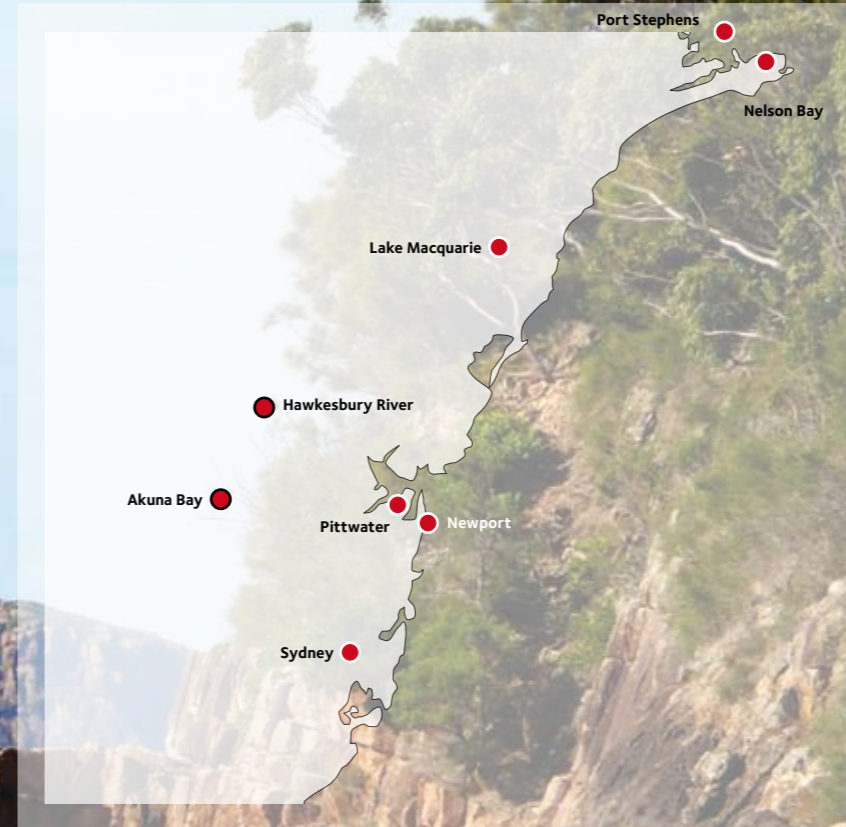


HOP *over to* PORT STEPHENS

FORGET THE HASSLE OF A DRIVING HOLIDAY – TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT THE EAST COAST OF NSW AND ENJOY LEISURELY STOPS AT SECLUDED ANCHORAGES ALONG THE WAY.
By Fiona Harper



Port Stephens



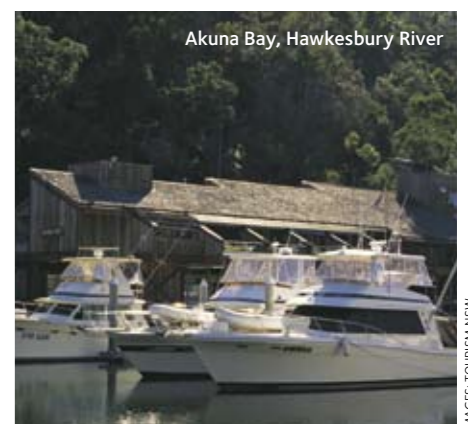
FOR THOSE WHO HAVE PLENTY OF TIME, MEANDER DOWN THE WATERWAYS OF THE HAWKESBURY RIVER AND COWAN CREEK, WHICH PENETRATE DEEP INLAND.



Pittwater and Broken Bay



Nelson Bay



Akuna Bay, Hawkesbury River

Boat-owning Sydneysiders are blessed with one of the finest natural harbours in the world. But for those looking for a relaxing getaway to an even larger natural harbour without the crowds, Port Stephens is just a few languid day-hops away. Departing Port Jackson on a boat must surely be one of the most dramatic beginnings to any journey. Passing between the cliffs of North and South Head, with urban Sydney at your back, the Tasman Sea beckons. The Tasman Sea can be moody and is well known, by those who have crossed 'the ditch' to New Zealand, for its irrational behaviour. Cross seas, unpredictable currents and swells without corresponding wind, are often encountered

and result from contrary winds colliding with the East Australian Current. At other times, extraordinary calms make a planing powerboat owner's heart race. Boating is always a mixed bag, with the level of enjoyment usually dependent upon the amount of wind Huey generates and the Tasman is no exception. The East Australian Current is treated like a welcome friend for southbound vessels, but can be challenging when heading north. As the current can run at anything up to four knots, parallel to the NSW coast in a belt that varies between 15 and 16 nautical miles wide, it has a significant influence on passage making. In calm conditions, the stream of current is

evident as flotsam, jetsam, weed and coral spawn hitchhike a ride south. Voyaging on the open sea creates both an exhilarating and an anxious feeling. This feeling doesn't last terribly long when heading north, as it's just 20 nautical miles to Barrenjoey Head and the entrance to Broken Bay. Passing Barrenjoey Head to port, you'll need to make a few hard and fast decisions about whether to explore Brisbane Water to the north, the Hawkesbury River to the west, or Pittwater to the south. If heading north, there's a five nautical mile marked channel to negotiate, with Booker Bay Marina and Machans Marina on the left before the Rip Bridge, which has a clearance of

approximately 17 metres. Diversions to the left include Woy Woy Channel, while to the right Lintern Channel leads to Davistown and the Cockle Broadwater beyond. Further north, the large body of water opens up to become Brisbane Water, with Gosford on its northern shore. For those who have plenty of time to spend, meander down the waterways of the Hawkesbury River and Cowan Creek, which penetrate deep inland. You'll find d'Albora Marinas Akuna Bay tucked into the head of Coal and Candle Creek, surrounded by Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park. If you're in a hurry to make some miles north and merely require an overnight anchorage, Pittwater is your best option, immediately

south-west of Barrenjoey Head. Anchor wherever you can find space along the shoreline in this somewhat crowded waterway, or head into the southern bays where Royal Motor Yacht Club Broken Bay is just one of the marinas that welcome visitors to this picturesque outer-Sydney waterfront suburb. Carrying on north, it's approximately 40 nautical miles to the Swansea Bar and the entrance to the Lake Macquarie cruising grounds, the largest saltwater lake in Australia. After passing through the Swansea Bridge opening, which is operated by the Coastal Patrol (02 4971 3723), marinas and boating facilities are spread across the lake, with Pelican Marina ▶

UPCOMING EVENTS

3-5 April Club Marine Trailer Boat Sportfishing Tournament
www.tbft.com.au

April 20-26 Sail Port Stephens
www.sailportstephens.com.au

June 3-8 Port Stephens Bluewater Country Music Festival
www.bluewatercountrymusic.com

July 6-7 Water Wonderland Golf Classic at Nelson Bay Golf Club

Oct 3-12 Port Stephens Whale Festival
www.whalefest.com.au



and Marks Point Marina beyond the entrance on Swansea Channel. Deep into the north-western corner is Marmong Point Marina, though there are plenty of diversions on the way there. There are more than 90 villages and communities

PORT STEPHENS IS ONE OF THE FEW ALL-WEATHER REFUGES ON THE NSW COAST WITHOUT A BAR CROSSING.

dotted throughout the City of Lake Macquarie, with the Watagan Mountains and Watagans National Park forming a backdrop to the lake.

From Lake Macquarie, it's another 40 nautical miles to Port Stephens, though Newcastle is just 15 nautical miles up the coast and does offer respite if a stopover is required. Visitors are welcome at the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club, who have an active social and racing calendar and may have casual berths for visitors. Newcastle is often overlooked simply because it is a major industrial port that has, in the past, been somewhat unwelcoming towards leisure craft. Tourism NSW is intent on changing that perception, inviting tourists to come and enjoy the heritage of Australia's second-oldest city, including some convict era relics that are on show.

But if your real longing is for calm inland-water cruising, the entrance to Port Stephens and Nelson Bay is just a further 15 nautical miles to the north-east. The expansive body of water known as Port Stephens penetrates far inland, creating a popular year-round cruising destination. It is one of the few all-weather refuges on the NSW coast without a bar crossing, the entrance is relatively straightforward using the entrance leads, with islands and prominent headlands protecting the entrance.

Regarded by many as the dolphin capital of Australia, Port Stephens offers regular cruises to

see the 100 or so bottlenose dolphins that call the port home. There's also quite a whale watching industry here, with whale watching cruises operating between May and October.

Twice as large as Sydney Harbour, Port Stephens has enough bays, coves and inlets to satisfy the most jaded cruiser. With little major infrastructure spoiling the natural environment, much of the coastline is presumably as it was when Captain James Cook named the port in 1770. In the north-east, the Myall River connects the port with Myall Lakes, creating a unique inland navigable waterway that meanders past curiously named towns like Winda Woppa and Monkey Jacket.

d'Albora Marinas Nelson Bay is just two nautical miles inside the entrance and incorporates a boutique shopping village at the end of Nelson Bay's main street. There are restaurants and bars and a visitor centre. It may just be the only marina in the country that has cable TV access at most berths. Just plug into your onboard TV and you're away. Highly respected Noakes Boat and Shipyards has a haul-out facility and boatyard, plus there's a shipwright, rigger and painter onsite, with mechanical, electrical and fabrication services nearby. There's a ship chandler here as well.

Nelson Bay CBD has cafés and shops just a few minutes' walk from d'Albora Marinas Nelson Bay. Port Stephens Coaches runs a daily service from Nelson Bay to Sydney (three hours), for Sydneysiders wanting to leave their vessels at Port Stephens and hightail it back to the big smoke. ☼

MORE INFORMATION

Cruising the NSW Coast by Alan Lucas
Port Stephens Tourism www.portstephens.org.au

the advantages come standard...

JOHNSON

MOTOR YACHTS

BOATS READY FOR DELIVERY;
90' — SECOND HAND
75' — NEW 2008 MODEL
58' — NEW 2008 MODEL
58' — SECOND HAND



87

World Class Motor Yachts

Models available 58', 75', 87', 103', 125'



Importer and NSW Distributor: Johnson Motor Yachts
T: (02) 49648111 F: (02) 4964 8370 E: sales@johnsonmotoryachts.com.au

QLD Distributor: Sun Marine - Jim Winchester
T: (07) 5571 1440 F: (07) 5571 1436 E: boating@sunmarine.com.au
www.johnsonmotoryachts.com.au

CANNON CHARTERS

A fishing experience like no other!

MOTHERSHIP SPORTFISHING IN AUSTRALIA'S TOP END & KIMBERLEY REGION

BOOKINGS: 1300 661 216

mvcannon@cannoncharters.com.au

www.cannoncharters.com.au



2007 & 2008 Northern Territory Adventure Tourism Award Winners

