers) who used the area for spiritual ceremonies and rituals. Further, some of the early interactions between First Nations peoples and the European colonists

occurred in the North Head area. Notably, the First Fleet – led by Captain Arthur Phillip – made contact with the local inhabitants in 1788.

Rock engravings, rock art, campsites, burials, and middens are reminders of the Gayamagal people's connection to the area.

Natural environment

Classified as a 'tied island', North Head took shape 90 million years ago. This was the result of tectonic forces, climate change, and both the erosion and deposition of soils.

The central area of North Head Sanctuary features dunes made up of wind-deposited sands that, according to competing sources, range from 5,000 to 140,000 years old. These dunes support an endangered ecological community known as Eastern Suburbs banksia scrub.

Another prominent feature of the natural environment is a freshwater wetland known as the Hanging Swamp (map ref 7D). A walking track weaves through the Hanging Swamp, meaning visitors can engage deeply with nature, including a chorus of frogs.

Visitors will also discover heathland, littoral rainforest and fernland. There are more than 650 plant species at North Head, of which nearly 500 are native.

This plant life is a refuge for echidnas, reptiles, amphibians, insects and 148 species of birds. The area is also home to an endangered population of long-nosed bandicoots, as well as locally

extinct species that have been reintroduced – the eastern pygmy possum, brown antechinus and bush rat.

The North Head Sanctuary Foundation works with the Harbour Trust to protect, maintain and promote awareness of the park's delicate ecosystem. This includes running Spring Wildflower Walks.

Visit their visitor centre, Bandicoot Heaven (Map ref 6C), to learn about local flora and fauna. It is open on weekends between 10am and 4pm.

Keep an eye out

Bandicoots

Bandicoots are at their most active at dawn and dusk. For their protection, please check underneath your car before departing North Head Sanctuary and scan the road for wildlife, including after dark.

Tick bites

When you leave, check your clothes and body for ticks. If you think you have been bitten by a tick, please seek medical advice.

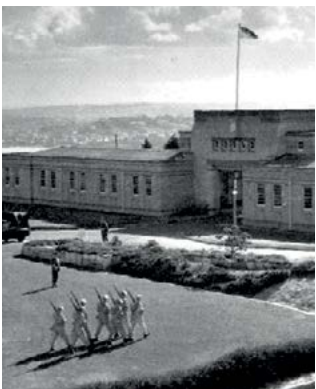
Defence of Sydney

North Fort Battery

Constructed between 1934 and 1938, the North Fort Battery is a remnant military complex. Strategically placed at the northern entrance to Sydney Harbour, the now-demilitarised fort was part of a defence system that spanned 300 kilometres of coastline during the Second World War.

Until 1952, North Fort featured two 9.2 inch calibre guns, capable of firing a distance of 26.4 kilometres. These heavy weapons were serviced by a network of underground tunnels (Map ref 5E and 6E) and target coordinates were relayed to them from the nearby Plotting Room.

Located 8 metres underground, the Plotting Room (Map ref 6E) was vital to Sydney's coastal defences during the Second World War. The facility's personnel, including members of the Australian Women's Army Service, exchanged enemy craft intel with other artillery batteries along the coast. Due to the highly classified nature of this work, their exploits were kept secret from the general public at the time.



The Former Army School of Artillery.

The Army School of Artillery

After the Second World War, the Army School of Artillery opened at North Head. Gunners lived and trained there from 1946 until 1998, when the school relocated to Puckapunyal, Victoria.

The former School of Artillery is located in what is now known as the Barracks Precinct (map ref 5C and 6C). This area contains a collection of art deco buildings as well as a parade ground.

The Third Quarantine Cemetery

North Head Quarantine Station was established in 1832 when the Governor of NSW declared land within a quarter of a mile of Spring Cove a quarantine area. The construction of the nearby Third Quarantine Cemetery, in 1881, coincided with a smallpox epidemic.

By the time of the cemetery's closure in 1925, more than 240 people – including Sydneysiders, soldiers returning from the war and their nurses – had been buried there, having succumbed to ravages including influenza, the bubonic plague, smallpox and scarlet fever.

The Third Quarantine Cemetery (together with the North Head Quarantine Station) is included on Australia's National Heritage List as a significant example of the nation's evolving quarantine practices.



Harbour and city views from Third Quarantine Cemetery (Map ref 4/5F).

Harbour Trust overview

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (Harbour Trust) manages extraordinary places on the world's best harbour and provides the public with access to precious bushland, parks and open spaces.

Located in First Nations Countries, our visitor destinations are known for their natural beauty. They also feature heritage-listed structures and other remnants from Australia's colonial, maritime and military history. For these reasons, they have significance on a national and international scale.

Our visitor destinations include Cockatoo Island / Wareamah, North Head Sanctuary in Manly, Sub Base Platypus in North Sydney, and the precincts of Headland Park in Mosman – Chowder Bay / Gooree, Georges Heights and Middle Head / Gubbuh Gubbuh. We also protect Woolwich Dock and Parklands, Macquarie Lightstation in Vaucluse, and the Former Marine Biological Station at Camp Cove.

Be involved

Interested in volunteering, signing up for our e-newsletter or finding out more about the Harbour Trust? Visit us at: harbourtrust.gov.au

Stay connected

Send us an email:

info@harbourtrust.gov.au

Or follow us on social media:



@HarbourTrust

#NorthHeadSanctuary

Emergency

In case of emergency, phone Triple Zero (000) or 112 if mobile coverage is limited and state your location. Then contact:

📞 **Ranger** 0434 652 152 | 7am – 4pm

📞 **Security** 0433 631 689 | 4pm – 7am

