Sydney no-go areas

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While this doesn’t detail every spot, it’s a fair guide to where you can fish and what restrictions are placed on you.

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WHILE anglers have a huge choice of prime fishing spots around Sydney, there are some places where you’re just not allowed to fish and others which place restrictions on what sort of fishing is allowed.

Whether it’s because authorities have decided to protect the marine life in areas of special significance, protect anglers in areas where their safety could be compromised or because of sensitive national security issues, there are places you just can’t go and other places where anchoring and fishing is forbidden, although you can fish from a drifting boat.

It is difficult to list all no-go locations in the Sydney area in one story but the following should provide a fair summary of the most important ones and the various types of restrictions that Sydney anglers encounter.

NSW Fisheries is responsible for restrictions on the taking of fish and other marine life in the region and associated angling closures, NSW Waterways is the authority determining safety issues and the Commonwealth Department of Defence has sway over waters near its establishments.

Let’s look at Fisheries zonings and the types of restrictions placed on anglers by them.

INTERTIDAL PROTECTED AREAS

Intertidal protected areas (IPAs) were established to ensure the sustainability of foreshore animals and plants. The intertidal zone extends from the mean high water to 10 metres beyond mean low water. The taking of all invertebrates from these areas is prohibited. Fishing is permitted in these areas, but bait collection is not allowed, although you may bring bait with you.

In southern Sydney there are IPAs at Cabbage Tree Point in Port Hacking, La Perouse and Long Bay. Heading north, there are IPAs at Bondi, Sydney Harbour, Shelly Beach, Dee Why, Mona Vale and Bungan headlands.

The whole of the foreshores of Sydney Harbour, including the Parramatta and Lane Cove rivers, is an IPA and collecting intertidal animals is prohibited. Excluded are the foreshores of North Harbour, from Manly Point around to the western end of Forty Baskets Beach.

AQUATIC RESERVES

The type of protection varies within each reserve. For example, in some reserves fishing with one line is permitted, as long as bait is not collected in the reserve. In other places, such as Cabbage Tree Bay, you can only dive and observe the marine life – all methods of fishing are prohibited. For further information see the details on each reserve.

There are aquatic reserves at Barrenjoey Head; Narrabeen Head; Long Reef; Cabbage Tree Bay; North Harbour; Bronte-Coogee; Cape Banks; Boat Harbour; Towra Point and Shiprock.

The aquatic reserve at Towra Point is about 1400ha and is divided into two zones: A refuge zone of about 900ha and a sanctuary zone of about 500ha. (Refer map 1/1). The refuge zone off Towra Point and into Woolooware Bay is a great place to chase dusky flathead and bream with minnows and plastics.

• The Cape Banks Aquatic Reserve (see map 1/2) includes the whole foreshore from the bridge at Cape Banks to the Endeavour Light at Henrys Head and extends 100m seaward from mean low water.

Within this area you have an IPA where anglers can spear-fish, line-fish, collect rock lobsters, sea lettuce and other bait weeds, but it is prohibited to collect cunjevoi, all invertebrates (dead or alive), including anemones, barnacles, chitons, cockles, crabs, mussels, octopus, pipis, sea urchins, starfish, snails, worms and empty shells.
During the Winter it is worth anchoring just off the south-eastern side of the reef that juts from Henrys Head. Fish the run-out tide and lay out a berley trail which will attract yellowtail, silver trevally, tarwhine and snapper. Fish down the berley trail with rigs as light as possible.

• In Port Hacking there is an aquatic reserve at the end of Little Turriel Point called Shiprock (see map 3/3). The shore upstream of Shiprock is excellent to fish from a boat for luderick during Winter on a run-out tide.

• There is an aquatic reserve at Boat Harbour on the northern side of Bate Bay (see map 3/2). Within this area is an IPA where anglers can spear-fish, line-fish, collect rock lobsters, sea lettuce and other bait weeds. The beach in Boat Harbour will produce excellent tailor, salmon, bream, drummer and luderick a few days after a big southerly blow.

REFUGE ZONES

Within a refuge zone there is no commercial fishing but recreational anglers can take fish by means of hook and line. They can also use any net that can lawfully used by a recreational angler.

Woolooware Bay (see map 1/5) is an example. It has a number of disused oyster racks that are well worth fishing for bream and flathead on a rising tide.

SANCTUARY ZONES

Within a sanctuary zone people are able to observe the marine plants and animals with care. Any type of fishing or collection of marine animals and vegetation is prohibited.

Areas that come to mind include Quibray and Weeney bays (see map 1/3).

MOORINGS, ANCHORING

You are not allowed to tie up to any navigational markers and you are not allowed to anchor inside a group of mooring drums.

• In Botany Bay there are five double mooring drums located just north-west of the end of the Kurnell Oil Wharf (see map 1/7, 1/4). Oil tankers tie up to them when unloading their cargo. You are not allowed to tie up to these drums or anchor inside this area.

You are allowed to drift between these drums when there is no tanker moored there.

These drums are a good place to cast poppers, plastics and minnows in Summer for kingfish. Dropping a live yellowtail or a slimy mackerel down to the bottom will also produce some monster kings. If you are after bream during Autumn, or silver trevally and tailor during Winter, anchor up-current of any one of these drums, lay out a berley trail and float lightly-weighted baits back towards the drums.

FISHING CLOSURES

You are not allowed to fish or harvest any marine animal or vegetation within signposted areas.

• Botany Bay: The area between the old and new airport runways is indicated by two yellow lines painted on the eastern side of the old runway and the western side of the new runway. Inshore of these is closed waters.

But draw an imaginary line between these runway lines and you will find an area that drops off into very deep water (see map 1/8). Anchor on the edge of the drop-off and fish the falling tide for silver trevally, tailor and salmon during the Winter. It is also a very good area to troll minnows or jig with plastics.

The docks at Port Botany (map 1/9) are closed to all types of fishing.

I have fished the retaining wall extending from the southern side of Port Botany towards the dog-leg in the main shipping channel since I was a kid and have caught bream, flathead, tailor, luderick and leatherjackets.

However, I have recently had ‘discussions’ with a chap from the Port Authority who claimed I was not allowed to fish there. He told me that there was a terrorist threat and that this area had always been a no-fishing zone. He also told that I should have carried a chart that would have indicated this ‘closed area’. I told him that I wasn’t required have to have a chart because I was in enclosed waters and I asked to see this closure on his chart. He declined and told me to move.

I contacted the Harbour Master, who informed me that the restricted areas of Botany Bay were as I had stated earlier (between the two runways, Brotherson Dock and 100 metres from the oil wharf). He also said there was a 100-metre restriction from the Bulk Liquid Berth, which is displayed on a sign at the entrance to Brotherson Dock. It does not say anything about not fishing from there up to the end of the retaining wall.

• Cooks River: Many anglers are under the impression that there is a ban on all fishing in the Cooks River (see map 1/10), the entrance of which is on the north-western side of Botany Bay. NSW Fisheries state that you cannot take fish by any means other than a rod and line, or handline or a landing net. This means you cannot go crabbing or prawning with nets.

I have fished with small lures, soft and hard, up the Cooks River and have found it productive for bream and flathead. I have caught some very large flathead up there that have been missing some fins so I let go all fish caught there and I recommend you do, too.
• **Kogarah Bay** (see map 1/11). You are not allowed to take pipis, cockles (and other bivalve molluscs) or whelks by any methods here. But you can always try drifting with soft plastics for flathead, flounder and whiting. Bream are always worth a try around the moored boats on the western side of the bay. Kogarah Bay is always worth a try for blue swimmer crabs during the Summer months – use mullet heads for bait.

• **Georges River** (see map 1/13). This has bream, flathead, mulloway, mullet, garfish, sand whiting, bass and plenty of blue swimmer and mud crabs. You can use witch’s-hat nets throughout the system but you cannot use any type of trap in Salt Pan Creek, nor in any waters upstream of the Rabaul Road boat ramp.

• **Woronora River**. The whole of the waters of the Woronora River (map 1/12) and its tributaries from the Woronora Bridge and upstream is closed to all forms of netting except for a landing net used only to land fish. All those big mud crabs and blue swimmers that get up there have to be caught on a line.

• **Port Hacking**. You are prohibited from taking worms, nippers and shellfish by any method from a line from the southernmost extremity of Burraneer Point to the southernmost extremity of Hungry Point. This includes the whole of Gunnamatta Bay and its tributaries north. (map 3/1)

**DISTANCES**

Certain structures are sign posted to let you know the minimum distance you are permitted from that structure. In Botany Bay you need to stay 100 metres or more away from the oil wharf (map 1/4) on all sides.

The western side of the oil wharf seems to fish better during the Winter for silver trevally, tailor and pan-sized snapper. You must anchor at least 100 metres away and use a good berley trail to attract the fish from the wharf. While anchored there you could also put out a live bait for kingfish or mulloway.

If you have ever fished near the old and new runways (map 1/6) you would have noticed cardinal markers (black and yellow) that have signs posted on them. This sign will have a picture of a person walking and will explain that you cannot walk on top of the concrete edge or any other part of the runway.

These cardinal markers, complete with signs, are about 20 to 25 metres out from the runway. During the Winter this is a good area to troll for tailor and during Summer for kingfish and salmon. You can also try jigging plastics for flathead year-round.

**SYDNEY HARBOUR AND COAST**

Sydney Harbour and its tributaries have many restricted areas in the form of intertidal protected areas, aquatic reserves, refuge zones, sanctuary zones, moorings, fishing closures and distances. The whole of Sydney harbour, including the Parramatta and Lane Cove rivers, is an intertidal protected area and collecting intertidal animals is prohibited.

**AQUATIC RESERVES**

As you come through Sydney Heads (map 2/1) there is an aquatic reserve on your right. This extends from North Head to Grotto Point and from Forty Baskets Beach to the point at Little Manly Cove. It does not include Little Manly Cove itself.

You are allowed to fish only for fin-fish with only one rod or handline per person.

There is also an IPA from the surf club at Manly and south to the start of the national park. Both these areas have great trolling runs for tailor, salmon, kingfish and bonito.

The Bronte-Coogee aquatic reserve (map 2/2) includes the whole foreshore from the southern end of Bronte Beach to the rock baths at Coogee and extends seawards for 100 metres. Spearfishing and the taking of groper in this area is prohibited.

The Narrabeen Head Aquatic Reserve (map 2/3) includes the whole foreshore from the southern end of Turimetta Beach to the rock baths at North Narrabeen Head and extends seawards for 100 metres.

The Long Reef Aquatic Reserve (map 2/4) it extends from Collaroy rock baths south to the Long Reef Surf Lifesaving Club and 100 metres seawards.

The Cabbage Tree Aquatic Reserve (map 2/5) includes the whole foreshore of the bay from Manly Surf Life Saving Club to the northern end of the Shelly Beach headland and all of Cabbage Tree Bay.

**ANCHORING AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS**

There are two main stretches of water that are the main shipping channels for Sydney Harbour (map 2/6). They are the Eastern and Western channels. You are not allowed to anchor in these channels and even though you can drift this area, it would be very advisable not to because there is an extreme volume of boat traffic and you may get run over by a ferry or an even bigger ship.

A couple of good places for fishing come to mind near the channels – those ornate channel lighthouses known as the Wedding Cakes. Even though the western Wedding Cake seems to hold a better population of kingfish, bream, silver trevally, snapper, leatherjackets and luderick, the eastern Wedding Cake can also turn on good catches.

Here is a list of places in the Harbour (map 2) where you are not allowed to anchor, but you can drift through with care.
• Clifton Gardens
• Off Steele Point at Nielsen Park
• South of Shark Island
• The northern side of the Cruising Yacht club in Rushcutters Bay
• Longnose Point in the Parramatta River
• Spectacle Island
• Rose Bay
• Point Piper to Garden Island
• Woolloomooloo Bay
• HMAS Penguin Naval Depot in Middle Harbour.

There are many other places in Sydney Harbour and its tributaries where you should take care when fishing because there may be restrictions on where you can anchor or drift. They include:

• Under and near the Harbour Bridge
• Sydney Cove
• Spit Bridge
• Cockle Bay in Darling Harbour

OTHER CLOSURES
Darling Harbour and its bays are closed to all forms of netting and trapping but you can use a landing net purely for landing line-caught fish. The same goes for the Lane Cove River, Bantry Bay, and the Hunters Bay/Balmoral areas in Middle Harbour.

In the Parramatta River you are not allowed to fish in Homebush Bay nor in the Parramatta River and Duck Creek in the channel upstream from the Duck Creek entrance.

I may not have listed a few spots that have restrictions applied to them that you may know about. Please email me with these so that I can let other anglers know about them.


DISCLAIMER
While all possible care has been taken in producing this article and maps, the publishers accept no responsibility for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies in any form. Maps are not drawn to scale and points marked therein are to be taken as general indications only. Anglers are urged to check with all local authorities involved before fishing.

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